

Slowing the spread of COVID-19 as a societal urgency

The Icelandic Government, SA Confederation of Icelandic Enterprise and the Icelandic Confederation of Labour agree on the urgency to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The virus is known to be more contagious than regular influenza, and no vaccine exists. The viral infection and steps taken to counteract it are already impacting on the job market and on society as a whole, and such effects can be expected to become more pronounced over the next few days.

The efforts being put in place aim to slow the spread of the virus, protect vulnerable groups against infection, and minimise the strain on the health system and on society's infrastructures during the viral outbreak. Quarantines are an important way to achieve this, and people who for various reasons can be expected to be at particular risk of infection, or of infecting others, are urged to heed the instructions of health authorities to remain in quarantine.

Decisions to put people in quarantine are based on the whole population's interests, which means that it is important to enable individuals to follow official instructions to enter a quarantine without having to worry about their personal finances. The parties signing this declaration have therefore agreed on the following:

1. SA Confederation of Icelandic Enterprise will recommend to businesses that they continue to pay the wages of those of their employees who have been quarantined by decision of the health authorities.
2. The Icelandic Confederation of Labour will recommend to its member organisations that persons with membership in their sick leave funds who fall ill receive full payments from the funds if their sick leave entitlements have been exhausted.
3. The Government will make arrangements for amendments to be made to the Health Insurance Act to allow a business that pays a salary to an employee who has been, or may later be, quarantined to claim reimbursement of that cost from the Icelandic Health Insurance up to a specified limit, subject to certain circumstances, such as a situation where the employee does not have the possibility to work from home. The exact form and timing of this intervention by the Government will need to be decided on; the aim is for this work to be completed on 13 March.

Reykjavik, 5 March 2020

Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Prime Minister

Eyjólfur Árni Rafnsson, Director General of SA Confederation of Icelandic Enterprise

Drífa Snædal, President of the Icelandic Confederation of Labour