

# REVIEW

BY: PROF. DR. VESSELINA JORDANOVA VALKANOVA

Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski”,

Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

Member of scientific jury, appointed by the Rector of SU „St. Kliment Ohridski”,

Order № RD- 38-247/15.5.2023

REGARDING: COMPETITION FOR AWARDING THE ACADEMIC POSITION „PROFESSOR”  
IN PROFESSIONAL FIELD 3.5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION  
SCIENCES – MEDIA ECOSYSTEM – FACULTY OF JOURNALISM AND MASS  
COMMUNICATION

In the competition takes part a sole candidate –

ASSOC. PROF. DR. SIMEON IGNATOV VASSILEV

## 1. COMPETITION INFORMATION

The competition for for the academic position Professor in the high education field Social, Economics and Legal Studies and in the professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences – Media Ecosystem, is announced with a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of SU “St. Kliment Ohridski” from 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 – Protocol № 7, after a proposal by the “Communication and Audiovisual Production” Department (Protocol № 11) from 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2023, and after a decision of the Academic Council of Sofia University from 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2023, in accordance with Art. 86, para. 2 of the Rules on the Terms and Conditions for Acquisition of

Academic Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions at Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski” and Art. 29 „a” of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria The competition has been announced in no. 35 of the State Gazette of April 18, 2023.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simeon Ignatov Vassilev is the only candidate in the competition. His participation at the competition has been approved by a decision of the Commission of selection in consistence with Art. 119, para. 2 of the Regulations for Earning of Academic Degrees and Gaining Academic Positions at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

The academic jury checked at its meeting on 3th July, 2023 whether the publications and activities of the candidate were congruent with the minimal national requirements and the additional requirements of SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”. The academic jury has decided Assoc. Prof. Vassilev to be allowed to participate in the competition.

## 2. GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE CANDIDATE

Mr. Simeon Ignatov Vassilev has a Master’s Degree in Bulgarian Philology of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences – Journalism (International Communication). He specialized at the BBC and at the University of Cardiff, Wales, as well as German Studies at the Martin Luther University in Halle, Germany.

Assoc. Prof. Vassilev combines his teaching and scientific work with professional activity, where he has a significant experience and a high level of expertise. He has consequently been an international editor at the Bulgarian National Television; a vice-director at Channel 1 of BNT – “News”; a program director of Channel 1 of BNT; an author of the international politics broadcast

“The World Gambit”; a correspondent of BNT in Bonn and Berlin; a “News” director of “Europe” TV – a co-founder of the first news television in Bulgaria; an “Information” director of BNT; a “News” director at the “Focus” Information Agency; an “Information” director of the BBT television; a founder and director of the National Palace of Culture’s press center; a founder of the “Facts” Information Agency, etc.

Assoc. Prof. Vassilev has a long-term journalistic, editorial, teaching and managerial experience. He achieved considerable accumulations in the sphere of management of media and with an international activity; he has an institutional and administrative experience. He is the author of 7 books, of 6 movies, of thousand articles on international politics in the Bulgarian and foreign press. He has multiple participations with comments and analyses in publicist broadcasts on Bulgarian television and radio broadcasts. He is the publisher of documental prose like the biographies of Willy Brandt, Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Angela Merkel, the memoirs of Yitzhak Rabin, etc.

The colleague has in his professional biography also teaching and training activity in management of public communications. He is a lecturer at the “Media and Communications” program of the Institute for public policy. He is a consultant on public communications at various institutions. He is a member of the editorial board of the “Rhetorics and Communication” journal. He is a member of the Bulgarian Journalistic Union, of the “East-West” International Forum, Switzerland, of the Association of the NATO Defense College Anciens’ Association in Bulgaria (NDCAA). He is the bearer of a jubilee badge “100 years of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” (1988), of the honorary token of Pope John Paul II in connection with coverage of his visit to Bulgaria (2002), of the badge of honor “100 years of diplomatic relations between USA and Bulgaria” (2003), of the “Golden Pen” award of the Bulgarian Journalistic Union for 2018 for research

contribution in the field of contemporary journalism, of a Bulgarian Journalistic Union badge of honor for contribution in the development of the political analysis and international commentary in Bulgarian media and for achievements in the publishing activity.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simeon Vassilev is an acknowledged specialist in media and communications and in communication management. The observations and the analysis of the academic activity of Assoc. Prof. Vassilev show a teaching aspiration towards high educational standards and creative development of the students.

### 3. TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Assoc. Prof. Simeon Vassilev has a longtime teaching experience: from 2011 to 2018 he has been a part-time lecturer at FJMC, he led the courses in “Communicative Skills”, “Studio Practice”, and “Experimental Studio”. He was habilitated in 2020 as an Associated Professor at the “Communication and Audiovisual Production” Department at FJMC. He trains students from the Bachelor, Master and Doctoral Programs of FJMC and is the leading lecturer on the following courses: “Media Ecosystem”, “Cultural and Historical Relations and Media Content”, “Leadership in Europe”, “Functions of the Institutional Speaker”, “Target Audience and Media Content”, and “Media Convergence”. In his academic practice Simeon Vassilev uses modern forms of teaching and interactive teaching methods as part of the educational process of students from various specialties and courses.

Assoc. Prof. Vassilev has been an academic tutor of dozens of students who have successfully defended their Bachelor and Master theses in FJMC’s programs. He is successfully tutoring PhD students, one of whom is currently in a public defense procedure.

#### 4. ACADEMIC WORKS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CANDIDATE

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simeon Vassilev is the author of 9 monographs, 32 articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals or in collective works, of many forewords, of 19 plenary and section reports at national and international conferences and forums. He is the editor of 4 academic and professional works, of 1 translation of a scientific work.

The topics in the scientific publications of Assoc. Prof. Vassilev are related to the problems and development of journalism and the media, to the challenges and transformations of the media ecosystem, of the media content and social media, of the deliberative communication, of the relations between media and audiences, of the marketing of media content, of the development of the public media, etc.

The large number of citations in scientific journals testify to the academic and research achievements of Assoc. Prof. Vassilev – they are an evidence of the echo of the research and of the assessment of the results of his scientific work.

Assoc. Prof. Vassilev has deposited for the present competition: **1 main monography; 1 monography which is not deposited as a main habilitation work; 1 chapter of a collective monography, 2 studies, 11 articles that are published in scientific journals and proceedings.**

All publications are on the topic of the present competition and are an evidence for the consistent and full-bodied development of the scientific field by Assoc. Prof. Vassilev, of the longtime researches in the field of media based on the reach professional experience of the colleague as a journalist and as a specialist in the media and institutional management.

The main work that is deposited for participation in the present competition – **MEDIA ECOSYSTEM. CHALLENGES OF THE TRANSFORMATION** [Sofia, St.

Kliment Ohridski University Publishing House, 2023, 176 p. ISBN: 978-954-07-5749-0], is dedicated to the transformation of the contemporary media environment in the context of complex technological, social, economic and cultural factors and prerequisites. Key moments in the monography are the observations, analyses and interpretations of the author on the serious challenges and changes in the media ecosystem and the influences on it from the public systems and the changes following general worldwide commutations such as the globalization and the digitalization.

The research contributes with its definitions of the ecosystem as a complex functioning organism that develops under the influence of the cultural, social, political, economic, and professional field, and at the same times influences the public life and social systems because, as the author notes, "... the public systems cannot be viewed outside the context of the media and outside the new relations that are created by the social media" (p. 22).

In the monography there is an understanding of the media ecosystem as aggregate of the technological innovation, social modernity and as a cultural phenomenon in the relations between the human and the media environment. This is a complex phenomenon constructed by many factors – "... the classical and new media, the computer and the network, the media environment of the communicative process and the technological evolution, the journalistic principles and the media standards in the social, political, cultural and legal aspects of the public relations" (p. 23).

The contribution of the monography is in the approach to review the media transformations, trends and problems through the social context and to do this in a time of complex public transformations. Without a doubt, the monography significantly upgrades the known accumulation of works in this field. The angle appears fruitful and gives trends, it presents professional transformations and

developments that are linked to the media policies, content management, to media influence and social management.

The author uses the interdisciplinary approach to research the key aspects of the scientific problem – social, cultural, political, aspects linked to the professional medium. On the basis of the in-depth observations and analyses are brought out the key trends and current developments of the media ecosystem. Systematized and explained are crises, challenges, risks to the media ecosystem that are also valid for the social processes.

With its original scientific interpretation of the essence of the media ecosystem, with its analyses and summaries of the transformation of the professional field in the last decades, with its systematizations based on the factors that determine the functioning of the object, the monography is without a doubt a step ahead in the research on public communications and information sciences, on media knowledge and theory of journalism.

The breadth of the analysis on the multifaceted change of the media ecosystem, the observations and conclusions on the mutual influences of traditional and online media, as well as the trends and developments important for proving the thesis, which, together with the leading theorizations of Assoc. Prof. Vassilev on current issues such as: the media paradigm of the network society, freedom of speech in a time of profound transformations, the digital turn, changes in the audience profile, etc. contribute to communication and media studies.

With its topicality and innovativeness; with the serious analysis of a significant volume of scientific literature on the researched topic; with the multifaceted analysis of the media ecosystem – the monography is a significant achievement of the author.

The research focus in the monography **IN THE SHARING SPIRAL. MEDIA CONTENT AND SOCIAL MEDIA** [Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Publishing House, 2022, ISBN: 978-954-07-5480-2] is on the social media and their role in the communication process and in the building and development of the new media culture of the XXI<sup>st</sup> century. There is an in-depth analysis, in a broad social context and in a historical and philosophical aspect, of the influences of social media as part of the media ecosystem on the media environment and media content. The typologies of social media upgrade the existing research on the topic. In this work, as in the basic monography of the author, there is an argued scientific prognosis for the future development of the researched object.

**THE ARTICLES** of Assoc. Prof. Vassilev in scientific journals and specialized collections are dedicated to current and important problems, points of view, terrains of the zone he specializes in – media ecosystem, social media, media transformations, media literacy, etc. Without a doubt, the articles of Assoc. Prof. Vassilev contribute to the research of the theory of mass communication. They bring out trends and work on the basis of significant observations and broad research. The analyses and systematizations bring out current problems, they outline current professional problems, positive and negative phenomena in the construction of the media publicity.

**The main habilitation work of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simeon Vassilev as well as his monographies and articles on the topic contribute not only to the communication researches but also have practical value for the journalism and media practices.**

Reviewed in general and with an emphasis on the main habilitation work, the scientific texts of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simeon Vassilev demonstrate:

- an elevated scientific culture, a capacity for scientific writing and high interpretation levels;



- broad knowledge of the researched problems;
- serious research of significant masses of specialized scientific sources linked to the analyzed topics;
- a multifaceted quality analysis of empirical masses.

With all of this and with the already outlined contributions the monographies and the scientific articles, which are presented for participation in the competition, are a step ahead for the Bulgarian media science.

## 5. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the complete analysis of the teaching and mostly of the scientific activity and achievements of Assoc. Prof. Vassilev – the only candidate in the competition for the academic position “Professor” of “Media Ecosystem” in the professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences, announced by Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, I am completely confident that Assoc. Prof. Dr. SIMEON IGNATOV VASSILEV has entirely fulfilled the requirements of the Law of the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The colleague has clearly defined contributions in the enrichment of the scientific terrain of the mass communication science, in the researches and in the teaching activities in the field of public communications and information sciences. With his teaching work with students from the Bachelor, Master and Doctoral Programs at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”, with the training of graduating students Assoc. Prof. Vassilev has significantly contributed to the quality professional and narrowly profiled training of mass media and communications specialists in the field in which he expertizes.

The valuable results from the research and teaching activities of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simeon Vassilev have been solid ground for my decision to support his candidacy and strongly to recommend the respected academic jury to award to him the academic position of "Professor" in professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences – Media Ecosystem.



Reviewer:

Prof. Dr. Vesselina Valkanova

10<sup>th</sup> August, 2023