



The Albrecht model home is the perfect starter home

With well-educated workforce, the history of commercial excellence, and proximity to the West, the Czech Republic has made a relatively easy transition to the free market, putting it on the fast track for EU membership. Throughout the country, construction has boomed as companies have improved their infrastructure and private citizens have built homes for themselves. The construction company Nordstav has positioned itself for projects in both commercial and private sectors. In particular, it has moved to become an expert in the construction of wood-frame environmentally friendly homes.

Nordstav is a classic Czech success story. Radomir Moucka, a trained mason, founded the enterprise in 1994. While he started offering his services initially as a one-man operation, the swelling order books prompted him to add employees. The breakthrough came two years later when he was tapped by Metrostav, one of the Republic's largest construction general contractors, to handle masonry work on the renovation of the Komerční Banka in Ustí nad Labem. The job was to run at least two years. Almost overnight the employee ranks at Nordstav climbed to 127 in 1997. When this project was completed, new jobs continued to come in, including jobs with SKD Prumstav and Dvorak Tabor. Still, this early success left a bittersweet taste in the mouth of Mr. Moucka after some important customers failed to pay their bills, forcing the company president to reduce the workforce by more than 50%

and to stop cooperation with the debtors in 1999. To provide the company with a steadier contract situation and give it a greater degree of independence, Mr. Moucka diversified into the construction of wood-frame structures, such as residential homes. In 2000, Nordstav began construction on its first wood-frame house. "These construction projects not only improved our bottom line, but also our image within the industry," explains Mr. Moucka. "In 2000, we also adopted a stock-holding structure, with my wife and me each holding 50% of the shares." That same year, Metrostav turned to Nordstav for work on the construction of the motorway D8, connecting Teplice and Dresden. Today, the construction of wood-frame single-family homes accounts for around one-third of Nordstav's revenue. "It was our hope to establish this type of construction and become the leader in it," says Mr.

Moucka. "Still conservative Czech consumers continue to prefer stone masonry homes. Nevertheless, we have made strides in positioning our homes as a low-energy alternative targeting environmentally conscious consumers." In addition to residential home construction, Nordstav provides its service on a wide range of commercial projects as well as in project management and construction supply wholesale. Thanks to its location in Teplice, just 20 km from the border with Germany, Nordstav has worked on several projects in Germany. "We've even had interest in projects as far away as Spain, Sweden, and Greece," adds Mr. Moucka. "We see excellent potential for expansion into the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, and Denmark. We are even seeking to gain a foothold in Asia, where the wood-frame houses will find their market." To make the transition to the international market,

Nordstav is looking for sound partners in the rest of EU, particularly in Germany. Moreover, it is interested in forging ties with people interested in investing in the Czech Republic, such as real estate developers. "I'm proud of what we have achieved in a little over a decade. We have an excellent full-time team of around 50 who deserve much credit for success. To grow more in the future, we need to professionalize our management operations," concludes Mr. Moucka. ■

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# Building the new Czech Republic



The reception of Nordstav, which makes its home in Teplice, Czech Republic