

Case study: VST

Two versatile systems to prepare 200 orders a day

Country: France



Cooperative VST has expanded its logistics centre in Les Essarts, France, and Mecalux has equipped it with Movirack mobile racking and multi-tier picking shelves. They have capacity for over 13,000 containers, which are stored according to their physical characteristics and weight. With this combination of solutions, VST has optimised its available space, sped up order preparation and reached its goal to dispatch more than 200 orders a day.



France's first industrial workers' cooperative

Active since 1976, VST (Vendée Sani Therm) is a French cooperative that accompanies and supports the activities of around 750 members (plumbers, electricians and roofers, among others). Its daily activity consists of supplying all the materials these professionals need to provide their customers with good service.

Due to the year-on year growth VST has experienced, the cooperative decided expand its logistics centre in Les Essarts by 7,300 m² with a single objective in mind. *"We wanted to bolster our growth prospects for the next few years,"* says Logistics Centre Manager Thierry Guillon.

The new addition is divided into two large areas. The first is the storage zone, which, thanks to optimisation of the surface area, occupies only 40% of the space (3,000 m²). The second is the order picking and dispatch zone — VST's main activities — which covers 60% of the total area (4,300 m²).

The storage systems are versatile enough to manage 13,000 SKUs of very diverse sizes. Guillon says: *"By starting-up this warehouse, our aim was to come up with the best way to organise and store a large number of pallets with extremely varied characteristics and turnovers. A quarter of these are large items, but we also have over 4,000 boxes."*

To that end, the cooperative contacted Mecalux. Guillon says: *"It's been a great partner for many years, so we knew we'd count on its collaboration again for this new logistics centre. We store our products on 800 x 1,200 mm pallets, so the Mecalux racks adapt to our needs perfectly."*

Two storage solutions in a single space

Taking into account VST's requirements, Mecalux set out to equip the logistics centre addition with two different storage systems: Movirack mobile racking and M7 heavy duty shelving for picking. Guillon says: *"We chose these two solutions because they would optimise space in our logistics centre and facilitate storage and order picking tasks."*

Every day, the warehouse receives 150 pallets sent by suppliers and quickly distributed on the racks based on product type, characteristics and turnover. Each storage system is allocated to specific items.

The Movirack racking houses bathroom renovation materials, radiators, heat pumps and household appliances.

The fixed racks on the ends of the Movirack system store shower enclosures, shower trays and insulation materials. Finally, the M7 heavy duty shelving is used for electrical, plumbing and HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) tools and supplies.



Thierry Guillon Logistics Centre Manager, VST (Les Essarts)

"Movirack mobile racks are the ideal solution for our warehouse, and we couldn't be more pleased with them: they leverage all the available space to provide storage capacity for more than 6,000 pallets. Meanwhile the M7 heavy duty shelving also houses a large number of items and facilitates order prep. The combination of these two systems will definitely boost our growth."

"We're thrilled with the expansion of our logistics centre. Mecalux understood our needs and proposed a solution 100% tailored to our business. And it did this while respecting the delivery deadlines," says Guillon.

Movirack mobile racking

Mecalux has installed three blocks of racking on mobile bases with a total storage capacity of 6,318 pallets. *"We were able to see how they worked in the Mecalux showroom in Barcelona and in other companies' facilities. And that really helped us make our decision,"* says Geoffroy Krieg, Deputy Executive Director.

The racks stand 7 m tall and have four levels. They are installed on mobile bases that move sideways autonomously. *"It's a very innovative system because it provides high storage capacity in small space. In addition, the rack levels have been adjusted so that we can store 3-metre-tall products,"* says Guillon.

In total, the system comprises 21 working aisles, of which only three remain open. Direct access to the goods is enabled by opening the required aisle by means of a remote control or directly via the onboard control panel. The other 18 aisles, which are completely compacted, make it possible to optimise 1,300 m² of floorspace.



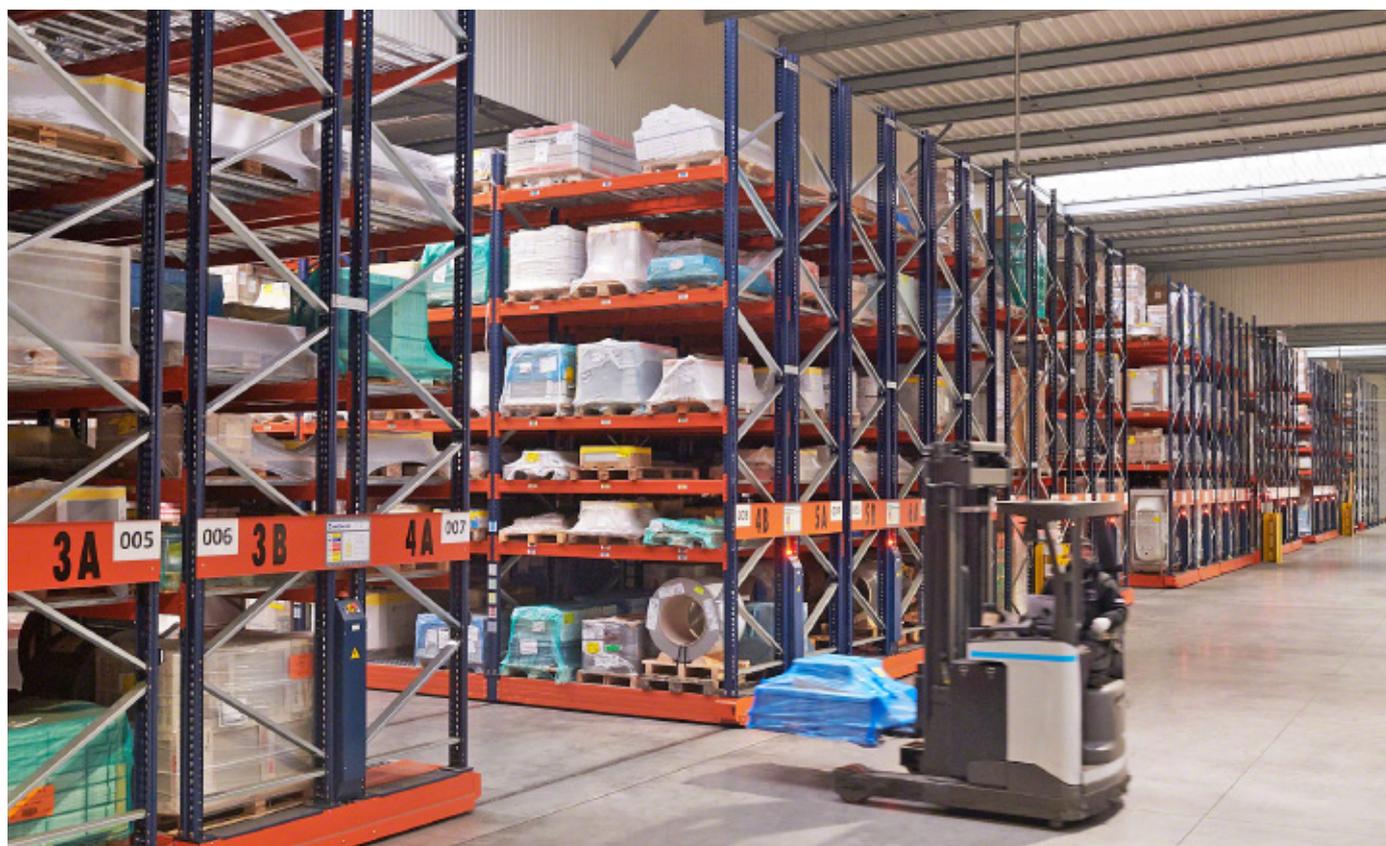
"Since we've been using these racks, there have been no malfunctions. By following Mecalux's advice in terms of cleaning, upkeep and maintenance, our day-to-day work is more efficient," says Guillon.

The racks have been specifically calculated and reinforced to ensure safe operations as well as the integrity of the operators, the goods and the system itself.

Manufactured according to the directives of the NF EN 15095+A1 European standard, the racks meet legal and technical safety requirements. They incorporate de-

vices that guarantee efficient, non-stop operations:

- **Exterior safety barriers** cut the power to the racking the moment an operator enters the aisle.
- **Interior safety barriers** detect the presence of objects or people in the aisle that would prevent the system from operating properly.
- **Emergency buttons** serve to stop the racks from moving in the event of an incident.
- Proximity photocells** ensure that the racks come to a smooth, safe stop.



Multi-tier M7 heavy duty shelving for picking

Mecalux has set up five 30-metre-long aisles with M7 heavy duty shelving for picking on each side. The shelves stand 7 m tall and include a wide range of accessories to adjust the locations to goods of varying sizes and characteristics. The shelving holds around 6,900 boxes.

Besides its versatility, this solution stands out for its great strength (each location can store up to 150 kg of products). Additionally, it offers direct access to the goods, which is essential for facilitating storage and order prep tasks.

Each aisle, spanning only 1.46 m wide, is equipped with a guide rail to guarantee the correct movement of the man-up order pickers. In these machines, the operator stands in the cabin and is lifted with the load. From that height, they pick the items that make up each order directly from the shelves.

Every day, around 200 orders are prepared and delivered to industrial workers in the area. Once the orders are complete, they are grouped in the 4,300 m² dispatch area, ready to be distributed among 12 loading docks.

Optimised warehouse

VST has enhanced its entire supply chain with this new addition to the logistics cen-



tre in Les Essarts. This facility serves the 750 members that form part of the cooperative. With the installation of two storage systems in one space, the company has achieved its goal. Movirack mobile racking is the only compact system that provides direct access to the goods in addition to optimising the surface area

to boost capacity. And the M7 heavy duty shelving is ideal for speeding up picking and storing a wide variety of goods by unit.

As a result, operations in VST's warehouse are seamless, and order picking is much faster.

Advantages for VST

- **Space optimisation:** the racks make the most of the available space to store a larger number of products (over 6,300 pallets).
- **Management of very varied goods:** the 13,000 SKUs are distributed in the warehouse according to their particular features, size and demand level.
- **Efficient picking:** every day, 200 orders are prepared with products from the Movirack mobile racks and M7 heavy duty shelving. The direct access provided by these solutions facilitates this operation.



Technical data

Movirack mobile racking

Storage capacity	6,318 pallets
Load size	800 x 1,200 mm
Max. load weight	1,250 kg
Racking height	7 m
Racking length	29 m

M7 heavy duty shelving

Storage capacity	6,900 boxes
Load size	400 x 600 mm
Max. load weight	25 kg
Racking height	7 m
Racking length	29 m