

PEER REVIEW

by **Prof. Dr. Plamen D. Tchipev**, member of Scientific Jury in the competition for academic position “PROFESSOR”, approved by a decision of the Scientific Council minutes No 4 on 10.04.2019, and by an order of the Director No 122 on 12.04.2019, announced by Economic Research Institute at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, SG, issue 13 on 12.02.2019

Candidate: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Radostina Telerig Bakardjieva

I. Short biography of the candidate

Radostina Bakardzhieva is Associate Professor, Doctor in Economics at Economic Research Institute at BAS. She has graduated “Political Economy” at University of National and World Economy, and has received scientific and educational degree “Doctor” from Sofia University “Kliment Ohridski”. Her dissertation is on the topic: “*The general and the specific in the economic mechanism of People’s Republic of Bulgaria and German Democratic Republic*”. In 1989 she joins ERI-BAS, occupying position of research fellow III to I degree. Since 2007 she is Associate Professor at the same institute.

Assoc. Prof. Bakardjieva works in the field of micro- and macroeconomics, sociology, business management and comparative analysis of economic systems. Her main interests are in studying the corporate social responsibility (CSR). Her focus is on the evolution of CSR theory.

II. General characteristics of the scientific and applied work of the candidate

1. General description of the submitted materials (monographs, textbooks, articles, reports, projects, etc.) by research fields

The materials presented by the candidate include scientific monographs, scientific and applied studies and articles, reports from scientific conferences, as well as participations and leadership in scientific projects. The monographs focus on the field of corporate social responsibility, the application of the international social standards in the Bulgarian companies compared with the relevant European standards. Most of the articles and studies also focus on this field, but they also cover a wide range of related problems like managing the non-financial risk and aspects of the venture capital, CSR dependence on the supply chain, social insurance in some European countries, non-financial reporting, social enterprises and corporate governance of the Bulgarian companies.

Special place have the candidate’s studies in practical and applied terms, such as the application of CSR standards and CSR assessment in the Bulgarian companies (including article in English), empirical evidence of CSR, some specific standards (like self-assessment on ISO 26000). In the same applied direction are her studies on confirming the standards for good corporate governance (chapter of a book).

Her participation in research projects is closely related to the publications and the mentioned fields, but there are several projects in wider areas – strategy for sustainable development of Bulgaria, improving the quality of education and mentoring of student practices.

2. General characteristics of the candidate's scientific, applied and teaching activities

The presented materials show that Assoc. Prof. Bakardjieva has extensive scientific activity in the field of privatization and restructuring of enterprises, innovation problems, corporate governance. In the last years, which are the subject of this competition, she specializes in Corporate Social Responsibility. Her active creative activity is confirmed not only by her two monographs, many other scientific publications, but also by her participation in many projects since 2007 till 2019, including 2 individual ones.

Among the projects are several international ones developed together with partners from Switzerland (2009), Russia (2007-2008), the World Bank (2008) and the European Union (2015-2017). I have known the candidate since 1989 when she came to work at ERI-BAS in the department where I worked, so I also have broad personal impressions of her work on some of these projects and the convincing way in which she defended them. Also, while the presented documents do not provide comprehensive data on her teaching activity, I can testify that Assoc. Prof. Bakardjieva has works for many years as a part-time associate professor at VTU "St. St. Kiril and Metodii", participates in conducting internships of students from South-Western University – Blagoevgrad and leads the preparation of their projects.

In practical and applied plan, Assoc. Prof. Bakardjieva participates actively in the training of trade union leaders, dedicated to increasing their competence to minimize the risks and threats to health and safety at work in the enterprises. The candidate also has a high social activity as an expert on the National Coordination Council on CSR at MLSP (2016-2018) and the Economic and Social Council (2017-2018).

The rich academic experience allows the candidate to distribute equally and effectively her efforts and time between scientific, teaching and expert employment.

III. Quantitative characteristics of the candidate's scientific work.

The candidate has presented for review scientific production in accordance with the indicators **A, C, D, E and F**, of the requirements – the national minimum ones, as well as those under Art. 1, para. 2 of the REGULATIONS FOR ACQUISITION OF SCIENTIFIC DEGREES AND OCCUPATION OF ACADEMIC POSITIONS AT ERI-BAS (RASDOAP at ERI-BAS), grouped as follows: section **A**) dissertation work for acquiring educational and scientific degree "Doctor"; section **C**) habilitation work; section **D**) 35 other scientific works (1 monograph, 29 articles, 2 studies and 3 book chapters); section **E**) 51 citations, and section **F**) participations in 13 scientific projects (9 national and 4 international ones). *[In addition, the candidate has stated 3 works that have not been awarded an ISBN/ISSN and are therefore not presented for review in this competition.]*

The materials of sections **A) – 50 points and B) – 100 points** fully satisfy the already stated requirements. The review of the presented publications in section **D**) shows that there are known matches of titles and problems in the individual works proposed for review. For example, section **D.7** presents three reports – **D7.2-2, D7.2-3, D7.2-4**, published at three different conferences with identical titles. Nonetheless, after careful review, I think they have sufficient differences in the content, they can be considered individual works, and I accept them for review. Similarly, I accept for review also two materials **D7.1-6** and **D7.2-8**, which are not presented physically, but are provided links to them and, though in a complicated way, can be accessed online.

At the same time, monograph **D4-1** is also included in the list of publications presented to the "Register of Academic Staff of NACID for Habilitated Persons", in accordance with the

requirements for occupation academic position “Associate Professor”, which is the reason to **not accept** this publication for review. Similar is the situation with publication **D9-1**, which also appears in the mentioned list as a DVD publication and which I do not accept for review for the same reason. **I do not accept** for review also publication (**D7.1-8**), since it is a review of reports presented at conference and does not contain original contributions. **I do not accept** for review also the co-authored publication (**D7.1-9**), which is not available among the materials and for which there is no division protocol of co-authorship, as required.

Thus, after the reduction, section **D** includes for review **31** materials with a total of **387.5** points, which exceeds the required number of 250 points.

According to the indicators set in the documents as section **F**, the candidate presented 51 citations – 1 citation is in journal referenced and indexed in SCOPUS (**E11**), 29 – in monographs and collective scientific peer-reviewed volumes (**E12**), and 21 – in non-referenced scientific peer-reviewed journals (**E13**). Bulgarian Journal of Agricultural Science (BJAS) is included in the “*List of Contemporary Bulgarian Scientific Publications, Referenced and Indexed in World-Famous Databases with Scientific Information*”, and respectively citation **№ 1** of section **E11** meets the minimum national requirements specified above and those of the Regulations of ERI-BAS by sections.

Of the rest, I do not accept for review 1 citation of those in monographs and collective volumes with scientific peer-review (**E12-13**) and 2 of those in non-referenced scientific peer-reviewed journals (**E13-18** and **E13-19**). The reason is that they are made to the previously mentioned publication (**D7.1-9**), which is not available among the materials, and for which there is no division protocol with her co-author, as required, which is why it is not clear the contribution of which of the two co-authors is considered. Thus, the total number of accepted citations is reduced to **48** and the total sum of points – to **395**, which also significantly exceeds the requirements.

The review of the projects shows that projects **№ 2** and **№ 3** of section **F16** are similar in title, in terms and results, because of which I accept them for review as 1. For projects **№ 4** and **№ 9** of the same section, the candidate did not specify the terms for implementation, so **I do not accept them** for review. Thus, the number of projects is reduced to **9**, the total sum of points on this indicator is **185 points**, which exceed the requirements.

Totally, accepted for review are:

A) dissertation for the award of educational and scientific degree “Doctor”	50 points
C) habilitation work	100 points
D) 31 other publications: 1 article and 1 study in referenced publications, 8 articles in non-referenced publications, 18 reports published in conference proceedings, and 3 book chapters	377.5 points
E) 48 citations, 1 of which in SCOPUS	395 points
F) 9 projects	190 points

The accepted materials are published after the first habilitation of the candidate and are eligible for review in the current competition.

In conclusion:

1. The total sum is **1112.5 points**, which significantly exceeds the required minimum number of 650 points, and completely cover the required points by groups of indicators A) and C) and exceeds the minimum requirements for groups D), E) and F).
2. Of the presented materials – 2 publications (1 article and 1 study) are published in scientific publications referenced and indexed in SCOPUS, which also covers the minimum national requirements and the requirements under Art. 1, para. 2 of RASDOAP at ERI-BAS).

IV. Evaluation of the results and scientific contribution of the candidate

The main groups of achievements of the candidate can be systematized in 3 groups:

a) enriching the spectrum of knowledge about the theoretical foundations of CSR:

- *Contributions to studying the nature of CSR.* The candidate systematizes the theory of CSR, focusing on its evolution – from the theory of the agents, and that of the stakeholders, through the beneficial responsibilities of the managers to the institutional school. Contributions include the reasoning of the definition of the CSR components like public institutions, but also as a set of standards and norms. Thus, CSR is considered a foundation of the corporate sustainability and serves as an instrument for resolving social and environmental conflicts (C; D6-1; D7.1-1; D7.2-1).

The author launches an updated definition of CSR: “*Corporate social responsibility can be defined as a unified system of consistent economic, environmental and social activities, including ethical norms and values, in constant interaction with the stakeholders for reducing the non-financial risks towards achieving corporate sustainability in pursuit of the goals of sustainable development*” (C1).

The applicant reveals that as a manifestation of the corporate governance, CSR follows closely the relation with the stakeholders, a “*stakeholder corporation*”. Shown are the competitive advantages that CSR creates by contributing to the value of the company (D7.3-4).

Among the theoretical contributions is the outlining of the impact of the companies on the society – the companies generate social and environmental concerns to the stakeholders on a voluntary basis between business and society (D7.2-1). The author reasons the convergence between the Anglo-Saxon and the European CSR models, outlining that the Bulgarian CSR model (as well as the American one) aims to satisfy the interests of all stakeholders (D7.2-1; D7.2-3).

b) contributions to clarify the nature and specifics of the international standards for corporate social responsibility:

- *Enriching and further developing the criteria of international CSR standards.* Studying the criteria of the international CSR standards, the author concludes that these criteria are subsequently embodied in economic indicators, through which the measuring of the impact of the companies on the society is possible (C1, D7.1-8, D7.2-6, D7.3-7).

Shown is the deduction of the self-assessment processes from the criteria of *International standards of corporate social responsibility*, the transition from one-time, partial, voluntary, socially responsible initiatives to systemically integrated in the corporate strategies CSR and the dynamics of the trends related to the confirmation of the companies’ institute of CSR

(CSR committees on health and safety of work, etc.). Defined are the key requirements for integrated reporting in its most current format – *Global Reporting Initiative* (D7.3-3).

The candidate reveals the importance of the management of the non-financial risk in the context of the corporate social responsibility as foundation of the social standards. She shows how the international standard *OHSAS 18001:2007* becomes a key instrument for satisfying the interests of the workers and employees, as the most important *internal stakeholder* in the corporations, in terms of health and safety of work. The standard is analyzed in the context of an integrated system with *ISO 9001:2009* and *ISO 14001:2009*, which together form the management system of CSR aimed at applying international reporting standards in the preparation for transition to its updated format *ISO 45001:2018* (D7.1-2).

- *Identifying indicators of non-financial reporting.* Another focus in the research activity of the candidate is the non-financial reporting, as a peak of the evolution of CSR. In a series of publications, the author proves that the essence of the CSR standards is not only to be a leading instrument for monitoring, conformity assessment and control, but also the first, optional, but necessary step in the development of the non-financial reporting. Formulated is a recommendation to synchronize the non-financial information (C1; D7.1-2, D7.2-2; D7.2-3).

The candidate outlines the CSR standard *ISO 26 000* as a generalizing methodological benchmark that creates the necessary premises for building a methodologically unified, harmonized platform for evaluating and comparing the various socially responsible practices of the different organizations. It is concluded that *ISO 26 000* is a reliable platform for integrated management of the social responsibility in the organizations in order to build an effective social responsibility strategy aimed at satisfying the interests of the stakeholders (D7.3-5).

Another contribution is the revealing of the relation between CSR and the sustainable development, through integrated reporting of the requirements of the standards of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). The development of non-financial reports is a very dynamic process, which peak is the creation of an integrated reporting system (D7.1-6).

c) problems of their application in the Bulgarian companies

In this area, the candidates monitor and evaluate the state and implementation of CSR in the Bulgarian companies over different periods of time. Some of the publications aim to study the CSR of the companies – TNC subsidiaries, operating in our country, as well as of the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), their contractors – suppliers, sub-suppliers, customers (7.1-4). Revealed are interesting socially responsible practices of SMEs to pay for training of students from specialized schools and after that to guarantee them a job (Dobrich) (7.1-1; 7.2-8). Based on indicators not used in previous publications, are systematized data on good social practices (ensured transport to the workplace, recreation, kindergartens, etc.).

Particular focus in the publications of Assoc. Prof. Bakardjieva is placed on the study of the European Strategy on CSR, in particular in Bulgaria. Made is a systematic analysis of the dynamics of CSR in the Bulgarian enterprises in social and environmental direction. Identified are the institutional subjects that are engines of the CSR processes. There has been a delay in the implementation of the requirements of the European Directive on non-financial reporting and diversity (D7.1-3). Identified are the processes of organizational institutionalization of CSR in the context of creating the corporate subjects responsible for it – *Executive Director, Director of Directorates “Human Resources”, “Marketing” or “Public Relations”* (D7.2-2).

For the analysis of the application of CSR standards are presented the results of empirical studies (e.g., *OHSAS 18001:2007*). On this basis, are prepared recommendations to the corporate managements regarding the effective implementation of the requirements of the standard and the observance of its norms (**D7.1-2**).

Among the contributions is the evaluation of the implementation of *ISO 9001:2015*. Formulated are recommendations to the managers to be more interested in the strict meeting of the requirements of the international reporting standards in the interest of the sustainable growth in the companies they manage. It is outlined that ISO standards are the most used CSR reporting instrument in the Bulgarian companies (**D2-6**; *the publication is co-authored and evaluated according to the division protocol*).

Reflection of the candidate's scientific publications in our and foreign literature. The candidate's scientific publications are well-known and appreciated by specialists, mainly on a national scale – reviewed are **48 citations** (out of 51 presented). The author has also an international popularity by citation in Bulgarian Journal of Agricultural Science (BJAS), which is included in the **SCOPUS** database, but also by publishing in English – 6 publications, with 1 article and 1 study recently published in *Economic Studies journal*, indexed in SCOPUS and with the potential for additional citation.

Significance of the contributions to science and practice. The stated contributions are significant to theory because they enable the Bulgarian scientific community, but also the practice, to get acquainted with the latest most current and at the same time very important requirements of the Corporate Social Responsibility, which is an integrated part of modern corporate governance. With their currency, systematization and wide scope of the studied area, the candidate's contributions are also very important for evaluating, improving and accelerating the application of these requirements in the Bulgarian companies, which is the basis for their good functioning and international integration. As stated on many places in the candidate's works, the good corporate governance practices, and especially CSR, contribute to increasing the value of the firms, enhancing investors' trust in them, and increasing publicity and taking into account the interests of all investors.

V. Assessment of the originality of the presented works and the reliability of the presented scientific data

Regarding the reviewed works, there are no reports or suspicions of plagiarism. My judgment is that they are original in nature and are result of the persistent and diligent research work of the candidate.

The presented data are from different surveys, some are carried out by external sociological structures, and in the cases of large projects also by specialist – team members, but in all cases these are qualified sociological units. Information has also been collected in various ways – there are sociological surveys on specialized questionnaires, on the method of standardized interview (**D10-3**), or from conducted nationally representative surveys of a wide range of people with face-to-face interviews at the interviewees' home, selected through a two-stage nest sample (**D10-1**). There are cases when data are obtained from organizing of focus groups on given topics.

This makes the data presented in the works highly reliable and does not raise doubts about their relevance. In the cases where the candidate has presented collective works, there are corresponding division protocols, and where one is missing, the publication is excluded from the reviewed works.

VI. Critical notes and recommendations

When it comes to such a wide-ranging analysis of dozens of works, projects and citations, critical notes by necessity are quite general. However, I will mention a few things that I think can help the candidate in her future work.

1. It seems to me that it is useful to have a deeper and strict distinction of the more theoretical works from the more practical ones. Of course, in large works, like monographs, the presentation of all sides of the problem is inevitable, but in smaller ones the distinction would lead to more depth and detail of the discussed matter.
2. It seems to me that Assoc. Prof. Bakardjieva's work would only benefit if she could outline more clearly the direction of development of her studies. Now, it is often seen certain comeback to the problems already discussed and and successfully solved, together with the new problem in a given work. Thus, there is, on one hand, repeating of part of the material, and on the other – the new part does not always stand out clearly enough.
3. As I know Assoc. Prof. Bakardjieva for a long time, with pleasure I can note the progress she has made in working with surveys, interviews and other empirical studies. Now her conclusions are more substantiated and deepened. I would also add that if these data are presented to us in more details, like attaching the questionnaires or the primary statistics, if the size allows it, it would give the reader an additional opportunity for a individual, critical evaluation of the study.
4. The last note is to the thematic diversity in the research work of the candidate. Again, I will refer to my acquaintance and say that, unlike in the previous period when she had a significant spreading in several areas, in recent years, i.e. practically over the period we are evaluating here, she is extremely concentrated on one area. Indeed, this area is diverse, there are many aspects, especially in the practical problems of implementation, but it still seems to me that a slight opening to the problems of the stakeholders and the corporate management would be very useful.

These notes of course are of limited significance and in no case call into question the qualities and merits of the author, as well as her efforts, contributions and results in the presented works.

VII. Conclusion

The stated in this review theoretical and practical contributions in the presented original scientific works give me grounds for a *positive assessment* that Assoc. Prof. Bakardjieva of fully meets the national requirements, regulated in LDAS, as well as the conditions for occupation of academic position **“Professor”** of the *Regulations for acquisition of scientific degrees and occupation of academic positions in ERI-BAS* (Art. 89, para. 1).

Based on the above arguments, I propose the Honorable Scientific Jury to propose to the Scientific Council at ERI-BAS, to elect Assoc. Prof. Dr. Radostina Telerig Bakardjieva for the academic position **“Professor”** in the competition announced by Economic Research Institute at BAS in SG, issue 13 on 12.02.2019 on professional field 3.8 “Economy (CSR)”.

Date: 21.05.2019

Member of jury: