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Abstract

The Republic of Moldova is one of the European countries with a multiethnic population and a culture which has been constituted over a long historic period. The allergenic population living for centuries on this territory and having contact with the indigenous population did not lose its individuality. This is due to the tolerance and respect of the main population for the ethnic minorities, and their culture, which is expressed through language, tradition, arts, etc. Thus, the connection between the allergenic population and their historic native land and the aboriginal people is obvious.

After the proclamation of independence, the Republic of Moldova engaging itself in the democratic changes and building the rule of law and being in conformity with the European standards, it recognized the rights of the national/ethnic minorities, who enjoy equal rights with the majority population.

Keywords:

Integration, ethno cultural relationships, ethnical minorities, majority population.

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Perspectives approach

After the proclamation of independence, the Republic of Moldova engaging itself in the democratic changes and building the rule of law, and being in conformity with the European standards, it recognized the rights of the national/ethnic minorities, who enjoy equal rights, with the majority population. In this context, laws and normative acts on the problem of national/ethnic minorities were adopted. In conformity with the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, the basis of the state is constituted by the unity of the nation and ethnic minorities as well, having the right to manifest, preserve and develop their culture, language and belief.

The primary objectives of the national policy are: the nation's consolidation taking into account the multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual and regional peculiarities; the consolidation of the politicaljuridical and historical-cultural bases of the territorial integrity; the preservation and development of cultures and languages of all ethnic communities in the country. The concept stipulates that the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity, the mutual tolerance and interethnic peace represent the spiritual wealth of the Republic of Moldova. More provisions on the state policy in the field of interethnic relations are included in the Presidential ordinances and Governmental resolutions: Ordinance of the Republic of Moldova's President No. 64, of February, 22, 1991 "On assurance of the Ukrainian national culture development in the republic"; Governmental Resolution No. 336, of July, 09, 1991 "On actions for assuring the development of the Russian national culture in the republic"; Ordinance of the Republic of Moldova's President No. 16, of August, 12, 1991 "On actions for assuring the development of the Jewish national culture and meeting the social needs of the Jewish population from the Republic of Moldova"; Ordinance of the Republic of Moldova's President No. 72, of March, 30, 1992 "On actions for the development of the Bulgarian national culture"; Governmental Resolution No. 131, of February, 16, 2001 "On actions in support of the Gypsies of the Republic of Moldova", etc.

Building rule of law and integration of national minorities

The harmonization of the internal legislation with the international standards in the field of human rights is one of the democratic consolidation means aimed at granting people of different nations the legal right to maintain and develop their identity. In this respect, the Republic of Moldova signed a number of international documents on the rights of national minorities. For instance, the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was ratified by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova on October, 22, 1996 (Conven ia-cadru..., 2000).

The complex process of managing national relations in the Republic of Moldova has influenced the state to develop an institutional framework in order to assure the maintenance of partnership and collaborative relationships of the titular population with national/ethnic minorities. New structures of the public administration bodies were created in order to guarantee the observance of the current legislation provisions. In the Republic of Moldova, sooner than in other states of CIS, a State Department for National Issues (further being subject to a number of reorganizations), the Parliamentary Committee on human rights and problems of national minorities, and relevant directions within the Ministry of Education and Youth, Ministry of Culture and Tourism were created. The Prosecutor General's Office established the position of councilor on interethnic issues; specialists on interethnic issues were employed at the Mayor's Office as well. In conformity with the Resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the Moldovan SSR No. 357, of November, 14, 1990 "On immediate actions on the realization of civil conciliation in the Moldovan SSR" the State Department for National Issues was created (Grek, 2003; Petrovskij, 2003; Šojhet, 2003), and by Governmental Resolution No. 218, of April, 25, 1991 "On the primary functions, structure and regulations of the State Department for National Issues of the Moldovan SSR", the functions, structure and regulations of activity of this body were established (Aksenov, 2003; Pancjuk, 2003; Šornikov, 2003). In conformity with Governmental Resolution No. 998, of September, 28, 1998 "On the approval of the structure, regulations and personnel of the Department of National Relations and Language Functioning", it was reorganized into the

Department of National Relations and Language Functioning which included the National Centre for Terminology in its structure. In conformity with the Governmental Resolution No. 940, of September, 07, 2001, this public authority body was reorganized into the Department of Interethnic Relations.

The Department's directions of activity are: the realization of state policy in the field of national relations; the assurance of language functioning in conformity with the current legislation; the international collaboration and activity with diaspora. The Department operates on the basis of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity principles, civic understanding, political, economic and social equality of the Republic of Moldova's citizens, regardless of nationality, national cultural autonomy of ethnic groups, collaboration with the organizations of ethnic groups from Moldova, establishment of relations between our allergenic citizens and their historical mother land. As part of the department, a collegial council for examining and solving fundamental problems, for personnel recruiting and training, for controlling the execution of resolutions adopted previously, and for drawing up documents was created. In collaboration with the institution, a number of documents in the field of interethnic relations were elaborated. Subsequently, the department was reorganized into the Bureau for Interethnic Relations, and currently it is a structure of the central executive power that represents and protects the interests of the coinhabiting ethnic groups. The House of Nationalities functions in the subordination of the Bureau, which is a cultural centre of all the ethnocultural organizations from Moldova that started its activities on June, 01, 1996, being the first institution of this kind on the territory of CIS (Levandovskaja, 2003).

The issues of national minorities are constantly in the attention of the country's scientific community. A subdivision for scientific investigation of national/ethnic minorities operated within the Academy of Sciences of Moldova. In February, 1991, the Division of the complex study on national minorities was founded, which was turned into the Institute of National Minorities in 1992 (Academia..., 2006; Skvorcova, 1999), and subsequently reorganized into the Institute for Interethnic Researches (1999) (Popovič', 2000; Stepanov, Červenkov 2000; Bodrug, 2001a; Bodrug, 2001b; Stepanov, 2003). Its objective is the complex

research of historical, language, folklore, literature, ethnographic and artrelated problems of the national minorities from the Republic of Moldova (Kožuhar', 2001; Zajkovskaja, 2001; Čimpoeš, 2001; Čimpoeš, 2006; Červenkov, 2001; Červenkov, 2006; Kopanskij, 2001) within the general context of historic development of the republic and traditional relations with the neighboring countries. Currently, the ethno-cultural issues of the Ukrainian, Russian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, Jewish, Gypsy population, etc are being studied within the Institute of Cultural Patrimony (Institutul Patrimoniului..., 2008).

Mother tongue learning by national minorities

In the context of a favorable legislative and institutional framework (Sidorov, 2003), the co-inhabiting nations have celebrated a number of socio-cultural achievements. Thus, one of the basic rights of the ethnic minorities is the organization of the learning process in the mother tongue which assures the personality development, the development of national consciousness, the preservation of the culture of ethnic minorities. Until 1989, only the children of the Russian minorities could be taught in their mother tongue, while the absolute majority of the children of other minorities - Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, Polish, etc. were taught in Russian (Roy, 2001). The current legislation of the Republic of Moldova guarantees each co-inhabiting nation the right to children's teaching and education in their mother tongue (Stojanova 2000; Suhomlin-Ciobanu, 2000; Kapkanar', Tjurnina, 2000) in kindergartens and schools, as well as learning their mother tongue (Mlečko, 1996) as a compulsory school discipline in schools providing teaching in the official language or in Russian.

The state created conditions for learning mother tongues (Ciobanu, 2002; Kapkanar', Tjurnina, 2000) and put the basis of transition to the teaching and education of children from the localities of the co-inhabiting nationalities with dense population in their mother tongue. Special resolutions of the Parliament and Government regarding the actions aimed at the improvement of the learning process of the languages of national minorities were adopted. The teaching and education in mother tongues in the public educational institutions was provided for the territories densely populated by the national minority.

For instance, during the academic year 1993-1994 schools and preschool institutions from the regions densely populated by Bulgarians transited to mother tongue teaching. A 10-year transition program of teaching in the mother tongue in the respective schools and kindergartens (taking into account the parents' choice) was elaborated for the Ukrainian population (Nikitčenko, 2005). Polish language teaching classes were opened at the secondary school no. 37 of Chisinau; and a group of children of Polish origin learning their mother tongue at kindergarten no. 129 of Chisinau was formed. An evening courses school of Polish language and literature was opened. The curriculum provides the study of other subjects, such as: history and geography of Poland (Bodrug, Damanciuc, 2006). Polish language courses were opened in Balti, Ribnita, Stircea (Glodeni) and Slobozia-Rascov. Schools providing mother tongue teaching to the other national minorities (Russians, Jews, etc.) were also opened.

One of the provisions of these documents concerns the creation of conditions necessary for learning the official language in all the educational institutions of the national minorities.

A new subject in the curriculum for the academic year 2002-2003 was included – the history, traditions and culture of the nation (Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian, etc.).

Ethno-cultural social organizations that belong to the less numerous national minorities (Germans, Poles, Belarusians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, etc.) organize Sunday schools aimed at the study of the mother tongue, culture, traditions and customs of the respective nationalities.

In 2007, the Ukrainian language was taught in 56 educational institutions, the Gagauz language - in 52, the Bulgarian language - in 34, etc. In the Republic of Moldova, pedagogic personnel are trained for schools and kindergartens providing teaching and education in the languages of ethnic minorities.

Mass-media as a mechanism of minorities culture perpetuation

Mass-media plays a significant role in the preservation of the coinhabiting nationalities' culture (Belostecnic, 1997; Rogovaja, 2005). The

percentage of TV channels in the languages of the co-inhabiting nationalities increased mainly in the densely populated regions by means of TV and radio programs, and an increase in the number of materials in the languages of the national/ethnic minorities in the regional print media was registered. The number of TV and radio programs increased to 3-4 hours per day for Gagauz and Bulgarians, the respective material and technical basis being created as well. For the first time, films were dubbed and subtitled into the Gagauz language. In order to create conditions necessary for the development of each ethnic minority's culture, within the State Company "Teleradio-Moldova", which is currently a public company, special editorial boards were set up aimed at producing TV programs in the languages of national/ethnic minorities: TV programs like "Svitanok" (in Ukrainian), "Russkij dom" (in Russian), "Budjak dalsasynga" (in Gagauz), "Budjanskaja volna" (in Bulgarian), "In the Jewish street" (in Yiddish and Hebrew), "Petalo romano" (in Romany) are broadcast.

In 2002, the number of programs broadcast during this year was as following: in Ukrainian language – 30 hours, in Gagauz language – 24 hours, in Bulgarian language – 22 hours, in Russian language – 12 hours, in Yiddish language – 6 hours, in Romany language – 6 hours.

The efforts of ethno-cultural organizations were supported for editing newspapers in the languages of national/ethnic minorities, such as: "Ukrainskij golos (a newspaper in Ukrainian), "Russkoe slovo" (a newspaper in Russian), "Ana Sözü" (a newspaper in Gagauz), "Ridno slovo" (a newspaper in Bulgarian), "Naš golos" (a Jewish newspaper in Russian), "Iutrzenka" (a newspaper in Polish). National/ethnic minorities have the possibility to develop their traditional culture and national arts under the conditions of equality and universality. In Chisinau there is the State Russian Drama Theatre "A.P. Čehov", in Ceadir-Lunga (ATU Gagauzia) – the Gagauz Drama Theatre "Mihail Ceachir", in Taraclia – the Theatre of the Bulgarians from Bessarabia "Olimpii Panov".

The interests of national minorities have been taken into consideration while carrying out the administrative-territorial reform. Law no. 764, of December, 27, 2001 "On the administrative-territorial organization of the Republic of Moldova" (Monitorul Oficial, 2002) stipulates for the establishment of district Taraclia that is densely

populated by Bulgarians. Due to the reduction in population size necessary for setting up localities (from 2,500 in conformity with the previous law to 1,500), favorable conditions for the formation of a new administrative-territorial units (villages, communes) in which the national minorities constitute the majority were created. Thus, favorable conditions are provided for the active participation in socio-political life at the local level.

Actions were carried out over the years that gradually became traditional both for the Republic of Moldova and for diaspora. The first ethno-folk Festival was held on June, 4, 2000 both in Chisinau, and in districts. The second edition of the Festival took place the following year, and by Government Resolution no. 82, of January, 29, 2002 "On the Ethno-cultural Festival" it was decided to organize this cultural event annually on the third Sunday of September. 48 ethno-cultural organizations took part in the 2003 edition with the motto "Unity through diversity" At the 7th edition of the Festival held on September 21, 2008, cultural and artistic programs took place in all the district centers, along with the artistic manifestations held in the centre of the capital.

Other events regarding the interethnic relations were held within the "European Cultural Days" program under the auspices of the Council of Europe Information Office in the Republic of Moldova, supported by the Ministry of Culture and National Library. The first edition of the events was held on September, 3-6, 2004 in Chisinau. The manifestations were accompanied by the vernissage of young painters from the Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania and Ukraine.

Festivals specific to the national traditions and cultures are annually held – multiethnic children's festivals (in January and June), spring celebrations (Martishor, Maslenica, Toponie Mojani, Novruz Bairam (all of them celebrated in March), and intercultural celebrations – the Days of Slavic Writing and Culture (in May) (Levandovskaja, 2003), Our Language (in August) (Gončarova, 2004).

Activity of the ethno-cultural organizations

The revival of national consciousness over the last two decades has been an impulse both for the titular population of the Republic of Moldova and the co-inhabiting minorities for the creation of ethnocultural associations necessary for the preservation of cultural values, language, traditions, and for the promotion of interests as well as for the integration into society. The adoption of Law no. 382, of July, 19, 2001 "On the rights of national minorities and legal status of their organizations" (Monitorul Oficial, 2001) was essential for recognizing and guaranteeing the rights of the respective national minorities who are full citizens of the Republic of Moldova, regardless of their number and social status.

According with 18th art. of this law, persons belonging to national minorities may exercise their rights individually or by joining, under the law, organizations (associations, communities, societies, etc.) which are of instructive, cultural, religious and charity character. At the same time, none of the organizations of the persons belonging to national minorities may demand the monopolized representation of the respective minorities' interests (art. 19). By means of their activity, ethnocultural communities contribute to the maintenance and consolidation of neighboring, friendship and collaborative relations between the Republic of Moldova and their states of origin. The decisions on the co-inhabiting nations are adopted by agreement with the ethno-cultural organizations represented by them.

The ethno-cultural organizations registered at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova are republican and local, and the figure of the latter exceeds 100. Ethno-cultural organizations have branches in the localities where their representatives hold the majority, including in the administrative-territorial units from the left bank of the Nistru (Levandovskaja, 2002). In 2010, 86 ethno-cultural organizations existed in the Republic of Moldova. The statutory activity of ethnocultural organizations is supported by the Bureau of Interethnic Relations.

The dynamics of ethno-cultural organizations in the Republic of Moldova

Year	Ethno cultural organizations	Represented ethnic groups
1989	3	3
1990	10	9
1992	16	14
1994	32	16

1996	38	17
1998	44	18
2001	64	19
2002	71	53
2004	78	-
2006	91	-
2007	92	-
2008	93	40
2010	86	-

The first structure representing the national minorities of the Republic of Moldova was the ethno-cultural organization of the Bulgarians "Vozroždenie" ("Revival"). Its activity is directed towards the revival of spiritual and cultural values of the Bulgarians, the consolidation of efforts for the execution and protection of the civil, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms, the participation in the elaboration of concepts and strategies on the problems of the Bulgarians from the Republic of Moldova (Current Archive...), as well as the establishment and development of collaborative relations with Bulgaria. In order to achieve its objectives, the organization elaborated ethno-cultural programs dedicated to celebrating Bulgarian national holidays; it participated in the establishment and development of the educational system in Bulgarian language; it held symposiums, conferences and seminars on Bulgarian culture; it contributed to the provision of public libraries and schools with literature in Bulgarian language, it promoted the initiative for the Bulgarian young people to continue their studies in Bulgaria. The Scientific Society of Bulgaristic Studies from Moldova set up in 1994 has participated actively in the identification and study of the history of Bulgarians living in Moldova.

The Society of Ukrainian Culture was set up in 1990. The Community of Ukrainian Women from Moldova was established in 1993 – the first ethno-cultural organization consisting of women of the most numerous national minorities.

The Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Moldova was founded in 1989 (the Jewish Community of Moldova was established on July, 4, 2008). The Community participates in various

important events, such as the Jewish Congress consisting of Jews natives of the Republic of Moldova settled abroad.

The Polish Cultural Society was established in May 1990 at the meeting of the Poles from Chisinau. This society has a wide range of activities (Bodrug, Damanciuc, 2004), the primary one being the creation of favorable conditions for mother tongue learning in the schools located in the Poles' residence places.

The Gagauz representatives founded the National Cultural Association *Kardaslik-Fratie-Bratstvo* ("Fraternity") in May 1990. The members of the association participated in the elaboration of guidelines for the draft law on the special legal status of Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri), in the organization of the Days of Gagauz culture held in Chisinau, in holding round tables on the current issues of the Gagauz language and culture, in the anniversary celebration of some personalities. The Association participated in the inauguration of the Gagauz Library *Mihail Ceakir* of Chisinau.

The reunion of the Greek-origin citizens from the Republic of Moldova took place on April 27, 1991 in Chisinau. The establishment of the Society of Greek Culture "Elefteria" was decided by the unanimous vote of 54 people. The objectives of this organization are: the study of the history of Greece and Greeks living on the territory of the Republic of Moldova; the dissemination of Greek culture and traditions; the mother tongue learning; the revival of national and religious holidays; the establishment of collaborative relations with different organizations and societies from Greece and Cyprus.

The Centre of Russian Culture in the Republic of Moldova was set up pursuant to Government Resolution no. 337, of September, 21, 1991. The objectives of this organization are: the creation of an efficient system for the Russian culture and language preservation; the strengthening and development of friendship relationships with the representatives of other co-inhabiting nations. The Russian society runs intense activities not only in Chisinau, but in other regions of the Republic of Moldova as well.

There are other ethno-cultural organizations such as: the Fund of Slavic Culture and Writing (1989), the Socio-Cultural Society "Moldovan Gypsies" (1990), the Centre of German Culture "Hoffnung" (1990), the Centre of Azerbaijan Culture of the Republic of Moldova "Azerbaijan"

(1992), the Armenian Community of the Republic of Moldova (1992), the Belarusian Community of the Republic of Moldova (1993), the Lithuanian Community of the Republic of Moldova (1997), the Moldovan-Japanese Cultural Centre "YUCO" (2002), the Centre of Interethnic Researches of the Republic of Moldova (2007), etc.

Conclusions

The ethno-cultural interference pattern applied by the institutional and legal framework of the Republic of Moldova directs the development of national and ethnic minorities towards the creation of a unitary and harmonious multicultural society, by offering the perspective of overcoming the inter-confessional, racial and inter-ethnic crisis.

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