

REVIEW

From Prof. Douhomir Minev

of materials submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in Sociology, code 3.1. at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology for the needs of the section "Public Policies and Social Change".

The competition for associate professor was announced in State Gazette No.89 / 12.11.2019. Assistant, Dr. Veneta Krasteva, has submitted documents for participation in the competition and she is the only applicant.

The applicant has a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Sociology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski »in 2003 and 2008 respectively. In 2009 she defended his doctoral thesis on the 'Business Ethics of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church' at the Institute of Sociology. In 2010, Krusteva was appointed to the position of " Chief Assistant" at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, which she has held until now.

1. General description of the materials presented

The applicant Veneta Krasteva submitted 35 publications for participation in the competition, out of a total of 54 publications before the holding of this competition. The publications include: habilitation work (monograph "Youth employment and job insecurity in Bulgaria, published in 2019), published PhD thesis, 15 articles and reports, 5 studies, 13 chapters of collective monographs. There are also 22 citations of the applicant's work and participation in a number of research projects

Submitted publications exceed the minimum requirements for occupying the position of associate professor. It can be added that the structure of the applicant's achievements also meets the minimum requirements, ie. not only the general minimum level of requirements was exceeded, but also the minimum requirements for the individual indicators by which the common minimum level was formed.

In particular, the minimum requirements are covered mainly through: publications, citations of research results and participation in research projects. All publications presented were made after the post of Chief Assistant and the PhD degree.

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

The publications presented show that the mentioned quantitative indicators were achieved through a considerable amount of research work, which was carried out during the 9-year period after the post of Chief Assistant in 2010. 12 chapters of collective monographs, 5 studies, 3 articles and reports were prepared and published in the years 2017-2019.

The topics covered by Veneta Krasteva have a clear focus on young people as a specific group and period. Research covers central aspects of the formation and use of their human capital, the specifics of youth labor and social integration. Krasteva was particularly interested in youth unemployment, job insecurity, the quality of jobs that young people occupy, the state of the institutional framework, and policies that shape young people's ability to enter and operate in the labor market.

With regard to the chosen and discussed research questions, I would emphasize something that at least impressed me - Veneta Krasteva has not slipped on a fairly common approach that avoids those aspects of social realities that can be understood as social criticism. An example of this is, for example, the explanations of youth unemployment and poverty as individual failures or the widespread interpretation of problems when young people enter the labor market as “stepping stones” - unavoidable disadvantages in the beginning of a work career, as long as the individual manages to take more favorable positions.

Veneta Krasteva avoided this approach and sought to capture key aspects of social realities, including the adverse effects of inadequate institutional frameworks and policies. Formerly Prof. G. Fotev used a term that in this case seems appropriate - research integrity. I would say that Veneta Krasteva has a high research integrity. It seems to me that a particularly clear example of this can be found in a rather voluminous study in which the life situations of young people are observed, analyzed and evaluated through the eyes of young people themselves.

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

In addition to his considerable research work, the candidate also holds a 6-year teaching position at the University of Plovdiv, where she taught Economic Sociology between 2010 and 2016. The annual hours for the taught discipline are significant - 60 hours. lectures and 60 hours of exercises, but it is inferior to the research work that undoubtedly prevails in the applicant's general scientific activity.

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

A review of the scientific contributions presented by Dr. Veneta Krusteva shows that the contributions are consistent with the content of the publications presented and are indeed significant, both theoretically and scientifically applied. The report is based mainly on the content and contributions to the outreach work presented, which focuses on youth and the social problems specific to this age group. I think that this focus has overlooked some of the applicant's other achievements, which I think deserve to be mentioned as well. However, I will stick to the candidate's submission, on the one hand, because the work and contributions to it provide a sufficient basis for judging the applicant's achievements and, on the other, to avoid discussing research and publications in which I have participated.

Of the contributions presented in the report, I would specifically note the following.

First, the use of the concept of precariat and the application of this framework in youth research. The concept is important because it is linked to a fundamental direction in the dynamics of modern economies - an increase in the number and proportion of people whose work is unnecessary and will hardly be hired. Guy Standing describes them as a "precariat" - to emphasize both their marginal status and their lack of relevance to the existence and dynamics of modern advanced economies. Or as one famous philosopher puts it: the former phenomenon of structural unemployment has already become structural uselessness. This is not the once Marxist idea of a relatively surplus population that arises because of the specific organization of economic life. Today, precarious people are more or less redundant because of the explosive increase in knowledge in the natural sciences and the ways in which it is used in the economy.

The use of the concept of precariat in the study of young people is important because the concept allows to emphasize the limitation of life chances, limited legitimate opportunities and fields for realizing their creative potential. Moreover, if we also consider others significant contributions to Ch. Assistant Veneta Krasteva - the analysis of the capacity of the educational system to shape intelligence (emotional and social), it follows that not only are the fields for applying the potential of young people restricted, but their capacity to be creative and to achieve prosperity is also limited.

This contribution has not only theoretical character, but also a significant applied meaning, since it contributes to the identification of a grand social risk that needs political recognition and a radical extension of measures to counteract it.

A second contribution that I would emphasize is the focus on policy interactions and the effects of these interactions. In particular, it is stated that the so-called. active policies in a particular context contribute to "the deterioration of the situation of the most vulnerable groups, to increasing levels of poverty and inequalities in society and creating conditions for social exclusion of large groups of people". I think Krasteva's focus is a really significant contribution, especially for public policy research, as it reveals an invisible segment of .public policies - the interactions between different types of policies and the effects that these interactions generate.

This is important because public policy research is usually focused on a particular type of policy and overlooks their interaction and its effects. A typical example is the combination of raising the retirement age and increasing the pressure on young people to enter the labor market, and in times of economic recession as job numbers decline. It is surprising that most academic evaluations of these policies are individually positive. And active inclusion policies have been widely advocated at European and national level as a means of combating poverty and social exclusion.

Another contribution that I think deserves special attention is related to another result of the work of Ch. Assistant Krasteva, namely the identification and highlighting of the growing fragmentation of the youth group in terms of the opportunities afforded them by the institutional, economic and cultural context for realizing their capabilities. I attach particular importance to this contribution because the use of the concept of youth as a separate period in human life and the consideration of young people as a separate, specific group can give rise to a focus on the characteristics and problems common to that group, and as a result may neglect an aspect of youth dynamics over the last few decades, namely, the increasing fragmentation of the group. In this context, fragmentation has grown mainly under the influence of the institutional and economic context.

5. Contribution of the applicant in collective publications

Much of the applicant's publications are made through collective publications. In the absence of separation protocols, it may be questioned whether the contributions indicated are the result of the efforts of the applicant himself. On this point, it should be emphasized that both the applicant's work and the contributions formulated are clearly distinguishable in collective studies. All of the contributions listed, including those that I have specifically emphasized, belong solely to the applicant and have been published both in the publications prepared by the applicant and in his individual works.

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

As already stated, the competition information contains 22 citations of the candidate's work. In this regard, it is also worth noting that a significant proportion of publications (especially studies and articles) have been published in English in foreign journals. In addition, the publications (including the monograph based on the dissertation) were made by reputable foreign academic publications.

In other words, the works of Veneta Krasteva have crossed the boundaries of national sociological research, as well as language restrictions, and their author has become a well-known participant in the European research area. This conclusion is confirmed by the citation list of Veneta Krasteva's works, which shows that about a quarter of all citations were made by foreign authors in foreign publications. Veneta Krasteva's significant presence in the European Research Area is further confirmed by her involvement in a number of international research projects.

7. Critical notes of the reviewer on submitted papers

I have not noticed any serious risks of knowledge distortions in Krastev's research and I have not made any critical remarks that draw attention to them. But if she continue to work on youth issues, I would suggest addressing the growing gap between young people's aspirations and the legitimate opportunities to pursue their aspirations. I do not mean "one red" colored Ferrari. I mean the aspirations of young people to develop, check and prove their own capabilities, the pursuit of achievement, expression, recognition. Now, perhaps the most significant area in which legitimate aspirational pursuit opportunities are afforded is sport, but that is not enough, and opportunities in other areas are limited and perhaps collapsed. There is something that I would call a capability crisis. The result is that the number of those who use illegitimate opportunities is increasing. But in some young people there are other dramatic changes that I suppose are related, for example, to the increasingly frequent shootings at schools, universities, restaurants, bars, and streets. This so-called terrorism seems to be on the rise. This is explained by xenophobia, racism, religious fanaticism, but maybe the reason is in the crisis of capabilities? I suppose that these problems will become more acute and research interest in them will grow.

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

I had the opportunity to observe the scientific development of Veneta Krasteva since her entry into the Public Policy and Social Change section. As I mentioned, I also participated in collaborative research with her.

It is my personal impression that Dr. Veneta Krasteva has been able, through hard and conscientious work, to achieve impressive scientific results, to develop impressive research potential and to become a fully-fledged scientist who has all the necessary qualities for the position of associate professor and for pursuing a fruitful scientific career. .

9. Reasoned and clearly formulated conclusion.

The outlined scientific activity of Ch. Assistant Veneta Krasteva, her research work, publications and scientific contributions, as well as her professional skills, give me reason to conclude that she fully meets the requirements for the position of Assistant Professor in the announced competition and I suggest the Honorable Scientific Jury to confirm Veneta's application Krusteva for holding this position at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology.

Sofia

Reviewer:
(Prof. D. Minev)