

Short opinion

1. Information about the competition

The competition is for the academic position of “Associate Professor” at the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG) and is accomplished in accordance with the current Bulgarian legislation. The field of higher education is 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional discipline 3.3. Political Sciences and is announced in the State Gazette, issue 77 dated 19.09.2025.

Candidate for the competition: Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Jean Crombois, American University in Bulgaria

Reviewer: Professor Antony Todorov, Dr. Hab. , New Bulgarian University

2. Validation of the candidate's compliance with the requirements for admission to the competition

Dr. Jean Crombois has been admitted to the competition on the basis of full compliance with the requirements of the law and the regulations of the American University in Bulgaria. In quantitative terms, the candidate's scientific achievements fully comply with and even exceed in some indicators the minimum national requirements for the academic position of “Associate Professor” in the professional field 3.3. Political Science.

3. Qualitative assessment of the candidate's achievements

3.1. Priority areas of research

Based on the documents attached to the competition, including the candidate's self-assessment, the scientific interests of Senior Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jean Crombois are focused on European integration in historical and theoretical aspects, with a focus on its development during the Cold War and in the present; the European Union's policy towards the Eastern Partnership and the enlargement process; as well as the foreign policy of the EU and the Member States, with a particular focus on Bulgaria's foreign policy after 2014. The submitted publications testify to an already established researcher in these areas of political science.

3.2. Scientific and applied contributions

The candidate for the competition, Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Jean Crombois, has published 32 scientific publications, including 3 monographs, 17 articles in refereed and peer-reviewed journals, and 12 chapters in peer-reviewed collective books. In addition, he has numerous publications in non-refereed publications intended for a wider informed audience.

The main thematic fields of these publications correspond to the candidate's stated scientific interests: international political economy, European integration and foreign policy, but also several interesting publications in the field of sociology and constitutional theory. Overall, these thematic areas are related and demonstrate a profound academic specialization of Jean Crombois.

Among the monographs presented, one has the characteristics of a habilitation thesis – *Camille Gutt and Postwar International Finance* (Pickering & Chatto, London, 2011, 192p. Reprinted in 2016 by Routledge). This book is a significant expansion of the book published in 1999 based on the doctoral dissertation of Jean Crombois (*Camille Gutt, les finances et la guerre 1940-1945*, CEGES/Quorum, Brussels, 1999). The habilitation thesis develops extensively the reasoning about the role and importance of the Belgian economist Camille Gutt in the principles and organization of contemporary international financial institutions.

I believe that Jean Crombois adequately defines the theoretical achievements of his habilitation work in the self-assessment of his contributions. I would summarize the most significant ones as a reasoned demonstration of the importance and even the decisive role of small countries (Belgium) and their politicians (Camille Gut) in world diplomacy and the shaping of multilateral frameworks of international cooperation. In this regard, the understanding that the financial coordination established between the small Benelux countries will be the actual precursor of the financial principles of the EU and even of global financial institutions is also argued. The understanding that the post-war financial institutions were built on the basis of interwar cooperation, and not, as is commonly understood, in opposition to this experience, is also argued.

Jean Crombois is extremely precise and upholds the principles of academic integrity when he states that his approach complements the work of Barry Eichengreen, Patricia Clavin, and Harold James, who also highlight the role of small states in financial history and diplomacy in the twentieth century.

I will point out several main ideas in the book, especially regarding the role of Camille Gutt in establishing post-war financial institutions in the world and in Europe. Jean Crombois, with arguments and references to archives, shows the Belgian financier and politician's

concern for both respecting the sovereignty of states (especially a small state like Belgium) and developing a beneficial international cooperation in the financial field. He opposes an overly ambitious but also risky project for a world currency, which would liquidate the sovereignty of states, especially the smaller ones. But on the other hand, he believes that a world financial institution is necessary so that all states, especially the small ones, can benefit from international cooperation.

The study also demonstrates one of perhaps the most essential traits of Camille Gutt as a politician, economist and diplomat – he is able to change his understandings and is not a slave to ideas adopted in his previous experience, he is ready to rethink the way in which an international financial order could both correspond to the sovereignty of Belgium (and in general of the European countries devastated by the Second World War), and promote international cooperation through supranational regulation of financial relations. Thus, he will reject the universal approach of probably the most influential Western economist at that time, J. M. Keynes, and will orient himself towards regulation at the regional level based on the experience of an economic union of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg – three small countries that unite in Benelux. It was precisely a philosophy of combining national sovereignty (especially of small states) and international regulations in such a way that one did not harm the other that would ultimately allow the long process of European integration, initially of six countries but including the Benelux countries as an important component, to begin. This philosophy fully corresponds to Jean Monnet's and Robert Schuman's understanding of European integration as the result of small and concrete steps.

Overall, I find that Jean Crombois' habilitation work expands our knowledge of the contemporary international financial system, as well as our understanding of the origins of European integration. The book is original and profound, and it is no coincidence that it has already been cited 11 times in various academic studies on the international financial system from Bretton Woods, the IMF, and the European integration.

Jean Crombois has a significant number of academic publications in the field of European integration. He rightly highlights in his self-assessment three directions in this thematic field: integration theory, EU foreign policy and EU enlargement. These are 4 chapters in collective books, 13 articles in peer-reviewed journals, as well as 20 reports at scientific conferences.

In these publications, the most significant as academic achievements, but also as applied knowledge, are the topics related to: a) the interaction of the regional and global levels in the organization of the EU monetary institutions, b) the nature and impact of the euro crisis and the migrant crisis in the EU; c) the difficulties facing European diplomacy in building a

common position on the issue of the war against Ukraine; d) the interaction between enlargement and the EU Eastern Partnership; e) the role of small states in European integration (including Bulgaria). In all cases, these publications represent not only a good academic achievement, but are also definitely of practical benefit for diplomacy and the practice of international cooperation for the EU countries.

The texts devoted to the foreign policy of Bulgaria as a member of the EU are of particular interest. The observations and the conclusion about the difficulty of reconciling the internal political divisions in the country and foreign policy solidarity are original and fit into an intense academic debate. Here again the question of the role of small states in the general policy of a much larger regional community, the EU, is treated.

I would add to this statement my high assessment of Jean Crombois' teaching, which stems entirely from his academic competence as a researcher. The courses he teaches at AUBG correspond to the main directions of his research interests and are based on his own published academic texts. His administrative experience also supports his candidacy. Jean Crombois has served as the head of the Department of Political and European Studies at AUBG for two different periods, as well as the chairman of the Faculty General Assembly before that. His international experience as a visiting professor in Oxford (United Kingdom) and in Ifrane (Morocco), as well as a visiting researcher at Georgetown University (USA), is also of undoubted importance.

4. Critical remarks and recommendations

In this brief statement, I have not formulated any significant critical remarks and recommendations. However, I will note one fact that caused my surprise. In his self-assessment, Jean Crombois notes "In Southeastern Europe (2019), I introduced the concept of "token autonomy." Unfortunately, I did not find this in the published text and did not understand this new concept.

5. Conclusion on the candidacy

Considering the original research contributions that I was able to identify in the candidate's academic publications, I believe that AUBG has all the necessary grounds to elect Jean Crombois as a full associate professor in 3.3. Political Science. In my opinion, the university will only benefit if it makes this choice.

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