



## Call for Papers for the International Conference

### *Eurovision Song Contest and Humanities and Social Sciences: Issues, questions and perspectives*

April 1, 2 & 3, 2026, Paris, Campus des Cordeliers

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Since its inception in 1956, the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) has launched the careers of global stars such as ABBA and Celine Dion. Multicultural and multilingual, and unmatched in scale outside the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the ESC has become a fixture of the European public media landscape. In 2025, the contest reached 166 million television viewers<sup>1</sup> and garnered 1.8 billion views across its social media platforms<sup>2</sup>. As a ceremonial media event (Dayan & Katz, 1996), the ESC carries significant economic, political, and social implications.

On the eve of its 70th anniversary, the ESC is far from being an outdated or kitschy public spectacle. Instead, it crystallizes numerous complex issues. It serves as a platform where Europe and its neighbors express national identities and shared imaginaries, while also reflecting geopolitical rivalries—from East-West tensions during the Cold War to more recent conflicts such as Armenia/Azerbaijan, Ukraine/Russia, and Israel/Palestine. Positioned at the intersection of the cultural and media industries, the ESC raises questions about the construction of norms and the representation of certain populations. Finally, the ESC prompts critical inquiry into cultural legitimacy and its counterpoint—the eclecticism of taste—raising the question: what does it mean today to 'love the Eurovision Song Contest'?

Studying the ESC thus entails exploring the intersections of identity, collective rituals, and social media participation, while also illuminating the complex political and social dynamics within the cultural and

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<sup>1</sup> [Eurovision.tv](https://eurovision.tv). "Vital statistics: Eurovision's 2025 record-breaking reach", May 28, 2025.

<https://eurovision.tv/story/eurovision-2025-record-breaking-reach>

<sup>2</sup> [Eurovision.tv](https://www.ebu.ch/research/loginonly/report/eurovision-song-contest-brand-impact-report). "Eurovision Song Contest Brand Impact Report", June 24, 2025.

<https://www.ebu.ch/research/loginonly/report/eurovision-song-contest-brand-impact-report>

media industries. To what extent can the humanities and social sciences help us to illuminate, understand, and critically analyze the social, cultural, and political issues—both past and present—embodied in the ESC?

In recent years, a growing body of research has examined the ESC through a variety of disciplinary and methodological approaches. This body of work engages with multiple disciplinary perspectives, including explorations of national and cultural identities in Europe (Fricker & Gluhovic (eds.), 2013; Jordan, 2014; Neves, 2017; Panea, 2020; Venon, 2007), as well as approaches rooted in musicology and popular culture (Björnberg, 1987; Fornäs, 2017; Shuker, 2016; Raykoff, 2021; Tragaki (ed.), 2013), cultural sociology and fan studies (Le Guern, 2007; Vieira Lopes, 2023), cultural studies (Carniel, 2018; Coleman, 2008; Salgó, 2017), history (Vuletic, 2018), communication and media studies (Appiotti, Bolz, Boittiaux & Neuvillers, 2025; Pajala, 2011), education studies (Cremona, 2022), and gender studies (Baker, 2024; Imre, 2020; Lemish, 2004; Vänskä & Tuhkanen (eds.), 2007).

The conference “Eurovision Song Contest and the Humanities and Social Sciences” seeks to build upon the collective initiatives that have helped establish an interdisciplinary state of the art in ESC research (Raykoff & Tobin, (eds.), 2007; Fricker & Gluhovic, (eds.), 2013; Dubin, Vuletic & Obregón, (eds.), 2023). Adopting an interdisciplinary and critical perspective, the conference aims to explore and interrogate emerging approaches and studies related to the contest and its multiple dimensions.

The discussions at this conference will be structured around the following central research questions:

- How are the humanities and social sciences approaching the ESC? Conversely, how might the ESC stimulate and challenge the theoretical frameworks and methodologies of these disciplines?
- Is the ESC an original social object with its own distinct questions and methods, or does it resemble other research topics that pose similar analytical challenges?
- Does current research on the ESC reflect a profound renewal of academic approaches, or is it primarily shaped by long-term dynamics involving the revision and adaptation of existing themes, objects, and analytical frameworks?
- What do analyses of the ESC contribute to the humanities and social sciences, particularly in terms of methodological tools, and interpretive perspectives?
- How do disciplinary orientations and the ethnocentric perspectives of researchers shape their interpretations of the ESC and influence their research practices?

This conference also aims to underscore the importance of diverse perspectives, disciplines, and research traditions, recognizing that only an interdisciplinary and intercultural approach to the ESC can fully capture and update the current state of scholarship on the subject. As such, paper proposals are welcome from a wide range of disciplines and methodologies, including but not limited to: anthropology, communication studies, cultural studies, law, economics, gender studies, tourism studies, aesthetics, geography, history, fan studies, musicology, narratology, performance and theater studies, political science, linguistics, semiotics, and sociology. In particular, papers are expected to include:

1. A critical and reflective presentation of the concepts, paradigms, and methodologies employed to address the questions raised by the conference. Special attention should be given to the identification of the disciplinary fields involved and the ways in which they are brought into dialogue. Contributions should demonstrate how these interdisciplinary engagements offer an original lens for understanding the ESC.
2. An analysis grounded in verifiable and contestable empirical material, such as ethnographic fieldwork, textual or media corpora, databases, or other forms of structured data, allowing for critical debate and scholarly validation.

To this end, we propose several thematic areas for consideration. These are not exhaustive and are intended as a guiding framework to assist in the drafting of paper proposals.

1. As stated above, we are interested in the **epistemologies and methodologies employed in conducting field research on the ESC**:
  - Between the “aca-fan” stance (Jenkins, 2006: 4) and the claim to axiological neutrality, how can researchers study the ESC while maintaining reflexivity, critical distance, and scientific rigor?
  - What approaches are commonly favored to define the ESC as a research subject, and what are the underlying reasons for these preferences?
  - In what ways do the social, political, and historical contexts of research shape the situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988) of scholars studying the ESC?
  - From the Super Bowl halftime show to the Olympic Games (Gilbert & Lo, 2007; Baker, 2016; Baker, Atkinson, Grabher & Howcroft, 2025), television competitions (Leveneur-Martel, 2021) and music festivals (Delanty, Giorgi & Sassatelli (eds.), 2011; Djakouane & Négrier, 2021), what comparisons and dialogues can be drawn between the ESC and other cultural phenomena and concrete research topics?
  - How can alternative research methods and protocols, including action research and research-creation, open new ways for investigating the ESC?
  - Finally, how do methodological and scientific experiments, for example related to digital research methods in the humanities and social sciences and digital humanities, renew scientific questions and research protocols concerning the ESC?
2. The role of **the ESC as a mirror reflecting socio-cultural and political issues, tensions, and debates**—an aspect that has drawn increasing scholarly attention in recent years—also deserves to be critically examined.
  - To what extent does the ESC function as a catalyst, a revealer, or a mirror of past and contemporary social, political, and cultural issues?

- How can we move beyond the conventional dichotomy of apoliticism vs. politicization often applied to analyze the ESC, and instead develop a more nuanced understanding of the actors, dynamics, and forms of politicization and depoliticization involved in the contest?
- Why—and through what mechanisms—is the ESC frequently connoted, or even disqualified, as an outdated, kitschy, or culturally illegitimate form? How can we (re)qualify the cultural hierarchies and tastes that shape perceptions of the ESC?
- Why does the ESC crystallize a wide array of debates, social discourses, values, and ideologies? In what ways are these performed and staged in the public sphere through interpretive conflicts, controversies, and scandals?

3. We also place great importance on the **various social actors involved in the ESC**. Our aim is to better understand the relational, interactional, and even 'cooperative-competitive' (Legavre, 2011) dynamics that structure the interactions among actors within the 'Eurovision world'.

This line of research invites submissions that explore—whether through monographic case studies or comparative analyses—the understanding of one or more types of social actors gravitating around the ESC, such as:

- The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) ;
- Public service media members of the EBU and broadcasters of the contest ;
- Artists and their “cooperation chains” (Becker, 1988): record labels, managers, musicians, dancers, producers, technicians, etc. ;
- Private or public media providing coverage of the competition (Wolther, 2006; Pajala, 2011): journalists, commentators, content creators, influencers, fan media, etc. ;
- The audiences (Ballarini & Ségur (eds.), 2017), non-audiences, and fans of the ESC, in all their diversity of practices and imaginations related to the competition ;
- Politicians, and how they have approached the ESC over the years ;
- ESC sponsors and partner brands.

4. **The forms and formats of the ESC** could also serve as a focal point for discussion at the conference, particularly in relation to the following aspects:

- A study of performances (songs, lyrics, staging, etc.);
- The (multi-)media dimension of the contest: the ESC is a concert stage, a television show, and an unprecedented catalyst for a variety of formats (videos, photos, memes, rankings, predictions, polls, etc.) on the web and on digital social networks;
- The ESC as an incubator for technical and technological innovations;
- The dramaturgy of the contest, with a continuous evolution of its rules and staging (voting rules, announcement of points, etc.);

- The spectacularization of the ESC's staging: evident both in the increasing professionalization of its shows and artistic performances, as well as in the substantial annual budget allocated to the event's organization, production, multiple rehearsals, promotion, and broadcasting.
5. We also believe that the **links between the ESC and the territories** provide a valuable gateway for dialogue on the following approaches and themes:
- The value of various scientific approaches, such as geopolitics (Yair, 1995; Yair & Maman, 1996) or socio-history, in understanding: the social and symbolic construction of territories, borders, and cultural identities through the lens of the ESC; the construction of territorial images and imaginaries through diverse discursive strategies (such as narratives of national and cultural identities, and the production and circulation of stereotypes) and semiotic strategies (such as video “postcards” presenting artists, host countries and candidates, costumes, flags, national symbols, etc.);
  - The role of the ESC in territorial development strategies: particular attention may be given to the economic, territorial, and tourism ecosystem of the ESC in relation to the host country and city. This includes examining its most contested dimensions (Shepherd, 2021), such as public administrations (tourist offices, information centers) and local authorities (city, region, etc.) as well as tourists.
  - The dialectical tensions between territorialization and deterritorialization (do Carmo Cruz, 2019), as well as between globalization and glocalization (Robertson, 1994) of the ESC.

In all cases, fieldwork, corpus-based studies, and reflexive approaches to the ESC's epistemological and methodological frameworks will be central to our discussions.

Aligned with the founding of the *Eurovision Research Network* (“Europe and the ‘New’ Europe Research Network,” 2009 in Fricker, Gluhovic, 2013: 3; 6), this conference aims to serve as a catalyst for the formation of an international scholarly network exploring the ESC through interdisciplinary and cross-thematic perspectives.

In a second phase, a collection of double-blind peer-reviewed articles in English is planned for publication in a specialized academic volume.

## Calendar

- Publication of the call for papers: September 1, 2025
- Paper proposal submission deadline: October 15, 2025
- Notification of paper acceptance: December 10, 2025

## Submission guidelines

Proposals should be sent by **October 15, 2025** to the following email address :

[escconference.paris@gmail.com](mailto:escconference.paris@gmail.com)

Please submit paper proposals **in French or English** as follows :

- 1) A file (in .pdf format) containing: the title of the paper, a short bio-bibliographical note (maximum 500 characters, including surname, first name, and institutional affiliation), an email address, and up to 5 keywords;
- 2) An anonymous file (in .pdf format) containing: the title of the paper, the paper proposal of no more than 3,000 characters including spaces, excluding bibliographical references.

As a reminder, paper proposals are expected to include:

- a) A concise overview of the research context;
- b) A clear and well-structured presentation of the research question, along with the key concepts, paradigms, and methodologies used to engage with the themes of the conference;
- c) A presentation of fieldwork-based analysis (e.g., ethnographic studies, corpora, textual analysis, databases, etc.). If the research is still in progress, please provide initial hypotheses and a description of the research protocol.

All information related to this call for papers and the international conference is also available on <https://encore-network.org>.

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