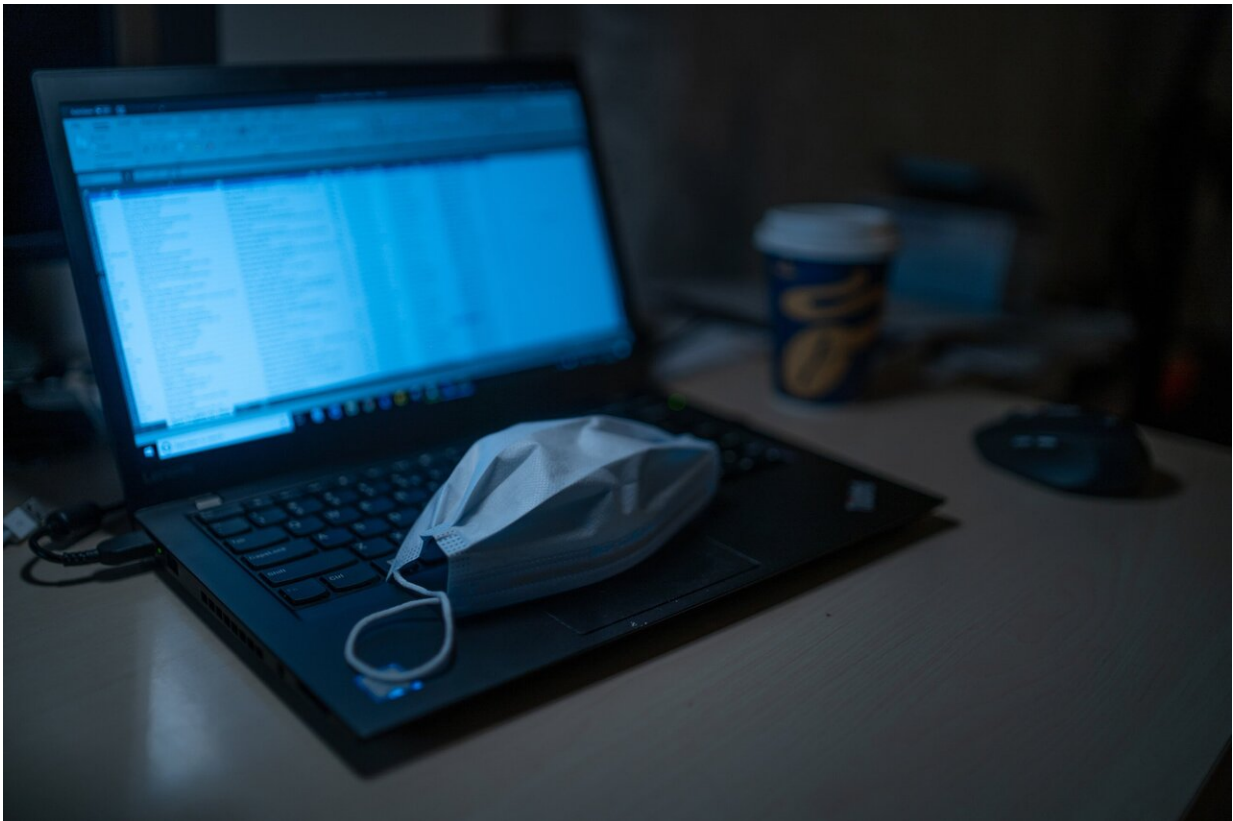


Finland to lift COVID restrictions from February 14

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Crowd limits at cultural and sports events will be lifted in Finland from February 14, the prime minister said on Wednesday, with most remaining coronavirus controls to end on March 1.

The government will issue advice to [local authorities](#) "to make events, culture and sports possible in all their forms", from February 14, Prime Minister Sanna Marin said after cabinet discussions on the country's coronavirus strategy.

In addition, restaurants and bars, which must currently end [alcohol sales](#) at 8:00 pm, will be able to serve alcohol until 11:00 pm from mid-February, but nightclubs will remain closed until the start of March, Marin said.

On Wednesday the Nordic country of 5.5 million passed the half-million mark of recorded coronavirus infections, and reported 2,012 COVID-related deaths since the start of the pandemic, maintaining some of the EU's lowest incidence rates.

But the Omicron variant led to a huge increase in infections at the end of 2021, which authorities worried would overwhelm the country's [healthcare system](#).

Marin said on Wednesday that the burden on healthcare appeared to have stabilised, meaning restrictions were no longer "essential" and must be lifted.

Denmark on Tuesday became the first EU nation to scrap nearly all remaining coronavirus restrictions.

It was followed later in the day by neighbouring Norway, where Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store said society must "live with" the virus.

"Finland is lagging about two weeks behind other countries' epidemiological developments," Prime Minister Sanna Marin said, adding that the mid-February date would allow officials to observe how the lifting of restrictions in Denmark and Norway plays out.

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