Ireland confirms first coronavirus case

February 29 2020

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Ireland on Saturday confirmed its first case of coronavirus after a man who had returned from northern Italy tested positive, the government said.

Health officials said the man, from the east of Ireland, was "receiving

appropriate medical care" after they followed "established protocols" in testing and diagnosing him with COVID-19.

"The case is associated with travel from an affected area in northern Italy, rather than contact with another confirmed case," the Department of Health said in a statement.

The authorities were working rapidly to identify any contacts the patient may have had, "to provide them with information and advice to prevent further spread," it added.

Health Minister Simon Harris said the development was "not unexpected".

"We have been preparing for this since January," he added.

The COVID-19 epidemic continues to spread around the world, with cases now recorded in several dozen countries.

More than 2,900 people have been killed and nearly 86,000 infected.

Qatar and Ecuador both confirmed their first cases on Saturday and the US announced the first death.

Ireland's Six Nations match with Italy in Dublin on March 7 was postponed this week due to the epidemic.

Although Saturday saw its first confirmed case, neighbouring Northern Ireland—part of Britain—had already recorded a positive test in recent days while mainland UK has seen 23 cases so far.

In the northern Irish case, the woman involved had travelled through Dublin Airport on her way home to Northern Ireland from northern

Italy.

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Citation: Ireland confirms first coronavirus case (2020, February 29) retrieved 4 March 2023 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-02-ireland-coronavirus-case.html