

Moldova

With a population somewhat over 3.5 million, Moldova is a parliamentary republic nestled between Romania and Ukraine.

Constitution and government	Education and children's rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
<u>There is systematic religious privilege</u>		<u>Discriminatory prominence is given to religious bodies, traditions or leaders</u>	
<u>Official symbolic deference to religion</u>	<u>State-funded schools offer religious or ideological instruction with no secular or humanist alternative, but it is optional</u>		<u>Some concerns about political or media freedoms, not specific to the non-religious</u>

Legend

Constitution and government

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as freedom of opinion and expression. While these rights are generally respected in practice, there is preferential treatment Moldovan Orthodox Church (MOC).

In a report based on his September 2011 visit, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief noted that the government's respect for the freedom of religion improved in recent years. However, the report noted the "overly predominant" position of the MOC, which had a privileged status at variance with the constitutional provisions of a secular state. The report noted that the predominance and attitude of the MOC also existed in the Transnistria region, with negative consequences for minority religious groups.

There is no official state religion, and it is illegal to discriminate on the grounds of religion. However, the law on religion describes the "exceptional importance and fundamental role of the Christian Orthodox religion, particularly that of the MOC, in the life, history, and culture of the people of the Republic of Moldova." The Metropolitan of Chisinau and all Moldova, the highest-ranking cleric in the MOC, holds a diplomatic passport and is the only religious leader known to be accorded such treatment.

A populist president

Socialist Party leader Igor Dodon, known as a strong admirer of Russian president Vladimir Putin, won the presidential election in November 2016 (though narrowly, and with some reported irregularities) over pro-European candidate Maia Sandu. Dodon had received glowing support from the Moldovan Orthodox Church (in effect a branch of the Moscow Patriarchate). The Orthodox Bishop Marchel openly supported Dodon, calling him a "Christian and patriot", and contrasting him favourably with his opponent, Ms Sandu, who was disparaged for being unmarried and for not having children. Others "accused" Sandu of being a lesbian on those same grounds. Dodon and the

Bishop Marchel both cited the support of gay people for Ms Sandu as a reason not to vote for her. On claiming victory, Dodon promptly invited Patriarch Kirill to visit Moldova, adding: "I would like to assure you that the Moldovan people are forever faithful to the Orthodox Church." Dodon overtly compares himself to the Russian president, saying "I will run Moldova just the same way Putin runs Russia, I assure you... In the current anarchy that we see around, Moldova immediately needs an iron fist, a strong vertical of power." Having promised everything to anyone who would listen during the campaign, he could also be compared to Donald Trump.

<bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37948154>

<interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=13426>

<thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/10/29/igor-dodon-is-vladimir-putin-s-moldovan-mini-me.html>

Education and children's rights

According to the law on education, "moral and spiritual instruction" is mandatory for primary school students and optional for secondary school and university students. However, the instruction does cover a wide range of topics and issues, including moral, spiritual, artistic, aesthetic, and ethical standards, with the aim of providing students with a broad understanding of human values. Topics covered include truth, goodness, peace, patriotism, faith, wisdom, tolerance, justice, team spirit, and trust in virtues. There are three optional courses: "Christian-Orthodox Education," "Religion," and the "History of Religions," which are taught from manuals developed by the Ministry of Education and the MOC and include teaching guidelines developed with the support of the BOC.

The separatist region of Transnistria, also has formal freedom of religion, but Transnistrian law affirms the role of the Orthodox Church in the region's history, and favours that Church in practice.

Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

The constitution protects freedom of expression and assembly and the current Moldovan government has generally protected those rights. However, the government in separatist Transnistria significantly restricts media freedom.