

# TEXTE



## PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA IN EUROPE

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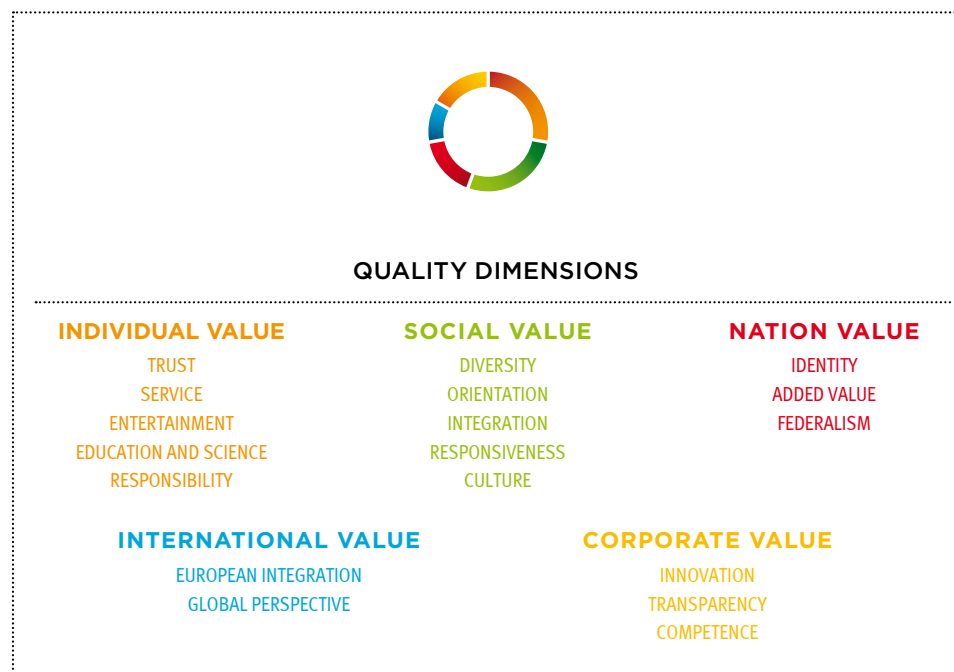
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## “WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE!”



Having won the ESC in Copenhagen last year, Conchita Wurst’s first reaction expressed much more than just an overwhelming feeling of victory. In fact, it was a statement for tolerance, respect and courage. Within a short period of time the winning song “Rise like a Phoenix” gained considerable international attention and had a strong impact, simply because it was understood as more than music, more than plain and simple entertainment. Obviously, it touched people’s minds, it expressed a current “Zeitgeist” and it was connected to a social agenda. Like many times before the ESC stimulated dynamic and controversial debates, and this time they revolved around the topic of gender identities and narratives.

Hosting the Eurovision Song Contest in 2015, the ORF has decided to focus on the social significance of the world’s biggest show event: What is the ethical, societal and cultural role of the ESC? Does it affect or change people’s awareness and perception? Does it express a different face of Europe - beyond crisis, bureaucracy and skepticism? In how far is Public Value connected to the event? Is the ESC and its tremendous success story more than just a contest of musicians? If so, what are the elements, the key challenges and expectations associated with it?

In order to contribute to the vivid international debate about the ESC’s meaning for society, we invited scientists and experts to share their opinions and perspectives. With this publication we are proud to offer you profound analyses and insights from different countries and academic disciplines.

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“TEXTE” publishes contributions from international and Austrian media experts focusing on Public Service Media quality.

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## TRANSNATIONAL TELEVISION THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST IN THE LIGHT OF RESEARCH

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“99 percent of the people you ask about it will profess to hate it, but they all love it really.”

(Katy Boyle, presenter of the Eurovision Song Contest in the 1960s and 1970s in the UK)

The Eurovision Song Contest (ESC), staged by the European Broadcasting Union, has been watched by 195 million viewers in 41 countries in 2014 (Eurovision, 2014). With this the ESC is a major issue to European Public Service Media and by far the most successful transnational entertainment format. Some observers would say it is the only one. So the question occurs, what is actually the secret of its success?

In fact, television across borders comes in different varieties. Of course there has always been inspill across borders, but the emergence of a globalized economy has also fed the idea of global television (Albarran & Chan-Olmsted, 1998; Gershon, 2006). Being a culturally bound product it became clear that television content is not easily globalized. Fictional content does cross borders in what some critics call cultural imperialism (Freedman, 2003) but for non-fiction there is hardly any global content. Even events that are distributed globally, such as the Olympic Games, are staged very differently in different countries. Thus one needs to scale back and discuss transnational television rather than global or international television (Chalaby, 2005).

Transnational television can mean three things in three contexts: First, and closest to the idea of globalized television, there could be transnational products, either in form of transnational channels that provide the same content in a number of countries or a transnational show that is aired identically in different countries (such as the ESC). Both concepts have proven problematic in the past and have largely been replaced by a third, that is the transnational TV format which is adapted to local

preferences whenever it crosses a border. Here the perspective is economic: reaping as much economies of scope (and scale<sup>1</sup>) as possible without alienating national audiences. The ESC's product characteristics have been the subject of several discussions. Here, its nature as a serial format (Akin, 2013), family television product (Georgiou & Sandvoss, 2008), contest-type media event (Dayan & Katz, 1992) as well as its liveliness and international dispersal are the most essential characteristics of the ESC. In the light of transnationality, the ESC is a product that is partly adapted in the different markets by using local commentators giving the event a country-specific tone.

A second perspective in research on transnational formats is focused on the audience, i.e. on their reception and effects at the individual and group level. Especially in the context of the European Union, transnational TV has been discussed as a means to create a transnational European public sphere (Esser, 2008). As an example, Sandvoss (2008) explores the role of the ESC in creating and shaping a European identity by providing a space of illusionary belonging. In contrast, Coleman (2008) considers the ESC as a moment of cultural embarrassment in the UK stating: “Paradoxically, while Eurovision seeks to invoke the imagery of a transcendental European culture, it actually reinforces national caricatures. The contest's amorphous internationalism draws attention to the reality of European cultural fragmentation, rivalry, and economic ambition. The failure of Eurovision songs to resonate universally only serves to accentuate their specificity.” (p. 131)

However, it has been argued that transnational formats contribute to the cohesion of a – transnational – society through sharing themes and through conveying values and norms (Vlašić, 2004, 2012). Here, entertainment content has an important integrating role (Vlašić & Brosius, 2002) as the public debates about respect and tolerance about the 2014 ESC winner Conchita Wurst convincingly showed (on constructions of non-heteronormativity at ESC see also Motschenbacher, 2013). In fact, a vast majority of research on the ESC focuses on the reception side emphasizing its role for personal or social identity work. As an example, in Lemish's (2004) study on the importance of the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) to the identity of gay Israeli men, many respondents point out the transnational feeling of connection the shared media experience creates as the contest is watched by a mutual community all over the world. The sense of connection, however, can be assumed to be the strongest for participants experiencing the content simultaneously exchanging their reactions to the media content by chatting on the phone or via the internet (Förster, Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2015). This collective experiencing may also take the form of a ritual for a social group. Audiences

may use specific formats as a special social event, an occasion to celebrate parties, to get together, enjoying refreshments and drinks, chatting, rating performances or betting on the results, as in the case of the ESC (Lemish, 2004). In summary it can be stated that transnational formats in general and the ESC in specific have an outstanding role for (1) personal identity work by providing a projection surface for own concepts of reality, (social) roles and the self, and for (2) social identity work by using the media content as a ‘campfire’ to strengthen in-group ties.

Third, we can observe a second level transnationalization of production cultures. While the product remains to be adapted to the national preferences, the adaptation is done by a “cosmopolitan tribe” (Kuipers, 2012) of professionals sharing a certain ethos and taste. Transnationality in production can thus find expression in internationally diverse production teams and in a high international mobility of single actors resulting in a ‘transnational attitude’ and convergence of production conventions. This perspective on transnationality in television has been neglected by research so far. As an exception, Akin (2013) interviewed musicians and producers who have been involved in the production of Turkey’s contribution to the ESC. He found that the actors’ views are vastly different from the dominant discourses about the ESC in Turkey. In more detail, they experience the ESC mostly as a competition but also as “an occasion for creating international bonds (mostly on interpersonal levels) not by watching the program but by getting involved in the production of the ESC event” (p. 2317).

Looking at the ESC as the most successful transnational format from these three perspectives – i.e. the production, the product and the reception – allows to better understand the antecedents of its attainments and to grasp its effects beyond pure data of reach and market shares. Moreover, this multi-perspective approach also provides a systematic, differentiated approach to evaluate the ESCs’ contribution to the public value of European Public Service Media. •

<sup>1</sup> As an example, the Austrian Millionenshow is being produced in the television studio of its German equivalent Wer wird Millionär.

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## EUROVISION AND THE "NEW" EUROPE

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The Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) is among the most high-profile popular public performances of Europeaness each year; only football tournaments, such as the European Cup, can rival it. As such it is one of the biggest success stories of European public service broadcasting. It has gained this significance because of its longevity, its broad reach, and ongoing innovations that have kept it in synch with the evolving media landscape, such as the introduction of televoting and the live-streaming of the contest on Eurovision.tv -- all core values of public service broadcasting. Absolutely central to its success is its somewhat paradoxical format: it promotes and celebrates European togetherness by pitting countries against each other in playful competition to choose the best pop song in Europe that year. The competitive aspect is much more compelling than a non-competitive showcase format would have been, and it is to the credit of Marcel Bezançon and the contest's other creators that, sixty years ago, they perceived this fact. The ESC draws attention because more is at stake than songs and performances: It is a song contest of nations, and as such, it becomes a conduit for thoughts and feelings beyond those people might have for the songs themselves. National, regional, and pan-European affiliations come into play, particularly given how strongly each entry is associated with the nation it represents (remember it is the name of the country, not the artist or song, that is voted on and appears on the scoreboard). No matter the forum, "Ireland vs. the UK", "Ukraine vs. Russia", or "France vs. Germany" stir passions.

Eurovision provides a window, therefore, not just onto the ways in which nations view and perform themselves, but onto evolving understandings of the continent itself. It materializes concepts -- Europe and Europeaness -- which are otherwise quite abstract and complex. Who, after all, can say what Europe is and what constitutes it? There are numerous organizations and events that purport to define Europe

by means of membership (the EU, the Council of Europe, the European Higher Education Area, UEFA, the EBU, and others) but their accounts and criteria all differ. There is no unitary history of Europe, but rather a number of different and sometimes contrasting accounts, depending on the perspective, location, and affiliations of the historian. In our era, debates about the nature and limits of Europeaness have been heated and ongoing, as the breakup of Yugoslavia and the end of state socialism in the former Soviet Union created more countries eager to enjoy the benefits of European belonging, and two expansions significantly and controversially enlarged the number of member countries of the EU. The stakes are high, as the desperate efforts of migrants from Africa and the Middle East to reach European lands remind us.

Such questions -- about what constitutes Europe, how understandings and realities of Europe and Europeaness have been shifting since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and how the Eurovision Song Contest has reflected and perhaps served a driver for such changes -- provided the focus of a scholarly research project I co-directed with Dr. Milija Gluhovic from 2009-2011. The central outcome of the project was a co-edited book, *Performing the "New" Europe: Identities, Feelings, and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest*, published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2013. In using the phrase "'New' Europe" we did not intend to reinforce a binary understanding of Europe as made up of the old (West) and new (East). Rather, the "New" Europe that we explore in our book is the enlarged, still-evolving Europe -- that which has resulted from expansion, the combination of traditional old and new. The project involved nearly two dozen scholars from various disciplines, from Central and Eastern European studies, cultural studies, gender and queer studies, French studies, German studies, media and television studies, musicology, political history, sociology, and theatre and performance studies. Members in our research network represented a range of cultural and national backgrounds, hailing from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, the UK, and (in my case), the USA.

Milija's and my approach to this project was, inevitably, shaped by our personal encounters with and perspectives on Eurovision. Being American, I had never heard of the ESC before I moved to Ireland in 1997 to pursue a PhD at the School of Drama at Trinity College, Dublin. Ireland was then experiencing the period of unprecedented (and, as it turned out, unsustainable) economic and cultural prosperity known as the Celtic Tiger, and, I discovered, was harbouring some very mixed sentiments about its unrivalled ESC record (it has won the contest

more times – seven – than any other nation). While Irish people I met at times seemed proud of that record, there was also a strong tendency to ironize and dismiss the Contest as something silly, kitschy, and insignificant. Eurovision was a tradition in which Ireland continued to be invested – hence the national broadcaster RTÉ’s ongoing participation – but I got the strong impression that the ESC had mattered more back when Ireland was less developed, and struggling for a sense of European legitimacy. Now that the country had become globalized, ESC participation was seen in some quarters as an embarrassing remnant of a past people would rather put behind them (Brian Singleton expands on this argument in his chapter in our volume, “From Dana to Dustin: The Reputation of Old/New Ireland in the Eurovision Song Contest.”) I became intrigued by the ways in which attitudes to Eurovision were shaped by the individual or nation’s positioning *via-à-vis* Europe. Milija, for his part, was born in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, and grew up watching the ESC on the national broadcaster Jugoslavenska radiotelevizija, which was one of the founders of the European Broadcasting Union. Yugoslavia was the only socialist country to participate in the ESC; that participation helped advance its standing as the most Western-friendly among the socialist states, an important element of President Tito’s leadership. The new countries that emerged out of the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s quickly rejoined the EBU and the ESC, and became, in the 2000s, some of the Contest’s most enthusiastic and successful participants, as evidenced by Marija Serifovic’s win for Serbia in 2007. Ex-Yugoslavian countries’ participation in the ESC, however, became controversial, in that some Western media and fans represented a tendency amongst these countries to vote for each others’ acts as unfair (this became known as “bloc voting” in the Western media, a term also used to describe voting patterns amongst former Soviet states). The historical, political, and socio-cultural realities of the countries that entered the ESC after the breakup of state socialism were clearly having an effect on their ESC participation -- and perceptions of that participation -- in ways that intrigued both Milija and myself.

### Feeling European

With these questions in mind, we assembled a number of colleagues for an initial workshop at the University of Warwick, where Milija is an associate professor of theatre and performance studies, in June 2011. We found that discussions coalesced in three main areas, which we used as themes for subsequent research network meetings, and as the organizing principle of our book. The first area was the strong feelings

that the ESC engenders, and we were particularly interested in the capacity of the ESC to produce a sense of “feeling European” alongside other identifications (national, ethnic, gender, age, and so forth). Three chapters in our book explore how the ESC reflects and shapes a sense of belonging to Europe from the early 1990s onwards. In her chapter, Marilena Zaroulia, who is from Athens, charts her (and her nation’s) shifting relationship to Europe by recalling specific moments of strong emotional engagement (positive and negative) with the ESC – an urgent narrative, particularly given Greece’s tumultuous relationship with the EU and other European bodies since the financial crisis began in 2008. My own contribution treats the United Kingdom’s relationship to the ESC, arguing that it reflects some deep-seated British anxieties about the place of the UK in the evolving Europe, and is also symptomatic of what the cultural studies scholar Paul Gilroy has called “postcolonial nostalgia” (2005). Looking in particular at ESC fans, the Finnish scholar Mari Pajala’s chapter explores the ways in which strong feelings about the ESC lead to direct action in the form of “voting, complaining, and singing along” (79).

While grounded in solid research and analysis, these chapters could not help but be personal, and in editing them I appreciated learning about my peers’ relationship to Europe and the ESC. I gained appreciation for the alienation Marilena felt from the 2011 Greek Eurovision act “Watch my Dance,” because she could not square the song’s message of defiant national pride with its spectacular and eclectic staging, which seemed to buy into the same values of globalization and late capitalism that the song itself was attempting to reject. On a more utopic note, I found myself imagining with pleasure a particular moment in the 2011 Eurovision afterparty that Mari describes in her hometown of Turku, “when the DJ played the 2010 Serbian entry ‘Ovo je Balkan’, with the full dance-floor singing along with “Beograd, Beograd, ja bezobrazan” in a language that few of them understood” (89). For myself, I got a particularly strong blast of the feelings that Eurovision engenders in the UK when I published an edited version of my chapter in the Guardian newspaper (under the headline “It’s time to stop laughing at foreigners”), prompting a volatile comment strand of over 500 responses, the strongest of which questioned not only my argument but my right to make it. Like song itself, Eurovision has a powerful capacity to engender feelings of togetherness and possibility, but it also serves to expose profound fractures in the structure of the European body politic.

## European margins and multiple modernities

Our second area of focus was the historic identification of Europe with the modern and progress -- that is, the extent to which Europe is viewed as “the particular site of the invention of the universal and its revelation to the world” (Balibar 3). This is, in our estimation, a limited and dated formulation, given the experience of two world wars, the breakdown of Europe-led empires, the decline of Europe’s political, economic, and military supremacy, and the processes of globalization. We sought out alternative conceptions of modernity that do not narrate it as a Euro-centric phenomenon; that acknowledge that different societies and cultures develop on different trajectories; and that promote self-reflexive thinking so as not to judge other cultures based on a blinkered understanding of what it means to be modern. These questions have become particularly urgent in our current era of European enlargement, as the West expands to the East; the work of the historian Larry Wolff (1994) was useful in reminding us that the “Eastern Europe” was an invention of Western Europeans during the Enlightenment, enabling a binary between civilization (West) and barbarism (East) which we see reflected to this day in Western clichés about the wild, exotic, and dangerous European East. We were interested in exploring the ways in which the enlarged Europe (which, as defined by the ESC, now stretches as far as the Pacific Ocean) was being manifest in the ESC.

Three chapters in our book look at this dynamic: Yana Meerzon and Dmitri Priven, who are Russian, write about the keen engagement of Vladimir Putin’s Russia in the contemporary ESC, exploring the ways in which political and media elites have exploited the Contest for nation-building purposes – not necessarily to assert a strong Russian presence in the EU, but to position Russia as the dominant force in a newly reconceived Eurasia. As previously mentioned, in his chapter Brian Singleton argues that the ESC was crucial to culture- and confidence-building in pre-1990s Ireland, which perceived itself as peripheral to Europe; but as Ireland’s economic and cultural fortunes blossomed in the 1990s – along with its sense of European legitimacy – so did its regard for Eurovision decline. For her part, Ioana Szeman explores the place, or lack thereof, in the ESC (and Europe more broadly) for Roma people, arguing that the contemporary ESC marginalizes and discriminates against Roma, particularly in the context of the increased celebration of ethnic music and cultures in the 1990s Contest.

## Gender Identities and Sexualities in the ESC

My first Eurovision research project, undertaken in 2005-2007 with Brian Singleton and Elena Moreo, explored Eurovision fandom, which manifests itself in the form of year-round discussions on internet forums, parties and Eurovision-music-themed club nights, membership in fan clubs, and – the ultimate expression of being a Eurovision-lover – attending the Contest in its host city each year and receiving press or fan accreditation to guarantee close proximity to the performers. We were particularly interested in the strong affinity that some gay men feel for the Contest, and we argued in several resulting publications that some gay spectators take what is ostensibly a family entertainment and transform it through the ways they interpret it into a celebration of values and aesthetics that they hold dear: glamour, fabulousness, underdog stories, and high drama. In so doing, gay fans create “an alternative family” to the mainstream, heteronormative family that the ESC is geared to: “a queer family whose reading strategy is the discourse of camp” (13). In this we joined a number of scholars who have explored the contest through the lenses of queer, camp, kitsch, and LGBT politics, including Raykoff and Tobin, Tukhanan and Vänskä, and Rehberg. In our project, Milija and I extended this research on the queer and camp appeal of Eurovision towards wider readings of the ways in which gender and sexuality are performed on the Eurovision stage. Several important scholars have argued that, in today’s Europe, sexual freedoms and gender equality issues are being instrumentalized by the EU and other organizations, with the result of reinforcing binaries “between sexual democracies in the West of Europe and its Eastern ‘others’” (Graff 584). Some of this othering happens not just between but within countries, such as the pressures put on immigrant and other minority populations to conform to Western standards and norms vis-à-vis gender, sexuality, and marriage. Our contributors in this part of the book explore how an ever-more-diverse Europe navigated such questions on the Eurovision stage. Elaine Aston looks at images of femininity in the contemporary Eurovision, focusing on a series of acts led by strong female performers (Marie N, Latvia, 2002; Serteb Erener, Turkey, 2003; and Ruslana, Ukraine, 2004). Aston connects these to a broader international trend of figuring women’s liberation in terms of “can-do girl power” (167), but also makes reference to the declining economic and material conditions for women in the “new” Europe, arguing that these female-positive images to some extent belie harsher realities. Peter Rehberg focuses on his native Germany, arguing that the victory of the singer Lena in 2010 under the mentorship of the powerful broadcaster Stefan Raab represented a step back in German gender and

sexual politics, in that Raab consistently disavowed the ESC's queer associations and displaced the Contest's otherness onto the East. Milija writes about Azerbaijan's troubled 2012 ESC hosting, in an attempt to provide a counter-narrative to the "frenzied fixation" (209) of Western media on Azerbaijan's perceived repressiveness and sexual intolerance. Calling on fieldwork he undertook in Baku and Belgrade, Milija argues that a movement for LGBT rights is very much underway in Azerbaijan (and in 2008 host country Serbia) and that winning and hosting the ESC has prompted "dynamic exchanges linking gender and sexuality with culture, ethnic and religious identities in contemporary Europe" (215). Finally, Katrin Sieg argues that the participation and considerable success of CEE countries in the ESC provides us a window into these nations' understanding of their access to Europeanness. While critiquing conservative images of marriage and family in two of Poland's entries (2003, "Keine Grenzen/Żadnich granic"; 2010, "Legenda") she locates the potential for the ESC to be used as a powerful site of anti-cosmopolitan critique of the inequalities between East and West that persist in 21st century Europe in the 2010 performance of Ukraine's Aloysha, "Sweet People."

### Conchita's Europe

If, as I have been arguing, Eurovision has always mirrored Europe itself, what are we to make of the dramatic victory last year of the bearded Austrian drag queen Conchita Wurst, who used her presence in the Contest to promote tolerance and respect? "This night is dedicated to everyone who believes in a future of peace and freedom. You know who you are -- and we are unstoppable," she said just after she won. Unstoppable indeed: Wurst has enjoyed a profile unprecedented for a contemporary Eurovision winner, to the extent of being welcomed at the United Nations by Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon as an ambassador for basic human rights, and her victory being recognized by Google Trends as one of the top stories of the year worldwide. Considered through the lens of our research project, Conchita strikes me as the "New" European Eurovision winner par excellence: her appearance -- revealed ever-so-dramatically and gradually in the opening verse of her winning song "Rise Like A Phoenix" -- seems engineered to evoke strong feelings, above and beyond the musical and performance qualities of her act. Wurst and her team took great risks in putting this unconventional act in the running to represent Europe, as it was certain to provoke strong reactions and not necessarily positive ones. Conchita disrupts the Old/New binary, in that her exoticism and difference hail not from the traditional

margins of Europe, but from a central European country -- a country, in fact, which in recent years has been associated with extreme conservatism (in the form, for example, of the controversial right-wing politician Jorg Haider). And given the complexity of her gender performance, Conchita's victory certainly qualifies as a watershed moment in the history of queer Eurovision, up there with the wins of the transgendered Dana International (Israel, 1988) and of Marija Serifovic, whose 2007 act daringly contrasted differing approaches to female gender performance. Tolerant, emotive, unconventional, subversive, progressive: these are the European values that Conchita reflects to the rest of the world. Every European reading this will have their own point of view about her act and these values; for my part, I celebrate the vivacity of a Contest that can still, 60 years on, provide an annual opportunity for Europe to take a look at itself, and perhaps be surprised by what it sees.

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## TOLERANT CREATIVITY AND INNOVATIVE ART

### THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST IN AUSTRIA

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For many decades the Eurovision Song contest has been a symbol for cultural exchange as well as for cultural diplomacy. During the cold war, for example, this event made a connection between people throughout different political and military blocks possible. This does not mean that there were no attempts to use the Song Contest as a political instrument. In 1969, Austria refused to take part at the event in Spain as a sign of protest against the dictatorship of Franco. There are many further examples of countries that tried to use the attention to communicate their own interests. But in the end, it is always the notion of music that wins. ETA Hoffmann stated correctly that where language stops, music begins. The Song Contest provides a platform for many ambassadors who aim to tell the world about their country, their culture and their personal message. The great success with the public confirms the idea that has been developed and confirmed since the first broadcast in 1956.

The Song Contest has to continue to act this role. Too many people still think that they have to convince others about their own beliefs; which often is the root for many current and past religious, political and other disputes. And also in the future there will be more wars of beliefs than of knowledge. At the moment Turkey and Russia, among others, felt compelled to boycott the Song Contest in Vienna due to the sexual orientation and connotations in song texts of Conchita Wurst. Only recently they confirmed their participation and they will be welcomed with open arms. It seems that in Europe we have to address problems we considered as solved all over again. How could this happen? One hundred thousand years ago, Homo sapiens have entered the face of the earth and they differ from other beings in only one feature. They have the ability to imagine things that do not exist; things that cannot be felt, heard, seen or perceived in any other way. This gift of imagination makes it possible to live creative, to invent new things and to craft art.

But do we actually need this? Do we have to be innovative? Human beings seem to have an innate curiosity. But have we arrived in a knowledge-based society yet? How are we using our knowledge? The answer is: through innovation. Because the knowledge we collect on a daily basis, brings the maximum of benefits if we use it correctly. This is what drives society and this is what is meaningful for every individual who uses and passes on knowledge. There are many creative options to put knowledge into use and create values that again are able to generate knowledge. And so it comes full circle. Driven by creativity, the wheel of knowledge is rotating even faster if knowledge is applied in various ways. In the process of accumulating knowledge, basic research is an important component – but it is only one of many that keep the wheel turning. If only one part is missing the wheel gets out of balance and keeps turning slower and slower.

Moreover, the wheel of knowledge is not turning in isolation. It is embedded in an environment of value, norms and patterns of thinking which decide about the freedom the wheel. In this metaphor, tolerance would be the grease that optimises the interaction between knowledge, creativity and innovation. Why should tolerance influence the dynamics of a knowledge- and innovation-society more than other parameters? Among the various synonyms for tolerance such as generosity, carefulness, patience, mercy, greatness of heart, liberality, indulgence, consideration or understanding, there is also a term that highlights the image of the wheel of knowledge: The margin. The bigger the room to move for the wheel, the smaller is the danger of external breaking forces that prevent innovation. However, that doesn't concern critical debates and continuous questioning. Of course, in a tolerant environment the impact of new insights is constantly reviewed and discussed. If religious or social dogmas come in between this discussion, the system remains in the same position until the conflict is solved.

However, a solution for a conflict of knowledge is more realistic than for a conflict of beliefs. History teaches us that religious conflicts have set back society for centuries. But is it in history only? Wherever dogmatists gain influence knowledge is contested. This happened in the past but is also a current issue and will stay important for the future. Galileo Galilei was accused because he dared to discuss a heliocentric system as a more realistic scenario. Today it is groups such as Boko Haram or the so called Islamic State who are declaring knowledge as a “scourge of the western society”. Next to the rejection of the theory of evolution also the view that the earth is flat is being propagated again – today, in the year 2015. These groups are taking effective measures to prevent the

creation of knowledge. All male individuals are being sent to war with the argument that there are sufficient infidels who can be fought. Writing a dissertation becomes even harder if one is attacked by grenade fire. Women who want to attend school, on the other hand, are executed as a mere means of precaution.

This is just the opposite of tolerance. Dictatorship and religious fanaticism are very successful tools against the development of society. This is not a horror scenario from a bad Hollywood movie but it is every day's reality. What does the future hold for us? How do we handle innovation? How are we dealing with "otherness"? Does it have to be as it always was? If everyone agrees we will remain where we already are – the comfort of the familiar. The security of the inner port one is always seeking if the wind blows from the wrong side. If some feel the wind of change they quickly escape to the next safe port, others are setting sails for new shores. This is also the case when we talk about homosexuality these days. Tolerance – how is society dealing with it? Are there parallels? Why is the capital of the homosexual scene situated where we also find the epicentre of innovation in Silicon Valley? The continuous departure to new shores. The continuous flow of immigrants who encourage the innovative system with their culture and knowledge. They are the children of the gold rush. They are the spiritual children because the population has turned around and blended in with every generation. Moreover, in Silicon Valley, the rate of company founders from a migrant background is 80 percent.

People come to Silicon Valley because they can feel tolerance, hope and this is where they find open doors and new ideas. Can we achieve this also in Austria? Can we be an immigration country? A hotspot for new ideas?

Why are we struggling with tolerance? In this country, walls for unorthodox thinkers are built before the idea is even formulated. What does the face of tolerance look like in our culture? The regular's table? That's where the European soul feels happy. Familiar people, familiar voices and faces – week after week, month after month – until you fall from the chair you got used to. The mental horizon often ends at the borders of the hometown.

And then something happens. Creativity surprises us. Art is showing society its own reflection. The victory of a Drag Queen at the Song Contest causes a sensation and not everyone can cope with the fact that this artists is from Austria. The defenders of the status quo are holding their

breath. That's impossible! This happens in our beautiful country! Well, yes and indeed there are also people who find it just cool – they are the islands of tolerance. Also politicians got used to the fact that also people of colour speak German nowadays, which is probably only tolerated as long as they are scoring goals. But as soon as the flood of goals ebbs away people's hatefulness returns.

The wagging finger of the short-term do-gooder cautions the spiteful to show kindness to people overwhelmed with the issue of immigration. A moment after the same finger points at the lesbian couple that sits in the same café as the owner of the finger. Yet, tolerance has a chance in Austria. It grows, slowly but steadily and observable for everyone who is ready to contribute to the acceleration of a cultural change. People have noticed that future also always means change. Creativity causes change made visible through art and innovation. The relation between creativity, art and innovation becomes obvious if one acknowledges the quality of the Homo sapiens: to imagine things that do not exist. Not to speak of tolerance in Austria – tolerance exists for sure!

So, how can we raise tolerance to the surface and make it tempting for society? What institutions in Austria can reach an audience of this size and can manage to establish tolerance as a sense of unity? This is a task that is directed from the public to the public. This includes the right as well as the obligation to present topics to the audience that not only get good ratings but also carry necessary and beneficial messages.

This is the task of Public Service Broadcasting in Austria and in all countries admitting to positive discussions in the public area. This is one of the core tasks of the "Österreichischer Rundfunk" (ORF). People believe in the things that happen on TV and this is also why television gains an educational mandate. It is not for nothing that television stations are one of the first things occupied after a coup d'état. But the law of the ORF turns the tables: propaganda on behalf of tolerance. Society made itself a task and uses the medium with the greatest impact by far. Hence, this results in great responsibility for those who are fulfilling this mandate in the service of the ORF. The temptation to surrender to populist pressure, to join in the political canon and to ride on the coat tails of power and envy is ubiquitous. Every single one of us has to contribute and there is no reason why we should not start today!

The Eurovision Song Contest is a great chance for building bridges in Austria and can contribute to an open contact with foreign languages, cultures and perspectives. •

## THE UNITY OF PLURALITY

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In terms of the theory of mediamorphosis (an adaption of the fragmented concepts of Weber's music sociology of the Institute for Music Sociology in Vienna) the technical development of media is the basis for aesthetic and social change. However, the development of mass media technology is already economically and politically motivated. As a mass medium it works through accessibility – the economic, social and psychological accessibility – the simple handling of an affordable device and its integration in the individual situations of everyday life – as home TV or flatscreen on the wall or as hand held mobile device of receptive diversity.

Already the Third Reich realised the potential of mass media, declared the radio to the "Volksempfänger" and designed it as an affordable piece of furniture – in order to connect all German countries on an emotional level through the common song, the "Volkslied". The radio established a close involvement of the listener through the colour of sound. Later television adapted this concept through emotional images in order to communicate commercial as well as political messages. While classical mass media aims to reach as many people as possible, the format as well as the emotional involvement can cause a differentiation between groups, for example through their (folk) music. As a mass medium, on-demand systems operate diversely through addressing individuals in their situational context. Classical mass media, on the other hand, are diverse through offering plurality. Both of them aim to offer an individual sound for "mood management" – and this musical sound is always linked to a specific message.

Adorno's critical view on the cultural industry considered "light" music as "unreal" because it seduces listeners on an emotional level. These findings were influenced by Adorno's experiences of the possessive use of folk music in the Third Reich and his radio research concerning the

use of music for specific mass reception while living in exile. However, post-war society showed that mass media not always lead to mass synchronisation but can be a means to foster individualisation and alternatives. Then again, the binding part and the determinant factor of this media structure is music which involves individuals on an emotional level. This is also how pop music emerged from mass media – through emotional involvement and its amplification through technology.

Music is a medium for connecting the masses. With new technical possibilities the European Broadcasting Union (EBU, founded in 1951) was a role model to connect the European but also the non-European Mediterranean area on a media level. It became a linchpin throughout borders of national broadcasting stations, which shows the motivation to bring people together. It was obvious that this standardised platform would establish a new, emotional as well as political structure with the help of music – and not through a circus show as originally envisioned. Music is the aesthetic medium of togetherness; it amplifies the technical and political process on an emotional level. Continuing the tradition, the folk music of a new generation was chosen: popular music was chosen as the sound of emotional unity in Europe.

Pop music often is the result of a tension between unity and separation, similarities and differences (see Diederichsen, 2014) and it is an ongoing search for new ways of life – the socialisation of puberty. But in a culture of common excitement and diversity of content – a matter of "holism", in the sixties experienced within a counterculture and later an alternative culture – nowadays in a culture of dissonant life resembling plurality in terms of "non-unity" finally paired with the "hopeness" of neoliberal "makeover", individuality is linked with uniqueness; diversity does not become individuality but reproduces meritocracy (see R. Gill; Chr. Scharff, 2011).

In the area of tension between "me" and "us" – enriched with plurality of content – pop culture is described as connective but also separating. In this context, symbols function as a disconnecting, excitement through sound as connecting factor.

So, pop becomes a playing field for exploring the political as an emotional climate (too) (see W. Jauk 2002a), and also the European Song Contest (ESC) can help to investigate and to build an emotional "state" Europe. Due to (mutual) benefits countries meet each other with rose-coloured glasses and in the context of a mainstream sound while dissident songs are missing (see W. Jauk 2002b). If a Nordic country offers

heavy metal riffs then this happens as a consequence of a mainstream stereotype of heavy metal and its droning, gloomy, mythical history. The impulse for a fellowship of all (European) people is ordered from above, by those, who have the relevant technical and economical tools and specific cultural embedding. The first title of the event already carries such beliefs.

The term “chanson“ is not only the French word for „song“ but it is a specific aesthetic form of the (pop) song. The contributions of the first years clearly reflect this understanding. Likewise, the dominance of Ireland and Great Britain can be seen as an aesthetic demand for the pop song. It developed from American Rock 'n' Roll to European pop blending Irish folk songs with rock 'n' roll rhythms. Moreover, aspects of the sound such as the use of “skiffle”-instruments and it's musical arrangements have influenced this development. This fusion shaped the vocal-heavy North-West-British pop song of the 1960s that has become the dominant notion of pop music in Europe and is distributed through pop-oriented formats and new forms of mass media.

The acceptance (if not love) for Anglo-American pop music took a mediating role in this process. With the evasion of the Nazi's broadcast monopoly – that was established in 1923 and outlasted the end of the Third Reich – a German-speaking (partly also French and English) channel near Germany was fighting this evasion. In the 1950s and 1960s Luxembourg became a stronghold for American pop aesthetics and one of the most important linchpins of the growing market. Against this competitor, the national public broadcasters developed their own formats and played the international pop program with their own national sound – a strategy that led to “domestic production” and also led to the emergence of “Austropop” in Austria at that time. These channels took up the national design of their ESC contributions too. In 1970 Austria presented a local colour of Austropop (created by ORF) with swinging music and a big-band arrangement that was against the trend of popular music at that time. Due to intelligibility the interpreter refrained from singing in Viennese accent.

Even though „Radio Luxemburg“ was a dominant distribution medium of American Pop its solo actions failed even during its heyday. The parallel events to the ESC in the linguistic region of the channel were held from 1969-1972 only.

In the wake of the economic miracle the German “Schlager“ brings in the longing for far-off places and the entertaining and relaxing feeling

of the “foreign” on a holiday. On the one hand, borders are being imagined or even encouraged to be crossed. On the other hand, the German nation is gaining power again because the satisfaction of these needs is what supports southern countries on a financial level. This is some kind of "Holidays in the Sun" (Sex Pistols), sensation seeking holidays from capitalism supporting capitalism; "A cheap holiday in other people's misery" as a Situationist slogan points out (see. G. Marcus, 1989). In the many holiday movies of the 1950s and 1960s the German “Schlager” is an emotional medium to make the foreign appear familiar. However, with its folk musical exoticism these songs do not represent southern European countries in a respectful or careful but rather in a trivial way. Similar mechanics are observable in Viennese operetta, as we can see in the representation of class struggles or regions, like the Hungarian Puszta.

Today, the technically and financially powerful countries of the EBU are still the leading states of the EU – even though not all of them are financially strong nowadays. They determined an orientation towards the chanson, paved the market for British pop-gear and captured the post-war boom as export market. The strategy consisted of holiday imagery paired with “Schlager” – the emotional attachment to the foreign together with domestic sounds and lyrics. Following demands, the exoticised states at the border of Europe (partly not even belonging to the geographic Europe) present themselves as vacation countries and sing about their home in folklore music or clichés (see I. Wolther, 2006). They expose themselves to the EU market. Similar to the “Sexualisation of Culture” (see R. Gill, 2008) this exoticism is leading to sensitisation and to an including as well as excluding diversity. But in the end, also a financially motivated exchange can cause cultural value – the foreign gets familiar, the extraordinary becomes in order (see B. Waldenfels, 1997).

The relation of the aesthetic and economic in- and output between the strong inner-European and the southern – since 1990 also the eastern – countries is one sided. The participation at the ESC not only represents a chance to win but it is also tied to costs. Concerning aesthetic sustainability and measured on the continuing presence on the market, the leading countries of the European pop song are ahead by far. First and foremost this regards the country of Ireland and with the adaption of the American sound the group ABBA drew the most success out of the ESCs dynamics. For the southern countries only an exoticised aesthetic remains. Due to economic hardship and inability to pay the costs they may be ruled out, which can weaken the feeling of a unified EU. But

besides the economic, cultural and product-related interests in export countries by the strong industry countries, the EU was also interested to maintain the ESC. Although they are no longer the financially strong nations, the big four (1996) – and since 2011 the big five – pay a large amount for securing the ESC. Moreover, they buy themselves into the event on an aesthetic level, which means that their songs are accepted to the ESC without preliminary decision. While in this case the financial contribution outweighs the aesthetic, the fixed participation of the winner of the last year is a sportive issue: the defence of the Championship.

The decreasing finances of the southern countries that bring in their exotic aesthetics but also their increasing orientation towards the “summer hit”, reduces diversity. At the same time the interest of the founding countries declined – some skipped only a few editions and Luxemburg, five-time ESC champion and the dominating distribution media of the inner European pop-gear, quit completely in 1994.

A lack of plurality was the consequence of the politically motivated abstinence of the North-African Arabic states, which declined due to the participation of Israel. When Morocco competed for the first and only time in 1980 it got 12 points from Turkey, which can be seen as an expression of aesthetic closeness apart from the Americanised EU songs.

A similar cultural closeness that became obvious in the rating of the south-east was criticised and tried to be ruled out. Besides this “fight of the cultures” (see Iring Wolther, 2006) and the western-pop-culture oriented corrections it seems that not only plurality is emerging but also an aesthetic change is beginning which leads away from American pop.

Yet, the impression of the contributions aligns with the aesthetics of the winner only to a certain level. Even if the American trend is decreasing, it determines all of ESC. This can be seen in the high number of winners from leading pop countries (from years ago) but also in the dominant sound of music with folklike elements – a strategy of the “aesthetics of trust” which MTV used for its worldwide marketing strategy. This results in an “international”, Anglo-American music with local influences: disperse sound with diverse elements meets commercially motivated diversity and at the same time cultural success that is fed by the image of identities, the poetics of the local, authenticity and proximity (see S. Binas, 2002, p.69). Then again, this kind of folk music comes close to how folk was imagined all along.

After the fall of the iron curtain, the former east dominated the multiple

ways of exoticism with the strategy of combining minority folk and western sound. With the bold display of western 'Body-Pop' the east approaches the west and breaks some taboos on the way. Some productions brought the comrade's, worker- and peasant-states and their notion of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll on the stage. So, not only by providing the oldest participant, the east enhances the plurality of exoticism and benefits at the edge of social diversity with the (Russian) people. With Buranowskije Babuschki one can experience the feeling of solidarity in a „party for everybody“. This mirrors the way the west met the former east in the past 20 years.

In the fight for attention extremes turn into gimmicks. Youth rules the ESC since the 1960s and a law that “protects” children turns their strength to its weakness. Youth dances barefoot, as innocent as a “puppet on a string” (1967) on stage and demands freedom (“Ein bisschen Frieden”, 1982) for the world of the future.

With pop also the youth grew old, which is an issue since the turn of the millennium, at least. After Cliff Richard, in 2012 Great Britain sent the aged star Engelbert with 76 year to the ESC stage. Switzerland is staging age in a charitable manner too: a 96 year old representative of the Salvation Army choir asks for votes. Another taboo is successfully staged in 2014 by the visual bending of gender images. Just like prescribed mainstreaming, critics see this exoticism as a further way of marginalisation (see M. do Mar Castro Varela et. al., 2011).

An association for communicative coexisting chose music as medium for an emotional bond of mutual togetherness – but also the concept of a competition. Even if ESC represents a playing field of difference, the longing to win puts the separating before the unifying element. The question if competition is a suitable form to combine experienced diversity within a pluralistic whole remains: a neoliberal attitude and the cultivation of competition may enhance diversity but it weakens the pluralistic whole. The longing to be the best is an obstacle for tolerance and variety – musical variety is cultivated in exoticism that downplays respect. Of course, trans-cultural stereotypes are also used to raise awareness for (ethnic) minorities and political shortcomings. Examples can be found in the performances of Portugal which successfully argued against autocratic structures in the beginning of the 1970s or Norway which demanded an equal status for the Samen in 1980. It is political agitation which uses the stage of the “standardised media event” with the biggest possible audience. But often these political messages are understood only partially.

The presentation of diversity – not so much the presentation of national-cultural identity but rather the satisfaction of wishes and offering “cultural surfaces for projection” (see R. Burnett, 1996) – may be a cautious way of getting used to the “foreign” and can become an emotional catalyst of tolerance. But can a competition between individuals with the financial support of a few powerful fellow campaigners be a medium of diversity, of variety? Does this mirror Europe’s political structure from the view of the powerful?

The once prescribed public service institutions are today’s democratic facilities. They are thus the best possible communication platforms to strengthen the political process from an “extraordinary” Europe to a dynamic and self shaped “order” in Europe, on a media level. From the outside, the ESC is indeed perceived as event with diversity: This year, also Australia is a guest country that sees the image of Australian diversity in the ESC. •

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## PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF THE DIVERSITY OF MUSICAL EXPRESSION

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The fact that Vienna will host the European Song Contest in May 2015 raises issues about the song as a form of artistic expression. On the other hand, also the question of diversity of music in Austria and Europe needs to be re-addressed.

Austria is a rich country and also rich in musical diversity. Music blooms everywhere: in churches, in discos, concert venues, at the opera, in ski lodges, clubs, at open air events, in living- and back rooms, in schools and musical schools, in restaurants, on the radio, TV, PCs and mobile phones, at festivals, main squares and cemeteries, in print magazines and at competitions, on sound recordings and in media, in books, at dancing events, in malls and in conversations, in the mornings, at noon, in the evenings and at night.

There are different tastes that are vehemently defended, cultural confessions of faith and harsh declarations of rejection. The basis for the social meaning of music of people in Austria (and anywhere) can be experienced from everyday practice: music is a part of the identity construction of individuals and therefore an emotionally charged topic. One can love music A but hate music B – right up to physical reactions such as ecstasy and nausea.

This is why the „UNESCO Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions” – ratified by Austria as well as over 130 countries worldwide – is a major challenge!

The “Austrian Report on Musical Diversity”, a study I conducted in the context of a research program at the University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, leaves behind the 19th Century notion that there are two kinds of music, “serious” and “entertainment” music. Instead, the report assumes genres or “Areas of Style” (Ger. “Stilfelder”): they arise

from traditional contexts which create differences or frames of reference and they are in a constant and lively flux. Six of these areas could be identified within current music: “Classical/Contemporary Music”, “Jazz/Improvised Music”, “Folk/World Music”, “Dance/HipHop/Electronic Music”, “Pop/Rock” and “Schlager/Traditionalist Popular Music”. Since 2000, it seems that diffusion processes happen mostly in the following areas: between contemporary music, electronic music and improvisation, between jazz and world music and between Schlager and pop music.

Concerning the diversity of music and beyond – and all differentiations within music – it is important to note: minimal music is not the same as ambient music, traditional music from Bad Aussee is not like the music of Carinthian Slovenes and hard rock is not heavy metal. Every creative musician has the right to claim a nuanced perception of their music. Moreover, they often regard themselves trans-cultural and are capable and used to deal with countless projects and various attributions at the same time.

Also the European Song Contest should be viewed in the light of this musical globe. Beginning with the French term “chanson” a strict regulatory towards stylistic diversity emerged. Nowadays this is also true for the folk tradition of a country as well as for Schlager, rock and pop music and dance/hip hop/electronic music. Even if songs include, for example, jazz elements they have to be built on the following scheme: Intro – Verse 1 – Prechorus – Chorus – Verse 2 – Prechorus – Chorus – Bridge – Chorus – Coda, and have to offer an appropriate scope for the vocal range of the interpreter. Vocal compositions or improvisations which do not follow this convention are being ruled out of the ESC beforehand.

This does not imply that the creation and production of worthwhile songs on the basis of these conventions is impossible. But in my opinion, a claim for cultural diversity has to accept different standards of value. Even if the quality of performance plays an important role for pop in general and pop in the audiovisual medium TV in particular, the specific efforts of authors – the songwriters and composers – who write good songs within this framework should be honoured in the course of the show. The ESC sees itself as “Song Contest” and not as competition of interpreters! To my mind, leaving the authors unconsidered is a bad habit that marks popular music. In classical music, composers always receive appropriate attention.

The main results of the „Austrian Report on Music Diversity” are the following:

The report on diversity of music in Austria considers the years 2000 – 2010 and is based on the concept of a „Comparative Analysis of Areas of Style”. The six musical areas of style - “Classical/Contemporary Music”, “Jazz/Improvised Music”, “Folk/World Music”, “Dance/HipHop/Electronic Music”, “Pop/Rock” and “Schlager/Traditionalist Popular Music” – were examined regarding the presence of nine dimensions: 1. Basis data (Austrian Advertising), 2. Areas of Style (Crossovers), 3. Education (Schools), 4. Promotion (Subsidies), 5. Events, 6. Market (Sound- & Image Carrier), 7. Media (Broadcasting); 8. Development (Cultural Exchange), 9. Research (Disciplines).

The observed profiles of stylistic areas show that the musical diversity in Austria is shaped by two parameters: on the one hand there is a strong presence of classical music tradition in state institutions (in subsidies and external presentations), on the other hand international rock and pop music dominates the music- and media market. In quantitative terms the diversity of contemporary music from Austria is very low: this is particularly true for “New Music”, “Jazz”, “Folk- and World Music” and “Electronic Music”, but also for the genres “Pop/Rock” and “Schlager”.

- While 94.5% of the federal subsidies flow into classical and traditional music theatre (opera, operetta, musical), 3.5% remain for new music and 2% for jazz, folk music, world music, dance music.
- While 65.9% of the advertisement pages in Austria concern classical music, 13.6% go to operetta, 9.1% to folk- and world music and 11.4% remain for pop/rock music, jazz and dance music.
- In the period of reporting, the LP charts of the year show 82.5% international repertoire (mainly pop/rock). The amount of Austrian music, on the other hand is 17.5% (8% pop/rock, 7% Schlager, 2% classical music, 0.5% dance/world music).
- In 2010 the radio program broadcasted 76.4% international repertoire (mainly pop/rock: 51.6%), the percentage of Austrian music is only 23.6% in total (11.2% pop/rock, 6.3% Schlager, 4.9% classical music, 1.2% folk/world + dance + jazz).

- In comparison, a representative study of the IMS that gathered data on the musical preferences of Austrian citizens came to the following results: pop/rock music: 44%, Schlager 35%, classical music 33%, folk music 30%, jazz 21%, world music 18%, dance music 15%.
- There is an exchange between all stylistic areas. In the period under review, mainly crossovers of new music, electronic music, jazz and world music as well as rock and Schlager could be observed.
- The rapid progress of digitalisation in the period under review enhanced the accessibility of musical diversity. The numbers of Austrian households with connection to the Internet grew from about 30% (2001: 10.3% music users) to about 70% (2009: 25.2% music users).

In view of the „UNESCO Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions” of 2005 the study formulates seven measures and recommendations:

1. A higher amount of diversity of contemporary forms of music concerning music promotion and the increase of the Austrian fund for music
2. Promotion of school projects as a meeting place
3. Cooperation of the external-, economic- and culture departments regarding export of music
4. Increasing the diversity of Austrian music in ORF.
5. Appropriate depiction of musical diversity in collective societies.
6. Compliance of the “UN Millennium Development Goals” regarding development cooperation, higher significance of cultural projects, solving Visa problems
7. Musical diversity as important factor of statistical cultural research, adding international research for comparison.

The Eurovision Song Contest could hopefully encourage the fulfillment of these recommendations in an unpretentious way and could additionally honour, as mentioned above, the creative work of European composers. Doing so, it would accomplish the mission it has: To be a best practice example of Public Service Media’s indispensable duty to European societies. •

## BEST PRACTICE IN PUBLIC BROADCASTING

PAUL JORDAN

MEDIA COMMENTATOR, GLASGOW

Public broadcasting throughout the world has been revolutionised in the digital age. From the advent of the internet, to the transition towards digital broadcasting and the launch of social media, outputs from public broadcasting have changed almost beyond all recognition since the first model was developed by the BBC in the 1920s. However, public broadcasting continues to speak to and engage, fostering a sense of national or community identity. Whilst public broadcasting is in theory, supposed to be distanced from vested interests, governments can and do, exert influence over broadcast content. Despite this, public broadcasting can be vital to a healthy democracy, arguably more so in this digital age.

The digital media environment has paved the way for plurality and diversity; the transition from analogue to digital produced capacity for literally thousands of television and radio channels as well as online content. Whilst conventional broadcast channels and their relatively high-budget programmes continue to attract the mainstay of viewing interest, ‘narrowcast’ channels targeting specific interests have meant that outputs have become much more representative of service users. Public broadcasting in the digital age is not without its flaws and as the recent global economic crisis has demonstrated, questions still remain concerning the inherent difficulties governing direct funding and universality of payment. Some argue that funding through a compulsory tax or TV licence is out of date and unnecessary, yet a consensus on an effective alternative has yet to materialise. In June 2013 the Greek government, as part of its wider austerity drive, closed down ERT, the country’s national broadcaster, with immediate effect. The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) expressed ‘profound dismay’ at this decision citing that far-reaching changes to broadcasting systems should be decided in a transparent manner and not ‘through a simple agreement between two government ministers’. In particular the rise of social me-



dia has meant that governments and authorities can be held to account like never before.

Social media has the capacity to change the world. This statement might seem bold however as the series uprisings in the Arab world and more recently in Ukraine show, social media was influential in organising, influencing and informing. Some commentators even went as far as to call them ‘Twitter Revolutions’. While there are obvious issues concerning censorship and the governance of social media which need to be addressed at an international level, social media provides instant access to information which largely falls outside of jurisdiction of governments. The recent protests in Ukraine, known popularly as ‘Euromaidan’ can be held up as an example of social media filling a void in public broadcasting. By 2013 Ukraine had slipped into an authoritarian regime led by Viktor Yanukovich, with a broadcasting network largely towing the party line. Social media allowed Ukrainian entrepreneurs to broadcast live to the world from the centre of the protests. It provided a powerful voice, one which became all the more important when the first shots against civilians were fired.

The past decade has seen an alarming rise in attacks on journalists throughout Europe, despite various governments providing assurances to the Council of Europe. The current economic, social and political context in which public broadcasting operates in today’s Europe makes it even more vital that it continues. Public broadcasting should do more to embrace new digital technologies, including social media, so that it continues to provide credible, independent output. Public broadcasting continues to command high levels of trust and large audiences. The existence of a public media service and its independence from government lies at the heart of democratic governance, a pillar of a pluralistic society. When governments break rules, broadcasters can shine a light on this. In times of war, public broadcasting remains crucial, even when it comes to the most unlikely of events. The Eurovision Song Contest, celebrating its 60th edition in 2015, is a prime example of this; it represents public broadcasting at its best.

Since its inception in 1956 the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) has become an annual television spectacle broadcast to over 120 million viewers. The original idea behind the contest and still its defining feature today, is that nations (whose television companies are active members of the EBU) submit original songs which are performed and televised live. This is followed by voting to determine the “best” European song of the year. One of the main aims of the ESC was that it would act as a

catalyst for pioneering new broadcasting techniques. Such developments are evidenced in the introduction of colour broadcasting in 1968, more elaborate stage designs, computerised scoreboards in the 1980s, introduction of satellite links with the jury spokespersons in 1994 and virtual reality in 1996. The contest was broadcast on the internet for the first time in 2000. Eligibility to participate is not determined by geographic inclusion within the continent of Europe, despite the inference in the title of the competition. Rather entry to the event is dependent upon the national broadcaster being a full and active member of the EBU. Several countries which are geographically out-with the boundaries of Europe have competed; namely Israel and Azerbaijan since 1973 and 2008 respectively. Morocco in North Africa took part in 1980. In addition, Turkey and Russia, which are both transcontinental countries with most of their territory outside of Europe, have competed respectively since 1975 and 1994.

The ESC, whilst not originally envisaged as a political event, has at times, become highly politicised and continues, to reflect the socio-political issues of the day. The ESC today can be seen as a stage upon which European cultures interact, a site where identities can be performed and articulated. The Eurovision Song Contest has reflected the changing map of Europe in the wake of the collapse of communism. For many newly sovereign nations, it has become a discursive tool in defining and articulating the state’s ‘European’ credentials. The ESC offers a form of approval but also a chance for each host country to say something to the world, on its own terms and can act as a platform for nation branding and as a mechanism for nation building. Arguably one of the strongest examples of the ESC being used as a platform for nation building is the participation of Bosnia Herzegovina at the 1993 contest whilst the war in the Balkans was raging. The delegation from Bosnia Herzegovina sought to portray their country as an ordinary European state despite news reports in the wider press suggesting otherwise. At a press conference, a member of the Bosnian delegation highlighted the significance arising from participating in the event for the country:

We have many problems to come here [to Eurovision]. We go out from the surrendered city, running across the runway in the middle of the night, through grenades, through snipers. We risked our lives to be here to show the whole of the world that we are just normal, peaceful people in Bosnia Herzegovina and that we just want to live in peace and to do our jobs (Why Not Millstreet? [TV] RTE 1993).

## AUSTRIA, ORF AND CONCHITA WURST

IVAN RAYKOFF

THE NEW SCHOOL IN NEW YORK

At the 1994 contest, the head of the jury for Bosnia Herzegovina was greeted with a spontaneous standing ovation when she was called to announce the votes. Such a display of raw emotion demonstrates that the Eurovision Song Contest is a truly special event and something so much more than just a song contest. Whilst the ESC has been criticised for its lack of musical and cultural relevance, it is one of the most watched television shows in Europe and as the 2012 winner from Sweden, Loreen, proved, it still generates international hits. It is also an event in which participating countries continue to invest. In 2010, Estonia's participation in Eurovision was paid for by Enterprise Estonia after ETV announced that they were withdrawing in the light of the global economic crisis. Enterprise Estonia cited that the ESC was an important platform for continuing to promote Estonia through the medium of public broadcasting. Despite the cynicism, the ESC remains an event which broadcasting authorities continue to buy into. In the case of Ukraine, it led to lasting political change after a visa-free regime was introduced for EU citizens specifically for the ESC in 2005. To date, this policy remains in place, a lasting legacy of the Eurovision Song Contest.

The continued success of the Eurovision Song Contest, entering its 60th year in 2015 is quite remarkable given that a wider European identity remains a vague construction still in the process of formation. The questions of what constitutes Europe and what holds it together remain as pertinent today as they were following World War II. The global economic crisis has further aroused discussions concerning development and notions of Europeanness. The ESC offers a space for an idealised image of reality. The slogan for the 2013 contest held in Sweden was "We are one". The financial crisis has demonstrated that Europe is not one, economically, politically or even socially. Yet, despite media narratives depicting the ESC as relevant or even fixed, as a television format it has continue to endure. Eurovision, and the wider socio-political tensions it exhibits, represents a unique form of public diplomacy, since, in theory, it allows countries to pass judgement without the threat of repercussion. Although, disputes between participating countries, Azerbaijan and Armenia, to name just one example, demonstrate that Eurovision is in fact a form of living nationalism. In an ever-changing Europe, where public broadcasting and technology are developing with intense pace, where meanings and identities are shifting rapidly, the ESC encapsulates some of the key debates of our times. The fact that the contest is bigger than ever and continues to attract fans and critics alike, nearly sixty years since its creation, is a feat which surely only existed in creator Marcel Baisson's imagination. •

The Eurovision Song Contest—celebrating its 60th year in 2015, when it is being hosted by Austria celebrating its first win in nearly 50 years—is an outstanding example of how European public service media—the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) in particular—endeavors to instill and cultivate certain shared cultural values through its programming. With a mandate to inform, educate, and entertain their audiences, the national television networks of the EBU and their expanding digital platforms strive to represent a diversity of views in promoting public values. The EBU's 2010 "Declaration on the Core Values of Public Service Media" identifies diversity as one of its six fundamental priorities: the charge of representing the views of majorities as well as minorities through a plurality of voices to create "a more inclusive, less fragmented society." This diversity is continually evolving, so public service media must "test prevailing assumptions" in order to balance tradition with innovation and conformity with the heterogeneity of difference, and in this way it aims to "enable our audiences, and each individual, to engage and participate in a democratic society." The Eurovision Song Contest attempts to put these ideals into play on the pan-European level as competing countries submit their songs and viewers across the continent vote for their favorites. Ideally this also occurs through a national selection process, organized by broadcasters on their own terms, that chooses the singer and song to represent the country in the upcoming contest.

Austria's Eurovision entries are chosen by the national public service broadcaster Österreichischer Rundfunk (ORF), which is still the country's leading television network (its monopoly on nationwide television broadcasting only ended in 2003). ORF exercises significant decision-making power as a result of this market dominance; its responsibility to acknowledge and represent the broad interests of its audiences is correspondingly high. One way to represent these broad

interests is to hold a national selection contest allowing viewers to vote directly for the song of choice, as ORF did in 2002-2005 and 2011-2013; in 2007, however, the selection was made internally by ORF. (In 2006 and in 2008-2010 Austria did not participate in Eurovision, usually citing the poor scores it achieved when it did send a contestant.) Placing second in the 2012 national contest was Conchita Wurst, the drag stage persona of the Austrian singer, celebrity, and artist-activist Tom Neuwirth (b. 1988). Neuwirth was already known to Austrian audiences thanks to his second-place finish in ORF's casting show *Starmania* in 2007, and then in 2011 he started performing as Conchita Wurst on another ORF talent show, *Die große Chance (Lucky Break)*. These nationally televised performances set the stage for Wurst's very close second-place finish in the 2012 Eurovision national selection contest, when she won 49% of the final vote. So it wasn't a complete surprise when ORF chose Conchita Wurst to represent Austria in the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest without providing a national selection contest beforehand. The controversy that this decision prompted, however, points to the significant role that public service media can and should play in promoting diversity as one of its core values.

ORF's television programming finds ways to blend information, education, and entertainment with shows like the "docutainment" series *Die härtesten Jobs Österreichs (Austria's Toughest Jobs)*. This series introduces celebrities and socialites to the typically unglamorous work of society's "true heroes," as the press release puts it; they work for a few days alongside construction workers, chimney sweeps, truck drivers, trash collectors, and other blue-collar laborers (waitresses, beekeepers, morticians, and counter-terrorism police have also been featured). The series informs viewers about the daily challenges of these types of work as it highlights specific Austrian businesses and industries, weaving in instructive lessons about the values of hard work, perseverance, and discovering one's hidden talents as well. In March 2013 Wurst was featured on the show. Her assignment was to work in a fish processing plant, not only catching the fish at night but also killing them with electrocution. Despite the unsurprising and unexpected challenges of this job, Wurst performed the labors assiduously and gained a greater sense of personal strength. "There were many situations that I was really afraid of," she noted, "but the best thing is to overcome these fears. I'm proud of myself for being able to do that." Here individual and societal values are enacted through a show that brings celebrities together with local workers to demonstrate life lessons that transcend class and task. It's more difficult to make comparable claims about public values with a reality series on a commercial network that featured Wurst in July 2013, *Wild Girls–Auf High Heels durch die Wüste (Wild Girls: On High Heels*

*through the Desert)* on RTL. Wurst was one of twelve "starlets" tasked with demanding challenges in the deserts of Namibia in southwest Africa. Following the format of other competitive-elimination reality shows, *Wild Girls* sought out a winner who persevered through a series of adventures requiring skill, speed, strength, smarts, and team spirit—and through a peer-voting process pitting contestants against each other in a very personal popularity contest. This kind of "trash TV" entertainment is very popular with audiences, of course, and very profitable for the commercial networks that produce and distribute these shows. It aims towards the more sensational side of entertainment ("Busty Stars Trapping Goats," as one review puts it) than informative or educational, but commercial television has never claimed the latter ideals as their charge. Even in this sexist and subtly racist show, however, Wurst noted how often interactions between the contestants and the local people were productive in terms of recognizing diversity. "We also spoke with the respective ethnic groups about our different cultures," she explained in an interview. "I was surprised by the tolerance that was shown to me personally. ... For them we were all some kind of aliens, but they were all very interested and unprejudiced."

Despite Conchita Wurst's appearances on televised music shows and celebrity-based reality shows bringing her positive public visibility in Austria, many people were upset by ORF's internal decision (announced on September 10, 2013) that she would be the singer to represent Austria in Eurovision in 2014. A Facebook page was established to protest this decision. "NEIN zu Conchita Wurst beim Songcontest" (NO to Conchita Wurst at the Song Contest) eventually gained 38,000 members and featured much harsh criticism of the singer and ORF as well. One frequent complaint was that the publically-funded national broadcaster should invite tax-payers to select the singer for Eurovision. According to the contest rules, however, the national broadcaster has always been solely responsible for deciding who represents the country in the contest, and in this case ORF decided to send the runner-up from the 2012 national selection show. A petition on the website *change.org* was also established in September 2013 calling on ORF to overturn this decision and hold a public or independent vote. This petition gathered nearly 5,000 signatures and numerous comments, many asserting that Austrians should choose their own Eurovision contestants, not the ORF. The demands for democratic representation suggest that Austrians might not consider their national public-service broadcaster to be sufficiently representative of their interests, at least when it comes to choosing a singer for this show. The numerous homophobic and transphobic comments clarify, however, that the real motivation for these

protests was the fact the ORF had chosen a performer who was not unambiguously male or female.

In promoting diversity as an important cultural value, broadcasters may need to “test prevailing assumptions,” as the EBU’s statement on public-service media’s Core Values puts it, among them prevailing assumptions about gender, sexuality, and identity. ORF’s decision to send Conchita Wurst to Eurovision 2014 prompted great outcry from Austrians who were not prepared to test certain assumptions about gender and sexuality on that highly public international stage. Their concerns found a public forum via online communities such as Facebook and the change.org website as opposed to resources such as the ORF’s own online forum, *debate.ORF.at*, which invites the “serious exchange of views on current political and social issues.” The Core Values articulated by the EBU for public-service media include universality (“the importance of sharing and expressing a plurality of views and ideas”) and a level of accountability (“we listen to our audiences and engage in meaningful debate”). On the one hand, public-service media endeavors to develop “new ways of connectivity with our audiences” so that it remains open to public dialogue and debate, not only top-down in its creation and dissemination of information. On the other hand, the trend of valuing consumers-in-the-market over citizens-in-society means public-service broadcasters increasingly have to justify the required tax revenues that keep them in business even as the media landscape broadens with new channels and platforms, as entertainment becomes another product and every person becomes a pundit. The challenge is in balancing between the interests of the public and “the public interest.”

Diversity, especially in terms of gender and sexuality, might be difficult for every individual to accept, but it is crucial for the larger public interest in contemporary Europe. This is one reason public-service media still has a responsibility for promoting pluralistic voices of difference in a society. According to Jean-Paul Philippot, president of the EBU, “European public service media contribute actively to the creation of a European public sphere through their promotion of cultural diversity, informed citizenship, and their exchange of images which shape our collective imagination.” After all this controversy, ORF’s broadcast of the Eurovision 2014 finals was watched by nearly 1.5 million people in Austria, a market share of 73%. In congratulating Conchita Wurst on her first-place win, Austrian President Heinz Fischer called it “not just a victory for Austria, but above all for diversity and tolerance in Europe.”

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## THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

DEAN VULETIC

UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

When the bearded drag queen Conchita Wurst met Ban Ki-moon at the headquarters of the United Nations in Vienna in November 2014, it was a rare encounter between a winner of the Eurovision Song Contest and a secretary-general of the United Nations. Yet it could also be interpreted as Austria’s participation in the Eurovision Song Contest coming full circle. For although we like to view the Eurovision Song Contest as a quintessentially European event, the participation of Austria and other states in it depends first of all on them being members of a United Nations agency. In 2015 Austria marks the sixtieth anniversary of its entry into the United Nations and the twentieth anniversary of its accession to the European Union, at the same time that it hosts the sixtieth edition of the Eurovision Song Contest. In a year of so many round anniversaries, it is timely to reflect on how the Eurovision Song Contest is not just one of the longest-running television shows in the world, but also the result of an even longer history of international cooperation in telecommunications. Indeed, Austria itself is the birthplace of international organisations as it was at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 that these were first created, meaning that there is also the two-hundredth anniversary of that to be commemorated in 2015.<sup>1</sup> The majority of discussions in the Congress of Vienna took place in the building that is now the Federal Chancellery of the Austrian government, where Austria’s chancellor Werner Faymann held a reception for Conchita Wurst in May 2014 to celebrate her victory in the Eurovision Song Contest.

After these foundations were laid at the Congress of Vienna, some of the first international organisations that were established were done so in order to facilitate worldwide cooperation in communications. For example, the first ever public international union, the International Telegraph Union, was formed in 1865, meaning one hundred and fifty years ago and adding yet another round anniversary to be marked in 2015. The Austrian Empire was a founding member of the International

Telegraph Union, whose first regular conference was held in Vienna in 1868.<sup>2</sup> With the advent of radio transmissions, the International Radio Telegraph Union was established in 1906 to apply the first international radio regulations, again with Austria as a founding member. In 1932, the International Telegraph Union and the International Radio Telegraph Union merged to form the International Telecommunication Union, which in 1947 became an agency of the United Nations. A state's membership of the International Telecommunication Union is a requirement for its national public radio and television broadcaster to become a member of the European Broadcasting Union, which organises the Eurovision Song Contest for its members. So the membership of Austria and other states in the International Telecommunication Union is also a prerequisite for their participation in the Eurovision Song Contest.

While membership in the International Telecommunication Union is the first prerequisite for membership in the European Broadcasting Union, the second is that the national public broadcaster comes from a state that is located with the European Broadcasting Area, as defined by the International Telecommunication Union. The International Telecommunication Union initially divided the world into regions for the purpose of allocating radio frequencies, and in 1932 it adopted a definition of the European Broadcasting Area as being bound to the North and West by the natural limits of Europe, on the East by the meridian 40° East of Greenwich and on the South by the parallel of 30° North so as to include the Western part of the U.S.S.R. and the territories bordering the Mediterranean, with the exception of the parts of Arabia and Hedjaz included in this sector.

It is because of this definition that the Eurovision Song Contest has since 1973 regularly included Israel and, on one occasion in 1980, even Morocco, even though the Middle East and North Africa lie outside of popular contemporary geographical and political definitions of "Europe." This definition of the European Broadcasting Area was not, however, actually produced by the International Telecommunication Union. It was the work of the International Broadcasting Union, which unlike the International Telecommunication Union did not have a worldwide purview but was limited to Europe. The International Broadcasting Union was formed in 1925 in order to facilitate cooperation among the national broadcasting organisations in Europe, which at that time meant radio stations. It was therefore the direct predecessor of the European Broadcasting Union. As radio services expanded rapidly in Europe after the First World War, especially in the 1920s, and as the number of states on the continent increased, particularly after the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, such an organisation was required to tackle common

problems faced by the national radio stations. The International Broadcasting Union also began the programme cooperation and exchanges that would later also be pursued by the European Broadcasting Union, including through the Eurovision Song Contest. The first common radio programmes broadcast by the members of the International Broadcasting Union were produced in the late 1920s and 1930s and included musical ones such as "National Nights" and "European Concerts."

However, the scope of the International Broadcasting Union was limited in that a major European state, the Soviet Union, never joined it. Just after the end of the Second World War, the Soviet Union sought to create an alternative organisation to the International Broadcasting Union. However, due to early Cold War tensions, cooperation between Eastern European and Western European states in such an organisation became unfeasible, and separate organisations were established for each of the two blocs. The European Broadcasting Union was formed in 1950 for Western European and Mediterranean states, with its headquarters in Brussels and Geneva. In 1954, the European Broadcasting Union established the Eurovision Network for programme cooperation and exchange, which is where the Eurovision Song Contest takes its name from. Just as Eastern Europe had COMECON and the Warsaw Pact as its alternatives to the European Community and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Eastern European states established the International Broadcasting Organisation as their equivalent of the European Broadcasting Union. It had its headquarters in Prague and was later renamed the International Organisation for Radio and Television, which had its own Intervision Network. During the Cold War, the International Organisation for Radio and Television organised its own song contests, one edition being the Intervision Song Contest that was held in the Polish resort town of Sopot from 1977 to 1980. However, Cold War political divisions did not prevent significant cooperation between the European Broadcasting Union and the International Organisation for Radio and Television. For example, there were programme exchanges between the Eurovision and Intervision networks that allowed Eastern European audiences to watch the Eurovision Song Contest.

During the Cold War, the European Broadcasting Union sought to promote technical cooperation among its members. As television services rapidly expanded in Europe in the 1950s, the Eurovision Song Contest was a technical feat that demonstrated that members could broadcast the same programme across Europe at the same time. When it came to political standards, however, these did not fall into the remit of the European Broadcasting Union. If a state was a member of the Internati-

onal Telecommunication Union located within the European Broadcasting Area, then it could become a member of the European Broadcasting Union, no matter what its political system. By 1956, the European Broadcasting Union included broadcasting organisations from almost all Western European states excluding Andorra, Liechtenstein and San Marino, which during the Cold War did not have their own national broadcasting organisations. The only new European Broadcasting Union member states from 1956 to 1990 were states from the southern Mediterranean such as Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Malta and Morocco. What all of the member states of the European Broadcasting Union had in common during the Cold War was that they were not in the East Bloc, even if they were not members of other Western organisations or had a different foreign policy from other Western states. For example, there were states that were members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and others, like Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Malta, Sweden, Switzerland and Yugoslavia, that were nonaligned or neutral during the Cold War. Some states were not even liberal democracies: Portugal and Spain were ruled by right wing dictatorships until the mid-1970s; Greece and Turkey experienced some periods of military dictatorship during the Cold War era; while Yugoslavia was a one-party communist state that joined the European Broadcasting Union and not the International Organisation for Radio and Television because it had severed its alliance with the Soviet Union in 1948.

Contemporary readings of the Eurovision Song Contest like to emphasise its political symbolism with regards to European integration, and the seven participants in the first Eurovision Song Contest in 1956 did indeed include the six founding members of the European Union, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany. At the same time that they established the Eurovision Song Contest, they were pursuing their first steps in contemporary economic, military and political integration through organisations such as the Council of Europe, the European Coal and Steel Community, Euratom, the European Economic Community and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The only exception in this regard among the first participants in the Eurovision Song Contest was Switzerland, which is still not a member of the European Union or the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, but nonetheless has played a major role in the history of the Eurovision Song Contest. The Swiss city of Lugano was the host of the first Eurovision Song Contest, and the headquarters of the European Broadcasting Union are located in Geneva, which hosts several other international organisations including the International Telecommunication Union.

From its beginning, the Eurovision Song Contest was open not only to these states that had founding roles in other European organisations, but to all members of the European Broadcasting Union which satisfied the technical criteria required to participate in the Eurovision Network and the broadcasting of the contest. In the late 1950s the contest expanded to include Austria, Denmark, Monaco, Sweden and the United Kingdom, and in the 1960s Finland, Ireland, Yugoslavia, Norway, Portugal and Spain. The new members in the 1970s were Malta, Israel, Greece and Turkey, and in the 1980s Morocco, Cyprus and Iceland. So almost all Western European members of the European Broadcasting Union participated in the Eurovision Song Contest at some point during the Cold War, as well as Yugoslavia, Israel, Morocco and Turkey. The only exception was the Vatican, which was a founding member of the European Broadcasting Union but only began developing its own limited television services from 1983. The Eurovision Song Contest in any case seems unfitting for the Vatican's cultural diplomacy, even though there have been recent cases of nuns competing in national song contests, including the Maltese national selection for the 2015 Eurovision Song Contest.

After the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, the International Organisation for Radio and Television merged with the European Broadcasting Union in 1993. The organisation's new East European members consequently joined the Eurovision Song Contest. The successor states of the former Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia, were among the first to do so considering their history of having already participated in the Eurovision Song Contest as a part of Yugoslavia, as well as their desire to draw international attention to their newly achieved independence and the wars that accompanied the dissolution of the Yugoslav federation. Other states of Central and East Europe also joined the Eurovision Song Contest in the 1990s, including Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia. For them, participation in the Eurovision Song Contest was a cultural affirmation of their desire for integration into Western organisations such as the European Union, which they all joined in 2004. Other states from the former Soviet Union also used the Eurovision Song Contest to send political messages regarding their pro-Western aspirations, such as when Ukraine hosted the Eurovision Song Contest in 2005 just after its Orange Revolution. Although most states that are represented in the Eurovision Song Contest are now members of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, there are some that are only a member of one of these organisations or, in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Switzerland and most states of the for-

mer Soviet Union, that are in neither. And then there is Kosovo, which is still awaiting recognition from more states before it can join the International Telecommunication Union and eventually the European Broadcasting Union.

Whereas membership of the International Telecommunication Union has always been a prerequisite for a state's membership in the European Broadcasting Union, it has only been in recent years that the European Broadcasting Union's Statutes have been amended to include a reference to another European organisation. The latest expansion of the Eurovision Song Contest occurred as a result of a change to the Statutes which allows not just states within the European Broadcasting Area, but also those which are members of the Council of Europe, to join the European Broadcasting Union. The only members of the Council of Europe that are not located within the European Broadcasting Area are Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, whose national public broadcasting organisations were subsequently admitted into the European Broadcasting Union in 2005 and 2007.

Ironically, although the Council of Europe promotes democracy, human rights and the rule of law through inter-governmental cooperation, Azerbaijan's membership in the European Broadcasting Union became controversial due to the authoritarian government of president Ilham Aliyev and its suppression of media freedoms, especially when Azerbaijan hosted the Eurovision Song Contest in 2012. The only states that are not members of the Council of Europe but are in the European Broadcasting Union are the Vatican, which is excluded from the Council of Europe because it is a theocracy, and Belarus, which has not been admitted because of human rights violations, particularly its continued use of the death penalty. As tensions between Russia and the West have increased in recent years over issues such as the war in Ukraine and the rights of sexual minorities, the politics of this has also been played out at the Eurovision Song Contest. Following some hostile reactions in Russia to Conchita Wurst's win in 2014, there was also a Russian-led move to revive the Intervision Song Contest as a challenge to the Eurovision Song Contest, although this time with Eurasian states from the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

On the map of the European Broadcasting Area, the political ambitions and interests of various international alliances and organisations have been played out to produce different associations of national public broadcasting organisations and even song contests. Yet the Eurovision Song Contest has outlived all of the changes in international relations

in the postwar era. It has been held without fail every year since it was first staged in 1956, making it one of the longest-running television shows in history. And it is this constancy that makes the Eurovision Song Contest an ideal lens through which to view not only the changes in international cooperation in telecommunications, but also those in the history of postwar Europe. •

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<sup>1</sup> Bob Reinalda, *Routledge History of International Organization: From 1815 to the Present Day* (London: Routledge, 2009), 28-29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86.

## “YOU WOULDN'T KNOW ME AT ALL...”

IRVING WOLTER

\_PHONOS-JOURNALISTENBÜRO, HANNOVER

You could hardly find another television programme that is so easy to recognize. Even if you start watching in the middle of the show you can understand what it is about. Short films introduce totally unknown artists walking through picturesque landscapes of their sometimes obscure home countries that you try in vain to guess by the national flags shown. Then the artists start to perform a song in some unfamiliar language, in the middle of a huge scene full to the brim with props, dancers and backing singers, while huge wind machines and pyrotechnics transform the stage set into Dante's inferno. Three presenters interrupt the succession of songs with more or less self-evident information about the show in the two languages spoken by the majority of the participating countries as well as in the language of the host country that no one except a handful of people is able to understand. In the end the songs are awarded points for their musical quality, for their breakneck performance or for their geographical situation, and Kazakhstan wins. Kazakhstan? What nonsense, they are not even taking part in the ... Or wasn't this all about the infamous Eurovision Song Contest? No, dear reader, the show I was talking about is NOT the annual European music extravaganza that will celebrate its 60th birthday in Vienna 2015. It is its counterpart for the Turkic world: the Turkvision Song Contest. The obscure countries mentioned are Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Republic Kabardino-Balkaria or the autonomous Moldovan region Gagauzia, and the three languages of the hosts are Russian, Turkish and Tatar, a Turkic language mainly spoken in the host nation of the contest 2014, Tatarstan. Except these little details (and maybe the music) the competition does not show many differences compared to its Eurovision model. The Turkvision Song Contest was started in 2013 as part of Turkey's foreign policy strategy to expand their influence in Central Asia with its huge territories inhabited by Turkic peoples. It is supposed to take place in the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World, annually chosen by the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRKSÖY) which is also

one of the organizing bodies of the contest. TÜRKSÖY, however, puts its efforts to a less calculating level: “The TURKVISION Song Contest is a unique project which aims at preserving and strengthening ties of friendship among Turkic peoples by introducing their common music, culture, language, art and traditions to the world.” Which does not necessarily mean that the Turkish audience will feel any closer to their Turkic brothers and sisters in the Russian Republic Khakassia after listening to some unexpected overtone singing.

It is not a secret that Turkey started to explore potential alliances with Turkic states in Central Asia shortly after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1992, but Russia was not willing to let Turkey interfere in the sphere of influence of the former Soviet Union. Only in 2009 did the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan manage to create a political instrument that succeeded in strengthening the ties within the Turkic territories, the Cooperation Council of Turkish-speaking States (CCTS). Since then Turkish politicians do not miss any opportunity to evoke the bright future of the Turkic world – a future that seems to be more likely to occur than Turkey's accession to the European Union. So, the Turkvision Song Contest is celebrating this “Turkic world” with more than 300 million people in more than 30 countries and territories, following a clear geopolitical strategy: move these people closer together in order to face the economic and political challenges to come.

Conspiracy theorists claim that the creation of the Eurovision Song Contest followed similar considerations: The music competition would have been created to pave the way for European integration and, later, the eastward enlargement of the European Union. I would not argue that the ESC, as it is affectionately abbreviated by its fans, was created as an instrument for European integration. However, it has definitely functioned as such, anticipating political and social development processes within a cultural area commonly described as “European”. And this is due to its particular evolution as a public service programme.

The Eurovision Song Contest as a public service programme Originally the competition was created by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) in order to have an annual opportunity for the national public broadcasters to co-operate on a common project. Television was new, and international broadcasts (e. g. the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.) turned out to be an ideal opportunity for promoting this new medium. Several options for a broadcasting co-operation on a regular basis were considered – a circus festival among others – but the success of the Italian Sanremo Music Festival prompted the organization of an international composing competition. Due to these particular circumstances the so-called “Song Contest” was created primarily as a television event and only with the secondary intention of supporting



national music production, even though this aim was an integral part of its official rules for many years.

Yet it is mainly due to developments in the field of television broadcasting that the ESC evolved the way it did, introducing state-of-the-art technologies hard to find in other TV-productions of the time like colour television, live satellite connections, or HD broadcast, to only name a few. This way the contest became kind of a showpiece for Eurovision, the television news and programme exchange of the European Broadcasting Union – to the extent that an official representative of the organization admitted off the record that the member broadcasters could not get rid of the contest even if they wanted to, because there is no other project representing the work of Eurovision the way the ESC does. Nowadays the contest is not just an occasion for media co-operation but also a tool for demonstrating the power of public television broadcasting. With their million euro media event the member broadcasters of the EBU demonstrate their technical and organisational superiority over private competitors.

A showpiece, however, with implications on a cultural and political level. It would be naive to think that any competition where representatives of a country are supposed to award other countries' performances with points could remain apolitical. This is even more the case for a competition between public broadcasters who may or may not be government controlled but in any case bear some kind of responsibility to contribute to national identity and sense of community – two key principles of public broadcasting. The Eurovision Song Contest is a perfect instrument to do so, since it combines various factors essential for creating identification: competition and thus emotional involvement, a feeling of belonging (as well as a feeling of alienation), a ritual and festive character, and a universal appeal to various groups of users. This commitment to community- and identity-building is maybe the reason for the ongoing success of the ESC. On the one hand the feeling of belonging to a national and/or ethnic community, crossing fingers for a song and singer which have been selected to represent a specific country. On the other hand the feeling of being part of a pan-European television community continuously growing year by year, from a Central-European nucleus formed by the first participating countries Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland (all 1956); to a broader idea of Western Europe including Austria (1957), the British Isles (UK 1957, Ireland 1965), Scandinavia (Denmark 1957, Sweden 1958, Norway 1960), Finland (1961), the former Yugoslavia (1961) and the Iberian peninsula (Spain 1961, Portugal 1964); feeling its way forward to the European periphery with Malta (1971), Greece (1974), Turkey (1975) and Iceland (1986); and finally embracing Eastern Europe

(Hungary, Slovakia, Romania 1993, Poland 1994, Albania 2004, Bulgaria 2005, Czech Republic 2007) and the Post-Soviet countries (Estonia 1993, Lithuania 1994, Russia 1994, Latvia 2000, Ukraine 2003, Belarus 2004, Moldova 2005, Armenia 2006, Georgia 2007, Azerbaijan 2008).

The “hidden agenda” of the Eurovision Song Contest

In terms of European integration the Eurovision Song Contest was always ahead of the times. It accepted participants from former dictatorships like Spain, Portugal, and Greece long before they found their ways to democracy. It helped countries like Estonia or Latvia, literally obscured by the Iron Curtain for many years, to get rid of their grim and hostile Post-Soviet image and establish themselves as competent political and economic partners before they became members of the European Union. It somehow even contributed to the consolidation of the Ukrainian society, when the 2005 contest was used for nation-building purposes shortly after the Orange Revolution. Again conspiracy theorists would interpret this as proof of a hidden agenda in Eurovision, working as a kind of undercover agent for the European Union. But there is no hidden agenda. There is only the agenda of the public service broadcasters – and it is not hidden at all.

In Austria one may find this agenda in the Federal Act on the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF Act), especially in Section 4, Programme mandate, mentioning among others the “promotion of understanding for all questions of democratic society”, the “promotion of Austrian identity from the perspective of European history and integration” and the “promotion of understanding for European integration”. In Germany the Provisions for Public Service Broadcasting mentioned in the Interstate Broadcasting Treaty are lacking any reference to the promotion of national identity, stating, however: “In their programming, the public service broadcasting corporations must provide a comprehensive overview of international, European, national and regional events in all major areas of life. In so doing, they shall further international understanding, European integration and the social cohesion on the federal and state levels.”

The Eurovision Song Contest is such a programme, furthering international understanding among a broad audience on an easily accessible level. It is a unique chance to meet the unknown, to get acquainted with different constructions of identity, whether they are cultural, national or individual – as in the case of Conchita Wurst, the winner of the 2014 edition of the contest. “You wouldn't know me at all ...”, she sings in her winning entry “Rise Like a Phoenix”, and we could easily continue the phrase by adding “... without the Eurovision Song Contest”, because the show helped the bearded diva to become internationally famous and spread her message of tolerance all over the European con-

continent and beyond.

Tolerance, however, is not a fashionable new catchword in Eurovision. It is something that the contest itself requests from its viewers since its very first edition in 1956. Tolerance for artists singing the praises of their countries, even if we might disagree with them; tolerance for languages that might sound strange and unmelodic to our ears; and tolerance for different cultural preferences in music and stage performance – alienating experiences to which most of us might be confronted only once a year, on a magical Saturday night in spring. The Eurovision Song Contest is not a show for intolerant, narrow-minded or xenophobic people, just because of the diversity this programme is made of. So, as long as the show is watched by some 100 million people, it is perfectly embodying the concept of “United in diversity” which is the official motto of the European Union. And this without any hidden agenda. Diversity in danger?

However, this diversity is not something to be taken for granted. There are fundamental differences in the role and definition of public service within the member broadcasters of the EBU, and not all of them share a common view on the EBU’s core values universality, independence, excellence, diversity, accountability and innovation. A fact that the organization is aware of: “To live out our core values requires constant efforts in organizations with very different backgrounds, histories and possibilities”, says the EBU’s Declaration on the Core Values of Public Service Media. So – as paradoxical as it may sound – the diversity of member broadcasters within the EBU might become a threat to the diversity of the Eurovision Song Contest.

Given the challenges posed by a rapidly changing media landscape the EBU needed to address the problems of public television and implemented major changes in the rules of the contest (possibility to sing in English, use of backing tracks, streamlining of the voting etc.) in order to keep it attractive both for the audience and the participating broadcasters. Every modification was the result of a laborious and time-consuming struggle between the participating broadcasters who pursued their own interests according to their various national media situations and corresponding interpretation of public value. One point, however, was not negotiable: equal opportunities for all participating countries in the contest, whether they are major contributors to the EBU budget or not. So every country was allowed to bring its own conductor, no country could have more than six persons on stage, and equal weight was given to the vote of all participating countries, regardless of their size and population.

The EBU’s “fundamental principle of solidarity“, however, could be eroded by recent changes in the determination of the contest’s running

order. Since 2013 it is in the hands of the producers in which order the acts will compete – thus being able to create a more compelling show. As understandable this decision might be from the producer’s point of view it could trigger a fatal dynamic: The participating broadcasters could implement mechanisms in their national selections to avoid the victory of polarizing acts they fear might get an unfavourable starting position. Since every national broadcaster is free in his choice how to select his representative, this could lead to an artistic streamlining of the contest. And it could lead to mutual distrust. Is it really for some dramaturgical considerations that the producer put a certain broadcaster’s contribution on second position in the running order (which is statistically least likely to win) or because (for whatever reason) he wanted to teach the broadcaster a lesson? Could this even question the democratic values of public broadcasting?

The re-introduction of the jury vote has already led to the withdrawal of Turkey which felt unfairly disadvantaged by this measure – and created its own contest. A country’s failure in qualifying for the final or getting a higher placement (presumably) due to the aforementioned changes could have similar consequences. It is to be hoped that considerations that put ratings above the historically grown values of Eurovision will not have any negative impacts on the acceptance of the show among viewers and participating broadcasters. In its 60th year of existence it is time to create a new awareness for the importance this contest has – for our collective “Euro-Vision” and for the development of tolerance towards other cultures and ways of life. •

## MISSION STATEMENT ESC 2015

EDGAR BÖHM  
ORF, VIENNA

The ORF has established a Mission Statement for the ESC 2015.

### WHAT THE ESC 2015 IN VIENNA IS ...

**The ESC 2015** is going to be a cosmopolitan party of tolerance, acceptance and variety

**The ESC 2015** will be Europe's biggest TV show of the year and will be organised and produced state-of-the-art by ORF

**The ESC 2015** will be the biggest musical competition for young singers from all over Europe and is characterised by respect, fairness and transparency

**The ESC 2015** is going to have the distinction of artistic quality and originality Austria, located in the heart of Europe, will be a charming, liberal and generous host for all participants

**The ESC 2015** is a modern and progressive European TV event which imparts the image to the rest of the world of a modern Austria with strong European roots

**The ESC 2015** will celebrate its 60th anniversary in Austria self-aware and happy

**The ESC 2015** will be Austria's creative interpretation of this big event, which will show the liberal-minded image of our country

**The ESC 2015** is going to be a shared project for all Austria and the entire team is aware of that unique opportunity

**The ESC 2015** will be barrier-free, and will, therefore explore new avenues

**The ESC 2015** will be an internationally-certified 'green event' having sustainability as a negotiating principle

### ... AND WHAT IT'S NOT

**The ESC 2015** will not be arrogant or autocratic

**The ESC 2015** is celebrating its 60th anniversary but nevertheless won't be nostalgic

**The ESC 2015** won't advance the popular Austrian stereotypes which are common for our country at international events

**The ESC 2015** will not be 'Austrian-centered' – the focus will be on Europe

**The ESC 2015** won't be wasteful or assume vast proportions

## AUTHORS

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**Paul Jordan** is an expert and regular media commentator on the Eurovision Song Contest. He obtained his PhD in Social and Political Sciences from the University of Glasgow in 2011. His research interests include nation branding, national identity and nationalist politics. In 2014 he published his first book, *The Modern Fairy Tale: Nation Branding, National Identity and the Eurovision Song Contest*. For more information visit [www.dreurovision.com](http://www.dreurovision.com)

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**Irving Wolther**, Dr. phil., studied Applied Language and Cultural Studies at the universities of Mainz and Geneva, and Journalism at the Hanover University of Music and Drama (HMTH). 2006 PhD “summa cum laude” with his thesis ‘Kampf der Kulturen’ – Der Eurovision Song Contest als Mittel national-kultureller Repräsentation (‘Clash of Cultures’ – The Eurovision Song Contest as a means of national-cultural representation). Since 1994 working as a freelance journalist and presenter; co-founder and holder of \_phonos-Journalistenbüro in Hanover. In his capacity as an expert for national popular music and music contests he is working since 2005 as a lecturer at the HMTH Institute for Journalism and Communication Studies and as collaborator for the official Eurovision Song Contest website of the German broadcaster NDR. Invited lectures and various publications on this and other subjects of popular culture. Initiator of HÖREN! – Hannover Song Contest.

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