

Voting for Europe: Eurovision 2013

Benjamin D. Hennig, Dimitris Ballas and Danny Dorling look at the politics behind voting patterns in the 2013 Eurovision Song Contest.

Political considerations are often thought to be a factor in Eurovision Song Contest voting patterns. It has long been argued that there are clear geographical, cultural and linguistic ties that influence voting, and there has typically been labelling of groups of countries that give their votes to each other as ‘blocs’ – such as the ‘Scandinavian bloc’, the ‘Mediterranean’, ‘western’, ‘eastern’, ‘Scandinavian’ and the ‘Balkan’ bloc. But how were voting patterns in this year’s contest influenced by the ongoing political and economic crisis in the European Union?

The map series looks at countries that are current members of the EU or official candidate member states (or official potential candidates for EU accession) and/or have signed up to any of the following agreements:

- European Economic Area
- the Schengen Zone
- the European Monetary Union.

The reference map shows a population cartogram of Europe, where each country is resized according to its total population. All other maps are drawn relative to the number of Eurovision points a country received. (It should be noted that not all countries

took part in the final round of the contest or in the voting.) Each country has to give 12 points to its favourite song, 10 points to the second favourite, eight to the third and seven to one points in descending order to the remaining seven ranked songs. These points are allocated via telephone voting, and all countries taking part in the final and the two semi-finals are eligible to vote.

The map of the total number of votes is dominated by the winner, Denmark, which received a total of 281 points – this was 90 more than the second country in our focus area, Norway.

The remaining maps show the number of points that all countries gave to an individual country. They highlight these patterns for the votes that were given to Denmark, Germany (18 points), the United Kingdom (23 points) and Greece (152 points).

The voting behaviour for Germany and the United Kingdom show a very polarised pattern that – putting aspects of the quality of the performance aside – also reflects some of the persisting affinities but also very contemporary hostilities or irrelevances in a European context. Germany mainly relies on its neighbours and places where there may be a larger numbers of German expats

or tourists at the time of the contest, the latter of which could also apply to the UK result. Germany is widely seen as a political scapegoat at present, while the relevance of the UK within Europe is seen as less important, which could help to explain why the UK received so few votes.

Greece, often at the centre of political and economic discussions within Europe and internationally in the past three years, received a total of 152 points. Greece also seems to rely on its neighbours or places with which there may be strong actual or perceived cultural and linguistic bonds. It also received votes from places where there are relatively large numbers of Greek diaspora, which has grown over the last three years as the result of an ongoing brain drain. Greece received 12 points from Cyprus and San Marino, 10 from Albania, eight points from Montenegro, Switzerland and the UK, seven points from Austria, Bulgaria, Italy and Romania, and also six points from Denmark and Germany.

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