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In Unprecedented Move, Eurovision 2017 Organizers Offer Russia the Chance to Compete in Ukraine via Satellite

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Russian singer Yulia Samoylova, March 14, 2017. **AP Photo / Maria Antipina**

“In the spirit of Eurovision’s values of inclusivity,” the European Broadcasting Union has done something unprecedented: it’s offered Channel One Russia the chance to let Yulia Samoylova compete in this year's song contest live via satellite. On Wednesday, the Ukrainian authorities formally banned Samoylova from traveling to Kiev, where the next Eurovision competition will take place in May.

“This is something that has never been done before in the contest’s 60-year history,” the EBU said in a statement published online, explaining that the decision is meant to “ensure that all 43 entrants are given the opportunity to participate.”

Reacting to the EBU’s offer, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Vyacheslav Kyrylenko vowed to prevent any broadcast of Samoylova’s performance on Ukrainian television, arguing on

Twitter that airing her song on TV would constitute the same violation of Ukrainian law as permitting her to travel to Ukraine.

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On Wednesday, Ukraine's National Security Service formally banned Samoylova from entering Ukraine for the next three years.

After Kiev announced the travel ban, the Russian TV network Vesti declared that Russian television will not broadcast this year's Eurovision contest, though the broadcasting rights for the 2017 competition actually belong to a rival station in Russia, Channel One.

It's not yet clear if Channel One will agree to the EBU's offer, having announced previously that it will send Samoylova as Russia's contestant for Eurovision 2018, in light of Ukraine's "unreasonable" decision.

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