

QUALITY, RICHNESS AND CONTENT AS SPARKLE'S NETWORKS EXPAND

From Sicily to Iran and Brazil, Sparkle is expanding its networks and offering a new view of services. Alan Burkitt-Gray talks to **Alessandro Talotta**, chairman and CEO at Sparkle

Q What are the latest developments in Sicily Hub, Sparkle's next generation data centre in Palermo?

The idea was to create an open ecosystem enriched by different types of customers and today we have not only carriers but also enterprises and content providers, as well as systems integrators and value added service providers.

We have connections from the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. That is exactly what we wanted to create, a place where we could connect different subsea systems. Today we have also the new SEA-ME-WE-5 and we have integrated it in a unique marketplace which is constantly growing in terms of its service proposition.

Why is Africa so important for the Sicily Hub?

The African continent is very near Sicily – it is the nearest part of Europe. Many operators find that, as a result, they have increased their quality of service.

It means African customers can access content from Europe through Sicily and there they can develop media and broadcasting activities because of the excellent connectivity and as a result of the new agreements we are developing with media hubs.

Our investment means an increase in quality, an increase in richness and an increase in content.

Q You have a vision for Iran and the surrounding region which depends on a stable presence. Can you tell us how that is going?

We are executing on the partnership we have with TIC, the international operator in Iran, to create an important hub in the country.

We are installing our equipment and this will be only the beginning. We have to work very hard to create the environment that can be used by internet service providers and the domestic content



Alessandro Talotta, chairman & CEO, Sparkle

providers to serve not only the Iranian market but all the neighbours in the area.

It is important to have rules to protect investments by international operators – this is a business comment, not a political comment. We are very careful and we try to understand where we can push and where it is not worth pushing further.

Q In Palermo you have an open point of presence (PoP) strategy for the SEA-ME-WE-5 cable. You've described this as a disruptive strategy. Can you explain?

This is beneficial not only for us but also for all the other service providers who can interconnect with each other and exchange traffic, and contents, and services.

It is an enabler of new value and a way for the market to develop. Value depends on how many services you can add to your offer – for example, services such as disaster recovery, security and so on.

Q Tell us more about the new Seabras-1 cable, the first to directly connect São Paulo, Brazil, to New York.

The cable will be ready for service in the middle of this year. We see strong demand in Brazil and Argentina as well as North America.

The capacity that we are going to put into operation will be important also for the Caribbean – and we are receiving a lot of requests from this region for connectivity.

We also see the potential for interconnecting it with other cables coming across the Atlantic, for example a new cable coming from South Africa.

We think that Fortaleza can become an important hub for Brazil.

Q What is Sparkle's role in the digital content revolution and how do you see operators' content strategy affecting the carrier business?

Our customers are not only providing access but also offering their consumers a bouquet of services that includes communications as well as television, movies, sports and so on.

International operators need to follow the needs of the domestic operators to connect different customers internationally.

Q Finally, how are you increasing your global footprint?

Sparkle is continuing to increase its presence not only in Europe but also in the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

We have opened new points of presence (PoPs) in Asia.

We are working to launch new projects in Africa and we are working with key players in the Balkans. We aim to be global as much as possible and we support globalisation with our new investments. ■