

## **REVIEW**

**by Assoc. Prof. DSc Dilyan Georgiev Georgiev, Department of "Ecology and Environmental Conservation" Faculty of Biology, Plovdiv University "P. Hilendarski"**

on the materials submitted for participation in the competition  
for the academic position of "Associate Professor"  
at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"

in: Field of Higher Education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Informatics,  
Professional Direction 4.3. Biological Sciences (Ecology and Ecosystem Protection)

In the competition for "Associate Professor," announced in the State Gazette, issue 32 of 09.04.2024, and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of "Ecology and Environmental Protection" at the Faculty of Biology, the candidates participating are Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Slaveya Tencheva Petrova and Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Vesela Slavcheva Yancheva from the Department of "Ecology and Environmental Protection" at the Faculty of Biology.

### **1. Overall Presentation of the Submitted Materials**

By order No. P33-21-1416 of 08.07.2024 by the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury for the competition for the academic position of 'Associate Professor' at PU in the field of Higher Education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Informatics, professional direction 4.3. Biological Sciences (Ecology and Ecosystem Protection), announced for the needs of the Department of "Ecology and Environmental Conservation" at the Faculty of Biology.

The following candidates have submitted documents for participation in the announced competition:

Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Slaveya Tencheva Petrova, Department of "Ecology and Environmental Protection," Faculty of Biology, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"

Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Vesela Slavcheva Yancheva, Department of "Ecology and Environmental Protection," Faculty of Biology, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"

The sets of materials submitted by the candidates in paper format are in accordance with the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU and include the following documents:

Chief Assistant Prof. Slaveya Petrova:

1. Application form to the Rector for participation in the competition;
2. European format CV;
3. Diploma for higher education with a Master's degree and its supplement (original and copy) or a notarized copy;
4. Diploma for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (original and copy) or a notarized copy;
5. List of scientific works;
6. Scientific works (copies of publications);
7. List of citations;
8. Reference for compliance with the minimum national and additional faculty requirements (if any);
9. Annotations of materials according to Art. 65 of the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU (in Bulgarian and a foreign language) with an extended habilitation reference if a monograph is not presented;
10. Self-assessment of contributions;
11. Declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
12. Certificate of employment;
13. Documents for teaching work;
14. Documents for research work;
15. Documents according to the additional requirements of the respective faculty;
16. Other documents;
17. Receipt for the participation fee in the competition;

18. Set of documents in paper format from items 1 to 18 - 2 copies;

19. Set of documents from items 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 10 (possibly indicating other documents from items 4, 5, 13, 14, and 15) in electronic format - 2 copies.

Chief Assistant Prof. Vesela Yancheva:

1. Application form to the Rector for participation in the competition;
2. European format CV;
3. Diploma for higher education with a Master's degree and its supplement (original and copy) or a notarized copy;
4. Diploma for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (original and copy) or a notarized copy;
5. List of scientific works;
6. Scientific works (copies of publications);
7. List of citations;
8. Reference for compliance with the minimum national and additional faculty requirements (if any);
9. Annotations of materials according to Art. 65 of the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU (in Bulgarian and a foreign language) with an extended habilitation reference if a monograph is not presented;
10. Self-assessment of contributions;
11. Declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
12. Certificate of employment;
13. Documents for teaching work;
14. Documents for research work;

15. Documents according to the additional requirements of the respective faculty;
16. Other documents;
17. Set of documents in paper format from items 1 to 17 - 2 copies;
18. Set of documents from items 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 10 (possibly indicating other documents from items 4, 5, 13, 14, and 15) in electronic format - 2 copies.

The documents submitted by Assistant Professor Petrova are in accordance with the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff at Plovdiv University, but those submitted by Assistant Professor Yancheva have two major omissions:

No.1: Regarding No.32 - documents for teaching work (paper copy) submitted by Assistant Professor Yancheva, I would like to note that the report on teaching hours and classroom workload was not requested by me as the department head in connection with participation in a competition. Accordingly, this is not described in the report, and it was likely given to me for signing in connection with the candidate's attestation (or for other needs). I was not informed that Chief Assistant Professor Yancheva would be participating in this competition. At a department council meeting, she stated that she would not be submitting documents. The documents submitted by the candidate in PDF format, named respectively "12. Teaching Work - Vesela Yancheva" and "Schedule of Hours for 2024-2025", do not have a scanned signature from me in my capacity as department head. The first electronic document indicates that it is for the needs of the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor," meaning it differs from the one submitted in paper form.

No.2: Chief Assistant Professor Yancheva has not provided a report on the scientific publications used for the academic position of "Chief Assistant Professor". According to the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff at Plovdiv University, these cannot be used for participation in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor": *"The materials from points 3 and 4 must not duplicate others used by the candidate in successful procedures for obtaining the educational and scientific degree 'Doctor' and the scientific degree 'Doctor of Sciences,' and for holding the academic position of 'Senior Assistant' - regardless of the scientific organization where this took place, as well as for the academic positions of 'Associate Professor' and 'Professor' at the University."* After a review by Professor Velizar Gochev, the chairman of the academic jury, it became clear that such articles were used, namely:

Yancheva V., Stoyanova S., Velcheva I., Petrova S., Georgieva E. 2014. Metal bioaccumulation in common carp and rudd from the Topolnitsa reservoir, Bulgaria. Archives of Industrial Hygiene and Toxicology, 65(1): 57-66. (15 points)

Georgieva E., Stoyanova S., Velcheva I., Vasileva T., Bivolarski V., Iliev I., Yancheva V. 2014. Metal effects on histological and biochemical parameters of common rudd (*Scardinius erythrophthalmus* L.). Archives of Polish Fisheries, 22: 197-206. (12 points)

In addition to the violation of the regulations, after the disqualification of the respective points attributed to these publications, the candidate does not meet the minimum national requirements for indicator B, which is 100 points (117 points minus 27 points = 90 points). Given the two identified irregularities in the documentation and the failure to meet the minimum national requirements for criterion B, Chief Assistant Professor Yancheva's materials should not be considered within the framework of the current competition. Nevertheless, below I provide a partial comparison of the materials submitted to me for review by both candidates. The conclusion pertains only to the one with valid documentation who meets the minimum national requirements, namely Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Slaveya Petrova.

## **2. Brief Biographical Data of the Candidates**

Slaveya Tencheva Petrova was born in 1977, married with three children. She completed her Bachelor's degree in "Ecology and Environmental Protection" at the Faculty of Biology, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski," where she currently works as a Chief Assistant Prof.. She obtained her Master's degree from the same institution, specializing in "Ecology and Ecosystem Protection." She also defended her doctoral dissertation in the same scientific specialty there. She works under a second contract at the Agricultural University - Plovdiv, as an Associate Professor in the Department of "Microbiology and Environmental Biotechnologies," Faculty of Plant Protection and Agroecology.

Vesela Slavcheva Yancheva was born in 1984, married with one child. She completed her Bachelor's degree in "Plant Protection" at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv; and a Master's degree in Norway, at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. She defended her doctoral dissertation in the Department of "Ecology and Environmental Protection," Faculty of Biology, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski," where she currently works as a Chief Assistant Prof. She also works as a supervisor at Haygrove Ltd., Redbank, Ledbury, Herefordshire, HR8 2JL, England.

Both candidates have sufficient professional experience for the academic position of "Associate Professor." Chief Assistant Prof. Petrova has more life and professional experience. The presented certificates for teaching experience are respectively 13 years and 3 months (Petrova) and 9 years, 7 months, and 13 days (Yancheva).

### **3. General Characteristics of the Candidates' Activities**

Chief Assistant Prof. Petrova:

Teaching Courses: A report for the last five academic years has been provided. The candidate teaches courses in the areas of ecology and environmental protection, geology, paleontology, organic agriculture, and soil science to students from various disciplines at the Bachelor's and Master's levels. Most of the teaching hours (lectures and exercises) are conducted at the Faculty of Biology, but she also teaches at the Faculty of Philosophy-History and the Faculty of Physics-Technology. She conducts classes at the university branches in the cities of Smolyan and Kardzhali. The number of hours taught in the last four years with Bachelor's students significantly exceeds 1000, with 839 hours in the 2019/2020 academic year, and lectures are not duplicated. Chief Assistant Prof. Petrova works under a second employment contract as an Associate Professor at the Agricultural University, where she also teaches a significant number of lectures and exercises.

Teaching Materials: The candidate has presented 13 textbooks and manuals, as well as one publication in English, resulting from an international project.

Work with Students, Graduates, and Doctoral Candidates: The provided report includes a total of 36 graduates who have successfully defended their theses under the scientific supervision of Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Slaveya Petrova, of which 22 are at the Bachelor's level and 14 at the Master's level. Among them, 33 are students from the Faculty of Biology at PU "Paisii Hilendarski," 2 are students from the Lyuben Karavelov Branch in Kardzhali, and 1 is a student from the Smolyan Branch. The candidate is actively involved in projects and works with doctoral candidates from the department.

Chief Assistant Prof. Yancheva:

Teaching Courses: She teaches compulsory and elective courses to students at the Bachelor's and Master's levels in two specialties at the Faculty of Biology and one at the Faculty of

Philosophy-History, as well as at the branch in Kardzhali. The courses she teaches are primarily in the fields of ecology, environmental protection, and ecological toxicology. She also participates in the University Center for Working with Young Scientists, Doctoral Candidates, and Postdoctoral Researchers at PU "Paisii Hilendarski."

Teaching Materials: A total of two textbooks for courses taught at the Faculty of Biology have been presented: "Ecological Toxicology," where the candidate is the second author after Professor Iliyana Velcheva, and "Water Pollution and Its Impact on Ecosystems" (second revised edition), where she is listed fifth, after Chief Assistant Prof. Petrova. The other two publications are guides not related to the courses taught at the university or school network and cannot be counted towards the required number or points.

Work with Students, Graduates, and Doctoral Candidates: The candidate has successfully supervised four Bachelor's graduates and one Master's graduate, for whom she has presented their theses. She also participates in the University Center for Working with Young Scientists, Doctoral Candidates, and Postdoctoral Researchers at PU "Paisii Hilendarski" with very good feedback.

#### *Assessment of the Scientific and Applied Scientific Activities of the Candidates*

I highly value the work of both candidates. A substantive analysis of their work shows that their contributions are indisputable and significant. For comparison, only the number of points accumulated for individual indicators related to applied scientific activities (scientific works, citations, projects, etc.) can be used.

Points awarded for indicators for both candidates:

Habilitation Work – Scientific Publications in Refereed and Indexed Journals in World-Renowned Databases (Web of Science and Scopus) with Q: Petrova 120, Yancheva 90;

Published monograph not submitted as the main habilitation work: Petrova 30, Yancheva 0. Assistant Professor Petrova presents two publications as monographs, but the one on paleontological topics is less than 100 pages and cannot be recognized;

Published Book Based on a Defended Doctoral Dissertation: Petrova 20, Yancheva 0;

Scientific Publications in Refereed and Indexed Journals Outside the Habilitation Work: Petrova 433, Yancheva 542;

Published Book Chapter or Collective Monograph: Petrova 45, Yancheva 0;

Citations in Scientific Publications, Monographs, Collective Volumes, and Patents in Refereed and Indexed Databases: Petrova 530, Yancheva 646. Assistant Professor Yancheva presents 707 points, but I reduce them to 646, according to the Regulations;

Participation in National Scientific or Educational Projects: Petrova 90, Yancheva 20;

Participation in International Scientific or Educational Projects: Petrova 120, Yancheva 20;

Leadership of National Scientific or Educational Projects: Petrova 60, Yancheva 20;

Attracted Funds from Projects Led by the Candidate: Petrova 12, Yancheva 0;

Published University Textbook or Textbook Used in School Networks: Petrova 46.67, Yancheva 26.66;

Published University Teaching Aid or Teaching Aid Used in School Networks: Petrova 41.83, Yancheva 0 (16 points presented by the candidate cannot be recognized due to the arguments mentioned above).

Chief Assistant Prof. Yancheva has more points in only two criteria, while she has no points in four criteria, unlike Chief Assistant Prof. Petrova. The total number of points for Chief Assistant Prof. Petrova is higher than that for Chief Assistant Prof. Yancheva.

#### **4. Assessment of the Personal Contribution of the Candidates**

The personal contribution of the candidates in the respective presented publications is high and indisputable. It is noteworthy that Chief Assistant Prof. Petrova has more publications as a sole author. The personal merit of the candidates is unquestionable and meets the requirements for authorship. The articles by Chief Assistant Prof. Yancheva have been cited more frequently, which indicates their high value.

#### **5. Critical Remarks and Recommendations**

I have no critical remarks or recommendations regarding the scientific works and activities of the candidates, nor regarding the future use of their scientific and applied scientific contributions.



The critical comments regarding the sets of materials of Chief Assistant Prof. Yancheva are addressed in other sections of this review.

## **6. Personal Impressions**

In my long-standing experience, both candidates are extremely conscientious and productive educators and researchers. Until this current competition, both have demonstrated the necessary collegiality in the workplace as well as respect toward the administration. However, there is a noticeable negative attitude within the department towards Assistant Professor Slaveya Petrova from some colleagues. I have not observed specific reasons for this targeted behavior that would justify hindering her from attaining the academic position of "Associate Professor." As the head of the department, I believe that such behavior by part of the team in the Department of Ecology and Environmental Protection is highly destructive and threatens not only the unit's reputation but also its integrity and existence within the Faculty of Biology.

## **CONCLUSION**

The documentation submitted by Chief Assistant Professor Vesela Yancheva is inadequate with regard to the report on teaching activities and the absence of a report on the scientific publications used for participation in the competition for the academic position of "Senior Assistant." Upon further review, it became clear that the candidate had reused two articles, which contribute 12 and 15 points, respectively. After excluding these, she does not meet the minimum national requirements for indicator B, which is 100 points.

In all required indicators and overall points, Chief Assistant Professor Slaveya Petrova has more points than Chief Assistant Professor Vesela Yancheva, with the exception of two. The former also holds an associate professor position at the Agricultural University – Plovdiv. In addition to the fact that Assistant Professor Petrova has better scores in all required criteria except for two, she also has more experience and life experience.

All documentation submitted by Chief Assistant Professor Slaveya Petrova is in order, with the appropriate signatures and stamps, and the paper and electronic copies are identical. The candidate meets and exceeds the scoring according to the minimum national requirements for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in all indicators.

Based on the above, I vote "FOR" Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Slaveya Tencheva Petrova to be appointed to the academic position of "associate professor" in the field of higher education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, professional direction 4.3. Biological Sciences (Ecology and Ecosystem Protection) in the Department of Ecology and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Biology, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

17.08.2024

Reviewer: .....

Assoc. Prof. Dilian Georgiev