

## REVIEW

On the materials submitted by Dr. Neno Aleksandrov Aleksandrov from the University of Forestry – Sofia, for participation in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Higher Education Area 6. Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Professional Field 6.5. Forestry, Scientific Specialty "Silviculture, incl. Dendrology" in the discipline of "Silviculture"

In the competition for Associate Professor, announced in the State Gazette, issue No. 10 of February 4, 2025, and on the website of the University of Forestry on January 23, 2025, under procedure code: FOR-AsP-0125-159, for the needs of the Department of Silviculture at the Faculty of Forestry, the candidate is Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Neno Aleksandrov Aleksandrov, Faculty of Forestry, Department of Silviculture.

**Reviewer:** Dr. Tzvetan Mladenov Zlatanov, Professor in Professional Field 4.3 "Biological Sciences," Scientific Specialty "Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation," and "Associate Professor" in Professional Field 6.5 "Forestry," Scientific Specialty "Silviculture, incl. Dendrology"

### 1. Brief biographical data for the candidate

Neno Aleksandrov Aleksandrov was born on March 8, 1979, in Sofia. He completed his secondary education in 1998 at the Forestry Technical School "Hristo Botev" in the town of Velingrad. He graduated from the University of Forestry with a Bachelor's degree in Forestry in 2002, achieving excellent academic results. In 2004, he completed a Master's degree in Forest Management at the same university. In 2006, he began working at the University of Forestry as an Assistant Professor in the discipline of Silviculture at the Faculty of Forestry. He was subsequently promoted to Senior Assistant (2009) and Chief Assistant (2011). In 2015, he defended his doctoral dissertation titled "Studies on the Natural Dynamics of the Structure of High-Mountain Spruce Forests in the Rhodopes", earning the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (Diploma UF-ESD-2015-50, issued on May 15, 2015, by the University of Forestry).

### 2. Correspondence of the submitted documents and materials of the applicant according to the Rules of the Development of academic staff at the University of Forestry.

The candidate has submitted all the necessary documents and materials specified in Article 60, Paragraph 4, and has complied with the requirements outlined in Paragraphs 5 and 7 of the Rules for the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Forestry (UF), as confirmed during the first meeting of the scientific committee and recorded in Protocols No. 1 and No. 2 dated April 16, 2025. The submitted report on meeting the minimum national requirements for the academic position of "Associate Professor" shows that the candidate meets, and in some cases exceeds, these requirements. The scores for the respective indicators are as follows:

Indicator A – The defended doctoral dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" provides the required 50 points;

Indicator B3 – Habilitation work (monograph) provides the required 100 points;

Indicator G – 266.44 points (with a requirement of 200 points);

Indicator D – 565 points (with a requirement of 50 points).

In total, against the minimum required 400 points across all indicators, the candidate has achieved 981.44 points.

### **3. Assessment of the candidate's educational and pedagogical activities (work with students and PhD students)**

Neno Alexandrov began his academic career in 2006 as an assistant professor in the discipline "General Silviculture". For nearly 19 years, he has conducted theoretical and practical classes with students from various degree programs at the University of Forestry (LTU). Since the 2016–2017 academic year, he has been delivering lecture courses in the discipline "Forest Management" for bachelor's degree students in the "Business Management" program (full-time). Starting from the 2022–2023 academic year, he has also taught the discipline "Basics of Silviculture" for bachelor's degree students in the "Ecology and Environmental Protection" program (full-time). In the same academic year, Dr. Alexandrov began teaching the lecture course "Forest Certification" for master's degree students in the "Forestry" program (both full-time and part-time). Under the supervision of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Neno Alexandrov, five diploma theses were successfully defended between 2017 and 2020 (one at the bachelor's and four at the master's level). Between 2009 and 2023, he served as a reviewer for 25 diploma theses (10 bachelor's and 15 master's level). Among his contributions to teaching, his involvement in updating the curricula for the disciplines "Forest Management" and "General Silviculture" stands out. In 2023, Dr. Alexandrov developed a new curriculum for the course "Silviculture," with curriculum code FOR 233, intended for bachelor's students in the "Ecology and Environmental Protection" program (both full-time and part-time). The program was approved by the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Ecology and Landscape Architecture (FELA), protocol No. 336/27.06.2023. Notably, Dr. Alexandrov has also created a series of tests for semester exams and ongoing assessments on various digital platforms. Neno Alexandrov is the primary author of one academic textbook and a co-author of six others. He also has experience as a PhD supervisor; the doctoral student he supervised has completed their training and is eligible for defence.

### **4. Assessment of candidate's scientific, scientific-applied and publishing activities**

In the documents submitted for the competition, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Neno Alexandrov presented 26 scholarly works, including 2 monographs (a book and a habilitation thesis), 11 chapters from collective monographs, and 13 scientific publications. A general summary of the materials submitted by the candidate for the competition is as follows:

- Monographs – 12 in total (including 1 habilitation thesis (B3.1) and 11 chapters (G11.1–G11.11) in 4 collective monographs);
- Books – 1 (G6.1);
- Scientific publications – 13 in total:
  - Articles in scientific journals indexed and referenced in internationally recognized databases – 6. Of these, four are in Bulgarian peer-reviewed journals (G7.3–G7.6), and two are published in journals with

an impact factor – Canadian Journal of Forest Research (5-year Impact Factor: 1.923, G7.1) and Baltic Forestry (Impact Factor 2020: 0.772, G7.2);

– Articles in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes – 5 (G8.1–G8.5);

– Studies published in scientific editions indexed in internationally recognized databases – 2 (G9.1 and G9.2).

– Information is also provided regarding authorship and participation in educational materials, projects, and other outputs not required by the procedure for applying for the academic position of Associate Professor:

– Textbooks and teaching aids – 7 in total.

#### **4.1 Participation in scientific, scientific-applied and educational projects**

The candidate's research activity can be evaluated through his participation in scientific and applied projects. Between 2008 and 2025, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Neno Alexandrov took part in three international projects funded by foreign institutions as a member of the research team, as well as three national scientific projects. Within the Research Sector of the University of Forestry (until 2020), Neno Alexandrov participated in eleven scientific and applied research projects, serving as the project leader for four of them.

Dr. Alexandrov's expert work is demonstrated by his participation in various expert groups appointed by order of the Executive Director of the Executive Forest Agency. These include groups for the amendment and supplementation of Ordinance No. 8 on forest harvesting and the Forest Act (2011). The candidate has provided documentation of applied scientific developments approved by the Expert Council of the Executive Forest Agency that are of significance to forestry practice—such as guidelines for managing coppice oak forests in three state forest enterprises (Northwestern, South Central, and Southwestern State Forest Enterprises), recommendations for the management of white pine-dominated plantations, and others.

#### **4.2 Characterization of published scientific results**

The publications can be classified as follows:

##### **By type:**

- Publications in scientific journals – 12;
- Publications in conference proceedings – 1;

##### **By significance:**

- Articles in journals with an Impact Factor – 2: Canadian Journal of Forest Research (5-year IF: 1.923, G7.1) and Baltic Forestry (IF 2020: 0.772, G7.2);
- Articles in journals indexed in Web of Science and SCOPUS – 4 (G7.3–G7.6);
- Articles in journals without an Impact Factor – 5 (G8.1–G8.5);



- Studies published in scientific editions indexed in internationally recognized scientific databases – 2 (G9.1 and G9.2);
- Chapters in collective monographs – 11, across 4 different collective monographs;

**By place of publication:**

- Articles in Bulgarian and international journals indexed in Web of Science and SCOPUS – 6;
- Articles in Bulgarian and international peer-reviewed journals not indexed in Web of Science or SCOPUS – 2;
- Articles in non-indexed Bulgarian and international journals – 5;
- Publications in the proceedings of international scientific forums – 1;

**By language of publication:**

- In Bulgarian – 20;
- In English – 6;

**By number of co-authors:**

- Sole-authored – 5;
- With one co-author – 5;
- With two co-authors – 9;
- With three or more co-authors – 7

**4.3 Reflection of Candidate's Scientific Publications in Literature (known citations)**

Total – 40 citations.

By type of citation:

- In peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings – 33 citations;
- In textbooks, monographs, dissertations, and other sources – 7 citations.

**4.4 Contributions to the candidate's work (scientific, scientific-applied, applied)**

The contributions presented have reinforced my opinion that Dr. Alexandrov's scientific work demonstrates a profound analysis of the structure and dynamics of forest ecosystems, offering applicable silvicultural solutions with an emphasis on sustainable and nature-friendly forest management. The contributions are grouped into several main directions, including:

- ✓ Dynamics of natural disturbances – analysis of the frequency and impact of small-scale disturbances in spruce forests in the Rhodopes Mountains, with recommendations for nature-friendly management through irregular shelterwood systems;

- ✓ Methods for assessing and controlling forest structure – application and comparison of indices for quantitative evaluation of spatial and vertical forest structure, with a recommendation to use the STVI index;
- ✓ Growth and productivity of forest stands – study of *Acer pseudoplatanus* as a productive tree species, with recommendations for establishing and managing plantations with its inclusion in the species composition;
- ✓ Transformation of forest stands – from even-aged to uneven-aged through modified methods for control and utilization;
- ✓ Analysis and classification of *Pinus sylvestris* plantations based on their ecosystem compatibility, through the assessment of their sustainability, economic efficiency, and recommendations for their management;
- ✓ Conversion of coppice oak forests into seed stands through regionally adapted approaches for ecological classification and analysis of their regeneration potential;
- ✓ Adaptive management of forest plantations aimed at improving their resilience and health, aligned with ecological conditions;
- ✓ Multi-functional forest management, with approaches for integrating ecological, economic, and social functions.

## **5. Assessment of the applicant's personal contribution**

Dr. Alexandrov is an independent and proactive researcher who demonstrates confidence in every phase of the scientific process – from formulating hypotheses to analysing and interpreting results. His ability to plan, organize, and carry out scientific research independently is a testament to a high level of professionalism. When working in a team, he often takes a leading role, coordinating activities and proposing innovative approaches.

## **6. Critical remarks**

I believe that the next step in Dr. Alexandrov's academic development is to strengthen his international scientific presence by publishing the results of his research in journals with an impact factor. Within Bulgaria, he is already a well-known and respected expert with significant contributions to his field. However, to expand his opportunities for active participation in teaching and research at the international level, it is important for him to be more clearly recognized by the global scientific community. Visibility in international publications will not only reinforce his scientific authority but also create new opportunities for collaboration, academic mobility, and involvement in international projects and educational programs.

## **7. Personal impressions**

Dr. Alexandrov is an ethical and approachable colleague. He stands out for his high level of commitment to professional and moral standards, as well as his willingness to offer support and assistance to colleagues and like-minded individuals. His activity is particularly impressive when it comes to defending significant causes related to the preservation of nature, sustainable forest resource management, and safeguarding the public interest. With his professional competence, public awareness, and uncompromising dedication to valuable principles, Dr. Alexandrov is not only an

important figure in contemporary forestry but will undoubtedly continue to be one of the leading representatives of the future intellectual and professional elite in the Bulgarian forestry community.

#### **8. Conclusion**

Based on the submitted documents, I believe that the sole candidate for the position, Dr. Neno Alexandrov, meets the minimum national requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor, in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law, and the Regulations for Academic Staff at the University of Forestry.

I RECOMMEND that Dr. Neno Alexandrov be appointed to the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 6.5. Forestry, Scientific Specialty "Silviculture, incl. ~~Dendrology~~" in the discipline of "Silviculture"

Signature of the reviewer:

Sofia

05.12.2025