



**IBERIFIER**  
Iberian Media Research  
& Fact-Checking

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# Spain & Portugal fact-checking brief

Q3 2023

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

Find more information at: [www.iberifier.eu](http://www.iberifier.eu)

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# 1. Most repeated hoaxes and disinformation campaigns

## July – September 2023

### In Spain

- Alleged electoral fraud in the general elections of 23J
- Disinformation about climate change with narratives about the drought, heat waves, fires or the DANA (upper-level isolated depression) that affected Spain in September
- Morocco earthquake
- Protests in France after Nahel's death

### In Portugal

- Ukrainian War
- National policy (health, housing, public debt, taxes, inflation)
- Vaccination against COVID-19
- Immigration
- World Youth Day
- Climate changes and fires

## 2. Main hoaxes

### In Spain

- The main disinformation topic this quarter has a clear political nature and occurs around the 23J elections. There are many hoaxes surrounding alleged electoral fraud, whether through voting by mail (1, 2), that of Spaniards residing abroad (1, 2) or the company Indra (1, 2). But other types of political disinformation also appear, such as conspiracy theories about alleged disagreements between King Felipe VI and President Pedro Sánchez.
- During the summer, disinformation about climate change and extreme weather phenomena such as heat waves, wildfires or the intense storm in Madrid region in September (1, 2) intensifies. There was also a political angle in the climate disinformation with accusations of hypocrisy against the vice president of Ecological Transition Teresa Ribera for supposedly taking a short trip on a jet
- Crisis situations such as the earthquake in Morocco or the riots in France after the death of Nahel also caused spikes in disinformation, in the second case with clear xenophobic narratives

- Another conspiracy theory that appeared strongly is the one that claims that foods with the Rainforest Foundation frog seal contain insects (1, 2)
- Disinformation continued about the “Trans Law”. In this case, it is falsely claimed that thanks to this law, inmates can request a change of module in prison
- There were also viral examples of scam attempts, such as the case of the message offering a supposed free Netflix subscription extension

### **In Portugal**

- The celebration of World Youth Day in Lisbon generated a lot of disinformation shared through social networks during this quarter. (1, 2, 3, 4)
- In the political and related sphere, a case of the CHEGA party leader André Ventura who spread disinformation using traditional media graphics stood out. (1, 2)
- An alleged piece of advertisement from Turismo de Portugal that is not official and that is being used to spread xenophobic and racist messages
- In the economic sphere, disinformation was also detected regarding claims that Portugal's fuel is the most expensive in Europe
- The war in Ukraine continued to generate disinformation. (1, 2, 3)

## **3. Main disinformation narratives**

### **In Spain**

- Several narratives claim that it has been an electoral fraud and question the cleanliness of the 23J elections. Sowing doubts about the electoral process before voting helps disinformers to delegitimize the results when they do not like them
- During the summer heat waves, narratives denying climate change returned, stating that “it has always been hot in summer in Spain.”
- A narrative appeared that seeks to blame a global elite for creating earthquakes, cyclones or wildfires with secret weapons. During this summer it was used, for example, in the serious wildfires in Hawaii, Tenerife and Turkey or the earthquake in Morocco

- The riots after Nahel's death in France were used to claim that immigrants are trying to invade Europe using violence and that they want to destroy Western civilization. In Spain, images of violence in France were also used to claim that, if Spanish voters want to prevent this from happening in Spain, they had to vote for political parties that ask for a tough line with immigrants
- The narratives about the Rainforest Alliance want us to believe that there is a global elite trying to get us to eat insects supposedly to stop global warming. They try to assimilate something unpleasant (eating insects) with the fight against climate change.

### **In Portugal**

- The aim is to promote the growing mistrust among the Portuguese population regarding immigration from certain parts of the world. The general idea is that a cultural substitution and a loss of European and national identity is taking place in the capital, Lisbon

## **4. Main hoaxes according to topics**

### **Environmental disasters**

- The big summer fires have been started using huge laser beams (1, 2, 3)
- Use of myths and disinformation about forest fires to attack the political class in Portugal
- Claims that major floods are normal to deny climate change
- The alarm that sounded in the Community of Madrid to warn about the arrival of a DANA (upper-level isolated depression) in September is a tool to limit the freedoms of citizens
- Disinformation about the earthquake in Morocco

### **Gender**

- Disinformation about the controversy over Luis Rubiales' non-consensual kiss to Jenni Hermoso after the Spanish team's World Cup victory ((1, 2, 3)
- Disinformation about legislation for the trans community (1, 2)
- Attacks on the LGBTQ+ collective coinciding with of Pride Day

### **Migration & racism**

- Disinformation that claim that immigrants are dangerous using disinformation about the unrest after the death of Nahel in France

- Hoax blaming the murder of the owner of a store in Madrid to a Maghrebi person (1, 2)
- Images out of context of the arrival of boats to Spain
- Disinformation about alleged incidents with migrants in Lampedusa
- Disinformation about the Islamization of Sweden
- It is also stated that immigration and/or refugees will cause a cultural replacement in European countries and cities (1, 2)

### **Celebrities**

- There have been several cases of false deaths of famous people such as Rosa Montero or Fernando Savater (1, 2)
- In Portugal, the figure of Cristiano Ronaldo is used to spread hoaxes

### **Politics**

- Disinformation both during the electoral campaign and after the vote that claimed there had been fraud (1, 2, 3, 4)
- In Portugal there are narratives that claim that citizens lived better during the Estado Novo dictatorship than today

### **Health**

- Content continues to appear that claims that COVID-19 vaccines are harmful (1, 2, 3)

### **Other**

- The start of the implementation of the new animal protection law has caused several hoaxes to spread about what is prohibited and why you can be punished (1, 2, 3)

## **5. Events that have brought increases in disinformation**

### **In Spain**

- The general elections on 23J
- Heat waves during the summer
- The DANA (upper-level isolated depression) that affected Spain in September
- The Moroccan earthquake
- The riots after the death of Nahel at a police checkpoint in France
- Large wildfires in various places around the world

## In Portugal

- World Youth Day held in Lisbon

## 6. Verifications on content created with Artificial Intelligence

Three of the five fact-checkers carried out verifications related to Artificial Intelligence.

During this quarter, cases of fake images created with artificial intelligence that presented political figures in situations in which they have not been have reappeared. For example, [Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau posing in a magazine](#), [Russian President Vladimir Putin being detained](#) or [the Pope in a jacuzzi surrounded by women](#). In Spain, a case also appeared in which the disinformation was just the opposite, it was said that a real image had been created with artificial intelligence. It happened with a photograph of President Pedro Sánchez in the Senate (1, 2)

Several cases have also been detected in which artificial intelligence has been used in scam attempts, either [using deepfakes](#) or cloning voices of famous people (1, 2). Deepfake was also [used with political intentions](#) and the cloning of voices, to generate songs by singers such as Ariana Grande, Lady Gaga or Duki (1, 2).

A case that shows the danger of the popularization of artificial intelligence was the one that occurred in the Spanish town of Almendralejo where the police arrested a group of teenagers [for spreading sexual images of underage girls in WhatsApp groups that they had generated using AI tools](#).

### Fact-checkers that have contributed to this report

#### SPAIN

Maldita.es  
EFE Verifica  
Verificat  
Newtral

#### PORTUGAL

Polígrafo

**Average number of verifications by fact-checkers in the quarter:** 232



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### Coordinator



Universidad  
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