

## OPINION

**By:** Assoc. Prof. Andrei Ivanov Nonchev

**Regarding:** competition for the academic position of “associate professor” at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (IFS) at BAS in the scientific specialty "Sociology" (procedural aspects of the emergence and formation of public opinion), professional field 3.1.Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences, announced in SG No. 61 of 29.07.2025

### **1. Information about the competition**

The competition was announced for the needs of the Centre for Empirical Research of the IFS at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences according to Protocol No. 16 of 09.09.2025 of the Scientific Council at IFS. I participate in the scientific jury of the competition according to Order №RD 09-366.7 from 24.09.2025.

### **2. Brief information about the candidate**

Only one candidate has submitted documents for participation in the competition for the academic position of “associate professor” at IFS - Dr. Svetlana Alexandrova. In 2003, she obtained a Master's degree in Cultural Management at the South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad. After successfully defending her dissertation in 2014 on the topic "Cultural Policies in the European Union. Between Democracy and Democratization of Culture: Policies of Participation" at the South-West University "Neofit Rilski", the candidate was awarded the scientific degree "doctor" in theory and history of culture (professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences). In the period 2014-2017, Dr. Alexandrova was a part-time lecturer at the South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Faculty of Arts, Department of Culturology. Since 2019, she has been working as a Chief Assistant Professor at the Centre for Empirical Social Research, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

### **3. Fulfilment of the requirements for acquisition of the academic position**

The documents submitted by the candidate for participation in the announced competition comply with the requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), the Regulations for its implementation, adopted by the Council of Ministers, the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at BAS and the Rules of the Scientific Council at IFS. The obligatory conditions under ADASRB (Art. 24) have been fulfilled. The minimum requirements of IFS - BAS (total and by groups of indicators) for holding the academic position of “associate professor” have been met - Dr. Alexandrova reports 480 achieved points, while 430 points are required. Originals or copies of documents accompany the completed summary reference as evidence to the relevant sections of the report.

### **4. Brief description of the presented scientific publications**

A total of 16 publications of which the candidate is an author or co-author have been submitted for participation in the competition. These include: a collective monograph; three articles in scientific publications (one of them is in English), referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information; four studies published in unrefereed journals with scientific review or in edited collective volumes; eight articles and reports (one of which is in English) published in unrefereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes. A list of six publications submitted for the award of the ONS "doctor" has also been attached. Dr. Alexandrova has declared participation in one international and five national research projects. She has presented reports (individually or in co-authorship) at 12 scientific forums, including eight international ones.

Leading in Dr. Alexandrova's research activities are studies in the thematic area of this competition - the emergence and formation of public opinion. In the collective monograph presented as a habilitation work (Chengelova, E., Alexandrova, S., Gerganov, A., Ivanova, I. (2023). *Public opinion: essence, genesis, factor determination and interpretations*. Acad. ed. "Prof. Marin Drinov". 327p.) the nature of public opinion is thematized, as well as the stages, elements, external and internal factors that have an impact on the complex and dynamic processes of its emergence and formation. The possibilities for studying public opinion

through the use of qualitative and quantitative methods and methodological experiments are presented. Its main aspects and manifestations in current social processes in Bulgaria are studied.

The nature of public opinion is analysed by Dr. Alexandrova through the prism of publicity, mass communications and democratic practices. The scientific grounds for defining the concept as rationality, as social control, as conversation and as counting are discussed (publication No. 7).

Based on current qualitative and quantitative data, the impact of public opinion surveys and public attitudes towards them are examined (publication No. 11). Negative attitudes are identified that define sociological surveys as a factor in a manipulative public environment rather than a democratic tool providing informed choices to citizens. In another publication by Dr. Alexandrova (No. 12), the thesis is defended that public opinion in Bulgaria is predominantly formed under the pressure of media, but also political (dis)information, in conditions of a prolonged crisis of trust in institutions and low efficiency of communication with them.

Dr. Alexandrova also focuses her attention on the methodological aspects and challenges of using virtual space as a research terrain for conducting qualitative and quantitative surveys (publication No. 10). The positive and negative aspects of the use of social media for collecting empirical information and their application in scientific research are examined (publication No. 5).

A specific focus in Dr. Alexandrova's publications is the study of public attitudes towards the "shadow economy". She analyzes quantitative data from a nationally representative survey of the attitudes of the Bulgarian population towards the shadow economic practices and the psychological readiness to engage in them (publication No. 4). She also reveals some leading motives for taking part in shadow activities of those who demonstrate a psychological tendency to give or receive a bribe and their attitude towards the determining factors for the emergence and reproduction of the "shadow economy" (publication No. 9).

Dr. Alexandrova also directs her scientific research towards studying the social role of science and the public attitudes towards it. The mechanisms of its interaction and functioning are examined in three relations: "science-politics", "science-media" and "science-society", as well as the positioning of science in a central, intermediate and peripheral role in them

(publication No. 1). Public attitudes towards the scientific sphere in Bulgaria and the role of political discourse in shaping public expectations and perceptions have been studied (publication No. 3).

**The author's publications submitted for participation in the competition correspond to its thematic area. They adequately reflect the scientific interests and creative achievements of Dr. Alexandrova, meet professional academic standards and can be positively evaluated.**

#### **5. Reflection of the candidate's scientific publications in national and foreign literature**

Dr. Alexandrova participates in the competition with a list of a total of 10 citations of her scientific publications, including: four citations or reviews in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes; two citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review; four citations or reviews in unrefereed journals with scientific review. Dr. Alexandrova's lists also a total of 15 identified citations in Google Scholar (H-index 2).

**The submitted citations testify to the candidate's visibility and recognition in the sociological community.**

#### **6. Teaching experience**

In the period 2014-2017, Dr. Alexandrova has obtained teaching experience in the Department of Culturology, Faculty of Arts at the South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad. As a part-time lecturer, she has led lectures and tutorials in bachelor's and master's programs in the disciplines "Cultural Management", "Entrepreneurship in the Sphere of Culture", "Public Relations and Marketing", "International Organizations in the Cultural Sector", "European Cultural Policies". The total classroom workload reported was 457 hours.

## **7. Expert and consulting activities**

Dr. Alexandrova has declared participation in the development of three analytical reports under Contract 001-P007 with the “Podkrepa” Labor Union dated 26.05.2020, related to "Research on the state of the working environment and social cooperation in 10 identified economic spheres" and development of a social package":

1. Analytical report for the economic sphere "Light Industry".
2. Analytical report for the economic sphere "Construction".
3. Analytical report for the economic sphere "Transport".

## **8. Synthesized assessment of the main scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the candidate**

Based on the presented publications and participation in national and international scientific projects, research and forums, several main areas of the candidate's scientific contributions can be identified, which also correspond to her self-assessment in the presented author's reference:

### **First, scientific and theoretical contributions to the conceptualization of public opinion:**

1. Based on a critical review of the scientific literature and theoretical concepts in the subject area of public opinion research, a comprehensive theoretical explanatory procedural model of the emergence and formation of the phenomenon has been proposed (in the habilitation thesis).
2. Scientific knowledge has been enriched by identifying, understanding and analysing the contradictions characterizing the field of public opinion research. It has been viewed as a dynamic, complex and multifactorial communication process. An expanded understanding and author's definition of public opinion as a socio-psychological phenomenon have been proposed, which build on its existing conceptualizations in the scientific literature (in the habilitation thesis, publications No. 7, No. 12).
3. An important contribution is the identification of psychological and social aspects in the emergence and formation of public opinion, which addresses the social interaction of individuals and groups. Key elements relevant to the process of public opinion formation are identified and substantiated (in the habilitation work, publications No. 14, No. 15).

4. The existing understanding of the factors involved in the process of public opinion formation has been upgraded through their systematization and categorization. The mechanisms through which they influence this process and interact in its implementation have been identified and investigated (in the habilitation work, publications No. 1, No. 3, No. 6, No. 11, No. 13)

**Second, scientific and applied contributions to the study of public opinion:**

1. Empirical data for the purposes of theoretical and applied research and the study of social representations of public opinion in Bulgaria have been enriched. The data obtained relates to several important topics: a meaningful scope of attitudes towards the phenomenon and its manifestations in the public environment; attitude towards achieving public consensus and the obstacles to its construction; role of dominant attitudes, expert opinions, critical and alternative opinions in public discourse; role of the public environment in the process of public opinion formation and the specific conditions of virtual publicity (in the habilitation thesis, publications No. 6, No. 8).

2. The main aspects of the processes of forming public opinion have been studied, understood and interpreted. The functions, topics, features of power influences in the Bulgarian public space and the main prerequisites that have the potential to attract public attention have been studied and highlighted. Models of the emergence and formation of public opinion have been identified. The influence of public and non-public factors and the specific positive and negative aspects in which they can affect the formation of public perceptions have been empirically established (in the habilitation thesis, publications No. 3, No. 6, No. 11, No. 15).

3. Construction of an original research strategy and application of established and emerging methodological approaches to explore influences on the formation of public perceptions on current topics from the Bulgarian reality - electoral attitudes; attitude to social, political and economic processes (especially the "shadow economy"); scientific sphere; COVID-19 crisis (in the habilitation work, publications No. 2, No. 3, No. 4, No. 5, No. 6, No. 8, No. 9, No. 10, No. 11, No. 12, No. 15).

4. A methodology and toolkit have been developed for the collection of reliable empirical information for studying the processes of emergence and formation of public opinion with

qualitative methods that can be adapted and applied in future studies on the formation of public attitudes and their impact.

**The research, teaching and consulting activities of Dr. Svetlana Alexandrova, materialized in substantial scientific theoretical and applied contributions, provide valid arguments for her to be awarded the academic position of "associate professor".**

### **9. Critical remarks and recommendations**

I have no critical remarks on the merits, but I would like to recommend the candidate to direct most of her publications to journals included in the bibliographic systems Web of Science (Thomson Reuters) and Scopus (Elsevier), in order to increase visibility and recognition of her research in the Bulgarian and international scientific community.

### **10. Conclusion**

Based on the indicated qualities of the scientific theoretical and applied research of Dr.Svetlana Alexandrova, her teaching and expert activities, I express my conviction that she meets all legal and professional requirements to obtain the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (IFS) at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in the scientific specialty "Sociology" (procedural aspects in the emergence and formation of public opinion), professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences.

06.11.2025

Signature: .....

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