

OPINION

Of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Krasimir Emilov Rusanov concerning the competition announced by the Institute of Oceanology (IO) - BAS, Varna, for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education: 4. "Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics"; professional direction: 4.3. "Biological Sciences"; scientific specialty "Ecology and preservation of ecosystems", scientific direction "Ecology and molecular taxonomy of marine organisms", announced in the State Gazette, issue 1 / 02.01.2024

Only one candidate, namely Dr. Nina Stoycheva Dzembekova, Assistant Professor at the "Marine Biology and Ecology" department of IO - BAS, Varna has applied for the competition announced by the same institute for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor". Concerning the announced competition, the candidate has presented comprehensive documentation allowing the establishment of an opinion regarding the fulfillment of the requirements according to the Law on Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria (LASDRB) and the regulations for its implementation at IO - BAS, Varna.

Dr. Dzembekova completed higher education at the Technical University, Varna, from where she graduated with a Master's degree in "Ecology and Environmental Protection" in 2004. Dr. Dzembekova's career development has been linked to IO - BAS, Varna since 2016, when she started working at the "Marine Biology and Ecology" department. During the 2016 - 2018 period, Dr. Dzembekova held the position of Research Assistant. In 2018, she obtained the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the specialty of "Hydrobiology" from IO - BAS, defending a dissertation on the topic of "Molecular taxonomy and ecology of potentially toxic phytoplankton species in the Black Sea", winning first prize in the BAS competition "Best publication" on the topic of the dissertation, announced in relation to the 150th anniversary of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Since 2019, Dr. Dzembekova has been appointed to the position of Assistant Professor in the scientific specialty "Hydrobiology" at the "Marine Biology and Ecology" department of IO - BAS. An overview of the presented CV shows that Dr. Dzembekova has participated in a number of training courses in the country and abroad allowing her to increase her qualifications, including training in working with a flow cytometer to determine the quantitative and qualitative composition of phytoplankton, molecular methods for the identification of phytoplankton species, application of microarray for monitoring toxic phytoplankton species, as well as working with next-generation sequencers. A specialization in Japan with a duration of 5 months at the National Scientific Institute of Fisheries Sciences - Research Center for Bioinformatics and Biosciences, Yokohama,

related to the acquisition of molecular techniques for monitoring toxic phytoplankton species stands out from the rest of the training courses. The active participation in training courses, as well as the conducted specialization abroad, speak of an aspiration towards learning a wide range of modern molecular methods and techniques aiming their application in the field of ecology and molecular taxonomy of marine organisms.

Dr. Dzhebekova has provided a list of 25 publications for participation in the present competition, of which 22 have been referenced and indexed in Web of Science / Scopus. Seven of the presented publications are referred to indicator B4 (132 points), 15 publications are referred to indicator Г7 (267 points), 3 publications are referred to journals that are not referenced or indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information (Web of Science and Scopus), as well as 2 publications designated as "Others" including a Report on analysis of the state of the marine environment - 2017 IO-BAS, Varna and the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), developed within the framework of a European project under the Black Sea CONNECT CSA. A very good impression is imposed by the large number of articles published in journals within the Q1 (6 articles) and Q2 (7 articles) quartiles, as well as the large number of citations (indicator Д = 528 points (264 citations)), which speaks of the high quality of the scientific output of the candidate and the wide response it received from the scientific community. The total number of points which Dr. Dzhebekova has applied for participation in the competition including indicators A (50 points) and Д (528 points) is 977. A reference to the regulations for implementation of LASDRB at IO - BAS, Varna shows that Dr. Dzhebekova meets and significantly exceeds the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the Professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences.

Dr. Dzhebekova has presented a list of 13 international projects where she has participated as a member of the scientific team, and in one of them (Coordination of Marine and Maritime Research and Innovation in the Black Sea - Black Sea CONNECT) she was the coordinator for IO - BAS. In addition, Dr. Dzhebekova has also participated in 7 projects funded by national sources, where in one of them, funded by the National Center for Polar Studies, she was the project coordinator. Regarding participation in scientific forums, the candidate presents a list of a total of 14 forums, 5 of which were abroad, including 11 oral presentations and 7 poster presentations. Dr. Dzhebekova is a member of the International Society for the Study of Harmful Algae (ISSHA) and is the holder of the "45 years IO BAS" badge of honor for the development of the "Molecular taxonomy of phytoplankton" field at IO BAS and on the occasion of the institute's anniversary.

I accept the presented reference for the candidate's original scientific contributions without any comments, as I believe that they reflect accurately and completely the scientific activity of Dr. Dzhebekova.

Conclusion:

The submitted documents for participation in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at IO - BAS, Varna, present Assistant Professor Dr. Nina Dzembekova as an established scientist actively participating in research projects with international and national funding in the field of ecology and molecular taxonomy of marine organisms. The research conducted by Dr. Dzembekova is of a marked multidisciplinary nature, including a wide range of modern research methods and techniques. Evidence of the high level of Dr. Dzembekova's scientific output is the large number of publications in journals within the Q1 and Q2 quartiles, as well as the large number of citations which the candidate has presented for participation in the competition. In addition to the high quality of Dr. Dzembekova's research activity, which is also evidenced by the current Hirsch index of 10 according to Scopus, Dr. Dzembekova actively participates in international scientific forums. The review of the scientometric indicators shows that Dr. Dzembekova significantly exceeds the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor", according to LASDRB and the regulations for its implementation at IO - BAS, Varna. Based on everything presented so far, I give my positive assessment and propose to the respected Scientific Jury to vote positively regarding the appointment to the academic position of "Associate Professor" of Dr. Nina Stoycheva Dzembekova in the field of higher education: 4. "Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Informatics"; professional direction: 4.3. "Biological Sciences"; scientific specialty "Ecology and preservation of ecosystems", scientific direction "Ecology and molecular taxonomy of marine organisms" at IO - BAS, Varna.

22.04.2024

Sofia

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/Assoc. Prof. Dr. Krasimir Rusanov/