



OPINION

in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 4. *Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics*; professional direction 4.4. *Earth Sciences*; scientific specialty *Ecology and ecosystem protection*, announced in State Gazette No. 94 of 05.11.2024.

Candidate: **Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Maria Chunchukova** from the Department of Chemistry, Phytopharmacy and Ecology and Environmental Protection at the Agricultural University - Plovdiv (AUP)

Member of the scientific jury: Prof. Dr. Andon Vasilev Andonov from AUP, appointed according to the Order of the Rector of AUP No. RD-16-12 of 7.01.2025.

1. Brief presentation of the candidate

Chief Assist. Prof. Maria Chunchukova, PhD, was born on November, 1981. She received her higher education at AUP, graduating in 2006 with a bachelor's degree in "Ecology and Environmental Protection" and in 2007 with a master's degree in "Landscape design - Exterior and Interior". In 2017, she defended PhD thesis at AUP and received a doctoral degree in the scientific specialty "Ecology and Ecosystem Protection". Since 2013, she has been working at AUP as an assistant (2013-2017), expert (2017-2018) and chief assistant (2018 – current) in the Department of Agroecology and Environmental Protection. In the period 2020-2021, she combines the academic position with the position of a postdoctoral fellow in the same department with the support of the National Programme "Young Scientists and Postdoctoral Fellows". Chief Assist. Prof. Chunchukova has good commands in English and Russian, good computer skills and various other competencies.

2. General description of the scientific production of the candidate

Chief Assist. Prof. Chunchukova participated in the competition with 24 scientific papers. All submitted papers are within the scope of the scientific specialty of the competition – Ecology and Ecosystem Protection and are subject to analysis.

According to the point system of the Regulations for the implementation of the law on the development of the academic community in Republic of Bulgaria (RILDACRB), the scientific papers of Chief Assist. Prof. Chunchukova, together with their noted citations, form a total of 585 points. They are distributed as follows: group A – 50, group B – 215, group D – 240 and group E – 80 points. These results correspond to and at the same time exceed the minimum requirements for scientific production for holding the academic position of "associate professor".

Two of the scientific papers of Chief Assist. Prof. Chunchukova - article No. 6 (*Helminthologia*, Q2) and article No. 8 (*Bulgarian Journal of Veterinary Medicine*, Q3) and 10 citations of the works are in journals with an impact factor, which also fulfills the additional minimum requirements in Art. 1a / Para. 1 of the Appendix to the RILDACRB in the AUP.

dams - Batak and Panicheri), as a result of which an ecological assessment of their condition was carried out and new data were obtained on: (1) the species diversity of parasite communities in characteristic fish species, new hosts of parasite species, (2) their habitats and a number of others.

4. Teaching activity

Dr. Chunchukova has 11 years of teaching experience, of which over 6 years as a Chief Assistant Professor. She conducts lectures, seminars, exercises and practices with students in the "Bachelor's" and "Master's" levels (full-time and part-time) from various specialties in the AUP (6 in the level "Bachelor" and 3 in the level "Master"). In the last 6 years Chief Asist. Prof. Chunchukova gives lectures on the disciplines *Invasion Ecology* and *Biodiversity and Bioresources* to Bachelor students and the disciplines *Biodiversity, Ecology and Conservation of Freshwater Ecosystems, Water Ecosystems and Sustainable Nature Management, Biodiversity and Environmental Risk*, etc. to Master students. Lectures on the specified disciplines are given according to curricula developed by the candidate. The annual horarium hours of Chief Assist. Prof. Chunchukova in lectures and exercises in recent years exceeds almost twice the norm of 360 hours. She supervised a significant number of graduates who successfully defended their diplomas, of which 8 in the "Bachelor" level and 9 in the "Master" level. She was also an academic mentor for students under the Programme "Science and Education for Intelligent Growth" and "Human resources development" (2012-2014; 2016-2017).

5. Notes and recommendations

I have no following notes and recommendations for the candidate.

CONCLUSION

After thoroughly acquainting myself with the presented materials, I believe that Chief. Assist. Prof. Dr. Maria Chunchukova meets the requirements of the RILDACRB in the AUP for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor". This gives me reason to support a proposal to the Faculty Senate of the Faculty of Plant Protection and Agroecology for the election of Chief. Assist. Prof. Dr. Maria Chunchukova to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in a scientific field of higher education 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics, professional direction 4.4. Earth Sciences, Science Speciality, Ecology and ecosystem protection.

Date: 4/02/2025

Prepared the opinion:

/Prof. Dr. Andon Vassilev Andonov/