

Workshop n°1

« How can the expectations of the young on equal opportunity be met? »



Wednesday 24 October 2007

Speakers :

- Mr Philippe LAMBLIN : Communication and Human Resources Director of the Lesaffre group
- Mr Jâafar SQUALLI : CEO of Ecodas, specialized in the transformation of hospital wastes
- Mr Grégory LIENARD : Human Resources Director of Lyreco (10 000 employees)
- Mr Boulal ABDERAHIM: Commercial in charge of the market of the countries of the Maghreb within the Lesaffre group.
- Mme Venetta PLESCA: in charge of the Europe central sector of the Lesaffre group.

This workshop was mainly constituted of young people aged 15 to 25, from the entire world (Africa, Argentina, United States, China, India ...) to debate and exchange ideas on this subject.

The introduction of this workshop was done by a report, showing today challenges on the equality opportunity debate:

- 18% of the planet is between 15 and 25 years old,
- In France, 62% students in the "grandes écoles" (competitive-entrance higher education establishments where engineering, business administration and other subjects are taught to a very high standard) are the children of senior executives and professionals, against barely 5% who are workers' children.

The debates provide the opportunity to tackle some issues:

- **Do the Youngs believe in equality of chances?** A video testimony puts forward the doubt of French secondary school students about the existence of an equality of chances in the framework of an access to school or recruitment...
- **Do certain countries favour the equality of chances?** Testimonies from international students succeeded one another. An Argentinean student presented Argentina as a country of discriminations, as far as financial status is concerned (price of the studies for example). Another testimony presents Australia, young country endowed with an important legal anti-discriminations system, as presenting only few inequalities but confronted to the Aboriginals' integration problem.

Finally, a new video was presented to the debate, shot by secondary School students who participated in the building of a free health centre in Congo. Through a play, they present the stigmatization and the inequality of access to the health devices for the patients of AIDS in Congo.

- **Does school favour equality of chances?** The Chinese educational system is characterized by his intensive rhythm and his strong competitiveness but equally by a number of inequalities: between urban zones where schooling is free and rural zones where certain aspects are dependent upon the families; between men and women to access the secondary level (for cultural reasons). The intervention of a Chinese student allowed putting forward that the Chinese government is conscious of these inequalities. To close this part of the debate, an initiative of young Argentinean high school students was presented. They decided to set up free computing lessons for resourceless families.
- **Do companies favour equality of chances?** It's the good practices prism that has been chosen. Lyreco, international company, strongly bets on apprenticeship, formation by the business thus and recruits only on the basis of competences. The company wants to set up "the social stairway", so as to give each employee the opportunity to realize itself on the basis of his own merit.

The firm Ecodas puts forward its neutral policy. Indeed, the multiethnic group that exists within the company constructed itself without being looked for.

Finally, 2 associates of the Lesaffre company showed the importance of personal engagement: they always found new skills to propose, learn new languages etc. to get round the "closed doors".

The session closed by a message, optimistically oriented towards the youth, insisting on personal engagement: **"Believe in you, believe in your capacities and do not focus on your failures"**.