

Review
by Prof. DSc Valentina Milenkova,
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Member of the scientific jury in the competition for the academic position of "Professor" in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences for the needs of the "CESS" section of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, announced in the State Gazette No. 105 of 13.12.2024.

1. General description of the candidate and the submitted materials

Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova-Manolova is the only candidate in the competition for the academic position of "Professor". She has been an associate professor at CESS at the IPS since 2022, and before that in the "Communities and Identities" section since 2012.

From 2002 to 2022, she held various academic positions in the following sections:

- "Ethnosociology": from 2002 to 2010, she was a research associate, 1st grade.
- "Communities and Identities": from 2010 to 2012, she was a senior assistant; 2012 - 2022, she was an associate professor;

She was a doctoral student at the Institute of Sociology in the period 1998 - 2002.

The candidate obtained a master's degree in Sociology/Sociology of Governance and Politics in 1987 at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski".

Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova has held the following administrative positions:

- Expert in International Cooperation at the Ministry of Education and Science (1987-1997);
- Scientific Secretary of the Institute for Research of Societies and Knowledge (2015-2018);
- Deputy Director of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (2019 - present).

A. Nakova is the scientific supervisor of 6 doctoral students and 2 post-doctoral students.

She has participated in a total of 28 juries for the award of: the Ph.D. degree, the academic position of Associate Professor and the academic position of Professor; 10 of her participations were for writing opinions and 18 for writing reviews.

She was a guest editor of:

- journal "Postmodernism Problems" in 2023, vol. 13/issue 1, as well as in 2019, vol. 9/issue 3;
- journal "Research Result. Sociology and management, 2021, vol. 7/issue 1.

Assoc. Prof. A. Nakova is the editor of the collective monograph "Refugees - fears, understanding, empathy", 2021, Academic Publishing House "Prof. M. Drinov".

The expert activity of the DSc Albena Nakova also includes membership in the editorial boards of 3 journals: "Posmodernism Problems", "Research Result. Sociology and Management", "International Science Reviews. Social Sciences series".

The candidate's expertise is also manifested in her activity as a member of various working groups at the MLSP, MES, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Albena Nakova is a key expert at the Association of Industrial Capital in Bulgaria.

All the listed activities demonstrate the extremely rich expert and consulting activity of Assoc. Prof. DSc. A. Nakova.

Her scientific and research activity is equally impressive.

The candidate has participated with reports and presentations in 102 scientific forums: national and international; and after her election as an associate professor in 2012 she has participated in 60 international scientific forums with papers.

She has also participated in 35 scientific and research projects: as a leader of 10 projects and a team member in 25 projects. After her election as an associate professor, A. Nakova has participated in 31 scientific and research projects as a leader and team member. The projects are funded by various European, national and academic programs.

I would especially like to emphasize the extremely rich publication activity of Assoc. Prof. Nakova, which includes:

- 4 author monographs;
- 14 collective monographs in which she participates as a co-author;
- 45 articles in international and Bulgarian journals – author and in co-authorship;
- 46 articles in collections published in Bulgaria;
- 19 articles in collections published abroad.

The candidate participates in the competition with two monographs and 15 articles, which are in Bulgarian and English; one article is in Russian. One of the articles is in co-authorship.

Assoc. Prof. DSc. Albena Nakova has presented 1235 points in the competition for the academic position of "professor" with a minimum required score of 590 points, which meet the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences by groups of indicators, approved by the Regulations of the National Assembly for the academic position of "Professor" at the IPS - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

The minimum national requirements by groups of indicators for "doctor", "associate professor", "doctor of sciences", "professor" have been met, and the publications submitted for each of them are not duplicated.

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

The research fields in which the works presented in the competition are developed are:

- Ethno-sociology and ethno-psychology: national and ethnic identity; European identity; interethnic relations and communication in a cognitive sense; ethnic tolerance in the context of the ideas about one's own and other ethnicity; interethnic distances; social ideas and attitudes in interethnic communication;

- Migrations and refugees: cultural differences in the era of mobility, interactions between peoples and cultures, cultural distances, migrations and changes in identity, ideas and attitudes towards the other/foreigner/refugee, integration of refugees in the host society.

I especially emphasize the pursuit of the comparative perspective, as well as the understanding of the national, ethnic, European analytical section and the possibilities for integration of the "others" in the context of ethnic diversification.

In terms of content, I would like to emphasize the desire to make generalizations and display systematizations in the publications of Assoc. Prof. DSc. A. Nakova, as well as the use of various empirical methods and data as the basis for the analyses.

3. A substantive analysis of the candidate's scientific achievements, a clear characterization of scientific contributions.

I can summarize the contributions of Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova as follows:

A. In the field of ethnosociology and the dimensions of identity:

- Conceptualizing the contemporary collective identity of Bulgarian citizens as a social construct with a hybrid character and a relative structure, combining elements of national, supranational, ethnic and local identity.

- Defining ethnic models of hybrid identities in the three main ethnic groups in Bulgarian society: Bulgarians, Turks, Roma, which have a specific structure and different shares of identity types in the general structure of identity.

- Deriving ethnic models of the formation of ethnic and national identity in the process of ontogenesis in the three main ethnic groups in Bulgarian society - Bulgarians, Turks, Roma.

- Defining ethnic tolerance through the prism of interethnic representations, the presence of a positive or neutral image of the other ethnicity and maintaining a positive perception of one's own ethnicity.

- Deriving models of interethnic communication, characteristic of the three main ethnicities in Bulgarian society, defined on the basis of tolerance in interethnic relations.

- Defining a specific model of attitude of the Bulgarian and Turkish ethnicities towards the Roma, characterized by a negative image, combined with an opposite image of one's own ethnicity.

B. In the field of refugees and their perceptions:

- Constructing public opinion about refugees as a social phenomenon, built from four types of components – cognitive, emotional, evaluative and behavioral, which are expressed in the three socio-psychological constructs: perceptions of refugees, attitudes and distances towards refugees.

- Differentiating the structure of the commonly shared image of refugees as: a core of constant characteristics and a periphery of changing characteristics, influenced by various temporal and existential manifestations.

- Explaining the positive role of communication with refugees as a basis for a tolerant attitude and shortening of distances towards them and showing the lack of xenophobic attitude of Bulgarian citizens towards refugees.

- Introducing into scientific circulation large-scale empirical material, based on numerous empirical studies, implemented with the personal participation and contribution of the author.

To the contributions thus derived, a number of other merits of the publications can be added, such as excellent structure, analytical and in-depth presentation, diverse sources of information, derivation of generalizations and a comparative vision between ethnic groups and attitudes towards them, and spreading the analysis in different contexts, which make the understanding of the researched topics clearer.

4. Reflection of the candidate's scientific publications in our and foreign literature

The candidate has submitted a total of 65 citations, which indicate the high degree of impact that her publications have in the literature nationally and internationally.

For her participation in the competition, Nakova has submitted 20 citations, based on 7 publications by authors.

5. Analysis of the presented publication

I will focus on the two main works with which Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova participated in the competition for the academic position of "Professor" in Sociology.

Nakova, A. 2024 Hybrid identities. Contemporary state and ethnic models in Bulgaria. Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences "Prof. Marin Drinov", Sofia, ISBN 978-619-245-444-9.

The monograph represents a successful, in-depth and multifaceted theoretical and empirical understanding of the collective identity of contemporary Bulgarian citizens along the

axis of national-supranational-ethnic-local identity. The idea of collective identity as a set of semantic structures with shared meaning, based on participation in social practices and experiences experienced together in the community and group, is substantiated. In this sense, collective identity, as a basic and key concept, is a social construct, a form of created and shared knowledge, which becomes possible "in" and through communication, imposing intersubjectivity as a framework of commonly shared meanings. A. Nakova substantiates that collective identity represents the simultaneous existence of different temporal layers - past, present, future, which are projected into the experience and knowledge of the group.

The monograph presents an up-to-date picture of the state of the contemporary identity of Bulgarian citizens from the point of view of the relation: national - supranational (European and global) - ethnic - local. It is emphasized that the contemporary identity of Bulgarian citizens has a hybrid character, combining elements of national, supranational, ethnic, local identity, which occupy a different place and are represented by different shares in the general structure of identity.

The monograph contains extremely rich empirical material, which is characterized on the one hand by a solid temporal saturation, and on the other hand, by great precision of the data, representativeness of the information and strong focus of the fieldwork. In all empirical studies used in the analysis, Assoc. Prof. Nakova is an author or a member of the team, which further enhances the effect of the empirical work, showing a research sustainability and accumulation. Results from:

- three national representative surveys on the identity of Bulgarian citizens, conducted in 2021, 2018, 2009;
- two representative sociological surveys for the town of Vetovo (characterized by a diversity of ethnic communities), conducted in 2018 and 2008;
- an online survey conducted in 2019 with Bulgarians residing abroad for a long time.
- two case studies - in the secondary school and kindergarten of the town of Vetovo, conducted in 2018, which are comprehensive in their scope.

The mentioned studies have a similar methodology, which allows for comparability of the results. I can definitely summarize that the empirical base is impressive, given the variety of studies that have been used, as well as the development over time of the thesis about the identity of Bulgarian citizens and its hybrid nature, which has developed over the years as the emphases and layers of the different types of identities have changed. In general, the use of such representative studies that are authorial or with the active participation of the author is not common in the Bulgarian sociological tradition, and this is a serious merit of the monograph. A. Nakova examines identity through various theoretical approaches known in the literature:

primordialism, instrumentalism, social constructivism, ethnosymbolism. The theoretical approaches are presented from the point of view of the specific emphases, reflecting the successive stages in the evolution of understandings of identity. It shows the tendency to relativize the content of identity and consider it today more as variable and plastic than as immutable and rigid. It is concluded that identity is not a static social structure, but is the result of multiple conditions/situations arising from interaction with others. Furthermore, it is traced how the concept of identity as multiple and hybrid has been enriched over time within the framework of theories of cultural pluralism and multiculturalism since the early 1990s.

The author has also focused her attention on the debate about European identity and its development as a theoretical and empirical construct, taking into account the substantive specifics that the different directions introduce. As an important element in the theoretical framework, the concept of “hybridization of identity” is introduced, which denotes, on the one hand, supranational identities coexisting with the processes of ethnicization, regionalization and localization, on the other. On this basis, the key conclusion about the identity of Bulgarian citizens is formulated, which is a hybrid construct with a relative structure, combining elements of national, supranational (European, global), ethnic and local identity, which are in different proportions in different ethnic communities. This conclusion is proven repeatedly in the following presentation, by presenting various empirical data, through which the structure of identity is traced in different ethnic communities in Bulgarian conditions.

I would especially like to emphasize the tracing of the Bulgarian tradition in the study of identity. Thematic accents and their development over the years by various Bulgarian authors are shown in detail. This shows a profound, but also precise look at what has already been achieved in the tradition, which is being built upon and enriched with new ideas, analytical fabric and results.

I highly appreciate the theoretical analysis in the monograph, as it presents the theoretical concepts of identity, deduces the main markers of the author's concept of the hybrid nature of identity, as well as its relative and time-changing nature, which has different semantic layers. In this way, the theoretical framework creates the necessary prerequisites for the empirical accumulations that condense the in-depth content layers in the overall presentation.

The monograph traces the general structure of the identity of contemporary Bulgarian citizens. Based on the empirical material used from 2021, a series of conclusions are drawn that national identity forms the core of the general structure of the identity of contemporary Bulgarian citizens. Its hybrid nature is emphasized. Comparisons are made with empirical results obtained from 2018 and 2009, and the changes that have occurred in the different layers in the general structure of the identity of Bulgarian citizens are deduced. The main indicators of

national identity are presented: the Bulgarian language, national cultural traditions and customs, historical past, collective memory, state symbols.

The collective identities of the three main ethnic communities are analytically traced: Bulgarians, Turks and Roma. Based on the results of the conducted empirical research, the specific, but also common characteristics in the ethnic profiles of identity are derived. The ethnic models of identity are shown. The author makes very careful analyses, references to data and conclusions, which become a distinctive feature of the monograph. The derivation of key generalizations on each of the topics considered both in individual paragraphs and at the end of each chapter is of great importance, because it focuses attention and places meaningful accents.

I would especially like to emphasize the study of the specificity of identity in its socio-group dimensions, based on various socio-demographic indicators such as gender, age, education, employment status, and each of these socio-group analyses was conducted at the national and ethnic levels.

The ethnic models of identity formation in the process of ontogenesis were also traced. The two main factors influencing their formation at the ethnic level were explained: the consistent development, improvement and upgrading of the structures of the intellect and the impacts of the external environment.

I give a very high assessment of the monograph, which definitely represents an achievement in the field of ethnosociology and the Bulgarian sociological tradition. A serious merit is the systematization of various concepts that represent a sociological understanding of the themes of identity and its formation, of the components and factors of identity, of the layers of identity and its manifestation in various ethnic communities in Bulgarian conditions in the present. With this, I would like to emphasize the erudition and potential of Assoc. Prof. A. Nakova.

The second monograph: Nakova, A. 2024. Public opinion about refugees in Bulgaria (2013-2020). Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences "Prof. Marin Drinov", Sofia, ISBN 978-619-245-505-7 focuses on different dimensions of public opinion about refugees in Bulgarian society, tracing the successive stages in the development of the refugee wave after the war in Syria in 2011. The topic of refugees and, respectively, the social crises that the refugee wave causes over the years has a stronger or weaker presence, but always remains relevant and in the focus of attention of politicians, researchers and observers. The reason is that globalization and the "wars generated by it" (Bauman) systematically give rise to the activation of large groups of people who leave their homelands and seek a better future. In this sense, refugee waves represent one of the challenges facing the modern world. Therefore,

this in-depth study of refugee flows and their characteristics, as well as public sentiment and narratives about them, is essential.

The monograph emphasizes that Bulgaria has a long historical experience as a country hosting refugees. In the last ten years, the main source of refugee flows has been associated with wars, with persons seeking international protection (in the period 2013-2020) mainly from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran. In the years 2015-2016, the number of refugee waves was the largest, in 2017 – they gradually decreased, and in 2019 was their lowest point; a new increase in refugee waves was observed in 2022, due to the war in Ukraine. I refer to these facts to present the context in which the analyses in the monograph unfold and to recreate the author's basic arguments – why this topic is always relevant. Today, the topic of refugees represents a starting point for negative pushback in the growing debates about the nation, developed by many European and Bulgarian politicians. On the other hand, this topic is also related to the justification of working policies and measures towards refugees, an integral part of which is taking into account the attitude of the local population towards them.

One of the serious merits of the monograph is the precise research framework, outlining the center of the author's analysis of the refugee wave between 2013 and 2020 (the refugee crisis caused by the war in Ukraine remains out of sight), as well as tracking the public attitudes of Bulgarian citizens towards refugees. An important author's clarification is that the image of refugees (according to the public opinion of Bulgarian citizens) includes both people with refugee status, people with humanitarian status, and illegal immigrants who crossed the Bulgarian borders. This means that at the everyday level the concept of “refugees” has a generalizing nature and includes all immigrants coming from insecure regions with military conflicts. I dwell on these details because they are important methodological prerequisites of this monograph. This creates a coherence of expression, precision of style and presentation, and excellent focus on the topic under consideration, which shows clarity of intent and authorial maturity.

I would like to emphasize that in the book, Albena Nakova thoroughly analyzes the new dimensions of the topic of cultural difference, of the "new others", poses the problem of the attitude towards the "other", emphasizes Bauman's concept that in the modern world, coexistence with "other" and "different" people is increasingly turning into coexistence with foreigners. Thus, the new figure of the "foreigner-neighbor" and new forms of multicultural coexistence (Bauman) are recreated. The theoretical discourse of the monograph also includes a detailed presentation of the authors and scientific research on the topic of "refugees" in the period from 1990 to the present, presenting both the topics being worked on and the authors who realize the diversity of research.

The monograph also impresses with its empirical richness, which is based on 7 empirical studies conducted from 2013 to 2020, which analyze public opinion about refugees from Syria and neighboring countries in the North Africa and Middle East region. Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova participated in all field studies, which made it possible to develop her substantiated concept of public opinion about refugees in Bulgaria. She presents the structure of public opinion as a social construct as being built up of three components: perceptions of refugees, attitudes towards refugees, distances towards them. The three mentioned components of the structure of public opinion unfold in the following main aspects: cognitive (knowledge about refugees), affective (emotions such as fear, sympathy, support, etc.), axiological (assessment of refugees as good, bad) and behavioral (attitudes to accept or not accept refugees).

Based on the developed theoretical concept, the author analyzes the empirical data and formulates a series of conclusions. She shows the direction in which the image-concept of Bulgarian citizens about refugees has evolved over the years. If in 2013 this image was highly generalized and schematized, over the years it has developed and enriched, and in 2020 it is already highly detailed and cognitively differentiated. According to Assoc. Prof. A. Nakova, an important characteristic of the image of refugees is its dual nature, which is stable over time. But if in the initial image-concept the dual nature is expressed in the presence of both positive and negative characteristics, later the image of refugees turns out to be built entirely of neutral-negative characteristics, which, however, do not have a xenophobic character.

An important conclusion of the author is that the attitude towards refugees in Bulgarian society is marked by an increase in negative attitudes towards them, with social distances being determined by people's fears related to increasing crime, conflicts in everyday life, ethnic and religious opposition, high state spending and the maintenance of refugees, terrorist acts, as well as the reluctance of refugees to adapt to the local way of life. This leads to an overall increase in negative perceptions and attitudes towards refugees, despite the presence of individual positive exceptions. However, the Social Democratic Party of Bulgaria Albena Nakova concludes her analysis with a positive message: it is obvious that despite the stated serious social distances towards refugees, migration cannot be stopped, therefore we must learn to live in the constant company of foreigners, in conditions of uncertainty and insecurity, trying to understand and accept others.

In summary, I can say that this is a thorough, extremely serious monograph, with a strong theoretical and empirical part, with a pronounced authorial charge, original views and interesting reflections on refugees and the attitude towards them.

I will also dwell on several articles with which Dr. Nakova participated in the competition for a professorship.

Nakova, A., Ivanova, V. 2023. European dimensions of the modern identity of Bulgarian citizens. Bulgarian folklore, 3, 391-411. ISSN 0323-9861, e-ISSN 2534-8558.

The article is based on an empirical national representative study conducted in 2021. The transformation in the identity of Bulgarian citizens in modern times is traced, characterized by increased mobility, migrations and communication with representatives of other ethnicities and nations. Identity is considered as a relative and situational/contextual structure, determined by the character and interaction with others and changing over time.

The distinction between “identity” and “identification” is made, and the concepts are analyzed meaningfully. The main conceptual framework for studying the essence of supranational/European identity is presented, tracing different approaches to the interpretation of European identity, starting from the 1990s. It is shown, based on the empirical research conducted, to what extent the elements of European identity have been formed in contemporary Bulgarian citizens. The results show that although at the present time national identity is leading for Bulgarian citizens, processes of identification with supranational structures are underway.

Nakova, A. 2022. The Refugees: Familiar and Unfamiliar. In: Marinov, M., Milenkova, V., Manov, B. (Eds.). Transformations and Challenges in the Global World. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK, pp. 60-67. ISBN (10): 1-5275-8922-6 ISBN (13): 978-1- 5275-8922-3. <https://www.cambridgescholars.com/product/978-1-5275-8922-3/>

The article traces the adoption of various political documents that, after 1990, created the regulatory framework in which events and positions at the state level towards refugees are structured. In the period after 1990, various political documents were ratified that guarantee human and civil rights and provide asylum to refugees. In 1999, the Refugees Act was adopted, which was repealed in 2002 and replaced by a new Asylum and Refugees Act, which has undergone various changes, but is still in force today.

The article presents public attitudes in Bulgaria towards refugees, based on a nationally representative public opinion survey on refugees conducted in 2020. It is shown that the media have a strong impact on forming public opinion on refugees.

The results of the study indicate that negative perceptions of refugees dominate society. They are conditioned by people's fears of increasing crime, conflicts, cultural and religious confrontations with the local population, terrorist threats, increasing unemployment. The overall picture of the image of the refugee is also strengthened by the reluctance of refugees to stay in Bulgaria, which they perceive as a transit destination on the way to Western Europe.

The articles submitted for participation in the competition precede in time the two authorial monographs of the candidate. In their entirety, they are evidence of how the analyses of Albena Nakova, develop, build upon and detail over time. The enrichment is spread both in a

conceptual plan, with detailed knowledge of existing theoretical views of various authors, and with the development of the author's own concepts and ideas about the phenomena under study:

- "identity" - its character, structure and manifestations;
- "refugees" - the narratives about them, the attitude, opinions and distances towards them.

I believe that the publications presented by Assoc. Prof. A. Nakova, in a very convincing way show the serious and in-depth theoretical and empirical work and achievements of the candidate in the field of ethnosociology and public opinion research.

For me, the acquisition of the academic title of "professor" by Assoc. Prof. Nakova is fully deserved and indisputable. Everything presented by the candidate demonstrates the height of her professionalism, authorial precision, and academic spirit.

6. Conclusion

Based on the scientific research activities of Assoc. Prof. Albena Ilieva Nakova-Manolova and her contributions, taking into account her participation in scientific forums, projects, her extremely rich publication activity, as well as her expert activity, I give a very high assessment of her complex work and results presented during her participation in the competition for the academic position of "Professor", in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences (Sociology).

I am fully convinced to vote "FOR" the acquisition of the academic position of "Professor" by Assoc. Prof. Albena Nakova. I appeal the Scientific Council of the IPS to vote positively.

4.03.2025
Sofia

Prof. DSc. Valentina Milenkova