

OPINION

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About the applicant Chief Assistant Milen Filipov, PhD, a participant in the competition for the academic position of an Associate Professor at Burgas Free University, in the professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Journalism and Public Relations - Strategic Public Relations and Planned Events), announced in the State Gazette, issue no. 25/26.03.2021

This opinion was written after a careful review of the submitted documents and the impressions of the academic and organizational achievements of Chief Assistant Dr Milen Filipov, supported by the necessary evidence. The conclusion is based on these views and on assessing the applicant's development potential in the field of Public Communications and Information Sciences (Journalism and Public Relations - Strategic Public Relations and Planned Events).

1. Assessment of compliance with the requirements

The documents submitted for the competition give grounds to state categorically that Chief Assistant Dr Milen Filipov meets the requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor". Moreover, according to specific indicators, the achievement is much more significant - formally and in terms of content.

2. Research and scientific activity

The research and scientific activity of the candidate has a scope and features that allow establishing a deep interest in PR, communications in general and in particular events and communications in the field of education. At the same time, the texts contribute significantly to the development of the field, which in itself is a value.

It is essential to pay special attention to the monograph of Chief Assistant Dr Milen Filipov "(Pseudo)event: Theory and Practice", presented as a habilitation thesis. The text is an in-depth study of the part of PR related to events and goes deep into theorizing a topic that we are accustomed to perceiving as purely practical and almost very close to craftsmanship. However, practice can only benefit from such an analysis by enriching itself with insights to make events more successful. Furthermore, it outlines the relevance and significance of the topic.

Further - in terms of content, the monograph lays a good foundation for understanding and clarifies the pseudo-events parameters and features exceptionally well. The different types of events are appropriately outlined, not so much from an organizational point of view as from a conceptual one. The need for this is well-founded - as the author himself points out, “there is no modern concept of the event that draws dividing lines between other mediated events.”

The monograph clearly outlines the parameters and features of the pseudo-event. Particularly valuable are the statements that this type of event is both created independently and must have some connection with reality; otherwise, they are in danger of failing. Furthermore, the author extremely correctly presents the parameters of the public environment in which such events occur, considering the criteria for creating and disseminating news. Thus, the topic is highly relevant due to the onset of the 2020 crisis and the significant changes that resulted from it - mainly digitalization and the transition to online and hybrid events. Some of the changes will remain so even when the pandemic passes. My only comment is regarding the research - it is methodologically sound, but I do not see the research value for the respondents to be asked about their understandings of the phenomenon, especially given the low spread of the topic.

The review of the other Chief Assistant Dr Milen Filipov publications gives grounds to claim that the candidate has serious, often stated, and amply deep interests in the field without falling into pettiness, which is excellent. The problems are analyzed in-depth, with the necessary criticality and author’s contribution. As a result, it contributes to developing these communication areas, which benefits the university and students and the entire professional community. Therefore, the citations of Chief Assistant Dr Milen Filipov’s publications are also at the required level.

3. Teaching and learning activities

The observations on the overall teaching and learning activity of Chief Assistant Dr Milen Filipov contribute to forming a better idea of the author’s potential. It is also clear enough from the submitted documents that the candidate is working extremely actively in this direction. Furthermore, the workload presented at KIMEP University, the university in Kazakhstan where he teaches, is impressive and cements the claim that he has gained enough authority. Finally, as far as I have had the opportunity to talk to his former students, currently working in communications, they provided hugely positive feedback. So it is also essential to include it in the assessment.

4. Activities for the benefit of society and the profession

The fact that Chief Assistant Dr Milen Filipov deals with the issues related to establishing the specifics of the events is sufficient to establish his contribution to the profession’s development.

Among the other activities in this direction, I want to emphasize his commitment to the Bulgarian Society for Public Relations (BDVO) scholarship in the name of Prof. Todor Petev for outstanding students. Dr Filipov financially supported the scholarship for 2021, increasing its size and committing to annually supporting it. Furthermore, as a jury member, he evaluated applicants' essays and selected the scholarship holder. It is an activity that encourages and motivates the young people in our country, who have embarked on the path of the communication profession, to develop and be better in what they do.

5. Personal impressions of the candidate

Some of the personal impressions are evident from what has been presented so far. In this situation, I could only add that Chief Assistant Dr Milen Filipov is distinguished by high personal and professional authority, exceptional organizational issues, and a constructive attitude to joint activities.

6. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the activity and achievements of the candidate

The main recommendation I would like to make is to deepen research in events, primarily digital and hybrid ones, which have been developing rapidly for a year and may contribute to the industry's future. It would be interesting to develop how (pseudo) events change (or will change) given consumers' new conditions and dynamics. I also believe that this topic is productive for co-authorship with practitioners, respectively the publication of such texts in business and lifestyle publications - this is a direction in which the candidate's expertise would reach a broader range of professionals.

7. Conclusion

Considering the merits and achievements of the candidate, the relevance of the studied problems, the need to find practical solutions for them in practice and the attitude to the learning process, my overall assessment is positive. In this regard, I would like to suggest that Chief Assistant Dr Milen Filipov be promoted to an associate professor for the Center for Humanities of the Burgas Free University (BFU) needs.

08.08.2021

Author of the opinion:

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