



**International Convention on
the Elimination of All Forms
of Racial Discrimination**

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Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

**Combined twelfth to fourteenth periodic reports
submitted by the Republic of Moldova under
article 9 of the Convention, due in 2020***

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Introduction

1. The combined twelfth to fourteenth periodic reports of the Republic of Moldova on the status of implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination¹ were drafted in accordance with article 9 (1) (b) of the Convention on the basis of the concluding observations on the tenth and eleventh periodic reports of the Republic of Moldova, adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at its 2527th meeting on 8 May 2017 (CERD/C/MDA/CO/10-11).
2. The report covers the period from 2017 (June) to 2019, provides specific information on the implementation of articles 1–7 of the Convention and describes the progress made in the implementation of its provisions. At the same time, the report sets out the measures taken by the Moldovan authorities to implement the recommendations put forward by the Committee in its concluding observations.
3. One year after the adoption of the concluding observations on the tenth and eleventh periodic reports of the Republic of Moldova (para. 31), the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations drafted an information note on the implementation of the recommendations, contained in paragraphs 19 and 23, which was submitted to the Committee for consideration through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration (in July 2018).
4. This report has been prepared by the Agency in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, the Prosecutor General's Office, the National Bureau of Statistics, the Bureau for Migration and Asylum, the Television and Radio Council, the National Employment Agency, the Public Services Agency, the People's Advocate (Ombudsman), the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality (hereinafter referred to as the Equality Council), the Bureau for Reintegration Policy attached to the State Chancellery and local authorities. The Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations set up a working group composed of representatives from the above-mentioned departments and leaders of cultural organizations of ethnic minorities to coordinate the drafting process and hold consultations on the report.
5. On 4–5 February 2020, the country office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Republic of Moldova held a workshop in partnership with the Agency on the international human rights monitoring system and the country's twelfth to fourteenth periodic reports for the Committee. The workshop was intended for members of the interdepartmental working group. The report was presented and discussed during the workshop. Representatives of 13 central authorities and 12 leaders of ethnocultural associations of ethnic minorities attended the workshop. The report was subsequently updated in accordance with the recommendations made by the participants.
6. The Coordinating Council of Ethnocultural Organizations, acting under the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations, was informed about the Committee's adoption of the concluding observations on the combined tenth and eleventh periodic reports. Members of the Council were involved in the drafting process and the consultations held within the framework of the Agency's meetings.
7. With a view to ensuring transparency and fostering participation, the report was made available for public consultation on the Agency's official website (www.bri.gov.md).

¹ The Convention was ratified by the Republic of Moldova in 1991 by Parliamentary Decision No. 707-XII of 10 September 1991. The Convention entered into force for the Republic of Moldova on 25 February 1993.

Part one

Overview of government policy on preventing and combating racial discrimination

8. The principles of equality and non-discrimination and the rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Constitution² are inalienable and form the basis of the entire human rights protection system in the Republic of Moldova. The legal framework contains provisions that prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, social origin, gender, opinion, political affiliation or property status or any other criteria aimed at restricting or denying the equal exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms and rights recognized by law.

9. The legal and institutional framework of the Republic of Moldova for the promotion and protection of human rights, including the rights of members of ethnic minorities, is regularly amended to bring it into line with international standards, national priorities and the country's aspirations for European integration. Particular emphasis is given to the implementation of human rights agreements to which the Republic of Moldova is a party.

10. The Republic of Moldova is a State with a multi-ethnic population (ethnic minorities account for about 25 per cent of the population), necessitating sustained efforts and measures to ensure respect for the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of every member of a minority group and, at the same time, to foster an environment that is conducive to the expression, preservation and development of such identity.³

11. The Moldovan authorities are involved in efforts to prevent racial discrimination and combat any manifestations of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism and encourage and support the implementation of actions to promote equality, tolerance and mutual respect. The various central administrative authorities have expanded the range of activities and stepped up their involvement in implementing the Convention in the areas within their competence.⁴

12. Pursuant to the adoption of public administration reforms,⁵ the Bureau for Inter-Ethnic Relations, in accordance with Government Decision No. 593 of 25 June 2018, was renamed the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations, the central administrative body reporting to the Government. At the same time, the functions of developing and monitoring policies on inter-ethnic relations and language usage were transferred to the Ministry of Education, Culture

² Articles 1 and 16 of the Constitution provide that human dignity, human rights and freedoms and the free development of human personality are supreme values and, in equal measure, the Government guarantees all citizens of the Republic of Moldova equality before the law and the authorities for the full realization of these values. Furthermore, according to article 19 of the Constitution, foreign citizens and stateless persons have the same rights and obligations as the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, unless otherwise provided for by law.

³ The rights of ethnic minorities are regulated by a set of national legal acts, as follows: I. Constitution; Act on the Usage of Languages in the Republic of Moldova, Act No. 3465-XI of 1 September 1989 (in conjunction with Constitutional Court Decision No. 17 of 4 June 2018, in which it held the law to be obsolete); Act No. 382-XV of 19 June 2001 on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic Minorities and the Legal Status of Their Organizations; and Act No. 344-XIII of 23 December 1994 on Special Legal Status of Găgăuzia (Gagauz Eri). II. Laws regulating the rights of ethnic minorities in various fields including: Act No. 173-XIII of 6 July 1994 on the Promulgation and Entry into Force of Official Acts; Act No. 338-XIII of 15 December 1994 on the Rights of the Child; Act No. 273-XIII of 9 November 1994 on Identity Documents of the National Passport System; Act No. 514-XIII of 6 July 1995, the Judicial Organization Act; Act No. 1227-XIII of 27 June 1997, the Advertising Act; Act No. 413-XIV of 27 May 1999, the Culture Act; Act No. 1024-XIV of 2 June 2000 on Citizenship of the Republic of Moldova; Act No. 982-XIV of 11 May 2000, the Access to Information Act; Act No. 125-XVI of 11 May 2007 Freedom of Conscience, Thought and Religion Act; Act No. 121 of 25 May 2012, the Equality Act; Education Code (No. 152 of 17 July 2014); and others. III. Presidential decrees and decisions of the Government on the development of the ethnic culture of ethnic minorities (Ukrainians, Russians, Bulgarians, Roma, Jews).

⁴ See part two of the report.

⁵ The Public Administration Reform Strategy for the period 2016–2020, approved by Government Decision No. 911 of 25 July 2016, and the 2016–2018 Action Plan for the implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy for the period 2016–2020, approved by Government Decision No. 1351 of 15 December 2016.

and Research.⁶ The Agency, which had undergone organizational reform, was still responsible for carrying out policies in this area. The reform was introduced in accordance with article 4 of Act No. 98 of 4 May 2012 on the Central Administrative Authorities, which establishes the guiding principle for the organization and functioning of the central authorities: the separation of the function of developing and promoting policies from that of implementing them.

13. In 2018, two studies were carried out within the framework of the project to increase cooperation and build the capacity of actors involved in promoting and protecting the rights of ethnic minorities carried out by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Moldova, entitled “Comparative analysis of good practices applied by human rights institutions” and “Assessment of the competences⁷ of authorities responsible for the promotion of the rights of ethnic minorities: a comparative analysis”.⁸ The overall objective of the studies was to enhance cooperation between the Agency, the Office of the People’s Advocate and the Equality Council with a view to developing joint activities and building the capacity of stakeholders. The studies found that there was a lack of coordination between three separate authorities responsible for the protection of ethnic minorities and human rights, demonstrating the need for cooperation to provide for a coherent protection mechanism.

14. The assessment of the competence of national human rights institutions recommended the establishment of a single cooperation mechanism. The Office of the People’s Advocate, the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations and the Equality Council thus signed a memorandum of understanding for this purpose on 15 November 2018,⁹ with a view to strengthening cooperation between institutions and enhancing joint efforts for the protection of human rights. The parties will be devoting special attention to the rights of ethnic minorities to education, access to information and participation and also cultural, religious and linguistic rights.

15. With a view to fostering further effective cooperation, on 20 September 2019, the three institutions signed a Joint Declaration on Conducting and Covering the Electoral Campaign without Discrimination or Hate Speech, which reaffirms their commitment to observe human rights and to ensure the equality of all persons in the Republic of Moldova with respect to political, economic, social, cultural and other areas of life, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic background, language, religion or belief, gender, age, disability, opinion, political affiliation or any other similar grounds.¹⁰ During the electoral campaign in October 2019, the signatories made appeals to politicians, candidates, journalists, opinion leaders and others to uphold democratic values, promote the principle of equality and non-discrimination, shun hate speech and respect human dignity. On 28 September 2019, the Television and Radio Council, as the competent authority for audiovisual communication, associated itself with this joint declaration.

16. The activities of civil society organizations working in the area of human rights have gained momentum, particularly with respect to the implementation of projects on subject matters that have to do with the Convention, among others. Such projects have been carried out in cooperation with development partners, with the support of various programmes of the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union, the Council of Europe, OSCE and diplomatic missions from the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Germany and other accredited missions in the Republic of Moldova. The most active

⁶ In order to perform functions in the field of inter-ethnic relations and language usage, a new branch was established in the central office of Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, called the Inter-Ethnic Relations Policy Service, established pursuant to Government Decision No. 1234 of 19 December 2018.

⁷ file:///C:/Users/BRI/Desktop/convenția%20rasială,%202019,%20raport/raznîe%20informații.%20raport/Analiza%20comparativă%20a%20practicilor%20eficiente%20aplicate%20de%20către%20instituțiile%20de%20protecție%20a%20drepturilor%20omului.pdf.

⁸ file:///C:/Users/BRI/Desktop/convenția%20rasială,%202019,%20raport/raznîe%20informații.%20raport/AnalizaOSCEVR27122018IVfinrevVR.pdf.

⁹ <http://www.bri.gov.md/index.php?pag=noutati&opa=view&id=1509&start=30&l=>.

¹⁰ <http://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/declaratie-comuna.pdf>; <http://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/declaratie-comuna-finala-RU.pdf>.

organizations include the Institute for European Policy and Reform,¹¹ the Institute for Strategic Initiatives,¹² the Promo-LEX Association¹³ and others.

17. Between July 2018 and July 2019, the Institute for European Policy and Reform, together with the Institute for Strategic Initiatives, implemented a project entitled “Promoting civil society and inter-ethnic dialogue in the Republic of Moldova in the context of the EU association process (CIVID)”. A number of workshops have been held at the local and regional levels to promote civil society dialogue. Discussions focused on the following areas: (1) education; (2) economic development and social rights; and (3) the mass media. The Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations has been involved in the project, which is also aimed at contributing to the implementation of the Strategy for Strengthening Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Republic of Moldova (2017–2027) and its Plan of Action for the period 2017–2019.¹⁴

18. During 2017–2019, Promo-LEX regularly monitored the public space and the mass media and, for the first time in the Republic of Moldova, presented disaggregated data on various aspects of hate speech, including the number of detected cases, categories of sources that spread hate speech, the public impact, gender and average age of the perpetrators and victims, prohibited grounds of discrimination and affected groups, and the politicians and mass media that most often use such forms of speech.¹⁵ The monitoring exercise in 2019 indicated that incitement to hatred most often occurred in a political or religious context. Hate speech was most commonly based on considerations such as sex, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, views and opinions, religion or belief, nationality, language, ethnic origin and disability.

19. The reporting period was characterized by increased efforts by the Moldovan authorities to come up with mechanisms to deal with various manifestations of anti-Semitism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance. In 2014, the Republic of Moldova was granted observer status by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. Applying for membership has given fresh impetus to legislative initiatives, events and programmes in this area in the Republic of Moldova.

20. On 26 November 2015, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova adopted Decision No. 210 on the Establishment of National Holocaust Remembrance Day, on 27 January.

21. The 2017–2019 Plan of Action on the Implementation of the Declaration of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova on the Acceptance of the Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust, chaired by Elie Wiesel, was approved pursuant to Government Decision No. 313 of 22 May 2017.¹⁶

¹¹ The Institute for European Policy and Reform, established in 2015, is a non-partisan, non-profit organization and independent research and analysis centre. The mission of the organization is to accelerate the European integration of the Republic of Moldova by promoting systemic reforms, expanding participatory democracy and strengthening the role of citizens in decision-making processes at the national and local levels.

¹² The Institute for Strategic Initiatives is a non-governmental organization founded in 2017. One of the priorities of the organization is to resolve conflicts and strengthen inter-ethnic relations.

¹³ The Promo-LEX Association was founded in 2002 and is a non-governmental organization that aims at developing democracy in the Republic of Moldova, including in the Transnistrian region, by promoting and protecting human rights, monitoring democratic processes and strengthening civil society.

¹⁴ <http://ipre.md/2019/10/23/promoting-civil-society-and-inter-ethnic-dialogue-in-the-republic-of-moldova-in-the-context-of-the-eu-association-process-civid/>; file:///C:/Users/BRI/Desktop/convenția%20rasială,%202019,%20raport/raport,%20diverse/CIVID-Synthesis-Report-_RU.pdf.

¹⁵ Within the framework of the project entitled “Strengthening the platform for the development of human rights activism and education in the Republic of Moldova: phase II”, with the financial support of the Department of Justice and Human Rights of the Soros Foundation Moldova, Promo-LEX published an initial report giving a comprehensive analysis of hate speech in the Republic of Moldova. The report for 2019 (for the period 1 August–30 November 2019) was the second relevant report. https://promolex.md/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/A4_hate_ro_II_web.pdf; https://promolex.md/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/A4_hate_II_ru-1.pdf.

¹⁶ In July 2016, Parliament adopted a declaration approving the final report of the International Commission on Holocaust Studies, presided over by Elie Wiesel. The declaration condemns the

22. The Government adopted Government Decision No. 1019 of 17 October 2018 on the Establishment of the State Jewish History Museum of the Republic of Moldova. The main purpose of this institution is to highlight the contribution of the Jewish community to the development of Moldovan society at different historical stages, as well as to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and to intensify the fight against anti-Semitism and intolerance. The Government has also worked out an action plan for the rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, capitalization and promotion of the Jewish cemetery in the Chisinau municipality and for the creation of a historical memorial centre dedicated to the Jews who had lived and worked in the Republic of Moldova.

23. Government Decision No. 18 of 18 January 2019 on the Condemnation of Anti-Semitism and the Promotion of Tolerance approved the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism.¹⁷ This decision expressly confirms the position of the Republic of Moldova in condemning any manifestations of hatred, xenophobia, antisemitism and other forms of discrimination.

24. The most significant practical activities in the field of combating any form of racism, xenophobia or antisemitism is Holocaust education, remembrance and research, including the following:

- Week of commemorative events to mark National Holocaust Remembrance Day organized every year (22–31 January), with a programme that includes a requiem mass for the victims of fascism (in the Chisinau municipality and other communities in the country), a round table entitled “Holocaust remembrance in the Republic of Moldova” (Parliament’s Europe Hall), the exhibition *The Holocaust in Bessarabia* (Parliament Hall), a youth forum entitled “The future belongs to us” (House of Nationalities) and others
- Signing of the Cooperation Agreement between Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and the voluntary organization Jewish Community of the Republic of Moldova (2017), which provides for the development by the Ministry of new curricula for the training of the teaching staff of general and university education institutions in the history of the Holocaust and the history, culture and traditions of ethnic communities in the Republic of Moldova
- Opening in the House of Nationalities of the Museum Centre dedicated to the history of the Holocaust in the territory of the present-day Republic of Moldova (27 January 2018), which was established by the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations with the support of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, including financial support; this museum centre has also mounted a first-ever exhibition devoted to the memory of the victims of the Roma genocide

systematic persecution and extermination of Jews by the Nazis and their accomplices during the period 1937–1944 in the current territory of the Republic of Moldova (Parliamentary Decision No. 190 of 22 July 2016).

¹⁷ “Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed towards Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, towards Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

Part two

Information on the measures taken by the Republic of Moldova to give effect to the Convention and implement the recommendations of the concluding observations on the combined tenth and eleventh periodic reports of the Republic of Moldova, adopted by the Committee on 8 May 2017

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 3 of the concluding observations

Situation of human rights in the Transnistrian region

25. Despite the impossibility of effective control over the situation in the Transnistrian region, which has been confirmed on multiple occasions by the European Court of Human Rights, the Moldovan authorities take a variety of steps to uphold human rights in the region. For example, the Bureau for Reintegration Policy, which is part of the State Chancellery, makes every effort to restore rights that have been violated and provides the necessary assistance to the persons affected. In 2019, 402 complaints regarding the violation of various rights in the Transnistrian region were considered and resolved, 475 applicants were provided with advice and 193 interdepartmental meetings were held on various subjects related to issues arising from unilateral action taken by representatives of Tiraspol institutions or from the unresolved situation in the Transnistrian region.

26. Measures to uphold human rights in the Transnistrian region are included in the following policy documents: the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Union-Moldova Association Agreement 2017–2019, the Individual Partnership Action Plan between the Republic of Moldova and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for the period 2017–2019, the Government Action Plan 2020–2023 and the National Human Rights Action Plan for the period 2018–2022, which set out a number of key actions to safeguard various categories of rights in the Transnistrian region and withdraw any reservation regarding the territorial applicability of international human rights treaties.

27. Issues related to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Transnistrian region remain on the agenda for dialogue between Chisinau and Tiraspol, including in the form of working groups on human rights involving experts from both sides of the Dniester River, during which the Republic of Moldova insists on the restoration of violated rights while also requesting support from international partners in the 5+2 talks between the parties, Transnistria and the Republic of Moldova, the observers, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and OSCE, and the external observers, the United States of America and the European Union. The agenda includes topics related to the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, the protection of the rights of children at risk, the repatriation of child victims of trafficking in persons, the prevention of online violence, the prevention and combating of domestic violence, the protection of persons living with HIV/AIDS, the prevention of segregation and discrimination and the promotion of social inclusion. However, Tiraspol demonstrates a regrettable lack of willingness to make progress on important issues concerning the fulfilment and protection of fundamental human rights.

28. Recently, there has been a steady rise in cases brought before the European Court of Human Rights against the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation by complainants from the Transnistrian region, which points to various abuses and violations committed by the so-called Transnistrian institutions; the Court has stated at the same time that the constitutional authorities in Chisinau are fulfilling their positive obligations to citizens in the eastern parts of the country to the extent possible and found the Russian Federation responsible for the situation in the region and for showing continued and multifaceted support to self-proclaimed administration of Tiraspol, while refusing to carry out the judgments against it and politicizing the temporary absence of effective control by the Chisinau authorities over the situation in the region, which is subject to the influence of the Moscow authorities.

29. The problem of access to the Transnistrian region for staff from the Office of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Moldova, who should be providing help and advice to

persons whose rights have been violated (including to persons in places of deprivation of liberty, children left without parental care, victims of domestic violence, etc.) has not been resolved, although it is frequently raised in the dialogue between Chisinau and Tiraspol, with the Transnistrian party unreasonably evading this issue. This has led to a wide range of problems related to the creation and maintenance by representatives of the Tiraspol regime of artificial barriers to free movement by officials, public servants, human rights defenders and citizens of the Republic of Moldova from the right bank of the Dniester River.

30. During dialogue with all international partners, it has been repeatedly affirmed that the protection of human rights in the region is an absolute priority and a call has been made for active involvement to ensure the observance of fundamental human rights in individual cases of abuses by the representatives of Tiraspol, including to resolve high-profile cases such as those of Aleksandr Rzhavitin and Oleg Khorzhan, citizens of the Republic of Moldova.

Articles 1 and 5 of the Convention

Follow-up information relating to paragraphs 6 and 7 of the concluding observations

Statistical data

31. The results of the most recent population and housing census, conducted in 2014, were released in March 2017. The National Bureau of Statistics has developed an application that displays 2014 census data in an easily viewable and understandable format to improve access to the results. This tool facilitates the evaluation of a huge volume of collected data, making it possible to disaggregate them both by ethnicity and by locality at municipal level. The population and housing census results are available in three languages: Romanian, Russian and English (<https://recensamint.statistica.md/en>).

32. For the 2014 census, data was collected on the following ethnocultural characteristics: (a) ethnicity; (b) native language; (c) language of habitual use; and (d) religion. These were optional questions, answered voluntarily by respondents in line with the Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations for the 2010 Censuses of Population and Housing, chapter IX.¹⁸ In 2014, in accordance with article 10 of Act No. 90/2012 on the Population and Housing Census in the Republic of Moldova, census takers in areas with high concentrations of ethnic minorities were recruited from among members of the ethnic groups being enumerated. The census takers were instructed to record the information using the exact words of the respondents, to respect their right to free self-identification.

33. According to the results of the 2014 census, Moldovans account for 75.1 per cent of the population, Romanians for 7.0 per cent, Ukrainians for 6.6 per cent, Gagauz for 4.6 per cent, Russians for 4.1 per cent, Bulgarians for 1.9 per cent, Roma for 0.3 per cent and other ethnic groups for 0.5 per cent.

34. The 2014 census data show that Moldova has 36 ethnic groups with more than 50 members. Specifically, 2,068,058 persons described themselves as Moldovan, 192,800 as Romanian, 181,035 as Ukrainian, 126,010 as Gagauz, 11,726 as Russian, 51,867 as Bulgarian, 9,323 as Roma, 2,828 as Belarusian, 1,597 as Jewish, 1,404 as Polish, 1,080 as Armenian, 914 as German, 667 as Azerbaijani, 594 as Turkish, 527 as Tatar, 322 as Greek, 313 as Georgian, 312 as Arab, 259 as Uzbek, 251 as Italian, 230 as Czech, 218 as Lithuanian, 155 as Tajik, 152 as Chuvash, 150 as Kazakh, 110 as Mari, 107 as Turkmen, 103 as Bashkir, 91 as Udmurt, 87 as Albanian, 77 as American, 77 as Latvian, 76 as Portuguese, 75 as Korean, 67 as Serb/Kosovan and 51 as Syrian.¹⁹

35. Data from the 2014 population and housing census about the representation of ethnic minorities in the labour market and in public administration is presented below.

¹⁸ <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Recomandari-Conferinta-statisticieni-europeni.pdf>.

¹⁹ Other ethnic groups account for 1,006 persons and 50,082 persons did not specify their ethnicity. The total population of the country is 2,804,801 persons.

Table 1
Statistics from the 2014 census about the major occupational groups, disaggregated by ethnicity (percentage)

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Moldovan/ Romanian</i>	<i>Ukrainian</i>	<i>Russian</i>	<i>Gagauz</i>	<i>Bulgarian</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Not specified</i>
Legislators, members of the executive branch, other high-ranking officials and administrators, heads and senior officials of departments	5.7	7.0	9.1	5.8	7.9	12.1	4.4
Professionals in various sectors	14.3	14.1	19.1	12.6	16.8	18.5	13.8
Technicians and associate mid-level professionals	6.1	7.0	7.1	6.9	8.1	5.6	4.8
Clerical support workers	1.9	2.4	2.9	1.9	2.4	1.9	1.9
Services and sales workers	12.1	13.2	15.0	12.9	12.4	12.9	10.8
Skilled agricultural, forestry, aquaculture, fish farming and fishery workers	19.8	15.5	7.6	15.2	11.1	7.6	10.7
Skilled and related workers	10.7	11.0	12.3	12.2	11.9	10.2	9.4
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	6.4	7.1	5.3	8.3	8.0	4.4	4.2
Elementary occupations	9.8	9.3	7.8	11.1	10.8	7.7	9.4
Armed forces occupations	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.3
Not specified	12.6	13.1	13.5	12.9	10.3	19.0	30.2

Table 2
Statistics from the 2014 census on unemployment rates according to ethnicity (percentage)

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Total</i>		<i>Urban</i>		<i>Rural</i>	
	<i>Unemployment rate</i>	<i>Other ethnicities</i>	<i>Unemployment rate</i>	<i>Other ethnicities</i>	<i>Unemployment rate</i>	<i>Other ethnicities</i>
Moldovan (Romanian)	2.8	3.1	3.7	3.7	2.3	2.3
Ukrainian	2.9		3.7		2.1	
Russian	3.6		4.0		2.2	
Gagauz	2.7		3.3		2.2	
Bulgarian	2.9		2.9		2.8	
Other	3.9		4.0		3.6	

Table 3
Statistics from the 2014 census on the representation of ethnic minorities in public administration

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Total</i>		<i>Urban</i>		<i>Rural</i>	
	<i>Employed in public administration</i>	<i>Other ethnicities</i>	<i>Employed in public administration</i>	<i>Other ethnicities</i>	<i>Employed in public administration</i>	<i>Other ethnicities</i>
Moldovan (Romanian)	3.1		5.0		2.1	
Ukrainian	2.1	2.2	2.5	2.5	1.7	1.8
Russian	1.8		1.8		1.7	
Gagauz	2.3		3.2		1.7	
Bulgarian	3.0		3.3		2.6	
Other	1.9		2.0		1.5	
Did not specify	2.7		4.0		1.4	

36. The current legislation guarantees all citizens the equal right to vote and be elected regardless of ethnicity or proficiency in the official language. In the parliamentary elections of 24 February 2019, 101 deputies were elected. For the first time, in addition to ethnic Moldovans, Ukrainians, Gagauz, Russians and Bulgarians, these included members of numerically small ethnic communities such as one Polish deputy, one Armenian deputy and one Roma deputy. Accordingly, the composition of Parliament reflects the diversity of ethnic groups in Moldovan society and also gender balance (25.7 per cent of the 101 deputies are women).

37. Following the local elections of 20 October 2019, 12 Roma, of whom 6 were women, were elected to local governments.

Article 2 of the Convention

Follow-up information relating to paragraphs 8 and 9 of the concluding observations

People's advocate (Ombudsman)

38. Accreditation of the Office of the People's Advocate with category A status in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) was one of the goals for 2018 included in the National Human Rights Action Plan for the period 2018–2020. To achieve this goal, Parliament adopted Act No. 70 of 13 April 2017 to add a provision on the status and role of the People's Advocate to section II of the Constitution.

39. In accordance with article 59¹ of the Constitution, the People's Advocate is not legally liable for views expressed in the exercise of his or her mandate. Interference in the work of the People's Advocate, deliberate disregard for his or her statements and recommendations and any form of obstruction of his or her work are all punishable under the law.

40. Act No. 52 of 3 April 2014 on the People's Advocate (Ombudsman) sets out guarantees for the Advocate's independence. Pursuant to article 3, the People's Advocate is autonomous and independent of all government agencies, legal entities with all forms of ownership and organizational and legal status and officials at all levels. No imperative or representative mandate is applicable to the People's Advocate. No one may oblige the People's Advocate to obey any instructions or directives. The People's Advocate may not be required to give any explanation or statement about previous or ongoing cases, except when this is essential in the interests of the complainant or the information is of public interest.

41. In accordance with the Regulations on the organization and operation of the Office of the People's Advocate, adopted by Act No. 164 of 31 July 2015, the Office is an autonomous

public agency which is organizationally, functionally, operationally and financially independent of all other government agencies, legal entities, regardless of type of ownership or organizational and legal form, and private individuals, including officials at all levels.

42. In accordance with article 37 of Act No. 52 of 3 April 2014 on the People's Advocate (Ombudsman), the Office of the People's Advocate is publicly funded within the budget allocations approved under the annual appropriations law. Act No. 181 of 25 July 2014 on Public Finances and Budget and Tax Accountability was amended, by Act No. 147/2018, to increase the financial independence of the Office. In accordance with the new article 51¹ of the Act on Public Finances and Budget and Tax Accountability, the draft budget of an independent and autonomous public authority along with an advisory opinion from the Ministry of Finance is approved by that authority and submitted to the Government for inclusion in the draft national budget to be adopted by Parliament. In the event of a discrepancy, the independent and autonomous authority submits comments on the Government-approved draft budget to Parliament to resolve the disagreement.

43. In 2018, the allocations from the government budget to fund the Office significantly increased, as did the funding for events organized by the People's Advocate and the People's Advocate for Children's Rights as part of their mandates. In 2019, allocations were increased to 112.5 per cent of 2015 levels.

44. In Act No. 164 of 31 July 2015, approving the regulations on the organization and operation of the Office of the People's Advocate, a maximum staffing level for the Office of 65 posts was approved. The staffing level of the Office may be revised by Parliament on the basis of a well-founded proposal from the People's Advocate.

45. As a result of the package of measures undertaken in May 2018, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions granted category A status to the Office of the People's Advocate following its periodic renewal of accreditation, indicating recognition that the Office is fully compliant with the Paris Principles.

46. The main challenge for the Office remains its high staff turnover, which has a negative impact on the effectiveness of its work owing to the lost skills and experience of the departing employees. Low pay, challenging tasks and a heavy workload are the main demotivating factors for staff. There are currently 39 persons working for the Office, including civil servants, the People's Advocate's staff, support personnel and the employees of regional offices.

Article 4 of the Convention

Follow-up information relating to paragraphs 10 and 11 of the concluding observations

Legal framework

National Human Rights Action Plan 2018–2022

47. The National Human Rights Action Plan 2018–2022²⁰ was approved by Parliamentary Decision No. 89 of 24 May 2018. It is the third public policy document produced to fulfil and promote human rights in the Republic of Moldova. This plan is based, inter alia, on the Committee's recommendations of 8 May 2017, contained in its concluding observations on the combined tenth and eleventh periodic reports of the Republic of Moldova.

48. Two of the 16 areas of activity in the document are dedicated to non-discrimination and equality (chapter 6) and the rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities (chapter 15). Issues with respecting the rights of the Roma population are reflected in chapter 15, objective II, entitled "Ethnic Roma fully enjoy their rights without discrimination". Since the population of the Republic of Moldova is ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse and there are often many individual differences between members of the minority communities themselves, the drafters of the document thought it pertinent to emphasize this diversity as a way of overcoming the division of society along ethnic, linguistic and religious lines.

²⁰ <http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=376768&lang=2>.

Therefore, in line with preparations for ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the plan proposes measures aimed at the effective social, cultural and economic integration of members of ethnic minorities, the provision of sufficient budgetary resources for the related policy framework, institutional capacity-building of the government agencies involved in monitoring the overall position of persons belonging to ethnic minorities and the introduction of school curricula for religious education that reflect religious diversity and are independent of religious ideologies and dogmas. Moreover, additional measures to reduce the social distance faced by members of minority communities will be based on the increased effectiveness of investigations into criminal offences and incidents motivated by prejudice, contempt or hatred, reviews of criminal legislation, capacity-building for the relevant criminal justice actors, provision of the necessary support to victims and the collection of disaggregated data on the scale of this type of offence.

49. Following the adoption of the 2018–2022 action plan and to meet the objectives set in accordance with the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Union-Moldova Association Agreement 2017–2019,²¹ Parliamentary Decision No. 64 of 11 February 2019 on the National Human Rights Council was adopted in order to establish an effective national mechanism to coordinate the development and implementation of human rights policy documents, human rights monitoring and assessment and the fulfilment of international human rights treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party. The Council's day-to-day work is performed by a special State Chancellery unit, which acts as the permanent secretariat for human rights. The permanent secretariat carries out the day-to-day monitoring and assessment of fulfilment of the national human rights action plan. A human rights coordinator has been appointed in every government department to ensure cooperation between the Council, the permanent secretariat and other agencies. Pursuant to Parliamentary Decision No. 89/2018, the Council submits a report on progress in implementation of the plan by 1 April each year.

Act No. 121/2012 on Equality

50. Act No. 121 of 25 May 2012, the Equality Act, is a comprehensive law to combat and prevent discrimination. Article 1 (1) of the Act provides that the purpose of this law is to prevent and combat discrimination and to ensure equal rights for all persons in the Republic of Moldova in the political, economic, social, cultural and other spheres of life, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion or beliefs, sex, age, disability, opinion, political affiliation or any other similar characteristics. Article 2 contains the following definition of discrimination: “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference in respect of individual or collective rights and freedoms, or support for discriminatory conduct based on the actual or perceived characteristics set out in the present Act”.

51. In the opinion of the Equality Council, the adoption of the Equality Act led during the reporting period to a measure of progress in various areas affecting the position of ethnic minorities.

52. A modest rise in tolerance has been observed among the public. In 2018, the Council, with support from development partners, assessed public perceptions and attitudes towards equality over a three-year period. A comparison between the results of the 2015 and 2018 studies on perceptions and attitudes towards equality shows a decrease in the social distance index for specific minority groups in the Republic of Moldova. The lowest level of acceptance remains only for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, persons living with HIV/AIDS, ethnic Roma and former prisoners.²²

53. At the same time, in order to consolidate the legal framework for preventing and combating discrimination and to strengthen the institutional mechanisms, the Ministry of Justice has developed a bill on amendments to various laws, including the Equality Act and Act No. 298/2012 on the Work of the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality. The main aims of the bill are to expand the grounds for protection against discrimination, strengthen the institutional framework in this area and improve the

²¹ National Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Union-Moldova Association Agreement 2017–2019 (approved by Parliamentary Decision No. 1472 of 30 December 2016), Section II, SL8, para. 4 (b).

²² Study on perceptions and attitudes towards equality in the Republic of Moldova, 2018, <http://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Studiu-privind-percep--iile.pdf>.

mechanism for the collection, monitoring and assessment of data on equality, non-discrimination and diversity. The bill was accepted by Parliamentary Decision No. 635 of 5 July 2018 and registered by Parliament under No. 235 of 6 July 2018. In accordance with parliamentary procedure for considering draft legislation, given that Parliament did not pass the bill after any reading, when the new Government was confirmed, the bill was returned to the Ministry of Justice, which started a new consultation process. At the same time, in order to ensure compatibility between the national legal framework and relevant international standards, including those set out in the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights and the recommendations of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, in letter No. 02/7392 of 2 August 2019, the Ministry of Justice requested assistance from the Council of Europe for an expert assessment of the bill.

54. As part of its monitoring of the implementation of adopted decisions, the Equality Council determined that the web pages of several government entities (Parliament, Chisinau City Hall) are now accessible to the members of linguistic minorities, as versions of these web pages have been made available in a language of inter-ethnic communication (Russian). Modest progress is also being observed in awareness of the unacceptability of specifying ethnicity in official press releases or the media.

55. However, despite the fact that some progress has been achieved, certain issues remain a cause for concern. The Republic of Moldova has not ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the authorities have not specified a time frame for its ratification.²³ The existing legal framework for preventing and combating discrimination is still failing to provide effective protection for the victims of discrimination. Despite the progressive nature of the Equality Act, some shortcomings have been revealed during the implementation process. The Equality Council considers it essential to adopt a clearer definition of incitement to discrimination, specifically to draw a distinction between different types of incitement and introduce the concepts of “type of discrimination” and “discriminatory language”, prohibit discrimination at work, define “public figure” and clarify the procedure for reviewing the statute of limitations regarding the compensation of losses incurred as a result of discrimination. To remedy these shortcomings, the Ministry of Justice drafted a bill, which was submitted to Parliament in July 2018 but was then returned to go through the legislative process again following the change of government.²⁴

56. The Code of Offences does not provide for the punishment of the following forms of discrimination: harassment; incitement to discrimination; victimization; and racial segregation. The Equality Council is only competent to find a violation; punishment of such violations is the prerogative of the courts. Granting the Council the power to impose sanctions for discrimination will ensure that anti-discrimination legislation is effectively upheld and that the perpetrators of discrimination are held to account.

Strategy on Strengthening Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Republic of Moldova for the period 2017–2027, Plan of Action for the period 2017–2020 on the Implementation of the Strategy on Strengthening Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Republic of Moldova for the period 2017–2027

57. Significant progress in improving the system for the protection of the rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities has been made with the adoption of the Strategy on Strengthening Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Republic of Moldova for the period 2017–2027, approved by Parliamentary Decision No. 1464 of 30 December 2016. The Plan of Action for the period 2017–2020 on the Implementation of the Strategy on Strengthening Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Republic of Moldova for the period 2017–2027 was approved by Parliamentary Decision No. 1019 of 29 November 2017. Through this action plan, the

²³ Measures related to ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (action 11, subactions 11.1–11.3), subaction 11.3, included in the National Human Rights Action Plan: Ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, deadline: 2021, responsible institutions: Ministry of Education, Culture and Research; special parliamentary commission; Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations.

²⁴ The bill drafted by the Ministry of Justice was accepted by Parliamentary Decision No. 635 of 5 July 2018 and introduced in Parliament under No. 235 of 6 July 2018. In letter No. 02/7392 of 2 August 2019, the Ministry of Justice requested assistance from the Council of Europe in conducting an expert assessment of the bill.

Government confirmed its determination to take the appropriate measures to fulfil the rights of members of minorities in an integrated and multilingual society based on respect for diversity. Numerous measures, actions and projects intended to achieve the main goals of the ethnic relations strategy have been proposed both by executive bodies and representatives of civil society. These include operational research to analyse the current situation in the field, identify the most pressing issues and risks and examine the situation of representation and participation of different ethnic groups in the public sector. The plan provides for the continued organization of traditional ethnocultural events, such as festivals, round tables, conferences, summer camps and other events aimed at developing intercultural dialogue, education and cooperation. National and international experts helped determine the financial resources required to implement the plan. Pursuant to Parliamentary Decision No. 1019/2017, the sum of 2,570,795 Moldovan lei (MDL) was allocated from the government budget; external assistance will account for MDL 2,101,822.

58. A bilingual Romanian-Russian edition of the strategy and the plan was printed in 3,000 copies for distribution among the ministries, other central and local government agencies, associations of ethnic minorities and civil society organizations, thus facilitating the implementation of these policy documents.²⁵ The strategy was also translated into four minority languages (Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian and Romani) and published with the financial support of the OSCE Mission to Moldova as part of a project to enhance capacity and sustainable cooperation mechanisms in the field of national minorities.

59. A so-called ethnobarometer for conducting research on inter-ethnic relations in the Republic of Moldova has been developed and implemented, and its methodology and questionnaire were negotiated and approved during a series of meetings held in April and May 2019. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations were tasked with conducting the research with support from experts from the Institute for European Politics, the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Institute for European Policies and Reforms.

60. To develop their own capacity and to strengthen the coalition between the Office of the People's Advocate, the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations and the Equality Council, employees of these organizations actively participate in the training programmes organized for this purpose by the OSCE Mission to Moldova. The first training seminar took place in October 2018, during which representatives of the agencies discussed a mechanism to identify and overcome existing shortcomings in public policy in the relevant field. The second such seminar took place on 15–16 May 2019 and was dedicated to methods of ensuring participation by ethnic minorities in public life, including through affirmative measures necessary to achieve equality, for example in governance and decision-making, and their practical application. The third training seminar took place on 21–22 November 2019 and helped staff from the three institutions analyse the core concepts and key elements of the right to health care and the impact of different health-care services on minority groups.

61. On 24 October 2019, the OSCE Mission organized a workshop for a broader group of government agencies working in the field of ethnic minority rights. The event was attended by representatives of the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations, the Office of the People's Advocate, the Equality Council, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and the ethnocultural organizations of ethnic minorities. The workshop focused on best practices of human rights monitoring and reporting.

62. The OSCE Mission supported the development of a road map to inform the public and raise the profile of the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations in order to facilitate progress in implementation of the ethnic relations strategy and improve platforms for communication with ethnic minorities, civil society and the media.

63. The Agency continues to provide support, including financial support, to ethnocultural organizations for the organization of ethnocultural events (exhibitions, book launches, commemoration and celebration evenings, festivals, conferences, round tables, seminars, concerts, shows, competitions, holidays, summer camps, etc.). Voluntary associations of ethnic minorities are supported in their work by the House of Nationalities – a cultural, resource and information centre attached to the Agency. The theme of such events

²⁵ This publication was produced by the Inter-Ethnic Relations Agency with financial support from the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova.

often goes beyond inter-ethnic relations, attracting people of all ages with different views and experiences, which helps foster a spirit of tolerance and encourages intercultural dialogue in Moldovan society.

64. To ensure equal opportunities for ethnic minorities to take part in the country's public, cultural and social life, the Agency is taking measures to reinforce and improve the effectiveness of cooperation with the Coordinating Council of Ethnocultural Organizations, which is a civil society advisory body to the Agency, so that partnership between ethnocultural organizations and the Agency leads to active involvement and the delineation of responsibilities and facilitates a more effective resolution of ethnic minority issues. To this end, the Agency recently made a number of amendments to the Regulations on the Coordinating Council.²⁶ The aims, composition and structure of the Coordinating Council were clearly defined. The Coordinating Council's mandate has been expanded and is now fully compatible with its public status. In the longer term, it is expected that these changes will improve the functioning of the Coordinating Council as a channel of communication between the authorities and the members of ethnic minorities. In its work with civil society, the Agency emphasizes the education of young persons in a spirit of European values with regard to inter-ethnic relations and supports youth projects and initiatives intended to develop intercultural dialogue and cooperation. In this context, measures are taken to include young activists on the Coordinating Council.

65. In accordance with the action plan on inter-ethnic relations, various measures were carried out in different areas, with financial support from international organizations and from the institutions involved.

66. In the area of research on inter-ethnic relations, as part of institutional project 15.817.06.03F, "Multidimensional promotion of ethnocultural heritage as a factor in social harmony and development in the Republic of Moldova: national heritage and social development", conducted by the Ethnology Centre, the Cultural Heritage Institute and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, researchers from the Ethnic Minorities department held 125 events in 2018 and 11 events in 2019 related to fundamental research on the ethnocultural heritage of Ukrainians, Gagauz, Russians, Bulgarians, Roma and Jews from the Republic of Moldova.

67. In the area of education, two new compulsory subjects were added in the 2018/19 school year: Personal Development and Education for Society, which directly or indirectly cover topics such as the value of cultural diversity, cultural diversity and pluralism, tolerance, harmonious relations, stereotypes and assertive, non-confrontational and non-violent communication, which facilitates the development of self-esteem and of methods for effective interactions with others throughout life. Since these subjects are mandatory, all teaching staff for the primary classes have been trained to teach them. Optional subjects are a flexible component of the framework curriculum, which facilitates the development of cross-disciplinary skills. The optional subjects Intercultural Education, A Culture of Good-Neighbourliness (years 1 to 4) and Let's Get to Know One Another Better (years 10 to 12) facilitate the understanding and recognition of the values of members of different cultures and cooperation in an atmosphere of mutual respect with persons of different ethnic, cultural and religious origins.

68. In the area of culture, in 2018 and 2019, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research carried out a number of actions aimed at the integration of ethnic minorities in cultural life. The main goals of the cultural events are to ensure access to culture regardless of race or ethnicity, promote intercultural dialogue and encourage citizens to learn about the traditions and cultural heritage of all ethnicities. Among the most important cultural events held by the Ministry is Folk Costume Day, organized in accordance with Parliamentary Decision No. 194 of 19 November 2015, under which the last Sunday in June is declared Folk Costume Day. The purpose of the holiday is to highlight the value of authentic Romanian dress and the traditional costumes of the ethnic groups living in the Republic of Moldova. The "Covorul Dorului" National Carpet Fair is an event that brings together different ethnic groups living in the country to showcase the most beautiful winter traditions of Ukrainians, Russians, Gagauz, Bulgarians and others, including an exhibition of winter

²⁶ The Regulations on the Coordinating Council of Ethnocultural Organizations attached to the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations are available at <http://www.bri.gov.md/>.

folk costumes, workshops with traditional craftspeople, live productions and performances of the folk music of ethnic minorities of the Republic of Moldova.

69. To support creative potential and empower civil society to develop cultural activities and get involved in the achievement of national cultural goals, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research offers grants on a competitive basis. Voluntary associations receive financial support in the form of funding for cultural projects submitted in accordance with the Regulations on funding from the government budget for cultural projects carried out by voluntary associations, in line with Parliamentary Decision No. 834 of 8 October 2014. In 2019, financial support was provided for six projects aimed at promoting ethnic and cultural diversity, social integration and the development of intercultural dialogue in the Republic of Moldova. The total amount of funding provided was MDL 310,500. In 2018, 12 projects were supported. The total amount of funding provided was MDL 385,000.

70. Following a central government reform, the functions of developing and monitoring inter-ethnic and linguistic policy, previously carried out by the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations, were transferred to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research in accordance with Parliamentary Decision No. 598 of 26 June 2018. A new department of the Ministry was established – the Inter-Ethnic Relations Policy Service, which is responsible for the analysis, development, monitoring and promotion of policies on inter-ethnic relations and the use of languages in the Republic of Moldova, including the Strategy on Strengthening Inter-Ethnic Relations and the related Plan of Action on its implementation.

Follow-up information relating to paragraphs 12 and 13 of the concluding observations

Hate speech and hate crimes

71. In order to adopt legislation on the prevention of crimes motivated by hatred and prejudice, the Ministry of Justice has developed a bill proposing several amendments to the Criminal Code, including a change to the offence established in article 346. Specifically, article 346 (Intentional actions aimed at inciting ethnic, racial or religious hatred, differentiation or discord) will be amended to criminalize “acts of incitement to violence based on prejudice” and the words “social, ethnic, racial or religious hatred, differentiation or discord” will be replaced with the word “prejudice” in all criminal legislation. In this regard, it is proposed to add to the Criminal Code an article 134/1, in which the concept of prejudice will be defined as: “preconceived opinions held by an offender on the basis of actual or perceived race, skin colour, ethnic or social origin, citizenship, sex, gender, language, religion or religious beliefs, political views, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, health, age or family status, regardless of whether the act is committed against a person who may be identified by such protected characteristics, against that person’s property or property associated with him or her or against a person supporting persons who may be identified by such protected characteristics or be associated with them”. Moreover, commission of an act “motivated by prejudice” will be considered aggravating circumstances for a number of criminal offences.

72. The bill on amendments to the Criminal Code, registered by Parliament under No. 301, was adopted at its first reading on 8 December 2016. At the same time, to ensure that the bill was compatible with relevant international standards, the Ministry of Justice requested the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to conduct an expert assessment. The findings of the Office were received on 26 April 2019; the bill was amended based on the recommendations made and will be submitted to a plenary session of Parliament for adoption at a final reading.

73. Regarding the bill mentioned in connection with amendments to certain laws and regulations for the purpose of defining criminal acts motivated by prejudice, hatred and contempt, the Equality Council is of the view that the introduction of a paragraph 2 to article 346 of the Criminal Code, which provides that acts committed during peaceful protest or in an academic or educational context cannot be characterized as “intended to incite ethnic, racial or religious hatred, discrimination or segregation”, would have contradicted the purpose of the bill and constituted a reason not to apply the legal provision.

74. On 24 September 2019, the Ministry of Justice submitted a revised bill, No. 301, to the parliamentary Committee for Human Rights and Inter-Ethnic Relations and Legal Committee for Appointments and Immunities, proposing it for adoption on final reading. On 22 October 2019, these committees organized public consultations on bill No. 301. Recommendations were made during the consultations, primarily relating to the deletion of article 346 (2) of the Criminal Code from the revised version of the bill, given that it restricts the scope of application of the main provision and gives rise to ambiguous interpretation, for, if the paragraph were retained, the established goals would not be achieved and the effective regulation of acts motivated by prejudice would not be possible. Another proposal was to add to the Code of Offences a new provision in the category of violations of the political, labour and other constitutional rights of persons, which would separately regulate cases involving facts that could be categorized as hate speech but do not constitute an offence. However, as Parliament had not adopted bill No. 301 by the end of the reporting period, national legislation in this area remains incompatible with international standards on the prohibition of hate speech.²⁷

75. From 15 October to 16 November 2019, the Equality Council jointly with the Office of the People's Advocate announced a slogan contest on social media, with the hashtags #MoldovaBezStereotipovIPredrassudkov (Stereotype- and prejudice-free Moldova) and #MoldovaBezNenavistnicheskikhVyskazyvaniy (Hate-speech-free Moldova), to raise public awareness and promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity. The contest saw the submission of 64 slogans encouraging equality and tolerance and condemning discrimination and the incitement of hatred.

76. To increase public awareness of human rights, the Office of the People's Advocate, the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations and the Equality Council jointly published a series of information leaflets in the languages used in the Republic of Moldova, as follows: 1. A leaflet for older persons in three languages: Romanian, Russian and Gagauz, which informs older persons about their basic rights, including the right to health care and the right to social insurance, social benefits and services and tax breaks for older persons; 2. A leaflet on the promotion and protection of ethnic minority rights in five languages: Romanian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Russian and Bulgarian, which contains brief information about the three agencies. These publications are available to all stakeholders and are distributed free of charge, like all other information materials produced by the Office.

77. During the reporting period, the Office of the Procurator General did not investigate any hate crimes or incidents of incitement to hatred.

78. The prosecution authority must initiate a criminal investigation within 30 days of a decision to prosecute and inform the person who reported the case or the relevant agency about the investigation if the report or records indicate at least a reasonable suspicion that an offence has been committed and there are no grounds that prevent such an investigation. Therefore, if an act has constituent elements of a crime, regardless of whether it is a hate crime or another type of crime, the prosecution authority must immediately bring criminal proceedings and the criminal offence must be investigated in accordance with the applicable legislation.

79. From the time when the crime is registered and the criminal investigation begins, the prosecution authority must ensure that all criminal acts are registered in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations. According to the register of forensic and crime information held by the Information Technology Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, no offences were registered under the category of hate crime in 2019.

80. The Office of the Procurator General issued Instruction No. 15-1 Od/17-601 of 12 October 2017, under which victims and injured parties in criminal proceedings must be informed about their rights and obligations. The newly designed forms contain written information about the rights of parties to proceedings, based on the Code of Criminal Procedure, Act No. 198 of 26 July 2007 on State-guaranteed Legal Aid, Act No. 137 of 29 July 2016 on the Rehabilitation of Victims of Crime and Act No. 05-XVI of 16 May 2008 on the Protection of Witnesses and Other Participants in Criminal Proceedings. These instructions were circulated to local and special procurators, criminal prosecution agencies under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Customs Service and the National Anti-Corruption

²⁷ https://promolex.md/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/A4_hate_ro_II_web.pdf.

Centre. In addition, to ensure the correct and uniform application of evidence and criminal procedure legislation, streamline the prevention and combating of hate crime, fulfil the National Human Rights Action Plan approved by Parliamentary Decision No. 89 of 24 May 2018 and provide protection from discrimination by ensuring the capacity of the criminal prosecution authorities and procurators to effectively apply criminal legislation in line with the provisions of article 531 (4) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, guidance on the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes has been approved pursuant to Order of the Procurator General No. 28/11 of 1 August 2019. The guidance was transmitted to the procurators for practical application within their competence.

81. From 20 to 29 September and from 30 September to 9 October 2019, the Television and Radio Council monitored coverage of the election campaign by national media service providers, including Moldova 1, Moldova 2, Prime, Canal 2 and Radio Moldova Tineret. No incidents of incitement to hatred or discrimination, incitement to interpersonal hatred, inter-ethnic or territorial separatism, harm to the dignity or reputation of another person, public humiliation or the use of sexist language were recorded.

Article 5 of the Convention

Follow-up information relating to paragraphs 16 and 17 of the concluding observations

Freedom of religion of ethnic minorities

82. According to the 2014 census data, the religious composition of the population of the Republic of Moldova is as follows: the total population is 2,804,801, of whom 2,611,795 indicated a religion; of those, 2,528,152 are Orthodox Christians, 2,535 are Old Believers, 2,745 are Catholics, 2,291 are Lutherans, 25,380 are Evangelical Baptists, 9,063 are Seventh Day Adventists, 10,049 are Pentecostal (Apostolic Church of God), 17,341 are Jehovah's Witnesses, 584 are Jewish, 2,009 are Muslims, 88 are Baha'i, 60 are Buddhists, and 193,042 are from other religious groups or did not indicate a religion.

83. In accordance with the article 31 of the Constitution: "(1) Freedom of conscience is guaranteed. It must be exercised in a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect. (2) Religious groups are free and organize according to their own internal rules and in compliance with the law. (3) All manifestations of enmity towards religious groups are prohibited. (4) Religious groups are independent, separate from the State and supported by it, including by facilitation of a religious presence in the army, hospitals, prisons and orphanages."

84. Act No. 125 of 11 May 2007 on Freedom of Conscience, Thought and Religion (as amended by Act No. 278 of 27 December 2011) governs matters related to freedom of conscience, thought and religion as guaranteed by the Constitution and international human rights treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party and also the legal status of religious groups and subgroups.

85. The Public Services Agency was established in accordance with Parliamentary Decision No. 314 of 22 May 2017.²⁸ Pursuant to Act No. 31 of 16 March 2018, amending various laws, the authority to register non-profit organizations, including religious organizations, was transferred to the Agency from the Ministry of Justice. In accordance with article 19 (7) of Act No. 125-XVI of 11 May 2007 on Freedom of Conscience, Thought and Religion, if the founding documents submitted by a religious organization are not compatible with the Act or the practices and rituals of the religion pose a threat to society, national security, the lives or physical and mental health of persons or public order or violate public morals or the rights and freedom of others, the Agency will refuse to register that religious organization, providing the reason for the refusal. Since the entry into force of Act No. 31 of 16 March 2018, no decisions to refuse the registration of religious organizations have been

²⁸ The Agency is a public institution established by the Government, delegated to perform functions of the State Chancellery to facilitate and improve the effectiveness of public service provision (Charter of the Agency, approved by Parliamentary Decision No. 314 of 22 May 2017 on the establishment of the Public Services Agency).

recorded. Furthermore, in accordance with an amendment to article 19 (4), the time taken to register a religious organization has been reduced to a maximum of 15 days.²⁹

86. Over the reporting period, the Office of the Procurator General did not investigate any incidents of violations of the rights of minorities based on race, skin colour or ethnicity, including their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Follow-up information relating to paragraphs 18 and 19 of the concluding observations

Linguistic rights of ethnic minorities

Measures to protect the linguistic rights of national minorities in the context of the pandemic

87. In view of the appeal made by Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres and the recommendations put forward by OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Lamberto Zannier regarding human rights in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova have cooperated with civil society to implement a series of urgent measures to meet the needs of all members of society, including persons belonging to national minorities. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, the office of the United Nations Population Fund in the Republic of Moldova, the Youth Platform for Inter-Ethnic Solidarity, the National Youth Council of Moldova, the Office of the People's Advocate and the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations took a number of measures, particularly with a view to making information accessible in national minority languages. For example, the Government launched a Russian-language version of an online platform providing the latest information on COVID-19 cases and other statistical data 16 April 2020.³⁰ The Russian-language version of the platform was set up to ensure that information is accessible to all persons, in the spirit of the principles and values of social integration. In addition, guidance on the COVID-19 pandemic has been published and distributed in the languages of the national minorities of the Republic of Moldova: Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz and Romani. The official websites of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, the National Public Health Agency and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research provide relevant information in two languages, namely Romanian and Russian. Civil society representatives, journalists and public figures have worked together to build a special website, which contains Russian translations of official documents adopted by the Emergency Situations Commission. Distance education is available for all students, including in national minority languages.

Access to education in the national minority languages

88. The Education Code of the Republic of Moldova, No. 152 of 7 July 2014, establishes the legal framework governing relations in respect of the planning, organization, functioning and development of the education system in the Republic of Moldova (art. 1). The Code also defines the languages of instruction. Article 10 states: "(1) Instruction in the education system is provided in Romanian and, to the extent that the educational system allows, in a language of international communication or, in accordance with paragraph 2, the languages of national minorities. (2) Where there is sufficient demand, in districts in which persons belonging to national minorities have traditionally lived or live in significant numbers, the State ensures that, to the extent that the educational system allows, persons belonging to such minorities have adequate opportunities to learn or be taught in the language of their minority as part of their compulsory education. (3) The study of Romanian is compulsory in all educational institutions at all levels and is regulated by State educational standards."

²⁹ Act No. 31 of 16 March 2018, article 19 (4), as amended.

³⁰ <http://gismoldova.maps.arcgis.com/.../opsdashboard/index.html>.

*Access to primary and general secondary education*³¹

89. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research is responsible for the education of national minorities. In the 2018/19 academic year, the network of general primary and secondary education institutions consisted of 1,244 institutions (with 334,159 students). Of these, 967 institutions provided instruction in Romanian (to 258,180 students), 217 in Russian (to 58,635 students) and 1 in Bulgarian (to 149 students); and 59 mixed schools provided instruction in both Romanian and Russian (to 17,013 students).

Table 4

Educational institutions and their student cohorts by language of instruction at the beginning of the 2018/19 academic year

	Educational institutions	Students	Breakdown by grade		
			1-4	5-9	10-12
Total	1 244	334 159	139 612	159 427	35 120
Schools offering instruction in one language only (total) Including:					
Romanian	967	258 180	109 114	123 944	25 122
Russian	217	58 635	23 929	27 556	7 302
Bulgarian	1	149	149	0	0
Mixed schools (Romanian-Russian)	59	17 013	6 420	7 897	2 696

90. In the 2018/19 academic year, Ukrainian was studied in 42 schools, Gagauz in 42 schools, Bulgarian in 28 schools, Polish in 1 school and Hebrew in 2 schools.

91. Romanian is the official language of instruction of the national education system, and 80.7 per cent of primary and secondary school students are taught in the language. A regional breakdown of the student cohort by language of instruction shows that the central region has the highest percentage of students learning Romanian, at 96.4 per cent. The proportion stands at 82.8 per cent in the southern region, 78.2 per cent in the north of the country and 77.4 per cent in Chisinau municipality.

92. In order to realize the right of national minorities to receive education in their native languages, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research is developing various model curricula, including primary and lower secondary curricula with native language instruction for ethnic Ukrainian, Gagauz and Bulgarian students; primary and lower secondary curricula with instruction in Romanian for ethnic Ukrainian, Gagauz and Bulgarian students; and upper secondary curricula with instruction in Romanian for ethnic Ukrainian, Gagauz and Bulgarian students.

93. National minorities are taught in accordance with a curriculum framework that has an ethnic and cultural component. The teaching of an ethnic and cultural component for national minorities is a priority of the multicultural approach to education across Europe. National minority languages and literatures and the history, culture and traditions of Ukrainians, Russians, Gagauzes, Bulgarians and Roma are compulsory at the primary and lower secondary level (four hours per week). The teaching of the history, culture and traditions of Russians, Ukrainians, Gagauzes and other peoples in national minority languages helps young schoolchildren belonging to these minorities to form an ethnic identity and a sense of citizenship towards the country in which they live and serves to promote the principles of good-neighbourly relations in the multicultural society of the Republic of Moldova.

³¹ In the Republic of Moldova, there are three models for studying national minority languages: (1) Russian-language schools at which persons who belong to national minorities traditionally study; (2) Russian-language schools at which Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian and other languages are studied as a subject for three hours a week and at which one hour is devoted to the history, culture and traditions of Russians, Ukrainians, Gagauzes, Bulgarians, Roma and other peoples; and (3) educational institutions at which, in separate classes at the primary education level, instruction is provided in the native language (for example, the Vasil Levski Theoretical Lyceum, with teaching in Bulgarian, in Chisinau municipality).

94. In 2018–2019, several measures were taken to promote the sociolinguistic integration of members of ethnic minorities. In July 2018, the National Curriculum Council approved a new generation of primary school curricula. In 2019, the Council approved modernized Romanian language and literature curricula for educational institutions at which instruction is provided in national minority languages, Russian language and literature curricula, Ukrainian language and literature curricula, Gagauzian language and literature curricula, Bulgarian language and literature curricula and curricula for teaching Russian at schools in which instruction is provided in Romanian (all for the lower and upper secondary levels). These curricula are integrated with national and European policy documents and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and are intended to improve the study of Romanian and students' communication skills in their native languages and promote social cohesion and intercultural communication. In 2019, Ukrainian, Gagauz and Bulgarian language and literature textbooks were developed for the first and second grades. Between July and August 2019, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research held a series of training workshops for the heads of general education institutions and teachers on the implementation of the new curricula.

95. Each year, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research allocates the necessary financial resources for the production and publication of textbooks for Ukrainians, Gagauzians and Bulgarians. In 2017, 1,948,000 lei were allocated for textbooks in Gagauz, Ukrainian and Bulgarian for the fourth and sixth grades. In 2018, 1,233,100 lei were allocated for textbooks in Gagauz, Ukrainian and Bulgarian for the first and seventh grades. Over the period 2016–2018, a total of 5,051,600 lei was allocated from the State budget for the publication of first language textbooks.

96. The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Găgăuzia was allocated 10,499.2 million lei in 2018 and 11,105.4 million lei in 2019. Taraclia district was allocated 2,598.5 million lei in 2018 and 2,603.4 million lei in 2019. In 2019, 2,732.2 million lei was allocated for the study of native languages in the northern districts (Bălți, Rîșcani and Ocnița), which have large national minority populations.

97. Teachers of national minority languages receive their initial training at the following educational institutions in the country: Comrat State University, Taraclia State University, Ion Creangă Pedagogical State University, the State University of Moldova, in Chisinau, the Alecu Russo State University of Bălți and the Comrat College of Education. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research provides funded places for initial teacher training.

98. Between 5 and 10 August 2019, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research held training sessions for 71 local education specialists in preparation for the implementation of the curricula approved by the National Curriculum Council on 5 July 2019. The training sessions covered the curricula for Russian language and literature (the language of instruction), Gagauz language and literature (for 30 specialists), Ukrainian language and literature (for 30 specialists) and Bulgarian language and literature (for 25 specialists), for the lower and upper secondary levels. In turn, in August 2019, the local education specialists held training sessions for teachers at general education institutions, which began to implement the new curricula on 1 September 2019.

Access to vocational education

99. In the 2018/19 academic year, there were 89 vocational education institutions: 13 model vocational education centres (including 1 non-State institution), 34 colleges (including 5 non-State institutions) and 42 vocational schools.

Table 5
Students of secondary-level vocational education institutions by language of instruction

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>2016/17</i>	<i>2017/18</i>	<i>2018/19</i>
Students (total)	18 980 (100%)	16 948 (100%)	15 306 (100%)
Romanian	16 642 (88%)	15 160 (89%)	13 315 (87%)
Russian	2 338 (12%)	1 788 (11%)	1 991 (13%)

Table 6
Students of post-secondary-level vocational education institutions by language of instruction

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>2016/17</i>	<i>2017/18</i>	<i>2018/19</i>
Students (total)	29 811 (100%)	29 638 (100%)	29 042 (100%)
Romanian	25 824(87%)	25 694 (87%)	25 187 (87%)
Russian	3 591 (12%)	3 478 (12%)	3 340 (11%)
Other languages	396 (1%)	466 (1%)	515 (2%)

Access to higher education

100. In the 2018/19 academic year, the country's network of higher education institutions consisted of 29 universities (19 public and 10 private) with 60,608 students.

101. In accordance with the regulations on the organization and conduct of the admissions to higher education institutions for the first cycle (bachelor's level) in the Republic of Moldova, higher education institutions can make arrangements for groups to compete in the admissions process in a language other than Romanian (Russian, English, French, German, etc.). After their enrolment, candidates may choose a language of instruction different from that of the institution at which they studied. School leavers therefore have the right to choose their language of instruction. At the same time, some higher education institutions create mixed groups in which teaching, tutorials and assessments take place in two languages, namely Russian and Romanian. For several years, in pursuance of its policy of reintegrating the country and guaranteeing equality of rights and access to higher education for all citizens, the Government of the Republic of Moldova has allocated an average of 400 State-funded places for school leavers from the eastern districts, most of whom are Russian speakers.

Table 7
Students of higher education institutions by language of instruction

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>2016/17</i>	<i>2017/18</i>	<i>2018/19</i>
Students (total)	74 726	65 543	60 608
Romanian	63 665 (85.2%)	54 264 (82.2%)	50 872 (83.9%)
Russian	9 242 (12.4%)	9 717 (14.8%)	8 336 (13.8%)
English	1 217 (1.6%)	976 (1.5%)	896 (1.5%).
French	401 (0.6%)	460 (0.7%)	400 (0.7%)
Other languages (Italian, German)	141 (0.2%)	126 (0.2%)	104 (0.2%)

Access to education in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Găgăuzia

102. The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Găgăuzia has 46 pre-university educational institutions, which teach 15,462 students. Găgăuzia has two upper secondary schools in which Romanian is the language of instruction, one Moldovan-Turkish upper secondary school and one mixed upper secondary school with classes in Romanian and Russian. All students learn the State language.

103. The total number of students of Gagauz language and literature is 12,396. Bulgarian language and literature are studied by 1,520 students. The history, culture and traditions of the Gagauz people are taught to 11,628 students at the primary and lower secondary levels.

104. All educational institutions are provided with textbooks and teaching resources. In 2019, Gagauz language and literature textbooks were published for the tenth to twelfth grades (upper secondary level), for the first time with the support of the Head of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Găgăuzia.

105. Educational institutions in the Autonomous Territorial Unit are 98 per cent staffed with qualified teachers of Romanian and of Gagauz language and literature. There are currently 119 teachers of Gagauz language and literature and the history, culture and traditions of the Gagauz people.

Learning the State language

106. With the financial support of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and local public administrations, a bilingual programme entitled “Integration with respect for diversity: learning both Romanian and Gagauz in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Găgăuzia” has been successfully implemented in preschools in Găgăuzia since 2015. The aim of the programme is to enable children and their parents to learn both Romanian and Gagauz, which will contribute to their linguistic, social and professional cohesion and integration and preserve ethnic identity and cultural heritage in the region.

107. There are currently 7,898 children at 56 early education institutions in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Găgăuzia who are learning Romanian and Gagauz. All preschools are provided with teaching resources in both languages so that students can learn their native language and the State language. These resources are produced by the National Association of European Trainers of Moldova³² and include textbooks, picture cards, a collection of songs and poems and audio resources. The programme is being implemented by 67 teachers of Romanian and 64 teachers of Gagauz.

Access to education in Taraclia district

108. There are 34 general education institutions in Taraclia district, including 16 early education institutions (1,511 children), two educational parks (covering the preschool to the lower secondary levels), 10 lower secondary schools (1,532 students) and 6 upper secondary schools (1,859 students). All educational institutions take steps to ensure that students receive proper instruction in their native language and the State language.

109. Bulgarian language and literature and Bulgarian history, culture and traditions are taught in 18 lower and upper secondary schools (to 1,477 students). Classes with more than 25 students are divided into subgroups. The Bulgarian language is taught by 73 teachers of Bulgarian language and literature. At the primary level, the Bulgarian language is taught by primary school teachers, if they have the necessary expertise. There are 32 such teachers. Taraclia district is fully staffed with teachers of Romanian and Bulgarian languages and literatures.

Learning the State language

110. During the 2018/19 academic year, 3,287 students studied Romanian as a non-native language. Romanian language and literature are taught for four hours a week in all general education institutions in which instruction is provided in Russian. Classes with more than 25 students are divided into subgroups. At pre-university educational institutions in Taraclia district, there are 44 teachers of Romanian language and literature in classes in which instruction is provided in national minority languages and 4 in classes in which instruction is provided in Romanian.

111. A project entitled “Ensuring the sociolinguistic integration of students who speak other languages by increasing the number of school subjects studied in Romanian” is being implemented in 11 general education institutions in Taraclia district. At the request of parents and students, certain choice subjects are studied in the State language, namely physical education, music, technology and an optional course on the art of communication. Parents and children have specifically requested these courses, which are taught in Romanian, to improve their knowledge of the language and their communication skills in the language. Teachers use various interactive methods to create a Romanian-language environment.

³² Established in 2005 and registered in 2008, the National Association of European Teachers in Moldova introduced opportunities for speakers of other languages in the Republic of Moldova to learn the State language and takes a professional, competent and responsible approach to the integration of national minorities through the development of communication skills. It provides the following services: (1) language teaching; (2) linguistic immersion; (3) cultural immersion; and (4) advice regarding the methodology for teaching adults and children.

Access of national minorities to opportunities to learn the State language

In general education institutions

112. The plan of action to implement the National Programme to Improve the Quality of the Teaching of Romanian in General Education Institutions in which Instruction is Provided in National Minority Languages (2016–2020), which was approved by Government Decision No. 904/2015, provides for special measures to ensure high-quality Romanian language instruction, beginning at the preschool level.

113. In 2018, a set of guidelines and a national curriculum in Romanian were produced for early education institutions in which instruction is provided in national minority languages. They were approved by the National Curriculum Council (Ministry of Education, Culture and Research Order No. 1592 of 25 October 2018). This ground-breaking document sets out the process of learning the State language in accordance with modern European trends on learning non-native/foreign languages at an early age, which represents a new development for the education system of the Republic of Moldova. The curriculum was designed for the study of Romanian as a second language at early education institutions, in the intermediate (4–5-year-olds), upper (5–6-year-olds) and preparatory (6–7-year-olds) classes.

114. In 2018, a set of educational resources was published to implement models for teaching Romanian at early education institutions in which instruction is provided in national minority languages. The resources included a curriculum, a set of guidelines and a Romanian-language textbook for the A1.1 level.

115. Between 12 and 23 November 2018, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, in partnership with the National Association of European Teachers in Moldova, held six regional training sessions on the implementation of models for teaching Romanian at early education institutions in which instruction is provided in national minority languages, on the basis of a new subject curriculum. The 83 participants were specialists of training departments, heads of preschools and training officers from institutions in which instruction is provided in national minority languages.

116. Between 16 and 23 November 2018, as part of a programme entitled “Ensuring the sociolinguistic integration of students who speak other languages by increasing the number of school subjects studied in Romanian”, three training sessions were held for teachers on the implementation of models for teaching non-linguistic subjects at educational institutions in which instruction is provided in national minority languages (Ministry of Education, Culture and Research Order No. 1326 of 10 September 2018). Some of the 85 teachers trained were from Taraclia district and the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Găgăuzia. Between 25 and 30 November 2019, training sessions were held for teachers on the implementation of models for teaching non-linguistic subjects at educational institutions in which instruction is provided in national minority languages (Ministry of Education, Culture and Research Order No. 135 of 1 November 2019).

117. In accordance with Ministry of Education, Culture and Research Order No. 1339 of 22 October 2019, a sum of 165,000 lei was allocated for the publication of resources for teaching Romanian in preparatory classes (6–7-year-olds) (level A1.2).

118. On 27 and 28 November 2019 (Ministry of Education, Culture and Research Order No. 1441 of 7 November 2009), training courses were organized for teachers of Romanian language and literature as a second language at universities and post-secondary education institutions. This initiative was financed by an allocation of 48,420.00 lei.

At the higher education level

119. In implementation of the Education Code, the new Higher Education Framework Plan for first cycle (bachelor’s), second cycle (master’s) and third cycle (doctoral) studies, approved by Ministry of Education, Culture and Research Order No. 1045 of 29 October 2015, contains a section on developing general skills and competencies, which provides that, in all areas of vocational training, the curricula for academic groups taught in other languages must without fail include a course on speaking Romanian that covers communication skills and business correspondence. In order to help students who speak other languages to find employment upon graduation, seniors in this category are now offered specialist subjects taught in Romanian.

Access to opportunities to study the State language by distance learning

120. In 2017, a project was implemented to diversify access to education for young people through distance learning. The aim of the project was to enhance the linguistic, social and professional integration of young people from ethnic minorities in the northern, southern and central regions of the Republic of Moldova, including the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Găgăuzia and Transnistria. The project was implemented as part of the Annual Grants Programme for Youth Organizations with the financial support of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. Some 288 young people from ethnic minorities have used distance learning to study the Romanian language. The Learn Romanian Online courses (<https://invat.antem.org/>) cover the levels A1, A2, B1 and B2 and level C1 (for certain professional categories) according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and is based on training resources developed by experts from the National Association of European Teachers in Moldova. The project cost 246,981 lei. As part of its implementation, modern technology was used to develop a mobile Romanian-English-Russian phrasebook, which allows users to learn and practice Romanian phrases in everyday situations. Users can improve their Romanian communication skills with a mobile device (mobile telephone or tablet). The number of downloads currently stands at 1,756 and is constantly growing. The application can be downloaded free of charge at <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.invatromina.invatromina> (Android) or <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/romanian-english-conversation/id1269053908?ls=1&mt=8>.

121. In 2018, as part of a project entitled “Informal education opportunities for young people through distance learning”, 494 young people from the northern, southern and central regions of the country, as well as from the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Găgăuzia and Transnistria, had the opportunity to learn Romanian and test their knowledge by gauging their level of proficiency in the language on the platform <https://invat.antem.org/>. Of the total number of beneficiaries, 125 young people were certified as having level A1 or A2 and 104 as having level B1 or B2. The project was implemented as part of the Annual Grants Programme for Youth Organizations, which was financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, and its total cost was 326,474.44 lei. In July 2019, the eighth phase of the project was launched. It too was financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research as part of the Annual Grants Programme for Youth Organizations, at an estimated total cost of 184,129 lei.

Access to the media in national minority languages*Strengthening the legal framework*

122. At the legislative level, the right to produce and broadcast radio and television programmes in national minority languages is guaranteed under the Audiovisual Media Services Code, No. 174 of 8 November 2018. The Code contains a number of new provisions on the principles of audiovisual communication, by which all media service providers are bound. These principles include freedom of expression, editorial independence, accuracy of reporting, protection of minors and persons with disabilities, gender balance, protection of the national audiovisual area, transparency of ownership, access to important events and the protection of journalists. Its various chapters concern broadcasting languages, which include national minority languages, the audiovisual programming balance, and compliance with the orthographic, pronunciation, morphological and syntactic rules of languages. In this regard, articles 4 (8), 11 (1) and (2) (a), 12 (1) and (2) (a), 19 (1) and (2), 33 (1) (a) and 55 (6) are particularly relevant.

Radio and television stations in national minority languages: the current situation

123. There are six radio stations (GRT FM, Bas FM, Albena, Pro 100 radio, Bugeac FM, Romano Patrino-FM) and nine television stations (TV-Găgăuzia, TV BIZIM DALGAMIZ, NTS, Eni Ai, Bizim Aidinic, BAS TV, ATV COGUK, ATV and Zona M) broadcasting in the regions of the Republic of Moldova in which ethnic minorities make up the majority of the population. The television channel NTS broadcasts in Bulgarian, Romanian and Russian and retransmits the television channel BNT from Bulgaria. The television channel TV-Găgăuzia retransmits the Turkish-language television channel TV TRT from Turkey. The other television channels broadcast in Gagauz, Romanian, Russian and Bulgarian. In addition to these private radio and television stations, Teleradio-Moldova, the national public

broadcaster, produces media in national minority languages. It should also be noted that Teleradio-Găgăuzia, a regional public radio broadcaster, provides radio and television programmes in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Găgăuzia for the ethnic Gagauzian population.

Follow-up information relating to paragraphs 20 and 21 of the concluding observations

Situation of Roma

*The implementation of the Plan of Action to Support the Ethnic Roma Population in the Republic of Moldova for 2016–2020*³³

124. The Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations continuously assesses and monitors the implementation of the Plan of Action to Support the Ethnic Roma Population in the Republic of Moldova for 2016–2020. The Agency carries out comprehensive monitoring work and draws up annual monitoring and progress reports on the implementation of the Plan of Action for submission to the Government.³⁴

125. The Agency has an inter-departmental working group to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Plan of Action. The working group has developed its activities through periodic meetings over the reporting period. Its members are representatives of State bodies and civil society organizations. In addition to the individual responsibilities of each of the bodies represented in the working group, the main task of the working group as a whole is to coordinate, monitor and ensure cooperation in the implementation of the Plan. In order to identify priorities and plan the involvement of international assistance in activities to support Roma, the Agency proposed that the working group should be expanded to include representatives of development partners involved in supporting the Roma population in the Republic of Moldova. Accordingly, representatives of development partners (the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ),³⁵ OSCE, the European Union, the United Nations, etc.) took part in a meeting of the working group for the first time on 4 October 2019. An overview of the results, priorities and measures necessary for the full implementation of the Plan of Action was presented at the meeting.

126. The Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations cooperates with seven Roma ethnic and cultural organizations enjoying national status and supports their statutory activities and the various projects that they implement throughout the country. The Agency supports and encourages the participation of Roma in programmes and projects to improve and monitor their sociocultural situation and integration into society and organizes various round tables, training events and activities to promote Roma cultural values and the Romani language. It also facilitates meetings between Roma civil society, on the one hand, and high-level officials of the Republic of Moldova and representatives of bodies of the Central Public Administration, on the other. As part of the annual celebration of International Roma Day, the Agency provides funding (30,000–45,000 lei each year) to various events organized in close cooperation with Roma ethnic and cultural organizations.

Roma community mediator service

127. In recognition of the role and added value of the Roma community mediator service, the Government is working to ensure its continued operation by increasing the insufficient number of mediators. In order to reverse the downward trend in the number of community mediators, caused by a lack of funding, the Government approved Decision No. 425/2018, which establishes that community mediators are to be funded from the State budget rather than from appropriations approved in the budgets of first-level local administrative units (town and villages), a change that will boost their recruitment at the local level. The State

³³ The Plan of Action to Support the Ethnic Roma Population in the Republic of Moldova for 2016–2020 was approved by Government Decision No. 734 of 9 June 2016.

³⁴ Annual reports on the implementation of the Plan of Action in 2017, 2018 and 2019 were drawn up, submitted to the Government in February of each year and posted on the official webpage of the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations.

³⁵ The German Agency for International Cooperation.

budget laws for 2018 and 2019 provided for 2.2 million lei to cover the hiring and salaries of 48 community-based mediators in 44 localities. This sum was calculated on the basis of the costs of maintaining one community mediator for one year (46,600 lei) and the number of localities in which community mediators provide their services.

128. The Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations has been tasked with formulating proposals for the number of community-based mediators and calculating the financial resources necessary to cover their activities. With the support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, the Agency produced a calculation of the budget expenditure necessary to cover the activities of community mediators and submitted it to the Ministry of Finance for inclusion in the medium-term budgetary framework for the period 2020–2022. With 54 community mediators in the Republic of Moldova, their number having been increased in accordance with the needs identified, the total projected annual expenditure on their activities is 3,904,300 lei.

129. Special efforts are made to develop the skills of community mediators through working meetings, workshops and consultations. In 2017 and 2018, a forum for community mediators was held in Chisinau with the participation of community mediators, leaders of Roma ethnic and cultural organizations, mayors of localities with large Roma populations and representatives of the Central Public Administration and international organizations. These events gave the participants an opportunity to communicate and interact at a deeper level with a view to jointly finding solutions to the problems faced by community mediators in the Republic of Moldova and promoting their active involvement in the lives of Roma communities.

130. Guidance for community mediators was developed with the participation of line ministries. Overall, as a result of the efforts made, there are now 32 actively employed community mediators.

Education

131. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, in partnership with non-governmental organizations and local public administrations, has been organizing regular awareness-raising campaigns for parents to promote the enrolment of children in the compulsory education system. In 2017 alone, 35 awareness-raising campaigns were organized for parents, reaching over 876 persons. In 2018, 21 awareness-raising campaigns were organized for parents in all districts of the country, reaching over 567 persons.

132. At the beginning of the 2019/20 academic year, more than 450 awareness-raising campaigns were conducted for Roma parents with a view to bringing their children into the compulsory education system and ensuring their enrolment, reaching more than 1,900 parents.

133. As a result of cooperation between local public authorities, the administrations of educational institutions and representatives of Roma communities, 1,778 Roma children are enrolled in a school (a number that has not fallen since the last academic year). In 2019, the largest numbers of ethnic Roma children attending school were registered in the following districts: Ocnîța (164 children), Călărași (150), Orhei (146), Drochia (134), Chisinau municipality (130), Soroca (97), Hîncești (91), Glodeni (86), Bălți, Cahul and Nisporeni municipalities (68 children each), Ștefan Vodă (63), Rîșcani (56) and Basarabasca (50).

134. Nutrition has been and remains an important factor in protecting and promoting the health of Roma children. The provision of free meals for all schoolchildren is governed by Decisions No. 234 of 25 February 2005 and No. 198 of 16 April 1993, and 835 Roma children receive free meals. All primary school students are fed free of charge. In some localities, local public administrations allocate resources for the provision of free meals for Roma students at all educational levels: 85 students in Călărași, 56 in Chisinau municipality (38 in the first to fourth grades, 15 in the fifth to ninth grades, and 3 in the tenth to twelfth grades), 48 in Bălți municipality, 44 in Glodeni, 41 in Drochia, 39 in Hîncești, 27 in Basarabasca and 34 in Rîșcani.

135. All local public administrations provide free travel for children from localities with high concentrations of Roma to the nearest educational institution, provided that there is no general educational institution of the relevant cycle (primary, lower secondary or upper secondary) within 2 km of their place of residence. A total of 31 Roma children receive free transportation to and from an educational institution.

136. Despite the measures taken to increase school enrolment and prevent school dropouts, the country continues to face related problems, such as the fact that some children lack the appropriate registration documents, a low level of parental interest in school and child education, unstable family environments and insufficient numbers of community mediators.

137. In 2018, a curriculum was produced for the subject “The history, culture and traditions of Roma in the Republic of Moldova”, which has been included in the learning plans of pre-university educational institutions for the first time. The subject is compulsory in primary-level educational institutions whose students include an ethnic Roma cohort. One of the particularities of the Roma communities in the Republic of Moldova is that they use Romani, Romanian or Russian as the native language in which they communicate in the family and the community. For this reason, the curriculum for the subject “The history, culture and traditions of Roma in the Republic of Moldova” was produced in Romani, Romanian and Russian so that children could be taught in their native language. In the 2019/20 academic year, 99 students at the Mihai Eminescu Theoretical Lyceum, an upper secondary school in Otaci, began taking this subject.

138. Several of the measures taken by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research are having a positive impact on access to higher education for ethnic Roma. For example, the regulations on the organization and conduct of admissions to higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova provide that, for each subject or area of vocational education, a quota of 15 per cent of the total number of budget-funded places must be set aside for applicants belonging to certain categories, including young Roma. In 2019, 18 young Roma enrolled in higher education institutions, compared to 7 in 2017.

139. Over the period 2016–2019, a total of 120 Roma enrolled in vocational education institutions: 58 in 2016–2017, 43 in 2017–2018 and 19 in 2018–2019. All students who requested dormitory accommodation were given places.

Job placement

140. In order to reduce unemployment and its social impact, lower its attendant risks, ensure a high level of employment and match workforce skills to labour market demand, Parliament passed Act No. 105 of 14 June 2018, the Employment Promotion and Unemployment Insurance Act, which entered into force on 10 February 2019.

141. Article 2 (4) of the Act guarantees access to job placement services, which are provided free of charge by the National Employment Agency, through local employment offices, to all persons seeking employment. There may be no discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, religion, beliefs, sex, age, disability, opinions, political affiliation, property status, social origin or any other ground in the application of the Act.³⁶

142. In accordance with the Act, all persons seeking employment, including ethnic Roma, have access to free employment placement services, including information on the labour market, vocational guidance, assistance in finding employment and information about the dismissal procedure. Ethnic Roma who have registered as unemployed are offered training opportunities free of charge, including retraining, skills upgrading, workplace training, professional internships and knowledge and skills certification. They are also able to benefit from advice, assistance and support in connection with the development of their own businesses, assistance to promote labour mobility, recruitment through employer subsidy measures and vocational rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. Article 43 (4) of the Act establishes the unemployment benefit, including for persons who have no income when it is calculated and have worked and been insured in the State social insurance system for at least 12 months in the 24 calendar months preceding the date of registration.

143. Local unemployment offices provide employment placement services to persons who qualify as unemployed under article 20 of the Act. Persons seeking employment should register with the local unemployment office at their place of residence or stay.

³⁶ Prior to the entry into force of Act No. 105/2018, the provisions of Act No. 102 of 13 March 2003 on the employment and social protection of persons seeking work were applicable. Article 8 of this Act guarantees access to public employment services for all, prohibiting any form of discrimination on the grounds of race, national or ethnic origin, sex, beliefs, political affiliation, financial or property status or social origin or on any other grounds.

144. In recent years (2016–2018), there has been an increase in the number of Roma who have applied to local employment offices for support and have registered as unemployed (from 1,464 in 2016 to 1,613 in 2017 and 1,902 in 2018). Over the period 2017–2019, Roma accounted for on average approximately 4.5 per cent of the total number of unemployed persons registered with the National Employment Agency each year.

145. Over the period 2017–2019, women and persons without work experience seeking employment for the first time accounted for the majority of Roma registered as unemployed (58.4 per cent and 87 per cent of the total number of Roma registered as unemployed, respectively). Only 6.9 per cent of Roma registered as unemployed were persons with recent work experience, a trend that can also be observed in the application of the criteria for access to passive social protection measures. Accordingly, over the period 2017–2019, the proportion of Roma registered as unemployed who received unemployment benefits was 0.5 per cent. Each year, just over 2 per cent of Roma registered as unemployed received an integration or vocational reintegration allowance. This allowance, which was established under Act No. 102/2003, is a fixed monthly sum equal to 15 per cent of the national average wage for the year preceding the date on which the payment is calculated, payable for a maximum of nine calendar months. However, the application of this passive measure was abolished with the entry into force of the Employment Promotion and Unemployment Insurance Act.

146. One of the main obstacles that Roma registered as unemployed face when seeking employment is their low level of education. In many situations, ethnic Roma who apply to the National Employment Agency cannot be included in vocational training programmes as they lack basic reading and writing skills. In 2019, approximately 75 per cent of Roma registered as unemployed had only primary education, 18 per cent had lower secondary education and 2 per cent had upper secondary education. Only 2.5 per cent of all Roma registered as unemployed have the qualifications or skills to enter the labour market. Each year, about 1 per cent of unemployed Roma take part in vocational training activities and, on completion of their course, receive a qualifying certificate free of charge. In 2019, seven unemployed ethnic Roma completed vocational training courses.

147. As a result of their level of education, Roma registered as unemployed tend to apply for positions that do not require qualifications, namely as labourers, caretakers, porters, dishwashers, janitors, guards or unskilled agricultural workers. Persons who have a profession or craft opt for positions as winegrowers, postal workers, chefs, tailors, tractor operators, shoemakers, drivers or hairdressers. In order to promote labour mobility, a standard allowance was provided in 2017 and 2018 to unemployed Roma who agreed to take up employment in a locality more than 30 km from their home (two recipients in 2017 and one in 2018).

148. The problems that arise when integrating Roma into the labour market include their minimal level of education, their lack of qualifications and work experience, the mismatch between supply and demand on the labour market in both rural and urban areas and their lack of motivation for seeking employment (preferences for self-employment and freelance activities). However, in recent years, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of unemployed Roma who were placed in employment, which stood at around 13.9 per cent in 2019 (198 persons, including 98 women).

Table 8

Trends in the number of Roma registered as unemployed and statistics on the services and measures provided by the National Employment Agency, 2017–2019

<i>Trends in the statistics on the services and measures provided</i>	2017	2018	2019	2017–2019
Total number of unemployed persons registered with the National Employment Agency	42 119	35 544	31 484	109 147
Number of Roma registered as unemployed (% of the total number of persons registered as unemployed)	1 613 (3.8 %)	1 902 (5.4%)	1 428 (4.5%)	4 943 (4.5%)

<i>Trends in the statistics on the services and measures provided</i>	2017	2018	2019	2017–2019
Number of Roma women registered as unemployed (% of the total number registered as unemployed)	943 (58.5%)	1 121 (58.9%)	825 (57.8%)	2 889 (58.4%)
Number of Roma registered as unemployed who have primary education (fourth grade) or none	1 195 (74.1%)	1 421 (74.7%)	1 099 (77.0%)	3 715 (75.2%)
Number of Roma registered as unemployed who have no work experience and are seeking employment for the first time (% of the total number of Roma registered as unemployed)	1 412 (87.5%)	1 669 (87.7%)	1 218 (85.3%)	4 299 (87.0%)
Number of Roma registered as unemployed with recent work experience (% of the total number of Roma registered as unemployed)	103 (6.4%)	110 (5.8%)	126 (8.8%)	339 (6.9%)
Number of Roma who found employment in the labour market (% of the total number of Roma registered as unemployed)	152 (9.4%)	203 (10.7%)	198 (13.9%)	553 (11.2%)
Number of Roma women placed in employment (% of the total number of unemployed Roma placed in employment)	79 (51.9%)	109 (53.7%)	98 (49.5%)	286 (51.7%)
Number of beneficiaries of labour market intermediation, including persons registered in the previous year	1 385	1 706	2 119	5 210
Number of persons who completed vocational training courses (% of the total number of Roma registered as unemployed)	17 (1.1%)	16 (0.8%)	7 (0.5%)	40 (0.8%)
Number of unemployed persons involved in public works (% of the total number of Roma registered as unemployed)	54 (3.3%)	45 (2.4%)	Discontinued in 2019	99 (2.0%)
Recipients of the integration or reintegration allowance (% of the total number of Roma registered as unemployed)	42 (2.6%)	42 (2.2%)	12 (0.8%); discontinued on 10 February 2019	96 (1.9%)
Recipients of unemployment benefits (% of the total number of Roma registered as unemployed)	5 (0.3%)	7 (0.4%)	11 (0.8%)	23 (0.5%)
Number of unemployed persons who received the labour mobility promotion allowance	2	1	0	3

Health

149. In accordance with the national legislation in force, Roma have the same rights and obligations in the area of mandatory health insurance as all citizens of the Republic of Moldova. Under the mandatory health insurance system, the public receives the amount of

medical care specified in the national mandatory health insurance scheme, which was developed with the resources of the mandatory health insurance funds.³⁷

150. In accordance with the scheme, insured persons receive the following types of medical care: emergency pre-hospital medical care, inpatient medical care, primary health care, specialized outpatient medical care, including dental care, highly specialized medical services and home-based care.

151. Uninsured persons are provided with emergency medical services and primary health care, including prescriptions for reimbursable medicines, as specified under the national health insurance scheme, without out-of-pocket payments for such services.

152. Specialized outpatient and inpatient medical care in cases of diseases associated with socioeconomic factors that have a major impact on public health is covered by the mandatory health insurance funds in accordance with current legislation.

153. The population receives reimbursable medicines covered by mandatory health insurance funds for specialized outpatient care, in accordance with the list of reimbursable medicines, as well as medicines provided free of charge under national programmes and purchased centrally by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, including for tuberculosis, endogenous psychiatric disorders, diabetes mellitus and diabetes insipidus. At inpatient facilities, patients receive the medicines provided for in national clinical protocols.

154. In 2018, family physicians held approximately 11,000 information events with the ethnic Roma population on the following topics: types of medical care and the general range of services to which persons insured under the mandatory health insurance system are entitled (approximately 2,900), the prevention of communicable diseases through immunization (approximately 3,000), the prevention of smoking and alcohol and drug abuse (approximately 2,500) and youth-friendly health services (approximately 2,700).

155. A departmental commission for combating discrimination in the health sector has been established under the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection in order to assess and analyse legislation in the area of health care with a view to identifying potentially discriminatory provisions and ensuring equality in the delivery of health-care services. The mission of this commission is to combat discrimination by identifying cases and addressing those brought to the Ministry's attention in petitions.

Issuance of personal identification documents

156. The Public Services Agency is responsible for issuing identity documents to all citizens of the Republic of Moldova, regardless of their ethnicity or race, and takes steps to optimize the processes of issuing identity documents and registering the population.

157. Ethnic Roma still face obstacles in obtaining identity documents (because personal identification is impossible or there are no civil status documents on record and other reasons). In the majority of cases, these obstacles are due to non-compliance with the provisions of article 22 (5) of the Civil Registration Act, No. 100/2001, which requires parents to declare the birth of a child to a civil registry office within three months of the birth.

158. In accordance with paragraph 31 of the regulations on the issuance of identity documents and the registration of citizens of the Republic of Moldova, approved by Government Decision No. 125/2013, in order to issue temporary proof of identity to persons who do not have all the paperwork needed to obtain an identity document, the branches of the Public Services Agency that issue identity documents and diplomatic missions or consular offices check whether there are civil status records in the applicant's name, either by using information held by the State population register or by making an official request to the Central Civil Status Department. There are specific legal conditions for preparing civil status documents, including through the courts, for a person whose birth was not registered with the register office. Paragraph 36 of the above-mentioned regulations states that the person's

³⁷ In accordance with the Health Care Act, No. 411/1995, residents of the Republic of Moldova have the right to health care regardless of their national origin, race, sex, social status and religion. In accordance with the Mandatory Health Insurance Act, No. 1585/1998, the Government provides insurance for 14 categories of unemployed residents of the Republic of Moldova who have registered with the appropriate bodies.

identity must be established by a court of law if all administrative means of identification have been exhausted.

159. The amendments introduced to these regulations, approved by Government Decision No. 125/2013 (amended by Government Decision No. 872/2017, in force since 3 November 2017) brought about an expansion of the categories of persons who have the right to make sworn statements to identify a person whose identity had not been established at the time of application or for whom the identity previously established could not be confirmed, because the person lacks either documents confirming his or her identity or first- to third-degree relatives who can identify him or her. Persons can thus be identified on the basis of sworn statements made simultaneously by three third persons who are citizens of the Republic of Moldova, hold valid identity documents and know the identity of the person being identified. This provision has greatly simplified the process of establishing identity and obtaining identity documents, in particular for ethnic Roma.

160. In the areas in which ethnic Roma predominantly live (Soroca, Rîșcani, Orhei, Ocnîța, Otaci, etc.), the offices of the Public Services Agency responsible for the issuance of identity documents and local public administrations carry out periodic information campaigns to raise their awareness of the requirement to hold identity documents, the services provided and the social and economic benefits that they will be able to enjoy in the future.

Involvement of Roma in information campaigns organized by the police

161. In 2019, the Inspectorate General of Police under the Ministry of Internal Affairs³⁸ conducted three information campaigns on opportunities to join the police force (an information campaign on 11 May 2019, an employment fair on 30 May 2019 and an information campaign on 27 November 2019).

162. In 2019, the staff of the local branches of the Inspectorate General of Police organized 582 information events, in which 6,104 persons participated. These events covered topical issues that took account of local circumstances (the need to include children in the education system, the prevention of delinquency, personal protection and material assets), and conditions of recruitment and employment in the police force.

163. In order to combat the victimization of ethnic Roma citizens and reduce the risk of their committing crimes and other antisocial acts, 105 activities were organized to raise awareness about crime prevention and control, personal protection and property, and safety in the community, which reached 1,577 persons from the target group and involved the distribution of 1,582 information resources.

164. With the aim of addressing problems related to school inclusion and to preventing children from dropping out, 38 meetings were held with parents on the need to include children in the education system, and 413 ethnic Roma citizens attended.

165. In order to raise awareness about the work of the police force among Roma and involve them in solving the problems that their communities face, 81 meetings were held, with 1,037 members of the Roma community in attendance. The participants in the meetings were provided with information about how they could organize and actively participate in campaigns and projects initiated or supported by the police, such as neighbourhood watches, the recruitment of older persons to serve as school crossing guards, passageways with personal, home, traffic and child safety posters, visits by young children to older people and coffee breaks with police officers.

166. Local units of the Inspectorate General of Police concluded 17 partnership and cooperation agreements with community mediators for Roma.

³⁸ The Inspectorate General of Police is a specialized State body under the Ministry of the Interior tasked with protecting freedom and fundamental human rights by working to uphold, maintain and restore public order and security and to prevent and combat misdemeanours and crimes.

Articles 6 and 7 of the Convention

Follow-up information relating to paragraphs 14 and 15 of the concluding observations

Cases of racial discrimination

167. The number of complaints of discrimination submitted to the Equality Council is increasing (60 in 2017, 248 in 2018). Moreover, the results of a study to assess public attitudes towards older persons³⁹ show that 35 per cent of respondents were already aware of the Council's existence. The Council determined that, of the 158 decisions adopted in 2017 and 2018, discrimination on the grounds of race, skin colour, ethnic origin, religion or beliefs was found to have occurred in 41 cases. The identified acts of discrimination related to access to public services,⁴⁰ equal access to justice, effective protection of the law, violations of human dignity through incitement to discrimination and persecution,⁴¹ and the exercise of freedom of expression and assembly.⁴² In two cases, the Council found racial profiling, one involving a person of Roma ethnicity. Cases of discrimination in access to justice on the grounds of language were dealt with in 22 of the Council's decisions⁴³ and in 4 cases it was determined that discriminatory speech based on ethnicity had been made. In its adopted decisions, the Council made recommendations to ensure just satisfaction, in some cases recommending public apologies and in others disciplinary measures against the perpetrators of discriminatory acts. The Council also made general recommendations on how to prevent similar situations in future. The Council continuously monitors the relevant actors to ensure compliance with the recommendations made.

³⁹ Study to assess public attitudes to older persons, http://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Raport_Evaluarea-atitudinilor-popula--iei-generale-fa----de-persoanele---n-etate-1.pdf.

⁴⁰ Decision No. 111/14 of 9 August 2014, http://egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizie_111_2014_depersonalizat_8782432.pdf;
Decision No. 190/14 of 13 February 2015, http://www.egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizie_190_2015__2000159.pdf;
Decision No. 263/15 of 11 August 2015, http://www.egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizie_263_2015_depersonalizat_9623919.pdf;
Decision No. 349/15 of 9 February 2016, http://www.egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizie_349_2016_depersonalizat_7268082.pdf;
Decision No. 363/14 of 12 February 2016, http://www.egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizie_363_2015_depersonalizat_5521507.pdf;
Decision No. 182/14 of 18 December 2014, http://www.egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizie_182_2014_eng_вузукыцтфдшяфе_1673643.pdf.

⁴¹ Decision No. 159/14 of 13 October 2014, http://egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizia_cauza__renato_usatii_r_5487969.pdf;
Decision No. 180/14 of 16 December 2014, http://www.egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizie_180_2014_eng_5421479.pdf;
Decision No. 497/16 of 20 January 2017, https://www.egalitate.md/media/files/files/draft_decizie_constatare_497_2016-votat-de-modificat_depers__5381970.pdf;
Decision No. 513/16 of 1 March 2017; Decision No. 187/14 of 5 February 2015, http://www.egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizie__187_2015__7264066.pdf;
Decision No. 293/15 of 28 September 2015, http://egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizie_293_2015_3555799.pdf.

⁴² Decision No. 029/2013 of 21 January 2014, http://egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizia_cauza_nr_029_2013_cultul_penticostal_9910224.pdf.

⁴³ Decision No. 009/2013 of 2 December 2013, http://www.egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizie_009_2013_eng_5063801.pdf;
Decision No. 439/16 of 23 September 2016, http://egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizie_439_2016__constatare-votat_6290889.pdf;
Decision No. 212 of 30 April 2015, http://www.egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizie_in_cauza_212_4588688.pdf;
Decision No. 268/15 of 28 August 2015, http://www.egalitate.md/media/files/files/decizie_268_2015_depersonalizat_eng_4390671.pdf.

168. The increased number of complaints is also related to the information campaign carried out by the Council in 2018⁴⁴ in regions with large ethnic minority populations. During the campaign, accessible information in different languages was provided about the Council and how to formulate and submit a complaint.

169. The Council has become more accessible in terms of information for ethnic and linguistic minorities with the translation of the guidance for complainants into four of the country's minority languages (Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian, Romani). The Council accepts complaints in ethnic minority languages. At the same time, the new composition of the Council reflects the diversity of ethnic groups and the gender balance in Moldovan society.

170. In accordance with the provisions of article 12 (1) of Act No. 382/2001 on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities and the Legal Status of Their Organizations, members of ethnic minorities have the right to apply to public institutions in written or oral form in Romanian or Russian and receive a reply in the language of communication. However, in practice these provisions are not enforced. The Council's experience of considering complaints has shown that the rights of members of ethnic minorities to receive a reply in the language of their communication are violated. The Council notes that the authorities have justified this violation by the shortage of staff proficient in Russian, the shortage of translators and budget restrictions, which prevent them from using translation services from external providers. The Council holds the view that to improve the situation in this area, a package of systemic measures is required to eradicate the root causes of the problem, such as provision for budget allocations specifically for contractual translation services and the recruitment of staff from ethnic minorities.

171. Another problem identified by the Council from its practice of considering complaints concerns the fact that persons from ethnic minorities cannot use Russian in the courts, notwithstanding its status as a language of inter-ethnic communication in the Republic of Moldova.⁴⁵ Despite the efforts made and the decisions taken between 2014 and 2019, the Council regrets that the problem of discrimination in access to justice on the grounds of language continues and is worsening. The Council's jurisprudence shows that statements of claim submitted in Russian are returned without being considered on the sole ground that a translation into the official language was not provided. The Council takes the view that action to improve the situation is required at both the legislative level (amendment to the Code of Civil Procedure explicitly stating that Russian is not a foreign language in the Republic of Moldova and that submission of an application in Russian is not grounds for its rejection) and at the administrative level (assignment of interpreters to the courts, while ensuring they are paid a decent salary).

172. Public speech inciting discrimination are an ongoing concern. The number of complaints about such speech is growing, particularly in the context of elections. Moreover, prejudices against certain minority groups in the Republic of Moldova still exist and are manifested in inflammatory statements made by other actors (lawyers, media figures, public opinion leaders and church representatives). With a view to taking a proactive approach to combating this scourge, the Council recommends the adoption, as soon as possible, of a legislative package concerning offences based on prejudice, contempt or hatred.

173. Another example of racism identified by the Council in its consideration of complaints is the discriminatory practice during investigations by police officers of using ethnic origin to identify the perpetrator without objective and reasonable justification. The Council considers that, to prevent such police misconduct, racial profiling should be prohibited by law and training courses should also be provided on the subject. Professional training on non-discrimination and equality for law enforcement and judicial officials should continue. If this does not happen, the efforts of the Council to combat and punish discriminatory behaviour will be undermined in cases when judges who do not understand the substance and applicability of the principle of non-discrimination set aside its decisions.

174. The Council stresses the urgent need to amend legislation to strengthen the regulatory and legal framework governing the Council's activities and powers. To ensure that it functions properly, it is essential to eliminate legal ambiguity in the procedure for considering

⁴⁴ <http://egalitate.md/campaigns/>.

⁴⁵ Para. 1.2 of the Strategy on Strengthening Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Republic of Moldova for the period 2017–2027, approved by Government Decision No. 1464 of 10 December 2016.

complaints, including regarding the possibility of extending the time frame for their consideration, as established by law, in highly complex cases and granting the Council the functional authority to make monitoring and fact-finding visits and to directly impose penalties for offences when cases of discrimination are identified.

175. In the view of the Council, the challenges it faces in the exercise of its mandate as a collegial body acting impartially and independently of government agencies remain. It continues to experience difficulties in achieving its set goals, which are caused by staff shortages and high turnover. Given the broad range of its functions, powers and activities, the approved number of staff is not sufficient for the Council to work effectively and must therefore be increased. The remuneration of employees in its administration is lower than that of other public servants in ministries and its financial independence is not assured.

Article 7 of the Convention

Follow-up information relating to paragraphs 22 and 23 of the concluding observations

Situation of non-citizens

Statistical data

176. In 2018, 9,367 foreign nationals were documented in accordance with the provisions of national law, of whom 8,136 had a temporary residence permit, 1,228 had a permanent residence permit and 3 had a residence permit for stateless persons. By comparison, in 2017, the total number of registered foreign nationals was 18,723, of whom 10,198 had temporary residency and 8,525 had permanent residency.

177. As of 31 December 2019, 9,739 foreign nationals with valid identity documents were registered in the Republic of Moldova, of whom 8,868 had a temporary residence permit, 868 had a permanent residence permit and 3 had a stateless person's residence permit.

178. According to data from the Bureau for Migration and Asylum, as of 31 December 2019, 18,972 foreigners with valid identity documents were registered in the Republic of Moldova, of whom 6,482 had a permanent residence permit and 12,490 had a temporary residence permit, whereas in 2018, 18,982 foreign nationals were registered, 7,986 with a permanent residence permit and 10,996 with a temporary residence permit. These data reflect a slight increase in the number of foreign nationals registered in 2019 compared to the previous years: in 2016, the total number of foreign nationals was 18,921 (9,052 with permanent residence permits and 9,869 with temporary residence permits), while in 2017, the number of foreign nationals with valid identity documents in the Republic of Moldova was 18,723 (8,525 with permanent residence permits and 10,198 with temporary residence permits).

179. Foreign nationals present in the country enjoy the same rights and freedoms as citizens, both those guaranteed by the Constitution⁴⁶ and other laws⁴⁷ and those provided by international treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party, with restrictions for a certain number of rights, including the rights to: vote and stand for election to the legislative, executive and other authorities; take part in general elections; be appointed to a position or carry out an activity for which citizenship of the Republic of Moldova is required; be a

⁴⁶ Article 19 (Legal status of foreign nationals and stateless persons):

(1) Foreign nationals and stateless persons have the same rights and obligations as citizens of the Republic of Moldova, with the exceptions prescribed by law.

(2) Foreign nationals and stateless persons may be extradited to another State only on the basis of an international agreement, reciprocity or the decision of a judicial authority.

(3) The right of asylum is granted and withdrawn in accordance with the law and in compliance with international treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party.

⁴⁷ Act No. 80-XVI of 10 July 2008 on Labour Migration, Act No. 200/2010 on the Regulations Governing Foreign Nationals in the Republic of Moldova, Act No. 274/2011 on the Integration of Foreign Nationals and Act No. 270/2008 on Asylum in the Republic of Moldova.

member of a party or other political organization; organize or attend assemblies that undermine State policy or national security; organize, finance or join political parties or other equivalent groups; serve in the armed forces of the Republic of Moldova; and work without obtaining a permit. Foreign nationals must abide by the purpose for which they were allowed entry to and, where applicable, residence in the country and must leave its territory before the end of their permitted stay.

180. To ensure the greatest possible protection of the rights of foreign nationals guaranteed by the Constitution, national legislation on migration and asylum is constantly being amended to streamline and improve the services provided to foreign nationals, respect the principles of non-discrimination during the documentation and status determination process and facilitate their social and cultural integration.

181. In 2017, Parliament adopted Act No. 23, amending several laws (Act No. 80-XVI of 10 July 2008 on Labour Migration, Act No. 200 of 16 June 2010 on the Treatment of Aliens in the Republic of Moldova), with the aim of bringing national legislation into line with the obligations set out in the Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova. Pursuant to the relevant amendments, the procedures were simplified for entry and temporary residence by certain categories of persons in the territory of both parties, in order to improve business and develop services and service providers, which led to significant improvements in preferential trade relations based on mutually advantageous conditions.

182. Through the adoption of Act No. 165/2017, amending several laws, the procedure for documenting foreign nationals on secondment was amended and simplified and some barriers to obtaining a temporary residence permit for employment purposes were eliminated.

183. In 2018, to establish uniform criteria with respect to the activities of foreign nationals in the Republic of Moldova for the purpose of attracting foreign investment by applying simplified conditions and optimal procedures to document the categories of foreign nationals stipulated by the Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area,⁴⁸ Parliament adopted Act No. 314, which provides for the merging of Act No. 80-XVI of 10 July 2008 on Labour Migration and Act No. 200 of 16 June 2010 on the Treatment of Aliens in the Republic of Moldova and establishes simplified procedures and optimal conditions for the documentation of foreign nationals who wish to work or develop a business in the country.

184. In 2019, the Bureau for Migration and Asylum under the Ministry of Internal Affairs took a number of steps to elaborate a draft government decision on approval of a bill to amend several laws (integration of foreign nationals). The bill contains proposals to review Act No. 274 of 27 December 2011 on the Integration of Foreign Nationals and bring it into conformity with amendments made to national legislation on the regulations governing foreign nationals in the Republic of Moldova, European Union directives and the changing migration situation in the region. The draft provides for the inclusion in integration processes of new categories of foreign nationals with the right to stay in the Republic of Moldova, to ensure more secure social integration. Bearing in mind the complex experience of European Union States regarding the outcomes of the non-integration of foreigners in the host society and the economic and social consequences and also to ensure and sustain public order and the safety of citizens, an analysis and assessment of the policies implemented by the Republic of Moldova in this field to date is currently ongoing. The primary objective is to motivate and ensure more active participation by foreign nationals in integration measures for the effective use of their potential.

Fulfilment of the Plan of Action for the Implementation of the National Migration and Asylum Strategy 2016–2020

185. The Plan of Action for the Implementation of the National Migration and Asylum Strategy 2016–2020 was approved by Government Decision No. 736 of 10 June 2016 and elaborated in accordance with the provisions of Government Decision No. 655 of 8 September 2011 and in the context of compliance with article 14 (3) of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova, contained in the

⁴⁸ The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area is an agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova aimed at preferential trade relations.

National Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Union-Moldova Association Agreement 2014–2016, approved by Government Decision No. 808 of 7 October 2014. The proposed goals regarding foreign nationals will contribute to the prevention of xenophobia and the fulfilment of the human rights enshrined in the Constitution and international treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party.

186. The Plan of Action includes 30 goals and 121 actions, organized into six chapters: I. Stabilization and development of international cooperation on migration and asylum; II. Regular migration; III. Migration and development; IV. Management of migration in the event of an increase in the influx of foreign nationals (migrants, refugees); V. Fight against irregular migration; and VI. Migration control instruments.

187. A number of actions were taken between 2017 and 2019 to implement the Plan; some of the actions related to ensuring respect for migrant rights are detailed below.

188. With a view to implementing Act No. 274 of 27 December 2011 on the Integration of Foreign Nationals in the Republic of Moldova, the Plan of Action for the Integration of Foreign Nationals for 2018 was approved pursuant to Government Decision No. 71 of 23 January 2018. This plan sets out the priorities for activities and combined efforts to achieve the main goals, which will help ensure access to rights, improve the regulatory and legal framework and build the capacity of organizations involved in the process of providing foreign nationals with services throughout the country.

189. The Government approved Decision No. 533 of 12 July 2017 on the establishment of integration centres for foreign nationals, pursuant to which three such centres were established under the Bureau for Migration and Asylum and appropriately equipped with support from the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and the Embassy of Romania and funding from the European Union. The integration centres are based and operate in the country's three regions: the municipality of Bălți in the North, the municipality of Chisinau in the Centre and the municipality of Cahul in the South. They comprise: 1. the Northern Integration Centre for Foreign Nationals in Bălți, which serves the municipality of Bălți and 14 surrounding districts; 2. the Central Integration Centre for Foreign Nationals in Chisinau, which serves the municipality of Chisinau and 12 surrounding districts; and 3. the Southern Integration Centre for Foreign Nationals in Cahul, which serves the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Găgăuzia and 6 surrounding districts. The activities of the centres are funded from State budget allocations approved by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other sources of funding in accordance with current legislation.

190. The integration centres provide foreign nationals with long-term support for the integration process and constitute a one-stop shop for handling applications to take part in integration events and programmes. The centres also facilitate the implementation of interdepartmental coordination on the ground and constitute a long-term service focused on the local majority population. In 2018, approximately 560 foreign nationals were involved in various integration programmes and events.

191. Foreign nationals may attend classes to learn the national language upon submission of an application to the Bureau for Migration and Asylum. In accordance with the previously approved methodology, four competent organizations have been appointed as service providers to teach the official language to foreign nationals: the Ion Creangă Pedagogical State University in Chisinau; the National Association of European Trainers of Moldova (ANTEM); the Alecu Russo State University in Bălți; and the Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu State University in Cahul. The Ion Creangă Pedagogical State University runs a centre that organizes courses for the study of Romanian for foreign nationals legally residing in the Republic of Moldova. In 2017, some 40 foreign nationals took training courses at the centre. Social and cultural assimilation sessions are held once or twice a year at the request of the Bureau for Migration and Asylum. In 2018, 24 foreign nationals studied the national language, of whom 17 were taught at ANTEM and 7 at the Ion Creangă Pedagogical State University. In 2019, the national language courses were attended by 8 persons, of whom 5 studied at ANTEM and 3 at the Ion Creangă Pedagogical State University.

192. In 2019, 200 individual counselling sessions were offered to foreign nationals on the following issues: learning Romanian; applying for Moldovan citizenship; and finding employment. In addition, four beneficiaries of humanitarian protection received counselling from the National Employment Agency and another four from the National Health Insurance Company.

193. In accordance with article 2 (2) of Act No. 105/2018 on Employment Promotion and Unemployment Insurance, the National Employment Agency works to help foreign nationals to enter the labour market. Pursuant to Act No. 274/2011 on the Integration of Foreign Nationals, foreign nationals with a temporary residence permit for family reunification or for the purpose of carrying out humanitarian or religious activities, foreign nationals who have been granted international protection or political asylum in the Republic of Moldova, persons who have been recognized as stateless persons in the country and foreign nationals with a permanent residence permit are entitled to the same employment and social protection actions and measures in the event of unemployment as other persons looking for work. Article 2 (4) of Act No. 105/2018 prohibits all discrimination based on race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, beliefs, sex, age, disability, opinion, political affiliation, property status, social origin or any other ground.

194. Since 2016, the Agency has implemented a mechanism for including foreign nationals in integration activities. From 2017 to 2019, local employment offices registered 2016 foreign nationals as officially unemployed, of whom 49 per cent were women. Employment was found for 26.4 per cent of these applicants.

195. Of the total number of foreign nationals registered with local employment offices, 16.2 per cent were young persons aged from 16 to 29 years. The majority – more than 93 per cent – used information and career advice services, while 54 per cent used intermediary job placement services. In accordance with their legal entitlements, 11 persons received unemployment benefits, 6 persons received integration and reintegration benefits and 3 persons attended free vocational training. The Agency continuously takes the necessary steps to provide stateless persons with free, unrestricted and non-discriminatory access to employment services.

196. The Republic of Moldova acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees by the adoption of Act No. 677/XV of 23 November 2001, with a number of reservations. In accordance with article 42 (1) of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the Republic of Moldova interprets article 21 of the Convention as not requiring it to provide housing to refugees.

197. Three ethnocultural organizations that bring together migrants, refugees and other categories of non-citizen are accredited with the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations, namely the Fatima Society for the Protection of Children of African Origin, the Comunitatea Originarilor din Țările Afro-Asiatice în Moldova (Community of Persons Originally from Afro-Asian Countries), and the Charitable Centre for Refugees. All these organizations actively contribute to promoting the rights of foreign nationals in the Republic of Moldova, facilitating the prevention of discrimination on the grounds of race, skin colour or ethnicity. The leaders of these organizations are members of the Coordinating Council of Ethnocultural Organizations acting under the Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations. The representatives of these non-governmental organizations consider that fulfilment of the rights of non-citizens in the country is generally improving.

Follow-up information relating to paragraphs 24 and 25 of the concluding observations

Training on racial discrimination for judges, lawyers, State officials and others

198. Criminal investigators take part in training seminars on different subjects on a continuous basis, to improve their theoretical knowledge and practical skills related to the classification and investigation of criminal acts. On 24 and 25 June 2019, six members of the criminal department of the Inspectorate General of Police took part in a regional conference on the subject of anti-Roma hate crime as a challenge for national police forces, held in Odessa, Ukraine; from 23 to 24 September and 30 September to 1 October, 40 officials from local units of the Inspectorate (10 women and 30 men), including criminal investigators, took part in a training seminar on the investigation of hate crimes held in Soroca and the municipality of Comrat.

199. In 2019, 11 events were held to raise awareness on gender and improve staff skills on the prevention of discrimination (one round table, one working seminar, two skills

improvement or specialization courses, one international conference, two training seminars and four training courses), attended by 141 police officers (42 women and 99 men).

200. In accordance with the training directive, the Department of Public Law and Border Security of the Faculty of Professional and Management Development at the Ștefan cel Mare Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs continues to provide group training as part of continuing education, with the following specialized courses:

- Combating Discrimination, which takes up 12 hours of the curriculum on the legal protection of human rights in the context of gender equality and covers the following topics: national and international legal provisions on gender-based violence; anti-discrimination mechanisms; anti-discrimination legislation of the Republic of Moldova; and combating discrimination in the work of the Ministry
- Human Resources Management, a 2-hour course on the subject of ensuring gender equality in the defence and security sector and the consideration of gender equality in recruitment, selection, hiring and promotion
- Legal Protection of Human Rights, an 8-hour course on the subject of means and mechanisms for protecting human rights, minimum standards for the treatment of prisoners and international and national anti-torture mechanisms
- Ensuring Gender Equality and Preventing Discrimination, a 24-hour course on the subject of building the competence of police officers in the protection of human rights, particularly those of ethnic minorities, upholding the rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities, improving Ministry employees' skills on non-discrimination, preventing torture and the standards set out in the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), including the prevention of inter-prisoner violence
- Protection of the Rights of Ethnic Minorities, a 16-hour course on the subject of protecting the rights of ethnic minorities (Roma and other ethnicities), protecting the rights and freedoms of members of ethnic minorities with disabilities, national identity, the ethnic factor and models for the integration of ethnic groups, analysis of national and international legislation on the integration of ethnic groups, respect for Roma ethnic identity and Roma integration
- Legal Protection of Human Rights II, a 24-hour course on the subject of upholding the fundamental rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities, tools and mechanisms for the protection of human rights, minimum standards for the treatment of prisoners, national and international anti-torture mechanisms and cases of the European Court of Human Rights related to human rights violations

201. From 2017 to 2019, 205 procurators received training at 17 events organized by the National Institute of Justice on the following topics: criminal aspects of the European Convention on Human Rights; fulfilment of fundamental human rights in the context of international legal cooperation between States; migrants' rights; victim rights in criminal proceedings; recording and investigation of hate crimes; and non-discrimination and equality.

202. From 18 to 20 November 2019, a training seminar was held on the subject of anti-Roma hate crime as a challenge for national police forces, organized by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Inspectorate General of Police under the auspices of the Council of Europe. The purpose of the seminar was to improve theoretical knowledge and practical skills of police officers in the investigation and documentation of hate crimes, through the application of European best practices and the examination of precedents from the European Court of Human Rights. The seminar was attended by 25 police officers.

203. From 29 to 31 January 2019, with Council of Europe support, the Television and Radio Broadcasting Council organized three national seminars (in Chisinau, Comrat and Bălți) for journalists and editors of national television and radio channels about the coverage of campaigns for the parliamentary elections and national referendum of 24 February 2019 by television and radio service providers. The purpose of the seminars was to ensure fair, balanced and impartial coverage of election campaigns, eliminate all forms of discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, religion and xenophobia and promote freedom of expression and

political pluralism in the audiovisual services provided by the country's television and radio broadcasters.

204. The Council performed thematic monitoring of the broadcast time and space dedicated to the Roma community by media service providers in the Republic of Moldova between 1 January 2018 and 10 April 2019. During this period, of the 57 television service providers active in the country, 21 devoted airtime and space to the Roma community and listed the programmes and their dates and times. Of the 55 radio service providers in operation, only 5 provided airtime and space to the Roma community. The 21 television media service providers devoted 27 hours of airtime to covering Roma issues, while radio service providers only 25 minutes.

Follow-up information relating to paragraphs 26 and 28 of the concluding observations

205. The National Human Rights Action Plan for the period 2018–2020 provides for a number of actions to ratify certain international conventions. Chapter 1, "Harmonization of national legislation with international standards", provides in particular for the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (action 2), the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (action 3) and the amendment to article 8 (6) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (action 4).

206. At the same time, chapter 15, "Rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities", provides, inter alia, for the organization of events to support persons of African descent as part of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024) (action 2.2) and to develop and implement a Plan of Action for Implementation of the Durban Declaration adopted at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in South Africa in 2001 (action 2.3).

Conclusion

207. The twelfth to fourteenth combined periodic reports of the Republic of Moldova on implementation of the Convention demonstrate the progress and significant achievements in implementation made from 2017 to 2019 from a perspective of fulfilment of the recommendations contained in the Committee's concluding observations on the tenth and eleventh combined periodic reports of the Republic of Moldova. However, certain shortcomings in implementation of the Convention persist, including:

- The need to improve the system for collecting and systematizing data on the number of hate crimes, incidents of hate speech, prosecutions and victim compensation
- Shortcomings in the protection of the right to freedom of religion for the members of certain ethnic groups (Muslims, Jews, etc.)
- The challenges still faced by the Roma community regarding social exclusion, discrimination, stereotypes and prejudice
- Inadequate knowledge and awareness of the Convention among public servants, especially those working for local authorities
- Non-compliance with laws and regulations: the relevant national legislation is not always properly implemented, and there have been violations of certain laws and regulations; owing to these problems, a number of issues remain unresolved, including at the local level (violation of the linguistic rights of minorities, the low level of representation of ethnic minorities in government and public service, etc.)

208. The removal of these obstacles will help make the implementation of the Convention more effective and successful and improve the situation in this area for the speedy elimination of all forms and manifestations of racial discrimination from Moldovan society.