



Irene Heijink

Prof. dr. Irene Heijink (1975) was trained as Medical Biologist and obtained her PhD at the Faculty of Medicine in 2004. She is fascinated by the mechanisms underlying aberrant damage and repair of the first line of defense against the inhaled environment, the respiratory epithelium. She leads the Experimental Pulmonary and Inflammation research (EXPIRE) lab and since 2022, she is program leader of the Groningen Research Institute for COPD (GRIAC). Irene Heijink is currently also head of the European Respiratory Society (ERS) Assembly Basic and Translational Sciences. She studies the role of the epithelium in the pathogenesis of lung diseases as asthma and COPD in a translational manner, using advanced culture models with cells derived from patients, in close collaboration with the clinic. Discoveries from Irene Heijink and her team contributed to the general hypothesis that epithelial damage is a major driver in the pathogenesis of asthma and COPD. In her chair as professor of Cellular and Molecular Lung Pathology, she aims to develop new strategies to repair the epithelial barrier in lung diseases and thus halt or even reverse disease.