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EU rights and data protection bodies: new technology and data protection have to go hand in hand

Joint FRA & EDPS statement

As EU countries continue rolling out new coronavirus contact-tracing apps, the data protection and privacy risks remain high on the agenda. Amid these developments, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) renew their cooperation agreement today to further strengthen data protection across the EU. Both FRA and EDPS argue that respect for fundamental rights, including privacy and data protection, has to be centre stage to make tracing apps, or any other technology, a success.

*"There's no doubt that technology can play a vital role in our lives – be it in the transition to the 'new normal' or when used to safeguard public health," said FRA's Director, **Michael O'Flaherty**. "But it has to be used correctly, respecting people's fundamental rights and data protection principles. Our renewed cooperation with the EDPS shall help us highlight these important issues and promote rights-respecting practices in Europe."*

*"The outbreak of Covid-19 is affecting our lives at an unprecedented pace. It is testing the resilience of our societies as we respond to this global crisis and try to contain its consequences, both in the short and in the long run," added **Wojciech Wiewiórowski**, the European Data Protection Supervisor. "Data protection is clearly not a problem, but part of the solution."*

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, both FRA and EDPS have been highlighting the importance of transparent, secure and voluntary use of technology to help curb the spread of the virus.

FRA's [Bulletin on fundamental rights implications of COVID-19](#) called for clear conditions for the roll-out of coronavirus contact-tracing apps, such as clear basis in law, voluntary use and no use of data for other purposes than those for which they were collected.

The EDPS is responsible in the EU for ensuring that the fundamental right to data protection is respected. To this end, it advises EU institutions and collaborates with other EU bodies, including FRA. In the past weeks, [contact tracing apps and data localisation](#) have become a constant topic in the political agenda of the Union. Such technologies may have strong consequences on EU citizens' lives and lead to growing inequalities.

In many countries, data protection authorities have been heavily involved in the design and development of contact-tracing apps, ensuring that the technology is rights-compliant.

This is ever more important as [new FRA data](#) reveal that many Europeans are unwilling to share data about themselves with public and private bodies. Some 41% do not want to share any personal data with private companies and 55% fear criminals or fraudsters accessing their personal data.



FRA and EDPS will continue working together in the future to put data protection issues in the spotlight.

With the entering into force of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2018, FRA, the EDPS and the Council of Europe issued together a Handbook on [European data protection law](#). It presents and explains European data protection law in a straightforward way for those working in this area.

See the agreement signed today: https://edps.europa.eu/data-protection/our-work/publications/memorandum-understanding/revised-mou-edps-fra_en