

## **Misperceptions, information disorder and polarisation between MEdia and political SYStems (MiMeSys)**

### **Short description of the research project**

MiMeSys centres on information disorder and ideological and affective polarisation as crucial sources of misperceptions among citizens and targets the effects of these misperceptions on relevant political attitudes and behaviours. It will do so by considering a set of critical issues that are, and will likely remain, paramount challenges both in Italy and Europe: for instance migration, climate change and gender equality. The project aims to achieve these goals through a cutting-edge and multi-method research design based on a panel survey including experiments, an elite survey, social and traditional media analysis. Thus, MiMeSys will significantly advance scientific knowledge on the causes and the political implications of misperceptions generating high-quality results that will benefit not only the academic community but also media professionals, and the public-at-large. The project will impact and strengthen research in this domain in three main ways. First, it will complement current concerns for citizens' awareness of the functioning of institutions and their knowledge of politicians by investigating the accuracy of beliefs on issues that may shape political attitudes and participation. Second, it will establish a multi-actor perspective on the issue of misperceptions by considering not only lay citizens but also media and political elites. Third, it will expand the focus beyond the current US-centred approach as it will address poorly investigated contexts such as Italy.

### **Plan of research activities**

Within this broad project, a research position is opened at the University of Bologna. This Research Unit is involved in the general design of the research and has the specific task to assess misperceptions among political and media elites. Despite being recognised as important, if not decisive, actors in shaping the attitudes and opinions of the public, little empirical research has been done on elites, defined as the incumbents in powerful political institutions and private organisations who have the power to shape political decisions. Moreover, extant research almost exclusively focuses on the comparison between opinions of members of parliament and their voters. Most notably, media professionals are rarely surveyed, and the way their opinions are formed is seldom investigated. It is just taken as an assumption that these people hold accurate and complete information, at least on political issues. In our research we aim to fill this gap by analysing how politicians and journalists contribute to shaping and interpreting news, where they get information from and how they evaluate its accuracy. This is one of the most innovative features of the research: the role of political elites and media professionals in favouring information disorder and polarisation and their diffusion is put at the centre of the stage, and empirically investigated, instead of being taken for granted.

Operationally, the researcher will undertake the activities of formulating, conducting, and scrutinizing the outcomes of a survey aimed at political and media elites. Furthermore, the researcher will assume the responsibility of compiling a comprehensive roster of contacts to facilitate the distribution of the survey. This endeavor shall be executed under the direct oversight of the responsible of the local research unit at the University of Bologna and in coordination with the other components of the research team engaged in the project. The researcher will also be actively engaged in the draft of research outputs related to this task.