



## REVIEW

of the works submitted for competition for the academic position of PROFESSOR in the Academic Field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Multiculturalism and Media), announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", State Gazette, Aug. 2, 2022, No. 61.

The competition has been announced on the basis of the Law of the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, art. 4 and 29; the Regulations for Application of the Law of the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, art. 57.1 and 57.2; and the Regulations for Earning Academic Degrees and Gaining Academic Positions at Sofia University, art. 108.1 and 108.3. The decision the announcing the competition was supported by the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication (Protocol 1, September 8, 2022).

The review was prepared in congruence with the Decision by the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for participation in the Academic Jury, RD-38-533, September 16, 2022. The proposition of the Academic Jury was entered into the Register of Sofia University of Members of Academic Juries as No. 33, September 8, 2022.

**Reviewer:** Prof. Dobrinka Stancheva Peycheva, D. Sc., Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski."

Associate Prof. Svetlozar Kirilov, Ph.D., Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," is the only participant in the competition.



## **1. Summary data about the candidate covering his research, teaching, and academic activities.**

### **A. Research activities of the candidate Svetlozar Kirilov**

Associate Prof. Svetlozar Kirilov submitted for the current competition the following publications: one monograph, eleven large articles (more than 20 pages, one in English), and twelve articles (three in English). These academic publications are different from those used by the candidate to register in NACID as a Ph.D. holder since 2001 and as Associated Professor since 2007.

Svetlozar Kirilov has taken part in dozens of academic conferences, many of which are international. He has delivered at least nineteen sectional reports according to his submitted data.

### **B. Teaching activities of the candidate Svetlozar Kirilov**

Svetlozar Kirilov teaches mainly at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski." He teaches the academic subjects *Sociology, Post-Socialist Transition and Media and Multiculturalism, Minorities, and Media* to students who study at the BA Programs of Journalism. Svetlozar Kirilov teaches to students who study at the MA Programs the following academic courses: *Sociology and Media; Sociology; Migration, Multiculturalism, and Media; Cinema in the Media; and Intercultural Communication*. He teaches the course *Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Multicultural Society* at the Doctoral Program at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication. Svetlozar Kirilov delivers English-language courses of *Sociology and Multiculturalism, Minorities, and Media* to students at the Erasmus Program.

Svetlozar Kirilov has helped as an academic tutor of forty-two students to prepare and defend their BA or MA theses at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication.



He has been tutor of one doctoral student who has defended her Doctoral thesis. Svetlozar Kirilov is currently a tutor of two doctoral students.

Svetlozar Kirilov has had rich experience in teaching English at universities abroad, perhaps the greatest varieties of universities among lecturers at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication. I mean lectures delivered at the University of Wroclaw, Poland; the University of Teramo, Italy; the University of Leeuwarden, the Netherlands; the University of Bilbao, Spain; the University of Maryland, the USA; the University of Westminster, the UK; the University of Warsaw, Poland. Many of these lectures have been within the framework of the Erasmus Program, and thus, the candidate contributed to the dissemination of the research of Bulgarian scholars abroad.

### **C. Academic activities of the candidate Svetlozar Kirilov**

Svetlozar Kirilov has held several institutional positions. He is Chair of the Department of History and Theory of Journalism at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of Sofia University, a member of the Faculty Council, Head of the MA Program Journalism and Media, and a member of the Attestation Commission and the Commission for Young Scholars and Postdocs at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Svetlozar Kirilov has acquired rich media competencies as an expert at the **Council of Europe** from 2005 to 2008. He took part in designing several recommendations of the Council of Europe in the media field during this period of time.

Svetlozar Kirilov is a member of two professional organizations: the Union of Bulgarian Journalists and the Bulgarian Sociological Association.

The candidate took part in several academic specializations at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Science, 2000-2001; the College of Media, Arts, and Design at the University of Westminster, London, 2005; the College of Journalism at the University of Maryland, College Park, 2008-2009. The



specialization at the University of Maryland was due to winning a competition for a fellowship at the Hubert Humphrey Program.

## **2. The traits of the academic works of the candidate Svetlozar Kirilov**

The academic publications submitted by the candidate Svetlozar Kirilov are entirely congruent with the competition's theme.

The monograph *Discriminated Against or Responsible for Their Plight: the Roma in Bulgaria and African Americans in the United States*, 439 pages, published by Sofia University Press in 2021, is the major habilitation work, and it is entirely consistent with the theme of the competition for the academic position of professor – Multiculturalism and Media. The monograph deals with two minorities: the Roma in Bulgaria and blacks in the United States. The light is cast on the life of both minorities in four important social spheres: the economy, education, family, and law-abidance. The particular research emphasis is on their existence in ghettos, areas of concentrated poverty, where social conditions are very different from those in neighborhoods of the majority of the population. The author has applied a sociological approach and conducted fieldwork in Bulgaria and the USA. The fieldwork in Bulgaria has been carried out in a variety of Roma neighborhoods in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Gorna Oriahovitza, Vidin, etc. The field research included also taking photographs in Washington, D.C, and Syracuse, New York, as well as in Roma neighborhoods in Bulgaria: *The Faculty* (Sofia); *Stolipinovo* (Plovdiv); *Bonchova Mahala* (Vidin), etc. The monograph also contains a valuable media analysis of the media portrayal of the Roma and coverage of the conflicts between the Roma and Bulgarians.

The second monograph of the candidate is *Poland in the Labyrinth of Transformation: the Changes in Politics, Civil Society, and the Economy after 1989*, published by the Sofia University Press in 2006. The monograph is focused on the main changes in Poland during the post-socialist period. The book includes a chapter about minorities in Poland, which sheds light on the situation of Jews, Germans, Ukrainians, and



Belarussians. This chapter is entirely relevant to the theme of the current competition, but the monograph is not among the publications submitted for the competition.

To a great extent, all articles the candidate sent for participation in this competition are consistent with the topic of Multiculturalism and Media. The articles can be broken down into three groups according to their topic:

The first group of academic articles is focused on intercultural dialog and media portrayal of ethnic, religious, or racial minorities, especially in cases of conflict. The concrete topics of the articles from the first group are the comparison of the texts of the Quran and the Bible about the interpretation of violence and women; the negative influence of prejudice and ethnocentrism on relations of communities with different ethnic and religious identities; hate speech; investigative journalism; whether to regulate the Internet; the media coverage of conflicts between Bulgarians and Roma, etc.

The second group of articles is devoted to the portrayal of particular issues or social groups in films: the image of the Roma in East European movies; the portrayal of Indians and Mexicans in American Westerns; the contemporary suggestions and ideological stances of the new Russian and Belorussian films about WWII; the image of Russia in Soviet and contemporary Russian movies, etc.

The third group of articles of Assoc. Prof. Svetlozar Kirilov is about the Russo-Ukrainian War: propaganda and disinformation related to the military conflict; the media coverage of particular events (e.g., the battle of Mariupol) and biases connected to this; the cultural clashes in building Russian and Ukrainian identity.

The candidate Svetlozar Kirilov has acquired 895 points from the criteria for fulfillment of the minimal national requirement.

Svetlozar Kirilov has participated in a variety of research projects. Some of them are the following:



*The Adequacy of the Media Coverage of the Conflicts between Roma in Bulgarians*, 2019. Leader of the project, financed by the Fund for Scientific Research at Sofia University.

*Visual Sociology of the Roma Ghetto*, 2013. Leader of the project, financed by the Fund for Scientific Research at Sofia University.

*New Media Literacy for Media Professionals* at the Leonardo da Vinci Program, carried out in 2012–2014 with academic partners from Slovakia, Romania, and Malta. A couple of academic conferences were conducted within the framework of this project: Gzira, Malta; Rousse and Sofia, Bulgaria; Bratislava, Slovakia; Timisoara, Romania.

### **3. The major contributions of the candidate in science, applied science, and teaching activities.**

A. The major academic contribution of the candidate is, as he writes: "**the explanation of the reasons for negative position of the Roma and African Americans in their respective societies. The plight of the Roma and African Americans has been due to a complicated interplay of social factors** (e.g., life in ghettos, mistrust from the wider society) **and cultural factors** (e.g., disrespect toward education, toleration of controversial social practices, such as begging and theft)." The social and cultural factors mutually amplify each other. As a result, **the Roma and African Americans have developed the traits of the underclass and culture of poverty.**

B. **The systematic comparison between the Roma in Bulgaria and blacks in the USA, based on sociological field research**, has been conducted for the first time in Bulgaria. The field research has ensured the real touch to both communities in Bulgaria and the USA. The fieldwork in Roma neighborhoods in different cities in Bulgaria was conducted for ten years, from 2010–2019.

**The comparative method** has been used not only for comparison between the Roma in Bulgaria and African Americans in the USA but also for minorities in both societies.



The situation of the Roma in Bulgaria has been compared to that of the Turks, Armenians, Jews, and other minorities. The plight of the Roma and blacks has been explained partly with their culture, but the author has underlined that the cultural component in the explanation of poverty and low educational level of the Roma and African Americans should not be exaggerated since the hostile social conditions in which both minorities live (life in ghettos, poor urban infrastructure, mistrust from employers) have their significant negative impact.

**C. For the first time, a Bulgarian scholar has conducted field research in African American ghettos and immigrant neighborhoods in the USA.**

D. The attempt to outline the main principles for impartial media coverage of minorities, especially in conflicts between Bulgarians and Roma, could be considered a contribution to some extent. The rules for objective media coverage of individuals differ in terms of race, ethnicity, and religion are known, and they are included in the ethical codes of journalism: the strife for neutrality, seeking of real fact and avoidance of rumors and assumptions; avoidance of arriving at strong and hasty conclusions; the presentation of the point of view of both sides; the rejection of using hate speech and labeling; the avoidance of seeking collective responsibility and collective guilt; empathy and understanding the point of view of the opposing party. All these rules are known, but the partial contribution of some of the publications of the author is that they deal with concrete cases of conflicts and compare the real facts established with the fieldwork and the media portrayal. Several conflicts between Bulgarians and Roma were systematically investigated by juxtaposing their media coverage and the real events: the village of Katunitza, 2011; Sofia's neighborhood *Dimitar Milenkov*, 2013; Varna's neighborhood *Asparuhovo*, 2014; Sofia's neighborhood *Orlandovtzi*, 2015; the village of Voivodinovo, 2019. The comparison between the media portrayal of the conflict and the actual flow of the event and its consequences provides an opportunity to outline the most significant professional principles of journalism and media. The



author sheds light on the importance of fact-checking and avoiding prejudices, hate speech, and the trap of self-fulfilling prophecy. In each of the analyzed cases of conflict, he tries to establish the main factors contributing to the media bias and distortion of impartiality.

The contribution of the candidate is also his thesis that the abilities of Bulgarian society to integrate minorities are not sufficient since some institutions are ineffective, poorly organized, and sometimes corrupted. The Bulgarian society makes the Roma live in ghettos with concentrated poverty and receive low-quality education and healthcare. Thus, the vast part of the Roma remains poor and uneducated. Scores of Roma have behavior patterns typical for uneducated individuals: impoliteness, arrogance, and aggressiveness. Some of them commit crimes, and thus the wider society maintains its attitude that these traits are "Gypsy traits" and its opposing stance that "the Gypsies cannot be integrated."

Some other ideas of the candidate contain elements of contribution: the notion that people can be divided into three groups in each conflict, namely tolerant, extreme, and "in the middle"; the idea of tolerance in concentric circles; the renewed use and new interpretations of the concepts of "we-group" and "others-group," introduced in the American sociology at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Other elements of academic contribution can be found in his publications about propaganda and disinformation in the media and communication during the Russo-Ukrainian War, as well as in the notion that the war initiated by Russia undermines the idea of the Pan-Slavism, Pan-Russism, and solidarity between Orthodox nations and seeking of the unity of the Orthodox civilization since Ukraine is the second largest Orthodox and Slavic nation.

#### **4. Criticism and Recommendations**





**I do not intend to express criticism. My recommendation to Assoc. Prof. Kirilov is to continue to conduct his research on this area, which is complicated but, at the same time, very important for the democratic development of our societies.**

#### **5. Conclusion**

**Based on high contributions from teaching, research, and publishing activities of Svetlozar Kirilov at the national and international levels;**

**Taking into account his academic style visible in his publications and his skills for analysis and explanations;**

**Bearing in mind his work with students who study for BA, MA, and Ph.D. degrees;**

**I confirm that I will vote positively for Svetlozar Kirilov to be awarded the academic position of Professor in the Academic Field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Multiculturalism and Media) at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"**

**Reviewer: Prof. Dobrinka Stancheva Peycheva, D. Sc.**