

ФРС-3280/05.05.2025г.

STATEMENT

on the materials for participation in a competition for acquiring of academic position "Associate Professor" in scientific field 6. Agricultural science and veterinary medicine, in professional direction 6.5. Forestry, scientific specialty "Silviculture, including Dendrology", subject "Silviculture", announced by University of Forestry in State Gazette № 10/04.02.2025, code of the procedure: **FOR-AsP-0125-159**.

Applicant to participate in the competition: Dr. Neno Aleksandrov Aleksandrov, Senior Assistant

Author of the statement: Dr. Evgeni Ivanov Tsavkov, Associate Professor, Department of Dendrology, University of Forestry

1. Short biography of the applicant.

Senior Assistant Neno Aleksandrov was born on 8 March 1979, in Sofia, Bulgaria. He received his secondary education at the Hristo Botev Forestry Technical School in Velingrad (now the National Vocational High School of Forestry "Hristo Botev") in 1998. He graduated the University of Forestry with a Bachelor's degree in Forestry in 2002, achieving excellent academic results. He then completed a Master's program at the same university in the subject Forest Management, at the Department of Dendrology with a thesis: "*Study of dendrological diversity in the State Forestry Enterprise 'Alabak' and the possibilities for selective forest management*", which he also defended with excellent success. In 2006, he began working at the University of Forestry as an assistant in the subject Silviculture at the Faculty of Forestry. He was successively promoted to Senior Assistant in 2009, and to Senior Assistant in 2011. In 2015, he defended a PhD thesis on the topic: "*Research on the natural dynamics of the structure of high-mountain spruce forests in the Rhodopes*", through which he obtained the educational and scientific degree Doctor (Diploma LTU-ONS-2015-50, issued on May 15, 2015, by the University of Forestry).

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

Senior Assistant Neno Aleksandrov has submitted all required documents and materials in accordance with Article 60, Paragraph 4 of the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff (RASD) at the University of Forestry (UF). The requirements outlined in Paragraphs 5 and 7 of the same regulation have also been duly fulfilled. This compliance was verified during the first meeting of the academic jury, and formally documented in Protocols No. 1 and No. 2 dated 16 April 2025.

As part of his application for the academic position of Associate Professor, the candidate has submitted a total of **26 scientific works**, categorized as follows:

- **2 monographs** (including a book and a PhD thesis).
- **11 chapters in collective monographs**, and
- **13 scientific publications**.

The evaluation of these materials against the minimum national requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor confirms that the candidate convincingly meets and in several indicators exceeds the required standards. The candidate's score across the respective evaluation indicators is as follows:

- **Indicator A:** The defended PhD thesis for the award of the educational and scientific degree Doctor secures the required 50 points (minimum required: 50).

- **Indicator B3:** The habilitation thesis (monograph) secures 100 points (minimum required: 100).
- **Indicator G:** A total of 266.44 points achieved (minimum required: 200).
- **Indicator D:** A total of 565 points achieved (minimum required: 50).

In total, for all indicators, with minimum requirements of **400** points, the candidate has achieved **981.44** points.

Based on the submitted documentation and the scoring across all relevant indicators, it is concluded that Senior Assistant Neno Aleksandrov fully satisfies and substantially surpasses the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position of Associate Professor.

3. Assessment of the applicant's educational activities

Senior Assistant Neno Aleksandrov began his teaching career in 2006 as an Assistant in Silviculture, and has served for 14 years in the position of Senior Assistant. Since the 2016–2017 academic year, he has been the lead lecturer for the course "Management of forests" taught to students in the "Business Management" program, Bachelor's degree, full-time study. Beginning with the 2022–2023 academic year, he also became the primary instructor for the course "Fundamentals of Silviculture", offered to students in the "Ecology and Environmental Protection" program, Bachelor's degree, full-time study. In the same academic year, he also began delivering the lecture course in "Forest Certification" for students enrolled in the "Silviculture" Master's program, both full-time and part-time. Between 2017 and 2020, under the supervision of Senior Assistant Aleksandrov, five graduation theses were developed and successfully defended - one at the Bachelor's level and four at the Master's level. From 2009 to 2023, he served as a reviewer of 25 theses of students in the "Silviculture" program, including 10 Bachelor's and 15 Master's theses. Significant contributions to the educational process also include the updating of curricula for key compulsory courses: "Management of forests" (for students in the Business Management program) and "Silviculture" (for Forestry students, full-time study). An important innovation in the student learning experience has been the development of customized test sets for semester examinations and continuous assessment, integrated into various digital platforms, such as Google Classroom, Live Worksheets, and Microsoft Teams.

Senior Assistant Neno Aleksandrov is the sole author of one textbook and co-author of six other educational manuals.

I can state with confidence that in his teaching activity, Dr. Aleksandrov demonstrates exceptional diligence and high standards. The material he delivers is presented at a high academic level and in full alignment with current trends in the field of Silviculture, a discipline of great importance in forestry education.

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

4.1. Participation in scientific, applied science, infrastructure and educational projects

The research activity of Senior Assistant Neno Aleksandrov is evidenced by his participation in a number of scientific and applied research projects. Between 2008 and 2025, he has participated in a total of three international projects, funded by foreign institutions, as a member of the research team. In addition, he has taken part in three national scientific projects, contributing to research efforts at the national level. Within the framework of the Research Sector at the University of Forestry (up to 2020), Neno Aleksandrov has been involved in eleven scientific and applied research projects, of which he has served as project leader on four applied research projects. These engagements reflect his active contribution to scientific research, both independently and in collaboration with national and international academic teams, and demonstrate his ability to lead and manage complex research initiatives.

4.2. Characteristics of published scientific results

The publication activity of Dr. Neno Aleksandrov is fully aligned with his scientific specialization and the academic discipline relevant to the competition. He has submitted a total of **26 publications**, which can be categorized as follows:

- **Monograph:** "*Oak Forests in Western Bulgaria*" (2024, 428 pages) (**B 3.1**).
- **Published book on the basis of defended PhD thesis:** "*Natural Dynamics and Structure of High-Mountain Spruce Forests in the Rhodopes*" (2022, 164 pages) (**Г 6.1**).
- **Published chapters of collective monograph - total 11.**
- **Scientific publications: total 13**, including:
 - Publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals indexed in globally recognized databases – 6, four of them are in Bulgarian peer-reviewed journals (Г7.3 – Г7.6), and two articles are published in the scientific journal with impact factor: *Canadian Journal of Forest Research* (5-year IF: 1.923) — Г 7.1; *Baltic Forestry* (IF 2020: 0.772) — Г 7.2.
 - in non-refereed journals with scientific reviewing or published in edited collective volumes - 5 (Г 8.1 to Г 8.5).
 - 2 studies published in indexed scientific publications in internationally recognized databases — Г 9.1 and Г 9.2.

Publications in Bulgarian predominate – 20 (77%). Five of publications are self-written, 5 – with one, 9 – with two and 7 – with more co-authors. In collective publications Neno Aleksandrov is the leading author in 11 of them.

Based on a detailed review of Neno Aleksandrov's scientific production, I consider he is one of our authoritative and competent researchers in the field of silviculture theory and practice. His scientific works cover various aspects of this field and entirely responds to the requirements to take up the academic position "Associate Professor".

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

The candidate has provided established 40 citations of 13 of his publications, mainly for articles in journals that are refereed and indexed in world-renowned scientific information databases. Of these, 33 citations pertain to such indexed journal articles. A additional 7 citations appear in monographs and collective scientific volumes.

The high citation score achieved by Dr. Neno Aleksandrov, including a significant number of citations in international journals, is a clear indication of the recognition and relevance of his research contributions within the scientific community, both in Bulgaria and internationally.

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

The scientific contributions in the publications of Dr. Neno Aleksandrov are summarized across six areas, all of which are fully aligned with key aspects of silviculture:

1. Dynamics of natural disturbances
2. Methods for assessing and controlling forest structure
3. Forest growth and productivity
4. Forest transformation
5. Adaptive forest management
6. Multifunctional forest management

I accept these stated contributions as presented and consider them adequately formulated and classified, fully reflecting the research directions of the candidate.

Particular attention should be paid to the monograph titled "*Oak Forests in Western Bulgaria*", which I consider to be a highly timely and purpose-driven scientific work focused on oak-dominated forests (genus *Quercus*), which are highly vulnerable and increasingly affected by

a range of, often destructive, anthropogenic influences. The development of adequate silvicultural approaches for the preservation and sustainable management of these forests is especially relevant in the current context.

The monograph, co-authored with Assoc. Prof. Toma Tonchev, another respected Bulgarian scientist, is written at a high scientific level, employing a well-constructed methodology, original approach, and with a clear personal contribution by Dr. Aleksandrov. The in-depth analysis of oak forests in Western Bulgaria (which make up approximately 30% of all oak forests in the country), the historical insight going back to sources from the early 20th century, and the approaches to their management, including their life strategies and regeneration methods, are fundamental factors upon which future silvicultural decisions and strategies for these forests will be based. The timeliness of this work is further reinforced by the ongoing trend of prolonged drought conditions, making the monograph even more relevant.

I also highly value Dr. Aleksandrov's contributions to the study of key silvicultural issues in coniferous forests, particularly those related to natural disturbance dynamics, structural diversity, and transformation toward uneven-aged structures. Clarifying these issues is of fundamental importance for providing natural regeneration, structural stability, and biodiversity in these forest ecosystems.

A further notable contribution is his classification of Scots pine plantations, based on complex site indicators and their level of ecosystem conformity. This original approach allows the development of differentiated silvicultural systems and measures aimed at improving forest health.

I evaluate Dr. Aleksandrov's contributions as highly significant, reflecting his solid background in silviculture — both in theory and practice. His published scientific output reveals a deep understanding, combined with an analytical and critical approach to the issues studied. The well-chosen topics and the thorough analysis of results support my firm conclusion that Senior Assistant Dr. Neno Aleksandrov is a well-prepared academician and researcher in the field of silviculture in Bulgaria.

5. Assessment of the applicant's personal contribution.

The candidate has authored five sole-authored publications and five co-authored with a single collaborator. The individual contribution of the candidate is clearly evident across all of his publications. The research outputs reflect his expert knowledge and professional competence in the field.

I am confident in stating that in the jointly authored works, the candidate's contribution is equivalent and significant, with a clearly identifiable personal input in each case. I highly value the candidate's scientific work, his in-depth expertise, strong academic interest, and active engagement in the field of silviculture.

6. Expert Activity

Dr. Aleksandrov is a representative of the University of Forestry in the expert council of the Executive Forest Agency (EFA). These include involvement in the amendment and supplementation of Regulation 8 concerning cutting in forests and the amendment of the Forests Act (2011).

The candidate provides evidence of his participation in the Expert Council of the IAG, where he contributed to various scientific and applied projects. These include work on the management of coppice oak forests in three forest enterprises in Bulgaria — Northwestern Forestry Enterprise, Southeastern Forestry Enterprise and Southwestern Forestry Enterprise. Dr. Aleksandrov has also provided guidelines for managing plantations predominantly composed of Scots pine, among other significant contributions to the silvicultural practice.

7. Critical remarks and recommendations.

I have not identified any significant omissions in the presented materials, and I would like to offer a few recommendations.

I would suggest that Dr. Aleksandrov clearly distinguishes between the scientific, scientific-applied, and methodological contributions in his work. Additionally, I recommend that the contributions be summarized in fewer categories with more precise formulations. Furthermore, I would encourage the candidate to consider adapting and presenting some of his results in a more accessible format, which would facilitate their understanding by a broader audience within the silvicultural community.

I believe that Dr. Neno Aleksandrov possesses the qualities of a skilled and experienced lecturer and a deeply knowledgeable researcher in the field of the most critical subject for a silviculturist. I would also like to highlight that Dr. Aleksandrov has experience in supervising doctoral candidates in his field. While building a research school is a slow and challenging process, I am confident that, given Dr. Aleksandrov's knowledge and experience, his work in training assistants and doctoral students will contribute to the growth of this academic field in Bulgaria and help elevate its status within the country.

8. Personal impressions

I know Dr. Neno Aleksandrov since 1999, in my capacity of a lecturer in dendrology in the University of Forestry and from various activities, both in teaching and through participation in different forums. I have a comprehensive understanding of his development from his student years to his establishment as a faculty member in the important specialized subject of silviculture. Even as a student, he stood out for his curiosity, diligence, and consistency in acquiring knowledge. With his hardworking nature and perseverance, he achieved excellent results in his studies. During the development of his master's thesis in dendrology, he gathered and interpreted a substantial amount of experimental material, achieving significant results through his skilful combination of research on dendrofloristic diversity and the potential for the appropriate selection of silvicultural measures aimed at its preservation and enhancement. As his reviewer at the time, I was particularly impressed by the precision in his writing, the well-structured style of his presentation, and the silvicultural thinking displayed in the interpretation of the issues. With his solid academic training, Dr. Aleksandrov is a valued and sought-after team member in scientific teams, committees, and working groups, which I consider an essential prerequisite for achieving meaningful results in scientific and research work. He is a member of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Forestry, the Academic Council of the University of Forestry (2016-2020 and 2023-present), and has been involved in various committees at the university and faculty levels.

9. Conclusion

Based on the above-mentioned, as well as the comprehensive assessment of the candidate's qualities, his scientific work and activity, and on the basis of my personal impressions, I have the reason to conclude that Assistant Professor Neno Aleksandrov meets the requirements for the academic position of "Associate Professor" set out in the Law on the Academic Ranks and the Regulations of the University of Forestry.

Therefore, I confidently RECOMMEND Assist. Dr. Neno Aleksandrov Aleksandrov to take up the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the subject "Silviculture" in the professional direction 6.5. Forestry, scientific subject "Silviculture, including Dendrology".

Date: 30.04.2025
Sofia

Author of the statement
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