



Quality
Commissioning

Building with a vision for safety

Even the proverbial “fine print” must be respected. Our regional, national and European standards and regulations are full of it, in a manner of speaking. The people at Vinçotte, however, have the perfect magnifying glass to read this “fine print” – the magnifying glass that comes with years of experience and carefully developed expertise.

Meeting: Friday, 28 January

Place: Broekooi 170 in Zellik

Host: Pieter Thijs, Safety Manager, Euro Pool System

Guests: Dieter Joossens, Project Manager, Slough Estates

Eng. Marc Vanderhaeghe, Contract Manager, Vinçotte

At the end of 2003 the ground was broken for the new Euro Pool System warehouse in Asse (Zellik). Retailer Delhaize with its distribution centre is not only the neighbour across the road but also the most important user of this warehouse. Euro Pool System is in its start-up phase – 14 million crates this year – and expects to be running at full capacity by mid- 2007 – 32 million crates/year. Expansion is possible, since only 60% of the 25,000m² industrial estate has been developed.

Crates, you said?

Indeed, the blue crates of Euro Pool System, a company that grew from a “pool” of 12-odd Belgian and Dutch vegetable auctions that together decided to work with uniform packaging. A simple concept, which has now grown into a network of more than 40 warehouses in strategic locations throughout Europe. In Belgium Euro Pool System owns five official warehouses, of which Sint-Katelijne-Waver is the largest in Europe. Euro Pool System’s activities can best be described as chain integration: when delivering vegetables, fruit and other fresh products (fish, meat, cheese, bread, etc.) to the Delhaize distribution centre suppliers can at the same time pick up empty crates a few metres away. Once the delivered crates come back empty from the various Delhaize stores, they go to Euro Pool System, where they are automatically sorted, washed and

inventoried. As logistic facilitator Euro Pool System is the largest renter of multi-use packaging in Europe – with an annual circulation in excess of 350 million. Colruyt with its 186 subsidiaries has been calling upon Euro Pool System’s logistical know-how for some time.

Slough Estates as quality added value

Dieter Joossens: “Slough Estates was not only the owner of the land, but was involved in the full project management from the start. The development of the buildings adds significant quality value for our customers. I would even venture to say that in this case Slough Estates’ expansion policy fits in perfectly with that of Euro Pool System. The new location is totally designed and built according to the latest vision and fitted with two fully automatic washing facilities. The total washing section covers some 2,000 m². The building was designed for a minimum of 30 million crates/year, but can be expanded to 40 million. The “dirty” and “clean” areas of the warehouse are completely separated. We have even built the stock-rooms in such a way that exactly five pallets can be stacked.”

Pieter Thijs: “During the building of the warehouse we strictly implemented the BRC standards (British Retail Consortium). This alliance of British retailers has drawn up standards for suppliers of food products and

packaging, which are comparable to ISO 9001 and HACCP. Our new warehouse is therefore designed for the future on all fronts.”

Dieter Joossens: “A promising future even! We might be dealing with local logistics operations, but things are going well for our country, also internationally. Belgium is located in the centre of the northern section of the area with the largest industrial concentration in Europe. This unique geographical location puts the country in an extremely favourable position for semi-industrial activities. More particularly for European distribution centres and logistical service provision. As a European service provider Euro Pool System obviously has a great location here. Even if it is inspired by their neighbour, Delhaize.”

Pieter Thijs: “One of the suggestions, made specifically by the architectural firm, was the cooperation with Vinçotte. The architects’ motivation was very simple: through the subcontractors, which were involved in our project, we would have eventually become involved with Vinçotte anyway. You might as well work with them across the board.”

Dieter Joossens: “It may sound somewhat disrespectful, but at any rate there is a great deal of truth to it, even if I would have put it differently. Vinçotte is present everywhere, and as a result by definition has the “experience and knowledge” required for this kind





of complex project. Vinçotte is the top consultant for anything related to safety."

Marc Vanderhaeghe: "Not only does that argument play a role, it is also much more profitable for customers to work with one party. In this way customers don't have to call on several external specialists – who in practise often work next to each other instead of working together. If all safety aspects are managed by one specialist, it almost sounds self-evident that the synergy of all legal audits can never be equalled by any other cooperation."

Total intervention package in order to tackle safety aspects across the board

Marc Vanderhaeghe: "For a sizeable construction project quite a few safety aspects come to the surface, whether they be the result of regional (Flemish), national (Belgian) or European legislation. Our assistance is aimed at the compliance of the technical installation. This aim actually comprises two specifications: on the one hand the evaluation of compliance of delivered equipment –with respect to European and Belgian legislation in force– and on the other hand, support to the Safety Manager (prevention adviser) with respect to his legal obligations for the 'bringing into service'."

Dieter Joossens: "I know from practical experience that this is not only an almost unmanageable task, but also quite a nervewracking one. In the case of the Pegasus Park in Diegem, the latest generation of "Slough's Industrial parks", I remember that the green plan had to be scrupulously geared to the underground piping plan."

Marc Vanderhaeghe: "That is 100% correct, because just stop and think for one moment how "unsafe" it would be not to have a clear plan – for example the water or sewer pipes that are hit by a tap during "grounds work". Or even worse a gas pipe."

Pieter Thijs: "Another nerve-racking element is all those other checks for the safety and compliance of the project. To name a few: European guidelines, machinery guidelines, Belgian legislation with ARAB Codex (work safety) and AREA (General Regulations for Electrical Installations) and Flemish legislation with Blare II (Protection of the Environment). With reference to the latter, I'm thinking, among other things, of the evacuation of rainwater and waste-water – since at Euro Pool System we wash the crates with rainwater and rinse them with tap water."

Marc Vanderhaeghe: "In my position as 'Coordinator Conformity of Technical Installations' I am backed by people with the right knowledge. There is no way I can know everything about everything, but I know exactly which specialists at

Vinçotte are the right experts. I have finished construction projects in the past where we were involved with 15 people from Vinçotte. We then work together as a 'dedicated team', whereby everyone brings the right skills from their field of expertise – regardless of whether it involves controlling automatic systems or the knowledge of specific Blare regulations. Vinçotte has all specialists under one roof. Or to put it in a more modern way, I have all their numbers in my mobile phone."