Dear WIDE+ members,

Warm greetings. We would like to share with you our solidarity statement with the girls and women in Turkey. Please join and express your solidarity. We invite you to use this statement for your own message.

**WIDE+ condemns the move of the Turkish government to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention**

Having been the first country to sign the Istanbul convention in 2011, Turkey withdrew from the convention in the middle of the night on March 20. In full, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence signed by 45 states and the EU is the first international, legally binding treaty to tackle problems of domestic violence and marital abuse. It also protects victims of gender based violence and protects women in the cases of discrimination on the basis of race, disabilty, migrant or refugee status. In short, the treaty works as a mechanism for preventing violence, protecting victims and punishing perpetrators.

At WIDE+ we strongly condemn this devastating action which could lead to the harm to many girls and women in Turkey and contribute to the even greater retraditionalization in the areas of gender roles, societal expectations of women and in handling of gender based violence.

The Istanbul convention provides legal and societal guidelines for states and governments to limit and try to suppress violence, aimed at women and girls. Turkey, governed by the conservative president Erdoğan, has been facing soaring numbers of femicides ever since his party took office in 2003. To illustrate, every day since the beginning of 2021 one woman has been killed. Combining this with the rise of gender based violence associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the "shadow pandemic", a term coined by the UN, the situation is alarming. In the light of this information it is difficult to not feel cynical about Turkey’s justification of the withdrawal, saying that existent legal provisions in Turkey are already offering enough security for victims of violence.
It must also be emphasized that gender based violence affects different sections of the populations differently. Without legal protection, older or migrant women will be exposed to even more potential harm and danger since these groups are less likely to be able to report or escape violence that occurs behind closed doors. Discourse surrounding withdrawal from the Istanbul convention was also extremely homophobic and it will contribute to marginalize the LGBTQ+ community even further.

The withdrawal of Turkey from the Istanbul convention was not necessarily unexpected given its recent tendency towards severe retraditionalization of the country, however this does not make it any less disappointing, tragic and most of all – unacceptable. With the rise of populist rhetorics that encourage conservative politics, Turkey may have set precedence for countries such as Poland or Hungary, who are slowly moving in a similar direction. These harmful patterns must be stopped and condemned loudly by state leaders and international institutions.

At WIDE+ we would like to extend our solidarity to all Turskish girls and women, who remain at the receiving end of discriminatory and outrageous decisions by the state. We stand with all the protesters, demanding a reversal of the withdrawal from the treaty and we would like to offer our voice in declaring that it is time to move forward, not back.

WIDE+ members, partners and members of the European Women Lobby standing in solidarity with women’s organisations in Turkey in 2016