

New realities of the administrative-territorial structure of Ukraine and areas of ethnic minorities' settlement: Geographical correlations and social consequences

Examples of Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi and Odesa oblasts

MYROSLAV DNISTRIANSKYI¹, JÓZSEF MOLNÁR²,
NATALIYA DNISTRIANSKA³ and ISTVÁN MOLNÁR D.²

Abstract

This article analyses the ethno-geographical problems of the reformed system of administrative and territorial structure of Ukraine. The authors consider the alignment of newly created administrative units (rayons, territorial communities) and areas of compact settlement of ethnic minorities as a favourable prerequisite for the organisation of local self-government and the establishment of balanced and mutually beneficial ethno-political relations in the state. The analysis of the ethno-geographical parameters of ethnic minorities and the configuration of the newly created administrative-territorial units revealed that the population of ethnic minorities in Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi and Odesa oblasts was given the opportunity to organise territorial communities in which they constitute the majority. At the same time, studies have shown that it was not easy to implement this approach in the newly created administrative districts, given the officially defined criteria, the politicisation of the issue and the relatively high degree of mosaic settlement of ethnic groups. Therefore, the ethno-geographical factor was only partially taken into account in the formation of new administrative districts and the selection of district centres.

Keywords: administrative and territorial reform, ethnic minorities, settlements, local self-government, territorial communities, Ukraine

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Introduction

In recent years, since 2014, events in Ukraine have attracted the attention of both the media and academia, including geographers. A change in the frequency of its appearance in the English-language literature can be indicative of the popularity of a particular topic (VAN DER WUSTEN, H. 2015). A search of the N-gram viewer revealed that the name "Ukraine" was referenced in an average of 8.2 publications per million books published

in English in 2015. This figure represents a notable increase from 2012, when the average was 4.7 (see books.google.com/ngrams 2024). It is evident that the primary focus of this study is on events and processes related to the Russian-Ukrainian war (e.g. KARÁCSONYI, D. *et al.* 2014; DOBYSH, M. 2019; GNATIUK, O. *et al.* 2022). However, it is important to note that other problematic issues of a geographical nature remain in the country, including the issue of ethnic minorities living compactly in the western regions of Ukraine.

¹ Department of Geography of Ukraine, Faculty of Geography, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv.

² Department of Geography and Tourism, Ferenc Rakoczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education, Kossuth Sqr. 6. 90202 Berehove, Ukraine. E-mails: molnar.jozsef@kmf.org.ua, molnar.d.istvan@kmf.org.ua

³ Department of Tourism, Institute of Sustainable Development, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Stepana Bandery St. 12. 79000 Lviv, Ukraine. E-mail: natalia.i.dnistranska@lpnu.ua

Ethnic minorities in Ukraine comprise all population groups that do not identify with the Ukrainian ethnicity. This includes small indigenous peoples (Crimean Tatars, Karaites, Gagauzes) and ethnic groups that are part of peoples whose main core resides outside Ukraine (Belarusians, Bulgarians, Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, and some others). The gradual democratization of European countries' political systems, including the principle of respect for the rights and interests of ethnic minorities, has allowed for the development of mechanisms to coordinate their interests with those of states and dominant ethnic groups. One of the tools for harmonizing opposing interests is precisely the administrative-territorial system (МАКАРОВ, Н. 2022, 56). Consequently, the ethno-geographical characteristics of numerous countries worldwide are considered to varying extent in their administrative and territorial frameworks.

As a result of the 2015–2020 administrative-territorial reform in Ukraine, aimed at giving more powers to local self-governments, significant changes have taken place at the lower and middle levels of the administrative-territorial system. At the lower level, instead of more than 11,000 village, town and city councils, 1470 territorial communities were created, and instead of 490 rayons, 136 new ones were formed (see www.kmu.gov.ua, 2020). Obviously, such significant changes, disrupting already established ties, could not but affect various aspects of the life of the local population, including ethnic minorities. Therefore, to ensure ethno-political balance and stability, it is advisable to find out whether the new administrative-territorial system has taken into account the peculiarities of compact settlement of ethno-national minorities.

Reflecting the problem in scientific literature

The multidimensional issue of the administrative structure of the state territory is studied by more than two dozen scientific fields, including political and legal sciences, history,

political science, sociology, and management. Geographical science is also involved in the comprehensive study of the administrative-territorial structure, and it has become the subject of a separate branch of study, administrative geography (НАЈДУ, З. 2014, 33). Administrative geography focuses primarily on optimizing the territorial organization of countries, the configuration and size of administrative units.

As for optimization, there are still many unsolved issues. For example, there is no perfect answer to the question of the optimal size of administrative units which would ensure both local democracy and economic efficiency in the delivery of local public services. Different solutions are implemented in order to reach this goal (CEMR 2009, 5). This is also the problem of applying the ethnic principle in determining the boundaries of administrative units.

In today's world there is a clear understanding of the need to ensure the civil rights of ethnic (national) minorities (political, cultural, religious, etc.), as evidenced by the adoption of a number of international legal documents, but at the same time there are no unified approaches to reflecting their interests in the systems of territorial organisation of state power and local self-government. This is mainly due to the diversity of options for the states' ethnic structure. Therefore, most of them have developed their own strategic political and administrative approaches to addressing such issues, based on national legal documents.

Some authors believe that ethnic minorities within administrative units have three options: assimilation, emigration or mobilisation of forces to create their own administrative units (MÜLLER-CREPON, C. 2023). This may seem rather categorical, but the creation of more or less mono-ethnic administrative units undoubtedly helps to meet the social, cultural, economic, etc. needs of ethnic communities.

The options for meeting the needs of ethnic minorities are grouped, on the one hand, into various forms of autonomy (territorial, cultural, personal), and, on the other hand,

within the administrative system of a unitary state. Best practices – such as the Belgian, Finnish and Italian models – provide for the establishment of certain territorial self-government structures for ethnic minorities (FODOR, Gy. 2010). Although the needs of densely populated ethnic minorities are occasionally expressed, these models are not yet widespread in Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time, such initiatives raise fears and do not find support from government agencies and political forces of the state-forming nations (MEZEI, I. and HARDI, T. 2003, 131–134; SZILÁGYI, F. 2010; HAJDÚ, Z. 2014, 34; KORZENIEWSKA-WISZNIEWSKA, M. 2020). In the end, the administrative system is largely the product of a kind of compromise, bargaining between stakeholders, rather than a fully science-based system (OSOIAN, I. et al. 2010, 108).

Given the importance of national and state practice, it is important to first analyse how Ukrainian analysts approach this issue, taking into account the interdisciplinary nature of the issue, which has socio-geographical, geopolitical, political, legal and economic aspects. Discussions on this issue since 1991 have stimulated demands from some ethnic minority NGOs for the creation of autonomous national districts (rayons). However, only a few Ukrainian scholars (BARANCHUK, V. 1998; DRUZIUK, S. 1998; FEDCHYSHYN, M. and FRONCHKO, V. 2000; KUCHABSKYI, O.G. 2010) allowed for the possibility of creating such administrative units, while most other ethno-political scientists and public administration specialists focused on the priority of the extra-territorial form of ethno-cultural autonomy. Suggestions were also made on the possibility of changing the boundaries of administrative units to meet the needs of ethnic minorities (DNISTRIANSKYI, M.S. 2006) and on the importance of taking the ethnic factor into account in subsequent administrative and territorial changes (NADOLISHNII, P. 1999).

In the process of reforming the administrative-territorial structure, which began in 2015, the need to take into account ethno-geographical features was also emphasised

at the scientific level (MUSTAFAIEVA, E. 2018; ZABLITSKYI, V. 2021), but without identifying real mechanisms. At the same time, more specific discussions on these issues were held at the level of government agencies, NGOs and, to some extent, interstate relations.

Structural administrative-territorial changes in general (consolidation of administrative rayons, increase in the size of the smallest administrative units, reduction in the administrative status of settlements) have also affected the livelihoods of ethnic minority populations, resulting in a significant increase in the distance to new administrative centres and, consequently, a number of other socio-economic problems. SKLIARSKA, O.I. claims “In today’s conditions, most rural communities cannot take advantage of decentralisation opportunities due to the limited socio-economic potential of settlements, including large villages that have become community centres” (SKLIARSKA, O.I. 2022). The issue of economic and demographic capacity of municipalities is topical. According to domestic and foreign experience, in the case of rural municipalities it is mainly ensured only in suburban agglomerations (SKRYZHEVSKA, Y. and KARÁCSONYI, D. 2012; HRUŠKA, V. and PŘA, J. 2019). These issues, namely various aspects of the conformity of the new administrative-territorial division and the resettlement of the population of Ukraine in general, have been widely reflected in other publications, in particular in the works of ZASTAVETSKA, L.B. (2013), BARANOVSKYI, M.O. (2017, 2020), KUCHABSKYI, O.G. et al. (2017), MELNYCHUK, A.L. (2020), SAVCHUK, I. (2020), SKLIARSKA, O.I. (2021), DNISTRIANSKYI, M.S. and CHAIKA, I.M. (2023), and others. The analysis of the issues raised in these publications is indirectly related to the social situation of ethnic minorities.

Research objectives and methodology

This study examines the compliance of Ukraine’s reformed administrative-territorial structure with the settlement of ethnic minorities. It considers three oblasts that

share common typological features of ethnic minorities' settlement and are characterised by large areas with a predominant majority of ethnic minority population: Zakarpattia, Odesa and Chernivtsi. Based on the nature of the problem, the main objectives of this study are 1) to analyse the level of density and mosaicism of ethnic minority settlements in Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi and Odesa oblasts; 2) to determine the correlation between the middle and lower levels of the reformed administrative-territorial division of Ukraine and the areas of settlement of ethnic minorities; 3) to objectively analyse the improvement of the compliance of newly created administrative units (territorial communities) with the areas of settlement of ethnic minorities; 4) to substantiate conceptual conclusions on the possibilities of reflecting the geography of ethnic minorities in the administrative and territorial division of Ukraine.

The main problem in the implementation of the research tasks is the limited source base on the current ethno-national structure of Ukraine's population, given that the last census in Ukraine took place in 2001. However, there is no alternative to using the materials of this census, as there have been no fundamental changes in the areas of compact settlement of ethnic minorities since then, with the exception of the territories not controlled by Ukraine since 2014, where no reform has been carried out.

The theoretical framework of the study is based on the following principles:

1. Ensuring closer correspondence between the units of the administrative-territorial structure and the areas of compact settlement of ethnic minorities, creating better conditions for the organisation of their local self-government, is the key to establish balanced and mutually beneficial ethno-political relations in the country.

2. The establishment of administrative-territorial units at varying levels, in alignment with the geographical distribution of ethnic minorities is not a prerequisite for ethno-political separatism. Rather, it serves as a foundation for developing constructive and

trusting relations between ethnic minorities and the country as a whole.

3. The formation of new territorial communities in areas of ethnic minority settlement should be based on the coordination of the local citizens' positions and public interests.

The methodological basis of the study is a structural-functional approach and a regional-comparative analysis of the location of administrative-territorial units, their centres and settlements with a significant share of ethnic minorities, as well as determination of the real correlations that existed before and after the reform.

A comparative analysis of the ethnic composition of the old and new administrative units gives rise to the question of which rank of units from the previous and current divisions should be compared. The answer is that the units are of the same rank, but they are also significantly different in size (the new ones are much larger). The choice for comparison fell on rayons of the previous administrative structure and territorial communities of the new one, since territorial communities have become the most functionally significant administrative units in the organisation of local self-government, replacing the former rayons. Territorial communities, in compliance with the reform, were given significant powers to form local budgets and internal socio-economic policies. At the same time, the powers of rayons in general and rayon councils in particular have not yet been conceptually developed.

These methodological approaches were implemented through the use of the cartographic method, as well as methods of analysing the distribution of ethnic minority areas, ethnic and settlement mosaic of administrative districts and territorial communities.

The analysis of the proportion of ethno-linguistic minorities in the former rayons is also of fundamental importance in assessing the conformity of the newly created administrative units with ethno-geographical realities. To quantify the ethno-geographic structure in each of these three regions, we also calculated an indicator of ethno-linguistic mosa-

icism, which takes into account the proportions of language groups, and linguo-settlement mosaicism, which is the diversity of the distribution of settlements with a majority of a particular ethno-linguistic group in terms of rayons and newly created territorial communities as of 2001. The classical index of ethnolinguistic mosaicism is calculated according to the formula (MRUCHKOVSKYI, P.V. 2018; NÉMETH, Á. 2019):

$$E = 1 - \sum_{j=1}^k (\varepsilon_j^2),$$

where E is the index of ethnolinguistic mosaicism, ε_j is the share of the population of the j -th language group in the administrative unit, k is the number of ethnolinguistic groups. The index of linguo-settlement mosaicism is determined by the formula:

$$P = 1 - \sum_{j=1}^k (\pi_j^2),$$

where P is the index of language-settlement mosaicism, π_j is the share of settlements with a majority population of the j -th language group among the settlements of the administrative unit, k is the number of ethno-linguistic groups.

Summary of research findings

Prerequisites for the reform

Independent Ukraine inherited the foundations of its administrative and territorial system from the Ukrainian SSR. In 1991, 24 oblasts, the Crimean Autonomy, the cities of Kyiv and Sevastopol formed its upper tier, 481 rayons, and 147 cities of Oblast significance formed its middle tier, and 287 rayon councils, 925 settlement councils and 9211 village councils formed its lower tier. The gradual shift away from totalitarianism and the democratisation of society have also led to various proposals to change this system

and the emergence of practical initiatives to create new administrative units. As a result of these trends, nine new administrative rayons were created at the middle tier between 1991 and 1996, bringing the number of rayons to 490. One of them, the Hertsa Rayon of Chernivtsi Oblast, was created in December 1991 on the initiative of the Romanian ethnic minority (DNISTRIANSKYI, M.S. 2006). At the same time, the decision of the 1991 local referendum on the creation of Berehove Hungarian (Zakarpattia Oblast) and Bulgarian (Odesa Oblast) national rayons was not officially approved, as there was no appropriate legal framework for such a decision.

The main ethno-geographic features of independent Ukraine were recorded in the first and only all-Ukrainian population census in 2001. According to its findings, ethnic minorities made up 22.2 percent of the total population of Ukraine, 26.3 percent of the urban population, and 12.9 percent of the rural population. At the time, the majority of ethnic minorities were concentrated in large cities, as shown by the regional proportions of ethnic minorities in rural and urban population.

The largest share of ethnic minorities was in the following regions: Sevastopol City (77.6%), the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (75.7%), Donetsk (43.1%), Luhansk (42.0%), Odesa (37.2%), Kharkiv (29.3%), Zaporizhzhia (29.2%), Chernivtsi (25.0%), Dnipropetrovsk (20.1%), Zakarpattia (19.5%), Mykolaiv (18.1%), and Kherson (18.0%) oblasts. Thus, at the upper tier of Ukraine's administrative and territorial structure, only one region, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and the city of national significance Sevastopol, had a predominantly non-Ukrainian population. This ethno-geographical feature in these regions was reflected in the administrative-territorial system of Ukraine by granting them special status. Out of the above regions, only Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi and the south-western part of Odesa Oblast have areas where several ethnolinguistic groups are settled, and therefore they have been chosen as the object of our study.

The administrative-territorial reform in Ukraine was initiated in 2015 with the ob-

jective of conferring greater autonomy upon local self-governments. Its implementation was preceded by the adoption of such documents as the Law of Ukraine on Voluntary Amalgamation of Territorial Communities (2015), and the Decree on Approval of the Methodology for the Formation of Capable Territorial Communities (2015), which defined the procedure and main criteria for the formation of new administrative units (in terms of the size of new administrative units, location of centres, etc.). Among the principles to be taken into account, the law also mentioned ethnicity (see zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/214-2015-%D0%BF#n10, 2015), but the mechanisms for implementing this principle were not specified.

Until 2020, the formation of territorial communities was voluntary, which allowed residents belonging to ethnic minorities to amalgamate into territorial communities in their places of compact settlement. By that time, 1070 communities had been formed (almost 73%). Moreover, the following communities were formed according to the perspective plans developed at the governmental level (www.kmu.gov.ua, 2020).

The consolidated communities were endowed with considerable powers and resources, including revenues derived from taxes, such as a unified tax, taxes on the profits of municipal-owned enterprises and financial institutions, property (real estate, land, transportation), and 60 percent of personal income tax, which were transferred to local budgets. Before the reform, only oblast, rayon budgets and budgets of cities of oblast significance had direct relations with the state budget. Following the reform, territorial communities (TCs) have direct inter-budgetary relations with the state budget. Appropriate transfers (grants, subventions, etc.) are received by TCs to enable them to perform their delegated powers (www.kmu.gov.ua, 2020). Consequently, territorial communities have become a key element of Ukraine's new administrative structure, which justifies the emphasis placed on them in our investigation.

In order to examine the extent to which the reformed system of administrative and territorial structure of Ukraine complies with the settlement of ethno-linguistic minorities, a case study was conducted in Zakarpattia, Odesa and Chernivtsi oblasts since in other regions where the reform was implemented, there are actually no relatively large areas where ethnic minorities would form the majority.

Thus, the results of the census show that the share of ethno-linguistic minorities and the share of settlements with a majority of ethno-linguistic minority population were the highest 1) in Hertsa Rayon of Chernivtsi Oblast (91.5% of ethnic Romanians, 92.2% of the population named Romanian as their mother tongue, the share of settlements with a predominance of Romanian-speaking population is 95.5%); 2) in Berehove Rayon of Zakarpattia Oblast (76.1% of ethnic Hungarians, 80.2% of the population named Hungarian as their mother tongue, the share of settlements with a predominance of Hungarian-speaking population is 76.7%); 3) in Bolhrad Rayon of Odesa Oblast (60.8% of ethnic Bulgarians, Bulgarian was the mother tongue of 57.5% of the population, the share of settlements with a predominance of the population with the Bulgarian language as their mother tongue was 59.1%). In addition, the degree of compactness of ethno-linguistic minorities was relatively high in the former Uzhhorod, Vynohradiv and Tyachiv rayons of Zakarpattia Oblast, as well as in Novoselytsia and Storozhynets rayons of Chernivtsi Oblast. In other rayons, these indicators were much lower, which objectively did not contribute to the creation of ethnically homogeneous territorial communities.

Difficulties in taking into account the ethno-geographical factor in reforming the administrative-territorial structure in Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi and south-western Odesa oblasts are also reflected in the indicators of language and language-settlement mosaicism, which were significant in virtually all rayons, including those with the highest proportion of ethno-linguistic minorities. This is especially true in the south-western

part of Odesa Oblast (historical Budzhak region), where settlements with different ethnic majority are highly dispersed and the degree of compactness of ethnic minority areas is low. It is noteworthy that in most rayons the overall indicator of linguistic mosaicism was higher than that of linguo-settlement mosaicism, which also reveals the tendency to “blur” the areas of compact settlement of ethnolinguistic groups in the process of urbanisation and migration (see *Tables 1–3*).

Conformity of the newly formed administrative-territorial units and areas of ethnic minorities' settlement in Zakarpattia Oblast

Let us first consider the results of the administrative reform of Zakarpattia Oblast in the light of interethnic relations policy. The main administrative-territorial changes in this region concerned the liquidation of 13 rayons (Berehove, Velyki Bereznyi, Vynohradiv, Volovets, Irshava, Mizhhirya, Mukachevo, Perechyn, Rakhiv, Svalyava, Tyachiv, Uzhhorod, Khust) and the creation of 6 new ones (Berehove, Mukachevo, Rakhiv, Tyachiv, Uzhhorod, Khust (*Table 1, Figure 1*). At the lowest tier, the liquidation of 337 city, town and village councils resulted in the creation of 64 territorial communities.

In ethno-geographical terms, Zakarpattia Oblast is distinguished by the compact location of only two ethnic minorities – Hungarian and Romanian. In 2001, the majority of the Hungarian-speaking population lived in Berehove and the urban settlements of Batiovo and Vylok. Their share was also significant in the town of Chop and the urban-type settlement of Vyshkovo – over 40 percent. Most of the villages where Hungarians constituted the majority (31 settlements) in 2001 were located in Berehove Rayon. In the former Vynohradiv Rayon, the ethnic Hungarian majority is recorded in 19 villages, in Uzhhorod Rayon – in 22 villages, and in Mukachevo Rayon – in 6 villages (see pop-stat.mashke.org 2024).

According to the 2001 census, Romanian was declared as a mother tongue by the major-

ity in the urban-type settlement of Solotvyno in Tyachiv Rayon, as well as in 5 villages of the former Tyachiv Rayon and 4 villages of Rakhiv Rayon (see pop-stat.mashke.org 2024).

As the reform will result in territorial communities being the most functionally significant administrative-territorial units in the organisation of local self-government, it is important to consider their structural features in places where Hungarian and Romanian ethnic minorities are densely populated. In this light, it is important to focus on how ethnically homogeneous the newly formed communities are and which settlements are community centres in terms of their organisational and human resources. It is also important to note that the formation of territorial communities was largely voluntary, allowing the local population to make a choice that would meet their interests.

Thus, the Hungarian-speaking population predominates in 7 of the 10 newly established settlements of Berehove Rayon (Berehove, Batiovo, Vylok, Velyki Berehy, Velyka Byihan, Kosyno, Pyiterfolvo) (see *Figure 1*). At the same time, the quantitative predominance of the Hungarian population within the first four municipalities of the rayon is less pronounced due to the diffuse nature of the settlement, with Ukrainian villages being located in areas dominated by ethnic Hungarians and Hungarian villages being located in areas dominated by ethnic Ukrainians.

In the newly created Uzhhorod Rayon, three communities – Chop, Velyka Dobron, and Siurte – are predominantly ethnically Hungarian. Some ethnically Hungarian villages of the former Mukachevo Rayon (Barkasovo, Chomonyn, Serne) were incorporated into Batiovo and Velyka Dobron municipalities with a predominantly Hungarian population, while others (Dertsen, Zhniatyno, Fornosh) – due to their distance from the centres of the Hungarian municipalities and possibly due to other political considerations of the village leaders – were incorporated into territorial municipalities with a majority ethnic Ukrainian population.

Table 1. Some indicators of the settlement of ethno-linguistic minorities in Zakarpattia Oblast by rayons before the 2020 administrative reform*

Administrative rayons and cities of regional significance (before 2020)	Share of population with Hungarian mother tongue, %	Share of population with Romanian mother tongue, %	Share of settlements with a Hungarian-speaking majority in the total number of settlements, %	Share of settlements with a Romanian-speaking majority in the total number of settlements, %	Index of linguistic mosaicism of former rayons	Index of linguo-settlement mosaicism of former rayons	Average index of linguistic mosaicism of territorial communities of former rayons	Average index of linguo-settlement mosaicism of territorial communities of former rayons	Percentage difference between the indices of linguistic mosaicism of former rayons and territorial communities	Percentage difference between the indices of linguo-settlement mosaicism of former rayons and territorial communities
Berehove	80.2	0.0	76.7	0.0	0.321	0.357	0.394	0.310	22.4	-13.2
Velykyi Bereznyi	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.020	0.000	0.021	0.000	3.3	0.0
Vynohradiv	26.3	0.0	40.0	0.0	0.412	0.480	0.227	0.112	-45.0	-76.6
Volovets	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.018	0.000	0.017	0.000	-4.4	0.0
Irshava	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.020	0.000	0.020	0.000	-0.2	0.0
Mizhhiria	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.014	0.000	0.015	0.000	4.1	0.0
Mukachevo	13.8	0.0	6.8	0.0	0.272	0.127	0.267	0.141	-2.0	10.7
Perechyn	0.2	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.067	0.000	0.060	0.000	-9.5	0.0
Rakhiv	2.5	11.5	0.0	12.5	0.270	0.219	0.101	0.080	-62.8	-63.6
Svaliava	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.053	0.000	0.049	0.000	-7.4	0.0
Tiachiv	2.8	12.4	0.0	9.8	0.287	0.177	0.091	0.000	-68.3	-100.0
Uzhhorod	35.4	0.0	34.8	0.0	0.499	0.454	0.344	0.099	-31.0	-78.3
Khust	3.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.092	0.000	0.103	0.000	11.7	0.0
Uzhhorod	7.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.393	0.000	-	-	-	-
Berehove	54.8	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.552	0.500	-	-	-	-
Mukachevo	9.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.389	0.000	-	-	-	-
Khust	4.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.170	0.000	-	-	-	-
Average for the oblast	12.8	2.6	13.7	1.6	0.255	0.145	0.175	0.072	-31.7	-50.7

*Calculated by the authors based on the data of the 2001 All-Ukrainian Population Census.

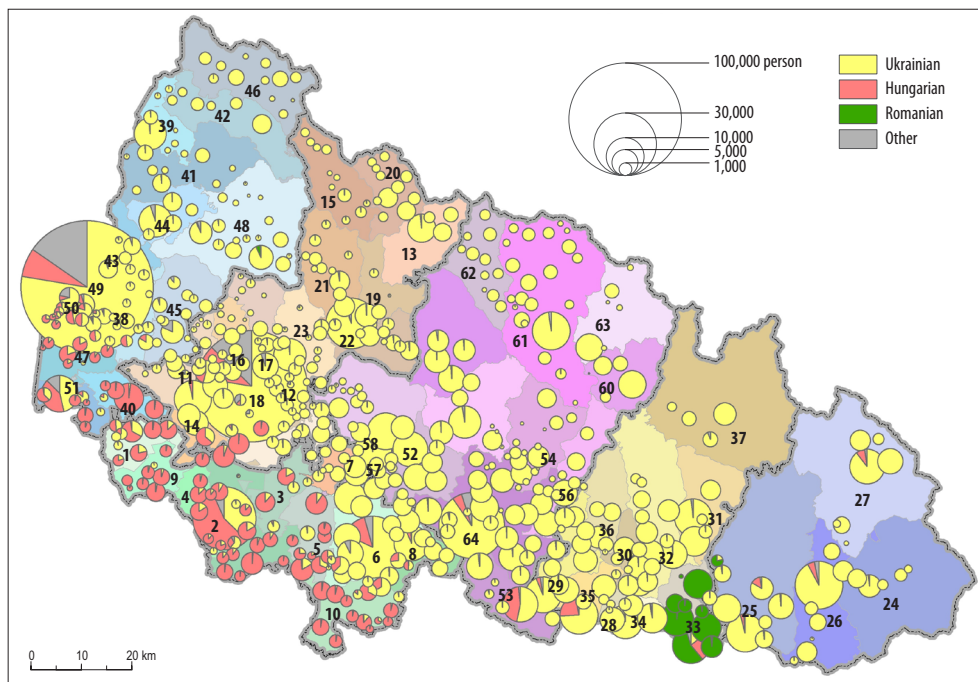


Fig. 1. The composition of the population of the settlements by native language of rayons and territorial communities of Zakarpattia Oblast formed as a result of the 2020 administrative reform. Territorial communities (1–64) of the newly created rayons: **I.** Berehove Rayon: 1 = Batiovo; 2 = Berehove, 3 = Velyki Berehy; 4 = Velyka Byihan; 5 = Vylok; 6 = Vynohradiv; 7 = Kamianske; 8 = Korolevo; 9 = Kosino; 10 = Pyiterfolvo. **II.** Mukachevo Rayon: 11 = Velyki Luchky; 12 = Verkhni Koropets; 13 = Volovets; 14 = Horonda; 15 = Zhenievo; 16 = Ivanivtsi; 17 = Kolchyno; 18 = Mukachevo; 19 = Nelipyno; 20 = Nyzhni Vorota; 21 = Poliana; 22 = Svaliava; 23 = Chynadiiovo. **III.** Rakhiv Rayon: 24 = Bohdan; 25 = Velykyi Bychkiv; 26 = Rakhiv; 27 = Yasinia. **IV.** Tiachiv Rayon: 28 = Bedevlia, 29 = Bushtyno; 30 = Vilkhivtsi; 31 = Dubove; 32 = Neresnytsa; 33 = Solotvyno; 34 = Teresva; 35 = Tiachiv; 36 = Uhlia; 37 = Ust-Chorna. **V.** Uzhhorod Rayon: 38 = Baranyntsi; 39 = Velykyi Bereznyi; 40 = Velyka Dobron; 41 = Dubrynychy-Malyi Bereznyi; 42 = Kostrino; 43 = Onokivtsi; 44 = Perechyn; 45 = Serednia; 46 = Stavne; 47 = Siurte; 48 = Turi Remeti; 49 = Uzhhorod; 50 = Kholmok; 51 = Chop. **VI.** Khust Rayon: 52 = Bilky; 53 = Vyshkovo; 54 = Horinchovo; 55 = Dovhe; 56 = Drahovo; 57 = Zarichchia; 58 = Irshava; 59 = Keretsky; 60 = Kolochava; 61 = Mizhhirla; 62 = Pylypets; 63 = Synevyr; 64 = Khust. Based on the results of the 2001 All-Ukrainian Census. *Source:* pop-stat.mashke.org/ukraine-census-2001-lang/zakarpatska.htm 2024.

At the same time, ethnically Romanian settlements in Zakarpattia Oblast, with the exception of the village of Plaiuts, which were previously part of both Rakhiv and Tyachiv rayons, now form one Solotvyno community, which is fully in line with their wishes. Since the formation of territorial communities has been largely voluntary, it has generally created favourable conditions for access to new centres, which now have more grounds to become larger centres of socio-economic

development. At the same time, distances to new centres have increased, and a number of settlements have lost the status of village council centres, which in many cases is perceived negatively by the local population.

The consideration of the linguistic and ethnic principle in the formation of territorial communities is reflected in a significant decrease in the average index of linguo-settlement mosaicism per community compared to similar indicators for rayons by 2020. The corresponding

indices calculated on the basis of the 2001 All-Ukrainian Population Census data at the oblast level were 0.327 and 0.264. By comparison, the indices for ethnic and settlement mosaicism were 0.337 and 0.254, i.e. the difference was insignificant and is mainly due to the significant proportion of Gypsies (Roma) who use the language of the local majority, mainly Hungarian or Ukrainian, as their mother tongue. As noted above, we chose to use language data because it is more readily available through settlement.

The weighted average index of linguistic mosaicism in the old rayons of Zakarpattia Oblast, according to population, was 0.255, and the index of linguistic settlement was 0.145, i.e. at the rayon level the indices were 21.8 and 44.8 percent lower, respectively. The creation of smaller territorial communities in terms of size and population objectively contributes to the reduction of linguistic and ethnic diversity within them. In Zakarpattia, the average index of linguistic mosaicism for territorial communities was 0.175, which is 31.7 percent lower than the average for rayons. Weighted by the number of population average indicator of linguo-settlement mosaicism decreased even more, by 50.7 percent to 0.072, during the transition to territorial communities, which also confirms the consideration of the linguistic and ethnic factor in the formation of communities in the oblast.

However, the latter statement may be questioned since, as noted above, the reduction in the size of administrative units itself contributes to a reduction in linguistic and settlement mosaicism. In order to clarify the role of the ethnic factor, a hypothetical merger of settlements in Uzhhorod Rayon (a typical multi-ethnic district was chosen) into communities was carried out, taking into account only the territorial principle. The settlements were merged using cluster analysis based on their geographical coordinates (hierarchical cluster analysis, measure – Squared Euclidean Distance, method – between-groups linkage), without taking into account ethno-linguistic composition. The settlements of Uzhhorod Rayon were grouped into 7 communities (according to

their actual number). The average weighted index of linguistic and settlement mosaicism decreased to only 0.313, i.e. by 31.1 percent compared to the corresponding indicator of the rayon. In reality, the linguistic and settlement mosaicism in the transition to communities decreased much more radically, to 0.099, i.e. by 78.3 percent (see *Table 1*), emphasizing the role of the ethnolinguistic factor in the formation of communities.

Changes in the indices of linguistic and linguistic-settlement mosaicism also allow us to assess the extent to which the linguistic and ethnic factor is taken into account in the formation of communities at the rayon level. It was most fully taken into account in the formation of communities in the former Vynohradiv, Rakhiv, Tiachiv and Uzhhorod rayons, where the indices decreased the most, especially the index of linguo-settlement mosaicism, which decreased by more than 60 percent (see *Table 1*).

The ethno-geographical factor also partially influenced the new rayon division. While the previous draft of the administrative-territorial division of the Zakarpattia Oblast did not provide for the allocation of a separate Berehove Rayon, such a rayon was formed in view of the position of Hungarian NGOs and Hungarian government agencies. It included all ethnically Hungarian settlements of the former Berehove and Vynohradiv rayons, but with several Ukrainian settlements. This was a compromise solution, as ethnic Hungarians raised the issue of creating a rayon based on all ethnic Hungarian settlements in the oblast, while some Ukrainian political circles opposed the creation of a rayon with its centre in Berehove. The ethno-geographic factor also influenced the configuration of the Tiachiv Rayon, which included several Romanian villages from the former Rakhiv Rayon, and the configuration of the Uzhhorod Rayon, which included the Hungarian village of Chomonyn from Mukachevo Rayon. It is important to note that the reconfiguration of the new rayons in Zakarpattia Oblast has only slightly changed the distances from ethnic minority villages to rayon centres.

Analysis of the conformity of the newly established administrative and territorial units and areas of settlement of ethnic minorities in Chernivtsi Oblast

Within Chernivtsi Oblast, there are areas of compact settlement of two related ethnic minorities – Romanians and Moldovans. In modern conditions, there is a self-awareness of their unity, but in the 2001 census, the Romanian and Moldovan languages and identities were recorded separately. According to the results of this census, ethnic Romanians constituted the majority in the former Hertsa Rayon (91.5%, with 92.2% speaking Romanian as their mother tongue), as well as a relatively significant share in the former Hlyboka (45.3% and 40.1%) and Storozhynets (36.8% and 35.4%) rayons, with Moldovans constituting the majority in the former Novoselytsia Rayon (57.5% and 54.7%) (Table 2). In Chernivtsi Oblast, there were 50 settlements with a majority Romanian-speaking population: there are 23 settlements in Hertsa Rayon, 16 in Hlyboka Rayon, 10 in Storozhynets Rayon, and one village in Novoselytsia Rayon.

Most of the population in 24 villages of the former Novoselytsia Rayon, one village of Hlyboka, Khotyn and Sokyriany rayons named Moldovan as their native language (see pop-stat.mashke.org 2024).

As a result of the administrative reform in Chernivtsi Oblast, instead of 11 rayons (Vyzhnytsia, Hertsa, Hlyboka, Zastavna, Kelmentsi, Kitsman, Novoselytsia, Putyla, Sokiriansk, Storozhynets, Khotyn), three new ones were formed (Vyzhnytsia, Chernivtsi, Dnistrovskiyi). In fact, all densely populated Romanian and Moldovan villages, except for Mamalyha community, are part of Chernivtsi Rayon (Figure 2) that generally meets their interests in the light of preserving national and cultural identity. Considering the settlement of ethnic minorities, 12 territorial communities with a significant predominance of representatives of the Romanian and Moldovan minorities were also organised (Hertsa urban, Krasnoilsk rural, Boianivka, Vanchykyvtsi, Voloka, Karapchiv, Ostrytsia, Petrivtsi, Suchevely, Terebleche, Chudei

rural communities in Chernivtsi Rayon, Mamalyha in Dnistrovskiyi Rayon – see Figure 2). At the same time, due to the location of certain settlements, Novoselytsia urban, Kamianske, Mahala, Tarashany and Toporivtsi rural communities are ethnically mixed. The ethnic peculiarities of individual settlements in these communities were considered when creating starosta districts (part of a territorial community having its own officer delegated by a community council). The centres of territorial communities with a predominant or significant share of ethnic minorities are characterised by adequate accessibility to adjacent settlements and have the appropriate social and cultural infrastructure to meet the needs of the population.

In 2001, the index of ethnic mosaicism in Chernivtsi Oblast was higher than in Zakarpattia Oblast (0.414 vs. 0.342), while ethno-settlement mosaicism was slightly lower (0.323 vs. 0.336). The significant difference between ethnic and ethno-settlement mosaicism is explained by the difference between the share of ethnic minorities and the share of settlements where minorities predominate. As for linguistic and linguistic-settlement mosaicism, they were clearly higher in Chernivtsi Oblast (0.408 and 0.342, compared to the corresponding Zakarpattia indicators of 0.327 and 0.264).

The average values of linguistic and linguistic-settlement mosaicism of the former rayons of Chernivtsi Oblast (0.277 and 0.147), weighted by population, are significantly lower than the oblast indicators, which indicates that the linguistic and ethnic principle was considered to some extent when creating them. With the transition to territorial communities, the average linguistic mosaicism of the oblast decreased to 0.224 (by 19.0%), and the linguistic settlement mosaicism to 0.102 (by 30.6% – see Table 2). In other words, linguistic and ethnic principles are taken into account in the creation of communities, but to a lesser extent compared to Zakarpattia Oblast. The objective reason for this is that ethnic minorities are less densely populated in Bukovyna (see Figure 2).

Table 2. Some indicators of the settlement of ethno-linguistic minorities in Cherniotsi Oblast by rayons before the 2020 administrative reform*

Administrative rayons and cities of regional significance (before 2020)	Share of population with Romanian mother tongue, %	Share of population with Moldovan mother tongue, %	Share of settlements with a Romanian-speaking majority in the total number of settlements, %	Share of settlements with a Moldovan-speaking majority in the total number of settlements, %	Index of linguistic mosaicism of former rayons	The index of linguo-settlement mosaicism of former rayons	Average index of linguistic mosaicism of territorial communities of former rayons	Average index of linguo-settlement mosaicism of territorial communities of former rayons	Percentage difference between the indices of linguo-settlement mosaicism of former rayons and territorial communities	Percentage difference between the indices of linguo-settlement mosaicism of former rayons and territorial communities
Vyzhnytsia	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.029	0.000	0.029	0.000	-0.2	0.0
Hertsia	92.2	1.6	95.5	0.0	0.147	0.087	0.150	0.077	2.4	-11.2
Hlyboka	40.1	5.9	46.2	5.1	0.559	0.571	0.404	0.410	-27.8	-28.2
Zastavna	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.016	0.000	0.016	0.000	2.0	0.0
Kelmentsi	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.044	0.000	0.044	0.000	0.0	0.0
Kitsman	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.023	0.000	0.022	0.000	-3.1	0.0
Novoselytsia	9.3	54.7	4.9	63.4	0.576	0.495	0.496	0.428	-13.9	-13.4
Putyla	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.011	0.000	0.011	0.000	0.0	0.0
Sokyriany	0.0	3.0	0.0	3.4	0.177	0.131	0.172	0.111	-3.3	-15.3
Storozhynets	35.4	0.2	23.1	0.0	0.497	0.394	0.211	0.145	-57.6	-63.3
Khotyn	0.1	6.9	0.0	2.5	0.157	0.049	0.116	0.067	-26.0	38.0
Chernivtsi	3.3	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.348	0.000	0.348	0.000	0.0	0.0
Novodnistrovsk	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.248	0.000	0.248	0.000	0.0	0.0
Average for the oblast	11.8	6.8	12.0	7.2	0.277	0.147	0.224	0.102	-19.0	-30.6

*Calculated by the authors based on the data of the 2001 All-Ukrainian Population Census.

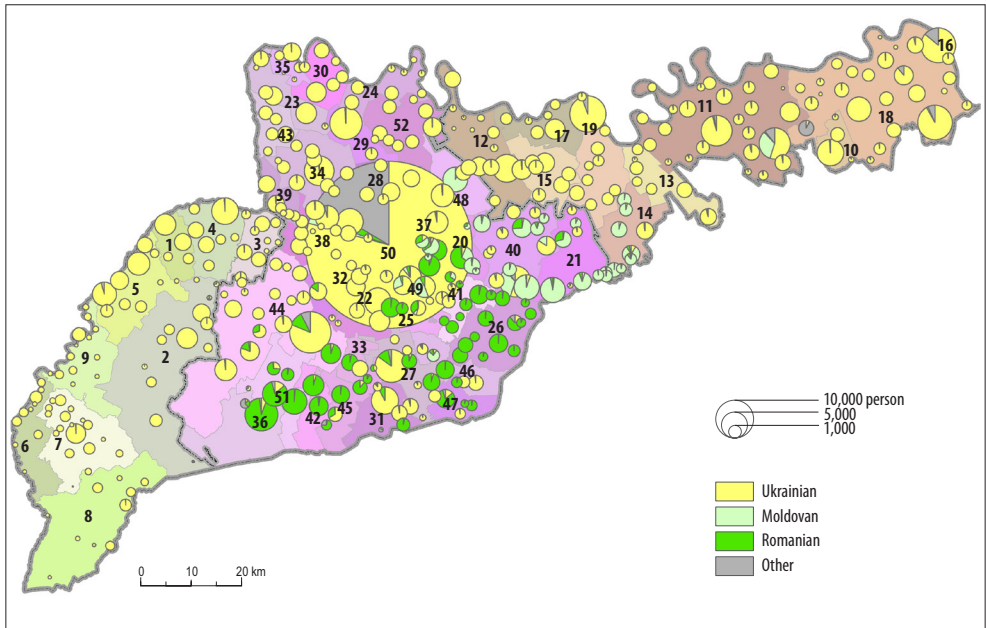


Fig. 2. The composition of the population of the settlements by native language in rayons and territorial communities of Chernivtsi Oblast formed as a result of the 2020 administrative reform. Territorial communities (1–52) of the newly created rayons: **I.** Vyzhnytsia Rayon: 1 = Banyliv; 2 = Berehomet; 3 = Brusnytsia; 4 = Vashkivtsi; 5 = Vyzhnytsia; 6 = Koniатыn; 7 = Putyla; 8 = Seliатыn; 9 = Ust-Putyla; **II.** Dnistrovskiy Rayon: 10 = Vashkivtsi; 11 = Kelmentsi; 12 = Klishkivtsi; 13 = Livyntsi; 14 = Mamalyha; 15 = Nedoboivtsi; 16 = Novodnistrovsk; 17 = Rukshyn; 18 = Sokyriany; 19 = Khotyn. **III.** Chernivtsi Rayon: 20 = Boiany; 21 = Vanchykvitsi; 22 = Velykyi Kuchuriv; 23 = Verenchanka; 24 = Vikno; 25 = Voloka; 26 = hertsа, 27 = Hlyboka, 28 = Horishni Sherivtsi; 29 = Zastavna; 30 = Kadubivtsi; 31 = Kamianec; 32 = Kamianske; 33 = Karapchiv; 34 = Kitsman; 35 = Kostryzhivka; 36 = Krasnoilsk; 37 = Mahala; 38 = Mamaivtsi; 39 = Nepolokivtsi; 40 = Novoselytsia; 41 = Ostrytsia; 42 = Petrivtsi; 43 = Stavchany; 44 = Storozhynets; 45 = Suchevely, 46 = Tarashany; 47 = Terebleche; 48 = Toporivtsi; 49 = Chahor; 50 = Chernivtsi; 51 = Chudei; 52 = Yurkivtsi. Based on the results of the 2001 All-Ukrainian Population Census.

Source: pop-stat.mashke.org/ukraine-census-2001-lang/cernivecka.htm 2024

The average values of the indices of language and language-settlement mosaicism in the transition to municipalities decreased the most in the former rayons of Storozhynets and Hlyboka with a mixed ethno-linguistic composition of the population (the share of Romanian-speaking population in 2001 was 35.4 and 40.1%, respectively). In the case of the old Novoselytsia Rayon, where the mosaicism of the population was also high (54.7% mentioned Moldovan as their mother tongue, 9.3% Romanian), the language and settlement mosaicism decreased by only 13–14 percent as a result of the reform.

Analysis of the conformity of the newly established administrative and territorial units and areas of settlement of ethnic minorities in Odesa Oblast

The most ethnically mosaic in Ukraine is the south-western part of Odesa Oblast, i.e. the historical region of Budzhak (ethnic mosaic index in 2001 was 0.735, ethnic settlement index was 0.653, linguistic index was 0.728, linguistic settlement index was 0.673) with areas of compact settlement of the following ethnic minorities: Bulgarians, Moldovans, Russians (sub-ethnic group of Old Believers), and Gagauzes. The former rayons of the region

were also characterised by a high degree of linguistic and ethnic mosaicism: according to the 2001 data, the indicators of language and language-settlement mosaicism did not reach the value of 0.5 only in Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy and Tatarbunary rayons (*Table 3*).

The largest area is inhabited by the Bulgarian ethnic group (*Figure 3*), which, according to the 2001 census, constituted an absolute majority in the former Bolhrad Rayon (60.8% of ethnic Bulgarians, 57.5% of the population with Bulgarian as their mother tongue), a relative majority in Artsyz (39.0 and 34.0%, respectively), and Tarutyne (37.5 and 31.7%). There are 49 settlements in the south-western part of Odesa Oblast with a Bulgarian-speaking population majority: 19 villages in the former Tarutyne Rayon, 13 settlements in Bolhrad Rayon, 7 villages in Artsyz Rayon, 6 settlements in Izmail Rayon, 2 villages in Sarata Rayon and 2 in Tatarbunary Rayon (see pop-stat.mashke.org 2024).

The autochthonous ethnic Russian population (a sub-ethnic group of Old Believers) lived mostly along the Danube and in the central part of Budzhak (see *Figure 3*). In 2001, the Russian-speaking majority was recorded in 44 settlements, including the cities of Izmail and Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy, 11 settlements of the former Tarutyne, 9 settlements of Artsyz, 6 of Kiliia, 5 of Sarata, 5 villages of Izmail, 3 of Bolhrad, 2 of Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy, and 1 of Tatarbunary rayons.

The settlement of ethnic Moldovans in Odesa Oblast is formed both by a compact area in the south-western part of Budzhak region and by separate settlements in its northern (Podil) part. The largest number of villages (26) with a predominance of Moldovan-speaking population were in Budzhak part of Odesa Oblast, in the former Reni (5 villages), Sarata (5), Tarutyne (5), Izmail (4), Kiliia (4), Tatarbunary (2) and Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy (1) rayons (*Figure 3*). In the northern part of the oblast, ethnic Moldovans constituted the majority in 5 villages of Podil Rayon (Hyderym, Kazbeky, Oleksandrivka, Lypetske, Stara Kulna), Tochylove village of Ananiv Rayon and Rozivka village of Okny Rayon.

Only in 5 villages of Odesa Oblast the majority of the population were Gagauzes: Dmytrivka, Oleksandrivka, Vinohradivka (former Bolhrad Rayon), Kotlovyna (former Reni Rayon), Stari Troyany (former Kiliia Rayon) (see pop-stat.mashke.org 2024).

Despite the significant mosaic of ethnic minority settlements in the south-western (Budzhak) part of Odesa Oblast, their wishes in this region were partially taken into account during the administrative reform. This concerns, first, the rayon division, as according to the proposals of Bulgarian NGOs, Bolhrad Rayon was created, which included settlements with a majority of ethnic Bulgarians in three former rayons – Artsyz, Bolhrad, Tarutyne. The majority of territorial communities in this rayon are also dominated by ethnic Bulgarians (see *Figure 3*).

The areas of residence of other autochthonous ethnic minorities (Gagauz, Moldovans, Russian Old Believers) had an area and population that did not meet the criteria of a rayon, so only in some cases in the newly created Izmail Rayon were territorial communities with a predominance of one ethnic minority organised on their basis. Thus, outside Bolhrad Rayon, only two communities can be called predominantly ethnically homogeneous: Reni urban community with a predominance of ethnic Moldovans and Vylkove urban community with a predominance of Russian Old Believers. Since the Gagauz villages are not compactly located, there were no prerequisites for the creation of territorial communities with a predominance of Gagauz people in the region. Therefore, given the close proximity of settlements of different ethnic composition, a number of territorial communities in areas where ethnic minorities are settled could not but have an ethnically mixed character.

Difficulties in taking into account the ethnolinguistic principle in the formation of territorial communities in Budzhak are also reflected in changes in the mosaic indicators: weighted average language and language-settlement mosaicism in the transition from

Table 3. Some indicators of the settlement of ethno-linguistic minorities of Budzhak part of Odesa Oblast by raions before the 2020 administrative reform*

Administrative raions and cities of regional significance (before 2020)	Share of the population with Russian as their mother tongue, %	Share of the population with Bulgarian as their mother tongue, %	Share of population with Moldovan as their mother tongue, %	Share of the population with Gagauz as their mother tongue, %	Share of settlements with a Russian-speaking majority in the total number of settlements, %	Share of settlements with a Bulgarian-speaking majority in the total number of settlements, %	Share of settlements with a Moldovan-speaking majority in the total number of settlements, %	Share of settlements with a Gagauz-speaking majority in the total number of settlements, %	Index of linguistic mosaicism of former raions	The index of linguo-settlement mosaicism of former raions	Average index of linguistic mosaicism of territorial communities of former raions	Average index of linguo-settlement mosaicism of territorial communities of former raions	Percentage difference between the indices of linguistic mosaicism of former raions and territorial communities	Percentage difference between the indices of linguistic mosaicism of former raions and territorial communities
Artsyz	42.8	34.0	3.1	0.8	46.2	30.8	0.0	0.0	0.667	0.639	0.622	0.532	-6.8	-16.8
Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi	13.0	0.5	5.0	0.2	3.5	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.328	0.101	0.432	0.065	31.4	-35.6
Bolhrad	16.3	57.5	1.0	17.8	9.1	59.1	0.0	13.6	0.608	0.603	0.535	0.436	-11.9	-27.8
Izmail	21.6	24.9	26.2	0.3	26.1	34.8	17.4	0.0	0.754	0.733	0.531	0.544	-29.6	-25.8
Kiliia	44.2	2.5	12.8	3.7	36.8	5.3	21.1	5.3	0.656	0.715	0.599	0.582	-8.6	-18.6
Reni	37.9	6.6	40.8	6.8	0.0	12.5	62.5	12.5	0.676	0.563	0.676	0.563	0.0	0.0
Sarata	21.4	19.1	17.6	0.1	15.4	7.7	15.4	0.0	0.716	0.568	0.553	0.429	-22.8	-24.5
Tarutynе	32.9	31.7	12.7	3.3	28.0	38.0	16.0	0.0	0.739	0.719	0.715	0.673	-3.2	-6.4
Tatarbunary	7.7	10.7	8.5	0.1	2.8	5.6	5.6	0.0	0.451	0.252	0.418	0.410	-7.4	62.8
Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi	54.3	1.6	1.2	0.2	66.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.529	0.444	-	-	-	-
Izmail	74.2	4.6	1.8	0.4	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.414	0.000	-	-	-	-
Average for the region	35.2	17.9	10.3	3.4	18.7	19.4	10.6	1.8	0.581	0.461	0.543	0.434	-6.5	-5.9

* Calculated by the authors based on the data of the 2001 All-Ukrainian Population Census.

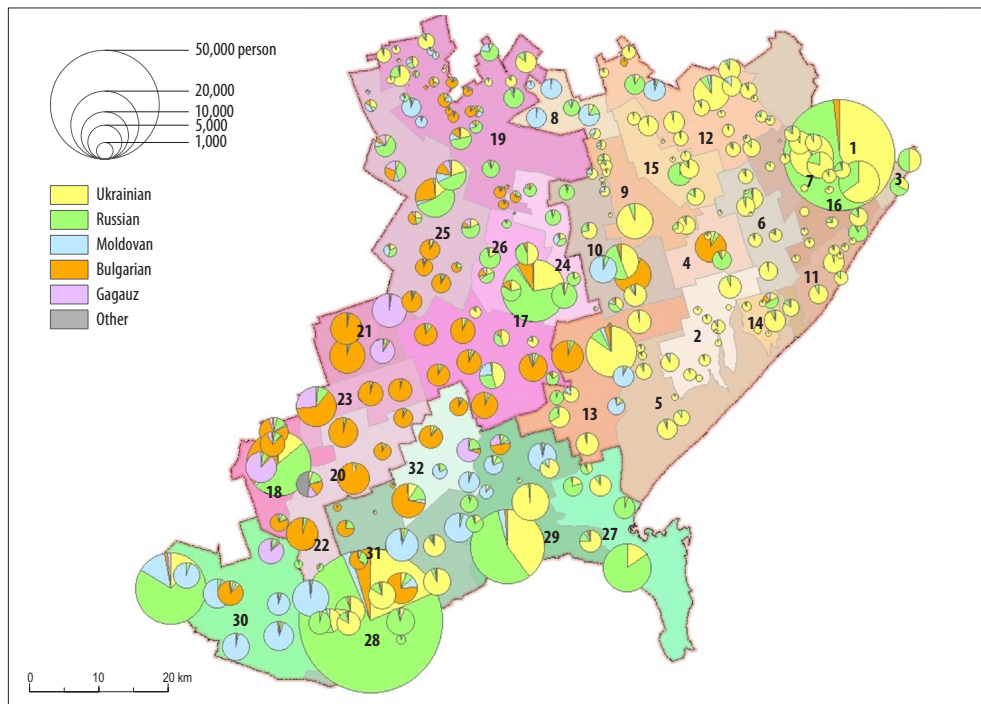


Fig. 3. The composition of the population of the settlements of rayons and territorial communities by native language in the southern part of Odesa Oblast formed as a result of the 2020 administrative reform. Territorial communities (1–32) of the newly created rayons: **I.** Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi Rayon: 1 = Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi; 2 = Dyviziya; 3 = Karolino-Buhaz; 4 = Kulevcha; 5 = Lyman; 6 = Marazliivka; 7 = Moloha; 8 = Petropavlivske; 9 = Plakhtiivka; 10 = Sarata; 11 = Serhiivka; 12 = Starokozache; 13 = Tatarbunary; 14 = Tuzly; 15 = Uspenivka; 16 = Shabo. **II.** Bolhrad Rayon: 17 = Artsyz; 18 = Bolhrad; 19 = Borodino; 20 = Vasylivka; 21 = Horodnie; 22 = Krynychne; 23 = Kubei; 24 = Pavlivka; 25 = Tarutyn; 26 = Teplytsia. **III.** Izmail Rayon: 27 = Vylkove; 28 = Izmail; 29 = Kiliia; 30 = Reni; 31 = Safiany; 32 = Suvorove. Based on the results of the 2001 All-Ukrainian Population Census. Source: pop-stat.mashke.org/ukraine-census-2001-lang/odeska.htm, 2024.

previous rayons to communities decreased by only 6 percent (see *Table 3*). A significant decrease in linguistic mosaicism was recorded only during the reorganisation of Izmail and Sarata rayons. It is interesting to note the significant increase in the average indicator of linguo-settlement mosaicism in Tatarbunary Rayon. This is due to the significant influence on the weighted average of the most populated Tatarbunary territorial community, which included all settlements of the former rayon with a predominance of ethnic minorities, and therefore has a high index of linguo-settlement mosaicism (0.584).

Given the significant powers granted to territorial communities in the process of administrative-territorial reform, it can be concluded that the creation of such administrative units with a predominance of ethnic minority populations provides the prerequisites for the organisation of their self-government, including the election of leaders, budget allocation and the formation of a programme of socio-economic development. But the true impact of the administrative-territorial reform on the livelihoods of ethnic minorities will be revealed over time, primarily depending on the capacity of communities to fill the provided framework with content.

Conclusions

In the process of administrative-territorial reform in Ukraine, given the voluntary nature of the first stage of merging settlements, ethnic minority populations compactly located in Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi and Odesa oblasts were given the opportunity to organise majority-ethnic communities and elect governing bodies, which in most cases was successfully implemented. If certain settlements were remote from the main compact settlement area of the respective ethnic minority, they were in most cases entitled to create their own separate starosta district.

As the Ukrainian experience shows ensuring greater correspondence between the units of the administrative-territorial structure and areas of compact settlement of ethnic minorities is necessary and feasible only for compactly located settlements with a predominance of ethnic minority population and taking into account the criteria and procedure for the formation of administrative units. At the same time, the self-government of dispersed ethnic minorities formed in the process of migration can only be realised in an extra-territorial form.

The distinctive settlement patterns of ethnic minorities and the wishes of their community organisations were only partially taken into account in the formation of new rayons and the selection of rayon centres, which in most cases was limited by the defined criteria for the size of new administrative units and political reasons.

Administrative-territorial reforms can be an effective tool to meet the cultural and economic needs of ethnic minorities and to expand their rights if they are aimed at reducing the ethnic mosaicism of the newly formed units and giving them greater powers in the process of decentralisation.

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