

INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIOLOGY (IPS) - BAS

REVIEW

By: Prof. D.Sc. Temenuga Genova Rakadzhiyska;
UNWE; Sociology

Regarding: participation in a competition for the acquisition of the academic position "professor" in the scientific specialty "Sociology" 3.1. in IPS-BAS.

Candidate: Maria Dimitrova Jeliaskova, *associate professor, doctor of sociological sciences - the only candidate in the competition*

Grounds for presenting the review: member of the scientific jury for the announced competition for "professor", professional direction 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences for the needs of the "Public Policies and Social Changes" department at the IPS - BAS, announced in the State Gazette N. 58 of 09.07.2024 and Protocol N. 16 of 03.09.2024 of the SC of the IPS - BAS, according to order No. RD-09-253/09.09.2024 of the director of IPS-BAS, on the basis of the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and for occupying academic positions at BAS, the Rules of the IPS' Scientific Council.

1. Information about the candidate, the publications submitted for review and their classification by topic

Assoc. Prof., D. Sc. Maria Jeliaskova completed her habilitation at IPS - BAS in 2012. She defended her PhD in sociology on the topic "**Social Creativity of Youth**" (Diploma No. 15396 / 07.02.1986). On June 12, 2024, she successfully defended her D.Sc. dissertation on the topic "**Social Policy: Guidelines, Fluctuations and Deformations**", for which she was awarded the scientific degree "doctor of sociological sciences". She heads the "Public Policies and Social Changes" department at the IPS. She is engaged in reviews, analyzes and recommendations in the field of social policy, anti-poverty strategies, social integration, unemployment and active labor market policies. M. Jeliaskova has participated in more than 35 projects, in some of them with leading functions - 15 of these projects are EU wide and the other 20 are national. She has lecture courses on "Social Policy" at UNWE (for specialty "Economics taught in English") and at SU (for "Sociology" students). She is a member of the National Council for Social Inclusion at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria and of the Executive Committee of the European Anti-Poverty Network. With expert and consulting functions, she participated in a series of working groups for the Council of Europe, OECD, MLSP, UNDP and others. She has numerous participations in scientific and expert forums, incl. of the EC, ILO, etc. Assoc. Prof. M. Jeliaskova has over 70 publications, half of which are in English. For participation in the current competition, she submitted 21 publications, of which: 4 monographs; 4 papers published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information; 8 papers published in edited collective volumes; 4 chapters in collective monographs and one article published in an edited collective volume. All the publications presented are in the field of public policies (especially social policy regarding poverty and social exclusion, social entrepreneurship, inequalities, labor market) - i.e. they correspond to the research focus of the department for whose needs the competition has been announced. 8 of the presented publications were written in the period 2018 - 2020, the rest in the last four years. It is important to point out that these publications have not been presented as publications for the defense of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sociological Sciences" and were printed after the candidate's first habilitation. The habilitation work on the topic "**The Polarized Bulgarian Society: Sustainable Poverty and Toxic Inequalities**" is published as a monograph in 2024.

The similar problem fields on which the research attention of Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. Maria

Jeliazkova is focused suggest a certain coincidence in content, but in my opinion, each of the publications has its own specifics. That is why I do not consider necessary to reduce any of those with similar titles and subject of research.

The discourse on the problems of economic inequalities, as well as **the conceptualization of a specific type of income inequality defined as "toxic inequalities"** could be traced both in the habilitation thesis: Jeliazkova, M. (2024), The Polarized Bulgarian Society: Sustainable Poverty and Toxic Inequalities (No. 1 in the attached list of publications), as well as in Jeliazkova, M. (2023), Inequalities and Political (In)Consistency, (No. 5), and in Jeliazkova, M. D. (2021), Poverty in Bulgaria: Dimensions, Policies and Analyses (No. 11). Interpretations of these issues are also present in other attached publications.

Problems related to **poverty and social exclusion, as well as the main generators of poverty, and poverty alleviation policies (social policy)** are analyzed in: Jeliazkova, M. (2021), Quality of Jobs and Employment in Bulgaria. (No. 14); Jeliazkova, M. D. (2021) Poverty in Bulgaria: Dimensions, Policies and Analyses, (No. 11); Jeliazkova, M., Minev, D. (2023). Bulgaria: Poverty Watch 2023 – State, Political Measures and Green Transition, (No. 12); Jeliazkova, M., Minev, D. (2022), Bulgaria: Poverty Watch 2021. (No. 11); Jeliazkova, M. (2023), Chapter seven: The policy against Poverty and Social Exclusion in Bulgaria as Part of Social Policy, (No. 18); Jeliazkova, M., (2019), Social Enterprises and their Ecosystems in Europe. Country report Bulgaria, (No. 3) .

Focus on **employment policies and active and passive labor market measures addressed to youth unemployment** are discussed in: Borisova-Marinova, K., Atanasova, M., Beleva, I. Jeliazkova, M., Tair, E., Tsekov , N., Hristova, A., Nikolova, S., Banov, H., (2018), Demographic Development, Labor Force and Labor Resources in Bulgaria, IPHS -BAS, Measures to Overcome the Demographic Crisis in the Republic of Bulgaria, (No. 2); Ricucci, R., Ghislieri, C., Krasteva, V., Jeliazkova, M., Taru, M. & Rokicka, M. (2021), Chapter 11, How Young People Experience and Perceive Labor Market Policies in Four European Countries. (No. 8); Jeliazkova, M. (2018), Elusive Effects of Youth Employment Policies, (No. 16)); Jeliazkova, M., Minev, D., Draganov, Dr., Krasteva, V., Stoilov, A. (2018). Youth Employment Policies in Bulgaria. (No. 17); Minev, D., Jeliazkova, M. (2023), Chapter Four, Employment Policies after the 1980s, (No. 19); Krasteva, V., Jeliazkova, M., Draganov, Dr. (2018). Socio-Economic Consequences. (No. 20); Krasteva, V., Jeliazkova, M., Draganov, Dr. (2018). Social Exclusion. (No. 21); Bertolini, S., Musumeci, R., Athanassiades, C., Flouli, A., Figgou, L., Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, V., Krasteva, V., Jeliazkova, M., Minev, D. (2021), Chapter 8, Is Housing Autonomy still a Step towards Adulthood in Time of Job Insecurity?. (No. 7).

In the large-scale work of Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. Maria Jeliazkova issues related to the **green transition and how understudied aspects of achieving energy efficiency affect energy poverty** are also focused: Foulds, C., Royston, S., Berker, T., Nakopoulou, E., Bharucha, Z.P, Jeliazkova, M., et all. (2022), An Agenda for Future Social Sciences and Humanities Research on Energy Efficiency: 100 Priority Research Questions. (No. 6); Minev, D., Jeliazkova, M. (2022), Making a Just Green Transition: Concepts and Risks, (No. 10); Jeliazkova, M., (2020), Vulnerable Consumers Protection Framework Paper (No. 4); Jeliazkova, M., Krasteva, V., Minev, D. (2020), Chapter 3, Inconsistencies in Policy-Making as Drivers of Energy Poverty in Bulgaria. (No. 9).

I would especially like to note also the article by Assoc. Prof. DSc Maria Jeliazkova, devoted to the extremely important problem of the "knowledge-power" conflict and how it is usually resolved, leading to "deformation/limitation of knowledge", which in turn leads to the strengthening of the power of the elites, while causing social damages - Jeliazkova, M. (2019), Status and Significance of Policy Evaluation Studies, (No. 15).

2. General characteristics of the candidate's scientific, scientific-applied and

pedagogical activities

As far as the requirement to assess which of the candidate's scientific, scientific-applied and pedagogical activities has priority is concerned, the candidate's scientific activity should undoubtedly be given priority (in accordance with her 77 publications, of which 21 were submitted for participation in the competition, and the presented list of numerous participations with reports in different scientific forums in different countries and in front of different audiences). However, this in no way belittles her efforts in the scientific applied field (her participation in numerous research projects, both national and international - of which she has nominated 4 for participation in the competition for professor - 2 national ones, one of which she leads and 2 international). She also devotes a lot of efforts to her teaching activities - she has two PhD students, one of whom has already successfully defended his thesis, and she has been lecturing on social policy (in Bulgarian and English) for more than two decades at the two prestigious state universities (SU and UNWE). As an expert in a number of national and international institutions, providing expertise and recommendations to increase the effectiveness of public policies, Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. Maria Jeliaskova has proven her indisputable scientific authority

3. Reference regarding the correspondence between the national and those of IFS-BAS scientometric requirements, and those achieved by the candidate

As indicated in the reference given by the candidate and approved by the technical commission at IFS-BAS, without the habilitation work, the total number of points of Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. Maria Jeliaskova is 469.2 (with 220 required in IFS), and the sum of points from individual publications alone is 390. For collective papers and chapters of books, separation protocols are presented, in which the authors have declared equal participation and accordingly the points are divided by the number of authors. In 4 of these publications, Assoc. Prof. Jeliaskova is the lead author.

152 citations of various publications of Assoc. Prof. Jeliaskova since 2012 are indicated, i.e. after her appointment as associate professor. Of these, 75 are presented for the competition for professor, and another 44 - for doctor of science. Of those submitted for the competition for professor, 28 are cited in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in Scopus and/or in Web of Science; 35 - are citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review and 12 - are citations in non-refereed journals with scientific review. The total number of points is 830 (120 are required in IFS). Copies of the citations are not provided, so the nature of the citations cannot be determined.

The presented results significantly exceed the minimum requirements of NACID, as well as those with the additions of IFS-BAS, in both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

4. Evaluation of the candidate's scientific contributions, according to the self-assessment

The formulated by the author, Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. M. Jeliaskova scientific contributions in the reference - self-assessment of scientific contributions I consider real. A conceptual framework has been built that allows to trace both the complex dynamics of socio-political practice and its interactions with other political fields, as well as its scientific reflection, either as real knowledge or as ideologemes. I consider a substantial contribution of Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. Maria Jeliaskova the critical view on the problems addressed. This allows her distance from the ideological justifications of the political decisions made and to prove that often their effects are far from the goals that society would like to achieve. I believe that her analyzes definitely enrich and develop further the existing knowledge in the area of her research interest.

5. Content analysis of the candidate's scientific achievements

The long-term research activity of Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. Maria Jeliaskova in the field of public policies is distinguished by very bright characteristics - enviable erudition, thoroughness of analysis, breadth of view on the studied phenomena, accurate statement and critical thinking, both to the studied policies and to the ways and methods of their research. As a result, her publications of the last decade outline a large-scale situational analysis of public policies (especially social policy), their effects in a national scale, and the correspondence between the conducted assessment studies on the effects of the implemented policies and the reality of the goals achieved. All the presented publications have a clearly defined and achieved goal: to counter the ideological and political coloring of the official mainstream publications with a real critical analysis of the implemented public policies.

Researching inequalities, Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. Maria Jeliaskova applies a sociological approach, significantly different from the officially accepted, primarily economic one, which mainly emphasizes personal characteristics and fates as reasons for the socio-economic status of the individual or the household.

She looks for grounds to distinct conceptually two types of inequalities - unavoidable and toxic - in historical research as well. The emphasis she puts is not only on their dynamics, but also on the border, the crossing of which affects the functionality of inequalities in the constitution of the social structure by damaging the cohesion of society and eroding the opportunities for democracy. Her creative efforts are focused on revealing the link between the maintenance of toxic inequalities and the social relations imposed in Bulgaria in recent decades. Social relations aimed at maintaining the process of "bottom up" income redistribution, i.e. siphoning off income from low-income to high-income groups. Such a process leads to the breakdown of the social fabric that holds a society together as a "state or political community" (Aristotle).

The negative effects of maintaining high toxic inequalities in the main spheres of social interactions have been traced: economy; democracy; welfare and demographic development. Studying the "wasted human and social potential as a result of the inequality of opportunities", Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. Maria Jeliaskova makes an important conclusion: that in societies with a high level of toxic inequalities, the neoliberal appeal to replace "equality of results with equality of opportunities" remains in the spirit of "widely recognized demagogy" insofar as "intense and high inequalities block any equal opportunities".

In her publications, the author also discusses the problems related to the adopted legislative framework in our country for overcoming **poverty and social exclusion and their effects**, as well as its concretization in the various social policy measures. The extensive research experience, as well as the extensive knowledge and critical understanding of the scientific literature, problematizing social policy, allows her to ask the right questions and to provide answers based on solid logical argumentation. According to her, poverty studies are often subject to political biases and are loaded with ideological imprints, which requires increased attention to the indicators used to outline the real picture of poverty. The identification of the actual level of poverty, according to the author, requires getting rid of "statistical illusions", i.e. clearly delineating the limitations of the indicators used and not allowing the replacement of norms with indicators. According to the author, poverty is institutionally shaped and is primarily a result of social relations and characteristics of the exercised power. The problem of stimulating social enterprises, which can be an essential tool in the field of politics, really aimed at poverty reduction and social inclusion of marginalized groups, is also discussed.

No less significant result is the problem raised by the author about the level of social and academic knowledge with its undeniable relevance: "Who and how decides which problems should be analyzed; what scientific research is needed and how the results of different research should be integrated and used in a socially useful way'. In the identification of insufficiently researched problem fields in the field of energy efficiency, the need for an increased

contribution of the social sciences and humanities is argued, insofar as energy efficiency must also be considered from the perspective of social justice, poverty and vulnerability. The question is raised about the need for multidisciplinary in the research and formation of the energy efficiency program in order to give voice to undesirable and contradictory consequences of energy efficiency interventions.

Most economic studies on **labor market imbalances** in our country, based on EC reports (such as the one for 2024, which reflects that "the country faces a serious shortage of workers due to a shrinking labor force, low economic activity among vulnerable groups in the population, the lack of skills adequate to the needs and ineffective policies of the state"..... "the shortage of labor and qualifications risk worsening due to demographic trends" - although due to the modern intensive dynamics of the social, economic and political conjuncture not only in our country, but also internationally, it turns out that all these reports and due to the complex bureaucratic procedure for their adoption, are post- and not ante-factum.) are primarily aimed at imbalances related to the quality of labor supply, but not to the quality of the jobs offered. In the publications of Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. Maria Jeliaskova, dedicated to these problems, the discrepancy in the dynamics of demand and supply of labor and jobs and, in particular, the poor quality of the jobs offered is discussed. The role towards disturbing the balance is argued by the increasing trend to transform active labor market measures into "activation" ones while limiting passive measures and thus strengthening the compulsion to unconditional labour market inclusion.

6. Critical notes and recommendations regarding the submitted publications

Regardless of the many merits of the research activity of Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. Maria Jeliaskova reflected in the presented publications, to hers also as to any intellectual work, some claims could be made, which I would like to note.

I consider the monograph on inequalities (the habilitation work) would have gained if it had even a schematic clearly explicit methodological model on the understanding of economic inequalities. Its presence would allow to avoid the passages (however few) that talk about economic, income and material inequalities leaving the impression on the reader that they are taken as equivalent - in my opinion, these are the pitfalls of measuring inequalities first and foremost as income inequalities.

While making the stipulation that, of course, every researcher has the right to use as a starting point achievements of other authors that he/she examines and interprets, I still would like to draw the author's attention to the fact that in her future research on inequalities she might also consider The Economic Complexity Index developed by César Hidalgo and Ricardo Hausmann (ECI). They offer it not only as a descriptive measure, but also as a tool for predicting economic growth and income inequality. According to statistical models presented in their Atlas of Economic Complexity (2011), the ECI is more accurate in predicting per capita GDP growth than traditional measures. The ECI also depicts a strong negative correlation with income inequality, suggesting that production structures with more knowledge are more inclusive of the income distribution and provides a statistically more powerful explanation of cross-national variation in income inequality than the Kuznets curve. In 2021, Bulgaria occupies 40th place, and Romania - 26th.

7. Personal impressions of the reviewer about the candidate

I know the creative work of Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. Maria Jeliaskova for decades. I follow her publications with great interest - they are a product of a good knowledge of the literature on the researched problems, of social practice and the methods of sociological research. Her research and practical experience, her expertise are highly valued not only in our country, but also in the international institutions and these of the EU. During these three decades, she

developed her great creative potential and is one of the leading researchers in the field of public policies.

8. Conclusion

Based on the indicated merits of the publications presented for the participation in the competition and the author's creative achievements, taking into account her broad theoretical knowledge of the studied issues, her remarkable scientific erudition and taking into account her overall activity as a scientist, expert and teacher and the fact that Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. Maria Dimitrova Jeliaskova meets all the procedural requirements specified in the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules of the IPS-BAS (fulfills and exceeds the minimum national requirements of the NACID) regarding her awarding of the academic position "professor", I call upon the members of the Scientific Jury appointed by Order No. RD- 09-253/09.09.2024 of the director of IPS-BAS, to unanimously decide on a proposal to the SC of IPS-BAS to award Assoc. Prof. D. Sc. **Maria Dimitrova Jeliaskova** the academic position "professor", which she fully deserves.

21.10.2024

Signature:

Prof. D. Sc. Temenuga Rakadzhiyska