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22 January 2004

UKR42334.E

Ukraine: Treatment of ethnic Romanians; state protection
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Demographics

The size of Ukraine's ethnic Romanian population is the subject to a dispute concerning whether it includes, as desired by some officials from Romania, persons identified as ethnic Moldovan (*Ziua* 16 Nov. 2001; *ibid.* 9 July 2001; *Rompres* 25 Nov. 1999). Romanian foreign minister Mircea Geoana, called the distinction between ethnic Romanian and ethnic Moldovans in Ukraine artificial and a distinction produced for political reasons in the Soviet-era (RFE/RL 6 Dec. 2001; *ibid.* 25 Sept. 2002).

Official Ukrainian figures report 151,000 ethnic Romanians in 2001 (an increase from 134,800 in 1989) and 258,600 ethnic Moldovans (324,500 in 1989) (CES 9 Jan. 2003). Accordingly, ethnic Romanians were the seventh-, and Moldovans the third-largest minorities in Ukraine (*ibid.*). Yet, Romanian and ethnic-Romanian Ukrainian sources claim the minority is between 200,000 and 460,000 persons in size (*Ziua* 14 Nov. 2003; *Rompres* 24 Nov. 1999; RFE/RL 25 Sept. 2002; CDARU 5 Apr. 2001). In addition, *Rompres*, the Romanian government news agency, claimed that Romanian is the mother tongue of 80 per cent of the ethnic Romanians in the Ukrainian district of Chernivtsi and 70 per cent of the Moldovans (*Rompres* 17 June 2003).

Most ethnic Romanians live in Bucovina and Herta-now known as Cernauti in Romanian (*Rompres* 17 June 2003) and Chernivtsi (Chernowitz) in Ukrainian (RFE/RL 25 Sept. 2002). A smaller population is concentrated in Southern Bessarabia (*Ziua* 16 Nov. 2001), which is now part of Ukraine's Odessa region (*Transitions Online* 12 May 2003). Chernivtsi was part of Romania between 1918 and 1940 (*ibid.*; *Divers* 11 Nov. 2002) and ethnic Romanians are a dominant population in several districts, including Gertzayevski (94 per cent of the local population), Glybokski (42.7 per cent), and Storozhinetzki (36.7 per cent) (CEMES 21 Jan. 2001, Sec. 4). Based on the 1989 census, approximately 100,000 people, or 75 per cent of the minority group live in Chernivtsi, while in Odessa, there are approximately 26,000 persons, or 22 per cent of the ethnic Romanian community (*ibid.*). Yet, in the 2001 census, only 700 of 2.4 million people in the Odessa region identified themselves as Romanian while another 140,000 opted for Moldovan ethnicity (*Ziua* 16 Nov. 2001).

Treatment

Research Directorate was unable to find reports of physical abuse, harassment or other forms of maltreatment perpetrated against the Romanian minority population by Ukrainian officials or society among the sources consulted.

The social situation of the Romanian community in Ukraine has been the subject of repeated meetings between Romanian and Ukrainian state officials over the past number of years (ibid.; Rompres 17 June 2003; ibid.; 7 Nov. 2001; ibid. 25 Nov. 1999). Agreements include the 3 May 1997 treaty on good-neighbourliness, which, under Article 13, stipulated that Ukraine would observe the rights of the Romanian minority community (Romania-Actualitati Radio 3 May 1997). On 6 June 2003, Ukraine ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and proclaimed Romanian to be one of 13 regional or minority languages recognized in Ukraine (ITAR-TASS 6 June 2003). The law provides ethnic representatives the right to communicate with authorities in their mother tongue and pledges the Ukrainian state to provide education and media broadcasts in regional languages (ibid.).

In 2001, a project report published by the Centre for European Migration and Ethnic Studies (CEMES), the main problems faced by the Romanian community are in terms of social development and their low representative proportion in higher education and in professional work (21 Jan. 2001, Sec. 4). Numerous reports from Romanian-based sources raise concerns for the situation of the Romanian minority in Ukraine and specifically criticize the availability of educational opportunities in the Romanian language (Rompres 18 Sept. 2003; ibid. 25 Nov. 1999; ibid. 24 Nov. 1999; CDARU 5 Apr. 2001). Despite these complaints, Ukrainian and international sources report between 90 and 110 Romanian-language schools in operation serving over 25,000 students as well as university programs available to prepare teachers to serve those schools (CEMES 21 Jan. 2001, Sec. 4; UN 18 Oct. 2000, 9-10; Divers 24 Nov. 2003). RFE/RL stated that there is a Romanian-language school in every region populated by the minority and that there were more than 20 Romanian-language print and broadcast media sources in 2002 (25 Sept. 2002).

Political Situation

CEMES reported a "diversified network of cultural institutions helping to preserve and develop the Romanian minority's culture and traditions" and that ethnic Romanians are represented on the local councils of a number of Ukrainian districts (21 Jan. 2001, Sec. 4). *Political Parties of Eastern Europe* lists two Chernivtsi-based ethnic Romanian socio-political organizations, including Eminescu Society (Spilka Eminescu, SE) and the Christian-Democratic Alliance of Romanians in Ukraine (Hristiansko-Demokratychny Allians Ruminiv na Ukraini, HDARU in Ukrainian) (2002, 958-959). The SE and the HDARU call for greater cultural and linguistic autonomy for the Romanian community-in the case of HDARU, the Romanian and Moldovan communities-and both groups have militant wings that seek to reunify the Chernivtsi region with Romania (ibid.). According to CEMES, the Romanian minority community's activism in securing rights and liberties provides it with more success than other, more numerous ethnic groups, "in satisfying its national and cultural requirements and in preserving its unique characteristics" (21 Jan. 2003, Sec. 4).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below

the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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