

## STATEMENT

**BY** Anita Georgieva Tosheva, PhD, Associate Professor, Faculty of Biology, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, a member of the Academic board of examiners, appointed by Order no. RD 38-569/03.12.2020 by the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Prof. Anastas Gerdjikov, Dr.

**About** the competition for filling the academic position **Professor at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”**, in the area of higher education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and informatics, Professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences (Ecology and conservation of ecosystems - Phytoecology) in Faculty of Biology, SU “St. Kl. Ohridski”, announced in SG ed. 88 on 13.10.2020.

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

In the competition for “Professor”, announced in the State Gazette ed. 88/13.10.2020, as sole candidate participates **Associate Professor Rossen Tzonev, PhD** in Department of Ecology and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Biology, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

The documents submitted by the applicant in electronic form are in accordance with the all requirements of the Act for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), the Regulations for the Application of the ADASRB, the Rules for the conditions and the procedure for acquiring academic degrees and occupying academic positions at SU “St. Kl. Ohridski”; they exceed considerably the recommended criteria for occupying the academic position “Professor” in the area of higher education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and informatics, Professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences. Documents are very well organised and provide ample information about the scientific and pedagogical activities of the applicant.

Associate Prof. Rossen Tzonev is graduate in Ecology in SU “St. Kl. Ohridski” in 1998. He successfully defended a PhD-thesis entitled “Flora and vegetation in the Middle Danube Plain between the valleys of the rivers Vit and Studena” at Department of Botany, Faculty of Biology, SU “St. Kl. Ohridski” in 2003. In 1989 he began his career as an assistant (2002-2005), then as a senior assistant (2005-2006) and chief assistant (2006-2010), and since 2010 he has been an associate professor at Department of Ecology and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Biology, SU “St. Kl. Ohridski”. Specialization has been conducted in Masaryk University, Brno (2000-2004). Associate Prof. Tzonev participates in administrative activities, he is Chairman of the Management Board of the Bulgarian Society for Phytocenology and a member of the Bulgarian Botanical Society and the Balkani Wildlife Society as well as of Editorial boards of *Annual of Sofia University, book-2 Botany*; *Phytologia Balcanica*, *Plant Sociology*. The expert activity of Assoc. Prof. Tzonev is also related to the preparation of reports on environmental assessment, procedures for assessment of environmental impact and compatibility of plans, programs and projects with the object and purpose of protected areas of the European Ecological Network NATURA 2000.

For this competition, Assoc. Prof. Rossen Tzonev has submitted a list of publications for all his scientific production (in Database for the scientific activity of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" - Authors): 88 - articles in journals and articles in conference proceedings, 23 – books and chapters in books, 19 – articles in Red Data Book of the Republic of Bulgaria, Vol.1 and Vol.3., 1 textbook and 2 teaching aids. According to the Scopus database, the candidate's h-index is 9 (8 all of the above numbers are after excluding autocitations).

In the competition for the academic position “professor”, the candidate has applied a total of 50 publications. From this list, 6 scientific publications are equated to habilitation thesis (publications in journals, that have been referenced and indexed in world-famous scientific information databases (Web of Science or Scopus), distributed by quartiles: Q1 - 3, Q2 - 2, Q3 – 1) and 43 beyond the habilitation thesis (17 distributed by quartiles: Q1 - 2, Q2 - 2, Q3 – 7, Q4 – 6; 1 publication in journal with SJR and 5 book chapters, 20 beyond Indicator D7 and D8). The articles D7.3 and D7.10 are in the scope of zoecology. According to the provided information, the number of citations of publication of Assoc. Prof. Tzonev after the acquisition of academic position Associate Professor is 430, in scientific editions referenced and indexed in Web of Science or Scopus are 267. Information on the participation in 27 national and 2 international projects is provided, included in the competition. The results of the research activity of the candidate have been reported at 29 scientific forums. Assoc. Prof. Tzonev is an author of one textbook. He is a supervisor of one successfully defended PhD student.

The attached author’s account shows that Assoc. Prof. Rossen Tzonev fulfills the minimal national requirements for occupying the academic position of “professor” (Indicator A fulfills national requirements, Indicator C is scored 130 points against the required 100 points, Indicator D is 352 with 200 points required, indicator E is 534 (required 100 points), and indicator F is 400 (required 150 points).

### **General characteristics of the candidate's activities**

#### ***Assessment of educational and pedagogical activity***

As a lecturer at the Faculty of Biology of Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski” Assoc. Prof. Rossen Tzonev has considerable teaching activity, which includes lectures and exercises for students in the Bachelor’s and Master’s degree (Protected areas and biodiversity conservation, Methods of ecological research, Environmental legislation and regulations, Biogeography, Fundamentals of ecology, Phytoecology, Biodiversity and bioresources, etc.). He has supervised 14 successfully defended diploma students and one PhD student in 2020, and is a supervisor or co-supervisor of 3 more PhD students.

#### ***Assessment of scientific and applied research activities***

The main scientific researches of Assoc. Prof. Rossen Tzonev are related to the classification of vegetation and natural habitats and the conservation of plants, animals, communities and habitats.

The research activity of Assoc. Prof. Tzonev in the publications included in the habilitation work (6 publications) is a contribution to the study of phytocoenology and plant

ecology - the diversity of vegetation in Bulgaria, its relationship with the vegetation of countries on the Balkan Peninsula and the vegetation of Europe as a whole. As a result, revisions were made to vegetation types widespread in Europe, in particular beech forests and coastal vegetation. A phytosociological classification of oak forests was made for the first time in Bulgaria, as well as of the serpentine communities in Bulgaria and neighbouring countries were established and new associations for science were described.

The research of Assoc. Prof. Tzonev in the publications by group of indicators D represents a continuation of studies of phytocoenology, but also of flora and fauna, as well as activities related to conservation and management of species and habitats of conservation importance, etc. The scientific results could be grouped into the following main contributions:

In the field of phytoecology, revision and classification of different types of vegetation in Europe (marsh vegetation of the class *Phragmito-Magnocaricetea* and floodplain forests and alder carrs), studies of plant communities and description of new syntaxa, both for the vegetation of the country (class *Oryzetea sativae*, alliance *Angelicion littoralis*, associations *Junco effusi-Molinietum caeruleae*, *Deschampsietum cespitosae*, *Caricetum acutiformis*) and for science (alliance of endemic Balkan-Anatolian sub-Mediterranean shrubs *Genistion lydiae* and three new associations belonging to it), effectively published diagnoses of syntaxa have been made. The European Red List of Habitats Part 2. Terrestrial and freshwater habitats has been prepared for the first time.

New chorological data for species from different floristic regions of Bulgaria have been established, including those of conservation significance, new species for the flora of Bulgaria (*Heteranthera reniformis*, *Rotala ramosior*, *Ranunculus paludosus* и *Erodium botrys*) and distribution of some taxa has been confirmed (*Hyacinthella leucophaea* subsp. *atchleyi*, *Circaea alpina*).

Some of the contributions are in the field of zoocology (waterbirds, reptiles) and ecology of fungi (rare and threatened fungi).

In the applied aspect contributions are mainly related to study, mapping and assessment of the conservation status of various natural habitats. Two new natural habitats included in the Habitats Directive, Annex 1 in Bulgaria have been established. Manuals with detailed characteristics and illustrations for natural habitats of conservation significance have been prepared and measures for their protection and management have been proposed. Databases of phytosociological relevés from different vegetation types from countries on the Balkan Peninsula and Europe have been created. Also an assessment of the impact of hydroelectric power stations on ecosystems and the ecological status of rivers and the evaluation of the ecosystem services, provided by the agroecosystems in Bulgaria have been made, a revision of the policies for application of conservation grazing and an environmentally friendly approach for the development of freshwater fish farms within the protected areas of the ecological network NATURA 2000 in Bulgaria is proposed, etc.

The results of the research activity of the candidate have been published in reputable international impact factor journals in the field: *Applied Vegetation Science*, *Phytocoenologia*, *Plant Biosystems*, *Acta Oecologica*, *Journal of Ecology*, as well as European Red List of Habitats - Part 2. Terrestrial and freshwater habitats, etc.

### **Assessment of the applicant's personal scientific contributions**

The personal contribution of Assoc. Prof. Rossen Tzonev to the experimental development, interpretation and publication of the results in the presented materials in my opinion is obvious and significant. In most of the publications, he is the first, second and / or corresponding author, which demonstrates his leading role. The submitted habilitation report of the scientific contributions correctly summarizes the work performed and reflects the theoretical and applied results achieved.

### **Critical Remarks and Recommendations**

I have no significant critical remarks or recommendations to the documents presented by the candidate, as well as on his scientific and educational activities.

### **CONCLUSION**

The documents submitted by Assoc. Prof. Rossen Todorov Tzonev, PhD are **in accordance with all the requirements** of the Act for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), the Regulations for the Application of the ADASRB and the Rules for the conditions and the procedure for acquiring academic degrees and occupying academic positions at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. The quantitative criteria of Assoc. Prof. Tzonev fulfill all minimal national requirements for holding the academic position “professor” in professional field 4.3. Biological sciences, as defined in the relevant legislation.

The candidate has presented a significant number of scientific works, published after the materials used in the defence of his PhD thesis and the acquisition of academic position Associate Professor, as well as with sufficient data for educational activity. The publications in reputable international journals testify to the high scientific level of research.

After getting acquainted with the materials for the competition and after analysing their significance, I give a **positive assessment** and recommend to the honourable Academic board of examiners to propose to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Biology of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” **Associate Professor Rossen Todorov Tzonev, PhD** to be elected on the academic position of **Professor** in the Professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences (Ecology and conservation of ecosystems - Phytoecology), area of higher education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and informatics.

1<sup>st</sup> February 2021  
Sofia

Signature: .....  
Assoc. Prof. Anita Tosheva, PhD