Three French Scientists Elected to the National Academy of Sciences

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French researchers Christine Petit (Collège de France, Pasteur Institute), Jean Jouzel (CEA) and Claire Voisin (College de France, CNRS) have been elected as Foreign Associates to the National Academy of Sciences [1].

They are among the 21 foreign scientists elected this year to the National Academy of Sciences, in recognition of their major contributions to scientific research.

The National Academy of Sciences is a private, nonprofit institution that was established under a congressional charter signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. Dedicated to the advancement of sciences, it provides — with the National Academy of Engineering and National Academy of Medicine — science, technology and health policy advice to the federal government and other organizations.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine rely on their members, on other volunteer scientists, and on their staff (more than 1,100 employees [2]) to carry out these expert reports, mainly ordered and financed by the federal government (284M$ in revenue in 2014, 80% coming from the different departments [3]). Members and external scientists are not compensated for their expertise.

The academies' activities are coordinated by the American Research Council, the administrative structure associated with the academies, and encompass the organization of science policy workshops on current scientific issues (like the Gene Editing Summit on Human Genome editing last December in Washington, D.C.), the publication on the nap.edu website of its expert reports (about 200 published per year, accessible for free in electronic format), the edition of the well-known multidisciplinary journal PNAS (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences), as well as the animation of scientific mediation activities for a general audience and the attribution of research fellowships and prizes for achievements in science.

The three French researchers nominated will join the prestigious assembly of 2291 active American members and 465 foreign associates (including 34 from France) at the National Academy of Sciences next year.

Dr. Christine Petit is a specialist of human genetics. Professor at the Pasteur Institute in Paris since 1996, she is the director of the Genetic and Physiology of Hearing Unit. She had a pioneering role in the discovery of the genes involved in human sensory handicaps, more specifically hearing deficits. Since 2002 she has held the prestigious Genetics and Cellular Physiology Chair at the Collège de France in Paris. She has received several awards for her work, including the L’Oréal-UNESCO Prize for Women in Science in 2004 and the Inserm (French National Institute of Health and Medical Research) Grand Prize in 2007. She has been a member of the French National Academy of Sciences since 2002.
Dr. Jean Jouzel is an international expert on climate issues. An honorary researcher at the CEA (French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission, a government-funded technological research organization) in the Climate and Environmental Sciences Lab. Dr. Jean Jouzel is the former vice-president of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and co-recipient of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. In 2002, he was awarded the CNRS (French National Center for Scientific Research) Gold Medal, France’s highest scientific award, with Dr. Claude Lorius for their work on Antarctica and Greenland ice cores, leading to the reconstitution of past climates and raising the first concerns about global warming. In 2002, he also received the Foundation Albert II of Monaco Prize and the Vetlesen Prize, considered as the Earth Sciences Nobel Prize.

Dr. Claire Voisin is a researcher in Mathematics, Senior Scientist at the CNRS (French National Center for Scientific Research) at the Mathematics Institute of Jussieu, in Paris. She was appointed in June 2016 as the new Algebraic Geometry Chair at the highly prestigious Collège de France in Paris. Her research focuses on algebraic geometry, and more specifically on variational Hodge structures, mirror symmetry and complex Kähler geometry. She received numerous prizes for her work, including CNRS Bronze and Silver Medals (in 1988 and 2006), as well as international awards: the Ruth Lyttle Satter Award in 2007 and the Clay Research Award in 2008. Dr. Claire Voisin has been a member of the French National Academy of Sciences since 2010.

This nomination of three French scientists among the 21 foreign associates elected highlights the dynamism of French scientific research and its international standing.

Footnotes