# Eurovision censorship sparks cultural clashes over provocative lyrics and language



When the winner of this year’s Eurovision Song Contest is declared, it will not be the final highlight of the night. As the event takes place in Basel, viewers will be treated to performances featuring playful and provocative lyrics that skirt the edges of decency as defined by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). This year's entrants, including a scantily clad Lithuanian performer and an Australian with suggestive aspirations, illustrate a recurring theme of Eurovision: the balance between celebration and censorship.

Reflecting on last year's contest, which was overshadowed by global political tensions relating to the Gaza conflict, many artists this year appear keen to shift the focus back to the festival's roots in pop culture and hedonism. Officially, the EBU’s rules prohibit lyrics deemed “obscene” or offensive, yet the real interpretation of what constitutes indecency varies significantly. While singing about sexual themes is generally acceptable, explicit naming is where the line is drawn—particularly in English.

A case in point is Miriana Conte from Malta, whose original song titled “Kant” was renamed “Serving” after the EBU objected to its phonetic resemblance to a vulgar English term. While “kant” translates to “singing” in Maltese, it was deemed inappropriate for an international audience. The 24-year-old performer conveyed a message of self-acceptance and celebration of identity through her original lyrics, stating, “It’s a celebration of embracing who you are.” Interestingly, this alteration came after complaints lodged by the BBC rather than any dissent from her home country, highlighting the complex dynamics of cross-cultural perception of vulgarity.

In the musical landscape of Eurovision, words that provoke less controversy in various Romance languages often carry heavier implications in English. The C-word particularly stands out, having been highlighted in recent surveys as one of the most offensive in the English lexicon. Such nuances underscore the cultural variances in what is considered offensive, paving the way for artists to experiment with language, much like the band Citi Zēni did with their 2022 entry “Eat Your Salad.” Their song faced censorship for its playful yet explicit verses, though the singer Jānis Pētersons continued to engage the audience by leaving out the offensive word, inviting applause instead.

The dichotomy of language explodes at Eurovision; artists in less anglicised countries like Finland face fewer restrictions on their expressions. For example, Erika Vikman’s entry “Ich komme,” meaning “I am coming” in German, navigated the censors without issue, unlike many English-language counterparts. Additionally, last year’s Spanish entry “Zorra,” which has its own cultural implications, suggests that certain words can pass under the radar when wrapped in elaborate linguistic contexts.

The remarkable freedom with swearing in some contests, such as Sweden’s Melodifestivalen, highlights this cultural disparity. There, the 2017 controversy surrounding the use of profanity led to a reaffirmation of expressive freedom in songwriting, underscoring the tensions and sensitivities that govern international musical competitions.

As Eurovision continues to evolve, the prospect of more daring and relaxed content remains tantalising. The contest not only serves as a platform for musical expression but also as a reflection of shifting societal norms. As artists navigate the labyrinth of cultural sensitivities and censorship, it prompts a vital dialogue on the intersection of language, art, and public morality. The seating of nudity and innuendo amidst the overt glamour of Eurovision offers an exciting glimpse into how far the boundaries of expression might stretch in the future.

As audiences anticipate the evening's choreography of performers and provocateurs, the question lingers: could Eurovision one day embrace a more liberated approach to language and content, enabling an even bolder celebration of artistic expression?

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
2. Paragraphs 1, 3
3. Paragraph 5
4. Paragraphs 5, 6
5. Paragraphs 2, 4
6. Paragraph 4, 5, 6
7. Paragraph 5

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/may/10/ich-komme-the-smutty-eurovision-songs-that-dodge-the-censors> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/mar/05/kant-malta-eurovision-entry-censored-title-similarity-c-word> - This article discusses the European Broadcasting Union's (EBU) decision to bar Malta's Eurovision entry, 'Kant,' due to its phonetic resemblance to a vulgar English term. The Maltese performer, Miriana Conte, was instructed to change the title and lyrics of her song, which originally meant 'singing' in Maltese. The EBU's intervention sparked debates about cultural differences and the boundaries of decency in international music competitions.
* <https://www.euronews.com/culture/2025/03/17/maltas-eurovision-entry-rewrites-song-after-c-word-controversy> - Following the EBU's ruling, Miriana Conte released a reworked version of her song 'Kant,' now titled 'Serving.' The article details the changes made to the lyrics and performance to comply with the EBU's guidelines. It also highlights the cultural implications of the controversy, emphasizing the challenges artists face when their work is subject to international scrutiny and censorship.
* <https://www.dailyustimes.com/eurovision-fans-shocked-by-maltas-explicit-2025-entry-but-its-not-all-as-it-seems/> - This piece examines the initial shock and backlash from Eurovision fans regarding Malta's entry, 'Kant.' The article delves into the linguistic nuances of the Maltese word 'kant,' its unintended similarity to an English expletive, and the broader discussions about language, culture, and censorship in the context of international music competitions.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/03/israel-asks-eurovision-candidate-to-change-lyrics> - The article reports on Israel's request for its Eurovision candidate to revise the lyrics of their song due to sensitive content. It highlights the delicate balance between artistic expression and cultural sensitivity, illustrating how political and social contexts can influence the acceptance of music in international platforms like Eurovision.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eat_Your_Salad> - This Wikipedia entry provides an overview of the song 'Eat Your Salad' by Latvian band Citi Zēni, which faced censorship during the Eurovision 2022 semi-final due to explicit lyrics. The article details the original lyrics, the controversy surrounding them, and the band's response to the censorship, offering insights into the challenges artists encounter with content regulations in international music competitions.
* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zorra\_(Nebulossa\_song)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zorra_%28Nebulossa_song%29) - This Wikipedia article discusses the song 'Zorra' by Spanish artist Nebulossa, which was scrutinized for its title's potential vulgar connotations. The entry explores the European Broadcasting Union's assessment of the song, the cultural implications of the term 'zorra,' and the broader discourse on language and censorship in the Eurovision context.