

2. RHÔNE-ALPES AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

2.1. In the context of the European Union, Rhône-Alpes has initiated a program of economic exchanges and agreements with three key European areas (Bade-Württemberg in Germany; Lombardy in Italy ; Catalonia in Spain).

By so doing, Rhône-Alpes appears to be pioneering in the creation of European Regional Centres. The population of these four areas represents more than 30 million consumers (a potentially larger market than Canada) and possesses a very varied economic profile.

2.2. Rhône-Alpes should be considered as a leader in the European Market of 340 million consumers.

3. RHÔNE-ALPES: A DYNAMIC POPULATION AND A BIG MARKET

3.1. With a population of 5.5 million inhabitants (more than 9% of the population of France, equal to the population of Finland or Denmark) Rhône-Alpes represents the second largest population centre in France after Paris and its region. The region also has one of the highest purchasing powers in France.

3.2. Thanks to the high speed TGV train (300 kmph) Lyons is only two hours away from Paris. All the main towns in the region are situated less than 250 km from Lyons. Each of these towns offers a substantial market. The three major towns in this area are Lyons, Grenoble and Saint-Etienne, which together account for 37% of the total population in the Rhône-Alpes area.