STATEMENT

on the materials submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of "professor" in professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, scientific specialty "Ecology and Protection of Ecosystems", announced by the Forest Research Institute – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in the State Gazette No. 18 of 17.02.2026.

Candidate for participation in the competition: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ina Aneva
Prepared the opinion: Prof. Dr. Miglena Zhiyanski

Brief biographical data.
The candidate for the academic position of "professor" in the announced competition is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ina Yosifova Aneva. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aneva was born on 04.06.1985 and graduated from secondary education at the Nature and Mathematics High School "Acad. Sergey P. Korolyov" in Blagoevgrad. The candidate is an established scientist in the field of botany, biodiversity and conservation of plant resources. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in "Molecular Biology" (2008) and a master's degree in "Botany" (2010) from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" with excellent results. In 2016, she obtained the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in the scientific specialty "Botany" at the Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IBER-BAS) with a thesis focused on the biological and phytochemical studies of species from the g.*Sideritis* with conservation status in Bulgaria. The candidate's professional path is entirely linked with the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, where she successively held the positions of biologist, assistant, chief assistant and associate professor at the Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research. Since 2019, she has been an associate professor, and currently also serves as the scientific secretary of the Department of Biodiversity, Bioresources and Ecology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ina Aneva also has teaching activities, including training students at the University of Forestry, New Bulgarian University and under the Erasmus+ program at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Her scientific results have been honored with prestigious national and international awards, including the Pythagoras 2020 Grand Prize for Young Scientist, the Badge of Honor "For Merit to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences" and the UNESCO "Man and the Biosphere" Award for Young Scientists.

Compliance of the submitted documents and materials of the candidate with the minimum requirements, according to the Regulations for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at the Forest Research Institute - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (FRI-BAS).
The submitted documents and materials support that the candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ina Yosifova Aneva meets and significantly exceeds the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "professor", according to the Law on the Development of Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the relevant internal rules of the Forest Research Institute - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The submitted scientometric indicators, scientific publications, citations, participation and leadership of national and international research projects, teaching activities and the attached evidentiary materials convincingly demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the competition in professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, scientific specialty "Ecology and Protection of Ecosystems". The administrative compliance of the submitted documents and evidentiary materials was also established by a meeting of the CDAS (Commission of Development of Academic Staff) at the FRI-BAS.

General description of the submitted materials.

According to the submitted report on the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation (including specific requirement of FRI-BAS), Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ina Yosifova Aneva fully meets and exceeds the criteria for occupying the academic position of "professor" in the professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences. With a minimum required score of 660 points, the candidate presents **a total of 3881 points**, which is a significant excess of the requirements.

According to **group A**, the candidate meets the requirement of **50 points** through the acquired educational and scientific degree "doctor" (PhD) with a thesis dedicated to biological and phytochemical studies of species of the genus *Sideritis* with nature conservation status in Bulgaria.

According to **group B** (habilitation work), **16 scientific publications** are presented in the form of a cycle of scientific works. The points for the group are formed by **12 publications**, distributed in journals from the quartiles **Q1-Q4** (of which 7 are published in journals from the first quartile (Q1), 2 in the second quartile (Q2), 1 in the third quartile (Q3) and 2 in the fourth quartile (Q4)), which form a total of **254 points** with a minimum required of 100 points. Four (4) additional publications published in scientific journals, collections and collective editions are also submitted to the cycle, which do not participate in the formation of the points for the indicator, but thematically complement and expand the scope of the habilitation work. The presented publications are united by a common scientific issue related to research on biodiversity, floristic wealth, genetic resources, ethnobotany, conservation biology and sustainable use of plant resources. The results demonstrate a consistently developed scientific line and research profile in the field of botany, conservation of plant diversity and the ecology of species and habitats.

On **group G**, the candidate presents **40 publications** outside the habilitation work, carrying a total of **782 points** with a minimum required of 240. A significant part of these publications have been published in prestigious international journals from the first and second quartiles (Q1/Q2), which testifies to the high quality and international recognition of scientific research. The candidate is the first author in only one publication, assigned to group G, while in the others she is in the team of co-authors.

The scientific production submitted for the competition includes a total of **56 publications**, all co-authored, with the candidate being the **first author in 11 publications** (10 from group B and 1 from group G) of them. Six (6) publications are the result of the work of large international scientific teams with more than 12 co-authors.

Under **group D**, 803 independent citations in publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus are presented, which form **1600 points** with a minimum requirement of 120 points. This result is particularly indicative of the high visibility of the candidate's scientific output and its established place in the international scientific community.

Group E is also significantly exceeded with **783 points** reported against a required 150. They are formed by participation in 15 national and 6 international scientific projects, leadership of 7 national projects and leadership of the Bulgarian teams in three international projects funded under the Horizon Europe programme.

The presented quantitative indicators show that the candidate meets and exceeds the requirements for holding the academic position of "professor", by demonstrating high scientific productivity, international recognition, successful project activity and active contribution to the development of scientific research.

Main areas of the candidate's research work and the most important scientific and applied scientific contributions.

The candidate's scientific results are characterized by a clearly expressed interdisciplinary approach, uniting research in the field of plant biodiversity, genetic resources, conservation biology, phytochemistry, ethnobotany and sustainable use of medicinal plants. This thematic extend determines a certain heterogeneity of the presented publications, as, along with works directly aimed at the problems of biodiversity and species conservation, developments of a genetic, phytochemical, ethnopharmacological and biomedical nature are also included. The interdisciplinary nature of the research allows for the consideration of plant diversity in a broader ecological and conservation context.

Among the contributions that are most directly related to the scientific specialty "Ecology and Protection of Ecosystems", two main directions can be outlined.

The *first direction* covers research on spatial patterns of biodiversity and the influence of ecological and anthropogenic factors on the structure and functioning of ecosystems. It includes publications No. 17, 25, 30, 32, 46 and 47, which analyse the relationships between land use, landscape structure and the state of biodiversity, as well as the influence of various factors on the sustainability of plant populations and ecosystems.

The *second direction* is related to the study, assessment and protection of rare, endemic and conservation-significant plant species and their populations. This group includes publications on *Rhodiola rosea*, *Malus florentina*, *Adonis vernalis*, *Primula veris*, representatives of the genus *Thymus* and the newly described species *Sideritis elica*. The results obtained expand knowledge about the distribution, population structure, reproductive potential and conservation status of a number of species with high conservation significance.

As complementary areas enriching the candidate's ecological profile, research on plant genetic resources can be considered, including the application of molecular and population genetic approaches to assess genetic diversity, as well as developments related to the sustainable use of medicinal plants, ethnobotanical research and plant resource management, which contribute to the understanding of the mechanisms for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Reflection of the candidate's scientific publications in the literature.

The candidate's scientific publications have received significant international visibility and recognition. The submitted reference shows that for the period 2020-2025, a total of **803 citations** were reported in publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, which indicates a sustained interest in the scientific results and their good integration into the international scientific space.

The greatest impact in the scientific literature is found in publications related to research on medicinal and aromatic plants, genetic resources and phytochemical characteristics of representatives of the genera *Sideritis, Rhodiola, Fumaria, Salvia* and others. Particularly high citation rates are observed in review publications and works dedicated to Rhodiola rosea and species of the genus Sideritis, which are cited in studies published in prestigious international journals. and journals in the field of phytochemistry, pharmacology, plant biotechnology, natural products and plant resource conservation.

The cited publications cover a wide thematic spectrum and are published by scientific teams from Europe, Asia and North America, which confirms the international importance of the results obtained. A significant part of the citations are in journals with high scientific authority, which is an indicator of the quality and relevance of the candidate's scientific developments.

It should be noted that the strongest impact is the publications in the field of biodiversity, genetic resources, phytochemistry and medicinal plants, while publications with a more direct focus on ecology and ecosystem conservation have a more limited but visible scientific impact. This corresponds to the interdisciplinary scientific profile of the candidate and the thematic structure of the presented scientific output.

Participation in scientific projects.

The candidate has significant experience in the implementation and management of research projects at national and international levels. The submitted reference includes participation in a total of **31 scientific and educational projects**, implemented with the support of the Scientific Research Fund, national scientific programs, the Ministry of Environment and Water, the European Union and other funding organizations.

The candidate's scientific activity is closely related to research on plant biodiversity, genetic resources, medicinal plants, ecosystem services and adaptation to climate change. Of particular importance are participation in projects related to the conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants (Sideritis scardica, Thymus spp., Rhodiola rosea), DNA barcoding and metabarcoding of plant diversity, mapping and assessment of the conservation status of species and habitats, as well as the development of methodological approaches for the assessment of ecosystem services.

It should be noted that the candidate not only participates as a member of scientific teams, but is also the leader of a number of national and international projects. Among them, the projects "Metabolic profile and genetic variability of *Thymus* species in Bulgaria", "Integrated technologies for optimization of bioactive *Thymus* products", as well as the projects under the National Program "Young Scientists and Postdoctoral Fellows", related to the study of medicinal plants and their environmental significance, stand out.

The candidate's active participation in international initiatives under the Horizon Europe program is particularly impressive, including as the head of the Bulgarian team in the MSCA-NET, CASRI and RADIANCE projects, as well as participation in the COST Action CA19128 "Pan-European Network for Climate Adaptive Forest Restoration and Reforestation" and the project for the restoration of waters in the Danube River Basin.

The presented data show high project activity, ability to attract external funding and successful work in national and international scientific networks.

Teaching and research activities (supervisor/advisor of doctoral students, training of students, etc.)

The candidate's teaching and research activities are closely related to the training of young scientists and specialists in the field of botany, biodiversity and genetic resources. The submitted materials show consistent participation in the training and scientific supervision of doctoral students, as well as engagement in educational and popular science initiatives.

The candidate is a scientific supervisor of a full-time doctoral student in the scientific specialty "Botany", with a topic dedicated to the biological and phytochemical study of species of the genus Thymus, distributed in Bulgaria. The doctoral studies were successfully completed with the right to defense in 2024, which testifies to effective work in the training of young researchers.

The submitted documents also show participation as a scientific consultant in the training of a doctoral student who defended the educational and scientific degree "doctor" on issues related to the protection and cultivation of medicinal and conservation-significant plant species.

It should also be noted the candidate's participation in the National Scientific Program "Education with Science", as well as in other initiatives aimed at popularizing scientific knowledge and building interest in natural sciences among students and young researchers.

Overall, I believe that the candidate demonstrates good activity in the training of scientific personnel and in the transfer of knowledge in the areas in which she develops her scientific activity. Although her main professional realisation is related to scientific research work, the evidence presented shows a consistent contribution to the training of doctoral students and the development of young scientists.

Assessment of the candidate's personal contribution.
From the materials presented, I believe that the candidate has a significant personal contribution to the obtained scientific results. Regarding co-authored publications, due to the lack of information on the specific distribution of the contribution between the individual authors, I assume that the participation of the co-authors in the published scientific results is equivalent. A significant part of the publications are of her leading authorship, and her participation as a leader of scientific projects and scientific supervisor of doctoral students confirms her active role in the formulation and implementation of scientific research.

Critical remarks and recommendations.
I have no significant critical remarks on the presented scientific production and the overall activity of the candidate.
As a recommendation, I would note that the expertise of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ina Aneva in the field of medicinal plants, plant genetic resources and their sustainable use could be even more fully integrated into the scientific research activities of the Department "Forestry and Management of Forest Resources ". The direction related to medicinal plants and non-timber forest resources has long-standing traditions at the Forest Research Institute - BAS and in the recent past was among the well-developed scientific topics. I believe that the professional experience, international recognition and scientific achievements of the candidate create excellent prerequisites for the restoration and further development of this direction by applying modern interdisciplinary approaches combining ecology, genetic resources, conservation biology and sustainable management of natural resources. At the same time, active work with doctoral students and young scientists could contribute to the formation of a new generation of researchers and to the strengthening of the scientific capacity of the department in this promising area.

Personal impressions.
My personal impressions of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ina Aneva are based on periodic professional contacts within the framework of the activities of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, related to her work as Scientific Secretary and my participation in the Management Board and the General Assembly of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In these contacts, she has shown herself to be a correct, well-intentioned and constructive colleague, with a responsible attitude towards the commitments undertaken and towards the development of the academic community.
Her dedication to scientific activity is impressive, as is her active engagement in the promotion of science and the activities of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences to the general public. I highly appreciate her participation in initiatives aimed at presenting the scientific achievements of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and increasing the public visibility of Bulgarian science. I believe that she successfully combines active scientific research work, organizational activity and commitment to assigned tasks.

Conclusion.
In connection with the above, I propose that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ina Aneva be elected as a "professor" in professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, scientific specialty "Ecology and Ecosystem Protection".

Date 02.06.2026 Member of the Scientific Jury:

Prof. Dr. Miglena Stoyanova