

## **Opinion for the academic position of Associate Professor**

### **1. Information about the procedure**

Habilitation procedure for the academic position of *Associate Professor* at the American University in Bulgaria, conducted in accordance with Bulgarian legislation. The procedure falls within Higher Education Area **3. Social and Economic Sciences and Law**, professional field **3.3. Political Sciences** and has been announced in the Bulgarian **State Gazette, Issue 77 dated 19 September 2025**.

The evaluation below 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 additional requirements for the procedure advertised on the AUBG website.

Applicant: **Senior Assistant<sup>1</sup> Professor Jean Crombois, Ph.D.**, American University in Bulgaria

Reviewer: **Associate Professor Iskren Ivanov, Ph.D.**, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

### **2. Confirmation of the Applicant's Eligibility for Admission to the Habilitation Procedure**

Dr. Jean Crombois was admitted to the habilitation procedure based on full compliance with the requirements listed in Enclosures 1, 2, and 3 to this document. In quantitative terms, Dr. Jean Crombois's research results exceed the Minimum National Requirements (MNR) for the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 3.3 Political Science (Enclosure 3).

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<sup>1</sup> As per the Bulgarian legislation

### **3. Qualitative Evaluation of the Applicant's Achievements**

Dr. Jean Crombois' research interests include European integration from both historical and theoretical perspectives, with a focus on its evolution during the Cold War, as well as recent developments; EU policy toward the Eastern Partnership and enlargement; and the foreign policy of the EU and its Member States, particularly that of Bulgaria since 2014. He has not only the theoretical knowledge and expertise to work in those fields, but also extensive practical experience, acquired during his specializations and teaching work as a guest lecturer at the University of Oxford, the Institute of Social Sciences at the Free University of Belgium, and Georgetown University. The applicant's impressive academic profile is complemented by his many years of teaching experience at the American University in Blagoevgrad and by his work as academic editor for several publications.

A deep analytical profile and a high degree of academic objectivity distinguish Dr. Jean Crombois's contributions in both science and applied research. The applicant's publications focus mainly on the dynamics of the European Union's foreign policy, the complex geopolitical challenges the community faces in the modern international system, and the geopolitical aspects of European leadership. Dr. Crombois is the author of three monographs examining various aspects of the development of political science in specific areas. As a monograph for the purposes of this procedure, the applicant has indicated his book, *Camille Gutt and Postwar International Finance*, which analyzes the Gutt doctrine in the global economy that laid the foundation for the global economic and financial order after the end of the Cold War. I find the choice of Dr. Crombois particularly justified, as the academic debate lacks serious research on Gutt's concept, which aims to create an economic architecture to reduce the risk of new conflicts and help rebuild Europe. The mechanisms Gutt creates in practice also lie at the heart of American soft power, which uses the International Monetary Fund to advance American foreign policy in a world where a new global conflict would have no winner. Such studies are absent from the Bulgarian academic debate, as the few works that examine how the global economy transforms after the end of the Cold War are usually highly politicized, drawing unfounded methodological parallels with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the socialist camp. These shortcomings stem from the state-centric approach of the authors and their attempt to make sense of such transformations with the tools of transitology (an academic discipline, studying transitions to democracy) - an approach that is not universal, however. Dr. Crombois's monographic work proves precisely the opposite - that the individual level of analysis has its advantages when there is a fundamental process of changing the balance of power and replacing one global economic model with another. This is his most original contribution.

No less relevant are the applicant's other academic contributions, which can be divided into three groups. The first group has specific, practical-applied contributions and is distinguished by a high degree of empirical validity. Some of Dr. Crombois's articles examine the role and place of Bulgaria in the European Union by operationalizing two variables: Bulgarian foreign policy in the context of post-socialist democracy, and how dynamic processes in the EU and NATO shape domestic political consensus in our country. The author bases his work on the understanding that Bulgarian foreign policy has always been divided between two factions - an objective empirical reality that has been

present since the first years after the beginning of the Bulgarian Transition. Of particular interest in this group are two of Dr. Crombois's publications, which, for me, have special research and practical value: *Bulgarian foreign policy and the war in Ukraine: moving towards a more assertive pro-western foreign policy?* and *Small country and European security: The case of Bulgaria-Russia relations since 2014*. The article dedicated to Bulgarian foreign policy regarding the war in Ukraine is the first serious in-depth study of this issue, and its main contribution is that it confirms the consensus in the academic debate that has existed in Bulgaria for decades – that, regardless of political dynamics and processes in public opinion, elites always strive to form a pro-Western consensus. Dr. Crombois is very right to look for and explore the reasons for this in the political culture of these elites, who, despite their differences, consistently achieve a pragmatic view of the geopolitical situation. The publication, which examines the dynamics of Bulgarian-Russian relations after Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, represents an original contribution by the author, as it applies and operationalizes the theory of the so-called "small states" to Bulgaria. The theory holds that small states position themselves within the geopolitics of the large ones, and in his study, Dr. Crombois demonstrates that this has been the case for Bulgaria, despite the divergent messages of the political forces.

The second group of contributions has a general, and I would even say universal, significance for the academic debate. They draw clear parallels between the specificity of European constitutionalism and the European political model. Jean Crombois's analysis of the formation of the Belgian tradition in sociology is fundamental for the understanding of the European debate in the social sciences, examined in detail by the author in his publication *L'univers de la sociologie en Belgique de 1900 à 1940*. Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles. It is a little-known fact that the Institute of Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences draws inspiration again from the Belgian tradition, and in this sense, the Bulgarian academic tradition once again proves that it is part of the European one. Although I am not a constitutionalist, as a political scientist, I'm taking the liberty of noting that drawing parallels between classical constitutional models, such as the Belgian one, and the attempts of the newly liberated Bulgaria to create its own organic statute lays the foundations of modern political life in our country. In this sense, Jean Crombois presents academic arguments to support the well-known political narrative that Bulgaria has always belonged to the European family of nations. I was pleased to read the author's French-language publication, "*L'influence de la Constitution belge de 1831 sur la Constitution bulgare de 1879. État de la question*", which shows that the Bulgarian constitutional tradition and political culture are part of the European, not the Eurasian, tradition.

The third group of contributions demonstrates Jean Crombois's rich academic competence in European studies. It distinguishes another research aspect of his work: the author's aspiration to position Central and Eastern Europe within the European political, economic, and cultural space. I would say that Dr. Crombois's approach is also innovative - he does not work only with historical analogies or political comparisons, but successfully proves that the very geopolitical development of the community is connected with the full integration of the former socialist bloc into the European Union. In this way, the author's publications are situated within a larger academic dilemma: Is it possible for liberal democracy to work in the former Soviet satellites? The author's approach is

original in another respect: he positions the European Union within the federalist paradigm. As is evident from Dr. Crombois's article, "Existe-t-il une diplomatie européenne?" In the case of the Eastern Partnership, his academic observations confirm the existing consensus that European diplomacy is the core of the European Union's soft power to influence the international system. The author is very right to look for the following zones of stability precisely in the Western Balkans, predicting that the greatest threat to European unity is polarization in European societies, which leads to disunity.

Thus, the publications of Dr. Jean Crombois present to the academic community a rich body of work that not only formally positions him but also establishes him as a scientist who has left a tangible impact in the fields of political science and European studies. This is evidenced by the citation list provided by Dr. Crombois, which includes 45 selected references. Among them, the references in the academic works of Rosario Palatano, Laura Delcourt, and James Scott stand out – academics with an established impact in the study of European regionalism and economic paradigms after the end of World War II. I draw attention to the fact that five of the presented publications are indexed in world-renowned databases such as SCOPUS and Web of Science, one of which was published in the Cambridge Review of International Affairs with a quartile Q1 in the direction of political science and international relations, which is a sufficient recognition of Dr. Crombois's recognition in academic circles.

The applicant has also presented information about his participation in six research projects funded by the EU and NATO, which include the organization and conduct of regular research seminars. All projects have been successfully implemented at the international level, and Dr. Crombois's long administrative experience as head of the Department of Political Science and European Studies is further evidence not only of his academic but also of his leadership skills. All this testifies that the academic path of Jean Crombois is connected not only with the accumulation of academic production, but also with its constant application and improvement.

I will also take the liberty of sharing a few personal impressions of the applicant with whom I had the opportunity to work over the past year. Some of them are related to Dr. Crombois' regular visits to the Political Science department of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", where he presented his analyses to our students as a guest lecturer in the discipline of the United States in International Relations. Our cooperation on several seminars and conferences convinced me that in the person of Dr. Crombois, the academic community has a scholar who will undoubtedly enrich the research profile of the AUBG and the knowledge of his students.

#### **4. Critical remarks and recommendations**

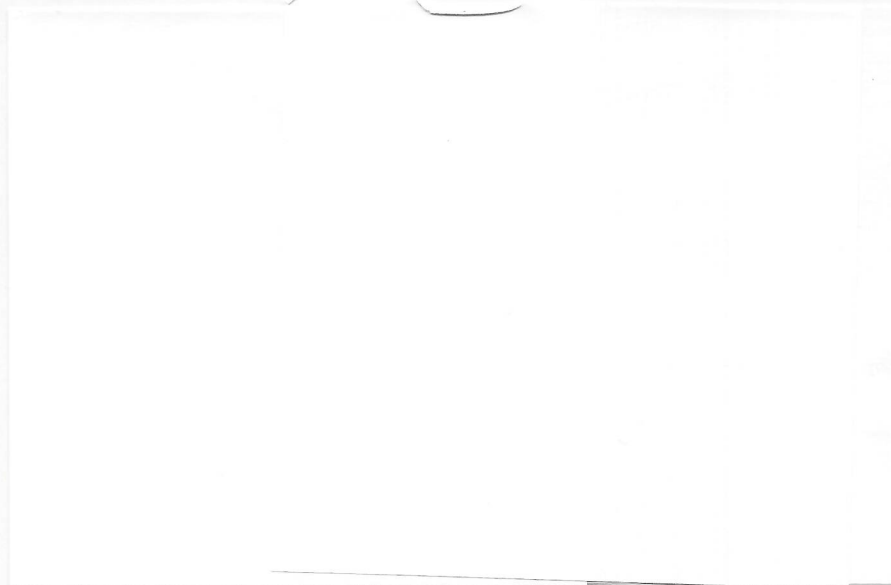
My position is that Dr. Jean Crombois has long demonstrated the academic achievements necessary to continue his academic growth. Yet I will allow myself one encouraging recommendation for his candidacy, which concerns his personal creativity. Since he has already fully mastered the theoretical apparatus and practical tools for teaching and research in political science, let the current competition not be a limit but another step in his professional and academic development.

#### **5. Conclusion and recommendation**

Taking into account the applicant's academic contributions and achievements, their original profile, and their high empirical impact, I confirm that I will decisively vote "for" granting the academic position of "associate professor" in professional field 3.3. Political Science to Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Jean Crombois and I suggest to the academic jury that we unanimously support his application.

Signature: Dr. Iskren Ivanov

Date: January 8, 2026



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*Requirements for the Academic Position of Associate Professor at the American University in Bulgaria Other than the National Minimum Requirements*

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(1)	The Applicant has a Ph.D.;
(2)	The Applicant has teaching experience from recognized and accredited higher education liberal arts institution(s);
(3)	The Applicant has teaching experience in a student-centered environment;
(4)	The Applicant has undergone at least one successful evaluation in teaching, research, and service at a recognized and accredited higher education liberal arts institution, including positive student evaluations of teaching;
(5)	The applicant has at least two years of experience in teaching in English at a higher education institution with English language instruction;
(6)	The applicant has at least five years of experience as Assistant Professor or Senior Assistant Professor <sup>2</sup> at a recognized and accredited academic institution in Bulgaria or abroad, OR,
(7)	If internal to AUBG, the Applicant has received a positive final decision for promotion to Associate Professor after evaluation according to the internal AUBG rules based on the US traditions as defined in the Faculty Handbook;
(8)	The Applicant has published a monograph or publications of equal standing in specialized academic editions;
(9)	The Applicant has original research works and publications and other academic and applied works, which are evaluated in their entirety;
(10)	None of the publications presented for the current procedure repeat publications used for the acquisition of the educational and academic degree of “Doctor”, the academic degree of “Doctor of Sciences”, or a previous academic rank according to the Bulgarian legislation;
(11)	The Applicant has not been found responsible for plagiarism in their works under a statutory procedure.

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<sup>2</sup> As defined by the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act.

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*Specific AUBG Requirements for the 2025–2026 Habilitation Procedure —  
Associate Professor, Professional Field 3.3. Political Sciences*

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Additional specifications: European Union (EU) Politics and History. EU Foreign Policy and Foreign Policy of the EU Member States.

**Research focus on:**

- R1. European Integration: History and Theory, with a Focus on Early European Integration During the Cold War.
- R2. New Developments in European Integration.
- R3. European Union Policy Towards the European Union’s Eastern Partnership and European Union Enlargement.
- R4. EU Foreign Policy and the Foreign Policy of the EU Member States with a Focus on Bulgaria’s Foreign Policy Since 2014.

**Teaching experience in:**

- T1. European Integration: History and Theory Since 1945.
- T2. European Integration: Policy-Making Processes.
- T3. European Union’s Foreign Policy and Diplomacy.
- T4. European Union’s Foreign Policy Towards China and Russia and the Foreign Policy of the Member States with a Focus on Central and Eastern European Member States.

*Bulgarian Minimum National Requirements for an ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR Academic  
Position in Professional Field 3.3. Political Sciences*

Indicator Group	Indicator #	Indicator	Number of Points	
			Eligibility	Required by Group
A	1	Doctoral (Ph.D.) dissertation	50	Group A: 50
C	3	Habilitation work – monograph <i>see DEFINITION^ C3 under the table</i>	100	Group C: 100
D	4	Published monograph that has not been presented as primary habilitation work	100	Group D: 200
D	5	Published book based on defended Ph.D. or Doctor of Science dissertation N/A	75	
D	6	Articles and reports published in academic editions that are indexed in world-renowned academic databases	30/n	
D	7	Articles and reports published in non-indexed peer-reviewed editions or edited collective volumes	10/n	
D	8	Studies published in academic editions that are indexed in world-renowned academic databases	45/n	
D	9	Studies published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes	15/n	
D	10	Published chapter in a monograph with multiple authors	20/n	Group E: 50
E	11	Citations or reviews in academic editions, monographs or collective volumes indexed in world-renowned academic databases	15	
E	12	Citations or reviews in [non-indexed] peer-reviewed monographs or collective volumes	10	
E	13	Citations or reviews in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals	5	