The shape of national finals

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Once the preselection season for Eurovision 2024 is over, we analyze two different ways to distinguish them. Whether due to the way in which they choose their representatives or the songs that participate, the national finals present a variety that allows them to differentiate themselves from the others.

A PYRAMID OF CRITERIA

One of the aspects that characterizes the national preselections is the set of criteria that intervene in the selection of the winners. Previously, a televised jury decided the winner, but the formula was opened with the arrival of televoting. More recently, and with the reinstatement of the juries in 2008, both national and international experts have been introduced.

For this reason, we wanted to analyze how televoting, the jury and other elements (such as demoscopic voting and televoting or international juries) are combined today. To visualize it, we have used for the first time in this blog a ternary diagram or triangle plot. With it we can visualize 3 characteristics on a plane. This type of graphs are widely used in sciences such as Economics (distribution of the 3 productive sectors) or Geology (rock composition).
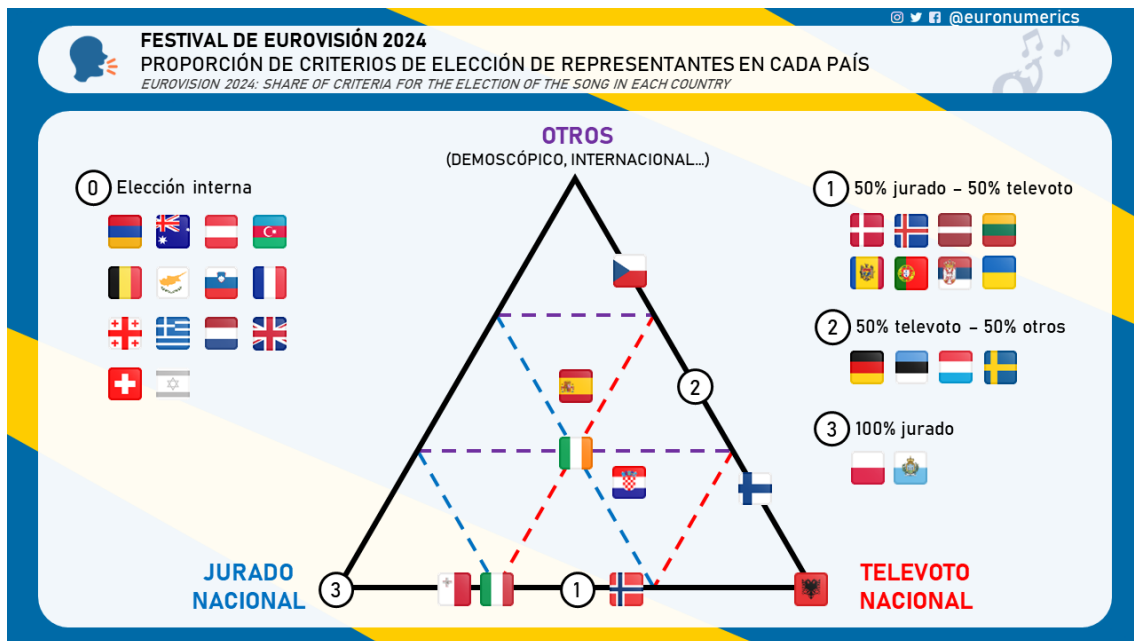
TO LEARN MORE… HOW TO UNDERSTAND A TERNARY GRAPH

The way to interpret a ternary graph is as follows. At each point of the equilateral triangle (sides of equal length) 100% of one of the three characteristics is represented. The further a point is from that vertex, the lower its percentage of that criterion. 0% of a feature is anywhere on the side that is not part of the 100% vertex. Obviously the center of the graph represents the equality of the 3 variables (33% of each).

That is, the closer a point is to the center, the greater the equality of criteria. The closer to a vertex of the triangle, the greater the concentration of the variable at that end.

On Wikipedia you can find examples of how these graphics work.

In the following image we have made this triangular graph representing these 3 variables: national jury (blue), national televoting (red) and others (purple). In addition, we have added small dotted lines of each color to improve your understanding.

FESTIVAL DE EUROVISIÓN 2024
PROPORCIÓN DE CRITERIOS DE ELECCIÓN DE REPRESENTANTES EN CADA PAÍS
EUROVISION 2024: SHARE OF CRITERIA FOR THE ELECTION OF THE SONG IN EACH COUNTRY

In 2024, the most frequent method, which in statistics is called the mode, has been the internal election. Around a third of the countries have hand-picked their representative. The rest of the nations are distributed in this graph.

Some formulas have been repeated. The most notable is the 50% jury-50% televoting (point 1) used in 8 countries, followed by 50% televoting-50% others (basically international juries, point 2). Poland and San Marino have had a 100% jury formula, which could well be an internal election, but due to their publicity we have not included it as such.

Only 9 nations have had a unique formula. Of all of them, Albania is the only country that used 100% televoting, a formula that once prevailed. As for the rest, Malta, Italy and Norway opted for unbalanced combinations of national jury and televoting. Czechia and Finland mixed national televoting with other elements in a different way.

How many countries used all 3 elements? Only Spain, Ireland and Croatia resorted to this mechanism. The purest is that of Ireland, which combined the 3 criteria with equal weight and hence its central position in the graph. Croatia gave 50% weight to televoting and the other 50% was distributed between the national and foreign jury. Finally, the distribution of Spain may bother you. Although in principle it is 50% jury, 25% national televoting and 25% demoscopic vote (others), as the jury is divided into half national, half international, we have positioned Spain with 25% national jury, 25% national televoting and 50% of others.

In general, we see a wide range of formulas for choosing representatives at Eurovision. What innovations will the coming years bring us? Will they become more complex or will we return to simplicity?

THE SHAPES OF MUSIC

We have seen a way to classify, distribute the shortlists based on what criteria they use to choose their winner. Another way to understand the preselections is according to the type of songs they include. To do this, we have used Spotify data to observe how the preselections are distributed based on the energy and valence/positivity of the songs.
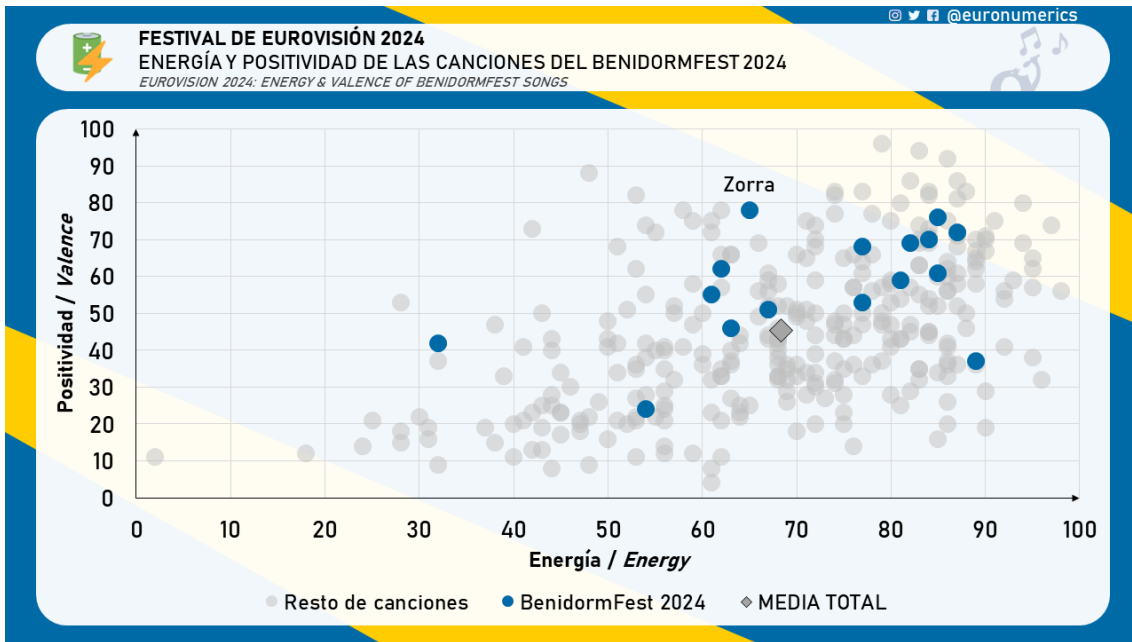
This location is made in the following graph, where the location of the flag of each country represents the average value of energy and positivity of the songs from its national preselection. For example, in the case of Spain we take the 16 songs from BenidormFest and we calculate the average energy and positivity of their songs and that pair of values is the one reflected in the image.
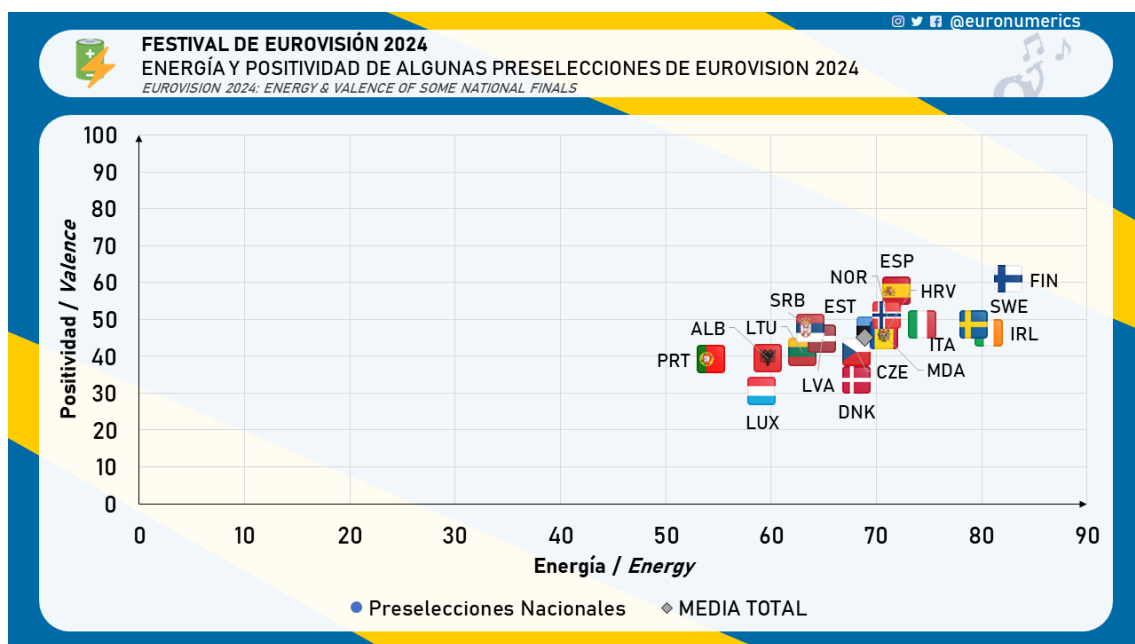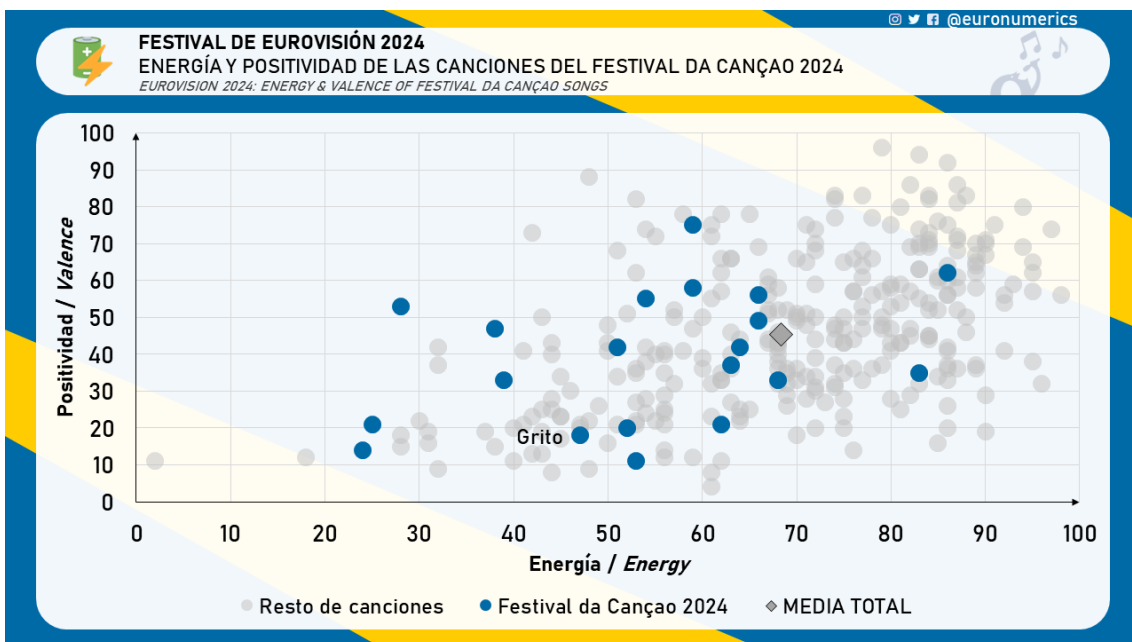

In general, what is observed are very similar values in all the preselections, they are all very close together. The first nuance we must make is that the same number of songs does not participate in the preselections. For example, at Melodifestivalen there were 30 songs while UMK only 7. Therefore, although Finland is revealed as the preselection with the most energy, the Swedish selection has more merit by having more songs.

Of all these preselections, I wanted to highlight three due to their extreme values and number of participants. To do this, in the following graphs the energy and positivity of all the songs from all these preselections are represented and in each case those of the preselection in question are highlighted.
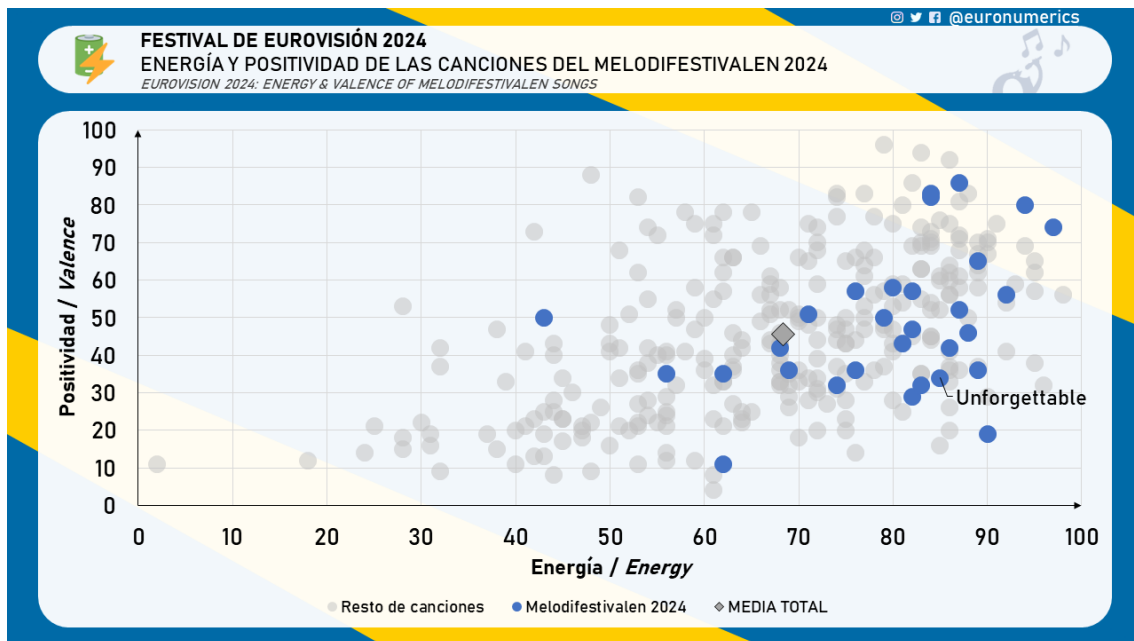
For example, in this graph we have highlighted songs from BenidormFest with blue dots, leaving all other songs from other countries in grey. If you look closely, most of the songs on our shortlist are very high up, the zone of high positivity. Almost all of them are above the global average of all songs, represented by the gray diamond. That is to say, BenidormFest has stood out from the rest of the preselections for having songs with a lot of positivity. To such an extent that the winner, *Zorra*, is the song with the highest level of good vibes of the entire preselection.

FESTIVAL DE EUROVISIÓN 2024
ENERGÍA Y POSITIVIDAD DE LAS CANCIONES DEL BENIDORMFEST 2024
EUROVISION 2024: ENERGY & VALENCE OF BENIDORMFEST SONGS

Zorra

Positividad / *Valence*

Energía / *Energy*

● Resto de canciones   ● BenidormFest 2024   ◇ MEDIA TOTAL

We traveled to our neighboring country to see what the Festival da Cançao 2024 has been like and your suspicions will surely be confirmed. Most songs are in the left, low energy zone. It is a preselection with a lot of intimate songs, with very own rhythms, without a doubt one of the preselections with the greatest personality.

FESTIVAL DE EUROVISIÓN 2024
ENERGÍA Y POSITIVIDAD DE LAS CANCIONES DEL FESTIVAL DA CANÇAO 2024
EUROVISION 2024: ENERGY & VALENCE OF FESTIVAL DA CANÇAO SONGS

Positividad / *Valence*

Grito

Energía / *Energy*

● Resto de canciones   ● Festival da Cançao 2024   ◇ MEDIA TOTAL

And now we go to the opposite side of the graph with the Melodifestivalen. In this case, the bulk of the Swedish songs (blue dots) are located in the right area, dance and fast songs. It is still curious that two preselections that are so opposite, the Swedish and the Portuguese, had their finals on the same day. Did you notice the contrast?

FESTIVAL DE EUROVISIÓN 2024
ENERGÍA Y POSITIVIDAD DE LAS CANCIONES DEL MELODIFESTIVALEN 2024
EUROVISION 2024: ENERGY & VALENCE OF MELODIFESTIVALEN SONGS

In short, this is a fairly visual way of representing the musical styles of the preselections, which allows us to show that they are different from each other. This is, let's say, a vertical analysis of one year, but it would be interesting to observe how the preselections themselves have evolved over the years, a horizontal analysis.

The preselections do not have a defined shape, but in this blog we have seen that we can associate them with certain characteristics that allow us to differentiate them. It is something that we must value: it is a variety, a richness, that enlarges the meaning of the Eurovision Song Contest and European music. And to you, in what other ways do you think the national finals can be identified? Do you feel more identified with any of them?