



EPA Statement in response to Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention

With active individual members in 88 countries and 44 National Psychiatric Association Members who represent more than 80,000 psychiatrists, the European Psychiatric Association (EPA) is the main association representing psychiatry in Europe.

The European Psychiatric Association firmly condemns Turkey's Presidential decision to withdraw from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention). The consequences of Turkey's withdrawal will exacerbate violence and discrimination, which will inevitably lead to much suffering and an increase in mental disorders, especially in women and children.

The Convention creates binding legal standards to prevent violence against women and domestic violence, to protect the victims, and to prosecute the perpetrators. It stipulates that gender equality must be anchored in the constitutions and legal systems of the signatory states and that all discriminatory regulations must be abolished. In addition, it calls for support services for women to be improved and for people to be made aware of the problem through educational programmes.

The individual measures to be undertaken, as outlined in the Istanbul Convention, include legal counselling, psychological support, financial counselling, help in accessing accommodation (setting up women's shelters), education and training as well as support in finding work. In addition, the signatory states must take action against psychological violence (Article 33), stalking (Article 34), physical violence (Article 35), sexual violence including rape (Article 36), forced marriage (Article 37), female genital mutilation (Article 38), forced abortion and forced sterilisation (Article 39), sexual harassment (Article 40). Deliberate offenses of this type are therefore to be punishable.

As consequence of the withdrawal from the Convention, adherence to all these measures is now removed, opening the door to violence against women and domestic violence as well as discrimination, among other things.

The Convention is not uniformly signed and ratified by all European countries. Furthermore, in some countries on different occasions arguments against the Convention have been raised, and withdrawal was attempted. Similar to the case in Turkey, arguments against the Convention in different countries often include common misinformation about the Treaty and reflect a discriminatory attitude. These attempts raise concerns since any delay in the implementation of these measures or withdrawal may have important mental health consequences.

The EPA wishes to express its solidarity with its Turkish member organisation, and the Turkish people, and calls upon key policy and decision makers at the European and international level to take immediate action to reverse Turkey's Presidential decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, and in all the European countries to support decidedly the Istanbul Convention's principles and associated measures which provide important means in the struggle against violence and discrimination.