

Opinion



Regarding the competition for the academic position of Associate professor in professional field 2.1. Philology, scientific specialty Bulgarian Language, as announced in the Bulgarian "State Gazette" No. 33, April 3, 2026.

Candidate: Magdalena Stefanova Abadzhieva, Senior Assistant Professor, PhD, at the Institute for Bulgarian Language, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Prepared by: Maria Emilova Pileva, Associate Professor, Ph.D., at the Institute for Literature – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

The materials submitted by M. Abadzhieva for the announced competition for the position of Associate Professor cover a wide range of scholarly and applied research publications: two monographs, an anthology co-authored with M. Tsibranska-Kostova, a study co-authored with L. Antonova-Vasileva, and 26 articles, eight of which have been published in peer-reviewed and indexed scholarly journals. Taken together, these works outline a coherent and clearly identifiable research profile. Twenty-nine citations to publications by M. Abadzhieva have been identified, of which eight are citations or reviews in refereed and indexed scholarly journals, four appear in peer-reviewed monographs and edited volumes, and the remainder in non-indexed peer-reviewed publications. The citing publications are authored by scholars from various fields, including historians of the Bulgarian language, Slavists, dialectologists, ethnolinguists, lexicologists, and literary scholars from Bulgaria and abroad, among them Mariola Walczak-Mikołajczakowa, Abidin Karasu, Tatiana Braga, Ivan Šimko, and Kjetil Rå Hauge.

The research of M. Abadzhieva's focuses on the history of the Bulgarian language, the literature of Bulgarian Catholics and Banat Bulgarian literature, historical lexicology and lexicography, dialectology, linguistic identity, and the standard language norm. Her work combines fundamental and applied research by bringing unknown manuscript and lexicographic sources into scholarly circulation, tracing the continuity between the Catholic literary tradition in the southern Bulgarian lands and Banat Bulgarian literature, presenting early texts in modern Bulgarian, examining language attitudes, and formulating proposals concerning the contemporary Banat Bulgarian written standard.

M. Abadzhieva has participated in 17 scholarly forums in Bulgaria and abroad, has delivered lectures outside Bulgaria, and has taken part in 11 national research and educational projects. She is the principal investigator of two projects directly related to the main areas of her research: "The Cultural Identity of the Banat Bulgarians and Bulgarian Catholic Literature" (Bulgarian National Science Fund, Project No. KP-06-N70/1, 2022) and "Digitisation of Texts and Studies Related to the History of the Bulgarian Language" (part of the National Scientific Programme "Development and Promotion of Bulgarian Studies Abroad", 2022). Since 2025, she has been a member of the editorial board of the journal *Balgarska rech*, while her proficiency in English and Italian facilitates her work with foreign-language sources and her participation in international scholarly exchange.

The principal scholarly contributions of Dr Abadzhieva's lie in integrating the written heritage of Bulgarian Catholics and Banat Bulgarian literature into the broader history of the Bulgarian language and literary culture. Through the identification, description, and analysis of

newly discovered or little-studied archival materials, she substantially expands the source base of historical linguistics and highlights the contribution of Catholic clergy to the linguistic and cultural development of the Bulgarians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Particularly significant are her studies of the works of Petar Kovachev Tsarski, the use of Latin-based graphic and orthographic systems, and the continuity between the two literary traditions, as well as her proposals for reconsidering their periodisation. An original contribution is her well-substantiated proposal of a term for the language of the Banat Bulgarians, which refines the conceptual framework for its scholarly description (Abadzhieva 2023).

M. Abadzhieva's monograph submitted as her habilitation thesis, *The Literature of the Bulgarian Catholics from the XIX Century and the Banat Literature* (2024), continues and synthesises her long-standing research interests. Her earlier monograph, *The 1845 Bulgarian-Italian Manuscript Dictionary of Father Maurizio* (2020), devoted to Father Maurizio da Castellazzo's literary, missionary, and educational work among Bulgarian Catholics, already demonstrates her meticulous work with primary sources and her ability to discover and analyse new evidence. The monograph presents the complete text of the earliest known surviving Bulgarian-Italian manuscript dictionary, containing approximately 3,500 words from the spoken language in the southern Bulgarian lands. Its analysis of the graphic, orthographic, phonetic, and lexical features of the manuscript, together with the numerous explanatory notes, reveals the dictionary's value not only as a lexicographic source but also as a significant historical and cultural artefact. This research model is continued and further developed in Chapters Five to Eight of the habilitation thesis through a comparison of the graphic, orthographic, phonetic, and lexical features of literature of the Bulgarian Catholics with the Banat Bulgarian written standard.

In the Introduction, the author draws attention to little-studied periods in the history of the Bulgarian literary language and raises the question of the links between the written heritage of the Catholic communities in the southern Bulgarian lands and Banat. Chapter One provides a systematic review of previous research and outlines the current state of scholarship on the subject. The clearly formulated aims and objectives focus on re-examining the periodisation and establishing continuity between the two traditions. Through an analysis of skilfully selected linguistic and literary material, the author consistently fulfils the stated objectives.

Chapter Two reconsiders the principal approaches to the periodisation of Bulgarian Catholic literature, which are based on different criteria: genre-related features in the studies of Boyan Penev and Petar Dinekov, who focus mainly on individual authors and works; confessional affiliation in the studies of Kr. Stanchev and Sv. Igov, who introduced the concepts of "Paulician literature" and "Palčene"; and linguistic features in the studies of L. Miletich and M. Walczak-Mikołajczakowa, who established the use of the term "Paulician literature". The review shows that, for much of the twentieth century, Bulgarian Catholic literature was not accorded the attention it deserved, one possible reason being the ideological climate of the socialist period, in which religious issues were systematically marginalised. M. Abadzhieva highlights the hitherto unexplored manuscript mode of transmission of this literature and handles the established terminological framework with both precision and a critical perspective.

Chapters Three and Four present a total of six manuscripts by various writers, preserved in Bulgarian and foreign archives and private collections, the contents of which is not confined to religious themes. Through an analysis of these manuscripts, the book traces the traditions,

lines of continuity, and external influences that shaped the development of Bulgarian Catholic literature, with particular attention to the use of the Latin script. The author formulates well-argued hypotheses, including the attribution of the 1845 manuscript to Andrea Canova; in the case of manuscript NBKM 1308, she identifies inaccuracies in the description by Stoyanov and Kondov and proposes convincingly argued corrections.

On the basis of the graphic and orthographic analysis in Chapter Five, M. Abadzhieva concludes that “there are grounds for speaking of an orthographic tradition in Bulgarian Catholic literature which became established after the mid-eighteenth century” and “formed the basis of an attempt to create a literary standard” (Abadzhieva 2024: 67). In Chapter Six, by comparing Yako Yakovski’s orthographic system with the Banat Bulgarian written standard, she identifies a more complex orthographic model and substantiates its influence on Yozu Ril’s *Balgarskoto pravopisanie*. Chapter Seven examines the phonetic features of nineteenth-century Bulgarian Catholic literature, including the vocalisation $v > u$, the reductions $e > i$ and $o > u$, and the reflexes of the yat vowel and the back nasal vowel, among others.

The final chapter, Chapter Eight, has the strongest empirical focus. Drawing on lexical examples from various written sources, M. Abadzhieva traces the continuity between the literature of Bulgarian Catholics in the southern Bulgarian lands and Banat literature, highlighting common layers in Christian and everyday vocabulary. Particularly valuable are Sections 8.1 and 8.2, which compare nineteen lexemes of biblical origin attested in Banat translations and in the literature of Catholics from the southern Bulgarian lands. The Bibliography comprises 85 sources, and the study includes an Index of names and a Summary in English. Many of the manuscripts discussed are reproduced in the appendices, thereby enhancing the documentary value and comprehensiveness of the work.

In any future expansion of the study, it would be useful to include R. Kauk and L. Kossilkov’s *Evangjeljite za sate nedeli i praznici* (1876), a work of particular significance for the spiritual life of the Banat Bulgarians, and to draw parallels with Protestant Bible translations from the same period. Such a comparison would further enrich the observations on biblical vocabulary, translation choices, and confessionally conditioned linguistic features.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that M. Abadzhieva’s scholarly output is distinguished by thematic consistency, a rich source base, analytical precision, and clearly defined original scholarly and applied research contributions. On the basis of the documents and scholarly works submitted, which comply with the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations on its Implementation, the Regulations on the Terms and Procedure for the Acquisition of Academic Degrees and Appointment to Academic Positions at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and the Regulations on the Terms and Procedure for the Acquisition of Academic Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at the Institute for Bulgarian Language “Prof. Lyubomir Andreychin”, I give a positive assessment of M. Abadzhieva’s candidacy and confidently recommend that the Scientific Jury endorse her candidacy for the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 2.1 Philology, Scientific Specialty Bulgarian Language.

Date: 04.08.2026

Signature:

/Maria Pileva/