pcgn The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names

Moldova

Country name	Moldova
State title	Republic of Moldova
Name of citizen	Moldovan
Official language	Romanian (see *Language*, below)
Country name in official language	Moldova
State title in official language	Republica Moldova
Script	Roman (and sometimes Cyrillic, see *Script* below)
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	MD/MDA
Capital	Chișinău

Introduction

Moldova is bordered by just two countries, simplistically to the west by Romania and to the east by Ukraine. As a small country, these neighbours, and Russia, have had a significant cultural and linguistical influence on Moldova. Moldova gained independence on the Soviet Union's break up in 1991 (being formerly the Moldavian SSR).

Transnistria is a separatist territory in eastern Moldova, lying mostly to the east of the Dniester river, along the border with southwestern Ukraine. Majority Russian speaking, it has become a focus of international attention since the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Transnistria is *de facto* an autonomous territory of Moldova, the central Moldovan authorities having no control there. The Transnistrian authorities consider it an independent state, though this is not recognised by any UN member state[1].

Geographical Names Policy

It is PCGN policy for Moldova to use authoritative Romanian-language (see *Language*, below) place names. These will mostly be found in Roman script, so no romanization is necessary. Diacritical marks and special letters should be reflected as found in these sources.

Transnistria
The name most commonly used in British English for this region is **Transnistria**, though Transdniestria and Transdniester Region, amongst other variants, may also be seen. Transnistria is actually also the Romanian/Moldovan language form, but it has evolved into the form most frequently used in British English.

The official Romanian/Moldovan (see *Language*, below) language name for the administrative territorial unit itself (as opposed to the area of the breakaway territory) has varied over the years, but is currently *Unitățile Administrativ-Teritoriale din Stânga Nistrului*, which translates approximately as "Administrative-Territorial Unit of the (Left) Bank of the Dniester", commonly referred to as *Stânga*

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[1] Its self-designated appellation (in Moldovan) is Република Молдовеняскэ Нистрянэ (romanized Republica Moldovenească Nistreană), usually termed Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic in English.

Nistrului (see *Administrative structure*, below). The term *Stânga* is frequently seen as *Stînga* (see *Script*, below).

Geographical Names Policy for Transnistria

HMG recognises Transnistria as a sovereign part of Moldova and therefore the geographical names policy for Moldova applies also to Transnistria. This policy is to use the Romanian-language names as used by official sources and authorities in Moldova. Cross-reference to Russian names, where these are significantly different, may in some cases be useful.

A significant, and somewhat anomalous, example is the town of Bender/Tighina, Tighina being the Romanian-language name, with Bender being (contemporary) Russian. In this instance, the Russian name has now become widely used as a *de facto* 'Moldovan' name (i.e. the name used by Moldova).

Language

The 1994 constitution of the Republic of Moldova asserts that the country's official language is 'Moldovan'. There is some promotion of this language label amongst Moldovan nationalists, though in linguistic reality the language is the same as Romanian. There exist dictionaries and other purported proofs of the languages' distinctness, but these often do little more than to confirm that the notion of Moldovan as a separate language from Romanian is a fiction. (See more in *Moldovan: An Identity But Not A Language*, PCGN, 2005).

In 2003, the Moldovan parliament (Law number 546/12-19-2003) defined Moldovan and Romanian as designations of the same language and a constitutional court decree[2] in 2013 ruled that the Declaration of Independence should take precedence over the Constitution and thus that the label 'Romanian' should prevail over 'Moldovan'[3].

Alongside Romanian, three languages have recognised minority language status: Ukrainian, Russian and Gagauz[4]. Russian is additionally recognised as the language of inter-ethnic communication.

Given the historical, political and cultural ties to Russia, the predominant language in Transnistria is Russian. The official languages according to the Transnistrian authorities are Moldovan, Russian and Ukrainian.

Script, spelling and romanization

Moldova reverted from Cyrillic to the Roman script in 1989, whilst still being the Moldavian SSR. The Romanian orthographical change of 1993 (simplistically an alteration of the use of a word-medial î to â, these phonemes being phonetically equivalent) was not adopted by Moldova until 2001 and, though this change has been signed into law by certain government departments in Moldova, the adoption has not been complete. Rather than making a wholesale change for names in Moldova, PCGN recommends following the spellings used on authoritative Moldovan mapping. In most cases this is likely to follow the spelling reform, but gives the flexibility to follow a source rather than a legal

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[2] *Curtea consideră că prevederea conţinută în Declaraţia de Independenţă referitoare la limba română ca limbă de stat a Republicii Moldova prevalează asupra prevederii referitoare la limba moldovenească conţinute în articolul 13 al Constituţiei.* [The Court considers that the provision contained in the Declaration of Independence referring to the Romanian language as the state language of the Republic of Moldova prevails over the provision referring to the Moldovan language contained in Article 13 of the Constitution].

[3] The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) previously categorised Moldovan as a separate language but now has uses only 'ron' as the ISO 639-2 language code with both Romanian and Moldovan as language names.

[4] Gagauz (ISO 639 code: gag) is a Turkic language spoken in the autonomous territory of Gagauzia.

framework as HMG policy. An example is the designation *Stânga Nistrului*, given above; this spelling is not consistent across sources, and older documents, and some recent ones, will still refer to *Stînga Nistrului*.

An inventory of letter-diacritic combinations, with their Unicode encoding, in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script is:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Ă	0102	ă	0103
Î	00CE	î	00EE
Ș	0218	ș	0219
Ț	021A	ț	021B

Note the diacritical mark appearing in the bottom 2 rows is properly a sub comma rather than a cedilla.

Moldovan is still mostly encountered written in Cyrillic script in Transnistria (as indicated in footnote 1). The correspondences between the two scripts can be seen in the table here: Moldovan: table of correspondences.

Sources for geographical names

The best available source is Moldova's official geoportal. This source has a number of clickable options that may be selected to see different base layers of information. The 2013 base map layer is currently the best authoritative source on this site.

The official government website includes a useful administrative map.

The NGA GEOnet Names Server is also a good source of names in Moldova.

Administrative structure

Moldova is divided into 32 districts (*raion*); 1 autonomous territorial unit (*unitatea teritorială autonomă* - Găgăuzia), 1 territorial unit (*unitatea teritorială* - Stânga Nistrului *(Transnistria)*) and 3 cities (*municipiu*) (Bălți, Chișinău and Bender). Six further cities (Cahul, Edineț, Hîncești, Orhei, Soroca, and Ungheni) have, as of 2016, the status of municipality but it is believed that these are not considered at the same level as the ADM1s.

The area of the *de facto* autonomous area of Transnistria includes some areas to the west of the Dniester, though these are considered separately in terms of the Moldovan authorities' view of the administrative divisions of the country[5].

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[5] The Moldovan authorities consider the autonomous region as the area to the east of the Dniester, and control some areas of Dubăsari district (Raionul Dubăsari) in this territory. Apart from these areas of Dubăsari, the Transnistrian authorities control all the land to the east of the Dniester, and additionally control the municipality of Bender and six surrounding villages on the west bank; these are considered by Moldova as a separate municipality (Bender and two villages) the other four villages being considered part of Căușeni district.

ADM1	ISO 3166-2 code	Centre	Location of centre
Anenii Noi	MD-AN	Anenii Noi	46° 52' 42" N 029° 14' 05" E
Bălți	MD-BA	Bălți	47° 45' 47" N 027° 55' 46" E
Basarabeasca	MD-BS	Basarabeasca	46° 19' 54" N 028° 57' 49" E
Bender [Tighina][6]	MD-BD	Bender	46° 49' 54" N 029° 28' 40" E
Briceni	MD-BR	Briceni	48° 21' 46" N 027° 04' 40" E
Cahul	MD-CA	Cahul	45° 54' 15" N 028° 11' 57" E
Călărași	MD-CL	Călărași	47° 15' 20" N 028° 18' 36" E
Cantemir	MD-CT	Cantemir	46° 16' 39" N 028° 12' 10" E
Căușeni	MD-CS	Căușeni	46° 38' 12" N 029° 24' 40" E
Chișinău	MD-CU	Chișinău	47° 00' 20" N, 028° 51' 27" E
Cimișlia	MD-CM	Cimișlia	46° 31' 37" N 028° 45' 52" E
Criuleni	MD-CR	Criuleni	47° 12' 47" N 029° 09' 33" E
Dondușeni	MD-DO	Dondușeni	48° 14' 22" N 027° 36' 20" E
Drochia	MD-DR	Drochia	48° 02' 08" N 027° 48' 47" E
Dubăsari	MD-DU	Cocieri	47° 18' 31" N 029° 06' 36" E
Edineț	MD-ED	Edineț	48° 10' 20" N 027° 18' 12" E
Fălești	MD-FA	Fălești	47° 34' 36" N 027° 42' 46" E
Florești	MD-FL	Florești	47° 53' 29" N 028° 17' 35" E
Găgăuzia, Unitatea teritorială autonomă	MD-GA	Comrat	46° 17' 40" N 028° 39' 23" E
Glodeni	MD-GL	Glodeni	47° 46' 30" N 027° 31' 08" E
Hîncești[7]	MD-HI	Hîncești	46° 49' 50" N 028° 35' 26" E
Ialoveni	MD-IA	Ialoveni	46° 56' 36" N 028° 46' 56" E
Leova	MD-LE	Leova	46° 28' 56" N 028° 15' 11" E
Nisporeni	MD-NI	Nisporeni	47° 04' 54" N 028° 10' 17" E
Ocnița	MD-OC	Ocnița	48° 22' 58" N 027° 26' 17" E
Orhei	MD-OR	Orhei	47° 23' 06" N 028° 49' 28" E
Rezina	MD-RE	Rezina	47° 44' 57" N 028° 57' 57" E
Rîșcani	MD-RI	Rîșcani	47° 56' 53" N 027° 33' 50" E
Sîngerei	MD-SI	Sîngerei	47° 38' 11" N 028° 08' 35" E
Șoldănești	MD-SD	Șoldănești	47° 48' 58" N 028° 47' 50" E
Soroca	MD-SO	Soroca	48° 09' 24" N 028° 17' 06" E
Ștefan Vodă	MD-SV	Ștefan Vodă	46° 30' 46" N 029° 39' 43" E
Stânga Nistrului, Unitatea teritorială din	MD-SN	Tiraspol	46° 50' 34" N 029° 37' 45" E
Strășeni	MD-ST	Strășeni	47° 08' 32" N 028° 36' 28" E
Taraclia	MD-TA	Taraclia	45° 54' 10" N 028° 40' 05" E
Telenești	MD-TE	Telenești	47° 30' 04" N 028° 21' 55" E
Ungheni	MD-UN	Ungheni	47° 12' 39" N 027° 48' 02" E

The Transnistrian authority's view is that the territory it controls is divided into 5 raions and 2 municipalities[8].

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[6] See *Geographical Names Policy*, above. PCGN recommends using Bender as the primary name. The form Tighina can be added in brackets if it is felt to be useful.

[7] As noted in *Script, spelling and romanization*, above, some sources, e.g. the 2021 Statistical Yearbook of Moldova have adopted the spelling reform's word medial â here, so specifically: Hâncești, Râșcani and Sângerei. PCGN has decided to reflect the geoportal's spelling for these raions and centres.

[8] Specifically, raions (north to south): Camenca; Rîbnița; Dubăsari; Grigoriopol; Slobozia and municipalities: Tiraspol and Bender.

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Approved Name	Name in Moldova	Conventional Name (where one exists)	Location	Feature Type
Bessarabia	Basarabia	Bessarabia	47° 00'N 28° 30'E	Region
Black Sea	Marea Neagră	Black Sea	43° 00'N 35° 00'E	Inland sea
Danube *or* Dunărea[9]	Dunărea	Danube	45° 20' 00"N 29° 40' 00"E	River
Dniester *or* Nistru[9]	Nistru	Dniester	46° 18' 15"N 30° 16' 25"E	River
Podişul Moldovei Centrale	Podişul Moldovei Centrale	Central Moldavian Plateau	47° 05' 00"N 28° 20' 00"E	Upland
Prut	Prut	-	45° 28' 08"N 28° 12' 27"E	River
Răut	Răut	-	47° 14' 40"N 29° 08' 50"E	River
Regiunea Deluroasă a Basarabiei	Regiunea Deluroasă a Basarabiei	Bessarabian Upland	47° 30' 00"N 28° 30' 00"E	Upland

Useful references

- Administrative divisions: http://www.statoids.com
- BBC Country Profile: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17601580
- CIA World Factbook: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/moldova/
- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Travel Advice
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- Languages: www.ethnologue.com, www.omniglot.com
- PCGN papers: *Notes on Transnistria*, updated 2022
  Moldovan: An Identity But Not A Language, 2005
- Unicode Consortium: www.unicode.org
- US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server: http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/index.html

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[9] PCGN may recommend transnational feature names (e.g. rivers and mountain ranges) be shown with their conventional English name and/or the relevant local form according to the product. Specific guidance is available on request.