

## OPINION

Of the scientific papers submitted for participation in a competition for the occupation of the PROFESSOR academic position in the professional field 3.3. Political Science (Political Science - Political Systems and Institutions), promulgated in the State Gazette, issue. 25 of 26/03/2019

With the candidate Assoc. Prof. Maria Andonova Pyrgova

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### **I. Applicant's research and creative activity**

#### 1. Evaluation of the monographic work

The candidate participates in the announced competition with the monograph "Problematic Fields in Political Science" (Monograph, 256 pages, St. Kliment Ohridski University, 2018. ISBN 978-954-07-4562-6) and with 6 articles published in scientific collections and journals. The submitted publications fall directly into the thematic area of the announced competition and in particular - theoretical political science with emphasis on political institutions and current problems of their development.

#### **• General presentation of the relevance and importance of the monograph.**

The monograph "Problematic Fields in Political Science" outlines the main research questions of current political science. In this way, it contributes both to the development of theoretical political science and to the improvement of public debate.

In recent years, Bulgarian political science has evolved rapidly, adopting and substantiating concepts that are essential to public practices. Real social processes take place so that practices very often overtake theoretical science, which explains them rather than prescribe them. Very often Bulgarian political science (as well as social science in general) copies theoretical models created in and for other social conditions, regardless of the local context. Maria Pyrgova's monograph formulates research questions, breaking the traditional

scientific issues through the prism of contemporary processes, including taking into account the peculiarities of Bulgarian political life. It includes a relatively complete set of theoretical dilemmas that Bulgarian social science faces.

In order to achieve its goal, the monograph draws on traditional knowledge of politics (including that of ancient philosophical thought), but also takes into account the small but significant contribution of Bulgarian political science since the 1980s. This period of the development of Bulgarian theoretical political science, regardless of its ideological background, is important for understanding the Bulgarian context. This is precisely what makes it necessary to include in the analyzes.

The contents of the monograph can also be used as a textbook. As it focuses on contemporary theoretical dilemmas and outlines current research topics, its use in generating basic policy knowledge can lead to favorable competency outcomes.

The monograph includes topics that usually stay away from theoretical political science. This is especially true of the Welfare State part. This problem seems to be out of date in the last three or four decades in both Bulgarian and world literature. Existing analyzes have, for a number of reasons, displaced this issue in public administration and economic science, giving it rather managerial character. On the one hand, in recent years there has been a return to this problem in world political science, at least at the level of identification of a research problem. On the other hand, the topic of the Welfare State is strongly intertwined with the topic of political (including electoral) behavior. In this sense, "returning it" to the bosom of political science makes sense.

The monograph has qualities that can help improve the political debate in the country. It offers basic knowledge that spread in society can enhance the policy process participants' competences. At present, the Bulgarian policy debate cannot even identify the problems of political development and action. Thus, politics remains an arena for a closed, often non-transparent elite. A possible way to overcome this disadvantage is to create and disseminate mass policy knowledge. Maria Pyrgova's monograph is an important step in this direction.

A major advantage of the monograph under discussion is that it includes theses that differ from the prevailing paradigm. Science is a dispute. Any stimulation of this dispute is useful because it identifies new problems and formulates new concepts. Remaining in the lap of the prevailing paradigm is a relatively easy situation. The audacity to defend unpopular ones, even when they seem difficult to prove, leads to discovery.

- **Evaluation of the scientific and applied contributions of the monographic study.**

The main contribution of Maria Pyrgova's monograph is the identification of new, theoretical and research problems. Many topics that contemporary political science views as ready-made recipes are formulated in the monograph discussed as a problem that opens the fields for new scientific search and reflection.

An additional contribution is the inclusion in the research field of theoretical political science topics that are usually analyzed separately and outline their own research perimeter: the welfare state and globalization. These two topics have changed Western society and therefore have changed political science itself. The refraction of traditional political science (that of the 1970s and 1980s) through contemporary issues is an approach that can greatly enhance scientific research.

Attempts to clarify and introduce the concept of "reduced" democracy can be appreciated as a contribution. Similar concepts exist in the literature, but they are seen as underdeveloped model, or as a model defect. It seems to me that Maria Pyrgova "reassures" the concept, allowing deviation to be inevitable due to the adaptation of the model to specific conditions. As timid as this experience may be, the author makes the transition from a purely normative political science that prescribes models to a rather positive political science that reflects on possible practices.

In general, the contributions of the monographic survey are significant and contribute to the development of Bulgarian theoretical science in the field of political science and political institutions.

The identified contributions were fully developed by the author of the monographic study.

- Knowledge of the problem and the literature

The monographic study was developed on the basis of sufficient literature relevant to the research problem. The author demonstrates an awareness of the scientific facts while at the same time possessing the skills to synthesize scientific knowledge.

## **2. Evaluation of contributions in other attached publications made after the appointment of the academic position of Assoc. Professor.**

In addition to the peer-reviewed monograph, Maria Pyrgova participates in the competition for the academic position of Professor with 6 other publications. They focus mainly on the following topics: political ideologies and their current development with a focus on the "left"; parliamentarism and the rule of law; theoretical understanding of globalization. They were published in the period before the writing of the monograph "Problem Fields in Political Science". The approach of the monograph - problematizing those perceived as postulates in political science - is found in all the articles. The quality of the publications included in the competition is at a good scientific level.

### **3. Compliance with formal criteria and scientometric indicators.**

The application of Maria Pyrgova meets all the formal requirements for obtaining the academic position of Professor. She has enough publications that has not be used in other competitions; it has been cited sufficiently to admit that it has influenced both the development and the spread of Bulgarian political science; she has participated in a sufficient number of practical projects; she has successfully completed PhD students.

There is a contradiction that needs to be commented on. The Scientometric Compliance Report lists (and scores) a Monograph "The Introduction to the Political science", issued in 2013. Its content is broadly in line with that of the 2018 monograph. The latter is the main publication that substantiates Maria Pirgov's candidacy. The comparison of the two publications shows that the new monograph contains a revised text which substantiates both the approach and the abstracts in it. In addition, with the previous publication, the candidate for Professor did not participate in another procedure. These are the reasons why I accept the monograph as the basis for the application.

At the same time, I believe that the 2013 publication should be removed from the reference for compliance with scientometric indicators and should not bear points to prove compliance. However, even in this case, compliance with the minimum requirements is in place.

### **4. Evaluation of the results of participation in research and creative projects and application of the obtained results in practice.**

Maria Pyrgova has led and implemented 7 research projects. They are directly related to her expertise in the field of political institutions. There is reason to believe that they have

contributed to the development of public practices in the country because they are conducted for the benefit of influential actors in the policy process.

## **II. Teaching activities.**

### **1. Auditory and extra-auditory employment**

The teaching activity of Maria Pyrgova is essential for the creation of the competences of bachelors and masters in Political Science. It is especially valuable that she takes introductory courses that offer basic knowledge and orient students in the specialty.

### **2. Student evaluations.**

Students' assessment of Maria Pirgova's teaching is favorable. She manages to create a circle of students who are drawn to her research topics and research topics. The candidate successfully leads Master's theses.

## **III. Personal impressions of the applicant (if any).**

I have known Maria Pyrgova for many years. We have worked together on socio-political projects. We have participated in numerous discussions on current public issues. My impressions are positive. Maria Pyrgova is able to formulate these and to protect them, regardless of the widespread attitudes towards them.

## **IV. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the applicant's activities and achievements.**

The fact that the candidate formulates dilemmas in science is extremely useful. I think that the already obtained expertise allows her to solve some of these scientific dilemmas. In my opinion, the open field is one related to the welfare state, where knowledge needs new development.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the quality of the scientific publications, as well as on her motivated activity as a teacher and participant in public policies in the country, I support the application of Assoc. Prof. Maria Andonova Pirgova to fill the academic position Professor in the professional field 3.3. Political Science (Political Science - Political Systems and Institutions).

22<sup>nd</sup> of August, 2019

Signature: