

OPINION

by Prof. Dr. **Dragan Petrov Chobanov**

Place of work: Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Member of the scientific jury for the competition for associate professor, appointed by Order No. RD-38-123 / 06.03.2025 of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Subject: competition for the position of **Associate Professor** in professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences (Zoology - Invertebrate Zoology - Entomology), announced in the State Gazette, issue 5/17.01.2025, at the Faculty of Biology of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Only one candidate applied for the announced competition – Dr. **Iliya Vladimirov Gyonov**, Chief Assistant at the Faculty of Biology, Sofia University.

The candidate, Dr. Gyonov, completed a master's degree in Biology and Chemistry in 2003 and a doctoral degree on the topic "Species composition, biological features and distribution of Fulgoromorpha (Insecta: Hemiptera) species in Bulgaria" in 2016 at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (SU), and since 2017 has been on an employment contract there as a chief assistant.

Dr. Gyonov's scientific output includes methodologically diverse studies focused on the infraorder Cicadomorpha (Hemiptera, Auchenorrhyncha) and related specialized parasitoids of the Dryinidae family (Hymenoptera, Chrysidoidea). The habilitation work is composed of thematically outlined publications on the relevant groups, with a focus on faunal and ecological studies, supplemented with precise illustrations and distribution maps. The contributions include 17 new taxa for the Bulgarian cicadomorph fauna – 4 genera and 12 species. Two genera and seven species of parasitoids of the Dryinidae family have also been identified for the first time. Phenology, altitudinal distribution, relationships with parasitoids and ants have been documented for many species. The candidate also specializes in the bioacoustics of singing cicadas, presenting two papers based on this methodology. The habilitation work is complemented by two fundamental morpho-taxonomic contributions – description of a new species for science (*Balcanocerus agapetomyrmices* Gjonov, 2024) and a description of a fossil of the genus *Aphrophora* from the Middle Miocene. The candidate is the first author in three and the second author in the remaining publications, which determines his significant contribution to these studies.

Contributions outside the habilitation work include results from systematic faunistic studies of fulgoromorphs, with 15 species identified for the first time in Bulgaria. The scientific results also include faunal data on Hemiptera from territories outside the country, with a particular focus on the Maltese archipelago, as well as data on coleopteran insects from the groups Pselaphinae (Staphylinidae) and Cerambycidae from Bulgaria and Turkey. The candidate also participated in publications on the molecular phylogeny and DNA barcoding of the family Aphalaridae and the molecular identification of prokaryotes, endosymbionts of species of the genus *Diaphorina* (Hemiptera, Psylloidea, Psyllidae). A new method for mounting insect preparations has also been developed.

In his scientific output, the candidate lists 43 publications and 185 citations of his publications. In the current competition, Dr. Gyonov participates with eight publications from group B and 15 publications from group G. Some of the publications are incorrectly scored according to the relevant quartiles in Scopus, since according to the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law, as well as the Regulations on the Terms and Procedure for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at the Sofia University, publications in journals with SJR that are not referenced in the Web of Science system, i.e., without an impact factor, are awarded 10 points. Thus, from group B, publications B1, B2 and B3 are scored 10 points each, i.e., the total sum of points from group B is 125. Similarly, publications G2, G6 and G8 acquire 10 points each and the total sum of points in group G is 243, and one publication from group I with Q2 is dropped. In this way, the candidate covers both the required number of points in groups B and G, and the additional criteria of the SU 24 and 27 – to have at least 7 publications from group I under indicators B and G, of which at least 4 with his significant contribution. Of the publications thus included, 11 are from group I, and I consider the author's contributions to them to be significant. According to additional criterion 28, for an associate professor, the candidate's h- index must be at least 5. The reference from Scopus shows an h- index of 5, and from Google Scholar – an h- index of 7, whereby Dr. Gyonov also covers this criterion. According to additional criterion 31, the teaching and learning activity for an associate professor must be at least 540 hours, with the total reference for the candidate's auditory busyness for the period 2022-2025 exceeding this threshold.

Under indicator D, the candidate, Dr. Iliya Gjonov, presents 40 citations, of which D2, D7 and D13 should not be scored and are dropped; citation D31 is shown in pre-publication source (manuscript), but I acknowledge it, since the manuscript was later published with a modified title, but cites the mentioned work. Thus, the candidate's reference includes 74 points at a required threshold of 50. On the other hand, the reference for the candidate's citations in Scopus when

searching for "Gjonov, Ilija V." (Scopus ID: 55960080300), shows 74 citations from 72 documents, as well as 26 documents by the candidate.

Dr. Gyonov's research has a well-defined thematic and methodological profile. The candidate's contributions can be classified as taxonomic, faunistic, ecological-faunistic, bioacoustic, molecular-phylogenetic and methodological with a main focus on Fulgoromorpha and Cicadomorpha (Hemiptera, Auchenorrhyncha).

I accept the reference on the scientometric indicators after the corrections made. I believe that the scientific indicators of Iliya Gyonov meet the national criteria, as well as the criteria of the Sofia University. The habilitation thesis is composed of works with thematically outlined content and a significant contribution of the candidate.

In addition to fulfilling the scientometric criteria, the candidate has submitted references for the study programs in which he participates and for his auditory busyness, which meet the criteria of the Sofia University.

Recommendations to the candidate. I would recommend that the candidate continue with active publishing, further developing and supplementing his scientific activity in the field of hemipteran bioacoustics, since he is currently the only scientist working in this field in Bulgaria. As a habilitated scientist, he would have the opportunity to train doctoral students on the methodology in which he specializes, which I highly recommend. I also recommend that the candidate strive to increase the visibility of his research and focus on publishing in journals from the first and second quartiles of WoS / Scopus. In the references presented by Dr. Gyonov, omissions are noticeable that require better knowledge of the regulatory documents related to the Academic Staff Development Act.

Conclusion. Dr. Gyonov is a focused and productive scientist who contributes significantly to the scientific output of Sofia University. He participates in numerous studies, projects, scientific forums and field activities. The candidate's teaching activity is high, and the projects and additional student lectures he leads are a serious certificate in his favor. His specialization in the bioacoustics of Hemiptera makes him a unique scientist for the country and determines the possibility of seriously upgrading his scientific output. The candidate is the author of scientific output that sufficiently meets the criteria for holding the academic position of associate professor. Based on the above, I give a high assessment of the candidate's scientific results, give a positive assessment of his candidacy, and recommend that the members of the Scientific Jury approve the selection of Chief Assistant Dr. Iliya

Vladimirov Gyonov for the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences (Zoology – Invertebrate Zoology – Entomology) at the Faculty of Biology of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

May 5, 2025

Sofia

(D. Chobanov)