

All Eleventh Saints' Day

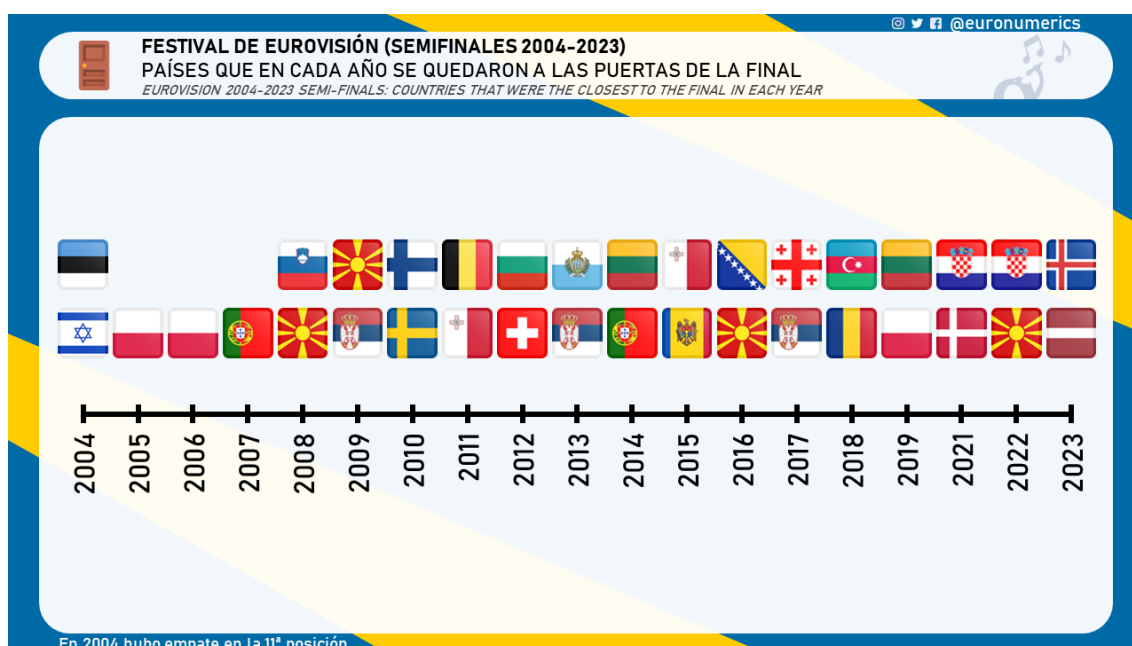
Written by Jesús Manuel Rodrigo Céspedes (@Euronumerics) 31/10/2023

Now that All Saints' Day is approaching, we are going to remember all those who fell in eleventh position in the semifinals. Because those of us who have our country always classified for the final do not know what the suspense of whether or not to go to Saturday night really is. In this blog we will put candles for all of them and we will see that there are certain geographical patterns that point to a Balkans between heaven and hell.

REACHING THE FINAL, THE DRAMA OF THE SEMI-FINALS

Since the semi-finals were introduced in Eurovision in 2004, the festival created a new moment of tension: the move to the final. Always, in each semi-final, the 10 best classified achieved the long-awaited access to Saturday's competition. There was no consolation for the next classified. From eleventh to last they should try their luck the following year.

The 10 qualifiers is a tradition that has remained intact, there would be one or two semifinals. Just like starting from second position, eleventh place has become a kind of undesirable: the most voted of those eliminated, the one who falls just short of it.



Estonia and Israel were the first to miss out on the final in 2004 (with forgiveness for the previous proto-selective processes of the 90s). Bad luck struck the following two years with Poland, which repeated its eleventh place in its first two semi-finals (in 2004 it was automatically qualified).

In 2008 and 2009 the organization introduced the jury vote in the semi-finals with a kind of wild card: the audience would classify their 9 favorites and the jury, from among the rest, would classify their most voted. Of the 4 semi-finals, only in one did the 10th classified coincide

between televoting and jury (Poland 2008). On the other 3 occasions, Sweden, Finland and Croatia replaced Macedonia twice and Serbia, which were ranked tenth in the televoting.

TO KNOW MORE...

The semi-finals were (re)introduced in 2004 on a permanent basis due to the high number of participating countries. Given the novelty, the organization included the results of the non-classified countries after announcing the 10 countries that did manage to reach the final. Only in that year was this publication made, from 2005 onwards the results of the semi-finalists were only known after the festival.

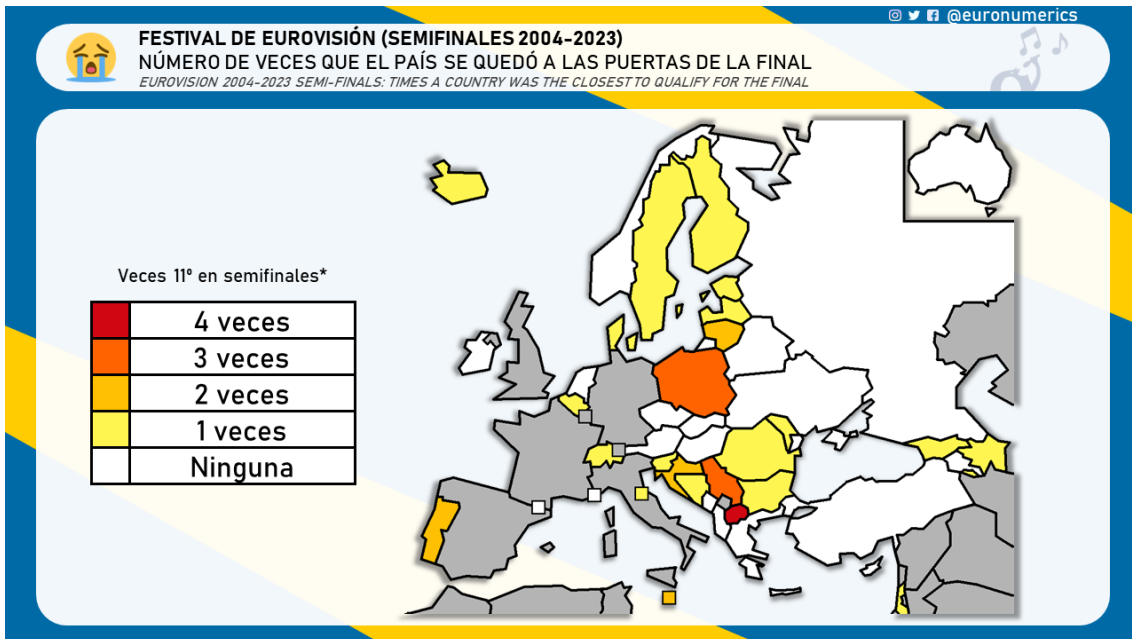
You can see the publication of the results of those not classified in 2004 live here. It so happens that, due to an error in the vote counting, the result that was shown was later modified, without affecting those classified.

A SLAVIC CRY

Looking at the history since 2004, North Macedonia is the country that has been on the verge of the final on the most occasions: in 2008 and 2009 for being tenth in the televote and in 2016 and 2022 for finishing in eleventh place. The second position is shared by Poland and Serbia with 3 times each. With two chances we have Croatia, Lithuania, Malta and Portugal.

On the other side of the coin, Albania and the Netherlands are the nations that have never placed 11th and have the most attempts in the semi-finals (all but one).

If we visualize these frequencies on a map, we will distinguish several areas. The following graph shows the number of times that a country fell short of the final. Firstly, the greatest concentration occurs in what we could call the inner Balkans, with Macedonia and Serbia at the head. Another area would be the Poland-Lithuania axis. Between them, we have two cases of diverse success: on the left, 3 countries with dubious success in the semifinals (Austria, Czechia and Slovakia) and on the right, two nations with a high percentage of progress to the final (Hungary and Ukraine). In the North, it is seen very rarely.



Both the North and the Balkans are groups that have point buffers, that is, points they receive from their neighbors by default. However, it is revealed that its usefulness has been different in each area.

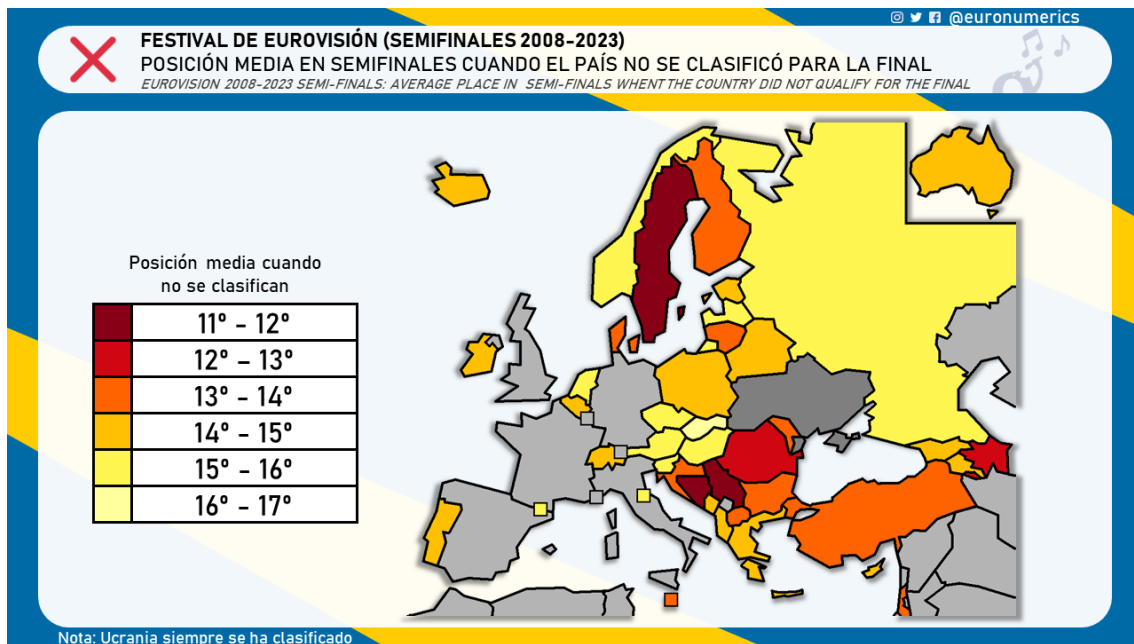
WALK THROUGH THE UNDERWORLD, THE NON QUALIFIED

Staying only in 11th place is looking at the anecdotal. Let's expand the analysis to the rest of the positions below the qualification zone and look back to 2008, when two semifinals were created to be able to compare since then.

In this period the award goes to Serbia, which has only been left out of the final on two occasions, 2013 and 2017, and in both editions in eleventh place. With only one chance out of the final and narrowly missed are Sweden (in 2010) and Bosnia (in 2016).

These countries have rarely been in the semi-finals. How have those countries that have been eliminated the most times been distributed? This analysis makes us travel from Croatia to Latvia.

Next, the map shows us the average position of each country, taking into account only its positions when it was not classified. The greater the intensity of the color, the closer the average is to qualifying for the final.



Of the 8 times that Croatia has been out of the final since 2008, in 5 of them they finished in 11th, 12th and 13th places. Its overall average is 13.25 and Lithuania, Bulgaria and Malta are not far behind.

In contrast, Latvia is the country with the worst average, 15.5. That is to say, its non-classifications are the most emphatic, although in this last year it fell short. Not only are they resounding, but on 5 of the 12 occasions (almost half) they have been last classified. They are followed, although with quite irregular participation, by Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Austria and Slovenia. All of the latter are found en masse in Central Europe, which points us to a geographical effect.

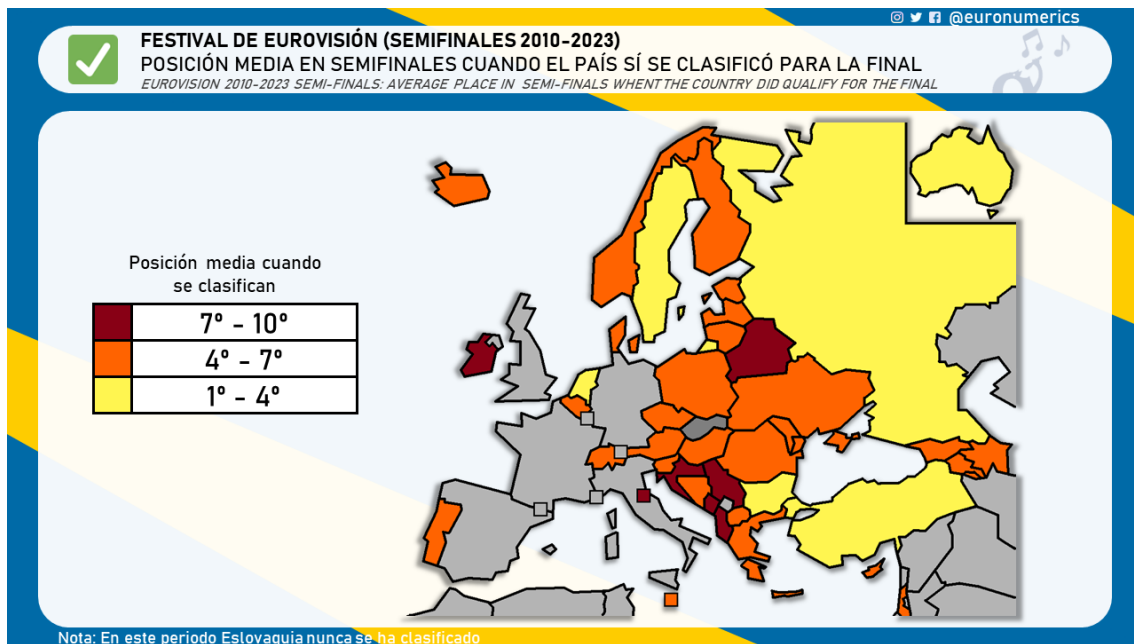
In summary, if we study not only the eleventh place but also the following ones, we once again show that the Balkans are further behind than other countries, especially the Central Europeans.

MIRACLE, MIRACLE!

In the same way that we have analyzed those who narrowly missed out on the final, let's now look at those who narrowly qualified. Because of how diffuse this concept becomes in 2008 and 2009, we discarded them and will look at 2010 onwards.

If we analyze the averages since 2008, the averages range from the splendid ones of Sweden, Australia and the Netherlands; to the tightest ones in San Marino, Croatia, Montenegro and Belarus.

This time the map shows us the average position of the countries when they have qualified. The higher the intensity, the closer the average is to tenth place.



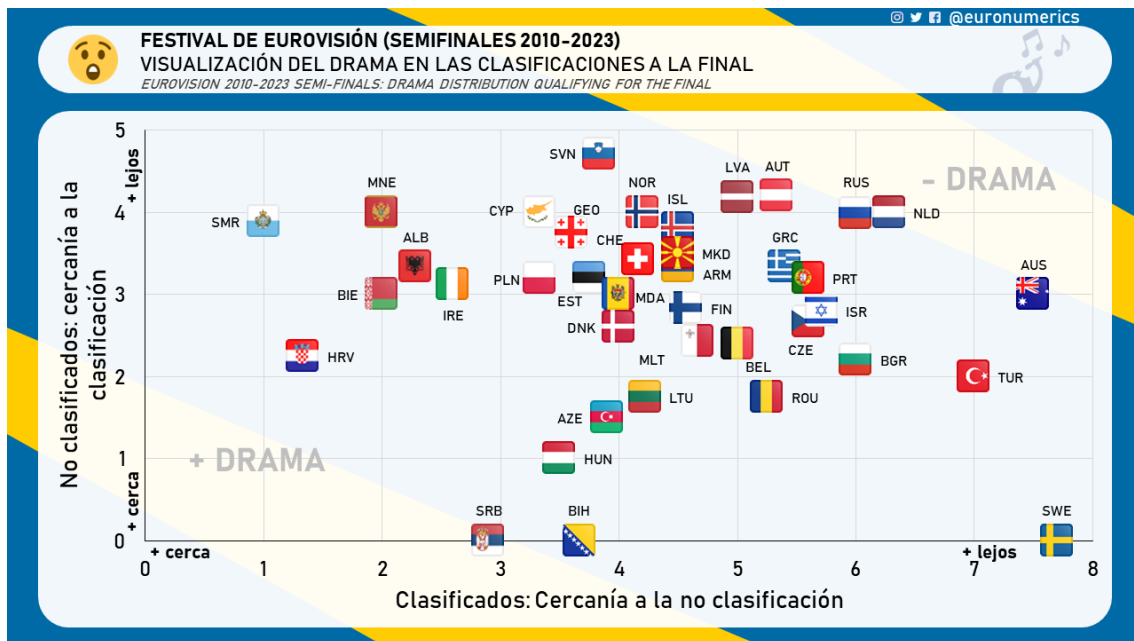
In its 10 classifications, Sweden has accumulated 4 victories in the semifinals and has never been lower than 7th place. This mark is only surpassed by Australia, which in 6 classifications has never dropped below sixth place. In short, strong classifications.

San Marino cannot say the same, which has qualified three times and all three times very fair, tenth, ninth and eighth. Something similar with Croatia: one tenth and two eighths. At the time, the average of Belarus' five rankings was 8th place. The classifications of Montenegro and the most recent ones of Albania are also especially tight.

There are several countries that have been classified twice in tenth position. If we look at the number of times in ninth position, two countries stand out, Serbia and Albania, which were this way two other times. Once again we observe how tight the positions of the Balkan countries are.

THE KINGS OF DRAMA

Finally, we are left to put these concepts together to discern which countries have the most dramatic rankings. We have represented it in the following graph. It is not easy to understand but we explain it in detail.



The horizontal axis represents the closeness of the classified countries to those that are not classified. That is, those countries that, when they qualified, did so closer to tenth position will be closer to zero. Therefore, on the left we have the countries that are classified barely and on the right those that do so comfortably.

The vertical axis shows the closeness of the countries to the classification when they were not classified. Thus, the countries that most frequently stayed close to eleventh place will be closer to zero. So, at the bottom are countries that are barely classified and at the top are those that are not clearly classified.

Following this data we can locate all the semi-finalist countries, to homogenize from 2010 to 2023, and without counting Ukraine and Slovakia (the first for having always qualified and the second for never having done so).

The most interesting area is the lower left, which tells us which countries are always closest to qualifying or not. As a summary of what we have seen, two former Yugoslavs are the most dramatic, Croatia and Serbia. Not far away we also have Bosnia, Albania and Montenegro.

At the opposite extreme, at the top right, we have the Netherlands as the greatest exponent: either they qualify decisively or they are left out completely.

In short, both analyzing those that were narrowly eliminated and narrowly classified, we have found the Balkan countries. Their cushions of points allow them to be in the fight, leaving their luck practically tossing a coin. On the opposite side, the micro-states and countries of Central Europe obtain worse results in a more conclusive way. And you, if you are Spanish, how would it feel to be left out of the final? Which eleventh place has been the worst for you? May God rest you all in his glory.