

INNOVATION IS MAIN DRIVER

Telecom Italia Sparkle is a global leader with a global focus, says chairman and CEO **Alessandro Talotta**



Alessandro Talotta, chairman and CEO, Telecom Italia Sparkle

Q What are the markets and business segments that Sparkle is concentrating on at the moment?

Sparkle is a global leader with a global focus. If you look at our recent infrastructural investments, that is Seabras 1 and SEA ME WE 5 you see how the Americas as well as south-east Asia and the Middle East are of strategic interest – as well as the Mediterranean, where we are leader, and Europe as our home market, so that's pretty much global.

To support our business with Africa and the Middle East we are pushing our Sicily hub, an open ecosystem and rich marketplace bringing the internet closer to Africa and the Middle East, and providing a wide set of services typical of a hub. This is in addition to private peering with the major global leading platform DE-CIX and private peering with major content global providers – with the advantage of offering the lowest latency as opposed to any other European hub. That's pretty much a global focus.

And we have a global portfolio that is always evolving, not just for data, as the investments we have just talked about might imply, but also for voice and especially for mobile solutions.

Recently we have launched an SMS booster for mobile that provides mobile

operators with a solution for A2P SMS traffic monetisation, as well as spam and fraudulent SMS filtering. And in voice, we have recently launched an advanced cloud-based over-the-top application that enables end customers to cost-effectively communicate via voice, video, SMS, rich messaging and conferencing, in cooperation with Genband.

Q Are there any of these markets and business segments which you see as having exceptional potential?

Data centre and cloud as a business segment is an area we are dedicating resources to. We want to create an ICT platform for the Mediterranean, therefore on top of our Sicily hub. We have our latest data centre in Palermo, and we are investing and upgrading our data centres in Athens and Istanbul to create a Mediterranean ecosystem to capture a fast-growing market for data and cloud coming from Africa and the Middle East.

Q How are the Iranian market opportunities opening up?

Iran is a major opportunity, a partnership that will expand in time.

We are the first global operator to partner locally and that provides a major opportunity to serve Iran and the region with our data solutions, especially our Seabone IP transit service

Q Sparkle has announced relevant investments recently among which Seabras 1 cable in the Americas as well as in the SEA ME WE 5 consortia. Any updates?

Seabras is due to come into service in 2017. We own half of the cable, three fibre pairs out of six.

With Seabras 1, Sparkle will confirm our current leadership in the Americas and especially on the most important and fastest growing IP route globally, that is North to South America – where Sparkle has been declared the best public IP route with quality equal to a private IP connection, with great benefits for demanding industries such as online gaming and financial

institutions. As far as SEA ME WE 5 is concerned, we are part of the consortium. The cable – due into service by end of his year – lands in Catania, Sicily, and Sparkle has recently been awarded the role of network administrator as well as the NOC functions by the consortium through an internal tender.

These functions will be handled just out of Catania.

This is a major recognition for Sparkle as a leading operator in the management and operation of important international subsea cable systems.

Q Is innovation still a major focus for Sparkle?

Indeed, we are a company that sells technology, and innovation is a main driver for growth. To give you one example, we are pioneers in launching – soon – web-based on-demand data services as part of the introduction of the principles of MEF's lifecycle orchestration and third network.

That entails a major IT transformation plan that affects not just equipment and software but also go-to-market, culture and organisation – a perfect example of how innovation impacts on the whole business model.

MEF is doing a tremendous job on these themes and we like to be a driving force behind it – as we are the only European operator sitting on MEF's board.

Q What will Sparkle be concentrating on at ITW?

ITW is the most important event for our industry and we have decided to become a leading sponsor this year.

And at ITW we have also announced to the market our new logo. ITW concentrates most of our market of reference while the sponsorship helps us sustain the awareness of the new brand.

We are also launching a new campaign to express our repositioning as a global digital and intelligent platform, a platform in constant evolution that creates value through the interaction of our partners, customers and suppliers. Because we are the world's communication platform. ■