

Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak in the EU

Fundamental Rights Implications

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1. Measures taken by government/public authorities

An overarching comment regarding the Swedish responses to COVID-19 is that the Government in general work through the country's national, regional and local authorities. The government is making the decisions needed to facilitate the work of limiting the spread of the new corona virus and counteracting the effects of the spread in society.¹ These decisions are based on the recommendations from the relevant authorities. The communications from the government and the different authorities focus on the general public health benefits of different measures – or on the necessity to counteract the impact on the country's economy and labour market. With the increased spread of COVID-19, the government has had to make more decisions with national impact.

The human rights directly restricted by the government with reference to the corona virus is the right to freedom of assembly and the freedom of demonstration, which are constitutionally protected rights as of chapter 2, section 1 of the Instrument of Government, (*Regeringsform [1974:152]*)². These rights are today restricted with reference to chapter 2, section 24 of the Instrument of Government, (*Regeringsform [1974:152]*)³ which stipulates "Freedom of assembly and freedom of demonstration may be limited for reasons of order and security at the gathering or demonstration or for reasons of traffic. Otherwise, these freedoms may only be limited for reasons of national security or the counteracting of epidemics." A limitation on the right to freedom of assembly or the freedom of demonstration may according to chapter 2, section 21 of the Instrument of Government (*Regeringsform [1974:152]*), be imposed only to satisfy a purpose acceptable in a democratic society. The limitation must never go beyond what is necessary with regard to the purpose which occasioned it, nor may it be carried so far as to constitute a threat to the free shaping of opinion as one of the fundamentals of democracy. No limitation may be imposed solely on grounds of a political, religious, cultural or other such opinion.

There are also restrictions of the right to privacy related to the requirements of contact tracing. The communicable disease control physicians may decide that persons who are infected or has been in contact with infected persons are to be quarantined in particular buildings, parts of buildings or areas and are prohibited to leave these areas. It is also possible to isolate infected persons who will not remain in quarantine of their own volition. All of these restrictions are possible with reference to the Communicable Diseases Act (*Smittskyddslag [2004:168]*)⁴ following the government's decision on 1 February 2020 to classify the corona virus as a disease which constitutes a danger to society (which makes it covered by the act in question).

All other restrictions with reference to the corona virus are so far "recommendations", i.e. there are no complete bans on various activities (not even closures of upper secondary schools and universities) nor are there any penalties for not following the recommendations.

¹ Sweden, Government Offices (*Regeringskansliet*) The government's work prompted by the new corona virus (*Regeringens arbete med anledning av nya coronaviruset*), government webpage, [available here](#)

² Sweden, Instrument of Government, (*Regeringsform [1974:152]*), chapter 2, section 1, 1 January 2011, [available here](#)

³ Sweden, Instrument of Government, (*Regeringsform [1974:152]*), chapter 2, section 1, 1 January 2011, [available here](#)

⁴ Sweden, Communicable Diseases Act (*Smittskyddslag [2004:168]*), 7 April 2004, [available here](#)

On 1 February, upon the Public Health Agency of Sweden's (*Folkhälsomyndigheten*) suggestion⁵, the Government decided to introduce an ordinance stating that the regulations in the Contagious Diseases Act⁶ on diseases that are a danger to the public shall be applied to COVID-19. The ordinance entered into force on 2 February 2020.⁷

On 5 March, the Government declared that the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) and the Public Health Agency of Sweden should be given the possibility to use the resources they need to strengthen their preparations.⁸ The increased resources were presented in the form of Government Assignments (*regeringsuppdrag*) to both authorities. The Public Health Agency⁹ was assigned the task to further develop existent and future cooperation and information measures relating to the outbreak of COVID-19. The authority shall also develop different kinds of support to concerned authorities and other actors, in connection to the ongoing outbreak. Furthermore, the agency will collect questions and answers about the virus and the state's preparations on its website.¹⁰ The assignment shall be presented to the Government by 31 December 2020. The National Board for Health and Welfare¹¹ was assigned the task to further develop its existent and future coordinating and supporting measures, for example for the access to diagnostics, hospital beds and other forms of support to regions and municipalities due to the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19.

On 10 March, the Government assigned the National Board of Health and Welfare¹² with the task to produce, compile and disseminate information to staff within the authority's areas of concern on which measures that are necessary to protect at-risk populations. The areas include elderly care, care for persons with certain functional impairments and personal assistance.

⁵ Sweden, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (*Socialdepartementet*) (2020) The Government makes decision in connection with the Public Health Agency's suggestion concerning infection of Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) (*Regeringen har fattat beslut med anledning av Folkhälsomyndighetens hemställda gällande infektion med coronavirus [2019-nCoV]*), Press release, 1 February, [available here](#)

⁶ Sweden, Contagious Diseases Act (*Smittskyddslag [2004:168]*), 7 April 2004, [available here](#)

⁷ Sweden, Ordinance on regulations in the Contagious Diseases Act on diseases that are a danger to the public and community shall be applied to infection with 2019-nCoV (*Förordning [2020:20] om att bestämmelserna i smittskyddslagen (2004:168) om allmänfarliga och samhällsfarliga sjukdomar ska tillämpas på infektion med 2019-nCoV*), 2 February 2020, [available here](#)

⁸ Sweden, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (*Socialdepartementet*) (2020) Increased resources to the Public Health Agency and the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Utökade resurser till folkhälsomyndigheten och socialstyrelsen*), Press release, 5 March, [available here](#)

⁹ Sweden, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, (*Socialdepartementet*) (2020) Government assignment to further develop existent and future cooperation- and information measures inter alia, due to the outbreak of covid-2019 (*Uppdrag att vidareutveckla befintliga och kommande samordnings- och informationsinsatser m.m. med anledning av utbrottet av covid-19*), Government Assignment, 9 March, [available here](#)

¹⁰ Sweden, Public Health Agency of Sweden (*Folkhälsomyndigheten*) (2020) Questions and answers (*Frågor och svar*), 11 March 2020, [available here](#)

¹¹ Sweden, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (*Socialdepartementet*) (2020) Government assignment to strengthen the preparatory work due to the outbreak of covid-2019 (*Uppdrag att stärka beredskapsarbetet med anledning av utbrottet av covid-19*) Government Assignment, 9 March, [available here](#)

¹² Sweden, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (*Socialdepartementet*) (2020) The government assigns the National Board of Health and Welfare to spread information on the coronavirus to all staff within the social care's activity areas (*Regeringen ger Socialstyrelsen i uppdrag att sprida information om coronaviruset till all personal inom socialtjänstens verksamhetsområden*), Government Assignment, 10 March, [available here](#)

On 11 March, the Government proposed several (5) amending budgets (*ändringsbudget*), prompted by the corona virus.¹³ The amending budget concerns four different areas:

- State compensation to municipalities and regions for extraordinary costs

The means of the extra amending budget create the possibility for the state to compensate municipalities and regions for extraordinary measures and additional costs in health care in connection to the corona virus. These compensations will be made in retrospect.

- Strengthening of concerned authorities

The Public Health Agency will receive an addition of 41 million SEK (€3.8 million) for extra personnel costs. The National Board of Health and Welfare will receive an addition of 20 million SEK (€1.8 million) for extra personnel costs, training measures and material. The Swedish Medical Products Agency (*Läkemedelsverket*) will receive an extra 5 million SEK (€464,000) for its work together with the country's regions to guarantee the provision of medicine in Sweden. The additions correspond with the authorities' own assessments of their present needs. The National Board of Health and Welfare's loan frame (*låneram*) is trebled from 100 to 300 million SEK, to enable purchases of protective equipment and testing equipment.

- Economic support to individuals and companies (prop. 2019/20:132)

To encourage people who are sick to stay at home, the employed will be compensated for the otherwise unpaid qualifying deduction in the beginning of a sickness period (*karensavdrag*). The same measure will apply for the self-employed. The employers will temporarily be compensated for their sick pay costs. Self-employed persons will also be compensated. To relieve the burden on the health care providers, the proposition also includes to waive the requirement for an employee to provide a medical certificate for the first 14 days of sick leave. The allocation for disease carrier pay (*smittbärrpenning*) is increased. The measures are assessed to be able to decrease the infectivity and the burden on the health care sector. The Swedish Social Insurance Agency (*Försäkringskassan*) received 130 million SEK for additional costs for implementing these measures.

The qualifying day of sickness (*karensdag*) was abolished, meaning that the state pays out sick pay from the first day of the sickness. The allocation for disease carrier pay (*smittbärrpenning*) is increased. The measures are assessed to be able to decrease the infectivity and thus the burden on the health care sector.

- Measures to subsidise companies that are affected economically

The proposition on short-time work, with the aim to avoid notices and give the companies the possibility to get back on their feet when the situation changes for the better, was brought forward and proposed to enter into force on 1 May 2020.

On 11 March, the Government introduced an ordinance banning some public gatherings and public events.¹⁴

The Government used the possibility defined in the Public Order Act¹⁵ to ban public gatherings and

¹³ Sweden, Ministry of Finance (*Finansdepartementet*) (2020) Extra amending budget due to the corona virus (*Extra ändringsbudget med anledning av coronaviruset*), Press release, 11 March 2020, [available here](#)

¹⁴ Sweden, Ordinance on banning public gatherings and events (*Förordning om förbud mot att hålla allmänna sammankomster och offentliga tillställningar*), 12 March 2020, [available here](#)

¹⁵ Sweden, Public Order Act (*Ordningslag [1993:1617]*) Chapter 2, section 15, 10 June 1999, [available here](#)

events if it is necessary to counteract an epidemic. The ban is articulated in the ordinance. The ordinance clarifies that it as of Thursday 12 March and for the time being, it is forbidden to organize public gatherings and events with more than 500 participants anywhere in Sweden. The Government will regularly evaluate the need for the ordinance, and it will be repealed as soon as it is no longer needed.

According to the Instrument of Government (*Regeringsform [1974:152]*)¹⁶, the Government may, after legal authorisation, restrict the freedom of assembly and freedom of demonstration to counteract epidemic. Such a restriction shall not go further than what is necessary in relation to the reason that has caused it. Each restriction must thus be proportional. The definitions of ‘public gathering’ (*allmän sammankomst*) and ‘public event’ (*offentlig tillställning*) can be found in the Public Order Act.¹⁷ The term public gatherings, according to the Public Order Act, includes i.e. demonstrations, lectures, religious gatherings, theatre and cinema screenings and musical concerts. The term public events, according to the Public Order Act, includes inter alia sports events, dance events, markets and fairs.

If anyone should defy the ban, the Police may cancel or break up a public gathering or public event that is held contrary to the ordinance.¹⁸ This includes also already granted permissions. An organiser of a public gathering or event who intentionally or negligently defies the ban may be issued with fines or sentenced to imprisonment for a maximum of six months.

On 20 March, the Public Health Agency has not recommended closing of schools. The authority states that there is no reason from a disease control perspective to tell healthy pupils to stay home from school. The same goes for school staff, regardless of where they have travelled. Pupils and staff who have travelled in areas where the corona virus is spreading does not have to stay home but should be attentive to symptoms. The authority further states that it is the heads of schools (that is the municipality for municipal schools, and the board at private schools) who have the responsibility for the employees and the work environment at the schools. The Public Health Agency points out that such decisions can be made based on the authority’s assessments.¹⁹

On 14 March, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs publicly advised against all non-necessary travels abroad. The non-advice runs until 14 April, after which new assessments will be made.²⁰

The municipalities or the boards may decide to close schools on basis of the assessments of the Public Health Agency and the medical epidemiologists. As of 16 March, an ordinance²¹ entered into force, which expands the principal’s possibilities to adjust the school activities, for example by offering

¹⁶ Sweden, Instrument of Government (*Regeringsform [1974:152]*), 28 February 1974, [available here](#)

¹⁷ Sweden, Public Order Act (*Ordningslag [1993:1617]*) Chapter 2, section 1-3, 1 September 2010, [available here](#)

¹⁸ Sweden, Public Order Act (*Ordningslag [1993:1617]*) Chapter 2, section 22, 16 December 1993, [available here](#)

¹⁹ Sweden, Public Health Agency of Sweden (*Folkhälsomyndigheten*) (2020) Information to school and pre-schools on covid-19 (*Information till skola och förskola om covid-19*), 9 March 2020, [available here](#)

²⁰ Sweden, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Utrikesdepartementet*) (2020) Information on the Ministry’s work concerning the corona virus (*Information om UD:s arbete med anledning av coronaviruset*), 14 March 2020, [available here](#)

²¹ Sweden, Ordinance on education in certain types of school in the education system upon spread of certain infectivity (*Förordning [2020:115] om utbildning i vissa skolformer i skolväsendet vid spridning av viss smitta*), 16 March 2020, [available here](#)

online or distance schooling, extended school days or an extended school year.²² The ordinance enables the principals to handle situations that may arise if they have to close schools, by extending their possibilities to adjust the activities to fulfil the pupils' right to education, while maintaining the adequate level of disease control. As regulated by the Education Act²³, the Government may introduce the necessary regulations during extraordinary events in peacetime in order to guarantee that the pupils receive the education they are entitled to. The ordinance will apply in four different situations – when a principal keeps or have kept a school closed:

- because such a big portion of the staff is absent due to the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19 that it is not possible to keep up ordinary activities;
- after consultation with a medical epidemiologist to prevent infectivity;
- because the school is located in an area where the Public Health Agency has decided that the schools shall be closed;
- to follow a recommendation from the Public Health Agency.

The Government assigned the Swedish Medical Products Agency (*Läkemedelsverket*) to work to prevent medicine shortages that may arise in relation to the current situation. The agency shall review the possibility for wholesalers and pharmacies to stock medicines with short durability in special supplies and prolong the time to their discard. The authority shall also examine any vulnerabilities in production and distribution of especially important medicines that may arise because of the virus spread.²⁴

On 15 March, in a joint consultation with the Swedish Civil Contingencies, the Public Health Agency and the National Board of Health and Welfare, the government called for a public message (*myndighetsmeddelande*) to everyone residing in Sweden.²⁵ The message contained instructions on how to break the infectivity process by:

- staying at home if you feel sick, even with mild symptoms;
- abstaining from visiting service homes for the elderly or hospitals if they can be avoided. Avoid such visits if you feel sick;
- frequently washing hands with soap and warm water.

The Government also assigned the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (*Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap*) with the task to quickly develop and disseminate a national information material to all households through efficient communication channels. The Government tasks the authority with assuring that the authorities' information to the public remains coordinated and clear and reach the public through efficient information channels. The Public Health Agency's

²² Sweden, Ministry of Education (*Utbildningsdepartementet*) (2020) Schools in Sweden gets greater chances to handle effects of the corona virus (*Sveriges skolor får bättre möjligheter att hantera effekter av coronaviruset*), press release 13 March 2020, [available here](#)

²³ Sweden, Education Act (*Skollag [2010:800]*), Chapter 29, section 29, 23 June 2010, [available here](#)

²⁴ Sweden, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (*Socialdepartementet*) (2020) Swedish medical products agency increases activities to assure access to medicine (*Läkemedelsverket ska öka sina insatser för att säkra tillgång till läkemedel*) press release 13 March 2020, [available here](#)

²⁵ Sweden, Ministry of Justice (*Justitiedepartementet*) (2020) The Government calls for message to the public and gives information assignment to the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (*Regeringen begär myndighetsmeddelande och ger informationsuppdrag till MSB*), 15 March 2020, [available here](#)

webpage has information available in different languages – Swedish, English, Chinese, Farsi, Arabic, Dari, Somali, Finnish, Tigrinja, Pashto and Kurmanji.²⁶ However, the information is only directed to persons who have travelled from areas with ongoing transmission of the coronavirus and is very brief. As of 18 March, the Public Health Agency (*Folkhälsomyndigheten*) has more general information on the virus and how to protect oneself and others available in Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Farsi, Finnish, French, German, Pashto, Polish, Somali, Spanish, Thai and Tigrinja on its website.²⁷ It is worth noting that none of the Western South Slavic languages (Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian) are among the languages, although there are over 157,000 persons²⁸ residing in Sweden, who are born in this part of Europe. The limited outreach to groups who do neither frequent Swedish media outlets nor speak fluent Swedish has become an increasing concern for different actors. For example, on 19 March the national newspaper Svenska Dagbladet devoted its editorial to discuss how to reach this group. The editorial mentions an initiative which will produce videos to publish on YouTube and on tellcorona.com where famous Swedes with immigrant origins present the information text in the videos.²⁹

On 16 March, the Government assigned the National Board of Health and Welfare with the task to assure the access of protective equipment and other health care material, and function as national central purchasing body for the same.³⁰ The assignment includes inter alia to on the national level respond to the allocation and redistribution between the responsible parties, such as municipalities and regions.³¹ The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency shall support the agency in the work. The assignment runs as long as necessary given the transmission of COVID-19. A report on the work shall be submitted to the Government by 31 December 2020.

On 18 March, the Government assigned the National Board of Health and Welfare with the task to coordinate Swedish intensive care to increase the number of available hospital beds. The regional authorities, responsible for health care and medical services are working to increase the intensive care capacity. The task of the National Board of Health and Welfare is to support this regionally based work by coordinating and increasing the number of hospital beds.³²

²⁶ Sweden, Public Health Agency (*Folkhälsomyndigheten*) (2020) Information material (*Informationsmaterial*), 12 March 2020, [available here](#)

²⁷ Sweden, Public Health Agency (*Folkhälsomyndigheten*) (2020) Information in different languages, webpage, [available here](#)

²⁸ Sweden, Statistics Sweden (*Statistiska Centralbyrån, SCB*), Population Statistics 2019 (*Befolkningsstatistik 2019*), statistical database, [available here](#)

²⁹ Sweden, Help us reach the society in the shadows (*Hjälp oss att nå skuggsamhället*), newspaper editorial, Svenska Dagbladet, 19 March 2020, [available here](#)

³⁰ Sweden, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (*Socialdepartementet*) (2020) Government Assignment to nationally assure the access to protective equipment and allocate other material due to the transmission of covid-19 (*Uppdrag om att på nationell nivå säkra tillgången på skyddsutrustning och fördela skyddsutrustning och annat material till följd av spridningen av covid-19*), Government Assignment, 17 March 2020, [available here](#)

³¹ Sweden, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (*Socialdepartementet*) (2020) Allocation of health care material due to covid-19 (*Fördelning av sjukvårdsmaterial till följd av covid-19*), press release, 16 March 2020, [available here](#)

³² Sweden, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (*Socialdepartementet*) (2020) National Board of Health and Welfare shall establish a coordinating function for intensive care hospital beds (*Socialstyrelsen ska inrätta en samordningsfunktion för intensivvårdsplatser*), press release, 18 March 2020 [available here](#)

On 16 March, the Public Health Agency stated that persons over 70 years old should limit their social contacts until further notice.³³ On the daily joint press conference on 18 March, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency explained that it is everybody's responsibility to ensure that the elderly come into contact with others as little as possible.

The isolation of the elderly has been subject to debate, and many private persons and companies have taken or called upon measures to help and facilitate older persons access to digital aids and social media.³⁴ Many food shops have for example extended their opening hours and offer the first open hour open only for persons in the risk group.³⁵ The frustration many elderly may feel over having to limit their social contacts was addressed by the Prime Minister Stefan Löfven in his speech to the nation on 22 March 2020.³⁶ Löfven said that he could understand the feeling, but that the measure is necessary for the individual health, but also for the sake of the health care.

In a press conference held on 17 March, the Public Health Agency calls on employers in the Stockholm region to let employees work from home when possible. It could have a suppressing effect on the infectivity and thus relieve the health care. The recommendation primarily concerns the Stockholm region, where the transmission of the virus at the time of writing, is spreading fastest.³⁷

The Public Health Agency also recommended that all upper secondary schools, municipal adult educations and universities introduces distance education.³⁸ The measure aims at dampening the transmission rate. As of 20 March, schools and preschools are not affected by the recommendation. However, should transmission matters get worse, and the schools need to close, the Parliament decided on new legislation that will make it possible for the Government to close schools and preschools while at the same time guarantee care for children whose parents have jobs of societal importance³⁹, and for children in need of care for psychological, physical or other reasons. The existence of the act creates capacity for action and preparedness if the situation should change, the Government states. The act means that the Government due to extraordinary events in peacetime may instruct provisions on that preschools and schools shall temporarily be closed on national, regional or municipal level. The act enters into force 21 March 2020. According to the newspaper Aftonbladet, the government is considering to introduce childcare allowance (*föräldrapenning*) for all parents who have to refrain from working to take care of their children if the schools should close.⁴⁰ On 19 March, the Minister of Gender Equality, Åsa Lindhagen, stated that the corona crisis

³³ Sweden, Swedish Public Health Agency (*Folkhälsomyndigheten*) (2020) Persons over 70 should limit their social contacts until further notice (*Personer över 70 bör begränsa sociala kontakter tills vidare*), webpage, 16 March 2020, [available here](#)

³⁴ Sweden, *Aftonbladet*, 2020, All older persons cannot stand the lonliness (*Alla äldre står inte ut med ensamheten*), 20 March 2020, [available here](#)

³⁵ Sweden, Swedish Television (*Sveriges Television*), 2020, Special opening hours for older persons to shop food (*Speciella öppettider för äldre att handla mat*), 19 March 2020, [available here](#)

³⁶ Sweden, State Council Preparation (*Statsrådsberedningen*) (2020), Prime minister Stefan Löfvens speech to the nation (*Statsminister Stefan Löfvens tal till nationen*), 22 March 2020, [available here](#)

³⁷ Sweden, Svenska Dagbladet, 2020, Anders Tegnell: "If possible, work from home" (*Anders Tegnell: "Jobba hemifrån om det går"*), 16 March 2020, [available here](#)

³⁸ Sweden, Swedish Public Health Agency (*Folkhälsomyndigheten*) (2020) Universities and upper secondary schools are now requested to conduct distance education (*Lärosäten och gymnasieskolor uppmanas nu att bedriva distansundervisning*), 17 March 2020, [available here](#)

³⁹ Sweden, Ministry of Education (*Utbildningsdepartementet*) (2020) New act enables the Government to close the schools (*Ny lag gör det möjligt för regeringen att stänga skolorna*), press release, 19 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁴⁰ Sweden, Childcare allowance may be the solution if the schools close down (*Föräldrapenning kan bli lösning om skolorna stänger*), *Aftonbladet*, newspaper article, 19 March 2020, [available here](#)

may pose a increased risk of violence in close relationships, since social isolation together with an economic crisis are commonly triggers for increased violence both against women and children.⁴¹

On the 17th of March the Government, due to the call of the European Council and the Commission, decided to temporarily stop non-essential travel to Sweden from countries outside the EEA and Switzerland. The decision took effect on the 19th of March and will initially be in force until the 17th of April. According to the Government, this is an exceptional measure that will not apply for longer than necessary. All travels to Sweden are not stopped. The entry ban does not apply to Swedish citizens. Further more, for example EU citizens whose reason for travelling is to return to their homes will be able to enter Sweden. In addition, the entry ban does not apply to people who have particularly urgent needs or who are to carry out essential functions in Sweden. This includes for example health care professionals, diplomats and people transporting goods to Sweden, as well as passengers travelling for imperative family reasons or for the purpose of seeking international protection. The right to apply for asylum is not affected by the ban⁴². The Migration Agency has also cancelled the travels from quota refugees that should have come to Sweden from Iran.⁴³ The decision was based on an overview by the Public Health Agency on areas where the virus is transmitting. The Migration Agency will cancel also other transfers if more countries/areas are affected by the transmission.

As a result of the evolving pandemic situation and restrictions around international air travel the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR and IOM, the International Organization for Migration, as of 17 March, suspended resettlement departures for quota refugees from all countries. The Swedish Migration Agency thereafter introduced temporary measures to cancel travels for all quota refugees planned to be transferred to Sweden. The Swedish Migration Agency will stay in close contact with UNHCR and IOM on the development, resuming resettlement transfers as soon as the global situation and logistics permit.

The government has proposed a number of different measures due to COVID-19. Preparations are underway so that the government can decide on the measures as soon as possible. The Swedish Social Insurance Agency (*Försäkringskassan*)⁴⁴ has collected information on its website on the regulations listed below. The Swedish Social Insurance Agency will update the information when the government has made a decision. The website currently contain information on⁴⁵:

- Disease carrier allowance (*smittbärappenning*) and travel allowance
- Deduction from sick pay during the qualifying period, doctor's certificate and sick pay
- Care of a sick child (*vård av barn*), possibilities for parents to stay home with their children with temporary parental benefit.
- Sickness benefit qualifying income (SGI) if you are laid off or laid off for a limited time
- Information to participants in programs at the Swedish Public Employment service

⁴¹ Sweden, Government Offices (*Regeringskansliet*), Åsa Lindhagen meets women's and girls' relief centres to talk about vulnerability in the home (Åsa Lindhagen möter kvinno- och tjejjourer för att prata om utsatthet i hemmet), pressrelease, 19 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁴² Sweden, Ministry of Justice (*Justitiedepartementet*) (2020) Temporary ban against travels to Sweden due to covid-19 (*Ett tillfälligt förbud mot resor till Sverige med anledning av covid-19*), press release, 17 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁴³ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency (*Migrationsverket*) (2020) The Migration Agency's transfer of quota refugees to Sweden – Information due to the corona virus (*Migrationsverkets överföring av kvotflyktingar till Sverige – information med anledning av coronaviruset*), 4 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁴⁴ Sweden, Swedish Social Insurance Agency (*Försäkringskassan*) (2020) Corona virus – this applies (*Coronaviruset – det här gäller*), [available here](#)

- Dental care subsidy
- Changed working conditions due to closed borders.

Since 2013, there is a national information number in Sweden call to give or receive information on major events or crises.⁴⁶ The emergency number 113 13 is Sweden's national information number. In connection to the COVID-19, you may call the number for general questions about the virus. The number compiles all information available from the most important actors. For questions on sickness symptoms and other health care related questions, the number is 1177.

The economic effects of the corona transmission are significant in Sweden, and many businesses express their worry and/or puts staff on notice. To try to mitigate the economic effects, the Government has introduced a number of measures, for example the extra amending budget mentioned above. The Government Bill on the matter will be delivered to the parliament (*riksdag*) for consideration by 19 March.⁴⁷

The Government presented a series of measures aiming to ease the possibility for small and midsized companies to finance in a difficult time. On 20 March, a range of measures were presented to make it easier for Swedish businesses, particularly small- and medium-sized businesses, to access finance at this difficult time. The state-owned investment company *Almi Företagspartner AB* will receive a capital contribution of 3 billion SEK to increase its lending to small- and medium-sized businesses throughout the country. The Swedish Export Credit Corporation's (*Svensk Exportkredit*) credit framework will be increased from 125 billion SEK (to 200 billion SEK and can be used to provide both state-supported and commercial credit to Swedish export companies. Furthermore, the Swedish Export Credit Agency (*Exportkreditnämnden*) will decide on credit guarantees that entail new and improved credit opportunities for businesses.⁴⁸

On 20 March, the Government proposed an extra 1 billion SEK to the cultural sector and sports movement in support due to the economic consequences affecting these sectors as a result of the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The proposal is an agreement reached between the Government, the Liberal Party and the Centre Party, and the money will be distributed by grant-allocating agencies in the area of culture and by the Swedish Sports Confederation (*Riksidrottsförbundet*).

The Government proposed an emergency package to save Swedish businesses and jobs. The package included that the state assumes all sick leave costs through April and May. Also the self-employed is included in this, by getting a flat rate sick pay leave day 1–14.⁴⁹ The measures also included a proposal on short-time layoffs (*korttidspemittering*).⁵⁰ The proposal builds on a previous proposal of a new support system in short-time work, but the subvention level is heavily increased. The state will assume three fourths of the costs for having staff work lesser time, compared to short-time work where the cost is split between the employer, the employee and the state. The proposal means that the employers' costs for salary can be reduced by half while the employer will receive 90 percent of

⁴⁶ Sweden, SOS Alarm (2020) Important telephone numbers (*Viktiga telefonnummer*), [available here](#)

⁴⁷ Sweden, Ministry of Finance (*Finansdepartementet*) (2020) Economic measures due to covid-19 (*Ekonomiska åtgärder med anledning av covid-19*), 16 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁴⁸ Sweden, Ministry of Finance (*Finansdepartementet*) (2020) Economic measures in response to COVID-19, 20 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁴⁹ Sweden, Ministry of Finance (*Finansdepartementet*) (2020) Emergency package for Swedish businesses and jobs (*Krispaket för svenska företag och jobb*), Press release, 16 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁵⁰ Sweden, Ministry of Finance (*Finansdepartementet*) (2020) On the proposal on short-time layoffs (*Om förslaget korttidspemittering*), 16 March 2020, [available here](#)

their salary. The aim is that affected businesses will be able to keep their staff and gear up fast when the situation changes. The new regulations will enter into force on 7 April but apply to all situations as of 16 March. They will be applicable during 2020. The public financial effect is estimated to 2.4 billion SEK for 2020. The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (*Tillväxtverket*) will administer the support and are provided with 20 million SEK. In addition to the Governments measures, the Riksbank, Sweden's central bank (*Riksbanken*) announced that they will loan up until 500 billion SEK to the businesses via the banks to assure the credit supply.⁵¹

Many court cases are cancelled due to cases of illness. Many civil cases are postponed indefinitely. Also many prosecutors are sick, which runs the risk of having to postpone also criminal cases.⁵²

To prevent transmission of the virus in prisons and custodies, as of 12 March, visits, permits and personal attendance is restricted. Inmates are not allowed to have any visits other than by their defence, prosecutor or personnel from the Police or other authorities, as long as these are symptom free. Already granted permits shall not be carried through unless absolutely necessary, and new permits are not granted. For persons who have symptoms, the personal attendance in prison or custody shall be postponed two weeks at a time.⁵³The director Lennart Palmgren says the measure is taken out of care both for the inmates and the personnel. The inmates are a vulnerable group, who generally have a poorer health condition than the average population. There are inmates who could get serious symptoms, should they be infected. The inmates can not themselves take action to protect themselves from transmission risks.

Many municipalities⁵⁴, and private caregivers⁵⁵ have imposed restraining orders on elderly care homes. These restraining orders are however not controlled, which has been subject of critique.⁵⁶ In some forms of elderly homes, the personnel have the mandate to throw out visitors, but many of the care homes are so called special homes (*särskilt boende*) and they build on free will, and such restraining measures are not possible.

One person placed in the Migration Agency's facilities was found infected by the virus. The person is now isolated from other detainees. When it was known that a detainee was infected by the virus, a threatful situation occurred by the detainees. The Police was called to the scene and two reports on violence against a public servant have been confirmed after attacks against personnel at the detention centre. The possibility to visit the detention centres is temporarily limited.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Sweden, Riksbank, Sweden's central bank (*Riksbanken*), 2020, Riksbank lends up to SEK 500 billion to safeguard credit supply, Press release, 13 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁵² Sweden, Swedish Radio, 2020, Many court proceedings cancelled because of the corona virus (*Många rättegångar ställs in på grund av coronaviruset*), 18 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁵³Sweden, Swedish Prison and Probation Service (*Kriminalvården*), 2020, Visits, permits and personal attendance stopped (*Stopp för besök, permission och egen inställelse*) 12 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁵⁴ Sweden, Swedish Television (*Sveriges Television*), 2020, Stockholm City imposes restraining orders on elderly homes (*Stockholms stad inför besöksförbud på äldreboenden*), 18 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁵⁵ Sweden, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 2020, Big caregivers impose restraining orders on elderly homes (*Vårdjättar inför besöksförbud på äldreboenden*), 11 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁵⁶ Sweden Swedish Television (*Sveriges Television*), 2020 Restraining orders at elderly homes are not controlled (*Besöksförbud på äldreboende kontrolleras inte*), 23 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁵⁷ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency (*Migrationsverket*), 2020, Detainee found infected by covid-19 (*Förvarstagen konstaterat sjuk i covid-19*), 18 March 2020, [available here](#)

On 24 March, the Public Health Agency decided on further measures to prevent the transmission, directed to restaurants, cafés and bars. In summary, the measures mean that only serving at the table will be allowed, this to avoid crowding around desks to order.⁵⁸

2. Impact of the outbreak on certain national or ethnic communities

Since early February, the media has reported on racism against persons of Asian origin or perceived as being of Asian origin.⁵⁹ The stories have mainly been based on personal witnesses, and focused on how the affected persons have been treated in the public transport system⁶⁰ or at school⁶¹. The Chinese ambassador in Sweden Gui Conguy has stated that the situation is unfortunate and distressing, that the treatment amounts to racism. He has demanded that Swedish society must show its position and condemn discrimination and racism.⁶² The Chinese Federation in Sweden (*Sveriges kinesiska riksförbund*) addressed the situation in a press release.⁶³ The federation's spokesperson John Hamben said that many Chinese living in Sweden are met with fear and harassment, i.e. children are bullied and harassed at school. John Hamben stated: "I understand that both Chinese and Swedish persons are afraid and worried. But regardless of which, it is never acceptable to harass other people, and especially children. The Chinese Federation therefore calls upon parents, teachers, other school staff and authorities to try to stop the fear for the corona virus leading to harassment of persons with Chinese origin." However, the spokesperson also stated that to physically distance oneself from persons of Asian origin or perceived as being of Asian origin cannot be considered to be discrimination. Rather, Hamben suggests, it is matter of self defence mechanisms that kicks in.⁶⁴ The Equality Ombudsman states that in relation to the corona-outbreak, there has been one report on a restaurant acting discriminating against persons of Chinese origin.⁶⁵

At least six of total 15 death cases in the Stockholm area has been of Somali descent. Five of the six persons who died also lived in the same area called Järva. The atmosphere in the area was reportedly worried the last couple of weeks, since many have not been able to take part of the information about the virus, which has almost exclusively been available in Swedish and English. A doctor in the Swedish-Somali Doctors Association (*Svensk-Somaliska läkarföreningen*) said he does not know for

⁵⁸ Sweden, the Government Office (*Regeringskansliet*), 2020, Measures concerning restaurants, cafés, night clubs and bars (*Åtgärder gällande restauranger, kaféer, nattklubbar och barer*), 24 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁵⁹ Swedish National Television (*Sveriges Television, SVT*), 2020, Her daughter was exposed to racist attack on tram "with regard to the virus you should get off" (*Hennes dotter utsattes för rasism på spårvagnen: "Med tanke på viruset borde du gå av"*), 4 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁶⁰ Swedish Radio (*Sveriges Radio, SR*), 2020, East Asians attest on racism after the corona outbreak (*Östasiater vittnar om rasism efter utbrottet av corona*), 5 February 2020, [available here](#)

⁶¹ Sweden, Expressen, 2020, Mother: they called my son a virus (*Mamman: de kallade min son för ett virus*), 7 February 2020, [available here](#)

⁶² Sweden, Svenska Dagbladet, 2020, Ambassador: Harassment against Chinese persons is racism (*Ambassadör: Kränkningar mot kineser är rasism*), 7 February 2020, [available here](#)

⁶³ Sweden, the Chinese Federation in Sweden (*Kinesiska Riksförbundet i Sverige*) (2020) Increased stigmatisation of Chinese in Sweden after outbreak of corona virus (*Stigmatisering av kineser i Sverige ökar efter coronavirusutbrottet*), press release 6 February 2020, [available here](#)

⁶⁴ Sweden, Expressen, 2020, Swedish Chinese restaurants lose half their customers (*Svenska Kinarestauranger tappar hälften av kunderna*), 23 February 2020, [available here](#)

⁶⁵ Sweden, the Equality Ombudsman (*Diskrimineringsombudsmannen*), Data collected through e-mail correspondence, 17 March 2020

sure why the area stands out in relation to covid-19 deaths, but mentions that the area is one where many people live overcrowded, and is also socio-economically challenged, which is a factor to poorer public health.⁶⁶ The association have now published the information on Somali. The lack of adequate information in other languages than English and Swedish have been debated in the media.⁶⁷

3. Impact on privacy and spread of disinformation

The spread of disinformation online is an issue mainly addressed by the national newspapers that keep updating the available information and answer questions from the readers. Some articles have also dealt with different so-called influencers who spread non-factual information or try to promote articles said to boost the immune system with reference to the outbreak.⁶⁸

On 24 March, the Defence minister Peter Hultqvist published a debate article on the topic of disinformation. The minister calls on the public to have one's wits about one, to question the aim of different kinds of information and to not spread false rumours and disinformation. He concludes his article by stating that the Government are basing its decisions on the Public Health Agency and other experts' recommendations, and that science and documented knowledge must win over the alarmism.⁶⁹

The public authorities and the government update their websites frequently and the Public Health Agency (*Folkhälsomyndigheten*), the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (*Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, MSB*) hold joint press conferences every day at 14.00, which are followed live by all major news outlets. This regularity and frequency is an attempt to guarantee correct and updated information to all.

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (*Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, MSB*) has published a webpage about the importance of criticism of information sources.⁷⁰

- On 13 March the Swedish Data Protection Authority (Datainspektionen) stated that they have received many questions about the corona virus in relation to personal data - in

⁶⁶ Sweden, Swedish Television (*Sveriges Television*), 2020, Doctor's association alarms: Several Swedish-Somali among corona deaths in the Stockholm area (*Läkarförening larmar: Flera svensksomalier bland coronadödsfall i Stockholmsområdet*), 23 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁶⁷ Sweden, "May think that it is a regular cough" (*"Kan tro att det är vanlig hosta"*), news paper editorial, *Expressen*, 12 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁶⁸ Sweden, Influencers cannot escape corona: disinformation and quackery reach an audience of millions (*Influencers kan inte smita undan corona: desinformation och kvacksalveri når ut till miljonpublik*), newspaper editorial, *Aftonbladet*, 16 March 2020, [available here](#), Sweden, Criticism against Swedish influencers after posts about corona (*Kritik mot svenska influencers efter inlägg om corona*), newspaper article, *Expressen*, 18 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁶⁹ Sweden, Ministry of Defence (*Försvarsdepartementet*) (2020), To have one's wits about one in the disinformation pandemic (*Håll huvudet kallt i desinformationspandemien*), debate article, 24 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁷⁰ Sweden, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (*Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, MSB*) 6 tips – think about this when you assess information (6 tips – tank på det här när du bedömer information), webpage, [available here](#)

particular in relation to work life.⁷¹ The authority has compiled the frequently asked questions and summarized the most important aspects as they see it:

- Information about that someone is infected with the corona virus is defined as personal data about health status.
- Information about that an employee has returned from a so-called risk area is not defined as a personal data about health status.
- Information about that someone is in” quarantine” (meaning that the person for cautionary reasons are not at work) is not defined as personal data about health status, unless it entails further information about the reason.
- Information about that someone is put in quarantine as defined in the Contagious Diseases Act⁷² is probably defined as personal data about health status.
- Information about health status is considered delicate matters.

⁷¹ Sweden, Swedish Data Protection Authority (Datainspektionen), 2020, The Corona virus and personal data (*Coronaviruset och personuppgifter*), 18 March 2020, [available here](#)

⁷² Sweden, Contagious Diseases Act (*Smittskyddslag [2004:168]*), 7 April 2004, [available here](#)