

## **OPINION**

**About the scientific works and educational activities  
of Mr. Hassan Azis Ismail, PhD  
Submitted for Participation in a Competition for taking  
the Academic Position of "Associate professor"  
in Professional Field 3.7. "Administration and Management"  
(Public Administration), announced in State Gazette No 55 of 15.07.2022  
for the Needs of the Center for Legal Sciences at the Burgas Free University**

Developed by: Prof. Kremena Georgieva Andonova, Ph.D. –  
Varna Free University Chernorizets Hrabar, 3.7. "Administration and Management"  
(Economics and Management (Integrated Regional Development))

This opinion was prepared on the basis of documents received through a competition announced by Burgas Free University (State Gazette, No. 55 of 15.07.2022) and on the University's website for the needs of the Center for Legal Sciences at Burgas Free University. The documents submitted for the competition correspond to the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for its Implementation. The competition procedure has been correctly followed.

### **1. General presentation of the received materials**

Only one candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition: Dr. Hassan Azis Ismail. The candidate has submitted a list of a total of 20 independent publications (2 monographs, 1 book on a defended dissertation, 1 textbook, 3 studies, 9 articles and 4 reports) in Bulgarian and foreign scientific publications and scientific forums that have not participated in other procedures. All presented works have been taken into account in the preparation of this opinion.

### **2. Candidate's data**

From 2020 until today, the candidate Dr. Hasan Azis has worked as a guest lecturer and teacher at various universities – Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", University of National and World Economy, Burgas Free University (currently). At the same time, the candidate also has extensive administrative and management experience, having been part of the system of

regional government and local self-government in Bulgaria since 2001, respectively as Deputy Regional Governor of the District with administrative center Kardzhali (until 2003) and as Mayor of the Municipality of Kardzhali (from 2003 to the present day).

In the period 1990 - 1998, Dr. Hassan Azis acquired two master's degrees - engineering from the University of Architecture, Construction and Geodesy, Sofia (master's degree "Industrial and Civil Construction") and economics from the University of National and world economy, Sofia (master's degree "Management and Marketing"). Since 2020, he has a doctorate in "Administration and Management" (regional development), successfully defending a doctoral dissertation in the field of decentralization and the development of local self-government.

### **3. General characteristics of the candidate's scientific output**

I accept the submitted 20 works for participation in the competition as satisfying the requirements for academic publications. From the documents submitted for the competition procedure, it is clear that the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position of "associate professor" in the field of higher education 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional field 3.7 "Administration and Management" have been met.

The main results of the candidate's scientific research are directly related to the scientific specialty and the thematic area of the competition. The presented scientific production analyzes various aspects of decentralization in the context of the European development of Bulgarian municipalities, institutional capacity and social climate in Bulgarian municipalities, cross-border problems of decentralization and integrated management.

On this basis, theoretical propositions in the considered problem areas were systematized, basic concepts were conceptualized, those about the essence of local self-government were argued in the context of the emerging limitations and challenges of the long-term transition to a pluralistic civil society and decentralization. In the process of his scientific research, the candidate offers conceptual solutions to current issues related to increasing administrative and management capacity, improving the social climate in Bulgarian municipalities, in the direction of increasing the quality of local self-government.

In general, the candidate's scientific output proves the abilities of Dr. Hassan Azis to conduct independent research on current and significant problems in the field of development and management of public administration. The impression of this is complemented by the candidate's active participation in 14 national and international research projects related to various spheres of local self-government and development.

#### **4. Characterization and assessment of the candidate's educational and pedagogical activities**

Dr. Hassan Azis has the necessary pedagogical experience, which is evident from his previous work as a teacher who prepares specialists for the needs of the professional field "Administration and Management". From the references submitted for the competition procedure, it is clear that the candidate has been assigned the following academic disciplines: Basics of local self-government; Administrative reform and decentralization, Decentralization and local self-governance, the subject matter and content of which fully correspond to the currently held competition for the academic position of "associate professor".

Additional recognition of the candidate's high level of professional training and competence, which provide additional advantages in his previous and future work with students and doctoral students, are the candidate's memberships in: the Scientific Council of the electronic scientific publication "Scientific Atlas", the Committee of the Regions and its auxiliary bodies, the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria, etc.

#### **5. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the candidate**

The candidate's contributions are in the interdisciplinary areas of decentralization, deconcentration, and local self-government, and are important for deepening and expanding knowledge about the organization and management of these problem areas.

Theoretical views and discussions on the issues under consideration are systematized, author's theses are argued in relation to: the process of forming and implementing public policies in the context of the strategic management of the regions; the distribution of functions and responsibilities between different management levels, subject to the principles of good governance; the need to adapt and search for a new model of functioning and regional development, oriented towards integrated management within a more liberalizing regional economy; increasing the institutional capacity, satisfaction with the workplace and the social climate in Bulgarian municipalities at the level of municipal administration, municipal councilors and mayors; the degree of implementation of the decentralization process in cross-border municipalities from Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. Theoretical approaches and original views to these scientific concepts have been developed.

The candidate's research on problems of barriers and challenges accompanying the overall process of decentralization is of a contributing nature, such as: strong administrative, financial and political dependence on the state and the executive power; dialogue with representatives of the central government is often broken; insufficient understanding of the problems of small

municipalities; prioritization of national or local projects, disregard of citizens' needs, lack of trained personnel, etc.

Critical imbalances in the strategic management and development of modern Bulgarian municipalities are critically assessed. Scenarios for carrying out a reform towards decentralization of the Bulgarian municipalities have been developed and specific recommendations have been made to improve the legislation, with the aim of ensuring the sustainability of the policies for strengthening and developing the Bulgarian municipalities to catch up with the average European standards of municipal autonomy.

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From the proposed list of scientific contributions, I do not accept contributions 5 and 8, which refer only to the tool (analysis, overview...) but not to the specific contribution result (systematization, structuring of elements, derivation of challenges, recommendations, etc.) .

In general, I accept the remaining scientific and systematized scientific-applied contributions of the candidate and consider them to be of the nature of enriching existing knowledge with new research that is of interest to everyone working in the fields of public administration and local self-government. At the same time, the conducted research and the obtained results have applied significance for finding and implementing new more effective approaches in managing the social development of public sector organizations, ensuring the sustainability of policies to strengthen and develop local self-government and the processes of decentralization, both in Bulgaria and cross-border.

## 6. Notes and recommendations

The candidate's scientific-research searches also cause some questions that could be formulated as recommendations for the future work and academic development of Dr. Hasan Azis Ismail, such as: the relationship "risk management - development of the processes of decentralization in municipal administrations". In addition to the candidate, the recommendation for a more active presentation of the achieved research results at international academic forums - seminars, webinars, round tables, conferences, etc.

## CONCLUSION

The general impression of the publication and pedagogical activities of the candidate Dr. Hasan Azis Ismail is that he possesses the necessary qualifications and professional competence of a promising researcher in the field of public administration.

After familiarizing myself with the materials and scientific works presented at the competition, analyzing their significance and the scientific and scientific-applied contributions contained in them, I give my **positive assessment** and recommend the management of Burgas Free University to appoint Dr. Hasan Azis Ismail to take the academic position of "associate professor" in professional field 3.7. "Administration and Management".

17.10. 2022

Opinion drawn up by: .....

(assoc. prof. Kremena Andonova)