

**Paisii Hilendarski
University of Plovdiv**

Faculty of Economic and Social Studies

OPINION STATEMENT

by

Prof. Velin Stefanov Stanev – Lecturer at the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv
on materials submitted under the competition for the position of **Associate Professor**
at **St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia**

in higher education field **3: Social, Economic and Legal Studies;**
professional field **3.5: Public Communications and Information Sciences**
(Communication Situation Management)

1. Procedure background and presentation of the candidate

By means of Order No ПД 38-14 / 13.01.2020, issued by the Rector of St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, I was duly appointed as member of the scientific jury for the award of an ‘Associate Professor’ position at the University, in higher education field 3: Social, economic and legal studies; professional field 3.5: Public Communications and Information Sciences (Communication Situations Management), promulgated in State Gazette Issue 93/26.11.2019 in response to the needs of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Only **one candidate** applied for the position – Chief Assistant Svetlana Ivanova Stankova, PhD, from St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia.

The set of materials submitted by Ms Stankova on electronic media is meticulously compiled and fully corresponds to the University’s Rules on Academic Staff Development.

The candidate has submitted for review a total of 14 works.

Ms Stankova holds a Master’s degree in Bulgarian philology from St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia. In 2010 she defended her PhD thesis and was awarded a Doctoral degree in scientific field 05.04.10: *Journalism*.

According to the candidate’s Length of Service Report, Ms Dr Stankova has a total of 8 years, 5 months and 19 days of experience in her field. She was employed as a part-time lecturer in the period of 2007/2008 - 2017/2018, and, as of May 2018, was appointed as Chief Assistant

at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications at Sofia University, meaning that she meets the national and institutional requirements for the position of Associate Professor laid down in the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA, Article 24, para 1, item 2b), the Rules on its application (Article 53, para 1, item 2b) and Rules on the Terms and Procedure for the Award of Degrees and Academic Positions in St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia (Article 105. 1, item 2b).

The candidate possesses valuable teaching, administrative and practical experience. She is fluent in English and Russian and is a member of the Union of Bulgarian Journalists and the Bulgarian Academic Association for Communications.

I do not personally know Ms Stankova but I was impressed by her varied experience, involving not only teaching, but also participation in the Communication Strategy for the Preparation of Bulgaria for EU Membership Project (Dublin, November 2003), specialisation with the Department of Social Studies at the Masaryk University (Brno), her work as scientific secretary at the 65th society the Union of Bulgarian Journalists entitled *Media in the 21st Century* and with the Bulgarian Academic Association of Communications. It must be noted that Ms Stankova has experience as a journalist with Focus Agency and the Press Secretariat of the Presidency and has published several materials on current political topics in *Theme* magazine and *Culture* newspaper, thus contradicts the popular opinion that many professors lecturing on the various subjects from among the rich palette of journalism and mass communications have practically no 'field' experience.

2. General description of the work of the candidate

Chief Assistant Svetlana Stankova, PhD, has an academic load which meets and even exceeds the approved annual quota for Sofia University. In the academic 2018/2019 (as per report), her academic work load was 697.5 study hours, of which 367 - auditorium hours; for the academic 2019/2020, as per approved individual plan, her anticipated work load is 872.2 study hours, of which 406 – auditorium hours.

Ms Stankova is actively involved with students not only as a professor. She has served as advisor of 6 graduate students and a functional expert on the Student's Internship Project.

An in-depth analysis of Dr Stankova's publications allows me to conclude that her scientific and research activities stand out with a marked practical value. Her good knowledge of literature, analytical thinking and accurate summarisation skills are evident.

The following publications were submitted as part the competition: 1 independent research monography and 13 scientific articles published in non-referenced periodicals and collections with scientific peer review (listed in the National Reference List of contemporary Bulgarian scientific periodicals with scientific peer review).

The scientific contribution of Ms Stankova in the submitted publications (in such problematic areas as media and politics; media and power; political communication and digitalisation) is indisputable. I would furthermore like to focus on several of the materials.

A. The monography (1):

- Provides a definition for a 'communication situation';

- Proposes a definition for ‘communication situation management’ and indicates opportunities for communication situation management ;
 - Distinguishes between the terms ‘communication situation’ and ‘communicative situation’;
 - Outlines hypothetic communication effects from implementation of the analysed communication situation management strategies;
 - Proves that the events which drove thousands of refugees to Bulgaria gain significance for the audience only after they are ‘introduced’ within a communication strategy, both in terms of information exchange and in terms of ‘event sharing.
- B.** One of the main contributions of her publications on the topic of media and politics (5, 8, 9, 10) is the analytical confirmation of the thesis that media interpretation, the choice of words and phrases form images, messages and suggestions which not only affect public opinion but also construct a certain reality.
- C.** The main contributions of her publications on the digitalisation of political communications and the use of social networks in election campaigns, of fake news and manipulation opportunities (3, 4, 6), are:
- The conclusion that the manipulations carried out by means of fake news published in social networks during the US Presidential Elections of November 2016 have influenced voting results to the benefit of Donald Trump;
 - The conclusion that social media sites allows politicians to sidestep traditional media and set their own topics in the political agenda.
- D.** One of the most significant (with view of the political and socio-cultural context of former Socialist-bloc countries) contributions of her publications on the relationship between media and power in the coverage of election campaigns (2, 12, 14), is the conclusion that while Bulgarian political powers enjoy significant freedom in controlling media agenda, in the Czech Republic journalists play the role of pundit, placing demands to the power elite and often an appeal for action.

Of course, the above opinion comprises a more or less subjective reading. The virtues of the submitted texts are many more and a telling fact of their scientific worth is the frequency of their quotation. Ms Stankova’s works have been quoted on a total of 9 occasions (6 times in monographies and 3 in non-referenced, peer-reviewed periodicals). In other words, in terms of scientometrics, this level exceeds the minimum threshold defined by the Rules on the application of DASRBA.

The main conclusion is that, in addition to being an indisputable contribution, the scientific work of the candidate meets the quantity indicators of the national criteria for the award of the academic position of Associate Professor.

3. Criticism and recommendations

I have no critical notes to make on Dr Stankova’s work. I would like to make two recommendations, unrelated to the object of the competition:

- E. Dr Stankova should publish in referenced periodicals, indexed in world-known scientific data bases (Scopus или Web of Science),
- F. She should write a textbook (textbooks) on the discipline (disciplines) she teaches. Admittedly, textbooks are somewhat overlooked in the newly-adopted grade point system, but are exactly what students of today (who regard smartphones as an inherent part of their physical body and demand that everything is delivered to them as quickly, clearly and concisely as possible) actually need. University professors, as opposed to institute employees, need to think not only of their career development but also of their students.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials submitted by Chief Assistant Svetlana Ivanova Stankova, PhD **meet all** requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Rules on its application.

The candidate has submitted a **sufficient** volume of scholarly work published AFTER the publication of the materials used in the defence of her doctoral degree and the academic position of Chief Assistant. The works of the candidate contain original scientific and practical contributions. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Ms Stankova are **beyond dispute**.

Following study of the materials and works of the candidate and in-depth analysis of their significance and of the scientific and practical contributions contained therein, I hereby give my positive recommendation to the Scientific Jury: it is my opinion that the Jury should propose to the Faculty Board of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications the election of **Chief Assistant Svetlana Ivanova Stankova** to the academic position of **Associate Professor** at St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia under professional field **3.5: Public Communications and Information Sciences (Communication Situation Management)**.

Statement prepared

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Prof. Velin Stanev

March 2020