

## OPINION

About the scientific research of Assistant Professor Ivelina Eftimova, PhD  
Regarding her application for the academic position "Associate Professor": Professional  
field 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences (Ethnography – Bulgarian  
ethnology), announced by Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, published in  
State Gazette № 37 on 17.05.2022.

By Prof. Dr. Daniela Koleva, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", member of the  
scientific jury by order № RD-16-133/15.07.2022 of the Rector of Shumen University

### *General characteristics of the scientific research presented by the candidate*

Ivelina Eftimova, PhD, has submitted 23 articles and a monograph (habilitation thesis) entitled *Ethnological aspects of old age and aging in Bulgarian society (from tradition to modernity)*. Over 1/3 of the articles, mostly from recent years, are related to the research that is systematically presented in the monograph. The other thematic areas in which the candidate works are the construction of ethnic and gender identity; inter-ethnic boundaries and relations in local communities; the traditional family; traditional culture and its changes, etc. The research is focused on the region around the city of Shumen and is based on serious fieldwork. Two of the articles are co-authored, for which relevant declarations from the co-authors are attached. Three articles are in English and one in Turkish.

The scientific research submitted by Dr Ivelina Eftimova for this procedure, fully corresponds to the specifics of professional field 3.1 and the specific topic of the procedure - Bulgarian Ethnology.

### *Teaching experience*

Dr Ivelina Eftimova has 13 years of experience as a lecturer at Shumen University. The disciplines she teaches (ethnology, history of religions, ethnography of Bulgaria) are basic in the general scientific field and in the more specific thematic field of the

procedure. In addition, the candidate offers innovative courses based on her research work: "Aging in Culture", "Migration and Identity", etc.

#### *Assessment of habilitation work contributions*

Thematically, Dr. Eftimova's habilitation work fits into the problem area of the anthropology of old age and aging, a field which has been rapidly developing worldwide in recent decades, but still new and insufficiently developed in our country. The introduction of this field into the Bulgarian social sciences and humanities is an indisputable contribution of the author. In this regard, I positively assess her ambition to offer a historical overview of the development of the topic of old age and aging from traditional Bulgarian culture through the policies of the modern state at the end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, the period of the communist regime and the present. Eftimova's successful effort to combine this historical perspective with ethnological research on retirement clubs conducted over the past few years is another important contribution. An undeniable merit of this part of the habilitation work is the empirical support of the research, provided by archival sources, media and rich field material collected in a number of settlements in North-Eastern Bulgaria.

In addition, I would like to note the very good theoretical background of the author, as well as her ability to select precisely those perspectives that are applicable to the specifics of the conducted research. I appreciate her adopted model of the three levels as particularly original and fruitful: macro (societal), meso (institutional) and micro (biographical), as well as the decision to focus on the meso-level without losing sight of the other two. In this way, she manages to capture and to make sense of non-obvious connections between the three levels. The realization of this model in Eftimova's empirical study is another important contribution.

The monograph is very well structured, written in a good academic style and language, with retention of the chosen perspective, coherently developed argumentation and skilful illustrative use of field material.

#### *Critical remarks and suggestions for future research*

Along with the listed merits, the monograph also has certain shortcomings, the most serious of which for me is the lack of a critical appraisal of the sources. The author

could reflect on the extent to which the recollections of her respondents are marked by some nostalgia, and to what extent the reports and annals of the pensioners' clubs present mainly the successes, while glossing over the weaknesses or failures. Some inaccuracies are also disturbing, such as calling the Bulgarian Communist Party a "socialist party" (pp. 85, 191).

The appropriately chosen theoretical approach provides opportunities for deepening the research, which have remained untreated in the monograph. One of them would be the study of the connections and mutual influences with other institutions at the so-called meso level, for example the family. In particular, whether and to what extent a correlation can be established between marital status and activity in pensioners' clubs. A promising direction for enriching the research in this regard is the gender dimension: while in one club there are only four women (p. 118), in other clubs the members are "predominantly women" (p. 157).

Another interesting question is the relationship between pensioners' clubs and those of active fighters against fascism and capitalism before 1990, given the fact that the latter were also of retirement age during the last decades of the regime.

I point out these lapses more as opportunities for future work than as significant deficits in the habilitation work.

### *Conclusion*

The contributions of the scientific works of Dr. Eftimova's, especially in her habilitation thesis, give me a solid reason to support her candidacy for Associate Professor in Professional field 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences (Ethnography – Bulgarian ethnology).

I declare that I have no joint publications with the candidate, I have no conflict of interest and I have not detected plagiarism.



Sofia, 26/08/2022

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