

Migration Narratives in Europe

A Social Media Intelligence Study

Country report for the Portuguese Republic



A Bakamo Public  **Project for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung**

- 2019 -

Context to the Portuguese Discussion on Migration



- The Portuguese Republic has been the member of the European Economic Community, later the European Union, since 1986. The population in 2015 was 10,374,822, and the **number of refugees is one of the lowest in the EU** (0.01%).*
- Public social media conversation in Portugal around migration in one year consists of ~102,700 posts. Compared to population size, **the conversation on migration in Portugal is one of the smallest in the EU**.
- The Portuguese government is lead by prime minister **António Costa** and the left-wing **Socialist Party** of Portugal.
- Both the government and the Portuguese public represents a generally **pro-migrant stance**, although the migration crisis did not significantly influence the country.



*Source: europarl.europa.eu

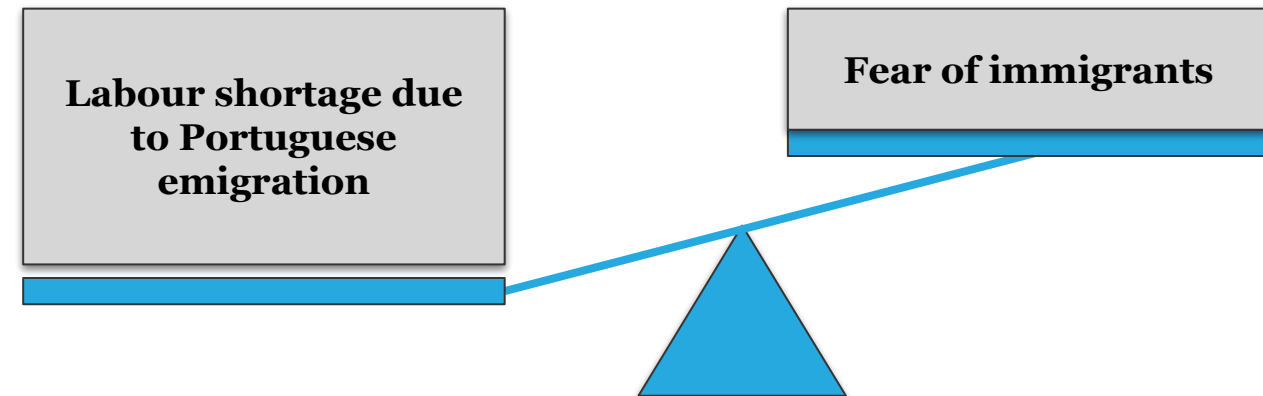


Economic interest of integrating migrants to the labour market overrides fear of immigrants

Portugal hosts one of the lowest number of refugees in the European Union, and most of the Portuguese content expresses a humanitarian approach and compassion towards refugees' struggles. However, this perspective is mainly fuelled by international news of the migration crisis.

Portuguese people's opinion appears to be more contrasted as locals often express fear of immigrant crime and concern over a potentially negative cultural influence of migration.

Although very few people engage in conversations regarding the economic aspects of migration, that discussion is mainly driven by the problem of mass emigration of young Portuguese workers. Labour shortage in the country is so crippling that most people are ready to put aside their fear of immigrants if they would be willing to work in Portugal.





Key Findings | PT

How and where do Portuguese people discuss migration in the social media space?

Size of Pan-European Narratives

A strong majority of the Portuguese discussion reflects the **humanitarian** aspects of migration and expresses compassion towards those in need. Security threats and cultural consequences of migration are also often discussed, while the demographic and economic aspects come up less frequently.

Local Issues

Mass emigration is an acute problem in Portugal, which is also reflected in the migration discussion. Many Portuguese people demand that instead of humanitarian aid for refugees funding should be spent on creating jobs for locals.

EU & Domestic Politics

Aspects of migration are mainly discussed in a **European context**. Although demographic and economic implications of migration are rarely discussed, people discuss the local politicians' role in integrating migrant workforce in Portugal.

Discussion Tone

Most of the Portuguese conversation is conducted in a **reserved tone**, but vigorous discussion occur on the cultural consequences of immigration.

Conversation Channels

Online news agencies generate most of the buzz around migration in Portugal, and they express most of the pro-migrant sentiment. However, individual Twitter handles often express more anti-migrant opinions.

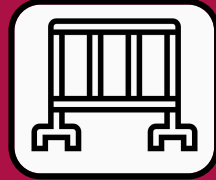


Key Findings | PT

Pan-European Narratives in Portugal



Partly driven by news on international humanitarian disasters, many Portuguese express **compassion** towards refugees. People emphasize that humanitarian help should be available for all in need, and the aid should be extended to support the integration of migrants.



While online news platform discuss the number of refugees and country-level migration policy, individual voices are more focused on the **everyday aspects of potential threat** posed by migrants.



The Portuguese conversations revealed **divided views on migration's impact on local culture**. While some people call out racism and argue that immigrants enrich the Portuguese cultural landscape, others are very articulate about how such changes in the local culture are unwanted.



The Portuguese population is rapidly aging due to **mass emigration**, thus locals are willing to accept migrant workforce to manage the imbalance.



Those Portuguese who discuss the economic consequences of migration articulate the need to differentiate economic migrants from those fleeing a war, and urge to provide these people a **working visa instead of humanitarian aid**.

+ *Pan-European Narratives in Portugal*



1.

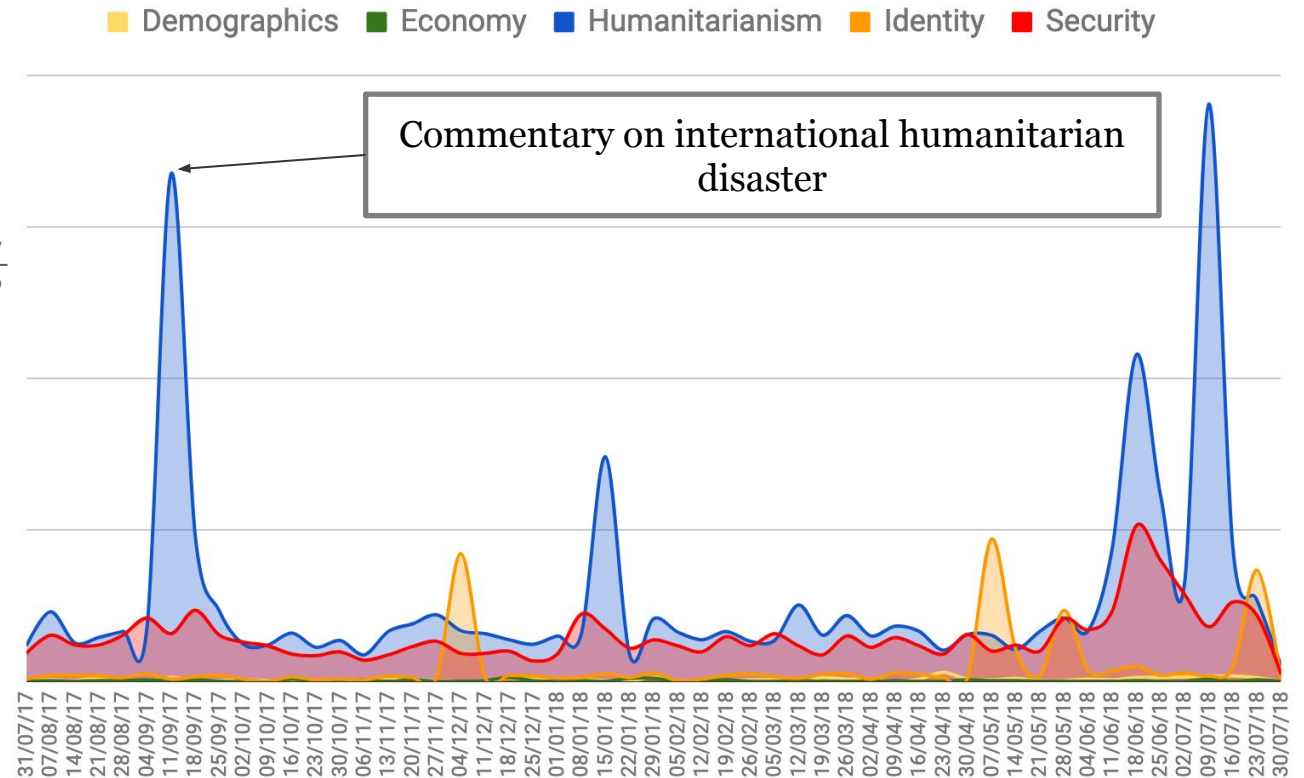
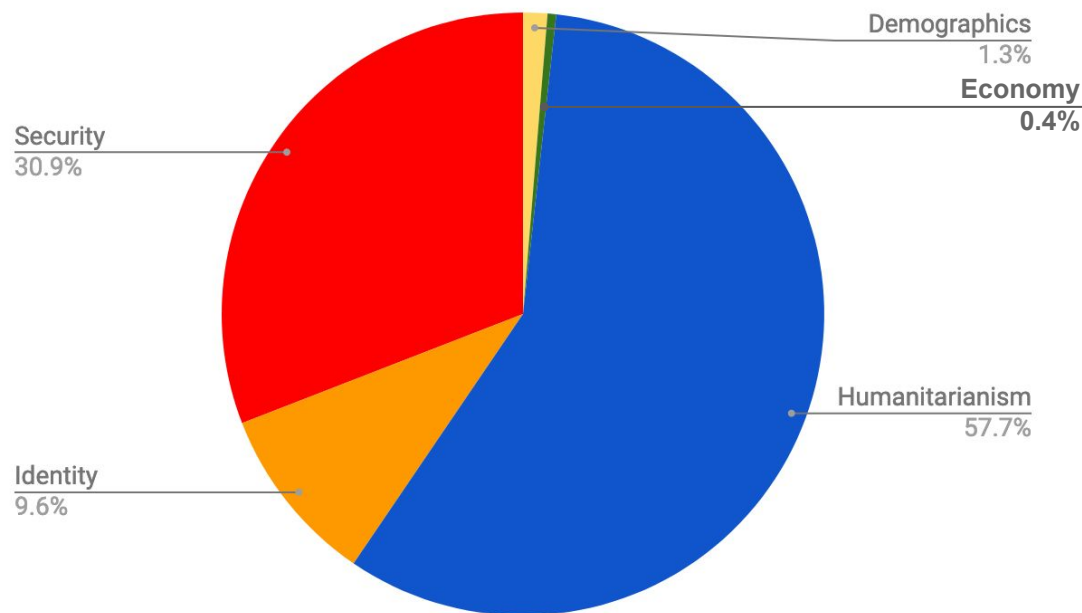


Pan-European Narratives | PT

The shape of the migration discourse

Humanitarian issues trigger the highest interest in Portugal, however, the security and identity implications of migration reveal more divergent set of opinions. Although labour shortage is a crippling problem in Portugal, demographic and economic aspects of migration are barely discussed.

Results:
~102,700

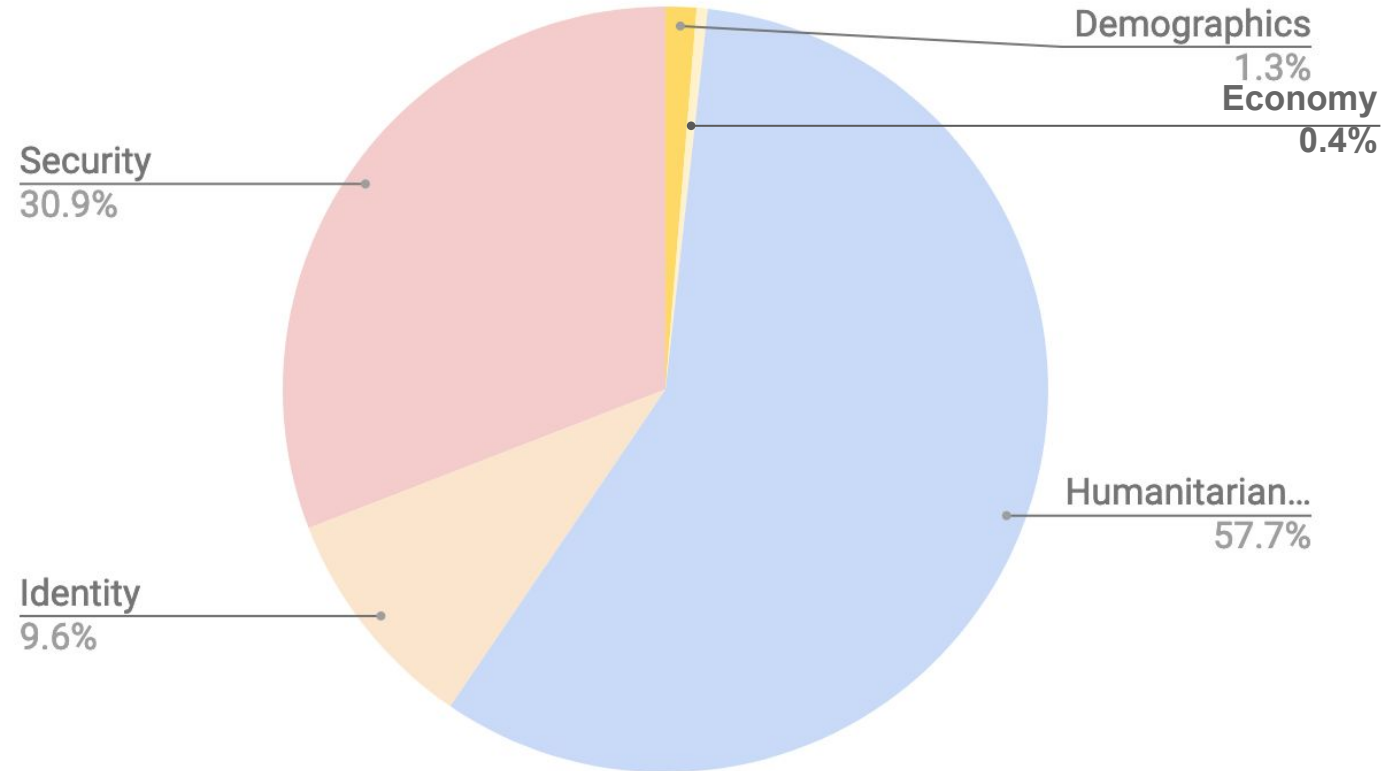




Demographics (1): Labour Shortage Is A Striking Problem

Portugal suffers from an imbalanced demographic structure: due to young people emigrating for better job opportunities and the average life expectancy increasing, the population is rapidly aging.

Although the demographic implications of migration are very rarely discussed, Portuguese emigration appears to be an alarming problem. So much so, that many of the local people are willing to accept migrant workforce (and support all initiatives with this goal) to manage the imbalance.





Pan-European Narratives | PT

Demographics (2): Quotes

NEUTRAL VOICES

The population decrease is so alarming that welcoming migrants is inevitable

*Without enough births and with a population that lives longer than ever, the situation in Portugal is **extremely alarming**. In the light of all this, welcoming those who seek us, our response can not be just a generous “yes”. It has to be a resounding “thank you”.*

PRO-MIGRANT VOICES

Changes are required to attract labour force (locals and migrants alike) in Portugal

*We must change our economy and support innovation so that Portugal will be attractive to young people, foreign investment, and also to **immigrant labour force**.*

*The 2017 annual statistical report on indicators of immigrant integration analyzes the residence visas allocated at consular posts in 2015 and 2016. Results show the high rate of visas associated with study and family reunification – **an increase in issuing more working visas is necessary**.*

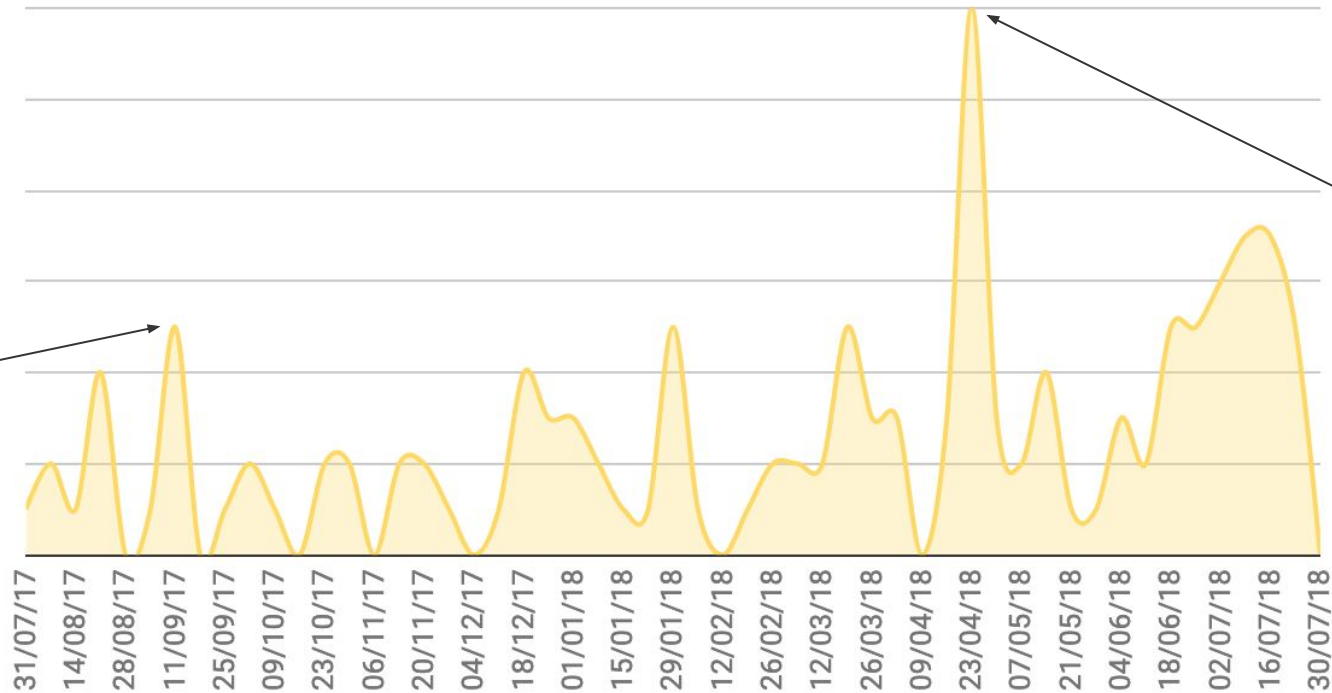
Pan-European Narratives | PT

Demographics (3): Top Stories

Portuguese labour shortage is a striking problem, as people migrate to big cities or to foreign countries due to Portugal's stagnating economic situation. Thus, every tool aimed to support immigrant workforce in the country receives wide exposure in the public online sphere.

Results:
~1300 (1,3%)

"Emigration and internal migration in Portugal is dramatic. But also understandable, if you look at the decreasing standards of living in the country, and especially at some rural areas."



Advertisement for those who seek working visa in Portugal: *"Living in Portugal as an immigrant? Access the services of LuResolve.com to learn more about conditions of work in Portugal."*

Demographics

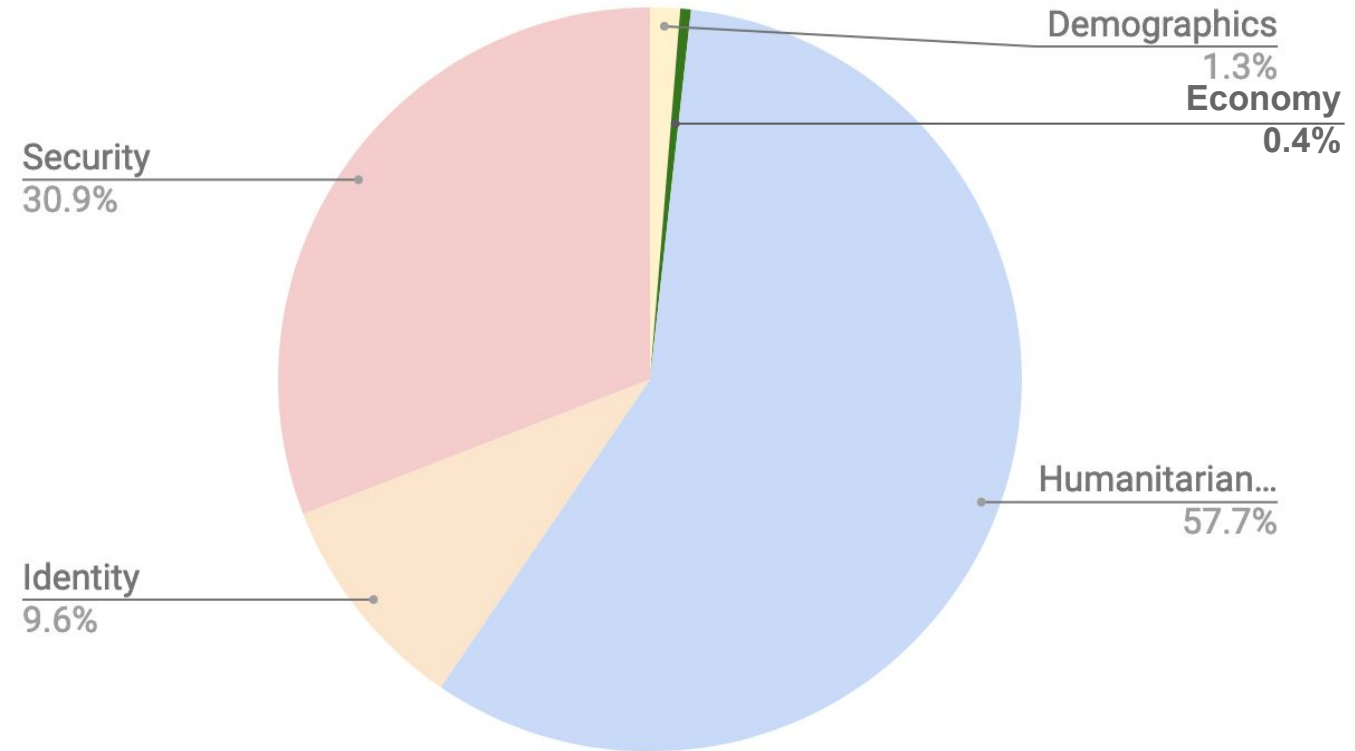


Pan-European Narratives | PT

Economy (1): Work Visa for Economic Migrants

Economic costs of migration are barely discussed in the Portuguese conversation, but when they appear, it reflects a deep disappointment. Those Portuguese who engage in this topic articulate the need to differentiate economic migrants from those fleeing a war, and urge to provide these people a working visa instead of humanitarian aid.

Some people approach the same issue from a pro-migrant sentiment, claiming that those people who come to Portugal from foreign countries should be able to access a legal residence permit.





Pan-European Narratives | PT Economy (2): Quotes

ANTI-MIGRANT VOICES

Condemning the EU for using economic threats to force migrants on member states

European Union, using the threat of withdrawing subsidies, wants to force countries to accept several thousands of Muslim immigrants.

Refugees must work or leave to other countries

*What you see on the street are fake refugees. **Only those migrants should be allowed to stay who are willing to work.** The rest should move on to countries made for emigration, such as Canada, America, Australia or the rich Arab states of the Persian Gulf.*

Many 'refugees' are just economic migrants – instead of refugee aid they should get a work visa

*80% of these people are not fleeing a war, simply look for better living conditions. **For those, who are legitimate job seekers, the state should not provide refugee allowance.** They should just apply for legal immigrant status.*

PRO-MIGRANT VOICES

Illegal migrants who are actually working in Portugal and thus support the local economy should have more rights

*We have a lot of **immigrant workers in the country working, many of them contributing to social security, who have illegal status.** This is absolutely absurd.*

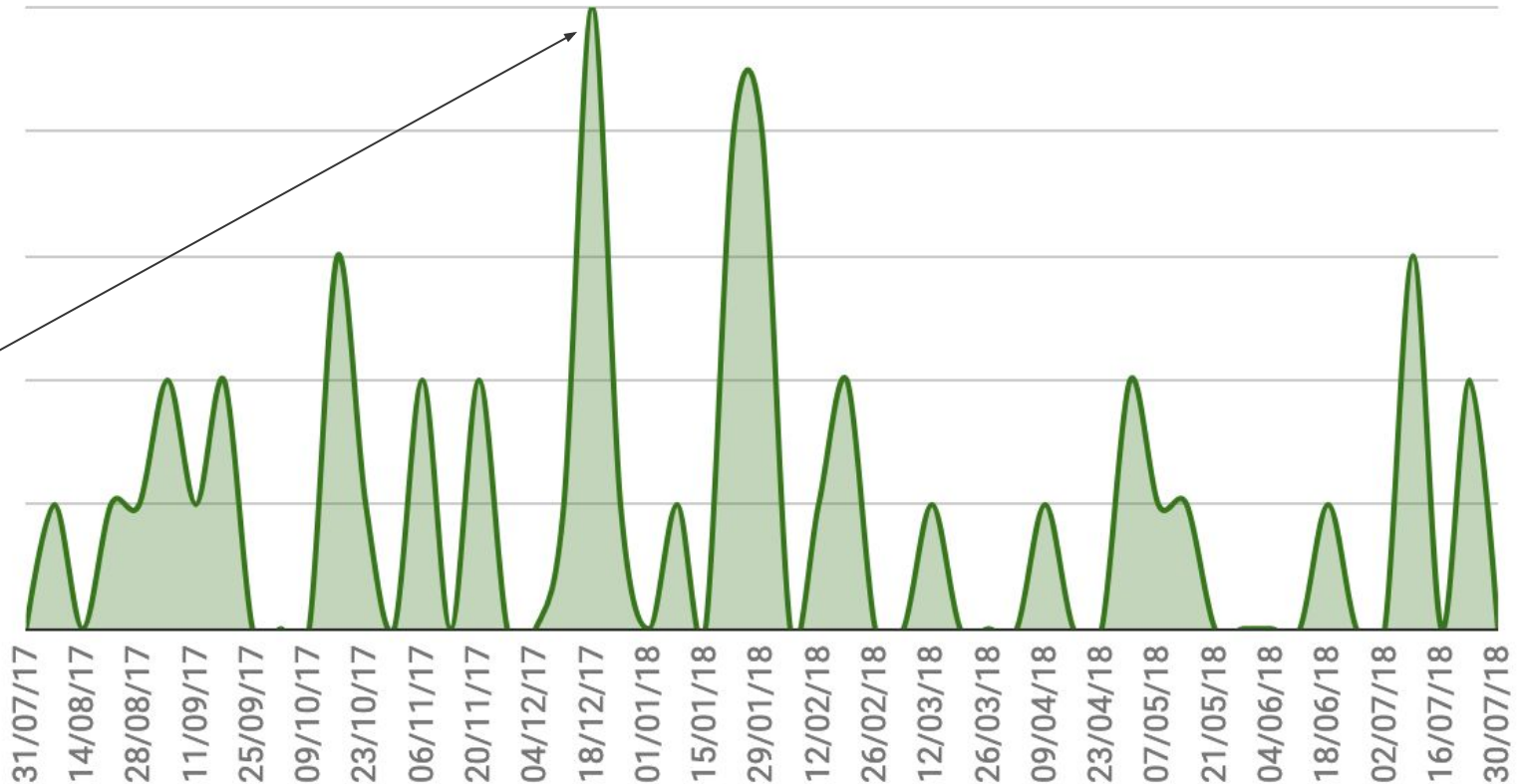
Pan-European Narratives | PT

Economy (3): Top Stories

Portuguese emigrant workers' remittance is a significant part of the local economy, which reflects the depth of Portuguese' exodus, and the country's consequent openness to welcome migrants to the labour market.

Results:
~450 (0,4%)

The amount of money that Portuguese emigrant workers send home has grown by 5% compared to previous year



Economy



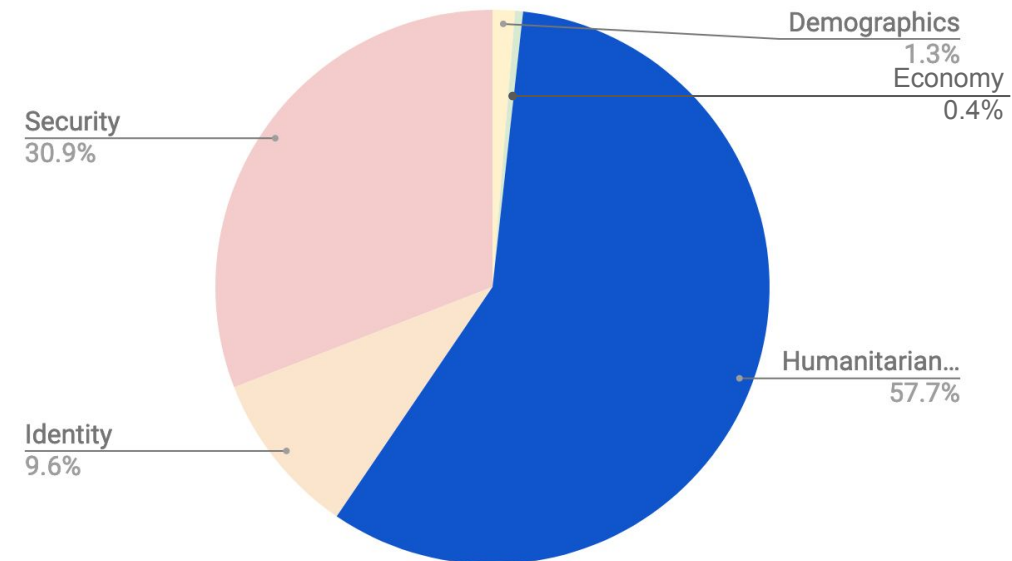
Pan-European Narratives | PT

Humanitarianism (1): Compassion For Those in Need

The dominant approach to migration in Portugal is driven by **compassion** towards migrants. The humanitarian narrative is present in more than half of the public social media conversations, and people mainly expose a pro-migrant point of view.

Many Portuguese claim that **humanitarian aid should not be exclusive** to certain groups, but should be accessible by anyone in need. Some people go one step further, and argue that paternalistic support is detrimental – instead of one-time aid, refugees should receive training to be able to become well-functioning in the Portuguese society.

Many Portuguese show interest in **humanitarian disasters** that take place **overseas**, and other EU member states are praised or condemned depending on their humanitarian actions (or the lack thereof) to help refugees.





Pan-European Narratives | PT

Humanitarianism (2): Quotes

PRO-MIGRANT VOICES

Humanitarian help is inclusive and should be accessible for everyone in need

*The **dignity of a person does not depend on whether they are citizens, migrants or refugees.** Saving the life of those who run away from war and misery is an act of humanity.*

*Refugees are not emigrants, they are people who are or have been forced to abandon their life, their home, their daily lives. **They do not come to steal and they are not terrorists. They are people like us who need support, and it is crucial to recognize this.***

Praise of other countries for the humanitarian aid they provide

*Spain agrees that the Aquarius can dock in Valencia for the landing of 629 refugees and migrants, including 123 children and seven pregnant women ... So **Spain does, for humanitarian reasons, what Italy and Malta, two other EU Member States, refused to do.***

Refugee support in Portugal is claimed to be too paternalistic

*We live in a **country that likes to give the fish but not teach how to fish.***

*Apparently **we follow the traditional paternalistic approach and provide just a little charity.** But actually this just reinforces stereotypes against migrants.*

Specific local support for migrants to learn the language and integrate into Portuguese society

*The Cascais Municipal Council used the **Fund for Asylum, Migration and Integration** to fund activities for the integration of immigrants and refugees. (...) This project contributes to minimize the difficulties experienced in professional and social integration, also allowing for the **preparation of seven students to take the Portuguese language test.***

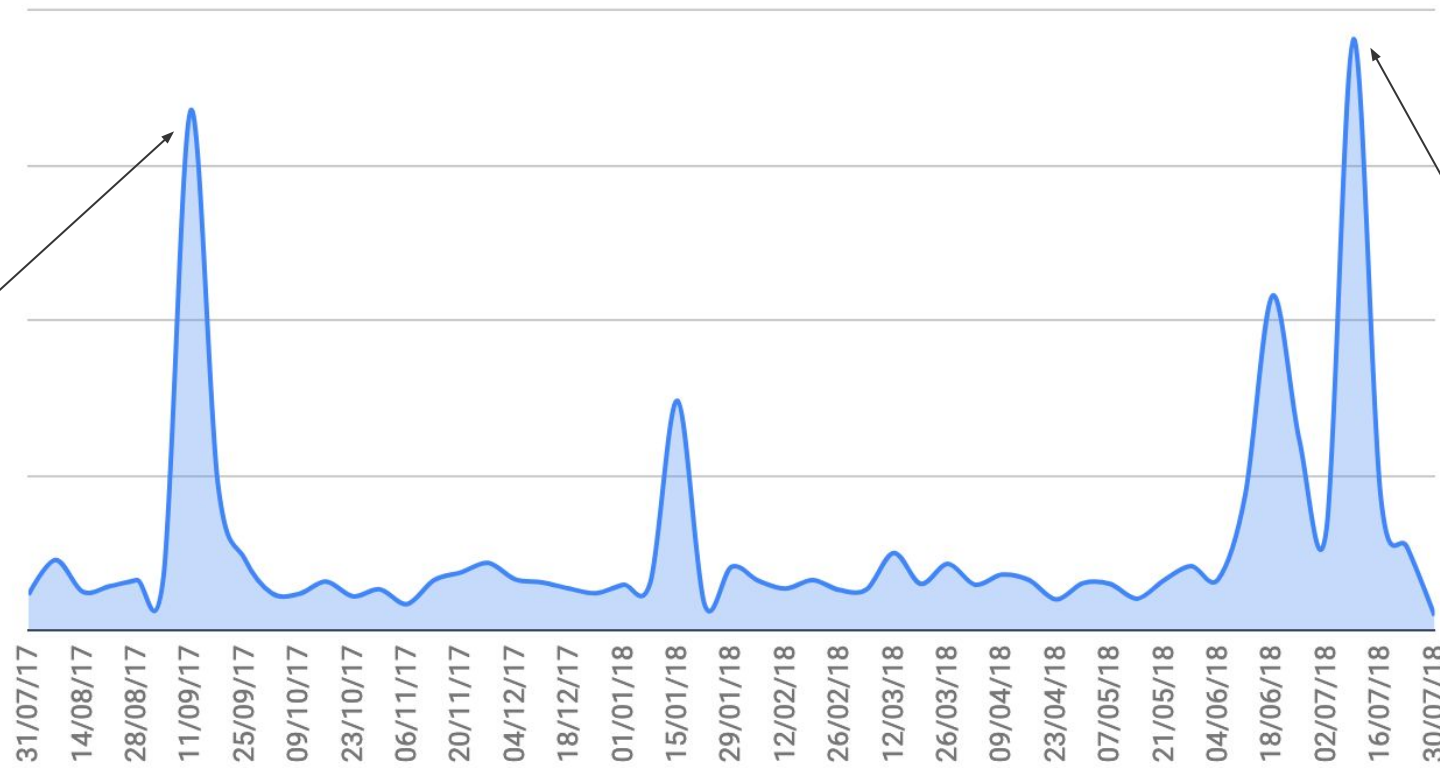
Pan-European Narratives | PT

Humanitarianism (3): Top Stories

International news of humanitarian disasters and success stories of those who overcame hardships of being a refugee, trigger substantial interest in the humanitarian discourse in Portugal.

Results:
~59,000 (57,8%)

Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel Peace Prize laureate is accused of supporting ethnic cleansing in Myanmar.



The success of Croatian soccer player Luka Modric in the FIFA World Cup is discussed in the context of him being a refugee during the Croatian war.

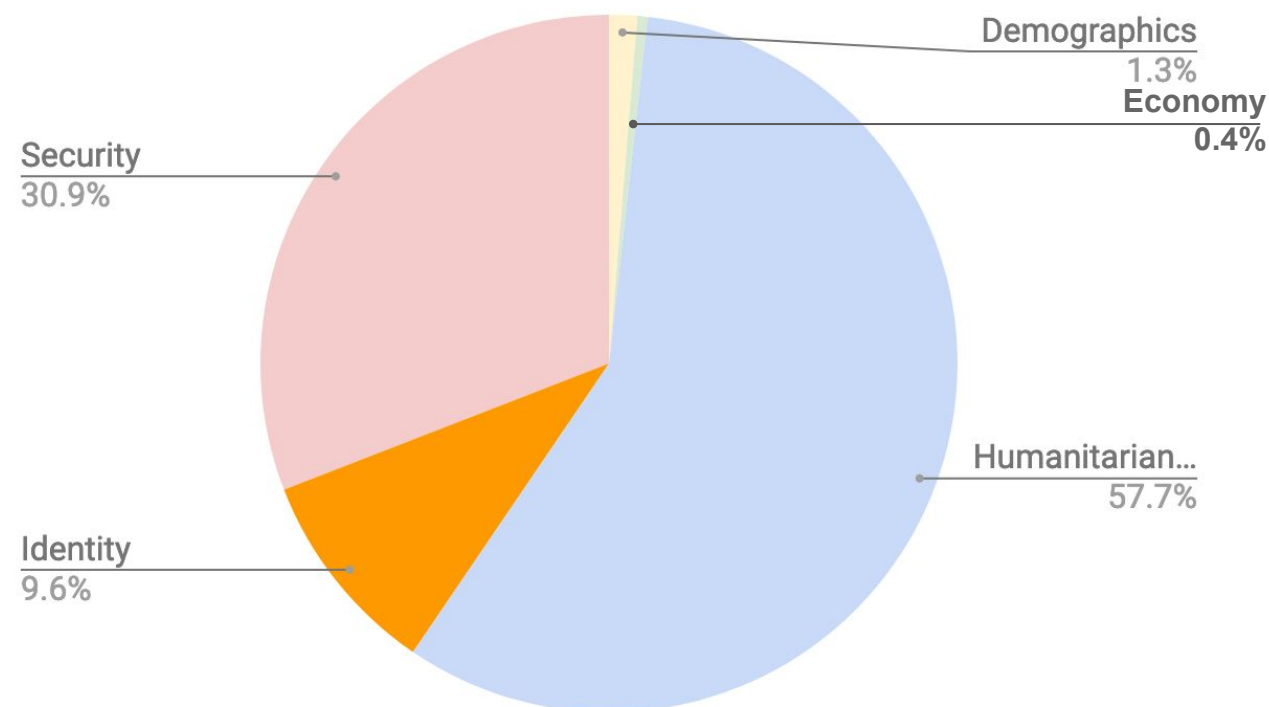
Humanitarianism

Pan-European Narratives | PT

Identity & Customs (1): Divided Views on Migration's Impact on Local Culture

Portuguese social media comments reveal a deeply divided approach to immigrants' integration to the local society. While some people call out racism and argue that immigrants enrich the Portuguese cultural landscape, others are very articulate about how such changes in the local culture are actually unwanted.

Some pieces of personal opinion receive wide exposure in the Portuguese public social space. For example, being a football-savvy country, many Portuguese relate to the identity crisis that developed around some of the most famous immigrant football stars in Europe, which adds to a better understanding of the context in which immigrants' identity is perceived.





Pan-European Narratives | PT

Identity & Customs (2): Quotes

ANTI-MIGRANT VOICES

Locals are disappointed over migrants' lack of Portuguese language skills

People barely speak Portuguese near the mosque of Lisbon or in the area of Martim Moniz square. And they do not show many signs of trying.

Immigrants are not welcome to initiate any change in the local culture

If you are an IMMIGRANT, you have NO right to complain about how the country is administered OR try to change the country. You're a guest. You must respect the people whose ancestors built the country and the culture. You must be GRATEFUL for people to let you in alone.

PRO-MIGRANT VOICES

Restaurant serving food prepared by Syrian refugees

One of the most interesting gastronomic experiences that you can have in Lisbon is also a great example of the country's openness to refugees. This is the Mezze restaurant, where food and service are provided by Syrian refugees.

Racist jokes are deemed unacceptable

You think it is normal to make jokes with slavery, race, or immigrants?? I am sorry to inform you but you are nothing more than totally inhumane and simply racist person.

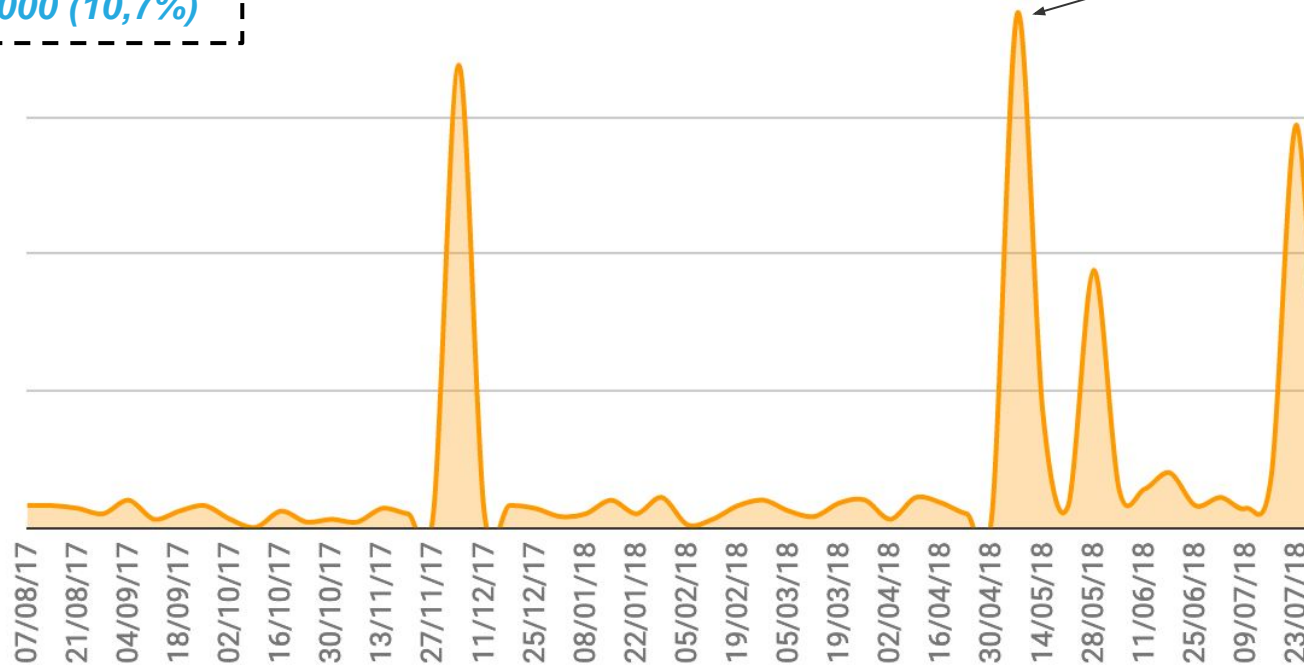


Pan-European Narratives | PT

Identity & Customs (3): Top Stories

Certain tweets become popular and are widely shared in the Portuguese online sphere. Some reflect cultural events in Portugal that were “hijacked” by artists from other countries, while others point to the EU-wide issue of the conditional pride over immigrants athletes.

Results:
~11,000 (10,7%)



Identity

#Eurovision 2018 in Lisbon was a joke. Here are the topics: Portugal: music about love and separation due to death; Spain: love of the purest and poetic way; France: refugees; Italy: terrorism. The winner is a weirdo from Israel, that was not even supposed to be in Eurovision because it is not European.

Benzema says: "When I score a goal I am French, when not, I am Arab" Lukaku says: "When things were going well, I was the Belgian striker ... when I was not, I was the Belgian striker of Congolese descent" **Özil says: "When we win, I'm a German. When we lose, I'm an immigrant"**

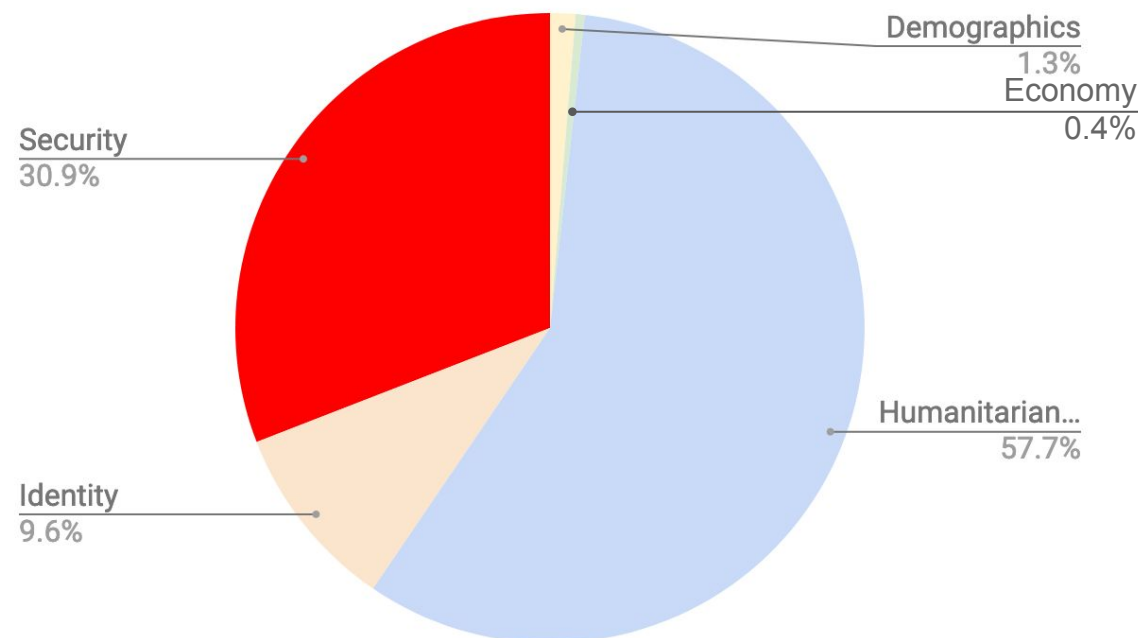


Security (1): Threat of Migrants Perceived on Micro Level

The security implications of migration is the second most discussed narrative in Portugal. While this issue is without doubt important, it appears to be two-tailed.

In this narrative, **online news** platforms are more prevalent, discussing mainly the **number of refugees** present in Europe and the **country-level policies** adopted either by Portugal, other EU member states, or the USA to manage the migrant influx.

On the other hand, **individual voices** echo a slightly xenophobic sentiment as they point out the **security threat implied by migrants**. Some people refer to everyday aspects such as public transportation influenced by the presence of migrants in Portugal, causing inconvenience to locals.



ANTI-MIGRANT VOICES

Crime committed by migrants is an apparent threat

*There is a real probability for refugee crime. Not because the country they come from, but due to the lack of means to survive. And a Portuguese thief is better than 2 refugee thieves... **Migrants simply bring unnecessary problems.***

Migrants' arrival causes inconvenience in the daily life of locals

*Until a few years ago there were no paygates at train stations in Portugal. People used to buy their tickets on the train without any problem. **But it seems that with the arrival of immigrants many were taking advantage and they had to install paygates.***

Government is accused that the laws towards migrants are too flexible

*We think that the government is giving in to "left radicalism" with the change of the law of foreigners. In practice **this allows anyone to have a residence permit in Portugal as long they have a promise of a work contract.** But let's note that according to these modifications **the State will no longer be able to expel someone who may have committed serious crimes against Portuguese society.**"*

NEUTRAL VOICES

News coverage on other EU member states' decisions to take in migrants

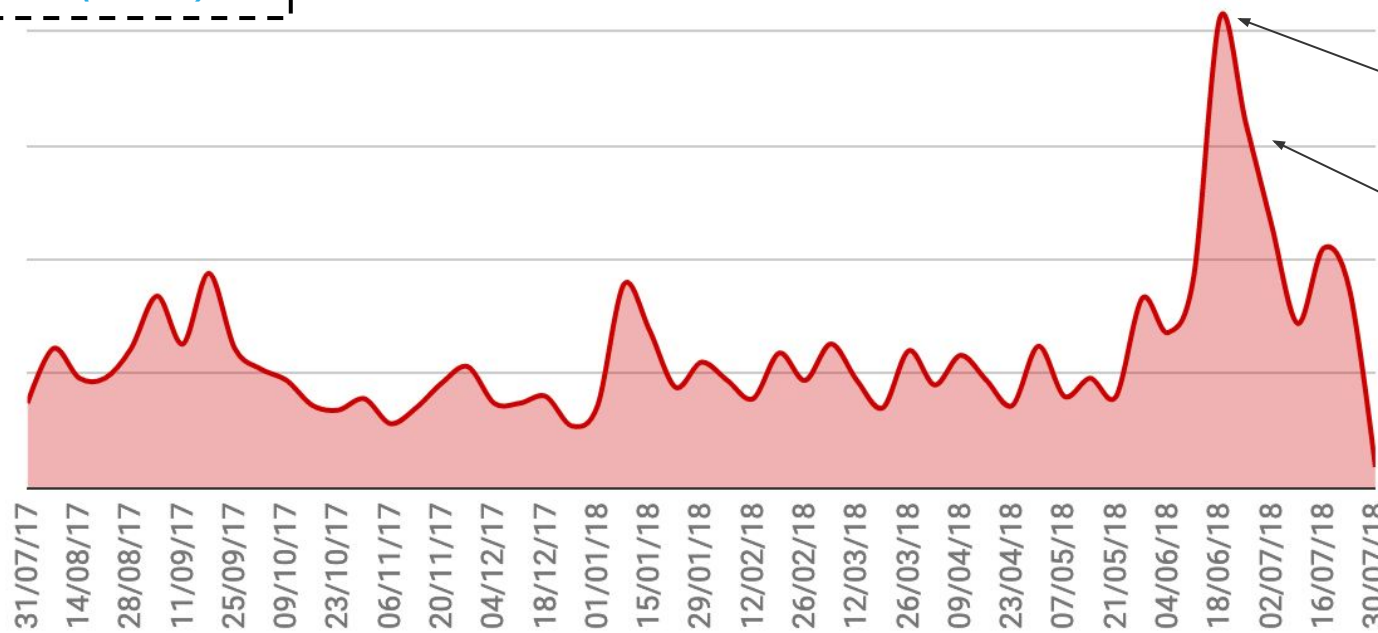
*The ship of the German non-governmental organization **Lifeline, which landed on Wednesday in Malta to land 233 immigrants, was detained** as a precautionary measure. Its' captain, Claus-Peter Reisch, was interrogated overnight.*

Pan-European Narratives | PT

Security (3): Top Stories

The Portuguese discussion on the security aspects of migration is in part fuelled by international events, such as Trump's management of the migration crisis in the USA. On the other hand, many people in Portugal discuss the implications of migration quotas and the EU-level regulation of refugee placement.

Results:
~31,000 (29,8%)



Scandal of Trump's child detention centers in the US trigger a conversation on the contradictory nature of the security threat posed by migration.

Commentary on the EU migration summit:
"This is a curious pile of shit, in which one country accepts the 'refugee quota' of another in exchange for money. They call it European Union."

Security

+ *Local Issues in Portugal Around Migration*



2.



Local Issues | PT

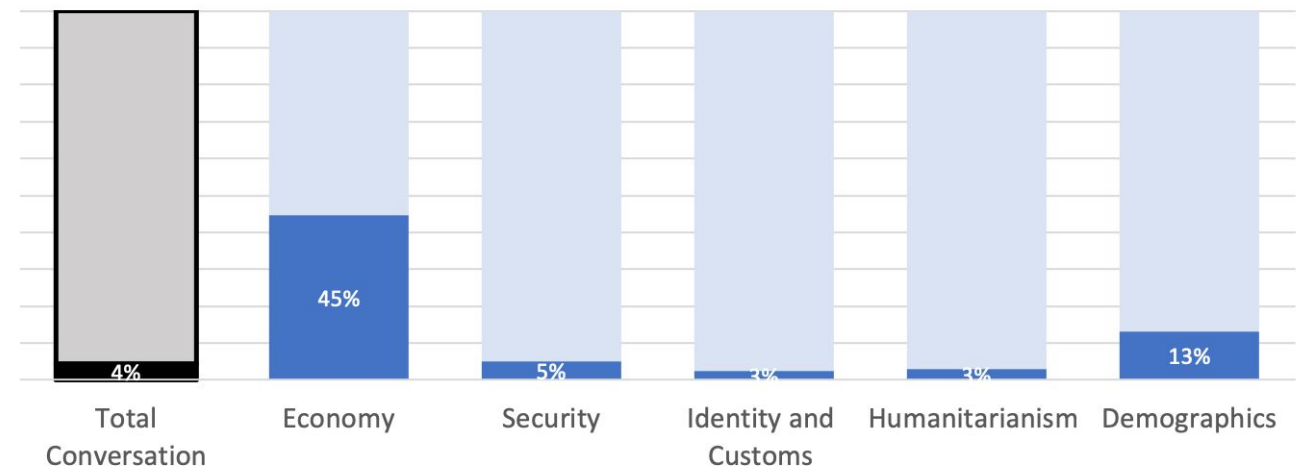
Portuguese Emigration

The European migration crisis is less of a concern in Portugal as the country witnesses large-scale emigration of the local youth, in search of better economic prospects. This issue is referred to in each aspect of migration, but people are most concerned about the economic and demographic consequences of Portuguese emigration.

Those who put local emigration in context with the current migration crisis, often represent the **zero-sum-game thinking** and point out that the funds used to support refugees should instead be utilized to strengthen the local economy, creating more jobs for Portuguese workforce.

*It is **beautiful to welcome thousands of refugees** just to look good to other countries, **while letting our people migrate** to other countries in search of a better life. Such a shame.*

*Just think about this. The previous prime minister Passos' actions lead to thousands of young Portuguese to emigrate because they could not find a promising future at home. **Now we are inviting refugees to live in Portugal, and spending money on their benefit.***



■ Share of comments within the narrative in the context of Portuguese emigration

+ *Migration in the Context of European- and Domestic Politics*



3.

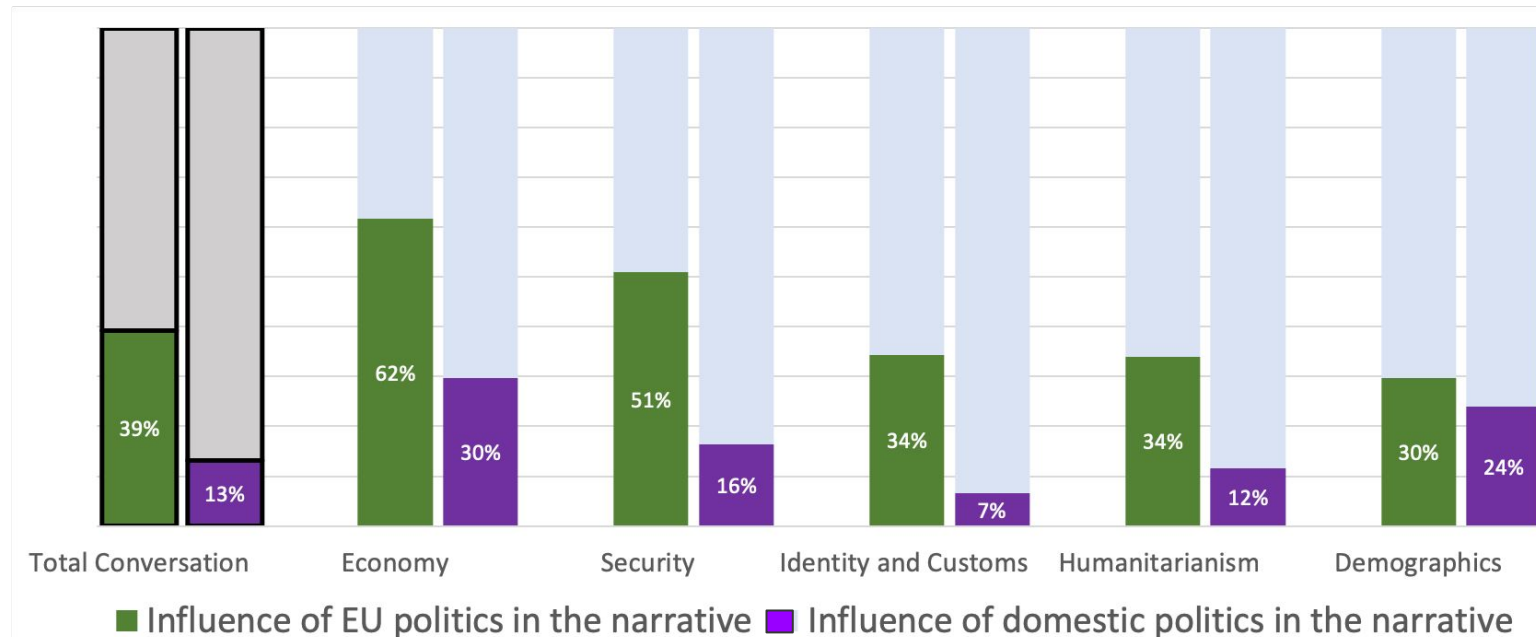


European and Domestic Politics Context within Narratives | PT

Migration: European Issue with Little Reference to Portuguese Politics

As the number of refugees in the country is minor, aspects of migration are mainly discussed in a European context. News of how refugees enter the European Union are widely shared – however, since refugees enter the EU in other countries, immediate management of the migration crisis is perceived as a European issue and not a Portuguese one.

Although the demographic and economic implications of migration are very rarely discussed in Portugal, some people emphasize the local politicians' role in introducing migrant workforce to fuel the Portuguese economic upturn.



+ *Discussion Tone in Portugal*

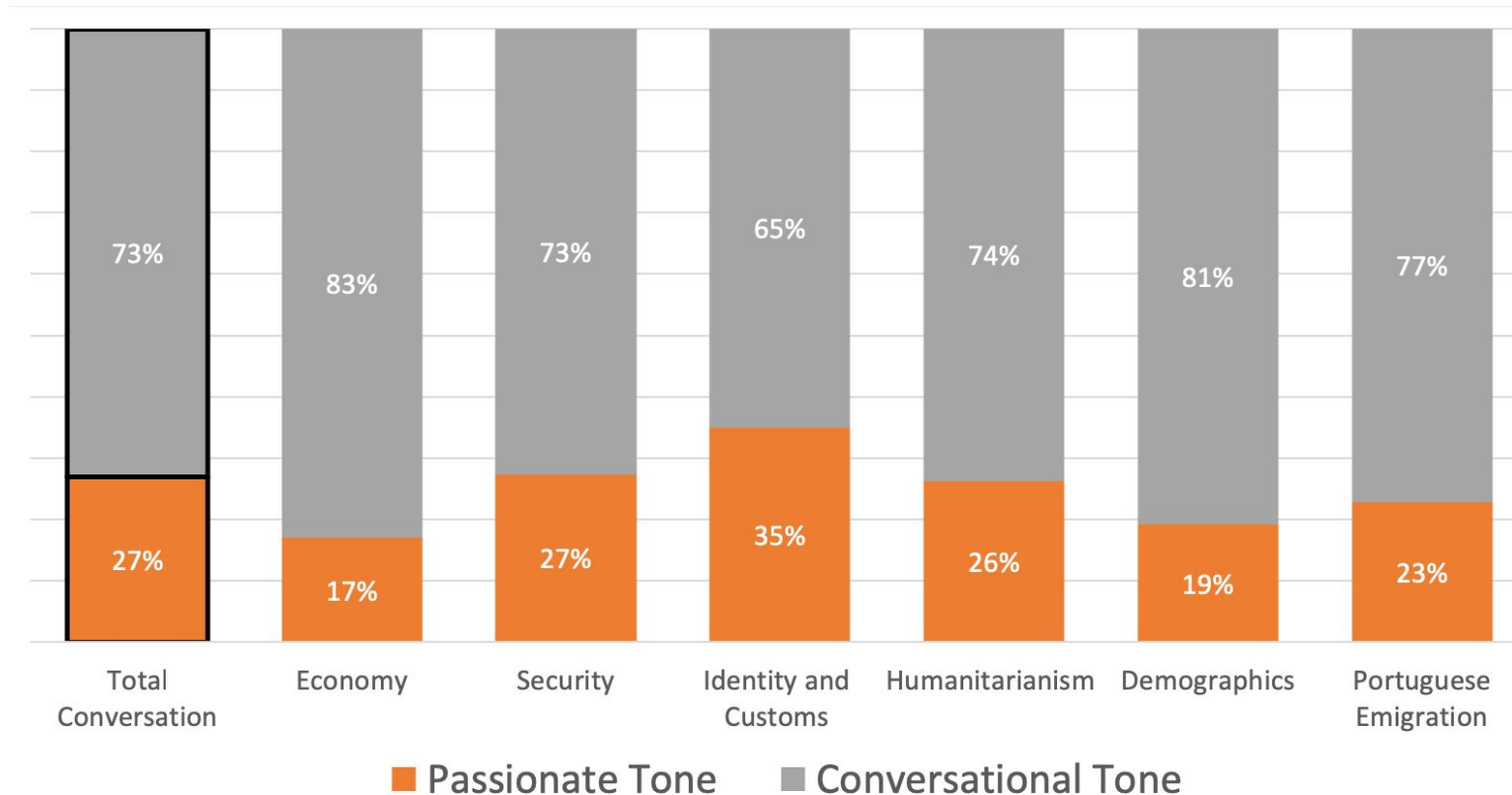


4.

Vigorous Conversations on Immigration's Cultural Consequences



The Portuguese conversation appears to be largely reserved. The greatest passion is expressed in connection with identity issues as Portuguese debate whether the cultural influence of immigration is beneficial or unfavourable for the country.



+ *Conversation Channels*



5.



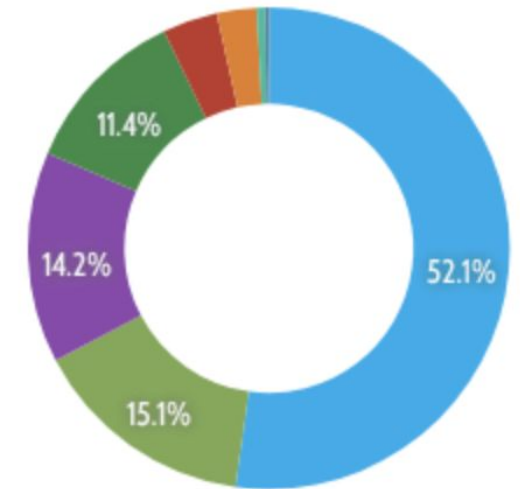
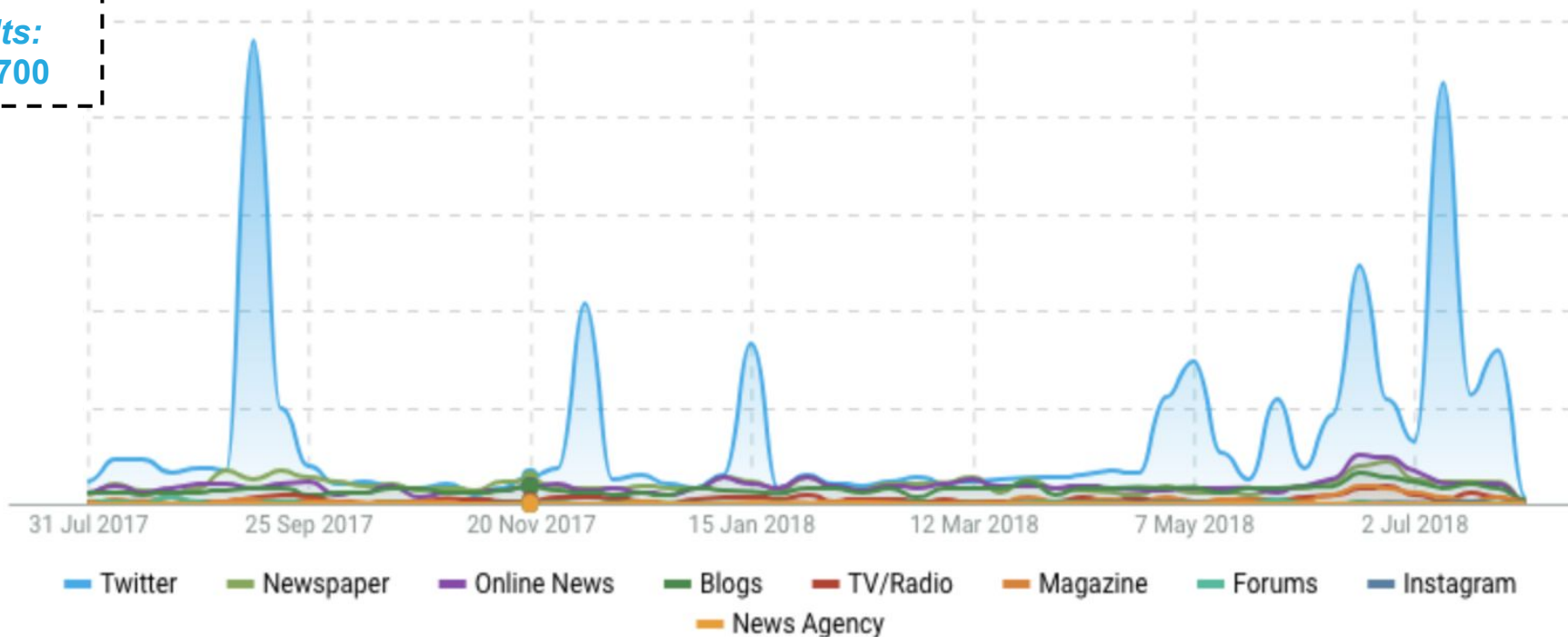
Channel Distribution | PT

Twitter and Online News Are Key Platforms

Half of the Portuguese public social media conversation takes place on **Twitter**. The intensity of activity on this platform closely follows the course of international events related to migration.

The other half of the conversation takes places on online news sites and blogs. The role of forums and other public social media platforms is minor.

Results:
~102,700



- Twitter
- Newspaper
- Online News
- Blogs
- TV/Radio
- Magazine
- Forums
- Instagram
- News Agency

Most Influential Authors | PT

Online News Sites Trigger Most of the Conversation

Content created by online news agencies drive the conversation in Portugal.

It appears that anti-migrant sentiment is represented mostly by individual users on Twitter.

Most Influential Online News Sites in the Overall Conversation

bbc.com	international news
publico.pt	leading online news site
observador.pt	leading online news site
dn.pt	"Diario de Noticias", leading online news site
expresso.sapo.pt	leading online news site
24.sapo.pt	leading online news site
sicnoticias.sapo.pt	leading online news site
pt.euronews.com	Portuguese edition of international news site
visao.sapo.pt	leading online news site
jn.pt	leading online news site

Most Influential Twitter Users in the Overall Conversation

@futtmais	football
@Publico	online news site
@OlympicCh_pt	sport
@observadorpt	online news site
@SICNoticias	online news site
@JornalNoticias	online news site
@DuploH	right-wing journalist
@apasmaceira	individual user with anti-immigrant tone
@FilipeBGuerre	individual user with anti-EU tone