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MIDAS expresses solidarity with prosecuted Basque journalist 1293

The Minority Dailies Association (MIDAS) has expressed their support and solidarity for the Basque journalist Martxelo Otamendi and the Basque language daily newspaper EGUNKARIA. Otamendi is currently facing prosecution for an interview that the paper carried with a leader of ETA last year in June.

‘We call for an immediate stop to all legal proceedings against Martxelo Ontamendi related to that interview. We further call on the Spanish Authority to respect the right of the people of the Basque Country for freedom of expression and to respect the right to information of the readers,’ states the resolution adopted by the 17 MIDAS members, attending the Annual Assembly held in Bratislava last weekend.

Other topics discussed at the meeting were the MIDAS homepage that will go online within this month, a common future publicity strategy and a planned exchange of journalists. ‘This is a very important point for us: We are planning not only to give minority journalists the opportunity to work among the editorial staff of other minority media but especially to work on an exchange of journalists from minority and majority papers’, explains Günther Rautz, project manager of MIDAS.

It was not a coincidence that the conference took place in the Slovakian capital: ‘MIDAS receive a lot of interest from media in regional and minority languages in Central and Eastern Europe. We decided to have this year's assembly in Bratislava in order to inform those newspapers about MIDAS and its goals. 2002 is also a very important year for Slovakia, as the accession to the European Union and the parliamentary elections are coming up. A common meeting of minority dailies from Western and Central Eastern Europe is in this respect a sign of the democratic development of our country. A common engagement will hopefully strengthen the situation of the Slovakian minority press on the market but also with politicians’, explains Edita Slezakova, director of the Hungarian daily Új Szó in Slovakia and member of the MIDAS-board, in an interview with German daily ‘Dolomiten’ in South Tyrol.

Next year's annual assembly will take place on the Åland Islands in Finland, carried out by the two Swedish dailies ‘Åland’ and ‘Nya Åland’. (EL/margret)