16 April 2013: Regional Daily Press

Published on April 17, 2013

The Autorité de la concurrence clears, subject to conditions, the exclusive takeover, by the Rossel group, of companies in the Hersant Média group's Champagne-Ardenne-Picardie Hub

> Version française

The Autorité de la concurrence examined the acquisition, by the Rossel group, of the Champagne-Ardenne-Picardie Hub of the Hersant Média group (hereinafter "the Pôle CAP").

Rossel, a Belgian press group, operates in France's press sector through its main newspaper, *La Voix du Nord*. It publishes, among others, several regional daily newspapers that are distributed in the Nord Pas-de-Calais and Picardy regions, these being *La Voix du Nord*, *Nord Littoral*, *Nord Eclair* and *Le Courrier Picard*.

The Pôle CAP of the Hersant Média group (GHM) also operates in the press industry, publishing five regional daily newspapers in Champagne-Ardenne and in Picardy, namely, *Libération Champagne*, *L'Ardennais*, *L'Est Eclair*, *L'Aisne Nouvelle* and *L'Union*.

The distribution area of these two companies' newspapers overlaps in a limited area, however. *L'Union*, *L'Aisne Nouvelle* and *Le Courrier Picard* are distributed simultaneously in the *département* of l'Aisne, in an area that includes the town of Saint-Quentin and the Chauny urban district (hereinafter "the Saint-Quentin-Chauny area").

The Autorité de la concurrence notes that for the area in question, the acquirer will own all of the regional daily newspapers, whereas there was, until now, competition between the publications.

Although the Autorité de la concurrence has been able to ensure that there will be no price increase in newspapers for the area in question, the operation might nevertheless lead to uniformity in the content of these essentially local-oriented newspapers, translating for the consumer-reader into a reduction in quality and diversity of the regional daily press.

The Autorité de la concurrence has therefore cleared the operation, subject to certain commitments that would remedy the competition concerns it has identified.

Commitments made by the Rossel group: diversity of content in these newspapers, maintaining dedicated editorial boards and a commitment to the distribution of the regional daily newspapers taken over in the area in question

In order to guarantee that the quality of these newspapers is maintained, the Rossel group has undertaken, firstly, not to combine the local and departmental content of the *Courrier Picard*, *l'Aisne Nouvelle* and *L'Union* daily newspapers that are distributed in the Saint-Quentin-Chauny area. Furthermore, Rossel undertakes not to proceed with the harmonisation of regional content between the publications of *L'Union* and the *Courrier Picard* that are distributed in the Saint-Quentin-Chauny area. On the other hand, since *L'Aisne Nouvelle* has no section devoted to regional news, the Courrier Picard will be allowed to provide *L'Aisne Nouvelle* with regional content. This commitment does not cover national and international news or news of a general nature (share prices, weather, horseracing, TV programmes, horoscopes, games, etc.). Furthermore, each of the newspapers will continue to benefit from a dedicated editorial board.

Finally, in order to maintain the current diversity of regional daily newspapers in the area in question, the Rossel group has undertaken to keep on distributing *L'Union*, *L'Aisne Nouvelle* and *Le Courrier Picard* in the Saint-Quentin-Chauny

area.

An independent representative, approved by the Autorité de la concurrence, will ensure compliance with these commitments.

> Full text of Decision 13-DCC-46 of 16 April 2013 will shortly be available on this page

> Press contact: André Piérard – Tel.: (+33) 1 55 04 02 28 / Contact by email