



## EU-LIFE Woman Postdoc Mentoring Programme

Short bios of mentors



### **Valerie Borde**

Research Director

Institut Curie

Paris, France

After graduating from Rennes University (France) in Biochemistry, I came to Paris VI University to get a Master and then a PhD in Molecular Pharmacology. I studied the mechanism of action of Topoisomerase II, a major target for chemotherapy, that makes breaks in the DNA.

Then for my postdoc, I decided to go to the USA, at the NIH (Bethesda, Maryland) where I began to study the process of meiotic recombination, for which it was recently discovered that it involved a new type of Topoisomerase II.

I really enjoyed these postdoc years, and it was quite successful since I published a few major papers. At the end of my 4 years postdoc, I had a first baby. We did not want to stay and live in the States, so we went back to France 6 weeks after, and there I made a second, short (one year) postdoc in Paris, while applying for a permanent researcher position at the CNRS.

I obtained this position in 2003, had a second baby, and spent 5 years as a researcher within a team, developing my own research topics. I published again some good papers.

This progressive independence and publication success incited me to set up my own research team. For this, I applied to a starting grant package which I obtained, and was selected through an international call to start my junior group at the Curie Institute, in the department led by Geneviève Almouzni at the time.

I enjoyed a lot these new responsibilities, especially the training of the PhD students and postdocs, and the freedom to lead my own research.

I also found that paradoxically, I was able to work very efficiently being a group leader, since I was no longer doing the experiments myself, and therefore was able to work from home in the evening or when needed.

After 6 years as a junior group, I had to move on, and was promoted as a senior PI at the Curie Institute, within another department.

Since then, I lead a group of around 8 persons. I also became deputy director of our department, which allows me to participate in the department direction and get to know all the scientific, organizational, and administrative decisions, and to know each member working in the department.



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My everyday life in the lab consists of managing the research projects, mentoring the PhD students and postdocs, writing papers, grant applications, reviewing papers and grant applications from others. I also try to read as much as possible the literature. I am also invited to many international meetings, which is very demanding, but always beneficial for the research and the interaction with my colleagues.

I would be happy to share my experience on how to cope and manage both the work and personal lives especially as a mother of two young children, how to manage with the different types of personalities of the lab members and the specific needs for each of them. And many other things and challenges regarding being a scientific group leader.