

OPINION

By Prof. D.Sc. Elka Todorova,

Professional field: 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology, and Culture Science

University of National and World Economy

Member of the Scientific Jury, appointed by the Director of IFS - Order № 09-391/28.09.2021, Decision №16/21.09.2021 of the Scientific Committee of IFS

Regarding: Competition for Assoc.Professor, Professional field: 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology, and Culture Science; Scientific area: Sociology by Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (IFS), Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS), published in State Gazette No 51/18.06.2021

The competition is announced for the needs of Section "Center for Empirical Social Research" with **Dr. Petja Ilieva-Trichkova** single applicant for the position.

Brief information about the candidate in the competition

The candidate has 14 years of experience as a sociologist and researcher at the IFS at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and has submitted all needed application forms on time.

Fulfillment of the requirements for holding the academic position

After reviewing the publications materials submitted in the competition, I state that the candidate has met the requirements of Art. 24, items 1,3,4 of ZRAS for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor" as well as has over-fulfilled the minimum national quantitative and qualitative requirements of Art. 2b, paragraph 2, 3 and 5. In terms of quantitative indicators, the candidate has got twice as many points as required — with the required 430 points, the candidate has 832.5 points (23 publications in Scopus and Web of Science indexed sources, with index 8 Hirsch (H-ind.8), i.e., at least 8 of them cited by more than five other authors; 22 publications in peer-review scientific journals), etc.

With regard to the implementation of the qualitative requirements for holding the academic position "Associate Professor," the situation is similar to the quantitative indicators — it is a question of over-fulfillment of the standard requirements for research workload. Dr. Petja Ilieva-Trichkova is a member of 4 NGOs, participates as an expert in the National Coordination Group for Lifelong Learning, has taken part in 58 different types of scientific forums.

Assessment of the candidate's research workload

One is impressed by the hard work and very active participation of the candidate as a member of working teams in research projects. Dr. Petja Ilieva-Trichkova has participated in 16 projects, most of which international, including FP7, Horizon 2020, ESS-ERIC, Operational Program "Human Resources Development," the Max Plank

Demographic Project, NSF, as well as projects resulting from bilateral agreements for joint research between countries and scientific institutions.

Brief description of the presented scientific papers / publications

The candidate presents a relatively compact scientific production, which, however, addresses various issues in the field of sociology of education and expands our knowledge on the positive consequences of lifelong learning; educational inequalities, and the main barriers to adult learning based on the principles of inclusion and equality; the mutual expectations of the business from education and vice versa, mediated through the relation of higher education and level of trust in the educational institution; as well as the relationship between job insecurity and freedom of choice for continuing education and lifelong learning.

Among the scientific production the brightest is the collective monograph, published in 2021. It includes most of the research findings stated in studio and papers, but that is done in a holistic way, where a unified framework to picture lifelong learning with several levels of analysis is presented. On the one hand the role of adult education and training is discussed the level of individual activity processing to demonstrate its transformational nature, and on the other hand — the emphasis is on the public importance of education as a public good and public right. The merit of the monograph is not only the extremely precise methodological framework and serious empirical analysis of issues related to lifelong learning, but also the choice to do this within concrete spacial and time perspective.

Altogether, the studies, articles, reports, as well as the monograph with which the candidate participates in the competition demonstrate ability to reason beyond the standard way of thinking, to be ready to embrace innovative theses', to support them with analytical reasoning and empirical data. The structure of the candidate's publications most often includes testing hypotheses with data from own surveys. And when secondary data analysis is performed, the candidate works with solid databases of European social surveys such as EUROSTAT-AES (Eurostat Adult Education Survey), EUROSTAT-LFS (Eurostat Labor Force Survey), ESS-ERIC (European Social Survey), EVS (European Values Survey), PIAAC (International Adult Competence Assessment Program), CVTS (Continuing Vocational Training Monitoring). This allows the candidate to highlight a number of problems in the use of quantitative data from large-scale comparative surveys to defend his thesis on the need to apply a combination of different types of data — primary, secondary, representative and unrepresentative along with analysis of qualitative information, when studying the processes of adult education and lifelong learning.

Synthesized assessment of the main scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the candidate

The candidate presents four areas of scientific issue-fields where contributions could be traced, as well as some scientifically applied achievements. I do accept all them as contributions and agree with the basic arguments for their selection. The four areas

identified by the candidate are: "Lifelong learning and Higher education"; "Educational inequalities"; "Gender differences" and "Donation".

The first two areas include most of contributions made in the applicant's contribution reference - 11/13. Accepting them without objection, I even think that a fifth area could be distinguished by separating lifelong learning from higher education. Then the author's contribution to broaden the understanding of the added value of education by including the capability approach, i.e., abilities and opportunities for realization and recognition would be more clearly highlighted, as well as the contribution to distinguish the active and empowering effect of education as a personal and common good.

The Integrated model for participation in adult education is a significant contribution, since it takes into account the interaction of factors that stimulate or hinder such participation, without rejecting their distinction at the micro, meso and macro levels. In this regard, the development of social instruments — indices for different levels such as the Index for inclusion, Index for fairness and at the macro level - Index for adult education as a public common good further enhances the importance of the model. Indirect, but related to the issue of education and macro-factors is the issue of employment of young people in different labor market situations, especially when high levels job insecurity are present where the candidate has devoted fruitful analysis with the provision of certain contribution.

Further, I do accept as a contribution the research done on stating the repercussions of educational inequalities for deepening self-perception and self-esteem problems, on clarifying the social capital's substructure, on the creation of institutional trust, and on the choice of professional career.

As to the research on gender-differences my opinion is that the candidate has rightfully stated to have some contributions. By proving the different role of vocational education for both sexes and the impact of the socio-educational hierarchical structure on attitudes towards work-life balance the candidate contributes to the cognitive understanding of conflict role management.

The scientifically applied contributions as stated by the candidate, insofar as they refer to the presentation of expert assessments for the formation of policies in the field of education, are undoubtedly real and visible. Among them, a special place is occupied by the creation of a tool for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of national policies in the field of adult education — the so-called. Index for adult education as a public good.

Main critical remarks and recommendations to the candidate

I have no critical remarks about the candidate, though I would like to draw attention to a small fact related to the information provided, under the heading "Editorial work" in the CV. There, the given ISBN for the relevant publication does not lead to the

specified work. I suppose this to be a technical error, but at the same time, in the presence of such a rich palette of active scientific realization, I don't think the candidate should have been in need of filling this particular area of competence.

I would also like to recommend the candidate to start thinking about teaching, for the scientific qualities of the production presented by Dr. Petya Ilieva-Trichkova clearly demonstrates that her research experience can be organized from as to suit the process of course development of contemporary courses in social sciences and Sociology above all.

Conclusion

Giving a very high assessment of the candidate's achievements and having in mind the above, I propose Dr. Petya Ilieva-Trichkova to be given positive evaluation and to be elected by the Scientific Jury as "Associate Professor" in the professional field 3.1. "Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences" and scientific area "Sociology".

05.12.2021 / Sofia

Signature: