C&A to close down another 30 stores in France

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After an executive committee meeting on Friday, Dutch retail group C&A is planning the closure of 30 stores in France, putting 200 jobs at risk, according to various sources.

C&A’s revenue in France is declining and this is the second job-rescue plan undertaken by the group in the country in less than a year, after 14 stores were closed down last April.

“The goal is to protect as many jobs as possible, but this is sometimes very difficult; owing to the distance between stores, only 14 jobs were saved out of 100 following the closures [in April],” said Maria Rodrigues, a representative of the FO union, talking to the AFP agency. The outlook is bleak for what is “an ageing work force, many of the employees are over 50 and have spent their entire career at C&A,” she added.

Before the first spate of closures in 2019, C&A operated nearly 160 stores and had 2,800 employees in France. A few years ago, the group boosted its logistics capabilities, but sales have been slumping since 2016 according to Rodrigues, who talked of C&A’s “baffling strategy.”

AFP contacted C&A’s senior management, which confirmed the planned closures, designed to “enable [C&A] to adapt to the needs of a constantly evolving apparel distribution sector, and return to profitability.” C&A indicated that “on January 17, [the group] submitted to the central employee representatives’ committee a set of documents relating to a new rationalisation plan for the group’s store network, which could lead to the closing down of an extra 30 stores.”

C&A (from the initials of the first names of the founders, brothers Clemens and August Brenninkmeijer) is a family company that has been in business for six generations. “A long-established family, the only shareholder [in C&A] and one of the wealthiest in Europe, but at what cost?” asked the FO Commerce union in a press release published on Wednesday.

Many mass-market retailers in France, like Carrefour, Conforama and Auchan, have been downsizing, and the apparel sectors is especially exposed, following a decline in consumption expenditure in the last two years and the growth in the power of e-tail. In recent months, apparel retailers like New Look and Pimkie have streamlined operations.

Translated by Nicola Mira

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