

PRESS RELEASE

Allande, the leading French manufacturer of women's lingerie opens an export distribution unit in Neuchâtel

A jewel of women's lingerie has announced today its arrival in Neuchâtel. Frantex, the export distribution unit of the Allande group, specializing in the design, manufacturing, marketing and sale of women's lingerie, is being opened in Neuchâtel. The Luxembourg, Belgian, German, Finnish and British markets will soon all be attended to by the logistics, marketing and sales support services in Neuchâtel.

Frantex already numbers more than 60 employees in Switzerland (in distribution and logistics). By 2008, the staff for the financial, logistics and marketing departments will rise to 20 people.

A Family Business

Allande is a family business founded by Philippe Lefebvre. The eldest of his daughters, Catherine Cotte, is a designer and every year creates two new collections of lingerie, a collection of bathing suits and two collections of indoor clothing. Nathalie Kordes, the youngest daughter is the director of exports and in charge of future markets.

The parent company, which was founded in 1994, has expanded rapidly. Already in 1999 the company opened a second production site, followed by a third in 2001. In order to make the collection more dynamic-looking, the Alcée brand name was created in 2002, and in 2003 a fourth manufacturing unit was opened. Last but not least, the beachwear and the Tanaïs indoor clothing collection was launched.

Allande, Alcée and Tanaïs are high quality products, entirely manufactured in France. Only luxury fabrics, such as lace from Calais or Swiss embroidery (Bischoff and Embrex) are used. Manufacturing is completely French and therefore benefits from the best labor force on the market.

Allande is the leading lingerie firm in France, with approximately CHF 49 million annual sales. The group employs 465 people in France. Every day the company produces some 7'000 pieces that are put on the market. Marketing and distribution are exclusively made through a network of more than 3'000 independent sales consultants and more than 350 company employees are assigned for support. The French activities of the Allande group are not affected by the expansion of the activity in Switzerland.

Home Party Sales Gains Popularity

While personalized home-delivery service is the oldest known way of selling, its role is more important today than ever before and it has a very promising development in most European countries. Allande's target customer is a refined woman aged from 30 to 50 with an active working life, who particularly appreciates this intimate and convivial way of shopping. This segment is characterized by higher and higher levels of spending on women's lingerie (+34.5% between 1998 and 2000 in Europe).

In addition, distribution in Switzerland has particularly retained the attention of the Allande group due to the diversity of clothing tastes and the important role of Switzerland seen as a test market for a successful development in north-eastern Europe or in Latin countries.

Future Development / Expansion

It is also important to note that, as from September 2005, Alcée will specialize in larger sizes. Furthermore, it is planned to open up new markets, among others in the United States.

Reinforcing The International Attraction Of Neuchâtel

The State Council and Development Economic State of Neuchâtel (DEN) offer a warm reception for the establishment of Frantex in the canton of Neuchâtel, which helps to reinforce the international attractiveness of the region.

State Councilor Bernard Soguel, Head of the Economic Department, is delighted that the name of Neuchâtel should be associated with such prestigious brands and wishes great success to this new company.

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