

Decree of the Ministry of the Environment

on living spaces, accommodations and workspaces

In accordance with the decision of the Ministry of the Environment and pursuant to section 40 of the Construction Act (751/2023) the following is enacted:

Section 1

Scope

This Decree applies to living spaces, accommodations and workspaces in new buildings or extensions of buildings, or such areas that are formed when the intended use of a building or a part thereof is materially changed.

Sections 4 to 10 of this Decree do not apply to the construction of a holiday home.

In the case of renovation and alteration of a building, this Decree applies only if the original solution is unfit for purpose. Repair and alteration work on a building may otherwise be carried out according to the original solution.

Living conditions of the building must not deteriorate as a result of the alterations.

Section 2

Definitions

For the purposes of this Decree:

(1) *living space* refers to a space primarily intended to be used constantly for living. Entrance halls, hallways, toilets and washrooms or comparable rooms are not considered to be living spaces. A kitchen is a living space primarily intended for food preparation and eating.

(2) *apartment* or residential dwelling means a space with a kitchen, kitchenette or other cooking space, and one or more living spaces for year-round or leisure use that has its own direct entrance.

(3) *multi-apartment building* refers to a residential building with at least two storeys, consisting of several apartments where spaces of different apartments are one on top of the other.

(4) *room floor area* means the surface area of a room or space bordered by the surfaces of the walls or by a planned extensions thereof surrounding the room or space; spaces less than 1.6 metres high are not included in the floor area.

(5) *apartment floor area* means the area bordered by the surfaces of the apartment walls surrounding the apartment on one hand, and the load-bearing walls inside the apartment and other building elements necessary for the building on the other; spaces less than 1.6 metres high are not included in the floor area.

(6) *room height* means the vertical dimension from the floor surface of a room to its ceiling surface.

(7) *floor height* means the vertical distance between one floor and the floor above it.

(8) *accommodation* means furnished rooms primarily intended to be provided on a professional basis to customers in need of temporary accommodation.

(9) *single-family houses* means detached single-family houses and attached single-family houses.

(10) *workspace* means a space primarily intended for working.

Section 3

Planning of living spaces, accommodations or workspaces

The principal designer, building designer and special designer shall, in accordance with their duties, ensure during building design that the building meets the essential technical, operational and architectural requirements related to living spaces, accommodations and workspaces in accordance with their intended use.

Section 4

Living spaces, accommodations and workspaces

The size and shape of living spaces, accommodations and workspaces shall be suitable for their purpose considering their intended use and furnishability.

However, the floor area of living spaces, accommodations and workspaces must always be at least 7 m². The room height of living spaces, accommodations and workspaces shall be at least 2.5 metres. This minimum height for a one-family house is 2.4 metres. Up to 20 % of the floor area of living spaces, accommodations and workspaces may fall below this minimum height, but they may never be less below 2.2 metres. The lower sections may not materially impair the functionality of the space or reduce the amount of daylight. If the ceiling of a space is not entirely horizontal, the room height is determined as the average height of the net room area.

Cardinal directions and the effects of environmental disturbances must be considered in the design of living spaces.

Section 5

Windows in living spaces, accommodations and workspaces

Windows of living spaces and accommodations shall have an aperture of at least 1/10 of the room area. The location and other arrangements of the window shall ensure that the space receives light, and the view from the space and the furnishability of the space. It must be possible to open the windows of living spaces and accommodations. If there is a window in a workspace, the aperture shall be at least 1/10 of the room area of the workspace, unless the room lighting is arranged by indirect natural light coming from another space or, where the nature of the work so requires, by artificial light.

The minimum distance to the opposite building in front of the main window of a living space in the same or neighbouring property shall be equal to the height of the opposite building measured from the floor level of a room unless otherwise provided by the town plan. However, there shall be up to a distance of at least 8 metres of unbuilt space in front of the main window. This distance for single-family houses located on the same plot or construction site may be less, but the requirements for a pleasant living environment shall be considered and the angle of light shall be 45 degrees with respect to the floor level of the room.

This can be derogated from in extensive renovations of an accommodation building or if the intended use of the building is changed to providing accommodation. When constructing a new accommodation building, the window requirement may be derogated from in up to 20 % of the accommodations.

Section 6

The floor of living spaces and accommodations in relation to ground level

The floor of living spaces and accommodations must be above the ground level at the location of the primary windowed wall. However, the floor may be located at maximum one metre below the ground in some of the living spaces of an apartment. The entrances to living spaces and accommodations shall be on a natural level with respect to the ground.

Section 7

Size of apartments

The minimum net floor area of an apartment is 20 m². The floor area of a student apartment shall be at least 16 m² if the common spaces ~~are located in the same building and~~ have appropriate spaces for leisure and other activities that are easily accessible.

Section 8

Facilities and fittings of apartments

The spaces and the floor plans of apartments shall be appropriate for living, taking into account the intended number of users, common areas of the apartments and changes in needs for use. Apartments must be provided with suitable facilities for resting, leisure and socialising, eating and cooking, hygiene and the maintenance and storage required by habitation.

Apartments shall have adequate facilities for the maintenance of clothing and for the storage of furniture, as well as for the storage of bicycles, prams and outdoor equipment.

Spaces shall be equipped with the solid fixtures, equipment and technical installations necessary for their operation. However, apartments must always be equipped with a toilet and wash space, as well as sufficient basic equipment for cooking.

Section 9

Passages

Staircases, landings and entrance halls shall be dimensioned so that access is easy for people and transporting goods. Transport of goods may also be enabled with an elevator.

It must be easy and safe to access the play and leisure areas in the building's yard areas and other spaces and areas that serve the purpose of the building from the apartments. Car spaces and waste disposal facilities shall be located and access for maintenance to the yard area shall be arranged in such a way as not to disturb or endanger the residents or the use of the yard area.

Section 10

Floor height

The minimum floor height in a multi-apartment building is three metres.

Section 11

Entry into force

This Decree enters into force on 1 January 2025.

Upon the entry into force of this Decree, pending projects are subject to the provisions valid at the time of entry into force of this Decree.

Helsinki, X.x.2024

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