

Eurovision DNA (VII) The Visegrad and the X Factor

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In 1335 the kings of Hungary, Bohemia (in the present Czechia) and Poland met in the city of Visegrad to seal a political and strategic alliance. Today these countries, together with Slovakia, form the Visegrad group. Although lately they have been noticed in the European Union, we will see that these countries have also had their impact in Eurovision with their voting and their irregular participation.

WHAT IS THE EUROVISION DNA?

In this section we take a look at the most important voting patterns in Eurovision and try to make sense of them. As we stated at the beginning, the votes of many countries are similar and that allows us to group them. In this way, instead of forty-odd votes, we can reduce them to a few. In our case, they are 14 (or, rather, 13 + 1 as we will see later).

The novelty is that these reduced votes or patterns can be calculated with mathematical methods and indicate to what extent each country follows these voting behaviours. In other words, for each voting pattern we can identify which countries have it and who those who follow this pattern vote for. It is as if we could obtain the DNA or genes of a country.

In previous blogs we have already seen how there is a Soviet, Yugoslav, Nordic, Hellenic and Baltic voting pattern; all of them widely recognized. Today we focus on another pattern, much more discreet, which is related to the Visegrad countries.

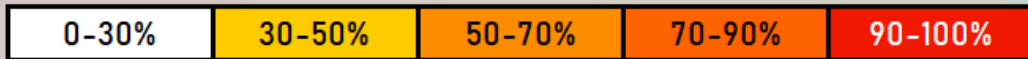
THE 4 OF VISEGRAD

As we have said, each of the voting patterns always tells us which countries follow it and to what extent; and to which countries they vote following this pattern.

One of these patterns is in Poland (68%), Czechia (44%) and Hungary (35%). Therefore, it is revealed that these 3 countries follow a similar voting method among themselves. The three, moreover, are quite geographically concentrated and belong to the aforementioned Visegrad Group. In the following map you can see them represented: the greater the intensity, the greater the importance of this gene in each country.



ADN EUROVISIÓN 2019: VISEGRAD ¿QUIÉNES SON?



We would only need Slovakia to complete the 4 of Visegrad, but it is not of sufficient value for us to include it as such. Why is Slovakia not related to them?

The main reason is the low participation of Slovaks in Eurovision. By not having many votes, there is not enough sample to study their behaviour correctly. In fact, the lack of data has led to an unrealistic voting pattern that we have named the X Factor.

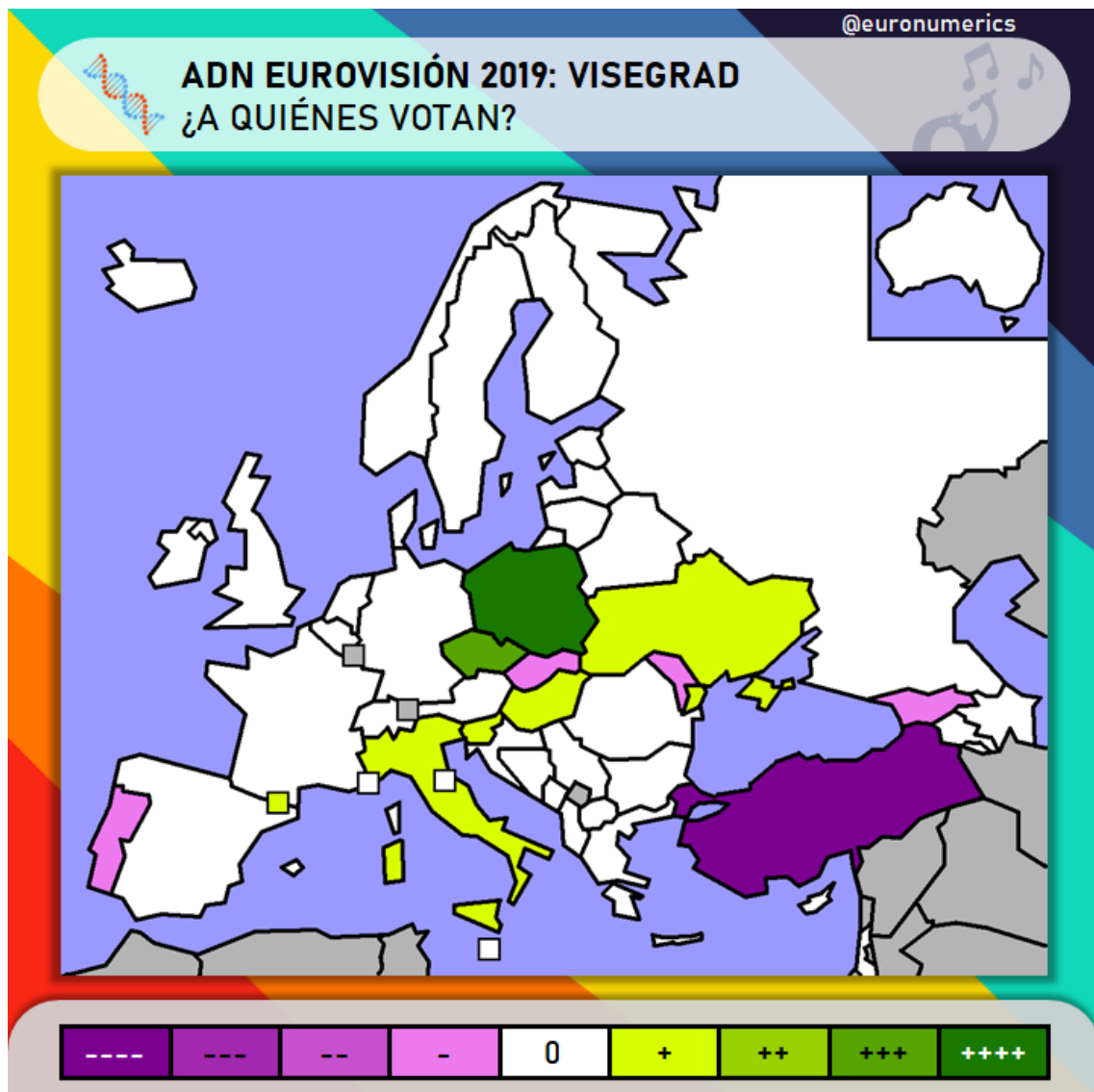
This residual factor is linked to two countries, Slovakia... and Malta. It originates because both countries have scored very well in their few coincidences and the mathematical model understands that they are similar countries when they are far from being so. Only the return of Slovakia to the Festival can dissolve this unreal pattern and make Slovakia and Malta return to their theoretical groups, Visegrad and Anglo-Saxon, respectively. That is to say, it is not a question of an error in the model but a way of indicating that there is something that does not fit: the lack of participation of Slovakia.

It must also be taken into account that the Visegrad pattern is the most recent of all and that it originated with the return of Czechia in 2015. Therefore, we are facing a recent axis that has yet to evolve and take its final shape.

WHICH COUNTRIES DO THEY VOTE?

So far what we have seen is that Poland, the Czechia and Hungary vote similarly. But which countries do they vote for in this similar way? In the following map, in shades of green, it is revealed that it is a group that tends to vote for itself, with Poland being the biggest beneficiary, but also other nearby countries such as Ukraine and Slovenia.

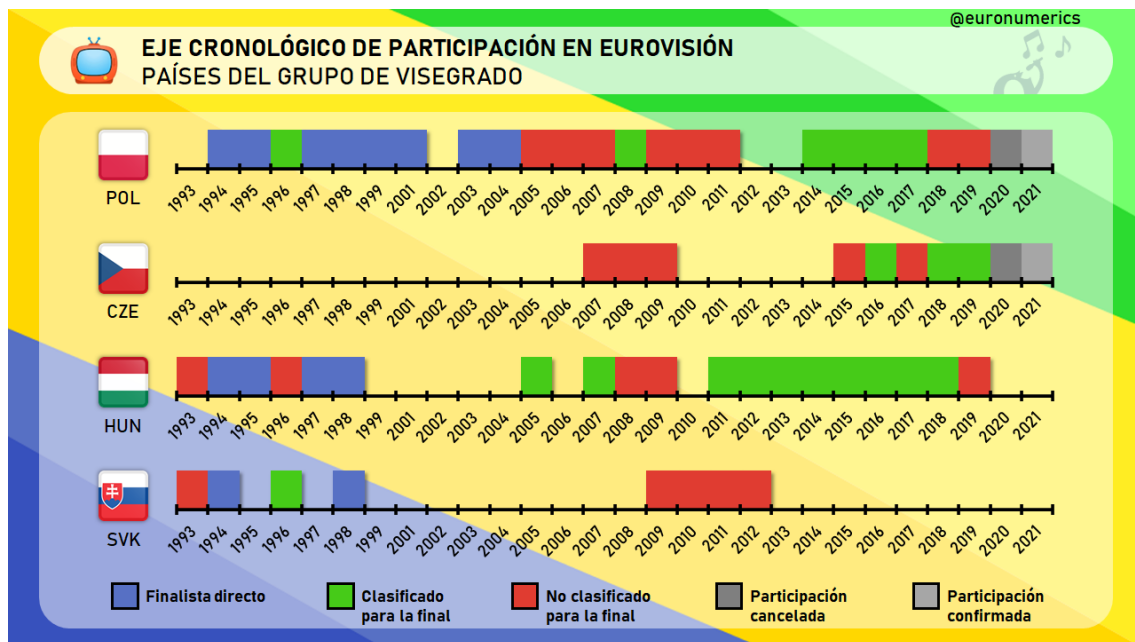
On the opposite side, in all purple, it is seen that the most affected country is Turkey, a possible sign of rejection of immigration from that country. Interestingly, we also observe that there is discrimination towards Slovakia. It will be necessary to observe if it is a real rejection or simply because his last participations were not very successful.



In short, the Visegrad Group is a reality in Eurovision as well. Like other Eastern voting patterns, it is again a group of countries that vote for each other. Although it is recent, it will take shape over the years. Only if Slovakia returns to the Festival will the European puzzle be completed.

THE VISEGRAD BAD BOYS

In Eurovision, when we talk about Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, surely an idea comes to mind: the irregularity of their participation. In the following graph you can see their history of participations and absences, as well as the times they went to the final or were eliminated in the semifinals.



Poland has been the most consistent but took a 2-year break after only reaching the final in one of the last 7 semi-finals.

In its debut, Czechia had three consecutive failures and stopped participating for five years. In the last two years he has managed to go to the final consecutively.

Hungary has also had several periods of absence. Despite having a record streak of 8 consecutive passes to the final, after the ruling in 2019 he retired in 2020 and will not participate in 2021.

Slovakia has participated the least. In his first stage from 1993 to 1998 his best position was 18th. On his return from 2009 to 2012 he never reached the final and in 2021 it will be 9 years since the last time he stepped on a stage.

Such is their irregularity, that these four countries have only participated in the same edition in 2009, and none of them qualified for the final. In 2016 three of them qualified for the final (Poland, Czechia and Hungary), something that had not happened since 1998 (Poland, Hungary and Slovakia). This lack of coincidences between them is what prevents us from seeing how these countries are related and voted.

His convulsive behaviour of participations, withdrawals and returns also has its counterpart in European politics, as for example with the withdrawal of Hungary from the festival. The latter, together with Poland, have had recovery funds blocked to deal with COVID-19.

Furthermore, the low presence of Czechia and Slovakia is also evident in the elections to the European Parliament. Both countries have the lowest participation rates: 29% for Czechia and 23% for Slovakia, far from the European average of 50% (2019 data). However, these are better data than those of 2014, when in Czechia only 19% voted and in Slovakia 13% (europarl.europa.eu).

It is also true that the results in the Festival do not accompany them. After debuting with second place, Poland only came close with 7th and 8th. Hungary, who finished fourth in their first final in 1994, have failed to make the leap to the top3. Of all of them, the most successful case is Czechia, which reached 6th place in 2018 and seems to have gotten the hang of the Festival. It is the best proof that, despite having a difficult start, you can succeed at the Festival.

E-DNA CALCULATOR 3.2

And after discovering a new Eurovision gene, we updated the calculator that will let you know if you have any Visegrad roots. You can download it by clicking here [ADN-E 3.2](#). When you open it, you will only have to fill in a note from 0 to 10 for each country. The spreadsheet will determine which groups you approach and what your genetics are. Are you a Soviet? Maybe a Yugoslav? Do you approach the Hellenic countries?

This is the Visegrad group, which stands out both for its voting behaviour and for its withdrawals. Perhaps the organization and we should consider the participation of these countries: prevent them from falling back and being able to integrate into the European family as one more fundamental part. As with voting, it may be more interesting to strengthen the internal foundations, than not to seek spectacular solutions outside our borders.