

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
The Chair

IPOL-COM-FEMM D (2021) 6635

D 200555 23.04.2021

Ms Pinella Bombaci
Executive BPW International
Business Professional Women
(BPW Europe aisbl)
Rue Defacqz, 109
BE - 1060 Brussels

Dear Ms Bombaci,

I would like to thank you for the letter of 25 March 2021 that you sent to President Sassoli regarding the announcement of the Turkish president to withdraw from the Council of Europe "Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence" (the so-called Istanbul Convention). The President has asked me to reply to you as Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) of the European Parliament.

As it could be witnessed during the debate in the plenary on 25 March, the European institutions are shocked and strongly condemn the decision taken by Turkey. The Istanbul Convention is about keeping women safe and this decision by the Turkish authorities will put women's lives at risk.

Following the debate in the Plenary, I can inform you that on 25 May the FEMM Committee, together with the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), will hold an exchange of views on the Turkish withdrawal in the context of the 10th anniversary of the Istanbul Convention.

The protection of the rights of women and ensuring their safety is today more important than ever, as violence against women and girls has increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Istanbul Convention follows a holistic, comprehensive and coordinated approach placing the rights of the victim at the centre, by addressing the issues of violence against women and girls and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, from a wide range of perspectives.

The Convention is the gold standard to protect the core women's right: the right to live a life without violence. Women's rights are non-negotiable, they are human rights and they must be fully protected.

In this spirit, let me assure you that we are going to continue our work on strengthening the contents of the Istanbul Convention through several ways on top of

the abovementioned exchange of views. Indeed, the FEMM Committee together with the LIBE Committee is currently exploring the options of adding a new Eurocrime of gender-based violence to the existing list. We are also awaiting the decision of the European Court of Justice regarding ratifying the Istanbul Convention even without unanimity by the EU's countries - a case we have filled as European Parliament. And of course we are in very close contact with the Council of Europe to address the announcements of Turkey but also other countries, like Poland and Greece.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Regner', written in a cursive style.

Evelyn REGNER
Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality