



UNIVERSITY OF NATIONAL AND WORLD ECONOMY

OPINION

From: **Assoc. Prof. Georgi Petrunov, PhD**
UNWE, Department of Economic Sociology

Regarding: Appointment for the position of **Associate Professor** in professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences, scientific area Sociology at the Department of Public Policies and Social Changes, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (IPS) at BAS.

1. Position information

The competition is announced by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology for the needs of the department "Public Policies and Social Changes", published in the State Gazette, issue. 67 / 28.07.2020.

I am a member of the Scientific Jury as per Order № 09-463/28.09.2020 of the Director of IPS at BAS.

2. Brief information about the candidates for the position

Only one candidate has applied for the open position of Associate Professor at IPS, Dr. Svetlana Stamenova, who is currently assistant professor in the Department "Public Policies and Social Changes" at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology. In 2001 she took the position of Research Associate I degree, which was subsequently renamed Chief Assistant Professor, following the entry into force of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act. Dr. Stamenova was first hired by BAS in 1988 at the Institute of Sociology.

Dr. Stamenova has graduated Sofia University in 1987 with a degree in Sociology. She also holds an MA in Sociology from the CEU in Budapest, 1994. She holds a doctorate in political science from the Institute for Political Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences. She received her PhD in 1999, with a thesis titled "Structural and Axiological Determinants of Political Support (Comparative Analysis of Poland and Bulgaria)."

From 2001-2005 Dr. Stamenova held six fellowship positions, in the UK, Germany, Romania, and the US. These included also a fellowship at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences, and a post-doc at Warwick University under the Marie Curie Program of the EC.

3. Fulfillment of the requirements for the academic position

Dr. Stamenova meets the national minimum requirements and the minimum requirements of BAS for candidates applying for the teaching and research position Associate Professor, in field 3, Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences. Her score is 785 points, with the threshold being 430 points.

Her score is well above the minimum requirements in Group G, where she achieved 350 points (the threshold is 220 points) and Group D, where she achieved 190 points (the threshold is 60). The two groups refer to the candidate's publications and citations record.

A special mention deserves one of the candidate's articles, (Stamenova, S. 2017. The specifics of the Balkan ethnic identity construction: ethnicisation of localities. *National identities*, 19 (3): 311-332), which was published by Routledge and indexed by Scopus. A large number of the citations of the candidate's work come from foreign scholars published in international journals, out of which five are indexed in world-renown databases.

Dr. Stamenova has provided information about her involvement in five projects; she was project manager of one of the projects.

4. Evaluation of the Candidate's Teaching

The candidate has worked for most of her career at BAS, where teaching is not a primary focus for the faculty. Nevertheless, Dr. Stamenova has indicated some teaching experience; she has taught one-semester courses at three universities, namely, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", New Bulgarian University, and Southwest University "Neofit Rilski". The course she taught was on theories and conceptions for post-communist systemic change.

5. Evaluation of the Candidate's Publications and Achievements

Dr. Stamenova has listed 22 publications relevant to the open position for which she is applying. They include two monographs; one is her habilitation thesis, and the second one is a book based on her doctoral dissertation. The other publications include seven papers; one chapter in a multiple-author monograph; 12 articles and reports, published in collected volumes. Half of the publications are in English, including the book based on her dissertation, the seven papers and the chapter in the monograph. This is evidence of a good international presence of the candidate's work.

The publications referred to above indicate three main fields of research interest of the candidate:

- identity studies (national and ethnic)
- political transformations and evolution of democratic regimes in post-socialist countries
- value systems in rural populations.

In most of her publications, the candidate takes a comparative approach to analyzing countries in Central and Eastern Europe, while some of her work focuses on the specifics in the Balkan countries. The first two fields of interest are the focus of an in-depth analysis in her habilitation thesis, which was presented in her application for the current position.

The habilitation thesis of Dr. Stamenova is titled "*Political and Ethical Influences on the National Consciousness of the Bulgarian Ethnic Majority*". It is 257 pages long, published by Paradigm Press in 2019. The monograph is structured as follows: an introduction, four parts, a conclusion and bibliography. The book offers a critical analysis of theoretical conceptions (described in the first three parts), which are tested through an empirical study, described in part four. The book provides an original analysis of the influence of political and ethnic factors on the formation of Bulgarian national consciousness in the context of globalization and neoliberalism. This author examines the transformations in the democratic

process as well as the effect of the growing migratory movements in the 21st century in Europe on the ethnic spaces in the national states.

The author's monograph has an important contribution to the following topics:

- 1) adaptation of the concept for classification of national identities as ethno-cultural and civic-political as a basis for developing a theoretical framework for studying the national identity of Bulgarians, based on which the thesis is defended that the mass consciousness of the Bulgarian ethnic majority does not distinguish between political and ethnic national identities;
- 2) the thesis of a contradiction between democratic order and national feelings of Bulgarians is empirically verified, which supports the observation of the prevalence of the ethnic in the mass consciousness of the Bulgarian ethnic majority at the expense of disapproval of political institutions and democratic regime in Bulgaria;
- 3) critical examination of the relation between the bond to one's own ethnic group and social tolerance towards minorities, on the one hand, and the attitude towards migrants, on the other;
- 4) a critical reading of the modernization theory and its relevance in terms of analyzing social distances to ethnic minorities and the influence of socio-structural and economic determinants on the political and ethnic factors in the national consciousness.

In addition to the topics analyzed in the monograph and in her previous publications related to national identity, tolerance of ethnic minorities, political and cultural changes and their influence on the democratic regime in Bulgaria, in three of her publications Dr. Stamenova shifts her attention to a different and very salient topic - land grabbing and food security in the context of globalization.

I find as important contribution, both from a research and an applied research perspective, the differences identified by Dr. Stamenova in the type of post-communist transformation experienced in Poland and in Bulgaria. The structural and axiological differences between the two countries and the support of democracy are discussed in the monograph Stamenova, S. 2012. *Structural and Axiological Determinants of Political Support* (Comparative Analysis of Poland and Bulgaria), Sofia: Omda; the author discusses the divergence as an effect of the communist legacy, not simply as a result of the type of communist rule, but rather as a variation of the pre-communist cultural and historical heritage of the two countries.

The study "The specifics of the Balkan ethnic identity construction: ethnicization of localities" contributes to the deeper understanding of the dichotomy of civic versus ethnic nation-building and nationalism; the author argues that this is in fact more a representation of two different strategies of ethnopolitical elites than real specificities of the nations, considered as either civic or ethnic. The strategies of the elites at a later stage turn into real and objective differences, which does not change their character of being theoretical constructs.

6. Critical comments and recommendations

I have no substantive criticism of the candidate's work. I would make the following recommendations about the candidate's future research.

1) In view of all events at the national and international level of the past ten years, it would be important to extend the scope of the candidate's monograph, which steps on empirical information from the period 1990 - 2011 with a study of the decade from 2011 to 2021. This will provide a critical perspective to a number of issues: What is the current picture of political support in Bulgaria? How has it changed? How does the legitimacy of the democratic regime today compare to previous ten-year periods? Has the political and ethnic influence on the national consciousness of Bulgarians changed?

2) I would recommend that upon her successful promotion Dr. Stamenova focus her efforts on working with PhD students and young researchers in the Department "Public Policies and Social Change" of IPS at BAS.

7. Conclusion

Having reviewed and positively evaluated the work of the candidate, I hereby vote in favor of promoting Chief Assist. Prof. Svetlana Doycheva Stamenova to the academic position of Associate Professor in the scientific field Sociology at the Department "Public Policies and Social Changes", Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at BAS.

16.11.2020
Sofia

Signature:
Assoc. Prof. Georgi Petrunov, PhD