



# GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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## Finland – COVID-19: Gradual Dismantling of Restrictions on Crossing Borders

On 7 May 2020, the Finnish government decided on the gradual lifting of restrictions on border traffic.<sup>1</sup> As of 14 May, the statutory restrictions on border traffic will be lifted for purposes of cross-border traffic across the Schengen internal borders. This will allow employment or commission-related commuting and other essential traffic.

Border traffic remains restricted however as the government decided on extending some of the existing rules from 14 May until 14 June.

Border authorities have also now adopted a new guideline for the entry of third-country nationals arriving in Finland for the first time.

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### WHY THIS MATTERS

The travel restrictions have had a considerable impact on mobile employees moving between Finland and other countries. The decision by the government to lift the cross-border traffic restrictions across Schengen internal borders for employment or commission-related travel allows companies operating across borders to bring workers from other Schengen countries into Finland. In the Finnish context, this will benefit the position of a great number of Estonians and other Europeans working in Finland.

The border authorities' new application of entry rules for third country nationals allows them to come to Finland for the first time if they already have a valid residence permit. So far, many individuals who had already been granted a residence permit by the Finnish authorities have been forced to wait in their home country until such times as Finland opened its borders, particularly if their planned tasks/activities did not fall under the category for necessary or essential travel.

These measures will ease the entry of several groups of employees into Finland and will therefore be of considerable importance to many companies that depend on a mobile workforce.

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## More Details

Third country nationals are now allowed to enter with a valid Finnish residence permit. From 19 March through April, third-country nationals were allowed to return only if already residing in Finland; but those who had not settled in Finland prior to restrictions could not enter if not considered working in a critical occupation and proving this at the border.

This applies for now to all other residence permit holders except for those with seasonal residence permit. Third country nationals with a seasonal residence permit arriving in Finland for the first time are still not allowed to enter if they are not listed on the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland's seasonal worker quota. On top of the 1,500 persons decided earlier, the entry of 3,000 persons from non-EU countries to carry out the work to be done in the spring and early summer will be allowed as from 14 May. The instructions currently in force concerning transport operations and two-week quarantine will continue to apply. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will issue further instructions on the entry to Finland.<sup>2</sup>

## Allowed Border Traffic

As of 14 May, travel to Finland is possible for the following groups of travelers:

- Finnish nationals and their family members;
- Nationals of EU and Schengen countries residing in Finland and their family members;
- Travel across the Schengen internal borders for employment or commission-related commuting;
- Third-country nationals who have a valid residence permit granted by the Finnish authorities;
- Essential travel to work and other essential traffic.

When it comes to travel across the Schengen internal borders for employment or commission-related commuting, the authorities have instructed that they will check the purpose and the conditions of the planned employment or commission in the context of inspections at the border. For example, the border authorities may ask the traveler to present documents to prove he or she meets the country's entry requirements. Such documents may include proof of an employment contract or a commission.

Seasonal work in Finland by EU nationals is included in the allowed commuter traffic starting from 14 May.

Entry by third-country nationals who do not have a valid residence permit granted by the Finnish authorities is still restricted, with the exception of other necessary or essential travel.

## 14-Days Quarantine

All individuals arriving in Finland are obligated, regardless of the reason for the border crossing, to remain in self-quarantine for 14 days. Moving between work place and home as well as for other specified necessary reasons is allowed. The requirement to remain in self quarantine for 14 days will not apply to employees for emergency medical services, rescue services personnel, or Border Guard and Customs staff.

## Past Measures

The Finnish government announced the first decisions to restrict the country's borders due to the spread of COVID-19 on 16 March 2020 (see previous coverage in [GMS Flash Alert 2020-076 \(19 March 2020\)](#)). The first announcement covered the initial period of 19 March until 13 April. Further tightening and extension of the restrictions for traffic across

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Finland's borders were announced on 7 April 2020 (see [GMS Flash Alert 2020-179](#) (17 April 2020)) and the restrictions at the time were prolonged until 13 May.

As for what is deemed necessary travel, the list of critical occupations introduced by The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment was also adopted on 7 April.<sup>3</sup> The tasks listed are characterised as critical to the security of the supply chain or for the specific industry.

According to the authorities' instructions, a special form completed by the employer must be presented at the time of entry to demonstrate the critical and urgent nature of the task he or she is to perform.<sup>4</sup>

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## KPMG NOTE

The KPMG International member firm in Finland continues to monitor these matters closely. Further information is expected to be received in due course as the authorities continue to hold more news conferences and issue releases that help clarify the newly-introduced measures.

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## FOOTNOTES:

1 See: [News](#) (in English) from the Border Guard: "Restrictions regarding border traffic from 14 May to 14 June 2020." See also (in Finnish) "[Työmatkaliikenne sisärajoilla sallitaan ilman vaatimusta työn välttämättömyydestä](#)" (7.5.2020).

See (in English) "[Guidelines for border traffic during emergency conditions from 14.5.2020](#)," by the Finnish Border Guard.

See (in English) "[Guidelines for border traffic during emergency conditions until 13.5.](#)," by the Finnish Border Guard.

2 See (in English) "[Government measures to ensure availability of seasonal employees.](#)"

3 See [the list and assessment of essential tasks](#) (in English) "Authorities' assessment of tasks essential for security of supply or critical for sector operations," set by The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment.

4 See "Employer's justification for the necessity of an employee entering the country during the state of emergency" (in English and Finnish): [PDF form](#).

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## Contact us

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional\* or one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in Finland:



**Julia Kanerva**  
Tel. +358 20 760 3000  
[Julia.kanerva@kpmg.fi](mailto:Julia.kanerva@kpmg.fi)



**Sanna Lundström**  
Tel. + 358 20 767 2070  
[Sanna.lundstrom@kpmg.fi](mailto:Sanna.lundstrom@kpmg.fi)

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**The information contained in this newsletter was submitted by the KPMG International member firm in Finland.**

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