

OPINION

By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vesela V. Evtimova

Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IBER-BAS)

Of a dissertation entitled

„Zooplankton as a bioindicator of ecological status of standing water bodies “,

presented for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in scientific field of Hydrobiology, code 01.06.11, professional field 4.3. Biological sciences, higher education field 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics

by Monika Atanasova Subeva,

Full-time PhD student with the Department of Aquatic Ecosystems, IBER-BAS

This opinion is prepared in accordance with article 9 of The regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and for occupying academic positions in IBER-BAS, voted by the SC on 22.07.2014, last additional amendment from 25.11.2022 and in compliance with Order № 18/ 26.01.2024 by the Director of IBER-BAS and in relation to the decisions of the Scientific Council (SC) of IBER-BAS, Protocol № 41/04.04.2025, article 3 and of the Scientific Jury from its first meeting, held on 25.04.2025.

Monika Subeva graduated with a Master degree from the programme “Applied hydrobiology and aquacultures” of the Department of General and Applied Hydrobiology, Faculty of Biology, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. She defended in her Master thesis on “Macroinvertebrate fauna of Atanasovsko Lake” in 2015. A few months later, in January 2016, she enrolled as a full-time PhD student at IBER-BAS. Monika was discharged with the right to defend her thesis in compliance with the decision of SC of IBER-BAS, Protocol № 16/06.05.2020 and Order № 37/10.05.2020 by the Director of IBER-BAS.

Monika’s professional development (within the ten years after her graduation and during her PhD studies) is in the field of hydrobiology, focusing on zooplankton and macroinvertebrates, as well as exploring environmental factors, quantification of primary production, assessment and monitoring of surface water bodies, based on various quality elements. She is a popular partner sought for scientific and applied projects and tasks. A testimony of the above is her participation in 16 projects/ tasks with colleagues from IBER, SU, etc.

The PhD thesis of Monika Subeva is presented under the form of four bound scientific papers. She is the first author of all four papers, two of which are published in journals in WoS (Acta Zoologica Bulgarica and Ecologia Balkanica), while one is in a journal with impact factor. The remaining publications are in Annuaire de l’Université de Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski” Faculte de Biologie and Journal of BioScience and Biotechnology. Monika has also presented two presentations

and two posters related to the topic of her dissertation (for all of them, Monica is the first author). At the beginning of 2025, one more presentation (Monica is the second author) and 1 poster (Monica is the first author) have been presented. They have not been included in her assessment according to the credit system at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The total number of credits collected amounts to 402 points, with a required minimum of 250 points.

It is noteworthy that all 322 (325?) samples processed during the preparation of the dissertation were collected and processed personally by/with the participation of the doctoral student, in which she has demonstrated independence and diligence. Monica also has participated in the preparation for and the analysis of the results. Colleagues from the department assisted during the various stages. Nonetheless, my impression of the process of drafting the dissertation gives me the reason to state that it is the original work of the doctoral student.

Some (technical) inaccuracies have been made, which do not detract from the work done. In order to avoid them, I recommend that the PhD student, in her future scientific work, plans enough time for presenting and summarising the scientific results, as well as for their verification.

All the provided information and namely the publications in specialised journals, participation in scientific forums and courses, the literary awareness and the mastered methods for field and chamber work, the demonstrated independence are proof that Monika Subeva is, to a large extent, able to conduct independent research and her dissertation work is a serious contribution in the study of zooplankton in the assessment of water bodies in Bulgaria.

The PhD thesis meets the requirements of the Law on the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the Regulations for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions in IBER-BAS.

Given the above, I will vote in favour and propose to the honourable jury to award Monika Subeva the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

Sofia, 27 June 2025

Signature:

(Assoc. Prof. Vesela Evtimova)