

O P I N I O N

from Associate Prof. Maria Jeliaskova, department “Public Policies and Social Changes”,
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, BAS

concerning the scientific work of Dr. Teodora Peneva, participant in the competition for the academic position “Associate Professor”, announced by the Economic Research Institute at BAS for the needs of the department “Macroeconomics”, in professional direction 3.8 Economics in "Poverty and social protection", published in the State Gazette, issue. 44/ 19.05.2023

1. General description of the materials presented

Dr. Teodora Peneva is the only candidate for the above-mentioned competition and her scientific interests, achievements and scientific profile fully correspond to the requirements of this competition.

Dr. Peneva participates in the competition with:

- 3 independent monographs, one of which is the habilitation publication "Energy Poverty in Bulgaria: Dimensions and Factors", published in 2022; another is from 2021, "Innovative model of patronage care in Bulgaria", and the third one "Measuring energy poverty in Bulgaria", also issued in 2021, is based on her PhD thesis,
- as well as with 5 articles related to the topic of energy poverty, of which 2 in English in scientific journals indexed in SCOPUS and another two in a scientific journal indexed in ERIH+.

Quantitatively, these publications cover and exceed the requirements laid down in the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff and related regulations, as well as the additional requirements of the Economic Research Institute of BAS.

The publications combine in-depth theoretical analysis, a wide range of empirical data, review and discussion of existing policy measures, clearly focused proposals for improvements and recommendations.

Publications submitted for participation in this competition are clearly distinguished from publications used to meet the minimum requirements for "PhD" and "Chief Assistant".

2. General characteristics of the applicant's scientific & applied activity

In the structure of Dr. Peneva's general academic activity, scientific research clearly predominates. The publications presented demonstrate scientific activity of significant scale, intensity and depth of research.

The main focus is the extremely actual problem of energy poverty. Based on a broad and in-depth knowledge of existing practices and theoretical developments in the field, Dr. Peneva analyses

various methods for its measurement, applies them to the Bulgarian situation, discusses their adequacy and formulates clear proposals.

At the same time, the monograph dedicated to patronage care in our country provides an overview, analysis and recommendations regarding home social patronage in Bulgaria.

Along with the publications, Teodora Peneva has participated with reports in numerous international and national scientific forums, as well as in various scientific research projects and sociological studies. She was invited and participated in the Commission for Energy Efficiency and Energy Poverty at the European Green Deal Advisory Board of the Council of Ministers; in a working group for the development of a Law amending and supplementing the Energy Law and the Ordinance for determining the conditions, order and criteria for determining energy-poor households in the period; with expertise to the Economic and Social Council of the Republic of Bulgaria in relation to water, energy and mobile poverty. These activities, on one hand, are a recognition of the fact that Dr. Peneva is widely recognized as an established expert, and on the other hand, they create opportunities for intensive exchange and, accordingly, for the improvement of the proposed solutions. The interaction between theory and practice, between analytical research and practical possibilities is a distinctive feature of Dr. Peneva's scientific activity.

The quantitatively and above all qualitatively significant scientific production submitted for participation in the competition is the result of the fact that Teodora Peneva is a very active researcher and expert.

3. Analysis of the applicant's scientific achievements, clear description of scientific contributions

The presented report on scientific contributions demonstrates the main directions of Dr. Peneva's scientific activity in both directions: energy poverty and patronage care.

Dr. Teodora Peneva is a well-established, leading researcher in the field of energy poverty in Bulgaria. Her scientific work in this respect both represents a systematic assessment of the state of affairs in the field and outlines clear guidelines for both future researches and policy improvements. The habilitation monograph is a thoughtful and in-depth study, which is distinguished by clearly formulated and convincingly argued theses with an impressive palette of analysed topics and subtopics. In particular and synthesized as main contributions, I would point out:

- The elaborated estimates for the level of energy poverty in our country based on established indicators of the cost measurement approach provide significant opportunities for further analyses and monitoring. A series of Dr. Peneva's own scientific products significantly enrich the existing data and create a very important and previously non-existent information database.
- The proposed methodology for determining an official energy poverty line in the country, the recommended definitions of "energy poverty" and "vulnerable consumers", are extremely important both analytically and practically. Dr. Peneva conscientiously and innovatively seeks and formulates nationally adapted options for determining energy poverty in our country.

- The focus on opportunities and recommendations to reduce energy poverty has a clear scientific-applied meaning and demonstrates a consistent logic from scientific analysis to necessary adequate socio-political measures. The systematization, analysis and recommendations regarding the state, policies and policy measures towards energy poverty in the country are another undoubted contribution.

I consider Dr. Peneva's overall achievements regarding energy poverty in our country to be extremely useful both academically and practically. I think also that they are widely recognized by various stakeholders.

It is also important to note the contribution regarding patronage care. Analysing the current state of the regulatory framework and based on empirical research, Dr. Peneva suggests optimizing the existing model by stabilizing and expanding services and improving price levels.

4. Reflection of the candidate's scientific publications in the academic literature

The citations presented by the applicant in the competition, both in scientific journals referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases, as well as in monographs and collective volumes with scientific peer review, significantly exceed the minimum requirements of the Law on the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, its regulations and the requirements of the Economic Research Institute at BAS.

I am convinced that Dr. Peneva's analyses in her capacity as an established leading researcher and expert in the field of energy poverty in our country are very useful and widely used by various interested parties. I also consider that this will increase even more in the future with the necessary social changes and the green transition.

5. Recommendations

Dr. Peneva is an extremely purposeful social scientist – her works demonstrate a clearly defined consistent focus, intensive analytical and empirical activity, search for answers to social challenges, clearly formulated political proposals. Regarding energy poverty, they represent a complete scientific result.

At the same time, I hope that Teodora Peneva will continue her intensive scholarly work on energy poverty, and in this regard, my recommendation is for a future expansion of the analytical perspective to the mutual influences between energy poverty and the overall socio-economic context, shaped by public policies. More specifically, for example, the dependence of energy poverty on wider processes such as the structuring, management and liberalization of services of general economic interest, the functional conditioning of the so-called "at-risk-of-poverty" line by the produced social inequalities, the mutual dependence and influence between various sub-areas of social policy such as social assistance, labor market measures, housing policy, health care, etc. Generators of energy poverty can be, and often are, wider structural processes in society and the public policies behind them. Social policy can restrict, but it can hardly carry out overall adequate solutions against different types of poverty if other policies intensively produce them.

6. Conclusion

Bearing in mind the overall scientific activity, the quality and volume of Teodora Peneva's scientific research work, her scientific contributions and their significance, I evaluate them completely positively and strongly suggest to the respected members of the Scientific Jury of the competition to recommend to the Scientific Council of the Institute for Economic Research at the BAS to unanimously elect chief assistant Dr. Teodora Peneva to the academic position of associate professor in the Macroeconomics department of the Institute.

September 16, 2023

Sofia

Assoc. Professor Maria Jeliaskova