



REVIEW¹

of the submitted works for participation in a competition for the academic position of PROFESSOR in the professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Journalistic Editing), announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in SJ, issue 22/16.03.2021

Reviewer: Prof. Andreana Eftimova, Dr

Candidate(s): Assoc. Prof. Efrem Efremov Karanfilov, PhD

I. Summary of applicant (research, teaching and academic activity)

Assoc. Prof. Efrem Efremov is a long-term lecturer at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication – before taking on his academic commitment, he was the editor of *Start* newspaper and the editor-in-chief of *Sport Plus* newspaper. He was also a media advisor in several ministries, as well as the leader of various electoral and media campaigns. Assoc. Prof. Efremov's practical experience in the field of media and public relations ensures the successful combination of theory and practice, which is so important for media and communications specialists. Assoc. Prof. Efremov has several specializations in the United Kingdom and the United States at the invitation of authoritative state and media institutions. He has published 5 monographs, the most widely circulating one being the book "Journalistic Editing" – its popularity a proof of its usefulness for future journalists.

Assoc. Prof. Efremov is the head of the Department of Press Journalism and Book Publishing. He has been the Deputy Dean for two terms, as well as the Chairman of the Association of Sports Journalists in Bulgaria (2005-2015), Chairman of the Balkan Association of Sports Journalists (2007-2011) and a member of the International Association of Sports Journalists (AIPS) since 1986 to date.

The significant academic presence of Assoc. Prof. Efremov, which began almost 20 years ago, shows a consciously made choice, but also the desire to follow his calling to promote higher education in journalism and thus improve the media environment in Bulgaria.

¹ Note: Recommended review volume - about 6-7 standard pages



II. Characteristics of the scientific and scientifically-applied production of the candidate

Assoc. Prof. Efremov participated in the competition with two monographs and 6 studies and articles.

The introduction and the first chapter of the monograph "Legal Aspects of Journalistic Editing" (Veliko Tarnovo: Faber, 2019 - 247 p.) outline the various challenges to journalistic editing in connection with the problems of freedom of speech, insults and slander, and the legal framework that regulates these controversial issues in journalistic practice.

Examining the international law and the national regulation of the right to freedom, Assoc. Prof. Efremov dwells on two important issues - the competition of different rights and the proportionality of different interests and the sanctions imposed by law. Via these two aspects it has been made possible to discuss in depth the admissible restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, commenting on the obligatory conditions for their application: to be provided by law, to be necessary for a democratic society and to be justified by legitimate aims (protection of morals; the reputation and honor of individuals and public figures; the reputation of the government, politicians, statesmen; maintaining the authority and integrity of the judiciary). The detailed problem analysis is made on the basis of a comparison of actual court results, which not only facilitates the perception of legal texts, but also illustrates possible points of conflict that could be avoided through the intervention of the editor in the media. For example, the disproportionate nature of the sanctions imposed is commented on in the *Lingens vs. Austria* case (1986) regarding the lesser degree of protection of the reputation of public figures; through the cases of *Handyside vs. the United Kingdom* (1976), *Scherer vs. Switzerland* (1994), *Wingrove vs. the United Kingdom* on the morality of social groups; *Guja vs. Moldova*, *De Haes and Gijssels vs. Belgium* with regard to maintaining the authority of the judiciary, and others.

While discussing these examples, Assoc. Prof. Efremov does not ignore the conceptual "obstacles" that the normative acts try or do not try to solve. In this regard, he intervenes in the discussions on concepts expressed with phrases such as "urgent public need" (p. 37), "public figure" (pp. 44-47), "private person" (pp. 50-54), "public space" (pp. 79-80). The commentary on the cases regarding the publication of information about the health condition of Francois Mitterrand and Naomi Campbell, as well as the interference in the private lives by Princess Caroline von Hanover are extremely useful and interesting. They show that, although



the cases that are commented on sometimes seem similar, there is a requirement for a proportionate weighting of interests and sanctions, leading to different court decisions. The preparation of the editor-journalist is precisely contained in the proper knowledge of the legal framework and the practice of law in order to prevent claims damaging the reputation of the media. Special emphasis in the review of international and national legal documents is placed on media regulation, on guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of communication, which proves that the author purposefully selects only the information that would help the formation and accumulation of the editor's competence.

The second chapter raises important questions about the language policy of the editorial board and the boundary between factual and evaluative judgments, between criticism and insult in the context of several cases. The third chapter, on the other hand, which examines insult and slander in historical and legal aspects, offers a much more detailed analysis of the role of the means of expression, since "the difference between negative criticism and insult is in the nature of the means of expression used" (Raimundov, quoted in Efremov 2019: 75). In relation to defamation, the possibilities for protection against it are examined, as journalists are often defendants in these types of cases. Here questions are raised about the conscious expression of the slander, the authenticity of the circumstances that are considered slanderous, about the means of satire and parody that neutralize slander, etc. The reasoning is supported by the richly illustrated practice of the Bulgarian court in criminal cases against journalists for insult and defamation. A huge advantage of the monograph is that the domestic practice of law in Bulgaria is compared and analyzed in relation to similar cases in European continental law.

The end of the third and fourth chapters follow the debate on the appropriate legal means for prosecuting insult and defamation. Without ignoring the *pros* and *cons*, the researcher strongly defends the decriminalization of defamation for reasons like abuse of defamation, attempts to silence media criticism and freedom of expression, violating the proportionality of sanctions, possible alternative regulatory mechanisms (codes of ethics, the right to respond, publication of a rebuttal or an apology), intensification of self-censorship, etc. Assoc. Prof. Efremov's opinion is synchronized with the insistence of international and regional organizations that "defamation is no longer a matter of criminal law, but of civil provisions devoid of a criminal dimension" (Efremov 2019: 112). In addition, the review of rules and practices reveals a heterogeneous situation in which only few countries in Europe



have actually applied the most severe criminal sanction - imprisonment, and in Bulgaria this punishment has been dropped in response to the requirement of international institutions to "liberalize the criminal law regime for insult and slander" (Efremov 2019: 114).

The comparative analysis of the criminal law regulations of insult and defamation in Bulgaria and other EU member states is impressive with the knowledge of the legislative provisions and practices and convincingly supports the conclusions made in the previous chapter. No less rich is the review of civil cases of insult and defamation in Bulgaria in a separate chapter, which presents crucial cases related to the activities of journalists and compares them (the cases of Kasabova and Bozhkov vs. Bulgaria; the cases of Yodanova and Toshev vs. Bulgaria; the case of Rumyana Ivanova vs. Bulgaria), raising both the issues of the duties and responsibilities of journalists, as well as the ethical rules for media coverage. Through the comparative analysis between the ethical norms in Bulgaria and several other European countries, as well as through the review of the violations of these codes, Assoc. Prof. Efremov proves the importance of professional ethics for lawsuits in which its observance can be a mitigating circumstance. In the last chapter, once again containing many examples from journalistic practice, the author comments on the specific rules for covering specific events, including the presumption of innocence, the indication of the source of information, the coverage of the identities of children and victims of crime, the violation of privacy. A special subchapter is devoted to online ethics, which addresses the issues of the specifics of hypertext, authorship, credibility in online journalism. These issues are an essential part of the editor's competence in online publications.

In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to the ability of Assoc. Prof. Efremov to balance the calls for the protection of the freedom and rights of journalists and at the same time for the need to comply with rules and laws in the spirit of Hegel's maxim that "there is no freedom where there are no limits of freedom" (Efremov 2019: 212).

In the monograph "Sports in the media world. Editorial Challenges" (Sofia: Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2020 - 199 p.) Assoc. Prof. Efremov reflects on his long and successful practice as a sports journalist through the theoretical perspective of an academic lecturer in sports journalism. The combination results in a fascinating exhibition, in which the main thesis is that sport has become a media product with cultural, social and political dimensions (p. 12). It is no coincidence that a number of researchers introduce new terms - media sport / mediasport (L. Werner), sportainment (R. Lipsite), etc., to emphasize the



pervasive connection between sport and the media. Information about the prices for TV broadcast rights regarding professional championships and interesting statistics for increasing the time spent for sporting events is given in support of the before-mentioned statement, coupled with the commentary on the implementation of a number of lucrative strategies - advertising breaks, repetitions, music breaks with cheerleaders, concerts, etc. The truth is not spared - the commercialization of sports affects the rules of the game, gyms, the motivation of athletes and others.

An important topic that runs through all parts of the book is ethnic, national and other stereotypes affirmed through sports commentary. As sport is one of the components for the formation of a national identity, the author comments on how the struggle for medals is being instrumentalized for political purposes in both totalitarian and democratic countries. Abuses in sports such as violence, fraud, doping, gambling and terrorism have been commented on from the point of view of the editor, who needs high legal and ethical competence in these cases. Particularly interesting is the part in which the participation of women in sports is commented on, as well as the coverage of women athletes in the media. Looking for the chronology of inequality, Assoc. Prof. Efremov gives examples of media coverage of women athletes who have won major sports competitions or been subjected to sexual violence, as well as the place of women in sports journalism. Here I note the exceptional usefulness of the data collected on the American who published the first manual of gymnastic exercises (1856), or the first female sports reporter (1937), or the first Muslim woman to win an Olympic title (1992).

The analysis of the interaction between the media and sports could not be carried out without taking into account the topic of mythologizing athletes. The media plays a key role in this process, the awareness of which will help to better cover and analyze sporting events.

And in this monograph Assoc. Prof. Efremov does not skip the topic of the challenges that the new digital media pose to editorial work. In the final part of the book he gives valuable advice to editors and journalists on checking the reliability of websites and information, the structure of the texts, the technological features of the environment (SEO - search engine optimization), etc., strengthening the scientifically-applied and educational research profile.



The 5 articles and studies presented in the competition are on topics regarded in the monographs. Their presence proves the successful approbation of some of the author's theses in reputable scientific journals.

III. Major contributions in scientific, applied science and teaching activity of the applicant

- Conducted comparative analyses, in which a significant number of normative documents from the legal systems in Bulgaria, as well as in several European countries was reviewed, as well as codes of ethics of journalistic professional associations in Bulgaria and abroad;

- Organization of an enormous corpus of criminal and civil cases and their typology according to their illustrative power and their probative value;

- Updating the theoretical and practical aspects of the editorial process according to the complicated media environment - formulation of basic problems and specifics of online ethics and editing

- Significant scientifically-applied and educational effects - acquainting students and current editors and journalists with several of the legal aspects of journalism, the current Bulgarian and European legislation, the peculiarities of codes of ethics and a number of other issues that would be useful for their activity; acquainting students with the challenges that new digital media pose to editorial work - checking the reliability of sites and information, the structuring of texts, the technological features of the environment (SEO - search engine optimization), etc.

- Proving the existing relationship between the media and sports, as their interaction is explored through political, social, economic, cultural, entertainment aspects of sports and a rich arsenal of examples.

- The contributions of the research are scientifically-applied (because problems related to the practical application of legality are commented on) and educational (because what is offered is information that enriches the educational process from a practical point of view).

IV. Notes and recommendations

Given that the candidate participates with two monographs, which in themselves are sufficient ground for evaluation of his candidacy, I do not comment on one of the proposed articles on Freemasonry - a problem that is considered in the dissertation of the researcher and which already has been the subject of a review.

V. Conclusion

Based on the scientific contributions and the overall teaching activity of the candidate, I strongly suggest to the esteemed jury to vote positively for the academic position of



"professor" in the professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Journalistic Editing) by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Efrem Efremov Karanfilov.

Date: 25.06.2021

Reviewer: