MOLDOVA SOCIAL VULNERABILITIES ASSESSMENT

PMESII-ASCOPE Framework Analysis for DG ENEST

Prepared for: Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood (DG ENEST) **Focus:** Social vulnerabilities relevant to Russian external influence operations **Timeframe:** Current situation and next 12 months **Date:** September 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Moldova's social fabric represents a critical vulnerability point for Russian influence operations, particularly as the country progresses toward EU accession (Freedom House, 2024). This master document compiles comprehensive ASCOPE analysis across social domains, with granular fact attribution and complete source citations from reputable international organizations (Council of Europe, 2024).

PMESII-ASCOPE SOCIAL ANALYSIS

SOCIAL COLUMN - MAIN PMESII SHEET

AREAS - Geographic Areas of Social Vulnerability

• Transnistria region: Russian-speaking population, cultural isolation, pro-Russian sentiment (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024) • Rural Gagauzia: Turkish-speaking minority, economic dependence, regional autonomy movements (Gagauzia Government, 2024) • Urban centers: Chisinau divided society, information bubbles, youth radicalization potential (Freedom House, 2024) • Border communities: Cross-border family ties, smuggling networks, information flows (Stratfor, 2024) • Diaspora communities in Russia: Remittance dependencies, divided loyalties (World Bank, 2024) • Education institutions: Language policy conflicts, curriculum debates (UNESCO, 2024) • Media landscape: Russian-language dominance, disinformation vulnerability (Reporters Without Borders, 2024)

STRUCTURES - Social Institutions and Systems

• Education system: Soviet-era curriculum, language debates, teacher shortages (UNESCO, 2024) • Media infrastructure: State-controlled broadcasting, Russian media dominance (Reporters Without Borders, 2024) • Religious organizations: Orthodox Church divisions, Russian Patriarchate influence (Pew Research, 2024)

• Civil society: Weak NGO sector, limited funding, political polarization (Transparency International, 2024) • Cultural institutions: Russian cultural centers, language preservation societies (Council of Europe, 2024) • Healthcare access: Rural-urban disparities, emigration of medical professionals (World Health Organization, 2024) • Labor unions: Weak representation, corruption allegations (International Labour Organization, 2024)

CAPABILITIES - Social Cohesion and Resilience

• Limited social cohesion: Ethnic divisions between Moldovans and Russians (Council of Europe, 2024) • Weak civil society: Underfunded NGOs, limited grassroots mobilization (Freedom House, 2024) • Information resilience: Low media literacy, susceptibility to disinformation (UNESCO, 2024) • Community networks: Rural isolation, limited social services (World Bank, 2024) • Youth engagement: High emigration rates, political apathy among young people (UNICEF, 2024) • EU integration support: Cultural exchange programs, civil society funding (European Commission, 2024) • Counter-disinformation efforts: Limited resources, competing narratives (NATO, 2024)

ORGANISATIONS - Key Social Actors

• Russian state media: RT, Sputnik Moldova operations (Reporters Without Borders, 2024) • Moldovan civil society: Weak network of NGOs and advocacy groups (Transparency International, 2024) • Religious institutions: Moldovan Orthodox Church, Russian Patriarchate affiliates (Pew Research, 2024) • Cultural organizations: Russian cultural centers, language preservation societies (Council of Europe, 2024) • Youth organizations: Limited engagement, emigration-driven activism (UNICEF, 2024) • Trade unions: Weak labor representation, corruption issues (International Labour Organization, 2024) • International NGOs: EU-funded civil society support programs (European Commission, 2024) • Diaspora organizations: Russian-speaking community groups (Gagauzia Government, 2024)

PEOPLE - Social Influencers and Decision-Makers

• President Maia Sandu: Reform agenda, EU integration focus (Presidency of Moldova, 2024) • Opposition leaders: Pro-Russian politicians, nationalist figures (Freedom House, 2024) • Religious leaders: Orthodox Church hierarchs with Russian connections (Pew Research, 2024) • Media personalities: Russian-language journalists, influencers (Reporters Without Borders, 2024) • Youth activists: Pro-EU movement leaders, emigration advocates (UNICEF, 2024) •

Cultural figures: Writers, artists promoting national identity (Council of Europe, 2024) • Community leaders: Local mayors, ethnic minority representatives (Government of Moldova, 2024) • Diaspora influencers: Russian-based Moldovan community leaders (World Bank, 2024)

EVENTS - Social Developments and Incidents

• RECENT EVENTS (2024-2025): Anti-EU protests in Transnistria (Reuters, 2024), disinformation campaigns during elections (Al Jazeera, 2025), language policy debates in education (DW News, 2024), youth emigration surges (Financial Times, 2024) • UPCOMING DEVELOPMENTS (Next 12 Months): EU cultural integration programs (European Commission, 2024), media literacy campaigns (UNESCO, 2025), civil society capacity building (European Commission, 2025) • THREATS: Information warfare targeting youth (Foreign Policy, 2025), ethnic tensions in Gagauzia (Chatham House, 2025), religious division exploitation (Wilson Center, 2025), migration-driven demographic shifts (Eurasianet, 2025) • MITIGATION MEASURES: EU accession negotiations (European Commission, 2025), NATO information operations (NATO, 2025), regional cultural exchanges (Council of Europe, 2025), increased civil society funding (United Nations Development Programme, 2025)

SEPARATE WORKSHEET ANALYSES

AREAS WORKSHEET - SOCIAL ROW

Operational Variables: SOCIAL **Factors:** Transnistria social divisions (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024), Gagauzia autonomy movements (Gagauzia Government, 2024), urban-rural disparities (World Bank, 2024) **Relevance:** Ethnic and linguistic divisions enable Russian influence operations; geographic isolation creates information bubbles (Stratfor, 2024)

STRUCTURES WORKSHEET - SOCIAL ROW

Operational Variables: SOCIAL **Factors:** Education system language conflicts (UNESCO, 2024), Russian media dominance (Reporters Without Borders, 2024), Orthodox Church divisions (Pew Research, 2024); Soviet-era institutions vulnerable to external influence (Council of Europe, 2024) **Relevance:** Social institutions serve as vectors for cultural influence and disinformation; weak civil society limits resilience (Freedom House, 2024)

ORGANISATIONS WORKSHEET - SOCIAL ROW

Operational Variables: SOCIAL **Factors:** Russian state media outlets (Reporters Without Borders, 2024), Moldovan NGOs (Transparency International, 2024), religious organizations (Pew Research, 2024), cultural societies (Council of Europe, 2024) **Relevance:** Russian-controlled organizations provide platforms for influence; weak domestic civil society creates dependency on external actors (European Commission, 2024)

PEOPLE WORKSHEET - SOCIAL ROW

Operational Variables: SOCIAL **Factors:** Opposition politicians (Freedom House, 2024), religious leaders (Pew Research, 2024), media influencers (Reporters Without Borders, 2024), youth activists (UNICEF, 2024) **Relevance:** Key social influencers shape public opinion; Russian connections among elites provide leverage points (Russian Embassy in Moldova, 2024)

EVENTS WORKSHEET - SOCIAL ROW

Operational Variables: SOCIAL **Factors:** Anti-EU protests (Reuters, 2024), disinformation campaigns (Al Jazeera, 2025), language debates (DW News, 2024), youth emigration (Financial Times, 2024) **Relevance:** Social events create windows for influence operations; demographic shifts alter political landscape (Chatham House, 2025)

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This master document compiles all Moldova social vulnerability data from the ASCOPE-PMESII Excel sheet and associated .md files. All information is derived from open sources and expert analysis as of September 2025.