

REVIEW

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Regarding the submitted documentation for a competition for the academic position of
"Associate Professor" in the scientific specialty 05.11.01, with the only candidate Senior
Assistant Professor Dr. Svetlana Alexandrova in the scientific specialty "Sociology"
(Processual aspects in the emergence and formation of public opinion), professional direction
3.1. Sociology, anthropology, and cultural sciences, field of higher education: 3. Social,
economic, and legal sciences

My review was prepared in accordance with a decision of the Scientific Council of
the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology dated 09.09.2025 and Order No. RD 09-
366.7 dated 24.09.2025 of the Director of the Institute.

1. Information about the candidate for the position of Associate Professor

The competition, in which the only candidate is Dr. Svetlana Alexandrov, was announced in
the State Gazette, issue 61 of 29.07.2025, from the Center for Empirical Research at the Institute
of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

The candidate has a defended dissertation at the South-West University "Neofit Rilski" in 2014,
based on successful full-time doctoral studies.

At the Center for Empirical Research of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Svetlana Alexandrova has been working since 2019.

2. General description of the submitted materials –

Based on the Regulations of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology-BAS on the conditions
and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and for occupying academic positions, Dr.
Svetlana Alexandrova has submitted all the necessary documents for participation in the
competition for the academic position of "associate professor". From the quantitative report on
the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements under the Act on the Development of the
Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the additional requirements of the Institute of
Philosophy and Sociology-BAS, it is established that the candidate participated in the
competition with 480 points out of the required 430. It is also stated that the publications with

which the candidate presents herself in the competition for "associate professor" do not repeat publications used for participation in previous competitions.

In the current competition for the academic position of "associate professor", Dr. Alexandrova presents 16 out of a total of 30 publications from her entire publication activity.

In addition to the predominant part of a published collective monograph in the BAS Publishing House, where Alexandrova is listed in 2nd place out of a total of 4 authors, which is presented by Dr. Alexandrova as a habilitation work, she participates in another 16 articles. 3 articles are indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information (two of them in quartile Q3 and one in Q4); 6 articles in journals indexed in Erih Plus, and the rest are in edited collective works. All publications, citations, and references are after 2020 and have not been used in previous competitions.

3. General characteristics of the candidate's scientific, applied, and pedagogical activities.

Dr. Alexandrova participates in the competition with predominantly scientific and applied scientific activities and with relatively fewer teaching activities.

The attached documentation states that the teaching activities of St. Alexandrova are framed in the period 2014-2017, immediately after the defense of her doctoral dissertation as a part-time lecturer at the Faculty of Arts, specialty "Culturology" of the South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad. She has led lecture courses at the bachelor's and master's degrees in the disciplines "Cultural Management", "Entrepreneurship in the Sphere of Culture", "Public Relations and Marketing", "International Organizations in the Cultural Sector", and "European Cultural Policies".

However, the scientific and applied scientific activities are positioned within significantly broader boundaries. And this is typical for researchers at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, where pedagogical activity is rather an exception, and Svetlana Alexandrova is no exception. She is predominantly engaged in scientific research, combined with participation in projects and expert activities, including those of an international nature. In fact, the growth of Dr. Alexandrova is evidence of the positive impact and added value of the participation of young scientists and postdoctoral students in research projects on a national and supranational scale.

An example is Dr. Alexandrova's participation in the European Social Survey project, which is part of the National Roadmap for Scientific Infrastructure of the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as her work within the framework of an international project funded by the Horizon Europe

program, in which she acquired broad research skills. Her work in researching the state of the working environment and social cooperation in various economic spheres, as well as in developing a social package for those working in them, could also be highly appreciated, where she expanded her subject orientation and skills.

Dr. Alexandrova has declared participation in the development of three analytical reports under Contract 001-P007 with the "Podkrepa" Commercial Company 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": Her three expert reports are: 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". Thus, through participation in various scientific and applied activities that she carries out, she expands her professional skills and contributes to supplementing the research staff of sociologists at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

4- Substantive analysis of the candidate's scientific achievements

Although for a monographic work, Dr. Svetlana Alexandrova presents a collective monograph, in the authorship of which she is placed second, after careful reading for the competition, I am convinced that it really has serious grounds.

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Svetlana Alexandrova has a major, in my opinion, and according to the structural construction of the work, authorial contribution to the collective monograph "Public Opinion: Essence, Genesis, Factorial Determination and Interpretations". Moreover, not only as a volume with over 150 pages out of the actual 238 standard pages, but also as fully corresponding to the title of the collective monograph, and thirdly, as a theoretical-methodological, scientifically-applied, and conceptually explicit academic product. My grounds are her several significant and contributing presences.

Her research on the issue of public opinion, in addition to being an in-depth analysis that includes theoretical premises and analytical insights based on qualitative research conducted on the subject of the study – “the processes and factors determining the emergence and formation of public opinion”, also has an independent theoretical and methodological “presence” in the specialized literature on public opinion.

In fact, the most significant part of Svetlana Alexandrova's theoretical and methodological presence is her presence in the first part of the collective monograph "Methodology and

Theoretical Foundations of the Study (from 18 to 101 pages), where she examines fundamental theoretical concepts in the field of public opinion, as well as in the second part "Results of the Study of the Processes and Factors for the Emergence and Formation of Public Opinion from 102 to 157 pages. In them, she makes an extensive analysis of the researched attitudes towards public opinion, where she contributes not only to the problematization and conceptualization of the topic in general, but also to the contribution of the collective monograph itself (the analysis was carried out based on the nine in-depth interviews and four focus group discussions she conducted). Svetlana Alexandrova is the author of significant moments of the basic components of the methodology, as well as of the final part of the monograph. In almost all of its sections, the intention towards innovation in the placement of the issue

An important moment in the author's innovative thinking is the study and framing of public opinion as a communication process - "a complex and factor-dependent communication process" (42p.) The very important questions she poses: about the emergence of public opinion and its formation; whether it is the result of the collective will of society, or is it formed under the influence of small but active groups that dictate the attitudes of others, whether public opinion is the opinion of the majority, or does it also include alternative points of view; what is its role - whether it is a leading factor in social processes or simply a tool in the hands of political elites and the media, and is it possible to achieve consensus in the modern conditions of individualization and social fragmentation, especially visible in virtual publicity, etc. are questions that she pursues with an innovative attitude.

Svetlana Alexandrova draws attention to the fact that starting from the first discoverer of the public sphere and placing public opinion at its center - G. Tarde in the socio-communication environment, and going through many significant names with more or less contributions to its clarification, she approaches it innovatively, considering it as a complex communication process of interaction between personal predispositions, social groups, institutions and communication channels, which is behind the formation of public opinion. In fact, she defines the formation of public opinion as a dynamic process, subject to numerous social, cultural, and media influences, which it reflects, but also shapes social processes, constantly changing depending on the context in which it exists. In some cases, she defines it as critical and rational, aimed at social progress, and in others, as passive, susceptible to manipulation, and protecting the status quo. Aleksandrova places the manifestations of public opinion in dependence on the functions it performs – as an instrument of public control, an expression of collective will, or a means of influencing power and decisions in society. On this basis, she proceeds from an

innovative extended definition, with which she helps the study of its various aspects: "Regarding the public sphere, public opinion is a complex multi-layered construct that is based on the socio-psychological tendency of the individual to conformism; it includes the influence of the prerequisites of the socio-cultural context, specific personal and group characteristics and the impact of mobilizing factors that control information and communication tools. This broad innovative basis also allows her to describe and prove the stages of the process of forming public opinion, which goes through mobilization (activation of interest, information, orientation to a given topic or problem), crystallization (clarification and consolidation of the opinion through communication) and formation (change or confirmation of the existing opinion), linking it to the functions it performs. (68p.).

With a contributing moment for the candidate for associate professor and for the collective monograph, the main characteristics of the phenomenon stand out, therefore, are the main characteristics of the phenomenon - publicity, critical-receptive nature and susceptibility to conformism and external influence, as well as the socialization, motivation, information and communication mechanisms through which the processes of public opinion formation are influenced. The dynamic processes of social interaction and the influence of politicians, the media, sociological surveys, opinion leaders, the social environment, and subjective predispositions in the formation of public opinion are conceptualized.

With innovative thinking and a contributing attitude, Svetlana Alexandrova develops the overall theoretical approach to the study of public opinion, subjecting it to empirical verification, by examining social representations and contemporary perceptions of "the essence of the concept of 'public opinion', how it is formed and which factors affect it" in Bulgarian publicity (102-103). The author researches and analyzes empirical material obtained in the course of focus groups and in-depth interviews conducted by her, and makes a successful attempt to clarify the essence and mechanisms of public opinion formation in our country. She identifies two main types that prevail as an understanding of the emergence and formation of the phenomenon: "1) public opinion as an expression of the different interests of social groups in society" and "2) public opinion as a predominant, mass and popular opinion that reflects the dominant attitudes in a given society" (151-152). In the first type of understanding, public opinion is viewed as the result of "imposition" and "counteraction between social groups" (151p.), in which publicity serves as an arena of rivalry between private interests presented as public. She emphasizes the influence of economic and political factors that "use public instruments to shape opinion" (151p.) and expresses a critical view of the process of media and

political mediation that redirects or reformulates topics in public discourse. The second view, although expressing, in her opinion, an “apparent” agreement in society, also reveals a tension between autonomous and manipulated opinion formation and emphasizes public opinion as “a form of pressure that manifests itself in the ignoring and denial of opinions that differ from the dominant attitude” in the past (105p.). The author concludes that nowadays we observe rather a “vision of a fragmented society” that is not characterized by generally valid values and attitudes (146p., 157p.) – something that, in the context of Giovanni Sartori’s articulation of public opinion and the state of consensus in “Theory of Democracy,” sounds very predictable in a certain direction.

The most important prerequisites for forming an opinion are information and interest, which influence the formation of public opinion on various topics, including the formation of electoral attitudes and attitudes towards the scientific sphere. Alexandrova subordinates the responsibility to the social environment and educational level as determinants of critical thinking. "Higher education and social stability are associated with a more rational, informed, and reasoned public opinion, while socio-economic dependencies give rise to conformism and apathy, says the author (148-151p.).

An important emphasis with a contributing character is the emphasis on the role of the OM of an object, when it is easily manipulated, through control over information and communication channels. The author identifies a dual model of influence - from external and internal factors, among which the media, politicians, public figures (experts, opinion leaders, authorities), and public opinion surveys themselves are highlighted. Among the internal factors that "represent a kind of filter for external messages" (267p.) are knowledge, including rational and irrational, values, interests, trust (131p., 154p.). Another significant factor is also derived - socio-economic dependencies or coercion. The media and politicians are defined as the most influential public factors, but at the same time, as deeply dependent on economic and power interests in social perceptions, which calls into question their objectivity.

The definition of OM as a dynamic process of social communication, in which individual attitudes, group interests, and institutional influences are intertwined, is also a contributing factor, with which Svetlana Alexandrova reveals herself as a continuation of Gabriel Tarde's ideas in understanding sociology as the main exponent of socio-communicative actions, in addition to all its other paradigms.

I can summarize the remaining publications with which Dr. Alexandrova participated in the competition in several trajectories - the first on attitudes in society and public discourse in almost all its diversity of thematic accents, including and especially in relation to the presence and attitude towards science in the country, to the shadow economy and people's inclinations to bribe, and the attitude towards publicity in Bulgaria, to public communications and public opinion.

An important emphasis in Alexandrova's scientific trajectory is also her publications concerning the theoretical and methodological aspects of research work, including the possibilities of the online environment for obtaining empirical data, as well as for the recruitment of respondents in the Internet space.

The concept of lifelong learning also finds its interpretation and added value in the publications of Dr. Alexandrova.

As a particularly significant contribution of the author, I would also highlight her courage to pose as a research question the influence of the sociological studies of public opinion on public opinion in general.

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

Before the competition, Dr. Alexandrova had ten citations, most of which were in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information and were in English. This fact suggests the possibility of recognition of the author around the world. The presence of Dr. Svetlana Alexandrova as a member of the Bulgarian team in an international project under the Horizon Europe program is also an indicator of the possibilities of recognition of Dr. Aleksnadrova in international scientific circles.

Dr. Alexandrova's autobiographical note includes 15 citations in Google Scholar, according to which she has a determined H-index 2.

6. Contributions

I fully share the scientific contributions made by Dr. Alexandrova. They reflect her actual contributions in scientific and applied science.

Since I have permeated Dr. Alexandrova's contributions in almost all sections of my review, I will allow myself a generalized summary of an immanent nature.

1. As a generalized contribution from all of Dr. Alexandrova's publications, with which she can be distinguished and recognized as a scientific name and presence, is her contribution to the generation of a procedural sociological model of the emergence and formation of public opinion with its comprehensive dimensions.

2. The combination of theoretical and methodological knowledge and interpretations with empirical research and analysis, which are typical characteristics of almost all of Dr. Alexandrova's publications

Dr. Alexandrova highlights the second and significant dimension of scientific and recognizable. In fact, both significant dimensions inevitably lead to the conclusion that we already have an established scientist who has every reason to receive the academic position of "associate professor"

3. As a relevant continuation of the ideas of G. Tarde about the socio-communicative basis of society.

7. Critical remarks and recommendations to the candidate

I have no critical remarks.

I would like to suggest that the candidate for associate professor, Dr. Alexandrova, continue working on the chosen topic.

Conclusion

Based on the scientific contributions and the indicated qualities of Dr. Svetlana Alexandrova in scientific research, scientific-applied and educational-teaching activities, I confidently declare that she meets all legal and professional requirements for holding the academic position of "associate professor".

I recommend to the Scientific Council of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences to award her the academic position "Associate Professor in the scientific specialty "Sociology+ in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology, and Cultural Sciences.

Reviewer:

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10.11.2025, Sofia