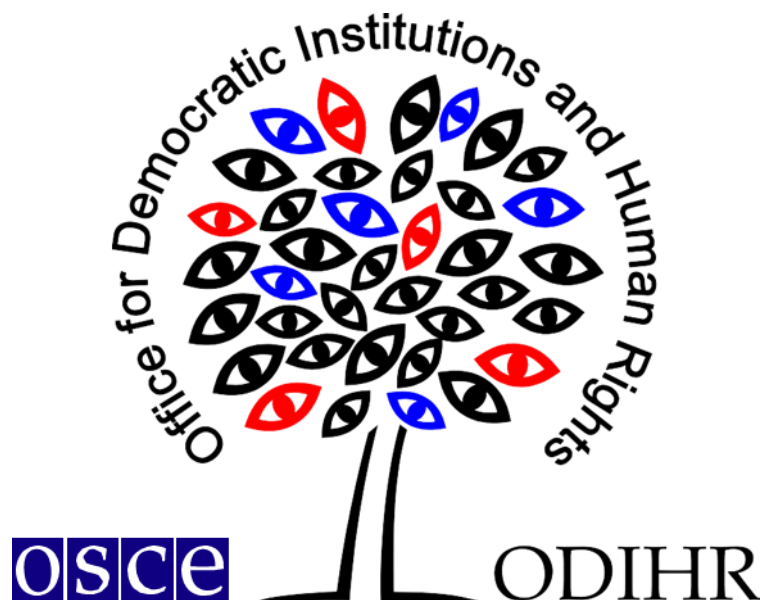


# Recommendations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Participate in Political and Public Life in the OSCE Region

(Dublin Recommendations)

2023



3 December 2023

## **Recommendations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Participate in Political and Public Life in the OSCE Region. (Dublin Recommendations)**

OSCE participating States have clearly stated their commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in political and public life as enshrined in the Moscow Document (1991, paragraphs 41.1-415). These commitments fit within the broader framework of OSCE commitments on democratic governance and ODIHR's specific mandate to assist participating States in the implementation of their OSCE human dimension commitments. For example, States commit to "promote principles of democracy" (Helsinki Document 1992, paragraph 10) and to provide for: equality before the law; equal suffrage; public office access; political parties; and anti-discrimination in all spheres (Copenhagen 1990, paragraphs 5.9, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6 and 25.4 respectively).

On the basis of these commitments and in line with its mandate to assist participating States in the implementation of their human dimension commitments, in 2021, ODIHR convened the Advisory Panel on the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities. The Panel consists of 11 independent experts from across the OSCE region, the majority of whom self-identify as disabled. The Panel provides advice, guidance and recommendations to ODIHR on matters related to the participation of people with disabilities in political and public life.

On this basis, ODIHR, in consultation with the Advisory Panel, offers the following recommendations to participating States, their parliaments, lawmakers, political parties and Election Management Bodies (EMBs). These were finalised during the annual meeting of the Panel in Dublin, Ireland, on 14 November 2023. In this way, ODIHR seeks to advocate for the genuine inclusion of persons with disabilities across the OSCE region.

### **1. Enact inclusive legislation**

We recommend that participating States adopt all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), OSCE commitments, other international documents and norms, to ensure the realisation of the right to participate in political and public life for persons with disabilities and to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that constitute discrimination on the basis of disability in the exercise of political rights.

### **2. Identify and remove barriers**

We recommend that participating States identify and systematically overcome barriers that hinder the political participation of persons with disabilities, including those related to physical accessibility, cognitive accessibility, legal barriers, communication, access to information and attitudinal factors.

### **3. Provide accessible information and support mechanisms**

We recommend that participating States develop and implement measures to ensure that proceedings, documents, and information related to political participation are fully accessible to persons with disabilities. This includes offering materials in multiple formats, such as audio, Braille, sign language interpretation, real-time captioning, Easy-to-Read and

accessible digital platforms. Participating States could also establish services, including personal assistants of one's choosing, and reasonable accommodations, to ensure the active engagement of persons with disabilities in all aspects of political life.

#### **4. Gender-sensitive and intersectional representation**

Recognizing that persons with disabilities, particularly women and individuals who identify with multiple marginalised identities, may face additional barriers in accessing political life, we recommend that participating States actively consider intersectionality as a key element of inclusive political participation. Intersectionality refers to how different social categories, including but not limited to disability, gender, age, religion, 'race', and ethnicity, contribute to unique experiences of stigma or discrimination.

#### **5. Capacity building and awareness**

We recommend that participating States invest in training programmes for parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, governments and the general public to raise awareness about disability rights and inclusion, foster an inclusive political culture, prioritising sessions led by experts who bring lived experience of disability. Other measures could include, but not be limited to, increasing the representation of employees with disabilities in decision-making roles and ensuring disability-inclusive parliamentary internship programmes for young people.

#### **6. Promote inclusive representation in political and public life**

We recommend that participating States encourage political parties to actively promote the representation of persons with disabilities internally and as candidates in elections, recognizing the value of diversity in political life. This recommendation also extends to the representation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and election observation groups, spanning both domestic and international elections.

#### **7. Data collection and reporting**

We recommend that participating States collect, regularly update and publish disaggregated data on the political participation of persons with disabilities, including their representation in national parliaments, with the aim of identifying and removing barriers in the exercise of political rights. Participating States should inform ODIHR of their efforts to enhance disability inclusion in national parliaments, facilitating peer review and exchange of best practices among OSCE members.

#### **8. Consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations**

We recommend that participating States engage in meaningful consultation with persons with disabilities, their representative organizations, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and national advisory bodies of persons with disabilities on decision-making and, when drafting and implementing policies, on ensuring their active participation in such processes.

#### **9. Implement inclusive electoral processes**

We recommend that participating States promote the comprehensive engagement of persons with disabilities throughout the electoral cycle and cross all election processes, including voter education, voter registration, campaigning, voting, election monitoring and results tabulation, post-election assessment and reform processes.

## **10. International cooperation**

We recommend that participating States encourage both disability-specific election access programming and disability mainstreaming in all development cooperation on political participation, including those with international organizations, civil society and other OSCE participating States.

ODIHR encourages OSCE participating States to consider these recommendations as they work towards creating a more inclusive and representative political landscape, thereby upholding the principles of democracy, human rights, and equality for all within the OSCE region.

### **ODIHR Advisory Panel on the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities**

**Virginia Atkinson**, Senior Global Inclusion Adviser of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (USA)

**Anna Drabarz**, Disability activist and legal scholar (Poland)

**Pat Clarke**, Vice President of European Disability Forum (Ireland)

**Martin Conway**, Senator, Ireland (Ireland)

**Karina Chupina**, Disability inclusion expert (Russia/Germany)

**Janos Fiala Butora**, legal scholar (Hungary)

**Lyazzat Kaltayeva**, Senator, Kazakhstan (Kazakhstan)

**Janet E. Lord**, Senior Fellow, Harvard Law School Project on Disability and Executive Director, Center for International and Comparative Law, University of Baltimore School of Law. (USA)

**Helga Stevens**, Lawyer, former Member of the Flemish Parliament, the Belgian Senate and the European Parliament and deaf rights activist (Belgium)

**Iryna Tekuchova**, Director Disability Research Center, Fight for Rights (Ukraine)

**Amu Urhonen**, Disability activist and leader in Finnish party politics (Finland)