

STATEMENT OF EVALUATION

for a competition for the academic position "Professor" in the professional field 3.2.
Psychology, announced by New Bulgarian University
by **Prof. Hristo P. Todorov, PhD**, Department of Philosophy and Sociology, NBU

The competition for the academic position "Professor" in the professional field 3.2. Psychology is announced by the New Bulgarian University in No. 87 of the Official Gazette of 17 November 2023. The only candidate for this competition is **Assoc. Prof. Elena Petrova Andonova, PhD**, full-time lecturer in the Department of Cognitive Science and Psychology at NBU. The documents submitted by the candidate for participation in the competition give grounds to conclude that Assoc. Prof. Elena Andonova meets the minimum national requirements and meets all other requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulation for the Development of Academic Staff of the NBU for holding the academic position "Professor".

The candidate received her PhD in 1999 from the University of Wales College Cardiff (validated by the SAC in 2005) with a dissertation on *Strategies of Euphemisation of 'Death'*.

Elena Andonova has submitted her *habilitation thesis* – the monograph "Early Language Development. ISBN - 978-619-233-205-1 (236 pages) – and 30 other publications. Of these, one study and ten articles have been published in refereed and indexed journals. The remaining nineteen articles have been published in non-refereed journals.

In terms of content, the monographic work "Early Language Development. Grammar" is closely related to another book by Elena Andonova "Early Language Development. Vocabulary" ISBN 978-619-233-194-8 (222 pages). Both books are in the field of psycholinguistics and deal with some of the most important issues of children's earliest development – issues related to language acquisition in terms of vocabulary and grammar respectively.

Elena Andonova's research is realized in the theoretical framework of the use-based research approach to language acquisition. This theoretical approach is presented in Elena Andonova's habilitation thesis along with other approaches in the chapter "Theoretical Approaches to Language Acquisition". The next chapter, entitled "Research Methodology", presents the prevailing research methods in contemporary psycholinguistics of early language

development. These two chapters reflect the current state of scientific knowledge in this research field. Particular emphasis in the chapter on research methodology is placed on the MBCDI (MacArthur Bates Communicative Development Inventories) and VERBA (Questionnaires of Language Development – Bulgarian Adaptation) questionnaires. The MBCDI is a research instrument developed by Elizabeth MacArthur. It is widely used in the USA and in dozens of other countries and has many adaptations to different languages. VERBA is a Bulgarian adaptation of the MBCDI created in 2012 by Elena Andonova. The author presents in detail the content of this tool in terms of grammar. Based on data collected over the last ten years on an unusually large sample for Bulgarian research practice of several hundred children acquiring Bulgarian, Elena Andonova traces and analyses the development of grammar in children aged 16 to 30 months – the period of active language acquisition. Her analysis makes it possible to establish the typical development of language skills for the acquisition of Bulgarian. It can be clearly seen, for example, when children generally learn to use word endings according to gender, number and tense and to combine words into expressions. Of particular interest are the author's subsequent analyses in which she explores the impact of social and demographic factors on children's language development. Statistical methods are used to investigate the dependence of children's language development on their gender, socioeconomic and educational status of parents. The author finds that the dependence of children's grammatical development on such factors is weaker than the dependence of their vocabulary development on them. Despite this difference, however, as shown in the chapter “On the Inseparability of Grammar from Vocabulary”, the author bases her research on the existence of an inextricable interdependence between children's vocabulary and grammatical development at an early age. This thesis is obtained as a final result of Elena Andonova's above mentioned two monographic studies on early language development – on vocabulary and on grammar. In addition to the two monographs, Elena Andonova has seven other publications on early language development. This shows that for her as a scholar, research in this area has been, and clearly remains, of paramount importance over a long period of time.

In addition to early language development, Elena Andonova has made significant contributions in another area of child development. Together with a small research group at the NBU, she has been developing tools to investigate the academic motivation of Bulgarian students from grades 5 to 12. These tools are well applied in pedagogical practice. Her research on the needs of Bulgarian families with autistic children is also of considerable

practical value. The study allows to find ways to support such families and to better integrate such children.

Another area in which Elena Andonova has research achievements is the field of spatial cognition and communication. These achievements consist in the development of experimental setups and data analyses for the study of communication between dialogic partners on the spatial localization of objects and on route descriptions. These research tools allow to better understand the influence of the utterances used by dialogic partners in their overall orientation in space.

Elena Andonova's research on the interaction between the grammatical gender of a word in Bulgarian and the gender of the person under study deserves attention. These studies are valuable not only because, unlike many other language systems, there is a grammatical gender in Bulgarian, but also because of the particular individual experiences of male and female speakers of Bulgarian. This experience is reflected in the frequency of use and perception of linguistic expressions with information about grammatical gender.

From the review of the candidate's publications and the list of her scientific contributions, it is evident that Elena Andonova is an active researcher with significant achievements. This finding is also supported by the list of 16 research and educational projects that have received funding from national and foreign sources in which she has participated. The large number of international projects as well as Elena Andonova's publications in prestigious international specialized journals testify that she is well integrated in the international scientific community.

Elena Andonova has a long and successful career as a university lecturer. For long periods of time she has taught at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", New Bulgarian University and the University of Bremen. For the longest time (from 1995 to 2004 and from 2011 to the present) she has taught at NBU. She has made a significant contribution to the creation and implementation of the Bachelor's programmes in Psychology and Psychology in English and the Master's programmes in Cognitive Science, Developmental Psychology and Translation and Interpreting Technologies at NBU. Elena Andonova's average grade in student surveys for the last 10 semesters until 2022 is very good (4.36). She successfully introduces students to research work and in the last five years has joint publications with 5 students from NBU undergraduate and graduate programs. She has also supervised 10 undergraduate and graduate theses in the last 5 years. Elena Andonova has also been a supervisor of two successfully defended PhD students.

Elena Andonova has performed various administrative functions at NBU. She has been the Director of the Master's Program in Cognitive Science and the Master's Programs of the Department of Cognitive Science and Psychology. She was the Head of the Department of Cognitive Science and Psychology and is now the Head of the Cognitive Science Research Centre.

I have known Elena Andonova since my student years at “St. Kliment Ohridski”. Later we were colleagues at the National School of Ancient Languages and Cultures. Since 2003 we have been colleagues at the NBU. In my eyes Elena Andonova is an intelligent, hardworking and responsible person. She stands out for her conscientiousness, efficiency and goodwill.

I have no joint publications with the candidate and have no conflict of interest.

Conclusion. The overall research, teaching expert and public activity of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Petrova Andonova is a convincing defense of her candidacy for the academic position of Professor in the professional field 3.2. Psychology at New Bulgarian University. As a member of the Scientific Jury I vote FOR her election with full conviction.

Signature:

Prof. Hristo P. Todorov, PhD

Sofia, 11 February 2024