

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Lyudmil Lyubomirov Georgiev, Honorary Professor of NBU, last habilitation in p.n. 3.7. Administration and management, in a competition with a sole candidate Assoc. Prof. Milena Hristova Stefanova, Dr, for holding the academic position of "professor" in a professional field 3.3. Political Science (Local Government and Self-Government), announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski ", published in the State Gazette, issue 22 of 16.03.2021

I. Compliance of the candidacy of Assoc. Prof. Milena Hristova Stefanova, Dr, with the requirements of the Law for development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and for the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements under Article 2b of the Law on Social, Economic and Legal Sciences professional field 3.3. Political Science (Local Government and Self-Government).

The competition for a professor in the professional field 3.3. Political Science (Local Government and Self-Government) has been announced in accordance with the established legal order for the needs of the Department of Public Administration at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski ".

The only candidate in the competition is Assoc. Prof. Milena Hristova Stefanova, Dr. The submitted documentation for the competition meets the requirements of the Law for development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its application.

The comparison with the minimum national requirements under Article 2b of the Law on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms shows the following:

- Absence of values below the normative by all indicators.
- Overfulfillment of the required values under indicator D with 50 points, indicator E - with 55 points, indicator E - with 140 points, articles in non-refereed editions - overfulfilled by 40 points, studies in non-refereed editions and collective volumes - overfulfilled by 15 points ., participation in collective monographs - overfulfilled by 20 points, overfulfillment of the norm by indicators: D11-30 points, D12 - 90 points, D13 - 5 points, E15 - 160 points.

The established numerous overfulfillments of the minimum requirements categorically present Assoc. Prof. Milena Stefanova as a quality and active scientist-researcher.

II. Publishing and research.

For the needs of the competition Assoc. Prof. Stefanova presented:

Monographs	2
Studies published in non-peer-reviewed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes	2
Articles published in peer-reviewed and peer-reviewed publications	1
Articles and reports published in unrefereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes	5
Published chapters from collective monographs	2
TOTAL	12

For her participation in this competition, the candidate has not submitted a report on her participation in research projects.

III. Evaluation of the monographic work.

For the purposes of the competition are presented two monographs - "**Comparative Studies of Local Government**", volume 116 pages and "**Local Authority and Local Government**", second revised and supplemented edition, volume 234 pages. The applicant has presented two research papers, one of which with a contribution to the theory of comparative research at the local level, and the other - with a strong practical and applied nature, the combination of which make the participation in this competition reasonable and convincing.

For "Comparative Studies of Local Government":

The monograph successfully complements the national level of political science comparisons with the insufficiently developed in Bulgarian science comparative local political science dimension.

Three essential aspects of comparative research of local self-government are discussed. The first is related to the choice of comparison methodology. The second concerns the choice of subject and objects of comparison. The third aspect is very important and answers the questions - apart from the cognitive component, do comparative studies have a practical effect? Do these studies influence the development and reforms of local government models in individual countries? Do comparative studies on a national scale help to improve local government practices?

The chronology of the comparative researches of the local self-government is traced.

The processes of reforms and the development of local democracy in the former countries of the socialist community after 1989 are analyzed.

The actions of governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations in the field of local self-government, aimed at reforming or improving its system, are discussed.

For "Local Authority and Local Self-Government":

The theoretical foundations on which modern political science is based on explaining local self-government are preserved, while the legal norms regulating politics and governance at the local level have been updated. Criticism of changes that distort good governance has not been spared. Unlike the first edition, which abounds in comparisons with foreign experience, mostly European, this is saved in the second edition and the author argues it with the changes that the dynamics of the development of systems and practices in democracies leads. Another reason is that she has developed and attached to the competition a separate monograph on comparative research of local self-government.

General notes:

The chosen title and the content of the monograph meet the requirements for relevance, scientificity, purposefulness and applicability.

The volume of the work allows the development of the research methodology chosen by the author and the research approaches - linguistic, historical and legal.

The language used is terminologically sound. The work does not contain gross factual and methodological errors, as well as ambiguous expressions that would disturb the perception of the defended theses and scientific statements.

The analyzes, results and conclusions of the monographic research have their scientific value and can serve for the long-term planning and management of interested institutions.

The nature of the work requires the collection and processing of a large volume of diverse facts and the presentation of varying degrees of compactness and shape to the content of individual chapters, which would give the impression to non-specialists that the work is too dependent on existing facts. To a large extent this is the case, but in this case the dignity of labor should not be sought in the empiricism presented as a basis for the statements, but in its interpretation and in the generalizations made, which make the content modernly significant.

There are parts of the book in which the author has buried herself with bait, analyzing the facts, which creates the impression of professional affection and vocation. These are: The rules for the constitution of the representative power in the municipalities and the influence of the electoral system for the formation of majorities in the municipal councils and norms of representation (p. 59); Issues of regional self-government; The model of urban decentralization in Bulgaria and the prospects of this process.

The conclusions made are correct and theoretically protected.

Evaluation of the contributions in the two monographic works:

A / The evaluation of the proposed monographic work "**Comparative Studies of Local Self-Government**" leads to the highlighting of the following contributions:

1. The methodology, methodologies and application in practice of results from comparative researches of the local self-government have been developed and substantiated.

2. The working theses in the monograph are proved with examples of various comparative studies of local self-government.
3. Basic principles of comparative research are derived.
4. The thesis has been proved that there is no and cannot be a universal methodology of comparative research of local self-government.
5. The stages of development of comparative research of local self-government are presented in four directions: the first is the inevitable review in historical context of the development of comparative research of local self-government, the second - the specifics of the institutional approach, the third - post-institutional approaches to comparative research of local self-government. , and the fourth, approaches to the study of emerging democracies.
6. The connection between the comparative researches of the local self-government and the creation of classifications of the systems, as well as with the attempts to build new theories is investigated.
7. All known classifications of local self-government systems are systematized.
8. In the discussion on the creation of classifications based on comparative studies, special attention was paid to the selection of criteria for comparison and reaching an agreement on the tolerance of the differences observed in the objects belonging to one group.
9. Special emphasis is placed on the peculiarities of the application of the concepts and their operationalization, characteristic of the developed democracies. This kind of comparative research on new democracies has been reported as advancing in the analysis of approaches to comparative research on emerging democracies.
10. The role of comparative research of local self-government in practice in an international and national context is comprehensively analyzed.
11. It has been proven that the most significant is the contribution of comparative research of local self-government to the activities of international organizations such as the Council of Europe, the Committee of the Regions, the World Bank and others.

B / The evaluation of the proposed monographic work "**Local Authority and Local Self-Government**" leads to the highlighting of the following contributions:

1. Original author's definitions of the basic concepts are derived: local government, local self-government, decentralization, deconcentration and local independence. The concept of "local government" is defined by the application of two approaches - institutional and functional. It is concluded that the full definition is possible only when the two approaches are applied together.
2. The approaches for formation of a municipality, the main tasks of the municipal policy, the concepts for the role of the municipality in the modern process of policy and management at local level are systematized.
3. The process of transformation of the state policy towards the municipalities and the understanding of the role of the municipality in Bulgaria after 1989 is analyzed.

4. The definitions, the structure, the spheres of competence, the powers and the balance of power resources, which the municipal council and the mayor of the municipality have, are systematically presented and analyzed.
5. The connection between the legislative and executive power and their control at local level is studied.
6. Basic approaches for financing local activities are outlined.
7. The principles of financing, the types of local taxes and fees known in the EU countries, the role and importance of the possibility for local authorities to be able to provide funds from their own sources of income, as well as to make tax policy are analyzed in detail.
8. A critical analysis of the system for financing local activities in Bulgaria has been conducted, as well as the possible cost activities have been considered.
9. The management and disposal of municipal property and the opportunities for municipalities to develop economic activity as a main source of additional revenues for municipal budgets are analyzed.
10. The author's views on the important problem of the theory of municipal development for the relations between the local and central authorities and the guarantee of balance and stability of the management system in the state are protected.
11. The possibilities and mechanisms for horizontal and vertical integration of the control system, as well as the possibilities for control are studied.
12. The introduction of intra-urban decentralization as a necessity arising from the large population in large cities, which threatens local democracy, is justified. Existing scientific statements about the forms, mechanisms and significance of civic participation in local self-government have been further developed. Both the legal norms and their application in practice in Bulgaria are considered.

IV. Evaluation of the contributions in the other attached publications.

1. The quality of the legislation regulating the relations at local level and the application of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government have been assessed and the need for a new Law on Local Self-Government has been proved (Publications 3, 5,).
2. The relations between the central and local authorities are considered in three directions - distribution of areas of competence, control over the work of local authorities and opportunities for local authorities to influence the policy of the central government regarding local self-government. The deficit of application of the principle of subsidiarity has been proved, as well as the importance of the municipal associations for achieving horizontal integration in the system of public administration (Publications 3, 5, 9).
3. A methodology for evaluation of the strategic approach in the management and disposal of municipal property has been developed and applied. The lack of strategic vision and capacity in the municipal administration has been proven (Publication 7).

4. By applying a methodology for analysis and evaluation of the activity of local authorities and administration for protection of the public interest in the management and disposal of municipal property, it has been proven that structured majorities in municipal councils do not influence this activity (Publication 4).
5. The main characteristics, features and obstacles to the decentralization process in Bulgaria in the period 1991-2015 are presented. (Publications 2, 5, 3, 6, 9)
6. The applicant unites the main ones, thus defending the meaning of the presentation of the two monographs, using a comparative method and concludes that the values on which the regional self-government is built are the same on which the local self-government is based. Thus, the two levels are linked to local communities, but regional self-government presupposes pooling resources to achieve common goals and supporting the application of the principle of subsidiarity (Publications 2, 8).
7. Through the analysis of the possibilities for introduction of regional self-government in Bulgaria the close connection between the successful decentralization and the regional self-government has been proved (Publications 2, 6, 8).
8. The trust of the Bulgarian citizens in the public systems is analyzed using data from the European Values Survey. It has been proven that people's interest in politics and their attitude to trust the world around them are decisive in building trust / distrust in public systems (Publication 10).
9. The imbalance between resource security, capacity and efficiency in the work of the administrations at central and local level has been proved, as well as the non-transparency in their work, the dependence on the will of the politicians. There are contradictions between the legal framework and the practice of its application. (Publication 11).
10. The institution "ombudsman" and the activity of the ombudsman in Bulgaria are analyzed and evaluated. There has been a large deficit to ensure integrity in the legal framework and practice - the lack of clear criteria for selecting candidates, nominating candidates from political parties and coalitions, and electing the ombudsman by a simple majority (Publication 12).

V. Citation.

Assoc. Prof. Stefanova has certified the correctly established citations of her works through the CERTIFICATE attached to the competition documents from the Department of Library and Information Services of the University Library at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for indexed and cited publications of the author, as autocitations are not included.

For the surveyed period from 2002 to 2019, the works of Assoc. Prof. Stefanova are cited in 95 authoritative publications. This is an enviable number of citations, especially since they relate to various of her works. The citations cover significant points of view, advocated by Assoc. Prof. Stefanova.

The reviewer allows the citations of the candidate's works to be much more in number, the establishment of which is impossible due to imperfections in our system of academic communication, which does not require the author of the cited work to be notified in writing.

VI. Teaching and learning activities and fulfillment of the requirements under Art. 115, para. 1, item 2.

According to the Certificate of work experience, issued by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski, Assoc. Prof. Milena Stefanova, Dr, has held the academic position of Associate Professor since May 18, 1998. Her teaching commitment is extremely high and significantly exceeds the statutory hours for Sofia University per year. The subjects taught by the candidate (Local Government and Governance, Comparative Local Government, Comparative European Public Administration, Public Interest, Multilevel Governance System), as well as the management of the master's program "European Public Administration", show a clear thematic focus and concentration of Assoc. Stefanova, which is a known guarantee for the quality of her teaching activities.

The attached reference does not contain data on the courses and curricula developed by her, but the large number of bachelors and masters who defended under her guidance, as well as 5 doctoral students who successfully defended their dissertations, is visible.

VII. Administrative and public activities.

From 1982 to 1995 Assoc. Prof. Stefanova was a research specialist dealing with the organization of sociological research, training of survey teams and teaching the discipline of Local Government. From October 2003 to November 2007 he was a municipal councilor, holding the position of Chairman of the Standing Committee on Local Self-Government and Legislation, Member of the Standing Committee on European Integration and Civil Society Relations and Member of the Management Board of the Municipal Guarantee Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises . From October 2003 to October 2007 he was Head of the Department of Public Administration. From November 2007 to November 2011 is Deputy Dean of FF - master's programs. From December 2011 to December 2015 he was the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs with a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree, responsible for accreditation.

I especially emphasize that the occupied administrative positions of the candidate show her extremely high and consistent commitment to the interests of Sofia University and fully correspond to the profile of the specialty "Public Administration".

VIII. Personal impressions of the candidate.

I know the candidate from her work in the field of local self-government and as a colleague with whom we have exchanged opinions and opinions on issues of local government and municipal government.

I am impressed by her broad general culture and authority, her ability to work and her responsiveness, as well as her ability to lead teams.

IX. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the activity and achievements of the candidate.

The following recommendations can be made to the current and future teaching and research work of the candidate:

1. The professional experience and the high expert level of Assoc. Prof. Stefanova require the development and publication of a university textbook, textbook or textbook to be used in the school network, which were not found in the analysis of the minimum national requirements under Article 2b of ZRASRB.
2. The author's statements about the role of the municipality in the modern democratic state are interesting. It is time for the European and our state view on the role and as a structure serving the population to be significantly adjusted and to bring to the fore the far more inherent and original role of organizer of human unity, including in the context of human personality development. in the global reality.
3. The term "municipality" must be strongly discussed and updated, taking into account the fact that its claim to continue to carry the social meaning of its origin has long been untenable and only its administrative-territorial meaning remains.
4. In addition to social municipalities, there are also economic structures and the issue of their objective participation in the processes of the market economy, observing its principles, requires the development of the issue of their possible bankruptcies, reduction of their number and their necessary unification in order to increase economic efficiency. their capacity.
5. The conclusion on page 35 that the territory is: "a relatively inexhaustible source of resources." Is quite controversial.
6. According to the applicant's capabilities, the development of the issue of the correlation of municipal and regional borders, so necessary in the defining EU as "Europe of the regions"...
7. The topic of municipal self-government with unattainable financial independence remains key and undeveloped - partly for a small part of Bulgarian municipalities and entirely for the rest of the majority, as well as the many legal restrictions in this area.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the critical analysis of the submitted documents and works on the competition, I define the set of contributions as essential, building on and developing the existing knowledge in the stated scientific field. This conclusion, together with the quality and responsible teaching, research, expert and organizational activities of the candidate in favor of Sofia University, give me a definite reason to propose to the distinguished members of the scientific jury to be awarded to Assoc. Prof. Milena Hristova Stefanova, Dr. , the academic position of "professor" in PN 3.3. Political Science (Local Government and Self-Government).

June 24, 2021

Sofia

Reviewer:

(Prof. L. Georgiev, PhD)