



HOUSE OF LORDS

European Union Committee

House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Tel: 020 7219 3616
euclords@parliament.uk
www.parliament.uk/lords

Lord Bethell of Romford
Minister for Innovation
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0EU

30 October 2020

Dear James,

C(2020)2296 : COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION on a common Union toolbox for the use of technology and data to combat and exit from the COVID-19 crisis, in particular concerning mobile applications and the use of anonymised mobility data

C(2020)2523 : COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION: Guidance on apps supporting the fight against COVID 19 pandemic in relation to data protection

Thank you for your letter of 23 October on the above files. The EU Services Sub-Committee considered the letter at its meeting on 29 October 2020 and decided to retain the file under examination.

On 19 October, the EU launched an “interoperability gateway” for COVID-19 track and trace apps based on shared data protection standards and the Commission’s Toolbox. Does the Government seek to join or affiliate with the gateway? Is the Government exploring other approaches to deliver interoperability with the apps developed by EU Member States? If so, how would effectiveness of the UK app be affected should there not be a positive EU data adequacy decision at the end of the transition period?

Scotland, Northern Ireland and Jersey have now signed an interoperability agreement for their COVID-19 track and trace apps. When does the Government expect that the NHS app for England and Wales will be interoperable within the UK? Why has interoperability across the UK been delayed? What is your estimation of the impact of these delays?

We note reports that users who have their phones set to languages other than the 12 initially supported by the app were met with a blank screen. This includes Spanish, French and Italian speakers. This is contrary to the accessibility guidelines set out in the Commission’s Toolbox. What is the Government doing to address this issue?

We look forward to your response within the 10 standard working days.

I am copying this letter to Baroness Harding, Chair of NHS Improvement; Sir William Cash MP, Chair of the Commons European Scrutiny Committee; Jessica Mulley, Clerk to the Commons Committee; Les Saunders and Donald Harris, Cabinet Office; and Harry Flannery, Scrutiny Coordinator, Department of Health and Social Care.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Kinnoull', with a horizontal line underneath.

Lord Kinnoull
Chair of the European Union Committee