

Hi 2023, bye semi-final juries

Written by Jesús Manuel Rodrigo Céspedes (@Euronumerics) 10/01/2023

Eurovision 2023 will mark a new milestone in the festival's voting system: the juries will disappear in the semifinal and an international televote will be added in the final. If we look back, most of the songs were also classified with or without a jury in the semifinals. However, there are countries that have the chance to win and others to lose with this change and that is what we are going to demonstrate in this blog. What will be the impact on the results of the final?

THE CHANGE OF RULES FOR EUROVISION 2023

Unexpectedly and in advance, the Eurovision organization has published new rules that will affect the voting system for Eurovision 2023 to be held in Liverpool. Although announced as three, there are actually two measures: eliminate the jury criteria in the Eurovision semifinals and add an international televote in all three events.

You can read the official statement [here](#) and the Eurovision publication in the form of FAQs [here](#).

Regarding the second, little can be advanced without any precedent, but as the EBU rightly points out, the balance will tip (even more) towards televoting.

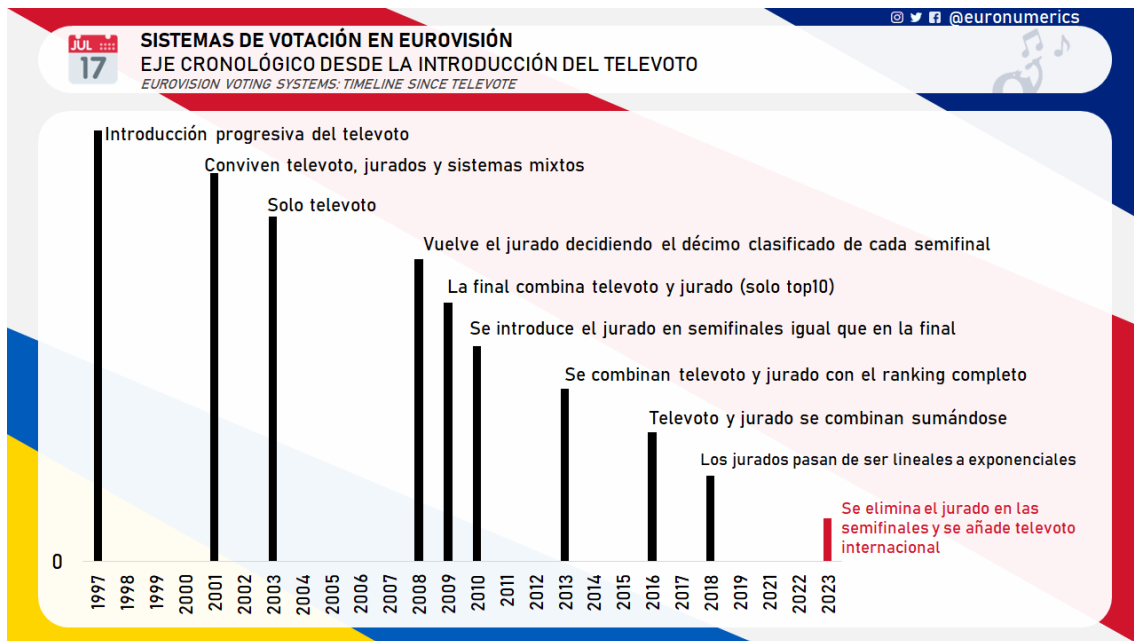
We are going to stop at the first novelty, the elimination of the jury in the semifinals. The measure is apparently taken as a consequence of the latest jury incidents in Turin. In fact, it seems to be glimpsed that the jury is retained in the final in order to maintain the current points delivery system: first the national juries by country and then the block televoting.

As always, there are those who are in favor of this change and there are those who are against it, each with their own arguments. What impact can it have on the results of the festival? Is it true that the jury has benefited small and western countries?

BE CAREFUL WITH THE PERIOD OF STUDY AND THE VOTING SYSTEMS

Before beginning the analysis, a small note about the study period. When analyzing the classified and non-classified, it should be remembered that the voting systems have evolved since the reintroduction of the juries in Eurovision.

The following image (which you can enlarge by clicking on it) shows a chronological axis with the most important changes in Eurovision voting since the introduction of televoting in 1997.



Since 2016, the comparison is easy since both for the jury and for televoting, one vote was generated per country, producing substitute votes if it were the case due to problems or lack of significance (as is the case with the televoting in San Marino).

However, in the years prior to 2016, the estimation of those classified by televoting and jury is more difficult since if there was no televoting or jury, it was not estimated, the valid of the two was used. For example, if a country's jury was invalidated, only their televoting was used to decide their score. These absences of points open the criteria to see how a general classification is: do we do it only with valid votes? Do we substitute the voided jury's points with their televoting so that the balance is maintained?

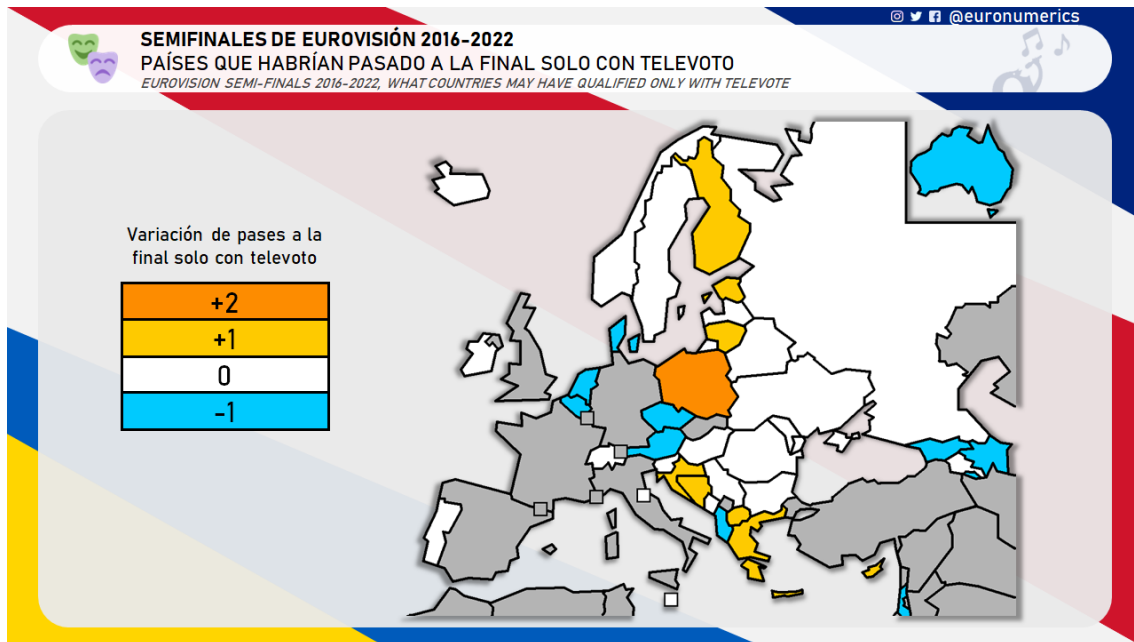
For example, for us to take it into account, on Wikipedia absentee voting has been replaced with the existing jury or televoting, so that they are comparable under this criterion, but they are not the exact result. Even so, because they are good estimators, for the years 2010 to 2015 this methodology has been used for the calculations that follow. Obviously, the year 2013 is omitted due to the lack of a result by points from the televoting and the jury in the semifinals.

THE REAL EFFECT, THE HINT OF SOMETHING BIGGER

In its statement, the EBU indicates that the period from 2017 to 2022 has been studied and it is concluded that the majority of those classified by televoting coincide with those classified by the sum of televoting and jury, around 9 out of 10. The truth is that for the aforementioned period, the correctness is closer to 8 out of 10, as you can see in the news that we already published on this website.

As we have previously pointed out, analyzing the data from periods prior to 2016 becomes more difficult, since there were votes not cast and that makes it difficult to compare the results of jury and televoting. In any case, the discrepancies between televoting and the jury are neither null nor large.

If we visualize on a map the beneficiaries and harmed by televoting since 2016, we will have the following result. In warm tones are the countries that benefited and in light blue those that would have been harmed, that is, those that would not have qualified if only televoting had existed.



The map is quite white because there are few observations, but certain areas can be seen. For example, the Baltic would have come out reinforced, as well as most of the Balkans and Hellenics. On the other hand, the most affected areas are Caucasians and the German environment, something that contrasts with Poland, which would have qualified in 2018 and 2019, being the one that benefited the most from the change in regulations.

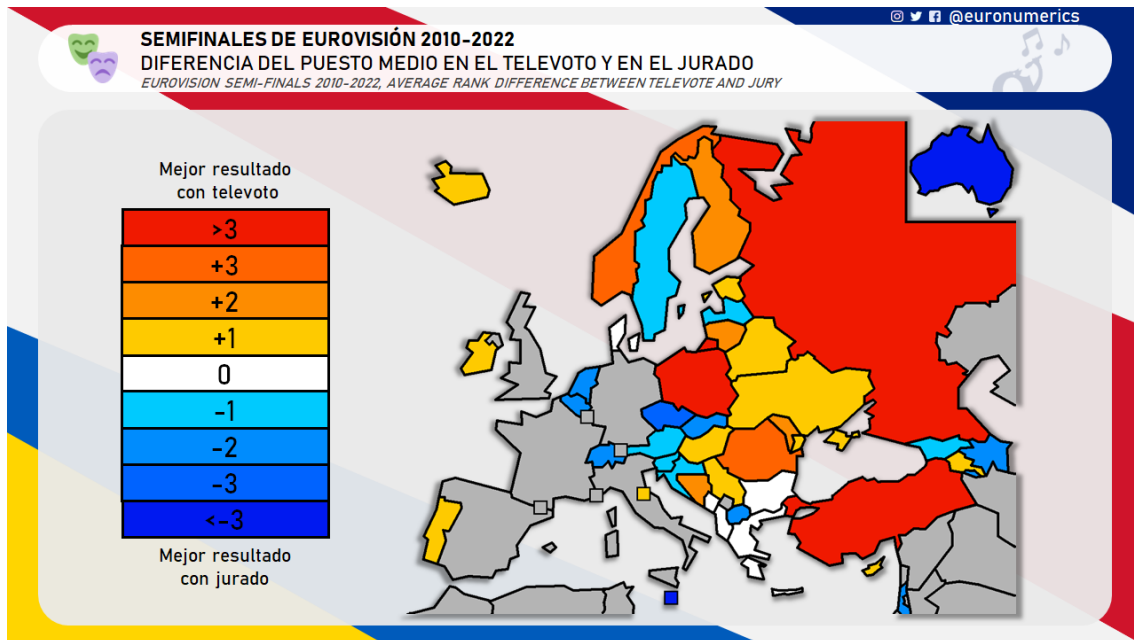
In short, at first glance and with these data, there are no great beneficiaries or harmed by the new rules, but there are areas that suggest that the absence of the juries in the semifinals could have a certain impact.

At this point it is worth making a distinction. Indeed, the real impact of this rule change is whether it affects the classifieds or not. That is to say, what has consequences is whether or not the barrier of the tenth classified is crossed. However, this point of view does not allow one to see the full effect. It is as if we were looking through a peephole in a door: we see a part but not the whole. So what is the full effect of the absence of the jury on the other positions? Are there regions or countries that would be harmed or benefited? Let's open the door wide.

THE UNDERLYING EFFECT: RETURN TO GEOGRAPHICAL IMBALANCE

As we say, it is crucial to observe the effect of the jury in all positions and not only in the tenth place barrier, since that does not guarantee us to see if there is a real impact. Therefore, in this section we are going to analyze the effect of the jury in all positions.

To do this, we are going to start by elaborating the difference between the average position of the semifinalist countries both in the televoting and in the jury. The result is in the following map. The warm tones indicate those with the best average position in the televote and the cold colors those with the best evaluation in the jury.



As for the beneficiaries, 3 countries stand out: Poland, Russia and Turkey. In general it is appreciated that the countries to the East are better seen by the televoting than by the juries. Regarding the best valued by the jury, we once again observe that they are Central European countries as well as the island countries of Australia and Malta.

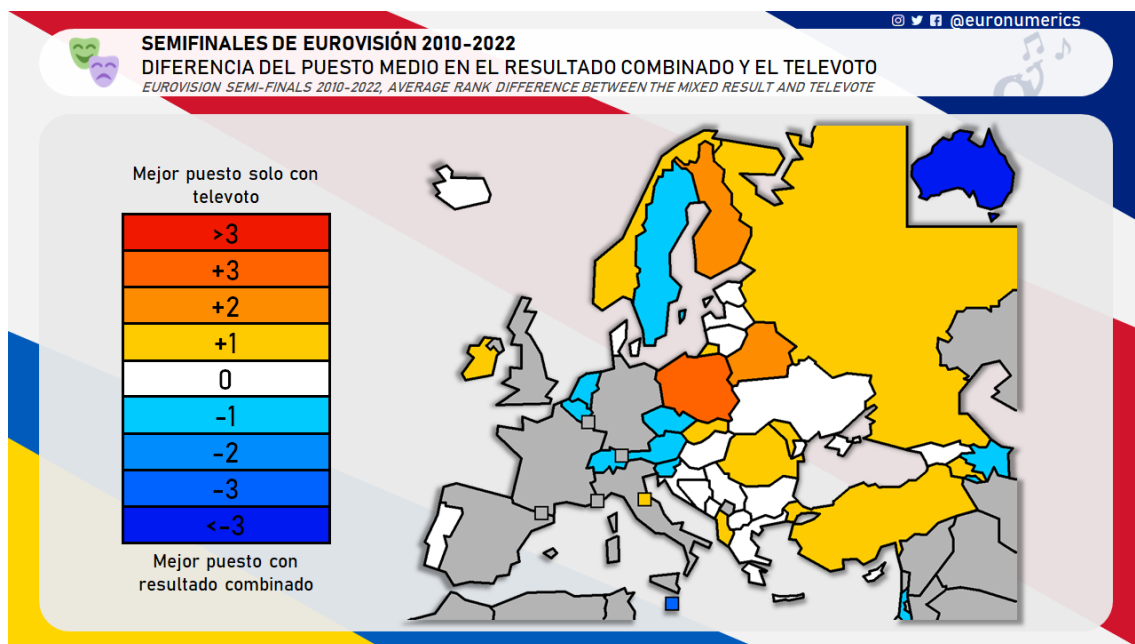
In the Nordics, a joint criterion is not seen, Sweden being the only one that benefits the most from the juries. There is also no single criterion neither in the Baltic and in the Caucasus. As for the Yugoslavs, the televote sees Serbia and Bosnia better, which we have already indicated are the great beneficiaries of the Yugoslav televote, while in the peripheries, Slovenia, Croatia and North Macedonia, have a better average in the jury. Finally, highlight the Balkan extreme, where there are no differences between televoting and jury.

The conclusion of this graph is that this benefit that the countries in blue from the jury obtain is going to disappear. The most notable case is that of Malta, which in juries has an average of 5.18 while in televoting it is 12.45, more than 7 positions apart. On the opposite side, the one that breathes the most is Poland, which averaged a position of 13 in the juries and 8.2 in the televote.

What we see coincides in part with the partial analysis of changes in the real classifieds that we saw at the beginning, which already reflected that Poland would benefit more without juries. Therefore, what we can expect is that in the long run, I'm not talking about one, or two, or perhaps three years, we begin to see that the countries in blue reach the final less while the countries in red qualify more easily. It can certainly discourage the participation of the former, making a return from Slovakia more unlikely, for example; or favor the return of Turkey to the festival, which averaged 5.3 in the televote compared to 9 for the jury.

It does not seem correct to extend the criterion to a confrontation between Westerners and Easterners. For example, on the western side, Portugal, Ireland or San Marino have a better average for televoting than for juries. The lack of unanimity also occurs in the East, where Latvia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Israel are better seen by the jury.

In the previous graph we have seen the difference between televoting and jury. Now, we are going to visualize the difference in average positions between the combined result of the last years, the real one; and televoting, which will be the new criteria from now on. The map is a summary of the previous two and we see how the countries that surround Germany have been more successful thanks to the combined result. As for the beneficiaries, only Poland and the East in general stand out.



The main conclusion of this analysis is that yes, at first glance it seems that there are no losers or gainers, but in terms of overall positions there are and it is to be expected that over the years this will manifest itself in the classifieds. All of this wouldn't make sense if it were purely due to the songs that are submitted each year, but once we look at geographic patterns there is an imbalance that is foreign to the spirit of the contest.

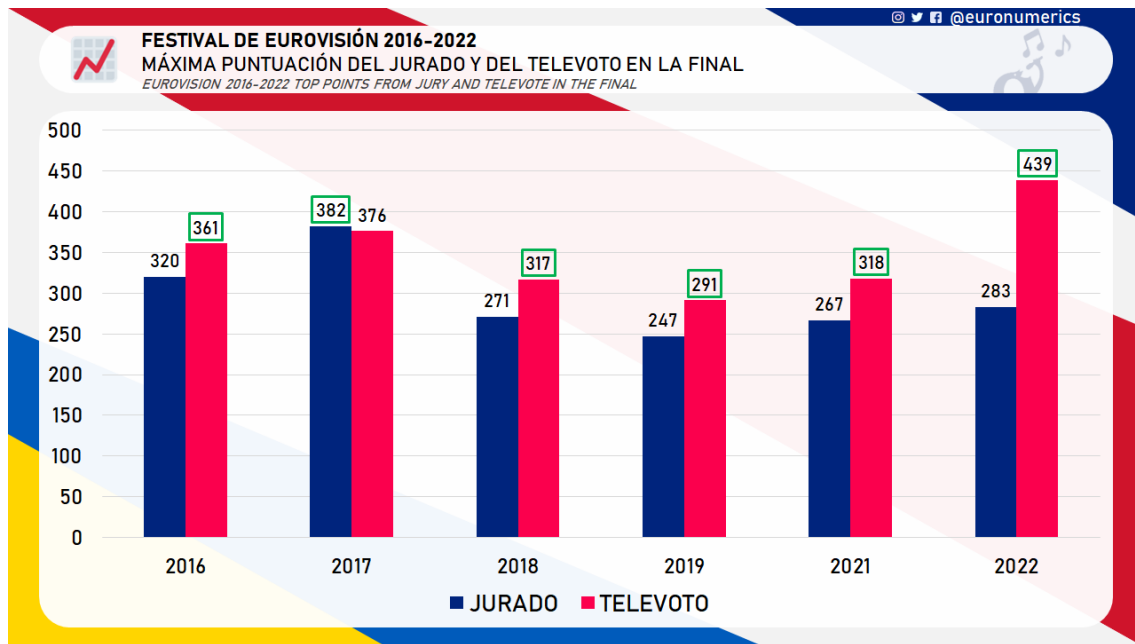
AND HOW WILL IT AFFECT THE OUTCOME OF THE FINAL?

As an extra, we are going to try to reason what would be the effect of the absence of juries in the semifinals on the results of the final. Let's remember that the final remains as it has been until now, with televoting and a jury in addition to the new international televoting.

Surely in the semifinals the televote will classify between 1 and 3 songs that the jury would not. In short, the audience will classify all his best songs, but not all the jury favorites will classify. Competitiveness, consequently, will be greater in the televoting than among the experts.

Therefore, the points in the televoting are going to be much more expensive in the final, since this criterion has classified the best songs for them. In contrast, the jury's points will be cheaper since they have classified issues that they did not deserve.

Especially for the host and the Big5, it will be easier to get points from the juries but it will be more difficult to get them from the televoting. So it would not be surprising that the direct classifieds try to seduce the jury more with ballads or intimate songs. A double zero like the one in the United Kingdom in 2021 would be much more difficult to obtain with this change and, if it did happen, it would have much more merit.



It is very curious to estimate whether this change would affect the real weight of the televoting and the jury. Traditionally we have seen that televoting has more weight since it discriminates more, while the jury distributes its points more equitably and therefore has less influence on the final result. The top graph shows the score received by the winner of the televoting and the jury in each year. It becomes clear that the televote delivers more points and is therefore more decisive in the final result.

The decrease in competitiveness under the criteria of the experts probably helps to make them more decisive and to discriminate more, therefore, they could gain weight in the final result. If we add to this a more competitive and not unanimous televote, the jury could impose its criteria more.

Although it may seem paradoxical or ironic, removing one criterion from the semifinals, in this case the jury to give more power to the audience, will increase the weight of expert opinion in the final.

To finish this blog, we have verified that although at first glance there is no real impact of the elimination of the juries in the Eurovision semifinals, there is an underlying effect that will become evident as the years go by. On the other hand, the decision to give more weight to the

audience could turn against him for the final. What is your opinion about these changes? Do they fall short or are they too ambitious? We read you in the comments!