

LANGUAGE POLICY DIMENSIONS FOR SOCIAL COHESION IN MOLDOVA: GAGAUZ MINORITY CASE

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This paper investigates the perspectives of the Gagauz minority and the elements that define the minorities-majority relation in the context of Moldovan society transition from the Soviet ideology-based model to a new phase of interaction, relying on the Western civilizations model. The transition period changed the principles of interaction and split the Moldovan society between the nostalgia for the Soviet past and the will to integrate into the European Union. The paper reviews publications concerning the Gagauz minority in the Republic of Moldova starting with the 1990s, the national and international reports concerning minority issues and the legal framework related to languages and education. The scope of the study endeavours to situate the anonymous Gagauz minority in the post Soviet setup of the Republic of Moldova, from the perspective of linguistic, cultural and social transformations. This minority appeared on the European map only after 1995, when the Gagauz Autonomous Region was created in the South of the Republic of Moldova. Originally, the Council of Europe criticized the autonomy model for giving too much power to the newly created entity. However, by 1996 it was reported that the Council of Europe was “extremely satisfied with the way Moldova solved the Gagauz conflict”. What is the current situation? Despite the modernized legal framework, the implementation of minority and language policies is still embedded in the Soviet legacies and the turmoil of transition. The actions, perceptions and interpretations are still linked to the Gagauz isolation, Transnistrian frozen conflict and to the historically privileged position of the Russian minority. Where is the link between legislation and real life? Where is the balance between the rights of the minorities and the social cohesion? This paper is aiming to raise critical questions and to call for effective policy development.