

SI LOS NÚMEROS CANTARAN...

Eurovision, a festival that is getting insipid?

By Jesús Manuel Rodrigo Céspedes (@Euronumerics)

Three of the last four editions have been won by ballads and those of France and Switzerland for this year have the odds. It seems that in recent years Eurovision has been filled with ballads and emotional songs. A study shows that the festival has lost vitality in recent years. However, by 2021 the trend is reversed and one song stands out above all the others. Discover the musical characteristics of the songs of 2021 on our blog!

THE "CONCHITA" EFFECT

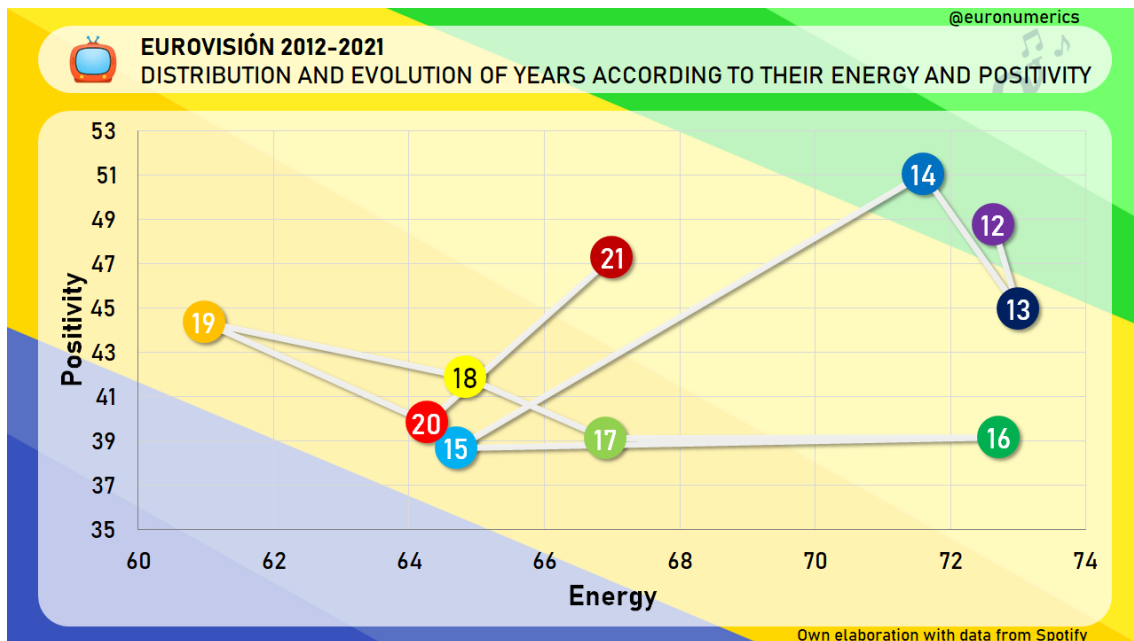
In our penultimate blog we saw the difficulties in ordering the Festival songs according to our tastes. But, how about measuring the positivity of a song with numbers? And their ability to be a dance hit? There are very difficult variables to measure and it would not surely be easy for us to reach a consensus.

However, in order to make a better segmentation, Spotify puts numbers to many of the variables that define a song. In this way, they create song lists for you based on your emotional state or the music you listen to lately.

Callum Ballard has collected and studied this data in the analysis *Eurovision is getting less cheesy, and we can prove it mathematically*. In it, the author makes a comparison between the musical characteristics of the Eurovision songs and those of other songs of the moment. Their results show that the songs in our contest have a different composition for different metrics.

Finally it focuses on the evolution of the festival in recent years. By measuring the energy and positivity of the songs, Ballard reveals that **Eurovision has become less and less cheesy, less cheerful.**

In the following graphic we have reproduced the relationship that Ballard makes (you can consult the original graphic in the article). As we see, the festival has passed from the upper right corner, which indicates more joy, dynamism; to the lower left corner, which reflects more sadness and more ballads. The key year turns out to be 2014. After the victory of Conchita Wurst with her ballad *Rise like a phoenix* (and the rest of the top3 were also slow songs, *Calm after the storm* and *Undo*) the contest has lost a good part of the festivity that characterized.

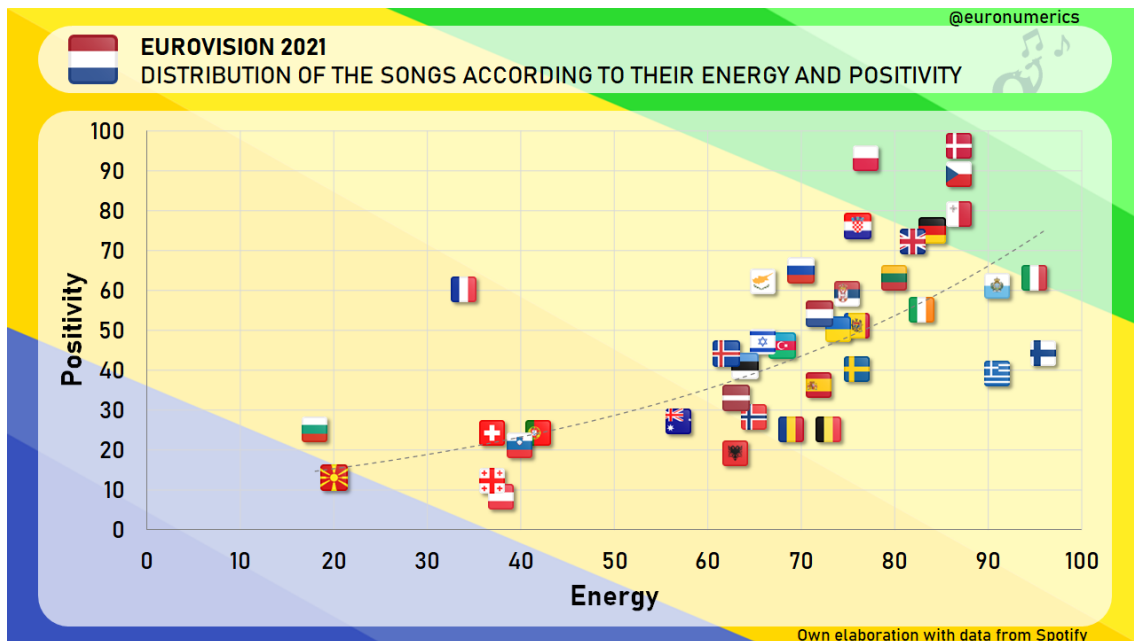


However, in 2021 we could be facing a change in trend: the happiness has increased and this year's seems an edition halfway between the sad last editions and the happy editions of the early 10s. We would have to go deeper on the causes of this evolution, but the financial crisis could weigh down the festivity of songs almost a decade ago (it would be cheaper to produce a ballad) while the pandemic may have changed the music we demand, making it more positive and hopeful.

THE MAP OF THE SONGS OF 2021

The data that Spotify throws gives us to do an infinite number of analyzes. Focusing on the songs of 2021, **how does Spotify rank them based on their energy and positivity?**

In the following graph you can see how the songs of May are distributed according to their energy (horizontal axis) and according to their positivity (vertical axis). Surely you disagree with some values that Spotify gives, but the truth is that the approach is quite accurate.



At first glance, it is found that there is a relationship between energy and positivity: the more the one, the more the other (and with an exponential rather than linear effect, as described by the discontinuous line).

In the lower left corner we have the less energetic and positive songs, Bulgaria and North Macedonia, which are close to other ballads (Austria, Slovenia, Georgia, Portugal and Switzerland). At the other extreme, we could say that there are two groups: the 4 most energetic (Finland, Italy, San Marino and Greece) and the 3 most positive (Denmark, Poland and the Czech Republic). However, **the song that best combines both attributes at this extreme would be Malta** with Destiny's *Je me casse*.

The central group includes the rest of the songs (also Spain). However, one song stands out for being very isolated from the others: France. Will this unique composition of energy and positivity help Barbara Pravi to stand out from the rest?

CURIOSITIES

We would like to mention some curiosities that we can extract from the data that Spotify offers us (for practically all the songs from 2012 to 2021):

Beats per minute (BPM): The song with the highest tempo is *I want your love* by Eduard Romanyuta (Moldova 2015) while the song with the lowest bpm turns out to be *Moj Svijet* by Sergej Cetkovic (Montenegro 2014). *Love is on my side* (Portugal 2021) sneaks in as the second song with the lowest tempo, while Duncan Laurence's *Arcade*, 2019 winner, is the fourth with the lowest bpm.

Energy: 2017 is the year of contrast. The title of the most festive song is for *Story of my life* by Naviband (Belarus 2017). On the contrary, *Amar pelos dois* by Salvador Sobral (Portuguese 2017) is the song with the fewest artificial rockets of the decade. The top 3 of the less energetic songs

are completed by Victoria's two songs, *Tears getting sober* (Bulgaria 2020) and *Growing up is getting old* (Bulgaria 2021).

Dance: This category takes into account the rhythms throughout the song to determine its success on the dance floor. Manizha with *Russian woman* (Russia 2021) sneaks into the top1, unseating Dady Freyr with *Think about things* (Iceland 2020) and *Trackshittaz with Woki mit dein Popo* (Austria 2012). On the other hand, the songs that are more about raising the lighter turn out to be *Birds* de Anouk (Netherlands 2013) and *I stand* by Gabriela Gunciková (Czechia 2016).

Positivity: In 2021 it renews the top2 in this category: Denmark is the most positive followed by Poland. This category was previously led by 3 songs from 2014: Italy (*La mia città*), Portugal (*Quero ser tua*) and Switzerland (*Hunter of Stars*). The song with the most negative vibes is another song from 2014, *Not Alone* by Aram mp3 (Armenia).

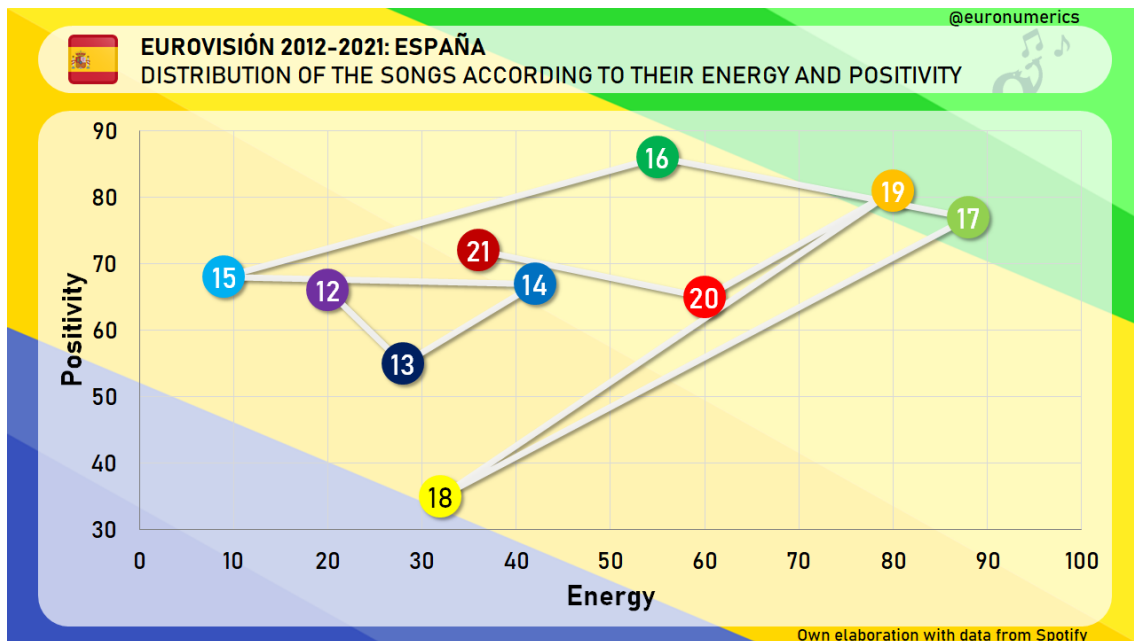
Acoustic: Victoria with *Tears getting sober* (Bulgaria 2020) is the song that is closest to a pure acoustic, followed by *Tu canción* by Amaia and Alfred (Spain 2018). In general, songs that are not very energetic are at the top of this ranking. However, *Fly with me* by Artsvik (Armenia 2017) stands out for combining acoustics and energy.

VOY A QUEDARME ... IN THE MIDDLE

Putting the focus on Spain, and in view of the previous graph, *Voy a quedarme* is projected very close to the center of gravity this year. Although the closest song considering only energy and positivity would be Sweden, it is also very close to more direct rivals such as Romania, Belgium and Norway.

From a marketing point of view, **our product is surrounded by others that stand out more and can cover us**. Since positivity is more difficult to change, our best trick to stand out is to play with energy. A quieter version or one with a more explosive ending could help us have a unique product that people buy and, in our case, vote for. In fact, our song doesn't stand out in any of the attributes that Spotify provides.

Looking at our history, it seems as if Spain is going back to the beginning of the last decade. In the following graph you can see our evolution from 2012 to 2021, always in terms of energy and positivity.



From 2012 to 2015 we moved in lower values of positivity and energy. In 2016 there was a huge leap and we broke with those songs, except for a sudden return in 2018 with *Tu canción*. In 2020, *Universo* had average values for both variables and now Blas Cantó's song for Rotterdam is closer to those from 2012 to 2015. A priori, the song that most closely resembles it is our top10 *Dancing in the rain*.

Finally, we said that the festival had become more bland over time. However, **the evolution of Spain was just the opposite of Eurovision**. Despite distancing ourselves from the general line of the contest, our results in 2016, 2017 and 2019 were not good. It leaves a bit of bitterness not having known how to take advantage of these occasions to stand out.

We hope you liked this analysis and it offers you a different way of seeing the festival. Do you think Eurovision songs are getting too slow? Do you think that this year there is an acceptable proportion? Will a lively song or ballad win this year? We are almost there...