



GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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Finland – COVID-19: Traffic Light Model Launched to Clarify Travel Guidance

On 26 August 2020, the Finnish health authority issued a new “traffic light” model that will help to communicate to citizens, businesses and others the level of coronavirus infection risk associated with travelling abroad.¹ Additionally, direct flights arriving in Turku from Skopje, North Macedonia, are suspended until 10 September.

The traffic light model is intended as guidance only and does not replace border traffic restriction decisions made by the Finnish government. Those restrictions are enforced by another authority (the Finnish Border Guard). As the list of countries approved for travel to Finland is reviewed by the government at regular intervals, travellers are encouraged to closely follow authority sources. (For prior coverage, see GMS [Flash Alert 2020-369](#), 25 August 2020).

WHY THIS MATTERS

The travel restrictions have had a considerable impact on travellers and employees moving between Finland and other countries. The “traffic light” model will be helpful by providing more clarity for businesses and their employees who undertake cross-border travel for business purposes.

How It Works

Announced by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), the traffic light model aims to guide travellers in understanding the level of COVID-19 infection risk associated with travelling abroad.

The model divides countries into three categories according to their current rate of COVID-19 infections:

- In the “green” category are countries in which the risk of COVID-19 infection is not significantly higher than in Finland. The prevalence of COVID-19 is below the level set by the Finnish government: less than 8-10 cases per

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2020-379 | September 1, 2020

100,000 inhabitants during the previous 14 days. When travelling to such countries, travellers are advised to pay attention to possible travel bulletins published by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- In the “orange” category are countries with a risk of infection that is higher than in Finland. The prevalence of COVID-19 is above the level set by the Finnish government: between 10-25 cases per 100,000 inhabitants during the previous 14 days. Travel should be avoided unless justified. Travellers arriving from: “orange” countries are instructed to self-quarantine for 14 days.
- In the “red” category countries, the risk of infection is significantly higher than in Finland or the risk cannot be reliably assessed. COVID-19 prevalence is very high, with more than 25 cases per 100,000 inhabitants during the previous 14 days. Travellers arriving from “red” countries are instructed to self-quarantine for 14 days. Currently many countries appear in the “red” category, meaning that THL does not recommend travelling to and from them.

THL is likely to update the classification categories every week. The health authority also maintains that unnecessary travel should continue to be avoided, to support efforts to control the spread of COVID-19.

Health checks are to be performed on travellers from “orange” and “red” countries at Finnish border crossing points; however, the manner of this practice is yet to be clearly outlined. So far, COVID-19 tests are generally voluntary; but a regional state administrative agency may order mandatory testing if deemed necessary. (For prior coverage, see [GMS Flash Alert 2020-357](#), 18 August 2020.)

Notice Regarding Direct Flights from Skopje

On 28 August, the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency announced that direct flights arriving in Turku from Skopje, North Macedonia, are to be suspended for the next two weeks from 28 August to 10 September.² The decision was made based on a statement from THL indicating that the temporary suspension of air traffic is necessary to limit the spread of COVID-19 in Finland. Previously, THL suggested that there was an unusually high number of positive COVID-19 tests among travellers arriving from Skopje.

The decision is supported by sections in the Aviation Act enabling authorities to prohibit or limit air traffic in order to solve sudden and short-term problems caused by unpredictable and unavoidable circumstances.

So far, the decision does not apply to any other flights.

KPMG NOTE

According to section 9 of the Constitution of Finland, Finnish citizens must not be prevented from entering Finland, and everyone has the right to leave Finland. However, limitations on the right to leave the country may be legally enforced if they are necessary for the purpose of safeguarding legal proceedings or for enforcing penalties or for fulfilling the duty of national defense.

Every traveller travelling from Finland to another state must check the restrictions on entry into the destination country. Destination countries may have in force their own restrictions and conditions on entry for travellers.

The KPMG International member firm in Finland continues to monitor these matters closely, and further instructions may be expected from the authorities in the forthcoming days to clarify further the newly introduced traffic light model.

FOOTNOTES:

1 The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare: [*Traffic light model to help in the assessment of risks associated with foreign travel*](#), 26 August (in English). The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare uses the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control's [data on the geographical distribution of COVID-19 cases worldwide](#), to update their classification categories each week (in English).

2 For Traficom's 28 August announcement (in Finnish), see <https://www.traficom.fi/fi/ajankohtaista/skopjen-lennot-keskeytetaan-kahdeksi-viikoksi>.

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Contact us

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