

# EVERYTHING UNDER ONE ROOF

Turkish Technic believes it is uniquely placed to offer the full array of MRO services, at a highly competitive price

**W**estern European Maintenance, repair and Overhauls (MROs) are perceived to offer quality, while some Asian competitors have an edge on price. Turkish Technic, the Istanbul-based MRO, is telling airlines in the GCC that it can give them both.

"If someone is looking for price and quality together, as well as good service, that is where we want to be," says Dr Ismail Demir, CEO, Turkish Technic. "You put these two together and we are in a position to provide the best service."

Sitting on the crossing point between East and West, Turkish Technic believes geography and its history are all in its favour as it seeks to gain more and more business from outside its

home market. As the MRO provider for Turkish Airlines, it has been around as long as the airline itself, giving it decades of experience in servicing Western-built aircraft.

When it comes to the question of quality at a reasonable price, East European MROs, with their lower labour costs, are perhaps the natural competitors of Turkish Technic.

Dr Demir acknowledges the competitive threat, but insists that the Eastern European MROs don't have as long a history with Western aircraft. Those countries' entry into the European Union could also act against their interests, with European labour legislation likely to push up their costs.

"In our location, we are not an EU

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and the labour cost for us for some time is going to be lower than Europe,” says Dr Demir. “But we have long experience in aviation; Turkish Airlines is an 80 year old company and maintenance procedures were established in parallel with this.”

Turkish Technic has a workforce several thousand strong and it has added 1500 technicians in the last three years, spending many millions training them.

The company prioritises recruitment from aviation colleges and technical schools. After passing exams, new recruits receive an initial six months of training, which helps refresh their technical skills. This is followed by 18 months working in the company under supervision.

In line with European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) regulations, and depending on their area of focus, recruits are certified in two or three years, in line with Part-147 regulations.

If they graduated from a school that is not Part-147 certified, they must have five years of experience. If schools are not Part-147, but recognised by Turkish DGCA, their graduates can still get licensed in two or three years.

Dr Demir stresses the company’s commitment to continuous improvement and follow-up. “We never think we are in a perfect situation,” he says. “There are ever changing regulations in EASA; rules and regulations are coming one after the other and we must always follow them up and make sure we are following them 100%.”

Turkish Technic’s workforce is recruited almost entirely from within Turkey. The company invests in English language training and potential recruits’ grasp of the language is tested. “We have a certain level they must pass when they start our programme,” Dr Demir says. “We also have in-house English improvement programmes. It’s another cost, but we think it’s worth it.”

With its vast pool of labour, in-house knowhow and training, Dr Demir sees the people as a key asset. “That



▲ Turkish Technic’s employees undergo rigorous training.

workforce, for sure, is going to deliver a quality service and the cost will be much lower than many European competitors. Of course, I cannot claim that we will be lower than somewhere in the Philippines or some of the North African countries, but I believe people will be willing to pay a slightly higher price when they have timely delivery of service, peace of mind and good customer relations,” Dr Demir says.

Key to being able to win business, of course, is the MRO’s capabilities. “We have a nose to tail service for many types of aircraft,” the CEO says, when asked what Turkish Technic can offer.

Its capabilities include an ‘A-Z maintenance service’, including airframe heavy maintenance, engine-APU overhaul and LDG overhaul. The MRO is certified through the Turkish DGCA, EASA 145, JAR 145 and the FAA for the performance of maintenance services.

It operates from four hangars, three located at Istanbul’s Atatürk Airport (one

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for business jets), and one at Esenboga Hangar in the capital Ankara.

While Turkish Airline remains its key customer, the MRO says that it now serves more than 100 airlines in Turkey, Europe, the CIS countries, Africa, the Middle East and Southern and Central Asia. Much of what it is capable of doing reflects the needs of its main customer, Turkish Airlines. The flag carrier’s fleet currently consists of A320s, A330s, A340s, 737s and 777s.

Longer term, Turkish Technic will

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need to learn the ins and outs of new generation planes (the 787, A380, A350 and 777X) if it is to win significant business from the major GCC carriers. Dr Demir says those planes, “are also in our game plan.”

“Our first plan is to go for 777X and A350, and then for 787 and A380,” he says. This approach will likely be driven by the needs of Turkish Airlines, which has all types of Airbus, except the A380, and is bringing the 777 into its fleet.

“We are an airline-owned MRO. Their priority pushes us in one direction or another,” Dr Demir explains. “If they acquire 787 before A350, we can shift from A350 to 787. But for A380, we’ll be waiting for some time. By 2020, we’ll be ready for all types.”

Whichever plane types it prioritises, the MRO is trying to develop its knowledge and understanding of composites. “We have an R&D department and they are actively working on some non-destructive testing capabilities, methods and tools to be developed for possible composite defect finding processes,” the CEO explains.

While MRO might typically be thought of as engines and airframes, Turkish Technic’s services increasingly go beyond the maintenance of the plane. Subsidiaries include Turkish Cabin Interior (TCI) and Turkish Seats Industries (TSI).

So if a plane comes into the Turkish Technic hangars for maintenance work, the owner could also give the plane’s cabin an overhaul. “The cabin is one factor that really attracts the customer – we



▲ A new facility is under construction at Habom.



▲ Turkish Technic has recruited 1500 technicians in the last three years.

are now packaging cabin care services,” the CEO says. “So during heavy maintenance, we can check the entire cabin and fix the entire seat arrangement, with a fully refurbished set.”

Something that Dr Demir stresses repeatedly is the MRO’s components capability. Turkish Technic is certified for more than 4000 Boeing and more than 4000 Airbus components.

“We have a vast component capability that we continue to build and we offer a component pool service that could give peace of mind to many airlines, especially in the Middle East,” the CEO says.

“We are well located and have very good connections with many countries in this area. We can provide very good services.”

Regarding the GCC and the wider Arab region, Dr Demir acknowledges the challenges involved in trying to win business there. Accounts take time to penetrate, many airlines have their own MRO divisions and there is the might of ADAT, owner of SR Technics, to contend with.

Some success, however, has already been achieved and efforts are being made. The MRO has been working with Gulf Air and it also counts Yemenia and

Jordanian operators amongst its customers. The company says it is talking to Air Arabia and Qatar Airways.

When discussing Turkish Technic’s prospects in the GCC, Dr Demir returns to his earlier point about MRO not simply being maintenance.

“When we talk maintenance in general, people look at the hangars and think this is the MRO industry. But if you look at the airframe itself, it’s 30-35% of the business,” he says.

“That means your business must be set up so that it is strong in engines and strong in components. Components itself is a market; it means, however, having full services and being able to provide not only repair of the component, but you must also have exchange capability and strong inventory.”

Turkish Technic has many millions of dollars of components on its shelves and it has now been in the components pool business for five years. Now that it serves “many” airlines in Turkey, the company is actively pushing its services in the Indian sub-continent, the Gulf region and Europe.

Another offering that may prove of interest to GCC customers is the company’s private jet capabilities. Turkish Technic provides base and line maintenance services for Gulfstream jets and has added refurbishment services, having worked on one government jet this year.

It holds an STC for Gulfstream cabin refurbishment and modification and is in the process of adding other types, like Falcon, Bombardier and Global.

“We have one VIP hangar for this kind of activity and as an extension we will go for full refurbishment of many types of aircraft once we have STC,” explains Dr Demir. “It is an important capability, which could be attractive for many customers.”

If the service is good enough, Dr Demir believes VIP customers will prefer to send their planes to Turkey for refurbishment, rather than Europe or North America. Separately from the actual MRO services themselves, Dr Demir believes Turkish Technic’s train-

## FAST FACT

1500

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ing experience could be of interest to GCC operators. He is ready to help any GCC airlines or MROs seeking to implement on the job training.

“It’s difficult to think of any other company having 1500 mechanics trained and put into the workforce in three years,” he says. We have seven facilities here and they are EASA certified. We can show them [partners in the GCC] how to set up a practical training site in their facility. The experience we’ve built up here is not small.”

Put all its services together, at a competitive price, and with the provider’s 80 year history thrown in, and Dr Demir believes Turkish Technic has a great story to tell prospective customers. “When a customer talks to us, we can provide them with airframe maintenance, paint, aircraft modifications, cabin modifications, refurbishment and many of the component services,” he says. “Anything you want is going to be under one roof.”

## HIGHLIGHTS

## What’s on offer

- Base and line maintenance: A320, A330, A340, 737 and 777
- Engine maintenance: certain CFM, GE and P&W types
- Component services: Airbus and Boeing
- APU and landing gear maintenance
- Cabin design and refurbishment, including VIP
- Non-destructive testing
- Stripping & painting