

OPINION

on the scholarly works submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 2.3. Philosophy, announced in the State Gazette, Issue No. 8 of 21 January 2026, for the needs of the Department of History and Philosophy at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov University of Burgas.

Author of the Opinion: Prof. Diana Radoynova, D.Sc.

Candidate: Franziska van Buren-Penev, Phd

1. Information on the Competition

By Order No. RD-109/23.03.2026 of the Rector of Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov Burgas State University, and by a subsequent order appointing the Scientific Jury, I was designated as a member of the Scientific Jury for the competition for the academic position of **Associate Professor** in Professional Field **2.3**. Philosophy, announced in the *State Gazette*, Issue No. 8 of 21 January 2026. I was assigned the task of preparing an opinion on the materials submitted for participation in the competition.

The sole candidate in the announced competition is Franziska van Buren-Penev. The candidate has submitted a complete set of application materials in both printed and electronic form, including all required documents in compliance with the minimum national requirements under Article 2b of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as Article 2 of the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedures for the Award of Academic Degrees and Appointment to Academic Positions at Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov Burgas State University.

2. Quantitative Overview of the Scholarly Output

The candidate participates in the competition with the monographic study *Aristotle's Eudemus: Collected Fragments with Commentary*, published by Brill, one of the world's most prestigious academic publishing houses, in its Ancient Philosophy series.

The candidate's dossier also includes eight scholarly publications: four journal articles, two of which have been published in peer-reviewed and indexed academic journals included in internationally recognized scientific databases, and four scholarly studies, three of which are indexed in the internationally renowned databases Scopus and Web of Science (WoS).

In addition, the candidate has delivered nine conference papers and invited lectures, including one keynote address and six invited presentations at international academic institutions and conferences. Franziska van Buren-Penev's research profile demonstrates sustained scholarly engagement in the fields of ancient, late antique, and medieval philosophy, with a particular emphasis on Aristotelian studies and their reception. Her academic work is characterized by thematic consistency, methodological rigor, and active participation in the international scholarly community.

3. Information on the Candidate

3.1. Educational Background and Research Activity

The candidate's educational background is impressive both in terms of its coherence and its international profile. Following the completion of a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and Classical Languages at Fordham University, combined with a second major in Classical History, Franziska van Buren went on to complete a Master's degree in Philosophy at the same institution with distinction. Her master's research focused on the metaphysics of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and its reception in the medieval philosophical tradition.

Franziska van Buren's overall professional and research activity is focused on the investigation of key problems in ancient and medieval philosophy, metaphysics, and theology. At the same time, her academic career is characterized by the consistent and in-depth development of research in the history of philosophy, active engagement in university teaching, and extensive international and interinstitutional mobility. These achievements are indicative of her strong and well-established presence within the international academic community.

Research Stays

The research stays documented in Franziska van Buren-Penev's curriculum vitae, conducted in Rome, Florence, and Sofia, involved work with manuscript and archival materials in specialized libraries

and research institutions. These activities demonstrate a serious commitment both to the study of primary sources and to an interdisciplinary approach to the investigation of the ancient and medieval philosophical tradition.

Particular attention should also be given to van Buuren's participation in archaeological fieldwork, which has further broadened her expertise regarding the historical and cultural contexts within which philosophical ideas emerged and developed.

Academic Career Development

The candidate's professional trajectory is marked by a consistent pattern of academic advancement within prestigious international research and educational institutions, as well as by active participation in research and teaching projects of significant scholarly value.

Following the completion of her doctoral degree at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München in 2021-undertaken within the framework of the Munich School of Ancient Philosophy and funded through a prestigious scholarship awarded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) - van Buuren continued her academic career as a postdoctoral researcher at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, one of Europe's leading centers for research in ancient philosophy.

Between 2021 and 2023, Franziska van Buren served as a researcher in the European Research Council (ERC) project *Not Another History of Platonism*. Since 2023, she has held an individual postdoctoral fellowship awarded by the Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO) for a project dedicated to the study of early Aristotle, with particular emphasis on his cosmology and theology.

These academic appointments attest to the international recognition of Franziska van Buren's scholarly potential, as well as to her demonstrated ability to secure highly competitive research funding.

3.2. Teaching Activity

The candidate also possesses substantial teaching experience. She has taught university courses and seminars at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, KU Leuven, and Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski." The subjects she has taught encompass key areas of ancient and medieval philosophy, including Aristotelian cosmology, Neoplatonism, the reception of Aristotle in the Patristic tradition, as well as the interactions between philosophy and religion in the ancient Mediterranean world. Given the specialized nature and broad thematic scope of van Buuren's teaching activity, it may be concluded that she possesses the requisite academic competence to work effectively with students at different levels of higher education, both in undergraduate and graduate programs.

Particularly noteworthy is her ability to consistently integrate the results of her ongoing research into the teaching process. This practice contributes to the continual updating of the curriculum through the incorporation of new theoretical perspectives, current research approaches, and recent scholarly findings. As a result, the educational process gains greater academic relevance and provides students with access to the latest developments and achievements in the respective field of knowledge.

3.3. Description and Evaluation of the Scholarly Contribution of Franziska van Buren's Monograph

The monograph *Aristotle's Eudemus: Collected Fragments with Commentary*, submitted as Franziska van Buren's principal habilitation work, constitutes a focused and methodologically rigorous reconstruction of Aristotle's lost dialogue *Eudemus*. Particularly noteworthy is the manner in which the author combines philological analysis, the history of philosophy, and conceptual reconstruction with exceptional depth and scholarly precision.

The study is organized into two substantial and complementary parts, followed by a critical edition and translation of the surviving fragments. The first part, "*Myths, Narratives, and the Dramatic Framework*," examines the literary, historical, and cultural context of Aristotle's lost dialogue *Eudemus*. Through detailed analyses of themes such as Orphism, Eudemus' dream, the myth of Midas and Silenus, and the related narrative traditions, the author reconstructs the dramatic setting and intellectual milieu of the work. This section demonstrates a high level of expertise in the interpretation of fragmentary sources and in situating Aristotelian thought within the broader context of ancient religious and philosophical traditions.

The author's treatment of the available evidence is characterized by methodological rigor, interpretative nuance, and a careful engagement with both primary sources and contemporary scholarship. As a result, the study offers a compelling reconstruction of the intellectual and cultural framework within which the dialogue was conceived and contributes significantly to our understanding of Aristotle's early philosophical development.

The second part, "*Central Philosophical Themes and Arguments*," is devoted to a systematic reconstruction of the dialogue's philosophical content. The discussion focuses on key issues in Aristotle's psychology and metaphysics, including the theory of the soul as harmony, the conceptual history and interpretation of *entelecheia*, the distinction between soul (*psyche*) and intellect (*nous*), as well as the relationship between cognitive and vital functions. The analysis combines meticulous philological scholarship with rigorous philosophical argumentation, enabling Francisca van Buren to advance original and well-substantiated theses concerning the development of Aristotle's thought. According to the author, the principal aim of the study is:

It is clear that my purpose from the very start was to investigate an alternative to the developmentalist reading: if we set aside the narrative about the supposed development of Aristotle's thought from Platonic to authentically Aristotelian, which has dominated the literature on Aristotle's lost works for the past near one hundred years, would the reconstruction that we arrived at indeed confirm or negate Jaeger's original hypothesis? The answer is clear: Jaeger's thesis does not stand up. Quite to the contrary, the present book provides an overview of the Eudemus, which aligns not only with the de Anima, but finds a clear place and purpose within the wider set of Aristotle's philosophical output, both extant and lost.

A significant scholarly contribution of the volume is its extensive concluding section, "*Fragments and Translations*," which presents the surviving textual evidence accompanied by translations and detailed commentary. This section provides an important research tool for specialists and enhances the value of the monograph as a reference work. Overall, the monograph is distinguished by a coherent structure that moves from literary and historical reconstruction to philosophical analysis and textual documentation. It is evident that, both structurally and substantively, van Buren's study successfully integrates approaches drawn from classical philology and philosophical inquiry. As a result, it makes an original contribution to Aristotelian scholarship and to the study of ancient theories of the soul.

4. Conclusion

The candidate in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field 2.3 Philosophy has submitted a sufficient number of scholarly publications produced after the materials used in the defense of her PhD degree.

In her overall academic activity and research output, the candidate demonstrates significant, original, and high-quality scholarly contributions that not only enrich the respective field of research but also possess substantial potential for broad practical application in both teaching and further scholarly inquiry.

The results of her work are characterized by topical relevance, scholarly depth, and unquestionable practical value. Dr. van Buren's scholarly and teaching qualifications in relation to the announced competition are demonstrated in a clear and unequivocal manner through her academic achievements, research activity, and teaching experience.

On the basis of all the considerations presented above, I give my fully positive and unequivocal assessment of the candidate and will vote without reservation in favor of the appointment of Dr. Francisca van Buren to the academic position of Associate Professor in Philosophy.

Prof. Diana Radoynova, D.Sc