

# The MIDAS journey: A European story

European Association of Daily Newspapers  
in Minority and Regional Languages





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## Imprint

### **Publisher:**

European Association of Daily Newspapers in  
Minority and Regional Languages (MIDAS)  
Alea Drusus / Drususallee / Viale Druso 1  
I-39100 Balsan / Bozen / Bolzano  
[www.midas-press.org](http://www.midas-press.org)

**Concept, graphic design, photo editing and  
texts:** Jakob Volgger

**Interviews:** Hatto Schmidt

**Translation and proofreading:** Martina Mitterer,  
Christopher Neill

Cover image credits: © Marisol Ramirez (center),  
© Ekaitz Zilarmendi (right)

## FOREWORD

# To many more achievements



For almost 25 years, MIDAS has brought together daily newspapers in minority and regional languages from across Europe. Each one is a vital voice for the communities it serves. Our members inform, connect and preserve cultures and languages that are too often overlooked.

This booklet marks a milestone in that journey. It reflects on the achievements of a network built on shared values: freedom of the press, cultural diversity, minority protection and the right of every language community to be recognized and heard.

This publication is a tribute to the founding generation, to every member who has shaped our path and to the belief that minority voices matter. Not just within their own communities, but across Europe. Here's to (almost) 25 years. And to the many stories still to be told.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marc Röggl".

Marc Röggl, General Secretary of MIDAS

## HISTORY

# MIDAS in a nutshell

The European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages (MIDAS) was founded in 2001 with the vision to unite and support daily newspapers in minority and regional languages across Europe. The acronym MIDAS stands for Minority Dailies Association. Over the past 25 years, MIDAS has become a vital network, connecting 28 newspapers.

MIDAS operates as a non-profit association based in Balsan/Bozen/Bolzano, Italy, at the Center for Autonomy Experience of Eurac Research.

## Our mission

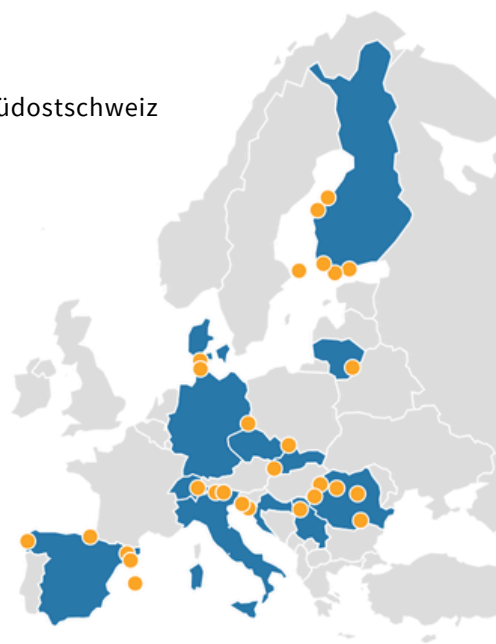
MIDAS serves as a platform for cooperation and advocacy for minority and regional language newspapers in Europe. Our mission is reflected in the following concrete objectives outlined in our statute:

- **Facilitate cooperation:** Strengthening collaboration among our members to share knowledge and best practices.
- **Support for underrepresented minorities:** Providing support and advocacy for communities that lack daily newspapers in their language.
- **Promote research:** Encouraging research on the challenges and opportunities faced by minority newspapers.
- **Increase visibility:** Ensuring better information and awareness about minority newspapers across Europe, highlighting their role in maintaining and promoting minority and regional languages.

## Our members

Åbo Underrättelser  
Ålandstidningen  
Allgemeine Deutsche Zeitung für Rumänien  
Berria  
Bihari Napló  
Der Nordschleswiger  
Diari de Balears  
Die Neue Südtiroler Tageszeitung  
Dolomiten  
Flensburg Avis  
Głos  
Hargita Népe  
Hufvudstadsbladet  
Kurier Wileński

La Quotidiana – Die Südostschweiz  
La Voce del Popolo  
Magyar Szó  
Nós Diario  
Nyugati Jelen  
Österbottens Tidning  
Primorski dnevnik  
Regió7  
Serbske Nowiny  
Szabadság  
Új Szó  
Vasabladet  
Västra Nyland  
VilaWeb



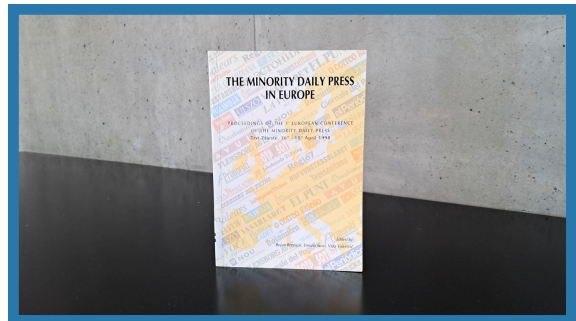
## HISTORY

# The history of MIDAS in pictures

A lot has happened in a quarter of a century of MIDAS. Here are some important milestones in the history of the association.

### April 1998

Representatives of more than 30 European minority daily newspapers met for a first network meeting in Trst/Trieste and set up a working group to further explore the idea of greater cooperation. The book 'The Minority Daily Press in Europe' was one of the results of the conference.



### May 2000

Editors-in-chief met again at the follow-up conference 'European Network of Print Media. Future Co-operation of Minority Dailies' in Balsan/Bozen/Bolzano.

### April 2001

At the constitutional assembly in Palma, 14 minority daily newspapers made an informal commitment to join MIDAS. It was decided to set up the organization and Toni Ebner, editor-in-chief of Dolomiten, the German newspaper in South Tyrol, was elected President. Furthermore, it was agreed that MIDAS was to be based at Eurac Research in Balsan/Bozen/Bolzano, with Günther Rautz, Director of the Institute for Minority Rights, as its first General Secretary.





## 28 July 2001

MIDAS was officially founded in Balsan/Bozen/Bolzano when its statute was officially signed and registered by the members of the Governing Board.

## June 2002

The first MIDAS General Assembly took place in Pozsony/Bratislava. Since then it has been held annually – in 2015, for example, in Trst/Trieste, as the picture shows.



© Andoni Canellada

## February 2003

The Basque daily Euskaldunon Egunkaria, a MIDAS member, was unjustly closed down by a Spanish court on false accusations of links to ETA. MIDAS launched a strong campaign to highlight the injustice and raise awareness at the European level. The photo shows a protest march to commemorate the closure in 2009.

## 2004

The MIDAS Prize and the Otto von Habsburg Prize were awarded for the first time. In 2006, the Otto von Habsburg Prize was awarded to Ivan Zsolt Nagy (Magyar Nemzet), presented in Apenrade/Aabenraa by Otto von Habsburg himself.



## 2004

In order to promote the exchange among members, a study visit program was initiated. The first study visit took seven MIDAS journalists to Donostia/San Sebastián. The photo shows the trip to South Tyrol in 2011, which included a visit to the daily newspaper Dolomiten.

## February 2006

MIDAS representatives met European Commission Vice-President Franco Frattini in Brussels for talks.



## 2007

The MIDAS Governing Board meets regularly, here in Balsan/Bozen/Bolzano in 2007.

## 2008

MIDAS received the Báthory Prize. This prize is awarded by the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania to those individuals and organizations who have contributed to the re-establishment of Hungarian higher education in Romania or to the successful struggle for this goal.



© Dominique Hommel/European Parliament

## 2011

Over the years, MIDAS was also involved in minority issues at the European level. The photo shows Toni Ebner and Günther Rautz at a meeting of the Intergroup on Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages in the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

## 2013

Edit Slezák, General Manager of Új Szó, was elected President of MIDAS. She took over from Toni Ebner.





© Arnaud Devillers/European Parliament

## 2014

As part of the European Parliament's information campaign for the 2014 elections, MIDAS was chosen as one of its media partners and developed the European Citizens' Corner (CITOYEN) project.

## 2014

Meetings with politicians were always on the MIDAS agenda, for example with Andrej Kiska, the President of Slovakia.



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## 2018

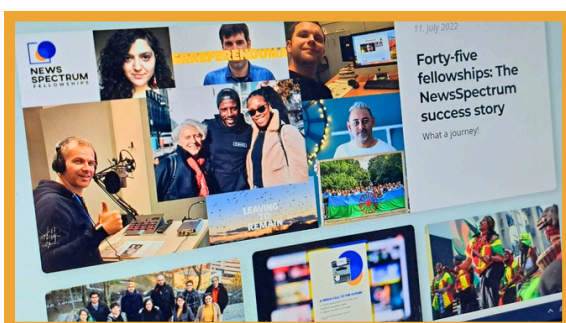
The MIDAS statute was revised to allow online newspapers to join under certain criteria. The transformation of Der Nordschleswiger into an online minority newspaper is seen as an example of best practice – recognized in 2024 with the award of the Associació de Mitjans d'Informació i Comunicació in the Europe category.

## 2018

Marc Röggl, the Director of the Center for Autonomy Experience at Eurac Research, replaced Günther Rautz as General Secretary of MIDAS. Here he is pictured with Edit Slezák at the 2021 General Assembly in Trst/Trieste.



© Damjan Balbi

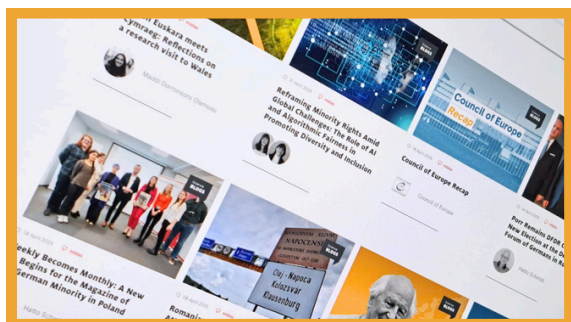


## 2021-2022

In collaboration with the International Press Institute, MIDAS launched and ran the EU-funded NewsSpectrum program. It promoted the cooperation between minority language media and their majority language counterparts.

## 2023

The MIDAS study visit program was transformed into a training program, giving journalists the opportunity to spend one to two weeks training at another member newspaper. Márk Macsicza from Új Szó was one of the first participants and spent two weeks at Flensburg Avis.



## 2024

The MIDAS Blog was launched as a new platform for publishing minority news.



## The MIDAS Blog

The MIDAS Blog, hosted by Eurac Research, shares stories that matter: interviews with experts and minority representatives, first-hand accounts and reflections on the unique experiences of minority communities across Europe.

Combining interdisciplinary insights with authentic voices, the blog explores the complexities of minority issues and linguistic rights. Contributors include journalists from the MIDAS network, as well as researchers from Eurac Research and other institutions.

**Discover the MIDAS Blog:** [www.eurac.edu/en/blogs/midas](http://www.eurac.edu/en/blogs/midas)



## INTERVIEW

# It all began with the fear of closure

Bojan Brezigar



*Even as a schoolboy, the future editor-in-chief wrote for the Slovenian daily Primorski dnevnik, published in his home town of Trst/Trieste. Brezigar was the paper's Rome correspondent and editor-in-chief from 1992 until his retirement. He has held numerous political posts, including local councillor and mayor of Devin-Nabrežina/Duino-Aurisina, member of the Provincial Council of Trst/Trieste and to the Regional Council of Furlanija-Julijska Krajina/Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Brezigar is a founding member of the Slovenian Research Institute Slori in Trst/Trieste and of the Italian minority organization Comfemili, for which he was a long-standing representative in the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages (EBLUL).*

**MIDAS (Hatto Schmidt):** You were there when the idea of founding the European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages (MIDAS) was born. How did that happen?

**Bojan Brezigar:** The idea stems from a very simple but very serious political issue. In the second half of the 1990s, the European Commission started a controversy about

subsidies by saying that private companies should not receive any subsidies from the public sector, neither from the state nor from the regions or municipalities.

**MIDAS:** What would that have meant for minority dailies?

**Brezigar:** I was editor-in-chief and managing director of Primorski dnevnik at the time, and we

were in great financial difficulty. We were very dependent on a law of the Italian Republic, which granted a certain contribution to minority newspapers. We were threatened with closure, there was simply no other funding. In view of the Commission's plan, we were very worried about our future. In this situation, we wanted to know what other newspapers were doing.

#### **MIDAS:** Other minority newspapers?

**Brezigar:** Yes. We found 30 minority newspapers in Europe. One situation was quite unique: Serbia had banned newspapers in Albanian, and Kosovo was still part of Serbia, so there were three Albanian newspapers published in Switzerland. Among all these newspapers, there were two numerically large groups. One was in Spain: the Catalans and the Basques. The Catalans used to have five or six dailies, now there are fewer. And then in Finland there were five or six Swedish newspapers. In 1998 we wanted to organize a conference in Trst/Trieste with these minority newspapers to discuss the problem of public funding. Thanks to the European Commission we were able to find the money for it.

#### **MIDAS:** How was this achieved?

**Brezigar:** I was President of the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages (EBLUL) at the time and I went to the European Commission. There was an official there who later became Director General, a certain Domenico Leonarduzzi. His father was from Friuli in Italy and had immigrated to Belgium after the Second World War to work as a miner in the coal mines of Charleroi. This was the result of a very unpleasant but useful policy, as there was a shortage of coal in Italy after the war. So a barter agreement was made with Belgium: labour for coal. In Charleroi, the family lived in a shack with tin walls and no heating, with children! Leonarduzzi had health problems, he had poliomyelitis as a teenager and his mobility was limited. He was placed in a children's home where a priest recognized his intelligence. The priest allowed him to study, he gained two degrees and made a career for himself. He showed great interest in his father's home region. That's how we became friends. I told him about our problem and he introduced me to a colleague who raised the funds. That

meeting was the birth of MIDAS.

#### **MIDAS:** Who attended the conference?

**Brezigar:** There were representatives of all the newspapers I mentioned, but also minority newspapers from Germany, Denmark and the Canton of the Grisons, and a Hungarian newspaper from Slovakia. Over lunch, the publisher of Primorski dnevnik, Michl and Toni Ebner and I thought it might be useful to set up an association to represent all these minority newspapers in their dealings with the EU Commission and to prevent the blocking of public funds. So the idea was born in Trst/Trieste. The following year, the Dolomiten organized the next conference, where it was decided to set up MIDAS.

#### **MIDAS:** Did South Tyrol play a role in this?

**Brezigar:** The Province of South Tyrol allowed the project to continue with its financial support. The following year, the inaugural meeting was held in Palma, organized by the Catalan newspaper that existed in Palma at the time. South Tyrol has been very supportive in every way, and Eurac Research has been very helpful. We quickly agreed that MIDAS should be based in Balsan/Bozen/Bolzano. Michl and Toni Ebner had asked me to take over the presidency, but I told them that it would be better if the presidency, at least for the first term, was taken over by someone from the region from which we receive funding, in order to secure the future of the association. The Region of Furlanija-Julijaska Krajina/Friuli-Venezia Giulia had no intention of supporting us financially.

#### **MIDAS:** So the problem of public sector funding had been solved?

**Brezigar:** Not immediately. We intervened repeatedly with the European Commission, went to Brussels for talks, and the Commission decided to exempt minority newspapers from the restrictions on public funding. So we were successful, but it wasn't easy. I remember more than one trip to Brussels and more than one meeting with Commission officials whom we had to convince of our case: a daily newspaper in a minority language is not a business, it is a

constant sacrifice for everyone and only brings costs. All minorities, with the possible exception of the Catalans, are small communities, so they all had problems with the cost of printing and distribution, and no newspaper was able to cover these costs on its own – without public contributions.

**MIDAS:** What were the biggest challenges MIDAS had to overcome?

**Brezigar:** There have been some very difficult moments. Just think of the arrest of Martxelo Otamendi by the Guardia Civil and the closure of the printing plant of Euskaldunon Egunkaria, the Basque newspaper, in Andoain. We immediately activated all our contacts. I managed to organize a formal protest by the Italian Chamber of Journalists. It was the first political closure of a newspaper in Europe since the Second World War. We travelled all over Europe to explain the idea of togetherness in Europe and the importance of newspapers for this European idea. Then Toni Ebner came up with the idea of the Otto von Habsburg Prize. At that time Habsburg was still an important politician, even though he was no longer a member of the European Parliament. But Bernd Posselt, who had been Otto von Habsburg's most important assistant, was now sitting there. We were very lucky then.

**MIDAS:** To what extent?

**Brezigar:** In the parliamentary working group, which is now called the Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages, you could focus on language issues. We were able to achieve a lot and move things forward, including through resolutions in the European Parliament. But the first one was a special case. It was tabled by the Italian socialist Gaetano Arfé. But in fact – I discovered this by chance – it was a document drawn up by John Hume. This Catholic Northern Ireland politician had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998, together with the Protestant David Trimble, for the Northern Ireland peace agreement. We organized an event with EBLUL at the European Parliament. We invited a lot of MEPs. John Hume came. He gave me a piece of paper and said: 'Look, this is the first European Parliament

resolution on national minorities'. I looked at it and said to him: 'Excuse me, but this is the Arfé resolution'. And he replied: 'Sure. But that was the way it was then: if a Northern Irishman had presented such a document, it would not have been adopted'. So Hume gave it to Arfé and he carried on with great success. What modesty on the part of this great personality!

**MIDAS:** How has MIDAS evolved over time?

**Brezigar:** We have seen new newspapers emerge, but unfortunately there have also been closures. Above all, there have been major problems with distribution. For example, after the fall of communism, four Hungarian and one German newspaper were established in Romania, in remote areas. Every day, countless kilometres are covered before the paper reaches the reader's doorstep. Unfortunately, we have also seen the closure of many Swedish newspapers in Finland. The costs were too high. Then came the internet and newspapers had to adapt. Some have changed completely, such as Der Nordschleswiger, which has done an excellent job. In 2016/17 MIDAS lost two newspapers in Catalan.

**MIDAS:** How did this come about?

**Brezigar:** MIDAS held the General Assembly in Barcelona, with contributions from the Catalan government, which was pushing for independence at the time. Two newspapers didn't want to attend because they said we write in Catalan but we're not for independence. That's why they left. These processes are quite normal, quite logical, but traumatic for such a small organization. But MIDAS has consolidated, let's hope it can continue its work.

## INTERVIEW

# MIDAS has an audience of millions

Toni Ebner



© Damiano Balbi

*Toni Ebner, who later became editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper Dolomiten, gained his first experience in journalism and publishing as a schoolboy at Athesia, which was run by his father, the journalist and politician of the same name. After studying law in Innsbruck, he worked for the Austria Press Agency APA and the Salzburger Nachrichten. From 1995 until the beginning of 2025, he was editor-in-chief of the Dolomiten.*

**MIDAS (Hatto Schmidt):** The aims of MIDAS were to lobby in Brussels, to exchange ideas, to collaborate and also to promote the recognition of minority issues and media in international organizations. Was MIDAS successful?

**Ebner:** Mutual support was also very important. Yes, MIDAS has been very successful. If one daily newspaper has a problem and raises it, it carries some weight. But if they all raise the issue together in an association, then millions of voices come together, because the minority dailies

together have an audience of millions. That is very important at the European level. We were heard in Brussels, but when there were problems with individual minorities, we were also heard in the respective nation states.

**MIDAS:** One example is the scandal around the closure of Euskaldunon Egunkaria in 2003 in the Basque Country.

**Ebner:** Euskaldunon Egunkaria alone would certainly not have been able to do anything

about the confiscation of the newspaper, the imprisonment and torture of its staff. For the majority newspapers, it was only a marginal story, if at all! But then we took it up. Each member of MIDAS sent a letter of protest to the Spanish ambassador in their country. The Dolomiten also wrote to the Spanish ambassadors in Vienna and Berlin. We all informed the press agencies. Dolomiten contacted the Italian ANSA, the Austrian APA and the German dpa. This created a critical mass, transforming the scandal into a significant event. All the media then covered it, because we also wrote to all the editors-in-chief of the major national newspapers. I wrote to the Italian, Austrian and German editors-in-chief. So suddenly the whole story exploded and pressure was put on Spain. It certainly had the effect of making the Spanish authorities' actions a disaster. The legal proceedings came to nothing. But what remains is that the people who tortured the editor-in-chief, who tortured the administrative director, who beat the staff, have never been prosecuted, and I think the confiscation of the newspaper has still not been lifted. All this happened in Europe, so just think what could happen in other countries.

**MIDAS:** There are other examples, such as the Italian daily *La Voce del Popolo* in Croatia, which got into trouble.

**Ebner:** Yes, MIDAS was able to prevent the imminent end. Luis Durnwalder, the President of South Tyrol at the time, helped a lot. The privatization of *La Voce del Popolo* revealed major economic problems. It was not used to being a profitable publishing house, having lived on state subsidies. When privatization came, the crisis was huge. We tried to intervene with the Italian minister for Italians abroad to see if he could help. But we got this answer: 'I won't give anything to the Italians in Istria/Istra because the good ones fled after the war and those who stayed are communists'. I then went to Durnwalder and asked him: 'Luis, what would you say if the German minority in Italy helped the Italian minority in Croatia?' 'We'll do it immediately,' he replied, and unbureaucratically released a considerable sum of money. This saved *La Voce del Popolo*.

**MIDAS:** You had the idea for the Otto von Habsburg Prize. Has it given MIDAS more visibility?

**Ebner:** Yes, definitely, because Otto von Habsburg is a synonym for Europe. He was already advocating for European unification while the Second World War was still raging in Europe. At that time, he had already written the first papers and developed proposals. Otto von Habsburg is a testimony to the European idea like few others, apart from Robert Schumann. And Otto von Habsburg was not only a European, he was also a journalist all his life. Not only did he write books, but he also contributed newspaper articles, commentaries and essays. He was an excellent writer. The two elements that make sense for MIDAS came together. And for many Europeans – whatever their political persuasion – Otto von Habsburg is a role model: he has supporters from the conservatives to the Greens. That's why he was the ideal person. He himself was enthusiastic about the prize. He didn't just come to represent, but every time he attended a General Assembly, he not only presented the award, but also participated. He was of the opinion that the European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages has a very important role to play because the dailies reach people and as multipliers they can do a lot for the European idea.

**MIDAS:** Otto von Habsburg was very popular. At the MIDAS General Assembly 2007 in Kolozsvár/Klausenburg/Cluj-Napoca he was surrounded by people and practically held court.

**Ebner:** And how he was adored by ordinary people! I remember him being driven through a village in a carriage. The women curtsied and the men tipped their hats. It was impressive how important he still was, even though he never held an office that would have done justice to his birth.

**MIDAS:** Is there anything else you remember?

**Ebner:** The contacts with the European Commission, for example. I remember that of all the people we met from the European Commission, one who was always said to be against minorities was the one who stood up for

us the most. That was Franco Frattini, the former Italian Foreign Minister. It was always said that he was a nationalist, that he had something against the South Tyroleans and so on. But in fact he was the only one who did a lot for MIDAS and opened a lot of doors for us.

**MIDAS:** Readers of traditional print media are getting older, younger people are not reading traditional media, costs are rising, from paper to staff, delivery is becoming more and more difficult, online is getting stronger and stronger, which is why the Dolomiten announced the principle of 'online first' a year ago. But no one has yet figured out how to make the necessary money from online journalism. Is there a future for serious journalism at all?

**Ebner:** There is. And I deny that young people don't read print. We can see this in the example of the Dolomiten: in the last media analysis in 2024 we had 90,000 daily readers under the age of 25. These young readers exist. You just have to offer them what they are interested in.

**MIDAS:** What would that be?

**Ebner:** In the case of Dolomiten, it's probably the sports coverage. We have a lot of sports clubs in South Tyrol, a lot of sports enthusiasts and athletes. They want to be reflected in the newspaper, in the form of results, match reports, photos and everything else. And the second point that plays an important role is volunteer work. The Dolomiten has always given a lot of space to fire brigades, bands, theatre groups, the 'Schützen' and choirs. Young people are there too, they find themselves there. And when readers find themselves in the paper, they will look at it and read it. Of course, we face strong competition online, but you have to make use of it. I dare say that our articles have never had as many readers as they do now, because we publish once in print, once in e-paper and once online.

**MIDAS:** And how do you make money from journalism?

**Ebner:** We have found a solution in the Scandinavian model. It says that you don't have to do anything other than practice good

journalism that focuses on people and what interests them. After all, that is the original task of journalism: to write what the reader is interested in, not what we or our colleagues are interested in. That is what readers are prepared to pay for. And there are many areas to consider. You have to take into account young families and you have to recognize that society has changed. We have a lot of single households. We have an older generation that has to be taken into account. We have a lot of patchwork families and everything that goes with that. We have to take all that into account. If you do that, as the Scandinavian media show, you will be successful. In print and online. But if you don't do it now and invest in it, you run the risk of missing the train, and once the train has left the station, it's too late.

**MIDAS:** The way forward is online, especially for minority dailies, which tend to be based in remote areas. Der Nordschleswiger switched from print to online in 2021, and two Hungarian newspapers in Transylvania did the same earlier this year. Should or must MIDAS focus more on online media in the future?

**Ebner:** MIDAS has to move with the times. Times have changed, there is no longer just the classic print daily newspaper, there are other ways of publishing. You have to take that into account and be flexible. But you need clear guidelines. Why did we create an association of European dailies and not include weeklies? For one simple reason. If a minority is able to set up a daily newspaper, then it has a certain size and an organizational structure at a certain level that is stable and guarantees that the minority concerned deals with its own language and culture on a daily basis. That is the crucial factor. In principle, it is not important what kind of medium it is. It can be radio, television or print, but it can also be online.

## INTERVIEW

# It felt like a wonderland for me

Edit Slezák



*Edit Slezák comes from a town some 200 kilometres east of Pozsony/Bratislava and belongs to the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. She worked as a business journalist for the Hungarian daily Új Szó and later spent many years as managing director and publishing director of the publishing houses that published Új Szó and the weekly supplement Vasárnap. Slezák has been with MIDAS from the very beginning, serving on the Governing Board since its inception and as President since 2013.*

**MIDAS (Hatto Schmidt):** How did you join MIDAS?

**Edit Slezák:** There's a personal side and a corporate side. At that time, Új Szó was published by a small publishing house, but the owner was the publisher of the Rheinische Post. In 1998, we received an invitation to a conference in Trst/Trieste; it went to the editor-in-chief of Új Szó. A few days before the event, he had a car accident. Nothing happened to him, but he was unable to travel to Trst/Trieste. The next person

to be considered was me.

**MIDAS:** So you went to the conference?

**Slezák:** Yes. There were a lot of people from different countries and from different minorities at the conference. Everyone had to give a short presentation about their newspaper. I introduced myself by saying: My name is Edit Slezáková in Slovak, but in Hungarian it is Edit Slezák. Everyone who had been asleep was now awake. I told them about the Hungarian minority and that

Új Szó was celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Bojan Brezigar, who has always been one of the most active members of MIDAS, suggested that we should put something together about Új Szó so that the other newspapers could write an article about it on this birthday.

**MIDAS:** How was the conference for you?

**Slezák:** It was very interesting for me. For the first time in my life, I saw that there are so many minorities and that each one is fighting for itself, each one has different problems, because the economic and political conditions are different everywhere. For me, the conference was very special indeed. You have to remember that I grew up under socialism and that not long before we were struggling with things like not being able to buy toilet paper. You couldn't speak your mind in public, you couldn't even trust your own friends, because you didn't know who was in the state security service. For me personally, but also as a publishing director, it was very special to see that the world was now as open to me as it was to others. I saw what was out there. It was like a wonderland for me.

**MIDAS:** How did the other Hungarian-language newspapers get involved with MIDAS?

**Slezák:** I have to explain a little. After the change, a man from Budapest contacted me. He was the head of an advertising paper. He proposed a cooperation with a Hungarian daily in Romania, one in Transcarpathia in Ukraine, with Új Szó and his own newspaper. His idea was to publish a joint weekly supplement. The aim was to bring together the Hungarian minorities in the region. The project lasted for about two years. Then the man from Budapest left and the cooperation came to an end. That was the first cooperation between Hungarian newspapers. And now to the question. I don't remember which Hungarian newspapers were present at the Trst/Trieste conference. But they were members of MIDAS from the beginning. That was not my success. Despite the cooperation on the supplement project, there was no close contact with the Hungarian newspapers. You have to remember that at that time there were twelve Hungarian newspapers in Romania alone. It's a very big country and each region had its own

newspaper. The fact that the other Hungarian newspapers are with MIDAS is a success for Bojan.

**MIDAS:** What were the most difficult moments during your presidency?

**Slezák:** There were two big problems before I became President: the biggest was the closure of Euskaldunon Egunkaria in 2003. Then Serbske Nowiny got into very serious financial difficulties. The Foundation for the Sorbian People had cut the newspaper's funding. In order to get a clear picture, Bjarne Lønborg from Flensburg Avis went there and took a close look at everything, including the financial data from the sale. In this way we were able to help Serbske Nowiny with arguments for their negotiations with the Foundation. During my own time as President, the big change from print to online and the expansion of online started. The fact that the newspapers have such different problems is an interesting aspect. There are dailies that get a lot of funding, but there are also some that get very little. There are newspapers that have no serious problems with domestic politics in their country and with coexistence, while others do. We cannot offer a solution to every problem, but we can bring together the different activities of minorities in different countries so that everyone can learn from them and adapt good ideas that have been successful in individual newspapers. That is why I have tried to encourage activities in this direction.

**MIDAS:** Do many minority dailies have economic problems?

**Slezák:** Almost all of them. Perhaps all MIDAS members should think about possible sources of income. I don't want to say that we should act as a media agency or an advertising agency. But without state or other support for the media, it won't work. In most cases, even such support is not enough. The advertising market is changing, even online. For example, if I had a good income from banners last year, this may not be the case next year because the advertiser has set up his own website or found other distribution channels. This part of the business is changing so much that this source of income has become uncertain. So we need a broad brainstorming

because we need money to produce our publications. It would be good to organize a workshop with experts in the field.

**MIDAS:** You mentioned problems in the coexistence of the majority and the minority in domestic politics. What do you mean by that?

**Slezák:** A small example from Slovakia. I am convinced that representation in parliament is very important for a minority. In Slovakia, we Hungarians do not have our own parties in parliament. What we do have, are Hungarian MPs in the ranks of Slovak parties. But we can't do anything with these people. If anyone is interested in us, it's only every four years when there are elections. In the meantime, as a minority, we can't achieve anything.

**MIDAS:** You mentioned the move to online. What challenges do you see for newspapers and for MIDAS?

**Slezák:** We are facing very big changes and we are already in the middle of this process. All over the world, print is mainly read by the older generation. Young people don't look for information in print. They are not interested in what we produce. But what kind of information are they looking for? There is also the question of whether or not belonging to a minority is as important to young people as it is to me. My sons live in England. The political situation in Slovakia is so bad that as a mother I can't tell them to come back, I have to tell them that it's so difficult here that they shouldn't come back. What is the best way, the right way? The young generation is scattered all over Europe. Is being a minority as important to them as it is to me? Social media and technology are changing all the time. Even on Facebook, young people are not there anymore. What was fashionable five years ago is no longer fashionable.

**MIDAS:** How important are minority media?

**Slezák:** Minorities have their own institutions, such as daily newspapers, theatres, teacher organizations, schools in the minority language. If we don't take good care of these systems, and just one or two of them disappear, we will never be able to build new institutions in their place.

What we lose, will be lost for all time. That's why every one of us who is still active and has ideas must fight. The Slovaks don't understand us Hungarians, they can't think with our heads. When a law is put on the table, the Slovaks don't understand what this particular law could mean for us Hungarians. Not because they are bad people, but because they don't think like us. This is why minority newspapers play such an important role in the distribution of information. If we add artificial intelligence to this situation and everything that goes with it, then we are in a very complicated situation.

**MIDAS:** So the challenge for minority dailies is how to use the channels to get the important information to young people?

**Slezák:** Yes. But it's not easy. Young people don't read, and when they do, it's often from online sources that prioritize entertainment over depth. On the Internet, only articles that contain nonsense get good click rates. That's a disaster. How are you supposed to get people the important information they need to live their lives?

**MIDAS:** MIDAS members are mainly print newspapers. Should the association open up more to the online world?

**Slezák:** Yes, absolutely. Things are already moving in that direction. In Romania, the two Hungarian dailies Nyugati Jelen and Bihari Napló have not been available in print since the beginning of 2025. I have spoken to representatives of both newspapers. They want to remain members of MIDAS. We can't say: you're no longer in print, so goodbye. MIDAS has to take care of newspapers that are not in print or are no longer in print. We have to open up to online, also because of our current member newspapers. This is the way to get more online newspapers as members.



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