Dear Editor,

We are submitting the research article “Blue mussels *Mytilus edulis* L. and *M. trossulus* Gould in sympatry: assessment of ecological niche divergence using species distribution modeling” for your consideration for publication in MEPS.

Twenty years ago we learned that, besides the common mussel *Mytilus edulis* (ME), there was a “cryptic” blue mussel species, *M. trossulus* (MT), in the White Sea (Väinölä & Strelkov 2011). At that time, ecologists considered *M. trossulus* as something understood only by geneticists. Since then, we have proven that ME and MT are separate entities not only genetically but also morphologically (Katolikova et al. 2016). Their ecological separation, however, is something of an enigma, and the mosaic nature of ME and MT distribution at the local scale remains largely unexplained.

In our present study we tried to elucidate this issue using Species Distribution Modeling. Within this approach, numerous environmental predictors potentially governing species distributions are incorporated into a single statistical model. Having applied this approach to extensive field material on ME and MT, we identified the most important environmental factors regulating the distribution of these two mussel species in sympatry.

We hope that our study will be of interest the broad readership of MEPS, considering that ME and MT coexist in many areas of North Atlantic and also that cryptic species are widely distributed in marine habitats. We hope that you will find the manuscript suitable for publication in your journal. VK conceived the study. VK and PS wrote the manuscript. All the authors contributed to sampling and data analyses. All the authors approved the submitted version of the manuscript and agreed to be listed. This manuscript or parts of it have not been published and are not under consideration anywhere. We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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