

OPINION

of Siyka Kostadinova Kovacheva, PhD, Associate Professor in the Department of Applied and Institutional Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy and History, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

of the materials submitted for the competition
to occupy the academic position of 'Associate Professor'
at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology,
for the needs of the Public Policy and Social Change Section.

Veneta Krasteva is the only candidate who has submitted documents for participation in the competition for Associate Professor in the specialty "Sociology", promulgated in the State Gazette Issue 89 / 12.11.2019.

1. General description of the materials presented

The set of paper materials presented by Veneta Krusteva is in accordance with the Rules of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology for the conditions and procedure for acquiring academic degrees and for occupying academic positions. The applicant participates in the competition with one monograph as her habilitation work, another published book based on her PhD thesis, 5 longer papers, 15 articles and 13 chapters in collective monographs, most of which are published in English. All publications are in well-established publishing houses and many of them are in internationally recognized academic journals.

Veneta Krasteva's research interests are in the area of youth employment, young people in vulnerable situations, flexible forms of work, poverty and social exclusion, and public policies to support vulnerable groups in the labor market and the sociology of religions.

2. General characteristics of the applicant's scientific, applied and pedagogical activity

Chief Assistant Dr. Veneta Krasteva has established herself as a young researcher and has successfully participated in 7 international and 5 national projects, receiving the BAS and MES

Award in 2019 for leading the most successful project under the Support to Young Scientists Program at BAS. Many of her studies are of applied nature, such as seeking transdisciplinary solutions to reduce youth disadvantage, finding effective policies against the social exclusion of young people, or reviewing good practices for involving young people in a number of European countries. Veneta Krasteva's teaching experience includes delivering lectures and seminars. Her dominant role as a researcher is reflected in her participation in scientific forums with papers and presentations, as well as as a member of the organizational committees of several national and international conferences.

In general, the activities of Veneta Krasteva have a wide spectrum and at the same time are sufficiently focused to achieve significant results.

3. Teaching experience of the applicant since the beginning of her career

For 5 years (2010-2016) Veneta Krasteva has delivered lectures and seminars in economic sociology at the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, which were very well received by the students majoring in the field of Sociology of Law, Economics and Innovation. In 2016, she worked as the coordinator of a student internship program between the Sociological Departments of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Sofia University and the University of National and World Economy.

4. Analysis of the applicant's scientific achievements, with a clear description of the scientific contributions

Veneta Krasteva develops the concept of job insecurity/precarious jobs by applying it to the situation of young people in the labor market in Bulgaria and in other European countries. This is the focus of her research and is present in her habilitation work and in at least ten more studies, articles and scientific reports. Her approach enriches the understanding of the vulnerability of young people not only as difficulties in starting the first job and experiencing unemployment, but also as the low quality of work, underemployment, in-work poverty, lack of career prospects. These new aspects are the result of the development of flexible forms of employment and the concentration of young people precisely in these sectors of the labor market. It is worth noting the demonstrated skills of Krasteva for analytics and reflexivity in dealing with quantitative and qualitative data.

Krasteva's contribution to the study of institutional change is important for a deeper understanding of youth job precariousness. The latter is shown to be the result not only of inevitable

economic trends, but also of the actions of different actors: government institutions, employers, and employees. Young people themselves are presented as active actors who interact with the institutional context and seek their own ways of social inclusion. Krasteva demonstrates the heuristic value of Sen and others' capabilities approach to analyzing in-depth interviews with young people who have experienced difficulties in their labor integration. The idea of the increasing role of individual agency in achieving secure labor integration and the diminishing role of the institutional factor in this process is being affirmed.

Veneta Krasteva also contributes to the development of the concept of youth and the impact of recent trends in contemporary societies, and in particular of its fragmentation in the context of globalization. Youth are seen as a "separate group" in the labor market, with their specific problems. Significant social inequalities in young people's access to resources for successful social integration have been explored.

5. Contribution of the applicant to collective publications

Many of the applicant's publications are collaborative, the result of the widening scope of contemporary research and its increasingly transnational character. Given the high quality of her individual work, her co-authoring in numerous reports, studios and book chapters is a recognition of her abilities. Moreover, Krasteva is the first author of some of them. The applicant's co-authors are leading Bulgarian researchers and established names from European universities and research centers.

6. Reflection of the scientific publications of the candidate in the academic literature

Dr. Veneta Krasteva has presented 23 citations in international and Bulgarian publications. They demonstrate her recognition as a well-known researcher not only among the Bulgarian sociological community but also at the European level.

7. Critical notes of the reviewer on submitted papers

Although the vulnerability is seen as a multidimensional situation, most examples of young people who have dropped out of the labor market and those who are poorly integrated are of Roma origin (See for example the third and fourth chapters of the habilitation work). More diverse cases could be considered - e.g. youth without parents, youth with special needs and others.

8. The reviewer's personal impressions of the applicant and other themes not mentioned in the preceding paragraphs

I know the candidate mostly from participating in national conferences and from her publications. I have the impression of her as a serious researcher and a tolerant colleague. Veneta Krasteva has gathered several times more points than the obligatory minimum on the indicators for scientific and research activity, in accordance with the Rules of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology for the conditions and procedure for acquiring academic degrees and for occupying academic positions.

9. Reasoned and clearly worded conclusion.

I declare my positive assessment of the overall activity of the candidate and I suggest to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury of the competition to recommend to the National Assembly of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at BAS the candidate Chief Assist. Dr. Veneta Krasteva to be appointed to the scientific position of "Associate Professor" in the specialty "Sociology" in the section "Public Policies and Social Changes" of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at BAS.

February 2020

Member of the Jury:

Assoc. Prof., PhD Siyka Kovacheva
University of Plovdiv