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Regulation of bilingualism: between Soviet legacies and nationalizing patterns

republics, including the adoption of the laws on languages. These new laws proclaimed titular languages as the official tongues, whilst Russian became the language of interethnic communication which emphasized its important and multifaceted role (Osipov 2016). After the USSR collapse, all three countries confirmed special status of the Russian language in their constitutions and some specific laws. In 1995, in Belarus Russian language has obtained equal legal status with Belarusian which has contributed to the development of sort of abnormal official bilingualism (Vasilevich 2015). While Ukrainian has remained the only official language of Ukraine throughout its independence, the status of the Russian language at the national and regional levels has been a subject of heated debates, frequently used by domestic and external actors. Moldovan situation is characterized by domination of the Russian language in Gagauzia and Transnistria, while entire Moldova faces evolution of the institutionalized approach towards the name of the titular language (Moldovan v. Romanian).

Based on the historical evolution of the language-related laws in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, this paper analyzes practices and patterns of formal and informal bilingualism (titular language v. Russian language) in these three countries.