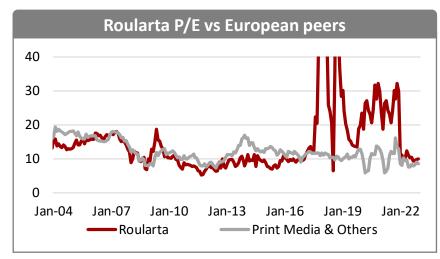
Roularta Media Group

BELGIUM

Bloomberg: ROU:BB Reuters: RLRT.BR





€m	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022e	2023e	2024e
Sales	278.4	298.0	258.5	303.6	344.3	355.6	363.8
EBIT	-63.7	7.5	4.0	8.5	16.6	17.3	21.3
Net profit	79.9	10.9	6.0	16.6	21.2	22.4	26.3
EPS (€)	6.14	0.83	0.50	1.38	1.77	1.86	2.19
DPS (€)	5.50	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
P/E (x)	3.2	16.3	26.6	10.8	10.0	9.5	8.1
Yield (%)	28.0	0.0	7.6	6.7	5.6	5.6	5.6
Adj. EV/EBIT (x)	na	3.4	7.5	6.0	7.1	5.4	3.4

Source: Merodis Equity Research, Factset

Pricing date: 31/12/2022

Market review and peer benchmarking

20 January 2023

Key quarterly insights: 4Q22

New CFO appointed following departure of Jeroen Mouton

Roularta welcomed Steven Vandenbogaerde as new CFO in November, following the announced departure of Jeroen Mouton. Steven has 27 years of experience in financial roles, including 19 years at stock market listed Ontex. He joined Drylock Technologies in 2021 as CFO. Jeroen, who moved to Kinepolis as CFO in December 2021, had been Roularta's CFO since 2016, overseeing fundamental strategic changes. Indeed, Roularta, under the leadership of CEO Xavier Bouckaert, launched major transformational deals from 2017, ranging from (1) divestments (mainly its 50% stake in Medialaan in October 2017 with a EUR 280m cash inflow) and (2) acquisitions (50% stake in Mediafin also in October 2017 for MERe EUR 57m, Sanoma's women magazines in early 2018 for MERe EUR 25m, gaining full control of the Bayard JV in Marc 2021 and opening a second home market in the Netherlands in December 2021 with the NSM acquisition for MERe EUR 20m) to (3) strategic measures (launch of New Deal, termination of Storesquare, major printing investment, cost containment measures to align opex with a structural declining ad spend, etc.). These resulted in a much more focused company with significantly reduced exposure to cyclical ad spend (in favour of more recurring subscription revenues with more than 1m magazine subscribers from below 0.8m in 2017) as well as sharply improved profitability (EBITDA margin of 10.2% in 2021 from 0.4 in 2017) and one of the strongest balance sheets in the sector with a net cash position of MERe EUR 71m (excluding c. 1.4m own shares worth EUR 24m) and shareholder equity of MERe EUR 220m in 2022e.

2H22 results preview

Roularta is expected to report 2H22 results on 3 March. We expect slowing top-line growth (+10% y-o-y from +20% in 1H22) driven mainly by the contribution from acquisitions (NSM acquisition). Roularta's top line should be hit by cyclical headwinds winds from weakening consumer spending and overall business confidence). We expect ongoing gross margins pressure (81% MERe vs 83.8% reported in 2H22) driven by higher paper prices (10% of COGS). After a record EBITDA margin in 1H21 (at 10.4%, the highest level since 2H10), we expect y-o-y erosion, also due to rising energy prices and despite ongoing cost control. With Belgium's wage-indexation-to-inflation law, further pressure should be felt but from early 2023.

Valuation assessment

The market currently values Roularta at an enterprise value (EV) of EUR 118m, which includes a market cap of EUR 233m, the value of other liabilities of EUR 12m, EUR 71m of net cash in '22e as well as our estimated value of EUR 44m for its 50% stake in Mediafin and EUR 7.5m for the 35% stake in Immovlan. Our fair equity value estimate is EUR 18.7/share (from EUR 17.8). We value the core Print Media activity at an EV of EUR 131m (7.5x EV/EBIT '23e down from 6.8x previously). We believe this business has more potential value, given, among others, Roularta's leading market positions in (news, business and women) magazines as well as it state-of-the-art printing facilities. Further support is provided by the solid and relatively secure dividend yield, currently at 5.6%.

Merodis

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Monthly market review dashboard

Goals of this Dashboard

- ➡ Follow-up to our coverage of Roularta which was launched in October 2015
- Tool to keep investors up to date with Roularta's equity story as well as its valuation in a sector context
- Update investors on recent company and sector news flow

Corporate calendar of Roularta's upcoming announcements and events

Friday, 3 March 2023: FY2022 results

Access our recent research reports on Roularta:

- "4Q21 market review" (quarterly dashboard), 17 January 2021
- "3Q22 market review" (quarterly dashboard), 17 October 2022





Company profile

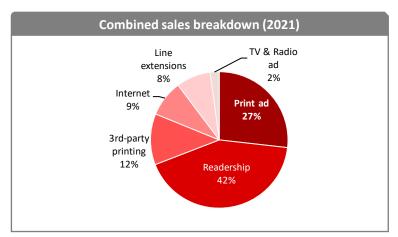
A domestic leader in high-quality print media focusing on its core activity

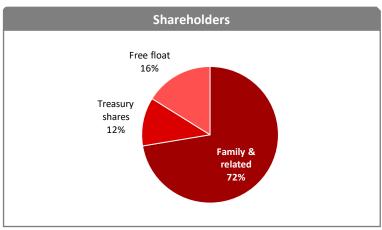
Company description

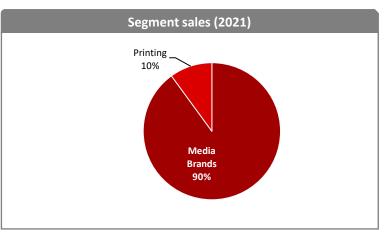
Roularta is Belgium's leading media company, offering:

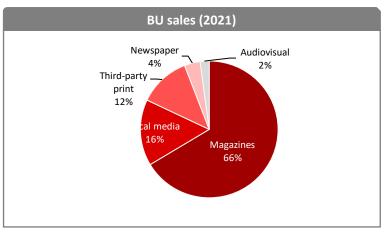
- (1) local weekly free newspapers in Flanders (Deze Week, De Zondag, Steps),
- (2) weekly news, business and women magazines in Belgium (Knack, Le Vif L'Express, Trends, Trends Tendance, Libelle/Femme d'Aujourd'hui and Flair and Feeling/Gael) and the Netherlands (EW, Beleggersbelangen, Knipmode, Formule 1, etc.),
- (3) internet platforms (Digilocal, Proxistore, Gezondheid.be, own content websites) and
- (4) a 50% JV stake in Mediafin, Belgium's leading daily business newspapers (De Tijd and L'Echo) publisher and a 35% stake in Immovlan.

Combined group sales are almost entirely generated in Belgium and the Netherlands (c. 20% of group sales) through (1) Print Media Advertising, (2) Readers Market revenues (subscriptions and newsstand sales), (3) Third-Party Printing, (4) Internet advertising and related, (5) other sources of revenues (inc. Line Extensions) and (6) TV & Radio advertising revenues. The 50% stake in Mediafin is equity-accounted. The company acquired its women magazines in an asset deal with Sanoma in 2018, it bought-out Bayard Presse from a JV with magazine titles in the Netherlands and Germany in '21 and acquired NSM (ex-Sanoma) in the Netherlands at the end of '21 (closed in Q1 '22) as well as 50+ Beurs in July 2021.







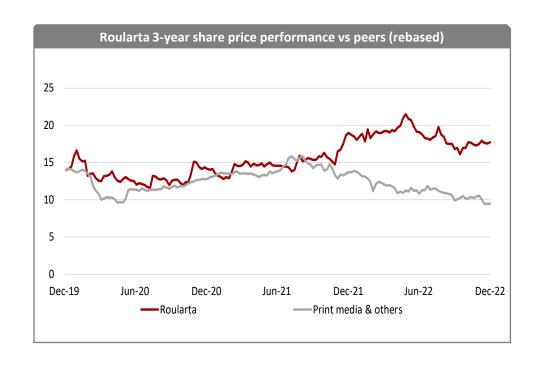


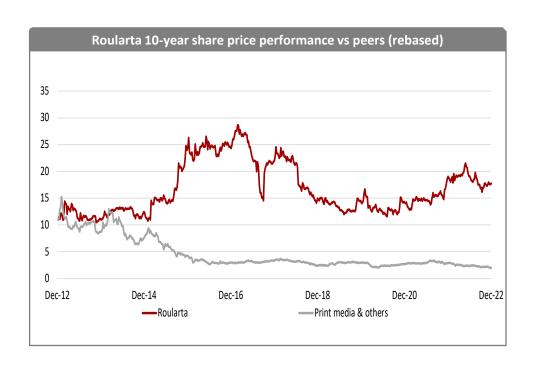




Share price performance

Positive momentum since 2H20 with macro headwinds since 1Q22









Analyst Recommendations, Earnings Expectations

Consensus stabilizes after downgrading from Covid-19 lockdowns

Consensus view

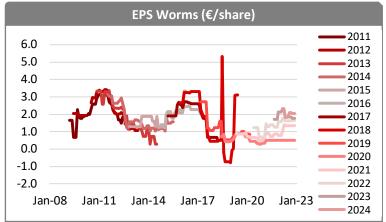
'22e consensus EPS estimates for Roularta remained flat q-o-q at EUR 1.65, despite the macro headwinds on ad spend and consumer spending from the inflationary environment.

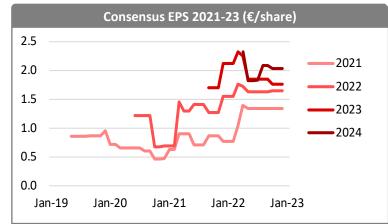
Consensus currently expects '23e earnings of EUR 1.77 per share (also flat q-o-q), vs. our forecast of EUR 1.86 (reflecting 5% growth y-o-y). Momentum is positive and we expect it to continue to some extent as the company's strategy of focused growth and cost discipline is paying off. We are, nevertheless, also expecting gross margin pressure from rising paper and energy prices.

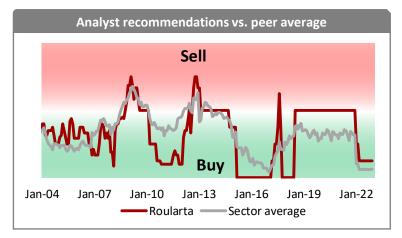
Our '24e EPS forecast of EUR 2.19 compares to a consensus forecast of EUR 2.04 per share (7.6% above consensus).

Roularta's share price increased by 5.7% in 4Q22, outperforming its Print Media peers (-4.7% q-o-q) but underperforming the broader market (+9.6% for the Euro Stoxx 600) and Belgian SMCs (+13.1% q-o-q). The share's 12 months low was EUR 16.10 (on 14 October '22), while its high during the year was EUR 21.50 (27 May '22).

Only one broker is actively covering the stock according to Factset, KBC Securities (Overweight recommendation with EUR 24 target price). Kepler Cheuvreux, which initiated coverage in September 2018, is no longer listed on Factset as actively covering the stock and Degroof Petercam does not appear to have published anything recently, also according to Factset.







	<u>2022e</u>	<u>2023e</u>	<u>2024e</u>
Sales	4.8	5.4	4.2
EBITDA	-10.7	-8.9	-6.0
EBIT	19.2	16.1	6.5
EPS	7.4	5.4	7.6
DPS	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net cash	19.6	170.9	188.4





Sector benchmarking and valuation analysis

Benchmarking Print Media peers and listed Printing companies

Sector financial benchmarking

		Freefloat	Liquidity	Depr/	Capex/	N	D/EBITDA		EBITD	A margin (%	6)	EBIT	margin (%)		Net	margin (%)			ROE (%)		2022-	24e CAGR (%	5)
	Company	(%) 2022	(daily,€m)	EBITDA	Sales	2022e	2023e	2024e	2022e	2023e	2024e	2022e	2023e	2024e	2022e	2023e	2024e	2022e	2023e	2024e	EPS	EBITDA	Sales
4	Solocal	100	0.14	46%	8%	1.7	1.5	1.2	27.8	28.2	28.1	14.1	14.5	14.6	6.1	6.2	6.4				2.3	0.3	-0.2
\geq	Mondadori	46	0.26	45%	2%	1.4	1.0	0.7	14.3	14.6	14.7	9.1	9.5	9.7	5.8	5.8	6.0	22.4	21.4	20.4	6.4	5.2	3.8
Ti.	RCS	5	0.10	31%	2%	1.3	0.7	0.4	13.8	16.5	16.2	7.9	11.1	11.2	5.3	6.1	6.3	9.4	14.0	13.6			
\geq	Vocento	50	0.02	45%	4%	0.2	-0.2	-0.6	9.4	10.6	11.6	3.5	4.8	5.8	2.8	2.5	3.4	4.6	4.3	5.7	12.0	14.1	2.8
	Sanoma	38	0.56	58%	3%	2.4	2.1	2.0	26.3	27.0	27.8	10.8	11.8	12.5	6.1	7.1	8.0		15.8	16.7	11.1	7.3	4.2
Z	Wilmington	90	0.82	103%	3%	-0.6	-1.0	-1.3	23.2	23.3	23.6	17.8	18.4	18.9	13.5	14.3	14.6		25.1	23.7	8.1	4.8	3.8
K	PRINT MEDIA AVERAGE	55	0.32	55%	4%	1.0	0.7	0.4	19.1	20.0	20.3	10.6	11.7	12.1	6.6	7.0	7.4	12.1	16.1	16.0	8.0	6.3	2.9
-	PRINT MEDIA MEDIAN	48	0.20	45%	3%	1.3	0.9	0.6	18.7	19.9	19.9	9.9	11.5	11.8	6.0	6.1	6.3	9.4	15.8	16.7	8.1	5.2	3.8
	Roularta (consolidated)	15	0.02	57%	13%	-2.2	-2.8	-3.0	9.2	9.6	10.6	4.4	4.4	5.4	6.2	6.3	7.2	9.4	10.0	11.3	11.3	10.2	2.8
	% prem./(disc.) vs median	-69	-91.2	25.4	326.0	-267.0	-419.5	-642.1	-50.8	-51.6	-46.8	-56.1	-61.5	-54.4	3.5	2.4	14.2	0.6	-36.8	-32.3	39.6	95.2	-25.9

Source: Merodis, Factset

Sector valuation

		Price	МСар		P/E			EV/Sales		EV	//EBITDA			EV/EBIT			P/B			DYield	
Company	Country	(local)	(local m)	2022e	2023e	2024e	2022e	2023e	2024e	2022e	2023e	2024e	2022e	2023e	2024e	2022e	2023e	2024e	2022e	2023e	2024e
Solocal	FRANCE	0.61	. 80	3.3	3.3	3.1	0.7	0.6	0.5	2.4	2.2	1.9	4.7	4.3	3.7				0.0	0.0	0.0
Mondadori	ITALY	1.81	471	9.0	8.4	8.0	0.7	0.7	0.6	5.1	4.5	4.1	8.1	6.9	6.2	1.9	1.7	1.6	5.7	5.9	6.3
RCS	ITALY	0.67	347	10.0	6.5	6.3	0.6	0.5	0.5	4.3	3.2	2.9	7.5	4.7	4.2	0.9	0.9	0.8	8.9	8.9	8.9
Vocento	SPAIN	0.63	76	8.2	8.8	6.5	0.2	0.2	0.1	2.7	1.9	1.3	7.1	4.3	2.6	0.4	0.4	0.4	7.9	5.8	5.3
Sanoma	FINLAND	9.82	1,602	16.4	14.2	13.3	1.9	1.7	1.7	7.1	6.3	6.1	17.2	14.4	13.5	2.3	2.2	2.2	5.6	5.8	6.0
W ilmington	UNITED KINGDOM	3.10	271	1683%	15.4	14.4	2.1	2.0	1.8	9.1	8.5	7.5	11.8	10.7	9.5	4.1	3.7	3.2	2.6	2.9	3.1
PRINT MEDIA AVERAGE				10.6	9.4	8.6	1.0	0.9	0.9	5.1	4.4	4.0	9.4	7.5	6.6	1.9	1.8	1.6	5.1	4.9	4.9
PRINT MEDIA MEDIAN				9.5	8.6	7.3	0.7	0.6	0.6	4.7	3.8	3.5	7.8	5.8	5.2	1.9	1.7	1.6	5.6	5.8	5.7
Roularta (consolidated)	BELGIUM	17.75	233	10.0	9.5	8.1	0.3	0.3	0.2	3.7	2.8	1.9	7.1	5.4	3.4	1.1	1.0	1.0	5.6	5.6	5.6
% prem./(disc.) vs median	i			5.6	10.7	11.7	-50.9	-58.5	-64.9	-20.7	-27.7	-46.1	-8.3	-5.6	-34.4	-44.1	-39.9	-37.2	0.3	-3.0	-0.4





P/E valuation relative to the sector

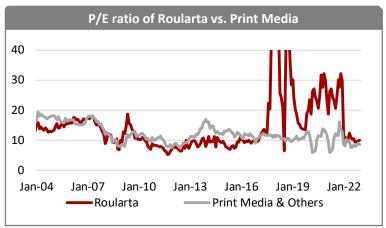
A recent normalisation driven by regained profitability momentum

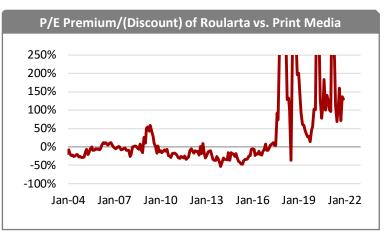
Valuation

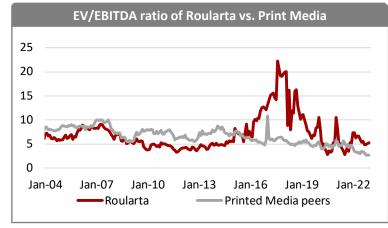
On consensus EPS estimates, Roularta shares trade at a P/E 12M forward of 10.1x, which is a premium to Print Media peers in Europe (currently at a median of 8.6x, up from 8.0x in September). Importantly, the volatility was historically due to profitability at Roularta which was negatively impacted by weak market conditions in the ad space for Roularta's core activity. The company's focus on subscriber revenues and reduced exposure to ad spend have alleviated earnings volatility.

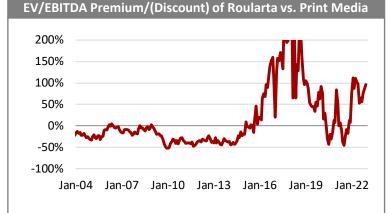
As a reminder, Roularta disposed of its stake in Medialaan in '18, which means Roularta is now a Print Media pure play compared to the past when TV broadcasting (through Medialaan) was the main profit contributor and the key value driver of the stock (in '16, 73% of Roularta's EBIT and 80% of its EPS was generated by Medialaan). The rerating compared to the Print Media sector is driven entirely by the share price performance since October '17 as well as the sharp cut in Roularta's earnings estimates due to launching costs in digital initiatives such as Storesquare (discontinued as from '19).

As disclosed in the first paragraph, the Print Media sector is valued at 8.6x P/E 12M forward (from 12.9x in December '21) and at 2.7x EV/EBITDA 12M forward (down from 4.8 y-o-y), which compares to a 20-year average of 12.3x and 6.7x respectively. The historical valuation range for the sector is 5.9x-19.4x (P/E) and 2.7x-10.9x (EV/EBITDA), which suggests that the sector remains close to the low-end of its historical P/E range and at the very bottom of its historical EV/EBITDA range.













Fair value estimate

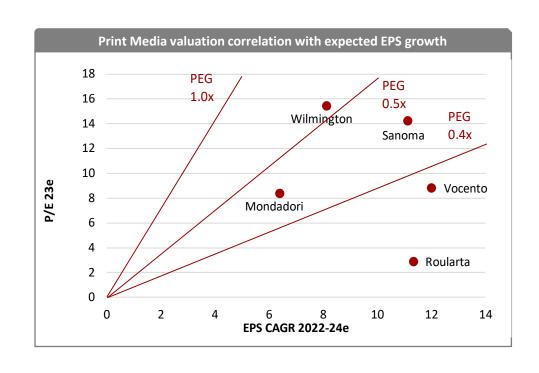
Reflecting the Medialaan disposal, Mediafin acquisition, Sanoma acquisition and Bayard buyout...

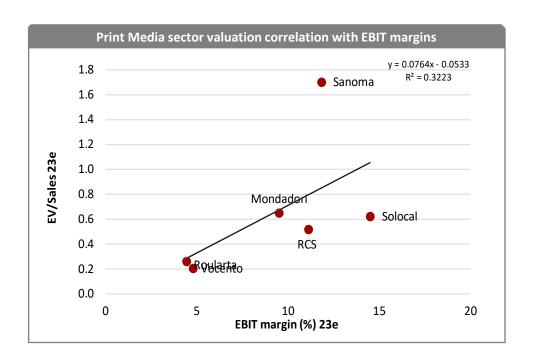
		Roula	rta updated	sum-of-the-pa	rts				
(EURm)	Ownership (%)	Adjusted EBIT 23e	Discount to peers (%)	EV/EBIT multiple 23e	Net debt 23e	Value	Equity value/sh.	Value split	Value w/o discount
RMG	100%	17.3	0.0	7.5		130.7	14.8	79%	130.7
Group enterprise value						<u>130.7</u>			<u>130.7</u>
- Net Financial Debt/(cash) (22)						71.3			71.3
- Other liabilities (22)						-12.4			-12.4
+ NPV tax asset (balance sheet)						5.2			5.2
+ Equity value of Mediafin stake	50%					43.5	3.3	18%	43.5
+ Immovlan stake	35%					7.5	0.6	3%	7.5
= Estimated market value of equity						<u>245.9</u>			<u>245.9</u>
Total share outstanding (m)						13.1			13.1
Equity value per share						18.7			18.7





Valuation indicators









Sales growth expectations

Impacted by cyclical and structural effects

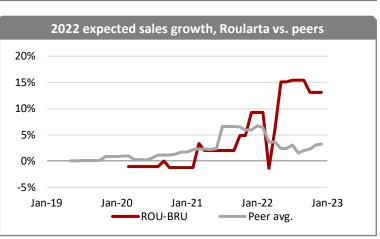
Expected Sales Growth

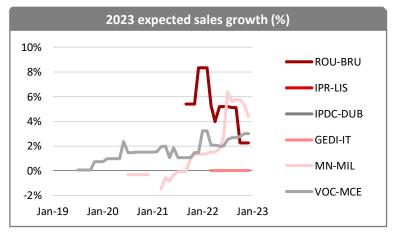
At the end of December, consensus expectations for '22 Print Media sales growth stood at +3.2% (up q-o-q from +2.0%) and vs. -1.3% at the start of 2020, reflecting the impact of the Covid-19 rebound. We expect Roularta sales to grow by 13% in FY22e with organic growth of 0.2% (from 7% in 2021).

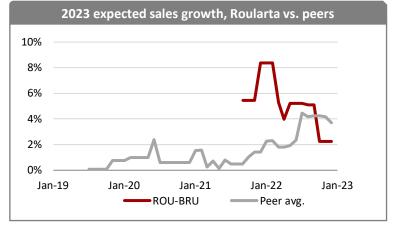
Roularta has engaged in a number of acquisitions and disposals over the past 4 years, leading to a repositioning of the company towards more focus on magazines and derived subscription revenues as well as printing in Belgium and in neighbouring countries. These transactions impede, however, on the comparability of the accounts from one year to another. The underlying trend, however, is positive in terms of focus and profitability.

In addition to the Covid-19 crisis which is affecting the world economy, the media sector is suffering from the structural impact of online media gaining market share over traditional Printed Media and TV in terms of advertising revenues. This is driven by changes in viewership, which is moving from the traditional media to online.













EBITDA growth and margin expectations

Advertising revenue pressure continues to hurt margins

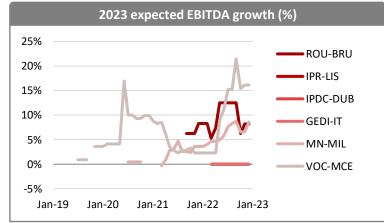
EBITDA expectations

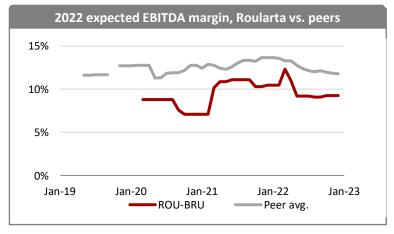
At the end of December, expected consensus EBITDA growth for '22e at Roularta lies at +3.2% (flat q-o-q), compared to the peer average of +4.7% (from +6.2% previously expected). Roularta's EBITDA margin expectations (9.3%) remain below the peer average for '22 (11.8%).

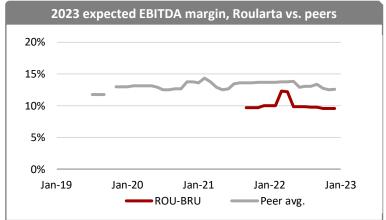
Note that consensus changes to EBIT or EBITDA at Roularta are not interpretable in a straightforward manner. In Roularta's case, its reported EBITDA margin (as reflected by Factset consensus) is positively influenced by the IFRS 11 treatment of its 50% stake in Mediafin (from March '18), whereby 50% of the net profit is accounted for in Roularta's EBITDA and EBIT, but where its sales are not accounted for in its top-line. Merodis estimates exclude equity accounted results from the EBITDA and EBIT lines, but other analysts may treat these figures differently, or they may have recently changed their view on them.

The transactions impact IFRS EBITDA and EBIT as the Mediafin net contribution is added as from March '18. Sanoma's contribution is included in the consolidation scope from July '18, as reflected in our forecasts. Finally, we have added the Bayard JV as being fully consolidated since April '21 with the buyout transaction (and ensuing 100% ownership). We have also added the contribution of the NSM acquisition as from Q1 '22, with an expected accretive impact thanks to the (estimated) reasonable price paid (MERe 4x EBITDA) and NSM's high margins (11.6% EBITDA margin vs Roularta's 10.2% in '21).













Consensus payout expectations

Stable dividend outlook backed by a strong balance sheet

Dividend payout

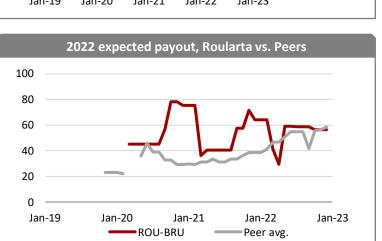
Roularta announced a dividend of EUR 1 per share for 2021, the same as last year. The amount is as expected although it reflects a high payout (73%) and implies a high dividend yield (6%).

Roularta's targeted pay-out ratio is 30%, which is in line with its average payout ratio prior to the acquisition in France of c. 32% ('02-06) and broadly in line with the Sector average.

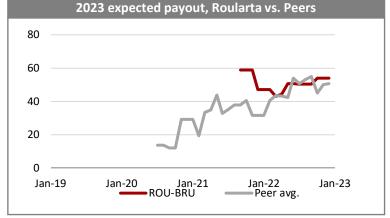
Consensus expects Roularta to pay out a dividend of EUR 1/share in '22e (flat q-o-q), in line with MERe and the company's guidance.

Going forward, we believe that a EUR 1/share dividend in the next years is entirely sustainable given the EUR 101m net cash position reported in '21. This excludes treasury shares worth a total of EUR 24m, which could either be cancelled (ie. considered as a form of payout), placed in the market in case of appetite (ie. turned back into cash with the added beneficial impact of increasing free-float/liquidity) or used as M&A currency (although we do not expect any major/disrupting acquisitions in the future). Recent communication suggests a current focus on improving liquidity.













Leverage expectations

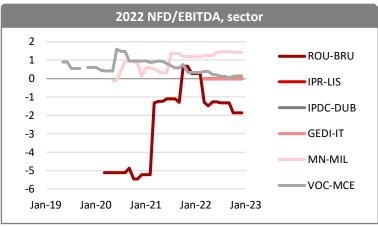
No longer an issue post the Medialaan disposal

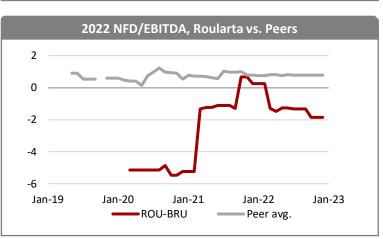
Net-debt-to-EBITDA

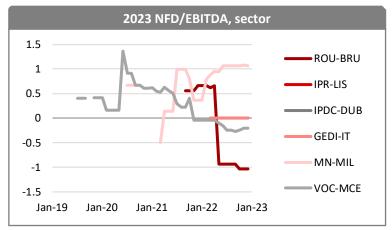
The level of expected financial leverage in the Media Sector was high in '11 and '12 and again in '14 (where it exceeded 2.2x Net debt over EBITDA), but trended down since then, before moving back up with, on average, a ratio of 2x. Roularta's ratio has exceeded 2x only during '14 but has reached a net cash position of €101m at the end of '21, following the transactions (Medialaan disposal and the acquisitions of Mediafin and Sanoma's women magazine titles) as well as the special €5/share dividend payout to shareholders in '18.

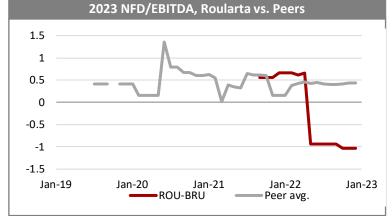
As a reminder, Roularta has paid back its €100m bond in '18 and benefited from the first full-year impact in '19. The company had a covenant threshold of 3.5x net debt over EBITDA based on annual EBITDA including the company's share of Mediafin's and Bayard's net profit.

Going forward, this has become a non-issue given our forecast of a net cash position of €71m at the end of '22e. However, we are well above consensus which stands, according to Factset, at a net cash position of EUR 59.6m.





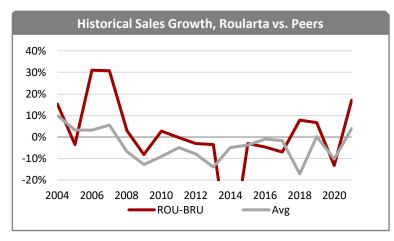


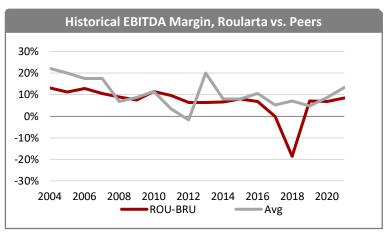


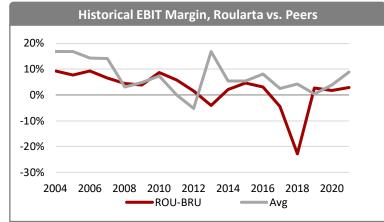


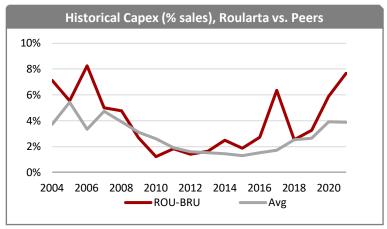


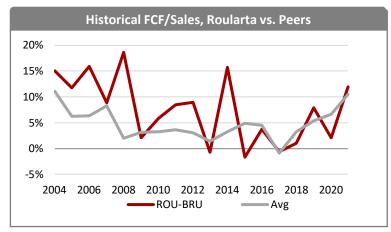
Historical P&L, CF and Balance Sheet Performance

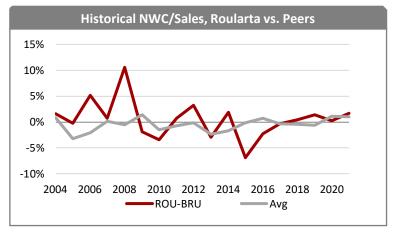










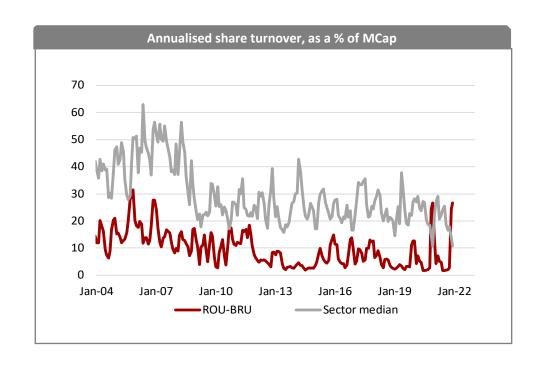


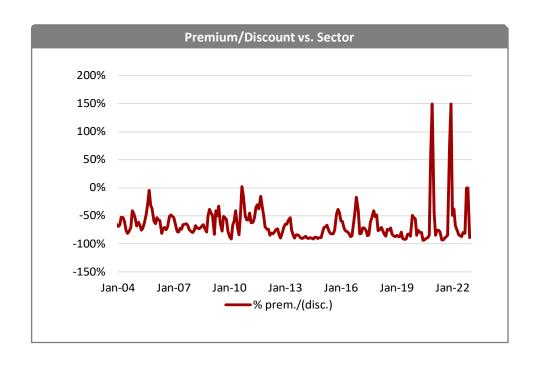




Share liquidity

Well-below peers









Merodis Equity Research

Financial tear sheet

Financial summary

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