

Interview with Mr. Filip Engelsmann, Owner and General Director of AURA

“The current priorities of AURA are to strengthen the company brand and develop stable work teams”, says the head of the largest Czech exporter of information systems in the field of military logistics.



Mr. general director, last year AURA celebrated 30 successful years of its existence. How did the festive year 2019 contribute to the development of your company?

Last year was really challenging for our company, but also interesting and varied. In addition to a high-quality fulfilling of foreign and domestic orders, we had a nice duty to celebrate with dignity and originality the important 30th anniversary of the foundation of AURA - from the original production cooperative established before the Velvet Revolution to FE Holding, which is based on AURA itself. At the conference held in the company headquarters in the centre of Brno, and then at the Brno Observatory and Planetarium, we welcomed representatives from 12 foreign partner organizations and dozens of domestic customers, including the leaders of our armed forces. Our employees enjoyed the anniversary especially at the two-day meeting in the beautiful historic town of Kroměříž. The joint team event, where we commemorated our main common successes, boosted our self-confidence, strengthened our sense of belong-

ing to the company, and was a motivation and encouragement for all of us to continue working.

The developers of our MC CATALOGUE information system for codification according to the NATO standards have been preparing projects for other countries and constantly working to improve the system for its current and future users. MCCATALOGUE is currently used in twenty countries around the world. Another important project of the last year was the implementation of the Logistic Information System developed by AURA and used by the Czech Armed Forces for the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The project has been continuing according to the plan also this year. Our codification agency was declared the most demanded agency in Czechia for the year 2019. It processed almost 80% of all codification data of suppliers of Czech companies to the Ministry of Defence.

Last year was very varied for AURA, but not so exceptional as for work. What actually forms the basis of the company favourable development, what have you preferred in recent years?

This interview would probably not be enough to analyse all preconditions for the favourable development of AURA. Each time and each situation require different approaches, which we have been experiencing very clearly in the current coronavirus pandemic. The world of ICT is also very specific, with a huge added value of the resulting products and work performance. Clear and well-thought-out personnel policy is essential in this area, from selecting the right people to stabilizing, strengthening and training entire work teams. I have appreciated the ability of our teams to adapt to various difficult situations also now, at a time marked by many

restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have very quickly improved in a distance communication, which is useful for us, because working in international teams and remote collaboration in general is becoming more and more common.

AURA is significantly presenting itself in the sphere of advertising, PR and comprehensive company branding. What can you tell us about it?

AURA has developed into the largest Czech exporter of information systems in the field of military logistics. We regularly participate in international conferences, seminars, professional working groups or economic diplomacy events focused on defence and security that are organized mainly by the Industrial Cooperation Division of the Ministry of Defence. In addition to the company itself, we successfully represent also Czechia at these events. In the last years, we have been focusing on new and modern marketing, advertising and PR policy, which certainly contributed to the fact that AURA was declared the company of decade in Czechia last year. Our new branding is more visible also due to a massive campaign related to the celebrations of AURA 30th anniversary. I am glad that the more distinctive company face finds its response at home as well as abroad. We have also created a new website with emphasis on the practical side of presenting the company portfolio and comfortable environment for visitors. In general, we pay more and more attention to the complex concept of social networks. Through them we try to create a favourable image in a specific territory before the actual physical activity, but also to establish good business-partnership relationships. You can read about us in printed or electronic commercial and non-commercial periodi-

icals in Czech and foreign language versions, and in a number of catalogues focused primarily on the Czech defence industry.

The whole world, including our Czech society, has been significantly struck by the COVID-19 pandemic this year. How has this affected the life in AURA?

“No one should ever consider anything definitive because no one ever knows what can happen” are the lyrics from the Golem revue by Voskovec, Werich and Ježek. They remind me not only of the current pandemic situation but also, for example, of the fading global migration crisis, when no one even foresaw such catastrophes. Very extensively and analytically, with mathematical models predicted crises and threats do not take place, but there come completely new and unexpected ones. It is not possible to prepare for them, but it is possible to react to them. Then, it depends on the speed and erudition of stable and real work teams, how quickly the standard state returns. AURA is a medium-sized ICT company and our employees have often worked in the „Home Office“, communicating on a regular basis through teleconferences, both among themselves and with their partners and customers from remote parts of the world. Currently, we are preparing the international codification courses NCS College 2020 in cooperation with the University of Defence in Brno and Czech National Codification Bureau, and we are evaluating whether we will make them on-site as usual or off-site without the need to travel for the students.

We soon adapted to the difficult situation at work. What I see as particularly important in relation to this pandemic is to maintain mental health and family integrity, and to find the optimal relationship between work

and personal or family life. I would also like to emphasize the tolerance and search of informal and effective help not only for people in the company, but also outside its circle. In this sense, AURA in cooperation with Code Creator offered to use the Publi system – a multiplatform server-client software system for publishing and managing text and multimedia documents.

It is evident from history that AURA is not a company treading water. It is constantly trying to adapt to new requirements, developing new information systems at the national and international level. What new can we expect from your company in the coming years?

It is obvious that we will continue to be active in the specific field of information systems for military logistics. We will focus on the development of our successful MC CATALOGUE which is currently the world's most widespread software tool for materiel codification. In this area, we have been constantly extending the portfolio of services made to order for our customers which are primarily national codification bureaus and companies from the defence industry. Speaking of codification, I would like to come back to the aforementioned Publi system. Technical documentation plays a major role in codification. And we have found an ideal and powerful tool in the mentioned platform, which can very effectively and at the same time safely manage the distribution of multimedia electronic documents. I would be happy if everyone, who needs to share documents with their customers, partners or institutions, has the opportunity to get to know Publi and discover its unexpected advantages. In AURA, we believe that there is a future in such tools.

Last year, we started working on a new generation of Logistic Information System – LIS which is designed for foreign markets. The development is based on our experience gained from the long-term cooperation with the Czech Armed Forces. The goal is to create a modular solution that can flexibly respond to the requirements of future customers, and thus maximize the capabilities of their armed forces. The key to achieving this goal is in particular the capability to cooperate with foreign armed forces, comprehensive overview of assets and their movements, well-trained units, operational equipment, ability to flexibly change plans according to the current situation and long-term sustainability of the entire supply chain. The basis of the system are modules for managing property, personnel and services together with operation and maintenance of equipment. They provide answers to the basic logistic questions – who, what, where and how much. In addition to the quality and timeliness of data, we also pay attention to their security. We are aware of the fact that nowadays the conflicts are moving into cyberspace. Therefore, in the development of logistics, we use modern robust technologies and adhere to international standards. The current pandemic has highlighted the key role of efficient logistics and well-functioning distribution chains.

I believe that AURA, which is primarily engaged in the development and implementation of logistic information systems, will significantly contribute to overcoming the pandemic consequences and will have plenty of opportunities to succeed in the field of military logistics in the future.

Antonín Svěrák thanked for the interview

Photo: AURA archive

