



## OPINION

on the submitted works for participation in a competition for the academic position of PROFESSOR in professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media Ecosystem), announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in SJ, issue No. 35 of 18. IV. 2023.

**Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Manuela Mironova Manliherova**

**Candidate (s): Associate Professor Dr. Simeon Ignatov Vassilev**

Associate professor Dr. Simeon Vasilev is the only candidate in the current competition for a professorship. The colleague has the necessary experience as a teacher and large-scale practical experience on the subject of the competition. The candidate is a person with serious journalistic practice as an international editor, deputy news director of Channel 1 at Bulgarian National TV, program director of Channel 1, political commentator, director of information and correspondent in Bonn and Berlin, as well as a recognized lecturer in discipline in the field of the competition - Media Ecosystem. His research interests are focused on international media, communication management and international relations. His other courses at the university are also related to Political Leadership in Europe, Cultural-Historical Interrelations and Media Content, Management and Content of Target Audiences, Crisis management.

### **I. Evaluation of the scientific and practical results and contributions of the scientific and educational production submitted for participation in the competition**

In the competition, the candidate participated with two monographs "Media Ecosystem. Challenges of transformation", University publishing house "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2023, ISBN: 978-954-07-5749-0 and "In the spiral of sharing. Media content and social networks", University publishing house "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2022, ISBN:978-954-07-5480-2, as well as numerous scientific publications dedicated to the media and international relations. The reference indicates that the candidate's scientific output (consisting of seven more monographs, 32 articles and studies, translations, publishing, authorship of four documentaries and over 100 articles in periodicals) meets the national requirements for holding the academic position of "professor" in the area. Main thematic lines in the presented publications are media transformation as a process, the transfer of media characteristics among media channels, the fourth network power, I would say the fifth network power, communication processes and changing the face of the media,



changing the media business, the turning point in the global journalistic identity and ethics and last but not least the meditation of the audience, the companies and the brands that create their ecosystems, part of the global. All this complex and multi-layered view is a clear request for the deep and research interest of the candidate. I would add again, the colleague is an experienced researcher and teacher, skilfully combining practical experience, research and teaching.

The main searches and achievements in the research work of assoc.prof. Vassilev in recent years have found their most complete and mature realization in the monographic work "Media Ecosystem". The habilitation monograph presented for the competition represents systematized knowledge with an original view on the ever-changing media ecosystem. The interdisciplinary approach used allows analysis of the concepts from political, social and journalistic aspects. I would like to point out that I really like the understanding that the media ecosystem is also a cultural phenomenon in the relationship between a person and a media environment. In fact, it is a cultural revolution that is expressed in the dissemination of knowledge, education and awareness by the media. Moreover, the scientific results of the study reflect the current stage of the development of the history of information, which is the history of mankind. A history in which, as the researcher himself notes, technical means and channel diversification prevailed. And the main cosmopolis is media content.

Special attention is paid to the never-ending problem of freedom of speech in the conditions of dynamically ongoing media processes, the introduction of artificial intelligence and the mass use of social networks. A very important point, in my opinion, is to analyze the process of mediatization, in which from a lack of information, we arrive at an excess of information, and this is the great radical change that overturns the notions of media, media environment and journalism today.

The bibliographic resource with titles in German, English, Russian and Bulgarian makes a strong impression.

In addition, the published monograph, which is not presented as the main habilitation thesis, "In the spiral of sharing. Media Content and Social Networks" further clarifies the problem of the socio-cultural transformation of society as a result of the rapid development of social networks as part of the global media ecosystem. I find that "The Spiral of Sharing" expresses an innovative approach to the author's research idea about social networks. As is well known and as noted by the researcher, the academic world does not look at social networks in a single-minded way and that is precisely why they are a challenge for the researcher.

Contributing moment of both works is the rethinking of what is happening at the moment and in this understanding the research works are playing role as media barometers. In summary, I will say that the scientific work of assoc. prof. Simeon Vasilev, presented in



the competition for professorship, is distinguished by a clear concept, rich and consistent argumentation, padded with deep analytical view. The media ecosystem metaphor, we see, serves as a metaphor for the entire society. In his main habilitation work, the author traces the change in the structural constitution of society using the ecosystem concept. Society as a whole develops in accordance with the model of ecosystem organization, where boundaries blur and different spheres of life intertwine.

## **II. Notes and recommendations**

I would like to applaud the research effort by noting that both books are distinguished by their precision and thorough rethinking of the ongoing media transformation in the complexity of technological configurations. Both studies fit into the new theory of media transformation today. It is important that in his research effort assoc. prof. S. Vassilev emphasizes the interactive characteristics of new media and social constructivist approaches to media technologies. The research can be continued in the direction of value judgments and the media as an environment of life, i.e. from the macro level to the micro level - how media influence certain situations and interactions. Because, as the author states on page 129, "whatever the challenges, the energy of the media and the power of journalism will continue to come from the creative process, .....where the most important algorithms are talent and journalistic creativeness." Because journalism has the task of presented the picture of the world in depth, and this is far from short videos and posts on social networks. I note this because I'm sure the research quest will continue.

My recommendation is that at least major parts of both monographs be translated into German or English.

## **III. Conclusion**

Based on the overall analysis of research activities, as well as the achievements of assoc. prof. Simeon Vassilev as a teacher - the only candidate in the competition for the academic position of "Professor" in "Media Ecosystem" in the academic field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences, announced by the Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", I am convinced that assoc. professor Dr. Simeon Vassilev meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and I strongly recommend the esteemed members of the academic jury to aware to him the academic position of Professor in the academic field 3.5 Public Communication and Information Sciences – Media Ecosystem.

Jury member: Assoc. prof. Manuela Manliherova

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SOFIA UNIVERSITY ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI

FACULTY OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION