

#2

(Executive summary)

# Monitoring xenophobic political discourses

A pilot study in Catalonia  
*-Executive summary-*

Ricard Zapata-Barrero  
Gema Rubio Carbonero

GRITIM-UPF Policy Series

April 2014



## Monitoring xenophobic political discourses:

A pilot study in Catalonia

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY-

Ricard Zapata-Barrero

Gema Rubio Carbonero

*GRITIM-UPF Policy Series*

#2 - April 2014

*(Executive Summary)*



Edited by:



Grup de Recerca Interdisciplinari sobre Immigració  
Departament de Ciències Polítiques i Socials  
Universitat Pompeu Fabra  
Carrer Ramon Trias-Fargas, 25-27  
08005 - Barcelona (Spain)  
[gritim@upf.edu](mailto:gritim@upf.edu)  
[www.upf.edu/gritim](http://www.upf.edu/gritim)

With the support of:



Coordination of the publishing process and copy-editing:  
Núria Franco-Guillén

This is the executive summary of the project *Monitoring xenophobic political discourses: a pilot study in Catalonia*, funded by the *Open Societies Initiative for Europe* (December, 2012-April, 2014). See: <http://www.upf.edu/gritim/projectes/internacionals/>

**Suggested citation:**

Zapata-Barrero, R. and Rubio-Carbonero, G. (2014) *Monitoring xenophobic political discourses: a pilot study in Catalonia- Executive summary*. Barcelona: GRITIM-UPF Policy Series, no. 2 [Free access: <http://www.upf.edu/gritim/pdf/gritimps2.pdf>]

Barcelona, April 2014

## 1. Presentation of the project: The need of a "radar" against xenophobic political discourses

Xenophobic political discourses are increasing their presence in Europe. It is even in the front door of several national governments and can even be the next headache of European institutions if they manage to win a parliamentary visibility in the next European Elections. At a time of economic crisis, political uncertainty and distrust of democratic institutions, migrants and ethnic minorities are particularly affected by unemployment and precarious working conditions. Economic downturn also creates fears among the general public that incite racist behavior, while it has led to financial public cuts to anti-racism activities in many countries. Some political parties are also interested in deviating public opinion attention to the crisis raising emotions and negative attitudes towards immigrants. For us, the way discourse on immigration is framed has consequences on the way the reality of immigration will be interpreted by society. Given how xenophobic discourses affect both at the level of society (legitimizing racist and xenophobic behaviors) and at the institutional level (legitimizing structural racism), the need to monitor them is fully justified.

But how do we make it? What methodological framework can we propose that is useful both for academics and for the main social and political actors? We interpret this framework as fulfilling the function of "road radar", which always leaves a margin of excess limits, but automatically takes a picture to those who exceed a fairly obvious way. As fulfilling this function, it provides a picture showing proof of having passed the threshold of *the discourse that our society can tolerate*. With such intentions it is also aimed to contribute to an *Ethics of political discourse on immigration*.

This framework has a descriptive and preventive dimension. It has mainly the objective to identify and counter any tendency of political parties of radicalizing their position towards xenophobia and racism, and to help parties to self-regulate their discourses. In order to test the viability of the proposed framework, we have implemented it to the context of Catalonia, as a pilot study with the aim to make it reproducible in other territories.

Accordingly, we will start by presenting the proposed framework in very straight forward terms, and then we will move into the description of the pilot study, to finally conclude with the main results of such a study and the policy recommendations we can offer in the light of the results.

## 2. The analytical framework

For the design of the framework we have considered conceptual resources from three main disciplines: political science, sociology and linguistics. Following a qualitative technique, we have identified three main analytical tools composed by a total fourteen standards that allow us to certify (*kitemarking*) xenophobic political tendencies, graduate (*framing*) how much xenophobic discourses are, and assess (*benchmarking*) what kind of rhetorical strategies are used to justify xenophobic political discourses. Ideally, *framing* and *benchmarking* are only applied to discourses that are certified as having xenophobic tendencies in *kitemarking*, but in the present test-case we have applied the framework to all discourses. In order to systematically assess that, we will quote 1 in each standard detected in discourse, according to the provided tips (see below), and we will quote 0 for those standards not detected in discourse.

**Kitemarking** is composed by 3 standards that allow us to certify discourse as having xenophobic tendencies. If the 3 standards are detected in a given discourse, such discourse is certified as having xenophobic tendencies. These standards are:

### 1. Strategies of target population:

- *Description*: Consider if discourse is explicitly or implicitly addressed to national citizens or to the whole population.
- *Tip*: Discourse addressed mainly to national citizens indicates discriminatory tendencies.

### 2. Strategies of polarization:

- *Description*: Consider if diversity and/or immigration is represented explicitly or implicitly in polarized terms (contrasting interests, positive-us vs. negative-them).
- *Tip*: Polarization of nationals vs. immigrants indicates discriminatory tendencies. Also explicit or implicit references to national preference are an indicative of discriminatory tendencies.

### 3. Strategies of negative representation:

- *Description*: Consider the presence of local strategies to represent diversity and/or immigration negatively: 1. **Generalizations** (“All immigrants are delinquents”), 2. **Hyperboles** (“the massive and constant arrival of immigrants is creating a national crisis”), 3. **Negative metaphors** (“the arrival of *waves/avalanches/tsunamis* of immigrants”), 4. **Dehumanizing terms** (“illegal, criminals, dangerous, violent, freeloaders, liars”).
- *Tip*: Negative representation of diversity/immigration is an indicator of discriminatory tendencies. If one or more of these local strategies are found, write “1” in this standard.

**Framing** is composed by 7 standards and allows us to graduate (from 4 to 10) how much xenophobic discourse is. The standards are divided in two main categories:

#### A. Lexical strategies

- *Description*: Lexical strategies have to do with the particular word selection and the meanings accompanying such a selection. Choosing one word instead of another to speak about a particular phenomenon involves a perspective and promotes a particular way of social interpretation in detriment of others.

#### 4. Countries of origin referred or preferred:

- *Description*: Consider which countries of origin are explicitly and implicitly referred in negative context.
- *Tip*: Frequent mentions to one or more particular countries in negative context are an indicator of discriminatory tendencies. Furthermore clear preference to some particular countries of origin is also an indicator of discriminatory tendencies.

#### 5. Religions referred or preferred:

- *Description*: Consider what religions are referred explicitly and what religions are referred implicitly through designation of which specific practices (pray, mosque, burqa, etc) or areas (education, administration, etc.) in negative contexts. State if there are preferences to particular religions.

- *Tip*: Frequent mentions to one or more particular religions (in negative terms) are an indicator of discriminatory tendencies. Furthermore, clear preference to some particular religions is also an indicator of discriminatory tendencies.
- 6. Languages referred or preferred:**
- *Description*: Consider which languages are explicitly and implicitly referred in negative contexts. State if there are preferences to particular languages.
  - *Tip*: Frequent mentions to particular languages in negative contexts are an indicator of discriminatory tendencies. Furthermore, clear preference of immigration with a particular language is an indicator of discriminatory tendencies.
- 7. Values referred:**
- *Description*: Consider which explicit and implicit values are associated with immigration ((in)morality, (in)tolerance, (in)equality, fanaticism, radicalism, (in)adaptation, etc.).
  - *Tip*: Majority of negative values is an indicator of discriminatory tendencies.
- B. Semantic strategies:**
- *Description*: They have to do with the construction and reconstruction of meanings through discourse.
- 8. Conceptualization of immigration:**
- *Description*: Consider how immigration is conceptualized: positive (challenge, opportunity, investment), negative (problem, conflict, concern) or neutral (phenomenon, issue, topic). Check textual references to immigration and the words accompanying to understand how it is conceptualized.
  - *Tip*: Majority of negative conceptualization of immigration is an indicator of discriminatory tendencies.
- 9. Global Meanings:**
- *Description*: It has to do with the **policy areas** (migration, integration, citizenship, co-development) and **policy issues** (legal, welfare, security, economic, identity) that are more (or less) frequent while dealing with immigration and how they are discursively constructed (positively, negatively, neutrally).
  - *Tip*: Majority of negative areas and issues is an indicator of discriminatory tendencies.
- 10. Global representation of national citizens and immigrants:**
- *Description*: In global terms, identify how national citizens and immigrants are represented (victim, aggressor, benefactor, beneficiary).
  - *Tip*: Negative representations of immigrants, especially if there is a contrast with positive representations of national citizens, is an indicator of discriminatory tendencies.

*Benchmarking* is composed by 4 standards and allows us to assess how xenophobic political discourse is justified and legitimized. It is divided in 2 main categories:

**A. Discursive rhetoric**

- *Description*: It has to do with the general socio-cognitive strategies used to convince, persuade and manipulate.
- *Tip*: State percentages for each *topos* and fallacy to find out if it is a more argumentative (majority of *topoi*) or manipulative (majority of fallacies) discourse. It may happen that one party combines both.

**11. Argumentative strategies:**

- *Description*: Consider which *topoi* are used and how many times: 1. **Threat** (“if we allow every one enter the country, then we won’t be able to cope with it”), 2. **Burden** (“since immigrants suppose and economic charge, then we cannot host everyone”), 3. **Advantage** (“since immigrants have norms and values different (worse) from us, then it is necessary that we teach them our norms and values for their own good”), 4. **Disadvantage** (“since immigrants are exploited by mafias, then it is necessary that we control and stop their entrance to our country”), 5. **reciprocity** (“since we have welcomed them, then they should adapt to our rules, norms and values”).
- *Tip*: High frequency of arguments representing immigration, as a burden or as a disadvantage or emphasizing the negative aspects (threats) of immigration reveal a tendency of discriminatory rhetoric.

**12. Manipulative strategies:**

- *Description*: Consider which *fallacies* are used and how many times: 1. Appeal to **fear** (“delinquent immigrants threat our security and, thus, they must be expelled out”), 2. Appeal to **pity** (“many immigrants die when they come to our coast, so it is necessary to control and stop the arrival of immigrants”), 3. Appeal to **international institutions** (“it is a EU’s compulsory rule” “France is doing the same”), 4. Appeal to **statistics** (“it’s not me, statistics link immigration and delinquency”), 5. Appeal to **rumors and prejudices** (“immigrants have many more social benefits than national citizens”).
- *Tip*: High frequency of fallacies representing immigration as a threat, immigrants as victims or that reproduces prejudices and rumors, reveal a tendency of discriminatory rhetoric.

**B. Political rhetoric**

- *Description*: It has to do with the ideological realization of particular strategies in order to legitimate xenophobic discourse by appealing to particular values (tradition or national citizens’ interests).
- *Tip*: State percentage of references for both rhetorics to find out which one prevails more for each party. It may happen that one party combines both rhetorics.

**13. Conservative rhetoric (traditionalism):**

- *Description*: Consider strategies that have the aim to preserve national values. Identify if arguments are justified by appealing to tradition or symbolic national values.
- *Tip*: References to (the defense of) tradition and national values (in detriment of others) show a tendency of xenophobic rhetoric.

**14. Populist rhetoric (citizenism):**

- *Description*: Consider strategies that have the aim to preserve national citizens’ interests or limit immigrants’ action. Identify if arguments are justified by appealing to national citizens’ interests.
- *Tip*: References to (the defense of) national citizens’ interest (in detriment of immigrants’ interests) show a tendency of xenophobic rhetoric.

### 3. The pilot study: Catalonia

For this pilot study, we have selected **6 political parties**: CiU (Convergence & Union), ERC (Republican left of Catalonia), ICV-EUiA (Green Initiative for Catalonia- United & Alternative Left), PPC (Popular Party of Catalonia), PSC (Socialist Party of Catalonia), PxC (Platform for Catalonia).

For each of these parties, we have selected three main formal **channels** (electoral programs, interviews and plenary sessions). The period of time selected corresponds to the two last **municipal** elections (2007, 2011) and the two last **autonomic** elections (2010, 2012) in Catalonia as a context to select programs and interviews, and the whole period of time (2007-2012) to select Plenary sessions.

According to these criteria, we have a total of **66 documentary sources** (23 electoral programs, 30 plenary sessions, and 13 interviews). If we consider the interventions done by each political party at the parliament, the 30 plenary sessions can be disaggregated into **71 interventions** (15 by CiU, 14 by ERC, 12 by ICV-EUiA, 13 by PPC, and 17 by PSC).

This means that we have a total of **107 individual implementations of the framework** (20 by CiU, 20 by ERC, 17 by ICV-EUiA, 21 by PPC, 23 by PSC, 6 by PxC). Each of these implementations has been registered in one individual template.

In order to cope with such amount of information, implementation is been done in four levels:

1. Level 1: **qualitative** individual analysis of each of the 107 interventions classified by political parties. This qualitative analysis has been developed by **four different coders** with different academic backgrounds (political science, economics and management, international relations and linguistics), in order to minimize the possible subjectivity of one simple coder.  
At this level, it is counted the presence or absence of each of the discursive strategies. Furthermore, for global meanings, we select the four most

frequent policy areas and issues in each intervention and how they are constructed (positively, negatively or neutrally). Besides, for discursive rhetoric, we select the three most frequent rhetorical strategies (either *topoi* or *fallacies*) in each intervention.

2. Level 2: **quantitative** analysis. We sum up the results obtained in level 1 and we establish proportions, that are applied as follows:

Tool	Standard	Proportionally to
Kitemarking (certification)	Discourse recipient	Total number of interventions by all parties
	Polarization	Total number of interventions by all parties
	Local Strategies	Total number of interventions by all parties
Framing (graduation)	Countries, religions & languages referred	Total number of interventions by all parties
	Values associated	Total number of values (positive and negative)
	Conceptualization	Total number of conceptualizations
	Global meanings	Total number of interventions by all parties
Benchmarking (rhetoric)	Global representation of immigrants	Total number of interventions by all parties
	Discursive rhetoric	Total number of interventions by all parties
	Political rhetoric	Total number of interventions by all parties

Source: own elaboration

3. Level 3: we implement the **results** obtained in level 2, by indicating “1” if a discriminatory tendency is detected, or “0” if there is not presence of such tendencies for each standard. This allows us to *certify* if discourse has xenophobic tendencies (3 standards), to *graduate* how much xenophobic discourse is (from 4 to 10) and to *assess* what kind of rhetoric (argumentative or manipulative, populist or conservative) is being used to legitimize discourse.
4. Level 4: once we have all the main results, we can cross over different **variables** in order to answer the questions we want to find out.

According to this application, we offer here a general overview of the results obtained that will allow us to establish some policy recommendations on how to construct a non-xenophobic (and even anti-xenophobic) political discourse.

#### 4. General findings: General behavior of political discourse in Catalonia

1. **Catalan political discourse does not certify xenophobic discursive tendencies:** As we will see in the next section, only one of the three minimum requirements defined as kitemarking in our framework has been detected in Catalan political discourse. Therefore, even if we cannot say that there is a clear pattern of xenophobic tendencies, we cannot ignore that there are some negative representations of immigrants that need to be assessed.
2. **The right / left wing discourse construction is significantly different:** While left and centre-left wing parties (ICV-EUiA, ERC, PSC) present a more proactive discourse towards immigration, the right and centre-right wing parties (CiU, PPC and PxC) have shown, each party to different extents and with particular characteristics, more discriminatory tendencies. In this sense, we could say there is an intrinsic relationship between right wing ideologies and the construction of discourse on immigration and diversity issues, according to the sources analyzed.
3. **There is a difference in political discourse between nationalist and Spanish state-based parties:** On the one hand, most nationalist parties (but ICV-EUiA) often appeal to traditional Catalan values to legitimate their proposals, their attitudes and policies, and interpose Catalan language and identity as the one that should be adopted by everyone, in priority terms in relation to the Spanish one. However, there are two meaningful differences in discourse between CiU and ERC: firstly, CiU (55%) articulates this language and national identity rhetoric more frequently than ERC (20%); secondly, while ERC's discourse focuses mainly on the preference for Catalan language, CiU as well establishes Catalan identity, values and principles as preferred. Nevertheless, both parties use more frequently an argumentative rhetoric (CiU: 71% and ERC: 82%), rather than a conservative one.  
On the other hand, PPC (19%) and PxC (17%) show also some occurrences of conservative rhetoric, but there are more cases of populist rhetoric (43% and 83% respectively). Hence, both parties appeal mostly to national citizens' interests as a way to legitimate their policies and attitudes. By contrast, CiU and ERC do not use this populist rhetoric at all.

- Finally, the rest of parties (ICV-EUiA, PSC) do not articulate their rhetoric in any of these ways, but rather, use an argumentative discourse focused on the possible advantages or disadvantages that their proposed policies or attitudes can bring to the host society, to immigrants or to both of them.
4. **There is a difference in discourse when parties are in opposition or in government.** In the case of CiU, there is a change in discourse when the party is in government and in opposition regarding the recipient or beneficiary of political discourse. That is to say, while CiU is in opposition within the period considered (from 2007 to 2010) most discourse is uniquely addressed to national citizens or enounced from the citizenship perspective. However, when autonomic elections approach in 2010 and the subsequent period in which CiU is in the government, we see how discourse turns to be addressed to both national citizens and immigrants.  
In the case of ERC, ICV-EUiA and PSC (the tripartite in the government within the period considered from 2007 to 2010), we can see a difference in the way immigrants are represented. While these parties are in coalition in the government the general tendency is to represent immigrants as *beneficiaries* of the policies and proposals made by these parties. However, when these parties become the opposition, the general representation of immigrants is as *passive victims* of the (presupposed) bad management of the government's actions. In this sense, the legitimization of these parties' proposals and policies is done through the victimization of immigrants as a way to construct criticism against government performance. It has to be acknowledged, though, that for ERC this pattern is not as clear as for the other two parties of the coalition.
  5. **There is a difference in political discourse in the electoral contexts:** We can say that all the discriminatory strategies are more prominent during 2010 and 2011, followed by 2007 (and in most cases, by 2012), while 2008 and 2009 are the years when these strategies are less recurrent and, some of them, even inexistent. Therefore, it seems that most frequent occurrences of discriminatory tendencies appear during the years when there are elections in Catalonia at both municipal (2007, 2011) and autonomic levels (2010, 2012). While the pattern for 2012 is not very consistent, it is clear that 2008 and 2009 are the years with less prominence of discriminatory tendencies detected in discourse. This seems to indicate that immigration is most commonly problematized and used with electoral aims when elections are approaching.



## 5. Concrete findings regarding discursive construction

We are offering here the results obtained for each of the fourteen standards (having in mind that each of the two last points include two standards):

### a) Kitemarking (Certification)

1. **Catalan political discourse is mainly addressed to both** (national citizens and immigrants) in 67% of the sources analyzed, while it is uniquely addressed to national citizens in 29% of the sources and only in 4% is only addressed to immigrants. Accordingly, we cannot say here that there is a clear discriminatory tendency.
2. **Polarization occurs in less than half** of the sources analyzed (36%) and this is why we cannot consider it as a clear discriminatory tendency. However, there is still some significant presence of this polarization that could be minimized.
3. There is not a high frequency of none of the local strategies in isolation. But **all together appear in a 69% of the sources analyzed**. In particular, *dehumanizing terms*, *hyperboles* and *metaphors* appear all of them in 19% of the sources analyzed, while *generalizations* appear in 13% of the sources. The fact that most of these local strategies are subtle, and might even be unconscious, may explain why they are so frequent in political discourse. Precisely because some of them form so much part of the migration discursive repertory, they are never assessed and simply reproduced.

### b) Framing (Graduation)

4. In the sources analyzed **there are very few references to particular countries in negative contexts** (8%) and also preferences are quite low (7%). Regional areas such as South America and East Europe are set as the preferred sending zones. These preferences, nevertheless, seem to be very much connected with the cultural/religious proximity that these countries supposedly share with Catalonia and, in general, with sphere of Christian

influence. However, this frequency is rather low to be considered as a discriminatory tendency.

5. In Catalan political discourse, **Islam is the only religion that is referred in negative contexts** in 13% of the sources analyzed, while preferences for Christian/Catholic religion only appear in 7% of the sources. Once again, this frequency is rather low to be considered as a discriminatory tendency.
6. In this case, it is important to make a distinction, since, on the one hand, **only PxC** (in less than 3% of the sources analyzed) emphasizes that it is preferred to receive immigrants that speak Spanish rather than other languages. In this sense, this is connected with the preference of immigrants coming from South America, where shared culture and religions with the host society are presupposed. On the other hand, CiU (in 30% of CiU's sources), ERC (in 40% of ERC's sources) and, to a less extent, PSC (in 13% of PSC's sources) establish Catalan as the language that should be adopted by everyone, in detriment of Spanish language firstly, and other languages secondly. Nevertheless, in total numbers, **Catalan political discourse shows a preference for Catalan language in 12%** of the sources analyzed, precisely because ICV-EUiA, PPC and PxC do not show such a preference. Consequently, while the case of PxC indicates a discriminatory tendency towards particular groups of immigrants, the case of CiU, ERC and PSC is more related to the protection and emphasis of Catalan as the language allocated on a priority position, compared to other languages, because Catalan language has less legal and political protections than Spanish one, which is the official language of the State. Hence, we have not considered it as discriminatory, because in most cases the acceptance of the presence of other languages (even if they are subordinated to Catalan language) is acknowledged. Consequently, we can say that there is not a discriminatory tendency regarding languages.
7. In Catalan political discourse, **there is more presence of positive values associated with immigration** (58%) than negative ones (42%). Regarding positive values, the most frequent and common to all parties (but PxC that does not associate any positive values at all) are *social cohesion*, *pluralism* and *equality*. Also quite frequent are values such as *development*, *progress* and *creativity*. By contrast, most frequent negative values are *inequality*, *insecurity*, *maladjustment*, *social disruption*, *intolerance* and *fanaticism*. Hence, even if we cannot say that there is a consistent pattern of discriminatory tendency

regarding the association of values, we should not disregard the high frequency of negative values associated with immigration.

8. Catalan political discourse **mostly conceptualizes immigration in neutral terms** (56%), such as *topic*, *phenomenon* or *issue*. Positive and negative conceptualizations are equally frequent (22%). Most recurrent positive conceptualizations include terms such as *opportunity*, *challenge* or *investment*, while negative conceptualizations mostly refer to terms such as *problem*, *concern* or *conflict*. Accordingly, there is not a clear pattern of discriminatory tendencies in this sense either.
9. **Positive constructions (42%) are more frequent than negative (32%) and neutral constructions (26%)**. By far the most frequent policy area is *integration*, which appears in 90% of the sources analyzed. However, there are differences in how this area is covered and what meanings are emphasized or de-emphasized. Accordingly, *integration* appears described in positive terms (or framed as something positive) in 47% of the sources. By contrast, *integration* in negative terms and/or emphasizing negative topics appears in 21% of the sources, while neutral constructions appear in 22% of the total. In this sense, we could say that in Catalan political discourse *integration* is mostly constructed in positive terms. Regarding the issues that are more frequently dealt with when speaking about immigration and/or diversity, *welfare* issues appear in the first position, in 49% of the sources, mostly constructed in positive terms (26%), while neutral (15%) and negative constructions (8%) are much lower. However, the second and third most prominent issues are *identity* (48%) and *migration* (43%), which are both of them mostly negatively constructed (21% and 17% of the sources respectively). All in all, though, Catalan political discourse offers more frequently a positive construction of the immigration phenomenon and, hence, we cannot consider it as having discriminatory tendencies in this regard.
10. In Catalan political discourses **immigrants are more prominently represented as beneficiaries** (60%) of the proposals and policies developed by each party. It is also very frequent the representation of immigrants as *victims* (47%) of the (supposedly) bad management of immigration policies by the government (either Tripartite or CiU). Representations of immigrants as *aggressors* are less recurrent (28% of the sources), but still quite

present. Finally, it is important to remark that representations of immigrants as **benefactors are rather low** (12% of the sources).

Therefore, the relatively high frequency of representations of immigrants as *aggressors*, combined with the low representations of immigrants as *benefactors* shows that in this regard there is room for discursive improvement.

### c) Benchmarking (Rhetoric)

11. In Catalan political discourse, the **main discursive rhetoric is argumentative** (73%), rather than manipulative (27%). The most common *argumentative* strategy is the *topos of advantage*, by which arguments are justified by appealing to the positive consequences that the proposals offered may bring to the host society. However, there is also a meaningful presence (47% of the sources) of those strategies that justify arguments by representing immigration as a **threat** (*appeal to fear*), as a **burden** for the host society (*topos of burden*), or by reproducing **rumours and prejudices** (*appeal to rumours*), which are indicators of discriminatory tendencies.
12. **Conservative and populist rhetoric are not very high** in Catalan political discourse. In particular, *conservative* rhetoric appears in 19% of the sources, and *populist* rhetoric only in 13%. *Conservative* rhetoric manifests particularly in the shape of Catalan values and identities that should be preserved over the rest. *Populist* rhetoric appears mainly by interposing the political leader or political party as the voice of national citizens and the only one fighting for their interests. It is positive that these two types of rhetoric are not very frequent in Catalan political discourse, but, once again, its presence, as the presence of the rest of discriminatory tendencies, could be minimized.

## 6. Policy recommendations

We have seen that, in global terms, **Catalan political discourse does not show a very consistent and generalized xenophobic discursive pattern**. However it shows some characteristics, even if they are subtle, which represent immigration in a negative way or associate particular negative



issues with the presence of immigrants. Therefore, this tool can be especially useful for these parties that can be unconsciously reproducing a number of discriminatory tendencies through their discourse. Precisely, because **subtle forms of discrimination are also forms of xenophobic tendencies**, this tool can help to correct these tendencies and also to help parties to have a more combative stance against those that reproduce xenophobic discursive tendencies.

We assume there is a first category of parties that explicitly construct their discourse against immigrants. Furthermore, they represent immigration with the majority of standards of the interpretative framework we have proposed, and they do so voluntarily and strategically. However, there might be a second category in which the frequency that parties use these negative standards is low and could be, even, involuntary. For the first category of political parties, this tool may not be useful because probably they will not be interested in self-regulating their discourse. However, it will be helpful for NGOs and for other parties and civil society in general, since **this tool provides a simple mechanism that helps to quickly detect xenophobic tendencies**, especially at the three initial certification standards. For the second category, the interpretative framework plays the function of **making visible involuntary discriminatory tendencies**.

Furthermore, within each political party, there might be a combination of positive, neutral and negative approaches to the representation of immigration through the discourse of different political participants. As most literature remarks, there is a **hegemonic tendency of political parties that produce xenophobic discourses** to become a reference discursive frame with its corresponding contagious effects to other parties or other members of the party. This may force parties or political actors to enter into a debate that they have not created. In this sense, this tool can be useful to minimize hegemonic xenophobic tendencies within and among political parties, by offering a solid conceptual tool to parties/political actors, so that they can back up their position with

objective and academically reliable arguments, **avoiding that this hegemonic tendency expands**.

Apart from the application of this tool, in the light of the results obtained, and always considering that we have constructed and applied an exploratory methodology as a pilot study, we can also provide the following policy recommendations:

- a. This interpretative framework can be considered as an ethical code to be applied for regulating the limits and a certain threshold of political discursive behavior. This also means that **it is necessary to create a public ethics of political discourse on immigration and diversity**, which allows monitoring xenophobic tendencies of political parties and, at the same time, sets boundaries about what we can or cannot accept as political discourse in a democratic society in terms of principles for action. One of the first principles of this ethics is the **self-regulation between political parties and within each party**.
- b. To construct an ideal non xenophobic discourse that can serve as self-regulative reference, it is necessary to keep in mind the following considerations:
  - **Political discourse on immigration should be addressed to the whole population**, not only to national citizens, and should avoid making polarizations between national citizens and immigrants. It is necessary, therefore, to start talking about us and let apart the division between *Us* and *Them*. In addition, it is recommended to become more aware of these strategies that represent immigration (or particular groups of immigrants) negatively, primarily as a threat or a burden for the host society, as well as avoid generalizations and hyperboles that maximize and problematize the phenomenon of immigration.
  - In line with the above, it is crucial that **discourse focuses on the positive aspects of diversity and the presence of immigrants**. Therefore, it is important to find a balance, so that the overall result does not only present problems, but also the real opportunities that diversity and immigration can bring to society. In this sense, these opportunities must be described explicitly (as problems are described) and not just simply referred to.

- It is needed to **become aware of subtle discriminatory discursive constructions**, such as the association of a high number of negative values with immigration, or the recurrent representation of immigrants as aggressors. On the contrary, positive values association should be in accordance with positive representations of immigrants as active benefactors, as playing an active and participative role in creating opportunities for host societies.
  - It is advisable that **parties acquire a commitment to deal with immigration and diversity issues in a transparent and rigorous way**, leaving apart ideological or strategic aspects and, rather, focusing on the description of reality as it is. In this sense, the more a society knows about reality, the more difficult would be that discourses, based on distorted stereotypes, spread out.
- c. We understand that xenophobic discursive tendencies manifest actively against immigrants. However, we have seen that **there is an implicit (or passive) discriminatory tendency in the nationalist discourse that prioritizes the own identity and nation**, although there is not an active construction of a negative perception about immigrants. In this sense, when there is a protectionist policy and a promotion of the own identity and culture, it would be advisable to avoid strategies that prioritize this identity over others or that subordinate them to the own one. Therefore, it is important that, together with nationalist discourse, there must be an explicit recognition of other identities, which should also be promoted, in order to avoid the establishment of power relations between majority and minority members, which could be the initial premises of new xenophobic tendencies that replace the more obvious polarization between *Us* and *Them*.
- d. We have seen that Catalan political discourses associate a number of positive values with immigration in theory, mainly in their electoral programs, which show the main position, attitude and ideology of each of the political parties. However, there seem to be a gap between this theoretical values and how discourse on immigration is constructed in practice. In other words, while there is a whole range of positive values associated with immigration, these values do not seem to appear in how political discourse is actually constructed when dealing with immigration and diversity issues. For example, in spite of the presence of all the positive values that in theory are associated with immigration (such as *progress*, *opportunity*), in practice discourse does not entirely represent immigrants as

- active *benefactors* for the host society. In this sense, this gap may be reduced by actually representing immigrants as active participants in society, by focusing also in the opportunities of such participation, in order to find a balance with the necessary focus on problems and conflicts that political discourse crucially needs to address. Precisely, because **politicians mainly deal with problems to be solved, it is important to find this balance, so that immigration is not only represented or constructed in negative terms**.
- e. In spite of the context of economic crisis, economic issues are not very frequent when dealing with immigration and diversity issues, and references to immigrants as economic burdens are not very frequent either. In particular, on average considering all the political parties, only 7% of the total of sources is dedicated to such representation of immigrants as an economic burden. In this sense, we could say that **immigration has not been exploited within the context of economic crisis**. However, we have found a significant difference in discourse between when parties are in government or opposition, since the global representation of immigrants is worse when parties are in opposition. In this sense, it seems that **immigration is instrumented when parties are in opposition to construct the main criticism against government's action**, either by emphasizing the (presupposed) damage that immigration causes to society, or by victimizing immigrants, due to the (supposedly bad) government's action. It is, therefore, necessary to avoid using immigration and diversity as a tool to construct the offense or the critique towards government.
- f. In line with the previous point, we have seen that there is more presence of discriminatory tendencies in Catalan political discourse in those years when there have been elections, especially in 2010 and 2011. This also corresponds with the two years when there was more media coverage of declarations of different political leaders and parties about several conflicts related to immigration and diversity issues. In this sense, it is advisable to **avoid using immigration as an electoral tool**, by making it problematic.
- g. The distinction between **non-xenophobic and anti-xenophobic** discourse is, we think, significant. It is clearly positive that political parties mostly construct their discourse without xenophobic tendencies, but apparently it is still a challenge to adopt a combative stance that does not allow other parties to reproduce xenophobic discourses. In this regard, in order to adopt an anti-xenophobic attitude that makes visible when other parties exceed the threshold that a society can tolerate, it is necessary to have a simple tool

as the one we propose here, which allows to certify and graduate xenophobic discourse with objective arguments. This is needed, because we have seen that some discursive constructions are xenophobic, even if they do not actively go against immigrants and these discursive forms are more difficult to detect and identify. Therefore, once these more subtle discriminatory forms have been detected, mainstream political parties should adopt a combative attitude towards them, so that they do not become trivialized and/or expand.

- h. In relation with this last recommendation, it is necessary to **request political parties and government bodies to develop instruments to prevent xenophobia** and to encourage them to play a more active role in the prevention of xenophobic tendencies.

## Acknowledgments

This project has counted with two consultative boards that combine the academic and the social dimension of the project. However, the authors of this report are the only ones fully responsible for the results processes of the pilot study. These boards are composed by:

- a) **International Academic Board:** related to the studies of racist and xenophobic discourse, and quantitative and qualitative analysis, and studies on immigration.

1. Mohamed-Ali **Adraoui:** Science Po. Association Graines de France.
2. Jamie **Bartlett:** Centre for the Analysis of Social Media, Demos.
3. Scott **Blinder:** Migration Observatory Compas.
4. Sebastien **Chauvin:** Department of Sociology. University of Amsterdam.
5. Regis **Dandoy:** Department of Political Science. University of Zurich.
6. Catherine **Fieshi:** Counterpoint.
7. Dirk **Jacobs:** Department of Sociology. Université Libre de Bruxelles.
8. Nonna **Mayer:** CNRS/ Centre of European Studies of Science Po.
9. Anna **Triandafyllidou:** Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. European University Institute.
10. Teun A. **van Dijk:** Department of Translation and Language Sciences. GRITIM-UPF. Pompeu Fabra University.
11. Ruth **Wodak:** Department of Linguistics. Lancaster University.

b) **Socio-political local board:**

1. Carles **Campuzano**: President of ACSAR.
2. Ghassan **Saliba**: President of CITE-CCOO in immigration.
3. Anna **Terrón**: Ex-secretary of the State of immigration
4. Daniel **de Torres**: Expert of Council of Europe in interculturality and ex-commissioner of immigration in Barcelona City Council.
5. Juan **de Dios Ramírez Heredia**. Lawyer and journalist. President of Unió Romani and exDeputy in the congress and European parliament.

Xenophobic political discourses are increasing their presence in Europe. It is even in the front door of several national governments and can even be the next headache of European institutions. At a time of economic crisis, political uncertainty and distrust of democratic institutions, political parties can have the temptation in deviating public opinion attention raising negative emotions towards immigrants. The way political discourse on immigration is framed has consequences on the way the reality of immigration will be interpreted by society. Given how xenophobic discourses affect both at the level of society and at the institutional level, the need to monitor them is fully justified. But how do we make it? The present study proposes an analytical framework fulfilling the function of a “road radar” to picture xenophobic tendencies of political parties. The present test-case has been applied at Catalonia for the whole period of 2007-2012. This pilot study has mainly the objective to identify and counter any tendency of political parties of radicalizing their position towards xenophobia, and to help them to self-regulate their discourses, as well as to civil society to accomplish its critical function.



## GRITIM-UPF Policy Series

GRITIM-UPF Policy Series aims at disseminating outcomes of studies contributing on the making public policies. The objective is to contribute to the research/policy nexus with a series that can be both a common ground for researcher, policy makers, stakeholders and representatives of civil society committed to the management of immigration and diversity.

GRITIM-UPF (Interdisciplinary Research Group on Immigration) is a multi-departmental group at Universitat Pompeu Fabra made up of researchers from different disciplines who are interested in aspects of innovation in research and management of change processes arising from human mobility and immigration. The group's main objectives are to promote theoretical and applied research related to political and social agendas.