

OPINION

By: Jeffrey Nilsen, Associate Professor, American University in Bulgaria

Regarding: The application of the following candidate for the academic position of **ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR** according to the Bulgarian legislation at the American University in Bulgaria in Area of Higher Education 3. Social Science, Economic Science, and Law in Professional Field 3.3 Political Science. The procedure has been announced in the State Gazette issue 70 dated September 9, 2016

Candidate: Dr. Emilia Zankina

I present the evaluation below in my capacity as a member of the Academic Jury appointed for the above mentioned procedure by a letter issued by AUBG dated November 4, 2016. This evaluation is based on the *Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria* Act, the Rules for its implementation, the internal AUBG rules, regulations, and policies, including the *Habilitation Procedure* and the advertisement on the AUBG website regarding the procedure.

Evaluation of the Applicants

*The evaluation is carried out according to the **Primary Indicators** and **Additional Indicators** included in the document **Guidelines for the Academic Jury**.*

I. Basis for Evaluation

Please indicate on what information this evaluation is based - documents submitted by the Candidate, professional activities, publications, e.g.:

YES monograph(s);
YES articles in refereed journals specialized in the area;
YES non-refereed publications;
YES conference reports;
YES other publications (*Media interviews, book review*);
YES citations (by publications abroad);
YES reviews, recommendations, opinions for the applicant's works;
YES projects (Bulgarian, international, project leader);
YES professional memberships;
YES theoretical and applied works;
YES activities (*Academic Advisor, Reviewer for scientific journals*).

II. Eligibility

1. Please find enclosed **AUBG Academic Position Requirements** (Enclosure 1) combining eligibility conditions set forth in the Law and the University regulations.
2. I find the candidate is eligible to apply for habilitation.

III. Research Areas of the Candidate. Evaluation of the Contributions of the Candidate.

1. The enclosed **Additional Requirements list** (Enclosure 2) gives the principle areas of the candidate's research. I find the Candidate's areas of research correspond to the specific and requirements of the current procedure.
2. The candidate herself defines her research comprising three main areas: populism, gender, and civil service reform. I will refer to publications below by citing the number given on the submitted "list and abstracts of publications".

Based on recent current events, newly-elected governments reflect that the world is regressing from the ideals of globalization and a cooperative strategy in facing environmental and radical Islamic threats. The elections of populist governments are becoming more numerous; examples are Hungary, the U.K. and the U.S. For this reason I view the research by the candidate as both timely and important.

In articles 1 and 2 the candidate argues that populism (via charismatic leaders) in transition nations does not arise due to voter discontent nor due to an anti-elite electorate but rather from an application of the economic concept of lower transactions costs. Briefly the argument is that rising costs of supporting traditional political parties makes it easier for special interest groups to work directly with charismatic personalistic parties. After a clear description of this model, the candidate then finds behavior in Bulgaria consistent with this model. In article 3, the candidate traces the evolution of populism in Bulgaria from ex-king Simeon to the current day. In general I find this topic and approach intellectually very appealing and might suggest further development, including to ask about the feasibility of some empirical test of this thesis.

The candidate has written four articles (articles 5, 6, 7, 8 all co-authored with Rashova) on the topic of gender and politics. I am brief due to the suggested limit but I see that articles 5 and 8 concern the progress of women in politics in southeastern Europe. And articles 6 and 7 investigate the role of women in right-leaning political parties in south-eastern Europe as opposed to where they might be more intuitively found in left-leaning ("progressive") parties.

The candidate also investigates civil service reform and I believe articles 4 and 9 focus on this topic. Article 4 notes that politicians restructure administrations with



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loyal cadres which disrupt the ideal of an apolitical civil service. The candidate then investigates the situation in Bulgaria. In article 9 the candidate examines the Bulgarian populace and the reasons for their political interest or disinterest as the case may be. She uses focus groups upon which to base her conclusions.

Finally a paper with two co-authors seeks to gain intuition on Bulgarian outgoing foreign direct investment.

In sum I find the candidate has accomplished significant and important research and has a promising research agenda for the future.

IV. Evaluation of the Candidate's teaching

- 1. Please find below my evaluation of Dr. Zankina's teaching according to the Additional Indicators. It is important for teaching in recognized liberal arts institutions with a student-centered approach.*
- 2. My opinion is that the Candidate's areas of teaching correspond to the **Additional Requirements** (Enclosure 2) set forth by AUBG for this procedure.*
- 3. The teaching statement of the candidate was very clear, succinct and coherent. Moreover made a clear expression of many of the beliefs I share. I found it especially interesting to read that teaching requires "questioning one's knowledge and skill, organizing it and analyzing it well, and more than anything learning about other people and the way their minds work." Further, she admits that students have more information at their fingertips than ever before, but "they struggle to make sense of that information and put it to good use". Her goal is to provide a toolkit so they can better understand the world around them so they can "take ownership of their education and knowledge".*

In terms of the actual teaching, she seeks to excite their curiosity, relate presented facts to broader context with examples, and also provide personal stories. To her classes she admits to weaknesses, something several students told me they value. She breaks up the classes with relevant videos (which I also find useful) and discusses with them current events. In sum, she expresses exactly what I believe is necessary in my related social science.



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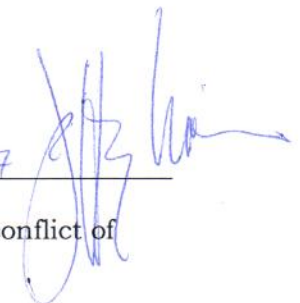
Judging from her statements on the classes she teaches, she is constantly updating the classes and adjusting her evaluation methods. Since she also relates the theory to current events, she also spends considerable effort in doing this.

The student evaluations showed consistently excellent results thus demonstrating that she converts her ideals into practice. Further, the three peer reviews were also entirely consistent with her statements in her self-evaluation. All reviewers mentioned well-structured and complete syllabi, a broad degree of student participation. All three reviewers mentioned that about half the students in the class actively participated. This is very high ! Further the reviewers mentioned the candidate's unforced and patient style. In sum I'll use the words of one reviewer who stated "her presentation of the material was at once conceptually meticulous, spirited and good-humored – and met with a very good response from students".

V. Conclusion:

- 1. The candidate is a highly valued member of the faculty, has proven research capability and teaching effectiveness so it thus entirely appropriate to the specific requirements of the American University in Bulgaria*
- 2. I strongly recommend the candidate for habilitation as associate professor.*

Signature and date:

19 July 2017 

By signing here I also declare that writing this review does not represent conflict of interest.

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AUBG Academic Position Requirements

Name of the Candidate: Dr. Emilia Zankina
Applying for: **Associate Professor**
In the Professional Field: **3.3 Political Science**

The following characteristics apply. I submit together with my opinion.

YES The Candidate has Ph.D;

YES The Candidate has served five years as (Senior) Assistant Professor (for applicants for Associate Professor) or six years as Associate Professor (for applicants to Full Professor) at a recognized academic institution;

YES The Candidate has published a monograph or publications of equal standing in specialized journals. These should not repeat publications based on which Ph. D., or Doctor of Science degree, or Associate Professor Rank was granted;

YES The Candidate has experience from recognized academic liberal arts institution(s);

YES The Candidate has experience in student-centered teaching approach;


YES The Candidate has undergone at least one successful evaluation in teaching, research and service at a recognized academic liberal arts institution, including positive student evaluations of teaching.

YES The Candidate has experience in teaching in English at a higher education institution with instruction in English language.

YES AUBG can ensure teaching and research load according to its internal rules and regulations.

Signature and date:

19 Jan 2017



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Additional Requirements

For Associate Professor Academic Position in Professional Field 3.3 Political Science

Additional specifications: democratic transitions, public policy, political elites, comparative politics, East European politics, political parties, gender and politics, populism.

Name of the Candidate: _____ Dr. Emilia Zankina _____

Check below what applies. Sign and submit together with your review or opinion.

Research

The Candidate has conducted research in the following areas:

- YES** Democratic transitions;
- YES** East European politics;
- YES** Political elites;
- YES** Public policy and public administration;
- YES** Political parties;
- YES** Populism;
- YES** Gender and politics.

Teaching

The Candidate has teaching experience in the following areas:

- YES** Comparative politics;
- YES** Bulgarian politics;
- YES** Russian politics;
- YES** Political elites;
- YES** Public policy;
- YES** Research methods.

Signature and date:

19 Jan 2017 