

NATIONAL MINORITIES IN THE ODESSA OBLAST: A MODEL OF COEXISTENCE OR TENSIONS AHEAD?

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Summary: *The article deals with the situation of national minorities living in the Odessa oblast and in the town of Odessa before the Russian war against Ukraine started on 24 of February 2022. It explains what are the historical reasons that made Odessa a region so diverse from the national identity perspective, with a lot of national minorities living here from centuries. Although there are a significant number of studies on the issue of the national minorities in this region, none of them have captured, so far, the complex relationship of Ukraine with the kin-states - Romania, Bulgaria and in some extent Turkey. The number of IDPs in Ukraine was already high before the war started, with an important impact on the relationship of the Ukrainian majority with the national minorities and it will certainly be much higher after the war. The article takes into account this situation particularly for the Odessa oblast. The article examines how the institutions and the religious actors have influenced this relationship but how the war will shape it remains an open question. The article offers a perspective on the 2017 Ukrainian law in education, how it was applied until 24 of February 2022 and why the promise of a new framework for the national minorities made by Ukraine after the end of the war is very important.*

Keywords: *education, IDPs, kin - states, national minorities, Odessa oblast, religious schism*

Purpose and issues

This article offers an introduction into the issue of minorities in Ukraine, which are, *inter alia*, Romanians, Turks, Bulgarians and groups of people from other origins, as well as religious and linguistic minorities. As mentioned in both the available literature and the brief critical literature review, most studies

Also, the article offers a perspective on the 2017 Ukrainian law on education that has been widely discussed by the national minorities living in Odessa oblast and in kin-states like Romania. The war disrupted the whole educational system of Ukraine; how the law will be applied after the war remains to be seen but Ukraine promised a new framework for the national minorities, especially because kin-states like Romania or Bulgaria helped a lot Ukraine in the face of the Russian Federation aggression. Everything connected with Ukraine, Odessa oblast and all national minorities living in this area will be impacted by the war; therefore, it is very important to have an accurate assessment *ex ante* in order to compare with the new situation that will occur as an outcome of the war.

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