

Turkcell

Becoming a deeper part of the ecosystem

As the Chief Information Officer of Turkcell, Serkan Ozturk is part of a rich history and an ever-evolving landscape. In 1994, the founding of this converged telecommunication and technology services provider marked the beginning of mobile communication in Türkiye; in 2000, they became the first Turkish company to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange. “But renewal never stops because new innovations should be introduced to ICT infrastructures and systems,” says Serkan. “You have to follow the latest technologies and implement them into the services and products that you present to customers.”

An important responsibility

One of the most notable changes in this timeframe was the 2007 creation of Turkcell Technology, which focuses on RD&I in ICT and provides services and solutions to millions of customers worldwide. With more than 1,100 researchers, this is also one of

the largest R&D centres in Türkiye.

“Turkcell Technology conducts research on emerging technologies and the achievements are commercialised in novel products, services and solutions,” Serkan explains. “But it also participates in international collaborative research programmes and holds Board

memberships of the ITEA and CELTIC Clusters of the Eureka programme. This is an important responsibility to handle: it means supporting the Clusters’ roadmaps and decisions. But it’s also an opportunity to work with companies and high-level managers around Europe, to see all projects in all verticals and where Europe is heading from an industrial perspective. We can then reflect this in our company’s journey. As part of the ITEA Board, we are a deeper part of the ecosystem.”

Shaping the future

In Serkan’s view, it can be hard for Turkish companies to get the full image of innovation in Europe, and beyond, without being part of such an ecosystem. For Turkcell, ITEA provides a platform to pool their strengths with like-minded companies, boosting each other’s global competitiveness in turn. “With the help of the publicly-funded research projects, international collaboration is built and partners – from SMEs to research institutes and from universities to industries – come together, offering different skills, capabilities and competences to maintain a strong



▲ Serkan Ozturk, CIO of Turkcell

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foundation for scientific, economic and social progress. When executing projects, we are trying to shape the future together, addressing the challenges of the societies and building the infrastructure that they need.”

Technological and innovative transformation

This is an area in which Turkcell has a great deal of experience, having participated in 35 ITEA projects since 2009. These have also touched on a variety of different sectors and verticals, including:

- **Smart engineering** (XIVT, MEASURE, SoMeDi and BUMBLE)
- **Smart health** (DEMWatch, eWatch, INNO4HEALTH, RM4HEALTH and Food Friend)
- **Smart industry and safety** (SPEAR, PARFAIT and DayTime)
- **Smart cities** (I2PANEMA)

“With these projects, we had the chance to undertake different roles in the R&D ecosystem, putting value into the market and technology chain as a use-case provider and testbed or as a technology and solution provider,” notes Serkan. “ITEA projects foster our journey in digitalisation – our technological and innovative transformation.

We gain experience in a variety of different sectors in order to expand our customer and market portfolio. This is a great way to collaborate between

different countries, to brainstorm and to do projects with a very precious Community in Europe, Canada, the UK and South Korea.”

Climbing higher together

On top of this, Turkcell has coordinated five projects internationally – CAP, DEMWatch, CarCode, PARFAIT and eWatch – and Serkan highlights the latter two in particular. With eWatch, they gained the opportunity to work with big industrial companies in the Netherlands and Belgium, including Barco and Philips, and applied this experience to gain further access to Smart health projects with further programmes. “This puts together the stones to climb higher,” continues Serkan. “And in PARFAIT, we had the opportunity to work on data in IoT with companies from Türkiye, France and Romania. In addition to the international collaboration, this was a great way to grow our internal ecosystem in these countries: companies get to know each other and have discussions for new collaboration. Not all proceed to projects, but we always keep in touch. So, ITEA projects are a great way to strengthen our network in technology and innovation.”

A shared vision and mission

“Ultimately, our vision is superior digital services for a better future and our mission is to add value along our

customers' digitalisation journeys, enriching their lives – both in Türkiye and throughout the world,” Serkan concludes. “Software innovation is a driving force in enabling our company to adapt to changing market dynamics as well as to improve efficiency and enhance the customer experience. As technology advances and industries become increasingly digitalised, the importance of software innovation will only grow. The bottom-up approach of Eureka programmes like ITEA therefore means a special role for industrial companies like Turkcell. ITEA presents powerful instruments for building up and realising collaborative RD&I projects and supporting the ecosystem with a strong methodology. This helps the consortia to maintain a strong baseline for the projects and enforces them for both technological and innovative progress and commercialisation and exploitation strategies. We appreciate the vision and mission of ITEA, which plays a crucial and multifaceted role in supporting industrial and economic development, advancing society, fostering innovation and addressing challenges.”

More information:

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