Population: 3.6 million
Area: slightly larger than Maryland
Capital: Chisinau (650,000)
Languages: Moldovan (official), Russian, Gagauz (a Turkish dialect)

EDUCATION
The education system in Moldova has experienced numerous reforms and suffered from a lack of efficiency and declining quality since independence. It currently has a compulsory 11-grade education system for ages 6-17. Grading is on a 10-point scale (1 being lowest, 10 highest and 5 passing). The literacy rate for 15 and over is 98.5%; however, results of Program for International Student Assessment 2009 Plus show that 60% of 15-year-olds lack the basic levels of proficiency in reading and math literacy and are among the lowest in Europe. Efforts are underway to address this.

RELIGION
The constitution of Moldova provides for freedom of religion; however, the law allows for some restrictions that can inhibit the activities of some groups such as: Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, and Pentecostal believers. The law requires religions to register and some groups, especially Muslim, have been unable to register. Orthodox Christianity is the dominant religion with 96% of the population claiming membership in either of two Orthodox denominations, Moldovan (88%) or Bessarabian(8%). Adherents of other religious groups, constituting less than 10 percent of the population, include Roman Catholics, Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'is, Jews, Unification Church, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and evangelical Christian groups.

ETHNICITY
Moldovans/Romanians are the largest ethnic group accounting for 78.2% of the population followed by Ukrainians (8.4%) and Russians (5.8%) according to the 2004 census. There was considerable emigration of the latter two following the collapse of the USSR. The Gagauz (4.4%), a Christian Turkic people, live in the south in the autonomous region of Gagauzia. There is controversy as to whether Moldovans constitute a subgroup of Romanians or a separate ethnic group.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS
Due to tradition as well as social and economic factors, Moldovan youth tend to live with their parents through their education and after marriage. Grandparents and godparents often play a significant role in childrearing. Children are expected to be God-fearing and shy and not participate in adult conversations without being asked to do so. Some major holidays include: Orthodox Christmas (January 7 according to the Julian calendar), Women’s Day (March 8), Orthodox Easter, Labor Day (May 1 and 2), Victory/Memorial Day (May 9) and “Limba Noastra” or “Our Language (August 31).
An Eastern Romance Language, it is officially called Moldovan, but its relationship to Romanian can be likened to that of English spoken in the USA and in the UK, however, the issue of whether it is a separate language or not remains a controversial and politicized issue.

The Latin alphabet was reintroduced to replace the Soviet imposed Cyrillic alphabet on August 31, 1989, a date celebrated as the ‘Limba Noastra’ (‘Our Language’) day. In Transnistria the Cyrillic alphabet is still used.

Frequent suffixes for Romanian names are: -esc (-escu), -an (-anu), and -ean (-eanu).

(ț=ts, ă=uh, ea=ya, c=k, but ce, ci=che, chi)

Hi ………………………… Salut!
Bye ……………………….. La revedere
Good day ……………….. Buna ziua
Yes ……………………….. Da
No ………………………… Nun
Please…………………… Va rog
Thank you………………… Mulțumesc
You’re welcome………… Cu plăcere
How are you? …………… Ce mai faceti?
I do not understand …… Nu înțeleg
Do you understand? …… Înțelegi?
What is your name?……. Cum te cheamă?
My name is ………………… Ma numesc...
Where are you from?….. De unde suntești?
Welcome! ………………… Bine ați venit

USEFUL LINKS
BBC Moldova Profile
BBC Trans-Dniester Profile
Infotag News Agency in English
Language Pronunciation