

Standpoint
of Prof. DSc Rumiana Stoilova
regarding the election of Dr Veneta Krasteva-Petrunova to the academic position of
“Associate Professor”
in the Department of Public Policies and Social Changes,
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at BAS

1. General description of the submitted materials

All the publications submitted by Dr. Krasteva-Petrunova for the competition were written after she obtained the academic rank of Doctor in 2009. The monograph (published in English in 2014 in Saarbrücken, Germany, and based on her dissertation thesis defended in 2009) should, in accordance with the requirements, be considered admissible for this competition. Besides contributing to the quantitative assessment of the candidate's publications, this monograph adds quality to the assessed publications. Her individual monograph on *Youth Employment and Labor Market Insecurity in Bulgaria*, has been published in 2019 by Prof. Marin Drinov, Publishing House of BAS, is submitted as a habilitation work for the competition. I am excluding from my assessment those of the submitted publications in which I myself have participated.

2. General characteristics of the candidate's scientific, applied and teaching activity

The academic biography of Dr. Krasteva-Petrunova includes all forms of activity: theory driven empirical work , policy evaluation, and pedagogical, with an emphasis, in the last four years, on the research in the framework of two international projects financed under the

Horizon 2020 program. Dr. Krasteva-Petrunova works successfully in an international environment, as evidenced by her publications in co-authorship with foreign researchers.

3. The candidate's teaching activity since the start of her professional career

In the period 2010-2016, Dr. Krasteva-Petrunova has carried out teaching activities in Plovdiv University. She was a coordinator under the memorandum for intern training and practicums at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology as well (then named Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge). With regard to the part of these activities carried out at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, I can state that she conducted them responsibly and with good knowledge of the specificity of the work.

4. Analysis of the contents of her scientific achievements

The monograph (2019) with which Dr. Krasteva is competing enriches our knowledge of vulnerable groups among young people in Bulgarian society over a period of ten years, starting from the global financial crisis of 2008-2009 and followed by the slow, uneven for the different social groups, exit from the situation of employment insecurity and unemployment engendered by the crisis. The monograph is structured and written in a professional language, with good knowledge of the normative regulations and applied policies towards vulnerable groups. The analysis of empirical results of the conducted social surveys are a contribution to the field. The method Veneta Krasteva uses most successfully in her work is in-depth interviews. Her empirical work lies on a theoretical foundation that Krasteva knows well and validates through thematic analysis of the conducted interviews. The monograph is useful with regard to the assessment of policies relevant to employment and vulnerable groups in Bulgaria in a comparative European perspective. The analyses of various factors at micro, meso and macro-level, leading to labor market vulnerability, and the conditions that allow escape from the situation of vulnerability are potentially important for

the mentioned policies. The author's thesis regarding the need for a complex assessment of the applied policies and measures taken to assist various vulnerable groups are quite well argued.

Included in the field of the candidate's research interests are topics related to religious feelings (Krasteva 2016)¹, the function and role of the Church in the changes occurring in social time (Krasteva 2014)², religious values as an element of personal activity (Krasteva 2013)³. I fully support her focus on this second area of her research interests, which has recently become a focus of intense manipulation and opposition to public policies towards the family, gender relations, and issues related to the upbringing and socialization of children and young people. The use of the religious feelings of people in order to oppose policies aimed at providing social services, preventing violence over women and children in the family, and even cultural policies requires the further attention of social researchers who have the skills and training for empirical work and for policy assessment. Dr. Krasteva fits this profile very well inasmuch as she is familiar with the contemporary theories and publications in the relevant international literature, and has mastery of the methods for gathering empirical information and for conducting precise analyses based on facts and revealing the ideological motivation underlying claims and attacks.

5. The candidate's contribution to collective publications

Due to the lack of dividing protocols for this Standpoint, I limit myself to publications of which Dr. Krasteva is the sole author. They consist in one independent monograph in Bulgarian, a monograph in English based on her dissertation for the PhD degree, and 18 independent articles. This number of publications for the Associate Professor title for which

¹ Krasteva, V. 2016. On the Use of the Religious Feelings of the Faithful (Кръстева.В. 2016 За употребата на религиозните чувства на вярващите)

² Krasteva, V. 2014. The Church and the Clash between the Profane and the Sacred (Кръстева.В. 2014 Църквата в сблъсъка между профанно и свещено)

³ Krasteva, V. 2013 (Orthodox Religious Values as Part of the Development of Personality (Кръстева.В. 2013 Православни религиозни ценности като част от личностното развитие)

Dr. Krasteva competing is sufficient to give a positive assessment of the candidate's qualities and the results achieved in her work. I am convinced Dr. Krasteva is capable of formulating clear theses and arguing them with studies of her own.

6. The impact of the candidate's scientific publications

Dr. Krasteva has listed 22 citations, of which there is a duplication in the case of citations 10 and 15; thus, the total number is 21. All citations are for the period 2016-2019. Her participation in international projects has created good possibilities for increased public visibility of the candidate's research work. She has very well presented her fieldwork efforts in the publication of the results. She has done so thanks to her ability to organize her time and work, and to persist in the study of the topics of her interest, namely, the effects of public policies on vulnerable youth groups.

7. Critical remarks and the candidate's literary informedness

The inclusion of the concept of quality of the work in the concept of insecure employment expands the scope of the issue of insecurity. Being fixed to low-quality job, the impossibility of escaping from low-paid and low-skilled positions, is a phenomenon that should be studied separately. On the other hand, the growing insecurity of employment, the shifting of the risks of economic changes from the employer to the worker, are very important in the sociological perspective. Dr. Krasteva points out that this trend began in Western Europe in the 1970s without lingering more thoroughly on the peaks and drops of insecure unemployment in Bulgaria.

The thesis that political decisions have led to de-industrialization of the Bulgarian economy also requires to be stated with greater precision. It is not made clear whether she has in mind the effects of privatization, or to what extent de-industrialization is part of the growth of the share of services in the national economy, or what is the impact of this transition to services on various categories of professions. The impact of the shift to services on young people

entering the labor market in the period 2008-2018 demands further study and greater precision.

The candidate has a broad literary informedness, which includes good knowledge of the publications and studies on topics related to young people, employment insecurity, vulnerable groups, and labor market policies. In the monograph proposed for habilitation, there are 45 titles in Bulgarian and 214 sources in English.

8. The reviewer's personal impressions of the candidate

My personal impressions regarding Dr. Krasteva is, that she is a penetrating researcher capable of focusing on a topic, bringing her studies to completion in the form of numerous publications. She has skills in working in international teams and in projects. Her current participation in the COST action on problems of youth job insecurity promises she will continue her studies in this very important issue of social policies. She has the needed skills and qualities to build upon her past activities and to undertake independent projects as well as to supervise doctoral students.

9. Conclusion

I recommend that Dr. Krasteva-Petrunova be elected Associate Professor (in the specialty Sociology, professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Culture Sciences) in the Department of Public Policies and Social Changes at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, BAS. I am convinced that she is part of the forceful middle generation in sociology that is developing this science amidst the fast-changing social realities and is contributing to winning an important place for sociology in interdisciplinary studies and in the Bulgarian and international scientific community.

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