The Linguistic Landscape of a Modern Post-Soviet Capital: Case of Chișinău, Republic of Moldova

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Introduction. Linguistic Landscape Theories

▶ **The linguistic landscape of the Moldovan capital is not studied enough.**

▶ **The goals:**

❖ analyze the LL of Chisinau and understand the situation of minority languages in this city;

❖ identify which languages are the most visible in each district of the capital of Moldova;

❖ compare the obtained data with the statistical information on mother tongue/ used language;

❖ explain whether the presence or absence of minority languages in the LL can be related to the country's language policy or a natural language shift.

- Applied linguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and cultural geography ➡ Linguistic Landscape Studies

- "The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration". (Landry and Bourhis 1997)

- The linguistic landscape is formed under the influence of public processes, thereby reflecting the language demographics, use attitude, policies and being the indicator of language preferences of the population. (Ismagilova, Pupyreva, Palutina, Gonzalez 2020)

- Written public signs can be said to both reflect and regulate the cultural, sociolinguistic, and political structure of the space they are situated in. (Blommaert, 2013)

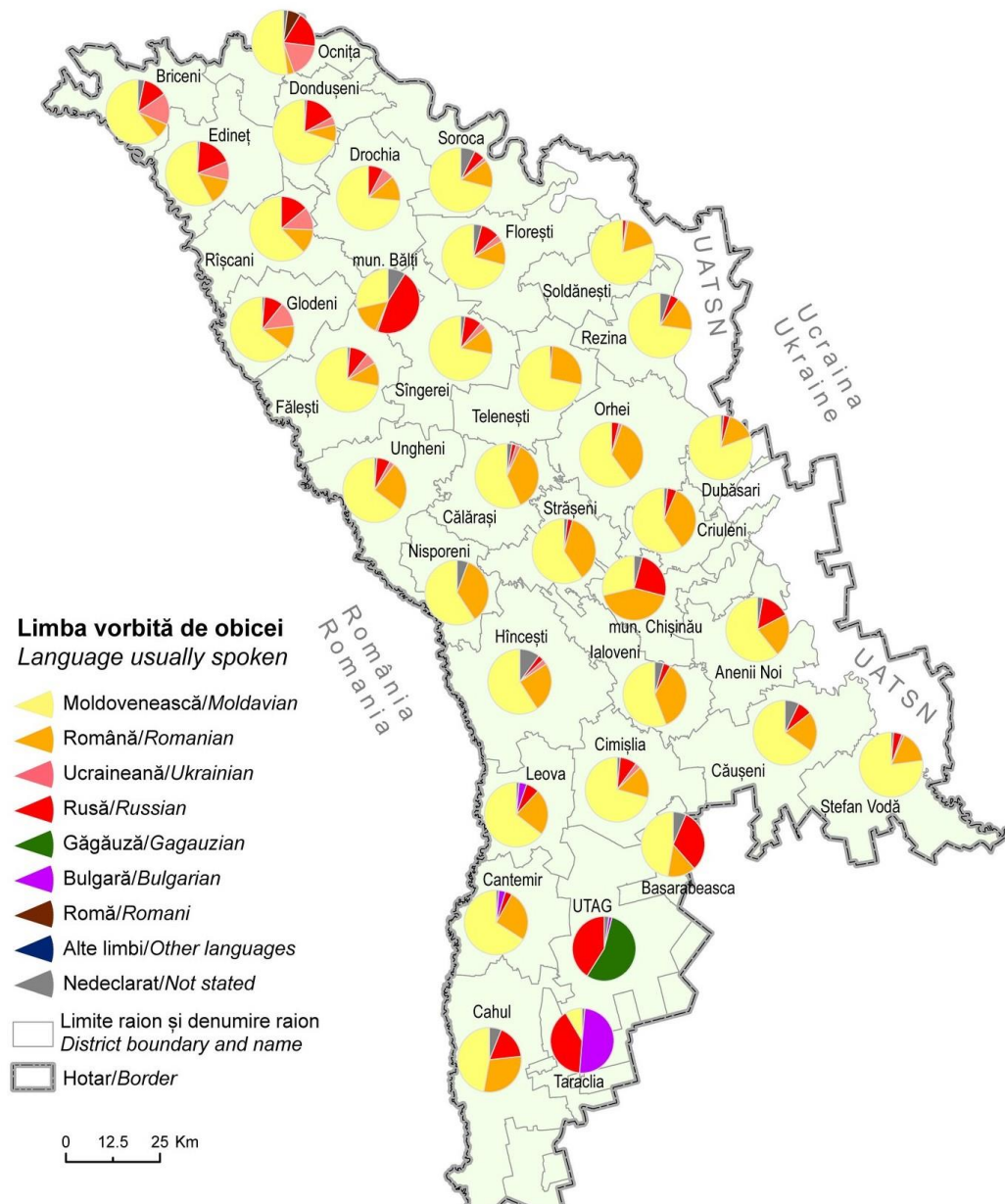# Moldova After 1991: Demographics and Language Policy

- **27.08.1989- Great National Assembly**

- **31.08.1989-New Language Law**

- **01.09.1989- Law "On the Functioning of Languages on the Territory of the Moldova"**

- **29. 04.1994- New Constitution**

- **2012- European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**

- **2018 - New Law on Public Advertisements: From Political and Audiovisual to Commercial and Street Advertising**

Limba maternă pe raioane
Mother tongue by district
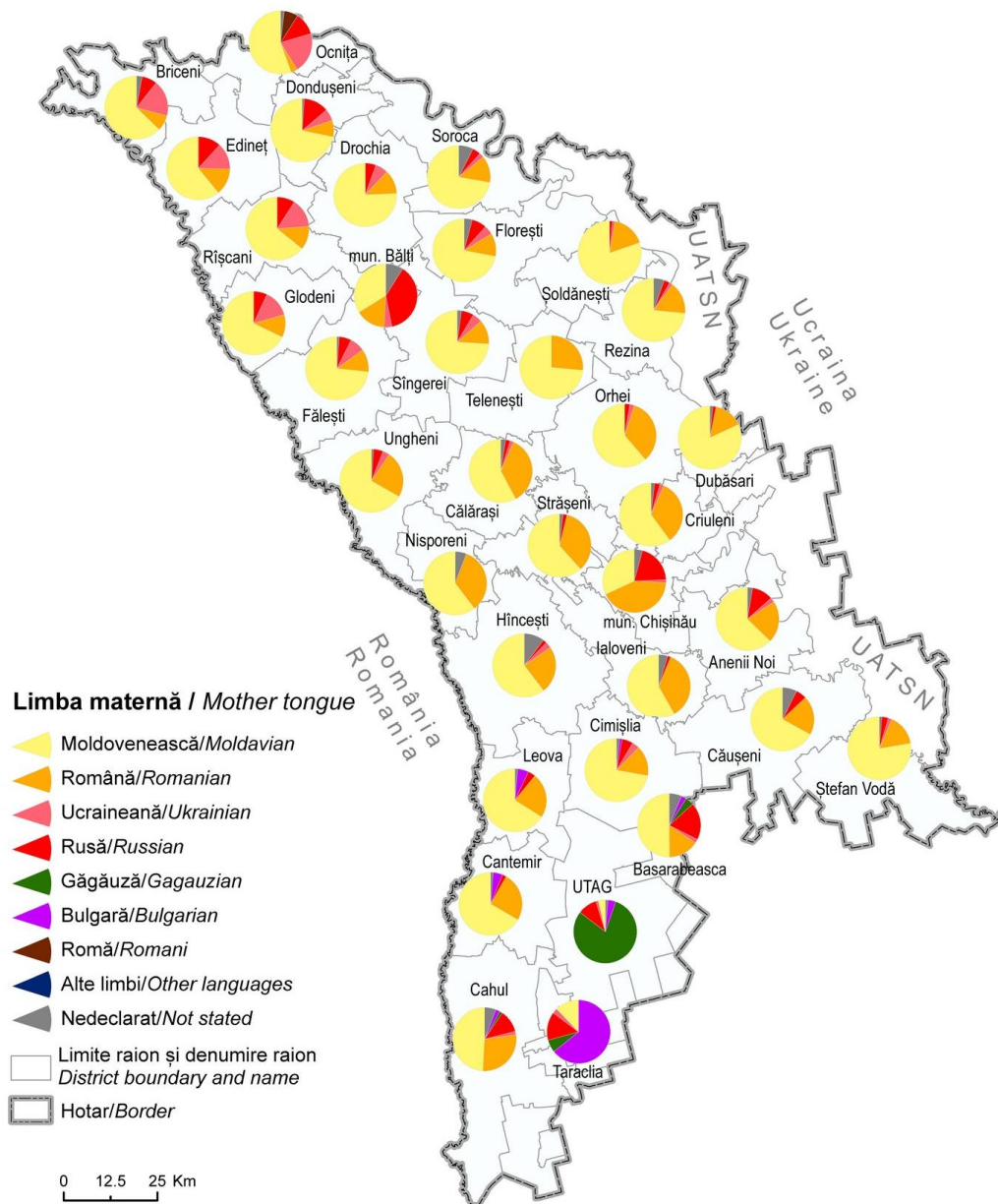
Mother Tongue by District

➢ Moldovan – 56.7%

➢ Romanian – 23.5%

➢ Russian - 9.7%

➢ Ukrainian – 3.9 %

➢ Gagauz – 4.2 %

➢ Bulgarian – 1.5 %
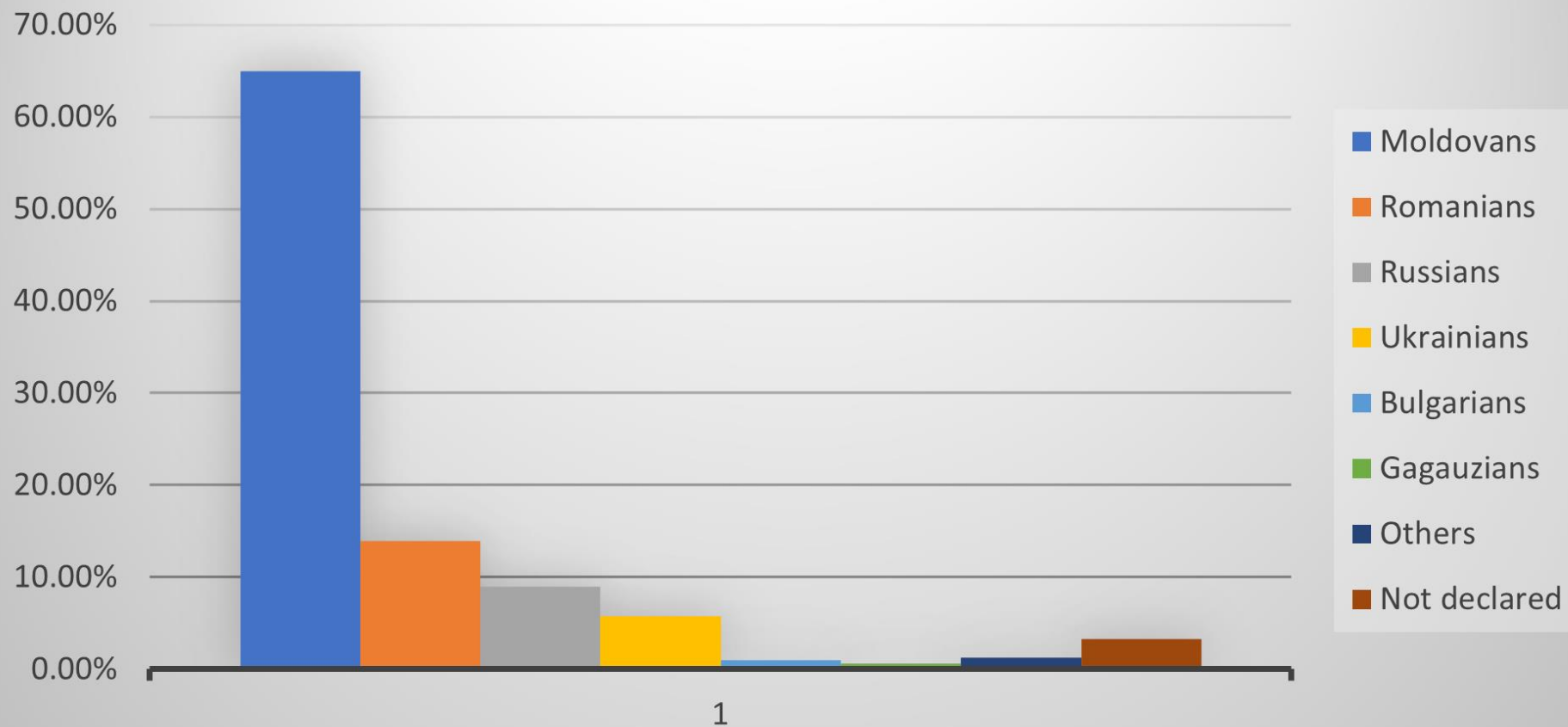
➢ Other/Not declared – 0.2 %

Language Usually Spoken

Limba vorbită de obicei pe raioane
Language usually spoken by district

RECENSĂMÂNTUL
POPULAȚIEI ȘI AL LOCUINȚELOR
2014

Limba vorbită de obicei
Language usually spoken

- Moldovenească/*Moldavian*
- Română/*Romanian*
- Ucraineană/*Ukrainian*
- Rusă/*Russian*
- Găgăuză/*Gagauzian*
- Bulgară/*Bulgarian*
- Romă/*Romani*
- Alte limbi/*Other languages*
- Nedeclarat/*Not stated*
- Limite raion și denumire raion / *District boundary and name*
- Hotar/*Border*

0   12.5   25 Km

➤ Moldovan 54.7%

➤ Romanian 24.0%

➤ 50% of ethnic Ukrainians, 33% of Gagauz, 33% of Bulgarians, and 5.7% of Moldovans declared Russian as their daily use language

Chișinău: Districts and Population

Ethnic Groups of Chișinău

Distribution of mother tongues in Chișinău by districts:

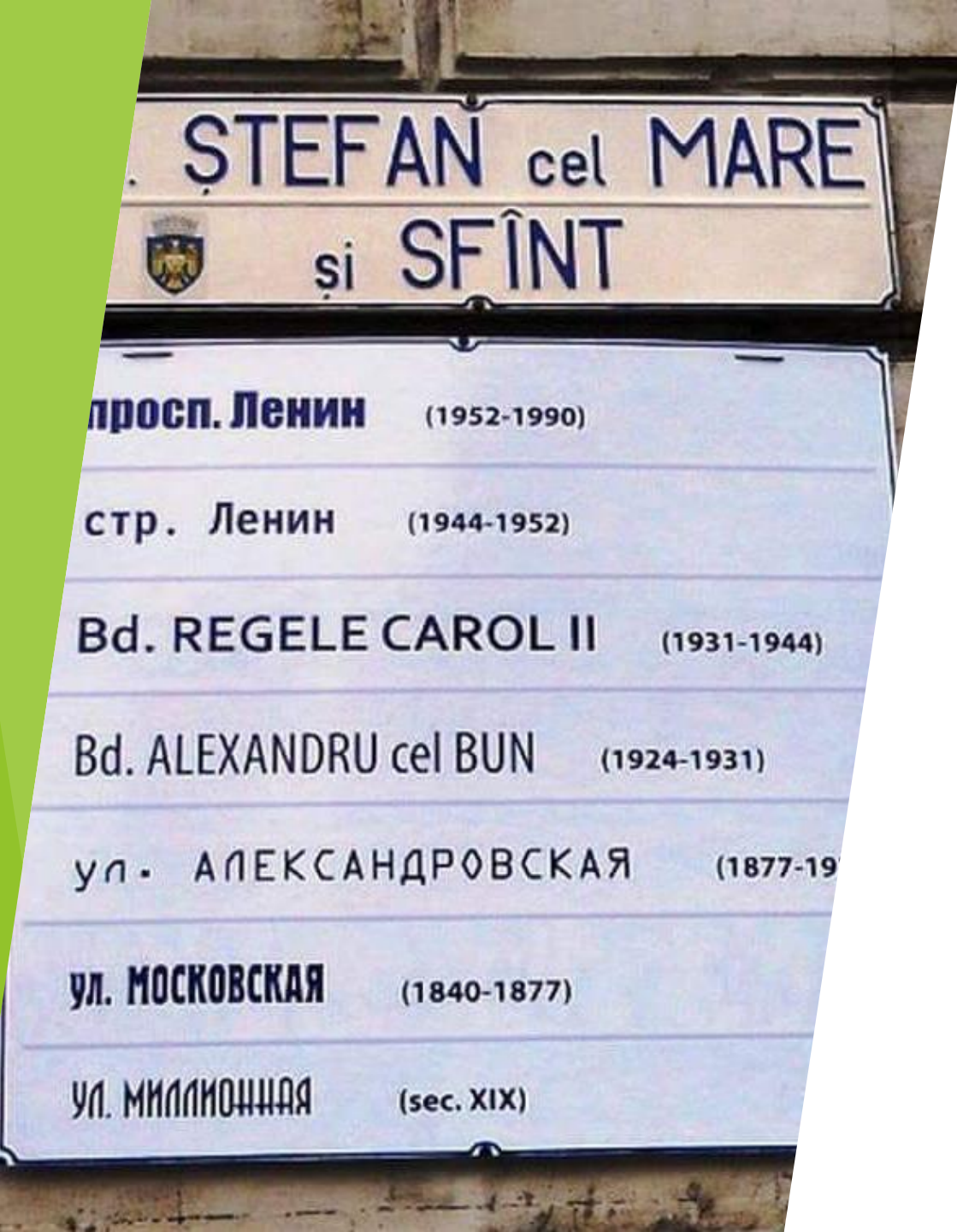| DISTRICT/MOTHER TONGUE	Total	Moldovan	Romanian	Ukrainian	Russian	Gagauz	Bulgarian	Romani	Other	Non-decalred
Chișinău	469 402	148 447	195 555	7 554	93 435	1 437	1 851	153	1 835	19 315
Botanica District, Chișinău	75 308	19 920	25 197	1 523	21 193	235	369	6	358	6 507
Buiucani District, Chișinău	64 402	17 715	28 874	1 069	14 692	230	257	7	242	1 406
Centru District, Chișinău	53 197	13 433	24 595	864	12 086	246	281	19	376	1 297
Ciocana District, Chișinău	69 351	21 416	30 051	1 312	13 856	201	308	*	202	2 003
Rîșcani District, Chișinău	76 821	18 576	31 349	1 523	21 114	303	399	8	308	3 211

*- Confidential data, amount less than or equal to 5

In 2018 Chisinau became one of the country's pilot municipalities for the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

► The new signs must indicate top-down information with trilingual inscriptions in Romanian, a local minority language (Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, German or Yiddish) and English.

Data Collection

- Quantitative method

- Material- digital pictures taken in Chișinău from July 2021 and in winter-spring 2022

- 670 pictures taken in 4 different districts of the city- Ciocana, Centru, Botanica and Rîșcani

- Governmental, commercial signs and private notices

Data Analysis

The most used languages on governmental signs: Romanian, Russian, Hebrew and Bulgarian, separately or in combination.

Some examples of top-down signs:

	Ciocana	Riscani	Botanica	Centru	Total
Romanian	14%	13%	12%	18%	57%
Romanian - Russian	5.7%	-	-	14.7%	20.4%
Russian (in Cyrillic or Latin characters)	-	3.2%	5.3%	-	8.5%
Romanian - Other	-	-	-	4.2%	4.2%
Romanian – Russian-Other	-	-	-	2.1%	2.1%

# Distribution of languages on governmental signs

In commercial sphere bi- or multilingualism is noticeable. The name of places differs significantly. The name of places is determined not only by the owners, but also by the municipal law which requires names to be written in Latin [Ciscel 2008].

The situation is similar for the commercial sphere: bi- or multilingual signs were noticed in all the districts, the only difference being the distribution of languages. While Romanian is the most visible here as well, Russian can be seen more often, even in Latin transliteration.

	Ciocana	Riscani	Botanica	Centru	Total
Romanian	2.38%	-	2.1%	37.5%	42%
Romanian - Russian	12%	-	17%	13%	42%
Russian	-	5.25%	-	5.25%	10.5%

Although Romanian is dominant on bottom-up signs as well, we found example of graffiti written only in Russian, both in Cyrillic and in Latin ➡ no strict patterns
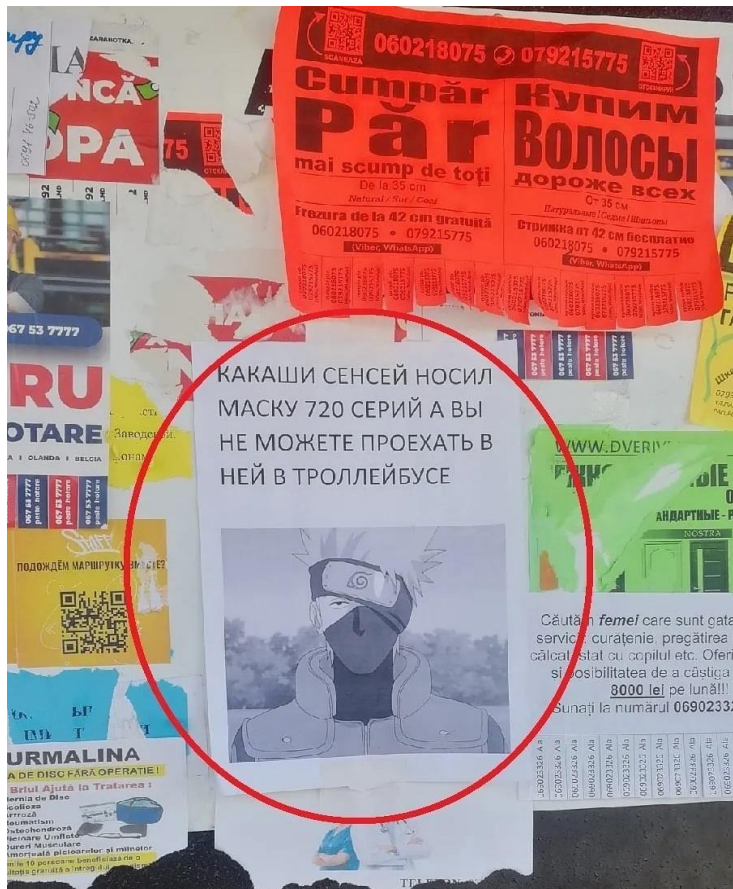
	Ciocana	Rîscani	Botanica	Centru	Total
Romanian	28%	13.5%	12.5%	-	54%
Romanian -Russian	-	8.4%	5.2%	-	13.6%
Russian	-	14.3%	17.5%	-	31.8%

▶ The number of signs in a certain language depends on the percentage of speakers of a certain language.

▶ In Ciocana most notices are written in Romanian, in Botanica and Rîscani- in Russian.

▶ In Centru no private ads were observed since it is forbidden to stick advertisement there.

Conclusions

➤ Minority languages are present in all 3 spheres of language functioning

➤ Correspondence to national and international regulations

➤ The prestige and the level of knowledge of Romanian is growing among national minorities' representatives

➤ Russian maintains its position as lingua franca ➡ not endangered in the Moldovan capital

➤ Absence of Ukrainian, Gagauz, German, and Yiddish

➤ Faith of these languages?

Thank You for Attention!

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Slide 5:

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Slide 6:

https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/Recensamint/Recensamint_pop_2014/Rezultate/Harti/Etnie.jpg

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Slide 7:

https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/Recensamint/Recensamint_pop_2014/Rezultate/Harti/Limbi_vorbite_A4.jpg

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