



March 13th, 2026

Our ref: Prof Janestic Twikirize

[secretary25@iassw-aiets.org](mailto:secretary25@iassw-aiets.org)

To Whom it May Concern,

### **Appeal to Safeguard Social Work Education at Ilia State University in Georgia**

The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) is the global network of universities and higher education institutions whose mission is to promote excellence in social work education towards contributing to more just and inclusive societies. On behalf the IASSW, we respectfully appeal to the government of Georgia to reconsider the potential termination of the Social Work programmes at the Master and PhD level at Ilia State university that may be sanctioned by the recent National Education Reform.

We understand that ongoing reforms aimed at restructuring the higher education landscape are necessary for various reasons but that at the same time trimming essential programmes such as social work, may have long standing implications for the development of the social service workforce needed to advance effective social service delivery, strengthen social protection and promote individual, family and community wellbeing in the country.

A well planned, trained and supported social service workforce, particularly social workers, is critical for socio-economic development and for addressing complex issues such as poverty, inequality, child protection, family vulnerability, drug and substance use, and mental health. All of these, if not adequately addressed, have crippling effects on citizens' ability to function and participate more effectively in national development and sustain their wellbeing.

We also express concern that recent quota allocations for social work programmes—such as restricting admissions to 50 undergraduate and 10 graduate places at Tbilisi State University, based on a labour-market study, have been widely questioned due to insufficient alignment with national workforce needs. Given that Georgian legislation requires a substantially larger social service workforce, and

parallel certification remains legally permissible, such limits appear insufficiently justified.

We stand in solidarity with Ilia State University as a long-standing member of our esteemed network. Its programmes are guided by the Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training. These globally recognized standards emphasize the importance of accessible, high-quality social work education delivered through universities and institutions of higher learning that maintain academic autonomy, foster research, and respond to the social realities of their respective societies. The MSW programme as well as the doctoral programme are among the very few in the country. The continuation of these Social Work programmes is essential not only for academic diversity but also for building the human resource capacity needed to support social welfare systems and community wellbeing.

In alignment with these global standards, IASSW respectfully encourages the Government of Georgia to engage the academic and professional communities in meaningful consultation and to consider measures that would enable the continued operation and admission of students to Social Work education programmes, including at Ilia State University.

Alongside our member institution, IASSW is willing to engage constructively with relevant authorities and academic partners in Georgia to support the continued development of high-quality social work education in the country.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antoinette Lombard', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Prof Antoinette Lombard**

President, IASSW