

On newspapers in Belgium

In much the same way as its European neighbours, Belgium's newspapers suffers from a gender imbalance. In fact, most of the largest daily newspapers are still run by male editors-in-chief, with only a few exceptions that will be highlighted below.

Perhaps the most relevant one is Ms. Margot Moeseke, who —between 2012 and 2015— was editor-in-chief at “Het Laatste Nieuws”, Belgium's leading daily newspaper by audience. However, today a male-only editorial committee runs the newspaper.

Another of the most significant exceptions is Ms. Liesbeth Van Impe, who —for almost a decade— has been editor-in-chief at “Het Nieuwsblad”, a position that she currently shares with Mr. Pascal Weiss.

We can also point out the case of Ms. Kris Vanmarsenille, who —since May 2014— has run the “Gazet van Antwerpen” together with Mr. Rudy Collir until December 2015, being Ms. Vanmarsenille the sole editor-in-chief since then.

Another woman in a leadership position is Ms. Monique Raaffels, who has been editor-in-chief of the main Belgian free newspaper "Metro" since 2015. In the same year, Ms. Indra Dewitte was appointed as editor-in-chief of the Dutch-speaking daily newspaper “Het Belang van Limburg”. In addition, Ms. Kirsten Bertrand was named together with Mr. Bart Eeekhout as editors-in-chief of the Dutch-speaking daily newspaper "De Morgen" in 2018.¹

Also within the specialised press we can find a woman in a leading position: in particular, Mrs. Isabel Albers is the general editor-in-chief of the largest Belgian business and economic newspapers, "De Tijd" and "L'Echo", with responsibility for indicating the editorial lines of these newspapers in collaboration with the local editors-in-chief.²

The genders of the current chief editors among the seven largest Belgian generalist daily newspapers by average readership per issue³ are shown in Table 1 below⁴:

TABLE 1

Newspaper	Average readership per issue ^{5 6} (2018-2019) (CIM)	Language of publication	Publishing group	Gender editor-in-chief (name)
Het Laatste Nieuws	1,382.4	Dutch	DPG Media	Male (<i>Dimitri Antonissen, Frederik De Swaef and Brecht Decaestecker</i>)
Het Nieuwsblad ⁷	1,130.7	Dutch	Mediahuis	Male and female (<i>Pascal Weiss and Liesbeth Van Impe</i>)

¹ This is not the first time that “De Morgen” has had women running it, as Ms. An Goovaerts and Ms. Lisbeth Imbo have been its “editors-in-chief” at different times during the last five years.

² “Peter De Groote new editor-in-chief of De Tijd”: <https://www.demorgen.be/nieuws/peter-de-groote-nieuwe-hoofredacteur-van-de-tijd~b00aegdd/> [Data Consulted: July 29, 2020].

³ The data comes from the press audience research conducted by *Centre d'Information sur les Médias* (“CIM”) relating to the 2018-2019 period. Further information on the survey can be found on the CIM website: <https://www.cim.be/>.

⁴ Sectoral newspapers (mainly relating to sports and business) have been excluded.

⁵ Figures include both paper and digital readership.

⁶ Data are expressed in 1,000 people.

⁷ Including its sister paper “De Gentenaar”, covering local news from the Ghent area.

Sudpresse⁸	532.2	French	Groupe Rossel	Male (<i>Demetrio Scagliola</i>)
L'Avenir⁹	506.1	French	Nethys	Male (<i>Philippe Lawson</i>)
De Standaard	489.9	Dutch	Mediahuis	Male (<i>Karel Verhoeven</i>)
Le Soir	460.7	French	Groupe Rossel	Male (<i>Olivier De Raeymaeker</i>)
Gazet van Antwerpen	457	Dutch	Mediahuis	Female (<i>Kris Vanmarsenille</i>)

Other relevant newspapers, not included in Table 1 above, that are currently run by women are indicated in Table 2 below:

TABLE 2

Newspaper	Average readership per issue (2018-2019) (CIM)	Language of publication	Publishing group	Female editor-in-chief
Metro	431.1	Dutch and French	Groupe Rossel	Monique Raaffels
Het Belang van Limburg	414.3	Dutch	Mediahuis	Indra Dewitte ¹⁰
De Tijd and L'Echo	312,2	Dutch (De Tijd) and French (L'Echo)	Mediafin (Groupe Rossel and Roularta Media Group)	Isabel Albers
De Morgen	294,4	Dutch	DPG Media	Kirsten Bertrand

In the light of the data contained in Tables 1 and 2 above, some facts can be inferred:

- 1) There are currently 2 women at the top of the 7 generalist daily newspapers with the highest audience in Belgium.
- 2) These 2 women, Ms. Van Impe at “Het Nieuwsblad” and Ms. Vanmarsenille at “Gazet van Antwerpen”, run German language newspapers published by the media company Mediahuis.
- 3) Among the rest of the most widely read Belgian daily newspapers, there are 4 women at the head of them.
- 4) Between the latter newspapers, 3 are published in Dutch, 1 in French and 1 in both languages. They are all edited by DPG Media, Mediahuis or Groupe Rossel (with the participation, in the case of the business and economic newspapers “De Tijd” and “L'Echo”, of the Roularta Media Group).

⁸ Including the regional newspapers “La Capitale”, “La Meuse”, “La Province”, “La Nouvelle Gazette” and “Nord Eclair”.

⁹ Including the regional newspapers “L'Avenir Namur/Dinant”, “L'Avenir Basse-Sambre”, “L'Avenir Entre-Sambre-et-Meuse”, “L'Avenir Brabant wallon”, “L'Avenir Luxembourg”, “L'Avenir Verviers”, “L'Avenir Huy-Waremme”, L'Avenir – “Le Courrier de l'Escaut” and “L'Avenir Mouscron”.

¹⁰ She shares the position with Mr. Ivo Vandekerckhove.

- 5) With reference to the above points, we can highlight the following facts: (a) the second and seventh daily newspapers by audience in Belgium are run by women, as well as (b) the main free daily and (c) the largest business and economic newspapers in the country.

As a final point, it should be noted that in 2019 nearly 8 million Belgians read the daily press every month, which is equal to 82% of the population. Therefore, every day, 5.62 million people say that they read a newspaper in any format (i.e. physical or digital).¹¹ Consequently, the scope and influence of the Belgian press should not be underestimated. The same applies to the gender of those who decide its contents.

¹¹ According to CIM data collected by Vlaamse Radio-en Televisieomroep ("VRT") in the following link: "Flemish read more newspapers again and trust the traditional media more": <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/fr/2019/09/18/les-flamands-lisent-a-nouveau-plus-de-journaux-et-font-davantage/> [Data Consulted: July 29, 2020].