

Review

From: Prof. Dr. Nikolay Dobrinov Nachev, Department of Biology, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski", designated as a member of the Scientific Jury and appointed by order of the Director of IBEI-BAS No. 85/29.09.2025, in connection with a procedure for the selection of a Professor in the professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, scientific specialty "Ecology and Conservation of Ecosystems", at the Department "Ecosystem Research, Ecological Risk and Conservation Biology" of IBEI-BAS.

Subject: Procedure for the selection of a Professor in the professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, scientific specialty "Ecology and Conservation of Ecosystems", at the Department "Ecosystem Research, Ecological Risk and Conservation Biology" of IBEI-BAS. announced in issue No. 63/01.08.2025 of the State Gazette,

The only candidate in the announced procedure is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simeon Petrov Lukanov. A detailed review of the attached documents convinced me that all the necessary data and elements set out in the ZRASRB regarding the procedure for selecting a Professor, the Regulations for the implementation of the ZRASRB, the Regulations for the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions of the IBEI-BAS have been presented. The procedure documents are properly structured and present the scientific and expert activity of the candidate.

Biographical data of the candidate

Assoc. Prof. Lukanov graduated with a bachelor's degree in Biology at the University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Biology, Sofia. In 2009, he graduated with a master's degree in the field of Vertebrate Zoology (Herpetology) at the same educational institution. From 2011 to 2014 he was appointed as a doctoral student at the Faculty of Biology of Sofia University in the specialty "Ecology and Conservation of Ecosystems/Behavioral Ecology". In 2014 he defended a dissertation entitled "Vocal Signalling and Relationships in Tailless Amphibians of the Ranidae Family in Bulgaria" for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". Since the same year, Dr. Lukanov has been working at IBEI-BAS, becoming a Chief Assistant Professor

in 2015, and in 2020 he habilitated in the specialty "Ecology and Conservation of Ecosystems". The candidate's total work experience at IBEI-BAS to date is over 11 years.

He has taught at the Faculty of Biology of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". He has led exercises in bachelor's programs in "Bioresources", "Ecology and Environmental Protection"

Competencies and activities

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lukanov is fluent in three foreign languages, which helps him to use sources from a wide range of original texts. The candidate develops his scientific activity mainly in the field of herpetological research, and the combination of proficiency in Russian, Spanish and English helps to form a stable base of knowledge and sources that are used in his publication activity. Especially when it comes to the herpetology of Bulgaria and Europe, the languages that Assoc. Prof. Lukanov uses are very necessary for finding difficult-to-access and often apocryphal information.

The candidate's communication skills are the basis of his international research and project activities. The large number of scientific products that are on foreign platforms and the wide range of foreign colleagues with whom Assoc. Prof. Lukanov collaborates are impressive.

Simeon Lukanov's command of the so-called "scientific English" is particularly good, as these skills secured him a position as a language editor in a high-ranking journal at a very early age. Assoc. Prof. Lukanov's language skills and scientific competencies are the reasons why he was selected and included in the scientific boards of international journals. He is currently the editor-in-chief of *Acta Zoologica Bulgarica* and a section editor of the *North Western Journal of Zoology*. Simeon Lukanov has been invited many times to be a guest editor in elite journals. His editorial skills have secured him invitations to review in numerous Bulgarian and foreign journals. To date, Assoc. Prof. Lukanov has prepared over 70 reviews for scientific journals of many different geography and disciplines. This is a truly large number of reviews in ten years and is a sign that the candidate is extremely cooperative and ready to provide his scientific expertise. I know many colleagues who simply refuse to perform review activities because most often this activity is unpaid and voluntary. In the case of the candidate in the procedure, we see that he has shown and continues to show collegiality, without which the processes of double review would not be possible.

Simeon Lukanov possesses administrative and managerial skills, which are usually rare in the scientific community with a similar profile. Assoc. Prof. Lukanov participates in numerous scientific procedures, and also leads national and international projects.

The candidate has a strong ability to work with numbers and statistical data processing. This is evident from the scientific output submitted under the procedure, as well as from the scientific publications submitted under the dissertation and habilitation. A large part of the work with digital databases and statistical work was done personally by Assoc. Prof. Lukanov.

Assoc. Prof. Lukanov has high technical and software literacy. His skills are developed in areas such as bioacoustics, biomechanics, ethology and other disciplines requiring documentation and data analysis. The foundation of the candidate's scientific career was laid on the basis of bioacoustics research and comparison of acoustic signals. Gradually, scientific production also included techniques for documenting and analysing movements, comparative morphometry, ecological mapping, modelling, remote monitoring, biochemistry, ecotoxicology, and others.

Simeon Lukanov's research and publications are based on laboratory work and field data collection. This reflects the characteristic (and often contradictory) skills and habits that both work environments require. Often, researchers who specialize in field work do not have the skills and discipline to work in a more sterile and controlled environment, and specialists in laboratory work do not have the skills to work in field conditions. Assoc. Prof. Lukanov has a pronounced tendency to prepare and adhere to a strict methodology in obtaining, arranging, storing and analyzing data.

The candidate has the skills and practical attitude to secure funds for his scientific research and travel. Assoc. Prof. Lukanov has provided project financial support and supervision of the work of his colleagues and students who are studying in his working group and "Ecological Monitoring".

Personal impressions

My personal acquaintance with Simeon Lukanov dates back to the time when he was in the master's program at the Faculty of Biology of Sofia University. Even from this early stage of his scientific development, the candidate impressed me as a person with a perspective in the field of herpetology and ethology. I have always highly appreciated Assoc. Prof. Lukanov's abilities to express himself accurately in the working languages that we have used and to process a large amount of available and acquired information. I have been impressed by qualities that many field researchers (especially strongly expressed in myself) lack. Here I can mention Simeon Lukanov's incredibly careful attitude to measuring devices, documentation and analytical research, to the appearance and technical condition of the equipment for field and laboratory work and to the careful attitude to protocol procedures.

I have worked with Simeon Lukanov on several scientific projects and have spent a lot of time in joint activities and discussions on scientific topics. I have two articles in common with the candidate, but it is not on the list of works submitted for the procedure. I believe that I can be completely objective in assessing his production and documentation for the procedure.

Expert activity

The candidate has participated as an expert in a number of projects funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Environment, the Ministry of Environment, the EEA Financial Mechanism, the Sofia Municipality, the European Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency. The fact that Assoc. Prof. Lukanov has participated in over 20 projects to date, and in 2025 he is the head of three projects under the Scientific Research Fund indicates that he is a recognizable and sought-after partner and expert in scientific circles.

Scientific activity and publications

The scientific activity of Assoc. Prof. Lukanov is reflected in his publications for the procedure, as well as those produced during his doctoral studies and habilitation. Simeon Lukanov is one of the colleagues with the most rhythmic and regular publication activity. From 2011 to the present, there has only been one year in which there are no publications, but this is due to the fact that the candidate began his activity at the beginning of his doctoral studies. In the year of the dissertation defense and in the subsequent period, two or more scientific productions were published annually. With such regularity, Simeon Lukanov has currently produced over 60 scientific publications. In a large percentage of the publications, Assoc. Prof. Lukanov is the sole, lead author or is co-authored with one researcher. His research has been published mainly in refereed journals from all quartiles. Many of the articles have been published in journals from the elite sections Q1 and Q2, with Assoc. Prof. Lukanov being the lead author in some of these articles. Scientific publications have been published both in relatively small co-author groups and in those including dozens of authors. For me, such plasticity is a sign that the candidate is capable of organizing work and setting topics both personally and to be included in large-scale international research clusters. To date, the total number of citations of Assoc. Prof. Lukanov is approaching 450, and the H index is 12. This is a result in world standards and a very good

achievement for national standards. I will pay more attention to the indicators in the next paragraph

Scientometric indicators of the procedure

The scoring of the various indicators is presented by the candidate as follows: Group A 50 points; Group B 100 points; Group C 266; Group D 328; Group E 389. Assoc. Prof. Lukanov is the supervisor of a doctoral student who defended his thesis this year. From the presented data, it is clear that all criteria are met. The points from the candidate's reference can be recognized, although it should be clarified that at the present time many points can be added. All submitted works are original, meet the standards for scientific production and regular publication. The candidate's contribution to all submitted scientific research is beyond doubt. The citations submitted in the procedure are regular without exception. Compliance with the legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria

The submitted documentation proves beyond doubt that the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simeon Lukanov meets the necessary and exceeds the criteria for acquiring the title of "Professor" under the legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Contributions to the procedure

The contributions formulated by the candidate are 14 in total and are distributed in 5 areas of biological science. I acknowledge all contributions and consider the way they were formulated to be correct. As a participant in many procedures and procedures for the scientific growth of academic staff, I have observed the most diverse in style, method of formulation and number of contributions. Undoubtedly, in this case, the contributions are compiled from publications that are the author's for the candidate and can be recognized as fully valid

Conclusion

After a detailed analysis of the documents submitted under the procedure, I can state that they fully meet the requirements for holding the academic position of "Professor" according to the Law on the State Administration of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the Regulations on the terms and procedure for acquiring scientific

degrees and holding academic positions at IBEI-BAS. As a participant in a scientific jury appointed by order of the Director of IBEI-BAS No. 85/29.09.2025, in connection with a procedure for the selection of a Professor in the professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, scientific specialty "Ecology and Conservation of Ecosystems", at the Department "Ecosystem Research, Ecological Risk and Conservation Biology" of IBEI-BAS, I vote positive for the election of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simeon Petrov Lukanov for Professor.

18.11.2024

Author of the review:

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(Prof. Dr. Nikolay Nachev)