

**TO:  
THE SCIENTIFIC JURY**

**RE:  
Resolution RD 38-177 / 30.04.2020  
of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”**

**OPINION**

**by**

**Assoc. Prof. Bilyana Bogomilova Borisova, PhD, Department of Landscape Ecology and Environmental Protection, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”**

**For the "Professor" competition in professional field 4.4. Earth Sciences (Biogeography and Geography of Soils), announced in SG no. 21 / 13.03.2020**

This opinion was prepared on the basis of the decision of the Scientific Jury at its meeting on July 21, 2020, in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria - ZRASRB (as amended on February 25, 2020), the Regulations for its implementation (RI ZRASRB, SG of 19.02.2019) and the Regulations for the conditions and the order for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”(as amended on 27 May 2020).

**I. General requirements under Art. 29 of the Law for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Art. 60 of the Regulations for application of the same law and Art. 115 and Art. 117 of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski"**

In relation to the Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" announcement for professor competition in professional field 4.4. Earth Sciences (Biogeography and Geography of Soils), published in SG no. 21 / 13.03.2020, documents for participation were submitted by one candidate - Assoc. Prof. Assen Ivanov Assenov.

Assoc. Prof. Assenov is a full-time lecturer at the Department of Landscape Ecology and Environmental Protection of the Faculty of Geology and Geography at Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski” since 1986, having successively held the positions of assistant (1986), senior assistant (1989), chief assistant (1992) and associate professor in 4.4. Earth Sciences (Biogeography and Geography of Soils) since 2012. Assoc. Prof. Assenov obtained the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (Biogeography and Geography of Soils) in 2013 at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski”.

In view of his participation in the competition, Assoc. Prof. Assen Assenov has presented 54 publications that do not repeat those submitted for the acquisition of educational and scientific degree "Doctor" and those submitted for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the same scientific field. These include a habilitation monograph, a university textbook, 3 chapters from collective monographs, 12 publications in publications which are indexed and referenced in world databases, 37 scientific publications in non-refereed journals. He submitted 13 single-author works, and the remaining 41 are co-authored, including 12 in which the candidate is the first author. Nearly 74% of the scientific production is in English - 40 publications, 14 of which are published abroad.

Assoc. Prof. Assenov is the editor-in-chief of book 2: Geography of Sofia University's Annual since 2017, as well as a permanent member of the scientific committee of the Ecology Seminar of IBEL-BAS since 2016. He is a member of the following scientific organizations: Bulgarian Geographical Society and the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria. He has participated in 10 scientific juries under the ZRASRB, two of which he chaired.

Assoc. Prof. Assenov is Head of the Department of Landscape Ecology and Environmental Protection of the GGF. He is a member of the Faculty Council (2015-2019) and of the Faculty Commission at Sofia University's Research Fund for the same period.

## **II. Additional requirements under Art. 29b of the Law for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Art. 61 of the Regulations for implementation of the same law and Art. 122 of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski"**

### **1. Requirements related to educational activities**

Assoc. Prof. Assenov has 34 years of teaching experience at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" - all of them at the Department of Landscape Science and Environmental Protection of the Faculty of Geology and Geography (renamed since 2019 as Department of Landscape Ecology and Environmental Protection). His teaching engagements include conducting lectures, seminars and practical field classes in basic disciplines at the bachelor's and master's level in the specialty "Geography" of GGF - General Biogeography, Biogeography of Bulgaria, Protected Natural Sites in Bulgaria, Natural Capital. He is the main keeper of the GGF herbarium collection for educational purposes. Assoc. Prof. Assenov also teaches in the Bachelor's program in "Regional Development and Policy" at the same Faculty in the disciplines Environment and Natural Resources and Forest Resources Management in Bulgaria. These facts prove that he is a highly qualified lecturer with extensive pedagogical experience. This statement is supported by the data on his study load - his total classroom engagement for the last 5 years is 534 hours on average, and his total study engagement - an average of 1027 hours per school year. Assoc. Prof. Assenov is the research supervisor of two doctoral students, one current PhD student in the first year of study, as well as 7 Master's graduates for the last 8 years.

### **2. Research requirements**

This opinion was prepared after reduction of the weight of the collection of scientific papers submitted for the competition by Assoc. Prof. Assen Assenov, arising from the circumstances

of co-authorship with the candidate - this refers to Г: 7.03, 7.07, 7.09, 7.10, 7.12, 8.11, 8.12, 8.13, 8.19, 8.22, 8.26, 8.27, 8.34.

The scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Assenov gives grounds to indicate the following areas of long-lasting research interests, in which he has produced theoretical and applied results:

- ❖ Theoretical and methodological foundations of the **biogeographical science**, corresponding to specific spatial analyses regarding the geographical conditions of Bulgaria and the resulting - biogeographical regionalization [B – 1, G – 7.06, 8.21, 8.28, 8-29, 8.30, 8.35, 8.36, E-20.1]
- ❖ **Applied biodiversity** in the context of interdisciplinary regional and landscape-ecological research - with emphasis on functional biodiversity [G-7.01, 7.08, 8.02, 8.03, 8.16, 8.18, 8.23, 8.24] and the spatial dimensions in the management of conservationally-important sites of the European ecological network [G-7.04, 8.04, 8.06, 8.07, 8.08, 8.09, 8.14, 8.25, 9.01]
- ❖ Concept of **Natural Capital** and applied aspects of its valuation [Г-7.02, Г-7.05, 7.11, 8.01, 8.17, 8.31, 8.32, 8.37, 9.02, 9.03]

Based on the above, I accept the original scientific contributions formulated in the author's reference.

The official report on the publication and citation activity presented by the candidate shows good recognition of the author's works. Of the 12 scientific publications referenced and indexed in scientific database, 8 are on record by Scopus - they are presented in journals valued by the specialized scientific community - One Ecosystem, Ecologia Balkanica, Phytocoenologia. The study dedicated to the Balkan Vegetation Database stands out with the highest number of citations [G-7.06].

The summary review of the scientific metrics shows that the candidacy of Assoc. Prof. Assenov meets and exceeds the requirements for holding the academic position of "professor".

### 3. Conclusion

The scientific production and the original scientific contributions, the academic teaching and teaching load, professional experience and expertise of Assoc. Prof. Assen Assenov show that his candidacy meets the terms and conditions for acquiring the academic position "Professor", as per ZRASRB, its Regulations, and the Regulations for the conditions and order for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". **On this basis, I express my positive opinion that Assoc. Prof. Assen Ivanov Assenov SHOULD ACQUIRE the academic position "PROFESSOR" in the professional field 4.4. Earth sciences, scientific specialty Biogeography and soil geography.**

Sofia  
August 28, 2020

Member of the Scientific Jury:  
Assoc.Prof. Bilyana Borisova, PhD