

## **Opinion**

For the scientific works submitted for participation in a competition  
For the occupation of the academic position "Associate Professor",  
In the professional strand 3.3. Political science (Regional governance and policy), announced  
in SG. 93 from 26. 11.2019  
Applicant: Dr. Elena Kalfova-Voinova.

From: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tatiana Tomova, Department of Public Administration, Sofia University  
", Scientific strand 3.3 Political Science (Analysis of public policies)

### **I. Research and creative activity of the applicant.**

By coincidence I observe the development of Dr. Elena Kalfova as a researcher from the development of her master's thesis. At first she had only research curiosity and perseverance. In the process of development, however, she absorbed the research methods of social sciences and learned to apply them. This gave her the opportunity to separate the facts from their interpretation and turned her into a scientist. In parallel Elena Kalfova found her research niche and concentrated her efforts in the field of regional governance. The combination of depth knowledge of theoretical literature and the positivist approach turned her into a significant researcher with a significant contribution to the development of knowledge about public governance with a focus on the regional level.

The candidate participates in the announced for the needs of the Faculty of Philosophy competition with the monograph "Regional management and regional policy-Application and evaluation" edition of the Sofia University Press (ISBN 978-954-07-4863-4, 342 "), as well as a series of 14 scientific papers and studies published in scientific journals. All publications fall directly into the thematic area of the announced competition with a focus on regional policy and regional institutions.

#### **1. Evaluation of monographic work**

##### **• Actuality of the monograph. Theoretical and public relevance of the study.**

The monograph "Regional Governance and regional policy – Application and evaluation" is dedicated to a topic that in the last three-four decades has taken an important place in the science of public governance. The differentiation of this theme in research is a consequence of the spreading of the thesis of the minimization of the national state. The topic expands its theoretical and practical meaning together with the search for efficiency in public sector by solving problems "closer to the citizens". This topic appeared in Bulgarian social science even before the changes from the 90 years in the last century. However, after this period, it became an integral part of the science of public governance and administration. As a result, this topic is permanently present in research in the field.

However, the topic continues to be very actual. In a theoretical context, it is up to date because of the accelerating dynamics of social change, which is why the science of public governance often grows old before it spreads. The rationalization of the new emerging facts is a continuous challenge to social science. The monograph of Dr. Elena Kalfova analyzes the contemporary problems facing regional development, caused not least by the controversy between the institutions created three-four decades ago and the changed social environment. The theme of the monograph is also extremely relevant for public practices, because of the expertise and the public doubts that this level of public governance has not yet developed its potential in the direction of demand for efficiency.

Probably due to the extreme actuality of the topic monograph of Elena Kalfova is not the only one in her field. However, it is unique and completely innovative in terms of the methodology that underpins research and its structure. Regional policy researches are often dominated by economic or territorial approaches. Such approaches are perfectly legitimate from a scientific point of view, but they cannot explain the actual process because they analyse the objectives and tools of the policies without regard to the factors that have led to their formulation and application. Elena Kalfova explains the actual process of regional policy in Bulgarian society, examining the main factors influencing its content and the results of its application. It seeks and identifies the main deficits in regional policy and explains them through the peculiarities of the factors influencing it. This approach enables the author to set and solve (often implicitly) important theoretical issues related to public policies. This makes the monographic study topical in methodological terms. It meets the current developments and the best achievements in the science of public governance. Following this methodology, Elena Kalfova succeeds to escape the widespread scientific practice of normative validation of certain practices or measures without analysis of the results, to which they lead in a particular environment. The above reasoning gives me reason to determine the peer-reviewed monograph as being extremely relevant in both theoretical and practical terms. It is important both for the science of public governance and for Regionistics.

- **General presentation of the monograph's content.**

The monograph is a comprehensive study of regional governance and regional policy with a focus on the processes of institutionalization and the achievement of public goals in Bulgaria. In terms of ideas, the monograph covers the period after the 80s of the last century, when a global shift is taking place in the paradigm of public governance. This shift sets the development logic to date. In terms of practices, the monograph encompasses the development of European regional policy and its application in Bulgaria in recent decades.

The following research objectives have been achieved:

The structure (governance) and the agency (policies) related to regional development have been clarified;

The factors influencing the shaping of structures and the formulation and implementation of the collective objectives in the area of regional policy have been clarified.

The case "regional governance and policies in Bulgaria" is clarified. The link between Bulgarian and European regional policy is analyzed.

An assessment of regional policy in Bulgaria has been made and recommendations for its improvement have been formulated.

To carry out the analysis of the evidences, Elena Kalfova has achieved the following theoretical objectives:

The relationship structure-agency, governance-policy have been investigated. The reciprocal link between the two is protected and proven.

The relationship of policies-management techniques (policy evaluation) has been investigated. The thesis is that the management techniques can improve the policy process and the research shows how.

A model for research and presentation of a specific public policy is created and applied. The basis of the model is the link "social factors-structure-agency-social results".

These theoretical achievements of the monographic study make it a significant scientific fact.

- **Methodology evaluation**

The main method of theoretical research is deductive. The author departs from general theoretical productions and applies them to the research of specific facts. The chosen approach is consistent with the research objectives. Its application has resulted in outcomes that are of interest to both theoretical and applied science in the field of public governance and regional studies.

The theoretical approach followed in the monograph is complemented by empirical studies. A secondary data analysis was conducted. The "Case Study" method is also used. The method is suitable, skillfully applied and contributes to the achievement of research objectives.

- **Evaluation of scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the Monographic study.**

Contributions to the peer-reviewed monographic study can be summarized in two groups:

A part of them can be defined as "applying existing theories to clarifying new facts". They relate primarily to the evaluation of the Bulgarian institutions and policies in the field of regional development. Elena Kalfova's substantial contribution is in justifying the need for change in the use of management techniques (policy evaluation) to improve the specific process.

The second (most significant) part of the identified contributions can be defined as "development and enrichment of existing theories". The content of this contribution is mainly related to the clarification of the reciprocal link "public governance-policies" and the consideration of its specific manifestations.

- **Knowledge of the problem and the literary material**

The Monographic study was developed on the basis of a sufficient volume, relevant to the research problem literature. The author demonstrates great awareness of scientific facts, while possessing skills for synthesis of scientific knowledge.

- **The personal contribution**

The identified contributions were entirely developed by the author of the Monographic study. I am not aware of such scientific results being created in the Bulgarian scientific literature. I do not know that there is a similar study of modern regional policy in general.

- **Questions on Monograph**

As any serious research the peer-reviewed monograph triggers reasoning and questions. I highly appreciate the withdrawal of the reciprocal 'governance-policies' relationship as a theoretical basis for the overall study. I believe this is the most significant contribution of the monograph. At the same time, probably due to my scientific identification with public policies, I believe that the policies that led to the creation of the modern institutions of regional government have not been clarified. In the Monograph the regional governance, and decentralisation of the national State as a whole, has been seen as a value in principle. However the decentralization as a main principle of public governance is a result of a specific, political and cultural situation, as well as a specific, situational interaction between empowered or influential stakeholders. This dependence of the institutions from the time they are formed, and the preservation and reproduction of past social relations through them, is a matter that truly excites me. In this regard, I make the following challenge to the author: What is the future of the idea of regional development and, in this sense, the future of the institutions of regional government. I don't expect a specific answer. I'm just directing the research efforts of Elena Kalfova in a direction I'm interested in. Perhaps it is time to look beyond the specific practices that we spread as correct, and to ask ourselves "Where does the world and individual societies go". I think that Elena Kalfova has the qualities to participate in this debate, which is undoubtedly forthcoming.

- **Evaluation of contributions in the other published publications made after the appointment of the academic position "Associate Professor".**

In addition to the peer-reviewed monograph, Elena Kalfova participates in the competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" with 14 scientific studies and articles. The articles are

directly related to the topic of the contest. They are published in prestigious, incl. English-speaking journals and collections. They all demonstrate high scientific lore, as well as the ability to analyze and synthesise of the author. These publications are cited in numerous publications, indicating their importance as scientific facts.

- **Evaluation of the results of participation in research and creative projects and application of the results obtained in practice.**

Besides her scientific contribution, Elena Kalfova has contributed to public policies and institutional development in the country. Her activity in this respect is significant. She has a significant project activity. Participates in consultative procedures in the development of specific institutions and policies in accordance with her competences.

## **II. Learning and teaching activities.**

Elena Kalfova is an extremely responsible lecturer. Her workload goes far beyond the norms established at the Sofia University. She is extremely useful for the Department of Public Administration with her competence (she is the first lecturer who develops and includes in the public administration programs in Sofia University the regional issues), with her motivation for teaching (Elena Kalfova works purposefully with the students and guide them to achieve results), with her attachment to the university career and to SU (she is actively involved in the management and administration of the educational process).

## **III. Personal impressions of the candidate.**

Elena Kalfova is a purposeful, consistent, disciplined and highly educated researcher. She is also a conscientious lecturer. I did not believe that I would say this for a considerably younger colleague, but she has contributed to my own development as a researcher and lecturer not only through our common projects, but also through her specific, selfless help. Having a colleague like Elena Kalfova is a huge advantage.

## **CONCLUSION**

On the basis of the high quality of the presented scientific publications, fully convinced I vote "yes" for this Dr. Elena Kalfova-Voynova to take the academic position "Associate Professor", in professional stand 3.3. Political science (Regional governance and policy).

23. 03. 2020

Signature:

Assoc. Prof. Tatiana Tomova