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I suppose, there is no need to speak about the popularity of European Song Contest «Eurovision» among people of different ages from different countries. Every year millions of people hurry home to see this wonderful festival of songs and fashion on TV, to enjoy new sounds, melodies, unexpected actions on the stage.

Eurovision is an annual song competition held among the member countries of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) since 1956. Each member country submits a song to be performed on live television and radio and then casts votes for the other countries' songs to determine the most popular song in the competition. It is one of the longest-running television programs in the world. It is also one of the most watched non-sporting events in the world, with audience figures having been quoted in recent years between 100 million and 600 million internationally. Eurovision has also been broadcast outside Europe to such places as Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, the USA and others, although these countries do not compete.

Belarus is also an active participant of this great singing festival. Both, young professional singers and talented Belarusian children take part in «Eurovision» every year. Besides, millions of people watch this contest on TV, take part in voting, support Belarusian team and hope, that one day Belarus will become a leader of Eurovision.

I should say, I am not only a great lover of this festival, but I am a member of General Organization of Eurovision fans. I have been watching Eurovision since 2002.

The voting system is a positional voting system. Countries award 12 points to their favourite song, then 10 to the second favourite, and then scores from 8 down to 1 to another eight songs.

Historically, a country's votes were decided by an internal jury, but in 1997 five countries (Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden and United Kingdom) experimented with televoting.

The experiment was a success, and from 1998 all countries were encouraged to use televoting wherever possible. Back-up juries are still used by each country, in the event of a televoting failure. Nowadays members of the public may also vote by SMS, in addition to televoting. From 2013, the public may also vote via a mobile app. The current method for ranking entries is a 50/50 combination of both telephone vote and the votes of juries made up of music professionals. It was first used in the final of 2009 edition, and extended the next year to semifinals.

Everything seems to be O.K. and well-organized. But more and more specialists, journalists, participants and viewers, are talking today about the interference of politics, geographical borders, languages in the results of voting and attitude towards this or that participant. Is that true?

The aim of my investigation is to analyse all the facts and make sure if there is a place for politics in arranging «Eurovision» festival and in what way it can influence the results of voting. Here are some facts from the history of Eurovision.

In 1978, during the performance of the Israeli entry, the Jordanian broadcaster JRTV suspended the broadcast and showed pictures of flowers. But Israel was going to win the contest. Afterwards, the Jordanian news media refused to acknowledge that Israel had won and announced that the winner was Belgium (who had actually come in 2nd place). In 1981 JRTV did not broadcast the voting because the name of Israel appeared on the scoreboard.

In 2009, the song «We Don't Wanna Put In» was selected to represent Georgia. However, the song text was banned by Eurovision as it was interpreted as criticism against Prime Minister of Russia Vladimir Putin. Georgia withdrew from the 2009 contest.

Statistical analysis of the results between 2001 and 2005 suggests the occurrence of regional block voting; it has been a matter of debate. Whether it is explained by a tendency for culturally close countries to have similar musical tastes. Several countries can be organised into voting blocs which regularly award each other high points: Greece and Cyprus, Turkey and Azerbaijan, Ireland and the United Kingdom, The Netherlands and Belgium, San Marino and Italy, Nordic states: Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland, Baltic states: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Romania and Moldova, acting as a bridge between the Balkan and Warsaw Pact states, Balkan countries, Former Warsaw pact countries.

So, the contest has long been accused by some of political aspects: televoters allocate points based on their nation's relationship to the other countries, rather than the musical merits of the songs. According to one study of Eurovision voting patterns, certain countries tend to form «clusters» by frequently voting in the same way. On the other hand, others argue that certain countries allocate disproportionately high points to others because of similar musical tastes and cultures and because they speak similar languages, and are therefore more likely to appreciate each other's music.

Another influential factor is the high proportion of expatriates and ethnic minorities living in certain countries. Although judges and televoters cannot vote for their own country's entry, expatriates can vote for their country of origin.

The total numbers of points to be distributed by each country are equal, irrespective of the country's population. Thus voters in countries with larger populations have less power as individuals to influence the result of the contest

than those voting in smaller countries. For example, San Marino holds the same voting power as Russia despite the vast geographic and population differences between them.

To try to reduce the effect of voting blocs, national juries were re-introduced alongside televoting in the final in 2009: each contributing 50% of the vote. This hybrid system was expanded in 2010 to also be implemented in the semi-finals. However, since 1994 no country has won two years in a row, and semi-finals have also been won by different countries, until 2012 when Sweden won the second semi-final in 2011 and 2012. Although many of them used to give their 12 points to the same country each year, like Cyprus and Greece, it has been noticed that factors such as the sets of other high votes received (7, 8 or 10 points) and the number of countries giving points to a specific entry, also highly affect the final positions.

These are just some facts from the history of the Contest, which may prove the fact, that there is a place for politics in arranging International Song Festival «Eurovision». It can be the subject of criticism regarding its political content.

To tell the long story short, I would like to say that, as we see people are influenced by relations, borders, politics... Nothing can be done here. It's true! This is the fact!

But on the other hand, taking part in different sorts of competitions, sports events, musical contests, the representatives of different countries and regions of the world become famous; more and more countries become known and even popular.

For example, at the beginning of the century, nobody in the world knew Belarus. Such a small country! «Where is it» – They asked. But fortunately, in 2007 D. Koldun, a representative from Belarus, was a great success at the contest.

Do you remember his famous song «Work Your Magic» which became very popular in Europe. At that time such countries as: Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Lithuania, Latvia, Armenia, Moldova and Poland gave their voices to Belarus. It was «Warsaw Pack» block!

As we see there is place for politics in Eurovision Contest.

Never-the-less, we should always remember that, first of all, this is a song contest. Choosing the best songs and singers is the right thing! People should vote for favourite songs without any political prejudice.

As for me, personally, I'd like to continue watching this music festival, I'll take part in voting again and again. I'll tell my friends and colleagues in the fan-club to vote for songs and singers without politics.

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