
Spain & Portugal fact-checking brief

Q1 2023

This quarterly report collects the main hoaxes and disinformation narratives detected in Spain and Portugal from January to March 2023 by the fact-checking organisations integrated into the IBERIFIER hub.

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May 2023

1. Most repeated hoaxes and disinformation campaigns — January-March, 2023

In Spain

- Climate disinformation such as 15-minute city-related narratives or *chemtrails* to alter the weather
- Hoaxes around various laws approved by the Government, such as the Animal Welfare Law or the Trans Law
- In the last part of the quarter, hoaxes were detected indicating alleged electoral fraud ahead of the May elections

In Portugal

- They stand out, especially the disinformation related to the war in Ukraine and the inflationary crisis.

2. Cases of cross mis- and disinformation (Spain-Portugal)

There is not much cross disinformation between Spains and Portugal. Two of the Spanish fact-checkers have not registered references to Portugal. The other two Spanish fact-checking organisations have two each.

The Portuguese fact-checkers detected one and two articles respectively with references to Spain. [This verification](#) by *Polígrafo* stands out, denouncing an alleged attack on a doctor who treated a woman without a veil. The video circulated in Portugal assuring that the images had been taken in Spain recently but were from Russia in 2021. That same hoax was also debunked in Spain by *Maldita.es* ([article](#)) and *Newtral* ([article](#)).

3. Main hoaxes

In Spain

- The hoaxes related to climate change stand out, such as those that talk about the supposed dangers of the city of 15 minutes. On this same subject there is another outstanding disinformation that ensures that the EU has asked citizens not to eat breakfast to help preserve the environment. The European Union also appears in another of the most prominent hoaxes, the one that says that it wants to introduce insects into the diet without warning about it.

- Another major issue is that of alleged fraud in the face of the May 28 elections. Particularly noteworthy is the hoax that claims that 1,600 North Africans are registered in a flat in Barcelona who live in Morocco but receive aid from the Spanish state and will be able to vote in the elections.
- When a humanitarian crisis or a major catastrophe occurs, misinformation on that topic spikes. This quarter saw the earthquake in Turkey and Syria and several verifiers point out that some of the main hoaxes of this period were related to that event.

In Portugal

- A relevant hoax was one that spoke of an alleged limitation in the withdrawal of cash from the Bank of America, after the bankruptcy of Silicon Valley Bank, something that was totally false.
- [Another hoax](#) that stands out in Portugal was related to a narrative that has also been very present in Spain: the supposed advantages of trans women in sports competitions. In this case, it refers to a fight between Gabi García (an alleged trans woman) with another opponent. Actually, neither of the two fighters is trans.

4. Main disinformation narratives

In Spain

- There is going to be electoral fraud in the next local and regional elections in Spain, either by manipulating the results through Indra or with irregularities in the censuses or voting by mail
- The climate is being altered with geoengineering, especially through *chemtrails*
- Climate change is an excuse to take measures (such as "15-minute cities") that are going to be used to end the rights and freedoms of citizens
- Trans people have advantages, for example, in sports competitions and they will carry out sex changes just to take advantage of these supposed benefits
- Around the earthquake in Turkey, videos and images out of context have been detected, above all

In Portugal

- The demonization of the LGBT community with the aim of accentuating their discrimination or ridiculing their claims for rights and freedoms
- Narratives that attack Ukraine with the aim of weakening the support of European countries

5. Main hoaxes according to topics

Environmental disasters

- The alleged climate lockdowns and “15-minute cities”
- Spraying with *chemtrails* is blocking clouds and causing drought
- Antena 3 television channel did not attribute the snowfall in January to climate change
- False images of the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria
- The Ohio train derailment was the American Chernobyl and the Biden government tried to hide it

Gender

- The Trans Law replaces the concepts of mother and father with those of "pregnant and non-pregnant parent" of the Civil Code
- Trans women achieve advantages in different sports competitions
- Ridicule of feminism using fake profiles posing as feminists, especially around 8M

Migration & racism

- Mass regularizations of immigrants are taking place to alter election results
- They give immigrants help to vote for a certain political party
- Entering a country illegally is a crime in all penal codes in the world
- Accuse immigrants of violent acts such as destroying the Calahorra nativity scene (La Rioja) or interrupting the Krampus parade in Austria

Celebrities

- Misinformation about the breakup of Shakira and Piqué
- Montage with the supposed cover of *Playboy* with the French Secretary of State Marlène Schiappa
- Manipulated image of Rosalía with an ultrasound.

Politics

- Electoral results can be influenced through Indra
- Erroneous comparisons of different indicators between cities to demonstrate that when a certain political party governs in a city, the indicators are better
- The EU has not authorized the use of insects in any food and without informing it on the label
- Manipulated image of Lula da Silva in handcuffs after his election
- The President of the Spanish Government Pedro Sánchez reproaches the PP for "voting no" to the rise in the SMI but the measure was not put to a vote in Congress
- Alberto Núñez Feijóo (PP) summons AIREF to question employment accounting with an analysis that the independent body denies having done
- It is false that Beatriz Gomes Dias, Lisbon city councilor for À Esquerda, said that it would be good if the Portuguese were a minority in Portugal

Health

- Putin has ordered the destruction of COVID-19 vaccines in Russia
- There is no evidence that Pfizer explores mutating the COVID virus
- Contaminated shipment of Dana brand rice has not arrived from Pakistan
- Temperature changes cause joint pain
- The European Union has not recommended not eating dinner "to sleep better"

Security

- There has been no dismemberment attempt during a Tinder appointment in Seville
- Erroneous Crime Rate Comparisons
- Hoaxes about the implications and actions of the EU or NATO countries in the war in Ukraine, such as the delivery of weapons
- It is false that Borrell said that the EU is the "Ukrainian army"

Sexuality

- Women think less about the sexual act and masturbate less
- The first contraceptive pill for men has been developed

6. Verifications on content created with Artificial Intelligence

- The images of the Pope with a Balenciaga coat were denied by five of the six fact checkers
- The false arrest of Donald Trump, three of the six
- The image of Vladimir Putin kneeling before Xi Jinping, two of the six

Fact-checkers that have contributed to this report

SPAIN

Maldita.es
EFE Verifica
Verificat
Newtral

PORTUGAL

Polígrafo
Prova dos Factos | Publico

Average number of verifications by fact-checkers in the quarter: 204



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Coordinator



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