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Netherlands Withdraws From Eurovision 2027 as Contest "No Longer Neutral"

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AVROTROS says new EBU hosting rules fail to address concerns over Israel's continued participation, in the Dutch broadcaster's second consecutive boycott

The Netherlands will not compete in the 2027 Eurovision Song Contest, its public broadcaster announced on Monday, arguing that the competition "can no longer be considered neutral" while a participating country remains involved in a large-scale military conflict.

AVROTROS, the Dutch broadcaster responsible for the country's Eurovision entry, said in a statement that geopolitical tensions in the Middle East were increasingly affecting the contest and had "led to great division". Although it did not name Israel directly, the broadcaster pointed to "the severe humanitarian suffering in Gaza and the ongoing attacks on press freedom" as having deepened rifts around the event in recent years.

"It is undeniable that international conflicts are increasingly affecting the Contest, undermining its neutral character," said Taco Zimmerman, AVROTROS's director-general. "The Eurovision Song Contest has therefore become a platform for division. "Zimmerman called the decision "painful", adding that the broadcaster would have liked to take part again in a contest that "remains close to our hearts".

It is the second year running that AVROTROS has stayed away. The broadcaster also withdrew from the 2026 contest in Vienna, one of five broadcasters — alongside Iceland, Ireland, Slovenia and Spain — to boycott that edition over Israel's participation; Ireland, Slovenia and Spain additionally declined to broadcast the event at all. The 2026 final drew 131 million viewers, down 35 million on the year before.

New hosting rules, old complaint

AVROTROS's announcement comes less than a fortnight after the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which organises Eurovision, updated the contest's rules for 2027. Under changes

announced on 12 August, a winning broadcaster automatically becomes ineligible to host the following year's contest if "an armed conflict, a sensitive geopolitical situation, or any other situation" materially affects the security, safety or stability of its state or region. The EBU may commission an independent security assessment before deciding and would appoint an alternative host broadcaster — staging the event "in its own right" — if a winner were ruled out.

Martin Green, director of the Eurovision Song Contest, said the annual rules review was "an important part of making sure the contest remains fair, transparent and consistent for all those who participate".

But AVROTROS said the changes addressed only who may host the contest, not who may compete in it — the issue at the heart of its complaint. "The recently announced changes by the EBU do not provide sufficient confidence that the independent and neutral character of the Eurovision Song Contest has been restored," the broadcaster said, adding that it had spent the past year pressing the EBU for "transparent rules for the participation of countries involved in a military conflict".

The EBU responded the same day. "We regret AVROTROS' decision to no longer participate in the Eurovision Song Contest but understand their choice and respect the views of our member broadcasters," Green said. "We will now continue our dialogue with NPO, the umbrella organisation for Dutch public service media, regarding the opportunities for another broadcaster to participate. We very much hope that audiences and artists in the Netherlands can continue to be represented in the Eurovision Song Contest."

AVROTROS has handed responsibility for any Dutch entry back to NPO, the country's public broadcasting umbrella body, which will decide how, or whether, the Netherlands takes part in 2027. The withdrawal, AVROTROS said, does not necessarily rule out a Dutch return in future years.

An EBU that regards the matter as settled

The Dutch withdrawal is unlikely to reopen the broader question of Israel's participation, which the EBU considers closed. At its general assembly in Geneva last December, EBU members voted not to hold a further ballot on excluding Israel's broadcaster, Kan, opting by a wide margin instead to endorse a package of "additional safeguards" for the voting system and let the 2026 contest proceed as planned; 65 per cent of delegates backed the changes, 23 per cent opposed them and 10 per cent

abstained.

Asked by Variety in July whether the question might be revisited, Green ruled it out. "No, that's done. The membership spoke conclusively," he said. "Almost 70 per cent made their decision that they believe that public service broadcasters are not responsible for the actions of their government and that Kan should be allowed to participate."

Who else is in, and out, for Burgas

As of 24 August, the Netherlands remains the only broadcaster to have confirmed a neutrality-linked withdrawal from Eurovision 2027, according to ESCToday, the specialist outlet tracks participation confirmations. Twenty broadcasters had by then formally confirmed their place, including Israel; Canada — making its debut as the contest's first North American entrant; and North Macedonia, returning after a five-year absence.

The other four broadcasters that sat out 2026 – Iceland, Ireland, Slovenia and Spain – have yet to announce their 2027 plans, along with more than a dozen others, including Australia, Belgium, France, Ukraine and Poland.

Russia and Belarus remain suspended from EBU membership and will not return; Bosnia and Herzegovina, Andorra and Morocco are absent for unrelated financial or long-standing historical reasons. Liechtenstein, Kosovo and Kazakhstan have all expressed interest in competing but are not currently eligible under EBU membership rules.

The 2027 contest is scheduled for Arena Burgas in Burgas, Bulgaria, on 11, 13 and 15 May, after Bulgarian singer Dara won the 2026 edition in Vienna with "Bangaranga".

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