



**Joint submission**

**towards the review of the Republic of Moldova under**

**UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

**112th session**

**by the**

**Youth Platform for Interethnic Solidarity (Minority Youth Moldova),**

**Accolada and**

**Non-profit Partnership "Roma Diaspora. Tent on the Dniester"**

**15 March, 2024**

**About the authors:**

**Youth Platform for Interethnic Solidarity** (Minority Youth Moldova) — a non-governmental organization in the Republic of Moldova, established in 2016 by eleven graduates of the internship program of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Moldova, with the aim of representing and promoting the rights of national, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities.

The idea of creating an organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of minority rights arose after the Universal Periodic Review (November 2016), when the Republic of Moldova received a large number of recommendations on working with minorities and protecting their rights.

The mission is to consolidate efforts to create a tolerant society in which the rights of national, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities are respected and promoted.

The organization promotes the active participation of minority representatives in the socio-political life of the Republic of Moldova, and also work on the integration of minorities into Moldovan society to ensure the democratic development of the country.

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**Accolada** is a non-profit public organization registered in 2002 in Dubasary, the Transnistrian region.

Aims of the organization:

- Contribution to the formation of the priority of human rights, universal values, moral values in the public consciousness.
- Aesthetic and intellectual education of the new generation.
- Wide range of cultural and educational activities.
- Providing psychological and social support to families and young people.
- Organisation of cultural and mass events: Actions, concerts, festivals, debates, presentations and exhibitions.
- Organisation of informative and entertaining excursions.
- Providing resources for the free expression of thought and discussion of acute and contemporary issues.

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**Non-profit Partnership "Roma Diaspora. Tent on the Dniester"** has state registration of a legal entity dated 6 July 2018.

The non-profit partnership Roma Diaspora "Tent on the Dniester" is an organization operating in the Transnistrian region. The activity of the Tent on the Dniester has several directions and is based on cooperation in the public sector, legal assistance to citizens, information and development of civic activity.

The objectives of the Partnership's activity are:

- consolidation of Roma of the republic for the implementation and protection of civil, economic, social, cultural and other legal rights and freedoms, national dignity of Roma;

- assistance in meeting the national, cultural and spiritual needs of Roma;
- achieving optimal conditions for the revival and development of the spiritual, cultural and educational heritage of the Roma of Transnistria;
- promotion of the welfare and improvement of the level and quality of life of Roma through education, employment, entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship, job creation, and the formation of a healthy lifestyle;
- revival of linguistic, cultural and spiritual traditions of Roma, preservation of their national identity.

The mission:

Consolidation of constructive forces of society in solving problems of children, women and family, participation in spiritual and moral education of youth of rural areas and small towns of Transnistria by providing information and consulting services, activation of cooperation, charitable events, promotion of advanced forms of leisure activities and additional education.

Who works in the organization: Teachers, psychologists, lawyers, social workers, sociologists, economists, musicians, youth leaders.

The Tent on the Dniester provides information and counseling services; promotes cooperation in civil society; organizes charitable events; introduces modern forms of non-formal education; supports youth and civil society organizations.

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## **Summary**

This joint alternative report reveals how minority rights are being ensured on both banks of the Nistru river, and provides recommendations to the Republic of Moldova and de facto authorities in the Transnistrian region. The report consists of 3 main chapters:

1. Legal and policy framework
  - 1.1. Impact of adopted legal and policy framework on minorities
  - 1.2. Developments in amending the legislation that affects minorities
  - 1.3 Statistical data
  - 1.4. The use of minority languages in public life
  - 1.5. Freedom of religion and belief
2. Roma, including Roma refugees from Ukraine
  - 2.1. Access of Roma to human rights on both banks of Nistru river
3. Minority youth in the decision-making process

## **ABBREVIATION**

**AIR** - Agency of Interethnic Relations

**Strategy** - Strategy of consolidation of interethnic relations in the Republic of Moldova 2017-2027

**PA** - Plan of Actions

**NHRAP** - The National Human Rights Action Plan 2018-2022

**NPHR** - National Programme for Ensuring Human Rights 2024-2027

**De facto authorities** - The duty bearers in the territory of the Transnistrian region

## Key areas of concern:

### 1. Legal and policy framework

#### 1.1. Impact of adopted legal and policy framework on minorities

- **2017 CERD Rec. 11 (a) The implementation of the Equality Act and its impact on the situation of ethnic minorities**
- **2017 CERD Rec. 17. The Committee also recommends that the State party take the measures necessary to ensure that complaints by members of ethnic minorities are properly filed and investigated and that perpetrators are prosecuted, convicted and sentenced.**

The recommendation is considered partially achieved at the level of implementation and impact on the situation of minorities.

The Equality Council receives a low number of complaints from the population, including cases of racial discrimination. However, over the past 10 years, the Equality Council has predominantly dealt with cases of discrimination based on protected characteristics such as disability, gender and those related to minorities<sup>1</sup>. In 2022, the highest number of decisions were based on language (22.73%), sexual orientation (18.18%), ethnic origin (9.09%), and disability (6.28%). Additionally, 22% of all decisions concerned violations of dignity, such as degrading portrayals of ethnic background in the media, racist remarks and similar offenses<sup>2</sup>.

However, in 2022, the enforcement of decisions published by the Equality Council was low. In 2021, 53% of the decisions were challenged in court, mainly by public authorities. **Just 6%** of the decisions were enforced, and **none** of them related to racial discrimination<sup>3</sup>.

#### Recommendation:

- The government should raise awareness among public servants and judges about equality and nondiscrimination to ensure the full implementation of the Equality Council's decisions, including those related to racial discrimination, and the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws.
- **2017 CERD Rec. 11 (b) Measures taken to develop and implement a plan of action to implement the Strategy on Strengthening Interethnic Relations (2017-2027) and to ensure the adequate allocation of financial resources for its effective implementation**

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<sup>1</sup> Equality Council. Equality council at 10 years of activity.

<https://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Brosura-A5-10-ani-Consiliul-pentru-Egalitate-en-web.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Equality Council. Discrimination in the Republic of Moldova, 2022.

[https://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Egalitate\\_raport\\_2022\\_ro-1.pdf](https://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Egalitate_raport_2022_ro-1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

- **2017 CERD Rec. 11 (c) Information on the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and impact of the Strategy on the situation of ethnic minorities and the involvement of minorities in its ongoing implementation.**

The recommendations are considered partially achieved at the level of implementation.

The issued in 2020 assessment report on the implementation of the Plan of Actions (PA) 2017-2020 for implementation of the Strategy of consolidation of interethnic relations in the Republic of Moldova 2017-2027 (Strategy)<sup>4</sup> identified several issues, among others:

1. Low implementation rate. Only 54% of the actions were reported as fully implemented, 38% were partially implemented and 8% remained incomplete.
2. Lack of sufficient financial and other resources. Most actions were initiated and supported by international partners, with the non-governmental sector playing an important role in achieving results. Cultural events, mainly funded from public sources, accounted for the bulk of planned activities carried out by implementing agencies.
3. Lack of explicit alignment of the PA to Moldova's international and national commitments.
4. Weak technical capacities of the AIR and evidence-based policy development, in particular the legal framework for strengthening interethnic relations provided in the Strategy and PA. 53% of experts interviewed stressed that the Strategy and the PA 2017-2020 only marginally or partially provided a sound legal framework for strengthening interethnic relations. *Data collection and analysis, evidence-based policymaking and monitoring and evaluation of policies* were identified as areas of institutional capacities that should be strengthened.

In April 2023, the new Programme 2023-2025 for implementation of the Strategy was adopted<sup>5</sup>. Since then, the mechanism for monitoring of the Programme implementation was created only in March 2024. Also, there is no publicly available data on its implementation. Additionally, there has been a low level of engagement and ownership of state institutions and cooperation with relevant stakeholders in implementing the Strategy.

The new programme has no budget for implementing the objectives of improving access to information and programmes in national minority languages, promoting multilingualism and diversity in society through the media, and promoting initiatives to foster a sense of citizenship. At the same time, the programme on inclusion of minority youth in civil service seeks financial support from development partners, despite the fact that two separate programs of internship for young people were established by the government and the administration of the president in recent years.

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<sup>4</sup> Burdelnii E. Assessment of the implementation of the Action Plan for 2017 - 2020 for the implementation of the inter-ethnic relations for 2017-2027, HCNM, Chisinau, 2021. [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/raportul\\_final\\_de\\_evaluare\\_a\\_pa\\_2017-2020\\_ro.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/raportul_final_de_evaluare_a_pa_2017-2020_ro.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> the Programme 2023-2025 for the implementation of the Strategy for consolidation of inter-ethnic relations in the Republic of Moldova 2017-2027, No. 169 of 29-04-2023, in: Official Gazette No. 159-161 art. 352, 11.05.2023. [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=136873&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=136873&lang=ro)

## Recommendation:

- The Government should align the policies related to minorities to international commitments and recommendations, as well as national standards; ensure that these policies are evidence-based, have mainstreamed human rights based approach and sufficient financial resources for their implementation; strengthen technical capacity of the Department for Policies in the Field of Interethnic Relations<sup>6</sup> and the Agency for Interethnic Relations in data collection, disaggregation and analysis by ethnicity, gender, age and disability, monitoring and evaluation, human rights and results based policymaking.
- **2017 CERD Rec. 11 (d) Measures taken to finalize and adopt the National Human Rights Plan of Action (2017-2021), including detailed information on measures included in the plan to combat racial discrimination and strengthen inter-ethnic relations, the resources allocated to the plan and efforts for the implementation of the plan and evaluation of its impact on the situation of ethnic minorities.**

The recommendation was partially achieved with no positive impact on the situation of minorities.

The National Human Rights Action Plan 2018-2022 (NHRAP) evaluation report<sup>7</sup> reveals the most modest progress and the lowest level of implementation of measures related to minorities, especially Roma. Within the areas related to minority rights, only 6.67% of indicators were largely achieved, while 86.66% remained unmonitored. Access to justice for national minorities regressed, despite progress for other vulnerable groups. Insufficient measures and accessibility issues in legal aid were noted, including in Russian language. Media accessibility for sensory disabilities and linguistic minorities lacked relevant data. Ensuring full access to public information faced challenges due to broadly formulated indicators. Non-discrimination and equality areas showed medium progress but none for minorities. Education rights, including for minorities, weren't achieved, with their underrepresentation in higher education. Employment data, especially for Roma women and minority youth, remained unmonitored. Social housing provision for vulnerable groups, in particular Roma, lacked assessment. Overall, NHRAP implementation suffered from inadequate monitoring and evaluation, lacking baselines and responsible institutions for data collection.

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<sup>6</sup> Department for Policies in the Field of Interethnic Relations is a structural subdivision of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, which provides analysis, monitoring, evaluation, policy development in the field of interethnic relations, the functioning of the languages spoken on the territory of the Republic of Moldova and the promotion of linguistic diversity.

<sup>7</sup> Evaluation Report: National Human Rights Action Plan 2018-2022, Chişinău, 2023.  
[https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/raport\\_de\\_evaluare\\_pnado\\_2018-2022.pdf](https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/raport_de_evaluare_pnado_2018-2022.pdf).



The evaluation report identified shortcomings, including: (1) insufficient allocation of financial resources for planned actions by ministries and other public authorities and institutions; (2) lack of political will to amend laws or ratify international human rights instruments; (3) shortcomings in establishing, monitoring and evaluating outcome indicators, by category of persons and human rights, to assess the final impact of these documents on people's lives, especially on the vulnerable and marginalized, and on the respect for their rights.

In March 2024, the Government adopted the new National Programme for Ensuring Human Rights (NPHR) 2024-2027. The NPHR<sup>8</sup> focuses almost exclusively on minorities' cultural rights out of 14 objectives. This approach does not align with the State party's international commitments to combat racial discrimination, particularly against Roma.

**Recommendation:**

- The government should fully align and mainstream international commitments and recommendations related to minorities in all areas of the legal and policy framework that may directly or indirectly affect them, including justice sector reform, health, social protection, access to adequate housing, regional development, employment, public service, etc.; ensure a human rights-based approach to data collection and disaggregation in all areas of policy making, including on the basis of ethnicity, gender, disability and age; allocate sufficient financial resources for the implementation of the NPHR; ensure effective implementation of the NPHR, as well as monitoring and evaluation of its impact on the fulfillment of the human rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups, including minorities.

**1.2. Developments in amending the legislation that affects minorities**

In 2022-2024, the authorities adopted legislation and policies affecting minorities without genuine and inclusive consultation with them. The reform of the public administration, the reform of the justice sector, in particular the courts, the Electoral code, Criminal Code, Tax Code, the Prosecutor's Office, the legislation on the translation of draft laws and adopted legal acts into Russian and others are among the legal acts that directly affected minorities and were not widely consulted with them.

In 2022, Parliament amended the Electoral code, raising concerns over minority language use in ballots and imposing high representation thresholds, hindering minority candidates' electoral opportunities.

In 2023, the new vague provisions of the Criminal Code on separatism as a criminal offence raises fundamental human rights issues and concerns about the potential negative impact on

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<sup>8</sup> [https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/nu-36-cs-2024\\_0.pdf](https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/nu-36-cs-2024_0.pdf)

minority rights, with possible implications for non-discrimination<sup>9</sup> and for the settlement process of the Transnistrian conflict, as well as the situation with Gagauzia.

The amendment to the Tax Code concerning the refund of VAT by Gagauzia to economic agents registered in the region was adopted in November 2023 without consultation with the Gagauzian authorities, financial expertise, affecting the economy and population of the region. The law was challenged before the Constitutional Court and declared unconstitutional<sup>10</sup>.

The Public Administration Reform Strategy for 2023-2030 and Programme for implementing the Strategy 2023-2026 lacked extensive consultation with minorities, notably the Bulgarian community concentrated in Taraclia district, in a language they could understand, prompting local authorities to appeal to the EU Parliament<sup>11</sup>.

In March 2024, the amendments to the legislation on the translation of draft laws and legal acts into Russian were not adopted as a result of repeated public appeals by civil society, including minority organizations<sup>12</sup>. Initially it was proposed that the translation should be provided only after the publication of the law in the online version of the legal database, within a maximum of one month, and by local public authorities upon request. The proposed amendment had a potential impact on the equal access to information, and as a result, access to justice, access to participation in the decision-making process and the exercise of other rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, international and regional human rights treaties that the Republic of Moldova is the party.

The reform of the justice sector, in particular the revision of the judicial map<sup>13</sup>, has not been consulted with minority communities, especially in densely populated by minorities regions, including Gagauzia<sup>14</sup>. The reorganization of the judicial system is one of the objectives of the Strategy for Ensuring the Independence and Integrity of the Judiciary for 2022-2025 and is a measure provided for in the National Plan for the Accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union. The draft law raises human rights concerns of access to justice of minority populations densely populated, including in Gagauzia, based on language, as the legal proceedings are held in Russian and other minority languages (e.g. Gagauz) in those territories. Also, the draft does not reflect the territorial structure of the state, subordination of

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<sup>9</sup> ODIHR Comments on the Criminalization of “Separatism” and Related Offences in Moldova, Warsaw, 4 December 2023, Opinion-Nr.: CRIM-MDA/490/2023 [NR].

<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/5/560695.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Constitutional Court. Judgment on reviewing the constitutionality of Law No 285 of 5 October 2023 amending Article 6 of the Tax Code (refund of value added tax and excise duties from the budget of the autonomous territorial unit with special status) (referrals No 229a/2023 and No 261a/2023), No 5, 5 March 2024. <https://www.constcourt.md/ccdocview.php?tip=hotariri&docid=847&l=ro>

<sup>11</sup> <https://tuk.md/video/live-news/segodnja-v-tuke-ivan-paslar-predsedatel-taraklijskogo-raiona-2/>

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<https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/ofitsialnyy-monitor-prodolzhat-vypuskat-na-russkom-parlament-vo-vtorom-chtenii-uchel-pozitsiyu-pravozaschitnikov-i-natsmenshinstv/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/nu-1109-mj-2023.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> The law 100/2017 on normative acts requires consultation with the authorities of Gagauzia.

the prosecutors' office and the police to those territorial units, and recommendations of OSCE, ODIHR, and Venice Commission issued earlier.

**Recommendation:**

- The government should ensure effective consultation and participation of minority communities in decision making through positive legal measures and institutional mechanisms, including in elaboration, monitoring, evaluation of policies and amendment of legislation, and/or implementation mechanisms that have a direct or indirect impact on minority rights; protect their language right to use their language in all spheres of life, in particular the right to receive publicly important information in their language, access to justice, etc. The reform of the judicial map should be aligned with the recommendations of regional mechanisms to the Republic of Moldova, and based on relevant good practices for ensuring access to justice for minorities in densely populated regions. Genuine consultations with territorial units, including Gagauzia, Taraclia, and others, should also be ensured.

**1.3 Statistical data**

The evaluation of the National Human Rights Action Plan 2018-2022 (NHRAP) revealed a lack of disaggregated data based on ethnicity, gender, disability, and area of residence. Data must be collected in order to develop, monitor, and evaluate the policy framework related to minorities. The unsystematic collection of data on the enjoyment of economic and social rights by minorities, as well as their representation in public and political life, affects the quality of the development and implementation of policies related to minorities. Also, the official data and data provided by the Roma CSOs on Roma population in Moldova have discrepancies<sup>15</sup> as they might hide the ethnic affiliation due to fears of potential discrimination.

**Recommendations:**

- The government should develop a comprehensive data collection and disaggregation system on the enjoyment of economic and social rights, the representation in public and political life by minorities, especially the Roma population.
- The government should provide and make publicly available disaggregated data based on the 2024 Census on minorities, including numerically smaller groups, and ensure the participation of Roma in data collection during the Census.

**1.4. The use of minority languages in public life**

Despite recommendations from the Equality Council urging the government and local authorities to ensure access to public information in minority and official state languages,

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<sup>15</sup> GIZ. Updated Report on Mapping of Densely Populated Roma Localities in the Republic of Moldova, 2021. [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/final\\_raport\\_privind\\_cartografierea\\_localitatilor\\_dens\\_populate\\_de\\_romi.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/final_raport_privind_cartografierea_localitatilor_dens_populate_de_romi.pdf)

they remained unimplemented. Information on government websites is not often accessible in the Russian language accessible for most minority groups.

During the 2023 local elections, the use of minority languages emerged as a human rights concern. The instance of prohibiting the use of the Russian language in election debates on Moldova 1, the sole national television channel, highlighted deficiencies in legislation concerning the equal participation of minority groups in elections, which should adhere to international and regional norms and legal precedents.

### **Recommendations:**

- The government should align legislation with international and regional standards and jurisprudence to ensure linguistic accessibility of official information and equal participation for ethnic minorities in public life, including elections.

### **1.5. Freedom of religion and belief**

- **2017 CERD Rec. 17. The Committee recommends that the State party promptly take effective measures to protect the rights of minorities, including their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, without any discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, as specified in article 5 of the Convention.**

The legal framework does not fully address the needs of religious minorities to enjoy their rights and face discrimination, including hate speech, on both banks of the Nistru river (Moldova proper and the Transnistrian region). The current legislation lacks adequate provisions for religious organizations to register or re-register as legal entities based on their statutes with the Public Services Agency. For instance, a uniform form is used for all non-commercial organizations<sup>16</sup>. In the Transnistrian region, for a local religious group to register as a religious organization, it must demonstrate a 10 years of activity within the region. Additionally, they must submit a list of members who have Transnistrian 'citizenship', permanent residence in the region, among other requirements. At the same time, “foreign” religious groups may not register or undertake religious activities<sup>17</sup>.

According to the 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Moldova, leaders of the Islamic League stated that the Chisinau municipal authorities’ refusal to allot a plot of land for the Muslim community at the state-run cemetery in Chisinau was in violation of the law<sup>18</sup>.

There has been no notable attention from authorities toward religious diversity, except for the pertaining to Holocaust remembrance, as reflected in any existing policy documents. The

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<sup>16</sup> This issue was raised during the consultation process on the new NPHR by the CSOs. See also 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Moldova.

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/moldova/>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Muslim population, according to perception studies<sup>19</sup>, face a significant social gap and are not embraced as neighbors within society.

### **Recommendation:**

- The government should revise legislation to eliminate barriers to the registration of religious organizations and adopt a policy framework to promote religious diversity and combat prejudice and intolerance based on religion or belief towards minority groups.

## **2. Roma, including Roma refugees from Ukraine**

### **2.1. Access of Roma to human rights on both banks of Nistru river**

- **2017 CERD rec. 21: (a) Take the measures necessary to ensure the Plan of Action for Supporting the Ethnic Roma Population in the Republic of Moldova for 2016-2020 is properly financed, implemented and monitored;**
  - (b) Continue to take measures to end discrimination against Roma and improve access by Roma to health care, housing, education, and employment;**
  - (c) Ensure the involvement and consultation of Roma on issues concerning them;**
  - (d) Ensure the representation of Roma in policymaking;**
  - (e) Work with the local government to ensure that all Roma mediator positions are financed and vacancies filled, emphasizing the importance of the role of Roma mediators in resolving problems faced by Roma and their integration into society.**

The recommendation is partially implemented.

The Roma population is widely regarded as one of the most disadvantaged minorities, facing systematic exclusion from accessing basic public services.

According to the 2014 census, the Republic of Moldova (excluding the Transnistrian region) had a Roma population of 0.3%.

Access to education and high rates of school dropouts are among the most pressing issues facing the Roma community. For instance, in Ocnița rayon, only 18.16% of Roma children attend educational institutions<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Equality Council. Study on perceptions and attitudes towards equality, 2021

<https://rm.coe.int/studiu-privind-perceptiile-si-atitudinile-fata-de-egalitate-study-on-p/1680a655e7>

<sup>20</sup> GIZ. Updated Report on Mapping of Densely Populated Roma Localities in the Republic of Moldova, 2021.

[https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/final\\_raport\\_privind\\_cartografierea\\_localitatilor\\_dens\\_populate\\_de\\_romi.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/final_raport_privind_cartografierea_localitatilor_dens_populate_de_romi.pdf)

Roma children, including Roma refugees, face barriers in access to education<sup>21</sup>. One of the reasons is that some of them don't have necessary documentation. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)<sup>22</sup> approximately 10-20% of the Roma Ukrainian Refugees are stateless or at risk of statelessness, which is the cause of low enrollment at schools.

Roma refugee children face challenges that Moldovan Roma children face. These include:

a) Some Roma children were illiterate, or their academic knowledge did not match their age. Moldovan schools currently do not have an established mechanism to provide in-school accelerated or reinsertion education programs.

b) Some Roma parents do not place a strong emphasis on the importance of education and encourage their children to work at an early age to support the family financially. Some parents are not literate themselves.

c) Moldovan schools are not fully prepared with friendly, welcoming environments for Roma children, which may increase reluctance to enroll, or lead to high dropout rates. In some cases, shared by Roma representatives during the roundtable about Roma issues, there was a case when a school refused to enroll Roma children and the cases were not reported to relevant institutions such as the Equality Council.

d) Many Roma families lack the necessary documentation needed to enroll their children in school, or their children are unvaccinated, which is required for enrollment in school in Moldova. Others don't have the necessary technical devices to be fully involved in education.<sup>23</sup>

The 2021 Equality Council study on perceptions and attitudes towards equality<sup>24</sup> revealed overwhelmingly negative attitudes towards Roma among the general population. Roma participants in the study highlighted the discrimination they face. The 2021 European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) report on Moldova<sup>25</sup> underscored the role of the politicians in spreading hate speech, fueled by deep-seated prejudices against Roma. Inadequate response from authorities, coupled with an unregulated online environment and ineffective sanctioning mechanisms, perpetuate hatred and intolerance.

While Moldova has adopted legislation and policies such as the Strategy on strengthening inter-ethnic relations (2017-2027) and the Programme for the support of the Roma population (2022-2025), more concerted efforts are needed to ensure the effective exercise of Roma rights. The national authorities have yet to prioritize addressing critical issues faced by Roma, as evidenced by the failure of Action Report no. 12 – 14 CERD/C/MDA/12-14 to adequately address these concerns.

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<sup>21</sup><https://agora.md/stiri/108080/fug-din-calea-razboiului-nu-si-a-educatiei-despre-procesul-de-scolarizare-a-copii-lor-refugiati-din-ucraina-dincolo-de-evidente>

<sup>22</sup> <https://fra.europa.eu/en/speech/2023/standing-rights-people-ukraine>

<sup>23</sup><https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/copii-din-comunit%C4%83%C8%9Bile-rome-marii-perdan%C8%9Bi-ai-educa%C8%9Biei-la-distan%C8%9B%C4%83/31141885.html>

<sup>24</sup> Equality Council. Study on perceptions and attitudes towards equality, 2021

<https://rm.coe.int/studiu-privind-perceptiile-si-atitudinile-fata-de-egalitate-study-on-p/1680a655e7>

<sup>25</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-conclusions-on-the-implementation-of-the-recommendations-in-respe/1680a27d9c>

## **Recommendations:**

- The Government should allocate adequate financial resources and ensure effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Programme of support for the Roma population (2022-2025).
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection should build capacities of the Roma community mediators to fully improve access of Roma to their human rights in education, health, employment, adequate housing, etc., and increase their remuneration; ensure addressing the needs of Roma refugees.
- The Ministry of Education and Research should elaborate the reinsertion programmes for children, in particular Roma girls, that dropped out from school.

## **Roma in the Transnistrian region**

According to the data provided by the de facto Ministry of Education of the Transnistrian region at the written request of the Transnistrian Media Centre on census data, as of 14 October 2015, the number of persons of Roma nationality aged 15 years and older was 406 people<sup>26</sup>. Based on a survey undertaken by OHCHR consultants on the left bank of the Nistru/Dniester river in July-August 2000, approximately 5,300 of persons of Roma origin were registered.

Determining the precise number of Roma residing in the Transnistrian region is challenging due to many individuals declaring another ethnic identity - Moldovan, Ukrainian, Russian, etc. - when applying for documents. This information has been reported to Accolada by school principals of schools attended by Roma children.

No statistics are available on the registration of Roma children living in the Transnistrian region, as reported by the de facto authorities in response to a written request from the Media Centre of Transnistria. Roma often hide their ethnicity due to fear of discrimination in the society.

The study conducted in 2023 in the Transnistrian region<sup>27</sup> revealed that a significant proportion of Roma respondents had a low level of education. Specifically, 18% of respondents had no education at all, while 17% had only completed primary school, with some having completed only one or two grades. A quarter of respondents (26%) had completed either 9 or 11 grades, technical school, or college, with 15% falling into this category. Only one percent of the respondents reported having higher education, and one respondent reported having unfinished higher education.

Among the most common reasons why Roma could not obtain education were identified poverty (68.8 percent) and early marriages (19.5 percent). Other reasons include tradition, parental decisions, migration, and negative treatment at school. 18% of the respondents reported being unable to read or write, while 27% reported being able to read and write to some extent.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://homodiversus.org/roma-in-transnistria/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://mediacenter.md/nizkij-obrazovatelnyj-uroven-romskogo-naselenija-mif-ili-realnost/>

Improving access to medical care for Roma requires addressing financial barriers and reducing the stigma associated with seeking help. The lack of finances, fear of stigma, and lack of knowledge of where to seek help hinder Roma's access to healthcare. Pregnant Roma women often register late for prenatal care due to various obstacles, such as financial issues and illiteracy, which also contribute to difficulties in accessing support services. Older Roma people often face poverty, illness, and lack of education. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure equal access to medical care and uphold human rights within the Roma community<sup>28</sup>.

The Roma Community Mediators network created in the Transnistrian region with the support of OHCHR in 2020<sup>29</sup> aims to facilitate access to healthcare, education, social protection, documentation, and decent living conditions for the Roma community, which operates in six localities.

### **Recommendations:**

- The de facto authorities should collect and disaggregate data based on ethnicity in the region, including Roma, and ensure full access to education, health, social protection and other human rights by vulnerable groups, in particular Roma. Establish and provide financial support to the network of Roma mediators within the local administration system.
- The de facto authorities should combat discrimination against vulnerable groups, in particular Roma, and raise awareness of the general population on non-discrimination and equality.

### **3. Minority youth in the decision-making process**

As part of the joint submission for the review of the Republic of Moldova at the 112th session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the important issue of the participation of minority youth in decision-making processes is also being addressed. This issue deserves special attention in the context of the aspiration towards a fair and equal society based on the principles of non-interference and non-discrimination.

Youth representing various minorities play a crucial role in shaping the future society. However, their participation in decision-making processes is often limited or insufficiently considered. In this context, assessing the situation and proposing measures to ensure their active participation are key steps towards eliminating racial discrimination and building a more just society.

When examining the involvement of youth organizations in decision-making processes, several general trends were identified. Most surveyed youth organizations acknowledged that public authorities usually consult with them, but this result is much lower among youth organizations representing minorities. However, many issues regarding youth participation

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<sup>28</sup> <https://mediacenter.md/dostup-k-medicine-socialnaja-zashhita-kachestvo-zhizni/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://shater-na-dnestre.ru/raboty-po-koordinaczii-instituta-romskih-obshhinnyh-mediatorov/>



still need to be addressed. Consultation processes rarely acquire real significance and often become formal procedures, as youth recommendations are seldom taken into account. Additionally, although mechanisms for youth participation exist at both national and local levels, they do not function as intended due to a lack of initiative or insufficient cooperation in advocacy efforts to protect the rights of minority youth.

The reduced participation of minority youth in public announcements regarding the organization of public meetings remains a problem despite established norms. According to transparency legislation and regulatory acts, government bodies are required to consult with citizens, associations, and stakeholders on legislative and administrative projects through publication on the official website <https://particip.gov.md/>. However, frequent cases of lack of publication, especially by local authorities, restrict access to information. Moreover, information is often available only in the Romanian language, significantly hindering the participation of youth from linguistic minorities in decision-making processes at both national and local levels, especially in regions with compact populations of national minorities.

Minority youth experience a reduced level of involvement in governmental activities. This factor negatively affects their ability to influence decision-making and policy formation, thus complicating the process of creating a more open and inclusive society. In this regard, the "Public Administration School for Ethnic Minority Youth from the Republic of Moldova" project, implemented by the Institute for European Policies and Reforms in partnership with the OSCE Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities with the support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, becomes an important positive example that should be implemented at the state level. This project provides youth from ethnic minorities with quality education and skills in public administration, opening up new opportunities for their active participation in shaping the political environment and decision-making in the country. Such initiatives help to overcome the obstacles faced by young representatives of minorities and contribute to their active involvement in various aspects of public life.

Additionally, one of the positive examples is the Minority Youth Moldova's Youth Forum representing national, ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities. This forum provides a significant platform for minority youth to interact with various stakeholders. It is also worth noting the Summer School on Minority Rights organized by the same organization, which contributes to enhancing the skills of minority youth in the field of human rights protection and promotion.

### **Recommendations:**

- The government should improve consultation processes by ensuring effective participation of minority young people and civil society organizations conducted by minority youth in decision-making.
- The government should ensure the publication of information on public meetings and consultations on official resources such as websites and portals, taking into account

the accessibility of information in minority languages and its wide coverage in regions with compact national minority populations.

- The government should conduct information campaigns and education programmes for minority youth on their rights and opportunities to participate in public and political life. This can involve arranging training, seminars, and courses focused on leadership development and civic activism.
- The government and civil society should facilitate the active participation of minority youth by providing financial support for minority youth projects, creating platforms for exchanging experiences and cooperation, and rewarding successful initiatives and achievements.
- The government should ensure measures to protect the rights of minority youth against discrimination by strengthening legal protection, setting up monitoring and evaluation of compliance with youth rights, and conducting educational activities on human rights and freedoms.