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OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Varadinova - IBER-BAS, Sofia and SWU "N. Rilski", Blagoevgrad,
member of a scientific jury in accordance with Order № 1/03.01.2023 r.
of the Director of the Institute of Oceanology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IO, BAS), Varna.
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Assoc. Prof. Dr. Valentina Todorova is the only candidate in the competition for the academic position "Professor", announced in the State Gazette no. 87 of 01.11.2022, Higher education area 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics, Professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, Scientific specialty „Hydrobiology“, Scientific direction "Macrozoobenthos", Marine Biology and Ecology Department.

Brief professional data

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Valentina Todorova graduated with a master's degree in biology with a specialization in "Hydrobiology and water conservation" at the Faculty of Biology of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Valentina Todorova has defended PhD thesis in the specialty of "Hydrobiology" at the IO, BAS. During her professional career, Valentina Todorova had been head of department "Marine Biology and Ecology", deputy director of scientific research of the IO, BAS, and head of an expert group on the Black Sea biodiversity. Dr. Todorova is the supervisor of a PhD student, who, according to the submitted report, was dismissed with the right to defense. As an expert hydrobiologist, Dr. Todorova periodically prepares reports devoted to the assessments of the ecological status of the Black Sea, as a part of the obligations of IO, BAS to implement the monitoring programs for marine waters, according to the national and European regulations. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Todorova performs consulting activities and participates in advisory bodies and working groups to ministries and other national and international authorities.

General description of the presented documents

Valentina Todorova has presented a total of 29 titles - 28 scientific articles and one chapter of a co-authored book, in the current competition for the academic position of "professor". Of these, 10 publications are in scientific journals included in Q1, three each are in Q2 and Q3, seven are in Q4, and 5 have been indexed in databases Web of Science and Scopus. Dr. Todorova is the first author in five publications, Apart from the reference made for compliance with the minimum national and IO-BAS requirements, 18 more publications are presented that are not included in Web of Science and Scopus, as well as selected scientific and technical reports. An extremely good impression is made by the significant share of scientific articles published in prestigious international journals which belong to the first two quartiles (Q1 and Q2). Valentina's scientific works have been cited in 337 publications. It should be emphasized here that only one article dedicated to the vulnerability and conservation status of European seabed biotopes was cited 82 times. The current reference in Scopus shows that Valentina Todorova has a total of 549 citations and H-index 12, and in Web of Science 391 citations and H-index 10 respectively.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Valentina Todorova manages and participates in the development and implementation of research projects, contracts and tasks related to national and international priority activities, which are carried out by the IO-BAS. In the period 2011-2022, Valentina participated in 15 international scientific projects (in three of them as the head of a team of IO-BAS) with one personal participation, as well as in 14 national scientific projects (in two of them as a team leader), with two personal participations. Dr. Todorova is the winner of the Varna Award for 2018, which she received as a head of the scientific project "Study of Marine Environment and Improvement of Monitoring Programs developed under the Maritime Strategy Framework Directive".

Achievements and contributions

Valentina Todorova's contributions are systematized and detailed in three main fields - scientific, methodical and scientific-applied. They are dedicated to the biodiversity, structure and functioning of the benthic communities in the Black Sea, development of the indicator systems for the ecological status evaluation of the Black Sea waters, development of the methodological standards for the harmonized implementation of European legislation in the field of biodiversity, waters and marine environment, mapping and modeling of benthic habitats in the Black Sea, development of scientific and methodological foundations for marine spatial planning and for the protection of marine nature through connected networks of marine protected areas. An important methodical contribution is the writing and editorial activity carried out by Valentina in the preparation of the „Black Sea Guide for Monitoring and Assessment“. A substantial scientific-applied

contribution is the classification systems developed for marine waters assessment, through a biological quality element macrosoobenthos. The proposed evaluation scales are included in Regulation H-4/2013 for characterization of the surface waters, by its amendments in 2021.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to express my satisfaction with the impressive and quality scientific production and activities of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Valentina Todorova. She has proven broad-spectrum professional competences and skills as a researcher and as an expert in the field of hydrobiology and marine ecology.

The candidate's scientific production not only corresponds, but significantly exceeds the national scientometric indicators for the occupation of the academic position "professor", defined in the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and Regulations on its implementation. The presented documents/materials also meet the minimum criteria set out in the Rules on the terms and conditions for the requirements of educational and scientific degrees and for the occupation of academic position at the IO, BAS

In view of the above, **I recommend to the respected scientific jury to propose to the scientific council of IO, BAS to elect Assoc. Prof. Dr. Valentina Todorova on academic position "Professor", higher education area 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics, Professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, Scientific specialty "Hydrobiology".**

Sofia, 28.02.2023 г.

Member of scientific jury:

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Varadinova)