

## LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND CULTURE OF RUTHENIAN MINORITY IN SERBIA / VOJVODINA

The Bačka-Srem Ruthenians / Rusyns present a kind of proof that long-lasting existence of a community small in number is quite possible only if a state creates suitable conditions.

According to linguistic criteria the Ruthenian language has characteristics of mostly Western Slavic, Eastern Slavic, and even Southern Slavic languages. The case of the Ruthenian language which has been in official use for several decades, both in the provincial organs and on the territory of six municipalities in which the Ruthenians live in a significant number, is by all means a prominent example for many developed European societies and states. This also applies to the existence of the educational vertical in Ruthenian – from preschool education to the Department of the Ruthenian Studies in Novi Sad. The beginnings of school education in the Ruthenian language can be traced from the middle of the 18th century – from 1753 in Ruski Krstur and from 1765 in Kucura. The first book in the Ruthenian language is the poetic wreath *From My Village (З мѡѡго вала)* by Havrijil Kosteljnik published in 1904.

The National Council of Rusyn National Minority is the only legal representative of the Ruthenian minority. It has been given a possibility, but also the obligation to coordinate and take care of the implementation of minority rights in the fields of education, culture, information and in the field of official use of language and script.