

OPINION

by Prof. Dr. GORITSA NAIDENOVA,

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regarding the candidacy of

Assoc. Prof. Dr. STEFKA GEORGIEVA VENKOVA-MOSHEVA in a competition announced in the State Gazette, Issue No. 44 / May 14, 2026, for the academic position of PROFESSOR in the field of higher education 8. Arts, professional field 8.3. Music and Dance, (Bulgarian church and secular music from the late 19th and early 20th centuries) at the Institute for Art Studies – BAS

One candidate is participating in the competition—Assoc. Prof. Stefka Venkova-Mosheva, Ph.D.—whose documentation fully meets the requirements of the Law on Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. The research activities and results she has cited unquestionably meet the minimum national scientometric requirements for holding the academic position of “professor” and are consistent with the field and professional focus of the announced competition: criterion B3—one monograph (habilitation thesis); Indicator G7 – a second monograph; Indicator G8 – 5 articles indexed in international databases; Indicator G9 – 10 articles in specialized publications in the field of the arts; Indicator G11 – 3 studies in specialized publications in the field of the arts; Indicator D16 – 1 citation in a publication indexed in international databases; Indicator D17 – 16 citations in monographs; Criterion D18 – 2 citations in non-peer-reviewed publications; Indicator D19 – 2 reviews of her books; Indicator E21 – supervision of one doctoral student who successfully defended their dissertation; Indicator E22 – participation in one national research project; Indicator E23 – participation in one international research project; Indicator E24 – leadership of one project; Indicator E30 – two research awards. For her participation in the substantive review process, the candidate submitted a habilitation thesis—a monograph published in 2026—and 13 studies and articles published between 2019 and 2026, divided into four main thematic groups: Bulgarian church music from the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries; religious/spiritual songs in Bulgarian church music; the first musical institutions in Bulgaria; and archives and archival collections of church music.

Stefka Venkova stands out in our academic community for the consistency and perseverance of her scholarly interests. Her habilitation monograph, “Building the New Musical Life in Bulgaria – The Work of Nikolay Iv. Nikolaev (1852 – 1938),”

stems directly from her previous research dedicated to the life and work of Nikolay Iv. Nikolaev's son, Apostol Nikolaev-Strumski. In both works, she pursues her research mission to provide a fresh, complementary biographical exploration of significant figures in our musical life, as well as a new, broader interpretation of their contributions—and, consequently, a reevaluation of musical developments in Bulgaria in the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. In fact, one could say that her new book, to a certain extent, reverses the perspective. Here, a number of musical and cultural trends, perspectives, discussions, institutions, and events (some of which have been discussed in our musicological literature) are reexamined through the lens of the behavior and presence of a musical figure who, at first (today's) glance, does not appear to be among the most prominent participants in them. Thus, the Bulgarian Music Union emerges as a unique focal point of this study—this is also the first comprehensive presentation of this organization in our scholarly literature. It is within the framework of this association that initiatives crucial to our musical culture—related to music education, church music, the social status of musicians, or an active push toward the establishment of musical institutions—are conceived and implemented. Based on the documents examined, Stefka Venkova highlights precisely these policies—and reveals them as the result of the views and significant influence of Nikolay Iv. Nikolaev. His role as a public figure and pioneer in a number of endeavors is also examined in his subsequent positions as director of the Music School and the Bulgarian Opera Society.

Of particular value is Stefka Venkova's approach to tracing the historical processes that unfold at every level—from the most prominent achievements to the daily, gradual, even painstaking work of building our musical culture. By focusing attention on the realm that lies “behind” the grand ideas of the time—that of concrete organizational work with all its ideas, efforts, achievements, tensions, and even conflicts—this study is thorough and exceptionally useful for a new understanding of this period in music history.

At the same time, both in the monograph and in the other publications submitted for the competition, the candidate adheres to the basic framework of historiography and diligently and consistently expands the archival and factual knowledge regarding individuals (Nikolay I. Nikolaev, Father Domenico Marteletti, Father Tomasz Brzeska) and musical institutions in Bulgaria (the Bulgarian Music Union, the Music School, the Music Academy), and the musical repertoire of church music in Bulgarian Orthodoxy and the Bulgarian Catholic Church (the introduction of polyphonic church singing in Bulgaria, religious/spiritual songs in our Orthodox music, new chants in the Bulgarian Catholic Church, etc. In this line of research, she has made numerous specific contributions, which would be too extensive to list within the scope of a single statement; however, I will highlight here her work on uncovering the history, systematizing, and cataloging the “Church Music” archive at the Institute of Art Studies. This area of her scholarly interests is reflected in active applied research, which has led to significant progress in the digitization of the

documents and in the development and expansion of the specially designed database for this archive.

The scientific and applied scientific achievements of Stefka Venkova, her overall presence within the academic community as a consistent researcher who continually develops her interests, possesses broad knowledge, and takes an active role in the training of doctoral students and in building the scientific community of musicologists at the Institute of Art Studies, lead me to wholeheartedly recommend to the esteemed Scientific Council that she be selected the academic position of “professor” in scientific field 8.3. Music and Dance Arts.

September 28, 2026

Signature:

Sofia (Goritsa Naydenova)