

## **OPINION**

from

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concerning

The competition for the academic position of associate professor, announced in the State Gazette, issue 106 / 15.12.2020, professional field 2.3. "Philosophy" (Philosophy of Politics), for the needs of the section "Social theories, strategies and forecasts".

### **1. Information about the competition.**

The competition is announced for the needs of the section "Social theories, strategies, and forecasts" at IFS - BAS, according to a decision of the Scientific Council of the Institute (Minutes № 4 / 18.02.2021). I participate in the scientific jury of the competition on the basis of Order № RD 09-109 / 17.02.2021 of the Director of IFS - BAS.

### **2. Brief information about the candidates in the competition.**

Documents for participation in the competition are submitted by only one candidate - Dr. Blagovesta Ilieva Nikolova, Ch. Assistant Professor in the Section "Social Theories, Strategies, and Forecasts" at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, BAS. She was born on September 18, 1983. She graduated in political science (International Political Relations and Security) at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" and holds a Master's degree (2008). The topic of her master's thesis is "NASA's Constellation Program and the Sphere of International Space Law." In the period 2010 - 2013 "she was a full-time doctoral student in political philosophy at the Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge, BAS, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Vasil Prodanov. Her dissertation on "Transforming Forecasting in Knowledge-Based Societies" was completed and submitted before the expiration of the three-year doctoral program in 2013. From December 2013 until now Dr.

Blagovesta Nikolova is Chief assistant Professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (former name "Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge"), section "Social Theories, Strategies, and Forecasts." Based on the above data it can be concluded that the candidate meets the requirements of Art. 36 of PPNSZAD-IFS-BAS regarding the presence of a minimum length of service in the specialty (5 years).

### **3. Fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position.**

The Technical Commission for the Verification of the Regularity of Documents has admitted to participation in the competition for the scientific position of "Associate Professor" Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Blagovesta Nikolova. The additional inspection for the fulfillment of the requirements under Art. 2b, para. 1 of ZRASRB and of art. 1a, para 1 of PPZRASRB, carried out on the basis of the submitted data and in fulfillment of the obligation of the scientific jury under art. 4, para 1 of ZRASRB and of art. 2, para. 2 of PPZRASRB, has found that the candidate meets the minimum national requirements for holding the competitive academic position. From the one presented by Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Bl. Nikolova scientometric tables is obvious that are fulfilled the minimum number of points under the mandatory sections for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the Regulations on the terms and conditions for obtaining scientific degrees and for holding academic positions in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The publications in the scientometric tables for ONS "Doctor" and for the academic position "Associate Professor" are not duplicated. Within the term for work of the scientific jury there are no signals for a violation under Art. 4, para. 5, item 3 of ZRASRB and under art. 53, para 1 item 5 of PPZRASRB. Based on the above, I believe that there is no obstacle to the evaluation of the results, the scientific contribution and the originality of the submitted works.

### **4. General description of the submitted materials.**

For evaluation in the competition for associate professor Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Bl. Nikolova has presented a total of 15 scientific publications, including one

monograph in English and 14 articles, half of which are in English and the rest in Bulgarian. One of the attached articles is co-authored. The doctoral dissertation of Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Blagovesta Nikolova is on the topic "Transformation of forecasting in knowledge-based societies" and was defended in March 2013. Comparing the data from the scientometric tables submitted by the candidate, it was found that the publications attached to the proof of meeting the national minimum requirements for ONS "Doctor" and published before the defense of the dissertation, are not repeated with those presented in the competition for the scientific position of associate professor.

#### **5. General characteristics of the scientific, scientific-applied and pedagogical activity of the candidate.**

Based on the data reflected in the candidate's CV at the time of the competition, the results of the scientific activity dominate. Data are presented on 39 reviews of projects under different programs for the period 2016 - 2020, as well as four draft reports. In 2017, Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Blagovesta Nikolova was awarded by the Ministry of Education and Science with an incentive award for a young scientist in the field of humanities and social sciences.

#### **6. Educational activity of the candidate from the beginning of his career.**

The submitted biographical reference does not reflect data on the educational activities of the candidate, including the management of doctoral students, postgraduates and graduates. There are three lectures given in the period 2015-2016. All three are related to the ethical aspects of research projects.

#### **7. Content analysis of the scientific achievements of the candidate.**

The main weight among the scientific works presented for evaluation is occupied by the monograph of Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Bl. Nikolova with the title "The RRI Challenge: Responsibilization in a State of Tension with Market Regulation" (2019), London, ISTE Ltd, in a volume of 259 pages. the ubiquitous dominance of market relations - not only in the economy but also in other social spheres. The Responsible Research and Innovation initiative, as attractive as it may

seem in its humanistic and ethical nature, meets with strong opposition to the technological and deeply imbued with market fundamentalism Western European thinking. Therefore, in the symbiosis between the market mechanism, subject to dehumanized efficiency and scientism, as a form of independence from the emotions and everyday life of everyday life, there is little room for the moral and social responsibility of those who create knowledge. The main question in the European context is how to reconcile economic ambitions with the value framework of the old continent and whether the basic concept of man as a subject of freedom and responsibility will be able to maintain established human rights under the pressure of market competition with the US and China for example.

The main contributions of the monograph are organized around the rethinking of the political and economic environment in which European scientists have to work and the need for such regulation that does not dehumanize European science. The monograph also has a practical ambition - to help the European institutions involved in the management of science in the formation of their strategy and plans to stimulate innovation. I think that both the topic and its presentation in the monograph are interesting and innovative in their approach and conclusions. The issue is similar in the article "Putting critique to work: Ethics in EU security research", co-authored with two other researchers Matthias Leese and Kristoffer Lidén, from Switzerland and Norway, respectively. Although it focuses mainly on security research, the ethical component of research is again raised, despite the strong trend towards technologicalization and instrumentalisation of projects in this field.

The other articles proposed in the competition can be combined into two groups. Most of them are organized around the issue of forecasting. This can be explained by the fact that a significant part of the candidate's scientific efforts so far, including the topic of the dissertation, fall into this problematic field. Interesting is the article about the so-called "wild card" events, which allow to think and incorporate instability and uncertainty in the individual experience. The ability to perceive the unexpected as an inevitable element of reality is important for orientation in today's increasingly

complex and systematically connected world. In my opinion, both articles on the economic aspects of forecasting are interesting, which give interesting ideas for the inclusion of forecasting tools in the market game. Under these conditions, attempts to outline future trends are no longer just an intellectual challenge, but also a significant element in achieving the marketing of science. I would also like to highlight the article on the optimistic bias in modern forecasting. It analyzes a significant problem of futurology - the mixing of objectivity in the analysis of event trends with subjective preferences for their course in the desired direction by the one who makes the forecast. This to some extent compromises the scientific value of forecasting, but is clearly an inevitable impurity in this type of activity. The second group of articles attached to the tender documents is devoted to other issues - the knowledge-based society, the COVID-19 pandemic, the issue of border control. The topic of border control is related to the scientific specialization of the candidate for associate professor of the current competition at the University of Namur, Belgium in the period 2015-2017. The reflections of Ch. Assistant Bl. Nikolova on the so-called "smart borders", a problem that emerged during the migrant crisis in the period 2016-2017, but will still be relevant in the future. The new digital and biometric technologies for managing the flow of migrants to European countries put in a new light the principles of freedom, human rights and the right to privacy, accepted as a postulate in the democratic countries of the old continent. It is also a question of the thin line between security and freedom, which is unlikely to ever be answered satisfactorily.

In conclusion and in accordance with the self-assessment given by the candidate, I would like to highlight the following scientific contributions of the candidate:

1. Outlining the conflict between the EU's strategic priorities to achieve accelerated economic progress based on innovation and the marketing of scientific developments, on the one hand, and the Member States' commitment to preserving social and humanistic values and the effective protection of human rights around who built their community, on the other.

2. The problematization of the inevitable difficulties in achieving accuracy in forecasting in the social sciences. As the main subject of these forecasts is man, and the object is the human-constructed social system that retains their propensity for impulsive action and surprising behavior, not only the time horizon of the forecast but also its scientific value are under serious threat.

3. The language and the way of presenting the theses and the argumentation in the scientific publications presented in the competition are available for perception by the specialists in their subject area. But it is good to reduce the scientific degree of style to some extent in order to make the style more accessible to readers whose interests are outside the specialized issues developed by the associate professor.

**8. In case of collective publications - determination of the candidate's contribution;**

The candidate presented a joint publication - the article Putting Critique to Work: Ethics in EU Security Research co-authored with Matthias Leese and Kristoffer Lidén, published in Security Dialogue, 2019, Vol. 50 (1). No protocol has been presented in which the contribution of each of the co-authors is determined, therefore we should assume that each of them has an equal participation in the development of it.

**9. Reflection of the candidate's scientific publications in our and foreign literature.**

The candidate has submitted a list of references and quotations of his publications and research noticed at the time of the competition. In the attached scientometric table the total number of points from the citations of the works of Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Bl. Nikolova is 360, which is a very high indicator, especially for a representative of the Bulgarian public and humanitarian scientific community. It is possible that some citations have remained off the list, but this is a problem with the way in which this type of evidence is organized. In this form, the list proves that the publications of Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Blagovesta Nikolova are available, often cited and have their impact on the research of other scientists.

## **10. Critical remarks of the reviewer on the submitted works**

I have no significant critical remarks on the presented works, as far as they present issues in which there is room for different interpretations and allows for a variety of arguments of the defended theses. I would like to ask the associate professor whether she really thinks that the concept of Responsible Research and Innovation is able to solve the problems of the gap between European science, which still seems complacently arrogant towards the difficult problems of everyday life (poverty, inequality, social exclusion, etc.) and ordinary people who rely on scientists to answer their pressing existential questions? And to what extent is the introduction of an ethical element in research projects enough to reduce this gap?

## **11. Personal impressions of the candidates.**

Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Blagovesta Nikolova is a colleague with a strong sense of responsibility, ethics and cooperation. She has a skill for dialogue, which combines communicative correctness and well-measured criticism. I believe that not only her scientific, but also her personal qualities are well balanced and would be a good addition to the habilitated staff of the section "Social Theories, Strategies and Forecasts" at IFS-BAS.

## **12. Conclusion.**

In conclusion of the above, I believe that Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Blagovesta Ilieva Nikolova meets the legal requirements and has the necessary scientific qualities, well protected by the publications and events presented in the competition. As a member of the Scientific Jury, I am voting in favor and I propose to the Scientific Council of the IFS to elect Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Blagovesta Nikolova for "Associate Professor" for the needs of the section "Social Theories, Strategies and Forecasts" at IFS-BAS.

**April 26, 2021**

**(Prof. D. Sc. B. Gradinarov)**