

**TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY,
APPOINTED BY ORDER No. 80/16.03.2026
TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL CENTER
FOR INFECTIOUS AND PARASITIC DISEASES
PROF. DR. IVA HRISTOVA, PhD, DSc**

STATEMENT

By

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External member of the Scientific Jury

Subject: regarding the announced competition for the academic position "PROFESSOR", in the field of higher education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, Direction: 4.3. Biological Sciences, Scientific specialty: Virology, for the needs of the Virology Department of the National Center for the Prevention and Control of Viral Diseases, published in the State Gazette No. 115/30.12.2025.

By order No. 80/16.03.2026 of the Director of the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, I am appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury in the procedure for occupying the academic position of "Professor" in the field of higher education 4. "Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics", in professional field 4.3. "Biological Sciences" and scientific discipline "Virology", for the needs of the Department of Virology, of the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, published in the State Gazette No. 115/30.12.2025 and by

decision of the Scientific Council of National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, protocol No. 1 of 12.03.2026.

At the first meeting of the scientific jury held on 18.03.2026, I was appointed to present a statement. One candidate was admitted to the announced competition indicated above – Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev Ivanov, DSc.

The statement is in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) and the Regulations for its implementation, as well as with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases.

1. Autobiography and career profile of Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev Ivanov, DSc:

Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev Ivanov, DSc has graduated from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 1994. In 2003, he has started his scientific carrer at the HIV Research and Development Center at the National Center for the Study of Virology. In 2008, Assoc. Prof. Aleksiev has acquired the specialty "Clinical Virology". From 2008 to 2011, he has been a PhD student at the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, and in 2011 he has defended his dissertation and acquired the educational and sceintific degree (ESD) "Doctor", and in 2014 he has been elected "Associate Professor". Since 2016, Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev has been head of the HIV Research and Development Center, and since 2024 he has been the head of the Virology Department at the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases. In December 2025, Assoc. Prof. Alexiev has obtained the ESD "Doctor of Sciences" with the topic of his PhD work: "Antiretroviral resistance and molecular epidemiology of HIV-1 in Bulgaria: an integrated analysis of genetic diversity, phylodynamics and demographic correlations".

Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev has completed a number of specializations abroad and is a member of numerous national and international prestigious scientific organizations: Union of Scientists in Bulgaria, Bulgarian Society of Virology, European Society for Translational Antiviral Research (ESAR), Euroguidelines in Central and Eastern Europe Network Group (ECEE), European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID).

Scientific titles:

Chief Assistant Professor of Virology at the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases from 2012 to 2014.

Associate Professor of Virology at the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases from 2014 to the present.

Assoc. Prof. Aleksiev's professional career has begun at the University Hospital "St. Anna" in 1995, where he has worked until 2001. From 2001 to 2005, he has continued his professional development as a biologist in the Blood Bank Department of the University Hospital "Pirogov". Since 2003, Assoc. Prof. Aleksiev has worked as a virologist at the National HIV Reference Laboratory at the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, and since 2016 he has been the Head of the The National Reference Confirmatory Laboratory (NRL) of HIV/AIDS, and since 2024 he has been the Head of the Virology Department at the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases.

To date, Assoc. Prof. Aleksiev has an overall work experience of 31 years, and for the last 10 years he has held managerial positions at the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases. His professional activities include virological monitoring of HIV, viral load, and antiretroviral resistance testing of individuals with HIV. Main methods applied: serological methods, PCR, sequencing, genotyping, bioinformatics, and others.

Assoc. Prof. Aleksiev's technical expertise includes:

Molecular and serological methods

- DNA/RNA isolation; PCR, RT-PCR, real-time PCR, quantitative PCR
- Sequencing and sequence analysis; NGS sequencing; hybridization
- Western blot, ELISA, LCT

Bioinformatics and data analysis

- Phylogenetic and molecular-epidemiological analysis
- Software: MEGA, BioEdit, FastTree, IQ-TREE, likelihood mapping (TreePuzzle), Temp Est, BEAST

The educational activity of Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev includes leading and participating in courses in the PDE approved programs at the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases. Assoc. Prof. Aleksiev is also the leader of a course at the Department of Virology at the Faculty of Biology of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" on the topic: "Evolution of viruses, phylogenetic analysis and molecular epidemiology".

Membership in scientific organizations:

European Society for Translational Antiviral Research (ESAR)

Union of Scientists in Bulgaria

Bulgarian Society of Virology

ECEE

2. The candidate's assessment has been made in accordance with the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the regulations for its implementation in the following areas: research and teaching.

2.1. Scientific and research activity

In the current competition for the position of Professor of Virology at the Department of Virology of the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev, DSc, submits a total of 57 scientific publications, in addition to those used for occupying the position of Associate Professor. Assoc. The academic development of Prof. Aleksiev up to now is based on a total of 96 scientific papers, of which 57 are scientific publications in refereed journals with an impact factor (IF), 36 are scientific publications in refereed journals without an IF, one monograph and participation in 2 books.

The scientific publications of Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev, submitted for this competition, are grouped as follows:

Publications in journals with impact factor (IF, Thomson Reuters) – 41

Publications in international and Bulgarian refereed journals – 16

The submitted publications have the following topics:

	Topics of the publications presented	number
1	Molecular epidemiology and immune aspects of HIV-1 in Bulgaria	27
2	Epidemiology of co-infections in people living with HIV – hepatitis B, hepatitis C, pneumocystis	5
3	Genomic epidemiology of SARS-CoV-2	14
4	Molecular and serological diagnostics of other respiratory viruses, including respiratory syncytial virus, endemic coronaviruses and influenza viruses	6
5	Molecular epidemiology of enterobiosis	5

In 9 of the articles submitted for the competition, Assoc. Prof. Aleksiev is the first author, in 8 he is the last author, and in the remaining 40 articles he is part of the author's team.

For participation in the competition, Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev presents a total of 485 citations in scientific publications, monographs, collective volumes and patents, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information (Web of Science and Scopus).

Assoc. Prof. Aleksiev, DSc is the head of 4 national scientific projects, which are funded by the Ministry of Education and Science and participates as a member of the research team in another 5 projects – 4 of which are also funded by the Ministry of Education and Science and 1 funded by the Medical University - Sofia. He also participates in the research team of two international scientific projects. The funding attracted for projects led by the candidate are a total of 240,000 BGN.

Assoc. Prof. Aleksiev successfully acquired the ESD "Doctor of Science" in December 2025.

Scientific contributions

The presented scientific works demonstrate a consistent, large-scale and conceptually complete research program in the field of virology and molecular epidemiology, with a main focus on HIV-1, viral co-infections, SARS-CoV-2 and other respiratory pathogens. Assoc. Prof. Aleksiev's studies in the field of molecular epidemiology and antiretroviral resistance of HIV-1 in Bulgaria represent a unique reference database of national and regional importance. Scientific contributions of theoretical nature include systematic documentation of the exceptional genetic diversity of HIV-1 in Bulgaria with identification of 26 subtypes, CRFs and URFs, reconstruction of the evolutionary and phylogeographic dynamics of the epidemic, detailed mapping of transmission clusters and networks, large-scale analysis of antiretroviral drug resistance, molecular characterization of viral coinfections, establishment of national genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 and identification of cellular and molecular biomarkers of immune recovery in people living with HIV.

Scientific and applied contributions include creating an evidence base for personalized therapeutic strategies for HIV infection, improving epidemiological surveillance and targeted preventive interventions, developing regionally adapted health policies, optimizing PrEP and PEP programs, implementing real-time genomic surveillance, and permanently positioning Bulgarian virological science in the international scientific space.

The published results have direct application in clinical practice, public health and strategic health planning. They simultaneously contribute to expanding international scientific knowledge on the molecular epidemiology of viral infections in the Southeastern European region. The research activity has been implemented through intensive international cooperation with leading academic and reference centers, which has contributed to building a sustainable

national expert network and to establishing Bulgaria as a significant regional center for highly specialized virological research.

2.2. Teaching and learning activities

The teaching activities of Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev include leading and participating in courses in the PDE programs at the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases. Assoc. Prof. Aleksiev also leads a course at the Department of Virology at the Faculty of Biology of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" on the topic: "Evolution of viruses, phylogenetic analysis and molecular epidemiology".

He is the supervisor of 2 PhD students who have successfully defended and acquired the ESD "Doctor".

3. Overall assessment of the candidate's compliance with the National Minimum Scientometric Indicators

According to the table of the National Minimum Scientometric Indicators attached to the candidate's documentation and the number of points collected according to the approved methodology i.e. 2403 points, Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev Ivanov, MD meets and even significantly exceeds the required criteria for acquiring the academic position PROFESSOR.

Conclusion: Based on the documents submitted, Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev Ivanov, DSc has fulfilled the requirements according to the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the regulations for its implementation and the regulations of the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases for acquiring the academic position of "PROFESSOR" in the scientific specialty "Virology".

I know Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev Ivanov, DSc as an excellent diagnostician, scientist and expert in the field of virology, in view of which I confidently give my positive assessment and strongly recommend the esteemed scientific jury to award Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Aleksiev Ivanov the academic position "PROFESSOR" in the field of higher education 4. "Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics", in professional field 4.3. "Biological Sciences" and the scientific specialty "Virology", for the needs of the Department of "Virology", of the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases.

28.03.2026

Prepared by:

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