

Scientific Integrity Committee (CWI) complaint 2021-03 – summary of the complaint

**“Contributing to predatory publishing?”**

Final decision: 17 October 2022, unfounded

*The complaint was filed and handled in English. This summary is therefore only available in English.*

The CWI received a complaint from the complainant via the Executive Board, in which the defendant, is accused by the complainant of violating norms of scientific integrity. In summary, the complaint includes two issues, namely:

1. Potential scientific misconduct of the defendant:  
The complainant accuses the defendant of misconduct by associating with a predatory publisher, referring to the journal "[*title of journal*]", of which the defendant is presented online as the chief editor, and therefore accuses the defendant of violating scientific integrity, in particular standard 52 of the Code of Conduct, namely: *“Do not establish a journal that does not apply the required standards of quality to its publications, and do not cooperate with any such journal.”*
2. Publisher’s behaviour:  
Reference is made to the behaviour of the publisher. If the publisher is indeed predatory, the UT might not want to be associated with this publisher. The complainant states that this question seems to be more of a legal issue for the UT than a question of research integrity of an individual employee.

The **CWI** advised that:

- regarding issue no. 1, there are no grounds to conclude that a violation of standards of scientific integrity did occur, leading the CWI to advise the Executive Board to declare the complaint unfounded.
- regarding issue no. 2, although the CWI cannot pass judgement on this issue, the CWI suggested that the Executive Board considers:
  - o if the UT wishes to be associated with this publisher and similar publishers when signals of predatoriness have been raised. The Executive Board is advised to look into that.
  - o if instruments are available or can be developed through which the UT/its employees can effectively and efficiently detect predatory publishers/journals’ behaviour.
- additional: In view of the present case the CWI shared an additional, more general consideration with the Executive Board. Having a formal complaints procedure for scientific integrity is undoubtedly a crucial facility but should not deter from taking opportunities to informally point at, discuss and resolve potential issues. In scientific integrity cases, it’s desirable that the question is raised whether it is opportune to approach the ‘wrongdoer’ directly and informally. In addition, it is to be emphasized that consultation takes place with the CWI confidential adviser, to also discuss this matter.

The **Executive Board** included the advice of the CWI in the provisional decision, in which the Board:

- regarding issue no. 1 and the compliance of the defendant with standard 52 of the Code of Conduct of Scientific Integrity, declared the complaint as unfounded,
- regarding issue no. 2, decided to investigate the possibilities,
- regarding the additional considerations of the CWI, decided to stimulate opportunities to informally point out, discuss and resolve potential scientific integrity issues and to make sure that complainants of complaints that are issued via the Executive Board are advised to consult the CWI confidential advisor.

A request was submitted by the complainant to the **LOWI**. The LOWI considered that, in view of the code of conduct, the option to submit a request to the LOWI is not intended to address general questions about the nature of the complaints procedure and about the role that a complainant and the CWI (should) play in it, but to request a second opinion if parties do not agree with the CWI’s advice. Regarding the submitted complaint, the LOWI is of the opinion that the CWI did a sufficient factual investigation on which to base the CWI’s advice. The Applicant has not convinced the LOWI that the CWI should have doubted the statement of the Defendant and should therefore have conducted any further fact-finding. The LOWI concluded that the request is manifestly unfounded. The LOWI therefore did not handle the request any further.

The Executive Board included the advice of the LOWI in its final decision, in which the Board:

- regarding issue no. 1 and the compliance of the defendant with standard 52 of the Code of Conduct of Scientific Integrity, declared the complaint as unfounded,
- regarding issue no. 2, decided to investigate the possibilities,
- regarding the additional considerations of the CWI, decided to stimulate opportunities to informally point out, discuss and resolve potential scientific integrity issues and to make sure that complainants of complaints that are issued are advised to consult the relevant advisor, such as the CWI confidential advisor.

[The full anonymous version of the CWI complaint can be read on the website of UNL, [www.universiteitenvannederland.nl/wi-2022.html](http://www.universiteitenvannederland.nl/wi-2022.html)]

[The original and complete LOWI advice in Dutch can be read on the website of the LOWI, via [www.lowi.nl](http://www.lowi.nl), request 2022-16]