

# ilpopulista.it

A website controlled by the far-right party The League that has published false and unsubstantiated claims.

## Ownership and Financing

Il Populista is owned by MC Srl, a private company based in Bergamo. MC Srl is owned by Pontida Fin, which is the financial arm of the far-right movement The League, according to the business registry of the Italian Chamber of Commerce.

MC Srl's chairman, Giulio Centemero, is a congressman and Treasurer for The League. MC Srl also controls Radio Padania, the party's radio station.

Il Populista earns revenue through advertising.

## Content

Il Populista mostly covers national and international politics from a far-right perspective, advancing an agenda that opposes immigration and the European Union.

Typical headlines include "Blindfolded killer, Americans get outraged. What about Guantanamo?" ("Assassino bendato, gli americani si indignano. E Guantanamo?"); "Public housing: they must go to Italians in need" ("Case popolari: devono andare agli italiani bisognosi"); and "Asylum seeker rapes and kidnaps a woman in the Padua area" ("Richiedente asilo rapisce e stupra donna nel Padovano").

Content is sorted into approximately 25 sections, including Economy, World, Politics, and Science. Its immigration section is called The Invasion (L'invasione). Other sections include Beautiful is Good (Bello è Buono), which covers food and agriculture, and the X-Files, which includes reports on UFOs and the paranormal.

A section called TelePopulista mostly publishes videos featuring local, national, and European politicians who are members of The League.



**Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.**

**Score: 12.5/100**

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22 points)**
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)**
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)**
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)**
- ✗ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)**
- ✗ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)**
- ✓ Clearly labels advertising (7.5)**
- ✓ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)**
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)**

*Criteria are listed in order of importance.*

[More information.](#)

Readers can upload videos, photos, and articles in a section called “Free the beast you have inside!” (“Libera la bestia che c’è in te!”). At the top of the section, Il Populista tells users, “Send us your contribution: be bold, instinctive and out of control. Free the beast you have inside!” (“Inviaci il tuo contributo: sii audace, istintivo e fuori controllo. Libera la bestia che c’è in te!”). The site tells users that “hypocrisy, falsehood or false goodness” will not be allowed in user-generated posts.

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#### Credibility

Il Populista articles are generally produced by staff and sometimes cite firsthand interviews or accounts from Italian news agencies. However the site has repeatedly published conspiracy theories and false information, including the 2020 Wuhan coronavirus outbreak.

A February 2020 article headlined “Coronavirus, the lead of the military experiment” (“Coronavirus, la pista dell'esperimento militare”) claimed, “Many, in America, Israel, Russia, New Zealand and now also in Italy, suspect that the deadly coronavirus that is spreading on the planet has escaped from a military laboratory in Wuhan, modified ... for war purposes (against whom?, we wonder)” (“Sono in molti, in America, Israele, Russia, Nuova Zelanda e ora anche in Italia, a sospettare che il micidiale coronavirus che si sta diffondendo sul pianeta sia sfuggito da un laboratorio militare a Wuhan, modificato ... per scopi bellici (contro chi?, ci domandiamo)”).

There is no evidence that the Wuhan coronavirus originated in a military lab, in China or elsewhere. A February 2020 report by the World Health Organization said, “increasing evidence demonstrates the link between the 2019-nCoV [Wuhan coronavirus] and other similar known coronaviruses (CoV) circulating in bats.” A study published the same month in Nature found that the virus is “96% identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus.” Rutgers University chemical biology professor Richard Ebright also told

the Washington Post that "based on the virus genome and properties there is no indication whatsoever that it was an engineered virus."

The website has also published several articles promoting the "great replacement," a conspiracy theory backed by right-wing and white supremacist movements that claims there is a plot to substitute the white population of Europe with non-whites.

A September 2019 article published in the site's Society (Società) section with the headline "Climate alarmism, veganism and euthanasia: the 'Great replacement'?" ("Allarmismi climatici, veganesimo ed eutanasia: la "Grande sostituzione"?"), asserts that fears about climate change, veganism, and euthanasia are instruments of the "globalist establishment" who seek to "weaken the European population."

Questioning why Italians are in favor of euthanasia, the author wrote, "But let's take a step back: Islam strictly prohibits euthanasia; and we all know how the leftists are obsessed with immigration and in particular with the integration of Muslims. It goes without saying that an euthanasiaic propagandist approach effectively excludes the vast majority of immigrants, those of Islamic faith, that ... will continue to proliferate in Europe."

An April 2019 article headlined "For the lefties 'do not spread hate' means let people f... them" ("Per i sinistri "non spargere odio" significa farselo mettere nel...") claimed that Islam is "the most popular religion among those who are the main actors for a planned ethnic replacement of Europeans" ("la religione più professata fra le masse materialmente attrici della pianificata sostituzione etnica degli Europei"). The article also argued that "globalists chose" Islam "to submit all people to the 'New World Order'" ("per sottomettere tutti i popoli al 'Nuovo Ordine Mondiale'"). The New World Order refers to a conspiracy theory that claims that a secret evil society is plotting to establish a singular global government.

The Great Replacement theory, which was popularized by right-wing French philosopher Renaud Camus, is not supported by evidence or data on immigration. According to the Warsaw-based European Border and Coast Guard Agency, also known as Frontex, illegal immigration in 2018 was 92 percent lower than it was in 2015. Data from the European Statistical Office (Eurostat) shows that 825,400 people sought to immigrate to a European Union member state in 2017, a 17 percent decrease from the year before.

The claim in Il Populista articles that most immigrants coming into Italy are Muslims is also contradicted by data. According to The Fondazione ISMU – Initiatives and Studies on Multi-ethnicity, an Italian foundation supported by the nonprofit of the bank Cariplo, as of Jan. 1, 2019, 53.6 percent of migrants in Italy are Christians, while approximately 30 percent of residents who immigrated to Italy are Muslims.

Il Populista has also published articles questioning the existence of climate change. A June 2019 article, titled “Do we stop our suicide?” (“Mettiamo un freno al nostro suicidio?”), falsely claimed that “the quantity of ice in Antarctica has grown” (“la quantità dei ghiacci in Antartico è aumentata”). The article did not cite a source for this claim.

A study published in January 2019 in PNAS, the official, peer-reviewed journal of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, contradicted this claim, and reported that ice in Antarctica has eroded over the last 40 years, jumping from 40 billion tons to 250 billion tons (“The total mass loss increased from 40 Gt/y in 1979–1990 to [...] 252 Gt/y in 2009–2017”).

Il Populista has also promoted unproven theories related to UFOs (unidentified flying objects). An August 2019 article titled “You can contact the aliens. That's how,” (“Contattare gli alieni si può. Ecco come”) claimed that the author of a book about UFOs and aliens spent his life “investigating firsthand the phenomenon of alien contacts which, as confirmed by the scrupulous reporter, are possible, in spite of the tedious objection of the skeptics about the great distances of the universe” (“ad investigare in prima

persona sul fenomeno dei contatti alieni che, ci conferma lo scrupoloso reporter, sono possibili, in barba alla noiosa obiezione degli scettici sulle grandi distanze dell'universo").

A May 2018 article, titled "The terrestrial beings? Made human by the colonizers from space," ("I terrestri? Resi umani dai colonizzatori dello spazio") described the theory of American anthropologist Roger Wescott, who claims that humans were "domesticated" by aliens. Wescott's theory is "confirmed with scientific and theological data," the article claimed ("viene ripresa - e confermata con dati scientifici e teologici[...]").

Because Il Populista has published articles and headlines promoting unsubstantiated claims and conspiracy theories about immigration, global warming, and UFOs, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false content, fails to gather and present information responsibly, and fails to avoid deceptive headlines.

Il Populista does not label articles as opinion or disclose an overall point of view. However, the website regularly publishes opinionated news articles that oppose immigration and the European Union, or back the League and its leader, Matteo Salvini.

For example, a June 2019 news article was critical of the European Union. Headlined "I'll give you democracy," ("Te la do io la democrazia"), the article stated, "if you did not realize it, we are in the Fourth Reich. Certainly [they] do not use cannons yet, but thanks to the Euro, they do not need them" ("se non ve ne siete accorti di fatto siamo al IV reich, certo non usano ancora i cannoni, grazie all'euro non ne hanno bisogno").

A July 2019 news article criticized the center-left parties, saying, "They invent so many things to make Salvini and the Government pass for bad guys and impose the invasion" ("se le inventano proprio tutte per far passare Salvini e il Governo per cattivoni e imporci a tutti i costi l'invasione").

Because Il Populista's news articles contain unlabeled opinions that advance a perspective the website does not disclose, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Il Populista does not state a corrections policy, and NewsGuard could not find corrections on the website.

NewsGuard sent three emails to a general email address listed on Il Populista's Contact (Contatti) page and left a voicemail at a phone number for the publication's newsroom, inquiring about the site's false claims, failure to correct stories, and mixing of news and opinion, but did not receive a response.

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#### Transparency

Il Populista lists MC Srl, the company that owns the newspaper, at the bottom of the homepage, along with email addresses for the newsroom and names of its top editors. However, the website does not disclose that the company is controlled by the League, which is a frequent subject of its coverage. Separate stories and videos featuring League politicians also do not disclose the connection. Because of this lack of disclosure, NewsGuard has determined that Il Populista does not meet its standard for revealing ownership and financing.

Most content is attributed only to "Newsroom" ("Redazione"). When articles do provide the names of content creators, they typically only provide a photograph, but no biographical or contact information, which does not meet NewsGuard's standard for providing information about content creators.

NewsGuard sent three emails to a general email address listed on Il Populista's Contact (Contatti) page and left a voicemail at a phone number for the publication's newsroom, inquiring about its transparency standards, but did not receive a response.

Advertising is distinguished from editorial content.

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#### History

Il Populista was registered in 2012. In 2013, the leader of The League, Matteo Salvini, wrote a Facebook post introducing the website, stating “Welcome to ‘Il Populista,’ a bold, spontaneous voice, out of control ... and a little pissed off!” (“Benvenuto a ‘Il Populista,’ voce audace, istintiva, fuori controllo... e un po' incazzata!”).

The League’s official newspaper, La Padania, was shut down in 2014 because of financial problems. Salvini was listed as the site’s co-editor-in-chief until July 2018, when he became the Italian vice-premier. Salvini left the office in August 2019 after the collapse of the League coalition as a ruling party in the Italian government.

*Editor’s Note: This Nutrition Label was last updated on February 28, 2020.*

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**Send feedback to NewsGuard:**[Click Here](#)

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