



Eurolang

MIDAS - the European voice of minority dailies

German version below

Bozen/Bolzano 7/9/01, by Margret Oberhofer

'So far we have 10 linguistic communities as members but the number is increasing constantly. I believe that MIDAS will have 20 members by the end of the year', says Günther Rautz, project manager of the minority dailies association. Rautz is also co-ordinator of the section 'Ethnic minorities and regional autonomies' at the European Academy in Bozen/Bolzano, where the secretariat of MIDAS is based.

'We have a lot of requests from Eastern European dailies wanting to join the association. They expect support with different things, for instance help with getting respect from the state. That's something quite clear for us, but it is not self-evident in their countries. Furthermore they have big technical and sometimes economical problems. In such cases MIDAS can support them technologically and strategically, but also maybe economically,' says Toni Ebner, the first president of MIDAS.

Ebner is also Editor-in-Chief of the German-speaking daily 'Dolomiten' in Bozen/Bolzano. He denies when asked if there were ever doubts about founding an association for minority dailies: 'An association of common interests is always sensible. The dailies are associated within Europe and within the world. In the national publishers' associations, minority newspapers have little saying. Therefore it was logical for minority dailies to found an organisation for themselves, to give their voices more importance.'

Founded recently, MIDAS must already now prove that everybody in the association stands up for one another: 'La voce del popolo', the Italian daily in Croatia is under threat to close down. The association will surely point out the bad state of affairs and do something about it,' Ebner explains.

But MIDAS doesn't only want to support existing minority newspapers, but also those minorities who don't have any periodical media at all.

'We also want to help those newspapers who don't have a homepage, Rautz explains. 'Another long-term project is to exchange journalists, so that they can have a look at the work of other editorial offices. At the same time they also get an impression of another minority situation.'

A further important task of MIDAS is to lobby together at European institutions in Brussels. 'The diversity of Europe is something essential - the regions and minorities are an important cultural part of that. We expect that Brussels sees this reality and supports it, by guaranteeing that minorities also have access to so far only national projects. The European institutions should also stop considering only nations but see the regions. I believe that the future of Europe lies in the regions,' says Ebner. (EL)

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