

bpost group subsidiary Active Ants opens its next E-fulfilment center of the future in Willebroek

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bpost group subsidiary Active Ants this summer moved into a new-build fulfilment center in Willebroek, where people and robots work alongside each other in a highly efficient setup. Thousands of shipments are prepared for online stores at the state-of-the-art facility. bpost group continues to grow in e-commerce logistics both in Belgium and globally.

The parcel market has yet to peak, despite a record year in 2020. In the first six months of the year, bpost recorded growth of 3% in the Benelux, compared with last year. bpost group is committed to remaining the leading e-commerce logistics provider in Belgium and helping drive the growth of Belgian online stores of all stripes with a wide range of solutions. That's why it has now launched activities at a highly automated E-fulfilment center in Belgium through its Active Ants subsidiary.

Humans and robots working together in efficient, sustainable union

The basis of the warehouse is the Autostore, a unique system where goods are stored in a very condensed way in bins. About twenty special storage robots drive on top of the bins over a grid and pick up the bins one by one, depending on the orders. The robots then bring these bins to the employees at the filling stations, also called picking stations. This goods-to-person system has a

very small footprint. The system stores up to six times more goods per square meter and the robots generate their own energy, minimizing the use of mains power.

"So storage, order picking, packing and sorting are completely automated. Employees form an efficient team with robots for the order picking. The return flow and the receipt of goods continue to be processed manually," says Jeroen Dekker, managing partner at Active Ants. "This mechanization leads to greater efficiency, high quality and a pleasant work environment for our employees. The setup is unique in the world."

Environmentally friendly, with the human touch

A box sealing machine with integrated printer has been specially designed for Active Ants. This means that personalized printed boxes can be made for every sender. "This unique functionality allows us to create personalized packaging for not just large but now also for small online stores," says Gert

Hellemans at Active Ants Belgium. "There is no longer any need to keep hundreds of pallets of preprinted boxes. That cuts customer costs and further shrinks the footprint," Hellemans says.

International e-commerce logistics is one of the drivers of growth at bpost group. The opening of the new Active Ants fulfilment center in Willebroek, and later this year another in Germany, brings the total number of bpost group fulfilment centers in Europe up to 11. There are four Active Ants sites (in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany) and seven Radial sites in Europe, including in Belgium, the Netherlands, the

UK, Italy and Poland, and Germany. A Radial site opened in Belgium this summer at the same site of the other subsidiary, Dynalogic, in Boom. Here, Radial focuses on larger online stores and offers bespoke fulfilment services, while Active Ants provides automated fulfilment services to small online stores, which also mainly sell smaller products. Together they form a network of centers close to customers, bpost group's response to the increasing demand for logistics services from e-commerce companies.

Source: [bpost](#)