

(English translation)

## **REVIEWER'S OPINION**

By Prof. Dr. George Dimitrov Mengov

Competition procedure for the position of full Professor in the field 3.8 Economics (Institutional Economics, Behavioural Economics, and Economic Theory taught in English, German, and Bulgarian)  
Announced by Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski in the State Gazette, issue 52/2.07.2019

**This Opinion follows** Order# RD 38-461/26.07.2019 of the Rector of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

### **1. General points**

The only candidate in this competition procedure for full Professor is Dr Teodor Venkov Sedlarski, currently Associate Professor at SU. He has submitted the necessary documents, which show him to meet all the requirements for the position. He has obtained his doctorate in Economics in 2009 by defending a dissertation entitled, “Institutions, transaction costs, and economic development: The transitional period in Bulgaria”, his supervisor being Prof. Dr. DSc. Nansen Behar. The candidate has worked as Assistant Professor (2005–2009), Senior Assistant Professor (2009–2010), Major Assistant Professor (2010–2011), and Associate Professor (2011–) in the Department of Economics at Sofia University’s Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (FEBA). Dr Sedlarski teaches a number of core academic courses in Bulgarian, English, and German in the bachelor and master programmes at FEBA. All of those courses fall within the scope of the competition procedure.

### **2. Publications and Citations**

The candidate has submitted a list of publications showing him to be the sole author or co-author of 61 scientific publications and two higher education textbooks. For this particular competition procedure, he has submitted a list of 42 publications. Of them one, namely [1] is a single-authored monograph in the Bulgarian language; one [18] is a single-authored scientific article in English, published in a Peter Lang Verlag academic series; two [19, 37] are co-authored articles in the same series; one [36] is a co-authored scientific article in German and is dedicated to the pedagogy problems of economics teaching. In addition, he is the single author of 15 and co-author of 13 scientific articles in Bulgarian published predominantly in the Bulgarian journals Economic Thought, Economic and Social Alternatives, as well as in academic series such as Yearbook of FEBA, and Scientific Papers of UNSS. He has authored two ‘long scientific articles’ (*studiya*, in Bulgarian) in Yearbook of FEBA (of them [7] is single-authored and [8] is co-authored); three book chapters [2, 3, 4]; two single-authored reports published as full text in international conference proceedings [41, 42];

two higher education textbooks in Bulgarian, of which [5] is single authored and [6] is co-authored by the internationally respected German economics professor Dr Hermann Albeck.

In addition, in the Form showing fulfilment of the Minimal National Requirements for the rank of full Professor as per the Bylaws (*Pravilnik*) for implementation of the Law for Development of the Academics in the Republic of Bulgaria, Dr. Sedlarski has given details on an additional co-authored publication in the Scopus-indexed Journal of Applied Economic Sciences.

The candidate has provided a list of 26 citations of his publications found in the works of other scientists. In the submitted Excel table showing fulfilment of the above Bylaws' minimal national requirements the candidate has enlisted 27 citations in total. I discuss them in chapter 5 below.

### **3. Description of the candidate's research**

In the standard Form describing his research interests the candidate has enlisted quite a number of areas: behavioural economic analysis, history of economic thought, economics of happiness, integrating the social status concept in the conventional economic theory, market analysis of extreme wealth inequality and resource distribution inefficiencies, international economics in the context of information connectedness and technological advancement. It is natural that the candidate's scientific contributions are of different value in all of these areas, but their sheer presence indicates a wide-ranging competence in contemporary economic science. I believe his contributions could be best described as critically reviewing a comprehensive body of scientific literature and then formulating interesting new generalizations. It is noteworthy that in certain areas the candidate is versed enough in the used mathematical apparatus and is able to grasp in depth the economic phenomena and to come up with interesting new ideas. For example, in his monograph [1] he is analysing the established paradox of diminishing women's happiness in our time and its relationship with various social and cultural factors. The author has identified interesting connections between the economic growth-targeted policies on one hand, and the burgeoning new field of happiness economics, i.e., the economic analysis of the factors determining human wellbeing on the other hand. Dr Sedlarski's views on the need to modify and augment the normative goal of economics – utility maximization – and include in it people's subjective wellbeing, are in unison with the contemporary economic thought worldwide.

### **4. Teaching activity of the candidate**

Dr. Sedlarski has a substantial teaching experience, accumulated over the last 14 years in a number of academic courses at FEBA. As a young Assistant Professor he had the opportunity to work under the guidance of a few German and Bulgarian economics professors who taught in the German-speaking bachelor programme. Consequently, he grew up and established himself as a capable lecturer, respected by colleagues and students alike.

## **5. Fulfillment of the minimal national requirements for the rank of full Professor**

The only candidate in the competition procedure has completed a Form showing that he fully meets the minimal national requirements published in the Bylaws (*Pravilnik*) for implementation of the Law for Development of the Academics in the Republic of Bulgaria for the scientific field 3.8 Economics. In particular: he has accumulated the necessary 150 points for Index1, Index2, and Index 3 from the ABV group by possessing the title Doctor (50 points) and having presented a ‘habilitation’ monograph (100 points). The Bylaws (see State Gazette issue 56/06.07.2018, Table 1, Scientific Field 3 Social Economic and Legal Sciences, 3.8 Economics) demand that each candidate should have gathered by publications only (group G, Index4 – Index10) at least 200 points for the rank of full professor. Dr. Sedlarski has filled the relevant Form, which shows that he requested a total of 317 points for 39 of his publications, related to the competition procedure. I believe the request to be fair, i.e., each publication is adequately assessed and the sum is correctly computed.

Next, the Bylaws (State Gazette issue 56/06.07.2018, Table 1, Scientific Field 3 Social Economic and Legal Sciences, 3.8 Economics) in group D (Index11, Index12, and Index13) demand that each candidate should have at least 100 points collected from citations in other people’s scientific publications. The relevant Excel Table Form submitted by Dr. Sedlarski shows that he requested 127 points collected due to 27 of his publications. Computing these he has committed two serious errors, one reducing his points and the other raising them. I believe one should have in mind that the methodology of the Bylaws is rather new – barely a year old – and some of its complexity is still poorly understood by our academic community.

The error reducing his sum is due to dividing by the number of co-authors. While such division must be done for the points for co-authored publications, it should not be done for citations. Thus, the candidate has inflicted damage on himself amounting to several dozens of points.

The error boosting the sum is due to inadequate reading of a text in the Bylaws (State Gazette issue 56/06.07.2018, Final Regulations, Note 9) stating, “*Publications for which the citing one and the cited one have at least one common author (i.e. self-citations) must be excluded from the total citation sum.*” In the submitted Excel Form, in line 58, line 69, line 72, and line 75 the candidate has enlisted cited publications with one and the same co-author – Henrik Egbert. After deducting these four citations as self-citations of Professor Egbert and recalculating the sum of the remaining 23 citations, one obtains 155 points. Therefore Dr. Sedlarski has more than the required 100 points and meets the demands.

## **6. Critique and recommendations**

In his research work thus far, Dr. Sedlarski has successfully followed two different lines. One is the ‘traditional’ way of doing economic science in Bulgaria for which is typical an elaborative literary style combined with seeking to theorize based on summarizing other authors’ literary

compositions. On the other hand, a number of his publications contain really interesting and modern research with a strong empirical component. The latter are mostly co-authored by Professor Henrik Egbert, or by Dr. Sedlarski's students developing their masters' theses. Such a 'two-tier' approach was totally justified in its time. However, a future full professor who is so young will not need to bow to outdated expectations, characteristic of a part of the local academic community. In addition, in the coming years he will have to work in an international environment where world standards for scientific research will not only dominate, but will probably remain the only standards. Therefore, I can recommend him to go that way.

## **7. Conclusion**

Dr. Teodor Sedlarski, Associate Professor, is the only candidate in the competition procedure for full Professor of economics in the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, and he meets all the demands for the position. He has accumulated enough of what is needed, and by several of the measures he exceeds significantly the quantitative requirements. He is fluent in the three languages, in which the new Professor must teach courses at FEBA. As a young Assistant Professor he had the opportunity to spend time in high-ranking German and Swiss universities and to learn from some of the most respected economics professors in the German-speaking world. He has gathered substantial experience working on academic projects at university, national, and international level. He has an impressive administrative experience, having been director of a faculty research Centre, Vice-Dean for academic affairs at FEBA, then Dean, and for some time a Minister of the Economy of Bulgaria in a care-taker government.

All of the above makes me support his candidature for full Professor at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

Sofia, 17 October 2019.

Member of the Scientific Jury:



Prof. Dr. George Mengov