

STATEMENT

by **Anelia Mihaylova Stojanova**, PhD

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

by: field of higher education 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics,
professional direction 4.3. Biological Sciences (Zoology – Zoology of Vertebrates)

In the competition for the academic position "Associate Professor", announced in the State Gazette, No. 98 of 19.11.2024 and on the website of "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv for the needs of the Department of Zoology at the Faculty of Biology, Ch. Assist. Prof. Dr. Vesela Ilieva Mitkovska from "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv, Department of Zoology, has participated as a candidate.

1. General presentation of the procedure and the applicant

By order No. RD-22-440 of 18 February 2025 of the Rector of the "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv, I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury of 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 direction 4.3. Biological sciences (Zoology– Zoology of Vertebrates), announced for the needs of the Department of Zoology at the Faculty of Biology.

The presented set of materials by Ch. Assistant Professor Vesela Ilieva Mitkovska, PhD in electronic form, includes all the necessary documents described in the application to the Rector of the "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv and are in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Plovdiv. The documents are prepared and presented correctly and accurately.

To participate in the competition, the candidate has submitted a total of 22 scientific works, 2 study aids and a list of participation in 9 research projects and 2 national programs. All of these materials are outside of her dissertation and are accepted for peer review. Dr. Mitkovska has also presented a list of 3 research papers associated with her PhD dissertation and 6 research papers associated with holding the academic position of "Chief Assistant", which are not peer-reviewed. The candidate has submitted all the necessary references and certificates in connection with the procedure, proving her contributions and meeting the minimum national requirements and the specific criteria of the Faculty of Biology for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv.

2. A general description of the applicant's activity

Educational and pedagogical activity

Dr. Vesela Mitkovska has been a lecturer in the Department of Zoology since 2011 (on a permanent employment contract since 2003), and since 2015 she has been a Chief Assistant. During this period, she has gained considerable teaching experience. In the last five years Dr. Mitkovska has conducted lecture courses and practical laboratory classes (in total 3651 academic hours) at "Bachelor" degree level in the disciplines: Vertebrate Zoology, Zoology, Animal Diversity, Medical Zoology Part II, Computer skills – office documents and software (optional discipline) and Disinfection, disinsection and deratization (optional discipline) in 8 Bachelor's degrees in the Faculty of Biology (full-time and part-time) and one Bachelor's degrees in the Faculty of Physics and Technology. Vesela Mitkovska has actively participated in field practical exercises, organized in accordance with the curricula. For the "Genetics" Master's program in the Faculty of Biology she has given tutorials on Methods for Cyto- and Genotoxicity Assessment and for "Archaeology and archaeological cultural heritage" Master's program in the Faculty of History and Philosophy has given lectures and tutorials on Zoology in Archaeological Research.

Dr. V. Mitkovska has been the academic supervisor and co-supervisor of seven graduate students from the Faculty of Biology who have successfully defended their diploma theses in the period of 2015-2024.

Dr. Mitkovska has a co-authored 2 study aids – "Vertebrate Zoology Exercise and Test Guide" and "Genetic Basis of Behavior" for the purposes of teaching at the Faculty of Biology of the "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv.

Scientific and applied scientific activity

To participate in the competition, Dr. Mitkovska has submitted 22 scientific works – 21 of them are published in internationally renowned peer revised scientific journals, indexed in the Web of Science and Scopus databases and one chapter of a collective monograph. Fifteen publications have an impact factor (total IF: 28.361) and six – have SJR only; the candidate is the first author in 9 of them. The distribution of the scientific works of the candidate, according to the minimum national requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor", is as follows: group of indicators B: 6 scientific works, distributed by quartiles: Q1 – 2 issues, Q2 – 2 issues and Q3 – 2 issues, carrying 120 points (100 points required) and by group of indicators G – 15 scientific papers, distributed by quartiles: Q1 – 2 issues Q3 – 7 issues and Q4 – 6 issues, carrying 242 points (200 points required). The submitted publications exceed the minimum national requirements in number of points.

The scientific research activity of Dr. Mitkovska finds a wide response among the scientific community. Under indicator group D, the candidate has submitted a list of a total of 50 citations in peer revised scientific journals, indexed in the Web of Science and Scopus databases, carrying 100 points (50 points required). This affirms that Dr. Mitkovska's research activity is popular and well received by specialists worldwide. The most cited publications are: „Mitkovska, V., & Chassovnikarova, T. (2020). Chlorpyrifos levels within permitted limits induce nuclear abnormalities and DNA damage in the erythrocytes of the common carp. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 27(7), 7166-7176“ (cited 22 times) and „Georgieva, E., Antal, L., Stoyanova, S., Arnaudova, D., Velcheva, I., Iliev, I., Vasileva, T., Bivolarski, V., Mitkovska, V., Chassovnikarova, T., Todorova, B., Uzochukwubg, I.E., Nyeste, K. & Yancheva, V. (2022). Biomarkers for pollution in caged mussels from three reservoirs in Bulgaria: A pilot study. *Heliyon*, 8(3). p.e09069. eISSN 2405- 8440“ (cited 10 times).

The works of Dr. Mitkovska published after the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree PhD, are in three main directions: 1) Biomarkers for assessing environmental genotoxic and cytotoxic potential in different zoomonitor species; 2) The role of vertebrates as vectors and reservoirs of viral zoonoses and blood parasites; 3) Studies of species-specific characteristics in mammals. Scientific works in the first direction covering research on zoomonitor species of mammals, amphibians and insects prevail. The candidate has significant original scientific, applied scientific, methodological and fundamental contributions, which are very well structured and formulated and fully correspond to the scientific specialty of the announced competition.

The scientific research work of Dr. Mitkovska has also been associated with participation in nine projects financed on a competitive basis. The candidate takes part in two national research programs funded by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education.

Dr. Mitkovska presents a list of participation in a total of 48 scientific forums in the period 2011-2024 (16 international, 20 national with international participation and 12 national scientific forums), which is irrefutable proof of successful popularization of her scientific results.

Dr. Mitkovska fully fulfills the specific criteria for academic growth of the Faculty of Biology: she has presented 2 study aids; she has been the scientific supervisor of 7 graduate students at the Faculty of Biology; she has 13 years and 9 month of teaching experience; she has participated in nine scientific research projects and two national programs.

The candidate has a very rich administrative activity raising the prestige and authority of the Faculty of Biology and “Paisii Hilendarski” University of Plovdiv.

Personal impressions

I have known Dr. Mitkovska since the time when she joined the Department of Zoology, and my personal impressions are also the result of our long-term collaborative work together. Vesela Mitkovska is a responsible, approachable and dedicated to her work. She is

a specialist with depth theoretical knowledge and practical skills, hardworking as a researcher, cooperative and well-intentioned as a person. I am convinced that these qualities are a guarantee for her successful future research and teaching work.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by Ch. Assistant Professor Vesela Ilieva Mitkovska, Ph.D., meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of LDASRB and the relevant Regulations for academic development of "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv, as well as the Additional requirements of the Faculty of Biology.

All criteria for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" – national and additional specific requirements of the Faculty of Biology, have been met by the candidate. Dr. Mitkovska has deep scientific interests and a clear profile as a researcher with significant original scientific and applied contributions in the fields of zoology and genetics that have received international recognition. Dr. Mitkovska is a highly qualified lecturer and achieves excellent results in the teaching process.

Based on the analysis of the candidate's pedagogical, scientific and applied scientific activities, I am confident that the candidacy of Ch. Assistant Professor Vesela Mitkovska, PhD, fully meets the requirements for the academic position of "Associate Professor". I give my **positive assessment** and recommend to the Scientific Jury the preparation of a report-proposal to the to the Faculty Council of Faculty of Biology, "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv supporting the election of Chief Assistant Professor Vesela Ilieva Mitkovska, PhD 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 direction 4.3. Biological Sciences (Zoology – Zoology of Vertebrates).

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Statement prepared by:

(Assoc. Prof. Anelia Stojanova, PhD)