

REPORT

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE TRANSNISTRIAN REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Retrospective of 2025

Chişinău, 2026



Promo-LEX
Advancing democracy and human rights



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ACRONYMS

ANRE	National Energy Regulatory Agency
BARS	BARS Military Sports Club
CBRN	Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
MGB	Ministry of State Security in Tiraspol
MGRES	Cuciurgan Power Plant (MGRES)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PMR	Abbreviation used in names/media for the Transnistrian region
MRT	“Moldovan Republic of Transnistria” (terminology used by the ECtHR)
TCCC	Tactical Combat Casualty Care (tactical first aid)
TSV	The television channel “TSV”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2025, the human rights situation in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova deteriorated significantly, against a backdrop of increasingly repressive practices, persistent impunity and a deepening energy and economic crisis. A turning point was the onset of a severe energy crisis on 1 January 2025, following the cessation of Russian gas supplies to the region. This led to massive power cuts, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without heating and several thousand more without jobs. The energy crisis quickly turned into an economic crisis, with direct effects on living standards. In this context, the Tiraspol regime introduced austerity measures, including the centralisation of budgetary resources, delays in the payment of salaries and pensions, the elimination of some social benefits and cuts in education and health spending. At the same time, budget allocations continued to give significant weight to the security forces, propaganda and paramilitary structures.

In parallel with the deterioration of socio-economic conditions, the Tiraspol regime intensified its identity propaganda and disinformation, declaring both 2025 and 2026 as the “Year of the Transnistrian People”. The initiative targeted children and young people in particular. In the first half of 2025 alone, 984 “patriotic” activities were organised, in which 136,637 people reportedly participated. At the same time, schools were required to use only the term “Transnistrian people” and to organise quarterly lessons on Transnistrian “identity” and “statehood”. These measures aim to consolidate an artificial identity, presented as distinct from that of the rest of the Republic of Moldova. A particularly worrying trend is the militarisation and indoctrination of children from preschool age, including orphans and children with special needs in correctional institutions. In 2025, dozens of children participated in competitions and camps organised in Belarus, the Russian Federation and occupied Crimea, focused on mythologizing the Soviet past. Several hundred more participated in military training camps, and over 120 minors aged between 10 and 17 were enrolled in the Suvorov military school and the cadet school.

The report also highlights the expansion of control over the digital and information space. Between April and July 2025, “amendments” were adopted allowing the blocking of online resources for content considered offensive to “public morality” or “disrespectful to society”, and in November 2025, the categories of online resources that can be included in the register of prohibited sites were further expanded. The measures explicitly target content related to the LGBT community, gender transition, reproductive autonomy and the decision not to have children.

In the field of education, the eight schools teaching in Romanian (in Latin script) recorded a moderate increase of 5.4% in the number of pupils, exceeding the threshold of 2,000 pupils for the first time in the last 15 years. This is a positive trend in the context of demographic decline and the hostile climate in which these institutions operate. However, chronic problems persist in terms of infrastructure, outdated and insufficient transport, discriminatory utility tariffs, as well as smear and disinformation campaigns, including the labelling of schools as “instruments of Nazi rehabilitation”. We note separately the case of the “Evrika” High School in Rîbnița, whose premises remain illegally blocked by the Tiraspol regime, despite the conditions set by Chișinău in

February 2025 as part of the agreement on natural gas transit. The situation highlights the fragility of these conditions in the absence of effective mechanisms to sanction non-compliance.

As for farmers in the Dubăsari district, they continued to face abusive restrictions imposed by the Tiraspol regime on access to agricultural land located along the Camenca-Tiraspol route. The constraints include illegal taxes, conditioning the transport of crops on registration in the region, and restricted access to irrigation systems. The situation for farmers remains uncertain, as the alleged access permits are granted for only three months and require quarterly renewals.

Another set of developments described in the report relates to the strengthening of mechanisms for surveillance and control of public space. The video and biometric surveillance system, managed by the so-called “minister of internal affairs” in Tiraspol, has been expanded. Further concerns are raised by the fact that the Tiraspol regime plans to expand this system in 2026 by connecting private cameras. At the same time, the terrorist alert level has been extended throughout the year. In addition, there has been an expansion of the influence of paramilitary structures. Against the backdrop of staff shortages, the Tiraspol regime has encouraged the recruitment of military personnel into civilian structures and enterprises in the region. They have been employed, among other things, as guards in illegal prisons. The regime also intends to recruit students as “investigators” in a system that already suffers from multiple shortcomings in the quality of its investigations.

Last but not least, Promo-LEX notes the perpetuation of systemic abuses within the illegal justice and detention system in the Transnistrian region, characterised by opacity, the absence of basic procedural guarantees and impunity. Persons illegally deprived of their liberty continued to be exposed to degrading treatment, poor detention conditions and, in some cases, the risk of forced labour, in the absence of effective independent control and monitoring mechanisms. Access to adequate food, hygiene, natural light and ventilation is severely limited. At the same time, communication with the outside world is censored, making it virtually impossible to report abuses in detention. The release of some illegally detained persons during the year has once again highlighted the major difficulties they face when seeking specialised support from the constitutional authorities. In the absence of an effective assistance mechanism and inter-institutional cooperation, they do not receive information support, temporary financial support or access to medical and psychological services, which makes them even more vulnerable. The situation is aggravated by the fact that some of these people are forced to relocate to the right bank of the Nistru River due to intimidation that continues even after their release.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a retrospective overview of the main developments affecting human rights in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova during 2025. The document was prepared in the context of the visible deterioration of the fundamental rights situation in the region and the crises that have affected the local population.

The need for this report stems from the systemic nature of violations of fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the difficulty of independent monitoring of the region. In the absence of control mechanisms and effective access for independent observers, rigorous public documentation of trends, alleged legislative measures adopted by the occupation structures and incidents remains essential for understanding the situation and keeping the issue on the public and international agenda.

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of the major dynamics in 2025, with a focus on the effects on the inhabitants of the left bank of the Nistru and, where relevant, on the people in the localities of the Security Zone affected by the decisions of the Tiraspol regime. To this end, the report pursues the following objectives: (i) to identify the main trends and developments that affected human rights in 2025; (ii) highlighting the links between the energy and economic crisis and the intensification of control over society; and (iii) presenting the impact on socio-economic, civil and political rights, including the right to education, freedom of expression and freedom of movement.

The report is structured in six thematic chapters, which analyse: the economic situation and its impact on living standards; restrictions on access to agricultural land for farmers in the Dubăsari district; control over the information environment and civic space, including the expansion of mass surveillance of the population; the militarisation and politicisation of education; the consolidation of the influence of paramilitary structures; and systemic abuses within the illegal justice and detention system. Finally, the report brings together the conclusions and a series of recommendations addressed to decision-makers and other stakeholders.

The findings presented are based on documentation of developments in 2025, compiled through analysis of public sources, including alleged acts and decisions published by the Tiraspol regime, information from constitutional authorities, press materials, field notes prepared following round tables organised by Promo-LEX, as well as testimonies from victims assisted by Promo-LEX lawyers.

Note on terminology: the use in this report of terms such as “minister”, “MRT”, “law” or “government” does not imply the legitimisation or *de jure* recognition of the occupation structures, their functions and the decisions they issue. We have, as an exception, allowed the use of the exact names of Transnistrian structures and functions within them, solely to ensure the most accurate identification of the entities and individuals involved in human rights violations.

CHAPTER 1



**THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE
TRANSNISTRIAN REGION AND ITS IMPACT ON
THE LIVING STANDARDS OF THE REGION'S
INHABITANTS**

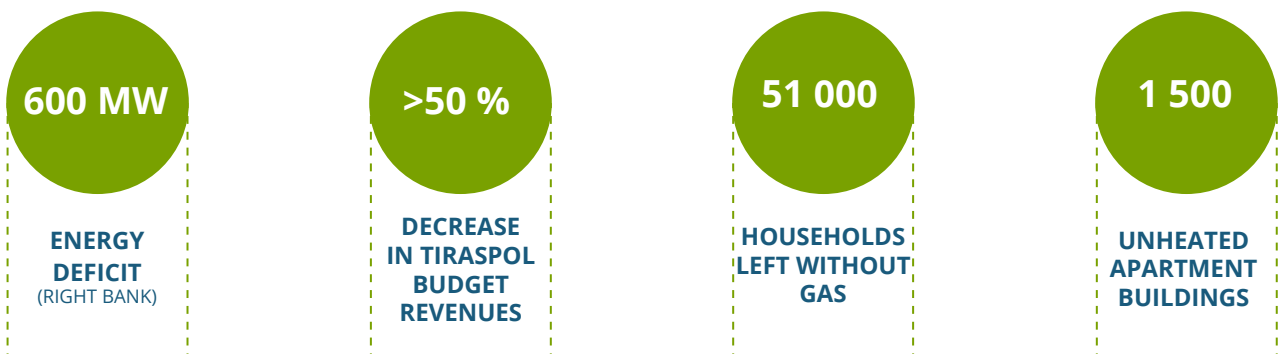
1.1 The emergence and evolution of the energy crisis

Since the beginning of 2025, the Transnistrian region has faced a **sharp deterioration in its socio-economic situation**, caused mainly by the energy shock generated by Gazprom, as well as the unsustainable nature of the local economic model. This model depends on free access to natural gas and its indirect exploitation through electricity production, an arrangement that was suddenly disrupted on 1 January 2025. On that date, Russian gas supplies to the region were cut off, which also led to the cessation of electricity production at the Cuciurgan power plant (MGRES) on the right bank of the Nistru. This disrupted an essential component of the regional economy and a major source of income for the Tiraspol administration. The constitutional authorities of the Republic of Moldova noted that, until 31 December 2024, the Cuciurgan power plant provided a significant part of the energy consumption on the right bank of the Nistru, and that the gas cut-off had created a deficit of around 600 MW, which could only be covered by imports and purchases on the domestic electricity market¹. At the same time, the inability to resume electricity sales to the right bank meant that the Tiraspol regime lost more than half of the source of liquidity that covered the local budget deficit. Large enterprises on the left bank of the Nistru, which had previously enjoyed cheap energy, also began to experience increasing financial difficulties.

The direct social impact of the energy crisis was felt in the first half of the year. The supply of natural gas, central heating and hot water was interrupted in many localities in the region, including the Security Zone. On 1 January 2025, energy companies in the region stopped gas deliveries to several localities (especially to domestic consumers), and even before that, on 28 December 2024, Tiraspoltransgaz had disconnected some public institutions in localities controlled by the constitutional authorities². Over 51,000 households were left without gas and approximately 1,500 apartment buildings without heating in the middle of winter. The situation was characterised as a risk of humanitarian crisis and was exploited by Moscow to launch a new wave of disinformation against Chişinău³.

Figure 1.

The immediate effects of the January 2025 energy shock on the Transnistrian region and the right bank of the Nistru



1 Government of the Republic of Moldova, "Electricity consumption for 1 January 2025 is fully covered", 01.01.2025, <https://gov.md/ro/comunicate-de-presa/celula-de-criza-de-la-guvern-consumul-de-energie-electrica-pentru-1-ianuarie>

2 *Ibid.*

3 Reuters, "Thousands left without heating or gas in Moldova's pro-Russian breakaway region," 6 January 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/thousands-left-without-heat-or-gas-moldovas-pro-russian-separatist-region-2025-01-06/>.

Against this backdrop, **the European Union and European institutions intervened with emergency support measures to prevent the situation from worsening.** Financing mechanisms were proposed for the purchase of gas to meet the immediate needs of the population on the left bank of the Nistru⁴.

In practice, at the beginning of February 2025, gas deliveries to the region were partially resumed through arrangements financed by European assistance. Moldovagaz shipped a first batch of ~3 million cubic metres of gas to the left bank of the Nistru. Unconditional European funds amounting to €20 million covered the needs for the first ten days of February. At the same time, **the EU also proposed aid conditional on commitments to respect human rights in the Transnistrian region, but these were rejected by the Tiraspol regime**⁵.

In February 2025, alternative supply arrangements emerged, supported by credit associated with the Russian Federation, but without full transparency⁶. Chişinău warned that these solutions were unpredictable, non-transparent and unsustainable, mentioning the involvement of a company from the United Arab Emirates that would pay the Hungarian company *MET Gas and Energy Marketing AG*, which would purchase the gas and deliver it to the region. In practice, the gas reached Tiraspol through obscure intermediaries, highlighting the precariousness of the supply mechanism.

The lack of sustainability of this solution came up several times during 2025. The state of economic emergency introduced in December 2024 was extended until 31 August 2025 and reintroduced in December 2025.

1.2 Austerity measures adopted in the context of the energy and economic crisis

The energy shock in 2025, caused by the drastic reduction in gas supplies, forced the adoption of budgetary austerity measures. For example, in June 2025, the daily volume of gas delivered fell to about half of previous levels, and on 11 June 2025, a state of emergency was declared in the economy for 30 days, citing the sudden reduction in supplies⁷. At the beginning of June, the region was still receiving an average of 1 million m³ of gas per day, but on some days the volumes fell to 0.7-0.8 million m³. **Energy-saving measures were immediately imposed**, for example, hot water supply was cut off for two weeks in multi-storey apartment buildings, and the sale of compressed natural gas at filling stations was suspended.

With financial reserves depleted and budget revenues declining, the Tiraspol regime moved to austerity measures that directly impacted living standards and public services. In June 2025, it emerged that Tiraspol had requested external financial assistance from Russia amounting to USD 200 million to balance the budget⁸. Decisions were taken to pay May pensions from commercial loans, to switch some public sector employees to part-time work and to stagger the payment of holiday allowances for teachers. Social benefits for vulnerable groups were also delayed, and from 1 June 2025, supplements granted to ~4,500 pensioners who were also employees were reduced (the simultaneous payment of pensions and salaries was discontinued).

4 European Commission, "EU provides emergency support to tackle energy crisis in Moldova", 27 January 2025, https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-offers-emergency-support-tackle-energy-crisis-moldova-2025-01-27_en.

5 Radio Free Europe Moldova, "Tiraspol rejects EU offer. It will receive gas through companies in Hungary and Dubai, subject to certain conditions", <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/tiraspolul-respinge-oferta-ue-va-primi-gaz-prin-companii-din-ungaria-si-dubai-cu-cateva-conditii/33309290.html>.

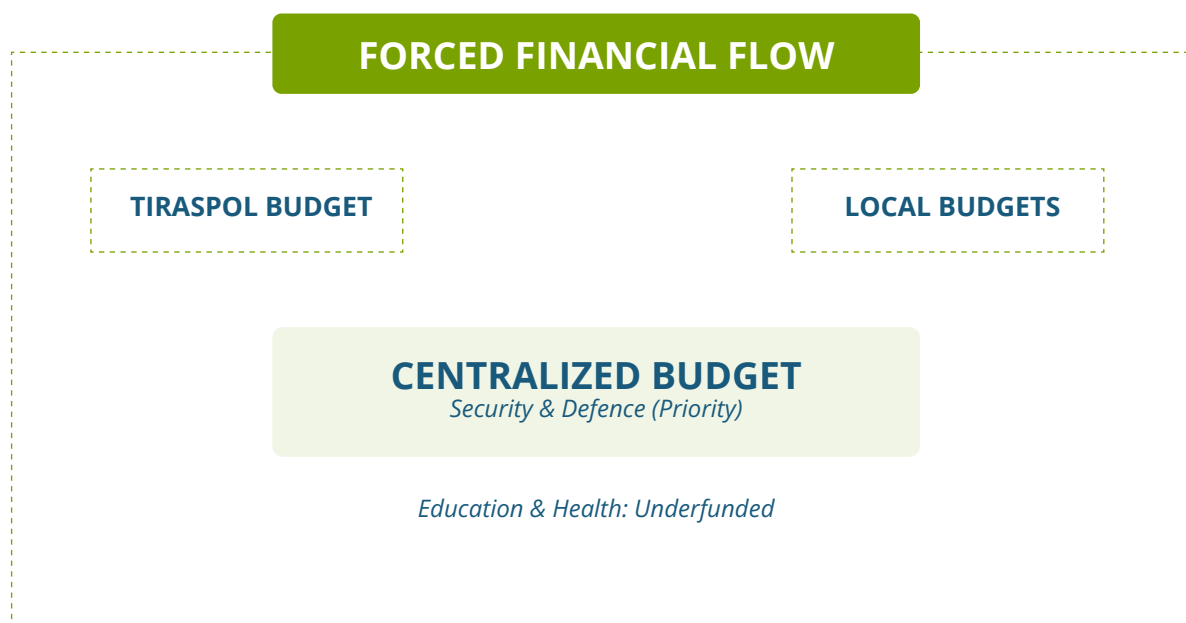
6 RISE Moldova, "The route of 'humanitarian' gas from Russia to Transnistria via Dubai-Switzerland", 10 February 2025, <https://www.rise.md/drumul-gazului-umanitar-din-rusia-in-transnistria-via-dubai-elvetia/>.

7 Ziarul de Gardă, "Economic emergency regime reintroduced in Transnistria. Krasnoselski's decree approved by the so-called Supreme Soviet", 11 June 2025, <https://www.zdg.md/stiri/regimul-de-urgenta-economica-a-fost-reintrodus-in-regiunea-transnistreana-decretul-lui-krasnoselski-aprobat-de-pretinsul-sovietul-suprem/>.

8 Telegraph, "Tiraspol asks Russia for \$200 million in 'aid' to cope with economic crisis", 6 June 2025, <https://telegraph.md/tiraspolul-cere-rusieia-un-ajutor-de-200-de-milioane-de-dolari-pentru-a-face-fata-crizei-economice/>.

Figure 2.

Centralisation of budgetary resources and prioritisation of security and defence spending



From a regulatory perspective, the regime adopted rules for crisis management of public finances. By Order No. 195rp of 20 June 2025, Tiraspol imposed the centralisation of financial resources: payment of salaries to budgetary employees at least once a month (between 1 July and 31 December 2025), redirection of 75 million Transnistrian rubles from the Tiraspol city budget to the central budget, and daily transfer to the centre of some revenues collected at the local level. The possibility of reallocating funds between different local budgets to cover temporary deficits was also provided for. Also in June, Decision No. 167 of 16 June 2025 limited the contracting of new budgetary expenditure, prohibiting purchases and investments considered non-essential and strictly prioritising “vital” expenditure, such as security and defence; while areas such as education, health and social protection remained underfunded and subject to delayed payments⁹. In July and August 2025, the economic emergency regime was extended successively, being reintroduced in December 2025.

1.3 Effects of the energy and economic crisis on the population and the local economy

In terms of economic activity, the region experienced a severe contraction in the first half of 2025. Data presented by Tiraspol authorities indicate a 51% decline in exports compared to the first half of the previous year, and indicators such as industrial production and retail trade were in sharp decline¹⁰. However, the authorities in Chişinău noted that the European Union remained the main destination for exports from economic agents in the region in the first six months of 2025, a sign that, despite the decline, trade interdependence with the EU market continued. In August 2025, the temporary stabilisation of gas supplies allowed some industrial activities to resume. For example, the Rîbniţa Metallurgical Plant (one of the largest industrial consumers of gas and a local budget contributor) resumed production, allowing electricity generation to increase to around 160-220 MW. There was also a resumption of scrap iron exports from Ukraine to the region in July 2025, which was important for the plant's operation and for bringing foreign currency into the region¹¹.

9 “government of the MRT”, “On the procedure for limiting the acceptance, execution and financing of budgetary obligations”, 17 June 2025, <https://government.gospmr.org/o-poryadke-ogranicheniya-prinyatiya-ispolneniya-i-finansirovaniya-byudzhethnyh-obyazatelstv/>.

10 “customs service of the MRT”, “statistics”, 10 July 2025, <https://customs.gospmr.org/news/tamozhennaya-statistika/>.

11 NewsMaker, “Ukraine has resumed scrap metal exports to the Transnistrian region”, 21 August 2025 <https://newsmaker.md/ro/presa-ucraina-a-reluat-exportul-de-fier-vechi-catre-regiunea-transnistreana>.

In terms of the energy sector, a sensitive issue was the Cuciurgan Power Plant (MGRES). Until 31 December 2024, this plant provided significant revenues from energy deliveries to the right bank, but in the absence of this revenue in 2025, the Tiraspol regime attempted to create a legal basis for subsidising the plant's losses from the budget by introducing an article allowing the financing of the difference between production costs and regulated tariffs. On the other hand, Chişinău took precautionary measures, with the National Energy Regulatory Agency (ANRE) deciding on 18 August 2025 to maintain Moldovagaz as the gas supplier for the Transnistrian region at least until the end of March 2026. Conditions were imposed that the gas purchased be exclusively for the region's needs and that the region build up reserves of at least 15% of the average annual consumption of domestic consumers and essential social institutions¹².

Figure 3.

Reduction in exports and weakening of the local economy



In September-October 2025, **social pressures on the left bank of the Nistru remained high**. There were reports of delays in public sector wage payments and uncertainties regarding gas supplies for the cold season. Between 2 and 17 October 2025, Tiraspol introduced a new energy saving regime, citing payment difficulties and repeated changes of intermediaries in gas procurement. This energy austerity regime resulted in the shutdown of hot water in localities and the deterioration of conditions in educational institutions. Subsequently, on 17 October, it was announced that gas supplies would be restored to contractual volumes, thanks to purchases made through the MET group and payments made through a company in Dubai, confirming the fragmented and vulnerable nature of the region's gas supply mechanism¹³.

In the second half of 2025, as **budgetary pressures intensified**, the Tiraspol regime resorted to exceptional measures to "mobilise" internal resources, including an attempt to forcibly redistribute bank profits to cover social spending. Thus, amendments were proposed requiring commercial banks controlled by the regime to transfer by 1 November 2025 their entire undistributed net profits for 2024 (totalling approximately 91.2 million Transnistrian rubles), the justification being to avoid delays in the payment of salaries in the public sector¹⁴. Subsequently, the solution was reformulated, and the

12 ANRE, "S.A. Moldovagaz will be responsible for supplying natural gas to the Transnistrian region until the end of March 2026", 18 August 2025, <https://anre.md/sa-moldovagaz-va-fi-responsabila-de-aprovizionarea-cu-gaze-naturale-a-regiunii-transnistrene-pana-la-sfarsitul-lunii-martie-2026-3-1109>.

13 NewsMaker, "Gas returns to the left bank of the Nistru. Residents will once again have hot water and heating", 16 October 2025, <https://newsmaker.md/ro/gazul-revine-in-stanga-nistrului-locuitorii-vor-avea-din-nou-apa-calda-si-caldura>.

14 "president of the MRT", Order No. 330rp of 1 October 2025, 16 October 2025, <https://president.gospmr.org/pravovye-akty/rasporjajeniya/o-proekte-zakona-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-vnesenii-dopolneniya-v-zakon-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-gosudarstvennih-merah-napravlenih-na-minimizatsiyu-negativnogo-vozdeystviya-na-ekonomiku-svyazannogo-s-sokrascheniem-prekrascheniem-postavok-prirodnogo-gaza-v-pridnestrovskuyu-moldavskuyu-respubliku-v-2025-godu-.html>.

document adopted by the so-called “supreme soviet” on 22 October and signed on 27 October 2025 introduced the obligation for the so-called “Transnistrian central bank” to transfer 100 million Transnistrian rubles to the budget as an advance payment from future profits¹⁵.

Overall, in 2025 the Transnistrian region experienced repeated episodes of energy and budgetary crisis. The response instruments of the Tiraspol administration focused on centralising financial flows and maintaining basic social payments with difficulty. Energy supply solutions remained largely temporary and non-transparent, depending on ad hoc arrangements, with a direct impact on basic public services, industrial activity and household incomes. This situation maintains high risks of recurring crises and deterioration in living standards, especially during periods of increased seasonal consumption.

15 “president of the MRT”, “Amendment to the Law on measures to minimise the negative impact on the economy associated with the reduction (cessation) of natural gas supplies in 2025”, 22 October 2025, <https://president.gospmr.org/legal-acts/laws/law-of-the-pridnestrovian-moldavian-republic-on-amendments-to-the-law-of-the-pridnestrovian-moldavian-republic-on-state-measures-aimed-at-minimising-negativnogo-vozdeystviya-na-ekonomiku-svyazannogo-s-sokrascheniem-prekrascheniem-postavok-prirodnogo-gaza-v-pridnestrovskuyu-moldavskuyu-respubliku-v-2025-godu-.html>.

CHAPTER 2



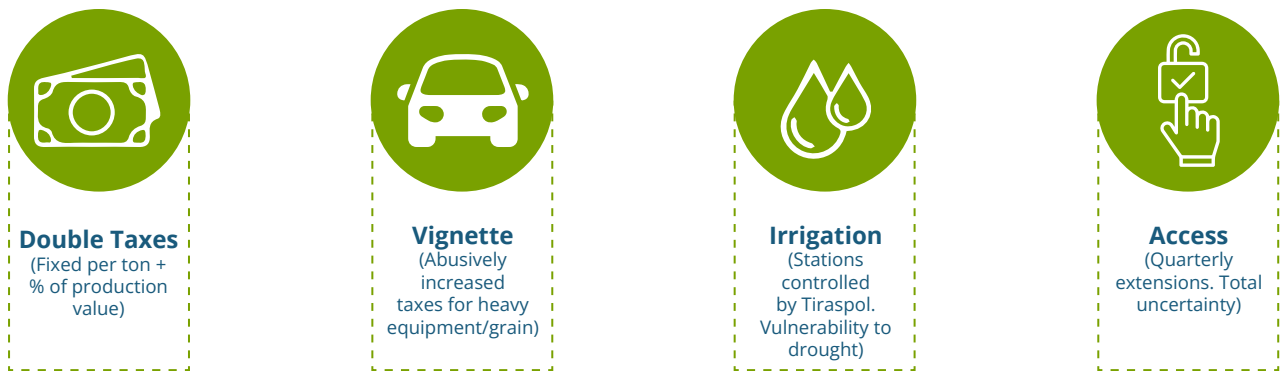
THE SITUATION OF FARMERS IN THE DUBĂSARI DISTRICT

Another chronic problem concerning socio-economic rights in 2025 was the restriction of access for farmers in the Dubăsari district, who own land located along the Camenca-Tiraspol route, to agricultural work and the movement of produce. Although access to these lands had previously been agreed through special mechanisms, in recent years additional barriers have been introduced, which remain in place in 2025, requiring the presentation of documents that must be renewed annually and making the transport of crops conditional on unauthorised illegal payments unilaterally established by the Tiraspol regime, including the application of a percentage of the value of the production. These practices directly affect the right to own and use land, freedom of movement and the right to engage in economic activity¹⁶.

In 2025, these constraints were maintained and formalised through successive extensions of the so-called “simplified” procedure for access to transport agricultural machinery and production. In reality, this “simplified” mechanism imposes a series of bureaucratic and financial burdens on farmers: they must periodically obtain a “land user” certificate, accept abusive checks and controls, and pay illegal fees for the movement of agricultural machinery and the transport of crops. Extensions were granted for short periods (usually quarterly), maintaining a **high level of uncertainty for farmers**, who are unable to plan their seasonal agricultural work (sowing, harvesting, storage, sales contracts) properly. In 2025, the regime continued to make access to land conditional on the payment of these illegitimate taxes and compliance with unilaterally imposed procedures, without guarantees of stability and without effective mechanisms for challenging them¹⁷.

Figure 4.

Coercive measures affecting farmers in Dubăsari



The constraints were not limited to the financial aspect. Restrictions were reported on the use of agricultural equipment, seeds and fertilisers, subject to obtaining additional approvals from the Tiraspol authorities, which reduces farmers’ ability to carry out agricultural work on time and maintain crop productivity. At the same time, access to irrigation systems remained vulnerable, as water pumping stations are under the control of Transnistrian authorities. This complicates the provision of water for crops, especially during periods of drought, and increases farmers’ uncertainty about maintaining yields¹⁸. Under such conditions, agriculture in the area becomes unstable and difficult to plan, including from the perspective of investments and costs per hectare.

16 Government of the Republic of Moldova, “Current problems faced by farmers in the Dubăsari district”, 09.09.2025, <https://gov.md/ro/comunicate-de-presa-bpr/probleme-curente-cu-care-se-confrunta-fermierii-din-raionul-dubasari>.

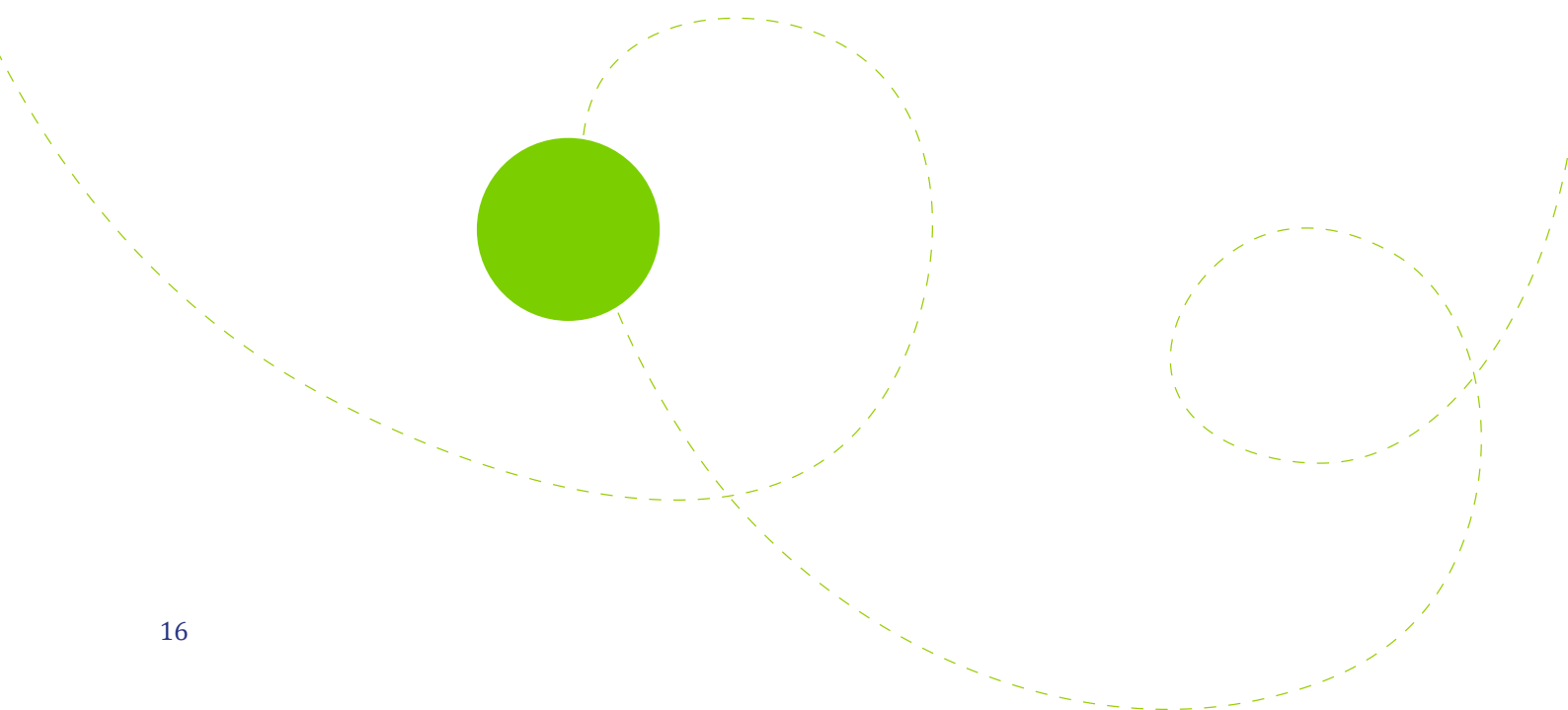
17 “government of the MRT”, “Resolution No. 12 on resolving land use issues in the Dubăsari district”, 10 January 2025, <https://government.gospmr.org/ob-uregulirovanii-voprosov-zemlepolzovaniya-v-dubossarskom-rajone-2/>.

18 AgroExpert, “Pressure on farmers in Dubăsari: Here are the problems they face”, 9 September 2025, <https://agroexpert.md/rom/novosti/presiuni-asupra-agricultorilor-din-dubasari-iata-problemele-cu-care-se-confrunta>.

In 2025, there was also **an increase in the financial burden on farmers due to higher illegal taxes**. The Tiraspol regime extended the application of abusive taxes for the use of roads in the region, especially for heavy goods vehicles used in the agricultural supply chain (e.g. for transporting grain). These increases directly increased farmers' logistics costs and reduced their competitiveness. At the same time, the Tiraspol authorities continued to resort to administrative pressure: repeated checks on farmers and intimidation measures, which affect the predictability of activities and increase the risk of losses at critical moments of the agricultural season.

In terms of taxation, the practice of imposing illegal payments has continued, with farmers being required to pay fixed rates per tonne for the transport of certain crops and, in addition, payments calculated on the basis of the value of the produce transported. These amounts reduce farmers' profit margins and increase the risk that they will be unable to meet their contractual and banking obligations, especially if access to land is restricted or delayed. Farmers have pointed out that **the compensatory measures offered by the Moldovan authorities, while welcome for immediate damage mitigation, do not cover the structural effects of the blockages**. The restrictions imposed may prevent them from meeting delivery deadlines, repaying loans or avoiding commercial penalties, leading to losses and debts.

Overall, the situation in 2025 indicates **the continuation of illegal practices conditioning access to agricultural land**. Farmers are forced to accept illegitimate fees and interact with unrecognised structures just to be able to cultivate their own land. The cumulative effect is a decline in farm income, a deterioration in economic predictability in the agricultural sector and increased vulnerability of food security through higher production costs, disruption of agricultural planning and limited access to irrigation. At the same time, the temporary nature of access "permits" and the constant pressure exerted through controls and taxes function as instruments of economic coercion, with the aim of subordinating and controlling the activities of farmers in the targeted area.



CHAPTER 3



THE INFORMATION AND EDUCATIONAL SPACE IN THE TRANSNISTRIAN REGION

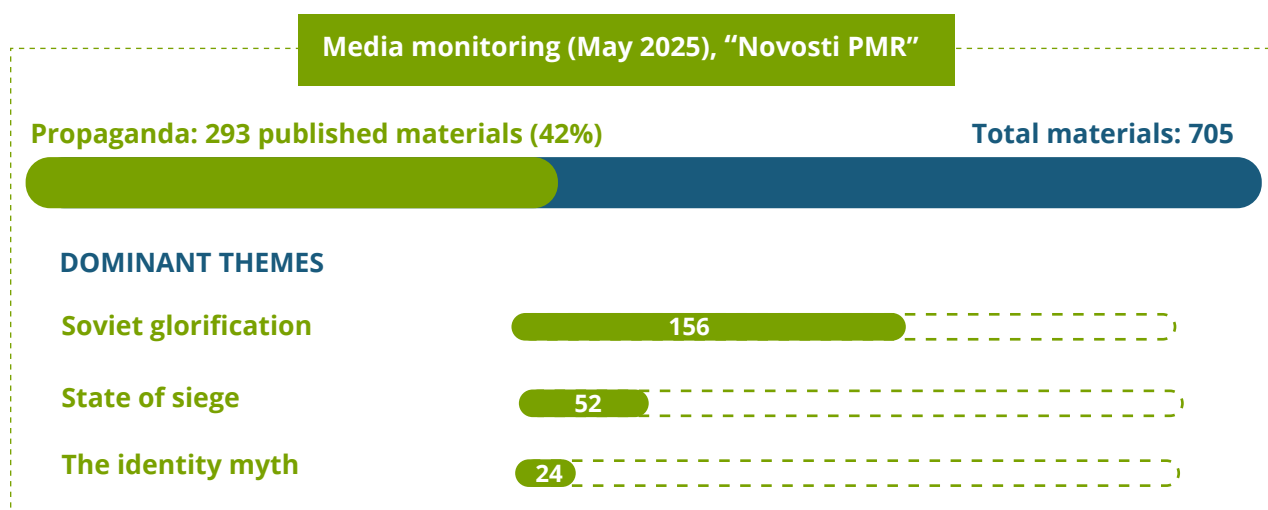
3.1 Propaganda and the myth of Transnistrian identity

In 2025, the Tiraspol regime consolidated a set of measures aimed at controlling the information space, standardising public discourse and strengthening ideological indoctrination, especially among children and young people. These developments combine symbolic and educational tools, publicly funded propaganda campaigns, and packages of “legislative changes” that substantially broaden the categories of prohibited content and increase the possibilities for intervention by the security forces, the “prosecutor’s office” and institutions subordinate to the regime.

The findings from 2025 are also supported by empirical data on dominant media content. Monitoring carried out between May and August 2025 on three representative sources in the region, “Novosti PMR”, “Pervii Pridnestrovskii” and “TSV”, indicates that in May 2025 alone, out of 705 materials published and distributed by Novosti PMR, 293 (approx. 42%) were propaganda in nature, with a pronounced concentration in the first half of the month, in the context of 9 May. Thematically, the most frequent narratives focused on **glorifying the Soviet military past** (156 articles), **cultivating a state of siege** (52), **consolidating the myth of Transnistrian identity and statehood** (24), **promoting the military-patriotic discourse** (17) and **promoting Russian occupation troops and so-called pacification mechanisms** (14). At the same time, the Transnistrian media space remains dominated by Kremlin-loyal broadcasters, either local public institutions or retransmitted Russian channels, with no counterbalance from independent sources¹⁹.

Figure 5.

Share of propaganda materials vs. neutral content materials



A central feature is the continuation of the project to construct an artificial identity, distinct from that of the population on the right bank of the Nistru. This logic is reflected in Decree No. 346 declaring 2026 **the “Year of the Transnistrian People”**, signed on 28 August 2025 by Vadim Krasnoselski. The document establishes the obligation to develop an action plan, include financial resources for implementation in the 2026 draft budget, involve a wide range of “institutions” and ensure constant media coverage with amplified public visibility. In practice, this decision transforms identity propaganda into a multi-year programme, integrated into budgetary and administrative planning²⁰.

19 Promo-LEX Association, Analytical Note: Propaganda and disinformation in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, 2025, <https://promolex.md/nota-analitica-propaganda-si-dezinformarea-in-regiunea-transnistreana-a-republicii-moldova/>.

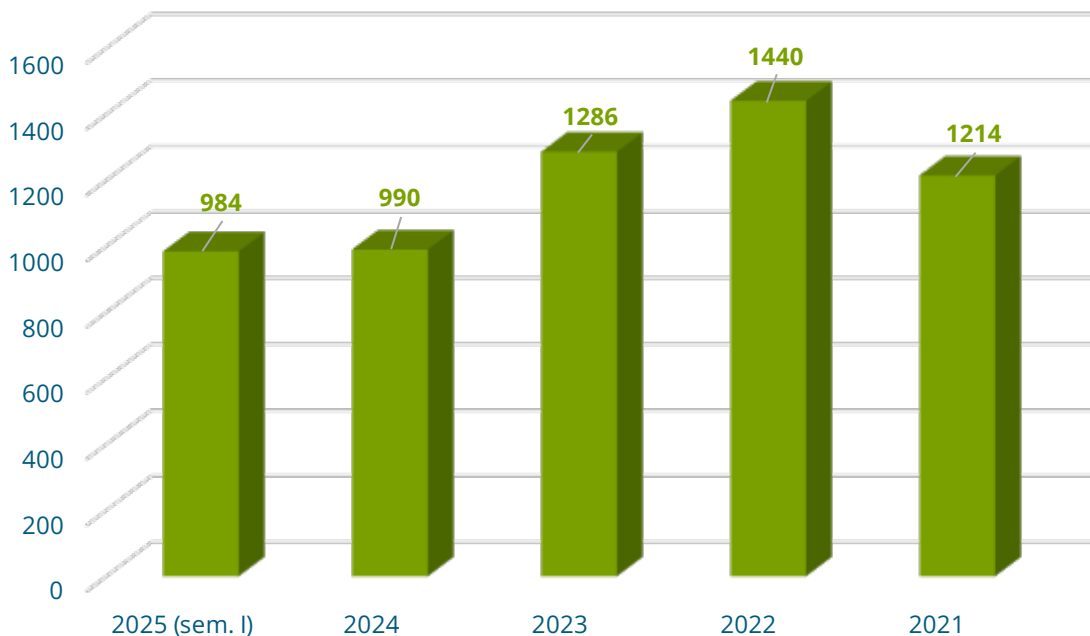
20 “ministry of justice of the MRT”, “Order No. 745r of 22 December 2025 on the approval of the republican action plan for the Year of the Transnistrian People 2026 in the MRT”, <http://www.minjust.gospmr.org/oo/Publication.nsf/805c7c76d1c2ddb8c2258213005be80f/4caf0ba9399bcb05cc2258d6b0047bd17!OpenDocument>.

The educational dimension is treated as the main infrastructure for indoctrination. In the summer and early autumn of 2025, the mandatory use of the single term “Transnistrian people” in the education system was promoted through instructions distributed to the directors of educational institutions, including on the basis of a protocol of the so-called “government” of 6 August 2025. According to an “order” made public on 4 September 2025, teachers are required to avoid plural formulations such as “the peoples living in Transnistria” and to use exclusively the unifying phrase. The measure is complemented by the organisation of thematic lessons on “**the Transnistrian people and statehood**” in schools, kindergartens and universities, in parallel with “patriotism lessons” that reinterpret the 1992 war as a defence of “the Transnistrian people” against “Moldovan nationalists”. Through this scheme, textbooks, curricula and school language become instruments for legitimising the regime and normalising an exclusivist historical narrative²¹.

Promo-LEX has observed a **steady increase in the number of “patriotic” activities** in recent years. In 2021, the regime organised 1,214 such events. The number increased to 1,440 in 2022, involving 156,307 participants, and remained high in 2023, when 1,286 events were organised, with 163,664 people participating. Although the total number of activities fell to 990 in 2024, the level of participation remained high (123,465 people involved). In the first half of 2025 alone, 984 events were organised, involving 136,637 participants. This increase seems to be closely linked to the multiple crises that have affected the region in recent years, increasingly undermining the regime’s position of power.

Figure 6.

Evolution of the number of “patriotic events” in 2021-2025



Source: compiled by the authors based on reports published by the “service for culture and historical heritage” in Tiraspol, <https://culture.gospmr.org/2016-07-01-05-22-55/otchet>.

At the same time, ideological control is reinforced by packages of “laws” explicitly inspired by Russian Federation legislation and integrated into the broader agenda

²¹ Telegram channel of the MOCT media portal, “Teachers in Transnistria are required to use only the phrase ‘Transnistrian people’ when referring to the region’s inhabitants”, 04.09.2025, https://t.me/most_dnestr/1738.

of promoting so-called “traditional values”. A package of six “draft laws” targets changes in areas such as information and information technologies, advertising, cinema, mass media, child rights guarantees and the code of administrative offences. The stated objective is **to ban “propaganda of non-traditional values,”** including content associated with non-traditional relationships, gender transition, and so-called “propaganda of childless life”. The package introduces fines which, relative to the average local salary indicated for the first months of 2025, may place disproportionate pressure on the population, with an effect of discouragement and self-censorship. A critical issue is the vagueness of the concepts used and the lack of examples or clear definitions, which facilitates arbitrary enforcement, including for punitive purposes against persons perceived as ideologically undesirable²².



22 “ministry of justice of the MRT”, Order 25r of 22.01.2024, https://minpros.gospmr.org/file/Report/22.01.24_25p.pdf.

3.2 Censorship and control of the online environment

Control and censorship in the online space have been expanded through a package of “legislative amendments” that introduce penalties for **digital content deemed offensive** to “public morality” or that expresses “a clear lack of respect for society”. Under the regime’s logic, the “prosecutor” or “deputies” can initiate procedures to block information resources, and the list of categories of content subject to censorship has been significantly expanded to include subjective criteria such as “insulting human dignity” or distributing images of illegal or violent acts, interpreted in very vague terms. These changes were registered in April 2025, signed on 22 July 2025 and entered into force on 6 August 2025, strengthening the possibility of filtering information and repressing critical expression in the digital environment.

In November 2025, the mechanism for blocking online content was further strengthened by Decision No. 345 of 24 November 2025, which formally extends the existing rules from 2018 on the inclusion of websites in a unified register of prohibited resources (a register that is not public). The new decision creates an additional basis for **blocking content related to privacy, gender identity, sexual orientation and reproductive autonomy**, introducing very broad criteria such as “forming a perception of social equality” between “traditional” and “non-traditional” relationships, “justifying” or “popularising” such relationships, or “stimulating interest” through repeated images or descriptions. In operational terms, the technical blocking tool is transformed into a **mechanism of ideological control** over public debate and access to information²³.

The first half of 2025 also saw increased pressure on access to information and independent reporting. In May 2025, initiatives were reported that would allow telephone and internet services to be suspended for up to 48 hours without a “court order”, based solely on a request from the security services. The first half of 2025 also saw increased pressure on the press and journalists, including through accreditation mechanisms used as a tool for censorship. On 31 March 2025, amendments were registered that provide for **fines for journalists and media workers from outside the region** who work without “accreditation”, against a backdrop of recurring reports of arbitrary refusals of access and the risk of detention. These measures exacerbate an already hostile climate for independent reporting and may also penalise locals who cooperate with the press.

Overall, developments in 2025 point to a convergence between three directions: the institutionalisation of identity propaganda (with a programmatic extension in 2026), the expansion of normative and technical censorship in the online environment, and the consolidation of control over actors who can produce alternative narratives (teachers, journalists, educational institutions, digital platforms). The deliberate ambiguity of terms such as “public morality” and “disrespect for society”, combined with the monitoring infrastructure and the possibility of blocking communications, creates the conditions for selective, politically oriented enforcement, which deepens self-censorship and reduces the population’s ability to report abuses and access pluralistic information.

23 “ministry of justice of the MRT”, <http://minjust.org/publication/docs/2025002122.html>.

3.3 The situation of schools teaching in Romanian using the Latin alphabet in the Transnistrian region

On the propaganda front, the beginning of 2025 was also marked by smear campaigns in the media controlled by Tiraspol and the Sheriff holding company, including against schools teaching in Romanian using the Latin alphabet in the region. In February and April 2025, **Romanian-language schools were labelled as “threats” and “instruments of Nazi rehabilitation”**, with a direct impact on the right to education and the safety of the school community, given that such campaigns are accompanied by pressure and intimidation.

Despite the intimidation and denigration campaigns, for the first time in the last fifteen years, in 2025 the total number of pupils enrolled in the eight Romanian-language schools in the Transnistrian region exceeded the threshold of 2,000. Thus, in the 2024-2025 school year, 2,041 pupils were enrolled, an increase of approximately 5.42% compared to the previous year. This positive trend indicates that these high schools and schools remain attractive even to some Russian-speaking families or employees of local structures, who prefer to educate their children in institutions subordinate to Chişinău.

Despite the increase in the number of students, these educational institutions continue to face systemic obstacles imposed by the unconstitutional regime in Tiraspol:

- ▶ Inadequate infrastructure: unsatisfactory buildings and facilities, with many spaces not meeting modern educational standards. Four of the high schools, “Lucian Blaga” in Tiraspol, “Ştefan cel Mare și Sfânt” in Grigoriopol (which operates in exile in the village of Doroţcaia), “Evrika” in Rîbniţa and “Alexandru cel Bun” in Bender face acute shortages of educational space, with no viable solutions for expansion identified to date;
- ▶ Lack of adequate and sufficient transport for pupils: children attending these schools do not have sufficient school transport options, which makes it difficult to access education in safe and comfortable conditions, especially for those who commute from remote areas;
- ▶ Discriminatory utility rates: these schools pay much higher prices for utilities (gas, heating, electricity, water, sewerage) than institutions subordinate to Tiraspol. The high costs consume a substantial portion of their budgets and are intended to exert financial pressure;
- ▶ Restrictions on movement and access: freedom of movement is restricted, with hundreds of students and teachers forced to pass through illegal checkpoints every day to get to school.

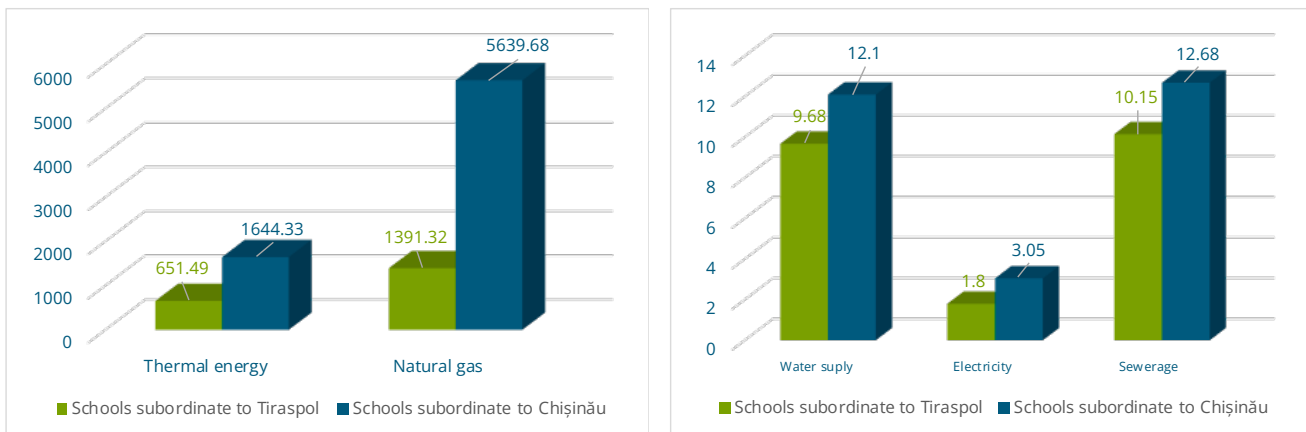
A particularly problematic issue in 2025 was **the abusive increase in utility tariffs** for these schools. The Tiraspol regime applies the highest tariffs in the entire region to these institutions, well above those charged to local schools subordinate to Tiraspol and even above the tariffs applied to industrial consumers. For example, the natural gas tariff applied to schools teaching in Latin script is about four times higher than that for schools controlled by the regime; for thermal energy (heating) it is about 2.5 times higher; for electricity, it is about 1.6-1.7 times higher; and for water and sewerage, it is about 20-25% higher.

In absolute terms, if an educational institution subordinate to Tiraspol paid ~1,391 Transnistrian rubles for 1,000 m³ of gas, schools teaching in Romanian were forced to pay 5,639.68 rubles for the same amount, a price ~4 times higher. For thermal energy, the comparison was ~651 rubles vs. 1,644 rubles per Gcal (2.5 times more),

for electricity ~1.8 vs. 3.05 rubles per kWh (~1.7 times more), and for drinking water ~9.68 vs. 12.1 rubles per m³ (~1.25 times more). These tariff differences, introduced against the backdrop of the energy crisis at the beginning of the year, demonstrate the discriminatory nature of the tariff policy towards these schools and the intention to create severe financial difficulties for them.

Figure 7.

Differences in utility tariffs between schools teaching in Romanian and schools subordinate to the Tiraspol regime in 2025



Source: compiled by the authors based on information published by the unconstitutional administration of the city of Bender, the Tiraspoltransgaz company and the Unified Electricity Distribution Networks company.

** Rates are expressed in so-called "Transnistrian rubles". The rate for water supply and sewerage services is calculated per 1 m³, for natural gas per 1,000 m³, for electricity per 1 kWh, and for thermal energy per 1 Gcal.*

The sudden tariff increases came in the context of the regional energy crisis at the beginning of the year, which caused an unprecedented economic crisis on the left bank of the Nistru. Already under financial pressure, Romanian schools had to bear much higher bills, which affected their ability to function (a significant part of their budget being devoured by utility costs).

In parallel with the economic pressure, **the regime also intensified its media campaign to stigmatise these schools.** Between February and March 2025, the subordinate media (the television stations "Pervii Pridnestrovskii" and "TSV", owned by the Tiraspol regime and the Sheriff holding company) broadcast over 30 reports, broadcasts and social media posts portraying Romanian-language high schools as "tools of rehabilitation of fascism and Nazism" in the Transnistrian region²⁴. The campaign focused on several key narratives:

- ▶ The history textbooks used in these schools allegedly promote the "rehabilitation of fascism and Nazism" by portraying Soviet forces as "occupiers" and offering a different perspective on historical figures. It is claimed that students are indoctrinated with a falsified and dangerous interpretation of history, which would lead them to perceive their own parents and grandparents as "occupiers".
- ▶ It has been claimed that this history curriculum acts as a "time bomb", capable of triggering destabilising or violent events in the future. According to Transnistrian

24 Promo-LEX Association, "Romanian-language schools in the Transnistrian region are the target of a new smear campaign in the Tiraspol-controlled media", 4 April 2025, <https://promolex.md/scolile-cu-predare-in-limba-romana-din-regiunea-transnistreana-sunt-tinta-unei-noi-campanii-de-denigrare-in-mass-media-controlata-de-tiraspol/>.

On 28 February 2025, for the first time in more than two decades, education experts representing Chişinău and the Tiraspol regime jointly visited the Evrika High School complex, located at 14 Gagarin Street in the city of Rîbniţa. These buildings have been unused since 2004 because the Tiraspol authorities have prevented any activity of the high school there, and one of the buildings is even used by the regime as a sports base for another institution. During the visit, the experts carried out a general assessment of the condition of the buildings and the surrounding land in order to identify the measures necessary to resume and complete the repair work begun almost 20 years ago, as well as for the possible commissioning of the premises as educational infrastructure under the administration of the Evrika High School.

Although the joint visit in February represented progress, subsequent efforts to recover the premises have stalled. Shortly after that inspection, construction specialists delegated by Chişinău were prevented from entering one of the high school buildings, the one used as a sports hall by the Transnistrian authorities, during a working visit intended to assess the necessary work in detail. That technical visit was supposed to clarify the scope of work for the launch of a detailed technical assessment, which is mandatory under Moldovan law (and must be carried out by authorised specialists). The assessment is an essential step in preparing renovation plans and cost estimates.

Figure 8.

Blocking of the premises of the Evrika High School in Rîbniţa (2004-2025)

The headquarters in Rîbniţa has been illegally blocked since 2004. The return was set as a condition by Chişinău for the transit of gas.

February 28 -----> Joint visit (first in 20 years).

Subsequently-----> Access for technical experts was blocked again.

Final 2025 -----> **No real progress. The headquarters remains closed.**

Gas conditionality ignored by Tiraspol.

Despite repeated requests from Chişinău to obtain a clear and official position on the resumption of educational activities in the entire complex and to receive written confirmation of the return of the premises to the high school, the Tiraspol authorities did not provide any official response by the end of the year. Although Chişinău introduced this conditionality in the gas negotiations, in practice no enforcement mechanisms were provided for Tiraspol's failure to comply, and the Transnistrian regime stalled without immediate consequences. Thus, at the end of 2025 and even now, the premises of the Evrika High School have not yet been returned to the educational process, illustrating how difficult it is to enforce rights even when they are the subject of high-level agreements, if there are no firm levers for implementation.

3.4 Militarisation and politicisation of education under Tiraspol's control

Throughout 2025, the Tiraspol regime intensified measures aimed at the ideological indoctrination of children and young people and the normalisation of militarism in educational and extracurricular settings. These practices combined, on the one hand, the consolidation of the myth of a distinct identity, associated with the narrative of the 1992 war presented as a "defence" against Chişinău, and, on the other hand, the

exposure of minors to paramilitary training, military symbolism and “patriotic” activities with pro-Russian propaganda content.

A central element in 2025 was the recruitment and training of minors in military institutions. For the 2025-2026 academic year, **75 minors were recruited into the “Suvorov Military School” in Tiraspol, and over 52 children were admitted to the “Cadet Corps” in Bender**. Children aged between 11 and 16 were included in special military training courses designed to adapt them to the training regime and practices of paramilitary and force structures. In the case of the Suvorov Military School, training is geared towards service in paramilitary structures, while in the case of the Cadet Corps, the training component is related to the training of future employees of the militia^{26, 27, 28, 29, 30}.

Figure 9.

Presentation of ID cards and epaulettes to students admitted to the Tiraspol Suvorov Military School (2025)



Source: Suvorov Military School, 2025

These institutions operate in a manner similar to that of military units, with minors housed in barracks-like conditions and constantly supervised by military personnel. Children’s contact with their families is limited, and responsibility for their education and socialisation is largely transferred to structures affiliated with the regime. Internal regulations include compulsory participation in activities organised by the “ministry of defence”, including weapons training, tactical field exercises and parades. The

26 Novosti Pridnestrovia, “The first bell rang at the Suvorov school”, 01.09.2025, <https://novostipmr.com/ru/news/25-09-01/vsuvorovskom-uchilishche-prozvenel-pervyy-zvonok>

27 Novosti Pridnestrovia, “52 students joined the Republican Cadet Corps”, 01.09.2025, <https://novostipmr.com/ru/news/25-09-01/v-respublikanskom-kadetskom-korpuse-imeni-svetleyshego-knyazya>

28 Tiraspol Suvorov Military School, “Suvorov Military School has begun training courses for young Suvorov cadets”, 20.08.2025 <https://www.tsvu.idknet.com/index.php/3005-v-suvorovskom-uchilishche-nachalsya-kurs-podgotovki-molodogosuvorovtza>

29 Promo-LEX Association, Analytical article “How children in the Transnistrian region are being prepared for war: childhood spent in cadet school”, 12 June 2025, <https://promolex.md/cum-sunt-pregatiti-copiii-din-regiunea-transnistreana-pentru-razboi-copilaria-petrecuta-in-scoala-de-cadeti/>

30 Promo-LEX Association, Analytical article “How the Tiraspol regime trains future soldiers: childhood in the Suvorov military school”, 29 May 2025, <https://promolex.md/cum-formeaza-regimul-de-la-tiraspol-viitorii-soldati-copilaria-in-scoala-militara-suvorov/>

curriculum and practices are modelled on similar institutions in the Russian Federation, and training includes weapons handling, combat tactics, drone use, military topography, CBRN protection and emergency response, as well as participation in training camps and competitions with a military component.

From a child protection perspective, public information about these institutions indicates systemic risks, including the application of military-specific disciplinary sanctions on minors, the absence of independent mechanisms for reporting abuse, the lack of guarantees regarding access to psychological counselling, and severe restrictions on free time, which is largely channelled towards “patriotic” media content. A militarised hierarchy is also established among minors, with organisation into “platoons” and commander-subordinate relationships, which transforms the educational relationship into a model of military subordination.

Indoctrination was not limited to military schools, but was extended to general schools and social institutions, including boarding schools and centres for vulnerable children. In 2025, thematic “lessons” on the “history of the Transnistrian people” were promoted, as well as meetings with veterans and representatives of law enforcement agencies, and activities explicitly targeting orphans and children with special needs, a category at increased risk of influence and exploitation. At the same time, school events with militarised content were organised, including military sports competitions, in which students participated in events such as air rifle shooting, under the coordination of the “ministry of defence”.

During the summer, the Tiraspol regime used both local camps and external programmes to increase minors’ exposure to military narratives and political loyalties. A relevant example is the camps in the territories occupied by the Russian Federation, including the “Artek” centre in Crimea, where the participation of children from the Transnistrian region was presented as an achievement, despite the fact that such camps are associated with intense propaganda-driven “patriotic education,” lessons in “courage” with the participation of Russian soldiers who fought in Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, military reenactments, and activities aimed at glorifying war and the military role of the Russian Federation. In this context, children are integrated into practices that normalise the conflict and cultivate hostile perceptions of Ukraine and the West, reinforcing a pattern of political socialisation oriented towards militarism³¹.

In the same context, between 20 June and 5 July 2025, a group of high school students from the region participated in the “Memory Train” project, a travelling school in the Russian Federation and Belarus, structured around ceremonies and re-enactments dedicated to the Second World War, presented through the lens of the “Great Patriotic War”. Participation in such programmes was treated as a tool for deepening “patriotic consciousness”, in reality contributing to the **standardisation of “historical memory” and the internalisation of a pro-Russian geopolitical narrative**³².

Domestically, paramilitary camps had a high profile in 2025. The “Mars” patriotic military camp, organised by the “Union of Afghanistan War Veterans”, brought together around 120 to 150 children aged between 10 and 18 for a ten-day programme of military-style discipline, training in the use of Kalashnikov-type weapons, shooting exercises, hand-to-hand combat simulations, tactical marches, night guard duty and

31 YouTube channel of the TV station “TSV”, “Vitaly Ignatiev: Chişinău does not want to negotiate”, 29 July 2025, <https://youtu.be/Jl984psRG68?si=kr9VblmVISYEDMQF>.

32 Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, “Поезд Памяти (Train of Memory)”, 21 June 2025, http://council.gov.ru/activity/activities/poezd_pamjati_2025/#project.

simulated “alarms”, with an explicit focus on “discipline” and “love of country” in the sense promoted by the Tiraspol regime.

At the same time, recreational summer camps were filled with militarised and propagandistic content. In the “Dnestrovskie Zori” complex, subordinate to the “ministry of defence”, military-patriotic activities were reported, including weapons demonstrations and training children in the use of firearms, as well as visits to museums presenting a distorted version of the 1992 war and the so-called “Transnistrian statehood”. In the same context, events with Russian Federation symbolism were marked, including activities dedicated to the “Day of the State Flag of the Russian Federation”, with the participation of organisations promoting loyalty to Russia.

A distinct feature in 2025 was **the expansion of paramilitary clubs for teenagers**. The BARS military sports club, part of the “Union of Defenders of Transnistria”, conducted training sessions that combined ideological socialisation through meetings with veterans of the 1992 Moldovan-Russian war and Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. Activities also included the development of dual-use skills such as radio communications, TCCC tactical first aid, evacuation of the “wounded”, handling Kalashnikov weapons and night-time exercises in low visibility conditions. Elements of symbolism associated with the Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine were reported, including the display of the letter Z on the uniforms worn by young people. The club also made demonstration visits to schools, transferring practices and messages specific to paramilitary pedagogy into the educational space^{33, 34, 35}.



Ideological indoctrination was also reinforced through **control of educational content**. On 10 November 2025, the “ministry of education” approved a unified list of “patriotic” readings recommended for extracurricular activities, structured by age group and thematic sections promoting narratives centred on Russia, the reinterpretation

33 “Union of Defenders of Transnistria”, “Summary of training sessions at the BARS Sports Club”, 11 October 2025, <https://sz-pmr.org/news/svodka-zanyatij-v-vsk-bars>.

34 “Union of Defenders of Transnistria”, “History lesson: meeting with a defender of Transnistria”, <https://szpmr.org/news/urok-istorii-vstrecha-s-zashitnikom-pridnestrovyaj/>.

35 “Union of Defenders of Transnistria”, “Intensive tactical training session”, <https://sz-pmr.org/news/zanyatie-intensivnoj-takticheskoy-podgotovki/>.

of the 1992 war as an “aggression” against the “Transnistrian people”, and the idea of local “statehood”. Themes include landmarks such as “The Great War for the Defence of the Fatherland”, “Great People of Russia”, and “Commanders of Holy Russia”, indicating the use of reading as a tool for social engineering and identity reorientation of minors^{36, 37, 38}.

In the second half of 2025, the Tiraspol regime also advanced a **structural alignment of education with the regulatory framework of the Russian Federation**, including through discussions on the massive replacement of textbooks and connecting teachers and students to Russian programmes and competitions oriented towards “practical patriotism” and Russian educational standards. Alignment with Russian educational standards and practices reduces the space for educational pluralism and the development of critical thinking among students^{39, 40, 41, 42}.

*Overall, developments in 2025 indicate a trend towards transforming childhood and adolescence into a field of political and paramilitary socialisation, in which education, leisure time and summer programmes are used to produce institutional loyalty to the Tiraspol regime and to integrate minors into a **culture of militarism**. These practices affect the right to education free from indoctrination and militarisation, increase the risks of abuse due to the lack of independent child protection mechanisms, and create conditions for the future recruitment and mobilisation of young people into paramilitary structures, in a regional context marked by war and insecurity.*



- 36 Novosti Pridnestrovia, “Schoolchildren and students from the capital visited the armed forces’ military history museum”, 30 October 2025, <https://novostipmr.com/ru/news/25-10-30/stolichnye-shkolniki-i-studenty-posetili-voenno-istoricheskij>.
- 37 Novosti Pridnestrovia, “Approximately 130 schoolchildren from Tiraspol and Blijinii Hutor visited the Transnistrian museum of local history and traditions”, 30 October 2025, <https://novostipmr.com/ru/news/25-10-30/poryadka-130-shkolnikov-iz-tiraspolya-i-blizhnego-hutora-posetili>.
- 38 Novosti Pridnestrovia, “Transnistrian students tested their knowledge of the history of their native country”, 26 October 2025, <https://novostipmr.com/ru/news/25-10-26/studenty-pridnestrovyya-proverili-znaniya-istorii-rodного-kraya>.
- 39 Telegram channel of the “ministry of education of the MRT”, “Teachers from Transnistria, winners of the educational practices competition, participate in the international forum ‘New Philosophy of Education’”, 29 November 2025, <https://t.me/MinprosPMR/3366?single>.
- 40 Telegram channel of the “ministry of education of the MRT”, “A teacher from Bender is among the winners of the International Competition of Local History Experts”, 12 November 2025, <https://t.me/MinprosPMR/3266>.
- 41 Telegram channel of the “ministry of education of the MRT”, “Victory Volunteers from Transnistria were recognised as the best international representative of the movement at the ‘Ready for Victory’ competition”, 12 November 2025, <https://t.me/MinprosPMR/3268>.
- 42 Telegram channel of the “ministry of education of the MRT”, “Galina Andronic, music teacher at School No. 15 in Bender. She is a finalist in the ‘International Teacher’ category of the international competition ‘Russian School Abroad’”, 12.11.2025, <https://t.me/MinprosPMR/3272>.

CHAPTER 4



DIGITAL CONTROL AND POPULATION SURVEILLANCE MECHANISMS

4.1 Strengthening control over civil society

In 2025, the Tiraspol regime continued to narrow the space for civil society and intensify surveillance of the population. **Measures were promoted to strengthen control over non-governmental organisations and external funding**, while expanding monitoring of persons considered “non-residents” (e.g. visitors from the right bank or foreign citizens). These developments reflect a trend towards the institutionalisation of preventive filters: any civic activity, externally supported project or travel by a person from outside the region becomes subject to approvals and notifications by structures subordinate to the regime, in the absence of credible guarantees of appeal and independent oversight.

In terms of civil society, a key moment came in June 2025, when a proposal was made to amend the so-called “legislation” on non-repayable aid granted to the region. The initiative concerns the so-called “Law No. 249-Z-V of 2011” and is associated with a Transnistrian MP known for his initiatives to “combat extremism”, a sign of the ideological motivation behind the proposed change⁴³.

Currently, external assistance projects are theoretically coordinated by a “Coordination Council for Technical and Humanitarian Assistance”, composed of persons appointed by the regime leader (“president”), the “Supreme Soviet” (local “legislative body”) and the “government”. This Council is responsible for evaluating projects, monitoring, requesting reports from beneficiaries and notifying the law enforcement agencies in case of alleged irregularities.

The changes proposed in 2025 would expand the powers of the “council” and introduce the obligation for any beneficiary of external funds (whether an individual, NGO or public institution) to register the non-repayable aid received in advance. A simple certificate from the donor attesting to the humanitarian or technical nature of the support would no longer be sufficient; the Council would have the right to approve or refuse the registration of the aid and to issue a certificate of compliance.

In the case of financial assistance, the draft introduces a new article requiring beneficiaries to obtain a certificate of registration of funds within 30 days of receiving the money. Furthermore, cash amounts would have to be deposited in a bank account within a maximum of five working days, and the actual use of the funds would be prohibited until formal confirmation of registration by the authorities. If registration is refused, the aid cannot be used and must be returned to the donor, whether it is money, goods or services.

This mechanism would effectively give **the regime a veto over any externally funded project**, increasing the risk that initiatives touching on “politically sensitive” issues would be selectively blocked. The measure comes in a context where, since 2018, the regime has banned organisations receiving external funding from engaging in “political activities”, a deliberately vague notion that is susceptible to abusive interpretations. For example, activities such as monitoring elections, expressing opinions on local government decisions, organising public events or calling for the modification or repeal of regime decisions are classified as “political”. At the same time, externally funded NGOs are required to report in detail on the amounts received, their sources and how they are used, and their “tolerated” activities are pushed towards strictly apolitical areas such as social, charitable, cultural, educational, health or sports.

43 “supreme soviet of the MRT”, “Draft law of 18 June 2025 on amendments and additions to TMR Law No. 249-3-V/2011 on free aid granted to the MRT”, <https://www.vspmr.org/legislation/bills/vii-soziv/proekt-zakona-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-vnesenii-izmeneniy-i-dopolneniy-v-zakona-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-bezvozmezdnoy-pomoschi-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respublike-.html>.

The result of these restrictions is **to discourage independent initiatives and increase the dependence of the non-governmental sector on the regime's arbitrary decisions**. Any project can be stopped before it begins, and beneficiaries risk finding themselves involved in investigations by the security forces if they are accused of irregularities, even if these are unfounded. In other words, a climate of preventive self-censorship is created among local civil society, which risks becoming inactive if projects are not to the liking of the occupying structures.

4.2 Digital supervision

These measures are complemented by an administrative framework for monitoring content accessible to children. Decision No. 245 of 11 August 2025 of the so-called "government" approves a regulation on "state control" of compliance with "legislation" on the protection of children from allegedly harmful information, with responsibilities distributed among four "authorities" in the digital, educational, legal and cultural fields. Controls may be planned or unannounced, including at the request of the "prosecutor," the "president," the "supreme soviet," or based on complaints from individuals, legal entities, or the media. At the same time, Order No. 138 of the so-called "ministry of digital development, communications and media" provides for monitoring and checks that can be carried out even without direct interaction with the entities concerned, by collecting and analysing data from information systems and the internet⁴⁴. It is important to note that the "ministry of digital development, communications and media" manages a unified register of prohibited domains and web pages, i.e. online resources whose content is blocked in the region, without transparency and without effective mechanisms for appeal^{45, 46}.

These measures are part of a broader trend of alignment with the Russian Federation's model of information space control. The categories of content considered prohibited are expanding, deliberately formulated in vague terms, such as **"insulting public morality"**, **"disrespect for society"** or **"denial of traditional family values"**. In practice, such wording allows the regime to use the protection of children as a cover for censorship and to put pressure on civic, educational and cultural initiatives. Even civil society organisations that carry out public, informational or advocacy activities can be accused of exposing minors to "harmful" information if they address politically sensitive topics.

4.3 Widespread video and biometric surveillance

The expansion of video surveillance in public spaces was another major development in 2025. The regime implemented the "Safe City" (Безопасный город) monitoring system on a large scale, which is not only used for traffic management but has also become a tool for biometric identification and tracking of individuals in public places. In June 2025, the local "supreme soviet" adopted amendments to the "code of offences" allowing drivers who talk on the phone while driving to be identified and punished on the basis of video recordings from the system's cameras. Then, on 5 November 2025, the legal framework was expanded so that alleged traffic violations committed not only by drivers but also by pedestrians, cyclists and other road users could result in fines based on video recordings.

More worryingly, public information indicates **the integration of facial recognition** into the Safe City system infrastructure, including in high-traffic areas (e.g. near schools,

44 "ministry of justice of the MRT", "Order No. 138 of the ministry of digital development, communications and mass media of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic on the procedure for organising and conducting state control over compliance with legislation on the protection of children from information that may harm their health or development", <http://www.minjust.org/oo/Publication.nsf/9306298df912e905c2258221004d4624/8dd00c1725e84b13c2258ced00471992!OpenDocument>.

45 "ministry of digital development, communications and mass media of the MRT", "unified register of domain names, website sections and web page indicators on the global Internet, which allows the identification of websites on the global Internet that contain information whose dissemination is prohibited" <https://mincifra.gospmr.org/%d1%84%d0%be%d1%80%d0%bc%d0%b0-%d0%b7%d0%b0%d0%bf%d1%80%d0%be%d1%81%d0%b0-%d0%b2-%d0%b5%d1%80%d0%b4%d0%b7%d0%b8/>.

46 "government", "Decision No. 216 of 21.06.2018", <https://government.gospmr.org/content/documents/2018/216.pdf>.

markets and shopping centres). Technical reports describe a surveillance architecture that allows for real-time identification of individuals and tracking of their movements in public spaces, marking of gatherings of people, and generation of alerts for incidents (such as smoke or fire); all data is aggregated at a central surveillance point of the so-called “ministry of internal affairs”. In the absence of independent safeguards and effective remedies, the expansion of facial recognition and biometric data processing goes far beyond the stated objective of road safety and consolidates a **mechanism of mass biometric surveillance**. This increases the risks to citizens’ right to privacy and freedom of assembly, as they can be identified and tracked at protests or other public gatherings^{47, 48}.

The risks are amplified by the regime’s plans to further expand the coverage of the camera network by integrating private video cameras into the centralised system. The adopted “regulatory” framework provides for the obligation to integrate cameras installed by individuals or legal entities into the surveillance network if those cameras also cover public spaces. There have been reports of plans to connect private cameras in cities (e.g. surveillance cameras at the entrances to buildings or shops) to the regime’s “Safe City” system from 2026 onwards. This would further extend the area of observation and the capacity to profile the population.

4.4 Monitoring of non-residents

On the issue of control over persons considered foreign to the region (“non-residents”), on 5 December 2025 the regime initiated a package of “draft laws” amending the “migration registration” regime and the regime of administrative offences, tightening the notification requirements regarding the presence of foreign persons in the region. In Tiraspol’s view, only persons with so-called “Transnistrian citizenship” would be guaranteed the right of entry and unrestricted stay, while all others (including citizens of the Republic of Moldova residing on the right bank of the Nistru) are treated as “foreign citizens” subject to migration control. In practice, visitors from outside the region are issued with a 45-day migration card (similar to a short-term visa), and for longer stays, residence permits are required, which are granted after “security” checks. Decisions to declare a person “undesirable” are at the discretion of the regime’s security structures and can only be overturned by its leader (the unrecognised “president”). Refusal of entry, cancellation of stay or expulsion can be justified on very broad grounds, invoking alleged risks to the regime, without effective judicial review⁴⁹.

The amendments proposed in December 2025 impose strict rapid reporting obligations on a wide range of local actors in relation to the presence of any person coming from outside. Hotels and anyone providing accommodation (whether for a fee or free of charge, e.g. private hosts) will have to notify the local authorities within one day of the arrival of a ‘foreigner’ and, separately, notify them within one day of their departure. Similar obligations extend to medical institutions and social welfare organisations: if they admit or provide residential care to a person from outside the region, they must submit their registration details within a very short time. At the same time, the relevant article of the regime’s “code of offences” has been amended to punish failure to comply with the obligation to notify the arrival or departure of foreign persons; non-compliance may be punished by a fine or a warning. Overall, these measures aim to strengthen the regime’s administrative control over the internal civic space and the mobility of persons from outside the region.

47 “supreme soviet of the MRT”, “Identifying offenders using Safe City system cameras,” 05.11.2025, <https://vspmr.org/news/supreme-council/viyavlenie-narushiteley-po-kameram-sistemi-bezopasniy-gorod-.html>.

48 TV channel “TSV”, “Militia Day: How neural networks are changing law enforcement”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2WoXwuH3w0>.

49 “president of the MRT”, “Order 441rp of 5 December 2025”, <https://president.gospmr.org/pravovye-akty/rasporyajeniya/o-proektah-zakonov-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-vnesenii-izmeneniy-i-dopolneniy-v-zakon-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-migratsionnom-uchete-inostrannih-grajdan-i-lits-bez-grajdanstva-v-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respublike-on-amendments-to-the-code-of-the-pridnestrovian-moldovan-republic-on-administrative-offences-.html>.

CHAPTER 5



SECURITY MEASURES AND MILITARISATION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS

5.1 Permanent terrorist alert regime

In 2025, the Tiraspol regime continued to maintain the region in a state of permanent securitisation, combining the repeated extension of the so-called “yellow” level of terrorist alert with the expansion of military mobilisation mechanisms and regulatory measures that increasingly integrate paramilitary structures into the civil administration and the economy. These developments have a cumulative negative effect on freedom of movement, access to information and respect for fundamental rights. In practice, the prolonged maintenance of a state of emergency is used by the regime to justify illegal restrictions and controls. For example, illegal checkpoints are being reinforced and **practices of extensive surveillance of the population are becoming normalised**.

A key element is the indefinite maintenance of the yellow level of **“terrorist threat”**, introduced in April 2022 and extended continuously, without interruption, including throughout 2025. Through several successive decrees, the alert regime has been extended until March 2026. These extensions show that **the region is being kept in a permanent state of exceptional security**.

The prolonged maintenance of the “terrorist alert” is accompanied by direct operational effects. These include the introduction of **additional movement restrictions** (e.g. more rigorous checks at internal crossing points and restricted access to certain areas), extensive surveillance of public places and the reinforcement of illegal checkpoints at the administrative line. In addition, the regime has used the terrorist alert regime to fuel alarmist narratives, claiming that the region is threatened by hostile actions from the right bank of the Nistru River and from Ukraine. The prolonged “terrorist alert” regime has also been used as a pretext to **restrict press freedom**. In 2025, it was repeatedly invoked to justify the refusal to accredit “foreign” journalists and to block independent documentary activities in the region. Any media representative who did not have accreditation issued by Tiraspol was considered a potential “threat” under the terrorist alert and was therefore at risk of illegal detention. In July 2025, the regime announced that certain targets in the Security Zone would remain under “increased protection,” indicating the use of the state of alert as a justification for maintaining restrictive security arrangements, including in the area of military observer posts of the peacekeeping forces.

5.2 Expansion of the influence and presence of military structures

In parallel with internal securitisation, 2025 also brought relevant regulatory changes regarding “military service” and **the use of military personnel in civilian structures**. Through the so-called “Law No. 195 of 7 October 2025” (amendment to the “law on compulsory military service and military service in the term”), the Tiraspol regime explicitly expanded the framework allowing for the secondment and transfer of “military personnel” to civilian institutions and enterprises, while retaining their “military” status and subordination to the local “ministry of defence”⁵⁰. Decisions on the number of “military personnel” seconded and their distribution remain at the sole discretion of the “military leadership”, without any civilian control or transparency.

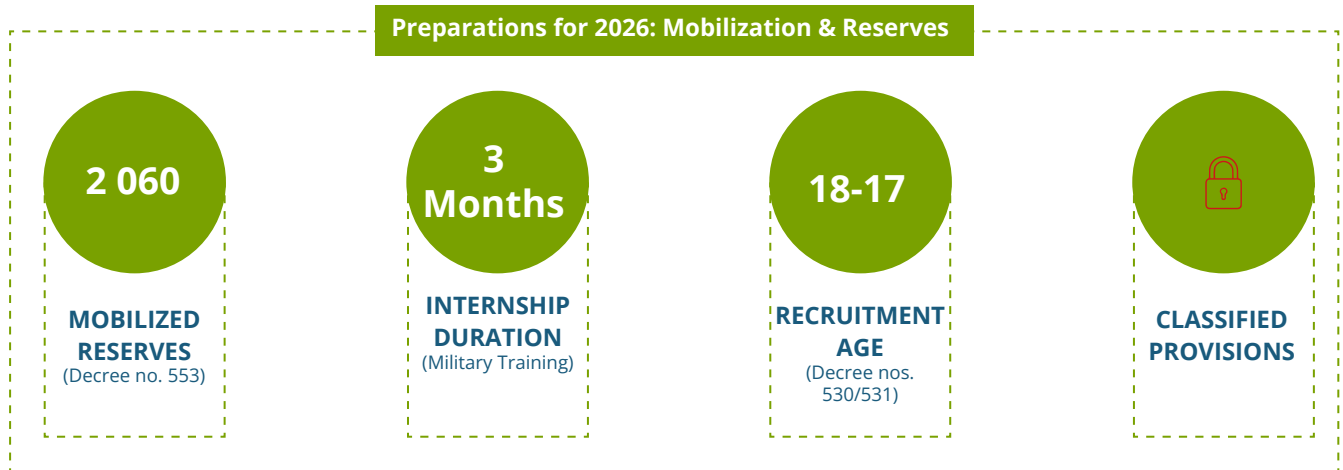
The stated reason for this measure is the personnel crisis facing the regime, with the Tiraspol authorities claiming that they have many unfilled positions in various institutions. Through this law, the regime has blurred the line between paramilitary structures and the civil administration of the region, allowing military personnel to be infiltrated virtually anywhere under the pretext of supporting deficient institutions

50 “president of the MRT”, “Amendment to the Law on Universal Military Recruitment and Military Service”, 24.09.2025, <https://president.gospmr.org/pravovoye-akty/zakon-pridnestrovskoy-molda1244vskoy-respubliki-o-vnesenii-izmeneniy-v-zakon-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-vseobschey-voinskoy-obyazannosti-i-voennoy-službe.html>.

in times of crisis. One effect is **to strengthen military control over society**, as seconded military personnel remain under the command of the local army, even if they are temporarily working in a town hall or a company.

Figure 10.

Mobilisation and training of reservists in 2026



Towards the end of 2025, the Tiraspol regime also prepared the ground for mobilisation in 2026, signing a series of decrees in December. Decree No. 553 of 15 December 2025 the call-up of reservists for “military” training during 2026 was authorised, with training periods of up to three months and a ceiling of 2,060 people who could be mobilised (including “reserve officers, non-commissioned officers and reserve soldiers”). The training is to be carried out according to an internal plan approved by the regime, and the document contains classified provisions, which further reduces the possibility of public control over the purpose and manner of implementation of the mobilisation.

On 1 December 2025, Decrees No. 530 and No. 531 were also signed, establishing the parameters for compulsory recruitment in 2026: it targets men between the ages of 18 and 27, in certain specific situations, and a category of reserve “officers” up to the age of 30, “depending on the needs identified by the paramilitary structures”.

These decisions confirm **the systematic nature of mobilisation**: in practice, a ready recruitment base is maintained every year, which in a context of high institutional opacity and social vulnerability (some young people accept enlistment for lack of economic alternatives) increases the risk that the military workforce will be used for purposes that are not subject to any public control^{51, 52, 53}.

Also in the context of strengthening “military” and demographic control over the population, in 2025 changes were made regarding **the imposition of Transnistrian “citizenship”** from birth. On 5 November 2025, the Tiraspol regime adopted amendments to the “citizenship law”, introducing the automatic acquisition of so-called Transnistrian citizenship for children born on the territory controlled by the

51 “president of the MRT”, “Order No. 553 of 15 December 2025 on the recruitment of military personnel for military training in 2026”, <https://president.gospmr.org/pravovoye-akty/ukazi/o-prizive-voennoobyazannih-na-voennie-sbori-v-2026-godu.html>.

52 “president of the MRT”, “Order No. 531 of 1 December 2025 on the recruitment of citizens enrolled in the reserve with the assignment of the military rank of officer for military service in 2026”, <https://president.gospmr.org/pravovoye-akty/ukazi/o-prizive-na-voennuyu-službu-v-2026-godu-grajdan-zachislennih-v-zapas-s-prisvoeniem-voinskogo-zvaniya-ofitsera.html>.

53 “president of the MRT”, “Order 530 of 01.12.2025 on the recruitment of citizens who are not in the reserve for military service in 2026”, <https://president.gospmr.org/pravovoye-akty/ukazi/o-prizive-na-voennuyu-službu-v-2026-godu-grajdan-ne-prebivayuschih-v-zapase.html>.

regime, even in situations where the parents do not hold this “citizenship”, as well as for orphaned children. Beyond the official justifications (facilitating the registration of newborns), the measure has security and mobilisation implications; holding local “citizenship” automatically implies registration with the military within the regime’s paramilitary structures. Furthermore, the issuance of local documents (“identity card”, “passport”) is conditional upon the presentation of recruitment documents upon reaching the appropriate age. From a political point of view, the automatic expansion of the “citizen” base can be used for propaganda purposes to support narratives about the existence of a large population that needs “protection” from Russia. From a legal point of view, this situation creates additional challenges for the future management of documents issued under the regime’s control, in the event of the region’s reintegration into the national legal framework. Constitutional authorities will have to determine how to deal with documents issued during the occupation, given that in many cases the region’s inhabitants cannot obtain equivalent documents on the right bank of the Nistru⁵⁴.

Overall, 2025 points to a simultaneous strengthening of securitisation and militarisation instruments on the left bank of the Nistru. The successive extension of the “terrorist alert” has normalised restrictions and extensive surveillance of the population; legal changes allowing the deployment of military personnel in civilian institutions have blurred the separation between paramilitary structures and public administration; and decisions on the recruitment of reservists and the extension of “citizenship” from birth serve to maintain a predictable demographic base for control and mobilisation. Together, these developments reduce civic space and increase the risks of abuse by decreasing transparency and strengthening the regime’s coercive mechanisms over society.



54 “president of the MRT”, “constitutional law of the MRT of 05.11.2025 on amendments to the law on citizenship of the MRT”, <https://president.gospmr.org/pravovye-akty/zakoni/konstitutsionnyy-zakon-pridnestro66vskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-vnesenii-izmeneniy-v-konstitutsionnyy-zakon-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-grajdanstve-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki.html>.

CHAPTER 6



SYSTEMIC ABUSES IN THE ILLEGAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THE TREATMENT OF PERSONS DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY

6.1 Erosion of procedural guarantees

During 2025, the Tiraspol regime promoted a set of “normative” changes which, taken together, diminish procedural guarantees against abuse, restrict access to independent legal assistance and reduce transparency regarding the activities of the “organs” and persons involved in the local “administration of justice” (a “pseudo-judicial” system). This package of initiatives has been publicly justified by Tiraspol by referring to the specific “realities” of the region, external pressures and institutional difficulties exacerbated by the economic crisis, but the cumulative effect is to consolidate a framework that favours arbitrariness, impunity and political control over processes affecting personal freedom.

Developments can be tracked on two related fronts: (i) **the erosion of safeguards during the investigation phase and in unrecognised judicial mechanisms**, (ii) **the institutionalisation of substandard detention conditions**, including through rules that normalise degrading treatment and coercive financial policies applied to persons deprived of their liberty.

A central element is the attempt to eliminate any possibility of access to lawyers from outside the region in “criminal trials”. In March 2025, the so-called “supreme soviet” in Tiraspol adopted in first reading a new “code of criminal procedure”, presented as a modernised instrument inspired by the practices of the Russian Federation, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Subsequently, Order No. 321rp signed by Vadim Krasnoselski on 26 September 2025 ordered **the removal of all provisions regarding the participation of foreign lawyers** (from outside the region) from the draft of the new code, along with proposals to tighten the framework for the functioning of the “legal profession”. In the initial version of the draft (before these interventions), the participation of lawyers from outside the region was allowed in a limited and conditional manner, requiring an agreement with the so-called local “chamber of lawyers”, except for cases that the regime would have considered “sensitive”. The elimination of even this narrow window must be understood in the context of already extensive control over the legal profession on the left bank of the Nistru. The so-called “law on the legal profession”, adopted in 2023 and subsequently amended, created a seemingly autonomous “Bar Association”, but in reality politically subordinate and controlled by the local pseudo-judicial system. That law gave the Chamber tools to control the profession, from admission to the profession to discipline and ethical standards; vaguely worded and ideologically charged, allowing for the exclusion of inconvenient lawyers^{55, 56}.

In practice, **many persons deprived of their liberty in the region are deprived of effective legal assistance**, often being represented by formally appointed lawyers who remain passive, do not challenge procedural violations, do not report ill-treatment and sometimes even collaborate with the regime’s security structures. Under these circumstances, restricting access to independent lawyers from outside the region has a direct effect on the defendant’s right to defence and on the possibility of reporting or documenting abuses such as arbitrary detention or torture. In other words, **the complete isolation of the local “judicial system”** from any external influence (such as lawyers licensed in the Republic of Moldova or other countries) reinforces the closed and non-transparent nature of “justice” in Tiraspol, increasing the risk of “judicial” errors and uncorrected abuses.

55 “president of the MRT”, “Order 321rp of 26.09.2025 on amendments to the second reading of the MRT draft law “code of criminal procedure of the MRT”, <https://president.gospmr.org/pravovye-akty/rasporyajeniya/o-vnesenii-popravok-ko-vtoromu-chteniyu-proekta-zakona-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-ugolovno-protseessualjnyj-kodeks-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-.html>.

56 “government of the MR”, “A new law on the legal profession has been adopted in the MRT”, 25 October 2023, <https://www.vspmr.org/news/supreme-council/prinyat-noviy-zakon-ob-advokatskoy-deyatelnosti-v-pmr.html>.

A second vector for reducing guarantees is the **decline in professional standards among “prosecutorial” structures**. Against the backdrop of an acute staff crisis (exacerbated by the exodus and economic recession of 2025), the Tiraspol regime proposed a temporary relaxation of the requirements for the position of “investigator” (investigator for the MGB or local “militia”). Specifically, the aim was to hire law students who had completed at least half of their studies as “investigators”, as well as to accept people without legal education but with other higher education diplomas considered “relevant” (a vague criterion that leaves room for arbitrariness)⁵⁷.

The official argument was the need to fill numerous vacancies and reduce the excessive workload of existing staff. However, such changes amplify the risks in a system already marked by structural deficiencies, which involve high staff turnover, insufficient procedural experience and poor quality preliminary investigations. In an environment lacking independent judicial control (with decisions being made by “courts” subordinate to the regime), lowering professional standards at the “investigation” level increases the likelihood of violations of the rights of persons under “criminal investigation”. Errors in legal classification, faulty administration of evidence or illegal deprivation of liberty without real guarantees are more likely to occur. Instead of remedying systemic problems, opted for an easy solution that can lead to poor-quality “investigations” and abuses^{58, 59, 60}.

6.2 The opacity of the parallel justice system in the Transnistrian region and the perpetuation of impunity

At the same time, the regime has extended measures that reduce the traceability of those involved in pseudo-judicial acts and limit public access to information of general interest about the officials concerned. Under the guise of “measures in response to external economic factors” (adopted in the context of the crisis), **the derogation from transparency obligations in several areas** has been extended for the whole of 2026. Specifically, the obligation to publish certain data on regime officials, including the identity of so-called “judges”, the leadership of “courts” and other institutional participants in proceedings, has been suspended. The publication of information about their income and property, which would normally have been required by “anti-corruption rules”, has also been suspended. The official justification was to maintain the high level of terrorist alert and the need to protect personal data, but the real effect seems to be to reduce the possibility of identifying and holding accountable those involved in persecuting opponents or making arbitrary decisions. By anonymising these actors, the regime effectively grants them impunity and hinders efforts by non-governmental organisations to monitor human rights violations⁶¹.

6.3 Degrading conditions of detention and the risk of forced labour

In 2025, the Tiraspol regime formalised rules legalising **detention standards below international standards** and introduced policies that shift part of the financial burden of detention onto detainees, increasing the risk of **degrading treatment and forced labour**.

57 “supreme soviet”, “draft law on amendments and additions to the law of the MRT on the investigative committee of the MRT”, 13 October 2025, <https://vspmr.org/legislation/bills/vii-soziv/proekt-zakona-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-vnesenii-izmeneniya-i-dopolneniy-v-zakon-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-sledstvennom-komitete-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-.html>.

58 “The MRT investigation committee”, “The investigation committee announced the results of its work over the past year”, <https://sk.gospmr.org/sledstvennyj-komit-et-ozvuchil-itogi-raboty-za-istekshij-god>.

59 “president of the MRT”, “president hears report on results of investigation commission’s activities”, <https://president.gospmr.org/press-sluzhba/novosti/prezident-zaslushal-doklad-o-rezultatah-deyatelnosti-sledstvennogokomiteta-pmr.html>.

60 “The MRT investigation committee”, “Information on the results of the activities of the investigation committee for 2024”, <https://sk.gospmr.org/informacziya-po-itogam-deyatelnosti-sk-pmr-za-2024-god>.

61 “president of the MRT”, “Law No. 273-ZI-VIII on amending the MRT law on certain additional state measures aimed at minimising the negative impact of external economic factors”, 24.12.2025, <https://president.gospmr.org/pravovye-akty/zakoni/zakon-pridnestr0vskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-vnesenii-izmeneniya-v-zakon-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-nekotorih-dopolnitel'nyh-gosudarstvennih-merah-napravlenih-na-minimizatsiyu-negativnogo-vozdeystviya-vneshnih-ekonomicheskikh-faktorov.html>.

In September 2025, Order No. 232 of 1 September 2025 (registered on 26 September) approved technical and material standards for administrative detention facilities under the control of the so-called “ministry of state security” (MGB). In practice, minimum standards were established for cells in which persons accused of administrative offences are detained. The standard provides for a minimum space of 2 square metres per detainee. This is well below European standards. For example, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture recommends at least 4 m² per detainee in collective cells and 6 m² for solitary confinement cells. In other words, the Transnistrian regime has officially established a standard that flagrantly violates the norms of human dignity⁶².

In addition, the established norms also allow for other conditions that may amount to inhuman or degrading treatment of persons deprived of their liberty. For example, the document allows electric lighting to be kept on at night in cells (which can cause sleep deprivation), and windows can be covered with frosted glass or painted, preventing natural light and views to the outside. Air ventilation is carried out, “according to the rules”, only after the cell has been vacated, confirming that there is no obligation to regularly ventilate occupied cells. Rooms are disinfected only in certain situations, with no provision for normal periodic cleaning. There are no basic guarantees regarding access to drinking water, toilets (on a continuous basis) or adequate food, nor is there any guarantee of a bed with clean bedding if the “detention” is prolonged. The medical component has been reduced to the existence of a simple first aid kit; there is no provision for access to a doctor or the right to a medical consultation, not even upon admission into custody or in the event of illness.

These provisions must be analysed in the context in which “administrative detention” is frequently used by the regime, excessively and arbitrarily, against those who violate its “rules” or simply express critical opinions. There is no transparency regarding these detentions, as there are no independent monitors visiting the isolation wards of the so-called MGB or the so-called Transnistrian militia. In this context, the new rules have the effect of formalising a very low threshold of treatment for detainees and creating an appearance of compliance with standards (now “regulated” by an internal order), without however providing real protection against abuse.

Another set of changes, directly relevant to the risk of **degrading treatment and even labour exploitation**, concerns the work regime for prisoners and the financial deductions imposed on them. In February 2025, the regime approved a regulation on the remuneration of convicted persons, including those placed in so-called medical labour institutions, structures that function, in fact, as forced labour units for persons with addictions, interned under medical or “correctional” pretexts, outside the classic prison system. The regulation establishes rules for calculating wages for work performed by prisoners and for distributing income, including a general obligation to transfer part of the income to the prisoner’s personal account. At the same time, it introduces a broad system of deductions from this income for maintenance, food and utility costs.

Subsequently, in November 2025, Order No. 13607 of 26 November 2025 established a new, even more coercive mechanism of **mandatory deductions from prisoners’ income to cover the cost of food**⁶³. This mechanism provides that amounts will be

62 “ministry of justice of the MRT”, “Order No. 232 of 1 September 2025”, <http://www.minjust.gospmr.org/oo/Publication.nsf/805c7c76d1c2ddb8c2258213005be80f/f99bde506d64641c2258d11004c375f!OpenDocument>.

63 “ministry of justice of the MRT”, “Order No. 13607 of the so-called “minister of justice” of Tiraspol, registered on 26 November 2025, amending Order No. 23 of 11 February 2025 “on the approval of the regulation on the remuneration of persons sentenced to imprisonment and persons detained in medical dispensaries of the medical care and social rehabilitation department of the state penitentiary service of the ministry of justice of the MRT, who work in state unitary enterprises of the penal system”, <http://www.minjust.gospmr.org/oo/Publication.nsf/9306298df912e905c2258221004d4624/15f66d8e01e6ad05c2258d4e005d6d6a!OpenDocument>.

deducted from the remuneration earned by a prisoner working in prison, depending on their productivity, the quality of the products made and their discipline at work, to cover their food expenses, which can be up to 100% of the cost of food. This policy effectively transfers the financial burden of detention to prisoners, which is unprecedented in modern Europe, and creates risks of forced labour, as prisoners will be motivated to work not to obtain real benefits, but to avoid the complete loss of any remuneration, thus essentially making their work unpaid. It is worth noting that prisoners' food was already underfunded by the regime and of poor quality, with many prisoners relying on food parcels brought by their families to ensure a minimum level of adequate nutrition. Furthermore, **the prohibition of receiving parcels from family members is used as a disciplinary sanction in prisons**, so that prisoners who do not comply with the rules risk being deprived of an essential source of food. Under these circumstances, the new financial deductions place them in an even more vulnerable situation⁶⁴.

Overall, the 2025 changes show a **trend towards strengthening repressive control** through seemingly technical regulatory instruments. A coherent framework of measures is emerging which, taken together, diminish safeguards against abuse on the left bank of the Nistru:

- ▶ restricting access to independent lawyers from outside the region undermines the right to defence and the possibility of reporting acts of torture or inhuman treatment;
- ▶ relaxing the criteria for hiring "investigators" lowers the quality of pseudo-investigations and increases the risk of "judicial" errors;
- ▶ Reduced transparency regarding the "judicial actors and officials" involved in repression conceals the identity of those responsible for human rights violations and encourages impunity;
- ▶ the formalisation of detention standards below the European minimum accentuates the perpetuation of inhuman conditions in "detention";
- ▶ The introduction of mechanisms for full wage deductions effectively cancels out the payment for work performed by prisoners and can be equated with forced labour.

All of this **weakens the protection of individuals against the arbitrary power of the regime** and highlights the regressive direction in terms of rights in 2025. People in the custody of the Tiraspol authorities, even temporarily, through "administrative detention", now have even fewer means of defending themselves or making their situation known to the outside world. The decline in transparency makes independent monitoring difficult, and the removal of the last checks and balances (such as lawyers not affiliated with the regime) leaves citizens virtually defenceless against the Transnistrian coercive apparatus.

6.4 ECtHR in 2025: cases concerning the Transnistrian region

On 23 October 2025, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) delivered a joint judgment in the case of *Urusbiev and Others v. Moldova and Russia*, resolving five separate complaints filed by six individuals concerning the Transnistrian region⁶⁵. The cases concerned the applicants Serghei and Nicolae Ilcenco (father and son, both journalists), Serghei Vardiasvili, Rauşan Ahmetşin, Petru Mustea and Ruslan Urusbiev⁶⁶.

64 "The procurement information system of the MRT", "Procurement plan no. 37 of the state penitentiary service of the MRT", 26.11.2025, <https://zakupki.gospmr.org/plan/?id=4034>.

65 Government Agent of the Republic of Moldova, *Urusbiev and others v. Republic of Moldova and Russia*, 23 October 2025, <https://agent.gov.md/comunicate-de-presa/urusbiev-si-altii-v-republica-moldova-si-rusia/>.

66 Promo-LEX Association, "ECHR confirms serious human rights abuses in the Transnistrian region in four cases won by applicants assisted by Promo-LEX", 24 October 2025, <https://promolex.md/ctedo-confirma-abuzuri-grave-ale-drepturilor-omului-in-regiunea-transnistreana-in-patru-cauze-castigate-de-reclamanti-asistati-de-promo-lex/>.

In all five complaints, the ECHR found serious violations of the European Convention on Human Rights attributable to the Russian Federation, including **unlawful deprivation of liberty, ill-treatment and violations of the right to a fair trial, freedom of movement and freedom of expression**. The Republic of Moldova was not found responsible, as the Court noted the lack of effective control over the territory and the fulfilment of positive obligations within the limits of its possibilities.

The Russian Federation was found responsible for violations of Articles 3, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 13, and in certain cases also of Article 14, Article 34 and Article 2 of Protocol No. 4. The judgment reconfirmed the jurisdiction and responsibility of the Russian Federation for events that occurred before 16 September 2022.

In the case of Sergei and Nicolae Ilcenco (application no. 40836/15), journalists from Tiraspol, the Court examined the house search of 18 March 2015, the arrest of Sergei Ilcenco on the same day and his preventive detention for approximately four months (until 17 July 2015), as well as the confiscation of journalistic materials and the restriction of access to writing instruments. The Court found conditions of detention incompatible with Article 3, unlawful deprivation of liberty (Article 5 § 1) and lack of an effective remedy (Article 13). Unjustified interference with private life (Article 8) and freedom of expression (Article 10) was found through searches, confiscations and monitoring of journalistic activity, as well as obstruction of the right to individual petition (Article 34), including through the confiscation of materials and abusive monitoring of lawyer-client communications. The Republic of Moldova was not found responsible.

In the case of Serghei Vardiasvili (application no. 558/16), the applicant, a Georgian national, was detained on 9 June 2015 on the pretext that his residence permit had expired and was held for three days in the Dubăsari police detention centre in poor conditions. On 11 June 2015, the *de facto* authorities forcibly expelled him across the so-called “border” and banned him from returning for six months, separating him from his family and home. The Court found violations of Articles 3 and 5 § 1, Article 8, Article 2 of Protocol No. 4 (freedom of movement) and Article 14 (discrimination on ethnic grounds), as well as a lack of effective remedy (Article 13). The Republic of Moldova was not found responsible.

In the case of Raušan Ahmetşin (application no. 862/16), the applicant was arrested on 13 March 2015 in the courtroom, following his conviction by the so-called court in Tiraspol, and was subsequently transferred to various places of detention. The Court found degrading conditions of detention and a lack of adequate medical care (Article 3), as well as the unlawfulness of the deprivation of liberty ordered by an unrecognised body (Article 5 § 1). It also noted the lack of an effective remedy (Article 13) in connection with Articles 3 and 5. The Court noted that on 1 December 2015, the Supreme Court of Justice of the Republic of Moldova quashed the decisions of the unrecognised “courts” concerning the applicant’s conviction, but there was no clear information regarding his immediate release, given the refusal of the *de facto* structures to cooperate. The Republic of Moldova was not found responsible.

In the case of Petru Mustea (application no. 83954/17), the applicant was arrested on 23 March 2017 and placed in preventive detention for an indefinite period, which was subsequently extended arbitrarily, and was released on 2 June 2017. The Court found inhuman conditions of detention and inadequate medical care (Article 3), unlawful deprivation of liberty (Article 5 § 1) and excessive length of pre-trial detention without sufficient justification and without regular judicial review (Article 5 § 3), as well as a lack of effective remedy (Article 13). In 2025, further developments in his case were reported with the issuance, on 4 July 2025, of a “sentence” in absentia, which imposed

a penalty of 5 years and 6 months' imprisonment, followed by "enforcement orders" on 8 and 11 August 2025, including a "fine" of 237,400 "Transnistrian rubles" and alleged costs for an unidentified "lawyer", with extended powers for the so-called "enforcers", including the right to enter premises and seize property. The Republic of Moldova was not found responsible.

In the case of *Ruslan Urusbiev* (application no. 33519/15), the Court held that the detention (starting on 17 September 2014) and conviction handed down by the so-called regional courts, including a seven-year prison sentence handed down on 19 November 2014 and upheld on 23 December 2014, could not be considered "lawful" within the meaning of the Convention. Violations of Article 5 § 1 (deprivation of liberty), Article 6 § 1 (conviction by a court not established by law) and Article 13 (lack of an effective remedy) were found. The Court noted that the Republic of Moldova had fulfilled its positive obligations, without finding any violations on its part.

Figure 11.

ECtHR judgments delivered in October 2025



Overall, the judgment of 23 October 2025 reconfirms the Russian Federation's responsibility for the acts committed by the *de facto* structures in the region during the period in which the Court found that effective control was exercised, as well as the fact that the alleged justice system in the region is not compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. The cases highlighted the vulnerability of residents on the left bank of the Nistru to arbitrary detention and abusive convictions, as well as the practical difficulties in accessing support and rehabilitation mechanisms for persons subjected to such abuses.

At the same time, in November and December 2025, the ECHR communicated two extended groups of applications, totalling 47⁶⁷, to the governments of the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation. These cover a wide range of abuses committed by the Tiraspol regime. Analysis of these communications reveals a diversification in the types of violations. While historically cases concerning detention conditions predominated, the new cases reveal **an increase in politically motivated persecution, restrictions on freedom of movement and economic rights**.

Most complaints continue to relate to violations of Articles 3 and 5 of the Convention. The Court has taken up for examination numerous cases of convictions handed down by unconstitutional "courts", followed by deprivation of liberty in poor conditions. Cases such as *Kruglova*, *Paslari*, *Nemcenco* and *Caraman* describe a repetitive pattern of overcrowded cells, poor hygiene and lack of access to natural light in prisons in Tiraspol, Hlinaia and Bender.

An alarming aspect highlighted in the new communications is the lack of medical care for vulnerable persons. The Court examines serious cases, such as that of the applicants in *the case of V.H. and E.H. or the case of S.A.*, where **persons diagnosed with HIV, tuberculosis or epilepsy were deprived of adequate treatment**. Similarly, in the *Rjavitin* case, the Court is examining ill-treatment in the context of forced conscription and punishment of "deserters", highlighting the abusive "militarisation" of the region.

A distinct element in the cases communicated in 2025 is **the repression of critical voices**, particularly in the regional geopolitical context. The *Pleşcanov* and *Lopuşneac* case is emblematic of this phenomenon, namely **the conviction for "extremism" and "hooliganism"** of a resident of Tiraspol who attempted to fly the Ukrainian flag and criticised Russia's war of aggression. Similarly, the *Samonii and Ermurachi* cases brought to the attention of the ECHR the use of the "Transnistrian criminal justice system" to silence political opposition or simple criticism expressed in private conversations, invoking a violation of freedom of expression (Article 10, ECHR).

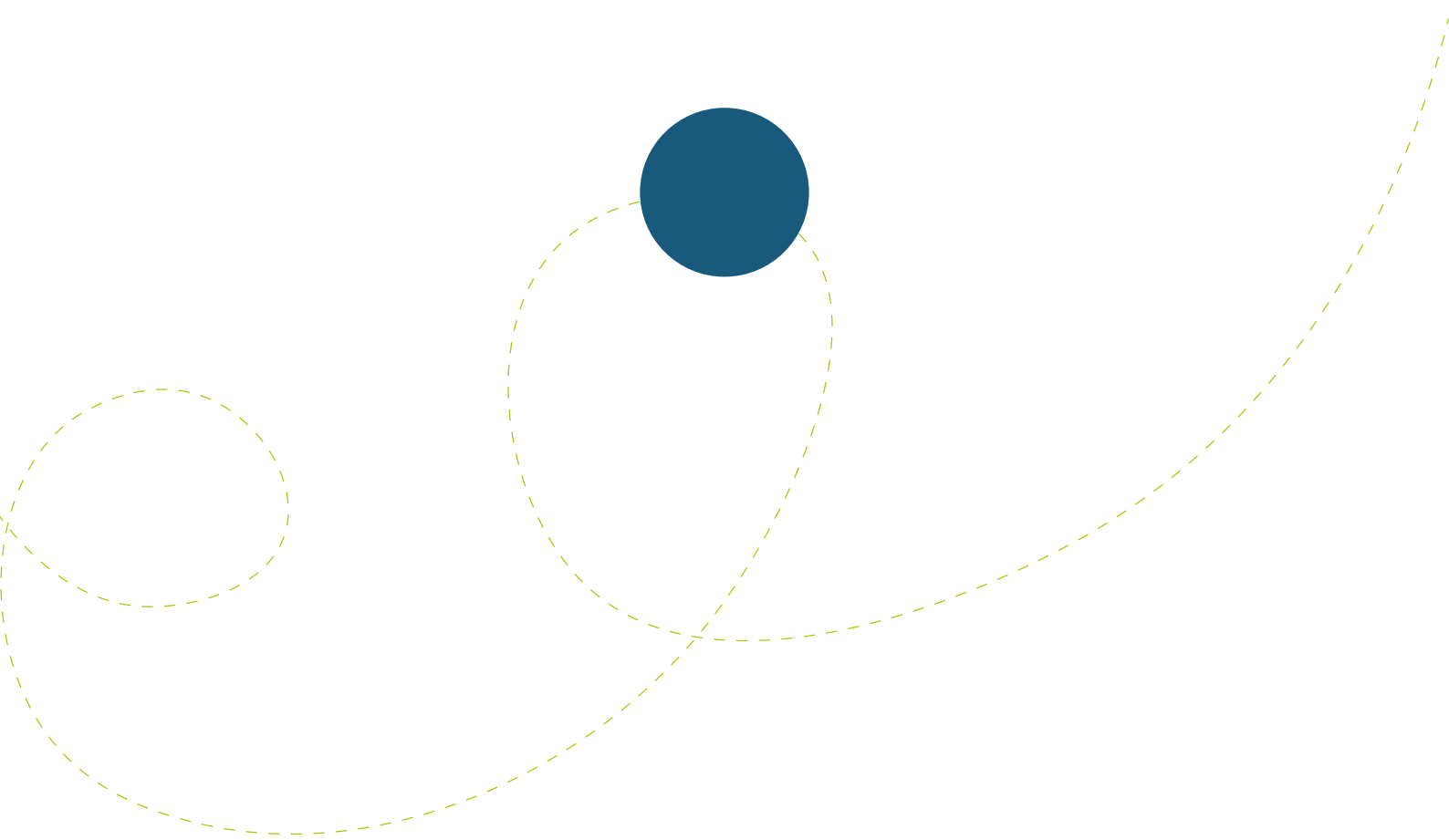
The Court placed particular emphasis on the practice of the Tiraspol authorities of expelling residents or denying them access to their own homes, a flagrant violation of Article 2 of Protocol No. 4 to the Convention and the right to family life (Article 8). *The Timuş*, *Moşneaga*, *Coţofan* and *Garmaş* cases illustrate the situation of individuals, including veterans and former employees of the structures in question, who, having been declared "undesirable", were forcibly separated from their families remaining in the region, without the possibility of challenging this decision.

Last but not least, the Court examined cases concerning physical and legal insecurity. *The Dudnic* case raises **the issue of abductions from constitutionally controlled territory**, while *the Glijin* case remains a landmark case concerning the Russian

67 Promo-LEX Association, "The ECtHR has communicated new cases concerning detentions and abuses in the Transnistrian region; 18 of them represented by Promo-LEX", 23 January 2026, <https://promolex.md/ctedo-a-comunicat-noi-cauze-privind-detentiile-si-abuzurile-din-regiunea-transnistreana-18-dintre-ele-reprezentate-de-promo-lex/>.

Federation's disregard for interim measures (Rule 39) and the continued incommunicado detention of prisoners. On the economic front, *the Victoria-Cocieri S.R.L. case* reiterates **the difficulties faced by farmers in the Dubăsari district**, whose right to own and use land is abusively conditioned by unrecognised structures.

It is equally important to note that, although the Republic of Moldova has not been found responsible for human rights violations in the Transnistrian region, the constitutional authorities can take further measures on the right bank of the Nistru to support persons released from illegal detention in the region by establishing a **post-detention assistance mechanism**. In the absence of a dedicated legal framework, these persons do not currently receive specialised assistance and information support from the authorities.



CONCLUSIONS

In 2025, **the human rights situation in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova has deteriorated significantly**, and monitored developments indicate a consolidation of a model of “governance” based on control, repression and impunity. The energy crisis that started at the beginning of the year was not only a destabilising socio-economic factor, but also a catalyst for strengthening control mechanisms.

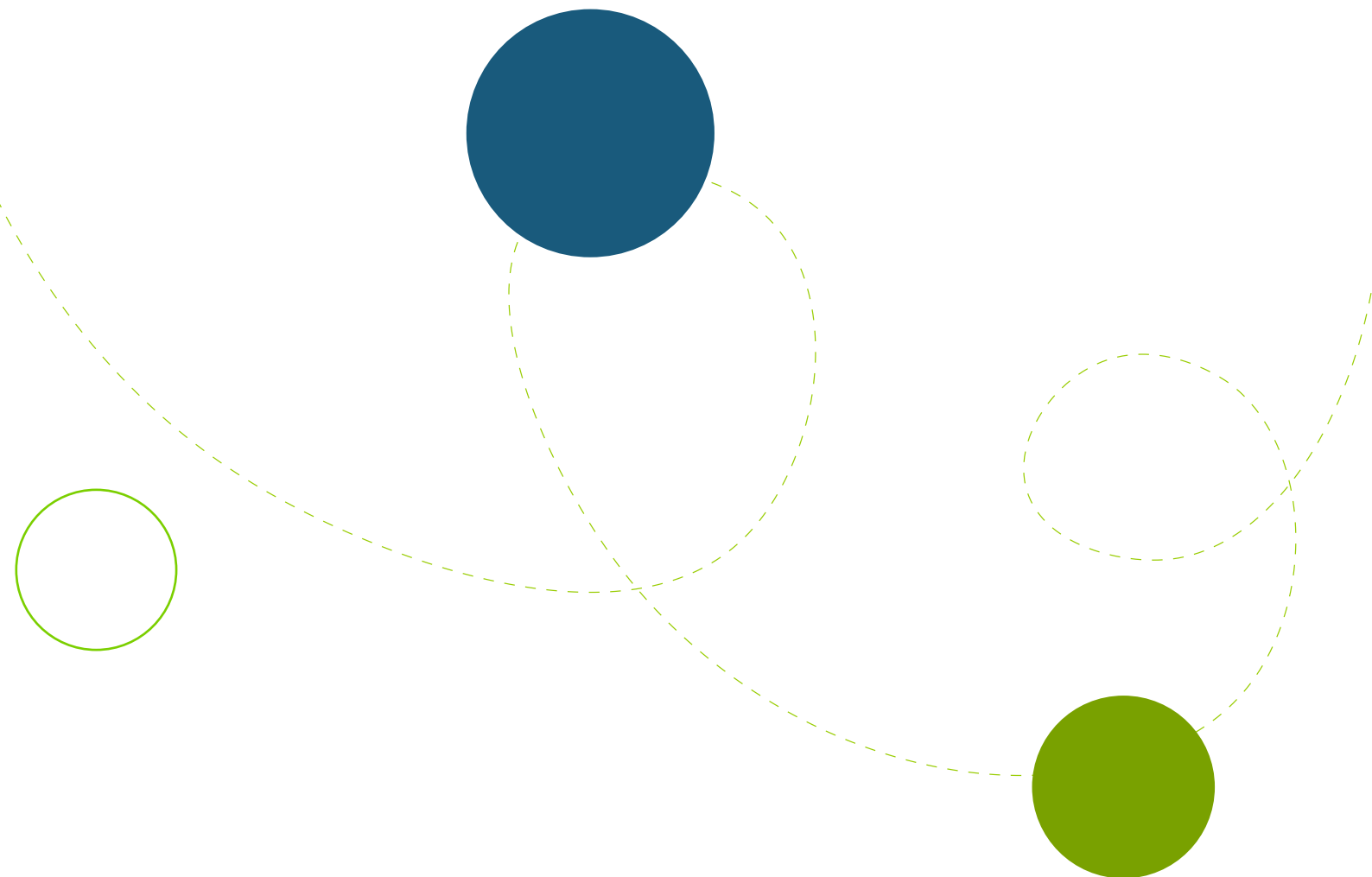
With financial resources dwindling and the local economy weakening, the Tiraspol regime has implemented **measures that have shifted the burden of the crisis onto the population**, while continuing to prioritise the security forces and the propaganda apparatus. These developments reflect the region’s dependence on **an unsustainable economic model** and external decisions, as well as the lack of internal mechanisms for transparency and accountability. In the absence of budgetary transparency and real public control, **austerity measures have exacerbated inequalities and social insecurity**, and the costs of the crisis have been borne disproportionately by vulnerable groups.

At the same time, the report shows that actions aimed at reinforcing the myth of Transnistrian identity are part of a broader strategy to legitimise the regime. Constant investment in the indoctrination of children and young people is intended to ensure their long-term loyalty and disconnect them from the rest of the country and the Western world. In this sense, **education is used more as a mechanism of political and ideological control**. Given the extent of the militarisation and politicisation of education, the reintegration of the Transnistrian region will require strategic interventions to cognitively de-occupy, demilitarise and democratise the education system.

At the same time, limiting access to information and expanding mechanisms for monitoring the digital space reduce the population’s ability to challenge the decisions of the occupation structures and report abuses. Under the pretext of security risks, **self-censorship and restrictions on freedom of expression are constantly being reinforced**, which also affects the possibility of independent documentation of human rights violations.

In the field of justice, findings confirm **the persistence of a parallel system characterised by opacity, lack of procedural guarantees and impunity**. Degrading conditions of detention, limited access to defence and the absence of independent monitoring are direct consequences of an institutional architecture designed to protect the regime and discourage the reporting of abuses. Under these conditions, **detainees remain at high risk of inhuman and degrading treatment**, with no effective protection mechanisms in place. Their vulnerability is exacerbated by the fact that, upon release, **they do not receive assistance or information support** from the constitutional authorities.

For the inhabitants of the left bank of the Nistru, **2025 has therefore meant increased economic precariousness and social vulnerability, coupled with a deterioration in the climate of respect for human rights.** At the end of the year, the region finds itself in a fragile situation, marked by economic underdevelopment and energy dependence, in which Transnistrian structures are increasingly resorting to authoritarian measures to maintain internal control. In the absence of major changes, these findings paint a bleak picture of the human rights situation in the Transnistrian region, which requires continued attention from national authorities and the international community.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

Targeted subjects: Government of the Republic of Moldova, Bureau for Reintegration Policies.

- ▶ Establish a dedicated support mechanism for victims in the Transnistrian region released from illegal detention, including legal, psychological and social assistance, with a view to their reintegration into society.

Recommendation 2

Targeted subjects: Government of the Republic of Moldova, Bureau for Reintegration Policies.

- ▶ Ensure systematic monitoring, documentation and collection of data on the human rights situation in the Transnistrian region. This information will be essential for the development of reintegration policies, so that they reflect and respond effectively to the realities in the occupied territory.

Recommendation 3

Targeted subjects: Government of the Republic of Moldova, Bureau for Reintegration Policies, international partners.

- ▶ Prioritise human rights and the situation of illegally detained persons in any dialogue with Tiraspol.

Recommendation 4

Targeted subjects: Government of the Republic of Moldova, Bureau for Reintegration Policies.

- ▶ Keep the situation of schools teaching in Romanian (Latin script) and farmers in the Dubăsari district on the institutional agenda in order to constantly address their needs, risks and impediments.

Recommendation 5

Targeted subjects: Government of the Republic of Moldova.

- ▶ Allocate additional financial resources for the expansion and modernisation of Romanian-language (Latin script) educational institutions in the Transnistrian region so that they can respond to the constant increase in the number of students, including allophone students.

Recommendation 6

Targeted subjects: Government of the Republic of Moldova, Bureau for Reintegration Policies, Centre for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation.

- ▶ Ensure monitoring of the information space in the Transnistrian region in order to identify the main propaganda narratives, tools for manipulating public opinion and mechanisms for indoctrinating children and the population as a whole. This monitoring will be necessary for the development of strategies for cognitive de-occupation and reintegration of the region into the national information space.



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