



GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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Finland - Update on Travel Restrictions Imposed Due to COVID-19

On 16 March, the Finnish authorities set in motion preparations to restrict the country's borders.¹ The authorities announced the restriction of passenger traffic at Finland's borders as of 19 March 00:00 AM (Finnish time) until mid-April, with the exception of returning Finnish citizens and residents. These new measures aim to protect the country's residents and control and prevent the further spread of COVID-19.

Owing to the coronavirus outbreak, Finland, in line with the rest of the Schengen countries, has also suspended the reception and processing of normal visa applications and residence permit applications in Finland's missions abroad with immediate effect from 19 March until further notice.²

WHY THIS MATTERS

Finland, like many other countries, is limiting cross-border travel into the country with significant impact for the mobility of a company's international workforce. The closing – for the most part – of Finland's borders and other travel, entry-exit, and visa handling matters that have been announced will impact companies with expatriate populations in terms of existing and future assignments inbound to Finland or outbound from Finland. Employees and their families who may have received offers for an international assignment to Finland may need to postpone the commencement of the assignment. This could cause some anxiety, stress, and inconvenience, especially where plans for relocation are already underway.

Companies with global presence and individuals operating across borders need to be increasingly aware of the relevant risks associated with travel, large-crowd events and conferences, and new work arrangements consequent to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Awareness of developments, which are unfolding rapidly, is vital to help minimise disruptions to operations and to manage associated risks and costs.

More Details

The government has announced that Finnish citizens and residents³ should not travel abroad. The government has also advised that individuals who are out of the country, should prepare to return immediately. Those returning to Finland should self-quarantine for 14 days (this includes arrivals through all border points – land, sea, and air borders).

Persons can still leave Finland; however, the government has advised that Finnish citizens and residents should not travel abroad. Essential, justifiable border crossings (for example work-related commuter traffic) may still be permitted on certain northern border crossing points (internal Schengen-borders with Norway and Sweden).⁴ International freight and cargo will also be allowed to continue.

EU-citizens and EU-residence permit holders residing in other EU countries may be permitted to transit through Finland back to their home countries, if they are deemed healthy enough to do so.

Context

The rapid worldwide spread of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) has motivated the Finnish government to take up drastic measures in order to control the virus' spread. The Finnish government has enacted an Emergency Powers Act that allows the government to take drastic measures in order to control the spread of the virus.

16 March 2020 New Measures

The government has held several news conferences during the past few days. The following measures are to be introduced, directly impacting the extent to which people may freely move around in Finland or enter/exit Finland:

1. Border movements will be restricted from 19 March onwards;
2. Individuals over 70 years old are urged to remain at home;
3. Public gatherings of over 10 persons are to be prohibited;
4. Most schools and universities will be closed as of 18 March until 14 April.

KPMG NOTE

Penalties may result from non-compliance with the new rules; however, what this means in practice hasn't been fully outlined yet.

Any individuals impacted by the new rules may wish to consult with their global mobility advisers and immigration legal counsel as soon as possible, for advice on next steps.

The KPMG International member firm in Finland continues to monitor these matters closely. Further information is expected to be received within the next 24-hours as the Finnish government continues to hold more news conferences to clarify the newly-introduced measures.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 For updates on actions by Finland's government (in English) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the declaration of the state of emergency, click [here](#).
- 2 For updates on how Finland has suspended the reception and processing of ordinary visa and residence permit applications, see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs webpage (in English) for a [19 March press release](#).
- 3 The term "residents" refers to EU-citizens who have officially registered their right of residence (and their family members), or third-country nationals residing in Finland permanently. Third-country nationals with valid residence permit (type A, B or P) can enter Finland to continue residing in the country.
- 4 For updates on how cross-border movements are restricted (in English), see the webpage provided by the Finnish Border Guard: by clicking [here](#).

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Contact us

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