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OPINION

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on the scholarly works submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies, scientific specialty Sociology (Socio-demographic Imbalances and Inequalities, Methodology of Sociological Research), announced in State Gazette No. 56 of July 11, 2025, with candidate Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Lubomir Ivov Stoytchev

I. Research activity and results

1. Evaluation of the monographic work, including assessment of the author's scientific and applied-scientific contributions

As I am a co-author of the monograph submitted by the candidate for the academic position of "Associate Professor" Lubomir Stoytchev, I will evaluate only his individual texts in the collective monograph entitled:

"The Housing Situation in the Republic of Bulgaria. Housing Needs of Vulnerable Ethnic and Religious Communities."

The author presents an in-depth, multi-layered, and multifaceted analysis of the housing conditions of vulnerable ethnic communities in the country, with a special focus on Roma populations, developed in a comparative perspective – European, regional, and urban/rural. His methodology includes the collection, processing, and interpretation of statistical data; literature and document review; and an analysis of survey results on public attitudes regarding key policy principles related to housing for the poor and homeless (e.g., permitting or banning the sale of municipal housing, providing rent vouchers for families at risk of poverty, and demolishing habitable illegal housing). Such a multidimensional analysis of Roma housing conditions and large urban ghettos is one of the few comprehensive studies conducted in Bulgaria in recent decades.

- A theoretical contribution is the demonstrated causal link between poverty and social exclusion as the main determinant of poor Roma housing conditions—contrary to the dominant political and media discourse emphasizing cultural factors, such as "Roma unwillingness to live among non-Roma," "specific hygiene habits," or "propensity for illegal building." Dr. Stoytchev convincingly argues for a paradigm shift in both the scientific and political discourse on Roma housing issues.
- A methodological contribution lies in proposing new indicators for monitoring and evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of housing policies and measures.
- A scientific contribution is the discovery of new empirical facts—for example, data on ethnic Bulgarians' attitudes toward solving severe housing problems among the poor, and attitudes among Roma and non-Roma toward cohabitation on the same street or in shared rented housing.
- Further theoretical contributions include the interpretation of statistical data on housing availability and the socio-economic consequences of overcrowding, as well as identifying "blind spots" in policy and research regarding illegal construction and unpaid utility use among non-Roma groups as well. Dr. Stoytchev also proposes previously unimplemented policy measures for the rental and real estate markets to increase supply and extend building lifespans.
- The applied contribution of the study lies in identifying public attitudes toward various housing policies. I fully endorse Dr. Stoytchev's self-assessment that the findings provide valuable insights for policymakers about the social feasibility and potential public support for specific housing measures.

"Attitudes and Social Distance of Bulgarians of Fertile Age Toward Roma" and "Attitudes Toward Immigrants"

These two chapters offer nuanced analyses of interethnic attitudes and social distances among Bulgarians of fertile age (women 18–50, men 18–55). Dr. Stoytchev focuses on the risks that negative or discriminatory attitudes pose to economic development, civil society, meritocracy, and democratic governance.

Theoretical contributions include the scientifically grounded interpretation of data identifying demographic, regional, educational, and socio-economic subgroups more open to Roma inclusion, and those resistant to policies of social integration. He also identifies key socio-demographic determinants shaping attitudes toward Roma—generational differences, level of urbanization, education, media influence, and personal contacts.

Comparative analyses with Western democracies and prior Bulgarian studies reveal unique national patterns—for example, that higher education in Bulgaria does not significantly reduce prejudice or

social distance toward Roma and immigrants. This finding has critical implications for sustainable democratic development.

Overall, the texts by Dr. Stoytchev confirm and advance sociological theory, offering significant applied contributions.

2. Evaluation of contribution in other publications submitted after appointment as Senior Assistant Professor

It seems to me that the most important aspect in evaluating the other publications submitted by Dr. L. Stoytchev is his demonstration of strong skills in statistical analysis and in the interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as in the presentation of the theoretical hypotheses and conclusions derived from them.

Dr. Stoytchev processes and analyzes data (regressions, correlations, standardization, weighting, etc.) using the statistical programming language R. In his publications, he skillfully applies a wide range of methods, such as direct and indirect standardization, logistic regression of the determinants of the studied social phenomena, and various types of correlation analyses — Spearman, tetrachoric, and others.

In this way, the results he publishes constitute scientifically grounded and statistically significant empirical findings. His high level of theoretical preparation, interdisciplinary competencies and skills, as well as his ability to apply diverse and complex methods such as machine learning and neural networks, and to offer a convincing theoretical interpretation of the results, position him as a recognized and respected researcher and scholar.

3. Citations by other authors

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. L. Stoytchev has submitted for the competition only a portion of the citations of the scholarly works of which he is an author or co-author. What stands out is his conscientiousness in selecting the citations and his effort to include primarily those that specifically refer to his own contributions within co-authored publications.

And although I began by noting that he has presented only a limited number of his citations, he nonetheless significantly exceeds the minimum requirements for obtaining the academic position of Associate Professor.

4. Evaluation of the results from participation in research projects and the application of the obtained results in practice

I was the principal supervisor of a significant number of the research projects in which Senior Assistant Professor L. Stoytchev has participated as a coordinator. His involvement has been of exceptional

importance in defining the samples, in formulating, justifying, and testing the empirical indicators, in organizing, conducting, and supervising the collection of field data, as well as in the review of scientific literature and documents. He has always played an important role in the statistical processing of data and has carried out a substantial part of their theoretical analysis. He has consistently demonstrated uncompromising precision in verifying the statistical significance of the data we have interpreted.

An essential part of his contribution to the projects was his assumption of the entire administrative workload related to the organization and implementation of international projects, maintaining ongoing communication with project sponsors and partners, with the relevant institutions, and with those that could assist in providing reliable administrative data. Moreover, he translated and edited reports and texts into English. In some studies, he also took responsibility for organizing external monitoring and/or financial audits of Bulgaria's participation in international projects.

Over the course of our 16 years of collaboration, he has developed remarkable organizational and communication skills.

5. Scientific contribution, originality of the presented works, and reliability of the scientific data provided

All scholarly works submitted by Senior Assistant Professor L. Stoytchev for the competition are original and authored by him. The reliability of the scientific data presented in them is indisputable and has been conscientiously demonstrated through proper citation of the instruments used, the statistical significance of the results, and the appropriate selection of methods for data processing and analysis—allowing any researcher with access to the data to verify their accuracy.

His diligence in mastering innovative and complex methods and his success in applying them is truly impressive.

II. Teaching and Educational Activity

Dr. L. Stoytchev is not a lecturer at any Bulgarian or Western university, but he is recognized as one of the best lecturers and consultants at the Institute for Population and Human Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IPHS–BAS). He has participated as a lecturer and instructor in seminars and training schools for doctoral students at the Centre for Population Studies and at IPHS–BAS since 2009—that is, even before he defended his doctoral dissertation.

The courses and training sessions he has conducted at IPHS–BAS, as listed in his reference report, are among the most attended by PhD students, young researchers, and established scholars. He possesses the rare ability to explain complex statistical methods clearly and accessibly, while his presentations on

statistical and mathematical modeling of social processes and phenomena have been among the most distinguished scientific and teaching events at the Institute in recent years.
Doctoral students and colleagues of all ages and with all academic degrees and positions regularly seek his consultations on methodological, theoretical, or practical issues.

III. Fulfillment of academic position requirements

In my opinion Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Lubomir Ivov Stoytchev meets all criteria for appointment as Associate Professor.

IV. Personal impressions

Dr. Stoytchev has an excellent academic background from Sofia University, the University of Oslo, and Oxford University. Over the 16 years I have known him, he has consistently expanded his expertise in sociology, quantitative methodology, and data science techniques applied to social research.

V. Conclusion

Based on the materials, publications, and long-term collaboration, I conclude that Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Lubomir Ivov Stoytchev fully meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the internal rules of the Institute for Population and Human Studies, BAS, for the academic position of "Associate Professor."
He is an established scholar with a clear research profile and notable academic output.

I fully support the application of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Lubomir Ivov Stoytchev for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the Institute for Population and Human Studies – BAS.

Date: October 20, 2025 Signature