

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

Voltage SDM and SecureData contribute to innovative Pay It Forward initiative that raises \$6.5 million to support citizens in need.



Who is Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality?

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) is responsible for the entire provincial territory, which spans a total area of over 5,000 km². IMM has 30 municipal enterprises, two subsidiary public utility corporations (Transport Authority and Water & Sanitation Authority), and close to 90,000 employees in total. It is responsible for a wide variety of areas including environment, natural-gas supply, energy, infrastructure, planning and development, IT, transportation, community services and vocational education, health and wellness, food and catering, culture, tourism, etc.

Pay It Forward Relies on Secure Transparency

Deeply rooted in religion and tradition, charitable giving is a recognized part of Turkish community DNA. Recent times,

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Erol Özgüner
CIO

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

following the pandemic and the rising cost of living, have been hard on many people. IMM wanted to do its part and introduced a ‘Pay It Forward’ initiative in May 2020, early in the COVID-19 pandemic. Erol Özgüner, CIO at IMM, explains further: “We felt passionately that our Turkish community would want to support fellow citizens who were struggling to pay their gas and water bills. We wanted to facilitate a secure platform where eligible citizens, qualified based on their income level and linked to social assistance applications, can choose to suspend their utility invoice. This action makes the invoice then available for charitable citizens to pay anonymously, either in full or in part. Payment is made directly to the relevant company, with no applicable intermediary fees, and the invoice balance is adjusted within the online systems as soon as payment is processed. Pay It Forward relies on a transparent infrastructure including sophisticated integration with the relevant systems. Because sensitive customer data is shared within invoices, security is of the utmost importance. We engaged with our partner Plainex Technology to achieve full security and regulation compliance.”

Plainex is an OpenText™ Cybersecurity Platinum Partner, and Cybersecurity International Partner of the Year 2022.



At a Glance

Industry

Government

Location

Türkiye

Challenge

Enable secure charitable giving in times of extreme need by facilitating complex infrastructure integration

Products and Services

Voltage Structured Data Manager (SDM)

Voltage SecureData Enterprise

Success Highlights

- \$6.5 million secure donations through Pay It Forward
- Sophisticated end-to-end security and integration
- Full PCI DSS and data privacy compliance
- Successful global showcase of charitable giving

“Voltage SecureData is designed to mask any sensitive data, while preserving its format for referential integrity wherever it moves within and in between applications. This is particularly helpful when moving invoices from the utility companies before loading this information into the Pay It Forward portal.”

Hikmet Kılıç
Managing Partner
Plainex Technology

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It specializes in delivering integrated solutions and has worked on various projects within IMM. Hikmet Kılıç, Managing Partner for Plainex Technology comments: “As the IMM infrastructure plays a key role in Pay It Forward, we recommended Voltage Structured Data Manager (SDM) by OpenText™ and Voltage SecureData by OpenText™ as a great fit for this initiative. SDM can scan for personal or sensitive data in the various databases and classify it for use in the Pay It Forward portal. SecureData is designed to mask any sensitive data, while preserving its format for referential integrity wherever it moves within and between applications. This is particularly helpful when moving invoices from the utility companies before loading this information into the Pay It Forward portal.”

Voltage SDM and SecureData Streamline \$6.5 Million in Donations

Time was of the essence to support citizens in need, and with the help of Plainex experts and 20 IMM staff members, this complex integration project was completed in just a week; an extraordinary effort helped by the fact that Voltage SDM and Voltage SecureData were already established security solutions to ensure full regulation compliance with several data privacy regulations such as GDPR and KVKK. The project was developed in a microservice architecture. When a charitable invoice payment transaction is

initiated, the transaction is completed directly by the payment sites of the utility providers, linked from the IMM portal. After the payment is processed, the bill is paid and the beneficiary is notified that an anonymous benefactor has settled their invoice.

“We soon saw how charitable our citizens are,” says Özgüner. “The initiative really took off and in the last couple of years, over 350,000 suspended invoices were paid to the tune of nearly \$4 million, making a measurable difference to the quality of life of Istanbul’s citizens. Meanwhile, any sensitive or personal customer data was effectively masked with Voltage SDM and SecureData to ensure the full privacy of our customers. We were so inspired that we expanded the initiative and redesigned the portal so that it can accept donations for specific initiatives. We introduced the Family Support package, the Mother-Baby Support package, the Educational Support package, and the Transportation Support package.”

The additional support packages suggest individual donations of either around \$5 or \$15. When a donation is made, the recipient’s Istanbulkart is automatically credited with the donated amount, and they receive an SMS message to notify them of the donation. This requires complex integration, supported through Voltage SDM and

SecureData. All online payments are subject to global PCI DSS compliance to ensure that financial data is protected wherever it resides or travels. The combination of Voltage SDM and SecureData secured over \$1.5 million in donations through the various support packages.

International Recognition and Awards—a Showcase for Success

The success of the Pay It Forward project is recognized throughout Türkiye, and municipalities in Ankara, Izmir, Mersin, and Antalya have all introduced similar initiatives. There has been interest from the international community too and IMM has also received international innovation awards. It is clear that many regard this project as a showcase for success.

Özgüner concludes: “We decided to introduce Pay It Forward during a very difficult time, at the start of the pandemic, and we really appreciate how Plainex supported us straightaway, enabling us to launch this within just a week. The Voltage solutions played a key part in the fast project delivery and helped our citizens support one another financially by safely and securely donating millions of dollars.”