

COVID-19 tracing apps: MEPs stress the need to preserve citizens' privacy

- Voluntary, non-discriminatory and transparent
- Strictly limited to contact tracing
- Data must be deleted as soon as the situation allows



Mobile apps could be a useful ally in the fight against COVID-19, say MEPs.

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Citizens need data protection and privacy safeguards with regard to new smartphone apps used to manage the spread of the pandemic, say MEPs.

In a plenary debate on Thursday, MEPs noted that, together with other COVID-19 related measures such as social distancing, masks and testing, contact tracing apps can help to manage the spread of the pandemic. However, most MEPs highlighted that the safety of citizens' personal data and privacy need to be guaranteed when it comes to the use of these apps. Most EU countries have already launched or intend to launch a mobile tracing app designed to track individuals who are infected or at risk of contracting the virus.

MEPs highlighted that the tracing apps must be truly voluntary, non-discriminatory and transparent. The use of the application must be strictly limited to contact tracing and the data must be deleted as soon as the situation allows. MEPs also emphasized the need for a coordinated approach in developing and using the apps to ensure their cross-border interoperability.

Commissioner Didier Reynders and Croatian State Secretary Nikolina Brnjac shared the MEPs' views on the need to ensure that citizens can trust the safety of the apps. Reynders responded to MEPs' concerns by highlighting that national authorities will work together with the EU data protection authorities to ensure that the tracing apps comply with EU privacy and data protection laws in place. He also stressed that the Commission strives to ensure a common approach between EU countries so that the apps are interoperable.

You can watch the debate via [video on demand](#).

Background

In a plenary resolution adopted on 17 April, [Parliament stressed](#) that national and EU authorities must fully comply with data protection and privacy legislation. "Mobile location data can only be processed in compliance with the ePrivacy Directive and the GDPR", says the resolution.

On 16 April, the Commission published an [EU toolbox for the use of mobile applications for contact tracing and warning](#) and on 13 May [interoperability guidelines](#) for approved contact tracing mobile applications.

Further information

[COVID-19 tracing apps: ensuring privacy and data protection \(6.5.2020\)](#)

[EP Research Service: Tracking mobile devices to fight coronavirus \(21.4.2020\)](#)

[EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material](#)

[Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs](#)

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