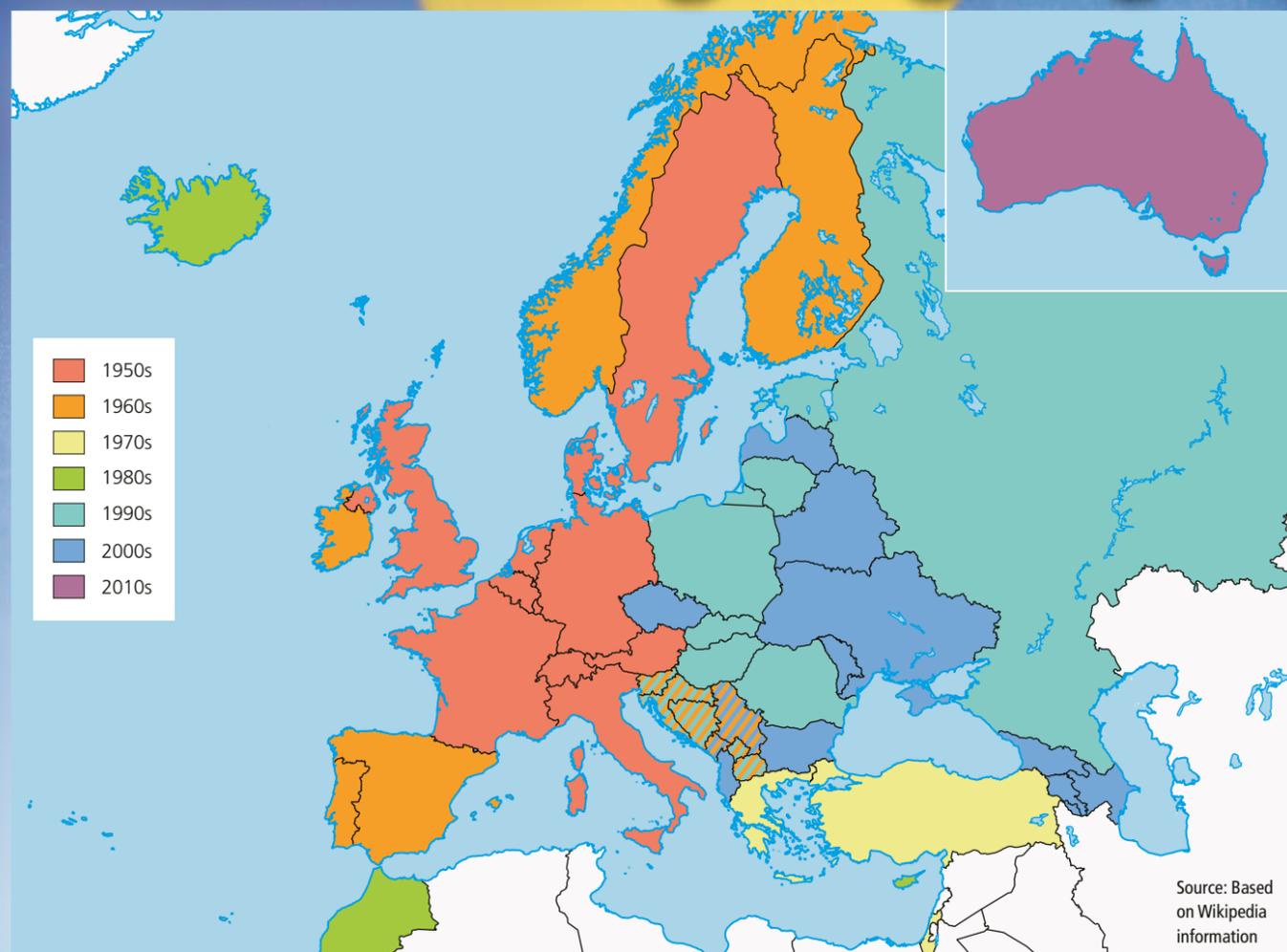




# The geography of Eurovision



**Map 1** Eurovision participants over the decades. Australia entered in 2015

## Fundamentals of Eurovision

The Eurovision Song Contest has been a mainstay of European culture since 1956. Established after the Second World War, it sought to expand on the ideas behind the formation of the United Nations, the European

Economic Community and other international bodies to promote cooperation and peace between neighbours. It has grown from just seven countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland) to now include over 50 and attracts some 200 million viewers worldwide. The UK first entered in 1957 with Austria and Denmark. Map 1 shows how the geography of Eurovision entrants has evolved over the decades.

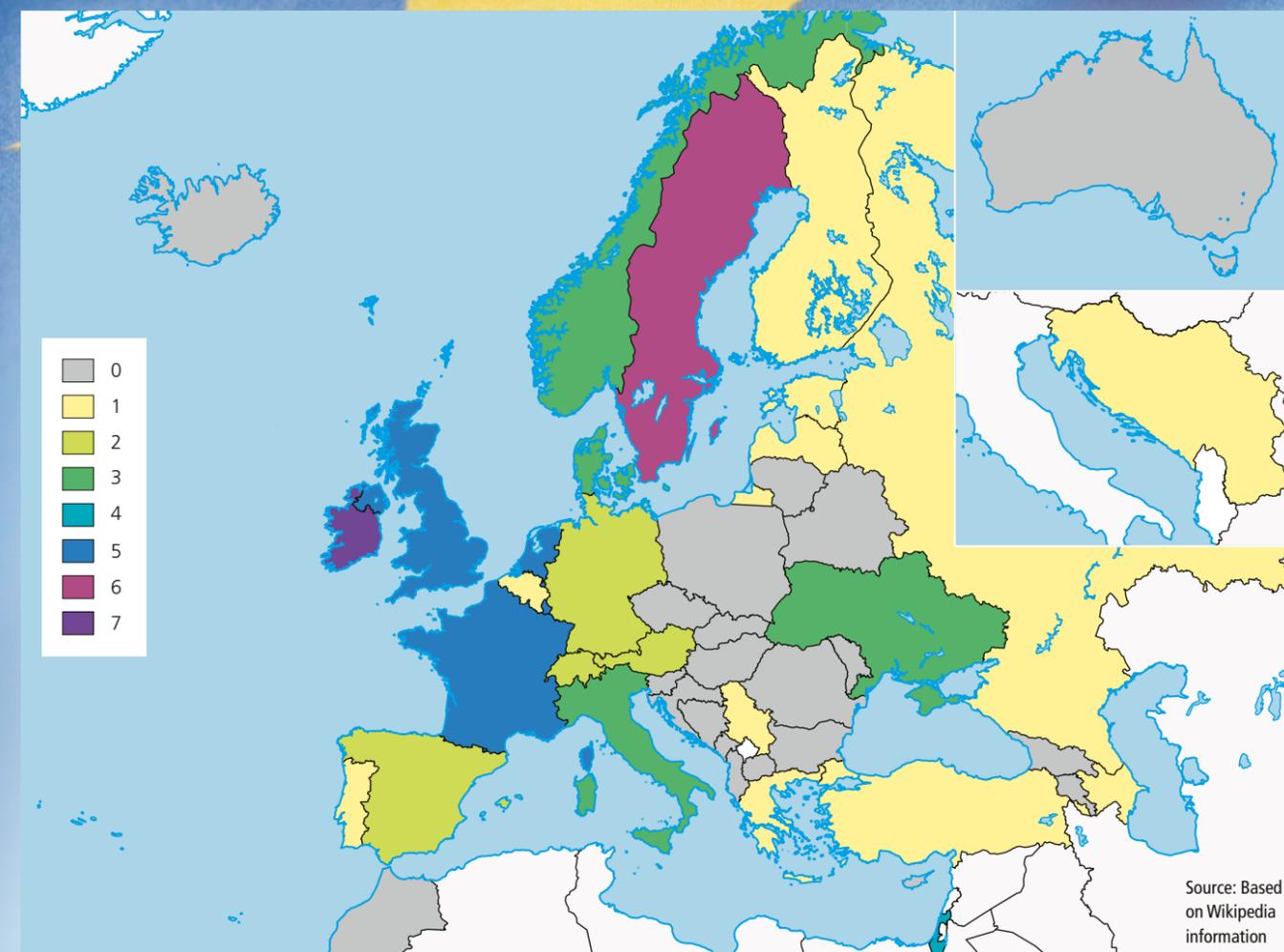
## The economics

Hosting Eurovision is expensive, but it can pay dividends by promoting the host city and boosting tourism. In 2016, Stockholm generated some £8 million from around 38,000 Eurovision visitors, with 7 in 10 saying

they planned to return within one year. In 2017, however, Kyiv recouped only one third of the hosting costs through 20,000 visitors, with location, conflict and distance from most European nations limiting numbers.

## The culture

A distinct, playful sub-genre of popular culture has developed around Eurovision, with associated clothing, music style and socialising. However, the level of engagement varies from country to country for a variety of sociocultural reasons. Sweden has large celebrations around the contest, and it is also held in high esteem by Armenia and other small Eastern European states where it provides a prominent stage for their



**Map 2** Eurovision winners shown by the number of successes

nations. Eurovision is a pan-European sharing of culture, with traditional outfits and instruments on display. Eurovision has attracted a loyal and enthusiastic fanbase in the LGBT+ community across Europe.

It can be argued that globalisation and processes of cultural erosion have diluted its charm, with many countries now singing in English, outsourcing song-writing to professionals across borders, and a broader concern around the individual style of entries shifting to more mainstream popular culture. This is not always the case, however. France's 2022 representatives, for example, were 'Alvan & Ahez'. Alvan is a multi-instrumentalist from the French region of Brittany and Ahez are a traditional vocal

group who showcase their Breton heritage by singing in their native Breton language infused with the ancient myths of Brittany.

## The politics

Eurovision is political. There are regular accusations of bloc voting, whereby countries have appeared to support the songs of neighbouring nations with similar cultures — such as Belarus and Russia. Geopolitical conflict has surfaced in Eurovision in various ways. Azerbaijan and Armenia, for example, do not vote for one other and the latter boycotted an event in the former citing security concerns. In 2018 Georgia was banned from entering its Putin-punning song 'We Don't Wanna Put In' for fear of inciting Russia.

Map 2 shows the winners of Eurovision. Ukraine's Eurovision success in 2022 reflected the international support it received against the Russian invasion. Due to the war in Ukraine, the Eurovision Song Contest 2023 will be held in Liverpool. There is now some discussion about Ukraine hosting, but this seems unlikely.

Eurovision continues to be hugely popular. Despite funding and geopolitical challenges, it remains a cornerstone of European culture celebrated by millions.

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## RESOURCES

Main Eurovision site:

[www.tinyurl.com/37rr53nc](http://www.tinyurl.com/37rr53nc).

A short history of Eurovision:

[www.tinyurl.com/2p82hpwr](http://www.tinyurl.com/2p82hpwr).

Guardian article written when

Australia joined the contest in 2015:

[www.tinyurl.com/vaj5y5ja](http://www.tinyurl.com/vaj5y5ja).