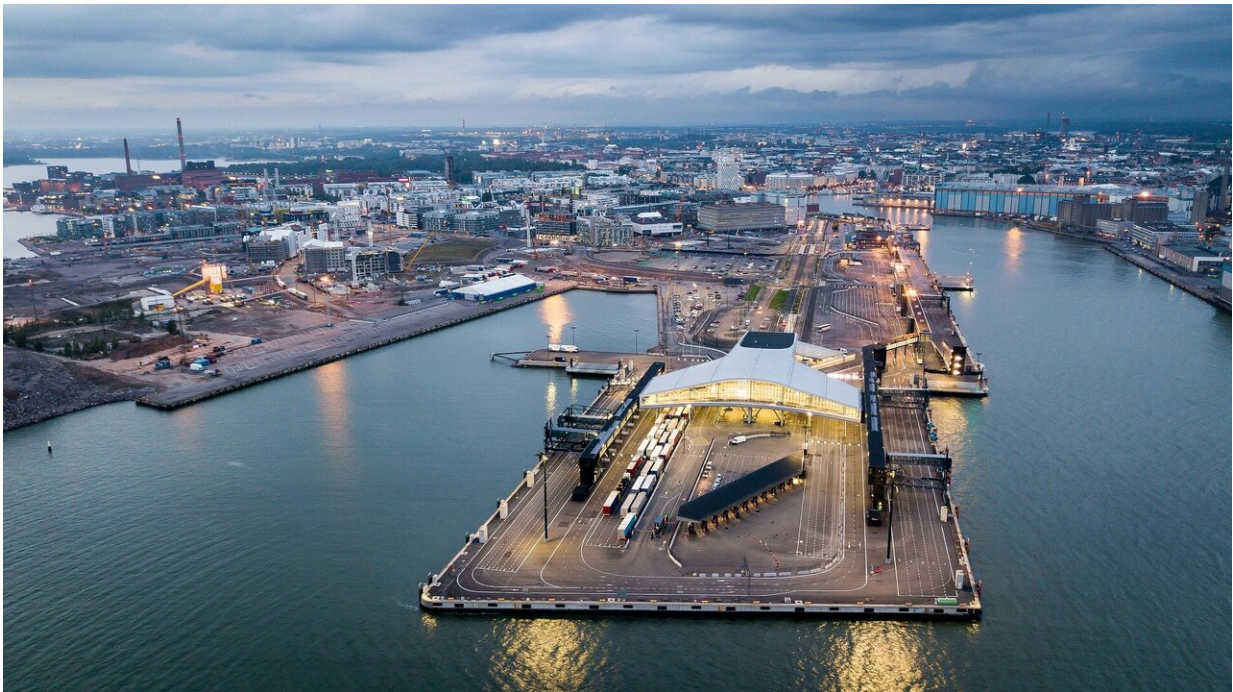


Finnish capital to shut high schools, ban public events

November 24 2020



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Finland's capital will introduce tough new coronavirus restrictions, the city's mayor said on Tuesday, after a sharp uptick in coronavirus cases.

High schools, libraries and swimming pools will be closed and public events banned outright in Helsinki due to the "worrying" situation, Mayor Jan Vapaavuori told a press conference.

"We propose to use the full range of measures within the city's powers," Vapaavuori said, warning that healthcare and contact-tracing services were at risk of being overwhelmed.

He said further details of the restrictions, such as the date they will take effect, would be announced at the end of the week.

Large-scale infections in institutions such as [care homes](#) and [homeless shelters](#) in Helsinki in recent days have also demonstrated the need for stricter measures, Vapaavuori said, adding that "too many people" have been ignoring the recommendations so far.

Helsinki is currently under a light-touch regime of controls which include voluntary limits on private indoor events and recommended use of masks in some situations.

Restrictions on restaurants and bars, or on freedom of movement, will have to be introduced by central government.

On Monday, Prime Minister Sanna Marin warned that a new state of emergency could be declared if current regional measures are not effective. That would allow for a repeat of measures such as the blockade of the Helsinki region between March and April this year.

Juha Tuominen, head of the capital region's health authority, noted "a sizeable jump in infections" with 1,533 new confirmed COVID-19 cases in the capital this week, compared to 992 the previous week.

Finland's nationwide incidence rate continues to be by far the lowest in the EU, with 69 new cases per 100,000 people detected in the last fortnight, although it has risen from the low forties at the start of November.

However the rate in and around the capital is currently significantly higher, at 155.8 new cases per 100,000 population.

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