

France say virus-tracking app won't be ready until June

May 5 2020

A phone app for tracing COVID-19 cases in France will not be ready until next month, three weeks after the country starts lifting the lockdown in place since mid-March, a government minister said Tuesday.

"Today we can say that we will be ready for June 2," digital affairs minister Cedric O told BFM television of the project that must yet be presented to parliament.

Health Minister Olivier Veran had conceded at the weekend that the [government](#)-sponsored app would not be ready for May 11, when schools and businesses are to start opening and people will be able to leave their homes more freely.

Health experts say infection tracing is vital for authorities hoping to ease lockdowns imposed to curtail the coronavirus outbreak, given that large portions of the population in many countries have still not been exposed to the germ despite the grim death tolls.

But critics say the apps, which track users' movements and contacts via Bluetooth connections in order to alert them if they are exposed to someone carrying the virus, would give governments unprecedented access to private data.

France has said the app will be voluntary and no [personal information](#) will be disclosed, and the country's CNIL privacy watchdog has already

given conditional approval for the system.

However the government will not work with tech giants Apple and Google, which have teamed up to give tracing app developers a way for phones to communicate across their separate iPhone and Android operating systems.

That means French authorities will need separate apps for iPhone and Android users, which could limit their effectiveness since a [phone](#) using one system will not recognise a phone using the other.

"We refused... because for us they present a certain number of problems in terms of privacy protection and in terms of interconnection with the health service," O said.

"It's because of these problems, and not because Apple and Google are the big bad wolf," he added.

"We will have a solution that works very well on all phones, and we believe the control of our health system, and the fight against the coronavirus, is a matter for governments... and not necessarily for large American companies."

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