

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PAPERS

of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vilyana Yankova Ruseva,

on the announced competition for the academic position of "associate professor" in Professional Field 3.7. Administration and Management (Human Resources Management and Organizational Management), announced in the State Gazette, issue: 89, dated 24.10.2025, in connection with Art. 50 (1), Art. 42 (4) of the PRASBSU and additional requirements of the PRASBU (Annex No. 2, I(3))

MONOGRAPHS

Main habilitation work for the academic position of "associate professor"

P1 Ruseva, V. (2025) The integration of sustainable development in human resource management. ESG strategies and employer social responsibility, BFU, ISBN 978-619-253-051-8, 188 pp.

The monographic work consists of six chapters. The overview part of the monograph (Chapters I, II and III) aims to systematize the theoretical and empirical foundations for the integration of sustainable development and ESG in human resource management, covering the period 2010-2025 with an emphasis on 2020-2025, when the regulatory framework and disclosure practices are accelerating. European and national regulatory documents are included (European Green Deal , SFDR, CSRD, EU Taxonomy , ESRS, amendments to the Labor Code and by-laws), peer-reviewed scientific publications on ESG-finance linkages and green HRM (GHRM), institutional and sector reports (EIB, OECD, SME United , SeeNext), methodologies and rating systems (MSCI, S&P Global CSA, CDP, Sustainalytics), as well as corporate reports and case studies from Bulgarian practice (Aurubis , UniCredit Bulbank , A1 Group, BACB, Kaufland). The search strategy combines scientific databases (Scopus , Web of Science, SSRN and the platforms of leading publishers) with official portals of European and national institutions and grey literature from recognized professional sources and rating agencies. For the purposes of the study, keywords and combinations (ESG, sustainability , HRM, GHRM, CSRD/ESRS, sustainable finance) have been set, with the initial selection being made by relevance to ESG-HRD and analytical value (theory, empirical, frameworks/methodologies, regulations, practices). Sources after 2018 and documents with clearly traceable metadata have been prioritized.

The analytical part gradually unfolds in three main directions. Chapter IV examines the integration of ESG principles in human resource management practices, focusing on the strategic role of HRM in implementing environmental, social and governance policies, tracking key indicators and KPIs, as well as reporting frameworks such as GRI and CSRD. Good practices of organizations from Europe and Bulgaria are presented in Chapter V. They are examples of successful implementation of ESG in human resource management, taking into account the specific features of different market and regulatory conditions. Chapter VI

presents the analysis of the conducted empirical study, which presents specific data from Bulgarian organizations. It can be said that the analytical part is a logical connection between theoretical concepts and practice. This allows us to outline some general trends, but also regional specificities in the integration of ESG principles in human resource management. The present study has several limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the results.

First, an evidence-based analysis of regulatory and official documents was applied, followed by peer-reviewed articles and monographs, institutional reports, and rating methodologies. This reduces the risk of bias but limits the scope of interpretation.

Second, global results are examined for their applicability to the Bulgarian environment, taking into account differences in regulatory and market structure. At the same time, corporate sources are critically analyzed for possible conflicts of interest.

Third, the empirical part of the study is based on data from 70 organizations, all from Southeastern Bulgaria. It is important to note that the selection of organizations was not pre-determined to implement ESG standards. On the one hand, this provides a more realistic picture of practices in the region, but on the other hand, it limits the possibility of drawing nationally representative conclusions.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed - only publicly available documents and secondary data were used, correctly cited and verified, without processing personal or sensitive information.

Published book based on a defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

P2 Ruseva, V. (2023) Development of know-how through consulting and training. The example of the tourism industry, BSU, ISBN: 978-619-253-026-6, 289 pp.

The book based on the dissertation work of Vilyana Yankova Ruseva "Development of Know-How through Consulting and Training (The Example of the Tourism Industry)" is a study in the professional field 3.8 "Economics". The work has a volume of 289 pages, includes an introduction, two chapters, a conclusion, a list of used literature (140 sources) and 10 appendices, contains 10 tables, 6 figures and 26 graphs. **The relevance** is justified by globalization, the growing share of the "Services" sector and especially tourism (over 10% of world GDP), as well as the need for sustainability, competitiveness and investments in human capital through training and business consulting.

The aim of the study is to prove **the positive impact of professional training and business consulting on the human factor in the tourism industry**, by diagnosing the problems in the tourism services market and analyzing how innovative consulting and training techniques can stabilize enterprises and generate growth. **The subject of the study** is the optimization of the tourism service based on innovative solutions and improvement of

human resources and consulting practices, and the object – the tourism industry system and its subsystems. **The main thesis** is that tourism organizations need to increase their management capacity and that the most appropriate tool for developing know-how, growth and competitiveness is business consulting and training. Three hypotheses are formulated, related to the impact of consulting and training on economic efficiency, the role of training, coaching and mentoring for management capacity and the tendency of management to invest more in capital than in labor.

The first chapter outlines the theoretical framework. Knowledge and the human factor as carriers of management know-how, the evolution of human resources and their “added value”, motivation, training and development of personnel in the context of company policy are analyzed. Numerous definitions of training and professional and practical skills are examined, as well as modern approaches such as training, mentoring, coaching, buddying, shadowing and the concept of “lifelong learning”. This part of the chapter is also dedicated to business consulting – definitions, historical development, professional organizations (FEACO, ICMCI, BAUKO), code of ethics, types of consultants (internal, external, certified), stages of the consulting process and types of contracts. Special attention is paid to know-how in management consulting and the need for knowledge management in conditions of strong competition. The third theoretical block examines the tourism industry as a complex system in the context of globalization, its economic and social impact and the key role of human capital in tourism.

The second chapter presents the methodology and practical results. A quantitative method (survey survey using Google Forms) and a qualitative approach (semi-structured interviews and case studies) were used. The survey covered 75 companies from the tourism industry (hotels, hotel chains, tour operators, travel agents, transport and restaurant enterprises, an aviation company, a union of tour guides), mainly from the South-Eastern region and the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, and was conducted in the period June 2018 - March 2019. Data processing was performed with SPSS 19.0 and supplemented with SWOT analysis. The questionnaire contains 28 questions in three blocks (demographics, business consulting, training), and the qualitative part includes 5 interviews with managers from the three main branches of the tourism product (accommodation, food, transport) and 4 case studies illustrating the effect of consulting and training interventions (e.g. implementation of HACCP systems, measures against legionella, development of management capacity and consulting a boutique hotel).

The results of the quantitative analysis show that a significant part of the respondents have higher education and many years of experience in tourism, but there are deficits in knowledge and competencies, especially in the field of marketing, digital skills and management. There is a weakness in knowledge and trust in business consulting activities, a tendency to invest more in “superstructure” (buildings) at the expense of human resources, as well as a need for more active use of training, coaching and mentoring. At the same time, some of the enterprises purposefully identify talents, invest in their development and use consulting and training services with a measurable positive economic effect. The SWOT analysis systematizes the strengths (growing importance of intellectual capital, availability of training programs and professional consultants), the weaknesses (insufficient human resources potential, weak business-education connection, distrust of consulting

services), the opportunities (funding from European programs, digital skills, business-academia interaction) and the threats (deterioration of the quality of the tourism product, uncompetitiveness, incompetent consultants).

In conclusion , **the thesis is confirmed that the economic efficiency of tourism enterprises can be improved through proper management of innovative approaches and processes, implemented through training and consulting services and competent specialists.** Key competencies and skills with the potential for employment creation, productivity growth and competitiveness have been identified, as well as the direct relationship between the effectiveness of management activities, the level of knowledge and skills of the staff and the quality of the tourism product. Recommendations are formulated for allowing consulting activities as a strategic element in resource provision, for strengthening the interaction between business and academic education and for more active use of national and European programs for improving competencies.

The contributions of this work include: enriching the theoretical research on the relationship between business consulting, training and economic efficiency; review and comparative classification of training, coaching and mentoring methods; study of the application of business consulting in the tourism sector. The scientific and applied contributions are expressed in an in-depth study of the use of training and consulting in Bulgarian tourism organizations, a qualitative analysis with case studies on the relationship between management capacity and methods for its change, as well as deriving trends in the investment preferences of tourism organizations in relation to production factors.

ARTICLES AND REPORTS PUBLISHED IN SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS, REFERENCED AND INDEXED IN WORLD-RENOWNED DATABASES WITH SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION

**P3 Nikolova , E., & Ruseva , V. (2025). Digitization of Cultural and Historical Heritage and Sustainable Development of Cultural Tourism on the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast. *Digital Presentation and Preservation of Cultural and Scientific Heritage* , 15 , 207–216.
<https://doi.org/10.55630/dipp.2025.15.19>**

The article examines in depth the role of the digitalization of cultural and historical heritage for the development of cultural tourism on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, combining theoretical concepts, expert evaluations of websites and empirical data from survey studies. Theoretically, the authors rely on models such as the Technology Acceptance Model, consumer behavior in tourism and the concept of sustainable tourism to explain how digital tools influence access to information, tourism decision-making and heritage preservation. The empirical part includes an analysis of museum and tourism portals on the Black Sea coast, assessed according to criteria such as functionality, navigation, language accessibility, multimedia, virtual tours, social networks and mobile optimization. The results show that despite the presence of well-structured content and an adequate mobile version in some portals, most sites have significant deficiencies – limited visualization, lack of 3D models and VR/AR solutions, weak activity in social media and insufficient interactivity , which limits their attractiveness for modern tourists. Museum websites suffer from even

weaker digital integration, with only individual institutions (e.g. RIM Burgas) offering high-quality virtual resources. Additional data from two surveys – among tour guides and representatives of tourism companies – confirm the high importance of digitalization: over 80% of tour guides believe that digital resources increase interest in cultural sites and support destination selection, and the majority of tourism companies define it as key for the development of the sector and for extending the tourist season. However, many companies do not actively use virtual tours, and the main barriers remain the lack of qualified personnel, insufficient funding and limited knowledge of available technologies. In conclusion, the authors emphasize that digitalization has significant potential for improving the competitiveness, accessibility and sustainable development of cultural tourism on the Black Sea coast, but in order to realize this potential, targeted investments, training, integration of VR/AR and 3D solutions, as well as more active use of digital platforms by cultural institutions and the tourism business are needed.

P4 Ruseva , V., Nikolova , E. (2025) How Continuing Vocational Education Training in Enterprise s Influence Innovation Activities in SMEs In Bulgaria?, Economic Alternatives, UNWE, ISSN (print): 1312-7462, ISSN (online): 2367-9409, pp. 495-513, DOI: [10.37075/EA.2025.2.10](https://doi.org/10.37075/EA.2025.2.10)

The article examines how continuing vocational training and education (CVT) in enterprises influences the innovation activity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Bulgaria for the period 2005–2020, focusing on the relationship between investments in human capital and results measured through patents and utility models. Based on a literature review, the authors show that CVT develops key skills – critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, technological adaptability – and creates a culture of “lifelong learning”, which is a prerequisite for innovation, especially in SMEs with limited resources. The empirical part uses data from the National Statistical Institute, Eurostat and the Patent Office of the Republic of Bulgaria, analyzing the main characteristics of CVT: participation and scope, types of training, targeted skills and evaluation of results. The results show a worrying decline in participation – the share of employees enrolled in CVT courses decreased from 26.5% in 2015 to 23% in 2020, and the share of enterprises offering CVT courses fell to 26.7%, with 58.9% of enterprises not providing CVT opportunities at all, which is worse than the EU-27 average. Large enterprises (250+ employees) have the highest share of those enrolled in training (78.9%), while small enterprises (10–49 employees) lag behind (37.3%), highlighting a structural imbalance in access to training. Bulgarian enterprises almost equally use internal and external training, with a slight predominance of internal CVT, but all forms of training – with the exception of “ learning circles ” – are significantly below the EU average. The most preferred form is on -the-job training training), and the focus is mainly on technical, practical and strictly job-specific skills (79.7% of enterprises), while managerial, administrative and “soft” skills remain less represented. The assessment of the effect of training is insufficient – only 34.2% of enterprises evaluate the results of CVT, with less than a fifth measuring the impact on the work of departments or the entire enterprise. The relationship between CVT and innovation capacity is analyzed through correlation and regression models; statistically significant relationships were found in two cases: between the number of enterprises offering internal CVT courses and the number of patents applied

for (weak positive correlation), and between the number of enterprises offering other forms of CVT and the number of utility model applications (very strong positive correlation, $R^2 = 0.9891$ in the linear model, according to which the increase in the number of enterprises with other forms of CVT is associated with an increase in the number of utility model applications). The authors highlight the limitations related to the small number of observations and the five-year data collection cycle, which makes it difficult to build more sophisticated models, and call for more frequent and detailed statistics. In conclusion, the study proves that CVT is an important factor for the innovation capacity of Bulgarian SMEs, but remains chronically underestimated and underfunded – a large part of enterprises do not systematically train their staff, the focus is too narrow (mainly technical skills), and the assessment of the effect on innovation is fragmented. The authors recommend targeted policies to stimulate investment in CVT, integrating training into the innovation strategy, more active participation of SMEs, development of internal rules and structures for training and future research across sectors and over time to assess the long-term impact of CVT on innovation and competitiveness.

P5 Ruseva , V., Baltova , S., & Nikolova , E. (2024). CHALLENGES TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN HIGH SCHOOL. INTERACTION BETWEEN FORMAL AND INFORMAL ASSESSMENT. Pedagogy/ Pedagogika (0861-3982), 96, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53656/ped2024-1s.06>

This article attempts to identify appropriate methods for teaching entrepreneurship in schools. The key to successful entrepreneurship education is finding the most effective way to manage learners' skills and determining the best match between students' needs and teaching techniques. Since entrepreneurship education includes all activities aimed at promoting entrepreneurial thinking, attitudes and skills, as well as aspects such as idea generation and innovation, experiential learning is an appropriate approach. For this purpose, a small experiment was conducted within the "Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship" classes and an online survey among students, the results of which are presented in the article. The target audience of this closed survey are teenagers aged around 15 to 16. In this case, the survey was conducted among students from the Specialized High School for Romance Languages "G. S. Rakovski" in Burgas, focusing on entrepreneurship with Spanish and entrepreneurship with French. The results of the study revealed that there are many common barriers to effective entrepreneurship education (EE), related to the availability of resources, problems with standardized curriculum and teacher training opportunities. Furthermore, the results of the study show both the impact of formal assessment, its systematic approach to assessing students' knowledge and abilities, and of informal assessment approaches, as well as their relevance to entrepreneurial thinking.

P6 Baltov , M., Baltova , S., & Ruseva, V. (2024). THE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN THE QUADRUPLE HELIX AND THE REGIONAL INNOVATION PROSPECTS. Strategies for Policy in Science & Education/ Strategii na Obrazovatelnata i Nauchna Politika , 32, DOI: [10.53656/str2024-4s-4-the](https://doi.org/10.53656/str2024-4s-4-the)

The article examines the role of the Quadruple Helix model (university-business-state-society) as a basis for regional innovation strategies that reflect the specific sectoral specialization and needs of local economies, with a special emphasis on digitalization as a catalyst for innovation processes. The authors emphasize that despite state policies to stimulate R&D, SMEs continue to face barriers such as lack of strategic planning, inadequate governance, insufficient resources, absence of processes for managing ideas and innovations, and a shortage of training in creativity and innovation management, which limits their ability to fully participate in innovation ecosystems. The article analyzes the evolution from the Triple Helix model (university-industry-state) to the Quadruple Helix by including society as an active participant in setting priorities for research and innovation, which allows for more sustainable solutions and higher social relevance of innovations. In the presented applied model, the authors show how the Quadruple Helix can be streamlined through innovative tools such as flexible business plans, online platforms, centers of excellence and digital services that support SMEs in key activities such as product development, production optimization, resource management, value proposition building, customer relationship development and adapting business models to the digital economy. The role of digitalization in creating new business models, platforms and ecosystems is highlighted, as well as the need for smart specialization at regional level, which would direct investments towards technologies such as artificial intelligence, supercomputing, cybersecurity and digital skills. In conclusion, the article suggests that the Quadruple Helix, supported by digital resources and regional innovation centers, represents an effective framework for stimulating cooperation, increasing the innovation capacity of SMEs and formulating policies that are relevant to the needs of the economy and society in the context of the European vision for digital transformation.

ARTICLES AND REPORTS PUBLISHED IN NON-PEERIZED JOURNALS OR PUBLISHED IN EDITED COLLECTIVE VOLUMES

P7 Ruseva, V., Process and Product Innovations as Marketing Strategy Tools of Organizations, (2023) Twenty-first Scientific Conference dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the International Economic Relations and Business Department Under the patronage of the Rector of UNWE, Prof. Dr. Dimitar Dimitrov, Sofia 2023 Collection "Membership on Bulgaria in the European union : fifteen years later", UNWE; 222-230 pp.; ISSN 2815-2727

The report examines process and product innovations as key tools of the marketing strategy of organizations and as a condition for increasing their efficiency, competitiveness and sustainable development in the context of dynamic technological changes and growing competition. The author presents the regulatory framework (the draft law on innovations in Bulgaria), according to which innovations – product, process, marketing and organizational – have strategic importance for smart growth, overcoming resource and demographic challenges and for building the “education-science-business” connection. At a theoretical level, a review of leading concepts is made – from Schumpeter and his “creative destruction

”, through Drucker and the role of innovations and marketing for “creating a customer”, to modern understandings of disruptive technologies and strategic “bypass attacks”, in which companies avoid direct competition through radically new products and business models (the example of iPod vs. Walkman). In detail, a distinction is made between product innovations (new or significantly improved goods and services with added consumer and functional value), process innovations (new or significantly improved methods of production, delivery, logistics, supporting activities and ICT solutions) and marketing innovations (new design and packaging, new methods of positioning, promotion and pricing as part of a new marketing concept). The empirical part is based on a survey of 150 enterprises in Southeastern Bulgaria, which shows that approximately 35% implement new or significantly improved products and services, and between 35% and 38% have implemented at least three different tools for process innovations - in the main activity, in supporting processes and in logistics/deliveries. In terms of marketing innovations, about a fifth of the companies do not change design and packaging, but nearly 74% have introduced new methods and techniques for promotion in the last two years, with factors such as "providing new products/services for customers" and "changes in the industry" standing out as strongly related to the strategic focus on innovation. In conclusion, it is emphasized that despite the rather cautious and inconsistent implementation of product and process innovations, companies are aware of their importance for their development and for their marketing differentiation, and the emerging partnerships with other companies and educational institutions are a sign of the gradual building of an innovation culture, which in the long term can strengthen their positions in the market.

P8 Nikolova , E., & Ruseva , V. (2024) FACTORS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF DIGITAL EDUCATIONAL PLATFORMS IN CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE “ Multidisciplinary Innovations for Social Change: Educational Transformations and Entrepreneurship” p 138-143, ISBN: 978-619-253-038-9

The report analyzes the factors for the successful implementation of digital educational platforms in the context of continuing vocational training in Bulgarian enterprises, based on data from the National Statistical Institute, Eurostat and empirical research under the ABECVET project. At the beginning, the framework of Industry 4.0 and the related changes in the content of work, organizational structures and qualification requirements are outlined, which make continuing vocational training and lifelong learning a key priority at the European and national levels. A functional characteristic of the digital educational platform for adult education is given - as an integrated online system with a user-friendly interface, multimedia resources, adaptive learning paths, assessment and feedback, certification, collaborative learning tools, real simulations, analytics, mobility, integration with LMS and HR systems, gamification and high security standards; examples of global platforms available in Bulgaria are also given (Coursera , edX , LinkedIn Learning , Google Classroom , etc.). In theoretical terms, the key prerequisites for the successful

implementation of such platforms in enterprises are systematized: the availability of reliable digital infrastructure (internet, appropriate hardware, cloud solutions), digital skills of personnel, technological compatibility with already used systems, high-quality and industry-relevant learning content, interaction with the real work environment, engaging methods (interactivity, gamification, collaboration) and well-established mechanisms for feedback and updating of courses. The empirical analysis shows that Bulgaria lags behind the EU average in several key dimensions - the share of employees using the internet for work purposes is significantly lower; the use of social networks by enterprises is growing, but remains below European levels; the share of people with basic and above-basic digital skills is relatively low, although a positive trend and faster growth is observed among women and people with lower education; only 9.1% of enterprises provide ICT training to their employees, compared to 22.4% on average for the EU. On the other hand, the use of paid cloud services is growing steadily, especially in large enterprises (over 250 employees), which creates a good basis for hosting and scaling digital training solutions. An important emphasis is also the lack or weakness of partnerships with universities and scientific organizations - about half of the surveyed companies do not answer questions about such cooperation, which is interpreted as an indication of its absence. In conclusion, it is summarized that digital educational platforms are an effective tool for fast and high-quality training within the framework of continuing professional education, but their successful implementation in Bulgarian enterprises is conditioned by overcoming the deficits in digital connectivity, digital literacy and learning culture, wider use of cloud services and more active strategic partnership with educational and scientific institutions.

P9 Ruseva, V., (2023), DIGITAL WASTE MANAGEMENT AS A TOOL OF ESG MODEL, International Conference on Governance and Strategic Management (ICGSM) "ESG Standards and Securing Strategic Industries" - 2023, 254-261

The article examines digital waste management as an important tool in the ESG model, tracing how digital transformation is changing the waste sector and how this fits into the objectives of the circular economy and policies such as the European Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan. The author clarifies the difference between "digitisation" (conversion of analogue information into digital form) and "digitalisation" (deep transformation of the economy and society through digital technologies) and shows that while digital solutions promise safer, more transparent, efficient and resource-saving processes in waste management, the sector is still in an early stage of digital maturity, with large differences between countries. It examines in detail the evolution of waste policies – from mass management of large volumes of low-value waste to a focus on rare and critical raw materials, the recovery of which is strategically important for the EU, as well as the transition to a circular economy, in which the boundaries between raw materials, products and waste are blurred, and producers retain responsibility (and often ownership) for materials throughout their life cycle. In this context, digital technologies are seen as a key infrastructure – through tracking material flows, "smart" collection and sorting systems, life

cycle data and platforms for shared and service models. Special attention is paid to electronic waste (e-waste) – the fastest growing waste stream, generated both by the end-of-life of devices and by consumer behavior and rapid obsolescence; the low share of actual recycling and the high concentration of valuable and hazardous substances are highlighted. The concept of “digital waste” (digital waste / data waste) – huge data sets stored in cloud centers and server farms, which require significant energy resources and lead to a serious carbon footprint, especially in energy-intensive activities such as AI training, crypto-mining , massive IoT- data generation and aggressive business models for information collection. In this sense, digitalization is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it reduces resource intensity and improves waste management, and on the other – it creates new, invisible forms of environmental burden. From an ESG perspective, the article argues that effective waste management (physical and digital) brings benefits for risk management, cost savings, reputation, access to capital and long-term sustainability of companies. Practical guidelines are also offered: organizations should carry out “ data audit ”, to reduce unnecessary data, optimize their infrastructure, comply with regulations such as GDPR/CCPA and integrate digital waste management into their overall ESG strategy; the individual user – to limit their digital footprint by “cleaning” clouds and devices. In conclusion, it is emphasized that the problem of digital waste is not only technical, but also political and ethical – related to the question of who controls the data and infrastructures, and whether we are ready to delegate to technology companies the right to shape the social and environmental conditions of the future, or will we seek alternatives through law, public policies and active civic participation.

P10 Ruseva, V., (2025), Organizational Culture and General Principles of Community-Based Enterprises, Proceedings of Knowledge, Science, Innovation, Technology Conference, p 426-439, Print ISSN: 2815-3472; Online-ISSN: 2815-3480

The report examines in depth the relationship between organizational culture and community - based enterprises (CBEs) , showing how shared values, beliefs, norms and patterns of behavior influence the identity, motivation and effectiveness of organizations, as well as their ability to generate sustainable social impact. The author draws on Edgar Schein 's model , which considers culture at three levels – artifacts (visible manifestations such as spaces, symbols, rituals), declared values and deep underlying assumptions – and on Cameron and Quinn 's model (Competing Values Framework), which distinguishes four main cultural types: “clan” (close, family-like, supportive environment), “ adhocracy ” (entrepreneurial, innovative, flexible), “hierarchy” (formalized, stable, with a focus on rules and procedures) and “market” (oriented to results, competition and achievements). The role of values, norms and traditions – as carriers of identity, ethical standards, social responsibility and sustainability – in shaping behavior, management style and relationships inside and outside the organization is emphasized. On this theoretical basis, community-based enterprises are introduced as a specific form of organization that prioritizes not profit maximization, but social impact, local economic sustainability and community well-being.

The general principles of CBEs are described : strong community participation in planning, management and decision-making; sustainability (environmental, social and economic) and a long-term perspective; local ownership and control, which ensure that the benefits remain in the community; a focus on social impact through employment creation, local economic development, increased social cohesion and empowerment; partnerships and collaboration with NGOs, businesses and public institutions; and high standards of transparency and accountability through open communication, financial disclosure and regular reporting of results. The article provides examples of typical forms of CBEs – cooperatives, community shops, energy projects, community tourism, land trusts – and shows how an appropriate cultural environment (e.g. clan or adhocracy culture with high trust, participation and innovation) supports their viability and sustainability. In conclusion, it is argued that integrating theories of organizational culture with the principles and management models of CBEs allows the development of more inclusive , adaptive and socially responsible business models that contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and building stronger and more resilient communities; Directions for future research are also outlined – comparative analyses between CBEs and conventional enterprises, the influence of different cultural types on the success of CBEs , as well as the role of digital transformation and public policies to support community entrepreneurship.

P11 Ruseva, V., (2025), The Impact of Design Thinking on Business Innovation and Organizational Management and Implementing It Through Vocational Education and Training, Proceedings of Knowledge, Science, Innovation, Technology Conference, p 412-425, Print ISSN: 2815-3472; Online-ISSN: 2815-348

The article analyzes Design Thinking as a human-centered approach to problem solving and shows how it transforms business innovation, organizational management and can be sustainably implemented through vocational education and training (VET). Various definitions and theoretical frameworks are traced (Simon , Brown, Cross), emphasizing that Design Thinking combines the needs of people, the capabilities of technology and the requirements of business, especially for “ wicked ” and poorly structured problems. Empirical evidence of the business effect is presented: design-oriented companies significantly outperform the market, increase their market share, reduce development time and achieve higher customer satisfaction and loyalty, as well as higher employee engagement. The key elements of the process are examined – empathy, problem definition, idea generation, prototyping and testing – and their role in promoting creative thinking, critical thinking and collaboration in organizations. It is shown how Design Thinking becomes an organizational philosophy and a tool for change through two case studies: Airbnb, which through a small but highly user-oriented intervention (professional photos and a redesigned user experience) went from a struggling startup to a global leader, and IBM, which implemented its own design model. thinking , invests in design teams and training, shortens development cycles and reports high ROI. The second line of research is the integration of Design Thinking in continuing professional training: it is linked to the concept of CVT,

development of entrepreneurial thinking, “learning by doing” and increasing the innovation capacity of enterprises. In conclusion, the author argues that Design Thinking, despite methodological fragmentation and resistance to change, is a strategic tool for building design-led organizations and recommends future research on its place in digital transformation, remote work, and educational programs, including VET, to prepare future leaders for an innovation-based economy.

P12 Ruseva, V., (2025), THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN WORKPLACE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR ANTICIPATION, PREVENTION, AND RESOLUTION, International Scientific Conference "Contemporary Management Practices XII –Entrepreneurial and managerial development and training in the Industry 5.0 " (under print)

The report examines the role of artificial intelligence (AI) as a strategic tool for managing workplace conflicts and as a key element in the methodology of continuing vocational training (CVET). It begins by focusing on the contemporary context – the digital age, global labour migration and the need for sustainable human capital development – in which AI functions both as a technological tool and a mediator in human relationships and organisational behaviour. It presents the nature of workplace conflicts – interpersonal, intergroup, role and cognitive – by distinguishing between functional (constructive) and dysfunctional conflicts and analyses the consequences of unresolved tensions: reduced productivity, stress, turnover, legal disputes, poor organisational climate and lower innovation activity. Against this background, AI is introduced as a means for early recognition, prevention and resolution of conflicts through the analysis of communication data (sentiment analysis in emails and chats, HR analytics, monitoring of organizational networks), predictive models, virtual coaching tools and chatbots, as well as AI-based simulations and virtual mediators for structuring dialogue and training in negotiations and conflict management, including in a multicultural environment. It is shown that the effective integration of AI requires targeted ongoing training: increasing digital literacy, preparing HR specialists and managers to work with analytical AI tools and ensuring their ethical application, citing practical examples from companies such as IBM, Unilever and PwC. Despite the potential, the report outlines significant challenges – algorithmic bias, limited sensitivity to emotional and cultural nuances, the need for investment, organizational resistance to change and the lack of an interdisciplinary approach between IT, HR, psychology and ethics. In conclusion, the author formulates recommendations: the need for a long-term strategy for using AI within the framework of HR policies, combined training programs (emotional intelligence + technical skills + cultural sensitivity), promoting a learning and adaptive organizational culture, and building clear ethical standards for the use of AI in human resource management, emphasizing that AI does not replace human empathy and judgment, but can be a powerful ally.

P13 Ruseva, V., Nikolova, E. (2025), DIGITAL TRAINING PLATFORMS-AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO INCREASE THE CREATIVITY OF EMPLOYEES WORKING IN SMEs OF BALKAN COUNTRIES, BSU Yearbook 2024, VOLUME L, ISSN: 1311-221X, p 258-284

The article explores the role and potential of digital learning platforms as a tool for enhancing the creative skills, qualifications and competitiveness of employees in SMEs from the Balkan countries, focusing on the relationship between the development of digital infrastructure, digital skills and effective professional training. The authors outline the context of global competition, the need to attract and retain talent and the importance of continuing professional training for innovation and growth. An overview of key definitions of digital platforms and their socio-technical nature is presented (Cusumano , Constantinides , Jacobides , Yoo), as well as the positions of the Balkan countries in the GTCI index (2023), which show serious differences in their ability to develop and retain human capital. The analysis of trends in corporate training highlights the spread of e-learning , microlearning , video training , as well as the advantages that digital platforms provide in terms of flexibility, personalization and speed of acquisition; at the same time, the challenges related to internet access, lack of digital skills and generational differences are pointed out . The literature review shows that SMEs in the region increasingly rely on LMS platforms, online courses and webinars , but suffer from a shortage of digital and “ new economy” skills, mismatches between educational programs and market needs, as well as a shortage of qualified personnel in sectors such as ICT and the creative industries. It is noted that the digital transformation in the Balkans is uneven – with differences between urban and rural areas, as well as between individual countries, but it has been proven that higher levels of digitalization correlate with economic growth. The new forms of work related to platform employment are presented, which require specific digital and soft skills and emphasize the need to recognize informal learning. The authors also discuss the possibilities of VR/AR, videoconferencing tools (Zoom , Teams , WebEx), digital libraries, gamification and podcast formats as tools for more engaging and effective learning. Methodologically, the study focuses on two critical variables for the successful implementation of digital learning platforms – the IT infrastructure of enterprises and the digital skills of the workforce – and presents cross-country comparisons that reveal significant imbalances in the region. The results show that countries such as Serbia, Montenegro, Romania and Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrate better internet connectivity, while countries such as Bulgaria, Croatia and Greece lag behind in terms of digital skills and use of social media for business purposes. However, digital literacy is growing, including in Bulgaria, where initiatives such as the BIA platform (Contipso) aim to reduce the digital divide. The article concludes that digital learning platforms have significant potential to improve the competencies and creativity of employees in SMEs, but their effectiveness is highly dependent on infrastructure readiness, investments in digital skills, cooperation between business and educational

institutions, and a strategic approach to human capital development, with future research focusing on measuring the effectiveness and return on digital training and models of interaction between organizations and training structures.

P14 Ruseva, V., (2026), CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND RISKS FOR WOMEN IN BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP, Yearbook , BSU 2025, ISSN:1311 (under print)

The study examines in depth the contemporary challenges and risks facing women in business and entrepreneurship, linking the financial, sectoral, socio-cultural, organizational and psychological dimensions of inequality. Based on data from Eurofound , OECD, GEM, EIGE and Eurostat , it is shown that women more often interrupt or delay their careers due to motherhood, take on 2–2.5 times more unpaid domestic work, are concentrated in lower-income sectors (services, care, education) and have significantly more difficult access to external financing and venture capital: with about a third of women entrepreneurs in the EU, only 3–5% of VC funds reach teams led entirely by women, and in Bulgaria, less than 10% of women entrepreneurs have received external financing and less than 7% of female startups have access to funds. Key mechanisms are analyzed: structural financial barriers (lack of collateral, limited access to investor networks, “ gendered questioning bias in VC negotiations), sectoral segregation (lower representation in STEM and deep-tech , lower participation in export and innovation ecosystems), social stereotypes and mismatch of role expectations (“ role congruence theory ”), unfavorable work–life balance and “double burden” between home and business, as well as organizational phenomena such as “glass ceiling”, “sticky floors” and persistent pay gap (about 13% in the EU and 11.2% per hour in Bulgaria, with an even larger gap in total incomes and pensions). It is shown that psychological factors such as imposter syndrome, internal self-censorship , increased risk of emotional burnout and fear of making mistakes reinforce structural inequalities and limit the aspiration for leadership positions, especially in heavily male and high-risk sectors. At the same time, the article also outlines a spectrum of opportunities and good practices: European and national programs (Women in Tech , SheLeads , EEN4Women, Women TechEU , BPW Bulgaria, Women Founders , EmpowerHer), ESG strategies with a gender-lens investing ”, mentoring and incubator initiatives, board representation quotas (Directive 2022/2381) and the Pay Transparency Directive (2023/970). In conclusion, the author argues that inequalities are systemic and multidimensional – from finance and sectoral positioning, through culture and organization, to psychology – and that an effective response requires an integrated policy: equal access to capital and innovation programs, flexible and family-friendly employment models, targeted support for women’s participation in STEM and high added value, mentoring and working with unconscious biases, so that female participation in business and entrepreneurship becomes a real driver of sustainable growth, innovation and social inclusion.

P15 Peer E-Mentoring, Ruseva , V., Jecheva , V., Baltov , M., In book: E-MENTORING: THEORY AND PRACTICE Chapter: 6 Publisher: Publishing House of Bialystok University of Technology (2023) DOI: 10.24427/978-83-67185-88-2

The chapter examines in depth the development of *peer e-mentoring* in the context of dynamic changes in European society and economy – digitalization, new technologies, globalization, demographic changes and transformation of the labor market – and traces how these processes change the role of continuing vocational education and the need for new forms of lifelong learning. **The concept of continuing VET is presented** as a specific form of adult education focused **on professional development through learning at the workplace (“ learning by doing ”, “ learning on the job ”, “ learning about doing ”)**, as well as the importance of intergenerational learning and social capital in multigenerational organizations, especially in SMEs. Mentoring is examined in detail – historically and conceptually – as a process of support, guidance and development of skills, knowledge and professional identity, based on trust, respect, formality of relationships, clear roles, constructive feedback and reciprocity, with benefits for both the mentee (mentee) - academic and career progress, professional development, and for the mentor - leadership development and reflection. A distinction is made between traditional (face-to-face) mentoring and mentoring supported by internet technologies, with e-mentoring presented as a targeted, long-term, flexible and geographically independent format that enriches traditional approaches, facilitates the exchange of knowledge and support, creates more equal relationships and offers new opportunities for academic, professional and psychosocial development, but at the same time carries risks associated with a lack of non-verbal signals, trust, communication security and digital competence. Different forms of mentoring and peer mentoring according to the socio-constructivist approach - peer collaboration , co-mentoring , mutual , collaborative , dialogical , reciprocal mentoring , mentoring circles , peer group mentoring , apprenticeship , tutoring – and it is emphasized that successful programs have clear goals, trained mentors, structured support, regular communication and systematic evaluation. Special attention is paid to the role of the telemmentor as an online mentor who supports the development of critical and reflective thinking, academic orientation, navigation in the “institutional labyrinth”, reducing isolation and increasing motivation, including through models such as OLCOM (Online Learning Community with Online Mentors). In the context of growing online and distance learning, the importance of digital competencies, systematized in the DigComp 2.0 framework – information and data literacy, digital communication and collaboration, content creation, digital safety and problem solving in a digital environment, is emphasized. The chapter also presents extensive examples of good practices in peer e-mentoring and online support – MentorNet (online mentoring in STEM, with mentor-mentee matching algorithms , structured four-month relationships and thematic “ prompts ”), IWS Online Tutoring (personalised online learning with 24/7 access to materials and regular progress reports),

MentorsMe . co . uk (national UK SME mentoring portal), Youth programmes Assisting Youth (virtual group mentoring , girls' empowerment programs, mental health training for mentors). Finally, a rich set of digital tools applicable in peer e-mentoring – platforms for synchronous and asynchronous communication, online surveys and voting (Poll Everywhere , SurveyMonkey), meeting coordination (Doodle), interactive whiteboards and brainstorming (Stormboard , Padlet , Bubbl.us), instant feedback and assessment (Plickers , Kahoot , Wooclap , Mentimeter) , document sharing and collaboration (Google Drive , OneDrive , Dropbox), task and project management (Trello), mind-mapping and idea visualization (Mindomo , MindMeister , Mindmup), as well as tools for following news and managing bookmarks – emphasizing that successful peer e-mentoring is not based on a single software tool, but on a smart, purposeful combination of multiple platforms and resources to support communication, collaborative learning, professional growth and engagement of participants.

P16 Ruseva, V., DEMOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE – PROFILE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN BULGARIA AND BURGAS REGION (2023) CIVIC MONITORING, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTED YOUTH POLICY IN BURGAS REGION AND MUNICIPALITY, ISBN 978-619-253-027-3

The chapter presents **a detailed demographic analysis of the youth population aged 15–29 in Bulgaria, Burgas district and Burgas municipality for the period 2019–2021, tracking the number, age and gender structure, employment dynamics and regional differences.** At the national level, the data show a clear decrease in the number of young people – from 1,005,227 in 2019 to 965,916 in 2021, which represents a decrease of nearly 4%. This trend is observed in all age and gender categories, with the only exception of urban male youth aged 15–19, who registered a slight increase. Despite the current decline, the NSI forecasts for 2025 and 2030, assuming convergence, indicate a possible reversal of the trend and a gradual increase in the youth population. In parallel with the change in numbers, a significant decline in employment among young people is noted - the number of employed people decreased from 432.5 thousand to 348.4 thousand, and the employment rate - from 42.1% to 35.8%, with the decline being more pronounced among young women. **In Burgas district, the demographic picture follows the national pattern, but also shows local specifics.** The population of the district is around 408 thousand people in 2021, and after a slight increase in 2020, a decline is reported in 2021. The structure of the youth population reveals positive trends in the youngest group 15–19 years old, where annual growth is observed, while the group 20–24 years old increases only temporarily and decreases again in 2021. The most significant is the decline in young people aged 25–29 years old - a group that is traditionally the most vulnerable in terms of employment, with the data showing an annual decrease of over 5%. Unemployment among young people in the district also follows national fluctuations, with the peak in 2020 related to pandemic conditions, followed by an improvement in 2021. **At the level of the Burgas municipality, a similar, but more pronounced, dynamic is emerging .** The municipality is among the largest and most

economically active in the country, but nevertheless, in 2019–2021, a steady trend towards a decrease in population was observed – both urban and rural, with a brief exception in 2020. The number of young people is also decreasing – from 28,561 in 2019 to 27,775 in 2021, with the internal structure following the pattern of the district: growth among the youngest, stability among 20–24-year-olds, and a significant decline among 25–29-year-olds. It is this latter group that is indicated as the most likely to migrate for economic reasons, in search of better job opportunities and development.

TEXTBOOKS

Electronic textbook

P17 Ruseva, V., (2024), Human Resources Management, BFU, ISBN 978-619-253-041-9, 290 pp.

The textbook offers a comprehensive and systematic introduction to human resource management (HRM), tracing its **essence, historical development, key concepts and contemporary trends**. At the very beginning, human capital is considered as the main type of capital in which organizations invest, and the qualities and competencies of employees are presented as factors determining productivity. Broad and narrow definitions of the concept of "HRM" are distinguished, which provides a basis for understanding its multi-layered nature. The historical review outlines **the emergence of HRM as a reaction to the industrial revolution and the need for systematized personnel management**, with key stages being Frederick Taylor 's theory of scientific management, the social and humanistic movement, the emergence of strategic HRM, internationalization and globalization. Classic authors such as Michael Armstrong, Boxall and Purcell, and Watson are also cited, whose definitions emphasize the strategic importance of HRM for the implementation of organizational goals, employee commitment and talent development.

The next part presents the objectives of HRM, which focus on building an organizational culture that promotes high productivity, engagement and sustainable development of human potential. The factors influencing human resource management – internal (organizational structure, culture, technology) and external (labor market, legislation, competition) – are analyzed, as well as different approaches and models. Among them, the corresponding model, the Harvard model, the contextual model, the 5-P model and the European model of HRM stand out. The categories in HRM are also described – short-term, **medium-term and long-term planning, strategic and operational management, as well as the levels of decision-making**. Strategic human resource management is defined by the relationship between the organization's long-term goals and HR policies, and the role of senior management is presented as key to integrating HRM into the company's overall strategy. Operational management is associated with the daily activities entrusted mainly to line managers – workforce management, dealing with administrative procedures, maintaining employment relationships.

A significant place is given to the structure and functions of the human resources department. The mechanisms for centralizing the HR function, different approaches to the internal distribution of activities and the principles for determining the size and structure of the HR department are described. The key HR processes are presented: planning and staffing, talent management, succession planning, budgeting and cost control, as well as the relationship between organizational planning and human resources planning, including the importance of the NCP.

The scope of personnel selection **describes the main stages of selection, internal and external sources of recruitment, the role of the media, social networks, recruitment agencies and educational institutions** . The anti-discrimination principles that must be observed in selection are presented , as well as classic models for assessing candidates - Roger's seven-point plan and Fraser's five-point plan. **The assessment methods** are analyzed - document review, recommendations, various types of interviews and tests, as well as decision-making methods, including sequential screening and multiplicative models.

The section on **personnel evaluation** explains why employees are considered an organizational asset that is subject to systematic evaluation. It describes objectives such as providing feedback, identifying training needs, and increasing motivation. It outlines methods such as self-assessment, 360-degree feedback, attestation, ranking, pair comparison, and the concept of “management by objectives,” which links individual and organizational performance.

This is followed by a detailed presentation of **staff training** – its essence, goals, key stages (needs identification, planning, implementation, evaluation) and modern methods such as coaching, mentoring, distance learning and shadowing . The importance of **“lifelong learning” as a fundamental paradigm of modern organizations** is emphasized .

The section on **motivation** presents internal and external factors, economic and behavioral models, as well as different approaches to motivating staff. It examines material and non-material incentives, Japanese practices such as Kaizen, models for job enrichment and individual development.

The topic of **remuneration** covers the main forms of remuneration, the differences between gross, net, nominal and real wages, payment systems (temporary, piecework), as well as specific mechanisms such as profit sharing, shareholder programs and public sector pay.

The book concludes with a comprehensive overview of **equality in the workplace**, protected grounds and international standards established by the ILO. **Different forms of discrimination are distinguished** – direct, indirect, harassment, victimisation and discrimination by association – as well as policies aimed at equal opportunities and positive measures.

The final part examines **corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a contemporary model of management and sustainable business behavior** . The key areas of CSR are described – community involvement, internal company culture, education and leadership skills, business ethics and environmentally friendly business. The connection between global challenges, social expectations, climate change and the need for organizations to implement transparent, environmentally friendly and responsible practices is emphasized.