

ЛЕСОТЕХНИЧЕСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ФАКУЛТЕТ ПО ГОРСКО СТОПАНСТВО
Регистрационен индекс на дата
ФС-5349 / 01.08.23

STATEMENT

on the materials for participation in a competition for occupation of academic position "Professor" in scientific field 6. Agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine, in professional direction 6.5. Forestry, scientific specialty „Forestry (incl. Dendrology)“, subject "Phytocoenology", announced by University of Forestry – Sofia in State Gazette No 26 of March 21, 2023, code of the procedure: **FOR-P-0223-102**.

Applicant to participate in the competition: Assoc. prof. Marius Alipiev Dimitrov, PhD

Prepared the statement: Prof. Milko Hristov Milev, PhD, University of Forestry – Sofia, scientific field 6. Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, professional direction 6.5. Forestry.

1. Short biography of the applicant

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Marius Dimitrov is a master of Engineering in Forestry (diploma A83 No 007148/01.07.1991) at the Higher Forestry-Technical Institute (now University of Forestry – UF). From 1992 he was a part-time assistant of subject "Botany" and from 1994 to 2006 he was a full time assistant of subject "Phytocoenology" in department of Dendrology, Faculty of Forestry, UF. During the period 2002-2004 he was a PhD-student of independent training and defended his PhD thesis on 04.07.2004 in scientific specialty „Forestry (incl. Dendrology)“ (diploma No 29416/03.01.2005). He consistently rose to the rank of senior and chief assistant, he won a competition for associate professor (Certificate No 23734/19.06.2006) and until now is a titular habilitated lecturer mainly in the competition course "Phytocoenology". He was Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Forestry (2007-2016) after which he was elected Dean of the Faculty and holds the position until now.

Dr. Dimitrov is a member of: Union of Scientists in Bulgaria, Bulgarian Society to Phytocoenology, Bulgarian Botanical Society, Eastern Alpine and Dinaric Society for Vegetation Ecology. His professional activities also include: member of the editorial boards of the journals "Forestry ideas" and "Shumarski pregled" (Forestry review), participation in the international scientific network Vegetation classification working group, member of the National Council on Forestry at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, three national and one international society, departmental commissions, working groups, etc.

2. Compliance of the submitted documents and materials of the applicant with those required under the Regulation for Development of Academic Staff at the University of Forestry

The submitted documents and materials are in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the UF (RDASUF), which was established at the first meeting of the Scientific Jury and reflected in Protocol No 1/02.06.2023.

In the documents for participation in the competition, Assoc. Prof. Marius Dimitrov presented a list of 85 published materials. Of these, 28 publications and two handbooks were published before the habilitation for "Associate Professor". The applicant's post-habilitation production which is the object of a review under this competition, consists of 55 materials.

As a stand-alone document Habilitation report there is a material entitled "Plant communities and natural habitats" in 17 pages. It was developed on the basis of selected 10 scientific articles concerning the formulated topic and published in renowned international periodicals (included in world-renowned databases of scientific information). An updated

reference shows that six of the articles have an impact factor (B4-2-4, 6, 8 and 9) and in sum make up an IF=5.125. Three of the articles are in journals with an impact rank (B4-5, 7 and 10) and in sum make up SJR=1.101. The first of the articles is in a journal from Web of Science (without SJR), and the List of citations indicates citations only for it (10 issues). Upon reference, another 33 citations are found in another 7 of the articles (B4-2-8), i.e. a total of 43 citations are found for 8 of the articles, which would increase the points for indicator D even more. The subject of the studies, reflected in the 10 articles, focuses on phytocoenological studies of plant communities and natural habitats in Bulgaria (8 of the publications). The other two publications refer to a wider area – the Balkan Peninsula.

The targeted Habilitation report, the included articles and the substantiated contributions from them are in accordance with the competition and I accept them to fulfill the requirement under item B4, with a total of 181.1 points collected (with a minimum of 100 points required) from the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b of LDASRB and Art. 2a, para 1 of RDASUF.

The sum of the points for the indicators included in the applications of Regulations for application of LDASRB and RDASUF for the relevant professional direction of the competition are above the minimum required, with the total sum of points being 3105.56, with a minimum of 550 points required.

The applicant has submitted copies of the publications listed and the required documents.

3. Assessment of the applicant's educational activities

Assoc. Prof. Dimitrov has been a lecturer at the UF since 1992 for more than 30 years. During the first two years, he has been a part-time assistant of “Botany” with a full load, and the presented Official Note (No. HR 2968/25.04.2023) is for the period from 1994, when he was appointed to the main employment contract. He has gone through all the ranks for non-habilitated teachers and has been "Associate Professor" for 17 years. He has participated in the training of students from 6 specialties at the UF, and has lead lectures, exercises and practices. Currently he has taught two courses of "Phytocoenology" (for subjects Forestry, Landscape architecture and Ecology and environmental protection) and on "Botany" (for Landscape architecture and Ecology and environmental protection subjects).

The candidate is the co-author of two textbooks (Botany - 2010 and Phytocoenology - 2012) and one manual (Anatomy and morphology of plants - 2016) for students at UF and 4 other methodical manuals of a scientific and applied nature.

The active teaching work includes the supervision of PhD students and graduate students. Dr. Dimitrov is the supervisor of a total of 4 PhD students, two of them with already defended PhD theses, one has been dismissed with the right to defend and one is active (only the first three are indicated in the presented documentation).

In view of the fundamental nature of the subjects and their positioning at the beginning of the studies in the curricula, the supervised graduates are naturally not many – one for the "Bachelor" degree and three for the "Master" degree.

The data shows a comprehensive engagement of the candidate with the palette of learning activities.

4. Assessment of the applicant's scientific, applied and publication activities

4.1. Participation in scientific, applied science and educational projects

Assoc. Prof. M. Dimitrov has participated in the implementation of 4 national scientific projects, of which he is the leader and in two international scientific projects. Out of a total of 54 research and applied projects, 38 are as sole author, and 7 have a leading expert.

The number of participations in international symposia and conferences is significant – with 25 reports and posters. They have been presented at 22 forums: 9 abroad (two of the participations are with 2 materials each), 7 at international forums in our country (one participation is with two materials) and 6 at national conferences.

Assoc. Prof. M. Dimitrov is the co-author of 4 practical guides, 3 popular science books and 6 popular science articles.

As Deputy Dean and Dean of FF Assoc. Prof. Dimitrov participated in 4 of the annual meetings of the Conference of Deans of European Forestry Faculties (ConDDEFFS): in Madrid – Spain (2012), Belgrade – Serbia (2014), Sofia – Bulgaria (2015) and Brasov – Romania (2018).

4.2. Characteristics of published scientific results

The characteristics of the published scientific results can be seen in the Self-Assessment Report presented in the indicators of groups B and G.

The candidate's post-habilitation creative work includes 39 publications, of which 20 are scientific publications, 5 reports in edited collective volumes and 14 chapters of monographs and books. Of these, 14 are in referenced and/or indexed in world-renowned databases (IF – 6, SJR – 3 and 5 in non-referenced with scientific review).

Three of the publications are as sole author, 13 have one co-author, and in 12 Assoc. Prof. Dimitrov is the leading co-author.

It should be noted that over half of the scientific work is in English and over 1/3 of the publications are in journals that are referenced and/or indexed in world-renowned databases.

The nine chapters in the Red Book of Bulgaria (vol. 3 "Natural habitats" – 2015) with author/co-author Assoc. Prof. M. Dimitrov are also published in English.

4.3. Reflection of the applicant's scientific activity in the literature (citations)

The list of citations submitted by the candidate includes a total of 208 pcs. for 14 of the articles. Of these, 138 are in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes (group D13), and 5 publications in this group are cited.

For 4 of the publications, 9 citations were registered in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review (group D14). For 5 of the publications, 61 citations are indicated in non-refereed journals with scientific review (group D15). In addition to those in co-authorship, two of the as sole publications were also cited (4 times).

Only 12 of the citations are in Cyrillic (published in Bulgaria – 4, Russia – 4, Ukraine – 3, N. Macedonia – 1). There are 47 citations from Bulgarian authors, 17 from international teams, and the remaining 144 – from foreign authors. The candidate has indicated citations for only 8 of his publications, but at least 7 others are found (an additional 33 citations are found for them). It is for the citation index (group D) that the exceeding of the minimum requirement (100 points) is the largest – a total of 2465 points (without the 33 citations of 7 of the articles from the Habilitation report).

The presented characteristic of citability shows the relevance and wide visibility of the scientific work and popularity of Assoc. Prof. Dimitrov among specialists not only in our country, but also especially well-known abroad.

4.4. Contributions to the applicant's work (scientific, applied)

I accept the references submitted by the candidate and their classification. The more important contributions in the works of Assoc. Prof. M. Dimitrov can be conditionally grouped according to their nature (many of the works are carriers of both scientific novelty and applied meaning) as follows:

1/ Contributions in the nature of scientific novelties

- A classification scheme of plant communities in Bulgaria has been drawn up (B4-1, 10).
- 11 new associations (in B4-5, G7-4, G8-7, G11-1), 4 new subassociations (in B4-6) and 5 plant communities (G8-6) are described.
- 19 associations and subassociations and 2 plant communities were identified (B4-6).
- For the first time, the vegetation diversity of Slivenska Planina Mt was studied at the alliance level, and for the first time in Bulgaria phytocoenoses from the alliance *Alnion incanae* (B4-7, G7-3) was established.
- A proposal was made for 5 new provisional associations (B4-9).
- It has been proven that the horse chestnut communities in Bulgaria have a natural relic character (G7-4).
- A syntaxonomic scheme of the forest communities in the NP "Central Balkan" has been developed (B4-9).
- The dynamics of different plant communities were studied: herbaceous (G7-2), shrub (B4-10) and forest (G8-1,8).
- 84 complexes dominated by peat mosses were studied on the territory of the "Vitosha" Natural Park (G8.6).

2/ Contributions of a methodical nature

- Methods and models for determining and mapping natural habitats have been developed and applied, incl. GIS model (G8-3).
- A combined application of remote mapping methods and classification of vegetation by the Braun-Blanquet method is proposed (G8-5).
- An original model has been developed for determining the criteria and categories for habitat threat assessment, based on the IUCN methodology (G11-8).

3/ Contributions of a scientific and applied nature

- The threats to the flora of Slivenska Planina Mt (G7-3) and the peatlands of "Vitosha" Natural Park (G8-7) are indicated and recommendations are made for the protection of floral diversity.
- A database was created with phytocoenotic relevés for the countries of the Balkan Peninsula (B4-4, G8-9).
- An up-to-date indicative map of the vegetation in Bulgaria has been compiled (G11-13).
- Recommendations have been formulated for tracking the dynamics of vegetation and preventing degradation processes (G7-2, G8-1,8).
- The relationships between forest plant communities and types of natural habitats have been established (B4-9, G11-1).
- Results were established for the bioproductivity of beech forests (G7-1, G11-2).
- Recommendations have been made for maintaining and improving the nature conservation status of habitats (B4-2,3,9, G8-3).

An applied effect is contained in most publications (incl. G8-5; G11-3–7, 9–11, etc.) and especially in the projects developed under the guidance and with the participation of the candidate.

The outlined main contributions of the candidate are grounds for claiming that he has developed as a high-level scientist and excellent expertise in the competitive field.

5. Assessment of the applicant's personal contribution

I am convinced, including on my direct impressions that the methodical provision, experimental work, the reporting and interpretation of the results, the formulation of conclusions, recommendations and contributions are to a large extent with the personal involvement of Assoc. Prof. M. Dimitrov. He has an active and often leading role in teamwork and project research

With his scientific and publication activities, Assoc. Prof. Dimitrov is among our leading scientists who contributed to the development of the relatively new phytocoenological science in our country and its orientation towards the floristic school as a modern vision for the natural classification of vegetation according to the Braun-Blanquet's approach.

6. Critical notes and recommendations

I did not find any significant gaps in the submissions. Assoc. Prof. Dimitrov has many more activities, such as a key role in the accreditation procedures, for the updating of the curricula for the specialty "Forestry" in 2017 and 2021, the participation in ConDDEFFS and especially for the organization of the International Scientific Conference "Forestry: Bridge to the Future" (2021). They would be good to add to the CV. The developed projects could have been more clearly included in the contributions.

I have a recommendation – for the writing of a new textbook in which to update the material in the subject "Phytocoenology", given its development and the greater maturity of Assoc. Prof. M. Dimitrov.

7. Personal impressions

I have known the candidate since his student years and my personal impressions are excellent – both as a scientist, as a teacher, and as a human being. He is especially dedicated to students and administrative tasks.

During his academic career, Assoc. Prof. Dimitrov has shown himself to be a diligent and disciplined teacher, including up-to-date information and scientific innovations in the teaching subject. He works actively with PhD students. There is recognition of his professionalism and scientific competences, which is also contributed to by the use of foreign languages. He stands out as one of the most ethical colleagues both in terms of perception by students and PhD students, as well as among the academic staff and employees of UF. I believe that Assoc. Prof. Dimitrov fully covers the image of an established academic scientist and erudite teacher.

8. Conclusion

I give a definitive positive assessment of the scientific creativity and the activity of the applicant and **I offer Assoc. Prof. Dr. Marius Alipiev Dimitrov to take the academic position of "professor"** in the course "Phytocoenology" of professional direction 6.5. "Forestry".

Prepared the Statement:

/Prof. Dr. Milko Milev/

Statement delivered on: 1.8.2023 г.