

REVIEW

Competition announced through Order RD-09-36 / June 1, 2026, for the academic position of "associate professor" in professional field 2.1. Philology, scientific specialty "Bulgarian Language," for the needs of the Section for the History of the Bulgarian Language, "Professor Lyubomir Andreychin" Institute of the Bulgarian Language

Author: Prof. Lilia Ilieva, Ph.D.

The sole candidate in the contest is Magdalena Stefanova Abadzhieva, Ph.D. in Philology and Senior Assistant Professor at the "Prof. Lyubomir Andreychin" Institute of the Bulgarian Language, Section for the History of the Bulgarian Language.

Presentation of the candidate.

Senior Assistant Professor Magdalena Abadzhieva Ph.D. earned a bachelor's degree in Bulgarian Philology from Sofia University in 2002, a master's degree in Marketing from the University of Veliko Tarnovo in 2006, and defended her doctoral dissertation in 2006 at the Institute of Bulgarian Language. She completed a specialization program in Italy that is closely related to her main research interests. The main field of research in which she works was a fortunate discovery, as it allows her to search for and study little-known and even unknown texts. This is the literature of Bulgarian Catholics, which contains a wide variety of texts: diverse in language, genre, and cultural significance.

To date, Magdalena Abadzhieva has worked primarily with manuscript texts (some of which she has tracked down and discovered herself), related mainly to the Catholics of southern Bulgaria, the so-called Paulicians. Some of these texts were written by Bulgarians, others by foreign Catholic missionaries—but in the Bulgarian language and intended to be read by Bulgarians. There is no doubt that when creating them, the missionaries

There is no doubt that, in creating these texts, the missionaries made use of language consultants from among the Bulgarian Catholics.

I would like to point out one distinctive feature of these texts. As literary works, they have modest cultural significance (with a few exceptions only). Their true significance lies in their reflection of the linguistic characteristics of the dialects in which they originated, at a time when the Modern Bulgarian literary standard was still

taking shape. In other words, they could not have been created within the framework of a linguistic standard simply because no such standard existed at the time. Yet they offer a rich insight into the diversity of the Bulgarian vernacular, and it is precisely here that both the interests and the contributions of Magdalena Abadzhieva, their researcher, lie.

Habilitation Thesis.

In accordance with legal requirements, a habilitation thesis has been submitted: the monograph "The Literature of 19th-Century Bulgarian Catholics and Banat Literature," published in 2024 in Sofia by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press. The author has also submitted two additional published books: "Father Maurizio's Manuscript Bulgarian-Italian Dictionary from 1845," published in 2020 in Sofia, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press; as well as a co-authored anthology: Magdalena Abadzhieva, Mariana Tsibranska-Kostova, "Texts from the Literature of Bulgarian Catholics and Banat Bulgarians," Sofia, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 2020.

In the monograph, submitted as a habilitation thesis, the author presents her view, which she seeks to substantiate and defend. This view concerns the continuity between the literary works of Bulgarian Catholics in the country and the literature produced in other countries. As is well known, there were several waves of emigration by Bulgarian Catholics to the territory of the former Habsburg Empire (later Austria-Hungary), and after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they found themselves divided among several new states, with the Bulgarian diaspora in present-day Western Romania, in the historical region of Banat, being the most intact. In the past, however, Bulgarian Catholics successfully integrated into Croatian education and culture, and some of them achieved significant accomplishments of which Croatians are justifiably proud.

M. Abadzhieva's interests, however, are focused on little-known or unknown authors whom she discovers by drawing on her personal contacts with Bulgarian Catholics, in addition, of course, to the manuscripts available in library collections. Her contribution to enriching the corpus of texts produced in the field she studies is significant.

M. Abadzhieva seeks to prove her important thesis regarding the continuity between works created within the country and those created abroad. M. Abadzhieva seeks to prove this primarily in two ways: first, through orthography; second, through vocabulary.

It is known that, from a certain point onward, Bulgarian Catholics used only the Latin alphabet and Italian orthography (Italian orthography was also used in older sources for entries written in Cyrillic, for example, in the letters from the people of Chiprovtsi to Rome or in Krastyo Peikich's "Mirror of Truth", in the 1716 Venetian edition).

Thus, it is a tradition with deep roots, linked to the literary tradition of Bosnian Catholics, but M. Abadzhieva's focus is on details and tracing historical changes.

As for the vocabulary, it is common to the dialect area of 19th- and 20th-century Bulgarian Catholics; the migrants brought it with them from their Bulgarian homeland, and it was precisely the Eastern Bulgarian linguistic layer that was supported by the standard language in Banat, where, along with Croatianisms, features of the Western Bulgarian Chiprovtsi dialect were also "purified."

In addition to the three books, M. Abadzhieva has also published a number of articles, most of which are related to the main focus of her research interests.

These articles deal with the language and literature of Bulgarian Catholics.

I will focus on certain points from the presented articles that I consider important or interesting.

Her article "NEW DATA ON THE LITERATURE OF BULGARIAN CATHOLICS IN THE 19TH CENTURY" is based on a paper presented at an academic conference. It provides an opportunity to highlight important aspects of M. Abadzhieva's scholarly research. The paper presents a newly discovered manuscript by Andrea Canova (a well-known author of books) from 1845. M. Abadzhieva was certainly successful in locating this manuscript, and this constitutes a significant scholarly achievement.

At the same time, this also highlights a difficulty in researching the field in which M. Abadzhieva works. She describes Andrea Canova as follows: "The author is a Catholic scholar, a priest of the Capuchin Order."

However, in the text itself, the author describes his work and himself as follows:

"Praudinata Od Verata

Ubadina sas pitani, i odgovareni za faida od oneja hora, deto nemat ureme illi akal Dase nauciat po na dalboko.

Kitapce od jedin Redovnik od Red od Jesuitite"

It is clear that the author presents himself as a Jesuit rather than a Capuchin (the Capuchins are Franciscans). I note this to emphasize that the study of Catholic texts requires a great deal of background knowledge that goes beyond standard philological

expertise. In most cases, M. Abadzhieva successfully overcomes such difficulties, but in this case, there is one oversight.

The article "THE BANAT BULGARIANS BETWEEN THE BANAT DIALECT AND THE PALKEN LANGUAGE," published in the journal "Bulgarian Language and Literature", is also of theoretical interest.

The author points out that even among the Banat Bulgarians themselves, their dialect is referred to in various ways—"Palkenski," "Banatski," "Banatski Bulgarian," and "Bulgarian." It is also not surprising to read the following sentence: "For the most part, families speak their own dialect, which they refer to as a language."

Anyone who has worked with informants in the field during a standard dialectological study knows that informants are usually convinced that in their village, people speak a "language" that is unique to that village.

Furthermore, the informants identify Bulgarian as the language they studied in school: "This is also confirmed by the question of which languages they studied in school.

Here, 55% of those surveyed answered 'Bulgarian,' which means that for the vast majority of Banat Bulgarians, the standard Bulgarian language is a foreign language, and they need additional help to learn it."

In general, no one has studied their native dialect or family idiolect in school! For all Bulgarians, the standard literary language is initially associated primarily with school. But in today's Banat, young people lack family support to learn not only the standard Bulgarian literary language but even its "Palken" variant. It is encouraging, however, that according to M. Abadzhieva's statement, "70% of those surveyed indicated that they speak 'Palken' in church, which confirms the historical fact that it was precisely the church that helped preserve the Banat dialect over the years and continues to be the keeper of the linguistic identity of the Banat Bulgarians today."

The article "THE CONCEPT OF 'ours' and 'theirs' IN THE SPEECH OF BULGARIAN CATHOLICS FROM BELENE: LEXICAL EXAMPLES," also published in "Bulgarian Language and Literature", is interesting in its conception. Here, the author has, in my opinion, offered an adequate interpretation of the word "бръзъицъ", found in the dialect, which refers to an unattractive woman (linked by M. Abadzhieva to the Romanian word for "stork"). However, the author (albeit cautiously) mistakenly links this word to the term "bras," found in this dialect, meaning "face"; she writes: "It remains to be further investigated whether 'bras' in

the dialect of the Bulgarian Catholics of Belene, with the meaning 'face,' is related to 'brăzûtsă.' According to Elena Vraikova, the Belene Catholics do not know the word 'face'; they use only the masculine noun 'bras,' e.g., 'umýy si brazù' (wash your face), 'ýbù bràs' (beautiful face)."

This "bras," however, clearly derives from "оѣраз," a word used to mean 'face' in many Bulgarian dialects, including the Chiprovtsi dialect. This makes the appearance of the word in Belene particularly interesting, because there are long-standing ties between the local Catholic population and the Catholics in the Chiprovtsi region.

Other Research Works

M. Abadzhieva's scholarly interests are focused but extend beyond the field of Catholic literature. She has conducted other research as well.

A paper she presented at a scholarly conference at Sofia University, titled "POETRY AND NORMATIVITY" and dedicated to the work of Nikolay Milchev, has been published. N. Milchev is an interesting contemporary poet, and M. Abadzhieva's study of him is no an accident.

She herself has a deep interest in and has made significant contributions to the field of Bulgarian poetry, which lends a distinctive flavor to her linguistic works.

M. Abadzhieva has also presented the article "HOW DO STUDENTS USE THE CONJUNCTIONS НИТО – НИТО, ТУ – ТУ И ХЕМ – ХЕМ?", based on a national survey she conducted. The article was published in the journal "Bulgarian Language and Literature." Here, once again, the author's interest in living spoken language is evident.

Conclusion

Ms. Magdalena Abadzhieva has made numerous discoveries and serendipitous finds, documented in her works, which are too numerous to list. For example, she managed to discover a new manuscript by Father Eduardo, who is an important figure in Bulgarian culture as a whole as the author of an adaptation of Paisii's History (based on Christaki Pavlovich's edition) for Bulgarian Catholics. There is no need to list them in detail, because her contributions are already evident.

Her organizational skills in the field of scholarship are also impressive. She has led important projects:

1. "The Cultural Identity of the Banat Bulgarians and Bulgarian Catholic Literature," funded by the Scientific Research Fund of the Ministry of Education and Science (contract KP-06-N70/1) from December 2022.

2. "Digitization of Texts and Research Related to the History of the Bulgarian Language," funded under the National Program "Development and Promotion of Bulgarian Studies Abroad" starting in September 2022.

I have personal impressions of Ms. Magdalena Abadzhieva, who is a positive and well-intentioned person with an honest approach to science.

I will vote without hesitation in favor of her appointment as associate professor in the field for which the competition is being held.

August 1, 2026

Signature:

(Prof. Dr. Lilia Ilieva)