

ISTANBUL VISIT TO ATTEND TAKEOFF ISTANBUL **DECEMBER 2024**

On 10th and 11th December, I joined Ata Arguder from Academia Park and Co-Lead of Tech Türkiye Advocates in Istanbul to attend TakeOff Istanbul, a fantastic tech event showcasing the Turkish startup and scaleup ecosystem.

Before attending some of the events, Ata and I spent time with Ilhan Bagoren, Board Member of HIB (Hizmet İhracatçıları Birliği – the Turkish Export Services Department) and Abdullah Keskin, Deputy Secretary General of HIB. HIB will be working with the Turkish Tech Ecosystem to have significant participation and representation during London Tech Week, and we discussed how GTA and Tech Türkiye Advocates can supportive. During our visit we also met briefly with Bekir Avdagiç, who one of the HIB Advisors and Chair of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce.

From there we joined a delegation of investors and scaleups from UK and Ireland (which Ata organised) to attend a dinner hosted at the President's office at Dolmabahçe Palace), Deputy Director for the Ministry of Industry and Technology, Zekeriya Çostu, sharing that Türkiye hoped to create 100,000 startups by 2030. The dinner was a great opportunity to meet with prominent VC investors in Türkiye including Cenk Bayraktar, Founding Partner at Revo Capital and Ahu Buyukkusoglu Serter, Founder of F Plus Ventures.



The following day on the 11th was the official opening of TakeOff Istanbul, and it did not disappoint. A very impactful video opened the event, and then Minister of Industry and Technology, Mehmet, Fatih Kacir, delivered the opening keynote. In addition to 100,000 startups, the Minister outlined Türkiye's ambition to create 100 unicorns (or 'turcorns' as they are called in Türkiye), up from 7 today. He also explained the plan to create 'Terminal', the 'World's Biggest Technology and Startup Center' on the site of the old Istanbul Airport. Finally, he shared information about Türkiye's new tech visa to attract overseas talent.

After the Minister spoke, next up was Tejpal Bhatia, Chief Revenue Officer at Axiom Space, and joining in the room was one of the Turkish astronauts who travelled in space on one of Axiom's recent missions. Tej reinforced for the group many key principles and examples of how successful startups need to operate to truly disrupt.

Before leaving, I joined Ata at the UK pavilion in the main expo center. Attendees from the British Embassy in Istanbul also joined including Kenan Poleo, His Majesty's Consul General Istanbul and Trade Commissioner for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. There are clearly strong ties between Türkiye and the UK, and a desire on both sides to build greater collaboration in key sectors like fintech, cyber, defense tech, EVs and more.

More than 20,000 from 25 countries were due to attend TakeOff Istanbul. Between this visit and the one in May 2024, I have a strong impression about the Turkish tech ecosystem, the ambition of its entrepreneurs to expand beyond Türkiye to the US, UK and many other places and the desire to a regional and global leader in the overall global technology landscape. From what I have been experiencing this year, Türkiye and its tech sector is well on its way to do so.

