

OPINION

By: Prof. PhD Ivaylo Dichev,
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member of scientific jury, appointed by the NBU Rector,
Order № 3-PK 194 от 24.06.2021

Regarding: Competition for awarding the Academic Position “Associate Professor” in
Professional Field 3.3. Political Science

Dr. Staykova is the only candidate for the position, her submitted documents are in order and meet the requirements of the NBU. The candidate has long established herself in the field of political studies and is actively involved in the teaching and research work of her institution.

In her doctoral dissertation, successfully defended in 2013, she poses the problem of the complication of forms of citizenship throughout history. The work begins with an in-depth analysis of the concept in order to arrive at the problems posed by increased mobility in the contemporary world. The dissertation is based on field research conducted in Bulgaria, which not only gives the study a factual density but also leads it to one of its main conclusions - the global aspect of contemporary citizenship, situated between globalization and urbanization alongside the intensification of migration processes and the weakening of the role of nation-states. Very interesting are the author's observations on the tension between the normative framework and the real content of citizenship today and in particular in the course of European integration. The contribution is both in the theoretical conceptualization of these processes and in the analysis of the new practices of supranational citizenship today.

The topic of citizenship in the context of the construction of the European Union is also addressed in other of the attached scholarly articles, several of them published in both refereed and foreign journals. Migration issues are analysed with field observations on the most vulnerable groups, such as Roma and young people. Original are Staykova's ideas about what she calls e-citizenship - the rights, competences, practices of the modern person in the virtual space of the web.

Another group of the presented publications deals with different aspects of political culture, a topic that is directly related to the candidate's teaching activity. Here stand out co-authored works related to populism, which is seen as the main threat to both the political and the European project.

Staykova's habilitation work marks a new moment in her scholarly development, which she

justifies as a logical extension of her engagement with citizenship. For modern man, "the city has proved to be one of the strongest identification markers. Not the state - the one my respondents came from or the one they went to - but cities are the main reason why people leave, arrive, become active and integrated citizens" (8). The impetus for the research is also Staykova's specific work with the Sofia municipality.

The study begins with a thorough review of theories of the city, which aims to show that the subject is multilayered and by necessity must have an interdisciplinary approach. The author's main interest is the governance of modern cities and how to engage broad civic participation in this.

Extensive attention is paid to the trends in the development of cities today and the new challenges they face, among which migration is given an important place. For Staykova, it is not only a problem due to the cultural and social differences it amplifies, but also a resource, insofar as attracting talent is an important condition for the development of the modern economy, science and culture. Cities open to migrants are, after all, today "more a multicultural ideal than multicultural policies" (69).

The problems that large concentrations of people pose for the economy and ecology are discussed, as well as the new form of coping that smart cities, managed on the basis of continuous data processing, find. In a chapter, the author discusses the diverse nature of the European city and points to the ways in which the Union is looking to ensure sustainable development. These are followed by a special focus on culture. The different types of municipal policies, the European projects concerning the city, and the results they produce are systematized.

The last chapter focuses the theoretical reflections and principles on the contemporary Bulgarian city. Here the work also gains a practical orientation. The reluctance of Bulgarian politicians to decentralize the territory is noted; "decentralization does not occupy an important enough place on the political agenda" (123). The main question the author poses is how this undesirable tendency can be overcome. Along with decentralization "from above" (e.g., financial), she sees a way to improve the situation by engaging more active citizen participation through referenda, local civic initiatives, NGOs, and public councils. Specific recommendations are given, based on Bulgarian and European legislation. In other words, this study will be useful not only for researchers but also for those who have taken up municipal policymaking.

In her teaching, Dr. Staykova covers a wide range of disciplines, including foreign languages, and fits well into the Political Science Department's programs, and students' evaluation of her work is close to the maximum. She directs programs and seminars, participates in numerous research projects at home and abroad, and feedback on her work is excellent. I do not know her personally, but I am familiar with her participation in research teams under the supervision of Prof. I am familiar

with the research groups of Prof. Krasteva and Prof. Todorov, in which she has her undisputed place.

On the basis of all that has been said so far, I strongly support Dr. Staykova's candidacy for the position of associate professor at NBU.

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Prof. Dr. Ivaylo Dichev