

## Opinion

from

Academician Prof. Dr. Ivan Gospodinov Milanov, MD

For participation in a competition for the academic position "Professor" in the field of higher education 7. "Health and Sports", professional field 7.1 "Medicine", specialty "Social Medicine and Health Management", for the needs of the Department of Mental Health, Directorate "Mental Health and Addiction Prevention", NCPHA, announced in the State Gazette, issue 99 / 26.11.2021 and at <http://ncpha.government.bg/> on 26.11.2021

One candidate participates in the competition - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristo Ruskov Hinkov, Ph.D.

### Biographical and professional data

Assoc. Prof. Hristo Ruskov Hinkov was born on March 25, 1953. In 1980 he graduated with a Master's degree in Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, MA, Sofia. In 1987 he acquired the specialty "Psychiatry" - MA, Sofia, and since 2002 he has a master's degree in health management - Burgas State University. In 2011 he obtained the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in Medicine, specialty "Social Medicine and Organization of Health and Pharmacy" at the National Center for Public Health and Analysis, Sofia. Since 2013 he has been an associate professor in the scientific specialty "Social Medicine and Organization of Healthcare and Pharmacy". During the period 1980-1987 Assoc. Prof. Hinkov worked as a general practitioner at the Municipal Hospital - Botevgrad, and later as a psychiatrist at the State Psychiatric Hospital in Novi Iskar. In 1987 he was appointed Research Fellow at the University Psychiatric Clinic, MA, Sofia, and from 1988 to 1997 - as Head of Psychiatric Counseling Office at NISM "Pirogov". From 1997 to 1999 he was Head of the Department "Projects, Programs and International Cooperation" at the Ministry of Health, from 1999-2001 he was Deputy Director of the National Health Insurance Fund. From 2001 to the present Assoc. Prof. Hristo Hinkov has been working at the NCPHA - until 2008 as Chief expert in the Mental Health Policy, Programs and Projects Sector, until 2009 - Head of the Global Mental Health Section, until 2011 - Deputy Director of the NCPHA, until 2014 - Head of the Mental Health Sector; since 2014 he has been the director of the National Center for Public Health and Analysis at the Ministry of Health. Assoc.

Prof. Hinkov is an expert at the national and international level, a member of national working groups and advisory committees and scientific networks in the field of psychiatry and public health. He is a member of the National Commission for elaboration of the Health Card at the Ministry of Health 2019-2021; Chief Coordinator of the Expert Council on the Medical Specialty of Psychiatry at the Ministry of Health; Chairman of the Board of Directors of

SBALHZ EAD; for several years he was on the Board of the Bulgarian Medical Union; member of the Executive Board of the "National Scientific Program Environmental Protection and Reduction of the Risk of Adverse Events and Natural Disasters"; member of the Bulgarian Psychiatric Organization and the Bulgarian Collegium of Private Psychiatry; member of the Scientific Council of the NCPHA; member of the Scientific Council at the Ministry of Environment and Water. He is a member of the editorial board of the Bulgarian Journal of Public Health, published by the National Center for Public Health; guest editor of the International Journal of Mental Health Systems - International Journal of Mental Health Systems ISSN: 1752-4458 Part of Springer Nature; member of the editorial board of the magazine Mental Health - IC STENO.

The candidate has participated in 25 national and international projects and programs in the field of public health, as a coordinator and lead contractor. Participates as a principal investigator in the continuation of the project "Study of Health and Stress in Bulgaria" EPIBUL 1 (since 2008 - present) and as a senior researcher in the project EPIBUL 2 (since 2015 - present). He is a member of the expert council at the Institute for Population and Human Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in connection with the preparation of a report "Measures to overcome the demographic crisis in the Republic of Bulgaria"; senior researcher for the RECOVER-E project (Large scale implementation of community based mental health care for people with severe and enduring mental ill health in Europe) 2018-2020; is the leader of the project "Improved mental health services", Program BG07 "Public Health Initiatives"; participates in the development of the National Mental Health Strategy (2020-2030) and the Action Plan to it.

He has participated in many training courses, as a trainer / lecturer in Bulgaria, as well as in a number of European countries, USA and Japan. There are a large number of interviews in the daily press and electronic media related to mental health, health policy and current issues of society. He is the supervisor of two doctoral students who have successfully defended.

### **General description of the materials submitted in the competition**

For participation in the competition, Assoc. Prof. Hinkov presented a diploma for the scientific degree "Doctor"; reference for fulfillment of the minimum national requirements and the respective evidence / monographs, books and chapters from them, copies of the scientific publications and reports, referenced and indexed in a world-famous database with scientific information; citations or reviews in peer-reviewed and indexed scientific journals, in monographs and collective volumes with scientific peer-review, and in non-peer-reviewed

journals with scientific peer-review; reference for the collected points by indicators according to the minimum requirements for the position "professor" (550 points);

list of participations in scientific forums and copies of materials from participations in scientific forums; summaries of scientific papers (paper and electronic); habilitation extended reference for scientific contributions; documents for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor"; diploma for acquired medical specialty "psychiatry"; reference for participation in editorial boards, membership in a scientific organization in the respective scientific field, reviews; management of doctoral students; participation in research projects; reference quality criteria

The presented materials and documents characterize the significant professional experience of the candidate and provide an opportunity for analysis and review of scientific activity, publishing activity and scientific and creative achievements.

Evaluation of the scientific works of the candidate for overall academic development

The scientific production and publication activity of Assoc. Prof. Hinkov is significant, mainly in the field of psychiatry and public health. 94 publications were presented, 49 of which after obtaining the academic degree of "Associate Professor". Assoc. Prof. Hinkov has 65 publications in foreign publications, 40 of which are after obtaining the academic degree of "Associate Professor".

The scientific activity includes 68 participations in scientific forums (9 of them after obtaining the academic degree "Associate Professor"), of which 44 are in international congresses and conferences (3 after obtaining the academic degree "Associate Professor"). He has participated in numerous discussions and expert discussions at national and international round tables, seminars and webinars.

The presented report on the number of citations shows interest on the part of the scientific community, not only in Bulgaria but also abroad. 2463 citations are given, according to a reference in the available databases (Scopus and Web of Science).

The presented report on the scientific contributions of the works covers the period from 2014-2021, including areas of scientific, scientific-applied and political-analytical nature. The scientific contributions of the publications are divided into four areas:

- Epidemiology of mental disorders and study of the psychosocial determinants of mental illness;
- Comparative analysis of epidemiological databases;
- Research on the organizational, legal, informational and financial aspects of the provision of mental health services in Bulgaria;

- Health policy and health reform, suicidology, the Kovid pandemic 19.

### **Epidemiology of mental disorders and study of psychosocial determinants of mental illness**

Publications in this area are the most numerous (33). Most of them have been published in prestigious scientific journals. Within the EPIBUL 1 project, the Bulgarian database has been created, which has its contribution and continues to be included in international comparative studies of common mental disorders worldwide. The epidemiological study of the anxious, depressed, reactive, affective, etc. disorders, conducted by the Bulgarian team led by Assoc. Prof. Hinkov, is the only one in Bulgaria. The questionnaire used for this study includes a large number of variables, which allows for a variety of comparisons and statistical analyzes. In the course of its implementation a new term "frequent" mental disorders was adopted, which became popular in the Bulgarian scientific psychiatric circles. The results of the study are internationally comparable and are of great importance, the most significant being those of the various nosological units concerning common mental disorders among the Bulgarian population.

### **Comparative analysis of epidemiological databases**

Within the framework of the BG07 Public Health Initiatives Program, with the financial support of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area, a second epidemiological study was conducted - EPIBUL 2 (2016-2017). The results of the study were published in two of the candidate's articles (43,45).

A significant contribution of the study is the dynamics of the prevalence of frequent mental disorders over a ten-year period. Tracking this dynamic allows the candidate to build a unique hypothesis about the reaction of the Bulgarian population to stressful events, presented in the monograph "Bulgarian anxiety"

### **Research on the organizational, legal, informational and financial aspects of the provision of mental health services in Bulgaria**

Some of the scientific developments in this direction include organizational schemes, information technologies and financial instruments in the practice of offering mental health services in Bulgaria, as well as the legal framework for their provision and have scientific and applied value (29,30,40).

The proposed model of mobile psychiatry in outpatient care, developed as part of an international project, is a contribution to the scientific justification of the reorganization of psychiatric services in the country. The development of this idea creates a basis for the overall adoption of this concept and its inclusion in the Action Plan of the National Mental Health Strategy (2020-2030). A major contribution in this regard is the establishment of an evidence base for the application of new technologies in the care of people with mental disorders (39).

A comparative analysis was conducted with neighboring countries in Central and Eastern Europe, covering various aspects of mental illness and the organization of psychiatric care, using consensus criteria (indicators) developed by international research teams - (19,21).

### **Health policy and health reform, suicidology, the Kovid pandemic 19.**

A significant practical and scientific-organizational contribution of the candidate is his active participation in the development of the National Mental Health Strategy (2020-2030), with an Action Plan, justification, motives and management framework (42).

A project funded by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism has been built suicide information portal. The established system for collecting data online is unique for Bulgaria compared to the countries in the region and the EU. Data on methods, motives, marital status and other demographic characteristics concern not only the suicidal acts that ended in death, but also suicide attempts, which serves as a basis for building an adequate preventive strategy (46).

As part of the publications, aspects of the ability to work and participation in the labor market of mentally ill persons are considered, based on extensive statistical evidence from the two databases of EPIBUL 1 and 2, which is done for the first time in our country. A peculiarity of the Bulgarian behavior in seeking professional help through somatic specialists - neurologists, GPs, etc. is established.

This is largely due to the influence of stigma on mental disorders, but also to a new phenomenon - the strong degree of somatization of mental problems among the Bulgarian ethnic group (monograph "Bulgarian anxiety").

A topical issue is the impact of the Kovid 19 pandemic on the mental health of the Bulgarian population in two of the articles (44,47). The scientific contribution consists in a new view of reality, which will explain the emerging disturbing mental phenomena caused by the pandemic on the mental health of the population and propose the development of adequate measures to deal with them.

### **General assessment of the candidate's compliance with the mandatory conditions**

**and mandatory quantitative and scientometric indicators according to the Regulations on the terms and conditions for obtaining scientific degrees and holding academic positions in the NCPHA**

The publications presented by Assoc. Prof. Hinkov show his excellent training in the field of public and mental health, the opportunity for in-depth analysis of scientific data, independent development and application of scientific and scientific-applied methods and programs.

The career development of Assoc. Prof. Hinkov and the presented documents give me reason to say that he is a professional and competent scientist in the field of public health and psychiatry. Assoc. Prof. Hinkov's scientific activity complies with all mandatory requirements for holding the academic position of "Professor", specified in the Regulations on the terms and conditions for obtaining scientific degrees and holding academic positions in NCPHA and the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for holding the academic position of "professor".

**Conclusion**

The analysis of the submitted documents for Assoc. Prof. Hristo Hinkov gives me full grounds to vote convincingly "FOR" the award of the academic position "Professor" in "Social Medicine and Health Management".

March 7, 2022 With respect:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'M' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.