

## Brief report: Second URIS workshop

# Language, Politics and Identity in Ukraine: History and Present

20 November 2017, Basel

Language is undeniably a defining attribute of national identity. This statement becomes problematic in countries and societies where two or more languages are commonly in use. Ukraine is one such case. Half of its population uses Russian in everyday communication, yet Ukrainian remains the only official language. Furthermore, Russian speakers are widely accused of not being «Ukrainian» enough. The contemporary crisis in Ukraine has intensified the debates over language and identity, forcing many to reassess what it means to be Ukrainian. The workshop examined the links between language and identity in Ukraine in historical perspective, offering a comparison between the formative Soviet decades and the period of independence. Furthermore, it discussed the role of the state and political elites in constructing national identities and manipulating the language question for their political gain in the past and the present.

The initiative «Ukrainian Research in Switzerland» organises workshops twice a year in order to encourage the exchange between ongoing Ukraine related research projects that are currently underway at Swiss universities and international research on Ukraine, as well as between scholars, students and the public.



# Workshop programme

## Panel 1: Becoming Ukrainian in Soviet Ukraine: the Korenizatsiia Experiment

**Roman Horbyk** (Stockholm)

The Soviet Language Policies in Ukraine

**Olena Palko** (Norwich/Basel)

Reading in Ukrainian: Ukrainian Language and Mass Culture in the 1920s

Chair: **Fabian Baumann** (Basel)

## Panel 2: Language, Literature and Politics in Contemporary Ukraine

**Oleksandr Zabirko** (Münster)

The Medium is the Message: Ukrainian writers' Choice of Language

**Anastasiia Grynko** (Kiev)

Tensions Between Old and New: Freedom of Media and Expression in Contemporary Ukraine

Chair: **Heinrich Kirschbaum** (Basel)

## Round Table: Multilingualism and National Identity in Independent Ukraine

With **Mykola Riabchuk** (Kiev) and **Volodymyr Kulyk** (Kiev)

Chair: **Frithjof Benjamin Schenk** (Basel)



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