

As Europe faces 2nd wave of virus, tracing apps lack impact

September 22 2020, by Kelvin Chan



Ella Ahmas, a 23-year-old business student at Aalto University, poses for a selfie photo in Helsinki, Finland, Sept. 15, 2020. With no end in sight to the global pandemic, more countries and states are turning to mobile tech to help fight infections. Ahmas said she was surprised that the Finland government had been

able to persuade so many people to get the mobile app to fight the spread of coronavirus. (Ella Ahmas via AP)

Mobile apps tracing new COVID-19 cases were touted as a key part of Europe's plan to beat the coronavirus outbreak. Seven months into the pandemic, virus cases are surging again and the apps have not been widely adopted due to privacy concerns, technical problems and lack of interest from the public.

Britain, Portugal, and Finland this month became the latest to unveil smartphone apps that alert people if they've been near someone who turned out to be infected so they can seek treatment or isolate—a key step in breaking the chain of contagion.

But a few countries have scrapped their tracing apps and others that have rolled them out have found so few users that the technology is not very effective. The adoption rate goes from about a third of the population in Finland and Ireland, to 22% in Germany and a meager 4% in France.

Health officials initially targeted a 60% adoption rate, an optimistic goal based on an apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak



William Oesch poses for a selfie photo on Sept. 21, 2020 in Helsinki. With no end in sight to the global pandemic, more countries and states are turning to

mobile tech to help fight infections. "It's our duty to take care of the health of our fellow citizens and those close to us," said William Oesch, 44, a photographer in Helsinki. (William Oesch via AP)



A man shows the contact tracing app Stayaway Covid on his cellphone, in Lisbon, Thursday, Sept. 17, 2020. The smartphone app uses Bluetooth technology to help discover whether people have been in close proximity to someone infected with COVID-19. Mobile apps tracing new COVID cases were touted as a key part of Europe's plan to beat the coronavirus outbreak. Seven months into the pandemic, virus cases are surging again and the apps have not been widely adopted due to privacy concerns, technical problems and lack of interest from the public. (AP Photo/Armando Franca)

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