

When the numbers sang... Eurovision 1980

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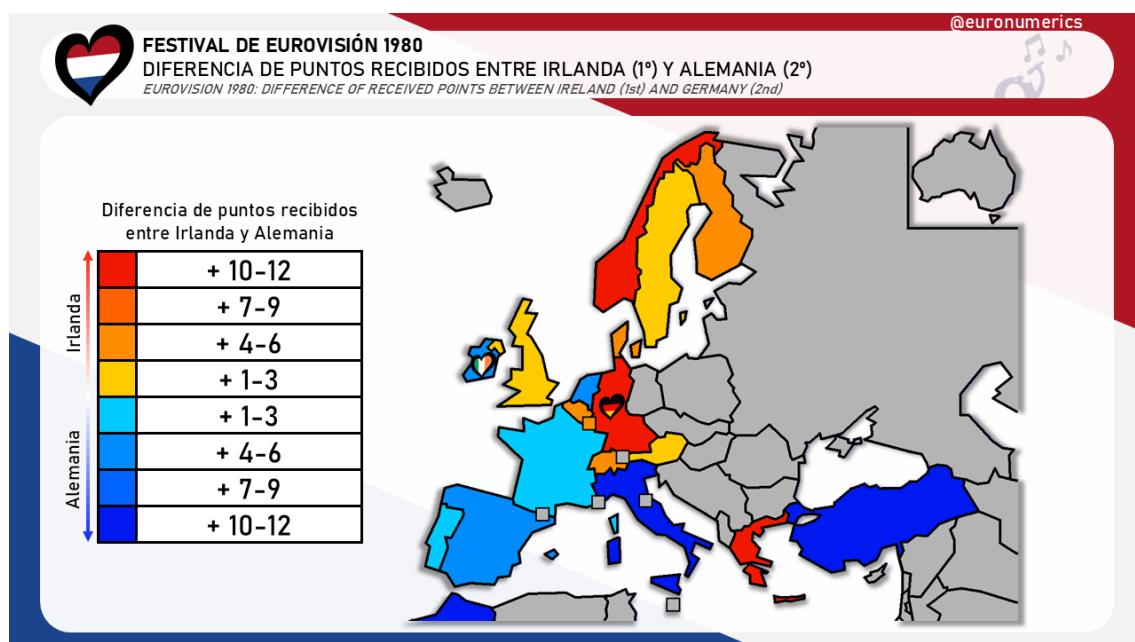
In our journey through Eurovision history, we stop in 1980. A last-minute organization, Morocco's debut, Johnny Logan's first victory... the numbers also play a role in highlighting, among other things, the differences between the Mediterranean countries and Central and Northern Europe. What impact did Morocco's participation have?

THE HAGUE 1980, THE MIRACLE EDITION

It's April 19, 1980. The 25th edition of the Festival has taken place in The Hague, Netherlands. The Dutch offered to host when everyone else declined due to the previous year's winner's refusal. Taking advantage of the Israeli void, Morocco participated in this edition for the first and last time. Turkey returned this year, while Monaco stopped participating until the following century.

Ireland was the winning country; it would be Johnny Logan's first victory and the Emerald Isle's second. Germany and the United Kingdom completed the podium. Spain finished in 12th place out of 19 with 38 points, thanks to Trigo Limpio and their song "Quédate esta noche" (Stay Tonight).

It's worth remembering that the current scoring system of 1 to 8, 10, and 12 has been in use since 1975. To begin our analysis, we've mapped out the difference in points received by the first-place finisher, Ireland, and the second-place finisher, Germany. Warm tones indicate that those countries voted more for Ireland, and cool tones indicate that they valued Germany more.



At first glance, there appears to be a difference between North and South: the more northerly countries gave more points to Ireland than to Germany, while the southern countries valued Germany more highly. There were only one exception on each side: the Netherlands and Greece.

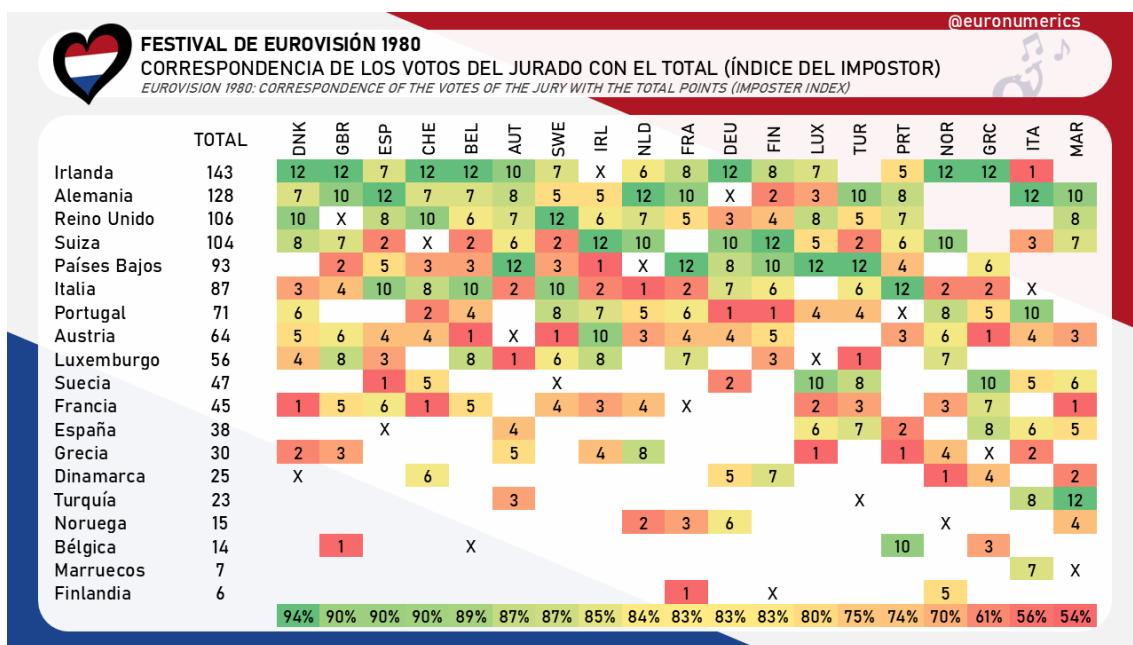
It's very noteworthy that three of these Mediterranean countries —Morocco, Italy, and Turkey— voted heavily for Germany and not at all for Ireland. And to make matters even more complicated, Greece, sandwiched between Italy and Turkey, did the exact opposite.

In short, and following on from what we discussed in a previous blog post, "The Jury, That Innocent Hand?", the juries were heavily influenced by the North-South divide and language.

MOROCCO, A TRUE IMPOSTER?

The highly disparate voting patterns we've seen earlier lead us to use the Impostor Index to determine if there was any suspicious behavior among the juries.

The following table shows the voting results for Eurovision 1980. In the rows, the countries are ordered according to their final result. In the columns, they are ordered according to their Impostor Index (which is the correspondence or correlation between each juror's vote and the overall result). The closer to 100%, the greater the correspondence; the lower the number, the greater the suspicion.



Denmark (94%), the United Kingdom (90%), and Spain (90%) were the three countries whose votes most closely aligned with the final result.

On the other hand, newcomer Morocco (54%) voted the most differently, closely followed by Italy (56%). These two countries accounted for 20 of the 23 points obtained by Turkey, and Italy was the only country to vote for Morocco, contributing 7 points. Both countries leaned much

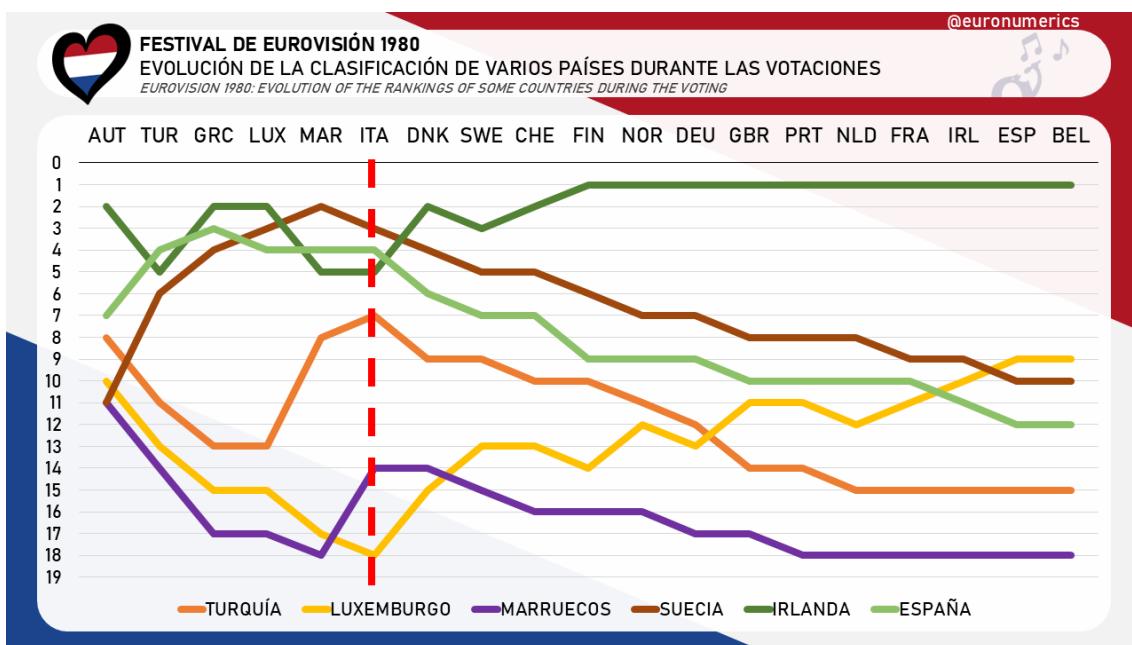
more towards Germany than Ireland, but Turkey also followed that pattern and doesn't have such a low score (75%).

Morocco paid the price for its inexperience with the most discordant vote, who knows with what intentions, giving its 12 points to Turkey, the other Muslim-majority country. However, it could also be an indication of a different way of viewing the festival, an added value compared to continental Europe.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VOTING ORDER: A SHIFT IN THE RESULTS

In the table above, the points were ordered according to the imposter score. It's curious that the most intriguing countries we've seen voted among the first 6 that night: Turkey, Greece, Morocco, and Italy.

In the following graph, we've shown the evolution of the positions of several countries throughout the voting, from Austria's first vote to Belgium's last. Italy's vote, which marks the end of the scoring for this first group of countries, is also represented with a red line.



Looking at the trends, the dotted red line marks shifts in these countries. Sweden and Spain were in 3rd and 4th place until the Italian vote, and ultimately fell to 10th and 12th. Turkey suffered a similar fate, dropping from 7th to 15th, and Morocco, after receiving its 7 points, plummeted to second-to-last place.

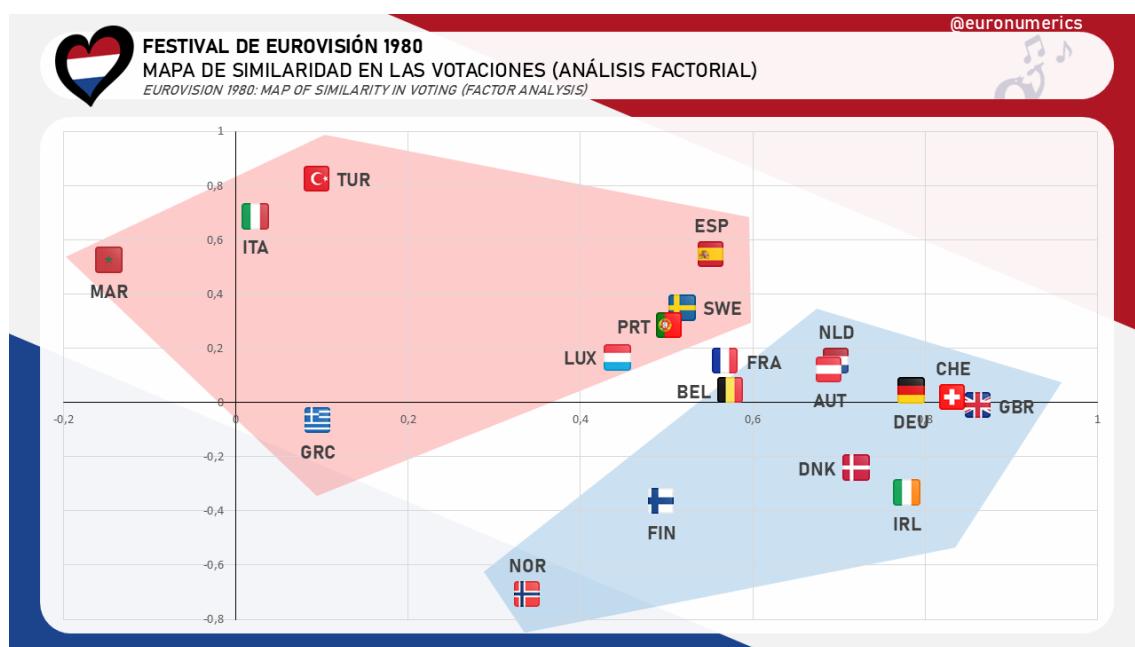
Among those who fared better was Luxembourg, which initially ranked second-to-last but ended up in the top 10. The winner, Ireland, struggled with this first group of countries. Once past this initial hurdle, it climbed the rankings and held the lead until the end.

It's a curious case of how the voting order created the impression of a dramatic shift in the results by initially grouping together countries that voted in a very particular way.

CONFIRMING THE NORTH-SOUTH POLARITY

This section is supplementary and for those who wish to expand upon this. We have seen that there was a group of countries that voted differently. This leads us to represent the voting map in two dimensions thanks to factor analysis. In short, it's as if we wanted to represent on a plane how all the countries voted, as if we wanted to create a map.

This map, which is a coordinate axis, is shown below. Each country appears positioned according to the model's calculations based on its votes. The closer two countries are, the more similarly they voted around a pattern (for example, voting for Eastern European countries or voting for Anglophone songs). If two countries are far apart, it is because they voted very differently.



Just to be clear, we again see Morocco, Italy, and Turkey very close together and separated from the rest (red area). The closest are other Mediterranean countries like Greece and Spain. On the opposite side, in the lower right corner, are the Anglophones, the Nordics, the German-speaking countries, and the Benelux countries (blue area). France falls somewhere in between, as it is halfway between the Mediterranean countries and Central Europe.

In short, a North-South divide is clearly visible, in line with the historical behavior of juries in recent years: the Mediterranean countries voted differently from the rest of Europe.

There is one notable exception on this axis: Sweden. The Swedes do not align with their Nordic neighbors but lean more towards the southern side. This is partly explained in the previous graph. Sweden earned 39 of its final 47 points up to the vote for Italy. It received no points from its neighbors. It was one of the most polarizing songs, and perhaps that is why it broke the mold and "switched sides."

In conclusion, Morocco's participation left its mark on the 1980 Eurovision results. That year, the North-South divide was very noticeable in the voting order, which led to a dramatic shift in the overall results. Will we ever see another African country participate in Eurovision again?