



Monitoring Report

The Human Rights Situation in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova

Monitoring period: 1 April 2026 – 30 June 2026

Promo-LEX
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Author: Mihaela Șerpi

Contributors: Vadim Vieru, Nicoleta Hriplivîi

Editor: Olga Manole

Design and layout: Marina Bejenari

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The opinions expressed in the report belong exclusively to the authors; they cannot be interpreted in any way as reflecting the opinion and position of the National Endowment for Democracy.



Acronyms

CoE – Council of Europe

“MGB” – “ministry of state security” in Tiraspol

“MRT” – The so-called “Moldovan Republic of Transnistria”, a name used by the illegal Transnistrian bodies for the territory under Russian occupation since 1992

PPR – Prison Population Rate

UIN – Illegal detention facility in the Transnistrian region

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Introduction

This quarterly monitoring report examines the human rights situation in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova between 1 April and 30 June 2026, based on data collected through Promo-LEX's ongoing monitoring. The report is divided into two chapters. The first chapter analyses the "legislative initiatives" and measures promoted by the illegal Transnistrian bodies and the Russian Federation that have an impact on human rights. The second chapter examines key developments in the illegal prison system, individual cases of unlawful detention, the politicisation and militarisation of education, propaganda and disinformation, as well as the socio-economic context. The report is based on qualitative research methods, in accordance with international standards for human rights monitoring. Information was gathered from open sources, official requests for access to information of public interest, interviews with victims of unlawful detention, fact-finding field visits and comparative statistical analyses.

During the monitoring period, the main developments point to an expansion of the mechanisms of control, surveillance and coercion exercised over the population of the Transnistrian region. The decree on simplifying the granting of Russian citizenship to residents of the region, including orphans and children deprived of parental care, forms part of a broader strategy of passportisation, Russification and the consolidation of dependence on the Russian Federation. Although the Russian Federation has been implementing a policy of passportisation in the Transnistrian region for many years, the new decree raises major concerns in the context of the large-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. At the same time, the extension of the obligation on "civil registry offices" to transmit data to "military commissariats" – including regarding women who are registered or required to be registered for military service – indicates a strengthening of mechanisms for monitoring the population for military purposes. Furthermore, the ban on the use of the name "Transnistria" in any language confirms the trend towards controlling public discourse and imposing the myth of a distinct "Transnistrian identity and statehood".

In addition to these measures, the report draws attention to the serious situation within the illegal prison system. The data analysed indicate a high incarceration rate, inhumane conditions of detention, chronic underfunding and limited access to healthcare. The ongoing reduction in medical staff, the lack of essential medicines and the inability to provide necessary treatment expose those unlawfully detained to major risks to their health and lives. The cases of Evghenii Pancioha and Emilian Ceban illustrate these systemic problems, including arbitrary detention, the lack of fair trial guarantees, the use of charges of "treason" for repressive purposes, and the risks associated with the early militarisation of children.

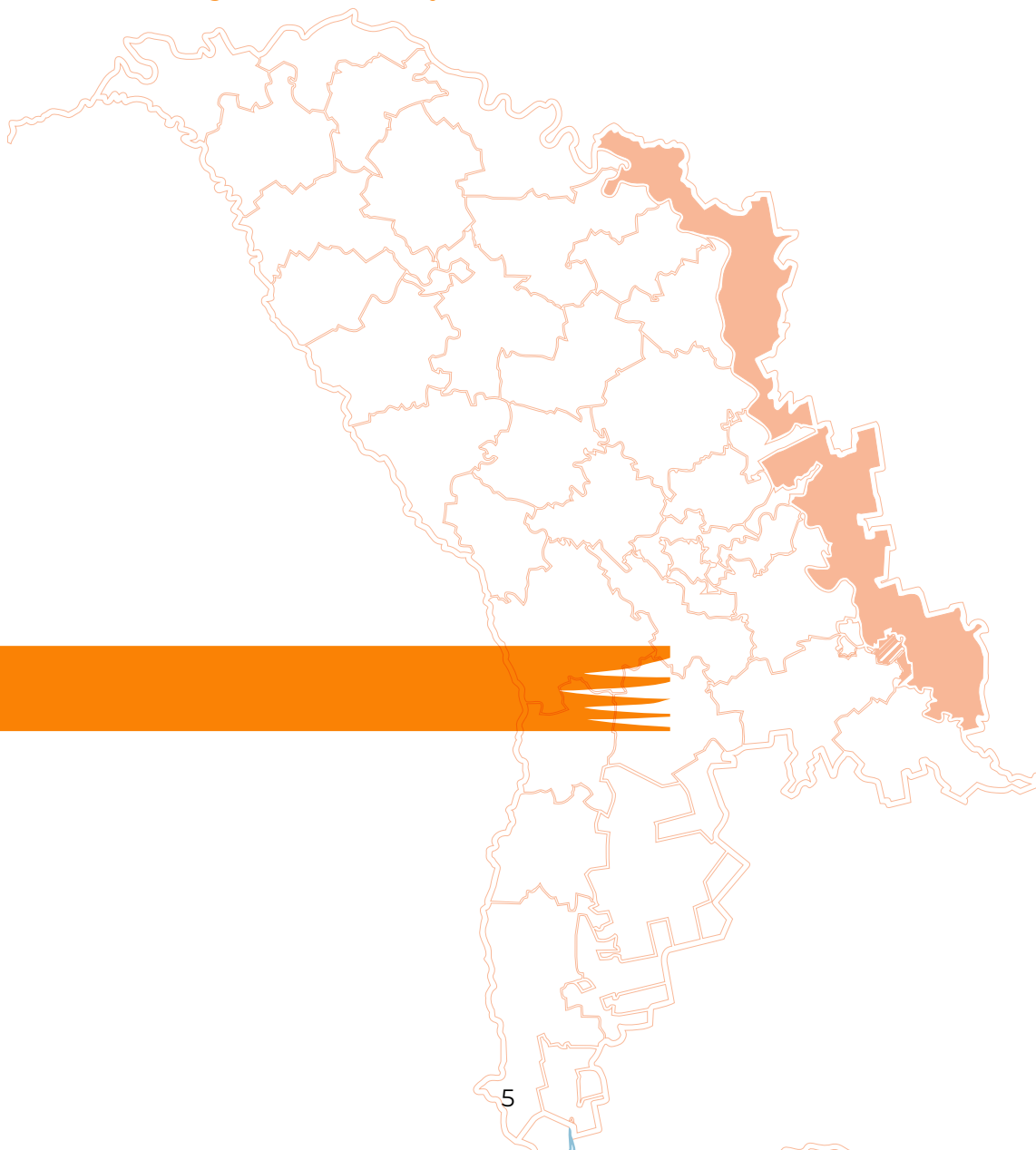
The politicisation and militarisation of children remain major concerns. The revival of the Pioneer movement, children's participation in camps organised in occupied Crimea and the Russian Federation, basic military training competitions, and the involvement of pre-schoolers in activities with dangerous ideological content reveal the use of the education system as a tool for indoctrination, Russification and the channelling of children towards paramilitary structures.

As regards the information environment, local propaganda has become more explicitly directed against the reintegration process. Monitoring of media sources in the region shows a shift from narratives about a "blockade" and "economic pressure" to terms such

as “genocide”, “extermination”, “occupation” or “forced Romanianisation”. These messages aim to instil fear, discredit the constitutional authorities and portray reintegration as an existential threat to the region’s population. Against this backdrop, attacks by illegal security bodies on the independent press have intensified, as have warnings to residents not to pass on information to media platforms on the right bank of the Nistru.

These developments are exacerbated by the deteriorating socio-economic situation. During the monitoring period, the state of economic emergency was extended twice, against a backdrop of mounting budgetary pressures. The budget deficit has led to cuts in certain areas of public spending and the channelling of resources towards current obligations, particularly wages and pensions. At the same time, the launch of the “Together” Social Support Fund indicates that an ever-greater share of the burden of the crisis is being shifted onto the population and the business sector. The reduction in funding for social, healthcare, educational and infrastructure programmes, the increase in certain tariffs and the deterioration of basic public services confirm the increasingly limited capacity of the occupation regime to sustain the region’s functioning.

Note on terminology: The terms “minister”, “law”, “MRT”, “government” or other similar designations are used exclusively for technical and descriptive purposes, to precisely identify the illegal Transnistrian bodies, the individuals holding office within them, or decisions that may have an impact on the human rights situation in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. The use of these terms does not in any way imply the legitimisation or *de jure* recognition of the occupying bodies, the functions established within them, or the illegal decisions they issue.



“Legislative initiatives” with an impact on human rights

1.1 The decree on the “passportisation” of the Transnistrian region

On 15 May 2026, Vladimir Putin signed a decree simplifying the procedure for acquiring Russian citizenship for residents of the Transnistrian region¹. This measure forms part of a broader “passportisation” strategy, which the Kremlin has been using for several years to Russify the occupied territory of the Republic of Moldova and which has been applied in a similar manner in the occupied territories of Ukraine. By granting Russian citizenship on favourable terms, the Russian Federation seeks to forcibly integrate the population under occupation into its own legal and administrative framework, transforming the inhabitants of these territories into subjects dependent on the Russian state. This policy is supported by local propaganda channels and the education system in the Transnistrian region, which constantly promote narratives about belonging to the so-called “Russian world”. Thus, passportisation, propaganda and ideologised education work together as tools to consolidate the Russian Federation’s control over the region’s population.

A particularly worrying aspect of the decree is the provision concerning the granting, under a simplified procedure, of Russian citizenship to orphans and children deprived of parental care. This category of children is in a position of heightened vulnerability, as they are not registered with the constitutional authorities of the Republic of Moldova, have extremely limited opportunities to exercise their rights, and are directly exposed to the control and recruitment mechanisms of the Tiraspol regime’s paramilitary structures. In 2025, Promo-LEX published an analysis of how the occupation regime is militarising the education of orphans and children without parental care². Among the methods used as part of so-called “patriotic education” are military-themed sports competitions, exercises mimicking military training, re-enactments of battles or war scenes, weapons exhibitions, air-gun shooting competitions, screenings of war films, drawing and literature competitions on military themes, as well as history tests in which the regime’s version is imposed as the sole source of truth. Furthermore, orphaned children and those deprived of parental care are the target of recruitment campaigns for the Suvorov Military School in Tiraspol and the Cadet School in Bender. The Tiraspol regime has promoted the idea that these militarised institutions and service in paramilitary formations represent the only viable alternative for children without family support. Against the backdrop of the Russian Federation’s large-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, young people trained within a militarised education system and from socially vulnerable backgrounds are exposed to heightened risks, particularly if they hold or acquire Russian citizenship.

Last but not least, this initiative also serves a propaganda function. Experience from the occupied territories in Georgia and Ukraine shows that the Russian Federation uses the granting of Russian citizenship to subsequently justify its interference in the internal affairs of neighbouring states. Under the pretext of “protecting its own citizens”, the Kremlin is constructing a narrative designed to legitimise political pressure, destabilising actions and the threat or use of military force. This initiative must also be analysed in the context of the intensification of anti-reintegration narratives promoted by the occupation regime and by local propaganda channels. These narratives consistently portray Chişinău’s actions as “genocide”, “strangulation” or “war against the Transnistrians”, artificially reinforcing the perception of an external threat and an alleged need for protection from the Russian Federation.

1.2 Extension of the obligation on “registry offices” to provide data on women to “military commissariats”

On 11 May 2026, Vadim Krasnoselski signed amendments to the so-called “law on general military duty and military service”³. These amendments expand the mechanism for the exchange of information between “civil registry offices” and “military commissariats” in the Transnistrian region, thereby strengthening the capacity of illegal paramilitary structures to identify and monitor individuals on the military register. Under the new provisions, “civil registry offices” are required to submit information to “military commissariats” by the 10th of each month regarding changes made to civil registry records during the previous month. The data concern, on the one hand, men aged between 16 and 65, and, on the other hand, women who are or are required to be on the military register, up to the age of 50. In the case of women, the information is to be submitted on the basis of lists previously submitted by the “military commissariats” and updated as individuals are registered for military service or removed from the military register.

These amendments must be analysed in the context of initiatives previously promoted by the occupying bodies. Promo-LEX’s monitoring report covering the period from 1 January to 31 March 2026 highlighted an amendment to the so-called “Law on Military Service”, which extended the obligation of the “civil registry offices” to transmit monthly information to the illegal paramilitary structures regarding changes in the civil status of men aged between 16 and 65, including marriages, divorces, changes of name and deaths⁴. According to the explanatory note accompanying the initiative, these data had not previously been reported on a regular basis, as men were not required, as part of civil status procedures, to indicate whether they were registered for military service. At the time, Promo-LEX noted that these amendments significantly restricted the possibility of avoiding registration with the illegal paramilitary structures, including by changing one’s name or other personal details.

Essentially, the new provisions contribute to the expansion of mechanisms for monitoring the population for military purposes. Whilst the mechanism previously targeted predominantly the male population aged between 16 and 65, the amendments adopted in May 2026 expressly include women who are registered or required to be registered for military service. On 18 May 2026, Telegram channels associated with illegal Transnistrian bodies and local propaganda dismissed the information regarding these amendments as false, claiming that it was intended to destabilise the situation and cause panic among the population. However, the information had also been published on the website of the so-called “president of the MRT”, who had already signed the document.



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1.3 Ban on the use of the name “Transnistria” in any language

On 1 June 2026, an “order” signed by Vadim Krasnoselski was published, proposing an amendment to Article 20.4-1 of the so-called “code of administrative offences”⁵. The initiative aims to ban the use of the name “Transnistria”, in any language, in public speeches, publicly displayed works or media materials, when it refers to the territory on the left bank of the Nistru. The only exception would be where the term is used to foster a negative attitude towards Nazi or extremist ideology and does not contain elements of propaganda or justification of such ideologies. The occupation bodies associate the toponym “Transnistria” with the period during the Second World War when the territory was administered by Romania.

The penalties provided for include fines of approximately 13–26 dollars or administrative arrest of up to 15 days for individuals. For so-called “public officials”, fines would range from approximately 13 to 52 dollars, and for legal entities, from approximately 130 to 652 dollars. According to the explanatory note, the initiative was prompted by the impossibility of holding individuals “administratively liable” for using the name “Transnistria” in a language other than Russian written in the Cyrillic alphabet.

As early as 2019, Vadim Krasnoselski argued that the use of the name “Transnistria” in English and Romanian was offensive, even though “Transnistria” is the equivalent in Romanian and English of the Russian name. This stance was subsequently translated into repressive measures. In September 2024, the use of the term “Transnistria” was banned in the Russian language. To this end, amendments were made to the so-called “code of administrative offences”, as well as to the “laws” on combating extremism and perpetuating the victory of the Soviet people. At the same time, local propaganda channels and travel agencies published and distributed materials designed to promote this narrative, including among foreign visitors, in an attempt to enforce the use of the name “Pridnestrovie”. Subsequently, in September 2025, the measures were extended to the education system, with teachers being prohibited from using any terms other than “the Transnistrian people” (“Приднестровский народ” in Russian) to refer to the population of the Transnistrian region.

The name “Transnistria” has a well-established historical and administrative usage in Romanian and English, being used to designate the administrative-territorial units and localities on the left bank of the Nistru River, including the municipality of Bender. The ban on this name serves a purely propagandistic purpose. The measure forms part of a wider series of initiatives through which the occupation regime seeks to control the terminology used in the public sphere, by imposing Russian names and reinforcing the narrative regarding the existence of a distinct Transnistrian “identity” and “statehood”. Through such interventions, Tiraspol seeks to create the perception of fundamental political, historical and ideological differences between the populations on either side of the Nistru. In this context, Krasnoselski presents the use of the term “Transnistria” by the Moldovan media and the authorities in Chişinău as an attempt to minimise or deny the fascist occupation and the crimes committed in the region between 1941 and 1944. Furthermore, he describes those who use this term as “advocates of the fascist occupation”. Such an association is deliberately tendentious, being used to discredit the press and the constitutional authorities. At the same time, the promotion of such initiatives also serves to divert public attention from the region’s real problems, in particular the acute economic and energy crisis.

Chapter 2:

Key developments affecting human rights

2.1 Analysis of the illegal prison system based on open-source data

The incarceration rate is a relevant benchmark for analysing the human rights situation in the so-called “prison system” on the left bank of the Nistru. In the Transnistrian region, deprivation of liberty is used as a means of exerting pressure, exercising political control and intimidating society. This practice reflects the repressive nature of the Tiraspol occupation regime, which operates outside the framework of national and international law. The very high level of detention is driven by the operation of a repressive system, in which individuals are deprived of their liberty unlawfully and arbitrarily, without effective procedural safeguards. The so-called “judicial system” on the left bank of the Nistru is directly subordinate to the interests and influence of the occupation regime, a fact which enables and facilitates the abusive and unlawful application of measures depriving individuals of their liberty.

A comparison of the incarceration rate in the occupied territory with that on the right bank of the Nistru, as well as with the average for Council of Europe (CoE) member states, highlights a fundamental contrast between an authoritarian regime, which operates outside any recognised legal framework, and judicial systems that operate in accordance with international human rights standards.

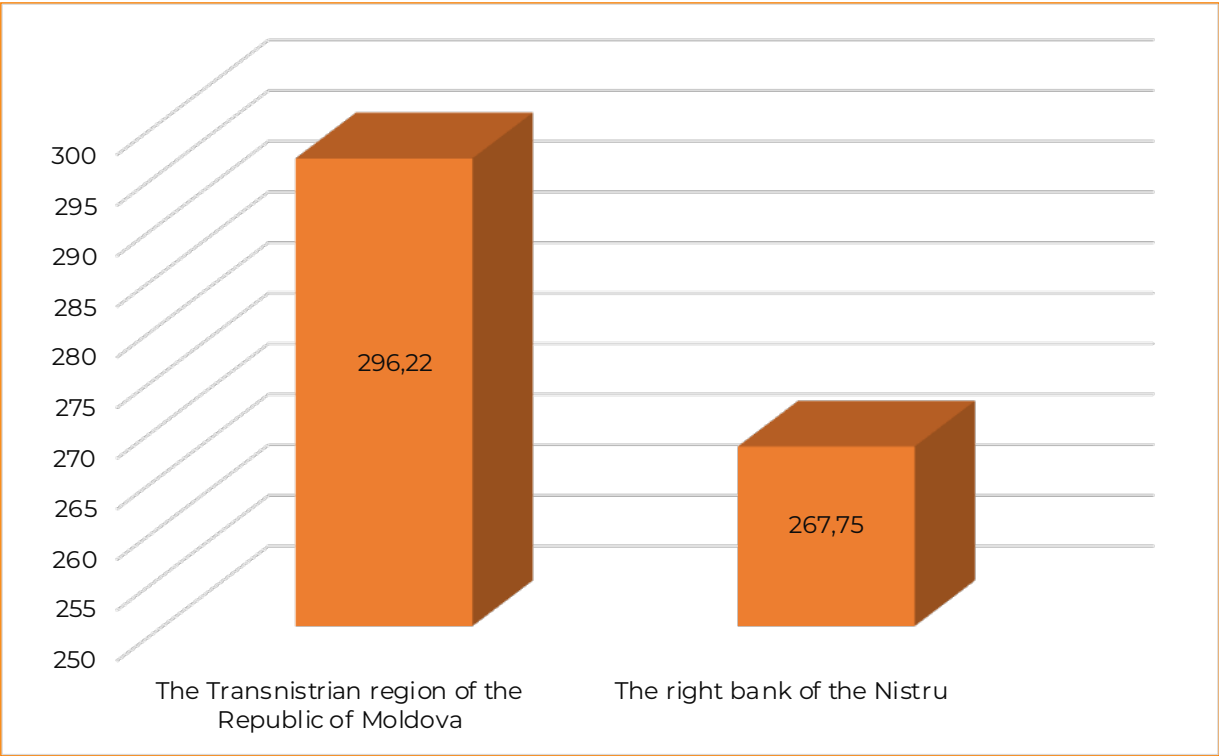
Table 1. Comparison of incarceration rates (PPR) between the right and left banks of the Nistru, according to data available up to 1 January 2026

	The temporarily occupied territory of the Republic of Moldova	The right bank of the Nistru, under constitutional control
Population	447,300 inhabitants	2,365,600 inhabitants
Total prisoners	1,325	6,334
PPR	296.22 per 100,000 inhabitants	267.75 per 100,000 inhabitants

Source: compiled by the author based on data published by [the National Prison Administration](#) of the Republic of Moldova and [the so-called ombudsman](#) in Tiraspol for the year 2025.

The comparative data show that the incarceration rate in the Transnistrian region continues to be higher than that on the right bank of the Nistru, even after the release, in 2025, of 812 people from illegal detention facilities, of whom over 63 per cent were released under the so-called “amnesty”⁶.

Figure 1. Incarceration rate – comparison between the two banks of the Nistru

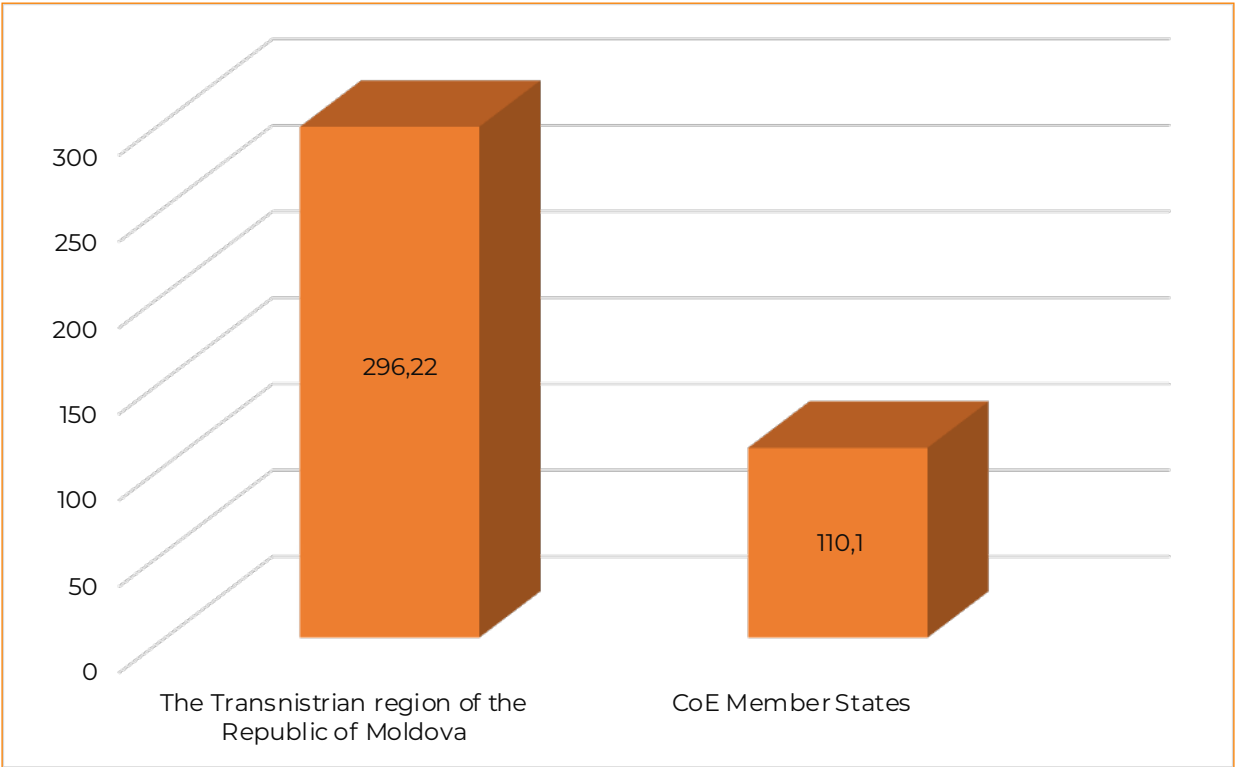


Source: compiled by the author based on data published by [the National Prison Administration](#) of the Republic of Moldova and [the so-called ombudsman](#) in Tiraspol for the year 2025.

Furthermore, the incarceration rate in the Transnistrian region, as at 1 January 2026, is more than double the European average of 110.1 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants – an indicator that reflects the excessive use of detention and the systematic violation of fundamental rights.



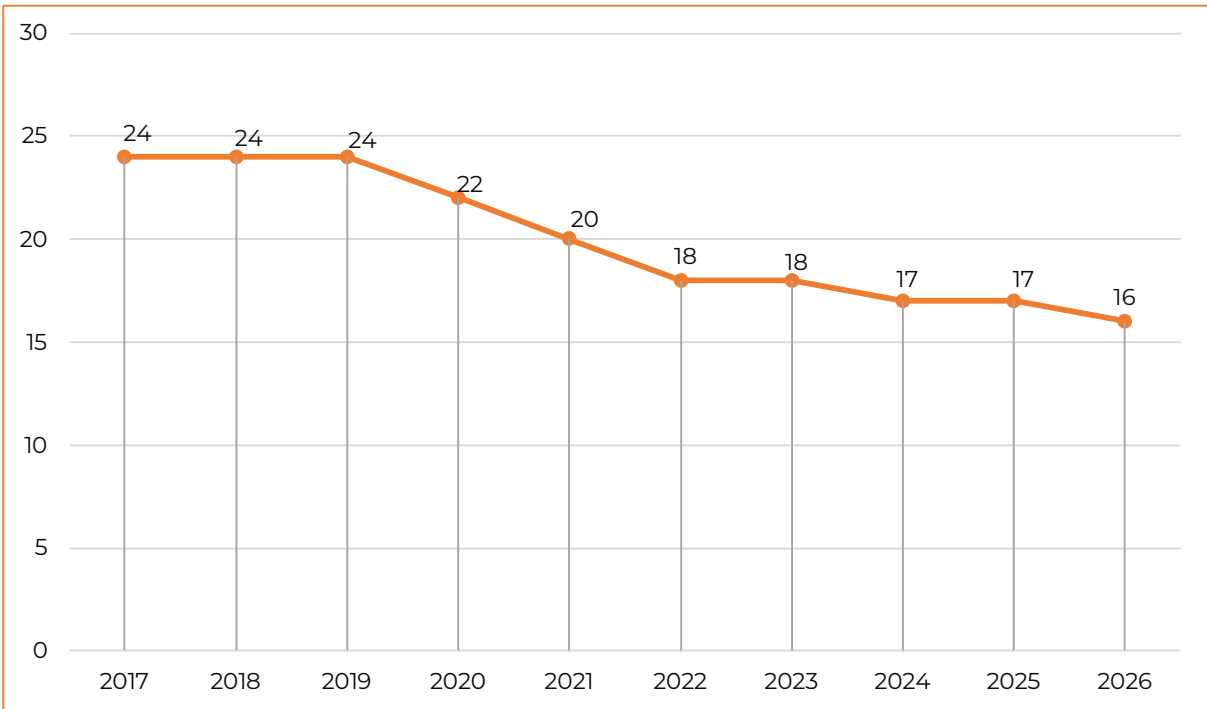
Figure 2. Incarceration rate – comparison between the left bank of the Nistru and Council of Europe member states



Source: compiled by the author based on data published by [the National Prison Administration](#) of the Republic of Moldova and [the Council of Europe](#) for the year 2025.

The broader decline in human rights in the region is also confirmed by the “Freedom in the World 2026” report, which reveals that the freedom score for the occupied territory of the country has fallen to 16 out of 100: 4 out of 40 for political rights and 12 out of 60 for civil liberties. Compared with 2017, the score has fallen by 8 points, confirming a steady trend of erosion in human rights.

Figure 3. The Transnistrian region's score in the Freedom House ranking, 2017–2026

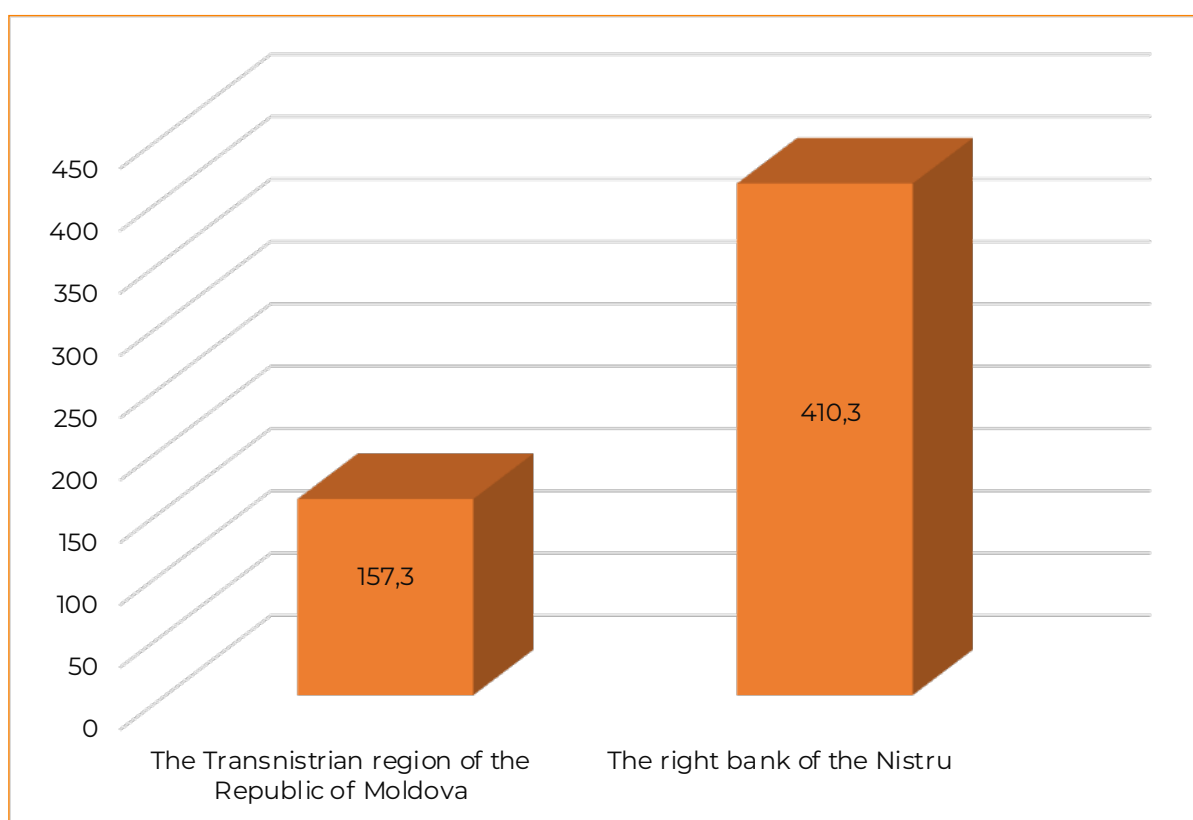


Source: compiled by the author based on Freedom House’s “Freedom in the World” [reports](#) for 2017–2026.

Another important aspect is the data on inhumane conditions of detention, including those reflected in the report published in May 2026 by the “ombudsman” in Tiraspol⁷. The report explicitly states that the rights and legitimate interests of detainees cannot be safeguarded due to limited socio-economic resources, the excessively closed nature of the illegal detention facilities, the lack of adequate public oversight, difficulties in addressing medical issues, and poor sanitary and living conditions. These findings confirm the structural nature of the problems in illegal detention facilities and indicate the system’s inability to guarantee respect for human dignity.

A relevant indicator of this situation is the daily cost of maintaining a detainee. In 2025, the amount stood at 157.3 lei, equivalent to USD 9.07, approximately 20 lei higher than in 2024. It nevertheless remained less than half the amount recorded on the right bank of the Nistru, where the daily cost of maintaining a prisoner was 410.3 lei, equivalent to USD 23.66^{8,9}. This discrepancy reflects the chronic underfunding of the “prison system” and is an indicator of inhumane conditions of detention.

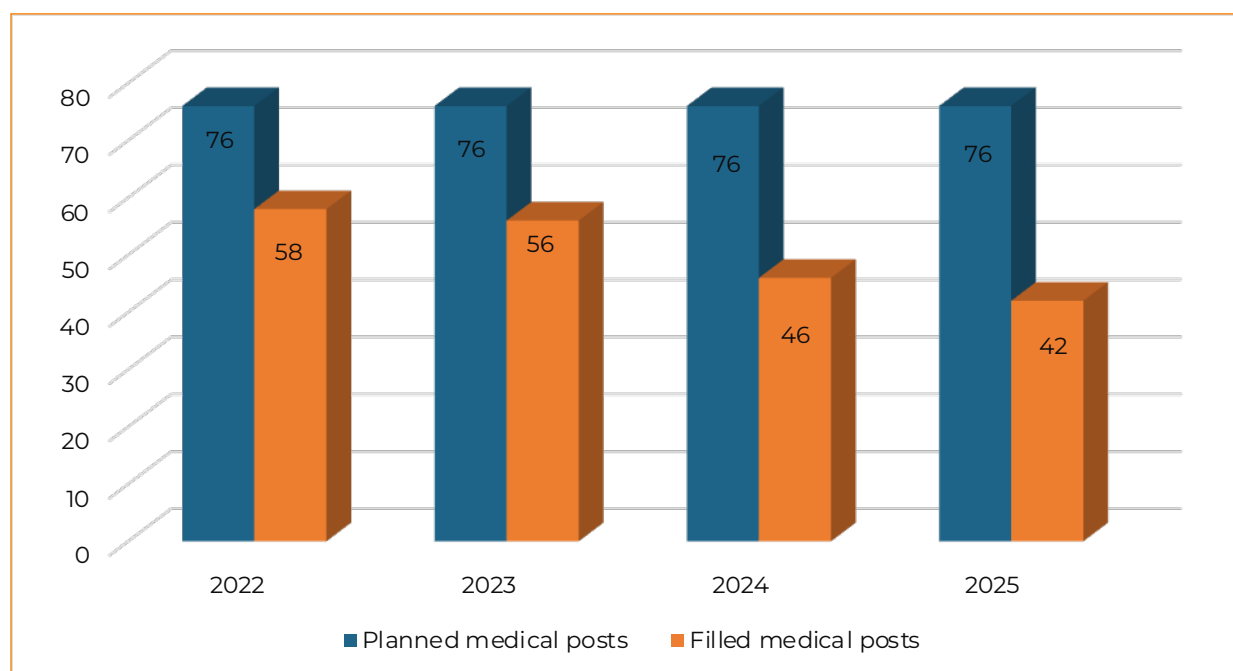
Figure 4. Daily cost of maintaining a prisoner on the left and right banks of the Nistru



Source: compiled by the author based on data provided by [the National Prison Administration](#) of the Republic of Moldova and the so-called [ombudsman](#) in Tiraspol for the year 2025.

A particularly serious concern is access to healthcare in the illegal detention facilities in the Transnistrian region. According to data available as of 1 January 2026, only 42 of the 76 planned medical positions were filled, representing approximately 55.3 per cent of the approved staffing level. This proportion has steadily declined in recent years¹⁰. Although the number of planned medical positions remained unchanged at 76 between 2022 and 2025, the number of filled positions decreased consistently. In 2022, 58 positions were filled, accounting for 76.3 per cent of the total¹¹. This figure fell to 56 positions, or 73.7 per cent, in 2023, and to 46 positions, or 60.5 per cent, in 2024^{12,13}. By 2025, only 42 positions remained filled. Of the medical personnel employed, 18 had university-level medical qualifications and 24 had secondary vocational medical qualifications.

Figure 5. Medical staffing levels, 2022–2025



Source: compiled by the author based on [reports](#) by the so-called ombudsman in Tiraspol for the years 2022–2025.

The ongoing reduction in medical staff, combined with a shortage of essential medicines and drastic underfunding of healthcare, exposes those unlawfully detained to serious risks to their health and lives. These risks are all the greater for those suffering from chronic illnesses, serious conditions or disabilities who require constant medical monitoring, ongoing treatment or urgent medical intervention.

The case of Evghenii Pancioha, which came to public attention in April 2026, illustrates the direct consequences of these systemic shortcomings¹⁴. He has been held illegally for eight years at the detention facility known as “UIN-2” in Tiraspol, and his state of health is extremely serious. Although he suffers from several serious and chronic conditions and requires specialised medical monitoring and treatment, Evghenii Pancioha is not receiving the necessary care whilst in detention, a situation which puts his life at risk. According to available information, he has suffered a stroke, but the recommended treatment has not been provided to him, even though he offered to cover the cost of the medication himself. The only treatment administered on a regular basis is antiretroviral therapy for HIV, dispensed by non-medical staff, without the clinical and laboratory monitoring required by international standards for such therapy. For his other conditions – peripheral vascular disease, the after-effects of a stroke, polyneuropathy, progressive psoriasis and chronic gastritis – treatment is completely lacking. Medical prescriptions are not issued, and the so-called administration of the illegal place of detention does not have the necessary medicines.



2.2 Cases of human rights violations

The unlawful detention of Emilian Ceban – an emblematic case illustrating the risks of the militarisation of children

On 18 May 2026, Promo-LEX publicised the case of Emilian Ceban, a young man from Grigoriopol who is unlawfully deprived of liberty in the Transnistrian region¹⁵. The case is significant not only because of the severity of the individual violations, but also because it highlights the risks posed by the early militarisation of children in paramilitary educational institutions controlled by the occupation regime.

In 2022, at the age of 18, Emilian Ceban was unlawfully deprived of his liberty after refusing to sign a 10-year military contract with the so-called “ministry of defence” in Tiraspol and informing the leadership of this illegal body that he intended to settle on the right bank of the Nistru. He was subsequently accused of alleged “treason”, on the pretext that he had passed on “classified information” concerning the so-called “Transnistrian army” and the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF) to foreign intelligence services. Promo-LEX points out that, given that the regime in Tiraspol is a Russian military occupation regime, invoking the charge of “treason” cannot, under any circumstances, constitute a legal basis for depriving individuals of their liberty.

According to available information, the alleged “criminal case” against Emilian Ceban was fabricated by the so-called “ministry of state security” (“MGB”) on the basis of an online conversation instigated by an “MGB” representative, who allegedly posed as a “journalist from Bellingcat” and asked him for photographs of the paramilitary unit. The only image sent by the young man was reportedly a photograph of a vehicle used to transport fuel, commonly seen in public spaces. Furthermore, Emilian Ceban never had access to the so-called “classified information” that the illegal Transnistrian bodies claim he passed on.

The so-called “criminal proceedings” against him took place behind closed doors, and the case file was reportedly classified, which prevented effective access to the case materials. Emilian Ceban was held *incommunicado* for a month and did not have the assistance of a lawyer capable of defending his rights and denouncing the abuses committed against him. These abuses, which are also found in numerous other cases of illegal detention in the Transnistrian region, indicate the absence of minimum guarantees of a fair trial¹⁶.

Emilian Ceban’s case forms part of a wider series of illegal detentions documented since 2022, against the backdrop of the Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine and the intensification of repressive control in the Transnistrian region. In this context, the occupation regime in Tiraspol has used such cases for propaganda purposes, to justify maintaining the so-called “terrorist alert”, to fuel alarmist narratives regarding alleged external threats from foreign intelligence services, and to instil fear among the population, including among young people recruited into illegal paramilitary structures.

Beyond the abuses committed during his detention, Emilian Ceban’s vulnerability must also be analysed in the context of his background. This reflects a systematic practice of militarising children and transforming paramilitary educational institutions into recruitment mechanisms for illegal armed groups. Emilian Ceban ended up in the so-called “Transnistrian army” after studying at the Suvorov Military School, an institution for children aged between 11 and 17, and subsequently at the “A. I. Lebed” Military Institute in Tiraspol. After enlisting in “compulsory military service”, he was pressured by representatives of the so-called “ministry of defence” to sign a long-term military contract.

In 2025, Promo-LEX documented how children in the Transnistrian region, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and boarding schools, are exposed from the age of 11 to a system of militarised education, political indoctrination and preparation for integration into illegal paramilitary formations¹⁷. Within this system, the Suvorov Military School plays

a central role, being presented by the occupation regime as a key link in the process of training and developing human resources for paramilitary structures. In February 2026, 266 children were enrolled at this institution¹⁸. They are trained in an isolated, rigid and coercive environment, in which general education is subordinated to military discipline and loyalty to illegal paramilitary structures. Enrolment in such institutions significantly restricts future educational and career options, as graduates are channelled towards the “M. I. Kutuzov” Law Institute, the “A. I. Lebed” Military Institute or directly into illegal paramilitary structures. Consequently, the Suvorov Military School functions as a mechanism for the early recruitment and training of personnel for illegal paramilitary structures. Once integrated into this system, young people have extremely limited opportunities to withdraw from the paramilitary system in which they were trained from an early age. Refusal to continue service in paramilitary formations may result in pressure, intimidation or reprisals, and the case of Emilian Ceban vividly illustrates this risk.

Another important issue is the staff shortage within the paramilitary structures, which increases the pressure on young people enrolled at the Suvorov military school. The most recent report by the “ombudsman” in Tiraspol confirms the existence of persistent problems in staffing paramilitary units with both conscripts and contract soldiers, a situation which leads to the existing personnel being overburdened. At the same time, the report highlights difficulties in recruiting officers, linking this problem to the decline in the prestige of the military profession within society¹⁹.

Given the seriousness of this case, on 18 May, Promo-LEX submitted the petition and public appeal regarding the urgent release of Emilian Ceban to the President of the Republic of Moldova, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration. On 21 May, just a few hours after the public statements made that same day by the Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova regarding his case, Emilian Ceban was placed in disciplinary isolation (solitary confinement) for a period of 15 days – a measure which Promo-LEX describes as direct retaliation for the public visibility of the case. The aim of such reprisals is to discourage the reporting of abuses, isolate victims, reduce public and international pressure, and send a message of intimidation to other unlawfully detained persons and their families.

The solitary confinement regime falls far short of any minimum standard of human dignity and, given the specific conditions under which it is applied, constitutes a form of inhuman and degrading treatment. The cell is approximately 1 × 2.5 metres in size, windowless, located in the basement or on the ground floor of the facility, with no natural light, making it impossible for the detainee to distinguish between day and night. The metal sleeping platform is accessible for only 6 hours out of every 24, usually between midnight and 6 am. For the rest of the time, it is raised and secured from the outside, so that the person cannot sit or lie down. During the remaining 18 hours or so, the prisoner is forced to stand or sit on the wet floor. Prison guards deliberately pour water onto the floor, thereby increasing the risk of serious respiratory illnesses. No bed linen or personal hygiene items are provided. Approximately one metre of the cell's floor space is occupied by an open hole in the floor, used as a toilet, with no partition whatsoever, creating a constant source of unsanitary and unbearable conditions. The person held in solitary confinement is even denied the right to a weekly shower.

Promo-LEX emphasises that the Republic of Moldova, although it does not exercise effective control over the Transnistrian region, has a positive obligation to use all available levers – diplomatic, political, economic and legal – to ensure the protection of the rights of its citizens who have been unlawfully deprived of their liberty. In this regard, any discussion concerning the supply of natural gas to the Transnistrian region or any economic support package intended for the region must include a clear and verifiable human rights protection component.

2.3 The politicisation and militarisation of education

2.3.1 The revival of the Pioneer movement

On 19 May, pupils and teaching staff from several schools wore symbolic items associated with the Pioneer organisation, such as the red scarf (identical to the flag of the USSR), and learnt about childhood during the communist era and what it means to be a Pioneer²⁰. To mark Pioneers' Day, a holiday in the former USSR, visits to historical propaganda museums, themed lessons and flash mobs were organised. Information about these events and images of children wearing Pioneer scarves around their necks appeared on local propaganda channels and on the Telegram channels of schools and education authorities subordinate to the occupation regime. At the same time, on 18 May, the History Museum of the Pioneer Organisation was inaugurated within the Palace of Children's and Youth Creativity in Tiraspol, on the initiative of Ilona Tiuriaeva, head of the city's illegal administration.

Figure 6. Teachers and pupils from Râbnița taking part in activities to mark Pioneers' Day



Source: Secondary School No. 8 in Râbnița, 19 May [2026](#); Râbnița Department of Public Education, 20 May [2026](#).

These events essentially constitute a spectacle of communist propaganda. Teachers and the education system as a whole should contribute to fostering a correct and balanced understanding of history and reject any attempt to idealise the Soviet past or distort historical truth. Tiraspol's initiative is deeply problematic because it promotes values and symbols that must be explained through the prism of historical context, not presented as positive role models or examples to be followed. The Pioneers' organisation was, however, conceived precisely as an instrument for the political and ideological indoctrination of children, in accordance with the directives of the Communist Party, and cannot be separated from the totalitarian regime under which it operated. The use of communist symbols in school activities, in the absence of any critical framework, risks perpetuating historical confusion and fuelling nostalgia for a period marked by repression and systematic human rights violations.

2.3.2 Children's participation in camps organised by the "Artek" centre, which has been sanctioned by the EU, Ukraine and other European states

Between May and June 2026, the first group of children from the Transnistrian region arrived at the "Artek" centre. The institution is included on international sanctions lists for its involvement in the forced deportation, detention and alleged "re-education" of Ukrainian children. The Ukrainian authorities have documented that the Russian occupation authorities use such institutions to impose a distorted version of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on young people, to foster loyalty to the occupiers and to systematically eradicate Ukrainian identity²¹.

Children gain access to these camps through vouchers offered by Russian institutions as part of themed competitions focused primarily on fostering "patriotism". For example, this year, a schoolgirl from Dubăsari won a voucher for the "Artek" centre after taking part in the Russian competition "School Museum Initiative". The project she presented was dedicated to the heroes of the "Great Patriotic War" and to the combatants who fought on the side of the Russian Federation in the 1992 Moldovan-Russian war.

Over the past nine years, more than 100 children from the Transnistrian region have taken part in programmes organised by the "Artek" International Children's Centre. This practice has continued even after 2022, despite security risks and information indicating the centre's involvement in Russia's war efforts. The participation of children from the Transnistrian region in these camps in June 2026 is all the more worrying given that the security situation in occupied Crimea has deteriorated significantly. These risks are exacerbated by the intensification of Ukrainian medium-range attacks on Russian energy infrastructure and military targets located on the peninsula or in its vicinity. Against this backdrop, the children at "Artek" have been sent home or relocated to camps in the Krasnoyarsk region of the Russian Federation. The closure and evacuation of summer camps in occupied Crimea are taking place in a disorganised manner, raising further concerns regarding the protection and safety of the children²².

2.3.3 Competitions for the initial military training of young people

■ The "Patriot – 2026" competition

In April 2026, the "Patriot – 2026" military-sports air rifle shooting competition for school pupils came to an end. It was held in three stages: at school level, at municipal level and, subsequently, at regional level²³. The competition was also attended by minors enrolled at the two paramilitary educational institutions: the "Suvorov" Military School in Tiraspol and the Cadet School in Bender. The event was organised by the so-called "ministries" of education and defence, a fact which highlights the close cooperation between the educational and paramilitary systems.

In addition to the shooting competition itself, the event also featured: an arms exhibition, organised by the "Heirs of Victory" movement, led by Vadim Krasnoselski; demonstrations of tactical training and hand-to-hand combat techniques, presented by soldiers from the special forces of the so-called "army"; as well as visits to propaganda museums.

Figure 7. Pupils from schools under the occupation regime taking part in the “Patriot – 2026” competition



Source: “ministry of defence” in Tiraspol, [2026](#).

The stated aims of the competition include: fostering “patriotism” and civic responsibility among young people; motivating and cultivating an interest in a military career; and increasing knowledge in the field of basic military training and sports disciplines with military applications²⁴. Beyond the stated objectives, Promo-LEX draws attention to the fact that such events form part of a wider phenomenon: every year, hundreds of pupils from the Transnistrian region take part in various military training camps and military-sports competitions, which are used by the illegal Transnistrian bodies as a means of recruiting young people for service in the security and defence forces²⁵. Added to this is the compulsory subject for secondary school pupils, “Basic Military Training”, taught by reserve officers or serving military personnel.

■ **The “Young Patriot of Transnistria” competition**

Between April and May 2026, the illegal Transnistrian bodies organised the “Young Patriot of Transnistria” military-sports competition, aimed at pupils aged between 14 and 16. Over 500 pupils took part in the district stage, whilst approximately 176 participants competed in the final stage²⁶. These included pupils from general education institutions, the Suvorov Military School and the Cadet School, as well as members of the “Yunarmia” (“Young Army”) movement, an organisation controlled by the OGRF, which is illegally stationed on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

The competition programme combined elements of military training with propaganda messages. The activities included frontline training, shooting competitions, tactical demonstrations and masterclasses delivered by representatives of the special forces, historical quizzes dedicated to the so-called “heroic heritage of the Transnistrian people”, as well as meetings with representatives of illegal security forces, including Vadim Krasnoselski, who spoke to the pupils about patriotism and the international recognition of the so-called “MRT”, presented as a central objective of the occupation regime²⁷.

Figure 8. Young people from the “Yunarmia” movement, under the control of the OGRF, taking part in the “Young Patriot of Transnistria 2026” military-sports competition



Source: “ministry of defence” in Tiraspol, [2026](#).

The competition has been held annually since 1994 and is a continuation of the Soviet military-patriotic game “Zarnița”. According to Order No. 342/73 of 17 April 2026, signed by the so-called “ministries” of defence and education in Tiraspol, the stated objectives of the competition include promoting “military-patriotic education” and enhancing the prestige of the military profession²⁸. Thus, these activities familiarise children and young people with illegal paramilitary structures and contribute to their ideological preparation for possible involvement in these structures. At the same time, the involvement of the “Yunarmia” and the OGRF confirms that such activities are not isolated local initiatives, but form part of a coordinated policy by the Russian Federation to ideologically indoctrinate and militarise the younger generation in the temporarily occupied territories.

2.3.4 Involvement of pre-school children in activities with dangerous ideological content

The education system has become a key tool through which the illegal Transnistrian bodies promote Russification, militarisation and loyalty to the occupying power. The indoctrination of children in the Transnistrian region begins as early as the pre-school stage, at a crucial time for the formation of values, social norms and initial conceptions of the world. At the end of the current academic year, 15,751 children were enrolled in kindergartens controlled by the occupation regime, where they were systematically exposed to indoctrination activities centred on militarism²⁹.

Pre-school institutions systematically organise activities dedicated to official Russian and Soviet public holidays, during which symbols of the Russian Federation and the USSR, the St George’s Ribbon, military camouflage uniforms, toy weapons and decorations depicting scenes of war are used. Children are also involved in games, performances and meetings with representatives of illegal paramilitary structures. Through these activities, children are exposed to Russian propaganda narratives, military-patriotic rhetoric and messages that normalise war and loyalty to the occupying forces.

Relevant examples are the activities organised to mark 9 May, celebrated in Tiraspol as “Victory Day”³⁰. During these events, children are cast in militarised roles, including as soldiers, frontline medics or symbolic participants in battle scenes. Another example is the military-patriotic festival “We Are Faithful to This Memory!”, organised on 8 May, with the participation of 2,790 pre-schoolers and schoolchildren³¹. The programme included performances and songs about the “motherland”, “victory” and “veterans”. The statement by Svetlana Ivanishina, the so-called “minister of education”, according to which children “already utter the word ‘Victory’ with reverence”, confirms the deliberate nature of these indoctrination practices. Thus, at an age when critical thinking is not yet fully developed, children are systematically exposed to messages containing dangerous ideological content which they cannot critically evaluate and to which they are particularly vulnerable.

Figure 9. Children in kindergartens under Tiraspol's control, taking part in “patriotic” activities to mark 9 May



Source: Tiraspol Department of Public Education, 7 May 2026; Tiraspol “ministry of education”, 8 May 2026.

Furthermore, in the run-up to Russia’s National Day, activities were organised in schools, kindergartens and educational centres for children with special needs to promote the idea that Russia is the “motherland”, with which the region shares the same values and ideals^{32, 33, 34}. Such initiatives form part of a wider phenomenon of the Russification of children in the region, through which their culture and ethnic identity are being eroded.

Figure 10. Children from kindergartens in Râbnîța taking part in activities to mark Russia Day



Source: Kindergarten No. 10 in Râbnîța, 12 June 2026.

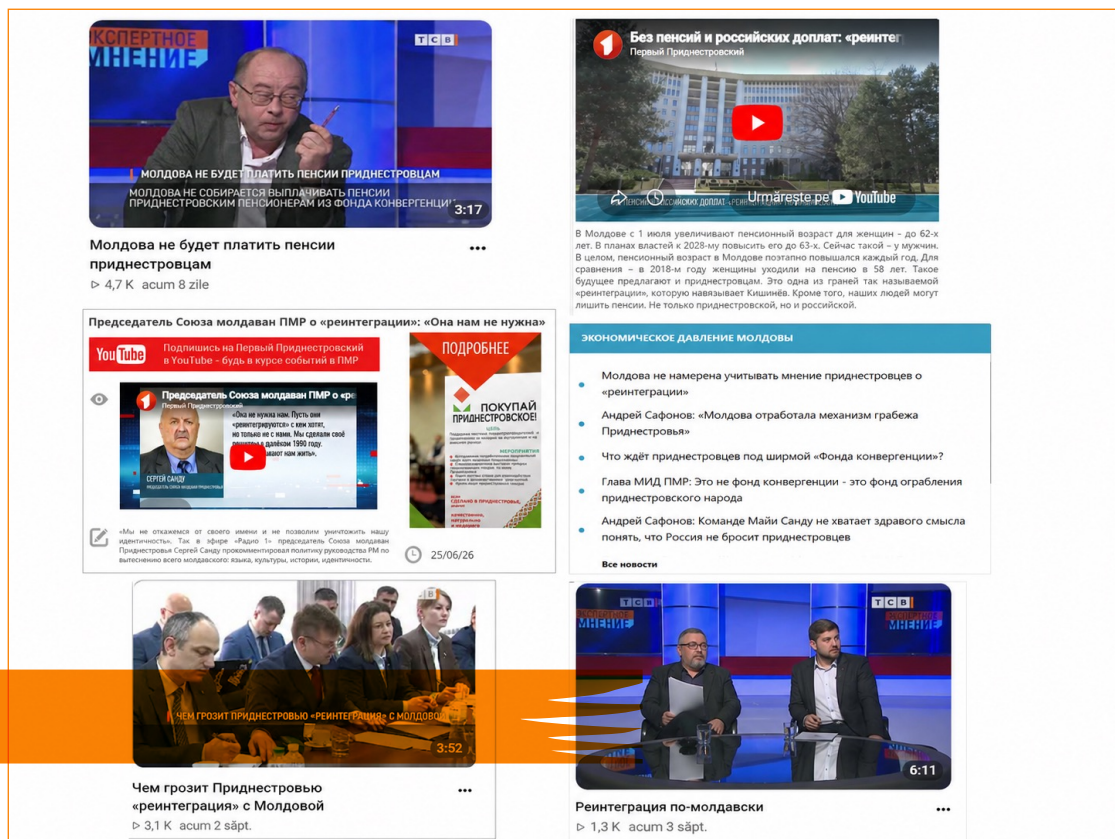
2.4 Propaganda and disinformation

2.4.1 From “blockade” to “genocide”: the escalation of anti-reintegration rhetoric

Monitoring of the “Novosti Pridnestrovia” portal and the “Pervii Pridnestrovskii” and “TSV” television channels, between April and June 2026, indicates a coordinated propaganda campaign aimed at manipulating information and discrediting the reintegration process, based on appeals to emotion and exploiting the fears of an economically vulnerable population. In April and May, the topic was addressed predominantly indirectly, through narratives about the “pressure” or “economic blockade” exerted by Chişinău, with the emphasis placed on alleged double taxation and the Convergence Fund. Economic reintegration measures were presented as tools through which Chişinău was seeking to weaken the Transnistrian region, whilst the Convergence Fund was portrayed in propaganda terms as a mechanism for “plundering the Transnistrian people”.

In June, the anti-reintegration rhetoric became much more explicit. Reintegration was addressed directly, made a central theme and presented as a process imposed without consulting the region’s population, with dramatic negative effects on the economy, local identity, the Russian language and social protection. Propaganda discourse consistently constructs the image of Chişinău as a hostile actor that “pressures”, “strangles”, “plunders”, “destroys the economy”, “causes a humanitarian crisis” and “treats Transnistrians as foreigners”. The messages appeal to fear and social insecurity, linking reintegration to threats such as rising prices, an increase in the retirement age, the loss of social benefits, the non-recognition of qualifications, discrimination and the dismissal of civil servants who do not speak Romanian^{35, 36}. Through the use of highly emotionally charged terms such as “blockade”, “plunder”, “extermination”, “genocide”, “occupation” and “loss of identity through forced Romanianisation”, reintegration is described and framed in the collective consciousness as an existential threat to the region.

Figure 11. Collage of propaganda material on reintegration, published by the “Novosti Pridnestrovia” portal and the television channels “Pervii Pridnestrovskii” and “TSV”



Source: [Novosti Pridnestrovia](#), [Pervii Pridnestrovskii](#), [TSV](#).

2.4.2 The myth of the “Transnistrian people”

Another theme constantly exploited by local propaganda during the monitoring period is the myth of “Transnistrian identity” and “statehood”. In April 2026, the television channel “Pervii Pridnestrovskii” premiered the propaganda film “The Transnistrian People: Forged Over Centuries”, produced at the request of Vadim Krasnoselski³⁷. The film was screened in cinemas, on local television and in educational institutions, and was also translated into Ukrainian, English and Romanian. The film seeks to reinforce the narrative of a distinct Transnistrian identity, presenting the “Transnistrian people” as a community formed over the centuries, rather than as the result of a political construct that emerged after 1992. To this end, the production employs the same techniques found in history textbooks used in educational institutions controlled by Tiraspol: the selective omission of important historical events, the distortion of facts, and the promotion of the idea that the region belongs to the “Russian world”. This production forms part of a broader series of propaganda initiatives aimed at legitimising the idea that the region’s population has a separate identity, distinct historical roots and ideological orientations that are fundamentally different from those of the population on the right bank of the Nistru. In this context, reintegration is portrayed as unrealistic and incompatible with the region’s alleged ideological orientation.

2.4.3 Intensification of alarmist messages and attacks against the independent press

Since May 2026, there has been an increase in messages coming directly from the “MGB”, led by Valeri Ghebos, a former colonel in the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation. These messages are intended to create the perception of a permanent threat to the region. The main themes promoted concern the alleged risk of terrorist attacks, the “militarisation” of the Republic of Moldova by NATO, and the supposed “hybrid attack” carried out by Chişinău against the Transnistrian region. A relevant example is the propaganda film “The Invisible Front: Hybrid Attack on Transnistria”, produced in May 2026 by the “MGB” and the “Pervii Pridnestrovskii” channel, controlled by the occupation regime³⁸. The programme was broadcast against the backdrop of the OGRF leadership being declared persona non grata on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. The film promotes the narrative that Chişinău is waging “information warfare” against the Transnistrian region, with the aim of fostering hostile attitudes towards the OGRF. At the same time, the report suggests that the information published about abuses committed by OGRF representatives originates exclusively from outside the region and forms part of a coordinated smear campaign. Furthermore, the film links the OGRF’s presence to the 1992 Moldovan-Russian war, creating the impression that, in the absence of the OGRF, the Transnistrian region would be at risk of a military attack from Chişinău.

Furthermore, on 29 June, this illegal entity, under the control of the Russian Federation, published a list of 19 media platforms and online channels, including Zona de Securitate, МОСТ and Маленькая Страна, which it presented as resources coordinated by the intelligence services of the Republic of Moldova³⁹. According to the statement, these outlets allegedly spread false information, foster negative attitudes towards Russia’s presence in the region, distort historical facts and justify the pressure exerted by Chişinău on the Transnistrian region. In the same message, the “MGB” warned residents of the region not to pass on any information to these platforms. The statement contributes to amplifying the narrative that the Republic of Moldova is waging an “information war” against the Transnistrian region. A key point is that the list published by the “MGB” includes both independent media platforms and Telegram channels that promote the agenda of the occupation regime in Tiraspol and actively participate in discrediting the press and human rights defenders on the right bank of the Nistru. This is an attempt to undermine the credibility of media platforms that provide residents of the region with alternative and objective sources of information.

Promo-LEX reiterates that the “MGB” is one of the main illegal bodies responsible for violating the rights of journalists on the right bank of the Nistru. These practices include placing journalists on lists of “undesirable persons”, threatening residents of the region with charges of “treason” for collaborating with media platforms such as Zona de Securitate, as well as the unlawful deprivation of liberty. In this context, Promo-LEX regards the statement published by the “MGB” as an attempt to intimidate the press, particularly those platforms that constantly monitor the Transnistrian issue, as well as residents of the Transnistrian region who are trying to freely express their opinions or pass on information to the independent press on the right bank of the Nistru. The statement comes at a time when these media platforms have been reporting on the socio-economic problems in the region and on efforts to reintegrate the country, providing residents with an alternative source of information in an area that has been dominated for decades by an information vacuum and propaganda. Promo-LEX emphasises that the constitutional authorities must use all available means to protect journalists and hold accountable those responsible for violating their rights in the occupied territory of the Republic of Moldova.

2.5 Socio-economic context

Between April and June 2026, the socio-economic situation in the Transnistrian region continued to deteriorate, against a backdrop of economic crisis and increasingly severe budgetary pressures. The state of economic emergency was extended twice during this period, remaining in force until 17 July 2026⁴⁰.

The figures released in April 2026 indicate a deterioration in the employment situation. According to these figures, in 2025, 20,484 people left employment, 89 per cent of whom left “of their own accord”⁴¹. Against the backdrop of staff shortages, measures have been adopted to facilitate the employment of students in certain fields. Thus, following the decision in February 2026 to allow law students to take up positions as “assistant investigators” and “investigators”, from 1 September 2026 students enrolled in teacher-training programmes will be able to work in educational institutions whilst studying. At the same time, law students will be able to work as “bailiffs”, provided they have completed more than half of their degree programme. These measures must be analysed within the broader context of the region’s economic vulnerability, including low wages and the risk of delayed salary payments.

On 11 May 2026, the so-called “government” in Tiraspol launched the “Together” Social Support Fund, calling on the business community and the region’s residents to contribute financially towards covering budgetary expenditure, such as pensions, wages and social benefits. This fund is also used to pay the pensions and wages of personnel employed in illegal paramilitary and security structures. By 29 June 2026, over 3,500 individuals and organisations had made donations, raising over 146 million “Transnistrian roubles”, of which 74.5 million had already been spent⁴².

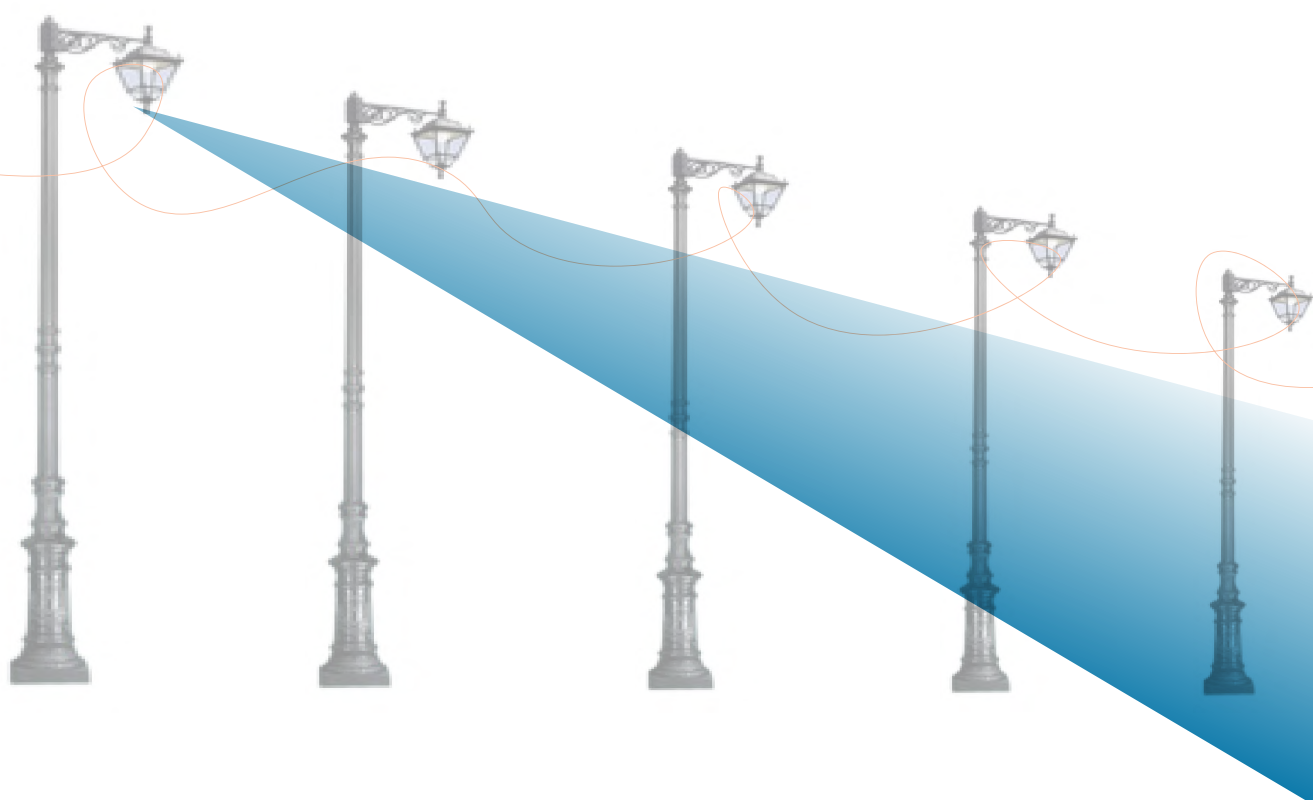
At the same time, further amendments have been made to the Transnistrian region’s budget for the current year, aimed at reducing expenditure by 344 million “Transnistrian roubles” and redirecting resources towards current obligations, in particular wages and pensions⁴³. The budget deficit remains very high, accounting for 49.30 per cent of expenditure. The cuts particularly affect investment and development programmes, including the road fund – which finances street lighting – and the capital investment fund. Some programmes have been suspended entirely for 2026, including the programme to upgrade the fire service’s fleet and the “Manual” programme, aimed at updating school textbooks. At the same time, several social and infrastructure programmes have been significantly scaled back. Funding for public vaccination has fallen from 6.58 million to 1.64 million “Transnistrian roubles” (75 per cent), whilst the cancer care programme has been cut from 43.31 million to 10.82 million “roubles” (75 per cent). The development programme

for “T. G. Shevchenko” University was cut from 16.15 million to 6.15 million “roubles”, whilst funding for the development of the water supply system fell from 9.67 million to 3.46 million “roubles”.

Furthermore, on 25 May 2026, a further increase in utility tariffs was approved, due to come into force on 1 January 2027. According to representatives of the occupation regime, the increase is due to reduced industrial consumption, losses in the energy systems and the ongoing deterioration of the networks, caused by a lack of funding for major repairs and restoration programmes⁴⁴. During the same period, fares for suburban and inter-city transport were increased by 17 per cent⁴⁵.

Furthermore, from 1 June 2026, residents of the region reported power cuts to street lighting in several towns. According to publicly available information, this situation could continue until autumn, confirming the direct impact of budget cuts on basic public services. Another measure was adopted on 8 June 2026, when the so-called “government” in Tiraspol decided that, throughout 2026, a portion of the net profit of regional and municipal enterprises would be transferred to the regional budget⁴⁶.

These measures reflect the increasingly limited capacity of the illegal bodies to ensure the functioning of public services and the fulfilment of basic budgetary obligations, with the costs of the crisis being passed on, first and foremost, to the population. At the same time, against the backdrop of drastic budget cuts, including in the health sector, residents of the Transnistrian region may increasingly turn to public services provided by the constitutional authorities, including health centres in the Security Zone. This aspect must be taken into account by the constitutional authorities when planning resources and response capacity.



Conclusions

The period from April to June 2026 confirms the ongoing deterioration of the human rights situation in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. The developments analysed point to an expansion of mechanisms for controlling the population, including through the passportisation of the region, the strengthening of military registration systems, and propaganda measures such as banning the use of the name “Transnistria” in any language. The decline in political rights and civil liberties is also confirmed by the “Freedom in the World 2026” report, in which the score awarded to the Transnistrian region has fallen to 16 out of 100, close to that of the Russian Federation, which was rated at 12 out of 100.

This general deterioration in the human rights situation is particularly evident in the illegal prison system, where the situation remains extremely serious. Available data indicate a high incarceration rate – more than twice the average for CoE member states – inhumane conditions of detention, chronic underfunding and a severe shortage of medical staff. These problems are exacerbated by the deep economic crisis, which further limits the ability of the illegal bodies in Tiraspol to ensure minimum standards of detention.

The cases of Evghenii Pancioha and Emilian Ceban, who have been held in illegal detention for eight and four years respectively, illustrate both the absence of fair trial guarantees and the major risks to the life, health and physical integrity of those unlawfully deprived of their liberty. At the same time, the case of Emilian Ceban highlights the risks posed by the integration of children, from a very young age, into the region's paramilitary system, particularly when they subsequently attempt to withdraw or forge a path for themselves outside this system. Given the gravity of these individual cases, it is essential that the constitutional authorities utilise all available instruments and levers to ensure the release of those unlawfully detained and their access to post-detention support services. Even in the absence of effective control over the Transnistrian region, the Republic of Moldova has positive obligations to guarantee the right to life, the prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, the right to liberty and security, and the right of persons deprived of their liberty to be treated humanely.

The politicisation and militarisation of children continue to represent one of the most worrying trends. The involvement of children, including pre-schoolers, in activities with dangerous ideological content contributes to the eradication of national identity, the normalisation of war, the cultivation of obedience towards paramilitary structures, and their increasingly pronounced integration into the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation. Promo-LEX emphasises that the systematic indoctrination of children through the education system, which has been ongoing for over 30 years, will pose a major challenge to the region's reintegration and democratisation process. This reality calls for the proactive planning of strategic interventions in the educational, informational and cultural spheres, including cognitive deoccupation measures.

At the same time, local propaganda has become more aggressive, particularly through the escalation of anti-reintegration rhetoric, the promotion of the myth of the “Transnistrian people” and the intensification of attacks against the independent press on the right bank of the Nistru. These narratives aim to fuel fear, isolate the population from objective information and cultivate deep mistrust of the reintegration process. In this context, it is

essential for the constitutional authorities to engage in direct dialogue with the region's population, as well as to communicate proactively and consistently on the issue of reintegration.

Last but not least, the socio-economic context exacerbates the structural vulnerabilities described above. The prolongation of the economic state of emergency, budget cuts, rising tariffs, pressures on the business environment and the disruption to public services highlight the increasingly limited capacity of the illegal bodies in Tiraspol to sustain the region's functioning. The costs of the crisis are being borne, first and foremost, by the population, whose situation has been increasingly precarious since the winter of 2025. At the same time, the reduced capacity to provide essential public services, including in the health sector, could place additional pressure on institutions in the Security Zone. This issue must be analysed by the constitutional authorities, including through an assessment of the capacity of institutions in the Security Zone to respond to a potentially higher number of requests from the region's residents.



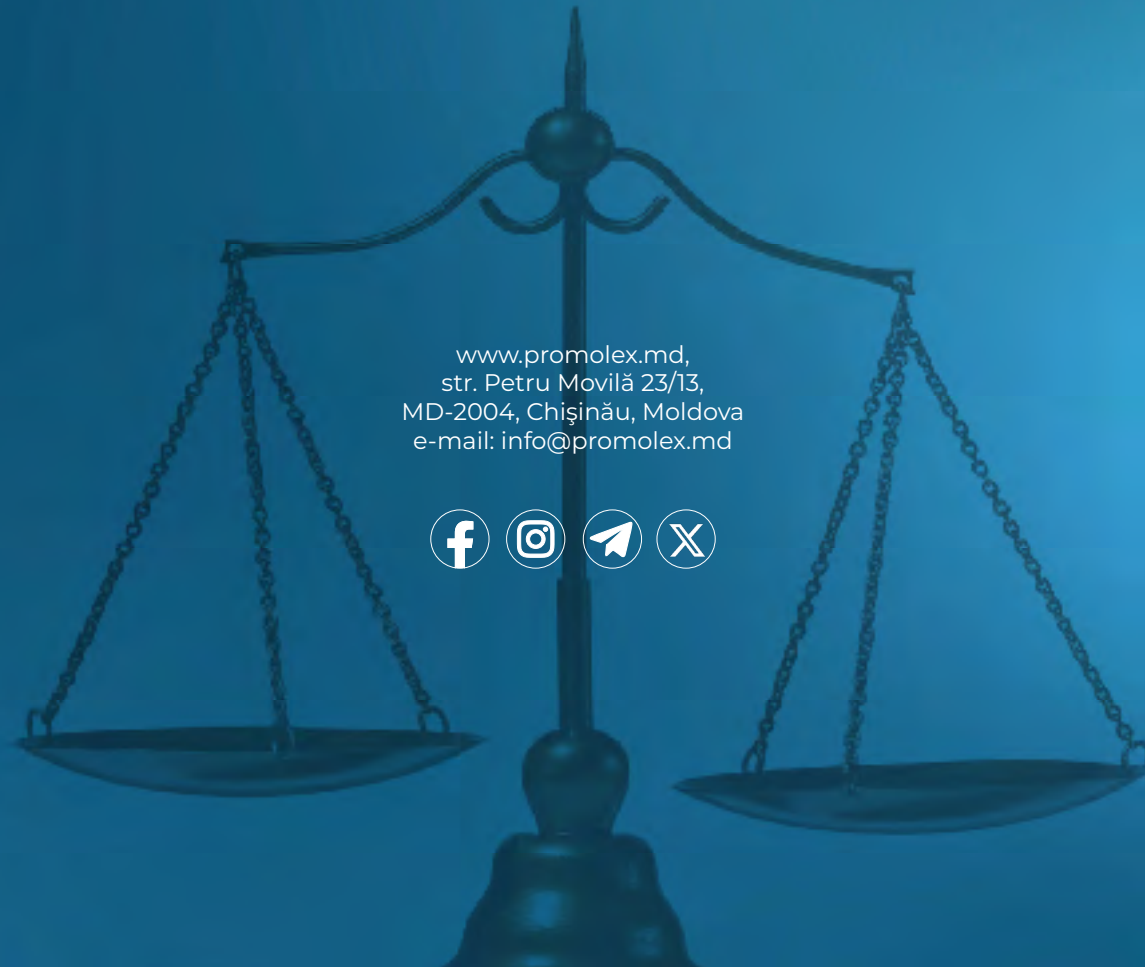
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www.promolex.md,
str. Petru Movilă 23/13,
MD-2004, Chișinău, Moldova
e-mail: info@promolex.md

