



Country-field research on fake news
about migration
(2015-2020)



reCREATE
HEALTHY NARRATIVES TO TACKLE FAKE NEWS

Abstract

Introduction

The advent of the internet and the rise of social media has increased the dependence on online platforms for information has resulted in an explosion of disinformation, misinformation, and mal-information on various issues under debate in Europe. This false spread of information is known as fake news popularized by the former president of the United States Donald Trump and its use spreading globally. The purpose of the research carried out was to highlight an overview of the immigration issue and the spread of fake news concerning it in seven European Union (EU) countries consisting of France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Romania, and Spain.

Methodology

This project utilized content analysis to assess the issue of fake news regarding the issue of immigration in the EU using documents published between 2015 to 2020. The data collection encompassed an average of five examples of fake news coverage on immigration in the EU for each year. The collection of these samples of fake news was from several sources including newspaper articles, posts from social networking platforms, videos, and interviews.

In addition, this was quantitative research encompassing the use of a survey method to collect data from the locals in each of the countries included in this project. The significance of this survey was to analyze the perception of young people regarding the issue of fake news on immigration in their countries. Achieving this entailed the development of a questionnaire containing 18 questions divided into several sections each meant to capture key elements of the issue of immigration in European countries.

Findings

There were several findings made regarding the issue of fake news on immigration in the EU. Based on the analysis of all the seven countries they have a long history of immigration with immigrants coming from the neighbouring regions as well as from beyond the region including Africa and Asia. In further demonstrating the findings of this study the entry of these immigrants in Europe has emerged to be a contentious political issue a fact that has given rise to xenophobia and their overall rejection by residents. The findings of this research project further show that there is increased use of fake news to paint immigrants in a poor light as most European countries struggle to meet the needs of their citizens with the already limited resources, increased economic downturn, and increased rates of unemployment. Accordingly, for many residents' immigrants represent a threat to their economic wellbeing resulting in increased attacks against them via fake news.

The findings of this research are significant because they provide awareness regarding the plight of immigrants and refugees in Europe. These findings demonstrate the feelings that

young people have regarding the issue of immigration in their countries. Additionally, the findings of this research are significant because they demonstrate the detrimental impact of fake news coverage on immigrants in Europe. Further, the findings of this research are significant because they illustrate the need to create new immigration narratives.

Conclusion

This project has demonstrated, fake news is an issue that has contributed to the rise in hostility regarding immigrants in Europe. Based on all the seven countries assessed fake news has emerged as a means of those against immigration fighting it and thus preventing the entry of refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants. Each of the assessed European countries has had a rich history of immigrants as people enter seeking safety and better opportunities compared to those in their home countries. In a bid to address the immigration issue, most European countries have sought to establish policies towards migration. This has included policies on cooperation on immigration such as the Schengen Agreement. The significance of the agreement is to control the movement of immigrants within the EU countries. This study concludes that immigration in the EU is an ongoing issue and there remains much to do in making it less hostile among natives. The European governments have the responsibility to take up measures to address the issue of fake news regarding immigration in their countries because of the resultant detrimental effects on the immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

Keywords: Fake news, Europe, immigration, EU, misinformation, disinformation, mal-information.

Table of Content

Abstract.....	2
Introduction.....	6
The Research Project.....	6
Fake News.....	7
Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in the EU.....	8
France.....	8
History of Immigration in France.....	8
Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in France.....	9
Germany	13
History of Immigration in Germany.....	13
Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in Germany.....	15
Greece.....	18
History of Immigration in Greece.....	18
Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in Greece.....	19
Ireland.....	19
History of Immigration in Ireland.....	19
Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in Ireland.....	20
Italy.....	21
History of Immigration in Italy	21
Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in Italy	22
Romania.....	23
History of Immigration in Romania.....	23
Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in Romania.....	24
Spain.....	25
History of Immigration in Spain.....	25
Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in Spain.....	26
Results of the Quantitative Survey.....	28

	Greece Results	28
.....	Ireland Results	28
.....	Spain's Results	29
.....	Closing Notes	29
.....	References	30

Introduction

Europe is a region that has experienced a massive flow of migrants in recent years. This has taken place upon harsh economic development characterized by increased rates of unemployment and overall economic downturn. Consequently, this has resulted in immigration becoming a major political, economic, social, and cultural issue in many European countries. The problematic nature of immigration in the EU has led to a considerable amount of news coverage on the issue. This news coverage has largely taken place online via social networking sites. Unfortunately, in expressing the frustration associated with the issue of immigration there has been a rise in false narratives shared during news coverage. This is even more problematic since, in the current world, online news coverage takes place mainly through user-generated content in the form of blogs, posts, and tweets. This type of news coverage is not well regulated and for this reason, there has been a rise of false stories published on the online space regarding immigration in the EU popularly known as fake news. The following is country-field research conducted using the framework Erasmus+ KA227 EU-project “reCREATE healthy narratives to tackle fake news”: 2020-1-IE01-KA227-YOU-o82. The purpose of the research is to highlight the issue of immigration in the EU and the subsequent fake news emerging concerning using several countries.

The Research Project

This research project aims to curb fake news regarding immigration in seven EU countries. The seven countries are France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Romania, and Spain. The reason for focusing on these countries is they are experiencing the most flow of immigrants as well as a rise in fake news in the EU. Therefore, this project will foster the development of an e-learning course concerning media literacy and technology among the youth. This includes equipping the youth with the necessary skills to verify the information they encounter online. At the same time, the course is meant to improve critical thinking in digital communication. Additionally, the research project will offer blended mobility regarding the

youth whose role is to foster the acquisition of video-making skills and foster the development of alternative narratives via creative tools. This will be instrumental in ensuring that there is the use of the inclusive and innovative methodology in which the young participants will gain the ability to develop a healthy narrative concerning immigration in their countries thus preventing stigmatizing and misinformation on this issue.

Fake News

Propaganda in the reporting of news has always been a major issue. In recent years, this aspect of propaganda reporting is known as fake news. Fake news is a term popularized by the former president of the United States, Donald Trump¹. He utilized the term to refer to news coverage regarding his administration that he deemed as not true. The popularization of the term resulted in its use at the international level eventually becoming an everyday phrase.

Today, fake news refers to misinformation. Unfortunately, there is no consensus regarding the definition of this term and for this reason, its reference takes place in several ways that include: rumours, satire, parody, fabricated content, manipulated content². There have been some researchers and scholars that have tried to develop more specific terms to refer to fake news. Accordingly, some of the most used terms include misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information³. Misinformation refers to the false information spread usually not with the intent of causing harm. Disinformation is the intentional creation of false information to cause harm⁴. Regarding mal-information, this is sharing genuine information with the intent of causing harm. All this provides some insight into the definition of fake news and the subsequent increase in the use of this term around the world.

Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in the EU

France

History of Immigration in France

A historical analysis of France demonstrates it is a nation of immigrants. In the 19th century, France became a haven for people in search of freedom or those facing persecution for the political beliefs in their home countries. The country became a destination for people like this as it enabled France to attain its industrialization ambition and meet its labour needs. The country received labour immigrants from countries such as Belgium and Italy. By 1931, France had approximately 2.7 million immigrants making up about 6.5% of its population⁵. During the second half of the 20th century, there was an increase in the number of

¹ Higdon, Nolan (August 15, 2020). The anatomy of fake news: A critical news literacy education. University of California, p. 1.

² Ibidem, p. 3

³ Giuliani-Hoffman, Francesca (November 3, 2017). "'F*** News' should be replaced by these words, Claire Wardle says". Money.CNN. Retrieved December 30, 2021.

⁴ Giuliani-Hoffman, Francesca (November 3, 2017). "'F*** News' should be replaced by these words, Claire Wardle says". Money.CNN. Retrieved December 30, 2021

⁵ Hamilton, Kimberly. 1997. "Europe, Africa, and International Migration: An uncomfortable triangle of interests." New Community 23(Chronique de la politique d'immigration en 2006 - Rupture, transition ou continuité? dossier d'actualité du site Vie publique, March 2007

immigrants in France⁶. In this period, there was a decrease in the number of immigrants coming from Europe and a rise in those coming from Asia and Africa.

With this entry of immigrants, one emerging issue is unemployment. This was because of the deteriorating economic situation in France. Since the 1980s the rate of unemployment in France had been declining lower than 7%. Many immigrants in France have experienced unemployment. For example, approximately 30% of immigrants from Algeria have experienced unemployment⁷.

The immigrants in France are less likely to be employed compared to non-immigrants. Accordingly, there is an employment gap between immigrants and non-immigrants in France at a rate of 18% for persons within the age range of 25-54 years. The differentiations exist according to the level of qualifications and country of origin. In further demonstrating the plight of employment for immigrants they are more likely to experience degradation in comparison to the non-immigrants. Immigrants are more likely to experience an unfavorable professional situation than their education level dictates. Accordingly, this is something that has facilitated the problem of the wage differential between immigrants and non-immigrants in France.

Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in France

Immigration in France has become a contentious issue. The problem of unemployment has been a contributing factor to the development of hostility towards immigrants in France. The expression of this hostility in recent years has been taking place through fake news. The Digital News Report of 2019 by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism investigated the use of social media as a source of information and news in France. As per this institute, 42% of the population in France uses social media as a source of information. Further, 69% of the French population obtains information online including from social media platforms. With this increased use of online sources for information, there has also been a rise in mistrust of the media. This is a development that has led to a reduction in the level of confidence that people have in the media falling 11 points in Europe.

There have been several cases of fake news in France which have entailed shading immigrants in a negative light. To demonstrate, the following highlights some facts and fake news coverage of immigrants.

The murder of 9-year-old Chloe was weaponized against immigrants in France from France 3 Nord Pas-de-Calais dated April. News on the murder of Chloe in Calais had been circulating on social media platforms. The title of the article on this story had been changed on the social media platform, Facebook by various internet users to stigmatize immigrants and therefore lead to the amalgamation of refugees. The title of the article in 3 Nord Pas-de-Calais, "Chloe kidnapped, killed and raped in Calais: the suspect confessed" was thus transformed into "Chloe kidnapped, killed and raped in Calais by an immigrant"⁸.

There have been additional instances of fake news on social media in France that have further degraded immigrants. An example of this is the creation of tweets spreading misinformation that claim immigrants receive 40 euros daily in financial assistance for each of the family members by use of a card.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 7

⁷ CAS, 2012.

⁸ F3nord. 2020. Calais: Chloe, 9, was kidnapped and killed. <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hauts-de-france/2015/04/15/calais-chloe-9-ans-ete-enlevee-violee-et-tuee-705643.html>



https://twitter.com/bergeredwige/status/777495870388441088?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E777495870388441088%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.leparisien.fr%2Fsociete%2Fla-carte-bleue-des-migrants-le-retour-d-une-infox-14-08-2019-8133486.php

This was a false narrative because the facts showed that immigrants who had made an asylum request on Ofpra received financial assistance in the form of asylum seeker allowance amounting to 6.80 euros daily. The Ofpra site indicated that it took a family of 10 persons to receive 37.40 euros daily to even close to the 40 euros in the fake news.

Another instance of fake news in France regarding immigrants shared on social media relates to a post made on 15th February 2017 shared more than 12500 times. This was a post of a map shared widely on social media with the false claim of rioting in France. The map was supposed to display the clashes taking place between the police and the rabble.



This was fake news because the fact was this was a map published in November 2005 and it was a representation of the increased social tensions in France clashes taking place from Lens to Perpignan via Lyons or Marseilles. For instance, the false map counts fifty zones of unrest between the forces of order and civil groups across France. Therefore, the map was distorting the urban violence taking place in France at a time when there was widespread rioting

Social media further demonstrates the issue of fake news regarding immigrants in France through false claims on their housing. An example of this is a Twitter user Florian Philippot who falsely claimed there was an allocation of 77000 HLM apartments for immigrants despite the need for this by the French citizens. A show of this tweet is below.



Florian Philippot ✓
@f_philippot

77000 HLM pour les migrants. Pendant ce temps tant de familles continueront d'attendre un logement social. Révoltant



Le Figaro @Le_Figaro
Plus de 77.000 HLM seraient disponibles pour des réfugiés
bit.ly/1LcXUFO

The above tweet was fake news and the real information was, it was not possible for immigrants to claim housing in HLM and they were not prioritized. One of the main reasons for this is claiming housing requires the immigrants to hold a residence permit. Accordingly, there was no favoritism of the immigrants as claimed in the tweet.

Germany

History of Immigration in Germany

Germany's history of immigration is quite complex. This begins from the end of the Second World War to the current time which has resulted in Germany emerging as the European nation with the largest number of immigrants hosted⁹. In most instances, the migratory flow into Germany was from geographical regions with cultural similarities. However, recent years have seen Germany welcoming more people from non-European countries with different cultures.

In conducting a historical analysis of immigration in Germany the first major wave of immigration that demonstrates a massive wave of immigrants into the country entailed entry of German refugees coming from historically former German regions. These were immigrants from Poland and those from the Soviet Union. This entailed the movement of approximately 12 to 15 million refugees from the years 1945 to 1950¹⁰. The refugees settled in most parts within allied-occupied Germany. Because these refugees were all Germans, they spoke the German language and shared this culture. Consequently, they easily integrated into Germany. Nonetheless, there was a rise of associations of resettles some of which remain active today who wanted to preserve the cultural heritage of the former German regions and ensure that there was a passage of this to the future generations.

One of the key themes of immigration whose impact remains largely visible today referred to as the "Gastarbeiter" or migrant workers emerged. This is a phenomenon that began in the 1950s because Germany was facing a labour shortage, particularly in West Germany. This is

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics

¹⁰ <https://www.kas.de/de/web/geschichte-der-cdu/flucht-und-vertreibung>

a challenge that was most common in the industrial and mining sectors which did not require the most skilled workers or qualifications. This became even more so a challenge following the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. At the time, the Federal Republic of Germany got into agreements with European and non-European nations to import unskilled labour. Between 1955 and 1968 agreements were honored by eight countries from the Mediterranean region who sent workers to Germany¹¹. These workers were not integrated into society and they did not receive many benefits including social welfare. However, the construction of the Berlin Wall brought about change regarding the welfare and benefits of workers in West Germany. This was a time when these workers began receiving access to social welfare as par that of German workers resulting in many of them settling in permanently. This phenomenon of "Gastarbeiter" ended in 1973 following the economic downturn from the oil crisis which resulted in a lack of employment opportunities for immigrants¹².

There has been a sudden and considerable increase in the number of migrants in recent years in line with the European migrant crisis of 2015. This year and the years thereafter marked an unprecedented increase in the flow of refugees. Many of these refugees selected Germany while seeking asylum. A considerable number of the refugees came from Syria following the escalation of the civil war and after the Arab Spring¹³. The massive flow of refugees into Germany has resulted in various challenges regarding their integration triggering social protests. This is a development that has triggered increased calls into adopting a stricter policy on immigration to reduce immigrants' entry into the country.

Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in Germany

Germany is a country that has also experienced the issue of fake news regarding immigration because of the increase in hostility towards immigrants. From 2015 to the present, there has been an increase in fake news largely presented on social media regarding immigrants in Germany¹⁴. There has been an increase in cases of fake news reporting on immigrants. Because many immigrants into Germany came from Middle Eastern countries the stereotype of terrorism has been used as a factor in contorting this fake news. An example of this is the case of Anas Modami a Syrian refugee that had taken a selfie with Angela Merkel. This was a selfie taken in 2015, but the fake news regarding Modami being a terrorist is from 2017. This led to many websites accusing Merkel of being a friend to terrorists during her political campaign.

¹¹ The International Migration Review, Vol. 19, No. 3, Special Issue: Civil Rights and the Sociopolitical Participation of Migrants, New York, 1985, p. 518.

¹² Klaus Bade, http://kjbade.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2007-09-21_verso-una-societa-multiculturale.pdf.

¹³ E. Kolinsky, Non-German Minorities in German Society, in "Turkish Culture in German Society Today", Berkley 1997, p. 83.

¹⁴ Deutsche Welle. 2017. German court rejects injunction against Facebook over Syrian refugee selfie



Photo of Anas Modami with Angela Merkel. Picture of 2015.

<https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/2206/german-court-rejects-injunction-against-facebook-oversyrian-refugee-selfie>

In 2018 there was an image circulating in the Facebook group claiming that the current government was investing additional support for asylum seekers and refugees compared to German residents¹⁵. The significance of this was to discredit a political opponent.



An article was posted on Facebook illustrating refugees as dangerous. The article made several false claims regarding teenage refugees such as threatening their tutors for money, PlayStation and demanding relocation to a bigger city. Additionally, the article asserts that teenagers destroy property such as furniture and even go as far as assaulting the police. However, analyzing the article reveals that it has no references, author, or sources. The picture of the article seems to be that of a newspaper, but it is not authentic.

¹⁵ Deutsche Welle. 2017. The growing problem of agitation against refugees online <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/2193/the-growing-problem-of-agitation-against-refugees-online>, URL consulted on 14.12.2021.



In the most recent times, an image was published by the local AFD party which affirmed that the German politics were in support of immigration from Africa to assist the content in addressing its problems. However, this is a false narrative since the sheer massive size of the continent cannot allow Germany to host Africa.



Greece

History of Immigration in Greece

The first wave of immigration in Greece began in 1989 following the fall of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe. The immigrants mainly came from Albania, Romania, and Bulgaria. Between 2000 to 2010, Greece attracted immigrants from former socialist countries as well as all over the world. The resultant impact of this was an increase in the population of Greece by immigrants. Approximately 7% of the country's population consists of immigrants coming from non-EU countries. The increased number of immigrants was unprecedented for most of the indigenous Greek population. Consequently, this created a serious political issue in Greece.

Greece continues to experience an immigration crisis as it has become the main entry point of immigrants to Europe particularly during the period from 2005 to 2010. That is, Greece

served as Europe's gateway for illegal immigrants. Many of the illegal immigrants that enter Greece usually end up within the centre of Athens increasing in number. Many of these immigrants have trouble gaining accommodation and they experience constant attacks by the far-right groups. Instead, these immigrants become forced to live in shared apartments. Additionally, immigrants in Greece tend to become exploited for cheap labour.

Immigrants in Greece face racist attacks. One major reason for this has been the country's debt crisis and economic downturn that has impoverished many Greeks. This has been a factor pushing Greeks to attack immigrants as they perceive them as taking away opportunities from them. The children of immigrants have experienced phobias and hatred against them.

Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in Greece

The issue of immigration in Greece has influenced the rise of fake news online. For instance, the increased number of immigrants has caused the situation in Kos Island to become very difficult. This is even more so an issue because healthcare professionals on the island find it a challenge to deal with the rise of cholera cases¹⁶. However, this was a development hidden in the mainstream media and by authorities.

An example of a case of fake news in Greece involved a Pakistani immigrant that had supposedly won a 9 million lottery¹⁷. According to a fake news article published on the immigrants, it claimed that the immigrant had stated that with all his winnings he could afford to bring his whole family to Greece and lead a wealthy life. This is even though the immigrant claimed not to like Greece because of pork and women dressed lightly.



https://www.pentapostagma.gr/koinonia/1353172_sok-me-tis-proklitikes-diloseis-toy-pakistanoy-ypertyheroy-poy-kerdise-9ek-eyro

Ireland

History of Immigration in Ireland

Ireland is a country that is experiencing an increase in migratory patterns. Economic, social, and political conditions have been a factor contributing to these immigration patterns. Because of this movement in and out of Ireland, has impacted the treatment of immigrants,

¹⁶ Thanos Sitistas. 2019. "Epidemic" bomb of typhus, cholera, plague, and tuberculosis by "illegal immigrants"? <https://www.ellinikahoaxes.gr/2019/11/30/migrants-infectious-disease-hoax/>

¹⁷ https://www.pentapostagma.gr/koinonia/1353172_sok-me-tis-proklitikes-diloseis-toy-pakistanoy-ypertyheroy-poy-kerdise-9ek-eyro.

asylum seekers, and non-nationals in Ireland. The situation has become even worse following the financial crisis and economic recession that resulted in many Irish citizens migrating in search of a better life. Ireland adopted immigration policies that further led to an increase in immigrants. An example of this was the legislative bill that provided the right to Irish citizenship including Ireland offering children of non-nationals the birthright to Irish citizenship. Thus, Ireland had fair laws and policies regarding immigration during this time which also coincided with the economic boom in the country. However, the situation has changed regarding the treatment of immigrants following the financial and economic crisis Ireland has faced. For instance, many Irish nationals that had left the country in search of employment returned seeking asylum resulting in Ireland having more entry of people compared to those leaving. Immigrants began experiencing unfair treatment evidenced by the 2004 referendum that removed the right to citizenship of the children of immigrants born in Ireland. Accordingly, the treatment of immigrants in Ireland today encompasses some considerable hostility as in most European countries.

Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in Ireland

There has been a rise in fake news coverage regarding immigrants in Ireland. This emanates from the increased hostility against immigrants in the country. Based on an article published in the Irish Times there is an increase in fake news stories on immigrants on social media platforms especially Facebook. Most Irish people show a considerable amount of skepticism concerning news stories covered on social media¹⁸. The fake news on migration in Ireland has been created and shared on social media by populist political organizations with the intent of sowing division in Ireland by influencing public opinion against immigrants¹⁹. There were false claims made online that the Irish government was planning on bringing in a million immigrants from Muslim countries. This was through news articles shared on several websites that claimed the government was planning on bringing immigrants into the country in a 2040 plan²⁰. However, the remarks made by the Irish prime minister concerning this plan were not in the context of immigration, but referred to the plan in general.

Italy

History of Immigration in Italy

The 1990s marked some of the most significant developments in Italy's migration patterns. In 1990 four key events took place changing the immigration movement in Italy consisting of the approval of Law 39/1990 aka Legge Martelli; The start of the Schengen accession process; Italy's subscription of Dublin Convention, which directly concerns migration and asylum; UN

¹⁸ Gleeson, C. (2021). Irish people's trust in media increases amid concern over fake news. The Irish Times. Sourced from: <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/media-and-marketing/irish-people-strust-in-media-increases-amid-concern-over-fake-news-1.4600628>.

¹⁹ O'Brien, C. (2021) Ireland to lead global initiative to tackle 'fake news' on migration. The Irish Times. Sourced from: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/ireland-to-lead-global-initiative-totackle-fake-news-on-migration-1.4547287?mode=sample&auth-failed=1&pworigin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.irishtimes.com%2Fnews%2Feducation%2Fireland-to-lead-globalinitiative-to-tackle-fake-news-on-migration-1.4547287>.

²⁰ DNA. 2018. Fake news: Ireland denies reports that nation will be brining in 1 million immigrants from Muslim nations. <https://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-fake-news-ireland-denies-reports-that-nation-will-be-bringing-in-1-million-immigrants-from-muslim-nations-2592167>

adopts the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

In 1991 Italy experienced an increase in migrants moving from Albania in massive numbers. This event provided the initial test for Italy's perception of immigrants. Following the landing of the Vlora ship carrying 6000 Albanian migrants, the reception was negative as they were placed in a city stadium for eight days because of conflicting decisions concerning their plight²¹. This resulted in increased patrol of the stretch of sea area between Albania and Puglia²². Additional immigrants from Albania entered Italy in 1997 because of the poor economic situation in Albania. This resulted in the Italian government taking up a rigid position in dealing with the situation including conducting additional patrols to deter the arrival of immigrants. Consequently, Italy's attitude towards refugees and immigrants has mainly been negative. However, in 2011 there was a more positive take on refugees based on their situation becoming perceived as a humanitarian crisis.²³ Nonetheless, there continue to be conflicts and clashes regarding the migration policies adopted in Italy.

Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in Italy

Recent years have seen an increase in the spread of fake news regarding the issue of migration in Italy. For instance, there was the publication of an article in 2018 claiming that the police had recovered 27 million € in a camp. However, the article fails to be specific on details such as where exactly this took place or when it happened. This same article was published in 2015 in a newspaper known as *Il Giornale* demonstrating the police fight against a nomad camp in Turin.

In 2019, there was a video taken from an Italian Tv broadcaster *Dalla vostra parte* published on Facebook. The video was reporting a news story of a protest of 40 unaccompanied minors who were seeking asylum and accommodated in a reception centre in Sicily. The published version of the video on Facebook was edited using subtext implying that the protest was of 40 refugees and that they had been moved into a 4-star hotel in Messina. However, this video was debunked as fake news by the *Pagella Politica* as misleading.

²¹ (Niglia, 2009)

²² Bucarelli, 2014)

²³ (ISTAT, 2012a)

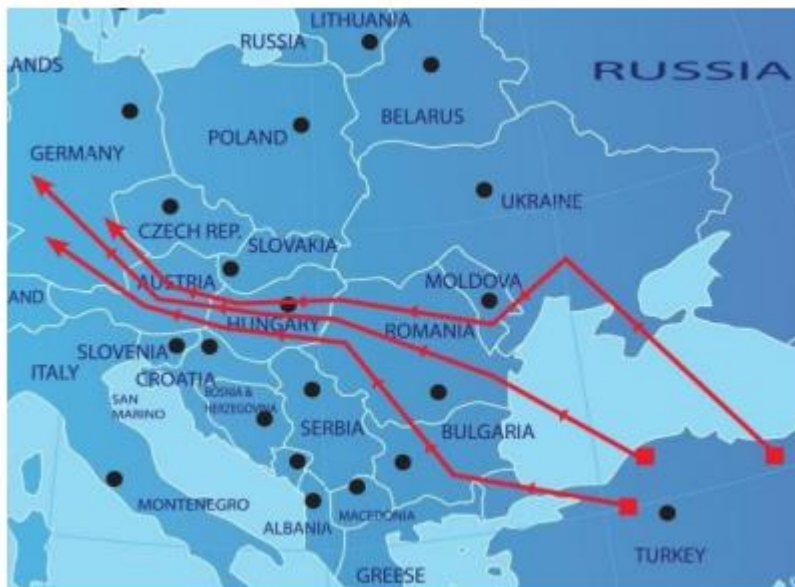


Notizia del 2016: la protesta in un centro di accoglienza in Sicilia

Romania

History of Immigration in Romania

Romania over time has faced the challenge of migration. This is large because Romania has served as a transit country for immigrants as well as a destination.



For a long time until 1989 Romanians perceived immigrants in a negative light. However, there was a change in attitude which entailed perceiving immigrants in a more positive light. The belief held in Romania is that control of the migration issue in the country is instrumental towards immigration becoming a positive reality. Most of the analysis conducted on immigration in Romania has mainly focused on the process of migration as

opposed to its impact on society. Romania went through a serious socio-economic process that resulted in 40% of job loss increasing the levels of unemployment. The resultant impact of this was an irregular development of migration to Western Europe which increased further following the restructure and closure of industrial companies. Romania then experienced a period of stagnation of its migration. However, this soon changed when migrants began coming into the country from countries poorer than Romania. In 2007 there was an increase in the number of permanent migrants into Romania following its entry into the EU. Romania then took up measures to develop migration policies that adopted normative acts as well as the establishment of institutions with attribution to the field of migration. The accession of the EU led to many changes in the legal rules regarding the regime of migrants in Romania. For this reason, Romania has welcomed citizens from EU member states and the European Economic region to ensure compliance with the European legislation.

Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in Romania

There have been increased cases of fake news regarding immigration in Romania. An example of this is a news headline published that claimed that the state provided 50 euros to support immigrants. However, the fact was the state cannot directly or indirectly provide such an amount of money with the consent of the citizens. However, this is something not mentioned in the article. In further demonstrating the misleading nature of the article, it neglects to mention the proposed initiative of a businessman whereby the citizens could donate 10% of their salary to assist migrants.

Spain

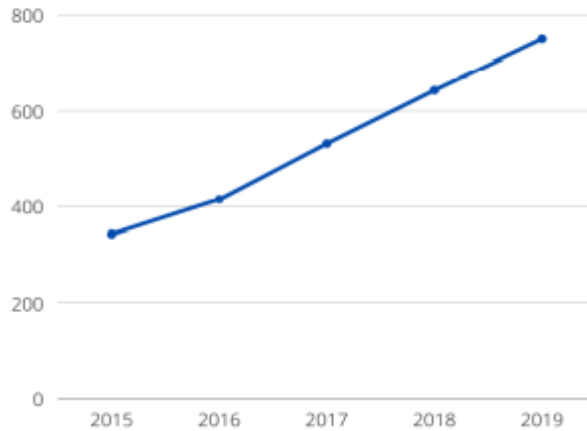
History of Immigration in Spain

Spain is a country that has traditionally been about emigration as opposed to immigration. However, this changed at the turn of the 21st century when there were changes took place following the arrival of the immigrant population mainly from Latin American states. The number of immigrants in Spain has been increasing annually making it the second country in the EU with the highest receipt of immigrants²⁴.

²⁴ European Commission, Special Eurobarometer 469, Report, Integration of immigrants in the European Union, April 2018.

IMMIGRATION IN SPAIN

Source of data: Eurostat



The migration in Spain reduced by approximately 37.9% in 2019 because of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Nonetheless, an estimated 400000 people took up residence in Spain in 2020²⁵. The female immigrants were much higher compared to the males. The recent years have shown that most immigrants into Spain come from Morocco, Ecuador, and Romania. A key issue in Spain relates to the limited knowledge that the members of the public have concerning immigration and related issues²⁶. Further, the public authority has placed minimal efforts towards addressing this issue, therefore, leading to the growth of propaganda and xenophobia concerning immigrants.

Fake News and the Issue of Immigration in Spain

There have been a series of fake news items regarding Spain's immigration disseminated in the media and social media networks. The most coverage of this fake news begins in 2015 when the crisis in Central Europe had an immediate impact on Spain. This is a development that resulted in growth in the debate regarding migration policies and the distribution of refugees. During this time, most of the issues regarding refugees and their danger related to the stereotype of terrorism targeting Muslims that already lived in Spain. However, the rise of the extreme right-wing populist party VOX resulted in an increase in hoaxes and false narratives regarding immigrants in Spain. This party utilized the media and social media to spread biased views regarding immigrants. Since then, there has been an increase in the number of fake news stories concerning immigrants in Spain.

25

²⁶ European Commission, Special Eurobarometer 469, Report, Integration of immigrants in the European Union, April 2018

Los musulmanes demandarán a España ante Estrasburgo por las procesiones de Semana Santa "E una ofensa al islam"



https://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/musulmanes-pedido-prohiba-semana-vuelve_1_1596759.html#:~:text=El%20encabezado%20que%20lo%20acompa%C3%B1aba,lo%20publicaron%20un%20a%C3%B1o%20despu%C3%A9s.

The headline of the article shown read, Muslims to sue Spain in Strasbourg over Easter processions" as "an offence to Islam. The source of this article was a British newspaper, the Daily Mail. The goal of running such a story was to pit the Muslim community against the indigenous population. They alleged that there will be attacks on one of Spain's most celebrated traditional Christian festivals. The fake news was shared on social media platforms such as Facebook close to 11000 times and was not deleted yet even after fact-finding. The unfortunate thing is that there is annual recycling of this news every year.

In 2020 there was fake news shared regarding a possible enroute of illegal immigrants from Algeria to Spain.





https://twitter.com/casoaislado_es/status/1289497132047581186

The above was a fake news Twitter post that claimed that there were 500 boats ready to sail from Algeria with immigrants to Spain. This is a tweet that led Twitter users to supposedly complete the information on the claim by providing false photographs of the alleged boats accompanied by the claim that they will arrive with 5000 illegal immigrants. However, this was false information because the shown boats belonged to fisherman from Mauritania posted on Instagram.

Results of the Quantitative Survey

Greece Results

The survey conducted in this research project has also shown the issue of fake news and immigration in Greece. As per the results of the survey, most of the participants perceived immigrants to be an opportunity to learn about new cultures. They also asserted that the advantages of migrants are that they accept doing jobs that nobody is willing to do. Generally, the research participants perceived the immigrants in a positive light. The participants indicated that they received news from different sources and the news is reliable depending on the source. Most of the participants admitted that they did not have an idea about identifying fake news. Further, they also admitted that there is fake news relating to immigrants and migrants.

Ireland Results

In Ireland, the survey encompassed the use of 41 persons who answered questions regarding their perception of fake news and migration and immigration issues. The results of the survey indicated that most of the participants perceived immigrants positively. As per most of the participants, immigrants served as human resources for Ireland. None of those who participated in the survey perceived immigrants as a threat. The participants, perceived immigrants as an opportunity to learn from another culture, deemed immigrants as persons who did jobs rejected by the natives and thus most immigrants to Ireland occupy unskilled jobs. Nonetheless, most immigrants in Ireland continue to face stigma and experience negative stereotypes within Irish society. Regarding fake news, most of the participants agreed that there is an issue of fake news online. However, they admitted that they did not know how to identify if a news story published or covered online was fake. This shows the need for additional education on fact-checking among the Irish. Very few of those who encounter fake news show willingness to investigate it.

Spain's Results

These are the results of a survey conducted on 36 participants representing the local people in Spain. The belief by most of the research participants is immigrants can be a source of strength for Spain if integrated into society. As per most of the participants they believe that the immigrants are simply looking for a better opportunity and living conditions when coming to Spain as they flee from bad situations. Most of the participants affirmed that they found the news and media unreliable and they determined the reliability relied on the source. Spain has established laws meant to address the issue of fake news in general apart from that related to migration.

Closing Notes

Europe represents a region that has experienced both immigration and emigration. This has consisted of a massive flow of migration at the internal, regional, and national levels. Additionally, Europe has experienced a rise in immigration from neighboring regions following political upheavals. Beginning in the 1960s, Europe became a destination for a massive migratory flow from African and Asian states because of political upheavals in the countries from these two continents. For instance, France experienced a massive flow of immigrants from Algeria while the United Kingdom experienced a rise of immigrants from India. Most of the European countries experience immigration challenges as they receive many refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants. With the massive flow of immigrants into Europe, there is the issue of fake news. There have been groups opposed to the increased entry of immigrants into their countries and their response has been discrediting the plight of immigrants by sharing false narratives concerning them. Most of this fake news spreads online via social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Most social media users, cannot determine the reliability of the news they encounter online. This is a factor that has contributed to fake news on immigration to continue to unprecedented levels that have led to loss of life of innocent immigrants.

References

- Central Statistics Office (2020). Population and Migration Estimates April 2020. Sourced from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2020/>
- Central Statistics Office (2021). Press Statement Population and Migration Estimates April 2021. Sourced from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/pressreleases/2021pressreleases/pressstatementpopulationandmigrationestimatesapril2021/>
- Deutsche Welle. 2017. German court rejects injunction against Facebook over Syrian refugee selfie.
- Deutsche Welle. 2017. The growing problem of agitation against refugees online <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/2193/the-growing-problem-of-agitation-against-refugees-online>, URL consulted on 14.12.2021.
- DNA. 2018. Fake news: Ireland denies reports that nation will be bringing in 1 million immigrants from Muslim nations.
- <https://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-fake-news-ireland-denies-reports-that-nation-will-be-bringing-in-1-million-immigrants-from-muslim-nations-2592167>.
- E. Kolinsky, Non-German Minorities in German Society, in "Turkish Culture in German Society Today", Berkley 1997, p. 81.
- European Commission, Special Eurobarometer 469, Report, Integration of immigrants in the European Union, April 2018.
- F3nord. 2020. Calais: Chloe, 9, was kidnapped and killed.
- <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hauts-de-france/2015/04/15/calais-chloe-9-ans-ete-enlevee-violee-et-tuee-705643.html>.
- Giuliani-Hoffman, Francesca (November 3, 2017). "F*** News' should be replaced by these words, Claire Wardle says". Money.CNN. Retrieved December 30, 2021.
- Gleeson, C. (2021). Irish people's trust in media increases amid concern over fake news. The Irish Times. Sourced from: <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/media-and-marketing/irish-people-strust-in-media-increases-amid-concern-over-fake-news-1.4600628>.
- Hamilton, Kimberly. 1997. "Europe, Africa, and International Migration: An uncomfortable triangle of interests." New Community 23 (Chronique de la politique d'immigration en 2006 - Rupture, transition ou continuité? dossier d'actualité du site Vie publique, March 2007.
- Higdon, Nolan (August 15, 2020). The anatomy of fake news: A critical news literacy education. University of California, p. 1.
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics.
- <https://www.kas.de/de/web/geschichte-der-cdu/flucht-und-vertreibung>.
- https://www.pentapostagma.gr/koinonia/1353172_sok-me-tis-proklitikes-diloseis-toy-pakistanoy-ypertyheroy-poy-kerdise-gek-eyro
- Klaus Bade, http://kjbade.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2007-09-21_verso-una-societa-multiculturale.pdf.
- O'Brien, C. (2021) Ireland to lead global initiative to tackle 'fake news' on migration. The Irish Times. Sourced from: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/ireland-to-lead-global-initiative-totackle-fake-news-on-migration-1.4547287?mode=sample&auth-failed=1&pworigin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.irishtimes.com%2Fnews%2Feducation%2Fireland-to-lead-globalinitiative-to-tackle-fake-news-on-migration-1.4547287>.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Continuous Reporting System on Migration (SOPEMI). Trends in International Migration. Paris: OECD Publications, 2003: 196- 198.
- Thanos Sitistas. 2019. "Epidemic" bomb of typhus, cholera, plague, and tuberculosis by "illegal immigrants"?
- <https://www.ellinikahoaxes.gr/2019/11/30/migrants-infectious-disease-hoax/>
- The International Migration Review, Vol. 19, No. 3, Special Issue: Civil Rights and the Sociopolitical Participation of Migrants, New York, 1985, p. 518.