



After reporting record 2018 earnings, PSA Group say they will reduce their dependence on Europe by launching Peugeot in North America, Citroën in India, and Opel in Russia. The group's record full-year sales and earnings were buoyed by the success of their Peugeot 3008 (photo) and 5008 SUV models.

Strong sales of its latest Peugeot SUVs have helped PSA to build on a steady recovery from near-bankruptcy in 2013-14, and CEO Carlos Tavares is applying the same discipline at the Opel division acquired from General Motors in 2017.

PSA say their 4.5 percent average margin goal for the 2019-'21 period will from now on include the less profitable Opel-Vauxhall division.

CFO Philippe de Rovira says the conservative "all-weather" objective covered the potential scenario in which Britain crashes out of the European Union in a no-deal "hard Brexit," as well as other market setbacks.

The Peugeot-Citroen-DS (PCD) division, housing its legacy French brands, reported a record 8.4 percent margin as sales rose 18.9 percent despite adverse currency moves and higher raw-material costs. Opel-Vauxhall (OV) recorded a 4.7 percent margin on sales of €18.31bn.

In addition to the new margin goal, Tavares unveiled steps to address the group's increased dependence on Europe, which now accounts for 80% of global vehicle sales in the wake of the Opel acquisition. The Citroën brand will launch in India as Opel returns to Russia in pursuit of a 50% group sales increase outside Europe by 2021, while PSA's long-promised return to North America will be led by the Peugeot brand. It has well been known since 2016 that PSA were going to return to North America, but until recently no decision had been taken as to which brand would lead the foray: Citroën, Opel, DS, or Peugeot. Some market research revealed Peugeot had the highest brand awareness of the four in the United States, for there are around 1,500 Peugeots still registered in the U.S.—probably the bulk of which are 404s, with a few

403s, 504s, and 505s—despite Peugeot having left the American market 28 years ago in 1991. The state with the highest Peugeot count? Alabama.