

Meeting with Researchers of the Section

Section 6 du Comité national



17 November 2024

Plan

Who does What?

The Section

Criteria and Recommendations

Activities

- Evaluation of Researchers

- Evaluation of Research Units

- Promotions

- Entrance Competition

- Miscellaneous

Internal Operating Procedures

Questions?

The direction of the lab

- A director, one or several deputy directors, an administrative head, in charge of the CNRS research lab
- Accompanied by an administrative and technical team
- Unique point of contact for the different organisms (CNRS + university, Inria, etc.) involved in the lab
- To be contacted for:
 - your immediate work environment (office, team, etc.)
 - direct advice on your career evolutions
 - first-level contact for all administrative and technical aspects (work trips, information about eligible expenses, etc.)
 - signing off on many aspects of your work life (approving a trip, an expense, vacation days, etc.)
- Often specific procedures, contact persons, put in place by the lab
- Also can contact your team leader, the leader of your department or pole in larger labs, for some of these

The regional delegation

- 17 CNRS offices across France, covering different regions
- Each headed by a regional delegate
- Various administrative staff, covering HR, finances, project management, trip management, transfer, etc.
- To be contacted for:
 - All HR concerns (salary, medical leave, part-time work, etc.)
 - Second-level contact for all administrative aspects **managed by CNRS** (e.g., for grants managed by CNRS, not other organisms)

CNRS InformatICS

- One of the 10 institutes of CNRS, formerly known as INS2I
- One director (Adeline Nazarenko), several deputy directors and other scientific staff, administrative staff
- One specific deputy director in charge of each lab (ask your lab direction who this is)
- To be contacted for:
 - Change of lab
 - Expatriation projects in CNRS labs abroad
 - Major career evolutions, strategic career decisions
 - Discussions about positioning within CNRS

The section

- **Independent of CNRS** and of its institutes
- Scientific evaluation and career oversight of CNRS researchers (or candidates for a CNRS position)
- Scientific evaluation of CNRS research units in areas relevant to the section
- Part of the **National Committee for Scientific Research (CoNRS)**, together with the Scientific Advisory Board, the Scientific Advisory Boards of each institute, Interdisciplinary Commissions and other Sections
- National role that sometimes goes beyond CNRS, notably by the writing-up of a situation report
- **Almost always: purely advisory** role, decisions not necessarily followed by CNRS (but they still are most of the time)
- **Exception:** the section forms the admissibility jury for CNRS competitions and decides on a list of admissible candidates

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Section representatives

- 14 elected members, in 5 colleges
 - A1: 3 DR CNRS
 - A2: 3 PU or DR from other EPSTs (Inria, etc.)
 - B1: 3 CR CNRS
 - B2: 2 MCF or CR from other EPSTs
 - C: 3 CNRS administrative and technical staff
- 7 appointed members (A1 & A2): proposed by CNRS Informatics to the Ministry, so as to complete topical coverage of elected members
- In practice: no distinction between elected and appointed members in day-to-day operations
- Renewed every 4 years

Board

- 1 president, who facilitates and moderates discussions (except in case of conflict of interest)
- 1 scientific secretary, who records session minutes and organizes the schedule of sessions
- 3 other members

The board prepares the section's work before every session and jury meeting (e.g., assigning dossiers to reviewers)

Scientific topics

- “Symbolic, discrete aspects” of computer science (“numeric aspects” are covered by section 7)
- In particular:
 - Algorithms, combinatorics, discrete structures, graphs
 - Computing (scientific computing, computer algebra, HPC)
 - Programming and software sciences, computer science logics
 - Networks and distributed systems
 - Artificial intelligence (in part); management, representation, and mining of data
 - Operations research, decision theory
 - Cybersecurity
 - Quantum computing
 - Bioinformatics

Boundaries of the section: CID

- In addition to sections, **Interdisciplinary Commissions (CID)** cover interdisciplinary research topics
- A researcher in section 6 can be co-evaluated by a CID; CR and DR2 positions are open in CIDs (any researcher can apply to such a position, when topically relevant)
- CIDs most relevant to section 6:
 - CID 51. Interfaces with life sciences (in particular, bioinformatics)
 - CID 53. Interfaces with social sciences (in particular, digital humanities, societal impact of computer research, legal, political, or sociological aspects)
 - CID 55. Experimental sciences and their data

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Section criteria

- The section has defined a list of criteria used for scientific evaluation of dossiers
- See <https://cn6.fr/documents/criteria.pdf>
- These criteria are occasionally updated to make some points precise
- Reading strongly recommended to interested parties (researchers evaluated by the section, candidates to CNRS competition)

General principles

- No criterion is absolutely required, except for scientific output
- We are committed to **non-discriminatory** evaluation and preserving diversity of profiles
- We can take into account **specifics** of every person's situation (handicap, long illnesses, family situation, ethical positioning) which may impact their activity, if the section is informed (but of course no obligation to communicate these elements)

Scientific output: Software, benchmarks, etc.

- Software and experimental production considered valuable output
- Elements taken into account: audience, originality, maturity, maintenance level, distribution; amount of implication in the design, implementation, maintenance, management
- Must be disseminated (either as open source, or by a documented industrial transfer)
- Possible to use an auto-evaluation form such as <https://cn6.fr/documents/logiciels-csi-ins2i.pdf>

Scientific visibility

- Invitation to conferences, international schools, or prestigious workshops
- Participation in program committees and editorial boards
- Participation in PhD committees, especially abroad
- Awards and distinctions
- Scientific expertise reports
- Prestigious grants (e.g., ERCs)

Collaborations

- Scientific collaborations
- Setting up and coordinating projects
- Participation in local, national, or international collaborative research projects
- Participation in pluri-, inter-, or trans-disciplinary research projects

Research administration (major tasks)

- Participation to national instances for scientific council and evaluation (CNU, CoNRS, CE Inria)
- Direction of a research unit, a GDR, a national or international scientific association
- Direction of a major local structure (e.g., Labex)
- Responsibility of a multi-site European project
- Vice-presidence of a university

Research administration (minor tasks)

- Leading a research team
- Responsibility of a multi-site ANR research project
- Responsibility of institutional or industrial contracts
- Elected boards or councils within universities
- Evaluation committees (e.g., ANR, Hcéres)
- Recruitment committees

Supervision, teaching

Supervision of PhD students or post-docs: work performed, co-supervision, career outcome, duration of PhD studies, appreciation of works by the scientific community, etc.

Teaching: taken into account with respect to their scientific relevance

Transfer, scientific mediation

- Efforts in **disseminating research within society**
- Industrial partnership or contracts (nature, object, duration, realizations); in particular, CIFRE PhD contracts
- Mediation efforts (popular science writings, interviews in media, participation in general public events, etc.)

Mobility

- Geographic and thematic mobility favorably considered
- Accomplishing a geographic mobility at least once during the career (PhD included) is considered as very important for a DR2 recruitment

Research plan

- For five-year evaluations, recruitment, promotions
- **Criteria:** relevance, importance, originality, feasibility, positioning within the local, national, international environment

Presentation of dossiers

- Accessible to a computer scientist, non-specialist of your field (in particular, positioning w.r.t. state of the art necessary)
- Qualitative rather than quantitative evaluation: better explain in detail a few publications than enumerate a long list of works (but full list of publications still useful!)
- Give more importance to recent works (e.g., for promotions, since the last promotion)
- Document long enough to include all relevant elements, concise enough to be readable in full
- For example: CV and factual information; 6–7 pages of summary of past works (positioning included); 4 pages of research plan (+ information about integration in case of recruitment or mobility)

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2.5-years evaluation

- Every 2 years and a half; dossiers prepared by researchers during summer, evaluated during fall
- Description of the activity in the last 2.5 years but not (necessarily) of the research plan
- The section decides on a recommendation:
 - Avis favorable** (95% of cases) everything is ok
 - Avis différé** (rare) elements are missing to make a decision, complements are requested
 - Avis réservé** (rare) reservations on the activity of a researcher
 - Avis d'alerte** (very rare) the section is worried about the activity of a researcher, which is not what is expected – usually follows an Avis réservé
- A (detailed) report is sent back to researchers, with the recommendation, sometimes some advice, and a summary of the reading of the dossier by the section

Post-evaluation follow-up

- Researchers having an Avis réservé or Avis d'alerte go through a post-evaluation follow-up process (*suivi post-évaluation*), with regular discussions with HR of the regional delegation and the institute (and sometimes the president of the section)
- The section can offer additional informal interviews with the researcher if desired (and researchers are encouraged to communicate with us)
- Not a sanction! It is supposed to help with developing one's activity, exchanging about work conditions, etc.
- Post-evaluation follow-up is loosened up after a first Avis favorable, and ended after two

Professional inadequacy

- After an *Avis d'alerte*, the direction of CNRS may ask the section to perform a formal vote about professional inadequacy of a researcher's activity (extremely rare)
- If the section votes towards professional inadequacy, and after a (compulsory) opinion from the *commission administrative paritaire* that includes representatives of researchers' unions, the direction of CNRS may order the dismissal of the researcher (not automatic)

After recruitment

- Opinion on career years.** In very specific cases (PhDs performed in the industry), the section is asked whether the whole duration of the industrial contracts should be counted as part of the research experience, for deciding on the initial salary rung of the researcher.
- Tenure.** Opinion on obtaining tenure for CR after their initial first year (not a problem in the overwhelming majority of cases)

RIPEC C3

- Sections are invited to participate in the process of allocating individual merit bonuses (RIPEC-C3) to researchers
- Section 6 considers that the overwhelming majority of researchers deserves such a bonus and regrets that only a small number of researchers may receive the bonus
- Consequently, we have decided not to evaluate RIPEC C3 applications (this will be done by an ad-hoc committee designated by CNRS Informatics)

CNRS secondments of professors

- Evaluating every year (within a very short time frame) of requests from professors (MCF, PU) to obtain a six-month or one-year secondment with CNRS
- **Priorities of CNRS Informatics:** lab directors (half-secondment), preparation of European projects (including ERCs), international mobility for CNRS (CNRS projects or IRL), resuming activity after a long leave (e.g., maternity)
- **Other favored elements:** other mobility, scientific project, heavy administrative duties, no recent secondment or teaching relief, project of writing and defending an HdR
- Low number of requests compared to the numbers of professors in computer science: 47 en 2022, 53 en 2023. . .
- Relatively high fraction of granted requests
- Recommendation of the section unfortunately **somewhat marginal** on the final decision: negotiation between CNRS and universities

Propositions of medals

- The section requests lab directors, GDRs, to provide nominations for potential recipients of the bronze (5–10 years after PhD) and silver (senior) medal of CNRS
- The section evaluated these propositions, may add others, and decides on a list of 2 persons (1 man, 1 woman) proposed for each of these, every year in the fall
- We make these propositions public, for transparency
- CNRS Informatics, in agreement with the direction of CNRS, grants medals to some researchers among the names proposed (or others)

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Hcéres committees

- The section is represented by one of its representatives within Hcéres committees for CNRS research units (labs) whose research is mainly in the area of the section (usually, only one section represented, sometimes two)
- Important for us to understand the day-to-day workings and life of a lab, to assess the importance of CNRS for this lab, to better understand how CNRS researchers are integrated
- This does not mean we agree with the full Hcéres evaluation process – our criteria and those of Hcéres are not fully aligned

Opinion on CNRS (continuing) involvement in labs

- After Hcéres evaluation, the section must indicate whether it is in favor of renewing (or starting) the involvement of CNRS in that lab
- We examine the auto-evaluation document produced by the lab and the report issued by the Hcéres committee (facilitated by our participation within these committees)
- Interview of the director proposed for the new 5-year term, possibly accompanied by the former director
- There was no new involvement by CNRS Informatics in a lab these past few years. . .
- CNRS does not always follow the opinion of the section

Creation or renewal of GDRs

- CNRS Informatics requests the opinion of the section on propositions to create or renew a GDR
- Possible interview with the future direction
- Evaluation of the past activity and of the project

Direction changes

- Examination of propositions to change a lab's director or deputy director
- We verify that the lab council approves, we check the opinion of the other organisms (universities, Inria, etc.) involved with this lab
- We check the coherence between the profile of the director and the lab
- Often a formality

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CRCN → CRHC

- Seniority: quite important
- But the whole activity of the researcher is evaluated
- There used to be few candidates, in particular among researchers at the 9 or 10 rungs of CRCN (though enough candidates in 2022 and 2023)
- Independent of DR2 applications: possible to apply and by recruited as DR2 independently of the CRCN/CRHC status

CRHC → CRHC Exceptional Rung

- Novelty from 2022
- Criteria similar to CRHC promotions
- For CRCH at the rung 7 (last rung except for this exceptional rung) of the CRHC salary ladder

DR2 → DR1

- In addition to raw scientific activity (important), contributions to society (research administration, supervision, mediation, transfer, etc.) have a significant weight
- Few places; but also many potential applicants do not apply!

DR1 → DRCE1

- Similar to DR1 promotions, but higher level of requirements
- Few places (though it used to be worse, relaxation of the quota of DRCE in 2022)

DRCE1 → DRCE2

- Similar criteria as for DRCE1 promotions
- Less constraints, concerns a smaller pool of candidates
- All eligible DRCE1 are encouraged to apply

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CRCN competition

- Positions opened every year, with some priority topics posted, decided by CNRS Informatics
- A profile that fits the priority topics is a plus, but the section only ranks candidates that satisfy the requirements to become CNRS researchers
- The number of candidates decreases: 85 in 2023 (> 100 all previous years)
- Despite this decrease, still **many excellent applications**
- Selection of about thirty candidates for interviews
- (Partial) ranking by the admissibility jury (section), **published**
- Final ranking by the admission jury

DR2 Competition

- Positions opened every year
- Competition, not promotion: open to researchers from outside the CNRS (some were recruited in section 6 in 2020, 2021, 2022)
- Since 2023: possibility of interviewing only a subset of candidates; we use this possibility to ensure every interviewed candidate has enough time for his or her interview
- Since 2023: obligation to rank $\geq 1.5 \times$ the number of positions of the competition
- Still **very competitive**: we cannot rank many excellent candidates
- (Partial) ranking by the admissibility jury (section), **published**
- Final ranking by the admission jury

Handicap Competition

- CNRS recruits every year **researchers with a handicap**, through a specific competition
- 9 positions in 2023, including 1 for section 6
- Labs must make propositions to open such positions to CNRS Informatics
- Process similar to the CRCN competition: selection of interviewed candidates, interviews, ranking of candidates by the section, then a commission ranks candidates across sections
- Recruitment on a one-year contract, after which it is possible to get a permanent CRCN position (opinion of a committee with representatives of the section and of the institute)

Junior professor chairs (CPJ, 1/2)

- 5- to 6-year contract with possible tenure as a DR2 after the 5 to 6 years; salaries higher than CRCN + allocated research budget (up to several hundred thousand euros)
- The National Committee as a whole is **opposed to the principle of CPJs** (see motions of C3N and of CPCN)
- Since these positions exist, we ask to participate to their recruitment committees

Junior professor chairs (CPJ, 2/2)

- In 2023: 4 positions at CNRS Informatics (and only one successful recruitment!)
- In 2024: 7 positions (including the 3 unsuccessful ones from 2023)
- Contrarily to CRCN, DR2, Handicap competitions, the section has a minor role (1 or 2 members in the committee, often spread across sections 6 and 7) in the CPJ recruitment committees
- Not possible to publish information as transparently as we do for CRCN and DR2 positions
- Tenure process not yet defined!

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Funding of thematic schools

- Examination, in the fall, at the request of CNRS HR, of propositions to fund thematic schools by their organizers
- Official goal: fund continuous training of CNRS personnel – meaning that involvement of CNRS employees (including PhD students and postdocs) is necessary
- If this is part of a series of schools, a report on past editions must be provided
- The section issues a recommendation (very favorable, favorable, reservations, no opinion) based on the scientific description, the relevance to the section, the report on past editions, the importance for the community, etc.

Situation report

- Once per term, the section must write a **situation report**: describe scientific areas covered by the section as of the date of the report, discuss the activity in these areas within CNRS and within France
- In the previous term, the section had decided to make a report oriented towards statistics, comparing data from CNRS, academic labs, and defended PhDs, cf. cf.
<https://old.cn6.fr/doc/Conjoncture06.pdf>
- We have just started working on this, with a similar orientation

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General principles

- Looking for **consensus**, leave the possibility so that every one can express their opinions
- Avoid raw votes, prefer discussions and asking every member to speak in turn
- The section is united and takes responsibility for all decisions taken and opinions issued
- **Secret** of the precise content of discussions
- **Transparency** whenever possible
- **Diversity** and **representativity** are points we care about (parity, thematic diversity, geographic diversity)
- Administrative and technical elected members do not take part in discussions about promotions and recruitment
- CR/MCF do not take part in discussions about DR1/DRCE promotions

Reviewers

- 1 reviewer on most dossiers, 2 on DR1/DRCE promotion dossiers and sensitive dossiers
- 2 reviewers for DR competition, 3 (1 only for interviewed candidates) for CR competition
- Reviewers are assigned taking into account their research area, their preferences (bidding system) and conflicts of interest
- Reviewers are not always the same: in particular, for competitions, not the same set of reviewers from one year to the next
- For competitions, reviewers read publications attached to the dossier (typically, one publication by reviewer, in the order proposed, but this may vary)

Reviewers' work

- Reading dossiers
- Writing up a pre-report (draft)
- Presenting and discussing the dossier with the section
- Writing up a final report on every dossier (depending on the type of dossier, as detailed as possible)

Validation of reports by the president

- Reading, minor fixes, and validation (signature) of all final reports
- Defending opinions and decisions of the section and of the admissibility jury towards CNRS Informatics and admission juries

Independence w.r.t. CNRS Informatics

- Opinions issued, decisions taken **in full independence** of the direction of CNRS Informatics and of CNRS
- But in cordial terms: taking into account guidelines given, scientific policy put forward, etc.
- A representative of CNRS Informatics present (but without voice, except in case of an explicit solicitation) during discussions, except for competitions and promotions
- Interview between the section and the director of CNRS Informatics twice a year (and regular discussions between the president of the section and the direction of CNRS Informatics)

Calendar

Fall: one week with 2.5-year evaluations, promotions, medal propositions, thematic school propositions, etc.

January: secondments

Between January and May: competition period (reading dossiers, selection of interviewed candidates, interviews, admissibility jury): three weeks

Spring: three to four days with 5-year evaluation, evaluation of labs, etc.

But also: Hcéres committees, some extra solicitations

Other instances (1/2)

Scientific advisory board of CNRS Informatics: the president of the section is invited, reports on the works of the section

Interdisciplinary commissions (CID): representatives of the section in CID 51 (interactions life sciences), 53 (interactions social sciences), 55 (science and data, president)

Conference of presidents of the national committee (CPCN): several times a year, discussion between presidents of sections on common preoccupations and positions, interviews with the direction of CNRS

Meeting of the scientific secretaries: discussions about operating procedures of sections

Other instances (2/2)

Board of the CPCN: preparation of works of the CPCN; the president of section 6 represents CNRS Informatics an CNRS Mathematics sections

Coordination of leaders of CoNRS instances (C3N): board of CPCN + presidents of scientific advisory boards of institutes + board of scientific advisory board of CNRS, once or twice a year; interviews with the direction of CNRS

Admission juries: the president of section 6 takes part in the CR admission jury of CNRS Informatics and may take part in the DR CNRS-wide admission jury

Conflicts of interest: major conflicts

- spouse, family member, etc.
- very close professional relation (as judged by the section)
- recent direct hierarchical relation
- for recruitment of CR, former PhD student

Conflicts of interest: minor conflicts

- recent collaborator (articles written within the past 5 years, current collaboration, etc.)
- member, in the past two years, of the same lab
- for recruitment of CR, candidate having defended their PhD in the same lab
- for recruitment of CR, candidate proposing the same hosting research group (or the same lab in case of a section member part of the direction team of the lab)
- for recruitment of DR, former PhD student
- any other situation where the section representative feels there is a conflict of interest

Conflicts: Impact (1/2)

Competition: in case of a major conflict, withdrawal from the jury (after decision on which candidate to interview); in case of minor conflict, no participation in discussion or vote about a dossier – but can answer a question not directly related to the candidate

Other situations: no participation in the discussion or vote; may leave the room during the discussion

Conflicts: Impact (2/2)

Representatives of the section: the section does not give any recommendation on requests for promotions or bonus from its representatives – such requests are discouraged; representatives of the section do not take part in the competitions

Medals: team members of a representative of the section are not proposed for a medal

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-  <https://cn6.fr/>
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