



EU-LIFE Woman Postdoc Mentoring Programme

Short bios of mentors



Leila Akkari

Group leader

NKI (The Netherlands Cancer Institute)

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Leila Akkari is an Associate Professor and Group Leader at the Netherlands Cancer Institute in Amsterdam. In 2019, she was nominated Junior Member of the Oncode Institute and became senior member in 2023. After an MSc between Montpellier (France) and Manchester (UK), she performed her PhD studies in Cell Biology at the Institute of Molecular Genetics of Montpellier, CNRS - French National Research Center, France, and completed her postdoctoral training in cancer biology, immunology and genetics, first at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, USA, and then at the Ludwig Cancer Center in Lausanne, Switzerland. In 2017 she joined the Netherlands Cancer Institute in Amsterdam, where she established her research laboratory. Since early on in her scientific career, she has been interested in understanding the complex interactions between cancer cells and normal cells within tumors and she works towards elucidating how external signals regulate cancer malignancy. Research in her group focuses on the role of immune cells in tumor maintenance and therapeutic resistance in brain and liver cancer, in order to harness these cells in personalized anti-cancer treatments.

She is recipient of prestigious personal research grants, such as the Vidi Research Grant from the Dutch Science Research Council (NWO) in 2020 and three research grants from the Dutch Cancer Society (KWF), including the Young Investigator Grant, Bas Mulder Award in 2017. In 2020, she was selected by the renowned life sciences organization European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) for their Young Investigator Program. In 2022, she is leading a multi-million euros consortium to target brain cancer with different immunotherapies and novel nanocarriers (NWO).