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SATRON

Innovative instrumentation brings great benefits to their users

DAREKON GROUP

New subsidiaries in Stockholm and Ylivieska are accelerating Darekon's development

SUSTAINABILITY

Darekon is determined to make its operations even more sustainable



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18 Sustainability is a journey that at Darekon reflects years of determined and consistent development work. Now Darekon is raising the target level even further and the firm has defined its different areas of sustainability very clearly.



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Kai Orpo
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2022: Management of supply chains and integration of operations

2022 is coming to an end and it was a special year, the third special year in a row. Each of those years has been special in different ways. First, the pandemic and related semiconductor availability challenges, which later expanded to other electronic components and raw material prices. Then the Russian attack on Ukraine and its political and economic consequences.

Supply chains in the electronics industry are living in a challenging era. Equipment manufacturers (OEM), contract manufacturers (EMS), distributors and component manufacturers strive to make the supply chain work as efficiently as possible. However, geopolitical changes, pandemics and climate change alter conditions quickly and predicting that change is difficult. The increase in demand for electronic components has extended delivery times, increased prices and increased EMS inventories. We expect the situation to improve during the next year.

In the midst of all this, we are also investing in the sustainability of our operations at Darekon. We have updated our Code of Conduct and created a sustainability program, which has helped us to determine our priority areas and sustainability goals.

In autumn 2021, we acquired the Swedish EMS company SMD Production AB of Stockholm. We have now changed its name to Darekon AB. At the turn of last year we also acquired Premec Oy, a sheet metal contract manufacturer from Ylivieska. Premec has continued its profitable growth. The integration of the functions of both companies into the Darekon Group is well under way. In addition, in the spring we decided to concentrate Darekon's Finnish electronics manufacturing in Haapavesi. This meant the shut-down of the Savonlinna facility. The run-down will be completed by the end of October.

The Darekon Group is aiming for a turnover of 80 million euros this year, and the number of employees has already increased to more than 400. During the current year, costs and the need for working capital have increased. A functioning value chain is based on trust between the parties, and in special times, the importance of reliable supplier relationships increases even more.

Solutions to these challenges can be found, and true partners will stand out in difficult times. Finally, I would like to thank all Darekon employees, our customers and suppliers for the past year.

Many thanks!
Kai Orpo

“

True partners
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difficult times.”

Premec invests in a turret punch press and a press brake

Premec Oy, a part of Darekon Group based in the Finnish town of Ylivieska, is updating and supplementing its machining capacity with two new machines.

Amada EMZ-3612 is a new generation turret punch press, which at Premec replaces an older, smaller machine. The new machine is servo-operated and saves about 70 per cent of the energy compared to a hydraulic-operated machine.

Speed in setup

Thanks to the large working area of the Amada EMZ-3612, it can punch up to 3mx1.5m sheets without realignment. In the new type of revolver, changing tools is easy and making setup is faster than before. You can also make threads at the same time.

Premec has seven turret punch presses in use. The new machine was installed in August.

New is always better than old

In the near future, Premec's 14th press brake will also be installed in Ylivieska, which will contribute to increasing the bending capacity. The Amada HFE3i is an 8-axis machine with a capacity of 100 tons and a width of 3.1 meters.

The graphical user interface using a large touch screen is intuitive and gives the user alternative options for flexible programming.

Setting up complex bendings is also quick.

"New and modern machines are always a little better than the old ones," says **Juha Männistö**, CEO of Premec Oy. "These machines are a welcome supplement to our machine base because there is really a lot of work. The value of the investments is in the order of half a million euros." ■



Warehouse carousels increase efficiency and free up production space at Haapavesi plant

Many people have heard of the paternoster elevator in the Parliament House in Helsinki. Its compartments go up and down in an endless chain and the same principle is applied in many warehouse carousels.



Darekon has invested in two Kardex Megamat warehouse carousels at its Haapavesi manufacturing facility. They stand freely and back-to-back in the component warehouse. The first unit has 12 carriers, each with space for 18 boxes of small component reels, and seven carriers for 10 boxes of large reels. The second unit has 26 carriers for boxes of small reels. The system can accommodate a total of around 20,000 small component reels and a couple of thousand large ones.

Space and speed

The whole system takes up only about 10 square meters of floor space and frees up 70m² of space taken up previously by shelves. Space saving is just one of the benefits of the system. Collecting components is much faster than from a regular shelf because the carousel always conveys the right carrier via the shortest path to the access opening.

The chances of picking errors are also reduced substantially because only the right carrier is within reach of the picker at any given time. In addition, the display bar at the edge of the work surface indicates the correct box where the requested coil can be found. At the same time the system's software takes care of, for example, the use of components in order of age, and that the coils that are not full are used first.

More room in the fall

"Paternoster has proven to be an excellent solution to streamline the management of components in the warehouse and frees up space," says Darekon Oy's Haapavesi plant manager **Antti Järviluoma**. "We have already ordered another similar system in which slightly larger components will be stored. It will be installed in another part of the plant and the warehouse carousel in question is seven meters high. This frees up about 100 square meters of floor space." ■

Darekon Oy's Savonlinna operations will be transferred to Haapavesi

In 2006 Darekon acquired the electronics contract manufacturer ET-Electro that was based in the village of Savonranta. The plant was successful and grew well. In 2019 issues such as staff recruitment and handling of logistics in a rather remote and small village led to the transfer of operations to the centre of Savonlinna, located 45 kilometers away.



Now – just three years later – the economic situation has changed greatly and for well-known reasons. As a consequence, the centralisation of Darekon's Finnish electronics manufacturing in Haapavesi leads to an improvement in supply reliability and cost competitiveness. The Haapavesi facility represents the best of Finland both in terms of know-how and machinery.

SMT placement at three plants

"The Haapavesi plant has for years made circuit boards for a significant part of the devices manufactured at the Savonlinna facility," says Darekon's Klaukkala and

Savonlinna plant manager **Pekka Antikainen**. "The assembly and final testing of the devices was primarily done in Savonlinna. The management of logistics and the entire supply chain will become simpler once the assembly work is transferred to Haapavesi."

Negotiations in good spirit

According to Antikainen, a total of 34 people at the Savonlinna unit have been involved in negotiations over the changes. Everyone has been offered a job at Haapavesi, and in the spring a two-day familiarisation trip to the Haapavesi factory and the city was organised for the entire staff.

"The transfer of operations is a two-sided issue," says Teemu Liukkonen, chief steward of the Savonlinna factory. "It's a pity that jobs are lost, but we have been able to manage things in perfect harmony with Darekon's management. Work has already been found for the vast majority of those who do not want to move to Haapavesi."

According to Antikainen, production transfer from Savonlinna to Haapavesi has been taking place one customer at a time since the beginning of June. At the end of the summer there was even a shortage of workers at Savonlinna, after some had already resigned. The unit will finally close at the end of October. ■

At the Klaukkala plant, people are being recruited and work shifts added



Darekon Oy's manufacturing facility in Klaukkala is busy. The increase in demand has led to the need to recruit significantly more employees for production work. At the same time, work shifts have been increased in such a way that several production steps previously performed in one shift are switched to two, and two-shift tasks to three.

"The Klaukkala factory is Darekon's 'first chain' in the final assembly of equipment," says plant manager **Pekka Antikainen**. "However, we now need more staff, especially for all work stages in the production of sheet metal parts and in the paint shop." ■

ROOTED DEEP IN THE VITALITY OF PIRKANMAA,
SATRON INSTRUMENTS OY DEVELOPS

SMART MEASUREMENT WITH OVER 100 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

In a nutshell, Satron applies well-known technology in an innovative way to devices that can then offer great benefits to users. Practical implementations require advanced know-how, intelligent programming, and high-quality control of fine mechanics.

Satron Instruments Oy develops, designs and manufactures innovative process instruments and intelligent measuring devices. The company's product range includes tools for measuring pressure, pressure difference, turbidity, consistency, density and many other quantities. The products combine the latest digital technology and decades of knowledge and experience.

More than 100 years of measuring experience

Few technology companies in Finland can boast of more than 100 years of tradition, but Satron can do just that. The company's history began in the 1920s, when the state aircraft factory in Santahamina established a department to repair aircraft instruments. In the 1940s, the department moved to Tampere and it became the Valmet Instrument Factory.

The factory was separated from Valmet in the 1990s to become a sales company, which was named Levec. A little later, the Swedish firm Satron became one of its owners, and since 1998 the company's name has been Satron Instruments.

Since 2003 Satron Instruments has again been a 100 per cent Finnish-owned company. With its own product development and design department, the firm can flexibly meet customer requirements. Continuous product development and product improvement means that, in fact, customers' expectations are often exceeded.

In 2019, the company moved to Pirkkala, near the city of Tampere. The modern premises was a new page in Satron's long history. Satron has distributors in more than 40 coun-

tries and its products are used in more than 60 countries in the paper and pulp industry, food industry and process industry.

Individual measuring transmitters with a delivery time of a few weeks

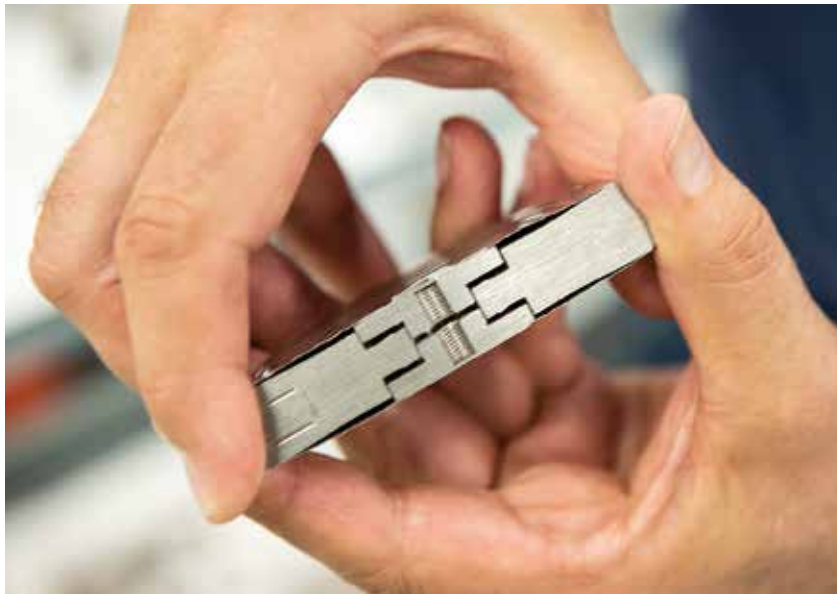
"We have cooperated with Darekon for years and they supply us with the demanding circuit boards used in the transmitters," says **Niina Venho**, production manager of Satron Instruments Oy. "In addition to high quality, we require reliability and punctuality in deliveries. One of our significant competitive advantages is that, if necessary, we can even supply our customers with just one transmitter unit. Few of our competitors operate as flexibly."

In Venho's opinion, Satron's strength lies particularly in the complete control of the entire production process. The circuit boards are manufactured by Darekon and the machined metal parts mainly come from contract manufacturers but everything else is the firm's own product. Assembly, testing, ageing and calibration of the transmitters all take place in Satron's own facility in Pirkkala.

"Our product selection includes around 4,000 different product variants, but despite that, our usual delivery time is three to six weeks, while it might typically be six months in the industry," continues Venho. "The production of measuring devices includes many stages and different variants are created, for example, through component choices or the choice of oil used to fill the pressure transmitter."



A half-cut sample of an old pressure sensor. In it, the pressure moved the wrinkled metal films and the pressure change inside the box was transmitted to the display device.



Veijo Jokinen presents assembled sensors that are waiting for the next production phase.



Tommi Martikainen, an assembler of optical measuring transmitters, solders connection cables to circuit boards.



Measuring devices for all purposes and for all environments

“When we were part of Valmet, all the know-how, tools and production were in our own hands, and instrumentation also had its own department,” says Satron Instruments product development manager **Jukka Lindfors**. “Perhaps our current principle of managing the entire value chain is also inherited from there. Product development cycles are long – even years long – so this for its part emphasises the importance of managing details.

“Measuring pressure and pressure difference is still our biggest business area, where the technology used has naturally changed over the years. Mechanical implementations gradually moved to electronic ones, and analog solutions to today’s completely digital ones. The principle solution is almost always a piezoresistive element, on which the pressure affects the signal sent by the element. The broad range of sensors is described by the selection of measurement ranges from 0...1.4 kilopascals (14 millibars) to 0...100 megapascals (1,000 bars).

“Optical measuring devices are a rapidly developing technology that opens up possibilities for measuring the most diverse things. With the help of light reflection, scattering or absorption, it is possible to measure, for example, material concentrations, turbidity, consistency or density. If necessary, it can be done with combinations of several wavelengths.”

In principle, simple transmitters are often very demanding in their practical implementation, and one key thing, according to Lindfors, is their housing, i.e. frame structures. The structures must withstand all imaginable conditions and basically all structures are assembled by welding. Depending on the usage environment, the manufacturing material is selected, which can be, for example, tantalum, nickel, titanium or duplex, alongside “standard” stainless steel.

When designing the solutions one has to understand the suitability of different materials for different chemical environments, as well as the reciprocal suitability of materials

for implementation. Naturally, Satron has the method and know-how to machine and weld all the materials used.

Expertise and guidance in a key role

"Manufacturing measuring transmitters is complicated and the entire manufacturing system was developed by us," says **Pasi Kallio**, CEO of Satron Instruments Oy. "Even if our competitor had the device drawings and a physical device in his hands, he would not be able to manufacture it. In a multi-stage manufacturing process, the methods and their implementation are decisive.

"Different films, different oils, different materials and their combinations are used in our 4,000 product variants. Naturally, all products are tested and the ageing of the assembled products takes place in conditions built for that very purpose. Such ageing cabinets are not available in stores. Helium is used to inspect the welds, which immediately reveals even the smallest leaks.

"Quality and customer service are central to our operations. We often help our customers with things they don't even know they need or know that such opportunities exist. We offer customers measuring devices and installation tools and teach them how to measure, where in the system the measuring transmitter should be placed and how to make the measurement work correctly. We continuously train and assist our dealers operating in more than 40 countries and share know-how through them."

Convenient solutions can save a lot

Veijo Jokinen, the production manager at Satron Instruments Oy, presents a box cut in half, in which two wrinkled metal films move under the influence of pressure and the movement is further transmitted mechanically or pneumatically to move the meter pointer. Although Satron still has a product introduced 60 years ago in active production, they have come a long way since those days.

"Today, pressure is measured with a piezo cell," Jokinen introduces a pressure gauge element smaller than a little finger nail. "With a pressure gauge, information is obtained, for example, about the amount of filling in a tank and, by measuring the pressure difference, the filling of a pressurised tank or the amount of flow in a pipe or open channel.

"In dairies, for example, containers must be washed between each production batch. Traditionally, rinsing has been controlled with timing, but with an optical measuring transmitter, the turbidity of the liquid can be seen precisely and the rinsing can be stopped when the specified value has been reached. This saves water, energy and time for efficient production."



Satron's PASVE mounting and service valve substantially reduces the need for maintenance downtime. With it, almost any measuring transmitter can be connected and disconnected without disturbing the operating process.



Darekon manufactures thousands of circuit boards for Satron every year."

An even more significant Satron innovation, Jokinen presents Satron's PASVE mounting and service valve. The body of the valve is welded to the tank or pipe whose pressure or contents is to be measured. After that, almost any measuring transmitter can be connected to and disconnected from the valve, with the process running without interruption. In this respect, the maintenance shutdown becomes a thing of the past.

If, for example, the transmitter of a large chemical tank needs to be cleaned or serviced, a couple of tank trucks have traditionally driven into the factory yard, the tank has been emptied of chemicals, the measuring device serviced and the tank filled again from the tanks of the trucks.

The operation can easily take several days. With the PASVE valve installed, the service person turns the valve lever, removes and installs the serviced transmitter, and turns the lever back. Three minutes!

Satron Instruments is a good customer for Darekon

Today, electronics and digital technology are used in the management and control of industrial processes. Along with several other customers of Darekon, Satron Instruments is a good example of this development, as mechanical, pneumatic and analog solutions have gradually moved to fully digital and software implementations. The measurement data provided by one measuring transmitter can produce large savings and, for example, replace analyses performed in the laboratory.

"Satron is a very good and suitably challenging customer for us," says Darekon Oy's sales director **Petri Kettunen**. "We manufacture thousands of – quite small – circuit boards for them every year, and our co-operation has continued for many years. The boards are demanding enough and their quality is so critical that the strengths of our production process come into their own and we can manufacture the boards cost-effectively.

"Satron deserves special thanks for good planning and anticipation of its needs. The orders for the boards in volume production have been placed far into the future, which gives us the opportunity to order and stock the necessary components for them in good time. In fact, today it is the only way to operate cost-effectively and still maintain flexibility in a difficult component situation.

"Well-anticipated production also gives us room for manoeuvre, allowing us to serve the customer quickly in all emerging needs. It is natural that – alongside series production – prototypes and small test batches are also needed." ■



DAREKON AB IN STOCKHOLM

IS AN AGILE MULTIFUNCTIONAL COMPANY

Darekon AB is the Darekon Group's new bridgehead in Sweden. The company was acquired a year ago and brings the opportunity to expand Darekon's versatile service offering to new customers in Sweden and internationally. At the same time, it gives Darekon's Finnish customers a channel to establish new contacts and relationships – to open connections with significant Swedish industrial companies and expand their market.

A year ago, Darekon acquired the entire share capital of Stockholm-based IHAAB Component Systems AB. The acquisition included the subsidiaries SMD Production AB and Kelab Systems AB. The acquisition was covered in last year's Darekon magazine. Now the companies have been merged into Darekon AB, which is a subsidiary of Darekon Oy.

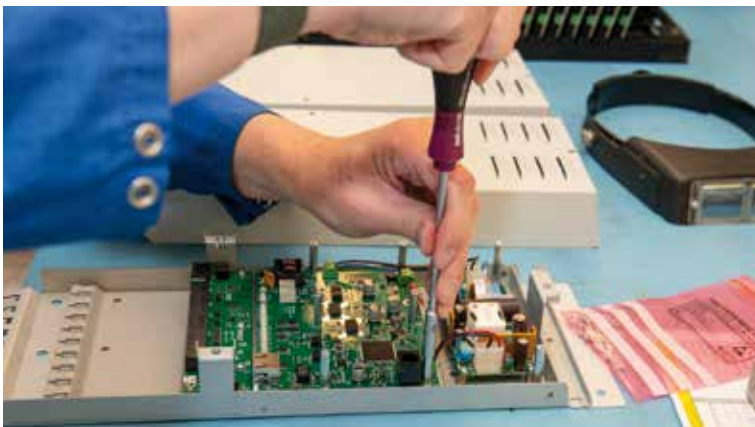
Deep roots in overall mastery

K E Levin Styrssystem AB started developing electronic devices in the early 1970s and manufactured items such as motor protection switches, phase monitoring relays and inclinometers. At one point, the company supplied more than 90 per

cent of the control systems for excenter presses on the Swedish market.

"Through acquisitions and mergers, SMD Production was formed, which focused on the manufacture of electronics, and sister company Kelab Systems, which originally developed its own products, but today focus on box-build," says **Sven Blomberg**, who has been CEO of Darekon AB for almost a year. "Our own products have gradually reduced in volume and today are sold primarily to Xylem, but we are also serving the aftermarket for eccentric press systems.

"So far, we are quite a small unit compared to Darekon's other factories, there are 25 employees and a turnover of around four million euros. Now, as part of the Dare-



Many of the assembly stages need to be done manually at Darekon AB.



Some of the products are manufactured in lots of several hundreds.

kon Group, we have completely new opportunities to grow together with our customers. Thanks to our location, we are close to major Swedish and international customers in the electronics industry. For example, the development of medical devices is centred around research hospitals, in Stockholm and Uppsala.”

Agility to move from prototypes to production series

Darekon AB's strength, according to Blomberg, is flexibility and speed. Production is less line-oriented – each order is almost its own project, which is natural, when you're working in the early stage of the product life-cycle. Production batches of 5 or 150 pieces go through production almost equally smoothly, while large batches (2,000-3,000 pieces) can sometimes be a challenge, but now can be handled easily at Darekon's other production facilities.

“We have a long tradition of manufacturing products for, for example, the aerospace and defence industries,” continues Blomberg. “There, the production series are quite small, but the products are advanced and often very demanding. However, our production machines are very modern, only the degree of automation is a little lower.

“For us, flexibility and speed are natural. When the production runs are small and there are frequent changes, it is easier to find gaps in production when they are needed. It can be said that from the point of view of series production we are not the most efficient, but from the project point of view the situation is the opposite. For most large manufacturers, a new order is a ‘problem’. We get them into production quickly, and large series can be handled at Darekon's other facilities.”

Everyone should focus on their core competencies

Nobody knows everything. Darekon does not design circuit diagrams, software or cir-

cuit board layouts. However, it is an advantage for the customer to include Darekon in their project from the very beginning. Planning for manufacturability may have a big impact on production costs at a later stage. Certain choices of components can also affect both the smoothness of production and cost.

“We are the customer's manufacturing and logistics partner,” says Blomberg. “We do not do technical design, but we take a stand on the manufacturability of the product and, where applicable, also on the material choices. Many – even large – companies focus on product development and sales, but manufacturability is not considered enough. Sometimes it pays to be a little ‘generous’ in some definitions and thereby gain an advantage for the whole.”

Changing the contract manufacturer is difficult

Blomberg graduated with a master's degree in electronics 30 years ago, and laughs that he has almost forgotten what he learned in school. He has worked for a long time as a developer of business, lean production and efficiency at Electrolux, but also managed the operations of a small start-up company. His tasks have included a lot of administrative matters, but also sales, product development and production development.

“I have been involved a lot with medical technology in Sweden, so I believe I have a good view of the market in the field,” continues Blomberg. “Experience in obtaining certifications is an important strength, because companies in the medical field hardly ever use contract manufacturers who do not have certification. Darekon AB – like other Darekon production facilities – has ISO 9001 quality certification, ISO 14001 environmental certification, and ISO 13485 certification for manufacturing medical devices.

“Changing your contract manufacturer is difficult, and I do not encourage anyone to do so without compelling reasons. On the other hand, I have sometimes done it myself in my previous positions, when the reasons have been sufficient. I know that it is possible and I know what things should be taken into account. If necessary, I can also help Darekon's future customers in this matter.”

Special products for important tasks

Most of Darekon AB's customers operate in the Greater Stockholm area, not far from Darekon AB's location in Årsta. It is easy to come to the place to discuss the initial stages of production, and Darekon's key account managers, on the other hand, often visit customers – some of the large customers almost every day.

Last June, Darekon participated in the Elektronikmässan event in Stockholm and presented some of the demanding products it manufactures:

One long-term customer's product is a radiotherapy test device that minimises the amount of radiation dose given in radiation therapy. Radiation therapy helps cure cancer, but at the same time creates a risk of new cancer. The test device uses hundreds of diodes manufactured by the customer as detectors, and testing the finished device is a bit demanding, because it can only be done in a genuine radiation therapy device.

Another example is the ship's VDR (Voyage Data Recorder), a “black box” or event recorder. The colour of the device is of course bright orange, just like on airplanes. The demanding nature of the product means that it must withstand fire and a temperature of 1,100°C for at least 60 minutes and immersion to a depth of 6,000 meters for 30 days. ■



YOUR PARTNER IN HIGH-QUALITY SHEET METAL MECHANICS

PREMEC OY IS NOW PART OF THE DAREKON GROUP

With an agreement made at the turn of last year, Darekon has acquired the entire share capital of Premec Oy, a contract manufacturer of sheet metal mechanics. The company is a profitable and solvent company that specialises in the manufacture of demanding mechanical parts and subassemblies, particularly for the electrical and electronics industry.

Driving into Premec's yard, the first impressive sight is the size of the production hall. The hall appears to continue to the horizon, although in reality it is some 200 meters long. In the backyard, behind a group of spruces, there is yet another part of the facility; another hall, shorter by half but at least twice as wide. There is the space to do even bigger production work here!

Comprehensive services with modern technology

Premec has just turned 20 years old, having been founded by three friends in May 2002. At the begin-



It's smoother
in many ways
with one
partner."

ning there were just five employees and now there are about 130. Last year's turnover was 15.2 million euros and the profit was almost 10 per cent. In the current year sales have grown strongly and will probably end up at more than 20 million euros.

The company operates in Ylivieska and has been based at the same premises from the start. The facility has been expanded a couple of times since then. In 2010, a 3,000m² extension was built and in 2018 another 2,000m² was added. The current premises – which are beginning to fill up – are approximately 8,500m². Fortunately, the plot still has 3,000m² of building rights.

The production of sheet metal mechanics requires quite a lot of space but a profitable operation also re-



Matching the welding method to every different item is an essential part of production.



With the Bystronic fibre laser, the opening of the sheets takes place flexibly. The laser is suitable for cutting all materials in use.



The painting process based on nanoceramics reduces the load on the environment and improves the quality and durability of the paint surface.

quires competent staff and modern machines. The newest machines are just being installed and there will be even more new devices in the fall.

Holes are made in a variety of materials with turret punch presses and laser cutters. There are seven punching stations and two lasers. There are also 13 CNC press brakes, three of which are connected to an arm robot. Five Haeger presses are used for pemming, i.e. attaching the inserts. Welding is done with mig, tig, spot and bolt welding techniques.

A powder coating paint shop was set up in the 2010 expansion and was a big step forward for the firm, opening doors to more business. Final assembly of the products is carried out to the specifications of the customer.

The materials to be processed are steel, stainless steel, aluminium, copper, brass and various plastic materials. Material thicknesses are between 0.5-10mm, with 85 per cent in the range 1-3mm. A good truckload of raw material is consumed per week, amounting to around 3,000 tons per year.

Strengths in location and expertise

"Ylivieska is a good location for this kind of activity," says Premec's CEO **Juha Männistö**, who was also born in Ylivieska. "The city is the growth centre of the region and several important electrical and electronics companies operate here. Logistically, the location south of Oulu is excellent and all trains on the Ostrobothnia line stop in Ylivieska. Goods move and it's easy to visit here. You can also easily visit Helsinki from here. In addition, there are companies around, for example in Sievi and Nivala, whose operations support our operations."

But why is Premec so good?

Männistö says that he has worked in the field since 1988. At the turn of the millennium, an American industrial giant bought his then employer. Männistö's work – he was in charge of sales – became guided by international corporate principles after the buy-out and the idea of starting his own company began to develop.

"Two friends and I ended up founding Premec. Since I had been responsible for sales in the company in my previous position, it was easy to continue that work in our own company. From the beginning, we had a tailwind in what we were doing, and every year we have had a positive result. In that, I can be proud of our employees – and also of myself.

"At the very beginning, former colleagues applied to work for us and I can honestly say that our staff is really good. The core team has long experience in the field, many of them from the early 1990s."

Internationalisation with good customers

According to Männistö, the skills of the staff have been put to the best possible use thanks to the new, high-quality machinery.

"At the beginning, our premises were almost too fancy, but the company that operated here had just closed and we were able to make a good lease agreement with the city," continues Männistö. "After all the expansions, we now own most of the premises ourselves, but an external real estate investor still owns some. The walls are already starting to bulge, so the expansion is again very timely.

"Our machinery has always been purchased new and we have always purchased quality brands – the best that money can buy. This has been possible thanks to our continued good profitability. We have also always been able to make our own decisions. We have always had the same three private owners that work in the company."

According to Männistö, the firm's success and profitability is due to the strategy of applying for jobs from around the world, right from the beginning. The name of the company was also chosen in such a way that it resonates with international customers. There have been exports from the start and new customers have been discovered at international fairs as soon as the company was first set up.

"We have dared to boldly go out into the world. First around Finland, the Nordic countries and Europe. From my previous work, I had ready-made international relations, and I have never considered that what we do is difficult. Now, in addition to Europe, we export to China and India, for example. The share of direct export is about 10 per cent, and about 80 per cent of our production ends up abroad with customers' products.

"Our customer base is now very good and the customer distribution is suitable. No single customer is too big and dominant. If someone disappears, our operations will not fall into that hole."

The goal is growth and expansion of services

Premec is a growth company that is looking for new customers and new markets. This fits Darekon's strategy, which includes growing both organically and through acquisitions. The acquisition of Premec – like other acquisitions made by Darekon – was not done on a whim, but was preceded by several years of exploration, preparation and consideration.

"Premec fits perfectly into Darekon's service package," says Darekon's CEO **Kai Orpo**. "Competent staff and a good, diverse customer base create good conditions for development. This acquisition perfectly supports our long-term growth strategy. Our goal is a turnover of more than 80 million euros this year."

Orpo sees good opportunities to offer even wider mechanics and final assembly services to Darekon's current customers, as well as electronics contract manufacturing to Premec's customers.



Juha Männistö regularly tours the production and maintains good relations with the production employees.

A broader overall service from within the same group is simpler and more affordable for customers. Planning and communication of the production phase, as well as logistics management, is easier with one rather than several different partners. The costs are reduced and the whole experience is smoother in many ways. ■



Premec's 8,500 square meter premises are starting to get cramped, but the plot still has building rights and room to expand.

A QUALITY CONTROL EMPLOYEE WORKING AT THE HAAPAVESI PLANT

JERE ALILA WANTS TO TRY NEW THINGS

Jere joined Darekon after vocational school in 2013. He has worked with testing since the beginning and is now a versatile expert in the Haapavesi factory's quality control team, handling many production issues.



The Mercedes-Benz 500 SL is a great car that is quite challenging to repair. Only one hand at a time can fit in the engine room's depths.



On the inspected circuit board, a crystal with the wrong orientation was found, which apparently had already been upside down in the coil. Jere blows the crystal off and replaces it with a new one facing right.

The days of a quality control worker are very varied. In the morning an email might change the day's plans if, for example, a tester requires inspection and maintenance. Usually, the day includes reviewing customer feedback and of course always overseeing the smoothness of production.

Testing, maintenance and guidance

"During vocational school, I had an internship at Darekon," says Jere. "It was difficult to find a job after school, so the TE office organised a job search course. As soon as the course started, I noticed that Darekon was looking for employees and I submitted an application. Maybe the whole course wasn't even necessary, because Haapavesi's factory manager at the time, Eero Meriläinen, invited me for an interview, and we're on that path.

"I work in quality manager Jari Aspegren's 'team' and there are many interesting things to do in a working day. The facility has a large testing area where customers' products are inspected and tested, which often go to very demanding locations in healthcare, industry and many other fields."

Maintenance and service of the testers in the testing area is a large and important part of Jere's duties. Products leaving the factory are tested according to customer requirements, so the testing equipment must be constantly in good working order. Jere guides new – and also current – employees in performing tests and does, for example, the programming of the flying probe tester. In addition, he works as an occupational health and safety representative.

Professional work in a good team

In Darekon's production, practically all printed circuit boards go through automatic optical inspection (AOI) when they come off the soldering line. Flying probe testing is used to some extent, depending on the products, and it normally takes place before functional testing. Functional tests can take a long time. At its fastest, the boards go through the testing in 30 seconds, but the slowest manual tests may take an hour and a half.

Testing is a very key part of electronics manufacturing. If necessary, Jere also participates in the repair of boards caught during the inspection. According to him, if it is a component or soldering fault, it is usually repairable.



Jere Alila presents how accurately a microscope can see possible errors on a circuit board.

“

We have a really great work community.”

“We have a really great work community, competent and professional people,” praises Jere. “During the day, I go around the hall a lot and find out any deviations. I have a lot of conversations with my colleagues and get along well with them. It’s nice to work here.”

Hobby cars and new experiences

Jere lives in Oulainen, about 35 kilometers from Haapavesi, towards the Bay of Bothnia. His hobbies include cars: a 1998 Volvo S90 and a 1995 Mercedes Benz 500 SL, which he maintains together with his father and brother. He says that the Mercedes, in particular, takes a lot of time because everything there runs on electricity and the car is very complicated. But Jere thinks it’s a great car that’s nice to drive when it works sometimes.

“If I had a lot of time, I would like to travel more,” continues Jere. “I have been to the USA three times; in Las Vegas, New York and Orlando, Florida. In the past, we have visited Poland, Spain, Turkey and Greece, among others. I originally planned to tour Central Europe this summer, but it was cancelled. At the beginning of next year, I plan to visit Orlando again.”

Jere says that he gets excited easily and wants to try all new things – even spontaneously, when the right opportunity appears. Last summer, one opportunity was tandem skydiving. The experience was memorable. According to Jere, another spontane-

ous opportunity was becoming an interviewee for this article.

“Bucket list” and time for loved ones

“Bucket list” refers to a list of things a person wants to do before they die. The name comes from the English folk saying “to kick the bucket”. In Finnish, the same meaning has its own sayings.

Jere’s list includes the dream of visiting Ukraine, Pripyat, the Chernobyl area. Why there?

“It would be interesting to see and experience the abandoned city of the 80s,” says Jere. “Maybe the fact that you can visit the place to see what happens when everything remains so-called at the mercy of nature. Documentaries and series that have appeared recently have only increased interest in the place. However, due to the current world situation, this dream seems to be moving further away.

“The second is Route 66 and driving (what’s left of it) end to end. Driving long distances doesn’t hurt me and is actually a nice thing to do. The changing landscapes keep the trip interesting and you can see several different regions of the United States. I had the opportunity to drive it for a short distance on a trip to Las Vegas, so it would be nice to drive it all the way through.”

At the end of the interview, Jere gets a little more serious and adds to the question about spending free time: “In my free time, I try to spend as much time as possible with friends and loved ones. It is the kind of time that is never wasted.” ■

A MULTIFACETED THING THAT IS UNDERSTOOD IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS

DAREKON IS DETERMINED TO MAKE ITS OPERATIONS EVEN MORE SUSTAINABLE

Darekon sees sustainable development as a goal-oriented and consistent development strategy which has already been benefiting the firm for years. In the first stage of developing this strategy, the foundation and principles for the concept were worked out. Now Darekon is implementing the second stage, where targets are raised even higher and the different areas of sustainable work are defined with increasing clarity.

What does sustainability mean to anyone? Perhaps the easiest way to convey the concept is to talk about climate change and how to slow it down. Another clear topic is the decline in biodiversity. But there is so much more to sustainability. Honesty, well-being at work, quality, human rights, supply chains are words that quickly come to mind.

The sustainability program clarifies the whole

The UN's principles of sustainability – or sustainable development goals (SDG) – became public in the late 1980s with the UN's so-called Brundtland Commission report. The commission defined sustainable development as meeting the needs of today without compromising the right of future generations to meet their own needs.

At the time, the report took a position that sustainable development is not only an environmental matter but includes – for example – economic, cultural and social dimensions.

Darekon wrote its Code of Conduct in written form for the first time five years ago. Recently, the Code of Conduct has been updated. During the current year, Darekon has also launched its sustainability program. In this project, the heads of various operations have regularly gathered together to define policies and goals to develop the entire group's operations in an increasingly sustainable direction. With that effort, the current level has been clarified, the key development points have been clarified and goals have been made concrete.

An outside perspective is helpful

"Sustainability cannot be 'glued onto' the company's operations, but it should guide the decisions and actions made by the company," says **Henrik Orpo**, head of Darekon's sustainability program. "It is a topic of open discussion, in which the company's employees, customers and other stakeholders participate. Today, customers in particular are very interested in the sustainability of the company's operations.

"Darekon's reputation has been built with the contribution of our entire staff. They are committed to doing their best in developing

our company into a sustainable contract manufacturer of medical devices and industrial electronics. Darekon's customers are at the heart of our development. The continuous development of the company's operations and stable, sustainable growth give our customers a reliable and high-quality contract manufacturer."

After launching the program, Darekon contacted an external consulting company to get a different perspective on the development of the program. The first comment from the consultant was that the basics seem to be on a solid foundation but Darekon does not emphasise enough in its communications how the operation has developed in a more sustainable direction. So there is room for progress.

Next, the consulting company called several important customers of Darekon and asked them what they considered when choosing a contract manufacturer – what they want from Darekon. The first thing that came up was sustainable procurement practices, which means the contract manufacturer has to ensure that human rights violations, neglect of the environment or other unsustainable activities do not occur in the supply chain. The second factor was minimising energy consumption and the third was recycling and waste treatment.

Sustainability is part of the entire way of working

"The whole of sustainable operations feeds Darekon's mission – it is not a separate island," says Darekon's quality manager **Jari Aspegren**. "Our operations must be entirely confidential and transparent, from procurement to delivery. This is already required by the EU's CSRD directive (Corporate Sustainability reporting), which is just about to enter into force for companies employing more than 250 people.

"Energy-efficient production that supports the circular economy is a key part of our own operations. We use renewable wind and solar energy, and we recycle production materials as widely as possible. Production reliability and product lifecycle management are added value for customers, they have their own goals and the demands of their own stakeholders. We are part of that whole.



Darekon participated in an electronics fair in Stockholm in June. Quality and sustainability were key topics of discussion with customers. (In the picture, Petri Kettunen is second on the left, Henrik Orpo in the middle and Sven Blomberg, CEO of Darekon AB, on the right.)

“Job security and good working conditions are a matter that goes without saying of course. Well-being and safety create the conditions for high-quality and efficient production. Sustainability in our own network and in stakeholder relations provide the rules of the game for joint action. Child labour, corruption and a long list of other issues are part of our sustainability. For our part, we engage in dialogue and interact with our suppliers and strive to guide them in developing their own operations.”

According to Aspegren, the four central goals in Darekon’s operations are minimisation of environmental impacts, sustainable use and procurement of materials, employee well-being, and the creation of sustainable added value. These goals are already guided by the ISO 14001 environmental certification, but many of Darekon’s internal and customer requirements are much stricter than the requirements of the certification.

The many dimensions of sustainability

Minimising the environmental impact is a clear part of sustainable operations, as stated earlier. This can be further divided into three parts, or scopes.

Scope 1: Direct emissions from production and production materials is the first. The company can significantly influence it with its operations and choices.

Scope 2: Energy used in production, such as electricity, heat and cooling – usually purchased energy – is a matter of choice. Renewable energy is widely available and its supply is constantly increasing.

Scope 3: The company’s external environmental effects, suppliers’ emissions and end use of products. This dimension still contains 15 different categories in the definitions and these effects are usually much larger than the first

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Darekon’s reputation has been built with the contribution of our entire staff.”

two. They are also much more difficult to control than the first two.

Darekon operates in Finland, Sweden and Poland, and regional cultural differences affect issues related to occupational well-being. For example, the work culture in Poland is more hierarchical than in Finland. There is more discussion in Sweden. In Finland, people want to work independently, and it is painful for the employee if the supervisor directs the tasks too closely. Even the employment contract in Poland is much more detailed than in Finland.

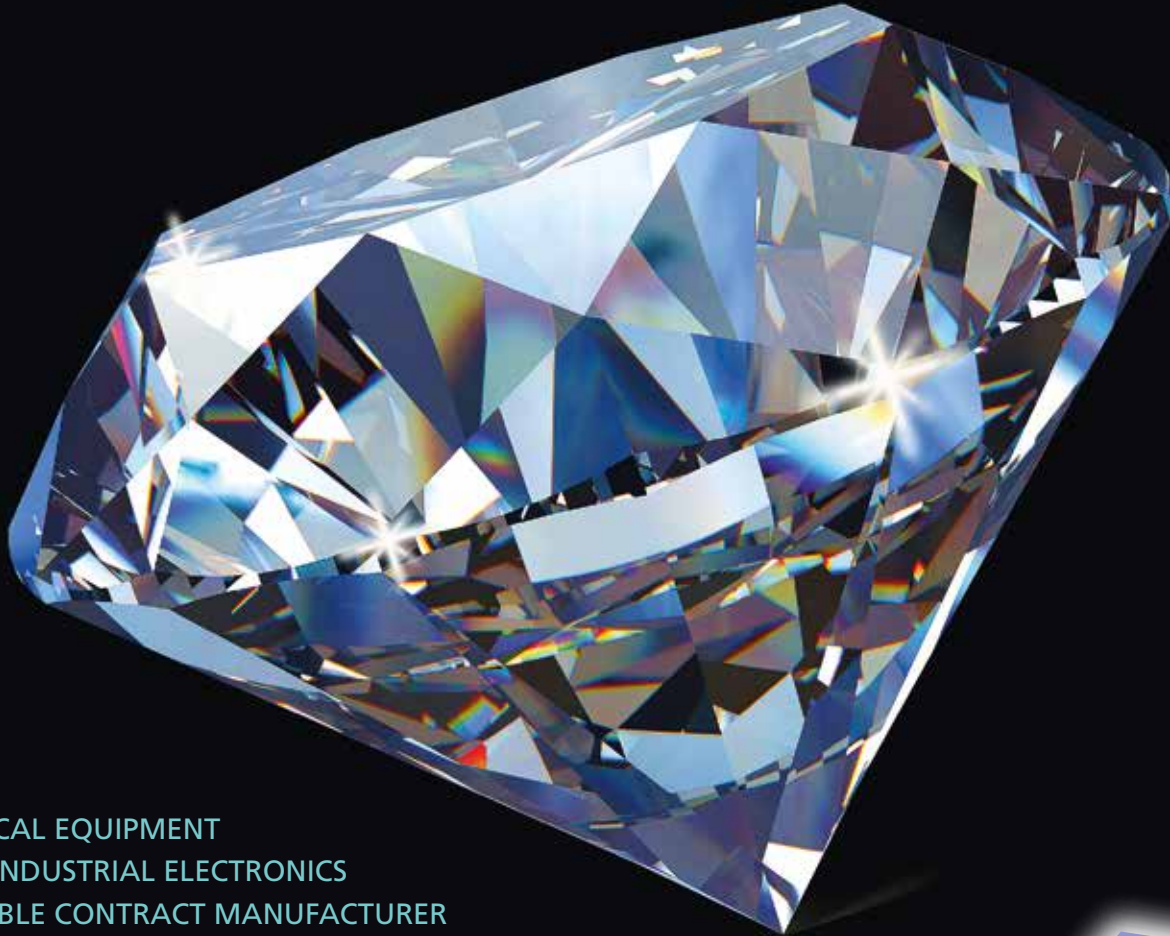
The company’s internal development discussions and staff meetings are ways to promote well-being at work. Remote work has become part of the work culture, and in the midst of change, developing your own job description may cause reflection. Darekon strives to promote an even more open conversation culture between superiors and subordinates.

Nowadays, supply chains extend around the world and taking care of their sustainability is challenging. Knowing your suppliers and conducting regular audits helps, but corruption, mistreatment of employees and pollution are still risk factors.

Clarity and condensing of communication

Darekon is constantly doing a lot of work in developing its operations. You don’t always know how to tell your partners about this work and the results it produces. One of the goals of Darekon’s sustainability program is to clarify communication for customers, partners, and its own current and new employees. In the program, a “one pager” will be produced, i.e. a one-page document in which everything important is explained. ■

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 **DAREKON**

DAREKON LTD
Vaisalantie 2, FI-02130 Espoo
FINLAND
www.darekon.com

**ORDER
FROM US:**

Petri Kettunen, tel +358 45 178 7478
petri.kettunen@darekon.fi

Ilmari Haho, tel +358 40 560 5780
ilmari.haho@darekon.fi

Tero Suomalainen, tel +358 40 746 7836
tero.suomalainen@darekon.fi

Mauri Seppälä, tel +358 41 731 3509
mauri.seppala@darekon.fi