

TO
THE SCIENTIFIC JURY
FOR THE PROCEDURE FOR
ACADEMIC POSITION "PROFESSOR"
AT THE FACULTY OF LAW
OF UNIVERSITY OF SOFIA
"ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI"

Scientific Opinion

by Dr. Zornitsa Ludmilova Yordanova

associate professor at the University of Rouse "Angel Kanchev"

on the competition for the academic position "professor"

in professional field 3.6. Law (Constitutional Law) at the Faculty of Law of the University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski"

1. Information about the competition

The competition for the academic position "professor" for the needs of the Faculty of Law of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" was announced in the "State Gazette", no. 65 of 07/28/2023. I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury by Order No. RD-38-487/08/08/2023 of the Rector of Sofia University.

2. Information about the candidate in the competition

The only candidate who submitted documents for participation in the announced competition for the academic position of "professor" is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Martin Kirilov Belov teaching at the Constitutional Law Chair of the Faculty of Law of the University of Sofia. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Martin Belov was born in Sofia. He graduated with honors in the specialty "Law" at the Faculty of Law of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 2004. He was a full-time PhD student in Constitutional Law at the same faculty during the period 2006-2009. The topic of his dissertation is "Direct democracy - national and comparative legal aspects".

He successively held the positions of "assistant", "senior assistant" and "chief assistant" in Constitutional Law at the Faculty of Law of the University of Sofia (2008 - 2018). In 2018, he was appointed to the academic position of "associate professor" at the Faculty of Law of the University of Sofia. He is currently holding this position. In addition to his academic position, he also holds other administrative and management positions at the Faculty of Law of Sofia University: vice dean responsible for international relations and digitalization (since 2019), head of the master's program "Protection of Fundamental Rights", administrative head of the Winter School, "Erasmus" coordinator and coordinator of the University Agency for Francophonie for the Faculty of Law.

Since 2016 he has been a visiting professor in 9 foreign universities - in Israel, Germany, France, Italy, the Czech Republic, Greece. He has also been guest lecturer in another 13 universities and institutions in Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Poland, Luxembourg, Sweden, Spain, Greece and Poland. He also held other research positions, delivered public lectures at authoritative educational institutions, and participated in the editorial boards of prominent legal publications.

He speaks 4 foreign languages at an excellent or very good level. He has participated in 79 scientific conferences, 16 international and 8 Bulgarian scientific projects. As can be seen from the presented documents, the candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Martin Belov has intense and diverse research, teaching and international activity.

3. Information regarding the fulfillment of the requirements for occupying the academic position "professor"

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Martin Belov meets the legal requirements for holding the academic position of "professor". He is both Master and PhD in Constitutional Law. He has held the academic position of "associate professor" for 5 years and has presented a significant number of publications and citation data. The candidate participates in the competition with a wide range of scientific production after being elected for the academic position of "associate professor", namely:

- 1 textbook;
- 18 studies;
- 1 monograph published in English and in Bulgarian;
- 5 scientific papers.

On the basis of the submitted documents one can conclude that Assoc. Prof. Belov's science metric indicators significantly exceed the requirements of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. The candidate has a total of 1707.5 points while the minimum according to the law is 450 points. The science metric points of Martin Belov are distributed according to indicators as follows:

Group of indicators A: Defended dissertation on "Direct democracy - national and comparative legal aspects" - 50 points (required 50 points);

Group of indicators B: published monograph on "Constitutional semiotics. Conceptual foundations of a theory and meta-theory" - 100 points (required 100 points)

Group of indicators D: Scientific publications - a total of 23 with a total number of points - 432.5 with a required minimum of 100 points.

Group of indicators D: Citations - a total of 610 points (required 100 points);

Group of indicators E: Management and participation in projects, publication of textbooks, etc. – 515 points with required minimum of 100 points.

4. Impact of the candidate's scientific publications on the scientific literature (discovered citations of his work)

The information provided by Associate Prof. Belov shows that due to his participation in projects and conferences, his visiting professorships, his activity as guest lecturer and coordinator, the scientific achievements of the candidate are well-known in the scientific community not only in our country, but also in a number of other European countries. Prof. Belov maintains an active international activity and regularly participates in exchanges and specializations. In the context of the current competition he has submitted data related to 70 known citations of his publications.

The points for indicator group D exceed six times the number of citations required for acquiring the academic position of "professor". In my observations, the applicant has not even listed all the citations of his publications. In addition, Prof. Belov is also a member of the scientific councils/editorial boards of five authoritative scientific journals, a member of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria and three international scientific organizations, and has also participated in a number of conferences, which contributes not only to the high quality of his scientific research, but also for their promotion among the legal and academic community.

5. Evaluation of the candidate's educational and teaching activities

On the basis of the presented documentation one can conclude that Associate Professor Belov has multitude of intense teaching activities. During the current 2023/2024 academic year, he is scheduled to teach classes in the following disciplines at Sofia University's Faculty of Law: Constitutional Law, Comparative Constitutional Law (in front of students in "Law" and "International Relations"), European Constitutionalism and Supranational and Comparative Constitutionalism (a total of 501 hours). In addition, the candidate is also the head of a master's program, as well as frequently lecturing as a guest lecturer and visiting professor at foreign universities. All this unequivocally shows that he has the competence and qualities to occupy the academic position of "professor" at the Faculty of Law of Sofia University.

6. Evaluation of the scientific activity of the candidate and the submitted publications for participation in the competition

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Martin Belov carries out an extremely diverse and multidisciplinary scientific and practical activity. His scientific interests go beyond traditional constitutional legal issues and concern issues

such as judicial dialogue, the impact of the Covid-crisis on socio-legal relations, some legal aspects of medical activity, human dignity, etc. Assoc. Prof. Belov participated in the current competition for the academic position of "professor" in constitutional law with his monograph "Constitutional Semiotics. Conceptual foundations of a theory and metatheory", as well as with another 23 scientific publications (18 studies and 5 articles), which were not used for the competition for the academic position of "associate professor". The submitted reference in the University of Sofia electronic system shows the existence of many more publications that are not presented in the current competition. Therefore, the scientific and scientific-applied activity of the candidate not only fulfills, but also significantly exceeds the requirements for occupying the academic position of "professor".

Special attention should be devoted to the monography "Constitutional Semiotics. Conceptual Foundations of a Theory and Metatheory", published in 2022. It is 398 pages long, including a table of contents, an introduction, five chapters and a bibliography. It is noteworthy that the author mainly uses foreign sources, since only 4 Bulgarian titles are listed in the bibliography with over 200 foreign language titles. In his monograph, Assoc. Prof. Belov presents various perspectives on the modern constitution, constitutionalism and specific constitutional categories. The research is distinguished by its unconventional and provocative character, by the search for meaning beyond the constitutional text, in the spheres of collective ideas, memories, concepts, etc. To the extent that modern constitutional law science is traditionally limited to the analysis of written normative texts, Associate Professor Belov explores the projections of the legal phenomena in constitutional ideas, ideologies, codes, myths and mythologies, etc. Thus, constitutions and constitutionalism are placed organically in their wider historical, anthropological, emotional and, ultimately, universal human context.

The chapters of the monograph are logically arranged in the following sequence:

Chapter one presents the general concepts of constitutional semiotics as a system of theories and metatheories. The author clarifies its meaning, structure and emphasizes the need for constitutional science to examine the so-called "shadow constitutionalisms" - emotional, symbolic-imaginary, performative and visual constitutionalism.

Chapter two analyzes textual constitutionalism and asserts its importance for constitutional semiotics. Assoc. Prof. Belov clarifies the meaning of several concepts and presents the constitution on the one hand as "a holistic and monolithic result of sovereign will, possessing a quasi-magical status and elevated to a part of the national pantheon of founding myths, mythologies and normative ideologies", and on the other - as " the discursive product of multiple constitutional narratives".

Chapter three of the monograph is devoted to symbolic-imaginary constitutionalism. Its essence is outlined and the concepts of constitutional codes, normative ideologies and ideas, constitutional myths, mythologies and utopias are clarified.

The fourth chapter is of particular interest in a broader civilizational and cultural context. It researches the so-called visual constitutionalism as a postmodern semiotic concept, examines the issues of official public visualisations, as well as iconisation, emojification and memefication as contemporary forms of signifying constitutionally significant content. Visual constitutionalism finds its applications in pop culture, pop art, architecture and other spheres of social life.

The last fifth chapter of the monograph is devoted to constitutional geometry and algebra as semiotic paradigms for explaining and ordering constitutionalism, constitutions and constitutional law. With it, the author gives a finished look to the study, clarifying the possibility that the constitutional order can be clarified and ordered through mathematical metaphors.

Indeed, modern constitutionalism is built primarily on the basis of rationality. Parliamentary and judicial procedures are formalized, with fixed prerequisites, duration and legal consequences. The work is an invitation to look beyond the visible, beyond pure rationality, and seek the deep meaning embedded in institutions and normative rules. The application of this modern approach to constitutional phenomena is an achievement of importance not only for the Bulgarian, but also for the global legal thought.

7. Evaluation of scientific and scientific-applied contributions

In the file on his original scientific contributions, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Martin Belov outlines the contributions of the scientific production presented for the competition. In my opinion, this self-evaluation reflects real achievements of the candidate and should be considered as they stand in his statement of contributions:

- the author creates and presents in his monography the first independent theory of constitutional semiotics in Bulgarian constitutional law literature. This is outstanding scientific and scientific-applied contribution. A new vision is offered for the study and application of the Constitution as a narrative, multi-discursive and semiotic project with multiple narrators acting on a particular community. As for the separate theories and meta-theories included in the composition of constitutional semiotics, the key ones also have an independent contribution;

- In the monograph and two of his publications, the candidate develops a theory of rational and emotional constitutionalism;
- A significant contribution to constitutional law is the construction of a theory of textual constitutionalism and the constitution as a system of narratives;
- In his monograph, the author proposes a theory of symbolic-imaginary constitutionalism, developing a concept of constitutional semiotic landscapes, constitutional codes, normative ideologies and ideas, constitutional myths, mythologies and utopias;
- The candidate also proposes a theory of visual constitutionalism, considering the Constitution not only as a text, but also as a visual and performative phenomenon;
- Assoc. Prof. Belov created an original theory of constitutional algebra as an explanatory and ordering matrix in constitutionalism and constitutional law;
- In his monograph, the author further develops and systematizes his theory of constitutional geometry as a set of tools for understanding and arranging the constitutional order through geometric metaphors;
- The candidate substantiates his theories of "quantum constitutionalism" and "cloud constitutionalism";
- In a number of his studies, the author develops a theory of Westphalian, post-Westphalian and neo-Westphalian constitutionalism and examines the positioning of important contemporary constitutional phenomena in these three time periods;
- Both in the monograph and in one of his studies, Assoc. Prof. Belov conceptualizes time from the point of view of collective constitutional imaginaries, constitutional memories and the politics of memories;
- The candidate also contributes to the field of public law theory of space by analyzing the constitutional aspects of the crisis of territoriality and examines territory and territoriality as signifiers in constitutional law;
- In several studies, the author clarifies the essence and analyzes the constitutional phenomena of judicial activism, judicial dialogue, as well as the role of constitutional, international and supranational courts as legislators and political actors. Assoc. Prof. Belov researches these phenomena specifically in the practice of the Bulgarian Constitutional Court;
- In two studies, the system of access to constitutional justice in the Republic of Bulgaria is analyzed, mainly in relation to the protection of human rights, with the author systematizing and arranging chronologically the debate on the subject and offering options for improving the constitutional model;
- A concept of transitional constitutionalism is developed;

- In view of the world crises in recent years, the candidate develops a concept of the constitutional polycrisis and constitutionalism of the state of emergency;
- In several studies, the author examines the role of national constitutions in the multi-level constitutionalism of the EU and supranational constitutionalism;
- Several of the candidate's publications contribute to the development of the modern theory of the rule of law and democratic state;
- In two of his studies, the author examines the impact of the information and technological revolution on constitutionalism, human rights and the normative ideology of humanism;
- In one of his studies, the candidate examines human dignity in the Bulgarian constitutional model exploring the essence, functions, effects, guarantees, and proposes improvement of the legal framework and judicial practice on the matter.

In my opinion all scientific publications presented by the candidate are the result of his personal research and contain original scientific contributions. The introduction of the concepts of "constitutional geometry" and "constitutional semiotics" into the Bulgarian constitutional law literature is attributed to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Martin Belov. His research provides new directions in the development of constitutional law science not only in our country, but also in modern Europe.

8. Critical notes and recommendations

My only remark about the candidate's scientific output is that, in my opinion, the high style of his scientific research presented for the competition (especially his monographic work "Constitutional Semiotics") would be more suitable for the acquisition of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences", than for teaching the subject "Constitutional Law" to students at the Faculty of Law. The strictly scientific terminology in some of the presented works is mainly suitable for a specialized audience.

I would recommend that the work should be published in an adapted version for the needs of teaching constitutional law and comparative constitutional law, where the use of the semiotic approach would be of considerable benefit. On the other hand, I believe that the enrichment of the Bulgarian legal literature with independent and more extensive publications concerning the presented theories and meta-theories (given the impossibility of their full development in one monograph, as pointed out by the author), would have both important scientific significance and practical utility.

Therefore, I recommend Assoc. Prof. Dr. Martin Belov to continue to further develop his theories and present them to the national and international scientific community. These recommendations in no way diminish the value and significant contribution of the publications presented in the competition and do not change the high assessment of their qualities.

9. Personal impressions

I know the candidate Assoc. Prof. Belov both from his scientific output and as the organizer of the Erasmus week of legal science at the Faculty of Law of Sofia University. My observations regarding his organizational and project activities, as well as regarding his scientific publications, are that the colleague is an active and dedicated university professor who successfully combines his work commitments as vice dean and teacher of a number of disciplines with high-quality and multidisciplinary scientific research. Assoc. Prof. Belov's rich culture, his broad scientific interests and active international activity are impressive and confirm my judgment that he is suitable for the academic position of "professor".

10. Conclusion

The candidate, Assoc. Prof. Martin Belov, undoubtedly possesses the qualities of a scientist of international rank. I believe that he repeatedly exceeds the legislative requirements for occupying the academic position of "professor" in Constitutional Law. Therefore, I strongly recommend to the scientific jury to elect and propose Assoc. Prof. Dr. Martin Kirilov Belov FOR THE ACADEMIC POSITION "PROFESSOR" at the Faculty of Law of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

09.11.2023

Scientific Jury member:

/Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zornitsa Yordanova/

