

## STATEMENT

by Gana Minkova Gecheva, PhD, Assoc. Prof., Faculty of Biology, PU „P. Hilendarski”

for the academic position „Assoc. Prof.“

area of higher education 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics,  
professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences,  
scientific specialty Ecology and ecosystem conservation

In the competition for "Associate Professor," announced in the State Gazette, issue 32 from April 9, 2024, and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of "Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation" at the Faculty of Biology, the candidates participating are Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Vesela Slavcheva Yancheva and Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Slaveya Petrova from Plovdiv University "P. Hilendarski," Faculty of Biology, Department of "EEC."

### 1. General Overview of the Procedure and the Candidates

By order No. RD-21-1416 dated July 8, 2024, issued by the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury for the competition to fill the academic position of 'Associate Professor' at PU in the field of higher education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Informatics, professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences (Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation), announced for the needs of the Department of Ecology and Environmental Protection ("EEP") at the Faculty of Biology.

Two candidates have submitted documents to participate in the announced competition: Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Vesela Slavcheva Yancheva and Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Slaveya Tencheva Petrova from PU "P. Hilendarski," Faculty of Biology, Department of "EEP." The candidates will be reviewed in the order in which they submitted their documents for the competition.

The materials submitted by Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Vesela Slavcheva Yancheva on an electronic medium are in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at PU. The candidate has submitted a total of 73 scientific works, 2 textbooks, 2 teaching aids, and a list of 15 research projects. A total of 71 scientific works are accepted for review (of which 5 in category B.4 and 22 in category G7 do not count for points), which are outside of her dissertation. Under criterion B, 2 publications (No. 7 and 9 from the Candidate's Reference) are presented, which were also used when applying for the position of "Senior Assistant Professor." According to the second-to-last revision of PU's Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff dated December 18, 2023, these materials should not be repeated. However, with the most recent revision from July 22, 2024, this requirement has been removed in accordance with the Regulations for the Application of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB). In the final evaluation, 2 textbooks, 1 teaching aid, and 4 international and national research projects are taken into account. One teaching aid, published as a supplement to the journal ZooNotes, is not reviewed. Citations outside of the Scopus and WoS databases, totaling 61, are not considered.

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Vesela Yancheva obtained her master's degree in Norway (Norwegian University of Life Sciences) in 2010, successfully defending her thesis on the topic "Trace metal accumulation in different organs of Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar* L.) smolts from River Storelva catchment area, Norway." In 2014, she defended her doctoral degree and became a Senior Assistant Professor in the Department of "Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation" at the Faculty of Biology, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski." Since 2020, she has served as an Erasmus+ Coordinator at the Faculty of Biology, Plovdiv University. In addition, she is the secretary of the international scientific journal *Ecologia Balkanica* and the technical editor of

Zoonotes, both indexed in Scopus/WoS. She is also a board member of two other scientific journals: International Journal of Environmental Monitoring and Analysis and International Journal of Zoology and Animal Biology (USA). Dr. Yancheva is a member of the "Union of Scientists – Plovdiv," the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, and the student club "ESETRA" at the Faculty of Biology, PU "Paisii Hilendarski." As a PhD student and Senior Assistant Professor, she completed five Erasmus training programs in Norway, Portugal, Hungary, Greece, and Romania. The candidate has participated in 51 scientific conferences both in Bulgaria and abroad.

The materials submitted by Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Slaveya Tencheva Petrova on an electronic medium comply with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at PU. The candidate has submitted a total of 43 scientific works, 2 monographs, 1 book based on her defended dissertation, 3 book chapters, 4 textbooks, 9 teaching aids, and a list of 19 research projects. A total of 32 scientific works, which are outside of her dissertation and previous appointment as "Senior Assistant Professor," are accepted for review. In the final evaluation, 4 textbooks, 9 teaching aids, 2 international and 8 national research projects are considered. Not reviewed are: 2 publications (numbers G.7.23 and G.7.24 in the documents) due to a high similarity rate (over 30%); materials submitted as monographs under criterion G.5, evaluated based on content and definition, according to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB); and 2 book chapters submitted under criterion G.8, which were published as supplements to the ZooNotes journal.

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Slaveya Tencheva Petrova successively earned her bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees at PU. Since 2011, she has been a Senior Assistant Professor in the Department of "Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation" at the Faculty of Biology, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski," and since 2017, she has also held the same position at the Agricultural University in the Department of "Microbiology and Environmental Biotechnology." The candidate's CV states that, as of 2024, she holds the position of "Associate Professor" at the Agricultural University. She is a member of the "Union of Scientists – Plovdiv," Mensa – Bulgaria, and public councils in Plovdiv Municipality. She is the technical editor of the international scientific journal *Ecologia Balkanica*. Dr. Petrova has completed two Erasmus+ mobility programs and has participated in various trainings in areas such as school education, safety and health, plagiarism, and more.

**In conclusion, both candidates are well-established educators and possess the necessary experience and qualifications to hold the academic position of "Associate Professor."**

## **2. General Overview of the Candidates' Activities**

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Vesela Yancheva delivers lectures and practical sessions across four compulsory courses in the Bachelor's degree program (B.Sc.): Aquaculture, Ecological Toxicology, Water Pollution, and Climatology and Hydrology in two specialties at the Faculty of Biology (PU) and one specialty at the Faculty of Philosophy and History at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski." She also teaches Water Resource Management in the Master's degree program (M.Sc.). Additionally, she is responsible for seven elective courses in both degree levels and has developed a new optional course titled Methodological Guidelines for Dissertation and Scientific Publication Development for students of the Faculty of Biology and the University Center for Young Scientists, PhD, and Postdoctoral students at PU. According to results from an anonymous survey assessing the quality of her teaching, conducted by the University Center, her courses consistently reach full enrollment with high satisfaction rates from students. In terms of teaching workload, she completed a total of 690 contact hours in the Bachelor's program during the 2023/2024 academic year. Additionally, she teaches three compulsory courses at the "Lyuben Karavelov" Branch in the town of Kardzhali.

Dr. Yancheva is a co-author of three teaching aids, including two textbooks. She has supervised five students across both Bachelor's and Master's degree levels. Furthermore, she actively participates in the organizational committees of various student and national scientific conferences, as well as several committees at the Faculty of Biology, such as:

- Accreditation Committee for professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences,
- International Activities and Public Relations Committee,
- Committee for Organizing the "Journey in Biology" competition for high school students (grades 10–12) in 2023, 2018, and 2017,
- Student Selection and Language Proficiency Verification Committee,
- International Affairs Committee (2019–2023),
- Committee on Ethical and Humane Treatment of Vertebrate Animals at the Faculty of Biology Vivarium.

Since 2019, she has been the Erasmus Coordinator for the Faculty of Biology at PU. Dr. Yancheva is the leading author in 44% of her submitted publications, with an H-index of 12. She has participated in one international project, three national projects, and 11 internal projects at PU, primarily in the field of water toxicology, serving as a project leader and coordinator for four of them. The contributions are categorized into three groups: Discovery and application of pollution-responsive biomarkers for the needs of ecotoxicology in two groups of organisms: (i) fish and (ii) mussels; (iii) Study of previously unexplored toxic elements and compounds in the country. These contributions are the result of collaborative work, with the publication activity and participation in scientific forums clearly demonstrating the candidate's role and undeniable personal contribution.

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Petrova conducts lectures and exercises in 4 compulsory disciplines in the Bachelor's degree programs: Fundamentals of Paleontology, Geology and Petrography, Soil Science and Soil Pollution, Ecology and Environmental Protection in 4 specialties at BF-PU and 2 disciplines (Geomorphology and Soil Science) in a B. Sc. Program at the Faculty of Philosophy and History at the University of Plovdiv "P. Hilendarski". She is also responsible for elective courses and one optional. As a numerical expression of classroom occupancy only in the Bachelor' programs for the last academic year 2023/2024, she has completed 1006 contact hours.

Leads several disciplines in the two branches of the PU, Kardzhali and Smolyan. In the presented reference for graduates, 22 diploma theses are listed in the "Bachelor Sc." Degree and 14 in the "Master Sc.". Dr. Petrova participated with teams in 71 international and national scientific forums. Actively participates in committees of the BF-PU, more precisely in: KSC, Commission for the preparation of the competition for students 10-12th grade "Journey in Biology" 2023, Quality Commission and Commission for accreditation of professional field 4.3. Lead author on 50% of submitted publications. H-index 8. Part of Dr. Petrova's contributions are logically tied to the topic of her dissertation work, where significant results were obtained under the guidance and thanks to the innovative approach of Prof. Yurukova (G.7.5, No. G.7.7, No. G.7.8, D.7.9). Formulated as "II. Contributions in the field of the ecology of natural ecosystems", are mainly based on articles related to the dissertation work of Dr. Yancheva (D.7.11, D.7.12, D.7.13) as the same is the first author in two of them and in this sense they cannot be accepted as a personal contribution. The third group of contributions is in area 6. Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine. It should also be worded as 'contributions in the field of agriculture' and not organic farming as it concerns experiments with different crops such as tobacco, sorghum, tomatoes etc.

The presented two monographs on indicator D.5. do not meet the requirements of the RSARB, where in the Additional Regulations, Paragraph 1, item 10, the legislator has clearly defined the requirements, namely "10. (new - SG No. 30 of 2018, in force from 05.05.2018) "Monograph" is a published scientific publication that contains a complete and comprehensive study of a certain subject, problem or person, written by one or several authors holding the same view. A monograph is a scientific work that does not repeat or summarize existing knowledge, has a scientific editor and/or scientific reviewers, has an ISBN, and is no less than 100 standard pages

with 1800 characters per page. It contains an extended table of contents, a comprehensive bibliography, and references to other scientific works in the text." The presented material (Petrova S. 2024. The green system of the city of Plovdiv - ecological aspects of the development and adaptation of some tree species) is a very good summary of existing knowledge. It is based on administrative documents such as the Program for the Development, Maintenance and Protection of the Natural Parks of the City of Plovdiv, 2013; Plovdiv Municipality OS Protection Program, 2014; Program for the improvement of the KAV on the territory of the Municipality of Plovdiv for the period 2018-2023, as well as publications by the author himself. The second material (Petrova S. 2014. Paleo-ecological reconstruction of Perunika village region (Bulgaria): Molluscs (Mollusca: Gastropoda, Bivalvia) as indicators for the paleoenvironment) has a volume of 80 pages and is not presented in the set of materials on an electronic medium.

### **3. Critical remarks and recommendations**

Dr. Yancheva has a clearly defined scientific and research profile, which marks the educational and pedagogical and scientific and applied activities of the candidate. The basis of this profile was laid during her studies as a bachelor at the Agricultural University nearly 20 years ago, was confirmed during her master's degree and was permanently shaped by the topic of her dissertation. A strength of the candidate is the continued growth in the field of aquatic toxicology through Erasmus trainings and establishing international collaboration with established researchers from Europe. Her profile is clearly visible in scientific publications and projects, as well as in more than 50 participations in scientific forums in the country and abroad, which popularize the obtained results in the field of aquatic toxicology.

Dr. Petrova lacks a clear outline of the field of scientific research, as a result of which the contributions are in two areas of higher education (4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics and 6. Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine). During their participation in numerous international and national scientific forums, they are also established in area 1. Pedagogical sciences. At the Chief Assistant Petrova, diplomas and certificates of studies are also available, incl. and a 2013 Eureka Award.

### **CONCLUSION**

The documents and materials presented by Senior Assistant Professor Vesela Yancheva, Ph.D., meets all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of PU "Paisiy Hilendarski" with the exception of one textbook, citations outside the two databases data and lack of clear distinction between the publications used in the occupation of the title of "Assis. Prof."

The documents and materials presented by Senior Assistant Professor Slaveya Petrova, Ph.D., meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of the PU "Paisiy Hilendarski" with a number of exceptions. The two materials presented as monographs do not comply with the Additional provisions, paragraph 1, item 10 of the RSARB. Two materials submitted for book chapters are essentially scholarly journal publications. Two publications have a high percentage of similarity. There are inaccuracies in the list of projects and misattribution to the international category as well as to project management. References are missing for some projects, and they are not found on the Internet.

Despite the established inaccuracies, the documents of the two candidates show that they are established academic teachers and researchers. The total number of points for both candidates exceeds the minimum national requirements, with the points of Dr. Yancheva having a certain advantage - 1408.7 points, of which 1314 points on the mandatory indicators A, B, G and D for a total number of Dr. Petrova 1330,5, of which 1102 points according to indicators A, B, G and D (Table. 1 and Tabl. 2, attached to this opinion). Both candidates also meet the additional

requirements of the Faculty of Biology at the PU. They are very active in teaching and learning. Their contribution to the Faculty of Biology is indisputable.

**In view of the fact that both candidates for the position associate professor cannot be selected, I am citing the main scientometric data. Dr. Yancheva participates with a higher number of scientific publications with a quartile (44 compared to 33 for Dr. Petrova), has a higher citation rate (323 citations in the world-famous databases with scientific information compared to 256 for Dr. Petrova), has a higher H-index with a difference of 4 points in favor of Dr. Yancheva, a clearly defined profile in the professional direction of the competition, namely 4.3, and definiteness of personal contributions in the same direction.**

**Based on the above, I give my positive assessment and recommend the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Biology for the election of the Assistant Professor. Vesela Slavcheva Yancheva, Ph.D., at the academic position of "associate professor" at PU "Paisiy Hilendarski" in: area of higher education 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics, professional field 4.3. Biological sciences, scientific specialty Ecology and ecosystem conservation.**

09.09.2024

Assessor:

(Gana Gecheva, PhD, Assoc. Prof.)

**Table 1.** Reference for conformity of the points of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Vesela Yancheva with the minimum scientometric requirements (the minimum requirements of the BF are given in parentheses)

Item	Indicator content	Points by indicator	Search points by group indicators	Points per candidate by indicator	Candidate's total points
A1	Dissertation for award of educational and scientific degree "doctor"	50	50	50	50
<b>ALL POINTS BY INDICATOR GROUP „A“:</b>					<b>50</b>
B4	Habilitation work – scientific publications (no less than 10) in publications that are referenced and indexed in world famous databases with	25 per publ. in Q1 20 per publ. in Q2 15 per publ. in Q3 12 per publ. in Q4 10 per publ. only with SJR	100	2 x 20 = 40 4 x 15 = 60 1 x 10 = 10	
<b>ALL POINTS BY INDICATOR GROUP „B“:</b>					<b>110</b>
Г7	Scientific publication in publications that are referenced and indexed in world renowned databases with scientific information (Web of Science and Scopus), outside the habilitation work	25 per publ. in Q1 20 per publ. in Q2 15 per publ. in Q3 12 per publ. in Q4 10 per publ. only with SJR	200	3 x 25 = 75 4 x 20 = 80 5 x 15 = 75 14 x 12 = 168 11 x 10 = 110	508
<b>ALL POINTS BY INDICATOR GROUP „G“:</b>					<b>508</b>
Д11	Citations in scientific publications, monographs, collective volumes and patents, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information (Web of Science and Scopus)	2	50	323 x 2 = 646	646
<b>ALL POINTS BY INDICATOR GROUP „D“:</b>					<b>646</b>
<b>ALL POINTS BY INDICATOR GROUPS A+B+G+D:</b>					<b>1314</b>
E14	Participation in national scientific or educational project	10	(2)	2 x 10 = 20	20
E15	Participation in international scientific or educational project	20		1 x 20 = 20	20

<b>E16</b>	Management of a national scientific or educational project	20		1 x20=20	20
<b>E18</b>	Raise funds	1 per 5000 BGN		1 x 4 = 4	4
<b>E19</b>	A published university textbook or a textbook that is used on the school network	40/n	(2)	1x20=20	26.7
				1x6,7=6.7	
<b>E20</b>	A published university textbook or a textbook that is used on the school network	20/n		1x4=4	4
<b>ALL POINTS BY INDICATOR GROUP "E":</b>					<b>94.7</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>1408,7</b>

**Table 2.** Reference for conformity of the points of Senior Assistant Professor Slaveya Petrova, Ph.D., with the minimum scientometric requirements (the minimum requirements of the BF are given in brackets)

<b>Item</b>	<b>Indicator content</b>	<b>Points by indicator</b>	<b>Search points by group indicators</b>	<b>Points per candidate by indicator</b>	<b>Candidate's total points</b>
<b>A1</b>	Dissertation for award of educational and scientific degree "doctor"	50	50	50	50
<b>ALL POINTS BY INDICATOR GROUP „A“:</b>					<b>50</b>
<b>B4</b>	Habilitation work – scientific publications (no less than 10) in publications that are referenced and indexed in world famous databases with	25 per publ. in Q1 20 per publ. in Q2 15 per publ. in Q3 12 per publ. in Q4 10 per publ. only with SJR	100	4x25=100 1 x 20 = 20	120
<b>ALL POINTS BY INDICATOR GROUP „B“:</b>					<b>120</b>
<b>Г6</b>	Published book based on a defended dissertation work for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"	20	200	1x20=20	20
<b>Г7</b>	Scientific publication in publications that are referenced and indexed in world renowned databases with scientific information (Web of Science and Scopus), outside the habilitation work	25 per publ. in Q1 20 per publ. in Q2 15 per publ. in Q3 12 per publ. in Q4 10 per publ. only with SJR		1x25=25 6x20=120 8x15=120 12x10=120	385

<b>Г8</b>	Published book chapter or collective monograph	15		1x15=15	15
<b>ALL POINTS BY INDICATOR GROUP „G“:</b>					<b>420</b>
<b>Д11</b>	Citations in scientific publications, monographs, collective volumes and patents, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information (Web of Science and Scopus)	2	50	256x2=	512
<b>ALL POINTS BY INDICATOR GROUP „D“:</b>					<b>512</b>
<b>ALL POINTS BY INDICATOR GROUPS A+B+G+D:</b>					<b>1102</b>
<b>E14</b>	Participation in national scientific or educational project	10	(2)	7 x10=70	70
<b>E15</b>	Participation in international scientific or educational project	20		2 x20=40	40
<b>E16</b>	Management of a national scientific or educational project	20		1 x20=20	20
<b>E18</b>	Raise funds	1 per 5000 BGN		12x1=12	12
<b>E19</b>	A published university textbook or a textbook that is used on the school network	40/n	(2)	1x8=8 1x10=10 1x20=20 1x6,7=6.7	44.7
<b>E20</b>	A published university textbook or a textbook that is used on the school network	20/n		1x4=4 1x2=2 2x6.7=13.4 1x10=10 3x3.3=9.9 1x2.5=2.5	41.8
<b>ALL POINTS BY INDICATOR GROUP „E“:</b>					<b>228.5</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>1330,5</b>