



# DEVELOPMENTS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS IN THE GĂGĂUZIA REGION

ADEPT ASSOCIATION  
MARCH 2026



This product was developed by the ADEPT Association, with the support of “Strengthening Democratic Resilience in Moldova” project, implemented by UNDP Moldova and funded by Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. The content of this material belongs to the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations, including UNDP, its member states, or the donors.

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## I. Introduction

The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (Găgăuzia region) has been experiencing, since the autumn of 2025, one of the most prolonged and complex institutional crises in its history. On the surface, it appears as a technical and legal dispute regarding the organization of regular elections for the People's Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG), whose mandate expired on November 12, 2025. At a deeper level, however, the crisis reflects structural tensions accumulated over decades between regional autonomy and the constitutional framework of the Moldovan unitary state—tensions further amplified by internal political factors and, to some extent, by external influences.

The crisis began with a legal-administrative deadlock: amendments introduced by the People's Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) in 2023 to the regional Electoral Code abolished the permanent status of Gagauzia's central electoral body—the Central Electoral Commission of Gagauzia (CECG)—and created an incompatibility with the provisions of the new Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, adopted in 2022. Challenged by the Comrat Territorial Office of the State Chancellery (CTOSC) and resolved definitively by the Supreme Court of Justice only after the expiration of the PAG's mandate, this dispute made it impossible to organize elections within the timeframes set by regional legislation.

While the first phase of the crisis (August–November 2025) revolved around the need to restore the permanent status of the CECG, the second phase (December 2025–February 2026) brought to the forefront an apparently formal dispute with systemic implications: the name of the regional electoral body—Central Electoral **Commission** of Gagauzia, in accordance with Law No. 344/1994 on the special legal status of Gagauzia, or Central Electoral **Council** of Gagauzia, in accordance with the revised Electoral Code of 2022. Behind this lexical dispute lies a conflict of principles regarding the hierarchy of normative acts and the degree of regulatory autonomy of Găgăuzia region vis-à-vis national legislation.

The crisis entered its third phase in March 2026, as it escalated across multiple fronts simultaneously: the PAG set the election date for June 21, 2026, establishing an electoral body whose legal basis remains contested; the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) referred to the Constitutional Court the issue of the constitutionality of certain PAG powers provided for in Law No. 344/1994; and the Comrat Territorial Office of the State Chancellery announced its intention to challenge the administrative acts of the PAG concerning the establishment of the electoral body and the setting of the election date. In this context, the likelihood that elections will not take place on the announced date is higher than the likelihood that they will proceed as planned.

**This analytical note aims** to clarify the legal and administrative causes of the institutional crisis in Găgăuzia region, the obstacles hindering a resolution, and the solutions identified by the competent national institutions. The note does not separately analyze the political determinants of the crisis, although they are referenced where they influence the behavior of the actors involved.

**The structure of the** note is organized into five sections. *Section I* presents the general context of the crisis. *Section II* describes the mechanisms of the electoral deadlock: the structural causes, the chronology of the dispute between the PAG and the CTOSC, and the emergence of the second round of judicial conflict. *Section III* analyzes the PAG's efforts to overcome the impasse and the solutions proposed by the

Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova (CEC)—including three distinct scenarios, with varying degrees of legitimacy and political risk. *Section IV* examines developments in the current phase of the crisis: the PAG’s appeal to international organizations, the referral to the Constitutional Court by the Ministry of Justice, and the persistence of the deadlock despite the resumption of parliamentary dialogue. *Section V* formulates conclusions regarding the nature, deepening, and risk of the institutional crisis evolving into a profound political crisis, with consequences extending beyond the regional electoral framework.

## **II. Blocking of procedures for organizing the election of deputies to the People’s Assembly**

### **2.1. Causes of the electoral deadlock**

According to [Article 45](#) of the Regulation of Gagauzia, as amended by the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) on [March 15, 2024](#), elections for the new legislature of the People’s Assembly were to be held on November 16, 2025—the first Sunday following the expiration of the four-year mandate of the [7th legislature of the PAG](#).

The same amendments also regulated the powers of the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) during the transitional period between the expiration of its mandate and the installation of the new composition. According to Article 46, during this period the PAG may not amend the Regulation of Gagauzia, nor adopt, modify, or repeal local laws. However, the institution retains the right to issue decisions and resolutions, and to make appointments in accordance with the law.

The deadlock in organizing the election of deputies to the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) arose due to amendments to the [Electoral Code of Gagauzia](#) adopted in December 2023, whereby the regional electoral body—the Central Electoral Commission of Gagauzia (CECG)—was stripped of its status as a permanent institution on the grounds of [saving budgetary resources](#), and was consequently dissolved to be convened only during electoral periods. The Central Electoral Commission (CEC) [reacted](#) to the dissolution of the CECG, stating that the decision was aimed at disrupting the natural relationship between the CECG and the CEC, describing it as an act of [“purging inconvenient staff.”](#) Specifically, [the amendments](#) in question targeted:

- the removal, from paragraph (7) of Article 16, of the phrase referring to the “*permanent activity*” of the CECG;
- the deletion, through replacement in paragraph (10) of Article 17, of the phrase “*the mandate of the CECG is 5 years*”;
- the replacement of the provisions of paragraph (11) of Article 17 with the phrase “*the mandate of the CECG is for the electoral period.*”

The Comrat Territorial Office of the State Chancellery (CTOSC) challenged the aforementioned amendments before the Court of Appeal, arguing that, by modifying the Electoral Code of Gagauzia, the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) disregarded the legal provisions governing the normative acts of the Republic of Moldova. The CTOSC invoked violations of the legal provisions set out in:

- Article 109(3) of the [Constitution of the Republic of Moldova](#): “The application of the stated principles [the basic principles of local public administration] may not affect the character of the state as a unitary state”;
- Article 111(6) of the [Constitution of the Republic of Moldova](#): “Control over the observance of the legislation of the Republic of Moldova in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia shall be exercised by the Government, under the conditions of the law”;
- Article 46(2)(c) of [Law No. 136](#) of July 7, 2017 on the Government: “The Government’s representative in the territory shall exercise control over the activity of local public administration authorities in accordance with the legislation in force.”

Until the final decision of the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) on the CTOSC’s appeal was adopted, the mandate of the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) expired on November 12, 2025. Consequently, it became impossible to amend the provisions of the Electoral Code of Gagauzia in order to bring them into conformity with national electoral legislation.

## **2.2. Chronology of the dispute between the PAG and the CTOSC**

On March 13, 2024, the Comrat Territorial Office of the State Chancellery (CTOSC) filed an administrative complaint with the Comrat Court of Appeal (CCA) against the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG), challenging the amendment concerning the dissolution of the permanent CECG, as this measure undermines the electoral rights of Gagauzia’s residents, creating dysfunctions such as:

- the impossibility of initiating local referendums, which cannot be organized in the absence of a permanent electoral body;
- the impossibility of organizing by-elections to fill vacant seats of deputies in the PAG arising for various reasons;
- the impossibility of exercising the competences provided for in Article 25 of the Electoral Code of Gagauzia, which refer to the functions of a permanent body during intervals between elections, not to an ad hoc body established only for the electoral period of regular elections;
- the violation of legal provisions regarding the status of persons holding public dignity offices—namely, the Chairperson and Secretary of the CECG (see [Law No. 336](#) of December 8, 2022)—whose mandates cannot be arbitrarily terminated, in accordance

with [Articles 7 and 9](#) of Law No. 199 of July 16, 2010 on the status of persons holding public dignity offices;

- the violation of the provisions of [Article 7 of Law No. 100](#) of December 22, 2017 on normative acts, concerning the correlation of normative acts and the hierarchy of their legal force, etc.

**On June 5, 2024**—more than a year before the start of the electoral period for the organization of regular PAG elections—the Comrat Court of Appeal (CCA) ruled in favor of the CTOSC, ordering the restoration of the permanent CECG and its full composition. In turn, the CECG challenged the CCA’s decision on **July 23, 2024**, waiting for the final ruling of the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ). The uncertainty surrounding the SCJ’s verdict lasted for more than a year, with the final decision being adopted only after the expiration of the PAG’s mandate on November 12, 2025.

**On August 15, 2025**—three months before the date when the electoral period for organizing regular elections for the new legislature should have begun—[the PAG convened in plenary session](#) to acknowledge the emergence of an institutional crisis, as the regular elections could no longer be organized within the timeframes set by regional legislation. The main findings, arguments, and proposals of the PAG deputies can be summarized as follows:

- **the date for the election** of PAG deputies can only be set after the adoption of the final decision of the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) regarding the restoration of the permanent CECG;
- **the proposal to appeal to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of the Republic of Moldova** for the establishment of a provisional electoral body in Gagauzia, for the purpose of organizing and conducting the PAG elections, is not acceptable, as this solution would affect the legitimacy of both the PAG and the Executive Committee;
- **the organization of PAG elections is, in principle, impossible** due to changes made to the map of judicial courts by [Law No. 135 of June 13, 2024](#). According to PAG deputies, following the revision of the judicial map, Comrat no longer has its own Court of Appeal—which would have been responsible for validating election results—and in its absence, the elections cannot be organized. Under these circumstances, PAG deputies decided to address a request to the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova to restore the previous structure of the judicial map. This argument was countered by the fact that the revised judicial map explicitly provides that the South Court of Appeal (SCA), with its main seat in Cahul, has a secondary seat in Comrat (see Annex 3 of the aforementioned law).

**On November 27, 2025**, a panel of three judges of the [Supreme Court of Justice](#) (SCJ) unanimously rejected the appeal filed by the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) on July 23, 2024, upholding the decision of the Comrat Court of Appeal (CCA), which obliged the PAG to restore the functionality of the Central Electoral Commission of Gagauzia (CECG) and its nominal composition. On the same day, a plenary session of the PAG [was convened](#), which decided to:

- take note of the final decision of the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) upholding the ruling of the Comrat Court of Appeal (CCA) regarding the restoration of the permanent CECG and its composition;
- set the date of the elections for March 22, 2026;
- convene, no later than December 22, 2025, a session of the PAG to fill the vacancies in the composition of the permanent CECG.

**On December 16, 2025**, a plenary session of the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) [was convened](#), during which the following actions were taken:

- the resignation of three members of the restored CECG, including the Chairperson and the Secretary of the institution, was approved;
- the composition of the permanent CECG was supplemented with four members.

**On December 17, 2025**, the renewed Central Electoral Commission of Gagauzia (CECG) began its activity by [re-electing](#) its leadership bodies. Over the course of approximately one month, the CECG managed to adopt a total of [21 decisions](#) regarding the organization of the electoral process and announced the start of the submission of applications for the nomination of candidates for the March 22, 2026 elections.

**On January 21, 2026**, the Central Electoral Commission of Gagauzia (CECG) issued a [notice regarding the impossibility of organizing the elections](#) of deputies to the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG), and suspended its activity.

### **2.3. Second phase of the dispute between the PAG and the CTOSC**

The second round of the dispute began a few weeks before the CECG announced the suspension of its activity. On **December 30, 2025**, the Comrat Territorial Office of the State Chancellery (CTOSC) filed an administrative lawsuit with the South Court of Appeal (SCA) against the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG), challenging the normative acts concerning the appointment and completion of the CECG’s new members. The SCA rejected the request, and on January 19, 2026, the CTOSC filed an appeal with the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ), invoking repeated violations committed by the PAG:

- **the deliberate disregard by the PAG**, in its adopted decisions, of the fact that the electoral body in Gagauzia is part of the system of electoral bodies of the Republic of Moldova under the name Central Electoral Council of Gagauzia, and not Central Electoral Commission of Gagauzia. For the CTOSC, it is a matter of principle that within a unified system of electoral bodies, two entities cannot bear the same name;
- **the use**, in PAG decisions, **of terms that are absent** from both national and regional electoral legislation, such as alternate members of electoral bodies;
- **the violation of the principle of the hierarchy of normative acts**, explicitly provided for by the Constitution and national legislation, etc.

The Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) accepted the CTOSC’s appeal for examination, arguing that it does not agree with the South Court of Appeal’s (SCA) refusal to examine the CTOSC’s claim on the grounds that

*“the dispute concerning the name of the electoral body of Gagauzia [Council vs. Commission] does not indicate manifest illegality of the contested administrative acts.”* Consequently, the SCJ decided to suspend the execution of PAG Decisions No. 501 and No. 502 regarding the “completion of the composition of the Central Electoral Commission of ATU Gagauzia” until the substantive examination of the administrative litigation is carried out.

Under the circumstances described, the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) convened an extraordinary session on **January 22, 2026**, to discuss the consequences of the [Supreme Court of Justice \(SCJ\)](#) ruling of January 20, 2026, by which it upheld the cassation appeal of the Comrat Territorial Office of the State Chancellery (CTOSC) regarding the suspension of the PAG’s administrative acts adopted on December 16, 2025—[No. 501-XLI/VII](#) and [No. 502-XLI/VII](#)—concerning the appointment and completion of the CECG’s membership. Taking into account the CECG’s announcement of January 21, 2026, regarding the suspension of its activity, the [PAG adopted a decision](#) to repeal its resolution of November 27, 2025, “On setting the date of elections for the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia,” which had been [scheduled for March 22, 2026](#).

### **III. Obstacles and pathways for overcoming the institutional deadlock**

#### **3.1. Efforts of the PAG to overcome the institutional crisis**

On February 9, 2026, the five-year mandate of the Central Electoral Commission of Gagauzia (CECG) expired; therefore, the suspension by the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) of the PAG decisions of December 16, 2025 no longer had a direct effect on the postponement of the elections. Under these circumstances, the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) proceeded in accordance with the obligation explicitly provided by regional legislation—the appointment of a new composition of the CECG, consisting of nine members. In this regard, on February 13, 2026, a plenary session of the [PAG was convened](#) to discuss ways of overcoming the impasse. The main obstacles identified in this context were as follows:

- the reluctance of the South Court of Appeal (SCA) and the Executive Committee of Gagauzia to nominate three candidates each for the renewed composition of the CECG;
- the lack of compromise regarding the name of the regional electoral body—commission vs. council;
- the existence of discrepancies between the provisions of regional and national electoral legislation, which create confusion in the application of norms;
- the persistence of the risk that the CTOSC will challenge any decisions that do not comply with national legislation, which could lead to the repeated annulment of elections.

Under the circumstances described, the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) decided to broaden its room for maneuver along two tracks: (1) resuming dialogue with the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, and (2) regaining the powers to adopt, amend, and repeal laws despite the expiration of its mandate. To this end, the PAG adopted two decisions:

- on [resuming the activity of the working group](#) involving members of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and the PAG, with a view to identifying possible solutions to overcome the

crisis. It should be noted that previously, in December 2023, the [PAG had decided to suspend the work](#) of the group due to the conflict triggered by the election of Evghenia Guțul as Governor of Gagauzia on behalf of the Șor Party. Evidently, the decision to resume the group's work aimed at finding political solutions, particularly at persuading central authorities to refrain from challenging, through the CTOSC, the decisions of the regional administration. The resumption of dialogue on the parliamentary platform of the working group took place on February 23, 2026, and [focused on electoral processes in Gagauzia](#), with the participation of Members of Parliament, PAG deputies, representatives of the Executive Committee of Gagauzia, and members of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of the Republic of Moldova. Possible solutions and compromises to overcome discrepancies between regional and national electoral legislation were discussed;

- on recognizing as appropriate the appeal lodged by the Executive Committee of Gagauzia against the PAG concerning the annulment of Law of ATU Gagauzia No. 56-XX/VII of March 15, 2024 "[On amendments and additions to the Regulation of Gagauzia](#)", through which the PAG had voluntarily restricted its powers to adopt, amend, or repeal laws after the expiration of its four-year mandate. The decision provides for its submission to the South Court of Appeal (SCA), which, according to PAG deputies, should declare null and void the law through which the PAG limited its own competences, thereby restoring the status quo ante—namely, the situation in which the PAG could adopt local laws even after the expiration of its mandate. This approach by the PAG disregards the norms of legislative drafting, aiming instead to influence a judicial decision and prompt the court to adopt, as soon as possible, a ruling favorable to the political interests of the PAG, irrespective of legal considerations. It is unlikely that the SCA will accept such a request, given its predominantly political nature.

### **3.2. Solutions proposed by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) to overcome the institutional crisis in Gagauzia**

While participating in a series of public debates on overcoming the electoral deadlock in Gagauzia, representatives of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) identified [three possible ways](#) to resolve the impasse at that stage:

- **The first solution**, considered preferable and with the highest degree of legitimacy, would be for the People's Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) to assume a leading role in resolving the crisis, especially since its own decisions led to the current situation. This would involve the possible adoption by the PAG of an administrative act stipulating that the resolution of the crisis can take place on the basis of the provisions [of Law No. 100](#) of December 22, 2017 on normative acts, which establish the hierarchy of such acts and the overcoming of existing contradictions through the application of norms of hierarchically superior laws, as follows:
  - a) the [Constitution of the Republic of Moldova](#), Article 111 "The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia";
  - b) the [Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova](#), Article 155 "Particularities of regional elections," which lists the normative acts on the basis of which regional elections are organized and conducted;

- c) [Law No. 344/1994 on the special legal status of Gagauzia](#), Article 12(3)(d), which provides that local public authorities adopt local laws, including those on the “setting, organization, and conduct of elections of deputies to the People’s Assembly and the approval of the composition of the Central Electoral Commission for conducting elections; setting elections for local public administration authorities in Gagauzia”;
- d) [Local Law No. 28-XXX/I of May 14, 1998 on the Regulation of Gagauzia](#) (as amended on March 15, 2024, Articles 42–57), which refers to the competences of the PAG, including the election of deputies;
- e) [Local Law No. 60-XVII/5 of September 25, 2015, the Electoral Code of Gagauzia](#) (as amended [by Local Law No. 48 of December 26, 2023](#)).

The Central Electoral Commission (CEC) considers that if the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) were to adopt such an administrative act, it would send a very clear message to the Central Electoral Commission of Gagauzia (CECG) and to voters in Gagauzia that a principled understanding has been reached for overcoming the institutional crisis in accordance with the rule of law, through the application of the legal norms set out in the Law on normative acts, based on their hierarchy, as follows:

- a) the Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova and the Law on the special legal status of Gagauzia have the **same hierarchical rank**, as both are organic laws. However, in the electoral field, the **Electoral Code is a special law**; therefore, according to Article 5(3) of the Law on normative acts, it takes precedence in the organization of elections;
- b) the official name of the electoral body in Gagauzia is the Central Electoral **Council** of Gagauzia. The designation “Central Electoral Commission” in Law No. 344/1994 on the special legal status of Gagauzia was a generic one, specific to the period 1991–1997, **when the Republic of Moldova did not have permanent electoral bodies at either the central or regional level**. During that period, similar names for ad hoc electoral bodies did not create confusion, as their activities were time-bound and did not overlap. At the national level, the Central Electoral Commission was established with the adoption of Electoral Code No. 1381 of November 21, 1997, which, under Article 204(6) “Transitional provisions,” explicitly stipulated that “the formation and functioning of electoral bodies not provided for by this Code shall not be permitted.” Consequently, it became necessary for Gagauzia’s electoral body to be integrated into the system of electoral bodies of the Republic of Moldova. This occurred more than 25 years later, with the adoption of the new Electoral Code, which, under Article 17(1), established the hierarchy of electoral bodies in the Republic of Moldova, stipulating in item (6) that **“the Central Electoral Council of Gagauzia is an integral part of the system of electoral bodies of the Republic of Moldova and exercises the powers of the central electoral body in regional elections in accordance with this Code and local normative acts”**;
- c) the competences of the Central Electoral Council of Gagauzia and its relationship with the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) are **fully reflected in Article 36 of the new Electoral Code** of the Republic of Moldova;

- d) **the specific features of organizing regional elections are set out in Article 155 of the new [Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova](#) and take precedence over local electoral norms, as follows:**
- the financing of electoral campaigns of electoral contestants in regional elections, as well as its supervision and control, shall be carried out in accordance with the Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova and local normative acts;
  - electoral lists for regional elections shall be compiled on the basis of the State Register of Voters of the Republic of Moldova;
  - complaints during regional elections shall be examined in accordance with the Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova and local normative acts;
  - national observers in regional elections shall be accredited by the CECG, and international observers—by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC).

These provisions are necessary to ensure the uniform observance of the electoral rights of voters and electoral contestants in both national and regional elections.

**The second solution**, less attractive to regional political elites, would be for the Central Electoral Commission (CEC)—the main specialized state institution in the electoral field—to adopt an administrative act imposing the above-mentioned approaches, in the event that the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) refuses to demonstrate goodwill in this regard. Such an approach would make evident the inability of the PAG to overcome the institutional crisis, implying that the intervention of a national specialized institution was necessary. This solution would very likely generate dissatisfaction and accusations of depriving Găgăuzia region of its legal powers.

**The third solution** would be for the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova to adopt a law revising the Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, particularly Title V “Regional and Local Elections,” in order to further elaborate the rules governing the specific features of organizing regional elections, taking into account the principles of the rule of law and the hierarchy of normative acts in cases where discrepancies exist between regional and national norms. Such an approach carries the risk of deepening political tensions, accompanied by accusations of stripping Gagauzia of its legal and legitimate powers.

## **IV. Continuation of the institutional crisis in the hope of intervention by international organizations**

### **4.1. The PAG’s insistence on holding elections on the basis of regional legislation**

On March 10, 2026, the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) sent a [letter](#) to Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu, Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, to Christoph Kamp, and to Alain Berset, requesting their involvement in “*de-escalating relations between Comrat and Chişinău in order to protect the rights of the Gagauz people.*” The document lists a series of accusations against the central authorities, which are alleged to intend to reduce the legal powers of Gagauzia. In fact, the letter addressed to the high-ranking European officials was a response to the solutions proposed by the Central

Electoral Commission (CEC) for overcoming the institutional crisis through the application of the hierarchy of normative acts.

On February 17, 2026, a new [plenary session](#) of the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) was convened, during which a number of issues related to the resumption of the electoral process for electing a new legislature were examined. The proposal to replace the generic name of the central electoral body in Gagauzia with the specific designation-Central Electoral Council of Gagauzia, as provided by the Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova- did not receive the required number of votes. To justify its firm stance on maintaining the existing name of the central electoral body, the PAG adopted a [declaration](#) on the procedure for organizing and legally regulating the 2026 regional elections for the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia, in which it insisted on the hierarchical superiority of the Law on the special legal status of Gagauzia over the provisions of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova. Under these circumstances, the PAG proposed that sensitive issues regarding the name of the central electoral body of Gagauzia be resolved through legislative means only after the election of a new composition of the PAG. During the same session, the PAG adopted a series of decisions preceding the launch of the electoral process, concerning:

- [the nomination of three candidates](#) by the PAG to the Central Electoral Commission of Gagauzia (CECG);
- the approval of the personal composition of the Central Electoral Commission of Gagauzia (CECG)—six members;
- [the setting of the date](#) for the elections to the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG).

It should be noted that the PAG decided not to wait for the nomination of three candidates from the courts within the territory of Găgăuzia region to be appointed to the composition of the CECG. The explanation for this approach is evident—the courts would, with certainty, propose three candidates for the Central Electoral **Council**, while the PAG and the Executive Committee each proposed three candidates for the Central Electoral **Commission** of Gagauzia. The conclusion is that nominations are being made for the same institution under different names, highlighting the confusion regarding the designation of the institution.

In the absence of nominations from the courts, the six members confirmed by the PAG hastily proceeded, on March 19, 2026, [to unanimously elect](#) the leadership: Chairperson – Petr Zaharia; Deputy Chairperson – Serghei Stoianoglo; and Secretary – Feodor Dobrov. It should be noted that the rushed election of the CECG leadership, in the absence of members nominated by the courts, created a major vulnerability for the institution, which is likely to become a subject of legal challenge.

Following the setting, on March 17, 2026, of the election date for June 21, 2026, the electoral period officially began. Despite this, the official website of the CECG remained for a long time without any information regarding its activity or preparations for the elections.

Under these circumstances, on March 23, 2026, the Comrat Territorial Office of the State Chancellery (CTOSC) submitted a [preliminary request](#) to annul the aforementioned PAG acts. Failing this, within 30 days, the PAG decisions will be challenged in court.

#### 4.2. Referral to the Constitutional Court by the Ministry of Justice

On March 9, 2026, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) [referred](#) the matter to the Constitutional Court for the constitutional review of certain provisions of Law No. 344/1994 on the special legal status of Gagauzia. The MoJ challenged the constitutionality of several articles:

- Article 12(3)(d) – within the competence of the People’s Assembly are: setting, organizing, and conducting elections of deputies to the People’s Assembly and approving the composition of the Central Electoral Commission for conducting elections;
- Article 19 – upon the proposal of the Governor of Gagauzia, the heads of sectoral departments are included in the collegial bodies of ministries and departments of the Republic of Moldova;
- Article 22 – the Head of the Justice Department of Gagauzia is appointed and dismissed by the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Moldova upon the proposal of the People’s Assembly;
- Article 23(1) – the Head of the Information and Security Department of Gagauzia is appointed and dismissed by the Director of the Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova upon the proposal of the Governor of Gagauzia, following approval by the People’s Assembly;
- Article 24 – the Head of the Internal Affairs Department of Gagauzia is appointed and dismissed by the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova upon the proposal of the Governor of Gagauzia, with the consent of the People’s Assembly.

The Ministry of Justice’s arguments are based on the fact that, according to Article 1 of the Constitution, (1) “The Republic of Moldova is a sovereign and independent, unitary and indivisible state,” while Gagauzia has the status of a special territorial-administrative unit; therefore:

- the competences of the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) must be interpreted restrictively, not expansively, without extending them over national institutions—such as the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Information and Security Service (SIS), etc.;
- in a unitary state, central authorities—ministries, the CEC, the SIS, etc.—must retain full control over their territorial structures in order to ensure the uniform application of legal norms. Accordingly, the involvement of the PAG in appointing heads of departments—justice, police, security, etc.—turns national institutions into bodies with dual, hybrid subordination, thereby fragmenting state authority within Găgăuzia region;
- according to Article 111 of the Constitution, Găgăuzia region independently resolves issues of a political, economic, and cultural nature, but not matters of a legal/administrative nature, etc.

It should be noted that the Ministry of Justice’s referral also took into account the fact that, previously, in 1999 and 2025, the Constitutional Court had been seized to examine the constitutionality of Articles 20 and 21 of the Law on the special legal status of Gagauzia, which were declared unconstitutional:

- Article 20(2) – “Judges of the courts of Gagauzia are appointed by Decree of the President of the Republic of Moldova upon the proposal of the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia, with the consent of the Superior Council of Magistracy,” declared unconstitutional by [Constitutional Court Decision No. 24 of May 6, 1999](#);

- Article 21 – “The Prosecutor of Gagauzia is appointed by the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Moldova upon the proposal of the People’s Assembly and is, ex officio, a member of the Board of the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Moldova,” declared unconstitutional by [Constitutional Court Decision No. 4](#) of April 14, 2025 (in force as of April 14, 2025).

It is evident that, following previous rulings concerning the judiciary and the Prosecutor’s Office, the Ministry of Justice’s referral aims to verify the constitutionality of appointments to ministerial collegial bodies and central specialized institutions. The authorities in Gagauzia- the People’s Assembly (PAG) and the Executive Committee- reacted negatively to the MoJ’s referral. In this regard, during the PAG session of March 17, 2026, a [declaration](#) was adopted on the inadmissibility of revising the constitutional and legal foundations of the autonomous status and competences of ATU Gagauzia, along with a series of appeals addressed to international institutions and heads of state.

## V. Conclusions

### 5.1. The essence of the institutional crisis in Gagauzia

The institutional crisis in Gagauzia consists in the impossibility of organizing regular elections for the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia for approximately six months following the expiration of the mandate of the 7th legislature. At the core of the crisis lie the discrepancies between regional and national electoral legislation, generated by the amendments introduced by the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) in December 2023 to the regional Electoral Code—through which the permanent central electoral body in Gagauzia was abolished in favor of an ad hoc body established only for the electoral period. A second cause lies in the failure to align the Electoral Code of Gagauzia with the provisions of the new Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, adopted in 2022—an adjustment that later became impossible due to the expiration of the PAG’s mandate.

### 5.2. Phases of the institutional crisis

The crisis has so far unfolded in three phases.

*The first phase* (August–November 2025) centered on the absence of a functioning permanent central electoral body, without which the organization of elections for the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) was not possible. The final ruling of the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ), which upheld the obligation of the PAG to restore the permanent CECG, was adopted after the expiration of the PAG’s mandate, thereby eliminating the possibility of legislative intervention by the regional body.

*The second phase* (December 2025–February 2026) was marked by a dispute over the name of the central electoral body of Gagauzia: Central Electoral Commission, in accordance with Law No. 344/1994 on the special legal status of Gagauzia, or Central Electoral Council of Gagauzia, in accordance with the revised Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova (2022). The Supreme Court of Justice suspended the PAG’s decisions on completing the composition of the electoral body until this dispute is resolved on the merits. Consequently, the PAG annulled its decision setting the elections for March 22, 2026.

*The third phase* began in March 2026. The PAG set the election date for June 21, 2026, and established an electoral body composed of six members, without including nominations from the courts, as required by

regional legislation. The Comrat Territorial Office of the State Chancellery (CTOSC) submitted a preliminary request to the PAG to annul these acts, announcing that, in the absence of a favorable response, it would challenge them in court. At the same time, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) referred the Constitutional Court for the review of the constitutionality of certain provisions of Law No. 344/1994, concerning the powers of the PAG in relation to national institutions—such as the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Information and Security Service (SIS), and others.

### **5.3. The risk of the institutional crisis escalating into the political sphere**

Against the backdrop of the prolonged institutional crisis, signs of escalation into the political sphere have emerged. On March 10, 2026, the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) addressed letters to Feridun H. Sinirlioglu, Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, to Christoph Kamp, and to Alain Berset, requesting their involvement in resolving the dispute between regional and central authorities. The document contains a series of accusations against the central government, which is alleged to intend to reduce the legal powers of Gagauzia.

In parallel, during the PAG session of March 17, 2026, a declaration was adopted on the inadmissibility of revising the constitutional and legal foundations of the autonomous status of Găgăuzia region, accompanied by appeals to international institutions and heads of state. These actions came in response to the solutions proposed by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of the Republic of Moldova for overcoming the electoral crisis, as well as to the referral to the Constitutional Court by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

The referral to the Constitutional Court concerns the review of the constitutionality of certain provisions of Law No. 344/1994 on the special legal status of Gagauzia, particularly those relating to the involvement of the PAG in appointing heads of territorial structures of national institutions—such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the MoJ, and the Information and Security Service (SIS). Regional authorities have interpreted this referral as an attempt to restrict the constitutional powers of Gagauzia, a position publicly expressed by both the PAG and the Executive Committee of Gagauzia.

At the same time, the representative of the Comrat Territorial Office of the State Chancellery (CTOSC) argued that the prolongation of the institutional crisis is linked to the influence of structures associated with the Șor Party, which was declared unconstitutional on June 19, 2023, over the regional administration.

The divergence between the positions of regional authorities and those of central institutions regarding the nature and causes of the crisis, combined with appeals to international actors and ongoing constitutional procedures, indicates an increasing level of political complexity in the situation in Găgăuzia region—one whose effects extend beyond the narrow framework of organizing regional elections.

### **5.4. Prospects for overcoming the crisis**

The institutional crisis in Gagauzia remains unresolved. The solutions identified so far—namely, the adoption by the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) of an administrative act applying the hierarchy of normative acts, the adoption of an administrative act by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of the Republic of Moldova, or the legislative revision of the national Electoral Code—have not been implemented. The dialogue between the PAG and the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova was resumed

in February 2026, but has so far produced no concrete results. The PAG has appealed to international institutions, including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Council of Europe, requesting their involvement in resolving the crisis. The Constitutional Court is yet to rule on the referral submitted by the Ministry of Justice. Under these circumstances, uncertainty persists regarding the organization of elections on the scheduled date of June 21, 2026.

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