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OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vladislav Stanislavov Vergilov (IBER-BAS)

regarding the competition for the academic position of **Associate Professor** in Field 4.3 "Biological Sciences," scientific specialty "Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation," for the Department of "Ecosystem Research, Ecological Risk, and Conservation Biology" at IBER-BAS; initiated by a Decision of the Scientific Council of IBER-BAS (Minutes No. 60 dated 18.09.2026, Item 10) and announced in the State Gazette, Issue 69 dated 31.07.2026; with candidate **Dr. Emiliya Dimitrova Vacheva**

Dr. Emilia Dimitrova Vacheva is the sole candidate in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the field of Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation. The candidate was born on December 2, 1989, in the city of Montana. She obtained a Master's degree in 2014, and in 2021, she successfully defended her Doctoral dissertation in Vertebrate Zoology at the National Museum of Natural History (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences). Her thesis was titled "R*elationships among representatives of three lizard families – Anguidae, Lacertidae, and Scincidae (Reptilia: Sauria) – regarding their spatial and trophic niches in Western Bulgaria.*" In 2021, she was appointed as an Assistant, and since 2022, she has held the position of Chief Assistant in the Department of Ecosystem Research, Ecological Risk, and Conservation Biology at the Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences).

The candidate's scientific career focuses on the study of the diversity, distribution, biology, and ecology of amphibians and reptiles in Bulgaria and the Balkan Peninsula. He has participated in **10 scientific and applied-scientific projects**, with his work extending to other countries, including Greece, the Republic of North Macedonia, and Serbia. The candidate successfully collaborates not only with leading scientists within the country but also with established experts from prestigious scientific institutions in Europe.

The candidate's scientific output comprises over **40 research publications** in prestigious, peer-reviewed journals. For the current competition, Dr. Vacheva has submitted **31 full-text research papers**, all of which are indexed in Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus. **Ten** of these publications fall under **Indicator C4** (*habilitation work—research publications in outlets that*

are peer-reviewed and indexed in internationally recognized scientific databases), while **21** fall under **Indicator D7** (*research publications in outlets that are peer-reviewed and indexed in internationally recognized scientific databases—specifically Web of Science and Scopus—excluding the habilitation work*). This body of work exceeds the national criteria, the criteria set by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS), and the criteria established by the Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research (IBER) for the academic position of Associate Professor.

Among the journals in which Dr. Vacheva's works for this competition have been published are prestigious international publications—such as the *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society*, *Molecules*, *Applied Microbiology*, *Salamandra*, and *Herpetozoa*. These are recognized among zoologists and ecologists as journals with high scientific standards, publishing research findings that have a significant impact on the contemporary development of zoology.

The candidate has submitted a list of **83 citations** of her scientific works, all of which have an Impact Factor (IF) or SJR index. These metrics characterize Dr. Emilia Vacheva as a productive researcher whose work has gained significant recognition within the scientific community. In her research, she employs a diverse range of methods, combining traditional approaches with innovative techniques from fields such as biology, ecology, morphology, microbiology, and population ecology, among others.

I accept the summary of scientific contributions presented by Dr. Vacheva in connection with the competition. As her habilitation work, she presents **10** studies in the fields of lizard distribution, population ecology, physiology, and diet; she is the leading author on eight of these. These studies are characterized by their broad scope, interdisciplinary approach, and the significance of the results obtained. They have gained recognition within the international scientific community and have been cited numerous times.

Other strengths in Dr. Vacheva's professional development should also be noted: her active involvement in various national scientific and applied-science projects, her participation in diverse educational activities for children and university students, as well as her engagement in various nature conservation initiatives and events.

The provided documentation demonstrates that the candidate exceeds the minimum required values for the scientometric indicators necessary for the academic position of Associate Professor, in accordance with the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring

Academic Degrees and Occupying Academic Positions at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS).

I have no critical remarks regarding the materials submitted for the competition.

I would also like to mention that I have known Dr. Vacheva personally for 20 years. We have collaborated on various projects and research studies, including two large-scale initiatives focused on mapping and monitoring the country's biodiversity. I am a co-author of three of the publications the candidate has submitted for this competition.

Based on her scientific achievements, my personal experience working with her within the same department, and our collaboration on numerous scientific and applied research projects, I consider Dr. E. Vacheva to be a highly capable, well-prepared, and industrious scientist who has made significant contributions to both science and nature conservation. I believe that her appointment as an Associate Professor will have a positive impact on the research conducted within the Department of Ecosystem Research, Ecological Risk, and Conservation Biology.

In conclusion, holding the candidate's scientific work and professional qualities in the highest regard, and based on all the points presented above, I provide a positive assessment and firmly support the appointment of Dr. Emiliya Dimitrova Vacheva as Associate Professor in Ecology for the Section of Community Ecology and Conservation Biology at the IBER-BAS.

November 10, 2026
Sofia

Signature:

/Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vladislav Vergilov (IBER-BAS)/