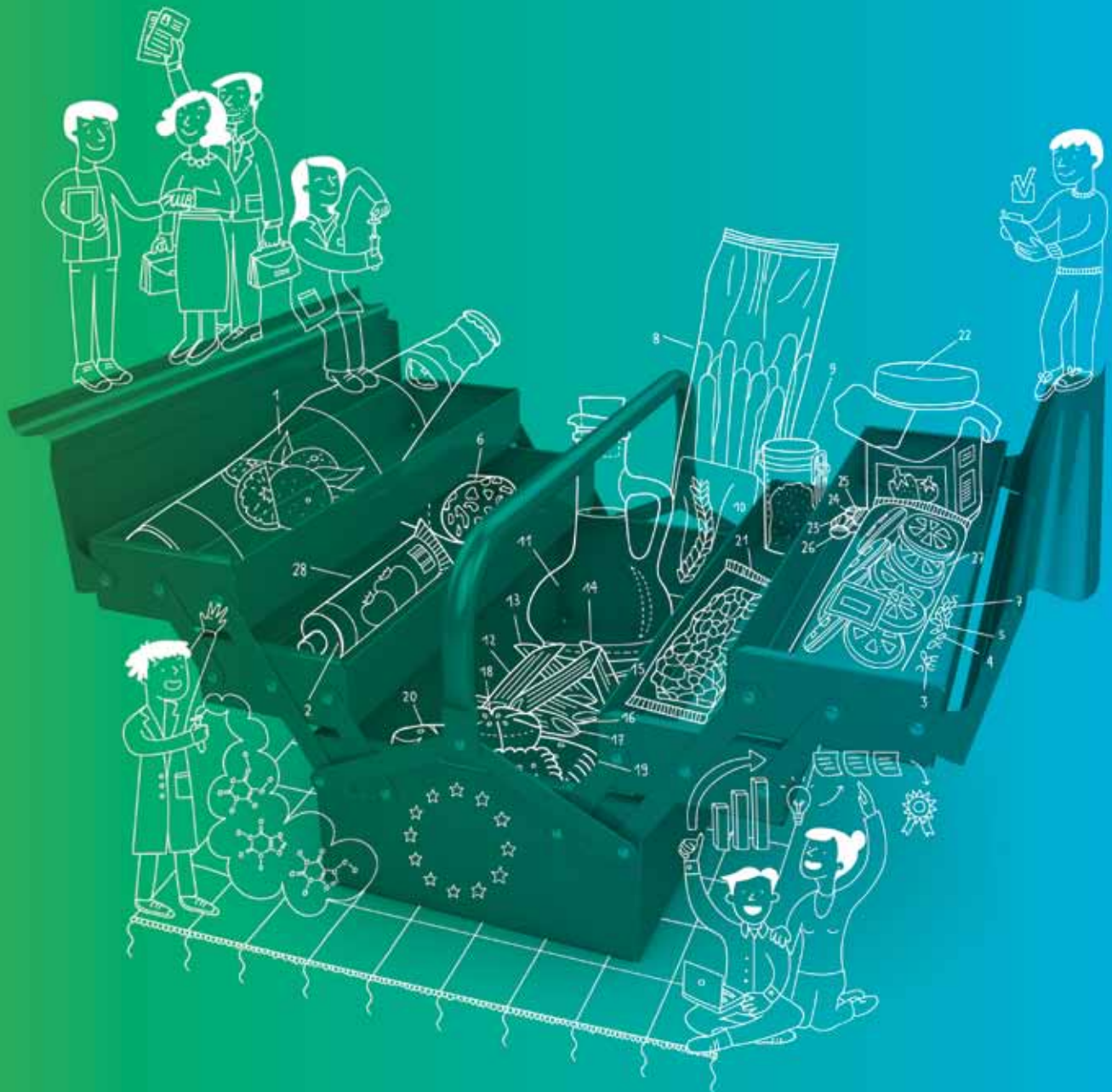




# CASE STUDY REPORT: PASS'IFRIA

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## KEY FACTS

- In France, Regional Institutes for Agri-Food Training (IFRIA) are joint training organisations bringing together employers and workers in the agri-food sector to promote and develop continuing training and apprenticeship.
- The “Pass’ Ifria” is a training programme based on the principle of short periods of combined work and training, lasting 6 months, carried out entirely within companies.
- The Pass’ IFRIA is an example of the good use of opportunities for combined work and training and financing funds for professional training in order to assist with companies’ recruitment or skill-building needs.
- The main benefits of the Pass are its flexibility combined with the IFRIA’s training expertise to respond to needs.
- The Pass is not in competition with traditional apprenticeships; however, it is, initially, most suitable for unemployed or unqualified people.
- This was an initiative from one company that is followed by several others in the sector now.

## BACKGROUND

There have been recruitment problems in the agri-food sector for several years. The sector includes 720,000 employees at 72,000 establishments, of which 360,000 employees are in the agri-food industry (AFI), 100,000 in agricultural cooperatives and 260,000 in food retail.

Looking specifically at the meat industry sector, there are 41,500 employees, a high proportion of whom are over 50 years of age, and there are serious problems in the area of recruitment / qualification (see the sector age pyramid in the appendix). The social partners and the state have produced contractual agreements expressly intended to develop **training and apprenticeships** as well as **continuing training**, particularly through **Professional Qualification Certificates (CQP)**.

The **Food Sector Contract** of June 2013 determined 6 priority actions:

- **Recruit 150,000 young people for combined work and training** during the period 2013-2017; with **professional training contracts** and **apprenticeship contracts**;
- Enable 5,000 additional employees to benefit from **basic skills training**;
- Harmonise and create links between the types of training providing certification; particularly the Professional Qualification Certificates (CQP);
- Create a **common platform** for the 4 professional observatories existing in the sector, namely Observia (<http://observiametiers.fr/>), Observatoire prospectif des métiers de la Coopération Agricole (Agricultural Cooperation Observatory), Observatoire des distributeurs conseils hors domicile (Distributing and Catering Observatory) and Observatoire prospectif des métiers et des qualifications (Observatory for Professions and Qualifications - “alimétiers”);
- Coordinate the national joint committees for employment and professional training;
- Make the sector more attractive through communication about the professions, in

particular by setting up the website **www.alimetiers.com**

The food sector observatories came together as a platform to study recruitment in 2014:

- 58,000 people were recruited in the sector, of whom:
- 81% were workers & employees, 12% were supervisors and technicians and 7% were managers;
- 53 % were on permanent contracts;
- **64% were young people under 30** (47% hired on permanent contracts);
- 5% were in the older age range, over 50 years of age.

29% of companies that recruited in 2014 had **recruitment difficulties**, citing the following reasons:

- Candidates had inadequate skills: 52%;
- Shortage of candidates in the area: 42%;
- Lack of experience among candidates: 27%;
- Working conditions (working hours, strenuous nature of work): 18%;
- Insufficient salaries: 5%;
- Poor image of the profession / sector: 5%.

In addition, the **evaluation carried out at the start of 2015 on actions taken in the framework of the sectoral contract** indicates a step backwards in all sectors involved in apprenticeships in the private sector in France in 2014 (-3.2 %). However, **combined work and training has increased in the agri-food sector**, with a total of 47,718 contracts in 2014 compared to 47,068 in 2013 (+1.3%):

- 5,551 contracts in the agri-food industries compared to 4,945 in 2013, i.e. +12%;
- 2,011 contracts in agricultural cooperatives compared to 1,725 in 2013, i.e. +17% (there are also industrial jobs in the cooperatives);
- 40,156 in food retail, compared to 40,398 in 2013, i.e. -0.6%.

There is significant growth in the industry. There has also been a **13% overall increase**

## in professional training contracts.

In 2015, the **sectoral contract** was updated. The initial objective of 150,000 combined work and training contracts for young people by 2017 will become 170,000. Training levels IV and V (the lowest levels) will be prioritised, as will high-demand professions, for which recruitment is particularly difficult. The agreement was signed

## THE “PASS’IFRIA”

The “Pass’Ifria” is a training programme based on the principle of short periods of combined work and training, lasting 6 months, carried out entirely within companies.

This distinguishes it from apprenticeships or “classic” continuing training programmes, which last longer, have more rigidly structured content that may not match the needs of companies so closely, and which also have a “theoretical” component, taking place outside the company.

It originated in 2005 in the region of Brittany, the most significant region in France for the agri-food industry.

The first “Pass’Ifria” programmes were set up jointly by **IFRIA Brittany**, a joint professional training body, and the **Bigard Group**, an industrial meat producer with headquarters in Quimperlé in the French department of Finistère.

The “Pass’ Ifria” was developed largely within the Bigard Group, then on a more limited scale within other companies for different professions. We would like to mention 2 other companies at this point: the smoked salmon processing company, **Meralliance**, and the **Doux** poultry group.

### THE BIGARD GROUP

The Bigard Group is the largest industrial meat producer (beef and pork) in France, with a turnover of € 4.2 billion. Its activities

by 36 employer organisations and 4 trade union federations.

The future professions observatory should be operational at the start of 2016, and it will initiate **monitoring of indicators related to combined work and training** (broken contracts, exam passes, professional integration etc.).

include production of processed meat products, including cold and frozen products and ready meals.

The group has 15,000 employees (13,000 on indefinite and fixed-term contracts and 2,000 temporary staff) at 52 factories across France.

There are 3 broad job categories in the group:

- Slaughtering and work with meat;
- Cutting, trimming and deboning;
- Manufacturing processed products.

### THE DOUX GROUP

The Doux Group is a poultry company with headquarters based in Finistère and a turnover of € 500 million in 2 distinct areas of activity: 1,200 workers are employed at 3 factories producing frozen **whole chickens** for the export market, principally the Middle East, and 485 workers are employed at 1 factory producing **processed poultry products**.

### MERALLIANCE

Meralliance is also based in Finistère; it has 2 industrial sites together with subsidiaries in Poland and Scotland. It is the 2nd largest company in the European market for **smoked salmon**, and it is no. 1 in France. It has a turnover of € 160 million and 950 employees. It has been part of the Thai Union group, a significant global player in the seafood products market, for 2 years.

## IFRIA

The **Regional Institutes for Agri-Food Training** (IFRIA) are joint training organisations bringing together employers and workers in the agri-food sector to promote and develop **continuing training and apprenticeship**.

**The first IFRIA was created in Brittany in 1996, then the network was extended over subsequent years to 11 other regions of France.** The IFRIA Brittany has a team of 12 and it is based in Quimper (Finistère).

## IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS, REASONS TO DEVELOP THE INSTRUMENT

In 2003, the Bigard group researched solutions to solve its problem with an age imbalance among its staff. The average age in the group is currently 43, and this figure has been stable for 5 years. The aim is to reach an average age of 40.

In 2003, Bigard worked with IFRIA and a local apprentice training centre to develop a recruitment programme based on a “classical” apprenticeship, i.e. 2 years of training leading to the classical CAP diploma (Certificate of Professional Aptitude), with the theoretical part covered in an apprentice training centre outside company premises.

This project ended in failure: none of the 12 young apprentices (between 16 and 26) completed the full training.

According to Bigard and IFRIA, this **failure** was due to the fact that the theoretical part of the training:

1. was too long;
2. was too theoretical;
3. was carried out outside the company, which was a major reason why the integration failed.

IFRIA develops collaborations with other bodies working with initial or continuing training, and it is active at various levels of training, from training for the lowest qualifications to continuous training or apprenticeships for engineers. Financing comes from the **apprenticeship levy** paid by each company and the **continuous training funds**, also financed by the companies. The fund dedicated to agri-food industries is OPCALIM (<http://www.opcalim.org/>).

Following this analysis, Bigard and IFRIA worked together to develop a shorter training programme (6 months) that was better geared towards the skills required by the company.

The theoretical part was also to be better harmonised with the practical part (training and work on-site) and above all it should take place within the company. This approach was favoured by a new statute created in 2015 for employees in France: the **professional training contract**, which is different from the apprenticeship statute (which remains linked to the system of initial training) and which can also affect older people. This contract is one of the tools linked to continuous training, but it can also be used for interns from 16 to 25 years of age, unemployed people over-26 and people on income support.

Professional training contracts can lead to different qualifications that may not necessarily be rewarded by a diploma, but by qualification certificates, such as the **CQP** (Professional Training Certificates).

People with a professional training contract are paid a **proportion of the minimum wage**. Payment is between 55% and 85% of the French minimum wage (SMIC) depending on the level of qualification and the age of the person. However, the company is free to pay more than the minimum.

In the case of Bigard, the group quickly decided to pay the interns **100% of the minimum wage to attract candidates**. The first 6-month Pass' IFRIA was a success in recruitment terms, and it was progressively implemented throughout the group.

Between 2005 and 2014, 1,038 interns took part in Pass' IFRIA training. This was carried out throughout the Bigard Group and across France with the assistance of IFRIA in other regions.

On average 70% of the interns completed the training and were taken on by the company with permanent contracts. Since 2005, a specific Pass' IFRIA has been created for 15 different professions, and training and materials were specially designed for different jobs:

- *Stall operative*
- *Slaughter operative in clean and dirty areas*
- *Offal treatment operative*
- *Skiver*
- *Conditioning operative for zry processing*
- *Machine operator*
- *Cleaning operative*

- *Logistics officer*
- *Labelling group operative*
- *Coarse cut operative*
- *De-boner*
- *Fine cutter*
- *Leather treatment operative.*

A 6-month Pass' IFRIA generally includes 110 hours of theoretical training carried out within the company, and 250 hours of practical training in the workplace. At the end of the training a **Competency Certificate** and a **"European Training Passport"** are provided.

The theoretical part is also directly linked to problems faced by the company and the group (group environment, organisation, internal communication, market, hygiene, food safety, traceability procedures, work safety etc.). This theoretical part is largely reproducible between different modules / professions of the different Pass' IFRIA schemes, providing a shared "culture" among the different professions.

The practical training in the workplace is carried out by the **internal trainers (tutors)** who have valuable experience. Some of them work as trainers 100% of the time: for example, there are 3 full-time trainers at the group headquarters in Quimperlé. At smaller sites, the trainers only carry out this task on a part-time basis.

## FOCUS AND TARGET GROUP, INITIATOR AND ACTORS INVOLVED

In the case of Bigard, the target population is 27/28-year-olds, but about 10% of interns are in older age ranges.

**At Bigard, Pass'IFRIA has come to be the only method of recruitment for the group for workers and operatives over the years.** Each year the group defines its needs; in 2015

this was 31 groups of 8 to 10 people for France as a whole, i.e. **310 to 320 interns per year**.

### THE ROLE OF IFRIA

The Pass initiative returns to the company. The company decides its needs. The role of the IFRIA is to:

- Advise the company using its expertise.
- Ensure training design and planning.
- Contact the bodies that will carry out the theoretical parts of the training; the company is, however, free to use the bodies or companies it chooses. Thus Bigard has an internal training tool that was used for the Pass programme. In the case of Meralliance

- (see below), IFRIA was responsible for selecting the external bodies and contractors.
- Monitor the interns throughout the 6 months, with regular evaluations and interviews.
- Manage the budget for training, administrative and financial elements.

## PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED, LESSONS LEARNED AND SUCCESS FACTORS

Bigard considers the expertise of IFRIA on the subject of apprenticeships and administrative management to be a key success factor in its training / recruitment, allowing the company to concentrate on the practical aspects of training.

This system is perceived to be very flexible, which is a key factor in success. However, the Bigard group finds there is a significant difficulty: candidate selection. Applicants do not need a diploma; selection is carried out by the National Employment Agency on the basis of a battery of basic skills tests: on average only 6 out of 10 candidates are selected.

The company then carries out personality

tests, but it seems that this second selection differs depending on the period; this decreases the success of the training sessions. Bigard underlines the need for the companies that want to carry out Pass' IFRIA training/ recruitment to work on the professions and skills that are required (**profession mapping**). The work that was done at Bigard in 2010 led to **significant changes to the content of the Pass' training sessions**.

It must be underlined that although the initial training / recruitment only concerned professions directly linked to the meat process, the company gradually deployed the Pass IFRIA for other professions such as conditioning, logistics and cleaning.

## ASPECTS FOR TRANSFERABILITY IN OTHER REGIONS, SECTOR OR COMPANIES

Although the Bigard Group is still the largest Pass' IFRIA operator in France, the scheme is being developed across the country for other professions and in sectors other than meat. For example:

- Seafood products with Meralliance;
- Biscuits / confectionery with Lu & Lindt;
- Preserved vegetables with Bonduelle;

- The dairy industry with the Saint Père dairy.

### THE EXAMPLE OF MERALLIANCE

**Meralliance** is a company that has worked with IFRIA to develop a Pass for **machine operators**. According to the management of Meralliance, different versions of this

training could easily be used for other companies in the smoked salmon sector.

They have taken a similar path to Bigard. The company wanted to recruit production **line bosses** as the profession has changed a lot over recent years (automation, computer aided production management, quality control etc.) and the training level of the workers is low (unqualified and some CAPs). There is a training programme for a Line Boss CQP (Professional Qualification Certificate) lasting 9 months, validated by the professional sector agreements, but the company found this training to be inappropriate for the needs of the company, citing an overdeveloped IT module, for example. There are also specific aspects of professions in the smoked salmon sector that are not included in the CQP, such as filleting or slicing.

Developing a 6-month Line Operator Pass that was geared to the needs of the company demanded a significant investment of time. It was prepared with the IFRIA over the course of 4 months; this time was required to set up the modules, analyse the precise needs and precisely define the content of the Line Operator job.

The theoretical modules were developed by IFRIA in collaboration with the production managers at the company. IFRIA selected the outside contractors except for the subject of food safety, as the company was already working with a contractor in this area. The practical part of the training was also designed jointly and then assigned to 6 staff tutors, i.e. one tutor to supervise each intern.

The management also found it very beneficial that the contractors come from outside the company for the theoretical part, as they had more distance than Meralliance staff.

6 interns were trained from September 2014 to May 2015 (of the 7 that started the programme, 1 failed). Of these, 3 are now working at the company (by their own choice)

and 3 people have been externally recruited. There are plans to implement other Pass' IFRIA for **high-demand professions**, such as maintenance: a session is planned for 2016 and another in 2017. Meralliance does not want to recruit systematically using the Pass' IFRIA.

In fact, the company does not have recruitment problems because it is located in a town and it claims to have made extensive efforts to adapt the jobs and working conditions. Nonetheless, the wages are not higher than those of other agri-food companies.

The company management says that financially the Pass should have at least 6 participants. The cost invoiced by IFRIA for this session was around € 40k, i.e. around € 7k per intern. This does not take into account the time spent developing the Pass programme, nor the salaries paid during the 6 months. **However, a grant is available for professional training contracts**, covering half the cost of the training, i.e. around € 20k.

#### **THE DOUX GROUP USES OTHER TYPES OF PASS**

Another example in the meat sector is the poultry group, **Doux**, which has worked with IFRIA to develop a **"Supervisor" Pass** with a first session that ran from February to October 2014. It was continued in 2015 with a new **"Change Pass"** for managers who had already been working with the Group for several years. The aim here is no longer recruitment, but rather **continuous manager training**.

The 2014 programme included the following modules:

- Effective communication and team management;
- Managing industrial performance;
- Managing one or more action plans and implementing continuous improvement.

Still, the principle of the Pass has remained identical, with 119 hours of external interventions.

## **WHAT MAKES IT A "GOOD PRACTICE" EXAMPLE? CONCRETE OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS**

The Pass'IFRIA is an example of the good use of opportunities for combined work and training and financing funds for professional training in order to assist with companies' recruitment or skill-building needs.

The main benefits of the Pass are its flexibility combined with the IFRIA's training expertise to respond to needs. The Pass is not in opposition to other existing training schemes. It is a first step in professional training that should then continue within the company; this could take the form of CQP-style training or other training based on Validation of Prior Experience (VAE).

**The Pass is not in competition with traditional apprenticeships either; however, it is, initially, most suitable for unemployed or unqualified people.**

**Bigard** considers the Pass to be a first stage before the CQP. The group says it has observed more rapid progress within the company among employees who have completed a Pass IFRIA. Training continues after the end of the Pass, in the form of supplementary training from 100 hours to 140 hours, until the trainee has fully mastered the profession. The 3rd stage is acquisition of skills for another profession, which is close to the initial profession, through 110 to 140 hours of training. The 4th stage is CQP training, and the group has set itself the objective of 150 to 250 CQPs per year.

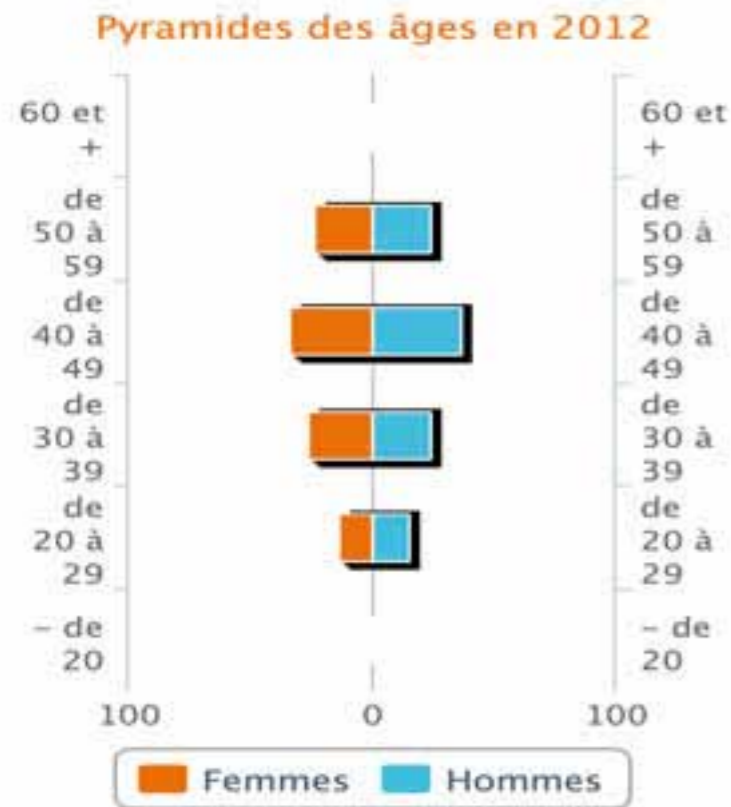
Bigard does not see the cost of the system as an obstacle but as an investment. It estimates the cost of an intern to be € 25k, including salary, but this is partly made up for by the hours that the employee works in production.

Meralliance also has a parallel policy of CQP training (for other professions that are in less high demand): between 25 and 30 employees have passed the CQP over the last 3 years (team leaders, workshop foremen etc.).

The different IFRIA across France communicate the results achieved over recent years to help spread the Pass IFRIA to other regions and companies.

This is also achieved through exchanges among different professional organisations, bearing in mind that their professional relationships are sometimes not close. The fact that the first main user and initiator of the Pass was the Bigard Group (nearly 2/3 of trainees to date) may, for example, constitute a barrier to extension of the system among some meat companies that do not belong to the same employers' union.

Other large agri-food groups are also currently expressing interest; the increasing influence of the tool should be confirmed during this period of reflection about sector contracts.



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- Mr Batoge, Head of Training at the Bigard Group;*
- Ms. Joubier, Human Resources Department at the Bigard Group;*
- Mr Hennekine, Head of Human Resources at the Doux Group;*
- Ms. Pellerin, Head of Human Resources at Meralliance;*
- Mr Jamier, Head of Operations in France at Meralliance.*

