from**prof. Boryana Tumanova, PhD**

About**:** Announced competition in Official Gazette No. 35/18.04.2023 for the academic position of ASSISTANT PROFESSOR;

Field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical sciences ;

Professional direction : 1.3. Pedagogy of training in... (Physical education and sport and non-traditional sports in the education system);

*Candidate*Chief Assistant Marina Nikolaeva Nedkova, PhD*.*

Based on an order of the Rector of the Sofia University, "St. Kliment Ohridski" No. RD 38-295/12.06.2023. I am a member of the scientific jury and appointed to form an opinion on the above competition.

The documents and publications submitted by the candidate in the competition are correctly ordered. They are following the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and Holding of Academic Positions of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

**Professional development**

The chief assistant Marina Nedkova, Phd is the only candidate in the "Associate Professor" contest in Pedagogy of Physical Education and Sport - Non-Traditional Sports. She is a lecturer in Zumba-Fitness, Fitness, Rugby and Cricket at the Department of Sports at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Chief asst. PhD. Marina Nedkova graduated from the NSA "V. Levski" in 2006 - an educational degree "Bachelor" with two specialities - ski instructor and physical education teacher, in 2009 - academic degree "Master" - speciality in sports management. From 2004 - 2009 the candidate participated in qualification courses associated with his professional growth - sports journalist and sports facility management. In 2008. Chief asst. Nedkova started her teaching practice as a lecturer at VTU, NSA, SU, and KhTMU, and since 2014 she has been a full-time lecturer at Sofia University. As a specialist in physical culture and education, Marina Nedkova is a lecturer in Theory and Methodology of Physical Education, Methodology of Teaching Physical Education to Students in Grades 1-4 and Didactics of Physical Education. Since 2021 she has been the Head of the Attestation Committee at the Department of Sport. In 2014 Marina Nedkova defended her educational and scientific degree "PhD" on the topic: "Innovations in the development of new educational and pedagogical approaches in sports and education in universities in Bulgaria". The candidate was an active competitor in alpine skiing, rugby and cricket.

The candidate's extensive *public* activities include:

Since 2016 she has been a volunteer in sports and social activities for people with mental disabilities and a coach in the "Special Olympics" organization. She has been selected to lead the women's representative winter sports team at the 2017 Special Olympics World Games in Austria. In 2012 she was the secretary of the organizing committee of the European Rugby 7's Women's Championship, Division A. In 2013 she was the head of the 6th European University Rugby 7's Championship technical committee. Since 2015 he has been the executive director of the BSCU. Since 2019 she has been the chairman of the Association "Bulgarian Student Cricket Union".

*Project activity*: Since 2011, she has been a coordinator, leader and participant in nine projects in the IFSC, Capital City Council, NSA and SU.

Educational and teaching activities: Chief asst. Nedkova is a fitness, rugby and cricket lecturer for students from all faculties of SU. She is a coach of the representative teams in alpine skiing, cricket and rugby, with average annual employment for the academic year 2021/22 over 500 hours. She conducts lectures on the subjects "Methodology of teaching PE to students of grades 1-4" and "Didactics of Physical Education" at the Master's degree of the students of FNOI (specialization in PE). She authorizes educational programs on Zumba-fitness, cricket, sports in electronic environments and rugby.

*Scientific research and publication activity*: The candidate declares participation in several scientific and practical conferences and round tables. The scientific research activity is presented in three groups: monograph; book based on a dissertation; articles, and reports (of which one is published in a scientific journal, refereed and indexed in world-known databases of scientific information). Their total number is 31, and 10 of the publications are independent. The rest are co-authored. Twenty-six are in Bulgarian, and five are in English. Of them, according to the report prepared by the Department of Library and Information Services of the University Library at Sofia University, "St. Kliment Ohridski" indicated 41 citations. The candidate fulfils the minimum science indicators by participating in the competition with 463 points. **The contributions and solutions** in Nedkova's scientific work can be considered in several directions:

*In the sport-methodical field*, the candidate enriches and expands the knowledge in theory and the methodology of physical education, particularly non-traditional sports. The presented monographic work deals with the application of innovations in the educational process at the university. A study of the new moments in the sport-competitive activity of students engaged in non-traditional sports in our country is made, and the success of the latest and non-traditional sports and sports disciplines practised by students in sports classes at Sofia University is presented. With the highest value, I appreciate the analysis of modern and up-to-date training methods in cricket, rugby and field hockey based on which the scientific and methodological foundations for training students in this type of sport (1). Physical education is studied as a continuous system of education and as a specific activity of students, imposed by the search for more effective means and methods to increase the effectiveness of physical education classes in higher education institutions (2). For the first time in Bulgaria, the methodology of training and introducing the sports academic discipline "Zumba-fitness" into the curriculum of students in non-sports-oriented higher education institutions has been studied (4). Their development, objectives and results have been traced (9,12, 23). A normative basis for assessing students' physical fitness has been developed, which is informative and applicable in university education (15, 17).

In *the*sport-organizational*area*, the candidate studies analyses and systematizes various aspects of physical culture in the educational system in our country and the universities of the United States, such as creation, condition, development and organization. She examines the problems related to the effectiveness of the educational and training process in the universities and the physical development of students. Identifies methods and means of increasing the effectiveness of physical education classes. Fully substantiates recommendations for improving the organizational mechanism of physical education management in the educational system ( 2, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 24).

In the research field, the candidate examines the level of physical skills of preschool and school-age children, as well as students of the University of Sofia, to study their condition and development. She examines the effect and investigates various aspects of physical and mental growth and health status while participating in archery, zumba-fitness, fitness, hiking, cricket, baseball, volleyball, basketball, tennis, field hockey and rugby. Based on the summarized results, she offers an evidence-based strategy and program for a more active and healthy lifestyle (3,5,6,7,10,11, 12,13,14,16,17,20, 21,22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31). Below is the current data on the physical development of students in Republic of Bulgaria(18). An overview of Bulgaria's most famous and popular traditional and non-traditional sports, covering the KFT Department of the NSA "V. Levski" (19).

**Conclusion**: Based on the above, I positively assess Marina Nedkova's activity as a teacher, specialist and scientist, seeking and mastering many routine, innovative and modern training methods, organization and research. The works submitted for review, as well as the overall sport-scientific and academic activity of the candidate, meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". I do not find any plagiarism. I would like to invite the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to award the academic position of Associate Professor to Chief Assistant. Marina Nikolaeva Nedkova, PhD in the professional field 1.3. (physical education and sports and non-traditional sports in the education system).

*05.8.2023 г. prof. Boryana Tumanova, PhD*