

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to invite you to the

## **Second International Conference on the Middle Class**

### **“The Middle Class as a Precondition for the Stability of Society: Fifteen Years Later”**

#### **The conference commemorates the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Prof. Nikolai Tilkidjiev**

The *philosophy of the conference* rests upon the understanding that, in order to be fruitful, the debate as to the nature of contemporary societies, as to their particularities, mutual similarities and differences, and the crises they undergo, requires a comprehensive analysis of the processes occurring in the *middle classes* of these societies.

What significant changes have occurred in the middle class in the last fifteen years? In view of the difficulties that all contemporary societies – both developed and developing, both Eastern and Western – have experienced, what transformations have taken place in the middle class, its structure, stratification specificity, and identity? In the context of the world economic crisis, is the middle class melting down or even disappearing in the worst hit regions? Is so-called “middle class anxiety” a typical phenomenon of our time?

The conference is focused on a *wide range of problems*:

- Theoretical and conceptual problems of the study of the middle class, its nature, formation, reproduction, development, stabilization, social-group mobility;
- The Bulgarian middle class: its social-economic, cultural, political, etc., status, identity, mobility, the problems that confront its social group stability, etc.
- The middle class in a comparative perspective, the social-group characteristics of the middle classes in contemporary post-communist and developed societies, a comparison of the middle classes in the historical, regional, national, civilizational, contexts;

- Stratification particularities of the different social-group formations belonging to the middle class: entrepreneurs, managers, professionals, specialists and experts, the “old” and “new”, the “lower”, “middle”, and “upper” middle class, etc.
- Methodological problems related to measuring the middle class, to the basic indicators defining it, and to the dividing lines between the separate social groups;
- The subjective middle class and how people identify with it;
- Cultural identity, educational achievement, and values of the middle class; its moral norms and esthetic tastes;
- Political culture and behaviour of the middle class;
- Models of consumption, leisure, and lifestyle of the middle class;

The conference will commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Prof. Nikolai Tilkidjiev, whose name has become emblematic for modern Bulgarian sociology of the middle class and social stratification. He was the main organizer of the international conference “The Middle Class as a Precondition for the Stability of Society”, conducted in 1998, a time when the claim that a middle class exists in Bulgaria and in the other post-communist societies sounded absurd at the very least, and when any discussion on the topic began and ended with the question “is there a middle class?”

How has the middle class changed in the last fifteen years since the First International Conference on this important topic? How have our theoretical approaches and the methodology with which we study it developed? What new conclusions and generalizations have we made, and how has the study of the middle class contributed to a fuller understanding of the society in which we live? What are the practical-applied results and achievements of research on the middle class? How has this research helped to clarify our understanding of the middle class’s social-group position? Have our research efforts enabled us to propose to the public and to people in government a clear and comprehensible conception as to the middle class and its social role, did we convince them of the middle class’s importance for the stability of society?

*The objective* of the Second International Conference on the Middle Class is to propose answers to these and related theoretical, methodological and practical-applied questions.

**The conference will take place on December 6 and 7, 2013 in Sofia.**

**All of you who would like to participate are asked to send the title and abstract of your paper (up to 150 words) by September 30 to:**

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**Organizing Committee:**

Rumyana Stoilova, Director of ISSK at BAS, Chairperson of RC Social Stratification at BSA

Maya Keliyan, ISSK

Mihail Mirchev, President of BSA, UNWE

Milena Stefanova, Vice Rector of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

Siyka Kovacheva, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and History of Plovdiv University Paisiy Hilendarski

Valentina Milenkova, South-West University Neofit Rilski, Blagoevgrad

Svetla Koleva, ISSK, President of the Balkan Sociological Forum