

## EXAMINER'S ASSESSMENT

**Dr. Yordan Simeonov Efftimov - Assoc. Prof. at New Bulgarian University, Sofia**

on the materials submitted for the competition

for the academic position Associate Professor

**at the “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia**

in the higher education programme 3.5 Social Communications and Information Sciences

in the professional discipline Journalism. History of Bulgarian Journalism

Taking part in the competition for the position Associate Professor, announced in the 65<sup>st</sup> issue (16<sup>th</sup> of August 2019) of “Darjaven Vestnik” as well as on the website of “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia regarding the requirement of the Department of History and Theory of Journalism at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, is Dr. Yassen Boychev Borislavov from the Department of History and Theory of Journalism at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Sofia.

### **I. Assessment of compliance with national minimum requirements**

The information provided shows that the applicant meets the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b of ZRASRB for occupation of the position of Associate Professor in the professional field 3.5 Social Communications and Information Sciences. The candidate has the required number of points in the statutory groups of indicators.

### **II. Research / creative activity and results**

The applicant's research activity is in unity with his creative activity as an active cultural journalist. An indisputable expert on the topics of "culinary arts and culinary traditions" and "wine as a technology, but also as a cultural phenomenon", he is also among Bulgarian journalists developing various forms of ironic journalistic writing. It is therefore not surprising that as a researcher his great focus is precisely on the history of laughter in the Bulgarian press.

1. The main monographic work that Borislavov presents in connection with the competition is “The Bulgarian satirical-humorous periodical press between the Two World Wars”, published in 2019. Naturally, the most important of the pilot publications was the study “The Political Laughter in the Bulgarian Humorous Periodicals Between the Two World Wars” (2018). The monographic study is related to a previous book by Yassen Borislavov – “The Natural History of the Bulgarian Laughter from Ivan Bogorov to the *Bulgaran*” (2014). However, there is little to say that this testifies to the

researcher's continued interest in the topic of the laughing and laughing culture of the Bulgarian, as well as his political sanctions.

In his monograph study “Political Laughter in the Bulgarian Humorous Periodicals Between the Two World Wars” and in his other studies on laughter Yassen Borislavov develops an approach that deserves exceptional admiration. First of all, I would point out the specifics of his historicism. He chooses a certain period of history, but feels obliged not only to explore the important sources – and in their complexity as origin, but also as technology (the analysis of the press involves attention not only to texts but also to visual material, mainly cartoons) – but also to associate the period with the previous one and the next one. Moreover, Yassen Borislavov demonstrates a broad and in-depth knowledge of Bulgaria's cultural, political and social history. His close reading of individual works by Bulgarian satirical writers and artists is set against the backdrop of a very wide ditch of contexts. Thus, the particular journalism, humor and satire are not only interconnected in a prominent system, but also a representative sample of Bulgarian culture as a whole.

Secondly, I would like to emphasize that without setting too much theoretical tasks, Yassen Borislavov is familiar with basic and authoritative understandings of laughter and laughter culture in literary and cultural theory, as well as in aesthetics and philosophy. Therefore, he is aware of the historical validity of laughter. In an essay, Umberto Eco tells how documentaries about Nazi concentration camps were projected onto blacks from North Africa - and the reaction was laughter. This not only surprised but also offended Europeans who immediately asked what was funny. They replied: “You Europeans are rounded and even fattened like pigs, and here we see people who are skin and bone, like us”. On the contrary, says the Italian semiotician, nowhere else in the world would anyone laugh at the wits of ancient authors such as Aristophanes, who in most cases will see us display bad taste. True to an understanding similar to that of Umberto Eco, Yassen Borislavov devotes lines to how certain things that are funny at one time and in one place, are not funny at other times and places, even incomprehensible or disgusting. His research is reflexive of the concept itself, which is not uniform and highly contextual. He makes a close analysis of texts and cartoons in order to find out the specifics of "Bulgarian" laughter from a certain period, and hence about Bulgarian laughter in general. Of course, the funny uses specific genres such as satire, parody, pun, and they already have their origin and development. The chosen dichotomy of “political” and “entertaining”, “boulevard” laughter (which steps on the lifestyle of the Bulgarians and the thirst of the everyday person) is working, especially when it comes to the common platform of publications in which laughter finds its home.

However, Yassen Borislavov's contribution to the writing style is very significant. It breaks academic standards with ease and linguistic virtuosity that are not usually inherent in Bulgarian

scientific writing. Without giving up the gravity of scientific analysis, of working with sources and archives (reviewing and analyzing the issues of several dozen Bulgarian editions from the first half of the 20th century), of using various reading techniques, he brings his skills to science developed as an active journalist. Suffice it to recall his remarkable book, *Bob and Metaphysics* (2004), which collected only a small part of his culinary and cultural articles from his column in the *Sega* newspaper for a long time to see where his journalistic writing was borrows in the future history of humor in the Bulgarian press - from another historical period.

2. Yassen Borislavov's articles and researches on the history of Bulgarian journalism are the second large group of his scientific works. Most notable among them is the monograph “Bulgarian journalism between the two world wars (1919-1939)” (2010). These studies are laughter-specific, show the same depth of research and Curt's work in dealing with a variety of sources and archival material. It is particularly important that they show that Yassen Borislavov is interested not only in the style, thematic and social orientation of the Bulgarian media, but also in how they influenced the formation of public opinion in Bulgarian society. He also proposes new benchmarks for making sense of the periodization of Bulgarian journalism.

3. In addition to scientific research, Yassen Borislavov is also the author of a large number of popular, educational, educational texts in the field of wine and culinary culture. Along with Yassen Zahariev (with his blog) he is one of the most influential Bulgarian wine experts after 1989. His encyclopedic book “Wine. A Bulgarian Encyclopedia” from 2004 has been reprinted in both 2009 and 2019.

## CONCLUSION

The documents and materials submitted and presented by Yassen Borislavov **meet all requirements** of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the implementation of the above-mentioned Act, and the corresponding Regulations of the “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia.

The candidate has submitted a **significant** number of scientific works which were published after the materials used in the defense of the educational and scientific degree Doctor. The applicant’s work has original scientific contributions that have received recognition in the community. Yassen Borislavov’s scientific and teaching qualification are **self-evident**.

The results achieved by Yassen Borislavov in the educational and research fields **fully** correspond with the specific requirements of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, adopted

in connection with the Regulations of the University of Sofia for the implementation of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria.

After becoming acquainted with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition and an analysis of their significance and the scientific contributions, I find it justifiable to give my **positive** assessment and **recommend** to the Scientific Jury to submit a proposal to the Faculty Board of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication appointing Yassen Borislavov for the academic position of Assistant Professor at the “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia in the professional discipline Journalism. History of Bulgarian Journalism.

03.01.2020

Drafted by: .....

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yordan Efftimov