

OPINION

on the dissertation work of doctoral student Nina Vancheva on the topic “Taxonomic revision of the genus *Gyrodactylus* (Monopisthocotyla: Gyrodactylidae) in freshwater fishes in Bulgaria” (regular form of education, doctoral program “Parasitology and Helminthology”) by Prof. Boyko B. Georgiev, scientific supervisor of the doctoral student

According to Art. 9 (16) of the *Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and for Holding Academic Positions at the Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences*, if the supervisor is a member of the jury for the assessment of the dissertation, his report has the character of the supervisor's opinion and is mainly focused on the qualities demonstrated by the student during the doctoral studies. The opinion of the scientific supervisor (scientific consultant) does not assess the nature of the scientific contributions.

I have known Nina Vancheva since her Master's degree education in parasitology at the Faculty of Biology of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (2013-2015). At that time, I was impressed by her curiosity and interest in the parasitological topic, as well as her excellent command of the English language. Therefore, I invited her to participate in the work of our research group as a supporting biologist and, at the same time, to develop a thesis in our section. After successfully graduating as MSc, she successfully passed the entrance exam for a doctoral student in Parasitology and Helminthology in 2016 and began the development of her doctoral studies. The results of these studies are now presented to the attention of the scientific jury. The reasons for choosing the fish-parasitology topic were related to the need to strengthen the thematic direction after the completion of the active professional career of specialists from previous generations working in the same field.

During her studies as a doctoral student, Nina Vancheva demonstrated important personal qualities and acquired skills that are a prerequisite for a successful scientific career. The most important of them I would point out are:

- Good basic general biological training, acquired both during her previous education and during her doctoral studies. Key to her successful work were knowledge in the fields of zoology, ichthyology, ecology, evolutionary biology, taxonomy and biogeography.
- Excellent foreign language training.

- Skills to use scientific literature, to analyze and summarize it as well as to subject it to critical analysis.

- Skills to prepare scientific projects, which allowed her to receive additional funding for her projects within the framework of the National Scientific Program "Young Scientists and Post-Doctoral Students".

- Methodological skills for collecting and morphological analysis of monogeneans.

- Skills for molecular analysis of parasitic worms, acquired under the mentorship of the scientific consultant Dr. Anelia Bobeva.

- Skills for preparing and presenting scientific reports.

In my opinion, the results of the research included in the dissertation are excellent. They bring the knowledge about the species of the genus *Gyrodactylus* in freshwater fish in Bulgaria to a modern state and are a good basis for further developments with the application of both morphological and molecular approaches.

I cannot fail to note the qualities of Nina Vancheva manifested in the publication of the articles on the topic of the dissertation in leading parasitological journals – Parasitology Research (WoS Q3-2020), Acta Parasitologica (WoS Q2-2024) and Parasitologia (WoS Q3-2024). These journals provided competent review, obviously by experienced experts in the group to which the dissertation is dedicated. The discussion between the reviewers and the authors (on our part – especially in the person of the doctoral student as a specialist in the group) was at a high professional level. This gave me additional reasons to once again be convinced that Vancheva has achieved remarkable professional taxonomic competence in parasites of the genus *Gyrodactylus*.

Based on the above, I give a positive assessment of the dissertation research and call on the members of the scientific jury to support the awarding of the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" to Nina Vancheva.

18 December 2025

Signature:

Boyko B. Georgiev
Professor, PhD, DSc