

# STATEMENT

From Professor Milen Ivanov Georgiev, PhD  
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Regarding competition for the academic position “Associate Professor” in the field of higher education 4. Natural sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, scientific specialty: Microbiology, announced in State Gazette No. 21 from March 14, 2025, for the needs of the Department of Biotechnology, Laboratory of Bioremediation and biofuels, The Stephan Angeloff Institute of Microbiology – BAS (IMicB – BAS).

The current statement is in accordance with Order No I-65 of April 29, 2025, by the Director of IMicB – BAS, based on a decision of the Scientific Council of IMicB – BAS, Protocol No. 6 from April 29, 2025.

**Candidate(s):** Senior Assist. Prof. Venelin Neychev Hubenov, PhD – sole applicant.  
The submitted set of documents complies with the requirements of Chapter IV, Section III of Conditions and Procedure for Holding the Academic Position of Associate Professor of the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and for Holding Academic Positions at the Stephan Angeloff Institute of Microbiology – BAS, and includes all the required documents.

I am personally acquainted with the candidate, I have no co-authored publications with him and hence declare no conflict of interest, in compliance with the relevant legal provisions.

## **Brief biographical data and overview of the candidate’s scientific interests**

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Venelin N. Hubenov was born on June 6, 1982. He obtained his higher education in 2007 in the field of Environmental Biotechnology from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. In 2015, he successfully defended his PhD dissertation at the Stephan Angeloff Institute of Microbiology – BAS. His professional development has followed the traditional steps of the academic career path – as a biotechnologist, assistant professor, and senior assistant professor at Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov University and the Institute of Microbiology – BAS.

Dr. Hubenov has completed trainings abroad at INRA, France (2011-2012), and the University of Bologna, Italy (2018). Senior Assistant Professor Hubenov has over 13 years of professional experience.

## **Evaluation of the submitted materials**

For the purposes of the competition, Senior Assistant Professor Hubenov has submitted a list of 17 scientific works (16 publications in peer-reviewed journals with impact factor and 1 conference proceedings paper), as well as one registered utility model. His publication activity fully meets the requirements for academic promotion. Three of the publications are ranked in the first quartile (Q1) for their respective field, seven fall within Q2, and three are in Q3 and Q4 each.

## **Main scientific and applied contributions**

The scientific activity and contributions of Senior Assistant Professor Hubenov, PhD, are focused in the following areas:

1. Investigation of methods for the pretreatment of lignocellulosic materials aimed at their application as substrates for anaerobic biodegradation.
2. Development and study of two-stage anaerobic biodegradation processes for the production of hydrogen and methane as energy carriers.
3. Characterization of the microbial communities involved in anaerobic biodegradation, specifically those participating in hydrogen production and those involved in methane generation.
4. Alternative approaches for the utilization of the liquid waste fraction (biosludge) obtained after anaerobic biodegradation processes.
5. Exploration of the potential of anaerobic biodegradation for the processing of organic waste in the context of long-term crewed space missions.
6. Assessment of the antimicrobial activity of nanocomposite films.

It should be noted that all submitted publications for the competition for “Associate Professor” are in the field of higher education 4. Natural sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, scientific specialty: Microbiology. A positive impression is made by the application of biotechnological approaches for sustainable hydrogen production – an area with significant potential for future development and possible commercialization.

#### **Impact of the candidate’s scientific publications in national and international literature**

The scientific production of Assist. Prof. Hubenov has been published in specialized scientific journals, which fully explains the number of citations – 101 for the publications included in the current competition call, out of 111 in total (according to Scopus, accessed on June 24, 2025). The Hirsch index is 6 (according to Scopus).

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Venelin Hubenov, is a member of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria (section “Microbiology”, since 2010), the Union of Automation and Informatics “John Atanasov” of the National Society of Ecological Engineering and Environmental Protection (currently a member of the Executive Board of the Society), and the Bulgarian Astronautical Society.

Dr. Hubenov is a leader and/or participant in 11 national scientific research projects funded by the Bulgarian National Science Fund, the Nuclear Regulation Agency, IMicB – BAS, TESI Ltd., and Alterco Robotics JSC. It would be beneficial to include the amount of funding attracted for each project!

**Teaching activity** – not provided.

#### **Overall assessment of the applicant’s compliance with the mandatory requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria (ASDARB)**

According to the submitted documents for the fulfillment of the minimum requirements of the ASDARB and those of the IMicB – BAS, Senior Assist. Prof. Dr. Hubenov exceeds the national and specific requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor – Dr. Hubenov has submitted the following scores by indicator group: A – 50 points, C – 107 points, G – 236 points, and D – 195 points, or a total of 588 points at the required minimum of 430 points.

**Critical remarks** – None of significance. I would like to take the liberty of recommending Dr. Hubenov to strive to publish his research findings in reputable journals in the field of applied microbiology and biotechnology. This would contribute to greater visibility and development of the field in which he works, as well as to the advancement of the IMicB – BAS.

**Personal impressions of the reviewer about the candidate**

I know Senior Assist. Prof. Hubenov as a coworker from IMicB – BAS. I consider him a humble person with excellent knowledge and skills in biotechnology and microbiology of anaerobic microorganisms.

**CONCLUSION**

The analysis of Senior Assist. Prof. Hubenov's scientific and research activity demonstrates that his work lies entirely in the scope of the announced competition, with contributions that are both fundamental in nature and clearly orientated toward practical applications. His research activity exceeds the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria (ASDARB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the ASDARB, the Regulations of the BAS, and those of the Stephan Angeloff Institute of Microbiology at BAS. The submitted materials and results fully comply with the specific requirements adopted in accordance with the Regulations of the Stephan Angeloff Institute of Microbiology – BAS. In view of all above, as well as my persona; impressions, I consider Senior Assist. Prof. Hubenov to be an already established researcher, and his habilitation will undoubtedly contribute to the further development of this scientific field at IMicB – BAS.

As a member of the scientific jury for the announced competition, **I give a positive evaluation and strongly recommend that the esteemed members of the jury vote in favor of electing Senior Assist. Prof. Dr. Venelin N. Hubenov, to the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, scientific specialty: Microbiology, for the needs of the Laboratory of Bioremediation and Biofuels, Department of Biotechnology, IMicB – BAS.**

June 24, 2025  
Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Prepared by: .....  
/Prof. Dr. Milen I. Georgiev/