

GMS Flash Alert



Immigration Edition

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Finland - COVID-19: Revised Policies Restricting Travel Restrictions, List of Critical Tasks

On 7 April 2020, the Finnish government adopted decisions to tighten and continue the restrictions on movement/traffic across Finland's borders. The authorities announced that the restriction of border traffic is to be prolonged until 13 May 2020. (For prior coverage, see GMS [Flash Alert 2020-076](#), 19 March 2020.)

Moreover, a list of tasks that are critical to the security of the supply chain or for Finnish industry has been announced.

The updated restrictions aim to slow the spread of COVID-19 and help ensure public safety during this health emergency, but at the same time to secure the supply chain in critical areas.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The updated travel restrictions will have a considerable impact on mobile employees moving between Finland and other countries. Companies and individuals operating across borders need to be aware of the travel restrictions and those situations where crossing the border is justifiable. Employers should be aware of the criteria and documentation required for workers who are entering Finland to perform critical tasks.

Until the government decides it is safe to rescind or roll back the current restrictions, remote working is a "best practice" for globally-mobile employees who are performing "non-critical" tasks and whose travel is "non-essential," to the extent possible, and is a way for employers to foster the safety of their employees and help ensure business continuity.

Awareness is vital to determine practical work arrangements and to manage associated risks and costs.

Enforcement of Prolonged Travel Ban

Finland continues to limit entries from the European Union (EU) as well as non-EU member states until 13 May 2020¹.

Currently, travel to Finland is possible for the following groups of travelers²:

- Finnish nationals and their family members;
- Nationals of EU and Schengen countries residing in Finland and their family members;
- Third-country nationals residing in Finland with a residence permit;
- Essential travel to work and other essential traffic.

All individuals arriving in Finland are obligated, regardless of the reason for the border crossing, to remain in self-quarantine for 14 days. The requirement to remain under quarantine for 14 days will not apply to employees for emergency medical services, rescue services personnel, or to freight transport³.

Critical Tasks List and Entry of Workers Due to Essential Work

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

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment has announced a list of tasks that are (i) essential to secure the supply chain or (ii) critical for the business' operations in a particular sector. Employees working in the areas that are designated critical must be granted entry to Finland⁴.

The ministry has defined that, in general, critical tasks are those which must be carried out without delay and where any possible delay could have a notable impact on the security of supply. However, this task-specific list devised by the ministry does not include any preliminary decisions on border crossings; the decision on whether a worker's travel is essential or not will be made separately by the border control authority on a case-by-case basis.

Workers who meet the criteria of "essential work" and are about to travel to Finland, will have to present at the border a document from their employer stating that the work is essential for the security of supply in/to the country or for a given industry⁵. Normal requirements for legal entry must also be met (including valid visa/residence permit/visa-free nationality).

Continuance of Suspension of Reception and Processing of Applications, but if in Finland, Service Continues with Pre-Booked Appointments

The suspension of official services tied to accepting and processing ordinary visa and residence permit applications abroad will continue until further notice. Applications for residence permits that have already been received will be serviced in the normal manner in cases where the applicants have identified themselves at the mission before the suspension became effective on 19 March 2020⁶.

If an individual is in Finland and applying for a residence permit or an extended permit, the Finnish Immigration Service continues to serve its clients by means of online services and with scheduled appointments⁷.

KPMG NOTE

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.

KPMG in Finland continues to monitor these matters closely and will endeavour to inform GMS *Flash Alert* readers if any new measures are announced.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 Updates on actions by [Finland's government \(in English\)](#) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2 [Guidelines for border traffic](#) (in English) provided by the Finnish Border Guard.
- 3 Information on quarantine obligations: [April 7 press release by Ministry of Interior \(in English\)](#) .
- 4 [The list and assessment of essential tasks](#) set by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (in English).
- 5 Employer's justification for the necessity of an employee entering the country during the state of emergency (in Finnish and English): [.PDF form](#) .
- 6 On the suspension of the reception and processing of ordinary visa and residence permit applications, see the 19 March press release (in English) on the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs webpage](#) .
- 7 For information (in English) on processing residence permit applications in Finland, see the webpage of [the Finnish Immigration Service](#) .

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Contact us

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* Please note that KPMG LLP (U.S.) does not offer immigration services or labour law services. However, KPMG Law LLP in Canada can assist clients with U.S. immigration matters.

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