

Bilal MACİT, General Manager of Teknopark Istanbul: “Teknopark Istanbul is set to become one of Europe’s largest and most qualified teknoparks.”

MSI TDR: Last February was the first anniversary of your office. Could you share with us your general assessment of this period?

Bilal MACİT: Certainly. We realise that to achieve the 2023 goals set by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, we need to develop high value added products. In this respect, we are fully aware of the great responsibility borne by Teknopark Istanbul. Teknoparks are special zones assigned with the design and production of advanced technology. The best way Turkey can respond to all the external interferences it has faced over the past year – such as the failed coup attempt, economic pressures and credit downgrade – is by ensuring the country’s economic growth. We have, to this end, accelerated our investments. To double our current number of 170 R&D companies and 2,750 R&D personnel, we are rapidly working to complete 84,000 square metres of new blocks, and will be opening our second zone in June. Ninety percent of these blocks have already been allocated. Plus, in cooperation with Boğaziçi University, we have opened four clean rooms and given them to new entrepreneurs. We have also enhanced cooperation within the industry, and between the industry and universities. We are now seeing many success stories in the areas of patents, products, exports and risk capital. Over the past year, two entrepreneurs at our teknopark have received more than \$10 million in investment.

MSI TDR: Could you tell us about the latest status of Teknopark Istanbul?

Bilal MACİT: Right now we are hosting nearly 170 R&D companies, 2,750 R&D personnel and 50 business incubators. Despite only three years having passed since our institution was first established, Teknopark Istanbul has 362 ongoing projects, 282 successfully completed projects and 17 patent applications. With the addition of the



Established as part of the Advanced Technology Industrial Park and Airport Project (İTEP) led by the Undersecretariat for Defence Industries, Teknopark Istanbul stands out as one of Turkey’s most important visionary projects. Soon after the first blocks became active towards the end of 2013, Teknopark Istanbul entered a period of rapid development. We discussed this teknopark’s latest status with Bilal Macit, General Manager of Teknopark Istanbul.

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blocks in the second zone covering 84,000 square meters, the number of R&D companies we have will increase to 300, while the number of incubating ventures and R&D personnel will reach 250 and 4,000, respectively. Furthermore, companies such as KordSA Global and Intertech have established their own centres of excellence here, and in 2016 completed the construction of nearly 35,000 square metres of installations. In addition to the buildings in the second zone, we have also signed contracts with the universities and companies operating in our premises regarding the construction of nearly 40,000 square metres of installations. Once the other zones are completed, Teknopark Istanbul is set to become one of Europe's largest and most qualified teknoparks. Over a development period of 10 years, Teknopark Istanbul is expected to achieve a turnover of \$10 billion, and to host more than 1,000 high-tech companies, 30,000 highly qualified workers and hundreds of business incubators within its 950,000 square metres of indoor areas.

MSI TDR: What is Teknopark Istanbul doing specifically in the fields of defence, aviation and space? Concerning the numbers you mentioned earlier; could you specify them on an industry basis, in relation to the defence, aviation and space industries? How many companies

are there, what is the total number of workers, and what are their turnover and export figures?

Bilal MACİT: Teknopark Istanbul seeks to become a technology base where Turkey can create its own brands. At Teknopark Istanbul, we host domestic companies, such as ASELSAN, ROKETSAN, STM, TEI, TAI, YALTES, Pavo, CTech, Kale Aero, Altınay, Vestel, Dearsan, FİGES, Hexagon and BMC. We have also assigned offices to world giants such as GE and SAP, which will contribute added value to our country. In general, companies in the maritime industry also take part in defence industry projects. So if we include these companies as well, we can say that 60 percent of our companies are operating in the defence industry. We also have companies in the energy, healthcare and industrial software sectors, which are also among our areas of focus. The total export of our companies has exceeded \$32 million.

As you may already know, various small and large parts used in national projects and platforms are made in Teknopark Istanbul. I won't be able to go into the project details but to give you a few examples, Altınay has completed the Six Axis Motion Platform Development Project in our teknopark, and so has SEFT its MTA Turkuaz Indigenous Seismic Research Ship Project, and CTech its Indigenous SATCOM Project for indigenous unmanned aerial vehicles.

Clustering Activities Continue Full Pace

MSI TDR: What can you say about your relationship with SAHA Istanbul? In your opinion, what are the advantages of the cooperation between a teknopark and cluster? Could this cooperation become a model that is applicable to Turkey in general?

Bilal MACİT: One of the main goals behind SAHA Istanbul's founding was to enhance the cooperation and communication between companies in Istanbul and its surrounding provinces that operate, or may potentially operate, in the areas of defence, aviation and space. In addition, it also aims to provide support and guidance in the certification and accreditation processes, which are considered as barriers for entry into the aviation industry. We are hosting SAHA Istanbul; we took part in its establishment and are continuing to support them.





We believe that clustering activities in the defence, space, aviation, maritime and biomedical industries – the areas of technology on which we primarily focus – are essential for the development of an ecosystem. In R&D-based innovation and design activities, collaborations between the scientific community, different academic areas and industrial partnerships, can lead to very productive results and tangible outputs. For this reason, one of our most important missions is to ensure coordination between these different parties, without having the idea of making a profit.

To this end, we organise cooperation days at national and international level, bring together companies in our teknopark according to their areas of focus, and hold industrial cooperation events. In line with the SSM's goals, and with a supply and demand balance between the companies in our ecosystem, we organise events between prime contractors and subcontractors.

Furthermore, to help coordinate innovative activities in healthcare, we also support the Istanbul Health Industry Cluster (İSEK). In addition to this, we also host and coordinate activities for the R&D Centres Communication and Cooperation Platform (ARGEMİP), which includes Turkey's largest industrial organisations. In the maritime industry, which is another one of our areas of focus, we are working together with our stakeholders to establish a centre of excellence. We've also laid the groundwork for a cluster on the maritime industry. The companies that design and provide engineering services to ships manufactured in the in Tuzla Shipyards Area – which alone accounts for more than 90 percent of our country's ship exports – have their offices at Teknopark Istanbul. The Ministry of

Economy has also decided to support this organisation that brings together much of the industry's R&D strength. This is a very recent development which I wanted to share here for the first time. We believe that clustering activities are critical for augmenting our competitive strength at an international level. We are giving our utmost institutional support to the formation of clusters centred in Teknopark Istanbul. Nearly all of the projects we prepare, using certain sources of funding, focus on the development of our clusters. Soon, we'll be taking important steps in relation to the administration of both SAHA Istanbul and our Maritime Industry Clusters. We are also in contact with the relevant parties to ensure that our clusters are assessed in the same way as it is defined in the literature on clusters. We'll become member to networks that bring together many reputable clusters throughout the world.

Aside from these, it is very important for us to form a common link with the universities that would help create an environment in which the acquired knowledge and experiences can be shared. By allocating specific areas in the teknopark to universities, free of charge, we are ensuring that they take part as actively as possible in Teknopark Istanbul,

along with their laboratories and their postgraduate and doctoral programmes that support the industry.

MSI TDR: At the time Teknopark Istanbul was being established, there was often mention of its proximity to Istanbul's industry and universities, its integrated position to the city's airport, its modern management philosophy, and other similar advantages. Considering the developments that have taken place since it began its operations, how have these advantages been put into practice? Could you share some examples and anecdotes with us about this?

Bilal MACİT: As you may already know, Teknopark Istanbul was established under a cooperation between the SSM and the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (İTO), with the aim of contributing to Turkey's technology development capacity and creating a dynamic innovation environment that is open for entrepreneurship. It represents the most important step of the İTEP project, which covers a 1,300-hectare area and encompasses the Sabiha Gökçen Airport. With the institutional support of our robust partners, we are assisting companies in finding investors and accessing financial support and sources.





The industry and universities in Istanbul tend to be somewhat distant from Ankara and the defence industry. However, through our channel, these relations can be organised very rapidly and effectively. For example, a company wishing to schedule a meeting with an SSM Department will be able to host the Head of this Department at its offices, when he visits Teknopark Istanbul. Or, for a company submitting an R&D project to our Science Committee, meetings can be arranged with the relevant Turkish Armed Forces Foundation-affiliated companies. Our companies can easily organise their industry meetings at the Teknopark Conference Hall. For instance, leading representatives from the composite industry can easily travel to Istanbul from cities such as Ankara, Izmir, Konya, Gaziantep and Kayseri, to attend meetings that will start at 9.00 AM; take part in highly productive workshop during the day; and then return to their cities on the 5.00 PM flight.

MSI TDR: What can you say about the level of interest companies are showing in Teknopark Istanbul? Looking at the level of participation, on a company and industry basis, would you say that the expected numbers have been reached?

Bilal MACİT: Our first zone buildings had enough office space for 100 companies; however, 600 companies applied. In fact, the online system initially indicated nearly 1,400 applications; but thinking that there wouldn't be enough space for them, some of these companies applied to other teknoparks instead. So it's likely we could have seen even higher numbers. Our teknopark has a prime location, and, by virtue of our position, we enjoy logistical means and capabilities that other science parks in the world would envy. We now have a similar situation with the buildings in our second zone; nevertheless, we continue to give priority to companies in the defence, space, aviation and maritime industry. There aren't too many companies above a certain size that operate exclusively in the defence industry, and a large share of these companies have already applied. We are trying to make room for companies that are currently carrying out, or may potentially carry out, projects in the areas of technology we focus on. We believe that these

companies will find a great opportunity if they come to Teknopark Istanbul. So we basically encourage companies that already have depth, capabilities and interest in R&D to contribute to the defence industry.

MSI TDR: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Bilal MACİT: Teknopark Istanbul is a full member of the International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation (IASP) and the Asian Science Park Association (ASPA). In this context, and thanks to its effective role within the IASP, Teknopark Istanbul qualified to host the 34th IASP World Congress on Science Park, which will be held between September 26 and 29, 2017. We expect hundreds of countries to participate, with the attendance of nearly a thousand executives from different science parks and companies, as well as many investors in the industry. We're in the process of making bilateral agreements with science parks in Europe, North America and Asia. With these agreements, our plan is to allow R&D and incubating companies to benefit, at no cost, from the opportunity of holding offices in other science parks for a certain period of time, and from all the administrative and technological infrastructure services these science parks have to offer. Currently, we are providing services to companies wishing to access the markets in Germany, Switzerland, the US, Malaysia and the Republic of Korea. The scope of our activities will continue to increase, depending on the level of expectations and needs. At the same time, we enable our companies to take part, without having to pay any expenses, in industry cooperation days that are organised abroad. We are also working on a separate

budget for participation to exhibitions. We especially provide support to companies at events where there is participation at a national level, or which are supported by the SSM or İTO. With the services we offer, our aim is to create an indigenous ecosystem in which R&D activities support innovation and technological production, and these in turn promote entrepreneurship and the economy. We invite our companies to become part of this ecosystem. We want to create a project in Istanbul that would encompass Turkey in its entirety. In this context, we not only seek to host the international brands and global giants that are the leaders of the industry, but we also aim to become a technology base that would create Turkey's own brands. In other words, Teknopark Istanbul's plans are not just for the short-term; quite the contrary, we are setting out on a long journey with the purpose of creating a park that would contribute to Turkey's technological infrastructure, and act as a focal point that brings together and develops advanced technologies. As we advance on this journey, we seek to create an indigenous ecosystem in which the services we offer support R&D activities, innovation and the production technology, and these in turn trigger entrepreneurship and economic development. Our doors remain open to all companies that share the same goal and sincerity as us. We call them to come here, so that we can work together to achieve the 2023 goals.

On behalf of our readers, we would like to thank Bilal Macit, the General Manager of Teknopark Istanbul, for taking the time to answer our questions and for providing us with such valuable information.