AI – Media Barometer 2026

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Management summary

The **AI Media Barometer** is a study into the applications of generative AI (GenAI) in the Flemish media sector, specifically examining how professionals in the fields of communication, design and journalism use GenAI tools in their day-to-day work. The 2026 edition is based on a quantitative survey among 560 media professionals (195 communication professionals, 118 designers and 247 journalists), combined with qualitative interviews. This year, the third edition of the Barometer centres on 'value': what is the value of AI-generated content, and what does AI do to the value of the professional themselves?

We first present the key general findings across all target groups. We then highlight five brief key learnings for each target group.

The use of GenAI among media professionals remains high, but for the first time we are seeing it plateau. Nine in ten media professionals report using GenAI at work, with 70% doing so at least weekly and 39% even daily. After last year's strong growth, daily use is dipping slightly among communication professionals (from 59% to 54%) and designers (from 53% to 45%). Only among journalists does daily use continue to rise, to 24%, although the group that rarely or never uses GenAI also remains relatively large there (21%). Belief in the added value of AI is also becoming more nuanced: among designers, the share who consider AI 'definitely an added value' drops from 55% to 38%, while among communication professionals it declines slightly to 66%. Journalists, meanwhile, are somewhat more positive than last year (31%).

The motivations for using GenAI remain stable. Working more efficiently and saving time remain the most important reasons, followed by finding creative ideas. The most widely used applications are still language-based: translation (67%), copy editing (64%), summarisation (62%), inspiration for content (61%) and text production (56%). Visual content creation remains clearly less established at 33%. Active use of advanced AI applications, such as agents and vibe coding, remains limited: 13% at most. A large group is, however, considering adopting them. Designers are the frontrunners: one in three already uses vibe coding tools.

Three quarters to four in five media professionals have ethical concerns about the use of GenAI in the sector, with journalists remaining the most critical.

This year's common thread is 'value'. The interviews reveal that professionals are transparent about their AI use towards clients, but prefer to keep quiet about it with the wider public. This out of fear of the devaluation of their work. There is also a shift in where the value of media creation lies: no longer in the output itself, but in the process, the service provision and the human contact. Respondents acknowledge that AI is putting pressure on pricing, but the time freed up is being reinvested in, among other things, application security, customer contact and more creative concepts. The media professional is thus becoming less and less of a maker and increasingly a director or curator, which for some also leads to frustration about the loss of fulfilment in their work.

Organisations are professionalising their AI policies, although not at the same pace everywhere. This year sees a clear shift from informal agreements to formal guidelines: 43% of communication professionals and almost half of journalists report that formally established guidelines exist. Among designers, a third are still left without guidelines. In terms of training, knowledge sharing among colleagues remains the most popular (52%), followed by training on individual request (36%). Journalists are the exception here: for them, structured external training (45%) is more prevalent than individual on-request training (18%).

Finally, there is an ambivalent attitude towards AI: 63% of media professionals are mainly curious about the future of the profession, but 51% are also concerned. The main tensions are fear of errors and hallucinations (50%) and the loss of personal creativity or authenticity (47%). As with last year, we see that GenAI is mainly taking over tasks that normally belong to the growth path of interns and junior employees, although 45% also indicate they cannot properly assess the impact on junior roles. This once again raises the question of how training programmes and careers should change in a media sector permeated by GenAI, when new professionals can no longer grow and must take on 'senior tasks' straight away, because AI is used for the remaining tasks.

Key learnings Communication professionals

1. After the doubling seen in 2025, a first slight decline follows in daily AI use.
2. The most widely used AI applications remain textual support.
3. The use of advanced AI functionalities is increasing slightly.
4. Communication professionals are mainly curious about the further evolution of AI, but concerned as well.
5. Communication professionals mainly fear the loss of creativity or authenticity.

Key learnings Designers

1. AI use among designers is plateauing, while conviction in its added value is declining.
2. Designers are picking up technically advanced AI applications, especially vibe coding.
3. For designers, the limitation lies rather in tooling and price than in the quality of AI output.
4. Junior tasks are disappearing; designers are moving from maker to curator and director.
5. Designers are discovering ethics: from the least to the most interesting topic.

Key learnings Journalists

1. Journalists are of two minds about the use of AI.
2. Efficiency gains come first, but there are doubts as to whether AI can deliver on that promise.
3. Fear of errors and a loss of authenticity.
4. Advanced applications are not catching on.
5. Guidelines are being formalised, but an adoption gap is emerging.