



OPINION

on the submitted works for participation in a competition for the academic position of PROFESSOR in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Multiculturalism and Media), announced by Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in SJ, issue 61, August 2, 2022.

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Katya Mihailova, PhD, University of National and World Economy, Department of Economic Sociology

Candidate (s): Assoc. Prof. Svetlozar Kirilov



1. Information about the competition

The competition was announced by request from the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of Sofia University, Protocol No. 1 of the Faculty Council, September 8, 2022. I participate in the academic jury in accordance of the Order No. RD-38-533, September 16, 2022, by the Rector of Sofia University.

2. Brief information about the candidates in the competition

Assoc. Prof. Svetlozar Kirilov is the only candidate in the competition. The candidate hold PhD in Sociology and the area of his habilitation as associate professor is Journalism. He is Head of the Department of Theory and History of Journalism at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of Sofia University.

The candidate fulfills the national minimal requirements for awarding the academic position of Professor in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Multiculturalism and Media) according to the submitted documents for the competition..

3. Assessment of teaching activities

The teaching portfolio of Svetlozar Kirilov includes courses of lectures at the all three levels of university education. The courses deal with introductory sociology, sociology of media and journalism as well as international journalism, multiculturalism and media.

I consider as major contribution of teaching of Svetlozar Kirilov that he has developed courses for BA Programs, MA Programs and PhD Programs related to multiculturalism and media. Teaching in the field of multiculturalism and media is fully congruent with systematic research and specializations of the candidate, which is proven by the submitted documents for the competition. Hence, Svetlozar Kirilov teaches knowledge that has already acquired with his efforts.

Courses are designed on the basis of interdisciplinary approach in theory and methodology with the leading role of sociology. This type of choice seems logical taking into account sociological education of the candidate. Sociology has potential to serve as a basis of



interdisciplinary methodology, which can be applied to problems in the field of multiculturalism and media.

I would like to share my excellent personal impressions from Assoc. Prof. Svetlozar Kirilov. He taught sociology, when I was in my first semester of the BA Program of Journalism at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication in 1994-1995 (at that time he was Chief Assistant). I still keep his signature in my student booklet with the grade but, more importantly, nowadays I apply sociology taught by him in my research and teaching. I consider contributing to continuity in science as the major merit of teaching.

4. Features of academic publications

The complete relevance between teaching and research activities of the candidate has been typical for him. The main areas of his teaching are also the areas of his research efforts. The academic works, which are submitted for the competition, provide an opportunity conclusions to be drawn about the research profile of the candidate.

It is clear that the candidate has been deeply involved in the study of multiculturalism and media for many years. The same perspective has been applied in the most recent research of the candidate focused on geopolitical stances related to Ukraine, a problem which is currently much discussed (for instance, the articles published in 2022: *Mariupol: the Information War* and *Russian Exceptionalism: Civilizational Hesitations and Soft Power*). The author seeks in studying this new topic the aspects of structural and cultural explanation of the conflict. The synthesis of structural and cultural explanation seems his methodological “trade mark”, already defined in his monograph *Discriminated against or Responsible for their Plight*, published in 2021.

The systematic approach applied by Assoc. Prof. Kirilov to the subject of study has been impressive. Taking into account the idea that at the core of multiculturalism is the relations to “the Other,” to “the otherness,” the author seeks different dimensions of these mutually related interactions. He defined in 2011 the main problem of multiculturalism as “Why we love to hate ‘Others’”, which is the title of his article. The article about the Quran and the Bible, published in 2021, provides comparative analysis of the attitudes toward “the Other” in



two religious worldviews. The studies of the images of “the Other” and “the otherness” in cinema and mass media also seek answers related to love and hatred.

Adhering of the principles of interdisciplinary framework is a distinctive trait of the research approach of the candidate. The application of interdisciplinary framework in publications of Assoc. Prof. Kirilov can be seen in the level of theoretical reflection on the subject of study as well as in the level of selected methodology. It allows a synthesis of application of approaches from sociology, social anthropology, ethnology, cultural studies, and social psychology. I hold that there is always leading science when building interdisciplinary framework. Sociology plays the leading role in this case. Sociology has been used by the researcher for theoretical modeling of the subject of study and chosen methodology, which usually applies combinations of quantitative and qualitative methods for empirical research.

The subjects of study by Assoc. Prof. Svetlozar Kirilov are logically related to the problems, which he considers important. There are contributions in his studies: about the Roma in Bulgaria and Europe and the blacks in the USA (the monograph *Discriminated against or Responsible for their Plight*, 2021, and many articles); about refugees; about prostitution. The studied social groups are often minorities, who maintain culture different from that of wider society. These minorities have their own existence and thinking but they have to be integrated into mainstream society according to principles of multiculturalism. The author regards integration as one of the five types of relations between the majority and minorities, who co-exist in a society (the monograph *Discriminated against or Responsible for their Plight*, 2021, p. 147).

The research area chosen by the candidate is linked to one of the heated debates in Bulgarian society since 1989: the integration of the Roma. The author writes that “the integration of the Roma is of no use for political parties” (the monograph *Discriminated against or Responsible for their Plight*, 2021, p. 153). Despite this, there are many political and ideological temptations related to this topic. Some of the temptations could be economic and even linked to corruption. In contrast, Assoc. Prof. Kirilov strictly adheres to the noble principles of impartiality and rational analysis, which I consider as a significant merit of his research. The author demonstrates in his publications methodologically grounded balance of different points of views, shows examples of real cases of tolerance and dialog, and proposes applicable



solutions for mutual co-existence of different communities and social groups in multicultural society.

5. Assessment of main contributions in science and applied science

I accept the contributions in science and applied science that are mentioned by the candidate.

The candidate has considered the comparative study of the Roma in Bulgaria and blacks in the USA as his major contribution. I am convinced that the analysis of the Roma contributes not only as methodology but also as knowledge about society, which is needed for construction of “the optimistic theory for our people”, whose methodology was proposed by Ivan Hadzhiiski.

Ivan Hadzhiiski thinks that the optimistic theory can be scientific. Assoc. Prof. Kirilov adheres to the scientific principles in his analyses. Moreover, according to Hadzhiiski the optimistic theory should not be blind to facts that lead to negative conclusions. I consider that the research of Assoc. Prof. Kirilov of the Roma and other topics demonstrate a rare ability for seeing the facts that could lead to negative conclusions. Finally, Hadzhiiski argues: “There are no superior and inferior races or great and small nations since glory and backwardness of a nation depend on the stage of her social development. The social development of all nations follows the same principles and there is no nation, who is deprived from this development.” (Ivan Hadzhiiski. *The Optimistic Theory for Our People*. Sofia, 2002, p. 17.) The same methodological principle has been applied and developed by Assoc. Prof. Kirilov in his research.

6. Critical notes and recommendations

I would like to ask two questions:

1. Is it possible working model of integration of the Roma to be proposed, which takes into account the interplay of structural and cultural factors?
2. What kind of roles should play politicians and intellectuals in order such model to be fulfilled?



7. Conclusion

On the basis of merits and contributions from teaching and research activities of Assoc. Prof. Svetlozar Kirilov I am going to support his application in the competition for the academic position of Professor in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Multiculturalism and Media).

December 20, 2022

Jury member: Assoc. Prof. Katya Mihailova, PhD