

OPINION

by Professor Boyko B. Georgiev, PhD, DSc, Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IBER-BAS), on a competition for the academic position "Professor" in Direction 4.3. "Biological Sciences" (Vertebrate Zoology, Geographical Information Systems) for the needs of the Faculty of Biology of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", announced in State Gazette 100/16.12.2022, with candidate Assoc. Professor Dr. Diana Peneva Zlatanova

Assoc. Dr. Diana Zlatanova is the only candidate participating in the competition for professor of "Biological Sciences (Vertebrate Zoology, Geographical Information Systems)" for the needs of the Faculty of Biology of the the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". She has been working as a lecturer in vertebrate zoology in the Faculty of Biology since 2011, initially as a senior assistant, and since 2016 as an associate professor. Before that, from 1993 to 2011, she worked as a zoologist at various positions at the Sofia Zoo. Overall, she has more than 33 years of experience as a zoologist, including more than 12 years as a university lecturer. She has undergone various forms of post-graduate training, including in the UK and Canada, as well as several joint international research project with scientists from many countries. All this shows her rich professional experience and excellent integration in the scientific community, both Bulgarian and international.

Dr Zlatanova participated in the competition for a professorship with a scientific output reflected in a total of 26 scientific works (outside of those presented during the previous habilitation or when obtaining the Doctor degree). They are distributed as follows:

Indicator B4. Habilitation thesis – scientific publications in journals referenced and indexed in internationally leading databases for scientific information (Web of Science and Scopus) – 8 publications.

Indicator G5. Published monograph, which is not presented as the main habilitation thesis. This work, representing the action plan for the conservation of the Balkan chamois, although bearing the marks of a monographic study, cannot be accepted as such due to a discrepancy with the definition given in the Bulgarian Act for the Academic Staff Promotion (no ISBN).

Indicator G7. Scientific publications in journals referenced and indexed in internationally leading databases for scientific information information (Web of Science and Scopus), which have not been included the habilitation work – 11 publications.

Indicator G8. Published book chapters or collective monographs – 6 publications.

In terms of quantity and quality, this is a solid production. In addition to the number and the significant share of publications in renowned international journals, their thematic focus is also impressive. It characterizes Dr D. Zlatanova as a goal-oriented scientist, strongly focused on the ecology and conservation of mammals. This productivity and thematic consistency of Dr. Zlatanova's works make her one of the most prominent contemporary specialists in Europe in the field of ecology, biology and conservation of large mammals. The noted 1980 citations of her works, mostly by foreign specialists, also testify to this.

I entirely accept the report on the scientific contributions presented by Dr. Zlatanova in connection with the competition.

It is remarkable that a significant part of the scientific output of Dr Zlatanova was published in authoritative international journals such as *Mammalia*, *Nature Conservation Research*, *Sustainability*, *Journal of Environmental Management*, etc., as well as her participation in the group of leading specialists who prepared the article on the wild cat for the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The teaching activity of Dr. Zlatanova is also impressive. She leads lecture courses "Vertebrate Zoology", "Principles of Captive Wildlife Breeding", "Conservationally Important Vertebrates in Agroecosystems", "Environmental Information Technology", "Vertebrate Research Methods", "GIS Field Data Mapping and Analysis Methods" and "Geographic Information Systems Data Analysis" in various degrees of higher education. Under her leadership, a number of students and doctoral students defended their bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. I have observed the development of some of her former graduates, with whom we work together at the Department of Animal Diversity and Resources of the Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. They are excellently trained and motivated for research work, with established scientific criteria and solid professional knowledge.

I cannot fail to mention our joint work on the editing of the journal *Acta Zoologica Bulgarica*, of which I am the editor-in-chief, and Dr. Zlatanova is a specialist-editor in the field of theriology. In this function, Dr Zlatanova is extremely competent, organised and demanding, with a certain contribution to the good level and quality of published scientific works.

Bearing in mind the high scientific results achieved as well as my personal impressions of our joint work, I consider Associate Professor Diana Zlatanova to be an excellently prepared, active and capable scientist with significant research contributions. I believe she has reached the necessary qualifications to hold the academic title "Professor".

On the basis of the above-mentioned, I strongly support the election of Associate Professor Diana Zlatanova as a full professor in Direction 4.3. "Biological Sciences" (Vertebrate Zoology, Geographical Information Systems) for the needs of the Faculty of Biology of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

19 April 2023



Signature: