REVIEW

Subject: Scientific, applied-scientific, and pedagogical activities, as well as research output, presented for the competition for the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology—covering the disciplines "Psychology of Terrorism and Negotiation," "Business Negotiations," "Psychology of Management," "Psychology," and "Psychological Interviewing, Interrogation, and Confession"—announced by the Department of Psychology and Police Management at the Faculty of Police of the Academy of the Ministry of Interior, published in the *State Gazette*, Issue 73 of August 14, 2026.

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Ivanka Vasileva Asenova, MVBU – Botevgrad

Candidate: Dr. Diana Ancheva Bozhanova

I. Brief Biographical Data on the Candidate

The research output submitted for review by Dr. Diana Bozhanova—the sole candidate in this competition—reflects her research interests and achievements in the field of police and criminal psychology. According to the declaration submitted by the candidate, the scholarly works presented for this competition have not been used to obtain the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" (PhD).

The documentation meets all criteria stipulated by the procedure for the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor." The scientometric report, prepared in accordance with current regulatory requirements and the regulations of the Academy of the Ministry of Interior, confirms that the candidate meets the minimum criteria across the six groups of indicators required for participation in the competition. The total of 432.5 points exceeds the required minimum of 400 points for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 3.2. Psychology. I have found no evidence of plagiarism in the submitted scholarly works, nor am I aware of any instances of plagiarism in the candidate’s academic output that have been established through the legally prescribed procedure.

The information presented in the professional biography of Dr. Diana Ancheva Bozhanova clearly outlines her focused commitment to sustained professional development, the deepening of her scientific expertise, and her established standing in both theoretical and applied research concerning police and criminal psychology, psychological support for professional activities within the Ministry of Interior system, and crisis communication. Her professional and scientific interests center primarily on crisis negotiation, the psychological characteristics of individuals in crisis, and issues regarding the veracity of verbal information. This thematic focus aligns with the profile of the "Psychology and Police Management" Department and the professional field for which the competition has been announced. Diana Bozhanova graduated with a degree in Psychology from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 1992, earning the professional qualification of "psychologist" along with an additional qualification as a "teacher of psychology, social studies, ethics, and law." From 2021 to 2024, she was a doctoral candidate (pursuing independent study) at the Department of Psychology and Police Management within the Academy of the Ministry of Interior, specializing in the doctoral program "Psychology of Activity" (Professional Field 3.2: Psychology). She was

awarded the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" (PhD) for her dissertation titled "Negotiation During Demonstrative Suicide Attempts," as certified by Diploma No. 94, dated April 25, 2024.

The candidate's professional career has been consistently focused on psychological work within the system of the Ministry of Interior. From February 1993 to June 2016, she served as a psychologist at the Institute of Psychology of the Ministry of Interior, and since June 2016, she has held the position of "Senior Lecturer" at the Academy of the Ministry of Interior. Her extensive practical experience serves as a vital foundation for aligning her teaching and research endeavors with the actual needs of police practice. The candidate's professional development includes training in selection and career development, specialized psychodiagnostics within the security sector, crisis management, interactive training and consulting methods, as well as the methodology for training specialized tactical rapid-response units. Directly relevant to her core research focus is the FBI 40-Hour Crisis Negotiation Course, which she completed in 2015.

Dr. Bozhanova's teaching activities encompass bachelor's and master's degree programs, initial professional training, and professional qualification refresher courses. According to her submitted curriculum vitae, she teaches courses such as "Introduction to Police Psychology," "Introduction to Criminal Psychology," "Psychology," "Business Negotiations," "Psychology of Terrorism and Negotiation," and "Management Psychology." She also participates in the training of personnel in areas including police and professional psychology, the psychological aspects of management, and lie detection.

Her participation in academic forums includes the IX International Congress of Psychology and the "30 Years of Psychology" forum held at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo.

The curriculum vitae also notes five "Written Commendation" awards received during the 2019–2026 period.

II. Evaluation of the Candidate's Scientific and Applied Scientific Output

The submitted scientific output demonstrates a clear applied focus on the psychological aspects of police work, with an emphasis on professional communication, crisis negotiation, and behavior under conditions of risk and heightened tension. A defining feature of Dr. Bozhanova's academic profile is the thematic coherence between her professional experience, the subjects she teaches, and her publication record.

The documentation includes seven publications: the habilitation monograph *Verbal Indicators of Deception* (2026), the monograph *Negotiations in Hostage Crises* (2026), the book *Negotiation During Demonstrative Suicide Attempts* (2025)—developed based on her defended doctoral dissertation—and four articles.

The list of publications not submitted for review includes an additional five articles within the thematic scope of police and criminal psychology. These works examine depression as a factor in suicidal behavior; the characteristics of individuals who engage in demonstrative suicide attempts; negotiation strategies during such attempts; the application of negotiation in managing critical incidents; and psychological reactions in situations involving danger and heightened tension. These publications provide further insight into the evolution of the candidate's research interests and highlight her sustained commitment to issues concerning crisis behavior and psychological support within police operations.

A review of the scholarly work submitted for evaluation allows it to be categorized into five thematic areas, which reveal the primary focus of Dr. Bozhanova's research, namely:

1. Psychological aspects of professional communication in police work (monograph: *Verbal Indicators of Deception*, Avangard Prima, 2026; article: "Psychological Specifics of Working with Elderly Individuals – Victims and Witnesses of Crimes," *Bulletin of the Faculty of Police*, Academy of the Ministry of Interior, No. 1 (40), 2020, pp. 85–93).

2. Negotiation in crisis situations (monograph: *Negotiations in Hostage Crises*, Academy of the Ministry of Interior, 2026; book based on a defended dissertation: *Negotiation in Demonstrative Suicide Attempts*, Academy of the Ministry of Interior, 2025). 3. Professional burnout and satisfaction with professional development (co-authored article: "Burnout Syndrome – Risks of Professional Burnout Among Fire Safety and Civil Protection Personnel and Its Relationship with Satisfaction with Professional Development." *Bulletin of the Faculty of Fire Safety and Civil Protection*, Academy of the Ministry of Interior, No. 3, 2025, pp. 5–10).

4. Psychological aspects of terrorism (article: "The Personality of the Terrorist." *Bulletin of the Faculty of Police*, Academy of the Ministry of Interior, No. 18, 2025, pp. 64–71).

5. Psychological aspects of hate speech (article: "Hate Speech – A Distinct Psychological Perspective." In: *Social Changes in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, proceedings of an international scientific conference. Sofia: UniBIT, "Za Bukvite – O Pismeneh," 2024, pp. 237–245).

The monograph *Verbal Indicators of Lying* is presented as the primary work for the habilitation procedure. The study covers the subject matter ranging from the historical conceptualization and definition of lying, through methods for its non-instrumental detection, to specific tactics for uncovering deceptive behavior within police practice. A central focus is the systematization of verbal indicators, examining the specific features of responses and accounts, the role of memory, the linguistic and grammatical characteristics of speech, and the assessment of the validity of statements. The applied nature of the work is demonstrated through the presentation of techniques for exerting influence during interrogations and operational interviews. Additionally, a structured list of questions for verifying the claimed age of immigrants is proposed; this tool was tested in simulated role-play scenarios, with preliminary results indicating potential avenues for further research. The significance of the monograph lies in its integration of psychological knowledge regarding deception with the analysis and evaluation of information within a specific professional context.

The second monograph, "Negotiations in Hostage Crises," explores the potential of negotiation as a tactic to support police operations in managing hostage-taking situations. The work examines the management of hostage crises, focusing on the principles, organization, and strategy of negotiations—tailored to the psychological characteristics of the individuals involved and the dynamics of the crisis situation. Drawing on an analysis of existing literature and international practice, as well as her own professional experience, the author outlines techniques for establishing contact, building trust, and influencing the perpetrators. The practical value of the work lies in its synthesis of psychological principles and negotiation techniques aimed at... The co-authored article, "Burnout Syndrome: Risks of Professional Burnout Among Fire Safety and Civil Protection Personnel and Its Link to Professional Development Satisfaction," holds scientific and practical value by presenting empirical data on the manifestations of professional burnout within a specific professional environment. A key contribution lies in comparing these manifestations across different areas

of activity and job roles, as well as in delineating their relationship with professional satisfaction. The findings highlight the significance not only of the immediate risks inherent in operational duties but also of organizational strain, managerial responsibilities, and interactions with the public. The practical relevance of the study is demonstrated by the development of preventive guidelines, focusing on psychological support for personnel and the mitigation of adverse organizational factors.

The article "The Personality of the Terrorist" is theoretical and synthetic in nature; it examines terrorist behavior through the interplay of personality traits, motivation, group influences, and ideological convictions. Its contribution lies in the systematization of various psychological explanations for involvement in terrorist activities—addressing factors such as the need for belonging, social identity, and the mechanisms used to justify violence. A significant point made in the conclusion is the rejection of the notion of a universal "terrorist profile," emphasizing instead the necessity of analyzing each specific case within its unique individual, group, and cultural-historical context. The practical significance of the article lies in providing theoretical frameworks for psychological analysis to support counter-terrorism efforts.

The article "Hate Speech: A Different Psychological Perspective" is theoretical and analytical in nature, examining the psychological mechanisms behind the spread and entrenchment of hostile discourse in everyday communication. Its contribution lies in comparing various explanatory approaches—such as social learning, conformity, frustration, dehumanization, and projection. Particular attention is given to the role of media models and the anonymity afforded by social networks in the perception and reproduction of aggressive communication styles. The article’s practical value stems from highlighting mechanisms that, when understood, can aid in the prevention of verbal aggression and the promotion of responsible, respectful communication.

The article "Psychological Aspects of Working with Older Adults: Victims and Witnesses of Crime" explores age-related changes in mental and physical functioning within the context of police work. Its practical focus is driven by the need to tailor professional engagement with elderly victims and witnesses to the specific characteristics of their condition and functioning. In this regard, the publication contributes to research on professional interaction by emphasizing that an understanding of age-related characteristics is a prerequisite for working effectively with this specific group of citizens. Taken together, the submitted works demonstrate a consistent research interest in the psychological aspects of police activity, crisis negotiation, and behavior under conditions of risk and stress. This core focus is complemented by studies on professional burnout, terrorist behavior, and hostile communication. A unifying feature of this body of scholarly work is the endeavor to link psychological knowledge with specific professional tasks and issues of social significance.

III. Citations

The provided record lists a total of 11 citations across five scholarly publications—three citations in a monograph and eight in articles. The total score for these citations is 70, which exceeds the required national minimum of 50 points under indicator group "D" for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field of 3.2. Psychology. Works are cited that address crisis behavior and negotiation, professional burnout, the psychological aspects of working with adult victims and witnesses of crime, terrorism, and hate speech. Some of these citations appear in the English-language publication *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*.

IV. Key contributions to the candidate’s scientific, applied-scientific, and teaching activities

Among Dr. Diana Bozhanova's distinctive qualities is her ability to synthesize and structure psychological knowledge in relation to specific challenges in police practice, as well as to analyze empirical data derived from real-world professional situations. A significant feature of her work is the integration of her research interests with her accumulated practical and teaching experience. The studies presented are oriented toward practical application in areas such as professional communication, information assessment, negotiation, and psychological support for personnel.

I accept the primary contributions claimed by the candidate as 2. A model has been developed that incorporates tactics and strategies for conducting interrogations and operational interviews, aimed at clarifying contradictions and verifying the account provided. Its scientific and practical value lies in the structuring of psychological approaches for gathering and verifying information within police practice.

3. A structured questionnaire has been developed to assist in verifying the claimed age of immigrants; it was pilot-tested in role-play scenarios involving personnel from the Academy of the Ministry of Interior. Its scientific and practical value lies in applying the "increased cognitive load" approach to a specific professional task and establishing a foundation for future empirical research.

4. Based on empirical data from police practice, the sociodemographic characteristics, motives, and circumstances associated with demonstrative suicide attempts have been systematized. The scientific and practical value of these findings lies in assisting the assessment of specific crisis situations and tailoring negotiation approaches to the individual's specific characteristics and personal experiences.

5. The potential for applying negotiation methods during suicidal crises has been summarized and analyzed, drawing on actual cases and a survey of personnel. The scientific and practical contribution lies in the development of guidelines for professional interaction with individuals in crisis, as well as for the specialized training of personnel tasked with managing such situations. 6. Key principles and strategies for conducting negotiations during hostage crises have been summarized and systematized. The scientific-applied contribution lies in the development of guidelines for organizing the negotiation team and conducting negotiations, taking into account the psychological characteristics of both the hostages and the perpetrators, as well as the dynamics of the crisis situation.

7. Based on prior research, the study summarizes personality traits, motives, and social influences associated with involvement in terrorist activities. The theoretical-applied contribution consists of systematizing benchmarks for the psychological analysis of perpetrators and leaders of terrorist organizations, while considering individual, group, and cultural-historical contexts.

8. Age-related characteristics of mental and physical functioning—relevant to police work involving older adults—have been summarized. The scientific-applied value lies in providing guidance for professional interaction that is tailored to the needs and capabilities of elderly victims and witnesses of crimes.

9. Based on a co-authored empirical study, data regarding manifestations of professional burnout among personnel of the Fire Safety and Civil Protection (FSCP) service—and their link to satisfaction with professional development—have been summarized. The scientific-applied contribution involves analyzing differences based on the specific area of activity and position held, as well as deriving guidelines for the prevention of burnout and the provision of psychological support to personnel. V. Critical Remarks and Recommendations

Certain formulations within the statement of contributions could be improved by more precisely highlighting the author’s original contribution in relation to existing scientific knowledge, and by more clearly distinguishing established results from prospects for future research.

I recommend that Dr. Bozhanova continue her research on professional communication and negotiation in crisis situations, expanding the empirical basis and deepening the analysis of the conditions required for the successful application of the approaches discussed. Another promising direction involves the further development and testing of the proposed questionnaire designed to verify the claimed age of immigrants. Her accumulated professional and teaching experience provides a solid foundation for continuing this work and aligning it with the needs of police practice.

VI. Summary Conclusion

Based on the aforementioned findings—derived from a review of the complete documentation regarding the procedure and an examination of the scholarly work submitted for review—I cast a positive vote for the appointment of Dr. Diana Ancheva Bozhanova to the academic position of "Associate Professor" (Docent). This appointment falls within Higher Education Field 3: Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences, and Professional Field 3.2: Psychology (covering the academic disciplines: "Psychology of Terrorism and Negotiation," "Business Negotiations," "Management Psychology," "Psychology," and "Psychological Interviewing, Interrogation, and Confession").

Date: 27.10.2026 Signature:

/Prof. Dr. Ivanka Vasileva Asenova/