

The Eurovision Song Contest

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary	Definition
1. to compete	a. to organise an event and provide a building and services for it
2. live	b. to get something after working hard for it
3. a viewer	c. to bring together people who have the same objective
4. a jury	d. to participate in a competition
5. to host	e. a song which is very popular
6. to unite	f. somebody who is watching a TV programme
7. a hit	g. an expert group of people who decide the winner(s) of a competition
8. to achieve	h. performed in front of an audience (not recorded in a studio before the performance)

The Eurovision Song Contest

Every year on a certain Saturday night in May, something quite unique happens in Europe. Millions of people turn on their TVs and prepare to watch their nation compete. But this is no ordinary international competition. It has no footballs, athletes or fast cars. This is a contest based on something much more important: finding the perfect pop song.

What is the Eurovision Song Contest?

In short, the Eurovision is an enormous, televised concert which is full of fireworks, wonderful dancing, lots of colours and shiny clothes. Oh, and pop songs, of course! Each participating country sends a singer or group to perform a song live at the Eurovision semi-final. From these performances, 26 are chosen for the Saturday-night Grand Final.

Which countries participate?

Most of the participating countries are within Europe or are nearby (e.g. Israel, Azerbaijan, etc.). However, due to the popularity of the competition with TV viewers in Australia, this country has been included since 2015.

How do they choose the winner?

After the performances at the Grand Final, each country votes for the best song. TV viewers can vote using their mobile phones, but each country also has an official jury who decide 50

per cent of the votes. Obviously, it is not permitted to vote for your own country. In the end, the song with the most votes wins. The winning country will then host the Eurovision the following year.

What is the origin of the competition?

Although it might seem like a normal TV talent show like *The X-Factor* or *The Voice*, the Eurovision has quite historical origins. The Second World War ended in 1945, leaving Europe very divided. In the 1950s, the European Broadcasting Union started to think of an event which would both entertain and unite Europeans. This led to the first European song contest in 1956. It happened in Switzerland and included just seven countries. Decades later, it has grown into an enormous international event with hundreds of millions of viewers.

What are the rules?

The competition's central rule is that each song needs to be a maximum of three minutes. This is shorter than most commercial pop songs, but the organisers decided that this limit was necessary so that the entire Grand Final (including voting) can happen within three hours. While performing the song, there is another rule that the maximum number of people on the stage is six. This includes the singer(s), musicians and dancers. Songs can be in any language, even though most countries choose to sing in English.

Are there any Eurovision stars?

The competition has certainly had some success stories. The Swedish super-group ABBA won the Eurovision in 1974 and then became huge stars with hits like 'Dancing Queen' and 'Mamma Mia'. In 1988, Céline Dion won for Switzerland before finding world fame with songs like 'My Heart Will Go On' from the film *Titanic*. In 2006, Finnish rockers Lordi won the competition and captured the world's imagination with their metal music and monster suits. Other winning songs which became international hits were the electro-hit 'Euphoria' by Swedish singer Loreen (2012) and 'Heroes' by another Swede, Måns Zelmerlöw (2015).

What next?

The popularity of the Eurovision has grown more and more each year. Outside of Europe and Australia, the Grand Final is now also watched by viewers in the USA and many other countries. Organisations in certain countries like China and Qatar have even expressed an interest in participating in the competition. So, who knows? Perhaps international unity will finally be achieved not through governments but through three-minute pop songs.

Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. At the Eurovision, the audience always hear the singer's real voice.	True	False
2. Australia is the only non-European country which participates.	True	False
3. In every country, a group of experts decide half the votes.	True	False
4. The first Eurovision was in 1945.	True	False
5. Céline Dion won the Eurovision with the song 'My Heart Will Go On'.	True	False
6. The text suggests that pop music can be very powerful.	True	False

Task 2

Put the sentences in the order the topics are mentioned in the text.

- How they decide where to have the final every year
- The number of countries which compete in the final
- A hope for the future
- Famous people who are connected to the Eurovision
- A country that competes but which is not European
- The number of people who watch the Eurovision every year

Discussion

What is your opinion of the Eurovision Song Contest? Which singer from your country would be a good performer at the Eurovision?

Answers

Preparation task

1. d
2. h
3. f
4. g
5. a
6. c
7. e
8. b

Task 1

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. False
6. True

Task 2

- 3 How they decide where to have the final every year
- 1 The number of countries which compete in the final
- 6 A hope for the future
- 5 Famous people who are connected to the Eurovision
- 2 A country that competes but which is not European
- 4 The number of people who watch the Eurovision every year