

## Statement

For research and academic achievements of associate professor Daniela Lubenova Koleva, PhD

On procedure for election and appointment of professor in professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology, and Human Sciences (Theory and History of Culture. Oral history and Cultural Studies of Memory), announced in State Gazette N 21 from 13/03/2020

From associate professor Ilia Iliev, PhD, department of Ethnology, Faculty of History, Sofia University

### 1. General review of publications

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniela Koleva applies for the position presenting one monographic study, 7 edited volumes where she is editor or co-editor, and 25 studies and articles, of which 17 in English and 14 in Bulgarian (part of the articles have been translated, which is correctly indicated by the applicant). All publications are in respected academic editions, and a significant part of the articles - in refereed journals. The presented academic production demonstrates the systematic interest of Assoc. Prof. Koleva in research problems of memory and oral history, as well as her significant contribution over the years.

### 2. General review of research and academic activities

Daniela Koleva has a PhD since 1993 and has been associate professor since 2002. She has worked in many elite universities and research centers, including EHESS, Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, the universities of Jena, Leipzig, Bratislava, Colchester and others. She has lectured as a guest lecturer in Sao Paulo, Olomouc, Regensburg, Lund, Tübingen, Nottingham, Budapest, Friborg and has participated in 69 important scientific forums with plenary or section reports. Part of her academic production (co-edited books, co-authored chapters) comes as part of joint endeavors with foreign scholars, as evidence of her recognition as a researcher abroad.

The main academic affiliation of Assoc. Prof. Koleva is the Department of History and Theory of Culture at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, where she has been teaching since 1993 with courses in BA and MA programs.

### 3. Academic fields and problems

Daniela Koleva works mainly in the field of oral history and memory of the recent past, adding to research in these important areas methodological analyzes of biographical interviews, fieldwork with vulnerable people and communities and more generally, problems related to data collection on events grounded in traumatic memory. The recent past, memories of socialism, of individual and collective persecution during this period, as well as nostalgia, are painful topics for Bulgarian society and Daniela Koleva explores them in a way that is both academically disciplined and personally engaged.

The author earns general professional esteem for her texts that always treat her interlocutors with respect and accept them as equals regardless of their education or ideological preferences, and even when the positions in question differ from hers, she seeks and manages to convey the logic and arguments of the respondents.

### 4. Teaching and applied research activities

Daniela Koleva has many years of experience as a lecturer in the BA and MA programs in the department of Cultural Studies, as well as numerous lecture courses as a guest lecturer at foreign universities. Five of her doctoral students have successfully acquired PhD degrees.

The role of Daniela Koleva in bringing a specific style of field research in Cultural Studies deserves special attention. The Department of History and Theory of Culture, where Cultural Studies are institutionally located, brings together professors with research interests in various fields - history, philosophy, literary theory, cultural and social anthropology, etc. Each of them has a different academic background and different tools for collecting empirical data, if such data are needed at all. Daniela Koleva played a key part in ensuring that students and young scholars

in the department now strive to combine direct, personal data collection with analysis of secondary sources such as media, the Web, or academic publications.

Regarding the applied aspects of her work, Daniela Koleva has an impressive record as expert or academic consultant to government institutions (National Agency for Accreditation and Evaluation, or Ministry of Education), academic centers (CAS, Institute for the Study of the Recent Past, Collegium New Europe - Bucharest) and is a member of the editorial board of eight academic journals, including the prestigious *L'Homme*, *Oral History Journal*, *Zeitschrift für Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft*, as well as *Bulgarian Ethnology*.

Last but not least, Daniela Koleva has organized several joint endeavors of Bulgarian scholars scattered across various rival institutions and interests, and this is the best evidence of the professional respect she enjoys. Special mention should be made of the seminars organized at the Center for Academic Studies, Sofia on everyday life during Socialism. The reports presented there were published in four edited volumes on love, death, childhood and ageing during this period.

## 5. Major research contributions

Daniela Koleva's original contributions are directly related to the position she applies for.

She is one of the first Bulgarian authors to systematically study the memory of the communist period and each subsequent publication adds, builds on, and sometimes discusses with the previous one. Thus, the personal memory of communism, nostalgia or trauma in individual memories, is compared to institutional memories of communism, as they are constructed and exhibited in museums, archives, monuments or publications of official institutions.

To this is added the family memory and the memory of voluntarily or forcibly isolated local communities, as well as ethnic or religious ones. Thus, over time, Daniela Koleva builds a complex and multi-layered picture of memory of the communist period, where various actors, their stories and their tools for influencing and mastering the past are approached with both respect and critical distance. Last but not least, in collaboration with foreign authors, she outlines

a kind of memory map of the region, comparing the different regimes of remembering the recent past in our part of the world.

I can only recommend the author to publish her most representative articles on memory, presented for this application, in a separate volume, as scattered as they are now, they can hardly convey each one on their own the whole complex picture that she otherwise manages to build.

Other original contributions by Daniela Koleva are related to biographical research, the collection of interviews and use of oral history to study the recent past. Two aspects stand out here: first, the construction of an analytical approach in which the researcher takes into account the point of view of their living interlocutor, his or her motives, the internal logic of the story, the limitations and advantages of a particular individual perspective, social characteristics of the interlocutor, as well as their beliefs. Second, the ethical dimensions of the study, especially when working with vulnerable individuals and communities, or on traumatic topics. Personally, I use articles by Daniela Koleva in teaching field research ethics and I do not know of their analogue in Bulgarian professional literature.

A third type of Daniela Koleva's original contributions is related to the study of the "normal". Continuing what she began in her pioneering work "Biography and Normality" (2002), she explores the normal not as standardized practices or shared expectations and values, as many classical sociologists and anthropologists since Durkheim and Malinowski have done, but as normalization - control and unification of memory by various institutions, networks and professions, the imposition of a common norm and the careful, polite or brutal erasure of differences in a Foucauldian way. These analyzes allow us to understand better the mechanisms of power in modern Bulgarian society.

## 6. Citations

A reference from Google Scholar and a university library for found citations has been added to the documentation. The list is not exhaustive, as it contains mainly English-language editions (e.g. my citations of Daniela Koleva's texts in Bulgarian publications are not included), but the list exceeds by far the requirements of the Law on Academic Staff Development and the Regulations of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

## 7. Personal impressions

I have known Daniela Koleva since 1998 and I follow her work with great professional respect. This attitude is shared by most colleagues and the best evidence is the many editorial boards in which she participates, as well as seminars and collections, where she manages to unite many scholars coming from different, often rival institutions with different professional trajectories, different work techniques and different positions regarding the communist past.

## Conclusion

The publications, research projects, lecture courses and applied activities presented by the applicant exceed the requirements of the Law for Academic Staff and the internal Regulations of Sofia University by far. Based on her overall research, academic, and teaching activity, based on her intellectual trajectory that I have been following with admiration for decades, I will support Daniela Koleva in my quality of member of the academic jury without any hesitation whatsoever.

Sofia, 14/09/2020

Ilia Iliev