

ETUC statement in response to Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention Draft Statement to be adopted at the Executive Committee 22-23 March 2021

The European Trade Union Confederation condemns the decision of the President of Turkey to pull his country out of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (**Istanbul Convention**) and considers it a devastating signal to women and girls in Turkey and across the world.

The ETUC urges the Turkish Government to reconsider this action and to reaffirm its international commitment to protect the human rights of women and girls and all their citizens.

The Istanbul Convention is the world's first joint binding effort to fight and to prevent all forms of violence against women including child marriage, marital rape, domestic violence, female genital mutilation and economic violence.

The timing of the announcement, in the middle of a meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and during the year celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Convention, is a deliberate provocation and represents yet another conservative attack on international cooperation. It is especially dangerous and unjustifiable considering the undeniable spike in domestic violence all around the world triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ETUC urges countries that have not ratified the Convention yet, namely Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia and Slovakia, to immediately ratify the Convention and to put adequate measures in place that protect women and girls from surging domestic and gender-based violence, and urges Poland and others to refrain from considering to withdraw from the Convention.

The ETUC calls on President Ursula von der Leyen to use any and all effective measures available to ensure that all EU Member States ratify and to work as a matter of urgency to finalise the accession of the EU to the Istanbul Convention. The ETUC calls on all EU Commissioners, the European Parliament and all the EU Member States to support the achievement of this stated "key priority" of the von der Leyen Commission.

Now is the time to deliver on the EU's commitment to combating and preventing violence against women and all forms of gender-based with actions. Anything less is unacceptable to working women and men throughout Europe.

The ETUC calls on the EU to use all effective measures available to urge the Government of Turkey to reconsider their decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention. The ETUC recalls that the Copenhagen Criteria set out the conditions for membership of the European Union and speak of the existence of stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. Turkey has been called upon in some progress reports to "ensure gender equality, avoid using vague criteria such as "general morality", refrain from considering women primarily as members of the family or the community, and consolidate women's human rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights, as individual rights".

The ETUC wants to express its solidarity with the women trade unionists of Turkey and assure them that we are by their side.