

50 YEARS OF EUROVISION

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50 YEARS ON

Eurovision network celebrates its jubilee.

Fifty years have passed since a handful of Members decided to launch themselves into an adventure – with foresight, daring and determination.

At that time you needed a great deal of optimism to invest in the future of television, which was still at the dawn of its development and trying to escape from national boundaries in the symbolic “season of exchanges 1954” which for the first time offered the scarce viewers of the time live pictures from other countries and on a truly European scale.

This very risky undertaking was even more successful than those who believed in it had ever hoped, a group that was undoubtedly much smaller than the number of sceptics.

Nowadays everything that happens in other countries has become accessible. Nobody is surprised at being able to watch pictures from the other side of the world and discover space or distant planets. In other words, to take an active part in life in the universe around us.

The whole world, in all its – often darkest – diversity, is now on show every day in homes everywhere.

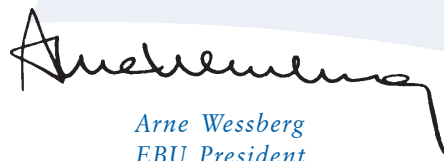
Fragile links providing somewhat fuzzy and shaky pictures in the early days of Eurovision have now become high-quality pictures broadcast over

a dense, stable network that has constantly improved thanks to technical progress and has spread to all continents.

Programme exchanges are multiplying and diversifying. Year by year EBU Members have continued to join the network, with total respect for the freedom of individual organizations and the differences that go to make up the richness of the group.

Ingenuity and creativity have been able to overcome the technical and legal hurdles. The challenge taken up in 1954 has been met. And this collective effort is still relevant today. The Eurovision network is destined to continue spreading.

Solutions have always been found to the most difficult problems. Fifty years on Eurovision, in the face of a fast-growing technology, must now accept a new challenge for the future to keep improving the services it provides for Members around the world.

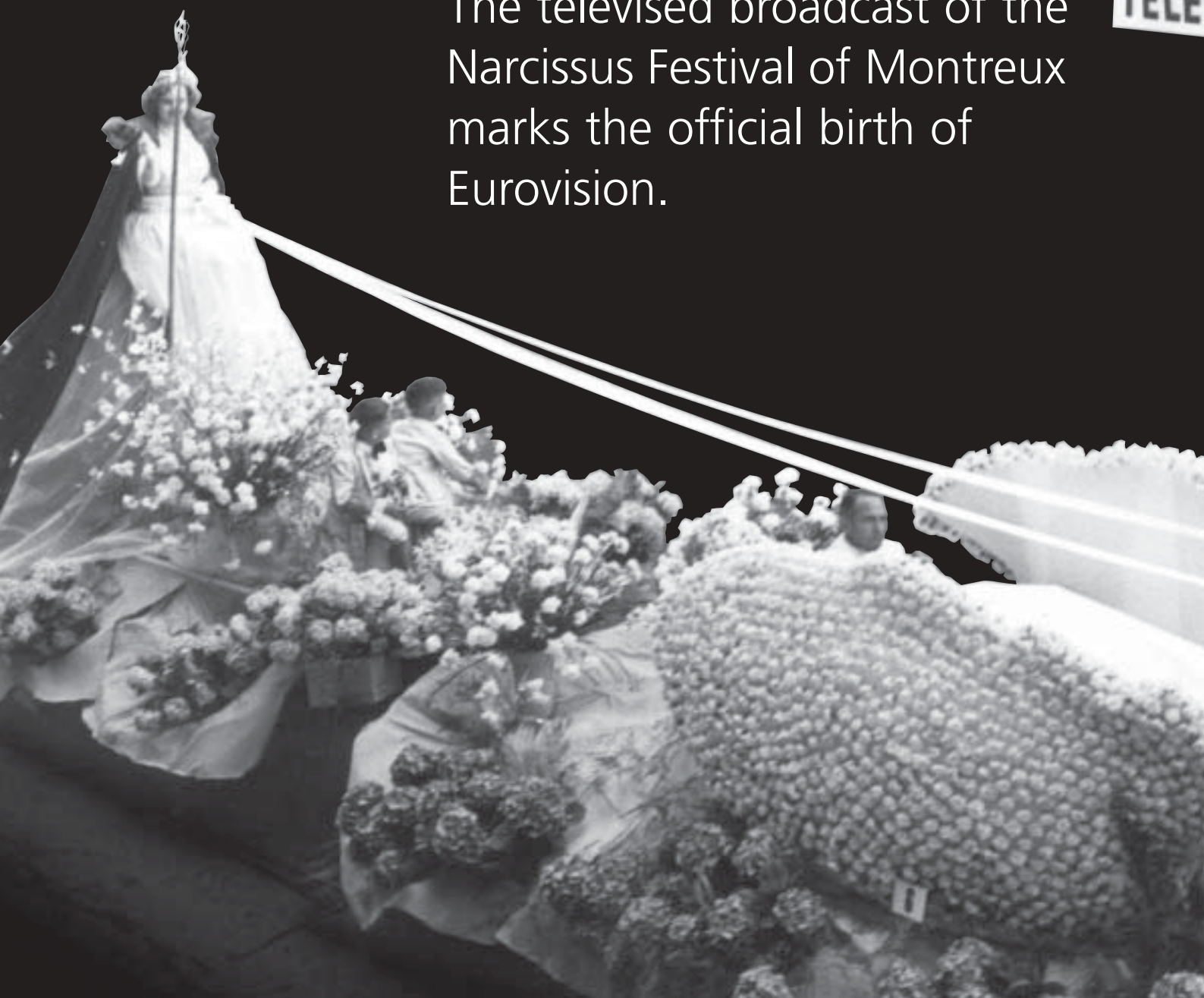


Arne Wessberg
EBU President

06/06/

The televised broadcast of the Narcissus Festival of Montreux marks the official birth of Eurovision.

TÉLÉ



1954!



On 6 June 1954 Montreux, nestling between vineyards and Lake Geneva, was the setting for the first Eurovision transmission: an outside broadcast of the Narcissus Festival and a parade of 25 floats covered with flowers, yodellers, singers and a dozen brass bands. This was followed by a 90-minute guided tour of the Vatican, which finished with a homily, in Latin, by Pope Pius XII, on the promises and the dangers of television, before he blessed the audience, *urbi et orbi*, in five languages.

In the next few days there was the Palio in Sienna, a party for refugee children in the Netherlands, an athletics meeting in Glasgow, a youth camp on the Rhine with the participation of Chancellor Adenauer, an agricultural fair in Denmark, a procession in the Grand'Place in Brussels, the Royal Navy parading past Queen Elizabeth, and a horse show in London.

Altogether 18 programmes were broadcast during this first 'European Television Season' of European programme exchanges, at the heart of which were the nine programmes exchanged for the World Football Cup. Watching these, people were glued to the 'box' in homes and pubs and in front of shop windows.



'Lille Experiment'

Throughout these live broadcasts, engineers who had set up shop in the Lille town-hall belfry strove feverishly to prevent or repair network breakdowns.

This control position gave its name to the operation: the 'Lille Experiment'. For everyone else it was Eurovision, a word invented by an English journalist, George Campey, who, in an article published in the London *Evening Standard* on 5 November 1951, had written concerning a BBC programme relayed by Dutch television: "Eurovision is a system of cooperation for the exchange of television programmes between the countries of Western Europe, including Britain".

The impact of the Season was due not only to the programmes, some of which were not particularly striking, but rather to the intention to repeat the experiment. After all, the network that had been set up for the Season was of a more permanent

nature than the circuits patched together for the coronation of Elizabeth II.

However, it was the coronation ceremony that released television from the straitjacket of different standards. It was then it became European, with thousands of French, Belgian, Dutch, German and, of course, British viewers witnessing – for the first time in history in such great numbers – the crowning of a sovereign.

After the first Season of exchanges in 1954, nothing could stop the tidal wave of Eurovision. Europe wanted to turn its back on the war, people were starting to travel again, to cross borders, to trade. International exchanges were the order of the day, and television reflected this new atmosphere.

The heads of Eurovision had set two key engines in motion: the main lines of international exchanges and the pooling of technical facilities. At the same time an ident was adopted: a star-burst emblem accompanied by

the opening ritornello from Marc-Antoine Charpentier's *Te Deum*.

Pivotal date

To try and establish when the idea of Eurovision first germinated, we can go back to 8 September 1953. On that day in Lime Grove, in a meeting room of the London television centre, for the first time delegates from Europe's television nations got together and decided to organize the European Television Season in the summer of 1954.

It was then planned that each country should supply a programme to be relayed live in all the other participating countries.

At the meeting of the Administrative Council held in Monte Carlo in November, Marcel Bezençon (SSR), who was behind the idea of a programme exchange, explained why a "television committee" should be set up. As the delegates were not convinced of the usefulness of such a committee, the discussion dragged on and on. In the end, the Council



Narcissus Festival, Montreux



proposed the setting up of a programme committee, which would be accepted by the General Assembly providing that the new committee concentrated mainly on television.

While planning for the Eurovision Summer Season in June continued, Marcel Bezençon – together with the help of René McCall of the BBC and Wladimir Porché of RTF – now started to prepare the Programme Committee for action.

In February 1954, at the first meeting of the Programme Committee, it was decided that the Committee's Bureau should be run by the eight representatives of the organizations in the television countries (RTB/BRT/Belgium, DR/Denmark, RTF/France, ARD/Germany, RAI/Italy, NTS/Netherlands, SSR/Switzerland, and BBC/United Kingdom). Two working parties were established, one for the broadcasting of films on television (GTV/1) under Sergio Pugliese (RAI), and the other for live broadcasts (GTV/2), chaired by Jean d'Arcy. A planning group, chaired

by Edouard Haas (SSR), had been added to GTV/2.

Problems

The first stumbling block the Programme Committee came up against was a concept for planning the programmes. At a television forum in Sandpoort (Netherlands) comprising television journalists from eight European countries, only a few topics likely to be of international interest were found; the British journalists merely suggested "Another Coronation".

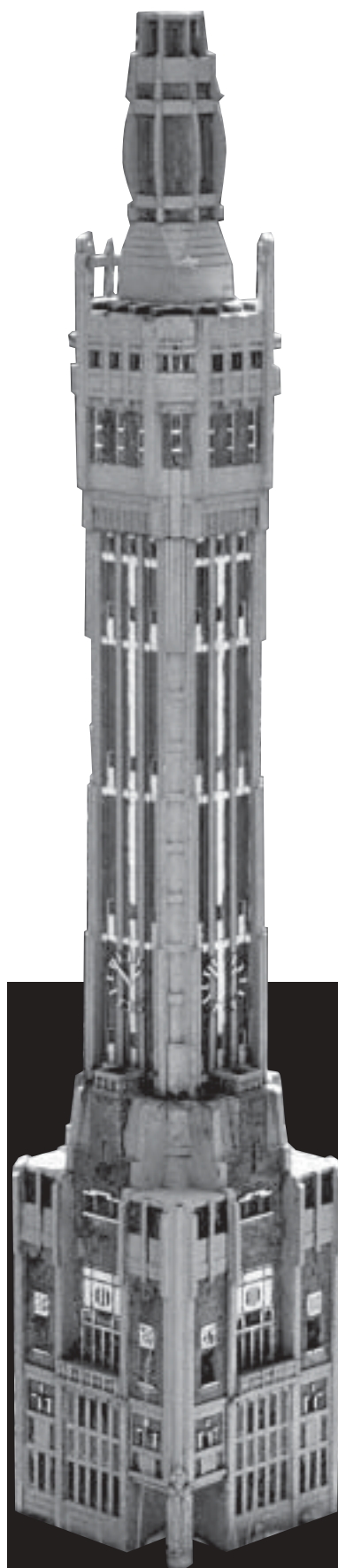
The clearing of films and technical equipment through customs posts proved to be a source of problems, not to mention the performers. For instance, the BBC was planning to contribute its famous variety show *Café Continental*, presented by unionized performers who, because of the expected increase in the audience figures (close on 3.5 million viewers), demanded an increase of 50% in their fee. A compromise was found: the matter would be settled by the EBU Administrative Council. On the other hand, there was no agreement in Denmark with the Tivoli artistes. The programme *Rendezvous in Copenhagen* was cancelled and replaced by a prize cattle show, eliciting this comment from *Der Spiegel*: "Thank God cows don't belong to unions."

Despite everything, the EBU was determined to make a success of the Eurovision season.

The most reliable way of ensuring this was the planned coverage of the World Football Cup in Bern, for which Marcel Bezençon had negotiated the television rights with the chairman of the Swiss Football Association, Mr Thomma. "How much are you offering?" asked the latter. "Nothing," said Bezençon. "Are you joking?" Marcel Bezençon was not joking, but nonetheless he offered to make up any shortfall in



A. Vogelsang, Mayor of Chatelard (Montreux)



Lille's town-hall belfry

gate money to a maximum of CHF10,000.

Leaflets announcing the broadcasts and advertising television in general had been published in the various participating countries. In Germany, the price of television sets was falling significantly. Obviously the television industry also thought the time had come for a breakthrough. People who had not thought of it before were considering buying their own set.

The rest we know.

The saga

To ensure the success of the Season, Marcel Bezençon fought two battles at the same time: persuade the EBU to turn his idea of programme exchanges into a Programme Committee and to expand on the

Eurovision operation that had taken place in June 1954.

The prospect of television being able to serve the cause of international understanding and the opening up of frontiers was tempting. It seemed less important that as early as 1954, and in contrast to what was true in the old IBU (International Broadcasting Union) and OIR (Organisation Internationale de Radiodiffusion) times – the word Europe was now being used to mean western Europe.

The Study Group Television now felt confident enough to get the Administrative Council and the General Assembly to accept a Television Committee at last, the name of which seemed to preclude the issue of radio programme exchanges. On the one hand, the Legal Committee of the EBU

considered it very important to emphasize the unity of television and radio, and thus ultimately of the EBU itself. On the other, the name Television Committee created the impression that the new committee was responsible for all television matters, which the technical and legal people saw as a limitation of their competence.

At the Administrative Council meeting in Monte Carlo in November, Marcel Bezençon explained the reasons why the Study Group had unanimously proposed setting up a 'Television Committee', pointing out that, as there were certain matters on which the Study Group could not touch if it were to remain within the limits of its mandate, he would like, on a strictly personal basis, to propose to the Administrative Council not to give consideration to the proposals



made by the Study Group without agreeing to extend the competency of the proposed Committee so as to cover all questions of programmes and programme exchanges, both in respect of sound broadcasting and visual broadcasting, and thus to make the proposed new organ a veritable 'Programme Committee'. The reasons for this amendment were to be found, on the one hand, in the importance of affirming, *vis-à-vis* third parties, the indissolubility of the problems of sound broadcasting and television, and, on the other hand, to make it clear that the scope of the new Committee was limited to 'programme' aspects of the questions under study.

The events that produced the Programme Committee and Eurovision might never have happened if the careful and thorough Sir Ian,

who did not think much of new committees and hasty decisions, had not been away just long enough (he returned to the Ministry of Defence for two years) for Marcel Bezençon to get his plans for programme exchanges and the Programme Committee accepted.

Now that the Committee had an official status, it met more often and launched exchange projects that had been previously been planned, criticized, rejected and accepted.

Reinforcements

After the Eurovision Summer Season, Austria, Luxembourg, and Monaco became the next organizations to extend Eurovision territory.

In Austria, the start of television had been delayed because Allied per-

mission was needed for broadcasting. In the autumn of 1953 the relevant bans were lifted and a regular television service started in January 1957. Since 1955, Austria had already served as a second Eurovision bridge across the Alps to Italy, and later also to Yugoslavia.

With Luxembourg and Monaco, which both adopted the French 819-line standard, two comparatively small private television companies joined the ranks of Eurovision in 1955: CLT (Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Télédiffusion), a subsidiary of Radio Luxembourg, and Radio Monte-Carlo (RMC). Both had a large part of their audience in France. In the Scandinavian countries, regular television services started from 1956, at first mainly in the more densely populated southern regions around the capitals. Very soon, however, the number of television licences shot up and reached the level of the 'big' television countries by 1960, at least as a proportion of their populations. Around this time, the Scandinavian countries, including Denmark and later Iceland, started to organize a small television union of their own called 'Nordvision'. Its symbol was the Northern Lights.

Finland was doubly important within the Eurovision network as a bridge to the OIRT countries in general and to the Soviet Union in particular. First of all, Finnish stations were able to receive the Baltic programmes of the Soviet Union, which made it possible to exchange programmes with the Soviet Union. The first programme to be transmitted in this way was the ceremony in honour of Yuri Gagarin after his space flight. Secondly, Finland was then the only country to belong to both the EBU and the OIRT (International Radio and Television Organization). For this reason, Finland was able to offer valuable assistance during the first attempts, in around 1958, at reaching an understanding between the two unions.



I remember several things:

The first is that Swiss television had been in the experimental stage for just a year: in Zurich it had a transmitter for each region and Geneva had a local television station, a sort of precursor for the present Télévision Suisse Romande. So we arrived from Zurich to film the Narcissus Festival with every bit of equipment because in Montreux there were no television facilities.

We had an English OB van (YPE) with three black-and-white cameras and commentator equipment provided by Radio Suisse Romande as we didn't have our own.

My second memory is that the people in Montreux were not at all familiar with installing an OB van, cameras, and commentator positions. So we had to improvise.

Two cameras were set up along the parade route, on the site of the main

stands. When we started installing them we were told, "No, not there. Those places are reserved for the municipal councillors, you can see best from there." So I immediately replied, "Well, if you can see best from here, this is where we'll shoot from." Of course, everything worked out in the end. The third camera was set up on the lakeside to film the landscape, the lake, and the Dents du Midi mountain range, weather permitting.

When it came to the OB van, it was the length of the cables we were given that decided where we would park it! We ended up next to the

covered market hall. No luck, that was where the ambulance was supposed to park! It had to go and find itself another convenient spot!

We were arriving on totally new ground but we received a great deal of help from the manager of the local Tourist Office, Raymond Jaussi, who knew a lot about the needs of television on account of his countless trips to the USA.

Patrick Jaquin: *After the pictures had been taken and relayed to the OB van, then where did they go, and how?*

They were transmitted via the Rochers-de-Naye, where there was a mobile relay station, and from



Mem

*An interview with Frank Tappolet,
Producer of the Narcissus Festival documentary*

there they went to Chasseral and then north in the direction of the Black Forest, and south in the direction of Monte Generoso, and from there to Italy.

PJ: Do you remember what the weather was like that day?

On Saturday 5 it was very overcast, not very encouraging and the parade organizers warned us that if it was the same weather the next day it was likely that no-one would be in the stands and so there wouldn't be any parade! It was Raymond Jaussi who saved the day by declaring, "We'll be parading even if there's no-one there, because there has to be a parade for the television!"

By a stroke of luck the weather cleared up and we even had some sunshine and our pictures were fine.

PJ: What was your main worry?

We weren't the only ones to have worries. They also had them in England because it was the first time that the BBC was to broadcast a programme it didn't have complete control over. As we were an experimental service the BBC decided to have me chaperoned by an experienced BBC producer. I have

to admit he was the epitome of English distinction, and he was gracious enough to leave us in peace.

My concern was the commentators. It was the first time that eight commentators were to work on the same pictures at once. I had to explain to them that it wasn't worth their while calling me to say, "Could you just point that camera a bit further left, etc.". I told them I wouldn't be paying attention to any of them, and that rather surprised them but they did as they were told.

PJ: And technically, no hitches?

No, nothing.

PJ: Were you feeling confident?

Well, of course we were confident! It was the early days of television. We had no idea of the risk of things going wrong.

But there was one thing. I wanted to start the programme with a shot of

Château de Chillon just along the lake. But the camera we'd placed on the lakeside couldn't see it. I came up with the idea to send a camera out on a boat 100 metres from the shore to film. At the dress rehearsal the boat's engine caught fire!

So we just took a straightforward still photo of the Château de Chillon that a camera assistant moved about just as if we were filming from a boat. You see, we were already cheating in those days...!

PJ: And 50 years on, what do you think of the institution television has become?

Obviously we were privileged because we didn't have any money, we needed to invent everything and make do with very few facilities. There were no opinion polls, no advertising. I really think that I experienced what we could call television's golden age. So you can guess from that what I think of television nowadays.



Pope

A first: Pope Pius XII in five languages and via Eurovision

“Non è forse una fausta coincidenza che in questo giorno, in cui la Chiesa solennemente commemora la discesa dello Spirito Santo nel Cenacolo e la prima predicazione dell’Apostolo Pietro alle moltitudini avidi di verità e di pace, Ci sia dato d’indirizzarCi personalmente a voi, spettatori europei della Televisione, e di dichiararvi quanto grande è la Nostra gioia nel venirvi in qualche modo incontro fin nella intimità dei vostri focolari?

“Ecco che giungono oggi a felice esito i diuturni sforzi, le ardue ricerche, gli esperimenti innumerevoli compiuti così da singoli scienziati, come da gruppi di studiosi e da nazioni, per stabilire tra i popoli europei, e forse fra qualche tempo con altri continenti, un nuovo mezzo di scambi intellettuali e artistici. Senza dubbio era già possibile mediante la radio di portare fin nelle vostre dimore parole d’insegnamento, d’incoraggiamento o di conforto. Ma chi non è bramoso di contatto immediato?

“Per quanto fervido ed efficace un discorso possa apparire, esso diviene anche più vivo e commovente, quando la prossimità dell’oratore permette di cogliere sul suo volto le più lievi sfumature dei più soavi sentimenti e d’imprimere nella memoria i lineamenti di lui.

“Perciò siamo lieti di salutare l’alta intrapresa della *Union européenne de radiodiffusion*, grazie alla quale, con la collaborazione degli organismi responsabili della Televisione e il tenace lavoro dei tecnici incaricati del buon andamento delle stazioni emittenti e riceventi, è potuta sorgere questa rete europea di trasmissione delle immagini. Le esperienze effettuate con favorevole successo gli anni scorsi attraverso la Manica hanno reso possibile l’elaborazione del programma, che ha oggi inizio, ed è ‘il primo che la Televisione italiana invia alle nove Televisioni europee nel quadro dei primi scambi internazionali di Televisione’.

“Le fonctionnement d’un réseau européen de télévision répond d’ailleurs à la fois au désir des techniciens et à celui des spectateurs. Comme toute invention récente, la télévision est avide de prospecter ses propres possibilités. Elle a découvert que son point d’application préféré était de saisir les manifestations les

Pius XII

plus intéressantes de la vie humaine au moment même où elles se produisent. Qu'il s'agisse d'activités scientifiques, artistiques ou sportives, des aspects innombrables de la technique moderne ou des réalisations sociales, chacun aspire à l'heure actuelle non seulement à en être informé dans le plus bref délai, mais à s'y associer immédiatement, à en être témoin, si possible.

“De plus, la difficulté de réaliser un programme de haute qualité invitait à une collaboration qui divisât les charges, tout en élargissant le champ d'investigation directe, il importe de remarquer en effet que, si la caméra de télévision capte le réel de façon synthétique, elle le soumet cependant à une analyse plus minutieuse que l'objectif cinématographique ; à cause des dimensions réduites de l'écran récepteur, elle préférera les images en gros plans, aux personnages peu nombreux, dont elle saisit les expressions les plus fugitives. Aucune hésitation des interprètes ne lui échappe, et l'attention concentrée du spectateur, que n'influence pas l'ambiance d'une assistance compacte, ne pardonne ni les faiblesses éventuelles du sujet ni les négligences de présentation.

“La télévision peut donc jeter partout un regard curieux et s'introduire au





cœur des événements. Elle est par là un instrument privilégié d'exploration humaine, un moyen efficace de mettre les hommes en contact les uns avec les autres, de leur révéler plus vite, plus sûrement et avec une puissance insoupçonnée de pénétration, les formes innombrables de la vie contemporaine,

“Kaum hat sich indes die weittragende Bedeutung dieses Werkzeugs zur Verbreitung von Kenntnissen und Wissen gezeigt, als sich schon gleich ein heikles Problem zu Wort meldet: Wie steht es um den sittlichen Wert der zum Teil neuen Welt, die das Fernsehen noch viel umfassender und anziehender eröffnet als der Rundfunk und der Film? Ist es nicht möglich, dass sich neben Bestem auch anderes findet; das ein sittsames Empfinden verletzt? Ist es deshalb nicht doch wohl die erste und selbstverständliche Pflicht der Fernseh-Unternehmen wie der Zuschauer, eine umsichtige und passende Auswahl zu treffen? Der Gesellschaftskörper von heute weist bereits zu viele offene Wunden auf, die ihm die zersetzende Tätigkeit einer bestimmten Art von Presse, Film und Rundfunk geschlagen haben. Wird vielleicht das neue noch wirksamere Mittel das Übel nur verschlimmern, oder wird man von Beginn an sich bereit finden, etwas wirklich Aufbauendes und echt Gesundes zu schaffen?

“Die Sorge um den nötigen Absatz verleitet die Unternehmen oft zur Verbreitung von Unterhaltungsstoff



und Stücken, die auf die minder edlen menschlichen Instinkte abgestimmt sind und ihnen schmeicheln. Es genügt nicht, die Folgen eines solchen Übels, besonders die diesseitstrunkene selbstische Vergnügungs sucht mit dem verschlossenen harten Herzen gegenüber der Not und den Wünschen der Mitmenschen zu beklagen. Man muss in geeigneter Weise vorbeugen. Will die Television ihre glänzenden Versprechen halten, so möge sie sich hüten, sich der billigen Künste zu bedienen, die nicht weniger dem guten Geschmack als dem sittlichen Empfinden so sehr widersprechen ; sie möge davon Abstand nehmen, sich auf die unnatürlichen Erzeugnisse eines kranken Zeitgeistes einzulassen; es sei ihr vielmehr darum zu tun, die wahre Schönheit zur Anerkennung zu bringen und alles, was die Menschheitskultur und besonders die christliche Religion an Gesundem und Hohem und Bestem hervorgebracht hat und hervorbringt.

“Perhaps one might here call special attention at the desire of a television audience to see reflected on the screen some of its own deepest aspirations, its ideal of human brotherhood, of justice and of peace, its love of family and country, and also the fact that it is a part of a society whose purpose transcends the limits of this material world or belongs to a religious group. We are thinking in particular of those of you, whom sickness or infirmity confine to your homes, and who would like to find the consolation and comfort

they need more than others by being present in spirit at religious ceremonies and uniting their prayer to that of the Church. From now on television, better than radio, will bring them into the sanctuary. This will not of course take the place of being present actually, and in person at religious rites; but at least it will help to create the atmosphere of reverence and recollection that surrounds liturgical functions, and bring the audience to share the fervent prayer of faith and adoration that rises heavenwards from a gathering of the faithful. May this first international programme, that brings together eight countries of Western Europe, be at once a symbol and a promise! Symbol it is of union between the nations, and in one respect, to a degree, it initiates that union. For must not knowledge go before appreciation and esteem? Let the European nations then learn to know each other better; let them be happy and proud to display the national beauties of their countries and its cultural riches; let them open to others the deeper feelings of their spirit and their sincere desire for understanding and cooperation. How many prejudices, how many barriers will thus fall! Lack of mutual confidence, selfishness will lessen, and above all a renewed ambition will be stirred to contribute something to the world community for the common good. Such is Our hope.

“On this day of Pentecost may the divine Spirit, sent to enlighten the minds of men on this earth and to

in flame their hearts with love of the Supreme Good, find in this product of human toil an instrument to extend the reign of mutual understanding and concord among all peoples. With an earnest prayer for this gift precious beyond others, and from a heart filled with love for all We impart the Apostolic Blessing.

“Tot slot groeten Wij alle Nederlands-sprekende toeschouwers alsmede het gehele Nederlandse volk, wiens welzijn Ons na aan het hart ligt en wiens lotgevallen Wij met warme belangstelling volgen.

“Beminde Zonen en Dochters, Wij smeken van harte Gods overvloedige Zegen over U af.”



Eurov



Marcel Bezençon

vision's

founding fathers

In the early 1950s television was a wholly new medium with an uncertain future whose costs were hard to estimate. Few countries broadcast noteworthy television programmes and no uniform standard had been able to impose itself on transmitters and receivers. Television was far from being a cast-iron investment. What seems so obvious today had not even been tried. Television was merely an affair for visionaries: an idea, a field of technical experimentation: not a medium, still less a mass medium.

The idea of Eurovision programme exchanges and, finally, of the whole west European television system did not stem from one individual but from a small group of pioneers wielding influence in key positions. They included the director of Swiss Radio Marcel Bezençon, the French programme-maker Jean d'Arcy, one of the very first to be involved in Franco-British exchanges, along with his colleagues Wladimir Porché and Stéphane Mallein or the Britons Cecil McGivern, Martin Pulling, Tony Bridgewater, Imlay Newbiggin-Watts and Peter Dimmock. They could rely for support and assistance on the experience of radio pioneers such as Théo Fleischmann (first Study Group Chair and interim President), without whom the

creation of the Programme Committee might have been postponed until much later.

Innovative flair

Though not always by common consent, and rarely unanimous, the Group became active in clearing away the first, hitherto insuperable legal and diplomatic obstacles. The advocates of programme exchanges needed the help of administrators endowed with great innovative flair, including Léo Wallenborn, and jurists with a feel for conventions and their necessary interpretation, such as Georges Straschnov of the Administrative Office, or Philip de Vries, Maurice Lenoble and Hans Brack of the Legal Committee.

Dozens of engineers from the broadcasting organizations involved, whose names figure in no official report, devoted themselves selflessly, enthusiastically, to adapting standards converters, radio links and wave amplifiers until the long awaited picture finally flickered up on the screen.

Jean d'Arcy

Father of operational Eurovision, first Director of Programmes, he ardently supported Marcel Bezençon's idea of creating a television 'programme exchange'. He was chairman of the Ad Hoc Programme Committee set up at the Paris meeting in January 1954 to finalize arrangements for the Summer Season. He was head of network at the programme coordination centre established for the Summer Season in Lille (France).

Marcel Bezençon

Founding father of TV programme exchanges, he launched the exchange in September 1953 and chaired the London meeting where the Summer Season was elaborated. He was then Chair of the first EBU Programme Committee (Switzerland).

Henri Anglès d'Auriac

Director of the EBU Technical Centre from 1950 to 1956, he played a leading role in the technical development of Eurovision (France).

Tony H. Bridgewater

Chair of the EBU Ad Hoc Technical Committee set up at the Paris meeting in January 1954 (United Kingdom).

George Campey

London journalist, coined the term 'Eurovision'. He later joined the BBC (United Kingdom).

Roger Clausse

Member of 1953 TV Study Group, member of TV Programme Committee (Belgium).

Jack Treeby-Dickinson

Chief engineer at the EBU Technical Centre from 1950 to 1972, he was closely involved in developing the Eurovision network and in 1954 collaborated in the operation of the Lille Technical Coordination Centre (United Kingdom).

Paolo Grilli

Member of the Programme Committee Bureau. (Italy)

Édouard Haas

Member of 1953 Study Group and of working groups GTV1 (film exchanges) and GTV2 (live exchanges) (Switzerland).

Henrik Hahr

Sveriges Radio Director of Programmes and member of the Programme Committee Bureau, Director of the EBU Administrative Office (Sweden).



Jean d'Arcy

Jens Fr.
Lawaetz

Georges Hansen

Closely involved in the development of Eurovision as successor to Henri d'Anglès at the head of the EBU Technical Centre (Belgium).

Eric Griffiths

Senior engineer then chief engineer at the EBU Technical Centre. Made a widely acknowledged contribution to the development of the Eurovision network (United Kingdom).

Jens Fr. Lawaetz

Director of Television, member of 1953 Study Group and of the Programme Committee Bureau (Denmark).

Henk Maas

First Secretary of Eurovision (Netherlands).

Stéphane Mallein

Head of Lille Coordination Centre set up for the Summer Season (France).

Imlay Newbiggin-Watts

Co-responsible for network, with Jean d'Arcy, at the Lille Programme Coordination Centre for the Summer Season (United Kingdom).

Timothy O'Brien

Creator of the first Eurovision logo. A stage designer celebrated in a number of countries (United Kingdom).

Edward L.E. Pawley

Chair of the EBU Technical Committee when Eurovision came into being (United Kingdom).

Werner Pleister

Member of the Television Programme Committee Bureau (Germany).

M.J.L. Pulling

Chair of the London Technical Conference held in 1953 to establish a European permanent television network. Chair of the EBU Working Party 'L' – international TV relays (United Kingdom).

Jan Willem Rengelink

Father of the news exchange: EVN-1 regular exchanges started on 29 May 1961. Member of 1953 TV Study Group and Programme Committee Bureau. Responsible for launching Eurovision news exchange (Netherlands).

Michel Robida

Member of 1953 TV Study Group, involved in meetings of the Programme Committee Bureau. (France)

Georges Straschnov

Director of the EBU Legal Department, responsible for legal questions raised by the first Eurovision relays (France).

Léo Wallenborn

Director of EBU Administrative Office (1950–58) when Eurovision came into being, secretary of the TV Study Group (Belgium).

Édouard Haas



Henrik Hahr

Edward
L.E. PawleyGeorges
Straschnov

The pic

1,585 days of discussions plus a coronation, to see – a narcissus . . .

At Torquay on 13 February 1950, delegates of broadcasting organizations from 23 countries of the European Broadcasting Area as defined by the ITU (International Telecommunication Union) set up the European Broadcasting Union.

No one mentioned television (too exotic), still less the idea of Eurovision. The proceedings were confined to radio and drawing up the Union's statutes.

It was only at the second meeting of the EBU Administrative Council, at Rapallo in May 1950, that Marcel Bezençon tabled his plan for television programme exchanges. The meeting was less than enthusiastic.

The Calais experiment

Nevertheless, things were progressing and lawyers and administrators were taken unawares on 27 August 1950 by the 'Calais experiment', the first television linkup between France and the UK.

For this programme, *Calais en fête*, there was no means of inter-converting the line standards – 405 horizontal picture lines in Britain, 819 in France – and the BBC had sent a team and equipment to France to transmit the pictures live from Calais by radio link.

The picture, passably viewable in Britain but not at all in France, nevertheless proved it was possible to exchange television pictures cross-Channel via the airwaves, and, if compatibility problems were overcome, why not between several countries and even throughout Europe?

On 5 October 1950 Marcel Bezençon tabled a more detailed plan for the EBU to study at its next Council in Ouchy/Lausanne (Switzerland).

Sir Ian Jacob, EBU president, proposed that the supporters of the idea draw up a concrete proposal, approach the Administrative Office and, if the plan



oneers



was approved, refer it to the Administrative Council.

Circular

The Administrative Office Director Léo Wallenborn sent a circular to members in which he spoke of the “market for television programme exchanges”. He asked for views on the creation of a permanent committee. Appended to the circular was the Bezençon proposal. Only ten written replies reached him: they thought the idea good but listed the technical and legal problems it raised (copyright and performer demands).

The Legal Committee raised other objections, such as film rights, sports rights and the right of privacy. In the Committee’s view each of these questions had to be settled individually in and with each country before a programme exchange could be thought of.

In May 1951 Marcel Bezençon submitted his plan to the Administrative Council again, and the Council, meeting in Geneva, approved the creation of a study group, chaired by Théo Fleischmann and with a membership comprising BBC, RTF and RAI and a Scandinavian representative – Norway, Sweden and Finland having shown keen interest.

Berne Convention

In August of the same year the “Berne Convention for the protection of literary and artistic works” came into force, thereby establishing the important legal preliminary for international programme exchange plans. This was because the new version mentioned, for the first time, ‘recordings’ without distinguishing between picture and sound.

Eurovision

The term ‘Eurovision’ first appeared on 5 November 1951 from the pen of George Campey, a British journalist, in an *Evening Standard* article on the future of television in Europe. Pronounceable in all European languages, the word Eurovision took root and offered the idea of a Europe united by a common vision.

So the concept of a programme exchange was baptized even before its creation was decided!

In January 1951 the British and French engineers and programme heads again took the first steps. Wladimir Porché, of Radio-Télévision Française, wrote to Sir Ian Jacob that BBC and RTF had studied the possibility of a bilateral

programme exchange and proposed that the EBU address all the attendant problems, in particular copyright, legal aspects and technical questions. In fact BBC and RTF told the EBU – politely – that France and Great Britain were at any time prepared to go it alone with the programme exchange.

The EBU decision-making process then started to speed up and the question of programme exchanges was high on the agenda for the May 1952 Administrative Council.

Tribute was paid to the Franco-British initiative. On 21 April 1952 the first Paris–London programme linkup was a success. Thanks to an efficient standards converter the picture was viewable on both sides of the Channel. During the summer the British and French were to broadcast joint programmes for an entire week.

In October 1952 the Administrative Council congratulated the Programme Exchange Study Group on its work and urged it to keep up the good work. The exchange of programmes between Britain and France was now a practical reality.

Shortly afterwards the EBU General Assembly, with its new president Sir

Ian Jacob, entrusted the overall direction of the Study Group to Marcel Bezençon.

The six

In 1952, only six broadcasting organizations in Western Europe had the capacity to make their own television programmes.

Britain and France had restarted work in television right after the end of the war and had therefore been able to establish a considerable lead. Germany and Italy soon joined them as television broadcasters. These countries were also able to build on their pre-war experience and, together with Britain and France, soon achieved the highest levels of television activity, at least in absolute figures. It was not long before these television nations came to be called the ‘Big Four’. Television also got off to an early start in Denmark and the Netherlands. Even if the absolute figures were bound to be lower in these countries than in those with larger populations, the pioneering achievements in television were at least as impressive. In relative figures, television density in these small countries often increased faster than in the big ones.

Britain was particularly important for the development of the European

television system. The BBC had resumed broadcasting in June 1946, maintaining the 405-line standard in use before the war. As early as 1952 a government White Paper permitted the establishment of a rival private commercial broadcasting company. The 1954 Television Act enshrined the concept of a regionalized, commercially funded broadcasting company. In September 1955 the ITA (Independent Television Authority) started broadcasting.

In the areas covered by both companies, the BBC lost up to 70% of its viewers and thus became the first European public television supplier to encounter the problem of private competition. Furthermore, the name ‘Independent Television’ created the false impression that the BBC was a government institution, although both companies had the same legal status.

Technologically, British television was the undisputed leader in Europe during the 1950s. New technologies such as videotape recording and colour television were invariably tested first by the BBC. The rest of Europe usually followed the assessment of the British experts. By giving the EBU generous technical support and providing a number of highly qualified specialists, the BBC

and ITV influenced the style of European television for a long time.

The first television programmes in France went out in 1945, at first in 441-line format, using the installations left behind by the German occupiers. After the 'Décret Mitterrand', the 819-line standard was introduced in 1948. Officially, this was to protect the French economy from European competition. In the event, the outcome was rather to protect the European competitors from France. The 819-line standard required very powerful transmitters which were expensive but still had only a relatively limited range. Whereas in France only 15% of the country and 30% of the population were able, technically, to receive television in 1958, in Britain the figure was almost 100%. Only in 1964 did it become possible for nearly the whole of the French population to receive television broadcasts.

West Germany opted for different technical and organizational solutions. After the unconditional surrender of the German Reich on 8 May 1945, the victorious Allies imposed a general ban on all radio and television broadcasting in Germany. Radio broadcasts for information purposes were soon permitted again, but television broadcasting was allowed to resume only in 1948. The British occupation forces as well as NWDR (Nordwest-deutscher Rundfunk), which had

started work in the British zone straight after the war, agreed to the launch of a television station. Even before this, German television specialists had agreed on 625 lines as the future standard.

At the beginning transmissions were possible only every other day because of the lengthy and costly preparations that had to be made each time. At first the number of television sets and viewers was also very small, since mass production got under way only hesitantly and the sets available were very expensive. While the French system was centralized, in West Germany public service broadcasting organizations were established by the *Länder*. One by one, these started transmissions of television programmes. By July 1950 the public service organizations NWDR (North), SWF (South-West), RB (Bremen), HR (Hesse), BR (Bavaria), and SDR (South) had got together and formed the ARD (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten Deutschland). These organizations came to an agreement on television in 1953 when they signed a contract for a joint German television channel, DFS, which was transmitted for the first time in November 1954.

Fundamentally different again was the Dutch system, which was based on the right of all relevant and organized groups in Dutch society to express their views publicly. Thus the vertical structure of Dutch society

became the formative principle. The structure established along these lines by Dutch radio as early as the 1920s served as a model for television. For television in particular, a foundation was established (Nederlandse Televisie Stichting, NTS) to organize broadcasting schedules. Founder members of NTS were the four big radio organizations: AVRO (liberal), KRO (Catholic), NCRV (Protestant), and VARA (Socialist). Each station was allocated its share of broadcasting time according to the number of subscribers to its own association's radio magazine. In 1969, the two umbrella organizations, NTS and NRU (Nederlandse Radio Unie, the corresponding radio organization), merged to become NOS (Nederlands Omroepprogramma Stichting).

Thus in 1952, the countries in Europe that made television did so along very different lines of social organization and using three different and mutually incompatible line systems.

By 1951 the CCIR (Comité Consultatif International des Radiocommunications), a sub-organization of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU, a UN specialized agency), had formed a working group led by the Swiss professor M. Gerber on technical criteria for a common line standard. The so-called Gerber standard of 625

lines was accepted in these talks as the new norm, although not by Britain and France.

The Coronation

On 6 February 1952 King George VI died in London. While this was an occasion for mourning in Britain, the monarch's death was also a great opportunity for the BBC: in the following year – allowing enough time for preparations – his daughter, Princess Elizabeth, would be crowned Queen of England in a grand ceremony. This would be the occasion for a live outside broadcast on a really large scale. In early autumn 1952, the first contacts were made between the BBC and the Dutch, Belgian and French broadcasting organizations. Later correspondence suggests these contacts were probably made by phone. On 19 November Cyril Conner, head of liaison at the BBC's External Services, informed his Dutch colleague, NTS controller Jan Willem Rengelink, of the BBC's intention to make the Coronation available to television organizations on the continent. First, the BBC planned to make a standard celluloid film which could be taken over and put on air, albeit with some delay. The second proposal, however, was for a live broadcast: "... RTF are hoping to make arrangements for a television relay from London to Paris, using means similar to those we employed for the relays from Paris to London via Lille last July. From Dover onwards into France the technical arrangements will of course be the responsibility of RTF and I mention this because any possible relays desired in countries close to France will presumably require to be linked with the French Television Service circuit and not taken direct [sic.] from the BBC" ("Coronation" correspondence file, OM Hilversum).

When the London meeting actually took place on 3 December, with

Martin Pulling from the BBC in the chair, it was attended (apart from Polling's colleagues Tony Bridgewater and Imlay Newbiggin-Watts) by the French representatives d'Arcy and Mallein, Mol and de Vlaam from the Netherlands, and J.F. Lawaetz from Denmark.

Denmark had to rely on receiving the television signals via Germany and was therefore unable to give any concrete answers, but in principle everything was ready for a television relay from Britain via France, Belgium (which did not even have its own television yet), the Netherlands, West Germany and all the way up to Denmark. Participants agreed to keep each other informed on the state of the preparations on the 15th of each month.

On 17 January, Werner Nestel (NWDR) informed all countries involved that NWDR was ready to enter the trial phase and sent a number of concrete proposals and some technical information.

It is clear that the big experiment of a multilateral transmission was really and truly under way.

The technical experts in each country started sorting out the conditions for a successful transmission, and the broadcasting organizations tried to clear away some of the legal and political problems, which did not always make things easier. Originally the necessary standards conversion was supposed to be done in Cassel, the first relay point in France. But the RTF suddenly objected for "reasons of principle" against any conversion on French territory. For similar reasons, Belgium refused to allow any conversion on its territory. Nevertheless, by early February 1953 'Operation Coronation' was largely assured.

On 9 February 1953 the participants of the scheme informed the EBU. It would hardly have been possible to

inform the EBU much later than this without being rather rude, to say the least as the Television Study Group was to meet in Paris on 23 March.

As head of the Study Group Television, Marcel Bezençon recognized the opportunity to promote his plan for a programme clearing house. For this, exactly the kind of network was needed as the one for the Coronation. It was clear from the state of preparations for the Coronation broadcast that some countries were perfectly able to get a live programme exchange going without any help from the EBU.

In fact, the five countries that had joined together for the Coronation broadcast were quite obviously not too keen on involving the hitherto rather heavy-going EBU. Marcel Bezençon, however, had to turn to the EBU for the realization of his own idea. As the director general of



The Coronation

the SSR he was not yet able to bring his own television service to the exchange experiments. Only for the following year of 1954 was there any hope that Swiss television would start even a trial service, and it fell to Marcel Bezençon to build the television 'bridge' across the Alps to Italy.

For the time being the EBU remained the only means for Marcel Bezençon to keep his influence on the way things were going. A meeting of the Administrative Council was scheduled in Florence for 11 and 12 May. In addition, Marcel Bezençon had already planned a meeting of the Television Study Group in which the Dutch and Germans were supposed to take part for the first time. This was the ideal opportunity for raising the matter in an EBU body. In order to allow the exchange of news items and documentaries to get going more quickly, the Study Group agreed to

make a recommendation rather than to impose a very rigid standard contract for programme exchanges. Then there was a discussion of "changes in the general television situation", on which a report was made for the Administrative Council. The Administrative Council was briefly informed of the situation and it took four decisions regarding the improvised network (without anybody being sure whether or not it would actually work).

- First, the BBC and RTF were to ensure jointly that the installations for the network were not taken down after the Coronation, but set up permanently.
- Secondly, all authorities involved were to use whatever influence they had on the appropriate organizations to push for the establishment of a European network.

The following two points were phrased in the minutes as follows:

- To offer to these authorities, as well as to the international bodies on which they are represented, fullest cooperation of all the organs and competent services of the Union.
- To instruct the Permanent Services of the Union immediately to take appropriate steps, by way of addressing enquiries to member organizations, or possibly the authorities concerned, to assemble all documentation relative not only to the setting up of this network, but also on the conditions, whatever they might be (technical, economic, financial, legal, political and so forth) connected with this operation.



Cassel, the first relay point in France

From the EBU's point of view, or rather that of the study group whose members wanted so much to make it the EBU's official Programme Committee, this could only be an attempt at damage limitation. An initiative that reflected so much the interests of the study group, if not those of the EBU as a whole, had been launched without any formal participation of the group. Yet the people who had agreed on the arrangements for the Coronation broadcast at the London meeting were the same as the members of the study group – with the exception of its chairman, Marcel Bezençon.

Meanwhile Marcel Bezençon himself had already made contact with the Swiss Football Association (ASFA) in order to make the 1954 World Cup in Switzerland available for television in several countries. He was now asked to continue these efforts on behalf of the EBU. After this, the study group made a statement concerning the "Coordination of International Meetings on Television". This was their plea:

"The Study Group suggested that the Administrative Council should strongly urge member organizations not to take any steps whatsoever to convene meetings of an international character relating to television, without prior reference to the Administrative Council and, furthermore, to refuse, whenever possible, to participate in meetings called on other authority during which questions relating to television are dealt with, which, in fact, could and should be discussed within the framework of the Union."

This would have made a meeting like the one in London in December 1952 illegal, strictly speaking, if the EBU was not advised of its happening in advance. The Administrative Council adopted exactly this position, and even extended the obligation to radio. It

The Coronation



is possible that some members or delegates felt attacked by the EBU's strict attitude, which carried an undertone of disapproval of the proceedings in the preparations for the Coronation broadcast.

If the members of the study group had hoped to strengthen their position by these measures and to be able to set up the longed-for programme committee, they were to be disappointed as it was agreed to postpone consultations about the establishment of a programme committee until the next meeting of the Administrative Council.

On 2 June 1953 the moment had come.

The Coronation of Elizabeth II was the first event to be broadcast live internationally in the full sense of the word, and as such it had an undreamt-of fascination for the public everywhere, including in all the countries on the continent that were already linked up. People crowded in front of the few available television sets and looked for the first time through the "window on the world" in its most agreeable form.

An event which they never thought could be a live audiovisual experience for them was flickering across screens in living rooms, pubs and shop windows. Dozens of journalists noted down meticulously the number of picture breakdowns, the changes in picture quality and the clarity of the sound. The fragile, improvised network was shaking, wobbling and trembling, and so was the picture on the screens, but it did not break down.

Television, still seen by many as a high-tech toy with no future, had proved able to transport images live across national frontiers. The cost of all this was undeniably huge, but the propaganda effect of this pioneer work for television was worth its weight in gold.

In the course of 1953–54, television systems in Belgium and in Switzerland reached a sufficient standard for trial transmissions of professional quality. Both countries were of particular importance because they functioned as bridges for the next few international activities in television programming. Belgium was a link between France, Britain, the Netherlands, and Germany; Switzerland between France, Germany and Italy. Although RAI was also already broadcasting television programmes, Italy had not taken part in any previous European exchanges. So now there were three new partners for future exchanges.

Switzerland and Belgium shared all the problems associated with being a multilingual country.

In Belgium, the difficulties started with the question of which television standard should be adopted. The options were the French 819- or the Dutch 625-line system. The specific situation Belgium was in with its two large language groups caused the Brussels Government in 1952 to adopt a position in which the answer to the question of the line standard was a unique but for Belgium far from untypical compromise. French-language television programmes were to be broadcast in 819 lines; Flemish programmes in 625 lines. From late October 1953 there was a regular television service that was as expensive as it was impractical, with the side-effect that Belgium became a real Eldorado for producers of televisions that could cope with several line standards. Multi-standard televisions were in fact needed only in Belgium, but they were also sold abroad to some extent, mainly along Belgium's borders with France and Luxembourg.

In Switzerland, the length of the experimental phase shows the initial resistance and scepticism encountered by television in that

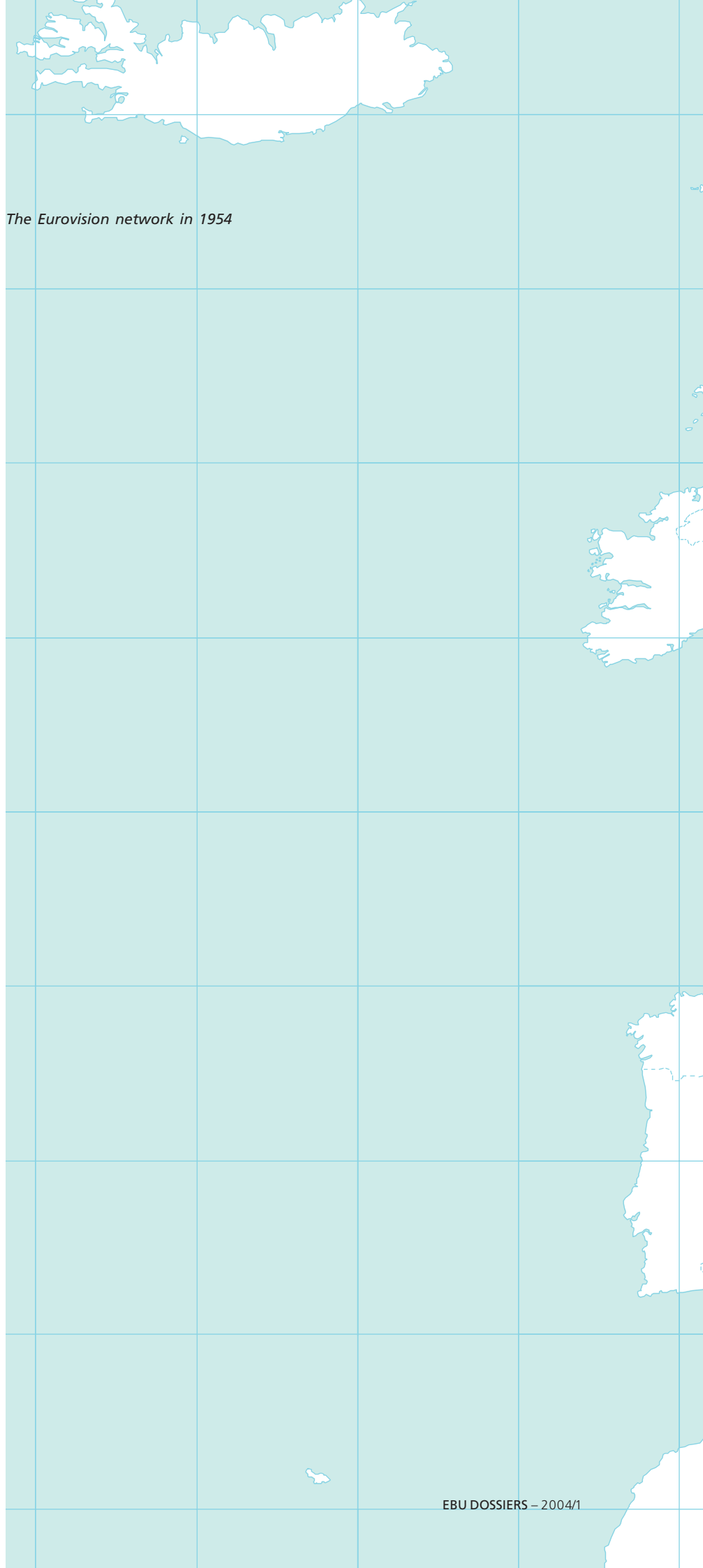
country. Édouard Haas started testing in early 1954 and the experimental stage was completed in 1958. In March 1957 there was a referendum on whether the Federal Council should be responsible in future also for the programme side of television, in both the creative and financial areas. The proposed new article of the Constitution on “Radio and Television” to this effect was rejected. The Federal Government was not allowed to interfere with programme decisions or to subsidize television.

After the Coronation, the EBU seemed to have learnt its lesson. During the first big European programme exchange, it had done little more than look on in amazement, while the almost entirely informal cooperation of the television organizations involved had worked surprisingly well.

The Bezençon Study Group now worked energetically towards setting up such an institution within the framework of the EBU. At two conferences in London in July and September 1953, under the direction of the EBU, the experiences surrounding the Coronation broadcast were evaluated. It was then decided to embark on another series of international transmissions only in the summer of 1954. This decision would furthermore allow enough time to settle the copyright and performance right questions surrounding the planned transmission, and to agree on how to share the cost of the necessary lines. Finally, time was needed for essential technical tests of various components of the network in order to be really sure that the transmission would go ahead with as few problems as possible.

Insurmountable difficulties were turning up constantly, nevertheless, the atmosphere at working meetings was pioneering.

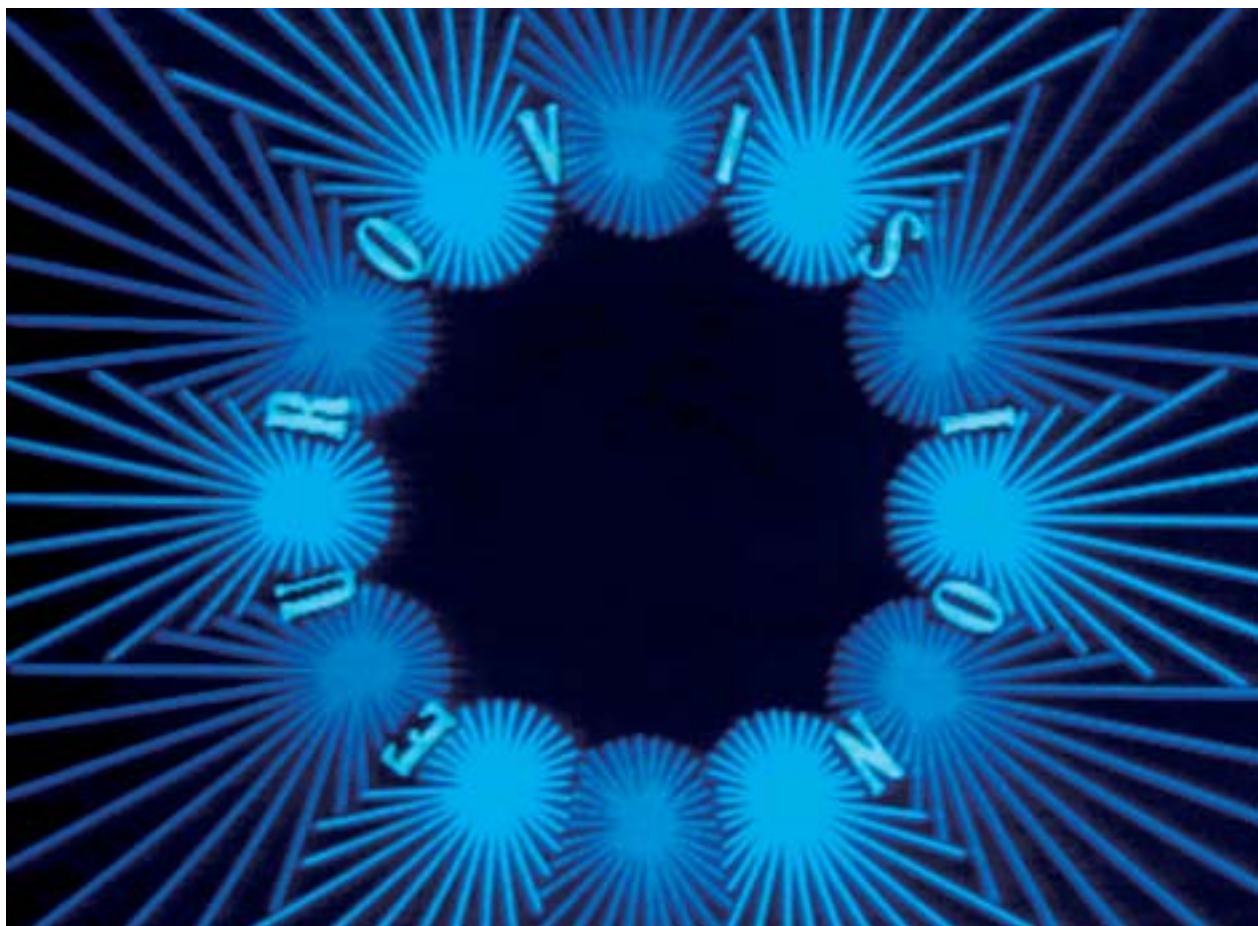
The Eurovision network in 1954





Merger

1 January 1993:
a new era for Eurovision



With the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the rapid changes in Eastern Europe, as early as January 1990 OIRT was talking in terms of a merger with the EBU during 1993, a process speeded in October 1991 when the EBU and OIRT set a date for the merger: 1 January 1993.

“OIRT’s relations with EBU had always been friendly and sustained, especially in the engineering field,” wrote George T. Waters, director of the EBU Technical Department (1986–1997) in the *Technical Review*.

Intervision Eurovision

Most OIRT activities had traditionally been pursued in cooperation with the EBU. The first multilateral transmission under the Intervision emblem had in fact been supplied by Eurovision on the occasion of the 1960 Rome Olympics.

Cooperation between Intervision and Eurovision was one of the rare examples of a genuine collaborative mechanism between Eastern and Western Europe.

Yet it was a sensitive area: that of broadcasting, with news and programme exchanges, operations for coverage of major sports events, provision of services for Union members and mutual access to transmission networks on the basis of solidarity and reciprocity!

Towards the merger

The principal stage in the march towards closer cooperation between Intervision and Eurovision dated back to November 1990, when the latter started to pick up the Intervision News Exchange (IVN-1) daily, live and without pre-recording. The Intervision News Exchange also

became directly accessible to EBU non-members in Europe via sublicensing agreements.

Another stage reached in late 1991 was the inclusion of Eurovision news items in IVN-1, through the creation of EVN-W as a step towards the integration of IVN and EVN exchanges.

As early as 1990 it was decided that Intervision would retain only two specialized working groups (TV News and Sports Programmes).

In the field of news it was also decided that the broadcasters of the republics of the ex-USSR would participate actively in regular Intervision exchanges, in contrast to the previous setup where the international activities of all USSR broadcasters were carried on quasi-exclusively by Gostele-radio.



Network integration

From the technical viewpoint the new EBU members from Central and Eastern Europe were integrated into mixed networks using two transponders on EUTELSAT satellites.

It was decided that from 1 January 1993, date of the merger, transfer of Eurovision operations to EUTELSAT II satellites would be

followed by digitization of the EBU network, providing eight channels as well as Euroradio (the EBU radio programme exchange) and communication links on each transponder.

The EBU, alive to the expectations of the former OIRT members and to ease their integration into the 'club', had taken a number of initiatives, one of which was to guarantee the loan made available

by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to finance earth stations linking several major cities of Central and Eastern Europe (Prague, Moscow, Bucharest, Budapest, Sofia and Warsaw among others) to the Eurovision network and at the same time connecting up entire regions: an investment of CHF 10–18 million!

And so it came to pass . . .

The EBU General Assembly in Oslo, July 1992



Albert Scharf (President of the EBU) and A. Vladtrov (President of the OIRT)



INTERVISION

With the growth of television in the late 1950s the countries of Western Europe, under the EBU banner, joined forces to exchange programmes under the name 'Eurovision'.

Eastern Europe, under the firm guidance of the OIRT, chose the name 'Intervision'. A sort of "anything you can do, I can do too" (a typical reaction in East-West relations at that time), but above all a technical system of programme exchanges with the same ideals as those of the pioneers.

Intervision's view was that promoting the differences and similarities of the Communist countries would facilitate international relations and prevent television viewers in the East from being dazzled by other cultures not really approved by the Politburo behind the Iron Curtain.

Intervision was thus considered, according to choice, as "the answer to Eurovision", "a means of developing international relations", "a counterblast to the bright lights of the West" or, again, a "propaganda tool".

"The broadcasters of Eastern Europe operated in a different way from their counterparts in the West", recalls Boris Bergant, Vice-President of EBU. "It took a certain time for the ex-members of OIRT to grasp, for example, the basic principles of copyright or a licence fee system, and to solve technical problems".



Jean-Bernard Münch, Secretary General of the EBU and his OIRT counterpart Milan Bauman

tomorrow

And now . . .

Jean Réveillon
Secretary General

Eurovision, a magic word, a few unforgettable bars of music imprinted for ever in our memories, a European anthem before its time.

When it burst forth, in Berlin on the evening of 30 April, from the brass and strings under the impassioned baton of Vladimir Ashkenazy, to welcome the new member countries to the European Union, the melody brought to mind that as a child . . .

As a child, I would run down the road in Burbure, my village in the north of France, towards the only house to have . . . television! I wasn't the only one and we gathered together, the neighbourhood children, leaning on the windowsill for the flight of fancy to unknown places promised by those few bars.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We are broadcasting from Sweden . . . You will be watching the World Cup final..."

Stockholm: I was there just the other day, with Arne Wessberg, to visit his

friends Lennart Johansson, the president of UEFA, and Lars-Christer Olsson, the director general, in the offices of the Swedish Football Federation. We breakfasted in the trophy hall and I felt choked by emotion.

Now, as Secretary General of the EBU, the captain of the Eurovision ship, life really does hold surprises . . .

How proud it makes me; and what a responsibility it is! Because, at the grand age of 50, our Eurovision, with more life in her than ever at the dawn of the new century, is facing its destiny. And it has a name: the digital age!

And the sub-headings are many: radio, television, Internet, UMTS, broadband, interactivity, video-on-demand, DAB, electronic programme guides, etc.

In an ever-changing world Eurovision must remain the leading light, the shining example of the quality of the public service.

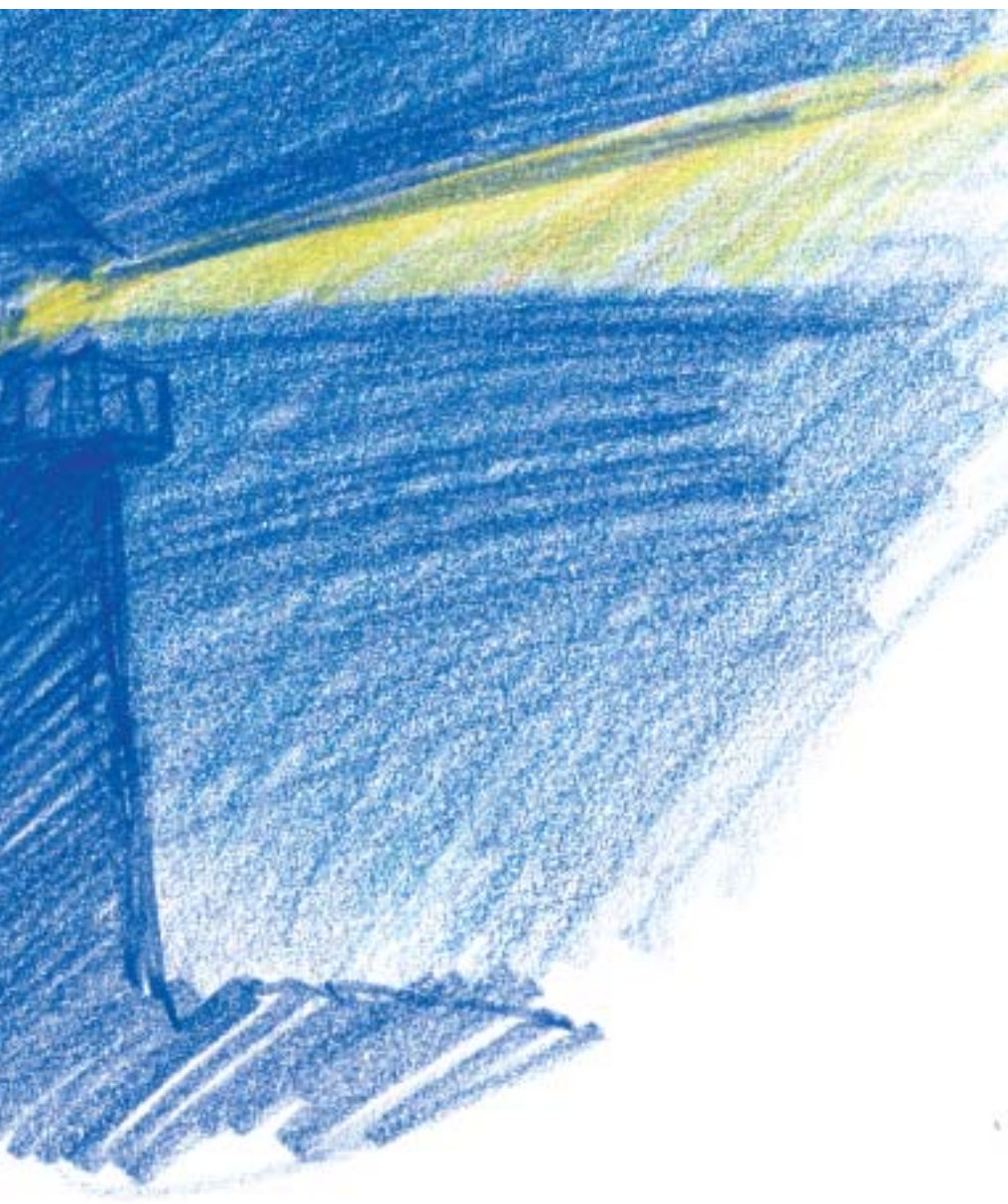
Our Members, in ever growing numbers, are right to demand it.

Public service broadcasters want to move with the times, adopt all the new forms of programme distribution, ensuring by doing so that the citizens of Europe will not be sacrificed to voracious commercial appetites but will keep their access to the key virtues of pluralism of information and cultural diversity that are catalysts for social cohesion and mutual understanding.

So, our Eurovision – by providing daily exchanges of sound and pictures for news and sport, by supporting the creation of documentaries, youth programmes, fiction and co-productions, by entertaining through major musical, singing and dance events, by promoting cultural exchanges or the diversity of languages – must seize every opportunity to promote the fundamental values that only the public service can uphold. The public service obviously remains in contact with market realities although it does not make them its only goal.

© Philippe Jutens – EBU/UEFA

orrow!



Demand is strong. It comes from societies that have long been steeped in democracy and that must defend themselves from attacks on all fronts, but it also comes from the younger nations in which public television and radio must still demonstrate their ability to escape the straight-jacket of State control to don the robes of modern media, open to freedom of speech and the citizen's voice . . .

And then there are the troubled areas where peace is struggling to settle, or to return. And there too pictures and sound must play an important role in helping much-awaited calm to reign once more.

Through its spirit and its web of invisible fibres that it spins between the countries of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, its area of operation, but also further afield with its relays, via its bureaux abroad or its sister unions, Eurovision is at the heart of these major issues . . .

It is ready to assume its role with all the assurance and expertise that comes with the grand age of 50, an age when the plenitude of experience joins with the energy and determination that it has never lost.

The leg

Werner Rumphorst

Director, EBU Legal and Public Affairs



“Ta taah ta-ta taah ta taaaah ta ta...” Who would not immediately recognize the prelude to Charpentier’s *Te Deum*, which, for the last 50 years, has announced to European television audiences that they are about to watch, or have just watched, a Eurovision programme? Rumour has it that the tune was chosen at the time to escape any obligation to make copyright royalty payments, since the compositions of Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643–1704) are in the public domain, i.e. anybody may use them freely.

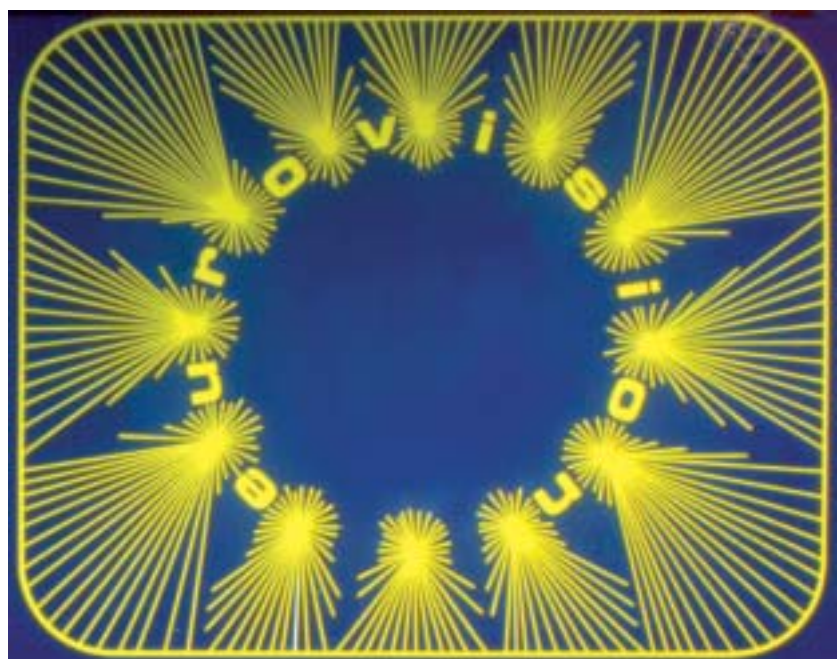
Not so any more, however! This tune, in relation with popular television programmes relayed with the Eurovision logo, has become so well known over the years as an identifier of Eurovision programmes that it was possible to register it as a protected Community trademark, and this was actually done in 2000, i.e. almost 300 years after Charpentier’s death. As a result, nobody – other than the active Members of the EBU – may use this tune in connection with the broadcasting of radio and television

programmes, or certain specified related services, without the express prior authorization of the EBU.

Similarly, the name Eurovision, together with the EBU logo, is protected as a trademark (the so-called Eurovision logo).

The logo

Many will remember that the original Eurovision logo, which was used for over 40 years, was a different one. It would be for television experts, and especially for branding specialists, to explain why the popular and extremely well known original logo (a semi-circle of stars surrounding the word Eurovision, with a circle in the middle left free for each relaying organization to identify itself) was abandoned in



The previous Eurovision logo

Legal side

of the story

favour of the present one, or why the present logo seems to be used only sporadically, and by no means by all Eurovision Members . . .

What, then, is Eurovision, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year?

An ideal place for elucidating this question must be Montreux, which was the venue for the spring 2004 session of the EBU Legal and Public Affairs Committee. The first Eurovision transmission consisted of live coverage of the Montreux Narcissus Festival, on 6 June 1954. It was relayed simultaneously in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The idea behind Eurovision was quite simple: each Member

connected to the Eurovision network would offer to all the other Members connected to the network its own television coverage of events of potential interest to at least some of the other Members. Once the production costs have to be paid in any case, for the purpose of the Member's own national coverage, why not offer the – already amortized – production free of charge to the other Members? In return, the offering Member would receive free offers from the other Members, and even though some Members were bound to offer less than others the overall benefits of such an exchange system for every participant were all too obvious.

So obvious, in fact, that it was not until 1988 that it was felt desirable for the EBU Statutes even to recognize the existence of Eurovision. Since then, Article 3§6 has defined Eurovision as follows:

'Eurovision' is a television exchange system organized and coordinated by the EBU, based on the understanding that Members offer to the other Members, on a basis of reciprocity, their news coverage of important events and their coverage of current affairs and of sports and cultural events taking place in their countries and of potential interest to

other Members, thereby enabling each other to provide a high quality service in these fields to their respective national audiences.

'Eurovision Members' have been defined as

– *active Members, with regard to their national, regional or local television programme services*

– *active Members or consortia consisting exclusively of active Members, with regard to their transnational television programme services, if admitted in that capacity by the Administrative Council,*

which participate on a regular basis in the EBU's Eurovision exchange system, in conformity with the applicable Eurovision rules laid down by the Administrative Council.

News, current affairs, sport and cultural events have one feature in common: either no national commentary is necessary for the local television audience to be able to follow the live relay of an event taking place in another country (e.g. a concert) or, more frequently, the offering organization's picture coverage (plus international sound) can be broadcast as it stands, supplemented merely by a



Today's Eurovision logo

commentary in the relaying organization's language (especially for sport and news). In contrast, programmes (such as drama) where the spoken word plays a decisive role do not lend themselves to an exchange via Eurovision; they may be dubbed or subtitled, of course, but normally there is no need for a live or near-live relay in such cases and, in any event, despatch via the traditional postal service would be much cheaper.

As may well be imagined, from the very outset the EBU's lawyers played an active role in laying – and further developing over the years – the legal foundations for the smooth functioning of Eurovision. Copyright and sports rights were the central concern of both the EBU Legal Committee and the EBU Legal Department and they remain so today.


Sport

In the beginning, the acquisition of sports rights – which are indispensable for Members' use of the coverage (pictures) offered by the host broadcaster – was a relatively minor affair. There were virtually no competitors outside the EBU, sport was still very much a matter for amateurs, and the staging of sports events was either relatively modest and cheap or, in the case of major events such as the Olympics, financed by the State and/or regional/local authorities. Accordingly, contracts were quite simple and brief, rights were systematically acquired for the whole Eurovision area, and rights costs at that time appear quite incredible today: for the 1954 Football World Cup, the EBU paid the impressive sum of CHF 10,000. Six years later, for the Summer Olympics in Rome (1960) the EBU paid US\$ 667,957. Twenty years later (Moscow 1980) the price had risen to US\$ 5,652,500. Another 20 years later, however (Sydney 2000), the price had sky-rocketed to

US\$ 350,000,000. Even when it is acknowledged that, unlike Rome and Moscow, the rights for Sydney also covered Central and Eastern Europe (the former Intervision countries), this huge increase within 20 years largely speaks for itself. The shift from amateur to professional sports is not only reflected in the television rights fee, however. There has been parallel inflation in the number of pages of the contract, given the ever-growing complexity of the relations between sport and television.

Over the years, this development has required more and more internal rule-making on the part of the EBU. Without any attempt at completeness, the following may be recalled in this context:

- model contract for the acquisition of Eurovision rights to a sports event;
- principles on advertising at venues for internationally televised sports events;
- advertising/sponsorship in Eurovision programmes;
- identification of timing and data service providers;
- rules on use of the Eurovision signal;
- rules on sharing of transmission rights under Eurovision sports agreements;
- composition and tasks of a sports steering committee;
- guarantor groups for the purchase of sports rights;
- memorandum on virtual advertising;
- sports rights acquisition rules and procedures;

- 
- EBU non-Members' access to Eurovision sports programmes (sublicensing);
 - sublicensing rules relating to the exploitation of Eurovision rights on pay-TV channels;
 - rules on former Eurovision Members' continued access to existing contracts.

Some of these texts have become obsolete, whereas others have been modified over the years.

The major rules, applicable today, include the following:

- Sports Rights Acquisition Rules and Procedures (2002);
- Sharing of Rights Fee by Administrative Council Decision (2003);
- Rules on Sharing of Transmission Rights Under Eurovision Sports Agreements (2004);
- Sublicensing Rules of Eurovision Sports Programmes (2004).

News

From the very beginning of Eurovision, news played a key role. Jointly, as a group, the Eurovision members – and no-one else – covered the whole news and current affairs events taking place in Western Europe, on a day-by-day basis. Together with the rapidly expanding Eurovision network, this constituted the guarantee that Members were in a position to report on events which took place the same day in each other Eurovision member's country.

The television news agencies, which for that reason largely abstained from covering European news events and concentrated instead on the other continents (with a marked emphasis on English-speaking countries), had no other possibility at that time to deliver their news packages to the Eurovision members which subscribed to their services other than to feed their material into the Eurovision network.

More or less parallel to this, a comparable system was developing in Central and Eastern Europe. Organized by the EBU's sister union, OIRT (with its headquarters in Prague), it operated under the name Intervision. Reciprocity between the Eurovision and Intervision news exchanges was a normal step for the broadcasting professionals on either side of the Iron Curtain to take. In practical terms, this was acceptable since what was made available to the other side was raw news material (i.e. moving images plus international sound) with every receiving broadcaster being perfectly free to use it or not to use it and, in particular, to accompany the material, if broadcast, with any commentary of its own choice.

Technically, the Eurovision network and the Intervision network were linked via the axis Vienna–Prague.

As may be expected, this inter-connection between the two regional networks also served to carry other live pictures, and especially coverage of sports events.

Later, when powerful satellites permitted news material to be transported on a global scale, the EBU entered into further reciprocity-type arrangements with other broadcasting unions, as well as with major individual broadcasting organizations in Asia (NHK) and North America (CBS).

From a legal point of view, it was not until the early 1990s that the need was felt to set up some rules to deal with the property (copyright) aspect of the news exchange system and, more specifically, with the sublicensing of Eurovision news items.

The 1992 Rules on Use of Eurovision News Material by Members and non-Members thus came into force. They are about to be replaced by a completely revised and modernized version.

Cultural programmes

Eurovision started with a cultural programme, a live relay of the Montreux Narcissus Festival.

For understandable reasons of language, only programmes in which there is no spoken content at all (such as classical music or ballet) or in which understanding the words is not essential for enjoyment (programmes such as pop concerts) lent themselves to live relays over the Eurovision network. Over the years, the number and type of programmes which were thus exchanged over the network have changed, largely in parallel with the tendency towards reducing, if not indeed altogether eliminating, live opera and classical music concerts on Members' main television channels.

Today, the flagships of Eurovision cultural programming are the yearly New Year's Concert from Vienna (ORF), the biennial competitions of Young Musicians and Young Dancers and, of course, the annual Eurovision Song Contest (which, by the

way, is in its 48th year). The most recent addition is the Junior Eurovision Song Contest, successfully launched in 2003 and definitely here to stay.

From the very beginning, copyright issues were a central point to be dealt with, whether *petits droits* or *grands droits*, music publishers' rights or the rights of performing artists. In principle, the matter was quite simple: the offering organization offers its production, i.e. its 'signal', free of charge to all the relaying organizations, just as in the case of sports and news. Any additional rights which need to be cleared in the relaying organizations' countries are then a matter for the relaying organizations to deal with.

In this context, *petits droits* cause no problem whatsoever, since the global contract which each broadcasting organization has with its national collecting society automatically includes any broadcasts of Eurovision programmes.

But what about the other categories of rightowners? How can the individual foreign relaying organizations possibly clear those rights and, in particular, clear them in sufficient time for the broadcast?

As regards music publishers, a standard contract between the EBU and the IPA (International Publishers Association), dating back to the early years of Eurovision, served as a basis for corresponding national agreements between EBU Members and national publishers' associations. While it continues to play a role in radio, it has become rather obsolete in the context of Eurovision. In any event, the principle was that the offering organization paid the whole amount due with respect to all the countries where the programme was relayed, with the possibility of requesting reimbursement from the relaying organizations.

Grands droits were either cleared by the offering organization and then reimbursed by the relaying organizations, or cleared direct by the latter

© Musée du Vieux Montreux



The Montreux Narcissus Festival

themselves. Another standard contract, concluded between the EBU and the international federations of performers (musicians, actors, variety artists) and dating back to the late 1950s, resulted in relaying organizations' being automatically entitled to broadcast the Eurovision programme subject to payment of a certain percentage (fixed on a country-by-country basis) of the initial fee paid by the offering organization.

This arrangement too is obsolete. Today, either a Member offers a programme and asks individual Members for a negotiated contribution, to cover part of its overall costs (the New Year's Concert), or the coproducing organizations agree to contribute a global amount to the host broadcasting organization's overall costs (e.g. the Eurovision Song Contest).

Apart from these copyright aspects, several other legal issues had to be dealt with, such as the exact use which relaying Members may make of the offering organization's signal and the conditions for having a Eurovision programme sponsored by a relaying organization. These matters are dealt with in the following texts:

- Rules on Use of Eurovision Signal (1993);
- Rules on Sponsorship in Eurovision Programmes (1987).

Network

If it is true that without programmes which lend themselves to simultaneous relay in other countries Eurovision would not exist, the same can also be said of the Eurovision network.

The network, which interlinks the Eurovision Members and allows the circulation of programme material between them, started out with eight national coordination centres (identical to the eight Members

which participated in the first Eurovision transmission, i.e. RTB/BRT, DR, ARD, RTF (France), RAI, NTS (Netherlands) and the BBC, plus SSR as the host broadcasting organization). Until ten years ago, central technical coordination of the network was carried out by the EBU Technical Centre in Brussels, until its move to Geneva and the setting-up of the Television Operations Department in 1993.

The rapid expansion of the terrestrial network from its beginnings in 1954, plus the above-mentioned interconnection with the Intervision network, was followed, from the middle of the 1980s onwards, by the gradual introduction of a satellite network, which reduced the permanent terrestrial network more and more. The latest development has been the introduction, in April 2004, of a fibre network between major European cities, as well as a connection point on the East Coast of the United States, to complement the existing satellite network.



There are no particular legal rules applying to the network, but there are, of course, operational/procedural codes and, in particular, financial rules and tariffs. However, these are normally outside the lawyers' field of concern.

Eurovision today

Today, the 50th anniversary of Eurovision is a time for celebration. Indeed, the EBU is rightly proud of this unique historic achievement, and it is with pride that it will receive the KulturpreisEuropa 2004, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Eurovision, for having "successfully crossed national frontiers and cultural-historical barriers, in its capacity as an ambassador in the field of culture".

Today's figures are indeed impressive and promise a bright future, but the historic achievement of Eurovision is no less impressive.

In a nutshell

On average, more than 100,000 transmissions are carried out over the Eurovision network per year, using up to 50 digital satellite channels for that purpose. The vast majority of these are unilateral (point-to-point) transmissions.

As regards content, approximately 30,000 news items are made available to the Eurovision Members every year, and together Eurovision Members broadcast some 50,000 hours of sports and cultural programmes offered to them via Eurovision. It should be noted, though, that a certain percentage of the sports programmes, as well as of the unilateral transmissions, are carried out on behalf of non-Members.

The potential audience in the entire Eurovision area is 640 million people.

5 years

Eurovision, whose fifth anniversary we celebrated on June 6, is something more profound than an exchange of programmes – or even the remarkable engineering techniques that make it possible. We who work in Eurovision know that when we go to a planning conference, or collaborate on a programme, we are taking part in a continuing adventure. And we like to think that the programmes we exchange are links in that chain of understanding between our countries which is so vital to our future.

June 6, 1954, marked a major step forward in the exchange of television programmes among neighbouring countries, for it was during the month which followed that eight services, namely those of Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Western Germany and the United Kingdom, linked their television networks in order to share programmes which were originated at various times in each of these countries. It was already a far cry from the early 1950s when it was an adventure to transmit a television programme over 200 or 300 kilometres. The problem of conversion of the pictures from one standard to another had not then

been tackled, and no machinery existed for coordinating the exchange of programmes. How great a debt do we owe, therefore, to those who had the vision to realise the possibilities, and whose ingenuity enabled them to overcome the immense difficulties – programme, administrative, legal and technical – until today we have a smoothly running machine under the unifying hand of the EBU.

I feel, too, that this is the time to remember those earlier days, beginning with the first cross-Channel television in 1950. While much of that early spadework was done by RTF and the BBC, it is well to remember the credit that must also go to those other services, particularly in the smaller countries, who started actively to participate in Eurovision, with all its demands on their programme and technical staffs, at the very moment when they were bearing the stresses and strains of getting their own domestic services going. And we remember too with gratitude the debt that we broadcasters owe to the postal authorities in providing and operating vision links for us and in helping us to solve the many problems which have arisen in connection with sound, vision and communication circuits.

Eurovision is no longer a novelty in the television programmes of the countries of Western Europe. I look forward with pleasure to the day – not, I feel sure, far distant – when it will be regarded as a normal and indispensable element of all the television networks in Western Europe and even further afield.

Jan Jacob



Sir Ian Jacob

10 years

J.W. Rengelink

*Chairman of the EBU News Study
Group; Programme Commissioner,
Nederlandse Televisie Stichting*

In the autumn of 1957 the Programme Committee of the EBU decided to investigate, together with the Technical Committee, the possibility of using the Eurovision network for the exchange of news items.

Of course, certain questions immediately arose. Would it be possible to obtain from a great number of organizations such regular and continuous cooperation? Would the costs not be too high? Would not this and would not that? But on the other hand, the advantages were so obvious. There was a Eurovision network that in the quickest conceivable way could transfer visual news from one European country to almost any other. The fastest jet plane had the speed of a snail in comparison.

A conference of chief editors of the news services of many television organizations, which was held on 10 and 11 March 1958 in Amsterdam, came to the conclusion that the Eurovision network offered great possibilities for such news transmissions, especially when very important last-minute items were involved. The conference advised the Programme Committee and the Technical Committee to form a study group, which would also have the task of experimenting with the daily exchange of news. The Programme Committee and the Technical Committee accepted this proposal and appointed a study group with myself as chairman. Mr J.T. Dickinson and Mr H. Maas were appointed secretaries. During



J.T. Dickinson, chief engineer of the EBU Technical Centre from 1950 to 1972

the preparatory work of this study group it turned out that, for financial reasons in particular, a number of organizations could not cooperate in an experiment.

Nevertheless, during the period from 6 to 11 October 1958 and from 20 to 25 of the same month, two experiments took place in which the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI), Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française (RTF), Belgische Radio en Televisie/Radiodiffusion-Télévision Belge (BRT/RTB) and the Nederlandse Televisie Stichting (NTS) took part, while during the second week the Independent Television News (United Kingdom) joined as well. During this experimental period, material from some news agencies was also broadcast via the Eurovision network; this material was available to all participants free of cost, apart from the question whether they were or were not subscribers to these agencies. The experiments proved that the system could work and also that it was useful. This was particularly apparent during the first period, in which the death of His Holiness Pope Pius XII occurred. Never before had news about such an event, as distressing as it was important, been spread so quickly. Not only Europe

benefited by the rapidity in disseminating the news: the American television stations received the news via the Eurovision network to London, from where it was brought over to the United States by plane.

The results of these experiments were discussed at a meeting in Rome in December 1958. It was the unanimous opinion at this meeting that the experiments had proved that the Eurovision connection could be valuable for a fast news transmission, and it was decided, among other things:

- that during a second experimental period even more experience would be gained;
- that more organizations would be invited to participate.

This second experimental series took place from 4 to 30 May 1959. During a part of this period the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Öffentlich-Rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (ARD), Sveriges Radio (SRT), Société Suisse de Radiodiffusion et Télévision (SSR) and Danmarks Radio (DSR), also participated in the experiment. Again the results were very satisfactory. At a meeting in Brussels in the following month a daily news

exchange was proposed, in which as many organizations as possible could participate, and which should begin as soon as possible. However, for all kinds of technical and particularly for financial reasons, it took some time before the news transmissions could take place regularly and before they became quantitatively significant. Because of the technical and financial circumstances referred to, only the BBC, the RAI, the RTF, the BRT/RTB and the NTS participated at the outset. But in effect since 1 January 1962 the news exchange, which takes place nearly every day, has become a smoothly running Eurovision instrument, in which many European television organizations participate. Indeed, at those times when events of importance take place in any European country, the Eurovision news transmissions are indispensable. Thus, Eurovision contributes towards bringing the news to television screens in the fastest possible way, news that tens of millions of people eagerly look forward to.

In 1962, 1,106 news items were distributed via the Eurovision network. Each of these was used by about five organizations on average. During 1963 a total of 1,246 items was made available. These were broadcast by an average of six

organizations. The news transmission has become an example of practical European cooperation of great significance. Nearly every day the television news services of Europe confer about the most important events, and the subjects that each would like to broadcast or to receive are deliberated. Nearly every day the news coordinator (appointed in turn by the participating organizations), the Eurovision coordinator in Geneva, and the staff of the Technical Centre in Brussels take care that when at five o'clock in the afternoon visual news appears on the network, everything has been well prepared so that the programme is conducted as fast and as efficiently as possible. The European news transmission has become an important function which we can no longer imagine not being part of the activities of the EBU.

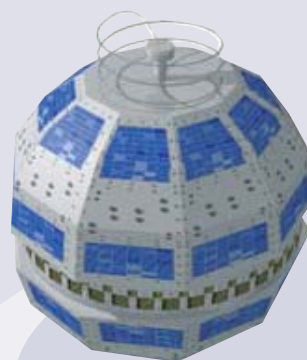
New developments are going on. The use of satellites for the transmission of news from America to Europe, and vice versa, can open up even greater possibilities in connection

with the Eurovision news exchange. News, for instance from Berlin, sent to one of the European satellite transmitters, relayed by satellite to an American receiving station and from there to the American television organizations, reaches its destination speedily. Many similar examples can be given in all kinds of combinations and directions. The possible linking of the Eurovision network to an east European system could stimulate the news exchange between west and east Europe. It goes without saying, that in such a case special attention would have to be given to norms of freedom and independence. But—luckily!—the world is on the move.

News and actualities form a thrilling part of television programmes, and the regular news bulletins probably have the highest viewing density. The financial resources that are available for news-gathering are enormous. It seems to me that a bigger share of these resources should be used for further improvement of news

distribution via the Eurovision network. More frequent broadcasts, more subjects, the opening of the network to the news agencies, these are some of the requirements, in my view at least. I am convinced that the time is not far off when a permanently available Eurovision network will open up even greater possibilities for the rapid dissemination of news. Close cooperation with the great international news agencies and especially technical links with other parts of the world will make possible, as it always has, faster distribution of news.

The News Study Group of the Programme Committee, consisting of representatives of many news services of members and associate members of the EBU, has, in my opinion, through the excellent cooperation with the Technical Centre in Brussels and the Administrative Office in Geneva as well, done much good work. Yet we are still only at the beginning.



Telstar



J.W. Rengelink

20 years

Stanley Englehardt

Millions of people in Europe can sit at home and look at programmes that come from all around the world. This is how it is made possible.



Henrik Hahr

The news of the assassination of Pierre Laporte, a Quebec cabinet minister, suddenly broke on to the world scene on 17 October 1970. Eurovision – Europe's non-profit international television exchange – at once tried to obtain pictures, but technical difficulties stopped the simple direct transmission between Europe and Montreal.

An elaborate coordination chain was immediately set up by telex from Eurovision's Brussels Technical Centre to Geneva, from Geneva to New York and New York to Montreal. After four hours' intense effort by Eurovision, an exquisitely complicated hook-up was established via New York – and European television viewers were able to see the pictures at exactly the same time as an appalled public in Canada and the United States.

This was quite an accomplishment for an organization that has only about twice as many employees (220) as it has active and associate members (103), owns no television studios of its own, and operates on an extremely limited budget. Few of the millions of European viewers realize that every day some ten items on their TV screen – news, sports, documentaries and entertainment programmes – are brought to them

Behind the screen of Eurovision

by Eurovision. Nor do they know how these pictures from distant countries reach them.

It all began in 1950 when the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) was formed by 23 Western European and Mediterranean area nations, to exchange information and experience in technical and legal matters. Television was little more than a technical curiosity then, and the countries that did broadcast television all used different systems of sending and receiving pictures. The British system, for example, transmitted a picture made up of 405 horizontal lines of electron-beam dots, while the French system used 819 lines.

Tuned-in Europe. This was resolved in 1952 by one of the least heralded, but most significant, technical breakthroughs in the history of TV. Developed jointly by British and French engineers, it consisted of a converter, an intricately wired “black box” at the BBC facilities in London, which could adjust lines no matter how many came in and how many were needed to go out. This was the key that unlocked the TV age for Europe.

In 1953, after the success of live television coverage of the Queen’s

coronation, the EBU decided to broaden its scope by including programme exchanges. One year later, eight nations – Belgium, Denmark, Federal Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom – arranged to swap 18 different live programmes, and the post and telecommunications authorities in each of these countries also agreed to provide the necessary links. Special television sections were set up within the framework of the European Broadcasting Union. It was named ‘Eurovision’, and a star-burst introductory motif was designed, backed by a stately *Te Deum* signature tune. (Today it is used only for special feature programmes.)

Try to get a firm grasp on Eurovision, however, and you’re likely to end up with a fistful of air. The 28 European, Mediterranean and US networks which operate TV services, and may participate in the daily exchange of programmes, are bound by no permanent agreement. The EBU has no owned circuits, no television cameras, no production units. It hasn’t even one superstar under full-time contract. What is it then? “A programme and news co-ordination point between all the European national networks,” says the EBU’s Secretary General Henrik

Hahr. “In other words, a TV programme clearing house.”

Perhaps this is seen most clearly in the daily exchanges of news, when most current events are ‘offered’ and ‘bid for’ during a unique news conference. One morning recently, I sat in on one of these sessions.

Foreign Exchange. The setting was a small studio at Eurovision’s Geneva headquarters. I was told that at over a score of similar studios in as many countries, including Britain, the TV news editors of European networks, plus those several news film services and American CBS, NBC and ABC chains, were sitting down at their microphones. The focal point of the voice conference, however, was the room in which I was standing, where a Eurovision team of four was getting ready to act as ‘broker’ for the daily news exchange.

On cue at 11 o’clock, editors began checking in, using either English or French, the working languages of Eurovision. The news coordinator, chosen on rota from among the network editors, asked the Eurovision coordinator what he had to offer. “We have several interesting items this morning,” the latter replied. Then he described the news

events that had been reported to him via teletype, telephone and radio from several associate members – television networks outside Europe which cooperate in the exchange of items. The films ranged from an airline crash in Japan to a political demonstration in South Africa.

Current Affairs. Other offerings, all of them professionally succinct, came from members on the circuit. The BBC had film of a State Visit; France had dramatic shots of a mountain disaster; and from Austria there were half a dozen items which had been filmed by Intervision, the communist bloc's equivalent of Eurovision. At the end of each description, the Eurovision coordinator asked, "Any interest?" It requires two or more acceptances for an item to be scheduled on the evening news-swopping session. Then after only 25 minutes – during which 28 news items were offered, 15 accepted and 13 rejected – the coordinator ended the conference with a polite, "Thank you and good morning."

For the actual news swapping, I flew to Brussels where the EBU Control Centre is located under the dome of the Palais de Justice, the highest point in the city. This is the nerve centre of the operation where antennae on the dome and a formidable array of electronic equipment under it are used to receive the programmes beamed to Brussels and to distribute them to Eurovision member networks.

By the time I arrived, the day's news exchange schedule had been set and the distribution routes planned. In a dimly lit control room, eight technicians at three consoles were now checking the quality of the various circuits that would be needed for the swap. Where the atmosphere in Geneva that morning had been relaxed, almost club-like, the air here crackled with tension as the technicians tested different routes

to clear the image from Rome. Then, on cue from the director, the evening news exchange began with a by now sharp and clear view of a late-breaking story from Italy's network.

That morning an Italian crew had covered a vicious storm which raked their Mediterranean coast, damaging homes and driving a huge tanker aground on rocks. Now, via radio relays, the story was being transmitted from Rome to Brussels, where switching equipment was sending it out again simultaneously to the eight EBU members that had requested the item. The recipients were recording the film on videotape for their evening news broadcasts. Background sound of the howling storm was being supplied, but local announcers would fill in the commentary in their native language, based on information sent from Eurovision by teletype.

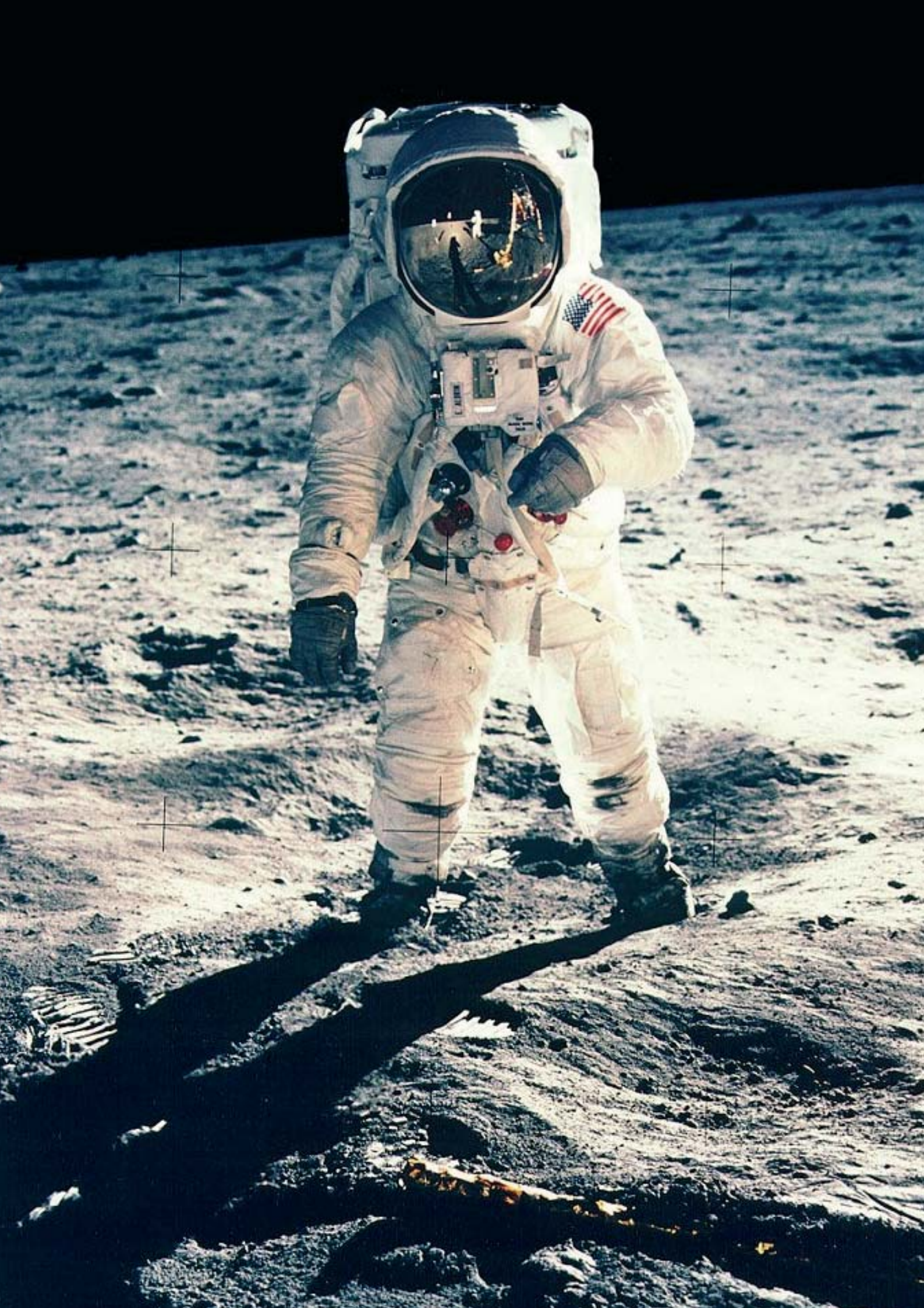
Who pays for all this? "One of the most remarkable things about Eurovision," says Henrik Hahr, "is the distribution of costs. By pro-rating the expenses, even the smallest nations can receive programmes that originated half way round the world. The formula for this pro-rating assigns each member a certain number of units based on the total number of TV sets in that country. These units are then used to calculate, how much a network must pay for participating in a programme or news item."

For example, during the 1972 Olympics, Germany offered extended coverage of the Games in Munich – a package of programmes that was accepted by virtually every active member and a large number of associates. There was no charge by the German TV consortium for the cameras, crews and local facilities involved; Eurovision operates on the principle that a favour done by one member today will be reciprocated by another member tomorrow. The Eurovision



Palais de Justice in Brussels





cost of cable and satellite transmission of the Games, however, was pro-rated, so that Britain, for example, which has one of the greatest numbers of television sets in Europe, had a bill more than 37 times larger than Tunisia for the same programme. Yet, large or small, all Eurovision members would have received the Olympic Games at a price they could afford.

Popular Records. In Britain, entertainment shows such as *The Eurovision Song Contest* and *Jeux Sans Frontières (It's a Knockout)* attract the largest European audiences. Next in line are sports events like the European Cup Final. But it's the one-shot specials, such as the Apollo XI coverage, which break records – even when things don't go as planned.

Months before the first historic moon walk of 20 July 1969, Eurovision began making plans to pick up the pictures offered by America's National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Programmers reserved land lines and satellite time needed to relay the pictures across the Atlantic Ocean. Then, less than a week before the final countdown, the Intelsat III F2 satellite suddenly went dead. In an all-day meeting at the ABC studios in New York, Eurovision's on-the-spot experts, and the US broadcasters who had planned to use the satellite to record the world's response to the moonshot, covered the floor and walls with maps of the world showing all available communications links. "If we can't go the short way," said Richard Francis, head of the EBU Apollo XI project, "then we'll take the long route – the other way round the world."

When British viewers tuned in on July 20 and 21, the only difference between theirs and the US reception was about half a second's time delay – a lag caused by the longest and most unusual tele-

vision network in communications history.

The starting point was on the moon, whence pictures were transmitted across 250,000 miles of space to Australia. From there, an earth station beamed the image to the Pacific satellite which, in turn, sent it back down to Jamesburg, California. At Jamesburg, it was put into a microwave relay system which sped it half-way across the United States to Houston Mission Control. In Houston, NASA fed the image to the networks.

At that point, a technician in the Eurovision caravan there flipped a switch on the console, which sent the pictures over land lines to New York, and by satellite to Tokyo for relay by cable to the Yamaguchi earth station of the Indian Ocean satellite. Then, in a split second, it went on to Goonhilly Downs, Cornwall; via cable to the BBC converter in London; by other cables to the Eurovision Control Centre in Brussels; and finally to some two dozen Eurovision members in Europe and North Africa and, through Intervision, to seven Eastern European countries. On the day before the shot, the Atlantic Intelsat II satellite became available and, to safeguard this moment in history, it was booked as well.

"We broke several records along the way," explains Richard Francis. "A transmission record of over 400,000 miles; a time lag of about 2.2 seconds between capturing the images on the moon and displaying them on European home screens; the use of three different communications satellites for a single broadcast. Soon we may have a European satellite which will eliminate the need for any land cables. We'll just beam the programmes up there, and individual stations can take them off if they like."

But even without the new satellite, Eurovision today is firmly

established as one of man's most useful and pleasurable technological tools. More, it is a formidable enforcer of what Jean d'Arcy, former director of Radio and Visual Services at the United Nations, calls: "The right of man to communicate."

25 years

Triumphal March

Emmanuel Belser





What does an international exchange of television programmes and baroque music have in common? Such a question is enough to fox even the best candidates of a TV or radio quiz show. Yet any schoolboy can whistle the Eurovision theme tune. These catchy few bars are borrowed from the prelude, entitled 'Triumphal March', from the *Te Deum* by Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1636–1704). It goes without saying that this music sounds better beneath the vaults of a baroque church than at the international football matches for which it regularly serves as an opening theme tune. But the fathers of Eurovision were entitled to a certain euphoria when you think of the difficulties they had to overcome before bringing their new-born child to be baptized. Just over four years before that an international exchange of TV programmes was still faced with major political, technical and legal obstacles. There was at the time the old International Broadcasting Union (IBU), that dated from before World War II and which had allocated radio channels and successfully promoted the international exchange of radio programmes. During the war it was struck with total paralysis then after the war it sank into a deep identity crisis as certain member countries, and first and foremost the Soviet

Union, tried to claim a dominant position that was unacceptable to the other European radio organizations. On the initiative of the BBC in London, a new umbrella organization was finally set up in Torquay on 12 February 1950: the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). Its ordinary members were broadcasting corporations in 21 European countries, joined by extraordinary members in Australia, Japan and South Africa. The countries in the Eastern Bloc did not adhere to it. Thus was created a body that in theory appeared able to organize and administer TV programme exchanges. And yet it met with countless difficulties. For example, the major facilities needed for multinational programme transmissions were still totally missing. In addition to national networks, at least five more new transmitters were needed along with 80 relay stations to guarantee the programme transmission axes from north to south and east to west because decimetric television waves only travel from transmitter to receiver in a direct, unobstructed line. The different picture standards used by the national television networks were another major difficulty: Britain used screens with 405 lines, France 819 lines and the other European countries 625, when they actually

had television. The legal and financial problems were no less serious: it was necessary to find a formula that was able to satisfy the copyright requirements of the participants and share out the costs in accordance with each corporation's financial situation.

Until the actual launch of Eurovision in time for the *European Television Weeks*, the issue had still not been solved: at the last minute some countries had to withdraw their contributions to the event owing to the failure of negotiations with the performers' unions. Among others, the British cabaret show *Café Continental* and the Danish programme *Tivoli*, which was to be broadcast from the eponymous fairground, had to be cancelled. Denmark nevertheless found a replacement programme, *Rendez-vous in Copenhagen*, featuring such stars as groups in traditional dress, folk dancers and an exhibition of farm animals.

Even the customs regulations at the time were a barrier to international understanding by the intermediary of television. A Swiss newspaper of the time told the following story: "When the French wanted to set up their relay stations on the English side of the Channel to transmit the English

programmes the British customs demanded £7,000 in customs duties for 'imported' equipment. Without further ado, the French customs seized the British equipment that was about to be installed on the opposite side of the Channel near Boulogne, and placed judicial seals on it demanding the payment of FF7 million. The irritated intervention of the British parliament and a decree from the Cabinet were needed before the French, then English, equipment were released from sequestration."

Let us look back over the first five post-war years, when the various countries were striving to reconstruct and there was still very little sign of a trend towards cross-border cooperation. Back in July 1947 the Swiss Marcel Bezençon, a man of radio and the future director general of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SSR), wrote to UNESCO to present his "Plan to set up an international newscast and television programme service". A year later he submitted to the dying IBU the idea for a "television programme stock exchange". Quite understandably, this initiative did not stir up any enthusiasm either. The foundation of the dynamic EBU in 1950 held greater promise. The EBU immediately decided to set up a Legal Committee to look into the complex issues of intellectual property. Shortly afterwards, Marcel Bezençon was appointed director general of the SSR, which allowed him, as the delegate of a member organization, to present his programme exchange project with greater authority. With untiring perseverance Marcel Bezençon – with the active support of his colleague Théo Fleischmann – reiterated his requests that this international forum should adopt his project of TV programme exchanges until it eventually agreed to discuss the subject, initially more out of politeness than out of any real interest. A working group was then set up under his chairmanship that strove to draw up, from practically

nothing, lists of problems, solutions and studies, all of which formed a remarkably solid base right up to the completion of the project. The success of the productions by the major television corporations of the time, in Britain and France, provided welcome support to the idea of programme exchanges. On 27 August 1950 the BBC organized the first international programme exchange in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the first cable being laid between England and France. The programmes were transmitted from Calais to London, relayed via Dover. For technical reasons, the link could only be made with British equipment and only in one direction. And that prompted the two countries to start building image converters. Barely two years later the goal had been achieved. The first official programme exchange both ways between London and Paris was made successfully during the 'Week of French and British Television' from 8 to 16 July 1952. Prior to the actual setting-up of Eurovision the transmission, to the continent, of the crowning of Queen Elizabeth II was undoubtedly a high point in the early days of international television. Britain, France, the Netherlands and West Germany – ARD had joined the EBU shortly before – formed on that occasion a provisional chain of terrestrial relay stations. In the meantime, within the EBU the working group had made enormous progress in planning the exchanges. On the group's initiative, the EBU Administrative Council asked its members to "urgently discuss with the competent authorities in their respective countries the possibility of setting up without delay a permanent network for the reciprocal relay of programmes". A planning subgroup, chaired by Édouard Haas – the then director of the television service in Zurich and now the head of programming at SSR headquarters – suggested that the programmes planned for the end of 1953 be deferred to June 1954

27 August 1950

At 9.30 pm on 27 August 1950 the television announcer at Alexandra Palace was able to say: *"On August 28th 1850 the first telegram was sent from England to France by means of a cable laid across the Straights of Dover. Tonight – in a very few minutes – television pictures transmitted to Alexandra Palace from one of our mobile outside broadcast units at this moment in Calais will not only mark the centenary of that historic achievement of the last century, but herald in a new and important era in international communication".*



when they could be turned into 'Television Weeks' to allow enough time for all European TV corporations to take part. These 'Television Weeks' would then coincide with the World Football Championship which was to be held in Switzerland. There was the promise of a marvellous propaganda coup for the small screen. In November 1953 the EBU General Assembly meeting in Monte-Carlo decided to set up a programme committee, whose job it would be to specify the key issues in this sector then submit proposals to the Administrative Council about the EBU's general programme policy.

By June 1954 everything was in place.

The signature tune was heard for the first time, in appropriate celebration of the first Eurovision exchange. Eight European countries were linked by terrestrial transmitters for the *European Television Weeks* and they delivered their contributions one after the other. Switzerland had the honour of opening the exchange with the Narcissus Festival in Montreux. Thanks to technical assistance from Germany and Italy, the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, which was still in its infancy back then, was able to transmit the World Football Championship from Bern.

It is true to say that sports events still occupy today as important a place in programme exchanges as they did then. But people are often unaware that the Eurovision news exchange currently supplies more than half of the volume of programmes exchanged. The Eurovision news exchange not only sends out the latest news in sound and pictures three times a day to the European television organizations that take part but it has also become a veritable hub of news exchanges throughout the world. Initially there was just the satellite link between Europe and the

USA. But since 1970 the EBU has had a coordination bureau in New York that sorts the news items coming from the major US television companies and the various news agencies before transmitting them to the EBU headquarters in Geneva. In the east Eurovision is connected to Intervision, which was founded in the early 1960s to similarly link the Eastern Bloc television corporations. The coordination centre for that institution is in Prague. Via Inter-

vision, a direct satellite link is made with the Far East. In South America a similar system with a coordination centre is currently being set up, which will improve the flow of news items both within the continent and from it to the rest of the world. We can quite rightly say that Eurovision developed in leaps and bounds. The eight national television corporations with about 10 million potential viewers during the Television Weeks back in 1954 have spread into a

network of 33 national corporations reaching a total audience of 300 million people: 100 million viewers in Europe; 200 million connected to the television networks of North Africa and the Middle East that transmit Eurovision.

It is a moot point whether Eurovision actually played or might play an important role in efforts to unify Europe. Sports competitions and similar events would appear to



favour nationalism. Programmes have been broadcast about a working-class family in Sweden and in other countries in a bid to bring Europeans together: the lack of interest was pitiful, yet perhaps we were disheartened too quickly. However, 'Eurovision' does not imply the expression of a community of different views from a united Europe but is merely a hybrid of the words 'Europe' and 'television' created by the British journalist George

Campey. Neither the EBU nor its subsidiary Eurovision can force the member organizations to accept what doesn't suit them. The freedom to decide is safeguarded for each of them. And yet the choice of programmes on the elections to the Council of Europe may just create new opportunities for this.

Although Eurovision has thrived to the point of being, as has been said, the European institution that works

the best, this is not so much due to a constant unity of views as to the will of members, the authorities in each individual country and the telecom companies, in particular in Switzerland that did their utmost to ensure the smooth running of the Transalpine link at the right time and without a hitch.

Given the results, a few bars of Charpentier's 'Triumphal March' would appear to be quite justified.



30 years

EBU Press Release, 31 May 1984.

On 6 June 1954, television audiences of eight European countries were able to watch live coverage of the Narcissus Festival from Montreux in Switzerland, and an address from Pope Pius XII at the Vatican. It was the beginning of a great adventure: that of Eurovision. Since that date, the now famous Eurovision star-burst emblem, accompanied by the soaring triumphal notes from the *Te Deum* of Marc-Antoine Charpentier has become familiar to millions of people throughout Europe and elsewhere. As Eurovision enters its 31st year on 6 June 1984, people are no longer amazed at seeing pictures of events coming to them live from far away countries, even from the Moon, and being able to participate indirectly in the world's great moments, whether happy or tragic, or even just distracting.

The idea for these international exchanges of television programmes, this programme 'stock exchange', had long been in the minds of certain people who were aware of the extraordinary possibilities of communication offered by the still

embryonic medium, and the complex problems – legal, financial and technical – that this new method of broadcasting would raise were foreseen by those who understood the prodigious development that was in store for it. As far back as 1947, the late Marcel Bezençon, then director of Radio Lausanne in Switzerland, had submitted a scheme to UNESCO for a 'television programme exchange'. The creation of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) in 1950 was to provide the instrument for establishing this.

The EBU, "a professional association of broadcasting organizations which aims to promote cooperation between its members and with broadcasting organizations worldwide" was the natural support for the Eurovision it created. It has forged over the years a mechanism which has opened the way to vast multilateral transmissions in Europe and between continents.

This was the pre-history of Eurovision.

Improvised link-ups

1950: On 27 August, the BBC made a TV broadcast across the Channel from Calais using its own equipment.

1952: Between 8 and 14 July, tests were carried out by the BBC and the then RTF with a view to setting up a TV relay between Paris and London.

1953: On 2 June, the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, broadcast in the United Kingdom, was transmitted live to France, Belgium, the Netherlands and West Germany. This was a one-day technical achievement which created an immense interest amongst the public. A start had been made and the germ of Eurovision was sown.

1953: There was a rapid expansion of television in European countries where it already existed, and in many other countries it was beginning to get underway. The individual television services could not exist in isolation: there was a need to organize international programme exchanges so that TV could truly become a "window on the world". The EBU took up the problem: its Technical Committee began studies on the technical development of international television links. A study

group on programmes (Television 53) felt that there would be considerable interest in seeing the provisional relay installations become permanent.

1954: The technical and programme experts of some EBU Members organized a “1954 TV Summer Season” in which eight television services could participate (Belgium, Denmark, Federal Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Switzerland). This Season, known as the “Lille Experiment” (it was in this city that the original coordination centre was located) began on 6 June 1954 with coverage of the Narcissus Festival and an outside broadcast from the Vatican and continued for a whole month with the transmission of the principal matches of the World Football Championship and eight programmes of a national character.

A network

What was only an experiment in June 1954 has become over the past 30 years a stable institution with an efficient terrestrial network, with worldwide ramification by satellite and the application of new technologies.

EBU member organizations were involved in the task of expanding Eurovision by contributing to the specialized working parties in order to solve problems of many kinds raised by the preparation and supervision of TV programmes.

There were urgent problems of a technical nature to be dealt with in two essential stages. Firstly, there was the organization and putting into operation in January 1956 of the International Eurovision Control Centre (EVC).

Brussels, home of the EBU Technical Centre, then occupied a strategic communications position between the embryonic television services of Europe.

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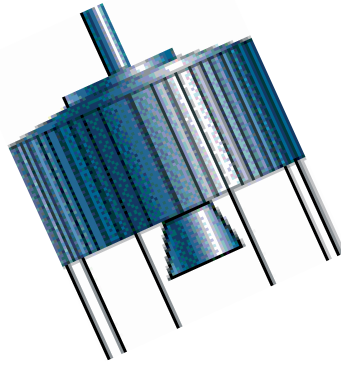


The Control Centre, located in the tower of the BRT/RTBF

The Control Centre, located originally in the dome of the Palais de Justice, is now housed in the new broadcasting centre of Belgian radio and television (BRT/RTBF). As the nerve centre of Eurovision, the role of the EVC is to supervise and switch programmes from various origins.

At the same time, a Permanent Eurovision Network was set up. This consisted of the leasing of the sound and vision circuits necessary for international transmissions. The EBU began the first stage in 1962 by the permanent leasing, for the common use of EBU members participating in Eurovision, of the most frequently used sound circuits and the corresponding control circuits. As from 1 January 1968, Eurovision has used its own Vision Circuit Network which increases in size each year with the addition of further circuits.

Proper maintenance had to be organized to ensure the quality of all these circuits; the vision circuits had to be adapted to colour and transcoders and standards converters had to be created. And to make the exchanges flow as smoothly as possible, operating rules had to be drawn up.



The multiplicity of the transmissions and the need to process them as quickly as possible, sometimes even immediately, led to the organization of a system of computerized remote switching of various sections of the Permanent Network.

Here are some significant figures: in the first year of Eurovision there was an average of one transmission per week. In 1983, the average number of programmes originated was three a day. In 1954, Eurovision reached only eight Western European countries. In 1984, 34 television services from 27 European and Mediterranean Basin countries are linked to Eurovision by terrestrial or satellite circuits. This vast network serves over 123 million receivers, representing an audience of some 370 million viewers. The Network is also linked to Intervision (the network of the Socialist Bloc countries) and to a great number of services outside the European Broadcasting Area. In 1984, the length of the Eurovision Permanent Vision Network is 17,500km and there are over 60 injection points.

Unceasingly, the Technical Centre through the EBU's technical working parties, is improving the Network, extending it and perfecting the transmission techniques so that the whole world can be presented to viewers.

Operation

While the technique was being developed, legal problems were dealt with and financial rules were established. Eurovision began with the development of programmes on a European basis but this has now been extended worldwide. The administrative coordination of the exchanges is the responsibility of the Television Programme Department of the EBU through its Eurovision Programme Division and News and Special Operations Division. A very thorough organization has been built

up to collect and distribute all information on programmes or news subjects offered by member organizations to be injected into the Eurovision Network, to establish precise timetables, to determine commentators' positions at the point of origin when necessary, and to settle financial questions.

Programmes

Exchanges of sports programmes are of great importance: major events like the Olympic Games – the first to be covered being the Winter Olympic Games from Cortina d'Ampezzo in Italy in January 1956. All Winter and Summer Olympic Games have been transmitted since then and in Summer 1984, viewers will see the Olympics from Los Angeles in the United States. Another major event seen regularly on Eurovision is the World Football Championship, the last being held in Spain in 1982.

A firm favourite with viewers is the annual *Eurovision Song Contest*, relayed for the first time in 1956 by 10 countries and seen in 1984 (5 May) by 27 countries.

On 25 June 1967 a landmark in Eurovision's development was a transmission using the entire geostationary satellite network of Intelsat for the programme *Our World* and this was repeated on a larger scale in 1971 with the programme *Children of the World*. Other types of programmes seen through Eurovision include concerts, variety shows, ballet, and opera, etc.

News Exchanges

EBU member organizations, aware that one of their most important tasks was to inform the public on the main events taking place in the world – a public more and more avid to know and participate in the life of its time, very soon concerned





themselves with a regular exchange of television news.

The creation of the Eurovision Network was a rapid vehicle for the transmission of television news from one country to another. From October 1958 to May 1959, experimental exchanges were set up between five organizations and continued on a regular basis from June 1959 to the middle of 1961. There was first of all one daily news exchange (1961), then two (1968) and then a third (1974), in the afternoon, early evening and noon, respectively.

As from 1965 collaboration began with Intervision and in 1966 an agreement was signed with the international news-film agencies to enable more material to be injected into the Network. Through satellite links, the Eurovision Network was extended to other continents. An EBU Television News Coordination Bureau was opened in New York in 1970 to organize material from North America. In 1971 there started, firstly on an experimental basis, a regular news exchange with the countries of Latin America (belonging to the Organización de la Televisión Iberoamericana – OTI). Since 1974, a regular exchange has been inaugurated with the broadcasting organizations of the

Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU).

Finally, in February 1977, the satellite EVN was born, linking simultaneously the ASBU countries and those of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) to the daily Eurovision news exchanges (EVNs) by regular transmissions via the Atlantic and Indian Ocean satellites.

For those responsible for the EBU's television news, the objective is to receive news material from everywhere and to distribute it the same day on a worldwide scale; they are concerned with rapid, effective and reliable information. They collaborate closely with their opposite numbers in the television services of EBU member organizations, utilizing to the maximum the possibilities of the Eurovision Network and satellite links.

The figures speak for themselves: from 1,134 items used in some 300 transmissions in 1964, to 7,943 items in 1,231 transmissions in 1983. The news traffic represents some 60% of Eurovision transmissions. At the moment, an average of 22 news items per day reach Eurovision services, plus the American networks and the other

broadcasting unions such as OIRT, OTI, ASBU and ABU.

The EBU is also concerned with mounting special operations for such events as the US Party Conventions and Presidential Elections, and space epics. These operations, which often require teams on the spot, are prepared well in advance and employ all the resources and experience which has been acquired over the years since Eurovision was born in 1954.

If one wishes to sum up Eurovision, it could be said that this creation, born for Europe, is no longer simply Europe; it is also the world. It is the catalyst for television exchanges on a worldwide scale which provides a marvellous instrument of mutual enrichment in the service of the viewing public. In the words of Marcel Bezençon, one of Eurovision's founding fathers, "It's a simple idea which succeeded."

40 years

Noble Wilson

In the beginning . . .

. . . Eurovision was a visionary concept, rooted in the idea of the public service, but in its birth were elements of practical need and mutual self-interest. To detect its roots, one has to look at the writings of the late

Marcel Bezençon, when he was programme director of Radio Lausanne. In 1948, he proposed to the EBU's forerunner, the IBU, that there should be a system of international pro-programme exchanges.

The IBU suffered the fate of a divided Europe, but, undaunted, Bezençon, who in 1950 had become director general, now put forward an idea for television programme exchanges: "One of the problems that will crop up before long," he wrote, "is that of the most economical way to run television. It is clear that the various



Celebrations in Calais

national organizations will have to have recourse to each other's output in order not to weigh down their own budgets with continual programme production."

His proposal was met with what he described as "peevish skepticism" by his colleagues in the EBU "for whom programmes were a private matter, not to be meddled with by foreigners." But gradually, good sense prevailed, and in the spring of 1951 the Administrative Council of the Union agreed to set up a study group with a view to creating a system of exchanges in due course. This decision may have been at least partly influenced by an experiment mounted by the BBC Television Service in 1950: a complete outside broadcast unit was shipped across the English Channel, and on 27 August a live relay of *Calais en fête* created the first live television link between the United Kingdom and continental Europe. The quality and stability of the pictures were not wonderful, and the tower of the Town Hall seemed to sway and shimmer. However, the experiment did prove that television signals could be microwaved across water.

In 1951, Jean d'Arcy, director of French Television and Cecil McGivern, director of BBC Television, decided to organize a week of Franco-British programme exchanges. In July of the following year, nearly 14 hours of live programmes were relayed between the RTF and the BBC. To achieve this, the engineers had to find a way of converting the picture line-standards of each service to that of the other – an electronic barrier which had sometimes seemed as much of an obstacle as the Alps. The solution which, in more sophisticated form, was in daily use until 1963, was simple: a camera of one standard was set up in front of a high-quality display, carrying the picture of the other standard. In Paris the 819/405 line converter was installed in the

southern pillar of the Eiffel Tower, which was the starting point of the 475km chain of microwave links to the roof of the Senate House of London University.

The success of these relays encouraged the participants to plan further ventures, but before these could be realized there came the announcement of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, an event which would need all the resources and staff of BBC Television's Outside Broadcast Department, and which was to be the occasion for the first multinational television relay. This project was supported enthusiastically by the RTF, which not only set up a switching centre in Cassel to route the signals to both Paris and Breda in the Netherlands, but also requested no fewer than 27 sound circuits for coverage of the event on its television and radio networks.

Thousands of people in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany joined the people of the United Kingdom, who, for the first time in history, were able to see their monarch crowned.

And so it was that in 1953, a piece of ancient ceremony and pageantry finally proved that television could reach out across Europe and break the confining technical chains of varying line-standards.

The tide of international cooperation was running; Europe was recovering from the miseries and hardships that were the legacy of the Second World War. People were beginning to travel. Trade was moving across borders. An international television relay was very much in the spirit of the age, and the reactions of the audience reflected the mood: a French viewer wrote to ask for "more programmes to strengthen the ties that bind us." A German believed that television would "bring nations closer together." And the owner of a German restaurant, who had

installed a receiver, and filled every seat, wished there could be a Coronation every day!

Such enthusiasms were not shared by everyone: the technical cost of building international links was enormous; artists and musicians unions were extremely wary about their members' performances being seen in other countries.

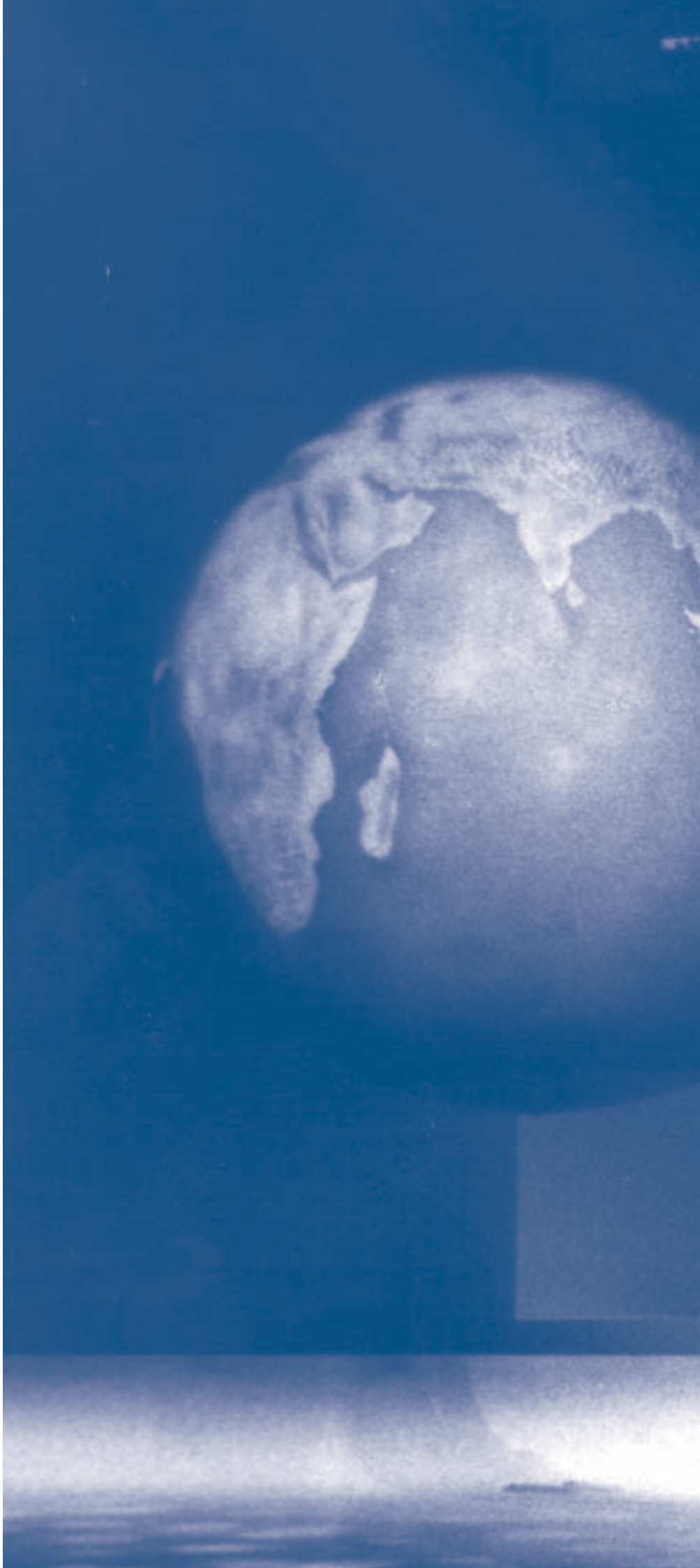
In September 1953, Marcel Bezençon, who was to become chairman of the EBU Programme Committee, chaired a conference in London attended by the programme directors of the Belgian, British, Dutch, French, German, Italian and Swiss television services. Building on what the Coronation relay had shown to be possible, they decided to organize a Summer Season of European Television Programme Exchanges to be held from 6 June to 4 July 1954. That decision set in motion a great deal of activity: international links had to be constructed – and that meant hours of discussion with cautious telecommunications companies; the programmes had to be planned; and the question of artists' and musicians' performing rights had to be resolved. In fact, a meeting of the International Federations of Actors, Musicians, and Variety Artists resulted in a banning of a number of the scheduled programmes: a *Fête de Nuit* from Versailles and a programme from the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen were among the casualties.

By its very nature, television wants and needs to move quickly, to communicate. It took a number of years to become less impatient with the workings of established bodies; and for the latter to come to understand the needs of television. The fact that agreement in so many areas was eventually reached is the result of countless hours of discussion and negotiation by the members and the Permanent Services of the EBU.

In the spring of 1954, a press release after a meeting of the programme directors in Cannes officially announced the plans for a Summer Season of 18 programmes to be transmitted to and from the eight participating services: Belgium (RTB/BRT), Denmark (DR), Germany (ARD), France (RTF), Italy (RAI), the Netherlands (NTS), Switzerland (SSR) and the United Kingdom (BBC). Nine of these programmes were on a subject which was to become a major attraction: football. The World Cup was taking place in Basle that summer, and Marcel Bezençon negotiated the television rights with the Swiss Football Association Chairman, M. Thomma. 'How much are you offering?' said the latter. 'Nothing' said Bezençon. 'Are you joking?' asked Thomma, Bezençon was not joking, but in the end he offered a guarantee to make up any deficit in gate money to a maximum of 10,000 Swiss francs (less than 2,500 dollars at the time). The contrast with the tens of millions of dollars paid out by the EBU for football transmission rights today could not be greater.

To ensure the smooth running of the Season, a temporary coordination and control centre of a very basic nature was set up in the belfry of the town hall in Lille. Here, Jean d'Arcy, together with Stéphane Mallein from the EBU and Imlay Newbiggin-Watts of the BBC, manned a battery of telephones to steer the programmes through this prototype Eurovision network, which extended over 6,400 km through 41 relay stations and three converters, feeding 44 transmitters.

For the record: the word 'Eurovision' was coined by a British journalist, George Campey. Writing in the London *Evening Standard* on 5 November 1951, about a BBC recorded programme which had been shown on Dutch television, he explained that: "Eurovision is a system of collaboration among the West





European countries, including Britain, by which television programmes will become interchangeable.”

The first programme came from Montreux, Switzerland. It was a relay of the annual Narcissus Festival, a parade of 25 floats and a dozen bands, yodlers, singers and 85,000 Swiss francs’ worth of flowers. An hour and a half later, the cameras of RAI-Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI) toured the Vatican, and His Holiness Pope Pius XII spoke (in Latin) of the great potential as well as the dangers of television, before pronouncing a blessing in six languages.

In the days that followed, there were relays from the Palio at Sienna, a party for refugee children in the Netherlands, an athletics meeting in Glasgow, a Youth Camp on the Rhine with Konrad Adenauer as guest, an agricultural show from Denmark, a parade in the Grand’Place in Brussels; the British Royal Naval Reserve on parade before Queen Elizabeth II; and the Richmond Horse Show in London. And, of course, the World Cup matches. It was a gamble. If the audiences had turned away, if there had been massive technical failure, if press comment had been highly critical, the momentum would not have been sustainable, and the story of television in Europe might have been very different.

There is a small number of people who have each been called the ‘father’ of Eurovision. The truth is that this was a case of multiple paternity.

There was the vision of Marcel Bezençon and the *entente cordiale* between Jean d’Arcy and Cecil McGivern – they were the three foundation stones on which Eurovision stands. But that first network could not have been built and made to work without the experience and managerial drive of

Martin Pulling of the BBC. Then there was a small family of like-minded executives: Edouard Haas of Switzerland, Bert Leysen and Louis-Philippe Kammans of Belgium, Heinz von Plato of Germany, Sergio Pugliese of Italy, Jens Lawaetz of Denmark and Wim Rengelink of the Netherlands. If they all believed in Eurovision, they also knew that working together would help their own organizations, both financially and in programme terms.

At their first meeting after the Summer Season, they “noted with satisfaction the great success of these experiments, both with the public and the press of the eight participating countries.” But it had been a strain: elsewhere Cecil McGivern referred to ‘Neurovision’. If not without reserve, the bulk of press comment was encouraging: 92% of French viewers were satisfied, and 88% wanted more. The German press thought that this kind of exchange was expensive, but that such experiments should be made. In Italy, Eurovision was thought to be something that would sell receivers and the World Cup relays had been especially popular. The British press was quite fulsome: Eurovision “could forge the first genuine link between the peoples of Europe.” The experiment was “not only history – it was evidence that worldwide TV cannot be far away” (it turned out to be 13 years). *The Times* of London also approved but added loftily that “international understanding will not be forwarded by the exchange of visual news, unless there is also [. . .] some appreciation of the cultures with which the events are informed”. There was even some comment in the American press, which said that Eurovision was “helping to make a united Europe”.

And then . . .

It was a good beginning, and one which had to be followed up if the

evident gains were not to be dissipated. The Programme Committee was already planning a second experimental period for the winter of 1954, in which there would be exchanges of normal programmes between neighbouring countries, supplemented by some special transmissions involving the whole network. Again, about half of these were to be sports events; the others included opera, a mass from St Peter’s on Christmas Eve, ballroom dancing, a motor show and a grape harvest festival. Live programme exchanges, however, were not the only concern of the Committee. Bezençon’s concept had been as much about films and recordings as about live relays. Nine members agreed to produce a film series called *The Great Cities of Europe*. Each film of 15 minutes would be sent to all the other partners, so for the price of one, each would have a series of eight programmes. For the smaller and less wealthy networks, this was a welcome innovation, and one which has been tried in varying forms, and with varying success, over the years.

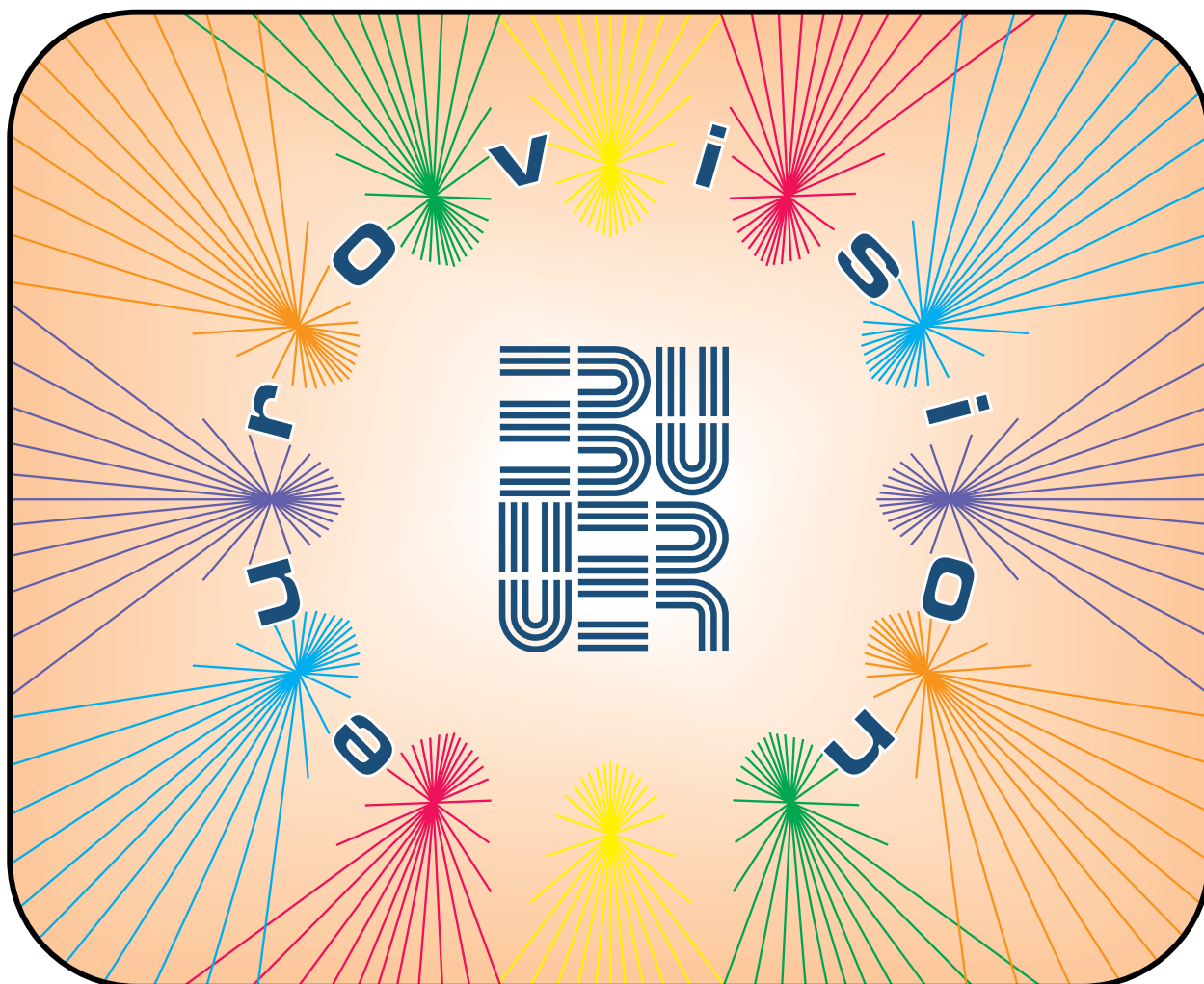
The mainspring

The minutes of that early meeting record discussion on two subjects which were of more than just passing interest:

- *Television news exchanges*
Thought to be very important as a means of accelerating the supply of information on topical subjects. It was urged that every organization should provide itself with telex equipment.
- *Relations with sports promoters*
It was noted that it would be necessary to consider opening discussions at international level with the international sports federations.

Eurovision had already identified the two areas which were to become its

mainspring. In practical terms, it also began to lay out the principles and the technical requirements for international exchanges. One of these was that there should be a mutual provision of technical facilities, such as monitors, microphones and telephones at commentary positions. There was also agreement on the ways in which Eurovision vision and sound circuits should be identified and handled. Eurovision transmissions were to be introduced by a 'panel' and with music – the *Te Deum* of Marc-Antoine Charpentier has accompanied the varying forms of the Eurovision star-burst for 40 years.



THE CO

After the success of the 1954 International Week of Exchanges, it was felt there should be an annual television event. The question was, what?

In July 1954 the Week of Exchanges climaxed in live coverage of the soccer World Cup.

After this success, Marcel Bezençon, Chair of the Programme Committee and Director General of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, his Vice-Chairs Jean d'Arcy, Director of French Television, and René C. McCall, BBC Deputy Director of Television, were convinced that something new had to be done every year to promote television.

In late January 1955 the EBU Programme Committee meeting in Monte Carlo approved the idea of two schemes concocted by its Bureau: a European song contest and a Eurovision cup for amateur variety artists, *The Top Town Programme*.

The latter project, less convincing than the first one, fell by the wayside and the EBU General Assembly, presided over by Sir Ian Jacob, BBC Director General, meeting in the Corsini Palace in Rome on 19 October 1955, approved the organization of a Grand Prix of European Song, to be staged, at the Swiss



Contest

delegation's suggestion, at Lugano in spring 1956.

Rules

Léo Wallenborn, Director of the EBU Administrative office, drew up the Rules: "The purpose of the Contest is to encourage the creation of original songs and stimulate a spirit of competition among authors and composers through international comparison".

The Planning Subgroup chaired by Edouard Haas, Director of Swiss Television, then introduced a whole catalogue of amendments.

The idea of a repeat performance of the song with piano accompaniment was rejected, since it would merely result in an undesirable and "non-televisual" lengthening of the programme.

Also thrown out was a request that each participating broadcaster be authorized to seat its own producer at the control desk. According to the brand-new principles of the infant Eurovision, the originating broadcaster must assume full responsibility for the programme. The involvement of a foreign colleague would anyway "inevitably disrupt the organization of production work". One must

avoid the danger of turning the competition into a producers' contest; each performer should be presented on screen in a uniform way to give all the songs an equal chance.

Thumbs down likewise for shortening the rehearsals to two days: "three days will be scarcely sufficient to properly organize the staging of fourteen entries".

Further negated was the idea of endowing the contest with cash prizes, since:

- no request for a credit had been lodged with the EBU Administrative Council (!),
- experience at the San Remo Song Contest showed that the award of a cash prize was in no way a condition for the success of the contest, "in which the music publishers of all participants' countries would certainly not fail to take an interest" (!).

Another idea was mooted, which has taken hold: decentralization of the international jury. It was not possible to put this into effect for the first contest, since it was difficult or even impossible to obtain a sufficient number of telephone lines in Lugano

and the programme already involved attendance by a large number of commentators. The EBU Technical Centre in Brussels subsequently solved this problem by setting up a radial voting network.

Finally, after hard bargaining, the Planning Subgroup decided not to twin the European song contest with the Eurovision amateurs cup. The *Top Town Programme* was dead and buried.

In the end the amended Rules were adopted and provided that each participating broadcaster (not more than one per country) could enter one or two original songs lasting 3–3 1/2 minutes and that the backing orchestra would comprise 24 musicians. The titular conductor would be from the Radiosa Ensemble of Italian Swiss Radio, but each broadcaster could appoint a conductor to accompany its star.

The jury consisted of two persons per participating broadcaster, who would judge the entries on the small screen in a situation approximating as closely as possible to family viewing.

"Presentation in the best technical conditions possible" was provided for in the text. Was there mistrust of

the Swiss, who had nevertheless proved their worth at Montreux and during the soccer World Cup – or was it just a form of words designed to reassure the competitors?

The jury's task was simple. Of the fourteen entries each juror had to choose the best ten in his/her opinion and classify them in order of preference by awarding 10 points to the entry they considered best, 9 to the next and so on. The winner was chosen by adding up the points awarded. Since the individual ranking was based on each juror's individual tastes and thus could be suspected of partiality, the losers could explain their defeat by "jury incompetence"!

With the passage of time there were attempts to enlarge juries and invent more sophisticated voting procedures. This never completely allayed the suspicions, and even today there are malicious spirits who see obscure trickery behind the announcement and analysis of the results.

Lugano

The choice of Lugano was motivated by the fact that the radio studio had a permanent light music ensemble whose members were part of the SSR establishment and not unionized, thus shielding the contest against costly claims from musicians for television transmission. However, at the time Lugano had no television. The viewers of Ticino received RAI programmes. So Switzerland's one and only OB van and crew were despatched from Zürich.

With this contest the EBU wanted to pull off a major coup at European level and was urged to publicize the event widely in dailies and magazines, and to select the national entry via public eliminators. Discreet allusions to potential interest among the music publishers opened the door to support from the light music industry.

In other words television represented an effective source of outside support, since the record sleeve could carry the notice "Grand Prix of the Eurovision Song Contest".

Rehearsals for the first Eurovision Song Contest began at the Lugano Teatro-Kursaal on 21 May 1956. The Radiosa orchestra, augmented by a few strings from Italian Swiss Radio, was conducted by Maestro Fernando Paggi. The show was directed by Franco Marazzi, a young producer of light entertainment programmes who was later to become the first director of Italian Swiss Television. Franco Marazzi had the theatre filled with flowers, to lend warmth to a setting televised in black and white.

The presenter was an experienced anchor from Italian Swiss Radio, Lohengrin Filippo, who, despite his Wagnerian first name, had a definite flair for light entertainment and polyglot gifts which enabled him to get the show across to an international audience.

Fourteen songs were entered for the contest, which played to a packed house. Was the audience there for the still unknown Eurovision, or for the – very popular – Radiosa orchestra and the star vocalists?

The organizers at Italian Swiss Radio had drawn up the following running order: Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg, Italy.

Transmission on the Eurovision network took place on 24 May 1956 from 21:00 to 22:30, relayed live by ten countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom). Seven TV networks took the broadcast live and thirteen deferred.

The jury picked as the winner the Swiss entry 'Refrains', lyrics by Emile Gardaz and music by Géo

Voumard, performed by Lys Assia, who received no personal award: winners' medals were introduced only later.

'Refrains', selected by national public eliminators, was largely uncontested because the song was really the best and, unlike later winning entries, was destined to become a genuine international hit – even without wholehearted support from the record industry, whose attention at the time was focused on the tricky changeover from 78s to 33rpm.

During her encore Lys Assia had a memory lapse and ended the song with a series of "la-la-la-la's", the singer's emotion communicating itself to the live audience and the outside world.

Géo Voumard and Emile Gardaz only heard of their success next day . . . that evening they had dined with friends far from Lugano!

After this first successful try-out and the favourable response, the Programme Committee decided to put the contest on again. It requested a re-examination of the voting procedure, the vote-counting having proved too time-consuming.

One far-sighted member of the Committee already thought it might be an idea to have the television audience participate in the jury.



The songs



Netherlands

'DE VOGELS VAN HOLLAND'

Lyrics: Annie Schmidt.

Music: Cor Lemaine.

Performed by: Jetty Paerl.

Conductor: Fernando Paggi

'VOOR GOED VOORBIJ'

Lyrics and score: Jelle de Vries.

Performed by: Corry Brokken.

Conductor: Fernando Paggi

Switzerland

'DAS ALTE KARUSSELL'

Lyrics and score: Georg Betz-Stahl.

Performed by: Lys Assia (with backing group Radiosa).

Conductor: Fernando Paggi

'REFRAINS'

Lyrics: Émile Gardaz. Music: Géo Voumard. Performed by: Lys Assia (with backing group Radiosa).

Conductor: Fernando Paggi

Belgium

'MESSIEURS LES NOYÉS DE LA SEINE'

Lyrics: Robert Montai.

Music: Jean Miret and Jack Say.

Performed by: Fred Leclercq.

Conductor: Léo Souris

'LE PLUS BEAU JOUR DE MA VIE'

Lyrics: David Bée. Music: Claude Alix. Singer: Mony Marc.

Conductor: Léo Souris

Germany

'DAS LIED VOM GROSSEN GLUECK'

Lyrics and music: Walter Andreas Schwarz. Performed by: Walter Andreas Schwarz.

Conductor: Fernando Paggi

'SO GEHT DAS JEDE NACHT'

Lyrics: Peter Mosser. Music: Lothar Olias. Singer: Freddy Quinn.

Performed by: Fernando Paggi

France

'LE TEMPS PERDU'

Lyrics: Rachèle Thoreau.

Music: André Lodge.

Performed by: Mathé Altéry.

Conductor: Franck Pourcel

'IL EST LÀ'

Lyrics and score: Simone Vallauris.

Performed by: Dany Dauberson.

Conductor: Franck Pourcel

Luxembourg

'NE CROIS PAS'

Lyrics and score: Christian Guittreau.

Performed by: Michèle Arnaud.

Conductor: Jacques Lassry

'LES AMANTS DE MINUIT'

Lyrics: Simone Laurencin.

Music: Pierre Lambry.

Performed by: Michèle Arnaud.

Conductor: Jacques Lassry

Italy

'APRITE LE FINESTRE'

Lyrics: Pinchi.

Music: Virgilio Panzuti.

Performed by: Franca Raimondi.

Conductor: Gian Stellari

'AMAMI SE VUOI'

Lyrics: Mario Panzeri.

Music: Vittorio Mascheroni.

Performed by: Tonina Torrielli.

Conductor: Gian Stellari



2005

50th

When you hear “Eurovision”,
you think of . . .



. . . the Eurovision Song Contest, an idea that germinated in 1954 through to 1956.

1956

The event is held in Lugano, Switzerland. Seven countries participated in this first contest. Each participant was allowed to submit two songs in the language they wanted. The only restriction: the performance was limited to 3½ minutes. The winner was chosen by a jury consisting of two delegates from each country who could award between 1 and 10 points. The winner is Lys Assia for Switzerland with the song ‘Refrain’.

1957

The Eurovision Grand Prix moves to West Germany, the new hosting country. The rule that determines that the winner’s home country will be hosting the next contest did not exist then!

New:

- only one song per participant
- the scoreboard enters the scene

Corrie Broekmans (Netherlands) wins with ‘Net als toen’.

1958

From now on the winning country hosts the next year’s Eurovision Grand Prix, unless there are exceptional reasons. France wins with André’s Claveau’s ‘Dors mon amour’.

1959

The Netherlands wins again, this time it’s Teddy Scholten with ‘Een beetje’.

1960

France has a second win with ‘Tom Pillibi’, performed by Jacqueline Boyer.

1961

There are 16 singers competing, and its Luxembourg with Jean-Claude Pascal and his song ‘Nous, les amoureux’ that wins.

1962

A new scoring system is introduced. Belgium, Spain, Austria and the Netherlands leave empty-handed; Isabelle Aubret from France makes it to the top with ‘Un premier amour’.

1963

Nana Mouskouri (Luxembourg) and Françoise Hardy (Monaco)

contest

enter but only reach the 7th and 5th places respectively as Grethe and Jorgen Ingmann from Denmark win with 'Dansevise'.

1964

To make the contest more exciting the voting system is changed again: each jury can only award 9 points. Udo Jürgens (for Austria) makes his debut and does not let his 5th place put him off – he takes part again the following year. However, this time he can only congratulate Gigliola Cinquetti from Italy for her song 'Non ho l'età'.

1965

Luxembourg wins. Thanks to France Gall with her song 'Poupée de cire, poupée de son' by Serge Gainsbourg.

1966

From now on all contestants must sing their song in their own language. This works well for Austria and, as if he had known, Udo Jürgens sang 'Merci, chérie' ('Thank you').

1967

Sandie Shaw for the United Kingdom sings her way to victory with 'Puppet on a string'. This was something Switzerland unfortunately didn't manage – 0 points!

1968

Massiel, Spain, makes it onto the medallists' podium with 'La, la, la' – beating Cliff Richard's 'Congratulations'.

1969

An extraordinary year: 4 out of the 16 countries share the Grand Prix – France (Frida Boccara with 'Un jour, un enfant'), Netherlands (Lenny Kuhr with 'De troubadour'), Spain (Salomé with 'Vivo cantando') and UK (Lulu with 'Boom bang a bang').

1970

The Netherlands is the host country but it's Dana from Ireland that celebrates her victory with 'All kinds of everything'.

1971

The voting system is amended: a new jury constitution and the award of 1 to 10 points per song. 'Un banc, un arbre, une rue' is a winner for Séverine of Monaco.

1972

'Après toi' ('After you') and so indeed were all the other singers after the performance of Vicky Leandros (Luxembourg).

1973

Change of rules: Everyone can sing in the language of their

choice. For the second consecutive year, Luxembourg makes it to the very top with Anne-Marie David and the song 'Tu te reconnaitras'.

1974

It's ABBA year. 'Waterloo' turns out to be anything but a defeat. Sweden wins, and ABBA was and will be the all time favourite of the contest.

1975

A new scoring system. 1–8, 10, 12. It's the hour for Teach-in from the Netherlands with: 'Ding Dinger Dong'.

1976

Brotherhood of Man for the UK wins with the plea 'Save Your Kisses for Me'.

1977

Another change of direction: all contestants have to sing in their native language again. Marie Myriam, France, wins with 'L'oiseau et l'enfant'.

1978

Israel's Ihzar Cohen and the Alphabeta wins with 'A-Ba-Ni-Bi'.

1979

'Hallelujah', Israel does it again with Gali Atari & Milk and Honey.

1980

Morocco enters the contest. Johnny Logan and Chorus & Sax win for Ireland with 'What's another year'.

1981

Egypt broadcasts the contest for the first time. Bucks Fizz takes the trophy for the UK with 'Making your mind up'.

1982

The world of pop needs 'Ein bisschen Frieden' ('A little bit of peace'). Nicole takes the prize for Germany.

1983

Australia broadcasts the contest for the first time. Luxembourg is the winner with Corinne Hermes and her song 'Si la vie est un cadeau'.

1984

Herrey's rendition of 'Diggi-loo-diggi-ley' wins for Sweden.

1985

This is the first time the Eurovision Song Contest is broadcast via satellite. The Bobbysocks from Norway let it swing and get the cup with 'La det swinge'.

1986

'J'aime la vie': 15-year-old Sandra Kim wins first place for Belgium.

1987

Remember 1980: same country, same star, same place – only a different title. Johnny Logan is the first artist to win the ESC for the second time, this time with 'Hold me now'.

1988

And the winner is... Switzerland! Céline Dion makes it possible with 'Ne partez pas sans moi'. The rest is history.

1989

Another new rule: only those over 16 can enter the contest. Riva and 'Rock Me' wins for Yugoslavia.

1990

A new idea: postcards presenting the participants are introduced. Toto Cutugno and his song 'Insieme 1992' had no reason to fear the context. First place!

1991

France and Sweden are level on points. In the end, Carola wins with 'Fangad av en stormvind', leaving Amina singing 'C'est le dernier qui a parlé qui a raison' behind.

1992

Johnny Logan: Take 3! Ireland asserts itself again with a song by Johnny Logan, 'Why me?' but this time the singer is Linda Martin.

1993

And Ireland's run on luck continues. It earns its 5th victory thanks to Niamh Kavanagh with 'In your eyes'.

1994

It's almost becoming routine: for the third time in a row, the Irish win when Paul Harrington and Charlie McGettigan pull it off with 'Rock'n' roll kids'.

1995

'Nocturne' grants Secret Garden its victory. Norway goes into raptures!

1996

The number of participants is limited to a maximum of 23 countries. Back to Ireland again! The 7th victory in the history of the contest is won by Eimear Quinn with 'The Voice'.

1997

A bit of variety at the top: Katrina and the Waves take the next event to the UK with 'Love Shine a Light'.

1998

Televoting is introduced in the countries with the necessary infrastructure. With 'Diva' Dana International struts onto the podium in her high heels for Israel!

1999

Change of rules once again: contestants can choose the language they want to sing in. 'Take me to your heaven': Sweden's Charlotte Nilsson's plea was answered – first place in the contest paradise.

2000

The contest goes multimedia: for the first time the event is broadcast live on the Internet; all fans in Asia can now be reached via permanent facilities; and a commercial CD featuring all 24 songs comes out. The Olsen Brothers from Denmark fly to first place 'On the Wings of Love'.

2001

Held in front of an audience of 38,000 at Parken Stadium in Copenhagen, the biggest event to date, 'Everybody' wins for Tanel Padar, Dave Benton and 2XL from Estonia.

2002

The number of participating countries is raised to 24. 'I wanna' and want she did: thanks to Marie N the contest travels from Estonia to Latvia.

2003

From Riga, Sertab Erener with 'Everyway that I can' takes the contest to Istanbul.

2004

A first: the contest will be held on two days: a qualifying round and a finale. A new record: 36 countries participate.

