

GAGAUZIA DIALOGUE

FINDING JOINT SOLUTIONS TO COMMON ISSUES

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GOOD GOVERNANCE PROVIDES FRESH INSIGHTS: “AUTONOMY IS A PROCESS”



More than 100 autonomy, governance and minority rights experts attended an international conference on ‘Advancing Good Governance through Decentralization, Autonomy and Accommodation of Minorities’. The conference was organized by the Gagauzia Dialogue project to increase Moldovan stakeholders’ understanding of how territorial and social diversity within a state can be effectively managed through decentralization.

To date, CMI Moldova activities have focused on executive level dialogue, facilitating the work of the Gagauzia Working Group made up of representatives from the Moldovan Parliament and Gagauz People’s Assembly. The conference signals a broadening of this dialogue to include journalists, academics, government workers and members of civil society, supporting these stakeholders to gain fresh perspectives on the Gagauz autonomy, and contribute to the generation of nuanced, sustainable joint solutions to shared issues between Chisinau and Comrat.

Presentations from academics and researchers at Eurac Research (Italy), the Aaland Islands Peace Institute (Finland), the KDZ Center for Public Administration Research (Austria), the State University of Moldova and other expert bodies were accompanied by a presentation of the findings of Moldova’s first Autumn Academy on “Decentralization, Autonomies, and Minority Rights” (see page 2).



The robust discussion following these presentations provided an opportunity for fresh insights into the common issues surrounding the Chisinau–Comrat relationship. Reframing the discussion away from ‘sides’, Eurac Research expert in minority rights Sergiu Constantine said “Autonomy is not about ‘bad’ or ‘good’ – autonomy is a process, and it can be effective or ineffective in relation to the quality of management and protection of the rights of local communities”.

The Conference and the Autumn Academy are part of a series of activities in the Gagauzia Dialogue project which aim to create connections between the political dialogue and broader society, and facilitate the participation of civil society in the process.



AUTUMN ACADEMY BUILDS NETWORK OF AUTONOMY EXPERTS



The Gagauzia Dialogue project organized Moldova's first ever Academy on "Decentralization, Autonomies, and Minority Rights", a four-day academic program for forty of Moldova's prominent NGO workers, civil servants, students, academics and researchers working in the fields of human rights, law, political science and public administration designed to build relationships, knowledge and capacity to find solutions to common problems related to the Gagauzia Autonomy and beyond.

The program was led by experts from Eurac Research Institute, Moldova State University and Comrat State University, with a series of lectures, study visits and Q&As designed to begin transforming attitudes towards the Gagauzia and

Transnistria contexts, improve understanding of autonomy issues, and deepen capacities for dialogue and discussion on autonomy issues in the next generation of professional stakeholders.

These capacities and discussions are vital to progress the existing dialogue towards more sustainable, nuanced discussions, and to shift the narrative surrounding Transnistria and Gagauzia in a more positive knowledge and solution-oriented direction.

The Academy also provided an example of cooperation between the two universities from Chisinau and Comrat, and began to develop a network of interested stakeholders across media, academia, government and civil society

who are interested in this area, extending the pool of experts in autonomy issues.

Participants reported the value of the new information they gained on the Gagauz context and other European models of decentralization and autonomy, and created connections with other attendees from across Moldova.

Elisabeth Alber, an Academy expert visiting from Eurac Research summarized this key success of the Academy as follows: "I really appreciated the diversity of the group... returning home, they will start generating solutions in the areas in which they are working, based on dialogue and mutual understanding".



AUTUMN ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS LEARN ABOUT AUTONOMY DURING VISIT TO GAGAUZIA



A key element of the Autumn Academy was a full-day study visit to the Gagauz Autonomy, to meet with and build relationships with key stakeholders, and learn about some of the autonomy's issues first-hand. For many of the participants from outside the autonomy, this was their first visit to Gagauzia, and provided an opportunity to meet with academics from Comrat State University and representatives from the Executive Committee and People's Assembly of Gagauzia.



Through discussion with Olesea Tanasoglo, the Deputy Governor of the Autonomy, Vladimir Kyssa, the Chairperson of the Gagauzia People's Assembly, and other key officials, participants learned about the administration of the autonomy, the competences of the Gagauz legislative body and territorial administrative organization, and how the institutions of the autonomy fit and function within the context of Moldova as a whole.



The visit provided an opportunity for participants to challenge their current thinking and existing stereotypes about the autonomy, especially with regards to its relations with the center. "I knew about the dilemmas regarding Gagauzia, but I was lacking the practical perspective", said one participant. "The discussions and questions from the Gagauz colleagues helped me to understand the real situation."

GAGAUZIA PARLIAMENTARY DIALOGUE IS TO CONTINUE

Following the activities of the previous dialogue project, which ran from 2015-2018, the Gagauzia Dialogue project continues to discuss the parliamentary dialogue process with members of the Moldovan Parliament and the People's Assembly.

CMI is engaging in bilateral meetings with informal working group members to continue shaping the agenda for the dialogue process, in order to find joint solutions to shared issues.

The formal dialogue process will reconvene following discussions with the Speaker of the Moldovan Parliament and parliamentary parties, aiming to build on the activities of the Gagauzia Working Group in 2015-2018 and following the roadmap previously set out by the group.



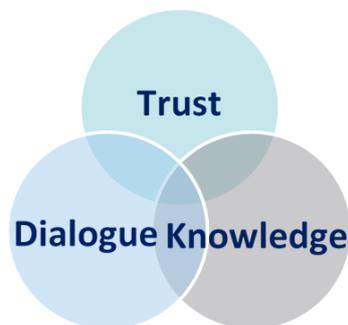
ABOUT THE GAGAUZIA DIALOGUE PROJECT

“Supporting Inclusive Dialogue and Strengthening Capacities for a Better Functioning Gagauz Autonomy in Moldova” or ‘Gagauzia Dialogue’ is a three-year project bringing together representatives of the government, legislators, experts and other interested parties from Chisinau, Comrat and across Moldova to find joint solutions to common issues related to the Gagauzia autonomy.

The project runs from 2019-2021, facilitated by CMI and funded by Sweden.

The Gagauzia Dialogue project works to create a positive political environment for dialogue between Chisinau and Comrat, and to enhance the capacities of all parties to address legislative contradictions and institutional disputes between the centre and the autonomy.

To support this process, the project will increase **knowledge** and understanding of autonomy issues in Chisinau and Comrat, increase institutional capacities for **dialogue** about them, and increase **trust** between all interested parties to support the development of joint solutions.



With this foundation, the project works with key stakeholders in both Chisinau and Comrat to:

- Develop a vision for policies in specific areas within the Gagauzia Autonomy (culture, education and tourism), and address the laws governing these policies in line with the 1994 Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia,
- Increase cooperation and coordination between Chisinau and Comrat to develop joint solutions to shared problems, and establish potential methods and institutional mechanisms to clarify autonomy competences and resolve disputes.

This work builds on the results of three years of dialogue between legislators from the Moldovan Parliament and the Gagauz People’s Assembly within the Gagauzia Working Group (GWG), a parliamentary dialogue platform facilitated by a previous CMI project.



About CMI: CMI is an independent Finnish organization that works to prevent and resolve conflicts through informal dialogue and mediation. Nobel Peace laureate and former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari founded CMI in 2000. Since then, the organization has grown to become one of the leaders in its field.



About Sweden: Sweden has a long-term commitment for continued support to Eastern Partnership countries through its Results Strategy 2014-2020. Key priority areas include strengthened democracy, greater respect for human rights, a more fully developed state under the rule of law, and gender inclusion.

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