

Annual report 2022

Scientific Integrity Committee

Wageningen
University & Research

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1 Preface

The WUR is a large scientific organisation, with a large variety of education and research activities, and many other organisational activities. A lot of things go as they should go, but in a large organisation it is inevitable that not everything goes smoothly, that people get angry and, indeed, people have arguments, fights, and feel seriously hampered in their work.

The Code of Conduct for Research Integrity acknowledges that good science is not only a matter of sound theoretical frameworks and appropriate methodologies, but also requires good social behaviour. Also universities have to acknowledge that the organisation is for too many researchers not the safe place for doing research as it should be.

Yet we should be careful not to use the Code of Conduct for Research Integrity too easily for addressing these issues. This year the Scientific Integrity Committee had three complaints in a row, which we did not handle because we thought they were not primarily research integrity issues. Fortunately, we were supported by LOWI the national research integrity body.

Such an assessment is always difficult to make, as it might suggest that we do not really take such issues seriously. That is not true. We feel always uncomfortable with these cases. But after all the Code of Conduct itself delineates the issue of scientific integrity from labour conflicts, *and*, more importantly, in many respects the internal expertise and processes for dealing with such conflicts are far more appropriate for these issues than ours.

Prof. Barend van der Meulen

Chair Scientific Integrity Committee Wageningen University & Research

2 Handling complaints at Wageningen University & Research

Every person at Wageningen University & Research (WUR) who is involved in any way whatsoever in scientific education and research is individually responsible for monitoring and safeguarding scientific integrity. All academics and researchers at WUR are required to act in accordance with The Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. The principles of good academic teaching and research in terms of scientific integrity are honesty, scrupulousness, transparency, independence and responsibility.

WUR has drawn up a Scientific Integrity Complaints Procedure based on a model obtained from the Universities in the Netherlands ([UNL](#)). It explains the steps that complainants need to take if they suspect an infringement of scientific integrity or of the standards referred to in Paragraph 5.2(B) of the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. The current complaint procedure at WUR entered into force on 30 March 2020.

Official complaints, regardless of whether or not a confidential counsellor has been consulted, can be submitted in writing or by e-mail to the Executive Board of WUR. WUR has appointed a Scientific Integrity Committee (CWI) that will investigate the complaint and present advice to the Executive Board. The CWI consists of an external independent chair and no less than two but preferably three other members. CWI members are appointed for a period of four years. At the end of a term, members may be re-appointed for a subsequent four years.

2.1 Guidelines for handling complaints

The CWI bases its judgement regarding violation of scientific integrity on – but not exclusively – the standards of scientific integrity that are primarily derived from The Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and the Scientific Integrity Complaints Procedure of Wageningen University & Research.

2.2 Information about the CWI and procedures

Information about scientific integrity, the CWI and the complaints procedure can be found on the website of WUR ([Scientific integrity - WUR](#)). This webpage is part of the information on integrity that is presented by the organisation, which also contains information about non-scientific integrity issues such as the Wageningen University & Research Integrity Code and other codes that apply to WUR employees.

2.3 CWI

In 2022, the members of the CWI were:

- Prof. Barend van der Meulen (*chair: professor University of Twente*)
- Prof. Tiny van Boekel (*vice-chair: emeritus professor WUR*)
- Prof. Johan Bouma (*emeritus professor WUR*)
- Prof. Cor van der Weele (*emeritus professor WUR*)

The CWI was supported by two secretaries: Dr Rixt Komduur and Dr Astrid Mars

3 Handled requests and complaints

In 2022, the CWI held four meetings. It completed a request for advice on authorship and presented advice on three complaints.

3.1 Request for advise on the authorship of three manuscripts (2021-01)

On 6 October 2021 the CWI received a request from a journal to advise on the authorship of three single-authored manuscripts submitted to the journal that were based on multi-authored chapters from a dissertation with which a doctoral degree was obtained at Wageningen University. The Executive Board of WUR asked the CWI to advise on the matter. The CWI completed its investigation in 2022 and advised the Executive Board on how to proceed. The Executive Board followed the advice and advised the journal on the situation regarding the authorship of the manuscripts.

3.2 Complaint (2022-01)

On 17 January 2022, the CWI received a complaint. The CWI advised the Executive Board not to handle the complaint as it only concerned a professional difference of opinion. The Executive Board followed the advice and took the provisional decision to declare the complaint to be inadmissible on 8 February 2022. The complainant asked the Netherlands Board on Research Integrity ([LOWI](#)) to present advice on this provisional decision of the Executive Board. The LOWI also concluded that the complaint was inadmissible. On 25 August 2022, the Executive Board took the final decision to declare the complaint to be inadmissible.

3.3 Complaint (2022-02)

On 28 January 2022, the CWI received a complaint. The CWI noticed that the complaint was incomplete as it did not include a clear description of the suspected infringement of scientific integrity and was not accompanied by relevant written documents or other evidence. The CWI afforded the complainant the opportunity to supplement the required information, which was received on 4 February 2022. The CWI reviewed the supplemented complaint and concluded that it was not made clear nor substantiated why the accusation would qualify as an infringement of scientific integrity. The CWI, therefore, advised the Executive Board not to handle the complaint. The Executive Board followed the advice and took the provisional decision to declare the complaint to be inadmissible on 24 February 2022. The complainant did not ask the LOWI to present advice on this provisional decision of the Executive Board. On 4 July 2022, the Executive Board took the final decision to declare the complaint to be inadmissible.

3.4 Complaint (2022-03)

On 8 March 2022, the CWI received a complaint. The CWI advised the Executive Board not to handle the complaint as it was primarily a labour dispute. The Executive Board followed the advice and took the provisional decision to declare the complaint to be inadmissible on 11 April 2022. On 13 April 2022 the complainant asked the board to revise its decision on the basis of the principle of justification as, according to complainant, the complaint also concerned a suspicion of infringement of scientific integrity. The Board decided to consider the complainant's request and asked the CWI to issue additional advice.

The CWI concluded that the complaint could not qualify as an infringement of scientific integrity as outlined in the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. The CWI, therefore, advised the Executive Board not to handle the complaint. The Executive Board followed the additional advice and took the provisional decision to declare the complaint to be inadmissible on 9 May 2022. The complainant asked the LOWI to present advice on this provisional decision of the Executive Board. The LOWI also concluded that the complaint was inadmissible as it concerns a labour dispute and does not qualify as an

infringement of scientific integrity. On 4 July 2022, the Executive Board took the final decision to declare the complaint to be inadmissible.

4 Other activities of the CWI

4.1 Symposium

On 31 March 2022, Rixt Komduur and Barend van der Meulen attended a symposium organized by the Netherlands Research Integrity Network (NRIN) for CWI chairs and secretaries. Current affairs regarding the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, case histories and recent developments and activities in the field of scientific integrity were discussed.

4.2 Symposium

On 23 September 2022, Astrid Mars and Rixt Komduur attended the symposium 'How to foster responsible research practices' and the Valedictorian lecture 'Why research integrity matters' of prof. Lex Bouter.

4.3 Conference

On 5 October 2022, Astrid Mars attended the 'Conference on promoting academic integrity, organised by the Erasmus University Rotterdam in partnership with the Council of Europe Best Practice Programme on Promoting Academic Integrity.

4.4 Symposium

On 11 October 2022, Rixt Komduur and Barend van der Meulen attended a symposium organized by the NRIN for CWI chairs and secretaries where the number of cases handled by the LOWI, media attention for issues of scientific integrity, case histories and retractions were discussed.

4.5 Symposium

On 27 October 2022, Astrid Mars attended the symposium 'Ethics & integrity education in development: moving towards evidence-based education' and the inaugural lecture 'Hear, See and Speak up' of Prof. Mariëtte van den Hoven.