

## Seminar at the New Bulgarian University

How to discuss European values?



New Bulgarian University is a Partner for the Study of European Values (full partner)

# Event Report

*by Dr. Teodora Karamelska, Assistant Professor at NBU, Deputy Director of the Center for the Study of European Values at NBU*

The New Bulgarian University is a Partner for the Study of European Values (full partner). Three years ago, with the support of the leadership of the NBU, **Professor Georgy Fotev**, EVS National Program Director, created a Center for the Study of European Values. For a second consecutive year, the NBU is hosting a joint university seminar "Contexts of European Values". In connection with the preparations for the presentation of the data on Bulgaria, which is the President of the EU Council in the first half of 2018, a seminar on „How to Debate European Values?" was held.

The seminar was attended by associate professor **Boriana Dimitrova**, Director of Alpha research and the most prominent and distinguished analysts, professors at the NBU and at the Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“: associate professor Antoni Galabov, professor Antoni Todorov, associate professor Haralan Alexandrov, associate professor Ognian Minchev, associate professor Rumyana Kolarova, associate professor Vasil Garnizov, professor Evgeniy Dainov, associate professor Tatyana Bouruzhieva, professor Alexander Kiossev, professor Dimitar Vatsov, professor Hristo Todorov, associate professor Momchil Badzhakov, professor Lyudmil Georgiev and others.



On the right is assoc, prof. Boryana Dimitrova, director of Alpha Research.

The rector of the NBU, Professor Plamen Bochkov, welcomed the experts and wished them fruitful discussions. Professor Georgy Fotev pointed out that it was necessary to launch a strategic debate on European values in Bulgaria. A solid empirical basis for such a debate could be the vast and unique data from the five waves of EVS. It is expected that by the end of the year all countries of the 5th wave of EVS will complete their research and the data will be published.



Prof. Georgy Fotev, EVS National Program Director and Prof. Plamen Bochkov, the Rector of NBU

A conference will be organized in Sofiata to discuss the data from the 5th wave of EVS with the participation of researchers from all Balkan countries. The New Bulgarian University is ready to host this event.

Prof. Fotev pointed out that it was not self-evident what was meant by „European values“ - whether these were the values functioning in Europe or the values that defined the identity of Europe? Plurism of values (Weber) makes debates on this subject extremely difficult.

Associate Professor Antoniy Galabov made several important distinctions, the first of which was between the values of Europeans and European values. The culture of Europe is value-defined only through the human being, through the individual person and their rights. Europe is where everyone is born equal in dignity and rights; everything else is not Europe, and this is not a geographic issue. Professor Antoni Todorov pointed out that when we talk about „European values“ we should consider a distinction between normative position and expectations or notions of Europe on the one hand, and realities on the other.



On the right side are visible Prof. Romyana Kolarova, Assoc. Prof. Antony Galabov

Associate Professor Tatyana Bouruzhieva defined the purpose of presenting EVS 5th wave data in May 2018 as not just to communicate the results of scientific analysis but to initiate a wide public debate on „What kind of Europe do we want?“ Associate Professor Romyana Kolarova noted that the European Values Study was a major scientific project whose long-term mission would be to re-establish the links in the academic community, to stimulate inter-university relations, to organize doctoral seminars and other scholarly forums. Professor Alexander Kiossev emphasized the need to make intelligent and understandable distinctions and explanations based on EVS data. As a possible longer-term goal, he identified the link between educational goals and cultural policies. He also insisted on an in-depth analysis of the gap between "Project Europe" and the values practically functioning in the European societies.



Prof. Ognian Minchev, assist. prof. Theodora Karamelska, prof. Dimitar Vatzov, associate Prof. Haralan Alexandrov, associate prof. Tatyana Bouruzhieva

Professor Dimitar Vatzov called for a correct presentation of the sociological data, but also stressed the need to send a political message in defense of European values, which, especially in connection with the sharp increase in xenophobia and homophobia among Bulgarians, have been under attack in recent years. Professor Ognian Minchev agreed that defining European values stemmed from the basic recognition of human freedom and dignity. He also questioned whether scholars should speak about them from the position of academic neutrality, or rather that each analyst is associated with certain ideological and political values. Considering the very serious value dynamics in Europe, according to Professor Minchev, it is of utmost importance to put some limits on what it is and what is not a European value, through clearly distancing ourselves from pejorative definitions.

In conclusion, Professor Fotev noted that the goal was not to reach unanimity on the topics discussed, which was hardly possible, but to achieve understanding and dialogue in the Bulgarian society. „Our strategic debate on European values – he said – needs to be based on a solid empirical basis, on rationalizing the growing complexity of the modern world. Intellectual honesty is a central virtue of scientific activity and we are responsible to the Bulgarian society.“



The rector of the New Bulgarian University, Professor Plamen Bochkov, congratulated the experts and wished them fruitful discussions



From left to right prof. Antoni Todorov, prof. Anna Krasteva, asso. Prof. Antoni Gulabov, assoc. Prof. Momchil Doychev, assist. Prof. Ivan Nachev, member of the EVS Bulgarian team

## Next steps...



Prof. Fotev and Assoc. Prof. Boryana Dimitrova, Alfa Research Director after the NBU seminar discuss visualized data on the Presentation scheduled for May 30



Prof. G. Fotev, Director of the Center for the Study of European Studies at NBU, dr. Teodora Karamelska, assistant prof., Deputy Director, and assist. prof. Evelina Hristovna discuss the next steps in the preparation of the EVS Fifth Wave Presentation