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Scientific misconduct: the CNRS announces penalties against two senior researchers

In recent months the CNRS has conducted two new disciplinary procedures for scientific misconduct involving two CNRS senior researchers. Patrice Dunoyer was penalized with a demotion in rank, and Olivier Voinnet with an official reprimand.

These two new disciplinary procedures for scientific misconduct involve Olivier Voinnet, a CNRS senior researcher who is currently on temporary assignment at ETH Zurich (Switzerland), and Patrice Dunoyer, a CNRS senior researcher who is currently on temporary assignment at the Secretariat General of South Province, New Caledonia. These procedures follow upon the establishment of a scientific investigative committee that conducted an in-depth examination of the scientific practices and approaches of the two researchers.

These two scientists had already been the subjects of a disciplinary procedure in 2015¹. As a result of the lapses identified at the time, the authors published corrections for the articles that had been called into question. The two procedures from 2018 concern some of these corrections, as well as new publications.

The investigation established that a number of incomplete corrections had been sent to scientific journals, which included previously manipulated images that had not been corrected, along with at least one new manipulation of an image. These lapses, which fall under scientific misconduct, damaged the image of the CNRS, and more broadly that of the overall scientific community.

Following an in-depth examination of the scientific practices and approaches of the two researchers, the disciplinary hearing judged that Patrice Dunoyer's responsibility in this new scientific misconduct had been proven. With regard to Olivier Voinnet, his active participation in fabricating the corrections that were called into question was not established; nevertheless, CNRS management deemed that he could not be cut off from his responsibility as group leader.

By decision of the CNRS President, Patrice Dunoyer was penalized by a demotion in rank, and Olivier Voinnet with an official reprimand.

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¹ See <http://www2.cnrs.fr/en/2593.htm>