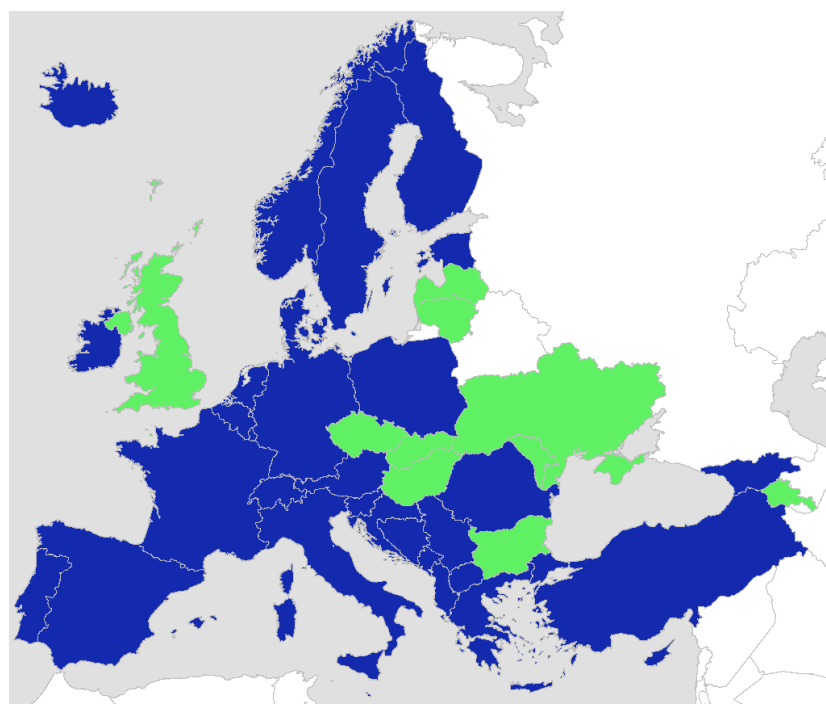


Theoretically, the dust of the presidential electoral campaign has settled. However, the two most prominent politicians of the ruling camp created a conflict around the Istanbul Convention (The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, May 2011) and the question of rights of people of different sexual orientations using it as a slapping stick. Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, principally only as strong as the mercy of Jarosław Kaczyński, and Zbigniew Ziobro, who holds two key posts in justice are locking in combat. For them, this is a game for a status in the ruling camp. For large part of the society, this is a game for their future.

Welfare and safety of women in Poland as well as LGBT minority is at stake and this puts a question mark over human rights issue in Poland generally. In addition, there are exceptionally perfidious attempts to connect these two fundamental matters - apparently the 'heated discussion' around the Convention was caused by the people from LGBT.



The Istanbul Convention was signed by 45 countries, of which 34 finally ratified it.

## CONVENTION

Justice Minister posing as ideologically clean right winger, filed a formal appeal to repeal the Istanbul Convention. He emphasises, contrary to the facts, that the level of protection of women in Poland is high anyway and this is why he is trying hard to knock down the Convention.

The Prime Minister is ducking. He sends the long ago ratified Convention to the Constitutional Court, because he wants to 'verify' if it is in line with the Constitution and if it 'doesn't disturb our legal order'. He asks for interpretation of the (already explained) word 'gender'. Ms Przyłębska, MA Law (Chairperson of CC), is probably waiting to be instructed by Kaczyński himself - to freeze the matter or not?

As a result, where two are fighting, the third won't win, contrary to the old saying. Stopping the charge of minister Ziobro doesn't mean coming to rescue for the needy groups. This is only an intense political game.

Let's have solidarity with those who still possess the strength, courage and enthusiasm to publicly demonstrate their support for so much needed Convention. Let's support protection of women's right to self-determination and let's stand in defence of the rights and safety of sexual minorities. Let's not try to see as 'offensive' the initiatives for bringing out these issues. Let's not push responsibility for increasing violence to apparently pushy feminists and too visible rainbow flags. Let's not force people to keep quiet, because apparently, this will make them safe.

Let's not be convinced by official statistics, which tell us to believe that the level of domestic violence in Poland is very low. They only prove one thing - low rate of reporting of such crimes. The Convention is exactly for the purpose of giving non-government organisations, support groups and victims the tools to fight for their fundamental rights. The right for safety and justice. We must not deny anyone these rights.

**Monika Piotrowska-Marchewa**  
**Maciej Pokrzywa**