

OPINION

of Assoc. Prof. Mario Marinov, PhD

Department of Sociology, South-West University "Neofit Rilski"

member of the Scientific Jury in a competition for the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR in the specialty "Sociology (Processual aspects in the emergence and formation of public opinion)", professional field 3.1 Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences, announced in the "State Gazette", issue 61/29.07.2025

Candidate (sole) for the academic position of Associate Professor:

Chief Assist. Prof. Svetlana Prodanova Alexandrova, PhD

Chief Assistant Professor Svetlana Alexandrova, PhD defended her educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Theory and History of Culture" (PhD) at the South-West University "Neofit Rilski" in 2014 with a dissertation on the topic "Cultural Policies in the European Union. Between Democracy and Democratization of Culture: Policies of Participation".

Previously, she graduated from the South-West University "Neofit Rilski" with a degree in "Cultural Management". Since 2019, she has been working as a Chief Assistant Professor at the Center for Empirical Social Research, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. She was an adjunct lecturer at the South-West University "Neofit Rilski" with lecture courses in "Cultural Management", "Entrepreneurship in the Sphere of Culture", "Public Relations and Marketing", "International Organizations in the Cultural Sector", "European Cultural Policies".

The candidate's participation in projects and empirical research directly related to the topic of the announced competition makes a good impression for the needs of the current competition, announced for the Center for Empirical Social Research. There is potential for her habilitation to fit directly into the traditions of the Center in terms of its staff development.

The publications and supporting material submitted for the competition fully meet the legal requirements and criteria for holding the position of Associate Professor.

Among the publications of Chief Assist. Prof. Svetlana Alexandrova, PhD with which she participated in the current competition, the following monograph stands out: Chengelova, E., Alexandrova, Sv., Gerganov, A., Ivanova, Iv. (2023). Public opinion: essence, genesis, factor determination and interpretations, Academic Publishing House "Prof. Marin Drinov", 327 p.

It is written as a collective monograph with a clear dividing protocol and highlighted contributions of a theoretical and scientifically applied nature. The monograph examines public opinion as a dynamic process with a quantitative and qualitative component. Through in-depth interviews and focus groups, assessments and attitudes towards the phenomenon in Bulgarian society have been investigated and current perceptions of public opinion have been

studied. The thematic analysis of the data focuses on questions about the nature of public opinion and its essence as a process. The attitude towards social networks is examined. The role of three types of opinion leaders is highlighted: authorities in the close social circle; opinion leaders on Facebook; and leaders with charisma. The analysis of data obtained with qualitative methods shows that public opinion is understood either as an expression of different and opposing interests of social groups, formed under the influence of economic and political factors, but presented as public; or as a dominant and mass opinion imposed by the media and political elites, which is accepted uncritically. The study emphasizes that although publicity plays a decisive role in the formation of public opinion, the subjective feeling of the application of manipulative practices affects the attention, interest and trust in the circulating messages. Social networks and personal authorities are perceived as more reliable sources of information. In the process of forming public opinion, a dynamic interaction between external and internal factors is observed, with the end result often being a fragmented and polarized public opinion, guided not by common values and development frameworks, but by the social characteristics of different social groups.

The other publications are related to the role of science, the quality of school education, political practices and mechanisms for influencing public perceptions of science, the "shadow economy", gathering empirical information for quantitative research in an online environment, characteristics and mechanisms of influence in the processes of forming public opinion, the concept of "public opinion" through the prism of publicity, mass communications and democratic practices, the communication of science on an everyday level from the perspective of virtual communication, the tendency to give or accept a bribe, methodological aspects and challenges in using virtual space as a research terrain for conducting qualitative and quantitative studies, public opinion surveys in the Bulgarian public environment, information and communication aspects in the public environment when declaring a state of emergency.

As recommendations to the candidate, I can note the need for more international activity and publications in international journals. The development of research methods cannot remain within national frameworks in the current world. The training in Cultural Sciences is a solid foundation for understanding cross-cultural differences and specificities of respondents in different countries, taboo topics and refusals to provide information on certain topics.

Conclusion:

The publications, research and teaching activities and the significance of the scientific activities give me reason to support Chief Assistant Professor Svetlana Alexandrova, PhD for the academic position of Associate Professor in the specialty "Sociology (Processual aspects in the emergence and formation of public opinion)", professional field 3.1 Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences. I will vote "YES" for the acquisition of the academic position of Associate Professor.

With respect:

Assoc. Prof. Mario Marinov, PhD

15 November 2025