

## **REVIEW**

**By Prof. Rumiana Ivanova Stoilova, DSc**

For the participation of Assoc. Prof. Rumiana Ruseva Jeleva, DSc, in a competition

For the academic position “Professor” in professional area 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and

Culture Sciences (Sociology: Sociology of Inequalities and Sustainable Development. The

Role of the European Union for Reducing Social-economic Inequalities)

for the Department of Stratification, Inequalities and Mobility at IPS-BAS

By decision of the scientific jury (Protocol № 1/5.03.2024) regarding the competition for

acquiring the academic position “professor” in professional area 3.1. Sociology,

Anthropology and Culture Sciences (Sociology: Sociology of Inequalities and Sustainable

Development. The Role of the European Union for Reducing Social-economic Inequalities),

published in SG, issue 104/15.12.2023, for the needs of the Department of Stratification,

Inequalities and Mobility at IPS-BAS, I was assigned to write a review on the participants in

the competition. In accordance with Art. 46, par. (2) of the Statutes of IPS for implementation

of the DASRBA, I will present my review in the following order:

**1. General description of the submitted materials:** Assoc. Prof. Rumiana Ruseva Jeleva, DSc, is the only candidate in the competition. The validity of her documents was verified by a technical commission designated by Order of the Director of IPS-BAS № ПД—09-49/21.02.2024. The candidate has a diploma of Doctor of Sciences № 001590/05.12.2023, a certificate for Associate Professor № 000544/29.01.2014, has more than seven years of service in the specialty in BAS, and is competing with the following scientific works: a habilitation thesis – published monograph: Jeleva, R. (2024). *Dimensions of Integration into the EU*. Prof. Marin Drinov Publishing House of BAS, and published as a book based on the

defended dissertation thesis for the academic degree “Doctor of Sciences”; Jeleva, R. (2024). *The Conditions for Sustainable Development*. Publishing House Informa Print, Burgas, ISBN: 978-619-7725-15-5. Also submitted are 17 articles, studies and papers published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or in collective volumes; all of these do not repeat the publications submitted for the previous stages of candidate’s career promotion . Citations in academic editions have been indicated; these carry the required number of points in the table for minimal requirements of the NACID and of IPS-BAS. The tables of NACID related to “doctor of sciences” and “associated professor”, presented for the sake of comparison, make it evident that the publications with which Assoc. Prof. Jeleva is competing for the position “professor” are different from the publications submitted for “doctor of sciences and from those with which she competed for the academic position “associate professor”.

**The candidate fully meets the requirement of Art. 3, par 3 of DASRBA, and on these grounds, the works with which she is participating in the competition may be assessed per se by the scientific jury designated for the competition.**

**2. General characteristics of the scientific activity of the candidate:** The professional profile of Assoc. Prof. Jeleva is in the area of research in its two scientific categories: theoretical and applied. Also significant is her work as expert-consultant done over the years in collaboration with the trade-union organization “Podkrepa”, the Agency for Social Assistance, the Institute for Balkan Studies, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. Her international activity and experts work is ample and of high quality. The whole range of activities and publications justifies the conclusion that Assoc. Prof. Jeleva is a scholar of proven authority and expertise.

**3. Teaching activity of the candidate:** Assoc. Prof. Zheleva is currently the supervisor of two doctoral students. Their dissertation research is closely related to her own field of research and with that of the Department of Stratification, Inequalities and Mobility. Assoc. Prof. Jeleva has been the reviewer of a master’s thesis, of post-doctoral projects and proposals, of PhD dissertations and for

graduates of SU, SWU; she has given lecture in doctoral course at BAS on the topic “The Foreign Policy of the EU Facing New Challenges”. The submitted professional biography of Assoc. Prof. Jeleva contains information on the numerous international projects she has headed, including some for the Erasmus program for academic exchange of doctoral students and young scholars from countries like Kirghizstan and Uzbekistan.

**4. Assessment of the scientific achievements in the publications with which the candidate is competing for the academic position “professor”:**

The monograph work Jeleva, R. (2024). *Dimensions of Integration into the EU*. Prof. Marin Drinov Publishing House of BAS, Sofia, shows that the author’s in-depth interest has continued for more than 20 years of activity. The monograph is valuable for the author’s knowledge and further elaboration of key concepts and current trends, and her delineation of the perspectives for EU integration. Assoc. Prof. Jeleva has long focused her research on the Western Balkan countries, the uneven and contradictory course of their accession to the EU. Currently, these countries include some that are EU member states and others that have not yet been fully integrated. Along with her research interest in the Western Balkans, the author’s critical perspective problematizes the degree of Europeanization of Bulgarian society. This double perspective – Western Balkans-Bulgaria – outlines the territorial boundaries of the European Union but also the socio-cultural dimensions of this unique community of citizens of different European countries, united to various degrees by the values they share and by their commitment to abide by universally valid rules. Awareness of the need to support the view of European integration as a cultural unification of countries with shared values and rules is of key importance for the stability and development of the EU, for the possibility of enlargement and integration of new member states.

A contribution of the author is the well-grounded sociological nature of the study of EU integration processes and of the simultaneous counter-trends of disintegration. The conditions for achieving strong community integration, based on diversity of personal activity in various

spheres of life, are a basic topic in the sociology of Emile Durkheim. Integration is one of the basic concepts that we learned as students from our teachers in sociology (G. Fotev *The Sociological Theories of Durkheim, Pareto, Max Weber*, 1979) and that we have developed in our own later research (R. Stoilova, *Inequalities and Community Integration*, 2001). The precondition for achieving such integration, which expresses the nature of European integration, is the formation of a basic consensus on values among EU member states. Rumiana Jeleva has placed this basic consensus needed for the European integration in a social context.

The complexity of the study of European integration that Assoc. Prof. Jeleva has pursued over the years crystallizes in her monograph from 2024 in a well-structured and convincing way. In the work, she introduces another concept, following the distinction made by David Lockwood in 1964 between system integration and social integration; she thereby adds depth to the sociological character of her topic. System integration describes the building and growth of European institutions, and social integration expresses the European citizens' understanding of and support for these institutions, their identifying with them and finding their functions meaningful. The discrepancy between system and social integration is a very significant problem, which will probably be unpleasantly displayed in the forthcoming elections for European Parliament.

Assoc. Prof. Jeleva's monograph studies the application of one other key sociological concept – differentiation. It is presented in the work by reference to the principle of differentiation in the governance of the internally integrated European Union, which is inevitably enlarging and thereby becoming differentiated in the territorial and social-cultural aspect. The author has stated appropriately and in a timely way the key question: In which areas of European policy does differentiation in the EU produce good results and in which areas does differentiation carry the risk of disintegration? The raising of concrete questions

and discussing them from the position of an expert (which means applying sociologically defined and operationalized concepts) is important for enhancing the quality of public debate on the EU, which often wanders into on-going national disagreements. Instead of expert debate, we often hear repeated shallow or vague theses that fail to inform citizens of the meaning of integration processes or of the solutions to the risk of disintegration, the need for differentiation in EU governance.

In her articles, Assoc. Prof. Jeleva studies the effect of integration and differentiation on the social inequalities and economic imbalances between the member states, the social-demographic, educational and regional inequalities in Bulgaria (which has been visibly lagging behind other EU countries in its 17 years of membership). I should note the research focus on forms of training, including dual training, for more rapid and successful integration of young people in the labor market. The author is successfully cooperating with German researchers and experts with rich experience and successfully applying dual training in the third level of higher education as well. Assoc. Prof. Jeleva has co-authored publications devoted to rural regions and pointing to the need for policies aimed at overcoming poverty and social exclusion, which include identifying the potential means for local development. These publications demonstrate the author's skill in elaborating topics related to European integration at the theoretical and applied level. The publications indicate the visible results achieved through these policies and the positive influence of EU integration on the development of Bulgarian society.

Assoc. Prof. Jeleva includes the factor of mobility in her conceptual model for the study of EU integration. Spatial mobility enhances the educational, labor and cognitive potential of European citizens, develops their social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu). Mobility is a basic achievement of European citizens but it also creates risks such as brain-drain from lower-income to higher-income countries in the EU. The author argues that overcoming

social-economic inequalities and the management of migration are key social mechanisms for successful European integration. A key thesis is that migration is the mode through which European integration happens at the level of the individual - what Steffen Mau calls “bottom-up” integration.

#### **5. The candidate’s contribution in collective publications**

Two of the publications submitted for the competition are collective: **Jeleva, R.**, Draganova, M. (2013) “From Europe to the Europeans and Beyond: A Study on European Identity through Biographical Methods”. *Sociological Problems* 1 – 2; and Draganova, M., **Jeleva, R.** , Pickard, D. and S. Karakusheva (2012). Farmers more and less Europeans. - In: Miller, R. & G. Day (eds.). *The Evolution of European Identities: Biographical Approaches*. Palgrave Macmillan. A report on division of the contribution of each author is lacking. In such cases, it is assumed the contributions of the authors are equal. More importantly, the two publications cover a broad thematic field and show that, over the years, Assoc. Prof. Jeleva has elaborated the basic topics of her research on European integration and identity. Especially valuable is her thorough knowledge of the use of the biographical method in sociology. It has been applied in the cited publications. Assoc. Prof. Jeleva’s contributions include her translations of theoretical texts for the journal *Sociological Problems*, including texts related to the biographical method and interviews with eminent sociologists, for instance, with Prof. Richard Munch from the University of Bamberg.

**6. Impact of the candidate’s scientific publications on Bulgarian and foreign literature.** The autobiographical reference indicates 43 major citations, and for the publications submitted for the competition, she has indicated 12 citations, of which four are in the world-high ranked databases and academic publishing houses. These citations show the good visibility of the publications in accordance with the requirements of the NACID and of IPS-BAS.

## **7. Critical remarks on the submitted works, including on the candidate's knowledge of the literature**

Regarding Assoc. Prof. Jeleva's knowledge of the literature, it should be noted that she has a deep knowledge of the theoretical foundations of the topics under study and follows the latest publications, and properly refers to them where necessary.

The "working hypotheses" presented in *Dimensions of Integration into the EU*, are rather guidelines for the study of European integrations, as the author clarifies in a footnote. I propose that we read "hypotheses" as guidelines for theoretical and empirical study. Thus, working hypotheses seems to be an inexact term, which even underestimates their heuristic potential. The importance of these guidelines for research, as I would call them, lies in the significant aspects of the sociological study of European integration. In fact, these guidelines delineate a complex sociological program for research on EU integration that Assoc. Prof. Jeleva has elaborated in her publications. I would briefly formulate the main parts of this program thus: The principle of differentiation and the future of European integration; Differentiation and the risks of disintegration; Integration at the level of the individual; Mobility as a mechanism of social integration; European identity and national identities. Assoc. Prof. Jeleva has submitted publications on all these important topics related to European integration.

## **8. The reviewer's personal impressions of the candidate and other information not presented in the points above**

I have known Assoc. Prof. Jeleva since she came to work at the Institute of Sociology in 2005. She is a person who delves deep into problems and has the skill to focus her varied research and expert experience on a major topic. Our acquaintance grew into closeness based on our shared interest in classical and contemporary German sociology. She is constantly

accumulating experience and knowledge and is presenting Bulgarian sociology before our German colleagues in the best way. She has the qualities of a leading scholar and the ability to engage and work with young colleagues, transmitting her knowledge in an unobtrusive way. Her publications, projects and expert activities have enriched and present in the best way the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology before the international audience and foreign partners.

**In conclusion:** Assoc. Prof. Rumiana Jeleva is one of the leading scholars at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology. Her international authority is outstanding. She is respected by the Bulgarian sociological community and takes part eagerly in collective writings and conferences organized in Bulgaria. I recommend that she be elected professor and be granted the position of “professor” in professional area 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Culture Sciences in the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of BAS.

Sofia

Prof. Rumiana Stoilova, DSc

15.04.2024