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OPINION

By Prof. DSc Maya Dimitrova Grekova, retired faculty member in the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", serving as a member of the scientific jury appointed by Order № РД-6-341/10.09.2025 of the Director of the Institute for Population and Human Studies,

Regarding the competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in professional field 3.1 Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies (Social and Demographic Imbalances and Inequalities; Methodology of Sociological Research), announced in State Gazette № 56, dated 11.07.2025, for the needs of the "Sociology and Social Demography" section at the Institute for Population and Human Studies (IPHS), Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS).

Within the statutory deadline, only one candidate submitted documents for participation in the competition – Dr. Lyubomir Ivov Stoychev, Assistant Professor in the "Sociology and Social Demography" Section, Department of Demography at the Institute for Population and Human Studies – BAS. At its first session, the scientific jury established that Assistant Professor Dr. Lyubomir Ivov Stoychev meets the minimum national requirements as well as the additional requirements of BAS and IPHS and is admitted to participate in the competition.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Lyubomir Stoychev submitted the following for the competition:

- habilitation work – 3 chapters from a collective monograph with clearly designated authorship of the candidate; in the same collective monograph, the candidate is also credited as co-author of the Introduction and one chapter;
- 9 articles published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals, of which 3 are co-authored and 1 concerns the topic of the doctoral dissertation, published before its defense;
- 1 co-authored study published in a scientific publication indexed and abstracted in internationally renowned scientific databases;
- 6 studies published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals and in an edited collective volume, of which 3 are co-authored;

- 8 chapters from collective monographs, of which 7 are co-authored and 1 pertains to the doctoral dissertation topic, published before its defense.

For this opinion, I exclude from my evaluation the co-authored publications — this should not be understood as diminishing the candidate's contribution to these works, nor the allocation of points for their inclusion among the publications submitted for the announced competition, but rather as an acknowledgment that it is impossible to distinguish the candidate's individual authorship substantively. I also exclude the two publications related to the topic of the dissertation, to the extent that they were published prior to its defense. All other publications considered are within the scope of the announced competition and convincingly represent the candidate's research interests and scholarly achievements.

Dr. Lyubomir Stoychev has participated in major international and national research projects addressing issues of social inequalities and poverty, ethnic minorities, majority-minority interactions and coexistence, as well as Bulgarians-immigrants. Based on the findings from these studies, he has developed independent data processing methodologies, which are analyzed in the publications submitted for consideration in this competition.

I would summarize the scientific and applied contributions in the independent publications submitted by Dr. Stoychev for the competition as follows:

- The well-founded development of indicators and/or independent processing of data from international and national research studies, enabling the elucidation of latent dimensions of the investigated problems and/or the formulation of hypotheses concerning the relationships between social characteristics of various socio-demographic groups.

I refer to: the analysis of housing conditions in Bulgaria and the need for indicators that clearly delineate the problems and refine the current situation, in order to overcome the ethnicization of the issue concerning illegal housing and the resulting intensified negative attitudes towards Roma through the development of an adequate housing policy (chapter 5 of the collective monograph); the analysis of negative attitudes towards Roma in Bulgaria, which refines conclusions drawn in previous studies and argues the hypothesis that shared

living, work, and educational spaces mitigate these attitudes among certain groups of ethnic Bulgarians (chapter 8 of the collective monograph); the analysis of negative attitudes towards immigrants in Bulgaria, highlighting specific patterns of their distribution within the Bulgarian population and enabling the identification of immigrant groups towards whom Bulgarian citizens demonstrate significantly greater tolerance (chapter 9 of the collective monograph, as well as publication 9.3 from the attached Reference on fulfillment of minimum requirements by the candidate in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor"); and the analysis of negative attitudes of ethnic Bulgarians towards mixed marriages with members of the Turkish ethnic group, revealing significant nuances in their distribution (publications 7.2, 9.4 from the attached Reference on...).

- Outlining socio-demographic profiles of distinct groups within the Bulgarian population:

The group of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET), within which Roma youth are disproportionately represented; however, the reasons for this phenomenon are complex and largely the result of inadequate and/or inconsistently implemented housing policies, as well as policies in the fields of education and employment (publication 7.1 of the attached Reference for...).

The group of short-term emigrants returning to Bulgaria, whose profile is critically important for designing policies aimed at their reintegration, but which does not constitute a reliable basis for concluding the proportions of returnees with specific characteristics (gender, marital status, place of residence, education) relative to the corresponding shares of emigrants, due to the absence of data on their numbers and respective socio-demographic attributes (publication 9.1 of the attached Reference for...).

- Identification of socio-demographic determinants of negative attitudes toward ethnic minorities in Bulgaria (notably toward Roma), various immigrant groups in the country, and interethnic marriages between Bulgarians and Turks – in the publications mentioned above.

Based on the analysis of empirical data from these studies, Dr. Stoychev formulates specific recommendations for the development of pertinent social, demographic, and educational policies, which I regard as applied contributions.

An important quality of Dr. Stoychev's scholarly publications is the accurate acknowledgement of the limitations of the conducted analyses, as well as the debatable nature of some of the drawn conclusions. This reflects both professional responsibility and the perspective and motivation for future researches.

Dr. Stoychev's publications are valued and cited by colleagues in Bulgaria and abroad who work on similar socio-demographic issues, as evidenced by the attached List of Citations of Asst. Prof. Dr. Lyubomir Ivov Stoychev submitted for the competition at the Institute for Population and Human Studies – BAS for the academic position of "Associate Professor." I would recommend that Dr. Stoychev increase the visibility of the results of his future researches by publishing in the pages of the sole Bulgarian sociological journal, *Sociological Problems*.

I have no joint publications with, nor do I have a personal acquaintance with, the candidate for the announced competition.

Conclusion: Asst. Professor Dr. Lyubomir Ivov Stoychev fulfills the legal requirements and the criteria set by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for the academic position of Associate Professor in professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology, and Cultural Studies (Social and Demographic Imbalances and Inequalities, Methodology of Sociological Research). Taking into account Dr. Stoychev's professional development as a researcher and the quality of his scholarly publications, I will vote in favor of the scientific jury recommending to the Scientific Council of the Institute for Population and Human Studies – BAS the election of Assistant Professor Dr. Lyubomir Ivov Stoychev as Associate Professor (Social and Demographic Imbalances and Inequalities, Methodology of Sociological Research).

Prof. Maya Grekova, DSc

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