

Norwegians find 'privacy' concerns in virus-tracing app

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Norwegian tech experts said Wednesday that a government app released to help trace the spread of the new coronavirus in the country, did not sufficiently protect personal "privacy."

Launched in April, the smart phone app Smittestopp ("Infection stop")

was set up to collect movement data to help authorities trace the spread of COVID-19, and inform users if they had been exposed to someone carrying the novel coronavirus.

Developed in Norway and downloadable on a voluntary basis, the application used centralised [data storage](#), as is planned in France and the UK, much to the chagrin of privacy advocates.

The data is supposed to be anonymous and deleted after 30 days, but a panel of experts concluded on Wednesday that [personal data](#) was not sufficiently protected under the current arrangement.

The panel was put together at the government's request after concerns over the app was raised.

"We see that a lot could be done to improve [data protection](#) without changing the functionality" the group's leader, Jeanine Lilleng, told a press conference.

Among other things, the experts recommended deleting unnecessary data and reducing storage time, splitting the application in two and allowing users to choose between the two functionalities.

Responding to the findings, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health said it has already implemented some of the recommendations and is open to other suggested changes.

"Overall, we feel that the solution is secure and personal data is well assured," said deputy director Gun Peggy Knudsen.

For the time being, the application's alert function—in the case of exposure to an infected person for more than 15 minutes—has not been properly tested due to the very limited number of new cases of between

10 and 20 per day.

To date, about 1.5 million people have downloaded the application and nearly 700,000 are actively using it in a country of 5.4 million people.

On Wednesday, Norway reported a total of 8,268 confirmed cases of the new coronavirus and 234 deaths.

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