

# Portuguese General Elections

## 2025

### Information and Disinformation on Social Media



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This report is produced under a partnership between MediaLab CIES\_Iscte and CNE – Comissão Nacional de Eleições, with the support of Agência LUSA and Democracia em Xequê, for the monitoring and screening of political disinformation in the context of the pre-campaign and election campaign for the General Elections of 18 May 2025 in Portugal.

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Authors	Gustavo Cardoso, José Moreno, Inês Narciso, Paulo Couraceiro e João Santos
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# Glossary





## Glossary

### Political Parties

AD – Aliança Democrática (Democratic Alliance): Political coalition comprising PSD and CDS that ran in the May 2025 legislative elections under the leadership of PSD and Luís Montenegro. Both PSD and CDS are members of the EPP – European People’s Party group in the European Parliament.

BE - Bloco de Esquerda (Left Block): Socialist left-wing political party currently led by Mariana Mortágua. Former member of The Left Group in the European Parliament. Founder and member of the European Left Alliance for the People and the Planet.

CDS - Centro Democrático Social (Social Democratic Center): Conservative right-wing party, currently lead by Nuno Melo, member of the European People’s Party.

Chega (Enough): Conservative and populist right-wing political party currently led by André Ventura. Member of the Patriots for Europe Group in the European Parliament.

IL - Iniciativa Liberal (Liberal Initiative): Liberal right-wing political party currently led by Rui Rocha. Member of the Renew Europe Group in the European Parliament.

L - Livre (Free): Ecological left-wing political party currently led by Rui Tavares. Member of The Greens / EFA Group in the European Parliament.

PAN – Pessoas-Animais-Natureza (People Animals Nature): Ecological political party currently led by Inês Sousa Real. Member of The Greens / EFA Group in the European Parliament.

PCP – Partido Comunista Português (Portuguese Communist Party): Communist political party currently led by Paulo Raimundo. Member of The Left Group in the European Parliament.



PS – Partido Socialista (Socialist Party): Center-left political party currently led by Pedro Nuno Santos. Member of the group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament.

PSD Partido Social Democrata (Social Democratic Party): Center-right political party currently led by Luís Montenegro. Member of the EPP - European People's Party group in the European Parliament.

## **Portuguese Politicians**

André Ventura: leader of Chega.

António Costa: Former Portuguese prime minister, now president of the European council.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa: Current Portuguese president.

Avelino Farinha: Businessman, defendant in a corruption case in Madeira, with connections to the current president of the Regional Government.

Carlos Moedas: Former European commissioner, current mayor of Lisbon.

Inês de Sousa Real: leader of PAN - Pessoas-Animais-Natureza (People-Animals-Nature)

Luís Montenegro: leader of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) which headed the AD coalition in the 2024 European elections.

Mariana Mortágua: leader of Bloco de Esquerda.

Nuno Melo: leader of CDS - Centro Democrático Social (Social Democratic Center)



Paulo Raimundo: leader of PCP - Partido Comunista Português (Portuguese Communist Party)

Pedro Frazão: politician and current parliament member elected by Chega party.

Pedro Nuno Santos: leader of the Socialist Party (PS).

Pedro Passos Coelho: Former leader of PSD - Partido Social Democrata (Social Democratic Party).

Rui Rio: Former leader of PSD - Partido Social Democrata (Social Democratic Party).

Rui Rocha: leader of Iniciativa Liberal (Liberal Initiative).

Rui Tavares: leader of Livre (Free).

## **Media Personalities**

Júlia Pinheiro: Portuguese daytime TV presenter.

Tony Carreira: Portuguese popular singer.

## **Media brands**

CNN Portugal: Portuguese news television channel under the CNN brand.

Correio da Manhã: Portuguese daily newspaper belonging to the MediaLivre group.

Diário Luso: Alternative media outlet focused on popular topics.



Expresso: Portuguese weekly newspaper belonging to the Impresa group.

Mundo Vivo: Alternative media outlet operating solely on social media.

Observador: Portuguese generalist digital newspaper. Also with a fact-checking section.

Polígrafo: Portuguese independent fact-checker, affiliated with EFCN and EDMO.

SIC: Portuguese generalist television channel belonging to the Impresa group.

Tuga Clipz: Alternative media outlet operating solely on social media.

## **Other**

AIMA - Agência para a Integração, Migrações e Asilo (Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum): Portuguese authority for migration and asylum issues.

Cyabra: Bots and fake profiles detection company of israeli origin.

Goa: territory in India that is a former Portuguese colony, with special formal connections to Portugal.

Mário Gonçalves: Portuguese right-leaning online influencer operating mostly on Facebook.

# Executive Summary



## Executive Summary

Between the 2024 and 2025 General elections, the main parties increased their follower base by 20 per cent and the candidates by 55 per cent, with **TikTok registering the largest relative growth**. In 2025, the candidates will overtake the parties in total number of followers (2.5 vs 2.2 million). **Chega and André Ventura lead in number of followers** on all social networks, with the exception of X, where the Liberal Initiative leads among the parties.



**Figure 1. Followers of each party leader on social media in 2025**

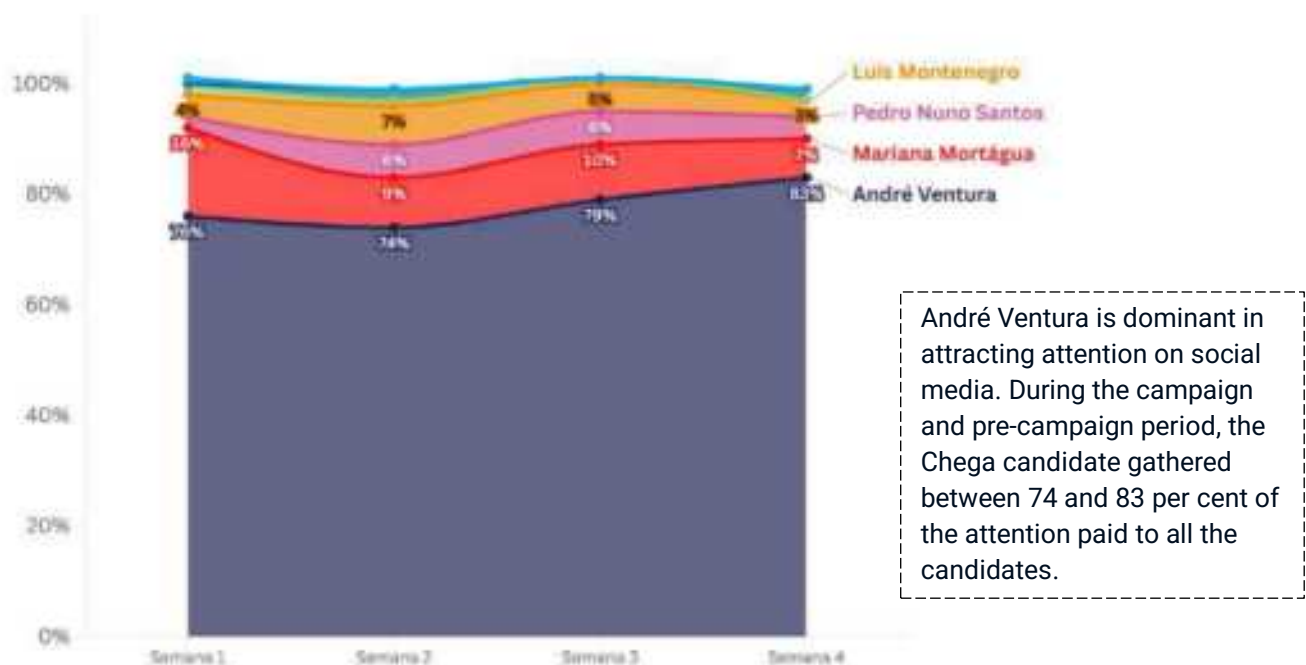
Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte.

As in previous General elections, **Facebook was the social network where candidates posted the most**. On TikTok, the number of posts tripled, reflecting the shift from three to six active accounts among the candidates. Among the parties, the **PCP was the most active** on the networks, followed by Chega and PS. Among the candidates, **André Ventura posted the most**, followed by Mariana Mortágua and Pedro Nuno Santos.



**Facebook led the way in terms of interactions generated** (reactions, comments and shares), unlike in the 2024 legislative elections, where it was Instagram. Overall, **TikTok was the most effective network**, i.e. the one that generated the most interactions per post considering its follower base, registering strong growth in total interactions and surpassing X (formerly Twitter).

**Chega on Facebook generated 1 in 3 total party interactions** and had the best performance per post, with an average of 6,500 interactions per post, six times more than PSD, PS, IL or BE. **André Ventura had an average of 18,500 interactions per post**, six times more than Mariana Mortágua or Luís Montenegro, and thirteen times more than Pedro Nuno Santos. André Ventura's most viral posts coincided with his episode of indisposition in the final days of the campaign.



**Figure 2 - Evolution of the weight of each candidate in the total number of views on social media over 4 weeks**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: semana = week.



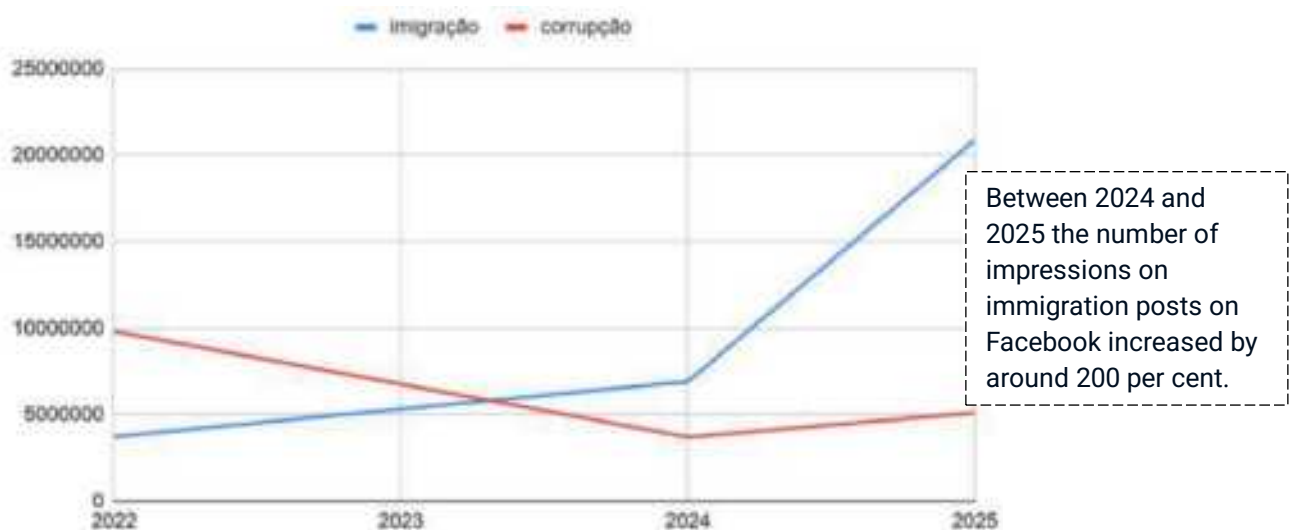
**In terms of reach, Chega and Ventura are undisputed leaders**, with Chega having an average of 57 per cent of the total views of party publications and Ventura 78 per cent. By comparison, Luís Montenegro's and Pedro Nuno Santos' posts together gathered only 10% of the total views among the candidates.

When it comes to posts by other social media users who refer to the candidates in their posts, **X clearly emerges as the network of choice for political discussion**, garnering more than 70 per cent of all posts on the four social networks that expressly mention the candidates' names. But the situation is reversed when we look at interactions. In this case, **it's Facebook that gets the most attention from users (46 per cent)**, followed by X (30 per cent). It should be noted that, although residual in terms of the number of posts about candidates, Instagram and TikTok still manage to capture 18.4 per cent and 6.2 per cent of user interactions, respectively.

**On Facebook, it is mainly posts from the main media and political parties** that drive the discussion about the candidates. But on the other networks other dynamics emerge in the attention paid to political content that mentions party leaders. On Instagram, the media vie for leadership with other **unconventional** actors, while **on X and TikTok it is clearly individual users and alternative media outlets that discuss candidate-related topics the most** and capture the most user attention with these posts.

Analysing the posts and interactions about the candidates in the four weeks leading up to the election reveals an upward pattern: both the **number of posts and interactions grew on practically all social networks until election day**. But the effect of **André Ventura's health problems** in the final days of the campaign is also notable. This **had an impact on the number of posts and interactions on social media, particularly Facebook, Instagram and X**.





**Figure 3: Evolution of the number of impressions on Facebook posts on the topics of "corruption" and "immigration" between the 2022, 2024 and 2025 legislative elections**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte.

Comparing the prevalence of narratives on corruption and immigration, we found that **immigration became the dominant theme of the electoral debate on social media in 2025, far outstripping the visibility of corruption, which had been central to previous campaigns.** Although the total number of posts on immigration grew exponentially, what was more relevant was the volume of views: **almost 21 million, around five times more than for corruption**, indicating a practically universal reach among Portuguese users on the networks.

The main narratives of these elections were promoted by **actors from the radical right**, feeding three major meta-narratives: the idea that **"Portugal is being invaded"** (including false claims about 2 million immigrants), the **"Islamisation of Portugal"** (through the instrumentalisation of the fake "Islamic Party" satire) and the narrative that **"50 years of democratic rule have been 50 years of corruption"**. These meta-narratives were amplified with disinformative content, exploiting fear, anger and mistrust, shared by political figures and pages with high reach.



During this period, some cases of **coordination between anonymous accounts and networks** were detected, but without evidence of automated control or external operations. Rather, a **hybrid dynamic** was identified, with national profiles - often anonymous or pseudonymous - operating in networks to amplify content aligned with the Chega party's discourse. These accounts, with a strong overlap of followers and synchronised sharing, managed to reach **hundreds of thousands of views at key moments**, such as the day of reflection.

The disinformation linked to the blackout also deserves a mention, as it occurred during the pre-election campaign and had obvious repercussions on it. Thus, **the circulation of a text falsely attributed to CNN, about a Russian cyber-attack on the European electricity grid, revealed the ease with which fabricated content can gain traction on platforms such as WhatsApp**. Subsequently, **a report by the Israeli company Cyabra - widely reported but without due transparency in the methodology used - generated misunderstandings about the very presence of disinformation**, by confusing anonymous accounts with fake accounts and fuelling misinterpretations about digital support for Chega.

# **1. The political parties on social media**



## 1. Political parties on social media

### 1.1. Party followers on social media



**Figure 4: Weight of each social media network in the total number of party followers**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: data for 29 February and 30 April 2025. Seguidores = followers

Between the legislative elections of 10 March 2024 and 18 May 2025, the number of followers of the main parties grew by 369,000 (+20%) to 2.2 million. TikTok was the network that grew the most, from 73,000 followers for all the parties to 203,000 (an increase of 176%).

While in 2024 TikTok represented just 4 per cent of the parties' total followers, in 2025 it represents 9 per cent. Even so, Facebook remains the network where most people follow the parties, accounting for 42 per cent of total followers in 2025.



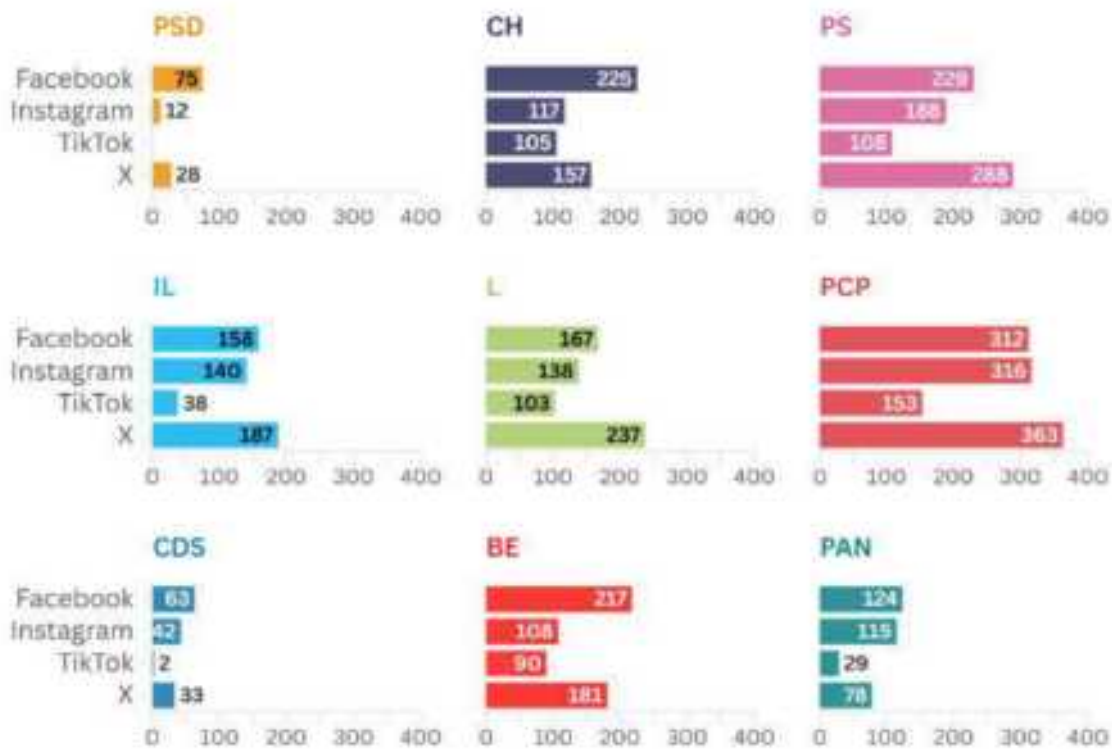
**Figure 5: Followers of each party on social media networks in May 2025**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: data for 29 February and 30 April 2025.

## 1.2. Volume of party publications

Facebook and X were the social networks most used by political parties to publish content between 21 April and 18 May (over 4 weeks). While Instagram was increasingly used from the second week onwards, TikTok was the least used social network overall.

Of the three major parties, the PS published the most, followed by Chega. The PSD concentrated its digital campaign on AD's accounts and therefore appears in this count with substantially lower numbers. As for the other parties, the PCP stands out as the one with the most posts on all the networks analysed.

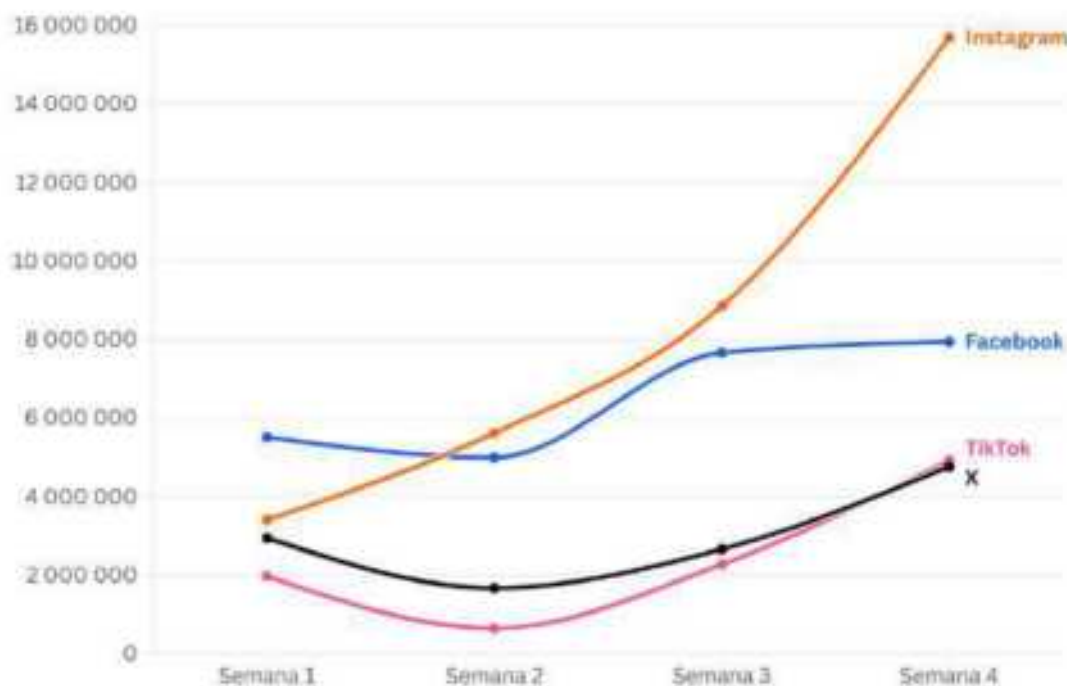


**Figure 6: Total number of posts by each party on social media networks**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: sorted in descending order according to the size of the Parliamentary Groups/Parties in Legislature XVII.

### 1.3. Reach of party publications

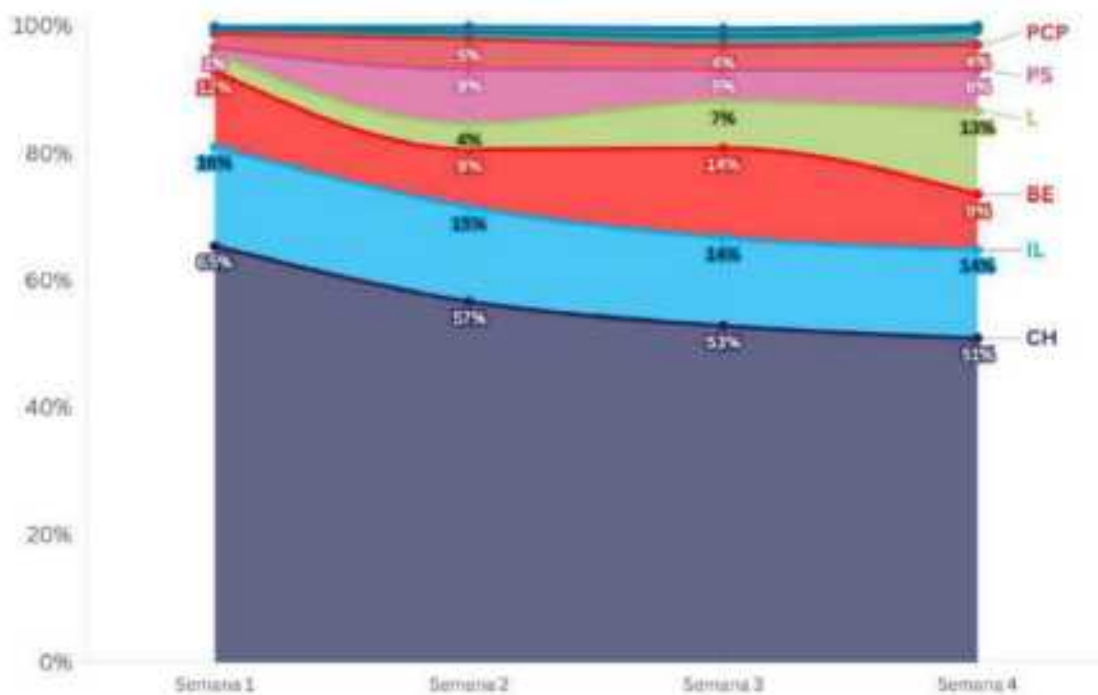
Although Instagram wasn't the most widely used, it was the social network that allowed the parties to have the most reach with their publications. In the last week of the campaign, Instagram stood out, concentrating twice as many views as the second most viewed social network: Facebook.



**Figure 7. Evolution of the number of views of the parties on social media over 4 weeks**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: semana = week.

In terms of views per political party over the 4 weeks, Chega's dominance is clear, as it always gets more than half of the views. During the official campaign period, the increased visibility of Livre (L) is also noteworthy, ultimately overtaking the place occupied by BE and drawing closer to Iniciativa Liberal, which consistently occupies the place of second party with the most reach.



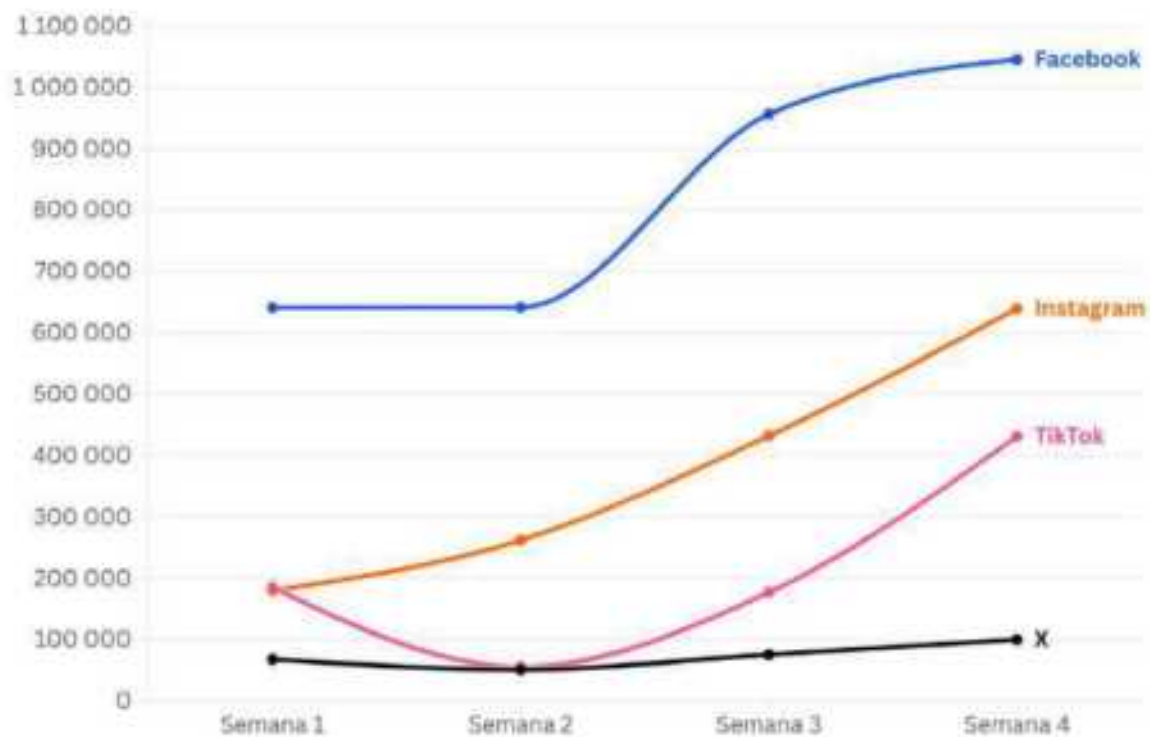
**Figure 8. Evolution of each party's weight in the total number of views on social media over 4 weeks**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: semana = week.

## 1.4. Interactions with party publications

Facebook was the social network where the parties recorded the highest number of interactions between 21 April and 18 May (4 weeks). On the other hand, the X network, which registered the same number of posts as Facebook, generated the fewest interactions. Overall, there was an increase in interactions in the last two weeks, which corresponds to the official election campaign period (from 4 May).

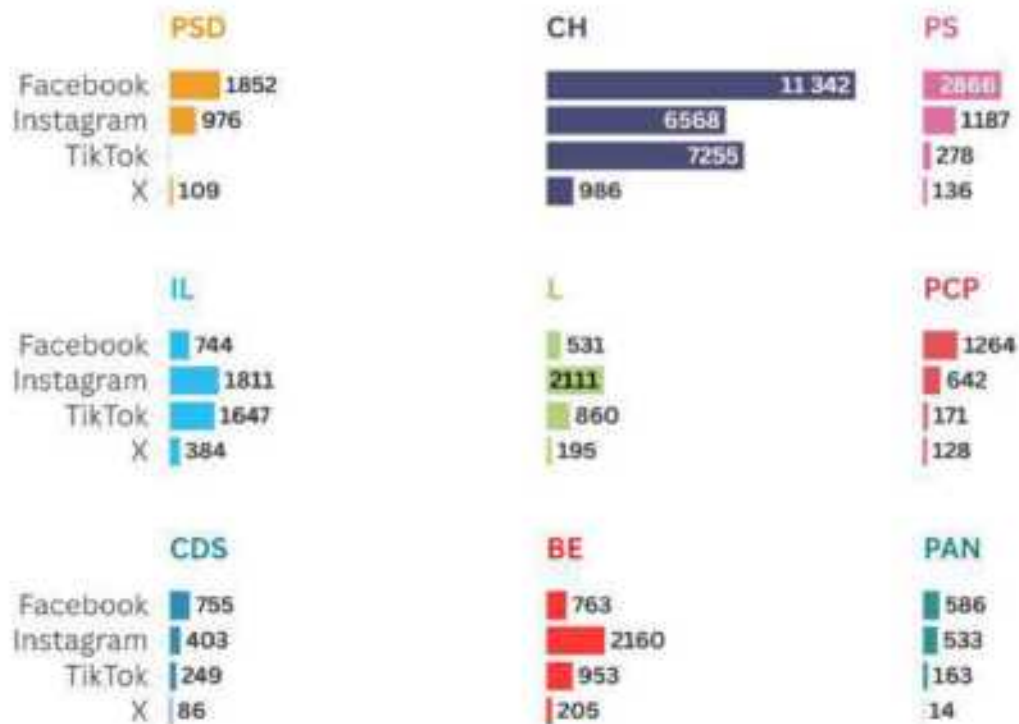




**Figure 9. Evolution of the number of interactions between parties on social media over 4 weeks**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: semana = week.

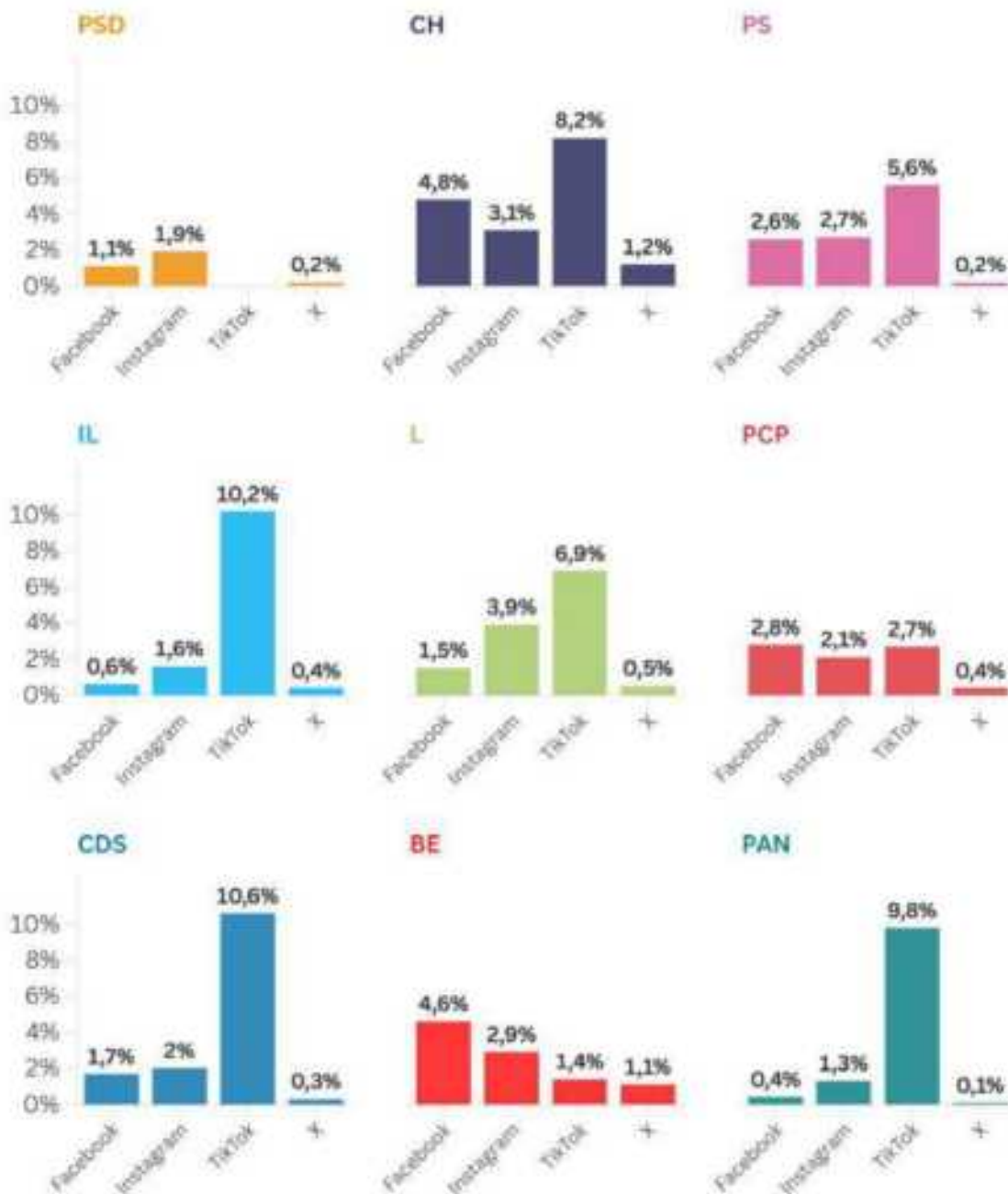
When comparing interactions per publication, Chega is the best performer, with an average of 6,500 reactions, comments or shares per post, a figure around 6x higher than PSD, PS, IL or BE. It is on Facebook that Chega achieves the best results, with around 11,000 interactions per post.



**Figure 10. Average interactions per post for each party on social media**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: sorted in descending order according to the size of the Parliamentary Groups/Parties in Legislature XVII.

Analysing each party's interaction rate, which takes into account the respective number of followers and posts, we see that Chega is the party with the best overall performance. Only the TikTok Liberal Initiative, CDS and PAN have a higher interaction rate, although in the case of the latter two parties this is explained by the small number of followers (less than 2,000).



**Figure 11. Interaction rate of each party on social media**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: Sorted in descending order according to the size of the Parliamentary Groups/Parties in Legislature XVII.



#### Methodological note

This chapter of the report is based on the collection of data from the publications made by the parties with parliamentary representation on the social networks Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter and TikTok, in the defined time period. The data from these posts was collected using the tools Meta Content Library (for Facebook and Instagram) and SentiOne (for Twitter and TikTok). Data collection and analysis was carried out by the MediaLab Iscte team, depending on the limitations of the collection tools and the availability of data on the online social media platforms. In the figures, the data has been ordered according to the composition of the Parliamentary Groups/Parties in Legislature XVII.

## **2. The candidates on social media**



## 2. The candidates on social media

### 2.1. Candidates' followers

Between the 2024 and 2025 legislative elections, the number of followers of party leaders increased by 889,000 (+55%) to 2.5 million. This growth was mainly generated by gaining new followers on TikTok and Instagram, which increased by around 300,000 followers each. In relative terms, it was TikTok that grew the most, increasing its followers by 148% (vs 104% on Instagram).



**Figure 12. Weight of each social network in the parties' total number of followers**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: data for 29 February and 30 April 2025. Seguidores = followers

In 2024 only 3 candidates had an active TikTok account, with 225,000 followers (of which André Ventura had 216,000), while in 2025 there are 6 candidates with an active account and a total of 534,000 followers. So while in 2024 Facebook was the social network with the most followers, in 2025 it's Instagram, with TikTok having grown to a level that brings it closer to the X follower base.



**Figure 13. Followers of each party leader on social media in May 2025**

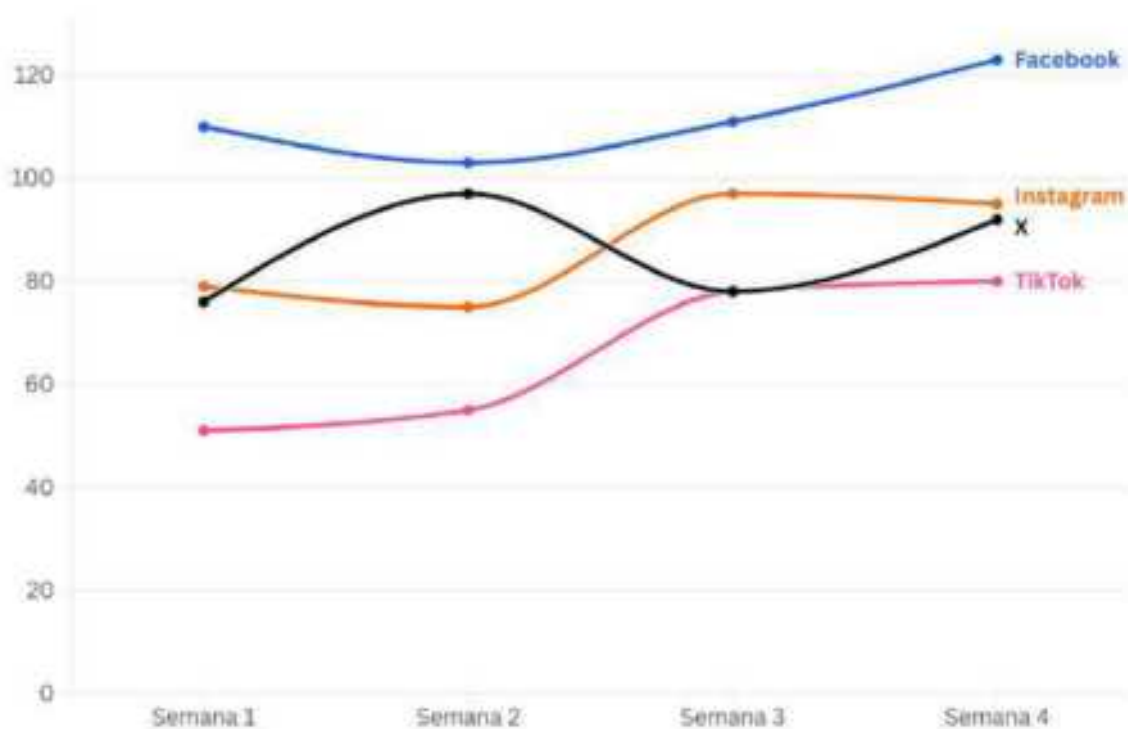
Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: data for 29 February and 30 April 2025.

In the 2025 legislative elections André Ventura is clearly the party leader with the most followers, with 2 out of 3 followers (66%) on Facebook and Instagram and 4 out of 5 (80%) on TikTok. Only on X does he have less than half the total number of followers of the party leaders, but he still has more than 1 in 3 followers (36%).



## 2.2. Volume of candidate publications

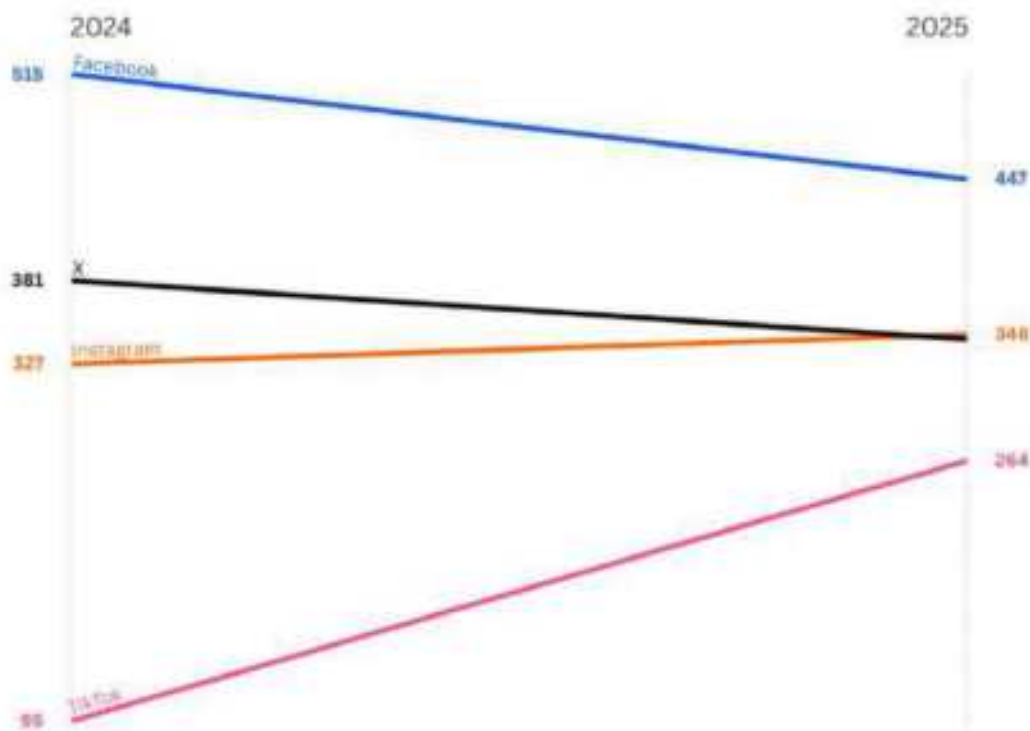
Among the candidates, there is a more balanced commitment to the different social networks, compared to the parties. Even so, Facebook continues to be the preferred network for publishing content between 21 April and 18 May (4 weeks). Overall, there was an increase in the volume of posts during the official campaign period.



**Figure 14. Evolution of the number of posts by candidates on social media over 4 weeks**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: semana = week.





**Figure 15. Variation in the number of posts on social media between 2024 and 2025**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte.

Compared to 2024, there was a marked increase in the number of posts on TikTok (from 95 to 264), a slight drop on Facebook and X, and a slight increase on Instagram.

In terms of candidate publications, Pedro Nuno Santos stands out as the most active on Facebook, while André Ventura published the most on Instagram, X and TikTok.

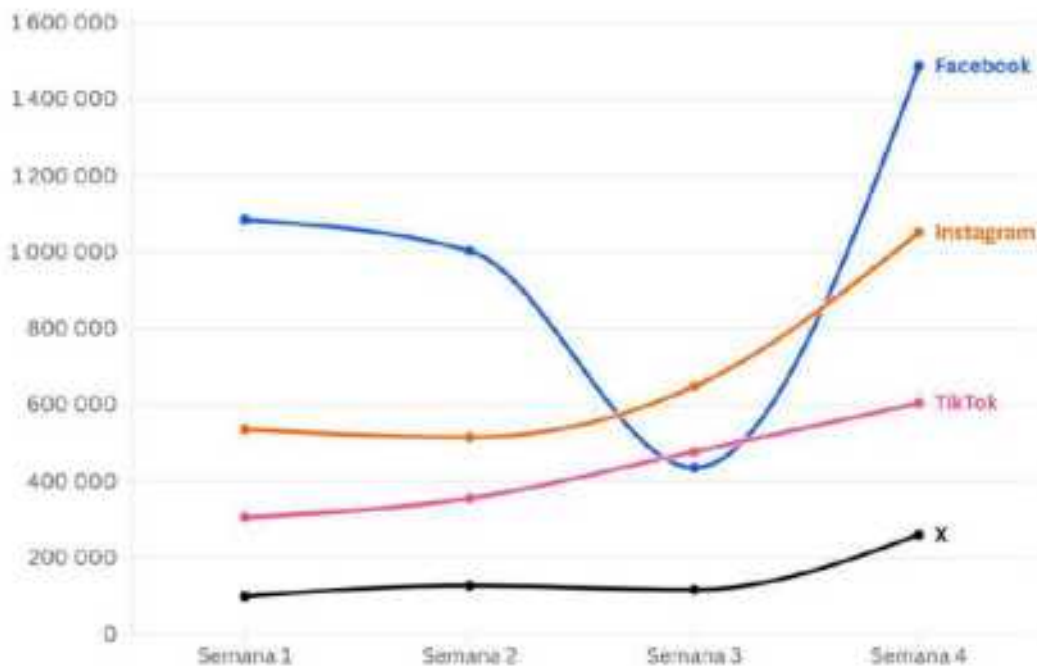


**Figure 16. Total number of posts by each candidate on social media**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: sorted in descending order according to the size of the Parliamentary Groups/Parties in Legislature XVII.

## 2.3. Reach of candidates' publications

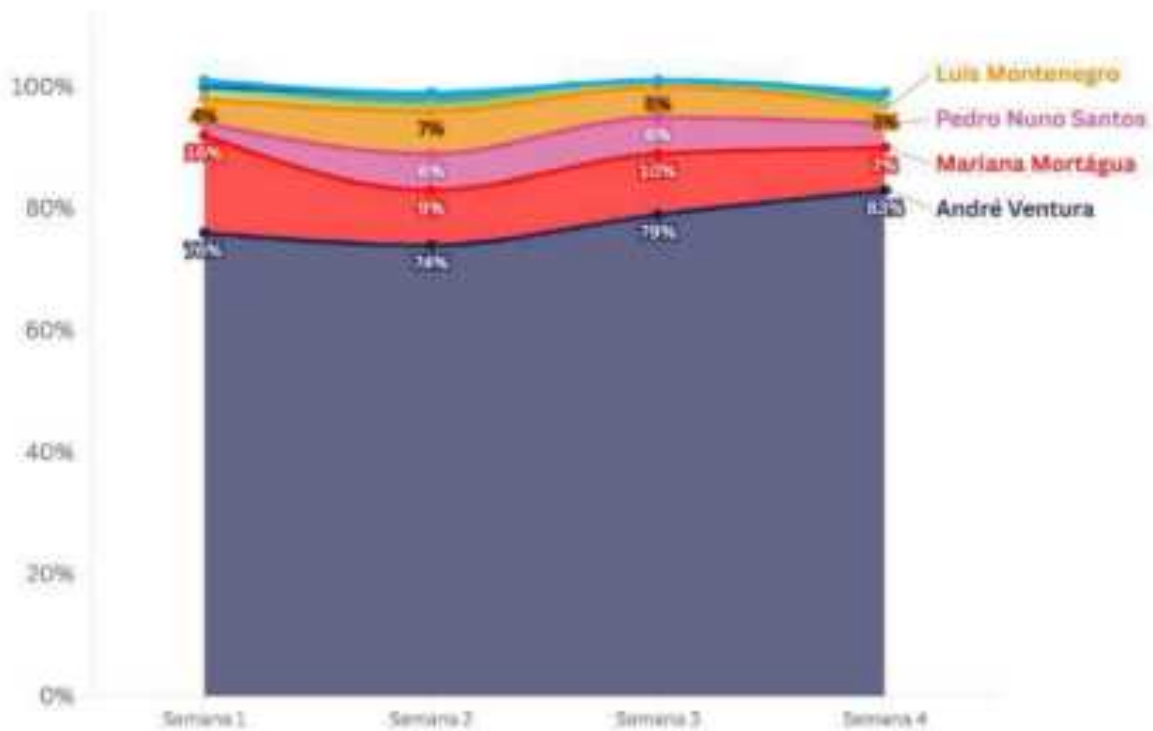
Although in the first two weeks Facebook was the social network that generated the most reach for the candidates, in the official campaign period it was Instagram that generated the most views. The sharp drop in FB views in the third week - which also translates into interactions - coincides with the period in which Ventura made fewer posts on this social network (8 vs. 20 on average).



**Figure 17. Evolution of the number of party visualisations on social media over 4 weeks**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: semana = week.

Over the four week period, André Ventura clearly dominated in terms of the number of views. Ventura consistently captured 70% or more of citizens' attention, even achieving 83% of views in the last week of the campaign. As for the other candidates, it is worth noting that Mariana Mortágua outperformed Pedro Nuno Santos and Luís Montenegro.



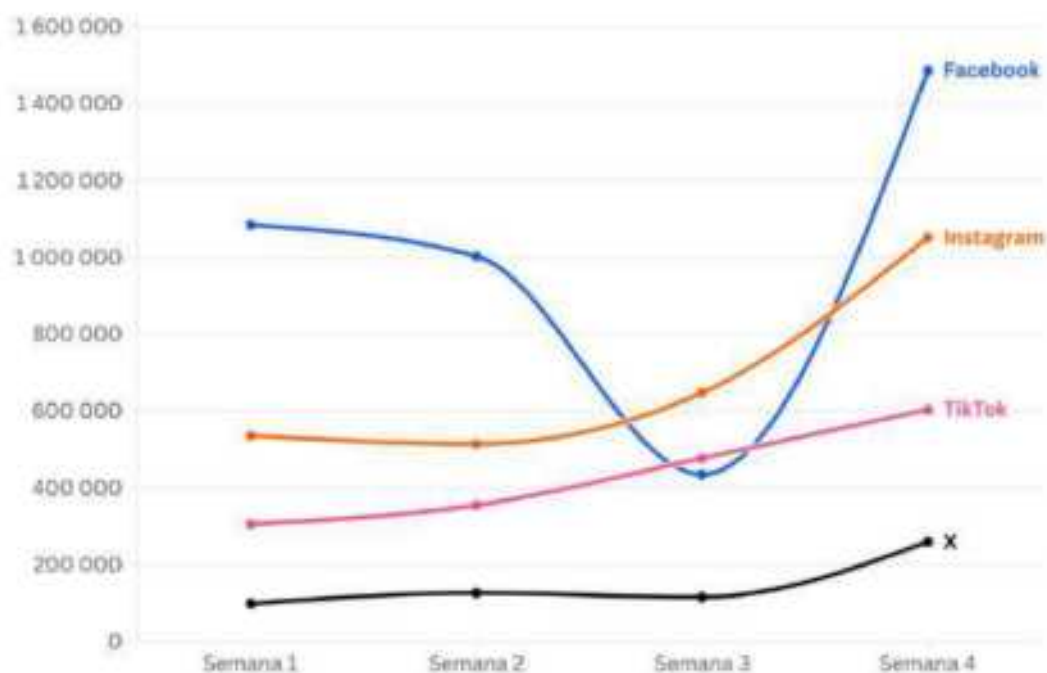
**Figure 18. Evolution of the weight of each candidate in the total number of views on social media over 4 weeks**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: semana = week.



## 2.4. Interactions with candidates' publications

Facebook was the social network where candidates recorded the highest number of interactions between 21 April and 18 May (4 weeks).



**Figure 19. Evolution of the number of candidate interactions on social networks over 4 weeks**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: semana = week.

When we compare the interactions per publication, Ventura is the best performer, with an average of 18,500 reactions, comments or shares per post, a figure around 6x higher than Mariana Mortágua or Luís Montenegro. The network where the Chega leader captures his followers' attention the most is Facebook, with an average of 39,000 interactions per post, even though he has fewer followers than on Instagram or TikTok.



**Figure 20. Average interactions per post by each candidate leader on social networks**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: leaders ranked in descending order according to the size of the Parliamentary Groups/Parties they represent in Legislature XVII.

Analysing each candidate's interaction rate in relation to their number of followers, we see that Inês de Sousa Real has the best overall performance. The PAN leader has the highest interaction rate on Facebook, Instagram and the X network. Pedro Nuno Santos stands out on TikTok. However, both get this result from a lower number of followers compared to André Ventura, who has the best on Facebook.



**Figure 21. Interaction rate of each candidate on social media**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: Leaders ranked in descending order according to the size of the Parliamentary Groups/Parties they represent in Legislature XVII.

## 2.5. Top 10 posts by the main candidates

This section presents the top 10 publications with the most views for the three candidates with the most views: André Ventura (CHEGA), Luís Montenegro (PSD) and Pedro Nuno Santos (PS). The candidates are presented in descending order of the total number of views.



**Table 1. André Ventura's Top 10 (CHEGA)**



**Post with the most views**

Photograph of André Ventura in hospital published on Facebook where he appears thanking people for the treatment he received and for their support following an illness during a rally.

Post	Social Network	Date	Views	Interactions	Topic
<a href="#">Link</a>		14/05/2025	3 322 952	295 950	Ventura Indisposition
<a href="#">Link</a>		14/05/2025	2 078 754	111 236	Indisposition Ventura
<a href="#">Link</a>		14/05/2025	1 815 131	158 614	Ventura Indisposition
<a href="#">Link</a>		23/04/2025	1 642 689	104 657	Immigration
<a href="#">Link</a>		14/05/2025	1 535 328	121 959	Indisposition Ventura
<a href="#">Link</a>		15/05/2025	1 528 132	108 561	Ventura Indisposition
<a href="#">Link</a>		14/05/2025	1 479 611	141 350	Ventura Indisposition
<a href="#">Link</a>		08/05/2025	1 108 489	56 738	Gypsy community
<a href="#">Link</a>		14/05/2025	1 104 719	73585	Ventura Indisposition
<a href="#">Link</a>		26/04/2025	1 084 540	24137	Immigration

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte.





**Table 2. Luís Montenegro's Top 10 (PSD)**



**Publication with the most views**

Video of Luís Montenegro published on Facebook in connection with 25 April where he appears with his wife and at institutional celebrations.

Post	Social Network	Date	Views	Interactions	Topic
<a href="#">Link</a>		25/04/2025	417 109	10 362	25th April
<a href="#">Link</a>		13/05/2025	193 111	4 579	Indisposition Ventura
<a href="#">Link</a>		28/04/2025	173 767	1 934	Blackout
<a href="#">Link</a>		03/05/2025	135 218	11 673	Mother's Day
<a href="#">Link</a>		01/05/2025	125 757	4 918	Labour Day
<a href="#">Link</a>		16/05/2025	116 662	2 568	Call for votes
<a href="#">Link</a>		12/05/2025	107 996	9 907	Campaign action
<a href="#">Link</a>		28/04/2025	101 135	5 812	Blackout
<a href="#">Link</a>		12/05/2025	100 476	6 668	Informal self-presentation
<a href="#">Link</a>		06/05/2025	98 512	2 062	Security











Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte.

**Table 3. Pedro Nuno Santos' Top 10 (PS)**



**Publication with the most views**

Video of Pedro Nuno Santos published on Twitter and featuring a young boy drinking coffee, with a party message and his campaign website.

Post	Social Network	Date	Views	Interactions	Topic
<a href="#">Link</a>		30/04/2025	302 304	1 005	Campaign website
<a href="#">Link</a>		04/05/2025	251 914	907	Campaign music
<a href="#">Link</a>		16/05/2025	246 947	6 075	Campaign action
<a href="#">Link</a>		06/05/2025	245 799	8128	Informal lunch
<a href="#">Link</a>		12/05/2025	219 887	7 677	Interaction with supporter
<a href="#">Link</a>		10/05/2025	179 353	7 720	Campaign action
<a href="#">Link</a>		14/05/2025	168 126	8 830	Interaction with public figure
<a href="#">Link</a>		02/05/2025	144 614	6 969	Campaign action
<a href="#">Link</a>		15/05/2025	130 930	8 502	Campaign action
<a href="#">Link</a>		28/04/2025	121 646	1 420	Blackout

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte.



#### Methodological note

This part of the report is based on the collection of data from the posts made by the political leaders of the parties with parliamentary representation, on the social networks Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter and TikTok, in the defined time period. The data from these posts was collected using the tools Meta Content Library (for Facebook and Instagram) and SentiOne (for Twitter and TikTok). Data collection and analysis was carried out by the MediaLab Iscte team, depending on the limitations of the collection tools and the availability of data on the online social media platforms. In the figures, the data has been ordered according to the composition of the Parliamentary Groups/Parties in the 17th Legislature. Paulo Raimundo (PCP) has no social networks. Rui Rocha (IL) uses Facebook and Instagram profiles not traceable by the Meta Content Library, and does not have a TikTok account. Luís Montenegro (PSD) does not have a TikTok account.





### **3. Mentions of candidates on social media**



### 3. Mentions of candidates on social media

In this section of the report we analyse in detail what was published on social media in the four weeks before the election (between 21 April and 18 May) specifically mentioning the names of the candidates. It is therefore an open collection, which includes all posts on the Facebook, Instagram, X and TikTok platforms, regardless of their author, in which there is some reference to the name of at least one of the candidates.

For this purpose, we used a query made up of the names of the leaders of the parties contesting the elections and with parliamentary representation: Luís Montenegro, Pedro Passos Coelho, André Ventura, Rui Rocha, Mariana Mortágua, Paulo Raimundo, Rui Tavares, Inês Sousa Real and Nuno Melo. The posts collected were then analysed according to their authors, their content and their metrics, namely in terms of the number of posts and the number of interactions ('likes', comments and shares).

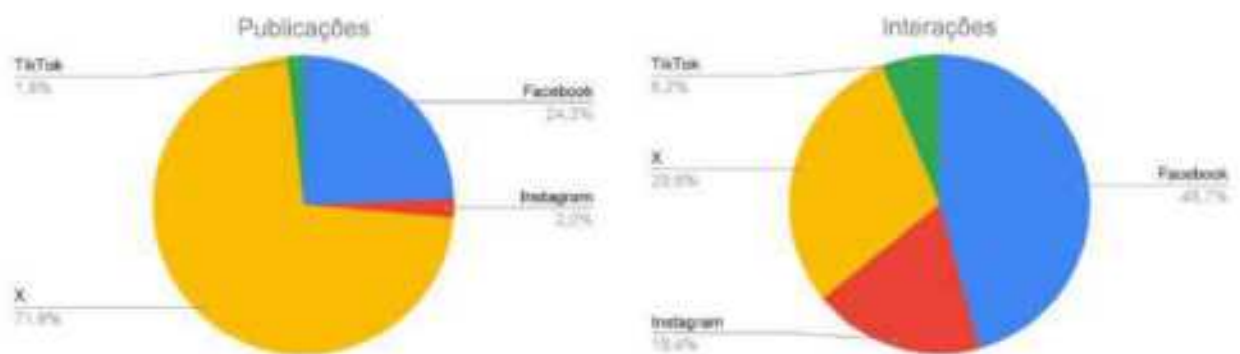
Platform	Posts	Total interactions	Total views	Average number of interactions per post	Average views per post
	2 439	1 125 547	— (1)	461	— (1)
	202	454 161	— (1)	2 248	— (1)
	7 216	729 958	31 025 284	101	4 300
	178	153 557	1 962 945	863	11 028

**Table 4. Comparison of publications, interactions and visualisations between platforms**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: Total interactions include 'likes', comments and shares on Facebook, X and TikTok and include 'likes' and comments on Instagram. Views are considered to be what each platform characterises as a view. (1) In the collection instrument used, Facebook and Instagram do not include views.



As can be seen in Table 4, platform X was the one most frequently used to talk about the candidates, with a total of 7,216 publications over the four weeks analysed, confirming it as the platform of choice for political discussion in Portugal. In absolute terms, Facebook came second, with almost 2,500 posts. Instagram and TikTok were used significantly less to mention the candidates in the election: only 202 and 178 posts, respectively.



**Figure 22. Breakdown of posts and interactions by platform**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: Total interactions include 'likes', comments and shares on Facebook, X and TikTok and include 'likes' and comments on Instagram. Publicações = Posts, Interações = Interactions.

However, it was on Facebook that the highest number of interactions was recorded, with over a million interactions, signalling that users paid attention to posts on the social network. With fewer posts, Instagram and TikTok registered fewer interactions. But - and this is a relevant piece of data - with better communication effectiveness, translated into a higher level of attention from users: 2,248 interactions per post on Instagram and 863 on TikTok. Moreover, although TikTok doesn't have the highest number of total views (far behind X), it is also the platform that offers the best average number of views per post.



As can be seen in Figure 22, platform X accounts for 72 per cent of all publications with references to candidates. But Facebook accounts for 46 per cent of the attention paid to this content, measured in terms of interactions. Instagram and TikTok have a residual share of publications (2% and 1.8% respectively), but have significant interaction values (18.4% and 6.4%), confirming that the focus on these platforms is reflected in greater attention to the political message by users.

	Account	Posts	Interactions	Average number of interactions per post
1	SIC Notícias	233	235.345	1010
2	CNN Portugal	248	183.571	740
3	Expresso	201	102.232	509
4	Observador	285	86.679	304
5	Notícias Ao Minuto	117	54.828	469
6	Chega	28	41.385	1478
7	SIC	77	36.229	471
8	PCP	49	34.925	713
9	Partido Socialista	20	33.701	1685
10	Público	82	32.853	401
11	Jornal Económico	95	25.135	265
12	Partido Social Democrata	19	24.795	1305
13	Diário Luso	9	23.119	2569
14	Correio da Manhã	36	21.971	610
15	RTP Notícias	117	21.538	184
16	CM TV	32	15.167	474
17	Chega - Oliveira De Azeméis	8	13.079	1635
18	André Ventura	3	12.494	4165
19	Bloco de Esquerda	22	9.799	445
20	Jornal de Notícias	25	8.759	350
<b>Total</b>		<b>2 439</b>	<b>1 125 574</b>	<b>461</b>

**Table 5 Ranking of the 20 accounts with the most interactions on Facebook with mentions of the candidates (between 21 April and 18 May 2025)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: The table counts all Facebook posts that mentioned the name of at least one of the leaders of the political parties contesting the elections. Total interactions are the sum of the number of "likes", comments and shares. Data collected using the SentiOne tool.

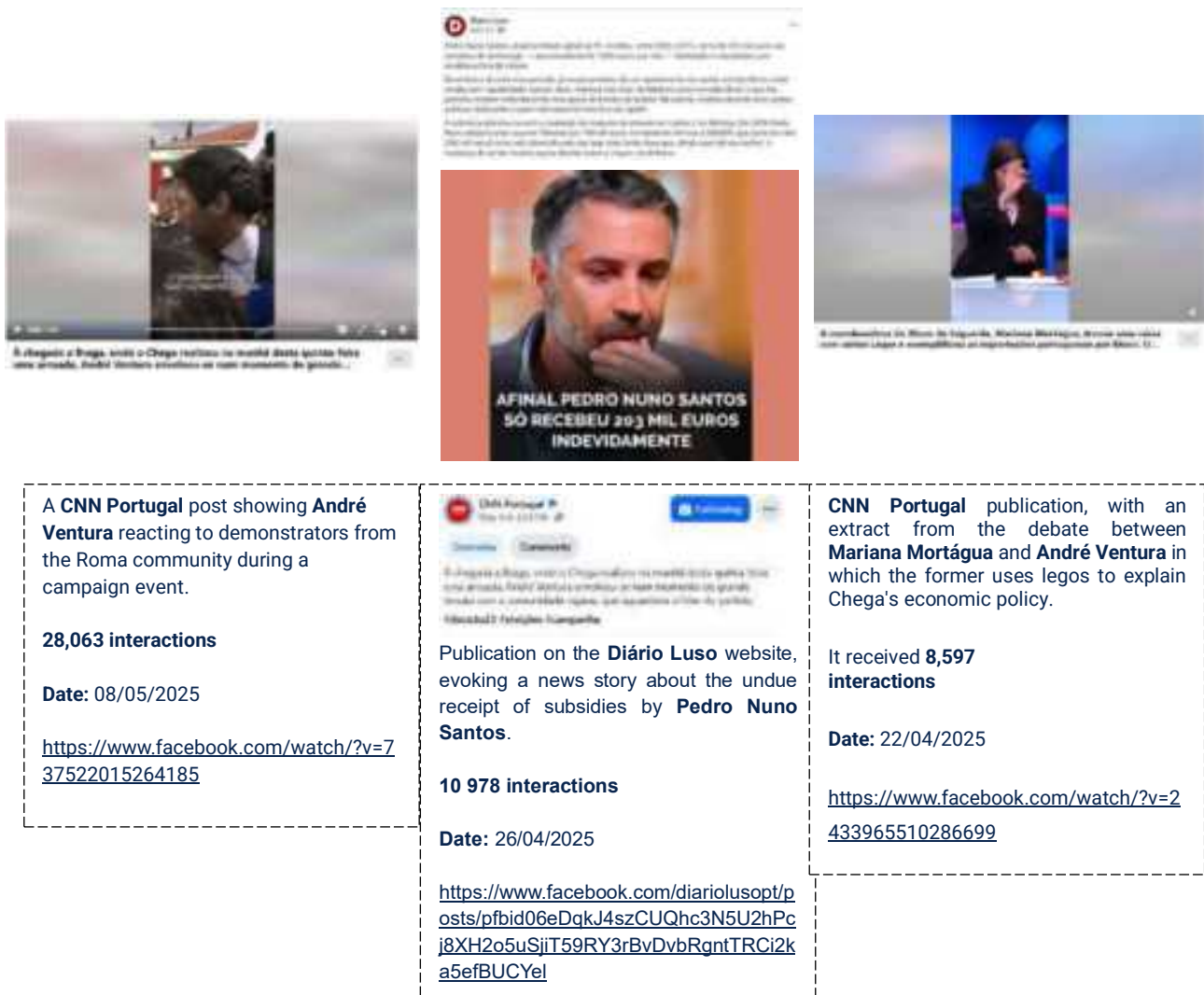


Analysing in detail the mentions of the candidates' names on Facebook during the four weeks of pre-campaign and campaigning, we detected a significant presence of the media in the ranking of those pages that most abundantly published content about the candidates and that obtained the most interactions.

SIC Notícias, CNN Portugal, Expresso and Observador were the pages that published the most about the candidates and generated the most interactions with these publications. But also noteworthy in this ranking is André Ventura, with the best average number of interactions for each of the 3 posts published with references to his opponents, and Diário Luso, an alternative media outlet that published 9 times with references to the candidates and registered an average of more than 2,500 interactions with each publication.

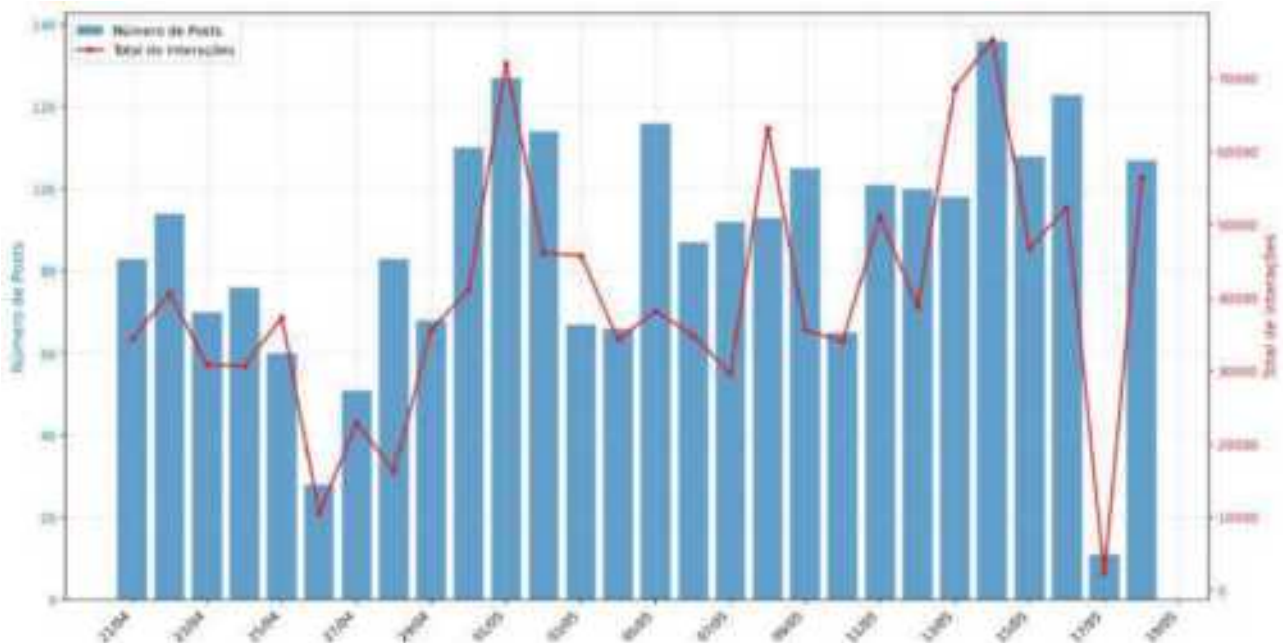
Among the three most viral publications with references to the candidates are two from CNN Portugal (see Figure 23, next page). The first, with 28,000 interactions, reproduces the moment when André Ventura confronts demonstrators from the Roma community during the campaign and the second reproduces part of the debate between him and Mariana Mortágua, in which the BE leader uses Lego pieces to explain the economic policies of her opponent's party. In the middle, a post from the alternative media outlet Diário Luso, with 11,000 interactions, which recaps a past news story according to which Pedro Nuno Santos unduly received travel allowances while he was a member of parliament.





**Figure 23. Posts with the most interactions on Facebook containing mentions of the candidates (between 21 April and 18 May 2025)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: The table counts all Facebook posts that mentioned the name of at least one of the leaders of the political parties contesting the elections. Total interactions are the sum of the number of "likes", comments and shares. Data collected using the SentiOne tool.



**Figure 24. Daily evolution of the number of posts and interactions on Facebook with mentions of the candidates' names (between 21 April and 18 May 2025).**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: The graph represents the daily evolution of Facebook posts that mentioned the name of at least one of the leaders of the political parties contesting the elections and the total number of interactions prompted by these posts. Total interactions are the sum of the number of "likes", comments and shares. Data collected using the SentiOne tool. Número de posts = Number of posts, Total de interações = Total interactions.

The evolution of daily posts and interactions about the candidates on Facebook reveals an upward trend towards the election date (18 May), but with two interesting peaks: the first on 1 May, prompted by political content related to the May Day demonstration, in which some candidates took part; and the second on 14-16 May, coinciding with the health problems experienced by Chega leader André Ventura during campaign activities.



	Account	Publications	Interactions	Average number of interactions per post
1	SIC Notícias	43	386.341	8.985
2	Jornal Expresso	7	36.458	5.208
3	Jornal de Notícias	9	14.768	1.641
4	Record	1	4.339	4.339
5	Miguel Faria	4	3.179	795
6	JSD	1	1.938	1.938
7	Observador	2	1.919	960
8	Pedro Frazão	1	1.286	1.286
9	Canal Patriota	1	954	954
10	Notícias ao Minuto	16	851	53
11	Renascença	1	702	702
12	Lídia Pereira	1	536	536
13	Portugal sem censura	4	208	52
14	O Tabuleiro Político	1	129	129
15	Vasco Gargalo	1	70	70
16	Luisa Maia	3	55	18
17	Francisco Figueira	9	37	4
18	PSD Évora	9	26	3
19	Bernardo Narciso	1	26	26
20	Carla Barros	7	24	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>202</b>	<b>454 161</b>	<b>2 248</b>




**Table 6. Ranking of the 20 accounts with the most interactions on Instagram with mentions of the candidates (between 21 April and 18 May 2025)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: The table counts all Facebook posts that mentioned the name of at least one of the leaders of the political parties contesting the elections. Total interactions are the sum of the number of "likes" and comments. Data collected using the SentiOne tool.

In the case of Instagram, there were fewer posts about the candidates over the period analysed, but in some cases with notable levels of interaction. The SIC Notícias account stood out in the top 20 of this platform in all respects.



It was the one that published the most times about the candidates (43), it was the one that generated the most interactions (386,000, around 10x more than the 36,000 of the Expresso newspaper) and it was the one that obtained the most interactions per publication, on average (almost 9,000). However, in the ranking of accounts with the most interactions on posts mentioning candidates, we also find several that are not media or political parties, in some cases with just one post and a small number of interactions. On the one hand, Instagram tends to generate a significant number of interactions when used strategically, but, on the other hand, it is rarely used for political or electoral content.

		
<p><b>SIC Notícias</b> publication with an extract from the debate between <b>Mariana Mortágua</b> and <b>André Ventura</b> in which the former uses legos to explain Chega's economic policy.</p> <p><b>34,720 interactions</b></p> <p>Date: 08/05/2025</p> <p><a href="https://www.instagram.com/reel/DLualjAMj_R/">https://www.instagram.com/reel/DLualjAMj_R/</a></p>	<p><b>SIC Notícias</b> publication with a photo of candidate <b>André Ventura</b> in a hospital bed, assuring that he is being well treated.</p> <p><b>27,872 interactions</b></p> <p>Date: 14/05/2025</p> <p><a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/DJoFrxoqe7s/">https://www.instagram.com/p/DJoFrxoqe7s/</a></p>	<p><b>SIC Notícias</b> publication reproducing on video the moment when Luís Montenegro joins Tony Carreira on stage during the 25 April celebrations on 1 May.</p> <p><b>18,258 interactions</b></p> <p>Date: 01/05/2025/</p> <p><a href="https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJHL3OcRNtv/">https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJHL3OcRNtv/</a></p>

**Figure 25. Posts with the most interactions on Instagram containing mentions of the candidates (between 21 April and 18 May 2025)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: The table counts all Instagram posts that mentioned the name of at least one of the leaders of the political parties contesting the elections. Total interactions are the sum of the number of "likes" and comments. Data collected using the SentiOne tool.



The three most viral posts on Instagram containing mentions of the candidates are all from SIC Notícias, which has apparently capitalised on this platform better than the rest of the media. The first alludes to the same moment that CNN Portugal captured on Facebook, coming from the debate between Mariana Mortágua and André Ventura, in which the former uses a set of Lego pieces to explain why Chega's economic programme is wrong.

The second is about Ventura's hospitalisation following a campaign indisposition and the third reproduces a curious moment when Luís Montenegro takes to the stage to sing with Tony Carreira at the 25th April celebrations, which have been postponed until the 1st May. It should be noted that any of these posts generated more interactions than the three most viral posts on Facebook, confirming Instagram as a platform where content, even if political, can better capture users' attention.



**Figure 26. Daily evolution of the number of posts and interactions on Instagram with mentions of the candidates' names (between 21 April and 18 May 2025)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: The graph represents the daily evolution of Instagram posts that mentioned the name of at least one of the leaders of the political parties contesting the elections and the total number of interactions prompted by these posts. Total interactions are the sum of the number of "likes" and comments. Data collected using the SentiOne tool. Posts por dia = Daily posts.



The daily evolution of posts and interactions about the candidates on Instagram reveals the impact of André Ventura's health problems in the final phase of the campaign, between 14 and 16 May. This disruptive event in the campaign had an impact not only on the number of posts but also on the number of interactions.

	Count	Posts	Interactions	Views	Average Interactions /Post	Average views/post
1	Cláudia Teixeira	42	53.027	2.346.215	1 263	55 862
2	Luís Ribeiro	12	16.803	672.649	1 400	56 054
3	Pedro Dos Santos Frazão	36	15.111	498.831	420	13 856
4	SIC Notícias	166	14.247	1.111.092	86	6 693
5	Gonçalo Levy Cordeiro	14	13.415	489.665	958	34 976
6	Leonor	32	12.955	492.499	405	15 391
7	Tomás	10	12.710	622.490	1 271	62 249
8	Rita Maria Matias	10	12.650	206.530	1 265	20 653
9	Partido Chega	33	11.316	166.753	343	5 053
10	O Tempestuoso	2	10.624	176.956	5 312	88 478
11	Senanews	25	10.482	298.319	419	11 933
12	Racismo Contra Europeus	6	9.775	373.817	1 629	62 303
13	Polígrafo	34	9.503	642.411	280	18 894
14	Expresso	198	9.287	1.341.441	47	6 775
15	Iniciativa Liberal	19	9.204	469.928	484	24 733
16	Meio Independente	3	9.040	51.909	3 013	17 303
17	Luís	1	8.623	590.057	8 623	590 057
18	Pedro Ribeiro	9	8.380	308.381	931	34 264
19	Nunes	2	8.295	223.293	4 148	111 647
20	Tony De Direita	15	8.188	265.883	546	17 726
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>7 216</b>	<b>729 958</b>	<b>31 025 284</b>	<b>1 642</b>	<b>62 745</b>

**Table 7. Ranking of the 20 accounts with the most interactions on X with mentions of the candidates (between 21 April and 18 May 2025)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: The table counts all Facebook posts that mentioned the name of at least one of the leaders of the political parties contesting the elections. Total interactions are the sum of the number of "likes", comments and shares. Data collected using the SentiOne tool.



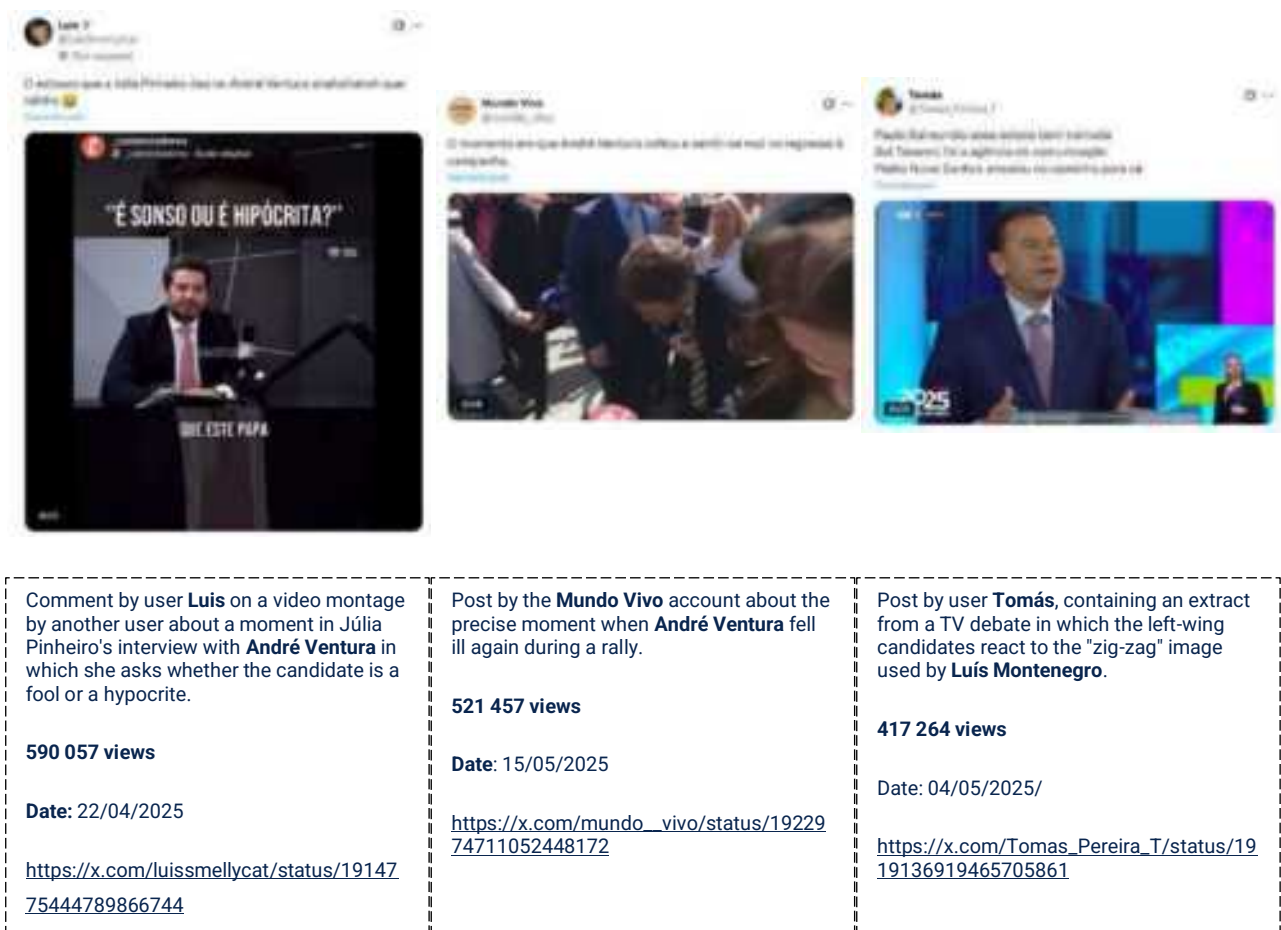


Twitter/X was the social network where the most users published content mentioning the candidates during the period in question, with more than 7,000 publications, almost 730,000 interactions and 31 million views.

As with the other platforms, the media was the category of users that published the most (SIC Notícias 166 times and Expresso 198 times, for example), but the ranking of users includes a wide variety of actors, from well-known politicians to lesser-known political party support pages, as well as anonymous users, many of them with a significant number of publications and not inconsiderable amounts of interactions and views.

For example, user Cláudia Teixeira published 42 posts about the candidates and generated more than two million views. Users Nunes, o Tempestuoso and Luís published only a few times but with great reach, the latter with just one post that achieved 590,000 views.

The most viral posts about the candidates on platform X are all from unconventional users, two individual users and one alternative media outlet (see Figure 27 on the following page). The most viewed post in the period under analysis belongs to user Luís and makes a comment about a "blow-up" that Júlia Pinheiro allegedly gave André Ventura when she asked him if he was "a fool or a hypocrite" because of two contradictory statements about Pope Francis. It should be noted that the post by user Luís reproduces a video montage by another user.

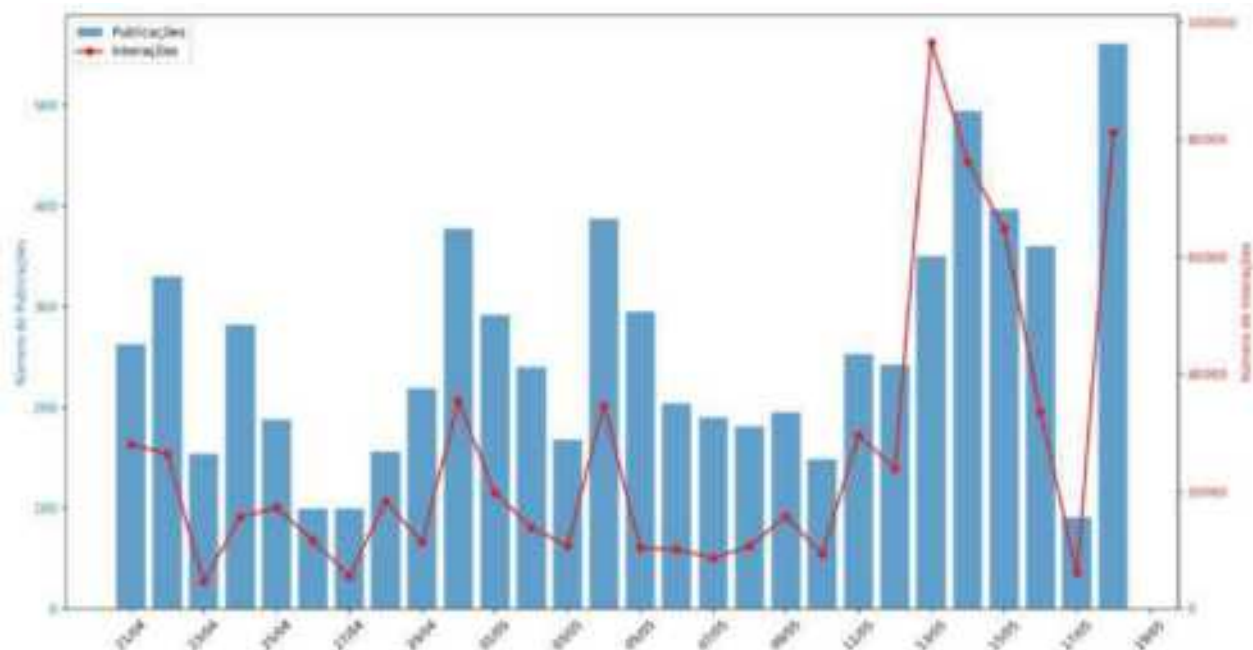


**Figure 27. Posts with the most views on X containing mentions of the candidates (between 21 April and 18 May 2025)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: The table counts all the posts on X that mentioned the name of at least one of the leaders of the political parties contesting the elections. Total interactions are the sum of the number of "likes", comments and shares. Data collected using the SentiOne tool.

The second most viral post was the moment when André Ventura felt ill again during a rally, captured on video and published by the alternative information website Mundo Vivo. The third post is by a user who calls himself Tomás and reproduces a video extract from a debate in which Luís Montenegro uses "zig-zag" as a rhetorical figure and the left-wing candidates react in unison.





**Figure 28. Daily evolution of the number of posts and interactions on X with mentions of the candidates' names (between 21 April and 18 May 2025)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: The graph represents the daily evolution of posts on X that mentioned the name of at least one of the leaders of the political parties contesting the elections and the total number of interactions prompted by these posts. Total interactions are the sum of the number of "likes", comments and shares. Data collected using the SentiOne tool. Publicações = Posts, Interações = Interactions.

The daily evolution of posts and interactions on Platform X with references to the names of the candidates also clearly reveals the influence of André Ventura's ill health on this network in the final days of the campaign. In fact, this was the most discussed topic on Platform X during the final phase of the campaign. The peak in the volume of posts on election day also shows this platform as the one most used to comment on the election results.



	Count	Posts	Interactions	Views	Average Interactions/Post	Average views/post
1	TUGA CLIPS	3	29.591	430.397	9 864	143 466
2	SIC Notícias	5	23.389	269.083	4 678	53 817
3	Su Figueiras	1	16.072	225.991	16 072	225 991
4	Por_portugal.	2	12.441	160.850	6 221	80 425
5	Leonorrcostaa14	2	11.282	84.374	5 641	42 187
6	Comentadores	1	9.398	141.661	9 398	141 661
7	Mariana Mortágua	6	8.142	53.754	1 357	8 959
8	G1	3	5.137	8.122	1 712	2 707
9	SIC Oficial	1	4.352	113.418	4 352	113 418
10	Josiney TV	2	4.316	48.948	2 158	24 474
11	Clips Portugal	2	3.776	80.751	1 888	40 376
12	Clips_da_tugaa	1	2.910	71.287	2 910	71 287
13	Ricardo Rocha	1	2.492	57.942	2 492	57 942
14	Metrópoles Oficial	2	2.176	6.638	1 088	3 319
15	Bloco de Esquerda	16	2.159	15.394	135	962
16	André Ventura	1	1.953	18.913	1 953	18 913
17	NOTÍCIAS TELMEX	2	1.769	1.232	885	616
18	Ambrósio Baltazar	1	1.614	21.903	1 614	21 903
19	João Leal Mendes	1	1.601	34.991	1 601	34 991
20	PCP	30	829	4.165	28	139
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>178</b>	<b>153 557</b>	<b>1 962 945</b>	<b>863</b>	<b>11 028</b>

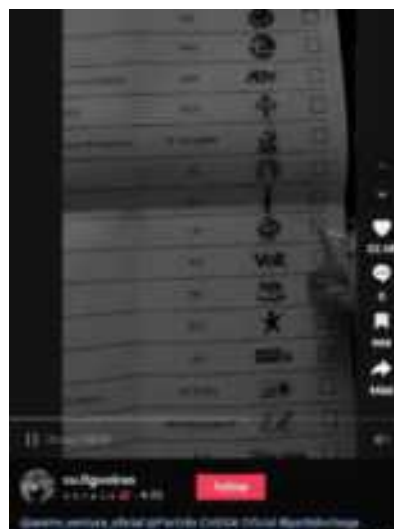
**Table 8. Ranking of the 20 accounts with the most interactions on TikTok with mentions of the candidates (between 21 April and 18 May 2025)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: The table counts all Facebook posts that mentioned the name of at least one of the leaders of the political parties contesting the elections. Total interactions are the sum of the number of "likes", comments and shares. Data collected using the SentiOne tool.

On TikTok, it's also the alternative accounts that distribute the most interactions and views on content that mentions the candidates.



Highlights include the Tuga Clips account (3 posts and 430,000 views), and user Su Figueiras, with 270,000 views on just one post (a video of a voting simulation for Chega). At the opposite pole are the Bloco de Esquerda and PCP accounts on TikTok, which publish a lot (14 videos in the case of the BE and 30 for the PCP), but with very limited effectiveness in terms of attracting attention.



Video from the **Tuga.Clipz** account reproducing **André Ventura**'s speech at the 25th April celebrations, in which he allegedly "attacks" **Luís Montenegro**.

**351,513 views**

**Date:** 25/04/2025

<https://www.tiktok.com/@tuga.clipz/video/7497218425136188718>

Post by user **Su Figueiras**, simulating a vote for the Chega party and **André Ventura** on a ballot paper.

**225,991 views**

**Date:** 25/04/2025

<https://www.tiktok.com/@su.figueiras/video/7497259191896182038>

Post by the account **Por Portugal**, claiming that **André Ventura** was right to say, in an interview with Júlia Pinheiro, that the BE had defended the illegal occupation of houses.

**160 071 views**

**Date:** 23/04/2025/

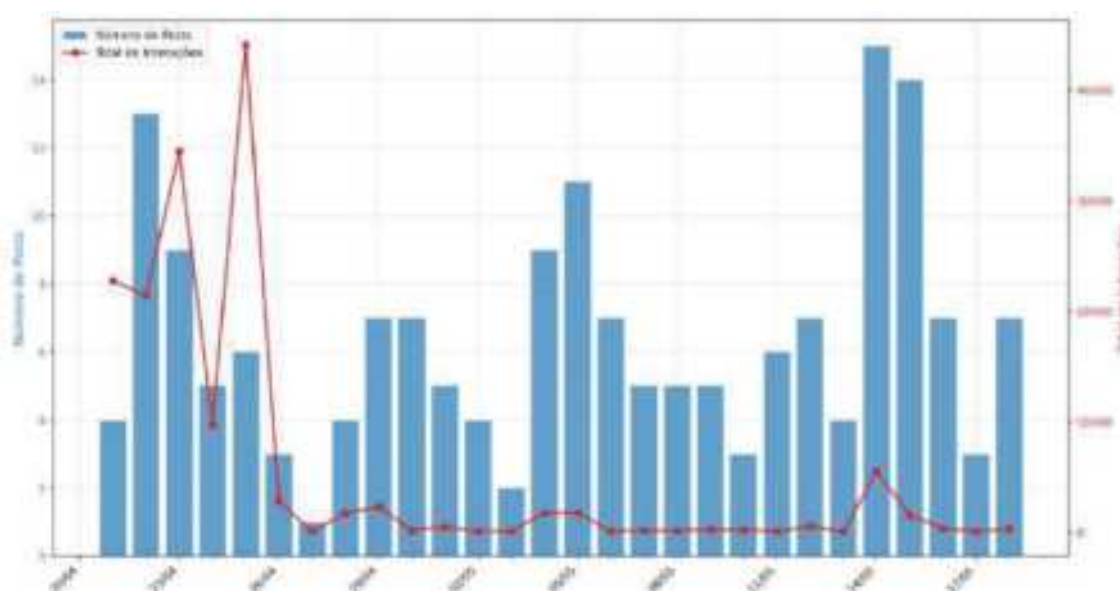
[https://www.tiktok.com/@por\\_portugal.\\_/video/7496634629089414422](https://www.tiktok.com/@por_portugal._/video/7496634629089414422)

**Figure 29. Posts with the most views on TikTok containing mentions of the candidates (between 21 April and 18 May 2025)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: The table counts all the posts on X that mentioned the name of at least one of the leaders of the political parties contesting the elections. Total interactions are the sum of the number of "likes", comments and shares. Data collected using the SentiOne tool.



The three most viral videos on the TikTok platform containing references to the candidates are also from unknown users. The Tuga Clipz account gathered more than 350 views of a video of André Ventura's speech on 25 April in which he allegedly "attacks" Luís Montenegro. User Su Figueiras simulated a vote for the Chega party and racked up 226,000 views. Finally, the Por Portugal account publishes a video montage that tries to prove André Ventura right in an argument with Júlia Pinheiro in a TV interview.



**Figure 30. Daily evolution of the number of posts and interactions on TikTok with mentions of the candidates' names (between 21 April and 18 May 2025)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: The table counts all the posts on X that mentioned the name of at least one of the leaders of the political parties contesting the elections. Total interactions are the sum of the number of "likes", comments and shares. Data collected using the SentiOne tool. Número de posts = Number of posts, Total de interações = Total Interactions.

The daily evolution of publications and interactions on posts about the candidates follows a different pattern on TikTok to the other networks, with more publications and more interactions at the start of the period, particularly on 25 April, with a significant contribution from the aforementioned video from the Tuga Clipz account about André Ventura's speech.



The 14th and 15th of May, marked by the indisposition of the president of Chega, also saw an increase in posts and interactions, but with less prominence than on the other social networks.

	FACEBOOK		INSTAGRAM		X		TIKTOK	
1	Luís Montenegro	2042	Luís Montenegro	73	Pedro Nuno Santos	4199	André Ventura	64
2	Pedro Nuno Santos	1364	André Ventura	39	André Ventura	3530	Mariana Mortágua	40
3	André Ventura	954	Pedro Nuno Santos	32	Luís Montenegro	3137	Luís Montenegro	39
4	Mariana Mortágua	431	Mariana Mortágua	10	Rui Rocha	703	Paulo Raimundo	33
5	Paulo Raimundo	427	Paulo Rangel	7	Rui Rio	428	Pedro Nuno Santos	29
6	Inês Sousa Real	73	Inês Sousa Real	5	Rui Tavares	170	Rui Rocha	10
7	António Costa	63	Rui Rocha	5	António Costa	94	Rui Tavares	4
8	Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa	58	Paulo Raimundo	3	Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa	46	António Costa	2
9	Rui Tavares	51			Carlos Moedas	38	Inês Sousa Real	2
10	Pedro Pinto	11			João Cotrim Figueiredo	18	Catarina Martins	2
11	João Cotrim Figueiredo	8			Rita Matias	17	Alexandra Leitão	1
12	Rui Rio	5			Fernando Medina	14		
13					Ana Gomes	11		
14					Paulo Rangel	6		
15					Augusto Santos Silva	5		
16					Catarina Martins	4		
17					Mário Centeno	2		
18					Duarte Pacheco	2		

**Table 9. Most mentioned politicians in publications containing mentions of candidates (between 21 April and 18 May 2025)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: The table counts all references to politicians in the set of publications that mention at least one of the candidates for the elections, on the Facebook, Instagram, X and TikTok platforms. The references were counted automatically by tracking the textual content of the posts using an artificial intelligence model. Data collected using the SentiOne tool.



Analysing the names of the politicians most mentioned in the posts that mentioned at least one of the candidates on the four social networks - Facebook, Instagram, X and TikTok - reveals, firstly, the great predominance of political discussion on X and Facebook. Pedro Nuno Santos was mentioned 4,200 times on X and André Ventura and Luís Montenegro both had more than 3,000 mentions.

On Facebook, the same three politicians are the most mentioned, with between 950 and 2042 mentions. On Instagram, the same three politicians occupy the podium, but with far fewer mentions in their posts. On TikTok, on the other hand, Mariana Mortágua manages to break into the leading trio, relegating Pedro Nuno Santos to 5th place.

It should also be noted that there are numerous references to other politicians not competing in these elections, such as António Costa, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, Rui Rio or Carlos Moedas. These are names used in the publications to discuss issues related to the candidates in the election.

#### Methodological note

This section of the report is based on the collection of data from publications containing references to the names of the leaders of political parties with parliamentary representation, on the social networks Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter and TikTok, between 21 April and 18 May. The post data was collected via the API of each of the social networks, using the SentiOne tool. The data was analysed and sorted taking into account the number of posts and the number of total interactions (sum of "likes", comments and shares) and/or views. Data collection and analysis was carried out by the MediaLab Iscte team, depending on the limitations of the collection tools and the availability of data on online social media platforms. In the context of previous reports, we normally follow the practice of not anonymising the names of users' public profiles. However, for subsequent public dissemination (academic publications, press releases, etc.) our practice is to anonymise these profiles, which although they are public, also refer to a public presence understood/imagined by many users as being of a personal nature.

## **4. Thematic evolution: Corruption vs. Immigration (2022-2025)**





## 4. Thematic evolution: Corruption vs. Immigration (2022-2025)

In order to analyse the evolution of the main topics under discussion during this electoral campaign, and how the issue of immigration has or has not gained greater prominence, a systematic extraction was carried out of all public Facebook posts with political content in the 30 days leading up to the 2022, 2024 and 2025 legislative elections. This collection was carried out through Meta's own monitoring tool, and used a Boolean search that included keywords related to the themes of immigration and corruption, the names of the main parties and figures (for each election), and the topic of legislative elections, while also adding terms to exclude content from Brazil.

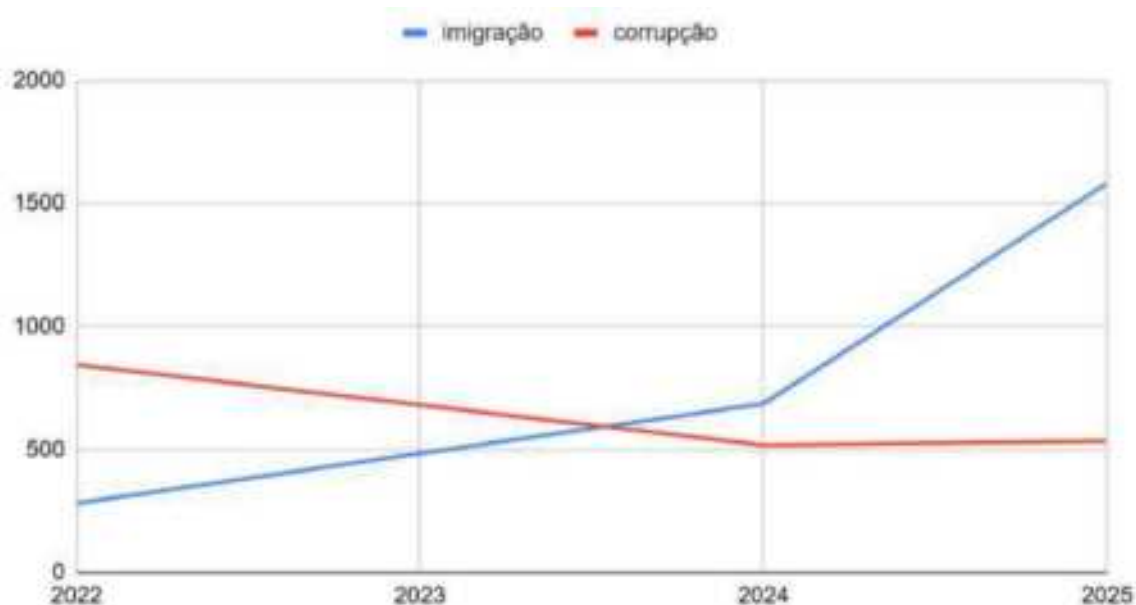
The extracted data was organised into thematic classes based on representative keywords, which made it possible to identify how different issues are structured discursively over time. In addition, a quantitative analysis was made of the frequency of topics and the variation in interactions per topic, with the aim of detecting changes in the agenda, fluctuations in public involvement and patterns of thematic (re)emergence between different electoral cycles.

One of the first trends observed is the exponential increase in publications on immigration in the run-up to the 2025 elections. While this growth could be attributed to a general increase in activity on social media, a comparison with the topic of corruption - dominant in the 2022 legislative elections<sup>1</sup> - reveals a clear shift, with immigration taking centre stage in the digital political debate over the last two years.

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<sup>1</sup> The theme of corruption in the electoral debate was identified by MediaLab Iscte in the 2019 Legislative elections: <https://medialab.iscte-iul.pt/desinformacao-no-facebook-em-periodo-pre-eleitoral-primeiras-conclusoes/>

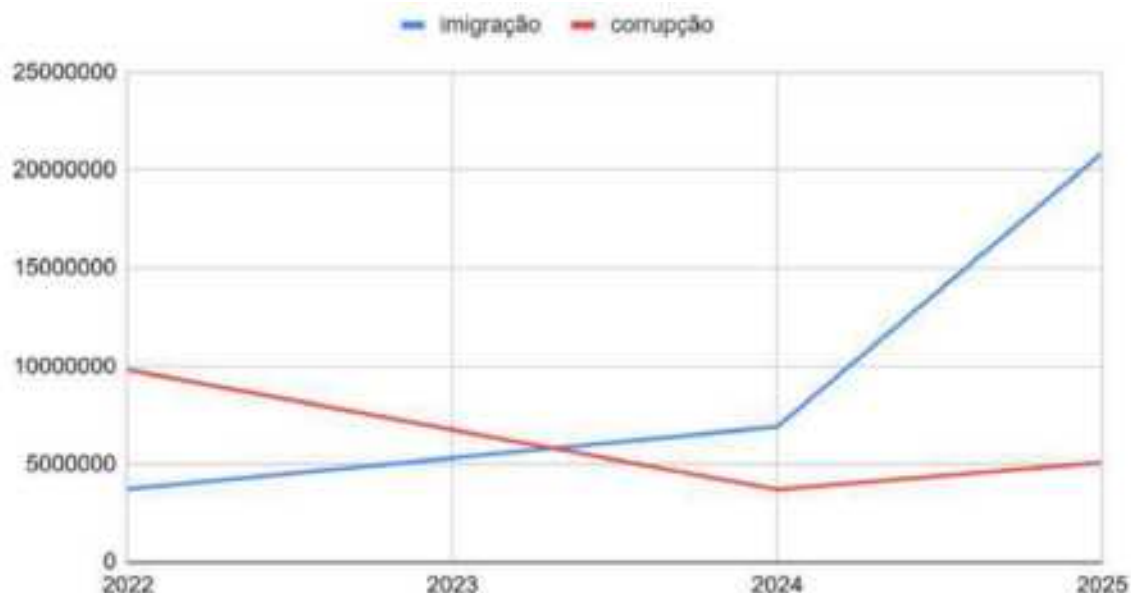




**Figure 31. Evolution in the number of Facebook posts on the topics of "corruption" and "immigration" between the 2022, 2024 and 2025 legislative elections**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: Imigração = Immigration, Corrupção = Corruption

More impressive than the increase in the number of posts is the fact that the topic of immigration tripled the number of impressions of the last election campaign, reaching almost 21 million views. In contrast, the visibility of content on corruption has decreased significantly compared to previous years. Even taking into account duplications between users, this is a topic with an almost universal reach, which probably reached all Portuguese on social media, either directly or indirectly.



**Figure 32. Evolution of the number of impressions on Facebook posts on the topics of "corruption" and "immigration" between the 2022, 2024 and 2025 legislative elections**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte. Note: Imigração = Immigration, Corrupção = Corruption

In addition to the quantitative analysis of the frequency and views generated by the topics under discussion on Facebook, a qualitative segmentation was carried out based on lexical clusters that allow us to understand how the debates are structured discursively at different times. Through the thematic classification of words associated with each publication, it became possible to identify patterns of co-occurrence and change in the way certain issues - such as immigration or corruption - are framed publicly. Cluster analysis thus allows us to go beyond counting mentions and explore how themes gain centrality, intensity and emotional charge in the pre-election debate on Facebook.



We understand these clusters as corresponding to different "vocabularies", which can indicate the different perspectives present in the discussion of topics such as immigration and/or corruption in different periods.

To carry out this analysis, we used textual analysis tools in R language, with unsupervised *machine learning* algorithms (a type of artificial intelligence) to group the set of words in the texts into vocabularies and perspectives, which allowed us to identify six main clusters within the discussions on immigration and corruption.

The algorithm begins by grouping the set of words in the texts, initially into two different vocabularies, and then each of these new vocabulary clusters into another two, operating successively until it reaches the limit of vocabularies defined by the data analyst (in this case the standard of six clusters), generating a "family tree" of vocabularies in which the "kinship" relationships would indicate how close or distant the vocabularies are (a process called descending hierarchical clustering). Throughout this process, in order to define the most relevant vocabularies, we discarded smaller vocabularies that did not involve at least 5% of the total text corpus.

To summarise, these vocabularies revolve around:

- **Cluster 1:** discussion of notifications and deportation of irregular immigrants and related measures;
- **Cluster 2:** the fight against corruption as the main theme in the vocabulary of government programmes, particularly associated with the figure of André Ventura and the Chega party, but also mentioning the names of Luís Montenegro and Mariana Mortágua;
- **Cluster 3:** the association between immigration and insecurity, strongly linked to Passos Coelho's statements on the subject;



- **Cluster 4:** general discussion on democratic institutions and elections, with intersections with discussions involving Angola and Brazil;
- **Cluster 5:** discussion of the radical right, conservatism and communism and their relationship with democratic parties;
- **Cluster 6:** corruption cases, especially the case involving the former mayor of Funchal and businessman Avelino Farinha.

The method indicates that the pair of clusters 2 and 3 and the pair 4 and 5 are vocabularies with great proximity and compatibility, i.e. they share the same direct origin in the previous stage of hierarchical clustering.

We cross-referenced the identified vocabularies with the publications of origin and their metadata, identifying, for example, which vocabularies are most associated with reactions to angry emoji or publications made during specific periods.

From this cross-referencing, we generate images that synthesise the cross-references made, such as heat maps cross-referencing interactions, vocabularies and word clouds for each textual cluster (vocabulary) identified.

Below is a heat map showing the *engagement* metrics (indicated on the lateral axis) of all the clusters (abbreviated on the lower axis by the term 'clust'):



**Figure 33. Number of publications of each vocabulary identified in the different clusters**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte.

The word immigration is associated with different debates on online social media platforms between 2022 and 2025, although the last election signalled a breakthrough compared to previous years.

Controversies such as Passos Coelho's statement in 2024 associating immigrants with insecurity are echoed at different times, with some similarity in their vocabulary and reactions, but the notifications from the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum (AIMA) for illegal immigrants to leave the country in 2025 generated waves of online reactions atypical of this debate.

Just counting the number of mentions of the term "immigration" can therefore hide significant differences in the way this discussion takes place at different times.



Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte.

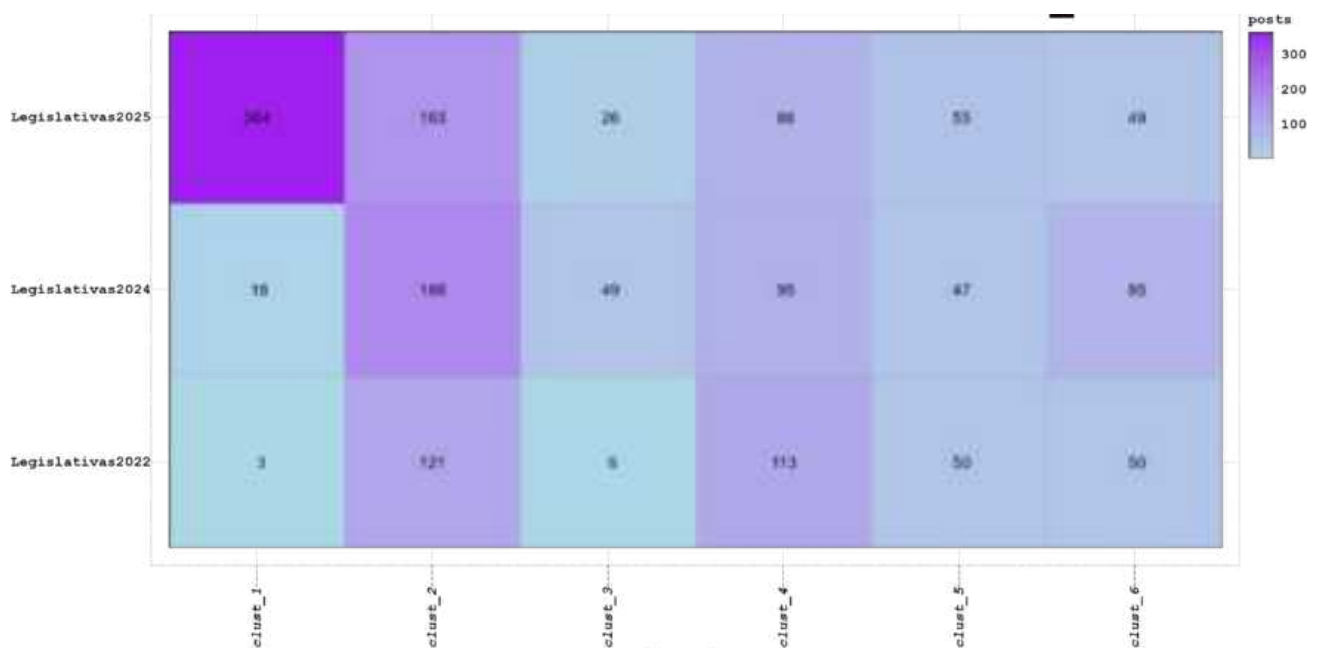


This indicates a targeted *engagement*, disproportionately associated with angry reactions to this agenda (which can be associated with both reactions of solidarity with immigrants and hate speech against them), concentrated specifically in the year 2025.

Even so, the record number of interactions is still around posts involving André Ventura, Chega and issues such as corruption (cluster 2), with a more continuous number of posts throughout the period analysed. On the other hand, the discussion of corruption also brings up a specific event among those identified that generates its own vocabulary (cluster 6): the decision to exonerate former mayor Pedro Calado (PSD) and businessmen Avelino Farinha and Custódio Correia in a case of suspected corruption on the island of Madeira. The level of interactions obtained, however, is considerably lower than that obtained by the discussion on immigration, denoting the regional focus of this case.

Cluster 5 features words such as "polls", "far right", "centre right", "conservatives", "230", "globalists" and "democratic", indicating the discussion about the rise of actors associated with the radical right.

Below is a heat map indicating the number of publications in each cluster identified (abbreviated in the lower axis by the term 'clust') and the interval analysed (indicated in the lateral axis).



**Figure 35. Number of publications of each vocabulary identified in the collection intervals (January 2022, February and March 2024, April 2025 and May 2025)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte.

It should also be noted that the vocabulary identified in cluster 2, in which André Ventura and the debate on corruption recur, is statistically close to the vocabulary used in cluster 3 centred on immigration and Passos Coelho's statement on the relationship between immigrants and insecurity.

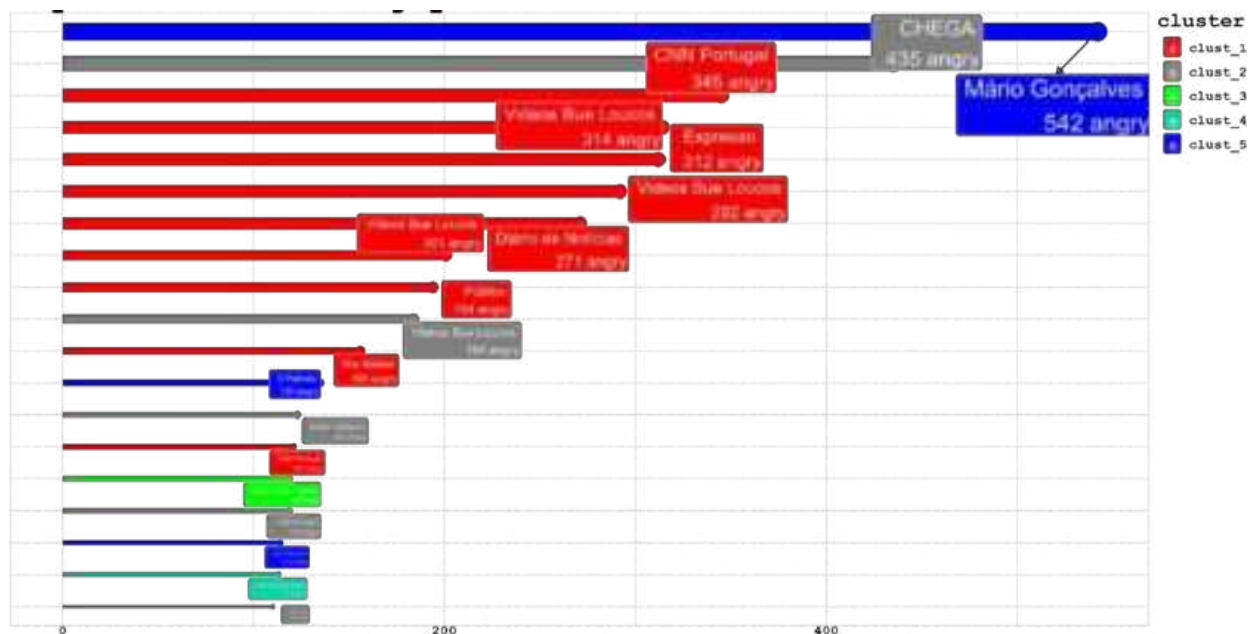




**Figure 36. Most used words in cluster 2 (corruption, grey, left) and cluster 3 (immigration and insecurity, green, right)**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte.

The general discussion about democratic institutions and elections, with intersections with foreign discussions (cluster 4) lags behind discussions about Andr  Ventura (cluster 2) and AIMA (cluster 1) in most metrics, surpassing the latter in shares and likes. Cluster 5, on the other hand, is also frequently associated with cluster 4.



**Figure 37. Top 20 actors with the most "angry" reactions 😡 in the context of anti-immigration discourse**

Source: MediaLab CIES\_Iscte.

Actors associated with anti-immigration discourse are among the record holders in terms of the number of "angry" reactions, with Mário Gonçalves leading the way, followed by the Chega party. The vocabulary most associated with AIMA notifications (cluster 1) is identified in 7 of the 10 publications with the highest number of "angry" reactions. The most recurrent actor in the top 10 is "[Vídeos Bue Loucos](#)", a page with more than 85,000 followers and which republishes content critical of immigration, such as that of the "Portugal Grande Novamente" page.

The changes brought about by the discussion around AIMA become clearer if we compare the predominant discussions in each year.



In 2022, the discussion with the vocabulary about irregular immigrants (cluster 1) is absent and the actors who associate immigrants with social problems play a secondary role in the discussion. In 2024, however, the discussion related to irregular immigrants gains prominence at different times and the debate associated with Passos Coelho's speech (cluster 3) becomes the most frequent vocabulary among the six clusters identified in this analysis. Throughout the month of May 2025, however, the discussion of irregular immigrants (cluster 1) occupies a prominent position as the most frequent in publications on different days.

#### Methodological note

This section considers all public Facebook posts with political content in the 30 days leading up to the legislative elections of 2022, 2024 and 2025. This collection was carried out using Meta's own monitoring tool, and used a Boolean search for keywords related to immigration vs corruption and the names of the main parties and figures (for each election) and the topic of the legislative elections. The extracted data was organised into thematic classes based on representative keywords (clusters). In addition, a quantitative analysis was made of the frequency of themes and the variation in interactions per cluster.

## **5. Meta-narratives fuelled by disinformative content**



## 5. Meta-Narratives fuelled by disinformative content

During the campaign period for the 2025 legislative elections, various meta-narratives shaped political discourse on social media, often fuelled by disinformative content. Although different political forces contributed to the disinformative ecosystem, the **Chega party and its supporters** were often at the centre of the amplification of these meta-narratives, using content that could confuse or mislead the user, usually with an emotional charge that weakened objectivity.

### 5.1. “Portugal is being invaded” (migration panic)

This was the most persistent and transversal narrative of the campaign, with several variations over the weeks. The false claim that “2 million immigrants have entered Portugal” appeared right at the start and reached more than 1 million users via Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and messaging groups. Despite being denied by fact-checking platforms, the narrative was widely repeated, even being mentioned on a [television programme](#) by a Chega MP and by digital influencers with a wide reach. Its dissemination combined organic reactions with coordinated sharing, particularly by Instagram pages, but with no signs of inauthentic activity or automated behaviour (see below).



On Facebook, MP Pedro Frazão alone, in three different video posts reinforcing this narrative, amassed 1.5 million views. On the Facebook platform, a search for the keywords "2M"/"2 million" and "immigrants" identifies around 600 publications with more than 6 million impressions, a figure that does not include TikTok, Instagram or X.

Other variations of this narrative included the claim that Portuguese nationality was "for sale" in India, through a manipulated video filmed in Goa, and the idea that illegal occupations by immigrants were on the rise - both with misleading messages, but with high reach. This narrative had particular reach because it was amplified by André Ventura, in a video published on all three platforms and still available, despite being fact-checked by Polygraph. André Ventura's video alone had over a million views.



## 5.2. “The Islamisation of Portugal” and the political instrumentalisation of immigration

A narrative recycled from previous electoral cycles, the idea that immigrants are organising themselves politically, possibly with the aim of creating a party, has resurfaced in these legislative elections. The satirical page of the supposed "Portuguese Islamic Party" was once again shared in the form of memes and posts that didn't publicise its humorous nature.

<sup>2</sup>

This idea was heavily instrumentalised, presented as proof of an alleged threat to national identity, with no concrete basis, and a direct association between immigration and the number of immigrants and the Muslim religion and/or Indo-European immigrants, when in reality the representation of these two communities is low.

The narrative has taken different forms, for example [in a video](#) with more than 1.2 million views by an individual who emphasises the importance of young people going to vote in the face of this imminent plan for political control by immigrants. This video also repeats the narrative of the 2 million immigrants, demonstrating the complementarity between them. At the same time, a complementary narrative emerged associating the political organisation of immigrant communities with left-wing electoral strategies. The most visible case was the allegation of an agreement between the Bangladeshi community and the PS, according to which the leaders of this community would have guaranteed electoral support in exchange for political quid pro quo.

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<sup>2</sup> In the 2024 elections, this was one of the disinformation narratives identified by the MediaLab Iscte team <https://www.obercom.pt/europeias-2024-amplificacao-do-discurso-politico-online-e-desinformacao/>





Although there were no verifiable sources, the message was widely disseminated through profiles with sharing patterns suggestive of deliberate dissemination. In this case, a single authentic profile distributed [the post](#) in more than 70 public Facebook groups in the space of about an hour (the figure could be much higher considering the private ones).





### **5.3. “50 years of corruption”**

Among the most structuring meta-narratives of the digital campaign was the idea that we have lived through 50 years of corruption and democratic decay since 25 April.

This meta-narrative is partly conveyed by the Chega party, which presents itself as a break with the installed political system. The narrative has been repeatedly mobilised by André Ventura and digital support channels to consolidate the perception that all parties are the same, only alternating between them in the management of the same failed regime. It is linked to the two previous ones and is often associated with disinformative content, as exemplified by [the post below](#), published on the day of reflection, which has more than 350,000 views.

In this case, the text reinforces the narrative that the last 50 years have been marked by failure, national decline and economic and social collapse - a misleading view that incorporates disinformative ideas about the alleged sale of Portuguese nationality, the expropriation of Portuguese property to give to immigrants and the instrumentalisation of immigration by left-wing parties in exchange for votes. The user who shared this video, for example, has over a million views in recent months, reinforcing this narrative with frequent references to the 50-year expression.



Text of the post: "In Spain they're already opening their eyes. IS THIS WHAT YOU WANT FOR PORTUGAL? EUROPE IS ON FIRE AND IT'S COMING HERE! IT'S TIME FOR THE PORTUGUESE TO TAKE A LESSON OR WE'RE GOING TO STAND WITH OUR ARMS CROSSED: AGAIN THEY'RE GOING TO HAVE NO MONEY FOR THE REFORMS AT THE COST OF THE GERINGONZA PS BE PCP all together participated in the beginning of the destruction of Portugal with unbridled immigration to get votes for them by the new generation of immigrants and still expropriate Portuguese people to offer everything to them. CRIME OF PATRIOTY for all these parties in court IN 2/3 YEARS THERE WILL BE NO MONEY FOR REFORMS AT THIS RATE DO YOU THINK IT'S CORRECT TO TAKE MONEY OUT OF PORTUGUESE POCKETS AT THIS RATE? SHAME IS THIS WHAT YOU WANT FOR PORTUGAL? NOBODY DID ANYTHING AND YOU THINK THEY'RE GOING TO NOW? 🤔🤔🤔🤔 PORTUGAL HAS HIT THE BOTTOM AND THEY HAVE RIGHTS THAT WE NEVER HAD, THEY'RE COMING TO SUCK MONEY OUT OF OUR SWEAT Sell Portuguese nationality and nobody does anything, they're all asleep and squandering pension and health money. 50 years of freedom for this can't be"

## 5.4. Concluding remarks on disinformative meta-narratives

Analysing the main meta-narratives that shaped the 2025 election campaign reveals a systematic discursive pattern of eroding trust in democratic processes and institutions, promoted above all by actors and networks aligned with the radical right.

Some of the most viral disinformation posts in this campaign that fed these meta-narratives articulate a constellation of themes - immigration, security, Islamisation, systemic corruption, "vote-buying" through immigrant communities - which, although diverse, converge in a common logic: the delegitimisation of the current democratic order.



*An example of a post with a million views, reinforcing the dichotomy of lies vs truth.*

By presenting immigrants as an instrumentalised mass, institutions as captured, and traditional parties as accomplices in a 50-year farce, a binary and polarised view of politics is constructed, where only a force "outside the system" can tell the truth and save the country.

This narrative structure, sustained by disinformation, simplification and emotion, fulfils a mobilising and radicalising function that weakens the civic space and challenges the principles of democratic pluralism.



#### Methodological note

The identification of the main meta-narratives fuelled by disinformative content during the electoral period was based on the continuous analysis of a qualified sample of public content, made up of: (1) publications by the main candidates and key figures of the parties with parliamentary seats, (2) publications from the official pages of the parties themselves, (3) content subject to fact-checking by the three structures registered in Portugal (Polígrafo, Observador and Público/Fact-Check), and (4) complaints submitted by citizens via the contact line of the National Electoral Commission (CNE). From this initial sample, disinformative content and associated meta-narratives were identified, which were further analysed through the analysis of related publications, circulation patterns and associated discursive elements, making it possible to trace the main thematic axes and their modes of dissemination on social networks.

## **6. Coordinated behaviour and other threats to informational integrity**



## **6. Coordinated behaviour and other threats to informational security**

During the 2025 legislative campaign period, several signs of coordinated behaviour and amplification strategies were identified, although sophisticated operations using automated processes have not been observed to date.

Instead, the patterns observed point to a hybrid dynamic, where real and anonymous accounts, mostly national, operate in networks to promote politically aligned content, with an emphasis on the discursive universe of the radical right.

### **6.1. Patterns of coordination between anonymous accounts and networks**

The most structured case involved a set of Instagram profiles - such as @portugalsemcensura, @observatorio\_de\_poder, @cabrasedireita, @militantedadireita @canadiantuga, among others - that shared the same content, often related to the narratives identified above, directed against political opponents and systematically in favour of the Chega party.

These accounts showed a strong overlap of followers, and often shared content together, indicating an alignment of content management. Some of these profiles also showed signs of strategic anonymity (generic name, facelessness, vague biographies), making attribution and accountability difficult.



This pattern of dissemination - with no evidence of automation - reflects part of what was evident throughout the campaign on the various social networks. The narratives present on the Chega party's networks are supported by a series of anonymous accounts, which promote content that is favourable to them and comment on or criticise their opponents.

Dissemination is regular and multi-platform, with a strong overlap of content and narratives, collaborations and shares, and is supported by the maintenance and creation of openly anonymous accounts for this purpose. Many of these accounts have suggestive names to appear in intra-platform searches and arouse users' interest when they appear on homepages or recommendation pages. The names and bios don't necessarily show support for Chega, appearing with usernames often associated with the imagery of the political right and Portugal.

Analysis of the texts of the posts, the publication times and the general behaviour of these accounts does not point to central or automated control. The data shows that they are the result of the successful activation of highly motivated digital activists, who in some cases may manage more than one account and share content with each other, thus amplifying the reach of the narratives they promote.

For a perspective on the metrics and impact that these accounts have achieved, the network identified above, which published on Instagram, had a total of around 850,000 impressions or views of the content published on the day of reflection, 17 May.



## 6.2. CNN at the centre of the “electoral blackout”

Television station CNN Portugal featured prominently in the weekly survey of political content shared on social media at two different times. Firstly, in the wake of the electricity blackout, disinformative content began to circulate about an alleged Russian cyber-attack on Europe's electricity infrastructure, spread via WhatsApp message, falsely citing CNN Brussels as the source.

The case had no significant impact on the election campaign, but it exemplified the speed with which disinformative content circulates via messaging platforms, where it cannot be removed or contextualised by the platform.

On another occasion, one of the most relevant episodes of the campaign in terms of reflexive disinformation - that is, unclear and even misleading data about the very presence of disinformation - was the widespread dissemination of unsubstantiated conclusions from a report by the company Cyabra, which claimed that "58 per cent of X accounts promoting Chega were fake". The claim was broadcast by CNN Portugal but lacked a rigorous methodological definition and did not correspond to the empirical evidence gathered.

The concept of "fake account" used by Cyabra was ambiguous and methodologically problematic, confusing anonymous and pseudonymous accounts and authentic profiles with intense activity. As shown above, the data on the Chega support accounts points above all to a digital militancy protected by anonymity.

A video in English, published on [Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#) in the aftermath of the election, replicated this data, misleading users that there was a huge network of fake accounts fuelling the Chega party's content. The video had around 1.8 million views, with intense sharing in the Portuguese digital ecosphere.





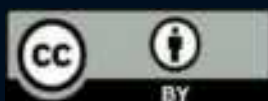
The confusion generated by the way the results were presented and publicised has serious implications for the credibility of public warnings about information manipulation, and could weaken the mechanisms of trust in detecting and combating disinformation. By failing to distinguish between legitimate digital activism and coordinated inauthentic behaviour, there is a risk of discrediting real criticism and, paradoxically, reinforcing the conspiratorial narrative of the target parties, who are presented as being unfairly persecuted by the "system".

#### Methodological note

The chapter dedicated to coordinated behaviour and other threats to informational integrity is based on the analysis of cases previously identified throughout the weekly monitoring, to which was added an analytical layer focused not only on the content shared, but on the behaviours associated with its publication and dissemination. Indicators such as the synchronised repetition of messages by multiple accounts, the existence of anomalous sharing patterns, signs of algorithmic manipulation (e.g. artificial amplification), and the persistence of anonymous networks linked to previous campaigns were considered. In addition, situations were analysed in which institutional or media responses to disinformation generated their own dynamics of reflexive disinformation, revealing weaknesses in public correction mechanisms. In the context of previous reports, we normally follow the practice of not anonymising the names of users' public profiles. However, for subsequent public dissemination (academic publications, press releases, etc.) our practice is to anonymise these profiles, which although they are public, also refer to a public presence understood/imagined by many users as being of a personal nature.




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