

Assessment of the situation with the study of the Gagauz and the Romanian languages in ATU Gagauzia

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The opinions expressed in this study are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Soros Foundation in Moldova or the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

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List of abbreviations

UN - United Nations Organization

OHCHR - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

OSCE HCNM - OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities

FCNM - Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

UDHR - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UNESCO - the UN Specialized Agency for Education, Science and Culture

SRMI - UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues

MER - Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova

Equality Council - Council on the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality

ICCPR – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

CSU - Comrat State University

NAECM - National Association of European Trainers from Moldova

ME – multilingual education

SEN – Special educational needs

LR - The Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies, OSCE, 2012

Summary of the key idea of the Assessment

The Gagauz language, which is one of the official languages in the autonomous territorial unit Gagauz-Yeri in the south of Moldova, is among the endangered languages and requires restoration and protection, including by the state. The level of command and use of the Gagauz language is insufficient. The level of command of the Romanian language in ATU Gagauz-Yeri is insufficient, which prevents the creation of the necessary conditions for the full participation of residents of the autonomy in the social, cultural and political life of the country, holding positions in the leadership of the central level, as well as increasing the level of social cohesion of society. The lack of serious attention to this issue may lead to a situation in which the Gagauz-Yeri autonomy will exist in isolation from the national processes.

This paper analyses the relevant legislation, including the international one, presents a thorough analysis of the current situation, highlights the point of view of the autonomy's residents with regard to the study and knowledge of the Gagauz and Romanian language, analyzes a number of programs and policies of the government and authorities of the autonomy, aimed to resolve these issues. As the main recommendation for improving the current situation, this paper suggests the gradual introduction of education in several languages in Gagauz Yeri. This approach, in a simplified form, designated as multilingual education, by analogy with the international experience, has proven to be beneficial in practice, including in the EU countries. Under this approach, it is proposed to introduce the teaching of general and specialized subjects in several languages. For example, by teaching part of the subjects in one language and the other part in another language. In practice, multilingual education in ATU Gagauzia may look like launching classes, where part of the subjects will be taught in the Romanian language, part - in the Gagauz, and part - in Russian. The amount of teaching in each of the languages will be determined based on the preferences of pupils and their parents, as well as on the capacities of the educational system of the autonomy.

Thus, teaching subjects in the Gagauz and Romanian languages at educational institutions of Gagauzia will create the conditions for graduates of educational institutions to master these languages and will have a beneficial effect on the opportunities of Gagauz residents to receive a high-quality higher education, find a good job, develop their business, join civil service positions or organizations which require knowledge of languages. Such decisions could be taken by the ATU Gagauz-Yeri authorities in cooperation with the central authorities. This paper also analyzes the risks associated with such an approach.

It should be noted that this study is limited to the research question - how to prevent the extinction of the Gagauz language and increase the level of Romanian language proficiency in Gagauz-Yeri, which would contribute, among other tasks, to the social cohesion of the society. This work did not cover the entire Republic of Moldova, which would require a separate, more in-depth study.

Brief Overview

Gagauz is the ethnic group living compactly in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia. 8.31% of Gagauz ethnos live in Taraclia and 3.15% in Cahul. In 22 localities they amount to 50% or more of total population, in 34 localities Gagauz people amount to at least 20%.¹

99 educational institutions, providing early, primary and secondary general education programmes are acting in the ATU Gagauzia. They include 54 kindergartens; three gymnasium-kindergartens; 19 gymnasia, and 23 lyceums. 7,026 children study in early education institutions, 15,853 students study in primary and secondary education institutions, while their number, compared to the last year, decreased by 262 students. The learning process in early educational institutions is provided by 822 teaching personnel while 1423 are engaged in primary and secondary general education institutions (last year data).

Depending on the language of instruction, the structure of the primary and secondary educational institutions in Gagauzia looks as follows: Russian language of instruction - 41; Romanian language of instruction- 2; Russian and Romanian language -1; Turkish -2.

The structure according to the native language studied looks ²as follows: Gagauz language - 83%, Bulgarian - 9.8%, Ukrainian - 0.13%, other languages - 7.1% of the total number of students (year 2019).

5.6% of the total number of students of the autonomy study in the Romanian language. In four education institutions Gagauz and/or other languages of national minorities (Bulgarian, Ukrainian) are not taught.

The foreign languages (two hours per week) studied in the educational institutions of the ATU Gagauzia are English - 84.7%, German - 4.25%, Turkish - 2.26% and French - 1.36%.

According to the Ethnobarometer, 97% of Gagauz respondents consider Moldova their homeland, and 92% noted that they only have Moldovan citizenship. 58% of Gagauz people associate themselves equally with their ethnicity and the people of the Republic of Moldova. Gagauz people consider themselves a constituent part of the society, 80% noting that they feel at home in this country, 79% are proud of being citizens of the Republic of Moldova, and 77% feel that they belong to the Moldovan society.

¹ Strategy of Strengthening Interethnic relations in the Republic of Moldova for 2017-2027, RP No.1464.2016, p.1, https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=97804&lang=ru

² In a number of general educational institutions of the autonomy, the representatives of the national minorities fail to study their mother language due to lack of teaching staff. In the Russian-speaking educational institutions of ATU Gagauzia having teachers of Bulgarian language and literature, the representatives of Russian and other ethnicities (Bulgarians, Roma, etc.) have to choose between Gagauz or Bulgarian as the "Native language" and, accordingly, graduating from the 12th grade - get their bachelor's degree in the native language chosen.

Along with ethnic Ukrainians and other main ethnic groups in Moldova, the Gagauz people could hardly be associated with those who would like to leave Moldova for good (6%) or temporarily (33%). For all other ethnic groups, this figure in the aggregate (the desire to leave for good or temporarily) is close to 50% or more. This means that, on average, the Gagauz people predominantly prefer to stay in their homeland.

Only 25% of Gagauz people believe that the interests of their ethnic group are sufficiently taken into account in the decision-making process at the state level. At the same time, 34% doubt that the interests of their ethnic group are sufficiently taken into account in the decision-making process at the state level.

Throughout history, language issues in Moldova have been characterized by complexity, controversy, and political tension. Language issues are at the root of many of the social cohesion issues the state is facing in the areas of employment, health, law enforcement, justice, and education.

Lack of proficiency in the Romanian language creates a number of obstacles that could be addressed through Romanian language programs. It should be noted that the understanding of the extent of the problem by the ethnic majority is insufficient.

Ethnic Gagauz people face language barriers to integration into the life of "Moldova in the broad sense of the word"³:

- 16% of ethnic Gagauz faced problems in employment (compared to 10-11% in case of the ethnic majority);
 - In 34% of such cases, the language was the main factor of problems;
- 18% of ethnic Gagauz people faced problems when seeking access to health care services (compared to 8-11% in the case of the ethnic majority);
 - In 41% of such cases, the main factor of problems was language disparity;
- 10% of ethnic Gagauz faced problems in the field of education (compared to 6% in the case of ethnic majority);
 - In 46% of such cases, language was the main problematic factor.

The occurrence of cases of discrimination in:	MD	ROM	RUS	GAG	BUL	UKR	ROMA
<u>EMPLOYMENT</u> (Language disparity reason)	11% (16%)	10% (10%)	25% (61%)	16% (34%)	(11%) (44%)	15% (61%)	48% (20%)
<u>Public health</u>	11%	8%	15%	18%	13%	14%	41%

³ Ethnobarometer: Republic of Moldova -2020, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/7/505306_0.pdf

(Language disparities)	(4%)	(12%)	(47%)	(41%)	(56%)	(46%)	(26%)
Education	6%	6%	10%	10%	6%	10%	27%
(Language disparity)	(15%)	(17%)	(71%)	(46%)	(67%)	(55%)	(19%)

Besides, 27% of ethnic Gagauz encountered linguistic problems when accessing the information concerning different laws and other regulatory acts (only 12% of ethnic majority encountered the like problems).

Thereat, only half of Gagauz people (49%) consider knowledge of the Gagauz language as an important factor of self-identification (unlike most other major ethnic groups in Moldova).

The Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri)⁴ and the Legal Code (Gagauz-Yeri)⁵ provide that the official languages used in Gagauzia are the state, Gagauz and Russian. At the same time, along with the official languages, the functioning of other languages on the territory of Gagauzia is guaranteed.

However, the measures taken at different levels to promote languages are not always consistent, insufficiently targeted and lacking resources required for the purpose.

As a result, a moderate level of Gagauz language proficiency is marked in ATU Gagauzia (54% of Gagauz people responded that they speak Gagauz language perfectly well⁶) and a relatively weak level of proficiency in the Romanian language. Thereat, comparing the data offered by the Ethnobarometer with the last population census (2014)⁷, one can conclude that there is a relatively slow positive trend in the field of learning and proficiency of the Romanian language (8.7% of Gagauz people claiming fluency in the Romanian language in 2014, and 12% in 2020).

Despite of the fact that the national, regional and sectoral strategic documents address the need of studying the Romanian and native language by the representatives of the national minorities as priority, in fact, implementation of the stipulated measures is lacking sufficient resources, effective monitoring of targets, sustainability of measures, and, most importantly, an integrated approach to the development of multilingualism as a key competence and a valuable asset providing for social cohesion, personal and socio-economic development, and cultural diversity. The quality of educational resources and the quality of teaching the Romanian and Gagauz languages leave much to be desired. The use of the same topical contexts and approaches to language teaching, without specific social and motivational goals, results in assimilation of a stronger language when considering the prospects of using the Romanian and Gagauz languages. The Romanian and Gagauz languages are usually studied only for the purpose of passing a written exam, while speech skills remain at a low level.

⁴ The Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri), Article 3 (1), <https://halktoplushu.md/index.php/zakon-ob-osobom-pravovom-statuse-gagauzii>

⁵ The Legal Code (Gagauz-Yeri), Article 16, <https://halktoplushu.md/index.php/ulozhenie-gagauzii>

⁶ Ethnobarometer: Republic of Moldova -2020, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/7/505306_0.pdf

⁷ According to the "Fifth Report submitted by the Republic of Moldova", p.20

Effective multilingualism should provide not only the written skills, but also the ability to understand verbal speech, initiate and maintain conversation, talk and read, understand and compose texts, with different levels of proficiency in different languages in accordance with human needs.

The pilot program of bilingual education in the Romanian and Gagauz languages, implemented by the National Association of the European Trainers of Moldova (NAECM) since 2015 in the institutions of early education of ATU Gagauzia shows rather good results. According to the assessment conducted in the 2020/2021 academic year, upon completion of the early education program, more than 70% of children showed a "good" and "very good" level of proficiency in the Romanian and Gagauz languages.

A pilot program of bilingual education at the level of primary and secondary general education in ATU Gagauzia was launched in 2021/2022 academic year. Half of the schools from ATU Gagauzia are covered by the programme. However, this program requires further consistent and systematic support of public authorities, both at the level of early education, as well as for its expansion at the next levels of education across the vertical, otherwise, it will be nothing but a worthless loss of investments.

It is worth noticing that ATU Gagauzia has taken significant measures to preserve, develop and expand the use of the Gagauz language in educational institutions and promote it at large as well as culture. However, the effective implementation of this goal requires coherence and interaction of all competent authorities. It is necessary to bear in mind the language rights of other national minorities populating ATU Gagauzia while implementing the above measures.

The process of learning the Romanian and Gagauz languages as well as the native language by the representatives of other national minorities populating the region needs to be planned, provided with sufficient resources and promoted within the framework of a common vision concerning further development of key multilingual competencies Thus creating conditions for linguistic policies "and/and", rather than on "or/or".

It should be noted that during the interviews, representatives of the Government of the Republic of Moldova expressed their intention, including as the result of this project, to offer a large-scale program of learning the Romanian language in ATU Gagauz-Yeri using modern methods, which should help Gagauz people with employment at the central level, as well as increase the level of social cohesion in Moldova. According to government representatives, significant funding from donors will be used to launch a large-scale Romanian language learning program.

At the strategic level, an educational ecosystem for language instruction must be developed step by step, yet comprehensively, based on compliance with international standards for language rights in education: definition of multilingual education, selection of a multilingual model and definition of learning objectives for each language, educational standards, trained and motivated personnel, curricula and resources for lifelong learning, methods for assessing language competencies,

information technology to improve the quality of teaching and to identify needs, monitoring of goals achieved, funding, partnerships, motivation and promotion, stakeholder advisory mechanism, etc.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Context

Human rights relating to language use are a combination of legal requirements established by international human rights treaties and guidelines on how to deal with issues affecting language or minorities and linguistic diversity in a state.

The Concept of the national policy is setting an objective of consolidating the society of the Republic of Moldova by bringing the national interests into conformity with the interests of all ethnic and linguistic communities of the country.

The Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri) and the Legal Code of Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri) stipulates that the official languages used in Gagauzia are the state, Gagauz and Russian. At the same time, along with the official languages in the territory of Gagauzia, the functioning of other languages is also guaranteed.

At the same time, the level of viability of the Gagauz language was assessed by UNESCO as "definitely endangered".⁸

Regarding the knowledge of the Romanian language, the 2014 census showed that only 8.7% of Gagauz people could speak it fluently (13.1% in the urban environment, and only 6.5% in the rural environment).⁹ Such status affects negatively their ability to access high-quality university education, find a decent job, develop business, join civil service or getting employment with such organizations where the knowledge of languages is a must.

1.2 Purpose and objectives of the research

The purpose of the research is to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the availability, as well as the effect achieved by public policies aimed at improving the study of the Gagauz and Romanian languages in ATU Gagauzia.

The objectives of the study include as follows:

- summarizing both positive practices and possible flaws/shortcomings in the process of promoting the study of Gagauz and Romanian languages in ATU Gagauzia, based, inter alia, on a sociological assessment of the opinion shared by the population;
- making use of the findings and recommendations of the study as the grounds for developing a roadmap to improve the study of Gagauz and Romanian languages in ATU Gagauzia.

⁸ <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap>

⁹ According to the "Fifth Report submitted by the Republic of Moldova" p.20

1.3. Research methodology and sources used

The research methodology was based on the inductive principle - from primary data collection, information, and source analysis to generalizations, conclusions, and recommendations. The research was based on quantitative and qualitative approaches. An in-depth analysis of sources was conducted, including literature related to language studies, legislation, international recommendations, and treaties. Secondary data collection included analysis of reports, plans and results of competent state structures, published on their official web-pages (Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Finance, Agency for Interethnic Relations, Council for Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, Office of People's Advocate, People's Assembly, Main Department of Education of Gagauzia). In order to collect primary information, a number of interviews were conducted with representatives of these state institutions, as well as representatives of the ATU Gagauz-Yeri leadership, including the Department of Education and other relevant agencies, experts, public figures, decision-makers and civil society.

As part of the qualitative analysis, data from studies of national and international organizations concerning the implementation of language policy and linguistic rights of national minorities in the Republic of Moldova were thoroughly examined.

A review of the entire legal framework of the Republic of Moldova regulating the issues of language policy in the field of formal education was conducted. There has been analyzed available updated data on the level of language skills of residents of Gagauzia, the availability and qualification of teachers and didactic materials. An assessment of public policies for the promotion of the study of the Gagauz and Romanian languages in Gagauzia ATU has been conducted.

Also, international standards in the field of human rights and rights of national minorities, recommendations of international structures to Moldovan authorities, as well as measures taken in the field of language education in the Republic of Moldova with international support were analyzed.

In order to assess the opinion of residents of Gagauzia regarding the motivation of learning the Gagauz and Romanian languages, as well as possible fears and problems in this process, 5 focus group discussions and 12 in-depth interviews were held.

Each of the five focus group discussions was composed of 6 participants from a pre-determined target group:

- parents from rural environment (whose children are studying in lyceums and gymnasia);
- parents from the urban environment (whose children are studying in lyceums and gymnasia);
- teachers of the Romanian language in schools (teachers from urban and rural environments);
- school principals;

- high school students studying the Romanian language in various institutions (in both urban and rural environments).

12 in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, senior education staff, graduates, civil activists, representatives of local authorities.

2. International human rights standards and policies for language rights in education

2.1 Normative standards and conceptual framework

The core scope of the minorities human rights protection could be summarized as follows:¹⁰

- 1) Protection of survival and existence;
- 2) Promotion and protection of the identity of minorities;
- 3) Equality and non-discrimination;
- 4) Effective and meaningful participation.

Protection of (Linguistic Minority) Survival and Existence

Any action that directly threatens the physical survival and integrity of persons belonging to minorities (and speakers of minority languages) is categorically forbidden.

Any passive and/or indirect action that may result in the physical destruction and violation of the integrity of persons belonging to minorities is also unacceptable. Such passive and/or indirect measures can range from forced displacement and evictions to failure to provide adequate water and sanitation, housing, health care, etc., which can result in the physical disappearance of a particular group.

Protection of (Linguistic Minority) Identity

Human Identity (Personality) and Languages

Human identity and personality, i.e. “the self” transcend the physical body. The full human identity and personality are made of multiple and intersecting dimensions of which cultural and linguistic dimension are often crucial. Denial of cultural and linguistic self-identification for many individuals equals to denial of their very personality and existence.

Language is also a pivotal element of many cultures and cultural groups, binding the groups together and providing them with a distinct identity and sense for life.

Thus, the role of language for personal and group identity is crucial, and so linguistic rights are human rights, to which all human rights principles apply fully.

Primacy of Self-Identification

The principle of freedom and equality in dignity and rights necessarily triggers right to self-identification. Nobody knows better that an individual him/herself what s/he is. The idea that somebody can determine better “what another person is” equals to pretending that such an

¹⁰ 1992 UN Minorities Declaration and 2010 OHCHR document (“Minority Rights: International Standards and Guidance for Implementation”)

external determiner “knows better” and positions above (over) the subject person. This idea is in clear contradiction to and violation of the equality in dignity principle.

Therefore, in all cases the primary agent in determination of “race”, “ethnicity”, native language, preferred language, religious affiliation, group name, individual name, etc – is the individual him/herself.

In case of a (minority) group it is the group itself (as the sum of such self-identifying individuals).

OSCE Ljubljana Document:

Identities are subject to the primacy of individual choice through the principle of voluntary self-identification. [...] No disadvantage shall result from such a choice [...] [A]uthorities should not affiliate persons with a specific group based on visible characteristics of other presumptions without their consent.¹¹

No third party, including "experts" and/or government officials, can make the choice instead of the individual.

Moreover, any individual is free to choose different or multiple languages to use in a certain respect and for a certain purpose. Thus, one may choose one language to communicate in the workplace and another to learn in an educational institution. Therefore, it should not be assumed that the language chosen for one purpose is an automatic choice of the individual for all others as well.

The data on the choice of preferred languages for each specific field is in addition to the general data on the declared native or spoken languages. Separate general data on declared mother tongues (e.g. collected in regular censuses) are not the basis for legislative or policy decisions.

General Human Rights Principles as Applied to Languages

State Authorities as Primary Duty-Bearers

State authorities are primary duty-bearers with regard to realization of fundamental human rights. Each and every fundamental human right automatically triggers the corresponding (mirroring) non-discretionary and imperative, justiciable and enforceable legal obligation.

In federal and decentralized states, the presumption is that any human rights failure is attributable and imputable to the central authorities, because the ultimate control over power and resources in the modern configuration of the world is with the central public authorities. The onus is on the central public authorities to demonstrate that with regard to a particular right or case, the powers and proportionally sufficient resources have been devolved to / shared with the lower levels of public administration (regional or local) to deal with the relevant right or case. For example, with regard to the minority rights in education, central public authorities are under the obligation to either provide for this right, or to demonstrate that they have devolved / shared sufficient powers and resources to lower levels of administration (regional and local authorities) to provide for these rights.

ACFC Comment 3:

Division of responsibilities among different levels of government cannot be invoked as a justification for the non-implementation of policies aimed at promoting the conditions for persons

¹¹ OSCE Ljubljana Recommendations, Section Primacy of voluntary self-identification, p.15

belonging to national minorities to develop their culture and language, as the central government remains fully responsible for the respect of its international obligations in this field¹²

Respect-Protect-Fulfill Framework

State obligations with regard to human rights, of which linguistic rights are a part, encompass the following triad:

- State authorities should respect the linguistic rights of minority individuals and groups;
- State authorities should protect the linguistic rights of minority individuals and groups against the interferences of third parties;
- State authorities should fulfill (i.e. constructively provide for) the rights of minority individuals and groups.

Provision of linguistic rights can take place in three forms (or through their combination):

- Through self-provision;
- Through state provision;
- Through provision by (through) the third parties.

Self-provision by the individuals and groups themselves mainly triggers the obligation of state authorities to respect and protect this process of self-provision, which inter alia means that such self-provision should be allowed, not obstructed, but also facilitated by the authorities.

State provision of human rights means direct provision of rights by state authorities and agents.

Third party provision is human rights provision through third parties, including business and not-for-profit entities.

The authorities have a choice to organize provision of linguistic rights through one or several above-indicated modalities. For example, state authorities may choose to deliver on their human rights obligations through outsourcing and/or collaboration with non-state actors (NGOs, mass media, businesses, international partners, etc). Nevertheless, it is within the purview of state authorities to grant these rights.

Equally, if self-provision of rights for whatever reason does not take place, it is the state responsibility to take over the organization of the provision. The main duty-bearer with respect to all human rights are the state authorities. Other actors (like self-organized groups or international partners) can initiate, pilot at the initial stage, contribute, help and facilitate, but they cannot be viewed as the substitution for the state authorities.

Progressive Realization

While state obligation of respecting human rights does not entail any resources (just the obligation to refrain from interference), and state obligation of protecting human rights entails little resources (mainly to police against the potential third party intruders), the obligations to respect and protect require realization by the state authorities.

In contrast, the state obligation to fulfill usually demands substantial resources to provide for all the necessary elements and remove eventual barriers for the enjoyment of human rights. Many linguistic rights demand substantial resources for their realization and hence are subject to

¹² ACFC Comment 3 (Languages), para 90, pp.28-29

progressive realization (some critical / core linguistic rights, however, are subject to realization, such as translation into one's language during criminal proceedings).

The state's obligation of progressive realization is the obligation to take appropriate measures towards the full realization of human rights to the maximum of their available resources.¹³ This obligation includes the following elements:

- Obligation to "take steps" – States have to make constant efforts to improve the enjoyment of human rights. This means that, while their full realization may be achieved progressively, steps towards that goal must be taken within a reasonably short time. Such steps should be deliberate, concrete and targeted as clearly as possible, using all appropriate means, including the adoption of legislative measures.¹⁴
- Obligation to invest all available resources into realization of human rights – since human rights are minimum standards to be provided for the state authorities, all of state's available resources should be directed to realization of human rights. *Available* in this context means materially present resources, and not the residual resources.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (art.2):

Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take steps, individually and through international assistance and cooperation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures.

- Obligation to achieve progress – Clearly, to qualify for progressive realization states have to progress in realization, i.e. to achieve improvements in realization of human rights. The progress should be directly proportional to the available resources.

*States must demonstrate that they are making every effort to improve the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, even when resources are scarce.*¹⁵

*A State's compliance with its obligation to take appropriate measures is assessed in the light of the resources—financial and others—available to it.*¹⁶

- No regress (non-retrogressive measures) – States should not allow the existing level of human rights delivery to deteriorate unless there are strong justifications for a retrogressive measure (for example, a major unforeseeable crisis). To justify a regress, a State would have to demonstrate that it adopted the measure only after carefully considering all the options, assessing the impact and fully using its maximum available resources to avoid the regress.¹⁷

Non-Discrimination and Progressive Realization

¹³ "Frequently Asked Questions on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Fact Sheet No.33" (OHCHR), para 7, p.13

¹⁴ OHCHR Fact Sheet No.33, para 8, point 3, p.16

¹⁵ OHCHR Fact Sheet No.33, p.14

¹⁶ OHCHR Fact Sheet No.33, p.13

¹⁷ OHCHR Fact Sheet No.33, para 8, point 4, p.16

State's obligation of non-discrimination is of immediate and compelling nature, meaning that discrimination should be eradicated immediately with the very first material availability. Since any state always has a budget and associated resources, every state should at all times in the first place direct its efforts and all available (present) resources towards elimination of discrimination, i.e. towards its most discriminated, marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Irrespective of the resources available to it, a State should, as a matter of priority, seek to ensure that everyone has access to, at the very least, minimum levels of rights, and target programs to protect the poor, the marginalized and the disadvantaged.¹⁸

Even if a State has clearly inadequate resources at its disposal, the Government must still introduce low-cost and targeted programs to assist those most in need so that its limited resources are used efficiently and effectively.¹⁹

The core idea is this – Keeping (non-addressing) discrimination, while having resources to address it, can be considered an act of discrimination. Therefore, in case of identifying disparities in enjoyment of particular fundamental human rights and/or public services by certain groups under protected grounds – the onus goes to the relevant authorities to demonstrate that the state does progress on elimination of the identified discrimination, as follows:

- (a) It does take deliberate, direct and clear steps to eliminate the disparities (incidental and/or marginal positive effect on vulnerable groups does not qualify as “deliberate, direct and clear steps”);
- (b) It invests into these efforts available resources;
- (c) It achieves a progress proportional to the available resources.

Availability-Accessibility-Acceptability and Quality Framework

For a human right to be enjoyed there should be no barriers for enjoyment of such right. In practical terms this means that realization of a human right entails:

- Availability, including:
 - Legal availability – i.e. legal provisions establishing the basis (and framework) for the realization of the right
 - Administrative availability – i.e. established administrative procedures and institutional framework (designated institutions) for the realization of the right, as well as administrative requirements for the enjoyment of right-realizing service (most notably documents-related requirements – these requirements should be strictly proportional, not prohibitive and should not present hardship);
 - Material availability – i.e. material presence and usability of the infrastructure, materials and staff required for realization of the right;
- Accessibility, including:
 - Distance accessibility – easily passable distance for all groups to the right-delivering service location;

¹⁸ OHCHR Fact Sheet No.33, p.14

¹⁹ OHCHR Fact Sheet No.33, p.16

- Physical accessibility – physical usability of right-delivering service / service location to all groups, including persons with disabilities;
- Economic accessibility – affordability of all direct and indirect costs (transportation, copying, translation, etc) for all concerned groups;
- Informational accessibility – provision of all necessary information about the right-delivering service through easily-usable modalities and in easy-to-understand formats (including the information on the availability and location of the service, eligibility and required documents, working hours and statutory holidays, waiting time, etc), and accessible for **all** groups, including persons with sensorial and psychosocial / intellectual disabilities;
- Linguistic accessibility – provision of right-delivering service in the language(s) understood (and used) by all groups of the served right-holders;
- Acceptability, including:
 - Social acceptability – i.e. acceptable in the given social circumstances for all concerned groups of rights-holders (delivery through a modality not exposing rights-holders to social pressures or “stigmatization”, not triggering for the vulnerable rights-holders problems with the family, community or wider society);
 - Cultural acceptability – i.e. acceptability for all cultural groups of rights-holders (cultural accommodation – i.e. customization to ensure cultural acceptability – extends up to the point, where the relevant cultural “norm” itself violates a human right);
- Quality – delivery of the right should be up to the established minimum quality standards

IMPORTANT: All of these elements / dimensions of human rights realization should be provided for **c**umulatively – delivery of just one or several elements is not enough for qualifying for full realization of human rights.

OSCE Ljubljana document, Principle 3:

The prohibition of discrimination entails ... that obstacles to effective equality are removed.²⁰

Equality and Non-Discrimination: Special Minority Protections

Modern human rights are based on fundamental equality of all human beings. The foundational Article 1 of the UDHR clearly states this cornerstone principle - “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. This postulate thus necessarily posits that human beings are equal in dignity and rights regardless of their belonging to a majority or a minority, and no majority can overrule the rights and dignity of any minority.

Modern democracies are largely based on the idea of majoritarian rule, i.e. on law- and policy-making by the vote of the majority (in most cases overruling a minority). Human rights come as inherent limitation on the “majoritarian majority”, and “special minority protections” come as special provisions to ensure equality of rights and dignity for minorities.

Structural Principle 2 of the OSCE Ljubljana Guidelines:

While democracy implies majority rule in political decision-making, it also includes safeguards against the abuse of majority power. This is achieved by ensuring the protection and participation

²⁰ OSCE Ljubljana Recommendations, principle 3, p.10

of minorities, and by facilitating inclusive processes of governance that involve all members of the population.²¹

Substantive (Effective) Equality and Non-Discrimination

Substantive and effective equality mean equality of outcome, i.e. a situation when all persons effectively enjoy as an ultimate outcome their human rights, power, resources and life opportunities equally.

For the individuals and groups in historically and/or presently unequal situation with other groups, substantive and effective equality implies provision of special (affirmative) measures, actions and resources to overcome the lag and level up with the rest (the majority). The aim of such special measures is to compensate and correct the inequality of outcome and to ultimately achieve it. Therefore, such measures are temporary in nature and should be in place until effective achievement of the equality of outcome.

Equality in allocation of state resources does not mean identical treatment! Each group, including each minority group, receive appropriate cultural, social and other forms of accommodation (“customization”) to ensure enjoyment of their human rights and life opportunities. This accommodation should be reasonable and should not violate human rights. Obligation of accommodation is a necessary corollary of the inherent diversity and differences among people and groups. Since the state should be responsive to each and every member of the society, such response should be accommodated to social groups and sub-groups.

It is to emphasize that:

- (a) Minorities might face specific barriers, different from the barriers faced by the majority;
- (b) Different minorities might face different barriers (for example, in case of Roma people, in addition to linguistic barriers all sorts of social barriers may exist – such as social prejudices and stereotypes, for example);
- (c) Specific barriers might exist for specific minority subgroups – for example, for minority women – even though for the rest of the minority group such barriers are not relevant.

It is state’s obligation to effectively address all of these barriers in a specific, targeted and customized (accommodating) manner! Failure to adopt and implement specific targeted and accommodating measures is an act of discrimination.

OSCE Ljubljana document, Principle 3:

Equal treatment does not mean identical treatment. To be effective, the principle of equality necessarily allows – and in some cases requires – different treatment of some persons to ensure that they are able to enjoy all rights on an equal footing with other members of society. ...[Special measures should be adopted to ensure full and effective equality for disadvantaged groups due to past, systemic or persistent discrimination. Such measures do not constitute discrimination as long as they pursue this legitimate aim and are proportional to that aim.]

²¹ OSCE Ljubljana Recommendations, principle 2, p.9

The prohibition of discrimination entails ... that obstacles to effective equality are removed. Ensuring effective equality in law and in fact also implies a positive obligation to adopt targeted policies and, where necessary, special measures.²²

Attention! Obligation of accommodation is permanent, because diversity and differences among the groups are an ever-present (and ever evolving) part of reality. Special affirmative measures are temporary in nature, continuing until achievement of the equality of enjoyment (outcome).

Effective and Meaningful Participation

Effective and Meaningful Participation

All decisions and allocations of resources with any relevance to languages (meaning virtually all decisions concerning humans) should be taken with direct and meaningful (effective) participation and inclusion of minorities.

Meaningful and effective participation literally means a participation which makes sense (“meaning”) and produces the intended effects for those who participate (“is effective”). So, participation is not just about the process, but it is also about the results (the effects) of this process. A participation which does not deliver the results intended by the participants is not effective!

In the context of languages in education, effective and meaningful participation means engaging not just members of public authorities, school administration and staff, but also the parents (of underage students) and students themselves (including underage, as per their age).

To be meaningful participation also requires that the participants understand and know the subject matter of participation (and the choices owed to them), are empowered and prepared to participate, and ultimately do participate with the intended effects being materialized.

The balancing of majority and minority interests during the participatory decision-making should take place based on the substantive principles outlined in this Framework, and not based on mere “over-voting” of minorities by the majority. Important: Consultations or meetings, which do not meet the outlined criteria of effective and meaningful participation do not fully respect human rights and equality!

Transparency

By virtue of the equality in dignity and rights principle no one should be assumed to represent the other members of the groups or the entire group, unless rights-compliant delegation took place. Participation should not be limited to a small circle of participants pre-determined by “oversighting” majority-dominated group or authority. All language-related decision-making processes should be fully transparent to allow participation of all interested minority members.

Genuine Representation

Where direct participation of all willing minority members materially is not possible, representation could be engaged. To be rights-compliant and genuine representation should be based on delegation following free, prior and informed choice of the delegate(s) by the delegating persons, as well as free, prior and informed consent to their respective delegation (mandate). In addition,

²² OSCE Ljubljana Recommendations, principle 3, p.10

delegates should be numerous enough to represent all significant variances within the group along gender, age, residential (rural/urban), disability, etc. Also, each linguistic subgroup should be adequately represented (for example, varying forms of Gagauz or Romani language should be each represented).

Representation should be meaningful and effective.

Accountability

To be fully meaningful and effective participation requires accountability, i.e. effective accountability of decision-implementers for the delivery of the results intended by the decision-making participants. Logically, the lacking or weak feedback and accountability mechanisms between the decision-makers and the decision-implementers (duty-bearers) cannot ensure the effectiveness (the intended effects) of participation. Hence, accountability mechanisms and factual accountability are necessary elements of meaningful and effective participation.

2.2 Evolution of international standards with regard to minority education: placing integration with respect for diversity at the center of education

Education

Ethno-cultural or linguistic diversity is a reality of societies across the globe. However, the way policymakers address the challenges of diversity, and in the present case, linguistic diversity, varies. Political choices in this area are often influenced by the geopolitical context within which a given school systems function. Moldova is no exception to this.

In former Soviet States where there is a legacy of institutionalizing ethnicity for internal stability purpose, democratic transition has called for the linguistic divide to be addressed in a way that is compatible with human and minority rights standards. A key challenge has arisen in this context: how to allow various ethnic groups to rediscover their own cultures and re-appropriate their languages, often marginalized during the Soviet period while forging a sense of togetherness or overarching identity that can transcend linguistic divisions? And how can integration of a society and ultimately consolidation of the State be achieved?

Striking an adequate balance between protecting identity and promoting integration

Answering this question and translating answers into public policies are a complex and ever-evolving undertaking for States. International minority rights standards in the field of language education²³ have offered some guidance. This guidance has been continuously updated overtime in light of the 21st century challenges of accommodating multiple and multi-layered diversities.

At the outset, international standards have offered a general model that balances out the political tensions existing between promoting tuition in the Romanian language and minority language learning. Article 14 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities asserts the right of national minorities to learn their language (paragraph 1) without prejudice to learning

²³ A range of international documents may be quoted (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child). For the purpose of this study, international references will focus on the 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The OSCE HCNM is also mentioned here, given its role as a 'normative intermediary'.

the State language (paragraph 3). Accordingly, opportunities to learn both languages should be made available.

2.3 Specific (minority) human rights standards and their practical application with regard to education

Study of and in State and/or Official Languages

States may legitimately promote the State language of the country. However, this should happen through positive incentives (like offering language classes, and so on). The linguistic rights of persons belonging to minorities must be respected. Recognizing the positive value of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity contributes to the integration of society.²⁴

Child Education

In the field of child education linguistic rights should be corroborated with child rights.

Late School Education, Post-School Education, Adult Education

1992 UN Minorities Declaration (Article 4.3):

States should take measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue.

International standards specify that special attention should be paid to threatened languages, i.e. languages under the threat of extinction.

ACFC Comment 3 (2012):

Special attention must be paid to the languages of numerically smaller minorities ... as their languages are often particularly threatened. States should also consider extending guarantees to geographically dispersed minorities and their languages, such as Romani.

Offering of teaching in minority languages should be pro-actively promoted by the authorities.

ACFC Comment 3 (2012):

71. The Advisory Committee appreciates the fact that minority language teaching is often offered in response to local demand and therefore encourages the regular monitoring of such demands. A purely passive approach on the part of the authorities is therefore not an adequate response; demands for education in a minority language should actually be stimulated through awareness-raising among parents and young people, and the promotion of existing possibilities for minority language teaching. Parents belonging to national minorities must be enabled to make informed choices about the language education of their children.

Teaching in minority language should be culturally appropriate for the minorities.

²⁴ OSCE Ljubljana Recommendations, Section on *Inter-Community Relations*, para 11, p.22

UNESCO Principle III (p.II):

The “educational rights of persons belonging to ... minorities, as well as indigenous peoples”, should be fully respected, through:

- *the implementation of “the right to learn in the mother tongue” and the “full use of culturally appropriate teaching methods of communication and transmission of knowledge”,²⁵*

2.4 Multilingual and intercultural education

The importance of multilingual education

The interpretation of the FCNM and the practice of the OSCE HCNM have evolved dynamically, especially in the last decade with a view to offer more effective responses to the contemporary challenges of diversity. In particular, growing attention has been paid on the measures to be taken to avoid that different ethnic groups build parallel, enclosed societies with limited interaction and cooperation across ethnic lines. The way the education system is dealing with this issue has been analyzed increasingly through integration lenses.

In this context, the contribution of education to intercultural comprehension and co-operation has been emphasized by both the ACFC and the HCNM. This clear preference for multilingual education and its strong functional, cognitive and emotional assets can be traced in the evolution between the 1996 Hague Recommendations on Minority Rights in Education to the 2012 Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies (LG) and the 2016 ACFC Thematic Commentary No 4 on the scope of application of the FCNM. The 2012 Ljubljana Guidelines in particular avoid the dichotomy between minority and majority and clearly assert the need for policies to target both majority and minority populations. In the field of education and language learning, this translates in recommending that education policies be formulated in line and as part of integration policies, avoiding segregation in education and recognizing that ‘multilingual education adds value for pupils of all communities and society at large and should be encouraged’ (LG, page 56). The said LG also emphasize the need for adequate training of staff to teach in a diverse classroom environment. The 2016 ACFC Thematic Commentary No 4 echoes such guidance when it expresses its general preference for bilingual or multilingual approaches to education that are equipped to accommodate more than one language in integrated classrooms (Thematic Commentary, page 25).

Principles of the multilingual education

The state provides education of the choice of the individual (or group) as well as opportunities to learn the state (official or national) language. These principles could be successfully implemented through multilingual education.

Several key principles apply to multilingual education:

²⁵ UNESCO Principle III

- Multilingual education provides opportunities to learn both the Romanian language and the corresponding language of a national minority (in this case, the Gagauz language);
- The first language in multilingual education is the mother tongue [for children], with the second language being the state, official or national language of the country (if different from the mother tongue), as well as one or more other (foreign) languages;²⁶
- The second language may be introduced as a subject, and its introduction as instruction language occurs when the students are sufficiently familiar and comfortable with it;²⁷
- The second language as a language of instruction can be introduced gradually, increasing its volume according to the rate at which students master it;²⁸
- The intensity and volume of languages in multilingual education must be balanced, and not lead to displacement of the mother tongue;
- Multilingual education is mutually enriching and intercultural;
- Multilingual education can cover not only the field of minority languages but also educational environments and teaching methods that can be adapted to cultural specificities.²⁹

2.5 Main focus of international monitoring bodies with regard to education in the Republic of Moldova

The way Moldovan legislation, policies and practices address the reality of the country has been regularly assessed by international monitoring bodies, especially the ACFC.

- I. The most recent ACFC opinion on Moldova (2016) focused on two main and interrelated aspects of language education policies: 1) language learning in the overall language environment of the country, 2) quality of language teaching (2).

Language use and environment

The ACFC noted that in Gagauzia in particular, students were surrounded by an almost entirely Russian-speaking environment and therefore were particularly reliant on schools for their learning of the Romanian language. At the same time, it observed that Gagauz language, although an official language, was reportedly used only very rarely in official communications and even less in written correspondence. The ACFC went on to comment that speakers of lesser-used languages tend to mainly assimilate into either one of the two larger language groups, Romanian language or Russian language speakers, 'leading to the formation of two parallel and mutually exclusive public spheres.' The ACFC also deplored that broadcast and print media in minority languages had been reduced overtime and the programmes offered mainly traditional culture and music content which have raised limited interest from among national minorities.

²⁶ UNESCO Principle II

²⁷ UNESCO Principle II

²⁸ UNESCO Principle II

²⁹ UNESCO Principle III

ACFC Recommendation: promote the use of minority languages, in particular those spoken by numerically smaller groups, in official communications and in topography.

Quality of education

Despite some progress, shortcomings were noted with regard to all languages, minority languages, Romanian language and Russian language. These include:

- Declining levels of quality in education in minority languages;
- Shortcomings regarding the supply of educational materials and teacher training opportunities in minority language schools which have led to a reduction in the number of students at such schools over recent years;
- Decrease of the number of suitable pedagogical facilities for the preparation of teachers at schools, where national minority languages are taught.

ACFC Recommendation: Enhance access to quality teaching and learning of and in minority languages through bilingual and trilingual education models where learning of different languages is available in integrated education environments.

II. In her 2017 Report on 2016 official visit to Moldova the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues highlighted the following points:

- Language issues, especially in the context of education, featured prominently during the visit. The use of one's mother tongue is highly important and emotive for many communities and is an essential aspect of personal and community identity. As stated by a minority representative, "if you lose your language, you lose your identity". Minority groups clearly expressed their desire to maintain and protect their language rights and their ability to use their mother tongue.³⁰
- Persons belonging to minority groups, including Bulgarians, Gagauzians, Russians and Ukrainians, expressed their desire to receive education in their mother tongue in schools.
- In Gagauzia, the Special Rapporteur was informed that, although education is mainly conducted in Russian, Gagauzian was a mandatory subject in the school curriculum and the 2016 Law on Gagauzian Language and Education adopted by the Gagauzian's Peoples Assembly aimed at expanding the scope of Gagauzian to be the language of instruction for some curricular subjects. The Special Rapporteur welcomed the first pilot projects on bilingual education in Gagauzia and stressed that bilingual and multilingual education could be a long-term solution to guarantee the right to mother-tongue education while ensuring the learning of the Romanian language.³¹
- Representatives of the Moldovan Ministry of Education stressed that mother-tongue education was a priority and, while noting the adoption of a plan to improve the quality of Romanian language teachers for minorities, acknowledged the difficulty to implement it given financial constraints.³²

³⁰ 2017 Report of the SRMI on the 2016 visit to Moldova, point 25

³¹ 2017 Report of the SRMI on the 2016 visit to Moldova, point 30

³² 2017 Report of the SRMI on the 2016 visit to Moldova, point 33

Recommendation of the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues: The Government should take the measures necessary to guarantee quality education in the Romanian language for all, and consider the design and implementation of bilingual and multilingual education programmes to ensure that minorities can learn and receive instruction in their own language/mother tongue³³.

III. During the **2016 Universal Periodic Review of Moldova** the following recommendations were provided to the authorities:

- Ensure proper implementation of the legislation on the promotion and protection of the rights, including linguistic rights, of individuals belonging to national minorities (Ukraine – 121.15);
- Further promote the rights of minorities and maintain social harmony and unity among various groups in the society (Thailand – 121.164);
- Guarantee to persons belonging to minorities their rights to use their language and practise their religion (Peru – 121.166);
- Implement the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues to promote linguistic rights of minorities and to take the necessary measures to guarantee quality education in both the mother tongue and the Romanian language (Hungary – 121.167).

2.6 Measures taken in the field of language education in the Republic of Moldova with international support

According to a 2016 report on donor assistance to Moldova³⁴, 119 projects³⁵ were carried out in the field of education between 2010-2015. Although numerous projects were implemented in the education sector over time, these were reported to account for only 4% of the total funding provided by donors in Moldova.

A number of stakeholders both national and international have been active in the field of language education over years. In its 2016 Opinion, the ACFC noted the particularly important role of non-governmental. While welcoming the explicit governmental commitment towards the promotion of the Romanian language, the ACFC noted that the 'efforts made to promote state language proficiency amongst teachers and the adult population strongly relied on the non-governmental sector' (see ACFC Opinion, page 32).

At the same time, the Government of the Republic of Moldova in its State report on the implementation of the FCNM (2019) stated that the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research is responsible inter alia for the promotion of international standards and best practices of multilingual education³⁶.

³³ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/004/42/PDF/G1700442.pdf?OpenElement>

³⁴ https://events.developmentaid.org/uploads/2016/moldova/event_report_moldova.pdf

³⁵ Details on the goals and content of the said projects have not been detailed in this report.

³⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/5th-sr-moldova-en/168094d328>, p.49

The information from the **Annex 9** provides a short overview of some of the most relevant activities or projects in the field of language education, with a particular reference to multilingual education. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but to shed light on the experience gained so far, notably through projects implemented principally by NGOs with the co-operation of national institutions and the support of international donors.

3. Analysis of the legislative framework governing language issues in the education system

3.1 Analysis of the national legislative framework

The following main legal acts are meant to govern the language issue in the education system of the Republic of Moldova in general, and ATU Gagauzia in particular:

- 1994 - Constitution of the Republic of Moldova;
- 1994 - Law No. 344 on the special legal status of Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri);
- 2001 - Law No. 382 on the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and the legal status of their organizations;
- 2003 - Law No. 546 on the approval of the Concept of National Policy of the Republic of Moldova;
- 2012 - Law No. 121 on Ensuring Equality;
- 2014 - Education Code No. 152.

The above legal acts comprise the following key provisions (*comments made in italics*):

- All citizens of the Republic of Moldova shall be equal before the law and public authorities, regardless of the race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, opinion, political affiliation, property or social origin (Article 16 of the Constitution);
- The study of the official language shall be ensured within all types of educational institutions (Article 35 of the Constitution);
- The State shall recognize and guarantee the right of all citizens to the preservation, development and expression of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity (Article 10 of the Constitution)
- 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 State (Article 13 of the Constitution);
- The State shall ensure, under the law, the right of anyone to choose the language in which the teaching and training are to be performed (Article 35 of the Constitution);
- The State guarantees the right of the persons belonging to national minorities to make their studies at all levels in the Romanian and Russian languages and creates conditions for the enjoyment of their right to education and instruction in their native language. To ensure the educational process within the educational institutions whereby the instructions are provided in the languages spoken by the national minorities, the State shall assist in the development of programs and methodical literature alongside with teacher staff training (Article 6 of the Law on the Rights of National Minorities);

- The State undertakes to provide funding for a standard package of educational services at the preschool and school levels, regardless of the type of ownership and organizational and legal form (private or public). The standard package of educational services for general education shall be approved by the Government (Article 9 of the Education Code);
The Government provides financing to ensure education in the preschool and schooling institutions and in the languages chosen.
- The State guarantees development of the effective communication skills in Romanian language and, as appropriate, in the languages spoken by the national minorities and at least two languages of international communication. The state shall ensure conditions for training and development of communication skills in English, French and Russian languages in all public institutions of general education (Article 9 of the Education Code);
- Within the framework of the education system, the instruction is done in Romanian and, within the capabilities of the education system, in one of the languages of international circulation or in the languages spoken by the national minorities. In the areas traditionally or in significant numbers populated by the persons belonging to national minorities, provided there is a sufficient need, the State shall ensure, to the extent possible within the educational system, that the persons belonging to these minorities have adequate opportunities to learn the language of their minority or to study in this language at the level of compulsory education (Art. 10 of the Education Code);
- The State shall provide all necessary conditions for studying the Romanian language in all of the educational institutions, including by increasing the share of subjects studied in Romanian in general education institutions with a different language of instruction (Article 10 of the Education Code);
- The official languages spoken in ATU Gagauzia are the State, Gagauz and Russian. The use of other languages on the territory of Gagauzia shall be guaranteed alongside the official ones (Article 3 of the Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri);
- General education institutions should fulfil the school component of the curriculum in line with children's and pupils' needs, interests and educational preferences. (Article 20 of the Education Code);
- The quality of language competencies and language rights shall be ensured through application of the following educational standards established by the state:
 - in general education, criteria and standards regarding the level of quality shall be developed by the Ministry of Education and include as follows: the National curriculum, competence levels, development of professional competencies of teaching staff, textbooks and other resources, conditions and material resources to support effective educational process (Article 39 The Education Code);
 - choice of the optional subjects from the framework plan shall have a share of 0 to 15% in the primary education, 15% to 20% in the gymnasium education and 20% to 25% in the lyceum education (Article 40 (7) of the Education Code);
 - the local public administration authorities of the first and second level and of ATU Gagauzia may establish for the education institutions under their subordination, the local component of the curriculum with a share of at most 5% in the primary and gymnasium education and

at most 10% in the lyceum education from the share of the optional subjects (Art. 40 (10) of the Education Code);

- in cases of educational alternatives, the framework plans and curriculum programs shall be developed by the representatives of education institutions, which implement them and shall be approved by the Ministry of Education (Article 40 (9) of the Education Code).

3.2 Conclusions and recommendations concerning the national legislative framework

The Republic of Moldova has a legislative framework regulating the provision and protection of the rights of minorities, which contains the key elements of the international standards, and their implementation is based on the principles of equality. Moldovan legislation provides measures to ensure the linguistic rights of the national minorities.

Consistent legislative measures have been taken in the Republic of Moldova in order to create a comprehensive system of protection of the right of national minorities allowing to preserve, develop and express their linguistic identity in the field of education.

At the same time, a number of regulations ensuring the linguistic rights provided for by the legislation require changes in the light of decisions taken by the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova, the need for an update in the context of the changed realities of modern society:

- development of special measures by the state to preserve the Gagauz language (possibly other regional languages), the viability of which is assessed under the risk of extinction, from the standpoint of preserving the language as part of the cultural heritage.
- updating the legislative framework underpinning functioning of languages in the Republic of Moldova;
- amending the Education Code with the notion of "multilingual education";
- updating the content of the guarantees concerning development of effective communication skills in the Romanian language and national minorities languages and conditions for development of skills in foreign languages. Providing for the development of a regulatory framework based on the integrated approach to language policy in order to effectively develop the multilingual education;
- updating the contents of article 10 of the Education Code having regard to the application of provisions on "system capabilities" and "sufficient need", based on equality standards and guarantees of minority rights;
- introduction of a mechanism for "determining language learning preferences". As a rule, if there is only one educational institution in the locality, then training shall be done depending on the profile of the majority or the capacities of the educational institution. And in such cases, if parents want to follow their preferences and have the appropriate opportunity, they should choose to send their child to study in another locality;
- definition of "conditions and guarantees of access" to the provision of language rights for the national minorities. In particular, in order to provide for a more comprehensive equal access to quality education for national minorities that have to study 3-4 languages, it is necessary to clarify the provisions of paragraph (2) of Article 9 of the Education Code on the

content of the standard package of educational services, of paragraph (3) on the basic financing of general education, which is carried out on the principle of "money follows the student". Currently, this provision does not take into account the scope of the application of the principle of financing, taking into account the specifics of the costs per student who, in addition to the state and foreign languages, also studies their mother tongue and the history of the native land³⁷. the ACFC in the 4th Opinion (2016) advised to eliminate the shortcomings marked in the Code³⁸. It is worth noting that the government annually provides funding to cover these costs through special transfers for teaching mother tongue subjects and the history of the native land (four extra hours);

- clarifying the powers within the national regulatory framework shared by the central authorities and the authorities of the ATU Gagauzia in governing the language policy in the autonomy by developing proposals on changes and amendments to the Education Code and other regulations.
- offering to ATU Gagauzia the appropriate space for independent regulation in the field of language policy and education in the context of needs called for by the present time;
- introducing provisions for central bodies to properly plan and monitor the realization of language rights in education in accordance with the international standards;

3.3 Analysis of the legislative framework of ATU Gagauzia

1. 1995 - Law of the ATU Gagauzia No. 3-IV/I "On the functioning of languages in the territory of ATU Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri)"³⁹;
2. 1998 - The Code of Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri) No. 28-XXX/I⁴⁰;
3. 2018 - The Law of the ATU Gagauzia No. 30-XVII/VI "On expanding the scope of the Gagauz language"⁴¹.

The above legal acts include the following key provisions:

- Revival, preservation, development and extension of Gagauz language are the priority tasks of the public authorities of Gagauzia. Gagauzia recognizes and guarantees equal rights with regard to preservation and development of languages and cultures of all nationalities living on its territory, creating opportunities for their free development (Article 16 of the Gagauzia Code (Gagauz-Yeri);
- Development of a program to expand the scope of the Gagauz language, creation of a Fund to save the Gagauz language (a Fund that cannot be less than 2% of the own revenues of the budget of Gagauzia and having the size of the Fund shown in a separate line of the budget of Gagauzia) as well as the Funds supporting topical, literary, musical, and drama materials (Article 3 of the Law on Expanding the Scope of the Gagauz Language);

³⁷ Report about the activity of the Equality Council in 2014, p.12

³⁸ Fourth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova - adopted on 25 May 2016 ACFC/OP/IV (2016)004, Strasbourg, 7 February 2017, para. 80.

³⁹ <http://halktoplushu.md/index.php/zakony-ato-gagauziya/288-2011-06-28-08-39-44>

⁴⁰ <https://halktoplushu.md/index.php/ulozhenie-gagauzii>

⁴¹ <https://halktoplushu.md/index.php/zakonodatelstvo-ato/zakony-ato-gagauziya/2510-zakon-30-xvii-vi-ot-26-oktyabrya-2018-g-o-rasshirenii-sfery-primeniya-gagauzskogo-yazyka>

- Approval of the rules of spelling and punctuation of the Gagauz language by the Research Centre of ATU Gagauzia M.V. Marunevich (Article 5 of the Law on Expanding the Scope of the Gagauz language). The Centre is responsible for compilation of dictionaries, preparation of educational and methodological manuals on subjects taught in the Gagauz language, translation of curricula (article 14 of the Law on Expanding the Scope of the Gagauz Language)
- Creating a linguistic environment through staff communication with children in the Gagauz language throughout the day. Classes are conducted in the effective language of instruction. Outside of classes, communication between children, with their tutors and parents shall be done in the Gagauz language. In order to create a language-friendly environment, the subject "Fine Arts" was gradually introduced (2019-2020), while for shaping a positive image of the Gagauz language, some cartoons in the Gagauz language were shown in preschool education institutions supplemented by reading fairy tales in the Gagauz language. The script and the repertoire of children's matinees and various events should contain at least 50% of the material in the Gagauz language (Article 8 of the Law on Expanding the Scope of the Gagauz Language);
- Teaching in all pre-university institutions of Gagauzia such disciplines in Gagauz language as: "History, culture and traditions of the Gagauz people", "Gagauz language and literature". Since the 2019-2020 academic year, in educational institutions where there is no division for studying other mother tongues, the following two subjects become mandatory for instruction in Gagauz: "Technological education" and "Fine Arts". The study of these subjects is introduced step-wise in primary school. The remaining subjects of the curriculum are studied in the language of instruction (Article 9 of the Law on expanding the scope of application of the Gagauz language);
- In the institutions of pre-university education of Gagauzia, extracurricular activities are held in the official languages established in Gagauzia, provided that, starting from the 2019-2020 academic year, at least 40% of the events shall be held in the Gagauz language (Article 10 of the Law on expanding the scope of application of the Gagauz language);
- Comrat State University provides translation into Gagauz of documents on teaching methodology of such disciplines as "Technological Education" and "Fine Arts" for preschool education and primary school;
- Introduction of measures to motivate the teaching of disciplines in Gagauz language: for young specialists in general education, and specialists to work as teachers at the Faculty of National Culture at the KSU a special monthly salary supplement worth one fixed official salary for the first 3 years of teaching activity is provided; to encourage and motivate teachers in all pre-university educational institutions double pay is provided for each hour spent, and for teachers who teach the subject "Gagauz language and literature" and "History, culture and traditions of the Gagauz people" a supplement to their salary in the amount of 50% of their official salary is provided (Article 15 of the Law on Expansion of the Use of the Gagauz Language).

3.4 Conclusions and recommendations concerning the legislative framework of the ATU Gagauzia

The legislative framework as a whole contains the basic principles and directions of ensuring language rights in accordance with the international and national standards. Measures for the revival, preservation, development and expansion of the use of Gagauz language have been taken into account in great detail and further developed.

At the same time, a number of provisions still require clarification. Once the national legislative framework is updated, it will be necessary to bring effective laws of the autonomy in the field of language rights in education in accordance with the national legislation. Inter alia, analysis of Law on expanding the scope of application of the Gagauz language in the ATU Gagauzia showed the need to harmonize provisions in the field of education with the national legislation and good international practices in language legislation in providing for multilingualism. Provisions of the regulatory frameworks of ATU Gagauzia that require further clarification or revision:

- coordination of the following two provisions - "holding events with at least 50% of the material delivered in the Gagauz language in all of the preschool institutions" and "creating language-friendly environment in preschool institutions through communication of the teaching staff with children during the entire day in the Gagauz language, except for classes that, by definition, are delivered in the language of instruction";
- updating provision having regard to "communication of educators with parents, which should be maintained in the Gagauz language". This formula could create barriers in communication with people of other ethnic origin who do not speak Gagauz language. At the same time, this provision is not coordinated with the provision on the functioning of three official languages in the autonomy and violates the principle of proportionality;
- updating regulation on "increasing the share of disciplines in the Gagauz language across all of the educational institutions (early/preschool, pre-university/primary, secondary education)". It does not take into account the language of instruction in each particular educational institution;
- updating provision according to which in the pre-university institutions, where there is no division of classes for the study of other native languages (i.e. in the institutions with the instruction delivered in Gagauz language), as well as for Gagauz students in the educational institutions in which the division into other native languages is implemented, two subjects become mandatory for studying in the Gagauz language: "Technological education" and "Fine Art". The practical implementation of this provision from the financial, staff and language standpoint could hardly be realized in case of classes divided into two native languages;
- clarify the provisions concerning commitment of the KSU to support the process of expanding the scope of the Gagauz language. Given that, according to the Code on Education, the higher education state institutions are subordinate to MER and have university autonomy in the field of management, functioning, teaching, research, management and financing, the regional/local public administration bodies can only carry out their joint activities on the basis of a cooperation agreement;
- clarification and development of the regulatory framework of ATU Gagauzia regarding the language policy in the field of education to ensure the protection of minority rights in the autonomy, which would take into account the language rights of other ethnic communities

and without harming the use, study and teaching in the Romanian language. Needs to be supplemented with the provisions on responsibility for learning the Romanian language.

4. Policies and program documents aimed at ensuring language rights in the field of education

4.1 National policies and program documents related to the strategic development of the Republic of Moldova

National, sectoral, or thematic policy and program documents are developed to implement the provisions of national and regional legal frameworks that ensure the realization of the linguistic rights of national minorities.

At the national level, the main strategic framework for ensuring the enjoyment of the language rights includes as follows:

1. The National Strategies "Moldova - 2020"⁴² and "Moldova -2030"⁴³
2. The National Human Rights Action Plan for 2018-2022⁴⁴
3. Strategy of strengthening the interethnic relations for 2017-2027⁴⁵
4. The Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova, Article 124 ⁴⁶
5. Republic of Moldova– European Union Action Plan for 2017-2019⁴⁷
6. Action Plan Republic of Moldova - European Union for 2020 - 2027 (draft)
7. The National Roadmap for the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European Research Space for 2019-2021⁴⁸
8. The National Research and Innovation Program for 2020- 2023⁴⁹
9. The Government Programme for 2019-2023⁵⁰
10. The Government Programme "Moldova of Better Times" 2021-2025⁵¹
11. Education 2020 Strategy and Education 2030 Draft⁵²

⁴² Law No. 166 of 11-07-2012 on the approval of the National Development Strategy "Moldova-2020", in: the Official Gazette No. 245-247 Article No. 791.

⁴³ Government Decision No. 377 of 10-06-2020 on the draft Law on the approval of the National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030", in the Official Gazette No. 153-158 Article No. 508.

⁴⁴ Government Decision No. 89 of 24-05-2018 on the approval of the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2018-2022, in the Official Gazette No. 295-308 Article No. 457.

⁴⁵ Government Decision No. 1464 of 30-12-2016 on the approval of the Strategy for Strengthening Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Moldova for 2017-2027, in Official Gazette No. 60-66 Article No. 129

⁴⁶ The Agreement of Association between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and the member states of these, on the one side and the Republic of Moldova, on the other part (europa.eu)

⁴⁷ Government Decision No. 1472 of 30-12-2016 on the approval of the National Action Plan for the implementation of the Association Agreement Republic of Moldova - European Union for 2017-2019, in the Official Gazette No. 103-108 Article No. 271.

⁴⁸ Government Decision No. 1081 of 08-11-2018 on the approval of the National Roadmap for the Integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European Research Area for 2019-2021 and the Action Plan for its Implementation, in the Official Gazette No. 6-12 Article No. 02.

⁴⁹ Government Decision No. 381 of 01-08-2019 on the approval of the National Program in the fields of Research and Innovation for 2020-2023 and the Action Plan for its Implementation, in the Official Gazette No. 256-259 Article No. 506.

⁵⁰ Government Decision No. 636 of 11.12.2019 on the approval of the Government Action Plan for 2020-2023, in the Official Gazette No. 378-379 Article No. 976.

⁵¹ [programul_de_activitate_al_guvernului_moldova_vremurilor_bune.pdf \(gov.md\)](#)

⁵² Government Decision No. 1328 of 13.12.2016 on the approval of the Action Plan for Socio-economic Development of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia for 2016-2019, in: the Official Gazette No. 459-471 Article No.: 1440.

12. The National programme on improving the quality of learning the Romanian language in general education institutions with instruction in the languages spoken by the national minorities (2016-2020)⁵³
13. Action plan for socio-economic development of ATU Gagauzia for 2016-2019⁵⁴
14. The National programme on improving the quality of learning Romanian language in the educational institutions with instruction in the languages spoken by the national minorities (2016-2020)
15. Draft action Plan for 2021-2024 on the implementation of the Strategy for Strengthening Interethnic Relations for 2017-2027⁵⁵

The core strategic frameworks providing for language rights in ATU Gagauzia are the following:

1. The Strategy of socio-economic development of Gagauzia 2017-2022⁵⁶
2. The programme of the Executive Committee of ATU Gagauzia for 2019-2023.⁵⁷
3. The Programme on expanding the scope of application of the Gagauz language for 2019⁵⁸
4. The Programme on expanding the scope of application of the Gagauz language for the period 2019-2021.⁵⁹
5. The Regional Sustainable Development Programme of Bilingual Language Teaching in Pre-school institutions of ATU Gagauzia⁶⁰
6. The Earmarked Programme and action plan for the development of the education sector of ATU Gagauzia for 2021-2030.⁶¹
7. The Sustainable Development Plan of the Regional Programme on Bilingual Study of Romanian and Gagauz languages in Early Education institutions of Gagauzia for 2021-2023 (Decision of the Advisory Council of the Main Department of Education of Gagauzia, 15.01.2021)⁶²
8. Regulations on the Fund for the Rescue of the Gagauz Language (in the amount of at least 2% of the revenues of the budget of Gagauzia) (Resolution of the People's Assembly No. 323 -XXX/VI/2019);

⁵³ Government Decision No. 944 of 11/14/2014 on the approval of the Education Development Strategy for 2014-2020 "Education 2020", in: the Official Gazette No. 345-351 Article No. 1014.

⁵⁴ Government Decision No. 904 of 31.12.2015 on the approval of the National Programme for Improving the quality of learning Romanian language in general education institutions with instruction in the languages spoken by the national Minorities (2016-2020), in the Official Gazette No. 2-12 article No. 9.

⁵⁵ https://particip.gov.md/ro/document/stages/*/8329

⁵⁶ Resolution of the Executive Committee of Gagauzia No. ... on the approval of the Strategy of Socio-economic Development of Gagauzia for 2017-2022. <https://www.gagauzia.md/ru/strategiya-soczialno-ekonomicheskogo-razvitiya-gagauzii-2017-2022.html> .

⁵⁷ Resolution of the NCG No. 314-XXIX/VI of September 11, 2019 <https://www.halktoplushu.md/index.php/postanovleniya/2899-o-programme-deyatelnosti-ispolnitelnogo-komiteta-gagauzii-na-2019-2023-gody>

⁵⁸ Resolution of the NCG No. 288-XXVII/VI of July 30, 2019 <http://halktoplushu.md/index.php/postanovleniya/2863-ob-utverzhenii-programmy-po-rasshireniyu-sfery-primeneniya-gagauzskogo-yazyka-na-2019-god>

⁵⁹ Resolution of the Executive Committee of Gagauzia No. 9/18 of March 18, 2019

⁶⁰ Resolution of the Executive Committee of Gagauzia on the approval of the Regional Program of Bilingual Language Teaching in Pre-school institutions of the ATU Gagauzia No.29/12 dated October 30, 2020

⁶¹ [Programme of development of the sphere of Education in UTA Gagauzia.pdf \(guogagauzii.md\)](#)

⁶² <https://guogagauzii.md/olimpiady-2020>

9. Regulation on the promotion and stimulation of the use of the Gagauz language (Resolution of the People's Assembly No. 326 -XXX/VI/2019);
10. Regulation on a special regional inquiry (Resolution of the Executive Committee of Gagauzia No. 23/5 of 24.07.2019);

4.2 Policy documents containing measures aimed at ensuring the language rights of the national minorities

The National policy documents are meant to generally define as strategic priorities and objectives the following : fair access, expanding access to quality education, including for people belonging to national minorities, ensuring measures in support of studying the Romanian language with the view of consolidation of the society.

The draft Strategy "Education 2030" (in the process of consultations) envisages the creation of conditions for integrating national minorities into the society, while focusing on providing key competencies in the field of communication in the state and native languages in accordance with the European recommendations (2018).

The Republic of Moldova - European Union Action Plan for 2017-2019 envisaged certain measures for strengthening the interethnic relations, implementation by the Republic of Moldova of the provisions stipulated by the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, development of communication abilities in graduates of higher education programmes in the State and native language.

The draft RM-EU Action Plan for 2021-2027 provides for the effective implementation of the European Convention for the Protection of National Minorities within 7 years (p.12) as well as the measures to provide equal chances for quality education granted to the representatives of the national minorities.

Policy documents in the field of scientific research assure participation in the European research initiative on the preparation of the programme " Cultural Heritage and a Global Change: A new Challenge for Europe and funding research in the strategic direction: "educational and cultural innovations for integration and adaptation" and "tangible and intangible heritage".

4.3 The national program documents aimed at ensuring the study of the Romanian language

- The programme of the Government of the Republic of Moldova for 2021-2025, is setting as priority the assessment of the results of the National Programme to improve the quality of learning the Romanian language in general education institutions with instruction delivered in the languages spoken by national minorities 2016-2020 (MER has announced a competition for making this study) and the development and implementation of the national

programme for 2021-2025, as well as the support of programmes for the development of communication competencies in the mother tongue for children and students in the institutions with instruction in the languages spoken by national minorities. The priority task is to improve the quality of instruction in the Romanian language and teaching the mother tongue in institutions with instruction in the languages spoken by national minorities.

- The study and application of the Romanian language for foreign-speaking citizens is also one of the priorities outlined in the current Strategy for Strengthening the Interethnic Relations for 2017-2027. One of the important principles of the Strategy is the recognition of linguistic diversity and the unifying role of the Romanian language.
- The draft plan for 2021-2024⁶³ for implementing the Strategy for Strengthening Interethnic Relations for 2017-2027 contains a number of measures to improve the teaching of the Romanian language: publication of didactic materials and training of teaching staff in non-linguistic disciplines for teaching in the Romanian language, modernization of curriculum and providing didactic materials in the digital format, developing and amending regulations with provisions necessary for the implementation of bilingual/multilingual education in preschool education and governing labour activity of the teaching staff, determining the training needs of teaching staff, free courses for adults, and promotion of mobility for young people.
- The national programme on improving the quality of learning the Romanian language in general education institutions, with instruction provided in the languages spoken by the national minorities (2016-2020), was focused on the development of linguistic competencies of the Romanian language and on the implementation of measures meant to teach the Romanian language in early education institutions with a program in the languages of national minorities (bilingual model), modernization of the teaching-learning-assessment process in the subject "Romanian language and literature" in primary, gymnasium and lyceum education, studying some of the school subjects in the Romanian language to ensure sociolinguistic integration, broadening the communication environment in the Romanian language as part of an extracurricular program, shaping up communication competencies in the Romanian language for foreign-language teaching staff (teachers of other disciplines).
- The Action plan of the Government of the Republic of Moldova for socio-economic development of ATU Gagauzia for 2016-2019 provided the opening groups in early education institutions with simultaneous instruction in Gagauz and Romanian (10 groups in 10 kindergartens for 200 kids) and arranging Romanian language courses for the civil servants of the Autonomy.

4.4 National policy documents aimed at ensuring the study of the native language of the national minorities

- The Strategy for Strengthening the Interethnic Relations for 2017-2027 contains measures aimed at ensuring proper protection of minorities.

⁶³ https://particip.gov.md/ro/document/stages/*/8329

- The draft plan for 2021-2024 for the implementation of the national Strategy for Strengthening Interethnic Relations for 2017-2027 contains a number of measures meant to ensure protection and development of the national minority languages: s.a. modernization of the curriculum, diversification of programmes, development of new textbooks, training of teaching staff, etc.

The priority task of the autonomy's program documents is confined to "preservation, development and expansion of the use of the Gagauz language in educational institutions and promotion of the Gagauz language and culture." To achieve this goal, developed and adopted was the Law on expanding the scope of application of the Gagauz language.

The programme of measures for the implementation of the Law on expanding the scope of application of the Gagauz language for the period 2019-2021 included as follows:

- The Regional Program for expanding the scope of the Gagauz language for 2019-2021 is targeted towards the creation of a linguistic environment, popularization, development and comprehensive application, dissemination and promotion of the Gagauz language. To achieve these goals, provided shall be the following measures: inclusion of a curriculum for the study of the Gagauz language in the Curriculum of all general educational institutions of the autonomy; teaching the subject "Fine Arts" in the Gagauz language in early education institutions, and teaching "Fine Arts" and "Technological Education" at the levels of primary and gymnasium education. The program also includes activities consisting of the translation and publication of methodological materials and textbooks, organization of training courses for teaching staff in these subjects.

Specific measures according to the levels of the education system provide for the following:

- activities in preschool institutions, with 50% of their content provided in the Gagauz language;
- activities in general education institutions, with at least 40% of extracurricular activities provided in the Gagauz language;
- teaching in vocational and higher pedagogical education in Gagauz language such subjects as "Pedagogics of primary education" and Methods of teaching "Technological Education" and "Fine Arts".
- provided for the implementation of the programme was a sustainable financing mechanism, amounting to 2% of the annual budget of the ATU Gagauzia.

4.5 The national and regional policy documents advocating language education

- The Target Programme and Action Plan for the development of the education sector of ATU Gagauzia for 2021-2030, adopted by the Executive Committee of ATU Gagauzia on the 16th of December 2021, includes as a priority the development and promotion of multilingual education in ATU Gagauzia.⁶⁴ Multilingualism is one of the fundamental principles pursued by

⁶⁴ https://vk.com/wall506808948_3803

the implementation of the programme and provides for integrated learning with studying several languages, forming a competence of students and relying, inter alia, on Gagauz, Romanian and foreign languages.

- The Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova contains an obligation to promote cooperation and exchanges in areas of mutual interest, such as linguistic diversity and lifelong language learning, through an exchange of information and best practices (Article 124).
- The draft Strategy "Education 2030" (in the process of consultations) provides for the development of a balanced policy.

4.6 Conclusions on strategic planning aimed at ensuring the language rights of national minorities

From the above-presented information it follows that the leadership at national and regional levels is taking measures to ensure the realization of language rights of the national minorities in the main areas provided by the national legislation as well as by the international standards contained in the Conventions ratified by the Republic of Moldova. The new draft programme documents are aimed at diversifying curricula, improving quality of teaching through training, modernizing the curriculum and developing new didactic resources, providing opportunities for adults to study the State and native languages, and focusing on developing a balanced policy of intercultural and multicultural education.

However, noted should be several problems and impediments that need to be taken into account when developing and implementing the new programme documents:

- insufficient attention/resources to the possibility of creating open resources for learning the Romanian language and the Gagauz language, distance learning for different population groups and for the training of teaching staff
- implementation of a series of strategic documents bears a rather formal nature as a result of insufficient funding;
- development of programme documents is not based on the definition of real needs, preferences, local specifics due to lack of an information base for strategic planning and effective monitoring;
- programme documents are insufficiently focused on achieving the present qualitative indicators.
- indicators of monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of programme documents are basically focused on measuring quantitative indicators (the number of trained people, textbooks published, events held, etc.), which do not allow for assessing the effectiveness of the measures and resources invested or the level of the goals achieved;
- due to the pandemic, the measures envisaged for 2020 have been partially implemented.

4.7 Recommendations on the strategic planning aimed at ensuring the linguistic rights of national minorities

- provide state support for preservation of the Gagauz language, which is at risk of extinction, in accordance with international and European standards, while mobilizing international assistance for this purpose;
- it is advisable to consider the development of new programmes in the context of a concept envisaging further development of multilingual communication competencies and bearing on the integrated approach. The future language policy should promote the development of linguistic diversity in all aspects related to the use of language;
- conducting research to select the most suitable model of multilingual education in the ATU Gagauzia, taking into account to study 4 languages (Romanian, Gagauz, Russian, foreign);
- bearing in mind when developing new policy documents that there should be the need to provide the following comprehensive and consistent measures: 1. Regulatory framework, 2. Conceptual model, 3 Curriculum and standards, 4 Preparation of teaching resources, Didactic resources, 6 Infrastructure, technologies, open resources, 7. Assessment of learning quality and the level of achieved competencies, 8. International cooperation, 9. Scientific research and analysis, 10. Monitoring the compliance indicators in accordance with international standards;
- provide the collection of information on the language spoken in the family and the needs for language learning;
- provide for regulation on further supplementing the national SIME⁶⁵ database with information fields necessary for monitoring compliance with the international standards for ensuring language rights, development of effective programmatic measures and the ability of preparing report/making analysis in real time;
- update protocols on cooperation with Romania and other states speaking languages similar to Gagauz, with the view of developing joint teacher training programmes, textbooks, carrying out scientific research, promoting cultural heritage and cultural diversity;
- provide for the development of educational and methodological resources required for studying the Romanian and mother tongues and ensure "active offer" of services for online education for different categories of the population, along with certification of competencies;
- developing an active service offering mechanism;
- to annually determine the need for the training of bi-/multilingual teaching staff and provide funding from the state budget, or from the external sources based on the cooperation agreements. In order to enhance efficiency, it is recommended that higher educational institutions and pedagogic colleges develop modular micro-qualifications;
- ensure the planning of resources to support the mobility of students and teaching staff;
- develop a mechanism for monitoring and planning implementation of multilingualism and identify the required needs;
- support the research in the field of implementation and development of language policy through allocations from the budget earmarked for the national research and development programmes.

⁶⁵ <http://ctice.gov.md/sime-2/>

5. The situation regarding the study of the Gagauz language in the ATU Gagauzia

5.1 Qualitative analysis of the level of competencies, preferences and barriers to studying the Gagauz language

Although Gagauz is the mother tongue of the majority of Gagauz people, throughout their lives the Gagauz language is preserved mainly in the domain of family communication. A tendency is observed to transition to a language other than the Gagauz language (mainly Russian) for intra-family communication amidst the new generation the children of the current Gagauz population. These events pose a significant threat to the preservation of the Gagauz language in the long term (1-2 generations).

According to the data made available by "Ethnobarometer: Republic of Moldova - 2020"⁶⁶:

For 88% of Gagauz people, Gagauz is their mother tongue (for 26% the mother tongue is Russian and for 4% - Romanian. Multiple answers were given to this question in the survey).

83% of Gagauz people use Gagauz language in everyday life (87% use Russian - multiple answers were allowed). This means that a significant share of Gagauz people speaks two languages in their everyday life.

83% of Gagauz people use Gagauz language with family members (68% use Russian - multiple answers were allowed). However, the situation is reversed in the workplace - 86% of Gagauz speak Russian in their work or study environment, and 60% speak Gagauz.

65% of Gagauz people feel comfortable expressing their thoughts in Gagauz (85% in Russian – multiple answers were allowed).

60% of Gagauz people speak Gagauz in their work or study environment (86% speak Russian).

36% communicate with the state authorities in Gagauz language (94% communicate in Russian).

Answering the question about the preferred (first) language of instruction for themselves, their children and grandchildren, only 4% of Gagauz people chose Gagauz (70% chose Russian and 18% chose the Romanian language).

Self-assessment of the level of proficiency in the Gagauz language shows the following viability maintenance rate - 54% speak perfectly, 40% have a good command.

The status of the Russian language in Gagauzia in relation to the Gagauz language

The Russian language, despite being the mother tongue of only 1/4 of the Gagauz people, de facto, became the main language of communication outside family environment in Gagauzia. 95% of the respondents from Gagauzia indicated Russian as the language of instruction.

For the sake of comparison, the earlier referred to data made available by Ethnobarometer was⁶⁷ compiled in a single table:

	Gagauz language	Russian language
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⁶⁶ Ethnobarometer: Republic of Moldova -2020, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/7/505306_0.pdf

⁶⁷ Ethnobarometer: Republic of Moldova -2020, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/7/505306_0.pdf

Mother tongue	88%	26%
In communication with family members	83%	68%
In daily life	83%	87%
Feeling comfortable expressing their thoughts	65%	85%
In communication at the workplace or in education institutions	60%	86%
In communication with the authorities	36%	94%
Learned independently at school	-	95%
The first-choice language for continuing education, studies for their children (grandchildren)	4%	70% (18% have chosen the Romanian language)

The above numbers show that the current generations of Gagauz, who spoke Gagauz mostly in early childhood (88%), rapidly transition to the Russian language later in their lives and choose this language for their future generations. Gagauz people mostly speak Gagauz in family settings, otherwise using Russian most of the time when communicating outside their home.

Thus, the Gagauz language, as a broadly spoken one, may be on its way to disappearance within the next 1-2 generations, unless this trend is reversed in the nearby future.

At least two main factors seem to be the main reasons underpinning this language transition process:

- The school instruction, in the vast majority of cases, is available in Russian (95%), rather than in Gagauz language;
- Limited opportunities for using Gagauz language outside family environment (at work, at school, in communication with the authorities).

Hence, granting support to the Gagauz language survival requires two types of actions:

- Ensuring accessibility to school instruction in the Gagauz language;
- Developing opportunities for using the Gagauz language outside the family environment (at work, at school, in communication with the authorities).

5.2 Ensuring the study of the Gagauz language

Gagauz language as the official language of ATU Gagauzia is mainly studied in the educational institutions with general instructions in Russian language. In these types of education institutions,

the students generally study four languages: Russian, the Romanian language, Gagauz, and one foreign language.

In the educational institutions of the autonomy, the Gagauz as a mother tongue is studied in 42 institutions - 12,193 students. 172 teachers teach the Gagauz language in the primary classes. Teaching of the Gagauz language at the gymnasium and lyceum level is provided by 107 teachers. The rate of passing external assessment exams for the primary and gymnasium cycles amounts to 100%.

a) At the stage of early education

- The pilot program of bilingual education in the state and Gagauz languages, implemented by ANTEM since 2015 in the institutions of early education of the ATU Gagauzia, shows good results. According to an assessment conducted in the 2020/2021 academic year, upon completion of the early education program, over 70% of children had "good" and "very good" level of proficiency in the state and Gagauz languages.
- As part of the educational and didactic support for the study of the Gagauz language, a curriculum was published for the study of the Romanian language in early education institutions.
- Textbooks and children's books were developed and made available online⁶⁸.
- In 2021, following the adoption of a Plan for the implementation of the Bilingual Study of Romanian and Gagauz languages Programme in early education institutions of Gagauzia, certain measures were taken for the development, promotion and monitoring of the implementation, assessment of the disciples' competence level, training of personnel, preparing didactic materials, and teachers' remuneration issues.
- Upon completion of studies at preschool institutions, subject to evaluation shall be the speech competence of the disciples attending the preparatory group. These data serve as an indicator of the effectiveness of preschool institutions in setting up a proper environment to communicate in the Gagauz language and serve as grounds for incentive payments to kindergarten employees that contribute to the expansion of the scope of application of the Gagauz language within the institution.
- Based on the results of the assessment of the Gagauz language proficiency of kindergarten graduates, the Regional Commission for the Allocation of resources to the Fund for Rescuing the Gagauz Language, approved a number of kindergartens, in which the required number of graduates showed "very good" knowledge of the Gagauz language. Payment in the amount of MDL 500 was established for each pupil showing excellent knowledge of their mother tongue⁶⁹.

⁶⁸ http://www.gbm.md/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=62

⁶⁹ For example, in 2021, based on the results of the competence assessment, accrued were the following payments: MDL 15,000 to the kindergarten of Besalma village, where 30 graduates showed knowledge of the Gagauz language assessed as "very good"; MDL 14,000 to the kindergarten of Gaidary village, MDL 12,500 to the kindergarten of Cismichioi village, MDL 7,500 to kindergartens of Beshgioz village, kindergarten No. 4 of village Copceac, and kindergarten No. 8 of mun. Comrat

- To create a friendly linguistic environment, communication between teaching staff, children and their parents shall be maintained in the Gagauz language; also, the script and repertoire of children's matinees and various events should have at least 50% of the content presented in the Gagauz language.
- Since 2019, all of 57 institutions of early education in Gagauzia are making use of a package of didactic manuals developed by the ANTEM, with the financial support granted by the Office for Turks Abroad and Related Communities. However, currently, the educational system of the autonomy is facing difficulties in maintaining the learning process and providing manuals for middle and senior groups, republishing of which requires financial support.
- The statute of the Comrat Kindergarten No.1, named after Hodja Nasreddin, was approved by Decision of the Comrat Municipal Council of 29.11.2019, thus incorporating it as a municipal early education institution with instruction delivered in Gagauz and Romanian. Work is underway to strengthen the statute.
- In 2016-2017, within the framework of the programme "Integration with respect for diversity", a model of bilingual education in the Gagauz and Romanian languages was piloted in 10 early education institutions in five localities (Comrat, Congaz, Chadyr-Lunga, Besgioz, and Vulcanesti).⁷⁰ Encompassed by the programme in 2017 were 230 children and 181 parents, with 239 children and 218 parents joining it in 2018.

b) At the primary education level

- The following *curricula* (the fourth revised edition) have been developed and published: "Gagauz language and literature", "History, culture and traditions of the Gagauz people" for grades 1-4 (in 2018);
- Methodical *guidelines* on the introduction of the curriculum "Gagauz language and literature", "History, culture and traditions of the Gagauz people" for grades 1-4.
- **Textbooks:**
 - "Gagauz language and literature" - textbooks for 1st grade and 2nd grade published in 2019; 3rd grade (2016); 4th grade (2017);
 - "History, culture and traditions of the Gagauz people" - textbooks in the subject for grades III -IV developed and handed over to the schools of Gagauzia.
 - "History of the Gagauz people" - new textbooks for grades I-IV developed by the Scientific and Methodological Centre named after M.V. Marunevich;
 - The new curriculum contains advanced requirements for textbooks, 2019 (p.66): support for creative manifestations, stimulation of critical thinking, self-assessment.
 - In order to expand the use of the Gagauz language, the instruction is being piloted as follows:
 - piloted in grades I-III is the subject "Spiritual and moral education";
 - piloted in the third grade is the subject "Culture of good neighbourhood";

⁷⁰ The project was implemented with the support granted by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

- Published was a Gagauz-Russian dictionary, intended for students of grades 1-4 (3,500 copies).
- As of the 1st of September 2021, teaching in the Gagauz language of two subjects – "technological education" and "fine art" was launched in the first grades of the educational institutions. The introduction of these subjects in the Gagauz language in primary schools will be done in a stepwise manner. To provide for the delivery of instruction of the aforementioned subjects in the autonomy, prepared were a series of specialized dictionaries, guides and curricula. The teachers were offered a special training course at the Comrat State University. Teaching of these disciplines in the mother language is provided by the Law on expanding the scope of the Gagauz language.
- 62 classes are studying technological education and fine arts in the Gagauz language Currently, 57 teachers from 43 educational institutions of Gagauzia have stated their preparedness to switch from delivering instructions in the Russian language to delivering them in the Gagauz language. In 6 educational institutions of the autonomy, the teachers do not feel ready to teach aesthetic cycle subjects in the Gagauz language.
 - To motivate teaching staff, the Law on expanding the scope of application of the Gagauz language provides double remuneration granted to teachers for each lesson delivered in the Gagauz language. 39 teachers from 25 educational institutions of Gagauzia received salary boosters for teaching "Technological education" and "Fine Arts" in the Gagauz language in the first grades. According to the General Education Directorate of Gagauzia, the total amount of such payments amounted to MDL 447.3 thousand. The cost of one hour of double pay for teachers equals to MDL 153.6.⁷¹
 - 30 people have attended the ongoing education courses on the new curriculum, being certified as National trainers. Subsequently they delivered courses on the ground for all teachers of ATU Gagauzia.

c) At the level of gymnasium and lyceum education

- **Curriculum and methodological guides:** "Gagauz language and Literature" for ⁷²grades 5-9 and 10-12 (2020) ⁷³(the fourth revised edition):
 - "Gagauz language and Literature" for grades 5-9, grades 10-12, developed in 2020 and published on the MER website;
 - "History, culture and traditions of the Gagauz people" for grades V-IX
- **Textbooks:**
 - Gagauz language and literature textbooks *for (V-IX grades)* of the fourth edition: 5th grade (2015); 6th grade (2017); 7th grade (2018); 8th grade (2019); 9th grade (2016). Textbooks for grades 5 and 7 are in the process of development.

⁷¹ <https://raioncomrat.md/2021/07/>

⁷² https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/limba_si_lit_gagauza_gimnaziu.pdf

⁷³ https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/limba_si_lit_gagauza_liceu.pdf

- Textbooks on the Gagauz language and literature for students of grades X-XII were published in 2018.

- With the view of broadening the use of the Gagauz language, an optional course "Intercultural Education" is being piloted in grade VII.
- Published was the Gagauz-Russian dictionary for students of grades 5-12 (2,500 copies).
- 30 video lectures on studying the Gagauz language, developed by the Research Centre of Gagauzia named after M.V. Maruvevich, can be downloaded for free⁷⁴.

5.3 Assessment of the level of language competencies of the Gagauz language

The level of competencies regarding the educational standards was not determined for the mother tongue in the case of national minorities, as there was no agreement on the application of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), since these are provided for the foreign languages.

The State and the Gagauz languages enjoy the status of⁷⁵ compulsory disciplines studied throughout the entire cycle of general education (**see Annex 5**).

Assessment of the level of linguistic competencies of the Gagauz language:

The Gagauz language in primary education cycle - assessment shall be performed both verbally and in writing at the grounds of an educational institution; in gymnasium education - no testing is done, and in lyceum education - testing is done in writing and applies on a national level.

Graduates of the lyceums in which the mother tongue is functioning, and 4 languages are studied have the right to choose a subject for passing the bachelor's degree exam, i.e. Russian language or mother tongue.

Results of external evaluation of school performances at the national level

a) At the level of preschool education

7213 pupils attend the Bilingual Education Programme in 50 early education institutions. The level of competencies as determined by the assessment:

Gagauz language proficiency: high 40.5%, medium 59.3%, low 14%.

b) At the primary education level

- As a result of the implemented programmes meant to improve the quality of teaching the Gagauz language, observed was a relative improvement in the results of proficiency.
- Overall, the level of school results in Gagauz language is higher than in Romanian (**Annex 7, Table 1.1**).
- Results in Gagauz language showed a slight decrease in during 2016-2018.

⁷⁴ http://www.gbm.md/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=255

⁷⁵ ord._nr._1572_din_23.10.2018_metodologia_cl._4.pdf (gov.md), n.31

- In 2019, according to the overall results of the external assessment upon graduation from the primary education, ATU Gagauzia ranked 21st in the republican rating (**Annex 7, Table 1.2**).
- Starting with the 2019 academic year, a system of knowledge assessment was introduced in primary education based on descriptors.
- In 2021, ATU Gagauzia was ranking the 16th in the republican scoring by the average results achieved (**Annex 7, Table 1.3**).

c) At the level of gymnasium education

- Regardless of the high workload stemming from the requirement to learn 4 languages – the level of passing graduation exams for the gymnasium cycle was as high as 100%, with a slight drop down during 2020 /2021, which can be explained by the impact of the pandemic and the increase in the inclusion of students with SEN. Over the past 3 years, the average results across ATU Gagauzia are higher than the average results across the country (**Annex 7, Table 2.1**).

d) At the level of lyceum education

- Overall, marked in ATU Gagauzia was a positive trend in improving the results of graduation exams, which allows to conclude on strengthening the measures meant to enhance the quality of education.
- As of 2017, the average score for lyceum graduation is higher than the average country score. A slight decline occurred in 2021, but this can also be explained by the effect of pandemic (**Annex 7, Table 3.1**).
- At the same time, the analysis of the results of graduation exams shows a decline in line with the transition to the higher level of education – from primary to lyceum education. In particular, the average score for the gymnasium cycle – 7.54 (2021) - is higher than that for the lyceum - 7.09 (2021).
- The results for the Gagauz language - 7.87 (2021) are higher than such for the Romanian language 6.64 (2021), while the upward trend is not very sustainable (**Annex 7, Table 3.3**).
- It is worth noticing that the students studying in Russian had the best results in the PISA testing in the republic in 2018.

5.4 Training of educational personnel

Higher education is provided by the Comrat State University, which offers training in the 1st and 2nd cycle in the specialty "Gagauz language and literature". During the 2021/2022 academic year, the CSU allocated a rather small number of places for training 89 teaching staff supposed to teach Gagauz, Romanian and other humanities, with funding from the state budget (see table for plan and

its implementation). There are just a few state financed openings (5 to 15), assuming that the groups will be formed by the training candidates joining on the contractual basis (see **Annex 6, Table 6.1**).

The analysis data show that, although applications for training on the grounds of state financed openings were submitted, as a rule, it is impossible to form a group, due to the lack of demand for training in these specialties on contractual basis. Subsequently, these vacant places are transferred to other related specialties, where the level of candidates' recruitment is higher. In reality, there is a dispersion of financial and human resources, and no real training is provided, making it impossible to ensure high quality and efficiency of education. Thus, due to the scarce number of teachers specialized in Romanian and Gagauz languages, there is a risk of missing the implementation of the strategic programme meant to provide the instructions in the state and Gagauz languages.

According to the Ministry of Education and Research, in 2020 (**Annex 6, Table 6.2**), only 7 students have managed to pass the licentiate program "primary education with teaching in the Gagauz language" and were employed – which is far from being sufficient, given the real demand.

Inter alia, CSU also organizes ongoing education programs aimed at improving the teachers' skills (300 hours courses): pedagogy of preschool and primary education; Gagauz, Romanian, Bulgarian languages and literature; Gagauz language and culture; Gagauz language in preschool education; didactics of mathematics, computer science; psycho-pedagogic module; e-learning, etc. The analysis of the situation occurring in higher education in Gagauzia revealed that the staff training programmes could hardly meet the needs of the region's development, due to limited number of programmes with instructions delivered in Romanian and foreign languages, etc. Not all higher education programmes are accredited, and for some, the accreditation term is already expiring. Marked as a positive element in the activities conducted by the CSU could be the ongoing education programmes for advanced training of teachers of preschool and primary education and languages: Gagauz, Romanian, Bulgarian, didactics of mathematics, didactics of computer science, psycho-pedagogic module, as well as the international mobility of teaching staff and doctoral students. In the recent years, a slump was observed in funding allocated from either the state budget and/or from external sources.⁷⁶

5.5 Other measures meant to promote the Gagauz language

- Celebration of the Gagauz Language Day "Ana dilimiz", annually on April 27.
- Since 2017, under the patronage of the Executive Committee of Gagauzia, a general writing test (dictation) on the Gagauz language is being held, with participation of pupils, students, and adults. Envisaged for the purpose are nine monetary awards, each worth MDL 1000.
- To incentivize the process of studying Gagauz language, the schools of the autonomy are entitled to receive rewards. To that end, at the beginning of the academic year, it is

⁷⁶ [Programme of development of the sphere of education UTA Gagauzia.pdf \(guogagauzii.md\)](#)

necessary to prepare and submit to the Main Education Directorate of Gagauzia a "Programme of activities to expand the use of the Gagauz language in the educational institution". The payment shall be differentiated, depending on the number of students attending the educational institution.

- Provision of financial incentives to students, teachers, educational institutions⁷⁷: scholarships for students studying the Gagauz language and literature (1st and 2nd cycle) - MDL 565.5 thousand; salary supplement for novice teachers - total worth MDL 89.2 thousand, allowance for teachers of Technological education and Fine Arts delivering instructions in Gagauz language - MDL 447.3 thousand, incentivising payments to kindergartens – MDL 60 thousand, and MDL 200.0 thousand to schools. Overall, in 2018, the funds allocated for improving the native language learning process amounted to MDL 10,499.2 thousand; in 2019 to MDL 11, 105.4 thousand; and in 2020 to MDL 13,890.1 thousand⁷⁸.
- Published were 6 editions of the scientific and methodological journal "Gagauz dili hem literatura"/ "Gagauz language and literature"
- Diaries for students of primary, gymnasium and lyceum cycles in the Gagauz language are published annually.
- Held in 2019, was the Regional Forum "Gagauz language: Diversity of opportunities in an integrated space".
- The M.V. Marunovich Gagauzia Research Centre announced a contest for creating an online Gagauz to Russian and Russian to Gagauz translation tool. Envisaged for the purpose MDL 170 thousand will be allocated from the Gagauz Language Rescue Fund.
- Extracurricular education provided by the House of Creativity is focused on the preservation of cultural identity and includes a theatrical studio and two drama clubs in support of mastering the Gagauz language and literature.

5.6 Conclusions/challenges in promoting the study of the Gagauz language

Gagauzia leadership has taken significant measures to ensure the revival, preservation and promotion of the Gagauz language in the sphere of education.

To this end, the following comprehensive measures were taken: development of legislative and regulatory frameworks, programme documents, including for bilingual study of the state and Gagauz languages, development of textbooks, dictionaries, further training of bilingual educators and teachers, training of the managerial staff of the educational institutions with the view of effective implementation of the programme, introduction of the system of early assessment of language competencies, financial measures to motivate and incentivize most effective implementation of the programme.

⁷⁷ Repot of UTAG Education Department, August 2021

⁷⁸ [Programme of Education Sphere Development UTA Gagauzia.pdf \(guogagauzii.md\)](#), p.44

- Data made available by five focus groups and following 12 interviews, both Gagauz and Romanian languages require further improvement in quality of instruction and teaching materials and providing sufficient number of bilingual teachers.
- Analysis of the practical status at the level of secondary general education in ATU Gagauzia shows lack of continuity of programmes and insufficient development of communication skills in native and Romanian languages at the subsequent levels of the education system, including in adult education. In particular, no conditions were created for continuing bilingual education in primary grades for the graduates of preschool programmes;
- Difficult and mundane textbooks in the Gagauz language make students of the Gagauz ethnic group to choose Bulgarian as their native language for study.⁷⁹
- No terminology was developed to support the effective linguistic immersion.
- The programmes are not targeted towards promotion of knowledge, cultural diversity and positive multilingualism. Little attention is paid to these issues when developing the local component of the curriculum.
- The program is excessively overloaded, especially in case of the students representing national minorities.
- Textbooks are of poor quality for many of the school disciplines, and are incapable to support the educational process. There is missing content in digital format, especially for studying the humanities in the native language of the national minorities.
- The support granted to the local component of the curriculum, in accordance with the Education Code, amounts to 5% of the share of elective subjects studied at the primary and gymnasium level and 10% for such at the lyceum level, while in the curriculum approved by the MER for elective subjects, envisaged was just one hour per week. Such a regulation makes this rule practically inapplicable.
- Studying the compulsory disciplines in fine arts and technological education, although providing with a phased-out introduction, does not stipulate the level of initial language proficiency for taking instructions in these disciplines so as to provide for its functionality/effectiveness.

5.7 Recommendations for improving the study of the Gagauz language

- Development of effective multilingualism/bilingualism requires laying out of a systemic concept for studying the Gagauz and Romanian languages throughout the verticality of the system from early to higher education, based on the principle of a systemic, consistent and multilingual approach. The above proposal is contained in the Programme for Development of Education in ATU Gagauzia until 2030.⁸⁰
- Multilingualism in the education system of Gagauzia requires development of the concept/model of language learning, taking into account the legislative definition of the 3 official languages in the region and the need of learning a foreign language. In this context, it is necessary to define the goals of learning each of these languages, based on which the

⁷⁹ Opinions shared during round table discussion on the challenges and directions of the strategic development of the Education System of ATU Gagauzia, 2019.

⁸⁰ [Programme of the development of the sphere of education in UTA Gagauzia.pdf \(guogagauzii.md\)](#), p.54

curricula should be developed, alongside with optimizing the load on students, and by so doing, to enhance motivation for language learning and provide the relevance of the content.

- It is necessary to reconsider approaches to teaching languages and their qualitative methodological support throughout the verticality of the system; strategy and periodicity of competence assessment, certification of knowledge, etc.
- Positive experience gained through the development of multilingualism in early education should be integrated and continued within the framework of primary education.
- Making changes and including in the financing formula of the educational institutions, according to the methodology approved by the Government Decision No. 868 of 8 October 2014, the coefficients for learning the native language and the permission to split up the classes for this purpose into subgroups, provided the majority of the students in the class do not use their native language in the family, have never studied it in early education institutions and are at the incipient stage of mastering it.
- It is desirable to develop and pilot some bilingual education programmes (Gagauz-English, Romanian-English, etc.) that would enhance motivation of students and support the strategic goals of economic development of ATU Gagauzia.
- Launching implementation of the new pilot programmes only against full provision of didactic materials for students and teachers, development of the effective system for assessing language competencies (verbal and in writing).
- It is necessary to develop programmes for parents, thus giving them a chance to learn their native and/or the Romanian language to gain an effective command, application and participation in the upbringing/support of children and creating common language environment.
- Making use of digital content to diversify educational resources and benefiting of the applied nature of language learning.

6. The situation with the study of the Romanian language in the ATU Gagauzia

6.1 Qualitative analysis of the level of competencies, preferences and barriers to studying the Romanian language

Despite the measures taken to ensure conditions for the study of the Romanian language by the representatives of national minorities, the level of its proficiency remains low⁸¹.

According to the study "Ethnobarometer⁸²: The Republic of Moldova - 2020", the survey among the representatives of the Gagauz population regarding the level of proficiency in the Romanian language showed as follows: 12% indicated that they speak and understand well; 19% speak and

⁸¹ Statement made in the Fifth Report submitted by the Republic of Moldova, p. 20

⁸² Ethnobarometer: Republic of Moldova -2020, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/7/505306_0.pdf

understand with some difficulty, 12% understand poorly/little, but could still speak; 29% speak poorly, but could understand.

Comparing the above data with such made available by the 2014 census, when 8.7% of Gagauz people noted that they speak fluently in the Romanian language, a conclusion can be drawn on a relatively slow positive trend in learning and gaining proficiency in the Romanian language.

The ethnic Gagauz people, with a poor command of the Romanian language, explained it as follows:

- 36% explained it by poor quality of teaching the Romanian language at school;
- 16% do not see the need to study it;
- 12% explained it by the lack of access to learning the Romanian language;
- 40% noted lack of time to study it;
- 40% claimed feeling no desire to study it.

Examining the preparedness to attend classes in the Romanian language, the Ethnobarometer found that: 39% of the surveyed representatives of the Gagauz population are ready to attend classes provided these are free; 2% are ready to attend and pay for classes if such will be held in close to their residence; 37% do not feel any desire; 20% choose not to answer.

Preparedness to learn the Romanian language is strongly linked with age. 58% of Gagauz people in the 18-34 age group are ready to learn the Romanian language; respectively, 46% of Gagauz people in the 35-59 age group and 25% of Gagauz people in the 60+ age group. From the presented data, it follows that young people are ready to learn the Romanian language, provided that the programmes are available in time, they are delivered free, and the quality of instruction is good. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that 83% of Gagauz people believe that knowledge of the Romanian language has a positive effect on career advancement in the Republic of Moldova.

In her 2017 report on her official visit to Moldova in 2016, the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues (SRMI) stressed that all representatives of national minorities unanimously stated the importance of studying and having a good command of the Romanian language. Many interlocutors expressed concerns that the teaching of the Romanian language provided in minority-language schools was of low quality and that the teachers in charge of the subject did not have the desired qualifications to provide high-quality language teaching. They further emphasized the negative consequences of poor fluency in the Romanian language, including difficulties in gaining access to university education — as the lyceum graduation examination had a specific exam on State language command — and to the labour market, and the limitation of opportunities in the public administration, as proficiency in the Romanian language was required to hold public positions.⁸³

The above numbers show that the promotion of the Romanian language in Gagauzia requires a comprehensive approach, including taking measures as follows:

- Improving the quality of teaching the Romanian language in schools;
- Free and high-quality opportunities for learning the Romanian language outside of schools;

⁸³ SDVM 2017 Report on her visit to Moldova in 2016, para. 31

- Opportunities for deep immersion in the process of studying the Romanian language in Gagauzia;
- Formation of a positive image of the Romanian language in Gagauzia (focusing around positive and stimulating messages, for example, "learning the Romanian language could be useful for career and life", rather than being imposed by the majority as a "mandatory" condition).

6.2 Ensuring the study of the Romanian language⁸⁴

a) Early education

- The pilot program of bilingual education in the state and Gagauz languages, implemented by ANTEM since 2015 in the institutions of early education of ATU Gagauzia, shows positive results. According to an assessment conducted in the 2020/2021 academic year, at the end of the early education programme, more than 70% of children showed a "good" and "very good" level of proficiency in the state and Gagauz languages.
- Pursuant to the Decision of the Executive Committee of ATU Gagauzia No. 29/12 of 30th of October 2020, starting with 1st of January 2021, introduced in the autonomy shall be a programme of bilingual education of children in the state and Gagauz language.
- As a result of the policies implemented within the framework of the National Programme (in accordance with the MECR report), revised was the regulatory framework, approved were the didactic concept of the Romanian language learning and the curriculum, adopted was the curriculum for the integration of non-linguistic disciplines, published was a curriculum for learning the Romanian language in early education institutions and providing such to all of the institutions, in line with further development of methodological guidelines, publication of support materials, including audio/video products and implementation of teacher training programs, provision of initial and additional teacher training, provision of educational institutions with didactic materials, creation of training and mentoring centres, and organization of online Romanian language learning facilities.

b) Primary, gymnasium and lyceum education

- In order to provide the conditions required for improving linguistic competences of teachers and heads of the Romanian language institutions teaching languages of national minorities, in all of the territorial-administrative units of the Republic of Moldova, introduced in partnership with the ANTEM was the "Programme for continuous language training for teachers and managers".⁸⁵ Organized within the frameworks of this Programme, were a

⁸⁴ https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/raport_consolidat_pag_2020.pdf

⁸⁵ MECR Order No. 137/2020

series of online Romanian language learning courses for 125 teachers and managers of educational institutions teaching languages of national minorities in the Republic of Moldova. Trainings were also organized and delivered for 64 teachers from compact regions inhabited by the national minorities: covering the Northern, the Central, the Southern regions and ATU Gagauzia, on the topic of introducing a new curriculum on the Romanian language in the preschool institutions with a programme of instructions in the languages of national minorities.⁸⁶

- **Curriculum:**

- The National Curriculum "Romanian language and Literature" for early education institutions with a programme delivered in the languages of national minorities (approved by the MECR Order No. 1592 of 10/25/2018);
- The National Curriculum "Romanian language and Literature" for educational institutions with a programme delivered in the languages of national minorities for grades I-IV (approved by the MECR Order No. 1124 of 12.07.2018);
- The National Curriculum "Romanian language and Literature" for educational institutions with a program in the languages of national minorities for grades V-IX (approved by MECR Order No. 906 of 17.07.2019);
- The National curriculum "Romanian language and Literature" for educational institutions with a programme delivered in the languages of national minorities for grades X-XII (approved by MECR Order No. 906 of 17.07.2019);
- The curriculum and the implementation guide "Romanian language and Literature" for educational institutions with a programme delivered in the languages of national minorities for grades V-IX (2020)⁸⁷; for classes X-XII⁸⁸.

- **Methodological grounds** underpinning organization of the educational process for teaching Romanian language (for educational institutions with instruction in the language of national minorities) for the academic year 2020-2021:

- Providing the respective textbooks: 1st grade (2019); 2nd grade (2015); 3rd grade (2020); 4th grade (2017); 5th grade (2016); 6th grade (2016); 7th grade (2019); 8th grade (2019); 9th grade (2016); 10th grade (2012); 11th grade (2014); 12th grade (2015);
- 220 educational institutions across the country teaching in the languages of national minorities were provided with educational materials to equip the Romanian language and literature classrooms with all necessary learning support materials, while 7 educational institutions teaching

⁸⁶ MECR Order No. 1168/2020

⁸⁷ https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/limba_si_lit_romana_gimnaziu_alongv.pdf

⁸⁸ https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/limba_si_lit_rom_liceu_alongv.pdf

in the languages of national minorities received 177 computers to equip the Romanian language and literature classrooms.⁸⁹

- Learning support kits were published for teaching and learning the Romanian language in early education institutions with a programme in the languages of national minorities.⁹⁰ Thus, the educational institutions with instruction delivered in the languages of national minorities were equipped with didactic teaching aids to study the Romanian language in the pre-school group.

- Currently, the educational institutions of Gagauzia's demand for Romanian language and literature teachers is satisfied at 98%. The total number of teachers teaching Romanian language (2019) amounts to 168.
- For teachers of the Romanian language, opportunities are being sought for advanced training in order to master the advanced language teaching techniques. For example, within the framework of the project "Programme for improving the effectiveness of teaching Romanian language in schools of Gagauzia and Taraclia district of the Republic of Moldova", organized were training courses for teachers in Romania. Within the framework of the project, 30 teachers attended advanced training courses in Romania in 2016, and another 27 in 2017.

c) Non-formal education

- Implemented in 2017, was the project titled "Diversification of access to education for young people through distance learning". The objective pursued by the project is to increase the level of linguistic, social and professional integration of young people representing ethnic minorities in the northern, southern and central regions of the Republic of Moldova, including ATU Gagauzia and the left bank of the Dniester River. The project was implemented as part of the Annual Grant Program for the Youth Sector with financial support of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. 288 young representatives of ethnic minorities had the opportunity to study Romanian language remotely.
- The platform "Learning Romanian remotely" [http://invat.antem.org /](http://invat.antem.org/) covers levels A1-A2, B1, B2 and level C1 (by professional categories) in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and is based on training materials developed by the ANTEM experts. The project cost amounts to MDL 246,981. As part of the project implementation a modern technology was used to develop a mobile Romanian-English-

⁸⁹ MECR Order No. 1134/2020

⁹⁰ MECR Order No. 940/2020, MECR Order No.1135/2020

Russian phrasebook, which allows users to learn and practice Romanian speech patterns in everyday situations.⁹¹

- The Government of the Republic of Moldova, with the support of the OSCE HCNM, has managed to implement a number of projects to support the process of Romanian language studying by the representatives of national minorities, primarily for children, youth and public administration workers: learning Romanian online (1800 youth representatives)
- ANTEM, in cooperation with the Romanian Language Centre, has developed a number of projects pursuing implementation of the state program for studying the official language.

6.3 Assessment of the level of language competencies in the Romanian language

- The level of competence in the Romanian language at the primary education level is set at A2.2 , for gymnasium education at B1.3 and for lyceum education at B2.3 (**see Annex 4**).
- The State and the Gagauz languages enjoy the status of ⁹²compulsory subjects studied throughout the entire cycle of general education (**see Annex 5**).

- Assessment of the level of linguistic competencies:

The Romanian language in the field of primary education is assessed verbally and through writing, while in gymnasium level - through writing with assessment done at the regional level and in lyceum - through writing with the assessment done at the national level.

The outcomes of the external evaluation of school records achieved at the national level

a) At the pre-school education level

7213 children participate in the Bilingual Education Programme in 50 early education institutions.

The level of competencies established bearing on the assessment:

Romanian language proficiency: high level 33%, medium level 50%, and low level 17%.

b) At the level of primary education

- Following programmes implementation with the view of improving the quality of teaching the Romanian language, marked was a gradual improvement in the level of competencies.
- Overall, the level of progress in learning Gagauz language is higher compared to that of the Romanian language (**Annex 7, Table 1.1**).

c) At the level of gymnasium education

⁹¹ Combined 12th to 14th periodic reports submitted by the Republic of Moldova under Article 9 of the Convention, due in 2020, p. 26

⁹²ord._nr._1572_din_23.10.2018_metodologia_cl._4.pdf (gov.md), p.31

- As a whole, the average results in the Romanian language and literature, tend to increase, while there has not yet been achieved a steady growth of the comparative indicators mirroring the graduation exams in ATU Gagauzia and across the country (**Annex 7, Table 2.2**).
- The dynamics of the results is positive - from 6.67 in the 2013/2014 academic year to 7.36 in the 2020/2021. The average grade in the Romanian language at the gymnasium graduation exam is 7.36, which is higher than the republican average set at 7.28. In the 2020/2021 academic year, ATU Gagauzia took the 13th position in the republican rating.

d) At the level of lyceum education

- The average results obtained in the Romanian language and literature are lower than the country's average. However, it is worth noticing the already established positive trend moving from 5.71 in 2014 to 6.64 in 2021 (**Annex 7, Table 3.2**).
- The results achieved in the Gagauz language amounted to 7.87 (2021), which is higher than that for the Romanian language - 6.64 (2021). However, the ascending trend is not stable enough (**Annex 7, Table 3.3**).

6.4 Conclusions/challenges in promoting the study of the Romanian language

The Romanian language is being taught as subject in all schools and at all levels of general education. Still, the share of population capable of communicating or understanding the Romanian language is insignificant, less than 1/3 of the population (according to the Ethnobarometer of the Republic of Moldova, 2020)

- lack of proper language environment that would motivate the process of learning and contribute to the development of speech competence;
- shortage of bilingual teachers in early education institutions and in schooling institutions;
- insufficiency of training programs for all categories of personnel (didactic, managerial, auxiliary);
- curriculum for the Romanian language is aimed at studying deep linguistic subtleties and not enough on the communicative competencies;
- necessity to have measures to support and motivate teachers to teach Romanian language and literature and non-linguistic subjects in Romanian;
- external assessment of language competencies is confined to checking the written competencies, except for the primary education, whereby also introduced was the verbal assessment of the linguistic competencies;
- low results were marked on the external exams in the Romanian language at both the gymnasium and lyceum levels;
- textbooks are developed with a huge delay, which is a mismatch compared to the time of effectiveness of the new curriculum; also the development of textbooks by different teams explains different methodological approaches, principles/ elements of textbooks, while the

sequence is rarely taken into account.

6.5 Recommendations for improving the study of the Romanian language

- updating the regulatory framework;
- assessment of the system's capacity and development of a national plan/programme for the implementation of the functional multilingual education;
- in order to improve the quality of teaching the Romanian language, it is necessary to: upgrade the system of training the personnel, including abroad; improve the quality of textbooks (in accordance with the modern standards applicable to the textbooks) and ensure publication matching the changes in the curriculum and taking into account compliance with the standards throughout the vertical of the education system, assessment of verbal competencies, development of translation competencies from Romanian to native/foreign language;
- providing for monitoring of the curriculum functionality, taking into account the dynamics of school records;
- providing for development of several teaching-learning-evaluation methodologies corresponding to the linguistic features of the Republic of Moldova;
- improving the language skills of persons belonging to national minorities, explaining the opportunities offered by good command of the Romanian language to the representatives of the national minorities;
- clear delineation of the rights and obligations of central and local public authorities in the issue of promoting the Romanian language;
- depoliticization and de-ideologization of the language issue;
- endowing local authorities with competencies having regard to the promotion and development of the minorities language;
- identifying new methods of initial training for educators/teachers and advanced teacher training. Considering the feasibility of introducing the specialty "Romanian for all languages":
- providing adequate conditions for using the Romanian language in the region;
- publication of bilingual textbooks on non-linguistic disciplines;
- developing a mechanism for attracting and motivating bilingual/multilingual teachers-native speakers of the Romanian language/native language of the national minority with high level of competence in a foreign language;
- developing programmes for professional conversion;
- creating online programmes designed for language application in different contexts, with a possibility of self-testing, aimed at improving the level of knowledge of the Romanian language among the youth;
- financing from the budget of the National Research and Innovation Program for the development of the concept of language policy and models of multilingualism corresponding to the national specifics and profile of ATU Gagauzia, other directions of research to provide for functional multilingualism;
- introduction of a system of incentives for bilingual teachers.

6.6 Conclusions and recommendations on assessing the level of proficiency in the Romanian and in Gagauz languages

- Comparing the opinions expressed by the managers of educational institutions, parents, and students during 5 focus group discussions and 12 in-depth interviews, as well as the conclusions made by the Ethnobarometer 2020 and the results of final exams according to the levels of the education system, a conclusion could be drawn on that the Romanian language and the Gagauz language are studied to pass the final exams, rather than for their effective ownership.
- Yet another issue is that the assessment of all language skills and competences is not done in accordance with the European/international standards.
- While assuming a number of factors influencing the quality of studying the state and Gagauz languages (programme, textbooks, quality of teaching), one could not exclude the importance of using specific methods to assess different language skills and the stages of their implementation. For example, at the gymnasium level, there is no external assessment of the level of native language knowledge.
- Therefore, it is necessary to choose the appropriate forms, stages of assessing the totality of the required language skills, taking into account the objectives pursued by their study: writing skills, ability to understand verbal messages, initiate, support and conclude, conversation as well as reading, understanding and composing texts.
- For this purpose, it is advisable to provide for division of the final exams in time.
- It is also recommended to develop tests using information technology for self-check up and more effective development of all skills of linguistic competence.

7. Multilingual approach to education in the ATU Gagauzia

7.1 The national curriculum on studying the Romanian and native language in the general education system⁹³

Curricula

⁹³ https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/_plan-cadru_2021-2022_pt_siteul_mecc_plasat_la_20.04.2021.pdf
Curricula for primary, gymnasium and lyceum education, 2021-2022 academic year, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova, pp.63-68

For the formation of communication competencies in the state and native language, the Ministry of Education and Research developed several types of curricula for the 2020-2021 academic year, allowing for making choice based on local specifics and preferences (**Annex 1**)⁹⁴ :

1. Curriculum with native language of instruction for students of national minorities
2. Curriculum with Romanian language of instruction for students of national minorities
3. Curriculum with Russian language of instruction for students of national minorities
4. Pilot curriculum for primary school and gymnasium
5. Curriculum with Russian language of instruction (without teaching the native language)
6. Curriculum with Russian language of instruction (without teaching the native language)

It should be noted that the curricula for teaching children with SEND contain a differentiated number of hours for learning the state and native language, while providing for an opportunity to learn languages and thereby contributing to their social integration in the society.

Allowed for the curriculum component "Language and communication", was a sufficiently large number of hours - almost half of the total number of hours intended for the full implementation of the curriculum.

a) Learning the Romanian language

A gradual increase in the workload is envisaged for studying the Romanian language in the educational institutions for non-Romanian language speakers:

- in primary education, for grades 1 and 2 assigned are 3 hours per week, and subsequently - 4 hours per week;
- assigned at the gymnasium level are 4 hours per week.
- assigned at the lyceum level, depending on the profile are 6 hours for humanitarian profile and 5 hours for STEM.

b) Studying the native Gagauz language

- assigned in primary education are 3 hours per week;
- in gymnasium and lyceum education, 4 hours per week are assigned for the humanities profile, and 3 hours for STEM.

c) Non-linguistic disciplines in the native language

- History, culture and traditions of the Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian, and Roma peoples – 1 hour per week;
- Fine arts and Technological education - 1 hour per week.

The topical contexts of the language learning curriculum are much alike. Perhaps this is one of the reasons explaining the decline of interest towards studying the state and Gagauz languages along with the relatively low level of proficiency (**see Annex 2**).

⁹⁴ METHODOLOGICAL GROUNDS FOR SETTING UP THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN TEACHING ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (for education institutions delivering instructions in the languages spoken by the national minorities) IN THE 2021-2022 ACADEMIC YEAR
4_repere_metod._2021_-_2022_l.rom._alol._1_final.pdf (gov.md)

The National Curriculum recommends for the educational institutions with instructions/study delivered in the native language, whenever possible, teaching the following disciplines in the native language: history, culture and traditions of Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian, Roma and other peoples; musical education, physical education, and personal development. For these disciplines, provided in the curriculum is one hour per week for each, i.e. there is a possibility to increase the hours for content/integrated learning of the native language by four hours.

With the view of combining the study of the native language with the components of multicultural education, the curriculum provides an opportunity to choose one of the disciplines developing these competencies: "Intercultural education" (grades I-XII), "Communication Culture" (grades X-XII), "Getting to know each other better" (grades X-XII), "Media literacy" (grades I-XI) and others.

The discipline of choice "Intercultural education" provides for the development of the following competencies: understanding and recognition of the values shared by the representatives of different cultures; cooperation with representatives of other cultural, religious groups with a different lifestyle, in the spirit of reciprocal respect (peaceful co-existence and tolerance through education); development of multicultural tolerance as an integral component of the grass root democracy.

Teaching "History, culture and traditions of the Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz and Bulgarian and Roma peoples" in grades I-IX in accordance with the ethnic composition of the students in the respective language.

The curriculum for educational institutions with instruction in the Russian language and study of the native language provides for almost $\frac{1}{2}$ (8-15 hours, taking into account one of the foreign languages, elective disciplines/local component) for the language and communication component, of which:

- to study the subject "Romanian language and literature", 3 hours a week are provided in grades I-II , 4 hours a week in grades V-IX, 6 hours for humanities and 5 for STEM in grades X-XII;
- provided for studying "Gagauz language and literature", are 3 hours per week in grades I-IX, 4 hours per week in grades X-XII for humanities and 3 hours for STEM grades X-XII;
- provided for studying "History, culture and traditions of the Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian and Roma peoples" (grades I-IX) is 1 hour per week for each, with instruction in the Gagauz language;
- provided for studying "Fine arts" and "Technological education", according to the Decision of the Executive Committee of ATU Gagauzia is 1 hour per week for each;
- the discipline of choice - 1 hour per week, with a possibility of instruction in the Gagauz language.

The above information allows to draw a conclusion on the proportionality of instruction time provided in the state and native language in the educational institutions of ATU Gagauzia. Also, consideration should be given to changes of developing linguistic competencies through extracurricular education, for which purpose provided are 8 hours per week for grades I-IX and 4 hours per week for grades X-XII.

Provided for educational institutions with instruction delivered mainly in native language and with 4 languages studied simultaneously, was a reduction by 1 hour of teaching "Russian language and literature".

Mixed-type educational institutions with instructions in the Romanian language and in the languages of national minorities, provided the respective decision is taken by the school management, may join the project "Sociolinguistic integration of students representatives of national minorities by increasing the number of school subjects studied in Romanian".

7.2 The problem of financing the teaching of languages spoken by the national minorities in the ATU Gagauzia

In accordance with the provisions of paragraph (2) of Article 10 of the Education Code No. 152/2014, the State provides, to the extent of the education system capacities, conditions for persons belonging to national minorities to learn the language of their minority or to have instruction in this language at the level of compulsory education.

For studying the native language, the national regulations provide for splitting classes into two subgroups with a capacity of 25 or more students studying the subject Romanian language and literature. However, in the majority of the educational institutions with instructions in Romanian language there are no representatives of ethnic groups and, accordingly, there is no need to divide a class into subgroups.

Dividing classes with 25 or more students into 2 groups for learning Mother tongue and literature (Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian) in the schools with Russian language of instruction in primary and gymnasium education could be done if there are financial resources allocated in the school budget for the purpose.⁹⁵ In reality, schools with instruction in Romanian as well as such with instruction in Russian and in the native language of national minorities receive the same share of funding. Thus, the educational institutions that need to arrange for instruction in 1 or 2 native languages could hardly get sufficient funding.

Specifics of educational institutions of Gagauzia is the concomitant study of 4 to 5 languages, of which, due to the profile of the demographic structure of the region, 2 could be mother tongues of ethnic groups living in the locality (Gagauz and Bulgarian/Ukrainian).

In the 2021/2022 academic year, the students in ATU Gagauzia study their mother tongue as follows:

- 3255 students study "Gagauz language and literature" / "History, culture and traditions of the Gagauz people";

⁹⁵Pursuant to the Order of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research No. 200 dated 02/26/2021, division into

- 1,404 students study "Bulgarian language and literature" / "History, culture and traditions of the Bulgarian people" (182 groups, according to expert estimates made by the Main Education Directorate of Gagauzia, 1/3 of the students studying Bulgarian decided to choose it because the programme / study process is easier, but they are not representatives of this ethnic group).

To provide for the quality of studying Bulgarian and Ukrainian languages, the schools are forced to divide the classes into 2 groups: one group of children study Gagauz and the other Bulgarian (or Ukrainian). Taking into account the ethnicity of the students and the obligation of the State to guarantee the rights to education on a non-discriminatory basis, division of the aforementioned disciplines shall be deemed as inevitable and mandatory.

The only school of ATU Gagauzia, attended in addition to the Gagauz students by the Ukrainians, i.e. the gymnasium-kindergarten named after M. Vovchok has no sufficient funding to provide for the study of two native languages. The educational institution is forced to compile classes of different age students to study their mother tongue. Thus, 3 groups (1 group of grade III and IV students, 1 group of grade V and VI students and 1 group of grade VII and IX students) study Gagauz language, 2 groups (1 group of grade V and VI students, 1 group of grade VII and VIII students) study Ukrainian language. Regardless of the fact that the gymnasium is small with minimum number of students in groups, the quality of knowledge remains low.

In total, in the ATU Gagauzia, in 10 educational institutions, in addition to studying Gagauz language as the mother tongue, likewise studied are the Bulgarian (in 9 schools) and Ukrainian (in 1 school) languages, as the mother tongues of these national minorities.

Thus, created in ATU Gagauzia is a situation whereby the weekly load of the Curriculum for educational institutions with instruction in the Russian language and 2 mother tongues of national minorities is, on the average, by 20% higher than the weekly load for educational institutions with instruction in the Romanian language (**see Annex 3**).

However, the national regulatory framework does not take into account the specifics of the regions and does not provide for adjusting the formula to ensure state funding for proper studying of two mother tongues.

Given the situation, the schools providing for the study of two or more mother tongues have to apply very tight savings regime to cover the budget deficit, and redirecting the funds intended for extracurricular activities to pay for extra hours of Bulgarian/Ukrainian languages. These educational institutions over the years had no capacity to upgrade their material and technical facilities, since most of the available funding goes on paying wages.

To that end, the educational institutions of the Autonomy with instruction in two languages of the national minorities are facing annually budget deficit on paying wages (2016 - MDL 2,070.7 thousand; 2017 - MDL 4,117.9 thousand; 2018 - MDL 6,921.2 thousand; 2019 - MDL 35,509.4 thousand, 2020 - MDL 17,152.5 thousand).

The amount of the additional financial resources required by the educational institutions to provide for studying Bulgarian language and Literature / History, culture and traditions of the Bulgarian people was estimated at MDL 2.8 million (deficit).

Thus, given the specifics of the curricula for studying languages spoken by the national minorities and arising from the targeted transfers from the state budget to provide for a standard package of general education services in ATU Gagauzia, provided in the 2022 draft budget were the following amounts:

- MDL 13,956.8 thousand for 2020; MDL 14,745.4 thousand for 2020; and MDL 15,904.7 thousand in the 2022 draft budget.

That is, the amount of MDL 15,904.7 has been allocated for upkeeping the educational institutions of ATU Gagauzia in 2022. However, this amount suffices for covering the costs of learning only one native language.

To solve the above problem, it is necessary to make changes in the financing of educational institutions with instruction in the languages of national minorities arising from the standard costs per student by changing the specific coefficient for determining the number of "weighted students", proving that for 2022 the educational institutions of the autonomy should receive additionally some MDL 25 million. As an option, applied could be the coefficient of adjustment of standard costs incurred with the implementation of the national curriculum.

7.3 Challenges/problems of ATU Gagauzia in improving the learning of Romanian and Gagauz languages and ensuring equal access for representatives of all national minorities living in the region to the opportunity to learn Romanian and their native languages

A) Ensuring the quality of Romanian language learning

According to the Education Code, art.10, studying the Romanian language is compulsory in all educational institutions at all levels. Romanian language is taught in all schools and at all levels of general education.

- The data from the survey and national examinations show that the measures taken in ATU Gagauzia do not ensure the quality of teaching the Romanian language. The results of Romanian language proficiency are lower than those of Gagauz. The Romanian language is studied more for the final examinations, rather than for its effective learning;
- the actions undertaken have an episodic character and are based on external sources of financing, and the sustainability of the developed curricula/innovative methods is not ensured at the end of the projects;
- Insufficient provision of bilingual teachers for preschool and general education;
- all language competence skills are not assessed according to national and European standards;

- little attention is paid to the analysis of the results of the national examinations in Romanian language at the end of primary and gymnasium education in order to take targeted measures to improve the teaching and command of the Romanian language;
- there is no systematic thematic analysis/monitoring of the level of teaching and language competences of Romanian language learners, taking into account the dynamics of school results, in order to determine the needs for continuous training of teachers,
- incomplete assurance of continuity / continuation of learning in the primary grades through a pilot bilingual program in pre-school educational institutions;
- there are no financial incentives for teachers of the Romanian language / bilingual teachers, as it is applied to teachers of the Gagauz language;
- regional funds for the study, expansion and promotion of the Romanian language compared to the Gagauz and Russian language in the ATU educational system are disproportionate;
- insufficient use of opportunities for cooperation with Romanian educational institutions for academic and professional mobility, exploring innovative approaches for bi-lingual studies in a combination in which Romanian is present;
- extracurricular/extracurricular activities are disproportionately focused on improving the Romanian language skills and language skills of persons belonging to national minorities;
- insufficient provision of conditions for the use of Romanian language in the region in order to integrate in the unified society of RM, explaining the opportunities given by the knowledge of Romanian language to the representatives of national minorities;
- the regional annual action plans for lifelong learning, youth programs, and activities aimed at learning the Romanian language do not fully reflect the directions contained in the national programs;
- insignificant funds are allocated from the regional budget for the study of the Romanian language for the purposes of targeting and for the youth;
- relatively limited measures to promote the need and prestige of the Romanian language in the Republic of Moldova.

B) The regulatory framework of the ATU Gagauzia on language learning

The analysis of the Law on the expansion of the Gagauz language revealed the need to harmonize the provisions in the field of education with the national legislation and linguistic rights of minorities, as well as the application of international law and good practices in the language legislation to ensure multilingualism.

The normative-legal base of ATU Gagauzia lacks a comprehensive approach to language policy in education, taking into account the needs of all ethnic communities in the region, including the improvement of knowledge of the Romanian language. Moreover, the regional legislation should

be harmonized with the national one, taking into account the international obligations of the RM in this area.

A number of the norms of the Law on expanding the scope of the Gagauz language need to be brought in line with the national legislation and the principles/standards of implementation of the linguistic rights of minorities. The Law does not take into account the functioning of the three languages in the region:

- The norm of carrying out activities, containing at least 50% of the material in the Gagauz language in all pre-school institutions implies that for representatives of other national minorities less than 50% of the educational time is given to learning two languages - their native language and Romanian, which, in accordance with national legislation, is compulsory;

- the creation of a linguistic environment in pre-school educational institutions should be carried out through communication of the staff with the children throughout the day in the Gagauz language, except for the classes, which are conducted in the language of instruction. This norm practically does not provide time for studying Romanian and the native language of other national minorities;

- a norm providing for communication between educators and parents in the Gagauz language may create obstacles in communicating with parents of other ethnic origin, who do not speak the Gagauz language;

- at the level of primary education "Technological Education" and "Fine Arts" are envisaged to be taught in the Gagauz language, without specifying the application of this provision in cases of division of classes into two or more native languages (Gagauz and Bulgarian, or Ukrainian) from a financial, personnel and linguistic point of view;

- the provision on "increasing the share of disciplines in the Gagauz language for all educational institutions (early/pre-school, pre-university/primary, secondary education)" regardless of the language of instruction in the region is contrary to the principle of freedom of choice;

- Ensuring the protection of minority rights in the region requires changing and developing the regulatory framework of Gagauzia in the field of language policy in education, which would take into account the linguistic rights of other ethnic communities and without prejudice to the use, learning and teaching in the Romanian language, supplemented by provisions on the implementation of the responsibility for learning the state language.

C) Planning and management of the provision of learning and effective mastery of Romanian and mother tongue

- the absence of a regulated mechanism for determining the needs/wants of parents for learning the native language and language of instruction in order to plan in advance the necessary resources and the training of teaching staff;

- an imperfect (insufficiently accessible, transparent) system of informing parents about the educational opportunities of the region and about the national standards in the field of language learning;

- it should be noted that the official web pages contain information mainly in Russian language;

- the study of Romanian, the native language by the representatives of other national minorities living in the region is not planned, is not provided with sufficient resources and is not effectively promoted within the development of key competences of multilingualism, cultural self-expression and awareness of cultural values, is not provided with a common vision/support;
- the lack of a comprehensive approach to the creation of an ecosystem for language learning based on the observance of principles and international standards for language rights in education: policy documents, regulations, the choice of a multilingual model and the definition of learning objectives for each language, educational standards, trained and motivated personnel, curricula and resources for lifelong learning, methods for assessing language competencies, information technology to improve the quality of teaching and to identify the language of minority languages
- the absence of an "active offer" of public services, as an indicator of recognition of the state's obligation to respect and ensure linguistic rights, so that persons speaking minority languages can easily access such services when needed, and thus do not have to specifically request access to them;
- the disproportionate use of minority languages in education, combined with the quality of teaching the official language;
- insufficient use of the instruments of cooperation with Romania and the states where languages similar to the Gagauz language are spoken, for the development of joint programmes, for the training of teaching staff, teaching aids, for scientific research, for the promotion of cultural heritage and cultural diversity
- insufficient attention to the development and financing of educational and methodological resources for learning Romanian and native language (open resources) in electronic format and ensuring the "active offer" of services for online training for different categories of the population, the certification of competences and the mechanism of active offer of services;
- It is advisable to annually determine the need for training bi-/multilingual teaching staff and provide funding, including from the regional budget, or from external sources on the basis of cooperation agreements.

7.4 Openness to diversity and linguistic preferences of the Gagauz population

According to the Ethnobarometer survey⁹⁶, Gagauz people show high level of openness to the involvement of all ethnic groups in the process of managing public affairs: 94% share the opinion that the Moldovan state should preserve the identity, language and culture of different ethnic groups; 92% noted the need of taking into account the opinions of all ethnic communities living in Moldova, since they stand for an important part of the society, and 87% highlighted the importance of knowing the history and culture of different ethnic groups in Moldova.

94% of Gagauz support the idea of bilingual education. 93% agreed with the statement "that children from different ethnic groups or speakers of different languages should study in the same classroom."

⁹⁶ Ethnobarometer: Republic of Moldova -2020, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/7/505306_0.pdf

At the same time, taking a multilingual approach to education in Gagauzia should be considered as a comprehensive arrangement, taking into account the following factors of high importance.

For 88% of Gagauz people, the Gagauz is their mother tongue, for 26% the mother tongue is Russian and for 4% - the Romanian language (multiple answers to this question were allowed).

87% of Gagauz people use Russian in their daily life, and 83% use Gagauz language.

The self-assessment of the level of language proficiency showed high share of those who speak Russian and Gagauz languages and, accordingly, a low level of proficiency in Romanian and foreign languages:

- 49% speak perfect Russian while 49% have good command of Russian language;
- 54% speak perfect Gagauz while 40% have a good command of Gagauz language;
- 1% speak Turkish perfectly well while 23% have a good command of Turkish language;
- 1% speak English perfectly well while 6% have a good command of English language;
- 2% speak Bulgarian perfectly well while 4% have a good command of Bulgarian language;
- 12% speak and understand Romanian well while 29% speak poorly but understand it and 19% have difficulty in speaking and/or understanding it.

From the results presented above, it can be seen that none of the respondents indicated that they were fluent in the Romanian language.

Answering the question about the preferred (first) language of instruction for themselves, their children and grandchildren, the overwhelming number of Gagauz people have chosen Russian (70%), with only 18% choosing the Romanian language and 4% making their choice in favour of Gagauz language.

Answering the question about the second language of instruction for themselves, their children and grandchildren, 46% of Gagauz people chose the Romanian language, 20% chose Russian, 19% chose English or another foreign language and 13% chose Gagauz. Comparing the answers given to both questions results in the following picture of preferences regarding the choice of the language of instruction in schools:

First choice language	Second choice language
Russian (70%)	Romanian (46%)
Romanian (18%)	Russian language (20%)
Gagauz language (4%)	English or another foreign language (19%)
	Gagauz language (13%)

Thus, one of the most important tasks to be resolved in terms of developing multilingual education options based on chosen linguistic preferences lies with coordination of the following factors:

- The Gagauz people choose the language of instruction for themselves, their children and grandchildren in the following order of preference: (1) Russian – (2) state - (3) English (or another foreign language) and (4) Gagauz language;

- The Gagauz language tends to be practiced to a much lesser extent facing the potential risk of disappearance. Hence, appearing on the agenda could be special approaches and more attention;
- Knowledge of the Romanian language is important for better integration into the reality of “Moldova in the broad sense of the word”;
- Knowledge of English and other foreign languages (primarily Turkish) is important for better integration into the reality of the "world in a broad sense".

The above data indicate that the following options for multilingual education, delivered concomitantly, could meet the above specified parameters:

BILINGUAL education	TRILINGUAL education
Russian - State	Russian - State - English
Gagauz - State	Gagauz - Russian - State
Gagauz - Russian	Gagauz - State - English (or Turkish)
	Gagauz - Russian - English (or Turkish)

In practical terms, this means that the interests and preferences of the Gagauz people will be best satisfied by stepping away from choosing one of the options while making use of the aforementioned sets of options bearing on free choice.

7.5 Languages of other minorities in the ATU Gagauzia in the context of multilingual education

In addition to 83.8% of the population of Gagauzia who identified themselves as Gagauz during the 2014 census:

- 4.9% of Gagauz inhabitants identified themselves as Bulgarians (more than 6,500 people),
- 4.7% - identified themselves as Moldovans (about 6,300 people),
- 3.2% - identified themselves as Russians (about 4,300 people),
- 2.5% - identified themselves as Ukrainians (about 3,300 people),
- 0.3% - identified themselves as Roma (this figure shall be deemed as underestimated),
- 0.6% - other ethnic groups

Some of these groups, in particularly high proportions live compactly in the specific communities (for example, in Ferapontievca).

It is worth noticing that during the 2014 census, in addition to 80.4% of Gagauz residents stating the Gagauz as their mother tongue:

- 9.9% claimed Russian as their native language (more than 13,000 people);
- 4.1% claimed Bulgarian as their native language (about 5,500 people);
- 3.7% claimed Romanian as their native language (about 5,000 people);
- 1.3% claimed Ukrainian as their native language (about 1,700 people).

1.7% of Gagauz residents (about 2,200 people) during the 2014 census, claimed using Bulgarian language in their daily communication.

The above figures show that the above facts need to be kept in mind when drafting the multilingual education plans for children having Bulgarian and Ukrainian as their native languages. The respective table mirroring the multilingual education in this case could take the following shape:

BILINGUAL	TRILINGUAL
Bulgarian/Ukrainian - Russian	Bulgarian/Ukrainian – Russian - Romanian
	Bulgarian/Ukrainian – Russian - Gagauz
	Bulgarian/Ukrainian - Russian - English

In addition, a separate discipline should be developed to deliver instruction in Romani language and culture of Roma people living in Comrat, Ferapontievca and other localities of Gagauzia.

7.6 International experience in implementing multilingual education

Multilingual education in various forms (partial and full immersion in the target language, etc.) has developed in response to societal demands. Among them, 4 main ones can be distinguished:

- Integration of society;
- support and development of the state language;
- support and promotion of minority languages;
- integration of migrants into the host community.

Quite often, language policy in general and the education system is shaped by the intersection of these goals, requiring the development of a specific approach. Among the best known and most established practices of introducing multilingual education for social cohesion are countries such as Switzerland and Canada, where the multilingual system has developed on the basis of fairly equal status of languages (except for retoromanic) spoken by large population groups. The linguistic model in these countries is an enriching one, ensuring the mastery of several languages at an equal level. In order to effectively implement the multilingual approach, these countries are developing methodological approaches and strategies that are further used by other countries that have chosen other models of multilingual education as well.

The traditional scheme of supporting and "reanimating" ethnic minority languages - the creation of kindergartens and/or schools with instruction in the native/first language + learning the state language as a subject - is implemented in different countries of the European Union on a different scale.

The province of South Tyrol in Italy is a post-conflict divided community; two large groups are Italian-speakers (25%) and German-speakers (70%), a small group is Ladino (5%). Two types of schools dominate, with instruction in German or Italian, with a second language as a subject - a

foreign language. The proper multilingual model in the modern sense is formed in schools in places of compact residence of Ladinians. Multilingual education begins in kindergarten and continues in school. Teaching is organized in three languages (Italian, German, Ladino), teaching in each language in kindergarten and elementary school is implemented during the week.

At the University of Bolzano teaching is organized in 4 languages (Italian, German, Ladino, English), for all other students - 3 (excluding Ladino). Graduate students must submit the results of standardized language examinations in accordance with the requirements of the Faculty in order to gain access to the defense of their bachelor's thesis.

Thus, Ladino representatives have the highest level of linguistic background. Bilingual/multilingual families in South Tyrol have the highest income.

In the Netherlands, in the province of Friesland, multilingual education is implemented by initiative groups with the support of the state, aimed at the revival and development of the Frisian language. This creates additional space for the practice of the Frisian language not only in the domestic sphere, but also for the development of the academic language. In order to support the Frisian language, four centers have been established, each of them specializing in the development of the Frisian language in education, in the media and other spheres. There is also a network of multilingual schools where experiences are exchanged and projects are implemented.

In Austria there is a special form of comprehensive secondary school for linguistic minorities (Slovenian, Croatian, Hungarian), and a number of federal states have established a number of rights for the use of minority languages.

In addition, Estonia and Latvia have opted for a transitional model of education.

Serbia, an EU candidate, has built a system for teaching the Hungarian minority in their native language at all levels of education, including university. In post-Soviet countries such as Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, an enriching model is in place.

7.7 Risks of implementing multilingual education in ATU Gagauzia

The risks of implementing multilingual education are considered, given that the recommended goals of this approach focus on:

- social cohesion,
- maintaining the native language of ethnic groups (Gagauz language),
- ensuring the possibility of economic and professional growth of the representatives of ethnic communities.

The table considers the main types of risks associated with the introduction of multilingual education, the degree of their expression and the system of measures that will help reduce the risks.

#	Types of risks	Description	Situation in Gagauzia	The level of expression of risks for Gagauzia (from 1 to 5)	Measures required/possible
1	Sociocultural	Ethnic, linguistic context of the country, degree of orientation to ethnic homelands or substitute countries, openness/closure of linguistic/ethnic communities, etc.	97% of Gagauzians consider the Republic of Moldova as their motherland, 79% are proud of being a citizen of the Republic of Moldova, 77% feel they belong to the Moldovan society. The subjective perception of the danger of losing the ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity could be aggravated in connection with the intensification of political risks.	1-2	Maintaining a multilateral language policy in education. Also in the education system in Gagauzia it is necessary to take into account the interests of representatives of other ethnic minorities living there. Ethno-cultural diversity and intercultural issues should be presented at all levels of education as part of the content (including history textbooks) and methodological approaches within educational areas and extracurricular activities.
2	Conceptual	Conceptual risks are related to the choice of the type of model of multilingual education (enrichment-transitional, a demanded set of languages) and understanding it not only as a narrow language goal, but as part of the policy of integration of society, the ratio of the tasks	Based on the analysis of the situation in the Republic of Moldova and ATU Gagauzia, an enriching flexible model of multilingual education with a set of languages in demand in the community and their functional tasks is proposed. The model of multilingual education has been tested in the	1-2	Analysis of the situation and the demand for languages in different districts of ATU Gagauzia - Determining the language set in accordance with the community needs and possibilities

		of inter- and multicultural education, increasing student motivation and other tasks.	kindergartens of ATU Gagauzia through the ANTEM program. 5,6% of the total number of students in the autonomy are taught in Romanian language.		- Correction of the models as teachers are professionally trained
3	Personal	<p>Personal risks are associated with three categories of people - teachers, students, and parents.</p> <p>- For teachers the difficulty of inclusion in the program, especially at the first stage, is associated with the need for a high level of proficiency in two or more languages and methodological approaches to teaching the subject in a non-native language. This requires a great deal of time and intellectual effort. Other risks in the pedagogical environment are related to the fact that teachers who are proficient in one language fear that they will remain unemployed, unable to get involved in the ME system.</p> <p>- Students who have difficulty learning other languages and are not proficient enough in the target language to learn the subjects may resist ME-based instruction.</p>	The concerns of teachers, students and parents of ATU Gagauzia are reflected in Annex 10 (Report on qualitative research - 5 focus group interviews) and Annex 11 (Report on qualitative research - 12 detailed interviews)	2-3	<p>- The whole school staff should be involved in the planning and implementation of multilingual programs, jointly forming an understanding of the role of the first, native, state, and foreign languages. It is necessary to organize cooperation of philologists and teachers of subjects, joint development of plans on the basis of the functional grammar and vocabulary corresponding to the goals of the ME program.</p> <p>The activities of teachers of pilot ME programs, especially at the first stage, should be supported financially and morally by the education administration, authorities, school and kindergarten administrations and parents.</p> <p>- The introduction of ME programs</p>

		<p>- Parents fear that children will be poor in both first and target languages, will have insufficient knowledge of subjects taught in the target language or bilingually</p>			<p>should be implemented on a voluntary basis as teachers and parents are ready. If possible, traditional curricula should remain in schools, and alternative approaches to learning should be provided. This reduces the risk of personal resistance on the part of both teachers and parents.</p> <p>- Organization of lessons and extracurricular activities should be based on ensuring the availability of educational content, the use of scaffolding, modern approaches to increase the active role and responsibility of students, it increases their motivation and interest in learning.</p>
4	Communicative (informing, interacting, engaging)	<p>Lack of awareness increases the amount of misinformation and myths about the quality and complexity of ME, generates fears of all subjects of education, and causes additional difficulties</p>	<p>ANTEM publishes information about the implementation of the program on its social networks page. IPIS produced and distributed 5 videos in Romanian and Russian (4 with personal stories of natives of Gagauzia who benefited from the knowledge of languages, 1 - an</p>	3-4	<p>It is necessary to develop plans for informational support of the introduction of MI at the country, regional, community, and school levels. And also the involvement of all parties in the discussion of</p>

			animated video about the essence of multilingual education)		problems and tasks of implementation.
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Thus, the analysis of different types of risks of implementing multilingual education in the Republic of Moldova (first stage - ATU Gagauzia) shows that these are mainly medium and low level risks. Most of them can be prevented by proper planning of the process of implementation of MI (Roadmap, Program and Plan for MI implementation). At the same time, ATU Gagauzia is a small region, which does not require significant resources.

Conclusions:

Bearing on the above analysis as well as on the assessment of the opinion shared by the Gagauz residents carried out as part of the project *"Promoting social cohesion in Moldova through the study of Gagauz and the Romanian languages in ATU Gagauzia"* in the course of 5 focus group discussions and 12 in-depth interviews, one could draw the following conclusions.

Multilingualism is a specific feature of ATU Gagauzia, marked by concomitant use of Russian, Gagauz, State, Bulgarian, and Ukrainian languages. The population is mostly bilingual. At the same time, the mother tongue (Gagauz, Russian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian) and the level of linguistic competence and language use do not always correlate with one's ethnicity.

The Russian is used in the sphere of personal communication (family), in social communication as a language of interethnic communication (friends, colleagues, neighbours), in public sector (education system, local authorities), in mass media and the Internet.

Gagauz, Bulgarian and Ukrainian languages are most often used in cases of personal (family) and social communication (friends, colleagues, neighbours).

The Romanian language is rarely used by the population of the region, despite of the fact that there is a tendency to switch to the use of the Romanian language in public and official sphere (education, reporting, local authorities). There are also difficulties in using the Romanian language resulting from insufficient language competence and ignorance of professional terminology.

The level of linguistic competence and the environment in which the language is being used depend on:

- settlement pattern of the ethnic group;
- ethnic status of a person and their family (parents, grandparents, other relatives);

- traditional lifestyle of families (the rural residents speak Gagauz language more often as compared to the urban);
- linguistic environment;
- assessments of the needs to learn a language;
- quality of language teaching in school;
- availability and level of access to information resources for language learning (literature, culture, mass media, Internet), etc.

Incentives underpinning the motivation of studying the Romanian language

- interest manifested by the parents and encouragement of their children to master the Romanian language;
- civic position taken with regard to studying the Romanian language;
- effective organization and quality of the educational process (schedule, teaching methods, teacher's personality, teaching materials, library equipment, etc.);
- desire to successfully pass the state exams (get bachelor's degree);
- extent of relevance of using the language in public and in everyday life;
- promotion of youth-friendly platforms in the Romanian language (mass media, social networks, etc.);
- desire to become integrated into the Moldovan society, higher education system and labour market;
- plans for immigration.

Stimulating factors underpinning the motivation to study the Gagauz language:

- interest manifested by the parents and encouragement of their children to learn their native language;
- development of values associated with traditions and customs in the family, building bridges between generations by preserving the Gagauz language;
- availability of language-friendly environment (including place of residence and dialects);
- level of literary language proficiency among the parents;
- effective organization and quality of the educational process (schedule, teaching methods, teacher's personality, teaching materials, library equipment, etc.);
- plans for studying/working in Turkey.

Demotivating factors for learning the Romanian language:

- inconsistency of the educational goals set out in the curriculum with the summative assessment and the expected result - fluency in the Romanian language;

- conservative approach to language teaching and curricula structure;
- low motivation of teachers to engage in the process of bilingual education, in which one of their subjects shall be qualitatively delivered in the Romanian language;
- lack of interest among parents and failure to motivate their children to learn the Romanian language;
- inability to use parents' help in doing homework in the Romanian language (as they do not have the required skills);
- desire of students to immigrate to Russia or Turkey, where this linguistic competence will be of no use;
- lack of informal communication environment in the Romanian language;
- small number of additional courses, paid or free classes;
- politicization of the language issue, misinformation implying that intensification of studying the Romanian language is aimed at belittling the Russian language and, as a consequence, pursues a geopolitical goal.

Demotivating factors for learning the Gagauz language:

- lack of interest manifested by parents and failure to motivate their children to learn the native language;
- low level of literary language proficiency with parents. The academic Gagauz language studied is much more complicated compared to that spoken in rural areas;
- perception of language as a burdensome. The curriculum is marked with complex structure and overly theoretical;
- insufficient provision of schools with resources for language training (including lack of dictionaries);
- poor use of national languages outside family environment;
- lack of language in the Internet environment (communication, additional educational materials, mass media).

Also marked was a low level of satisfaction among the population of ATU Gagauzia with the existing level of proficiency in the state and Gagauz languages. When communicating in the Romanian language, the indigenous residents of ATU Gagauzia encounter certain psychological barriers, as feeling a persistent fear of making mistakes and being mocked up. The Gagauz language is mainly used in its colloquial form.

The assessment of the state and Gagauz language programme (curriculum, textbooks, didactic materials), produced as part of a qualitative research during 5 focus group discussions and 12 in-depth interviews:

Advantages:

- high quality of the curriculum and organization of the educational process in different languages;
- vesting the educational institutions with required didactic materials;
- teaching staff have the opportunity to improve their efficiency and qualifications, participate in methodological meetings, exchange the experience, etc.

Disadvantages:

- shortage of teaching staff (including qualified, bilingual);
- lack of innovative methods of teaching the state and Gagauz languages;
- complexity of the curriculum;
- inconsistency of the topical content of textbooks; difficult and sometimes unclear homework task;
- lack of socio-cultural context for studying the state and Gagauz languages (theaters, museums, etc.)
- difficulties in organizing educational events outside the schooling institutions due to the underdeveloped regional socio-cultural infrastructure and lack of opportunities to visit cultural institutions outside the Autonomy.

Teachers, educational leaders, parents, graduates, civil activists, representatives of local authorities of ATU Gagauzia, within the framework of a qualitative study of the project *"Promoting social cohesion in Moldova through the study of Gagauz and Romanian languages in ATU Gagauzia"*, expressed through the following arguments in favour of multilingual education, as well as a number of concerns in the context of its implementation.

Arguments in favour of multilingual education:

- paving ways towards the multilingual culture in Gagauzia;
- with a well-organized educational process and structured knowledge, such a training system can play the role of a "safety cushion" in the future for employment or possible emigration to another country;
- studying the Romanian language can be included in the extended day system, thus eliminating the need for parents to help children with their homework;
- Step-wise introduction of the multilingual education is meant to encourage teachers to improve their skills while using the opportunity to enjoy the financial benefits.

Concerns underpinning introduction of multilingual education:

- teacher shortage;
- rather weak linguistic base, implying a drop down in the quality of teaching the subjects with regard to which implemented will be the multilingual approach;

- problems with the assignment of instruction hours among older teachers who will not be able to fit into the new system;
- pressing need for additional professional training of teaching staff;
- additional burden on the students in addition to already hard one;
- stress for children and extra concerns for the parents;
- linguistic training in 4 languages belonging to different language groups creates confusion in the educational process and in the use of the languages studied;
- probability of shaping up a misconception about the goals pursued by such a policy as well as the concerns that step by step the entire educational process will be carried out in the Romanian language exclusively.

Recommendations:

- supporting the infrastructure of language environment in Gagauzia for studying the state and Gagauz languages to provide for development and harmonious functioning of these languages in all spheres of life;
- stimulating the motivation to learn the Gagauz and Romanian languages by mainstreaming the bilingual/multilingual success stories;
- depoliticization and de-ideologization of language issue in the Republic of Moldova
- giving definition of the term "multilingual education" in the Education Code;
- adding the consistent implementation of multilingual education into the directions of development of the education system of the Republic of Moldova;
- developing the concept of a model/models of multilingual education with participation of the representatives of ATU Gagauzia;
- developing a comprehensive programme for the introduction of multilingual education mirroring the desires cherished by the teaching staff, students, parents and responding to their reservations as well as including measures to prevent the above risks;
- revising language learning programme in part of the topical tasks, consolidating the communication skills; paying more attention to arranging the extracurricular activities;
- financing of additional linguistic training for adults and children on the grounds of educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and centres providing language training services.