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Coronavirus: Commission starts testing interoperability gateway service for national contact tracing and warning apps

To exploit fully the potential of mobile proximity contact tracing and warning apps to break the chain of coronavirus infections and save lives, the Commission is setting up an [interoperability gateway service](#) linking national apps across the EU. Today, an important milestone has been reached as a group of Member States starts testing the infrastructure. The Commission has kicked off test runs between the backend servers of the official apps from the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Latvia, and a newly established gateway server.

Thierry **Breton**, Commissioner for Single Market, said: *"Many Member States have implemented national contact tracing and warning applications. It is now time to make them interact with each other. Travel and personal exchange are the core of the European project and the Single Market. The gateway will facilitate this in these times of pandemic and will save lives."*

Stella **Kyriakides**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, added: *"Coronavirus tracing and warning apps working across borders can be powerful tools in our efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19. With cases on the rise again, apps can complement other measures like increased testing and manual contact tracing. If used widely enough, they can help us break the chains of transmission. We will not stop fighting on all fronts against the pandemic."*

In the fight against coronavirus, most Member States have launched a national contact tracing and warning app, or plan to do so. The setup of the interoperability gateway service by the Commission follows the [agreement by Member States on technical specifications](#) to deliver a European solution to ensure a safe exchange of information between the backends of national contact tracing and warning apps based on a decentralised architecture. This covers almost all such apps launched in the EU.

The gateway, a digital infrastructure that ensures the communication of information between national apps' backend servers, will ensure that apps will work seamlessly also cross-borders. Thus, users will only need to install one app and will still be able to report a positive infection test or receive an alert, even if they travel abroad.

The gateway will efficiently receive and pass on arbitrary identifiers between national apps to minimise the amount of data exchanged and thus reduce users' data consumption. No other information than arbitrary keys, generated by the national apps, will be handled by the gateway. The information exchanged is pseudonymised, encrypted, kept to the minimum, and only stored as long as necessary to trace back infections. It does not allow the identification of individual persons.

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The gateway is developed and set up by T-Systems and SAP and will be operated from the Commission's data centre in Luxembourg. After testing, it will start to be operational in October.

Background

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, Member States, backed by the Commission, have been assessing the effectiveness, security, privacy, and data protection aspects of digital solutions to address the crisis. Contact tracing apps, if fully compliant with EU rules and well coordinated, can play a key role in all phases of crisis management, especially during this time when most countries are gradually lifting social distancing measures. They can complement existing manual contact tracing and help interrupt the transmission chain of the virus. Thereby, they can contribute to saving lives.

Member States in the eHealth Network, supported by the Commission, have developed an [EU toolbox for the use of mobile applications for contact tracing and warning](#) in response to the coronavirus pandemic, which was accompanied by [guidance on data protection](#) for mobile apps. This is part of a common coordinated approach to support the gradual lifting of confinement measures, as [set out in a Commission Recommendation](#). To ensure contact tracing and warning apps work also cross-border, Member States, with the support of the Commission agreed on [interoperability guidelines](#) in May, on a [set of technical specifications](#) in June, and the Commission adopted an [Implementing Decision](#) to provide a legal basis for the set-up of the gateway service and the processing of the data.

For more information

[Questions and Answers: a common approach for safe and efficient mobile tracing apps across the EU](#)
[Technical specifications for interoperability of contact tracing apps](#)
[Interoperability guidelines for contact tracing apps](#)
[EU toolbox on mobile applications to support contact tracing in the EU's fight against COVID-19](#)
[Guidance to ensure full data protection standards of apps fighting the pandemic](#)
[ECDC guidance on mobile applications in support of contact tracing for COVID-19](#)
[Commission Recommendation on a common Union toolbox for the use of technology and data to combat and exit from the COVID-19 crisis](#)
[Commission coronavirus response page](#)
[Digital technologies in response to coronavirus](#)