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Iberian Digital Media
Observatory

IBERIFIER — Iberian Digital Media Observatory

Spain & Portugal fact-checking brief

Main Disinformation Narratives and Key Findings

Consolidated report – June 2024–August 2026

This consolidated report collects and reflects on the main hoaxes and disinformation narratives detected in Spain and Portugal from June 2024 to August 2026 by the fact-checking organisations integrated into the IBERIFIER hub.

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Summary

The nine quarterly briefs examined in this report show how disinformation in Spain and Portugal frequently attached itself to major emergencies, political developments, and international events, while repeatedly drawing on familiar claims about migration, institutional misconduct, and public health. Their combined value lies in the connections between these cases: different events provided settings for similar allegations, and individual falsehoods often linked several subjects at once.

The [Valencia DANA](#) and the [Iberian blackout](#) provide enlightening case-study examples. In the first case, false explanations of the disaster coexisted with claims of concealed deaths and obstructed assistance. In the second, fabricated statements and unsupported explanations attributed the outage to cyberattacks, renewable energy experiments, or government coordination. The briefs also describe the reuse of the dam-demolition narrative to explain both drought and flooding. These examples show how an existing accusation can be adjusted to a new emergency.

Migration provides a recurring connection between distinct subjects. The quarterly briefs often describe false associations with crime, alleged preferential access to services, threats to religious traditions and claims of electoral manipulation. [Mocejón](#), [Torre Pacheco](#), and [Ceuta](#) crises illustrate how particular incidents or decisions became attached to these broader narratives.

Visual/multimedia content is significant to many of the documented cases. Old footage presented as new appears alongside manipulated images and AI-generated videos. Political endorsements, military operations, disaster damage and investment promotions were all represented through fabricated or misleading material. The evidence supports treating AI as one component of this wider repertoire, but it does not establish what proportion of all circulating disinformation was AI-generated.

A key methodological innovation in [IBERIFIER Plus](#) was integrating disinformation narratives into its analytical framework, enabling systematic identification of recurring patterns and the structures connecting individual false claims. Examining how these narratives persist and adapt across events deepens understanding of the Iberian disinformation landscape and reveals new connections. This approach also informs practical priorities: maintaining reusable evidence on recurring allegations, preparing event-specific monitoring and exchanging findings across the Iberian network. These recommendations draw on the documentary analysis; their effectiveness was not evaluated in the quarterly briefs.

This report is a qualitative consolidation. It does not estimate prevalence, audience exposure or changes in disinformation volume. The analysis draws exclusively on nine [quarterly IBERIFIER briefs](#).

1) Purpose and approach

This consolidated brief brings together the main subjects and findings from nine Spain & Portugal fact-checking briefs, covering June 2024 to August 2026. It is intended to support researchers, fact-checkers, journalists, and media-literacy practitioners by clarifying the connections between the documented cases.

The analysis groups material by major event, recurring narrative, and method of manipulation. An event is the immediate setting, such as a flood or election. A narrative is a broader proposition that can connect multiple claims, such as the allegation that authorities systematically favour outsiders. A method is the way the claim is made persuasive, for example by presenting old footage as current or falsely attributing a statement to a recognised source. These distinctions are analytical tools used in this synthesis.

Subjects receive extended treatment when the briefs develop them in their main sections, return to them in subsequent reporting, or provide examples that clarify an important mechanism. This is a reasoned editorial selection.

The underlying material was produced by [Polígrafo](#), [Maldita.es](#), [Newtral](#), [EFE Verifica](#), [Verificat](#), [AFP España](#) and [InfoVeritas](#), with participation varying across reporting periods. Hyperlinks lead directly to fact-checks and investigations cited in the quarterly publications.

The Iberian material forms the core of this analysis. The Latin American perspective draws on collaboration with the fact-checking organisations participating in the IBERIFIER repository: [Animal Político](#) (Mexico), [Cazadores de Fake News](#) (Venezuela), [La Silla Vacía](#) (Colombia) and [Chequeado](#) (Argentina), and on broad regional reports published by [LatamChequea](#) and its members. These contributions broaden the geographical/linguistic context and help identify shared themes and recurring disinformation mechanisms.

2) Major events and subjects

2.1 The Valencia DANA

The Valencia DANA in autumn 2024 became the focus of a wide range of false claims about the disaster and the emergency response. The documented claims concern several dimensions of the emergency: its alleged artificial origin, the role of infrastructure, the number

of victims and the conduct of organisations providing assistance. [False explanations invoked geoengineering, HAARP and cloud seeding](#), while other messages alleged that [deaths were being concealed, including in the Bonaire car park](#). Humanitarian organisations and local authorities were [accused of obstructing assistance](#).

These claims can be read as attempts to offer alternative explanations of the disaster and its management. Some portray the event as deliberately engineered, while others challenge information about victims or claim assistance was withheld. This distinction matters because correcting a misleading flood video alone does not address a separate allegation that public authorities are concealing casualties.

[The dam-demolition allegation](#) provides a documented example of a reused narrative. The claim was previously used to explain drought and then to explain the severity of flooding. The immediate event changed, but the accusation of government responsibility through alleged infrastructure destruction remained available. This supports a conclusion about the narrative's adaptability, without establishing how many people accepted it.

The DANA also illustrates persistence beyond the initial emergency. In the following months, allegations that the death toll was being hidden persisted, including the claim that [people who died in cars were being classified as road-traffic victims](#). These later claims show why verification needs can persist after the initial emergency.

There is also a specific cross-border example: [footage recorded in Zaragoza in 2023 was presented as showing the Valencia floods](#) and was addressed by both Maldita.es and Polígrafo. This connects the wider narrative analysis to a traceable instance of misleading visual material appearing in the two national contexts.

The emergency also became a setting for anti-migration claims. [Maldita.es](#) and [Verificat](#) examined allegations attributing looting solely to immigrants. Here, a disaster supplied a new setting for an existing accusation about migration and criminality.

2.2 The Iberian blackout

The Iberian blackout in spring 2025 generated disinformation in both countries, including [a supposed cyberattack announcement attributed to Ursula von der Leyen](#), [an alleged failed experiment with renewable energy](#) and false information about the geographical extent of the outage. The Portuguese examples include claims about a rare atmospheric phenomenon, the demolition of a nuclear plant and prior planning by the Spanish government.

The shared feature is presenting an explanation before the cited evidence justifies it. Some claims borrowed authority from a prominent official, and others supplied a technical-sounding cause or alleged deliberate action. Incorrect claims also suggested that [Germany and Italy had been affected](#). This adds a separate verification problem as the scope of an emergency can be distorted alongside its cause.

Read alongside the DANA, the blackout shows how different emergencies can host similar accusations about hidden causes and institutional responsibility. The comparison is between documented narrative mechanisms. It suggests a practical need to distinguish verified operational information, unresolved explanations, and demonstrably false claims during emergency coverage.

2.3 Wildfires and other disasters

During the summer of 2025, false allegations circulated that [forest clearing was prohibited by environmental laws or the 2030 Agenda](#), and that [fires were deliberately started to make land available for solar installations](#), mining or a hydrogen corridor. In Portugal, examples concerned distorted burned-area and forest-ranger figures, [alongside allegations that firefighting resources were being diverted towards gender-equality and LGBTQIA+ policies](#).

These examples show two connected forms of accusation. One attributes a hidden economic purpose to the fires. The other presents spending on an unrelated policy area as evidence of neglect of fire prevention or response. They require different kinds of verification: an alleged development project, an invented legal prohibition, and a misleading budget comparison cannot be resolved through the same evidence.

In summer 2026, false connections again appeared between Spanish wildfires and photovoltaic projects, along with claims about forest maintenance. Examples include a vehicle wrongly described as electric and allegations circulating in Portugal linking Spanish fires to approved photovoltaic projects. The recurrence supports treating these explanations as reusable narratives.

Other emergencies extend the evidence on visual manipulation. The Los Angeles fires in early 2025 generated AI-created and manipulated material. In early 2026, [Storm Kristin in Portugal was accompanied by false damage imagery](#) and misleading information about assistance, while [the Adamuz railway incident in Spain attracted conspiratorial explanations](#). InfoVeritas also checked [a fabricated image of an Italian aircraft supposedly fighting fires in Spain](#), illustrating the need to verify depictions of the response as well as the disaster itself.

Together, these cases indicate that emergency verification needs to cover images, causes, casualties and assistance.

2.4 Migration and the events attached to it

Migration-related disinformation repeatedly connects different subjects across the period examined. Its importance to this synthesis comes from the range of subjects it connects, such as criminal allegations, social provision, religious identity, and the electoral process.

Mocejón is a clear example of false criminal attribution. In summer 2024, [claims blamed an undocumented immigrant for the murder of a child](#), although the perpetrator was not a foreigner. [The false claim also reached Portugal](#). Another example involved [footage from the Kenyan Parliament misrepresented as immigrants attacking a restaurant in Tenerife](#). In one case, the perpetrator's identity was misrepresented; in the other, unrelated footage was presented as evidence of a local incident.

[The assault in Torre Pacheco in summer 2025 was followed by false videos and messages](#), including footage from elsewhere presented in connection with the episode. Both Spanish and Portuguese fact-checkers addressed claims linking the event to migration and criminality. The material supports examining how a specific incident is extended into a broader account of an entire group, while retaining the distinction between the underlying event and false additions to it.

Other claims alleged privileges in school enrolment, childcare, healthcare and public support. In the Portuguese material, these claims appear alongside [false claims of preferential access to healthcare](#) or exemptions unavailable to other residents. Their common premise is an asserted unequal distribution of rights, policies or resources.

Religious and cultural claims include supposed attacks on Christmas markets, [restrictions on Christmas terminology](#), bans on pork and fabricated changes to language or religious rules in European countries. These allegations connect local claims with a broader portrayal of Muslim presence as a threat to established traditions.

The joint reading makes a common structure visible across Spain and Portugal. Claims about benefits portray migrants as receiving an unfair share of public resources; claims about Islam or demographic replacement portray their presence as a threat to cultural continuity. The alleged benefit, institution, or threatened tradition changes with the territory. This is a shared narrative expressed through locally recognizable details and does not by itself establish that the claims originated from the same source.

Spain's extraordinary regularisation process adds an electoral dimension. In spring 2026, claims alleged that legal status would be granted to influence elections, alongside false videos supposedly showing arrivals following the announcement. Maldita.es examined [the false claim that migrants covered by the regularisation would be entitled to vote in the next elections](#). Narratives about the measure also circulated in Portugal, where Polígrafo checked [the allegation that Spain would automatically pay €2,800 to migrants who regularised their status](#).

The events in Ceuta in summer 2026 were accompanied by false material, including old or decontextualised videos, fabricated scenes and allegations about migrants' behaviour. Maldita.es addressed examples such as [a video falsely presented as showing women fighting on a road in Ceuta](#) and [AI-generated imagery allegedly showing Moroccan and Ceuta flags at the city's Assembly](#). Portuguese examples recast the events as warnings of a similar situation in Portugal and included [a video falsely presented as showing migrants from Ceuta arriving in the Algarve](#), checked by Polígrafo. This illustrates how a Spanish event was adapted into a claim about a Portuguese threat.

2.5 Elections and political authority

Elections brought several recurring problems into the spotlight: misleading accounts of how voting works, fabricated statements attributed to candidates, and claims that migration was being used to alter the electorate. The examples span domestic campaigns and elections abroad that became subjects of verification in Spain and Portugal.

During the 2024 European elections, Maldita.es examined both [claims that the published results concealed the real outcome](#) and [false instructions on how to complete a ballot](#). These cases concerned the voting process itself, like how a vote should be cast and whether the announced result could be trusted. The same reporting period also included scrutiny of political claims associated with the Catalan regional elections. Verificat's examination of [a claim about Catalonia's regional income-tax rates](#) illustrates the accompanying work of checking candidates' accounts of public policy.

The 2024 US presidential campaign supplied a substantial body of material. Newtral brought together [false claims targeting Kamala Harris](#), while Maldita.es examined [photographs falsely linking her to Jeffrey Epstein](#) and [a slowed-down video presented as evidence that she was drunk](#). Migration also entered the campaign through [the allegation that Haitian immigrants were eating pets in Springfield](#). False attribution affected claims about Trump too: Verificat checked [a purported list of books he intended to ban](#), and Polígrafo examined [a fabricated quotation describing Republican voters as "the dumbest group of voters"](#). Together, these

show how a campaign coverage could be distorted through altered footage, invented associations and statements the candidate had never made.

European elections outside the Iberian Peninsula also attracted attention. During Germany's 2025 election campaign, EFE Verifica documented [false claims about candidates and decontextualised protest imagery](#). Polígrafo checked [a video allegedly showing postal ballots supporting the AfD being destroyed](#). In the Romanian electoral context, EFE Verifica examined [the unsupported allegation that 1.7 million deceased people had been included in the electoral register](#).

Portugal's 2025 legislative elections brought the substance of campaign arguments into the analysis. Polígrafo checked statements made during televised debates about [housing-price trends](#), [the number of immigrants working and contributing to Social Security](#) and [whether naturalised citizens could become President of the Republic](#). These were questions about the evidence and legal rules behind campaign statements, moving away just from allegations of ballot manipulation.

The Portuguese local elections later that year added fabricated campaign material and disputes over political credit. Polígrafo examined [an image purporting to show South Asian and Muslim candidates representing PS, Livre and Bloco de Esquerda](#), as well as [the claim that Carlos Moedas had been the first mayor to regulate tourism in Lisbon](#). The first attached migration and religious identity to party competition and the second required checking the history of municipal policy.

New York's 2025 mayoral election provided another example of an overseas contest entering Iberian debate. Newtral reviewed [false claims surrounding Zohran Mamdani's victory](#), while Maldita.es addressed [the allegation that he would ban churches](#). In Portugal, Polígrafo checked [the claim that the election was fraudulent because Mamdani's name appeared twice on the ballot](#). Claims about religious threat thus appeared alongside a separate attempt to present the ballot itself as proof of fraud.

During Portugal's presidential election in early 2026, fabricated endorsements and statements were especially visible in the documented material. Polígrafo checked [an endorsement of André Ventura falsely attributed to José Mujica](#), [a supposed appeal by Manuel Luís Goucha to vote against socialism](#) and [statements attributed to António José Seguro about immigration and mosques](#). Verification also covered practical electoral rules, including [whether an elector could sign more than one presidential nomination](#). The work therefore ranged from establishing

whether a statement existed to explaining how participation in the electoral process was governed.

In Spain, the 2026 Andalusian elections brought renewed allegations about postal voting. Verificat examined [claims that postal-vote envelopes indicated electoral fraud](#), and Maldita.es addressed [the allegation that envelope markings or colour differences allowed votes to be identified without opening them](#). AFP España also examined [claims about the PSOE's postal-vote result](#). Alongside these election-specific allegations, Spain's migrant regularisation process was presented as a means of manufacturing future voters. InfoVeritas addressed [the claim that regularised migrants would be able to vote in the 2027 general election](#), while Maldita.es checked [a similar allegation about voting rights in forthcoming elections](#). Although the future

Across the electoral cases, the same practical questions recur. Was the statement actually made? Does the image match its caption? Does an unfamiliar voting procedure indicate fraud, or is it being misrepresented?

2.6 Wars and international political events

Misleading representations of the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East recur throughout the period of analysis. Examples concerning Ukraine include allegations that Volodymyr Zelensky and his wife used foreign support to acquire luxury goods, and [a fabricated report alleging the acquisition of a mining company](#). These cases combine an accusation of personal enrichment with material presented as supporting evidence.

In summer 2025, [footage of a fire in China was falsely presented as an Iranian attack on Tel Aviv](#). Other narratives portrayed victims in Gaza as actors and the humanitarian crisis as staged. Later in 2025, attempts to discredit the humanitarian flotilla included fabricated scenes and allegations of leisure activities rather than aid delivery.

The 2026 material includes images concerning Nicolás Maduro's detention and false depictions of military operations during the conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran. Claims that Benjamin Netanyahu had been killed appeared alongside old footage presented as current. These examples show how both synthetic scenes and recycled material can supply apparent evidence during a rapidly developing international event.

These require distinct verification questions: did the attack occur, does the footage belong to this conflict, was the statement made, and what evidence supports an allegation that suffering

was staged? Authentic material was also dismissed as AI-generated. Verification therefore has to address fabricated evidence and unsupported attempts to discredit real evidence.

2.7 Sport and public figures

Major sporting events also brought social and political narratives into the material reviewed. At the Paris Olympics in 2024, [false or unsubstantiated claims about boxer Imane Khelif](#) circulated in both countries. They connected sporting coverage with attacks on gender identity and alleged unfair competitive advantages.

The 2026 reporting documents fabricated claims around the FIFA World Cup involving players, political figures and international conflicts. Examples include AI-generated images of Lamine Yamal with a Palestinian flag and [a false drone tribute to Cristiano Ronaldo in Madeira](#). AFP España's [verification of an image of Lamine Yamal holding a Palestinian flag](#) illustrates the intersection of football, politics and synthetic imagery.

Public attention surrounding deaths also appears in the corpus. In spring 2025, conspiracy theories and false statements surrounded Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV. That summer, [fabricated content concerned Diogo Jota's funeral](#) and an alleged Rihanna tribute. These examples justify including prominent cultural and sporting figures in monitoring, alongside conventional political subjects.

2.8 Health and digital fraud

Health-related material combines claims attached to current events with recurring allegations about vaccines and treatments. In 2024, false claims associated mpox with COVID-19 vaccination. Early 2025 examples included an unsupported cancer treatment and misleading claims that a respiratory-virus situation in China was equivalent to the COVID pandemic.

The hantavirus outbreak in spring 2026 provides a developed example of reuse. Claims alleged a staged or artificially created outbreak and hidden pharmaceutical interests, alongside [a false link to COVID-19 vaccination](#) and [invented public-health measures](#). The connection with earlier material is the reuse of vaccine-centred and hidden-interest explanations around a different disease. The recurring mechanism is attaching an established anti-vaccine allegation to a new public-health event.

Fraud uses some of the same devices for a different immediate purpose. Queen Letizia's image was misused in cryptocurrency scams in the 2024 material. In spring 2025, [fake investment promotions were attributed to Cristiano Ronaldo and Luís Montenegro](#). Later Portuguese examples impersonate tax, road-safety, health, banking and energy organisations.

Summer 2026 examples also involved fabricated medical authority through [fictitious doctors and cloned images or voices](#), alongside a false investment report using António José Seguro's image. These cases connect impersonation, synthetic media and commercial deception.

3) What connects the documented cases

Reusable explanations

Across the selected events, several recurring propositions connect otherwise different claims. Authorities conceal the truth, a policy benefits a favoured group at others' expense, an emergency has a hidden intentional cause or a prominent person has secretly supported, purchased or done something. This grouping is an interpretation of the documented examples, not a claim that they belong to one coordinated operation.

The dam-demolition narrative offers explicit evidence of adaptation between events. Allegations about social privileges appear in migration coverage and claims about competing spending priorities appear in wildfire coverage. Electoral allegations can incorporate migration policy, while international war narratives can borrow the visibility of celebrities. These intersections are a principal finding of the consolidation. We saw that thematic categories are useful for organisation, but individual falsehoods often cross their boundaries. The DANA and wildfire cases also show how narratives make use of the attention surrounding an emergency. Allegations about immigrants and looting attach an existing criminality narrative to flood coverage, misleading comparisons between equality spending and firefighting resources turn a disaster into evidence for a broader accusation about government priorities. The analytical inquiry, therefore, is not solely focused on the false information related to an event, but also on which pre-existing allegations it reinstates.

Evidence made to look immediate or authoritative

The mechanism here is trying to showcase several ways of supplying apparent proof. Recycled videos preserve the visual credibility of a real scene while changing its location or date. Fabricated quotes borrow a speaker's authority. Imitated news formats borrow a publisher's credibility to prove a point. AI-generated images create a scene that can be presented as a record of an event. These mechanisms can coexist within one subject or claim.

Also, establishing that a video is authentic does not establish that its caption is true. Equally, the appearance of a politician or media brand does not establish that an endorsement was

issued. Verification needs to examine provenance and attribution as well as whether the image itself was altered.

AI within a broader manipulation repertoire

AI appears across the corpus in political, migration, disaster, health, sporting and fraud-related examples. The evidence supports a conclusion about the diversity of AI applications within documented cases, not a quantified account of technological growth or displacement of older techniques. The documented sophistication lies in the combinations: a generated image can borrow the format of a news report, a cloned voice can impersonate a public figure, and genuine footage can supply a credible setting for a false account. Examples of fictitious doctors, fabricated endorsements, and military scenes illustrate these different uses of technology. They show how deception is constructed, but do not provide a consistent measure of improvement in technical quality, verification difficulty, or audience impact over time.

The corpus of the analysis also highlights a further difficulty: awareness that images can be generated may itself be used to question authentic content without evidence. A sound response therefore requires positive evidence about a specific item's origin and context, rather than treating visual plausibility or suspicion of AI as a sufficient verdict. An example from Verificat concerns an [AI-generated image of migrant women and girls in Manresa](#); InfoVeritas examined a fabricated image of [Santiago Abascal eating seafood on a yacht](#). These cases show the same technology supplying apparent evidence for different political claims.

4) Circulation across borders

Mocejón is reported as a false claim originating in Spain and reaching Portugal. The DANA example identifies the same miscaptioned Zaragoza footage addressed in both countries. Other examples include a Portuguese festivity with sausages falsely framed as a procession to drive away Muslims, [checked by EFE Verifica and Newtral](#), and a manipulated video falsely depicting António Costa reprimanding Pedro Sánchez, [checked by Newtral and Polígrafo](#).

Later examples show adaptation as well as shared attention. In spring 2026, narratives about Spain's migrant regularisation process circulated in Portugal. That summer, the Ceuta events were recast as warnings about Portugal and accompanied by false videos of arrivals. These cases are relevant to cooperation because the local claim may depend on evidence about an event or measure in the other country.

The Latin American material

The Latin American material adds examples from Animal Politico, Cazadores de Fake News, La Silla Vacía and Chequeado. These illustrate related mechanisms in other national settings, without establishing a common origin or a transmission route to the Iberian Peninsula.

Animal Político examined [footage falsely presented as migrants vandalising Ceuta](#). Chequeado investigated [videos of fictitious doctors generated with AI](#) and [the misuse of recognised physicians' identities to sell treatments without evidence](#). La Silla Vacía addressed [a fake investment platform attributed to Abelardo de la Espriella](#). Cazadores de Fake News documented [a campaign against a volunteer rescuer](#) and [propaganda adopting the format of verification](#).

Joint monitoring reveals shared subjects and narratives across the Atlantic. The material on Maduro's detention includes [fabricated arrest imagery examined by Polígrafo](#) and [AI-generated capture imagery checked by Colombiacheck](#). In coverage of the Middle East conflict, [EFE Verifica](#) and [Chequeado](#) addressed attempts to use alleged signs of AI manipulation to sustain rumors of Netanyahu's death. These examples document related false accounts in both regional landscapes.

The regional material also includes distinct priorities, such as Latin American elections and security operations. It should not be read as a replica of the Iberian landscape. Migration narratives are present, including claims about US immigration issues, but not to the same extent. The examples are used to identify connections and regional contexts, rather than constructing a common quantitative dataset.

5) Implications for practice

The following implications translate the documented patterns into possible working practices.

Prepare for an event and its likely claims

Emergency monitoring can be organised around the claim types illustrated by the DANA, blackout and wildfire material: cause, location, victims, official instructions, assistance and public spending. Preparing relevant contacts and primary records for these questions would give teams a starting point when similar allegations reappear.

Retain the narrative alongside the individual fact-check

A reusable record can link the specific claim to its broader proposition, the evidence used to resolve it and any later variant. Migration examples suggest a great value in keeping precise records on eligibility for services and distinguishing them from separate allegations about crime or voting.

Exchange the evidence needed to resolve local adaptations

Cross-border collaboration can focus on the original item, its language and context, the evidence establishing location or date, and the relevant national rules. A Portuguese claim about a Spanish regularisation measure requires different expertise from a shared synthetic football image. The cases support exchanging the underlying verification material, not only the final headline or verdict.

Develop bounded prebunking around recurring mechanisms

The repeated examples justify considering advance explanations of false criminal attribution, supposed group privileges, recycled disaster footage and fraudulent endorsements. Such material should explain the mechanism and how to check it, using accurate examples without implying that every future allegation will be false. Whether this approach improves recognition or reduces sharing would need separate evaluation.

6) Conclusions

What emerges from these reports is that disinformation does more than distort an event. It places that event within a familiar story about who is to blame, who benefits and who cannot be trusted. We versus they. Floods become evidence of deliberate neglect, migration policies become proof of unfair privilege, and unfamiliar voting procedures become grounds for alleging fraud. Reading the Spanish and Portuguese cases together reveals how their details adapt to local circumstances, while the underlying accusations remain recognisable. This is where analysing narratives alongside individual claims makes a difference: it helps explain what connects falsehoods that would otherwise appear unrelated.

Together, these examples suggest that disinformation sticks around partly because it offers a comforting, familiar reason for new events. The idea that dams were knocked down could explain both dry spells and floods. Talk about getting special favors could shift from houses to hospitals, from moving to money for urgent needs. Things might be different, but the main

grumble stayed the same: the people in charge were hiding their mistakes, looking out for certain friends, or leaving everyone else to fend for themselves. Spotting these repeated stories was a big plus for how IBERIFIER looked at things. It let each fact-check become a piece of a bigger picture showing how false stories make sense of public events.

Recognising these recurring narratives also changes what a fact-check can continue to contribute. Establishing that a video is old corrects its use in a particular claim, but more needs to be explained about the accusation it was presented to support. Tracing earlier versions can show how the same allegation has been attached to different events and supplied with new apparent evidence. This gives the correction a longer useful life. It becomes a reference for understanding later claims, helping fact-checkers recognise what has been recycled and identify what needs to be investigated afresh.

AI belongs within this wider question of evidence and authority. Synthetic scenes, cloned identities and imitated news formats can be combined to make a claim appear credible. Authentic footage with a false caption can serve the same purpose. These cases support examining those combinations closely, they do not establish a measured increase in AI use, but it is clear that technical quality is increasing. Verification still depends on reconstructing the relationship between the material, its source, and the claim it supports.

What happened in Spain and Portugal between 2024 and 2026 also shows that a story can mean something else when it travels across borders. A Spanish rule about people moving can become a tale about good things happening in Portugal; what occurs in Ceuta can become a scare about what's supposedly coming for the Algarve region. Working together is really helpful here. Finding out what actually happened is one step, and understanding why the story was changed and presented to a different audience is another.

This combined look is useful because it highlights these connections. It links the untrue story to the actual event that makes it matter, the proof that makes it seem believable, and the tale that keeps it going. This gives us a stronger way to keep track, check things, and tell people what's going on, instead of just dealing with each new lie as its own separate problem.

IBERIFIER – Iberian Digital Media Observatory

IBERIFIER is a digital media observatory in Spain and Portugal funded by the European Commission, linked to the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO). It is made up of thirteen universities, five fact-checking organizations and news agencies, and five multidisciplinary research centers.

Its main mission is to analyze the Iberian digital media ecosystem and tackle the problem of misinformation. To do this, it focuses its research on five lines of work:

1. Research on the characteristics and trends of the Iberian digital media ecosystem.
2. Development of computational technologies for the early detection of misinformation.
3. Fact-checking of misinformation in the Iberian territory.
4. Strategic reports on threats of disinformation, both for public knowledge and for the authorities of Spain and Portugal.
5. Promotion of media literacy initiatives, aimed at journalists and informants, young people and society as a whole.

For more information look for the project website iberifier.eu and the Twitter account [@iberifier](https://twitter.com/iberifier).

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