

## OPINION

**By:** **asoc.prof. Denitsa Gorchilova, PhD**  
**Area:** 3.7 “Administration and Management”, specialty “Organisation and Management outside Material Production (Civil Society Institutions)”  
**University:** Public Administration department, UNWE  
**Regarding:** competition for associate professor in area 3.7 “Administration and Management (Public Management)” for the department of Public Administration, Sofia University

### 1. Information about the competition

The competition for the academic position of Associate Professor is announced for the needs of the Department of Public Administration at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University.

I participate in the scientific jury of the competition according to the Order No. ПД-38-491 / 22.08.2022 of the Rector of Sofia University.

### 2. Brief information about the candidate

There is only one candidate in the competition - chief assist. Simeon Atanasov Petrov, PhD. As can be seen from the submitted curriculum vitae, the candidate is inextricably linked with the Department of Public Administration - initially as a trainee Bachelor, Master and PhD, and since 2011 - as a lecturer. In parallel, he is very active in project and consultancy activities in the field of public administration; he is involved in the publication of scientific periodicals.

### 3. Fulfilling the requirements for the academic position

According to Article 24 (1) of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, the following conditions shall be met:

1. The candidate should hold a PhD degree“;
2. Have held for at least 2 years the academic post „(chief) assistant“;
3. Have submitted a published monographic work;
4. To meet the minimum national requirements under Article 26, para. 2 and 3;
5. To have no proven plagiarism.

#### **Performance by points 3.1., 3.2. and 3.5.**

The fulfilment of the first two conditions is evident from the attached documents. The candidate has a PhD in 3.3 Political Science (Public Administration) with a dissertation on "Public Policy Change. European Employment Policy" from 2015 (document 3). He has held the post of chief assistant professor since the same year 2015 (document 4).

To the best of my knowledge, Dr. Simeon Petrov has not been legally proven to have plagiarized or presented unreliable data in scientific papers.

### **Performance by point 3.3. (monographic work published)**

The submitted habilitation thesis on "Non-Profit Organizations - Nature, Roles, Governance" was of particular interest to me due to the area of my scientific interests and the accumulated over 25 years practical and teaching experience in the field.

The study has a number of merits. First of all, one cannot fail to note the exhaustive knowledge of the multitude of "primary sources" - theoretical texts by authors from the fields of philosophy, political science, theory of the state, law, economics - all those are perspectives through which attempts have been made over the last two centuries to theorize the role and place of organised/institutionalised civic activity. Simeon Petrov has not only managed to encompass this array of sources, but also to trace the connections and contradictions within them.

I welcome the choice of terminology for naming these structures, put in the title of the text. Referred to more often as "non-governmental" or "non-profit", these structures, increasingly involved in solving contemporary Bulgarian problems, are clearly unaware of the methodological problems in defining themselves by what they are not. The term "organizations with a cause / ideal purpose" is far more appropriate, as it is positive and puts the spotlight on their most distinctive feature - dedication to causes and working for goals other than power or profit.

Particularly valuable are the reflections on outdated sectoral thinking towards societies. Dr. Petrov not only theorizes the particularities and place of civic structures, but also pays attention to the ever multiplying grey areas between sectors that are difficult to catalogue or classify. In this respect, practice far outstrips theory, not only in our country but throughout the democratic world.

Civil society and the civic sector have been explored in connotations with many related and/or similar concepts - communitarianism, social capital, community development, etc. In this habilitation paper, I find particularly valuable the exploration of links with public governance, public policies and public value generation.

I cannot fully agree with the author's thesis expressed in the introduction that the text does not solve management problems of CSOs and that it is not a textbook on their management. Insofar as it does not go down to the level of specific management techniques, this is probably the case. But on the other hand, good management of nonprofit organizations requires a clear recognition of their specificities, the applicability of concepts from business management and from public management, and an understanding of the special role of volunteerism - all topics that are clearly placed within the logic of the text and clarified in readable and accessible language for a variety of readers.

The habilitation thesis presents its author as extremely well prepared at the theoretical level (existing concepts and their advantages and disadvantages; links and contradictions between theoretical views; their usefulness for contemporary practice), well aware of the problems of the Bulgarian civil sector at the beginning of the 21st century and able to present his views in a precise and engaging way.

For me, the question of whether this is a classic monographic work remains a bit controversial. Rather, the text represents a deeply developed "research programme". It identifies the major theoretical areas, each of which could be developed into an independent monographic study. In parallel, large segments of the text (because of the clarity, precision of language and examples given) can be used as course readings in civic sector related courses in various undergraduate and graduate programs.

If we still adhere to the understanding that the monograph is (from the Greek *μόνος*, "one," and *γράφειν*, "write") a methodical and comprehensive work, the problem actually stems from the multifaceted nature of the object of study, namely, the nonprofits.

**Concerning this particular work, I have no doubt that it is unique for the Bulgarian scientific literature and fully meets the condition to be accepted as a habilitation thesis.**

### **Performance by point 3.4. (minimum national requirements)**

The minimum national requirements contain two distinct subsets of indicators - science-related and teaching-related.

**3.4.1.** The candidate's **scientific searches and achievements** are expressed in publications of sufficient quantity and quality.

The foundation is built by the *habilitation thesis* of dr. Simeon Petrov, which has been commented in detail above in fulfilling the requirements under point 3.3.

Out of a total of 25 scientific publications, the candidate chooses to submit 17 for the purposes of the competition, with the studies having the highest weight - 12 in total. Their subject matter covers public governance issues, various aspects of public policies, local government issues, the public role of certain types of civil society organizations, and employment policy. Quite naturally, the majority of publications are related to the SU - conference proceedings, jubilee proceedings and the journal *Public Policies.bg*. A recommendation to the candidate is to seek an even wider range of opportunities to promote the results of their research. Some of the texts identified as studies rather have the characteristics of a scientific article, but this does not diminish their qualities.

The candidate also reports one co-authored book chapter published abroad; one conference proceedings article and one scientific journal article.

In general, the **publication activity of the chief assist. Petrov corresponds to the field of the announced competition, well represents the areas of his scientific searches and is distinguished by the depth of the work and the high quality of the results achieved.**

Simeon Petrov's scientific publications (9 papers, 3 of which co-authored) *have been cited* a total of 23 times by sources in the country and abroad. A total of 4 publications (3 authored and 1 co-authored) have been selected for the competition and have been cited a total of 6 times since 2015 - 1 time in a refereed/indexed publication, 1 time in a non-refereed scientific journal and 4 times in monographs or peer-reviewed collective volumes. The number of established citations confirms the author's recognition in scientific circles.

Dr. Petrov is a member of the editorial board of the e-journal "*Public Policies.bg*" and at the same time coordinates the publication of the journal and maintains its website. He has also been invited as a reviewer for a number of internationally recognized journals.

The extremely active work of Simeon Petrov on a *project basis* is impressive. For the period 2008-22 he has participated in a total of 23 projects developed at university, local and national level. In 5 of these projects he has also served as coordinator or administrator. Along with accumulating useful practical experience, this is a good testimonial to his ability to put into practice concepts familiar from university audiences, as well as to transfer them in the opposite direction - from actual problems of practice to theoretical reflection and solution. It is therefore no surprise that he is able to develop case studies and assignments to enrich the teaching of his lectures and exercises.

**3.4.2.** With regard to the subset of indicators related to **teaching and learning**, Dr Petrov provided a reference for the period 2016/17 - 2020/21 academic years with an average teaching load of 1318 hours per year, of which 497 were classroom hours. He teaches as a tenure-track or adjunct faculty member in numerous courses in the undergraduate and graduate programs of the Faculty of Philosophy. In this regard, he has been involved in the introduction of new lecture courses (including e-based courses) and has developed and introduced innovative teaching methods. The candidate in the

competition has not successfully defended any PhD students under his supervision, but reports active work with graduate students.

Dr. Petrov is co-author of one textbook ("Theory of Management in the Public Sphere" from 2020, developed jointly with prof. T. Tanev). The included practical tasks, case studies and other didactic materials support active teaching in many courses studied by the students of the department's specialties.

In summary, it can be said that the candidate **demonstrates a high level of preparedness to hold the academic position of Associate Professor in terms of the associated with it teaching commitments.**

#### **4. Evaluation of the main scientific and applied contribution**

In the attached documents, Dr. Petrov claims five scientific contributions:

- 1) Original research on the civil sector and its constituent organizations.
- 2) Clarification of the role of the civil sector in public governance.
- 3) Innovative work on the drivers of change in public policy.
- 4) Developed a model for the study of public policy change.
- 5) Enriching the theory of public governance and public management.

As far as my area of research is related to the civic sector, I accept contributions 3-5 based on the author's work and statement. I have no doubt that the other members of the esteemed jury will have a far more in-depth view of them.

I fully accept the first and second contributions, which are well manifested in the habilitation thesis. In the Bulgarian scientific literature over the last two decades, the subject of civil society organisations has been gradually making its way, but the majority of publications are at a very specific level (type of civil society organisation, regional problem, aspect of governance, fundraising problems, etc.). A corpus of 'reference' literature is also being built up - mainly manuals developed for specific projects. Theoretical and conceptual insight is still extremely rare and I can safely confirm that the habilitation work of dr. Petrov fills a gap in the literature. I have already discussed the merits of the text in section 3.3.

#### **5. Key recommendations**

After reviewing thoroughly the scientific and teaching work of the candidate in the competition dr. Simeon Petrov, I could make several recommendations for the next steps in his career development.

First of all, the teaching and practical (project-related) experience he has gained should be "capitalized" by creating modern teaching and methodological literature - textbooks or structured content for learning platforms. Such is lacking in the necessary variety and volume, especially in the field of his monographic research. The topic of civil society structures and their contemporary role in Bulgaria is not yet the subject of specialized higher education, and the available educational literature is the fruit of the work of a few authors.

Secondly, a natural next step is to go beyond the publishing activity of SU and to present more seriously scientific texts (papers, articles, studies) in publications of other scientific research institutions in the country and abroad.

Finally, the enormous amount of work on projects should normally be transferred to the international arena, and I look forward to Simeon Petrov's inclusion in supranational teams working in the areas he has researched.

## 6. Conclusion

Following a review of the documentation, references and publications available, I confirm that the candidate Simeon Petrov meets the minimum national requirements.

I recommend the esteemed scientific jury to **confirm the compliance of the chief. assist. Simeon Petrov, PhD for the academic position of “associate professor”** in the area 3.7 "Administration and Management (Public Management)" and to propose to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Sofia University to take approve it.

Signed:

assoc. prof. Denitsa Gorchilova, PhD

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