



OPINION

regarding: the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of Higher Education 6. Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, professional field 6.1. Crop Science, scientific specialty "Ornamental Plants", announced in the State Gazette, issue No. 48 of 26.05.2026

Candidate: Chief Assistant Dr. Valentin Panchev Panchev, Department of Horticulture, Faculty of Viticulture and Horticulture, Agricultural University - Plovdiv

Prepared by: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kostadin Penchev Kostadinov, Agricultural University - Plovdiv, appointed pursuant to Order No. RD 16-812 of 29.06.2026 of the Rector of the Agricultural University - Plovdiv as a member of the Scientific Jury

1. Brief Presentation of the Candidate

Chief Assistant Dr. Valentin Panchev Panchev was born on June 16, 1982, in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. He completed his secondary vocational education at the Vocational High School of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodesy "Arch. Kamen Petkov" - Plovdiv in 2001, majoring in Park Construction. In 2006, he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Agronomy (Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture) from the Agricultural University - Plovdiv, followed by a Master's degree in Landscape Design at the same university in 2007. During the 2011–2013 period, he completed an additional professional qualification in Pedagogy ("Teacher") at the Center for Continuing Education of AU - Plovdiv.

His career began as a high school teacher at the Vocational High School of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodesy (2008–2015). On April 1, 2015, he joined the Department of Horticulture at the Agricultural University - Plovdiv as an Assistant Professor. Between 2015 and 2018, he carried out doctoral studies and, after successfully defending his dissertation entitled "Studies on Different Propagation Methods of Species of the Genus Tilia" on December 5, 2018, obtained the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) in Ornamental Plants (Diploma No. DR 113 of 07.12.2018). By Rector's Order No. RD-16-610 of 03.06.2019, he was promoted to Chief Assistant Professor, a position he currently holds.

2. General Description of the Scientific Output

Chief Assistant Dr. Valentin Panchev participates in the competition with a total scientific output of 36 papers, categorized as follows:

Publications related to the doctoral dissertation and prior promotion to Chief Assistant – 7 items (not subject to evaluation);

Monograph / published book based on the doctoral dissertation (Indicator G6) – 1 item;

Scientific publications submitted for the present competition – 29 items, including:

Publications equivalent to a habilitation work (Group of indicators "B") in journals indexed and abstracted in Web of Science and Scopus – 10 papers;

Publications in journals indexed in internationally recognized databases (Indicator G7) – 6 papers;

Publications in peer-reviewed non-indexed journals and conference proceedings (Indicator G8) – 12 papers.

According to the authorship distribution report, Dr. Panchev is the sole author of 10 publications (34.48%), first author of 5 publications (17.24%), second author of 9 publications (31.03%), and co-author (third or subsequent) of 5 publications (17.24%).

The candidate has accumulated 616.65 scientometric points (Group A: 50 pts; Group B: 255 pts; Group G: 256.65 pts; Group D: 55 pts), which exceeds the national and institutional minimum thresholds required for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in field 6.1 (400 points).

3. Teaching Activity

Chief Assistant Dr. Valentin Panchev has a teaching experience of 11 years and 3 months at the Department of Horticulture of AU - Plovdiv as of 30.06.2026, alongside 7 years of prior secondary vocational pedagogical experience.

His total direct teaching workload for the period 2021/2022 to 2025/2026 amounts to 3,680.35 hours, encompassing 941 lecture hours, 1,779 practical laboratory and seminar hours, and 960.35 hours of extracurricular and exam duties across Bachelor's and Master's curricula. His teaching portfolio includes major courses such as Floriculture, Ornamental Dendrology, Greenhouse Flower Production, Flowers for Open Spaces, Flower Arranging, Ornamental Nurseries, and Computer-Aided Landscape Design.

In addition, Dr. Panchev has supervised 20 defended diploma theses (10 Bachelor's and 10 Master's students) and participated in developing curricula for courses within the faculty.

4. Research Activity and Contributions

The research activity of Chief Assistant Dr. Valentin Panchev spans four main thematic areas:

1. Physical pre-sowing seed priming methods using ultrasonic treatments in ornamental species.
2. Agrotechnological evaluation and optimization of nitrogen fertilization in cut flower crops (*Gladiolus hybrida* L.).
3. Biotechnology, in vitro micropropagation, and vegetative cutting propagation of woody and floral plants (*Tilia*, *Angelonia*, *Ficus*).
4. Ecological, phenological, and acclimatization assessments of perennial landscaping species (*Dianthus*, *Dahlia*, *Goniolimon*, *Ginkgo*).

Scientific Contributions:

Determined optimal parameters for ultrasound treatment (40 kHz, 4–6 min) to improve germination energy, seed viability, and seedling vigor in *Antirrhinum majus*, *Lupinus polyphyllus*, *Colutea arborescens*, *Caesalpinia pulcherrima*, and *Zinnia elegans*, describing the responses through polynomial regression models.

Developed an efficient in vitro micropropagation protocol for large-leaved linden (*Tilia platyphyllos* Scop.), identifying effective surface sterilization protocols and showing that metatopolin (mT, 5M) significantly enhances shoot proliferation and root development.

Established the micropropagation parameters for *Angelonia angustifolia* from stem explants using BAP cytokinin regimes.

Conducted ecological and population monitoring of three newly identified natural habitats of the rare Balkan endemic *Goniolimon dalmaticum* in the Slavyanka Mountain region.

Scientific and Applied Contributions:

Performed varietal evaluations of introduced *gladiolus* cultivars and established optimal nitrogen fertilization regimes (16kg/daN) to maximize flowering quality and stem height.

Evaluated winter hardiness and demonstrated the feasibility of overwintering corms and tubers of *Gladiolus hybridus* and *Dahlia variabilis* directly in the soil under the agroclimatic conditions of Southern Bulgaria.

Demonstrated the economic and ornamental utility of extending the cultivation cycle of *Dianthus barbatus* L. up to 2–3 consecutive years in public green areas without loss of aesthetic quality.

Citations and Recognition:

Dr. Panchev has documented 5 citations (45 points under Indicator D13 and 10 points under Indicator D15), including citations in international scientific journals indexed in Web of Science such as *Ciência e Agrotecnologia* and *Scientific Papers Series B*.

Project Involvement and Mobility:

The candidate has participated in 13 national and institutional research contracts (including the National Program "Young Scientists and Postdoctoral Researchers" 1 and 2) and served as project manager for one institutional research grant. He has completed 4 Erasmus+ mobility programs and attended specialized didactics workshops under the European ENTER network.

5. Remarks and Recommendations

Notwithstanding the candidate's active teaching workload, an in-depth review of the competition files reveals notable deficiencies and inconsistencies:

Subject-Matter Deviations: Several publications submitted under Indicator G7 (such as G7.1 on tomatillo and G7.2 on field tomatoes) belong entirely to vegetable crop production rather than the specific scientific profile of the competition ("Ornamental Plants").

Chronological Discrepancies and Re-use of Theses Data: Papers G7.4 (2015) and G8.1 (2014) predate the defense of the candidate's doctoral dissertation (2018) and his promotion to Chief Assistant (2019). Moreover, certain publications regarding the genus *Tilia* (e.g., B3 and G7.6) directly re-use experimental datasets and review sections from his defended PhD dissertation.

Duplicate Reporting: Publications G8.3 (2020) and G8.4 (2022) present virtually identical experimental data on dahlia tuber overwintering published across two series of the same local journal. A duplicate entry was also noted in the list of publications used for Chief Assistant (items 1 and 5 being identical).

Bibliographic and Scientometric Flaws: Indicator D15 includes an undergraduate engineering thesis and a doctoral dissertation rather than articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals. Paper B7 contains several mismatched, non-horticultural citations (borrowed from econometrics, theoretical physics, and human medicine), and paper B10 reports chemical concentrations in *Ginkgo biloba* leaves that are biologically unrealistic due to incorrect unit conversions.

Administrative Imperfections: Discrepancies exist between application dates, curriculum descriptions contain unfilled placeholders, and several typographical errors appear in publication titles (e.g., G7.5, G8.9).

6. Conclusion

Despite the identified critical remarks and technical inconsistencies in the paperwork, Chief Assistant Dr. Valentin Panchev Panchev has demonstrated sustained pedagogical commitment, carries an extensive teaching load in the Department of Horticulture, and meets the statutory numerical requirements stipulated by the Law on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), its Implementing Regulations, and the internal Regulations of the Agricultural University - Plovdiv.

These considerations justify a POSITIVE evaluation of his overall application.

I recommend to the esteemed Scientific Jury to vote in favor, and to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Viticulture and Horticulture at the Agricultural University - Plovdiv to elect Chief Assistant Dr. Valentin Panchev Panchev to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the

field of Higher Education 6. Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, professional field 6.1.
Crop Science (Ornamental Plants).

September 11, 2026

Plovdiv

Prepared by:

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(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kostadin Kostadinov)