

INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

MOLDOVA BETWEEN EAST AND WEST:
VIEWS FROM GAGAUZIA AND TARACLIA

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Summary of Recommendations

Involvement and participation of persons belonging to national minorities in national decision-making processes (in the state administration and civil service)

- The requirement of Gagauz political leaders regarding the right to registration of regional parties are legitimate and should be satisfied.
- In order to resolve the issues connected with requirements of adequate representation of the Gagauz nation in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova the way out could be in transition from the absolute proportional electoral system, one country – one election constituency to the limited proportional electoral system, i.e. creation of multi-member constituency. Gagauzia should become an election constituency with 4-5 mandates proportionally to the number of citizens living in it.
- The status of Member of the Government granted to the former Bashkan of Gagauzia requires conceptualization in order to maintain constant dialogue aimed at the resolving of problems arising in the region according to the legal norms and with account of the region's specifics. Representative of the State Chancellery affiliated to the Executive Committee of the Autonomy should counterbalance the role of Bashkan in the Government of the Republic of Moldova. Such interaction will be aimed at harmonizing adequate fulfillment of the decisions issued by the Government and Executive Committee of Gagauzia.
- It is necessary to create a standing committee with participation of specialized structures of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and People's Assembly for the purpose of bringing in conformity the local laws of Gagauzia with national legislation. It is also necessary to maintain constant dialogue between the national legislature and People's Assembly of Gagauzia aiming at balanced resolving of the problems related to the Gagauz Autonomy.

Improvement of the state language skills of national minorities, but also the prestige of the state language among the representatives of minority ethnic groups

- Delimit explicitly the rights and the duties of the central and local public authorities in terms of promoting the state language, remove the influence of political populism factors on issues related to study of languages, both of the majority, and of the minority ones.
- Update the regulatory-legal framework, proclaim the state language a means for interethnic communication, empower the local authorities with competences for promotion and development of regional and minority languages.
- Conduct an analysis of international practices in terms of massive learning of 4-5 languages, evaluate the capacity of the educational system and of educational institutions to implement the intended learning process, develop teaching-learning-evaluation methodologies compliant with the linguistic particularities of the Republic of Moldova.
- Expand the area for the usage of the Romanian language by the alolingual speakers as a result of producing and disseminating high quality printed works, audio-visual broadcasts and performances, whose contents and artistic level would be attractive for the citizens of the respective region.

- Focus the activities aimed at enhancing the level of mastery of the state language mostly on young people. Strengthen, first of all, the state language learning component in preschool, primary and gymnasium education.

Ensuring an inclusive information space that would promote diversity and democratic values

- Consolidate the role of the state in strengthening Moldovan mass media capacities to offer diverse and high quality content to TV program consumers in the Republic of Moldova by allocating necessary state budget funds not only to the public television but also to private channels.
- Proceed with the de-monopolisation of the TV advertising market and establish conditions of equitable competition on this market
- Promote the creation of national TV and radio channels oriented to the Russian speaking public in the Republic of Moldova, based on channels of the national public broadcaster, to ensure an objective informational environment.
- Ensure informational integration of the various linguistic segments of Moldovan society.

Study of the level of integration of the population in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district

Vasile Cantarji

Methodological aspects

The data at the basis of this analysis is the result of a survey carried out among the adult population (aged 18+) of the ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district.

- **Sample size:** 701 people aged 18 or over;
- **Sample type:** stratified, probabilistic, two-staged;
- **Stratification criteria:** 2 geographical regions, residential environment (urban-rural), number of population in rural localities (3 types of rural localities).
- **Sampling:** Volumes of strata were calculated proportionally with the number of population, according to the data communicated by the Statistics Department of the Republic of Moldova.
- **Stages of randomization:**
 - Locality: in the adjusted strata, selected localities (35) were established at random, based on a table with random numbers.
 - Family: the maximum number of interviews carried out in a sampling point was 5. The families in which interviews were carried out were selected through the random route method with a pre-established statistical step.
 - Person: in cases when the selected families had more than one adult, the person to be interviewed was established by applying the nearest birthday method.
- **Representativeness:** the sample is representative for the adult population of the regions that are part of the study, with a maximum margin of error of +3.7%

Data collection period: 21 November – 2 December 2015. Interviews were carried out at the homes of respondents. The questionnaire was written in Romanian and Russian, the respondents having the chance to choose the communication language of the interview.

Information obtained in the opinion poll were complemented by the results of a series of individual interviews carried out in the ATU Gagauzia and the Taraclia district with representatives of state institutions, the academic environment and the mass-media. Interviews regarded aspects similar to those contained in the survey, coming to substantiate and/or explain the essence of phenomena found in the survey.

Respondents of individual interviews:

1. Member of the ATU Gagauzia Parliamentary Assembly
2. Lector of the State University of Comrat
3. Lector of the State University of Comrat
4. Journalist, Comrat
5. Member of the District council, Taraclia District council
6. Public servant, Taraclia town hall
7. Journalist, Taraclia
8. Civil society representative, Taraclia

Summary

Aspects on interethnic relations

Problems connected to interethnic relations are basically missing in the public perception of the main challenges, only 2% of the respondents invoking this aspect among the main fears of the population. Also, ethnic and linguistic minorities are not included by the respondents (residents of ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district) among the main groups discriminated in the RM.

Identity perceptions and the constituent elements of identity

Inhabitants of the region that are part of the study do not have a predominant primary identity, there being three, most often manifested models: civic identity (citizen of the RM), regional identity (resident of the ATU Gagauzia or the Taraclia district) and local (citizen of their locality). Very few mainly identify with their own ethnicity (4,5%).

Linguistic and cultural integration

The linguistic space in the region is a dual one, shared between the Russian language and the language of the ethnicity (Gagauz and Bulgarian). The state language is basically absent in the local use. There is also a very low level of the state language knowledge -only 31% of the population of the Taraclia district and 13% of the ATU GAGAUZIA speak the state language. As a cultural identity, the feeling of belonging to Russian culture is predominant.

Media-informational consumption

From a media standpoint, the populations of the study regions are located in a completely Russian space, over 90% consuming media productions which are exclusively in Russian. Russian Mass-Media enjoys a very high level of trust, while the European, Romanian or Ukrainian media production is regarded with mistrust. Beside the linguistic factor, these realities are also determined by the low attractiveness of the local media content compared to the one in the RF.

Perceptions on the future of the Republic of Moldova

In the vision of respondents, the future of the Republic of Moldova as a state is uncertain. The dominant forecasts are that the RM will become a part of the Russian Federation(34%) or will maintain its independence, however in a federation, with Gagauz and Transnistria its components (32%). Only 19% see the future of the country as a unitary independent state. Consequently, the future of the regions (ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia) is seen by a great part of respondents as "together with Moldova as part of the Russian Federation".

Appreciations on autonomies based on the ethnic principle

The impact of creating the ATU Gagauzia and the Taraclia district is regarded by the population of the regions as a rather positive aspect.

Views on the Transnistrian conflict

The conflict on the Nistru is perceived as being in the detriment of both banks. The future of the Transnistrian region is also unclear, the provisions being shared. 21% of the respondents see the future of Transnistria as part of the Russian Federation, 19% - as part of the federation with the RM, 19% -with the current statute, 13% - as part of the RM with a certain autonomy. 9% see the future of the region as an independent state with international recognition.

Attitudes towards the latest political events

A great part of the respondents support the thesis that the Republic of Moldova is a captive state 33,1%. The responsibility for this situation is placed either on the country's development partners (EU, Romania, USA), either on the business groups of the country (oligarchs, Plahotniuc).Protest movements occurring in

the center of the capital in the autumn of 2015 are supported by the great majority of the researched regions' population (76%).

Perceptions on the historical motherland of the Gagauz and Bulgarian ethnicities

Most Bulgarian and Gagauz ethnic citizens of the RM feel like they historically belong to the former USSR (37.6%) or the current Russian Federation (17,4%). And if in the case of the Gagauz ethnicity, the dispute regarding the history of the group continue, the paradox is very visible in the case of the Bulgarian ethnics, only 6.5% of respondents in Taraclia (mostly populated by Bulgarian ethnics) perceive the Bulgarian national state as a historical motherland.

Attitudes towards international actors

Only two countries, the RF and Turkey enjoy preponderantly positive attitudes of the ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district residents. 95% of respondents declared positive attitudes towards the RF and 70% towards Turkey. A medium level of this indicator is registered towards the Ukraine. In the case of the other countries and international mechanisms (Romania, OSCE, EU, USA, NATO), the proportion of people with negative attitudes is double than the share of respondents with positive attitudes. Broadly speaking, the populations of these regions have an accentuated negative attitude towards any country or organization associated with the West.

Views on the external orientation of the RM

The future of the country is preferred as part of some interstate unions from the East, inside the boundaries of the former USSR. Two thirds of the respondents wish for the RM to be part of the Eurasian Union, other 12.7% wish for the RM to be part of a new union of former USSR republics. The option of integration into the EU or a status-quo of a state which is integrated in neither of the listed unions is not popular.

Appreciating events in Eastern Ukraine

Being entirely located in a Russian informational space, the residents of the studied regions are predominantly sharing the position of the Russian Federation on the events occurring in Eastern Ukraine. The main promoted theses are shared – „state power in Ukraine was taken over by fascists” and that the fighters in Eastern Ukraine are exclusively fighters and volunteers. At the same time, most of the respondents support the annexation of the Crimea peninsula by the RF.

1. Elements of integrating the ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district residents in the Moldovan society

The Republic of Moldova currently experiences probably the most pronounced crisis of confidence of the population in the state since the proclamation of its independence. Satisfaction with the standards of living and the economic situation in the country¹ and the trust in major state institutions have reached, in 2015, the lowest levels in all the period of measurements of the Public Opinion Barometer Program.

¹Indicators are based on BPO data for a set of questions traditionally placed in the study:

Level of living

„How satisfied are you by your current life compared to a year ago”

„How satisfied are you generally with the way you live”

„How do you think your life will be in one year”

Economic situation

„How do you appreciate the economic situation of the Republic of Moldova compared to a year ago?”

„How satisfied are you with the current economic situation in Moldova”

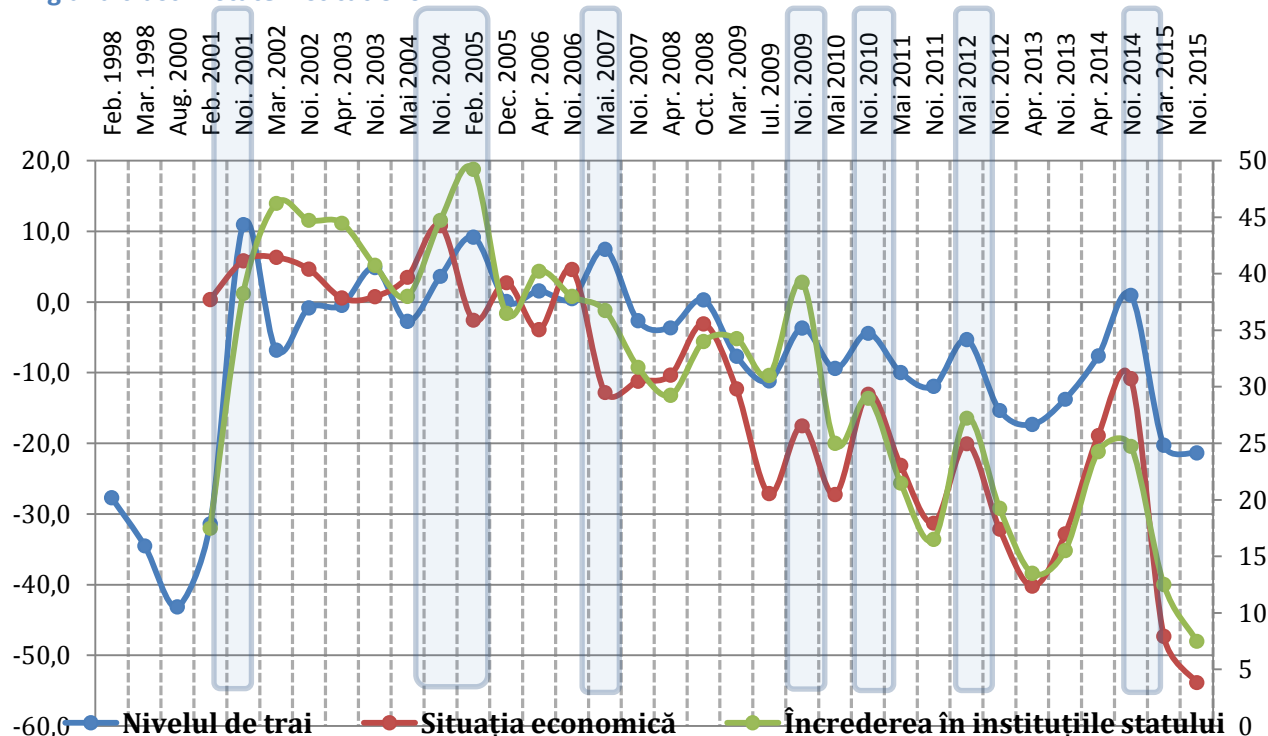
„Compared to the current economic situation, which do you think will be the economic situation of the Republic of Moldova in one year?”

The vulnerability of the state in this period is also strongly amplified by the destabilizing events in Ukraine: the aggressive position of the Russian Federation towards the domestic political situation in Ukraine, the annexation of the Crimea peninsula and the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

Internally, the discontent of the population has, in some parameters even exceeded the anti-record documented after the post-1998 financial crisis period. The slight volatility of public perceptions of the situation in the country is ensured by optimistic expectations caused by electoral events. In Figure 1 trends of increase in the indicators for the evaluation of living standards and the economic situation, as well as the trust in institutions in the election period (before or immediately after the election) may easily be noticed.

However, overall, in the past decade, the perception and satisfaction of citizens maintained a declining trend, November 2015 being the time of the lowest levels. Thus, presently, the Republic of Moldova is passing through the period of almost total deficit of the state's social capital, marked by a pronounced distrust of citizens in state institutions, discontent related to standards of living and the country's economic situation.

Figure 1. Evolution of the indicators of public perception on the country's economic situation, level of living and trust in state institutions



Source: Barometer of Public Opinion, 1998-2015

The trust component in the social state index will rely on indicators expressing the trust of citizens in the main government institutions:

- Government
- Parliament
- President of the country
- Justice

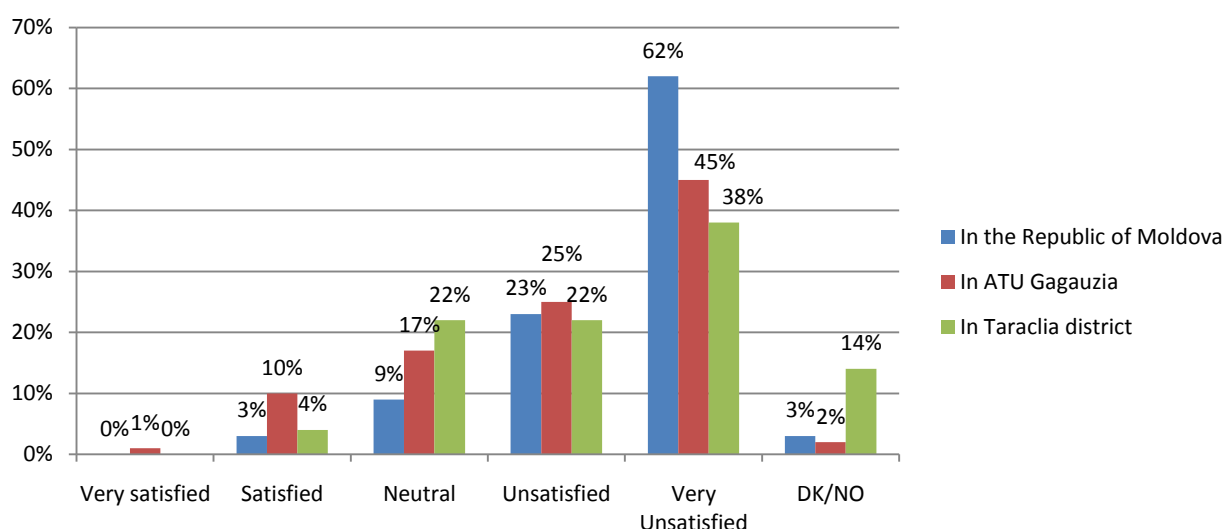
Distributions are synthetically integrated in one value, according to the example: % „very satisfied” + % „quite satisfied” * 0,7 – „not too satisfied” * 0,7 – „not satisfied at all”.

These indicators reflect the general spirit in society at the time of this study, thus the analysis of the survey results must consider this context.

Distributions of respondents' answers prove that the ATU Gagauzia and the Taraclia district are no exception. The economic situation of the Republic of Moldova is particularly negatively appreciated by residents of these regions, over 85% of respondents declaring themselves unsatisfied with the economic situation of the country.

Moreover, even if negative appreciations prevail on the economic situation at the regional level, (70% of ATU Gagauzia residents and 60% of those in the Taraclia district negatively appreciating the economic situation in their own regions) another negative trend appears in survey results. The countrywide situation is perceived as worse compared to the regional states of things, such perceptions that are not aligned to the objective situations being much more likely to fuel secessionist rather than integrationist trends.

Figure 2. Level of satisfaction with the economic situation



Aspects regarding interethnic relations

Problems that cause the biggest concerns for residents in researched regions are the typical ones, constantly registered in national level surveys. Citizens' concerns are connected to poverty and the economic situation in the country – prices and unemployment, leading to concerns on the children's future. The problem of corruption is emphasized of late with an increased number of mentions.

In the current study context, it must be mentioned that there are practically no issues connected to interethnic relations in the public perception of main challenges, only 2% of respondents invoking this aspect among the main fears.

Table 1. Top fears

	Total	Taraclia district	ATU Gagauzia
Prices	63%	62%	63%
Unemployment	54%	59%	52%
Poverty	46%	44%	46%
Children's future	43%	44%	42%
Corruption	33%	24%	36%
Financial crisis	16%	20%	14%

Potential war in the region	11%	14%	10%
Illness	10%	9%	10%
Crime	9%	12%	9%
Lack of heating in the cold season	4%	3%	5%
Famine	4%	4%	4%
Interethnic relations	2%	1%	2%
Installation of a dictatorship	1%	2%	1%
Natural calamity	0%	1%	
Other	2%	1%	2%
DK/NA	0%		0%

Moreover, another question regarding the problematic of exclusion more directly, targeted the perception on the discrimination of various groups of citizens. Results obtained confirm that interethnic relations are not, in the population's opinion among the main social challenges of the moment. Asked which are the most discriminated groups in the Republic of Moldova, ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district residents mainly indicated the elderly, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV, women, former prisoners and only later, as a share of the total number of answers, linguistic and ethnic minorities. It must be noticed that despite the varying framework of the autonomy compared to the RM central authorities,² no discrepancies were registered between regions on the discrimination of ethnic and linguistic minority groups. However, when referring to other groups a regional specific may be felt. For instance, former prisoners were mentioned by a third of respondents in the Taraclia district, more than double compared to the ATU Gagauzia. The varying degree of citizen awareness on this group's situation being in this case most likely connected to the presence of a penitentiary institution in the town of Taraclia and the absence of one in the ATU Gagauzia.

Table 2. Discriminated groups in the RM

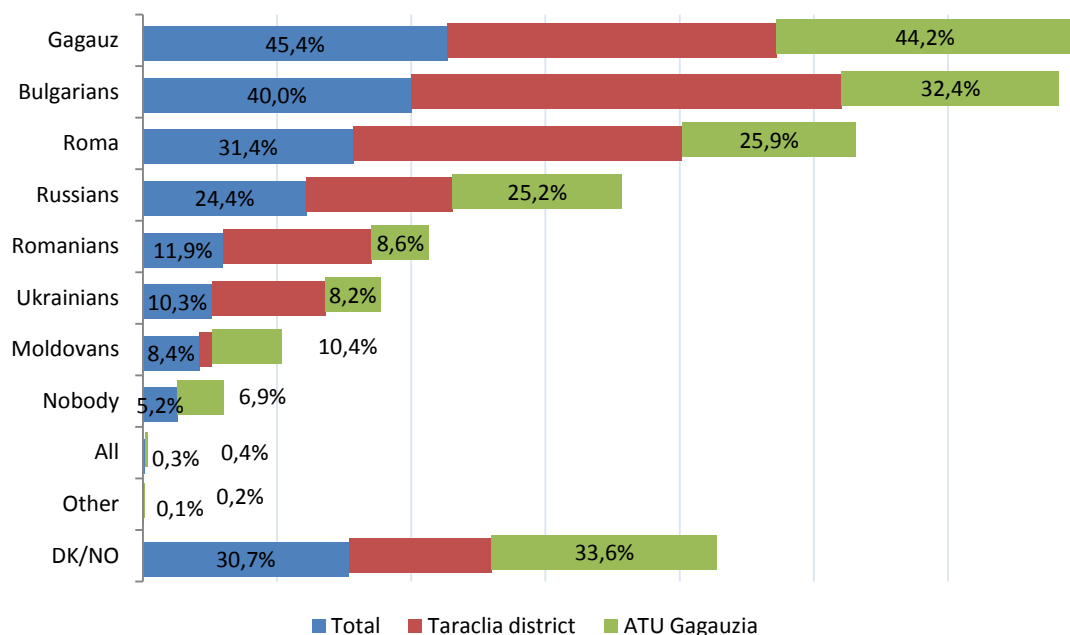
	Total	Taraclia district	ATU Gagauzia
The elderly	65%	69%	64%
Persons with physical disabilities and or/persons with mental disabilities	51%	46%	52%
HIV positive persons	24%	32%	21%
Women	21%	24%	20%
Former prisoners	19%	34%	14%
Russian speaking population	17%	17%	17%
Ethnic minorities	16%	17%	15%
Religious minorities	11%	9%	12%
Sexual minorities	10%	12%	9%
The poor	2%	2%	2%
The unemployed	2%		2%
Children	1%	3%	1%
Other	2%	0%	3%
DK/NA	11%	6%	13%

Appreciations given to other questions meant to directly present perceptions on the specific situation of every minority ethnic group from the perspective of discrimination, emphasize a number of aspects. First of all, the perception of the statute specificity of the region is felt. The absence of an autonomy statute for the Taraclia district creates the perception that Bulgarian ethnics are more discriminated than the Gagauz ethnics, a perception manifested through increased shares of mention in both regions. On the other hand,

²ATU Gagauzia is an autonomous administrative-territorial unit, territorially defined by the populating ethnicity share while the Taraclia district, though similarly defined is an ordinary administrative-territorial unit.

Roma are an ethnic group seen as one of the most discriminated. It seems the perceived discrimination level is reversely proportional to the numeric size of the ethnic group.

Figure 3. Perceptions regarding the discrimination of ethnic groups in Moldova



Results of the qualitative study allow the sketch of basic aspects characterizing interethnic relations, demonstrating the conclusion that in Moldova signs of discrimination by ethnic character may be considered present just towards the Roma ethnicity, which is confronted with an increased social distance, with all negative consequences connected to labor market integration, access to services and civil integration generally. In the case of other ethnicities, discrimination cases are based on other characteristics such as disability, age, poverty, etc. the great majority of respondents having indicated these criteria and not the ethnic one during individual interviews:

- *"Firstly persons with special needs, retired persons regarding employment and health insurance, since they have no money to pay for medical services. Unemployed persons who own land are not registered as unemployed and receive no unemployment benefits."* (Academia, Comrat)
- *"Usually the unemployed, the ill persons, the small income populations are discriminated in Moldova."* (Taraclia town hall employee)

Another aspect emphasized is that the perception of an ethnic discrimination presence is artificially fueled by groups with political aims:

- *"In my view, interethnic relations are quite tense. But they have a political component rather than confusions between simple people of various nationalities. It's mainly a political problem in the minds of politicians using interethnic relations topic to their own gain."* (ATU GAGAUZIA People's Assembly member)
- *"A unique feature of Moldova is multi-ethnicity, ..., for political reasons there are confrontations, society is divided not because they are all different, but because the political sphere creates interethnic conflict situations."* (journalist, town of Taraclia).

The line that disadvantages and divides ethnic groups in the RM is related to linguistic aspects as mentioned by most respondents:

- *"Considering the entire context of Moldova, the problem is not as much that the Gagauz are not allowed to work in public government or elsewhere as it is the problem of not speaking the state*

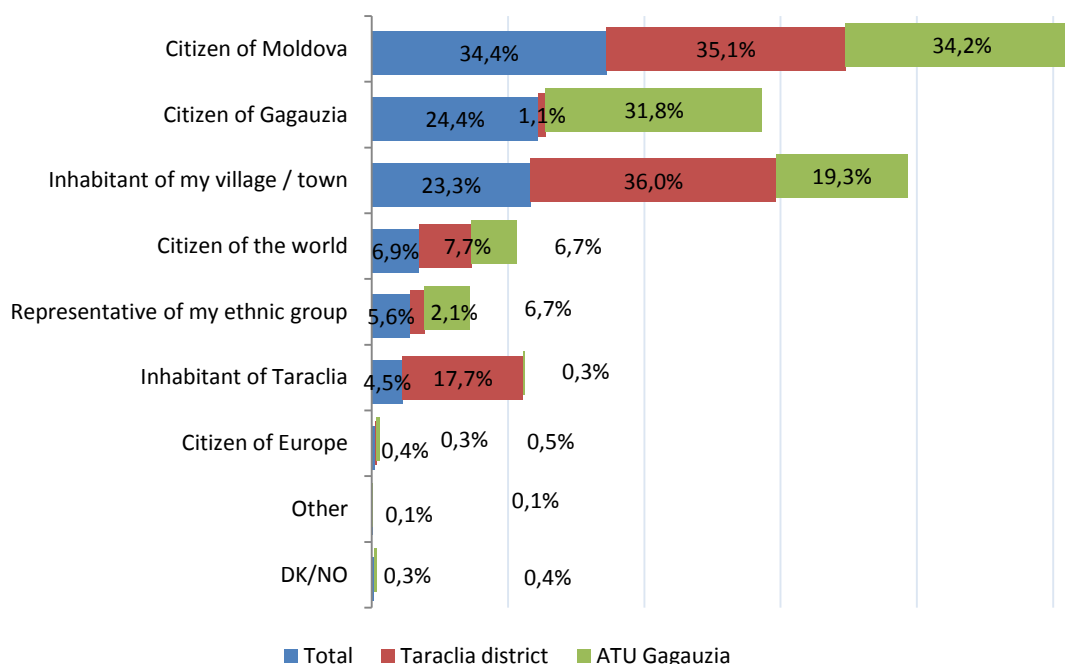
language. For this reason, the Gagauz are less competitive than representatives of the Moldovan nation.” (ATU GAGAUZIA People’s Assembly member)

- “Official documents in Moldovan in the Taraclia district create problems, since the population even if they know the language, they don’t speak it well enough.” (Taraclia town hall employee)”
- “Interethnic relations are normal, I can’t say very good, since there is a certain mutual misunderstanding. Why? Certain ethnic groups feel more deprived to some extent. Among the main reasons there is the language barrier. The current generation of students know the state language better than older generations, yet we need at least 10 more years to overpass this linguistic barrier. This is the main reason.”(NGO representative, Comrat)”

Identity perceptions and constituting elements of identity

Residents of studied regions have a predominant primary identity, with three most manifested models emphasized. The civic identity (RM citizen) is characteristic to a third of respondents. The second is regional, when ATU GAGAUZIA residents identify with the autonomy (31.8% see themselves as ATU GAGAUZIA citizens) while Taraclia district residents identify with this district (17.7%). A third form of identity with an increased share is the local one, 23.3% of respondents identify firstly with their locality. Note that ethnic identity is rarely perceived as primary, in only 5.6% of cases.

Figure 4. Primary identity

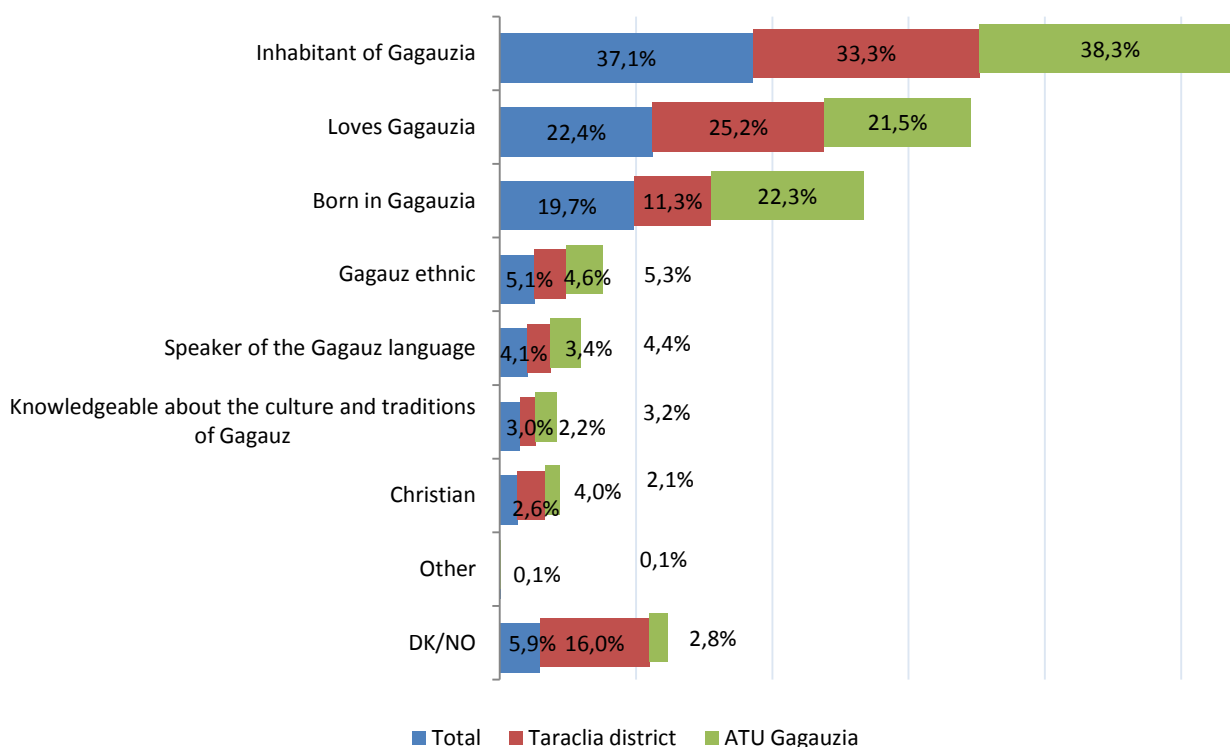


Three essential elements manifest in defining the belonging to the ATUG/Taraclia district. Asked who is in the right to identify themselves as part of the regions' populations, respondents emphasized the following conditions:

1. To live in the region - 37.1%
2. To love the region - 22.4% and
3. To be born in the region - 19.7%.

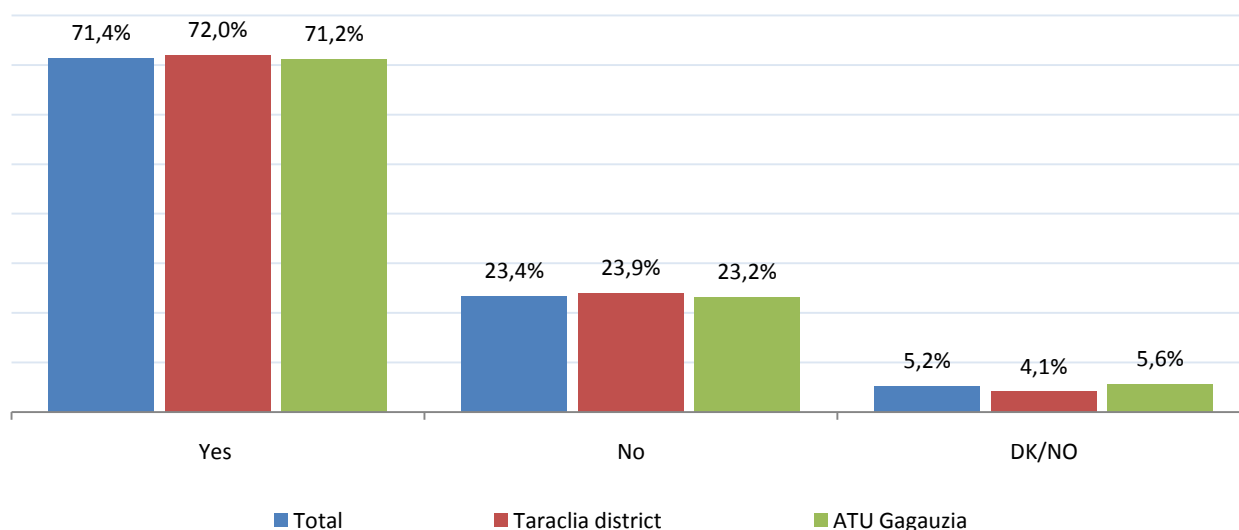
There is a direct link between the last condition and the region's ethnic composition. Respondents in ATUG, the more ethnically homogeneous one (78.3% Gagauz versus 57.8% in the Taraclia district) insisted on this condition in a double proportion (22.3%) compared to Taraclia district respondents (11.3%).

Figure 5. Elements of attributing the belonging to the Gagauz/Bulgarian people



The fragmented nature of the studied regions' identity also appears in the indicators below. Though civic identity is manifested as the primary one by only one third of respondents, most respondents (72.0% of the Taraclia district and 71.4% of ATUG) consider themselves integrated in Moldovan society.

Figure 6. Appreciating the integration into the RM society



During the qualitative study, views on the minorities degree of integration are divided, emphasizing several key aspects.

Essentially the argument that there is a civic nation in RM (and all ethnic groups are integrated) is based on the dry argument of civic belonging (we're all citizens of the same country), without taking the level of integration itself into account: *"we're all citizens of Moldova, have Moldovan passports, firstly, we differ on the principle of nationality."* (Taraclia town hall employee).

Respondents who in turn argue that ethnic groups aren't integrated, explain this through the existence of two major barriers in the way of integration:

linguistic division:

- *"Not speaking the state language is a barrier in having a high position. Those speaking the state language have an advantage even for vacancies in our local government. All official documents circulate in the state language."* (Taraclia NGO representative)

and difference of visions and geo-political aspirations:

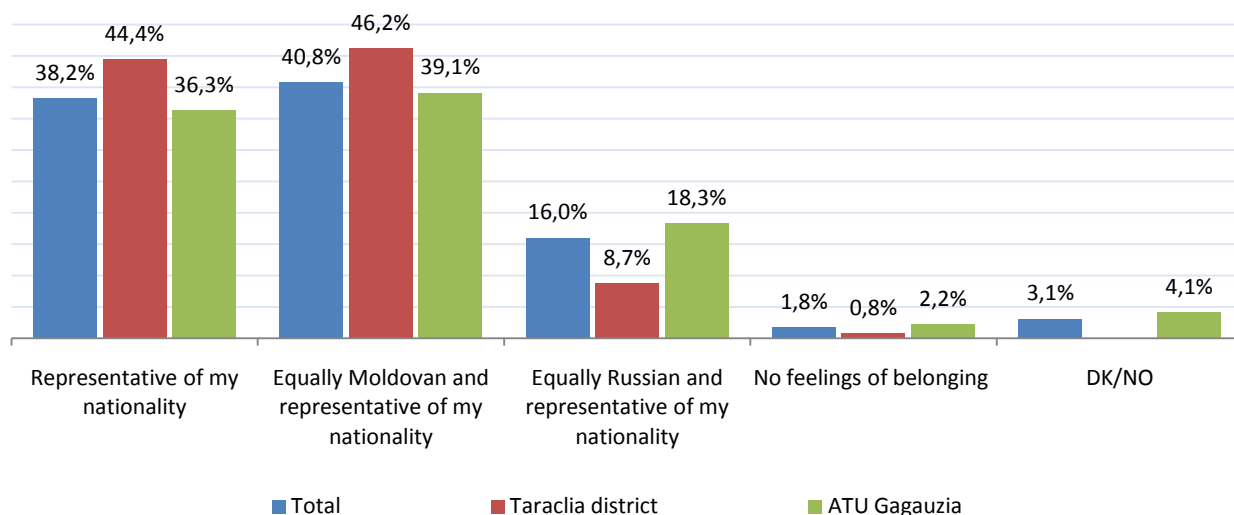
- *"There is no unity, though there is an understanding that we are the country's citizens. The whole country is divided 50/50 depending on the development vector towards Russia or Europe."* (Academia, Comrat)
- *"This occurs for various reasons, both political and geopolitical, since Moldova is in the orbit of geopolitical interests of both the West and East. All these games of the big geopolitical players divide Moldovan society. We know that, according to all polls, society is divided not only regarding the language spoken, but also on political views. Thus, under these conditions we can't talk about the unity or even existence, as such, of a Moldovan nation."* (ATU GAGAUZIA People's Assembly Member)

Respondents also tend to emphasize the loyalty of minorities to the state of the Republic of Moldova. In this context, erroneous misperceptions are highlighted, being fueled by views regarding risks for the existence of the RM statehood originating in the "danger" of European integration or unification with Romania. These perceptions form the idea that it is exactly the ethnic minorities who are the promoters of the Republic of Moldova:

- *"I think the Gagauz claim first and to a greater extent that they are citizens of the Republic of Moldova and that we must preserve the statehood of the Republic of Moldova."* (Academia, Comrat)
- *"Representatives of various ethnic groups are bigger statehood adepts than government members who want the union with Romania and this is amazing"* (Taraclia town hall employee)

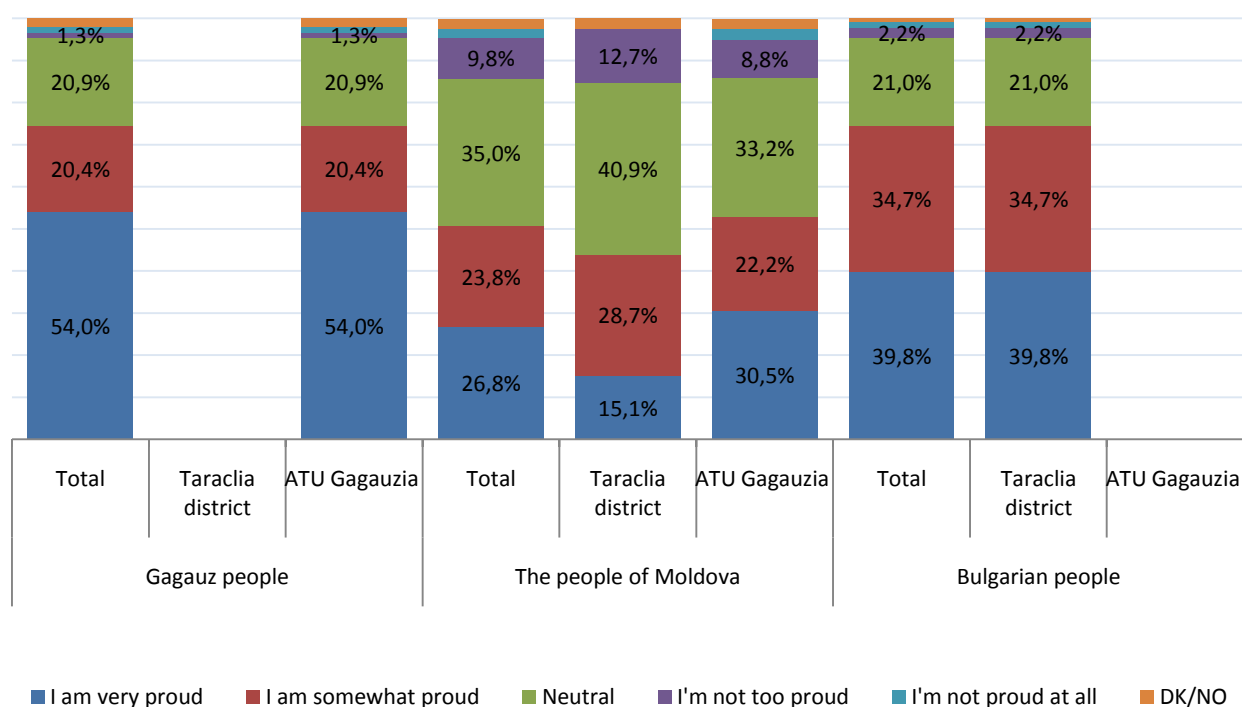
The feeling of multiple belonging, which should apparently be typical, based on historical realities and the multitude of ethnic groups living in the RM, is only shared by 57% of respondents. Even among them, a good part identify themselves, besides their own ethnicity to the Russian one (16.0%). And four out of ten respondents (38.2%) show a mono-ethnic identity, feeling that they only belong to their own ethnic group.

Figure7. Feelings of multiple belonging



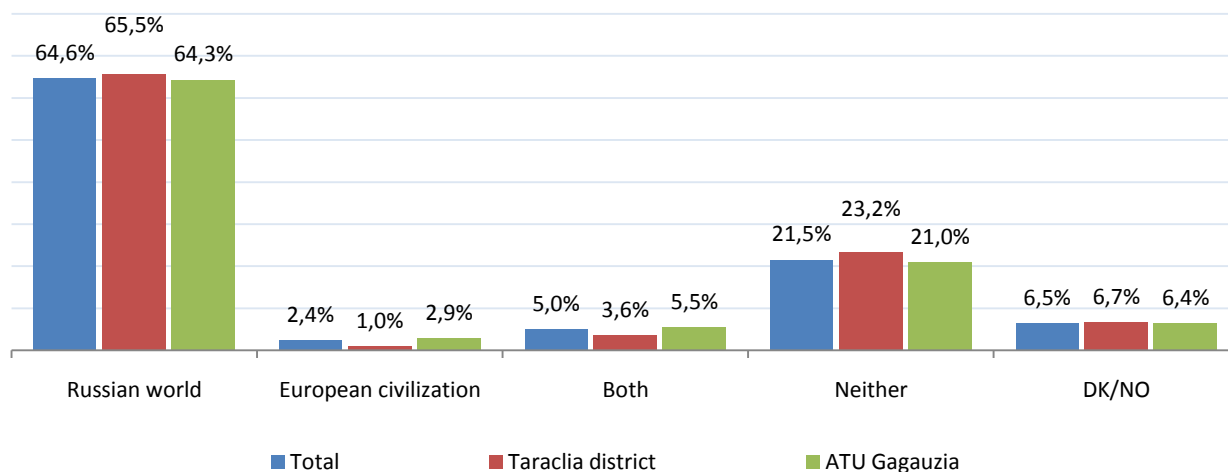
Plus, we notice a major disparity on feelings towards persons pertaining to a common people, defined in the limits of statehood under the name "people of Moldova". Asked if they feel a sense of pride due to belonging to this people, about half of the respondents replied affirmatively. On the other hand, this percentage is significantly lower than feelings of pride of belonging to the Gagauz or Bulgarian peoples.

Figure 8. Feelings of pride for belonging to...



The indicator that most visibly shows distorted views of ethno-cultural belonging are the answers to the question on which cultural space the Republic of Moldova belongs to. The "Русский мир" ("Russkij mir"- "Russian world") syntagm, intensely propagated in the context of the 2015 events in Ukraine, is strongly favored to describe this space. Almost two thirds of respondents stated the RM belongs to this space. The fact that only 2.4% claimed the RM belongs to the European space and another 5.0% that it belongs to both macro-identities only comes to emphasize the categorical character of beliefs that the RM belongs to the so-called "russkij mir" (Russian world).

Figure 9. Perceptions on the belonging of the RM to regional cultural spaces

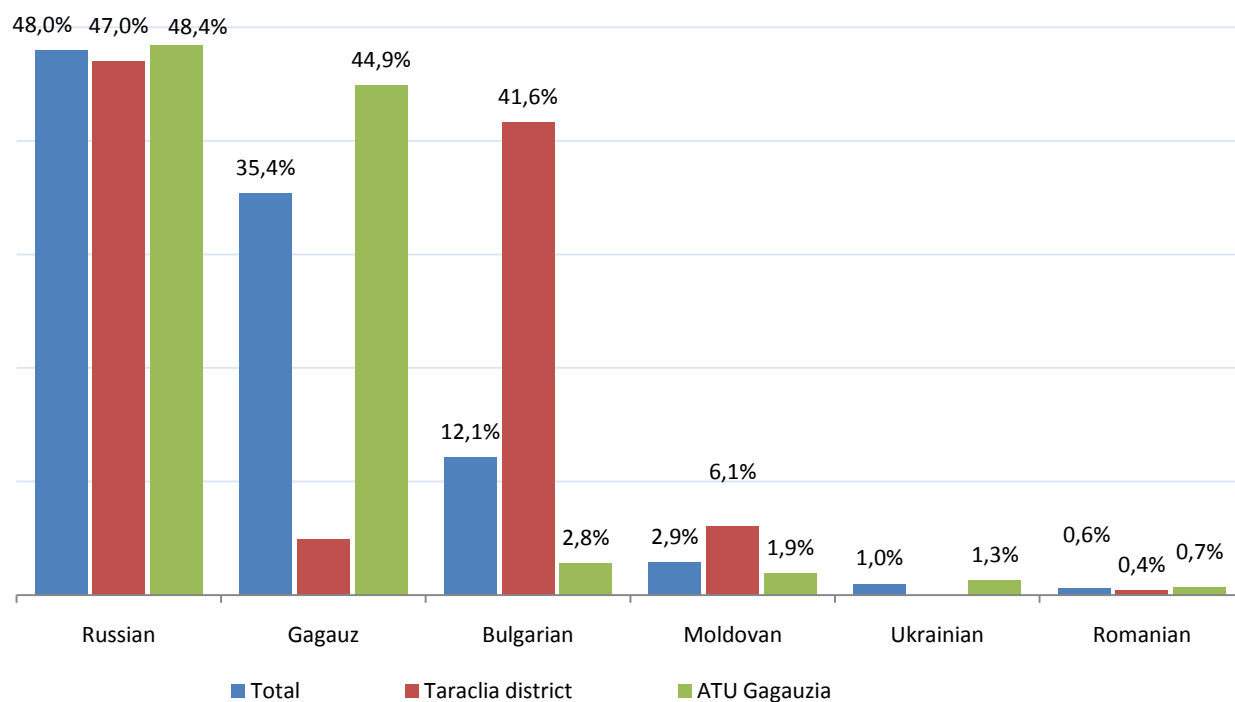


Linguistic and cultural integration

Fragmented identity with seemingly contradictory expressions, is shaped by the specific linguistic and informational space in which the residents of the ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia districts are located. Being more or less homogeneous regions from an ethnic standpoint, these communities have a pronounced bilingual character. Moreover, not the official language or languages of these ethnic groups are mostly used in these regions, but Russian. In families every second respondent most often speaks Russian. In 41.6% of the Taraclia district families, residents speak Bulgarian, Gagauz being spoken by 44.9% of the ATU Gagauzia residents.

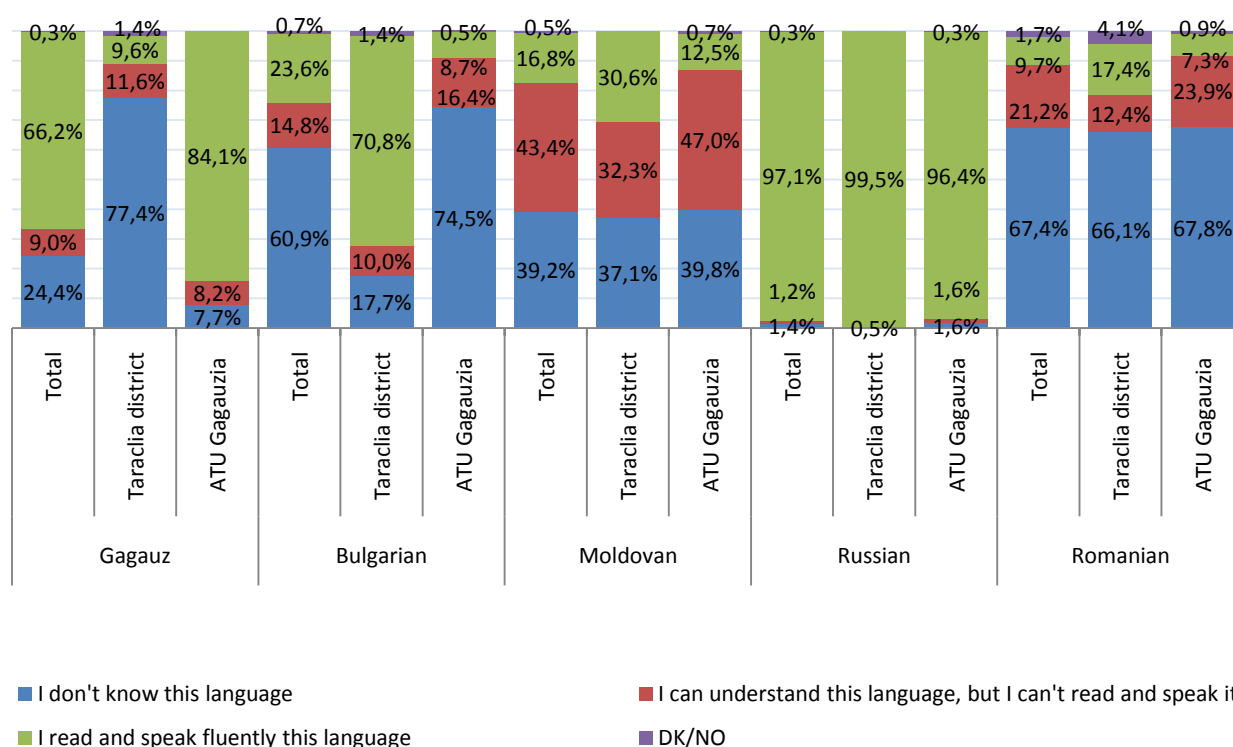
Communication in the language of their own ethnic group is more characteristic for the elderly population in rural areas. Among middle aged respondents with a high socio-economic and educational level of life, from urban areas, there are bigger shares of those who speak Russian in the family.

Figure 10. Languages most often spoken at home



By general level of knowledge, Russian is known by practically all residents of the regions, with a level above those of the Gagauz and Bulgarian ethnicities. People speaking the state language are in numerical minority. Gagauz is spoken by 84% of ATU GAGAUZIA residents and Bulgarian by 71% of the Taraclia district population. The state language (in the "Moldovan language" syntagm) is spoken freely by 31% of Taraclia district dwellers and 13% of ATU GAGAUZIA residents, being known at the beginner level ("I understand, but cannot communicate or read") by 32% and 47% respectively. Note the high level of confusion between "Moldovan" and "Romanian", the latter being declared as known by far fewer respondents than those who claim to speak "Moldovan".

Figure 11. Languages spoken



The need to speak three languages: Russian, the state language and the mother language is generally acknowledged. Asked about what two languages should the youth in region know, 79.5% of respondents mentioned Russian, 40.1% Moldovan (+ 2.6% Romanian). The mother tongue of the ethnicities was mentioned by about 55% (44.1% Gagauz and 10.4% Bulgarian). There are some differences between regions, ATU GAGAUZIA respondents opting more for Gagauz rather than the state language, while those from the Taracia district placed greater emphasis on knowing the state language.

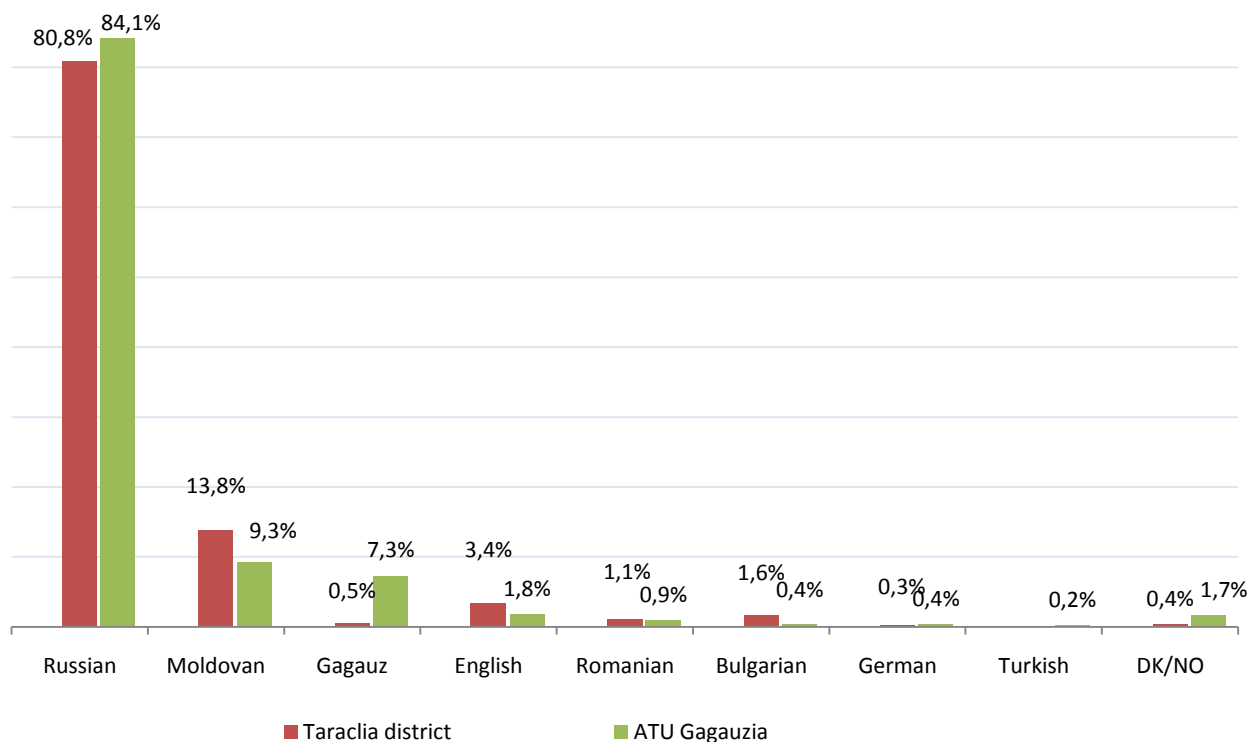
Table 3. Two languages that the youth in ATUG/Taracia district must know

	Total	Taracia district	ATU Gagauzia
Russian	79.5%	76.4%	80.4%
Gagauz	44.1%	5.2%	56.4%
Moldovan	40.2%	58.4%	34.4%
Bulgarian	10.4%	35.3%	2.5%
Romanian	2.6%	4.9%	1.8%
Ukrainian	2.2%	2.8%	2.0%
Other	1.7%	3.5%	1.1%
DK/NA	0.8%	0.3%	0.9%

From another angle, Russian is preferred as the children's study language by the vast majority of respondents - 80.8% of the Taracia district and 84.1% of the ATUG. About 10% of respondents would like their children to study in the state language (13.8% in the Taracia district and 9.3% in the ATUG). For the ATU Gagauzia as much as 7.3% of respondents were registered opting for studies in Gagauz a feature which is less characteristic for the Taracia district, only 1.6% opting for Bulgarian language in this regard.

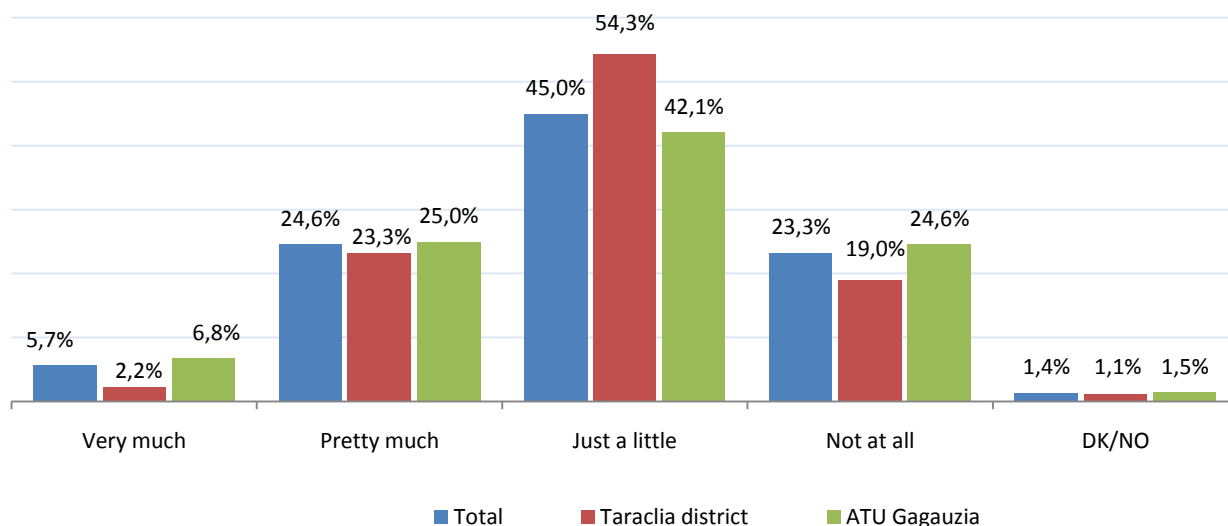
However, the idea to create mixed language schools is supported by 51% of respondents, particularly 56% in the ATU Gagauzia.

Figure 12. Language in which respondents would like their children to learn



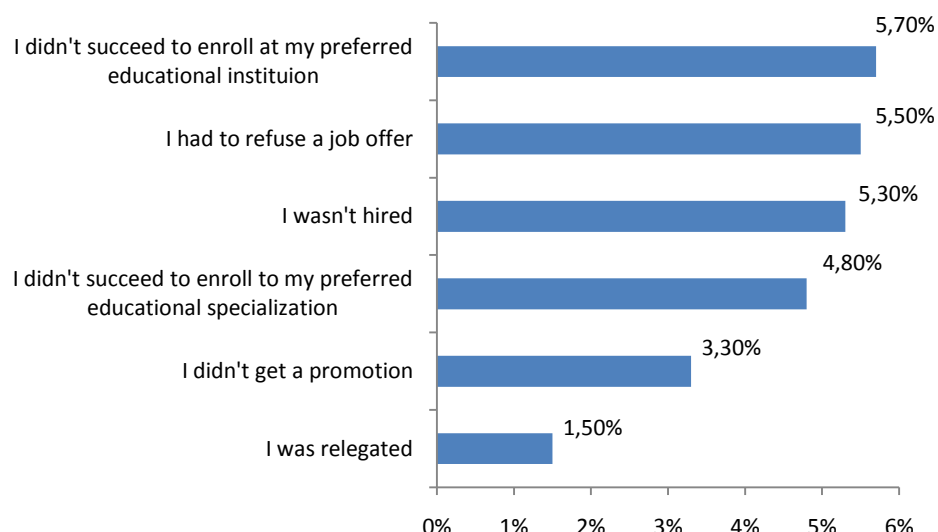
The somewhat low level of linguistic integration of ethnic minorities is based on the compact popularity of some ethnicities on the one hand and on the substitution of the state language with Russian on the other. Most respondents who don't speak the state language claimed they don't see the necessity to do so.

Figure 13. Extent to which the need to speak the state language is felt



The incidence of academic failure situations caused by not speaking the state language is not very high. Between 1.5% and 5.5% of respondents faced such situations in their professional careers, 4.8% were unable to study the desired specialization, while 5.7% were unable to choose the desired place of study.

Figure 14. Share of respondents who faced various situations caused by not knowing the state language



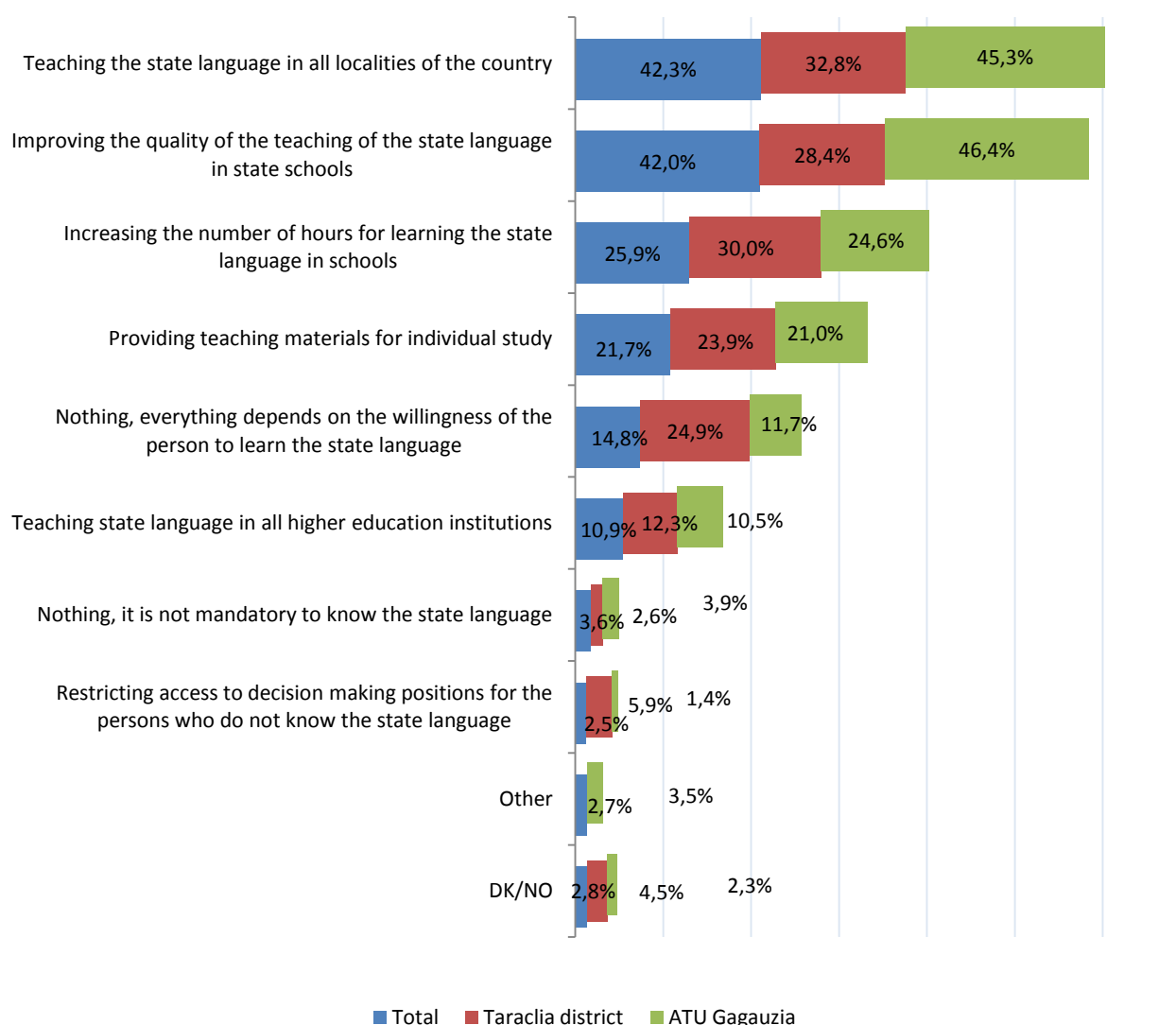
Study data shows that when we ask ourselves why ethnic minorities in Moldova don't speak the state language we should first think about the extent to which this disadvantages them. The Gagauz and Bulgarian ethnics are very eloquent examples in this regard. Living in somewhat densely populated areas from an ethnic composition standpoint, their contacts with other ethnicities are reduced, so representatives of these groups rarely find themselves in difficult conditions due to the ignoring the state language. Still we do not exclude that the situation could be different for ethnic Bulgarians and Gagauz outside Gagauzia and the Taraclia district.

The qualitative study shows that the compact population of ethnicities is one of the factors that don't motivate the citizens to possess the respective ethnic language. Although we saw that the issue of ethnic relations is almost exclusively reduced to issues of linguistic integration, at the level of the studied regions there are no feelings of the necessity to communicate in the state language. In this respect, respondents only refer to difficulties in relationships at the level of public government, where the exchange of documents between local and central authorities is conducted in Romanian. At the same time, the existence of barriers in career development is emphasized, especially in public administration, particularly due to the ignorance of the state language:

- *"Not knowing the state language is a barrier for holding high positions. Those who speak the state language have an advantage even for vacancies in our local government. All official documents circulate in the state language."*(NGO representative, Taraclia)
- *"This does not allow our youth, our politicians to make progress. They can get into Parliament, but Ministry positions are not accessible. On the labor market, there is loyalty, although upon employment, the knowledge of the state language is desirable, however not mandatory. Elsewhere knowledge of the language is mandatory, therefore people wishing to work learn Moldovan without difficulties."* (NGO representative, Comrat)
- *"The problem is that we do not know the state language. We learned in the times when Moldovan was only taught twice a week in our schools. Besides, the state doesn't even support us in this direction now."*(ATU Gagauzia People's Assembly Member)

A series of measures and conditions are proposed by respondents to increase knowledge of the state language among citizens who do not speak it. Organizing courses to study the state language and raising the level of its teaching in education institutions are the most often mentioned conditions.

Figure 15. Measures necessary for the promotion of studying the state language



Besides traditional approaches to promote the state language - offering courses and improving the quality of teaching in educational institutions, the study attests the acceptance of the idea to promote the mixed linguistic model in educational institutions. Forms may be different, like a gradual transition to teaching some subjects in the state language:

- *"Perhaps some of the simple subjects- physical education, paint class, might be taught in the state language - to gradually create a daily communications environment." (Taraclia town hall employee)*

or raising the level of teaching the state language:

- *"The gradual study of the state language, just like in the case of Turkish and English, should be introduced in schools, like our Turkish lyceums, for instance, but this must be done from the very first days of school." (ATU GAGAUZIA People's Assembly Member)*

or enrolling children in mixed institutions or institutions with the respective profile:

- *"I agree for mixed, Russian-Moldovan schools to be created, for them to exchange experience, but this must take place gradually." (ATU GAGAUZIA People's Assembly Member)*

Even today tendencies are observed to enroll children in institutions with teaching in the state language:

- *"Many people send their children to Moldovan schools, lyceums, for them to learn Moldovan from a small age and thus have an easier integration into society." (ATU Gagauzia People's Assembly Member)*

- *"There is a tendency to speak Russian with children in families, but for them to be enrolled in Moldovan schools" (ATU GAGAUZIA People's Assembly Member)*

The situation of native languages of the Gagauz and Bulgarian ethnicities deserve particular attention. It seems developments in this regard are different in the two regions. In ATU Gagauzia there are signs of trends that may endanger the future presence of the Gagauz language:

- *"In villages they are still speaking in the Gagauz language, but in the cities Gagauz language slowly disappears. UNESCO included this language in the category of endangered languages. The language is no longer being enriched with new words." (Academia, Comrat)*
- *"From year to year, the Ministry of Education allocates 20-30 seats financed from the state budget for the training of Gagauz language teachers. This year the last group of 6 people has graduated, there will be nobody afterwards. Nobody wants to study this specialization. In such circumstances, we can say that the Gagauz language has no prerequisites for development." (Journalist, Comrat)*
- *"The Gagauz language is used increasingly less since our youth are growing up in a Russian speaking environment, especially in towns, we have no schools and kindergartens teaching in Gagauz language. We must not blame the parents in this case because they are thinking about where their children will learn further ..." (Academia, Comrat)*

Some voices are critical of local authorities for the lack of effort in promoting the Gagauz language:

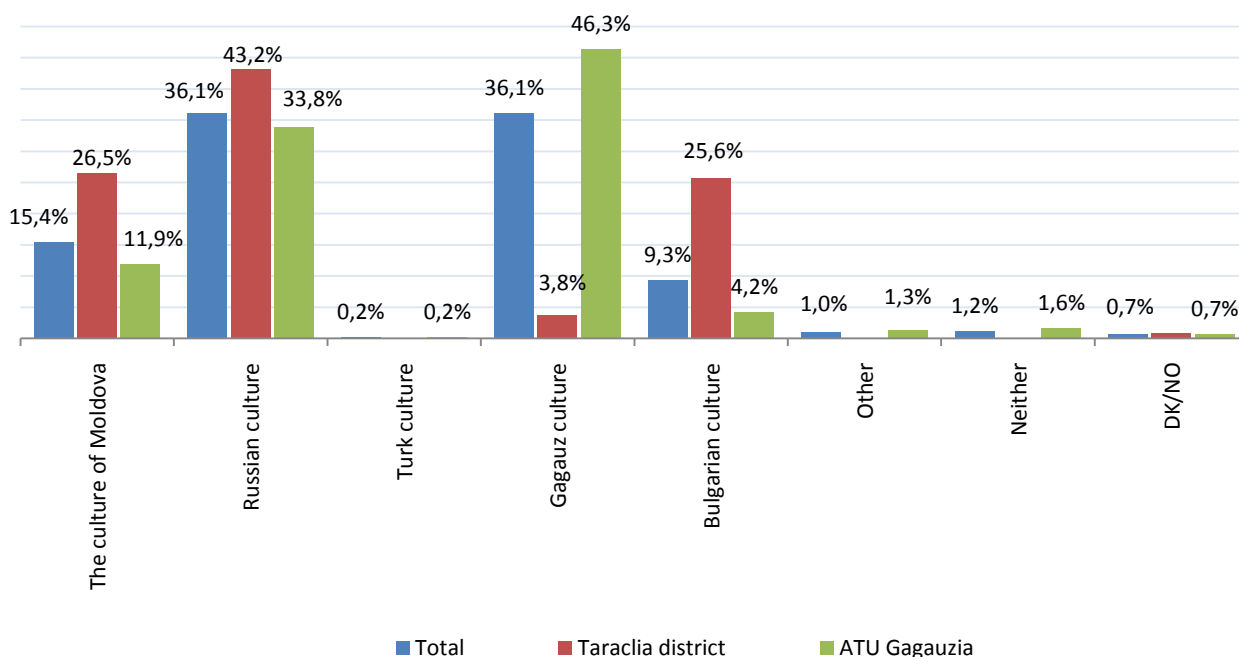
- *"There must be political will in order to preserve the language and traditions. The law does not specify the percentage of time in which the GRT public company--the only company financed from public money, and basically with the function to maintain and develop the Gagauz language and culture - must broadcast in the Gagauz language."*
- *"A few years ago, UNESCO admitted that the Gagauz language is on the endangered languages list. The authorities, who are aware of this, have not done anything to improve the situation. There is only one kindergarten throughout Gagauzia where children communicate in three languages straight from childhood. "*
- *"The Gagauz Autonomy was conceived in 1994 to develop Gagauz language and culture. In this 20-year period programs for the preservation of Gagauz language and culture could have been developed." (Journalist, Comrat)*

In contrast, in the Taraclia district respondents believe that the level of applying Bulgarian language is rather on the rise:

- *"The Moldovan-Bulgarian University opened, more literature was published in Bulgarian, a book was published on the history of the Taraclia district. Bulgarian is increasingly spoken in schools, kindergartens and even on the street. Russian is spoken more often, but that does not prevent us from speaking Bulgarian." (Taraclia town hall employee)*
- *"The teaching level is quite good. There is support from Bulgaria. Teachers and children participate in exchanges, internships and go to camps in Bulgaria. In the cultural sphere, there is also a drama theatre in Bulgarian. There is a "Bulgarian Philology" department at the University of Taraclia. (NGO representative, Taraclia)*

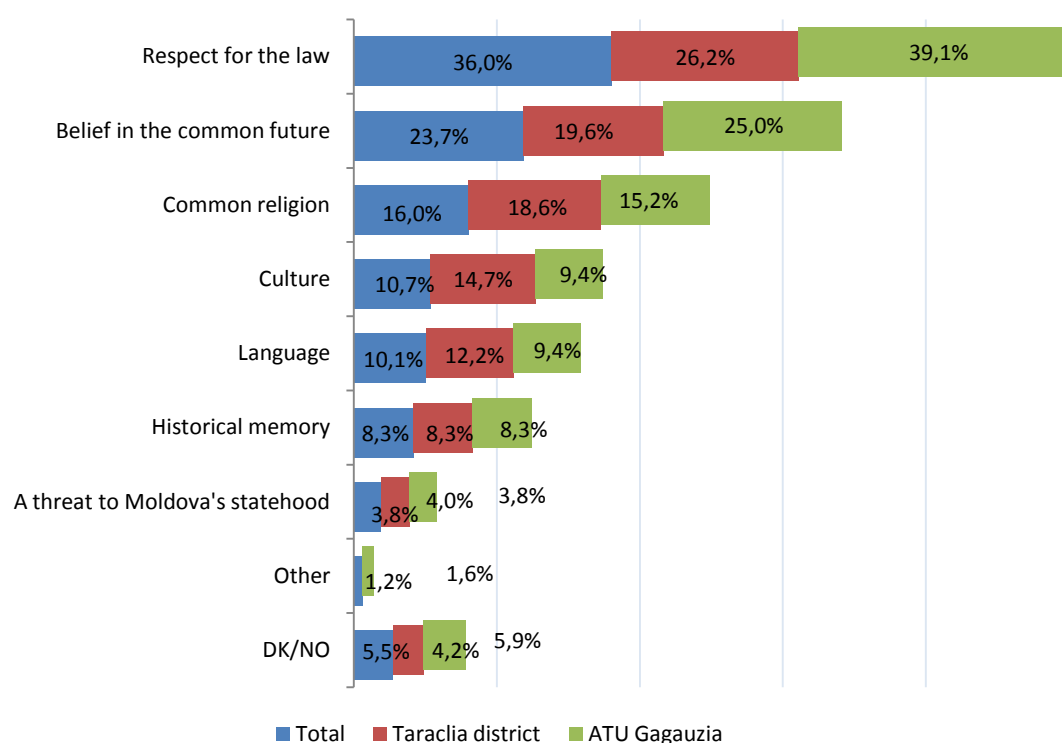
Along with primary identity and linguistic peculiarities, we find a fragmented cultural identity. Increased shares of respondents feel they belong to Russian culture (36.1%), their own ethnic cultures (25.6% of respondents from the Taraclia district and 46.3% from the ATUG) and 15.4% to Moldovan culture.

Figure 16. Perceived cultural belonging



Identity and linguistic fragmentation determine the basing on other principles for the integration of ethnicities from the RM into a common nation. Respect for the laws, a common future and religion are basic elements that unite the RM citizens, in the respondents' opinion.

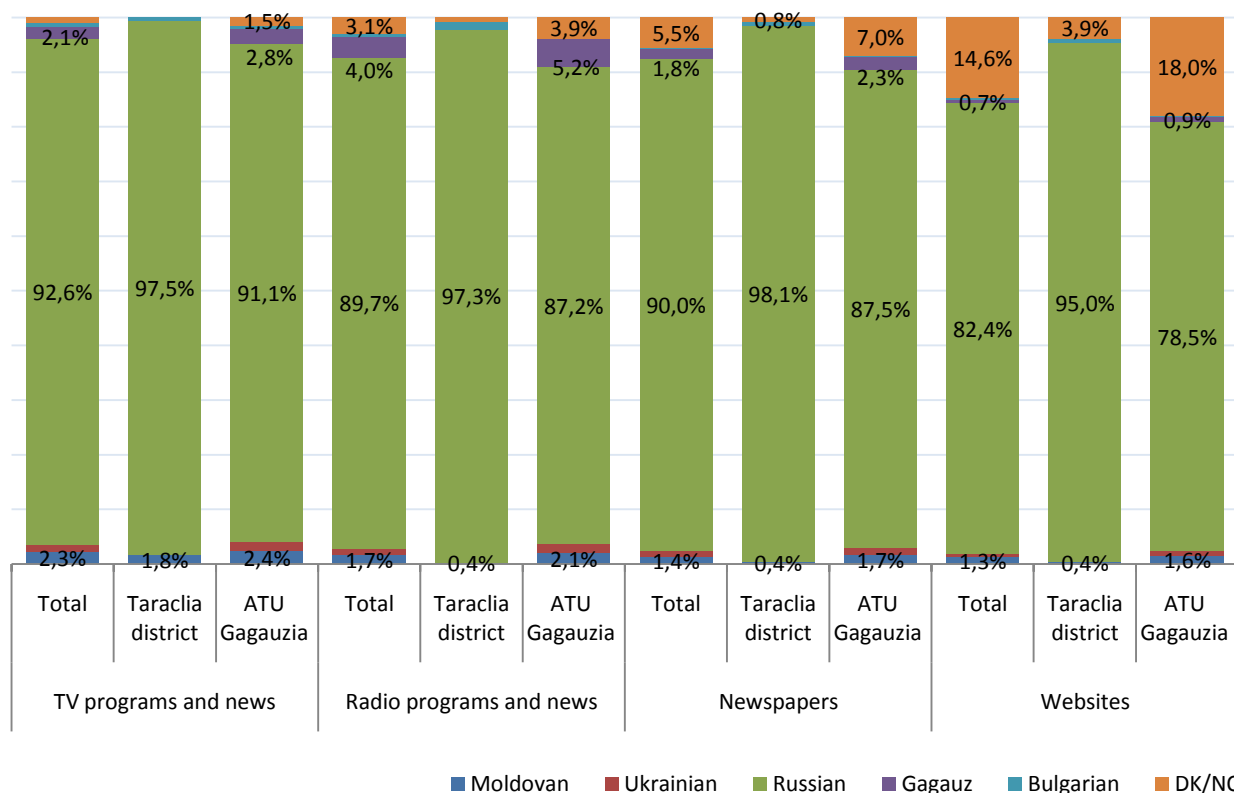
Figure 17. Elements at the base of integrating/bringing closer together of ethnic groups in the RM



The media-informational consumption

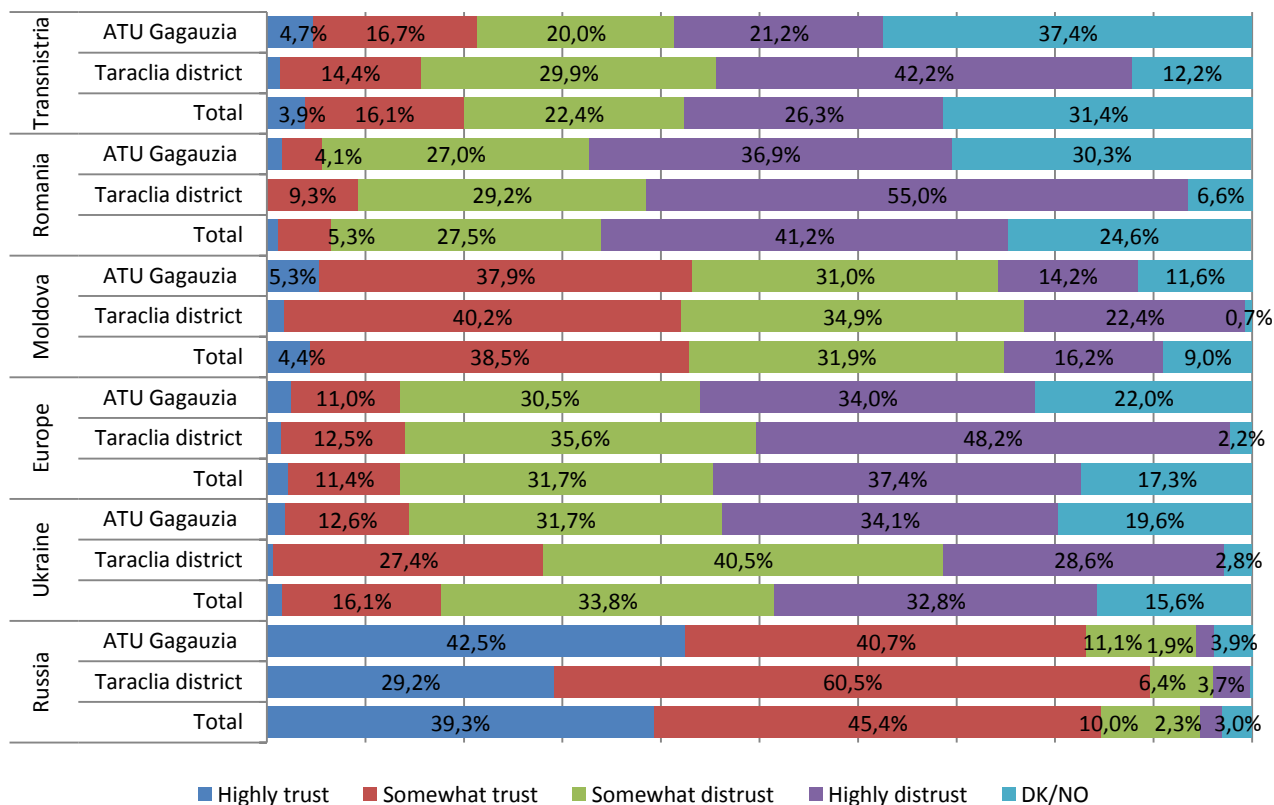
The informational space of the populations of the studied regions is comprised almost exclusively from Russian content. Regardless of source, nine out of ten regional residents consume information in Russian.

Figure 18. Media consumption by content language



From here the exclusive trust in the RF mass-media may be deduced. Nine out of ten respondents show trust in the RF media sources, compared to 42%-43% in the RM mass-media or 14%-15% in the European mass-media.

Figure 19. Trust in the mass-media of different countries / regions



Visions on the future of the Republic of Moldova

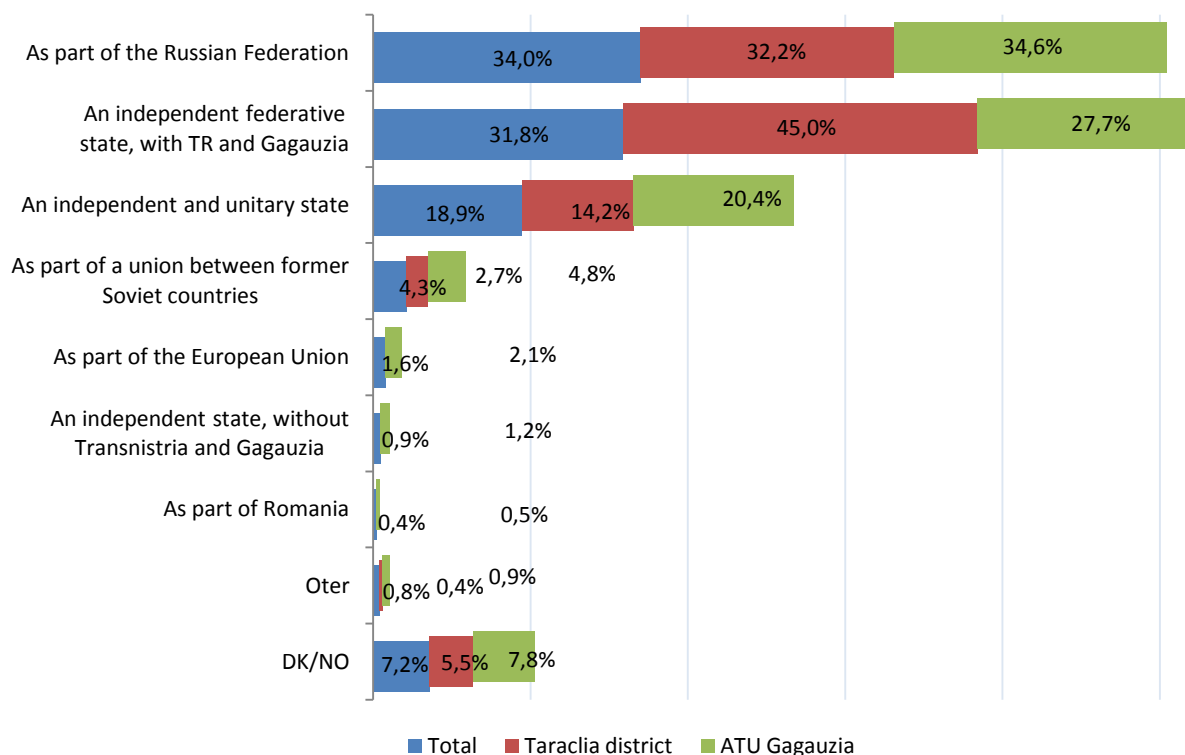
The perspective of the common future is perceived as one of the key elements in the integration of ethnicities. However, only 3.8% of respondents indicated dangers to statehood as an integrating element (figure 17). Thus from the perspective of integration into society, the trust, value and visions on the future of the RM statehood require special attention.

Study results suggest that ethnic minorities give a high probability for the change of the state organization form, or even loss of the RM sovereignty. Only 18.9% believe the future RM will remain a unitary and sovereign state, with Transnistria and Gagauzia as ordinary administrative-territorial units. Still, only 0.9% of respondents predict a unitary state without Transnistria and Gagauzia in its composition.

About a third of respondents see the future RM as a federal state with Transnistria and Gagauzia as subjects of the federation.

Yet, most of the citizens in the study regions believe Moldova will lose its sovereignty, either by inclusion in the composition of the Russian Federation (34.0%) or as part of a union of former USSR states (4.3%).

Figure 20. Visions on the future of the statehood of the Republic of Moldova

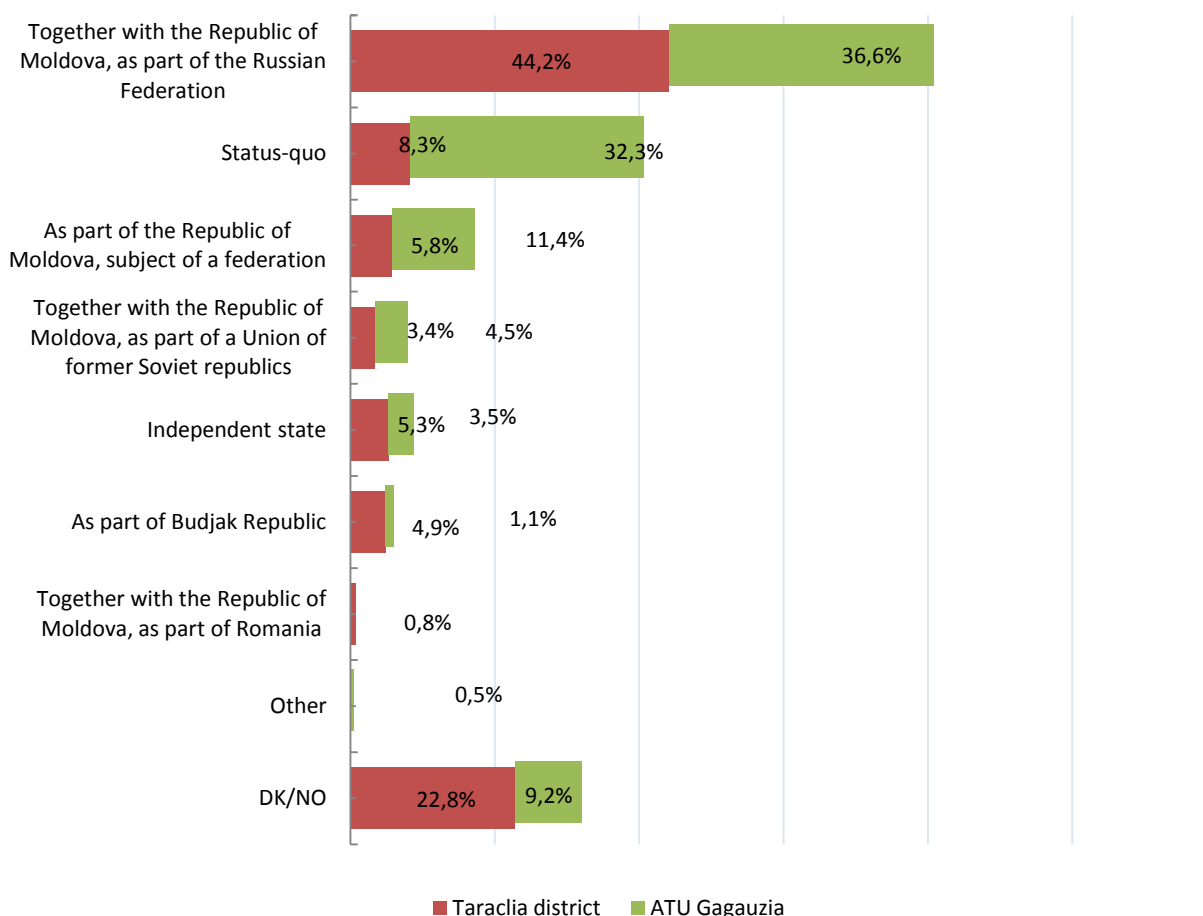


Thus, although secessionist perspectives are not predicted by many respondents (only 5,3% respondents in the Taraclia district and 3,5% in the ATU Gagauzia see their regions in perspective as independent states), most respondents anticipated the future of the region together with Moldova in the Russian Federation or in some union of states based on the former USSR.

Nonetheless, the share of those estimating that the future RM will be an independent and unitary state, with the Transnistrian and Gagauz regions as part of it, grow along with the study level.

Figure 21. Visions on the future of regions

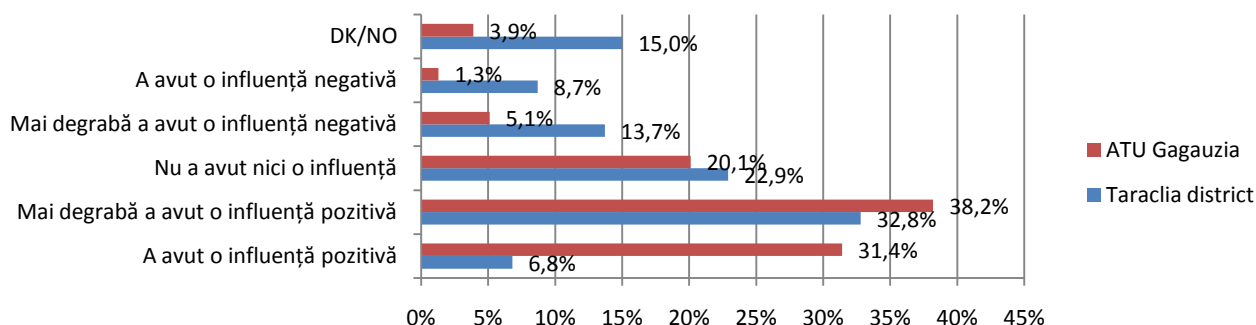
Generally, a state of mind not favorable to the integration or even dangerous for state sovereignty may be observed. Considerable shares of citizens don't see their future in a sovereign RM, either due to lack of sympathy towards the state or the perception of its fragility.



Appreciations regarding autonomies based on the ethnic principle

Both ATU GAGAUZIA as an autonomy and the Taracalia district as a distinct territorial administrative unit, are ethno-territorial constructions, created based on the compact population of these territories by the Gagauz and respectively Bulgarian ethnic groups. The creation of the ATU Gagauzia is perceived by approximatively 70% of respondents as having positive effects for the region's population whereas in the case of the Taracalia district, only about 40% of the respondents share this opinion. Discrepancies are determined by the different statute of this region, the ATU Gagauzia having a certain specific autonomy compared to the other administrative-territorial units of the country.

Figure 22. The impact of creating the ATU Gagauzia and the Taracalia district for the population of the regions



Appreciations by the autonomy's impact on the qualitative study respondents are contradictory. The majority consider that the creation of the Gagauz autonomy had positive effects. Mostoften, the fact that the autonomy's creation increased the image and notoriety of the Gagauz ethnicity in the world is mentioned:

- *"The Gagauz became more confident in their own strengths and were recognized as a distinct ethnicity." (Academia, Comrat)*
- *"Things changed, the whole world heard of us as an autonomy." (ATU Gagauzia People's Assembly Member)*

Other arguments are that the creation of the autonomy increased the accessibility of certain public services, or that it had a positive impact on Gagauz culture:

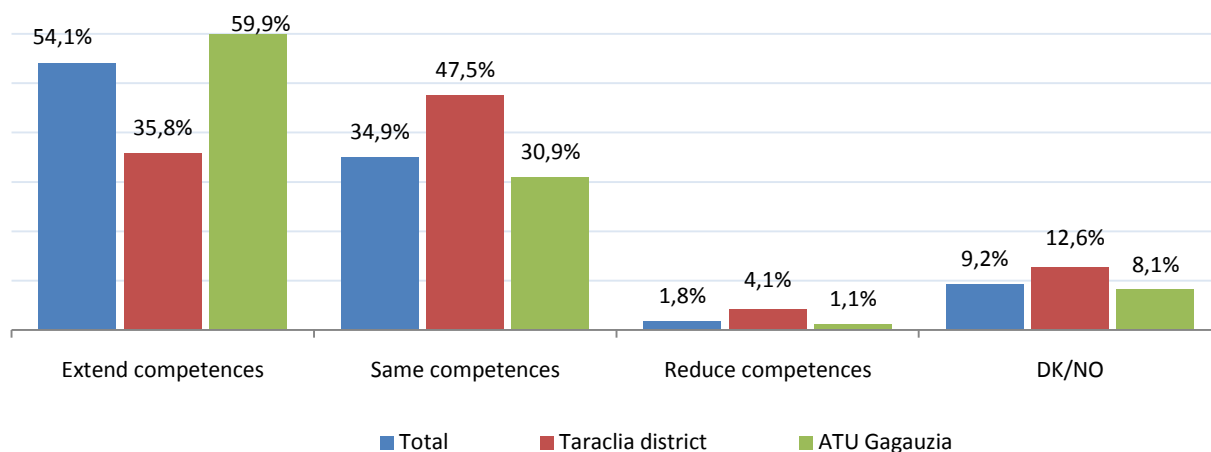
- *"Access to public service increased, it became simpler to address Gagauz authorities than central authorities." (Academic environment, Comrat)*
- *"As regards culture, songs there are songs about our villages and towns, people started being proud to be Gagauz." (ATU Gagauzia People's Assembly Member)*

However, there are also critical voices, speaking about the failure to capitalize on the autonomy's potential:

- *"Everybody says that Gagauzia's competences were reduced, however the members of the people's assembly have the right to address the constitutional court. If the parliament of the country adopts laws that break the rights of Gagauzia, the People's Assembly is in right to address the Constitutional Court for a decision on the case. In the 20 years since it holds this right, Gagauzia only once addressed the Constitutional Court, and this only during the first mandate of the People's Assembly, you won't find another such address." (journalist, Comrat)*

Opinions differ on the need to expand ATU Gagauzia prerogatives. Though very few respondents think they should be reduced, a third of citizens opted for the maintenance of the current statute, and 54,1% to extend the degree of autonomy. The choice to extend the degree of autonomy is made by the youth (59,8% respondents, aged 18-29, versus 48,0% aged 60+), and also people with medium and higher education.

Figure 23. The need to extend the competences of the ATU Gagauzia



Opinions of interview respondents are also divided on this aspect. Mostly, those who see positive effects after the autonomy was created, tend to claim the need for the extension of its prerogatives:

- *"People's Assembly competences need to be extended for more independence." (ATU Gagauzia People's Assembly Member)*
- *"I think the extension of competences may positively impact the future of Gagauzia. Along with the extension of competences, Gagauzia must understand that it is, after all, located on the Territory of the Republic of Moldova." (academia, Comrat)*

Still, the others emphasize the full capitalization of existent prerogatives or in the context of the need to implement decentralization reform countrywide:

- *"Competences must not necessarily be extended as much as the authorities need to be trained in using them. Competences must be delineated between what Gagauzia does and what central authorities do."*(academia, Comrat)
- *"Unfortunately, power today is concentrated in Chisinau, and this doesn't only refer to the statute of the Gagauz autonomy, but to the other regions as well, thus, we need to implement the European decentralization model. Local authorities, including the Gagauz autonomy need more independence, for example in forming the budget. It's a republican level problem."* (journalist, Comrat)

Some key aspects arise regarding the Taraclia district. First, there are no wishes here for an autonomy like the one Gagauzia enjoys. Second, creating a ATU by the compact population of the Bulgarian ethnicity principle is seen as one of the conditions insuring the conservation of the identity of Bulgarians in Moldova:

- *"We preserved our Bulgarian identity, if we were part of the Cahul district, we wouldn't have been noticed. We're currently trying to obtain the national-cultural district status. This had a positive influence on the conservation of our Bulgarian identity."* (Taraclia town hall employee)

Still, fears persist on the district's dissolution, especially in the administrative-territorial reforms context:

- *"We're weary of the law on decentralization. According to this draft law 3-4 big counties will be created in the Republic of Moldova, and the Taraclia district will be disbanded, resulting in the loss of Bulgarian traditions and culture."*

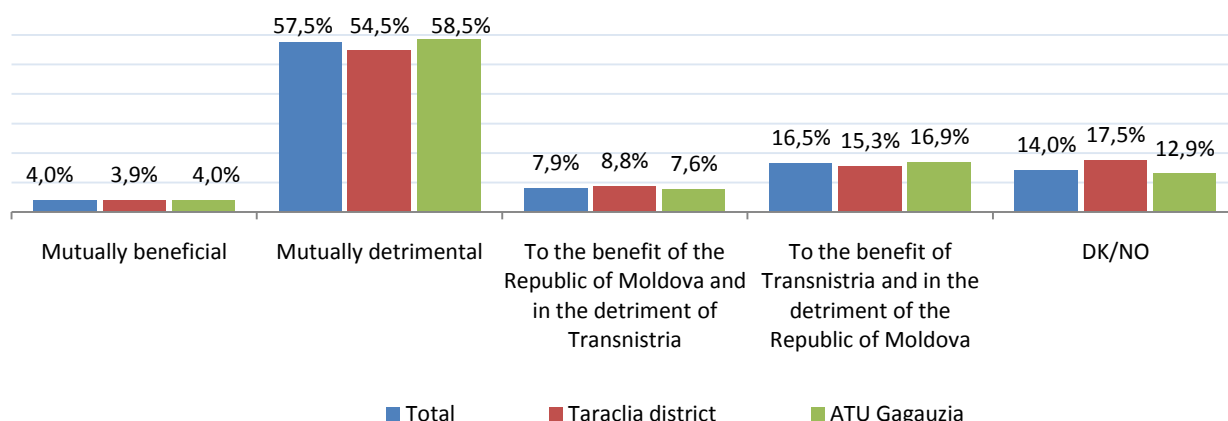
a fact on which claims to grant a national-cultural statute to the district are actually based:

- *"We wish to receive the national-cultural district status. We don't ask for competences like Gagauzia, with a separate budget, fiscal policy, but simply an organic law on the national-cultural status of the district, to be sure it won't be disbanded."* (Taraclia town hall employee)

Visions on the Transnistrian conflict

The perception analysis of minority groups on the right bank on the Nistru on the Transnistrian conflict presents a special interest from the perspective of identifying solutions for its resolution. Consequences of this conflict are negative for both parties (58%).

Figure 24. Effects of the Transnistrian conflict

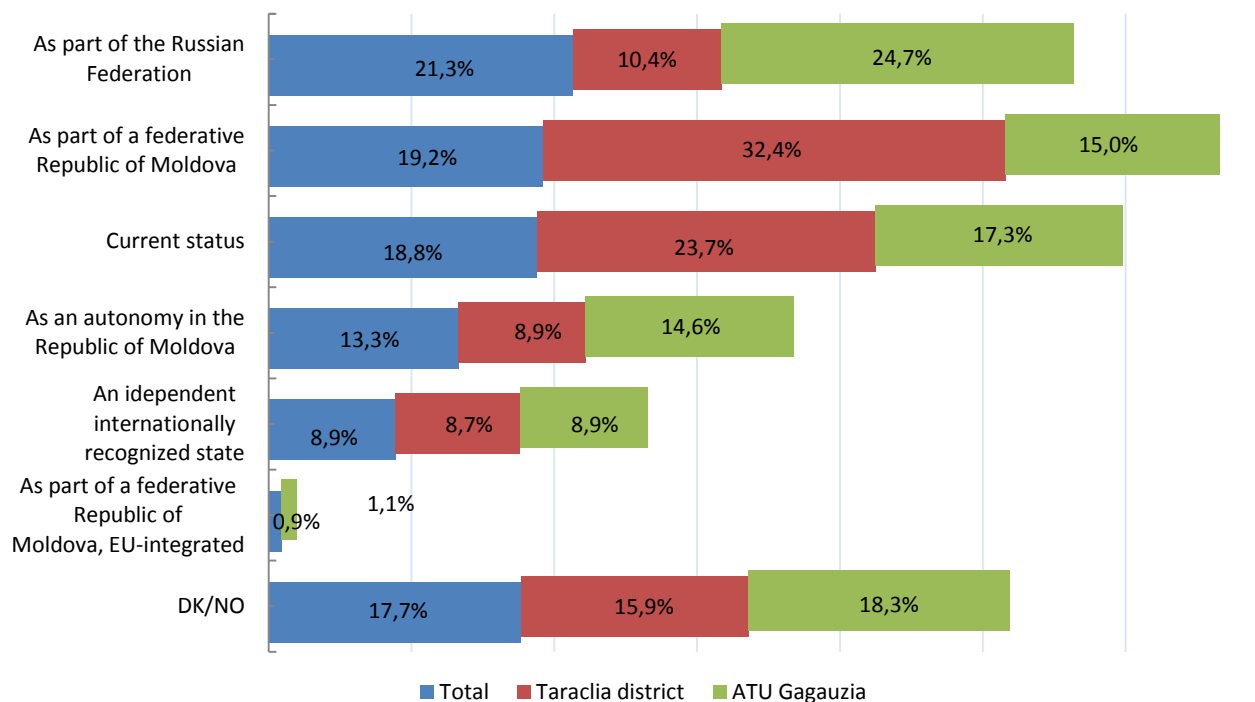


Considering that most respondents qualify the conflict's consequences as negative, 79.7% of respondents see the resolution of this conflict to be very important. However, opinions differ on the region's future. Every fifth respondent sees the future of the region on the left of the Nistru as part of the Russian Federation, the approximately same share sees Transnistria as the component of a federation based on the

current state of the RM, and 13,3% as an autonomy in the RM. Another 18,8% see the future preservation of the current status-quo and only 8.9% think the region will accomplish the objective to be internationally recognized as an independent state.

As with thoughts on their own regions futures, respondents with a higher level of education are more likely to predict that the future Transnistria will be integrated in a common state with the Republic of Moldova.

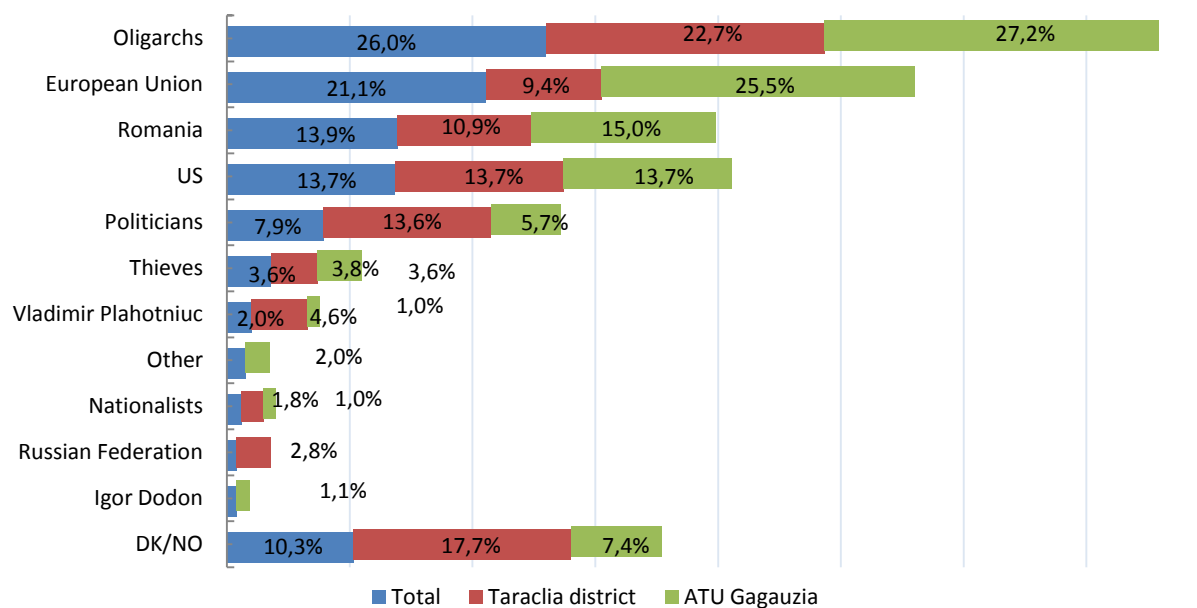
Figure 25. The future of the Transnistrian region



Attitudes towards the latest political events

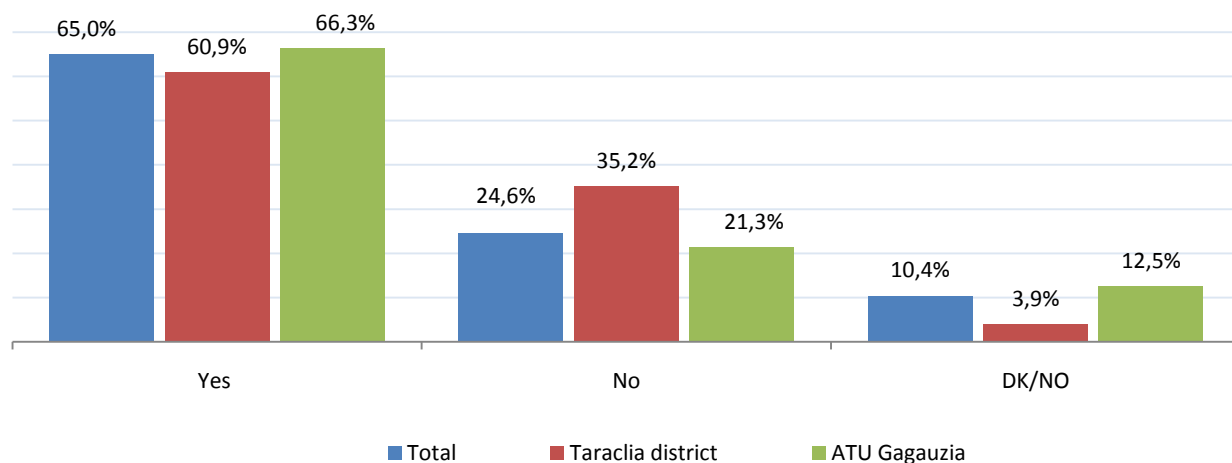
Skepticism on the future of RM's sovereignty is also fueled by the instability that marked the political life of the state in the past years. Particularly an important part of the respondents supports the thesis that the Republic of Moldova is a captive state – 33,1%. The thesis is especially supported by youth, people with a higher level of education and socio-economic status. Responsibility for this situation is either placed on the country's development partners (EU, Romania, USA), either the business groups in the country (oligarchs, Plahotniuc).

Figure 26. People responsible for “capturing” the state



Protest movements in Chisinau in the fall of 2015 are supported by most residents of the research regions (76%), but specifically by youth and middle-aged persons, economically active and with a high educational and socio-economic level. Still not all parties to these protest actions are supported by the populations of the ATU GAGAUZIA and Taraclia district. The great majority of respondents support the PSRM protest, just one out of five support both (at the moment) protest movements, the PSRM and the DA Platform ones. Two thirds of the citizens in the study regions support the supporters main claim-organizing early parliamentary elections.

Figure 27. The degree of support for the claims to organize early parliamentary elections



2. Geopolitical orientation aspects

The RM ethnic reality is paradoxical, with specificities that would much rather require the definition of minority groups by features other than ethnic ones. In the identity orientations and perceptions of the Gagauz and Bulgarian ethnicities virtually no ethnic criteria or specific ethnic history transpire. Study results illustrate very clearly that these groups of citizens, through their reporting to the state and its future, by their identification, do not show trends of self-definition based on ethnicity, but rather, based on a number of realities such as:

- linguistic realities and information (priority use of Russian)
- the Soviet past,

c) the present geographical mobility (migration to RF)

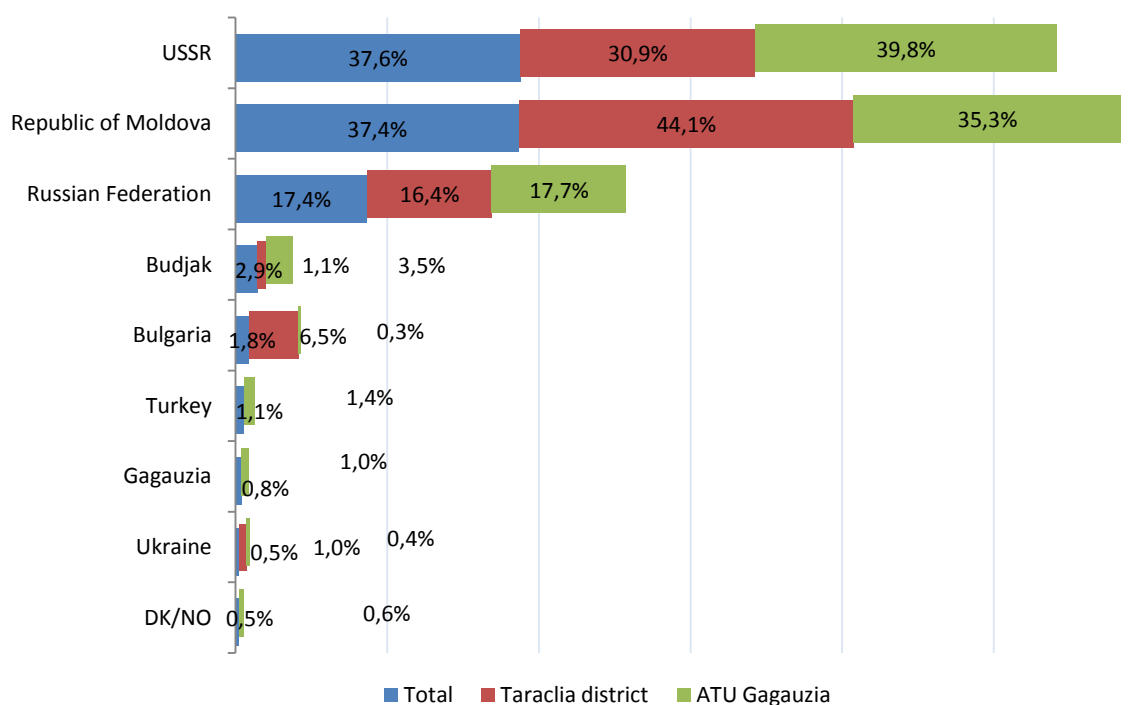
they self-define inside the common minority group (regardless of ethnicity) of the Russian-speaking population, remaining in Moldova after the fall of the USSR.

Perceptions on the historic motherland of the Gagauz and Bulgarian ethnicities

Ethnic identity is basically absent among the criteria of primary identity criteria for the citizens of the study regions, only 5.6% respondents identify first of all with their ethnic group.

On the other hand, the history of the respective ethnic group is itself almost completely absent from the relations with reality. Most Bulgarian and Gagauz ethics, citizen of the RM are reporting historically to the former USSR (37,6%) or the current Russian Federation (17,4%). And if in the case of the Gagauz ethnicity, disputes on the history of the group continue, the paradox being very visible in the case of ethnic Bulgarians when only 6,5% respondents from the Taraclia district (mostly populated by ethnic Bulgarians) perceive the Bulgarian national state as a historical motherland.

Figure 28. Perceived historical homeland



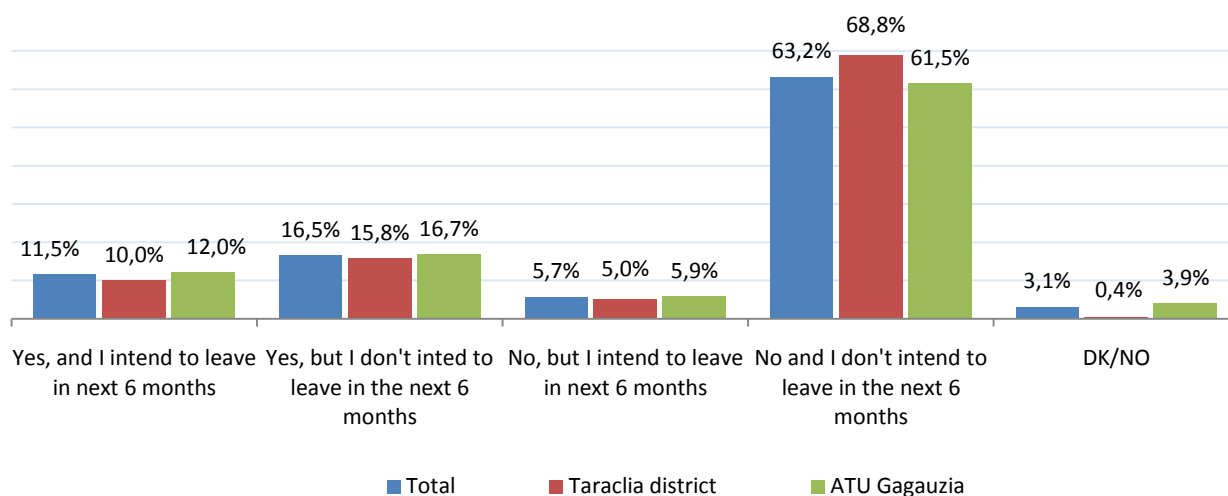
Involvement in the external migration and migrationist intentions in the future

The amplitude of migrationist processes from the period of the RM independence makes us unable to neglect its effects even in legal subjects connected to national identity and orientation. The impact of the labor force migration is felt in all spheres of social life, even in electoral preferences³. There is, for example, evidence of significant relationships between the vote for the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova in the 2009 parliamentary elections and the prevalence in labor migration patterns (East vs. West) in households and communities.

³ Toman Omar Mahmoud, Hillel Rapoport, Andreas Steinmayr, Christoph Trebesch „[The Effect of Labor Migration on the Diffusion of Democracy: Evidence from a Former Soviet Republic](#)”, August 2013

Study regions are no exceptions when it comes to the amplitude of labor migration processes. At the moment of the study the brute involvement of the population (either recent migration experience-last 2 years, or intentions for the near - 6 months) was exceeding one third of the adult population.

Figure 29. Involvement in the labor force migration in the last 2 years

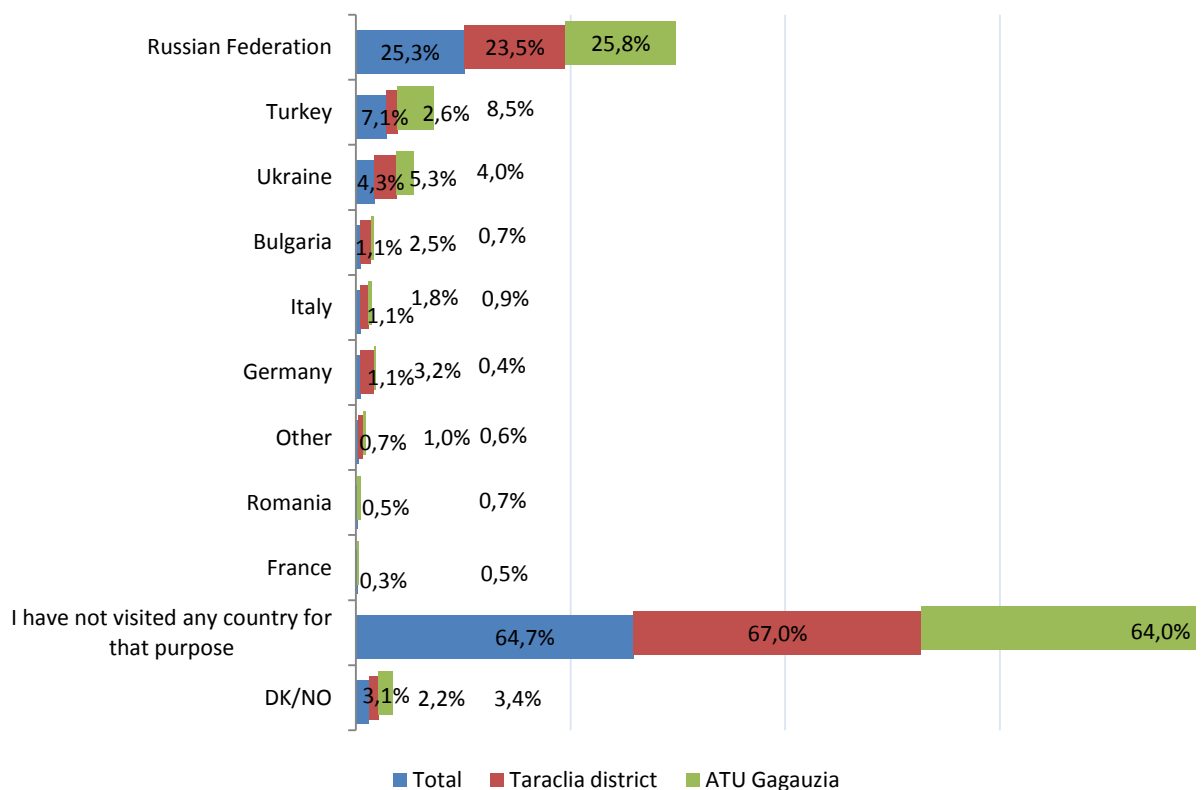


The migration of residents in the ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district is preponderantly directed towards the East, 61,0% of the persons involved in the last 5 years in labor migration heading for the RF, another 10.4% for Ukraine. Turkey has an increase share (17.1%) as a destination compared to the total migration per country⁴, the EU member states have a lower percentage.

Thus additional to the informational space almost completely dominated by the Russian media, there is also the tight objective connection to the RF through migration.

Figure 30. Countries visited in the labor migration process in the last 5 years

⁴National Bureau of Statistics, „[Migrația Forței de Muncă](#)”, 2013



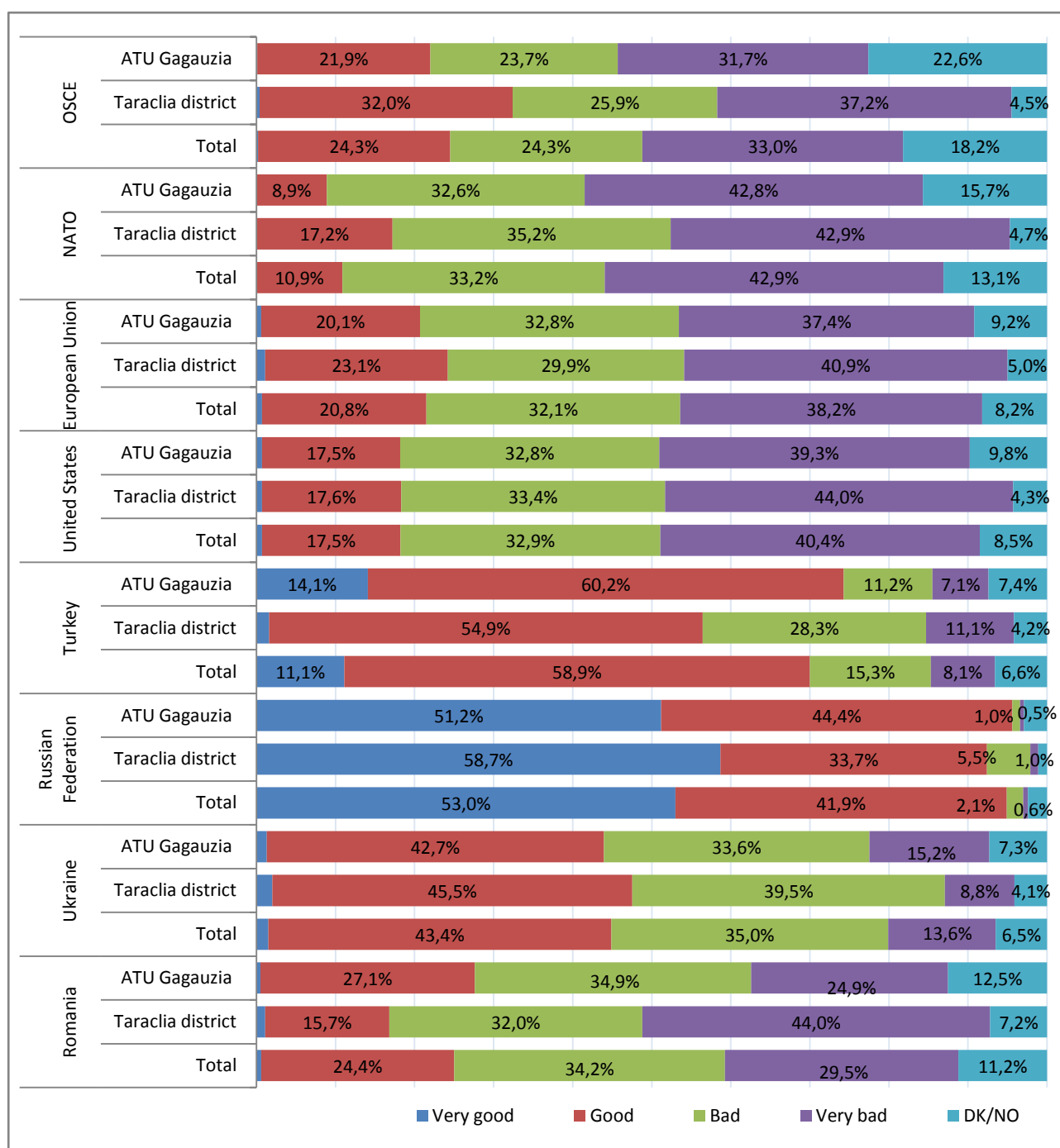
in such a context, it doesn't seem at all surprising that 60,2% of the RM citizens residing in the study regions, don't see the future of their children in Moldova and 78,2% of them would prefer for them to live in the RF.

Attitudes towards the international actors

Only two countries, RF and Turkey enjoy predominantly positive attitudes of the ATU GAGAUZIA and Taraclia district residents. 95% of the respondents showed positive attitudes towards the RF and 70% towards Turkey.

An average value of the indicator regards Ukraine, 45% of respondents having positive attitudes and 49% negative ones. In the case of other countries and international bodies the share of those with negative attitudes is more than double compared to the percentage of respondents with positive attitudes. Generally speaking, the residents of the regions have a pronounced negative opinion on any country or organization associated to the West.

Figure 31. Attitude towards the external partners of the RM



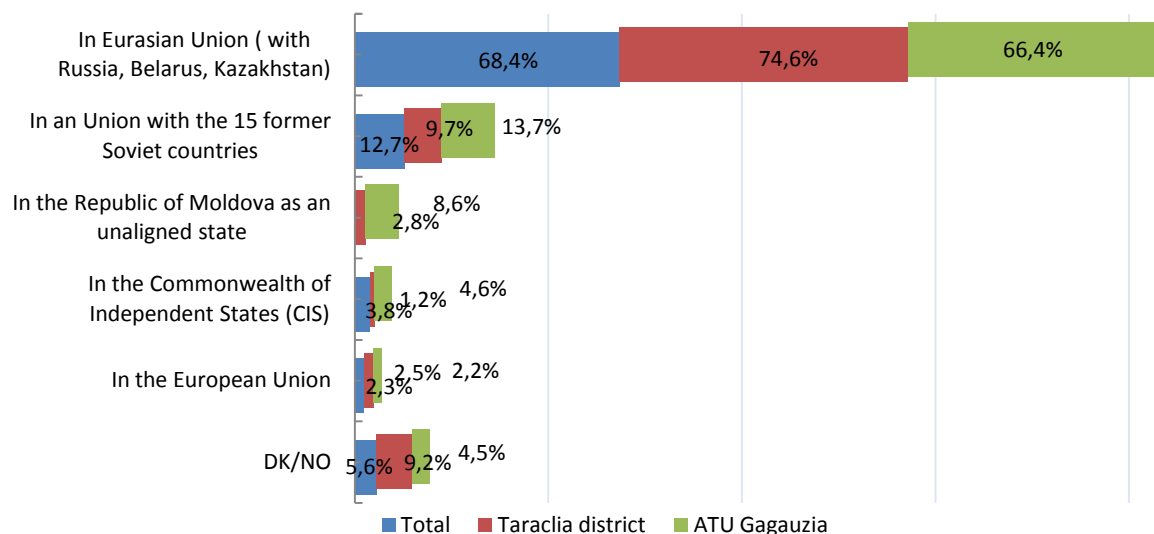
Although general findings are valid for all sociodemographic, categories we also find certain specific elements. First ATU Gagauzia residents compared to those in the Taraclia district have a more positive attitude towards Romania and Turkey.

The rural population and those with higher levels of education show more positive attitudes towards all external partners and attitudes towards EU countries, international organizations and the USA correlate with the age of respondents, the youth showing more positive attitudes towards these countries and organizations.

Visions on the external orientations of the RM

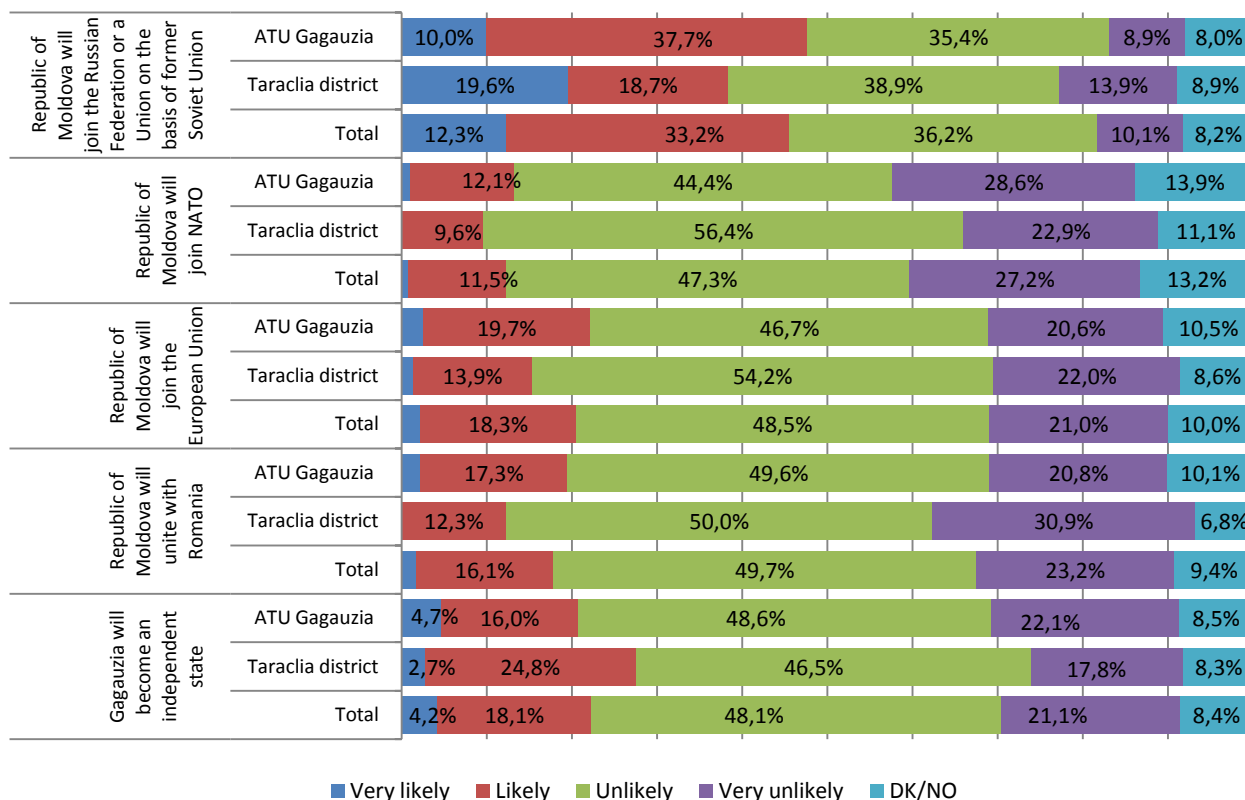
The future of the country is preferred as part of some interstate unions of the east, in the space of the former USSR. Two thirds of respondents wish the RM to be part of the Eurasian Union, other 12.7 would wish the RM to be part in a new union of former USSR republics. The options to integrate in the EU or the status-quo of a state which is part of neither of the above listed union, are not popular.

Figure 32. The future of the Republic of Moldova, preferred by respondents



Nearly nine out of ten respondents declare their direct preferences for the Eurasian Union in the detriment of the EU. On the other hand, the future of statehood is unclear. Respondents evaluated the union with Romania, the integration of the RM in NATO as highly unlikely, most having estimated the independence of Gagauzia as even less likely. Opinions are divided on the union between the RM and the RF or integration in Eastern economic and political unions, almost half of respondents believing that this scenario is likely, the other half - as excluded or unlikely.

Figure 33. Appreciations on the probability of various scenarios regarding the RM statehood

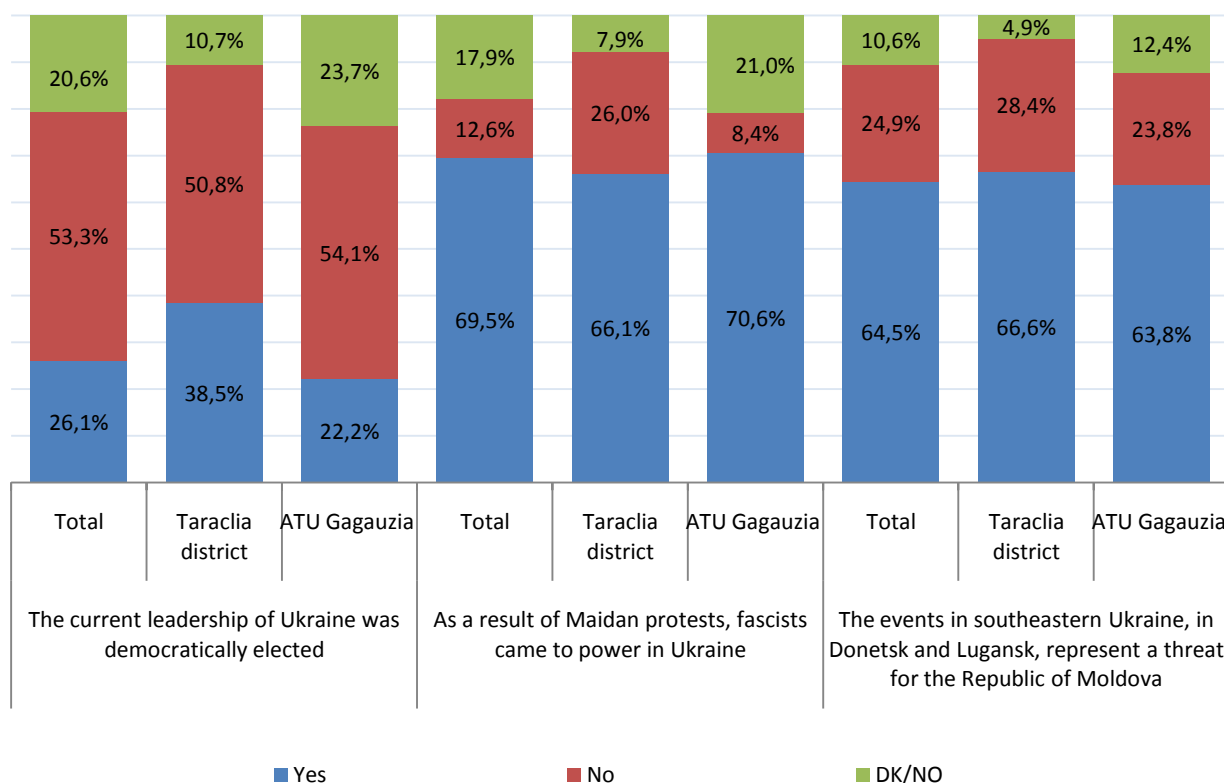


Appreciation of events in Eastern Ukraine

The events in Ukraine, from the change of government after bloody protests on the Maidan, followed by the annexation of the Crimea peninsula to the armed conflict which continues in the east of the country introduced destabilizing elements regionally and globally. Information warfare was one of the basic components of the conflict.

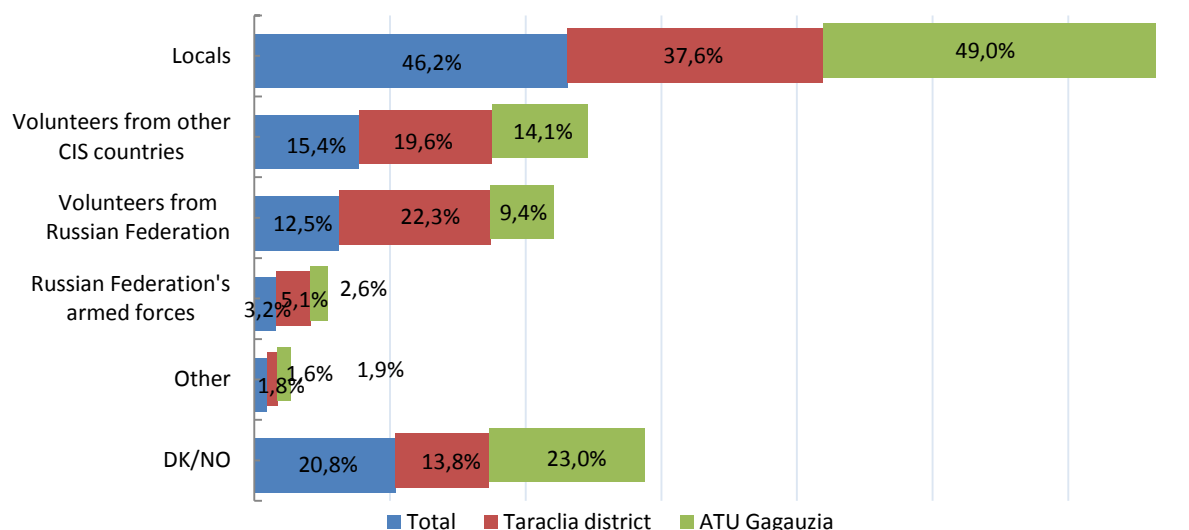
Apparently the logic of similar realities would put the population of RM on positions of support towards Ukraine, a victim of separatism generated through scenarios similar to the Transnistrian one. Still, the situation is different, the informational component in the reflection of events being completely dominated by visions propagated by the RF. Therefore, the vast majority of studied regions residents are adepts of the RF position on events in Ukraine. Propagandistic ideas promoted by Russian media alleging that the new government in Ukraine is not legitimate, and that Ukraine was taken over by fascist groups are massively embraced by the residents of the ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district. However, most respondents claim that events in Eastern Ukraine also post a treat to Moldova.

Figure 34. Appreciations on a series of theses related to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine



There is also a shared belief that in the Eastern Ukraine confrontations carry the character of a civil war, without involvement of the Russian Federation. Almost every second respondent thinks the government armed forces are fighting locals in the regions of Eastern Ukraine. Others think that volunteers from CIS countries (15,4%) or the RF (12,5%) are fighting in Eastern Ukraine. Just 3.2% of respondents support the Ukraine's position that the RF armed forces are fighting in the East of the country.

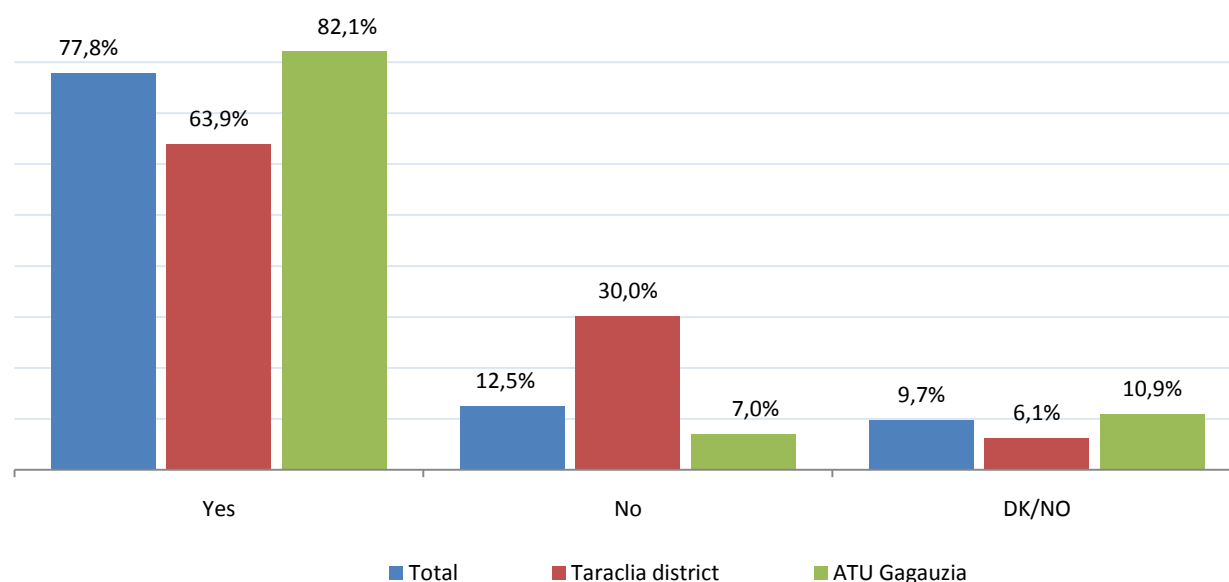
Figure 35. Opponents of the army of Ukraine in Donbas and Lugansk



The involvement of youth groups originating from ATU Gagauzia in the armed conflict in the Eastern Ukraine, which led to a series of arrests, had considerable media sonority in Moldova. The specific nature of the study regions' media coverage, characterized by extremely low penetration of national mass media, especially in the state language, seems to not have caused the same level of reverberation of these events in southern regions. Four in ten people could not express an opinion and another 43.2% said that the involvement of youth from the ATU Gagauzia in military training in the RF do not correspond to the truth. Moreover, the fact of these youth's arrest sparked preponderantly negative reactions from residents of the regions.

Finally, regarding the annexation of Crimea most of the ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district population (77.8%) consider that the Russian Federation was right in its actions.

Figure 36. Opinion on the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation



A secessionist project promoted in 2015 by a number of forces in the southern region of Moldova and the adjacent region of Ukraine, called the "Budjak Republic", aimed at a union based on the ethnic Gagauz and Bulgarians from the respective regions, had considerable echo in Moldova in general and in the south in particular. 39.6% of respondents have heard about it. One must note the increased level of support for

such ideas that from one third of the residents in the region, or about half of those who have heard about this intention.

The "Novorossia" project promoted by the RF in the context of the events in Ukraine in 2014-2015, is known by 30.2% of respondents, particularly among educated, economically active men. If we refer only to those who knew of such a project when the study was carried out, over half of respondents have shown positive attitudes towards it.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

The extremely tense period that Moldova is currently going through is determined both by internal destabilizing factors and the external conjuncture of insecurity. The multiple political crises in recent years and the high-level corruption considerably diminished public confidence in state institutions and political parties. Regional conflicts on the territory of the neighboring state might further complicate the situation in the Republic of Moldova.

The south of Moldova, characterized by the presence of territorial administrative units created on the principle of ethnic population with populations that are linguistically and informationally not integrated in the state space requires increased attention and profound knowledge of regional specifics to find effective solutions for maintaining the situation within constitutional limits.

This study cannot provide a comprehensive diagnosis for the state of things, generating empiric material for the assessment of perspectives and solutions to integrate ethnic minorities in the South as part of a civic nation in Moldova.

A first element, unearthed by this research is that ethnic relations are not perceived as a primary concern by residents of Gagauzia and Taraclia. From the incidence of discrimination standpoint, ethnic and linguistic minorities are also not found among the discriminated categories.

The identity status of citizens the ATU Gagauzia and the Taraclia district is confusing. On the one hand, at the declarative level there is an emphasis for the feeling of integration in Moldovan society. On the other hand, besides the diffuse character of primary (civic, regional, local) identity, ethnic identity is also diffuse, the population being divided between those who exclusively assume an ethnic identity, and those with a feeling of multiple ethnical belonging.

Another essential element to emphasized is the strong assumed tendency to attribute the entire space of the Republic of Moldova as belonging to a Russian identity ("Русский мир"["Russkij mir"- "Russian world"]). Through the perception of historical past, the population of Gagauzia and the Taraclia district identify with a Russian space, ethnic elements not having any major coagulating importance.

The Gagauz and Bulgarian ethnicities of Moldova live in a state of complete linguistic isolation from the ethnic majority and the state in general. The absolute majority of these groups' representatives do not speak the state language, while Russian is known by all of them, much better than these groups' native languages (Bulgarian, Gagauz). Moreover, in ATU Gagauzia and the Taraclia district Russian language is given priority from the start in the educational process compared to the state language and native language.

Amid linguistic isolation there is also isolation in the Russian informational space. The informational background in ATU Gagauzia and the Taraclia district is completely dominated by mass-media with Russian content. In light of the above aspects, there is a risk for these groups lose their linguistic identity over time, presenting at some point in the future just the features of a Russian linguistic minority.

Considering this context, state policies towards the linguistic integration of linguistic ethnic minorities had no significant results, the rethinking of existing approaches being necessary. The intensification of the educational efforts on teaching the state language and native languages is needed in the educational

institutions of ATU Gagauzia and the Taraclia district. Moreover, improved conditions need to be created for the interaction between different language groups in the country. A remedy in this respect would be the evaluation of mixed pre-university educational institutions from the language teaching capacity standpoint, especially since the study indicates that such an idea is approved by citizens.

Attitudes of ethnic minority groups regarding the state of the Republic of Moldova are marked by a declared loyalty, yet, also mistrust in the future of state-building. The future of the Republic of Moldova is regarded by most residents of the southern regions either as part of the Russian Federation, either as part of a union of states based on the former USSR.

Western Integration is neither approved nor considered probable. Thus, despite over a decade of efforts to approach the European Union, we find that obtaining support from ethnic groups in ATU Gagauzia and the Taraclia district in favor of this development trend was not successful. It is necessary to rethink the communication processes regarding the European integration process of the Republic of Moldova.

The perception by the region's population of regional and global external events, confirm that the Russian media dominance in this space is a destabilizing factor for civic cohesion and integration processes in the Republic of Moldova. If the possible linguistic efforts must be planned on a long term basis, medium-term efforts are needed to substitute Russian media production with local content in languages spoken by minorities, and on a short term, measures are necessary to counter the media propaganda emanated by the Russian Federation.

Elections in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia

Igor Boțan

1. Preliminary considerations

Sociological surveys results including those analyzed in the given study confirm that the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauz-Yeri (Gagauzia) being part of the Republic of Moldova is characterized by a number of obvious specifics. Elections held at the national and regional levels infallibly show specific characteristics of the Gagauz Autonomy. The given chapter is devoted to the examination of Gagauzian citizens' electoral behavior and the way they reflect spirits in the given community.

Perceptions of the Gagauzian Autonomy citizens reflected in the results of the survey held at the local level of Gagauzia can be explained by a number of factors. The first factor relates to the cultural and parochial (patriarchal) sphere prevailing not only in Gagauzia but also in the country as a whole. Being insufficiently urbanized, Gagauzian society, as well as that of Moldova can be characterized by the contemplative rather than active attitude to life and participation in the political processes initiated and carried out by the elite. Therefore, citizens tend to identify strong leaders who can resolve their problems. As a result, the local elites are characterized by predictable behavior, use of identical messages and similar stereotypes. For example, they constantly refer to the need of special relations with allies outside of the Republic Moldova to render pressure upon central authorities.

The second factor relates to the conflict potential that served as a basis for the formation of the Gaguzian Autonomy. This potential has not yet been exhausted as yet. During the Soviet period, Gagauzian community used to compactly reside in the Budzhaksky steppes located in the south of the Republic Moldova being mainly engaged in agricultural activities. It had no autonomy being subjected to the assimilation process in the attempt to form a Soviet Nation. National renaissance of Gagauzians as well as of Moldovans or Bessarabian Romanians resulted from the break-up of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). This process was accompanied by antagonistic movements. If Moldovans/Bessarabian Romanians supported sovereignty of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova (MSSR) from the USSR during this period, Gagauzians, together with Transnistrians, supported preservation of the USSR, declaring on August 19, 1990 independence of the MSSR in order to remain part of the USSR. As a result, relations between Chisinau (capital of the Republic of Moldova) and Comrat (capital of Gagauzia) in 1990-1995 remained rather intense. In 1995, leaders of the Gagauzian community agreed to return to the constitutional field of the Republic of Moldova in the status of autonomy. In this situation, in 1995, the first elections were held aiming to form governing bodies for the Autonomy – People's Assembly and Executive Committee of Gagauzia.

The third factor relates to Gagauzia's external or civilizational orientation towards Russia. Gagauzian elite puts forward, at least, three incontestable arguments with regard to Russia. The first one is the fact that about 200 years ago the Russian empire saved Gagauzians – the nation of Turkish origin and Christian confession living at the Danube outflow – from genocide by resettling them in the Budzhaksky steppes. The second argument relates to the fact that Russian language and culture actually served for the Gagauzian nation as a window to global culture and civilization. The third argument bases on the fact that due to the traditional economic relations, Gagauzian agricultural goods are well known and well perceived in the Russian market even if they do not quite meet modern quality standards.

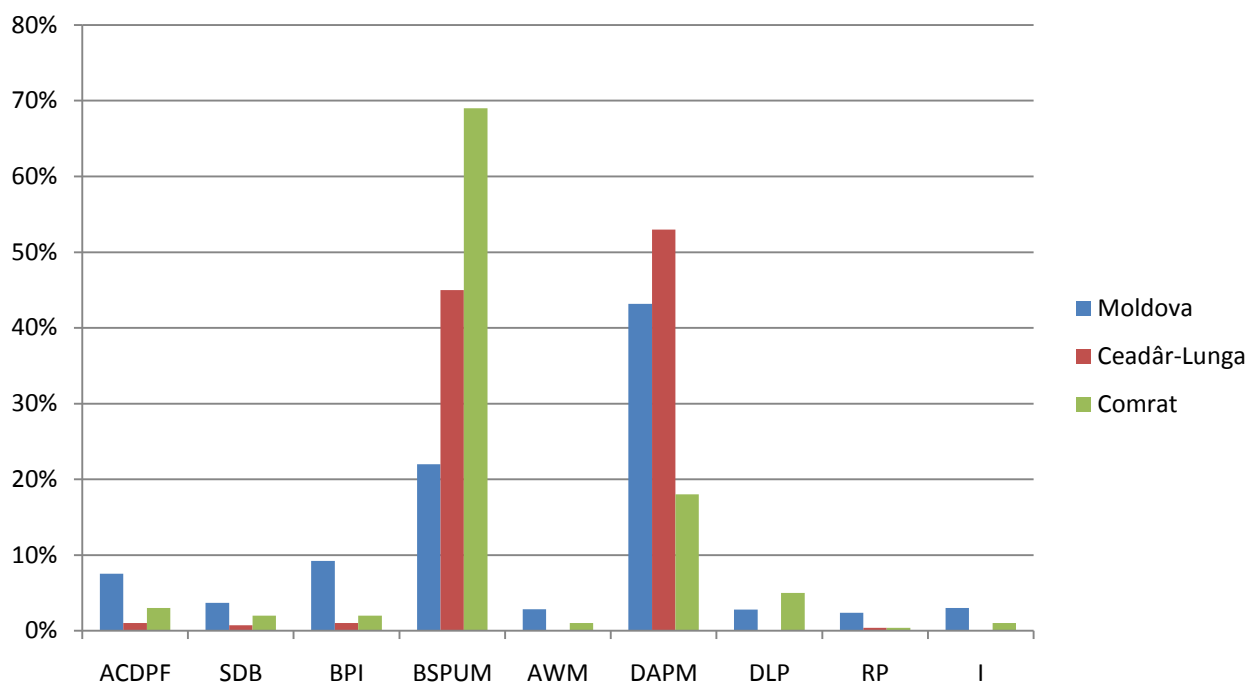
The fourth factor relates to the educational and informational influence. During the Soviet period, the MSSR citizens including Gagauzians were educated in the anti-western and especially anti-Romanian spirit.

Romania and Romanian *bourgeois and land-owning classes' regime* were represented as the main enemies of the Soviet people, builders of communism. As a result, all these factors fully manifest themselves in the electoral outcomes in the Gagauzian community during national (parliamentary and presidential), as well as regional elections.

2. Electoral cycle of 1994 – 1998

Starting with 1990 through 1994, the Republic of Moldova was headed by the Supreme Soviet (Parliament) elected during the legislative elections of February-March 1990, i.e. the last year of the USSR existence when the national renaissance wave reached its apogee, as well as that of the movements aimed to counter this wave. The structure of this Supreme Soviet of the XII convocation consisted, roughly, of 1/3 of pro-Soviet adherents, about 1/3 of the agrarian nomenclature that formed the Agrarian Democratic Party of Moldova PDAM supporting independence of the Republic of Moldova and establishing economic relations within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and, approximately, 1/3 of political forces supporting national renaissance and rapprochement with Romania being against joining the CIS. In August 1993, the Supreme Soviet of XII convocation dissolved itself having failed to ratify Agreement on Joining the CIS by the Republic of Moldova. Elections of the professional Parliament on the multi-party-system basis took place on February 27, 1994 under the new Law on Elections (according to the absolute proportional electoral system of one country – one election constituency.

Figure 1. Parliamentary elections in 1994



ACDPF - Alliance of the Christian Democratic Popular Front

SDB - Social Democratic Bloc

BPI - Bloc of Peasants and Intellectuals

BSPUM - Bloc of Socialist Party and Unity Movement

AWM - Association of Women in Moldova

DAPM - Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova

DLP - Democratic Labour Party

RP - Reform Party

I - Independents

The context of these elections explains behavior of voters in the districts compactly populated by Gagauzians. First, on the eve of elections the country leaders supported by PDAM Republic of Moldova. The actual goal of the Congress was consolidation of the unionist political movement (general term used for the idea of uniting the Republic of Moldova with Romania) promoted by the pro-Romanian formations of AFPCD and BTJI. Secondly, there was taken a decision to organize right after the parliamentary elections a plebiscite named Council with People» (Sfat cu poporul) to confirm independence of the Republic of Moldova via nation-wide voting. The plan was to eliminate grounds nurturing separatism of Gagauzia and Transnistria. Thirdly, the country's top leadership promised the heads of Gagauzia that in exchange for their giving up the self-proclaimed independence (separatism), the Constitution of the country that was just planned to be developed and approved at that point of time would legitimize broad autonomy status for the territories compactly populated by Gagauzians.

Figure 1 shows the districts of Comrat and Ceadâr-Lunga populated by Gagauzians, which presupposed considerable support to politically pro-independent and pro-Russian forces of PDAM and BPSMUE. After elections of April 1994, new PDAM leadership kept its word ratifying the Agreement on the Republic of Moldova Joining the CIS. Adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova followed on July 29 1994. Article 111 in the Constitution titled *Special Autonomy Status* envisaged in its initial edition that districts located on the left bank of Nistru River, as well as some districts in the south of the Republic of Moldova could receive special conditions and forms of autonomy according to the special statuses approved via organic laws. At the same time, organic laws regulating the special statuses of these districts could be modified by voting with the resulting three fifth of the votes of all elected deputies.

On December 23 1994, the Parliament passed Law No 344-XIII on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri) regulating practically all the aspects of creation and functioning of the Gagauzian Autonomy and providing in Article 1 that "In case of change of the status of the Republic of Moldova as an independent state people of Gagauzia have the right of external self-determination". At last, on May 28 1995, first elections to the People's Assembly and position of Gagauzian Governor (Bashkan) took place. The importance of these elections consisted in the fact that Gagauzian Autonomy received competent management and the conflict between Gagauzian community and central authorities of the Republic of Moldova was eventually overcome. Elections were preceded by the referendum held on March 5, 1995 in a number of localities populated by Gagauzians in order to identify territorial borders of the Gagauzian Autonomy according to Article 5 of the Law on Special Legal Status.

Table 1. Elections to the People's Assembly of Gagauzia in 1995

Electoral candidates		Round I	Round II	Mandates
Work collectives	WC	43	7	11
Popular Party „VATAN”	PPV	16	2	5
Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova	PCRM	15	1	8
Independents	I	15	1	5
Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova	DAPM	13	2	4
Gagauz People's Party	GPP	4	1	1
Total		106	14	34

Results of elections to the People's Assembly were surprising (Table 1). They demonstrated rather low support of leaders of the National Gagauzian Renaissance (party of VATAN) that was directly involved in the creation of tension between the regional and central authorities of the Republic of Moldova. This fact could be explained in the considerable fall of living standards of the population and, respectively, of confidence in nationalist political forces, which resulted in the significant loss of votes given to independent candidates and representatives of working collectives. Another surprising fact referred to the number of votes won by the candidate representing the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) rehabilitated after its prohibition resulting from the putsch (coup) of August 18-21 1991 one month before the elections.

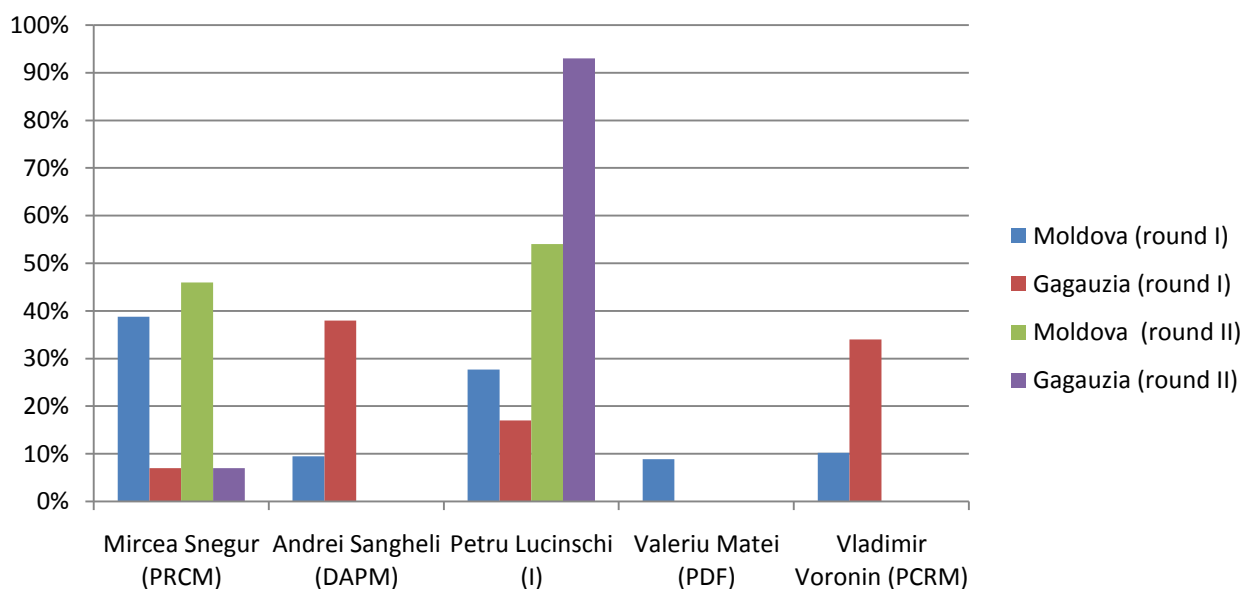
Equally important were the results of elections to the position of Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia as long as Bashkan of Gagauzia is, at the same time, Minister without Portfolio of the Government of the Republic of Moldova. Gheorghii Tabunșcic promoting balanced ideas and supporting development of the Gagauzian Autonomy with establishment of normal cooperation relations between the region and the Center was elected Bashkan

Table 2. Elections for the position of Bashkan of Gagauzia in 1995

Electoral candidates	Round I	%	Round II	%
Mihail Kendighelean, Popular Party „VATAN”	17924	23,7%	22081	31,9
Gheorghii Tabunșcic, work collectives	34262	45,4%	44392	64,1
Stepan Topal, work collectives	7988	10,6%		
Dmitri Croitor, work collectives	12287	16,3%		

After this, there followed direct presidential elections of 1996 that were of special interest in view of electoral behavior formation of the Gagauzian Autonomy citizens. In the first round of elections, the major part of Gagauzian votes went to Andrei Sangheli (~40%), Prime Minister and actual leader of PDAM. This support was understandable as PDAM had kept its promise and gave Gagauzia the status of Autonomy fixed in the Constitution. At the same time, a considerable number of Gagauzians' votes were casted in favor of Vladimir Voronin (~35%), PCRM leader who openly expressed nostalgia for the Soviet times.

Figure 2. Presidential elections in 1996

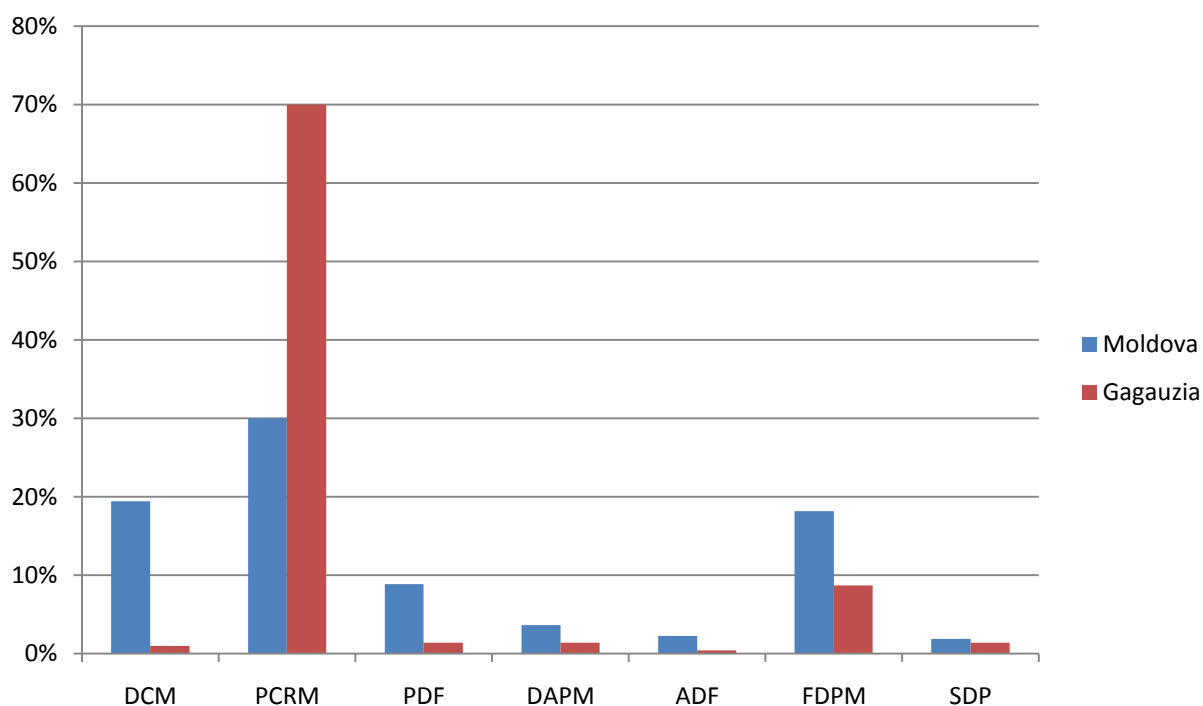


As a result of elections, official leaders of the Republic of Moldova – acting President Mircea Snegur and the Speaker of the Parliament Petru Lucinschi – got inconsiderable support in the Gagauzian community winning in the first round 7% and 17% of votes, respectively. In the second round, the winner in elections – Petru Lucinschi perceived as a bigger Russophile than Mircea Snegur won in Gagauzia 93% of votes.

3. Electoral Cycle of 1998 – 2001

The Parliamentary elections of 1998 took place in the atmosphere of relative political stability. It was the third year of Gagauzian Autonomy, while the process of Transnistrian conflict settlement, that the Gagauzian elite put certain hopes on, entered a new stage that seemed promising to Gagauzia, especially after President Petru Lucinschi had signed the so-called Primakov Memorandum with the Russian Federation on May 1997. The Memorandum envisaged creation of the ‘common state’ in the course of separatist conflict settlement. The idea of ‘common state’ opened prospects for federalization of the Republic of Moldova, while Gagauzian leaders also wanted to receive the status of the federal subject similar to that of Transnistria. Secondly, Parliamentary elections of 1998 showed growing PCRM popularity as of a party that openly demonstrated nostalgia for the USSR. It was PCRM and namely the party leader Vladimir Voronin who insisted on President Petru Lucinschi’s signing of Primakov Memorandum giving as an argument that they had supported him in the second round of presidential elections of 1996 aiming to promote the ideas of federalism.

Figure 3. Parliamentary elections in 1998



DCM - Democratic Convention of Moldova

PCRM - Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova

PDF - Party of Democratic Forces

DAPM - Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova

ADF - Alliance of Democratic Forces

FDPM - For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova

SDP - Social Democratic Party

In the parliamentary elections of 1998, national and pro-Romanian parties of BCDM, PFD and BAFD won less votes than in 1994, while PDAM having kept almost all its promises in relation to the Gaguzian Autonomy quitted the Moldovan policy stage. PDAM as the party of the former rural communistic nomenclature had lost its significance against the background of the rising PCRM (~70%) as the party nostalgic about the Soviet times. Only BPMDP received in Gagauzia a significant number of votes (~9%), which was due to President Petru Lucinschi's support. The new parliamentary majority – Alliance for Democracy and Reforms (ADR) consisted of two pro-Romanian parties – BCDM and PFD, as well as BPMDP that was considered as promoter of ideas of independence with moderate Russophilism. Such a coalition of hardly compatible parties had been formed in order to prevent returning to power of communists in the Republic of Moldova so much desired by the Russophile electorate including Gagauzian voters.

Results of parliamentary elections rendered a great influence on the voters in the region both in relation to the elections to the People's Assembly and those to the position of Bashkan that took place on August 22, 1999. These elections showed that Gagauzian voters were rather pragmatic. Giving considerable support to the pro-Russian forces, they did not wish to lose advantages resulting from good relations of the Autonomy with central authorities. In this respect, elections to the position of Bashkan were won by the candidate supported by the Movement for Democratic and Prosperous Moldova (MPMDP) – Dmitri Croitor who gained a competitive edge in the second round versus the PCRM candidate, acting Bashkan Gheorghii Tabunșic. Results of elections to the People's Assembly with its 35 mandates were as follows: 25 independent candidates; 4 PCRM candidates; 2 – candidates from the Party of Furnica; 2 – from the Socialist Party; 1 – from the Popular Democratic Party of Moldova and 1 – from MPMDP. It is worth noting that Mihail Kendighelean, one of the National Renaissance Movement leaders of Gagauzia and promoter of Gagauzia's independence became Chairman of the People's Assembly. Thus, election of Kendighelean definitely compensated for the election of the politician supported by the central authorities as Bashkan.

4. Regional Parties Problem

Elections in Gagauzia should be viewed through the prism of regional parties problems. In the period of 1991–1998, regional parties were functioning under Law No 718-XII of September 17, 1991. After coming to power in 1998, ADR modified the Law on Political Parties practically banning regional parties. This happened in the situation when national parties had already compromised themselves with various political scandals. Nine years later, on December 21, 2007 the Parliament passed a new Law on Political Parties that also ignored requirements in relation to the regional parties registration.

The international experience shows that regional parties usually are never banned explicitly, while the conditions set for their registration become so strict that meeting them is next to impossible. The same international practice shows that presence or absence of regional parties does not depend on the federal or unitary status of the country. The major criterion for the allowing or disallowing regional parties is the fact whether the central authorities see any danger of separatism in the functioning of certain formalized political structures. For example, Russia disallows regional parties though it is a federation occupying a huge territory with 83 federal subjects (according to the recent reorganizations). On the other hand, Spain, which is not a federation *de jure*, but considered as the one *de facto* has in each of its 17 autonomous units, at least, one regional party. The Constitutions of both countries contain the right of citizens to freedom of associations, including political parties. The details related to the conditions of political parties registration make it impossible in Russia and rather easily achievable in Spain.

It is worth considering an example that, to a certain degree, is close to the reality of the Republic of Moldova from the point of view of the form of governance and territorial and administrative structure. The

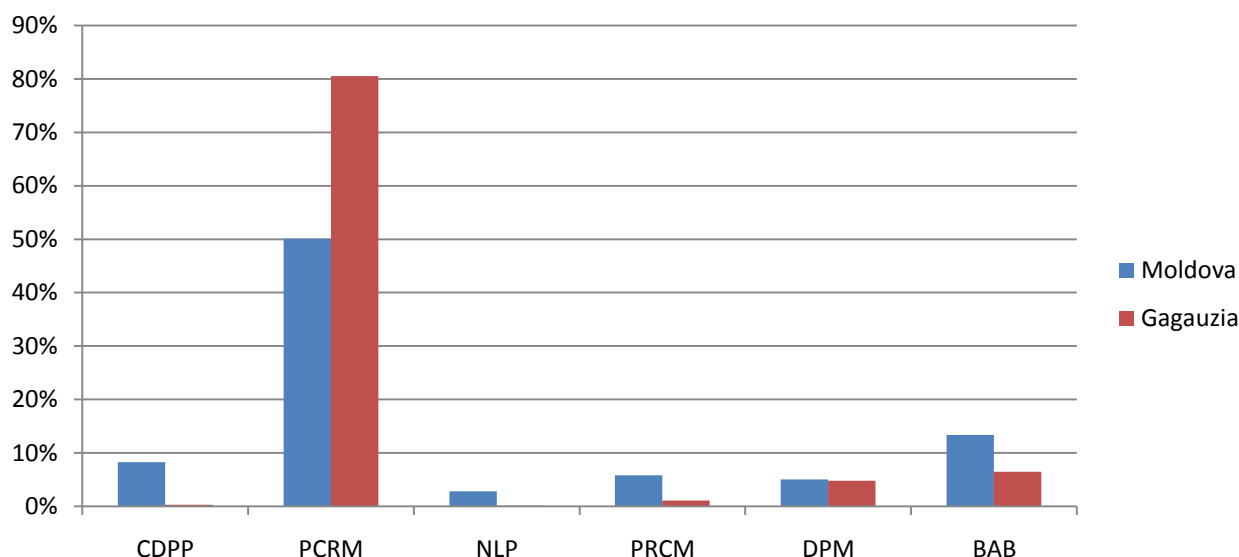
matter in question is Portugal having a specific constitutional norm that disallows regional parties. Under Article 6 of the Constitution, Portugal is a 'unitary state ensuring autonomy of local authorities and democratic decentralization of administrations. The Archipelagoes of the Azores and Madeira include autonomous regions with their own political statuses and public authorities'. Despite the autonomy of these two archipelagoes fixed in the supreme law, para (4), Article 51 of the Constitution explicitly says that 'no party can be created, if its name and statutory goals mention its regional nature'.

Thus, we have, on the one hand, an example of Russia that the political forces of Gagauzia sympathize with so much and which, being a federation, disallows formation of regional parties, while on the other hand, we see an example of Spain, which, facing very dangerous separatist movements has the legislation allowing formation of parties in general and regional parties in particular. All the other specified examples fit between the extremes mentioned above. Speaking about the situation in the Republic of Moldova as such, one can say that no evidence proving any danger from the functioning of regional parties has been provided as yet. Therefore, the negative attitude of Moldovan authorities displayed in their relation is groundless. The tables given above show that in the situation when regional parties were existent Gagauzian citizens vested more confidence in the candidates from the working collectives, independent candidates and national parties versus regional parties at the elections to the People's Assembly.

5. Electoral Cycle of 2001-2005

The early parliamentary elections of February 25, 2001 impacted greatly the course of events in the Republic of Moldova and Gagauzia. PCRM won the elections with overwhelming majority of votes (50.07%), receiving 71 mandates from 101 (more than 2/3 of all the mandates) and securing constitutional majority. The PCRM victory in 2001 could be explained by the exploited pro-Soviet nostalgia of poor population. The major messages of communists included joining the Russia-Belarus Union by the Republic of Moldova and granting the Russian language an equal status with Moldovan/Romanian.

Figure 4. Parliamentary elections in 2001



CDPP - Christian-Democratic People's Party

PCRM - Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova

NLP - National Liberal Party

PRCM - Party of Rebirth and Conciliation of Moldova

DPM - Democratic Party of Moldova

BAB - Braghiș Alliance Bloc

In January 2002, about one year after coming to power, PCRM suggested creation of 'the top-down command structure', i.e. imposing control on all public institutes, including those of the Gagauzian Autonomy. After the Audit Chamber verification, the People's Assembly of Gagauzia initiated removal of Bashkan from power; the idea was supported by the President of the Republic of Moldova Vladimir Voronin who publicly accused acting Bashkan Dmitri Croitor of public funds misappropriation. Gagauzia's administration rejected the charges and opposed the idea to hold a referendum on the issue of Bashkan's removal from office, which resulted in the splitting of the People's Assembly members into two antagonistic camps. To prevent the referendum on Bashkan's removal from office, there was initiated legal prosecution against Bashkan Dmitri Croitor and Head of the Protocol Department and People's Assembly Ivan Burgudji.

Thus, a new conflict between the Gagauzian Autonomy and central authorities was provoked anew. Although it was not of ethnic, linguistic or externally oriented nature being purely political, it was intentionally transformed into the ethnic conflict. The legal prosecution of Bashkan and his supporters resulted in Croitor's declaration of resignation in summer 2002, which caused political crisis in the region and holding of early regional elections planned for October 6, 2002. The electoral campaign took place in the atmosphere of nervousness and suspicions. Due to certain reasons, results of elections of October 6, 2002 were cancelled with repeated elections held on October 20, 2002, which generated even more suspicions. In the repeated elections the main opponents of Gheorghii Tabunșic (representing PCRM) were Stepan Topal (unrecognized President of Gagauzia in the acutest conflict period of 1990-1995 between Comrat and Chișinău) and Mihail Formuzal (mayor of Ceadâr-Lunga). Though Gheorghii Tabunșic won the repeated elections, Mihail Formuzal succeeded in rising to prominence as the major opponent of central authorities and future continuator of tense relations between Comrat and Chișinău.

Tension between Comrat and Chișinău made Chairman of the People's Assembly Mihail Kendighelean declare his resignation, communist Ivan Kristioglo being elected to replace him. Thus, all the power in Gagauzian Autonomy got under the PCRM control and being built in the 'top-down command structure'. To decrease tension the PCRM constitutional majority in the Parliament entered amendments in Article 111 of the Constitution on July 25, 2003 declaring that it thus had kept its promises on strengthening the Gagauzian Autonomy.

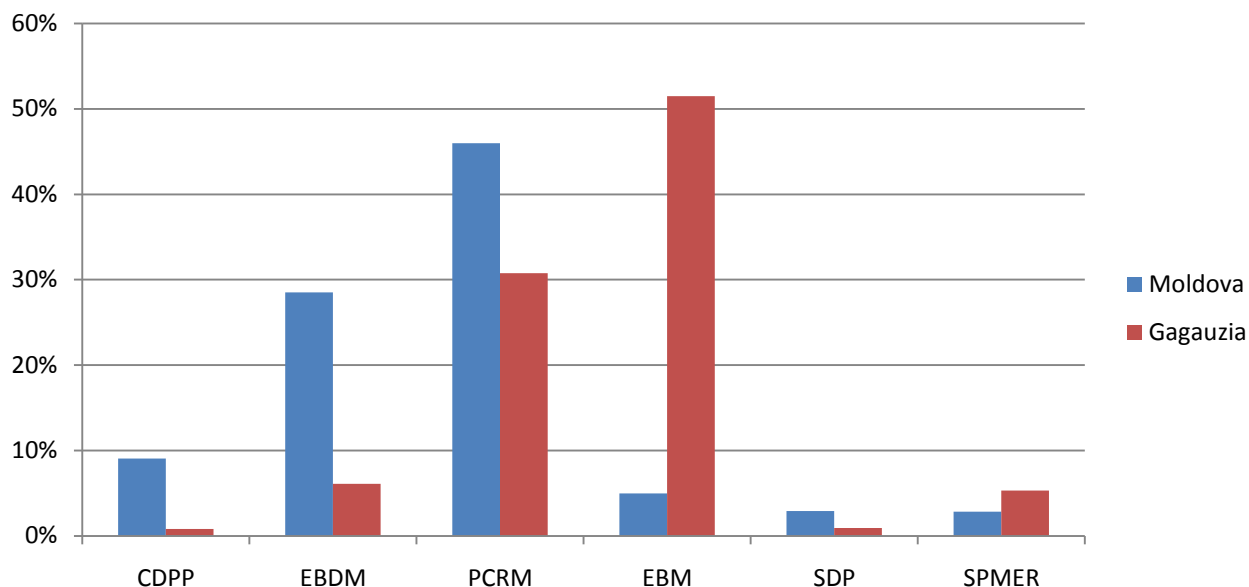
The regular elections to the People's Assembly held on November 16, 2003 yielded the following results: Independent candidates – 17; PCRM – 16; Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM) – 1; Republican Movement of Equality (MRR) – 1. Stepan Esir was elected People's Assembly Chairman, which fact ensured conflict-free cooperation with the PCRM Bashkan – communist Tabunșic and central authorities. This political lull continued until 2006.

6. Electoral Cycle of 2005 – 2009

PCRM also won Parliamentary elections of March 6, 2005 (~46%) but with the results less significant than those of 2001. Afterwards, Gagauzian electors voted for PCRM progressively less (~ 30% versus 80% in 2001). The Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM) having won at the national level only ~5% got in Gagauzia more than 50% votes, thus becoming a new electoral preference for the Autonomy. The reasons for this kind of change in the electoral behavior were: conflict of 2002 between the central communist and regional authorities, signing by President Voronin on November 13, 2002 of the Decree on European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, his refusal to sign Kozak Memorandum on Federalization of the Republic of Moldova in November, 2003, signing of the Action Plan of the Republic of Moldova –

European Union on February 22, 2005, i.e. on the eve of parliamentary elections. In fact, throughout 2002-2005 PCRM changed its foreign policy vector from Russia to the European Union. In this situation, PSRM succeeded in winning sympathies of Gagauzian voters gaining them from the PCRM together with the image of pro-Russian political policy supporter.

Figure 5. Parliamentary elections in 2005



CDPP - Christian-Democratic People's Party

EBDM - Electoral Bloc Democratic Moldova

PCRM - Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova

EBM - Electoral Bloc Motherland

SDP - Social Democratic Party

SPMER - Social-Political Movement "Equality in Rights"

One and a half year after the parliamentary elections of 2005, there took place elections to the position of Bashkan of Gagauzia on December 3, 2006. These elections actually became the highest point in the renewed tension between Comrat and Chişinău after the crisis of 2002. The outcome of elections obviously resulted from the previous experience of voters. After the turbulent period of 1990-1995 having considerably affected relations between the Gagauzian community and Moldovan authorities, the Gagauzian electors got the 'privilege' of voting for the political forces that used to win elections at the national level for about one decade. Therefore, in the period of 1994 – 2005 the Gagauzian community had its representation in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova that was twice as big as the specific number of its citizens. However, the situation changed after 2005.

Electoral campaign in the course of elections to the Bashkan position in 2006 was a competition between 4 candidates. They all got registered as independent. The messages of all the candidates were in many respects similar: consolidation of Autonomy, clear delimitation of powers between Comrat and Chişinău, modernization of economy, development of social sphere, etc. Therefore, details and factors of administrative nature were specifically important. From this point of view, the major competitors were Gheorghii Tabunşic – candidate supported by the central authorities, and Mihail Formuzal – a symbolic

oppositional figure with eight criminal cases initiated against him by the central authorities in the attempt to intimidate and discourage him.

Performing the functions of acting Bashkan, **Gheorghii Tabunșic** used to the full administrative resources and support of the ruling party of PCRM. Actual improvement of living standards in the region due to the economic growth and coincidence of circumstances in the regional economy served as a big advantage for the acting Bashkan. In his turn, Mihail Formuzal entered competitive struggle having the image of a politician persecuted by the central authorities. Mihail Formuzal's program and ideas had a clear tint of confrontation with the Chișinău authorities.

Mihail Formuzal won the elections, which was perceived as the opposition victory. It is worth mentioning that since Bashkan elections of December 2006 until the last elections of 2015 only the candidates who were in opposition of the central authorities used to be elected as Gagauzian Bashkans.

Table 3. Elections for the position of Bashkan of Gagauzia in 2006

Electoral candidates	Round I	%	Round II	%
Gheorghii Tabunșic, independent	13745	24,14		
Nicolai Dudoglo, independent	17880	31,40	25603	43,77
Alexandr Stoianoglo, independent	6025	10,58		
Mihail Formuzal, independent	19297	33,89	32890	56,23
Voter turnout		62,58		64,29

The next regular elections to the People's Assembly of Gagauzia took place on March 16, 2008. As usual, the majority of candidates were independent. In fact, the number of political forces participating in the elections was bigger. Two camps of candidates– formal and informal ones – got clearly shaped in the campaign. The matter in question is the Block for Flourishing Gagauzia within Renewed Moldova (BGÎMR) created by PCRM and the non-governmental organization set up by Bashkan Mihail Formuzal – United Gagauzia Movement (MGU). None of the forces won the elections having failed to receive support that would be sufficient for formation of simple majority in the People's Assembly: Independent candidates – 21 mandates; PCRM – 10; Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) – 2; MRR – 1. The immediate outcome of elections to the People's Assembly was blockage of its activity.

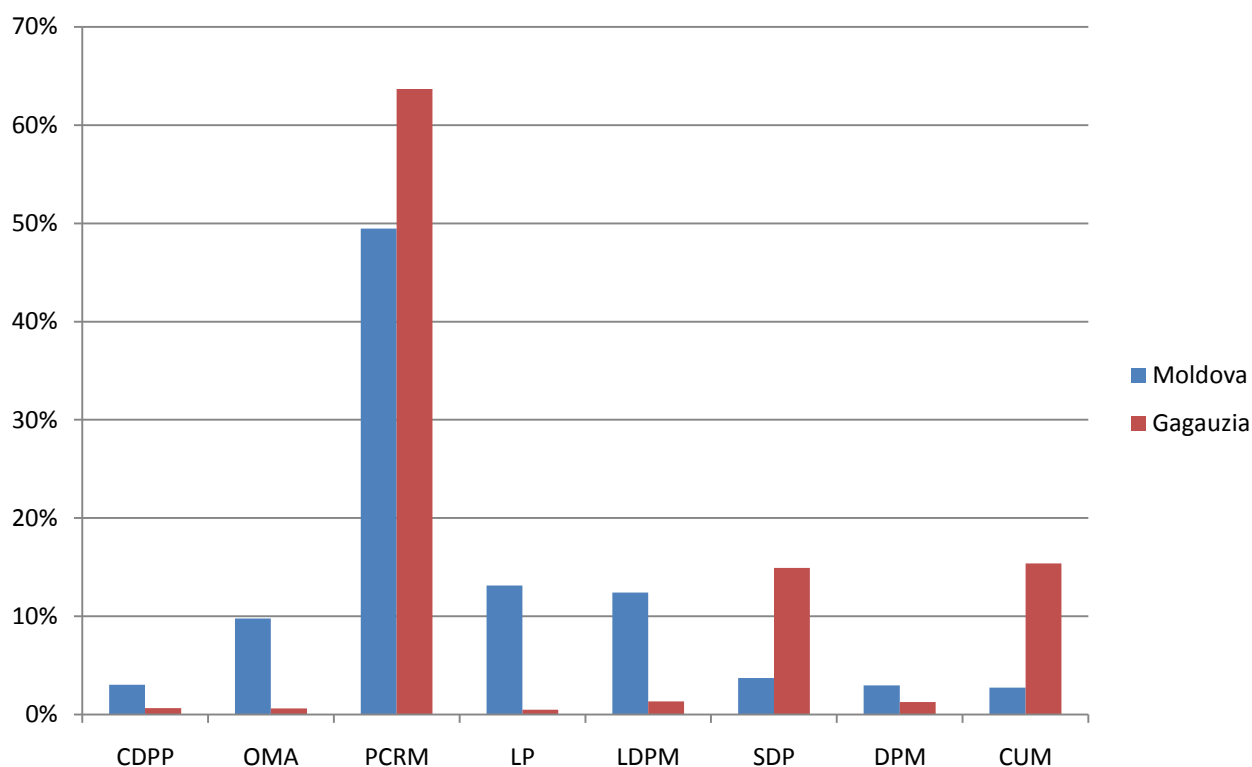
Activity of the newly elected People's Assembly was blocked from the very beginning due to its inability to elect administrative board, especially in connection with the struggle between the centers of power at the local level. Finally, the independent candidate Anna Harlmenko, sister of Nicolai Dudoglo, mayor of the Comrat municipality, capital of the autonomy, was elected Chairperson of the People's Assembly. As a result, relations between the People's Assembly and Executive Committee of Comrat, i.e. between the groupings of Dudoglo and Formuzal, were tense throughout the whole period of the People's Assembly mandate.

7. Electoral Cycle of 2009 – 2014

The new political cycle began in the Republic of Moldova and Gagauzia immediately after the parliamentary elections of 2009. Regular elections of April 5, 2009 were convincingly won by the PCRM winning over 49% of citizens' votes and receiving 60 mandates from 101. The CPRM had regained support of Gagauzia after a number of steps undertaken by President Vladimir Voronin, who declared about distancing from the West

and returning to the Russian political orbit. As a result, CPRM support doubled reaching ~64% of Gagauzians' voters.

Figure 6. Parliamentary elections in 2009



CDPP - Christian-Democratic People's Party

OMA - Our Moldova Alliance

PCRM - Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova

LP - Liberal Party

LDPM - Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova

SDP - Social Democratic Party

DPM - Democratic Party of Moldova

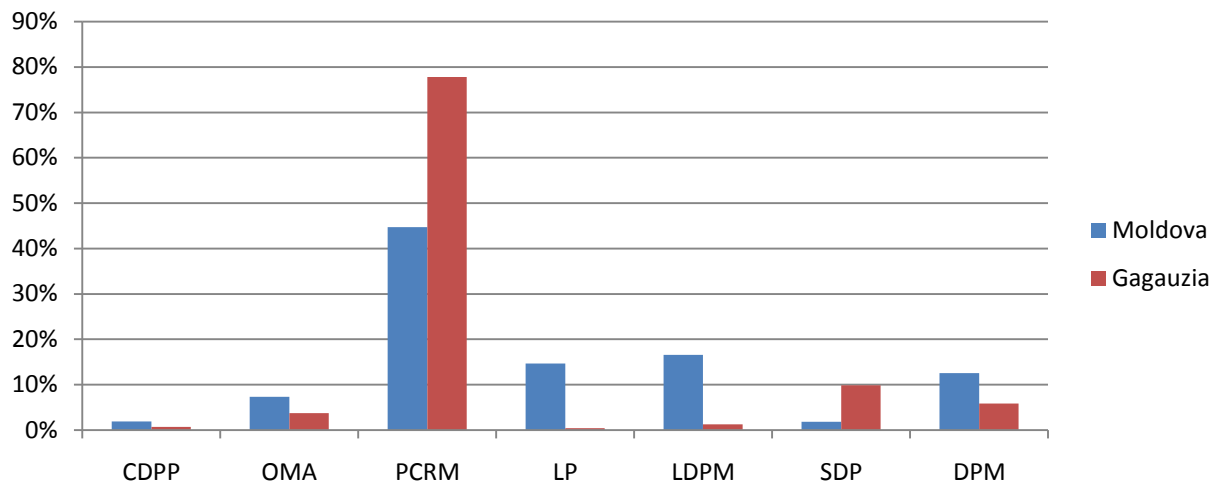
CUM - Centrist Union of Moldova

After elections of April 5, 2009 PCRM needed one additional vote in the Parliament to elect its own President by, at least, 3/5 votes of the elected MPs. In this situation, violent youth protests also named Twitter Revolution took place on April 7, 2009. The youth challenged the PCRM victory insisting along with the oppositional forces on the electoral theft. One of the reasons for the protest was sharp change in the PCRM foreign policy course. In the long run, PCRM failed to elect the Head of the state and the Parliament was dissolved. During the early elections of July 29, 2009 PCRM received only 48 mandates from 101. In this situation, voters of Gagauzia had rendered PCRM even stronger support equal to almost 80% of its votes.

As a result, Alliance for European Integration (AIE) was set up at the central level with the majority of 53 mandates from 101 that, actually, continues in power to date (April 2016). Since 2009, the AIE elite has been trying to strengthen its positions in Gagauzia. From this point of view, Bashkan Mihail Formuzal succeeded in establishing good relations of cooperation with the Government and Prime Minister Vlad Filat

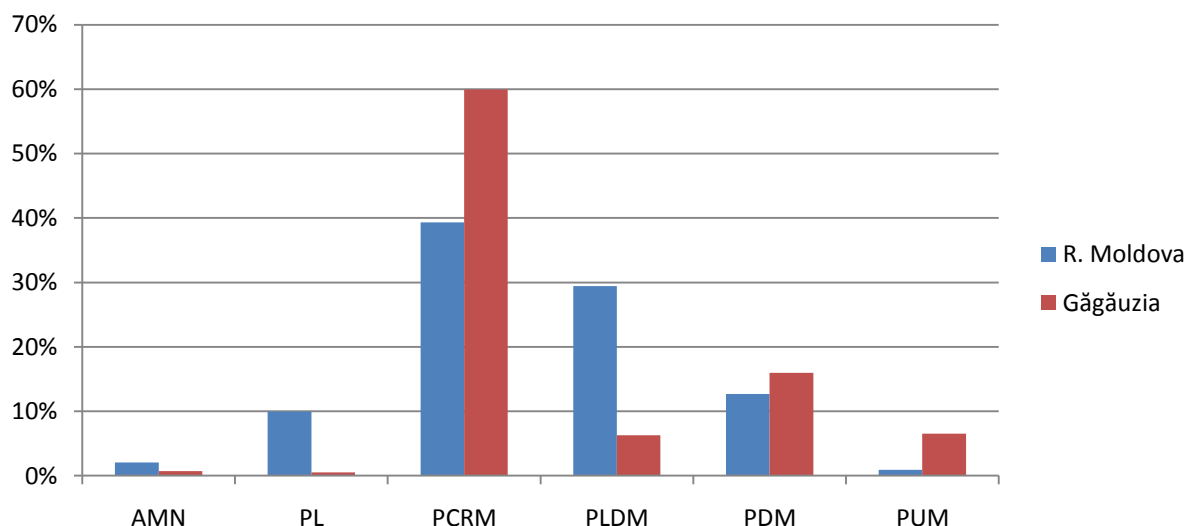
– leader of PLDM. On the other hand, mayor of Comrat Nicolai Dudoglo and his team strengthened their relations with PDM.

Figure 7. Early parliamentary elections in 2009



Sympathies of Gagauzian voters and influence of national parties manifested themselves during the early parliamentary elections of November 28, 2010 caused by the political crisis and inability of the Parliament to elect President in December 2009. Results of elections strengthened AIE positions at the national level. AIE received 59 mandates from 101, which, anyway, was insufficient for electing the President. PCRM received 42 mandates, which gave it a chance to block election of the President. In Gagauzia, PCRM gained about 60% of votes, which demonstrated non-acceptance by the voters of the European Integration course promoted by the AIE. Despite the improved relations between the executive power of Gagauzia and the Government of the Republic of Moldova headed by the PLDM leader, the latter won a modest number of votes, and namely ~6%. On the contrary, PDM, supported by the Comrat mayor Nicolai Dudoglo gained ~16%. This result can be explained by the fact that during this period PDM, AIE component party, tried to counterbalance the course to the European Integration of the Republic of Moldova with the policy aimed at maintaining good economic relations with the Russian Federation. In this sense, PDM succeeded in becoming official partner of the Russia's ruling party of Edinaya Rossia.

Figure 8. Early parliamentary elections in 2010



The next elections to the position of Bashkan of Gagauzia were appointed for December 12, 2010. During the election campaign three candidates were registered as representing the most important political forces in the region: Mihail Formuzal, leader of the United Gagauzia Movement (MGU) who stood for election seeking consecutive mandate for the second term as Bashkan; Nicolai Dudoglo – mayor of the Comrat municipality and leader of the New Gagauzia Movement, and Irina Vlah – Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova proposed by PCRM.

It is worth mentioning that leaders of MGU and MGN – Mihail Formuzal and Nicolai Dudoglo, respectively, were registered as independent candidates. The potential of regional political forces got shaped four years earlier. These three candidates, as a whole, reflected political preferences of the Gagauzian Autonomy citizens. Actually, political forces represented in the People's Assembly self-identified as the most representative and strong political figures to compete for the position of Bashkan.

Table 4. Elections for the position of Bashkan of Gagauzia in 2010

Electoral candidates	Round I	%	Round II	%
Nicolai Dudoglo, independent	19252	31,84	29874	48,62
Mihail Formuzal, independent	22484	37,19	31576	51,38
Irina Vlah, PCRM	18720	30,96		
Voter turnout		56,95		56,83

As acting Bashkan, Mihail Formuzal used Russian factor. Actually, during elections to the position of Bashkan in 2010, there took place a true struggle to convince the electorate that Russia's elite and important authorities of the Russian Federation were supporting respective candidates. On December 6, 2010 Sergey Naryshkin – Head of Russia's Presidential Administration – being on a visit to Chişinău for the purpose of testing Moldovan political spectrum expressed particular concerns with regard to the elections of Gagauzian Bashkan emphasizing that they were of specific importance for the Republic of Moldova as 'Gagauzian Autonomy, being part of Moldova, is an example of delicate approach to national minorities in the multinational state'. According to Naryshkin, 'elections in Gagauzia are supposed to demonstrate that if opinion of the national minority is correctly and delicately taken into consideration, it is possible to

ensure peace, security and growing development of the territory populated by the national minority'. Finally, the Russian factor played in favor of Mihail Formuzal who received the second mandate as Bashkan of Gagauzia.

Relations between regional political groups were revised during the next elections to the People's Assembly that took place on September 9, 2012. As a result of elections, the new structure of the People's Assembly consisted of: Independent candidates – 25; PCRM – 7; PLDM – 1; Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM) – 1. It is necessary to note that none of the PDM candidates got any mandate in the course of those elections; at the same time, 18 out of 25 independent candidates declared that they were PDM supporters and formed democratic majority at the People's Assembly electing Dmitri Constantinov as Chairman. This unexpected transformation of 18 independent deputies into democrats caused suspicions of political corruption on the part of PDM.

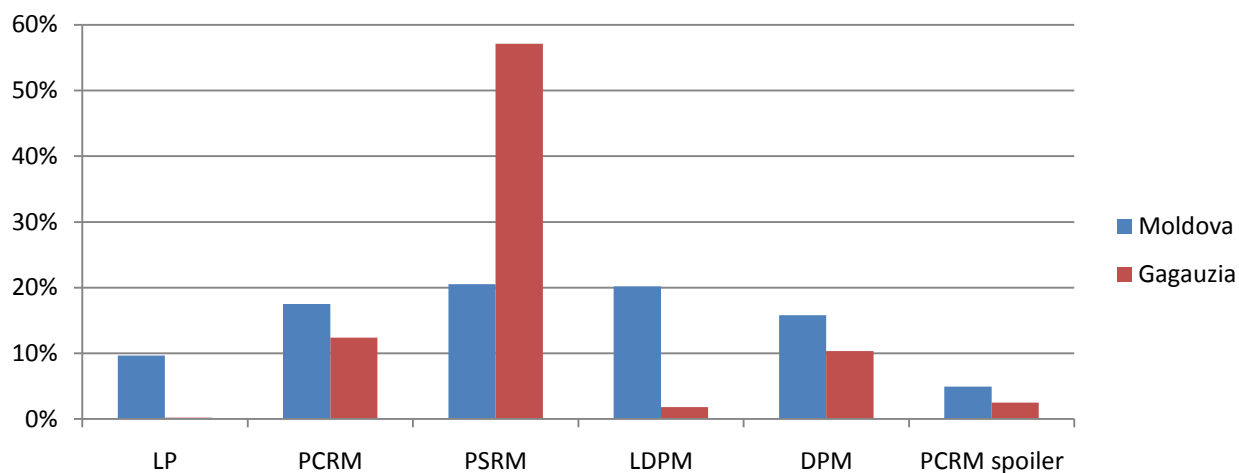
8. Electoral Cycle of 2014-2015

The next parliamentary elections took place on November 30, 2014 in the specific conditions that predetermined the final result. First, parliamentary elections were taking place in the context of regional geopolitics, equally difficult and confusing. Moldovan citizens, including residents of Gagauzia, displayed extreme sensitivity towards regional problems. Objections of the Russian Federation in relation to the signing of Agreement on Association of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine with the European Union, annexation of Crimea and launching of the Novorossiia Project in the southeast of Ukraine served as a motive for Gagauzia for organization on February 2, 2014 of a referendum regarding preferences related to the regional integration of Gagauzia and declaration of independence in case the Republic of Moldova loses its independence. Attitude of citizens and authorities of the Autonomy in this respect was well known in advance, therefore the organization of referendum on the issues obviously exceeding powers and responsibilities of Gagauzian authorities was considered as provocation aimed to renew tension between Chişinău and Comrat.

Secondly, national parties with the pro-Russian views demonstrated behavior that changed preferences of Gagauzian voters in their relation. In its turn, the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM) supported Gagauzian referendum to be held on February 2, suggesting holding of similar referenda also in other regions of the country despite their unlawfulness.

Thirdly, on the eve of Parliamentary elections PSRM publicly supported annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation suggesting that the Republic of Moldova put forward irredentist requirements to Ukraine with regard to returning the Republic of Moldova its historical territories. On the other hand, PCRM showed cautious behavior with regard to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict preferring not to make any *pro* or *contra* statements in relation to these two parties in the regional conflict. As a result, PSRM won more than half of the Russophile electorate in the Republic of Moldova with the Gagauzian one being equal to ~3%.

Figure 9. Parliamentary elections in 2014



Fourthly, the central authorities of the Republic of Moldova launched a hysterical campaign related to the danger for the country coming from Russia to hush up a number of scandals connected with corruption. Voters appeared in the situation when they had to vote for corrupted but declaratively pro-European parties, which would protect Moldova from revanchist influence of Russia in the region. Thus, parties in power again gained the parliamentary majority of 55 mandates from 101.

Immediately after the parliamentary elections of November 2014, citizens of the Republic of Moldova were informed about embezzlement of funds from the country's bank system. Consequences, in the form of impoverishment of people followed immediately due to the dramatic drop in the national currency exchange rate, etc.

Such was the situation, in which the next elections to the position of Gagauzian Bashkan appointed for March 22, 2015 took place. 12 candidates were originally registered in the course of electoral competition; two of them subsequently withdrew their names from the list of nominees. All the candidates were registered as independent; two of them were members of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova supported by the parliamentary political parties. If in case of Nicolai Dudoglo the situation was clear, as being the PDM member he got support of his political party; in case of Irina Vlah the situation was different. She had withdrawn from PCRM and accepted support from PSRM. Irina Vlah's plan was simple. As long as these 10 candidates had declared themselves supporters of the Eurasian integration, she needed support of a recognized party, which, being pro-Russian would also get support of the Kremlin elite. PSRM got such a status in 2014 due to its open support of Crimea annexation by the Russian Federation. This situation predetermined Irina Vlah's success already in the first round. It is worth mentioning that Russian authorities were substantially involved in the election campaign in Gagauzia and openly demonstrated their support of Irina Vlah.

Table 5. Elections for the position of Bashkan of Gagauzia in 2015

Electoral candidates	Round I	%
Valerii Ianioglo, independent	5080	7,98
Ruslan Garbalî, independent	3075	4,83

Nicolai Duduoglo, independent, supported by DPM	12136	19,06
Irina Vlah , independent, supported by PSRM	32543	51,11
Oleg Garizan, independent	3251	5,11
Alexandr Stoianoglo, independent	3174	4,98
Serghei Cernev, independent	122	0,19
Dmitrii Croitor, independent	3956	6,21
Ilia Anastasov, independent	84	0,13
Leonid Dobrov, independent	253	0,40
Voter turnout	64034	58,21

During the election campaign, candidate Irina Vlah showed herself as successor and continuer of the policy promoted in 2006–2015 by Bashkan Mihail Formuzal who had lowered the level of tension in relations between Comrat and Chişinău.

Electoral campaign to the position of Bashkan also served as a natural reason for discussion of problems faced by the Gagauzian Autonomy. As Irina Vlah demonstrated herself as Mihail Formuzal's follower, her former electoral competitor and twice-Bashkan Gheorghii Tabunşic 'scanned' the period of Formuzal's ruling in the period of 2006-2014 mentioning the following facts:

- Distortion of ideas of statehood of Gagauzia as a component part of the Republic of Moldova plunged the region in permanent political chaos;
- The nature of Formuzal's political activity negatively affected economy, social sphere and interpersonal relations. As a result, the share of own means of the budget reduced during 2006-2013 from 81.4% to 47.6%. Thus, the share of transfers to the regional budget from the central one doubled during less than ten years;
- Outflow of active population continued (50% of employable population left the region), while the officialdom in the region became twice as big;
- Region's need in medical specialists is covered only by 70%;
- Gagauzian authorities ignore regional legislation on transparency of their activity, which can be proven by the fact that regional Executive Committee submitted to the People's Assembly only one report throughout eight years of its activity. Reporting between executive and legislative regional branches of power was carried out in the atmosphere of permanent tension. Thus, the last 2 years of his mandate, Bashkan Formuzal tried to settle scores with the People's Assembly through public justice 16 times;
- People's Assembly and Chamber of Accounts revealed facts of considerable embezzlements from the regional emergency reserve fund for the sum of ten million lei, which led to the attempts to initiate resignation of Bashkan, etc.

According to the former Bashkan Gheorghii Tabunşic, the problems mentioned above were used as grounds for complaints in relation to insufficient powers fixed in the official status of Gagauzia. As a result, lack of appropriate management intentionally stimulated transformation of unresolved problems into those of political and even geopolitical nature.

In this context, general promises of Irina Vlah became a starting point for all other promises of specific nature. They include:

- Development of Gagauzia as part of the Republic of Moldova but in close cooperation with Russia, Customs Union (CU) and Eurasian Economic Union (EEU);
- Setting up of Advisory Council under Bashkan's office including in its structure leaders who proclaimed independence of Gagauzia in 1990, previous Bashkans and Chairmen of People's Assembly;
- Protection and development of language, culture and traditions of Gagauzia.

In the light of abovementioned facts, the referendum of February 2, 2014 demonstrated hopes of Gagauzian citizens connected with Eurasian integration vector as vision of Gagauzia's development opposed to the European development vector promoted by the central authorities. As to the Gagauzian economy management, the newly elected Bashkan Irina Vlah intends to rely on the 'Wise Men Council' including leaders of the Republic of Gagauzia in the period of 1990–1995 who proclaimed independence of the region from the Republic of Moldova (MSSR) remaining part of the USSR. This fact means something more than simply allusions to the continuation and succession of Gagauzians' preferences to be with Russia in the Customs Union and Eurasian Economic Union similar to quarter-of-the-century-ago preferences to remain in the USSR.

It is also important to recognize that quarter of the century of national renaissance and creation of Gagauzian Autonomy have failed to bring the region to its primary goal – 'meeting national requirements and preservation of national identity of Gagauzians, their true and multilateral development, prosperity of the national language and culture, assurance of political and economic independence'. During the last elections to the position of Gagauzian Bashkan, the need to print ballots in Gagauzian language made only 1.5%. It is a very important indicator for understanding the role that Gagauzian language plays in political and administrative life of the region 20 years after gaining autonomy.

In this context, accusations put forward by Irina Vlah to the central authorities of Chişinău regarding measures that have limited the use of Gagauzian language in the region sound strange, to say the least. There cannot be found any evidence of the kind of attitude that would demonstrate any steps by Chişinău aiming at this type of reprehensible facts, at least in connection with its desire to receive higher electoral outcomes in the region. Since creation of Gagauzian Autonomy, discussions of the role and place of Gagauzia as part of the Republic of Moldova have become habitual. In this sense, Irina Vlah's electoral program reiterates provisions from the program of former Bashkan Formuzal:

- Granting of special legal status to the Law on Special Legal Status of Gagauzia;
- Fixing in the national legislation of the right of Gagauzia to external economic and political activity including the right to appoint representatives of Gagauzia to foreign diplomatic missions.

Regarding the regional development issue, Irina Vlah promised to transform it into the center of regional development, which would also attract other economic entities of the country through the examples worthy of replication. In this respect, Irina Vlah's electoral promises include:

- Creation of Regional Development Agency for developing programs on social and economic development of Gagauzia;
- Creation, with support of investors from the Russian Federation, of 11 enterprises on the basis of modern technologies, mainly, in the processing industry;
- Opening of Commercial Center in Moscow for promoting wine products from Gagauzia and local trade marks in the Russian market;

It is necessary to mention that the most important future economic achievements of the Gagauzian region are connected with support of investors and authorities of the Russian Federation. The role of the central

Moldovan authorities is not mentioned at all. Moreover, one gets an impression that central authorities represent the main obstacle on the way to Gagauzia's economic prosperity. It is important to mention that during her election campaign, Irina Vlah made a number of visits to Moscow and regions of the Russian Federation together with the PSRM leader aiming to ensure future support from the functionaries and decision-makers in Russia. Thus, fulfillment of respective promises depends not only on the newly elected Bashkan of Gagauzia but also on the authorities of the Russian Federation.

9. Conclusions

1. Permanent conflict between central and Gagauzian authorities bases on the difference in perceptions of the way, in which Gagauzia received its autonomous status. On the one hand, Gagauzian elite considers that it could have insisted on the independence of the region proclaimed in August 1990 like Transnistria; however, it chose the way of compromises as a concession in exchange for contract-based society, be it federation or confederation. On the other hand, central authorities consider that Gagauzian region received its status of autonomy due to deep decentralization and concessions of central authorities in favor of 'separatist movement' for the sake of peace and coexistence of ethnic groups in the Republic of Moldova. This kind of perception can be oftentimes noticed in the attitude of central authorities to the Gagauzian Autonomy. The latest example of this kind of attitude is connected with the process of discussions of Draft Constitution of the Republic of Moldova in 2010, when acting President Mihai Ghimpu publicly stated that Gagauzian Autonomy should be considered as an ordinary district.

2. Power vectors having strong impact on the Gagauzian region should always be analyzed based on the quadrangle principle: Comrat – Moscow – Chişinău – Tiraspol. For the Gagauzian elite, and especially for Gagauzian citizens, orientation towards Moscow and Russia's projects in the region are a major factor. From this point of view, European values and assistance of the European Union provided in different ways are of less importance. The referendum of February 2, 2014 against the European Union in favor of the Eurasian Union, as well as the rhetoric regarding support of annexation of Crimea by Russia confirm this reality. The most convincing evidence in this respect is the electoral behavior of elite and citizens of the Autonomy during parliamentary elections in all electoral cycles when political forces proclaiming themselves promoters of rapprochement with Russia and supporting its integrationist projects win the number of votes exceeding the country's average.

3. Taking into account central authorities in Chişinău as a factor is a necessity dictated by the reality and circumstances for the Gagauzian Autonomy. Gagauzia failed to use industrial and geographical factors (river Dniester being a natural obstacle) and military presence of Russia in 1990s to behave towards Chişinău the way Transnistria did. Therefore, leaders of Gagauzian community see the need for cooperation with Chişinău to meet the major needs of the Autonomy. At the same time, as the electoral behavior and other high profile events show, there persists a trend towards decreasing internal tension in relations between political groups of Comrat by means of its increase in the relations between Comrat and Chişinău. In other words, central authorities are a bigger 'enemy' than 'intra-Gagauzian ones'. In this sense, *transformation* of the conflict between Gagauzian elites in the form of impeachment of Bashkan Formuzal in 2013 into the conflict between regional Comrat authorities with those from Chişinău in relation to the holding of referendum on February 2, 2014 initiated by the People's Assembly can serve as an example.

4. Constant mention by the Gagauzian regional elite of refusal by the central authorities in Chişinău to bring legal framework of the Republic of Moldova into accordance with the Law on Special Legal Status of Gagauzia is the fact proving the tendencies aimed at the creation of contractual federation. The arguments provided by the regional elite come down to the fact that central authorities in Chişinău promised Gagauzian leaders of 1990-1995 that the Republic of Moldova would adapt legislation according to the requirements of Gagauzia but has not kept its promises. Such is the explanation for requirements related to the right of Gagauzia to external economic policy, own customs posts, legal bodies unsubordinated to the center, etc. Part of these requirements is included in the electoral program of acting Bashkan Irina Vlah; however, they are stated in a milder and less conflictual way.

5. Relations between Gagauzia and Transnistria have almost always been those of mutual support, which is rather symbolic than realistic. The goal of Gagauzian elites, as well as those of Transnistria has always been and is to constantly reiterate that the Gagauzian Autonomy model is unsuccessful and, respectively, cannot be used for the eventual Transnistrian conflict settlement. This is why the Gagauzian elites formulate requirements very much exceeding the constitutional norms of unitary state fixing at the constitutional level existence of broad autonomy for certain regions (Gagauzia and Transnistria). The goal oftentimes declared at different forums consists in definitive transformation of the Republic of Moldova into contractual federation consisting of three subjects – Moldova, Gagauzia and Transnistria. Contractual nature of the state will make it possible for the latter two subjects to constantly demand new powers or to disallow delegation of powers to the central level of authority. Certain type of this model was tested through the so-called Kozak Memorandum developed by the Russian Federation in 2003 and rejected by the authorities of the Republic of Moldova. This kind of model was also proposed to Ukraine in 2014 during the conflict in connection with Crimea and Donbass; it was also rejected for the reason that it is aimed at the erosion of central power potential in decision-making, while its deconcentration in favor of regions will foster politics promoted in the region by the Russian Federation.

6. Transformation of the Gagauzian Autonomy model in the successful one corresponds to the interest of the Republic of Moldova. In the society fragmented on multicriteria basis the unitary status formula offering the status of autonomy to certain regions with expressed ethno-cultural nature looks optimal. This conclusion suggests that with the existing constitutional framework of the Republic of Moldova Transnistrian problem can be resolved only based on the Gagauzian model. Possible, revision of the constitutional framework, in case of Transnistrian conflict settlement under respective circumstances, could generate requirements on the part of Gagauzia aimed at receiving conditions similar to those of Transnistria.

7. Central authorities of the Republic of Moldova carried out uncoordinated and inconsistent policy in relation to the Gagauzian Autonomy. After granting Gagauzia the status of Autonomy in 1995, Moldovan authorities preferred to ignore requirements of Gagauzian elites without trying to begin a deep dialogue in order to do away with apprehensions of the Gagauzian community in relation to possible projects of the country's development. In other cases, ignoring of Gagauzia's requirements led to enforcement measures as it happened in the case of referendum of February 2002 aimed against Bashkan Dmitri Croitor. Formation, after elections of 2012, in the People's Assembly of majority of the Democratic Party having received no mandate at all, shows that this majority resulted from collusion with involvement of political corruption. However, it is only at first sight that one can think that political corruption appeared for the Gagauzian elites less unsympathetic than national political parties. The conflict that started in 2014 in connection with organization of referendum on the issue of Russia's integrationist project versus the European integration led to rejection by the deputy majority of its belonging to the Democratic Party, which shows that pro-Russian factor in the Gagauzian Autonomy is stronger than political corruption.

10. Recommendations

1. Requirements of Gagauzian political leaders regarding the right to registration of regional parties are legitimate and should be satisfied. To satisfy these requirements, Gagauzian parties can use their constitutional right in order to achieve this kind of decision. According to the constitutional modifications of 2003, the People's Assembly has the right to legislative initiative, which means the opportunity to suggest the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova modifying the Law on Political Parties. As an argument, they can use the fact that it is not normal that Gagauzians have the right to territorial autonomy being deprived of the right to association in political parties at the regional level. Another argument in favor of allowing regional political parties is that in case of possible, under certain circumstances, settlement of the Transnistrian issue there will arise a need of their legalization.

2. In order to resolve the issues connected with requirements of adequate representation of the Gagauzian nation in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova the way out could be in transition from the absolute

proportional electoral system, one country – one election constituency to the limited proportional electoral system, i.e. creation of multi-member constituency. Gagauzia should become an election constituency with 4-5 mandates proportionally to the number of citizens living in it. In this case, meeting the requirement to allow regional parties is also inevitable in spite of the fact that voters in the region avoid voting for national parties. Sustainable settlement of Transnistrian issue will mean transition of the Republic of Moldova from absolute proportional electoral system to the limited one.

3. The status of Member of the Government granted to the former Bashkan of Gagauzia requires conceptualization in order to maintain constant dialogue aimed at the resolving of problems arising in the region according to the legal norms and with account of the region's specifics. Representative of the State Chancellery affiliated to the Executive Committee of the Autonomy should counterbalance the role of Bashkan in the Government of the Republic of Moldova. Such interaction will be aimed at harmonizing adequate fulfillment of the decisions issued by the Government and Executive Committee of Gagauzia.

4. It is necessary to create a standing committee with participation of specialized structures of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and People's Assembly for the purpose of bringing in conformity the local laws of Gagauzia with national legislation. It is also necessary to maintain constant dialogue between the national legislature and People's Assembly of Gagauzia aiming at balanced resolving of the problems related to the Gagauzian Autonomy.

Study of the Romanian Language as a Means for Integration into the Moldovan Civic Society

Anatol Gremalschi

1. Conceptual Benchmarks

The conceptual benchmarks of this work derive from the developments of the approaches applied in the previous publication⁵ and are based on the latest achievements in the field of human rights defence policies and education science.

Here is a brief presentation of these benchmarks:

In the process of **integration** of the representatives of minority ethnic groups and strengthening of the Moldovan civic society, the educational system shall base on the general human values and on promoting the scientific truth. The scientific truth and the professional ethics of the educational system should not be sacrificed for the sake of the conjuncture political aims, and the ethno-linguistic and cultural diversity should not lead to the erosion of the unitary nature of the educational system in our country.

The particularities of the Republic Moldova in terms of integration of the representatives of ethnic minorities and strengthening of the civic nation, differently from other European countries, consist in the

⁵ Gremalschi, Anatol. *Educational Policies*. In "Integration of ethnic groups and strengthening of the civic nation in the Republic of Moldova". Institute for Public Policy, 2012. Pages 188-215.

fact that certain ethno-linguistic groups, which are now minority groups, enjoyed a privileged statute in the former Soviet Union. Consequently, overcoming the prejudices linked to the Soviet past which, 25 years after proclaiming the independence of the Republic of Moldova, still have an influence on the collective mentality, could play a decisive role in the development of a civic nation, strengthened on the basis on the national and general human values.

The integration of the representatives of minority ethnic groups and strengthening of the Moldovan civic nation shall be based on the respect, guarantee and enforcement of the individual rights of each citizen, rather than on invoking some alleged „collective” rights, what might lead to a ethno-linguistic segregation and territorial separatism.

The State has the obligation to set the required conditions for each citizen to preserve and express his/her ethno-linguistic identity, and each citizen has the responsibility to integrate into the common educational and cultural area, becoming thus an active member of the Moldovan civic nation. The persons belonging to the national minorities have the responsibility to integrate into the society where they live, as a result of learning appropriately the official language of the State.

The equality and non-discrimination in education may be ensured and guaranteed only in a deeply democratic State. In such a State, the educational policies are developed, approved and promoted in line with both the ethno-linguistic diversity of the society, and with the specific interests of each social group. In the process of developing and promoting the educational policies, the representatives of the majority ethnic group shall communicate and collaborate with the representatives of ethnic minorities and involve them in decision-making and implementation.

The responsibility for the success of the integration of minority ethnic groups into the Moldovan civic society belongs to the State, as well as to the representatives of the concerned groups. Both the central, and the local public authorities shall ensure a harmonious cooperation for the sake of the development of the Moldovan civic society, using to such an end the toolkit provided by the Moldovan educational system.

The facilities and the opportunities provided by an open and non-discriminatory educational system should not be used for the sake of conjuncture political goals. The representatives of the minority groups do not enjoy a veto right in making the decisions concerning the totality of the educational system that are made in accordance with the legislation of a democratic society.

Promoting positive discrimination policies in education towards certain social groups may only be justified when the disadvantaging factors do not depend on the will of those disadvantaged, such factors being historical, geographical, political, environmental, etc. Otherwise, such educational policies might lead to the negative discrimination of other social groups.

Mastery of the Romanian language, which has the statute of state language, is an absolutely necessary prerequisite in order to ensure the integration of the alolingual speakers in the Moldovan socio-cultural area. It is namely the Romanian language, the mother tongue of the largest share of the population, not the official language of the former Soviet State that shall become the main means for interethnic communication. The State has the obligation to set the required conditions for the alolingual speakers to learn the Romanian language, but mastering it is the responsibility of each citizen that claims to be loyal to this State.

The maternal language represents both a means for ethnical self-identification, and for communication. Given that the geographical areas for communication in a minority language are much more limited than

the ones of the official state language, the local public authorities shall take over the basic competence for promoting and developing the minority languages. Respectively, the educational policies shall provide to local communities a larger autonomy in terms of curriculum.

2. European Educational Policies for Study of the Official and Minority Languages

The essence of the European educational policies for learning the official and minority languages derives from a range of documents adopted by the European and national authorities.

The Compulsoriness of Study and Mastery of the Official State Language

Despite the considerable language diversity between the European countries, there is only one state language in most of them. There are also countries having two or even three state languages, but usually each of them is used as an administrative language in a certain geographic area or socio-cultural field. In the same time, in a number of European countries, there are geographic areas/Autonomous Territorial Units where a regional or a minority language may have an official statute.

In general, for most Europeans, their mother tongue is also one of the official languages of the country/Autonomous Territorial Unit where they reside⁶. Consequently, in such situations, there are no problems related to education in a language which is different from the official one. In the same time, citizens whose mother tongue is different from the official language, enjoy the required conditions for their socio-cultural integration and for the gradual transition towards the education in two or more languages, learning of the official state language being compulsory.

In most European countries, the curriculum of compulsory education is focussed on the development of key-competences defined in accordance with the EU recommendations⁷. Two out of the eight key-competences are related to mastery of languages:

Communication in the mother tongue, is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts.

Communication in foreign languages, that, in addition to the main dimensions of the skills for communication in the mother tongue, also involves mediation and intercultural understanding skills. The level of proficiency depends on a number of factors and on the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

In the same time, from the perspective of the socio-cultural integration, another European key-competence plays an important role:

Cultural awareness and expression, that involves the appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media (including music, performing arts, literature and the visual arts).

In the European Union countries, the evaluation of the language competence of pupils has a variety of forms and applies different assessment tools and methods. The models may be internal or external, formative or summative, and the results may be used to various ends. The national tests for pupils is the most widely spread assessment practice in the European educational systems. The competence to

⁶ The European Commission. Europeans and their languages. Survey co-ordinated by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, 2012.

⁷ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18th of December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC). The Official Journal of the European Union. L 394/10. 30.12.2006.

communicate in the mother tongue is assessed in 81% of the European Union countries (levels 1 and 2 ISCED), and the competence to communicate in a foreign language—in 46% of the EU member-States.

To be noted that in 49% of the European Union countries, the assessment results have an influence on making decisions about the learners' school pathway⁸. In other words, the "insufficient" marks given to pupils in the assessments of language competences may encumber their access to the following educational levels, both to general or vocational-technical, and the higher education levels.

The Common European Reference Framework for Languages

The document with the full title "The Common European Reference Framework for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment " was developed during the period 1986-1996 within a large project called "Language Learning for European Citizenship". The final draft of this document⁹ was published by the Council of Europe in 2001. Although it is focussed on the improvement of the process of learning modern languages, the approaches laying at the basis of the *Common European Reference Framework for Languages* is a valuable resource in developing and implementing the language policies for the integration of alolingual minorities into the Moldovan society.

The *Framework* makes an explicit distinction between the *multilingualism* and *plurilingualism*, multilingualism being defined as the simple coexistence of different languages in a given society or as the diversification of the languages on offer in a particular school, while plurilingualism is seen as the enlargement of each person's language experience. Thus, in terms of plurilingualism, the language experience of an individual person expands from the language used within the family towards the communication language of a particular social group, then towards other social groups, regardless of the fact if this is achieved by the means of the school learning system or through direct experience. In accordance with the Reference Framework, a plurilingual person "... does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated compartments, but rather builds us a communicative competence to which all knowledge and language experience contributes".

In general, *the Common European Reference Framework for Languages*:

- provides a common basis for the development of modern languages syllabuses, reference papers, examination contents and criteria, textbooks, etc. across Europe;
- gives an exhaustive description of what should learn the language learners who learn a language in order to be able to use it for communication purposes;
- lists the knowledge and skills that a learner shall learn and develop in order to have an efficient language behaviour;
- defines the levels of competence that serve to measure the learner's progress at any stage of the learning process and at any life point.

Being focussed on promoting the democratic citizenship, the Common European Reference Framework urges all those involved in the organisation of the language learning process to build up their actions in strict compliance with the learner's needs, motivation, particularities and resources. According to this survey's author, the recommendations of the document under consideration are fully applicable not only in

⁸ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012. Developing Key-Competences at School in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities for Policy. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: the Publications Office of the European Union, 2012. –68 p. ISBN 978-92-9201-446-9.

⁹ The Common European Reference Framework for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment / Steering Committee for Education "Language Learning for European Citizenship"; translation from French by Gheorghe Moldovanu. – Ch.: S. n., 2003 (F.E.-P. "Tipografia Centrală"). – 204 p. ISBN 9975-78-259-0.

the organisation of the process of learning modern languages, but also of minority and regional languages. Therefore, the following questions of the *Reference Framework*, that derive from the realities of the European integration processes, are also fully actual from the perspective of the processes of integration of alolingual minorities into the social-cultural area of the Republic of Moldova:

To what end and in what specific situations will the learner need to use the language?

What does he/she need to learn in order to be able to use the language for such purposes?

What makes him/her want to learn the language?

Who is he/she (age, sex, social environment and educational background)?

What knowledge, skills and experience do his/her teachers have?

To what extent does the learner have access to textbooks, works of reference (dictionaries, grammars, etc.), audio-visual and computer aids(hardware and software)?

How much time can, is willing or able a learner to spend in order to learn a language?

Certainly, the answers to the above-mentioned questions, that need to be based on evidence, not only on conjuncture political approaches, scholastic schemes or affective interpretations, might be used as starting points in developing and implementing educational policies meant both to preserve the cultural-linguistic diversity of the minorities, and to integrate them organically into the Moldovan society. The functional-shareholder component of the respective educational policies shall be based on the measures recommended by the *Reference Framework* for learning of modern European languages:

accessibility of the means for language learning for all categories of population;

focussing the language learning policies on the development of the skills to use them at a sufficient extent for efficient communication;

building the language teaching and learning policies upon the learner's needs, motivation, particularities and resources;

setting real and realistic objectives;

developing appropriate teaching methods and aids;

implementing appropriate methods and tools for the assessment of learning programmes, depending on the country's social-linguistic situation.

From the perspective of organising the language learning processes, the definition of the levels of language proficiency by the *Reference Framework* represents a special point of interest, the levels being based on such descriptors, as "what you are able to do". The evaluation scale proposed by the *Reference Framework* is conceived as in variant towards the national languages and educational systems, what ensures a unitary approach to language competence. The European States are encourages to align their evaluation systems to the European ones or, at least, to provide a conversion grill. To note that the recent analyses¹⁰ point out that considerable results have been achieved in this direction, the school still remaining the central element of plurilinguistic and intercultural education.

¹⁰ The European Commission. *Study on comparability of language testing in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015. – 146 p. ISBN 978-92-79-50995-7.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

*The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*¹¹ was adopted in 1992 and entered into force in 1996. According to this document, the following principles shall lay at the basis of policies, laws and practices promoted by the signatory States:

- the recognition of regional or minority languages as an expression of cultural wealth;
- the respect of the geographic area of each regional or minority language;
- the need for resolute action to promote regional or minority languages in order to safeguard them;
- the facilitation and/or the encouragement of the use of regional or minority languages, in speech and writing, in public and private life;
- the maintenance and development of links between groups using a regional or minority language and other groups in the State;
- the provision of appropriate forms and means for teaching and study of regional or minority languages;
- the provision of facilities enabling non-speakers of a regional or minority language living in the area where it is used to learn it;
- the promotion of study and research on regional or minority languages;
- the promotion of appropriate types of transnational exchanges among speakers of regional or minority languages from different States.

To point out that the principles of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages are also applicable to non-territorial languages, with the remark that “the nature and scope of the measures to be taken to give effect to this Charter shall be determined in a flexible manner, bearing in mind the needs and wishes, and respecting the traditions and characteristics, of the groups which use the languages concerned”.

As a whole, the Charter provides that the Parties shall undertake to eliminate any unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference relating to the use of a regional or minority language and intended to discourage or endanger the maintenance or development of the respective language. The document also specifies that the adoption of special measures in favour of promoting equality between the users of minority languages and the rest of the population shall not be considered as an act of discrimination against the users of more widely-used languages.

In accordance with the Charter, the Parties shall undertake to promote the mutual understanding between all the linguistic groups of the country. Two fields are particularly concerned: education and mass-media. As far as education is concerned, the Charter’s authors recommend the inclusion of “the respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to regional or minority languages among the objectives of education and training”.

In defining their policies with regard to regional or minority languages, the Parties shall take into consideration the needs and wishes expressed by the groups which use such languages. The Charter encourages the establishment of bodies in charge of advising the authorities on all matters pertaining to regional or minority languages.

¹¹ The Council of Europe. Language Policy Unit, DG II. Languages for democracy and social cohesion. Diversity, equity and quality. Sixty years of European co-operation, 2014.

With regard to education, the Parties undertake, within the territory where the respective regional or minority languages are used, according to the situation of each of these languages and without prejudice to the teaching of the official language of the State:

- to make available preschool, general, vocational-technical and university education in regional or minority languages at least for those children/pupils/students who request it in a number considered as sufficient;
- to provide facilities for the study of such languages as an university education subject;
- to arrange for the provision of adult and continuing education courses which are taught mainly or wholly in the regional or minority languages;
- to make arrangements in order to ensure the teaching of the history and of the culture which is reflected by the regional or minority language;
- to provide the basic and continuing training of the teachers required to implement the intended measures.

The Charter also stipulates that Parties undertake, if the number of users of a regional or minority language justifies it, to allow, encourage or provide teaching in a regional or minority language.

To be noted that the Republic of Moldova signed in 2002 the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, but has not ratified it yet. This remains one of the major commitments in the dialogue with the Council of Europe in terms of ensuring the right of national minorities to protection of their language.

3. National Policies for Study of the Romanian Language and of the Maternal Languages by Representatives of the Alolingual Minorities

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova

The fundamental law of the Republic of Moldova provides that the human rights and freedoms shall be interpreted and enforced in compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and with other covenants and treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is party. According to the Constitution, the State shall recognise and guarantee the right of all citizens to preservation, development and expression of their ethnical, cultural, linguistic and religious identity.

Article 13 of the Constitution provides that the state language of the Republic of Moldova is the Moldovan language based on the Latin alphabet. In the same time, the State shall acknowledge and protect the right to the preservation, development and use of the Russian language and other languages spoken within the territory of the country. The State shall also encourage and promote the study of languages of international circulation. The use of languages within the territory of the Republic of Moldova shall be established by an organic law.

To be noted that the name of “Moldovan language” stipulated in Article 13 of the Constitution was not accepted by the scientific community and by the absolute majority of the intellectuals of the country, particularly by the Romanian-speaking ones. Despite the fact that, by virtue of the Judgement of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova related to this issue¹², it univocally results that the name of

¹² Judgement of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova no. 36 of 05.12.2013 on the interpretation of Article 13 paragraph (1) of the Constitution in correlation with the Preamble to the Constitution and of the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Moldova.

the state language is the “Romanian language”, this name has provoked and it still provokes contradictory debates and diverse political speculations.

According to Article 35 of the Constitution, the State shall ensure, under the legal conditions, the right of the person to choose the language of education and training. The study of the state language shall be provided in educational institutions at all levels.

The Law on Functioning of the Languages Spoken on the Territory of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic

By virtue of this law adopted during the times of the Soviet Union¹³, the state language of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) is the Moldovan language, functioning based on the Latin alphabet. As a state language, the Moldovan is being used in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and accomplishes accordingly the function of a language of interethnic communication on the territory of the country.

In accordance with this law:

- the Moldovan SSR guarantees to all inhabitants of the country the free study of the state language at the level required for performing one’s professional duties;

- In communities where the Gagauzian nationals make up the largest share of the population, the official language used in various spheres of life shall be the state language, the Gagauzian language or the Russian language;

- The Russian language, as a language for communication between the nations of the Soviet Union, shall be used as a language for communication between the nations on the territory of the country, alongside with the Moldovan language, as a means to ensure a real national-Russian and Russian-national bilingualism;

- The MSSR shall guarantee the usage of the Ukrainian, Russian, Bulgarian, Hebrew, Yiddish, Romani languages or the languages of other ethnic groups living on the territory of the country to satisfy their national-cultural needs;

- The MSSR shall guarantee the right to preschool, secondary general, post-secondary, technical-vocational and university education in Moldovan and Russian languages and set the required conditions for the enforcement of the right of citizens of other nationalities living in the country to education and instruction in their maternal language (Gagauzian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Hebrew, Yiddish, etc.);

- The Moldovan language shall be an academic discipline in educational institutions of all levels - in classes and groups where Russian or another language is the language of instruction (for pupils and students of Gagauzian or Bulgarian nationality - at a sufficient for communication level) and Russian language – in classes and groups with Moldovan or another language of instruction;

- upon graduation from an educational institution, the pupils and students shall pass a graduation examination in Moldovan or, respectively, Russian language, what sets the prerequisites for countrywide enlargement of the spheres of communication.

The Law does not provide expressly for the compulsory mastery of the State language by all citizens of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic.

To be noted that in parallel with strengthening of the independence of the Republic of Moldova, the socio-linguistic situation in the country has considerably changed and, certainly, a number of provisions of the

¹³ Law no. 3465 of 01.09.1989 on Functioning of the Languages Spoken on the Territory of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic.

Law on Functioning of the Languages Spoken on the Territory of the MSSR are not in line with the present reality anymore. But, in the lack of will to discuss openly and honestly about such issues which, in the opinion of many political forces, might cause tension in interethnic relations, the terminology used in the Law is now outdated.

Despite the socio-linguistic changes occurred in the country since its adoption in 1989 up to now, the Law on Functioning of the Languages Spoken on the Territory of the MSSR was not subject to any modification. For comparison, it is worth reminding that the Law on Education which was in force during the period 1995-2014 has suffered 47 modifications, that is, three modifications per year, on the average.

The Law on the Rights of the Persons Belonging to National Minorities and the Legal Status of their Organizations

In the field of education, this Law¹⁴ reiterates at large the provisions of the Law on Functioning of the Languages Spoken on the Territory of MSSR and of the Law on Education:

- the State shall guarantee the enforcement of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities to preschool, primary, secondary (general and vocational), university and post-graduation education in Moldovan and Russian languages, set the prerequisites for the exercise of their right to education and instruction in their maternal language (Ukrainian, Gagauzian, Bulgarian, Hebrew, Yiddish, etc.);
- in order to ensure the educational process in educational institutions where the instruction is fully or partly done in the languages of national minorities, the State shall contribute to the development of the curricula and of the teaching-methodological literature, to training of the teaching staff, collaborating in this field with other countries;
- the persons belonging to national minorities and their organisations have the right, according to the law, to establish preschool and private educational institutions of all levels. Study of the Moldovan language and literature, as well as of the history of Moldova shall be compulsory in all educational institutions.

Although it was adopted nearly 10 years after the proclamation of the independence, the Law does not provide explicitly for the compulsory mastery of the State's official language by the persons belonging to national minorities.

The Code of Education

This legislative document that came into force in December 2014 introduces new approaches to training and development of language competences of both Romanian speakers, and of alolingual ones¹⁵. According to the Code of Education:

- one of the basic missions of education consists in promoting the intercultural dialogue, the spirit of tolerance, non-discrimination and social inclusion;
- one of the principles of education is the recognition and guarantee of the rights of the persons belonging to national minorities, including of their right to preservation, development and expression of their ethnical, cultural, linguistic and religious identity;
- the educational space in the Republic of Moldova is unitary and integral;

¹⁴ Law no. 382 of 19.07.2001 on the Rights of the Persons Belonging to National Minorities and the Legal Status of their Organizations.

¹⁵ The Code of Education of the Republic of Moldova no. 152 of 17.07.2014.

the State shall guarantee the training and development of the competence to efficiently communicate in Romanian language, in languages of national minorities, if necessary, and in at least two languages of international circulation;

study of the Romanian language shall be compulsory in all educational institutions of all levels and shall be regulated by state educational standards;

the State shall ensure the required conditions for study of the Romanian language in all educational institutions, including by increasing the number of disciplines studied in Romanian language in general educational institutions with another language of instruction;

in areas inhabited traditionally or by a substantial number of persons belonging to the national minorities, if there is a sufficient demand, the State shall ensure, within the possibilities of the educational system, the appropriate conditions for persons belonging to these minorities to learn their minority language, or to benefit from education in this language, at the level of compulsory education;

in educational institutions where the language of instruction is other than Romanian, a compulsory examination in Romanian language shall be passed upon completion of gymnasium and lyceum education.

Differently from the Law on Functioning of the Languages Spoken on the Territory of the MSSR and the former Law on Education¹⁶, according to which the State ensured the right to choose the language of education and instruction at all levels and stages of education, in accordance with the new Code of Education such a right will be enforced by the State at the level of compulsory education and within the possibilities of the educational system.

The fact that instruction after the level of compulsory education will be mostly provided in Romanian language puts much more advanced requirements towards the competence of alolingual graduates to communicate in the State's official language. But although, according to the former Law on Education, the Ministry of Education and local public administration authorities bore the responsibility for ensuring the process of learning the state language in all educational institutions (Article 8, paragraph (3)), the new Code of Education does not explicitly specify such a responsibility.

4. Curriculum Support for Study of the Romanian and of the Maternal Language by Alolingual Speakers

The Framework-Plan for General Education

Traditionally, the Ministry of Education approves each year a framework-plan based on which every educational institution develops its own plans. From the language perspective, the educational institutions are given by the ministry the following options¹⁷:

- 1) framework-plans for the schools where Romanian is the language of instruction (national schools);
- 2) framework-plans for the schools where Russian is the language of instruction;
- 3) framework-plans for schools where instruction is provided in mother tongue for pupils of Ukrainian, Gagauzian and Bulgarian nationality;
- 4) framework-plans for schools where instruction is provided in Romanian language for pupils of Ukrainian, Gagauzian and Bulgarian nationality;

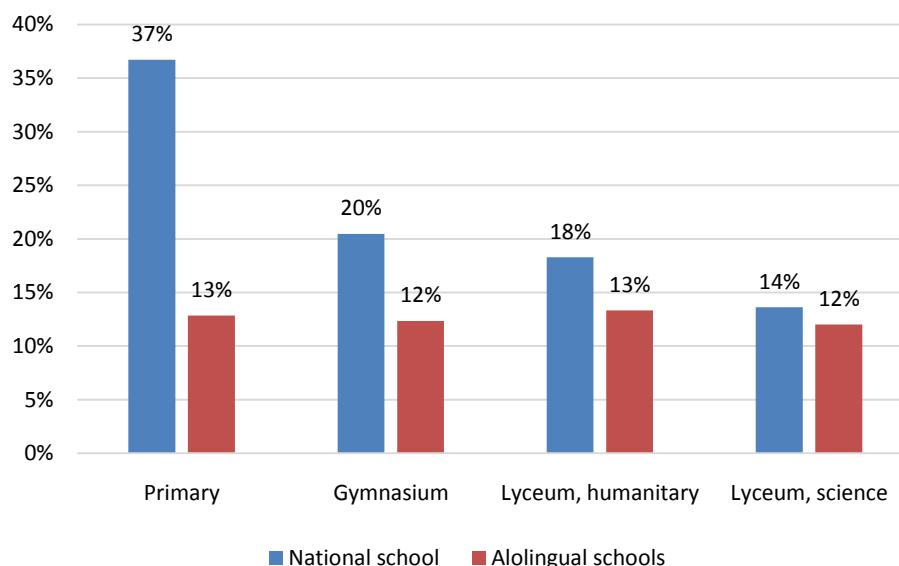
¹⁶ The Law on Education no. 547 of 21.07.1995.

¹⁷ National curriculum. The Framework-Plan for primary, gymnasium and lyceum education, 2016-2017 academic year. Approved by Ordinance of the Ministry of Education no. 242 of 25.03.2016.

- 5) framework-plans for schools where instruction is provided in Russian for pupils of Ukrainian, Gagauzian and Bulgarian nationality.

The comparative analysis of the framework-plans points out that there is a considerable difference in the number of hours allocated to Romanian language in national and in alolingual schools.

Figure 3. The share of hours allocated to Romanian language and literature in national schools and in alolingual schools where instruction is provided in Russian for pupils of Ukrainian, Bulgarian and Gagauzian nationality



Source: Calculation made by the author based on the data of the Framework-plan for 2016-2017 academic year

Thus, in national schools, 37% of the total amount of the time of instruction in primary education is allocated to Romanian language and literature, while in schools where instruction is provided in Russian for pupils of Ukrainian, Bulgarian and Gagauzian nationalities- only 13% of the total length of instruction. In gymnasium education, the respective indicator has the value of 20% in national schools and of only 12% - in alolingual schools. Only at the level of lyceum education the respective difference is less pronounced– 14% in national schools and 12% in alolingual schools.

Such a difference obviously leads to considerable gaps in the level of development of the competence to communicate in the official language of the State, the future graduates of alolingual schools being disadvantaged from the very beginning.

The Curriculum for Romanian Language and Literature for National and for Alolingual Schools

At present, the educational process in schools of the Republic of Moldova is based on the National Curriculum approved in 2010. The respective curriculum is focussed on the development of competences and includes the curricula in Romanian language and literature (national schools) and in Romanian language and literature for alolingual speakers (schools where instruction is provided in Russian). In general, the above-mentioned curricula differ considerably, the curriculum for Romanian language and literature for alolingual speakers being more focussed on developing the communication competences.

Thus, the curriculum for bilingual pupils aims at developing the following specific competences throughout the stages of primary and gymnasium education¹⁸:

- reception and reproduction of different types of information, texts;
- performing communicative acts in different communication situations, applying the rules for usage of literary Romanian language;
- practising communication in different relationship circumstances (personal, family, social group, etc.);
- producing one's own communication acts, with or without reference points, by the means of description, presentation and assessment of facts, processes from the society and nature;
- operating and transforming/changing the linguistic structures in accordance with the communication situation. Perceiving the message from the position of intercultural communication, as a result of spotting the similitudes and differences between the Romanian literature and the literature of the cohabiting ethnic groups;
- correct, fluent, conscious reading of literary and non-literary texts about the culture and civilisation of the Romanian linguistic area;
- reading for pleasure, for exploring the literary and cultural treasure, for selecting information on various topics;
- analysis/interpretation of literary/non-literary texts from the perspective of one's own vision, pointing out the artistic means of literary works;
- learning the ethic rules, the traditions, the culture, the history and the literature of the target-language speakers.

In terms of developing the linguistic competences, a thorough analysis of the National Curriculum¹⁹ conducted in 2014 highlighted the following:

- a high degree of curriculum theorisation;
- the curricula contents are congested and do not provide any relevance for the personal, social and professional development and fulfilment of the beneficiaries of the educational process;
- insufficient development of the skills to communicate in the official state language and in foreign languages;
- the formative and summative evaluation of learning excessively focuses on knowledge and on the reproduction of contents, to the detriment of the evaluation of competences.

In the process of drafting the National Programme for the improvement of the quality of learning of the Romanian language in general education institutions where instruction is provided in languages of national minorities, it came out that the curriculum in Romanian language and literature for bilingual speakers has certain gaps that are specific to this school subject²⁰:

- the contents partly contribute to educating the pupils as active citizens of the society, of Europe, as independent, conscious, productive, creative, etc. individuals in their actions, to making them

¹⁸ The Romanian Language and Literature. The Curriculum for gymnasium education (V – IX grades). Pre-university educational institutions where instruction is provided in Russian. Approved by Ordinance of the Ministry of Education no. 245 of 27th of April 2010.

¹⁹ The Education Development Strategy for 2014-2020 „Education - 2020”. Approved by Decree of the Government of the Republic of Moldova no. 944 of 14.11.2014.

²⁰ The National Programme for the improvement of the quality of learning of the Romanian language in general education institutions where the instruction is provided in languages of national minorities (2016-2020). Approved by Decree of the Government of the Republic of Moldova no. 904 of 31.12.2015.

responsible and cooperative in their relations with other persons, accepting the difference and, first of all, developing the competence to communicate in Romanian through values and for values;

there is a certain deficit in terms of contents related to the European values: ensuring peace, democracy, multilingualism, freedom of expression, freedom of movement, the pluralism of opinions, defence of human rights, civic spirit, cooperation, transparency, equity, tolerance, etc.

Certainly, the curriculum designers shall take into consideration the spotlighted gaps and complement the educational contents with content units intended to fill them.

Provision with Teaching Aids

Since the year 1999, the provision of pupils with textbooks, regardless of the language of instruction, is done by the Special Fund for manuals. In primary education, the costs of textbooks are fully covered by the State, and in gymnasium and lyceum education – by parents who pay a yearly rent established by an Ordinance of the Ministry of Education. In accordance with the respective Ordinance²¹, the rent of textbooks for Romanian language and literature for allolingual pupils is estimated at nearly 8,00 Moldovan lei, depending on the grade.

As a whole, according to the data provided by the Special Fund for manuals, each pupil in the Republic of Moldova is provided with all the textbooks, as required by the regulatory documents in force, being even available a reserve of printed manuals of nearly 10%. As far as children from disadvantaged families are concerned, their parents do not pay for the rent of textbooks, as the respective expenditures are covered by the State. A share of 10% of the total number of pupils may benefit from such aids²².

To be noted that the rent of the textbooks for Ukrainian, Bulgarian and Gagauzian languages is estimated at 10,00 - 13,00 lei. This amount does not cover the real costs of developing and editing the respective textbooks, such costs being by nearly 10 times higher than the ones of the textbooks for Romanian and Russian languages, because of their very small circulation. Nevertheless, in order to encourage the allolingual pupils to learn their maternal language, the additional expenditures required for developing and editing the textbooks for Ukrainian, Bulgarian and Gagauzian languages are covered by the State²³.

No doubts, the provision of each pupil with textbooks is an incontestable achievement of the Moldovan educational system, but, on the other hand, the educational technologies are advancing fast. The analysis of the data deriving from numerous sociological surveys conducted among the pupils of lyceum grades^{24, 25}, parents and teachers revealed an acute shortage of modern teaching means in Moldovan schools – electronic lessons, placards, posters, audio and video aids. Such means are particularly important for schools of the communities compactly populated by national minorities, communities where the Romanian is spoken exclusively during the lessons.

²¹ Ordinance of the Ministry of Education no. 473 of 24.05.2016 on the approval of the payments for the rent of textbooks for gymnasium and lyceum education in 2016-2017 academic year.

²² Decree of the Government of the Republic of Moldova no. 876 of 22.12.2015 on the provision of pupils with manuals.

²³ Idem.

²⁴ Gremalschi, Anatol; Vremiş, Maria; Vladicescu, Natalia. *Etica şi integritatea academică în învăţământul general. Studiu sociologic (The academic ethics and integrity in general education. Sociological survey)*. Institute for Public Policy, 2016.

²⁵ Petruţi, Doru; Zătic, Viorica. *Percepţii privind sistemul educaţional. Studiu sociologic (Perceptions of the educational system. Sociological survey)*. IMAS, 2016.

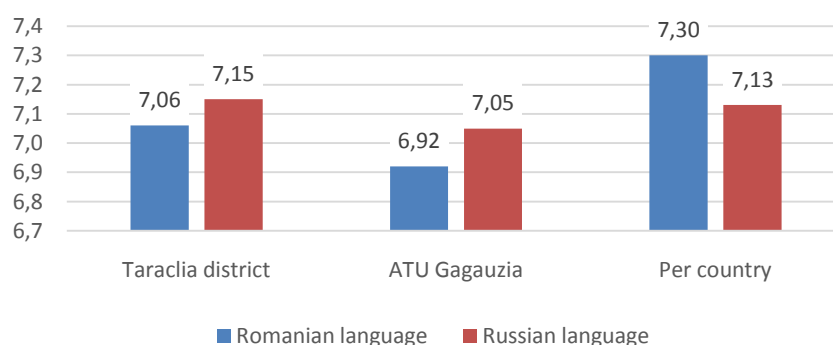
Consequently, the Ministry of Education shall diversify its activities in terms of provision of educational institutions with teaching aids and shift the learning paradigm of the past century, based on the use of printed textbooks, towards a modern paradigm which fully capitalises on the resources provided by information and communication technologies.

5. Learning Results of the Alolingual Pupils in terms of Mastery of the Romanian Language

Relying on the assumption that the evaluations of learning results are objective, correct and relevant, we may conclude that alolingual pupils display satisfactory results in terms of mastery of the maternal language, of the language of instruction and of the state language.

In 2015, in the examination for gymnasium graduation in the district of Taraclia, the average score for the subject Russian language as the language of instruction was 7,15, and for Romanian language– 7,06. In the same year, in the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit, the average score for Russian language (language of instruction) was 7,05, and for Romanian language– 6,92. To point out that while the scores in Russian language in the district of Taraclia and in the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit are slightly lower than the average score in the country (7,13), the score in Romanian language shows a significant difference (7,30). Certainly, the more modest performance in Romanian language displayed by pupils of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit, compared to the pupils of the rest of the country, may be explained both by the deficiencies of the process of teaching-learning-evaluation of the state language, and by the lack of opportunities to practise this language in everyday activities.

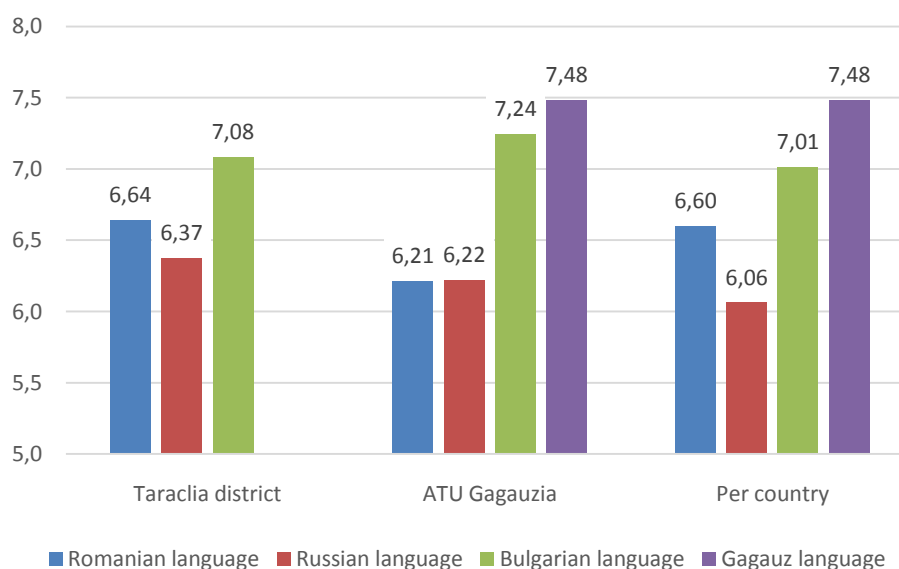
Figure 4. The average score in gymnasium graduation examinations, 2015 session



Source: National Examinations and Evaluations 2015. Agency for Quality Assurance, 2015

The performance of lyceum graduates in baccalaureate examination is much more modest both in Romanian and in Russian languages. At the same time, the scores in maternal languages, respectively, Bulgarian and Gagauzian, are much higher.

Figure 5. The average score in the tests for the baccalaureate examination of the candidates from the theoretical lyceums, 2015 session



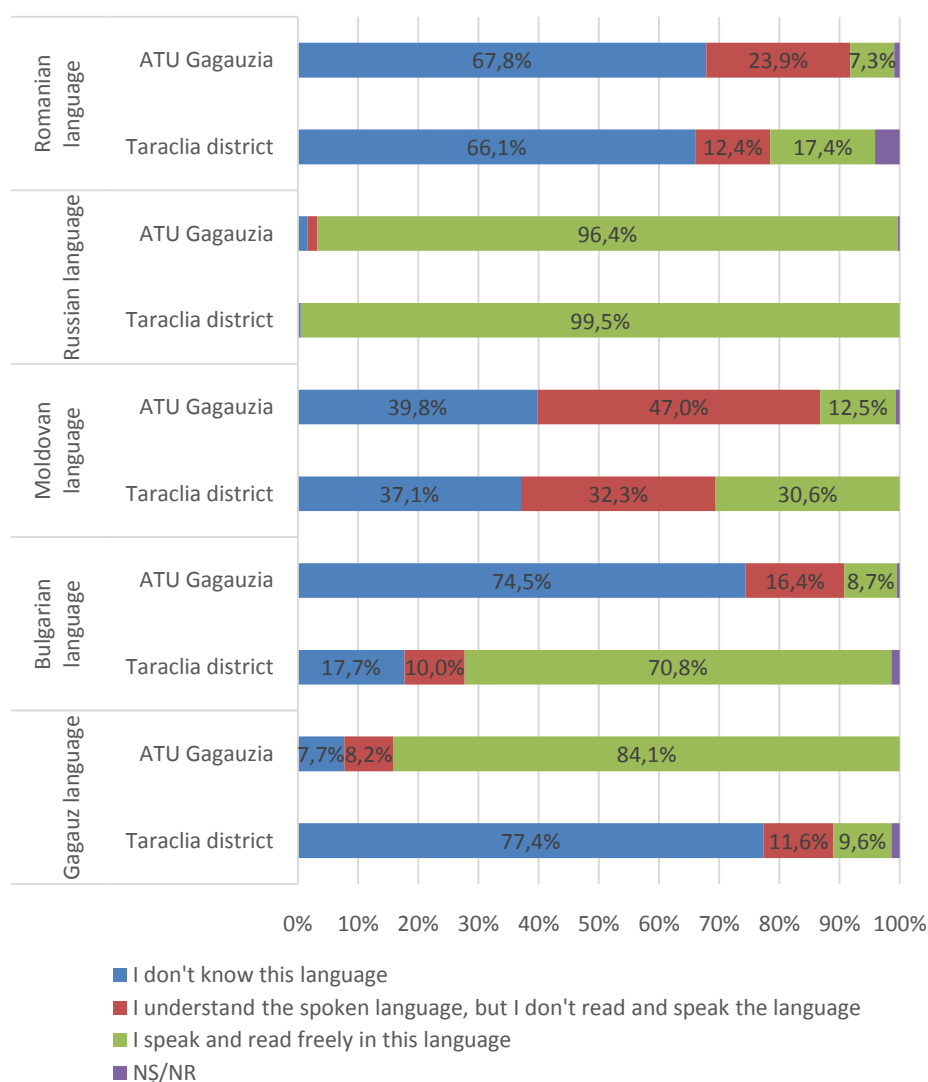
Source: National Examinations and Evaluations 2015. Agency for Quality Assurance, 2015

The analysis of the data in the chart above shows that lyceum graduates displayed a better performance in the maternal language as a school subject, respectively in Bulgarian and Gagauzian languages, and a much poorer performance in Romanian and Russian languages. Moreover, judging only by the scores of the candidates in the baccalaureate examination, we may conclude that they have a better knowledge of the Romanian language syllabus, than of the Russian language syllabus, a language which is the language of instruction for them. Certainly, the complexity of the syllabus for the language of instruction is higher, than the one for the Romanian language, what might lead to more modest scores in this school subject. At the same time, the scores of lyceum graduates in Romanian language gives hope that they are able to fluently communicate in this language, likewise in Russian language.

In reality, the situation is completely different. According to the results of a sociological survey commissioned by the Institute for Public Policy and conducted in 2016 by CBS-AXA Sociological Survey Company, not more than 30,6% of the inhabitants of the district of Taraclia and 12,5% of inhabitants of the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit may fluently speak and read in “Moldovan” language. As far as Romanian language is concerned, the values of this indicator are even lower – 17,4% for the district of Taraclia and 7,3% for the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit.

The share of respondents who understand the spoken language, but do not read and do not speak “Moldovan” is larger– 32,3% in the district of Taraclia and 47,0% in the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit. The situation is similar in relation with the Romanian language– 12,4% in the district of Taraclia and 23,9% in the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit.

Figure 6. The level of language proficiency in the district of Taraclia and in the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit



Source: The degree of integration of the population of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit into the society of the Republic of Moldova. Sociological survey. Institute for Public Policy, 2016

Given that instead of the “Moldovan language” school subject, the “Romanian language” subject is being taught in all educational institutions since the very first year of independence of the Republic of Moldova (1991), at least 25 cohorts of graduates certainly know the correct name of the state language and most of them have had passing marks in this discipline. At the same time, according to the age pyramid²⁶, the share of these graduates in the total number of the adult population amounts to nearly 53%. The comparison between the share of 53% and the share of those who fluently speak and read in “Moldovan” (30,6% in the district of Taraclia and 12,5% in the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit) and of those who fluently read and speak Romanian (17,4% in the district of Taraclia and 7,3% in the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit) leads to the conclusion that the process of learning of the state language is neither efficient, nor effective, being vitiated both by the interference of politicians, and by the phenomenon of academic mystification.

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The population and the demographic process. The National Bureau for Statistics, 2016.

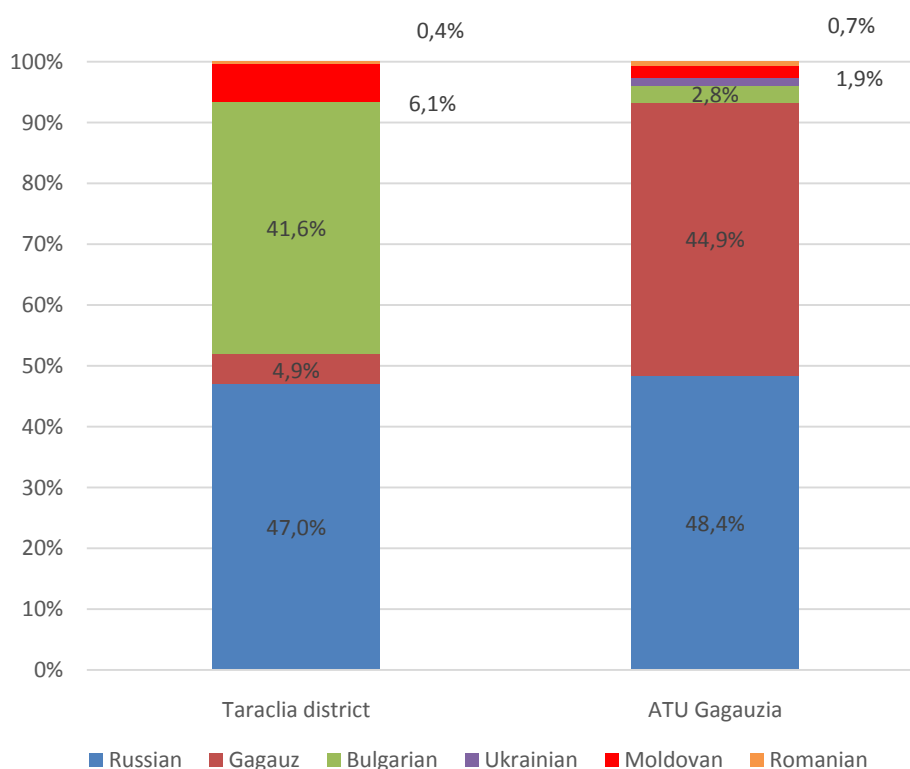
6. Perceptions of the Role of the Romanian Language in Social Life in the District of Taraclia and the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit

The importance of the role that a language plays in social life is one of the decisive factors that contribute to its massive learning. In the Republic of Moldova, likewise in other countries that have been under the domination of the former Soviet Union, languages are not only a means for communication and for expressing the identity, but also a means for promoting certain geopolitical options and orientations. As a whole, the politicisation of language-related issues has a negative impact on the process of teaching-learning-evaluation of all languages, both of the Romanian language as the state language, and of minority and regional languages.

The Romanian Language as a Means for Communication in the District of Taraclia and the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit

In general, the Romanian language does not make up a significant share in everyday language preferences of the inhabitants of the district of Taraclia and the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit (Gagauzian ATU). According to the results of sociological surveys conducted in the above-mentioned Autonomous Territorial Units, nearly 47,0% of families in the district of Taraclia usually (the oftenest) speak Russian and 41,6% of families–Bulgarian. The „Moldovan” and Romanian languages are spoken in only 6,5% of families, probably the ones from the community where the Moldovans (Romanians) are the majority population.

Figure 7. Distribution of families in the district of Taraclia and the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit by language spoken usually (the oftenest) at home



Source: The degree of integration of the population of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit into the society of the Republic of Moldova. Sociological survey. Institute for Public Policy, 2016

In the Gagauzian ATU, the Russian language is usually (the oftenest) spoken at home by nearly 48,4% of families, and the Gagauzian language—by 44,9% of families. The „Moldovan” and the Romanian are spoken by only 2,6% of families in this Autonomous Territorial Unit.

The situation is similar from the perspective of the languages the inhabitants of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU prefer to use while watching, listening or reading the news in the mass-media.

In the district of Taraclia, the share of respondents who prefer to watch TV broadcasts and news in Moldovan language amounts to 1,8%, and in the Gagauzian ATU—to 2,4%. The share of respondents who prefer to listen to radio broadcasts in Moldovan is even smaller— 1,7% in the district of Taraclia and 0,4% - in the Gagauzian ATU. Similar values, statistically insignificant, were established with regard to newspapers and the Internet.

As a whole, language preferences of the respondents from the Autonomous Territorial Units covered by the survey are neither in favour of the state language, nor in favour of the Bulgarian or Gagauzian languages, 90% of respondents having expressed their preference for watching, listening and reading mass-media products in Russian language.

Consequently, the inhabitants of the above-mentioned Autonomous Territorial Units do not use the official language of the Republic of Moldova in everyday activities, and they practically do not have the need, neither the natural opportunity to communicate in this language. Therefore, they perceive the Romanian language as something imposed from outside their everyday life circumstances. Certainly, in the lack of mass-media in Romanian language, special requirements in terms of methodologies for teaching and learning it in schools should be established and the number of hours allocated in the framework-plans to this school subject should be assessed from the perspective of its relevance for the complexity of communication competences to be formed and developed in pupils.

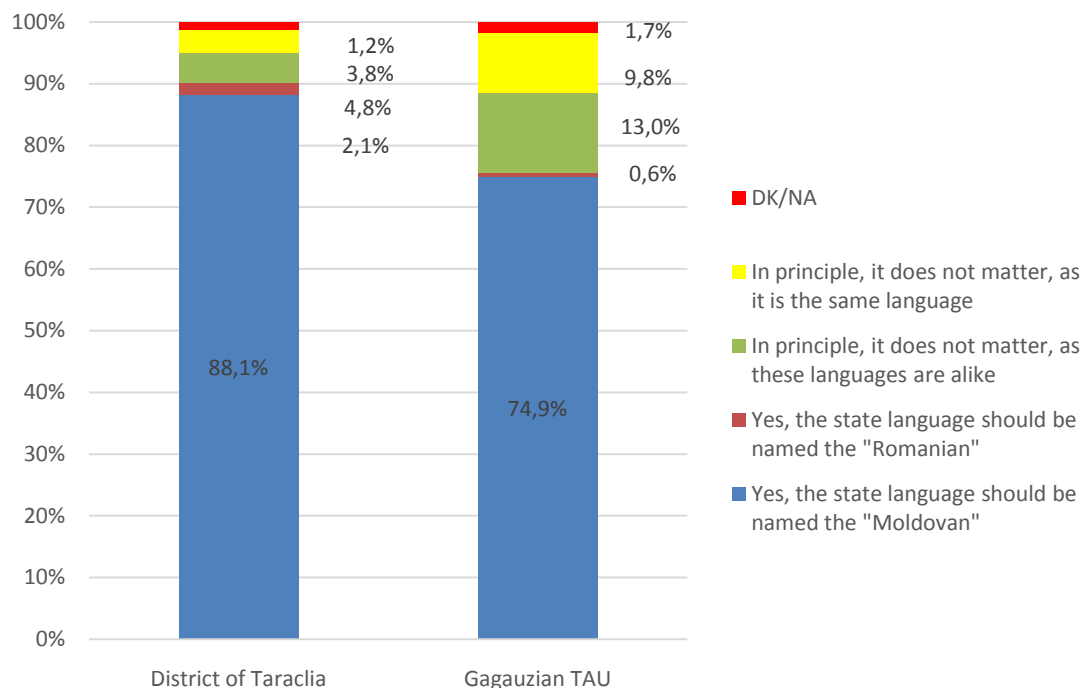
The Usage of the Romanian Language in Expressing One's Geopolitical Options and Orientations

The name of the state language – Romanian or Moldovan – remains a matter of principle for the population of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU, most of it opting for the name the “Moldovan language”.

Being questioned if the name of the state language is really a matter of principle for them, nearly 88,1% of respondents of the district of Taraclia and 74,9% of the Gagauzian ATU gave an affirmative response, specifying that the language shall be named the “Moldovan”. Moreover, a very small number of respondents opted for the correct name of the state language – the Romanian language, their share being statistically insignificant— 0,6% in the district of Taraclia and 2,1% in the Gagauzian ATU.

The share of citizens for which the name of the state language is not a matter of concern amounts to 8,6% in the district of Taraclia and to 22,8% in the Gagauzian ATU. A part of these respondents consider that Romanian and Moldovan languages are alike (4,8% in the district of Taraclia and 13,0% in the Gagauzian ATU), and another part—that both names represent the same language (3,8% in the district of Taraclia and 9,8% in the Gagauzian ATU).

Figure 8. Distribution of responses to the question “Is the name of the state language a matter of principle for you—Moldovan or Romanian?”



Source: The degree of integration of the population of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit into the society of the Republic of Moldova. Sociological survey. Institute for Public Policy, 2016

Certainly, such responses reconfirm that most of the inhabitants in the Autonomous Territorial Units included in the survey, consciously or unconsciously, still stick to the primitive moldovenism in terms of language issue, rejecting or ignoring the scientific truth concerning the correct name of the state language. Willy-nilly, many of them associate the name of the language with the name of the State, pointing out that the name “The Romanian language” should be used exclusively in Romania and the name “The Moldovan language”- in the Republic of Moldova. Certain political forces, both at the national level, and at the level of the Autonomous Territorial Units included in the survey, speculate that the idea of accepting the name “The Romanian language” would be a step towards the reunification of the Republic of Moldova with Romania.

Unfortunately, the erroneous postulates of the primitive moldovenism are still legally supported by a number of regulatory-legal documents in force, ad litteram, including by the Constitution. Although the Constitutional Court has established that the correct name of the state language of the Republic of Moldova is the “Romanian language”²⁷, both the Constitution, and a number of organic laws have not been

²⁷ Judgement of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova no. 36 of 05.12.2013 on the Interpretation of Article 13 paragraph (1) of the Constitution in correlation with the Preamble to the Constitution and with the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Moldova.

modified yet^{28, 29}, disorienting the well-intentioned citizens and setting the conditions for the emergence of collisions in the regulatory-legal documents, including in the ones of the field of education.

A telling example is, from this perspective, the referral submitted by the People's Assembly of Gagauzia to the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova³⁰, as the representative body of the Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit considers that the inclusion of the subjects "The Romanian Language and Literature" and "The History of the Romanians" in the curriculum of primary, gymnasium and lyceum education in the 2013-2014 academic year for schools where instruction is provided in Russian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian and Gagauzian languages is an infringement of the right of the Gagauzian people to learn the state language – the Moldovan language – and the history of Moldova, a right which is guaranteed by Article 35 of the Constitution. In addition to it, the authors of the referral claimed that the provisions under consideration also infringe Articles 7, 13 paragraph (1), 35 paragraph (3) and 111 paragraph (2) of the Constitution, as well as Article 12 paragraph (1) of the Framework-Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

In its Judgement, the Constitution Court dismissed the complaint as inadmissible³¹, grounding its position on arguments in favour of the right name of the state language—the Romanian language – and highlighting that the implementation of the state linguistic policy is an exclusive competence of the Ministry of Education.

To be noted that the above-mentioned judgement on inadmissibility was not published in the Official Gazette, neither in the State Register of legal acts of the Republic of Moldova³², and it can only be read on the official website of the Constitutional Court³³. The author of the present work is not aware of the grounds for non-publication of that judgement, the central authorities possibly thought that such a legal "dispute" between Comrat and Chişinău would not contribute to the harmonisation of interethnic relations in the country.

Attitudes towards the Compulsoriness of Mastery of the State Language

A considerable share of respondents of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU consider that they must learn and master the state language, despite the fact that they do not have many opportunities and needs to practise it.

Nearly 30,3% of respondents in the district of Taraclia fully agree with the requirements that citizens of the Republic of Moldova must master the state language and 43,2% of respondents rather agree with such a requirement. In the Gagauzian ATU, the share of respondents who fully agree with the requirement for mastery of the state language is even larger— 45,1%, and of the ones who rather agree with this requirement— 29,7%. Thus, nearly 73,5% of respondents in the district of Taraclia and 74,8% - in the Gagauzian ATU are in favour of the compulsoriness of mastery of the state language.

²⁸ Law no. 3465 of 01.09.1989 on Functioning of the Languages Spoken on the Territory of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic.

²⁹ Law no. 382 of 19.07.2001 on the Rights of the Persons Belonging to National Minorities and the Legal Status of their Organisations.

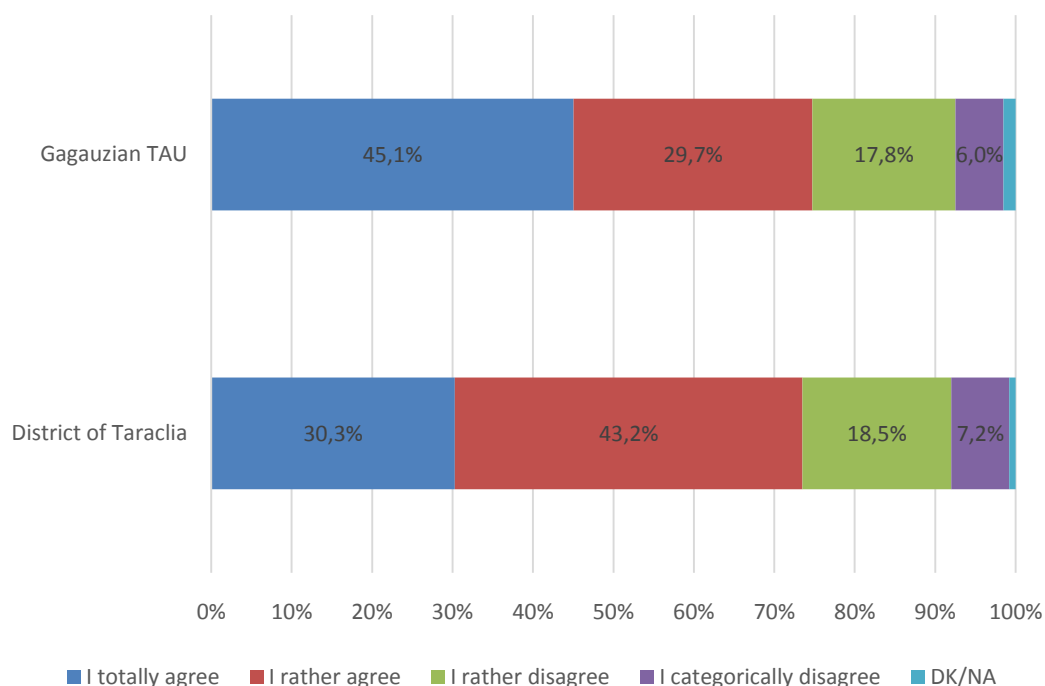
³⁰ Referral no. 453-03/1-13 of 22.10.2013 of the People's Assembly of Gagauzia to the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova.

³¹ Judgement of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova on the Inadmissibility of the Referral no. 46j/2013 on the control of constitutionality of certain provisions of the Framework-plan for primary, gymnasium and lyceum education for 2013-2014 academic year, approved by Ordinance of the Ministry of Education no. 679 of 4th of July 2013 (the disciplines „The Romanian Language and Literature” and „The History of the Romanians”).

³² www.justice.md.

³³ <http://www.constcourt.md/ccdocview.php?tip=decizii&docid=148&l=ro>.

Figure 9. The opinions of the respondents about the requirement for mastery of the state language by each citizen of the Republic of Moldova



Source: The degree of integration of the population of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU into the society of the Republic of Moldova. Sociological survey. Institute for Public Policy, 2016

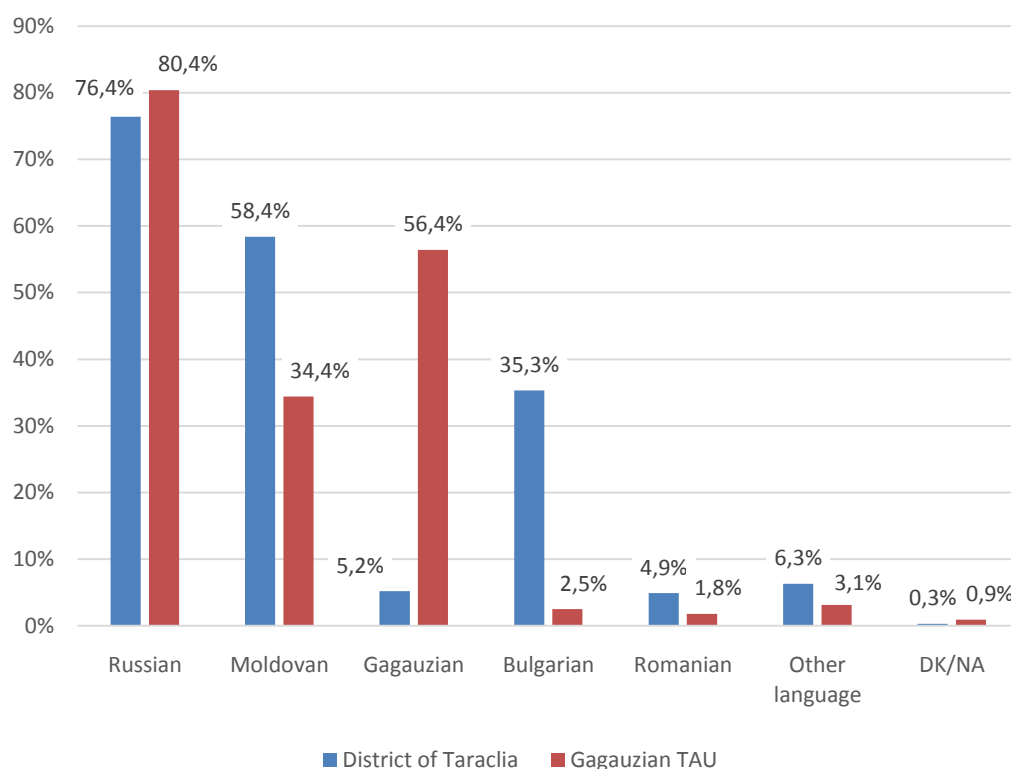
At the same time, it shall be noted that, in both Autonomous Territorial Units, the share of those who are against the compulsoriness of mastery of the state language is relatively large— 18,5% in the district of Taraclia and 17,8% in the Gagauzian ATU. Certainly, such a significant category of population might have an influence on the motivation of their children and grand-children to learn the Romanian language.

Although most of respondents from the Autonomous Territorial Units covered by the survey agree with the compulsoriness of mastery of the state language, the preferences incline more towards mastery of Russian, first of all.

Being questioned what two languages should the young people of the Autonomous Territorial Units under consideration master first of all, most of the respondents specified the Russian language: 76,4% in the district of Taraclia and 80,4% in the Gagauzian ATU. In the district of Taraclia, the state language is on the second position: the “Moldovan” - 58,4% and the Romanian - 4,9%, with a cumulative share of 63,3%. In the Gagauzian ATU, the opinions in favour of the state language are less common, than in the district of Taraclia: the “Moldovan” - 34,4% and the Romanian only 1,8%, with the cumulative value of 36,2%.

Certainly, a significant share of respondents in both Autonomous Territorial Units included in the survey also pronounced themselves in favour of mastery of the maternal language by young people: Bulgarian language - 35,3% in the district of Taraclia and Gagauzian language - 56,4% in the Gagauzian ATU.

Figure 10. Distribution of responses to the question “What two languages should the young people of the district of Taraclia / Gagauzian ATU master first of all?”

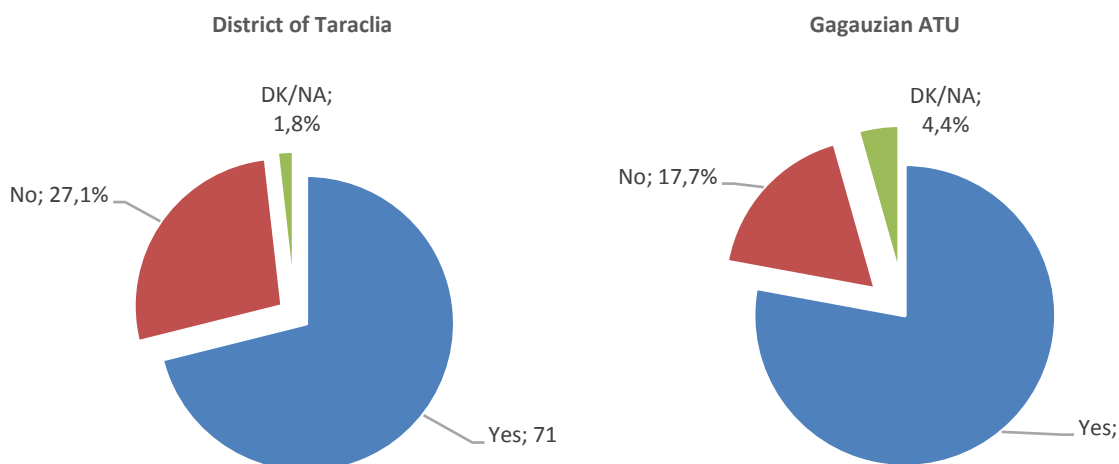


Source: The degree of integration of the population of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU into the society of the Republic of Moldova. Sociological survey. Institute for Public Policy, 2016

The options in favour of the Russian language are much more common than in favour of the state language and of the maternal languages of the inhabitants of the Autonomous Territorial Units included in the survey and they are in a close correlation with the options concerning the cultural area to which the Republic of Moldova belongs according to the respondents. Nearly 65,5% of the respondents in the district of Taraclia and 64,3% of those of the Gagauzian ATU consider that the Republic of Moldova belongs to the “Russian world”. Such opinions shall certainly be taken into consideration during curriculum development and during the process of teaching-learning-evaluation of the state language and of the maternal languages, as well as of other school subjects, particularly of the humanities.

Indisputably, one of the most relevant indicators characterising the respondents’ attitude towards the compulsoriness of learning the state language is the parents’ opinion about its mastery by their children. Despite the fact that, from the perspective of this indicator, most of respondents consider that the Republic of Moldova belongs to the “Russian world”, most of the parents still are in favour of mastery of the state language by their children. Thus, 71,1% of respondents in the district of Taraclia and 77,9% - in the Gagauzian ATU pronounced themselves in favour of mastery of the state language by their children.

Figure 11. Distribution of the responses to the question “Should your children master the state language?”



Source: The degree of integration of the population of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU in the society of the Republic of Moldova. Sociological survey. Institute for Public Policy, 2016

Unfortunately, the share of respondents who pronounced themselves against the requirement for mastery of the state language is relatively large— 27,1% in the district of Taraclia and 17,7% in the Gagauzian ATU. Such an attitude might probably be explained to some extent by the will of most parents of the Autonomous Territorial Units included in the survey that their children study in Russian (). Obviously, in such a situation, Romanian has a secondary position among the parents' preferences.

Consequently, the transition from the instruction in Russian to the instruction in Romanian language shall be done gradually in the administrative-territorial units included in the survey, starting with teaching one or two subjects or even certain topics in Romanian, mainly the ones related to the particularities of the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, the requirement for mastery of the Romanian language must be more insistently promoted both in educational institutions of the district of Taraclia and Gagauzian ATU, and by the mass-media of the region, with a focus on the immediate and long-term benefits of mastery of the state language, rather than on the compulsoriness: access to education in any university of the Republic of Moldova and Romania, opportunities for pro-active involvement in cultural and political life, for getting a job, for performing country wide economic activities.

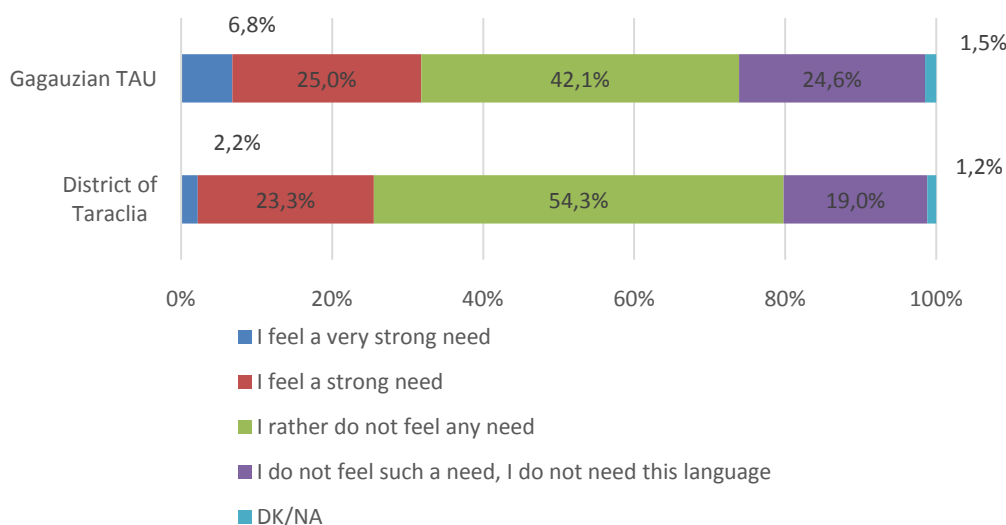
7. Difficulties Faced in the Process of Teaching and Learning of the Romanian Language by Alolingual Speakers

The Lack of Motivation

The lack of motivation for mastery of the state language is one of the major obstacles to extending the process of learning it. In the district of Taraclia, for example, not more than 2,2% of respondents stated they feel a very strong need for mastery of the state language. In the Gagauzian ATU, the value of this indicator is slightly higher— de6,8%. A strong need for mastery of the state language was expressed by only 23,3% of respondents in the district of Taraclia and 25,0% of respondents in the Gagauzian ATU. Obviously,

the total share of these respondents is too small to be able to mobilise the public opinion in the region towards learning of the state language.

Figure 120. Distribution of responses to the question "To what extent do you feel a need for mastery of the state language?"



Source: The degree of integration of the population of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU into the society of the Republic of Moldova. Sociological survey. Institute for Public Policy, 2016

Unfortunately, most of the population in the administrative-territorial units included in the survey rather do not feel (54,3% in the district of Taraclia and 42,1% in the Gagauzian ATU) or do not feel at all a need for mastery of the state language, and some of them even stated that mastery of this language is useless (19,0% in the district of Taraclia and 24,6% in the Gagauzian ATU).

Similar attitudes have been revealed as a result of the self-assessment by alolingual speakers of the probability of ever learning the state language.

Not more than 3,4% of respondents in the district of Taraclia and 2,9% in the Gagauzian ATU stated that they will certainly learn the state language. The share of respondents who stated they will probably learn the state language is also small- only 18,2% in the district of Taraclia and 19,6% - in the Gagauzian ATU.

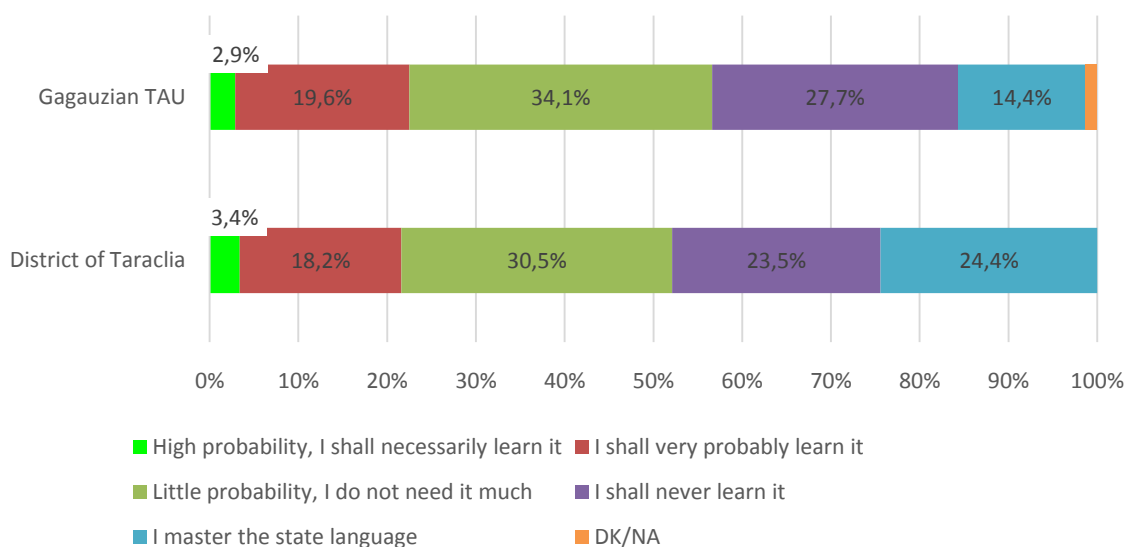
On the other hand, the share of respondents who stated they do not feel a great need to master the state language, therefore there is a little probability of learning it amounts to 30,5% in the district of Taraclia and to 34,1% in the Gagauzian ATU. Moreover, nearly 23,5% of the respondents in the district of Taraclia and 27,7% in the Gagauzian ATU stated they will never learn the state language.

Such attitudes may to a certain extent be explained by the high degree of tolerance of the majority, Romanian-speaking population towards their alolingual compatriots.

Thus, despite the fact that nearly 17% of the respondents from the administrative-territorial units covered by the survey consider that the Russian speakers are the most discriminated in the Republic of Moldova, over 90% of them stated they had never faced a case of discrimination at employment, enrolment in the desired educational institution, promotion in the career, etc. because of non-mastery of the state language.

The low level of motivation to learn the state language was also confirmed by the low frequency of the respondents' intentions to choose the Romanian language as the language of instruction for their children. From this perspective, most of respondents did not pronounce themselves in favour of the state language or their maternal languages, as it would be natural, but in favour of the Russian language.

Figure 11. Opinions of the citizens of the district of Taraclia / Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit about the probability of learning the state language



Source: The degree of integration of the population of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU into the society of the Republic of Moldova. Sociological survey. Institute for Public policy, 2016

While questioned "What language would you prefer to be the language of instruction of your children/grand-children?", over 80,8% of respondents in the district of Taraclia opted for Russian and only 14,9% - for Moldovan/Romanian language. Not more than 1,6% of respondents opted for the Bulgarian language as a language of instruction, which is the most widespread regional language in this administrative-territorial unit. The situation is approximately the same in the Gagauzian ATU, where 80,1% of respondents opted for Russian, 10,2% - for Romanian and only 7,3% for Gagauzian as the language of instruction.

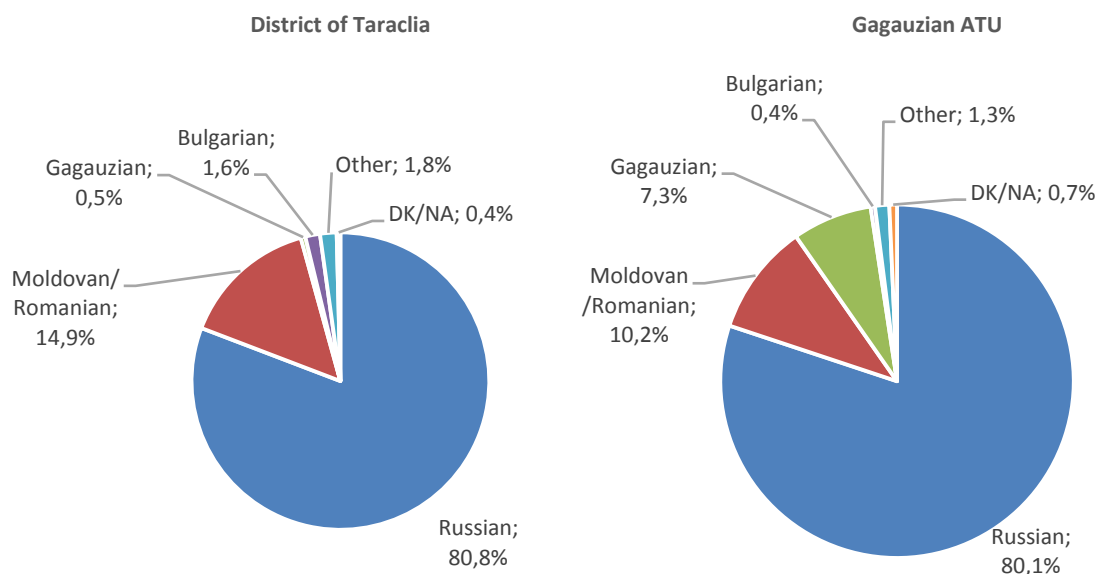
To be noted that preferences for the Russian language to the detriment of the state language and even to the detriment of the maternal language may be to a certain extent explained by the fact that very many respondents, nearly 60% of them, do not see any future for their children in the Republic of Moldova. Moreover, nearly 78% of respondents from the Autonomous Territorial Units included in the survey would prefer their children to leave for Russia.

From the geopolitical perspective, nearly 33% of respondents from the Autonomous Territorial Units subject to the survey see the Republic of Moldova as a part of Russia in the future. As for the future of the concerned Autonomous Territorial Units, taken apart, the values of this indicator are even higher: nearly 44% of the respondents of the district of Taraclia and nearly 37% of respondents of the Gagauzian ATU see these territorial entities as parts of Russia in the future.

Consequently, the degree of motivation for learning the Romanian language by the alolingual speakers depends to a large extent on the attractiveness of the Republic of Moldova as a country where the citizens

may realise their aspirations. Certainly, the higher its attractiveness will be, the more interested the alolingual speakers will be to live in this country and to learn its state language.

Figure 12. Distribution of responses to the question "What language would you prefer to be the language of instruction of your children/grand-children?"



Source: The degree of integration of the population of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU in the society of the Republic of Moldova. Sociological survey. Institute for Public Policy, 2016

The Inefficiency of the Methods Currently Used for Teaching the Romanian Language to Alolingual Speakers

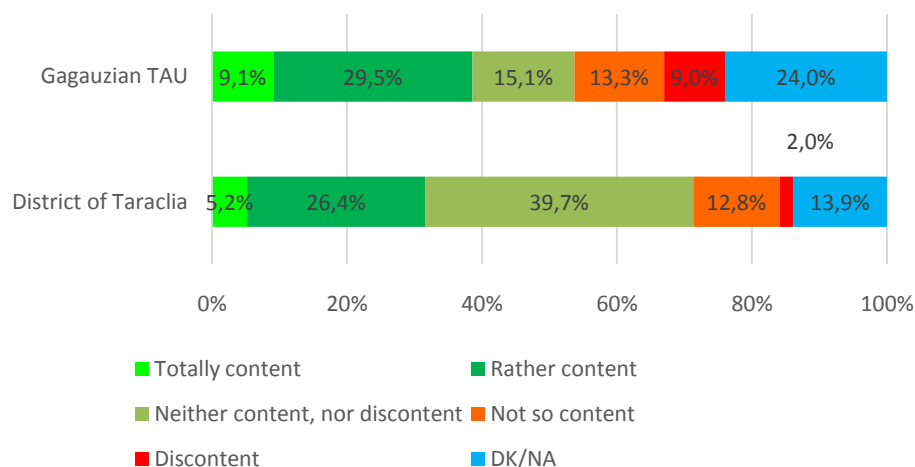
This obstacle is common for all school subjects, the Romanian language for alolingual speakers not being an exception. As mentioned before, all the alolingual graduates of primary, gymnasium and lyceum education have passing marks in Romanian language. But how many of them are really able to fluently communicate in this language? This rhetorical question may also be asked in relation with the alolingual speakers who completed diverse courses for learning of the state language conducted throughout the years of independence.

Despite the fact that a large number of alolingual graduates of gymnasium and lyceum education are unable to communicate in Romanian language, a considerable share of respondents from the Autonomous Territorial Units which were subject to the survey are totally or rather content with the level of teaching of the state language: nearly 31,6% in the district of Taraclia and about 38,6% in the Gagauzian ATU. The share of those who are not so content or discontent is nearly two times smaller :14,8% in the district of Taraclia and nearly 22,3% in the Gagauzian ATU.

The divergence between the relatively high degree of contentment with teaching of the Romanian language in schools of the Autonomous Territorial Units covered by the survey and the relatively low level of this language mastery might be explained by the low motivation to learn the state language and the relatively small share of those who intend to learn it.

The inefficiency of the current approaches to teaching-learning-evaluation of the Romanian language by alolingual speakers is to a large extent caused by the fact that the modern methods provided by information and communication technologies are not used in schools yet. This may be explained both by the poor provision of educational institutions with multimedia digital equipment, and by the low level of qualification of the teaching staff in this field. Thus, according to “Education 2020” Strategy, in 2012/2013 academic year, the number of computers used by the teaching staff did not exceed 6 thousands, and most of them had not licensed software. The educational institutions usually purchase personal computers each year, but they do not use to also purchase teaching software required for the educational process, therefore no significant modernisation of the teaching-learning-evaluation processes was achieved so far. According to the data of the National Bureau for Statistics³⁴, in 2014, the expenditures for the purchase of software in education sector made up only 6,7% (nearly 3,4 million lei) of the total amount of expenditures for information technologies (nearly 50,2 million lei).

Figure 13. The degree of contentment with the level of teaching of the state language in schools of the district of Taraclia / Gagauzian Autonomous Territorial Unit



Source: Degree of integration of the population of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU into the society of the Republic of Moldova. Sociological survey. Institute for Public Policy, 2016

Unfortunately, taken into account the economic possibilities of the Republic of Moldova, pupils are unlikely to enjoy daily access to multimedia digital tools for language learning in the nearest future. According to the standards which were recently approved by the Ministry of Education³⁵, each educational institution shall have a sufficient number of computers to guarantee the ratio of one computer per 20 pupils at the most. Or, obviously, a ratio of 20 pupils per a computer would impede the systematic use of information and communication technologies in language learning, including of the Romanian.

³⁴ *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova*. National Bureau for Statistics, 2015.

³⁵ *Minimal standards for the provision of primary schools, gymnasiums and lyceums with information and communication technologies*. Approved by Resolution of the College of the Ministry of Education no. 3-1 of 09.06.2015 applied according to Ordinance of the Ministry of Education no. 541 of 24.06.2015.

In such a situation, it is important that schools use the digital resources that pupils have at home. According to the data of the World Economic Forum, the share of households that have a computer amounts to 67%, and 66% of households have Internet access³⁶.

Another significant factor that determines the inefficiency of the current methods for teaching the Romanian to alolingual speakers comes from the fact that the present system for monitoring, evaluation and assurance of the quality of school performance, including in the subject “The Romanian Language and Literature for alolingual speakers”, is not in line with curriculum provisions related to the development of competences, neither with the requirements of the international evaluation programmes. Although the modernised curriculum is being implemented for more than five years, there is no correlation yet, in general education, between the methodologies for evaluation of the level of training and development of the pupils’ languagecompetences and the European methodologies³⁷.

Overburdening of Pupils

Being a general issue characteristic to both national, and to alolingual schools, this issue is becoming particularly pressing in educational institutions that operate based on framework-plans for schools where instruction is provided in Russian language for pupils of Ukrainian, Gagauzian and Bulgarian nationality. According to the respective framework-plans, in 2016/2017 academic year, a pupil from primary, gymnasium and lyceum education will have to learn four languages (Russian, Romanian, the maternal language and a foreign language). Moreover, the new Code of Education, in its Article 9, paragraph (7), stipulates that the State shall guarantee the study of at least two languages of international circulation, consequently, the number of languages learnt by a pupil might come up to five in the future.

Learning of five languages would certainly require considerable efforts to be put by pupils and implies the development and the implementation of curriculum documents that would explicitly define the complexity of language competences to be formed and developed for each of the respective languages. Unfortunately, no research has been conducted in the Republic of Moldova so far in order to critically analyse the experience of our country in terms of learning several languages by pupils, the adjustment of the level of complexity of language competences to be formed and developed in pupils to their age particularities and physical, psychic and intellectual capacity, alongside with the feasibility of the plans for the expansion of multi-or plurilinguistic education.

The Shortage of Qualified Teaching Staff

A number of public policy works in the field of education^{38, 39} point out that the Moldovan education sector faces an acute shortage of teaching staff. The school subject “The Romanian Language and Literature for alolingual speakers” is not an exception from this viewpoint.

According to the data of the System of Mapping of primary schools, gymnasiums and lyceums, in 2015/2016 academic year, 152 teachers taught the school subject “The Romanian language and literature for alolingual speakers” in educational institutions of the Autonomous Territorial Units which were subject to the survey. Among them, only one person (0,7%)held the highest teaching degree and 12 persons

³⁶ The Global Information Technology Report 2015. *ICTs for Inclusive Growth*. World Economic Forum, 2015.

³⁷ National Programme for the improvement of the quality of learning of the Romanian language in general education institutions where instruction is provided in languages of the national minorities (2016-2020). Approved by Decree of the Government of the Republic Moldova no. 904 of 31.12.2015.

³⁸ The World Bank Group. *Moldova Teacher Policy. SABER Country Report 2014*.

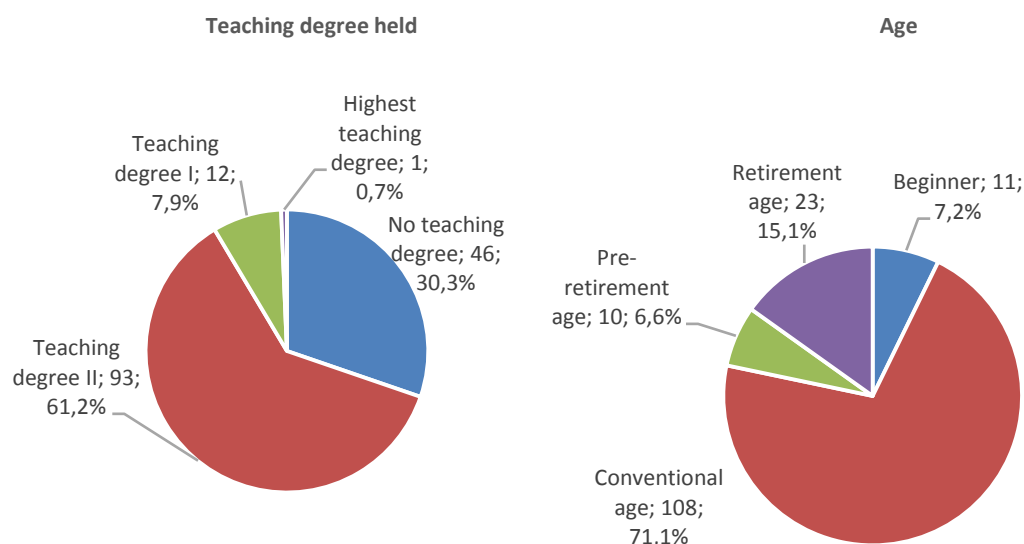
³⁹ Beleaeva, Svetlana; Gavriliță, Galina; Gremalschi, Anatol ș. a. *Public Policy Proposals: reconceptualising lyceum education*. In “Education for a Knowledge Society: The Reference-Framework of the New National Curriculum: Educational Policy Studies”. Institute for Public Policy. – Chișinău, 2015.

(7,9%)—the first teaching degree. 93 persons (61,2%) were holders of the second teaching degree, that, de facto, is awarded by educational institutions and is only confirmed by the local specialised authorities in the field of education, and 46 persons (30,3%) were not holders of any teaching degree. All teachers from this category have a pedagogical education background, but most of them are not native Romanian speakers.

In the total number of teachers who teach the school subject “The Romanian language and literature for alolingual speakers”, 11 (7,2%) are beginners (less than three years of length of service), 10 (6,6%) —are of pre-retirement age (three years before the retirement) and 23 (15,1%) are of retirement age.

The initial training of the teaching staff is done both in universities of the capital city, and in the regional ones. According to the enrolment plans approved by the Government⁴⁰, about 250 places are allocated each year for the training of teachers of “The Romanian Language and Literature for alolingual speakers”. Unfortunately, there is no demand for those places, and universities very often use to enrol the candidates who failed to be admitted in other specialisations.

Figure 14. The teaching staff that teach the school subject “The Romanian Language and Literature for alolingual speakers” in schools of the district of Taraclia / Gagauzian ATU



Source: The System of Mapping of primary schools, gymnasiums and lyceums. Ministry of Education, 2016

To be noted that, because of the small number of candidates to enrolment, universities insistently promote and the authorities support the training in the so-called “double specialisations”, such as „The Romanian language and literature and English language”, „The Romanian language and literature and French language”, „The Russian language and literature and Romanian language”, “The Ukrainian language and literature and Romanian language”, “The Gagauzian language and literature and Romanian language”, “The Bulgarian language and literature and Romanian language”, „Preschool pedagogy and Romanian language” etc. In the lack of research concerning the school performance of pupils whose teachers are graduates of “double linguistic specialisations”, it is difficult to make any conclusion about the opportunity of such an approach. On the other hand, the respondents of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU

⁴⁰ Decree of the Government of the Republic of Moldova no. 842 of 07.07.2016 on the plans (State command) for training of the specialised staff by professions, specialisations and general fields of training, in technical-professional and higher education institutions for 2016-2017 academic year.

expressed, during the interviews, the wish that teachers who are native Romanian speakers teach the school subject “The Romanian language and literature for alolingual speakers” after having been trained in this specific specialisation, not in a “double” one. In the opinion of the respondents, the fact that graduates in “double” specialisations teach the Romanian language in alolingual schools does not comply with the status of this language and its importance for strengthening the Moldovan society.

According to the authorities, the following important factors, which are also specified in the Code of Education, will contribute in the nearest future to the provision of general education with qualified teaching staff:

- developing and implementing the National Framework of Qualifications in higher education;
- implementing the Standards for professional competence of the teaching staff in general education;
- developing, approving and putting into practice the National Programme for the development of human resources in general education in the Republic of Moldova 2016-2020.

By the date when this survey was being written, the Professional Standards of the teaching staff have already been approved by the Ministry of Education⁴¹, the Programme for human resources development was submitted for public debates⁴², and a number of qualifications, although not approved by the Government yet, were published by the universities of the country⁴³. But, unfortunately, the specialisation in “The Romanian language and literature for alolingual speakers” is not specified as a distinct entity in these documents.

The continuing training of the teaching staff is provided both by universities, and by a number of non-governmental organisations licensed by the Ministry of Education to perform such activities. To be noted that “Alecu Russo” State University of Bălţi is the only institution that provides master degree education in the specialisation „The Didactics of the Romanian language and literature for alolingual speakers”. At the same time, the offer of non-governmental organisations is much more diversified, due to the support provided by the Government of Romania⁴⁴ and by the development partners of the Republic of Moldova: Soros-Moldova Foundation, USAID, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Council of Europe, “CORDAID” Dutch Foundation, etc.

Unfortunately, at a result of the interviews conducted in the district of Taraclia and in the Gagauzian ATU, it came out that certain representatives of local specialised authorities in the field of education “insistently recommend” to the teaching staff to follow continuing training courses exclusively in universities of their region, grounding their “insistent recommendations” on the fact that the respective universities “do not have enough students”. Moreover, some of the respondents had even been “warned” that the continuing training certificates issued by institutions from outside the Autonomous Territorial Units included in the survey will not be considered in the process of certification of the teaching staff.

⁴¹ Standards for professional competence of the teaching staff in general education. Approved by the Ordinance of the Ministry of Education no. 623 of 28.06.2016.

⁴² <http://particip.gov.md/proiectview.php?l=ro&idd=3207>.

⁴³ National Framework of Qualifications The National Framework of Qualifications: Higher Education / State University of Moldova. – Chişinău, 2015. – 493 p. ISBN 978-9975-80-951-1.

⁴⁴ <http://gagauzinfo.md/md/index.php?newsid=1698>.

8. Prospects for the Improvement of the Level of the Romanian Language Mastery by Alolingual Citizens

Aiming at the improvement of the level of mastery of Romanian language by the alolingual citizens, the authorities approved by the end of the year 2015 the National Programme for the improvement of the quality of learning of the Romanian language in general education institutions where instruction is provided in languages of national minorities (2016-2020) that provides for:

- modernisation of educational policy documents towards the adjustment of the process of learning of the Romanian language to the European trends in this field;
- raising the efficiency of the system for evaluation of communication competences of pupils in compliance with the Common European Reference Framework for Languages;
- provision of the educational process with textbooks and teaching and methodological aids developed based on the modernised standards and curriculum;
- modernisation of the programmes for initial teacher training;
- modernisation of the programmes for continuing teacher training towards their adjustment to the Common European Reference Framework for Languages.

The sociolinguistic integration of the alolingual pupils will be more efficient, if the number of subjects taught in Romanian in alolingual schools is increased. The authorities also intended to implement the *CLIL-Content and Language Integrated Learning* model which is being successfully applied in many European countries⁴⁵. Since the year 2011, this model was also piloted in the Republic of Moldova, including in several educational institutions of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU.

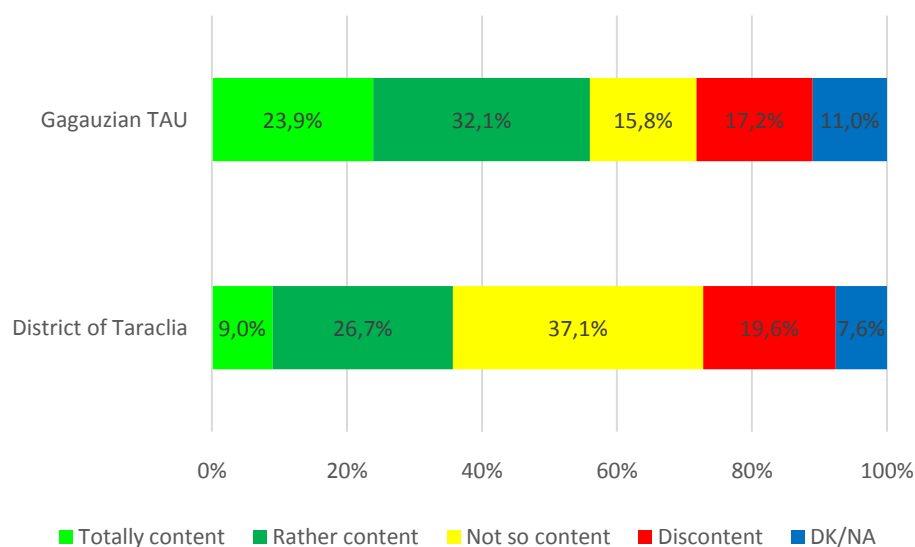
Although the authorities consider that the results of piloting are gladdening, the attitude of the respondents of the Autonomous Territorial Units covered by the survey towards the „mixing” the languages is not univocal.

Being questioned “What is your attitude towards the idea of setting up joint schools, that is schools in which a part of classes would study in Romanian language and the other part – in Russian language?”, nearly 37,1% of respondents in the district of Taraclia stated they are not so content with such an idea and 19,6% –are discontent. Not more than 35,7% of respondents stated they are totally or rather content.

In the Gagazian TAU, the share of respondents who stated they are totally or rather content with the idea of setting up joint schools is larger –nearly 56,0%. Nevertheless, the opinions of 15,8% of respondents who stated they are not so content and of 17,2% of the sample who stated they are discontent with the idea of having joint schools might be decisive in relation with a so sensitive issue, as the language issue in the Republic of Moldova.

Figure 15. The degree of contentment with the idea of setting up joint schools, that is schools in which a part of classes would study in the state language and the other part – in Russian language

⁴⁵ Baïdak, Nathalie; Mínguez, María, Luisa, García (coordination); Oberheidt, Stéphanie. *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at School in Europe*. Eurydice, the information network on education in Europe, 2006.



Source: The degree of integration of the population of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU in the society of the Republic of Moldova. Sociological survey. Institute for Public Policies, 2016

The shortage of human resources and of financial means might be another obstacle to implementing the *CLIL* model.

The budgetary expenditures planned to be allocated according to this Programme are absolutely insufficient. Or, according to the Programme, allocations of only 606 000, 579 000 and 513 000 lei are, respectively, planned for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018, these amounts being insufficient for reaching the established objectives. It is worth mentioning that just the procurement cost of an edition of one school textbook in 8-9 thousand copies (the indicative yearly number of alolingual pupils enrolled in the 1st grade) amounts to 250-300 thousand lei.

Unfortunately, many objectives of the Programme are rather pedagogical, than policy oriented, most of the objectives being related to the provision with teaching and methodological aids, adjustment of curriculum documents, update of standards, raising the efficiency of the system of evaluation, etc. Without denying the importance of such objectives, it is worth recognising that the following main measures might have a decisive contribution to the level of mastery of the Romanian language by the alolingual speakers: establishing and/or delegating to the district of Taraclia and to the Gagauzian ATU a professional corps of Romanian-speaking teaching staff; raising the motivation for learning the Romanian language; switching from the past century methods to modern learning methods based on multimedia technologies.

The improvement of the level of mastery of the Romanian language by the alolingual citizens is also a matter of concern in the new draft Strategy for the integration of national minorities of the Republic of Moldova for the period 2015-2020, submitted by the authorities to public debates⁴⁶. This document acknowledges the role of the Romanian language for the integration of ethnic minorities, emphasising the poor mastery of this language in the communities with compact alolingual population.

According to the draft Strategy's authors, the main objective in the linguistic field consists in "encouraging the mastery of the state language, protecting and promoting the languages of national minorities and

⁴⁶ Bureau for Interethnic Relations of the Republic of Moldova. *Strategy for integration of national minorities of the Republic of Moldova for 2015-2020(draft)*. <http://particip.gov.md/proiectview.php?l=ro&idd=2373>.

fostering the language diversity in the society". The actions planned in order to reach this objective are similar to the ones specified in the national Programme for the improvement of the quality of learning of the Romanian language in general educational institutions where instruction is provided in languages of the national minorities (2016-2020), which has already been approved by the Government. The new element is the provision of the access to electronic teaching aids in the state language; the development and dissemination of language software for learning of the state language.

To be mentioned that notable non-governmental organisations⁴⁷ have pointed out numerous serious deficiencies of the draft Strategy: the absence of relevant statistical data, the obsolete data concerning the ethnic structure of the population of the Republic of Moldova, the lack of concrete measures for promoting the state language, the reiteration of certain actions intended to promote the mastery of the state language that proved to be inefficient, the particularities of the Gagauzian ATU and of Transdniestria are not considered. At the same time, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Chişinău has insisted on emphasising in the Strategy the particular role of the Russian language as a means for interethnic communication in the Republic of Moldova⁴⁸, what points out once more the complexity of the issues related to the reinstatement of the inherent rights of the Romanian language in the Republic of Moldova.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Finding 1. In the process of integration of the representatives of the minority ethnic groups and strengthening of the Moldovan civic nation, the educational system shall base on the general human values and on promoting the scientific truth. The scientific truth and the professional ethics of the educational system should not be sacrificed for the sake of political conjuncture goals, and the ethno-linguistic and cultural diversity should not lead to the erosion of the unitary nature of the educational system in our country.

Recommendations. Delimit explicitly the rights and the duties of the central and local public authorities in terms of promoting the state language, remove the influence of politicianist factors on issues related to study of languages, both of the majority, and of the minority ones.

Finding 2. The regulatory-legal framework related to functioning of the languages spoken in the Republic of Moldova is out-of-date. Having been developed and approved during the times of the defunct Soviet Union, it is not compliant with the present socio-linguistic realities anymore and does not contribute to the efficient promotion of the state language mastery by the alolingual citizens.

Recommendations. Update the regulatory-legal framework, proclaim the state language a means for interethnic communication, empower the local authorities with competences for promotion and development of regional and minority languages.

Finding 3. Forming and developing the language competences specified in the new Code of Education is a difficult task for education sector in the Republic of Moldova. The compulsoriness of learning four or even five languages (Romanian, Russian, the maternal language and one or two languages of international circulation) by the representatives of ethnic minorities is not common in the international practice.

⁴⁷ "Viitorul" Institute for Development and Social Initiatives. National Association of European Trainers from Moldova. Some references to the Strategy for integration of national minorities of the Republic of Moldova 2015-2020. <http://www.viitorul.org/>.

⁴⁸ http://www.noi.md/md/news_id/61088#close.

Therefore, no research was done in our country in this field, and no practical methodologies have been developed for massive study by pupils of so many languages.

Recommendations. Conduct an analysis of international practices in terms of massive learning of 4-5 languages, evaluate the capacity of the educational system and of educational institutions to implement the intended learning process, develop teaching-learning-evaluation methodologies compliant with the linguistic particularities of the Republic of Moldova.

Finding 4. Despite the changes undertaken over the past decade in the field of multimedia digital technologies, the present curriculum support and the methods currently applied by the educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova in the field of study of languages are practically based on the traditional approaches coming from the past century. The curriculum is theorised, the curriculum contents are congested, and issues related to forming and developing the communication competences are insufficiently propagated.

Recommendations. Update the curriculum in line with the Common European Reference Framework for Languages, start the process of developing and implementing the modern teaching methods: digital textbooks, interactive multimedia lessons, electronic books, didactic films, etc.

Finding 5. Despite the good scores of pupils of the educational institutions in the territorial-administrative units covered by the survey in “The Romanian Language and Literature for alolingual speakers” school subject, most of graduates do not hold the competence to fluently communicate in this language. Multiple reasons explain this phenomenon, the main of them being the lack of motivation, the deficiencies of the teaching-learning-evaluation process, the unavailability of an environment for the alolingual speakers to practise the communication in Romanian language.

Recommendations. Focus the teaching-learning-evaluation process on forming and developing the communication competences. Update the toolkit for the assessment of the level of such competences, eliminate the academic mystifications from the educational system.

Finding 6. As a matter of fact, the language preferences of the respondents from the Autonomous Territorial Units included in the survey are neither in favour of the state language, nor of the Bulgarian and Gagauzian languages, as 90% of them pronounced themselves for watching, listening and reading mass-media products in Russian language. Consequently, in their daily activities, the inhabitants of the respective Autonomous Territorial Units do not use the state language of the Republic of Moldova, as they do not practically have the need, neither the natural opportunity to communicate in this language. As a result, they perceive the Romanian as something imposed from outside their everyday living environment.

Recommendations. Expand the area for the usage of the Romanian language by the alolingual speakers as a result of producing and disseminating high quality printed works, audio-visual broadcasts and performances, whose contents and artistic level would be attractive for the citizens of the respective region.

Finding 7. The geopolitical factor is the major one that diminishes the motivation for learning of the Romanian language by the alolingual citizens of the Autonomous Territorial Units covered by the survey. A significant share of respondents, nearly 65% of the sample, consider the district of Taraclia and the Gagauzian ATU as parts of the “Russian world”, and, in their opinion, the Republic of Moldova will be a component part of Russia in the future (nearly 32,2% of respondents of the district of Taraclia and 34,6% of the Gagauzian ATU).

Recommendations. Strengthen the statehood of the Republic of Moldova, enhance the degree of the country's attractiveness, mobilise the public opinion in favour of the independence of the Republic of Moldova, explain and capitalise on the opportunities provided by mastery of the Romanian language to the alolingual citizens.

Finding 8. A large share of respondents from the district of Taraclia (58,4%) and the Gagauzian ATU(34,4%) specified that the "Moldovan" language is one of the two languages that young people from the respective Autonomous Territorial Units shall master. Moreover, nearly 71,1% of respondents from the district of Taraclia and 77,9% from the Gagauzian ATU consider that their children should master the state language. These data reveal that there are real prerequisites in the Autonomous Territorial Units covered by the survey for the increase of the level of the state language mastery.

Recommendations. Focus the activities aimed at enhancing the level of mastery of the state language mostly on young people. Strengthen, first of all, the state language learning component in preschool, primary and gymnasium education.

Finding 9. The success of the actions meant to increase the level of mastery of the Romanian language by the alolingual citizens seems to be unlikely, because of the acute shortage of teaching staff able to apply the modern teaching-learning-evaluation methods. The perpetuation of the traditional methods for teacher initial and continuing training is a wrong track, and the expansion of training in the so-called "double specialisations" seems to be rather a means to "lure" the candidates to study, rather than to enhance their level of qualification.

Recommendations. Identify new methods for initial and continuing teacher training for teaching the subject "The Romanian language for alolingual speakers". Encourage the native Romanian-speaking teachers to teach the respective subject in educational institutions of the district of Taraclia and Gagauzian ATU. Switch to new methods for provision of educational institutions with teaching staff for the subject "The Romanian language and literature for alolingual speakers": delegation of professionals by the central authorities, set up, in alolingual institutions, branches of the chairs of institutions where instruction is provided in Romanian, establish inter-lyceum Romanian language and literature chairs in district towns of the region, increase the mobility of the teaching staff.

Finding 10. The National Programme for the improvement of the quality of learning of the Romanian language in general education institutions where the instruction is provided in languages of the national minorities (2016-2020) that was recently developed and approved by the concerned authorities was an important step towards the increase of the level of mastery of the state language by alolingual citizens. Being focused on the implementation of *CLIL–Content and Language Integrated Learning* model which was successfully applied in a number of European countries, the Programme opens new prospects for all alolingual citizens who wish to fluently communicate in the state language. At present, the Programme needs to be supported by the citizens and the local authorities from the district of Taraclia and the Gagauzian ATU through concrete actions and by the required budgetary support.

Recommendations. Promote the Programme among the population of the district of Taraclia and of the Gagauzian ATU. Encourage the local authorities to support financially the implementation of the Programme. Establish explicit indicators for the monitoring of the results of Programme implementation.

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The ATU Gagauzia informational space and its influence on the moods of the public in the region

Mihail Sirkeli

Introduction

The total population of the ATU Gagauzia and the Taraclia district is 205.437 persons⁴⁹, or 5,78% of the total population of the Republic of Moldova. Besides the fact that the ATU Gagauzia and the Taraclia district include localities for the compact residence of national minorities from these two administrative-territorial units, they have a population with an overwhelming majority of Russian language speakers⁵⁰.

As the results of the „Study on the degree of the UTA Gagauzia and Taraclia district population integration into the society of the Republic of Moldova “ (hereinafter the Study⁵¹) show, the residents of these two administrative territorial units prefer watching news and analytical programs in Russian⁵², thus having a degree of trust in the mass media from Russia which is a number of times higher than the ones in Moldova, Ukraine, Romania and EU⁵³, which is directly proportional with the degree of influence that Russian mass media have in these administrative territorial units.

In the context of the situation in Eastern Europe in the later years and especially in neighbouring Ukraine, aspects of the mass media influence gain a very important meaning, since Eastern Europe, including the Republic of Moldova, became the place of confrontation for the geopolitical games of Russia and the West in the person of the European Union and the United States of America.

In this battle Russian mass media became a serious instrument of influence on public opinion, forming the attitude of the population towards various processes on a global, national, regional and even local scale⁵⁴.

Study results show that the opinion of the ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district inhabitants on events in Ukraine, political aspects and historic memory reflect the vision promoted by Russian mass media. Besides, it can be unequivocally stated that the opinion of the population in these administrative-territorial units on the Eastern Partnership project initiated by the European Union for six former soviet Republics and in particular the European Integration process of the Republic of Moldova, was formed exclusively by Russian mass media, who described the process as a threat to regional stability, the loss of the sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova and a threat to the Russian-speaking population in these countries.

According to study results, events in Ukraine in the last years and the role of Russian mass media in preparing the populations of Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk for these events, reflections of the actual

⁴⁹ ATU Gagauzia – 161.818, Taraclia district 43.619, National Bureau of Statistics data

⁵⁰ The „Russian speaking population” term refers to the category of Moldovan citizens who do not speak the country’s official language and prefer limiting themselves to Russian

⁵¹ http://www.ipp.md/public/files/Evenimente/2016/Sondaj_Gagauzia_-_Taraclia_ru.pdf

⁵² According to Study results a total of 92,6% of respondents in the ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district prefer watching televised programs and news in Russian.

⁵³ According to Study results, a total of 83.2% of respondents in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district have great trust or a certain amount of trust in Russian mass media.

⁵⁴ Russian Mass media had an important influence in the results of the election for the Governor (Bashkan) of Gagauzia on March 22, 2015. It is notable that this was the first time the election result was determined in the first round, and the winner was a woman.

events, in forming the attitudes of ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district populations⁵⁵ towards events in Ukraine, demonstrate the impact that Russian mass media may have on the political, humanitarian situation in the neighbouring countries, and even on the modification of borders.

Considering existing geopolitical divisions in Moldovan society, including due to efforts by Russian mass media and the impact they have not only on the Populations of the ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district but also on the entire segment of Russian speakers in Moldovan society in matters of internal and external policy, the Republic of Moldova is confronted with a serious challenge in contouring a unique understanding and perception among the country's population regarding the processes taking place in the country and abroad. It should be mentioned that in Moldovan society, there is another segment, the one of the Romanian language speakers that are under the influence of the Romanian language mass media, including those in Romania and the west, which reflects events from a standpoint different from that of Russian mass media. In these conditions, it is obvious that Moldovan society is disintegrated from an informational point of view, while its various linguistic segments have varying perceptions of processes taking place in the country and abroad.

This situation leads to the necessity for the Authorities of the Republic of Moldova and those of ATU Gagauzia to develop actions at a local and national level that would aim at overcoming the dangerous division in the perception of events occurring in the country and abroad by various linguistic segments of the society in Moldova, as well as actions that would compensate the negative impact of Russian mass media in the country, which promotes the existing divisions and represents a potential threat to the country's security and independence.

In this paper I analysed and compared the degree of influence of the local, national and Russian mass media in forming the public opinion in ATU Gagauzia in aspects of local, national and international importance. The respective situation described on the example of the ATU Gagauzia may be projected in varying degrees on the rest of the Republic of Moldova territory.

The purpose of this paper is to make recommendations to local and national authorities on modifying existing policies with the aim to overcome existing divisions disintegrating various segments of Moldovan society by linguistic aspects in a matter of perceiving events on a national and international scale.

The paper consists of an introduction, four chapters and conclusions. The first chapter analyses local laws of ATU Gagauzia in the audiovisual sphere and their interactions with the national legislation in the field.

The state of the mass media market in the ATU Gagauzia, the local, national, Russian mass media degree of influence on the ATU Gagauzia public opinion on aspects of local, national and international importance, as well as the reasons affecting the state of things in the field are analysed in the second, third and fourth chapter.

⁵⁵ According to the study, 53,3% of respondents think the current Government in Ukraine was not elected democratically, while 77,8% of respondents support the incorporation of Crimea into Russia.

1. Examining local legislation of the ATU Gagauzia, as well as its interaction with the national legislation in the field of the audiovisual

The legal status of the ATU Gagauzia is set by the Law of the Republic of Moldova on the Special legal status of Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri) No. 344 of 23 December 1994 (hereinafter law, No. 344). Article 12 of Law No. 344 grants the Gagauzia People's Assembly (GPA) the right to adopt local laws in the following fields:

- a) science, culture and education;
- b) housing and housing services, landscaping;
- c) healthcare, physical education and sports;
- d) local budget, finance and fiscal issues;
- e) economy and ecology;
- f) labour and social security relations.

In Part 2 of Article 12 of Law no. 344, we cannot find fields like radio broadcasting that may be regulated by the GPA. However, in 2007, the People's Assembly adopted the ATU Gagauzia Law number 66-VIII / III from 10.07.2007 on television and radio (hereinafter Local law No. 66). The People's Assembly adopted local law No. 66 after the Parliament of Moldova adopted the Code of the Audiovisual under No. 260 of 27.07.2006. The audiovisual reform was held in Moldova in 2006, aiming at implementing international recommendations concerning the RM in this area, among the recommendations there being the privatization of the audiovisual media. Thus, the national Teleradio Moldova state broadcasting company was reorganized and became public. The Audiovisual Code also stipulated the functioning of the regional public broadcaster Teleradio Gagauzia, that would have to be formed as a result of the reorganization of the homonymous state regional broadcasting company, operating at the time.

Article 65 of the Audiovisual Code also provides for the operation, based on the People's Assembly decision, of the "Teleradio Gagauzia" regional public broadcasting organization. To implement Article 65 of the Audiovisual Code, the People's Assembly adopted Law No. 66. Thus, under Article 65 of the audiovisual code, assuming adoption by the People's Assembly of just the solution to ensure implementation of this article, the Local law appeared that goes far beyond the limits of the frame indicated by Article 65 of the Code.

Additional to the procedure for the organisation of the Teleradio Gagauzia regional company, Local law No.66 regulates the entire audiovisual field for Gagauzia, including licensing issues, placing television advertising, audiovisual communication principles, functioning of private mass media, etc. Thus, a parallel legislation for the audiovisual was created in Gagauzia. This law did not officially cancel the action of the Audiovisual Code. However, its adoption created the risk that, in lack of synergies in the reform of local and national audiovisual legislation, for contradictions to appear between local Law No. 66 and the Audiovisual Code, which would invariably lead to the lack of possibility for some of the Audiovisual Code provisions to be fully implemented in Gagauzia. Such situations indeed began appearing along with amendments to the ATU Gagauzia local legislation regulating the field of the audiovisual.

Upon adopting Local Law No. 66 the possible consequences of such an approach for the application of Audiovisual Code Article 65 were not discussed. Although local law No. 66 far exceeded the limits of Audiovisual Code Article 65, it completely does not conflict with the Code, being copied from it and making a multitude of references to it, and not granting Gagauz authorities powers pertaining to national authorities according to the audiovisual code. Consequently, there was no tension in relations between the center and the autonomy when the law was adopted.

This approach functioned in an environment where most of the People's Assembly members were politically loyal to authorities in Chisinau⁵⁶. In the moments when the influence of central authorities on the GPA was weakening there were frequent contradictions in the vision/interpretation of competences of Gagauzia in important fields of life, including in a sphere as important as the Audiovisual. These contradictions turned into dissonances between local and national legislation in the audiovisual field.

The governing Coalition in Chisinau didn't have a strong political influence on the decision-making process in the fifth legislature People's Assembly⁵⁷. Consequently, during the mandate of the current ATU Gagauzia GPA, the local law in the field of the Audiovisual has suffered major changes.

Despite general conformity with the national Audiovisual code, some provisions of Local law No. 66 contravened to it from the very beginning and undermined some of the basic principles of Audiovisual communication, that would insure the freedom of mass media from political influence, making possible the limitation of the freedom to express opinions in Gagauzia. Specifically, the Law enabled the GPA⁵⁸ to monitor and supervise the respect of Local law No. 66, as well as competences to form the Supervisory Board (SB) of the "Gagauz Radio Televizionu" (GRT PC) Regional Public Company⁵⁹.

One of the objectives of the audiovisual reform carried out in Moldova in 2006, was to ensure the independence of mass media from the influence of political power. To achieve this, the Coordinating Council of the Audiovisual (CCA), an independent national authority for the regulation of the Audiovisual field was created based on the Audiovisual Code, with a mandate to monitor and supervise compliance with the Audiovisual Code across the country, and to form the Supervisory Board (SB) of the "Teleradio Moldova"⁶⁰ National public television and radio company.

The fact that the GPA assigned itself powers to control the compliance and supervision of local Law No. 66 and to create the SB of the GRT PC had a negative impact on the GRT PC activity. The fifth legislature GPA leadership used it to intervene in the management of the company management, causing a leadership crisis in the GRT PC, beginning with 2013.

The first attempt to amend local law No. 66 was made by the fifth legislature GPA in 2013. Amendments revealed severed discrepancies from the vision of the center on the means to administer the audiovisual field in Gagauzia. Amendments aim, in particular, to transfer the licensing powers of audiovisual mass media in Gagauzia from the CCA to the ATU Gagauzia Main Administration for Construction and Infrastructure.⁶¹ Other changes were also made, yet this one is the most contradictory in relation to the Audiovisual code. Attempts to make changes were unsuccessful since the law amending Local law No. 66 adopted by the GPA was not signed by the Governor (Bashkan) of Gagauzia, while the GPA did not seek to challenge the veto decision of the Bashkan.

⁵⁶ The Majority in the third legislature People's Assembly that adopted Local law No.66, was part of the Fraction "For a blossoming Gagauzia in a renewed Moldova", that included representatives from the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova and independent representatives. The mandate of the third legislature GPA coincided with the period of the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova government.

⁵⁷ The fifth legislature GPA was elected on 11 October 2012. Its competences expire on 11 October 2016.

⁵⁸ The Gagauzia People's Assembly is Gagauzia's representative and legislative body elected for 4 years in direct elections.

⁵⁹ Local law No. 66 gave the GPA competences to organise and carry out the contest to occupy vacant positions as well as to approve Supervision Council Members.

⁶⁰ CCA organises the competition to occupy the vacant member positions in the Supervisory Council of the "Teleradio Moldova" national public company. Selected CCA members are approved by Parliament.

⁶¹ Part of the Gagauzia Executive Committee-the executive body of the ATU Gagauzia.

Another attempt to amend local law No. 66 was made on 4 November 2014, when the GPA adopted a law amending Local law No. 66. The attempt was successful; the law was signed by the Bashkan, published in “EKSPRESS Kanon”, the Official Gazette of Gagauzia⁶². One should note that the initiative to introduce these changes in local law No. 66 came from the Gagauzia Executive Committee⁶³.

Amendments to Local law No. 66 04.11.2014 mainly referred to the field of licensing in the audiovisual sphere. Following amendments, competences to grant licenses for radio broadcasting on the territory of Gagauzia were allocated to an authorised competent authority of the Gagauzia Executive Committee (or pertaining to the Gagauzia Executive Committee)⁶⁴. They included the issuance of: broadcast licences, permits for the functioning of networks, as well the authorisation to retransmit information systems. This had limited the capacity of the CCA to insure the supervision of abidance to the Audiovisual code on the territory of ATU Gagauzia, since local audiovisual mass media were operating on licences issued by the Authorities of Gagauzia. The broadcast licence is an important instrument of influence over the mass media by the regulating authorities in the audiovisual field. In this case, the CCA could not influence mass media that it did not licence.

Owners of local cable networks in the ATU Gagauzia, as well as local mass media broadcasting audiovisual products through these networks largely benefited from amendments to Local law No.66. The mass media broadcasting through radio channels and frequencies could not benefit from these amendments due to lack of technical and legal possibilities to develop and distribute radio frequencies in ATU Gagauzia.

It is worth mentioning that local cable networks benefited from changes in local law No. 66 not as much to produce and distribute their own television systems, but to a great extent in order to retransmit media from Russia, bypassing restrictions imposed by national broadcasting laws. This was one of the reasons that owners of local cable networks were actively involved in lobbying for changes in local law No. 66 of 11.04.2014. In their view, the rules to retransmit foreign information systems that exist in Moldova, do not allow them to meet the needs of customers wishing to watch the original Russian TV channels that are popular in Gagauzia, like Channel One, NTV, RTR, Russia Channel.

At the same time, the retransmission of Russian channels by local cable operators in the ATU Gagauzia based on the local audiovisual legislation in Gagauzia and bypassing the holders of exclusive rights to retransmit these channels in Moldova, raises questions on the legality of such actions. The existence of local audiovisual legislation in ATU Gagauzia does not deny the effect of the Broadcasting Code of Gagauzia and the rules established by it. Moreover, the retransmission of mass media systems from Russia, also falls under RM Law No. 139 of 02.07.2010 on copyright and related rights. Russian channel retransmission by cable television operators in ATU Gagauzia without appropriate permission, violates Law No. 139, and at the same time the rights of companies with exclusive rights to retransmit Russian TV channels in Moldova. This demonstrates on the one hand, the inability (and, to some extent, unwillingness) of Gagauz authorities to comply with national legislation in applying their powers, on the other hand, the inability of Moldovan authorities to ensure countrywide compliance.

⁶²http://dimpo67.narod.ru/vesti_gagauzii/2014/Buletin_169-171.pdf

⁶³Through his position, the Bashkan of Gagauzia is also Chairman of the Gagauzia Executive Committee.

⁶⁴This formulation was used in ATU Gagauzia Law No. 46-XXIII/V of 04.11.2014 on amending and completing ATU Gagauzia Law No.66-VIII/III of 10.07.2007 “On Television and Radio “.

Holders of exclusive rights⁶⁵ to retransmit Russian channels in Moldova do not retransmit them in pure form, but by adding their own program systems, as a rule analytical-informative programs (news, political talk shows) that are broadcasted in prime time. Thus, analytical programs produced by mass media in Russia are broadcasted at later hours. According to cable network owners, this is an inconvenience to their clients, for which news programs of federal Russian channels are an important source of international news as well as news from the Russian Federation⁶⁶.

Contradictions between the national and local legislation on media licenses existed long before the adoption of amendments to Local law No. 66 of 04.11.2014. The ATU Gagauzia Law on licensing certain kinds of activity on the territory of Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri) No. 15-IX/II of 7 July 2000 (hereinafter called Local law No. 15) allowed, at the time of adoption, for the Department of industry, transportation, constructions and the service sector to issue licenses in the audiovisual field⁶⁷, while the necessary political conditions weren't always present for the adoption of local law No.15. During the period when Georghe Tabunscic was Bashkan, which coincided with the communist party government, the Gagauzia Executive Committee did not apply provisions of local law No. 15 in this aspect and refused to licence local mass media that sought broadcast licences based on this law.

Licensing competences for the audiovisual field were modified during the period of Mihail Formuzal as Bashkan. The practice of issuing broadcast licenses for Gagauzian mass media based on Local law No. 15 that continues today was re-established. Modifications to Local law No. 66 of 11.04.2014 were thus harmonized with Local Law No. 15.

Provisions of Local law No. 66 as well as those of Local Law No. 15 do not oblige national mass media or cable network operators activating based on a licence issued by the CCA to compulsorily hold a local licence, in case they broadcast or are located on ATU Gagauzia territory. These two local laws offer an opportunity for operators of Local cable networks in ATU Gagauzia to elude provisions of the national legislation in the field of the audiovisual.

Recent changes in local legislation from the audiovisual field in the ATU Gagauzia were introduced on 1 March 2016, when the GPA adopted a new Law on the audiovisual in Gagauzia⁶⁸. The new law did not change the situation of licenses in the audiovisual, installed after amendments to Local Law No. 66 of 04.11.2014. This was not the purpose of adopting the law of the audiovisual.

The adoption by the GPA of the Audiovisual law aimed, in the view of Parliament member Roman Tyutin⁶⁹, at *"solving the crisis and restoring order"* in the regional public TV-radio broadcaster, the "GagauzRadioTelevizionu" public regional company.

Basically, the adoption of the local audiovisual law, enabled the reorganisation of GRT PC. The following were reorganised: the managing structure of the company, the Radio and Television chairman position, the

⁶⁵ Program systems may only be rebroadcasted on the territory of the Republic of Moldova by holders of exclusive retransmission rights. Mass media wishing to retransmit Russian mass media in their broadcast network must have agreements with exclusive right owners.

⁶⁶ Opinion expressed by one of the local cable networks in Gagauzia during detailed individual interviews.

⁶⁷ Annex No. 2 to ATU Gagauzia Law on licensing certain activities on the territory of Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri) No. 15-IX/II of 7 July 2000.

⁶⁸ Local law No. 66 was cancelled upon adoption of the local audiovisual law. http://dimp067.narod.ru/vesti_gagauzii/2016/Buletin_220-221.pdf

⁶⁹ The Freedom Live Program <http://gagauzmedia.md/index.php?newsid=6457>

executive director position was renamed and so were the Television's and Radio's editor-in-chief positions. Basically all managerial competences of the company were transferred to the SB of the GRT PC, thus violating the balance of power between management and the Supervisory Board of the company, while the GPA obtained the right to dismiss members of the Supervisory Council without explanation. The new Law on Broadcasting has built a system allowing the GPA to influence and control the GRT PC through the People's Assembly, which has excessive powers of leadership in GRT PC, the independence of the latter having, in turn, been undermined since the GPA should not dismiss any SB member without reasoning.⁷⁰.

Another aspect that I would wish to examine is the implementation on the territory of the ATU Gagauzia of the RM Law on the privatization of public periodical publications No. 221 of 17.09.2010. The law was adopted in 2010 and stipulated the restructuring of all public periodical publications held by authorities, including the ATU Gagauzia authorities in official gazettes. Official gazettes had, in turn, to be registered as non-governmental organizations with public institution status. A 24-month period was established to implement requirements of law on the privatization of public periodicals, RM Law No. 221. This two-year term expired in 2013⁷¹.

When Republic of Moldova Law No. 221 was adopted, there were 3 public periodicals on the territory of Gagauzia: the "Vesti Gagauzii" newspaper, held by the GPA; the "Znamea" newspaper, held by the Ceadir-Lunga district administration; and the "Panorama" newspaper, belonging to the Vulcanesti district administration.

Currently, requirements of Republic of Moldova Law No. 221 are not applied on the territory of Gagauzia. Of the three public periodicals in Gagauzia that existed at the moment of the law adoption, one, the "Panorama" newspaper, was closed. The other two are still held by the GPA (Vesti Gagauzii) and the Ceadir-Lunga district administration (Znamea).

This chapter's analysis shows the legal disputes arising from contradictions existing between the local and national legislations. Indigenous actors use the local ATU Gagauzia Audiovisual Law as a base for non-compliance with the national legislation in the area. Sometime, national law is ignored without any local legal provisions, as is the case with the denationalisation of public periodicals. Such an approach in applying the law undermines the rule of law, threatening the blockage on ATU Gagauzia territory of the potential legal measures or mechanisms developed and discussed to consolidate the country's informational space by the central authorities of Moldova in order to overcome the division in Moldovan society.

2. The situation of local mass media in ATU Gagauzia and their role in forming public opinion

Local mass media in ATU Gagauzia are diverse, and include audio video, printed and online media, including on-line, including state owned, public and private ones. The following may be mentioned among local mass media:

Electronic audiovisual media:

⁷⁰ A more detailed analysis of the impact the new ATU Gagauzia Law on the Audiovisual may have on the freedom of press and of expression, may be found here: <http://pilgrim-demo.org.md/noutati/control-of-legality/>

⁷¹ <http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=336636&lang=2>

Television broadcasted through radio waves/frequencies⁷²:

- “TV Gagauzia” regional public television-regional coverage, broadcasting on the entire Gagauzia territory
- “AiînAcîc” private television –broadcasting on the territory of the Ceadir-Lunga town and district;
- “BizimAidinic” (ATV) private television- broadcasting in the Comrat and Ceadir-Lunga districts
- “ATV Çocuk” private television – broadcasting on the territory of the Comrat district.

Television channels broadcasted through cable networks and MMDS standard networks:

- “Eni Ai,” private television broadcasted through a standard MMDS network, belonging to operator “5 TV”⁷³;
- BizimDalgamiz television broadcasted through a standard MMDS network, belonging to operator “5 TV”;
- Pervyi Narodnyi (One Popular) – broadcasted through a cable network, functioning based on a license issued by the general department for constructions and infrastructure of the ATU Gagauzia.

Radio stations⁷⁴:

- The “GRT FM” regional public radio station broadcasting on the entire territory of Gagauzia;
- The “Pro100 Radio” private radio station broadcasting on the entire territory of Gagauzia;
- The “Albena” private radio station broadcasting on the entire territory of Gagauzia⁷⁵;
- The “Bugeac FM”, private radio station broadcasting on the entire territory of Gagauzia.

Print media

- The “Vesti Gagauzii” (News of Gagauzia) printed periodical; The “Znamea” (“Banner”) periodical; the “Edinaya Gagauzia” (“United Gaguzia”) public periodical⁷⁶.

Online mass media⁷⁷:

- Gagauzinfo.md informational portal (2129 Facebook users);
- Gagauzmedia.md informational portal (851 Facebook users);
- Gagauz.md informational portal (791 Facebook users);
- Budjakonline.md informational portal (701 Facebook users);
- Gagauzyeri.md informational portal (480 Facebook users).

The existence of formal mass media diversity in the ATU Gagauzia, does not, however contribute to the goal of informing the people of Gagauzia. Local mass media in Gagauzia do not differ from one another by genre and theme; almost all have the same format, and, basically, reflect events occurring in Gagauzia and abroad. Generally, the media in Gagauzia prepare information from the site of the event, if these events take place in the administrative center of Gagauzia, the town of Comrat, or publish articles from the national or foreign media, when it comes to events, occurring outside of Gagauzia or abroad the country.

The existence of original programming in the radio and TV broadcast spectrum is very limited. Basically every local radio and TV station produces news broadcasts, some of them produce their own political talk shows with one or more guests in the studio⁷⁸. Among the materials produced by the local mass media there are virtually no journalistic investigation materials, documentary films or materials requiring efforts

⁷²Coordinating Council of the Audiovisual (CCA) registry http://cca.md/files/Registru%20TV%20Eter%20Etalon_0.pdf

⁷³ CCA Registry <http://cca.md/files/Registru%20Cabl%20Etalon.pdf>

⁷⁴ CCA Registry http://cca.md/files/Registru%20Radio%20Etalon_0.pdf

⁷⁵ The “Albena” radio station belongs to a company in Taraclia, but is broadcasted both on the Taraclia district territory and the entire Gagauzia

⁷⁶ “Edinaya Gagauzia,” (United Gagauzia) is a periodical of the homonymous popular movement.

⁷⁷ This analytical article reflects the Internet mass media with the biggest subscriber numbers on Facebook, as well as those preparing and publishing materials daily.

⁷⁸ Gagauz media produces two chat shows; EniAi produces one chat show; TVGagauzia produces several chat shows.

and investment of time and resources. To fill the program schedules, local television stations retransmit foreign programs, mainly those produced in Russia.

The Internet mass media mainly publishes articles in the form of text, photos and videos, containing descriptions of events that took place in Gagauzia. Some mass media also publish commentaries on various events, written by staff or freelance correspondents. Mostly, the mass media in Gagauzia produce reports from the place of the events taking place in the locality where the respective mass media is located. The same applies to the GRT PC. This proves the limited logistical and operational capacity of local mass media.

The largest number of programs in the program schedule may be seen on the GRT PC, which receives public subsidies from the regional budget as well as funds from the sale of advertising. However, because of the crisis existing in the company amid confrontation between the Supervisory Board and company management with the active intervention of the GPA, which uses the GRT PC Supervisory Board as an instrument to influence the company, its operations, including those of a financial nature are paralyzed. In this regard, GRT GP was unable to fulfil its functions and provide quality information and analytical products. The management crisis in the GRT PC began in 2013 and continued until the new law on broadcasting in Gagauzia of March 1, 2016 was adopted. Consequences of the crisis are visible today, because in this period some broadcasts being excluded from the program schedule and some journalists being dismissed and having not yet returned in the program schedule of the television in Gagauzia⁷⁹.

During the crisis in the GRT Public Company, the Company Supervisory Council dismissed the current GRT PC chairman several times. Decisions by the Supervisory Council on dismissing the company chairman were attacked in court and ruled illegal. This led to trial expenses that were later paid from the GRT PC budget.

In the 2014-2015 period, three electoral campaigns were held in Gagauzia⁸⁰, in which the GRT PC had an important role as regional public broadcaster. According to the national and local electoral legislation, the GRT PC must reflect all elections and organize electoral debates. Because of the crisis in management, the reflection of elections by the GRT PC was endangered, a fact signalled by civil society organisations⁸¹.

The reaction of local mass media to the GRT PC crisis that paralysed the activity of a public company for a number of years, to the adoption of the ATU Gagauzia Audiovisual Law, that may substantially limit the freedom of expression in Gagauzia and the editorial independence of the GRT PC, to the adoption of the Gagauzia Law on education, containing a number of provisions affecting rights of national minorities living on ATU Gagauzia territory, exposed their unsatisfactory professional level.

Local mass media reflected these events as part of reports presenting facts and opinions by authority representatives and experts. Some mass media organised talk shows with experts, representatives of the autonomy's authorities, in which they attempted to discuss existent issues⁸². The GRT PC crisis was most actively reflected by the Gagauzia.md informational portal but also by GRT PC itself. During these talks-shows, guests present in the studios of the TV channel were asked questions in attempts to form viewers' opinions on the situation. Besides these, there were no analytical materials or informational campaigns that would reflect on the essence of the problem in detail, that would form public opinion and would

⁷⁹ The "Facing the region" political chat show by Vitaly Gaydarzhi was excluded from the broadcast schedule.

⁸⁰ Elections to the Republic of Moldova Parliament in 2014, elections of the Governor (Bashkan) of Gagauzia in 2015 and local elections in 2015.

⁸¹ <http://pilgrim-demo.org.md/noutati/ru-заявление-организаций-гражданского-2/>

⁸² The Gagauzmedia.md informational portal organised a number of broadcasts to discuss the ATU Gagauzia Audiovisual law and the ATU Gagauzia Law on education: <http://gagauzmedia.md/index.php?newsid=7378>, <http://gagauzmedia.md/index.php?newsid=6457>.

declare the local mass media position on these problems in front of the public and parties concerned to satisfy public interest. The PC crisis quite clearly demonstrated the capacities and level of GRT PC journalists who could not invert the situation with the adoption of the Gagauzia audiovisual law and could not defend the company's editorial independence.

Among the main problems confronting the local mass media is the limited financial capacity. In the context of the Republic of Moldova mass media market, the media, including local ones in Gagauzia mainly exist from advertising funds. The advertising market in Gagauzia is very limited and cannot satisfy the financing needs of local mass media in the autonomy. The lack of financial transparency among the mass media in Gagauzia does not allow us to identify the sources of financing for their activity.

Lack of financing makes the media vulnerable to political influence. This is clearly demonstrated by results of media monitoring during the 2010⁸³ and 2015⁸⁴ elections of the Gagauzia Governor (Bashkan) and during elections in the Gagauzia People's Assembly in 2012⁸⁵ made by order of the Pilgrim-Demo NGO. Monitoring results have shown that Gagauzia mass media did not insure an objective reflection of candidates during electoral campaigns, giving clear preference to some candidates and presenting others negatively, except the GRT PC and the Gagauzmedia.md informational portal, which generally respected conditions to reflect elections. The rest of the mass media have, according to monitoring data, reflected elections in a partial manner.

Another issue I wish to examine is the transparency of mass media owners in Gagauzia, especially on-line mass media that recently appeared massively in Gagauzia. If in the case of audiovisual mass media who are licensed by the CCA and the names of their managers, who are in most cases their real owners, may be determined from the CCA register in the case of informational portals it is not at all clear who is behind them, what sources they were created from and finance their activities from.

A very serious limitation in the work of local Gagauzia mass media is the deficit of qualified human resources in journalism and mass media in general. This situation may arise from the following reasons: Gagauzia is not an attractive place for journalists to work and live in; lack of financial resources of local mass media limits their ability to attract professional journalists; also does the lack of a journalist specialization at the Comrat State University.

Local mass media do not play serious role in shaping opinions of the autonomy's population as to events occurring abroad or events occurring in neighbouring countries. If such materials appear in local media, they are usually materials produced by foreign mass media, as a rule Russian ones. Thus, local mass media plays the role of conductor for the views of foreign Russian language media.

Among the functions that the GRT PC may carry out, considering that the ATU Gagauzia positioned itself as a center of Gagauzians from all over the world⁸⁶, is the reflection of events and life of Gagauzians living compactly in other countries⁸⁷. These may also include the ways in which Gagauzians living compactly in

⁸³ <http://www.e-democracy.md/files/elections/bascan2010/fina-report-pilgrim-demo-elections-gagauzia-2010-ro.pdf>

⁸⁴ http://pilgrim-demo.org.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Bashkan-elections-2015_Final-Report.pdf

⁸⁵ <http://www.e-democracy.md/files/elections/gagauzia2012/final-report-pilgrim-demo-gagauzia-2012-ro.pdf>

⁸⁶ Three world congresses of the Gagauz were held in Gagauzia. The fourth Congress is planned for realisation in the autumn of 2016.

⁸⁷ Besides the Republic of Moldova, compact residence places for Gagauz exist in Ukraine, Bulgaria, Greece, Russia.

<https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Гарызы>

neighbouring Ukraine, confront themselves with events occurring in the east of this state and the way in which events of 2 May 2014 in Odessa⁸⁸, affected lives of Gagauzians in Ukraine.

The local mass media working language is another circumstance affecting their possibilities. All local mass media in Gagauzia are Russian speaking⁸⁹, while broadcasted/produced materials are, mainly, in Russian. Most journalists in local mass media only speak Russian. This restricts access of local Gagauzia mass media to Romanian and English language media. This issue has a serious impact on the capacity of local mass media to form the opinion of the autonomy's population, regarding events and processes taking place abroad as well as statements by foreign press on the Republic of Moldova and ATU Gagauzia.

3. The presence and influence of Chisinau mass media in the autonomy

The population of Gagauzia has access to five national coverage TV channels– Moldova 1 (public television), Prime, Publika, Canal 2 and Canal 3⁹⁰. The other channels in Chisinau are also broadcasted on Gagauzia territory, yet, mainly through cable network operators Moldtelecom and Starnet⁹¹, or through specially allocated frequencies and/or through local cable networks. Through the Moldtelecom and Starnet cable networks, people also have access to local television channels from other regions, additionally to those in Chisinau. Radio stations broadcasted on the territory of Gagauzia are mainly Radio Moldova, Hit FM and Maestro FM.

For the population in Gagauzia, the mass media in the capital are the main source of information on national level events: information reflecting activities of the Government, the Parliament as well as economic and social national news. Considering that the people of Gagauzia mainly watch, listen and read Russian language mass media, from the mass media in Chisinau only those offering broadcasts in Russian are watched in Gagauzia. Of the mass media in Chisinau featuring Russian language broadcasts and which are watched to some extent by the population of the autonomy, we can mention: Moldova 1, Prime, Publika TV, Canal 2, Canal 3, NTV Moldova, RTR Moldova, TV 7.

Of these channels, only Moldova 1 and Publika include own production programs in their content. Moldova 1 is a general format channel with analytical and entertainment programs in its broadcast schedule, the format of Publika being just informational and analytic.

In its content, Channel 3 only partially offers own production programs, these being mainly news editions in Russian and Romanian. One should note that other content includes series produced abroad (not in Russia).

In their grid, channels Prime, NTV Moldova and RTR Moldova retransmit analytical and entertainment programs of Channel 1 (Russia), NTV (Russia), Rossiya 1(Russia) that constitute the majority of these medias contents. These channels enjoy most popularity among residents of Gagauzia.

Thus, channels Prime, NTV Moldova and RTR Moldova are relayers of informational-analytic broadcasts by Russian federal channels on the territory of Moldova and in particular on the territory of ATU Gagauzia.

⁸⁸ The Odessa region is the biggest compact residence center for the Gagauz in Ukraine. According to data of the 2001 census, the Gagauz population in the Odessa region amounted to 27.617 persons. https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Гагаузы_на_Украине

⁸⁹ Except GRT PC that produces program content (news, talk shows, entertainment programs), in all three Gagauzia's official languages: Gagauz, Russian and Moldovan.

⁹⁰ Channels Prime, Publika TV, Canal 2, Canal 3 are owned by the General Media Group media holding, controlled by Democrat party vice-president, Vlad Plahotniuc.

⁹¹ The Moldtelecom cable network encompasses the entire territory of Gagauzia, StarNet is present in two towns: Comrat and Ceadir-Lunga.

As for the Republic of Moldova's external vector and European integration process, as well as regarding events in eastern Ukraine, the Chisinau mass media (or, more to the point the analytic information programs produced by them) cannot compete with those from Russia, as Study results prove⁹². Despite many efforts by some channels in Chisinau with national coverage to produce informational programs in Russian to inform the Russian speaking population of Moldova on the European integration of Moldova, this did not help orient the public opinion of Gagauzia in favour of the European integration process.

It should be noted here that, despite efforts by the mass media in Russia, who had a significant contribution to the formation of negative attitudes by residents of Gagauzia regarding the process of Moldova's European integration⁹³, the efficiency of these efforts could be reduced to a minimum, in case if improvements were to be made to the quality of life after the Alliance for European Integration came to power in 2009, when the Republic of Moldova's European integration process was activated. However, in this period, the political, financial and social situation in the country worsened, the period being marked by a series of corruption scandals, including the so-called "theft of the century"⁹⁴ which, involuntarily, started being associated by citizens to the European integration process.

There are several factors that limit the capacities of national media and do not allow them to play an important and decisive role in shaping the opinions of Gagauzia's population on foreign policy or the Republic of Moldova's external vector, as well as points of view on international events or developments abroad.

There is more business and politics than journalism on the media market. Most Russian language national mass media like Prime, NTV Moldova and RTR Moldova, allocate over 70% of their broadcasting time for the retransmission of their Russian homologues, Channel One, NTV and Russia 1, respectively. Owners of Romanian versions of these Russian channels extract profit from the placement of advertising without investing serious resources in producing their own content. And program packages produced by these national channels, which consist mainly of information and analytical programs focus, in most cases, on promoting certain political parties⁹⁵.

Limited financial resources and monopoly on the advertising market. According to the Advertising Agency Association of Moldova, the volume of the televised advertising market was of 14 million USD in 2014, a great share of which belongs to Casa Media which, like General Media Group is controlled by Democratic Party of Moldova vice-president, Vlad Plahotniuc⁹⁶. Here one may clearly see the monopolisation of the televised mass media and televised advertising market. According to information from www.newsmaker.md the most profitable TV channel in the General Media Group holding is Prime, while Publika TV is subsidized.

⁹²At the question "If there was a referendum (elections) on the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the EU, would you vote for or against?" 79% of respondents in ATU Gagauzia stated they would vote "Against". Meanwhile, 84,4% of respondents in ATU Gagauzia answered they would vote "for" accession to the Eurasian Union.

⁹³A report of the Rossia 1 Channel "Vesti Rosii" program whose anchor Dmitri Kisselev is an example of such contribution.
<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2689344>

⁹⁴Extraction of currency reserves from the National Bank of the Republic of Moldova.

⁹⁵ Monitoring report on the mass media in Moldova http://media-azi.md/sites/default/files/CJI_Media_Monitoring_Report_Nov.2015-Jan.2016_RO.PDF

⁹⁶ NM Study: how is the television market divided in Moldova <http://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/issledovanie-nm-kak-podelen-moldavskiy-telerynok-22680>

Thus, we can conclude that a large part of the television market in Moldova and most of its television advertising market is concentrated in the same hands and is used to promote the political and business interests of certain persons.

During the year, there were attempts by the Moldovan Parliament, to amend the audiovisual code to limit the broadcasting of analytical TV and radio programs produced in countries that have not ratified the European Convention on Transfrontier Television (Russia has signed but not ratified it). The authors of the draft law aim, in this case, to limit the negative impact of Russian mass media.

However, the means through which the achievement of this aim is proposed might lead to an increase in the influence of the General Media Group holding⁹⁷, that may in turn significantly limit the freedom of the press in the Republic of Moldova and in consequence, the freedom of expression.

Lack of an integrated approach in television content production. National media do not produce the full range of television programs. Some of them only produce informational and analytical programs. Meanwhile, most residents of ATU Gagauzia watch television not only to learn about latest events and news but also for entertainment. Therefore, not only informational and analytical programs enjoy popularity, but also the entertainment and educational ones that are basically not produced by the national mass media.

Lack of national television channels focused just on the Russian speaking public in the Republic of Moldova. Almost all channels produce bilingual programs, which reduces the length of broadcasts in Russian in their broadcast list and which, also, does not allow them to maintain the Russian speaking public. One must mention the Teleradio-Moldova public company role. Teleradio Moldova does not offer full services for the Russian speaking population. The public company has two television channels, Moldova 1 (M1) and Moldova 2 (M2)⁹⁸. Both channels have mainly Romanian language programs in their broadcast list. Of the Russian language programs, only news in Russian exist in the program list of the M1 and M2 public televisions. For the public in ATU Gagauzia, the national public television offers programming in Gagauz pertaining to the publicist genre on topics of culture, traditions, history and traditions of the Gagauz people.

Generally, the policy of the public television and radio company for national minorities reflects the state policy. To combat the influence of Russia, the Republic of Moldova is promoting a policy to integrate national minorities that offers an individual approach to each national minority community, by creating conditions to promote the language and culture of national minorities in an attempt to thus reduce the role of Russian language, that insures the communion of national minorities of the Republic of Moldova as “speaking Russian”. Inspired by this approach, the national public television produces broadcasts in the language of national minorities⁹⁹.

The government of the Republic of Moldova and thus the public television refuses to admit that a significant part of the national minorities in Moldova are united by the linguistic criterion - Russian language speakers, including: Ukrainians, Russians, Gagauz, Bulgarians, Hebrews, Armenians and others. From the standpoint of strengthening the role of the public television in shaping the public opinion

⁹⁷ Work on amendments: how may amendments to the Code of the audiovisual help the media holding of Vladimir Plahotniuc <http://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/rabota-nad-popravkami-kak-izmeneniya-v-kodeks-o-televidenii-i-radio-mogut-pomoch-m-12779>

⁹⁸ Moldova 2 received a broadcast licence from the CCA on 29 April 2016. The channel is broadcasted through cable networks.

⁹⁹ In the M1 broadcast list, the program in Gagauz is called Gagauz Ocaa.

between the Gagauz and other representatives of national minorities, considered to be a group of people speaking Russian, the state policy of the Republic of Moldova and the policy of the public television regarding national minorities is not appropriate for the informational integration of various linguistic segments of Moldovan society.

ATU Gagauzia residents do not watch televised information and analytical programs in Gagauz for several reasons. The production of information and analytical programs in Gagauz is expensive since it requires large expenditures and numerous human resources; it is hard to achieve because there are few journalists able to produce and present information and high quality analytic journalistic products in the Gagauz language, and there are very few politicians, public figures speaking Gagauz, thus making impossible the production, for example, of political talk shows or news broadcasts about national and international events. The production of programs in languages of other national minorities in Moldova is also difficult, just like in the case of the Gagauz language.

For the Gagauz, belonging to Russian culture and knowing Russian language is, above all, an aspect of cultural, social and political development as a community. The Gagauz perceive Russian as their mother tongue, or, even more, as a language that provides access to education, Russian and world culture. For the Gagauz in Moldova, the Gagauz language serves as a guide, liaising them with their culture, traditions, customs, and to a certain extent, history of their people and in no case, as a language granting them access to news of national and international importance.

It is therefore clear that in the context of their current policy, M1 and M2 cannot play a least bit important role in shaping public opinion among the people of ATU Gagauzia. It would be desirable from the point of view of possible results and the efficiency of resource use, to create a public television that would focus on the Russian speaking public in Moldova.

Another aspect, which is does not lack importance is the independent coverage of events abroad. Basically no TV channel in Moldova has correspondents abroad, thus not presenting events that occur abroad from their place of development and, as practice shows, do not react to them. For example, none of the television channels with national coverage reflected the events taking place in Turkey on the night of July 15 to July 16, 2016¹⁰⁰. One should mention that the Republic of Turkey is an important economic and commercial partner of the Republic of Moldova and a major political actor in the Black Sea region. Events in Turkey may undermine the entire region's security. In the conditions in which television channels do not reflect and do not react to important events taking place abroad; it is difficult to talk about their role in forming a public opinion regarding these events.

It is important to mention the role of government in consolidating the capacities and opportunities of the mass media in Moldova in informing and forming public opinion. Regretfully, the Republic of Moldova has no role in this process. There are basically no funds allocated from the public budget to support the mass media, except for subsidies for the financing of the Teleradio-Moldova national public broadcaster that amounted to 83.3 million lei in 2015¹⁰¹, while the GRT PC is financed from the ATU Gagauzia budget. The activity of other television channels is not subsidized from the public budget.

¹⁰⁰The coup d'état attempt <http://www.mfa.gov.md/comunicate-pres.md/504593/>

¹⁰¹Teleradio-Moldova activity report for 2015 <http://www.trm.md/files/documente/rapoarte/rapoarte-de-activitate/RAPORT%20IPNA%20Compania%20„Teleradio-Moldova”%202015.pdf>

4. The role and influence of foreign mass media in perceiving the country situation in a global context

Russian media have, according to study results, the biggest impact on the people of Gagauzia. This influence is reflected not only in the perception of Moldova's foreign vector, the formation of opinions on events abroad, but also in matters of national and local importance. The results of the Governor (Bashkan) elections which took place on 22 March 2015 are an example of this. One should note that the winner of these elections was identified in the first round, the position of Bashkan being won by a woman. It is remarkable that in a society that is considered patriarchal, a woman won the elections, and the election result was determined in the first round, which has never occurred in the history of the Elections for Bashkan since 1995.

The election result was possible thanks to the active intervention of federal Russian mass media in the election coverage. For example, on Election Day, 22 March 2015, Russian Channel One presented reports on the voting process in Gagauzia, where the main protagonist was Irina Vlah, the candidate for Bashkan of Gagauzia. This report was broadcasted five times in five different news bulletins. Moreover, during the election campaign, other Russian federal channels, including Rossia24, produced several reports on the upcoming elections, with interviews only with candidate for Bashkan Irina Vlah and representatives from the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova that supported her.

The reason for such a strong influence of Russian mass media on the Russian speaking audience can be explained as follows. When talking about the Russian television, we must understand that it is a very strong television industry, which includes a large number of channels of different formats that produce their own content. Russian TV channels are numerous, they are diverse, offering a quality product, there being a great demand for them on the mass media market of the Republic of Moldova. And, most importantly, the Moldovan media market cannot offer anything substantial in return.

The Russian television industry has very large funds, including from the Russian state budget to support the mass media. For example, 80.2 billion rubbles were allocated for the support of mass media from the Russian Federation budget for 2016¹⁰², which amounts to approximately 1.144 billion euro. Beside the state budget, Russian mass media also receive incomes from advertising.

The demand of the ATU Gagauzia population for Russian channels is explained primarily by the fact that, for the vast majority of Gagauzia's population, Russian is basically the only communication language, except for the native Gagauz language. For this reason, residents of Gagauzia can simply not watch TV productions in other languages, such as English or Romanian.

Information and analytical programs of Russian media often contain materials to manipulate public opinion, and sometimes openly present lies instead of reflecting reality, especially when it comes to covering events in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova¹⁰³. They are also presented in quite a professional manner, and an unsophisticated public which is easy to manipulate, will have no doubts regarding truthfulness.

¹⁰² <https://meduza.io/news/2015/10/09/rashody-byudzheta-na-podderzhku-smi-v-2016-godu-sokratyat-na-1-1-milliarda-rubley>

¹⁰³ Dmitri Kiselev admitted to having used false documents in the "Vesti nedeli" broadcast <https://meduza.io/news/2016/05/16/dmitriy-kiselev-priznal-ispolzovanie-poddelnogo-dokumenta-v-efire-vestey-nedeli>

ATU Gagauzia residents are subject to manipulation, primarily because they do not have experience or at least have no considerable experience in viewing/reading quality journalistic material, based on principles of objectivity and journalistic ethics, given that a large part of Gagauzia's population was born, grew up and lived most their lives in the USSR, where the journalists and mass media acted as mouthpieces of the government and were mainly engaged in propaganda activity.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ATU Gagauzia people, including those who were born and raised in independent Moldova, remained in an informational space that was already dominated by Russian media based on the experience and traditions of Soviet journalism.

Another reason is the lack of critical thinking that can be attributed to the lack of democratic traditions and the low level of reading in society. According to results of the public opinion barometer commissioned by the Public Policy Institute, over 58.4% of respondents read less than once every three months¹⁰⁴. Lack of critical thinking among the population creates fertile ground for the manipulation of public opinion, since the population is inactive in searching and comparing the information presented by the mass media.

Russian mass media have access to the information space in Moldova through various channels, including through cable, through its partners in Moldova and satellite television. The attempt to restrict the retransmission of information and analytical programs produced by Russian mass media will not solve the problem since there is high demand for them in Moldova, in particular in the ATU Gagauzia, thus users of these programs in the ATU Gagauzia will seek ways to access them¹⁰⁵.

To ensure the application of restrictions, the CCA may only act in relation to cable network operators and partners of Russian mass media in the Republic of Moldova, that broadcast programs based on a licence issued by the CCA based on the Audiovisual code of the Republic of Moldova, without extension over satellite television. Applying restrictions on the territory of ATU Gagauzia, will be difficult for the reasons described in Chapter 1.

In light of statements by the leadership of Gagauzia, condemning the decision of Parliament, that adopted in the first lecture the draft law restricting the retransmission of information and analytic systems that are not produced in the EU and the signatory states to the European Convention on Transfrontier Television, one may assume that the ATU Gagauzia authorities will not take any action to harmonize the Audiovisual law of ATU Gagauzia considering amendments proposed in the Audiovisual code of the Republic of Moldova. If amendments will be made to the code, there will probably be an attempt by the Territorial Office of the State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova in Comrat to initiate the process to review the legality of the request to repeal the provisions of the ATU Gagauzia audiovisual law that contravene to amendments to the Audiovisual code, while authorities of ATU Gagauzia will in turn oppose it.

¹⁰⁴ Public opinion barometer of April 2016 http://www.ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/BOP_04.2016_prima_parte_finale-r.pdf

¹⁰⁵ On 7 July 2016 the Moldovan Parliament adopted draft Law no. 218 on amendments and supplements to the Audiovisual Code of the Republic of Moldova in the first lecture. The draft law proposes, specifically to add to Article 9 of the Audiovisual code paragraphs (2) and (3) as follows: "(2) It is prohibited for broadcasting companies or distributors of programs to broadcast and retransmit television channels and radio stations, containing informational and analytical programs that are not produced in the Member States of the European Union and in the States that are parties to the European Convention on trans-frontier television. (3) It is forbidden for broadcasting companies to broadcast information and retransmit informational, analytic and political programs, as well as broadcasts on military topics, which are not produced by EU Member States and States parties to the European Convention on Transfrontier television." During public hearings organised by the profile commission of the Parliament regarding the draft law, Nadine Gogu, executive director of the Independent Journalism Center drew attention to the wording of the draft law. She noted that amendments appear in the law that basically prohibit Russian TV channels in Moldova, although the authors of draft law have rejected this view. In addition to the prohibition of news, she mentioned, there is a separate provision to prohibit broadcasting channels featuring news from states that did not ratify the Convention on Transfrontier Television (Russia being among them).

This may cause a crisis in relations between authorities of ATU Gagauzia and Moldova, as evidenced by the reaction of the Bashkan of Gagauzia¹⁰⁶, the People's Assembly chairman¹⁰⁷ upon adopting draft law No. 218 in the first lecture.

Limiting the dissemination of Russian mass media as well as informational and analytical programs produced by them, may lead to the situation in which residents of ATU Gagauzia will refuse the services of cable television operators that have excluded Russian channels from their broadcast list and will start purchasing satellite antennae or chose other local operators of cable transmission.

This may also aggravate the crisis in relations between the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation, which sees this attempt by the Republic of Moldova to impose restrictions as an unfriendly act¹⁰⁸. Considering the enormous influence of Russian mass media in the ATU Gagauzia, this may be used as a supplementary element in aggravating the crisis between the autonomy and the center and that may destabilize the situation in the country.

Moreover, restrictions for broadcasting sets of programs by mass media from Russia can damage the image of the Republic of Moldova¹⁰⁹. International partners and international organisations for human rights firmly advised the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to not impose restrictions for the retransmission of foreign channels¹¹⁰ (Russian ones). According to the FreedomHouse human rights protection agency the restrictions would undermine the freedom of the press in the Republic of Moldova¹¹¹.

There is a risk that the adoption of Draft Law no. 218 establishing restrictions on retransmission programs of Russian mass media will create a bad precedent that could later be used to fight difference of opinion and restrict the activities of the opposition media in the Republic of Moldova.

There are already some trends of restricting the activity of opposition channels or channels presenting a critical standpoint regarding authorities. This is confirmed by the repartition of the mass media market in the Republic of Moldova, but also the redistribution of the televised advertising market, which was controlled at the beginning of 2016 in a proportion of 60.1% by the Casa Media sales house, which belongs to Dutch Company OTIV Prime Media BV, controlled by Vladimir Plahotniuc. Casa Media sells advertising for television channels officially owned by Vladimir Plahotniuc official (Prime, Canal 2, Canal 3 and Publika TV¹¹²).

These measures lead to the economic strangling of TV channels presenting an alternative point of view and that do not favour authorities, forcing them to close some programs. One of these channels is TV 7, where Natalia Morari's program "Politica" was closed. On the closing of one of her broadcast Natalia Morari

¹⁰⁶ Statement by the Bashkan of Gagauzia related to the adoption of amendments to the Audiovisual code of the Republic of Moldova <http://www.gagauzia.md/newsview.php?l=ru&idc=390&id=6690>

¹⁰⁷ Chairman of the Gagauzia People's Assembly on the prohibition to broadcast Russian television channels

<http://halktoplushu.md/index.php/novosti/1379-predsdatel-narodnogo-sobraniya-gagauzii-o-zaprete-translirovaniya-rossijskikh-teleprogramm>

¹⁰⁸ MFA of the Russian Federation: banning of Russian channels in Moldova – an unfriendly step <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2774999&cid=5>

¹⁰⁹ OSCE recommended authorities in Moldova not to restrict the retransmit of foreign television channels <http://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/obse-rekomendovala-moldavskim-vlastyam-ne-ogranichivat-retranslyatsiyu-zarubezhnyh-telekan-26183>

¹¹⁰ EU advises Moldova to not introduce restrictions at the retransmission of foreign television channels <http://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/es-sovetuet-moldove-ne-vvodit-ogranicheniya-na-retranslyatsiyu-zarubezhnyh-telekan-26200>

¹¹¹ Moldova: Restrictions on Foreign Broadcasters Undermine Press <https://freedomhouse.org/article/moldova-restrictions-foreign-broadcasters-undermine-press>

¹¹² NM Study: how is the TV mass media market partitioned in Moldova <http://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/issledovanie-nm-kak-podelen-moldavskiy-tereynok-22680>

commented: "... Today all conditions were created for free and independent mass media to either disappear or obey¹¹³ ..."

Such tendencies may lead to replacing the external propaganda with the internal one, which is no less dangerous for the development of the country and functioning of civil liberties and human rights.

Conclusions and recommendations

Russian mass media influence on the Russian speaking public in Moldova is very high. Russian mass media influence on public opinion among residents of the ATU Gagauzia both in relation to international events and in relation to internal policies and local regulations. This limits the capacity of Moldovan authorities to form foreign policy.

Russian mass media have unlimited access to the media market in Moldova through various legal channels. In the ATU Gagauzia mass media space Russian media access is even more simplified. There is a demand for Russian mass media in Gagauzia, because they offer a variety of media formats, which are very popular among residents of Gagauzia.

Restricting access to Russian mass media on the mass media market of Moldova will not have the desired effect, especially on the territory of ATU Gagauzia, since there is local law in the autonomy that would offer unlimited opportunities for the retransmission of Russian programs by local media in ATU Gagauzia. People who want to watch Russian media will use methods of access to them that are not subject to restrictions that the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova seeks to impose.

Currently, the mass media in the Republic of Moldova cannot offer an alternative to the one offered to consumers in the Republic of Moldova by Russian television mass media, neither as volume, quality or variety. The audience of Russian speakers in the Republic of Moldova is offered basically nothing with the exception of news programs and a number of talk shows in Russian.

The mass media market in Moldova is a hostage of business and political interests of certain groups, therefore lacking responsibility to respond to the public's needs and offer a real alternative to Russian media. The state plays no role in strengthening Moldovan media opportunities. Moreover, experience shows that state institutions are used to promote economic and political interests of individual groups associated with the media market.

Local ATU Gagauzia legislation in broadcasting is used by local actors interested as a basis for non-compliance of national legislation in this area. In some cases, national legislation is totally ignored without any local legal reasons, as is the case with public denationalisation. Such an approach in applying the legislation undermines the rule of law, creating the threat for potential legal measures or mechanisms developed and discussed by the central authorities of the Republic of Moldova in consolidating the information space and information integration of Moldovan society could be blocked on the territory of ATU Gagauzia.

Recommendations

¹¹³ Natalia Morari announced the closing of the Politica talk-show on TV7 <http://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/natalya-morar-objiyavila-o-zakrytii-tok-shou-politica-na-TV7-25262>

Based on the above analyses we're proposing central authorities of the Republic of Moldova and ATU Gagauzia authorities to grant attention to the following recommendations:

1. Consolidate the role of the state in strengthening Moldovan mass media capacities to offer diverse and high quality content to TV program consumers in the Republic of Moldova by allocating necessary state budget funds not only to the public television but also to private channels.
2. Proceed with the de-monopolisation of the TV advertising market and establish conditions of equitable competition on this market
3. Promote the creation of national TV and radio channels oriented to the Russian speaking public in the Republic of Moldova, based on channels of the national public broadcaster, to ensure an objective informational environment.
4. Develop policies to ensure informational integration of the various linguistic segments of Moldovan society.
5. Introduce amendments to RM Law No. 344 that would exclude the possibility of ambiguous interpretation of Gagauz People's Assembly rights and competences regarding legislation adoption.
6. Define clear principles to guide the activity of the Gagauz People's Assembly when adopting local laws, in order for local ATU Gagauzia laws not to block the implementation of national legislation on the territory of Gagauzia.
7. Considering the complexity of recommendations No. 5 and 6, which require a comprehensive approach both from the authorities of the Republic of Moldova and ATU Gagauzia, the joint working group of the Parliament and Gagauz People's Assembly should include them in its action plan.