

Mr. Commissioner Andrius Kubilius,

Mr. President of the Magna Charta Observatory Giovanni Molary,

Honorable Rectors and Presidents,

Dear guests and colleagues,

It is a great honour to stand here today, as a member of the **Board of Directors of the European Women Rectors Association, EWORA**, at the moment when our Association joins the **Magna Charta Observatory family**.

This signing is more than a **procedural act**. It affirms something that has long united our organisations: **a deep and natural alignment of values**.

The Magna Charta Observatory was founded to promote and defend academic freedom and institutional autonomy; to monitor, to advocate, and to support universities in living by these principles.

European Women Rectors' Association (EWORA) was founded to advance gender equality and values-based leadership in higher education and research; to bring together women rectors and senior academic leaders, to share experience, and to open the doors of academic decision-making wider.

Our missions are distinct, yet they rest on a **shared conviction**: universities fulfil their purpose when they welcome all talent and enable every member of the academic community to contribute. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are strengthened by a culture in which women and men have equal opportunities to pursue knowledge, exercise leadership and shape the future of their institutions.

As our **Memorandum states**, we share a belief that higher education is essential to building a more prosperous, healthy and stable world, and a vision in which quality higher education **is available to everyone**.

Today, we give that shared vision a **practical framework**. The Memorandum opens opportunities for collaboration on publications, projects and events, drawing on the experience and expertise of both organisations.

Within this framework, we can explore joint initiatives to support women's academic and research careers, encourage inclusive leadership and strengthen participation in university governance. We can exchange good practice, create opportunities for mentoring and give greater visibility to the next generation of women scholars and leaders. Together, we can also bring the relationship between academic freedom, institutional autonomy and gender equality into wider international discussions.

The strength of this partnership will lie in the work we undertake together and in the opportunities that work creates for others. **Our task is to translate shared principles into meaningful action**: to help ensure that talent is recognised, that barriers are addressed and that academic leadership reflects the breadth of the communities it serves.

At a time when universities face profound political, technological and social change, this cooperation carries particular significance. Universities need the freedom to question, the independence to pursue knowledge and the confidence to serve society. They also need the insight and experience **of the whole academic community**. Inclusion strengthens their capacity to meet these responsibilities.

Allow me also to express **my sincere gratitude to the speakers**, whose insights over these three days have challenged and inspired us; **to all the participants**, who have travelled here and contributed so generously; and to **the organisers team**, whose dedication has made this meeting possible.

I would also like to thank our colleagues at the **Magna Charta Observatory** for their trust and commitment to this partnership, **Vilnius University** for hosting today's ceremony, and the musicians from the **Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre** for their beautiful musical contribution to this occasion.

My hope is simple. May this meeting in Vilnius further strengthen the partnership among our universities. May the values of the Magna Charta Universitatum continue to unite not only universities, but also the wider society we serve - in pursuit of sustainable human progress, and of peace, which today we must never take for granted.

Thank you - and congratulations to us all on this new chapter.