

T4EU STRATEGIC POLICY CONFERENCE

UNIVERSITIES SHAPING THE FUTURE: BUILDING RESILIENT SOCIETIES THROUGH INNOVATION AND GLOBAL IMPACT

21–22 October 2025

Organized by: Vytautas Magnus University (VMU), Transform4Europe Alliance (T4EU)

Location: Vytautas Magnus University, Great Hall, S. Daukanto str. 28, Kaunas

CONCEPT NOTE

Although for almost a millennium it was universities that functioned as primary hubs for the advancement of intellectual thought and visionary leadership, their trendsetting and pioneering position in society has been immensely diminishing, especially in Europe. As the means of remedy, the European University initiative that is currently uniting 65 alliances was introduced to strengthen European higher education institutions and their role in boosting European identity, but also competitiveness, technological advancement and an overall societal resilience.

In the wake of the rambling global crises and mounting uncertainty, resilience has become a vital societal asset and personal skill and has been chosen as the main axis of action during the presidency of Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) in the Transform4Europe (T4EU) Alliance in 2025. Resilience will also be the focal point in the Strategic Policy Conference held at VMU on 21–22 October to mark the conclusion of the presidency year.

The main goal of the conference is to bring together not only academic leaders, experts, and students from the T4EU and other European University alliances, but also leading European and Lithuanian political figures, global partners, and key stakeholders. Together, they will engage in discussions on resilience from multiple perspectives, including the need to shift from reactive crisis management to proactive resilience with the focus on cooperation among governments, private sector partners, and citizens, closer cooperation between NATO and the EU, building and expanding structures for cooperation between the two organizations, the global and European transformation of democracies, societies, and technologies. A Policy Paper on Resilience Competency will be finalized and shared, drawing on the expertise and insights generated during the conference.

21 OCTOBER (DAY 1)

9:00–10:00	Registration & Welcome Coffee
10:00–10:30	Welcome Remarks Ineta Dabašinskienė, Rector of Vytautas Magnus University Henna Virkkunen, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for Technological Sovereignty, Security and Democracy, and European Commissioner for Digital and Frontier Technologies Opening Speech Gitanas Nausėda, President of the Republic of Lithuania
10:30–11:15	Session 1: Europe's Resilience in a Shifting Global Order — Presidential Panel Plenary. Keynote speaker: Sauli Niinistö, former President of the Republic of Finland Moderator: Vilma Bijekienė, Chair of the Conference Young Challenger: Maka Berulava, Research Analyst at Andrei Sakharov Research Center for Democratic Development
11:15–12:00	Networking Coffee Break
12:00–12:45	Highlights of the T4EU Alliance Results and Impact Handover of T4EU presidency to Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

12:45–14:00	Session 2. Democracies Under Pressure Round Table Discussion Moderator: Victoria Vdovychenko, Centre for Geopolitics, University of Cambridge, UK Speakers: ■ Vygaudas Ušackas, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania and former EU Ambassador to Afghanistan and Russia ■ Mykola Trofymenko, Vice-Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine ■ Konstantin Eggert Hon, DW Russian Affairs Analyst and Programme Host ■ Anne Friederike Delouis, Vice-President for International Relations Université d'Orléans, ATHENA European University, France
14:00–15:30	Networking Lunch & T4EU Innovation Agora Launch*
15:30–16:30	Session 3: Individual Resilience: Preparing Minds for an Unpredictable World Round Table Discussion Moderator: Robert Van Voren, Director of the A. Sakharov Research Centre for Democratic Development, Vytautas Magnus University; Chief Executive of Human Rights in Mental Health Federation Global Initiative on Psychiatry (FGIP), Lithuania Speakers: ■ Patrícia Oliveira e Silva, Director of the Human Neurobehavioral Laboratory, Catholic University of Portugal ■ Tanja Michael, Chair of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy Saarland University, Germany ■ Donatas Paulauskas, Head of Group Diversity, Inclusion and Well-being at Ignitis Group ■ Lana Par, President of European Students' Union
16:30–18:00	Session 4: Science, Innovation, and Universities' Global Competitiveness Round Table Discussion Moderator: Tomasz Pietrzykowski – Vice-Rector for International and Domestic Cooperation of the University of Silesia in Katowice Speakers: ■ Lukas Savickas, Member of the Lithuanian Parliament, former Minister of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania ■ Manuel Heitor, former Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education of Portugal ■ Marius Vaščega, Head of the EC Representation, Lithuania ■ Tomas Vitkus, CEO of Novian, Lithuania
18:30–20:30	Culture Uncorked: Wine & Snacks Soirée

22 OCTOBER (DAY 2)

09:00–09:20	Signing Ceremony of the Transform4Europe Legal Entity
09:20–10:30	Session 5. From Local Roots to Global Reach: Higher Education and Societal Renewal Round Table Discussion Moderator: Francisco Mendes-Palma, Director of Transform4Europe Office, Catholic University of Portugal Speakers: ■ Regina Valutytė, Vice-Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania ■ Zofia Sawicka, SIRIS higher education & international research consulting company and former head of the National Agency of Academic Exchange in Poland ■ Darius Von Guttner Sporzynski, Canberra Campus of the Australian Catholic University ■ Irena Melua, Vice President for Internationalization at Caucasus University
10:30–11:30	Closing Remarks Policy and Strategic Directions for Universities Signing of MoA with Global Partners
11:30–12:30	Networking Coffee Break Final reflections & commitments from stakeholders Deal & Go – Informal networking discussions

* The T4EU Innovation Agora – an open space for dialogue, collaboration, and showcasing resilience-building initiatives across the global academia & stakeholders