



VYTAUTO  
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UNIVERSITETAS  
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## Declaration by the community of Vytautas Magnus University regarding the initiative by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to establish Kaunas University in 2018

11 May 2017

Kaunas

The University of Lithuania established on 16 February 1922 in Kaunas was the first school of higher education in Lithuania which became a vitally important beacon of culture and science as well as a modern and independent intellectual thought for our country. When the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the Grand Duke Vytautas Magnus was commemorated in 1930, the University of Lithuania was granted the name of Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) to honour his name. Implementing the Law on Universities of 13 December 1939, three faculties of Vytautas Magnus University (humanities, law and mathematics-natural sciences) were moved to Vilnius hereby re-establishing Vilnius University. In order to destroy the Lithuanian national identity, the Soviet government renamed VMU to Kaunas University in 1940 and 1946, and eventually closed it completely in 1950.

On 28 April 1989, in a collective effort of Lithuanian and diaspora scientists, the declaration on reestablishment of Vytautas Magnus University was announced. Its statutes were validated by the Law of the Supreme Council of 4 July 1989 “On the Reestablishment of Vytautas Magnus University”, Article 1 of which announces the “reestablishment of Vytautas Magnus University, granting it the status of an independent institution of higher education”. Therefore, as announced in Article 1 of the Law on Universities of 1939, Lithuania attained the 11 March (the Restoration of Lithuania’s Independence) with two universities: Vilnius University in Vilnius and Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas.

Today, celebrating the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its reestablishment, Vytautas Magnus University is one of the most liberal schools of higher education in Lithuania, continuing the mission of the University of Lithuania established in Kaunas in 1922. VMU students, teachers and graduates are united by the idea of *artes liberales*. It fosters an independent creative thought, focuses on the quality of studies, science and arts and is highly successful in developing its international relations. Both international and national ratings position VMU among the top 4 strongest Lithuanian state universities taking leadership in scientific research and internationalisation.

A group of international experts who assessed Vytautas Magnus University in 2014 submitted a recommendation for “<...> the Ministry of Education and Science to take active measures to promote and ensure proper evaluation of the unique contribution of the mission of VMU liberal arts to Lithuanian and European academic world. This institution stands out from other similar institutions in Europe and could position itself as a Lithuanian leader in Europe and beyond its borders”.



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Vytautas Magnus University is a unique university in Lithuania, since it is one of the few European and global state universities to host a Faculty of Catholic Theology, approved by the Holy See. Not only did the Catholic Church and its hierarchy support the idea of VMU reestablishment, but it also kept the Faculty of Theology running, when it was shut down by the Soviet government.

Moreover, it is mandatory to comply with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, which have enshrined university autonomy, the will of academic communities and their right to independently define and consolidate their organisational and management structure, relations with partners, procedure for research and studies, study programmes, procedure for student admission as well as a guarantee for the inviolability of the territory, facilities and other assets necessary for research and studies.

Taking into consideration the historic development of universities and acknowledging the provisions of the Law on Universities of 13 December 1939 adopted by the First Independent Republic of Lithuania, the attempt to consolidate the universities of Kaunas is acceptable only if the name and academic tradition of Vytautas Magnus University is preserved.

We find the actions of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania preparing the plan for university network optimisation completely hasty, non-transparent, disregarding the positions taken by the academic communities and avoiding dialogues with universities.

We hereby invite all who support this appeal to sign it below.