

TO THE CHAIR OF THE
SCIENTIFIC JURY BY ORDER No.
NO-05-05-12/21.10.2025 OF THE
DIRECTOR OF IEMPAM-BAS

OPINION

**by Assoc. Prof. Ivelin Angelov Vladov, PhD
for the competition for the academic position of Professor**

Competition for the academic position of Professor in the scientific field of "*Parasitology and Invasive Diseases of Animals and Humans*" (code 04.03.07), field of higher education 6. Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, professional direction 6.4. Veterinary Medicine, announced for the needs of the Experimental Parasitology section at IEMPAM-BAS in State Gazette No. 81/03.10.2025 and Order No. NO-05-05-12/21.10.2025.

Candidate: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Stancheva Panayotova-Pencheva

GENERAL INFORMATION

This opinion is prepared in full compliance with the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and the Regulations of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Panayotova-Pencheva is the only candidate in the competition.

The documentation is complete, well structured, and clearly organized. It allows an objective evaluation of her research and teaching activity.

EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC DEGREE

Assoc. Prof. Panayotova-Pencheva graduated in Veterinary Medicine in 1995 from the Higher Institute of Zootechnics and Veterinary Medicine in Stara Zagora (now Trakia University). She graduated with excellent results.

In 2009, she defended a PhD dissertation entitled "Etiological, Epizootological and Pathomorphological Studies on Protostrongylidosis in Domestic and Wild Ruminants in Bulgaria." She was awarded the degree "Doctor."

PROFESSIONAL CAREER

Her entire academic career is linked to IEMPAM-BAS. Her professional career began in 1995 as a specialist veterinarian, progressing through the positions of research associate III, II, and I. Since June 2014, she has held the position of Associate Professor. She has more than 30 years of professional experience in the field.

TEACHING ACTIVITY

The candidate has solid experience as an honorary lecturer at the Forestry University (LTU) in Sofia. She has participated in the preparation of three self-assessment reports for accreditation of the doctoral program in Parasitology at IEMPAM-BAS.

SCIENTIFIC OUTPUT

General indicators

For this competition, the candidate presents 54 scientific publications. These are different from those used for her PhD and Associate Professor procedures.

Thirty-two papers are published in journals indexed in Web of Science or Scopus with IF or SJR as follows: Q1 - 6, Q2 - 10, Q3 - 8, and Q4 - 8. The total impact factor is 22.328. Her individual impact factor is 9.729.

Research Areas

The candidate's research activity covers five main areas:

- Etiology and distribution of parasitic diseases
- Epidemiology
- Immunity, pathogenesis, and pathomorphology
- Control of invasive diseases
- Bee pathology and bee products, with focus on *Varroa destructor*, *Nosema apis*, and *Nosema ceranae*

Scientific Recognition

She is Guest Editor of the special issue "*The Long-Standing Problem of Parasitic Diseases in Zoo Animals: Current Challenges and Searching for Solutions*" in the Journal of Zoological and Botanical Gardens (2025). This confirms her international recognition.

Citations and scientific impact

Her publications have received over 300 citations. A total of 168 citations are in refereed and indexed databases (Web of Science and Scopus). Currently, Assoc. Prof. Panayotova-Pencheva has an h-index of 8, which is an objective indicator of her scientific influence.

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

The contributions presented are of fundamental and applied importance for veterinary parasitology:

- **Scientific and theoretical contributions:** New parasitic species and new hosts have been identified in the country. Of particular significance is the registration of the eye nematode *Thelazia callipaeda* in new wild predators - the sable (*Martes zibellina*) and the lynx (*Lynx lynx*). Precise morphometric descriptions of 22 parasitic species have been made, including first descriptions of the larval stages of a number of protostrongylids.
- **Scientific and applied contributions:** An original method for preparing permanent microscopic preparations of parasites in lung tissue has been developed. In the field of beekeeping, effective methods for controlling varroasis through the application of thymol and organic acids (formic and oxalic) have been proposed.
- **Methodological contributions:** An integrative taxonomic approach has been applied to clarify the etiology of helminthiasis in wild animals, combining morphological and molecular biological methods.

PROJECT ACTIVITY

She has participated in 17 research projects. In this procedure, she presents 8 national and 4 international projects. She coordinated two bilateral projects under EBR:

- with Slovakia (2018-2020) on parasites in carnivorous animals
- with Lithuania (2025-2027) focused on integrative taxonomy of helminths in wild animals.

She has presented 40 oral reports and 25 posters at scientific forums.

SUPERVISION

Assoc. Prof. Panayotova-Pencheva supervised one PhD student Vasilena Dakova who successfully defended in 2020.

ACADEMIC SERVICE

The candidate is an active participant in academic life as a member of the Scientific Council of IEMPAM-BAS and the Management Board of the Bulgarian Parasitological Society. Her expert activity is impressive - 48 reviews of scientific articles and projects. She has participated in 12 scientific juries.

FULFILLMENT OF NATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The candidate exceeds the criteria for the position of "professor" at BAS:

Group of indicators	Required points	Actual points
Group A (Dissertation)	50	50
Group B (Habilitation thesis)	10	208
Group D (Scientific publications)	200	264.5
Group D (Citations)	100	2520
Group E (Projects and doctoral students)	10	155
TOTAL	550	3197.5

The candidate significantly exceeds the minimum national requirements for Professor at BAS. Her total score is 3197.5 points. The required minimum is 550 points. It should be emphasized that, according to the indicators in Group B, the presented habilitation thesis of 11 publications exceeds the requirements by more than two times. In Group D (Citations), she has 2520 points, while the minimum requirement is 100 points. The total number of points is nearly six times above the required minimum.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

There are no critical comments on the materials presented. I recommend that she prepare a monograph summarizing her accumulated research results. I also encourage her to expand supervision of doctoral students. Her scientific profile allows future application for the degree "Doctor of Science."

CONCLUSION

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Panayotova-Pencheva is an established researcher with strong international visibility. She fully meets and substantially exceeds the legal requirements of the ZRASRB and the Regulations of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

I give my unequivocal **POSITIVE ASSESSMENT** and propose that the esteemed Scientific Jury vote on a proposal to the Scientific Council of IEMPAM-BAS for the election of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Stancheva Panayotova-Pencheva to the academic position of **Professor** in the scientific field 04.03.07 "Parasitology and Invasive Diseases of Animals and Humans."

Date: 13.02.2026 Sofia

Prepared by:
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivelin Vladov

A handwritten signature in black ink is written over a red rectangular stamp. The signature is cursive and appears to read "Ivelin Vladov". The stamp is a solid red rectangle.