

EU to link national COVID-19 tracing apps together

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In this Thursday, June 11, 2020 file photo, Italian Technological Innovation and Digitalization Minister, Paola Pisano shows her phone, featuring a contact tracing app that Italy launched nationwide in its efforts to contain COVID-19's spread, during an interview with The Associated Press in Rome. The European Commission on Monday, Oct. 19, 2020 launched an EU-wide system devised to link national COVID-19 tracing apps together in its latest effort to slow down the coronavirus pandemic. (AP Photo/Domenico Stinellis, File)

The European Commission on Monday launched an EU-wide system devised to link national COVID-19 tracing apps together in its latest effort to slow down the coronavirus pandemic.

Following testing in different EU countries earlier this autumn, the bloc's executive arm said the system got underway with three national apps—Germany's Corona-Warn-App, Ireland's COVID tracker, and Italy's immuni—now linked through the so-called interoperability gateway.

According to the European Commission, these three apps have been downloaded by around 30 million people, the equivalent of two-thirds of all tracing app downloads in the EU.

Tracing apps have been developed to break contagion chains by alerting people if they've been near someone who has been infected.

As virus cases continue to surge across the 27-nation bloc, the new system ensures that national apps can work in all the countries willing to join the scheme, as users only need to install one app also compatible in other participating nations.

In total, the commission said tracing apps from 20 member states could be linked via this system.

"Many member states have launched voluntary contact tracing and warning apps, and the commission has supported them in make these apps safely interact with each other," said Thierry Breton, the commissioner for single market. "Free movement is an integral part of the single market, the gateway is facilitating this while helping save lives."

The EU said all information generated by the apps doesn't allow the identification of users and isn't kept after infections are traced back.



In this Tuesday, June 16, 2020 file photo, Horst Seehofer (CSU), Federal Minister of the Interior, Building and Homeland Affairs, takes part in the presentation of the official Corona Warning App in Berlin. The European

Commission on Monday, Oct. 19, 2020 launched an EU-wide system devised to link national COVID-19 tracing apps together in its latest effort to slow down the coronavirus pandemic. (Hannibal Hanschke/Pool Photo via AP, File)

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