

Kv-palvelut / MKos

18.3.2020

Crisis legislation in Finland due to coronavirus

The Finnish Government, in cooperation with the President of the Republic, **has declared a state of emergency in Finland** over the coronavirus outbreak. On 16 March 2020, the Government decided on measures to slow down the spreading of coronavirus and to protect risk groups. **The decisions will remain in force until 13 April 2020.** The measures will be enforced in accordance with the Emergency Powers Act, Communicable Diseases Act and other relevant legislation. This is the first time since 1940's that emergency powers legislation has been used.

The purpose of the Emergency Powers Act is to secure the livelihood of the population and the national economy, to maintain legal order and fundamental and human rights, and to safeguard the territorial integrity and independence of Finland in emergency conditions.

The Government [declared 19 measures](#) and issued several degrees to the Parliament. The Parliament's Standing Committee on the Constitution will give its opinion on 18th and it is assumed that Parliament will approve the degrees. Many of the Government's measures are legal provisions but many are recommendations or guidance for the citizen. The main thing is, that the Government will have, by the Emergency Powers Act, legal possibilities to act more promptly and wider than in normal circumstances.

At the moment (on afternoon 18th March) all the details of the crisis legislation, degrees, decisions and recommendations that will be done are not yet totally clear. What we can already see, is that the streets of capital Helsinki and other cities are very quiet. Employees, when it is possible, are mostly working from home and the economic impact is gigantic. The Labour Partners are actively seeking proposals on one hand against the crack down of the cash flow of companies and on the other hand to secure the workers capability to pay the rents and feed the families, as there will be quick impacts like lay-offs when the ordinary life has been so suddenly stopped in the society.

Measures decided by the Government

Few examples (more from the link above) from the decision already made:

- The premises of schools, educational institutions, universities and universities of applied sciences as well as civic education and other liberal education institutes **will be closed down**, and contact teaching will be suspended. Instead of contact teaching, the teaching and guidance will be organised in alternative (distance learning) ways.
- As **an exception**, however, pre-primary education organised in schools and contact teaching for grades 1–3 will continue for the children of parents working in sectors critical to the functioning of society.
- Early childhood education and care units and the pre-primary education organised in connection with them **will be kept in operation**, but the Government advises parents and guardians who are able to arrange childcare at home to do so.
- **Public gatherings are limited** to no more than 10 persons, and it is recommended to avoid spending unnecessary time in public places.
- All national and municipal museums, theatres, cultural venues, libraries, hobby and leisure centers, swimming pools and other sports facilities, youth centers, clubs, organiza-

Kv-palvelut / MKos

18.3.2020

tions' meeting rooms, day care services for the elderly, rehabilitative work facilities and workshops **will be closed**. Private and third-sector operators and religious communities are advised to do the same.

- Visits to housing services for the elderly and other at-risk groups **will be prohibited**.
- **Visitors will be banned** from care institutions, health care units and hospitals, with some family exceptions on a case-by-case basis.
- As a general guideline, persons over 70 years of age must refrain from contact with other persons to the extent possible (**quarantine-like conditions**).
- Non-urgent activities **will be reduced** in healthcare and social welfare services in the public and private sectors. The capacity of the private sector will be mobilized for public use as necessary.
- In the case of critical personnel, **exceptions will be made** to the provisions of the Working Hours Act and the Annual Holidays Act in both the private and public sector.
- Arrangements will be made **to oblige** trained professionals in healthcare and social welfare and internal security, to perform work as necessary.
- The movement of people **may be restricted** in order to prevent a serious danger to life and health.
- The Finland's **borders will be closed from 19th March** in accordance with international obligations. Passenger transport to Finland will be suspended as soon as possible, with the exception of the return of Finnish citizens and persons residing in Finland. Finnish citizens and persons residing in Finland must not travel abroad. Finnish tourists abroad are advised to return to Finland immediately.
- Finns and permanent residents in Finland returning from abroad **will be placed in quarantine-like conditions** for two weeks. Freight and goods traffic will continue as usual.
- The Defence Forces will ensure the continuity of their operations and their preparedness in all circumstances. The other authorities will be prepared to provide support as necessary.

Latest updates

In English it is possible to find the latest information from

- Governments "[Information and Advice on Corona virus](#)" web page
- The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare [THL's latest updates](#) web page
- Those, living in Finland, a national [telephone service at the number 0295 535 535](#) gives general information and advice on the coronavirus on weekdays 8–21 and Saturdays 9–15

The Finnish legislation may be found from Finlex-web service, but for some reason, the 1522/2011 Emergency Powers Act has not been translated in English ([Finnish version may be found](#))

<https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2011/20111552?search%5Btype%5D=pika&search%5Bpika%5D=valmiuslaki>

Collected from various sources by Matti Koskinen
Head of International Affairs, Trade Union Pro