

OPINION

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Regarding: the application of Senior Assistant Emilia Zankina, Ph.D., for the academic position of Associate Professor in area of higher education 3. “Social and Economic Sciences and Law”, professional field 3.7 “Administration and Management” at the American University in Bulgaria [AUBG]. The competition was announced in State Gazette issue 90 dated 9 September 2016.

Based on the documents required for the procedure and presented by the candidate I offer the following assessment in my capacity as a member of the Academic Jury, according to President’s Ordinance dated 4 November 2016.

This assessment is drawn up according to the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, Rules for its implementation, and internal rules, policies and procedures of AUBG including the Habilitation procedure posted on AUBG’s website. Primary and additional indicators, outlined in “Guidelines for the Academic Jury” are also taken into account.

Assessment of the Candidate

I. Overall characteristics of the publications and professional activities:

The assessment is based on the following documents presented by the candidate: list of publications, contents of each publication, list of citations, list of courses Dr. Zankina has taught during the period 2010-2016, student opinions presented according to 16 criteria in student evaluations of teaching for the courses Dr. Zankina has taught in the period 2012-2015, self-evaluation of the candidate’s teaching, self-evaluation of the candidate’s research, description of the research activities for the period 2013 – 2016, and CV of the candidate.

Publications record:

Dr. Zankina has presented for evaluation 10 publications (7 articles and 3 studies in refereed academic journals, specialized in the area of the current procedure).

The publications are categorized as follows¹:

- Co-authored article in a peer-reviewed journal with impact factor of 0,441; 14 pages;
- Individually authored article in a peer reviewed journal without impact factor; 17 pages;
- Co-authored article, non-peer-reviewed and non-refereed journal; 15 pages;
- Individually authored study in a peer-reviewed journal with impact factor [Impact Factor 0.437, Ranking: Area Studies 32 out of 66, Political Science 114 out of 161, 5-Year Impact Factor 0.509, 5-Year Ranking: area Studies 34 out of 66, Political Science 113 out of 161] – 29 pages;
- Co-authored article in a peer-reviewed journal, 13 pages;
- Co-authored paragraph of a book (peer reviewed), 17 pages;
- Co-authored paragraph of a peer-reviewed edition – 7 pages;
- Co-authored study in a peer-reviewed edition with impact factor 1,576 – 36 pages;
- Individually authored paragraph in a peer-reviewed edition – 9 pages;
- Co-authored study in a peer-reviewed edition – 28 pages.

The summarized assessment indicates that the following have been presented: 9 publications in peer-reviewed editions, 3 of which – with impact factor, and one publication in a non-peer reviewed edition. Three of the publications are individual, and 7 are co-authored.

The total number of pages is 185². Regardless of the fact that the number of pages is at the lower end of the requirement regarding the volume of a monograph, the fact that all publications are not in the mother language (all are in English), to a significant extent compensates for this fact.

Article 24 (1), item 3 of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act requires that the candidates for Associate Professor should present “a published monograph or

¹ Further I will define the individually authored publications as individual, and the joint publications as co-authored

² The number of pages is calculated according to the format in which the articles of the candidate are presented, without transforming them into a uniform standardized format.

publications of equal standing in specialized academic editions”. My further assessment of the publications presented is in the context of this requirement.

In addition, I am including the participation of Dr. Zankina in 21 academic national and international conferences, as well as her participation in two research projects, all of which are relevant to the area of the procedure; citations of her publications; peer reviews of her colleagues regarding her teaching performance; student evaluations of teaching; and memberships in professional organizations.

II. Fulfilment of the requirements for appointment to the academic position

I am enclosing a list of AUBG academic position requirements, filled out and signed (Enclosure 1), including my assessment of the compliance with the requirements of the legislation and the internal AUBG rules and regulations.

My opinion is that Dr. Zankina complies with these requirements. I cannot express opinion on the last item of the enclosure – whether AUBG could ensure teaching and research load according to its internal regulations, however, I could say that judging by the enclosed materials for this procedures it is evident that [the university] has ensured these for the candidate.

III. Area of scholarly interests and assessment of the contributions

Primary areas of scholarly and research activities of the candidate:

The articles of Dr. Zankina are in two main areas:

- Democratization of the political process in Bulgaria (9 items)
- Political development and foreign investments (1 item)

The study of the economic impact of foreign investments in Bulgaria is focuses on the political and economic aspects, with emphasis on the economic impact of the foreign investments in Bulgaria. However, it can be included in the current evaluation because, to a significant degree, it deals with issues related to public policy and political risks in this area.

Since protocols indicating the relative shares of co-authorship are missing, I assume the contribution to the co-authored publications was equal.

I am enclosing a list of additional requirements (specific for this procedure) including my evaluation – Enclosure 2.

Opinion regarding the correspondence of the research area of the candidate with the specification of the current procedure:

All of the publications presented for assessment correspond to the announced professional field [of the procedure]: 3.3 Political Science (democratic transitions, public policy, political elites, comparative politics, East European politics, political parties, gender and politics, populism).

Integrated evaluation according to primary and additional indicators of the most important scholarly and applied results and contributions of the candidate:

The candidate has fulfilled the requirement regarding minimal scientometric indicators for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor: she has presented 10 prestigious publications, 9 of which (and not 7 as is the requirement) in peer-reviewed editions. The number of citations of the candidate's works is twice as big compared to the requirement – 20 instead of the required 10 citations. She holds a Ph. D. degree and has participated in two successfully concluded projects, one of which – international.

In summary, I believe that according to the above mentioned scientometric indicators for appointment to the position of Associate Professor Dr. Zankina exceeds the requirements according to two important indicators.

The primary contributions of the candidate are the following:

1. Presents a new theoretical approach to the study of populism, treating it as a political strategy that establishes a direct link with voters and special interests, thus eliminating the need for traditional political parties as mediators in this process.
2. Theoretically connects populism to the increase in personalist parties.
3. Connects the study of populism to the theory of institutional economics by introducing interdisciplinary analysis of the phenomenon.

4. Contributes to comparative studies of the populism through a detailed study of the contemporary political processes in Bulgaria.
5. Presents an advanced theory of populism as a political strategy, and this theory explains the rise and fall of populist parties and connects this dynamics to wider socio-economical processes.
6. Presents a theoretical framework that is applicable beyond the specific context and facilitates the study of populism in various historical and political contexts.
7. Explains the political dynamics in Bulgaria in terms of the developed theoretical framework.
8. Applies the theory of synergic charisma to the Bulgarian context, and through this theory explains the success in the 2001 elections of the National Movement for Stability and Prosperity and Simeon Saxe-Coburg [National Movement Simeon II] .
9. Enhances the scholarly research on charisma.
10. Proposes an innovative approach to the study of the politicization of the public administration by focusing on the restructuring of the governmental structures, which allows ensures staffing with politically loyal cadres.
11. Contributes to comparative studies in public administration by presenting an analysis of the administrative reform in Bulgaria.
12. Presents an innovative approach to the study of women representation in politics by focusing on political party regulation as an important factor that influences the political representation of the women.
14. Presents an empirically proven theoretical framework regarding women representation in politics in Bulgaria, which questions the established theory that women are better represented in political parties of the left. On the contrary, the article proves that in Bulgaria it is right-wing and centrist parties that elect women to high-level political posts.
16. Studies a new phenomenon, namely the participation of women in radical right populist parties.

17. Presents the first of its kind study of women [representation] in populist radical right and nationalist parties.

18. Examines the differences between the radical right in Western Europe and Bulgaria.

19. Lays the grounds for a theoretical framework that explains the phenomenon of women [representation] in radical right and nationalist parties.

20. Conducts a historical and cultural analysis of women representation in the politics in Bulgaria.

21. Develops a model for forecasting the direction of outward investments.

Outside of the list of the presented publications, I *give high evaluation* to the 23 scholarly-research contributions of the candidate, all of which [have taken place] on major international conferences and congresses, with topics relevant to the scholarly fields that specify the current procedure (democratic transitions, public policy, political elites, comparative politics, East European politics, political parties, gender and politics, populism), which evidences scholarly depth, academic consistency and willingness to defend her theses at a high-level professional scholarly forums.

IV. Assessment of the teaching of the candidate

The teaching experience of Dr. Zankina in recent years is related exclusively to the American University in Bulgaria – an institution that is built upon and oriented towards the liberal arts tradition and student-centered approach. During the period that is subject to evaluation – 2010-2016, the candidate has taught seven courses *that she herself has designed*: Comparative Politics, Public Policy Analysis, Bulgarian Government and Politics, Theory and Methods in Political Science, Topics in Comparative Politics: Issues in Russian Politics, Economics and Public Policy, Topics in Politics: Elites, Political Parties, Populism, Topics in Politics: Political Parties. The last three courses did not exist before that in the curriculum, and the other seven are improved versions of already existing courses, while texts or materials of professors who used to teach them have not been used.

The presented high student evaluations of Dr. Zankina's work are supported by an important fact: the constant level of enrollment in her courses, which is a very good testimony about her work and her status as a preferred professor.

For the purposes of the procedure, Dr. Zankina has presented three peer reviews by colleagues (Dr. Andrey Gurov, Associate Professor Diego Lucci and Associate Professor Ivelin Sardamov) who visited and assessed, according to established criteria, her classes. All three peer reviews are positive and present a detailed picture of the teaching methods and the communication methods with students that the candidate implements, namely: well-structured syllabi, clearly articulated goals and guidelines, well established schedule of topics which is consistently followed so that students have clear understanding which topic follows and come prepared to the lectures. In the evaluation criteria, the importance of active participation in discussions has been emphasized, on-line video clips have been used, [as well as] Power Point presentations, Adobe Flash slides, as well as Internet materials. In the evaluations of her peers, Dr. Zankina is described as a professor with deep competence in her field of study (see Diego Lucci), with high standards and effective communication with- students, and promoting active learning environment.

The areas in which the candidate has scholarly interests and teaching experience are in full compliance with the specific requirements for the current procedure, which I have expressed in the filled-in and signed Enclosure 2.

The overall teaching experience of the candidate evident from the courses she has taught, diploma projects [she has supervised] and peer reviews of her colleagues, indicate that Dr. Zankina is an established university professor who applies contemporary methods of teaching and student assessment and fosters steady student interest and preference for her courses in fields corresponding to the specification of the current procedure.

Personal impressions from the candidate: I know Dr. Zankina professionally since 2006 when she sought my advice, in my capacity as Vice-Rector for Research, with regard to her dissertation research, which included: interview, discussion of readings, contacts, and considerations of the project. I was left with the impression that she was a diligent, persevering and consistent in her efforts young scholar who accepts and critically assess advice, and who is open to dialogue and supports claims with arguments.

V. The following notes and recommendations could be addressed to the candidate:

1. The assessment of the publications was made difficult due to the fact that 70% of the works are co-authored, and protocols indicating the level of participation of each of the authors were not presented.
2. In the list of publications, publication number 8 is presented with incorrect title (“How Radical, How Much for Women? Examining the Gender Question in Radical Right Parties in Bulgaria”). The precise title is: “Women Representation in Radical Right Parties in Bulgaria: What and How Much for Women?”.
3. It would have been of help to the evaluation process if the abstract of the candidate’s dissertation was available.
4. I recommend that the candidate focus her efforts towards writing an individual monograph through which she would demonstrate her obvious abilities to write on current topics, with scholarly-analytic approach, and in depth.

VI. Conclusion

1. The primary and additional materials presented by Dr. Zankina for the procedure are in full compliance with the specific requirements of AUBG for the current procedure.
2. My assessment of her scholarly, research and teaching activities give me grounds *to recommend Dr. Zankina for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor.*

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Translation from Bulgarian: Tanya Papazova and Mariela Bacheva