

MIDAS conference: Russian minority media and the plans for a Welsh daily

Helsinki 12/05/03, by Davyth Hicks

The MIDAS conference (European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages) held in Helsinki at the weekend brought together for the first time representatives from the Russian-speaking minority with their western European partners in the minority media. The conference also heard about the new Irish daily Lá, the launch of a Welsh language daily next year, and from minority media representatives from other accession countries. The conference also reaffirmed its support for Egunkaria.

Bojan Brezigar, editor-in-chief of the Italian Slovene paper, Primorski Dnevnik, told Eurolang that: 'it's the first time that a minority organisation from the EU has organized an event and managed to get Russian organisations from the Baltic states to attend. Normally they would not want to attend such a meeting, they had difficulties accepting the status of 'minority' up until now and being included within the western European meaning of a national or linguistic minority.'

'I think that this is a first step; we have had the request of two Russian newspapers from Latvia and Estonia to enter the organisation. It's a sign that the Baltic states are slowly, and with many difficulties, being normalised in the western European way.'

Ned Thomas, head of Mercator Media, spoke on the launch of a new Welsh daily early next year and that: 'the plans are well advanced, we've done eighteen months of research, we know what sort of paper we want to produce and our market'.

Ciarán Ó Pronntaigh, editor of the new Irish language daily, Lá, described how launching the paper had been like 'running a 100m dash all day'. He added that 'the response has been very, very good, we've had a lot of people calling in, people are glad to read it, some thought that it wouldn't happen at all'.

Meanwhile MIDAS continues to campaign for Egunkaria, Ned Thomas commented that the 'the importance of the MIDAS association has been shown by its support of Egunkaria and its help with setting up the Irish daily.' (EL)