

REVIEW REPORT

by

Assoc. Prof. Simeon Petrov Lukanov, PhD

Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia,
Bulgaria

Subject: Competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field 4.3 Biological Sciences, scientific specialty Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation, for the needs of the Community Ecology and Conservation Biology Section, Ecosystem Research, Ecological Risk and Conservation Biology Department, IBER–BAS

Candidate: Dr. Angel Valentinov Dyugmedzhiev

1. General Background

The competition for the academic position of *Associate Professor* was announced in the State Gazette, issue 32 of 15 April 2025. Documents were submitted by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Angel Valentinov Dyugmedzhiev, who has presented 27 publications beyond his doctoral dissertation, alongside 49 citations indexed in the Web of Science and/or Scopus. On the basis of these metrics, the candidate fully satisfies the requirements for the position of *Associate Professor* as stipulated in the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as the career development framework of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS). Dr. Dyugmedzhiev graduated in 2013 from the Faculty of Biology at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” with a Master’s degree in Biology, specializing in Vertebrate Zoology. In 2020, at the National Museum of Natural History (BAS), he defended his doctoral thesis in Zoology on the topic “Spatial ecology of the nose-horned viper *Vipera ammodytes* (Linnaeus, 1758) in Western Bulgaria”. Since 2020, he has been employed at the *Ecosystem Research, Ecological Risk and Conservation Biology* Department of IBER–BAS, initially as a biological specialist and later, within the same year, appointed as Chief Assistant Professor. His main research interests concern the ecology, morphology, and behavior of snakes, and in the years since defending his PhD he has established himself as a recognized herpetologist with deep expertise on both Bulgarian and foreign species of amphibians and reptiles.

2. Scientometric Indicators

The candidate is the author of 32 scientific works, three related to his doctoral thesis and two presented for reference only. The remaining 27 publications are considered in the present competition: **Category B:** 8 publications (1 in Q2, 4 in Q3, 3 in Q4); **Category G:** 19 publications (1 in Q1, 2 in Q2, 2 in Q3, 2 in Q4, 11 in SJR-ranked journals without an impact factor, and 1 book chapter). These works yield 116 points in Category B (minimum required: 100) and 244 points in Category G (minimum required: 220). Fifteen of the submitted papers are published in impact factor journals, meeting both the national and IBER–BAS internal requirements. The candidate is the first author of 15 publications, with one co-authored with an international collaborator. I note that I have co-authored six publications with Dr. Dyugmedzhiev, all of which are included in the competition materials.

Regarding citations, the candidate has 49 citations in impact factor or SJR-ranked journals, all verified as legitimate. This corresponds to 98 points (minimum required by law: 60). According to the internal rules of the National Museum of Natural History, at least 20 citations are required, 10 of which in impact factor journals — the candidate exceeds these thresholds (34 citations in IF journals). A Scopus search shows an h-index of 6 (reduced to 4 when self-citations are excluded). While modest, this is reasonable for a researcher at his career stage in this field.

3. Research Profile and Contributions

All submitted publications are relevant to the specialty for which the competition is announced. With the exception of one paper on the brown bear in Bulgaria, all works focus on amphibians and reptiles from Bulgaria and abroad, reflecting the candidate's established research profile. The majority of studies investigate the distribution, ecological characteristics, and behavior of Bulgarian amphibians and reptiles, with particular emphasis on the nose-horned viper — the central focus of Dr. Dyugmedzhiev's scientific work. He employs a diverse array of modern ecological methods, complemented by genetic analyses in collaboration with established researchers nationally and internationally.

The candidate presents his contributions grouped by research subject rather than thematic area: 1) **Studies on the nose-horned viper (*Vipera ammodytes*)** – 8 contributions; 2) **Studies on other amphibians and reptiles** – 14 contributions; 3) **Scientific-applied contributions** – 4 contributions. In my view, the third group is superfluous, as these contributions are essentially part of fundamental research on reptiles and amphibians (and one on the brown bear) without

applied outcomes beyond basic biological science. Nevertheless, they are clearly formulated, appropriately documented, and meet the aims of the competition.

4. Additional Academic Activity

To date, the candidate has participated in 19 scientific conferences (mostly with international participation) and in 27 scientific and applied projects, including NATURA 2000 amphibian and reptile mapping, and projects funded by the Bulgarian National Science Fund. He lists leadership of five research projects for young scientists; however, two were funded under the Ministry of Education and Science's *Young Scientists and Postdoctoral Fellows* program, which should not be counted towards formal project leadership requirements under current legislation

5. Question and Recommendations

1. In which research directions do you intend to develop further?
2. Will you broaden your focus on anthropogenic impacts to include more species, or maintain a concentration on snakes, particularly the nose-horned viper?
3. Have you supervised students or graduates (formally or informally)? Do you maintain academic links with universities in Bulgaria or abroad? Do you plan to recruit PhD students in the near future?
4. I recommend prioritizing publications in top-quartile (Q1, Q2) impact factor journals over short communications in SJR-only journals.
5. I recommend more active collaboration with international researchers.

6. Conclusion

On the basis of the submitted materials, I am confident that Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Angel Dyugmedzhiev fully meets — and in several respects exceeds — the criteria for the position of *Associate Professor* under national legislation, the regulations of BAS, and the internal rules of IBER–BAS. His research profile aligns precisely with the expectations for the announced position. I strongly recommend that the Scientific Jury support the appointment of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Angel Dyugmedzhiev to the academic position of Associate Professor in Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation, for the needs of the Community Ecology and

Conservation Biology Section, Ecosystem Research, Ecological Risk and Conservation
Biology Department.

Prepared by:

Assoc. Prof. Simeon Lukanov, PhD

Date: 8 August 2025