

## OPINION

ЛЕСОТЕХНИЧЕСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ФАКУЛТЕТ ПО ГОРСКО СТОПАНСТВО
Регистрационен номер и дата
ОК-3276/05.05.2025

on the materials submitted for participation in a competition for „Associate Professor“ in the field 6. Agriculture Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Professional field 6.5. Forestry, scientific specialty Silviculture (incl. Dendrology) in the discipline Silviculture

In the competition for professor, published in the State Gazette №10/04.02.2025 and on the site of the University of Forestry with the code FOR-AsP-0125-159 for the needs of the Department of Silviculture at the Faculty of Forestry, as a candidate participate Chief Assist. Prof. PhD Neno Alexandrov Alexandrov, Faculty of Forestry, Department of Silviculture

**Prepared the opinion:** Marius Alipiev Dimitrov, Ph.D., Professor in a Professional Field 6.5. Forestry, from University of Forestry

### 1. Brief biographical data for the candidate

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Neno Alexandrov was born on March 8, 1979, in Sofia. He completed his secondary education in 1998 at the “Hristo Botev” Forestry Technical School in Velingrad. He continued his studies at the University of Forestry, where in 2002 he earned a Bachelor's degree in Forestry with distinction. In 2004, he obtained a Master's degree in Forestry, specializing in Forest Management, at the same university. His master's thesis, entitled “A Study of the Dendrological Diversity in the State Game Enterprise ‘Alabak’ and the Opportunities for Selective Forest Management”, was completed at the Department of Dendrology and was defended with distinction.

In 2006, he was appointed as an Assistant in Silviculture at the Faculty of Forestry at the University of Forestry. Since 2009, he has held the position of Senior Assistant, and in 2012 he became a Chief Assistant. In 2015, he defended his doctoral thesis entitled “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 No. ONS-2015-50, issued on 15.05.2015 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.

Chief Assistant Professor Neno Alexandrov has submitted all required documents and materials listed in Article 60, paragraph 4, in accordance with the requirements of paragraphs 5 and 7 of the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff (RDAS) of the University of Forestry. This fact was confirmed by the academic committee during its first meeting (Minutes No. 1/16.04.2025).

The submitted information regarding compliance with the national minimum requirements for the academic position of “Associate Professor” shows that the candidate meets and in some cases exceeds the standards, despite an identified inaccuracy in the calculation of points under indicator Г9. Publication Г9-1 consists of 14 pages and does not meet the criteria for a “study” under item 12 of §1 of the Supplementary Provisions of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA). Therefore, the total score for

Group  $\Gamma$  indicators, initially calculated as 266.44 points, should be reduced by 6.43 points. At the same time, the publication is a report published in an edited collective volume, which complies with the requirements under indicator  $\Gamma 8$  and can be awarded 1.43 points. Thus, the corrected total score for Group  $\Gamma$  indicators is 261.44 points.

The scores achieved after the correction are as follows:

Group A Indicators: Dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree PhD – 50 points (minimum required: 50 points)

Group B Indicators: 3. Habilitation work (monograph) – 100 points (minimum required: 100 points)

Group  $\Gamma$  Indicators:  $\Gamma 6$ . Book based on a defended doctoral thesis – 40 points;  $\Gamma 7$ . Articles and papers published in scientific journals indexed in internationally recognized databases – 57.5 points;  $\Gamma 8$ . Articles and papers published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals – 12.26 points;  $\Gamma 9$ . Studies published in indexed scientific journals – 15 points;  $\Gamma 11$ . Published chapter in a collective monograph – 136.68 points. Total: 261.44 points (minimum required: 200 points).

Group  $\Delta$  Indicators:  $\Delta 13$ . Citations or reviews in scientific publications indexed in internationally recognized databases – 495 points;  $\Delta 14$ . Citations in monographs and collective volumes – 70 points. Total: 565 points (minimum required: 50 points)

**Total score across all groups: 976.44 points (minimum required: 400 points).**

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

Dr. Neno Alexandrov began his teaching career in 2006, when he was appointed Assistant Professor in the discipline of “General Silviculture” following a competitive selection process. For nearly 19 years, he has conducted theoretical and practical classes with students from various degree programs at the University of Forestry. Since the 2016–2017 academic year, he has been delivering lecture courses in the discipline “Forest Management” for students in the “Business Management” Bachelor's program (full-time). Starting from the 2022–2023 academic year, he has also been teaching the lecture course “Fundamentals of Silviculture” for students in the “Ecology and Environmental Protection” Bachelor's program (full-time). In the same academic year, Dr. Alexandrov began delivering the lecture course “Forest Certification” for Master's students in “Forestry” (both full-time and part-time programs).

Between 2017 and 2020, under his supervision, five thesis projects 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 for 25 theses (10 Bachelor's and 15 Master's). Among his contributions to teaching activities is his involvement in updating the curricula for the courses “Forest Management” and “General Silviculture.”

It is also worth noting that Dr. Alexandrov has developed a series of tests for semester exams and continuous assessment using various digital platforms. He is the primary author of one teaching aid and a co-author of six others.

The candidate also has experience as a doctoral advisor; the doctoral student under his supervision has completed their training and has been granted the right to defend their dissertation.



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

General description of the presented materials

Candidate Neno Alexandrov participated in the competition with:

- Monographs - 12 numbers;
- Books - 1 number;
- Publications – 13 numbers.

Information is presented regarding authorship and participation in educational materials, projects, and resources that are not required under the procedure for obtaining the academic position of “Associate Professor”:

- Learning materials - 7 numbers;
- Projects - 17 numbers.
- Scientific and applied developments - 7 numbers.

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

The candidate's research activity can be assessed through his participation in scientific and applied projects. Between 2008 and 2025, Neno Alexandrov took part as a member of the research team in three international projects funded by foreign institutions, as well as in three national scientific projects. He has participated in eleven projects administered by the Research Sector of the University of Forestry, serving as project leader in four of them. The candidate has also been involved in seven applied research initiatives.

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

The monograph submitted for the competition (B3.1) presents an analysis of research results concerning oak forests in Western Bulgaria. The study identifies issues related to the coppice management of these forests. An important conclusion is drawn—that these issues require adaptive management and the rationalization of production processes in the context of climate change and increasing demand for bioenergy. Scientifically grounded and specific recommendations for the management of coppice forests in Western Bulgaria are provided.

The published book based on the doctoral dissertation (Г6.1) disseminates the results of the candidate's work as a PhD student.

Six scientific articles have been published in journals that are indexed in internationally recognized scientific databases. Two of these (Г7.1, Г7.2) are in journals with an impact factor, and one (Г7.3) is in a journal with an impact rank. The remaining three articles (Г7.4, Г7.5, and Г7.6) are indexed in reputable databases but are not in journals with an impact factor or rank.

Five articles have been published in non-indexed but peer-reviewed journals (Г8.1–Г8.5), and one article appears in an edited collective volume (Г9.1). Additionally, one study (Г9.2) is published in a refereed and indexed journal without an impact factor or rank.

Dr. Alexandrov is the author and co-author of eleven chapters across four collective monographs. Three of these monographs (Г11.1, Г11.2, and Г11.3) are accepted with certain reservations. While they apply scientific research methods and present results of practical significance, they lack some elements of academic research, such as a literature review and cited sources. However, even if the 60 points awarded for these monographs were to be excluded, the minimum requirement for Group Г indicators would still be met (201.44 points).

The remaining chapters are part of a collective monograph dedicated to the adaptive management of Scots pine plantations and are of high scientific value (Г11.4–Г11.11).

Five publications are single-authored, while the remaining 21 are co-authored: 5 with one co-author, 9 with two co-authors, and 7 with more than two co-authors. In 11 of the joint publications, Neno Alexandrov is the lead author; in 8 he is listed second; and in the remaining 7 he is third or in a later position. Six of the publications are written in English, while the remaining 20 are in Bulgarian.

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

The candidate's scientific and applied research activities have received positive recognition and are well acknowledged within the academic community.

- Total - 40 citations of 13 publications have been presented.

##### **By type of citations:**

- In scientific journals and proceedings that are referenced and indexed in internationally recognized databases - 33 citations, including 8 in journals with an impact rank;
- In peer-reviewed monographs and collective volumes - 7 citations.

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

The contributions in the scientific publications of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Neno Alexandrov are grouped into six areas, all related to aspects of silviculture:

1. Research on the dynamics of natural disturbances in coniferous forests;
2. Methods for assessing and controlling forest structure;
3. Studies on stand growth and productivity;
4. Forest transformation, including changes in age structure, transformation of Scots pine plantations, and conversion of coppice oak forests into seed-origin stands;
5. Adaptive forest management; and
6. Multifunctional forest management.

I accept the stated contributions but would like to note a remark regarding their classification. The candidate has presented almost all conclusions – except those related to multifunctional forest management – as scientific. I believe that all the contributions are of an applied scientific nature, which I view as a positive aspect. Forest sciences, and silviculture in particular, are predominantly applied fields, and it is entirely natural for scientific research in this area to focus on solving practical cases and problems.

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

The documents, scientific works, and supporting materials submitted by the candidate provide sufficient grounds to conclude that the results achieved are either solely his own or bear his significant contribution. The candidate is the sole author of five publications and a co-author of five others with a single co-author.

#### **6. Critical remarks**

I do not have any significant critical remarks, except for the previously noted inaccuracies in evaluating the national minimum requirements and the classification of contributions.



I would recommend that Dr. Alexandrov avoid terms such as “purely composed” and “natural stands,” with the clear understanding that these terms have been widely used and have long been legitimized in forest science and practice. Nevertheless, I believe more suitable terms would be those with broad international application, such as “monodominant/one-species forests” and “naturally-originated forests.”

Based on the candidate’s excellent theoretical and practical background, I would like to recommend the following for his future work:

- 1) To write an updated textbook on General Silviculture;
- 2) To actively participate in the much-needed update of the Regimes for sustainable forest management in Natura 2000 in Bulgaria;
- 3) To contribute to the scientifically grounded establishment of the relations between habitat types and forests with high conservation value, on one hand, and plant syntaxa, on the other;
- 4) To publish the results of his future research primarily in scientific journals that are peer-reviewed and indexed in internationally recognized databases.

## 7. Personal impressions

My impressions of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. N. Alexandrov are direct and stem from my opportunity to follow his work as a student, lecturer, researcher, and expert.

The candidate stands out with his professional seriousness, strict methodological approach, and constant commitment to student training, as well as his research and expert activities. He demonstrates a high level of scientific competence, combined with the ability to work in a team, both in the context of national and international projects. He actively contributes to the education of students and doctoral candidates and to the optimization of the teaching process.

## 8. Conclusion

After analyzing the submitted documents, scientific and research activities, scientific, applied, and expert contributions, and teaching activities, I believe that the candidate fully meets the requirements of the Act for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and its Regulation, as well as the Regulation for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Forestry. **In this regard, I propose that Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Neno Alexandrov be elected as a „Associate Professor“ in the discipline Silviculture in the Professional field 6.5. Forestry, scientific specialty Silviculture (incl. Dendrology).**

Prepared the opinion: 

/Prof. Marius Dimitrov, PhD/

Opinion delivered on May 05, 2025