

Sofia, Thursday 14th October 2021

Subject: Opinion about the research of Tatiana Tomova under the application for acquiring the academic position of Professor in the professional field 3.3. Political Sciences (Public and social policies) for the Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Philosophy published in State Journal Issue 54/29.06.2021

Only one applicant: Associate Professor, Doctor of Political Sciences Tatiana Tomova

Written by: Professor PhD Maria Stoicheva

1. Compliance with the requirements of the Act of Development and Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB)

There is only one candidate in the above-mentioned academic position selection. The candidate's portfolio for the participation in the procedure is detailed enough for the assessment of the compliance of the research publications and professional activities of the candidate to the minimal national requirements according to the amendment of ADASRB as of 19.02.20219 and the additional requirements of Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski with their final amendment as of 26.05.2021. My assessment is also based on my personal experience from the candidate as Head of the Department of Public Administration between 2012 and 2020, as fellow in the same Faculty of the University. Associate Professor Tomova teaches in the Master Programme to the Department of European Studies, of which I am the academic director, since 2012.

The Portfolio of Associate Professor Tomova includes a habilitation monograph entitled "The Process of Policies: bottlenecks-based management" (in Bulgarian), a monograph as additional habilitation work published in 2008, a paper in a collective volume, eight papers published in unreferenced journals with scientific reviewing and in edited collective volumes. The included publications were not used in any previous academic promotion procedures and are after granting the academic position of "Associate Professor" in 2004. A book based on the research presented for the procedure for acquiring of the scientific degree "Doctor of Political Science" entitled "The Bulgarian path in social policy. The history of a transition without an end" (in Bulgarian) is included in the portfolio. The publications are evidently a result of the candidate's own research and demonstrate continuity and consistency in her research interests. The requirements related to citations in monographs, collective volumes

and unreferenced journals with scientific editing are covered and the same refers to the group of requirements related to supervision of doctoral student who have successfully defended their research (4), participation with papers in national and international conferences and projects. Tatiana Tomova has contributed to the academic community governance in her capacity of Head of Department, Vice Dean and Member of the Faculty Council.

After careful acquaintance with the candidate portfolio submitted for participation in the academic procedure I conclude that the minimal academic requirements are entirely met and the achieve score is well above the minimum threshold score according to with the above-mentioned regulations.

2. Assessment of the contribution of the main habilitation research monograph submitted for the academic promotion procedure

I will present my opinion on the submitted monograph as the main habilitation research work since in my view it demonstrates clearly the contributions of the candidate and has a major role in supporting the relevance of the capacity of the candidate.

The monograph “The Process of Policies: bottleneck-based management” is in-depth and innovative research of the process of policies, which applied the bottleneck-based management theory to the area of development and implementation of policies. This perspective is justified in a comprehensive theoretical context and exploration of its heuristic potential in the analysis of the restricted capacity of various chains of the political process, leads to methods for identification of the bottlenecks exercising a congestion effect or holds up in the implementation of policies. Therefore, the main question of the monograph is related to the extent to which the management of the process of policies includes and requires management decisions adequate for the overcoming of the bottlenecks which hold up or interrupt the process of their implementation.

Chapter one explores the theoretical context for undertaking of the research in the differentiation between management through policies and management of policies. The thesis is that the process of policies is a factor for improving and stabilizing of democracy with the effect of creating bonds between groups with different interests and values through application of participatory methods. The application of professional methods of policy development presupposes knowledge of the community for which they are intended (p. 43). European practices in the institutional system of public governance within the European Union are traced (e.g. benchmarking and the open method of coordination). The thesis of the peculiarity of the democracy developing policies requires additional justification and clarification in the context of the understanding of policies as temporary organization. The distinction between public management and public policies and the similarities between

policies management and organization management demonstrates the basis of the focus of the monograph on bottlenecks jeopardizing their implementation (p. 72).

Chapter two is dedicated to theories of the process of policies with the aim of presenting the research frame of reference, defined as “combined” by the author (following Sabatier 2007). The overview of the main theoretical research frames leads to the conclusion of the need of their supplementing “despite the sometimes-opposite assumptions in their foundations” (p. 142), thus justifying their combination in the proposed research frame for exploration of the processes of policies in the contemporary Bulgarian environment. It should also be noted that the assumption concerning the potential or emergence of a new actor and distortion as a result of that of the initially envisaged balance in and among the advocacy coalitions (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1988) is key among the assumptions of the research frame application.

Chapter three is the core of the monograph with a focus on the process of policies and the possibility of stalling, holding up and congestion at various points/chains in their implementation. Following the proposed research frame the stages in the management and the issues that can be defined as bottlenecks are outlined by borrowing terminology from the operations management. Thus, the term ‘bottleneck’ is defined as “those chains in the stages of the cycle at which the process is stalled, interrupted or reversed” (p. 159). Bottlenecks need to be specifically identified in close relation to the community for which policies are envisaged, to their internal structure and the dynamics of the behavior of groups and free individuals. The identification of the bottlenecks/ the weakest links in the process of policies is part of the overall governance/management process. As a result of the research frame types of policy bottlenecks are identified: generic policy bottlenecks with a high probability of occurrence in each concrete process of policies, and policy bottlenecks brought about by lasting informal institutions characterizing the public environment of the process of implementation and conducting of policies as for example specific Bulgarian policy bottlenecks as a reflection of the Bulgarian social environment. I would like to draw the attention to the three types of policy bottlenecks in Chapter three, namely the policy bottleneck “issue – solution”, “solution – results” and “result – assessment” which mirror the situation of public speaking about an issue and its inclusion in the policy agenda, the understanding of what can be considered a result of a policy and the public assessment on which the policy effectiveness largely depends. Factors for the occurrence of these types of policy bottlenecks are outlined as well as the measures for their release in terms of reducing the delay or being stuck in the bottleneck. The author argues that the main factor with a potential to distort every process of policies is the already existing in the public attitudes distrust in political power. It is possible for this situation to be compensated but at the stake of special efforts. The monograph concludes with the question of who should govern the process of policies in the context of political action of supranational unions, “fuzzy” personal identification, fluidity of collectives with a real

potential for imposition of rules and the condition of the 'changed' state – a question which remains open for further discussion and research.

3. Assessment of the overall contributions to the advancement of knowledge

The self-assessment of the research contributions, prepared and included in the portfolio, reflects the achieved in the overall research outcomes presented for assessment in the current procedure. There is continuity in the applied approach in the candidate's research demonstrated in the outlined contributions in theoretical and practical perspective. I confirm the validity of the outlined contributions in the area of public policies, which can be used as instruments for theoretical and empirical research. The main monograph is a confirmation of this observation with a significant number of contributions referring to it as for example the thesis of the change in the administration science as a result of the policies implementation and changes in the functioning of democracy in the context of enhanced decentralization. The designed research frame can be considered a major contribution to research in the area. Similarly, this is valid for the exploration of bottlenecks in the process of policy implementation, their classification and the focus on the necessary subjects, agents/brokers for policies management and in particular bottlenecks management in the process of policies. A series of research questions are also formulated, brought about by the candidate's research in her last monograph outlining a logical continuation, which the academic community in the Bulgarian context would expect with interest.

Conclusion

After in-depth acquaintance with the research work included in the portfolio for participation in the senior promotion procedure of granting the academic position of "Professor" and being well aware of the candidate's teaching experience, academic presence and prestige I express without hesitation my conclusion and strong recommendation to the jury for the election of Associate Professor Tatiana Tomova as Professor in the professional field 3.3 Political sciences (Public and social policies) in the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski.

14.10.2021

Opinion written by:

(Prof. Maria Stoicheva)