SNFBA
Case study for the session
Part I - Ethics and governance of digital technologies during a pandemic

Digital contact tracing in Europe and in Greece

Contact-tracing during an epidemic is a well-established public health practice aiming to break viral transmission chains. It involves the identification of contacts of a confirmed infected case and the order of quarantines, isolation and testing. Contact tracing was a key strategy for the COVID19 pandemic control. However, as high numbers of cases of infected individuals accumulated quickly, regular contact tracing procedures that are undertaken by contact tracers through public health authorities became insufficient and, in some countries, crashed under the case volume. In response to this situation, digital contact or proximity tracing was introduced in several European countries by the summer of 2020. These digital applications aimed to supplement (not to replace) the efforts of public health authorities to break transmission chains. They used Bluetooth technology in smart phones to alert contacts of a confirmed case without the mediation of a person and with preservation of privacy since the identification was not of a person but rather of a "key" in the Bluetooth memory on the user's phone. (see lecture for a detailed explanation of the technology)

In the table on page 2 you can see that most European countries introduced this technology in the second half of 2020. (if you wish you to have more information about these applications you can use the active links on the table) Although Greece discussed the development of such an app, it did not finally implement it. On the other hand, Greece pioneered the use of other technologies, for example Artificial Intelligence at its border to determine which incoming travellers to test, and the digital certification of vaccination, recovery, test.

Discussion questions:

 Do you think Greece should have developed such an app? What ethical arguments support your position? What ethical arguments could opponents of your position put forward?

What ethical? obligations do countries have in developing and adopting new technologies for public health purposes? Under what conditions?

All European digital contact tracing applications were based on the Application Programming Interface (API) that was offered jointly by Google and Apple. While governments welcomed the willingness of Big Tech to offer technical support in the middle of a global crisis, questions were raised about the role of private actors in building public health infrastructure. How can governments negotiate these collaborations with Big Tech? What is the role of individual citizens in such negotiations?

Privacy and public health were portrayed as being in tension during the pandemic, specifically in the context of digital technology. Discuss the perception of this binary choice in Greece.

Countries	App	Interoperable - is this app potentially interoperable?
Austria	Stopp Corona App	Yes
Belgium	Coronalert	Yes
Bulgaria	The deployment of a contact tracing app is not foreseen.	
Croatia	Stop COVID-19	Yes
Cyprus	CovTracer-EN	Yes
Czechia	eRouška	Yes
Denmark	Smittestop	Yes
Estonia	HOIA	Yes
Finland	Koronavilkku	Yes
France	TousAntiCovid	No
Germany	Corona-Warn-App	Yes
Greece	Contact tracing app under development.	
Hungary	VirusRadar	No
Ireland	COVID Tracker	Yes
Italy	Immuni	Yes
Latvia	Apturi Covid	Yes
Lithuania	Korona Stop LT	Yes
Luxembourg	The deployment of a contact tracing app is not foreseen.	
Malta	COVIDAlert	Yes
Netherlands	CoronaMelder	Yes
Norway	Smittestopp	Yes
Poland	ProteGO Safe	Yes
Portugal	StayAway COVID	Yes
Romania	Romania is exploring the development of a contact tracing app.	Yes
Slovakia	A contact tracing app is being developed.	
Slovenia	#OstaniZdrav	Yes
Spain	Radar Covid	Yes
Sweden	The deployment of a contact tracing app is not foreseen.	

*information from the European Commission
https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/travel-during-coronavirus-pandemic/mobile-contact-tracing-apps-eu-member-states_en (last accessed 20 October 2021)