

# A solution has been found to the situation in Valka and Valga if the incidence of Covid-19 increases in Estonia

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Ministry of Health



If the incidence of Covid-19 increases in Estonia, the residents of Valka and Valga municipalities will not have to observe 14 days of self-isolation. Such a decision was made today, on 8 September, by the government, so that the inhabitants of these cities may freely cross the state border on a daily basis and their access to services, family and working conditions are not affected.

The Latvian and Estonian border towns Valka and Valga, unlike the rest of Latvia, are one functional territory that cannot be completely separated, as certain services and infrastructure for both Valka and Valga residents are only located on one side of the border.

In order not to significantly disrupt the daily lives of Valka and Valga residents from receiving daily services, as well as not to restrict business in the territory of these cities, the government decided that Valka and Valga municipalities will be able to ignore 14 days of self-isolation if they cross the land border of the Republic of Latvia with the Republic of Estonia. Besides, these people should also be declared in this area. In turn, if people arrive to Valka from another region of Estonia, such as Tallinn, 14 days of self-isolation will have to be observed.

While, in relation to the rest of the borderland of Latvia, the government adopted the decision last week, applying a special regulation in the borderland so that people who, for example, work or study in Lithuania or Estonia on a daily basis can continue to do so if the morbidity increases in neighbouring countries.

If the incidence increases in neighbouring countries, the government's decision stipulates that persons living in the Latvian borderland (except Valka) and going to work or an educational institution in Lithuania or Estonia on a daily basis will be able to continue to do so. At the same time, these persons, when being in Latvia, for example, when returning from work, shall have to observe the principles of self-isolation. This means that on a daily basis these persons will be able to freely go to Estonia and Lithuania, as well as return to Latvia in the following cases:

to perform work duties in Lithuania or Estonia (if a document certifying the fact of employment can be presented); to receive child supervision services or to attend a pre-school educational institution (if a certificate issued by the service provider or the educational institution can be presented); to visit educational institutions, as well as interest education groups (if a statement issued by the educational institution can be presented); to accompany persons with special needs to an educational institution, such as schools and kindergartens, as well as interest education (if a certificate issued to the person by the institution can be presented); to receive healthcare services prescribed by a doctor that are not available in the territory of Latvia.

Persons will also be able to cross the state border if it is necessary to organise or attend a funeral. It will also not be necessary to observe self-isolation for persons who cross Latvia in transit. This means that persons traveling in transit will have to cross the territory of Latvia within a maximum of 12 hours, without planning an overnight stay in the territory of Latvia.

In turn, when returning to Latvia, for example, in the evening after performing work duties in Lithuania or Estonia, these persons should observe the following additional security principles:

avoid exposing others to the risk of infection, which means not hosting guests, arranging and attending private meetings, visiting social and public places and crowded places. Exceptions are, for example, the workplace or situations related to the above-mentioned cases for crossing the border; when performing work duties or providing a service, the prescribed precautions should be observed; mouth and nose covers should be used when staying in public places; if any signs of respiratory infection develop, self-isolation should be provided immediately and a physician should be consulted.

It should be emphasised that these requirements do not have to be applied yet, but this will be the case in the event of an increase of incidence in neighbouring countries.

\*Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 360 of 9 June 2020 "Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of Covid-19 Infection"

Anna Strapcāne  
Communication Specialist of the Ministry of Health  
Telephone: +371 60005509; +371 28346707  
e-mail: [anna.strapcane@vm.gov.lv](mailto:anna.strapcane@vm.gov.lv)

<https://www.mk.gov.lv/en/article/solution-has-been-found-situation-valka-and-valga-if-incidence-covid-19-increases-estonia>