

Women in science: meeting one of them, Christine Ferran.

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On the fourth of February, Christine Ferran came to the University Institute of Rodez, to meet Information-Communication students. She talked about her job, her firm and about the condition of women in the scientific world. It was also the opportunity to prove students that communications can be applied to some different areas.

Mrs Ferran is a communications manager at **Inserm**. She is also a member of the **Women in Science** association whose goal is to find the key to women's issues at work - it is complicated for women to access or find a high position in the hierarchy of a corporation. Indeed, today it is a fact - there are not a lot of females who land these jobs.

At **Inserm, the National Institute for Health and Medical Research**, her main task is to convince researchers to communicate, especially in two ways - through "Café des Sciences" where people can discover current research, and by giving information to the journalists - thanks to press releases, for example. As a matter of fact, for this organisation, it is a "duty to inform" the population because the newly created medicines and drugs are finally for them, to take care of the people.

Secondly, Mrs Ferran explains the notion of information (in science still), because even if her job is to communicate, she must know about information first. A piece of information must be shared, must seduce and convince. And this is some hard work to make it understood by the scientists who have some prejudices against it. Thus, once you know what you want to communicate, you have to know who the recipients will be. There are four categories of them: **young people**, especially girls, who are the future of Inserm, the **scientific community** with whom breakthroughs are shared, the **patients** who must trust science and the **journalists** who ensure a mediation with the large public.

Thirdly, communicating is a matter of making choices - everything cannot be shared and understood, that is why one of Mrs Ferran's roles is to create an editorial policy for each of those targets.

Then, she has described some media to the students, warning them against the ethical issues that may arise in the world of journalism. From the newspapers, to the news media all the way through television, learners have discovered a reality: it is a big deal to communicate and, above all, share the information you want to convey.

When tackling the theme of science, the topic of communications is quite burning at Inserm. As a matter of fact, ethical issues are also present in that type of organisation, because of a strong local competition (even within a lab) and an accelerated construction and transmission of knowledge. Some researchers are tempted to forget collective responsibility and break these ethical rules by, for instance, publishing wrong results. Consequently, it is a duty for Inserm and its communications manager, Christine Ferran, to convince researchers to communicate in the right way, as we said before.



Furthermore, this goal is particularly difficult to reach because scientists and communicators are quite different- when journalists want to communicate emotions "to tell a story", scientists tend to be as neutral as possible, and if the first want to publish tangible results and major breakthroughs, the latter rarely reach a "Eureka!". Thus, this meeting was a great opportunity for the students to meet Mrs Ferran and discover her point of view, which is that of a woman working in a male environment. She gave an exhaustive and complete speech, talking about her company and the reality which lies behind the words "information" and "communications" in the specific area of science.