

REVIEW

**by Prof. Dobrinka Stancheva Peicheva, Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski"
on the materials submitted for participation in the competition
for the academic position "Professor" in the specialty "Sociology", code 3.1.
Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences (Public Opinion Studies on the
Contemporary Identity of Bulgarian Citizens and Refugees),
announced for the needs of the Center for Empirical Social Research, Institute of
Philosophy and Sociology - BAS**

The review is based on the Order on the composition of the Scientific Jury for the competition by the Director of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology - BAS, No. RD-09-42.1/5.02.2025.

1. Competition details

The competition for the academic position "Professor" has been announced by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology - BAS for the needs of the Center for Empirical Social Surveys, and was published in the State Gazette, issue 105/13.12.2024.

The present review is based on the Order for the composition of the Scientific Jury for the competition by the Director of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology - BAS, No. RD-09-42.1/5.02.2025.

2. General description of the candidates

For the announced competition for the academic position of "professor", documents were submitted only by Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova-Manolova from the Center for Empirical Social Surveys at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova graduated in 1987 at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", in Sociology, profile "Sociology of Management and Politics". In 2002 she defended her dissertation on "The Socialization of the Intelligence" and was awarded a PhD. In 2012 she was already habilitated in the field of ethnosociology with the monograph "Communication between Bulgarians, Turks and Roma", ISBN 978-954-383-036-7 (287 pages)

Assoc. Prof. DSc. Nakova has held prestigious administrative positions. She was "Scientific Secretary" of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology from 2015-2018, Deputy

Director of IPS-BAS from 2018-2022, and again a second mandate as Deputy Director of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of BAS from November 2022 to the present.

The attached reference of Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova shows that she has also held prestigious positions in the educational public management hierarchy - she was an expert on international cooperation at the Ministry of Education and Science (1987-1997).

She is a member of various working groups at other ministries - at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, etc. Her expertise is also valued by the Association of Industrial Capital in Bulgaria, where she is an expert to this day.

Assoc. Prof. Nakova also has an enviable scientific and editorial activity. She is a member of the editorial boards of 3 academic journals: "Postmodernism Problems", "Research Result. Sociology and Management", "International Science Reviews. Social Sciences series".

Albena Nakova has been a guest editor twice for the e-journal "Postmodernism problems " in 2023, vol. 13/issue 1, as well as in 2019, vol. 9/issue 3; as well as in the journal "Research Results. Sociology and management, 2021, vol. 7/issue 1.

Assoc. Prof. DSc. A. Nakova was also the compiler and editor of the collection "Refugees - fears, understanding, empathy", 2021, Academic Publishing House "Prof. M. Drinov".

3. Fulfilment of the state requirements for the academic position

From the attached references it is evident that Assoc. Prof. Nakova fully meets the state requirements for the position of Professor. She also meets the minimum requirements of the BAS for groups of indicators approved by the Regulations of the IPS - BAS for holding the academic position of Professor.

From the tables presented, it can be seen that she gained a total of 1235 points - more than double the required 590 points. It was found that the minimum national requirements for the groups of indicators for "PhD", "Associate Professor", "Doctor of Science", "Professor" were also met, as the publications, citations and other activities presented for each of them were not duplicated.

Assoc. Prof. DSc. A. Nakova was the scientific supervisor of 6 doctoral students and 2 postdoctoral students.

She was a member of 28 juries for the acquisition of: PhD and DSc, for the academic positions of "Associate professor" and "Professor"; ten of which were for writing opinions, and eighteen - for reviews.

The scientific research and project activities of the candidate for professor are also highly impressive.

Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova has participated with presentations in over 100 national and international scientific forums.

The number of participations in research projects is also extremely impressive -35. She has participated as a team leader in 10 projects, and as a team member in 25 projects. After she was elected an Associate Professor, A. Nakova has participated in 31 research projects as a leader and team member. The projects in which the candidate has participated are funded by various European, national, and academic programs.

Assoc. Prof. Nakova has a high publication activity: 4 individual monographs; 14 collective monographs; 45 articles in international and Bulgarian journals; 46 articles in collections published in Bulgaria; 19 articles in collections published abroad.

Assoc. Prof. Nakova participated in the competition with 20 citations in national and international scientific journals, and overall, she has more than 60 citations after election as Associate Professor.

In the current competition for the professor Assoc. Prof. Nakova participated with two main monographs and 17 articles, 6 of which are in English, and one is in Russian.

Assoc. Prof. Nakova has fulfilled and exceeded all the indicators for the positions and degrees held so far, including the indicators for the position of "professor", for which she is a candidate in this competition.

4. General characteristics and assessment of the candidate's scientific and applied scientific activities

The main research interests of the candidate are within the perimeter of the current competition, which combines the problems of identity and refugees, namely: national and ethnic identity, interethnic relations and communication in cognitive terms, ethnic tolerance in the context of perceptions of one's own and other ethnicity, interethnic distances; social perceptions and attitudes in interethnic communication, etc., and on the other hand, the problems of migration and refugees - cultural differences in the age of mobility, interactions between peoples and cultures, pluralism and multiculturalism, cultural distances, migrations and identity changes, perceptions and attitudes towards the other/foreigner/refugee, integration of refugees in the host society. Demographic processes and demographic development; measures for overcoming the demographic crisis, active ageing are topics on which Assoc. Profs. Nakova continues to work on at present.

In the current competition for the professor Assoc. Prof. Nakova applied with 2 main monographs, published by the Academic Publishing House "Prof. Marin Drinov": 1. "Public opinion about refugees in Bulgaria (2013-2020)" and 2. "Hybrid identities. Contemporary state

and ethnic models in Bulgaria", as well as with 17 articles in scientific publications, not included in previous scientific competitions.

1st monograph:

Nakova, A. 2024. Public opinion about refugees in Bulgaria (2013-2020). Academic Publishing House "Prof. Marin Drinov", Sofia, ISBN 978-619-245-505-7.

The first monograph of Assoc. Prof. Nakova is a successful attempt to reveal the public opinion of Bulgarians about refugees from the war in Syria and neighboring countries, as well as from Arab countries in North Africa, based on the results of sociological surveys, in the period 2013-2020.

This work fully corresponds to the topic of the announced competition for a professor insofar as it explores public opinion about the refugees.

Theorizing the image, attitudes and distances towards refugees are successfully realized by her in four perspectives - cognitive, emotional, evaluative, and behavioral. This aptly derived four-dimensionality of the public opinion about refugees provides her the opportunity for relevant structuring of the text and successful conceptualization in the direction of socio-communicative reflections and reconstructions of the images of refugees; of the attitudes towards them; and the stated distances towards them.

The monograph consists of 7 chapters, which have a two-vector focus - theoretical-methodological and empirical with a clearly indicated relationship between them. I mean the first, second, and third chapters, on the one hand, and the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh, on the other hand.

The first chapter "On cultural difference and the 'new others'" is built on the basis of Andreas Wimmer's concept of cultural compromise.

In analyzing the role of cultural difference in the modern era of constant migrations and increased mobility, which "eliminate the closedness of peoples and cultures and create a new type of social communication", Assoc. Prof. DSc A. Nakova articulates two main types of "difference" and "foreignness" - on the one hand, when the "other" is "other, but ours, our own" (referring to the multiethnicity in our country), and on the other hand, when the "other" is "other, but not ours, when it is foreign" referring to migrants and refugees. The focus of this monograph is on the differences of the "other as a foreigner".

Using J. Habermas's terminology for communicative action, she focuses on the agreement of Bulgarian citizens with the symbols, patterns, and norms valid for us and sets the boundaries within which or beyond which foreigners become acceptable or unacceptable.

The second direction of the analysis of Assoc. Prof. Nakova starts with and refers to Z. Bauman's new figure of the "stranger-neighbor", the new forms of multicultural coexistence that the modern era imposes and that define some people as " newcomers".

The second chapter "Refugees in Scientific Discourse" continues the theorization on the topic "refugees" in a national and international perspective, and the third chapter "Methodological Considerations" reveals Assoc. Prof. A. Nakova in her high professionalism. I mean highlighting the specificity of the sociological and social psychological methods applied in the monograph to study the public opinion about refugees.

In addition to the seven empirical studies on which the problems are articulated, it is worth noting that the first survey on public opinion on refugees was conducted in the town of Vetovo, Ruse region, a town with a mixed ethnic population, followed by two case studies conducted in the towns of Yambol and Gotse Delchev, and two nationally representative surveys conducted in 2018 and 2020, as well as one online survey conducted with Bulgarian citizens living abroad. All surveys on which the monograph is based were organized and conducted between 2013 and 2020.

In the other group of chapters "First "meetings" with refugees – 2013", "Public opinion about refugees after the peak of the refugee wave – 2018", "Public opinion about refugees during the period of the a receding refugee wave – 2020" and "Fluctuations of public opinion about refugees in Bulgaria – conclusions and generalizations", data are revealed, processes are discussed and analyzed, again based on the experience of our and international researchers and the own professional skills of Assoc. Prof. Nakova. These chapters reveal particularly clearly the possibilities of Assoc. Prof. Nakova to demonstrate her erudition and skill in conceptualization. The conceptualization is explicated through the articulation of the author's interpretations that reveal the image of refugees:

- in their dual nature in cognitive and evaluative-emotional aspects;
- in its growing cognitive enrichment and differentiation and in its acquiring an increasing neutral-negative character;
- in the proven lack of xenophobia towards refugees, despite the great social distances demonstrated towards them, in their different cognitive and behavioural dimensions;
- in affirming the positive role and importance of direct communication with refugees and getting to know them as a basis for forming a tolerant model of attitude towards them and shortening social distances.

My assessment of this monograph is that it not only meets the specifics of the announced competition as a particular perspective, but also that it reveals the high intellectual and analytical qualities of the candidate for professor - Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova.

2nd monograph:

In the second monograph "Hybrid Identities. Contemporary State and Ethnic Models in Bulgaria", Academic Publishing House "Prof. Marin Drinov", Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova expands the idea of the contemporary identity of Bulgarian citizens as a hybrid collective identity, stated in her doctoral dissertation for the acquisition of the scientific degree of Doctor of Sciences.

Exploring the dimensions of identity in the three main ethnic groups in our country - the Bulgarian, the Turkish and the Roma, namely - national, supranational (European and global), ethnic and local identities, she links the explication of its different variations and proportions depending on the different place of ethnicity in society and depending on the changes in time that identity has undergone over a period of more than 15 years until today.

With the search for validity and reliability of the results, which has become her immanent feature, or in other words, with her inherent permanent research scope Assoc. Prof. Nakova confirms the derived patterns of collective ethnic identification by defining patterns of ethnic and national identity formation in children aged 5 to 18 in the three main ethnic groups in Bulgarian society.

In the first chapter "Theoretical Prerequisites" Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova has framed identity, quite reasonably for an established sociologist as she is, positioning it in the trajectory of the social, of sociality. The social is the framework of individuals as a trajectory of possible identity formation together with others of the group/community to which the individual belongs. In this sense, the forming collective identity of contemporary Bulgarian citizens Assoc. Prof. Nakova also unfolds in a supranational aspect, within the supranational and in particular the European community. Sociality is taken into account in its border axial contours: supranational-national-ethnic-local.

That is why the formation of an idea of one's own identity - individual and group - and the identity of others, is brought out as one of the cornerstones of contemporary interethnic, interstate and international relations, determining their character - of peace or conflicts and war. The exceptional relevance of the topic of identity in the contemporary world in this sense is shown not only as more than obvious but is also exemplified by the military-conflict developments in the present. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nakova's understanding of identity as a social construct, determined by the nature of the interaction with "others" and changing over time and

the situation, is also evidence of the permanent relevance of the topic that Assoc. Prof. Nakova has taken up and continues to work on.

The fact that the data on which the analyses in this work are based represent results of many sociological surveys conducted over time, in which the author has personal participation, is indicative not only of the relevance of the monograph, but also of its significance over time. This is a convincing illustration of the fact that Assoc. Prof. Nakova not only has a scientific sense of what is significant in the research of social issues, but also that she herself has a significant presence in the research of these issues.

Proof of this are a series of empirical studies in which A. Nakova has participated:

1. National representative survey on the topic: "National and European dimensions of the contemporary identity of Bulgarians", conducted in 2021 within the framework of a project of the same name under a contract with the National Science Fund at the Ministry of Education and Science.

2. National representative survey under the project "Measures to overcome the demographic crisis in the Republic of Bulgaria", funded by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, implemented by a consortium of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences under the leadership of the Institute for Population and Human Research, conducted in 2018.

3. National representative survey under the project "National Identity and Social Time: Differentiation of Ethnocultural Models", funded by the National Science Fund at the Ministry of Education and Science, conducted in 2009.

4. Representative sociological survey on the topic: "Formation of Ethnic and National Identity", conducted in 2018 in the town of Vetovo, Ruse region - a small town with an ethnically mixed population. The survey is representative for the town and for the three main ethnic communities living in it - Bulgarians, Turks and Roma.

5. Representative sociological survey on the topic: "Communication between Bulgarians, Turks and Roma", conducted in 2008 also in the town of Vetovo, Ruse region. The study is also representative of the city and of its three main ethnic communities – Bulgarians, Turks and Roma.

6. An online survey conducted in 2019 within the framework of the project "Measures to Overcome the Demographic Crisis in the Republic of Bulgaria", funded by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria. The study was conducted with Bulgarians residing abroad for a long time and aimed at identifying the main markers of their identity.

7. Two case studies conducted in the secondary school (from grades I to XII) and kindergarten in the town of Vetovo in 2018 with different age groups of children to trace the successive stages of the formation of ethnic and national identity in the process of ontogenesis.

Both case studies are comprehensive, i.e. all children studying in the school and kindergarten are covered, which makes it possible to identify typical dependencies and patterns. The studies are filled with similar methodology and tools, which allows for both data comparability and results comparability, and also makes it possible to deduce trends in the development of the processes of collective identity formation among contemporary Bulgarian citizens from the perspective of the relation: national–supranational (European and global)–ethnic–local identity.

Here again, theorization and conceptualization are immanent features of the analyses of Assoc. Prof. Nakova.

As in her other monograph, here too, she not only sheds light on the different theories and concepts, starting from primordialism, passing through instrumentalism, social constructivism, ethnosymbolism, cultural pluralism or multiculturalism, transnationalism, methodological nationalism and transculturalism, striving to reveal the evolution in approaches, but also generates conceptualization. The changes in identity - she says - are a reflection of societal transformations, as a consequence of which identity is no longer perceived as something once and for all given and unchanging, but as something mobile, dynamic, as a changing correlation with different normative-value systems and referencing of belonging to different communities, in which the processes of formation of supranational identities are increasingly coming to the fore. Therefore, the hybridization of identity is a progressively developing and imposing trend in contemporary postmodern society, and the formation of supranational identities is only one side of the evolving process of hybridization of identity, the other side is related to the reverse processes of ethnicization, regionalization, localization, glocalization.

The presented second monographic work is a complete conceptualization of the contemporary identity of Bulgarian citizens with a contribution on the specificity of the global problem of identity in a particular country and the approaches to its explication and validation.

The extreme relevance of the topic of identity is determined by the contemporary world of global social changes and polycrises, which more and more often call into question identities built and affirmed for centuries and necessitate the study of its contemporary dimensions and specificities. This is, in fact, one of the main contributions of the monograph.

The interest in the study of identity is provoked not only by theoretical needs, but above all by the acuteness of a number of practical problems related to collective identification and self-identification in today's world of constant transformations.

The articles submitted for the competition are also closely related to the theme and issues of the announced competition in its 2 dimensions – identity and refugees. 6 articles are devoted to the identity of Bulgarian citizens and 9 to the attitude towards refugees.

I would especially highlight 2 articles, without belittling the others. I am referring to the article dedicated to the study of Roma women, published in Baku in a joint publication of UNESCO and the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences "The Roma woman in Bulgaria - social status, values and gender relations in family", which concludes that Roma women are also characterized by the desire for higher social status and equality with others, as well as the article from 2021 "The poles of public opinion about refugee children – from sympathy to indifference", which states that "non-acceptance and indifference to the other extend even to such vulnerable and usually sympathetic and compassionate groups as children" and that "refugee children could have a new life and future if they were given the opportunity to grow up in a safe environment and were supported to develop their abilities", but that Bulgarian society is still far from the necessary humanity.

The other articles that Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova presents are similar examples of her professionalism and research "insatiability" in her chosen scientific amploa.

I highly appreciate the scientific and research achievements of Assoc. Prof. Nakova.

5. Contributions

I accept all the contributions made by Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova. I add that the two monographic works have an contribution of their own, insofar as they present a complementary conceptualization of identity, once examined in its own dimensions and specificities as the identity of Bulgarian citizens and of the three main ethnic groups in Bulgarian society, and a second time examined through the prism of attitudes towards otherness, but no longer as an otherness that is "one's own and familiar", but as an otherness that is "foreign and unfamiliar", i.e. refracted through attitudes towards refugees. In this sense, both monographs and the issues analyzed in them are fully relevant to the subject of the announced competition for professor.

6. Notes

I have no critical remarks. I look forward to Assoc. Prof. A. Nakova to continue to develop these very significant issues.

7. Personal impressions.

I know Assoc. Prof. Nakova as a guest editor and author in the e-journal "Postmodernism Problems" that I manage, where she was twice a guest editor of thematic issues, and where she has shown not only her scientific editorial qualities, but also her responsibility for the quality of thematic issues as a researcher and scholar. I also know her as a member of Scientific Juries for promotion in academic positions and for the award of scientific and educational degrees when we worked together. Where she demonstrated herself once again as a responsible colleague with a professional attitude to the assessed works. She has had a high level of competence and professionalism.

My first thorough acquaintance with her work was her dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Science, which both then and now I consider to be the best quality work I have ever reviewed. And my experience in this respect, as is well known, is extensive.

In all her publications Assoc. Prof. A. Nakova analyses and interprets data from the surveys she uses as argumentation material with relative ease. At the same time, her analyses are detailed and thorough, permeated with erudition and theoretical conceptualizations from the lowest to the highest level.

Assoc. Prof. A. Nakova presents us academic but also very readable texts, all with serious contributions. One can be envious of this type of her scholarly skill in getting results.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to share that all the available materials and evidences provided by Assoc. Prof. Nakova are well structured, concrete, accurate, not misleading and meet the requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the specific requirements of the IPS – BAS

I highly appreciate the candidacy of Assoc. Prof. DSc Albena Nakova for the academic position "Professor" at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. I declare that I will vote "yes" to approve Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova for the academic position of "Professor" at the IPS - BAS in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences (Public Opinion Studies on the Contemporary Identity of Bulgarian Citizens and Refugees).

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