

14 JAN '26

HER MAJESTY QUEEN MÁXIMA OPENS ANNIVERSARY EDITION OF EUROSONIC NOORDERSLAG

The showcase festival kicked off on Wednesday

On Wednesday January 14th, Her Majesty Queen Máxima opened the 40th edition of ESNS (Eurosonic Noorderslag) at De Oosterpoort in Groningen. Máxima attended the opening ceremony hosting shows by German theatre duo Siegfried & Joy, Ukrainian artist Alina Pash, Dutch group YĪN YĪN and Spanish singer Lia Kali.



Photo: ESNS - Ben Houdijk

Official Opening ESNS26

Her Majesty Queen Máxima and ESNS managing director **Anna van Nunen** officially opened the festival's anniversary edition at De Oosterpoort. When asked what music means to her personally, the Queen said that music is essential: it expresses what we can't do with words.

"See what 40 years of ESNS and European music has brought us," says Van Nunen. "And I'm thinking about superstars such as Stromae or Dua Lipa, but we are equally proud of Mario Batkovich, the Bosnian/Swiss accordion player that amazed festival goers after playing ESNS. We all love Fontaines D.C., Stormzy and AURORA, but we equally love harpist Remy van Kesteren, who flows between pop and classical scenes. Let's embrace the mainstream and the niches that Europe has!"

The Queen attended a live show by Dutch artist Goldkimono at the Kleine Zaal, who performed a rendition of ABBA's "Dancing Queen". Later at the Binnenzaal, she witnessed a performance by Irish songwriter and performer Dove Ellis. At the end of her visit to Groningen, the Queen met with several artists who have played on the first day of ESNS 2026.

MEET@AIR at Grote Markt

With the free **MEET@AIR** programme, ESNS is once again spotlighting talent from the north of the Netherlands. According to Mayor Roelien Kamminga, Eurosonic Noorderslag and Groningen are "inextricably linked." "(ESNS is) a festival focused on developing young talent from the Netherlands and abroad," says Kamminga. "Whether it's music, art, or photography. That suits a vibrant, entrepreneurial city like Groningen. What starts small can grow into something big with a global impact; ESNS has proven that over the past forty years, and we can be proud of that."

40 years of ESNS

For four decades, music lovers and professionals have been coming to Groningen to spot leading artists. ESNS is marking its anniversary with several projects open to the public. For example, the photo exhibition **Then and Now**, curated by concert photographer Ben Houdijk, is on display in the Grote Markt and Nieuwe Markt and **ESNS Photo** by Noorderlicht. The **ESNS Echo** art installations can be seen at various locations throughout the city. With the **ESNS Popwalk** through Groningen's city center, NTR, NPO 3FM, and ESNS are charting 40 years of European pop history.

ESNS Conference

The ESNS Conference program features over 520 leading music industry professionals participating in panel discussions, workshops, and keynotes on a wide range of thought-provoking and cutting-edge topics, attended by over 4,000 music professionals from Europe.

ESNS Festival

During the festival, almost all European acts will perform in 18 venues in the heart of Groningen. ESNS has proven itself as a vital platform for launching new European acts throughout Europe and beyond. ESNS26 is the place to discover promising new acts before they break through.

About ESNS

ESNS is Europe's leading platform showcasing emerging European music talent. Every January, Groningen (NL) hosts the ESNS festival and conference, connecting fresh artists with fans and industry professionals. The final day is dedicated to Noorderslag, the benchmark for Dutch pop music since 1986.

Year-round, ESNS supports new talent through initiatives like the European Talent Exchange and presents major awards including the Music Moves Europe Awards, the European Festival Awards, and the Dutch Popprijs. It partners with key organisations and alliances such as Yourope, EBU, and Green Deal Circular Festivals to foster a diverse, sustainable music scene.

Since 1986, ESNS has helped launch careers of artists like AURORA, Stromae, Christine and the Queens, Fontaines D.C., Sigrid, Altin Gün, The Haunted Youth, The XX, Robyn, Tramhaus, Sam Smith, Hozier, Zaho de Sagazan, Fat Dog, Judeline, Luvcat, Boko Yout, Antony Szmierek, Kingfishr, Sylvie Kreusch, Arp Frique & The Perpetual Singers.

Not for publication:

More information, contact & downloads

**Photo sselection
ESNS 2026**

[Download](#)

**Hi-res Photos
ESNS 2025**

[Download](#)

Contact ESNS:
[Nikki McNeill](#)
[Floor Oostra](#)

[Press-mail](#)

ESNS logo

[Logo](#)

Stay connected:



EUROPE CALLING

Founding Partner



Partners

