

ACADEMIC OPINION

for the scientific and creative activity of Assoc. Prof. Mila Ivanova Serafimova, Ph.D. and Mr. Boyan Asenov Kutevski, Ph.D., applicants for the academic position of “Associate Professor” at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” by professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Theory and History of Public Relations) in a competition announced in issue 93 of the State Gazette of November 26, 2019

Member of the scientific jury: Prof. D. S. Lubomir Stoykov

1. Competition details

The review and analysis of the submitted documents shows that the present “Associate Professor” competition was duly declared by the “Department of Communication, Public Relations and Advertising” of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and promulgated in the State Gazette, issue 93 of November 26, 2019.

The competition procedure is in accordance with the requirements of the new rules for the conditions and procedure for acquiring academic degrees and occupying academic positions at Sofia University, adopted by a decision of the Academic Council on October 31, 2018, as amended by a decision of the Academic Council of May 29, 2019, as amended by a decision of the Academic Council of 17 July 2019, as amended by a decision of the Academic Council of 25 September 2019, as amended by a decision of the Academic Council of 30 October 2019, and is in accordance with the criteria in the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria. The applicants in this current competition for the “Associate Professor” position are Assoc. Prof. Mila Ivanova Serafimova and Ph.D. Boyan Asenov Kutevski.

2. Applicant details

Assoc. Prof. Mila Serafimova was a full-time Ph.D. student at the UNESCO “Department of Public Relations” at FJMC of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” from 1996 to 2000. She defended her dissertation on the topic of “Media Management - Ethical Aspect” in 2001 at the Specialized Scientific Council of Philosophy. In the following years, she was an honoured lecturer in Media Management at the Faculty of

Journalism and Mass Communication. Assoc. Prof. Serafimova was a lecturer in “Effective Communication” particularly in the field regarding public relations with officers from NATO countries, respectively NATO School (SHAPE) - NATO Public Information Course. She is the Chief Assistant of the “Department of Leadership” of the Faculty of National Security and Defence of the Military Academy “G. S. Rakovski” (2009 - 2010). For the next ten years, she is an Associate Professor of Public Communications in Security and Defence at the “Department of Leadership” of the Faculty of National Security and Defence of the Military Academy “G. S. Rakovski”.

Mila Serafimova has specializations and additional qualifications in a number of prestigious foreign centers and institutes, such as the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, Leaders of the 21st Century Course, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany; Defence Information School of the department of Defence, USA, Fort Meade - Diploma in Public Affairs Officers Qualification Course; Defence Language Institute, USA, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas - Diploma in Specialized American Journalistic Language Course; NATO School (SHAPE) - NATO Public Information Course and more. Assoc. Prof. Serafimova's professional career is evidence of good experience in the fields of journalism and public communication, including her time at newspaper “Standart”, “168 Chasa” press group and more. She has also worked as a public relations expert at the Ministry of Defence.

Ph.D. Boyan Kutevski was a Ph.D. student at FJMC in the period 2003-2007. His dissertation was on the topic of “Functions of persuasive influence in propaganda and public relations”. From 2011 to 2013 he was an Associate Professor at the College of Management, Trade and Marketing in Sofia, where he lectured “PR and reputation management”, “Political Marketing” and “Brand Management”. He has university teaching experience at New Bulgarian University – “Department of Cinema, Advertising and Show Business”, where he was an Associate Professor between 2012 and 2017. He leads the Bachelor's Degree programs there in “Copywriting”, “Organizational Reputation Management”, “Branding”, “Briefing Techniques”, “Brand Management”, and he also leads the Master's Degree programs in “Relationship Management, advertising agency - client” and “Internal and External PR

Communications”. He has also been a programmatic, political and communications consultant in various professional and academic structures.

Boyan Kutevski has journalistic and editorial experience in Nova TV, respectively in the TV shows “Calendar” and “Labyrinth”, as well as a serious experience as an advertising and marketing expert and manager at Graffiti / BBDO, A-TEAM Advertising, Euro RSCG Sofia, MAG Advertising, Lavena Merchandising “Let’s do” Ltd., “Explica” - Marketing research and consulting agency and more.

3. Fulfilment of the academic position criteria

The production of **Assoc. Prof. Mila Serafimova, Ph.D.**, including monographs, studies, articles and other publications comply with the necessary quantitative and qualitative requirements for participation in the competition for the occupation of the academic position “Associate Professor”. The report on the implementation of the minimum national requirements under act 26 of LDASRB (scientific area 3. Social, business and legal sciences - professional field 3.5. Public communications and information sciences) shows as follows - 50 points (group of indicators A), 100 points (group of indicators B), 270 points (Indicator group G) and 160 points (Indicator group D) or a total of 580 points that are sufficient for the purpose of the competition. The enclosed report indicates that 18 citations to her publications have been found.

Scientific papers - monographs, studies, articles and other publications, submitted by **Ph.D. Boyan Kutevski**, meet the necessary quantitative and qualitative requirements for participation in the competition for the occupation of the academic position “Associate Professor”. The report on the implementation of the minimum national requirements under act 26 of LDASRB (scientific area 3. Social, business and legal sciences - professional field 3.5. Public communications and information sciences) shows as follows - 50 points (group of indicators A), 100 points (group of indicators B), 205 points (Indicator group G) and 60 points (Indicator group D) or a total of 415 points that are sufficient for the purpose of the competition. The enclosed report indicates that 7 citations to her publications have been found.

4. Description and evaluation of scientific works

Assoc. Prof. Mila Serafimova offers a serious and respectable production of scientific texts, deposited specifically for this competition.

Her research publications include:

- 3 monographs, one of which is habilitation work;
- 8 articles, reports and compendiums (under her compilation and scientific editorial).

In the works of Assoc. Prof. Serafimova, **the depth of analyses, the correct use of scientific evidence, originality and logic in the interpretation of current communication cases and problems, as well as exact academic style and scientific vocabulary are clearly evident.** I would like to point out some of her works that are particularly illustrative in this respect: Serafimova, Mila. PR in the digital era, Sofia: ph. “Enthusiast”, 2020; Serafimova, Mila. PR - theoretical foundations and historical development. Sofia: ph. “Vanyo Nedkov”, 2020; Serafimova, Mila. Fundamentals of public communication - media management, Sofia: ph. “Vanyo Nedkov”, 2010; Serafimova, Mila. Strategic communications as a tool for security and defence management. Yearbook of the “G.S. Rakovski” Military Academy, 1/2013, Sofia: “G.S. Rakovski” Military Academy, 2013; Serafimova, Mila. The role of the government press service in strategic crisis communication. In: Current security and defence challenges. Proceedings of the annual scientific conference of the “Faculty of National Security and Defence”, 19 - 20 May 2016, second part. Sofia: “G.S. Rakovski” Military Academy, 2017 and more.

Mila Serafimova's scientific publications cited above should be very much appreciated, as she is able to professionally and reasonably outline the dynamics of public relations in the Internet and virtual communications, enrich the theory and practice of PR by laying down strong demarcation lines between quality information and misinformation, and does not hesitate to paint or hint at the future of digital PR. When she strikes - in a scientific way, of course, the theory and history of PR, she draws the reader's attention to her conception of an optimistic theory of public relations, to the fundamental principles of public relations, while also keeping in mind the new dimensions of interaction between PR practitioners, media and journalists, crisis communications, media pools and more.

Ph.D. Boyan Kutevski states his ambitions in this competition for “Associate Professor” with the following research papers:

- 2 monographs, one of which is habilitation work;
- 3 studies;
- 6 articles.

Most of the author's texts are interesting and significant, among which I would point out: Kutevski, Boyan. PR - From propaganda to reputation management, Sofia: Jay Point Plus, 2020; Kutevski, Boyan. Integrated marketing communications. Review, Sofia: Jay Point Plus, 2019; Kutevski, Boyan. Reputation management as the new possible “centre” for integrated marketing communication (IMC) - part two, Rhetoric and communications (online) issue 40, July 2019; Kutevski, Boyan. Revision of the conceptual framework for integrated marketing communications (IMC) - part I, Rhetoric and communication (online), issue 38, January 2019; Kutevski, Boyan. Social Media Content as a Stakeholder Mapping Tool. 12th CEECOM Conference 19-21 June 2019, FJMC, Sofia University and others.

These and other publications proposed for the participation of Boyan Kutevski in the competition for “Associate Professor” should be highly appreciated. In them, the author **competently, reasonably, adequately and in modern fashion interprets very significant and relevant aspects of propaganda, reputation management, integrated marketing communications, film branding, the functions of text in commercial communication, advertisements of sports goods and more.**

5. Scientific contributions

Papers presented by **Assoc. Prof. Mila Serafimova, Ph.D.** for the competition contain **significant scientific and applied contributions to the theory and practice of public relations, communication evolution and dynamics in the context of new digital technologies, analysis of misinformation and fake news, current reputational issues** and others.

I acknowledge the scientific contributions submitted by her, in particular highlighting that:

- The theoretical perspectives pioneered have been enriched and upgraded in a quality manner, summarizing changes in the theoretical models and paradigms of public relations in the digital environment;
- She has been successful in rethinking the history of public relations;

- The transformation of paradigms in PR has been adequately studied through competent analysis of influencers, trolls, political bots, self-communication, etc.;
- Fake news and online misinformation are accurately interpreted by systemizing the terms Fake / Hoax-News, Clickbait, fake news factories, etc.;
- Enriches the communication and media sciences by defining a new field in the theory of crisis PR, related to counteracting false claims online and more.

A number of scientific contributions, mentioned by the other candidate – Ph.D. Boyan Kutevski, are worthy of respect and recognition, including:

- Good analysis of the dynamics and changes in public communication techniques, in particular propaganda, PR and reputation management;
- Analytical and critical rethinking of the concept of integrated marketing communications;
- An interesting and correct perspective on reputation management and branding in the context of today's digital society;
- Good research efforts to theoretically review integrated marketing communications with a view on defining new principles of action and outlining even more robust guidelines for their effective implementation in communication practice;
- The successful new step towards the identification of significant components of the film brand, that can positively influence the marketing of the film and contribute to the effective branding of film production with a view on its effective publicity, etc.

6. Conclusion

It becomes clear that the applications for the “Associate Professor” competition are competent and respected colleagues in the communication and media industry, each of whom offers interesting and valuable scientific output. What is special is that while the scientific publications of Assoc. Prof. Mila Serafimova, Ph.D. are more clearly directed and focused on the theoretical and historical aspects of public relations (which directly corresponds with the professional segment), in the documents and creativity of the other candidate – Ph.D. Boyan Kutevski, the centre is shifted in the

direction of integrated marketing communications, branding, partly - advertising, propaganda, commercial communication, etc.

Based on all of the above, as well as on **professional qualities, academic reflection, scientific and practical contributions to the theory and history of public relations and the transformation of PR in the digital era, as well as her past university and pedagogical activities, I convincingly vote for Assoc. Prof. Mila Ivanova Serafimova, Ph.D. to take the academic position of “Associate Professor” at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in professional direction 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Theory and History of Public Relations).**

April 26, 2020

Sofia

Prof. D. S. Lubomir Stoykov