



24TH EHEALTH NETWORK MEETING 1-2 JUNE 2023, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

COVER NOTE

4.2 Contact tracing apps (EFGS)

1) Introduction

In April 2020, Member States in the eHealth Network, supported by the Commission, adopted an EU toolbox on contact tracing apps in the EU's fight against COVID-19. This toolbox set out the foundations of a common pan-European approach to contact tracing and warning apps. The eHealth Network adopted the interoperability guidelines in May 2020, detailing the interoperability needs at different stages of the digital contact tracing flow.

Building on this work, the eHealth Network adopted in June 2020 the interoperability specifications, which set out the architecture for a European Federation Gateway Service (EFGS). The modalities for processing personal data in the EFGS were adopted in July 2020 with the amendment of the Implementing Decision on the eHealth Network. The development and deployment of the EFGS was completed by the end of September 2020.

2) Issue at stake

The EFGS was discontinued mid-February 2023. Currently, the ECDC and the Commission working on preparing a reactivation procedure and integrating it in the new cross-border health threats framework.

3) Summary

22 contact tracing applications were implemented by Member States in the EU since the beginning of the pandemic. The European infrastructure to ensure the interoperability of these apps, the European Federation Gateway Service (EFGS), was deployed by the end of September 2020 and has connected 19 national contact tracing apps out of 22.

The outbreak of the Omicron variant steered the keys traffic through the EFGS to an absolute peak of over 700 thousand keys uploaded on a single day in March 2022. With the favourable evolution of the pandemic, the traffic has decreased, and countries started to gradually lift their restrictions and phase out their contract tracing apps.

The EFGS operations were transferred to the ECDC in April last year. The last countries offboarded from the EFGS mid-February 2023, after which the EFGS was subsequently discontinued. The ECDC is now finalising post-retirement activities. Currently, the ECDC and the Commission working on preparing a reactivation procedure and integrating it in the new cross-border health threats framework.

4) Format of procedure in the meeting

For information