

Case study on prevention measures during the pandemic

Most Member States have launched a national contact tracing and warning app to be used on a voluntary basis, although with very different adherence patterns depending on the countries and cultural contexts.

The Member States and the European Commission (EC) believed that this would be an important area to coordinate transnationally and have set up a new service to allow national apps to talk to each other and be warned if they were in contact with someone who has indicated that they have tested positive for COVID-19. Contact tracing and warning apps are based on Bluetooth technology and only used voluntarily in order to respect users' privacy without enabling tracking of people's locations.

The official website of the EC states that this service works according to a decentralised system in combination with the Gateway Services, that enable these apps to be used across borders. The server itself is hosted in the Commission's own data centre in Luxembourg. The system is operational and the first national apps were connected to it in October 2020.

Please reflect on the following questions:

- What are the particular strengths of tracing apps as they have been implemented in the EU?
- What are their particular weaknesses or challenges at individual or societal level?
- What could have been done to overcome these weaknesses? At what costs, both for individuals and society?
- Did you install a tracing app? If so, what was your experience like with it?
- Do you consider the efforts for the development of the tracing app worthwhile?
- Do you know about unintended side-effects of tracing apps?
- What lessons can be learned in this context from the Covid-19 experience?