

Implementation of state policy on ensuring the rights of national minorities (communities) in Ukraine

ANALYSIS OF THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND LOCAL PRACTICES



The Center of United Actions is a civic organization that works in the interests of Ukraine's citizens and is independent, politically neutral, and impartial in all aspects of its activity.

We analyze national and local policies, implement tools to involve citizens in decision-making and participation in democratic processes, and promote democratic change.



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Introduction

According to the most recent national census (2001), people of more than 100 nationalities lived in Ukraine, comprising **22.2% of the total population**.

Although there is no more recent data on the number of national minorities in Ukraine, the overall spatial and social patterns of settlement, including areas of traditional or compact residence, remain broadly understood

These patterns have persisted despite demographic and migration change over nearly a quarter century since the last census. This level of ethnic diversity has long underscored the need to update outdated legislation and, in turn, to develop a coherent, high-quality regulatory framework and effective policy practice that align with key international standards on protecting the rights of national minorities and are designed to secure the rights and meet the needs of national communities.

In 2022, a new Law "On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine" was adopted. Its adoption and subsequent amendments have established the core legal framework for fulfilling the rights of national minorities in Ukraine in line with European standards.

The Cabinet of Ministers also adopted a number of regulations to implement its provisions. Once the legislative and subordinate framework was in place, policy efforts shifted to implementation, monitoring practical results, and securing sustainable funding and institutional capacity for the authorities responsible for this area.

Alongside legislative change, Ukraine's regions have developed their own (often informal) practices of local governance and interaction over centuries of coexistence among Ukrainians and other nationalities. State policy in this field takes concrete shape at the local level: through decisions by local self-government bodies and through access to education, culture, information, and public services.

There is therefore a need for a systematic review and analysis of how local self-government bodies implement state policy to ensure the rights of national minorities (communities). This report is therefore structured into three interconnected parts:

01 – The first part contains the analysis of the regulatory and institutional framework of state policy on ensuring the rights of national minorities (communities).

02 – The second part covers the results of a review and analysis of the implementation of this policy at the national and oblast levels, particularly in Lviv, Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi, and Odesa oblasts.

03 – The third part of the report is the analysis of policy implementation at the local level, focusing on the Berehove, Hlyboka, and Mostyska territorial communities. At the end, the research findings are summarized, and conclusions and recommendations aimed at improving legislative and administrative mechanisms for ensuring the rights of national minorities (communities) in Ukraine at the state, oblast, and local levels are proposed.

Methodology



The aim of this study

The aim of this study is to analyze state policy on ensuring the rights of national minorities (communities) in Ukraine at the national, regional, and local levels, with a focus on practices of implementation in communities of traditional or compact residence of national minorities, and to develop conclusions and recommendations to improve legislative and administrative mechanisms for ensuring these rights at the respective levels.



To achieve this aim, the following research tasks were set:

- *Review and assess laws and regulations that define the legal status and guarantees of the rights of national minorities (communities) in Ukraine, with attention to their compliance with international standards, Ukraine's international obligations, and European Commission requirements*
- *Analyze mechanisms for ensuring the rights of national minorities in settlements of their traditional or compact residence, with a view to identifying shortcomings and gaps in practical implementation*
- *Analyze the institutional and regulatory framework for ensuring the rights of national minorities (communities), including the powers of central and local authorities in this area*
- *Identify key features and challenges in ensuring language, education, cultural, and information rights of national minorities (communities) in settlements of their traditional or compact residence*
- *Formulate recommendations to improve legislative, institutional, and administrative practices for ensuring the rights of national minorities (communities) at the national, regional, and local levels.*

Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used. Specifically, to gather empirical information, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of national minorities (communities) and with key stakeholders involved in implementing and protecting minority rights: representatives of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience, the Office of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, oblast military administrations, and local self-government bodies.

In addition, field visits were conducted to communities in settlements of traditional or compact residence of national minorities, using photo documentation as a supplementary data-collection method. The purpose of photo documentation was to record the actual state of language policy in the public space of the communities. During the visits, photographs were taken of official signage, street names, information plaques of local self-government bodies and cultural institutions, as well as items that demonstrate the use of minority languages in public space (including posters, announcements, displays) and outdoor advertising.

01 / Fieldwork was carried out in several stages

October–December 2025:
in-depth semi-structured interviews
with key stakeholders.

November–December 2025:
field visits to communities, with photo
documentation as a supplementary
method of collecting empirical data.

In total, 39 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted. Of these:

- 3 interviews – with representatives of state authorities involved in decision-making in issues concerning ethnopolitics and the protection of the rights of national minorities (communities), including representatives of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience (DESS, Державна служба України з етнополітики та свободи совісті) and a representative of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights responsible for equal rights and freedoms, the rights of national minorities (communities), and political and religious beliefs.
- 8 interviews – with representatives of national minorities (communities), including members of the Council of National Communities of Ukraine and leaders of civil society organizations of national communities.

In addition, 28 interviews were conducted at the regional and local levels with representatives of authorities and residents of settlements with a significant share of national minorities:

- 4 interviews – with representatives of oblast military administrations (Lviv, Zakarpattia, Odesa, and Chernivtsi)
- 19 interviews – with representatives of local self-government bodies,
- 3 interviews – with principals of general secondary education institutions
- 2 interviews – with heads of Administrative Service Centers.

Informant recruitment was conducted by the NGO Centre of United Actions.

02 / Ethical considerations observed during the in-depth semi-structured interviews

Participation was voluntary.

Before the interview, all informants were briefed on the purpose and objectives of the study and informed of their right to refuse to answer any question or to withdraw from the interview at any stage. In all cases, oral informed consent was obtained to participate in the study and to video-record the interview.

Interview recordings were used exclusively by the research team and stored in compliance with confidentiality requirements. All data obtained during the study was processed and stored in anonymized form.

03 / Localities selected for the study

The study covered settlements where persons belonging to national minorities (communities) traditionally reside or constitute a significant share of the population, in accordance with Article 1 of the Law "On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine" and the Cabinet Resolution "On approval of the list of settlements in which persons belonging to the national minorities (communities) of Ukraine traditionally reside or in which such persons constitute a significant share of the population":

→ **Berehove,
Zakarpattia Oblast**

*Persons of Hungarian nationality accounted for 48.15% of the city's population**

→ **Mostyska,
Lviv Oblast**

*Persons of Polish nationality accounted for 18.84% of the city's population**

→ **Hlyboka,
Chernivtsi Oblast**

*Persons of Romanian nationality accounted for 11.72% of the settlement's population.**

*According to the 2001 national census

The analysis of mechanisms for ensuring the rights of national minorities in settlements of traditional or compact residence included: decisions of city and village councils and their executive bodies aimed at implementing legislation on language, education, culture, and other rights of national minorities;

the existence of local programs or measures to support national minorities (communities); the practice of duplicating official inscriptions in minority languages; and decisions on funding measures in culture, education, and media for national minorities.

04 / Limitations

- *The regional-level analysis covered only four oblasts: Zakarpattia, Lviv, Odesa, and Chernivtsi. Accordingly, the conclusions and recommendations in the report relate exclusively to implementation practices in these oblasts.*
- *The local-level analysis covered only three territorial communities: Berehove Urban, Hlyboka Settlement, and Mostyska Urban communities. Accordingly, the conclusions and recommendations relate exclusively to these communities and are based primarily on the experience of Hungarian, Romanian, Polish, and Roma national communities.*

- *Some decisions by local self-government bodies, program documents, financial information, and materials on the implementation of minority-rights policies are either not published or published only in part. Some communities also did not provide the requested documents or information in full, which complicated a comprehensive analysis of local implementation mechanisms. In such cases, the analysis relied on available public sources and expert interviews, which may have affected the completeness with which certain aspects of implementation were covered.*
- *Ethnopolitics, language rights, and interethnic relations are sensitive topics for both representatives of national minorities (communities) and officials at different levels. During the study, this often led to more restrained statements by some informants and limited the depth of discussion of certain sensitive issues.*

01

LEGISLATION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF NATIONAL MINORITIES (COMMUNITIES) IN UKRAINE

This section of the report reviews and evaluates legislation on protecting the rights of national minorities (communities) in Ukraine. It also examines the legislation's compliance with international standards and European Union requirements, and identifies key challenges related to implementation.

The conclusions and recommendations in this section draw on an analysis of legislative and regulatory acts in the field of protecting the rights of national minorities (communities), with particular attention to their alignment with international standards, Ukraine's international obligations, and the requirements of the European Commission, as well as on information obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including representatives of state authorities, local self-government bodies, and national minorities (communities).

Constitutional provisions regarding the rights of national minorities (communities)

The Constitution contains several provisions that guarantee protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, particularly with respect to **linguistic, cultural, and educational rights**.

Article 10 guarantees the free development, use, and protection of the languages of national minorities in Ukraine. In its ruling of December 14, 1999 (№10-рп/99), the Constitutional Court further clarified that the languages of national minorities may be used alongside the state language by local executive bodies, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and local self-government bodies. In addition, in state and municipal educational institutions, languages of national minorities may be used and taught alongside the state language in the educational process.

Article 11 provides that the state promotes the development of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity of all indigenous peoples and national minorities of Ukraine.

Article 24 stipulates that there shall be no privileges or restrictions based on race, skin color, political, religious, or other beliefs, sex, ethnic or social origin, property status, place of residence, or linguistic or other characteristics.

Article 53 guarantees citizens belonging to national minorities the right to receive education in their native language or to study their native language in state and municipal educational institutions, or through national cultural societies.

Furthermore, in its ruling of July 14, 2021 (№1-п/2021) concerning the constitutionality of the Law “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language,” the Constitutional Court emphasized that a threat to the Ukrainian language constitutes a threat to the national security of the state. At the same time, the Court stated that the policy supporting the state language must be coupled with a respectful attitude toward the languages of national minorities that have historically lived in Ukraine, and with guarantees for the protection of their linguistic rights.

Overall, the Constitution sets out fundamental principles and guarantees for ensuring the rights of national minorities. Representatives of national minorities in Ukraine surveyed for this study positively assess the constitutional provisions protecting their rights.



“And we are proud that our Constitution is still considered one of the best. It has been recognized by European countries, which is very good. At the same time, I believe the Constitution provides a very good, sufficient basis for our rights, for the protection of our rights, and for their realization”.

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ROMANIAN NATIONAL MINORITY (COMMUNITY)



International treaties and standards regarding the rights of national minorities (communities)

Ukraine is also party to a number of **international treaties and standards** that form the legal basis for protecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.



European Convention on Human Rights

1950

Guarantees freedom of expression, religion, and association, and prohibits discrimination (Article 14).

UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities

1992

Emphasizes that individuals belonging to minorities have the right to freely express their identity, participate in public life, establish associations, and engage in decision-making to ensure they can fully and effectively enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination and based on full equality before the law.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

1973

Provides that in states where ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, and to use their own language (Article 27).

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by the Council of Europe

1995

States that the government creates conditions for the preservation and development of the culture and key elements of the identity of national minorities (including religion, language, traditions) and refrains from assimilation policies towards persons belonging to national minorities.

The European Commission for Democracy through Law (**the Venice Commission**), the Council of Europe's advisory body on constitutional law, plays a significant role in developing and assessing Ukraine's national legislation on national minorities.

In its **opinions**, the Venice Commission consistently stresses the need to strike a balance between integrating persons belonging to national minorities into Ukrainian society and preserving their linguistic and cultural identities. It also underscores the importance of avoiding the prioritization of one language or culture over others and of adhering to anti-discrimination standards when implementing language policy.

At times, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) is mistakenly included among international treaties that regulate the rights of national minorities. This is incorrect: the Charter cannot be regarded as an instrument that directly concerns the protection of the rights of national minorities, because its terminology and core provisions, particularly the notion of “minority languages,” do not align with the concept of protecting the rights of national minorities established in the Framework Convention and other international instruments.

During ratification, however, Ukraine used in its national translation the term “languages of national minorities” instead of the original “minority languages,” which created terminological confusion and led to the Charter being wrongly identified with instruments for protecting the rights of national minorities. Specifically, the Ukrainian text of the Charter addresses languages traditionally used within a state’s territory by citizens of that state who constitute less than half of the population.

It covers only languages that are not among the state’s official languages and are not dialects of the state or an official language. Each state independently determines the list of languages it will protect under the Charter.

Representatives of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience have also noted certain inaccuracies in the implementation of the European Charter. They pointed out that there are currently two lists: one of minority languages that are endangered and need state support, and another of languages designated as national minority languages at the time of the Charter’s ratification. Another problem stems from confusion during ratification. For example, the Charter mentions “the language of the Greek national minority,” whereas in Ukraine representatives of the Greek national minority speak Urum, Rumei, or Modern Greek. At the same time, according to a representative of the State Service, the Charter’s executive body has not raised fundamental objections to such discrepancies.

On December 3, 2025, the Verkhovna Rada adopted Bill #14120, aligning the Law “On the Ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” and certain provisions of Ukraine’s Laws “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine” and “On Media” with the updated official translation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (translation by Ukraine’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 2024).

The law also clarified the list of languages to which the Charter’s provisions apply in Ukraine:

- *Belarusian*
- *Bulgarian*
- *Gagauz*
- *Hebrew*
- *Yiddish*
- *Karaim*
- *Crimean Tatar*
- *Krymchak*
- *German*
- *Modern Greek*
- *Polish*
- *Romani*
- *Rumei*
- *Romanian*
- *Slovak*
- *Hungarian*
- *Urum*
- *Czech*

Law “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine”

The foundational law governing the protection and exercise of the rights of national minorities in Ukraine is the Law “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine” of December 13, 2022, №2827-IX.



Its adoption resulted from the implementation of international standards in the field of minority rights and Ukraine’s fulfillment of its international obligations in this area. Before that, Ukraine operated under the Law “On National Minorities,” adopted in 1992. That law determined which citizens of Ukraine could belong to national minorities, tied minorities’ right to national and cultural autonomy, provided for state support for their development, and guaranteed respect for their rights, including with regard to the use of minority languages. On the one hand, the 1992 law offered guarantees for the rights of national minorities. On the other, it did not set out any mechanisms for implementing those rights.

Amending Ukraine’s legislation on protecting the rights of national minorities was among the European Commission’s recommendations in the context of granting Ukraine EU candidate status. In its Opinion on Ukraine’s application for EU membership, the European Commission stressed the need to “complete the reform of the legal framework for the protection of the rights of national minorities, which is currently being prepared in line with the Venice Commission’s recommendations, and introduce immediate and effective mechanisms for its implementation.”

There were several reasons why the protection of national minorities remained in the European Commission’s spotlight.

- First, respect for minority rights is part of the Copenhagen criteria, compliance with which is a prerequisite for accession to the European Union.
- Second, the European Commission advises candidate countries to take into account the conclusions and recommendations of the Venice Commission. From 2017 to 2022, the Venice Commission repeatedly underscored the need to clarify Ukraine’s legislation on the linguistic and cultural rights of minorities, particularly in connection with the adoption of the Laws “On Education” and “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language.”
- Third, certain EU member states, notably Hungary and Romania, periodically voiced concerns about restrictions on the rights of their national minorities in Ukraine. For example, after the adoption of the Law “On Education” in 2017, both Hungary and Romania actively criticized it for limiting education in the native languages of the Hungarian and Romanian minorities. And in October 2019, Hungary blocked a joint statement by NATO ambassadors, insisting on including a reference to the “deprivation of rights” of the Hungarian minority in Zakarpattia.

On November 24, 2022, a group of MPs registered the draft bill “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine.”

By December 13, 2022, the law had been adopted. It entered into force on June 13, 2023 — six months after its adoption. It is worth noting that the law uses the term “national minorities (communities).” In international treaties, specifically the 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the 1992 UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, the term “minorities” is used, which has a well-established meaning in international law. As President Volodymyr Zelensky stated back in 2021: **“We do not want anyone in Ukraine to be a minority. Everyone is a community.”** The use of the construction “national minorities (communities)” is a compromise that aligns international legal terminology (minorities) with the Ukrainian authorities’ political stance of preventing the marginalization of any group of the population.

For the first time in Ukrainian practice, the law spelled out in detail the mechanisms for exercising the rights of national minorities in the linguistic, educational, cultural, and information spheres, which was an important step toward meeting the Copenhagen criteria. At the same time, this draft bill had a number of shortcomings.

Chief among them was the weakening of certain requirements of the Law “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language.” In particular, the law’s requirements regarding the language of book publications did not apply to the operation of specialized bookstores for national minorities or to publishing products for national minorities. In addition, allowing the creation of private educational institutions with their own language of instruction conflicted with the Law “On Education” and the Law “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language.” Such provisions could undermine the integration of members of national minorities into Ukraine’s education and cultural systems. Students at such institutions would find it more difficult in future to obtain higher education in Ukraine and to find their place on the labor market.

The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe released its opinion on the Law “On National Minorities (Communities)” in June 2023. The Commission welcomed the Law’s adoption but recommended revising a number of provisions, in particular:

- *expand the right to organize events in minority languages to all persons*
- *remove the obligation to provide, upon visitors’ request, a Ukrainian translation of information about public events, or reconsider this provision in light of the principle of proportionality*
- *reconsider obligations relating to the distribution of books and the operation of bookstores, including by clarifying the definition of specialized bookstores*
- *ensure greater legal certainty regarding the possibility of translating official inscriptions and general information into a minority language*
- *set out in the law the main criteria for the methodology on the use of minority languages.*

Amendments to the Law

Basing their work on the Venice Commission's opinion, lawmakers amended the Law "On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine" twice more in 2023.

On September 21, 2023, the Verkhovna Rada adopted a law on certain aspects of exercising the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to national minorities (communities). The amendments entered into force on November 8, 2023.

This law introduced a number of changes.



- First, it clarified that restrictions on the rights of national minorities may be established by law only in the interests of national security, territorial integrity, and public order, to prevent disturbances or crimes, to protect public health, and to safeguard the rights and freedoms of others, provided such restrictions are necessary in a democratic society (para. 1 of part 6 of Article 5).
- Second, it defined the concept of a specialized bookstore established to ensure the rights of national minorities. The Ministry of Culture and Information Policy sets the procedure for establishing and operating such bookstores (para. 3 of part 5 of Article 10). It also clarified that, at the request of a person belonging to a national minority, the language of that minority may be used not only when providing emergency assistance, but also when caring for individuals in residential care homes for older persons and when providing assistance or protection if such a person has suffered domestic violence (parts 6 and 10 of Article 10).

Under the new amendments, the Cabinet of Ministers determines both the procedure for identifying and the list of settlements where persons belonging to national minorities (communities) traditionally reside or where such persons constitute a significant share of the population. In these settlements, internal and external advertising, as well as advertising on local radio and television, may be disseminated in the state language and dubbed or translated into the languages of the respective national minorities. Local executive authorities and local self-government bodies shall apply these rules alongside the state language, in accordance with the methodology approved by the Cabinet of Ministers (parts 11 and 12 of Article 10).

By law, the Cabinet of Ministers approves the list of national minority (community) languages that are endangered. It also defined the tasks of the centers for national minorities (communities) of Ukraine, which must ensure the institutional and technical conditions for preserving the cultural identity of national minorities (communities) on the principles of equality and inclusive access. In addition, the rules on the use of a minority language in advertising and in public, cultural and artistic, and entertainment events do not apply to the state (official) language of a country recognized by the Verkhovna Rada as an aggressor state or occupying state. This exception takes effect upon the relevant parliamentary decision and remains in force for five years from the date the parliament adopts a decision revoking that status.

Overall, these amendments to the Law “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine” fully complied with the Venice Commission’s recommendations while maintaining a balance between the interests of the state language and the languages of national minorities.

On November 8, 2023, the European Commission recommended that EU member states begin negotiations with Ukraine on EU accession. However, to launch official negotiations, Ukraine still had to meet a number of conditions, including implementing the Venice Commission’s recommendations regarding the law on national minorities.

Initially, on November 24, 2023, the Cabinet of Ministers registered draft bill №10288, aimed at meeting the European Commission’s requirements. Following a wave of criticism, the Verkhovna Rada adopted an alternative draft №10288-1, which addressed all the public’s critical concerns. These amendments refine the definition of a settlement where persons belonging to national minorities have traditionally (for over 100 years) lived and constitute a significant share of the population (over 10%). In such settlements, the executive committees of village, settlement, and city councils ensure the exercise of the right to use minority languages. In addition, parliamentary oversight of compliance with the right to use minority languages is assigned to the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights.

The rules on the use of minority languages in education were also changed. Private higher education institutions may choose the language of instruction from the list of official languages of the European Union. The state language must be taught as a separate subject. In classes where instruction is provided in minority languages that are official EU languages, the right to use the minority language alongside the state language is guaranteed. For students belonging to national minorities whose languages are official EU languages and who began their studies before September 1, 2018, the number of subjects taught in the state language will not be gradually increased. Members of national minorities have the right to receive basic and specialized secondary education using languages that are official EU languages. At the same time, subjects related to the study of the Ukrainian language and literature, as well as the history of Ukraine, are taught in the state language.

The law also clarified the functions of the Center for National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine, which is responsible for developing and implementing measures and programs for national minorities. For broadcasters airing programs in the languages of indigenous peoples and national minorities (except Russian), the weekly share of programming in the state language must be at least 30%. The provisions on the use of minority languages in election campaigning, publishing, public events, advertising, television, and communications with public authorities do not apply to the Russian language.

Thus, the amendments ultimately formed a legal framework for ensuring the rights of national minorities in Ukraine in line with European standards. Subsequent steps focused on implementing these norms, monitoring their practical results, and ensuring sustainable funding and the institutional capacity of the authorities responsible for national minority policy.

Assessments of the Law*

During the interviews, the new legislation was generally viewed positively by both public officials working on the protection of national minorities and representatives of various national minorities in Ukraine. One of its main advantages is that it meets the requirements of the European Union and the Venice Commission, as noted by a representative of the Ombudsman's Office.



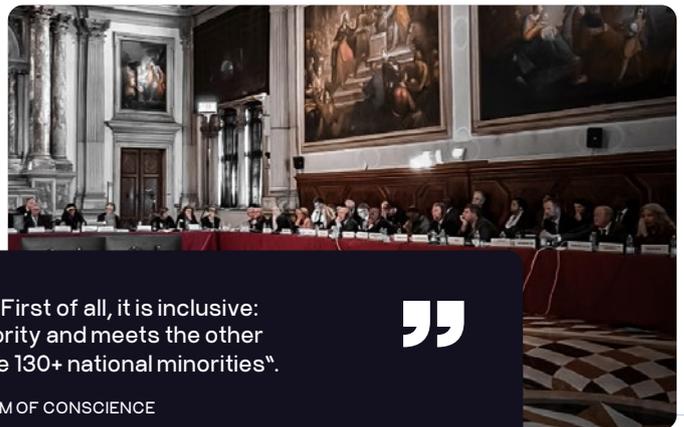
“This, incidentally, is now reflected in the Ukraine – European Commission negotiation framework on accession. Overall, our basic law on the protection of minority rights – guaranteed rights [the Law of Ukraine “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine”] – is quite well drafted, and it gives effect to the rights minorities have today”.



REPRESENTATIVE OF THE OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE

In its 2025 Enlargement Package report on Ukraine, the European Commission likewise noted that the rights of persons belonging to national minorities are generally supported, while stressing the need to continue implementing the updated legislation and the Action Plan on National Minorities in close cooperation with minority representatives, and to ensure adequate resources and capacity-building support for the competent authorities.

Another core advantage of the new legislation, according to a representative of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience, is the greater detail and specificity of powers, including a clear definition of the tasks of the central executive body responsible for ensuring the rights of national minorities.



“If we take the new law, it is more detailed. What's new in it? First of all, it is inclusive: any national community that considers itself a national minority and meets the other conditions becomes such a minority. Thus, we can now have 130+ national minorities”.



REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STATE SERVICE FOR ETHNIC AFFAIRS AND FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

*The assessment of the provisions of the Law of Ukraine “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine,” as well as the conclusions and recommendations set out in this section, are based on the results of in-depth semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Accordingly, the assessment of the legislation presented here reflects the positions, experience, and perspectives of representatives of state authorities, local self-government bodies, and national minorities (communities).

Another positive change, in the view of a representative of the Odesa Oblast Military Administration, is the clearer definition of who belongs to national minorities (communities).



“A certain period of residence for them [national minorities] in the territory has been established, although this had been discussed for a very long time. I have been working since 1996. From around then – certainly since 1999 – there were debates and discussions about how to classify representatives of national minorities. More precisely, how to clarify who are national minorities. That has now been done”.



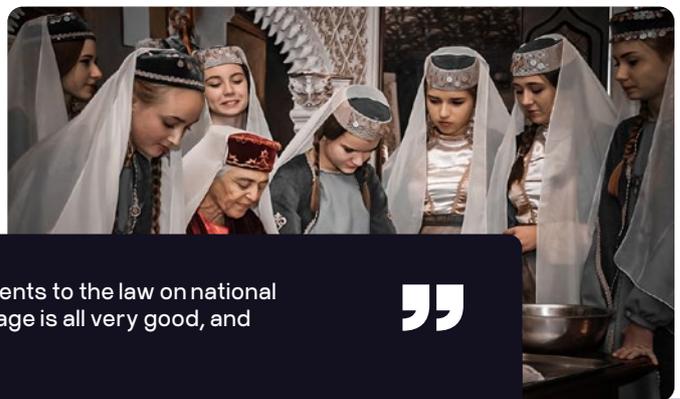
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ODESA OBLAST MILITARY ADMINISTRATION

Introducing the compromise term “national minorities (communities) of Ukraine,” as set out in the Law, was also important for minority representatives. A representative of the Armenian national minority noted that the term “national communities” had initially been considered, but after discussions with international partners a compromise was adopted. In the view of the representative of the Odesa Oblast Military Administration, this decision met the expectations of some minority representatives while remaining consistent with international norms.

Representatives of various national minorities also gave **positive assessments of the consultation process** and their involvement in drafting the Law.

Discussions covered, in particular, the creation of cultural centers, the establishment of advisory bodies at the local level for national communities, as well as the possibility of introducing advisers on national minority issues at the regional level. Although not all proposals were incorporated immediately, most minority representatives were able to convey their views to lawmakers, and the relevant inputs were taken into account during subsequent refinements of the legislation.

According to a representative of the Romanian national minority, one of the greatest benefits of the new legislation is the expanded ability to hold events in one’s native language.



“As for culture, there are no issues. Along with the amendments to the law on national minorities, the permission to hold events in the native language is all very good, and people have received this positively, without objections”.



REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ROMANIAN NATIONAL MINORITY (COMMUNITY)

Conclusions and recommendations concerning the Law*

Despite a number of positive aspects, representatives of various national minorities point to **specific problem areas** that require further legislative refinement.



01. Lack of regulation and record-keeping for national minority (community) organizations.

One of the key challenges remains the absence of proper regulation and systematic accounting of civil society organizations of national minorities (communities) in Ukraine. Representatives of the Armenian national minority highlight the lack of a unified register of such organizations, which complicates their institutional interaction with state authorities and international partners.

In particular, this creates difficulties with official representation, participation in international events and meetings abroad under martial law, and prevents a clear determination of their status compared with other institutions — such as religious organizations — that have a defined legal status. Ultimately, this erects additional barriers to the sustainable and effective operation of community organizations.

02. Lack of hierarchy and grading among national minority (community) organizations.

Another issue is the absence of any hierarchy among existing organizations of the respective national minorities (communities) in Ukraine, as a result of which small organizations can present themselves as nationwide. There is therefore a need to introduce appropriate grading so that organizations meeting defined criteria (particularly with respect to membership numbers) can represent different levels of activity: local, regional, and national.

03. Absence of a distinct status for national minority (community) organizations.

Another important issue for minority representatives is the introduction of a separate status for civil society organizations representing national communities. According to representatives of the Council of National Communities of Ukraine, this is important because non-governmental organizations of national minorities (communities) represent specific segments of Ukrainian society. It is therefore essential to legally distinguish such organizations from civil society organizations engaged in other types of activities.

*The conclusions and recommendations regarding the provisions of the Law of Ukraine “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine,” as well as the conclusions and recommendations formulated in this section, are based on the results of in-depth semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Accordingly, the conclusions and recommendations on the legislation presented in this section reflect the positions, experience, and perspectives of representatives of state authorities, local self-government bodies, and national minorities (communities).

04. Ambiguity in the normative content of cultural autonomy.

A representative of associations of the Hungarian national minority (community) draws attention to the lack of clarity in the provisions on the cultural autonomy of national minorities. Although the concept of cultural autonomy was introduced by the 1992 law (Article 6) and is preserved in the new legislation, it lacks a clear normative interpretation of its practical meaning for

national minorities. In the view of the Hungarian representative, a number of issues still require additional normative clarification through secondary legislation and official explanations, particularly concerning the use of minority languages in everyday life.



“There is a European practice that starts from 10% of the total population when a community is represented. Then it can use not only the everyday language but also the official language alongside the state language. This has already been noted, but the issue needs to be clarified. Moreover, an official letter or interpretation from the Constitutional Court is needed. For example, the latest law states that ‘in some cases it is allowed,’ but the main law on the state language categorically rejects this in some aspects. Therefore, it needs to be determined which law will be applied in practice”.



REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MINORITY (COMMUNITY)

05. Unregulated use of national minority symbols alongside state symbols.

The question of using the symbols of national minorities alongside the state symbols of Ukraine in settlements where persons belonging to national minorities (communities) traditionally reside remains unregulated. Minority representatives note the need for clear normative guidance from state authorities on the procedure and conditions for using such symbols.



“Since 1991, when Ukrainian state symbolism began to be used here locally, it has gone parallel with various symbols of national minorities... Back in 1992–1993, various local self-government bodies adopted these alongside their resolutions. Unfortunately, now the use of these symbols alongside state ones is not regulated. So, can or cannot a local self-government body use and display these symbols? If it can, then who approves it, what is the order and what is the procedure for their use? There have been very unfortunate moments in some settlements where the majority are Hungarian, who performed the state anthem of Ukraine and the national anthem of Hungary at their public events. Multiple criminal cases were raised regarding this. Therefore, we believe the state should fully regulate this somehow – either through the Ministry of Justice or other departments – to clarify all points: what this procedure should be if a community wishes to define its symbols, how they can appeal as per the law. There should be an appropriate body that approves and allows their use, fully describing how, when, and in what manner”.



REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MINORITY (COMMUNITY)

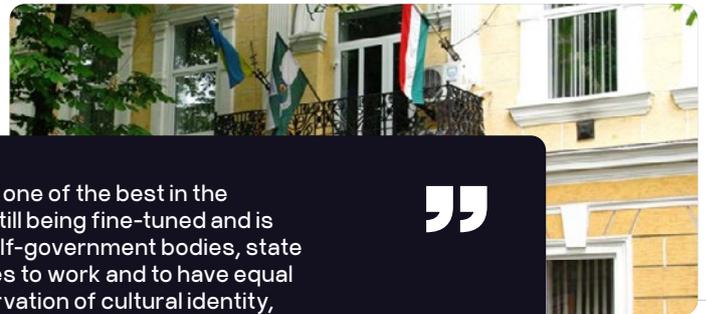
06. Dependence of language rights implementation on decisions of local self-government.

The new law provides for the possibility of offering services in the languages of national minorities in settlements where persons belonging to national minorities (communities) of Ukraine traditionally reside, or where such persons constitute a significant share of the population. However, implementing this provision depends on a decision by the local self-government body.

Thus, even in amalgamated communities that include populated areas with a compact presence of national minorities, the provision of such services remains contingent on the local council's decision.

If the local council does not support the relevant decision, representatives of national minorities are effectively deprived of the ability to use such services. This pertains in particular to introducing bilingual street names or information plaques in communal institutions in the relevant settlements — even if financed from their own resources.

Despite certain inaccuracies and the need for further refinement, the Law “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine” is well regarded by public officials, representatives of national minorities, and international partners.



“I believe that the regulatory framework, long considered one of the best in the European space with regard to national communities, is still being fine-tuned and is quite successful. It provides full opportunities for local self-government bodies, state authorities, and civil organizations of national communities to work and to have equal legal protection, the right to self-identification, the preservation of cultural identity, and participation in social and political life”.

”

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ODESA OBLAST MILITARY ADMINISTRATION

Representatives of the Council of National Communities of Ukraine also note that the legislative framework can and should continue to be improved, while recognizing that it is impossible to resolve all problematic

points in a very short period. They emphasize the need for gradual, consistent refinement of the legislation and the practices of its application.

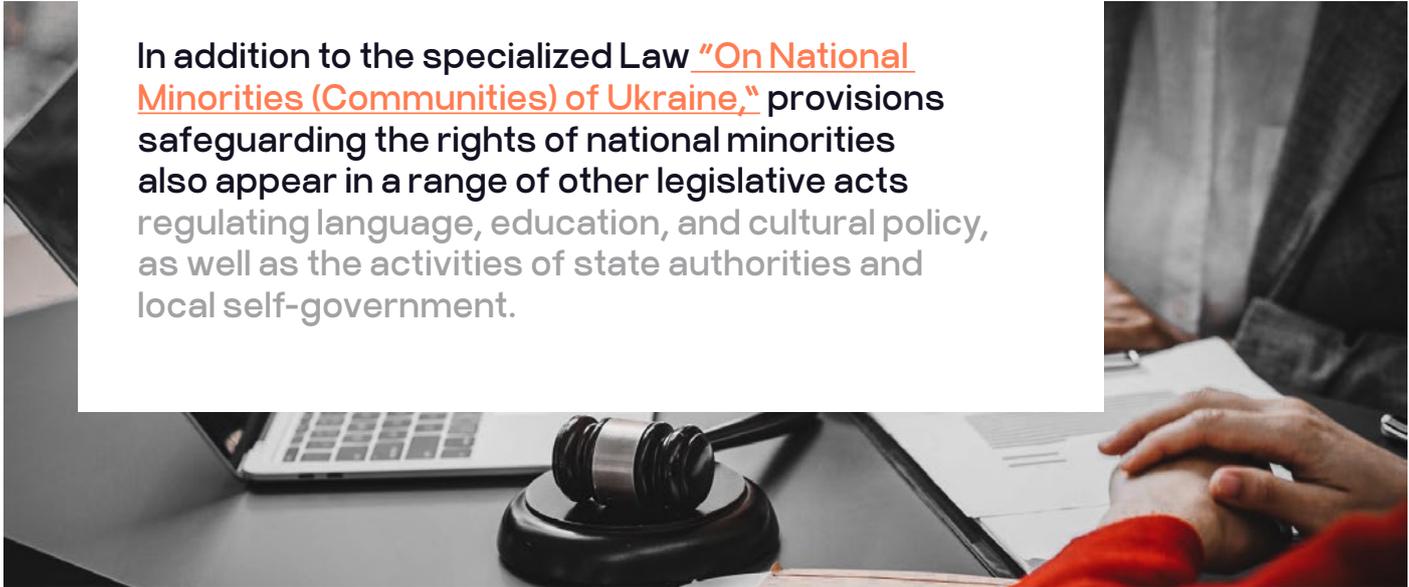


“To expect that all the issues that have accumulated, as they say, over 30–35 years, can be resolved within one year or two years — that, I think, is incorrect. Time is needed. Work is needed. I think that over time these issues will also be resolved”.

”

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COUNCIL OF NATIONAL COMMUNITIES OF UKRAINE

Other laws concerning the rights of national minorities (communities)



In addition to the specialized Law [“On National Minorities \(Communities\) of Ukraine,”](#) provisions safeguarding the rights of national minorities also appear in a range of other legislative acts regulating language, education, and cultural policy, as well as the activities of state authorities and local self-government.

These norms create a broader legal context for ensuring minority rights and directly influence how they are applied in practice at both national and local levels.

→ The Law [“On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language”](#)

specifies in [part 3 of Article 2](#) that the use of the Crimean Tatar language and other indigenous and minority languages in the relevant spheres of public life is determined by the law governing the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples and national minorities in Ukraine, taking into account the features set out in this law. In particular, it provides for the possible use of minority languages in election campaigning, education and culture, advertising, and in the names of communal enterprises.

→ The Law [“On Local Self-Government”](#)

states that district and regional councils delegate to the respective local state administrations, in areas of compact settlement of national minorities, the powers to develop programs for their national cultural development ([paragraph 1 of part 1 of Article 44](#)). The law also assigns to village, settlement, and city councils the delegated power to ensure, within the limits set by law, the right to use the languages of the respective national minorities (communities) in populated areas where persons belonging to these minorities traditionally reside or where such persons make up a significant share of the population (subparagraph 12, subparagraph “b,” Article 32).

→ The Law “On Local State Administrations”

provides that, in areas of compact settlement of national minorities, local state administrations are tasked with implementing programs for their national-cultural development ([paragraph 3 of part 1 of Article 2](#)). Local state administrations are also responsible for implementing legislation concerning national minorities ([paragraph 8 of part 1 of Article 25](#)). In addition, this law contains a provision that positions in local state administrations are to be filled by Ukrainian citizens with appropriate education and professional training who are proficient in the state language, regional languages, or minority languages to the extent necessary to perform official duties, pursuant to [Article 11](#) of the Law “[On the Principles of State Language Policy](#).” Notably, that latter law has been struck down as unconstitutional; accordingly, this provision should have been removed, but it has not yet been addressed and formally remains in force.

→ The Law “On Education”

contains several provisions on the use of minority languages in education. [Article 7](#) states that:

- *in classes (groups) where instruction is provided in the languages of national minorities that are official EU languages, the right to use the respective minority language in the educational process alongside the state language is guaranteed*
- *persons belonging to national minorities of Ukraine are guaranteed the right, in communal educational institutions, to receive preschool and primary education in the language of the respective national minority alongside the state language. This right is ensured by creating, in accordance with the law, separate classes (groups) where instruction is conducted in the respective minority language alongside the state language, and does not extend to classes (groups) taught in Ukrainian*
- *persons belonging to indigenous peoples and national minorities of Ukraine are guaranteed the right to study the language of the respective indigenous people or national minority in communal general secondary education institutions or through national cultural societies*
- *appropriate conditions are to be provided for persons belonging to indigenous peoples, national minorities, foreigners, and stateless persons to learn the state language*
- *upon the request of students in vocational (vocational-technical), pre-higher, and higher education institutions, educational establishments must provide opportunities to study the language of an indigenous people or national minority of Ukraine as a separate subject.*

→ The Law “On Higher Education”

stipulates that, upon an individual’s request, assignments are to be provided in translation into the language of a national minority or indigenous people of Ukraine if that language is used as a language of instruction at the educational institution (excluding assignments in Ukrainian language and literature and in foreign languages) ([part 11 of Article 45](#)).

→ The Law “On Culture”

designates the development of the culture of the Ukrainian nation, indigenous peoples, and national minorities of Ukraine as a priority of state policy in the field of culture ([subparagraph 1 of part 1 of Article 4](#)).

Subordinate legislation adopted to implement the Law “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine”

To give effect to the Law “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine,” the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a number of regulatory acts implementing its provisions.



Unity in Diversity program

In September 2023, immediately after the law entered into force, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted Order №850-p “On Approval of the State Target National-Cultural Program “Unity in Diversity” for the Period until 2034.” The Program provides for regular consultations, annual forums, monitoring compliance with the rights of persons

belonging to national minorities, assessing their needs, and systematic engagement with relevant foreign states and international organizations. It also envisages competitive grant calls, financed from the state budget, to support the realization of minority rights.

As part of implementation, the government plans to:

- develop the procedure for identifying and the list of settlements in Ukraine (to be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers) where persons belonging to national minorities (communities) traditionally reside or where they constitute a significant share of the population
- develop a methodology on the use of national minority (community) languages, including for providing any topographical information and for communications with public authorities in such settlements; upon request and where there is a demonstrated need, traditional toponyms may be restored
- provide schoolchildren from national minorities and indigenous peoples with bilingual textbooks, with 1.2 billion UAH earmarked from the state budget
- support the development and dissemination of online courses for learning minority languages
- amend curricula to deepen understanding of ethnic diversity in Ukraine and worldwide
- develop a strategy to preserve endangered languages (Urum, Rumei, Karaim, Krymchak)
- finance centers for national minorities from local budgets
- provide training in fundraising and accounting for civil society organizations of national minorities and representative bodies of indigenous peoples to strengthen their project-management capacity
- support media that launch additional editions in minority languages and those that promote the development of minority languages and cultures; communities particularly affected by the armed aggression of the Russian Federation (due to hostilities and/or temporary occupation) will also receive support.

Over the next 10 years, 2.5 billion UAH is planned for financing the Plan:

- 1.3 billion UAH from the state budget, 103 million UAH from local budgets, and over 1 billion UAH expected from international technical assistance and other partnership mechanisms.



Overall, the Program is comprehensive and spans a wide range of measures aimed at ensuring the rights and needs of national minorities. Provided that international technical assistance is stable and sufficient, its implementation will help meet the needs of different national minorities. A significant caveat, however, is the heavy reliance on international financial resources. The system of indicators for evaluating effectiveness also warrants special attention: many success criteria focus on quantitative, process-oriented metrics (e.g., number of

events held), which only partially reflect the realization of minority rights and the Program's real impact on their situation.

Representatives of national minorities noted in interviews that the launch and implementation of the "Unity in Diversity" Program and the national cultural program have helped involve representatives of various national minorities (communities) in implementing state policy in this area and increased their awareness of the rights and opportunities guaranteed to them under Ukrainian law.

Procedure for determining the settlements where representatives of national minorities traditionally reside

Part 12 of Article 10 of the Law "On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine" provides that both the procedure for determining the list and the list of settlements where persons belonging to national minorities (communities) traditionally reside, or where such persons constitute a significant share of the population, are approved by the Cabinet of Ministers.

This procedure sets out how to identify settlements where national minorities have traditionally lived or where they make up a significant portion of the population. The decision to designate a settlement as one where national minorities have traditionally resided in compact communities is taken by the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience (hereinafter — DESS, after the Ukrainian "Держава служба України з питань етнополітики та свободи совісті").

To include a settlement in the list, DESS obtains official information from the State Service of Statistics on the distribution of the population by ethnic origin based on the latest national census. If settlements meeting the necessary criteria are identified, DESS submits a draft of such a list to the Cabinet of Ministers for consideration.

The Ministry of Culture, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, local self-government bodies and their executive authorities, as well as research institutions and public associations of national minorities, may propose adding settlements to this list. Submissions must indicate the settlement's name and provide evidence of the uninterrupted residence there of national minorities over the last hundred years.

Information confirming the residence of representatives of national minorities in a given settlement over the past 100 years may include:

- data from official documents of institutions and organizations that operated in the 19th–20th centuries in the territory of that settlement
- records from scholarly, religious, and community societies that played an important role in the settlement's political, social, and cultural life in the 19th century and the first third of the 20th century

- documents from population censuses of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1900 and 1910), the Republic of Poland (1921 and 1931), Czechoslovakia (1921 and 1930), the Kingdom of Romania (1930), and the Kingdom of Hungary (1941)
- documents (works, private letters, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, personal documents such as passports, certificates, extracts from vital records/parish registers, identification documents, court-investigative records, police surveillance documents), including handwritten materials, etc.

DESS representatives noted in interviews that a key challenge in developing the procedure was identifying appropriate sources of information. At times, compromise solutions were needed because policymakers lacked access to Hungarian and Romanian archival documents and therefore to data on the ethnic composition of populations in parts of Ukraine that were once within Romania or Austria-Hungary. The procedure's development relied primarily on accessible Ukrainian archives, which provided the necessary data to estimate the numbers of representatives of various national minorities living in specific settlements or regions a hundred years ago and later.

The introduction of the term “traditionally residing” is linked to practices in neighboring countries. DESS representatives explained that in Hungary, Romania, and Poland a 100-year period is considered traditional residence. In Ukraine's case, this timeframe also broadly aligns with the historical period of the Ukrainian People's Republic. Hence, this principle was adopted.

The 10% population threshold for representatives of national minorities was likewise drawn from the practice of neighboring states. Officials explained in interviews that this approach was intended to align Ukrainian legislation with European practice and ensure consistency of approach.

On December 17, 2025, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted Resolution [№1682](#) “On Approval of the List of Settlements Where Persons Belonging to National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine Traditionally Reside or Where Such Persons Constitute a Significant Share of the Population.”

Including a settlement in the list of areas where persons belonging to national minorities (communities) traditionally reside, or where they constitute a significant portion of the population, provides local self-government with a legal basis to implement the provisions of the Law “[On National Minorities \(Communities\) of Ukraine](#)” within the community. In particular, it enables local self-government bodies to decide on the use of minority languages in the public sphere, to support cultural initiatives, and to create institutional conditions to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of national minorities, within the powers defined by law.

At the same time, inclusion in such a list does not impose automatic obligations on local self-government bodies; it enables the exercise of the relevant rights and guarantees based on decisions adopted by local councils.

Methodology for the use of languages of national minorities (communities)

Part 10 of Article 10 of the Law “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine” provides that the specific features of using the languages of national minorities (communities) — including, but not limited to, the provision of topographical information and communication with public authorities in settlements where persons belonging to

national minorities (communities) traditionally reside or where such persons constitute a significant share of the population — at the request of those persons and provided such a request corresponds to actual needs, are determined by a methodology approved by the Cabinet of Ministers.



The law also specifies that the methodology must ensure:

- the possibility for persons belonging to national minorities (communities) to use, alongside the state language, the language of the respective national minority (community) in their interactions with local executive authorities and local self-government bodies, and with their officials who operate in settlements where persons belonging to national minorities (communities) traditionally reside or where such persons constitute a significant share of the population
- the possibility for local executive authorities and local self-government bodies, and their officials operating in such settlements, to use — by decision of the respective body — the language of the relevant national minority (community) alongside the state language in their interactions with persons belonging to national minorities (communities)
- the possibility of taking other measures based solely on the core provisions of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

The Methodology for the Use of Languages of National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine, approved by Cabinet of Ministers Resolution №181 of February 9, 2024, is a subordinate act that specifies the provisions of the Law “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine” and sets out the procedure and conditions for using minority languages in settlements where such minorities traditionally reside or constitute a significant share of the population.

The methodology provides local self-government with a clear legal framework within which they may take decisions on the use of minority languages in the public sphere. In particular, village, settlement, and city councils may, by their own decision:

- determine which minority language is to be used in the respective settlement
- define the spheres of public life in which the use of this language is permitted (toponymy, public services, communication with authorities, medical and social assistance, etc.)
- identify funding sources for expenditures related to the use of minority languages (the state budget, local budgets, and other sources not prohibited by law).

Importantly, the methodology does not impose an automatic obligation on local self-government bodies but creates a lawful opportunity to adopt such decisions without risking non-compliance with state language legislation.

It should also be emphasized that local self-government bodies that adopted decisions on the use of minority languages before the methodology took effect must review and update those decisions in light of the new approaches and spheres of use set out in Cabinet of Ministers Resolution №181. This will bring local practice into conformity with current legislation and avoid legal uncertainty.

Thus, the methodology defines the specific features of using the languages of national minorities in Ukraine in settlements where persons belonging to national minorities traditionally reside or where such persons constitute a significant share of the population, in line with the Constitution, the 1995 [Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#), the Law “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language,” and the Law “[On National Minorities \(Communities\) of Ukraine](#).”

Representatives of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience (DESS) noted in interviews that the methodology is comprehensive in content, complies with legislative requirements, and at present does not require further amendments.

List of the languages of Ukraine's national minorities (communities) and indigenous peoples at risk of extinction

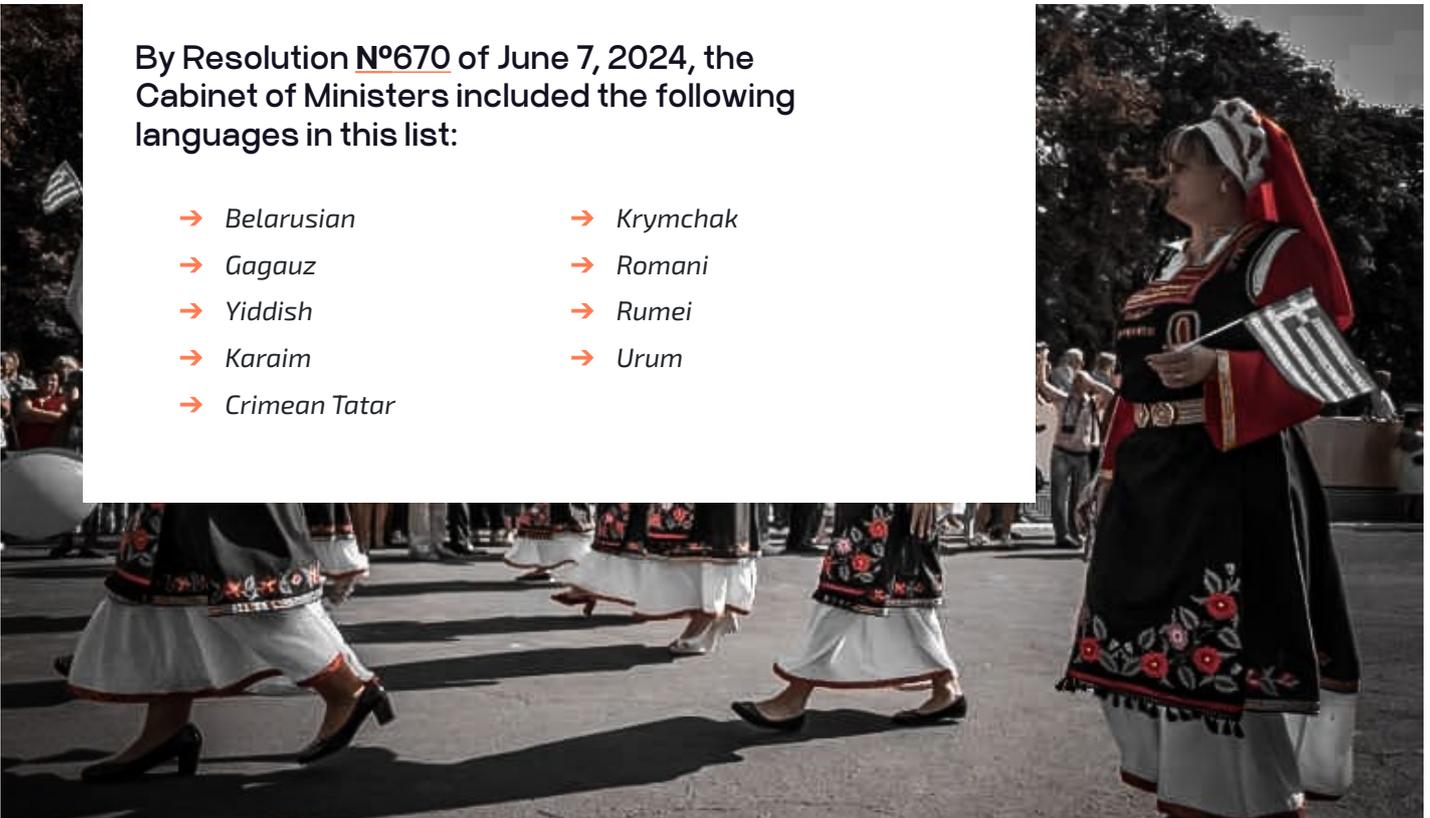
According to subparagraph 5 of part 1 of Article 13 of the Law "On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine," state policy in the sphere of national minorities (communities) aims to provide state support for minority languages that are threatened with disappearance.

The list of such languages is to be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on the basis of international standards.



By Resolution Nº670 of June 7, 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers included the following languages in this list:

- *Belarusian*
- *Gagauz*
- *Yiddish*
- *Karaim*
- *Crimean Tatar*
- *Krymchak*
- *Romani*
- *Rumei*
- *Urum*



Introducing a list of languages at risk of disappearance aligns with international approaches to protecting linguistic diversity, particularly UNESCO's recommendations on preserving endangered languages. Representatives of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience (DESS) indicated in interviews that creating this list was their initiative. The list was compiled following consultations with research institutions, academic bodies, and experts.

The languages included are highly diverse. According to a DESS representative, among the nine endangered languages, Crimean Tatar stands out for having a stronger foundation. For the remaining languages, a working group of eight subgroups was formed, including philologists and linguists. They have virtually completed a strategy for the development and protection of minority languages in Ukraine that are threatened with disappearance.

Procedure for the establishment and functioning of the Center for national minorities (communities) of Ukraine

Under part 1 of Article 19 of the Law “[On National Minorities \(Communities\) of Ukraine](#),” the procedure for establishing and operating the Center for National Minorities (Communities) is determined by the central executive body responsible for implementing state policy in the sphere of national minorities (communities).

Under the Law, centers for national minorities (communities) are intended to ensure the institutional and technical conditions needed to meet the cultural needs of persons belonging to national minorities (communities) on the principles of equality and inclusive access.

In line with these provisions, the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience approved Order [№H-18/12](#) of February 2, 2024, “On Approval of the Procedure for the Establishment and Functioning of Centers for National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine.” Under this Procedure, such centers may be created by reorganizing existing enterprises, institutions, or organizations, and — resources permitting — by establishing new institutions.

The main functions of the centers are:

- *developing and implementing measures and programs to meet the cultural, linguistic, and educational needs of national minorities*
- *conducting cultural and educational activities*
- *organizing language courses and publishing activities*
- *cooperating with representative bodies of national minorities, local administrations, and international organizations*
- *participating in consultations on policy development concerning national minorities.*



Centers may be financed from local budgets and from other sources not prohibited by law.

For representatives of national minorities, establishing and operating such centers is among the most pressing issues.

A representative of the Moldovan national minority noted in an interview that discussions about the need to create such centers began 4–5 years ago.

At the time, there were concerns that including the relevant provisions in the draft bill could complicate or prevent its adoption. Today, a legal framework for the functioning of centers for national minorities has been created, but the key issue remains practical implementation.

At times, there is **insufficient awareness** among some minority representatives about the procedure for setting up such centers.

A representative of the Ombudsman's Office noted that representatives of national minorities in one region of Ukraine inquired about opening a center but did not realize they needed to apply to local authorities with a request to establish it. As a result, the Ombudsman's Office carried out outreach to explain the steps for creating centers for national minorities.

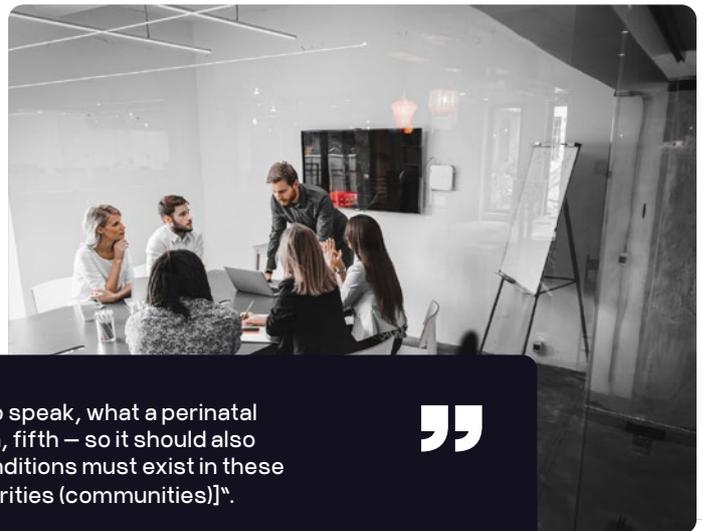
One of the biggest challenges in establishing such centers is the **lack of funding and suitable premises**.

Both minority representatives and officials at various levels point to this problem. Another challenge is the shortage of local resources and information about the condition of premises and their property status.

Representatives of national minorities support and recognize the need to create centers for national minorities (communities). For them, these centers offer opportunities to preserve traditions, develop their culture, and even promote traditional sports.

DESS representatives likewise recognize their importance, as not all national communities have sufficient resources to create and finance their own centers. Both government and minority representatives agree that these centers should be multifunctional and properly equipped so that members of different national communities can use them freely.

At the same time, national minorities understand that creating such centers during wartime is difficult due to limited resources, and therefore they do not demand immediate decisions from regional or national authorities. They stress that the centers' operation should be clearly regulated. It is also essential to determine who will be the custodian of these centers and who will be responsible for their upkeep and proper equipment.



“There should be a clear definition. Just as we define, so to speak, what a perinatal center is – what it must include, first, second, third, fourth, fifth – so it should also be clearly defined what needs to be included and what conditions must exist in these houses of national communities [centers for national minorities (communities)]”.

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REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GREEK NATIONAL MINORITY (COMMUNITY)

Roadmap and Action Plan for the protection of national minorities (communities)

On May 14, 2025, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a Rule of Law Roadmap as part of a package of roadmaps outlining priority reforms within the negotiation process for Ukraine's EU membership.

It sets out a comprehensive set of measures to reform the legal system and protect human rights to be implemented by the end of 2027, in particular in the areas of non-discrimination, combating hate speech, ensuring the rights of national minorities, the use of minority languages, and education in minority languages. Pursuant to the Roadmap, an Action Plan for the Protection of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine was developed and approved, identifying measures, reporting mechanisms, and responsible state authorities.

In addition, the Roadmap provides for the establishment of a comprehensive and effective mechanism to monitor compliance with the rights of persons belonging to national minorities (communities) in Ukraine and a mechanism for documenting instances of discriminatory actions. It also envisages ensuring adequate staffing and capacity for effective parliamentary oversight of compliance with the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to the Roma national minority.

It is worth noting that some of the measures set out envisage amendments to the Law "On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine." Proposals to expand the use of minority languages conflict with the Law "On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language."

For example, they propose broader use of minority languages in election campaigning, the provision of medical and other services, and in education. There are also concerns about the continued use of faulty translations of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Such changes appear artificial and do not contribute to the consolidation of Ukrainian society.

Representatives of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience (DESS) noted that, during the development of the Plan and the Roadmap, a series of meetings and discussions were held with representatives of national minorities, international partners, and experts from the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and various embassies in Ukraine. As a result, the drafting process was quite open and inclusive.

DESS faces certain challenges in implementing the Plan, particularly because different agencies and ministries interpret the implementation of individual points differently. To date, such discrepancies have been reconciled. The Service continues to work closely with the European Commission on implementation of the Plan and takes into account the experience of other countries that have undergone similar processes during their integration into the European Union.

02

IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE POLICY ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF NATIONAL MINORITIES (COMMUNITIES)

Implementation of the policy at the national level

This section of the report assesses the implementation of state policy to protect the rights of national minorities (communities) at the national level.

The analysis focuses on the work of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience (DESS) as the key central executive body responsible for this policy, as well as the functioning of the Council of National Communities of Ukraine as the principal consultative mechanism for minority participation. The assessment covers DESS's institutional capacity, how effectively it performs its assigned tasks, the nature of its engagement with representatives of national minorities and with public authorities at different levels, and the key constraints that affect the practical realization of minority rights.

Particular attention is given to the role of the Council of National Communities of Ukraine, its potential as a platform for structured dialogue and civil society participation, and challenges related to representativeness, procedural transparency, and institutional interaction.

The conclusions and recommendations presented here are based on analysis of information obtained through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including representatives of state authorities, local self-government, and national minorities (communities).

State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience

The State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience is the central executive body that ensures the implementation of state policy on interethnic relations, freedom of conscience, and the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples and national minorities in Ukraine.

The key tasks of DESS are defined by Cabinet of Ministers Resolution №812 of August 21, 2019, "On Approval of the Regulations for the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience and on Amendments to the Regulations for the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine."

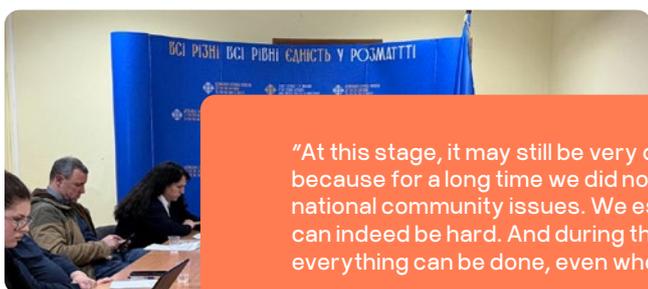
In the sphere of policy on national minorities (communities), DESS is responsible for:

- summarizing the practice of applying legislation on national minorities and preparing draft legal acts
- monitoring compliance with legislation in the sphere of national minorities (communities) of Ukraine
- studying and analyzing issues that affect the development of national minorities (communities) in Ukraine
- coordinating with the relevant authorities of foreign states on matters concerning national minorities
- developing measures to preserve and ensure the cultural and linguistic development of persons belonging to national minorities (communities) of Ukraine
- providing organizational, informational, and logistical support for the activities of the Council of National Communities of Ukraine
- collecting and analyzing statistical information on the number and types of public associations of the indigenous peoples of Ukraine and of national minorities (communities) of Ukraine.

Representatives of various national minorities assessed DESS's work positively in interviews.



They view the creation of a dedicated institution responsible for implementing policy on the rights of national minorities as an important step, given that Ukraine long lacked a specialized authority to address these issues systematically. As a result, much of the policy work had to start essentially from scratch.



"At this stage, it may still be very difficult to get everything up and running, because for a long time we did not have a state-level structure to deal with national community issues. We essentially had to start from scratch. That can indeed be hard. And during the war, I need to be understanding that not everything can be done, even when there is the will".



REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MOLDOVAN NATIONAL MINORITY

Minority representatives report well-established engagement with DESS leadership. They also highlight active cooperation at the local level and their involvement in various discussions. This indicates the Service's openness to dialogue and its readiness to cooperate with representatives of different national minorities.

State officials at the regional level likewise report established cooperation with DESS.

Representatives of oblast military administrations emphasize the Service's willingness to engage in dialogue and joint work, and its involvement in organizing events and business trips. This is especially important given the limited resources of regional administrations for arranging such travel. In addition, DESS maintains ongoing communication with relevant departments and requests feedback on draft decisions to improve state policy in the sphere of interethnic relations.

Challenges in the work of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience

Despite the many positive assessments, representatives of various national minorities stressed that DESS needs to improve its work.

01. Staffing Shortages

The Service's resources are limited — due in part to the full-scale war — even as it carries significant responsibility and a broad mandate. At current staffing levels, DESS cannot effectively fulfill its assigned duties.

02. Imbalance in areas of work

Minority representatives point out that, because substantial effort is concentrated on religious matters, insufficient attention is paid to issues concerning national minorities.

"We have very warm, constructive relations with the leadership... However, the small number of staff simply cannot cover such a complex agenda. Therefore, I would recommend increasing the staffing of this body and hiring specialists who work professionally on issues concerning national minorities".

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COUNCIL OF NATIONAL COMMUNITIES OF UKRAINE

”



"Additionally, we feel that religious issues, which are also under the purview of the State Service, consume a lot of time and energy, and therefore they do not always have the capacity to address issues related to national communities, apart from those concerning Eurointegration".

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MINORITY

”

03. Lack of a clear action plan

Resource and staffing constraints shape the Service's approaches to working with national minorities, particularly its capacity and the speed with which it responds to issues that concern national community representatives. This also affects the quality of interaction and communication, and the possibilities for a structured dialogue between DESS and different national minorities. A representative of one

national minority remarked that it appears the Service lacks a clearly articulated strategy and understanding of how to build engagement with national minorities under current conditions. Although DESS operates within its available means, there does not appear to be a clearly defined algorithm for cooperation with each specific national minority.

04. Absence of DESS representation at the regional level

Both minority representatives and public authorities stressed that interaction with DESS representatives at the regional level is critically important, given the need for constant communication with local self-government and systematic on-the-ground information gathering. Moreover, national minorities in different regions have varying needs and requests. In this context, resolving all issues exclusively through the central authority, without involving regional representation, is ineffective.

05. Incomplete execution of duties

Because of insufficient staffing and a focus on other formats of work, DESS does not always effectively fulfill its responsibilities. This applies in particular to information and public outreach concerning the rights and opportunities of national minorities. Situations arise in which minority representatives approach DESS with education-related issues that do not fall within the Service's remit, and the Service lacks the capacity and authority to process such requests.

Given the importance of addressing national minority issues in the context of Ukraine's European integration, the question of DESS's institutional capacity will only become more pressing.

Solving many of the current challenges directly depends on the Service's resources and the effectiveness of its work. At present, some DESS functions are being partially assumed by other public bodies, including the Office of the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights. However, this is not a sustainable solution.

There is a risk that European partners will pay increasing attention to this issue. Accordingly, strengthening DESS's institutional capacity and further developing the Service should be among the government's priorities in protecting and realizing the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

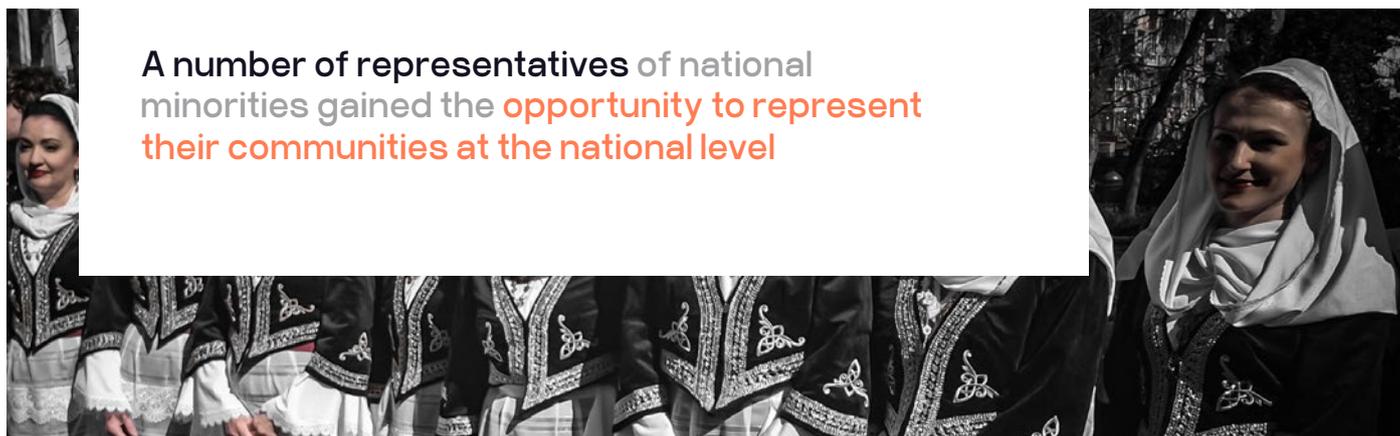
Council of National Communities of Ukraine

The Council of National Communities of Ukraine operates under the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience (DESS). It is a standing consultative-advisory body established to hold consultations with representatives of public associations of national minorities (communities) on matters relating to the rights and freedoms defined by law for persons belonging to national minorities (communities) in Ukraine.

The Council's activities are governed by Order [№H-86/12](#) of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience, dated October 2, 2023.

Pursuant to this order, the Council of National Communities of Ukraine was established as a permanent advisory body, and the Council's [Regulations](#) were approved. These set out the main tasks and functions, the procedure for forming the Council's membership and terminating its powers, membership rules, the rights and duties of the chair and members, and the Council's working procedures.

The current (first) convocation of the Council held its inaugural meeting on May 31, 2024.



A number of representatives of national minorities gained the opportunity to represent their communities at the national level

Representatives of public associations have responded positively, emphasizing that they can now discuss and propose improvements to current policy on national minorities. In addition to numerous meetings and discussions, the Council's work has produced two appeals addressed to the President.

According to a representative of the Moldovan national minority, the Council of National Communities of Ukraine under DESS has given national minorities greater opportunities for representation and involvement in decision-making.

“But our council is effective; it works, raises issues – sometimes quite sharply – and does so within the framework of current law. Given that this is a new structure and no one had prior experience... Although each of us, the council members, has certain experience gained in the regions and in our own organizations. Still, both DESS and the council under DESS are new institutions, so we still need to learn how to use these opportunities as effectively as possible. Nevertheless, in my view, the start is not bad, and we can already see some positive steps in this direction”.

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MOLDOVAN NATIONAL MINORITY (COMMUNITY)



Challenges in the work of the Council of National Communities of Ukraine



01. Ambiguity in selection criteria for Council membership.

Some representatives of national communities have pointed to challenges in how the Council was formed. A key concern is the lack of clarity in the criteria for selecting public associations whose representatives may serve on the Council. According to a representative of the public union “Council of Public Associations of National Communities of Ukraine,” significantly more public associations of national minorities are active in Ukraine than are represented on the Council. It also remains unclear by which specific criteria the current associations and their representatives were selected. The representative stressed that transparency would be improved by publishing clear requirements that public associations must meet to join the Council.

02. Limited representativeness of the Council's composition.

Another challenge is that representatives of so-called “umbrella organizations” — associations, unions, or congresses representing several ethnicities or national minorities at once — cannot be elected to the Council. This significantly narrows the range of public associations that can be represented. At the same time, the numerical composition of the Council is a concern for representatives of national minorities. The first convocation elected 18 members, while more than 130 national minorities are represented in Ukraine. This raises questions among minority representatives about the justification for the size of the first convocation and the possibility of increasing membership in the future.

03. Absence of systematic dialogue of the Council with state authorities and local self-government bodies, and insufficient involvement in European and Euro-Atlantic advocacy.

A systemic shortcoming remains the lack of structured, regular dialogue between the Council of National Communities of Ukraine and key state authorities at both central and local levels. At present, the Council's interaction with the Office of the President, the Cabinet of Ministers, the Verkhovna Rada, relevant parliamentary committees, ministries, and other central executive bodies is ad hoc rather than systematic.

Participation by national minority organizations in foreign policy and Eurointegration advocacy — including engagement with “kin” states and during international events — also remains insufficiently institutionalized, despite their potential as partners in advancing Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic integration. At the regional level, an additional challenge is that most regional state administrations lack designated positions or structural units responsible for systematic interaction with national minority organizations, which complicates the resolution of current issues and the joint development of strategic solutions.

To improve the work of the Council of National Communities of Ukraine, efforts are currently underway to revise its Regulations. According to one Council member, ongoing work includes refining voting procedures and the rotation rules for the chair and deputy chairs, as well as verifying the updated Regulations with the Ministry of Justice.



Implementation of the policy at the regional level: Zakarpattia, Lviv, Chernivtsi, and Odesa Oblasts

This section of the report assesses the state of implementation of state policy to protect the rights of national minorities (communities) at the regional level.

The analysis focuses on evaluating how the legislation is put into practice and on the interaction between oblast military administrations (OMA) and representatives of national minorities, as well as the key constraints that affect the effective realization of the rights of national communities amid the ongoing full-scale war.

To conduct this assessment, four oblasts were selected: **Zakarpattia, Odesa, Lviv, and Chernivtsi Oblasts.**

The selection was based on the presence in these oblasts of previously identified populated areas where representatives of national minorities (communities) reside and which were the subject of research.

The conclusions and recommendations presented in this section are based on analysis of information obtained through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including representatives of the oblast military administrations and representatives of national minorities living in the aforementioned regions.

*It is important to keep in mind the limitations of using the presented data to analyze the current situation in the sphere of national minority rights. Official statistics on the national composition of the population are based on the latest All-Ukrainian Population Census, conducted in 2001. In the more than two decades since then, there have been significant demographic, social, and migratory changes, including internal and external migration. Accordingly, the demographic data cited in this report do not reflect the current numerical composition of national minorities and are used primarily to outline general structural contexts, rather than to provide a precise assessment of the demographic situation in regions, communities, and localities.

National composition of selected oblasts

Zakarpattia Oblast

Oblast is characterized by significant ethnic diversity.*

Ukrainians made up the overwhelming majority (80.5%), while the region is home to representatives of more than 100 nationalities and ethnic groups, with Hungarian (12.1%), Romanian (2.6%), and Roma (1.1%) national minorities predominant.

The share of national minorities in Zakarpattia Oblast is among the highest compared to other regions of Ukraine. This ethnic composition directly influences the formulation and implementation of regional policy on the protection of minority rights.

Lviv Oblast

The population is largely monoethnic.*

Ukrainians constitute the overwhelming majority (94.82%), while representatives of the Russian (3.55%), Polish (0.7%), Belarusian (0.21%), and Jewish (0.08%) minorities also reside in the region.

Since the share of national minorities is relatively small compared to other regions of Ukraine, only 21 populated areas have been identified where persons belonging to national minorities (communities) traditionally live or where they make up a significant share of the population. The presence of settlements with compact minority populations underscores the need to account for specific local needs when implementing policies to protect minority rights at the community level.

Chernivtsi Oblast

Oblast has an ethnically diverse population.*

About 80 nationalities live in the oblast. Ukrainians make up the majority (75%), along with Romanians (12.5%), Moldovans (7.3%), and Russians (4.1%)

A key feature of the region is its border with Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Chernivtsi Oblast is the primary region of residence for the Romanian national minority in Ukraine, which directly shapes regional policy priorities concerning the protection of minority rights.

Odesa Oblast

Oblast exhibits a high level of ethnic diversity.*

Ukrainians constitute the majority (62.8%), while Russian (20.7%), Bulgarian (6.1%), Moldovan (5.0%), and Gagauz (1.1%) minorities also reside in the oblast.

This ethnic structure shows pronounced intra-regional differences and directly influences the formation of local contexts for implementing policies to protect minority rights, including through their representation in local self-government bodies and district administrations.

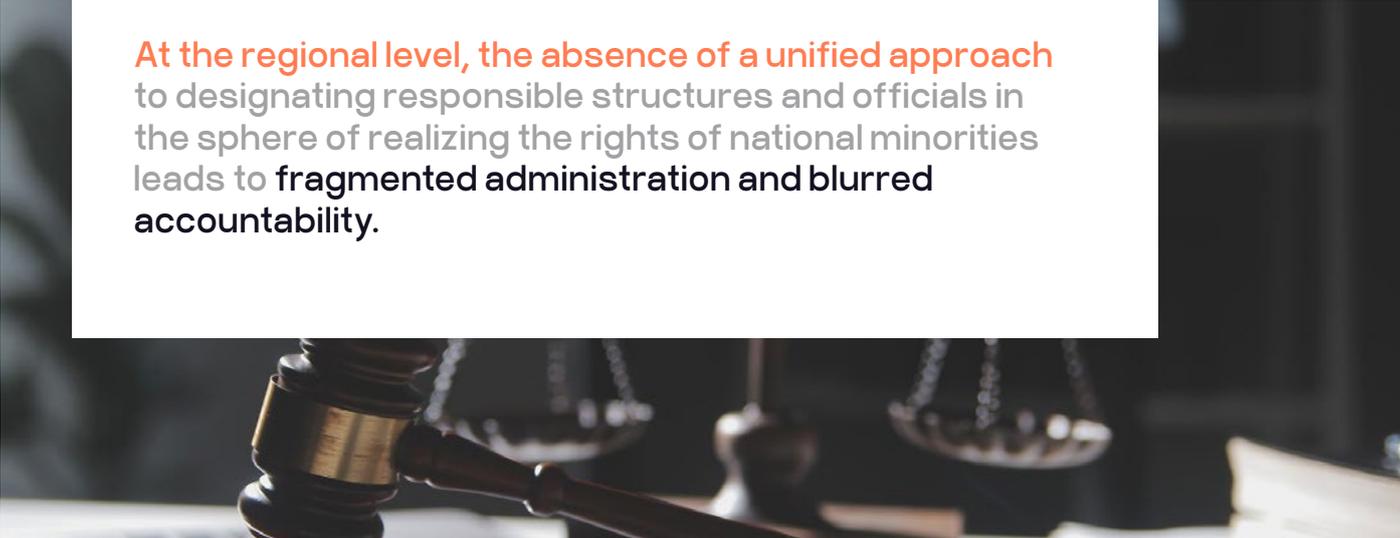
*According to the All-Ukrainian Population Census of 2001.

Evaluation of the implementation of state policy at the oblast level

At the regional level, the enforcement of legislation and implementation of measures concerning the rights of national minorities (communities) are ensured by the oblast military administrations in cooperation with local self-government bodies. Implementation of this policy varies across Ukraine's regions. Representatives of national minorities noted during interviews that in each region policy is shaped by the needs of national minorities and with due regard to the available institutional capacities of regional and local authorities.

Currently, each oblast military administration independently decides whether to create specific structural units responsible for policy on national minorities.

In the regions analyzed, powers related to implementing policy on the rights of national minorities are assigned to different structural units within the OMAs. Thus, in Odesa OMA this area is overseen by the Department of Culture, Nationalities, and Religions; in Zakarpattia OMA, by the Department of Nationalities and Religions; in Lviv OMA, by the Department of Culture, Nationalities, and Religions; and in Chernivtsi OMA, by the Division of Nationalities and Religions. Despite differences in organizational structure, all regions share the problem of insufficient staffing, driven by low salary levels and a significant workload on employees of the relevant units.



At the regional level, the absence of a unified approach to designating responsible structures and officials in the sphere of realizing the rights of national minorities leads to fragmented administration and blurred accountability.

As a result, representatives of national communities often find it difficult to identify the relevant structural unit or official, which complicates communication with oblast authorities and negatively affects the timeliness and effectiveness of regional policy implementation..

According to [Article 18](#) of the Law “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine,” oblast military administrations may establish consultative-advisory bodies to ensure systematic interaction with representatives of national minorities (communities), to take their needs and interests into account during the formulation and implementation of regional policy, and to develop recommendations in the sphere of protecting minority rights.

Evaluation of the implementation of state policy at the oblast level



In three of the four oblasts under analysis, consultative-advisory bodies involving representatives of national minorities operate within the oblast administrations.

Generally, these bodies are involved in discussions on setting priorities for allocating regional funding aimed at supporting the oblast's national-cultural societies. They also participate in drafting recommendations and proposals for regional and national policy on the protection of minority rights.

Odesa Oblast

In Odesa Oblast, the advisory body for national minorities under the oblast military administration has been functioning since 1999. At the time of the study, it comprised 16 members. Meetings are held on a regular basis, approximately once a quarter

Lviv Oblast

In Lviv Oblast, a similar advisory body has been operating since 1997. In 2024, its membership and leadership were once again updated. Currently, the Council includes representatives of about half of the 48 national-cultural societies officially registered in the oblast.

Chernivtsi Oblast

In Chernivtsi Oblast, an advisory body with similar functions was established in 2019. As of January 2026, it comprised 18 members, including representatives of the oblast military administration and national communities.

Of the four oblasts analyzed, the advisory body within the oblast military administration is effectively inactive only in Zakarpattia Oblast. According to a representative of the oblast military administration, this body was established long ago but currently exists only formally and does not conduct full-fledged activities. At the same time, the regional authority acknowledged the need to restore its functionality to establish systematic communication and interaction with national minorities in the oblast.

Active operation of such a body could also foster stronger interaction among different national minorities, improve mutual understanding of their needs and priorities, and, over time, contribute to developing shared approaches to problem-solving. Ongoing coordination and collaboration on common issues would create conditions for implementing joint projects, attracting additional funding, and conducting cultural and educational activities.

Implementation of Legislation at the Regional Level

Overall, the adoption of the Law “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine” **has not led to substantial changes** in how policies to protect minority rights are implemented at the regional level.

Experts from different regions noted that many provisions of the new law were, in effect, already being applied before its adoption, and existing practices in the cultural sphere and engagement with national minorities formed the basis for the relevant legislative norms. At the same time, too little time has passed since the law took effect to conduct a full-fledged assessment of the level and quality of its implementation.

Interaction and Cooperation Between Oblast Military Administrations and National Minorities (Communities)



Most representatives of national minorities report **established cooperation with regional authorities.**

They emphasize that oblast administrations are generally open to engagement and ready to work together on issues that concern national communities.

However, some note that since the start of the full-scale invasion, interaction between national minorities and regional authorities has worsened. Whereas regular meetings and consultations with minority representatives on developing regional programs were previously common in various regions, since 2022 this practice has been

curtailed in some oblasts or has lost relevance due to new challenges stemming from the war and its consequences.

Despite this, national minorities and regional administrations are interested in cooperation and productive work. Therefore, developing regional strategies — so that each oblast works with national minorities based on local circumstances — and clarifying responsibility for cooperation with minorities would improve the implementation of policies on the rights of national minorities across all regions of Ukraine.

Key Constraints on the Implementation of Minority Rights at the Regional Level

Institutional ambiguity of responsibility.

A key problem cited by representatives of national minorities, regardless of their region of residence, is the lack of clarity as to which specific structural unit or official within oblast administrations is responsible for protecting and implementing the rights of national minorities. At present, oblast administrations independently decide whether to create separate departments or directorates for this purpose, or to limit themselves to establishing dedicated positions within existing units.

In the view of minority representatives, this practice fragments responsibility and complicates coordination and cooperation at the regional level.

Representatives of oblast administrations acknowledge the problem and note that available resources are insufficient for more productive work in protecting the rights of national minorities. Officials say they are interested in developing and strengthening the institutional capacity of units responsible for working with national minorities, but currently cannot proceed due to staff shortages and funding constraints. A representative of the Lviv Oblast Military Administration, for example, emphasized that the key obstacle to effective policy implementation in this area is a staffing deficit. Over the past three years, the administration has been unable to fill vacancies due to low salaries and excessive workloads. The situation is further complicated by a significant volume of overlapping responsibilities, as roughly 3,000 religious organizations are registered in the oblast and also require administration.

Decreased capacity for financial and institutional support for national minorities.

Before the full-scale war, regions had programs to support national minorities, including funding for publishing in minority languages, organizing cultural events, and holding consultations and public meetings. After the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion in 2022, a significant portion of such programs was reduced or discontinued. Representatives of oblast military administrations link this primarily to a lack of financial resources and to diminished demand from national communities. Such changes were reported, in particular, by representatives of the Zakarpattia and Lviv OMA.

A representative from Zakarpattia Oblast also noted that difficulty in obtaining funding through the State Treasury Service further complicates the implementation of support programs.

According to him, national-cultural societies often decline state support due to the substantial documentation and bureaucratic procedures involved. A similar trend is evident in other regions. For instance, Lviv Oblast previously had a competitive program to support national minority events, but in recent years it was discontinued due to a lack of applications. In the view of a representative of the Lviv OMA, this is because national minorities do not hold large-scale events and mostly organize their activities independently, without seeking budget financing.

Representatives of national minorities understand the financial and staffing constraints faced by regional authorities during wartime, but they stress that this does not remove the need for basic support from the regional level.

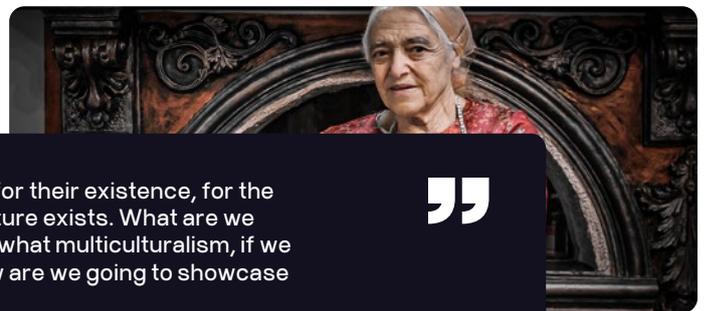
Inability to provide premises.

Another pressing issue is the inability to ensure sustainable access to premises for national minority activities. Not all national communities can maintain dedicated spaces for their needs and therefore require support from regional and local authorities. Without such support, national minorities risk being unable to carry out their activities and to establish centers for national minorities (communities).

This problem is especially acute in regions where communal infrastructure is under heavy strain. Representatives of the Lviv OMA point directly to the lack of suitable premises that meet legal requirements

and could be adapted for centers for national minorities without altering historic buildings.

The absence of systematic solutions at both regional and local levels to provide premises or compensatory support mechanisms creates a risk that the activities of some national communities — especially smaller or financially vulnerable ones — will gradually wind down. This, in turn, narrows opportunities to exercise cultural rights and reduces the potential for intercultural dialogue within communities.



“They need to be supported by the state and celebrated for their existence, for the fact that these people are here, that this multicultural culture exists. What are we going to talk about then? About what unity in diversity, or what multiculturalism, if we have no place to gather and no venue for our events? How are we going to showcase this culture?”

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GERMAN NATIONAL MINORITY (COMMUNITY)

Despite limited financial and staffing resources, oblast administrations are striving to implement policies on the rights of national minorities fully and comprehensively. Representatives of all four oblast military administrations stated in interviews that the rights of national minorities are protected and realized in their regions. According to oblast officials, no manifestations of systemic discrimination on national or cultural grounds have been recorded in any of the oblasts. Isolated incidents, when they occur, are addressed by involving representatives of national minorities, law enforcement agencies, and relevant specialists from regional authorities. Representatives of national minorities living in these regions express similar views, emphasizing that mutual understanding and respect underpin the coexistence of Ukrainians and other nationalities, enabling attention to different groups’ needs and the resolution of contentious situations through dialogue.

To improve the implementation of the new legislation on the rights of national minorities, it is advisable to review the

current organization of structural units responsible for this policy at the regional level. Specialized departments, directorates, and divisions should be adequately staffed. A key task for these units is comprehensive engagement with representatives of national minorities, including through the development or creation of consultative-advisory bodies within oblast military administrations. This would help establish sustained dialogue with representatives of national minority civic associations operating in the oblast and foster cooperation among different national minorities.

Additionally, a critical line of work at the regional level should be strengthening the capacities of public associations of national minorities and engaging them across different spheres of public life. In this context, it is advisable to move away from limiting the participation of national minorities to the cultural sphere alone. Their involvement is also important in the social and economic domains and in developing international cooperation. Representatives of national minorities, for their part, show interest in expanding existing formats of participation and partnerships.



Ensuring the rights of national minorities (communities) at the local level: Berehove, Mostyska, and Hlyboka communities

This part of the report is devoted to reviewing and assessing the implementation of state policy to ensure the rights of national minorities (communities) within local self-government bodies in three communities: Berehove Urban (Zakarpattia Oblast), Hlyboka Settlement (Chernivtsi Oblast), and Mostyska Urban (Lviv Oblast).

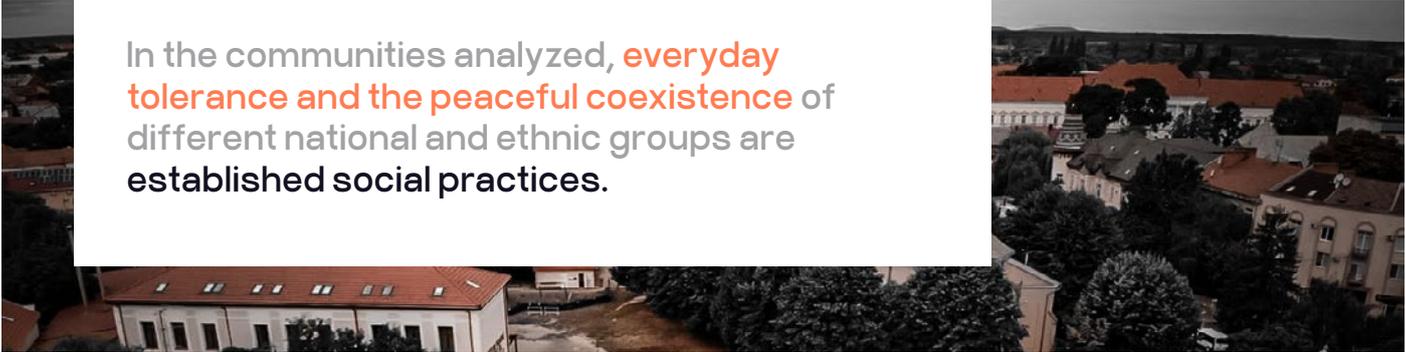
It analyzes the mechanisms for ensuring the rights of national minorities in localities where they traditionally reside or constitute a significant share of the population, with a view to identifying gaps in implementation. Special attention is given to defining key challenges in protecting and realizing the linguistic, educational, cultural, and informational rights of national minorities at the local level, as well as to formulating recommendations to improve policies aimed at ensuring the rights of national minorities at the local level.

The conclusions and recommendations set out in this part are based on an analysis of decisions of the Mostyska and Berehove city councils and the Hlyboka settlement council, along with their executive bodies, concerning the provision of linguistic, educational, cultural, and informational rights for national minorities (communities), in particular the Romanian, Hungarian, Polish, and Romani communities.

The analytical component is supplemented by the results of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including representatives of state authorities, local self-government, and national minorities (communities).

In addition, during the field phase of the research, site visits were carried out to the communities with photographic documentation of signs, street names, information plaques of local self-government bodies and cultural institutions, as well as objects demonstrating the use of minority languages in public spaces (for example, posters, announcements, stands) and in outdoor advertising.

Evaluation of the implementation of state policy at the local level



In the communities analyzed, **everyday tolerance and the peaceful coexistence** of different national and ethnic groups are established social practices.

This is reflected in the policies of local self-government, which aim to see community residents as a single whole, where national affiliation is not grounds for segregation or discrimination. Local self-governments apply this integrative approach when developing and adopting management decisions, not singling out national minorities as a separate category but incorporating their needs into the community's general development policies.

The languages of national communities are actively used in everyday communication, in the service sector, and in interactions between residents and local institutions. At the same time, the communities have not adopted specific decisions on the use of minority languages in accordance with the new Methodology approved by the Cabinet of Ministers.

Education is one of the key areas for realizing the rights of national minorities. In all the communities analyzed, opportunities are provided to study and receive education in the native language while simultaneously adhering to state education standards.

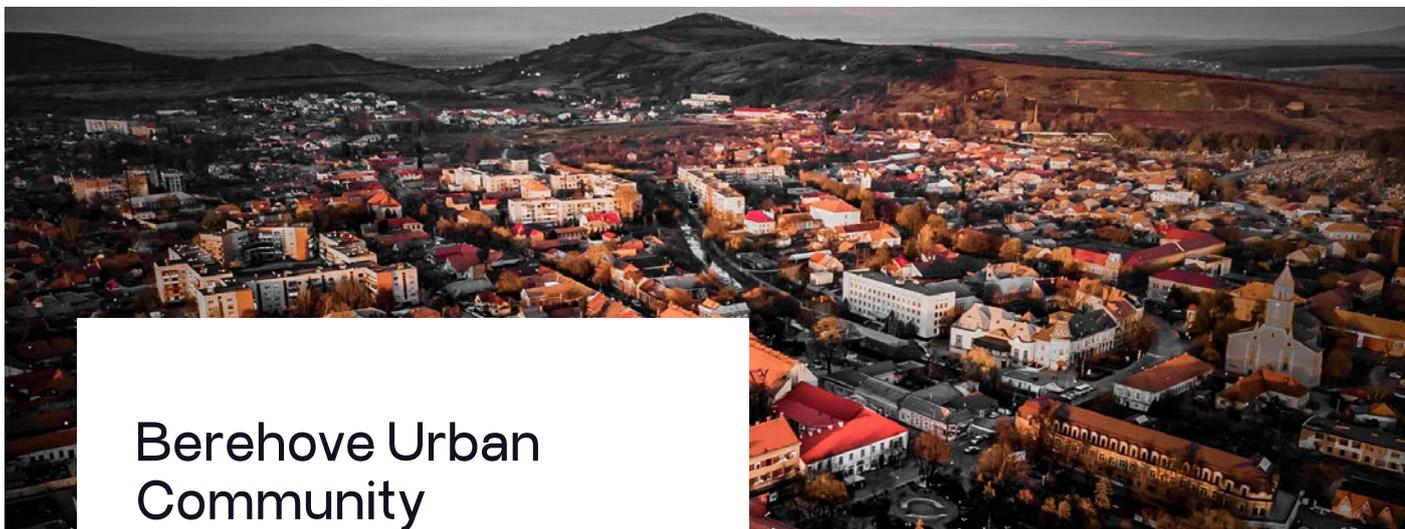
A similar situation exists in the exercise of cultural rights: there is no need to establish separate centers for national minorities

(communities) in these communities, since cultural rights are ensured through the existing network of cultural institutions, libraries, community centers, and museums, as well as through the activities of national-cultural societies and religious communities. Overall, the cultural life of the communities is characterized by "natural bilingualism." This means that local authorities support authentic traditions (festivals, holidays, religious rites), which often become part of the regions' tourism and investment potential. Religious communities and national-cultural societies act as partners of the authorities, often taking on roles in social support and volunteering.

An important factor is the active cooperation between local self-government bodies and national communities of these areas with neighboring countries (Hungary, Poland, Romania). This cooperation takes the form of attracting international grants, supplying equipment to educational institutions, humanitarian support, and implementing joint cultural projects. In this context, civic organizations often prove more flexible than state structures, as they can make decisions more quickly and respond more promptly both to the requests of national minorities and to initiatives from neighboring countries.

Thus, policy in these communities rests on a "living experience" of tolerance.

Local authorities successfully play the role of mediator between state requirements and the needs of national communities, but they require greater support from the center in communication and in adapting legislation to the practical realities of multiethnic regions. The communities show readiness for development, provided the security situation stabilizes and people return home.



Berehove Urban Community

ZAKARPATTIA OBLAST

The Berehove Urban Territorial Community is located in the southwestern part of Zakarpattia Oblast and directly borders Hungary.



According to the All-Ukrainian Population Census of 2001, the majority of the population in the city of Berehove were Hungarians — 48.1%. Moreover, 16 out of 17 populated areas in the community have been designated by a Cabinet of Ministers decision as places where persons belonging to the Hungarian national minority traditionally reside. This list also includes the villages of Vary and Hat, where representatives of the Romani national minority live.

According to representatives of national minorities, cooperation with local authorities is well established and regular, despite the absence of a specialized advisory body within the local council.

Local self-government bodies routinely involve representatives of the Hungarian and Romani minorities in discussing and resolving issues pertinent to their interests.

This engagement is facilitated by a high level of political representation of the Hungarian national minority in local self-government. The Berehove City Council includes two deputy factions representing the interests of the Hungarian national minority. The largest faction is the KMKS — “Hungarian Party of Ukraine,” which has 13 deputies. The second-largest faction is the Democratic Party of Hungarians in Ukraine (DPUU), represented by 8 deputies. Collectively, these political forces form a majority in the city council, creating institutional conditions for systematically addressing the cultural, linguistic, and educational needs of the Hungarian national minority at the community level.

In addition to the Hungarian national minority, a significant share of the community’s population is made up of the Romani national minority. Work with the Romani population requires the involvement of several structures: the Center for Providing Administrative Services (CPAS), the Department of Social Protection, and Legal Aid. Key areas of focus include documenting individuals without passports or children without birth certificates, particularly those born abroad. The community actively cooperates with NGOs, such as the Mukachevo branch of “NIKA” (UNHCR), which assists with legal support and the costs associated with document processing.

Given the large number of Romani residents and the anticipated return of those who left for abroad, a separate specialized department for working with Romani people is being established within the Department of Social Protection.

The authorities also emphasize the need to strengthen cooperation with parents in Romani communities to ensure compulsory education for children up to 18 years of age. Assistance is provided under the “difficult life circumstances” category, which applies to community residents regardless of ethnic origin.

The community’s governance system effectively combines adherence to state standards with a flexible approach to the needs of national minorities.

This is reflected in the bilingual service environment, the ability to choose the language of instruction in educational institutions, and the active support of cultural traditions. A notable factor is the active role of civic organizations and religious communities, which respond promptly to the needs of vulnerable groups and internally displaced persons (hereinafter – IDPs), complementing the work of official social services.

01 / Education



The community’s education system is structured to **ensure the right to study one’s native language at all levels**—from preschool to the upper grades of general secondary education institutions (hereinafter – GSEIs).

Instruction in Hungarian in the community is provided in the following institutions:

- *Badalivska Gymnasium named after Yozsef Gvadányi*
- *Benianska Gymnasium*
- *Berehove Gymnasium “Opre Roma”*
- *Berehove Gymnasium named after Hanna Horvat*
- *Berehove Lyceum named after Lajos Kossuth*
- *Berehove Lyceum named after Mikesh Kelemen*
- *Borzhavaska Gymnasium*
- *Vari Lyceum named after Francis II Rákóczi*
- *Halaborska Gymnasium*
- *Hatian Lyceum named after Kovach Vilmosh*
- *Hechanska Gymnasium named after Kaidi Lajos*
- *Berehove Lyceum named after Gabor Betlen*
- *Chetfalvivska Gymnasium named after Zsigmond Moritz*

In total, instruction in Hungarian takes place in 13 out of the community’s 21 communal GSEIs.

Among community residents there is a trend toward mixed language choices in education. For instance, Ukrainian-speaking families sometimes opt for classes taught in Hungarian to familiarize their children with

local culture, while Hungarian-speaking families are increasingly choosing education in the state language. However, the full-scale invasion has affected this dynamic: more than 250 children from internally displaced families have joined the community’s education system, predominantly opting for education in Ukrainian. According to local authorities and heads of general secondary education institutions, the integration of IDPs into the community’s schools has been successful and conflict-free. IDP children typically study in Ukrainian-language classes, but in preschools parents often wish to introduce their children to Hungarian culture by enrolling them in relevant groups. Despite some residents’ departure abroad, the community has managed to maintain and even open new parallel classes thanks to a sufficient number of children.

Educational institutions are hiring bilingual educators capable of working in classes with different languages of instruction. All specialist teachers are proficient in the state language. At the same time, teachers who teach in Ukrainian also work effectively in Hungarian-language classes, as students possess a sufficient level of proficiency in the state language to grasp the educational material. Despite full staffing in educational institutions serving representatives of the Hungarian national minority, a particularly acute issue remains the reluctance of teachers to work in schools attended by Romani children. Educators often avoid employment in such

institutions due to the difficult socio-economic conditions of the students, the specifics of the local environment, and limited involvement and support from parents. This creates additional challenges for ensuring stable quality in the educational process in these schools.

According to the heads of general secondary education institutions, schools in the community are fully provided with textbooks in Hungarian. However, there are certain limitations in selecting educational materials: while several alternative textbooks for a single subject are available for Ukrainian-language classes,

schools serving national minorities are limited to those editions that have been translated. The full-scale invasion has caused logistical difficulties, as a result of which textbooks do not always arrive at educational institutions before the start of the academic year.

In the sphere of extracurricular education, the primary language of instruction is the state language. Nevertheless, there remains a need to adapt and translate program materials to better address the linguistic and cultural needs of national communities.

02 / Language



No separate decision has been adopted regarding the use of a national minority language within the community. However, there is a **high level of practical proficiency in both Hungarian and Ukrainian among the population in everyday use.**

Private establishments, including pharmacies and stores, provide the option to be served in Hungarian, consciously selecting staff so that at least one employee per shift speaks Hungarian. This allows residents to communicate freely with sellers and pharmacists in both Hungarian and Ukrainian.

Representatives of local self-government also often speak Hungarian, enabling them to accept oral requests and provide consultations in the minority language.

Translation of documents and the provision of services in minority languages.

The community has not adopted specific decisions to allow written requests in minority languages or to publish council acts in translation. There is also no designated translator position within the city council's structure. For addressing operational issues, translations are carried out with the involvement of educators or council employees; however, such translations are purely operational and cannot be used for notarization or other legally significant procedures. Meanwhile, staff who speak Hungarian **receive** allowances from the local budget for their language skills and their use at work.

Official record-keeping and documentation are conducted exclusively in the state language, as they are intended for subsequent processing within state structures. At the same time, in direct communication, Administrative Service Center staff switch to Hungarian as needed to ensure accurate data verification and comprehensive assessment of client needs. For example, when announcing job vacancies, the city council **indicates** that proficiency in Hungarian is an additional requirement for employment at the Administrative Service Center in the city of Berehove. Similarly, the staff of social services is reinforced by bilingual specialists for whom Hungarian is a native language, which significantly facilitates communication.

Toponymy and public signage.

Following the Cabinet of Ministers' approval of the [Methodology](#) for the Use of Languages of National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine, the community has not adopted separate decisions on duplicating information in national minority languages on the signs of local self-government bodies and communal institutions, or in external or internal advertising and toponymy. At the same time, the community retains the previously introduced duplication of names for certain communal institutions and public objects, particularly in signage and toponymic elements, as well as the use of Hungarian symbols.

During field visits to the city of Berehove, photographic documentation recorded the duplication of public signage for communal institutions and street names in Hungarian. The observed practice complies with the requirements of the [Methodology](#) for the Use of Languages of National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine: duplicated names are placed below the official names in the state language, do not have visual dominance, maintain the priority of the Ukrainian language, and use the codified language of the national minority.



► Duplication of information in Hungarian on the signage of municipal institutions in the city of Berehove



► Duplication of street names in Hungarian in the city of Berehove

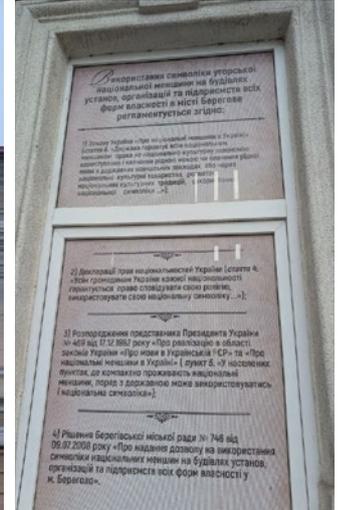
Regarding the use of national minority symbols, the Berehove City Council adopted Resolution №746 on July 9, 2008, "On Granting Permission for the Use of National Minority Symbols on the Buildings of Institutions, Organizations, and Enterprises of All Forms of Ownership in the City of Berehove."

Despite the practice of using symbols of the Hungarian national minority in Berehove, the updated legislation still lacks clear procedural guidance on whether and how symbols of national minorities may be placed alongside the state symbols of Ukraine in populated areas where national communities reside.

In this regard, representatives of national minorities stress the need for regulatory clarity from state authorities on the conditions and rules for such use.

While local self-government bodies have the authority to oversee the placement of outdoor advertising, including on private property, their ability to influence the linguistic design of signage and the use of symbols outside the realm of advertising is limited.

In 2021, the executive committee of the Berehove City Council adopted Resolution №149 “On Approval of the Rules for the Placement of Outdoor Advertising,” which regulates how advertising media are placed but does not set out specific procedures or requirements for the use of minority languages or symbols in the public space overall.



► The Hungarian flag on the building of the Berehove City Council and an information plaque referring to the Law “On National Minorities in Ukraine” (1992, repealed) and Council Resolution №746 “On Granting Permission for the Use of National Minority Symbols on the Buildings of Institutions, Organizations, and Enterprises of All Forms of Ownership in the City of Berehove.”



03 / Culture

Despite the absence of a dedicated center for national minorities (communities) within the community, the cultural rights of national minorities are ensured in part through a **developed cultural infrastructure** that includes central institutions in Berehove and a network of 14 branches of culture houses and libraries in rural localities.

The operations of these institutions are based on the principle of bilingualism: events are conducted in the state language alongside Hungarian.

In villages with predominantly Hungarian-speaking populations, cultural life revolves around traditional holidays, such as the Jam Festival or the Butcher’s Festival, where each settlement’s national identity is expressed through folkloric and choreographic ensembles.

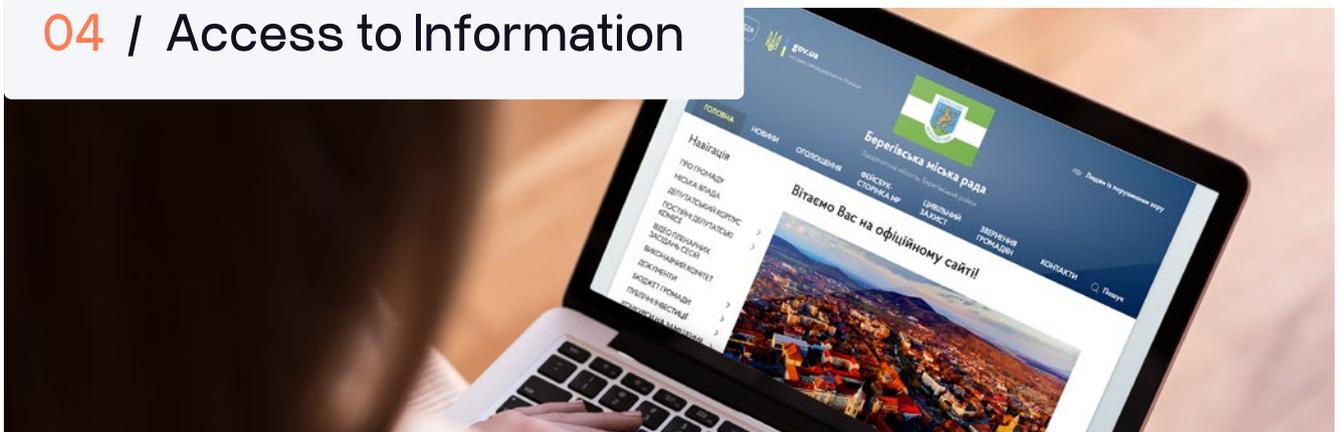
In Berehove, there are Ukrainian-language amateur theaters as well as a regional drama theater that also performs in Hungarian. During local festivals and fairs, performers traditionally blend their repertoire, singing in both languages. The experience of providing programs in both Ukrainian and Hungarian, which was actively practiced before the full-scale invasion to accommodate foreign delegations, has now evolved into “live dubbing” on stage or the use of informational texts in both languages. This ensures comfortable access to information for all attendees and guests from Hungary without the need for separate interpreters.

Local authorities implement cultural support policies without segregating residents by national affiliation. An important area is publishing, particularly the “Sun Clock” book series, which is funded from the local budget and published alternately in Ukrainian and Hungarian.

The community’s cultural diversity underpins active cross-border cooperation and tourism development. Civic organizations play a crucial role in responding quickly to social challenges, taking on tasks that are often difficult for the authorities to handle. National-cultural societies, including the active Slovak organization “NIKA” and Hungarian institutions, work with the municipality on joint projects. One notable example of such cooperation is the unveiling of monuments in partnership with the NGO “Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association.” These collaborative practices existed even before the adoption of the new law on national minorities (communities).

The full-scale war has led many specialists and their families to leave, causing staffing shortages in the cultural sector. For example, the Hungarian folk theater ceased operations due to the departure of its director and amateur actors. Other cultural areas also face a shortage of Hungarian-speaking staff, although Ukrainian folk theaters continue to operate, involving Hungarian actors in their performances.

04 / Access to Information



The community’s official website offers translation into Hungarian and other languages. The official Facebook pages of the city council and the mayor are maintained in both languages, with Ukrainian presented first and Hungarian following.

Additionally, the local radio station “Pulse” operates in the community, with programs designed to involve representatives of different communities.

For holiday religious broadcasts, priests from the Reformed, Greek-Catholic, and Orthodox churches participated, addressing parishioners in both Ukrainian and Hungarian. This model provided engaging and inclusive content for all residents.

During mass events, the community also strives to maintain balance: programs often feature two hosts and duplicated performances.

Challenges in implementing the policy

Despite the generally positive assessment of interaction and cooperation with the Hungarian and Romani national minorities, representatives of the Berehove City Community and of national minorities point to a number of problems that arise in implementing policies to protect the rights of national minorities.

Imperfection and ambiguity of legislative norms.

There is a significant gap between the provisions of laws and their practical application. In particular, the education law defines the state language as the language of instruction in communal educational institutions, yet the mechanisms for realizing the right to education in a minority language are often vaguely formulated. Administrators face problems due to the lack of clarification regarding the term “parallel use” of languages: whether the minority language may be used outside lesson time and between classes, or at parent meetings and within the school community.

An environment of heightened sensitivity and mistrust has formed around the use of minority languages in the Berehove community.

Even isolated instances of using a minority language for communicative or cultural purposes (for example, a single Facebook post announcing a children’s drawing competition) can trigger swift negative reactions and public criticism from some members of the public. As a result, officials are forced to operate under constant public scrutiny, carefully weighing each decision and communication step to avoid accusations of disloyalty or of violating language policy.

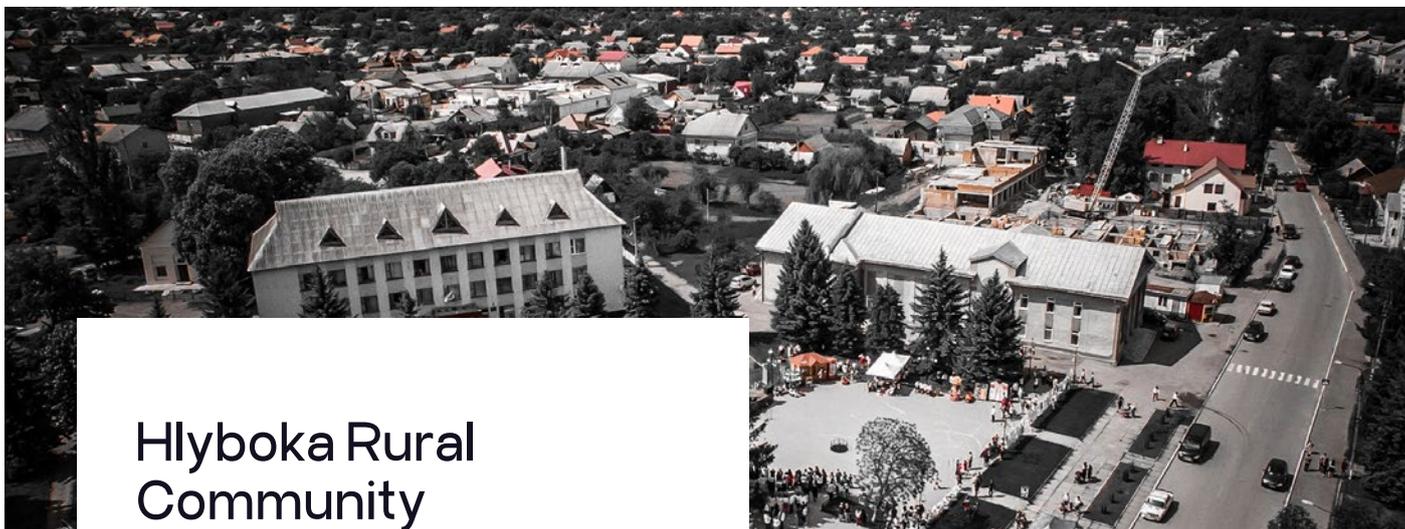
Political manipulation and prejudice.

The national question often becomes a tool for political games, heightening the sense of grievance among minority representatives. Residents feel that distrust toward them “comes in waves,” depending on the political climate.

Although they see themselves as part of the Ukrainian people and suffer from the war just the same, they are forced to continually justify themselves and prove their belonging to Ukraine, confronting prejudices that have intensified over the years of independence.

Staffing crisis and specific challenges in Romani schools.

A particularly acute problem is the reluctance of teachers to work in educational institutions attended by Romani children. Educators often avoid these schools due to the extremely difficult living conditions of the students, the specifics of the environment, and the lack of parental support. Working in such institutions requires teachers to serve not only as educators but also as social workers, helping families overcome difficult life circumstances — a demand for which far from all professionals are prepared.



Hlyboka Rural Community

CHERNIVTSI OBLAST

The Hlyboka Settlement Territorial Community is located in the southern part of Chernivtsi District, Chernivtsi Oblast, and directly borders Romania.



According to representatives of the settlement council, approximately 40% of the community's population belongs to the Romanian national minority. Within the community, there are two villages — Dymka and Oprysheny — where, according to local authorities, around 90% of residents are Romanian. Pursuant to a Cabinet of Ministers decision, 5 of the community's 9 settlements have been included on the list of localities where persons belonging to national minorities (communities) traditionally reside or constitute a significant share of the population, namely the urban-type settlement of Hlyboka and the villages of Dymka, Oprysheny, Slobidka, and Sterche.

According to local government representatives, cooperation between local self-government and representatives of national minorities is well established and regular.

Representatives of the Romanian national minority give a similar assessment. Even in the absence of a specialized advisory body under the Hlyboka Settlement Council, political and social representation of national minorities in the community is ensured through cooperation with civic organizations and cultural societies, as well as through the participation of national minority representatives in local self-government bodies. A member of the Council of National Communities of Ukraine also noted that they have established cooperation with the community's local authority.

At the same time, the process of developing the community's socio-economic development plans and strategies — even in the absence of specific programs for national minorities — involves discussions at the level of the starosta districts. Representatives of national minorities

actively participate in this process and advocate for their rights and interests at all stages, from initial discussions to decision-making at council sessions. The establishment of an academic lyceum in the village of Dymka is one example of such cooperation.

The community also maintains established cooperation with Romania, interacting with a number of its towns and communes. Special emphasis is placed on cooperation with Romanian communes where ethnic Ukrainians live compactly. In addition to humanitarian aid, this cooperation covers cultural and social spheres: joint events, including celebrations of Mihai Eminescu's birthday, as well as organizing recreational trips abroad for children, including those from national minorities.

01 / Education



The community has Romanian-language educational institutions, including the Dymka Educational Complex and the Oprysheny Lyceum. As of today, 2,452 students are enrolled in the community's general secondary education institutions (GSEIs), of whom about 21% are Romanian-speaking children.

Language policy in schools is determined by teaching staff and administrations within the autonomy provided by law.

Representatives of the Romanian national minority generally assess the fulfillment of educational needs in the Hlyboka community positively. According to representatives of national minorities, local self-government, and heads of educational institutions, there have been no recorded cases of discrimination or limitations on access to education for persons belonging to national minorities. On the contrary, there is a trend whereby some Ukrainian families consciously choose Romanian-language schools, viewing multilingualism as an educational and professional advantage for their children, while some Romanian-speaking students attend Ukrainian-language institutions to deepen their proficiency in Ukrainian.

Representatives of Romanian-language schools regard the provision of textbooks in Romanian as adequate (around 90%) and assess their interaction with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine as satisfactory. At the same time, the availability of stands and other visual materials in national minority languages is not fully covered by the tools of the New Ukrainian School initiative. Consequently, such materials are often procured independently by institutions using local budget funds or with support from parents and sponsors.

In preschool institutions, the educational process is conducted in the state language. At the same time, staffing at kindergartens and schools is predominantly bilingual. For example, in the Oprysheny preschool "Kazka," this enables comfortable communication with Romanian-speaking children and their parents without language barriers.

Overall, the community's challenges in the education sphere are systemic in nature and are not exclusively linked to the implementation of state policy on protecting the rights of national minorities. The main challenges remain declining student numbers and a shortage of teaching staff. There is also the problem of an absence of programs training Romanian-speaking teachers (apart from preparing specialists in Romanian language and literature). As a result, teachers obtain pedagogical education in the state language and then learn to teach in Romanian at school by independently adapting materials and practices. Additional difficulties arise for teachers who do not speak Romanian (this applies in particular to teachers who are internally displaced persons), which complicates communication in the school environment of Romanian-language GSEIs.

02 / Language



The community has not adopted a separate decision regarding the use of a national minority language on its territory. At the same time, everyday communication in the community effectively takes place in both languages.

Employees of the settlement council, starostas, and representatives of executive bodies often speak Romanian in addition to the state language, enabling them to accept oral requests and provide consultations to representatives of national minorities without special council decisions.

Some local self-government employees have taken language exams and receive bonuses provided by law for their knowledge and use of a national minority language at work. Starostas who regularly communicate with residents in their respective starosta districts receive similar allowances.

Document translation and provision of services in minority languages.

The community has not adopted separate decisions on accepting written requests in national minority languages or publishing council acts in translation. Nevertheless, representatives of the settlement council can provide translation when necessary, including by engaging an on-site interpreter.

In recent years, there have been no recorded requests for official documents in national minority languages, and there is no systemic language barrier in official record-keeping.

Toponymy and public signage.

Since the community's establishment, the settlement council has not adopted a separate decision on the use of minority languages in toponymy. At the same time, in populated areas with compact settlement of national minorities, bilingual signage and toponyms are retained (at settlement entrances, educational institutions, administrative buildings, etc.), introduced in 2012 by resolutions of the Dymka and Oprysheny village councils.

These resolutions were adopted under the Law "[On the Principles of State Language Policy](#)" of July 3, 2012 (the so-called Kolesnichenko-Kivalov law*), which at the time allowed for granting Romanian the status of a regional language.²

*This law introduced the concept of a regional language as a language traditionally used in a specific territory by citizens belonging to national minorities. The list of regional languages included more than 15 languages, in particular Russian, Romanian, Hungarian, Polish, and others. Measures related to the use of a regional language could be applied provided that its speakers constituted at least 10% of the population of the respective territory, and in certain cases even below this threshold by decision of the local council. In practice, the law created conditions for the widespread use of the Russian language alongside Ukrainian in many spheres, which, despite the declared protection of national minority rights, led to the strengthening of the role of the Russian language in Ukraine. Only on February 28, 2018, did the Constitutional Court declare this law unconstitutional and therefore invalid.

For example, concert programs often feature performances in both languages, while Romanian color — rhythms, dances, and folk amateur ensembles — enjoys particular popularity. In particular, the ensemble “Izvorazh” is a regular participant in the international festival “Bukovynian Meetings,” held in four countries. Traditional celebrations, including the Romanian Mărțișor and community events for Koliada (Christmas caroling), are held regularly and receive appropriate support.

Funding for cultural institutions in the community is provided on general grounds.

Budget funds are directed to salaries for managers and staff of institutions and to supporting cultural events, without dividing ensembles by national affiliation.

Although program classifications do not single out the language of an ensemble’s creative work, the community funds both Ukrainian-language groups and groups with a Romanian repertoire.

In addition to budget resources, grant funding is actively attracted through international programs and with the support of Romanian consular institutions. This enables artistic exchanges for creative groups and artists, educational projects for teachers, and tourism initiatives.

04 / Access to information



According to local authorities, the information rights of representatives of the Romanian national minority in the community are partially fulfilled, in particular through the formerly state-owned newspaper “Novyi Den,” which previously had district status. The publication now operates on a contractual basis with local authorities: at the start of each budget year, the community allocates funds for publishing official materials and announcements. “Novyi Den” publishes materials in both Ukrainian and Romanian. The outlet also has its own website, where materials are available in Romanian translation.

The community’s official [website](#) offers translation options into Romanian, Polish, and other languages. On the community’s official social media pages (including [Facebook](#)), as well as on the [community head’s page](#), the primary language is Ukrainian. Information is not duplicated in national minority languages.

At the regional level, however, a contraction of the Romanian-language information space is being observed. Representatives of the Romanian community note that only a few Romanian-language editorial offices remain in the oblast, while a significant share of local Romanian-language media have ceased operations in recent years. The amount of Romanian-language content in audiovisual media has decreased: programs air irregularly and may be scheduled in time slots inconvenient for rural residents, reducing practical access to information in national minority languages. The availability of recordings on digital services (including video platforms such as YouTube) partially broadens access but does not make up for the shortage of systematic language content and stable channels for disseminating information.

Challenges in implementing the policy

Despite the generally harmonious coexistence of representatives of different nationalities, both local self-government representatives and national minorities in the Hlyboka community draw attention to a number of challenges that complicate the implementation of policy on the rights of national minorities.

Insufficient political representation.

The electoral model used during the 2020 local elections created a problem of uneven representation of settlements on the community council. Because political parties did not always balance electoral lists with regard to the territorial principle, some villages risked being left without deputies to directly represent their interests. In response, the community partially compensated for the representation deficit through the institution of starostas: starostas, including those of Romanian nationality, sit on the executive committee, and decisions concerning their respective settlements are made with their participation.

Lack of specialized higher education for teachers.

A significant problem is that higher education institutions do not train specialists to teach subjects in Romanian. With the exception of philologists, all other specialists at universities study in Ukrainian. As a result, teachers (for example, geography teachers) entering schools for national minorities have to independently improve their knowledge of professional terminology in their native language in order to teach children in Romanian.

Reducing the language component in the curriculum.

Representatives of national minorities indicate that educational plans have recorded a reduction in classroom hours allocated to the study of Romanian language and literature. Whereas previously these subjects together with world literature received 4–5 hours, Romanian language instruction is now only 1.5–2 hours per week. Such reductions raise concerns among community representatives.

Lack of government funding for purchasing Romanian literature for libraries.

Collections are replenished exclusively through charitable contributions and gifts from local writers rather than through centralized procurement.

High costs of specialized publications in Romanian.

Due to translation and logistics complexities, there is a significant price disparity: as the director of a Romanian-language school noted, a textbook costing around 150 UAH in Ukrainian can cost about 500 UAH when translated into Romanian. This makes new educational literature less accessible for the community.

Contraction of the Romanian-language information space.

Representatives of the Romanian community note that only isolated Romanian-language editorial offices remain in the region, while a significant portion of local Romanian-language media have ceased operations in recent years.



Mostyska Urban Community

LVIV OBLAST

The Mostyska Urban Territorial Community is located in the western part of Lviv Oblast and directly borders the Republic of Poland.



The community has a population of approximately 32,400, of whom 91.8% are Ukrainians and 8.2% are Poles. Pursuant to a Cabinet of Ministers decision, 6 of the community's 63 populated areas are listed as localities where persons belonging to national minorities (communities) traditionally reside or where such persons constitute a significant share of the population. The list includes the town of Mostyska and the villages of Krysovychi, Lypnyky, Pnikut, Striletske, and Chyshky.

There is currently no designated position within the city council responsible for national minority issues, nor has a specialized advisory body been established under the council. According to local officials, the long-standing peaceful coexistence and absence of interethnic conflicts **reduces the perceived need for separate posts or bodies.**

Representatives of local self-government note that the community's management model is based on an integrated approach without delineating specific policies for the Polish national minority. Representatives of the Polish community and heads of educational institutions are systematically engaged with local authorities as part of regular management processes: working meetings with heads of institutions are held before council sessions to gather needs, conduct budget planning, and discuss current issues.

The question of targeted budgeting "specifically for the Polish minority" has not arisen: expenditures cover the needs of all residents without dividing them by nationality.

No separate programs aimed exclusively at supporting national minorities have been adopted in the community either. Officials from Mostyska emphasize that the interests of national minorities are integrated into the community's general strategic and program documents, though they are not highlighted in separate provisions or points. For example, measures to support cultural diversity are included within the program for conducting cultural events on the territory of the Mostyska City Council. The expected outcomes of this program include the development of cultural traditions, preservation of historical values, and ensuring access to cultural institutions for all residents, without singling out specific goals or indicators for the Polish national minority.

01 / Education



Support for and development of the educational process in the language of the Polish national minority is ensured through **the operation of a network of educational institutions.**

In particular, these include Lyceum №3 named after Queen Jadwiga in the town of Mostyska, with 238 students, and the gymnasium in the village of Striletske, with 110 students. Access to schools is organized through a system of school buses that transport children from neighboring villages, including Pnikut and Myshliaty, as well as students from other localities interested in studying Polish. At the preschool level, two private kindergartens operate in the community with support from the Polish society.

Instruction in the community is built on a gradual transition from Polish in primary school to predominantly Ukrainian in the upper grades.

Only Polish as a native language and history are taught in Polish, while the sciences and other subjects are taught in the state language under nationwide curricula. Children grow up in a naturally bilingual environment, which ensures fluency in Ukrainian and successful performance on state tests. Visual bilingualism is maintained in the school environment, with signs and notices used in both languages.



“And Polish minority children do not enter conditions where there is only one language – they grow up in a bilingual environment, Ukrainian and Polish. They study Polish – writing, reading. They already know Ukrainian, how to speak it, at a good level. Before the war, when they sat the External Independent Testing (ZNO), they had the right to submit requests saying they did not wish to take tasks in Polish. But we had no such applicants. All our children completed the test tasks in Ukrainian”.

REPRESENTATIVE OF A GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION INSTITUTION WITH INSTRUCTION IN POLISH

Local officials and school leaders note that schools have no staffing problems; teachers regularly upgrade their qualifications both at Ukrainian methodical centers (including in Drohobych and Truskavets) and on courses abroad in Warsaw or Przemyśl.

Schools in the community have an extensive network of partnerships with educational institutions and teaching teams in Poland.

However, according to school heads, the scope and intensity of this interaction has decreased due to the security situation. Even so, foreign partners continue to maintain contact and organize educational and recreational events for children, albeit less intensively than before the full-scale invasion.

The community's challenges in education are similar to those in Hlyboka and are systemic rather than specific to the protection of national minority rights. The demographic consequences of the war significantly affect Polish-language institutions. Local officials report a substantial decrease in student numbers due to families moving to Poland. For example, enrollment at the Striletske Gymnasium has fallen from roughly 150 to 110. Some children are studying under family or individual forms and are simultaneously receiving education abroad, remaining enrolled at the community's schools as external students.

02 / Language



The community has not adopted separate decisions on the use of Polish in localities where the Polish national minority traditionally resides. According to representatives of local authorities and national minorities, communication takes place in both Polish and Ukrainian, and residents do not face language barriers.

Representatives of local self-government, in addition to the state language, often speak Polish, which allows them to accept oral requests and provide consultations to members of the Polish community without significant difficulty.

Document translation and the provision of services in minority languages.

The Mostyska City Council has not adopted separate decisions on accepting written requests in the language of the Polish national minority or publishing council acts in Polish translation. When necessary, local self-government representatives arrange for document translation by engaging interpreters on the ground. According to social protection officials, in recent years there have been no recorded requests for official documents in national minority languages, and there is no systemic language barrier in official record-keeping.

Consultations on accessing public and social services can be provided in Polish if an applicant has difficulty using the state language. Given the community's border location, staff of institutions understand Polish and, where needed, use it in oral communication.

In practice, linguistic conflicts or complaints about the use of Polish during citizen requests do not arise.

Where documents of foreign origin are required to obtain state social benefits (for example, birth certificates issued abroad), translation is carried out in accordance with legal requirements. Such translations are performed by certified translators, since decisions on benefits are made at the national level (including by the Pension Fund of Ukraine).

According to social sector employees, throughout their tenure there have been no complaints of bias or unequal treatment of representatives of the Polish community. All applications are considered on general grounds, and residents communicate in the language most comfortable for them without any restrictions.

Toponymy and public signage.

The council has not adopted separate decisions on the use of national minority languages in the toponymy of localities in the community.

At the same time, in Mostyska some communal educational institutions have their names duplicated in the language of the Polish national minority.

Such duplication is carried out partially in accordance with paragraph 12 of the Methodology for the Use of Languages of National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine: the name in Polish is placed below the name in Ukrainian, but the Polish font is visually larger than the font of the state-language name.



► Sign of Lyceum №3 named after Saint Queen Jadwiga, Mostyska, Mostyska City Council



No separate center for national minorities (communities) has been established in the community, as, according to local authorities, the function of preserving and developing the cultural identity of the Polish minority is carried out by **existing cultural institutions in the community**.

In the Action Plan for 2025–2027 to implement the Development Strategy of the Mostyska Urban Territorial Community to 2027, Mostyska is defined as “a community of active people who preserve the long-standing traditions of Ukrainian and Polish cultures and know how to work for themselves and for the good of Ukraine.” At the same time, the program document contains no specific directions or measures aimed at supporting national minorities.

Nor has the community adopted separate programs aimed exclusively at supporting the Polish community. According to representatives of the Mostyska City Council, the needs and interests of national minorities are integrated into the community’s general strategic and program documents, though not singled out in separate provisions or targeted points. For example, measures to support cultural diversity are included within the program for conducting cultural events on the territory

of the Mostyska City Council. The expected outcomes of this program are the development of cultural traditions, preservation of historical values, and ensuring access to cultural institutions for all residents of the community, without identifying separate tasks or indicators for representatives of the Polish national minority.

Representatives of the Polish national minority generally assess the exercise of their cultural rights in the Mostyska community positively. A key factor in cultural harmony is shared religious traditions across different denominations. Commemorative and festive events, prayer services, and pilgrimages are held with the participation of representatives of the Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, and Orthodox churches. Joint prayers by clergy underscore the unity of the community and the absence of divisions when honoring the memory of the fallen and during celebrations.

04 / Access to Information



The community's [official website](#) offers a translation function that, consistent with public administration standards, adapts content into Romanian and Polish. On the community's official social media pages (including [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#)), as well as on the community head's [page](#), the primary language is Ukrainian. Information is not duplicated in national minority languages.

The community also runs a printed publication — the newspaper “[Nash Krai](#),” which is issued weekly in Ukrainian and covers the activities of local self-government bodies, as well as social, cultural, and community events. The publication does not have separate sections or regular materials in national minority languages but serves as a basic informational channel for residents amid the community's cultural diversity.

Challenges in implementing the policy

The local authorities of the Mostyska community do not see a need to introduce separate measures or mechanisms to regulate interethnic relations, as all residents are regarded as equal citizens. **The absence of real difficulties in communication** or cooperation makes any additional management decisions in this sphere unnecessary.

The community's position is to recognize all residents as part of a unified whole in which national identity is not a basis for distinguishing particular groups.

Like Hlyboka and Berehove, the Mostyska community faces systemic challenges that have intensified since the start of the full-scale invasion. Issues related to residents moving abroad are already affecting student numbers in the community.

The difficult security situation in the country has an impact on the level of partnerships and engagement with foreign donors, who previously supported the community and the Polish national minority more actively. The outflow of young professionals remains a significant concern. And although the community is located in a rear region of Ukraine, all these systemic issues affect its life and the implementation of policies to protect the rights of national minorities..

Conclusions



With the adoption of the Law “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine” in 2023, **a new phase has begun in shaping state policy** to protect and ensure the rights of national minorities.

As of today, national legislation in this area aligns with key international standards for the protection of minority rights, including the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995), and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992).

In addition to the foundational law “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine,” several subordinate legal acts have been adopted, and a Roadmap and Action Plan for the Protection of National Minorities (Communities) have been developed to implement the law and introduce corresponding state policies. Thus, the current legal framework not only meets key international standards in the field of minority rights protection but also maintains a balance between ensuring these rights and safeguarding the proper functioning of Ukrainian as the state language. This approach reflects both international obligations and Ukraine’s national interests.

Overall, the rights of persons belonging to national minorities are also practically ensured and supported at all levels of state policy implementation. This is confirmed by the research findings, particularly the responses of minority representatives, as well as by assessments of the European Commission reflected in the relevant 2025 conclusions. At the same time, the effectiveness of policy implementation in this area remains uneven and depends to a significant extent on the institutional capacity of State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience (DESS).

A key challenge is ensuring institutional balance in the work of DESS and effective coordination of state policy implementation at national, regional, and local levels.

Despite the existence of a developed regulatory framework, practical implementation is hindered by the absence of effective interagency coordination mechanisms. This creates risks of overlapping responsibilities, resource dispersion, and a reduction in overall effectiveness across all levels.

This is particularly linked to the limited institutional capacity of DESS as the key executive body in the sphere of ethnopolitics.

The Service lacks sufficient staffing and financial resources to fully perform its assigned functions, which limits its ability to plan strategically and to monitor and evaluate the implementation of policy on minority rights.

In this context, there is a need to establish a unified coordination mechanism or clearly regulate an interagency platform that would ensure coherent policy implementation and systematic monitoring and evaluation of results.

An important component of this approach is further developing and strengthening the Council of National Communities of Ukraine as a tool for representative participation.

Despite the adoption of new legislation that generally meets current international standards and norms, the practical realization of minority rights and relevant state policies at national, regional, and local levels requires further implementation and refinement. There is demand for this from both representatives of various national minorities in Ukraine and from local self-governments. At the same time, some maintain that meaningful changes can only be implemented after the war with Russia concludes, since the state's priority must be countering external aggression and addressing its consequences.

Despite limited resources and priority security challenges, improving policy in the sphere of ensuring the rights of national minorities (communities) remains an urgent task for European integration. **It is therefore essential to continue refining implementation mechanisms even amid full-scale war and resource constraints.**

Recommendations



Enhance the institutional capacity of the DESS.



The Service requires institutional strengthening and greater organizational capability, particularly given the limited number of specialists engaged in protecting minority rights. It is necessary to reinforce the Service with additional staff and clearly focus its activities on work with national minorities (communities). Strengthening this area is especially important given that protection of the rights of national minorities is one of Ukraine's European integration tracks. At the same time, bolstering DESS institutionally and establishing systematic interaction with national communities in Ukraine will improve external communication with other states.

At the regional level, it is also advisable for DESS to develop its own network of representations in oblasts with compact settlement of national minorities. This will provide national communities with direct, systematic contact with state authorities and enable DESS to function as a decentralized institution oriented toward addressing specific challenges and needs in each region.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT

Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, DESS.

Raise general awareness of new legislation on minority rights.



Understanding new norms is essential at all levels of state policy implementation. Specialists in regional administrations and local self-government bodies, immersed in local contexts and challenges, may not always track legislative changes. DESS should ensure timely and comprehensive communication of new norms and requirements. In turn, regional administration specialists should disseminate this information to local self-government officials and representatives of national minorities. Shared understanding of new norms and requirements across all levels involved in the implementation will lead to better, more effective execution and help national minorities better understand their rights.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT

DESS, oblast military administrations, local self-government bodies.

Create a network of specialized departments within oblast military administrations.



Create a network of specialized departments within oblast military administrations. State policy should be directly present in areas where national communities live compactly. Instead of merely assigning these issues formally to culture or sports specialists, full-fledged structural units (departments) should be created within oblast state (military) administrations in oblasts with compact settlement of national minorities (communities). Such departments should have a clearly defined staffing structure and the mandate to address not only humanitarian issues but also economic ties with countries of origin and cross-border cooperation.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT

Cabinet of Ministers, oblast military administrations.

Establish advisory bodies with representatives of national minorities (communities) in oblast administrations.



Oblast military administrations should be interested in creating separate bodies that enable representatives of national minority associations to communicate their rights and needs. For oblast military administrations, this provides a centralized mechanism for collecting requests from national minorities (communities) and developing cooperation with them. For national minorities (communities), it is an opportunity to defend their interests officially and gain experience in political participation. Developing effective cooperation between oblast military administrations and national communities in Ukraine can also help attract international assistance, including from the countries of origin of these communities.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT

Oblast military administrations.

Promote inclusion of national minorities (communities) in the political process.



Political parties should more actively involve representatives of national minorities (communities) in political participation. National communities seek greater political representation and can become active members of various political parties. For political forces, this can translate into additional support at local and oblast levels.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT

Political parties of Ukraine.

Structure existing public associations of national minorities (communities).



Introduce a clear model for differentiating national minority organizations based on the number of branches and/or membership size. According to such criteria, associations could have “national,” “oblast,” “district,” or “local” status and designation. This will help avoid conflicts in the classification and naming of national community associations and increase the transparency and orderliness of their representation. These criteria could also serve as one basis for forming the composition of the next convocation of the Council of National Communities of Ukraine.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT

DESS.

Strengthen the Council of National Communities of Ukraine’s dialogue with state and regional authorities.



It is necessary to establish regular dialogue between the Council and key state authorities at central and regional levels. At present, the Council’s interaction with the Office of the President, the Cabinet of Ministers, the Verkhovna Rada, dedicated parliamentary committees, ministries, and other central executive bodies is irregular.

Participation by national minority organizations in foreign policy and Eurointegration advocacy — including engagement with countries of origin and at international events — should also be increased.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT

DESS.

Refine criteria for selecting representatives of the Council of National Communities of Ukraine.



It is necessary to develop changes that would allow several representatives of the same national minority to be Council members if they represent different public associations. Participation should also be permitted for associations representing organizations from different national minorities – for example, congresses and federations of national minorities and communities.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT
DESS.

Introduce regulation for issues of national symbols.



Legislative clarity is required regarding the use of symbols of national minorities (communities) in Ukraine. It will allow to eliminate opportunities for manipulation and speculation by clearly distinguishing state symbols, symbols of countries of origin, and specific national symbols of minorities in Ukraine, thereby ensuring citizens' rights to express their identity within the legal framework.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT
Verkhovna Rada, DESS.

Introduce changes in education that will take into account the needs of national minorities (communities).



The study of native languages of national minorities (communities) should be clearly regulated at the national level, rather than left to the discretion of local authorities and schools. Clear standards (for example, 3–4 hours of instruction in the native language or study of the language as a subject) should be established and communicated to school principals in areas of compact settlement of national minorities (communities). There should also be regulations on the use of minority languages in extracurricular activities, at teachers' and/or parents' meetings, on signage, and in lesson schedules. In addition, it is important to develop programs to train personnel for instruction in the languages of national communities and to include culture and music in nationwide curricula.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT
Ministry of Education and Science, Verkhovna Rada, DESS.

Reassess decisions on toponymy and public signage in minority languages.



Local self-governments should review decisions concerning toponymy and public signage to bring them in line with current legislation, including the Methodology for the Use of Languages of National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine. This entails adopting new decisions that were not made after the establishment of territorial communities and revising existing norms on bilingual signage in accordance with current requirements, as well as updating or reviewing decisions adopted under legislation that has since lapsed.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT

Local self-government bodies.

Institutionally strengthen and promote legal literacy among leaders of public associations.



International and state assistance should be directed toward building the institutional capacity of national minority organizations. This includes training leaders in the legal aspects of working with public authorities and in effectively formulating positions in the form of documents, requests, and draft decisions. An important initiative could be the creation of a nationwide hub or expert council (a “supporting body”) where lawyers and scholars help minorities (communities) use Ukrainian and European law to protect their interests.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT

Cabinet of Ministers.

Institutionally support publishing activities and media representation of national minorities (communities).



There is a need to introduce state support programs for printed outlets (newspapers) and book publishing in national minority languages, and to expand support for creating content in national minority languages on Public Broadcaster platforms, ensuring a diversity of programs and formats that reflect their culture, history, and contemporary life.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT

DESS, human rights organizations.

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