

O P I N I O N

for the scientific works and contributions of Assoc. Prof. Svetlana Prodanova Alexandrova, candidate in the competition for "associate professor" in Professional field 3.1. Sociology (Procedural aspects in the emergence and formation of public opinion), for the needs of the Center for Empirical Research, IFS-BAS,

by Professor Bogdana Todorova, PhD, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

1. Basis for preparing the opinion

Pursuant to Order RD 09-366-7/24.09.2025, issued by the Director of the IFS. I am a member of the Scientific jury for the selection of an "associate professor" and the author of this opinion, pursuant to the Decision of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, held on 14.10.2025.

The competition was announced in the State Gazette, Issue 61/29.07.2025.

2. General description of the submitted materials

Dr. Svetlana Prodanova Alexandrova is the only candidate in the competition for associate professor in Professional field 3.1. Sociology (Procedural aspects in the emergence and formation of public opinion). To participate in this competition, the candidate has correctly submitted a table with the scient metric indicators for "associate professor," "senior assistant," and "doctor," which fully meet the minimum national requirements set forth in the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria under Article 2b, paragraphs (2) and (3), the National Center for Information and Documentation, and the additional requirements of the Regulations on the conditions and procedures for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at the Institute of Forestry and Forestry Sciences, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

3. General description of the candidate's scientific and applied scientific activities

Svetlana Alexandrova is applying for this competition with a habilitation thesis (parts of a co-authored monograph: Chengelova, E., **Alexandrova, S.**, Gerganov, A., Ivanova, Iv. (2023). *Public*

opinion: essence, genesis, factor determinism, and interpretations. Academic edition. "Prof. Marin Drinov", ISBN 978-619-245-337-4, 327 pp., respectively, part one – "Hypotheses and research questions," "Theoretical Basis," Part Two – "Thematic Analysis Focus Groups and In-Depth Interviews," and Conclusion. A separation protocol is attached, certifying both the parts she has developed and the required number of pages. Alexandrova participates in the competition with 15 publications, including 3 articles in Web of Science (Q2 and Q3), in the Academic publishing house "M. Drinov" and in the magazines – "Philosophical Alternatives", "Ethical Studies", "Sociological Problems", "Problems of Postmodernity" (ERIC+), which testifies to her serious publishing activity.

Svetlana Alexandrova holds a master's degree in Cultural Management from South-West University "Neofit Rilski," Blagoevgrad. She holds a PhD in History and Theory of Culture. The topic of her dissertation, *"Cultural Policies in the European Union. Between Democracy and Democratization of Culture: Policies of Participation,"* defines her future research interests in the formation of public attitudes, European cultural policies, cultural participation, and education. She has experience as an adjunct lecturer in bachelor's and master's programs in the disciplines of "Cultural Management," Entrepreneurship in Culture, Public Relations and Marketing, International Organizations in the Cultural Sector, and European Cultural Policies at South-West University, which proves that she also meets the requirements for teaching. In addition to the academic interests listed above, she also has experience as an expert in the development of analytical reports under Contract 001-P007 with "Podkrepa" dated May 26, 2020: 1. Research on the state of the working environment and social cooperation in 10 identified economic sectors and development of a social package: Analytical report on the economic sector "Light Industry"; 2. Study of the state of the working environment and social cooperation in 10 identified economic sectors and development of a social package: Analytical report on the economic sector "Construction"; 3. Study of the state of the working environment and social cooperation in 10 identified economic sectors and development of a social package: Analytical report on the economic sector "Transport."

In addition to her active scientific and publishing activities, Dr. Alexandrova is also heavily involved in project work. She is a member of five scientific projects, including some of the most significant for the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology: European Social Survey: ESS,

Skills2Capabilities "From Skills to Abilities and Opportunities for Realization," Factor Determinism of the "Shadow Economy" and Approaches to Its Containment in Bulgarian Society (FSR).

For her participation in the competition for "associate professor," she has indicated 100 points from citations and 8 participations in international scientific forums on the subject of the competition. This shows that the results of her scientific and research work are receiving real approval in the field of cultural and educational policies, public attitudes, and civic activism.

According to Certificate No. 05-10-150 dated July 22, 2025, she has the required five years of work experience in accordance with the Higher Education Act and the ZRASB, effective February 20, 2017, and continues to work under an employment contract at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

4. Substantive analysis of the candidate's scientific achievements in the publications with which she is applying for the academic position of "associate professor"

The scientific interests of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Svetlana Alexandrova are in the field of shaping public attitudes, public and cultural policies, and education.

The sections she has developed in her habilitation thesis outline a unique combination of theoretical and practical approaches in an attempt to understand the processes of the emergence and formation of public opinion, and the problems of studying it in the context of contemporary social processes and democratic challenges, which is one of the greatest merits of the thesis.

Based on the theoretical concepts discussed (Lipman 2001; Blumer 1948; Habermas 1995; Noel-Neumann 2010; Crespi 1996; Bourdieu 2004; Moscovici 2007; Herbst 2011; Clawson & Oxley 2016), a new theoretical explanatory process model has been developed, with a scientific and applied aspect in relation to the study of the main aspects of the emergence and formation of public opinion, which determines the originality of the study. As a result, the lack of empirical knowledge about the process of opinion formation itself, whose dynamics are due to the interaction of multiple factors with varying degrees of influence, has been outlined.

Dr. Alexandrova's research interests also lie in the thematic field related to changes in public discourse and its reflection on the scientific sphere. It reflects the broader social transformations

that challenge traditional concepts of truth and rationality and impose new ways of understanding the role of science in society. Public attitudes towards the scientific sphere in Bulgaria and the role of political discourse in shaping public expectations and perceptions are analyzed. The research methodology includes an analysis of theoretical concepts and their empirical verification with data from a quantitative Eurobarometer survey (Special Eurobarometer 516) and a discursive analysis of the representation of the scientific sphere in the public sphere.

Svetlana Alexandrova skillfully examines the attitudes of the Bulgarian population towards shady economic practices and their psychological readiness to engage in them. The possibilities of the online environment for obtaining empirical data based on the analysis of quantitative data from a nationally representative survey by the National Science Fund have been studied, and the methodological aspects and challenges of using virtual space as a research field for conducting qualitative and quantitative studies have been analyzed. The recommendations for policies to prevent and limit manifestations of the "shadow economy" are a contribution to the study.

Svetlana Alexandrova offers her own critical interpretation of institutional responsibility and the role of educational policy approaches in shaping public attitudes. She provides a substantive analysis of the impact of the National System for Educational Quality Assurance, which contributes to improving the quality of school education and training.

The individual fields of research in her work are interrelated because the formation of Bulgarian public attitudes depends on the influence of deficits in the public sphere, defects in the educational system with regard to the development of political and civic culture, the lack of critical thinking, and the internalization of conformist and authoritarian practices in society.

5. Scientific contributions

The contributions formulated by Assist. Prof. Dr. Alexandrova are correctly presented in the author's report and testify to her excellent knowledge in the scientific field.

An original comprehensive theoretical explanatory procedural model for the emergence and formation of public opinion is proposed. Such an approach not only significantly broadens the scope of the research, but also provides an opportunity to study conceptualizations broadly—in the field of philosophical discourse, in the historical sociology of modernity, in applied psychology, and in social practice, which is a valuable contribution.

The definition of public opinion as a complex and factor-determined communication process is supplemented by the author with socio-psychological characteristics. The stages in the process of forming public opinion, analyzed in depth, identify key elements relevant to this process.

The constructed new explanatory theoretical process model, tested in quantitative studies of public opinion, successfully analyzes the role of significant factors. The influence on the formation of public perceptions regarding current issues directly affecting Bulgarian reality (electoral attitudes, social, political, and economic processes; the scientific sphere; COVID-19) and their dependence on levels of trust, which is a valuable contribution to future research on the fragmented polarization of public attitudes in the Bulgarian context.

The interdisciplinary approach applied in summarizing and analyzing contemporary theories of public opinion and the possibilities for studying it is eclectic, which is another important contribution to Dr. Alexandrova's research.

Her attempt to track and analyze public attitudes toward National strategy and the need for comprehensive, targeted, and sustainable institutional accountability is a valuable contribution to Bulgarian educational policies and the quality of education.

The tools developed, which served to gather rich empirical information for researching the processes of emergence and formation of public opinion using qualitative methods, can be adapted and applied in future studies on the impact and context of the formation of public attitudes.

The analysis of the methodological aspects and challenges of using virtual space as a research field for conducting qualitative and quantitative studies, as well as the specific conditions of virtual publicity, are a valuable contribution to the development of recommendations for policies to prevent and limit manifestations of the "shadow economy."

Dr. Alexandrova's research fills the existing need for systematization of knowledge about public opinion at various levels: at the theoretical level – multifaceted study of the concept of public opinion, its nature, structure, dynamics, functions, and causes; at a practical level – identification of the main problems and influencing factors.

6. Critical comments on the presented works

I have no critical comments on the publications presented by Dr. Alexandrova. Their content reveals in-depth scientific and theoretical knowledge in the field of public attitudes and public opinion, cultural and educational policies.

7. Conclusion

Taking into account the publications presented by Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Alexandrova, their indisputable scientific, theoretical, and applied contributions, and their social and practical significance, I will vote with conviction for Dr. Svetlana Alexandrova to be elected as an associate professor in Professional field 3.1. Sociology (Procedural aspects in the emergence and formation of public opinion) and I call on the members of the esteemed Scientific Jury to support this decision.

November 14, 2025

Sofia

Professor Bogdana Todorova