

# OPINION

by **Prof. Dr. Balik Malomirov Dzhambazov**

**Faculty of Biology at the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv**

regarding the materials presented for participation in a competition  
for the academic position "**Associate Professor**"  
at the **Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv**

in the field of higher education **4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics**

professional field **4.3. Biological sciences (Morphology)**

In the competition for an Associate Professor, announced in the State Gazette (Bulgaria), no. 98 of 19.11.2024 and on the website of the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv for the needs of the Department of Developmental Biology at the Faculty of Biology, as a candidate participates Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Stela Georgieva Stoyanova from Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

## **1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate**

According to order No. RD-22-441 / 18.02.2025 of the Rector of the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury of a competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the PU in the field of higher education 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics, professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences (Morphology), announced for the needs of the Department of Developmental Biology at the Faculty of Biology.

The set of materials presented by Chief Ass. Prof. Dr. Stela Stoyanova in electronic format is in accordance with Art. 66(2) of the Regulations for the career development of the academic staff of the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. A total of 33 scientific publications (10 in Group indicators B-4 and 23 in Group indicators G-7) and 2 study guides (in Group indicators E-20) are presented. The lists of scientific works with which the PhD degree was acquired and the academic position " Chief Assistant Professor" was occupied are also presented. According to Art. 24 of the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and Art. 53 of the Regulations on the Implementation of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, scientific works are evaluated according to the criteria for the minimum national requirements. All 33 scientific publications, with which the applicant participates in the competition for the academic position "Associate Professor", 2 study guides and participation in 5 research projects, were accepted for review.

In 24 of the scientific publications presented (8 of Group B-4 and 16 of Group G-7), Chief Ass. Prof. Dr. Stela Stoyanova is a leading author (first, last or author for correspondence). The citations in Web of Science and Scopus are much more than the required 50 points.

Chief Ass. Prof. Dr. Stela Stoyanova has completed her Bachelor's Degree in Biology at the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv in 2009, and in 2011 completed the Master's Degree in

Antropology at the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. The PhD Degree was defended in 2015 in the PhD Program "Ecology and Ecosystems Protection" at the Faculty of Biology, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

Stela Stoyanova's commitment to the Department of Developmental Biology began back in 2009, when she was appointed as a part-time Assistant Professor in Embryology and histology, which continued to perform until 2014. In 2014, she was appointed as a full-time Assistant Professor in Embryology and histology, and since 2016, she has held the academic position of Chief Assistant Professor. In parallel with teaching, throughout these years, she has been actively developing research with a clearly outlined profile in the field of morphology. Proof of this is the large number of scientific publications and research projects with her participation.

I personally know Ch. Ass. Prof. Dr. Stela Stoyanova and I believe that she is an energetic and responsible teacher, a good researcher, a correct person with a clear willingness to help and assist anyone with whatever she can.

## **2. General characteristics of the applicant's activity**

### ***Evaluation of the educational and pedagogical activity***

The pedagogical activity of Ch. Ass. Prof. Dr. Stela Stoyanova includes lecture courses and laboratory exercises mainly in Embryology and histology, Histology and pathology, and Human development biology in the Bachelor's degrees of the Faculty of Biology, as well as several disciplines in the Master's Programs in "Reproductive Biology" and "Biodiagnostics". The presented reference shows that every year, the workload is over 500-600 study hours.

Two study guides in coauthorship (Guide on Histology, 2025, ISBN 978-619-281-021-4 and Guide on Histology and Pathology, ISBN 978-619-281-022-1) are presented for participation in the competition for an Associate Professor.

Ch. Ass. Prof. Dr. Stela Stoyanova participated in the scientific supervision of 10 successfully defended graduates in Bachelor's and Master's programs at the Faculty of Biology, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. In addition, she is an academic advisor at the University Center for Working with Young Scientists, PhD students and postdoctors and each year participates in the organization and holding of the competition "Journey in Biology" at the Faculty of Biology. She has participated in the Committee on Teachers' Certificate, as well as in the Committee on Doctoral Programs (Morphology). She has participated in the Teachers' Certificate Committee as well as in the PhD programs Accreditation Committee (Morphology).

The aforementioned pedagogical and organizational activity of Ch. Ass. Prof. Stoyanova clearly demonstrates her professional training and willingness to occupy the academic position "Associate Professor".

### ***Evaluation of the scientific and scientific-applied activity***

For participation in the competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the scientific specialty "Morphology", Ch. Ass. Prof. Dr. Stela Stoyanova presents a total of 33 scientific publications (in 24 she is a lead author), which have not been used in the procedures for obtaining the educational and scientific degree PhD and for occupying the academic position "Chief Assistant Professor". They are classified into 2 groups of indicators:

**Indicator B-4:** Ten scientific publications are presented that are referenced and indexed in Web of Science / Scopus (with Q2, Q3 and Q4), 9 of which have an impact factor and carry a total

of 146 points out of a required minimum of 100 points. The real number of points is actually higher, since for some journals that have different quartiles in different fields, the maximum quartiles are not always taken, as should be the case according to the requirements.

**Indicator G-7:** This group presents 23 scientific publications referenced and indexed in Web of Science / Scopus, 16 of which have an impact factor. Of these, 2 are with Q1, 3 with Q2, 2 with Q3 and 16 with Q4. The calculated total number of points is 332 with a required minimum of 200 points, but again, as with the above indicator, they are actually more.

The personal participation of Ch. Ass. Prof. Dr. Stela Stoyanova in the presented 33 publications is illustrated by the fact that in 24 of them she is the lead author.

The main scientific directions in which Ch. Ass. Prof. Dr. Stela Stoyanova works are a natural continuation of her PhD thesis. The issues considered in the scientific works are related to the study of the toxic effects of pesticides and heavy metals on various aquatic organisms, as well as the use of aquatic organisms as bioindicators for pollution with these toxicants. The majority of scientific publications and scientific contributions are in this direction.

Other scientific contributions are related to research on the role of the nutritional supplement PAPA® in improving the morpho-physiological status of sperm, as well as the influence of physical exercises on serum levels of the hormone ghrelin.

From the presented scientific publications, the outlined profile of Ch. Ass. Prof. Dr. Stela Stoyanova in the field of ecotoxicology and morphology is clearly visible. The presented 272 citations of her scientific publications (a total of 544 points with a required minimum of 50 points) demonstrate the recognition and knowledge of the scientific contributions of Ch. Ass. Prof. Stoyanova by international specialists in the same field.

The research activity also includes participation in 10 research projects (5 of them are national), as well as 37 participations in scientific forums.

Ch. Ass. Prof. Dr. Stela Stoyanova actively participates in the administrative and social activities of the Faculty of Biology. She is the secretary of the Department of Developmental Biology and participates in a number of committees at the Faculty of Biology, as well as in the organizing committees of various events.

### **3. Main critical remarks and recommendations**

I have no critical remarks about the pedagogical and scientific activities of Ch. Ass. Prof. Stoyanova. All indicators and criteria for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor" are covered.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis and evaluation of the pedagogical and scientific activities, I think that Ch. Ass. Prof. Dr. Stela Stoyanova meets all the requirements of the Regulation for development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (RDASRB), the Regulation for application of RDASRB and the relevant Regulation of the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

Ch. Ass. Prof. Dr. Stela Stoyanova has presented a significant number of scientific papers published after the materials used in the defense of the PhD degree and holding the academic position "Chief Assistant Professor". The candidate's scientific publications contain original scientific and applied contributions that have received international recognition.

Therefore, I give my **positive assessment** and recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Biology for the **election of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Stela Georgieva Stoyanova to the academic position of "Associate Professor"** at the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv in the field of higher education: 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences (Morphology).

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**Prepared the opinion:** .....

Prof. Dr. Balik Dzhambazov