International Post Corporation

# bpost group continues expansion in the Netherlands with future-proof Active Ants e-fulfilment centre

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bpost group subsidiary Active Ants has moved into a new-build fulfilment centre in Roosendaal, where people and robots work alongside each other in a highly efficient setup. Thousands of shipments are prepared at the state-of-the-art facility for online stores. Active Ants will also open a branch in Belgium in 2021, as bpost group continues to expand its e-commerce logistics services in Belgium and beyond.

"Storage, picking and sorting are all fully 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 mechanisation leads to greater efficiency, high quality and a pleasant work environment for our employees. The setup is unique in the world."

People and robots in union

65 autonomous mobile robots (AMRs) bring empty boxes to the employees, who fill them with the goods brought by other robots. The AMRs then transport the boxes to the packaging machines, where they are sealed and weighed. The boxes are made as small as possible to minimise filling and empty air. A shipping label is also attached.  The AMRs then sort the sealed boxes by shipper.

Around 40 robots are tasked with picking goods from the storage bins and bringing them to employees. This goods-to-person system is carefully designed to have a very small footprint. The system stores up to six times more goods per square metre and the robots generate their own energy, minimising the use of mains power.

Environmentally friendly, with the human touch

A box sealing machine with integrated printer has been specially designed for Active Ants. This means that personalised printed boxes can be made for every customer. "This unique functionality allows us to create personalised packaging for not just large but now also for small online stores," says Jean Lahaye, managing partner at Active Ants. "There is no longer any need to keep hundreds of pallets of preprinted boxes. That cuts customer costs and further shrinks the footprint," Lahaye says.

E-commerce logistics a driver of growth at bpost group

As its subsidiaries continue to grow, bpost is increasingly active in e-commerce logistics worldwide. This enables the company to expand around the globe, while also remaining one of Belgium's biggest employers.

The opening of the new facility in Roosendaal brings the total number of bpost group fulfilment centres in Europe up to eight. There are two Active Ants sites in the Netherlands and Radial has six facilities in Europe: one each in the Netherlands, the UK, Italy and Poland, and two in Germany. They form a network of centres close to customers, bpost group's response to the increasing demand for logistics services from e-commerce companies.

Active Ants expanding into Belgium and Germany in 2021

bpost 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. Active Ants will launch operations at an existing site in Boom, located between Antwerp and Mechelen, in the spring of 2021.

"I'm proud of this new step in our e-commerce logistics activities in the Netherlands," says Jean-Paul Van Avermaet, CEO of bpost group. "This shows not only that we are transforming our business in the right way to respond to the changing needs of our customers, but also that we have the courage to deploy state-of-the-art technology and innovation on the market to make our mark worldwide. I wish the colleagues at Active Ants huge success in this new step an look forward to the opening in Belgium."

Source: bpost


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