



GYS has expanded its warehousing facilities to a total area of 20,000 m². The logistics building, equipped with photovoltaic panels of, has been ISO 14001 certified since January 2023, as have the manufacturing facilities.



«Looking ahead, beyond production and the design office, the difference will be in our operational efficiency,» says Bruno Bouygues, CEO of GYS.

Continuous development, step by step

The Mayenne-based manufacturer, specialising in battery maintenance, welding, cutting and automotive bodywork repair equipment, is continuing to invest in its logistics warehouse and production facilities. The objective is to increase the company's capacity to accommodate a four-fold increase in the quantity of orders.

We are obligated to keep moving forward,» explains Bruno Bouygues, CEO of GYS, the specialist manufacturer of battery maintenance, welding, cutting and auto-body repair equipment. There is no question that the French family-run SME, which will be celebrating its 60th anniversary next year, will continue to constantly invest, ensuring that it is equipped to adapt to the rapidly changing realities of the marketplace,

but also to meet its ambitious targets for future growth. And the Mayenne-based company has no shortage of ambition; it has its sights set on 300 million euros in 8 to 10 years time, more than double its current turnover of 130 million. «Looking ahead, beyond production and the design office, the difference will be in our operational efficiency and, in particular, in our ability to store raw materials, components, and finished products».

20 000 m²
of logistics space

Just before Covid, the company invested in a new 10,000m² warehouse, 'GYS 2', in Changé, a short distance from the head office in Saint-Berthevin, near Laval (53), which also houses its manufacturing and R&D departments. In 2023, the capacity of this facility doubled

to 20,000 m² following a second stage of investment. The total expenditure totals 10.5 million euros, including a substantial solar power system installed on the roof which is already helping to recoup a portion of the investment. These photovoltaic panels are also part of the company's CSR programme; last year GYS carried out a carbon audit to gain a clearer understanding of how it can contribute to sustainable development. In January, the company obtained ISO 14001 certification (environmental management) for all its facilities in France. Looking ahead, the 20,000 m² warehouse facility will provide the necessary infrastructure to support growing ambitions, and lay the foundations for the future of the company. «This warehouse is one of the showpieces of the business. It's the biggest in Europe within our industry,» says Bruno. «We heavily invested in logistics during the pandemic, which now means that we can dispatch orders within 24 hours and, if necessary, stock items for our distribution customers. This resource is also helping us progress with the Europeanisation of GYS».

Europeanisation

Over the next five years, the company aims to serve ten thousand distributors throughout Europe, with export sales currently accounting for 50% of total sales. By the end of this period, 2,000 to 3,000 orders will have to be dispatched every day, compared with the 500 to 600 at present. «The number of orders will quadruple, and some of them will be micro-orders. So we need to mechanise in order to reduce costs. The new warehouse will enable us to carry out robotisation trials. We're investing in the resources we will need in order to serve our customers better, and to acquire the latest technology».

The Spanish and Italian subsidiaries are already being supplied directly from the central warehouse in Changé, while the German and UK subsidiaries have their own logistics centres. A fifth subsidiary, in Eastern Europe, is due to open soon. Through a dedicated export department, which consists of around forty people and speaks some fifteen languages, GYS markets its products in more than 135 countries. The company is also working towards the goal of becoming an authorised economic operator. This will give them the capacity



The Changé logistics unit centralises all products from GYS I, the Saint-Berthevin production site, GYS China, and resale merchandise.

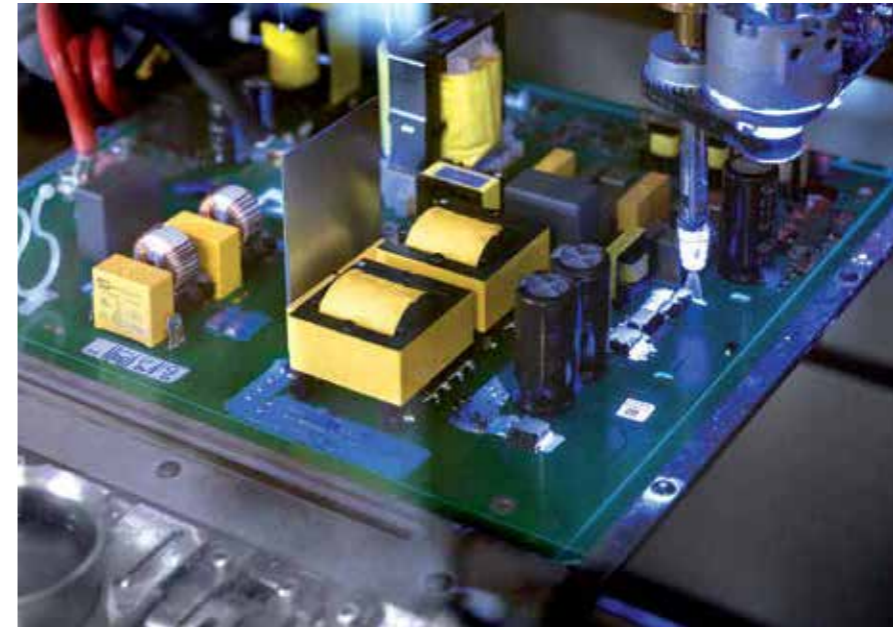


Vertical storage areas specifically for accessories and consumables have been set up in the warehouse, alongside conventional 13-metre-high racks. Smaller items with a high turnover rate are stored in the lower area.



The recent expansion of the logistics space is intended to accommodate the growth of the company, but it also allows them to stock pallets of products that cannot be dispatched due to the recent wave of «blank-sailing» (cancelled stops by transport vessels).

STRATEGY



The varnishing line for printed circuit boards has been doubled at the Saint-Berthevin production site.



to clear their products through customs from their own warehouse, enabling them to be more responsive and more accountable, as they will have all the export documentation in-house.

Greater manufacturing efficiency

Of course logistics are not the only area of investment for GYS. They manufacture 65% of products sold in France at their Saint-Berthevin site, where the entire production process is handled (electronics, mechanics, transformers, wiring, sheet metal, paint, etc.). Of the remaining 35% of sales, one half come from the Gys China production unit (small welding units for DIY, etc.) and the other half are traded accessories and consumables purchased globally.

Around €7 million is invested every year at Saint-Berthevin, a site that is also constantly evolving. Taking advantage of the 3,000 m² vacated at the old logistics centre, and the 5,600 m² extension completed in 2020, the total production area in France now exceeds 50,000 m². The new space has enabled the workshops to be reorganised, with some of them resized, and stock of semi-finished products introduced between the different production areas. For example, the automated varnish coating line for printed circuit boards has been doubled. In addition, two new testing machines have been installed, bearing in mind that electronic boards



«Robotics is a very important area of innovation for us. We're learning about different systems so that our power sources can be incorporated into a comprehensive welding solution,» says Cédric Ougergouz, the Group's Sales Director.

come in two types, through-hole or surface-mounted (SMD).

«The expansion of the line will enable us to supply the production facilities more quickly,» explains Cédric Ougergouz, the Group's Sales Director.

A large area has been freed up to accommodate a new robot for automated sheet metal bending in the not-too-distant future, which will be used in the production of machine bodywork and casings. The sheet metal workshop is, ultimately, the only place in the company where manual welding is still practised, giving the company the opportunity to use their own products. The department has been

strengthened and now includes two full-time positions, responsible primarily for welding the components used in the lifting systems that the company offers to the automotive/heavy goods vehicle repair sector, for the handling of vehicle wheels, for example. These products are standardised and must comply with very precise specifications, meaning that the welding process must be extremely meticulous.

A robotics test laboratory

The former finished-product warehouse now houses the milling-machining workshop, which has benefited from the increased surface area by integrating new machines. The other part of the finished-product warehouse is now used to store raw materials and components.

The most recent part of the building has two floors, and houses the assembly workshop for welding and battery charging, and maintenance equipment:



The sheet metal workshop will soon benefit from a new automatic bending machine.



This workshop is the only one in the business where manual welding is still used.

the first floor is occupied by heavy and light MIG-MAG welding and charging products, while the ground floor is used for more complex equipment, such as ventilation elements, and a variety of printed circuit boards, etc. Every line is structured in the same way, with an essential testing procedure for each piece of equipment at the end of each line,

culminating in the issuing of a traceability label. Handling support systems for the heavier components have been also been put in place.



For the past three years, GYS has been designing and manufacturing lifting equipment for automotive/heavy goods vehicle repair workshops, designed to help them handle heavy goods such as wheels and brake discs. This is the test area.

The new building has also become home to a showpiece robotics test laboratory. «This is a very important area of innovation for us. We're learning about different robotic systems so that our power sources can be incorporated into a comprehensive welding solution,» explains Cédric Ouguergouz. Building on partnerships with leading robot and cobot manufacturers, GYS naturally supplies the installation with the welding source, as well as the corresponding integration process and the SAM (Smart Automation Module) communication unit, which enables the power source to interact with the robot. The new industrial welding catalogue from GYS also includes an integration section, with dedicated cobotics and robotics packs based on different manufacturers. Via the extranet on the GYS website, the customer can download all the necessary software and data files, which can then be integrated into the communications module of the robotic installation.

Located adjacent to the design office, another test area is growing in size; this one dedicated mainly to prototypes or to aftersales testing, when specific problems need to be identified. By the end of the second quarter, a large room with four climatic chambers will be operational, providing a facility to test machines in adverse operating conditions, under extreme low and high temperatures. Again, the aim is to improve responsiveness, and to test the ever-growing number of machines, in every possible customer environment. «We now have a sizeable



The prototype testing area has been expanded to streamline the process between design office projects, and the start of production. This copper floored area, in which the power source can be tested for electromagnetic interference, will be doubled in size.



This microscope, which magnifies two thousand times, can be used to check micro-welds on electronic boards, for example.

design office that undertakes a large variety of projects. The larger space gives us greater flexibility, because all our machines can be tested more thoroughly before they actually go into production». The test area is also fitted with machines to reproduce the voltage variations of the world's different electrical distribution systems, and a vibrating table to measure machine durability against the various impacts to which it may be subjected, during transport for example. A second room, recognisable by its copper floor, will also be installed to check that the welding equipment does not create electromagnetic disturbances in the surrounding environment.

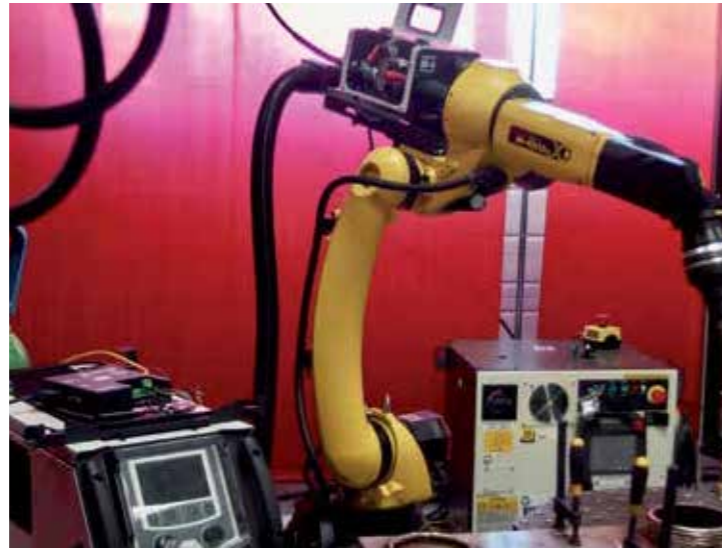
Academy extension

The GYS Academy has not been left behind. In addition to the bodywork/automotive and welding sectors, the charging division has its own dedicated area, with a showcase of equipment and tailored retailing solutions. «This facility is an important resource for training our



GYS has formed partnerships with various robot and cobot manufacturers, with the aim of integrating its welding power sources with their respective systems.

customers in the product and in sales. At GYS, we strive to provide sales support that helps our distributors to market our products. 70 to 80 French customers come here every year for training» explains Hervé Barbaroux, head of the



GYS designs the interface and the communication module between robot and welding unit, as well as the support bracket for integrating the module into the robotic arm.

French sales department.

In the French market, the sales team is comprised of around forty people, plus a dozen specialist demonstrators, divided between the bodywork/automotive and industrial welding sectors, and supervised by two sales managers. The Industry demonstrator team works exclusively on the industrial welding catalogue, handling specialist welding dealers and providing support to general distributors. Today, the GYS sales strategy is built on the level of partnership that exists with the dealer. To benefit from the status of partner, the distributor must be able to stock machines, and

have sales staff dedicated to the welding sector, who are capable of carrying out demonstrations and commissioning, and of representing the brand in terms of its quality. «We require our partners to have loan machines. A breakdown is not necessarily a serious problem, but when a machine has a defect and the customer needs it, they should be able to have a substitute unit available to avoid any production interruption». The Aftersales department at Saint-Berthevin is able to respond to breakdowns more rapidly because it is located close to the design office, which can help to resolve any unknown technical problems.



In the assembly workshop, each production line is organised in the same way, with an electrical safety test for each product at the end of the line. Once the test has been approved, a serial number is issued with all the necessary traceability information. This label is affixed to the product and to the packaging.



8 Kronos power sources leave this assembly line every day.

STRATEGY



In addition to the bodywork/automotive and industrial welding sectors, the charging division now has a showroom specifically dedicated to it too, with equipment on display and suitable merchandising solutions.

«Our competitors in France are often subsidiaries with remote Aftersales services. With us, all the data is available on site.»

Website version 2

With a desire to provide maximum support to its distributor customers, GYS has now integrated all 3,700 of its products into a PIM (Product Information Management) system, which is constantly being updated in order to provide all sorts of data to its resellers, regardless of the format they use. The company has also carried out extensive work on its website. Until now, distributors could use their customer account number to access Aftersales monitoring, spare parts lists, and marketing campaigns, including flash newsletters. The semi-annual newsletters are now presented in four editions, highlighting special promotions for the different markets (Industrial welding, Car body repair, DIY, etc.).

Version 2 of the website adds an extra layer of security, giving distributors the ability to log in with an e-mail account, which they can share with the employees of their choice. Initially, they will be able to place orders, with subsequent monitoring, and at a later date they will be able to find out the stock level of a product, once the new ERP system has been implemented. Customers will also be able to download the company's CSR commitments and practices.

Lower tariffs

In line with customer expectations, GYS introduced a new price list on 1 May... with an overall average reduction of 3%. «When steel and component prices rose, we made a commitment to review our pricing when raw material and transport costs declined. This is now the case. So we decided to revitalise our products by lowering our prices to better reflect the market situation. It's a powerful statement» continues Hervé Barbaroux.

After a slow year in 2022, due to inflation and the war in Ukraine, the company can count on the diversity of its three catalogues (Charging, Welding, Car Body Repair) to find new sources of growth. «We are seeing an upsurge in the market for battery chargers, which is experiencing significant growth, while industrial welding and cutting are also developing rapidly».

In addition, while the welding range is divided into five categories (MMA, TIG, MIG/MAG, Plasma Cutting, Induction), the company is announcing new Pulse Inverter MIG machines for the end of 2023, to complement the Neopulse range, with more streamlined interfaces and functionalities than the existing units designed for incorporation into robotic installations. «In 2023, despite the war in Ukraine, we're starting out in a more favourable period for business,» explains Bruno Bouygues, who, after a phase of relative calm, foresees a period of strong momentum. «Some of our production departments are under considerable pressure. We are no longer able to increase capacity in the

body shop, mechanical welding or metal fabrication departments. And we don't have sufficient space for robotisation. Some innovative product families will help drive our progress, because the current plant was not designed with them in mind. That's going to require new buildings...» A new manufacturing site is planned, within the next 18 months, on the 8,000 m² still available at the GYS 2 site. However, the CEO remains on the lookout for land for future buildings.

AR