



POLITICAL INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: BARRIERS, GAPS AND DIRECTIONS FOR REFORM

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INTRODUCTION

People with disabilities represent a significant segment of the population of the Republic of Moldova. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, as of 1 January 2025, there were approximately 160,000 people with disabilities registered in the Republic of Moldova (as recipients of disability pensions and state social disability allowances), representing around **7%** of the country's usual resident population¹. The composition of this group is diverse in terms of both the type and degree of disability, as well as demographic characteristics. The distribution by degree of disability shows that 55.1% of people with disabilities have a significant disability, 28.4% have a moderate disability, and 16.5% have a severe disability. At the same time, the demographic structure indicates that most of them fall into the adult age groups: 37.4% of people with disabilities are aged between 30 and 54 (59,800 people), 31.3% are aged between 55 and 64 (50,100), and 18.5% fall into the 65+ age group. Together, these categories represent the largest share of the population with disabilities. At the same time, children with disabilities (aged 0–17) number around 11,400, equivalent to approximately 2.3% of all children aged up to 18.

This distribution shows that a significant proportion of people with disabilities fall within the adult population, during the active phase of social and economic life, and enjoy full political rights. However, statistical data suggest that the participation of people with disabilities in various areas of public life remains limited. For example, the labour force participation rate among people with disabilities is 18.4%, compared to 48.1% among people without disabilities, and the employment rate is 17.5%, almost three times lower than that of the population without disabilities. These discrepancies reflect the existence of structural barriers that limit the full participation of people with disabilities in economic and social life, and these constraints are similarly reflected in civic and political participation, where their presence is limited. Estimates show that over 150,000 people with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova have the right to vote and stand for election, representing approximately **5%** of the total number of citizens eligible to vote. From this perspective, people with disabilities constitute not only an important social group, but also a significant segment of the electorate, with the potential to influence democratic processes and public decisions.

Given that people with disabilities make up a significant proportion of the population, their active participation in all spheres of social life, including the political sphere, is an essential condition for the functioning of an inclusive society. For people with disabilities, this participation involves both involvement as active actors in political processes – through membership of political parties, standing for elected office or involvement in public policy-making – and participation as citizens in democratic processes, including through the exercise of the right to vote and involvement in mechanisms for civic participation and public consultation.

In this context, this analytical note examines the level of participation of people with disabilities in decision-making processes in the Republic of Moldova, with a focus on the political dimension of this participation. The document analyses both the involvement of people with disabilities in political processes as active participants and their participation in democratic processes as voters or participants in public consultation mechanisms. At the same time, the analysis identifies the main barriers limiting the political participation of this group and explores possible measures to encourage participation, including by drawing on relevant international experiences and practices in the field of political participation of persons with disabilities.

¹ Press release from the National Bureau of Statistics, 2025, https://statistica.gov.md/ro/persoanele-cu-dizabilitati-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024-9460_62109.html

THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The political participation of people with disabilities is an essential aspect of inclusive democracy, reflecting the ability of all citizens to influence public decision-making processes. In recent decades, the international human rights agenda has increasingly emphasised the need to include under-represented groups in political and public life, including people with disabilities. Although the right to political participation is universally recognised, in practice this group continues to face multiple structural barriers that limit both voting and involvement in decision-making processes, the ability to stand for election, to participate in the activities of political parties, to influence the public agenda, and to hold elected or administrative office. In this context, strengthening mechanisms to facilitate the active political participation of people with disabilities becomes an important aspect of democratic reforms and inclusion policies.

At the international level, the regulatory framework on the political participation of persons with disabilities is underpinned by a set of human rights instruments. The most important document is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)², adopted by the United Nations in 2006. Article 29 of the Convention establishes the obligation of states to guarantee persons with disabilities political rights equal to those of other citizens and to ensure their full and effective participation in political and public life³. The Convention emphasises that states must take appropriate measures to remove barriers that limit participation by: (i) ensuring the accessibility of electoral processes, including through accessible electoral procedures and materials, (ii) facilitating the casting of votes independently and in secret, (iii) ensuring that persons with disabilities can stand for public office and hold elected positions, and participate in non-governmental organisations, political parties and organisations of persons with disabilities, (iv) promoting an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively participate in public life, without discrimination. Article 12 of the CRPD is intrinsically linked to the right to political participation: it guarantees the right to legal capacity for persons with disabilities on an equal basis. The CRPD Committee clarified in General Comment No. 1 (2014) that decision-making capacity cannot constitute a ground for exclusion from the exercise of the right to vote⁴. Consequently, any law that makes the right to vote conditional upon full legal capacity is incompatible with the CRPD. The interpretation and implementation of these obligations are further elaborated in the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has repeatedly emphasised that Member States must remove legal and institutional barriers that limit the ability of persons with disabilities to stand for public office and adopt measures to encourage political participation.

Within the European Union, standards on the political participation of persons with disabilities are reinforced by instruments and recommendations drawn up by the Council of Europe. In 2017, it adopted the Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2017–2023⁵, which includes participation in political and public life as one of its priority areas. The document recommends that states remove the legislative and practical barriers preventing persons with disabilities from participating in electoral processes and promote their representation in democratic institutions. At the same time, the Council of Europe has adopted a series of resolutions and recommendations on the political participation of persons with disabilities⁶. Furthermore,

² UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted by UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/106 of 13 December 2006, in force since 3 May 2008, <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd>

³ CRPD, Article 29(a)(i), <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-29-participation-in-political-and-public-life.html>

⁴ CRPD Committee, General Comment No. 1 on Article 12 — Equality before the law, CRPD/C/GC/1, 19 May 2014, paragraphs 48–49, [CRPD/C/GC/1 - General Comment No. 1 \(2014\)](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/crpd-committee-general-comment-no-1-2014)

⁵ EC Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2017–2023, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/disability/strategy-2017-2023>

⁶ Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2006)5 of the Committee of Ministers on the Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities 2006–2015; Parliamentary Assembly, Resolution 2039 (2015) on the political rights of persons with disabilities, [Council of Europe - CM/Rec\(2006\)5 and Resolution 2039 \(2015\)](https://www.coe.int/t/e/assembly/docs/2015/201502039_en.asp), [Recommendation \(CM/Rec\(2011\)14\)](https://www.coe.int/t/e/assembly/docs/2011/201114_en.asp) on the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life.

the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights guarantee the right to free elections (Article 3 of Protocol No. 1). The Court has ruled that restrictions on the right to vote must be proportionate and cannot be applied automatically based on disability⁷. The EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030, adopted by the European Commission, identifies political participation as one of the key priorities, emphasising the need to remove barriers in electoral processes and increase the representation of persons with disabilities in public life⁸. The EU Accessibility Directive (2019/882) and the European Accessibility Act contain provisions relevant to making electoral information accessible⁹.

The OSCE/ODIHR also plays an important role in the development of inclusive electoral standards. The guide developed by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on the participation of persons with disabilities in electoral processes¹⁰ emphasises that states must ensure accessibility throughout the entire electoral cycle, from the registration of voters and candidates to the conduct of election campaigns and participation in electoral administration. The document highlights that the lack of accessibility to party headquarters, electoral materials or public debates reduces the ability of persons with disabilities to participate as active political actors. The OSCE/ODIHR guidelines identify five main categories of systemic barriers faced by persons with disabilities in political life: (i) lack of social support and exclusionary attitudes, (ii) educational gaps limiting access to civic education, (iii) restrictive legal frameworks, particularly provisions relating to legal capacity; (iv) inaccessible physical environments; and (v) communication and information barriers. The document emphasises that all these obstacles can be overcome through strong partnerships between democratic institutions and organisations of persons with disabilities.

In addition to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the European instruments mentioned, there are other relevant international standards that reinforce the right of persons with disabilities to participate in decision-making processes. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)¹¹, adopted in 1966, guarantees in Article 25 the right of every citizen to take part in the conduct of public affairs, to vote and to be elected, as well as equal access to public office. Although the ICCPR does not explicitly mention disability, Article 26 of the treaty prohibits any discrimination, including on the basis of any ‘other status’. Disability is now interpreted as such a protected status, which means that restrictions on political rights based on disability contravene the ICCPR. UN monitoring committees have, moreover, emphasised that no restriction on the right to vote or to stand for election can be justified solely on the grounds of a disability, as the principle of universal suffrage implies the inclusion of all citizens.

In interpreting international treaties, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the body overseeing the implementation of the CRPD) has developed important principles through its General Observations. The Committee’s *General Comment No. 7 (2018)*¹² emphasises the obligation of states to actively involve persons with disabilities and their organisations in *all* stages of the decision-making process on matters that concern them. The motto ‘*Nothing about us without us*’ is put into practice through Article 4(3) of the CRPD, which requires close consultation with persons with disabilities in the drafting of laws and policies. The Committee notes that persons with disabilities are often not consulted on public decisions affecting them, which contravenes both the spirit of the CRPD and other human rights instruments that

⁷European Court of Human Rights, Alajos Kiss v. Hungary, Application No. 38832/06, judgment of 20 May 2010. [ECHR, Alajos Kiss v. Hungary, Application No. 38832/06 - HUDOC](#)

⁸European Commission, EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030: A Union of Equality, COM(2021) 101 final, 3 March 2021, [EUR-Lex - COM\(2021\) 101 final, Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#)

⁹Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on accessibility requirements for products and services (European Accessibility Act), [EUR-Lex - Directive \(EU\) 2019/882 \(European Accessibility Act\)](#)

¹⁰OSCE/ODIHR, Guidelines on Promoting the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities, Warsaw, 2019, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/414344>

¹¹Disability Rights and Election Observation: Increasing Access to the Political Process

https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/migrate/disability_rights_and_election_observation.pdf#:~:text=status%E2%80%99,status%20that%20might%20experience%20discrimination

¹²General comment No. 7

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no7-article-43-and-333-participation#:~:text=Participation%2C%20as%20a%20principle%20and,the%20principle%20of%20meaningful%20participation>

enshrine participation as a fundamental principle. Furthermore, *General Comment No. 6 (2018)*¹³ on equality and non-discrimination reaffirms that the refusal to provide reasonable accommodation (for example, the refusal to ensure accessibility or adequate support in the electoral process, in administrative procedures or in the workplace) constitutes a form of discrimination on the basis of disability. Furthermore, *General Comment No. 2*¹⁴ (2014) on accessibility highlights that making the physical environment, information and communications accessible is a prerequisite for political rights – the right to vote, to participate in public debates, to hold office – to be effectively exercised on an equal basis by persons with disabilities. Last but not least, the CRPD Committee clarified, as mentioned, in *General Comment No. 1*¹⁵ (2014) that assessments of decision-making capacity cannot be used to deprive a person with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities of their right to vote; pursuant to Article 12 of the Convention, legal capacity must be recognised for all persons with disabilities, with appropriate support, and the restriction of political rights on the grounds of lack of capacity is incompatible with the obligations undertaken.

The Montreal Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹⁶ (2004), resulting from an international conference under the auspices of the World Health Organisation, sets out essential principles for ensuring the full participation of persons with disabilities, in particular those with intellectual disabilities. The Declaration calls on governments to implement the agreed standards regarding the rights of these individuals, to consult them systematically when drafting laws, policies and plans that affect them, and to take measures to guarantee their full inclusion and the right to participate in society. At the same time, the Montreal Declaration calls for the allocation of sufficient resources and the development of support mechanisms (services, assistive technologies, training, etc.) so that people with disabilities and their families can be genuinely involved in community life and decision-making processes.

The Venice Commission has consolidated these principles through the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters¹⁷ and the Interpretative Statement on the Participation of Persons with Disabilities¹⁸, updated in 2025. The document reaffirms the five principles of the European electoral heritage: universal, equal, free, secret and direct suffrage. The new 2025 guidelines place greater emphasis on the concept of ‘Universal Design’, which requires that voting facilities and procedures be designed from the outset to be used by all people, without the need for costly subsequent adaptations. It is also emphasised that assistance with voting should only be provided at the express request of the individual and by a freely chosen assistant, thereby ensuring that the voter’s will remains unaltered

The Republic of Moldova has adhered to these international standards by ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010¹⁹ and by making commitments to promote social and political inclusion. At the legislative level, the national regulatory framework includes several pieces of legislation enshrining the principle of equality and non-discrimination in the exercise of political rights. The right of citizens to participate in the administration of public affairs is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, which enshrines the universal right to vote (Article 38) and the right to be elected (Article 39)²⁰. These rights are elaborated in electoral legislation, in particular in the Electoral Code of the Republic of

¹³ General Comment No. 6

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no6-equality-and-non-discrimination>

¹⁴ General Comment No. 2

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no-2-article-9-accessibility-0>

¹⁵ General Comment No. 1 <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/812024?v=pdf>

¹⁶ The Montreal Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities https://www.coe.int/hr/web/commissioner/viewpoints/-/asset_publisher/xZ32OPEoxOkq/content/id/51114688/pop_up?com.liferay.asset_publisher_web_portlet.AssetPublisherPortlet_INSTANCE_xZ32OPEoxOkq_viewMode=print&com.liferay.asset_publisher_web_portlet.AssetPublisherPortlet_INSTANCE_xZ32OPEoxOkq_languageId=hr_HR#:~:xt=The%20declaration%20called%20upon%20governments,right%20to%20participate%20in%20society

¹⁷ CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN ELECTORAL MATTERS https://www.venice.coe.int/files/Code%20de%20conduite_GBR%202025_WEB_A5.pdf

¹⁸ REVISED INTERPRETATIVE DECLARATION TO THE CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN ELECTORAL MATTERS ON THE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN ELECTIONS [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2011\)045-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2011)045-e)

¹⁹ The Republic of Moldova signed the CRPD on 30 March 2007 and ratified it by Law No. 166-XVIII of 9 July 2010. The Republic of Moldova has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRPD, [UN CRPD - Status of Ratification](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/2014/12/166-xviii-law-no-166-xviii-of-9-july-2010-republic-of-moldova)

²⁰ Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=145723&lang=ro#

Moldova²¹, which establishes the principles of equal participation in elections and includes provisions on the accessibility of the electoral process (the possibility of assisted voting for voters with disabilities, the organisation of home voting for people who are unable to travel, the accessibility of polling stations, and the adaptation of electoral materials for people with various types of disabilities). However, the Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova stipulates that the right to vote belongs to all citizens who have reached the age of 18, with the exception of those deprived of this right by a court decision establishing a judicial protection measure. This means that persons placed under guardianship or curatorship may be deprived of the right to vote, which represents a potential incompatibility with Articles 29 and 12 of the CRPD. The CRPD Committee has repeatedly emphasised that decisions regarding legal capacity cannot constitute justification for exclusion from voting²².

An important role in the development of the national legislative framework is played by Law No. 60/2012 on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities²³, which establishes the general principles regarding the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in all areas of social life, including public and political life. The law stipulates the obligation of public authorities to ensure the accessibility of the physical, informational and communicational environment, which are essential elements for political participation. At the same time, the national electoral framework includes provisions on making polling stations accessible, informing voters and facilitating the exercise of the right to vote for people with various types of disabilities.

A turning point in technical regulation was the adoption by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of the Regulation on the accessibility of the electoral process for persons with disabilities (Decision No. 1187/2023²⁴). This regulation sets out the obligations of public authorities to select accessible premises for polling stations and to equip them with suitable facilities, such as adapted voting booths (folding, made of rigid material) and magnifying glasses for people with visual impairments. It also regulates postal voting (to be piloted in 2024), which may represent an alternative for people with reduced mobility, although it requires careful monitoring in terms of the digital accessibility of registration platforms.

Despite the existence of these international commitments and national legislative provisions, the political participation of people with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova remains limited. Although the regulatory framework recognises the political rights of this group, concrete mechanisms to encourage their involvement in decision-making processes, including as candidates, political leaders or holders of public office, remain underdeveloped. In this context, analysing the existing framework and identifying additional tools to promote the political participation of people with disabilities are essential for strengthening the inclusive nature of democratic processes.

²¹ Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=153001&lang=ro#

²² CRPD Committee, Concluding Observations on the initial report of Hungary, CRPD/C/HUN/CO/1, 2012, paragraph 47; and Concluding Observations on the initial report of Germany, 2015 – clear precedents regarding the incompatibility of voting restrictions based on legal capacity with the CRPD, [CRPD Committee Concluding Observations – Hungary](#)

²³ Law of the Republic of Moldova No. 60 of 30 March 2012 on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities, published in the Official Gazette Nos. 155–159 of 27 July 2012, [LP60/2012](#)

²⁴ DECISION No. 1187 of 22 August 2023 approving the Regulation on the accessibility of the electoral process for persons with disabilities https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=144794&lang=ro#

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Although the regulatory framework imposes no restrictions on the participation of people with disabilities in decision-making processes, in practice numerous structural, institutional and social barriers persist that limit their access to political life. These barriers primarily affect active participation in the political sphere as actors involved in the formulation of public policies and decisions, as members of political parties or candidates, and secondarily influence their participation as voters, as civic actors or as citizens who can influence decisions that have implications for their lives.

Despite the fact that people with disabilities make up around 7% of the country's population, their level of representation in electoral processes and in elected office is virtually non-existent. According to monitoring reports carried out by specialist organisations, in the general local elections on 5 November 2023, only 28 people with disabilities stood as candidates for elected office, including for the positions of mayor and local councillor, representing candidacies from 13 administrative-territorial units across the country. Of these, three were from urban areas and 25 from rural areas; there were 8 candidates for mayor and 18 for local councillor, 2 for district councillor and 2 for municipal councillor. Most of these candidates were included on political party lists, whilst a limited number stood as independents: 3 independent candidates and 25 on party lists²⁵. In the case of the parliamentary elections of 28 September 2025, the situation is even more alarming. Reports monitoring the 2025 election show that the participation of people with disabilities in the election campaign was extremely low. A monitoring effort covering 10 districts in the country indicates that people with disabilities were not actively involved either as candidates, volunteers or members of campaign teams²⁶. Furthermore, the monitoring of the 10 districts revealed only one instance of active participation by a candidate with a mobility disability in debates and campaign activities, which demonstrates their limited presence in electoral processes and decision-making spheres. According to the results of the 2025 parliamentary elections, no candidate with a disability secured a seat in the 12th Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, thus perpetuating the total absence of this group from the national legislature. This situation is exacerbated by a lack of data. The Central Electoral Commission does not hold disaggregated data in this area, and no public data is available on the number of people with disabilities on candidate lists, within political parties or in elected public office at all levels, reflecting the lack of policies to include them in political life.

Electoral processes remain largely inaccessible to voters with disabilities, despite the existence of legal safeguards regarding the exercise of the right to vote. People with disabilities account for approximately 5% of the voting-age population (over 150,000 people). Monitoring reports produced in the context of the 2025 parliamentary elections show that most of them have demonstrated an interest and civic willingness to participate in political life, including by exercising the right to vote guaranteed by national legislation, but are frequently hindered by infrastructural, informational and organisational barriers²⁷. An additional factor influencing voter turnout relates to legislative barriers concerning the legal capacity regime and the guardianship system. In the Republic of Moldova, persons declared legally incapable by a court ruling may be placed under full guardianship, which limits their ability to exercise their civil and political rights autonomously. According to the report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, in the Republic of Moldova approximately 4,000 people with disabilities were deprived of legal capacity and placed under

²⁵ Press release, INFONET Alliance, 2023, https://www.old.ipn.md/ro/persoanele-cu-deficiente-de-vedere-au-avut-acces-limitat-la-informatiile-de-pe-p-8012_1100549.html

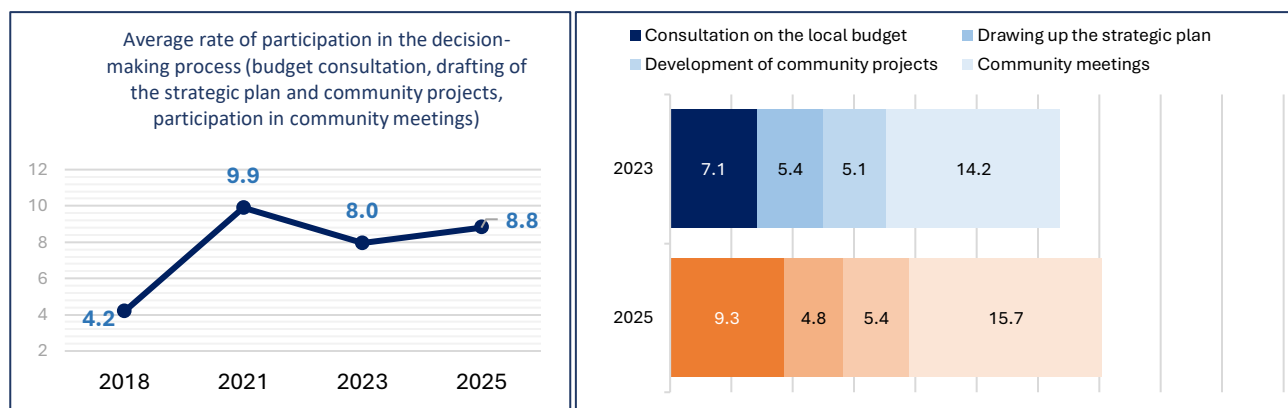
²⁶ Monitoring report on the parliamentary elections of 28 September 2025 from a disability perspective, INFONET Alliance, 2025, <https://www.infonet.md/storage/files/fSm5CmMIBBXhztN4GiMLmfqAeElyuCDHRMQnseHy.pdf>

²⁷ Ibid., <https://www.infonet.md/storage/files/fSm5CmMIBBXhztN4GiMLmfqAeElyuCDHRMQnseHy.pdf>

guardianship in 2024, a group consisting mainly of people with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities²⁸. People declared legally incapable by a court order automatically lose their fundamental civil rights, including the right to vote and participate in political life. Under this system, people under guardianship cannot make legal decisions on their own behalf, and the guardian becomes responsible for all decisions regarding their lives, leading to complete exclusion from democratic processes, including the exercise of the right to vote. Consequently, although the legal framework recognises the right of people with disabilities to participate in elections and cast their vote, the existence of legal mechanisms such as guardianship, alongside other structural constraints, contributes to limiting this group’s effective participation in electoral processes.

The participation of people with disabilities in decision-making processes remains low even in the case of simple forms of civic engagement, such as participation in the drafting of the community’s strategic plan, in the consultation/finalisation of the local budget, in the development of community projects, or in community meetings – as a form of expression in the decision-making process. Although there has been a slight upward trend over the last seven years, the average participation rate of people with disabilities has failed to exceed the critical threshold of 10%, reaching a level of just 8.8% in estimates for 2025, compared to 8% in 2023. Although this is modest progress, it is significant in the context of a long history of social exclusion. However, this stagnation below the ‘one in ten’ level show that, despite commitments to inclusion, most of people with disabilities remain excluded from decision-making spaces. Even in the most common forms of civic participation, such as community meetings, the rate barely reaches 15.7%, indicating that the voice of this group is almost entirely absent from public dialogue. The situation is critical in the areas of strategic planning and policy-making, where the level of participation falls below 5%. These figures confirm that people with disabilities are almost completely excluded from local governance, their role being limited to a symbolic presence, which does not allow for a systemic change in the way communities are administered. The preference for more accessible and informal participation suggests that, when institutional barriers are reduced and direct contact with the community is facilitated, vulnerable groups are willing to get involved.

Figure 1. Level of participation of people with disabilities in decision-making activities, %



Source: *Unequal Moldova Report*²⁹, Partnership for Development Centre (CPD), 2025

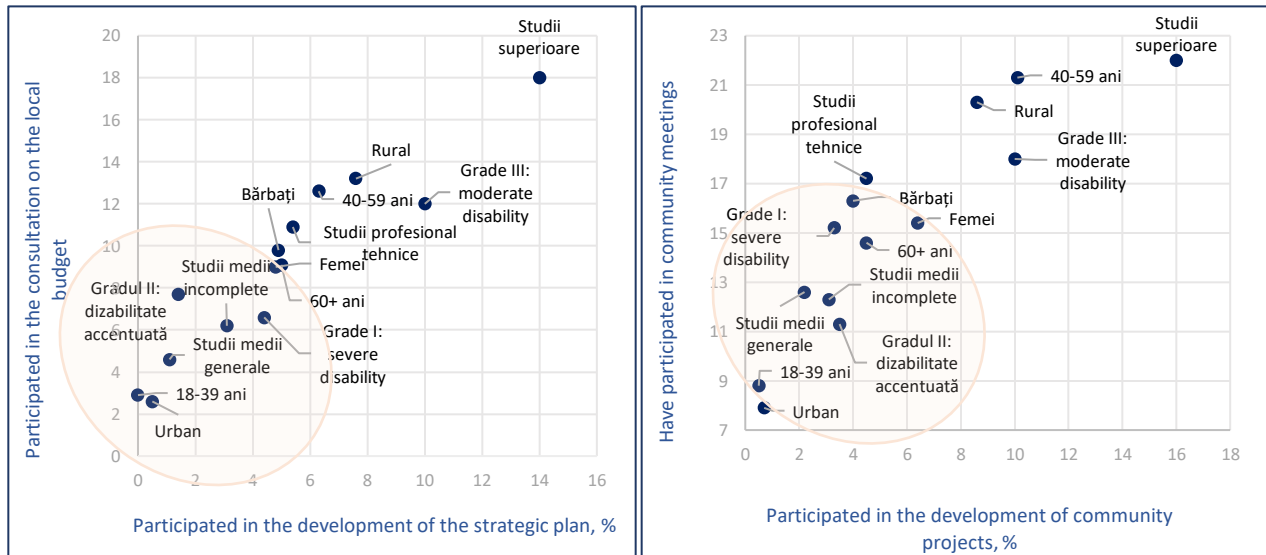
The profile analysis shows that the limited access of people with disabilities to decision-making processes disproportionately affects certain groups. People with a low level of education are less likely to participate in activities such as drawing up strategic plans, local budget consultations or developing community projects, with their level of civic engagement generally falling below the 5% threshold. Similarly, young people aged between 18 and 39 and those living in urban areas are under-represented in these processes. Exclusion is even

²⁸ Report of the UN Human Rights Council, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/831670/files/A_HRC_31_62_Add.2-AR.pdf

²⁹ *Unequal Moldova 2025: The reality of vulnerabilities in 2025 and the way forward*, Partnership for Development Centre, 2025, https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/CPD_Raport-Moldova-Inegala_2025-2.pdf

more pronounced in the case of people with severe or significant disabilities, who rarely feature in public consultation and planning processes. The low level of participation of this group indicates the existence of systemic barriers, including a lack of adapted infrastructure, accessible participation mechanisms and information presented in accessible formats. Similarly, women with disabilities have lower levels of participation in political dialogue, reflecting the effects of gender-based and disability-related barriers.

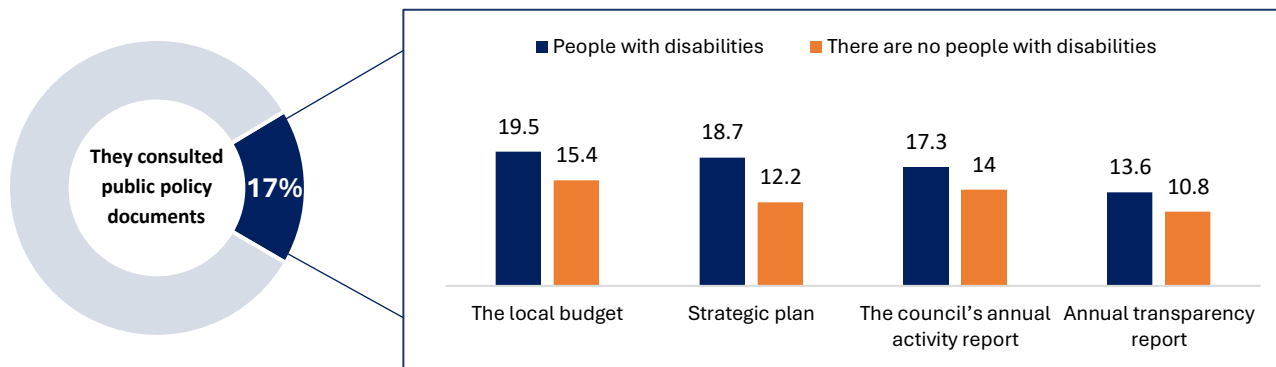
Figure 2. Profile of people with disabilities by level of participation in decision-making activities, %



Source: Unequal Moldova Report, Partnership for Development Centre (CPD), 2025

The low level of civic participation also correlates with limited access to public policy documents, such as local budgets, strategic development plans or the activity and transparency plans of local public authorities (LPAs), this being the simplest form of involvement in the decision-making process. Overall, on average only 17% of people with disabilities manage to consult and analyse local policies. According to the data, approximately 18.7% have consulted the locality's strategic development plan, and 19.5% have consulted the locality's budget. These figures confirm the existence of structural barriers to accessing public consultation processes and civic participation mechanisms. In many cases, local policy documents are published in a technical format or on digital platforms that are not adapted for universal accessibility, and public consultation processes do not include adapted mechanisms to facilitate the participation of people with disabilities. Consequently, even if people with disabilities were interested in finding out about the community's development directions, their ability to influence decisions remains limited nonetheless.

Figure 3. Proportion of people with disabilities who have consulted/reviewed local public policy documents, %

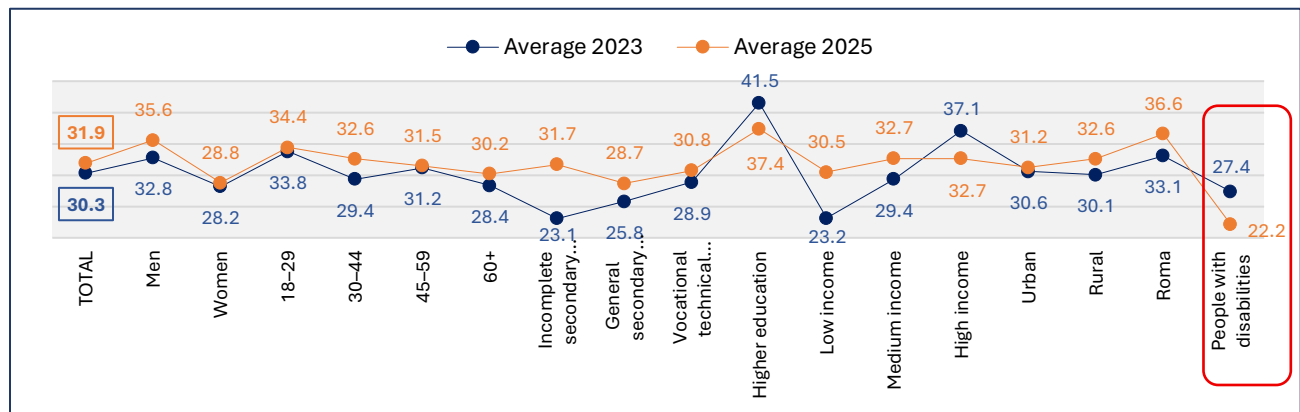


Source: Unequal Moldova Report, Partnership for Development Centre (CPD), 2025

Barriers to accessing the decision-making process ultimately discourage interest in proactive participation.

The direct consequence of the obstacles faced by people with disabilities is evident in their willingness to participate in future activities aimed at influencing decisions, which has declined. According to the data, in 2023 the willingness of people with disabilities to engage in such activities was 27.4%, and by 2025 this had fallen to 22.2%. This decrease of over 5 percentage points suggests that access barriers not only complicate the technical process but also erode the very motivation for long-term involvement. When participation mechanisms are consistently perceived as opaque or difficult to access, people with disabilities adjust their expectations and reduce their level of involvement. However, it is significant that, despite this decline, over 22% of people with disabilities express a desire to be involved in the decision-making process, which indicates the existence of civic potential that remains underutilised. The current attitude is, in essence, a response to an administrative system that does not provide sufficient levers for inclusion.

Figure 4. Willingness to participate in activities aimed at influencing decisions, %

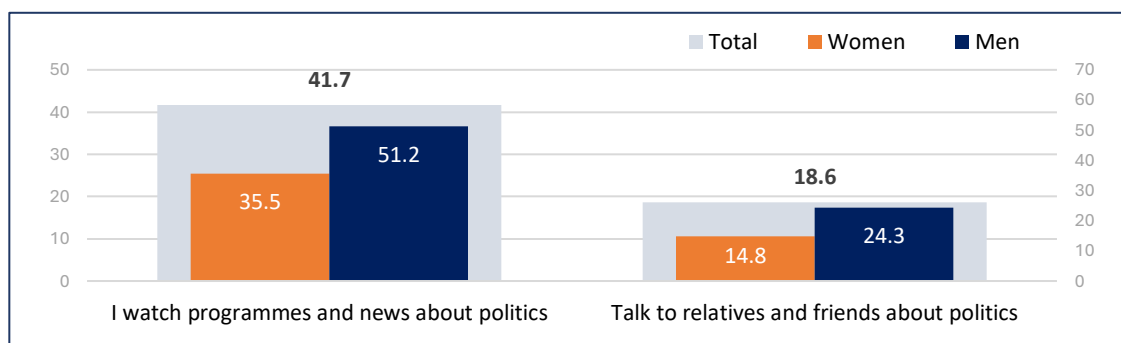


Source: Unequal Moldova Report, Partnership for Development Centre (CPD), 2025

This trend is also reflected in the way people with disabilities engage with the political sphere in a broader sense.

The data show that 41.7% of people with disabilities watch programmes or news about politics, and 18.6% discuss politics with relatives or friends, suggesting that, even though there is interest and motivation, engagement with political life remains largely passive. A gender-disaggregated analysis highlights differences in this regard. Around 51% of men with disabilities follow political content, compared to 35.5% of women, and regarding discussions about politics within their close circle, 24.3% of men state that they participate in such conversations, compared to just 14.8% of women with disabilities. These discrepancies indicate that constant exposure to barriers (political content that is not adapted, information that is inaccessible to certain types of disability, etc.) in the decision-making process contributes to the political participation of people with disabilities becoming predominantly passive.

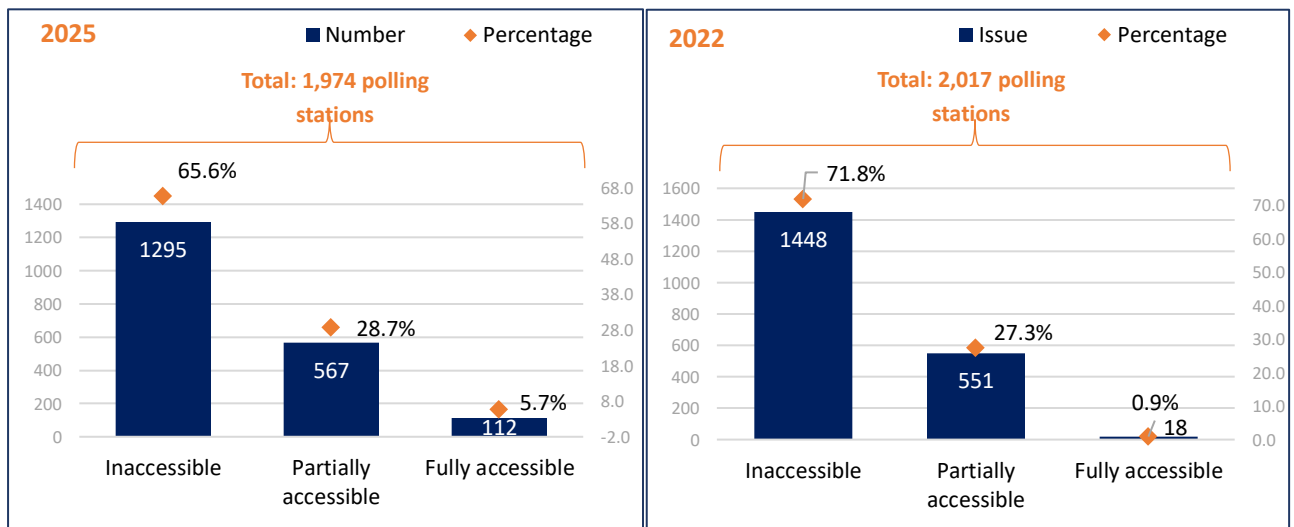
Figure 5. Proportion of people with disabilities who express an interest in politics, %



Source: Unequal Moldova Report, Partnership for Development Centre (CPD), 2025

The accessibility of physical infrastructure represents one of the most persistent barriers to the participation of people with disabilities in political and electoral processes in the Republic of Moldova. Although the authorities have adopted a series of measures and regulations designed to facilitate access for people with disabilities to the electoral process, including regulations on making polling stations accessible and informing voters, assessments carried out by civil society organisations show that the implementation of these provisions remains limited. For example, assessments of the accessibility of electoral infrastructure show that in the 2025 election, only around 6% of polling stations were fully accessible to people with disabilities, whilst over 65% remained completely inaccessible³⁰. These figures indicate that most of the electoral infrastructure does not provide adequate conditions for voters with disabilities to participate in the voting process. An analysis of developments over time shows that progress has been made in ensuring access to voting for people with disabilities, through the adaptation of a greater number of polling stations and the implementation of additional measures to support their participation. However, issues relating to physical accessibility persist in many locations, maintaining a significant barrier to the full exercise of the right to vote by people with reduced mobility³¹. In 2022, 2,017 polling stations were assessed, of which only 18 were fully accessible, approximately 27% were partially accessible, and around 72% were inaccessible³². Compared with this situation, the 2025 data show a more than six-fold increase in the number of fully accessible polling stations, from 18 to 112, as well as a reduction in the proportion of inaccessible polling stations from approximately 72% to 65%. However, the proportion of partially accessible polling stations has remained relatively constant (27% in 2022 compared to 28.7% in 2025), suggesting that the improvements made to date have not been sufficient to ensure full and uniform access to electoral infrastructure for voters with disabilities.

Figure 6. Accessibility of electoral infrastructure (polling stations) for people with disabilities



Source: Election monitoring reports 2023–2025, UNDP, INFONET, ADEPT, AOPD

Accessibility issues extend beyond polling stations to the wider political infrastructure. Assessments carried out by civil society organisations show that most political party headquarters and venues where electoral activities are held are not adapted for people with disabilities, and physical access to political events, meetings with voters or campaign activities remains limited. Monitoring carried out in the context of the 2025 parliamentary elections shows that out of 55 political party headquarters analysed, only 3 were considered

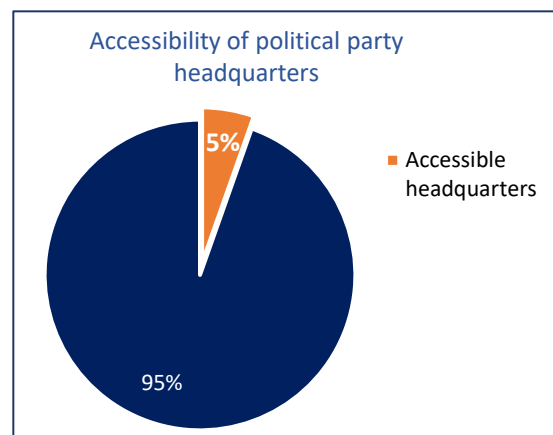
³⁰ UNDP press release, 2025, <https://www.undp.org/ro/moldova/press-releases/112-sectii-din-numarul-total-de-1974-de-sectii-de-votare-din-moldova-sunt-accesibile>

³¹ Electoral 2025: parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova, ADEPT, 2026, <https://www.adept.md/ro/products/article/electorala-2025-alegerile-parlamentare-din-republica-moldova>

³² Report on the observation of the General Local Elections of 5 November 2023 from the perspective of disability inclusion, AOPD, 2023, <https://aopd.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/RAPORT-Misiune-de-observare-ALG-2023.docx.pdf>

functionally accessible to people with disabilities (around 5%)³³. Most of the venues where electoral activities were organised presented obvious architectural barriers – steep stairs, a lack of ramps or lifts, and the absence of adapted toilets, which meant that many people with reduced mobility were unable to attend political meetings, campaign activities or other events organised by parties. This problem actually reflects a broader situation regarding the accessibility of public infrastructure. Assessments carried out by organisations specialising in accessibility show that the majority of public buildings in the Republic of Moldova remain inaccessible to people with disabilities. According to data collected as part of accessibility monitoring initiatives, out of approximately 4,000 public institutions assessed, over 2,600 are inaccessible due to non-existent or non-compliant ramps, a lack of lifts, narrow doors or other architectural barriers³⁴. These limitations also affect the premises of local public authorities and the administrative spaces where local council meetings, public consultations or other deliberative processes take place, which reduces the ability of people with disabilities to participate directly in decision-making processes.

Figure 7. Accessibility of political party headquarters



Source: Parliamentary Election Monitoring Report, INFONET, 2025

In 2015, Serghei Afanasenco became the first member of the Government of the Republic of Moldova to use a wheelchair, having been appointed Minister of Youth and Sport. Upon his appointment, Serghei Afanasenco highlighted the fact that the Government headquarters was not equipped to accommodate a cabinet member in a wheelchair, requiring ad hoc adaptations to allow access to working meetings. During his time as Minister of Youth and Sport, Serghei Afanasenco spoke publicly about the challenges faced by people with disabilities in accessing public spaces and participating in the social and institutional life of society, emphasising the need to adapt infrastructure to ensure the equal participation of all citizens.

Accessibility of information represents another major barrier that explains the low level of political participation among people with disabilities. In a context where political and electoral processes increasingly depend on digital communication and access to public information, the lack of adapted materials and accessible platforms significantly reduces this group’s ability to stay informed and participate equally in political life. Monitoring carried out during the 2025 election campaign regarding access to electoral information shows that the websites of the 23 electoral candidates analysed do not comply with international web accessibility standards (WCAG). None of them fully met the accessibility requirements, and only two parties came close to a minimum acceptable level of compliance. Most online platforms fall below the 50% threshold, which limits access to electoral information and political programmes for people with visual, hearing or mobility impairments³⁵. The technical analysis highlights several shortcomings: links and buttons without accessible labels, incorrect heading structures, insufficient contrast between text and background, and a lack of navigation elements for screen readers, which makes it difficult for people who use assistive

³³ Monitoring report on the parliamentary elections of 28 September 2025 from a disability perspective, INFONET Alliance, 2025, <https://www.infonet.md/storage/files/fSm5CmMIBBXhztN4GiMLmfqAeElyuCDHRMQnseHy.pdf>

³⁴ Accessibility Map, “Motivație” Association, <https://motivatie.md/harta-accesibilitate/>

³⁵ Report on the assessment of the accessibility of the websites of electoral candidates in the 2025 parliamentary elections, INFONET Alliance, 2025, <https://www.infonet.md/storage/files/kQv7t4MSKRP6SGAFWbovDsv9jk8xe0aGOIGKNqC8.pdf>

technologies to use the websites. Furthermore, none of the websites analysed offer integrated accessibility tools, such as widgets or options allowing contrast adjustment, text resizing or simplified navigation – elements considered best practice in the digital environment. At the same time, documents published by electoral candidates are often uploaded in PDF format, which is not tagged for screen readers, and some information appears only as images, making it impossible for blind people to read. These barriers exclude voters with disabilities from accessing electoral programmes, political messages or official communications³⁶.

Issues regarding access to information are not limited to the online environment, but also extend to the materials used by political actors. Monitoring of electoral processes shows that adapted electoral materials, such as information in easy-to-read language, in Braille, in audio format or with sign language interpretation, are very rarely used by electoral candidates, which limits access for people with disabilities to political messages and electoral programmes. Furthermore, most TV stations failed to provide sign language interpretation during candidates' debates, highlighting a direct breach of legal regulations and a structural shortage of specialised human resources. Only three television stations included sign language interpreters, but with windows that were too small and positioned at the edge of the screen, limiting the actual accessibility for people with hearing impairments³⁷. In the absence of systematic mechanisms for adapting political information, a significant proportion of voters with disabilities remain excluded from the political information process, which reduces their ability to participate in democratic processes in an informed manner.

Another structural barrier to the political participation of people with disabilities relates to the commitment of political parties. A candidate's election manifesto is extremely important, as it represents their vision and commitments to voters. It reflects not only political intentions, but also the values, priorities and solutions the candidate proposes for society's problems. Analyses carried out in the context of the 2025 parliamentary elections show that the issue of disability was addressed very little in the electoral programmes. Of the 23 candidates, only 17 presented an election manifesto, of whom only 11 explicitly mentioned the issue of disability in their manifestos, with references focusing predominantly on social protection measures, such as pensions or benefits, and less on political rights or civic participation. At the same time, the issue of infrastructure accessibility is mentioned only in the manifestos of two candidates³⁸, which indicates a limited approach to the inclusion of people with disabilities in structural public policies³⁹. Similarly, an analysis of electoral programmes in local elections has highlighted that the disability dimension is often overlooked: for example, in the mayoral election for Chişinău, only 10 out of 28 candidates included commitments to removing barriers and creating an accessible environment. This lack of political prioritisation is also reflected in the low representation of people with disabilities in electoral contests. Data on the 2023 local elections indicate that only 28 people with disabilities stood as candidates at national level, the majority for local councillor positions, and electoral institutions do not systematically collect disaggregated data on candidates with disabilities. In the parliamentary elections of September 2025, the representation of people with disabilities on candidate lists remained in the shadows, with only isolated cases being known. Conclusive data on this subject is not available in the public domain, and requests for information submitted by relevant organisations to political parties regarding the representation of people with disabilities on their candidate lists have not been answered. This suggests that the political inclusion of people with disabilities is not yet a strategic priority for political parties, and the electoral agenda continues to treat disability primarily through

³⁶ Report on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the 2025 parliamentary elections: monitoring the accessibility of infrastructure, the digital environment, the media and institutional processes during the 2025 election campaign, "INFONET" Alliance, 2025, <https://www.infonet.md/storage/files/TrzFNcaBHhOxWxflvA8xFWVSKekXCTggNAhI7zS4.pdf>

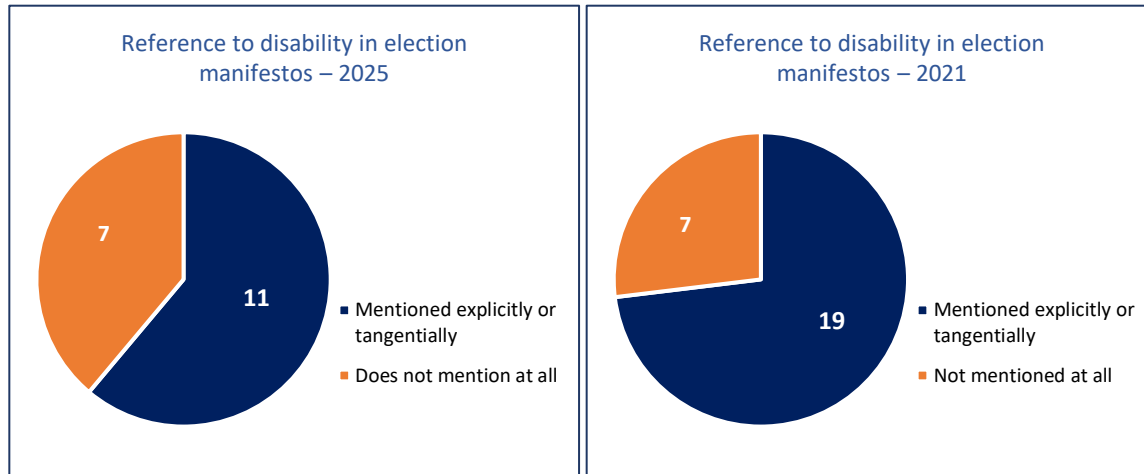
³⁷ Report assessing the accessibility of electoral debates and the representation of disability issues in the media, "INFONET" Alliance, 2025, <https://www.infonet.md/storage/files/oq7CJGP54u5t4sgGmNcAmnxnVp2e7oJChQu7XPSA.pdf>

³⁸ Monitoring of the parliamentary elections of 28 September 2025 from the perspective of the coverage of issues faced by people with disabilities in the electoral programmes of the candidates, "INFONET" Alliance, 2025, <https://www.infonet.md/storage/files/pjEgpAevFEzdAl4s4skoerrEUrdGEL5eH5bRq1cU.pdf>

³⁹ Electoral Digest. Journal of theory, analysis and research in the electoral field, CICDE, 2025 <https://cicde.md/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Digest-electoral-ed.-XIV.pdf>

the lens of social welfare rather than as a dimension of political representation and democratic participation. Political parties show no commitment to promoting people with disabilities in the political sphere and do not take measures to ensure their representation among party members or on candidate lists for elected office.

Figure 8. Integration of the disability dimension into the electoral programmes of candidates in the parliamentary elections



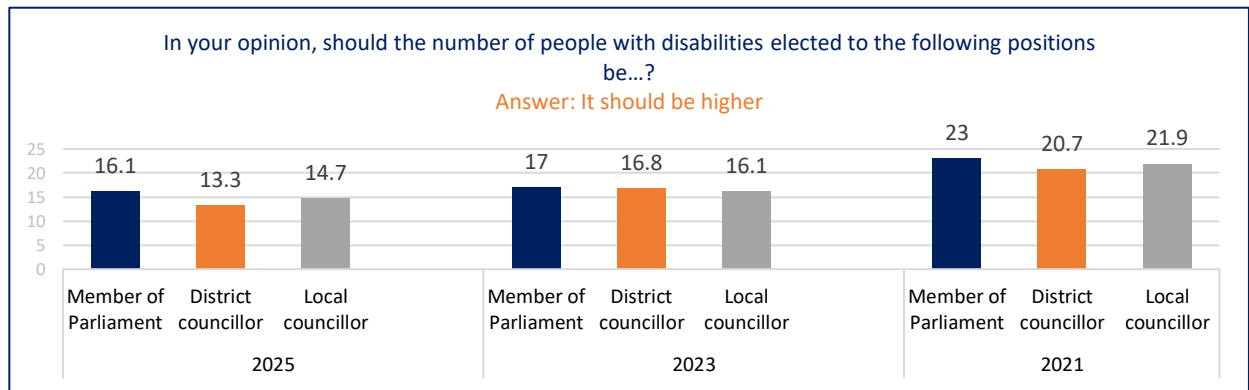
Source: Parliamentary Election Monitoring Report, INFONET, 2025

The difficulty faced by people with disabilities in integrating into political life is further exacerbated by persistent attitudinal barriers within society. The data reveal a paradoxical trend: as the issue of inclusion becomes more prominent in public discourse and there is an increasingly urgent need to integrate this group into social, economic and political life, public support for greater representation of people with disabilities in decision-making processes is declining. According to the data, the proportion of the population who believe there should be more people with disabilities serving as MPs has fallen from 23% in 2021 to 17% in 2023⁴⁰ and to just 16.1% in estimates for 2025. A similar trend is observed at local government level: support for increasing the number of district councillors with disabilities has fallen from 16.8% in 2023 to 13.3% in 2025, and for local councillors from 21.9% to 14.7%⁴¹. This trend indicates a gradual decline in society’s willingness to support greater political representation of people with disabilities. At the same time, a significant proportion of the population – 34.2% – considers the current level of representation to be already ‘sufficient’, despite the fact that the actual representation of people with disabilities in national institutions remains almost non-existent. For example, in the current composition of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, there are no MPs who visibly or explicitly represent the community of people with disabilities, and instances of high-level political participation remain isolated. This perception reflects a form of ‘passive satisfaction’ among the electorate, fuelled by social stereotypes and a limited understanding of the structural barriers that prevent this group from accessing political competition. Under these circumstances, the absence of people with disabilities from elected office is not perceived as a problem of democratic representation, but is often normalised or considered irrelevant to the functioning of public institutions. Consequently, attitudinal barriers act as an invisible mechanism of exclusion that reinforces the political marginalisation of people with disabilities. As long as a significant portion of the population perceives symbolic representation—or even their total absence—as adequate, social- al pressure for inclusive policies remains limited. Consequently, even in the context of regulatory or institutional progress, the lack of public support for fairer representation contributes to keeping people with disabilities on the periphery of decision-making processes.

⁴⁰ Local Elections 2023: Between Perceptions and Reality, Partnership for Development Centre, 2023, <https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Raport-Alegeri-combinat-1.pdf>

⁴¹ Representation, power and gender inequalities in the 2025 parliamentary elections, Partnership for Development Centre, 2025, https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Raport_final-Alegeri-2025-ROEN.pdf

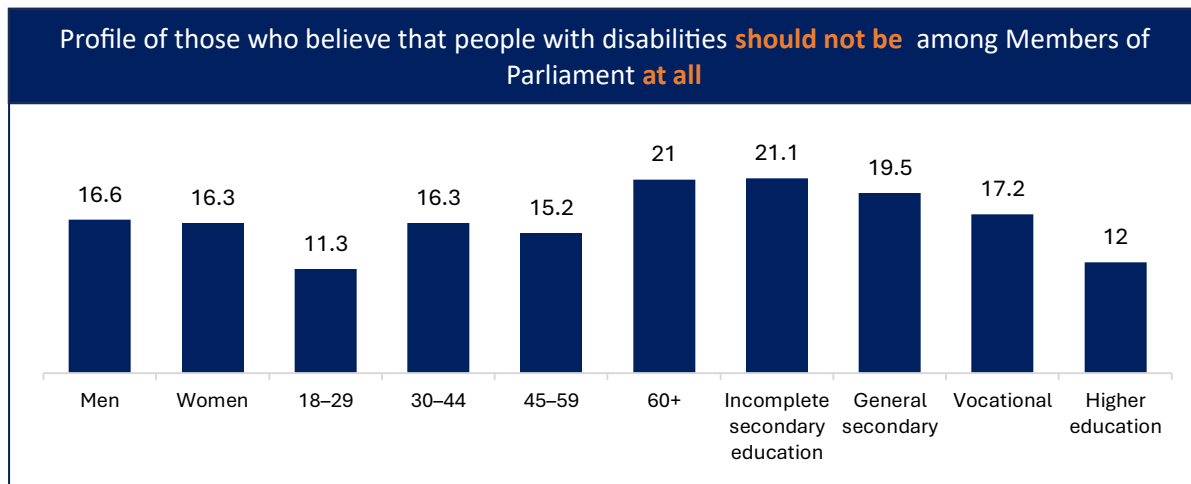
Figure 9. Public perceptions of the representation of people with disabilities in Parliament and district and local councils, %



Source: Monitoring reports on the 2021 and 2025 local and parliamentary elections, Partnership for Development Centre

There are certain segments of the population that explicitly exclude people with disabilities from political processes. A significant proportion of the population believes that people with disabilities should not be represented in Parliament at all, which is the reality in 2025. This attitude confirms the persistence of structural prejudices that maintain a social ‘glass ceiling’ based on ability criteria. Analysis of the data reveals clear differences based on education, age and gender. The strongest resistance is found among those with incomplete secondary education (21.1%) and those over 60 (21%), whilst young people aged 18 to 29 show the lowest level of opposition (11.3%), indicating a slow but positive shift in the attitudes of the younger generations. Furthermore, nearly one in six men supports the total exclusion of people with disabilities. This active hostility, combined with informational and physical barriers, creates a difficult political environment, in which a person with a disability standing for election is a courageous act, in a society still marked by stereotypes.

Figure 10. Profile of respondents who exclude certain social groups from parliamentary representation (women, young people, minorities, people with disabilities)



Source: Monitoring reports on the 2025 parliamentary elections, Partnership for Development Centre

Economic barriers are another structural factor contributing to the under-representation of people with disabilities in politics. In the Republic of Moldova, people with disabilities face high unemployment rates and lower incomes compared to the rest of the population, which puts them at risk of poverty and economic

exclusion⁴². This unequal economic situation has a direct impact on the ability of people with disabilities to run in election campaigns. Campaigns involve expenditure on promoting political messages (posters, leaflets, video and audio materials), mobilising voters, organising public events, and adapting materials into accessible formats (simplified text, sign language, subtitles). For people with disabilities, these costs can be higher than for candidates without disabilities. For example, a report by the Mental Disability Advocacy Centre (MDAC) shows that people under guardianship or with limited financial resources face significant political under-representation, as a lack of access to financial resources limits their visibility and ability to compete on an equal footing⁴³. Furthermore, international studies highlight that economic inequalities correlate directly with the under-representation of vulnerable groups in politics. The OSCE/ODIHR report on the elections in Moldova (2023) indicates that the lack of financial resources and economic constraints disproportionately affect independent candidates and people from marginalised groups, including people with disabilities, reducing their ability to promote their messages and mobilise voters⁴⁴. This economic barrier compounds other obstacles, such as complex registration procedures and limited access to public party funding. Consequently, people with disabilities are often excluded from electoral contests, and their representation in elected office remains low.

In conclusion, the political participation of people with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova is limited by a set of interconnected barriers, such as physical, informational, attitudinal and economic, which keep this group in a state of decision-making invisibility. Logistical obstacles and restricted access to public and digital infrastructure, combined with social prejudices and a lack of institutional support, discourage active participation. Economic barriers and restrictions related to legal capacity act as additional filters, transforming the exercise of political rights from an inalienable right into a privilege available only to those who can overcome the costs and difficulties of the current system. In the absence of structural reforms—ranging from infrastructure and accessible digitalisation to affirmative action measures and the combating of stereotypes—the participation of people with disabilities will remain marginalised, undermining both the representativeness and the legitimacy of democratic processes.

⁴² Unequal Moldova 2025: The Reality of Vulnerabilities in 2025 and the Way Forward, Partnership for Development Centre, 2025, https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/CPD_Raport-Moldova-Inegala_2025-2.pdf

⁴³ The human rights of people with mental or intellectual impairments in the Republic of Moldova, The United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), 2015, https://mdac.org/sites/mdac.info/files/un_article_-_the_human_rights_of_people_with_mental_and_intellectual_impairments_in_the_republic_of_.pdf

⁴⁴ Recommendations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Participate in Political and Public Life in the OSCE Region, OSCE/ODIHR, 2023, <https://odih.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/b/1/559254.pdf>

INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES

The participation of people with disabilities in decision-making processes is recognised internationally not only as a fundamental right, but also as an indicator of the quality of democracy and social inclusion. Despite the enshrinement of this right in instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), comparative experience shows that the mere formal recognition of political rights is not sufficient to ensure effective participation. In most countries, people with disabilities continue to be under-represented in elected bodies and public office, and legal, institutional, economic and social barriers limit their access to decision-making. In response, states have developed a diverse set of public policy instruments that go beyond the traditional approach based solely on non-discrimination and include proactive measures to correct structural imbalances.

International experience shows that the participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making is not stimulated by a single intervention, but by a convergent package of measures. These types of measures are reflected in both OSCE/ODIHR documents and Council of Europe standards. In particular, Resolution 2155 (2017) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe called on states to consider introducing quotas, to systematise the collection of data on the political participation of persons with disabilities, and to provide financial support to candidates with disabilities to cover the additional costs of campaigning. In the same vein, the OSCE/ODIHR guide⁴⁵ on disability quotas indicates that the most common approaches are reserved seats, legislative quotas and voluntary party quotas.



➤ Legislated affirmative action measures: reserved seats, legislative quotas and party quotas

The first type of intervention consists of affirmative action measures for representation. In comparative practice, these take three forms: reserved seats, which guarantee direct representation; legislative quotas, which oblige parties to include candidates with disabilities on their lists; and party quotas, adopted voluntarily through internal regulations. These mechanisms address the same structural problem: the almost chronic under-representation of people with disabilities in parliaments, local councils and other decision-making bodies. Their main advantage is that they shift the discussion from mere formal non-discrimination to the active correction of historical exclusion. Their limitation is that, in the absence of rules regarding list

⁴⁵ Disability Quotas for Parliamentary Elections, 2025

https://odihr.osce.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/2026/01/Disability%20Quotas%20for%20Parliamentary%20Elections_web.pdf

positioning, the replacement of mandates or effective support for candidacy, they can degenerate into symbolic mechanisms.

In the category of reserved seats, the clearest examples come from East Africa. In Uganda, *Article 78(1) of the Constitution*⁴⁶ provides that Parliament shall include, in addition to members elected from constituencies, a number of representatives of special groups, including persons with disabilities. In Rwanda, the Chamber of Deputies specifically includes a reserved seat for persons with disabilities, alongside reserved seats for young people and women. These arrangements have the merit of guaranteeing an immediate institutional presence for people with disabilities in the legislative process and of creating political visibility. However, comparative experience shows that reserved seats tend to remain few in number and do not replace the need for a broader presence on party lists and in the administration.

In the category of legislative quotas, the case most frequently cited at OSCE level is Kazakhstan. According to Article 15-1 of the Law on Political Parties, lists for the lower house must include, cumulatively, at least 30% women, young people and people with disabilities. The OSCE/ODIHR Guide notes that the reform was extended in 2022 to explicitly include people with disabilities and that, in 2023, all parties formally complied with the quota. However, the OSCE also emphasises that the effectiveness of the mechanism depends on its design: grouping people with disabilities into a single quota alongside other under-represented groups can create competition between categories and reduce the actual space allocated to each. Kazakhstan is particularly relevant precisely because it illustrates both the usefulness of the quota and the need to accompany it with clear rules on the distribution of seats and positioning on the lists.

A very instructive comparative example is Kyrgyzstan, where Article 60 of the Constitutional Law on Elections required, until 2025, the inclusion on electoral lists of at least two candidates with disabilities, one of whom had to be placed within the top 25 positions. This case is relevant because it shows that a quota may exist in form, but can lose its effectiveness if the threshold for inclusion on the list is not sufficiently close to the eligible zone or if the reform lacks long-term political support. The OSCE/ODIHR notes that the new electoral system introduced in 2025 abolished this quota, confirming that affirmative action measures without political consensus and institutional strengthening mechanisms can remain fragile. For the Republic of Moldova, this lesson is important: any quota for people with disabilities should not be limited to mere inclusion on the list, but should also provide for placement in eligible positions.

Outside the OSCE region, Mexico⁴⁷ offers one of the most interesting examples of affirmative action in electoral matters. For the 2020–2021 federal electoral process, the National Electoral Institute (INE) imposed a minimum number of candidates with disabilities on the parties: six candidates for first-past-the-post constituencies and two for proportional representation, and these candidates had to be placed in the top ten positions on the list. This detail is crucial: unlike systems where the quota can be met by placing candidates at the bottom of the list, the Mexican model also introduces a minimum guarantee of eligibility. Furthermore, parties were required to prove the existence of the candidate's permanent disability, which transformed the quota into a legally enforceable and administratively verifiable instrument.

At the level of political parties, voluntary best practices are generally more flexible, but also less uniform. In the United Kingdom, the Liberal Democrat Party's selection rules for the 2025 parliamentary cycle⁴⁸ stipulate that, where a shortlisting procedure exists, each shortlist must include a person with the protected characteristic of disability, provided there are eligible candidates. The rules also provide for the possibility for

⁴⁶ Composition of Parliament, Uganda, <https://www.parliament.go.ug/page/composition-parliament>

⁴⁷ Affirmative Actions in Candidate Nominations: Disability Inclusion Measures in the 2020–2021 Electoral Process https://igualdad.ine.mx/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/INFOGRAFIA_ACCIONES_AFIRMATIVAS_EN_POSTULACIONES_DE_CANDIDATURAS_PROCESO_ELECTORAL_20202021_Corr_ec9_03.pdf

⁴⁸ Rules for the Selection of Westminster Parliamentary Candidates in England https://www.libdems.org.uk/fileadmin/groups/2_Federal_Party/Documents/Members_Area/Selection_Rules/Westminster_Selection_Rules_2025_v1.7.1_as_approved_by_EC_on_180325.pdf

applicants to request reasonable adjustments during the selection process. In the Scottish organisation of the same party, the 2024 rules allow either an all-disabled shortlist or the reservation of a place on the shortlist for a candidate with a disability . These models are important because they show that inclusion can also be promoted through internal party rules, without necessarily waiting for legislative intervention. However, dependence on the party's goodwill remains a structural limitation. By contrast, the case of the Liberal Party of Canada, highlighted in the OSCE/ODIHR analysis, illustrates the limitations of an exclusively voluntary approach. Its rules require local organisations to demonstrate that they have made efforts to recruit candidates from marginalised groups, including people with disabilities, before finalising the selection. However, the lack of sanctions and of quotas or reserved seats means that the practical impact remains modest. The comparative lesson is clear: voluntary policies help to change organisational culture, but, in the absence of stronger obligations, they rarely produce a substantial increase in representation.

➤ **Financial incentives and practical support for candidates and parties**

The second type of measure consists of financial incentives and instruments to compensate for the additional costs incurred by people with disabilities when they wish to stand for election. In a comparative context, it is important to note that examples of direct public subsidies granted to parties for each person with a disability elected are still rare and not very standardised. Instead, the model of public funds dedicated to candidates has developed, or the model recommended by the Council of Europe, according to which public funding of parties may be conditional on compliance with accessibility requirements. *PACE Resolution 2155 (2017)*⁴⁹ explicitly calls on states to explore two avenues: additional financial support for candidates with disabilities to cover the extra costs of campaigning, and linking state funding of parties to compliance with accessibility requirements. This resolution is important because it shifts the discussion from the symbolic to the budgetary level: if participation is a right, then the additional costs caused by barriers should not be borne solely by the person with a disability.

A model of reference is New Zealand's Election Access Fund⁵⁰ , administered by the Electoral Commission. According to the official guide, the fund supports people with disabilities who wish to stand as candidates in parliamentary or by-elections, and its aim is to reduce cost barriers by covering disability-related expenses that people without disabilities do not incur. The fund can be used for both the internal party selection phase and the election campaign phase, including participation in events, public meetings, training sessions or travel. This is one of the clearest examples of administrative recognition that equal opportunities in electoral competition also entail equalising the costs of access.

A similar initiative can be found in Scotland, where the Access to Elected Office Fund⁵¹ provided grants to people with disabilities standing for election to the Scottish Parliament and in local elections. Official documents show that the fund covered additional costs such as accessible transport or communication support, and that the legislation was amended so that these sums were not included in the standard campaign spending limit. The precedent-setting value of the Scottish model lies precisely in the fact that it treats disability-related costs as an objective condition for participation, not as an individual problem of the candidate.

➤ **Removing legal barriers and making the electoral process fully accessible**

The third type of measure concerns the removal of legal barriers and making electoral procedures accessible. The most significant comparative development over the last decade has been the gradual abandonment of

⁴⁹ The political rights of persons with disabilities: a democratic issue
<https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=23519&lang=en>

⁵⁰ Election Access Fund Application Guidelines
<https://elections.nz/assets/EAF-2025/EAF-Application-Guidelines-2025-PDF-3.pdf>

⁵¹ Access to Elected Office Fund, https://consult.gov.scot/elections/electoral-reform/user_uploads/30-32.pdf

the link between legal incapacity/guardianship and the loss of the right to vote. A clear legislative example is Spain, which, through *Organic Law 2/2018*⁵², removed the provisions that allowed for the restriction of the right to vote for persons with disabilities and expressly provided that previous limitations, based on these texts, cease to have effect. The preamble to the law directly invokes the obligations arising from the UN Convention and the CRPD Committee's recommendation to revise legislation so that all persons with disabilities may vote and participate in public life on an equal basis.

This approach has been strongly supported by European case law. In *Alajos Kiss v. Hungary* (2010), the European Court of Human Rights held that the automatic loss of the right to vote by a person under guardianship was unjustified, classifying the measure as a violation of Article 3 of Protocol No. 1. On a different note, the case of *Toplak and Mrak v. Slovenia* (2021) shifted the focus from legal capacity to the State's positive obligations to create effective conditions for voting by persons with disabilities, with the Court finding a violation of Article 13 in conjunction with Article 1 of Protocol No. 12 due to the lack of an effective remedy enabling voters with disabilities to request an accessible polling station in advance. Together, these judgments highlight two key ideas: the state cannot exclude voters on the grounds of disability, nor can it limit itself to the formal recognition of the right if it fails to provide effective mechanisms for its exercise.

At the same time, many countries have invested in procedural and informational adjustments. Spain⁵³ has also expanded, for the 2024 European elections, an official set of measures that included Braille kits, pictograms and materials in easy-to-read formats for people with intellectual disabilities, sign language interpretation and magnetic induction loops for deaf or hard-of-hearing people. In New Zealand⁵⁴, the Electoral Commission introduced telephone dictation voting as early as 2014 for blind, partially sighted or physically disabled voters who were unable to mark their ballot paper independently, alongside resources in New Zealand Sign Language, video, audio and Braille. Meanwhile, in Mexico, the INE adopted in 2022⁵⁵ an official protocol to guarantee the right to vote and civic participation for people with disabilities, designed also as a basis for training electoral staff, polling station officials and observers. These examples illustrate a significant shift: accessibility is no longer treated merely as an infrastructure issue, but as a standard for the entire electoral cycle.

➤ Policies for the inclusion of people with disabilities in public office and advisory bodies

The fourth type of measures concerns the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the civil service, in administration and in consultative bodies. In Argentina, Law 25.689⁵⁶ and its implementing framework⁵⁷ stipulate that the state must maintain a proportion of at least 4% of people with disabilities within the three branches of government, decentralised bodies, public entities and other relevant structures. Furthermore, vacant posts must be reserved as a priority for people with disabilities who meet the job requirements, and failure to update data on quota fulfilment is treated as non-compliance. In Germany, the Social Act (⁵⁸) stipulates that public and private employers with at least 20 jobs must fill a minimum of 5% of these with

⁵² Organic Law 2/2018, Spain, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2018-16672>

⁵³ Government of Spain, 'The Ministry of Home Affairs extends measures to facilitate accessible voting for people with disabilities' (2024) <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/gobierno/news/paginas/2024/20240520-eu-elections-accessibility.aspx>

⁵⁴ Electoral Commission New Zealand, 'Telephone dictation voting' (accessible voting service for people with visual or mobility impairments) <https://vote.nz/voting/get-help-to-vote/telephone-dictation-voting/>

⁵⁵ National Electoral Institute (INE), Mexico, 'Protocol for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the exercise of the right to vote and civic participation' (2022) <https://igualdad.ine.mx/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Protocolo-Personas-con-Discapacidad-INE.pdf>

⁵⁶ Law No. 25,689 – Employment quota for people with disabilities (2002) <https://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/75000-79999/77052/norma.htm>

⁵⁷ Decree No. 312/2010 – Regulation of the employment quota for people with disabilities in the public sector <https://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/165000-169999/165222/norma.htm>

⁵⁸ Social Code Book IX (SGB IX) – Rehabilitation and Participation of People with Disabilities (provides for a 5% quota for employers) https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/sgb_9_2018/

people with severe disabilities; failure to comply with this obligation results in the payment of a compensatory contribution⁵⁹. Even though it is a general labour market instrument, its importance for decision-making participation is evident: it creates pathways for institutional entry into the public sector and administrative structures. Unlike systems that focus solely on election to political office, these measures build decision-making participation from within the state apparatus. A more sophisticated example of public policy is provided by Canada, through the federal strategy 'Nothing Without Us: Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada'⁶⁰. The official documents set out both an employment target – 5,000 new employees with disabilities by 2025⁶¹ – and structural measures: a centralised fund for workplace adjustments, a library of assistive technologies, dedicated recruitment pools, internships, ambassadors for assessment accessibility, and recruitment and promotion plans for each institution.

➤ **Training, mentoring and professional development programmes for candidates, civil servants and the electoral administration**

The fifth type of measure concerns capacity building and professional development for those involved in the electoral and administrative process. In Mexico, in addition to electoral affirmative action and the INE protocol, the Supreme Court⁶² has reinforced the right to consultation for persons with disabilities, invalidating regulations adopted without prior consultation with those affected, where legislative measures directly impacted their interests. This case law is significant because it puts into practice Article 4(3) of the CRPD and the principle of 'nothing about us without us': the participation of persons with disabilities must not be limited to election day but extended to the drafting of regulations and policies that concern them. In terms of capacity building, comparative experience shows that affirmative action and legal reforms are more effective when complemented by mentoring, training and logistical support. The OSCE/ODIHR Guide on Quotas explicitly recommends mentoring and training for potential candidates with disabilities, and examples from New Zealand, Mexico, the United Kingdom and Canada show that electoral institutions and parties can reduce barriers through practical support in selection, campaigning, evaluation and reasonable accommodation. Furthermore, the Council of Europe has insisted that debates, political programmes and parliamentary websites be accessible, and that parliaments cover the costs of assistance for MPs with disabilities and systematically consult representative organisations.

In terms of professional development and entry into public service, Canada once again sets a strong example through the Federal Internship Programme for Canadians with Disabilities⁶³, developed by the Public Service Commission of Canada as part of the federal accessibility strategy. The programme offers long-term internships in the federal public service, tools and resources for recruitment, integration, development and retention, as well as support for both participants and the managers who employ them. Furthermore, the strategy provides for the roles of Assessment Accessibility Ambassadors within institutions, with training and support, to improve expertise in assessment and accommodation. This model is particularly valuable as it links professional development to the actual career path within the civil service, rather than just one-off training sessions, and demonstrates that capacity building must be accompanied by institutional mechanisms for support and retention.

⁵⁹ Federal Employment Agency, 'Severely Disabled Persons – Employment Quota and Compensation Levy'

<https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/en/employers/severely-disabled-persons>

⁶⁰ Government of Canada, 'Nothing Without Us: Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada' (2019)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/accessibility-public-service/accessibility-strategy-public-service.html>

⁶¹ Government of Canada, 'Accessible Canada Act' (2019) <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/A-0.6/>

⁶² Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation, *Monthly Bulletin of Plenary Decisions*, 2023 – <https://www.scjn.gob.mx/sites/default/files/boletin-mensual-resoluciones-pleno/2023-07/boletin-mensual-resoluciones-pleno-junio-2023.pdf>

⁶³ Federal Internship Programme for Canadians with Disabilities

https://www.canada.ca/en/public-service-commission/jobs/services/recruitment/federal-internship-program-canadians-disabilities.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com

POLICY MEASURES FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Promoting gender-balanced representation in decision-making and electoral processes is closely linked to the concept of inclusion. Whilst the focus is on ensuring a fair distribution of men and women in public and elected office, it is important to ensure diversity and the inclusion of marginalised groups. Ensuring equitable representation is not limited to gender alone, but also encompasses other dimensions of diversity, such as ethnicity, age, disability and sexual orientation. Promoting inclusion in public office is essential to creating a genuine democratic framework that reflects the diversity and complexity of society. Below, we set out specific proposals for promoting inclusion in public office.

- **Collecting data on candidates from an inclusion perspective**

Collecting data on candidates is essential for a deeper understanding of their composition and diversity in the electoral process. This data (on age, profession, and membership of vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and Roma people) provides valuable information for assessing representativeness and inclusion within government institutions and for identifying potential barriers or discrimination. Currently, there are significant gaps in the availability of data on candidates. Although the Central Electoral Commission collects information on age and occupation, this data has not yet been published for public use, which limits transparency and access to relevant information. Furthermore, there is a lack of data on Roma and disabled candidates, and candidates are not required to provide such information voluntarily. The collection of this data is crucial for assessing and monitoring progress in ensuring adequate representation of these groups in the electoral process. This could contribute to greater accountability and commitment on the part of electoral authorities and candidates in promoting inclusive and equitable participation in the electoral process. It could also facilitate the development of specific policies and programmes to support and encourage the participation of these groups in political and public life.

The OSCE makes the following suggestion in the [“Recommendations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Participate in Political and Public Life in the OSCE Region, Dublin, 2023”](#): “Participating States should collect, regularly update and publish disaggregated data on the political participation of persons with disabilities, including their representation in national parliaments, with a view to identifying and removing barriers to the exercise of political rights. Participating States should inform the OSCE’s ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) of their efforts to enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities in national parliaments, thereby facilitating peer review and the exchange of good practices among OSCE members.”

Specific recommendation: It is recommended that the Central Electoral Commission identify solutions for the transparent collection and publication of data on candidates, including information on age, profession and membership of vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities and Roma. At the same time, the CEC should develop and implement measures to encourage candidates to voluntarily provide the requested information, highlighting the importance of such data for promoting fair and diverse representation within government institutions.

- **Approval of inclusion ‘quotas’ and financial incentives for parties that promote the inclusion of marginalised groups**

The experience with gender quotas has demonstrated the effectiveness of this measure in increasing women’s involvement in decision-making and political processes. Accordingly, the introduction of a similar

mechanism to promote other vulnerable groups could be beneficial. The implementation of inclusion quotas for marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities, ethnic minorities or other disadvantaged groups, would ensure greater representation of these groups in power structures and in the decision-making process. Such quotas can create equal opportunities for these groups to make their voices and needs heard within political institutions. In international practice, there are three forms of quotas that may be adopted: (i) *quotas introduced into electoral legislation* – a quota requiring that a certain number of people from a marginalised group, such as people with disabilities, be included on the list of candidates; (ii) *'reserved' seats provided for by law* – a certain number of seats in public institutions or in the workplace are allocated to people from a marginalised group (these seats may be filled either by nomination or by election); (iii) *voluntary party quotas* – where political parties agree to include a certain number of people from a specific marginalised group on their lists of candidates.

The OSCE's [Guidelines on Promoting the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities](#) provide key recommendations to support the political participation of persons with disabilities. Among these suggestions is the proposal to introduce inclusion quotas for people with disabilities in the electoral and political process. Such quotas would provide a clear and binding framework for political parties and other relevant organisations, setting a minimum percentage of candidates with disabilities who should be included on lists and in leadership structures. The aim of setting specific quotas is to ensure adequate representation of people with disabilities in political life and in the decision-making process.

Quotas for [ethnic minorities](#) exist in various countries around the world, but the implementation and scope of these provisions vary significantly. Below are some relevant examples:

Colombia: seats are allocated to members of indigenous groups

New Zealand: seats are allocated to members of indigenous groups

Croatia: places are allocated to various ethnic communities, such as Hungarians, Italians, Czechs, Slovaks and Serbs

Pakistan: a small percentage of seats are reserved for Hindus and Christians

Lebanon: seats in Parliament are divided equally between Christians and Muslims

Belgium: seats in the Upper House of the legislature are divided between three linguistic groups – Flemish, French and German

India: seats are reserved for members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Specific Recommendation 1: It is recommended that the Electoral Code be amended to introduce representation quotas for both persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities in the process of drawing up lists of candidates for elections, as follows:

- 5% – representation quota for people with disabilities: this quota will ensure that people with disabilities are fairly represented in electoral processes and in positions of power, thereby promoting a better understanding of and response to the specific needs of this community;
- 5% – representation quota for ethnic minorities: this quota will support the participation and representation of ethnic minorities in political life, contributing to a more inclusive society and a government that is more representative of all citizens.

Specific recommendation 2: Alongside quotas, financial incentives for parties that adopt inclusive policies and practices can strengthen their commitment to diversity and equity. The provision of financial incentives could include additional grants, reimbursement of campaign expenses or other benefits for parties that demonstrate a firm commitment to the inclusion of marginalised groups.

Recommendations for political parties: It is recommended that political parties integrate these quotas not only into their lists of candidates for public elections, but also into the structure of their internal governing

bodies. Such an approach will ensure that diversity and inclusion become central values in the organisational culture of political parties, positively influencing the decision-making process and the policies promoted

- **Accessibility in the electoral process for people with disabilities**

Accessibility is not a secondary technical measure, but a prerequisite for the effective exercise of the right to vote, the right to stand for election and the right to hold public office on an equal footing. In accordance with Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 17 of Law No. 60/2012 on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities, and the general obligations of non-discrimination undertaken by the Republic of Moldova, accessibility must be treated as a structural dimension of the entire electoral cycle. Consequently, the identified issues must be addressed through three complementary dimensions:

- **Accessibility of electoral infrastructure and public buildings where electoral processes and administrative activities take place.** Effective electoral participation cannot be achieved as long as polling stations, the offices of electoral authorities, the headquarters of political parties, venues where public consultations or electoral debates are held, and administrative buildings remain partially or totally inaccessible. Infrastructure accessibility must be treated not merely as a one-off obligation prior to an election, but as a permanent component of public policies in the fields of civil engineering, local public administration and public investment.

The Election Commission of India⁶⁴ has adopted a Time-bound Action Plan for Accessible Elections, which treats infrastructure accessibility as a permanent and planned obligation. The document provides for the continuous identification of barriers, the mapping of voters with disabilities, the adaptation of polling stations according to the specific needs identified, as well as the provision of compliant ramps, reserved parking spaces, accessible toilets, wheelchairs, adequate lighting and other facilities at polling stations.

Recommendations: It is recommended that: **(i)** Parliament, the Government, subordinate institutions, first- and second-level local public authorities, and electoral authorities be required to carry out, on a regular basis, annually and prior to each election, assessments and self-assessments of the accessibility conditions of public buildings used as polling stations, for electoral bodies, for public consultations and for party or administrative activities; **(ii)** the urgent development of a National Plan for the accessibility of polling stations and administrative premises related to the electoral process. The plan must set out deadlines, institutional responsibilities, financial resources, minimum technical standards and monitoring mechanisms; **(iii)** the introduction of an obligation for all public institutions and all local public authorities applying for national funds for the construction, reconstruction or renovation of public buildings to allocate a minimum of 25% of the project budget to accessibility works. This rule is justified by the fact that polling stations are usually located in public buildings, and investments in local infrastructure must contribute directly to making the electoral process accessible.

- **Accessibility of information and communication regarding electoral materials, platforms and activities.** Exercising the right to vote and the right to participate in public life requires access to electoral information, political programmes, debates, procedures and official materials in accessible formats. In the absence of mandatory standards regarding sign language interpretation, subtitling, website accessibility, and the availability of materials in easy-to-read, audio or Braille formats, the participation of people with disabilities remains formally recognised but substantially limited.

⁶⁴ Election Commission of India, Action Plan with Timelines on Making Elections Accessible to All Persons with Disabilities, 2018–2019, <https://ceodelhi.gov.in/PDFFolder/planning/Action%20Plan%20for%20Accessible%20Election%20issued%20by%20ECI.pdf>

In terms of information accessibility, a sound practice is provided by the New Zealand Electoral Commission⁶⁵, which publishes information on registration and voting in Easy Read, audio, Braille, large print and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL). This model is relevant because it treats information accessibility as a fundamental obligation of the electoral administration rather than as an exceptional measure. It demonstrates that access to electoral information must be designed simultaneously for people with visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities.

A second relevant example comes from Spain, where the Ministry of the Interior has expanded⁶⁶, for the 2024 European elections, a set of accessible voting measures for people with disabilities. These included: pictograms and signage with clear and simple messages for people with intellectual disabilities, an easy-to-read installation guide, an accessible kit in Braille for voters with visual impairments, as well as sign language interpretation and a magnetic induction loop for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Recommendations: It is recommended that: **(i)** regular audits be carried out on the accessibility of electoral materials, official websites, digital platforms, video clips and public communications produced by electoral authorities and electoral candidates; **(ii)** the development of a separate plan for ensuring the accessibility of information regarding the electoral process, which should regulate mandatory accessibility formats and the responsibilities of public authorities and electoral candidates in this area; **(iii)** the amendment of the Electoral Code and the CEC's regulatory acts with explicit provisions establishing information accessibility as a mandatory electoral standard. This must include the obligation to produce and distribute electoral materials in accessible formats, including easy-to-read text, audio, Braille and digital formats compatible with assistive technologies; **(iv)** introducing a requirement that all press conferences, electoral debates, video clips, public messages and relevant electoral events organised by political parties and electoral authorities be accompanied by sign language interpretation and subtitles; **(v)** establishing a requirement that the websites of political parties, electoral candidates and electoral authorities comply with minimum digital accessibility standards, including in terms of navigation, contrast, information structure, compatibility with screen readers and the availability of documents in accessible formats.

- **Accessibility of public institutions and the electoral administration as a workplace and space for professional participation for people with disabilities, including by ensuring reasonable adjustments.** People with disabilities must be able to participate not only as voters, but also as members of electoral bodies, civil servants, candidates, party representatives and holders of elective or administrative office. This objective requires the adaptation of working conditions, recruitment procedures, training and promotion mechanisms, and the professional environment, through the effective application of the principle of reasonable accommodation.

Recommendations: It is recommended that: **(i)** central and local public authorities periodically assess the accessibility of their own institutions from the perspective of a person with a disability who wishes to work in these institutions as a civil servant, a member of electoral bodies, a candidate or a political representative; **(ii)** the development of institutional inclusion plans for the civil service and electoral administration, setting out concrete measures to attract, recruit, retain and promote persons with disabilities; **(iii)** the express guarantee of reasonable accommodation in all competition, selection, training, assessment and promotion procedures for persons with disabilities. These adjustments must include adapting competition tests, the venue, technical support, the time allowed, forms of communication and training methods; **(iv)** ensuring reasonable

⁶⁵ Enrolment information in alternative formats

<https://vote.nz/enrolling/get-help-to-enrol/enrolment-information-in-alternate-formats>

⁶⁶ Measures to facilitate accessible voting for people with disabilities

https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/gobierno/news/paginas/2024/20240520-eu-elections-accessibility.aspx?utm_source=chatgpt.com

accommodation for civil servants and staff in electoral bodies with disabilities, including through the adaptation of the workplace, the use of assistive technologies, organisational flexibility, communication support and modification of the working environment where necessary for the effective performance of duties.

- **Removal of the restriction on the right to vote of persons with disabilities in the Electoral Code**

It is recommended that the provisions of the Electoral Code which expressly or implicitly permit the restriction of the right to vote of persons with disabilities who are subject to guardianship measures or deemed to lack legal capacity be repealed. These provisions, although rarely applied, directly contravene international standards. Articles 12 and 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) guarantee equality before the law and the full exercise of political rights by all citizens, without exception on the grounds of disability (CRPD, Art. 12 and Art. 29). In its case law, the CRPD Committee has clarified that the lack of legal capacity cannot constitute a legal basis for the deprivation of electoral rights (CRPD Committee, Communication No. 4/2011, *Bujdosó v. Hungary*). Furthermore, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), in the case of *Alajos Kiss v. Hungary* (2010), ruled that an automatic restriction of the right to vote for persons under guardianship is disproportionate and contrary to Article 3 of Protocol No. 1 to the ECHR, emphasising that the indiscriminate deprivation of voting rights on the grounds of mental disability is inadmissible. In this regard, there is an urgent need to revise Article 13 of the Electoral Code and remove any provision permitting the deprivation of political rights on the grounds of mental disability or incapacity.

The OSCE/ODIHR and ENEMO reports on the 2019–2023 elections consistently highlight the need to remove discriminatory provisions from the Electoral Code. For example, the OSCE/ODIHR report on the 2019 parliamentary elections noted that any general deprivation of the right to vote on the grounds of disability is “contrary to international standards”⁶⁷.

- **Developing a national civic and political leadership programme for people with disabilities**

In the absence of mentoring, training and institutional exposure programmes, political participation remains dependent on individual and exceptional initiatives, rather than on public policies designed to foster representation. It is recommended that a national civic and political leadership programme for people with disabilities be developed, implemented in partnership with the CEC, CICDE, the State Chancellery, local public authorities, public administration training institutions, organisations of people with disabilities, and development partners. The programme should include: **(i)** modules on civic and electoral education, public policy drafting, public communication and participation in debates; **(ii)** internships and mentoring programmes in Parliament, local and district councils, central and local public administration, and electoral bodies; **(iii)** support mechanisms for people with disabilities interested in standing for election, becoming active in political parties or participating in public consultations. Such a recommendation would help transform potential participation into a real and sustainable presence in the decision-making process.

⁶⁷ INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION Republic of Moldova – Parliamentary Elections, 24 February 2019
<https://odhr.osce.org/sites/default/files/MDL%202019%20Parliamentary%20PS%20FINAL.pdf#:~:text=incompetent%20by%20a%20court,incluing%20those%20with%20mental%20disabilities>