

OPINION

By Prof. Dr. Rayna Dimitrova Gavrilova, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", habilitated in the field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences,

on the scientific papers for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences, FBO, Department of Anthropology, announced in the State Gazette No. 38/24.04.2026

with candidate Senior Assistant Dr. Milena Ivanova Angelova.

I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University

After reviewing the materials submitted by Dr. Milena Angelova, I found that they comply with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University and she can participate in the competition.

II. Research and results

The applicant Milena Angelova has submitted a habilitation work published as a monograph entitled *The Social Disease. Tuberculosis in Bulgaria in the First Half of the 20th Century*. The monograph is 346 pages long, including a three and a half page summary in English and 19 pages of bibliography and sources. The emergence in the last two decades of serious studies of the historical development of medicine, the medical profession and institutions, and state policies (for example, those of G. Mircheva and V. Dimitrova, cited by Angelova) is highly satisfying. As for tuberculosis, there is hardly a more actively researched and commented medical problem in the first half of the 20th century. But even in this abundantly cultivated field, Milena Angelova's work stands out as the first general and definitive study of the problem in its social dimensions. The history of the disease, both in medical and social aspects, has a rich tradition in world literature, including in the last two or three decades. This fact not only does not belittle the work, but fills a previously existing gap. Moreover, the author's excellent knowledge of relevant foreign history (medical, political, and social) has enabled her to explore and present comparisons that highlight both the common characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the Bulgarian experience. If I had to summarize my impressions, Milena Angelova's text stands out with its qualities: clear intentions and tasks, comprehensiveness, a solid documentary basis and the ability to see the connections and trends that make a quality study of social history. If the excellent knowledge of everything written about tuberculosis in Bulgaria - in books, scientific articles, journalistic materials and archives leaps out when

reading the text, then the author's competence in areas that are not "her field" is no less notable. The search and systematization of information about dozens (without exaggeration) individuals and institutions leaves the impression that the author has left no stone unturned, if I may use the colloquial expression. The information is astonishing and gathered not only from already published researches, but also from newspaper publications and, above all, from long-forgotten archives. Despite the avalanche of materials, they are placed in a well-presented historical and social context, in which both individual initiatives and state efforts (or lack thereof) are located and made sense of. At the same time, Angelova is careful not to make the factuality of the text to make it unreadable - I appreciate the bolding of names and the transfer of numerous biographical and curious data in the footnotes, which are worth reading carefully (a rare quality). The "resurrection" of the history, preserved only in archives and old newspapers and magazines, has the flavor of archaeological research. The history of sanatoria and hospitals, of the deeds of physicians, officials, teachers, which has been searched and reconstructed with documents, biographies and photographs, weaves the story not only of a medical problem, but also of its social repercussions. I highly appreciated the included photographic material, which emplots the story. Through topics that at first glance appear secondary to historians, the entire social history of Bulgaria is examined and understood. The study clearly demonstrates the competence of an accomplished researcher.

The monograph is part of Milena Angelova's long-standing interest in the history and historical anthropology of public health. In a series of studies and articles (appended), she analyzes individual problems – the development of balneology, the activities of the Rockefeller Foundation, the Sovietization of public health – she not only enriches our knowledge of the history of everyday words (dispensary, sanatorium), but also demonstrates the possibilities of interdisciplinary approaches in the study of seemingly purely medical topics.

The interest in studying phenomena and facts in their contexts is also evident in Angelova's works that are not on the topic of her habilitation and that were published after her appointment as a senior assistant (2004): the monographs *The (Un)Shared Memory of Late Socialism: The "People's Memory Tells" Movement (1983-1989)*, 2010, and *"Model Village": The Modernization Project for the Village in Bulgaria 1937-1944*, 2008; the editing of anthologies, as well as two articles in refereed and indexed publications and 6 in non-refereed publications (4 of them in a foreign language). The applicant has provided information for seven citations or reviews in scientific publications, refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases or in monographs and collective volumes; nine in peer-reviewed publications and 19 in non-refereed journals with peer-review. All publications show not only established professional interests, but also an individual research style, demonstrated in the above discussed monograph: interest in the social and cultural dimensions of phenomena, institutions and facts, studied by different disciplines; use of diverse documentary evidence, convincing construction of interpretation based on empirical material.

Throughout her career both at the Southwestern University and at the NBU, Milena Angelova has worked on research projects that have measurable results in her publications: *Social Policy and Social Diseases. Comparison of the Policies of the Municipalities of Vienna and Sofia in the Fight against Tuberculosis after the First World War* (2007), international project *Politics of Memory and Memory Cultures of the Russian-Ottoman War 1877/1878: From Divergence to Dialogue* (2012-2016), *Knowledge Exchange and Academic Cultures in the Humanities: Europe and the Black Sea Region, late 18th – 21st Centuries* (2017-2021). In her research program for the period 2024-2028, we find information about a field research; the organization of a conference; the preparation of a traveling exhibition; participation in and publication of results in a project *Political repressions of Muslim women during the communist regime, women's resistance networks and civil rehabilitation*, launched in September 2024, and funded by the Bulgarian Women's Fund Foundation. Her international academic experience is impressive with a clear focus on the Caucasus and contacts with Austrian researchers, which undoubtedly provided an opportunity for direct research into different contexts. Milena Angelova is the chairwoman of the "Balkanistic Forum - International University Seminar for Research and Specializations"; a member of the editorial board of the journal "Balkanistic Forum" (2001-2024), of the Turkish journal "Tobider" and of the journal "Balkanistic Worlds".

III. Teaching and learning activities

Since her appointment as an Assistant Professor at the Southwestern University, Milena Angelova has regularly offered courses in Historical Anthropology, Social History and Bulgarian History, as well as specialized courses on Oral History, the history of women, minorities, children (list attached). After moving to the New Bulgarian University in 2024, Milena Angelova developed and offered courses in Civic education, Cultural heritage, Medical Anthropology and Political Anthropology. The attached curriculum of the Medical Anthropology course shows the same serious awareness of contemporary trends in the field and depth. The research program also includes the preparation of teaching materials: Medical Anthropology (2026) and Historical Anthropology (2027). Her courses at NBU are in Moodle and are provided with materials

Her work with students at NBU still has a short history: in 2024 she carried fieldwork with students from the Anthropology Department – *Project Cultural Diversity and Shared Heritage: Yakoruda and Belitsa*, June 7-9, 2024. The average score from the student surveys for 2024-25 is an excellent 5.54.

After carefully reviewing the attached materials on the candidacy of Milena Angelova for the academic position of Associate Professor, in professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences, Faculty of Arts, Department of Anthropology, I confidently declare my positive assessment of her academic activity and propose that she be admitted to election by the Academic Council.

Date...04.09.2026

Signature