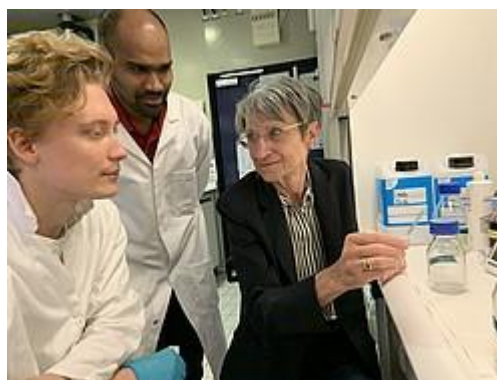


# Sylviane Muller elected to the European Academy of Sciences

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Sylviane Muller, CNRS <sup>1</sup> Emeritus research director at the Biotechnology and Cell Signalling joint research unit (CNRS and University of Strasbourg), has just been appointed to the European Academy of Sciences in the Medical and Life Sciences Division. This researcher in immunology, who likes to think outside the box, is motivated by one sole scientific wish that is “to understand”, receives this distinction in all humility.

67 year-old Sylviane Muller has lost none of her enthusiasm for research. “I still invest a great deal and with passion”, indicates the immunologist who has just been appointed to the European Academy of Sciences. “I received a letter in January informing me about it, there are eminent people from the world over sitting there and I wonder what I am doing among them”, says the researcher, smiling and thanking those who voted for her. “One of my personal ethics is to never to apply for a prize. It’s a lovely surprise to learn of such a recognition, as I did when I received the Legion of Honour.”



Sylviane Muller is Emeritus research director at the Biotechnology and Cell Signalling joint research unit. Photo MR

On asking Sylviane Muller about her career, she usually responds by saying she didn’t pass her bac<sup>2</sup>. “Since I was very little I wanted to wear a white coat and work in a laboratory that was all white, but I didn’t foresee that one day I would find myself producing a drug.” Sylviane Muller compares her career path, which has been punctuated by luck and opportunities, to a ball of wool: “a small thread protrudes, sometimes we pull it and it can change everything.”

## A molecule-drug

For several years, the researcher has been working with a team of five to six people on a molecule-drug, known as P140, to treat patients with lupus. “At the beginning, it was a very fundamental subject.” As one thing led to another, a meeting with Robert Zimmer, CEO of ImmuPharma-France enabled her to start carrying out clinical trials on patients. “At present, the P140 is in phase III of the trials. For my part, with my small team, I carry on with my research; we are trying to use this molecule in other auto-immune diseases similar to lupus, as well as for chronic inflammatory conditions.”

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<sup>1</sup> French National Centre for Scientific Research

<sup>2</sup> Baccalauréat (French high school leaving certificate)

Sylviane Muller is motivated by the wish to “understand” and has no other passion other than her research. “Even on holiday, I’ve always got documents to read and write in my bag”, emphasises the mother of two and grandmother of three grandchildren, who has always lived as close as possible to her laboratory ... What does she enjoy above all? “To have a blank page. I write down a title, I put down all the results – sometimes after two years’ research work on my computer – and I tell the story, I make sense of it, it’s pure joy.”

### “A playful spirit...”

From her years spent in laboratories the researcher pinpoints one change. “When I started in labs, researchers and students told terrible jokes, there was a playful spirit that reigned. Some of them once put a senior lecturer’s little car on the roof of the institute by using a hoist.” She believes that the increased selectivity of competitive exams has shown the expansion of a sort of anxiety-provoked competition. “Today young people are more pessimistic, more anxious”, notes Sylviane Muller who has posted her favourite saying up in her office: “Productivity and well-being are not mutually exclusive!”.

Her keyword is to be creative so as to think outside the box. “You have to rave about things, break free. There is no point in doing ‘as usual’. What do we risk? If it doesn’t work, it’s not a disaster. It’s like painters in front of their canvas, they experiment”, specifies the researcher who always anticipates the ‘near!’ future”. “As long as I am able to bring strategic support to the people around me, I shall be at their side. The privilege of age is perhaps to better know how to bring people together and take a healthy step back.” Sylviane Muller’s appointment allows her to attend annual meetings, and she shall also be able to join a working group. “I am interested in being able to confront ideas.”

**Marion Riegert**

*The article was originally published in French: [Sylviane Muller élue à l’Académie européenne des sciences](#).*