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## **Ethnic Groups and Languages of Moldavia According to the Results of the Census of 2004 and the Statistics of the State Enterprise “Centre for State Information Resources ‘Registru’”**

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***Этносы и языки Молдавии по результатам переписи 2004 г. и данным ГП «Центр государственных информационных ресурсов “Registru”»***

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The first national census of the population was held from October 5 to October 12, 2004. But do the census data, regarding nationality in particular, fully reflect the status quo?

Of certain interest for scientists is the comparison of 2004 census results, the population statistics of 2012 collected by the National Statistics Bureau of the Republic of Moldova and the information from the government establishment called “Centre for State Information Resources ‘Registru’” (“Registru”). Although the process of documenting the population is not finished yet and the information on citizens under 16 years of age is incomplete (their data are entered into the documentation of their parents or on the basis of the acts of civil status), the information on nationality and the native language is stated and double-checked by citizens when they fill in the forms for ID cards and the foreign passport. The data are quoted less on the population of Bendery and the Dniester left-bank regions (Transnistria).

As of October 12, 2004 (the time of holding the census), 2,570,170 people were registered in “Registru”. 2,362,540 of them were over

16 years of age (the census gave it as 2,673,438 citizens). According to people's own statements, this age group included 1,665,622 Moldavians, 2,579 Romanians, 147,014 Russians, 206,594 Ukrainians, 99,283 Gagauzes, 44,916 Bulgarians and 4,175 Jews.

339,481 people stated that Russian was their mother tongue (even though the data on people registered in "Registru" during the period in question lacked 813,162 people who were registered in the census database, and this information mainly concerns people aged over 16).

According to the information of the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova as of January 1, 2012, 3,559,541 people lived in the Republic (2,935,531 people aged over 16 among them). As of the same date, the "Registru" database shows the population number as 3,559,605 inhabitants (2,972,657 people (83.5%)) aged over 16. Thus, the figures are almost identical while the information provided by "Registru" reflects a more realistic picture.

In accordance with the data of "Registru" as of January 1, 2012, 2,477,084 (69.6%) citizens indicated their national identity as Moldavian (2,212,800 of them were over 16 years of age (74.4% of this age group)). 3,087 people identified themselves as Romanians (0.09%), 2,881 of them aged over 16. The data show that people indicated their ethnicity as follows: 183,115 (5.14%) Russians, 252,835 (7.1%) Ukrainians, 128,683 (3.6%) Gagauz, 61,609 (1.7%) Bulgarians and 4,098 (0.12%) Jews. 1,930,103 (54.2%) people acknowledged Moldavian as their mother tongue, 207,840 (5.8%) people acknowledged Romanian as such and 524,885 (14.7%) people stated that their native language is Russian.

As regards people aged over 16 registered in "Registru" as of 01.01.2012, Russian is the mother tongue for 67,595 Moldavians, 225 Romanians, 159,168 Russians, 133,838 Ukrainians, 11,948 Gagauz, 16,557 Bulgarians and 3,107 Jews.

The large number of Ukrainians who acknowledged Russian as their native language can be explained by the fact that many of them are Rusins or their descendants. After the reunification of Bessarabia and the USSR, the attempted Ukrainization of Rusins in Moldavia in the 1950s was to no avail.

According to the 2004 census in Moldova (exclusive of information on Transnistria), 60% of citizens (2,029,847 out of 3,383,332 people) acknowledged Moldavian as their native language and 16.5% (558,508 people) called Romanian their mother tongue.

380,756 people (11.3%) out of 3,383,332 citizens of the republic stated that Russian was their native language. Russian was native for 195,573 Russians, 63,290 Moldavians, 89,853 Ukrainians, 9,134

Bulgarians, 8,618 Gagauzes, 3,500 Byelorussians, 2,795 Jews, 1,557 Poles, 1,163 Germans, and for 571 Romanians. Russian as the language for everyday communication was acknowledged by 540,990 (16%) people, among them 128,372 Moldavians, 141,206 Ukrainians, 40,445 Gagauzes, 1,537 Romanians, 23,259 Bulgarians and 18,610 representatives of the other ethnic groups. Fluent speakers of Russian were distributed as follows: 52.5% Moldavians (1,347,647 people out of 2,564,849, according to the 2004 census), 32.7% Ukrainians (92,248 people), 60.5% Romanians (44,350 people), 57.1% Bulgarians (37,497 people) and 62.5% Gagauzes (92,114 people).

The existence of a considerable number of citizens for whom Russian is their mother tongue and the language for everyday communication highlights the pressing issue of a steadfast compliance with the country's language laws including the Organic Law on functioning languages within the territory of the Republic of Moldova Nr. 3465–XI of September 1, 1989, which has priority over other statutory acts but its statutory requirements are not met by state agencies.

### **Keywords**

Russian, Romanian, Moldavian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Gagauz, Bulgarian, Russian language, Romanian language, Moldavian language, Moldavia, Rusin.