

# Lithuania: Research Assessment Exercise

Panel H: Humanities

# Introduction

## Background

The overall objective of the research assessment exercise of Lithuanian higher education and research institutions was:

*To provide the Lithuanian public, policy-makers and decision-makers and the academic community with the most objective picture possible of the excellence and competitiveness of Lithuanian science in comparison with the global practice in the respective area of science.*

The assessment produced evidence based analytical material that carefully and in details analyzes the research excellence and competitiveness of Lithuanian research, combining its socioeconomic impact and the capacity of its research institutions. This material will provide evidence for research policy making at different of levels as well as will enable the research institutions involved in the process to gain a significant impetus for improving their operations. The research assessment was directed at institutions that were Higher education institutions and their constituent faculties/departments/research groups or State research institutes.

Altogether nine panels were appointed to perform the evaluation. This document is the report of Panel H: Humanities.

## Scope of Panel H: Humanities

The Panel was asked to evaluate research in Humanities in 24 Units of Assessment (UoA) using the following criteria: research quality, economic and social impact, infrastructure, research management and development potential and to score each Unit on a five point scale, namely, ranging from outstanding [5] to poor [1]. The overall objective was to benchmark research in Lithuania against international research in the Humanities.

## Material on which the assessment was made

Each institution participating in the evaluation provided the panel with a self-assessment report for the years 2009 - 2013. The self-assessment report contained the following categories:

1. General information about the unit of assessment (UoA)
2. Human resources
3. Research output
4. Doctoral training
5. National and international collaboration
6. Other scientific and social activities
7. SWOT analysis
8. Funding

The self-assessment also included a list of best publications by the personnel. Copies of the institution's best papers were sent to the panelists. The panel also had access to a bibliometric analysis including information on citations and international co-authors.

## Assessment procedure

Experts from the Panel H visited Lithuania on January 11 - 16, 2015 and during this period it made site-visits to all assigned UoA. The final Panel H assessments were based on both, self-assessment report and evidence gathered during site visits. At least two panel members were present at each visit. Each self-assessment

report was read in details by at least two Panel members and then discussed by the whole Panel on at least two occasions, namely, before and after the Panel visits to the Units.

### **Institutions involved**

Panel H was asked to evaluate 24 UoA within 16 institutions. The scientific disciplines of these institutions include Education, Philosophy, Theology, History and theory of arts, Philology, History, Ethnology.

### **Universities**

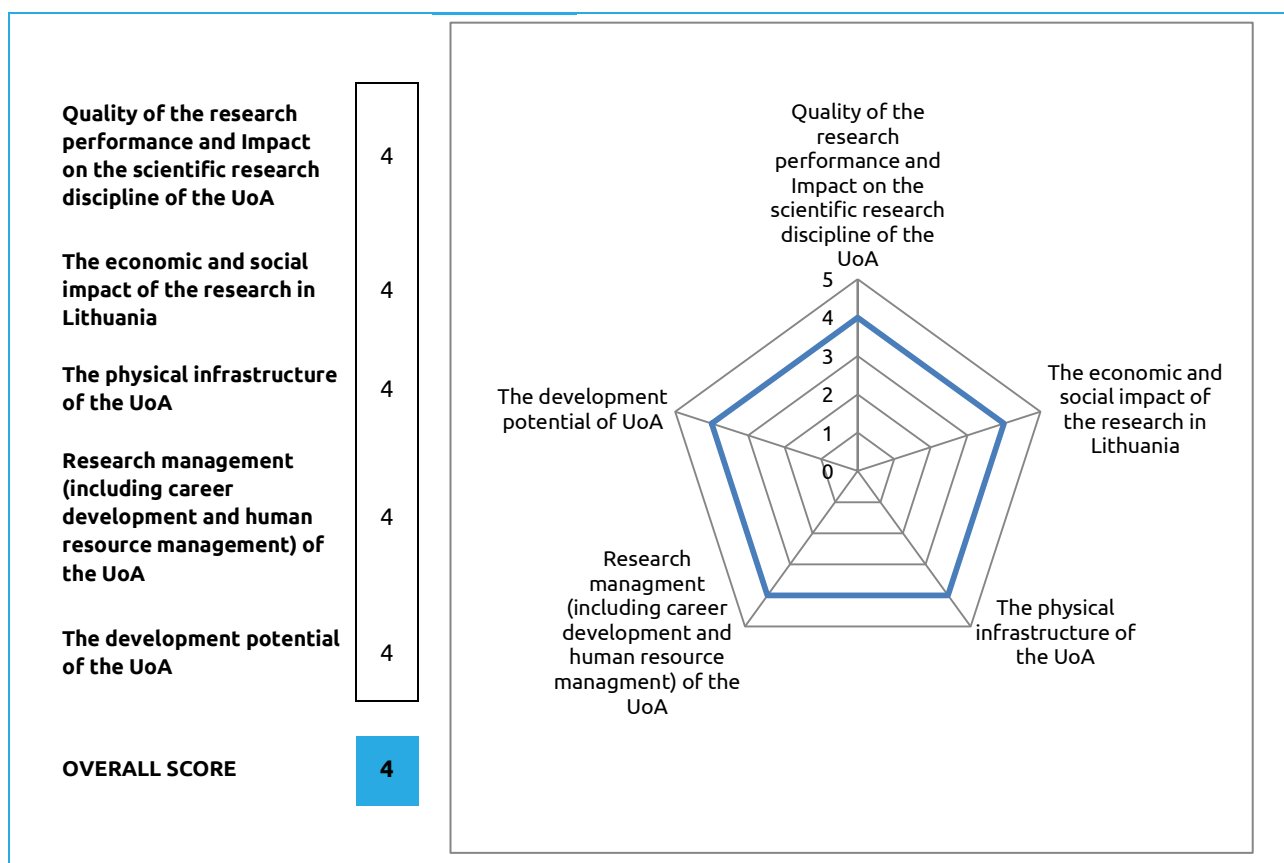
1. Kaunas University of Technology
2. Klaipėda University
3. Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre
4. Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences
5. Lithuanian University of Health Sciences
6. Mykolas Romeris University
7. Šiauliai University
8. The General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania
9. Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts
10. Vilnius Gediminas Technical University
11. Vilnius University
12. Vytautas Magnus University

### **Research Institutes**

1. Institute of the Lithuanian Language
2. Lithuanian Culture Research Institute
3. The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore
4. The Lithuanian Institute of History

## Faculty of History, Vilnius University

<b>Name of the UoA</b>	Faculty of History
<b>Name of institution being assessed</b>	Vilnius University
<b>Total no. FTE researchers</b>	26,99
<b>Composition of the Unit of Assessment (UoA)</b>	Department of Ancient and Medieval History; Department of Archaeology; Department of Modern History; Department of Theory of History and History of Culture; Research Group of Lithuanian Statutes and Metrica; Centre for Stateless Cultures



### Overall score

The overall score reflects the strong position of the UoA. It is one of the largest history research and study centres at a University in Lithuania. Its goal is training highly qualified specialists (historians, archeologists, researchers of culture and heritages) and to promote the development of Lithuanistics as one of the main priorities of the Lithuanian state. It promotes a balance between research and studies. It comprises four departments: archeology, ancient and medieval history, modern history and theory of history. The Faculty provides three BA- and three MA programs (800 students), and a graduate program (40 Ph.D. students).

### Quality of research performance and Impact on the scientific research of the UoA

The UoA focuses on the Baltic region, the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the period of Soviet Lithuania and on historiography and cultural studies (with a recent book on the Soviet-Lithuanian historiography 1944-1985). This means that there is a considerable overlap with other units with the same focus. The quality of research is very high. This is shown by the papers that were presented as well. Irena Vaišvilaitė's elaborated contribution on the changing face of Vilnius 'from capital to administrative center

and back' is outstanding and can serve as an example. The article by Jurgita Verbickiene on the social and legal status of the Jews, Tatars and Karaites, is thoroughly researched. Marija Dremaitė's chapter on industrial heritage in the a rural country that Lithuania was, shows an innovative approach and opens new perspectives for research. Arturas Vasiliauskas' chapter on citizenship in the 16 th and 17th C enfeebles convincingly the myth of the political backwardness of the great majority of the Lithuanian nobility.

The UoA published between 2009 and 2013 29 monographs, 24 doctoral theses, 3 textbooks, 697 articles in scientific journals and 309 popularising 'publications' (per year: 6 monographs and 86 articles). These are realised by a staff of (on average over three years) 27 FTE researchers. Looking at the list of 20 most important publications one can conclude that it comprises 12 publications in English, 6 in Lithuanian and 2 in German. They were published in Lithuania (7), United Kingdom (5), Germany (2), Sweden (2) The Netherlands (2), USA (2) and Austria (1). Given the places of publication one can say that there are a lot of international contacts.

This is also shown by the many visits abroad of staff members: over the period under consideration there were 85 visits to 21 countries (to Afghanistan, Austria, Belarus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Ukraine, USA), 46 of them for a duration of at least a month, and 10 for 3 months or more. The UoA made in this period 20 presentations at international scientific conferences (in Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and USA). At least 16 scientists are actively involved in more than 25 different international scientific organisations (f.e. Rimvydas Petrauskas (German Historical Institute Warsaw, International Historical Commission for the Research of German Orders, the Scientific Society of Torun), Mykolas Michelbertas (the German Archaeological Institute, the Latvian Council of Sciences) and Enonas Butkus (Commission of Historians of Latvia). In 2013 the UoA was able to attract two postdoctoral researchers of non-Lithuanian citizenship.

The UoA is collaborating with the Lithuanian Institute of History in editing the Lithuanian *Metrica* (documents of the chancellery of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, published in original languages, translated and annotated) and the *History of Lithuania* in 12 volumes. It also carries out research on ethno-confessional groups (Jews, Tatars, Karaites). The emphasis on the multilingual situation and the multi-ethnicity of the region is interesting, and can only be carried out because of the Lithuanian researchers' language skills, but the results should be disseminated also outside Lithuania. In this respect, an extra effort could be recommendable, by setting up a larger number of international projects. As far as Lithuanistics is concerned one could say that the research carried out in the Unit is comparable with the best work internationally in the same area. It is striking though, that also this UoA - like all other history faculties in the country - is focusing on the development of Lithuanistics. This is at least partly the result of the priorities chosen by the Lithuanian State. Perhaps a broadening of the research perspective beyond the geo-focus of Lithuania and its region would be recommendable.

### **The economic and social impact of the research in Lithuania**

The wide-ranging and intensive research on Lithuanian history that the UoA conducts is clearly very important for the Lithuanian society. And it is not just academic research. Some representatives of the UoA obviously provide a significant contribution to the public debate, e.g. on the Lithuanian national identity and historical memory. (Through thematic events, museum exhibitions, publications, heritage protection, debates concerning national memory and history policy). 23 staff are members of the editorial boards of scientific journals some as editor in chief (in Lithuania but also in Poland, Russia, Estonia and Romania), 15 are members or experts of scientific boards of 18 governmental bodies (e.g.: the State committee for Cultural heritage, the Editorial Science council of the Lithuanian Encyclopedia, the Lithuanian Council on Archives, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe). However, one can ask whether the members of the UoA are especially 'sought-after' or whether this is just the normal level of societal interaction.

It has also to be mentioned that the UoA founded public institutions such as the Academy of Cultural Heritage, the Centre for Studies of the Culture and History of the East-European Jews, and the Academy of Historical Memory. In those projects the UoA was successful in attracting non-academic R & D partners. As the development of 'Lithuanistics' is one of the main priorities of the Lithuanian state, the UoA follows this priority policy in formulating its research topics. But, as already noted above, this strategy implies that there is a considerable overlap with other institutions that are also involved in the development of Lithuanistics. The UoA tries also to keep up pace with the developments in the European scientific world. One of the priorities is the joint program 'Cultural Heritage and Global Change: a new Challenge for Europe'. Especially in medieval and modern history. But it also is on the international wavelength in the field of the history of historiography and theory of history.

### **The physical infrastructure of the UoA**

The UoA offers an excellent research infrastructure. The History Faculty is situated in a historical building (the building of the old Jesuit Academy in the centre of Vilnius) which has been renovated and expanded recently. It occupies a separate unit, with workplaces between the open racks, plenty of possibilities for discussion and library work in several study and reading rooms, where people easily can meet (which encourages the academic debate and the exchange of knowledge). It has a good library which contains specialised collections, comprising some 30.000 books in different languages, with recent acquisitions and ca. 50 current periodic publications. Researchers and students have easy access to the Vilnius University library (virtually in the same building) with a fund containing more than 5.4 million documents.

They have also access to electronic resources. They comprise 45 Lithuanian and foreign databases (f.e; JSTOR, Web of Science, Ebrary). The researchers of the UoA created themselves 5 databanks, two of them are freely accessible on internet ([www.archeolitas.if.vu.lt](http://www.archeolitas.if.vu.lt), [www.mdl.projektas.vus.lt](http://www.mdl.projektas.vus.lt)). The UoA disposes since 2007 over a laboratory-computer class, which has hardware, specialized software and specialized databases (ArcGIS SDesktop, ArcView 9.3.1 a.o.) used mainly for archeological and heritage studies and research. In order to present the most recent scientific research, concerning the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, by means of virtual reality the UoA developed a project 'Orbis Lituania' ([www.ldkistorija.lt](http://www.ldkistorija.lt)). This internet portal received several awards). To disseminate historical knowledge among the broader public it developed a similar portal 'Virtual Historical Vilnius' ([www.viv.lt](http://www.viv.lt)).

According to the self-assessment report in the archeological research there seems perhaps to be a lack of modern equipment, that hampers the development in the field, but this was not corroborated during the visit.

### **Research Management (including career development and human resource management) of the UoA**

The UoA is an institution of both research and study. The larger part of the research staff of the Faculty is also involved in teaching. The average number of master degrees over the years 2011-2013 is 52 and the average number of doctoral degrees awarded 5. As the funds come from the state assigned grants for students, the opportunities for the formation of the research staff are limited. The employment of researchers is usually related to the needs of the study process. Only the members of the research group preparing the publication of the Statutes and Lithuanian Metrica, (i.e. 3 - 4 researchers employed during the period under consideration) are not teaching. Each department employs 1- 2 researchers conducting commissioned research.

Guiding rules related to research planning are: joining larger international projects and networks, participating in conferences, publishing the research results in peer reviewed publications both national and abroad, enhancing the international prestige of the Faculty by publishing more articles in a foreign language in the journals edited by the Faculty itself (*Archeologia Lituana*, *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*) and by encouraging doctoral students to go on study trips to research centres abroad and to approach their research objectives from an angle of comparative history.

Research topics are planned for a medium (5 years) or long term (11 years) period, with defining for each topic its aim, unit in *charge*, *team leader* and *team members*. Also Topics for specific years are planned. It is all part of the UoA's Strategic Plan. The funding of the institute is based on state-assigned funding grants for students. Budget allocated and own funds are sufficient for the salaries of the employees and the maintenance of the infrastructure, although competitive project funding constitutes the most significant part for financing research. During the period under review the UoA received funding for 8 major research projects and ensured publishing of its journals. Funding was also received for partners abroad (new contacts established with Oslo University). These projects were the main source for the implementation of innovative research ideas and methods and for promoting the internationalisation of the Faculty of History.

Considering the list of visits abroad there seems to be enough funding for foreign research and study trips (supported by VU Research Support Fund, Faculty of History funds or Erasmus program). The other way round the UoA does not show strong evidence of attracting "high-level international researchers", although in 2013 it could welcome two post-doctoral researchers, which can be a good sign for the future.

The UoA has a high number of staff, 74 persons (= 58,5 FTE) with a sound balance among age groups (25-34 y.: 15; 35-44 y.: 33, 45-54 y.: 12, 55-64: 11, 65 +: 3) partly due to the fact that after the independence several staff members, who did not fit in the post-soviet historiography starting at that moment, left the University. Since 2011 the UoA started together with the Lithuanian Institute of Lithuanian History a joint doctoral studies program, with about 40 Ph. D. students.

During the visit of the panel the rather young and dynamic group of researchers (from seniors to Ph. D. students) expressed their satisfaction with the organisation of the Faculty. The Ph. D. students emphasised the good work climate, and what they called: the 'stimulating' and 'very productive' contacts between the different generations of professors and scholars.

### **The development potential of UoA**

The UoA has a very high development potential. It is now already an international player with a good reputation abroad. It has the critical mass and shows enough dynamism to improve its position on national and international scale. This is shown by the staff's activities in a variety of national and international contacts (international conferences, research carried out abroad, international publications). The Faculty could develop further to the level of a 'global leader', if it could broaden the scope of its research field beyond "the Lithuanian perspective", and publish more in English.

The "outer world", and especially the international community of historians, can be interested in Lithuanian history as part of the European history, but therefore even more attention and effort should be given to the dissemination in English of the Lithuanian research results. Much depends also on how the Unit can help the upcoming generation of researchers to rise to a new level of international activity.

It is the impression of the panel that the UoA has a clear and realistic vision of its own strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and that it is carefully managing, and with good results until now, the problems that arise.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The UoA is already a strong international player. Research quality, social impact and research management of the Unit are very good. It is clear that historical research should in the first place be beneficial to the own community. In that sense the UoA is doing a lot also in disseminating new research results to the broader public, a.o. by the history portals on internet, and popular publications.

Nevertheless, given the fact that the Lithuanian Institute of History is focusing on Lithuania as well (as is defined in its Statutes) one could expect that, in order to become a 'global leader', the Vilnius History Faculty should widen its research horizon, and try to cover history in a broader sense (European and global). Anyway, the considerable overlap between these two Units should be reduced urgently.



Another recommendation could be made here. As this UoA is the largest and most important university centre of historical research, it could perhaps be its role to take the initiative for the organisation of a graduate school (in the form of a seminar with Ph. D. students) on a national scale (or if Klaipeda is too far away, at least on a regional one), including not only the Lithuanian Institute of History, as is already the case, but also Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas. Only then enough critical mass could be available, to stimulate a real scientific debate among doctoral students and their supervisors.