

Olivier Grasset appointed Director of CNRS Earth & Space

Thierry Dauxois, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the CNRS, has appointed Olivier Grasset as Director of CNRS Earth & Space, effective 1 September 2026. As a member of the CNRS Executive Board, he will define and lead the institute's scientific strategy while overseeing its national mission in collaboration with partner organisations, the relevant ministries and stakeholders involved in territorial and environmental issues.

A renowned planetary scientist, Olivier Grasset has served as Vice President for Research and Open Science at Nantes Université since September 2021, following four years as Director of the Laboratory of Planetology and Geosciences (CNRS/Nantes Université/Université d'Angers).

After graduating from the École nationale supérieure de géologie with an engineering degree in 1991, Olivier Grasset completed a PhD in Orsay before undertaking postdoctoral research in the United States. He began teaching at the University of Nantes in 1994, was appointed Associate Professor in 1996, obtained his Habilitation to Supervise Research (HDR) in 2002, and was promoted to Full Professor in 2004.

A planetary scientist at the Laboratory of Planetology and Geosciences (CNRS/Nantes Université/Université d'Angers), he directed the laboratory from 2012 to 2017 before being appointed Vice President for Research at Nantes Université in September 2017. In 2021, he became Vice President for Research and Open Science at the multidisciplinary university, which brings together 42 research laboratories and five federative research structures.

Alongside his responsibilities at Nantes Université, Olivier Grasset has played a major role internationally through his longstanding involvement with the European Space Agency (ESA). Between 2010 and 2012, he co-led the scientific team that conceived the JUICE mission to Jupiter. In 2014, he joined ESA's Solar System Exploration Working Group, which he chaired from 2017 to 2019. From 2020 to 2021, he chaired the scientific committee responsible for defining *Voyage 2050*, ESA's long-term robotic space exploration programme for the period 2035–2050. Since 2024, he has chaired the Space Science Advisory Committee, which oversees ESA's entire robotic exploration programme, from Earth's space environment to the outer reaches of the Universe.

Strongly committed to science outreach and public engagement, Olivier Grasset coordinated the organisation of the International Planetary Science Conference in Nantes in 2011 and again in 2015. Alongside these scientific events, he and his teams developed public exhibitions on space exploration, which attracted nearly 20,000 visitors in 2015.

On 1 September 2026, Olivier Grasset will succeed Jean-François Doussin, who has served as Interim Director of CNRS Earth & Space since the departure of Nicolas Arnaud in February 2026.

¹ Formerly known as CNRS National Institute for Earth Sciences and Astronomy (INSU)



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About CNRS

A major player in basic research worldwide, the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) is the only French organisation active in all scientific fields. Its unique position as a multi-specialist enables it to bring together all of the scientific disciplines in order to shed light on and understand the challenges of today's world, in connection with public and socio-economic stakeholders. Together, the different sciences contribute to sustainable progress that benefits society as a whole.

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