

REVIEW

by Associate Professor Plamen Marinov Ralchev, PhD,

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of the materials submitted for participation in the competition

to hold an academic position of Associate Professor at University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" in the field of higher education **3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences,**

Professional field **3.3. Political Science (Elections and Electoral Systems)**

In the competition for Associate Professor, announced in the State Gazette, issue 40 of 14.05.2021 and on the website of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of Political Science and National Security at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, the candidate who participates is Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Daniela Dobreva Pastarmadzhieva from the Department of Political Science and National Security at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski".

1. General Presentation of the Received Documents

By order № P33-3167 of 13.07.2021 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU) I was appointed as a member of the scientific jury of a competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in PU in the field of higher education **3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional Field 3.3 Political Science (Elections and Electoral Systems)**, announced for the needs of the Department of Political Science and National Security at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences.

For participation in the announced competition the only candidate who has submitted documents is Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Daniela Dobreva Pastarmadzhieva from the Department of Political Science and National Security at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski".

The set of paper materials presented by Dr. Daniela Pastarmadzhieva is in accordance with the Regulations for development of the academic staff of the University of Plovdiv, and includes the following documents:

- application form to the Rector for admission to participate in the competition;
- CV in European format;
- diploma for higher education with acquired educational qualification degree "Master" - notarized copy;
- diploma for educational and scientific degree "Doctor" - notarized copy
- list of academic publications;

- reference for compliance with the minimum national and additional faculty requirements;
- annotations of the materials under Art. 65. of RAASPU, including self-assessment of contributions;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
- certificate of work experience;
- documents for educational work;
- documents for research work;
- documents in accordance with the additional requirements of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences;
- other documents.

For participation in the competition, the candidate Daniela Pastarmadzhieva has submitted a total of 41 scientific publications, including 3 studies, 1 monograph, 1 textbook and a list of 36 articles and reports. 29 scientific publications are accepted for review, of which:

- Monograph - 1;
- Textbook - 1;
- Studies - 3;
- Articles - 10;
- Reports – 14.

These scientific publications are beyond the thematic and substantive scope of the candidate's doctoral dissertation, were not presented in the competition for the academic position of Chief Assistant Professor, contribute to the professional field 3.3 Political Science and are considered in the final evaluation. The scientific papers on the dissertation, submitted in a competition for the academic position of Chief Assistant Professor, as well as the applied scientific papers with contribution in professional fields 3.7 Administration and Management and 3.8 Economics are not reviewed. The distribution of scientific publications by relevant sections, in the country and abroad, is as follows: 23 in the country and 6 abroad.

2. Brief Biographical Notes

As can be seen from the submitted documents, in 2007 Daniela Pastarmadzhieva obtained a Master's degree in Law at the University of National and World Economy, Sofia. In the period 2010-2013 she was a doctoral student at the Department of Political Science at the University of National and World Economy. In 2013 he obtained a PhD degree in Political Science, defending a dissertation on "Political subcultures in Bulgaria in the process of transition to democracy (party and generational subcultures: a comparative analysis)." Since 2013, she has been conducting seminars on "Political Culture" for students at the University of National and World Economy. Since March 2016, she has been a Senior Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science and National Security at the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. At the University of Plovdiv, she has developed courses and continues to conduct lectures and seminars in key disciplines in the study of Political Science, namely "Political Culture", "Elections and Electoral Systems" and "Comparative Political Studies". Regarding the scientific work of Daniela Pastarmadzhieva, proved by the evidence presented so far, she has realized 50 scientific publications, some of which are in the framework of research projects. She is the head of one of the projects, which is also on the topic of the competition. The candidate has more than eight years of teaching and more than ten years of research experience.

3. General Characteristics of the Candidate's Achievements

From the presented report on class and extracurricular activities it is evident that Dr. Pastarmadzhieva has developed the following courses, in which she leads or has led lectures and seminars, namely:

- Political science
- Political culture
- Elections and electoral systems
- Comparative policy research
- Parliamentarianism and the rule of law.

All courses, except for Parliamentarianism and the Rule of Law, are available and accessible to students on the university online system Moodle. The e-courses include general information and contact of the teacher, distribution of classes in the semester, exam questionnaire, materials on individual topics, links for learning in an electronic environment, assignments, etc.

Alongside with the above mentioned, she also teaches a course on Political Culture in English for students who study at the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" under the Erasmus+ program. Under the same program, the candidate has lectured at two foreign universities, namely ISCTE - IUL in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2017 and at Cappadocia University, Mustafapaşa, Ürgüp, Turkey in 2019.

On the course pursuant to the topic of this competition, namely Elections and Electoral Systems Dr. Pastarmadzhieva has published a textbook Pastarmadzhieva, D. (2020) Methods for Calculating the Election Result (textbook on discipline "Elections and Electoral Systems"), Plovdiv: Fast Print Books, ISBN 978-619-236-179-2.

Daniela Pastarmadzhieva's active work with students is impressive. In 2017, together with students mainly from the Political Science major, 4th year, they published a collection of student works "Elections and Electoral Systems", in which students discuss all types of electoral systems. Dr. Pastarmadzhieva is the editor and scientific supervisor of the collection. In the same year, she supervised the work of the student Antoni Gerasimov, who

defended his thesis with an excellent grade. She is also an academic mentor in both phases of the Student Internships project. In addition, Daniela Pastarmadzhieva is the leader of a student research project dedicated to the electoral systems of the European Union member states. It includes ten students and two doctoral students. It is positive that this project involves students from different professional fields - Political Science, Economics, Administration and Management. Specific to the work on this project is that Dr. Pastarmadzhieva organized two training courses for students to prepare them to write scientific articles.

An indication of the candidate's attitude towards her students are the competitions for pre-election forecasts, which she organizes. Dr. Pastarmadzhieva has found a way to encourage participants in these competitions through awards, diplomas and certificates.

Evaluation of the scientific and applied scholarly activity of the candidate

Within the list of scientific publications with contribution to Professional field 3.3 Political Sciences, there are 14 titles in the scientific specialty of the competition, of which 1 independent monograph (Appendix 1), 1 textbook (Appendix 2), 7 reports (Appendices 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5 , 5.9, 5.10, 5.13) and 5 articles in scientific journals (Appendices 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.8), two of which (Appendices 4.2 and 4.3) in a scientific journal indexed in primary databases (Scopus and Web of Science).

The main habilitation work of the candidate "Majority vote electoral system and the development of societies" is directly related to the topic of the announced competition. The monographic scientific research is on a highly debatable topic in the Bulgarian political process. The author sets an ambitious goal of the study, namely to determine whether the countries with majority vote electoral systems are more stable and with better opportunities for socio-economic development than the countries using proportional or mixed systems, and whether there is correlation between the type of electoral system and the level of development of countries in the social, economic and political spheres. The study covers 183 countries. The subject of the study are the electoral systems for electing members of the legislature in the analyzed countries, as well as various measures for their functioning in the social, economic and political spheres. The author sets several tasks: 1) Synthesizes the conceptual framework of electoral engineering, deriving the dependencies between the electoral system and other socio-political structures; 2) examines and summarizes the main

highlights of the debate on the introduction of a majority electoral system in Bulgaria from 1989 to the present; 3) study the experience of the Balkan states in connection with the implementation of a majority electoral system since 1989; 4) presents empirical data on the distribution of electoral systems worldwide and analyzes the outlined dependencies; 5) analyzes and summarizes the accumulated theoretical and empirical data; 6) on the basis of the conducted research makes a forecast for the possibility of the introduction of a majority electoral system that could lead to the development of Bulgaria in the public, economic and/or political sphere.

The main research thesis of the author is that the change of the electoral system in Bulgaria to any of the majority varieties does not have the potential to ensure positive development in terms of social, economic and political environment. This statement is supplemented by the following sub-theses: 1) Electoral engineering alone cannot bring about significant change and compensate for existing weaknesses, thus ensuring development. 2) Majority electoral systems are applied mainly in countries with low results in terms of the functioning of democracy, economy, civil rights and freedoms and others; 3) Attempts to implement majority electoral systems in the Balkans have failed.

A wide range of research approaches and methods have been used. The main elements of electoral engineering are systematized within the framework of the literature review. An overview of opinions, positions and analyses in connection with the Bulgarian debate on the introduction of a majority election is also presented. The monographic study combines statistical methods of analysis with a historical and comparative approach.

The book is structured in three chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the concept of electoral engineering, clarifies its nature, goals and effects, as well as the factors that affect it. The consequences of the application of different types of electoral systems are also indicated. The second chapter summarizes highlights from the Bulgarian debate on the introduction of a majority electoral system after 1989, and also examines the general framework in Europe and the Balkans with a view to similarities in terms of historical and social development. The third chapter presents the empirical results for the development of countries with different electoral systems, assessed by a set of indicators, and dependencies are identified.

The structured conceptual framework and the clarification of the basic concepts provide an opportunity to continue the research in the context of Bulgaria. The author gives examples

from which it is clear that electoral engineering should be approached with special care when trying to do so in the context of 3 post-totalitarian countries from Central and Eastern Europe. In these countries, factors of a historical and cultural nature can lead to unexpected results when electoral legislation changes. This is of particular importance for Bulgaria, as it belongs to the group of countries in question. The first chapter gives grounds to conclude that some positive political effect can indeed be achieved through electoral engineering, but this is especially true for societies where there are serious conflicts. In such societies, the electoral system can stabilize the confrontational situation by providing an opportunity to represent different social groups that in principle have the potential for radicalization.

However, electoral engineering cannot compensate for the weaknesses of the functioning of a political system. The change in the electoral rules has a limited range of consequences and in this sense one should not create an expectation for a radical transformation in case of a change in the legislation concerning the procedures for forming a legislative body. The study has a total volume of 212 pages, of which 163 pages of main text, 17 pages of references with 134 sources and 32 pages of appendices. A very good impression is made by the fact that the author makes short summaries at the end of each chapter, which also serves as a logical connection to the next one. The research is characterized by an extremely rich selection of sources, depth and complexity of the analysis and high practical value.

The monographic study ends with conclusions and summaries of the nature and effects of the majority vote and its possible consequences on Bulgarian socio-political development. The author ambitiously, convincingly and justifiably formulates the claims for contributions of her scientific work in two main directions - development of scientific knowledge in the Bulgarian political science on electoral engineering, as well as applicability in the educational process of students of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski". Dr. Pastarmadzhieva's scientific work also has a public contribution to informing and enriching the public debate on the advantages and disadvantages of the introduction of a majority vote in Bulgaria.

Daniela Pastarmadzhieva's monographic study is on a significant topic, concerning political theory and practice and in comparative terms - with direct application to the Bulgarian political system. The research contributes to the problematization, analysis, synthesis and generalization of issues linking the majority electoral system with the qualities of the socio-political system and the potential and opportunities for development of the political community.

In addition to the published monograph, the candidate in the competition has a published textbook: Pastarmadzhieva, D. (2020) Methods for calculating the election result (textbook in the discipline "Elections and Electoral Systems").

The monographic work, the textbook and the published articles and reports form three main directions of the research activity concerning the scientific specialty of the competition, namely "Elections and electoral systems":

- 1) The relationship between the type of electoral system and various aspects of the functioning of states, including the degree of democracy, representation, stability, continuity in governance, etc.
- 2) Influence of the different methods for calculating the election result and in particular in the proportional electoral systems, on the representation, participation of smaller political parties, utilization of the votes, etc.
- 3) Objectives and methods of electoral engineering and the factors determining its necessity.

In general and in particular, the scientific publications of the candidate submitted for review correspond as much as possible to the scientific field of the announced competition and represent a systematic upgrade and deepening in the scholarly work.

4. Assessment of the personal accomplishments of the candidate

Dr. Pastarmadzhieva's scholarly publications examine in detail various aspects of electoral engineering, which complements and enriches the existing knowledge in Bulgaria in this scientific field. The concept of electoral engineering (Appendix 1) is brought to the forefront, operationalized and developed, which has been previously underrated in the Bulgarian political science literature. For comparison, in Western political science the concept is well known. One of the main focuses of the research is the role of the social context (Appendix 1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.9, 5.10) and in particular the political culture. In the context of electoral engineering, examples are given of the results that the majority electoral systems can produce, which in the degree of its detail is also a novelty for the Bulgarian political science. One of the most significant scientific contributions of the conducted research is the empirically proven connection between the type of electoral system and the general assessment of the development of the countries (Appendix 1, 4.6, 4.8, 5.5, 5.13). This is the basis for further research in which to test an even wider range of indicators, including

dynamics, as well as to study specific cases. Dr. Pastarmadzhieva also started the conceptualization of the issues related to the right of withdrawal (Appendix 4.3).

Scientific and applied contributions

Dr. Pastarmadzhieva's scientific work reflects the renewed debate on the introduction of a majority electoral system in Bulgaria. She is motivated to look for empirical evidence for conceptual formulations that will provide answers to current social, economic and political demands, questions and problems of society. The monograph, scientific articles and reports present a number of starting points that should be taken into account when choosing a system for forming a legislative body, as well as the effects that the different approaches produce. Part of the research is focused on the Balkans (Annexes 4.1 and 5.10) and/ or on specific Balkan countries (Annex 5.9), given the fact that Bulgaria belongs to this region and has similarities with other countries on the peninsula.

The possibilities for holding parliamentary elections during the COVID-19 pandemic provide a practical look at the theoretical voting opportunities applicable in a pandemic, but also at the approaches already applied by other countries (Annex 5.2). Dr. Pastarmadzhieva makes a careful analysis of the arguments for the introduction of a majority electoral system in Bulgaria, distinguishing between those that correspond to theory and practice, and those that mislead citizens about the results they can expect (Appendix 5.4). The practical dimensions presented in the research, empirical data and the analysis of the Bulgarian debate, increase the public awareness on the topic, contribute to constructive discussions and better legislative solutions.

Educational contributions

Dr. Daniela Pastarmadzhieva is an author of lecture courses related to the thematic area of this competition. She innovatively implements in teaching all the results of her research work. Since the academic year 2020/2021, Electoral Engineering has been included as a separate topic in the course "Elections and Electoral Systems", which is studied by students of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski". A textbook has been published focusing on the calculation of the election result for the different types of electoral systems and the methods used. For each of the methods there is a task with a solution, a link to an example from practice and tasks for individual assignments. (Application 2)

An indisputable assessment of the significance of Dr. Pastarmadzhieva's contributions is also contained in the reference to the citation of her publications both in the country and abroad, which testifies for her international recognition as a scholar.

5. Critical remarks and recommendations

The issue of elections and electoral systems as a technology for producing political representation is to some extent secondary to the general crisis of representative democracy - the growing fragmentation and heterogeneity of those represented against the background of dynamically changing structures that must bring forth their representatives, which lately quite often are alternative or external (some call them "unsystematic players") for the already recruited political elites. How will the crisis of democracy affect the development of societies? Is the fatigue of politics in some societies also due to frustration with elections and electoral processes, and what happens when we replace politics/governance with management? ... These are issues that focus more on elections and electoral systems as a philosophy, not just as a technology. This by no means diminishes the qualities of scholarly work of the candidate, but rather contains a provocative recommendation for future research work.

6. Personal impressions

I have known Daniela Pastarmadzhieva since the time she was working on her doctoral dissertation, and I attended her public defense afterwards. Since then, I have been following her scientific work and academic development almost continuously.

I am convinced that having her onboard Plovdiv University has a valuable lecturer and researcher who manages to pass on her knowledge, skills, energy and motivation to her students, which I have witnessed as a reviewer of her research projects, in which students are actively involved. Apart from being academically engaged, Dr. Pastarmadzhieva also holds responsible civic positions on current public issues. She is a respected member of the Bulgarian Political Science community. Her monograph synthesizes a response to the public debate on the majority system and provides empirical evidence for the position taken by the Bulgarian Association for Political Science that this system is not suitable for Bulgaria and will not produce the expected results.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials submitted by Daniela Pastarmadzhieva meet all the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for implementation of ZRASRB and the respective Regulations of PU "Paisii Hilendarski".

The candidate in the competition has submitted a sufficient number of scientific papers, published after the materials used in the defense of the PhD degree and in the competition for the academic position of Senior Assistant Professor. The quantitative indicators of the criteria for holding the academic position of Associate Professor are fully met.

In the works of the candidate there are original scientific and applied contributions, which have received public approbation in journals and scientific collections. Scholarly publications have practical applicability, as some of them are directly oriented to the educational work. Daniela Pastarmadzhieva's scientific and teaching qualification is undoubted and indisputable. She strictly adheres to the norms of academic ethics. No plagiarism was found.

The results achieved by Daniela Pastarmadzhieva in the teaching and research activities fully comply with the specific requirements of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, adopted in connection with the Regulations of the University of Plovdiv for the application of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, analysis of their significance and the scientific and practical contributions they contain, I solemnly give my **positive assessment** and recommend the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences for the appointment of Daniela Dobрева Pastarmadzhieva to the academic position of Associate Professor at the University of Plovdiv "P. Hilendarski" in professional field 3.3. Political Science (Elections and electoral systems).

9.09.2021

Reviewer:

Associate Professor Plamen Ralchev, PhD