**Eurovision song contest:**

**“Only songs performed in English do well?”**

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**Continuing our “Myths of the Eurovision Song Contest debunked” series, where we look at misconceptions viewers might hold about the world's biggest live music event, we're examining the common belief that only songs performed in English do well. Where does this come from? Is there enough evidence to back it up? Let's dig into it!**

There is a long-held belief that if a country wants to do well in the competition they have to perform their song in English. While there have undeniably been many winners and good placings among the songs performed in English, particularly recently, if we take a closer look at our history, we learn that is not always the case.

## The evidence

Two of the last 5 winning songs of the Eurovision Song Contest were performed in languages other than English, thus contradicting the myth right off the bat. In 2016, Ukraine achieved its second victory thanks to [Jamala](https://eurovision.tv/participant/jamala)’s 1944, a song performed partly in Crimean Tatar. The year after, Portugal swept the competition with [Salvador Sobral](https://eurovision.tv/participant/salvador-sobral)'s Portuguese song Amar Pelos Dois.

## The history of the language rule

The official rules concerning the language in which the entries can be performed have changed several times during the Eurovision Song Contest's 65 years history. There was no language rule in the first 10 contests; it didn't come in to play until a country performed their song in a different language than their official one. This was in 1965 when Sweden sent opera singer [Ingvar Wixell](https://eurovision.tv/participant/ingvar-wixell) to Naples to sing his song, Absent Friend, in English.

After that ‘incident’, the first language rule was created: "Entries must be performed in one of the official languages of the participating country". It didn’t last long, though: in 1973 this rule was abolished, allowing participating countries to perform in the language of their choice.

This freedom was short-lived: In 1977, the language rule was reintroduced. It was not re-introduced early enough for that year's Contest, however, as Germany and Belgium had already chosen their songs in English before it was decided on. So it was from 1978 to 1998 that all entries were performed only in one (or more) of the official languages of the participating countries. [Dana International](https://eurovision.tv/participant/dana-international)'s Diva, from Israel, was the last winner under the language rule.

## Winners by language

Since 1999, no such restriction has existed. In these years, we've seen a trend of using the English language more often, meaning there have been more entries sung in English and so higher chances for these songs to do better. In the years since 1999, there have been 17 winners in English and 4 of them in another language, the most likely evidence for this myth's persistence.

If we check those statistics from the very first Eurovision Song Contest in 1956, the winners by language become more varied:

* 46,3% English
* 20,9% French
* 32,8% Other

This means that, over the course of the Contest's history and changing language rules, **53,7%** of the winners have been in languages other than English. That includes the 2007 winner from Serbia, [Marija Serifović](https://eurovision.tv/participant/marija-serifovic)’s Molitva.

## Non-winners

What about the songs that didn’t win the competition but still did well when performed in other languages? The most recent ones include Iceland’s Hatriđ Mun Sigra which [Hatari](https://eurovision.tv/participant/hatari) performed in Icelandic, giving their country their first Semi-Final qualifier in 5 years and a Top 10 finish in the Grand Final. This is something that Iceland had achieved only on 5 previous occasions, 2 of them in Icelandic. It was Iceland’s first song in their native language since 2013’s Ég Á Líf, which [Eythor Ingi](https://eurovision.tv/participant/eythor-ingi) also took to the Grand Final.

A country that has recently decided to move away from English is Albania; this change has also improved their rankings in recent years. [Jonida Maliqi](https://eurovision.tv/participant/jonida-maliqi)’s Ktheju Tokës saw the country qualify for the Grand Final for the second year in a row after [Eugent Bushpepa](https://eurovision.tv/participant/eugent-bushpepa) did so in Lisbon with Mall, which ended up placing 11th. Albania’s best placing ever, 5th, was [Rona Nishliu](https://eurovision.tv/participant/rona-nishliu) in 2012 and her Albanian language song Suus.

Source: https://eurovision.tv/story/only-songs-performed-in-english-do-well