



OPINION

of the submitted works for participation in the competition for the academic position

"Associate Professor"

3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (International Journalism)

announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in SG, issue 1/2014

99/20/11/2020

Reviewer: Prof. Dr Habil. Nelly Ognyanova

Candidate: Dr. Ralitsa Kovacheva

I. Evaluation of the scientific and practical results and contributions of the scientific and educational production submitted for participation in the competition

The core teaching and research of Dr. Ralitsa Kovacheva are in the field of International journalism. I accept the publications submitted for review, which are in the subject area of the competition. In this area is also the habilitation work "News of the World. On the Meaning and Value of International Journalism".

Understanding Europeanisation

The Europeanization of Bulgarian society certainly deserves a priority in academic research. The choice of the topic for dissertation work, habilitation work and some of the articles provided for review ("European" vs. "traditional" values in the Bulgarian media, Brexit – could we have foreseen it) show Dr. Kovacheva's interest in the Europeanization and Europe as a process. The Europeanization is a subject of the overall production, and in particular - the Europeanization in the field of media and journalism. Already in the Doctoral thesis poor visibility of European themes, low level of presentation of the European agenda (topics discussed) and problematic



implementation or non-application of European media standards are underlined. These long-standing deficits sustainably exist in the Bulgarian media landscape.

Disinformation, propaganda, hybrid wars

Another issue that attracts Dr. Kovacheva's attention relates to the most important factors for the contemporary International journalism, such as post-truth and related terms of propaganda, disinformation and hybrid threats, respectively hybrid threats in Bulgarian media. Hybrid threats are discussed in the context of Europeanization in Bulgaria, on the one side, and Kremlin's strategy for disinformation and hostile influence against European democracies, European Union and the values of the Union, on the other side ("Sanctions against Russia in the 2017 election campaign – political (mis)uses").

The digital future of journalism

Digital transformation of the media is an essential topic for the future of journalism. In the habilitation work, attention is directed to social media, and this is perfectly reasonable: "they form a new media ecosystem, but not just parallel to the traditional media ecosystem, but the social media penetrate and change it." In-depth research is yet to be done on the dual nature of the social effects of technology on the media: the internet globalizes access to information, but it also creates unprecedented risks to communication rights. I fully agree with the position expressed in the habilitation work for so cold *Post-Habermas* situation, which occurs in the media world, including in this country: "in view of the expansion of opportunities for participation in public debates, processes are taking place that lead to a deterioration in the quality of the arguments – the decisive factor, according to Yurgen Habermas, for the quality of public debates in the public sphere". If the path to truth passes through social media, paradoxically, it may turn out that a substantial part of citizenship chooses *ignorance as a path to truth*.

Digital technologies have spread rapidly and our world today is undeniably digital - but at the same time we're more exposed, than ever before, to Orwell's dystopia. According to the author, the role of journalism academic education in the digital world is to provide "*not facts that can be found by a single click on Google, but systematic*



knowledge of the social world” and to allow journalists “not just to reflect events, but “to present them in context and create a picture of the world”.

Original empirical research

Dr. Ralitsa Kovacheva has conducted original empirical research. The data deficit is one of the main obstacles before the analysis of trends in the media sector. Bulgaria competition regulator (Commission on Protection of Competition, CPC) in its decisions indicates that the lack of media data hinders both the functioning of media market and the regulatory efficiency. Existing data deficits during *data economy era* have been addressed as a problem. The academic environment creates many opportunities for transfer of methodology and training students for empirical research and related data journalism.

All results in this field represent the author's own contribution.

II. Notes and recommendations

I would recommend to the author to actively apply the results of her research in the field of International journalism in her teaching due to the urgent need to expand the field of quality Bulgarian journalism.

III. Conclusion

Given the scientific production and the contributions outlined above, I propose confidently Dr. Ralitsa Kovacheva for Academic Position "Associate Professor" in 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (International Journalism), announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Jury member:

Data: