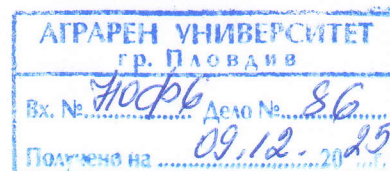


OPINION



by Prof. Vasil Stoimenov Nikolov, PhD, Department of Animal Sciences at the Agricultural University–Plovdiv, scientific specialty “Breeding of Farm Animals, Biology and Biotechnology of Reproduction,” field 6.3 “Animal Husbandry”

Regarding: competition for occupying the academic position “Associate Professor” in the field of higher education 6. Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, professional field 6.3 Animal Husbandry, scientific specialty “Pig Breeding,” announced in State Gazette, Issue 65 of 08.08.2025.

Grounds for preparing this opinion: Order No. RD 16-1037/10.10.2025 of the Rector of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv.

Candidate in the competition: Chief Assistant Ivelina Asenova Zapryanova, PhD, Department of Animal Sciences at the Agricultural University–Plovdiv.

Chief Assistant Ivelina Zapryanova, PhD, was born on 06.03.1974 in the town of Karlovo. She graduated from the Foreign Language High School “Ivan Vazov” – Plovdiv (1988–1992). In 1997 she obtained a Master’s degree in the specialty “Zootechnics” from Trakia University – Stara Zagora. From 1997 to 2000 she worked as a zootechnician at the Department of Animal Husbandry at the Agricultural University – Plovdiv. Her scientific and teaching career began in 2000, when, after winning a competition, she was appointed Assistant Professor in the same department. Since 2003 she has been a Senior Assistant, and since 2007 to the present time – Chief Assistant. In 2012 she was awarded the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the scientific specialty “Pig Breeding,” after defending a dissertation titled “*Effect of the Use of Plant Extracts on Productive Indicators in Pigs.*” Dr. Zapryanova has completed an advanced training program in genetics and acquired qualification for teaching agricultural disciplines, which is of importance for her scientific and teaching activity.

Scientific Output

Chief Assistant Dr. Zapryanova has submitted a list of 32 scientific publications. Five of them are related to the acquisition of her PhD degree. Two do not belong to the scientific specialty of the competition. Twenty-five scientific articles are subject to review.

Twenty of the publications (80%) are published in journals indexed in internationally recognized scientific databases. Four articles are in journals with an SJR ranking – 2 in *Ecologia Balkanica* (SJR 0.167, Q4) and 2 in *Bulgarian Journal of Agricultural Science* (Q3; SJR 0.261 in 2018; 0.191 in 2019). One publication is in *Lucrari Stiintifice Seria Zootehnie* of the University of Iași, and another in *Scientific Papers. Series D. Animal Science* of the University of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest, Romania. The remaining articles are published in *Agrarni Nauki* – 3, *Zhivotnovadni Nauki* – 2, *Scientific Works of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv* – 3, *Journal of Mountain Agriculture on the Balkans* – 4, *Biotechnology in Animal Husbandry* – 2. These journals are included in the List of Contemporary Bulgarian Scientific Publications, Refereed and Indexed in International Databases (NACID). Five of the articles are in non-refereed proceedings of scientific conferences.

Dr. Zapryanova is sole author of 5 publications; in 10 she is first author; in 9 – second author; and in 1 – third or subsequent author, which demonstrates her leading role in her research directions. Six papers were presented at 5 scientific forums in Bulgaria – 2 as oral presentations and 3 as posters, and 2 posters were presented at two international symposia.

Teaching Activity

Dr. Zapryanova has 25 years of academic and teaching experience. She has taught lectures and practical classes in the disciplines: “Pig Breeding,” “Biological Foundations of Pig Husbandry,” “Pig Husbandry Technology,” “Meat and Meat Products Technology” for students in professional field 6.3 Animal Husbandry, as well as “Environmentally Friendly Animal Husbandry,” “Biological Foundations of Animal Husbandry,” “Animal Husbandry,” and “Pig Breeding” for students from other fields of higher education at the University.

Chief Assistant Zapryanova is the author of 7 Bachelor’s degree curricula for the disciplines she teaches, and 6 Master’s degree curricula in the disciplines “Breeding Programs in Pig Husbandry,” “Biotechnology of Reproduction in Pig Husbandry,” “Fundamentals of Pig Breeding,” “Genetic Resources in Pig Husbandry,” “Digitalization in Pig Husbandry,” and “Meat Technology” for three Master’s programs. She has taught lectures and practical classes in the first four Master’s degree disciplines.

Her teaching load over the last 5 years has averaged 529 hours annually (at a standard of 360), including 239 hours of lectures. She has supervised 8 successfully defended graduates, 5 of whom in the Master’s degree programs.

Research Activity

In the competition for Associate Professor, Chief Assistant Dr. Ivelina Zapryanova participates with:

1. **Habilitation work** – 10 articles published in refereed and indexed journals, from which she acquires 240.6 points, thus fulfilling the requirements of “Group B” from the Annex to Art. 1a, para. 1 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (RILDA), for Field 6: Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine.
2. **Group G** includes 15 publications, 10 of which are published in internationally indexed journals. The total number of points is 240.6, with 200 required.

The works in Groups B and G fall entirely within the scientific specialty of the competition. The submitted, well-prepared “Extended Habilitation Reference” shows that Chief Assistant Zapryanova works in four main areas: 1. **Opportunities for wider use of primitive, highly adaptable pig breeds** for sustainable pig production (B1, 2, 3, 4), with an original approach using unmanned aerial vehicles to study pig behavior. 2. **Optimization of pig husbandry technologies** to improve animal welfare. This includes studies on microclimate parameters of buildings (B5, 6) and related homeostasis through morphological, biochemical, and immunological blood parameters (B7, 8, 9). 3. **Reproductive ability of pigs** – boar reproduction (G11, 12, 13, 21, 23), sow reproduction (G19, 20, 24), and growth capacity of piglets (G16). Original findings include: age-related changes in sperm production (11), influence of breed (G11), collection interval (G12), season (G21), correlations between sperm parameters (G21), factors affecting sperm viability during semen storage (23).

Studies also cover factors affecting reproductive performance of sows, such as age at first mating (G19), age and season of mating (G24), and factors affecting birth weight and growth of piglets (G16). 4. Continuation of her PhD research on the **use of alternative sources of biologically active substances in pig feeding** (B10, G14, 15). Part of the publications analyze the state and development of pig production (G7, 18, 25).

Citations

Eight citations of five scientific works are presented, all in refereed and indexed journals. From these, the candidate obtains 120 points, with 50 required. Some citations are in prestigious journals such as *Animal Bioscience* (SJR 2021: 0.665, Q1); *Acta Geographica Slovenica* (SJR 2024: 0.403, Q1); *Journal of Applied Animal Research* (SJR 2018: 0.470, Q2); *Polish Journal of Veterinary Science* (SJR 2021: 0.238, Q3).

Research Projects

Dr. Zapryanova has participated in 4 research projects funded by the University Research Fund, two of which she led.

Recommendations

It would be beneficial for Dr. Zapryanova to increase her participation in research projects and expand her publications in journals with higher scientific impact.

I would like to emphasize the excellent presentation of the competition materials – a habilitation reference with clearly defined research directions and contributions; well-organized and labeled publications with attached abstracts; citations, curricula, teaching activities. This reflects the exceptional diligence and responsibility Dr. Zapryanova consistently demonstrates in preparing and conducting her teaching and research activities, project preparation, and participation in scientific conferences and departmental events – something I have witnessed over more than 25 years of collaboration.

Conclusion

Chief Assistant Dr. Ivelina Zapryanova meets the requirements of Article 24(1) of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the RILDA, and the Regulations of the Agricultural University for its implementation, for holding the academic position “Associate Professor.” I give a **POSITIVE** evaluation of her overall activity and with full confidence propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to also vote positively, and for the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Agronomy at the Agricultural University – Plovdiv to elect Chief Assistant Dr. Ivelina Asenova Zapryanova as **Associate Professor** in the field of higher education 6. Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, professional field 6.3 Animal Husbandry, scientific specialty “Pig Breeding.”

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Plovdiv

Prepared the Opinion:


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