Regional press: the Autorité de la concurrence clears the acquisition of the Sud Ouest group by the Rossel group (La Voix du Nord, Le Courrier Picard, l'Union, Paris Normandie)

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Background

On 2 October 2026, the Rossel group notified the *Autorité de la concurrence* of its plan to acquire the Société bordelaise de gestion (Socibog) group. In particular, the parties operate a number of regional daily newspapers in France, including *La Voix du Nord* and *Le Courrier Picard* (Rossel group) and *Sud Ouest* and *La République des Pyrénées* (Socibog group).

In addition to the markets typically examined in the print media sector (readership and advertising), the *Autorité* analysed, for the first time, the possibility of a separate market for the purchase of journalistic services, without, however, reaching any conclusion to the question, due to the absence of any anticompetitive effects resulting from the transaction.

Following its examination, the *Autorité* ruled out any risk of harm to competition and cleared the transaction unconditionally.

The parties to the transaction

The Belgian media group Rossel operates in the French press sector. It publishes several regional daily newspapers distributed across the Hauts-de-France (*La Voix du Nord*, *Nord Éclair* and *Le Courrier Picard*), Grand Est (*L'Union* and *L'Ardennais*) and Normandy (*Paris-Normandie*) regions. It also publishes several local daily newspapers, including *Libération Champagne*, *Nord Littoral* and *L'Aisne Nouvelle*. Rossel also publishes the weekly specialist newspaper *La Voix des Sports*, distributed across the Hauts-de-France region, as well as the free magazine *L'Instant*, which is published in regional editions and made available at high-traffic locations.

The Sud Ouest Group is also active in the print media sector in south-west France, notably through the publication of several regional daily newspapers, including *Sud Ouest*, *La République des Pyrénées*, *Charente Libre* and *Dordogne Libre*. It also publishes a number of regional weekly newspapers, including *Haute Gironde*, *La Dépêche du Bassin* and *Le Résistant*.

The parties are also active in the audiovisual media sector and in related areas of the print media sector, including the operation of websites, the printing of newspapers and magazines on behalf of third parties, and the distribution of newspapers on behalf of third parties.

The *Autorité* ruled out any risk of harm to competition on the markets concerned by the transaction

In its examination, the *Autorité* took into account the respective market shares of the parties and the characteristics and functioning of the markets concerned, in particular the competitive pressure exerted by their competitors.

It then analysed the risks of horizontal, vertical and conglomerate effects arising from the parties' presence across the various upstream, intermediate and downstream markets for print and audiovisual media.

Any risk of harm to competition from the transaction was ruled out. The parties do not operate in the same geographic markets (in particular, the *Autorité* noted

that the parties' respective newspaper circulation areas do not overlap) and, moreover, the Rossel group will not hold significant positions in any of the markets concerned at national level following the transaction. Consequently, the *Autorité* considered that the transaction was not likely to harm competition on the markets concerned.

Lastly, the *Autorité* – like the Belgian competition authority[1] – examined the possible existence and scope of a market for the purchase of journalistic services, upstream of the markets for the publication and distribution of news content.

Following its analysis, and after consulting a wide range of competing national and regional press groups and trade unions representing journalists, the *Autorité* concluded that it was not necessary to define such a market precisely, as the new entity would not hold a significant position in any markets in which journalistic services are purchased in France. The *Autorité* will continue to monitor any consolidation in the print media markets that could create or strengthen a dominant position in France and thereby have an anticompetitive effect on the supply of journalistic services.

[1] Decision ABC-2026-CC-22 of 3 July 2026 pursuant to Article IV.66, 1-2 of the Code of Economic Law. Case no. CONC.C/C.25-0009 Rossel / IPM.

DECISION 26-DCC-222 OF 24 NOVEMBER 2026

on the acquisition of sole control of Socibog and the Rossel group

The full text of the decision (in French) will be available soon

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