Call for Papers

From Linguistic Practice to Theory: The Lithuanian Seminaries in Halle and Königsberg as the Beginnings of Baltic Studies

International Conference organized by Vilnius University in cooperation with the Francke Foundations in Halle, Humboldt University in Berlin, the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in the Federal Republic of Germany, and the Society for Baltic Studies e. V.

Halle (Saale), April 28–30, 2027

The year 2027 marks the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Halle Lithuanian Seminary. In May 1727, the leading Halle Pietist Gotthilf August Francke was commissioned by the king of Prussia, Frederick William I, to establish a seminary where future pastors for the Lithuanian-speaking congregations of Prussia would be trained in the Pietist tradition and instructed in the Lithuanian language. The establishment of the Halle Seminary is closely linked to the Lithuanian Seminary in Königsberg, which had been founded a few years earlier, and is a direct result of the confessional disputes between Halle Pietism and Königsberg Lutheran orthodoxy.

Both Lithuanian Seminaries provided a decisive impetus to Baltic studies by introducing Lithuanian language instruction and developing the necessary teaching materials. They established traditions that fostered the development of research focuses on the Baltic languages at both universities within the field of historical-comparative linguistics, which emerged in the 19th century.

The anniversary provides the occasion for an international, interdisciplinary conference in the historic halls of the Francke Foundations, where the legacy of the Lithuanian Seminary is still preserved today.

The aim of the conference is to bring together scholars from Baltic studies, historical-comparative linguistics, other philological disciplines, as well as history and

theology, to engage in a fruitful exchange on the role of the Lithuanian seminaries in Halle and Königsberg within the academic and religious contexts of the 18th century, their influence on the development of historical-comparative linguistics and Baltic studies, their significance for the emergence of Lithuanian literature, etc.

The conference takes an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates perspectives from philology, theology, the history of religion, and research on other minority languages (e.g., Sorbian). The following focal points are intended to serve as a guide:

- History of the Lithuanian Seminaries in Halle and Königsberg
- Early history of Baltic language instruction
- Studies on Lithuanian literature produced in connection with the two seminaries
- Source studies on archival documents from the Lithuanian Seminary in Halle
- Lithuanian book printing in Halle and Königsberg
- Historical-comparative linguistics in Halle and Königsberg
- The significance of the Lithuanian Seminaries for pastoral care in East Prussia
- Pietism in Prussian Lithuania and the Baltic region.

We would be delighted if you were interested in contributing to the conference with a presentation on one of these topics. Presentations may be given in either German or English. Presentations should be 20 minutes long, and plenary talks 40 minutes.

We kindly ask you to submit your proposals, including a working title and abstract (max. 1,500 characters, including spaces) in German or English, by **December 1, 2026**, to Dr. Birutė Kabašinskaitė (birute.kabasinskaite@flf.vu.lt) or Dr. Christiane Schiller (christiane.schiller@hu-berlin.de). The papers based on the presentations will be published in a peer-reviewed edited volume (2028; baar Verlag).

Vilnius | Halle, October 2026

The conference organizers

Dr. Birutė Kabašinskaitė, PD Dr. Christiane Schiller, Prof. Dr. Daiva Sinkeviciūtė

LMT
Lietuvos mokslo taryba

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