OPINION

of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimitar Vasilev Baturov, member of the scientific jury
in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" (Docent)
Field of higher education: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences
Professional field: 3.9. Tourism
Scientific specialty: "Economics and Management of Tourism (Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence in Tourism)"
Announced in the State Gazette, issue 64 of 14.07.2026, for the needs of the College of Tourism – Blagoevgrad.

1. Data on the competition and the applicant

One applicant participates in the announced procedure – Dr. Ivanka Petrova Vasenska. The submitted documents comply with the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria and the internal rules of the College of Tourism – Blagoevgrad. No procedural violations have been found, and the applicant meets the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor".

Dr. Ivanka Petrova Vasenska completed the educational and qualification degree "Bachelor" in the specialty "Tourism" (2009) and the educational and qualification degree "Master" in the specialty "Management of Alternative Types of Tourism" (2010) at South-West University "Neofit Rilski" – Blagoevgrad. In 2015 she obtained the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management by Sectors (Tourism)" with a dissertation entitled "Managing the Attractiveness of the Tourist Destination".

Her professional development is connected mainly with the Department of Tourism at the Faculty of Economics of South-West University "Neofit Rilski", where she has successively been an hourly-paid lecturer, assistant and chief assistant professor.

2. Teaching activity

The applicant has established experience in teaching students in the "Bachelor" and "Master" degree programs. She has taught the courses "Economics of Hospitality", "Digital Tools in Sustainable Tourism", "E-Tourism" and "Business English for Economists", as well as the course "Digitalization of Tourism" at the College of Tourism – Blagoevgrad.

She has participated in developing curricula and accreditation procedures, supervised student internships and diploma theses, and served as an academic mentor in the national program

"Student Internships". She has carried out teaching mobilities under the Erasmus+ program in Spain, Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia.

I consider the applicant's teaching activity to be consistent, diverse and fully in line with the profile of the competition.

3. Research activity

Dr. Vasenska's scientific output includes 3 monographs, 5 chapters in collective publications, 1 study and 31 articles and papers. Nine of the publications are published in journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. A total of 204 citations have been recorded, of which 90 are in publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science.

Type of scientific output	**Number**
Monographs (incl. 2 sole-authored and 1 collective)	3
Chapters in collective monographs and encyclopedic editions	5
Studies	1
Articles and conference papers in publications referenced and indexed in Scopus and Web of Science	9
Articles and conference papers in non-referenced peer-reviewed journals and in edited collective volumes	22
Citations noted – total	204
of which in publications referenced in Scopus / Web of Science	90
of which in peer-reviewed monographs and collective volumes	12
of which in non-referenced peer-reviewed journals	102
Reviewing activity for international scientific journals (Risks, JRFM)	2
Participation in national projects	6
Participation in international projects	7

The research can be grouped into six main thematic areas:

- artificial intelligence and machine learning in tourism demand forecasting;
- digitalization of financial relations and financial technologies in tourism;
- competitiveness and attractiveness of tourist destinations;
- cultural heritage and event tourism;
- risk, sustainability and post-pandemic transformation of tourism;
- institutional transformation and human capital development in the tourism sector.

Of particular importance for the competition is the submitted monograph "Digital Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Tourism", which is a complete and independent scientific work with a clearly expressed contribution to the announced scientific specialty.

After analysing the submitted publications, it can be concluded that the research is distinguished by a good connection between theoretical propositions and practical applications. A

significant part of the results have direct application in the management of tourist destinations, the implementation of digital technologies and the development of policies for sustainable tourism.

4. Scientific and applied-science contributions

The applicant's contributions can be summarized in three main groups:

Theoretical contributions, related to the development of concepts for using artificial intelligence and machine learning in tourism, models of competitiveness of tourist destinations, and research on institutional changes in the tourism sector.

Methodological contributions, expressed in the development of comparative forecasting models, bibliometric analyses, the application of game theory, and the creation of tools for assessing tourist behavior under conditions of risk.

Applied-science contributions, related to the assessment of tourism policies, the application of fintech solutions, the development of tourism products based on cultural heritage, and the implementation of the "Tourism 4.0" concepts.

I accept the scientific and applied-science contributions declared by the applicant as real, significant and corresponding to the subject of the competition.

5. Project, expert and public activity

Dr. Vasenska has participated in 13 scientific and educational projects, of which 7 are international and 6 are national. Their topics relate to sustainable tourism, cultural heritage, social entrepreneurship, distance learning and risk management.

The applicant is Deputy Chief Editor of the journal "Economics and Law", editor of the journal "Entrepreneurship", and a reviewer for the international journals Risks and Journal of Risk and Financial Management. She is the winner of the Best Paper Award of the journal Risks for 2022.

6. Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no significant critical remarks on the applicant's scientific and teaching activity. A declaration of originality and authenticity of the information has been submitted, and there is no evidence of established plagiarism in the submitted works.

Conclusion

Having reviewed the submitted materials, I consider that Dr. Ivanka Petrova Vasenska fully meets and substantially exceeds the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor". Her scientific output, citation record, project activity and

teaching experience are in full accordance with the subject of the competition and with the requirements of professional field 3.9. Tourism.

On the basis of the above, I give a positive assessment and recommend that the members of the Scientific Jury support the selection of Dr. Ivanka Petrova Vasenska for the academic position “Associate Professor” in professional field 3.9. Tourism, scientific specialty “Economics and Management of Tourism (Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence in Tourism)”.

23.10.2026 Prepared by:
Blagoevgrad Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimitar Baturov