

OPINION

**by Prof. DSc. Ivan Stefanov - Member of the Scientific Jury by Order No. RD-09 -
42.1/05.02.2025 of the Director of the IPS-BAS Prof. Dsc. E. Chengelova**

for the competition announced in the State Gazette, issue 105 of 13.12.2024) for the academic position of "Professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences (Study of Public Opinion on the Contemporary Identity of Bulgarian Citizens and Refugees) for the needs of the Centre for Empirical Social Studies at the IPS - BAS

1. General description of the submitted materials

In the competition for the academic position "Professor" in the field 3.1.Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences (Study of Public Opinion on the Contemporary Identity of Bulgarian Citizens and Refugees) only one candidate submitted documents - Assoc. Prof. DSc. Albena Nakova. The documents are in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. The presented tables for meeting the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the BAS to the candidates for the academic position "professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences show that Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova fully meets the minimum national requirements as well as the requirements of the BAS for this position and even exceeds them many times - she collects 1235 points with the required 550 points according to the minimum national requirements and 590 points according to the requirements of the BAS.

Assoc. Prof. DSc. Albena Nakova participated in the competition for professor with 17 publications, of which: 2 monographs and 15 articles; 6 of the articles are in English, 1 is in Russian and only 1 is co-authored, for which there is an attached protocol for the contribution of co-authors; 7 of the articles are published abroad by prestigious international publishers such as Cambridge Scholars Publishing, the publishing house of the University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Lumina University, Bucharest, the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, Belgorod State University. All this testifies to the author's aspiration to create international visibility of his work and its popularization not only in Bulgaria, but also among the international scientific community. All publications with which Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova participated in the competition for the academic position of "Professor", do not repeat those submitted for the academic position of "Associate professor" and for the obtaining of the scientific degree "Doctor of sciences".

The entire professional experience of Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova is completely in the field of the announced competition.

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

The publications submitted for the competition outline three theoretical focuses of the research work of Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova and several main themes, closely interrelated, deriving from each other and crossing into each other. Following the chronology of her publications, the first thematic focus is related to the problematics of interethnic relationships in Bulgaria, the image of the ethnic other and the attitude towards otherness in Bulgarian society and the derivation on this basis of models of interethnic communication and models of tolerance in interethnic relations in Bulgaria. This thematic line has led her to two others that have dominated her research in recent years. First, this is the line of research on the attitude towards otherness and cultural difference, when the other is not "one's own", as in the case of relations between ethnic groups in Bulgarian society, but "foreign", a line that is imposed by the increasingly active processes of migration in contemporary global society and the influx of refugees to the Bulgarian borders, and to Europe as a whole, as a result of local wars, interethnic and interreligious conflicts. And the third focus of the research work of Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova in recent years is also a consequence of the initial orientation towards the study of interethnic relations in Bulgarian society, but refracted again through the prism of the imposing specificity of contemporary global society as a society of mobility and migration, a specificity leading to significant changes in the identification of different ethnic communities in Bulgarian society and of Bulgarian citizens in general and to the formation of a specific type of identity, a hybrid identity, combining elements of national, supranational/European, ethnic and local identities, which are represented in different ethnicities with different shares and occupy different places in the overall structure of their identity as a hybrid construct. This new thematic line of research interest is complemented by the study of identity formation processes in different ethnic groups from childhood to adulthood in the course of ontogenetic development.

This specificity of the research interests of Assoc. Prof. Nakova leads to the integration of different scientific approaches in her scientific work and above all to the combination of sociological and social psychological methods and approaches in the analysis of the phenomena under study. At the same time, an important feature of her work, which deserves

to be noted, is that it is devoted to structurally defining for society and at the same time extremely topical and of great practical importance topics and problems. And the specificity of her research approach and the methods she applies allow her to penetrate below the surface visibility of the phenomena under study and to reach those deep connections and interactions that delineate the systematic and the regular. Undoubtedly Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova is a scientist with profound and systematic scientific research on issues, the interest in which develops over time in new theoretical fields, and the approach to it becomes more and more complex and multidisciplinary. And the other very important feature of her work is that it is supported by the use of a very rich empirical material. All the theoretical analyses of Assoc. Prof. Nakova are based on numerous empirical studies, some of them the author's own studies, and the other part were carried out with her active participation, including as the author of the developed toolkit and theoretical model of the study. All this guarantees the reliability, authenticity and validity of the analyses and the generalizations drawn.

Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova is an extremely productive author. It is evident from her CV that she has authored a total of 18 monographs, of which 4 individual and 14 collective, in which she has authored individual chapters and her contribution is clearly outlined. And overall, her publications number in excess of 130.

Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova's scientific activity is very successfully complemented by her applied scientific activity.

She has successfully presented the results of her scientific activities at various scientific forums. Since her election as Associate Professor, she has participated in a total of 60 international and national conferences, and in the last year in particular, she has participated in scientific conferences in Portugal, the UK, France, China, Romania, Azerbaijan and Russia, where she has presented papers, which is undeniable evidence of her aspiration for international visibility and, at the same time, of the international recognition of her scientific work.

Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova is a participant in 31 scientific projects - national and international, again after her election as Associate Professor, and she is the leader of the team of 10 of them. In terms of content, the projects in which she participates or leads are closely linked to the specificity of her scientific and theoretical research, contributing to its practical validation. On the other hand, they make possible the transfer of scientific knowledge to various national and international institutions and organizations, thus outlining the practical utility of the research activities carried out.

Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova is also a very successful expert. She is an expert at various institutions and organizations such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Industrial Capital Association in Bulgaria, applying her knowledge and supporting the work of various expert groups within these institutions and organizations.

Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova is also a member of the editorial boards of three scientific journals, two of them international - from Kazakhstan and Russia.

She is also quite active in teaching, which is again linked to her research and scholarship work. Assoc. Prof. Nakova lectures two courses at the Centre for Doctoral Training at BAS. She is a scientific supervisor of 6 PhD students, two of them from abroad - Kazakhstan and Greece, and a scientific consultant of two postdocs, one of them from Turkey. Albena Nakova is also the author of 28 reviews and opinions for the acquisition of scientific degrees and academic positions.

Besides scientific and expert activities Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova is also highly engaged in administrative activities. Since 2015 she has held the positions of Scientific Secretary and two mandates of Deputy Director of the IPS.

In general, it can be said that in the work and commitment of Albena Nakova is fully respected the balance between scientific and theoretical, scientific and applied and teaching activities, and in addition they are extremely rich, multifaceted and in full synchrony in terms of content and completely meet the requirements for holding the academic position of professor.

3. Scientific achievements and contributions of the candidate

I would like to note that I accept the self-assessment of the scientific contributions made by the candidate - it corresponds to the content of the scientific publications submitted for review. In this regard, I would like to highlight a few points of contribution in her publications, which I see as related to the three theoretical focuses I have highlighted in her work.

First, it is the definition of ethnic tolerance through the prism of ethnic perceptions and the derivation of models of ethnic tolerance characterized by varying degrees of intensity of tolerance or lack of tolerance in interethnic relations. I would especially highlight the specific model of tolerance towards Roma ethnicity in Bulgarian society defined as "tolerance-patience for ambivalence", "tolerance-compatibility" or "bearing with otherness". Within this thematic

framework, I would also note the identification in each ethnicity's collective image of the other of a core of constant characteristics that reflects consistency in perceptions regardless of the changing social situation and a periphery of changing characteristics that reflects the contemporary interpretation of past experience.

As a further development of this interpretation of the image of the "other", the "different", the "foreign" is the identification of two types of characteristics in the commonly shared image of Bulgarian citizens for refugees: a core of constant characteristics, which remain unchanged regardless of the stage of the refugee wave and the socio-demographic profile of the respondents sharing them, and a periphery of unstable characteristics, which vary depending on the different socio-demographic profile of the respondents, the different time period of the refugee wave, the experience of interaction with refugees and the degree of getting to know them. In this context, the role of direct contact with refugees and getting to know them as a key factor for positivizing attitudes towards them and shortening distances should also be noted. Within this thematic focus of the research work of Assoc .Prof. Nakova it is also worth noting the interpretation of public opinion about refugees as a social phenomenon, made up of four types of components - cognitive, emotional, evaluative and behavioral, which are expressed in the three social-psychological constructs through which they manifest and acquire reality: the image of the refugee, attitudes towards refugees and distances towards refugees.

Finally, within the third meaningful thematic focus of Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova's work, I would note the conceptualization of identity as a hybrid construct in which different types of identity (national, European, ethnic and local) are represented as occupying different places and different shares in the overall structure of identity, the derivation of specific ethnic models of hybrid identities and specific ethnic models of identity formation in the process of ontogenesis.

Thus structured the main contributions in the work of Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova reflect the patterns and meaning matrices through which she interprets the subject of her research, while at the same time giving her research work originality and heuristic.

4. Identification of the candidate's contribution in collective publications

Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova participated in the competition with only one collective publication, in which her contribution is correctly defined with an attached protocol for contribution of co-authors.

5. Reference of the candidate's scientific publications in our and foreign literature

It is evident from the attached CV that Albena Nakova has 63 citations since her election as Associate Professor, which are a reflection of her visibility and representation as a researcher in the scientific space.

6. Critical remarks on the submitted papers

I have no critical comments to make on the papers presented. I consider them to be of a high scientific level and fully meet the requirements for the academic position of professor.

7. Personal impressions of the candidate

I have known Albena Nakova since her student years and then as part of the IPS and have excellent impressions of her as a serious scholar and conscientious researcher who has a good professional reputation.

8. Conclusion

Taking into account the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and based on the stated so far evaluations of the work of Assoc. Prof. DSc. Albena Nakova, I consider that she meets all the requirements for holding the academic position "Professor" in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies and I vote with conviction that she be awarded the academic position of Professor.

6.03.2025

/Prof. DSc Ivan Stefanov/