



UNIVERSITY OF NATIONAL AND WORLD ECONOMY

OPINION

By: Prof. Dr. Svetla Borislavova Toshkova, UNWE

Scientific field: *History of Economic Theories*

Concerning: Competition for occupying the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field of 2.3. Philosophy for the needs of the Department of Social Theories, Strategies and Prognoses at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IPS-BAS). The competition was announced by IPS-BAS with Protocol №4 from 11.02.2021 and confirmed in the State Gazette – issue 106 from 15.12.2020.

I hereby participate as a member of the Scientific Jury in compliance with Order № ПД-09-109 from 17.02.2021, issued by the Director of IPS-BAS.

1. Brief information about the candidates in the competition

The only candidate in the competition is Assist. Prof. Blagovesta Nikolova, PhD, born on 18.09.1983. She has obtained her MA in Political Science (International Relations and Security Studies) in 2008 at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky”. In 2013 she received her PhD in Political Philosophy defending a dissertation text entitled “The Transformation of Foresight in Contemporary Knowledge Societies”. In 2013 she was appointed as Assistant at ISSK-BAS. Since the end of 2013 up until now she has been holding the position of Assistant Professor at IPS-BAS.

2. Fulfilling the requirements for obtaining the academic position of Associate Professor:

The review of the scorecard with the quantitative requirements shows that the candidacy is in full compliance with the national requirements according to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (art.26) and the Rules and Regulations for its enforcement. Dr. Blagovesta Nikolova is the author of a dissertation and a monograph. For the purposes of the competition the candidate has submitted 15 academic articles and papers, 5 of which are published in international journals with Impact Factor, 4 – in other refereed and indexed outlets, and the rest – in respected scientific editions in Bulgaria and abroad.

The scientific work of Dr. Nikolova involves the exploration of recent and particularly topical problems: 1/ the social and ethical framework of technological transformations in contemporary knowledge societies; and 2/ trends in contemporary foresight. Currently the realm of futures studies is growing in importance as a means to address the need of coming up with explanatory models for the anticipated global trends and prognoses in response to the rapidly developing technological and information innovations, and their social and ethical ramifications in the context of the notion of progress towards a better future. In addition to that, the research offered by Dr. Nikolova contributes to developing the specific profile of the Department she belongs to, and allows for deeper engagement of the research work with strategies and prognoses, which are the focus of significant scientific and public interest.

Dr. Nikolova is well-cited in foreign editions (some of which are peer-reviewed), which illustrates her being identified as interesting and recognized researcher in the realm of political philosophy and prognostics.

For the qualification of Dr. Nikolova and her being familiar with the developments in international science speak her specialization and participation in many international scientific fora. In 2015-2017 she was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Namur, Belgium. She has also been engaged as an expert by the European Research Executive Agency for performing ethical reviews of projects from different programs in the 2016-2020 period. Dr. Nikolova has participated in numerous international and national conferences with presentations, she has taken part in international projects and she has provided some lectures and training sessions in international schools and seminars.

Dr. Nikolova has been awarded with the “Pythagoras” encouragement prize for young researcher in the realm of social sciences and humanities (2017).

3. Brief description of the submitted research works/publications and scientific contributions

The research interests of Dr. Nikolova are mainly in the realm of political philosophy, futures studies and responsible research and innovation. From the review of the submitted publications for the purposes of the competition, I can delineate certain scientific-theoretical and scientific-applied contributions which I will briefly summarize below.

I. In the monograph (2019) *The RRI Challenge: Responsibilization in a State of Tension with Market Regulation. Innovation and Responsibility Set, Volume 3, ISTE & Wiley: London, UK and Hoboken, NJ; ISBN: 978-1-78630-142-0*
Link: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/book/10.1002/9781119616122> :

- The exploration of the problem of the manageability of the innovation process in the context of the social and ethical framework of the technological transformations in contemporary knowledge societies.

- The discussion about imposing the notion of neutrality and objectivity of scientific knowledge and prioritizing the economic efficiency of the research and innovation process.
- Tracing back the formalization of these processes in EU policies and legislation /the emergence of the concept of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) and its integration within the European institutional context/.
- Exposing the conflict between the strategic priorities of the European Union and the actual implementation of the policies for “ethical scrutiny” concerning the research and innovation process.
- Revealing the entanglement of economic considerations into the discourse of official documents, arguing the legal, social and ethical acceptability of the innovation process.
- Critical examination of the assumed overlap between democratization and responsabilization of the research and innovation process. Proving that public engagement and opening for exogenous perspectives does not ensure successful RRI implementation; what is more, it can be misused as a mechanism for legitimizing problematic innovations, for obscuring political responsibility, and for promoting profit-making mechanisms by the means of free inflow of ideas.
- The identified critical potential of RRI for rethinking the politico-philosophical framework of the knowledge-creation process and for reconsidering the innovation governance mechanisms towards narrowing the forms of market regulation.
- In terms of practical application – the contribution of the study is in the suggested changes as to the practical implementation of EU and national institutions’ research and innovation policies – on political, expert and administrative level.

II. *The publications submitted for the competition – publications in international journals with Impact Factor and/or SJRank, and papers and articles in other refereed and indexed editions as well as those in non-refereed editions* not only continue the research work in the outlined direction but also mark the consistent interest of the candidate in the problems of prognostics and in two particular aspects of the recent global developments – migration and the COVID-19 pandemic. Once again, the author explores the social and ethical aspects of the processes and seeks their explanation in the deep technological transformation with its value deficits.

The contributions of these studies are predominantly in the following directions:

- exploring the process of marketization of contemporary forecasting; broadening public participation and the prognostic function of social sciences;

- the idea of the significance of science fiction for the futures research realm, interpreted through the perspective of the possibilities offered by the former for opening room for reflexivity with regard to social change, the human condition and “the other”;
- examining the possibility for using the existing institutionalized mechanisms for integrating ethics in EU security research for advancing some of the priorities in the conceptual agenda of the Critical Security Studies (CSS);
- the analyses of the migration processes in the context of new technological forms for managing the latter and within the configuration of values, interests and conflicts; critical analysis of the current state of European border control and its problems;
- outlining the deficits in the current governance paradigm of “catching up” with the Covid-crisis and its narrow normative orientation towards economic expediency; the discussion on the strategies and techniques for bordering of groups and individuals that are integrated in the logic of the current governance paradigm and are at the heart of attempts to ensure governability of the current complex and normatively fragmented societies in a highly dynamic and uncertain global context.

All works submitted by Dr. Nikolova show detailed familiarity with the examined problems. They are supported with significant evidential material. They contain original interpretations and inferences, and adopt explicit civic stance and engagement.

Conclusion

In conclusion,

I give my positive appraisal for the scientific work of Assist. Prof. Blagovesta Nikolova, for her activity as a lecturer and consultant, for her qualities as a researcher with creative abilities and orientation towards the topical and significant issues of contemporary science and the problems of the future, and

I recommend to the honorable Scientific Jury to select Assist. Prof. Blagovesta Nikolova FOR the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field of 2.3. Philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology-BAS.

15.04.2021
Sofia

Prof. Dr. Svetla Toshkova