

## Opinion

Prof. Dr. Vasil Kostadinov Manov, DVM,

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Forestry University - Sofia, field of higher education 6.0.  
Agrarian Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, professional field 6.4. Veterinary Medicine,  
scientific specialty "Animal Pathology", member of the Scientific Jury, according to order No.  
NO-05-05-12/21.10.2025 of the Director of IEMPAM-BAS

**Subject:** Competition for the position of Professor in the scientific specialty "Parasitology and Invasive Diseases of Animals and Humans", field of higher education "Agrarian Sciences and Veterinary Medicine", professional field 6.4. Veterinary Medicine, announced for the needs of the "Experimental Parasitology" section at IEMPAM-BAS.

In the competition for professor, announced in the State Gazette, issue 81/03.10.2025, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Stancheva Panayotova-Pencheva, DVM, Section "Experimental Parasitology" - IEMPAM-BAS participated as the only candidate.

### General characteristics of the candidate's activities

#### Scientific and research activities

The total number of scientific works of Assoc. Prof. Panayotova is 106, of which: 10 are in connection with the dissertation for the acquisition of the ONS "Doctor", 30 are related to the competition for associate professor and 12 are popular science.

In the current competition, she participates with 54 scientific publications, which do not repeat those presented in previous procedures. The number of scientific works published in journals with IF or SJR is 32, of which in editions with quartiles Q1 – 6, Q2 – 10, Q3 – 8 and Q4 – 8. The total IF of the publications is 22.328, the individual – 9.729, and in the competition for professor – the total IF is 11.855, and the individual – 3.218.

The personal contribution of the candidate is undeniable. There are 18 independent publications, and 30 collective publications in which she is the lead author.

The achieved scientific results have found a positive response among the specialists in the field. As a result of the prepared reference, a total of 308 citations were found, of which 168 are in journals, referenced and indexed in Web of Science/ Scopus with IF/SJR, and 56 are in dissertations and scientific theses abroad.

### **Assessment of compliance with the minimum required points by group of indicators**

According to indicator 1 (group A), the candidate has 50 points out of 50 required for a dissertation work for PhD degree. According to indicator 2 (group B) - 0 points out of 0 required. According to indicators from group C, a habilitation work is presented - 11 scientific publications (not less than 10) in publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases. The number of points collected is 208 with a requirement of 100 points. According to indicators from group D - 264.50 points out of 200 required. Of these, 123.74 points were obtained from 14 scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases, and the rest - from articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review and in edited collective volumes. The number of points for indicators from group D is 2520 points, obtained from 168 citations (in publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus), with a requirement of 100 points. For indicators from group E, the requirement is for 100 points, and the candidate collects 155 points from supervising a successfully defended doctoral student and participation in projects.

The total number of points obtained by groups of indicators is 3197.50, with a minimum national requirement of 550 points.

From the information presented, it can be summarized that, according to the required indicators, Assoc. Prof. Panayotova meets and significantly exceeds the requirements of the Law on the Qualification of Teachers of the Republic of Bulgaria and those of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, necessary for occupying the position of Professor.

### *Analysis and character of scientific contributions*

The candidate's scientific output is summarized in five main areas: 1) Etiology and distribution of parasitoses; 2) Epidemiology of parasitoses; 3) Immunity, pathogenesis and pathomorphology of parasitoses; 4) Control of parasitoses; 5) Bee pathology and bee products.

The scientific contributions from these studies are related to veterinary parasitology: species composition, distribution, hosts of parasites in domestic and wild animals, morphology and taxonomy of parasites, biological features of the causative agents of parasitoses, epidemiology, pathogenesis, pathomorphology and control of various parasitoses.

In her research, Assoc. Prof. Panayotova uses not only classical (parasitological autopsy, light microscopy, scanning electron microscopy, drawing of microscopic objects, etc.), but also a number of modern methods such as: computer morphometry, PCR analyses and molecular phylogenetics.

In conclusion, it can be summarized that most of Assoc. Prof. Panayotova's contributions are original and have a fundamental and scientifically applied nature, which is proof of the significance of the achieved results.

#### *Participation in scientific forums and projects*

Assoc. Prof. Panayotova has presented her scientific results at a number of national and international forums. She has delivered 40 reports and participated with 25 posters.

The candidate's scientific activity is funded by a significant number of projects - 17, financed mainly by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Education and Science. She participates in the competition with four of them, two of which she is the head of: "Parasites in domestic and wild carnivores from Slovakia and Bulgaria in the era of global changes" - bilateral project between the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Slovak Academy of Sciences (2018-2020) and "Integrative taxonomic approach to studying the etiology of helminthiasis in wild animals in Bulgaria and Lithuania" - bilateral project between the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (2025-2027). Both projects are funded under the EBR (BAS).

#### Teaching and expert activity

Assoc. Prof. Panayotova was a part-time lecturer at the Department of "Infectious Pathology, Technology and Control of Food of Animal Origin" of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Sofia in the disciplines: Parasitology - from 1998 to 2015 and Game Diseases - from 2011 to 2015.

She was the supervisor of a doctoral student Vasilena Dakova, who successfully defended her dissertation in 2020 on the topic: "Studies of parasitoses in wild animals in Bulgaria", specialty "Parasitology and invasive diseases of animals and humans".

The candidate has participated in 12 scientific juries in procedures for scientific degrees and academic positions. She has reviewed 48 scientific articles and projects. She was a guest editor

of a special issue of the Journal of Zoological and Botanical Gardens on the topic "The Long-Standing Problem of Parasitic Diseases in Zoo Animals: Current Challenges and Searching for Solutions" and editor of a book-reprint.

### **Critical remarks and recommendations**

I have no critical remarks regarding the materials submitted for the application. I recommend that Assoc. Prof. Panayotova continue her research in the field of parasitology and I believe that she has undoubted potential to supervise more doctoral students, as well as to continue to participate in teaching students in the scientific specialty.

### **Conclusion**

Assoc. Prof. Panayotova participated convincingly in the competition with a completely sufficient scientific output. The results of her research, published in a number of prestigious journals, are of real practical applicability. She is an experienced and erudite researcher, with high competence in the field of parasitology and without a doubt fully meets the criteria for holding the academic position of professor, set out in the ZRASRB and the Regulations of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for its implementation.

All this gives me reason to confidently support the candidacy of **Assoc. Prof. Mariana Stancheva Panayotova-Pencheva** for "**PROFESSOR**" in the scientific specialty "Parasitology and Invasive Diseases of Animals and Humans", Professional Direction 6.4. Veterinary Medicine, Field of Higher Education "Agrarian Sciences and Veterinary Medicine".

03.02.2026

Prof. Vasil Manov, PhD...

