
Doc. dr. Angela Balzano, prejemnica svečane listine za mlade visokošolske učiteljice in sodelavke UL

Assistant Professor Dr. Angela Balzano received the Special Commendation for Young Higher Education Teachers and Staff

Maks Merela, Katarina Čufar

Doc. dr. Angela Balzano je v okviru tedna Univerze v Ljubljani 28.11. 2023 prejela Svečano listino za mlade visokošolske učiteljice in učitelje ter visokošolske sodelavke in sodelavce kot priznanje za izjemne pedagoške in raziskovalne dosežke (Teden Univerze, 2023) (slika1, 2).

Doc. dr. Angela Balzano je zaposlena na Oddelku za lesarstvo Biotehniške fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani (OL BF UL). Trenutno opravlja delo asistentke in je habilitirana v naziv docentke za področje Znanost o lesu in lignoceluloznih kompozitih ter tehnologije v lesarstvu. Študij prve in druge stopnje gozdarskih in okoljskih ved je zaključila na Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, v kraju Portici pri Neaplju v Italiji. Na isti univerzi je v letu 2017 zagovarjala tudi doktorsko disertacijo z naslovom "Functional wood traits: xylogenesis, tree rings and intra-annual density fluctuations (IADFs) in Mediterranean species = Funkcionalne lastnosti lesa: ksilogeneza, prirastne plasti in sezonska nihanja gostote (IADF) pri sredozemskih vrstah". Mentorica pri doktoratu je bila prof. dr. Veronica De Micco iz Italije, somentorica pa prof. dr. Katarina Čufar z Univerze v Ljubljani.

Angela Balzano se je že v času študija v Italiji vključila v mednarodno raziskovalno delo. Kot doktorandka je sodelovala pri aktivnostih COST in pridobila več štipendij za izpopolnjevanje v tujini, med drugim tudi na Biotehniški fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani, kjer je za svojo disertacijo opravila velik del laboratorijskih raziskav na področju nastajanja lesa.

Že pred zaključkom doktorskega študija se je kot raziskovalka zaposlila na Oddelku za lesarstvo



Slika 1. Doc. dr. Angela Balzano je prejela svečano listino za mlade visokošolske učiteljice in visokošolske sodelavke Univerze v Ljubljani za leto 2023. Podelil ji jo je rektor Univerze v Ljubljani prof. dr. Gregor Majdič (Foto: Nebojša Tejić in Katja Kodba/STA).
Figure 1. Assistant Professor Dr. Angela Balzano received the 2023 Ceremonial Certificate for Young Higher Education Teachers and Higher Education Associates from the Rector of the University of Ljubljana, Prof. Dr. Gregor Majdič (Photo: Nebojša Tejić in Katja Kodba/STA).

BF na projektih TIGR4Smart (2016–2020) in WOOLF (2018–2021), ki jih je vodil prof. dr. Miha Humar. V okviru projektov je bila vključena v interdisciplinarno in mednarodno sodelovanje na področju trajnostnega in inovativnega gradbeništva za pametne stavbe ter lesa in lesenih izdelkov v celotnem življenjskem ciklu. V raziskave se je vključila kot dobra poznavalka in skrbnica opreme na Katedri za lesne škodljivce, zaščito in modifikacijo lesa. Omenjena oprema vključuje med drugim konfokalni laserski vrstični mikroskop, vrstični elektronski mikroskop z EDX detektorjem ter pripravo GeoPyc 1365 za določanje gostote materialov s pripadajočo opremo za pripravo vzorcev za analize. Razvila je izjemne spretnosti pri pripravi površin in rezin za različne mikroskopske tehnike, vključno s svetlobno mikroskopijo s širokim naborom tehnik.

V času svojega bivanja v Sloveniji se je predano posvetila znanosti in v enaki meri tudi učenju slovenskega jezika. Od leta 2021 deluje na Katedri za tehnologijo lesa, kjer je opravila velik del laboratorijskega dela za disertacijo in raziskave, ki vključuje nastajanje lesa in floema, delovanje kambija ter druge raziskave, ki potekajo na katedri, vključno z raziskavo arheološkega lesa s prazgodovinskih kolišč na Ljubljanskem barju ter raziskavami oglja oz. pooglenelega lesa.

Angela Balzano od leta 2021 vodi vaje pri predmetih Anatomija lesa in Zgradba lesa ter od leta

2022 tudi pri drugih predmetih Katedre za tehnologijo lesa (KTL) na Oddelku za lesarstvo, od leta 2023 pa tudi predmete na študijskih programih Oddelka za gozdarstvo in obnovljive gozdne vire. Pri tem poučuje študentke in študente prve in druge stopnje različnih študijskih programov. Vaje že od začetka opravlja v slovenskem jeziku, študentke in študenti pa so jo za pedagoško delo ocenili z nadpovprečnimi ocenami anket (povprečje študentskih ocen 4,8). Kot mentorica in somentorica je sodelovala že pri več diplomskih in magistrskih delih. Več let je bila neformalna podpornica tujim študentom na izmenjavah ERASMUS. V zadnjem času se je pod njenim (so)mentorstvom na Katedri za tehnologijo lesa izobraževalo več tujih doktorskih študentk in študentov z različnih Univerz v Italiji, na Češkem, Slovaškem in Poljskem. Sodeluje tudi pri promociji študija in je aktivna podpornica kluba alumnov na OL BF UL.

Kot raziskovalka na začetku raziskovalne poti ima zavidljivo znanstveno pot in bibliografijo. V njeni bibliografiji je zavedenih 148 enot (stanje 1. 12. 2023, SICRIS). Kandidatkin dela imajo visoko odmevnost, saj so bila 338-krat citirana, njen H-indeks je 12. Med objavami je 34 izvirnih znanstvenih člankov, od tega 25 v mednarodnih znanstvenih revijah s faktorjem vpliva. Ostali članki so večinoma objavljeni v reviji Les/Wood v angleščini s prevodom ključnih delov v slovenščino. Objavljena dela



Slika 2. Na terenu s študentkami in študenti magistrskega študija lesarstva jeseni 2023.

Figure 2. In the field with Master's students of the Department of Wood Science and Technology in the autumn of 2023.

zaradi kombinacije angleškega in slovenskega jezika s pridom uporablja pri pedagoškem delu.

Za svoje delo je bila tudi večkrat nagrajena. Za doktorsko delo je prejela nagrado Italijanskega botaničnega društva za najboljšo doktorsko disertacijo v letu 2017, ki ji je bila podeljena na generalni skupščini v okviru Botaničnega kongresa v Padovi. Prejela je tudi prestižno Baileyevo nagrado, ki ji jo je podelilo ugledno mednarodno društvo IAWA (International Association of Wood Anatomists) za najboljši znanstveni članek mlade raziskovalke v letu 2019 v reviji IAWA Journal (Čufar, 2019) in nagrado za najboljši poster na srečanju mikroskopistov Slovenije v letu 2022 (Merela, 2022). Vključena je v znanstvena društva kot so IAWA, ATR (Association of Tree Ring Research), Slovensko društvo za mikroskopijo in Slovensko društvo za biologijo rastlin.

Ima izkazano mednarodno sodelovanje v okviru mednarodnih projektov, sodelovanja na konferencah in znanstvenih srečanjih ter gostovanja na tujih univerzah. V zadnjem času je obnovila tesne vezi s svojo matično ustanovo Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, s katero pripravljajo več inovativnih projektov, vzpostavili pa so tudi izmenjave ERASMUS. V Italiji nasploh postaja vse bolj prepoznavna in cenjena.

Glede na navedeno lahko zaključimo, da je doc. dr. Angela Balzano odlična in perspektivna mlada znanstvenica, ki se je izjemno lepo vključila v slovensko družbo in je prepoznavna po odličnem pedagoškem delu, ki ga izvaja v slovenskem jeziku. V študijski proces vnaša nove vaje in pristope k delu. S svojim delom krepi ugled Univerze v Ljubljani v Sloveniji, v svoji domovini Italiji in po svetu.

Veseli nas, da so njene kvalitete prepoznane in ji za prejem svečane listine iskreno čestitamo!

On 28 November 2023, Assistant Professor Angela Balzano was awarded the Special Commendation for Young Higher Education Teachers and Staff during the University of Ljubljana Week in recognition of her outstanding achievements in teaching and research (University Ljubljana Week, 2023).

Angela Balzano works at the Department of Wood Science and Technology, Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana (DWST BF UL). She obtained habilitation in the field of Wood Science and Lignocellulosic Composites and Wood Technology. She completed her first and second degrees in For-



Slika 3. Doc. dr. Angela Balzano po prejemu priznanja.

Figure 3. Assistant Professor Angela Balzano after receiving the award.

estry and Environmental Sciences at the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Portici, near Naples, Italy. In 2017 she defended her doctoral thesis entitled “Functional wood traits: xylogenesis, tree rings and intra-annual density fluctuations (IADFs) in Mediterranean species”. The doctoral thesis was supervised by Prof. Dr. Veronica De Micco from Italy and co-supervised by Prof. Dr. Katarina Čufar from the University of Ljubljana.

Angela Balzano was already involved in international research during her studies in Italy. As a doctoral student, she took part in COST activities and received several scholarships for advanced training abroad, including at BF UL, where she carried out a large part of the laboratory research on wood formation for her dissertation.

Even before completing her doctorate, she worked as a researcher at the DWSL in the TIGR4S-

mart (2016-2020) and WOOLF (2018-2021) projects under the direction of Prof. Dr. Miha Humar. The projects involved interdisciplinary and international collaboration in the field of sustainable and innovative construction for smart buildings, as well as wood and wood products over the entire life cycle. She was involved in the research as a knowledgeable person and equipment manager at the Chair of Wood Pests, Modification and Protection of Wood. This equipment includes a confocal laser scanning microscope, a scanning electron microscope with EDX detector, and a GeoPyc 1365 material density determination kit with associated sample preparation equipment for analysis. Balzano has thus developed exceptional skills in surface and section preparation for a variety of microscopy techniques, including the aforementioned and light microscopy using a wide range of techniques.

During her stay in Slovenia, Balzano dedicated herself to science and equally to learning the Slovenian language. Since 2021, she has been working at the Department of Wood Technology, where she conducted much of the laboratory work for her dissertation and research, including on wood and phloem formation, cambium activity and other ongoing projects, including work on archaeological wood from prehistoric pile dwellings in the Ljubljana marshes and research on charcoal or charred wood.

Balzano teaches courses on Wood Anatomy and Wood Structure and other courses at the Chair of Wood Science (CWS), as well as courses at the Department of Forestry and Renewable Forest Resources. She has been teaching in Slovenian since the very beginning of such work, and receives above average grades from her students (average student grade 4.8, with 5 being the best grade). She has worked as a tutor, co-mentor and mentor on several Bachelor's and Master's theses. She has been an informal tutor for incoming and outgoing ERASMUS exchange students. More recently, Balzano has supervised several PhD students from a number of universities in Italy, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland who visited DWST as part of various exchange programmes. Balzano is also committed to promoting study programmes in the fields of wood science and technology, and is an active supporter of the Alumni Club at DWST.

As a young scholar, Balzano can look back on a remarkable academic career. Her bibliography comprises 148 entries (as of 1 December 2023, SICRIS). Her work has a high impact, having been cited 338 times, with an H-index of 12. Her publications include 34 original scientific articles, 25 of which are in international journals with an impact factor. The remaining articles were mostly published in the journal *Les/Wood* in English, with the most important parts translated into Slovenian. In this way she also contributes to the development of scientific terminology and improves her knowledge of the Slovenian language. The combination of English and Slovenian in her published works makes them particularly useful for students.

Balzano has already received several awards for her work. She received the Italian Botanical Society's prize for the best doctoral thesis in 2017, which was presented to her at the General Assembly of the Botanical Congress in Padua. She also received the prestigious Bailey Prize from the renowned International Association of Wood Anatomists (IAWA) for the best scientific paper by a young researcher in the *IAWA Journal* in 2019 (Čufar, 2019), and the Best Poster Award at the Meeting of Microscopists of Slovenia in 2022 (Merela, 2022). She is a member of scientific societies such as the IAWA, the ATR (Association of Tree Ring Research), the Slovenian Society of Microscopy and the Slovenian Society of Plant Biology.

She has demonstrated her international co-operation through various projects, participation in conferences and scientific meetings and guest lectures at foreign universities. Recently, she has renewed close relations with her parent institution, the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, with which she is currently carrying out several innovative projects and an Erasmus exchange programme. She is increasingly recognised and appreciated by the Italian academic and student community.

In short, Assistant Prof. Angela Balzano is an excellent and promising young scientist who has integrated very well into the Slovenian scientific community and is known for her excellent teaching. She develops new exercises and approaches for the study process. Through her work she enhances the reputation of the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia in both her home country of Italy and around the world.

We are delighted that her qualities have been recognized by the University of Ljubljana, and congratulate her on the honourable mention!

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