

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA ACCORDING WITH THE 2004 CENSUS DATA

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Abstract. Although with a small territory, Republic of Moldova has a relatively high ethnic diversity. It is the result of the last centuries of colonization and population migration, mainly during the Russian Empire and Soviet time. Last population census was conducted in 2004, being the first one during the independence of the Republic of Moldova. Practically the country is split between the main territory controlled by the official authorities and self-proclaimed Dniester Moldavian Republic in the Eastern side of Moldova, which has also conducted separate census in 2004. The ethnic structure of population still keeps the configuration from the Soviet time, but many quantitative and qualitative changes occurred. Ideological separation of the same nation between Romanians and Moldovans are still not exceeded, official census regards the Moldovan as titular nation of the country. General characterization of the settlements according to ethnic structure shows the specific regional and urban-rural character of particular ethnic groups. The geographical division in northern, central, southern and eastern parts of the Republic of Moldova corresponds to the ethnic concentration of main nation and minorities, as can be seen by the administrative units and at the level of localities.

Keywords: ethnic groups, census data, Republic of Moldova, rayons, settlements

Introduction

Total territory of the Republic of Moldova is 33,844 sq. km, from which 4,163 sq. km are under control of so-called “Dniester Moldavian Republic”.

For Moldova the basic territorial-administrative units are called *rayons* (“raion”). Several changes in administrative structure and limits of territorial units of the country occurred during the Soviet time and independence period. At the time of the Independence, in 1991, the Republic of Moldova had as administrative units 40 rayons and 4 municipalities. Between 1990 and 2005 limits and number of rayons has frequently changed. A territorial reform which was supposed to organize bigger territorial units as county (*judet*) was implemented in 1999 – 2002, after that returning to rayon system.

Territorial structure and limits become more complex after the self-proclamation of “Dniester Moldavian Republic” in the eastern part of the country in 1990. As result of confrontation period between central government and separatist movement from eastern rayons during 1990-1993, de facto border was created without taking in consideration the previous limits of the rayons. Camenca and Dubăsari rayons were divided; changes took place also in the territories near Slobozia and Bender.

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Another important territorial change inside Moldova was creation in 1994 of autonomous territorial unit Gagauz Yeri, as the result of the ethnic emancipation of gagauzians. It was a compromise between the central government and gagauzian movements for independence. This administrative unit includes territories of Comrat, Ciadir-Lunga, Basarabeasca, Taraclia and Vulcanești rayons, without a territorial continuity, based on the referendum organized in every locality with ethnic Gagauzians. Today it is a special territorial-administrative unit of Moldova, which include 3 rayons (dolay): Comrat, Ciadir-Lunga and Vulcanești.

In present Republic of Moldova has as territorial-administrative units 32 rayons, 2 municipalities and one autonomous unit.

Settlements characterization according the ethnic structure

According to the census of 2004 in the territory effectively controlled by the Republic of Moldova there are 57 urban localities and 1,464 rural localities.

Ethnic characteristics of rural localities is different, depending on the region. By the ethnic majority we can distinguish the following categories of localities:

1. Moldovans / Romanians forming absolute majority in 1,132 rural localities, majority of them in central, north-eastern, south-western and south-eastern rayons.

2. Moldovans and Ukrainians in 154 localities, majority of them in northern rayons of Moldova

3. Moldovans and Bulgarians in 21 localities of southern rayons.

4. Moldovans and Gagauzians in 13 localities of southern rayons.

5. Moldovans and Russians in 8 villages, mainly in south.

6. Moldovans, Ukrainians and Gagauzians in two villages (Chioselia Rusă, Gagauz Yeri and Nicolaevca, Cahul).

7. Moldovans, Ukrainians and Russians in 3 localities.

8. Moldovans, Bulgarians and Gagauzians only in Orehovca, rayon Taraclia.

9. Ukrainians in 73 localities, absolute majority in the north-western rayons.

10. Ukrainians and Russians in 3 localities.

11. Ukrainians and Gagauzians in 3 localities in south.

12. Ukrainians, Bulgarians and Moldovans in Picus, Anenii Noi rayon.

13. Russians in 9 villages, dispersed.

14. Bulgarians in 10 villages in the south, mainly Taraclia rayon.

15. Bulgarians and Gagauzians in 6 villages in the south.

16. Gagauzians in 22 villages, absolute majority of them in Gagauz Yeri.

17. Gypsies in two localities: Vulcănești of Nisporeni rayon and Ursari of Călărași rayon.

18. Mix between Polish, Moldovans and Ukrainians in the village of Sîrcea, Glodeni rayon.

“Dnester Moldavian Republic” is considered formally as separate territorial unit inside Republic of Moldova, which status should be determined. This territory includes as administrative units 5 rayons and 2 municipalities.

Total number of localities under administration of this “republic” are 157, from which 12 urban and 145 rural.

Ethnic structure of rural localities looks as following:

1. Moldovans / Romanians in 40 localities,

2. Moldovans and Ukrainians in 42 localities,
3. Ukrainians in 19 localities, only in Rîbnița and Camenca rayons,
4. Russians in one locality,
5. Mix between Ukrainian, Moldavians and Russians in 40 localities,
6. Bulgarians with Russians and Ukrainians in the Parcani village, Slobozia rayon,
7. Poles with Ukrainians in the village Slobozia Rașcov, Camenca rayon.

All urban localities have mix ethnic structure, with higher percentage of Russians in Tiraspol, Bender and Dnestrovsc, of Ukrainians in Rîbnița and Pervomaisc and Moldovans in Dubăsari, Camenca and Grigoriopol.

Table 1: Official results of the ethnic structure of population of the Republic of Moldova by territorial units, according to the census 2004

Territorial units	Total	Moldovan	Ukrainian	Russian	Gagauzian	Romanian	Bulgarian	Other	Non-declared
Total	3383332	2564849	282406	201218	147500	73276	65662	34401	14020
Chișinău	712218	481626	58945	99149	6446	31984	8868	11605	13595
Bălți	127561	66877	30288	24526	243	2258	297	2889	183
Anenii Noi	81710	68761	6526	4135	235	857	481	699	16
Basarabasca	28978	20218	1948	2568	2220	70	1544	410	–
Briceni	78027	55123	19939	2061	59	314	45	460	26
Cahul	119231	91001	7842	7702	3665	2095	5816	1104	6
Cantemir	60001	52986	969	710	519	910	3736	169	2
Călărași	75075	69190	2799	947	54	1490	47	519	29
Căușeni	90612	79432	2469	3839	653	2844	1108	267	–
Cimișlia	60925	52972	3376	2371	278	331	1341	253	3
Criuleni	72254	67046	2692	1008	49	1170	72	214	3
Dondușeni	46442	37301	5893	2714	31	247	36	220	–
Drochia	87092	74369	9849	1641	44	675	33	480	1
Dubăsari	34015	32652	521	611	45	102	16	68	–
Edineț	81390	58749	16084	5083	143	446	91	792	2
Fălești	90320	75863	10711	3064	39	306	32	267	38
Florești	89389	75797	8023	4633	45	433	51	407	–
Glodeni	60975	46317	11918	1693	32	329	44	641	1
Hîncești	119762	108189	6218	1463	99	3046	212	529	6
Ialoveni	97704	91379	1117	1112	95	2608	935	407	51
Leova	51056	43673	1245	1167	432	471	3804	255	9
Nisporeni	64924	60774	223	339	17	2329	28	1213	1
Ocnîța	56510	32491	17351	2764	79	104	60	3658	3
Orhei	116271	100469	4520	2216	113	8253	90	596	14
Rezina	48105	44721	1691	1093	34	375	40	151	–
Rîșcani	69454	50391	15632	1726	60	777	61	806	1
Sîngerei	87153	74139	8456	3029	47	1162	43	275	2
Soroca	94986	84728	4752	2601	53	931	48	1869	4
Strășeni	88900	83368	985	1576	70	2542	109	249	1
Șoldănești	42227	40354	1055	376	9	299	14	120	–
Ștefan Vodă	70594	65318	2182	1918	64	562	145	405	–
Taraclia	43154	5980	2646	2139	3587	29	28293	480	–
Telenești	70126	67309	879	537	16	1262	16	94	13
Ungheni	110545	97805	7743	2766	90	1627	93	421	–
Gagauz Yeri	155646	7481	4919	5941	127835	38	8013	1409	10

In %									
Territorial units	Total	Moldovan	Ukrainian	Russian	Gagauzian	Romanian	Bulgarian	Other	Non-declared
Total	100,0	75,8	8,4	5,9	4,4	2,2	1,9	1,0	0,4
Chişinău	100,0	67,6	8,3	13,9	0,9	4,5	1,2	1,6	1,9
Bălţi	100,0	52,4	23,7	19,2	0,2	1,8	0,2	2,3	0,1
Anenii Noi	100,0	84,2	8,0	5,1	0,3	1,0	0,6	0,9	0,0
Basarabeasca	100,0	69,8	6,7	8,9	7,7	0,2	5,3	1,4	–
Briceni	100,0	70,6	25,6	2,6	0,1	0,4	0,1	0,6	0,0
Cahul	100,0	76,3	6,6	6,5	3,1	1,8	4,9	0,9	0,0
Cantemir	100,0	88,3	1,6	1,2	0,9	1,5	6,2	0,3	0,0
Călăraşi	100,0	92,2	3,7	1,3	0,1	2,0	0,1	0,7	0,0
Căuşeni	100,0	87,7	2,7	4,2	0,7	3,1	1,2	0,3	–
Cimişlia	100,0	86,9	5,5	3,9	0,5	0,5	2,2	0,4	0,0
Criuleni	100,0	92,8	3,7	1,4	0,1	1,6	0,1	0,3	0,0
Donduşeni	100,0	80,3	12,7	5,8	0,1	0,5	0,1	0,5	–
Drochia	100,0	85,4	11,3	1,9	0,1	0,8	0,0	0,6	0,0
Dubăsari	100,0	96,0	1,5	1,8	0,1	0,3	0,0	0,2	–
Edineţ	100,0	72,2	19,8	6,2	0,2	0,5	0,1	1,0	0,0
Făleşti	100,0	84,0	11,9	3,4	0,0	0,3	0,0	0,3	0,0
Floreşti	100,0	84,8	9,0	5,2	0,1	0,5	0,1	0,5	–
Glodeni	100,0	76,0	19,5	2,8	0,1	0,5	0,1	1,1	0,0
Hînceşti	100,0	90,3	5,2	1,2	0,1	2,5	0,2	0,4	0,0
Ialoveni	100,0	93,5	1,1	1,1	0,1	2,7	1,0	0,4	0,1
Leova	100,0	85,5	2,4	2,3	0,8	0,9	7,5	0,5	0,0
Nisporeni	100,0	93,6	0,3	0,5	0,0	3,6	0,0	1,9	0,0
Ocniţa	100,0	57,5	30,7	4,9	0,1	0,2	0,1	6,5	0,0
Orhei	100,0	86,4	3,9	1,9	0,1	7,1	0,1	0,5	0,0
Rezina	100,0	93,0	3,5	2,3	0,1	0,8	0,1	0,3	–
Rîşcani	100,0	72,6	22,5	2,5	0,1	1,1	0,1	1,2	0,0
Sîngerei	100,0	85,1	9,7	3,5	0,1	1,3	0,0	0,3	0,0
Soroca	100,0	89,2	5,0	2,7	0,1	1,0	0,1	2,0	0,0
Străşeni	100,0	93,8	1,1	1,8	0,1	2,9	0,1	0,3	0,0
Şoldăneşti	100,0	95,6	2,5	0,9	0,0	0,7	0,0	0,3	–
Ştefan Vodă	100,0	92,5	3,1	2,7	0,1	0,8	0,2	0,6	–
Taraclia	100,0	13,9	6,1	5,0	8,3	0,1	65,6	1,1	–
Teleneşti	100,0	96,0	1,3	0,8	0,0	1,8	0,0	0,1	0,0
Ungheni	100,0	88,5	7,0	2,5	0,1	1,5	0,1	0,4	–
Gagauz Yeri	100,0	4,8	3,2	3,8	82,1	0,0	5,1	0,9	0,0

Regional characterization according to ethnic structure

The ethnic structure of the population of Moldova after 1990 maintains the territorial distribution of ethnic groups which was characteristic from the second half of 20th century.

According to the ethnical variety we can distinguish four major regions, which have a geographical, historical and economic significance: Northern, Central, Southern and Eastern (Transnistria).

1. Northern Moldova is characterized by Moldavian / Romanian ethnical majority which is over 80% in the northeastern part (rayons of Soroca, Floresti, Şoldăneşti, Rezina) and less than 80% in the northwestern part (rayons of Briceni, Ocniţa, Edineţ, Rîşcani, Glodeni).

Here we can meet the compact areas of Ukrainian population, more numerous in the rayons of Ocnîța (30,8%), Briceni, Edineț, Glodeni, Rîșcani (between 20 and 25 %). Bălți, the main city of Northern Moldova have relative majority of Moldavians (52,3 %), but high percentage of Ukrainians (23,9 %) and Russians (19,2 %) as well. Other representative ethnic minorities in this part of Moldova are the Gypsy communities from towns Otaci and Soroca and small Polish community in the village of Stîrcea, Glodeni rayon.

Table 2: Results of the ethnic structure of population of the “Dniester Moldavian Republic” according to the census 2004

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Russian</i>	<i>Ukrainian</i>	<i>Moldovan</i>	<i>Belarus</i>	<i>Gagauzian</i>	<i>Jews</i>	<i>Bulgarian</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Not declared</i>
Total	555347	168678	160069	177382	3811	4096	1259	13858	2071	6924	17199
TIRASPOL	159163	66281	52481	24205	1727	1995	573	2461	723	2170	6547
BENDER	105010	46387	18725	25888	740	1182	392	3332	286	1383	6695
RÎBNIȚA	82699	14237	37554	24685	412	149	177	309	150	1071	3955
DUBĂSARI	37449	7125	10594	18763	185	92	46	134	63	447	0
SLOBOZIA	95742	25436	20772	39722	475	512	35	7323	496	969	2
GRIGORIOPOL	48000	7332	8333	31085	187	123	26	240	327	347	0
CAMENCA	27284	1880	11610	13034	85	43	10	59	26	537	0

2. Central Moldova was always the core of ethnic Romanians. Here from the beginning of medieval Moldavian state and until now, the percentage of Moldovans remains very high, generally over 90%. In this region we can observe also the higher percentage of population that have declared themselves as Romanians according to the results of 2004 census (7,1 % for Orhei rayon). Other ethnic groups, such as Ukrainians, Russians and Gypsies, make small communities surrounded by Moldovans. The main city in the region is Chișinău, the capital city of the Republic of Moldova, where the ethnic structure is more complex and the predominance of Moldovans is not as evident as in rural areas. Moldavian proportion has grown with more than 15 % from 1989 to 2004 census, constituting now days 68, 4 % of Chișinău population, to which can be added also the 4.4 % of whom declared as Romanians. Anyway, the persistence of Russian-speaking community is still quite evident as well in Chișinău and some other smaller towns. Some small villages with Ukrainians settled here from the north of Bessarabia in 19th century. There are also Gypsy villages, whose majority is linguistically and culturally assimilated by Moldovans. Exceptions are villages of Vulcănești and Ursari where Gypsy identity and language are well preserved.

3. Southern Moldova has the most complicated ethnic structure since medieval ages. This region was traditionally in the way of migrations. The natural conditions of steppe do not offer proper conditions for stable populations throughout the history. This region was quite affected by political-administrative changes of territory, as from the time of Turkish Empire, to the annexation by Ukraine of bigger part of South Moldova after 1940/1945, which makes big disturbance for the political, economic and ethno-cultural development of the region. The remaining part of the territory under Republic of Moldova in this region has also suffered the biggest territorial-administrative changes after 1990, among other parts of the country. The organization of current administrative structure have an ethnic criteria as well, due the fact of establishment of an autonomous territorial unit for Gagausians – Gagauz Yeri, and also we can consider somehow as ethnical unit the rayon of Taraclia, with majority of Bulgarian

population. For the South Moldova we can identify 3 different regions, according to the ethnical predominance:

- Western part, along the Prut River (rayons Leova, Cantemir, Cahul) with the absolute ethnic majority of Moldavians (around 80%). The main town here is Cahul, an ethnic mix, but with high predominance of Moldavians;

- Central part of Southern Moldova, named Bugeac, with the interference between the Gagauz Yeri autonomous regions, which was constituted after the referendum on each locality and have not the continuous territory, where the Gagauzians have absolute majority of 82,6 % and the rayon of Taraclia, where the Bulgarian population forms majority of 66%. Somehow ethnically mixed, but with the predominance of Moldavians (69, 9%) is the rayon of Basarabasca. Main urban centre is Comrat, the capital of Gagauz Yeri region.

- South-East Moldova, which include today rayons of Căușeni and Ștefan Vodă, where Moldavians forming over 90 % of population.

4. Eastern region of Moldova, today controlled by the authorities of so-called “Dniester Moldavian Republic”, have specific situation also in ethnical structure. For the total population of this territory we can mention the relative balance between 3 ethnic groups: Moldavians, Ukrainians and Russians. Moldavians predominate in all the rayons, forming over 60% in Grigoriopol and Dubasari rayons, and lightly over 45% in the Camenca, Rîbnița and Slobozia rayons, but they are less than 30% in urban centres of Tiraspol, Bender and Rîbnița.

Ukrainians are present in all the rayons and towns, but more numerous in Camenca and Rîbnița (arr. 40%), as well as in urban localities.

Russians represent mainly urban population of Tiraspol, Bender and surrounding area. Many of them was coming after 1945, some are from older communities.

Ethnical processes in this region are totally different from another part of Moldova; the main used language here is Russian, although officially the Dniester Moldavian Republic has 3 state languages: Moldavian, Russian and Ukrainian. It is important to mention that Moldavian language in this region has not accepted the Latin alphabet, like in the rest of Moldova, but still use the Cyrillic one.

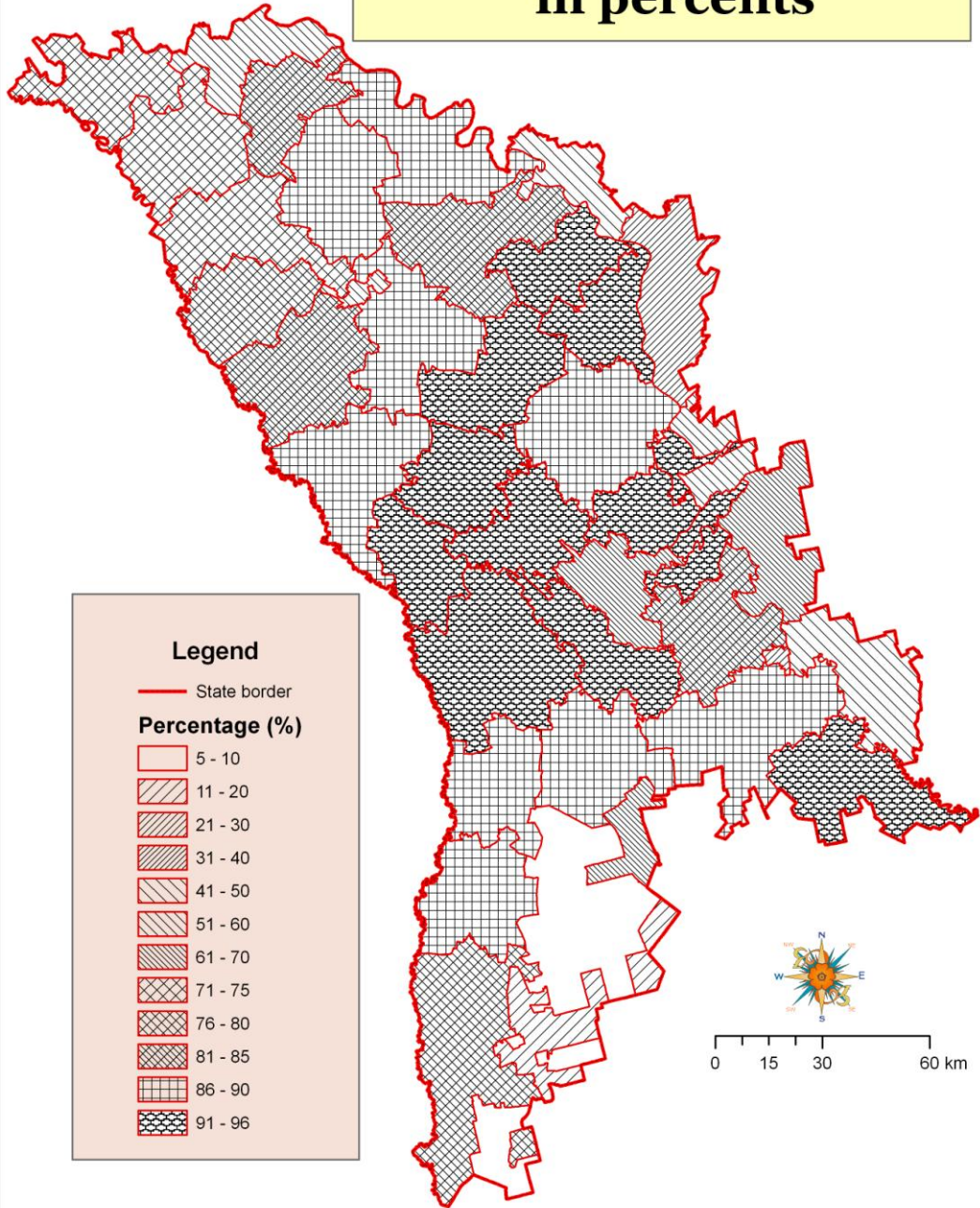
Small ethnic communities in this region are also Bulgarians (in the Parcani village near Bender), Jews, Gagauzians, German, Polish and Belarusians.

The substantial difference in ethnical structure we can identify also between rural and urban population. The percentage of Moldavians, Gagauzians and Bulgarians is much higher in rural areas in opposite with Russians, Ukrainians, Jews and other minorities which are mostly concentrated in urban areas.

Acknowledgments

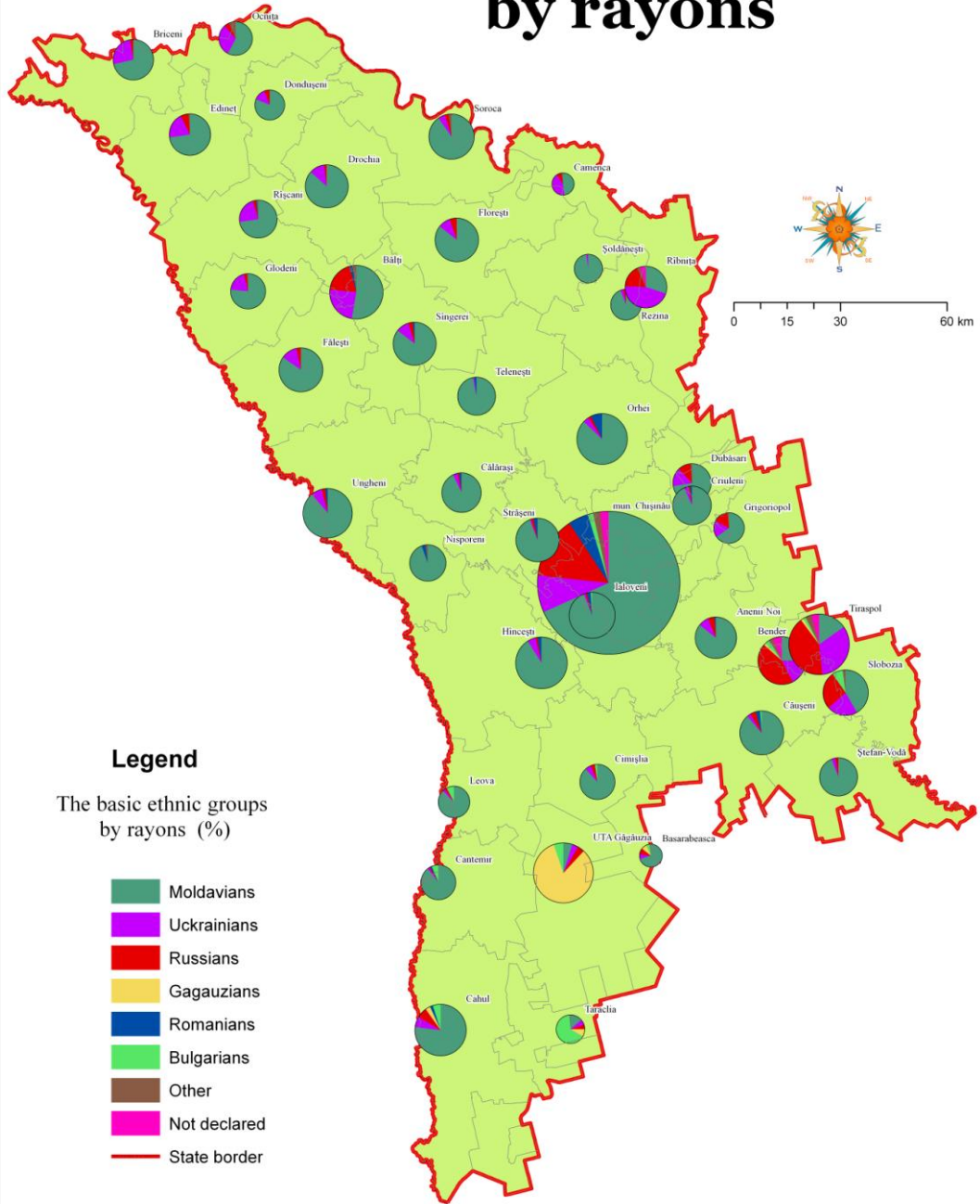
Support for this study was granted by the European Social Fund in Romania, Managing Authority for the Sectorial Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013 through the post-doctoral program POSDRU/89/1.5/S/49944 “*Development of innovative capacity and increasing of research impact by post-doctoral programs*”.

Moldovans by rayons in percents



Sursa: Datele recensământului din a.2004
Autorii: Rogica Igor, Lozovanu Dorin
Data realizării: 16 ianuarie 2008

The basic ethnic groups by rayons



Reprezentarea dată este prevăzută pentru formatul de imprimare A3

Sursa: Datele recensământului din anul 2004
 Autorii Raportului: Lucianova Dorin
 Data realizării: 16 ianuarie 2008

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