



LUXEMBOURG

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Introduction

Luxembourg is the size of a metropolitan region (2,586 km²) and hosts a population of 672,000 inhabitants (Statec, 2024, p. 7). This relatively small market should prevent the existence of a plural media offering coverage on a purely economic basis – especially in a context of a medium-term reduction in commercial resources (Luxembourg Ad'Report, 2013, 2023). Nevertheless, the country has around 500 accredited professional reporters (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2024), which equates to one for every 1,300 inhabitants. By comparison, there is around one accredited reporter for every 2,000 inhabitants in the adjacent and large French media market (AJEF, 2021). The number of media outlets these professionals work for in Luxembourg has increased over the last two decades. The current analysis of media ownership and pluralism in the Grand Duchy focuses on the three main components of the media environment. First, RTL, Europe's largest commercial broadcaster, which produces and broadcasts news for the country. Second, media outlets organized around two main press publishers: Mediahuis Luxembourg and Editpress. Third, media controlled by other owners that broadens what is available to the public in terms of the agenda and points of view. For each type of media, the focus is on the construction of the business model, the ownership and executive control, the audience reached, and the state support.

RTL planet: National public control of a European commercial giant

RTL is a private company that occupies a special place in the Grand Duchy's media environment. Its commercial success was based initially on breaking the monopolies of state-controlled radio stations abroad, such as the BBC in the UK (Dominguez-Muller, 2007). In parallel, the Luxembourg state granted RTL a radio monopoly to broadcast content in the Luxembourg language for the citizens of the Grand Duchy. The national monopoly was abolished in recent decades, but RTL continues to play a dominant role in informing Luxembourg citizens in their Frankish national language through the news bulletins it broadcasts (Lamour and Lorentz, 2014). Its website in Luxembourgish can also be considered the most widely consulted daily text in the national language. This had previously remained in the oral domain, as the traditional printed press had always favored German as the language for disseminating news to Luxembourgers (RTL Luxembourg, n.d.a). The changing cultural and linguistic profile of the country, where half the population does not have Luxembourg citizenship and does not speak Luxembourgish, is currently taken into account by RTL with French subtitles in certain broadcasts of its television news bulletins, as well as on the English and French versions of its website (RTL Luxembourg, n.d.b; RTL Luxembourg, n.d.c). RTL's website in French also takes into consideration the existence of a Greater Luxembourg, including the part of the border region where the majority of border workers employed in the Grand Duchy can be found. It should be noted that the Luxembourg economy employs twice as many cross-border workers as residents with Luxembourg citizenship (Statec, 2025), hence the interest of this audience to the commercial media. French-speaking cross-border commuters can thus access the main information about their place of residence and work on a single website. There is a tailor-made linguistic and geographical pluralism sought by the commercial media, mainly in the digital media space.

RTL's overall audience strength is in the radio, TV, website, and social media segments. The most recent comparative data available (from 2022) reveals this dominance (Ilres, 2022). The television content broadcast by RTL mainly consists of a daily evening news bulletin, which attracts the equivalent of a quarter of Luxembourg's citizens (90,000 people). By comparison, its radio program reaches many more people, although there is competition from other radio stations broadcasting in Luxembourgish and other languages. The equivalent of 40% of Luxembourg's citizens listen to the

RTL radio station (146,000 people). Its website, the content of which can reach beyond the community of Luxembourg speakers and citizens thanks to its multilingual content, is accessed by 192,000 people. Facebook is the most-used social media channel in Luxembourg (Statec, 2022a), and RTL's Facebook page also has a greater number of followers than most other media companies in 2025, with 118,000 visitors (RTL Lëtzebuerg, n.d.). Anyone looking for information about the transparency and control of RTL will readily find that it is operated by a private company (CLT-UFA), of which three-quarters of the shares are controlled by the German company, Bertelsmann Capital Holding (RTL, 2025). Of all the media companies in the country, CLT-UFA is generating by far the largest net turnover – 670.5 million euros in 2023, as reported in the Luxembourg business registers (Luxembourg Business Registers, n.d.). RTL is thus a powerful private media company that is nevertheless subject to relative public control, since it has a public service mission and receives public subsidies that go with this by means of a signed agreement.

For the period 2024–2030, this commercial media agreement provides for the transfer of 11 million euros per year at the start, rising to almost 15 million euros at the end of the period (Etat du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2022). The agreement results in public scrutiny of the news production. It refers to respect for pluralism of opinion, the rejection of any discrimination in information, respect for the professional rights and duties of journalists, the existence of an ethics committee (the reports from which are forwarded to the state), and the monitoring of content by the independent authority responsible for controlling broadcasting (ALIA). RTL's capital is controlled by the German company Bertelsmann; however, as the Grand Duchy's only major broadcaster, it is too important for the country's public sphere to be left in the hands of any private owners who might direct its content to favor one party or promote specific policies over others. Information about RTL's news executives, available on the Internet, also shows that Luxembourgers and not Germans are in charge. RTL's ownership and news pluralism characteristics are very different from those of two other key media groups in the Grand Duchy that publish paid-for dailies, which have played a central role in the public debates concerning Luxembourg's democracy over the last century: the *Luxemburger Wort* and *Tageblatt*.

The constellations of Mediahuis Luxembourg and Editpress: Believing without belonging in the Grand Duchy

Mediahuis Luxembourg and Editpress control the two most widely circulated paid-for print dailies, around which public debate has long revolved (Lamour, 2023). For Mediahuis Luxembourg, the *Luxemburger Wort* was founded in the nineteenth century, and is associated with moderate center-right Christian Democracy. The newspaper employed up to 1,000 people in the past (Reporter.lu, 2022). For Editpress, the *Tageblatt*, created at the beginning of the twentieth century, is associated with the socialist center-left. The primary aim of the long-term owners of both dailies has not been to make print capitalism their business, but instead to circulate a set of ideas in line with the central ideologies guiding public debate. This refers to Catholicism for the *Luxemburger Wort*, owned by the Archdiocese of Luxembourg (through the publisher Saint-Paul), and socialism for the *Tageblatt*, owned by left-wing trade unions. These ideologies have not disappeared from the public sphere in 2025; however, they are circulated in a late modern society characterized by individualized trajectories, as in the rest of the Western world. Catholicism as an institutionalized set of practices has declined sharply in Luxembourg (Statec, 2023). The number of workers belonging to trade unions has also lessened, in what is currently a transformed, service-based economy (Statec, 2022b). The new class of workers is made up of foreign residents and cross-border commuters (75% of the total: Statec, 2025), who are not necessarily interested in electing Luxembourg trade

union delegates to represent their interests (Bannier, 2024). As a result, the *Luxemburger Wort* and the *Tageblatt* (both of which are mainly in German and aimed at Luxembourg citizens) have to find content for a transformed national readership. This readership must believe in some of the orientations of thought inherited from the dailies, but without belonging to the institutions and prescribed practices that shape these orientations, to paraphrase Grace Davie's work on transformed religious practices (Davie, 1994). Moreover, the *Luxemburger Wort* and the *Tageblatt* have shifted from being the sole press organs of specific institutions up to the end of the twentieth century, to now simply being among the many press organs of publishing companies engaged in strategies of international media capitalism, notably to ensure their viability.

Editpress, the publishing company of *Tageblatt* (26,000 readers in 2022) (Ilres, 2022), was the first to develop media diversification at the turn of the century. It has frequently done so with the support of foreign media companies (Lamour, 2014, 2021). The most successful organ born of this international alliance is the free daily *L'essentiel*, set up with the Swiss company TX Group AG (previously Tamedia), which is also in charge of *20 Minutes*, a free paper in the Swiss Confederation (Lamour, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). *L'essentiel*, printed in French and read mostly by commuting Luxembourg citizens, foreign residents, and cross-border workers, has become the only daily with a larger audience than the German-language *Luxemburger Wort* (171,000 in 2022). Its website, available in French, German, and recently also in English, attracts more visitors than that of RTL (197,000 in 2022). Its Facebook page also has more followers than RTL's (192,000 by 2025) (L'Essentiel, n.d.). The Saint-Paul company, publisher of *Luxemburger Wort* (121,000 readers in 2022), followed Editpress in this diversification strategy, but using its own economic capital and its own know-how, until *Luxemburger Wort* and its many other media outlets (magazines, websites, commercial music radio, etc.) became the property of the Belgian publishing company Mediahuis in 2020. Mediahuis has developed a strategy of European media capitalism similarly to RTL, but from another prosperous Benelux stronghold: Belgian Flanders.

Mediahuis Luxembourg has continued the strategy initiated by Saint-Paul of attracting the multilingual public in the Grand Duchy through online newsrooms in French (Virgule.lu), English (Luxtimes.lu), German (Wort.lu), and Portuguese (Contacto.lu) associated with *Luxemburger Wort*. These online newsrooms are under the control of specific editors-in-chief, but all have a single director, a Luxembourger, while the board of directors is also chaired by a Luxembourger. This chairperson must nevertheless interact with four other members of the board, who come exclusively from Mediahuis' home region of Belgian Flanders, according to information available in the Luxembourg business registers as on 5 September 2023 (Luxembourg Business Registers, n.d.). The editorial power structure of Editpress is more complex, as the various outlets involving the publisher are controlled by different companies incorporating other capital holders and sometimes a specific director, for example in the case of *L'essentiel*. Nevertheless, Editpress as an entity has managed to retain executive control of its company in Luxembourg hands. As reported in the Luxembourg business registers, as at 7 July 2024, 10 of the company's 11 administrators were born in the country and lived there (Luxembourg Business Registers, n.d.). A significant number of the Editpress board of administrators still live in the southern industrial region, where the affiliated trade union, the Socialist Party, and *Tageblatt* have found their greatest appeal among the citizens of the nation state over the last century. Luxembourg is small and changing, but the control of the media still reflects a reproduced and regionalized geography of power control in the fixed and democratic nation state.

According to the Luxembourg business registers, Mediahuis Luxembourg has overtaken Saint-Paul as the unitary print media company with the highest net turnover (45.7 million euros in 2023).

Editpress, which publishes *Tageblatt*, is far behind (at 9.7 million euros in 2023) and is even behind Edita, which publishes *L'essentiel* (13.3 million euros in 2023) (Luxembourg Business Registers, n.d.). The revenue from this free daily and the commercial music radio station, Eldorado, is essential to the Editpress business model, which has gone through a difficult period in recent years (Bumb, 2019, 2021; Bumb and Schmidt, 2018). These difficulties were also felt during the takeover of Saint-Paul by Mediahuis Luxembourg (Bumb, 2020). The Luxembourg state plays a key role in the financial support of the two publishing companies experiencing problems. Mediahuis Luxembourg and Editpress (along with the companies created with foreign/national partners) are the biggest beneficiaries of public financial support for the press, as they have the largest number of media outlets and reporters. This support has been granted in proportion to the number of reporters since 2021. It is less important than that given to RTL. However, it remains more substantial than is found in most EU countries for professional online/print media. Professional media outlets can receive 30,000 euros a year from the state for each full-time journalist. Fixed annual public support of 200,000 euros is also allocated for each editing company, irrespective of its economic situation (Strada lex Luxembourg, 2021). This specific approach to public financial support within the EU exists only in Denmark and Luxembourg (European Commission, 2024, p. 75). The media controlled by Mediahuis Luxembourg (*Luxemburger Wort*, *Télécran*, *Contacto.lu*, *Luxtimes.lu*, and *Virgule.lu*) received 2.5 million euros from the state in 2024 (23% of the total support for the press). Print and online media involving Editpress (*Tageblatt*, *Le Quotidien*, *Revue* and *L'essentiel*), which collectively have a larger number of staff, received support of 4.4 million euros in 2024 (more than 40% of the total support for the press) (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2025a). Data concerning public advertising by the various ministries in the press also reveals that the *Luxemburger Wort* and the *Tageblatt* are the two largest beneficiaries, with 45% and 19%, respectively, of the total public advertising spend in 2021, (181,000 euros for the *Luxemburger Wort*; 78,000 euros for *Tageblatt*) (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2021).

The other media owners: Identified framing outlets in late modern Luxembourg

The other media guaranteeing pluralism of information in Luxembourg can be grouped into four main categories. First, there are the paid print/online newspapers, mainly targeting the national citizens of the Luxembourg nation state, with content published in German, French, and even Luxembourgish. These newspapers have fewer members of staff than those of Mediahuis Luxembourg and Editpress, although they are similarly linked to specific political families of thought: the communist party (*Zeitung vum Lëtzebuurger Vollek*), the liberals (*Lëtzebuurger Journal*, *Lëtzebuurger Land*), and the ecologists (*Woxx*). Apart from the *Zeitung vum Lëtzebuurger Vollek*, which is owned by the Luxembourg Communist Party and its president, the other newspapers claim independence from political groups, in the same way as Mediahuis Luxembourg and Editpress. They are owned by a foundation (*Lëtzebuurger Land*), an associative study center (*Lëtzebuurger Journal*), and a not-for-profit company (*Woxx*). The only political parties represented in the national parliament that do not have an associated print/online newspaper are the most recent and excluded from nation state executive coalitions (déi Lénk on the left, D'Alternativ Demokratesch Reformpartei on the right, and the Pirate party). All these newspapers have a lower readership than those published by Mediahuis Luxembourg and Editpress (Ilres, 2022). Their net turnover is not necessarily shown in the Luxembourg business registers (Luxembourg Business Registers, n.d.), but they are also financially supported by the state (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2021, 2025a).

The second type of media symbolizes the strengthening of a particular segment of society in the prosperous global cities of the late modern era: the elite, generating omnivorous cultural tastes. In

Luxembourg, these media outlets include two radio stations that offer strong cultural programming, different from that of commercial radio stations and their pop-rock music industry. One of the former outlets is Radio 100.7, which is the country's only public service radio station, a status it acquired in 2022. Its content is in Luxembourgish and it has a substantial news component. It also needs to promote national cultural production (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2022). Radio 100.7 can be seen as an instrument that strengthens the national consciousness on a daily basis; like RTL, but for a smaller community (17,600 versus 146,300 daily listeners in 2022) (Ilres, 2022). It reinforces the national consciousness in a country that has multiple major cultural facilities and international programming in line with other world cities, attracting an international elite that expects a series of high-level services at its disposal (Lamour and Lorentz, 2019a, 2019b, 2021). Radio 100.7 replicates the cosmopolitan yet national cultural radio stations found in major European countries, such as France Culture and Deutschlandfunk Kultur. The second radio station in this type of media, Radio ARA, is financially supported by the state through an agreement and able to attract an audience through its distinctive cultural programs in 10 languages. It dates back to 1992 and is controlled by Luxembourgers and non-Luxembourgers. By comparison, Radio 100.7 has a board of directors controlled more by Luxembourgers and an executive director who previously held senior positions in the main daily press publishers also controlled by Luxembourgers (Saint-Paul and Editpress) (Luxembourg Business Registers, n.d.). Radio ARA attracts far fewer listeners than Radio 100.7 (4,300 daily in 2022) (Ilres, 2022).

The third type of media is also linked to Luxembourg's late inclusion among the world's cities: an outlet aimed at the international business elite. It is represented by a monthly paid print magazine that began publication in French in 2000 (*Paperjam*) and in English in 2011 (*Delano*). The *Paperjam/Delano* publication, which is also available online free of charge, differs markedly from the rest of the Luxembourg press. First, it has a specific news agenda in a country where most of the press covers all the news issues to capture as many readers as possible in a small market. Second, the director of the magazine's publishing company, Maison Moderne Publishing and Media S.A., is a Luxembourger and the sole capital holder. This is an exception in the Grand Duchy, where other media are controlled by associations, foundations, trade unions, formerly the Catholic Church, large international publishing companies with multiple shareholders, and very recently the state (Radio 100.7 in 2022). This director has developed a dual trajectory. First, the organization of cultural and business events, together with the former publication of magazines and websites promoting recreational/cultural life in a changing Luxembourg (e.g., *nightlife.lu*). Second, involvement in one of the key activities of dynamic cities: the real estate economy. Maison Moderne is majority owned by Lemonland S.A. (a company that rents and manages its own or leased real estate), which is itself controlled by the director/owner of *Paperjam/Delano* (Gaudron, 2016; Paperjam, 2020; Luxembourg Business Registers, n.d.). Third, *Paperjam/Delano* is the publication that enables the international business elite based in Luxembourg to identify the various people holding executive positions in the public and private sectors. An important part of the magazine includes articles as well as photos of a large number of entrepreneurs taking part in the many networking events organized by the "Paperjam Club," which brings together 1,800 companies and 22,000 active members (Paperjam Club, n.d.). The magazine therefore outlines the entrepreneurial community working in a global Luxembourg. As a professional medium, it also benefits from public support: 1.1 million euros in 2024 – an amount equivalent to that transferred to the major paid-for and free dailies of Editpress and Mediahuis Luxembourg (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2025a).

The latest type of media outlets found in Luxembourg are purely online operations. One of the most important outlets for this online journalism is *Reporter.lu*, which is run by three owner-reporters who previously worked for the most widely circulated paid-for print daily (*Luxemburger Wort*). According

to its website, *Reporter.lu* has 4,500 paying readers. The media outlet aims to assert a distinctive editorial line in the country (“No more superficial information and sensationalism: We have a passion for in-depth investigation and we want to offer you articles that focus on what is important and essential”: *Reporter.lu*, n.d.). *Reporter.lu* respects the rules of journalism in Luxembourg. Its journalists are accredited by the Press Council and the operation received public funding of around half a million euros in 2024 to support the work of its professional team (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2025a). *Reporter.lu* publishes texts about the country and international issues, but its most interesting articles from the point of view of media ownership and pluralism are probably those that focus on other media owners and/or the relationship between journalism and the other fields of power. For example, it used available data as well as insider voices to report on the difficulties of Editpress (Bumb and Schmit, 2018, Bumb, 2019, 2021) and portrayed *Paperjam* and its festive events involving representatives of the fields of politics and justice (Poujol, 2022). It exposed the crisis management at the restructured *Luxemburger Wort* (Bumb, 2020) and requested and circulated information concerning the Ilres Plurimedia 2023 survey, revealing the continuing negative trends of news readership in inherited media (Reuters, 2024).

Conclusion: Cosmology of a Grand Duchy

Media pluralism is under threat in the European public sphere, hence the publication of this report on Luxembourg as part of the EurOMo2025 project. This comes after the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) was passed by the EU Parliament in 2024, against the wishes of many of the normalized and growing radical-right political parties (Lamour, 2025). The current media environment in the Grand Duchy is structured around a relatively large number of outlets belonging to different types of owners. The plural media output that has been preserved over the last two decades. It is the combined result of legacies and operations beyond the journalistic field. The first legacy is the perpetuation of broad connections between specific political parties, and the paid-for press and their editing companies. The two largest press publishers and their most widely circulated paid dailies belong to the very broad family of thought of the two main moderate center left/right political parties, which have been associated with most of the state's coalition governments since the Second World War. The second legacy is the state's willingness to support the press at a time of steadily declining readership and uncertain commercial revenue. The third legacy is the more direct involvement of the state in the broadcasting of information, involving a contractual relationship with the only dominant commercial media outlet (RTL) together with the very recent status of public service broadcaster granted to a radio station that counterbalances the weight of RTL (Radio 100.7). The fourth legacy is the ability of the state-national elite to retain control of media ownership and/or to maintain an executive function over the plural media, despite, the increasing internationalization of the elite in the country, the significant influx of reporters from abroad, and a national citizenry comprising only half of the resident population and a quarter of the workers (Statec, 2025).

These four legacies reveal that media capitalism is not soluble in the global economy, although the Grand Duchy's growth depends exclusively on international markets and being able to attract external economic resources. The current wealth of the democratic nation state of Luxembourg, based on its globalized economy, helps its public executive to support the plural media environment. The state has increased the laws and initiatives on media pluralism, such as the national plan for the safety of journalists (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2025b). This can always be at risk on specific issues, such as the topic of gender (Kies and Lukasik, 2024), as shown in other EU countries (Lamour, 2025b). One of the greatest challenges for media pluralism in Luxembourg in the years to come is the continuing hemorrhaging of readers, listeners, and viewers from the various

traditional media outlets that require professional investment and trusting attention from citizens. This problem exists in all EU countries, but it can be particularly acute in a small media market and democratic public sphere. One can wonder what the future of this pluralism will be if, in the coming years, most of the professional media content accessed by the next generation of citizens becomes short texts on social media platforms, as this also includes free content produced by influencers, trolls, and AI, thus diluting the value of plural and professional journalism in the liberal democracy of the Grand Duchy.

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