

Campaigns in Transition: Spain's Radical Left Reframed

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Abstract

This article examines the communicative transformation of the Spanish radical left in the 2019 and 2024 European Parliament elections. The study analyses how these actors reconfigured their campaign communication regarding emotional framing, Europeanisation, and visual style during a phase of party institutionalisation and organisational reconfiguration. Drawing on an integrated theoretical framework that connects research on emotional political communication, communicative Europeanisation, and multimodal campaigning, the article advances the concept of communicative normalisation. This concept captures how processes of institutional adaptation are reflected not only in programmatic or ideological shifts, but also in the emotional tone, territorial framing, and visual grammar of campaign communication. Methodologically, this study employs a mixed-methods design based on the systematic coding of 126 campaign materials—posters, videos, and social media content—combined with Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) and Fisher's exact tests. The MCA identifies two main dimensions structuring the communicative space: a substantive central concept contrasting emotionally charged and Europeanised messages with more rational and nationally framed discourse, and a stylistic central concept distinguishing symbolic-affective formats from technocratic and informational presentations. The results show that 2019 campaign was characterised by higher emotional intensity, symbolic European references, and greater visual expressiveness, whereas in 2024 they used more rationalised, nationally oriented, and standardised communicative repertoires, albeit with internal variation between the two groups. This

article contributes to political communication research by demonstrating how emotional framing, European references, and visual strategies are jointly reconstructed over time within a specific national context. Rather than treating Europeanisation or emotionality as isolated dimensions, this study demonstrates how their interaction provides insight into the communicative consequences of party institutionalisation in contemporary electoral campaigns.

Keywords: European elections; emotions; Sumar; Podemos; political communication

Resum. *Campanyes en transició: l'esquerra radical d'Espanya replantejada*

Aquest article examina la transformació comunicativa de l'esquerra radical espanyola en les eleccions al Parlament Europeu de 2019 i 2024. L'estudi analitza com aquests actors van reconfigurar la seva comunicació de campanya en l'enquadrament emocional, l'europèitització i l'estil visual durant una fase d'institucionalització del partit i reconfiguració organitzativa. Basant-se en un marc teòric integrat que connecta la recerca sobre la comunicació política emocional, l'europèitització comunicativa i la campanya multimodal, l'article avança el concepte de normalització comunicativa. Aquest captura com els processos d'adaptació institucional es reflecteixen no sols en canvis programàtics o ideològics, sinó també en el to emocional, el marc territorial i la gramàtica visual de la comunicació de campanyes. Metodològicament, l'estudi empra un disseny de mètodes mixtos basat en la codificació sistemàtica de 126 materials de campanya —cartells, vídeos i contingut per a xarxes socials— combinats amb l'anàlisi de correspondència múltiple (MCA) i les proves exactes de Fisher. L'MCA identifica dues dimensions principals que estructurin l'espai comunicatiu: un eix substantiu que contrasta missatges carregats emocionalment i europèititzats amb un discurs més racional i emmarcat a escala nacional, i un eix estilístic que distingeix els formats simbólicoafectius de les presentacions tecnocràtiques i informatives. Els resultats mostren que la campanya de 2019 es va caracteritzar per una major intensitat emocional, referències simbòliques europees i una major expressivitat visual, mentre que el 2024 es van adoptar repertoris comunicatius més racionalitzats, orientats a l'àmbit nacional i estandarditzats, encara que amb variacions internes entre tots dos grups. L'article contribueix a la recerca en comunicació política en demostrar com l'enquadrament emocional, les referències europees i les estratègies visuals es rearticulen conjuntament al llarg del temps dins d'un context nacional específic. En lloc de tractar l'europèitització o l'emocionalitat com a dimensions aïllades, l'estudi mostra que la seva interacció aporta una visió de les conseqüències comunicatives de la institucionalització partidista en les campanyes electorals contemporànies.

Paraules clau: eleccions europees; emocions; Sumar; Podemos; comunicació política

Resumen. *Campañas en transición: la izquierda radical de España replanteada*

Este artículo examina la transformación comunicativa de la izquierda radical española en las elecciones al Parlamento Europeo de 2019 y 2024. El estudio analiza cómo estos actores reconfiguraron su comunicación de campaña en el encuadre emocional, la europeización y el estilo visual durante una fase de institucionalización del partido y reconfiguración organizativa. Basándose en un marco teórico integrado que conecta la investigación sobre la comunicación política emocional, la europeización comunicativa y la campaña multimodal, el artículo avanza el concepto de normalización comunicativa. Este captura cómo los procesos de adaptación institucional se reflejan no solo en cambios programáticos o ideológicos, sino también en el tono emocional, el marco territorial y la gramática visual de la comunicación de campañas. Metodológicamente, el estudio emplea un diseño

de métodos mixtos basado en la codificación sistemática de 126 materiales de campaña —carteles, vídeos y contenido para redes sociales— combinados con el análisis de correspondencia múltiple (MCA) y las pruebas exactas de Fisher. El MCA identifica dos dimensiones principales que estructuran el espacio comunicativo: un eje sustantivo que contrasta mensajes cargados emocionalmente y europeizados con un discurso más racional y enmarcado a escala nacional, y un eje estilístico que distingue los formatos simbólico-afectivos de las presentaciones tecnocráticas e informativas. Los resultados muestran que la campaña de 2019 se caracterizó por una mayor intensidad emocional, referencias simbólicas europeas y una mayor expresividad visual, mientras que en 2024 se adoptaron repertorios comunicativos más racionalizados, orientados al ámbito nacional y estandarizados, aunque con variaciones internas entre ambos grupos. El artículo contribuye a la investigación en comunicación política al demostrar cómo el encuadre emocional, las referencias europeas y las estrategias visuales se rearticulan conjuntamente a lo largo del tiempo dentro de un contexto nacional específico. En lugar de tratar la europeización o la emocionalidad como dimensiones aisladas, el estudio muestra que su interacción aporta una visión de las consecuencias comunicativas de la institucionalización partidista en las campañas electorales contemporáneas.

Palabras clave: elecciones europeas; emociones; Sumar; Podemos; comunicación política

1. Introduction

The Spanish political landscape has undergone an intense cycle of electoral competition since 2019. Between then and 2024, citizens were called to vote in multiple legislative, regional, local, and European elections, generating a context of sustained political mobilisation and continuous campaign activity. Parties located to the left of PSOE have played a key role in this ongoing cycle. The emergence of Podemos in 2014 marked a major transformation of the Spanish party system, introducing an actor characterised by a strong mobilising capacity, an outsider identity, and innovative campaign communication (Rodríguez-Teruel, Barrio & Barberà, 2016).

This new political party has since undergone substantial organisational and strategic change. Within the radical left, Unidas Podemos Cambiar Europa (UP) was split into Podemos and the Sumar coalition by 2024, mirroring developments in the national arena. The 2018–2024 cycle included the first national coalition government between PSOE and Podemos; following the 2023 elections, Podemos left the coalition and was replaced by Sumar (Montabes, Valencia & Delgado, 2024). In 2019, UP put together a pro-European agenda based on social justice and reformist Europeanism, securing 10% of the vote and three European Parliament seats. By 2024, this party had fragmented. Sumar promoted a labour-oriented, pro-European agenda (Brown, 2024; García Agustín, 2024), whereas Podemos focused on social conflict and national sovereignty. These developments echo broader transformations within the European radical left, where parties oscillate between pragmatic Europeanisation and sovereignty-centred rhetoric (Herkman, Sibinescu & Palonen, 2024).

This article compares the campaign communication of three radical left candidacies competing in European Parliament elections: UP in 2019, and Podemos and Sumar in 2024. It examines how they reconstructed their campaign messages regarding emotional and rational content, communicative Europeanisation, and visual and stylistic formats. Previous research shows that the evolution of radical left parties is often accompanied by changes in leadership structures, degrees of institutionalisation, and communication strategies, particularly in digitally mediated campaign environments (Keith & March, 2023; Brown, 2024).

Political science defines European Parliament elections as second-order elections (Reif & Schmitt, 1980), shaping competition dynamics and campaign structuring. In Spain, features like a single national constituency, no electoral threshold, and prevalent electoral coalitions create a distinct analytical context. Recent results reflect broader changes in Spanish politics. While turnout was 60.7% in 2019, five years later it dropped to 46.4%, below the historical average. The party system in European elections has moved toward reduced parliamentary fragmentation and a lower effective number of parties (Trujillo & Pérez-Castaños, 2025).

Analysing parties' visual and textual communication is key to understanding how meanings of Europe, nation, and citizenship are negotiated during election campaigns. This study examines this by combining a mixed-methods approach based on coding campaign materials with factorial and Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) to identify recurring patterns and underlying dimensions.

Despite extensive literature on the Europeanisation of radical left parties and on emotions in political communication, these research areas have developed in parallel (Caiani & Fenner, 2026). Europeanisation is often analysed as a political or ideological process, while emotional and visual communication are examined separately, limiting understanding of their interaction in campaigns. Thus, we lack a comprehensive account of how party institutionalisation reshapes emotional content, visual strategies, and the communicative construction of Europe. This article addresses this gap by conceptualising communicative normalization, through which radical left parties move from emotionally mobilising and Europeanised repertoires toward more rationalised, nationally framed, and technocratic campaign communication.

2. Communication, emotions, and the reinterpretation of themes in the alternative left

This section covers three bodies of literature that are rarely examined together: research on emotional political communication, studies on communicative Europeanisation, and scholarship on multimodal and digital campaigning. Rather than treating emotional content, communicative Europeanisation, and visual communication as independent analytical dimensions, we conceptualise them as interdependent elements that jointly impact campaign com-

munication. In the case of radical left parties—whose trajectories often involve a shift from movement-style mobilisation to institutionalised governance—these dimensions are particularly salient. We argue that processes of party institutionalisation are reflected not only in ideological moderation, but also in a reconstruction of emotional tone, territorial framing, and visual grammar. We conceptualise this constellation of changes as communicative normalisation.

This “affective turnaround” in political communication highlights how emotions shape political interpretation, engagement, and mobilisation (Marcus, 2023). Emotions are cognitive and relational mechanisms that simplify complex issues, construct moral boundaries, and foster collective identification. In radical left politics, emotional content mobilises grievances and articulates alternative projects, often combining hope, empathy, and pride with indignation or anger (González-Castro, 2023). Emotions do not operate only through discourse; visual cues such as facial expressions and posture are crucial in transmitting the fact of being affected (Farkas et al., 2022). The emotional intensity of a campaign is linked to its visual presentation. For movement-oriented parties such as Podemos, emotionally charged, visually expressive campaigning helps construct outsider identities and mobilise diverse constituencies.

Emotional content also mediates abstract political arenas, making them intelligible. This is vital in European politics, where affective framing connects supranational institutions with political concerns. Europeanisation has been seen as adapting national actors to European norms and governance (Featherstone & Radaelli, 2003), often measured by EU-related visibility in campaigns (Caiani & Fenner, 2026). But seeing Europeanisation as simply EU presence overlooks its communicative and symbolic dimensions. Europe is not just a political object but a frame requiring emotional and narrative work to resonate. For radical left parties, whose European integration stance is ambivalent, communicative Europeanisation involves emotions from hope to skepticism (March & Mudde, 2005; Gómez, Ramiro & Rori, 2025).

We adopt a communicative approach to Europeanisation, seen as how Europe is symbolically framed, emotionally charged, and visually represented in campaign materials. We distinguish between symbolic, emotionally mobilising communicative Europeanisation, emphasising transnational solidarity and collective futures, and rationalised forms, where Europe appears through EU-focused content tied to technical concerns and subordinate to national governance. This distinction is significant in party institutionalisation contexts, where emotional and symbolic investment in European narratives is reconstructed.

Visual political communication is the interface where emotional content and territorial framing become perceptible and durable. Based on multimodal communication theories (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020), visual elements actively contribute to political narratives. In radical left campaigns, visual choices—such as leader prominence, interpersonal proximity, expressive

intensity, or aesthetic informality—convey authenticity, horizontality, and emotional closeness (Farkas et al., 2022). Meanwhile, visual strategies signal institutional adaptation: technocratic layouts, informational formats, and controlled aesthetics often accompany professionalisation and governance-oriented communication. Thus, visual communication is the space where emotional content and communicative Europeanisation intersect. Images shape whether Europe appears as a distant bureaucracy, a shared community, or a backgrounded context, and if this representation is affectively charged or emotionally neutral (Geise, Panke & Heck, 2025).

As radical left parties move from movement-based mobilisation toward institutional consolidation, the communicative space tends to shift away from emotionally intense, symbolically rich, and transnationally oriented repertoires toward more rationalised, informational, and nationally anchored forms of communication (Nord, 2023). Emotional content is not eliminated but selectively disciplined; communicative Europeanisation is maintained but increasingly domesticated; and visual communication becomes more standardised (Casiraghi, Cusumano & Chrysosgelos, 2023). Analysing how these dimensions are jointly realigned allows us to capture this transformation empirically.

Recent scholarship in political communication increasingly focuses on treating visual and digital campaign materials not just as complements to textual discourse, but as key areas of political meaning-making (Farkas et al., 2022). Since platform-based campaigning has become consolidated, images, short videos, posters, and social media have become key vehicles for political actors to articulate emotional registers, territorial frames, and stylistic cues in condensed form. Research on visual political communication shows visuals operate as autonomous units, conveying political evaluation, emotional tone, and institutional positioning independently of verbal content (Farkas & Bene, 2021). Moreover, studies on European election campaigns show digital visual formats are sensitive to professionalisation and normalisation, as parties increasingly rely on standardized visual repertoires to signal credibility, competence, and institutional embeddedness (Novelli, Johansson & Wring, 2022; Geise, Panke & Heck, 2025). Thus, systematic analysis of posters, videos, and social media content provides a grounded and appropriate entry point for examining how emotional framing, communicative Europeanisation, and campaign style are jointly constructed in contemporary electoral communication.

3. Materials and methodology

This study implements a methodological framework by Novelli and Johansson (2019) to analyse European election campaign materials. Their codebook—validated in later research (Novelli, Johansson & Wring, 2022; Trujillo & Pérez-Castaños, 2025)—was adapted for this study's specific objectives. The coding scheme systematically examines verbal, visual, and stylistic features within a multimodal analytical framework. In accordance with Kress and van

Leeuwen (2020), the analysis captures explicit discursive content and the visual and emotional grammar of campaign communication.

The study’s variables address three interrelated dimensions: discursive content (e.g., thematic focus, emotional vs. rational content), visual representation (e.g., presence and characteristics of political actors), and stylistic features (e.g., tone, humour, symbolic elements). The empirical analysis focuses on Spain, examining campaign materials from three political parties: the UP coalition in the 2019 European elections, and Podemos and Sumar in the 2024 elections. Campaign materials were collected from official party communication channels, including verified social media accounts, campaign websites, and audiovisual content produced during the electoral period.

Table 1. Summary of analysed materials

Content	UP 2019	Podemos 2024	Sumar 2024	Total
Poster	27.6% (16)	5.6% (2)	6.3% (2)	15.9% (20)
Spot	1.7% (1)	2.8% (1)	3.1% (1)	2.4% (3)
Social Content	70.7% (41)	91.7% (33)	90.6% (29)	81.7% (103)
Total	100% (58)	100% (36)	100% (32)	100% (126)

Note. Social content was collected from each party’s official Facebook and Twitter/X accounts. Posters and spots were provided directly by political parties.
Source: own creation based on data from Pérez-Castaños et al. (2026).

As shown in Table 1, the corpus includes 126 items of campaign materials from the 2019 and 2024 European elections. Social media dominates both cycles, with printed materials declining in 2024, reflecting shifts in campaign practices. Despite fewer materials for 2024, the corpus captures key content, as digital campaigns often rely on impactful messages. This selection aligns with research prioritising visibility over volume (Greenacre, 2017).

Coding reliability was tested through internal recoding. A random 12% subset was recoded three months later to assess consistency, achieving a Cohen’s Kappa of 0.93, indicating high alignment. Internal recoding is common in multimodal content analysis, supporting the coding process’s reliability.

The analysis was undertaken in two stages. First, MCA reduced dataset dimensionality, identifying latent structures and visualising relationships, useful for multimodal campaign data (Greenacre, 2017). Second, Fisher’s exact test assessed associations between political actors and communicative variables, supplemented by Odds Ratios (OR) to compare category distributions across cycles (Rudas, 2011). MCA is exploratory, while inferential analysis confirms observed relationships.

For the MCA model, variables were selected and processed to maximise analytical variability while ensuring statistical robustness. Variables with zero

variance and categories with frequencies below 2% were excluded, as their inclusion can distort the stability of the factorial solution. The “party or coalition” variable was treated as a supplementary variable, allowing political actors to be projected onto the factorial space without influencing the construction of the dimensions.

In the inferential analysis, variables were recoded into dichotomous categories for 2×2 contingency tables, addressing statistical and analytical needs. Statistically, Fisher’s exact test requires binary variables, especially with small samples. Analytically, dichotomisation highlighted meaningful contrasts, such as emotional versus rational content or the presence versus absence of European references. Thus, the OR reflects associations within these dichotomies, not the complexity of original variables, a limitation considered in the interpretation of the results. The empirical analysis operationalises communicative Europeanisation from the theoretical framework in the previous section. Three variables capture analytical dimensions: EU presence (visibility of European symbols, actors, institutions), EU representation (evaluative framing of the EU), and EU-focused content (centrality of European issues in campaign materials). This alignment ensured continuity between theoretical and empirical measurement, aiding precise interpretation of Europe in campaign communication. The full coding and recoding schemes are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Variable Coding for Types of Analysis

Variable	Original Code	MCA’s Code	Fisher’s Code
Material	C: Poster / Spot / Social Content	No change	-
Presence of leaders	D: Yes / No	-	No change
Type of leader	C: Allies / Opponents / Mix	No change	-
Clothing	C: Formal / Semi-formal / Casual / Others	No change	-
Facial expression	C: Smiling / Angry / Neutral / Multiple expressions	No change	-
Gender	C: Male / Female / Both	No change	-
Origin	C: National / Foreign / Both	No change	-
Topic	C: Economy / EU-related / Welfare State / Geopolitics / Others	No change	D: False dichotomies for each topic
EU presence	D: Yes / No	-	No change
EU-focused content	C: National / European / Mixed / International non-European / Other	No change	D: European Yes / No
EU representation	E: Very negative – Very positive	No change	D: Positive / Negative
Attack content	D: Yes / No	-	No change
Attack objective	C: Foreign countries and parties / National parties and leaders / Foreign governments and leaders / Foreign economic institutions / Others	No change	-

Humorous content	D: Yes / No	-	No change
Humour objective	C: Foreign countries and parties / National parties and leaders / Foreign governments and leaders / Foreign economic institutions / Others	No change	-
Emotional / Rational content	C: Emotional / Neutral / Rational	D: Emotional / Rational	D: Emotional / Rational
Type of emotional content	C: Fun / Empathy / Pride / Fear / Anger	No change	-
Type of rational content	C: Capacity / Justice / Concrete data	No change	-

D: Dichotomous | C: Categorical | E: Scale
Source: own creation.

Similarly, the party variable—originally consisting of three categories (UP 2019, Podemos 2024, and Sumar 2024)—was recoded to enable pairwise comparisons across electoral cycles. Two separate dichotomous variables were constructed: one comparing UP (2019) with Podemos (2024), and another comparing UP (2019) with Sumar (2024). This strategy allows for a more precise assessment of changes in campaign communication over time while maintaining analytical clarity. Overall, this recoding procedure ensured comparability across electoral contexts while preserving the core theoretical distinctions underpinning the analysis.

Based on the theoretical framework developed in the previous sections and the operationalisation of key variables, the empirical analysis was guided by the following hypotheses:

- H1: Sumar, by incorporating actors from the 2019 UP coalition, displayed a degree of communicative continuity with the previous campaign.
- H2: Campaign communication in 2024 exhibited a reconstruction of emotional content compared to 2019.
- H3: The presence of political leaders was more prominent in 2024 campaigns than in 2019.
- H4: Attack-oriented content was more prevalent in 2024 than in 2019.
- H5: The thematic structure of campaigns differed between the two electoral cycles because of changes in the national and international context.
- H6: Elements of communicative Europeanisation—including EU presence, EU representation, and EU-focused content—were more prominent in the 2019 campaign than in the 2024 campaigns.

4. Results of the MCA

The MCA identified two principal dimensions that together explain 79.6% of the total variance, with eigenvalues of 7.72 and 5.81, respectively. This level of explained variance indicates a robust factorial structure, well above conventional thresholds for exploratory multivariate analysis in political

communication research (Hair et al., 2019). The model also exhibits high internal consistency ($\alpha=0.91$) and reached convergence after 38 iterations, confirming the stability and reliability of the solution.

Table 3. Summary of the MCA model

Dimension	Eigenvalue	Inertia	% Variance
1	7.722	0.454	45.4%
2	5.818	0.342	34.2%
Total	13.540	0.796	79.6%

Note. CATPCA model with convergence in 38 iterations. Variables with zero variance (< 0.02) and categories with frequencies below 2% were excluded.

Source: own creation based on data from Pérez-Castaños et al. (2026).

The first dimension captured the main structuring axis of the communicative space, contrasting campaign messages characterised by higher levels of emotional content and communicative Europeanisation with those dominated by rational content and a predominantly national focus. Empirically, this dimension reflected a shift in communicative emphasis from affectively charged and symbolically Europeanised messages toward more informational, governance-oriented discourse.

This transformation can be interpreted as communicative rationalization, whereby emotional intensity and symbolic European references become less central, while rational content and nationally anchored framing gain prominence. Importantly, this dimension integrates both substantive and expressive aspects of campaign communication, indicating that changes across electoral cycles affect not only what is communicated but also how it is conveyed.

The variables contributing most strongly to this dimension included emotional versus rational content, EU representation, thematic focus, and EU-related topics (Table 4). Together, these elements defined a transversal axis that links the thematic orientation of campaign messages with their communicative register.

The second dimension reflects a complementary cornerstone related to communicative style rather than thematic orientation. Variables such as material type, visual attributes, humour objectives, and emotional or rational appeals contribute more strongly to this dimension. It distinguishes between performative, visually expressive, symbolically dense formats, and standardised, informational, technocratic presentations. This stylistic axis captures differences in how political messages are visually and rhetorically organised, highlighting variations with campaign professionalisation and institutional adaptation. Together, the two dimensions provide a multidimensional representation of campaign communication where emotional content, communicative Europeanisation, and stylistic features meet. The MCA reveals that differences between electoral cycles are not reducible to isolated variables but are embedded in broader patterns linking emotional framing, European references, and campaign style. The projection of political parties

Table 4. Variables contributing most per dimension

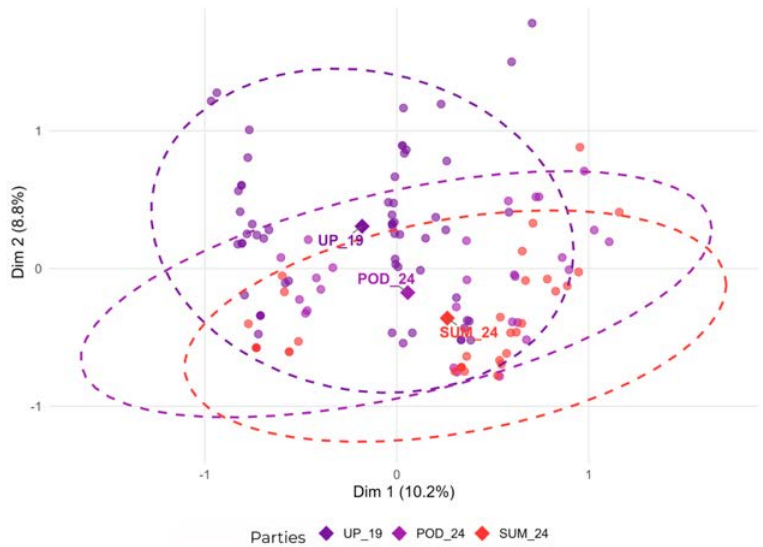
Measures of discrimination			
	Dimension		Mean
	1	2	
Material	0.019	0.165	0.092
Topic	1.162	0.778	0.970
Attack objective 1	0.365	0.256	0.311
Attack objective 2	0.653	0.520	0.587
Attack objective 3	0.322	0.060	0.191
Gender	0.023	0.029	0.026
Type of leader	0.154	0.120	0.137
Origin	0.109	0.077	0.093
Clothing	0.095	0.110	0.103
Facial expression	0.179	0.174	0.177
EU-focused content	0.736	0.433	0.585
EU representation	1.020	0.092	0.556
EU-related topic	1.399	1.229	1.314
Humour objective	0.006	0.344	0.175
Emotional vs rational content	0.903	0.665	0.784
Type of emotional content	0.103	0.406	0.254
Type of rational content	0.474	0.359	0.417
Party	0.457	0.346	0.401
Total inertia	7.722	5.818	6.770

Source: own creation based on data from Pérez-Castaños et al. (2026).

and variables onto the factorial space (Figure 1) reveals clear differences in communicative positioning across electoral cycles. Unidas Podemos (2019) is located in the area associated with higher emotional content and communicative Europeanisation, characterised by positive European Union representations and a stronger presence of affective appeals. This positioning reflects a campaign style oriented toward symbolic mobilisation and transnational framing. In contrast, both Podemos (2024) and Sumar (2024) are positioned closer to the opposite pole, characterised by greater reliance on rational content, weaker European references, and a more nationally oriented discourse. Within this trend, Sumar occupies an intermediate position, combining rational content with predominantly neutral EU representation, whereas Podemos is more closely aligned with the rational–national pole, reflecting a more instrumental communicative approach.

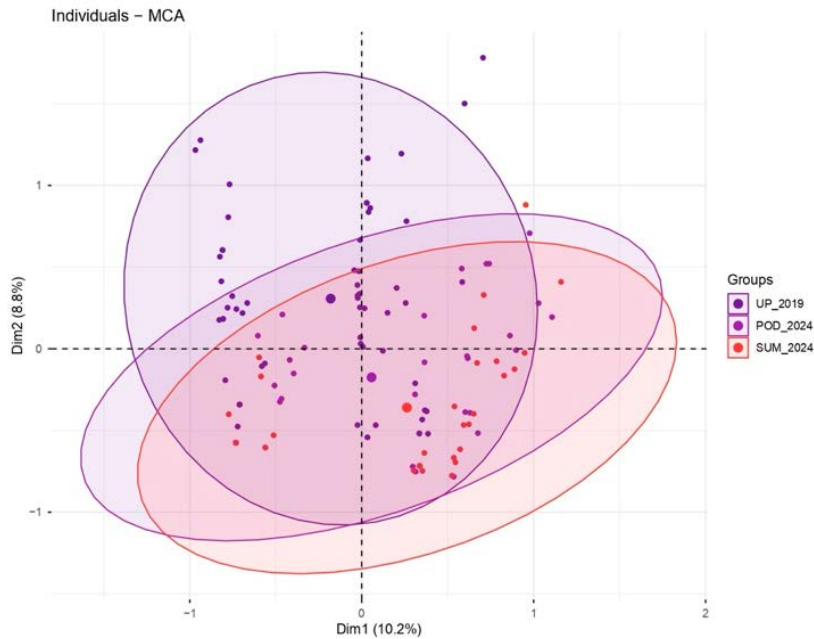
The distribution of individual campaign materials (Figure 2) reinforces this interpretation. UP (2019) displays greater dispersion within the factorial space, indicating a higher degree of internal heterogeneity and the coexistence of multiple communicative frames. In contrast, the 2024 campaigns show a more concentrated distribution, suggesting greater internal coherence and a more standardised communicative repertoire.

Figure 1. Factorial projection of variables and parties



Source: own creation based on data from Pérez-Castaños et al. (2026).

Figure 2. Distribution of individual campaign items

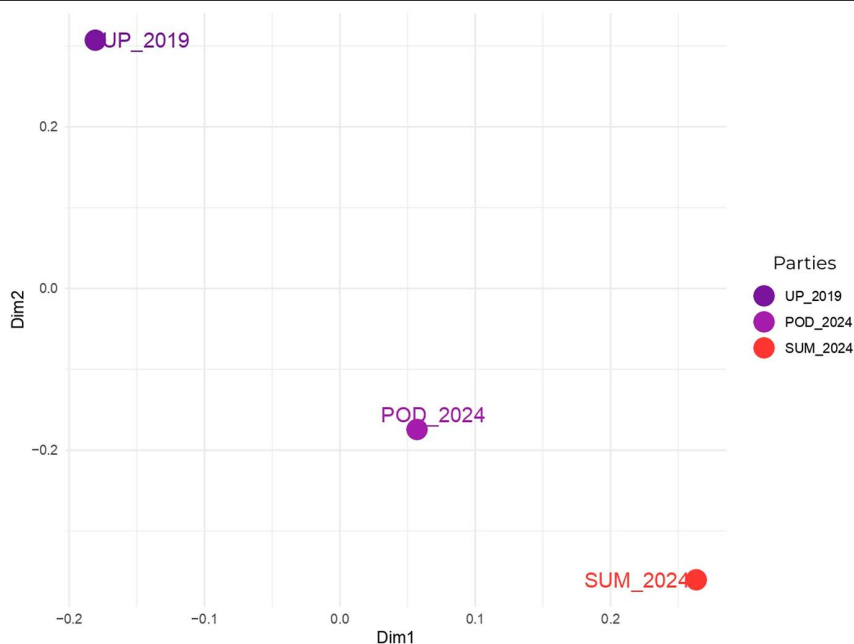


Source: own creation based on data from Pérez-Castaños et al. (2026).

This convergence toward a narrower communicative space suggests increasing standardisation in campaign strategies, consistent with processes of party institutionalisation. The reduced dispersion observed in 2024 reflects a stabilisation of communicative choices, privileging rational content, controlled emotional appeals, and less symbolically central forms of communicative Europeanisation.

The centroid map (Figure 3) highlights a clear separation between UP (2019) and the 2024 formations, as well as a relative proximity between Podemos and Sumar. This configuration suggests a convergence in communicative strategies, particularly in their greater emphasis on rational content and nationally anchored discourse.

Figure 3. Centroid positions of the parties



Source: own creation based on data from Pérez-Castaños et al. (2026).

Overall, the MCA reveals a structured transformation in the communicative patterns of the Spanish radical left between 2019 and 2024. This shift involves a move from emotionally driven and symbolically Europeanised communication toward more rationalised, informational, and nationally oriented campaign strategies. Rather than indicating the disappearance of emotional appeals or European references, these findings point to a reconfiguration of their relative weight and communicative function within an increasingly standardised campaign environment.

5. Correlation analysis

To complement the exploratory patterns identified through the MCA, Fisher’s exact test was applied to assess the statistical significance of the associations between political parties and key communicative variables. This approach is particularly appropriate given the categorical nature of the data and the relatively small or uneven distribution of some categories.

Table 5. Values of Fisher’s exact test between UP and other parties

Party Item	Podemos 2024	Sumar 2024
Economic topics	1.000	0.707
EU-related topics	<0.001	<0.001
Welfare topics	1.000	0.046
Geopolitics topics	<0.001	0.356
Humour content	0.077	-
Attack content	0.599	0.023
EU presence	0.539	0.285
EU representation	1.000	0.069
EU-focused content	<0.001	<0.001
Leaders	0.022	0.797
Emotional content	<0.001	<0.001
Rational content	<0.001	<0.001

Note: Statistically significant results at $p < 0.05$ are highlighted in bold.
Source: own creation based on data from Pérez-Castaños et al. (2026).

The analysis reveals several statistically significant differences between electoral cycles. Comparing UP (2019) and Podemos (2024), significant associations emerge for EU-related topics, geopolitical issues, EU-focused content, political leaders, and both emotional and rational content. A similar pattern is observed with Sumar (2024), showing significant differences in EU-related topics, welfare content, attack-oriented messages, EU-focused content, and emotional and rational content. The differences in emotional and rational content are particularly significant. Emotional content is more associated with the UP (2019) campaign, whereas rational content is more prevalent in the 2024 campaigns. This result aligns with the process of communicative rationalisation identified in the MCA, indicating a shift from emotionally intense and symbolically rich communication toward more informational and governance-oriented discourse. Differences related to communicative Europeanisation further reinforce this interpretation. While EU presence and representation do not display uniformly significant associations, EU-focused content shows strong significance across comparisons. This suggests European references are not reduced but more selectively articulated and increasingly embedded within nationally oriented or instrumental frames.

To assess the direction and magnitude of these associations OR were calculated for the statistically significant variables. Values below 1 for emotional

content indicate that this type of messaging is less likely to appear in the 2024 campaigns compared to UP (2019), whereas values above 1 for rational content indicate a higher likelihood of this type of communication in both Podemos (2024) and Sumar (2024). The confidence intervals for these variables do not include value 1, confirming the robustness of these associations.

Table 6. Summary of OR

Party Item		Podemos 2024	Sumar 2024
EU-related topics	OR	0.552	0.552
	Lower CI	0.437	0.437
	Upper CI	0.696	0.696
Welfare topics	OR	-	1.279
	Lower CI	-	0.994
	Upper CI	-	1.646
Geopolitics topics	OR	1.385	-
	Lower CI	1.131	-
	Upper CI	1.696	-
Attack content	OR	-	2.476
	Lower CI	-	1.168
	Upper CI	-	5.248
EU-focused content	OR	1.753	2.408
	Lower CI	1.217	1.471
	Upper CI	2.524	3.941
Leaders	OR	1.510	-
	Lower CI	1.050	-
	Upper CI	2.172	-
Emotional content	OR	0.310	0.260
	Lower CI	0.148	0.126
	Upper CI	0.650	0.534
Rational content	OR	2.483	3.976
	Lower CI	1.362	1.732
	Upper CI	4.526	9.109

Source: own creation based on data from Pérez-Castaños et al. (2026).

A similar pattern is observed for variables related to communicative Europeanisation. Lower OR values for EU-related topics indicate a stronger association with the 2019 campaign, whereas higher OR values for EU-focused content in 2024 reflect a more selective and instrumental use of European references.

Overall, the inferential analysis corroborates the patterns identified in the MCA and confirms a shift from emotionally driven and symbolically Europeanised communication toward more rationalised, selectively European, and nationally framed campaign strategies.

6. Discussion and conclusions

This study contributes to three interconnected debates in contemporary political communication: the role of the radical left in constructing the European project, the transformation of campaign communication in the digital era, and the role of emotional content in electoral mobilisation (Öhberg & Cassel, 2023). By analysing campaign communication across two European Parliament elections, this article puts forward the concept of communicative normalisation as a multidimensional process connecting emotional content, communicative Europeanisation, and campaign style within contexts of party institutionalisation.

The results reveal a clear reconfiguration of campaign communication between 2019 and 2024. Campaigns shift from emotionally driven and symbolically Europeanised repertoires toward more rationalised, informational, and nationally oriented strategies. This shift does not imply the disappearance of emotional content or European references; rather, it reflects a change in their relative weight and communicative function within a more standardised campaign environment.

The analysis of the hypotheses indicates a pattern of partial confirmation and reconfiguration. Hypothesis H1 receives limited support, as structural similarities coexist with significant differences in specific communicative variables. Hypothesis H2 is not supported: emotional content is more strongly associated with the 2019 campaign, whereas rational content predominates in 2024. Hypothesis H3 is also not confirmed, since leader presence is more characteristic of the 2019 campaign. Hypothesis H4 receives only partial support, with attack-oriented communication showing mixed patterns across cases. In contrast to this, Hypothesis H6 is clearly supported, as elements of communicative Europeanisation—particularly EU-related topics—were more prevalent in 2019. Hypothesis H5 is partially supported, indicating selective rather than uniform thematic change.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align with research on the evolution of radical left parties, which highlight tensions between movement-oriented mobilisation and institutional adaptation (Brown, 2024; García Agustín, 2024). The Spanish case shows that these tensions extend beyond organisational or ideological change and structure communicative practices. Emotional content and communicative Europeanisation thus operate as structuring dimensions of campaign communication rather than as isolated variables.

More broadly, communicative Europeanisation extends beyond the visibility of EU-related issues to encompass how political actors frame, emotionally articulate, and integrate these references into national political discourse. While the 2019 campaign relied more heavily on emotionally charged and symbolically dense representations of the European Union, the 2024 campaigns reflect a more selective and instrumental use of EU references, increasingly subordinated to nationally oriented communicative frameworks.

Taken together, the findings indicate a broader process of communicative normalisation, through which campaign communication becomes more

rationalised, nationally anchored, and strategically standardised. This process reflects adaptation to institutional constraints, evolving electoral dynamics, and the professionalisation of political communication in digital environments.

The study has several limitations. The size and composition of the corpus—particularly the predominance of social media content and the smaller number of materials for 2024—may affect the generalisability of the findings. In addition, the recoding of variables for inferential analysis simplifies the original categorical structure and should be considered when interpreting the results.

Future research should extend this analysis to other national contexts and electoral cycles to assess whether the patterns identified here represent a broader trend within the European radical left. Comparative and longitudinal designs would be particularly valuable for evaluating the generalisability of communicative normalisation across different political environments.

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