

SUBMISSION

Following Rule 9.2 of the Rules of the Committee of Ministers for the supervision of the execution of judgments and the terms of friendly settlements

Judgment date: 19.10.2012

Catan and Others v. Russia (Applications nos. 43370/04, 8252/05 and 18454/06)

Promo-LEX Association is an independent non-governmental organisation founded in 2002. It advocates for advancing democracy in the Republic of Moldova, including the Transnistrian region, through various activities, including defending human rights, strengthening civil society, and monitoring democratic processes.

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1 CONTENTS

2	Introduction	3
3	Individual measures	3
4	General measures	3
5	Key developments in 2024.....	4
5.1	General issues	4
5.2	Infrastructure deficiencies in Romanian-language Schools.....	6
5.3	Tranportation.....	8
5.4	Access to Romanian Cultural Products and Services	9
5.5	Abuses Committed Against Schools in 2024: Utility Tariffs	10
5.6	Intimidation of Parents and Teachers in 2024	11
5.7	Military Registration with Paramilitary Forces	12
6	Conclusions	13
7	Specific recommendations.....	15

2 INTRODUCTION

1. In line with Rule 9.2 of the Rules of the Committee of Ministers, this Communication aims to provide in-depth information about the issues arising from the non-execution of the ECtHR judgment in the case of *Catan and Others v. Russia* as well as to emphasise the measures necessary for addressing the critical flaws in its implementation. This Communication should be read in conjunction with our previous submissions on the *Catan and Others* case, which detail the evolution of the situation of Moldovan-administered Latin-script schools located in the Transnistrian region and the human rights record in Moldova's breakaway territory.

3 INDIVIDUAL MEASURES

2. Regarding individual measures, the Russian Federation has not fulfilled its obligation to pay the following amounts: €6,000 to each applicant for non-pecuniary damage and €50,000 to all applicants jointly in respect of costs and expenses. As mentioned in previous submissions, the General Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation stated that the execution of these judgments contradicts the constitution of the Russian Federation. On 11 June 2022, the Russian Federation adopted a law stipulating that the execution of the ECtHR judgments is "unconstitutional".

4 GENERAL MEASURES

3. The Russian Federation has yet to show an intention to present an action plan to improve the Transnistrian region's human rights record and ensure that the right to education is universally guaranteed without discrimination. The "law on languages", which stipulates that the so-called "Moldovan language" must be written in Cyrillic alphabet rather than the Latin script, remains in force. Moreover, the Russian Federation has not made any formal commitments nor taken any tangible measures to address political interference in the educational process and to ensure the safety of children and teachers of these schools. In the absence of concrete measures, the risks of being subjected to an aggressive campaign of intimidation, administrative pressures, illegal interrogations, and gross human rights violations are still present. As the European Parliament resolution of 6 February 2014 on Transnistria (2014/2552(RSP)) indicates, the aggressive campaign against the 8 Romanian-language schools has a repetitive character. Given Russia's decisive influence over the separatist leadership, it can be argued that Russia has the capacity and tools to determine the *de facto* administration to reconsider its practices and attitude towards the 8 Latin-script schools.
4. While the primary concerns revolve around the right to education and linguistic freedom, the broader implications of the situation in the Transnistrian region touch upon the essence of cultural identity, self-expression, and the fundamental principles of human

rights. The enforcement of the "law on languages" is not just a linguistic issue; it symbolizes a deeper struggle for cultural preservation and the right to self-identity.

5. The international community has been observing the situation with increasing concern, recognizing the potential for such policies to escalate into broader socio-political conflicts. The absence of a proactive stance from the Russian Federation, given its influence in the region, raises questions about its long-term intentions and commitment to fostering stability in the region.
6. The challenges faced by the Romanian-language schools serve as a microcosm of the larger issues at play. The international community's focus is not just on the immediate safety of students and teachers but also on the preservation of cultural heritage.
7. Furthermore, the situation underscores the importance of diplomatic engagement and international dialogue. Regional stakeholders and international bodies must come together to address these concerns, ensuring that cultural and linguistic rights are not trampled upon in geopolitical power plays. The Transnistrian region's future stability hinges on a collaborative approach that respects the rights and identities of all its inhabitants.

5 KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2024

5.1 GENERAL ISSUES

8. In 2024, Romanian-language schools in the Transnistrian region continued to face illegal actions from local structures, ranging from significantly increased utility tariffs compared to Tiraspol-subordinated schools, to intrusive inspections and threats directed at teachers crossing illegal checkpoints. Parents have been intimidated and interrogated to force them to transfer their children to institutions controlled by Tiraspol, while the schools themselves have been required to provide student lists for enlistment by paramilitary structures.
9. Meanwhile, longstanding structural problems, such as the lack of adequate transport and insufficient or substandard teaching facilities, remain largely unresolved. Financial constraints limit the schools' ability to expand or improve classroom spaces, and the growing number of students only intensifies these challenges. At the same time, more support is needed to integrate non-Romanian-speaking pupils, promote the learning of Romanian, and improve access to cultural services in the Romanian language.
10. During the 12–14 March 2024 session of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, the fundamental importance of primary and secondary education in one's national or mother tongue was reaffirmed, in line with Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights. The Committee recalled that, in addition to payment of just satisfaction, execution of the *Catan and Others v. Russia* judgments involves revoking the discriminatory regulatory framework, restoring schools teaching in the Latin script to their original premises or other suitable facilities, and implementing measures to stop the harassment of students, parents, and teachers. Over the last four years, the eight

Romanian-language schools have seen a slight but steady increase in enrollment, with a rise of 123 students compared to the 2023–2024 academic year¹. Roghi Gymnasium has seen a particularly notable 20% increase², now serving pupils from villages such as Țibuleuca and Corjova, as well as from the city of Dubăsari, reflecting both the attraction to Romanian-language education and the urgent need for improved school conditions.

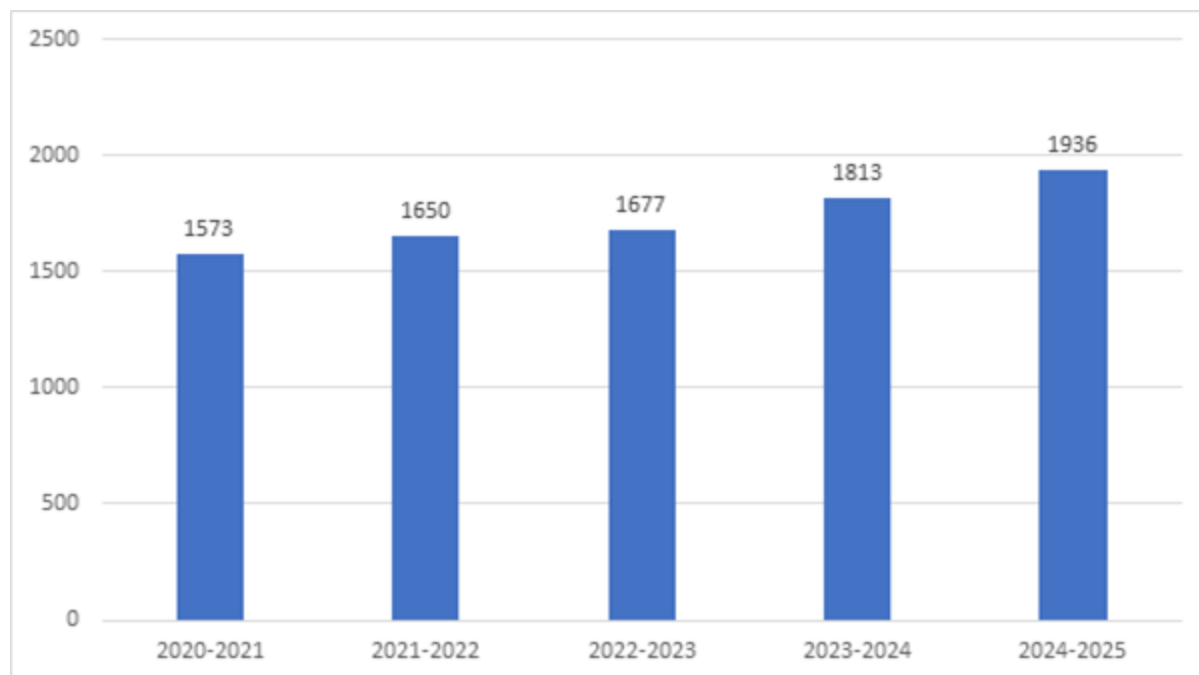


Figure 1³ illustrates the upward trend in the number of students attending Romanian-language schools in the Transnistrian region between the 2020–2021 and 2024–2025 academic years. According to the data provided by the Bureau of Reintegration, there were **1,573 students** in 2020–2021, and this figure rose steadily each year to reach **1,936** in 2024–2025. The consistent growth over this five-year period underlines both the enduring demand for Romanian-language education and the challenges these institutions face in accommodating an expanding student population.

11. In recent years, the eight Romanian-language schools under the Moldovan Ministry of Education have maintained an average annual growth of about 5% in student enrollment. By contrast, roughly half of the 158 schools under the control of the Transnistrian authorities are experiencing an acute shortage of students, with some institutions

¹ Government of the Republic of Moldova. "On the Evolution of the Number of Children in the Eight Educational Institutions with Romanian Language Instruction in the Transnistrian Region." Last modified September 17, 2024. Accessed January 20, 2025. <https://www.gov.md/en/node/53306>.

² Bureau for Reintegration Policies. "Response No. 23-78-14223 of December 24, 2024." Accessed January 20, 2025.

³ Source: compiled by the authors based on data provided by the Bureau for Reintegration, "On the evolution of the number of children in the eight Romanian-language schools in the Transnistrian region." <https://www.gov.md/en/node/53306> (accessed on November 19, 2024).

enrolling only one or two pupils per class. Many of these schools also face a significant shortage of qualified teaching staff, so that even core subjects are sometimes taught by preschool educators or individuals who do not hold a teacher's diploma. The Transnistrian authorities have proposed closing some of the smaller schools—including those that teach in the so-called Moldovan Cyrillic script—a measure that could further boost enrollment in Romanian-language schools administered by the Ministry of Education.

12. Over the past few years, these Romanian-language schools have become increasingly attractive, especially for Russian-speaking families seeking a nationally or internationally recognized diploma. This recognition opens the way for students to continue their education at universities on the right bank of the Dniester or in European Union member states. The rise in enrollment, however, requires additional budget allocations for expanding and restructuring school buildings, improving study conditions, opening new classes, and purchasing modern, larger-capacity buses. An example is the recent refusal of “Mihai Eminescu” Theoretical Lyceum in Dubăsari to open two extra 12th-grade classes in Russian, due to a lack of resources—even though an increasing number of Russian-speaking pupils have sought admission. The school currently operates three high school classes in Russian, serving a total of 46 students.
13. This growing demand for Romanian-language education in the Transnistrian region offers an opportunity for national authorities to integrate more children and youth from the temporarily occupied territory into the national education system. Such efforts would promote Romanian-language studies, foster national culture, and encourage a more democratic and pluralistic educational model. For students in the Transnistrian region, these institutions are the sole alternative to Tiraspol-administered schools, where political indoctrination and militarization often prevail. In addition, the contribution of Romanian-language schools to implementing the National Program for Studying Romanian by Adults highlights their essential role not only in the country's reintegration process but also in bringing local inhabitants closer to national cultural and linguistic values⁴.

5.2 INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICIENCIES IN ROMANIAN-LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

14. A major and persistent challenge for Romanian-language schools in the Transnistrian region is the absence of buildings that meet modern educational standards. This issue grows more urgent as student numbers rise each year, creating a pressing need to restructure and expand existing spaces or secure alternative locations. Most of these schools—subordinated to the Ministry of Education—have gone without major renovation work for over two decades. In many cases, the limited budget only covers minor repairs, forcing parents to contribute financially to routine maintenance.
15. At “**Lucian Blaga**” Theoretical Lyceum in Tiraspol, the lack of a sports hall, assembly hall, canteen, language lab, and dedicated science laboratories seriously hampers the learning

⁴ Zona de Securitate. "Residents of the Transnistrian Region Actively Learn Romanian: Enrollment in the National Program for Studying the Romanian Language Continues This Year." Accessed January 20, 2025. <https://zonadesecuritate.md/video-locuitorii-regiunii-transnistrene-invata-activ-romana-inscrierile-la-programul-national-de-studiere-a-limbii-romane-continua-si-in-acest-an/>.

process. Adding to the strain, the de facto authorities in Tiraspol consistently refuse to grant the school access to sports facilities in nearby buildings. The lyceum's urgent renovation needs—roof, façade, heating system—are estimated at 2.3 million lei, with no clear funding source yet available.

16. For **“Alexandru cel Bun” Theoretical Lyceum** in Bender and the affiliated boarding school, the shortage of essential facilities, coupled with an aging structure built 67 years ago, calls for extensive work: structural consolidation, modernization of the courtyard and sports field, and renovation of classrooms. Although the school secured 1.71 million lei to reinforce one study block in 2025, the absence of any cadastral documentation for the property poses additional hurdles.
17. Similar problems affect **“Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt” Lyceum** in Grigoriopol, currently operating in exile in the village of Doroțcaia, where it shares premises with another institution. The surge in enrollment and limited physical space often force classes to run from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m., despite some students having to travel up to 30 kilometers. Without major renovation funds—estimated at two million lei—the school cannot address urgent needs such as updating the electrical system, improving classroom lighting, and procuring modern equipment.
18. Meanwhile, **“Mihai Eminescu” Theoretical Lyceum** in Corjova, Dubăsari, occupies a former residential building that still bears bullet marks from the 1992 war and has never undergone a full overhaul. The gym, canteen, assembly hall, and computer labs also fall short of standard requirements. Over the past four years, the institution has received only 21,000–22,000 lei annually for repairs, which are generally funded by parents' contributions. Proposed investments—including roof repairs, thermal insulation, and a sports field upgrade—would cost millions of lei, far beyond what the lyceum's budget can support.
19. At **“Evrika” Theoretical Lyceum** in Rîbnița, the budget stretches only to minor interior repairs. Costs for repairing the building façade alone are around two million lei. The bathrooms require renovation (estimated at 800,000–900,000 lei), and a corridor lined with flammable material must be addressed at a cost of about 200,000 lei. The school would also benefit from setting up a language lab to improve foreign-language instruction.
20. By contrast, **“Constantin Sucitu” Gymnasium** in Corjova, Dubăsari, faces fewer infrastructure challenges but still needs funding to renovate its assembly hall. Although 300,000 lei were spent in 2024, the allocation for 2025 is only 91,000 lei, leaving the school short of the estimated 600,000 lei needed to finish the project. **Roghi Gymnasium** has received investments in its sanitary facilities, cafeteria, stadium, and sports hall but continues to require additional resources to modernize classrooms and acquire updated technology.
21. A final matter of concern is that most of these schools operate under limited-term leases with the de facto Transnistrian authorities, set to expire in 2027. Whether these contracts will be renewed, and under what conditions, remains unknown. Furthermore, the maximum 10-year lease period disqualifies schools from many donor opportunities that require longer-term agreements of 20 to 25 years. This uncertainty impedes their ability

to secure the substantial funds needed for capital repairs and upgrades, leaving vital infrastructure improvements in limbo.

5.3 TRANSPORTATION

22. Transportation remains a significant challenge for the Romanian-language schools in the Transnistrian region. Most of the vehicles used—whether buses or minibuses—are outdated and require frequent, often costly repairs, made more difficult by the lack of spare parts. The growing enrollment in these schools, with students coming from increasingly distant localities, underscores the need for modern, higher-capacity vehicles.
23. Several schools stand out for their particularly urgent transportation needs. “Alexandru cel Bun” Theoretical Lyceum in Bender transports 270 students daily, relying on vehicles that make 12 trips each day within the city. The school urgently needs a bus with at least 50 seats. “Evrîka” Theoretical Lyceum in Rîbnița, which transports 111 students daily from five rural communities over distances of up to 80–90 kilometers (round trip), similarly requires a 35-seat bus. Two of its three vehicles are no longer repairable due to discontinued spare parts. At “Lucian Blaga” Theoretical Lyceum in Tiraspol, 167 students—around 69% of the total—are transported daily, some from localities as far as 40 kilometers away, such as Dnestrovsc. The school currently operates three outdated vehicles (16, 18, and 19 seats, respectively) and rents a 55-seat bus. The rental alone costs approximately 230,000 lei per semester.
24. “Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt” Lyceum leases five coaches, each with 50–55 seats, transporting 310 students from five different localities, at an annual cost of about 2.1 million lei. Because the school lacks parking space in Grigoriopol, purchasing its own buses is not an option. At “Mihai Eminescu” Theoretical Lyceum in Corjova, Dubăsari, 500 students and over 40 staff members travel daily from eight localities. The school has six vehicles with a combined capacity of 151 seats, forcing each bus to make three or four daily runs. In 2024, the school received one new 17-seat bus (part of a batch of 69 funded by the Romanian government), but it still needs three large-capacity buses to replace older models.
25. “Constantin Sucitu” Gymnasium in Corjova currently owns a 16-seat minibus, which transports 32 students from Dubăsari, Lunga, and Mahala, and urgently needs a bus with around 40 seats to keep pace with enrollment growth. Roghi Gymnasium now has one new 17-seat bus (again part of the Romanian-supported acquisition) to serve 22 students from Țîbuleuca and Dubăsari, covering distances of approximately 25 kilometers. However, the school still requires an additional vehicle to run both routes simultaneously.
26. In all these cases, the lack of suitable transport not only strains financial resources but also risks students’ safety and convenience, particularly as enrollment continues to rise. Without consistent, reliable mobility, families face further challenges in accessing Romanian-language education, potentially discouraging them from enrolling their children in these schools.
27. Beyond student transport, “**Lucian Blaga**” Lyceum in Tiraspol, “**Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt**” Lyceum in Grigoriopol (Doroțcaia), and “**Mihai Eminescu**” Theoretical Lyceum in Dubăsari all require an additional vehicle for administrative tasks and teacher travel. Their existing vehicles, already in poor condition, are used not only for transporting teachers but also

for bringing diesel and gasoline from the right bank of the Dniester, as well as for carrying construction materials, food supplies, and textbooks. Meanwhile, **“Alexandru cel Bun” Lyceum** in Bender will soon need to replace its current vehicle due to excessive wear and tear.

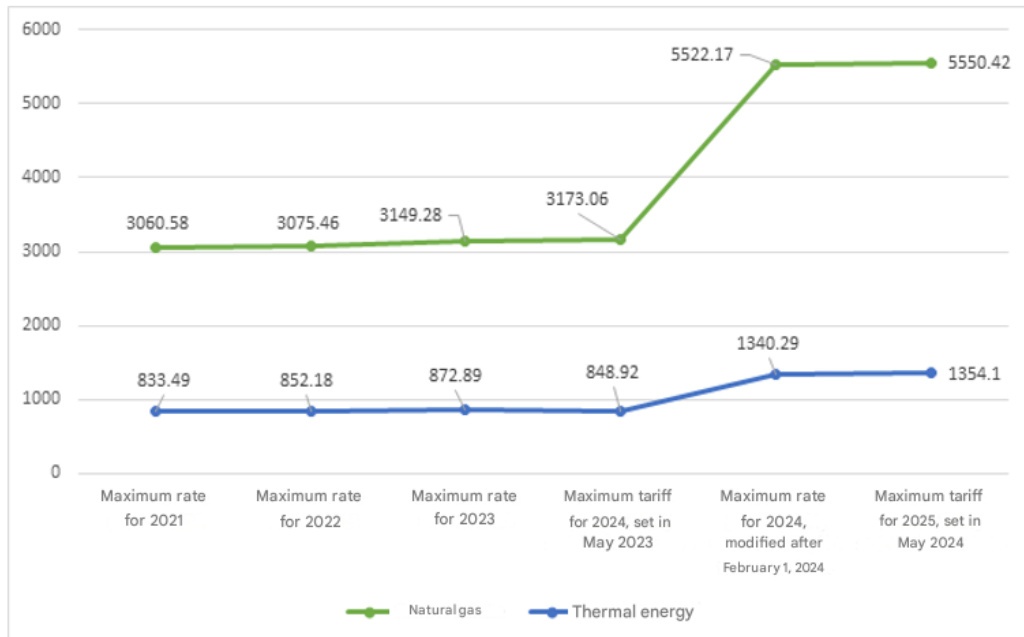
5.4 ACCESS TO ROMANIAN CULTURAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

28. Students from Romanian-language schools in the Transnistrian region face limited access to cultural activities such as book fairs, museum tours, theatrical performances, and film festivals. This limitation stems in large part from illegal checkpoints that restrict both the students’ travel to the right bank of the Dniester and the entry of cultural figures into the region. Such constraints prevent schools from fully integrating cultural resources into their educational programs and make it difficult to cultivate a strong sense of national cultural identity among students, who often encounter a pronounced pro-Russian and anti-Western discourse in the area.
29. Although the Ministry of Culture (MC) does not currently implement a specialized program for these eight Romanian-language schools, it has organized sporadic cultural activities benefiting them and other institutions in the Security Zone, in cooperation with entities such as the National Museum of Art, the National Museum of Romanian Literature, the National Museum of History of Moldova, and the “Ion Creangă” National Children’s Library. Over the last two years, with support from development partners, these institutions have arranged writer visits, theater performances, a study trip to Lithuania, 14 guided museum tours, and both a summer and an autumn school. Most of these activities have involved students from the “Lucian Blaga” Theoretical Lyceum in Tiraspol and the “Evrika” Theoretical Lyceum in Rîbnița. An especially positive example is the ongoing collaboration among the “Ginta Latină” Culture and Arts Center, “Lucian Blaga” Lyceum, and “Evrika” Lyceum, which regularly enables dozens of students to attend theatrical performances.
30. Additionally, 18-year-old residents of the Transnistrian region who hold Moldovan citizenship can, in theory, benefit from the MC’s “Cultural Voucher” program, which provides recipients with a 1,000-lei allowance to spend on cultural products or services. However, the program has not been well publicized in the region. Currently, the Ministry of Culture lacks information on how many young people from left-bank districts and the municipality of Bender have actually used these vouchers, as the distribution of beneficiaries by region is unknown. For 2025, the Ministry intends to increase the program’s visibility—working in cooperation with the Ministry of Education—to reach potential beneficiaries in the Transnistrian region. In the future, expanding this cultural voucher scheme to younger pupils could further enhance their access to cultural resources. Similar programs have been implemented in other countries and have been recommended by the Council of Europe as a way to strengthen cultural engagement among students of various ages.

5.5 ABUSES COMMITTED AGAINST SCHOOLS IN 2024: UTILITY TARIFFS

31. In 2024, Romanian-language schools in the Transnistrian region once again became the targets of abusive measures imposed by the de facto authorities—this time concerning utility tariffs. The rate hikes followed the entry into force of the Republic of Moldova’s new Customs Code, which stipulates that economic operators in the Transnistrian region registered with the Public Services Agency must pay the same customs duties as companies on the right bank of the Dniester. In response, on January 15, 2024, Tiraspol amended a “decree” initially signed by Alexander Rosenberg on May 31, 2023. The revised decree increases communal service prices specifically for commercial and non-commercial institutions not registered in the Transnistrian region, as well as for individuals who are not “citizens of the ‘rnm’” and own non-residential properties on the left bank of the Dniester or in Bender municipality.
32. An analysis of the tariffs set by this decree shows that schools subordinated to Chişinău—considered by the de facto authorities as “foreign” institutions—incur the highest costs for utilities such as natural gas, electricity, and heating. On May 27, 2024, Rosenberg signed yet another decree for the 2025 rates, which will once again raise the communal tariffs. As a result, Romanian-language schools will continue paying the highest utility prices in the region throughout 2025.
33. The figure below illustrates how the most substantial increase in tariffs since 2021 occurred after the new Customs Code took effect. This underscores Tiraspol’s use of the schools’ vulnerable position to retaliate against measures undertaken by Moldova’s constitutional authorities to establish a unified economic space.

Figure 2. Trend in the Increase of Natural Gas and Heating Tariffs for Romanian-Language Schools, 2021–2025



Sources: Compiled by the authors based on information provided by the Transnistrian de facto authorities via a series of “decrees” regulating communal service tariffs between 2020 and 2024.

34. According to data provided by the Bureau for Reintegration (BPR), utility rates for Romanian-language schools in the Transnistrian region rose by an average of **82%** in 2024, compared to 2023. The most dramatic surge affects natural gas, where prices jumped by **501%**, followed by a **125%** increase for electricity. The graphs below illustrate the stark contrast between the rates paid by institutions under Tiraspol’s control and those subordinated to Moldova’s constitutional authorities. The greatest disparity appears in natural gas supply: for every 1,000 m³ consumed, commercial and non-commercial entities not registered in the region—such as Romanian-language schools—pay **roughly 148 times more** than schools under Tiraspol’s administration.
35. With regard to heating, Romanian-language schools pay **4 to 5 times more** than Tiraspol-affiliated institutions, while electricity costs run up to **32%** higher and water and sewage rates are about **20%** higher for the Romanian-language schools.
36. In 2024, under **Government Decision No. 341/15.05.2024**, the Program of Activities for Reintegration of the Country allocated **1,475,000 lei** to the Ministry of Education and Research for covering operating costs in the eight Romanian-language schools. Compared to 2021, 2022, and 2023, this one-time support increased by **84.37%** in 2024, largely due to the substantial hike in utility prices. Yet this amount is generally sufficient only for everyday expenses and leaves little room for investment in upgrading or modernizing school facilities.
37. The discriminatory escalation of utility rates, along with other structural problems these schools face, was discussed on **December 6, 2024**, during a meeting of the education working group. For the first time, school directors took part in these talks, which resumed after a two-year hiatus caused by repeated refusals from Transnistrian authorities. According to the BPR, four formal requests to convene the working group were submitted in 2024, alongside multiple indirect approaches through other dialogue platforms.

5.6 INTIMIDATION OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN 2024

38. Reports from 2024 document cases of intimidation and harassment targeting parents who enroll their children in Romanian-language schools in the Transnistrian region. These incidents have escalated as more Russian-speaking families and individuals working within local structures nevertheless choose schools subordinated to the Moldovan authorities. Some families, confronted with coercion and interrogations by Transnistrian security forces, ultimately decide to transfer their children to Tiraspol-administered schools.
39. In September 2024, the local press launched a campaign of intimidation and denigration aimed at the “Alexandru cel Bun” Theoretical Lyceum in Bender. This campaign began when the Transnistrian authorities barred Moldovan writers Maria Ivanov, Dumitru Crudu, Emilian Galaicu-Păun, and Elvira Moroșan from visiting the lyceum on the grounds

that the literary magazine *Timpul*, which they were bringing, contained “political propaganda.”

40. The Transnistrian state-funded television channel “Pervii Pridnestrovskii” aired segments suggesting three major points:
 - * The magazines were allegedly designed to foster hostility among “Transnistrian children” toward Russia and Transnistrian institutions.
 - * Russians were portrayed as barbarians, and local residents as separatist puppets.
 - * Distribution of these magazines and the writers’ visits supposedly aimed to create children’s groups that could later engage in “subversive” activities against the so-called “rmn.”
41. During these broadcasts, the television station underscored that Transnistrian authorities keep a close watch on materials distributed in Romanian-language schools—particularly those concerning history and civic education—and included video footage taken in the school courtyard without the institution’s permission.
42. Meanwhile, during the annual joint inspection prior to the start of the academic year, Transnistrian representatives displayed a hostile attitude toward Romanian-language school administrators. To date, “Alexandru cel Bun” Theoretical Lyceum in Bender has not received a fire-safety compliance certificate for the 2024–2025 school year. Addressing this issue requires going through the so-called “rmn ministry of foreign affairs,” led by Vitali Ignatiev, who is known for his lack of cooperation on Romanian-language school matters. The transfer of fire-safety oversight to this ministry highlights how Transnistrian authorities leverage the schools’ precarious situation as a negotiating tool.

5.7 MILITARY REGISTRATION WITH PARAMILITARY FORCES

43. According to reports from 2024, the Transnistrian de facto authorities continue to request from school administrators the names of 16-year-old boys in order to register them for possible future conscription into paramilitary forces. This registration process is managed by the so-called “rmn ministry of defense,” headed by Oleg Obrucikov, and includes data on all residents of the region—regardless of whether they hold Transnistrian “citizenship.” Only young people living permanently outside the region, individuals who have renounced Transnistrian “citizenship,” those unfit for service due to health reasons, those already sentenced to imprisonment, people who have completed at least 12 months of military service in another state, or those over 27 are exempt from conscription.
44. Most students attending Romanian-language schools in the Transnistrian region were born there and therefore hold “rmn citizenship,” which makes them vulnerable to forced conscription. For decades, local authorities have conditioned access to various public services on obtaining Transnistrian documents, including birth certificates and “rmn citizenship.” To avoid appearing on military rolls, 16-year-olds must register with Moldovan military commissariats on the right bank of the Dniester (or in another country) and, in many cases, change their residence accordingly. However, if they hold

Transnistrian “citizenship” and remain in the region for more than 90 days, or if they wish to obtain a Transnistrian passport, they are still required to register with the de facto forces.

45. Although not widespread, there have been cases in the past four years where students who transferred in the 12th grade from a Tiraspol-controlled school to a Romanian-language school were forcibly recruited into the paramilitary forces. Such students are particularly vulnerable because Transnistrian “legislation” mandates conscription after the 11th grade in Tiraspol-controlled schools, regardless of whether students move on to a 12th grade in a Moldovan-administered school.
46. The constitutional authorities do not currently collect data on how many students in these eight schools hold Transnistrian “citizenship” or proactively provide information to families about how to avoid forced conscription. No dedicated hotlines or publicly available guidelines exist on official websites to help residents navigate this issue. When asked about formal measures or protocols to protect students at risk of forced registration, the Bureau for Reintegration (BPR) referred only to maintaining continuous dialogue with school administrations, encouraging families to register on the right bank, and offering case-by-case support. Beyond these general statements, however, there appear to be no detailed preventive measures or a formal interinstitutional mechanism—uniting the Ministry of Education, the BPR, and the Ministry of Defense—to shield students from conscription. As a result, the help offered remains largely reactive, leaving families and young people in a precarious situation.

6 CONCLUSIONS

47. **Principled non-execution undermining the ECtHR.** The Russian Federation’s continued refusal to comply with *Catan and Others v. Russia*, including its deliberate non-payment of just satisfaction, represents a flagrant affront to the authority of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). By declaring ECtHR judgments “unconstitutional” and adopting domestic legislation reinforcing this stance, Russia has openly repudiated its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). This explicit rejection not only nullifies the rights of the victims but also severely erodes the credibility of the Court and sets a dangerous precedent for other states that may seek to disregard binding international decisions.
48. **Systemic repression and legal loopholes.** As emphasised in our previous Communication⁵, the de facto administration in the Transnistrian region has consolidated its repressive institutional and legal apparatus, effectively shutting down avenues for victims to file complaints at national or supranational levels. This entrenchment of authoritarian control exposes the inherent limitations of existing enforcement mechanisms. The region’s “grey zone” status effectively creates legal loopholes that

⁵ Council of Europe. "Communication from the Republic of Moldova Concerning the Case of Catan and Others v. Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation (Application No. 43370/04)." HUDOC-EXEC. Accessed January 20, 2025. [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng?i=DH-DD\(2023\)1110E](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng?i=DH-DD(2023)1110E).

authoritarian regimes exploit, ensuring widespread impunity for human rights violations such as forced conscription, educational discrimination, arbitrary intimidation of parents and teachers, and restricted access to justice.

49. **Alarming deterioration in temporarily occupied territories.** The marked deterioration in fundamental rights within the Transnistrian region—and other similarly administered territories—should not be viewed as a mere local anomaly. It reflects a far-reaching issue with global ramifications. These regions function as testing grounds for authoritarian tactics designed to circumvent international scrutiny, silence dissent, and consolidate power. Left unchecked, such tactics may be replicated elsewhere, perpetuating a cycle of repression that poses an existential threat to the international rules-based order and the global protection of human rights.
50. **Global threat and expansion of authoritarian rule.** The impunity characterizing post-Soviet “grey zones” is part of a broader phenomenon of authoritarian resurgence. States or de facto entities emboldened by successful evasion of accountability often seek to influence or infiltrate international institutions, manipulate political processes, and perpetuate disinformation campaigns. These strategies undermine democratic values, fracture unity among democratic states, and diminish the capacity of supranational bodies to enforce human rights standards. Ultimately, this contributes to the worldwide expansion of authoritarian rule, eroding public trust in both national and international legal frameworks.
51. **Vicious climate of impunity.** Decades of unaddressed or inadequately addressed rights violations have entrenched a culture of impunity, particularly in territories like Transnistria. This “vicious climate” is not merely an internal governance issue; it implicates the fundamental ethos of the international community. If rights enshrined in the ECHR can be systematically violated without consequence, the entire multilateral human rights system risks losing its moral and legal force. The absence of stringent accountability measures effectively signals to perpetrators that the international community lacks both the will and the means to defend human rights in contested territories.
52. **Urgent need for a strengthened accountability framework.** The persistent nature of these abuses underscores the urgent need for building and reinforcing an international accountability framework capable of addressing human rights violations in temporarily occupied regions. This framework must include:
 - * **Individual responsibility:** Identifying and prosecuting those personally responsible for sanctioning or executing human rights abuses, whether in a formal state capacity or as part of de facto administrations.
 - * **Political, economic, financial, and diplomatic mechanisms:** Employing sanctions, asset freezes, travel bans, targeted diplomatic isolation, and other measures to pressure states and entities complicit in violations to comply with international norms.
 - * **Legal and non-legal approaches:** A holistic strategy extending beyond purely judicial remedies—given the limitations of legal processes under conditions of

non-execution—to include sustained political engagement, policy reforms, and educational initiatives that strengthen the rule of law over time.

53. **Erosion of trust in international institutions.** The inability of courts and organizations—at both national and supranational levels—to secure effective remedies in these contexts fosters disillusionment among victims. Their reliance on legal redress is undermined by bureaucratic hurdles, political stalemates, and states’ refusal to acknowledge binding judgments. This weakening of trust eventually diminishes the influence and efficacy of institutions like the ECtHR, the Council of Europe (CoE), and others. As a result, authoritarian regimes gain confidence, employing the same strategies of denial, legislative shielding, and intimidation to escape accountability.
54. **Risk of wider global replication.** The tolerance of persistent violations in the Transnistrian region risks becoming a template for other regimes or entities looking to legitimize authoritarian practices. If these actions continue without meaningful repercussions, similar tactics—targeting minority language rights, religious freedoms, freedom of expression, or other fundamental rights—could proliferate globally. The international community thus faces not only a localized crisis but a situation with far-reaching implications for human rights protection everywhere.
55. **Political will as a prerequisite for compliance.** Given that Russia’s stance goes beyond mere neglect and instead involves deliberate and openly defiant conduct, the issue of non-execution cannot be resolved through judicial pathways alone. Sustainable improvements in the human rights landscape hinge on political goodwill and vigorous diplomatic engagement. It is incumbent upon the CoE and its member states to elevate the non-execution of ECtHR judgments to a political and diplomatic priority, applying coordinated pressure—through sanctions, public condemnation, and strategic negotiations—so that Russia and other non-compliant actors recognize that continued defiance of international obligations carries tangible costs.

7 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

56. Building on both the conclusions above and the proposed measures, in our opinion, the following targeted recommendations fall squarely within the CM’s mandate and can be promptly undertaken:

1. **Establish a *specialised expert panel* to draft an Action Plan**

Action: Through a formal CM decision, convene practitioners, legal experts, representatives from the applicant schools, and civil society organisations (including Promo-LEX) into a *Specialised Panel*.

Mandate:

Draft a clear, time-bound *Action Plan* detailing the general measures necessary to fulfill the requirements of the *Catan and Others v. Russia* judgments.

Identify practical steps for revoking discriminatory regulations, safeguarding the right to education, and curbing human rights abuses in the Transnistrian region.

Outcome: An authoritative blueprint for execution, adopted as a CM resolution or recommendation, specifying responsibilities, timelines, and measurable indicators.

2. Create an *Independent Monitoring Mechanism for the Transnistrian Region*

Action: Adopt a CM resolution mandating the Secretary General to set up an ongoing *Monitoring Mechanism*, composed of human rights experts, education specialists, and Council of Europe officials.

Mandate:

Conduct regular on-site or near-site assessments of the human rights situation—particularly the right to education.

Issue periodic public reports identifying non-compliance, recommending corrective measures, and highlighting obstacles.

Coordinate with relevant CoE entities (e.g., the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Venice Commission) for legal and policy guidance.

Outcome: Greater transparency, continuous follow-up on the Transnistrian “grey zone,” and an institutional channel to escalate urgent concerns directly to the CM.

3. Institute a *Dedicated Compensation Mechanism and Trust Fund*

Action: Initiate discussions within the CM to design and implement a *Compensation Fund* under the CoE framework, inspired by the “Trust Fund for Victims” model of the International Criminal Court.

Mandate:

Develop clear operational rules and eligibility criteria for victims who have not received reparations from the Russian Federation.

Explore synergies with EU and UN initiatives to align potential asset seizure or reallocation mechanisms—particularly those involving Russian assets earmarked for reparation.

Secure voluntary contributions from member states to ensure sustainable financing.

Outcome: Tangible financial support for victims in “grey zones,” reinforcing the ECHR’s principle of *collective enforcement* and mitigating the direct harm caused by non-payment of just satisfaction.

4. Adopt a *Strategic Action Plan Addressing “Grey Zones” and Combatting Impunity*

Action: Using the CM’s thematic debates and decision-making authority, propose and approve a *Strategic Plan* outlining cross-cutting measures to tackle human rights violations in territories with de facto administrations.

Mandate:

Detail best practices and recommended legislation for member states to strengthen accountability—combining legal, diplomatic, economic, and political tools to pressure non-compliant entities.

Integrate guidance on preventing forced conscription, ensuring freedom of movement, and safeguarding minority linguistic rights.

Promote synergy with other international bodies to harmonise sanctions, travel bans, and asset freezes where appropriate.

Outcome: A comprehensive reference framework to help national governments and international partners coordinate efforts, thereby reducing impunity and enhancing protection of fundamental freedoms.

5. Foster Collaboration with Universities and Research Institutions

Action: Issue a CM recommendation encouraging CoE organs and member states to partner with academic and research institutions capable of conducting in-depth studies on:

Obstacles to executing judgments in contested regions,

Innovative mechanisms for enforcement despite political non-cooperation,

Effective strategies for safeguarding children’s rights and linguistic freedoms in conflict settings.

Outcome: Data-driven policy recommendations and novel legal tools that the CM can integrate into existing or new frameworks, ensuring evidence-based decisions on the ground.

6. Maintain vigilant supervision and escalate political pressure

Action: Include *Catan and Others v. Russia* on the regular agenda of CM Human Rights (DH) meetings and issue robust interim resolutions openly calling upon Russia to:

Fulfil its payment obligations and cease obstructive practices,

Engage in dialogue with the newly formed Expert Panel and Monitoring Mechanism.

Mandate:

Make explicit the CM’s readiness to consider additional diplomatic or economic countermeasures should Russia persist in non-compliance.

Invite other member states to reinforce these measures via national avenues—public statements, parliamentary resolutions, or targeted sanctions.

Outcome: Heightened political visibility, ensuring that non-execution remains a priority. Sustained pressure can stimulate a change in Russia’s stance or, at minimum, discourage further deterioration of the situation on the ground.

7. Advance an International Accountability Framework

Action: In line with the principle of *collective enforcement*, the CM should formally recommend the development of an *International Accountability Framework*.

Mandate:

Incorporate individual and collective sanctions, restrictive measures, and legal avenues for prosecuting or penalising those responsible for ongoing violations—whether state actors or de facto authorities.

Coordinate with EU bodies, the OSCE, and UN agencies to align on shared strategies, such as the targeted use of Magnitsky-style laws, and to streamline evidence collection on rights abuses.

Outcome: A coherent, multidimensional approach that closes legal loopholes exploited by authoritarian regimes and sets a precedent for addressing future cases of non-execution in similar contexts.

57. By taking these concrete actions—each of which falls within the CM’s existing powers—the Committee of Ministers will underscore its unwavering commitment to the enforceability of ECtHR judgments and the integrity of the European human rights system.
58. We respectfully urge the CM to intensify its supervision of *Catan and Others v. Russia*, mobilise all available legal, political, and financial levers, and issue strong, coordinated recommendations aimed at holding Russia accountable. This not only upholds justice for the victims but also serves as a crucial bulwark against the global proliferation of authoritarian practices in so-called “grey zones.”

On behalf of the Promo-LEX Association
