



Report on the Follow-up dialogue to the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Republic of Moldova

Chișinău, 13 December 2024

OPENING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTORY SESSION

A follow-up meeting on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNNM) was organised in Chișinău on 13 December 2024 by the Agency for Interethnic Relations of the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Council of Europe secretariat of the Framework Convention. The [programme](#) is available on the website of the Framework Convention.

During the event, an expert of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention, the Secretariat of the Council of Europe, national and local authorities, and representatives of national minorities discussed recommendations adopted by the Advisory Committee in its [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#), adopted on 7 June 2023, as well as recommendations contained in the [Committee of Ministers' Resolution CM/ResCMN\(2024\)1](#), adopted on 10 January 2024, and more broadly, ways to strengthen protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities in the Republic of Moldova. The Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova was translated and distributed into [Romanian](#), [Russian](#) and [Ukrainian](#) languages.

The meeting was opened by Veaceslav Reabcinschii, Director General of the Agency for Interethnic Relations Government of the Republic of Moldova, the Head of the Council of Europe Office in Chișinău, Falk Lange, and the Head of the National Minorities and Minority Languages Division in the Council of Europe, Elise Cornu.

Veaceslav Reabcinschii stressed that the national legislation is largely aligned with the principles and provisions of the Framework Convention and that the Republic of Moldova has effective mechanisms in the fields of education, economy, social and culture, facilitates the participation of representatives of national minorities in public life and intercultural dialogue, promotes the teaching of the Romanian language, as well as develops the protection of the languages of national minorities. Access of minorities to information from the media in the languages spoken by them is also ensured, he said. He presented the activities conducted by the Agency in 2024, in particular those in the regions to foster dialogue with the various minorities. The level of involvement of state bodies in implementing state policy in the field

of strengthening interethnic relations has increased, interdepartmental interaction of ministries, as well as co-operation between central and local executive bodies with representatives of the public sector. He underlined that the well-being and stability of a multiethnic society largely depends on the degree of addressing and preventing interethnic conflicts, ensuring equality and creating conditions that allow national minorities to manifest, preserve and develop their identity.¹

Falk Lange indicated that the Council of Europe Office in Chişinău is actively supporting the Republic of Moldova in enhancing ethnic diversity, equality and non-discrimination. In collaboration with the Government, the Council of Europe has prepared the [Action Plan for Republic of Moldova for the period 2025–2028](#). It sets strategic co-operation framework to further support key national reforms, including in the field of protection of national minorities and equality. Together with state and non-state partners, including legal and law enforcement professionals, as well as civil society representatives, projects implemented in the Republic of Moldova help harmonising domestic legal and institutional frameworks, and sharing practices with the European and international standards to combat discrimination, hate speech and hate crime. According to the State Register of Population, more than 150 ethnic groups reside on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, most of them continue to form part of the Co-ordinating Council of Ethno-Cultural Organisations set up under the Agency for Interethnic Relations. This diversity is reflected in different spheres of life in the country and creates important cultural, educational and social heritage. Raising awareness about diversity through different multicultural events contributes to fostering mutual respect and understanding among different ethnic groups, thus significantly contributing to the Republic of Moldova's development and EU integration process.

Elise Cornu thanked the Moldovan authorities for organising this follow-up event. Twenty-six years after its entry into force, the Council of Europe's Framework Convention remains the only international treaty on the protection of national minorities. This Convention is part of the Council of Europe's commitment to the protection of national minorities in Europe and to building "inclusive societies without marginalisation, exclusion, racism and intolerance", as reaffirmed by the Reykjavík Declaration "United around our values", adopted at the Fourth Summit of the Heads of State and Government in May 2023.² Reinforcing the Council of Europe's engagement with civil society is also an important objective of the Reykjavík Declaration. This follow-up meeting provides an opportunity to jointly explore ways of implementing recommendations to the Republic of Moldova, by clarifying them where necessary and by sharing practices of other states parties that could be a source of inspiration for the authorities and for organisations representing minorities. Furthermore, this meeting complements the technical co-operation activities foreseen in the above-mentioned Action Plan 2025-2028.

Ian Feldman, member of the Advisory Committee in respect of the Republic of Moldova explained the main features of the Framework Convention and its monitoring mechanism, as well as the role of a national member.³

Tomáš Hrustič, member of the Advisory Committee in respect of the Slovak Republic, presented the main findings of the Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova, as well as priority recommendations made by the Committee of Ministers to the Moldovan authorities. The Opinion was written based on information from the fifth state report, other written sources from public authorities, minority organisations and NGOs and also on the findings from the country visit that took place in Chişinău, Briceni, Edineţ, Comrat and Ceadăr-Lunga from 19 to 23 September 2022. The Advisory Committee commended in its opinion the excellent co-operation from the Moldovan authorities throughout the monitoring process. The Advisory Committee is also thankful for the Comments of the Moldovan Government on the Fifth Opinion which provide additional information about the situation in the country and are very useful for this follow-up meeting, as well as for further process of preparing the next opinion.

As an introduction, Tomáš Hrustič indicated that the Advisory Committee had an overall positive feeling about the situation in the Republic of Moldova and the state of interethnic relations which can be generally characterised as stable, harmonious and peaceful. The successful management by the Republic of Moldova of its ethnic diversity, including under difficult circumstances was being praised by

¹ Agency for Interethnic Relations, press article on the Follow-Up meeting on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (National legislation is largely aligned with the principles and provisions of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, available in Romanian [Legislația națională este în mare măsură aliniată la principiile și prevederile Convenției-cadru pentru protecția minorităților naționale](#)), 13 December 2024.

² See [Reykjavík Declaration](#).

³ See [FCNM leaflet in Romanian](#), [Ukrainian](#), [Russian](#), [Bulgarian](#) and [Romani](#).

the Advisory Committee. This remained so despite the war against Ukraine on its borders and the influx of several hundreds of thousands of refugees. This demonstrates the strong resilience of the Moldovan society and its potential to develop a shared civic identity which is at the heart of the Framework Convention. The Advisory Committee observed, nevertheless, that the potential for developing shared civic identity of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova based upon common interests is still work in progress and efforts should be pursued. These efforts should be in line with continual protecting and promoting ethnic linguistic and religious diversity as the society's integral and valued part.⁴ Moreover, the Moldovan authorities show their commitment to support full and effective equality of persons belonging to national minorities in the most of areas of economic, social, political and cultural life, together with conditions that will enable them to express, preserve and develop their culture and identity.

Tomáš Hrustič emphasizes that the Republic of Moldova continues to apply an inclusive and pragmatic approach towards the application of the scope of application of the Framework Convention. No proof of citizenship or birth certificates is necessary to access minority rights, which is welcome. In the 2024 Population and Housing Census, the possibility to declare multiple ethnic and linguistic affiliation and to recruit persons belonging to national minorities as interviewers were steps in the right direction. The Ethno-barometer, mapping of the Roma community, and other data collections should be pursued as they can provide additional useful information on needs of the persons belonging to national minorities.

Vitalii Mrug, Co-chair of Ethno-minority Council and Chair of the Ukrainian Community, expressed several concerns, such as the lack of staff in the Agency for Interethnic Relations and the need for additional funding of the activities of minority organisations, the lack of media programmes in Ukrainian, and the use of full personal names, including patronymics, in identity documents.⁵ He reminded that this recommendation is important for the Bulgarian, Gagauz, Russian and Ukrainian national minorities.

THEMATIC SESSION 1: ENSURING QUALITY EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL MINORITIES AND DEVELOPING MINORITIES' CULTURES AND LANGUAGES

This session was moderated by Adriana Cazacu, State Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Research, who referred *inter alia* to initiatives for learning Romanian language. She referred to multilingual education, but also mentioned the lack of funds. She also mentioned that there are at present 51 Roma community-based mediators, but the budget is for 82. She indicated that the lack of people speaking Romani is an obstacle for recruiting Roma school assistants.

In its session introduction, Tomáš Hrustič welcomed the authorities' efforts in increasing the number of Romanian language courses and training of trainers. Whilst speaking and understanding the state language is particularly relevant in supporting and promoting a shared civic identity, measures aimed at promoting the state language must be implemented in a way that respects the identity and the linguistic needs of persons belonging to national minorities. Language policies should ensure that all languages that exist in society are audibly and visibly present in the public domain so that every person is aware of the multilingual character of society, and recognises him- or herself as an integral part of society.⁶ These measures to promote the use of the Romanian language should be simultaneously complemented by further measures aimed at strengthening the teaching and use of the languages of national minorities. Overall, minority language barriers still exist, especially for older generations, thus impeding access to rights and participation in public services. Minority languages are, for instance, still primarily taught at Russian-language schools. Persons belonging to national minorities have therefore difficulties to gain full proficiency in Romanian, despite some extra teaching hours. There are several ways how to fulfil all these needs and requests for learning Romanian: bilateral co-operation with neighbouring Romania could be envisaged, incentives for teachers of the Republic of Moldova to reach out to administrative territorial units and rural areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities could be introduced.

⁴ See recommendation for immediate action in para. 16 of the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#)

⁵ See Recommendation 7 of the [Committee of Ministers' Resolution CM/ResCMN\(2024\)1](#) and further recommendation in para. 22 of the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#).

⁶ ACFC [Thematic Commentary No. 3](#) on the language rights of persons belonging to national minorities under the Framework Convention, 5 July 2012, paras. 33 and 53.

Furthermore, obstacles to equal education experienced by Roma children were addressed.⁷ Tomáš Hrustič highlighted that the Advisory Committee positively noted the strong support to the programme of Roma community-based mediators, including through ensuring state funding to recruit these mediators. However, the tasks of Roma community-based mediators must cover in their daily work are very complex and sometimes too general. The authorities should pursue the recruitment and funding of Roma community-based mediators, whilst ensuring that such positions are geographically distributed according to the size of the local Roma population and municipalities' needs. Awareness-raising among the municipalities of the available funding opportunities for Roma community-based mediators should be stepped up. Employing more specific Roma mediators, mainly in the field of education, would be needed.

Consideration should be given to introduce the practice of Roma school assistants to assist Roma pupils with a view to increasing school performance and decreasing school dropouts.⁸ The examples of other States Parties to the Framework Convention show that the various "helping professions" employed to work with Roma communities provide for more effective inclusion of persons belonging to Roma minorities – be it positions of field social workers, health mediators, school assistants, or community workers. All these positions have strong potential to overcome barriers that representatives of the Roma minority have in accessing their rights.

Good examples from other countries exist where these positions are designed wisely and are effective and help Roma children with better school results. One of the most important factors is that these assistants should speak the language of the children so they can be more effective in communication with them. The knowledge about the community and the language seems to be more important criterion than for example formal education of these assistants. However, it has also been observed that in countries where the authorities introduced formal education criterion for the positions of the Roma school assistants which resulted with the majority of skilled Roma assistants lost their jobs because they lacked formal education. As a result, new people were hired who did not speak Romani language and were not from the Roma communities, and they were not able to help children as effectively as the assistants before. The cases which the Framework Convention monitors prove that the most effective assistants are those who speak the language and are from the communities concerned, while formal education can be provided by additional training and practice. Furthermore, the design and the scope of work of any of these helping professions should be consulted with the persons belonging to national minorities, including women and those who are directly affected by these policies. This participatory principle is one of the most important factors for effective measures and policies.

In addition, Tomáš Hrustič reminded participants that the Advisory Committee adopted in May 2024 its new [Thematic Commentary no. 1 on Education](#) which replaces a previous version dating from 2006. Its objective is to guide States Parties on how to design educational systems that guarantee access to rights for persons belonging to national minorities and promote a high-quality and inclusive education. The right to high-quality and inclusive education is also highlighted in a further recommendation of the Fifth Opinion.⁹ The importance of ensuring that teaching about the presence of national minorities and their languages, histories and cultures forms part of mainstream education for everyone in the state is another recommendation addressed by the Advisory Committee to the Republic of Moldova.¹⁰

In the field of culture, the monitoring visit of the Advisory Committee took place in the period after recent redistribution of roles and competences, notably between the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Culture and the Agency for Interethnic Relations. This set up was unclear for many representatives of national minorities and local authorities. In this context the Advisory Committee asked for clarification of the roles and competencies. Tomáš Hrustič took positive note that, following the recommendation of the Advisory Committee regarding the Institute of Cultural Heritage and its Centre of Ethnology,¹¹ the research studies on national minorities in the Republic of Moldova are now realised at the scientific unit "Department on Traditional Culture of Ethnic Minorities" in the Institute of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture.¹²

⁷ See recommendation for immediate action in paragraph 18 of the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#).

⁸ For example, good practice covering the Roma school assistants, can be seen in countries like Poland.

⁹ See further recommendation in para. 23 of the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#).

¹⁰ See recommendation in para. 150 of the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#).

¹¹ See recommendation in para. 66 of the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#).

¹² See the [link](#) to the Round Table "Contemporary Ethnographic Research: Perspectives on the Cultural Heritage of Ethnic Minorities" from 21 November 2024 where new perspectives on cultural heritage were discussed. They are now working on

Furthermore, the support for the preservation and development of minority identities, cultures and media is also an integral part of the Framework Convention's principles. The Advisory Committee is pleased that financial support for ethno-cultural organisations and their activities continues to be provided by the Moldovan authorities. However, overall, such funding remains limited compared to the needs. The support to ethno-cultural festivals is much appreciated by representatives of national minorities, but the Advisory Committee would like to highlight that also the development of more contemporary expressions of minority cultures should be equally promoted, as highlighted in its further recommendation.¹³

A representative of the Department on Traditional Culture of Ethnic Minorities in the Institute of Cultural Heritage asked whether the Government had any plans for the Commemoration of the Roma Holocaust in 2025. Ivan Duminica, Chief of Political Service in the field of Interethnic Relations from the Ministry of Education and Research, replied that such an activity was foreseen in the 2025 budget. He also pointed out that one hour was added to the curriculum to learn a minority language (Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, etc.), as well as also one hour in learning the Romanian language. It is already implemented in the Taraclia region. Ivan Duminica also mentioned the existence of 15 bilingual schools since 2019. The Jewish minority has its first Jewish curricula for the first time and courses for developing the teaching of the Ukrainian language for refugees have been created. He also mentioned training of teachers in Romanian, as well the increasing interest of Roma students in scholarships (43 in 2023, 94 in 2024).

The Chief of the Education Department, Edineț district, stated that the interest among Roma children to study had increased. In 2024, 117 Roma enrolled in training. However, many Roma go to Germany for work. About 95 Roma children are being taught in Russian, not Romani. She also called for more Roma community-based mediators in preschools. As regards the situation of Ukrainian children, 568 of them are learning Ukrainian language and culture. There is a programme for Ukrainian refugees to learn the Romanian language because command of Romanian is compulsory for graduating grade 9.

The Chief of Education Direction, Taraclia district, indicated a need for protection of the Bulgarian language since it is less and less spoken because of mixed marriages. In Taraclia, 64% of the population belong to the Bulgarian minority. According to the new allocation, children study from two to four hours of Romanian language. Since September 2024, there is guidance and handbook for teachers on how to implement the curriculum; this is a progress. She welcomed the openness of the government and the appointment of Ivan Duminica who travelled in the regions. Overall, they lack teachers. A Ukrainian school disappeared due to the low number of children attending it.

The Chief of Youth Education and Sports Department, Nisporeni district, recalled that ensuring enrolment of Roma children at school and to avoid drop-out was an issue for the last 30 years. A specific challenge is the migration of Roma children with their parents. More Roma children are registered than really attending primary school (124 are enrolled out of 144 listed). In Vulcănești, a highly Roma concentrated village, there is a Roma school teaching Romani. More efforts should be made to train teachers in addressing Romani language to increase quality education. As for Ukrainian refugees, nine children are enrolled, including six Roma children.

A Roma community-based mediator reaffirmed that Roma are still the most marginalised group in the Republic of Moldova. Roma minority representatives are often consulted but their decisions are not always taken into consideration. She asked to develop a state programme like the "second chance programme" of Romania¹⁴ to give the possibility to complete education for people who are often illiterate. She referred also to specialists (mediators) to improve access to employment, such as in Romania.¹⁵ Another Roma representative said that there were insufficient funds to pay Roma community mediators. These Roma community mediators are not sufficiently consulted on decisions that concern them.

A young Armenian representative stated that Armenian ethnicity and culture are not sufficiently reflected in history textbooks and the genocide of Armenians has not been recognised by the Republic of Moldova. A member of the Russian national minority and former Director General of the Bureau for

improving the research of the six national/ethnic minorities in the Republic of Moldova: Ukrainians, Russian old believers (Lipovans), Jewish, Gagauz, Bulgarians and Roma.

¹³ See further recommendation in para. 21 of the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#).

¹⁴ See the [Roma Education Fund website](#) for information on the Second Chance Programme in Romania.

¹⁵ "In the area of employment, approx. 26 000 Roma participated in active employment measures such as information counselling, vocational training, and job-matching provided to all registered jobseekers in 2019." (See [Fifth Opinion on Romania](#), adopted on 3 April 2023, para. 198).

Interethnic Relations raised a question as concerns the availability of information in Russian on the Ministry of Education and Research website. Ivan Duminica responded that such information existed. A representative from the Nigerian Union (speaking on behalf of the African descent community) spoke in favour of learning Romanian to integrate. A Russian speaking woman said that the Republic of Moldova is an elderly country: the older generation has difficulties to learn and speak Romanian and to use the Latin alphabet.

**THEMATIC SESSION 2:
COMBATING DISCRIMINATION AFFECTING NATIONAL MINORITIES AND
REINFORCING THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL BODIES**

The moderator was Nicolae Radița, Deputy General Director of the Agency for Interethnic Relations, who highlighted the importance of state institutions in addressing discrimination of national minorities.

The Chief of the Direction Co-ordination of Public Policy in the Ministry of Justice underlined that discrimination is prohibited by law. However, the Roma minority is still discriminated at local level in some municipalities. She also referred to measures taken by the authorities to respect the European Court of Human Rights judgments, the EU Directives and Treaties and the United Nations treaties.

A representative of the People's Advocate referred to three main tasks of his Office: protection, promotion and prevention. They also do research and studies, which are available on their website, about vulnerable populations and national minorities.¹⁶

The President of the Equality Council referred to 40 decisions in 2023-2024 and stressed that the authorities should provide timely follow-up to their decisions, reports and queries related to national minorities, as per the Advisory Committee's recommendation.¹⁷

A member of the Public Order and Security Policy Directorate in Ministry of Internal Affairs mentioned amendments to the Criminal Code and the Contraventions Code concerning hate speech. Police officers are trained to combat hate speech and to deal with vulnerable groups. There were 140 offences reported on biases on ethnic origin in 2022-2024. There is also training among the police on gender diversity.

A representative of Agudat Israel Association reported that cases of antisemitism still occur, as well as desecration of cemeteries, and hate speech on social media. Russian is the first language for the Jewish community, and the Romanian language needs therefore to be taught to members of the Jewish community as well.

A representative of the Coalition of Roma Voice mentioned that discrimination against Roma still persists in the Republic of Moldova. When public authorities are present and involved, the issue decreases. In schools, discrimination comes from parents who do not want their children to play with Roma children. The teachers contribute to this discrimination when they do not react appropriately. For him, it is important to increase quality education. There is also discrimination in access to employment and housing, for instance in the ATU Gagauzia ("we do not rent to Roma"). He indicated that populist speech during the last presidential elections started targeting persons affiliating with the Roma minority.

Tomáš Hrustič summarised this session, highlighting that the anti-discrimination and equality legal frameworks are comprehensive and amendments to the Criminal Code and the Contraventions Code concerning hate speech and incitement to discrimination have been adopted. Regarding findings of the Advisory Committee, the Moldovan society remains largely tolerant, and only a few racist attacks were reported, in particular against the Jewish and Roma national minorities. Some cases of ethnic racial profiling exist, particularly against the Muslim community at border controls.¹⁸ Tomáš Hrustič stressed that in many States Parties to the Framework Convention, there are tendencies to redefine anti-Roma racism ("antigypsyism") as a specific form of racism because it could lead to more specific sanctions. For this reason, a working group could be set up by the Moldovan authorities, involving *inter alia* relevant state authorities, equality and human rights institutions, academics, legal professionals and

¹⁶ See the website of the [People's Advocate](#).

¹⁷ See recommendation in para. 57 of the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#).

¹⁸ See para. 11 of the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#).

representatives of the Roma minority, to examine the need and feasibility to include anti-Roma racism as a specific form of racism in relevant legislation.¹⁹

Both the Equality Council and the People's Advocate are active in combating discrimination, as indicated by Tomáš Hrustič. However, more awareness raising among national minorities should be also pursued because, like in many other countries, persons belonging to national minorities in rural areas and regions remote from the capital have limited access and knowledge about these institutions and existing anti-discrimination legislation. From the Advisory Committee's point of view, substandard communities such as the Roma minority, have very limited, if any, knowledge about legal remedies to discrimination. Therefore, supporting projects providing low threshold and free legal advice and assistance services to persons belonging to national minorities, in particular those belonging to the Roma minority, such as easily accessible 'legal clinics', would be important. Furthermore, the Equality Council and the People's Advocate institutions face challenges in filling vacancies due to low salaries and these vacancies are not attractive for young professionals. It is obviously not easy, but authorities should find also other means how to make these positions more attractive by various incentives and try to attract also persons belonging to national minorities to these positions. Adequate human resources are necessary, for instance by organising local branches of these institutions, so as to pursue awareness raising and build trust, notably in rural areas.²⁰

THEMATIC SESSION 3: EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL MINORITIES

The moderator of this session, Michaël Guet, Secretariat of the Framework Convention in the Council of Europe, indicated the important role of the Co-ordinated Council of Ethno-cultural Organisations, working under the Agency for Interethnic Relations, which acts as a consultative platform for issues affecting national minorities. He refers to the lack of data regarding representation of persons belonging to national minorities in Parliament and mentions that the existing Law on National Minorities as regards the use of Russian and Gagauz languages, alongside Romanian, in the ATU Gagauzia, should be fully implemented. Finally, he mentioned the positive initiative of the national minorities expert group on the platform of national human rights institutions which started after the monitoring visit.

In the session's introduction, Tomáš Hrustič, welcomed the existence of the Co-ordinating Council on Ethno-Cultural Organisations in which leaders of ethno-cultural organisations are consulted on various matters. He emphasised that the Advisory Committee considers effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities as integral part of minority rights and it should be equally implemented also on all levels of authorities. This participatory principle is essential in developing effective measures and policies.²¹ Such consultation bodies should, therefore, not be formalistic, but, as far as possible, constitute a shared ownership of the decisions taken. Representation of national minorities should be guaranteed not only in cultural matters but also in other policies and legislation immediately affecting persons belonging to national minorities. Organisations representing religious groups could potentially be invited to participate in the Co-ordinating Council of Ethno-cultural Organisations to have the possibility to express the specific concerns of their respective communities. Another important element in effective participation is also the gender perspective. Woman and girls should not be overlooked in consultation processes because their insight and perspective may be different. At the time of the visit, the Co-ordinating Council on Ethno-Cultural Organisations had 103 members and only 26 were women. Along with gender perspective, it is also important to take into consideration youth perspective throughout the consultation processes. For example, there is a need to recruit young people out of national minorities to positions at public administration and a need to find ways how to make these positions more attractive financially and socially.

Tomáš Hrustič highlighted that public information is often made available in Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian and Romani minority languages. However, more attention should be paid to languages spoken by numerically smaller minorities. The authorities should value linguistic competences in minority languages for the recruitment of civil servants at all levels of public administration and in the judiciary.

¹⁹ See recommendation in para. 111 of the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#).

²⁰ See further recommendation in para. 19 in the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#).

²¹ See further recommendation in para. 24 of the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#).

The economic revitalisation and modernisation of infrastructure should be also further supported, including through European Union funding and foreign investments.

Tomáš Hrustič also highlighted the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities at the level of the Administrative Territorial Unit of Gagauzia where Romanian is co-official language together with Gagauz and Russian.²² Furthermore, the Advisory Committee asks the authorities to ensure that ballot papers and relevant voter information are produced in Romanian, as well as in languages spoken by persons belonging to national minorities, especially those who have an official status in administrative territorial units.²³

During the discussion, the Chair of the Greek community “Eleftheria” considered that this meeting format was very useful for authorities and minorities’ representatives. Public media often ignore the events organised for and by national minorities, this should be changed. He added that this meeting should have also provided for interpretation in Russian.²⁴

The Mayor of Comrat city in the ATU Gagauzia referred to the 1994 Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia. He mentioned the fact that in some villages, people speak Gagauz only. He added that lower threshold to access parliament is a good practice like in Poland.²⁵ Also in Romania, persons belonging to the Ukrainian and Tatar national minorities managed to be politically represented.²⁶ In the ATU Gagauzia, they would like to achieve the same.

The Executive Director of Civic Initiatives for National Minorities spoke on behalf of minority youth. He said that funding should not only be available for cultural festivals and folkloristic events, but also for social values and youth perspective. He stressed that ethnic groups need cultural centres, youth centres, community centres like in many other states parties of the Framework Convention. He mentioned examples of Romania, Bulgaria, Poland where there are cultural/community centres or youth centres where different events are organised. He indicated that many wish to have a representative in parliament, but he wondered how this would be possible with 150 ethnic groups in the country.

The Co-chair of the national minorities expert group on the platform of national human rights institutions (Equality Council and People’s Advocate) presented the platform, set up in January 2023. Its work reviews and monitors the legislative initiative and also focuses *inter alia* on gender equality and youth.

The Chair of the Azeri Congress from the Republic of Moldova stated that consultation with national minorities, however, is often formalistic. It is a top-bottom and a tick the box approach. Youth does not receive enough attention. The Co-ordinating Council of Ethno-cultural Organisations is slow and deserves improvements. There is a lack of awareness-raising about the consultation procedures. A mechanism of efficient consultation between national minorities and government needs to be set up. There are 17 members of parliament from national minorities. However, they do not represent their ethnicity but the party line. There is also need for an office for the Ukrainian national minority, the biggest minority in the country. The Republic of Moldova is on the right path; there are problems but potential as well.

A former member of parliament, and Russian speaker, referred to the adoption of the Law on National Minorities which is no longer taken into account. There is blatant violation by the authorities that persons cannot use Russian in relations with judicial authorities. Identity cards with patronymics are also needed. Census show that out of two million inhabitants, more than 200 000 are elderly. He was of the view that people above a certain age cannot learn Romanian.

²² See recommendation in para. 131 of the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#).

²³ See recommendation in para. 186 of the [Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova](#).

²⁴ In practice, the Romanian-English interpreters agreed to interpret from Russian into English. However, there was no interpretation from Romanian into Russian.

²⁵ See [Fourth Opinion on Poland](#), adopted on 6 November 2019, para. 165.

²⁶ See [Fifth Opinion on Romania](#), adopted on 3 April 2023, para. 190.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Veaceslav Reabcinschii affirmed this was a unique follow-up meeting with such a high number of participants. All ministries invited had come. Only members of parliament were absent, but they had a session that day. There is a need to put the recommendations into actions and this is *inter alia* a task for the Agency of Interethnic Relations. The Director General also reiterated that the national authorities have significant potential for development and co-operation in order to ensure the rights of national minorities and assured that the Republic of Moldova will continue to actively participate in the political and social dialogue in order to find appropriate solutions in the field of interethnic relations.

Elise Cornu thanked the Agency for Interethnic Relations for inviting so many participants and for organising this event. For the Council of Europe, this is an important opportunity to facilitate a continuous dialogue with all who work to represent various minorities, and who have engaged in such a constructive manner with the Advisory Committee during this monitoring cycle.

Tomáš Hrustič thanks the participants for a very interesting and lively discussion, in particular all the speakers, but especially the ones representing minority youth for making their voice heard during this meeting. The high number of participants (almost 140) shows the interest and importance of the issues they have discussed today. This format of dialogue was useful for everybody – useful for representatives of national minorities, and also useful for the authorities and hopefully the examples and good practices mentioned today will inspire decision-makers and civil society organisations in identifying appropriate measures to fulfil the Republic of Moldova's obligations under the Framework Convention. It is important to continue the dialogue in order to address the shortcomings identified by the Advisory Committee and to further improve the protection of national minorities. The Advisory Committee looks forward to receiving the sixth state report (in 2025), and to returning to the Republic of Moldova to monitor the progress made. Regarding the next monitoring visit, he invited all representatives of national minorities to meet with the delegation and share their concerns, as well as success stories. Meeting with diverse organisations is crucial for the Advisory Committee to draft its opinion. He is confident that the delegation will see progress in the areas of serious concern to the Advisory Committee, such as quality and inclusive education for Roma children. "Building a common shared identity is still work in progress but you can count on the support of the Council of Europe", he concluded.
