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# Government decided on tightening restrictions on border traffic along the border with Sweden and Norway and on steps to secure medical care in Åland

Government Communications Department

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**On 7 April 2020, the Government decided at an extraordinary Government session to prolong the validity of the decision on the temporary reintroduction of border control at internal borders and the restrictions on traffic. The validity period was extended from 14 April 2020 to 13 May 2020.**

The Government's aim is to further reduce movement in the common travel-to-work area along the borders with Sweden and Norway. Only strictly necessary travel to work will be allowed, and employees must carry a certificate from their employer stating that the work is essential. As a rule, all persons arriving across internal borders to Finland are obliged, during their stay in Finland, to follow the instructions of the Finnish health authorities and to remain under quarantine-like conditions for 14 days from their last entry to Finland.

The requirement to remain under quarantine-like conditions for 14 days will not apply to essential emergency medical service and rescue service personnel or to freight transport personnel. The Government also calls on employers to explore ways of reducing the cross-border movement of workers, for example by providing employees with accommodation near where they work.

Finns working in Sweden and Norway in the areas along the Finnish border must stay under quarantine-like conditions when they are in the territory of Finland. As an exception to the rule, employees may continue to travel to work if they comply with this condition and follow the quarantine guidelines.

Employees coming to Finland from Sweden or Norway must follow the guidance on minimising the risk of infection (the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare) and must stay in quarantine-like conditions, to the extent possible, both in Finland and during their stay at home. Finland also considers it essential that Sweden instruct health care staff to better protect themselves and increase the testing of these groups. Sweden has committed to enabling the provision of some of Norrbotten County's hospital capacity (including intensive care capacity) for the treatment of Finnish patients. If the epidemic worsens, staff may no longer be able to move across the border.

Finland is closely monitoring the development of the disease and is prepared to place further restrictions on border traffic if necessary.

## The Government recommends that ticket sales for maritime passenger traffic be stopped as of 11 April

The Government recommends that shipping companies operating to Finland from Sweden, Estonia and Germany stop the sale of passenger tickets for ships departing on or after 11 April 2020, with the exception of goods and freight transport. The recommendation will be in force until 13 May 2020.

## Situation in Åland

The Government requires the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to ensure that the operation of the Åland Hospital will be safeguarded in cooperation with the Government of Åland. Transfers of necessary doctors will be arranged from mainland Finland to Åland and assurance is given that the incoming staff will have sufficient knowledge of Swedish. The FinnHEMS helicopter in Turku will also serve Åland.

The pilots of the air ambulance used in Åland belong to the emergency medical and rescue personnel and are therefore not subject to the requirement to remain under quarantine-like conditions for 14 days.

Following the implementation of these decisions, other necessary and justified passenger traffic will continue to be allowed on scheduled flights from Stockholm, Helsinki and Turku to Mariehamn. It will also be possible to carry passengers on the shipping routes from Åland to mainland Finland.

Other necessary travel will include work that is important for the functioning of society or the security of supply and must be carried out without delay.

The implementation of these decisions will not prevent the production of globally critical health care equipment in Åland. Essential travel to work may continue, provided that the quarantine guidelines are followed.

#### **Inquiries:**

#### **Public service info:**

Border Guard helpline, tel. +358 50 597 2255 (08.00–16.00)

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