

10 April 2017

To the members of the Promotion Committee
Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovak Republic

Opponent Statement for doc. Ing. Emilia Beblava, PhD

As an external expert, I will focus mainly on the scientific qualification of the candidate, while the other requirements (e.g. teaching, supervision, research funding, international activities) are paid only superficial attention. Research output and activities form a basis for all other activities (e.g. teaching) that any professorship requires, therefore, the international standard when evaluating candidates for professors' positions focuses foremost on research. This evaluation looks primarily at the research output and research profile of the candidate. As my knowledge of Slovak language is very limited, and because contribution to internationally accessible and recognized scholarship is expected from a professor, I base my opinion on publications published in English.

The applicant is a well-known and internationally respected scholar within the discipline of Political Science. I'm well familiar with her work which crosses borders – both geographical and disciplinary. This is a value by itself since it requires broader horizon and expert knowledge of different research areas and countries. I would like to highlight the importance of candidate's research in three fields:

- 1) Studies on good governance in general, and anti-corruption, transparency and openness of governance, in particular. This is the field where the applicant is internationally most well-known and which her main publications address. The applicant has approached this extremely relevant topic from the public policy point of view analyzing different policy actors, processes, choices and instruments targeted to the reduction of corruption, including both preventive as well as repressive measures. This is a major subfield of Political Science, especially important in the context of Central and Eastern Europe, where the candidate has substantially contributed to the existing knowledge.
- 2) Studies on public administration reforms. While the candidate's foremost specialization is with the anti-corruption studies, her expertise is broader, spreading to a large notion of 'good governance' and public administration reforms in general. The other fields of research include politico-administrative relations, public procurement and outsourcing, civil service reforms and public service delivery – all cutting edge topics within Political Science.
- 3) Comparative and multi-level studies of public policy. The candidate is a respected scholar within Central and Eastern Europe through carrying out both two-country comparisons as well as broader comparative studies which focus mainly on the new EU member states. That shows a true professionalism and professional respect from CEE region in general. These studies also touch upon Europeanisation, especially in regard to administrative practices in new democracies. The applicant focuses also on public policies on municipal level, not solely on the central level by that contributing to the studies on multi-level governance.

Candidate's research is based on political, economic, institutional and cultural theories indicating a solid and wide-ranging theoretical background. She uses skillfully different approaches and is able to synthesize them. She has a track record of effective use of both qualitative as well as quantitative skills.

Candidate's research output is further evaluated on the basis of widely recognized bibliometric indicators such as number of publications, citations and H-index. Three databases were used:

- 1) Thomson Reuters Web of Science (WoS): this is a classical scientific database which is widely used in the majority of highly developed countries for the assessment of publications. Although it does not include so many journals in Social Sciences, it is still evident that the most highly regarded journals in Political Science belong to WoS. It is every social scientist's primary aim to get his/her best research published in a journal included in WoS as this is itself a sign of high quality scholarship. Several top universities in the world count only articles included in WoS.
- 2) Scopus: this is a more broad-based and Social Science-friendly database which includes a wider range of publication outlets which are known for their international focus and strict peer-review process.
- 3) Google Scholar: this is a broadest, yet reliable database which includes publications and citations not only in high-end journals but also other relevant publications. It is most useful for evaluating research activities in applied fields of research and of scholars outside Anglo-Saxon world.

I realize that publishing articles in highly ranked journals is very much American practice, although the best research-oriented European universities increasingly emphasize this as well (also in the field of Public Administration). In addition, science funding evaluations (e.g. EU's Framework Programmes and Horizon 2020) most often rely on these databases which means that publishing in journals covered by WoS and Scopus is a good predictor of getting highly competitive science funding. My general expectation is that candidates for professorship must demonstrate their ability to be involved in a high-level academic discourse which takes place in the journals included in Scopus and WoS, in particular. If they decide to publish elsewhere, their research cannot be so easily accessed and assessed by their peers. While publishing in second-tier journals is accepted for lower ranked academics and young scholars, professors must strive for academic excellence as they set a role model and standards for their junior colleagues. Not only the number of high-quality articles is important but also the impact of research which is operationalized in the number of citations and H-index. Below are the results of a search of the candidate carried out in April 2017.

	WoS	Scopus	Google Scholar
No. of publications	15	12	58
No. of citations	46	38	191
H-index	4	3	7

The search shows that the candidate is very active in publishing, although the number and impact of English-language publications in high-end journals is somewhat lower compared to Western European colleagues. Yet, taking the context into account, she publishes much more than most full Political Science professors in Central and Eastern Europe. Especially appreciated are her

high quality writings in journals *Policy Studies* and *Europe-Asia Studies*. All publications are very relevant to the field of Political Science in which the full professorship will be awarded.

As for the other criteria besides research output, the successful supervision of two PhD students must be positively noted. As for teaching, I do not have sufficient information. However, I know the candidate from a variety of conferences where she has submitted high-quality papers and presented them in a very professional way. Based on this, I also assume that her teaching practice is of high quality.

Taken the above-mentioned information into account, I strongly recommend doc. Ing. Emilia Beblava to become full professor in Political Science.

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