

REVIEW

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On the scientific works and contributions of Assoc. Prof. Maria Dimitrova Jeliaskova, candidate for the competition for professor in professional field 3.1. 05.11.01. Sociology

(Sociology - Public Policies against Poverty and Social Exclusion), for the needs of the Section "Public Policies and Social Change", promulgated in the State Gazette, issue 58 of 9.07.2024

Only one candidate participated in the competition, Assoc. Prof. Maria Dimitrova Jeliaskova

Judgement for the candidate's admission to assessment

According to the submitted by the candidate, Assoc. Prof. Maria Jeliaskova, a reference on the fulfilment of the minimum national requirements under Article 2b of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LADAB), and the decision of the Commission for verification of participation in the competition, she not only meets the requirements of the LADAB, but also exceeds the minimum requirements of the IPS-BAS. The requirements for three indicators - groups D, E and F (publications, citations and participation in scientific and educational projects, respectively) have been exceeded. This means that Assoc. Jeliaskova should be admitted for evaluation.

1. General description of the submitted materials

The candidate Maria Jeliaskova, PhD, has submitted a total of 21 scientific works for the Professor competition, of which four monographs (including a stand-alone monograph submitted as a habilitation thesis - Polarized Bulgarian Society: Persistent Poverty and Toxic Inequalities, Polis Publishing House, Sofia, ISBN 978-954-796-121-0 (240 pp.)) and fourteen articles and book chapters, published in Bulgarian or English, authored or co-authored. Three

other monographs have been published which are not presented as a main habilitation work. Two of them are independent, in English - one is related to social enterprises in Bulgaria, the other to European policies for energy poverty alleviation. Maria Jeliaskova has also presented four studies published in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information. These studies are in English with different number of co-authors and therefore the scientific metrics are divided by the number of authors as in all other co-authored publications. A further eight articles were published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes. Of these, five are in English and three in Bulgarian. Four of these publications are individual and the other four are co-authored. The list of publications also includes four chapters published in collective monographs: two in English and two in Bulgarian. One of these chapters was written independently by Assoc. Jeliaskova and the other three are co-authored. There is also an individual article published in an edited collective collection. For the majority of the co-authored publications, Assoc. Maria Jeliaskova has submitted division protocols for the authorial contribution.

The monograph presented as a major habilitation work is extremely important in the context of modern Bulgarian sociology, where the issue of inequalities and poverty is often not given the place it deserves. The author has shown an exceptionally good knowledge of the debates in the world literature, as well as of the global and national tendencies. Certainly, the idea of the qualitative characteristics of inequalities and the need to go beyond quantitative analyses is a contributing point, as is the distinction between the usual and the so-called toxic inequalities that lead to missed opportunities for countries like Bulgaria.

The review of the other publications for the competition clearly outlines a thematic field within which Assoc. Jeliaskova is a leading researcher in Bulgaria. This is the issue of poverty, which has been one of the most serious and persistent problems of Bulgarian society over the last thirty years. Her individual publications focus on different aspects of poverty, including the so-called energy poverty, as well as on the situation of certain groups on the labour market, such as young people. I would like to say that the continuous and in-depth development of this research field is giving its results, both in academic terms and in the context of the development of certain policies that Maria Jeliaskova advises public authorities and stakeholders on.

2. General description of the candidate's scientific activity

Assoc. Jeliaskova received her master's degree in sociology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in Bulgaria, and in 1986 she received her PhD at the Institute of Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences with a dissertation on "Social Creativity of Youth". In 1997-1996 Maria Jeliaskova specialized at the National Centre for Social Research, Athens, Greece, and in 1998 at the University of Bielefeld, Germany. She worked as an assistant at the Institute for Youth Studies and since 1992 she has been employed at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. 12. 06. 2024, she successfully defended her dissertation for the award of the Doctor of Sociological Sciences degree at the IFS - BAS, and the topic of her dissertation was "Social policy: landmarks, fluctuations and distortions".

In her scientific CV, attached to the competition documents, Assoc. Jeliaskova listed 77 publications, which is evidence of active publication activity. These include individual and collective monographs published abroad and in Bulgaria, as well as numerous studies, articles and chapters from collective monographs and collections. It can be observed that over the years she has developed several, often interrelated research themes. Her research interests focus on the transformation of Bulgarian society and on certain aspects related to poverty and social exclusion, as well as on public policies to address these problems, including social policy, social entrepreneurship, local development, etc.

The strong scientific commitment of Assoc. Jeliaskova's is clearly demonstrated by the many forms of her activity, including:

- Participation in a number of European research projects, including those funded by the Horizon Programme, such as 2015-2018: EXCEPT: Social Exclusion of Youth in Europe: Cumulative Disadvantage, Coping Strategies, Effective Policies and Transfer;
- Presenting papers at numerous conferences in different European countries;
- Compiling collections and special issues of sociological journals;
- Organization of conferences on important topics for Bulgarian society in cooperation with leading European NGOs;

- expertise for international organizations and Bulgarian institutions, including the European Anti-Poverty Network, OECD, MLSP, etc.;
- participation in scientific juries in Bulgaria.

3. Teaching activity

In different periods after 1998 Assoc. Jeliazkova has taught at several universities in Bulgaria. She has given lectures for undergraduate and graduate students. The subjects she has taught include "Social Policy" in English and "European Projects" at the University of National and World Economy (UNWE), "Economic Sociology", "Social Policy", "European Social Policy", "Social Work", "Reforming Social Policy in Bulgaria" and "Social Policy" at the Sofia University, "Sociology of Labour" and "Economic Sociology" at the SWU, as well as "Sociology of Labour" at the Free University in Burgas. Assoc. Jeliazkova has also delivered individual lectures at prestigious European universities. She has supervised one successfully defended PhD student, Stefano Kobelo, whose dissertation topic was "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs". Currently Assoc. Jeliazkova is supervising another PhD student at the IFS. The teaching career of Assoc. Jeliazkova's teaching career reflects her research interests in sociology of work, social policy and economic sociology and public policy. All this represents an impressive contribution, especially in the context of working at BAS, where research is a priority.

4. Nature of scientific achievements and contributions

The scientific work of Assoc. Jeliazkova in the entirety of the presented publications represents a contribution to the development of modern economic sociology and social policy. In the attached Author's note on the candidate's contributions in the publications for the competition, the following is highlighted: "Theoretical reflection and analysis of neglected and understudied causes of poverty and social exclusion: in addition to individual deficits, various "political deficits" also contribute to poverty and social exclusion and, moreover, are more important causes of them". This contribution certainly has not only a high academic value, but also a

practical dimension, as it provides an opportunity to rethink economic and social policies in Bulgaria and in the European Union.

5. Reflection of the candidate's scientific publications in Bulgarian and foreign literature

In her reference, Assoc. Jeliaskova indicates 152 citations of her various publications since 2012, i.e. after her appointment as Associate professor. Of these, 75 were submitted for the competition for Professor and another 44 for the acquisition of Doctor of Sciences Degree. It is noteworthy that her works have been cited in both Bulgarian and international journals, including indexed and referenced in world-renowned databases of scientific information. Of the citations submitted for the competition for professor, 28 are citations in scientific journals refereed and indexed in Scopus and/or Web of Science; 35 are citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific peer review and 12 are citations in non-refereed journals with scientific review.

6. Critical notes

Along with the many positive evaluations, the publications proposed for review naturally raise a number of questions and comments that cannot be fully presented, and for this reason I will focus them mainly on the monograph presented as a Habilitation thesis, "Polarized Bulgarian Society: persistent poverty and toxic inequalities".

My first question relates to Assoc. Jeliaskova's assertion that "the processes in Bulgarian society analysed in this book point to growing problems and the need to revise basic principles and institutional rules". If, on the one hand, the analysis of institutional problems is convincing, I would like to ask Assoc. Jeliaskova to develop her thesis in which direction she thinks this institutional framework should be changed and by whom. On the other hand, which actors would be interested in such a change and which would not?

My second question is related to the recent finding of the World Bank experts that Bulgaria is already among the group of rich countries, and in the last two years the number of immigrants

has exceeded the number of emigrants. Does this not mean that through economic development some of these toxic inequalities can be overcome?

Third, based on Assoc. Jeliaskova's experience, I would like to ask her how Bulgarian institutions can best address the "discouragement of society"?

7. Personal impressions

I have excellent direct impressions from the work of Assoc. Jeliaskova as a researcher at the IFS-BAS. Maria Jeliaskova is a colleague distinguished by high professionalism, outstanding efficiency and serious self-criticism. She successfully combines persistence in terms of her research topics with openness and curiosity towards new issues. Her academic work is accompanied by a strong social commitment, within the European Anti-Poverty Network and many other social initiatives. Her achievements and efforts have been recognised both at a national level and abroad.

8. Conclusion

Based on all that has been said above about the contributions of Assoc. Jeliaskova, presented in the attached documents and materials, as a member of the Scientific Jury I have the categorical reason to vote for the occupation of the academic position "Professor" by Assoc. Prof. Maria Dimitrova Jeliaskova.

24.10.2024 г.

Signed:

Prof. D.Sc.. Vasil Kirov