

# Promoting the Political Participation of People with Disabilities in the OSCE Region



## How does ODIHR promote the political participation of people with disabilities?

People with disabilities continue to be under-represented in governing structures and decision-making positions across the OSCE region. ODIHR assists participating States in increasing the participation of people with disabilities in political and public life by supporting institutional change, giving expert advice, capacity-building, conducting disability-disaggregated research, and creating tools and platforms for dialogue and advocacy.

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

In 2021 ODIHR convened a panel of experts on the rights of people with disabilities, in line with its mandate to help participating States implement their OSCE human dimension commitments and, in particular, on the rights of people with disabilities and political pluralism.

The Advisory Panel provides advice, guidance and recommendations to ODIHR on the participation of people with disabilities in political and public life. It is made up of independent experts from across the OSCE region, the majority of whom self-identify as disabled. Members serve as private individuals and do not represent any organization or participating State. ODIHR shares the Panel's expertise with participating States, OSCE field operations and non-governmental organizations.

## ODIHR's mandate:

OSCE Commitments on Persons with Disabilities are enshrined in the Moscow 1991 Document in which participating States commit to:

- (41.1) Ensure protection of the human rights of persons with disabilities;
- (41.2) Take steps to ensure the equal opportunity of such persons to participate fully in the life of their society;
- (41.3) Promote the appropriate participation of such persons in decision-making in fields concerning them;
- (41.4) Encourage services and training of social workers for the vocational and social rehabilitation of persons with disabilities;
- (41.5) Encourage favourable conditions for the access of persons with disabilities to public buildings and services, housing, transport, and cultural and recreational activities.

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 and, in particular, to "promote principles of democracy" (Paragraph 10, Helsinki Document, 1992). Furthermore, in the

Copenhagen 1990 Document, OSCE participating States commit to provide for:

- (5.9) Equality before the law;
- (7.4) Equal Suffrage;
- (7.5) Public office access;
- (7.6) Political parties; and
- (25.4) Anti-discrimination in all spheres.

### Activities

ODIHR conducts a range of activities in the area of political participation of people with disabilities. These include:

#### Survey of disability inclusion in national parliaments

ODIHR uses its methodology for disability audits of parliaments and political parties to promote disability inclusion. ODIHR gives technical support to parliaments and political parties to make their structures, policies and programmes more disability-inclusive. ODIHR relies on disabled people's organizations (DPOs) in each participating State to guide this work.

#### Promoting the Participation of Persons with Disabilities: An Interactive Tool for Parliaments and Political Parties

This eLearning course introduces the most common challenges people with disabilities face in accessing political and public life. It provides tips, tools and good practices from across the OSCE region on how to mitigate these barriers and mainstream disability throughout parliaments and political parties. The target audience is members of parliaments and political parties and their staff.

The course can be accessed at:

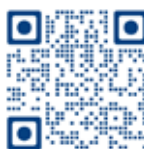
[<https://elearning.osce.org/courses/course-v1:OSCE+ODIHR-DISABILITY-EN+2021\\_05/>](https://elearning.osce.org/courses/course-v1:OSCE+ODIHR-DISABILITY-EN+2021_05/).

#### Mentoring programme on political participation for youth with disabilities

This pilot initiative pairs young people with disabilities with professionals working in democratic institutions or other public bodies in OSCE participating States. The young people with disabilities must show a keen interest in democratic institutions and their active participation in political and public life. The professionals all have an interest in developing the capacities of young people with disabilities. This programme aims to strengthen democratic institutions by improving the knowledge and skills of young people with disabilities so they can better access democratic institutions and participate in civic and public life. In parallel, it builds the ability of democratic institutions (e.g., parliaments, local and municipal administrations) to address the barriers to meaningful youth participation, in particular, the participation of young people with disabilities.

#### Championing accessible and inclusive communications

To engage actively in political and public life, people with different types of disabilities need information in accessible formats. Information presented in easy-to-read (ETR) format can encourage those with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities to participate. ODIHR has held several workshops for DPOs, activists, educators and public officials on the ETR methodology and has commissioned several important public documents in the format, including a Russian ETR version of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. ODIHR has also helped establish online communities of people competent in using the ETR methodology.



OSCE Office for  
Democratic Institutions and  
Human Rights

Ul. Miodowa 10  
00-251 Warsaw  
Poland

Office: +48 22 520 06 00  
Fax: +48 22 520 06 05  
office@odihhr.pl

Follow OSCE

