ODIHR Advisory Panel on the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities

2026-2030

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE ODIHR



Ziyat Abdykaimov

Kazakhstan

Ziyat Abdykaimov is an Expert Manager for Assistive Technologies and Accessibility at Nazarbayev University. Through his professional role and disability rights activism, he focuses on inclusive higher education, digital accessibility, and political participation of persons with disabilities. Ziyat was part of an expert group that produced an alternative civil society report on Kazakhstan's implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He also contributed to parliamentary working groups developing the nation's Social and Digital Codes. In 2023-2026, he served on the country’s Commission for Access to Information and the Coordinating Council on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities.



Virginia Atkinson

United States

Virginia Atkinson is the Senior Global Inclusion Advisor at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), where she leads the organization's work to build inclusive societies and support all people to participate in political life on an equal basis. She has two decades of international human rights advocacy and civil society capacity building experience. Atkinson has worked in over 30 countries around the world on disability rights, including Albania, Armenia, North Macedonia, and Ukraine. Her work has been recognized through numerous accolades, including by Marquis Who's Who in 2026, Forbes in their inaugural Accessibility 100 List in 2025, and the University of Mary Washington in 2017.



Zaruhi Batoyan

Armenia

Zaruhi Batoyan is an Armenian Member of Parliament and disability rights advocate with more than two decades of experience promoting inclusion, accessibility, and equal participation. She previously served as Deputy Minister and Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, where she helped advance reforms in social protection and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). As a parliamentarian, she has led legislative efforts to improve accessibility, inclusive education, employment, healthcare, public transport, and protection from violence. A journalist by background and experienced trainer, she is a frequent speaker on inclusive policymaking and human rights.



Mushegh Hovsepyan

Armenia

Mushegh Hovsepyan is a member of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the 2027–2030 term. He is President of Disability Rights Agenda NGO in Armenia, an organization led by persons with disabilities that promotes and monitors implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He has over ten years of experience in disability rights policy and law, monitoring, and strategic litigation. His work focuses on anti-discrimination, digital rights, accessibility of elections, deinstitutionalization, and the meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities in public decision-making.



Elena Kochoska

North Macedonia

Elena Kochoska is an economist, legal and public policy expert, researcher, and trainer with more than 25 years of professional experience in governance, legislative reform, and human rights at the national and international levels. She is President of the Board of the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, a member of the Management Board of the European Network on Independent Living (ENIL), Technical Coordinator of the Inter-Party Parliamentary Group on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Assembly of North Macedonia, and founder of ZETA – Organization for Disability and Justice. She has collaborated with international organizations, governments, parliaments, and civil society on democratic governance, electoral and political participation, legislative reform, access to justice, and the implementation of international human rights standards, with a particular focus on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).



Ljupka Mihajlovska

Serbia

Ljupka Mihajlovska is a human rights and accessibility expert specializing in the rights of persons with disabilities. She served as a Member of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, where she gained extensive political experience, particularly in legislative drafting, public policy development, advocacy, and public speaking. She also served as Adviser to the Minister responsible for Gender Equality, Prevention of Violence against Women, and the Economic and Political Empowerment of Women. In addition, she chaired the Working Group on Accessibility, established by the Government of the Republic of Serbia. Ljupka is a co-founder and Chairperson of the Managing Board of the Serbian Alliance for Accessibility. She also works as an international consultant for a range of international organizations, providing expertise on the human rights of persons with disabilities, accessibility, and disability inclusion.



Alejandro Moledo

Spain

Alejandro Moledo is Deputy Director and Head of Policy at the European Disability Forum (EDF), the umbrella organisation representing 100 million persons with disabilities and their families across Europe. He leads EDF’s work on political participation, has extensive experience in accessibility policies and supports the European Parliament Disability Intergroup. He contributed to UN and EU policy processes, has authored key research, such as the EDF 6th Human Rights Report on political participation of persons with disabilities, and served as Accessibility Analyst for an ODIHR Election Expert Team. He is member of ONCE, the Spanish organisation of blind and partially sighted people.



Iryna Tekuchova

Ukraine

Iryna Tekuchova is a researcher and human rights expert with extensive experience advancing the rights of persons with disabilities in Ukraine. She holds a PhD in EU Law from the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Her expertise includes EU disability law, EU external relations, Ukraine’s EU accession process and the political rights of people with disabilities. Since 2020, she has served as Director of the Disability Research Center, a long-term initiative of the organization of persons with disabilities “Fight For Right”. In this role, she supports Ukrainian authorities in integrating disability as a cross-cutting priority into national policies, legislation, and strategies, and promoting inclusive, sustainable reforms.



Helga Stevens

Belgium

Helga Stevens is a deaf Belgian lawyer and human rights activist. She studied law in Belgium, UK and USA. After becoming the first deaf attorney at the Brussels Bar, Helga joined the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) in 1996 as project coordinator. Later she became EUD General Secretary, Director, and President. She was a Member of the Flemish Parliament (2004-2014), Belgian Senate (2007-2014), European Parliament (2014-2019), and the Gent city council (2007-2014 and 2022-2025). Currently Helga works for the Belgian government service. She was board member and director of Doof Vlaanderen and is currently Vice President of the Flemish Sign Language Center and EUD.



Magda(lena) Szarota

Poland

Dr. Magda(lena) Szarota is a scholar and award-winning cross-sector advocate whose work bridges disability, gender, human rights, policy, and innovation. She earned her PhD at Lancaster University (UK) and received scholarships, including one at Yale University. A pioneer of the disabled women's movement in post-socialist Eastern Europe, Magda co-founded Poland's first association of women with disabilities in 2004. She advocates for disability rights at EU and UN levels, collaborates with institutions across the Global South and North, and serves as Disability Ombudsperson for Humanity in Action. She was named an Ambassador for the UN CRPD and received the Risk-Taker Award.



Amu Urhonen

Finland

Amu Urhonen is a Finnish disability activist who has been involved in political decision-making in the Greens and her home city more than 20 years. She is working in the field of global development, currently as the chairperson of Abilis Foundation. She has been a member of the ODIHR advisory panel on the political participation of persons with disabilities since 2021, and has also served as the chair of the panel.

For any inquiries,
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Designed by Alexander Manno and ODIHR.

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