

# From the Maine to social media

A Participatory Action Research about  
**Information and Disinformation on Diversity and  
Migrations** and their Impact on Migrant and  
Racialised Communities

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



FEDERACIÓN  
**S.O.S. RACISMO**



### Coordination

Cecilia Themme Afan  
Inés Huarte Gonzalez  
Mikel Araguás

### Main researchers

Cecilia Themme Afan  
Ines Huarte Gonzalez

### Researchers

Raúl Martínez Corcuera. *Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Vic.*  
Anaitze Agirre Larreta. *Professor of Journalism. Faculty of Social Sciences and Communication. UPV EHU.*  
José Joaquín Pizarro Carrasco. *Faculty of Psychology. UPV - EHU.*

### Field work

Elena Aguirre Cubero (Aragón)  
Covadonga Almarcegui Elosegui (Navarra)  
Edoardo Bazzaco (Catalonia)  
Marilda Sueiras Bardou (Catalonia)  
Zorian Chacón Ofarrill (Bizkaia)  
Ines Huarte Gonzalez (Gipuzkoa)  
Sonia Mendez Dasilva (Galiza)

### Translation (Spanish – English) by

Rodríguez Moreno, Victoria

*Thanks to the team of student interns in Gipuzkoa as well: Iñigo Guembe, Tania García, Nahia Casado, Victoria García, Ángela Gonzalo.*

### Scientific committee

Cecilia Themme Afan  
Ines Huarte Gonzalez  
Mikel Araguás  
Raúl Martínez Corcuera  
Anaitze Aguirre Larreta  
Maitane Arnoso  
José Joaquín Pizarro

### SOS Racismo Federation

[www.sosracismo.eu](http://www.sosracismo.eu)

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*Por una Europa plural*



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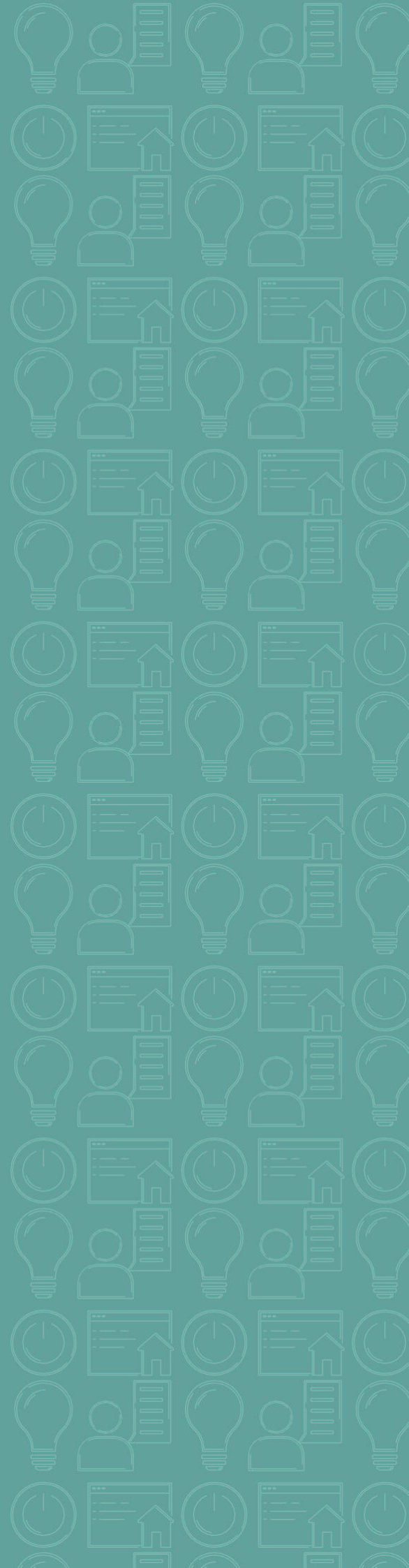
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# Introduction



# Introduction

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the entrance of the United States of America onto the Cuban War was caused by the pressure of the news published by the main North American journals at the time: Hearst's New York Journal and Pulitzer's New York World. Both reported in a self-interested way that it was a Spanish attack what sank the battleship Maine. Nevertheless, the reality was a little more ordinary: it was an internal blast. **For this reason, and to remind that fake news are not recent but they have a negative impact on our lives, we have used this name to head our research.**

José Manuel Burgueño contextualises this reality in a series of articles. Indeed, when talking about disinformation we cannot get caught in the trap of modernity, as this disinformation and these fake news have not been shown recently but since the beginning of time. From the accusations that Christians had to bear, described by Tertullian in the third century, to the schemes used during the French Revolution that led to Marie Antoinette being guillotined, or to Hitler's propaganda. More recently, fake accusations against refugees in Cologne in 2016 New Year's Eve, or the 2016 North American elections between Clinton and Trump, whose end led to statements such as *"the now called fake news can have consequences in the real world"*.

Why does it appear now with another name? Although fake news are as old as communication itself, the scope and speed of its dissemination due to Internet and social media give them a new nuance. The universalisation of dissemination tools, and its easy and free usage increases the spreading of this fake news greatly (the name fake news is questionable since the term "news" implies truthfulness). Thus, fake news' power to lead to mistakes and manipulate decisions also increases. The wickedness of its evolution leads to the usual identification of fake news as "alternative facts" — as if reality could accept an equally valid alternative— or "post-truth" — which mess with its antithesis with a non-convincing prefix.

However, we cannot ignore the fact that this reality does not affect all the population in the same way. As we have seen, these dynamics have been based on the exploitation of otherness. In other words, the difference between "us - them," being "them" the group that always puts up with all the social resentment and blaming. At present, this otherness is represented by diversity.

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1 Burgueño, José Manuel: Adán y Eva, Nerón, María Antonieta o Trump: las 'fake news' son falsas pero no nuevas. Inter Press Services. August 2020. <https://ipsnoticias.net/2020/08/adan-eva-neron-maria-antonieta-trump-las-fake-news-falsas-no-nuevas/>



Nowadays, in 2021, what is most striking is that this is still happening in democratic societies where, in advance, freedom of information<sup>2</sup> is guaranteed in different constitutions, codes of ethics and international regulations.

Based on this analysis, we want to address rumour, disinformation, media treatment, social media, etc., in a broader way that focuses on their impact on the lives of the people affected. **According to our vision, in SOS Racismo we aim to put migrants and racialised<sup>3</sup> people at the centre of research, so that we break with the traditional subject/object relationship of research and move towards a relationship between equals. To this end, we have adopted different methodologies that make the study a collective exercise in construction, in the highlighting of the importance of different knowledge, in social improvement and in proposals to make diversity a new centre on which to build our coexistence** based on the respect for human, civil and political rights.

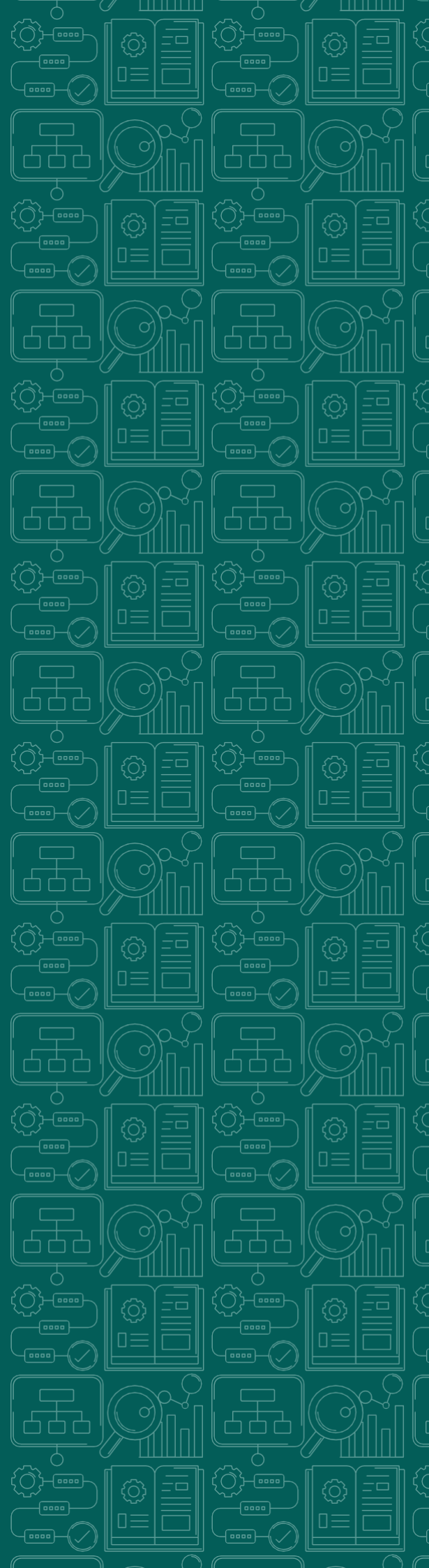
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<sup>2</sup> "Freedom of information can be defined as the right to have access to information held by public bodies. It is an integral part of the fundamental right to freedom of expression, recognised by the Resolution 59 of the United Nations General Assembly, adopted in 1946, as well as by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which states that the fundamental right to freedom of expression includes the right "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

"Freedom of information has also been established as a corollary of freedom of expression in other important international instruments", such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the American Convention on Human Rights (1969). Cf.: <http://www.unesco.org/new/es/communication-and-information/freedom-of-expression/freedom-of-information/>

<sup>3</sup> "It is a way to describe the racial category. It is another category as gender or sexuality. Strictly speaking, a racialised person is someone who receives favourable or discriminatory treatment on the basis of the racial category that society ascribes to them", as Moha Gerehou describes in his article. Cf.: [https://www.eldiario.es/opinion/zona-critica/racializado\\_129\\_1074959.html](https://www.eldiario.es/opinion/zona-critica/racializado_129_1074959.html)

# Objectives and methodology



# Objectives and methodology

This study was based on Participatory Action Research (PAR), a method of study and transformative action, which seeks to obtain reliable and useful results to improve collective situations, basing the research on the participation of the groups themselves. The research delved into the informative treatment of migration, disinformation, and social media, as well as their relationship with hate speech through various methodologies. In this way, three different studies were conducted to understand the informative treatment of migration from different perspectives: content analysis, headlines in the written press and emotions in the media when reporting on migration or diversity.

At the same time, the impact on the daily lives of migrants and racialised people was analysed through the perceptions of the participants. That is, the aim was to analyse the dimension of the psychosocial and emotional impact of hate speeches and disinformation on the lives of these people. On the other hand, it was also interesting to investigate, from a perspective and mapping of the feelings<sup>4</sup> and experiences of the people affected, the effects and impacts of the different public and private anti-rumour and anti-racism initiatives and campaigns that have been worked on and disseminated in this field.

To this end, various empirical studies were conducted: territorial mapping, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and participant observation in which the perceptions of the participants were collected. This PAR focused on the Spanish territories in which the SOS Racismo Federation participates: Galicia, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, Navarra, Aragón, and Catalonia. Based on their own realities and knowledge, their aim is to learn about the psychosocial impact of rumours, disinformation and hate speeches, and to identify proposals and measures to confront them.

A total of 83 semi-structured<sup>5</sup> interviews aimed at experts in this field were conducted. Those belonging to communities that may have been affected by rumours and hate speeches (migrants, racialised people of national or foreign origin with a social background, leaders of associations, migrant communities, activists, etc.). As well as other agents that are part of the social fabric of each territory and are related to this subject<sup>6</sup>. The systematisation of the information was based on quantitative analysis using Iramuteq<sup>7</sup> software to make a qualitative interpretation of the results.

Moreover, 12 focus groups were formed (6 mixed, 6 non-mixed, one per territory) with a total participation of 73 people. Throughout the process, participant observation was used to perceive the not perceptible dynamics in the discourse.

The non-mixed focus group was composed of migrants and racialised people of different profiles mentioned above. A non-mixed group was formed in each territory with the participation of 37 people. In the mixed focus groups, also formed in each territory, different agents participated: migrants and/or racialised and non-migrants, who are related to the issue of migration, hate speech and disinformation; communication agents, people belonging to migrant or anti-racist collectives, institutional agents, local associations, people belonging to social movements, leaders of migrant communities and civil society, etc. A total of 36 people participated in the mixed groups.

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<sup>4</sup> Based on a dialogue of knowledge and recognition where understanding each other's positions and orientations is necessary.

<sup>5</sup> Between 12 and 15 people in each territory.

<sup>6</sup> Associations, public institutions, communication experts, technical staff of municipal councils, university professors, etc.).

<sup>7</sup> IRAMUTEQ software processed the texts according to the analytical categories of the project, counted the absolute frequency of words, and generated graphical images of the most recurrent words and topics in the interviews conducted.

# Perception of hate speeches and its impacts



### 3.a. Perception of hate speeches and disinformation: stereotypes, rumours and hate speeches.

Stereotypes and prejudices are known to be natural in inter-group relations. What is interesting, however, is how groups perceive them. This section has focused on the subjectivity of migrants and racialised people about the majority society's view of them.

In this case, the participants perceive that the majority Spanish society identifies migrants and racialised people by associating them with a series of negative and generalising images and stereotypes. Indeed, different narratives that intersect and overlap are identified: **the narrative of exploitation, the narrative of threat and victimisation.**

According to the testimonies in this study, the narrative which impacts or affects migrants and racialised people the most is the one related to **the use of services and resources**. Thus, rumours related to social aid, or the lack of work and resources are repeated.

*I've heard that we are people who have come to take things away. To take jobs away, to take aid away. As if we don't work. We just receive (...) That we migrant people only receive aid more than all the people here... only migrant people can access houses...*

*(E4 Navarra. 40 years old, female, 9 years residence time, nationality, and country of origin Malawi).*

As for the **threat narrative**, there are a number of images that situate the migrant as **criminalising, associated with danger and invasion**. In this narrative, the migrant is **threatening at various levels**: a threat to the labour market, a threat to traditional cultural values, to Western customs and lifestyle, as well as to coexistence and social cohesion. In this way, concerns about security overlap the dignity and rights of migrants.

*They feel a kind of suspicion that suddenly someone will come and invade their territory, their job opportunities, everything. (E2 Aragón. 44 years old, male, 2 years residence time, nationality, and country of origin Colombia).*

Finally, the **narrative of victimisation or inferiorisation** hides values of superiority and paternalism about the social situation of migrants and racialised people. For example, associating migrants with poorly educated and uninformed people who perform low-skilled labour activities. Additionally, they claim that they are attributed with little cultural background, a lower evolutionary and emotional level. They point out that this imaginary reinforces a stereotypical and racist discriminatory perception, and it also affects employment opportunities and expectations, as well as in other areas.

**These narratives are also intersected by the gender factor.** Participants perceive that migrant and racialised women suffer from a series of images that add up to discrimination. Thus, the image of migrant women is related to sexualisation, the image of "husband-hunting", care and domestic work, or passivity and lack of agency. Indeed, according to

theories on intersectionality in the field of international migration, factors such as gender, class, national origin, race, ethnicity, age, migratory status, and religion can have a direct impact on the daily lives of women and men. This can have a determining influence on their access to rights and opportunities, as well as on the situations of privilege or exclusion that result from them (Anthias, 1998).

*In the end, I think that a racialised woman has it worse than a racialised man, because her situation is doubly worse: not only is she given the negative part of being racialised in a country where she is a minority, but also being a woman is intrinsically linked to the little respect that is shown to women.*

*(E9 Aragón. 26 years old, female, national, country of origin United Kingdom).*

These prejudices form the basis of hate speech, specific forms of expression that represent an attack on the dignity of the people who suffer from them (Bazzaco, García, Lejardi, Palacios and Tarragona, 2017). Regarding migrants and racialised people's perception of the presence of hate speech, **the main perception is that the current presence of hate speeches is extremely high.**

However, it is related to the political discourse of the extreme right-wings, which would be legitimised and amplified in the media and social media. Thus, they believe that discourse in the political and public sphere has led to hate messages being reproduced in the public sphere with greater impunity. In fact, most participants identify hate speech with violence and physical assaults. They think that these have increased with the rise of the extreme right-wing, as these speeches are the germ that provoke actions against a group or collective.

## 3.b. Migration in the media and social media

The media and social media are one of the main points of this research. In this case, it has focused on the media treatment of migration, the repercussion of this information on social networks and the impact it has on migrants and racialised people. In this way, four of the main ideas included in the results and conclusions of this study are presented.

- 1. Most of the participants think that the media construct mostly negative discourses and narratives on the informative treatment of immigration.** In this sense, they play a relevant role in the perpetuation of images and social imaginaries that legitimise the discriminatory and racist social discourse about the representation of immigration.

*I think the media plays a particularly significant role in the perpetuation and the image of how you create the immigrant person, doesn't it? On the one hand, they always show immigrants related to criminal acts, robbery, violence, and immigrants arriving in small boats. This image is always associated with poverty escaping from violence. On the other hand, these people are rarely imagined in other fields. They occupy a small space, their successes, or achievements or how they contribute to the community are never reflected in the media.*

*(E4, Galicia, 36 years old, female, 3 years of residence, nationality, and country of origin Bolivia).*

**2. The media reinforces stereotypes and prejudices.** The participants consider that the media could create, transmit and reinforce stereotypes and prejudices through the use of different news frames with repetitive information. This generates a reductionist, problematic and stigmatising universe of immigration that conditions a biased view of it.

**In this way, different narratives stand out:**

- a) Associating migration with invasion, uncertainty or political, economic, or healthcare destabilisation.
- b) Linking immigration to criminal matters, conflictuality, violence and criminality.
- c) Generating a narrative about social insecurity, violence and fear linked to specific ethnic migrant groups.
- a) Presenting migrant women who are dependent, voiceless, subordinate, or linked to prostitution, according to countries of origin.

**3.** The participants in this study are concerned about **the internalisation of images and information in the collective imaginary of Spanish society**, which reduces the issue of migration to issues of poverty, social conflict, and crime.

In this sense, they think of migration as commodity, manufacturing and reinforcing a racist discourse. Sometimes with false information to justify and legitimise the power of the established order through otherness. The defence/wall/protection impulse in a society leads to the search for a "scapegoat".

**4.** There is a lack of representation of migrants and racialised people in the media. **Most participants do not see themselves reflected in this distorted view of the reality of immigration.** On the contrary, they consider that the relationship between migration and criminal matters, conflictuality, violence and criminality, not only is not an objective and real representation but it also generates rejection and mistrust towards certain groups and towards migrants in general.

They also consider that the **representation of immigration as dangerous and vulnerable** represents, for the participants, a racist approach to the informative treatment of migration. This otherness is represented as culturally backward, uncivilised, inferior, ignorant and in need of help.

*Colonial, supremacist, xenophobic, and the lines to move on to hate are very thin. I do feel that all media in these processes of dehumanisation lead to a bottomless spiral.*

*(E12, Galicia, 26 years old, female, 3 years of residence, nationality, and country of origin Mexico).*

In short, this informative treatment has real consequences for the processes of inclusion of migrants and racialised people in Spanish society. Participants recognise that distorted voices are amplified and that no space is provided for expert, reflective and critical voices. The headlines and contents of the news and information are not very objective, and they act like an advertising strategy. This is not very much in favour of interculturality and coexistence.

*Every summer you know that summer arrives in Spain when the news programme starts with the news of the borders and the cayucos and all those things. Even more so now, and they are using it as a political weapon.*

*(E2, Gipuzkoa, 45 years old, female, 10 years of residence, nationality, and country of origin Nicaragua).*

Thus, the reproduction of racist practices and ideologies are gestated and exercise power through writing and speech (van Dijk, 2006, p.16-18) in which the media have great responsibility. It is true that journalistic practices are being created and strengthened, though, but there is still a long way to go.

## Social media and immigration

The level of introduction of fake news is becoming deeper and deeper on social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, or Twitter, as is the impact on the people who receive these messages. Participants generally perceive that the truthfulness of the information sources is not checked. This information is shared compulsively.

*Anything, any chain message that appears on WhatsApp or any video they see on Facebook, they believe it and take it as true. And people do it more and more often and don't take the time to check whether what they are saying is true or not.*

*(E9, Bizkaia, 28 years old, female, 2 years of residence, nationality, and country of origin Ecuador).*

Concepts accepted by human rights and by a large majority of the population are now being called into question. They believe that we are at a time when the media, even social media, are polarising sources. Violence on the streets is increasing with the polarisation on social media. Social networks are one of the means that make racist ideas go viral under cover of anonymity.

*The extreme right-wing has achieved to change what used to be socially acceptable to talk about immigration, which was more within the human rights framework. It has also made people to begin to question whether concepts accepted by human rights and by a large majority of the population are still acceptable. So, I think that we are also at a time when the media, even social networks, are very polarising, so what is happening is that they are betting on content that is very polarising and extreme, which makes people express anger and rage, and share and click.*

*(E5, Catalonia, 31 years old, male, national).*

They reflect on the role of social media in the dissemination of fake news which come easily and are difficult to eliminate. They argue that it is a double-edged sword, immediately accessible and usable for better or worse, added to the difficulty of distinguishing between false and true information. On the other hand, this information is getting the extreme right-wing, the populist anti-immigration parties, and even the traditional political parties to offer easy solutions to extremely complicated problems. In this sense, they state that social media have played a fundamental role in the dissemination of hate speech.

Regarding the relationship between **disinformation** and **hate speech**, different analyses show that there is a higher probability of hate speech when information turns out to be false. At the same time, it is observed that people who consume disinformation are more likely to be exposed to hate speeches (Szakács and Bognár, 2021). The "ecosystem of hate" is also spoken about, arguing that disinformation is often used to create a climate of hostility or an atmosphere of hatred, reinforcing prejudices and negative attitudes towards migration.



## 3.c. Psychosocial impacts of hate speeches and disinformation

This process of stigmatisation, derived from stereotypes and prejudices, as well as hate speeches and disinformation, has direct consequences on the lives of migrants and racialised people. Impacts that turn into scenes of everyday racism for the participants, ranging from small gestures to insults and harassment, which have **psychosocial consequences** in the lives of racialised people. These impacts range from **psycho-emotional** aspects (effects on self-esteem and self-perception, feelings of fear, frustration or anger, or effects on identity and sense of belonging), to consequences on **access to rights** (housing or employment), **impacts on interpersonal relationships and institutional racism**.

In this way, rumours about housing and migration make racialised people to have less access and opportunities to achieve them. The participants mention that migrants and racialised people find it more difficult to obtain housing. This is because, based on the colour of the person's skin, the accent, the origin or the foreign names and surnames, owners and estate agencies do not allow or make it difficult to rent or buy housing, based on racist prejudices. As a result, they end up in more precarious residences, far from city centres and with higher entry requirements.

*It affects us in many day-to-day issues (...) To be talking, with a contract, the payslip and everything they ask for. But as soon as you send the details, and they see your Moroccan name and surname, your origin, and that you don't even have nationality, the payslip doesn't matter anymore, and your studies either...*

*(E13, Gipuzkoa, 28 years old, female, 15 years of residence, national, country of origin Morocco).*

In the same way, the same phenomenon occurs in the **access to the labour market**. The lack of employment opportunities repeats, the difficulty in getting a job due to discrimination in the selection processes, which means that even if racialised people meet the required professional profile, they are not given priority in the selection process. This causes frustration and anger among the participants. Thus, they end up in specific niches of work, characterised by job insecurity, exploitation, and instability.

*I've also encountered people who look at you like, but, uh.... where are you from? I've been out of work for many years. Looking for a job, where I found myself going to a company, they saw my CV... oh... how interesting. Because I haven't put a photo, but once they see me.... no, no. It's either not anymore or it's not the profile we're looking for.*

*(E4 Navarra. 40 years old, female, 9 years residence time, nationality, and country of origin Malawi).*

If we look at these impacts a little more closely, we will enter the **public sphere of coexistence and relations in the neighbourhood, in public spaces and shops**, in the private sphere of interpersonal relations and even, in the case of mixed couples, the difficulty when it comes to establishing family and couple relations. In all cases, it is recounted how preconceived ideas of migration and racialisation not only hinder egalitarian and horizontal relations, but also provoke rejection and isolation.

*People not interacting with you as an equal, feeling isolated, not having people get close to you due to x reasons and being judged for your skin colour, your origin, or the way you speak because of stereotypes they hear in the street.*

*(E15 Gipuzkoa. 23 years old, female, 8 years residence time, country of origin Brazil)*

Going into the **invisible wounds and scars in the form of emotional consequences**, participants' testimonies reflect that hate messages and the disinformation that fuels them have a direct impact on the state of mind of migrants and racialised people. In this way, emotional words such as fear, frustration, or anger, helplessness, insecurity, shame, anxiety, loneliness, sadness, scorn, or mistrust are used by the participants when exposing the impact of these discourses on their daily lives. Indeed, even if these messages are not addressed to them personally, they feel equally challenged.

Derived from the above, it is worth underlining that many of the participants explained effects on self-esteem derived from personal underestimation or feelings of inferiority, related both to physical appearance and to one's own abilities.

In this way, a new pattern of behaviour of racialised and migrant people appears, which is the difficulty of sharing these experiences. This is why they are often lived in solitude and can lead to situations of isolation. In this sense, an attitude of mistrust towards the host society is mentioned, which is increased by the presence of extreme right-wings in the political landscape with their hate messages towards migration.

Other impacts of these hate speeches and the existing collective imaginary about migration are the consequences they have on the **identity and sense of belonging of migrants and racialised people**.

Thus, one of the elements pointed out has to do with the lack of a sense of belonging among the racialised and migrant people interviewed. A feeling defined by them as otherness. The reasons are varied but are influenced by the perception that most of the population have of them, the messages they receive about not belonging to the local society, or the permanent foreignization, through cutting questions about their origin, for example.

Indeed, identity confusion is recurrent in the participants, both in terms of belonging or not to the host society, as well as identification and disidentification with the country of origin, uprooting. Thus, the idea of feeling stateless repeats.

*You will always be like someone who has been inserted, who is there as a stranger, as a weirdo. For example, I can live here for 6 years, but my neighbours don't consider me as a neighbour, I am the foreign person.*

*(E9 Catalonia. 32 years old, female, 6 years residence time, nationality, and country of origin Brazil).*

In fact, some testimonies show how they only became aware of their racialisation when they arrived in Spain or, in the case of some participants born in the territory, during their adolescence, and how they noticed a change in the way society looked at them and treated them. They also point out how this construction of identity is most complicated in times such as adolescence, where identity creation has significant importance.

However, in the interviews and in the focus groups, it was concluded that in the face of this lack of a sense of belonging to the host society, strategies are developed to generate other types of belonging. For example, participation in different collectives where a new construction of identity and reinforcement of self-esteem is produced, also as a form of self-protection and empowerment. Likewise, **this rejection generates new forms of self-perception and socialisation**. In many cases, this ends up implying **self-recognition as racialised people and victims of racism** as a means of affirmation and construction of identity, the recognition of origins, and pride in these, as a form of resistance to racism.

## 3.d. Empowerment and processes of resistance to hate speeches and racism

Regarding **empowerment in the face of hate speeches**, they recognise that, although the path seems complicated in terms of providing a forceful response, it is positive to make visible the way in which hate speeches affect migrants and racialised people. The normalisation of the extreme right-wing's discourse, amplified by certain political representatives, the media, and social media, is a cause for concern. On the other hand, they argue that although such discourses have always existed, they are not acceptable in a democratic society. For all these reasons, they point to the strength of the collective to shape political organisation and action, while calling for punitive action against hate speeches, amplified by social media and the media, which seriously affect people's dignity.

As it has been demonstrated by the participants in this research, empowerment and resistance processes are diverse. The ability of agency<sup>8</sup>, resilience, social action, identity, political and affective resistance are also different. It leads us to ask ourselves: What is being understood by empowerment and resistance? How are these differentiated processes and articulations taking shape in social, political, and affective practices?

*Working collectively, joining together to be able to build what hurts us and defend ourselves. Not defending ourselves with more aggressiveness and more hatred but taking care of ourselves.*

*(E2, Bizkaia, 30 years old, female, national).*

They understand that empowerment requires social activism as an individual and collective process of transformation. They argue that it is better to act through "collective" networks, meaning that collectivised space can heal and strengthen people.

*You share, we give each other strength, the experience of the companion can help me during the empowerment process. We share many things; the collective has given me security.*

*(E4, Nafarroa, 40 years old, female, 9 years of residence, national and country of origin Malawi).*

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<sup>8</sup> "In gender studies, the concept of agency is fundamental in analysing the relationships that occur both in society and in individual identity. This concept places special emphasis on the interaction of factors such as class, race, and gender". For more information, cf.: [https://www.lai.fu-berlin.de/es/e-learning/projekte/frauen\\_konzepte/projektseiten/konzeptebereich/lista6/agencia.html](https://www.lai.fu-berlin.de/es/e-learning/projekte/frauen_konzepte/projektseiten/konzeptebereich/lista6/agencia.html)

They claim **that regaining lost agency, and responsibility** as citizens helps to empower them in the face of discrimination, without falling into family and social loneliness. They value and admire the individual activism of some people to "put the body into it", in the sense of turning threat into challenge. There is also a diversity of opinions on the wearing process of feeling the need to "respond" to violence received "from outside" as opposed to other collective healing processes that may have other derivations.

*There are people who do it individually, that put their bodies into it. It tires you down a lot and at the same time you receive a lot of violence and counterattacks (...) I think it is safer to do it through collectives, through groups, through organisations. On an individual level you are very vulnerable, it does a lot of damage, you have a lot of problems (...) although a lot of people do it and I admire them.*

*(E12, Catalonia, 29 years old, male, national).*

*I am nothing without the collective. How I see myself. My body is made of many other bodies. (E7, Galicia, 44 years old, female, national, country of origin Brazil).*

As for generating coping strategies in the face of discrimination and racism, they propose working on care networks and on the creation of safe spaces in the face of violence, aggression, and discriminatory situations, understanding **care as a form of collective empowerment**.

But also, some of the participants understand the **"collective body"** in the sense of "being" affected by other bodies. They mention that in addition to individual work and coping, the group influences the **collective political subject in collectivised struggle and resistance**. This is why they opt for a collective organisation as a means of empowerment and believe that the support of organisations of these initiatives of migrants and racialised people is important.

*[...] it's a very collective, very cooperative work, where little by little, talking about us, we try to have an impact. I think this is where we can do the most, and that these initiatives must also be supported.*

*(E6, Catalonia, 35 years old, female, national).*

From this point of view, the participants' processes of empowerment and resistance on how they intend to confront, resist, or transform the realities they live, intersect with the demand for freedom, social justice, distribution of wealth, or equal rights. Empowerment to heal and strengthen from the consequences of living in a capitalist, heteropatriarchal and racist system is also mentioned. But resisting in the face of adversities, to be strong or not to pay attention to the ignorance of certain people, too. Not to mention the racism and discrimination they suffer.

Thus, migrants, racialised people, social agents and journalists participating in this study reveal different strategies and forms of empowerment, which correspond to the radical, liberal, or neoliberal models proposed by Bacqué and Biewener (2016). These authors propose a division of empowerment typologies based on different questionings and levels in the face of *status quo* and power. Without the models being purely watertight and fixed, these models are mixed in practices, actions, and discourses, although trends continue to set the scene.

# Evaluation of anti-rumour and anti-racism campaigns

Towards new **narratives**



# Evaluation of anti-rumour and anti-racism campaigns. Towards new narratives

Another objective of this research has been to assess the impact of the measures that have been designed to confront hate speeches and disinformation (anti-rumour strategies, campaigns, community dynamization, etc.) and to design a new way to confront disinformation from the perspective of migrants and racialised people as well as social agents.

Overall, the participants expressed a critical view of the effectiveness of these initiatives. While some think that the effectiveness of anti-rumour campaigns is measured in the long term, the idea of the low reach of these campaigns is the most repeated. Indeed, the feeling is that these campaigns reach people who are already aware or interested in becoming aware. They believe that the challenge is to reach those ambivalent, undecided, or uninterested audiences, where hate speech can get through more easily. They opt for dedicating more resources to improving its reach, reinforcing the determination and continuity of these campaigns, involving different entities, and having a presence at all levels to achieve greater transformation.

Likewise, the participants are critical of the initiatives and campaigns conducted by the institutions. They believe they are too formal and lack credibility. However, they believe that the clear positioning of institutions is necessary to delegitimise hate speech. They feel that these campaigns are often used as window dressing, as they are often superficial campaigns that are not reflected in the political practices of the institutions themselves.

In this sense, they believe that **it is essential that these campaigns emerge from the very people who suffer from discrimination**. They criticise the lack of representation of migrants and racialised people in the design and execution of the initiatives, as well as the utilitarian use of their image.

Most of them opt for the creation of narratives to confront hate speeches and propose a series of diverse strategies for the construction of new narratives on migration and racialised and migrant people. They critically focus on **"countering" or "creating" new narratives in the face of disinformation, fake news and hate speeches**. Both views agree that these forms of communication must be based on new and alternative frameworks.

On the one hand, the **counter-narratives** are proposed precisely to dismantle hate speeches and negative messages about immigration. Countering means changing these messages with facts and contextualising hate narratives and disinformation, refuting false messages and equipping citizens with the information they need to challenge those messages.

On the other hand, they focus on creating **transformative narratives and proactive counter-discourses**, which should emerge with affected people and communities. Talking about immigration in other terms, spreading a message that focuses on positive issues about immigration and migrant and racialised people. Regarding strategies of discursive communication: explaining what is wanted (rights and equality) and not only denouncing what is not wanted. To this end, they propose using humour, irony and sarcasm as a communicative tool and argumentative resource. Focusing on a few ideas and positioning them. Collectivising the discourse. Encouraging anti-racism narratives and alternative support materials (comics, series, posts, and videos) considering the importance of the people who experience it, without falling into paternalism.

As for the messages, they affirm that they must be related to the values and emotions that a large part of society has and that are universal, without falling into a pedagogy of moralistic or aid propaganda. Avoiding the dramatization of victims, pointing the finger at the culprit, the hater, and the racist aggressor. Talking about the role that each person plays in the consolidation of oppressive social structures. Addressing people with privilege to confront themselves.

And in any case, before talking about anti-racism initiatives and campaigns, the participants believe that migrants and racialised people must first be guaranteed equal access to employment, housing, social services, and other types of resources. In other words, approaching inclusion processes from a rights-based perspective that puts personal and community situations before other statuses. That is, offering means and messages to real problems based on the guarantee of Human Rights and Civil and Political Rights.

# Proposals against disinformation and hate speeches:

## Action Plan<sup>10</sup>

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10 From this approach and acting more as narrators of the proposals of the people who have participated instead of as researchers, we would like to present the following common lines of action as a proposal for future work. This work must undoubtedly be based on the incorporation of racialised and migrant people in this struggle, as well as on the networking of all people and organisations (public, non-governmental, activists, etc.).

# Proposals against **disinformation** and **hate speeches**: Action plan.

Thus, from the highest levels of responsibility to anonymous citizens, we have organised the different lines of work proposed by the participants around seven main points. We hope this will work as a basis for the definition of new strategies and general work priorities that will have to be implemented in the reality of each territory.

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## POLITICS

1

- a. Incorporate civil organisations and communities of racialised people and migrants into the public agenda and establish channels of communication with them.
- b. Improve the legal framework against hate speech and hate crime.
- c. Include the intercultural perspective in all areas of public administration, raise awareness and conduct training.
- d. Promote the representation of migrants and racialised people in public institutions.
- e. Promote a broader concept of citizenship, based on diversity and residence.

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## EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

2

- a. Introduce anti-racist education in the school curriculum.
  - b. Design of awareness-raising campaigns focused on citizens to raise awareness of this reality, as well as to propose new transforming narratives.
  - c. Design of training strategies for citizens to acquire tools to deal with fake news, disinformation, and rumours (general).
  - d. Encourage youth's critical thinking and self-questioning.
  - e. Media literacy with young people and non-native internet users for the prevention of disinformation and hate speech in media and social media.
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## MEDIA

3

- a. Review, update and implement codes of ethics. Raise awareness of their use.
- b. Conduct training and meetings with migrants for journalists and media professionals.
- c. Incorporate migrant and racialised people and organisations as sources of information.
- d. Establish alliances for the development of alternative narratives.

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

4

- a. Create measures to denounce hate speech on social media so they have a real impact.
- b. Use social media to network and disseminate alternative narratives.
- c. Systematise good practices in the fight against rumours, disinformation and hate speech.

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## SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND AGENTS

5

- a. Strengthen and create networks between different social movements, collectives, and social leaders.
- b. Design in a consensual and participatory way initiatives to fight rumours, fake news, and disinformation at the local level, which are diverse and pluralistic.
- c. Establish review, evaluation, and self-criticism as part of the usual mechanisms for the functioning of these networks.
- d. Generate alternative and transformative narratives that can be used in relations with the media, public administrations, and policymakers.
- e. Denormalise the racist narratives that operate at various levels. Act on the basis of reporting and with greater implications.

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## COMMUNITY LEVEL

6

- a. Facilitate meeting and interaction spaces.
  - b. Strengthen support networks based on belonging and sense of community.
  - c. Training and awareness-raising on communication tools, prevention of disinformation, anti-rumour, and anti-discrimination strategies.
  - d. Design local community-based intervention strategies.
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## MIGRANT PEOPLE/COMMUNITIES



- a. Create spaces for citizens to meet.
  - b. Establish pathways to foster self-organisation and individual, collective and community empowerment.
  - c. Establish spaces for citizen training in rights and coping tools.
  - d. Generate alternative and transformative narratives that can be used in relations with the media, public administrations, and policymakers.
  - e. Conduct community actions in streets and neighbourhoods.
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# Conclusions and final reflections



## Conclusions and final reflections

Stereotypes, prejudices, and rumours about migrants and racialised people are based on hate speeches. It is negative images what justify racist discourses and narratives based on the ideas of exploitation, threat, and victimisation and that reinforce the idea of us and them (Stephan and Stephan, 2000).

At the same time, the media, based on this collective imaginary, construct, and reproduce fundamentally negative political discourses and narratives about immigration. In short, the mass media, as builders of social reality and the collective imaginary, with journalistic narratives, transmedia and increasingly changing, accelerated and versatile forms of communication, condition public opinion. Thus, the main journalistic discursive constructions on immigration can be categorised as racist narratives that produce a reductionist, problematic and stigmatising universe on immigration, conditioning a distorted vision of it, which dehumanises migrants and racialised people.

In this sense, our analyses and empirical diagnoses reveal that the ideological orientation of the media has an implication in the way in which the news are approached. That is, a greater orientation towards dehumanisation and threat on the part of right-wing ideologies, as opposed to a more humanising orientation towards the need for people's involvement in this social problem, in the media with left-wing political tendencies (Pizarro, 2021). Indeed, as Carmen González Enríquez and Sebastian Rinken (2021) warn: the relationship between ideology and opinion on immigration is strengthening. That is, the positions expressed by the right-wing and the left-wing on immigration are becoming increasingly differentiated.

This tendency is also repeated in the specific case of the migratory situation in the Canary Islands, as the media publish an uncritical link between migration and conflict. They focus on arrivals, socio-health problems, or migration as a weapon between institutions and parties. The responsibility falls on the victim. This is why a change of mental frameworks, and a critical role of the journalistic profession is needed, focusing on human rights and the consequences of ineffective institutional policies (Corcuera and Aguirre, 2021).

It is therefore not surprising that migrants and racialised people do not feel represented in the media. Also in the pandemic, the informative treatment of migration was negative in 77.4% of the information, as demonstrated in the study "Inmigración y COVID19" (Matarín, 2020).

Moreover, our results show how, during the first year of the pandemic, the media conditioned the public agenda on migration through the choice of a series of topics related to the control of migratory entry and arrivals to the state's shores. As well as policies related to migration and migrants' work status, lifestyles, and social conditions. Using a series of attributes, they contributed to creating an image that reflects migration as a "problem". At the same time, associating the migrant population with health problems and virus outbreaks reinforced the idea of migration and migrants as a threat and a problem, in a state of health crisis (Huarte, Guembe, Garcia and Casado, 2021).

At the same time, social media and the Internet have undoubtedly changed the ways in which people and institutions communicate and exchange information, ideas, goods, and services, but hate speeches are also spread and have a real impact on the lives of migrants and racialised people.

Indeed, based on the subjectivity of migrants and racialised people, we can affirm that hate speeches, rumours and disinformation have psychosocial consequences. This goes from psycho-emotional aspects such as effects on self-esteem and self-perception, feelings of fear, frustration or anger, or effects on identity and sense of belonging to consequences on access to rights, such as housing or employment, impacts on interpersonal relationships and institutional racism. These results are relevant, as they outline the challenges and pending debates that we will have to take on in the coming years, if we intend not only to manage present and future diversity in a constructive and positive way, but also to provide solutions to the obstacles that many people face on a daily basis.

From this approach we see that the impact of rumours goes beyond the discursive issue, as it impacts on the daily lives of migrants and racialised people. For this reason, we consider it important to rethink strategies to deal with rumours in a way that not only combats rumour in the traditional way, but also focuses on the spaces that these people have identified as central. Thus, fighting against rumours means working to eradicate any type of discrimination in access to housing or employment, using both awareness-raising and sanctioning instruments against this type of racist behaviour, which are included in our legal system.

And, in addition, reflecting at a social and institutional level on the daily impacts of racism on the people who suffer from it, from their emotional states to the construction of their identity. We must move beyond the interpretative framework, and raise the public debates that underlie these results, such as the existence of multiple identities, hybrid identities, the system of coexistence that we want to have in our society - a fact that entails a renunciation of current privileges by the majority group, the systems of social inclusion and, above all, jointly defining the management of diversity at all territorial levels. Likewise, recognising institutional, structural, or systemic racism as a total social fact (Buraschi and Aguilar, 2019, p.3) which overlaps the capitalist and patriarchal system.

Simultaneously, according to the participants, it is necessary to create transformative narratives with a rights-based approach, which allow these feelings to be put in a positive light, towards more constructive elements that make it possible to overcome the traditional strategy of argumentation-counter-argumentation of current anti-rumour strategies. And bearing in mind that the processes of empowerment and resistance do not represent an egalitarian and homogeneous subject, it is necessary to propose strategies at a local level, according to the variants of the historical and cultural context. Thus, we are challenged to "understand in order to transform the human ability to produce and reproduce collective ways of inhabiting the world from another place" (Gutiérrez and Salazar, 2019, p.22), which will generate new opportunities for the creation of diverse intercultural spaces, under equal conditions and without discrimination.

