A Turkish citizen who travelled from Europe tested positive for the virus on Tuesday evening, the health minister said.

Minister Fahrettin Koca announced the country's first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus early on Wednesday.

A Turkish citizen tested positive for the COVID-19 virus shortly on Tuesday evening, Koca told reporters during a televised press conference in Ankara shortly after midnight.

On Monday, Koca had assured journalists that Turkey was free of the deadly outbreak despite its status as a key transit hub and its proximity to Iran, where nearly 300 people have died from the novel coronavirus.
Turkey's first confirmed COVID-19 case contracted the virus after travelling to Europe, the health minister said according to state news agency Anadolu. Koca did not say which country the person had travelled from.

The patient has now been "isolated from the outside world", he added, explaining that the case had been diagnosed "early".

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Koca repeated advice given to Turkish citizens on Monday to refrain from foreign travel unless necessary.

Ankara has also advised Turks living abroad - especially in Europe - "not to go out unless necessary" and told those coming from abroad to self-quarantine for 14-days.

COVID-19 has been found in most of Turkey's eight neighbours – Iran, Azerbaijan, Greece, Iraq, Bulgaria, Armenia, and Georgia.

Turkey implemented early precautions including thermal screening at airports, closing its border with Iran, and suspending air travel with virus epicentres China, South Korea and Italy.

But the reported lack of the virus' spread in the country prior to Wednesday morning provoked suspicion among some on social media that the Turkish government had either suppressed news of its spread or failed to adequately test suspected cases.

[Confirmed Coronavirus Cases in the MENA Region]

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Turkey announces first coronavirus case