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Supervisor's report

Simona Georgieva

I first met Simona in 2005 when she applied for a part-time job on one of my projects. I was lucky since she, although just a bachelor student at the time, has become a major "force" and has helped me to identify a huge amount of material of digeneans from mugilids from the Mediterranean and Black seas and the Sea of Japan. She did not have knowledge on the taxonomy of the groups but while making permanent preparations of the many thousands of worms she succeeded impeccably to sort them by species. Two PhD students, one in Spain and one in Bulgaria graduated with this excellently prepared material. Simona then completed her MSc thesis at the Faculty of Biology of the University of Sofia St Kliment Ohridski (Bulgaria) under my supervision. As a student, she was appointed at the Institute for Experimental Pathology and Parasitology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences where she was promoted to a Research Fellow grade 3 after her graduation. In spite of this "flying colours career" I had my reasons to consider this post a waste of her potential.

This is why, after failing to recruit a Czech student to work on our GACR project funded in 2010, we invited her to apply for a PhD study at the University of South Bohemia. The entry exam was, in my opinion, a disaster since she had no time to prepare and her knowledge of English was almost non-existent. I am still grateful to the Committee for giving Simona the chance to pursue a PhD research career with us. I believe that she did her best to show that she was worth the opportunity offered. She became a major member of the "mollusc girls team", attending the extensive sampling and virtually "living" in the lab during the first three years, keeping alive the many thousands of snails in their individual pots while identifying, documenting and fixing all parasites. In 2012 she was also involved in the ECIP project which added to her tasks fish sampling, dissections, documenting, morphometric characterisation and identification of thousands of metacercariae of *Diplostomum* spp. She carried out in parallel the sequencing of the many groups we wanted to cover. Working on both projects also meant meeting strict deadlines for the publication of the results. Meanwhile, Simona was actively teaching BSc and MSc student Jana Zikmundová and many visiting PhD students (I counted 10 in her CV!). She was also keen to contribute to the postdoctoral research of my former PhD students, Ana Pérez-del-Olmo, Isabel Blasco-Costa and Douniazed Marzoug; this resulted in a number of collaborative publications, some not included in the thesis, and there are more to come out shortly. I really do not know how Simona managed all this.

During her study Simona improved substantially her spoken and written English (although further effort is required) and developed a strong background in parasitology and taxonomy of the focal groups of her thesis. She reads widely and shows a good grasp of new concepts even when the issues are complex (e.g. molecular methods in taxonomy, multivariate statistics). Simona is also enthusiastic about learning new skills, mastered quickly and easily new techniques and analytical programs and worked fast and precisely to achieve results. During the development of her PhD research project, she has also shown maturity, initiative and ability to plan and execute the work on her own, and independent thinking. Simona's publication output shows both, an ability to complete a project and work effectively with colleagues. With her pleasant and interactive nature she made a positive contribution to our research team.

To conclude, Simona is a bright, highly motivated, accomplished scientist, at a very young age. Her specific strengths are: dedication, efficiency and responsibility. I am confident that the thesis is of a standard worthy of defending and wish her success in the viva examination and future research career.