OPINION

by **Associate Professor Veneta Tabakova-Komsalova, PhD**

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on the materials submitted for participation in a competition
for the academic position of **Associate Professor** at **Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar"**
in higher education area **4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics**,
professional field **4.6. Informatics and Computer Science**

The candidate in the competition for Associate Professor, announced in the State Gazette, Issue No. 69 of 31 July 2026, for the needs of the Department of Computer Science at the Faculty of Social, Economic and Computer Sciences of Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", is Chief Assistant Professor Ivan Stanimirov Stoyanov, PhD.

1. General overview of the procedure and the candidate

The documents listed in the application dated 23 September 2026 have been submitted for the competition: a medical certificate (8 September 2026), a criminal record certificate (9 September 2026, "no criminal convictions"), Master's and doctoral degree diplomas, a curriculum vitae, a document certifying the academic position held, a statement concerning VFU's additional requirements, a statement of compliance with the minimum national requirements, a list of publications, a statement of scientific contributions, summaries of the scientific works (in Bulgarian and English), a citation report and a list of all scientific works. These materials establish that the procedure is supported by the requisite documentation. The materials also include a second acceptance letter (Submission ID 15) for a publication that is not included in the competition list and has therefore not been taken into account in the assessment.

Chief Assistant Professor Ivan Stanimirov Stoyanov, PhD, holds a Master's degree in Software Technologies, specialising in Mobile Systems and Applications, from Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv (2019, overall grade "Excellent", 5.95). He obtained his doctoral degree in professional field 4.6. Informatics and Computer Science, doctoral programme in Informatics, in 2023 (defence on 28 June 2023), with a dissertation entitled "Research on the Development of a Virtual Operator in an Infrastructure for Smart Agriculture". According to his curriculum vitae, since 2021 he has been a Chief Assistant Professor at the Institute of Information and Communication Technologies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and a member of the John Atanasoff Society of Automatics and Informatics. At Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", he was appointed to the academic position of Chief Assistant Professor under Employment Contract No. 14 of 9 July 2026 (research

and teaching duties, a quarter-time position), following election by VFU's Scientific Council (Minutes No. 3 of 11 June 2026), effective from 10 July 2026. He is also entered in the register of the National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID) as holding the academic position of Chief Assistant Professor.

With regard to the additional requirements for candidates who have previously held the position of Chief Assistant Professor at VFU, laid down in Article 18(2) of Ordinance No. 3, the submitted statement establishes that the candidate meets the substantive requirements relating to research activity and academic qualifications, namely scientific publications indexed in the international databases Scopus and Web of Science, as well as the corresponding NACID registration. Since the requirement for internationally indexed publications is met, the alternative condition concerning publications in VFU outlets is inapplicable. As regards the requirements for a positive performance appraisal and supervision of at least two student activities, account should be taken of objective circumstances beyond the candidate's control. The candidate was appointed in July 2026, and just over ten weeks had elapsed by the time of application—a period that objectively provided no opportunity to conduct a performance appraisal procedure. Consequently, the absence of a positive appraisal does not result from an adverse assessment of his teaching or research, or from identified professional shortcomings, but from the fact that such a procedure had not yet been conducted. Similarly, according to the submitted statement, no student activities that he could have supervised were organised in the department between his appointment and the submission of his documents. The absence of supervised student activities cannot therefore, in itself, be regarded as evidence of insufficient academic engagement or failure to perform assigned duties, insofar as the conditions necessary for carrying out the relevant activity were objectively absent. In these circumstances, it is justified to consider the two requirements in light of the short period during which he has held the position, the actual opportunity to meet them, and the principles of objectivity, proportionality and equal treatment in assessment.

Therefore, as a member of the scientific jury, acting within the scope of the powers conferred on me and the applicable regulatory framework, I consider, on reasoned grounds, that these circumstances allow the two requirements to be treated as no obstacle to a positive assessment of the candidacy, taking into account the demonstrated fulfilment of the requirements for scientific output and academic qualifications.

In the interest of transparency, I note that I am a co-author of 11 of the 12 publications submitted by the candidate for the competition, as well as of the collective monograph. The assessment below is therefore based primarily on the submitted documents and the formal scientometric indicators.

2. General overview of the candidate's activities

The candidate's teaching activity at VFU is at an early stage: he has held a quarter-time appointment since 10 July 2026, and the materials contain no teaching workload statement.

The research activity is relevant to professional field 4.6 and follows a consistent line of inquiry. It is organised into four areas: (1) an event model and modelling of intelligent systems; (2) knowledge-based systems; (3) intelligent assistants and agent-oriented platforms; and (4) artificial intelligence education in secondary school. The stated contributions—a universal event model, a unified architecture for integrating knowledge representation models, a general model for personalised intelligent assistants, and a methodology for teaching artificial intelligence in secondary school—are of a scientific and applied nature and are supported by implemented platforms and practical validation.

The collective monograph "Artificial Intelligence in 24 …", Book Three (Prof. Marin Drinov Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2024, ISBN 978-619-245-470-8, 804 pages), devoted to machine learning, big data and blockchain technologies, has been submitted as the habilitation work. The candidate's contribution is the chapter "Introduction to Generative Artificial Intelligence", which covers the mathematical foundations, an overview of methods, prompt engineering, autoencoders, generative adversarial networks, autoregressive models and transformer models.

The candidate participates with 12 publications in outlets indexed in Scopus and/or WoS: two in Q1 (Future Internet, 2025 and 2026), one in Q2 (Mathematical Biosciences and Engineering, 2021), one in Q3 (TEM Journal, 2024), one in Q4 (BRAIN, 2025), and seven papers in international conference proceedings published by IEEE (ICAI, BdKCSE, IS'26). His curriculum vitae lists 36 publications in total. He has participated as a team member in two national scientific programmes ("Smart Crop Production" and "Smart Animal Husbandry", 2020–2023), in Project KP-06-M62/2 "Knowledge Modelling in the Field of Bulgarian Folklore", funded by the Bulgarian National Science Fund, and in Project IS-PGR-SADOVO (Contract No. KP-06-N86/9/9 December 2024), also funded by the Bulgarian National Science Fund.

According to the statement of compliance with the minimum national requirements in professional field 4.6, the candidate exceeds the required points: 50 points in Group A (50 required), 100 points in Group B (100 required), 417 points in Group Г (200 required) and 152 points in Group Д (50 required), for a total of 719 points. The requirement in Group Г is met by a wide margin even when only the five publications in quartile-ranked journals are counted, as these yield 291 points.

3. Critical comments and recommendations

a) All submitted publications are co-authored, and the candidate is the first author of only two of them. I therefore recommend publishing more scientific works as first or sole author, as well as gaining experience in project leadership, since his participation to date has been solely as a team member.

b) The 19 reported citations have not been sufficiently checked for accuracy. Citations 2 and 4 refer to the same article (El Khammari and Hasnaoui), while citation 5 is listed as citing the TEM Journal article of November 2024, which is incorrect. After the two obvious duplications are removed, 17 citations (136 points) remain, exceeding the required 50 points by more than two and a half times.

c) I recommend that the candidate develop a documented university teaching portfolio at VFU, including syllabi, courses in artificial intelligence, knowledge-based systems and multi-agent systems, as well as digital learning resources.

These comments are advisory and do not detract from the candidate's scientific results.

Conclusion. On the basis of the submitted materials, I consider that **Chief Assistant Professor Ivan Stanimirov Stoyanov, PhD**, meets, in terms of scientometric indicators, the minimum national requirements for the academic position of **Associate Professor in professional** field **4.6. Informatics and Computer Science**. The candidate pursues a consistent line of research in event modelling, knowledge-based systems and agent-oriented platforms, with applications in smart agriculture, environmental monitoring and education, and has publications in refereed outlets, including two in Q1 with an IF of 4.6. My recommendations concern his teaching activity at VFU and his individual authorship contribution.

For the reasons set out above, I give a **positive assessment** of the candidate's scientific and applied research activity and recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury propose Chief Assistant Professor Ivan Stanimirov Stoyanov, PhD, for election to the academic position of Associate Professor in professional field 4.6. Informatics and Computer Science.

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Prepared by: .....

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