



Research  
Council of  
Lithuania



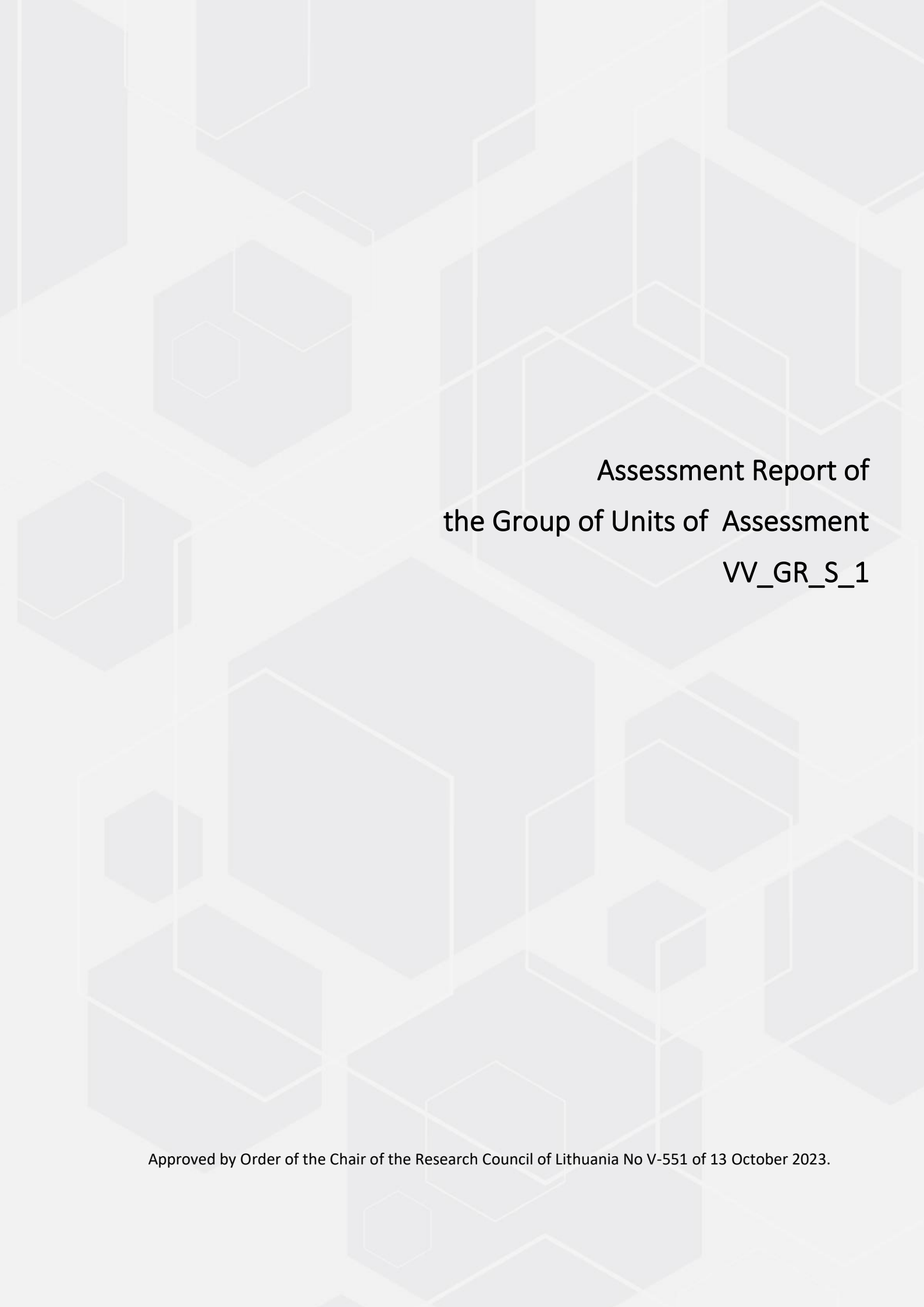
**Assessment Report of  
Comparative Expert  
Assessment of Research  
and Development Activities  
Carried out by Universities  
and Research Institutes for  
the Group of Units of  
Assessment VV\_GR\_S\_1**

Vilnius 2023



2014-2020 Operational  
Programme for the  
European Union Funds  
Investments in Lithuania

Financed by European Social Fund and Lithuanian State Budget



**Assessment Report of  
the Group of Units of Assessment  
VV\_GR\_S\_1**

Approved by Order of the Chair of the Research Council of Lithuania No V-551 of 13 October 2023.

## Table of Contents

Terms & Abbreviations .....	3
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. Purpose, Scope, Goals of the Comparative Expert Assessment.....	4
1.2. Comparative Expert Assessment Organization and Assessment Criteria .....	4
1.3. Expert Panel for the VV_GR_S_1 Group of Units of Assessment.....	6
1.4. Assessment Organization for the VV_GR_S_1 Group of Units of Assessment .....	7
<b>2. ASSESSMENT REPORTS .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1. MRU_TM-VSA Unit of Assessment .....	8
2.2. PPMI Group Unit of Assessment.....	12
2.3. EHU_S Unit of Assessment .....	17
2.4. VU_02S Unit of Assessment .....	22
2.5. VU_08S Unit of Assessment .....	27
2.6. VDU_TEIS Unit of Assessment .....	31
2.7. VDU_POL_KOM Unit of Assessment .....	35
2.8. VU_01S Unit of Assessment .....	41
<b>3. FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>46</b>

## Terms & Abbreviations

**CEA** – Comparative Expert Assessment of research and development activities carried out by Lithuanian universities and research institutes

**FTE** – Full-Time Equivalent

**Institutions** – Lithuanian universities and research institutes

**RCL** – Research Council of Lithuania

**R&D** – Research and Development

**UoA; Unit(s)** – Unit(s) of Assessment

**Research area:**

**S** – Social Sciences

**Universities:**

**EHU** – European Humanities University

**MRU** – Mykolas Romeris University

**VDU** – Vytautas Magnus University

**VU** – Vilnius University

**Research Institute:**

**PPMI Group** – PPMI Group

**FTE<sup>1</sup>** – the number of working hours worked during the year by a certain group of employees divided by a number of working hours in the 12 months of that year, as set by the Minister of Social Security and Labour (with a 5-working-day week). <.> The FTE unit – a person per year.

**FTE(SD)<sup>1</sup>** – the sum of the FTE of teaching staff members with a science degree divided by 3, and the FTE of research workers and other researchers with a scientific degree.

---

<sup>1</sup> Description of the Comparative Expert Assessment of Research and Development Activities by Universities and Research Institutes approved by Order No V-1593 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of 2 September 2021

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Purpose, Scope, Goals of the Comparative Expert Assessment

The Comparative Expert Assessment of research and development activities carried out by universities and research institutes of Lithuania (hereinafter – CEA) was carried out in 2023 by Research Council of Lithuania (hereinafter – RCL) in accordance with the *Description of the Comparative Expert Assessment of Research and Development Activities by Universities and Research Institutes* approved by Order No V-1593 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of 2 September 2021 (hereinafter – the Description), the *Regulation on Procedures for the Comparative Expert Evaluation of Research and Development Activities Carried out by Universities and Research Institutes* approved by Order No V-486 of the Chair of the RCL of 8 August 2022 (hereinafter – the Regulation), and other related legislation.

The purpose of CEA is to provide a picture of research and development (hereinafter – R&D) performance, socio-economic impact, and the development potential of Lithuanian universities and research institutes (hereinafter – Institutions) based on their R&D activities during the period of 2018–2022.

The scope of CEA encompasses both state and non-state Institutions operating in Lithuania. All state universities (in total eleven) and all state research institutes (in total eleven as well), four non-state universities and two non-state research institutes were participating in the CEA in 2023. The Institutions or parts thereof were assessed as the units of assessment (hereinafter – UoA or Units). The CEA facilitates the comparison of R&D performance of the UoA against international standards and within the national context. It provides valuable evidence to R&D policymakers at different levels, as well as offers the Institutions involved in the assessment a significant incentive to enhance their performance.

Since 2018, the CEA has been an integral part of assessment of R&D activities of Lithuanian institutions. The annual assessment of R&D activities carried out by the Institutions together with CEA conducted every five years constitutes the Lithuanian assessment system of R&D activities. The results of the two-step assessment are used to allocate state funding for R&D activities for Institutions. The results of the CEA implemented in 2023 will determine 70% of state budget funding for R&D activities of Institutions for the subsequent five years.

The assessment results will also determine the continuity of doctoral studies as well as the new rights to carry out doctoral studies at Institutions in accordance with the *Regulations on Doctoral Studies* approved by Decision No. V-739 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of 18 May 2020. Moreover, the findings from the CEA might serve as a trusted source of evidence on R&D performance of the Institutions for assessments concerning other funding instruments or higher education studies.

## 1.2. Comparative Expert Assessment Organization and Assessment Criteria

The CEA relies on international peer review panels to evaluate Lithuanian Institutions' R&D activities. Using panels rather than individual peers creates a possibility for discussion and debate within the peer group and enabling comparison within the group.

The assessment is carried out on the UoA level, which is the organisationally defined structure – ranging from a whole Institution to a division of an Institution corresponding to the faculty or other formal structures of the Institution. In accordance with the Description the rules for the formation of the UoA are as follows:

- the UoA should be interrelated by common R&D activities and might operate in one or two research areas;
- the minimum size of the UoA should be no less than 5 full-time researchers with scientific degree (FTE(SD)) and the maximum size of UoA should not exceed 75 FTE(SD).

The exceptions could be made for better reflection of R&D activities in the Institution. If an Institution had a UoA with a higher number of FTE(SD) or/and UoA operated in three research areas, it should have submitted arguments and obtained RCL approval for participating with not typical composition.

Following the instructions, Institutions have formed eighty-five UoA. All these UoA were split into thirteen groups resulting from four to nine UoA per Panel. The interval of the UoA size ranged from slightly above 5 FTE(SD) to UoA of more than 150 FTE(SD). The number of research areas and research fields one UoA was operating in also varied, i. e., while most UoA operated in one or two research fields, there were outliers where Units were involved in up to five research fields. The variations in size, composition, and research areas among the UoA within each group posed challenges for comparison and required careful consideration by the Expert Panel.

The assessment of the Units is based on three criteria:

- The quality of R&D activities (weight 0.65) of UoA in the research field(s) (group of research fields);
- The economic and social impact of R&D activities (weight 0.2) of UoA;
- The development potential of R&D activities (weight 0.15) of UoA.

The quality of R&D activities is assessed either in each research field or the group of research fields within the research area while economic and social impact as well as development potential are assessed on the UoA level. Each assessment criterion is scored on a five-point scale, namely, ranging from excellent [5] to poor [1] or no R&D [0]. The description of the values of the scores for each criterion are provided in the Description. Half point scores were allowed, and that provided a possibility for more nuanced assessment when necessary.

The quality of R&D activities of the Unit is assessed following these rules: if UoA has at least 10 FTE(SD) in the research field or has between 2 and 10 FTE(SD) and has the right to provide doctoral studies (or intends to seek such right in the next 5 years) in the research field, then the research quality is assessed in the research field; if UoA does not meet these criteria, then the research quality is assessed in the group of research fields within the research area. In the latter case, the assessment considers the collective quality across the research fields within the group.

The assessment was based on the material provided by the UoA to the RCL information system “Vieversys” and covered the period 2018–2022, as well as summarized results of the annual assessment of R&D activities of Institutions (for 2018–2021) provided by RCL, alongside the information obtained during the visits of the Panels to the Institutions and meetings with the representatives of the UoA. Following the Description and the *Procedure for the Submission of Data on Results of Research and Development Activities Carried out by Universities and Research Institutes for the Comparative Expert Assessment* approved by Order No V-1593 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of 2 September 2021 (hereinafter – the Procedure for Submission of Data) relevant data was examined when assessing the UoA against each of the CEA criteria. In most cases the number of provided outputs for the assessment depended on the size of the UoA varying from a minimum of five to maximum of eighty-two outputs.

It should be noted that since the previous round of CEA in 2018, several organisational improvements of assessment have been made, therefore caution should be exercised when comparing the results of these two assessments. Some of them are worth mentioning:

- 85 UoA were formed and grouped into 13 Expert Panels in 2023, while the first CEA resulted in 117 UoA formed and grouped into 6 Expert Panels. The cause is mainly due to the change of rules for setting up a UoA. During the 2018 CEA, forming a UoA was allowed in only one respective research area, i. e., if the UoA operated in two research areas, it had to be split into two Units for the assessment purposes. In 2023 this restriction was eliminated, and Unit could easily operate in two (and in some cases in three) research areas. As well UoA formation was influenced by changing landscape of Institutions during the assessment period as mergers of several institutions took place: Aleksandras Stulginskis University and the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences merged with Vytautas Magnus University since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019; Šiauliai University was merged with Vilnius University, as well as the Institute of Law, the Lithuanian Institute of Agrarian Economics and the Lithuanian Social Research Center were merged into Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021.
- The CEA scoring system has also undergone some changes. While five-point scales were used in both assessments, in 2023 half points were allowed, while in 2018 only whole numbers were used.
- There were some changes in the requirements for documentary input. In 2023 one list of Unit's R&D outputs for a five-year period was required while in 2018 a list of R&D outputs for each assessment year (from 2013 to 2017) and an additional list for the entire assessment period were required, resulting in a large volume of data.

### 1.3. Expert Panel for the VV\_GR\_S\_1 Group of Units of Assessment

The Expert Panel for the VV\_GR\_S\_1 group had to assess eight UoA of five Institutions:

- **European Humanities University** – 1 UoA:  
*Social Sciences* (abbr. *EHU\_S*);
- **Mykolas Romeris University** – 1 UoA:  
*Law School – Public Security Academy* (abbr. *MRU\_TM-VSA*);
- **PPMI Group** – 1 UoA:  
*PPMI Group* (abbr. *PPMI Group*);
- **Vytautas Magnus University** – 2 UoA:  
*VMU Political and Communication Sciences* (abbr. *VDU\_POL\_KOM*),  
*VMU Law* (abbr. *VDU\_TEIS*);
- **Vilnius University** – 3 UoA:  
*Law* (abbr. *VU\_01S*),  
*Political Sciences* (abbr. *VU\_02S*),  
*Communication and Information* (abbr. *VU\_08S*).

The Units were operating in the Law, Political Sciences, Communication and Information research fields, and considering these research fields RCL has appointed the Expert Panel members with the main responsibility to assess UoA against three criteria and provide recommendations for UoA future development. The Panel consisted of nine members affiliated with institutions abroad:

- Nicolaas Stijn Groenendijk (*Panel Chair*), Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway
- Antoni Abat Ninet, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel
- Paško Bilić, Institute for Development and International Relations Zagreb, Croatia
- Leif Kalev, Tallinn University, Estonia
- Tamás Lattmann, University of New York in Prague, Czech Republic
- Sirke Mäkinen, University of Helsinki, Finland
- Raluca Petre, Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania

- Joaquín Sarrión Esteve, Distance Education National University (UNED), Spain
- Alesia Ann Zuccala, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

#### 1.4. Assessment Organization for the VV\_GR\_S\_1 Group of Units of Assessment

Timeline of the assessment organization for the VV\_GR\_S\_1 Group of UoA:

**Submission of data.** Institutions participating in the VV\_GR\_S\_1 Group submitted data on R&D activities of their UoA to the information system “Vieversys” by the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2023 following the Procedure for Submission of Data.

**Individual assessment.** Prior to the visit to Lithuania, the data of each UoA submitted for the assessment was individually evaluated by at least three experts from the Panel. The number of experts assigned to assess each UoA would increase based on the number of research fields within the UoA. The individual assessment of the Units within the VV\_GR\_S\_1 Group was conducted till the 20th of March 2023.

**Visit to Lithuania.** The Panel members for the VV\_GR\_S\_1 Group visited Lithuania from the 25th to the 30th of March 2023. The main objectives of the visit included discussing the results of the individual assessment within the Expert Panel, ensuring a uniform and consistent application of the assessment criteria among the Panel members; visiting and familiarizing with the academic and administrative staff, PhD students, and research infrastructure of the UoA (at least three experts from the Panel had to visit one UoA); and collectively agreeing on all scores for the Units within the group in the joint session.

**Final report.** After the visit to Lithuania, the preparation of the Panel report took place. The coordination of the preparation was done by the Panel chair. Before the submission of the Panel’s report, the institutions were given an opportunity to provide comments on the factual errors if any observed in the written justification of the scores for UoA. Taking into consideration the comments, the Panel's report has been adjusted where necessary. In addition, the Panel prepared a reply to the commenting authorities. The report was submitted to the RCL with the agreement of all Panel members.

**Appeals.** Upon receiving the final results on each Unit, the Institutions had the right to submit a substantiated appeal to the RCL if they believed there were factual errors in the justification of the UoA assessment and/or if they suspected a breach of the assessment procedures that may have affected the assessment outcome.

RCL has established an external Board of Appeal, comprised of seven members selected from the candidates nominated by the Lithuanian Research Academy, the Conference of Rectors of Lithuanian Universities, the Conference of Directors of the Lithuanian National Research Institutes, and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports. The Board of Appeal was responsible for determining whether the appeals adhered to the specified provisions and in case of favourable decision to examine the appeal thoroughly.

The Panel VV\_GR\_S\_1 has received two appeals. The Board of Appeal dismissed the appeals due to non-compliance with the established appeal provisions.

**Approval of the report.** The final report of the VV\_GR\_S\_1 group is approved by the Order of the Chair of the RCL in accordance with the Regulation.



## 2. ASSESSMENT REPORTS

### 2.1. MRU\_TM-VSA Unit of Assessment

Name of the institution	<b>Mykolas Romeris University</b>
Official abbreviation of the name of the institution	<b>MRU</b>
Name of the Institution's unit of assessment (hereinafter – UoA)	<b>Law School - Public Security Academy</b>
Abbreviation of the UoA name	<b>MRU_TM-VSA</b>
The scope of the UoA (FTE(SD))	<b>35,03</b>
Research area(s)	<b>S 000 - Social sciences</b>

### Quality of the R&D activities by research fields (groups of research fields) of the UoA

#### Social sciences

Research field	Scope (FTE(SD))	Score (points)
<b>S 001 - Law</b>	<b>35,03</b>	<b>3,5</b>

#### Reasoned justification of the score

The documentation provided by the UoA gives evidence of good research output. Some of the publications provided by the Unit as examples of high-quality output, concern articles in high-impact journals. In addition, there are book chapters as well as books that are published with relevant, although not always top-level, international publishers.

The UoA organises a PhD programme in Law with excellent candidates. The information provided by the Unit shows that the number of defended theses is adequate and stable over time. The programme hosts a decent and rising share of foreign doctoral students. Two of them were present during the site visit, both were recruited after previous stays in Lithuania. Although some internationalisation is thus observed in the PhD programme, more generally the Unit does not seem to include foreign professors or researchers.

The UoA has a very good record of participating in internationally renowned conferences and of producing quality expert reports. The list of best conferences spans across several fields of Law and is a demonstration of the broad expertise of the staff of the Unit. Nonetheless, while the Unit's participation in 18 conferences is very good, there is room for further international involvement and activity to improve the Unit's research quality, beyond conference participation.

The list of main national and international awards contains 18 examples, of which most are national awards. This exemplifies the outstanding position that the Unit has at the national level. Of the list, 3 examples are international, including a student essay and a Fulbright grant. These examples show the emerging nature of the Unit in the international arena.

During its visit to the Unit, the Panel observed how the laboratory serves as a platform for the implementation of advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence. The activities involved have produced several publications in various fields (including Law). This platform has become a driving force in the advancement of the research quality of the UoA by exploring the possibilities of Artificial Intelligence in legal research and case-analysis. The Panel's visit confirmed the fact that this laboratory has been established as a trailblazer to integrate Artificial Intelligence and other emerging technologies in the field of Law.

During its visit, the Panel was informed of the excellent communication between research staff dealing with different themes but the Panel remarks that a basic institutionalized structure to exchange knowledge across research staff members, to improve collaboration, and to create synergies in research, is missing.

Overall, the research carried out by the Unit is of high level, and well recognized nationally. International recognition is more limited, and mainly concerns participation in international conferences.

## Economic and social impact of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

4

Reasoned justification of the score

The list of research outputs, R&D orders, and projects are mostly national, the members of the UoA also have international recognition (FRA, HYBRIDC, and others). The members of the UoA participate in the highest levels of commissions at the national level (including participation in the Seimas, Department of National Minorities, Ombudsman, Police, and the military). In this sense, the economic and social impact that the UoA has achieved at the national level is very good. The list of 18 research outputs that show this impact is varied, and shows high public significance of the Unit's work, including assessment of draft of legislation, academic opinions on the constitutional evolution in the country, judicial proceedings, et cetera. The impact is basically domestic, but that some of the outputs may transcend national borders and may also impact politics abroad (for example, contribution to EU asylum and migration policy reform developments). The involvement of researchers in public institutional and private committees is also very good, covering the most important Lithuanian public institutions, on different levels of governance. The members of the Unit are also developing an important social and research influence in relevant associations and private institutions. The Unit also has a very good impact through consultations and participation in national economic entities, where again several ministries and public institutions are benefiting from the interaction and consultancy of the members of the Unit.

The Unit's track record in organisation of conferences and workshops is very good, with a focus on bringing together leading experts and scholars to share their research and insights on cutting-edge topics in Law. These events serve as platforms to obtain outputs which contribute significantly to the Unit's development of new ideas and the refinement of its existing work. In addition to organising these events, the Unit's members are actively involved in serving on the editorial boards of national (in-house) journals (as the International Comparative Jurisprudence, published by MRU), and some international journals (such as the European Journal of Legal Education, and the Baltic Yearbook of International Law). This involvement is important for the impact of the Unit not only in the academic community but also in the national institutional structure.

The Panel's visit confirmed the strong ties that this UoA has with entities other than those in the academic community (Public Security forces and Lithuania's most relevant political institutions). These ties provide the

Unit with more empirical and practical perspectives, which helps to further strengthen the notable national social impact of the Unit.

## The development potential of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

4

Reasoned justification of the score

As was confirmed during the Panel's visit, in the assessment period, the Unit has implemented several economic and administrative efforts to increase its research quality. These measures create the potential for the UoA to consolidate and enhance its emergent international position, by participation in relevant international research networks and with the objective to have more publications in international outlets. The current research activities (including the future-oriented topics) and the existing national and growing international network the Unit is part of, serve as a solid base for the future growth of the Unit.

The development potential of the Unit is properly supported by the Unit investing in English proof-reading of articles, papers, books, and book chapters. This applies to all staff members, ranging from PhD candidates to senior staff members of the UoA. Another valuable aspect that needs to be mentioned is that the administration of the UoA economically rewards high-level publications, in internationally renowned outlets. A good example of the path to follow is the 2022 international event "Towards future research impact in Lithuania", organized by the international publisher Elsevier, where the UoA participated, and MRU (including the Unit) was awarded for the highest compound annual growth rate in research output in 2002-2022.

The potential development of the research activities is also promoted efficiently by the administration with a huge investment in library, electronic resources, online support service, catalogues, and important databases, to conduct, also remotely, research activities.

The Unit's active involvement in various research projects at the European level is commendable. Furthermore, during the assessment period, a Unit's senior faculty member submitted an ERC starting grant application, which, despite not being successful, is evidence to the Unit's ambition and determination to secure external funding for cutting-edge research.

The solid national reputation achieved by the Unit may help to progressively consolidate a stronger international research position as well as more international economic and social impact. The Unit's national reputation makes that it will be perceived by others as a reliable and experienced partner. Lithuanian institutions that the Unit currently cooperates with, may propose the UoA as potential partner to their homologue institutions abroad, for participation in consortia or in international workshops.

The inclusion of MRU in the European University Initiative through the European Reform Universities Alliance (ERUA) is another important aspect to be considered in terms of the potential of the UoA. Such participation creates new chances for involvement in international calls, for joint events, and for shared publications.

## Recommendations for continuity and/or improvement of the activities of the UoA

The Panel recommends that Unit continues its efforts to pursue publishing in highly regarded international outlets. The Panel believes that the UoA is well-positioned to do that, especially regarding research topics

where the Unit has demonstrated international expertise and can leverage Lithuania's particular position on the global stage. Additionally, the Unit has a strong portfolio and background, both theoretical and empirical, in areas such as public security aspects, including issues related to EU external borders with Russia and Belarus, the war of Ukraine, and minority rights inclusion. The UoA is also actively exploring new research topics, especially regarding legal aspects of emerging technologies, which the Panel also strongly recommends the Unit to continue.

The Panel further points to two specificities of the Unit that could be exploited. First, its outstanding experience in topics related to public security and external borders. Secondly, the way new technology is applied (such as AI and analysis of algorithms). As the visit showed the Panel, the Unit's administration has been and is investing in new technologies and Artificial Intelligence, which has already led to economic impact and research results. This technology offers the possibility to further open new research avenues and multidisciplinary research. The Panel recommends the Unit to carefully consider the choice between pursuing new and broad research topics and further exploitation of the current specialisations. It could be that the latter is effective to consolidate the Unit's international position.

The work atmosphere and conditions of this UoA are concordant with quality of its research. As the site visit confirmed, the atmosphere in the UoA is excellent and young researchers and PhD scholars are invited to participate in joint research projects and activities. But even though the conditions for cooperation are very good, joint work (in terms of publications and projects), involving two or more members of the Unit, is limited. The Panel advises the Unit to establish a very basic and light structure, such as brownbag lunch meetings, where researchers meet every 2 or 3 weeks, and get exposed to each other's projects, papers, research interests et cetera. This will improve the quality of the research and encourage research output of the UoA as a unit and not as output from individual members.

---

## 2.2. PPMI Group Unit of Assessment

Name of the institution	<b>PPMI Group</b>
Official abbreviation of the name of the institution	<b>PPMI Group</b>
Name of the Institution's unit of assessment (hereinafter – UoA)	<b>PPMI Group</b>
Abbreviation of the UoA name	<b>PPMI Group</b>
The scope of the UoA (FTE(SD))	<b>5,29</b>
Research area(s)	<b>S 000 - Social sciences</b>

### Quality of the R&D activities by research fields (groups of research fields) of the UoA

#### Social sciences

Group of research fields within the research area	Scope (FTE(SD))	Score (points)
<b>S 002 - Political Science</b>	<b>5,29</b>	<b>2,5</b>

#### Reasoned justification of the score

The Public Policy Management Institute (PPMI) is a private research and policy analysis centre with activities in (inter alia) the field of public policy research, impact assessment and policy evaluation, data analytics, and capacity building in the public sector. For the Comparative Expert Assessment, it has formed a UoA with 5.29 FTE researchers, all in the area of Social Sciences, with Political Science as main field of research. The R&D capacity of 5.29 FTE concerns ten individual researchers. No information is provided on PPMI in the chart provided by the Research Council which shows results from the Annual Assessment (2018-2021). According to the overview provided by the Research Council, in 2021 PPMI received EUR 2.3 mil. from R&D orders by economic entities, whereas it received far less in 2020 (EUR 0.35 mil.). Information provided during the site visit indicates a -far- higher level of such revenue (between EUR 9 and 10 mil., annually).

Based on information provided during the site visit, PPMI has experienced a steady growth over the last decade, in revenue, staff and projects. PPMI is very active internationally, especially as a service provider for EU institutions. Measured in contracts awarded, in 2021 it was in the top-5 of companies providing services to EU institutions in the policy sector (together with companies like EY, Ipsos, ICF and Ecorys). Currently, 92% of PPMI's revenue comes from orders from EU institutions.

Public policy research counts for 35% of PPMI's activities. This concerns participation by PPMI in European framework programmes for research and innovation, grants for research projects from Lithuanian programmes, and scientific studies (based on service contracts) for different Directorates-General of the European Commission and for other EU institutions. Approximately 50% of PPMI's activities concern policy evaluation and impact assessment (also for EU institutions), which do not count as research, according to the 2015 OECD Frascati manual. The rest of PPMI's activities concern engagement and co-creation, and support to policy delivery.

Some of the public policy research is listed under best output. Other commissioned research is listed as examples of impact. The research is applied, comparative, often with large-scale field work, and regularly involves many international partners. Generally, it is of good quality.

In addition to the above, PPMI conducts follow-up research based on the results of studies and evaluations, including the preparation of scientific peer-reviewed publications. These activities are funded by the results-based funding from the Lithuanian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, since 2021. Participation by PPMI researchers in scientific networks, conferences, and other events is financed from different sources, including PPMI's own resources.

The two examples of academic research output that were provided by the UoA represent decent research, but not of very high quality. The two examples of conference presentations signal mixed quality. Moreover, the research output (as provided by the Unit) is very limited in magnitude, especially the peer-reviewed academic output and participation in scientific events. However, during the site visit it was mentioned that the academic output is growing.

PPMI does not offer doctoral studies itself, nor is it structurally involved in PhD programmes offered by other institutions. There is also no involvement in teaching. No mention is made of any awards received for R&D. Information is provided on only one competition-based project (SIRIUS), even though it is clear from other information and from the site visit that PPMI has been successful in various (other) (EU) tenders and competitions.

The profiles of the researchers (i.e., the links provided by the UoA to ResearchGate pages) show some variety. Two researchers have very decent academic profiles, with regular publications in high-quality academic journals. Others have rather limited academic output. Interestingly, most researchers present themselves as being affiliated with Vilnius University, one with Cambridge, and one with Central European University. It was explained during the site visit that it is common at PPMI to have positions at universities in addition to the (full) job at PPMI.

Overall, the quality of the R&D of PPMI is satisfactory. PPMI is involved in international research projects and can secure commissioned research in a -very- competitive environment. This signals international recognition. The quality of the applied research is good. However, from the perspective of academic research activities (peer-reviewed journal publications, conference participation) the quality of R&D at PPMI is relatively poor.

## Economic and social impact of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

2,5

Reasoned justification of the score

The research outputs that are listed as having the greatest impact, as well as the other reports mentioned as examples of best research, and the examples highlighted during the site visit, show that PPMI's applied research is highly relevant to policymaking, both at the national and EU level. PPMI's research outputs are also very relevant to society at large, again both in the national and in the international context. The applied research covers a variety of topics, showing a broad range of expertise that is potentially relevant to various societal challenges. Many of the topics covered are in the social domain (education and youth, culture and

sports, employment, health care) which make them especially suited for public outreach and interaction with society.

Given the relevance of these reports and the underlying research, given the links PPMI has with international organisations and especially EU institutions, given its cooperation in international consortia, and given the type of policy fields PPMI does research in, it is therefore surprising that PPMI researchers, with their expertise, are not more active in various professional or academic networks. There are no researchers that represent the UoA in working groups, commissions or committees set up by state authorities, state and municipal institutions, enterprises and organisations, and economic entities. Nothing is listed under consultations provided to public or economic entities, even though support to policy delivery is one of the core activities of PPMI.

According to the information provided, PPMI has not organized any scientific conferences, even though some events were presented during the site visit. There is no participation in editorial boards. No participation in international working academic groups or associations is mentioned in the documentation. There are no scientific popularisation activities. Nothing is listed under cooperation agreements between the UoA and economic entities, even though it is clear from the information provided that PPMI has -for example- framework agreements with the European Commission. Such framework agreements could have been listed in the documentation. Also, NESET (the European Network of Experts working on the Social dimension of Education and Training), which is run by PPMI, could have been mentioned.

While the impact of its research output is potentially large, PPMI is good at securing orders/tenders, and is very well connected to the EU institutions, PPMI does seem to do relatively little in terms of -planned- interaction with its environment, other than its direct clients. There is very limited interaction with relevant academic communities and very little public outreach.

## The development potential of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

2,5

Reasoned justification of the score

According to the Panel, PPMI has considerable development potential, not only as an institute for applied commissioned research, but also for more academic research and peer-reviewed publications. However, the Panel is not convinced of the UoA's ambitions in this direction and therefore scores this criterion between satisfactory and good.

Generally, the UoA has sold itself short by not filling out large parts of the report. Instead, it refers to the strategy document, which is not very elaborate. It contains information on mission, activities, values, which can also be found on PPMI's website and in its annual report. Even though it is stated in the strategy document that the document was prepared specifically for the purpose of the comparative research assessment, it does not really discuss the strategic choices needed to improve PPMI's R&D quality, which is a missed opportunity. The researcher group at PPMI has a good gender balance and consists of young researchers (all younger than 55 years), which is important from the perspective of development potential. Generally, the PPMI group has many international researchers (approximately 35%). 10 of the 107 employees at PPMI have a PhD degree. The information provided on human resource management is however very limited and focuses on rather practical issues concerning the recruitment process. It does not address career

development. No information is provided on training of (young) researchers. During the site visit it became clear that training opportunities are available, and annual training plans are made. Trainings concern company-wide training (digital skills, data analysis) and niche training (in for example particular methods). Additionally, internal workshops are held to share knowledge.

The R&D infrastructure at PPMI is not addressed in the report. The technical part of it (servers and computers, software, analytical and managerial tools, et cetera) is mentioned as strength in the SWOT-analysis, together with the presence of a data science team. These strengths were confirmed during the site visit. Research infrastructure is however about more than servers, software, and tools; it is also about the academic environment: exposure to the (international) research front, availability of peer groups, mentoring by seniors, et cetera.

In the SWOT it is mentioned that one of the strengths is the research focus on a few thematic areas (R&D&I, public management and governance, education, and training), but the same document lists many research fields (higher education; vocational education and training; public administration; economic policy; R&D policy; employment, and social policy). The choice of research themes and the breadth vs. focus issue are not addressed in the strategy document but they are important for development potential. Whereas the competitive applied research arena requires broad deployability of researchers and transversal skills, academic research excellence often comes with specialization.

A major weakness mentioned in the SWOT-analysis is the insufficient use of commissioned research for further (academic) publications or activities, in the post-project phase. No attempt is made to discuss -potential- measures to deal with this -core- problem. Reference was made during the site visit to the results-based funding from the Lithuanian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, as main vehicle for these activities (since 2021). Additionally, but exceptionally, PPMI uses its own resources to fund literature reviews. Such reviews are used to enhance expertise in the topics concerned and/or are used in acquisitions. Generally, according to the researchers during the site visit, PPMI promotes involvement by its researchers in academic research activities. Also, if an employee wishes to pursue PhD research, this is facilitated.

During the site visit it also became clear that in some cases, with service contracts, copy right issues may prevent the direct use of data for academic follow-up publications (i.e., the European Commission uses the gathered data first in its own Staff Working Documents). With research activities within framework programmes such as Horizon Europe, academic publications are often part of the deliverables of the project.

It was also mentioned during the site visit that -in the common case of a PPMI researcher having a position at a university- publications by PPMI researchers that do not directly use data gathered in PPMI projects, and are of a more fundamental nature, are used as research output for the university, not for PPMI.

Concluding, some issues related to possible improvement of the -academic- research output of PPMI have been addressed by the UoA, especially during the site visit. However, according to the panel, looking at PPMI's mission, and its strategic and financial choices, PPMI shows relatively little commitment to academic research which limits its development potential in this field.

## **Recommendations for continuity and/or improvement of the activities of the UoA**

For the next Comparative Expert Assessment, PPMI should comply better with the requests for information for the UoA data and should provide a more comprehensive overview of relevant activities and output (such events, cooperation agreements, and participation in networks). It should also pay much more attention to the final parts of the document which deal with strategic and management choices.



The panel recommends that PPMI considers the following steps to enhance its -academic- R&D quality:

1. Decide on ambitions. Is academic research a marginal activity for PPMI, instrumental to its core activities, or does it have merit of its own and does it need to be prioritized? If there is ambition to enhance the academic profile, what organizational and financial measures are needed? Is the results-based funding from the government sufficient or should more resources be made available?
  2. Learn from similar organisations. Both within and outside of the academic sector, there are many organisations that operate in the same context: financially almost fully dependent on commissioned research but with clear academic research output goals or requirements. How do they deal with this combination in terms of funding? Some of them -for example- systematically earmark part of the revenues from commissioned research for academic follow-up activities. How do others deal with clients' copy right on data and the delays in data availability this may present for PPMI? Is this really a significant problem, given that peer-review processes for article submissions generally take time?
  3. Make better use of existing connections with universities, both internationally (through participation in relevant consortia) and nationally (through additional positions PPMI researchers have at universities). There is very high degree of complementarity between PPMI and more traditional research institutions, in the sense that the latter often lack international competitiveness (especially when it comes to the European framework programmes) but can offer the academic environment that PPMI lacks (for example doctoral studies, regular academic events). Identify and further develop cooperation possibilities (between PPMI and universities, for example Vilnius University) that are systemic and build on yet go beyond personal affiliations of PPMI researchers. Do not go outside of PPMI to do -more fundamental- academic research (like most researchers at PPMI now do through side jobs at universities) but bring academia more into PPMI itself.
  4. Systematically plan the interaction with the academic community. Prioritise and plan conference participation, regularly organise academic events and make better use of existing networks (such as NESET). Systematically plan follow-up academic research activities for each project, at the proposal and acquisition phase.
-

### 2.3. EHU\_S Unit of Assessment

Name of the institution	<b>European Humanities University</b>
Official abbreviation of the name of the institution	<b>EHU</b>
Name of the Institution's unit of assessment (hereinafter – UoA)	<b>Social Sciences</b>
Abbreviation of the UoA name	<b>EHU_S</b>
The scope of the UoA (FTE(SD))	<b>7,92</b>
Research area(s)	<b>S 000 - Social sciences</b>

## Quality of the R&D activities by research fields (groups of research fields) of the UoA

### Social sciences

Research field	Scope (FTE(SD))	Score (points)
<b>S 001 - Law</b>	<b>2,50</b>	<b>3</b>

#### Reasoned justification of the score

The UoA in the field of Law is a coherent research unit, specialised in constitutional law and human rights, with a high level of expertise on Belarus and its context. It is a very small Unit with research capacity in the form of partial research time of eight staff members (1 professor, 6 associate professors, 1 lecturer) that have teaching as their main task. There are no full-time researchers. The UoA does not carry out PhD programmes of its own, but there is a plan to carry out a PhD programme in the future in the field of Law.

According to the documentation provided by the Unit, and the information obtained during the site visit, it is difficult to attract and motivate active young researchers due to the declining prestige of a scientific career and linked also to the salary and to specific problems of the model of a university in the exile.

However, taking into account its size, the Unit is quite productive, with a decent number of publications in internationally established academic journals. The participation in conferences abroad is adequate and shows recognition at the international level. Nevertheless, publications of books and international papers are limited.

EHU attracts some European funding, as the Jean Monnet Chair on transnational constitutionalism and Open Society Foundation funding shows. However, during the visit it was confirmed that the Unit's participation in applications for international research projects and its current participation as partner in European projects and international networks is limited.

The UoA has a good structure of Departments focused on teaching, and research centres focused on research with specific topics. It is important to note the relevant activities carried out within the Centre for Constitutionalism and Human Rights, such as supporting and developing activities and research initiatives, inviting Belarusian and Ukrainian scholars after the war in Ukraine and after the events in Belarus in 2020. During the visit it was outlined also that the Unit plans to promote research groups, as it is pointed out in the documentation, with more ad-hoc and interdisciplinary focus, to foster research in the University.

In conclusion, the UoA in the field of Law is a small but quite good research unit which is becoming a hub for academic and research activities linked to Belarus and Ukraine.

Group of research fields within the research area	Scope (FTE(SD))	Score (points)
<b>S 008 - Communication and Information</b>	5,42	3
<b>S 005 - Sociology</b>		
<b>S 002 - Political Science</b>		

#### Reasoned justification of the score

The UoA, in the research fields of Sociology, Communication and Information, and Political Science does not carry out PhD programmes of their own, and there is no plan to carry out such a programme in the future. Therefore, there are no theses defended in the assessment period. The Unit is partner in a PhD program with two other universities, but it seems more this is in the sense of co-taught courses for PhD students than in the sense of doing research together with scholars and PhD students from the partner universities. Research capacity is small, with only one researcher, and most research capacity based in teaching staff (mostly senior staff), and without any PhD students.

The participation in conferences abroad is adequate and shows recognition at the international level. Scholars in this Unit do work together and publish in established international journals, such as 'Sustainability' or 'Emotions and Society'. Three papers that are listed in Scopus seem to be a very decent outcome, considering the size of the Unit. This small Unit also manages to attract funds from national as well as external sources, such as the Open Society University Network or the Erasmus + framework. There are not any awards or recognition at the national or international level, though.

There are four centres within the Unit: Centre for Gender Studies, Centre for Research of Intersubjectivity and Interpersonal Communication, Laboratory of Critical Urbanism, Laboratory for Studies of Visual Culture and Contemporary Art. These centres provide identity and direction to the faculty. They do not necessarily carry out research projects at the moment, but mainly activist and popularisation activities.

A total of 20 persons are researching the three domains (Sociology, Communication and Information, Political Science) in a balanced way. Staff members have excellent linguistic capabilities that could provide a major asset in research. Activities centre around the publication *Topos*, that is published in Lithuanian, Belarussian, Russian and English. Staff members are considering studying within the theoretical model of decolonisation but lack convergence towards research groups. Each research field has very diverse preoccupations, and even within a single research field there is a lot of diversity. The individual researchers have an admirable international profile, but cover quite a dispersed agenda, stretching from nuclear urban settings, art, film, gender to sustainability and digital education. Even though there is no unified research agenda, Belarus as an object of study is an element of convergence in the three domains. The Communication and Information domain is lagging behind the other fields in the Unit in terms of research output. Nevertheless, the ongoing grants addressing disinformation through digital education might strike a better research balance. The Unit has a successful BA program in English on Media, but it does not produce any research on media and not even a structured and continuous media flow. They have the technology but, at the moment, the infrastructure is used more as a playground for the students and their media and arts projects. The books on media in the library are mainly in Russian, and quite ancient. Philosophy professors teach in the communication and media program.

## Economic and social impact of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

3

Reasoned justification of the score

The provided list of outputs with largest impact is relevant in topics related to Belarus and increasingly Ukraine. In fact, the Centre for Constitutionalism and Human Rights is an important research centre supporting research initiatives and fostering initiatives with a considerable impact. Moreover, scholars provide expert knowledge to various national as well as international bodies (consultations provided to public organizations, business, non-governmental organizations) on issues of gender equality, the situation of women in Belarus and Ukraine, and other issues. In addition, and according to the documentation, there is useful input in terms of policy background knowledge that can feed informed decisions about regional relations and strategy. During the visit, it was confirmed this relevant economic and social impact, particularly in Belarus and Ukraine issues, and a strong cooperation focus in the region. However, the participation of the Unit's researchers in editorial boards of scientific journals is weak (limited to several journals in Lithuania and abroad).

Nevertheless, it is important also to note that the Unit is a safe harbour for scholars and students from Belarus and Ukraine, and they provide teaching in Lithuanian, Russian and English, with a good impact for Russian language students. The organization of conferences within the University campus is adequate at national level considering the size of the Unit. A significant part of these conferences and other events are organized in cooperation with national and international partners.

As pointed out in the documentation, the Unit plans to promote research groups, with more ad-hoc and interdisciplinary focus, to foster research activities in the EHU. These groups can serve to organize more conferences, to prepare big and multidisciplinary research projects, and other activities with economic and social impact. During the visit it was noted that researchers are very positive about the development of these new research groups. The research groups will foster the participation of students actively in research activities, including several topics as forced deportation of children, environmental rights, and culture heritage in Ukraine. It is important that teaching staff try to engage students in research and help them organising empirical research.

Nevertheless, participation in international working groups and cooperation agreements is limited (PhD programmes, Marie Curie and Erasmus agreements, consortia to present research projects, etc.), particularly in the collaboration for the organization of conferences and events abroad (participation with other entities to develop activities outside the University). The Unit's researchers participate actively in conferences abroad but there are no data relating to the involvement of the Unit in co-organizing conferences and activities abroad, particularly in collaboration with foreign universities or institutions.

In the end, the Unit is a relevant hub for Belarus and related topics, and the Panel considers that the social and economic impact is quite good, both for neighbouring Belarus and Ukraine, as well as for Lithuania. However, the current limitations in the participation in international working groups and committees, and the limited current collaboration with other universities and entities for the organization of conferences and events abroad, do not justify a higher score.

## The development potential of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

3

Reasoned justification of the score

There is a strong potential for development, especially when it comes to its special object of study, Belarus and potentially Ukraine and relations with other neighbour states. Human resources management does not contain strong active policies in order to attract and retain researchers. In addition, according to the documentation and the visit, the Unit does not have specific policies for the recruitment and retention of top researchers (salary awards, there is not possibility of sabbatical periods) and to foster the participation of staff in international research projects and grant applications.

In fact, the training, formation, and research opportunities for young researchers are limited, considering the ongoing PhD programme in Philosophy and research seminars and activities. With the planned future PhD programme in Law, the Unit could increase the potential to attract young researchers, because currently, the Unit does not have sufficient specific strategies to attract talented researchers, particularly young researchers, and PhD students, including researchers developing a PhD abroad.

The research strategy, in general, and considering the new research groups focus, is good. The Unit plans to promote research groups, as it is pointed out in the documentation, with more ad-hoc and interdisciplinary focus, to foster research in the University. These research groups will be new research units with different foci than the Departments (which focus on teaching) and research centres (which focus on specific research topics). In the interview with researchers of the Unit it became clear that there is some optimism regarding the development of these research groups. The panel acknowledges that the Unit's idea of creating research groups could be combined very well with the structure of centres (the centres provide longer term identity; and the research groups are more ad-hoc and interdisciplinary), while the research groups can be used to prioritize certain research topics (e.g., constitutionalism/human rights/rule of Law).

The Unit has potential to engage researchers from Eastern European countries with a relevant academic future to connect with Belarus and Ukrainian topics. Looking at its current performance (outputs, current agreements with other Universities and entities in Lithuania and abroad), its human resources (a small Unit, with a limited number of teaching staff, particularly limited as far as full-time staff is concerned), and infrastructure, the Unit has the potential to maintain its good ratings in the next years.

The UoA seems to be aware of its weaknesses and opportunities, according to the documentation and the observations and information gathered during the visit, but it will be particularly important to promote the retention and recruitment of top researchers and the internationalization.

## Recommendations for continuity and/or improvement of the activities of the UoA

The UoA has improved its research achievements over the last 5 years, and it currently has a good performance. However, it has a great potential -thanks to its special nature as a hub in Belarussian and Ukrainian issues- which it should embrace, aimed at increasing scientific outputs and participation (at least as partners) in research applications and international projects as well. The panel recommends promoting specific policies to foster and incentivize the participation of researchers in international research grants and projects applications. The Unit should also promote the collaboration with other universities and entities for the organization of conferences and events abroad in order to foster economic and social impact.

The joint PhD program with two other universities includes Belarussian PhD students that are not funded. The panel recommends finding ways to have the Belarussian students funded as well (by looking for public and private funds in order to support students). There is no clear prospect for sustainability of PhD programs if there is no legal way to finance the PhD students in a non-discriminatory way.

The Panel recommends the Unit to strengthen its partnerships with Lithuanian and other universities. The Unit can be very active in research consortia because EHU has a singular position and would be a very much appreciated partner. EHU now has a collaboration with Vytautas Magnus University and could extend that with the programs in Communication in order to be inspired about research on media and the use of technology for channelled content on their topics of activism.

The UoA needs more full-time staff to foster research and teaching and to give more stability in teaching programmes, particularly in the PhD programme. The Panel recommends developing strategies to promote the retention and attraction of researchers, particularly Visiting Scholars, young researchers, PhD students, including researchers developing a PhD abroad. For example, the UoA could explore the possibility to provide a sabbatical as an award for staff members after a good assessment of the research outputs.

In conclusion, the Unit is working very well! Nevertheless, with the potential position as a hub in Belarussian and Ukrainian issues, it could still improve a lot to increase the quality, impact, and development potential of the R&D activities.

---

## 2.4. VU\_02S Unit of Assessment

Name of the institution	<b>Vilnius University</b>
Official abbreviation of the name of the institution	<b>VU</b>
Name of the Institution's unit of assessment (hereinafter – UoA)	<b>Political Sciences</b>
Abbreviation of the UoA name	<b>VU_02S</b>
The scope of the UoA (FTE(SD))	<b>16,37</b>
Research area(s)	<b>S 000 - Social sciences</b>

### Quality of the R&D activities by research fields (groups of research fields) of the UoA

#### Social sciences

Research field	Scope (FTE(SD))	Score (points)
<b>S 002 - Political Science</b>	<b>16,37</b>	<b>4,5</b>

#### Reasoned justification of the score

The UoA in Political Science (Institute of International Relations and Political Science) at Vilnius University represents the largest Unit of Political Science in Lithuania. The Unit has 32 researchers, 45 teaching staff (with limited research time) and 37 other employees; 49 of them with scientific degrees. During the site visit the management of the Unit defined their Unit as one of the smallest at the Vilnius University, but even in international comparison- compared with Political Science units in other small states in Northern Europe, such as Estonia, Finland, Norway or Sweden, this constitutes a rather large unit. It follows that the amount of their human resources is adequate for delivering a good number of research outputs and for providing a critical mass which should also improve the chances of producing high level research. During the site visit the Panel also learned that many of the teachers and researchers have acquired an extensive international experience before returning to Lithuania.

In addition, the Unit has a good number of PhD students (17 full-time PhD students in 2022) and 1-4 students have defended their doctoral dissertation each year. Even though in the report it was argued that PhD students are encouraged to write their theses in English and that approximately a half of them would do so, most of the dissertations listed in the report were written in Lithuanian (8 out of 10). The topics vary from foreign policy to memory studies and political thought related questions.

Judged by publications, the Unit has an excellent quality of research. It seems to have reached this part of the goal set in the strategic plan for the internationalization of research. Political scientists have published in highly ranked international peer-reviewed journals (1st quartile in Scopus) such as Nations and Nationalism, Europe-Asia Studies, Political Research Quarterly, European Societies, Journal of Common Market Studies, or books/chapters in edited books by international publishers such as Routledge, and Oxford University Press. The topics of their publications vary between foreign policy or security related questions and political economy and EU policy such as the role of European Central Bank and the European Court of Justice in the

sovereign debt crisis. However, during the site visit the Panel learned that the researchers conduct research on mainstream political science and public administration topics as well (linked with their teaching), not only those related to international relations.

Researchers of this Unit take part in leading international conferences, such as ECPR, Pan-European Conference on IR, Annual Association for the Study of Nationalities World Convention, International Public Policy Association Conference, Annual Midwest Political Science Association Conference, ISA West Annual Conference. Those researchers who participated in site visit discussion had also participated in EUSA, ECSA-Canada, TEPSA, BISA, events of Icelandic Centre for small state studies.

The Unit's scholars have received an impressive number of different awards e.g., European Charlemagne Prize Fellowship, Independence Scholarship of the Republic of Lithuania, Prize for the Winner of 2017 Young scientists and doctoral students' research competition, Lithuanian Political Science Association award for the best political science publication.

Even if the Unit has excellent quality of research, there is room for improvement as to external project funding. It could be higher when taking into account the number of researchers and teachers. The most significant funding comes from the Horizon Europe Framework Programme (almost half a million), a project focusing on public history and coordinated by Vilnius University. The Unit also participates in a project funded by the Horizon 2020 programme. In addition, it has been able to acquire national research funding e.g., from the Research Council of Lithuania and from Lithuanian Studies Programme. The Unit has also smaller grants e.g., from NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme.

## Economic and social impact of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

4,5

Reasoned justification of the score

According to the Panel, the Unit's research has relevance both at the national and international level. It engages actively with policymakers and other external stakeholders. The Unit's projects and research findings have a great potential in making a positive contribution to society. From the report the Panel learnt about the efforts for achieving impact. For example, regarding research on the COVID-19 pandemic, an open access book was delivered to the key decision-makers, the Unit invited key decision makers, such as ministers, to discuss their research findings, and this event was also broadcast on the website of the Lithuanian National Radio and Television. In addition, the Unit's researchers engaged with media by publishing op-ed pieces. This represents an excellent example of societal outreach. The voter advice tool Manobalsas should also be mentioned among those activities that surely have an impact, as well as citizen discussions regarding the ideas for the future of Europe organized by the Jean Monnet Centre. There is also a potential EU-level impact, together with the book series Views from the Capitals whose readers include policy makers in the EU.

The Unit's researchers and teaching staff also take part in several working groups at the national and international level. Staff members act as members of the Council for State Progress; government of Lithuania; the Radio and TV commission, accountable to the Parliament, the executive committee of the Central European Political Science Association and as an expert for European Research Council. In addition, the Unit's staff members provide consultations at the national level, for example, for the Lithuanian Government.

In addition, the Unit has organised a good number of international conferences, such as the Lithuanian political science conference. The Unit's expertise is required in editorial boards and international advisory



boards or as editors in different international journals, such as the Journal of Baltic Security, the Journal of Baltic Studies, the Journal of International Relations and Development. Researchers also popularise their research by commenting political events in mass media and social media, organising public debates and lectures, publishing podcasts, etc. For example, the Unit's researchers engage in civic education of pupils and the general public, by broadcasting lectures through its YouTube channel.

What is also appreciated by the Panel is that according to the report, societal outreach is not concentrated on the shoulders of few members of the faculty but several of them disseminate their research findings by giving public lectures, engaging with media, giving consultations, and serving in different working groups.

## The development potential of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

4,5

Reasoned justification of the score

As to human resources, the Unit has both junior and mid-career scholars. The Unit represents a rather young group of researchers (67 out of 97 under 45 years), with a slight gender imbalance (56 male/41 female). According to the Panel, the Unit has a great potential with this group of researchers. What could be improved is the inward mobility, i.e., a steady number of visiting scholars from abroad who would diversify the research community. The Unit has recognized international recruitment as a challenge but during the site visit it was mentioned that the situation was slowly improving. There are no bottlenecks in terms of language (staff can teach and do research in English). Their own assessment of the reason for low recruitment is the lack of international prestige/reputation.

Regarding infrastructure, the Unit has adequate physical premises (even if some modernizing might be needed), and a very good library with relevant databases. The Unit has also institutional membership of ECPR, TEPSA, NISPAcee, CEPSA and the OESC network.

The Unit has an excellent strategic plan with four main goals: internationalization of education and research, improving workload balance and empowerment of their community. Based on the strategic plan, their ambition level is high with the expected research output (indicators to do with the number of publications with citation index, high level publications in international journals, international R&D applications, participation in international R&D projects). These goals and ways to achieve them were also discussed with the management and researchers during our site visit.

In order to meet the strategic goal of internationalisation, the Unit has introduced financial incentives for high level publications. During the site visit researchers convinced the Panel that the given incentives have been in use and worked well. It should also be mentioned that the support services for research seem to be working well, e.g., the research office, without the help of which it would not have been possible to get the Horizon framework programme, the researchers argued. Researchers also get proofreading free of charge (also available for PhD students). As to workload balance, the Panel learnt that the balance has moved into right direction. The Unit's researchers have annual assessment talks with their superiors, and this is the instrument for institutionally recognising their tasks. They can discuss which preferences they have as to social outreach, teaching, and research. For example, if they have a project, their teaching load can be reduced. The Unit has also a sabbatical system.

The Panel was impressed by the quality of the plan of the future researcher training (doctoral training, post docs, early career researchers). It should also be mentioned that inviting BA and MA students to take part in

the research process is important for future PhD recruitment. During the site visit the Panel also learnt that PhD students were happy with the renewed courses and with supervision and support services. They also have an opportunity to develop their skills in teaching even if it is not obligatory. PhD students have also been able to gather international experience e.g., by presenting their research in international conferences abroad. The Unit has a relatively low number of state-funded PhD positions (2-3 per year). According to their results and demand for such positions, it would be good to have one or two more positions per year.

One of the measures in the strategic plan concerns the identification of key research themes. The documentation lists six broad research themes: Political Behaviour and Institutions: Lithuanian and Comparative Perspectives; (Post-) Soviet Memory and Society; Public Policy and Governance Analysis; Area Studies with a Focus on Russia, Eastern Europe and Europeanisation; Lithuanian/Small State Foreign and Security Policy; Political Philosophy and Lithuanian Political Thought. Furthermore, six new topical themes are recognized: Politics of climate change; Green technologies; New technologies and their relation to politics; Migration; Innovation, digitalisation and big data; (Post) pandemic changes in politics. The Unit has already identified problems with "insufficient linkage between research areas" and adding more of them would not solve the given problem. The only solution would be to make a decision which themes will be prioritized in the future.

In addition to the research themes, the Unit has the following research groups: Political economy; Belarus; Politics of technology, Afterness; Feminist policy and critical theory; Asian, African and Latin American Studies. The researchers seemed to be satisfied with these groups and belong to more than one group. The research groups make it possible to gather young staff members around a topic. However, it was not quite clear to the Panel how research themes and research groups were connected with each other.

The Unit has made a very comprehensive and convincing self-assessment report. As a negative trend the declining number of students, including PhD researchers, was mentioned, as well as the lack of funding, and the pressure to acquire more external funding which may lead to "fatigue".

## **Recommendations for continuity and/or improvement of the activities of the UoA**

According to the Panel, it may take several years for any unit to build up and boost its external image. The Unit is already on a very good path to become an even more recognized player in the field of Political Science and International Relations thanks to its increasing number of publications in top-level publications and active research and education collaboration with foreign partners. The Panel considers it very likely that the measures taken in the assessment period for the internationalization of research, will further show their results in the next comparative assessment.

The Panel would, however, suggest the Unit to consider the following recommendations on how to further improve the quality of research:

- Discuss research themes among the research community and decide about a more explicit and distinct research profile - which themes are most interesting, in which themes would the Unit be most competitive, and how could the Unit stand out from its closest 'rivals', nationally and internationally.
- According to the report of the Unit, the most valuable research output comes from the fields of Security studies and Area studies. Please discuss how to bring research on Political Behaviour and Institutions and Public Policy and Governance Analysis to the same level (e.g., the quality of publication fora) if they represent significant fields of study for the Unit's research profile.

- To further internationalise the research community, consider creating a visiting fellow programme (with scholarships) for both junior and senior scholars. This may lead to having more post doc applications from abroad, as well as to enhancing international collaboration in grant applications and co-authoring.
  - Try to find more incentives (and suitable collaborators) for applying for external funding. Explore whether and how the Unit's premises can be upgraded and made more functional, taking into account today's requirements for (co)working space.
  - Systemize and formalise the Unit's cooperation with alumni and other external stakeholders, for example, by starting from the ideas envisioned in the SWOT analysis. This would strengthen the Unit's social impact as well as may contribute positively both to the researcher training and to finding collaborators for projects/grant applications.
-

## 2.5. VU\_08S Unit of Assessment

Name of the institution	<b>Vilnius University</b>
Official abbreviation of the name of the institution	<b>VU</b>
Name of the Institution's unit of assessment (hereinafter – UoA)	<b>Communication and Information</b>
Abbreviation of the UoA name	<b>VU_08S</b>
The scope of the UoA (FTE(SD))	<b>18,60</b>
Research area(s)	<b>S 000 - Social sciences</b>

### Quality of the R&D activities by research fields (groups of research fields) of the UoA

#### Social sciences

Research field	Scope (FTE(SD))	Score (points)
<b>S 008 - Communication and Information</b>	<b>18,60</b>	<b>3,5</b>

#### Reasoned justification of the score

The Unit is strong, with a limited degree of international recognition. Research carried out is of high level and nationally recognised. The Unit has substantial human resources, with 85 persons with scientific degrees and 81 other employees and doctoral students related to R&D and studies, even though a large part of the staff is teaching staff, with limited research time.

The group's research interests cover various communication, information, and media studies topics, strongly focusing on historical and heritage issues relevant to Lithuanian society. These publications, primarily journal articles and books, have a national appeal. The research leans towards being theoretical, qualitative, and descriptive, with some policy-related implications, thus indicating a humanities-oriented approach primarily. In the List of Best Research Outputs, the Unit did not include publications that showed regular co-authorship with international colleagues. In the List of the Best Reports Delivered at Conferences Abroad, there is one comparative study concerning Lithuania and Finland. Through (physical or on-line) conference participation, research findings have been brought to conferences in Europe, Israel, Iceland, and Australia, among others.

Best research outputs include top-quality international peer-reviewed journals (e.g., Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology, Public Understanding of Science, New Media & Society) and book chapters in edited volumes by international publishers (e.g., Oxford University Press). However, the List of Best Research Outputs includes only contributing chapters to volumes edited by scholars outside the Faculty of Communication, and does not include any books, published by internationally renowned publishers, that are (co-)edited by members of the Unit. Some listed publications are from the Vilnius University Press in the Lithuanian language.

Scholars attend top conferences organised by leading international associations such as IAMCR and ECREA, but there is no listed participation in closely related ones such as ICA or AoIR. The UoA listed seven awards for R&D activities, primarily national. A European organisation (the EMA-European Museum Academy)

granted one of the awards. The Unit has been successful in attracting external funding for R&D projects. This includes European funding bodies like CHANSE (Collaboration of Humanities and Social Sciences in Europe), co-created by HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area), NORFACE (New Opportunities for Research Funding Agency Cooperation in Europe), Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) in Telecom, and the Horizon 2020 program Science with and for Society (SwafS). Funding has also been obtained from the Research Council of Lithuania.

## Economic and social impact of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

4

Reasoned justification of the score

The Unit carries out important scientific research and is a very important partner in R&D beyond the academic community. The research carried out is important for society. The UoA is closely related not only to the academic community but also to business, decision-makers, and society. Researchers in the Faculty of Communication contribute and make an impact on topics such as libraries, books and the history of publishing in Lithuania, cultural and digital heritage conservation, science communication, and higher education policies.

Consultations for public or economic entities are conducted in areas ranging from media literacy, artistic projects, social entrepreneurship, open-access publishing, and others. The Unit communicates the findings of its studies to external partners, including associations, museums, and decision-making bodies in higher education. Researchers regularly participate in working groups, panels, or committees formed by administrative authorities, state and municipal enterprises, and organisations, indicating a robust national impact (e.g., Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO, The Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania, National Radio and Television of Lithuania (LRT) Council, The State Commission of the Lithuanian Language, Media Council, The Association of Lithuanian Serials).

Several of the Unit's researchers have served as members and chairs of governmental and non-governmental working groups, state commissions, and associations. Faculty members are also active participants in European associations and networks (e.g., The European Communication Research and Education Association – ECREA, the Baltic Association of Media Research, and the Association of European University Presses).

Nine are members of journal editorial boards, with two serving as Editor in Chief for Lithuanian journals and one for a Nordic-Baltic journal. Whilst some of the journals are international, they are highly niche-oriented and thus not necessarily top-ranked within the broader field of communication studies. The Unit actively organises scientific and popularisation activities, thus reaching out to the community and utilising media. Popularisation activities are particularly strong. Two cooperation agreements between research and economic entities have been signed. The DebunkEU and Vilnius University cooperation promise to create a significant impact due to the project's focus on combating disinformation.

## The development potential of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

4

Reasoned justification of the score

The UoA has the potential to achieve very good ratings. Regarding current performance, the human resources, strategy, and organisation of activities and infrastructure of the assessment Unit will ensure conditions for very good ratings in the next five years. There is a convergence between the humanistic tradition of history and language and digitalisation. Initiatives such as the international strategic communication think-tank and new cooperation agreements with foreign researchers represent a source for further development in scientific research on media, such as disinformation. The Unit has an impressive infrastructure, with well-equipped laboratory spaces for heritage monitoring, eye tracking, 3D scanning, light measurement, and video and audio recording.

The Human Resources policy is good and includes the recruitment of PhDs from the Master's program, the adaptation of new employees, learning and development, performance appraisal, and remuneration policies. The strategic plan of the University is realistic and focused on the internationalization of research and collaborative international studies. The description and justification of the research subjects to be developed are satisfactory and focus primarily on continuing existing research areas. These include traditional topics such as book publishing, cultural heritage, journalism, and political communication. However, there needs to be a greater focus on developing cutting-edge technologies and carrying out research concerning social change topics within the field of communication studies.

Given the significant number of PhD students, the plans for developing new topics and retaining talented researchers should be stronger. There are good practices for organizing summer schools with visiting international scholars. These should be encouraged and supported further to provide more opportunities for PhD students. There was only one postdoctoral scholar during the assessment period. Based on the information provided during the visit to the Unit, there are initiatives to decrease the time allocated for teaching obligations and to introduce one-third of the allocated time for research. There are additional time-load reductions for writing research grants. The Unit supports the mobility of postdoctoral researchers once they obtain their PhD. This could be a beneficial long-term strategy, especially for attracting top post-doctoral students after they gain cutting-edge knowledge in their respective research areas abroad.

### Recommendations for continuity and/or improvement of the activities of the UoA

The Unit would benefit from a more focused strategy on research development. On the one hand, the Unit has a large number of employees (85 persons with scientific degrees and 81 other employees and doctoral students related to R&D and studies), which would justify a large and broad research portfolio. On the other hand, the Unit has four main research divisions (i.e., Books, media, and publishing research; Digital cultures and digital communication; Journalism and media research; Information and communication activities of organisations), three centres (Baltic disinformation observatory, 3DSST\_Lab, VU Centre for Gender Studies), and one think-tank (STRATCOMM), which could mean result in a research staff that is spread too thin, with too little critical mass for each specialization, unless there is a significant overlap between the topics and synergies are used.

The development strategy should focus more on devising new and more focused research areas that are internationally recognised, perhaps in the digital communication area, and much closer to a social sciences

perspective on communication. The Unit still struggles to define a clear identity for the faculty after the reforms that shifted the communication field from humanities to social sciences.

In more practical terms, the Unit should avoid listing in-house publications (VU Press) as their best research output. Instead, it should focus on publishing more often in high-quality international journals, editing collected volumes and writing entirely authored monographs for top international publishers. While publications in the national language are highly valuable and can have a significant impact (i.e., social and economic) at a national level, they do not bring international recognition to the Unit, which is one of the main criteria for quality assessment.

The Unit should also devise a more strategic approach to international visibility in professional communications associations not listed in the assessment period and publish more often in collaboration with international researchers. Regarding research projects and competitive research grants, the Unit should focus on the best periods and topics for coordinating Research and Innovation Actions (RIA) in Horizon Europe or seek to participate as a consortium partner. This Unit certainly has the technical infrastructure and know-how to take a leadership role.

---

## 2.6. VDU\_TEIS Unit of Assessment

Name of the institution	<b>Vytautas Magnus University</b>
Official abbreviation of the name of the institution	<b>VDU</b>
Name of the Institution's unit of assessment (hereinafter – UoA)	<b>VMU Law</b>
Abbreviation of the UoA name	<b>VDU_TEIS</b>
The scope of the UoA (FTE(SD))	<b>9,29</b>
Research area(s)	<b>S 000 - Social sciences</b>

### Quality of the R&D activities by research fields (groups of research fields) of the UoA

#### Social sciences

Research field	Scope (FTE(SD))	Score (points)
<b>S 001 - Law</b>	<b>9,29</b>	<b>3,5</b>

#### Reasoned justification of the score

The documentation provided by the UoA gives evidence of good research output. Most of the articles listed are published in decent but not very high-quality international journals (such as Sustainability and European Studies – the review of European Law, Economics and Politics). In addition, documentation is provided on a high-quality monograph with Springer, and a high-quality book chapter in an edited volume (published by Brill). During the visit, the Unit showed additional publications, including edited volumes and chapters written by faculty members that could not be mentioned in the documentation provided.

The list of 5 best papers delivered at conferences abroad includes some adequate academic contributions, but also some contributions that are more applied (e.g., on legal education, on the anonymisation of judicial decisions). Based on the list of best conference contributions, chosen and provided by the Unit (5.2), the Panel sees no real evidence of participation in top international academic conferences, with high quality papers.

The Unit has a joint PhD programme with MRU. In the assessment period, 7 doctoral theses were defended, which is good, given the limited number of PhD students (7-8) at this -relatively small- UoA. Most of the defended theses were published in English and concern topics that are of international academic relevance. The Panel appreciates that PhD research at the Unit has this clear international dimension.

In the assessment period, the UoA has received some international and national recognition through relevant awards. Here, the involvement of renowned (former) practitioners (such as the former President of the Constitutional Court of Lithuania) in the Unit's activities is obviously important.

The Unit has a very good gender-balance and a very recent gender equality plan. It has a solid open science practice.



Participation in competition-based research projects includes the participation of the University in a consortium for a Horizon 2020 project, where the UoA is playing a shared role with other units of VMU (according to the explanations provided by the management during the site visit). The documentation provided by the UoA also lists another Horizon 2020 project on Solar PV where the scholars of the Unit collaborated with LEI, the Lithuanian member of the project consortium. The documentation lists other projects, such as EduLaw and FUTURE, as well as the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet project “EU Criminal Law and Policy”, granted by the EU to the University. During the site visit, it became clear that the Unit has not applied itself, as lead partner or principal investigator, in recent call rounds (of Horizon Europe, CERV and other relevant programmes), but plans to be more involved in (international) competition-based projects.

## Economic and social impact of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

4

Reasoned justification of the score

The economic and social impact of the Unit’s activities is considerable, for example through extensive consultations and reports linked to national legislation, and by means of participation in relevant committees. The societal impact, although very good, is mainly national, supplemented with some international activities of staff members of the Unit as external experts.

The consultations in which the UoA is involved include the most important institutions of the Republic (Office of the President; Committee of Human Rights of the Seimas). Some of the consultation activity has an international dimension (e.g., contribution to the labour inspection service in Georgia).

The involvement of researchers in public institutional and private committees is also very good, covering various important Lithuanian public institutions at different levels of government. As far as the central government level is concerned, members of the UoA participate as external experts in important institutions such as the Ministry of Economy, the National Court of Administration, the Prosecutor’s Office, and the Chamber of Auditors. The members of the Unit have also developed important links with society through relevant associations and private institutions in the country.

Activity regarding the organisation of conferences and workshops is well-developed and shows very good quality. All the five selected examples have a clear international dimension and are of high academic relevance. These events serve as platforms to enhance the impact of the research activities of the Unit and to disseminate the expertise of its staff, also on an international level.

In addition to organising these events, the Unit’s members are actively involved in serving on the editorial boards of national and international journals such as the Baltic Yearbook of International Law, European Company Law and the Baltic Journal of Law & Politics (where the Senior editor-in-chief is a member of the Unit). Some members of the faculty actively participate in international academic networks (e.g., Academic Society for Competition Law), but the Panel notes that this is less than can be expected, especially regarding topics where the UoA shows some international reputation and expertise (e.g., Digitalisation, Public Security, and External Borders of the EU).

The participation of members of the Unit in more applied activities as external experts, such as in the Venice Commission the Council, the European Agency of Fundamental Rights, and the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary is remarkable, as is the role of the former Constitutional Court President, who is very active

in the media and the press. The site visit confirmed the strong ties this Unit has with various societal actors outside of the strictly academic community.

## The development potential of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

4

Reasoned justification of the score

The Unit has the ambition to improve its research quality, especially in terms of high-quality research output in international outlets. As far as such research output is concerned, the Panel notes that the Unit seems to be stronger in books and book chapters than in publishing with high-quality international peer-reviewed journals, and that especially regarding the latter category of publications there is considerable room for improvement. This is also true for participation at high-level academic conferences. As was confirmed during the site visit, in terms of future strategy, the Unit aims to increase internationalisation and quality of research by investing funds to support such publications and activities. The Unit also aims at attracting more international foreign researchers and at involving them in ongoing research activities.

In its description of research infrastructure, the Unit adequately points at the importance of both the physical infrastructure (which is good) and infrastructure in terms of networks. Participation by VMU and by the Unit's researchers (including PhD students) in the T4ERI network (and in T4E activities generally) is a good example of how participation in conferences and stays abroad at research institutions of consortium partners can open up new venues to further internationalize the Unit's research activities through research collaboration.

The Human Resources policy of the Unit is adequate and is supportive of increasing research quality. In terms of staff composition, the Unit is balanced, in terms of both age and gender.

The SWOT analysis provided by the Unit is extensive and thorough. One weakness that is mentioned in the analysis but not really dealt with in the strategic plan of the Unit, is the issue of fragmentation (small groups working on different themes, some fields, such as environmental law, are not well-developed). The document on research themes provided by the Unit confirmed this fragmentation, rather than tackles it. Another issue that is not sufficiently addressed in the documentation is how the Unit can be more actively involved in applications for competition-based research projects, also internationally.

The Unit is very good at consultation and legal policy advice and has very good links with relevant societal actors. Many of the staff members have additional or former positions as practitioners. This clearly adds to the development potential of the Unit, which overall, in the view of the Panel, is very good.

## Recommendations for continuity and/or improvement of the activities of the UoA

The Panel acknowledges the significant steps the Unit has made in terms of research quality in the assessment period. According to the Panel, the Unit has considerable potential to further improve its research output.

The Panel recommends the Unit to focus on three main activities where improvement can be made: (a) high-quality international journal articles, (b) participation in top international conferences, and (c) applications for competition-based international research projects. Here, the Unit can build on its involvement in editorial boards of international journals, on the clear international dimension of much of the PhD thesis research, and on its involvement in the T4E Alliance. The Panel advises the Unit to explicitly evaluate why these latter internationalisation activities are well-developed, whereas there are still weaknesses regarding the former activities (articles, conference participation, and project applications). What are the main bottlenecks for staff members and how can current measures be improved? The Panel also advises to look at how thesis work by PhD students (often done in English) can be used for international journal articles. Furthermore, the Unit should analyse how it can increase its activity in applications for research funding. This could also be applications where the Unit takes the initiative, in the role of lead partner.

The Panel also recommends the Unit to analyse how it can do more to attract foreign researchers and let them contribute to the Unit's activities (as guest researcher, in permanent positions, or as PhD researchers), especially in those fields where the Unit has a good international reputation, e.g., fields where staff members play a role in editorial boards and/or as external experts.

Finally, the Unit should make clearer choices regarding its research profile and main research themes. For that, it should also look at cooperation with and specialisation between partner institutions, such as the existing cooperation with MRU concerning the PhD programme.

---

## 2.7. VDU\_POL\_KOM Unit of Assessment

Name of the institution	<b>Vytautas Magnus University</b>
Official abbreviation of the name of the institution	<b>VDU</b>
Name of the Institution's unit of assessment (hereinafter – UoA)	<b>VMU Political and Communication Sciences</b>
Abbreviation of the UoA name	<b>VDU_POL_KOM</b>
The scope of the UoA (FTE(SD))	<b>19,48</b>
Research area(s)	<b>S 000 - Social sciences</b>

### Quality of the R&D activities by research fields (groups of research fields) of the UoA

#### Social sciences

Research field	Scope (FTE(SD))	Score (points)
<b>S 002 - Political Science</b>	<b>14,72</b>	<b>4</b>

#### Reasoned justification of the score

VDU Political Science staff numbers 40 persons with 14,72 calculated FTE(SD). This makes it a relatively large Unit among Lithuanian political science institutions. Research is further supported by 18 other employees and PhD students with 14,49 FTE. There are many research activities and there is a considerable output.

The examples of best (international) output (articles, book chapters; conference paper presentations) indicate a large variety in research topics. Generally, the examples provided are of (very) good international quality, published in well recognized international peer reviewed journals, such as Nations and Nationalism and Journal of Baltic Studies and Problems of Post-Communism, or chapters or books published by international publishers such as Palgrave Macmillan, Edinburgh University Press or Routledge. It should, however, be mentioned that from the information provided it is not really clear whether international publications and international conference participation are concentrated with a limited number of staff members or are more common within the Unit. The staff profiles at the university homepage show a large variety of research interests and specialisations among staff, and on average relatively little research output, with relatively many national (and especially in-house) publications.

VDU political scientists have taken part in a number of major international conferences (area studies or political science) such as ASEES, CEPASA, ECPR or Conference of Baltic Studies. They have also received numerous awards granted by national authorities or Polish authorities. Many awards are not directly research-related and some of these are double listed (e.g., funding awards for post-docs in part 5.4 of the Unit's report).

The Unit has been involved in a Horizon 2020 project (2018-2022) and in two Europe for Citizens projects (2018-

2020). Three postdoc projects have received funding from the EU Structural and Investment Funds in 2014-2020 Action Program. Also, there is a Jean Monnet Chair. External research funding is not very extensive,

given the size of the research and teaching staff. Moreover, activities in the Europe for Citizens projects concerned outreach activities (exhibitions, public debates) mainly and to a lesser extent research.

VDU has a good number of Political Science PhD students (16 in 2022) and also a good number of PhD defences within the five-year assessment period: 10. It seems that a lot of PhD research is focused on Lithuania. Most of the PhD theses are in Lithuanian, with extended English summaries. Here also, the variety of topics is large. Many PhD students are also engaged in teaching. It is not clear how thesis work is related to or followed up by other types of publications, for example in international journals.

Research field	Scope (FTE(SD))	Score (points)
<b>S 008 - Communication and Information</b>	4,76	4

#### Reasoned justification of the score

Communication and Information is a small but vibrant and promising Unit. The Unit has 12 researchers with a scientific degree and 8 teaching staff with a scientific degree. The information provided on the staff members (section 7.2 of self-assessment report) shows that four staff members have Communication and Information as their (sole) field of research, including others that have indicated a combination of Political Science & Communication & Information. The PhD study programme was quite recently launched (in 2021), and so far, three students have been enrolled: one doctoral student in 2021, and two in 2022. There have been no PhD dissertation defences during the assessment period.

The Communication and Information unit has been serving the knowledge and development needs of the Lithuanian society. It can be taken as a model of combining teamwork with international outreach, as well as societal contributions. This Unit has contributed to research concerning media pluralism, media transparency of ownership, media education, media environments in relation to civic agency, and journalism ethics. Digitalisation is addressed, and not just as a technical, operational issue, but as a structural or philosophical ontology. These focal areas move beyond techno-optimism, towards a more critical stance, thus, students benefit from this reflexive approach to digitalization.

The list of best research output chosen and provided by the Unit (5.2 in the self-assessment report) shows that researchers from this Unit have produced articles in two international journals, as well as one monograph published in English (with Palgrave), a chapter in an edited volume (English, and international), and an e-book published in Lithuanian. This small group within the larger Unit has participated in mainly European conferences as well as networking activities and grants. It has obtained international recognition through involvement in a UNESCO Chair on Media and Information Literacy for Inclusive Knowledge Societies, which started in 2018. There has also been participation in relevant EU funded projects, such as DIGIRES, EurOMo and BECID. The Unit has been successful in securing a new Horizon Europe project (DIACOMET), as lead partner.

This smaller group within the UoA lists 15 awards, with five dedicated to specific projects; one of which was dedicated to studying the effects of COVID on mental health, and another concerning the challenges and threats faced by contemporary journalists in the development of quality journalism. Several awards are not directly research-related, and some are national funding 'awards' for post-docs or other projects.

The PhD program is currently conducted jointly with Vilnius Tech and the PhD students take preliminary courses together with the Communication Sciences PhDs from Vilnius Tech. PhD students are encouraged to engage in projects with senior researchers, and to participate in various academic activities, including teaching. There appears to be some confusion over the number of hours the -mandatory- academic internship involves (120 hours according to the regulations, 150 hours mentioned by PhD students during

the site visit). Moreover, PhD students are not fully aware of the exact -research- activities they can undertake as part of the internship; most of them are engaged in teaching activities. Although it may be common for many PhD students at the Unit to pursue a career in academia and/or research after finalization of their thesis, the path for becoming a full-time academic in this Unit is not clear to all current PhD students.

## Economic and social impact of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

4,5

Reasoned justification of the score

The economic and the social impact of the Unit is considerable. There are well-established networks with key government agencies, and public organizations. Political consultations and advice to the government are quite common. Faculty members are involved in scientific advisory boards and committees (Committee for Humanities and Social Sciences of the Lithuanian Research Council; The Lithuanian Academy of Sciences) and serve as experts in working groups (e.g., Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education Working Group for updating the field of Public Administration) and commissions (Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania). The UoA has provided consultancy work relevant to Lithuania and other Baltic nations (e.g., Regional Committee for European-North American Chapter of UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Alliance (GAPMIL)).

As with the research activities, it was not entirely clear how widespread the participation in societal and political impact-oriented activities is among the staff but all in all, there is enough convergent and solid scholarship to feed the needs of the society. There is as well the necessary internal dynamism that can make possible the dissemination of knowledge. The Unit is directly involved in society, by means of research that is relevant to all government levels, by means of media education programs, as well as through other popularization activities.

There is a significant number of impact related events, with a mix of more general outreach events, academic conferences and events that involve policy makers such as roundtables. The academic staff members act in editorial boards of international journals, including some international ones. The Unit is well represented in international groups and associations. Their expertise is also required by media. Popularization and outreach activities are well explained and signal good quality. The Unit is involved in many cooperation agreements with the public and private sector. This Unit has demonstrated that it is well capable of attracting European research and development funds.

Overall, the Unit has high impact, with close relations to stakeholders, in society as well as in the (international) academic community. The knowledge production and dissemination, networking, self-organized events, and other activities seem adequate and contributing to the society. The scholarship is available for a global audience and is also put to good social use at the local and national level. Also, the attractiveness of the Unit for promising scholars increases. The knowledge that this Unit produces is relevant for the stakeholders. The students are served with up-to-date information, the international community learns about Lithuanian media and politics, policy makers have data and knowledge to base their decisions on, and society at large benefits from the education that scholars are actively providing.

## The development potential of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

3,5

Reasoned justification of the score

VDU has a solid academic standing and considerable academic potential, but the full utilisation of this seems to be impeded by organisational aspects. Currently, there is a diversity of structural arrangements, with faculties, departments, centres, clusters, institutes, and groups. It seems quite difficult for academic staff members to relate to all of these in a meaningful and time effective way. As the Panel understood during the site visit, this is partly due to the current transformation to new structures of academic activities in the university, so it is possible that the situation will improve.

In terms of organisational culture, the Panel was told during the site visit that VDU wants to be a 'university without walls', e.g., enabling free movement between different institutional structures and accessibility of facilities to everyone. Researchers also argued that they collaborate between research clusters and that many of them work for different faculties; they identify with the University, and not necessarily with one faculty or cluster. However, every academic staff member needs to plan their work and the University and Unit need some strategy and co-ordination. As the Panel understood during the site visit, the performance review of employees is held with the head of the department, i.e., the head of the unit responsible for studies. It did not become clear how the planning and feedback takes place for research that is organised through a variety of arrangements and units. Finding a good balance between strategic development and the tradition of liberal arts seems to be a challenge.

The presented strategic plan 2021-2027 was for the University and not the Unit specifically. It would have been helpful to have a Unit level strategy, especially given the diversity of (sub)units and research profile(s). The research profile was presented as three core streams, with a prioritization into seven themes. But a prioritization in seven research themes can hardly be called a prioritization for a Unit of that size. The topics are also not very well elaborated, including the planned activities. Some of the topics listed (e.g., social and political implications of digital transformation; digital resilience and competencies of the digital age) match a small number of topics that have been previously researched (e.g., the DIGIRES project). The membership of VDU of the Transform4Europe consortium is interesting, but how the Unit is involved or can benefit from that cooperation could have been more elaborated. On the other hand, in the documents and discussions during the site visit some unit-level strategic goals were highlighted such as interdisciplinary research in communication, political science and public administration, as well as a focus on researcher training, and fostering cooperation and networking. These objectives seem valid and there seems to be potential for conducting more interdisciplinary research.

Academic staff seems to be fairly well distributed across age groups and gender. The balance between the age groups is quite good even though among the researchers there are relatively few under 45 years. However, it is not clear how new top-level researchers are being attracted, given that the goal is to further internationalize the research community. The Unit has good infrastructure with modern premises, library, access to databases and literature.

There are monetary and other types of incentives for the active researchers. A salary bonus is linked to publication in journals in the higher quartiles of rankings. This applies to both the established scholars and early career researchers. The established scholars can have a reduction of as much as 50% of the teaching load for their research activities. Salary is in 3 levels depending on the results, set for 5 years, there is a 6 level bonuses system and a complementary award system for most significant academic results. Researchers

have been active at applying for external international funding, and it was made clear during the site visit that they the Unit has applied for a total of 9 Horizon2020 proposals, of which 3 have been successful so far.

There seems to be some space to develop a more elaborate strategy of the Unit towards its young researchers. There is a considerable number of PhD students and a relatively high number of defences compared to the other institutions. There is also an aim to recruit young researchers and develop talent, but it is not clear what the long-term possibilities are for new PhDs beyond the integrated roles that they have on temporary contracts. Many of the PhD students that we met, had a career as a practitioner (in communications, teaching, politics, military). It is positive that there is national-level collaboration in PhD training so that small units can combine their forces.

All in all, there seems to be space for a more strategic and efficient organisation of the activities, involving new international and young researchers.

### **Recommendations for continuity and/or improvement of the activities of the UoA**

From the documentation and based on the information provided during the site visit, the Panel acknowledges that there have been activities that follow-up on the recommendations from the previous CEA (2018) but part of these seem to be ongoing (e.g., rearranging of research and of the organisational structure). Thus, part of the recommendations below are new, whereas part of them are devoted to topics where further progress could be made.

The Panel recommends the Unit to develop a strategy for the Unit itself, in addition to the University strategy. In this process it is possible to further elaborate the current research profile(s) and priorities, taking into account implementation issues and elaborating on the co-operation of political science and communication scholars. It is advisable to further enhance international research cooperation, and, possibly, to get more international scholars joining the Unit. Also, the Panel recommends to further enhance the participation in larger mainstream political science conferences and academic networks (ECPR, APSA, IPSA, CEPSA), also by PhD students.

The Unit would benefit from a less sophisticated structure. If teaching takes place at departments, possibly these could also be used for generally co-ordinating research or alternatively, research could be organised either through centres or clusters. The Unit would also benefit from elaboration of human resources activities, i.e., it would be advisable to develop a clear arrangement of a mentoring system for new staff members. These are likely university level issues.

The Panel also recommends the Unit to bring more structure to PhD training, recruitment, mentoring in general, also including a more elaborate path for becoming a full-time academic in this Unit. The Unit would benefit from making a better use of PhD research, especially for the enhancement of the international profile. It would be advisable to have more dissertations published in English and/or followed up by international publications. Selection of PhD candidates should continue to prioritize more PhD students from abroad. The co-operation network of several universities in PhD studies seems to be useful and further consideration and exploitation of its opportunities is encouraged. Also, the number of PhD students could be increased as there seems to be a clear demand and also successful defences.

The communication and information PhD program of VDU is currently conducted jointly with Vilnius Tech and the PhD students take preliminary courses together with the Communication Sciences PhDs from Vilnius Tech. If allowed and properly acknowledged by national regulation, it could be considered to integrate the VDU Political Science PhDs and Communication PhDs eventually together in common courses at the



Department. Vilnius Tech has an emphasis on the creative industries, so the real benefit for the PhDs in this type of cross-institute arrangement remains unclear.

---

## 2.8. VU\_01S Unit of Assessment

Name of the institution	<b>Vilnius University</b>
Official abbreviation of the name of the institution	<b>VU</b>
Name of the Institution's unit of assessment (hereinafter – UoA)	<b>Law</b>
Abbreviation of the UoA name	<b>VU_01S</b>
The scope of the UoA (FTE(SD))	<b>24,87</b>
Research area(s)	<b>S 000 - Social sciences</b>

### Quality of the R&D activities by research fields (groups of research fields) of the UoA

#### Social sciences

Research field	Scope (FTE(SD))	Score (points)
<b>S 001 - Law</b>	<b>24,87</b>	<b>4</b>

#### Reasoned justification of the score

The UoA is large, with 138 staff members with scientific degrees and 88 other employees and doctoral students. Many of these staff members have teaching and other tasks, not research, as their main activity and/or have part-time positions. Based on the documents provided for evaluation, the Unit does not host research fellows from abroad. However, during the site visit, the representatives of the Unit pointed out that there are short-term fellows present at the Unit and they also emphasised the internationalization of the doctoral programme and the group of PhD students. Some of the international PhD students were present during the site visit as well.

The theses defended in the assessment period (total: 28) cover Public and Private Law topics, often with a clear International (European) Law dimension. Most of the theses are published in Lithuanian, but there is a fair share of theses written in English (4) and in French (1). It is important to note that the majority of the theses were finished in the first year of the assessment period (2018: 14), with a significant reduction in the number of defences in later years (2019: 1; 2020: 4; 2021: 3), and some recuperation in 2022 (2022: 6). The number of PhD students in the programme is stable (between 20-25 full-time students and between 20-25 part-time students). There is a small presence of international students, in both categories (full-time and part-time), with seems to increase over the last years in the group of full-time students. According to the information gathered during the site visit, the Unit participates in several strong PhD networks and promotes the participation of PhD students in teaching, international conferences, research projects, and moot court competitions. Regarding the latter, the site visit made it clear that the Unit's participation in international moot court competitions is much more frequent than indicated in the evaluation material.

It is also important to note the relevance of the PhD Lab for students, open to multidisciplinary discussion and exchange of ideas and methodology development, which helps to achieve high scientific quality in the

R&D activities of the Unit. Overall, the Unit's staff composition shows a good combination of more renowned senior professors on the one hand, and young researchers and PhD students on the other hand.

The research output is considerable and concerns both national and international publications. Most of the examples concern chapters in international edited volumes, with renowned publishers. Some examples of journal articles are provided, as well as an encyclopaedia entry. One monograph (on the regulation of the data economy and artificial intelligence; with Edward Elgar) is listed. Overall, the output is of very good quality and shows a clear international dimension as well as recognition, particularly through the chapters in books with international editors. As became clear during the site visit, there is strong financial support for high quality publications, which is also available to PhD students and early career academics.

Participation in conferences is also substantial and shows a clear international orientation. There is also financial support for the participation in conferences, which – similarly to publication bonuses – is available to the whole staff of the Unit.

The list of awards is impressive and covers different levels (internal/university, national, international). However, not all awards listed are relevant to the assessment of the Unit's research quality, as some awards are rather general in nature and/or concern non-research related achievements.

In the assessment period, there was considerable participation in international and national competition-based R&D research projects with relevant topics in the legal research field. The Unit has been successful in a decent number of calls by the Research Council of Lithuania. Internationally, it has been a partner in relatively small projects within the framework of the Civil Justice Programme and similar programmes of the EU. The Unit has not coordinated any international EU-funded projects itself. It has not participated in the dedicated research programmes of the EU (such as ERC or Horizon2020/Europe).

Overall, the Unit shows a very good research output, with international recognition. It has a strong PhD programme with a large number of students, and a strong ambition towards internationalization. Performance in competitive research funding is sufficient, but could be improved, especially at the international level.

## Economic and social impact of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

4,5

Reasoned justification of the score

The impact of the UoA on various stakeholders outside of academia is mainly national. The Unit is based at a national university, located in the country's capital, which traditionally has been a leading actor in its fields. This has the natural effect of making the Unit very strong when it comes to participation in national working groups, commissions, and national, regional, and local institutions. In line with this, the Unit has been involved in a good number of relevant consultations. The documentation provided by the Unit lists a large number of (research and other) output with high relevance in terms of impact. The Unit is very good at providing input for law making, court decisions, and other issues regarding the legal system in Lithuania, including being represented among the ranks of constitutional court judges of the country. This demonstrates the public national recognition of the research by the Unit. Some examples are given of similar impacts and policy input in a more international context, but this type of impact is less frequent.

In terms of academic impact, the overview of conferences and events organised by the Unit is very good, with good cooperation with other institutions, also internationally. The events cover a variety of topics.

Researchers of the Unit participate in editorial boards (as board member or adviser) of relevant scientific journals, both at national and international level. Participation in editorial boards of high-ranking international journals is sufficient but could be better, especially taking into consideration the size and manpower of the Unit.

There is good participation in (international) academic associations. The documentation lists some ordinary memberships of staff members of such associations, which is limitedly relevant, but there is also involvement at relevant levels (executive committee, working group chair et cetera). Moreover, staff members are active in (national and international) expert working groups in the field.

Researchers of the Unit are very active in popularisation and outreach activities, both in traditional mainstream media, and through (international) policy briefs and commentaries. Additionally, there are various other relevant and interesting activities, which involve a variety of communication channels (training seminar, podcast/Teise talk, GovTech). Apart from that, the Unit is active in other forms, for example through drafting amicus curiae letters.

The UoA is very strong when it comes to economic and societal impact, especially at the national level, with excellent involvement in working groups, consultations, and policy input.

## The development potential of R&D activities of the UoA

Score (points)

4

Reasoned justification of the score

The R&D infrastructure of the Unit is very well described and recent developments and plans are very well discussed. Overall, the current infrastructure is adequate for the further development of legal research. It adheres to common standards, with good office and library facilities. Access to relevant legal databases and journals is very good. The Unit is in the process of organizing its office facilities in such a way that they better link to the structure of the research groups. The documentation provided by the Unit also explicitly addresses current involvement in international networks, but here no future outlook is provided: what is desirable in terms of future involvement in international networks, linked to research, such as mobility programmes (Erasmus, Horizon Europe/Marie Curie fellowships), joint PhD programmes (again: Marie Curie) or future consortia building to compete for ERC of Horizon Europe funding.

Generally, the group is composed in a balanced way, both regarding age and gender. The Unit does have a high share of PhD students and (partly linked to that) a high share of relatively young researchers, whose potential development and growth are clearly supported by the policies of the Unit. This is in principle positive in terms of its development potential. Human resources management includes individual financial incentives (bonuses, using a faculty remuneration fund) as well as (competitive) internal grants for one-two year research projects. The Unit's salary and bonus plans are targeted towards rewarding high quality research and publication, which creates the possibility to keep researchers capable of quality research output and to attract new, young faculty with the same capability.

PhD students are required to participate in the teaching activities of the Unit, both in Lithuanian and English. The site visit made clear that PhD students are generally satisfied with the workload shares of

research/teaching. Most of them are highly committed to the Unit and have plans to continue their research at the Unit, even if they get a job somewhere else (outside of academia).

The policy of training students and young researchers is very well developed through the PhD Law programme, through an international network of Doctoral Studies in Law with other European Universities, and other scientific activities. Particularly interesting is the PhD lab which supports young researchers in submitting applications for research projects and in preparing legal opinions. The Unit also promotes participation of (master) students in research through the faculty's Students' Scientific Society, and through scholarships, tutoring, and promoting the participation of students in research projects, in conferences, workshops, etc. During the period under evaluation the Unit employed 5 postdoctoral researchers with project-based funding. The Unit's frequent participation in international moot courts is also relevant related to development potential, as these events offer the opportunity to identify potential future researchers in various fields of Law.

The Strategic Plan for 2023-2025 has been prepared by means of involvement of a large group of stakeholders, including social partners and alumni. The plan is very appropriate and shows the interconnection between research, formation and teaching, and society. It includes objectives as internationalization, interdisciplinarity, social impact, and a strong community (in line with the overall strategic plan for Vilnius University). These objectives have clear subgoals and activities, which include for example: the training of graduates for future society, high international level research, and innovation in teacher training (i.e., the pedagogy of the 21st century).

The main overarching research topic (for 2022-2024) concerns the challenges that multiple crises, sustainable development and digital technologies pose to the legal system. This topic is well argued for and is adequately divided into three subareas. These areas are described in good detail (involved staff, international cooperation). The choices made provide a good basis for targeted research, with enough mass and research capacity for each theme. The Unit uses one of its advantages very adequately for its future research plans, namely its close connections to other faculties of the same university: this makes it easy to develop various multidisciplinary applied research programmes.

The assessment by the Unit of its strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats is also of very good quality. It realistically presents the main internal and external factors relevant to the Units' future development.

According to the panel, it is very likely that the Unit will maintain its current ratings for quality and impact of its R&D. This is based on the quality of the strategic plan, the research plan, the existing PhD students and the SWOT-analysis, and on the Unit's important and longstanding position within the Lithuanian legal landscape. The well-developed PhD programme, the age composition of the research group and the attention the Unit pays to the development of young researchers are also very positive. Improvement of the ratings for especially R&D quality will require a further step in internationalization, especially by means of more participation in international competitive funding, building on recent successes in this field (MSCA fellowship, partner in a successful Horizon-HEALTH application). The Panel would like to stress the importance of applications not just as a partner, but as lead partner or principal investigator.

### **Recommendations for continuity and/or improvement of the activities of the UoA**

The panel acknowledges the steps the Unit has made over the last five years in terms of its research output and especially the growing international recognition of the Unit. It encourages the Unit to proceed along this path, with a clear focus on international publications and participation in international conferences. Three recommendations can be made to further improve the (international) research profile of the Unit.

The panel first recommends the Unit to raise its participation in international research projects, especially in the framework of EU research programmes such as ERC and Horizon Europe, also in a coordinating role. The Unit currently has good connections to some existing networks, but it should focus on expanding its linkages and invest in a more central role in (the building of) relevant research consortia.

Secondly, the Unit could improve the involvement of foreign researchers in its activities, i.e., attract more visiting professors, more (longer-term) foreign postdocs and (even) more short-term research fellows. It can participate more actively in available programmes such as Marie Curie.

Thirdly, although very strong at the national level, the international dimension of the PhD programme could be further enhanced (more foreign PhD students, more theses published in English, especially those theses that have a clear international law content.)

---

### 3. FINDINGS

#### SUMMARY REPORT PANEL S1 SOCIAL SCIENCES

##### Introduction and background

Panel S1 assessed eight different Units of Assessment, which represent research units in the fields of Law (4), Political Science (3), Communication & Information (2) and a composite field of Communication & Information, Sociology & Political Science (1). Not only did the involved disciplines vary, also the size of the units differed considerably (from 2 FTE(SD) to 23.55 FTE(SD)). An obvious, but nonetheless much needed disclaimer at the start of this part of the report is that drawing overarching conclusions “for Social Sciences in Lithuania”, based on such a small number of very different cases, comes with considerable limitations. Such limitations are especially relevant when comparing the Units across different disciplines, which therefore will be done here.

On average, the scores of the Units assessed in this panel, were between 3.5 and 4 (3.55 for research quality, 3.85 for impact, and 3.6 for development potential). In this summary report, the findings of the Panel regarding the three criteria used in the assessment will be discussed briefly first, followed by a discussion of some more specific aspects. This summary is concluded by some reflections on the assessment process.

Recommendations can be found throughout the text and have been highlighted in bold in the following way: “the Panel **recommends**” or “the Panel **advises**”.

##### Quality of R&D activities

The average score on quality of R&D activities in the 2018 Comparative Expert Assessment was 2.9 (for the 36 Units of Assessment in the larger Social Sciences panel), whereas the score for the Units in this 2023 assessment is 3.55. This suggests an improvement in quality, which is confirmed if we look at those -nine-cases where the Units in the current assessment are largely comparable (in composition and research field) with Units from the 2018 assessment: one Unit retained its score, four Units moved up 0.5 in score, and four units moved up one full point in score. Some of this effect could be due to the possibility, introduced in the current assessment, to give .5-scores (whereas the 2018 CEA used rounded numbers only). Still, the improvement is considerable, and the average score of 3.55 on research quality signals good quality research with some international recognition.

The scores on research quality are distributed as follows: 2.5 (1 Unit), 3.0 (2 Units), 3.5 (3 Units), 4.0 (3 Units), and 4.5 (1 Unit). This shows that a considerable part of the Units have made the step to being an international player in their field but the majority is not there yet. The Panel notices that in all Units there are individual researchers and/or smaller research groups that have connected to the international research community in their field, but only in some cases is the connection broader and less based on activities of such individual forerunners. This Outlook will therefore (after the discussion of impact and development potential) focus on and provide recommendations concerning issues of a more structural nature that define the possibilities for such a broader and more institutionalized internationalisation of research:

- Publication strategies;
- PhD requirements;
- PhD programmes and interdisciplinarity;
- Critical mass, research themes and international cooperation.

### **The impact of R&D activities**

The average score here is higher (3.85) than for research quality as such. Most Units are very active in dissemination of knowledge, especially at the national and subnational level. The Panel has been shown some very good examples of research with high societal impact, as well as many interesting outreach activities by the Units. The latter is especially impressive if one takes into consideration that in the last part of the assessment period such activities were seriously hampered by the Covid pandemic. The Panel also acknowledges the width of impact activities, which cover the full range of possible involvement: from media appearances to involvement in expert committees, and from popularisation events to expert consultations. The findings of the Panel confirm findings in earlier assessments: generally, Lithuanian social science researchers consider outreach to society a high priority. Obviously, some researchers are more active than others, depending on skills and preferences. At the same time, the Panel, reiterating the findings of the 2018 assessment, **recommends** considering the trade-off in the use of resources (especially time) between the two types of activities (research as such on the one hand, and outreach to society on the other hand). One should not go at the expense of the other. A professor who spends a lot of time on committee work, consultations, and media appearances, does not have time to do research. Eventually, over time, what he or she has to offer in informing the public about or advising authorities, will become outdated and irrelevant.

Moreover, societal impact currently is mainly apparent at the local, regional and national government level, and in the general public domain. There is very little indication of structural involvement with (or research funding from) businesses. Also, generally, there are limited links to international and European institutions. The impact in the academic community, which is most directly related the quality of R&D activities and academic reputation, also can be improved. The Panel acknowledges that some individual researchers have important positions internationally (in editorial boards of high-quality journals, in international academic associations), but often involvement is regional or national and/or concerns in-house journals. On the other hand, the Panel has the impression that scientific events (especially on-line or hybrid events) organized by the Units have become more internationally oriented. Regarding impact, the Panel **recommends** the Units to look for ways to broaden and diversify their societal impact.

### **Development potential**

The average score for development potential of the Units in this Panel is 3.6, which means that generally the Panel expects the units to maintain their (very) good scores or even improve them. The assessment of development potential is based on composition of the staff and HRM-policies (including training of new researchers), the strategic plans of the Units and their research prioritization, and the infrastructure.

Generally, the composition of staff of the Units, by looking at age and gender, is healthy, and seems to be on average “younger” than in many other European countries. Staff are sufficiently trained, and appointment requirements are up to international standards. However, the Panel noticed that many Units have relatively little research capacity (in FTE). Large “research groups” in reality represent far less research capacity measured in FTE, due to part-time appointments (especially for researchers) and teaching obligations (for teaching staff). Regarding the latter issue, the Lithuanian situation (with approximately one-third of time dedicated to R&D) is not very different from that in other European countries. Regarding the first issue, the Panel **recommends** both the Units and the authorities to promote that (chief and senior) researcher positions are not largely used for small part-time appointments but rather for full-time appointments. The Panel found that overall HRM-policies are adequate. However, lack of possibilities for (research) sabbaticals was mentioned during more than one of the site visits. This seems to be a structural shortcoming. The Panel **recommends** Units to look into such possibilities, if not already available.

Improvements can be made regarding the strategic plans and research prioritization. Here, the variety in quality of the information provided by the Units (strategic plans, SWOT analysis, justification of R&D themes)



was rather high, ranging from very good (good underpinning, clear prioritization, attention for implementation) to very superfluous. If not already in place, the Panel **recommends** Units to establish an adequate strategic planning cycle.

Interestingly, Units interpreted R&D «infrastructure» in very different ways. In most cases, information was provided on library facilities and access to databases, which is of limited interest when assessing specific Units and research fields, as these facilities are available across the institution and generally are up-to-standards anyway. More relevant is participation in international R&D organisations, but often this was interpreted as (institutional or individual) memberships of academic associations in the field and not as the establishment of and participation in research consortia, university alliances, or similar research cooperation schemes. The Panel **recommends** Units to assess how research infrastructure understood as research network participation can contribute to their (internationalisation) objectives.

Below, the Panel draws attention to some more specific yet overarching issues.

### **Publication strategies**

All Units have arrangements in place that provide financial incentives to staff members to publish and -especially- to publish internationally. In most cases such arrangements have been there for quite some time. Based on -among other things- the strategic plans of the Units, the Panel found that most Units work from a rather general idea of internationalization of publications, i.e., they have a very general aim of «more international publications», without making too much difference between the quality of international outlets. As international recognition is a key factor in internationalization, the reputation of international outlets should be an important consideration in the publication strategy and in the use of financial incentives. One or two articles in well-established top-tier journals have a far bigger impact in terms of international recognition than many «international publications» in low-level journals. The higher/lower the bar, the higher/lower the impact in terms of reputation. The same is true for monographs: not all international book publishers are equally good; there are considerable differences in -especially- the stringency of the peer review that is applied.

International publications in low-level outlets should not be incentivized. The Panel therefore **advises** to fine-tune publication strategies, and to reconsider and update current financial arrangements. One could for example align incentives with the classification used in the annual assessment of research output by the Research Council, but obviously with further fine-grained classification for the discipline and research themes involved. The classification used in the annual assessment seems to have very limited discriminatory power between articles in any peer-reviewed journal, articles that belong to the top 10% of the world's most cited articles, and articles with JIF in CA JCR and/or SNIP Scopus indexed journals. It should be clear to staff members what is regarded as top-level outlets and what not, and how important it is to make a difference between high and low quality. The Panel also **recommends** encouraging (and incentivize financially) co-authorship with international colleagues, as this clearly adds to international recognition and enhances further internationalization possibilities.

Financial incentives can be important tools but should be part of a broader set of tools, which includes support with the writing process as such (e.g., language editing, sufficient time for writing). In that regard it is also important to have regular meetings where draft papers are discussed among staff. Most Units have such meetings (on the department or departmental section level, within research groups, et cetera), but also here the Panel **advises** to rethink the arrangements from time to time (aim, size, frequency, possible involvement of outsiders as discussants, et cetera).

Another issue concerning publication strategy is the choice between publications in national outlets (in most cases: in the Lithuanian language) and international publications (in most cases: in English). This issue is of

course not specific to the Lithuanian context, as social problems are often local in nature and are very context specific. With that comes a natural tendency to study social phenomena locally and to publish locally, at the detriment of international publications. The adequate mix of local and international publications will also vary across disciplines within the Social Sciences, with relatively many national publications for -for example- a discipline like Law, given its link to national law-making and national judiciary processes. The Panel does however **recommend** all Units and all disciplines to look at combined publication possibilities (i.e., publishing nationally as well internationally, based on the same material). Generally, such combined publications require some attention early in the research process. Whereas mere application of existing theoretical and analytical approaches to “the Lithuanian case” may be sufficient for a national publication, international publications require far more in terms of theoretical added value, research design and originality.

Finally, there is the issue of in-house publications, critically discussed in summaries of previous CEAs as well. In-house publications most often concern in-house journals (which either publish fully in English, or combine Lithuanian and English language articles), but can also concern monographs or edited books published by a “university press” (at the own institution or at a university in the wider region). Even though such outlets may be indexed in international databases (such as Scopus), it is generally **not advisable** to (a) publish in such outlets, and (b) to spend time, energy, or financial resources in running them. In-house journals have very little visibility, as there are so many of them. They have very low impact factors and are therefore not attractive to authors from outside of the own institution. External outreach is often limited to a small regional network of authors that publish in each other’s in-house journals. These outlets thus do not add to the international recognition of the Units. On the contrary: internationally, they are not really taken seriously, unless published by very high-ranking universities. There are very few examples of in-house journals that over time have made it into established journals in their field, for example by being taken over by renowned publishers. The argument that in-house journals provide an opportunity for especially early career researchers to gain experience with the publishing process, does not hold. They can gain experience by submitting to decent journals as well and will in that case probably get higher quality peer review of their work.

### **PhD requirements**

Building on the previous topic, the Panel **advises** both the Units and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports to be stricter regarding the requirements for PhD students. Generally, the Panel found that many PhD theses are still written in Lithuanian with very little evidence of any international publication spin-offs, even when the topics lend themselves very well for international publication(s). The Panel would however like to stress that this situation is not particular for Lithuania. Setting the “right” standards for PhD students (i.e., being strict but without ending up in a situation where students are discouraged) is an issue that is repeatedly debated in many other countries as well. Still, raising the bar at this stage of the academic career will have a considerable longer-term impact.

The current requirement in Lithuania (for the social sciences and humanities) in the case of a thesis-based dissertation, is to have published -while preparing the thesis- two articles in peer-reviewed scientific publications, with one in an international publication where more than half of the members of the editorial board are not representatives of the country where the publication is published, or in scientific publications with a citation index in CA WoS or Elsevier Scopus databases, or in a scientific monograph. For a dissertation based on articles only (articles-based dissertation), the requirement is four articles in scientific publications with a citation index in CA WoS or Elsevier Scopus databases. According to the Panel, these requirements still allow for low-quality output. In the case of a thesis-based dissertation, first, one of the two articles can be published in any peer-reviewed journal. Secondly, the requirements for the other article are rather weak. Indexation in Scopus as such does not guarantee high quality, and most in-house journals have composed

their editorial boards in such a way that more than half of the members are foreign. Moreover, it is possible for one of the articles to be co-authored, with the candidate not being the first co-author. In the case of an articles-based dissertation (with the requirement of four WoS- or Scopus indexed journal articles), again indexation in Scopus as such does not guarantee sufficient quality. In addition, here the regulations open up for the possibility of (non-first) co-authorship for two of the four articles.

### **PhD programmes and interdisciplinarity**

In Lithuania, the right to “implement PhD studies” in a certain research field is granted to single universities or small consortia of universities. From 2023, the results of the CEA will be used to decide whether a university has sufficient research quality in the relevant field to have the right to implement PhD studies.

The Panel noticed that in Lithuania the organisation of doctoral studies and the underlying choice of «research fields» still follows the traditional disciplines within the area of research. These «disciplinary silos» can however hamper interdisciplinary PhD research as well as collaboration within Units that represent multiple fields of research. The Panel therefore **advises** the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports to consider a system that allows for more interdisciplinary collaboration, by moving away from these disciplinary lines, when it comes to PhD degrees, financing of doctoral study places, and the implementation of PhD studies.

Moreover, given the small scale of the Lithuanian research system, creating separate programmes within one research discipline, seems to make very little sense. For example, why have two PhD programmes in Political Science (VU; VMU with LKA, KTU and KU) in a rather small country? These are programmes that serve a very limited number of students (around 3-5 new PhD students each year). The Panel **recommends** looking at ways to better pool resources and create sufficient critical mass. *In extremis*, for the Social Sciences, one could think of two or three (interdisciplinary) national PhD schools (in which all institutions participate) that offer high-quality courses and events (such as summer and winter schools), with involvement of internationally renowned visiting staff.

### **Critical mass, research themes and international cooperation**

According to the Panel, in too many cases, Units presented research programmes with a large variety and magnitude of research topics. The Panel has the impression that many Units establish research agendas based on the need to cover all main «textbook» topics in their research field or to the wish to include all specializations of all current staff members. Especially for smaller Units, trying to cover a wide range of topics does not make sense and leads to fragmentation. Such fragmentation can go hand-in-hand with high quality research output, but that will then be based on the activities of single researchers and is not necessarily sustainable.

Generally, lack of critical mass is detrimental to research quality. The Panel **recommends** the Units to not start with listing all possible topics but to start at the other end. Units should critically reflect on what would constitute a minimum critical mass (in terms of research FTE) in order to do high quality research on a certain topic. The total number of available FTE then gives the number of research priority topics for the Unit.

Safeguarding critical mass within the Unit can be done by prioritizing research topics, but here the Panel also **advises** institutions and the authorities to aim for more inter-institutional cooperation within Lithuania, just as with the PhD programmes and the idea of national doctoral schools, explained above.

To take this argument one step further, the Panel **advises** similar steps as to international cooperation as this is another way to create critical mass in research capacity. Although improvements are clearly visible, the Panel found that the Units in the assessment were generally still relatively little involved in international research cooperation, i.e., had limited research infrastructure in the less traditional sense. Particularly,

applying for international research funding as coordinator/lead partner is still exceptional. The Panel **advises** to make investments in the establishment of such infrastructure a core theme in the strategic plans and to take these activities out of the context of ad hoc opportunities created by specific calls and related requests for participation by other international partners. This is a longer-term activity, linked to research prioritization, that requires planning (and patience).

### **Some reflections on the assessment process**

Finally, the Panel would like to reflect on some aspects of the assessment process.

Generally, the Panel was satisfied with the quality of the information the Units provided in their reports (i.e., the file with the Unit of Assessment data for the CEA), determined by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports and provided by Research Council of Lithuania. Only occasionally were there minor deficiencies (e.g., links that did not work, missing information). There are however some main **points of improvement** of the reports:

- The data on employees (numbers, FTE, FTE(SD), other employees) in part 3, also related to the overviews in part 7, were not always easy to interpret. These data do not present an unambiguous picture of the size of the Unit, in terms of research capacity, to what extent that capacity is concentrated or spread across a large number of persons, how the Unit is built-up, et cetera. More «traditional» information on the organization of the unit (organizational chart(s) of departments and/or research groups with names, positions (including for example post doc positions), and - research- FTE) would be helpful. Also, a more explicit overview of internationalisation aspects relating to staff composition would be very convenient (foreign employees, short- and long-term foreign research fellows, visiting professors, etc.);
- The data on the doctoral studies could be supplemented by a short overview of the content of the PhD programme(s): course work, mandatory academic work in addition to the PhD research, arrangements concerning supervision, et cetera. In that way, the Panel does not have to use precious time during the site visit to be informed (by the PhD students) about such formal arrangements and can focus more on their experiences and insights. Also, in the case of articles-based dissertation, it would be good to have access (doi-links) to the underlying articles;
- A major issue, that was also brought forward by the Units during the site visits and in their responses to the draft reports, concerns the lists in 5.1 and 5.2. Units could provide only a certain number of best research outputs and best conference papers, the limit of which was based on their size. This had various implications. To start with, it meant that the Panel did not have an overview of the full magnitude of research output. Moreover, the lists provided by the Unit were not randomly selected but presented the «best» works according to the Unit. Obviously, other considerations than quality of the publication or conference paper are likely to have also played a part in the selection, such as the distribution of listed works across researchers, research groups and themes. In addition, the limitations gave an incentive to Units to come up with additional material (publication lists, tables, graphs) during the site visit or as annexes to their response on the draft reports. Given the variety in such information (and thus lack of comparability across Units), the lack of the possibility to check its accuracy, and the late stage at which the information was provided, it was of little or no use to the Panel. The summary of the results of annual assessments, provided by the Research Council, gave some idea about the relative performance of different institutions, in different research fields, but the absolute values concerning publications (annual average of points of formal assessment per FTE(SD)) did not represent useful information;

- Despite the instructions, some Units listed positive results of applications for competitive R&D funding (such as postdoc funding) as awards. More generally, many Units listed awards that were of no or very limited relevance to research quality (e.g., awards for services in the public domain, awards for teaching activities);
- In the assessment the impact aspect refers to impact beyond the academic community, but experts were to take into account information on academic impact as well (scientific events, participation in editorial boards and in research associations). This should be reconsidered;
- The overview of participation in competition-based projects should be supplemented with an overview of all applications (as lead partner, or as participant) for competitive research funding (national, international) in the assessment period (successful, unsuccessful, under consideration), as the Panel considers this an important aspect of quality of research activities;
- Finally, the overview in part 7.2 of the researchers involved in the Unit (excel files with URL-links to their profiles) is of very limited use. Often, these lists are rather long (in one case in this Panel: up to 71 researchers). Moreover, profile pages are presented in various ways, with different formats, across Units. Often, profile pages are not (fully) “filled” with information, are not up-to-date, or available only in Lithuanian. A simple improvement would be to ask for links to Google Scholar profiles (which also include an h-index).

A more general issue concerns the overall nature of the report provided by the Units, which is a mix of factual data (parts 1-7, 10) and more reflective and reflexive aspects (parts 8, 9 and 11). The Panel **advises** to strengthen the latter aspects (without compromising on the factual parts), and to «force» Units to perform more critical self-evaluation, regarding the main issues related to research quality and impact, i.e., to turn the reports more into real «Self-Evaluation Reports». This can be done by (more) explicitly requesting the Units to reflect on issues such as overall research strategies and prioritization of research themes, internationalization of research, publication strategies, funding strategies, and research cooperation strategies. As stated above, the strategic plans and SWOT analyses, that the Units provided, were often too general and lacked focus. Moreover, Units should be asked to explicitly reflect on the outcomes and recommendations of earlier assessments and how they have been followed-up. The order of the information provided in the reports should also be changed: first the self-reflection and then the data (which can also be put in annexes).

Regarding the site visits, the Panel would like to mention the great hospitality that all Units showed in receiving the Panel members. With the CEA becoming a regular feature, participants in the site visit generally seemed to be more relaxed than during the 2018 site visits. Still, also here, some **points of improvement** can be mentioned. First, it is important to let the Panel use the full 3 or 3.5 hours for the visit, to be flexible and not make the Panel «hurry» through the programme. Some coordination of the programme between the Panel (chair) and the Unit prior to the visit would be advisable. Secondly, not all parts of the site visit were equally relevant. Visits to libraries, staff offices or auditoria are not essential, unless these facilities represent truly unique features for research activities. Thirdly, some Units felt the need to give a substantial role in the programmes to higher-level management (e.g., vice-rector for research). While the Panel fully understands and appreciates the intent behind this (i.e., to give a formal welcome on behalf of the institution), the Panel feels that such involvement does not necessarily add much value and can actually hamper a free exchange of ideas between the participants. Finally, Units should be aware that the groups (of researchers, of PhD students) the Panel meets cannot be too large as this also hinders an effective conversation.

Finally, the Panel wishes to express its sincere and huge gratitude towards all Units and to the Research Council for their efforts to enable a smooth assessment.

