

## OPINION

**By: Prof. Yuliya Trifonova Yorgova-Ford, PhD, Burgas Free University**

*Scientific specialty "Management",*

*Professional field 3.7 Administration and Management*

**Regarding:** open call for the academic position of **Associate Professor** for the professional field 3.7 Administration and Management (Public Administration) at Burgas Free University (BFU).

### **1. Call information**

The Call is open with announcement in State Gazette, No. 55/15.07.2022 for the needs of the Faculty of Legal Studies of the BFU.

### **2. Information about the participant in the Call**

Dr. Hasan Azis Ismail , is the only participant in the Call.

He acquired the PhD degree in the professional field 3.7 Administration and Management / Regional Development/ at UNWE - Sofia in 2020.

Dr. Azis has extensive practical and, in recent years, teaching experience. Over the years, he has been a part-time lecturer at UNSS - Sofia, a guest lecturer at "Chernorizets Hrabar" VSU, and since 2020 he has also been a lecturer at BSU. Dr. Azis has been the Mayor of Kardzhali Municipality since 2003 until now. He is a member of a number of prestigious international and national organizations in the field of economic and regional policy.

### **3. Compliance with the requirements for holding the academic position**

#### *3.1. Quantitative requirements*

From the submitted call documentation the following findings can be made regarding the fulfillment of the National minimum requirements, Rules and regulations of the academic staff development of Burgas Free University and the Additional requirements of Faculty of Legal Studies at BFU for holding the academic position of "associate professor":

- the National minimum requirements have been surpassed and a total amount of 655 points has been reported with a required minimum of 450 points;
- 2 monographs were published upon request of 1;
- 1 textbook and 1 book based on the dissertation have been published;

- a total of 13 publications outside of the dissertation work, with a requirement of a minimum of 7, of which 3 studies, 6 articles and 4 papers from scientific forums are presented;
- it is clear from the presented references that the candidate has participated and carried out coordination, monitoring and control activities of 12 national and 2 international projects in the field of regional development, education and human resources.

The conclusion that is imposed on the basis of the presented data is that the quantitative requirements for all indicators have been exceeded.

### *3.2. Quality requirements*

The fulfillment of the qualitative requirements for holding the academic position "associate professor" in the presented scientific production, as well as in the other specified appearances of the candidate, is present. In support of this statement, the following facts can be cited:

- all publications presented in the competition (studies, articles, conference papers) are in peer-reviewed editions or in edited collective volumes;
- a total of 16 citations were found in scientific publications, 5 of which in publications referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes;
- membership in the scientific board of the electronic scientific publication "Scientific Atlas";
- membership in a number of national and international organizations dealing with problems of regional development.

The submitted materials for the competition allow the finding that the candidacy of Dr. Hasan Azis fully meets the mandatory conditions under the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as the additional requirements of the Faculty of Legal Studies of the BFU, related to the scientific research activity.

## **4. Characterization and evaluation of the teaching activity of the candidate**

From the attached references, it is clear that Dr. Hasan Azis was a part-time lecturer at UNWE-Sofia, Department of Regional Development and a guest lecturer at VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar". Since 2020, he has been a lecturer at BFU, Faculty of Legal Studies. Over the years, he has held classes in disciplines corresponding to the thematic area of the current competition. Namely: "Fundamentals of Local Self-Government", "Administrative Reform and Decentralization in Bulgaria", "Decentralization and Local Self-Government", "State Policies and Strategies", "State Policy and Local Self-Governance in

Sports". Three of the mentioned courses are included in e-learning platforms. Dr. Azis is also the author of a textbook on the discipline he leads, "Fundamentals of Local Self-Government".

The candidate also has a lot of practical experience in the field of the disciplines he teaches, which is a very valuable advantage for his work as a lecturer.

The information presented above gives reason to conclude that Dr. Azis possesses the necessary teaching competencies and experience for the position of "associate professor".

#### **5. Brief description of the submitted scientific work/publications**

Dr. Hasan Azis's papers submitted for review are focused on the study of local self-government issues. As the main habilitation thesis for the competition, the candidate presented a monograph entitled "Local policies in the new reality - strategic elements and approaches of municipalities". The research is dedicated to a particularly current and important problem in the field of local self-government - the implementation of real decentralization as the main path for the European development of the municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria.

In the monographic work, the author's goals have been achieved to investigate and analyze in depth the process of decentralization of municipalities, to point out some problems in the development of local self-government and to make recommendations regarding the development of Bulgarian municipalities in accordance with European standards. Appropriate attention in the monograph is also given to the impact of decentralization on the leadership management style and the resulting need to develop organizational capacity through effective investment in human capital. As part of the merits of the work, I believe that the in-depth analysis of the challenges facing the local administration in the current program period can also be mentioned. Combining the theoretical and practical-applied focus in his presentation, the author provides examples, statistical data and results of empirical research of real processes in local self-government.

It must be concluded that the candidate's proposed main habilitation thesis is a completed author's research with indisputable scientific-applied contributions.

Dr. Azis also presented a second monograph entitled "Institutional capacity, satisfaction and social climate in Bulgarian municipalities". In this work, the author examines the institutional capacity, job satisfaction and social climate in Bulgarian municipalities at the level of municipal administration, municipal councilors and mayors. The importance of the leadership style for the good management of the processes in the local self-government is justified in an appropriate way. I believe that the author

has achieved the main goal of the research and has argued his proposed thesis, reflecting the relationship "social climate - job satisfaction - work performance".

Without being commented on in detail, the remaining scientific works of the candidate presented in the competition show that they are the result of in-depth scientific and practical-applied research on current and insufficiently researched topics in the field of public administration. A number of aspects of local self-government and regional development were studied, good practices in Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece were presented. The changes in regional and local self-government in Europe after the creation of the Europe of Regions concept are also subject of evaluation and analysis.

As a summary - the scientific works submitted for review by Dr. Hasan Azis fully meet the requirements for holding the academic position "associate professor" in the professional field 3.7 Administration and Management, (Public Administration) at the Burgas Free University.

#### **6. Summarised evaluation of the main scientific and practical-applied contributions of the candidate**

I consider the scientific and practical-applied contributions claimed by Dr. Hasan Azis to be authentic and significant. They are contained in the presented scientific works. The candidate's achievements confirm his in-depth knowledge and abilities to research and solve scientific and practical problems in the field of public administration.

In support of this, scientific contributions can be cited regarding:

- the systematization of the conceptual apparatus of the decentralization and regionalization process at the levels of management;
- the assessment of the financial effects by monitoring the change of key indicators for local budgets and the degree of decentralization;
- the implementation of an in-depth theoretical-methodological overview and comparative analysis of local and regional self-government in Bulgaria and other countries;
- the evaluation of leadership management styles in the studied municipalities and their relationship with levels of job satisfaction, etc.

Based on his rich practical experience in local self-government, Dr. Azis has also achieved a number of important practical-applied contributions in:

- the testing of a methodology and algorithm for an empirical study of the administrative potential and civil attitudes to implement the process of decentralization in municipal administrations and civil society;
- the proposal of possible scenarios for carrying out a reform aimed at decentralization of the Bulgarian municipalities;
- the output based on the author's research and the systematization of specific recommendations for improving the microclimate and increasing job satisfaction in the municipalities, etc.

### **7. Critical remarks and recommendations**

I have no critical remarks or questions about the works submitted for participation in this open Call. I recommend Dr. Hasan Azis to continue actively sharing and disseminating his rich scientific and practical experience both with the academic community and colleagues from local self-government in Bulgaria and abroad. Publishing in scientific editions, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information and participation in international forums is one of the sure ways to do this.

### **8. Conclusion**

Based on the evaluations of the submitted scientific papers, the teaching activities and the main scientific and practical contributions of Dr. Hasan Azis, it could be claimed that they fully meet the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its application and Regulations for Academic Staff Development of BFU.

***The indicated overall positive assessment gives me reason to confidently support the application of Dr. Hasan Azis Ismail for the award of the academic position "associate professor" in professional field 3.7. Administration and Management (Public Administration) at Burgas Free University.***

19 October 2022

Burgas

Signature: .....

/Prof. Yuliya Yorgova-Ford, PhD/