

Lausanne, 20 April 1998

## **Orange Communications SA wins mobile telephone licence in Switzerland**

**Consortium awarded license to operate GSM 1800 network**

**Orange Communications SA was today awarded a licence to construct and operate a GSM 1800 network for mobile telephony in Switzerland. The decision was announced by the Swiss Communications Commission following a two-month review of bids received from six consortiums for the award of two national licences. Orange Communications SA comprises Orange plc, VIAG AG, Swissphone Engineering AG and the Cantonal Bank of Vaud (BCV).**

Commenting on the award, Frithjof Frederiksen, Managing Director of Orange Communications SA said: 'We are naturally delighted by this news. The competition was very strong but we always believed that our unrivalled experience in operating GSM 1800 networks, the success story of Orange plc in the UK allied to the strength of the brand, our track record of working together in other markets, and our knowledge of the Swiss market for mobile telephony would prove a winning combination. This is not only good news for Orange but also for the Canton of Vaud whose authorities gave us magnificent support.'

Orange Communications SA is based in Lausanne in the Canton of Vaud. The company has pledged to create up to 1,250 jobs in Switzerland of which around 70 per cent will be in the canton of Vaud and Lake Geneva region. It has also announced plans to invest more than one billion Swiss Francs in the venture; this will encourage the creation of high-tech start-up enterprises in the region. In addition, Orange intends to have close working relationships with Lausanne-based academic and technical institutions.

Orange plc and VIAG AG each currently hold 35% of the shares of Orange Communications SA with 20% held by Swissphone Engineering AG and 10 % by the Cantonal Bank of Vaud. It is also envisaged that there will eventually be a public offering following listing on a Stock Exchange.

Orange plc has built the biggest and most successful GSM 1800 network in the world which now has over 96% UK population coverage. Since its launch in 1994, Orange has acquired over 1.3 million customers representing 14.2% of the UK mobile market and has also developed one of the best recognised brands in the UK.



VIAG AG has gained substantial fixed and mobile telecommunications experience through its VIAGINTERKOM subsidiary which was awarded the fourth German mobile telephony licence in February 1997. VIAG and Orange are also partners in the third Austrian mobile licence through Connect Austria. Both the German and Austrian licences are for the operation of GSM 1800 networks. The Swiss telecoms partner of Orange Communications SA, Swissphone Engineering AG, is one of Europe's leading paging companies. Headquartered in the canton of Zurich, it employs 400 people and operates a modern call centre AirCall Lausanne. Swissphone Engineering AG also operates a Swiss paging roaming agreement with Orange plc.

The Cantonal Bank of Vaud (BCV) is one of Switzerland's leading regional banks majority-owned by the State of Vaud. With 2,000 employees, the BCV is one of the largest employers in the Canton of Vaud and plays a major role in the Union of Swiss Cantonal Banks.

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