



20 April 2026

# Solidarity and support for the University of Belgrade

## Coimbra Group Statement

The Coimbra Group reaffirms its unwavering commitment to academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and the rule of law as non-negotiable foundations of democratic societies. As a network of universities whose members are signatories of the [Magna Charta Universitatum](#), we recall that “intellectual and moral autonomy is the hallmark of any university and a precondition for the fulfilment of its responsibilities to society” and that this “independence needs to be recognised and protected by governments and society at large, and defended vigorously by institutions themselves.”

In this context, the Coimbra Group expresses deep concern over recent developments at the [University of Belgrade](#). We stand in full and unequivocal solidarity with its leadership, particularly its Rector, Prof. Vladan Đokić, with Prof Danijel Sinani, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, as well as with other faculty members, students and the wider university community, as they are facing escalating pressure.

Recent reports of police raids on university premises, the use of force against peaceful gatherings, and the arrest of students in their homes for exercising their fundamental rights, point to a worrying escalation. These events follow sustained student mobilisation for accountability and transparency and raise serious concerns about respect for civil liberties and the autonomy of higher education institutions.

Academic freedom is not an abstract principle. It is a cornerstone of democratic societies, enabling universities to foster critical inquiry, advance knowledge, and contribute to evidence-based policymaking and public accountability. Any attempt to intimidate or restrict students and university staff anywhere in the world undermines not only institutional autonomy, but also the democratic fabric of society.

The Coimbra Group therefore calls on the Serbian authorities to fully respect the fundamental human rights and safety of all students and staff and refrain from any interference in the governance autonomy and integrity of higher education institutions without exception.

We also call on the European institutions, member states governments, and the international academic community to monitor the situation closely and stand in solidarity with, and provide support to, those affected.



**The members of the Coimbra Group Executive Board:**

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