



Bologna, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026

To the Prime-Minister Irakli Kobakhidze  
Tbilisi  
Georgia

Dear Prime Minister,

### **Safeguarding university autonomy and academic freedom in Georgia**

The Magna Charta Observatory (MCO) is a global signatories' association, independent from political organisations or interest groups. It was established in 2000 and is located at the University of Bologna. Its foundation document is the Magna Charta Universitatum (MCU), which over 1000 Universities from 94 countries, including 6 from Georgia, have signed. By doing so, they have made a public commitment to uphold the principles of the MCU. Principally, these are to engage with and serve society to benefit humanity and contribute to sustainability, and to operate autonomously with academic freedom. (The full text can be seen at <https://www.magna-charta.org/magna-charta-universitatum/mcu2020> )

It is therefore with deep concern that the Observatory has learnt about the National Concept for the Reform of the Higher Education System in Georgia which was published by the Georgian government on 16 October 2025 and the subsequent legislative changes passed in December 2025 and February 2026, all of which threaten to eliminate university autonomy and academic freedom in Georgia.

Our concern arises from both the impact that your concept will have on the ability of the universities affected to operate in accordance with the Magna Charta Universitatum, their concomitant impact in Georgia and their ability to engage with MCU signatory universities in other countries. The latter point is significant given the highly international nature of the research on which the solutions to societal challenges are based.

In recent years, the reputation of Georgia and its universities has been enhanced by the proactive engagement of Ilia State University in the research and development work of the MCO. The loss of this is likely to hurt the universities and countries involved.

Hence, for the sake of the continued prosperity of universities in Georgia and the impact that they are able to have for good in Georgia and the rest of the world, the Governing Council of the Magna Charta Observatory calls upon the Georgian Government to withdraw those reforms which prevent its universities from implementing fully the principles, values and responsibilities of the Magna Charta Universitatum.

Yours sincerely

The Governing Council of the Magna Charta Observatory.