

NEWS IN BRIEF

IRINA SEDAKOVA 70

Irina Sedakova has a long history of cooperation with Estonian folkloristics. As a member of the international collegium of the journal *Folklore: EJJ* she has graciously extended her advice; she has been the guest editor of several special issues, and she has also been a member of the external board of the Estonian Folklore and Cultural History Centre for Excellence (2000–2007).

Irina Sedakova is an outstanding linguist, researcher of folklore and customs and Balkanist, who has authored over 450 publications in Russian, Bulgarian and English. These include many monographs, edited collections and articles, but also reviews, translations from Bulgarian and English, textbooks, etc. Her doctoral dissertation (1984) examined “Lexica and symbolism of Bulgarian Christmas and New Year rituals”. The monograph “Balkan motifs in the language and culture of the Bulgarians” (2007) became a bestseller in its native language, and in 2013 a translation into Bulgarian was published. The book provides a thorough ethnolinguistic overview of the complex formations of Bulgarian folk religion, such as customs surrounding birth, motherhood and the first period of human life from the perspective of fate. Sedakova’s research examines the semantics of cultural traditions and concepts such as fate, life, path, old age, beginnings, poverty-wealth, lightness-heaviness, soft-hard, etc; kinship terminology, the folk calendar and folk demonology, the value system of folk culture, folk religion and the cult of saints, the ethnography of language, and the language and poetics of folklore.

In 2008, at the instigation and under the leadership of I. Sedakova, the Balcanica centre was created, which gathers and coordinates research on Slavic and Balkan languages and cultures in various centres throughout the world. Since 2017 she has directed the typology and comparative linguistics department in the Slavic Studies Institute in Moscow, and in 2021 she was appointed editor-in-chief of the Institute’s journal, *Slavic Studies*.

Inna Sedakova conducts a significant amount of scientific and organisational work. From 1993 onward she has organised annual international conferences entitled “Balkan readings” and the roundtables of the Balcanica linguistic-cultural research centre (over 25 of these have taken place). Since 2004 Irina has directed an international interdisciplinary working group (SIEF working group of the Ritual Year) in the framework of which 14 conferences have been organised in various European cities. The working group coordinates the research in its area globally.



Irina Sedakova on her jubilee with her grandchildren. Photo from personal archive. 2025.

Irina Sedakova has edited over forty published thematic collections and materials and abstracts of conferences and roundtables. She is a member of the editorial board of several Russian and foreign journals and a member of the International Association of Ethnologists and Folklorists (SIEF); she has participated in many congresses, conferences and symposia. She has lectured at Moscow State University, Exeter University (United Kingdom), Bulgaria, Japan, Estonia, Belgium and the USA.

For her outstanding contributions to instruction in the Bulgarian language, Irina Aleksandrovna has been awarded the gold pin of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences; in 2024 she was awarded the title of “Meritorious Worker in Science and Advanced Technology of the Russian Federation”.

Irina Sedakova is not only a fine researcher and scholar, but a wise, gracious and helpful colleague; a true friend, to whom we send our heartfelt congratulations.

Editorial board of the journal *Folklore:EJF*