

Guidelines on advancing disability-inclusive parliaments: an assessment methodology and insights from the OSCE region



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1. Introduction

Persons with disabilities are often referred to as the world's largest minority. The World Health Organization estimates that 1.3 billion people, or around 16 per cent of the world's population, currently experience significant disability.¹ Yet, this sizable minority is largely under-represented in policymaking, with few examples of persons with disabilities at a high level of politics, representing a significant deficit in modern democracies. For decades, disability rights activists have used the motto “Nothing About Us, Without Us” to advocate for their inclusion in political and public life. Now, the shift is towards “Nothing Without Us”, as activists highlight the need to mainstream disability into all aspects of political activity. Important and groundbreaking reforms have been made due to this advocacy. However, decision-making structures, such as national parliaments, still do not systematically address the many facets of disability inclusion in parliamentary processes.

Disability inclusion in political and public life means ensuring that persons with disabilities can meaningfully exercise their political rights and participate in all political and other public decision-making processes, including through representation, lawmaking, oversight and public policy processes. This involves not only ensuring that persons with disabilities can vote and be elected without restrictions and are represented in political institutions, but also that existing barriers are removed, whether they be physical, attitudinal or structural, so that persons with disabilities enjoy the same rights and opportunities. Furthermore, disability should be mainstreamed into all political processes to ensure that no policy action is disadvantageous or discriminatory towards persons with disabilities. It is neither sufficient nor fair to persons with disabilities to assume that this will happen automatically through greater representation; systematic efforts need to be made to guarantee that people with disabilities become a permanent part of political and public life. Overall, disability inclusion strengthens democracy by creating more equal, fair and representative institutions.

1 [Fact Sheet: Disability](#), World Health Organization, 7 March 2023.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is the leading international human rights treaty on disability and, as of 2025, 54 OSCE participating States are State Parties to the Convention.² Article 29 of the CRPD calls on States Parties to “Ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives, including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected.”³

Disability inclusion is an important part of the OSCE Human Dimension Commitments. In the 1991 Moscow Document, OSCE participating States agreed to “take steps to ensure the equal opportunity of [persons with disabilities] to participate fully in the life of their society” and “to promote the appropriate participation of such persons with decision-making in the field concerning them”.⁴ The 1990 Copenhagen Document recognized the “right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination”.⁵

These commitments are complemented by further guidance from OSCE bodies. In its 2014 Baku Declaration, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly called for intensified efforts to prohibit discrimination against persons in employment and the workplace, and urged OSCE participating States to sign, ratify and implement the UN CRPD and to implement existing OSCE commitments.⁶ In 2023, ODIHR’s Advisory Panel on the Political Participation

2 [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), United Nations, adopted 13 December 2006. Excluding Tajikistan and the United States of America, which are signatories, and the Holy See which did not sign the CRPD.

3 *Ibid.*, Art. 29.

4 [Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on Human Dimension of the CSCE](#) (Moscow Document), OSCE, 3 October 1991, paras. 41.2 and 41.3.

5 [Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE](#) (Copenhagen Document), OSCE, 29 June 1990, para. 7.5.

6 [Baku Declaration and Resolutions](#), OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, 2 July 2014, paras. 71 and 95.

of Persons with Disabilities⁷ issued the *Recommendations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Participate in Political and Public Life (Dublin Recommendations)* to OSCE participating States (pSs), their parliaments, lawmakers, political parties and election management bodies (EMBs).⁸ The ten recommendations they make are an important guideline for the genuine inclusion of persons with disabilities in political and public life.

Parliaments play a pivotal role in shaping policies and legislation, which affect the lives of everyone, including those with disabilities. By extension, national parliaments play an important role in preventing discrimination and fostering disability inclusion. This applies not only to the representative function of parliaments, but also to lawmaking, oversight and the accessibility of parliaments. As key democratic institutions, parliaments are well positioned to serve as role models for society and to lead the way in creating a disability-responsive environment at the national and local levels. To ensure these obligations and recommendations are met by all OSCE parliaments, a number of barriers need to be overcome, including raising awareness about the right of persons with disabilities to participate in political and public life; recognizing the preconditions for effective participation; ensuring an accessible environment, information and infrastructure; promoting an enabling legal framework, conducive to the inclusion and full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life; and addressing prevailing stereotypes and prejudices.

While the representation of persons with disabilities in national parliaments is increasing in some pSs, paving the way for political leaders with disabilities and demonstrating the positive impact of diverse perspectives, persons with disabilities continue to encounter barriers due to the lack of an accessible and inclusive environment where they can actively engage in decision-

7 ODIHR's Advisory Panel on the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities is a consultative body that brings together independent experts to advise ODIHR on issues related to the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life. It supports ODIHR's work by providing technical guidance, contributing to the development of recommendations and standards, and informing ODIHR's activities and publications.

8 *Recommendations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Participate in Political and Public Life in the OSCE Region (Dublin Recommendations)*, OSCE, 1 December 2023.

making processes. For more than a decade, ODIHR has worked with national parliaments and individual legislators to ensure that persons with disabilities are represented and included in parliamentary processes. In 2019, ODIHR published the *Guidelines on Promoting the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities*⁹ — a practical resource for pSs to strengthen disability inclusion in democratic institutions. In 2025, ODIHR published the guide on *Disability Quotas for Parliamentary Elections*¹⁰ that presents practical considerations for the design and implementation of quota measures aimed at increasing the representation of persons with disabilities.

These Guidelines, which complement ODIHR's earlier publications, aim to support national parliaments in becoming more disability-inclusive institutions. Disability inclusion in parliaments remains a relatively under-developed topic in the OSCE region, and, while progress has been made in many countries, more efforts are needed. For disability inclusion in parliaments to be pursued systematically, we need a clear definition of the concept of a disability-inclusive parliament and a comprehensive methodology to assess it. This is what this publication sets out to do.

First, the publication establishes a working definition of a disability-inclusive parliament based on ODIHR's experience and evidence-based insights from national parliaments across the OSCE region ([Chapter 1](#)). It then presents a comprehensive methodology for assessing the disability inclusiveness of parliaments based on this concept ([Chapter 2](#)). The methodology builds on ODIHR's experience and expertise in working with parliaments, legislators and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs). The methodology reflects lessons learned from ODIHR's previous pilot disability-inclusion assessments in Montenegro (2025), Uzbekistan (2021) and Serbia (2021). Additionally, the methodology is informed by evidence-based insights from OSCE national parliaments, from a 2024 survey conducted in collaboration with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), which gathered data from 33 OSCE national parliaments on barriers, opportunities and practices related to the political participation of persons with disabilities. [Chapter 3](#) sets out these insights — including overall trends, gaps and good practices

9 [Guidelines on Promoting the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 15 March 2019.

10 [Disability Quotas for Parliamentary Elections](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 31 December 2025.

from across the region — to support national parliaments to advance disability inclusion and inform parliaments' assessment processes.

The Guidelines aim to inspire national legislatures, individual legislators, parliamentary staff and disability advocates to take a proactive, evidence-based approach to disability inclusion, tailored to address the specific needs of their parliament. By using a disability assessment to gather an objective understanding of current practices and processes, and with a solid understanding of gaps and good practice in parliaments from across the OSCE region, national parliaments can make significant progress towards creating more equal, inclusive and democratic institutions.

1.1 DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE PARLIAMENTS

Enhancing the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life, as enshrined in UN CRPD Article 29, has traditionally focused on the right to vote. Efforts and important developments have been made in improving the accessibility of polling stations and removing legal restrictions surrounding legal capacity and guardianship. This work remains essential, as legal and institutional barriers continue to limit the effective exercise of the right to vote for persons with disabilities.¹¹ Gradually, the focus has expanded to include the right to stand for elections and the importance of political representation. This shift recognizes that meaningful participation not only requires being able to cast a vote, but also equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to stand for election, hold public office and participate effectively in political and public life. However, data collected in the 2024 ODIHR/OSCE PA survey indicates that the representation of persons with disabilities in national parliaments in the OSCE regions remains limited, with a notable absence of Members of Parliament (MPs) with a disability across many OSCE national parliaments.

11 In 2022, the European Disability Forum reported that several EU Member States maintained legal restrictions on the right to vote based on legal capacity or guardianship. See, Alejandro Moledo and Marine Uldry, [Human Rights Report on Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities, European Disability Forum](#), European Human Rights Report, Issue 6, 2022, Chapter 3: The right to vote and stand for elections of persons with disabilities.

At the same time, the presence of politicians with disabilities does not necessarily ensure disability inclusion in parliamentary institutions. Due to stigma and attitudinal barriers, some may choose not to disclose their disability or may not wish to assume the role as advocates for disability-related issues. To live up to international legal obligations and commitments, disability inclusion in parliaments needs to go beyond representation alone, to encompass the parliamentary functions of lawmaking and oversight. These functions directly affect the realization of human rights for persons with disabilities in all areas of life.

The topic of disability-inclusive parliaments is largely under-researched. Although academic research has been done on various topics connected to the political representation of persons with disabilities, such as on disability representation in politics;¹² the political behaviour of politicians with disabilities;¹³ and the impact of media accessibility on the political inclusion of persons with disabilities,¹⁴ very little work has been done to develop a concept of a disability-inclusive parliament.

The concept of a disability-inclusive parliament set out in this publication draws on the concept of a gender-sensitive parliament as the foundation of a framework for transforming politics to be more equal and inclusive of an under-represented group. A gender-sensitive parliament “values and prioritizes gender equality as a social, economic and political objective and reorients and transforms a parliament’s institutional culture, processes and practices and outputs towards these objectives”.¹⁵ A disability-inclusive parliament should take a similar transformative approach, by mainstreaming

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- 12 Vivien Fabry, Michael Hunklinger and Liza Mügge, [Representing the Unrepresented? Examining Disability Representation in the German Parliament](#), *German Politics*, 21 January 2025, pp. 1-24.
 - 13 Stefanie Reher and Elizabeth Evans, [Someone Like Me? Disability Identity and Representation Perceptions](#), *Political Behavior*, vol. 47, 28 August 2024, pp. 689-709; Stefanie Reher, [Do Disabled Candidates Represent Disabled Citizens?](#) *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 52, no.2, April 2022, pp. 520-534.
 - 14 Priccilar Vengesai, [Political rights of persons with disability in the Zimbabwean media](#), *African Journal of Disability*, vol. 14 (0), 30 June 2025.
 - 15 Sarah Childs and Sonia Palmieri, “Gender Sensitive Parliaments: Feminizing Formal Political Institutions”, in Marian Sawer, Lee Ann Banaszak, Jacqui True and Johanna Kantola (editors), *Handbook of Feminist Governance*, (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2023).

disability within all parliamentary processes, practices and outputs, and ensuring disability inclusion is a central value of the parliamentary culture. A disability-inclusive parliament reflects disability inclusion in its parliamentary structures, procedures, practices and outputs, including the full legislative cycle and oversight functions, while respecting diversity and promoting equal treatment for all. This supports the democratic functioning of parliaments.

The concept of a disability-inclusive parliament presented here draws on the three pillars of a gender-sensitive parliament — representation, lawmaking and oversight — set out in *Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region*.¹⁶ Importantly, it includes a fourth pillar, essential to work on disability — access.¹⁷ In addition to their democratic functions, parliaments are physical buildings that should be accessible for everyone, not only visitors seeking to learn more about the democratic process, but also for participants in parliamentary processes (such as committee hearings and research activities) and audiences of parliamentary communications.

A disability-inclusive parliament is one in which persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all parliamentary processes and are represented in all levels of decision- and policymaking. This is most effectively achieved when all four pillars are assessed and reformed from the perspective of disability inclusion.

16 *Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region*, OSCE/ODIHR, 6 December 2021.

17 The concept of a disability inclusive parliament in this methodology was inspired partially by *Policy Brief on Disability Inclusive Parliament*, Institute of Informatics and Development and the British Council, 2023.

Pillar 1 Representation

Disability-inclusive representation refers to the participation of persons with disabilities in political life as Members of Parliament (MPs) and as parliamentary staff, supported by an inclusive working environment on parliamentary premises, and parliamentary mechanisms and cultures that promote inclusive participation and representation.

Pillar 2 Lawmaking

Parliament has a legislative role to play across the full legislative cycle, from planning and consultation through adoption, monitoring and evaluation. It also debates, approves and monitors the national budget, including through disability-responsive budgeting. Mechanisms to support this include the use of in-house expertise, disability-impact assessments, the collection of disability-disaggregated data and the meaningful participation of OPDs throughout the legislative process.

Pillar 3 Oversight

Disability-inclusive oversight refers to a parliament's capacity to scrutinize public policies, laws, programmes and practices, including for progress on disability rights and compliance with national and international obligations. This includes regulatory oversight of draft legislation and evaluation of adopted laws. This requires a dedicated body or mechanism with sufficient expertise for systematic monitoring that also ensures the meaningful involvement of OPDs.

Pillar 4 Access

A parliament is sometimes called the 'people's house' of government and, as such, should be accessible to everyone, in all their diversity. Accessibility of parliament means the physical infrastructure, communications and parliamentary sessions. It also covers the capacity and willingness of parliament to make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.

While certain OSCE national parliaments have made progress towards enhancing disability inclusion in some of these areas, there is still much to be done to advance disability-inclusive parliaments. An accessibility audit of parliamentary infrastructure — and, in some cases, communications — is often undertaken, and is an important first step. The parliamentary disability-inclusion assessment methodology presented here goes beyond accessibility to consider the disability-inclusivity of all parliamentary processes, practices and outputs.

2. Methodology for assessing parliaments

2.1 PARLIAMENTARY DISABILITY-INCLUSION ASSESSMENTS: THE APPROACH

A parliamentary disability-inclusion assessment (hereafter referred to as an ‘assessment’) is a comprehensive, multi-faceted tool for evaluating disability-inclusion practices within a parliament across each of the four pillars — representation, lawmaking, oversight and access — in order to produce actionable recommendations. It gathers and analyses data from multiple sources, from both within and outside parliament, to capture a holistic portrait of the existing situation. An assessment is not meant to compare or judge parliaments, but rather to support them in identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and help to determine how best to improve disability inclusion. An assessment is the starting point for further discussions between, and further action by stakeholders. This chapter presents this methodology, including the approach, scope and concrete steps for conducting a disability-inclusion assessment.

A clear understanding of current practices is an important starting point for advancing disability inclusion in parliaments, yet dedicated guidance on assessing disability inclusion in parliaments remains limited. ODIHR has therefore developed this methodology, building on existing gender audit methodologies¹⁸ and drawing on its expertise, including pilot assessments, to help address this gap.

The methodology is primarily intended for parliaments, including political party members and leaders, parliamentary leaders and administrative staff. An assessment should be led, designed and carried out by an external expert, in close co-operation and consultation with the parliamentary leadership, MPs, parliamentary staff, OPDs and disability experts.

Recognizing that the direct involvement of persons with disabilities is fundamental to advancing disability inclusion, ODIHR developed the assessment methodology with participatory and human rights-based

18 Elements of this methodology are based on ODIHR’s participatory gender audit methodology presented in [Participatory Gender Audits of Parliaments: A Step-by-Step Guidance Document](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 16 August 2022 as well as the ILO methodology in [ILO Participatory Gender Audit](#), International Labour Organization, 2007.

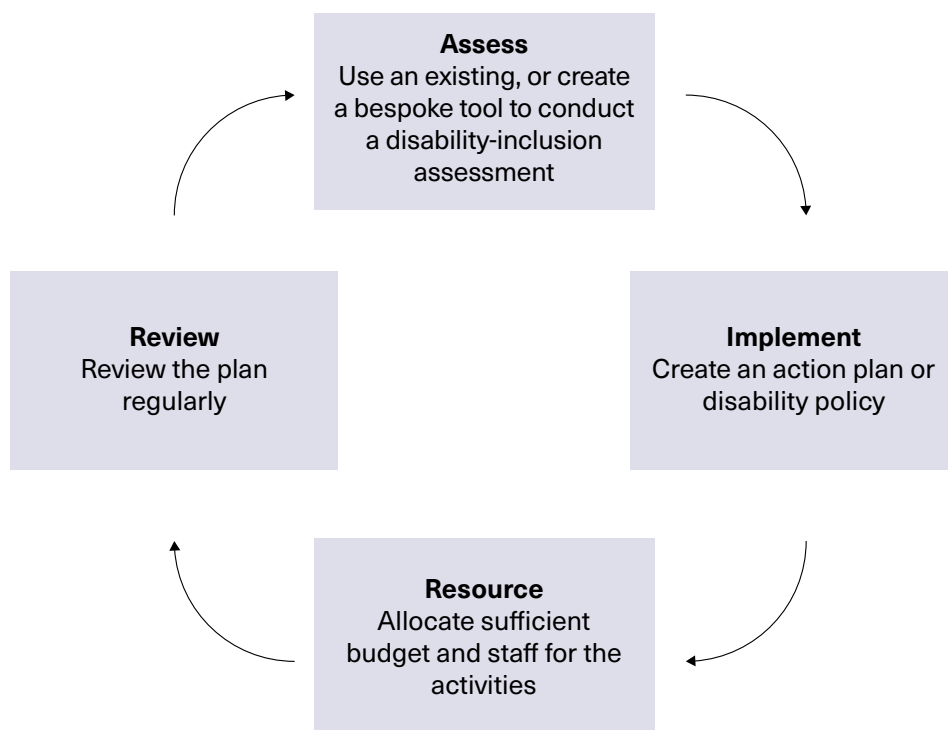
approaches at its core. A participatory approach emphasizes the involvement of persons with disabilities throughout the process, as their lived experience and expertise contributes to a more accurate analysis.¹⁹ Meanwhile, a human rights-based approach ensures that the assessment is guided by the principles of non-discrimination, accessibility, intersectionality and meaningful participation. Representatives from OPDs taking part in the assessment should also be appropriately compensated for their time and expertise.

Designed in consultation with the [ODIHR Advisory Panel on the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities](#), the methodology ensures that the voices and lived experiences of persons with disabilities guide each stage of the process. It has also been informed by previous assessments and the contributions of OPDs, accessibility specialists and parliamentary representatives during these processes. This approach fosters a genuine partnership, where parliaments work alongside persons with disabilities, OPDs and external experts to identify barriers, jointly develop solutions and implement targeted recommendations. Such collaboration not only empowers persons with disabilities to contribute actively to democratic processes, but also strengthens the capacity of parliaments to create inclusive environments that reflect the diversity of their societies.

The methodology also takes an intersectional approach. For example, by incorporating a gender lens, it acknowledges that disability affects individuals differently based on their gender, with women and girls often facing additional barriers and discrimination. Recognizing the unique barriers faced by marginalized groups within the disability community is crucial to designing a methodology that is fit for purpose.

The assessment should be seen as one step in a continuous, four-step process to advance disability-inclusive parliaments, and persons with disabilities should be included, consulted and valued during each stage of the process.

19 Anna Arstein-Kerslake et al., [Introducing a Human Rights-based Disability Research Methodology](#), *Human Rights Law Review*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2020, pp. 412-432.



All parliaments and political systems are different. This methodology is intended to be flexible and adaptable to individual contexts. Flexibility allows the assessment tools and approaches to be customized to align with the specific needs and circumstances of each pS, facilitating a more accurate and comprehensive evaluation of disability inclusion in their respective parliaments. Ultimately, this flexibility should enable pSs to take ownership of the assessment process, thereby increasing its relevance and sustainability in the long term.

By conducting a disability-inclusion assessment, parliaments can expect the following outcomes:

1. Greater awareness among MPs and staff about what it means to work towards a disability-inclusive parliament.
2. Strengthened partnerships between parliament, OPDs and civil society.

3. Practical, targeted recommendations for advancing disability inclusion, including the improved accessibility of parliamentary premises, processes and communications, and a stronger legal framework around disability inclusion.

2.2 SCOPE OF A PARLIAMENTARY DISABILITY-INCLUSION ASSESSMENT

The table below aims to help guide the desk research and stakeholder interviews. The list is non-exhaustive and should be adapted to the local context, availability of information, and priorities identified during the assessment's scoping phase. For each area, the table indicates the typical documentation reviewed and areas to assess.

Table 1 – Scope of a parliamentary disability-inclusion assessment

International commitments and legal framework

International framework

- International legal obligations regarding disability and intersecting factors, including binding treaties and their optional protocols (CRPD, ICCPR, CERD, CEDAW and others); regional human rights instruments and commitments to which the country is a party.
- OSCE commitments and recommendations relevant to disability inclusion and political participation.
- Recent concluding observations and recommendations of the UN CRPD Committee on the country, especially provisions on disability inclusion.
- Findings or recommendations from other UN treaty bodies (e.g., the Human Rights Committee, CERD, CEDAW Committee) with a bearing on disability or intersecting grounds of discrimination.

Domestic framework

- Provisions on disability in the Constitution.
- Primary legislation, including, in particular, anti-discrimination legislation, electoral law, political party law, and legislation regulating freedom of association and legislation regulating legal capacity.
- Any other relevant national legislation.

Pillar 1: Representation

Electing persons with disabilities

- Whether data on the disability status of elected representatives is collected, and if so, by what method (self-identification, administrative records or other means).
- The proportion and number of persons with disabilities elected to parliament in recent convocations, as well as the proportion and number of persons with disabilities in the general population.
- The proportion and number of persons with disabilities holding senior functions within parliament (e.g., committee chairs, speakers, deputy speakers).
- Proportion and number of persons with disabilities serving in the government, including as ministers or in other senior executive positions.
- Reasonable accommodations available for MPs with disabilities.
- Electoral system and any temporary special measures taken to increase the political participation of persons with disabilities.
- Legal barriers that persons with disabilities face when running for parliament or voting, including any exclusionary language in legislation such as 'incapacity', 'illness', 'inability' and/or 'competency'.
- Regulations for mainstreaming disability into parliament's appointment function for public officials.

- Actions taken by political parties to increase the political participation of persons with disabilities and remove barriers to their political participation.
- Public/political party funding available for candidates with disabilities.
- Public funding available for political parties that promote the participation of persons with disabilities.

Representation of disability issues

- Formal or informal bodies for MPs with a mandate related to disability issues, such as committees, parliamentary commissions, caucuses or working groups.

Dignity and respect

- Parliamentary regulations on disability, accessibility, equal treatment and anti-discrimination, bullying and harassment, such as those included in the Rules of Procedure or Code of Conduct.
- Prevalent cultural or stereotypical issues or views surrounding disability or politicians with disabilities.

Parliamentary staff

- Whether data on the disability status of parliamentary staff is collected, and if so, by what method (self-identification, administrative records or other means).
- Proportion and number of persons with disabilities in the parliamentary staff.
- Specific programmes to recruit persons with disabilities within the parliamentary administration.
- Regulations for parliamentary staff on disability, accessibility, equal treatment and anti-discrimination, bullying and harassment.

Capacity building

- Training or other capacity-building events available to staff or MPs on disability, including the use of appropriate language.

Pillar 2: Lawmaking

Disability mainstreaming

- Regulations on disability mainstreaming.
- National disability strategies or policies, especially those with references to disability mainstreaming or the political participation of persons with disabilities.

Lawmaking and budgeting

- Parliamentary rules and procedures governing the legislative process.
- Regulations on disability-impact assessments, including during reviews of the budget. Whether disability-related impacts of draft legislation are systematically identified, assessed and documented during the legislative process.

Data and expertise

- Availability and use of disability-disaggregated data or in-house expertise on disability.
- Meaningful consultations with OPDs, including whether consultations are timely, accessible, systematic and transparent, and whether feedback is provided on how OPD input was considered; parliamentary regulations or data on contacts with civil society organizations.

Language

- Regulations on the use of disability-sensitive language, such as person-first language and the elimination of demeaning and discriminatory terminology.
- Standards or guidance related to clarity, accessibility and non-discriminatory legislative drafting.

Pillar 3: Oversight

Reviewing laws and budgets

- Regulations on the parliamentary oversight of legislation, including whether there are regulations or existing practices to include disability.
- Regulations on parliamentary oversight of the budget, including whether there are regulations or existing practices to include disability.
- Overview of the activities of any formal body mandated to conduct oversight from the perspective of disability.
- Where no dedicated body exists, an overview of the activities of other formal bodies to conduct oversight from the perspective of disability.

Expertise

- Availability and use of in-person or external expertise on disability-inclusive oversight.
- Involvement of OPDs in oversight activities.

International framework

- Regulations and existing practices on monitoring compliance with international legal obligations and commitments on disability, such as the UN CRPD, including any follow-up procedures, reporting obligations or accountability mechanisms.

Pillar 4: Access

Policies

- Overarching strategies and policies on accessibility and any recent reforms.
- Perceptions and views of persons with disabilities on the accessibility of parliament.
- Previous accessibility audits undertaken by the parliament, their conclusions and any resulting reforms.
- Results of an accessibility check, if undertaken during the assessment.
- Legal obligations on accessibility and reasonable accommodation.

Physical accessibility

- Current accessibility of parliament's physical infrastructure.
- Reasonable accommodations available for parliamentary visitors.

Accessibility of communications

- Current accessibility of parliament's communications.
- Any parliamentary communications strategies or informal practices that include specific outreach to persons with disabilities or efforts to ensure they are visible in parliamentary outputs.

Accessibility of events and parliamentary sessions

- Measures taken to increase the accessibility of parliamentary events and sessions.

2.3 DISABILITY-INCLUSION ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

A disability-inclusion assessment has **three concrete stages** that parliaments in the OSCE region can follow. External experts gather data via desk research, questionnaires and surveys with various stakeholders, to compile a report and set of recommendations for further actions to promote greater accessibility and inclusivity. An assessment typically takes six to twelve months, from the point of obtaining parliamentary support.

A crucial lesson learned from previous disability-inclusion assessments is the significance of securing strong buy-in from the parliament right from the outset, alongside maintaining their continuous engagement throughout the process. The higher the level of endorsement within the parliament, the better it is for the assessment. Furthermore, it is strongly recommended to involve a senior member of the parliamentary staff in the working group. This person can facilitate the administration of surveys, support various audits and ensure effective co-ordination between the working group and the parliament. An assessment cannot proceed without the support of OPDs and persons with disabilities, who contribute their expertise and lived experiences to the process.

Another important lesson from previous (pilot) assessments is to include follow-up steps into the assessment process. By establishing a working group, comprised of MPs, parliamentary staff and representatives from national OPDs, it becomes more feasible for the parliament to organize follow-up events and prioritize the implementation of the action plan to address the identified barriers and recommendations effectively.

Stage 1: Preparation

A disability-inclusion assessment should engage all significant political parties within the parliamentary community, as well as ensure the systematic involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. This can only take place if sufficient time is taken to plan and agree on the format of the assessment.

The initiative to undertake an assessment may come from within parliament or from external actors, but the process starts with a co-ordinator. Where ODIHR is involved in supporting the assessment, it acts as the assessment co-ordinator. The motivation for conducting an assessment will likely impact the assessment process, making it important for the co-ordinator to understand the rationale. The co-ordinator will begin to make initial arrangements, including conducting a brief mapping of the stakeholders to ascertain who should be engaged in the process. Local partners and, where present, ODIHR field offices often play an important role in the co-ordination process, providing background information, awareness about any sensitivities and guidance on identifying and engaging stakeholders. Throughout the process, the co-ordinator provides the methodology, tools and guidance; solicits parliamentary support; engages external experts and OPDs; facilitates the process; and safeguards the methodological integrity and independence of the assessment.

1. Secure parliamentary support

Every assessment needs the support of the parliamentary leadership at the highest level to succeed. This support then should be expressed in a formal decision, such as an invitation from the Speaker to conduct an assessment. It is important to highlight that support will be needed during the entire the process to ensure the assessment leads to genuine change. MPs, from across the political spectrum, will also need to be involved throughout the assessment.

2. Engage external experts

The co-ordinator identifies and engages an international expert or experts to support the assessment process. In some cases, it is advisable to have

a team: either a larger group of experts (for larger parliaments), or a group of national or international experts with complementary experience and qualifications. The external expert may come from OPDs, other civil society organizations (CSOs), academia or international organizations. Engaging a local expert can help to ensure sufficient understanding of the national political and parliamentary environment. The external expert should have both a background in parliamentary affairs and expertise on disability inclusion in political and public life, as well as lived experience of disability if possible. The external expert should have a deep understanding of the national political and party system for the assessment to be implemented successfully. The co-ordinator should work with the external expert to determine what the process will look like, clarify roles and responsibilities and establish the joint expectations for co-operation.

3. Identify parliamentary focal points

It is important for the co-ordinator to have at least one focal point in the parliament being assessed, with whom to co-ordinate the assessment. The focal point should be appointed by the parliament and work closely with the co-ordinator and external expert. The expert should agree on a timetable and discuss expectations with the focal point early in the process to ensure the assessment runs smoothly. For example, during the implementation stage, the focal point will be expected to co-ordinate the completion of a questionnaire, as well as ensure the external expert receives any parliamentary documents they might need.

The co-ordinator and the focal point then set up a working group, which will supervise the assessment. The working group is composed of OPDs, the parliamentary focal point(s), parliamentary staff, MPs and any other stakeholders, such as representatives of international organizations or OSCE field offices.

4. Connect with local OPDs

It is important to involve OPDs throughout the whole process. It is vital that OPDs are contacted during the preparation stage, informed about the assessment process and how they can be involved, and included in the working group. The co-ordinator should meet OPD representatives to discuss

and agree on priorities for the implementation stage and to understand their needs, as reasonable accommodations may be necessary. The co-ordinator should ensure that the OPDs represent a range of disabilities and backgrounds, such as networks of women with disabilities and youth organizations. Representatives from OPDs should be compensated for their time and expertise.

5. Launch the assessment

A kick-off meeting is held with the working group to introduce the external expert and the co-ordinator. During this meeting, all participants should agree on the assessment methodology, tools and timeline. This ensures the assessment is tailored to the specific parliamentary context, while maintaining consistency in core components across multiple assessments, including the four-pillar structure and key methodological principles.

Following the kick off, the working group takes on overall responsibility for the assessment and for the implementation of the subsequent action plan. The co-ordinator leads the assessment process and preparation of the final report. The external expert and co-ordinator may, however, attend future working group meetings, but only as observers. This is to prevent any conflict of interests and ensure rigorous peer review during later stages of the process.

Stage 2: Implementation

Once the assessment has been launched, all stakeholders have been engaged and the working group has been set up, the next stage can begin — implementation. This covers a range of activities, all of which aim to build a full picture of each area covered by the assessment. The implementation stage also provides a valuable opportunity to raise awareness about disability inclusion in parliament and to build support for the assessment, the recommendations and the action plan to follow.

1. Desk research and pre-visit data collection

The external expert conducts desk research for a desk review report, which is made prior to the expert visiting the parliament in person. This should cover all four pillars of the disability-inclusive parliament framework and will inform the subsequent in-person visit by identifying any gaps in the information and key areas for further research. Sufficient time should be allocated during the preparation phase to ensure that the necessary information is gathered prior to the in-person visit.

Sources of information include:

- **Documents to be supplied by the parliament:** E.g., the Constitution, the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament, any laws relevant to disability inclusion. A full list can be found in [Annexe 1](#).
- **Independent research documents and information:** E.g., news reports, the parliament's website, reports of the country and civil society to the UN and/or Council of Europe treaty bodies, ODIHR Legal Reviews and/or Comprehensive Assessments, ODIHR Election Observation Mission Reports, and reports by international organizations.
- **Pre-visit questionnaire completed by the parliament.** One pre-visit questionnaire should be completed by the parliament as an institution to identify work already being done with regards to disability inclusion. A sample questionnaire is provided in [Annexe 2](#).
- **Survey completed by persons with disabilities.** With the support of the external expert and parliamentary focal point, local OPDs should disseminate an online, accessible survey to persons with disabilities. Ideally, they will have visited the parliament or had experience using the parliament's website. A sample survey is given in [Annexe 3](#).
- **Survey completed by MPs and parliamentary staff.** Parliament should take the lead in disseminating an online survey to MPs and parliamentary staff to collect data on current views and perceptions of disability inclusion in parliament. Attention should be paid to ensuring that the survey is sent to all MPs and parliamentary staff and that it is filled out by both parliamentarians and staff. A sample survey is provided in [Annexe 4](#). Survey responses are a useful tool

for gauging the understanding of disability inclusion in parliament, the experience of MPs and staff with disability, and whether there is likely to be support for certain reforms following the assessment. Surveys are useful in understanding views and developing ideas for discussion during the visit. The survey data should be disaggregated by gender, age, and other characteristics, as relevant, in order to ensure an intersectional lens.

The desk review report should include an introduction — containing a brief overview of the importance of disability inclusion and the assessment process — followed by four chapters on representation, lawmaking, oversight and access, respectively. The external expert should consult [Table 1](#) for guidance on what to include in each chapter.

The report will be used to determine the priorities for data collection during the in-person visit. It is important to note that, following the in-person visit, the report will be updated to become the final assessment report. In this way, any information that is missing after the desk review can be added later.

2. Conduct an in-person visit

The in-person visit is an essential step in the assessment process. Each parliament may wish to adapt the format of the in-person visit to meet their individual needs. The external expert and co-ordinator plan the visit with the working group with all members agreeing on the format. All in-person events should be fully accessible for persons with disabilities.

The in-person visit should include:

1. **Interviews and focus groups with MPs, parliamentary staff, key personnel from political parties, representatives from OPDs, other CSOs and persons with disabilities and international organizations, including OSCE Field Offices.** These meetings should focus on filling in the missing information and obtaining qualitative information. Questions should be tailored to the expertise and experience of the interlocutor. Interviews and focus groups may yield ideas about further avenues for action. Efforts should be taken to ensure that the participants represent a diverse range of different identities, including women, young people and members of ethnic

minorities. Participation in interviews and focus groups should be voluntary, and participants should provide informed consent and be made aware of confidentiality and data protection arrangements before taking part.

2. **A workshop on disability inclusion.** The in-person visit provides an opportunity to raise the parliamentary community's awareness about disability inclusion. The workshop should explain the concept of disability inclusion and the assessment process and be designed to increase knowledge and understanding about the issues as they relate to the particular parliament. It is also an opportunity for the parliamentary leadership to demonstrate its commitment to the assessment process and secure buy-in from the parliamentary community for the action plan to follow. Attendance should be voluntary, but the parliamentary focal point should encourage a high level of active participation by a diverse range of MPs and staff, including those in positions of leadership such as committee chairs or heads of departments.
3. **Infrastructure accessibility assessment.** The in-person visit should include an assessment of the accessibility of the parliament's physical infrastructure and communications, a core part of the Access pillar. The infrastructure assessment may be conducted using the Parliamentary Accessibility Checklists for Physical Infrastructure and Communications (sample checklists provided in [Annexes 6 and 7](#)), which should be adapted to national accessibility standards, where applicable. The accessibility assessment consists of a systematic walk-through of the parliamentary premises to check their compliance with national and international standards and to identify both barriers and good practices. It is led by the international expert in co-operation with the parliamentary community, OPDs and, where relevant, accessibility experts, ensuring that both technical expertise and lived experience inform the findings. It is crucial for the assessment to include individuals with different types of disabilities to ensure infrastructure is accessible to as broad a group as possible. The findings feed in to the broader disability-inclusion analysis.

The in-person visit typically lasts three working days. Ideally, the workshop should take place on the first day in order to raise awareness about the

assessment and establish the baseline understanding of disability inclusion within the parliamentary community. The interviews and focus groups should be conducted on the second and third days, although the length and format of the visit can be tailored to individual parliaments.

Interlocutors for interviews and focus groups should include, but are not limited to:

- MPs or parliamentary staff with disabilities
- Speaker, Deputy Speaker or other members of the parliamentary leadership
- Chair and/or members of the committee mandated with disabilities or, if there is no committee, the Chair of the committee on human rights, equality or sustainable development
- Chair and/or members of the committee on legal affairs, legislation or similar
- Chair and/or members of the budget committee and/or dedicated oversight committee
- Members of any informal groups on disability
- Heads of political party factions in parliament
- Chair of the ethics committee or the body mandated with parliamentary ethics
- The Secretary General, Head of Human Resources or other key members of the parliamentary staff leadership
- Committee staff or research personnel, including any of those with expertise on disability
- Legal department staff
- Press service and public relations staff
- Library staff
- IT staff
- Protocol staff, or staff from a similar unit responsible for facilitating seating arrangements, accompanying MPs and guests in the building and organizing interpretation of parliamentary sessions
- Staff responsible for visitor experience
- Representatives from local OPDs

Local OPDs and persons with disabilities should be engaged throughout the assessment process and can be a valuable source of information during the desk review. However, they are especially important during the in-person visit. Representatives from OPDs can sit in on interviews and contribute to focus groups, and are invited to lead sessions during the workshop, sharing their expertise on the local context.

3. Data analysis and report drafting

Following the in-person visit, the external expert collates all the new data, analyses it and updates the desk research report into the final assessment report. At this point, the expert formulates the recommendations. These should be both actionable and feasible for the parliamentary context. Making too many recommendations can be counterproductive.

The external expert submits the draft final report for review by the co-ordinator. Then it is sent to the working group, which, on behalf of the parliament, verifies the factual accuracy of the report and provides feedback. The external expert and co-ordinator should not be part of the verification process, to ensure thorough review. OPDs who are part of the working group should also be able to provide their comments to ensure that the report includes their views and lived experiences. The external expert implements any the proposed changes and finalizes the report.

Table 2 — Final assessment report structure

Introduction	• Brief overview of disability-inclusive parliaments • Brief overview of disability-inclusion assessments • Methodology followed during the assessment, including details of the survey(s), questionnaire and in-person visit
Findings and recommendations	• Representation • Lawmaking • Oversight • Access
Appendices	These could include: • Table with the scope of the assessment • Table with survey results • Accessibility checklists, where applicable (infrastructure and communications) • Template for a parliamentary action plan • ODIHR's <i>Dublin Recommendations</i>

Stage 3: Follow up

Following verification, the final report is sent to the parliament. The next steps are determined by the parliament with support from the co-ordinator, where requested. After this, the parliament has the opportunity to raise awareness further about disability inclusion, garner support for future reforms and inform the public about its commitment to disability inclusion. The co-ordinator and local OPDs would ideally still be available to support parliament in this stage, if required.

1. Presentation and publication of the assessment report

Once the report has been finalized, the parliament should organize a launch event to present the assessment findings. The co-ordinator and external expert could be invited to present the report and recommendations. It is good practice also to invite local OPDs to speak, so they can comment on the necessity and practicality of the recommendations, further increase understanding around disability inclusion and foster a sense of agency and ownership of the report and its recommendations. This event is important for soliciting commitment for an action plan, as outlined in the next section.

Alongside the launch event, the report should be translated, as necessary, into the national language(s) and distributed among MPs and published on the parliament's website, in accessible formats. Where OPDs are willing and able, they can be consulted to help ensure the report is accessible.

2. Action Plan

The final report should be used to develop a concrete parliamentary action plan; a template can be included as an annexe to the final report. Local OPDs and persons with disabilities should be engaged in drafting the action plan. The co-ordinator can help with technical expertise and experience-based knowledge, if needed. The rationale of the action plan is to systematize the implementation of the final report recommendations that the parliament plans to carry forward.

The action plan should ideally cover all four pillars of the assessment, with multiple objectives. For each objective the following should be specified:

- Activity
- Indicator of success
- Baseline and target
- Parliamentary body or unit in charge
- Time frame
- Required resources and budget
- Monitoring and review arrangements

It is important that the action plan is achievable, with realistic timeframes over a multi-year period. Clear responsibilities should be outlined for each activity.

2.4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The successful implementation of a disability-inclusion assessment relies on clear roles and responsibilities. Below is an outline description of the primary roles:

Co-ordinator:

- Provides the methodology, tools and guidance for the assessment process;
- Co-ordinates and oversees the assessment implementation;
- Hires the external expert and local OPDs to conduct the assessment;
- Facilitates the workshop during the in-person visit;
- Contributes to conducting interviews and focus group discussions as appropriate; and
- Oversees and leads the finalization, verification and presentation of the final assessment report.

Parliament:

- Provides access to key documents, parliamentary premises, MPs and key staff for assessments, surveys and interviews;
- Hosts meetings, focus groups, workshop and other activities related to the assessment;
- Completes the pre-visit questionnaire for parliament as well as an accessibility infrastructure assessment;
- Supports the dissemination of surveys to stakeholders and ensures participation; and
- Acts as a vocal supporter of disability inclusion by promoting awareness and implementing recommendations.

OPDs:

- Actively participate in the assessment process to ensure the representation of diverse perspectives;
- Contribute expertise and lived experience to the assessment process;
- Support the distribution of surveys to persons with disabilities through their networks; and
- Participate and contribute with expertise and lived experience to the infrastructure and communications accessibility check.

External expert:

- Researches and identifies key stakeholders for inclusion/consultation;
- Completes the desk research and drafts the desk research report;
- Conducts interviews and focus groups during the in-person visit;
- Leads the accessibility infrastructure check of the parliament's premises;
- Drafts the final assessment report;
- Assists with co-ordinating the assessment process; and
- Liaises with OPDs to leverage their expertise and support.

3. Evidence-based insights from the OSCE region

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In 2024, ODIHR conducted a survey on the political participation of persons with disabilities across all OSCE national parliaments, with the support of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, in order better to understand the barriers, challenges and opportunities for success that pSs may encounter when implementing the disability-inclusion assessment methodology. **Thirty-three national parliaments** answered the survey, representing more than half of all OSCE pSs.

This chapter presents the research data, highlighting what is already being done across the OSCE region to further the political participation of persons with disabilities in national parliaments. It identifies existing trends and good practices, including case studies from nine national parliaments, as well as some gaps and areas for improvement in current policy.

The survey data gives ODIHR and other stakeholders an important baseline for tracing progress over time, as OSCE national parliaments work towards the common goal of enhancing the political participation of persons with disabilities. Regular research and information gathering, such as through disability-inclusion assessments and surveys, is important for understanding what has been done and what further action is needed. The insights from the survey revealed some key gaps in parliamentary practice that can be addressed by conducting regular and comprehensive parliamentary disability-inclusion assessments.

This chapter has three sections: an overview of the data and the key trends identified in national parliaments; notable gaps in current work and related recommendations for further action; and case studies of the parliaments of Canada, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Moldova, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal and the United States, alongside other examples of good practice from pSs. All data and practices mentioned reflect the state of affairs at the time the surveys were conducted in 2024 and do not include any reforms/changes made since then.

3.2 SURVEY DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

The research was conducted by ODIHR in partnership with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The survey was developed in spring 2024 and one copy was distributed in June 2024 to each of the 56 national parliaments of the pSs (excluding the Holy See). The survey was made available in English and Russian. Survey questions were developed based on ODIHR's prior experience in this subject area. Responses were received from 33 pSs.²⁰ There is, therefore, no data from certain pSs.²¹ To develop case studies, follow-up interviews were conducted with nine national parliaments, either via email or an online video conferencing platform.

The survey consisted of 18 central questions²² (with sub-questions) under six thematic headings: parliamentary structure and policy, formal and informal bodies, review of international commitments and legislation, expertise and data collection, support and accessibility measures, and additional comments (where parliaments were asked to provide any further information not covered in the survey). The survey was live until September 2024. Based on the innovation and uniqueness of their responses, nine parliaments were selected for follow-up interviews in autumn 2024 in order to identify further good practices and develop several detailed case studies. Interviews were conducted with Canada, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Moldova, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal and the United States.²³ When selecting case studies, attention was given to ensuring geographical diversity across the OSCE region.

20 Thirty-three OSCE participating States responded to the survey: Andorra, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Türkiye and the United States.

21 Twenty-three OSCE participating States did not respond to the survey.

22 Survey questions can be found in [Annexe 5](#).

23 Due to the parliamentary calendar, it was not possible to schedule an interview with the *Oireachtas* to inform the Irish case study. However, as the survey response was extremely thorough and detailed, the completed case study was instead sent to the *Oireachtas* for verification and to provide any supplementary information if needed.

The research conclusions are based on the data provided by the national parliaments. It is important to note that some of the responses indicated a lack of understanding around the topic of disability inclusion and some of its more technical aspects. This survey has yielded important insights, but the data also shows that training and capacity building are needed in national parliaments.

3.3 OVERVIEW OF THE DATA AND KEY TRENDS

The data gives an overview of the representation of persons with disabilities in national parliaments, including the number of MPs with disabilities in the OSCE region. This is the first time such data has been compiled for the OSCE region.

Of the 33 national parliaments who responded to the survey, six do not collect any data on MPs with disabilities.²⁴ Several respondents who indicated the number of MPs with disabilities in their parliaments added the caveat that their data was incomplete, because there was no systematic data collection. Instead, these respondents provided the number of MPs that had asked for reasonable accommodations.

Of the remaining 27 pSs, 48 per cent said they had no MPs with a disability in parliament, 26 per cent had one MP, 11 per cent had two, and 7 per cent had three. Only two national parliaments reported having more than three MPs with a disability — Ireland (6) and Poland (13).

24 Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Estonia, Germany, Norway and the United States.

Figure 1 — Number of MPs with a disability in national parliaments, of 27 OSCE participating States that responded to the survey.

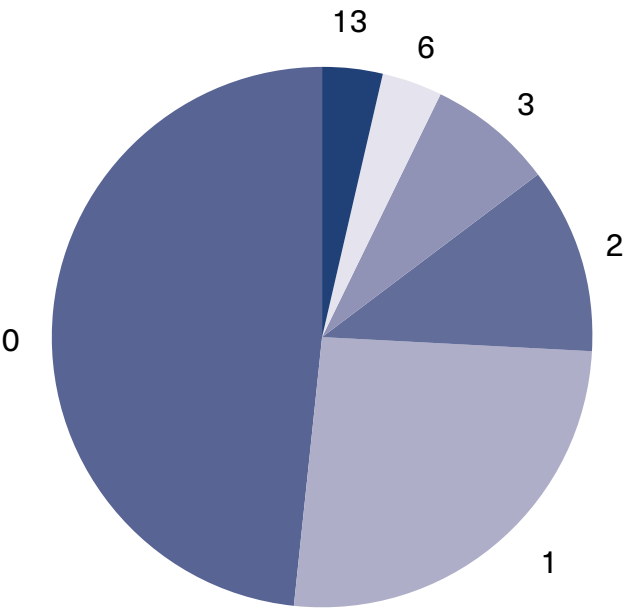


Table 3 — National parliaments with MPs with disabilities

Number of MPs with a disability	Participating State
0	Belarus, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Finland, Liechtenstein, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Netherlands, North Macedonia, San Marino, Slovenia
1	Andorra, Belgium, Georgia, Hungary, Montenegro, Slovakia, Spain
2	Portugal, Mongolia, Türkiye
3	Iceland, Italy
>3	Ireland, Poland

In the survey, respondents were also asked for the number of MPs with a disability in the previous convocation of parliament. Of these 27 states, Belgium and Italy reported that there was no data available. Of the remainder, in six cases the number of MPs with disabilities had increased — in Andorra, Ireland, Mongolia, Poland, Portugal and Spain. However, in eight parliaments, the number of MPs with a disability had decreased from the previous convocation.²⁵

The survey revealed several other key statistics related to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in national parliaments:

- **15 per cent of parliaments mention disability in their Rules of Procedure or Code of Conduct.** Five parliaments reference disability in their Rules of Procedure: Canada, Hungary, Georgia, Portugal and the United States. Only the United States House of Representatives mentions disability in their Code of Conduct. In most cases, the articles in the Rules of Procedure are on preventing discrimination against MPs and staff with disabilities.
- **24 per cent of parliaments collect data on disability.** A few parliaments have made specific efforts to collect data on disability, such as through a survey (Canada) and studies undertaken by committees (Moldova). Other parliaments reported that data collection is only done under employment regulations regarding parliamentary staff or with respect to MPs who had requested accommodations. It should be noted that this information was yielded from a question on disability-disaggregated data, but there seemed to be a lack of understanding on what this means in practice. Parliaments therefore ticked ‘Yes’ if they collected data on disability, even if they did not have other data sets that could be disaggregated by disability.
- **39 per cent of parliaments have procedures in place to consider draft legislation from the perspective of disability.** However, these vary significantly in scope and do not always apply systematically to all legislation. Often, when asked to provide

²⁵ Although, some cases may need to be looked at with nuance. For example, in Hungary, the number of MPs with disabilities fell from two to one between convocations, but this was due to the death of one of the two previous MPs. However, the second secured their re-election.

specifics, some parliaments clarified that these provisions only apply to certain bills either based on their topic or coming from the government. Respondents also often said that disability has to be included in more general impact assessments.

- **49 per cent of parliaments have a disability policy or action plan.** In the vast majority of cases, these parliamentary policies are related either to accessibility or equal opportunities in staff employment. At times, a dedicated disability policy is integrated into a wider policy related to equality, diversity, inclusion, equal opportunities or non-discrimination, or included in other strategic documents such as committee action plans.
- **55 per cent of parliaments have conducted disability audits or a review related to disability.** Many of the respondents stated that these were solely related to accessibility. Some pSs specifically mentioned involving OPDs in this work — for example, North Macedonia, Slovakia and Spain.
- **64 per cent of parliaments take efforts to include OPDs in their work.** In almost all cases, when asked to specify how this was done, parliaments stated that OPDs are invited to committee hearings on bills that specifically concern persons with disabilities, or standing committees are able to reach out to any bodies relevant to their work.
- **76 per cent of parliaments have a formal body mandated to oversee disability issues, but only 15 per cent have an informal body working on disability issues.** In most cases, disability issues are included in the mandate of more general formal bodies also covering topics such as social issues, health, welfare, employment, transport, family, seniors, equal opportunities and human rights. Only Czechia, Ireland and Spain have formal bodies (including sub-committees) dedicated solely to disability. Five parliaments — Estonia, Finland, Mongolia, North Macedonia and the United States — have informal bodies that work on disability issues, either as a forum to develop policy and legislative initiatives or as a support group for persons with disabilities in parliament.
- **94 per cent of parliaments report having buildings and offices that are fully or partially accessible to MPs, staff and visitors with disabilities.** A further 70 per cent said that they have measures

in place to support MPs with disabilities, including reasonable accommodations. 64 per cent of parliaments said that they have support or accessibility measures in place to support the wider parliamentary community, namely staff and visitors.

3.4 GAPS IN PARLIAMENTARY WORK ON THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION

While the survey responses highlighted important and innovative work being done across the OSCE region within national parliaments, they also demonstrated three major gaps in how parliaments are working to enhance disability inclusion. These gaps were extrapolated from all the survey responses and form the starting point for thinking more comprehensively and holistically about including disability in all parliamentary processes and outputs. Based on the identified gaps, recommendations for further action were generated.

Gap 1: Lack of systematic data collection

Without robust data, it is difficult for parliaments to identify barriers, design targeted policies or measure the impact of inclusion efforts. As mentioned above, six respondents reported that they do not collect data on the number of MPs with disabilities. Several other parliaments stated that they are unable to answer definitively how many MPs have disabilities, from either the current or previous convocation, and instead provided information on how many MPs requested accommodations as a result of their disability.

In general, there was a lack of knowledge about collecting disability-disaggregated data. For those parliaments that do collect data, the majority of the data is about parliamentary staff, as required by national employment regulations. Parliaments often face challenges in collecting disability-disaggregated data due to privacy concerns, lack of resources or inadequate data-collection mechanisms.

Access to accurate, representative and disaggregated data is crucial for identifying and removing barriers to equal political participation.²⁶

Recommendation: Consider systematizing the collection of data on disability and using it to inform disability policies, track representation and assess the impact of accessibility measures, including by:

- Prioritizing anonymized and voluntary data collection to address privacy concerns while still gathering essential information;
- Training parliamentary staff on disability-sensitive data-collection practices that align with national and international standards; and
- Engaging experts from OPDs and data-protection authorities to ensure transparency and accountability in the data-collection process.

Gap 2: Disability inclusion is equated with accessibility

Accessibility is a crucial component of facilitating the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life. It is commendable that this is being recognized by so many national parliaments. Given the extent of expertise on accessibility, this is often an obvious and important entry point for parliaments seeking to make their services more disability inclusive. Expertise and guidance on other topics related to disability inclusion in political life may be more difficult to access.

The finding that 94 per cent of parliaments report having buildings and offices that are fully or partially accessible to MPs, staff and visitors with disabilities is notably high. While it is encouraging that so many parliaments consider themselves to have made progress on accessibility, genuine accessibility requires specialist knowledge and the meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities and OPDs in the assessment. To ensure that reported accessibility reflects the lived experience of individuals with diverse

26 The regular updating and publishing of disaggregated data on the political participation of persons with disabilities, including their representation in national parliaments is covered by Recommendation 7 of ODIHR's [Dublin Recommendations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Participate in Political and Public Life in the OSCE Region](#) and is also reflected in Article 31 of the UN [CRPD](#).

disabilities in practice, it is important that accessibility evaluations are carried out with the input of OPDs and accessibility experts, rather than relying on self-assessment alone.

However, it is very clear from the survey responses that accessibility is the primary focus of parliamentary work on enhancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities, to the detriment of other areas. This imbalance indicates that accessibility is often seen as the main marker of inclusion, while broader dimensions, such as policymaking and oversight are neglected.

For example, most of the action plans and policies mentioned by pSs in answer to Question 3 (on disability action plans) were accessibility plans and policies. While it is undoubtedly important to put these in place, there is also a need for broader and more comprehensive parliamentary disability action plans and policies, which address all of the barriers persons with disabilities face in accessing politics. Additionally, when discussing disability-centred reviews and audits, most parliaments mentioned accessibility reviews and audits. This means that there is no systematic review of other parliamentary activities from the perspective of disability, such as lawmaking and oversight. The disability-inclusion assessment methodology provides a more comprehensive guide for how all parliamentary processes can be assessed from the viewpoint of disability inclusion.

Recommendation: Expand the scope of disability inclusion, including by:

- Developing guidelines for legislative reviews with a disability perspective;
- Conducting disability-sensitive oversight; and
- Leveraging accessibility gains as a stepping stone to broader inclusion.

Gap 3: Disability is not systematically addressed in parliamentary activities

The historic under-representation of persons with disabilities in political life and the scarcity of available data on the topic means that there is no comprehensive roadmap on how to make parliaments disability-inclusive.

From the responses to several different questions, a trend emerged whereby disability considerations are included in parliamentary work but not specifically and systematically. One example is Question 10 (on involving OPDs in parliamentary work). Many parliaments responded that it was at the discretion of standing committees to invite civil society organizations to proceedings, and it was taken for granted that this would include OPDs when disability issues were discussed. Yet, in the responses there was little evidence of any systematic or dedicated approaches to engaging a range of OPDs in parliamentary activity, including in regards to issues not purely about disability. Similarly, in response to Question 11 (on disability expertise in parliamentary services), many parliaments listed the research service or a similar service as being fully capable of supplying disability expertise, without mentioning whether there were any staff with specialist knowledge of disability issues.

The data also suggests that, while formal bodies are important for ensuring accountability, they typically address disability as one of several issues under broader mandates, such as social policy, health or human rights. This multipurpose focus can dilute attention to disability-specific barriers, limiting opportunities for tailored actions and robust oversight. Informal mechanisms, although rarer, appear to have several benefits, including greater flexibility and cross-party collaboration, enabling innovation and the broader integration of disability inclusion across parliamentary activities.

From the data, it is apparent that disability is not given much specific attention in parliamentary processes. Instead, it is often seen as another protected characteristic within broader work on equality. There is little dedicated and specialist attention given to disability. In turn, disability inclusion does not appear to be systematically reflected in parliamentary practice. More concretely, work is being done on disability inclusion in national parliaments without input from OPDs or persons with disabilities. Intersectionality — the inclusion of persons with disabilities from different social categories, such as women, youth or ethnic minorities with disabilities in the work of parliament — was also notably absent from survey responses.

Recommendation: Strengthen the systemic integration of disability into parliamentary functions, including by:

- Encouraging formal bodies to dedicate specific agendas or subcommittees to disability issues to ensure they receive sustained attention;
- Fostering informal bodies, including promoting the establishment of caucuses or all-party groups dedicated to disability, leveraging their flexibility to advocate inclusion across multiple legislative domains;
- Embedding disability perspectives into all parliamentary activities, including legislative drafting and reviews, oversight processes and representation efforts; and
- Enhancing OPD engagement beyond consultation on disability-specific legislation, ensuring their input informs wider parliamentary work through clear procedures, adequate notice, accessible formats, reasonable accommodations and feedback on how their input was considered.

3.5. Good practices

This chapter includes nine short case studies of parliaments, which, as of 2024, were taking various innovative steps to enhance the political participation of persons with disabilities. Developed from survey responses and follow-up interviews, these case studies highlight particularly novel or significant good practices within each parliament in the different areas of disability inclusion. Where relevant, other good practices in the same thematic area have been included in the case studies, in order to give a comparative perspective.

These good practices illustrate how parliaments have successfully addressed barriers to political participation for persons with disabilities, from improving physical accessibility and enhancing inclusive communications, to engaging OPDs and adopting disability-sensitive policies. These examples serve as models for parliaments to consider as they implement the steps outlined in the methodology. They also demonstrate that meaningful progress is achievable when parliaments work alongside OPDs, accessibility experts

and other stakeholders. It should be noted that the good practices presented are based on self-reported information from parliaments and have not been independently verified or assessed for implementation impact.

CASE STUDY 1 — Canada (House of Commons and Senate)

Introducing accessibility policies: All parliamentary entities are obliged to prepare and publish accessibility plans under the 2019 Accessible Canada Act, including the House of Commons, the Senate, the Library of Parliament, the office of the Senate Ethics Officer, the office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, the Parliamentary Protective Service and the office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The House and Senate plans were developed in consultation with OPDs, who also act as advisors for plan implementation. These action plans must be updated every three years, and parliamentary entities must also publish progress reports, detailing the steps that they have taken to implement their plans. The plans and progress reports are all publicly available online. Both the House and the Senate have a dedicated member of staff responsible for the implementation of the accessibility plan — the Director of Accessibility Implementation (House) and the Senate Accessibility Officer. An Accessibility Working Group was formed in the House of Commons in January 2022, comprised of directors, managers and subject-matter experts from across the House Administration, who meet monthly to discuss the plan's implementation and any feedback received.

Another example, from Iceland

The [Icelandic Parliament's Accessibility Policy for People with Disabilities](#) has been in place since 2007 and covers both accessibility in the physical environment and in employment. The policy includes measures to ensure barrier-free access to buildings, appropriate workspaces, reasonable accommodations and collaboration with OPDs and external experts. In particular, the policy outlines that any structural changes to parliament buildings need to be guided by the principles of universal design. It also affirms that laws and regulations, international commitments and recommendations from OPDs will be used as guides for accessibility work.

Collecting data: In spring 2023, the House of Commons undertook an anonymous survey of the parliamentary community. This is an annual survey to help the parliamentary administration identify and evaluate accessibility barriers. Respondents were asked to identify barriers that they had encountered or observed, suggest ways that they could be removed and list potential solutions. The survey also gave people the option to identify as having a disability or being close to someone with a disability. In total, 8 per cent answered that they self-identified as having a disability and 6 per cent that they were close to a person with a disability. Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide their contact details if they were interested in participating in consultations. They were then invited to take part in further workshops and events.

Accommodating MPs with disabilities: The Rules of Procedure of both Houses contain a provision on ensuring the full and equal participation of MPs with disabilities. Rule 1-1(3) of the Rules of the Senate states: “if a provision of these Rules or a practice of the Senate constitutes a barrier to a senator’s full and equal participation in proceedings solely due to a disability, as defined in the Accessible Canada Act, the Speaker, or the chair of a committee, may authorise reasonable adjustments in the application of the rule or practice in order to facilitate the Senator’s participation in proceedings in the Senate chamber or in the committee room.” Similarly, Standing Order 1.1. of the House of Commons Standing Orders allows the Speaker to modify the application of certain rules and practices of the House and its committees to allow MPs with disabilities to participate fully.

CASE STUDY 2 — Finland (*Eduskunta*)

Innovating with an informal body: The Parliamentary Co-operation Group on Disability Affairs has been active in the *Eduskunta* since 1999. The informal group is organized during every convocation and currently includes eight MPs and 20 representatives from OPDs. All MPs are sent the invitation to join the group, and the Finnish Disability Forum facilitates the nomination of representatives from each member organization. The group’s mandate is to act as a bridge between OPDs and parliament and has been successful in

influencing legislation, including through holding meetings with government ministers.

Another example, from Mongolia

In August 2024, the Mongolian Parliament held the first meeting of the new, informal working group on social inclusion and accessibility. The group is comprised of 25 MPs, almost 20 per cent of the total, and includes the chairman, deputy chairman, chairpersons of standing committees and cabinet members.

Improving accessibility: The *Eduskunta* is also implementing several innovative measures related to visitor accessibility, along with barrier-free access for all visitors. For example, the parliament provides relief maps of the parliament building and plenary hall, which will soon be made available for guided tours. Visitors with visual impairments are also allowed to touch some statues and busts with cotton gloves provided by the parliament. The *Eduskunta* is currently conducting a survey on accessibility to inform planned repair and alteration works to the parliament building. Finally, the Administration and Services Department reaches out to external experts, including persons with disabilities, to plan accessible routes through the parliament for visitors, staff and MPs with disabilities.

Another example, from Spain

Parliamentary facilities have been made accessible, for example, through the installation of ramps in the plenary and committee halls, as well as induction loops. Signage in buildings has been adapted for persons with visual impairments. The broadcast of parliamentary sessions is subtitled, and sessions are also translated into sign language. The parliament employs staff with intellectual disabilities, as the Senate has a specific work programme for persons with intellectual disabilities, who are able to receive important documents about their work in Easy-to-Read format.

CASE STUDY 3 — Hungary (National Assembly)

Ensuring sign language provisions: The Act on the National Assembly (2012), which serves as the parliament's Rules of Procedure, outlines the right to use Hungarian sign language when speaking in the National Assembly. Additionally, sign language interpretation is provided by the Office of the National Assembly during plenary sessions and, at the request of the member, parliamentary committee sessions.

Mandating formal bodies: During a previous convocation, the Committee on Social Welfare had a dedicated Subcommittee on Disability. However, during the 2022-2025 convocation, this was replaced by a new Subcommittee on Equal Opportunities also specifically mandated to cover disability issues. The subcommittee was chaired by an MP with a disability. More broadly, the Committee on Social Welfare was specifically tasked with monitoring the National Disability Programme 2015-2025. Under the programme, the Committee was tasked with receiving reports from the government on the programme's implementation and conducting oversight activities. The programme was adopted through a parliamentary resolution and is available in Braille, Hungarian sign language and Easy-to-Read formats.

Another example, from Czechia

Since 2009, the Committee on Social Policy in the Chamber of Deputies has established a Sub-Committee on Social Services and People with Disabilities. The Committee has six members from the Committee on Social Policy and is mandated to cover issues regarding persons with disabilities.

CASE STUDY 4 — Ireland (Houses of the *Oireachtas*)

Introducing dedicated formal bodies: When it was established in September 2020, the Joint Committee on Disability Matters became one of the first committees in the world tasked with monitoring the UN CRPD. The Committee has members from both houses and regularly liaises with other national parliaments who are monitoring the UN CRPD. Thus far, the

Committee has held over 125 public meetings with key stakeholders, such as OPDs and self-advocates, in order to support their work. It should also be noted that engaging with OPDs and the lived experiences of persons with disabilities is included in the Terms of Reference for all parliamentary committees. The Committee has published five policy reports, bringing attention to key under-studied areas related to the human rights model of disability, including on the public participation of persons with disabilities and harmonization of national legislation with the UN CRPD.

Pioneering in parliamentary services: The Houses of the *Oireachtas*, in addition to a dedicated equality, diversity and inclusion team, has a Disability Liaison Officer within parliamentary services, who assists and supports staff with disabilities to receive necessary support. They also provide line managers with information and advice. In addition, the *Oireachtas* has an Irish Sign Language Interpreter team, which provides live interpretation for televised parliamentary sessions, political programming and important events, such as the annual Budget Day, in addition to translations for the *Oireachtas* website and interpretation for committee witnesses and guided tours. The team also works with the Education Outreach Officer to provide educational programmes for schoolchildren with hearing impairments. Finally, they host a fortnightly Irish Sign Language (ISL) conversation café for staff. The parliament has introduced several training programmes on disability for the entire parliamentary community, including the Understanding Autism Training in 2023. The *Oireachtas* was accredited as the world's first autism-friendly parliament, following a sensory audit of public areas held in December 2022.

Another example, from Türkiye

In parliament, the public relations unit staff and counsellors receive expert training on inclusive communication and communication with persons with disabilities. All parliamentary staff are also issued a brochure entitled “Proper Communication with Disabled People”, which includes information on sign language as well as appropriate behaviour.

CASE STUDY 5 — Moldova (Parliament)

Mainstreaming disability in legislation: The Law on the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (2012) mandates that draft laws related to labour, the audiovisual code and electoral issues must be considered from the perspective of disability. Two formal bodies in parliament have a mandate to oversee disability-related issues: the Standing Committee on Social Protection, Healthcare and Family; and the Standing Committee on Human Rights and Interethnic Relations. Parliamentary committees can also consult the National Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for advice. The National Council is made up of representatives from all central public authorities and OPDs as well as members of the Standing Committee on Social Protection, Healthcare and Family.

Another example, from Cyprus

All draft bills submitted by the Government to the House of Representatives must be accompanied by an impact assessment, which includes the impact on persons with disabilities. One significant achievement in regards to mainstreaming disability was the 2024 Accessibility of Products and Services Law, which states that OPDs must be consulted by competent authorities when implementing this law.

Developing data analysis tools: In 2023, the Standing Committee on Social Protection, Healthcare and Family carried out consultations with representatives from civil society to develop a matrix of indicators for monitoring the rights of persons with disabilities. The resulting matrix has 116 indicators, based on the provisions of the UN CRPD, in the fields of: demography, employment, education, health care, social protection, justice and human rights, access to transport and infrastructure, participation in public, political and cultural life, and independent life and functional limitations.

CASE STUDY 6 — Montenegro (Parliament)

Using committee oversight functions: Within Parliament, the Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms is one of three bodies mandated with disability issues. The committee performs several important functions related to disability, including considering reports of Montenegro's Independent Monitoring Mechanism for the promotion, protection and monitoring of the UN CRPD and overseeing the application of the national disability strategy. In June 2015, the Parliament passed a conclusion obliging the government to perform an analysis of all regulations that define the rights of persons with disabilities in areas defined by the UN CRPD. The Government was also required to involve OPDs in all stages of this process and to prepare amendments to laws on traffic, health care and social and child protection. The Committee was then tasked with overseeing the implementation of this conclusion. Indeed, in April 2023, the Committee held a hearing on these recommendations to harmonise legislation with the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities and the UN CRPD as well as the implementation of the Strategy for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities from Discrimination and the Promotion of Equality 2017-2021.

Another example, from Poland

Each chamber of parliament has a body specifically mandated to oversee the implementation of the UN CRPD, which also includes disability policy within its remit. In the *Sejm* (lower house) this is the Committee on Social Policy, and in the Senate, this is the Committee on Family, Senior and Social Policy.

Conducting post-legislative scrutiny: The Committee also undertook post-legislative scrutiny of the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities in 2020, resulting in a set of recommendations that were presented to the Government in January 2021. In November 2024, the Committee held a hearing with various government ministries to assess the application of these recommendations. The hearing was also attended by OPDs.

Raising disability issues across committees: Both the Committee for Health, Labour and Social Welfare and the Committee on Gender Equality are mandated to cover disability and are actively working on the topic. For example, in 2024, the Committee for Health, Labour and Social Welfare held a hearing on improving the living conditions of children and persons with disabilities and then prepared a report that was submitted to several government ministries. Also, in 2023 and 2024, the Committee on Gender Equality held committee meetings to review important documents related to the implementation of the national disability strategy action plan.

CASE STUDY 7 — Norway (*Storting*)

Practising inclusive recruitment: The *Storting* has a recruitment policy for parliamentary staff, whereby for every vacant position, a person with a disability is invited to the interview stage, in line with national legal requirements. They also specifically mention in job advertisements that the *Storting* facilitates equal working conditions for persons with disabilities. Parliament is currently collaborating with *Fontenehuset*, a working community for people with mental health conditions, to help them gain practical work experience. Members from this community receive job training in the *Storting*, mostly in the Graphic or Catering Services Sections. Some of these trainees have been offered permanent employment at the *Storting*.

Introducing web accessibility solutions: The *Storting* has placed great emphasis on web accessibility and developing information and communications technology (ICT) solutions that comply with the principles of universal design. Accessibility is a legal requirement for all Norwegian websites and, from February 2023, all websites must publish an accessibility statement. The *Storting*'s Communication Department constantly works on measures to identify and correct errors, and all new content and website functions are checked against Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Another example, from Slovenia

In 2023, the parliament launched a working group for improving the accessibility of the web portal, following on from the Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications Act (2018), requiring that all public institutions ensure web accessibility. The group is comprised of parliamentary staff that are currently working with external experts to redesign the parliament's web portal to be fully accessible.

Making recommendations on disability: Within the *Storting*, the Standing Committee on Labour and Social Affairs is mandated with disability issues, including monitoring the implementation of the UN CRPD. Some achievements of the committee related to disability include issuing recommendations on changing terminology in legislation to align with the UN CRPD, appointing a public committee to investigate the financial situation of persons with disabilities and their families, and the human rights of persons with intellectual disabilities.

CASE STUDY 8 — Portugal (Assembly of the Republic)

Assisting independent mechanisms: Portugal has an independent body for implementing the UN CRPD, the National Mechanism for Monitoring the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The parliament works closely with the National Mechanism, including electing two members of the board. The National Mechanism's board also appoints a representative from each parliamentary group to the National Mechanism's consultative council. The National Mechanism is funded from the parliament's budget.

Supporting the parliamentary community: Whenever an MP with a disability is elected, the Assembly of the Republic conducts an assessment on the barriers that they may face and the measures needed to overcome them. This is either done with the MP themselves, particularly when mobility issues are at stake, or with the help of an expert. The Assembly also conducts regular training and awareness-raising sessions for the parliamentary community on disability. For example, in 2024, the parliament held an open workshop on how to provide support for visitors to parliament with visual

impairments in collaboration with the National Association of Blind and Visually Impaired of Portugal.

Another example, from North Macedonia

In 2020, the Parliamentary Institute collaborated with Polio Plus, a local OPD, to conduct an analysis of parliament's practices in relation to the disabled community. The review resulted in a set of action-oriented recommendations for parliament to enhance political participation and to enhance compliance with the CRPD.²⁷

CASE STUDY 9 — United States (Congress)

Legislating on disability issues: Only two congressional committees explicitly refer to disability in their rules: the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. However, since congressional committees tend to have jurisdiction over broad policy areas, almost every committee in Congress may have legislation related to disability referred to them. In the 118th Congress (2023-2025), 268 legislative measures were introduced that were related to disability. These legislative measures were distributed across committees, meaning that all 20 House standing committees and all 16 Senate standing committees were assigned draft laws with a disability aspect during this congressional session. For example, the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Reporting Act 2024 was assigned to the House Committee on Small Business and the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

27 See the final report [Анализа За Практиките На Парламентите Во Однос На Заедницата Со Хендикеп](#) (Analysis of Parliamentary Practices Regarding the Disability Community), Western Balkans Democracy Initiative, Skopje 2020, (in Macedonian).

Another example, from Georgia

In the Rules of Procedure of the Georgian Parliament, Article 2 states that parliament will ensure the accessibility of the Palace of the Parliament. Article 12 outlines that MPs with disabilities will be allocated an adapted service car and assigned a support person. Article 15 lays out that MPs with disabilities are given a one-off allowance of 10,000 GEL during their term of office. Finally, Article 67 provides for special accommodations for persons with disabilities who are invited to the hearings of a temporary investigative commission.

Creating informal bodies: The House of Representatives has two informal bodies dedicated to disability. The House Bipartisan Disabilities Caucus has been active since 2001. It was founded by the first MP with quadriplegia elected to Congress, Representative Jim Langevin. It had more than 50 members in the 118th Congress. According to its website, the Caucus is used as a space to inform, educate and raise awareness of disability issues in Congress. The House Congressional Disability Employment Choice Caucus was founded in the 118th Congress and currently has two members. Other causes focused on specific medical conditions, such as Dyslexia and Multiple Sclerosis, may also deal with issues of disability.

4. Annexes

Annexe 1

Sample list of documents for desk research

Below is a non-exhaustive list of documents that can be used during desk research. While the list should be tailored to individual parliaments, certain core documents should normally be reviewed in every assessment to ensure consistency. These include, at a minimum: the Constitution, Rules of Procedure, relevant legislation, internal parliamentary regulations, accessibility-related rules and policies, and documents governing lawmaking, oversight, human resources and public participation. At times, the documents may also need to be translated, either by the parliament or the external expert. If a particular document does not exist, the parliament should be asked to indicate this and, ideally, explain why.

- The details and results of any previous audits or assessments related to disability inclusion
- The Constitution
- Legislation regulating disability, equal opportunities and discrimination; Civil Code and/or other legislation governing legal capacity and guardianship
- Electoral legislation regarding the election of parliament
- Legislation regulating political parties, including legislation and rules on campaign finance and election funding, particularly where these may affect support measures or reasonable accommodation for candidates with disabilities
- Rules of Procedure of the Parliament, or similar document(s)
- Any internal regulations or decisions that structure or regulate the work of parliament, such as the Law on Parliament or Law on the Status of Members of Parliament
- Code of Ethics/Conduct for Members of Parliament
- Any internal regulations or decisions that regulate the handling of cases of discrimination, bullying or harassment based on disability
- Any additional documents provided to MPs or parliamentary staff on ethical regulations, such as a guide or manual
- Any relevant examples of ethics investigations related to disability-related discrimination, bullying or harassment

- Organigram of the parliamentary administration
- Rules of Procedure of the parliamentary administration, or a similar document
- Code of Ethics/Conduct for parliamentary staff
- Any internal regulations or decisions on the mandate and activities of the committee or other formal body mandated with disability
- Any internal regulations or decisions on informal bodies working on topics related to disability
- Legislation or internal regulations governing public consultations, committee hearings, petitions, expert hearings and engagement with organizations of persons with disabilities and civil society organizations in the legislative process
- Any parliamentary strategic documents, such as multi-year strategies or action plans, which include objectives related to disability
- Induction of new MPs, training or other capacity-development materials on human rights, CRPD and other international human rights instruments
- Legislation or internal regulations related to disability-sensitive lawmaking, including disability impact assessments and related templates and guidance documents
- Manual or guidance on law drafting
- Two to three examples of disability impact assessments, if applicable (with accompanying documents)
- Legislation or internal regulations related to disability-sensitive oversight, including post-legislative scrutiny
- Two to three examples of disability-sensitive oversight, if applicable (with accompanying documents)
- Policies, standards and rules related to web accessibility and communication or publication practices
- Three most recent annual reports of the parliament, along with relevant statistics about petitions, public hearings, etc.
- Oversight of the executive over implementation of international human rights law

Annexe 2

Sample pre-visit questionnaire for parliaments

This questionnaire is completed by the parliament in preparation for the in-person visit, as part of the desk research.

1. Representation

1. Does parliament collect data on the representation of persons with disabilities in parliament?	
☐ Yes	☐ No
If so, through which mechanism:	If not, please specify why:

2. How many people in parliament identify with having a disability? Please provide the response in numbers for the last three convocations, adding the years of the convocations into the table.						
	Years (.....-.....)		Years (.....-.....)		Years (.....-.....)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Members of the lower house						
Members of the upper house (if applicable)						
Parliamentary staff						

3. Have any persons with disabilities ever held leadership positions in parliament, such as Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Committee Chair/Deputy Chair, Party Leader/Deputy Leader, or a position of leadership in the parliamentary administration?	
☐ Yes	☐ No
If so, please indicate which position and for how long.	

4. What reasonable accommodations are available for MPs or parliamentary staff with disabilities? Please mark the correct answer with an X.		
	Yes	No
Step-free access		
Sign language interpretation		
Live captioning		
Information available in Braille		
Information available in Easy-to-Read format		
Audio induction loops		
Service animals allowed in parliamentary buildings		
Accommodations for assistants		

Accessible parking		
Extra financial allowances		
Extra speaking time for MPs with disabilities		
Tactile maps		
Accessible signage		
Other (please specify):		
If yes, please indicate where the regulations that regulate reasonable accommodations can be found, and what the process is for MPs/staff who wish to request reasonable accommodations? What unit or service is responsible for providing reasonable accommodations?		

5. Does parliament have any formal or informal bodies that work on disability issues?			
	Name	Year established	Source of mandate
Formal body such as a parliamentary committee, commission or council			
Informal body, such as a caucus or working group			
If such bodies exist, please specify 3 major achievements of each body related to disability in the last five years:			

6. Does parliament have any regulations on disability-related discrimination or bullying/harassment? If yes, please mark the box with an X.		
	Discrimination	Bullying/harassment
MPs		
Parliamentary staff		
If yes, please indicate the documents where these regulations can be found:		

7. Does parliament offer/has parliament offered in the past any training/capacity-building activities for MPs or staff on topics related to disability? Please mark the correct answer with an X.		
	Yes	No
MPs		
Parliamentary staff		
If so, please provide details about the topic and attendance of the training/ capacity- building activities:		

8. Does parliament include information on disability awareness and available reasonable accommodations as part of the onboarding of new MPs and parliamentary staff?	
☐ Yes	☐ No
If yes, please provide details:	

2. Lawmaking

1. Does parliament have a strategy on disability or any strategies/ action plans that include objectives related to disability? Please mark the correct answer with an X.	
☐ Yes	☐ No
If yes, please name them and, if applicable, name the objectives related to disability.	

2. When considering proposed legislation — including the budget — does parliament... Please mark the correct answer with an X.			
	Yes	No	Sometimes
Require a disability impact assessment or disability analysis of a draft law?			
Conduct consultations with OPDs?			
Ensure that persons with disabilities are present at hearings?			

Provide access to disability-disaggregated data?			
Have guidance on disability-sensitive language?			
Monitor legal acts for compliance with the UN CRPD and other international or national standards on disability?			
If you answered 'Yes' for any of the questions, please indicate where the regulations for these mechanisms can be found:			

3. How often are the views of the following individuals or groups consulted during reviews of legislation? Please mark the correct answer with an X.				
	Always	Often	Rarely	Never
Government bodies on disability, such as national councils or co-ordination bodies				
OPDs				
Academic experts on disabilities				
International organizations with expertise on disability				
If consultations with any of these groups is required by legislation or an internal regulation, please name the document below:				

4. Does parliament make specific efforts to include OPDs in its work systematically by ... Please mark the correct answer with an X.			
	Yes	No	Sometimes
Inviting OPDs to hearings of legislation?			
Consulting OPDs on disability-sensitive language?			
Using OPDs as a knowledge/data source?			
Holding joint events with OPDs?			
If yes, can you please provide some relevant examples of this co-operation?			

5. Is disability expertise present in the units and services of parliament? Please mark the correct answer with an X.			
	Disability experts present	Disability policies in place	No expertise
The office of the Secretary General/ Clerk			
Research unit			
Legal unit			
Public affairs/ communications unit			

Training/capacity-building unit			
Security unit			
Human resources unit			
Visitors' unit			
If applicable, please indicate the experts and policies on disability in each unit:			

3. Oversight

1. Does the parliament have a body responsible for disability-sensitive oversight? Please mark the correct answer with an X.	
☐ Yes	☐ No
If so, please name it and some recent examples of disability-sensitive oversight conducted by the body:	

2. Does the parliament have a body responsible for monitoring compliance with the UN CRPD and other international commitments related to disability? Please mark the correct answer with an X.	
☐ Yes	☐ No
If so, please name it:	

4. Access

1. Are parliament buildings fully accessible for MPs, staff and visitors? Please mark the correct answer with an X.	
☐ Yes	☐ No
If no, please provide further details on what is currently not accessible:	

2. Are any measures in place to ensure parliament's communications and outputs are fully accessible? Please mark the correct answer with an X.	
☐ Yes	☐ No
If yes, please provide further details of such measures:	

3. Has parliament ever conducted an accessibility audit of its physical infrastructure or online communications? Please mark the correct answer with an X.		
	Yes	No
Physical infrastructure		
Online communications		
If so, please provide details about the audit(s), the main conclusions and any subsequent reforms?		

4. Does the parliament have an accessibility strategy? Please mark the correct answer with an X.	
☐ Yes	☐ No
If so, please provide further details:	

5. What reasonable accommodations are available for visitors with disabilities? Please mark the correct answer with an X.		
	Yes	No
Step-free access		
Sign language interpretation		
Live captioning		
Information available in Braille		
Information available in Easy-to-Read format		
Audio induction loops		
Service animals allowed in parliamentary buildings		
Accommodations for assistants		
Accessible parking		
Extra financial allowances		
Extra speaking time for visitors with disabilities		

Tactile maps		
Accessible signage		
Other (please specify):		
If yes, please indicate where the regulations that regulate reasonable accommodations can be found and what the process is for visitors who wish to request reasonable accommodations? What unit or service is responsible for providing reasonable accommodations?		

6. Does parliament collect data on the number of visitors with disabilities and their experiences?	
Yes	No
If so, through which mechanism:	

Annexe 3

Sample survey for persons with disabilities on disability inclusion in parliament

The survey aims to gather data on the perception and attitudes of persons with disabilities concerning disability inclusion in parliament. The questions marked with an asterisk may be skipped if they are not relevant to the respondent, but all of the 'respondent data' questions should be mandatory.

Respondent data

1. Are you filling this survey out on behalf of someone else? If yes, please fill out all further questions, including the respondent data, from the perspective of that person.
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
2. Sex
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
 - ☐ Other
3. Age
 - ☐ Up to 30
 - ☐ 30-60
 - ☐ Over 60
4. What type of disability do you have? Please tick all that apply
 - ☐ Blind or visual disability
 - ☐ Deaf or hearing disability
 - ☐ Physical disability
 - ☐ Mental or intellectual disability
 - ☐ Other (please specify)

Participation in politics

Please rank the statements below from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

- ☐ My interests as a person with disabilities are well represented in parliament.
- ☐ There are barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from being elected to Parliament.
- ☐ There are barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from being hired as staff of the parliamentary administration.
- ☐ I trust that I would not experience discrimination, bullying or harassment on the basis of my disability if I was elected to parliament or joined the parliament's staff.
- ☐ Parliament, MPs and staff have a good awareness of disability issues and my needs.
- ☐ Parliament produces policy that is not discriminatory towards persons with disabilities.
- ☐ Organizations of Persons with Disabilities are well represented in parliamentary activities.
- ☐ Parliament takes steps to ensure that it complies with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other commitments on disabilities.
- ☐ I feel confident that I can comfortably visit the parliament's buildings.
- ☐ I feel confident that I can comfortably use the parliament's website.

Using parliamentary communications

1. Have you used the parliament's website?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
2. If yes, did you face any challenges when using the website? Please tick all that apply.

- ☐ I experienced difficulties reading documents or materials published there with screen reader programs.
 - ☐ I missed textual descriptions/subtitles in videos published on the website.
 - ☐ I missed information in sign language.
 - ☐ I missed audio descriptive comments (audio description) for videos.
 - ☐ I had difficulties understanding the content of the materials and documents (presented in complicated/hard-to-understand language).
 - ☐ I had difficulties navigating the website.
 - ☐ I had no difficulties.
3. Have you ever communicated in writing with MPs or any members of the parliamentary staff?*
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
4. If yes, did you have any problems in submitting your communication? Please tick all that apply.
- ☐ It was not clear where it should be sent.
 - ☐ The format for accepting the communication was not accessible for me (only writing by mail, only electronic by e-mail, or other).
 - ☐ Other (please specify)
 - ☐ There were no problems.
5. If yes, have you encountered any difficulties when communicating with MPs or members of the parliamentary staff? Please tick all that apply.
- ☐ There were difficulties associated with the lack of sign language interpretation.
 - ☐ Incorrect terminology was used regarding people with disabilities (invalid, handicapped, sick, defects, etc.).
 - ☐ I felt I was being ignored and treated in a negative, dismissive manner due to my disability.

- ☐ There were difficulties understanding interlocutors — they used terms and concepts that were unclear to me.
 - ☐ Other (please specify)
 - ☐ There were no difficulties.
6. Have you ever participated online in any sessions of parliament?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
7. If yes, did you encounter any difficulties when participating? Please tick all that apply.
- ☐ I experienced difficulties reading documents or materials with screen reader programs.
 - ☐ I missed textual descriptions/subtitles in the video.
 - ☐ I missed information in sign language.
 - ☐ I missed audio descriptive comments (audio description) for the video.
 - ☐ I had difficulties understanding the content of the session (presented in a complicated/hard-to-understand language).
 - ☐ I had difficulties navigating the video software.
 - ☐ I had no difficulties.
8. Do you have any comments or suggestions about how the accessibility of parliamentary communications could be improved?*

Using parliamentary buildings

1. Have you visited the buildings of the parliament?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
2. Have you ever observed any sessions of parliament?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
3. Have you ever taken part in-person in any sessions of parliament?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No

4. Have you ever visited parliament as a tourist?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
5. If you have visited the parliament in any capacity, did you encounter any difficulties? Please tick all that apply.
- ☐ There were difficulties with physical accessibility of the buildings.
 - ☐ No universally designed, accessible bathroom.
 - ☐ There were navigation difficulties (not clear where to go).
 - ☐ There were no sign language interpreters and/or deaf guides.
 - ☐ Other difficulties (please, specify)
 - ☐ There were no difficulties.
6. If you have visited the parliament in any capacity, were you offered reasonable accommodations? Please tick all that apply.
- ☐ I was offered to be escorted by another person.
 - ☐ I was offered the services of a sign language interpreter.
 - ☐ I was invited to use a tablet or smartphone that converts speech to text.
 - ☐ I was offered materials in Braille.
 - ☐ I was offered materials written in plain language.
 - ☐ I was offered materials printed in a larger print.
 - ☐ I was offered other reasonable accommodations (please specify).
 - ☐ I was not offered anything.
7. Do you have any comments or suggestions about how the accessibility of parliamentary buildings could be improved?*

Annexe 4

Sample survey for MPs and parliamentary staff on disability inclusion in parliament

This survey aims to gather data on the perception and attitudes of MPs and parliamentary staff on disability inclusion in parliament. It should be made available online and in accessible formats.

Respondent Data

1. Sex
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
 - ☐ Other
2. Age
 - ☐ Up to 30
 - ☐ 30-60
 - ☐ Over 60
3. Category
 - ☐ Member of Parliament
 - ☐ Parliamentary staff
4. Do you identify as having a disability?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
5. If so, what type of disability do you have? Please tick all that apply
 - ☐ Blind or visual disability
 - ☐ Deaf or hearing disability
 - ☐ Physical disability
 - ☐ Mental or intellectual disability
 - ☐ Other (please specify)
 - ☐ I do not have a disability

Please rank the statements below from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The first set of statements relates to disability-inclusive representation:

- ☐ I understand what a disability-inclusive parliament is.
- ☐ Persons with disabilities are well represented in parliament.
- ☐ Persons with disabilities hold leadership roles in parliament.
- ☐ Extra funding should be available for electoral candidates and MPs with disabilities.
- ☐ There is a clear and well-known process about how to request reasonable accommodations if you experience disability.
- ☐ There are barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from being elected to parliament.
- ☐ There are barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from being hired as staff of the parliamentary administration.
- ☐ Persons with disabilities, either MPs or parliamentary staff, do not experience discrimination, bullying or harassment in parliament.
- ☐ Parliament should run more training courses on disability inclusion for MPs and parliamentary staff, including the use of disability-sensitive language.

The second set of statements relates to disability-inclusive lawmaking:

- ☐ Draft legislation and the budget are scrutinized from the perspective of disability.
- ☐ Disability impact assessments are used when analysing draft legislation.
- ☐ There is expertise on disability available to lawmakers and staff.
- ☐ Lawmakers and staff have access to disability-disaggregated data.
- ☐ Parliament regularly works with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities.

The third set of statements relates to disability-inclusive oversight:

- ☐ A disability mandate is clearly allocated to one parliamentary committee.
- ☐ Disability is addressed as part of oversight activities such as questions and parliamentary debate.
- ☐ Post-legislative scrutiny is regularly carried out from the perspective of disability.
- ☐ Parliament effectively monitors the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and other international disability and human rights treaties.

The fourth set of questions is on access for persons with disabilities.

- ☐ Parliament has an accessibility strategy that is well known to MPs and staff.
- ☐ Parliament's buildings are accessible for everyone.
- ☐ Parliament's communications are accessible for everyone.
- ☐ Reasonable accommodations are available for visitors with disabilities.
- ☐ Measures are taken to increase the accessibility of events and sessions run by parliament, both online and in-person.

Please provide a short narrative response (a few sentences) to the following questions.

- What recommendations would you make to improve disability inclusion in parliament, including in parliamentary lawmaking and oversight activities and among MPs, parliamentary staff and visitors?
- Please add any other comments or ideas you might have.

Annexe 5

Sample data-collection survey questions

Introduction

1. Country
2. Name of parliament and parliamentary chamber (if parliament is bicameral)
3. Name of questionnaire respondent
4. Position of questionnaire respondent
5. Contact email of questionnaire respondent

Parliamentary structure and policy

1. How many MPs currently identify as having a disability? *Please specify the number in each chamber, or if there is no data available, please specify this.*
2. How many MPs identified as having a disability in the previous convocation? *Please specify the number in each chamber, or if there is no data available, please specify this.*
3. Does the parliament have a disability policy/action plan? *Yes/No/I don't know*
 - a. If yes, specify the name and give a brief description, including the data of the disability policy/action plan. *Please include a link, if available.*
4. Do the Rules of Procedure and (if applicable) Code of Conduct of the parliament mention disability in any capacity? *Yes/No/I don't know*
 - a. If yes, please specify the Article(s) where disability is mentioned in the Rules of Procedure and (if applicable) Code of Conduct of the parliament?

Formal and informal bodies

1. Is there a formal body in parliament, such as a standing committee or parliamentary council, mandated to oversee disability-related issues? *Yes/No/I don't know*
 - a. If yes, please specify the name of the formal body in each chamber, when it was formed and its main functions.
 - b. Can you name any three major achievements of this formal body related to disability in the last five years, or specify an active parliamentarian who we could contact to discuss the group's work?
2. Is there an informal body in parliament, such as a caucus or all-party group, which works on topics related to disability? *Yes/No/I don't know*
 - a. If yes, please specify the name of the informal body in each chamber.
 - b. When was the informal body formed?
 - c. Is the informal body permanent or must it be set up during each convocation? *The body is permanent/ It must be set up during each convocation/ I don't know*
 - d. Can you name three major achievements of this informal body related to disability in the last five years, or alternatively specify an active parliamentarian who we could contact to discuss the group's work?

Review of international commitments and legislation

1. Which body in parliament is mandated to oversee the implementation of the UN CRPD and other international agreements related to disability? *Please specify the name of the bodies in each chamber.*
2. Are there procedures in place to consider draft legislation from a disability perspective? *Yes/No/I don't know*
 - a. If yes, please specify the procedures here.
 - b. Are these procedures mandatory for specific types of legislation or subjects?

Expertise and data collection

3. Does the parliament make any specific efforts to include Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in its work? *Yes/No/I don't know*
 - a. If yes, please specify in what capacity Organizations of Persons with Disabilities are engaged in parliamentary activity. Is the nature of their involvement consultative, advisory, as a knowledge resource or are they empowered to make decisions?
4. Does the parliament collect any disability-disaggregated data? *Yes/No/I don't know*
 - a. If yes, please specify in which area(s) the data is collected.
5. Does the parliament have access to any disability expertise in any parliamentary units or services, such as a parliamentary research unit, legal unit, public affairs unit, human resources unit or capacity-building unit? *Yes/No/I don't know*
 - a. If yes, please specify in which units and in what form.
6. Has the parliament ever conducted any kind of review or audit related to disability (this could be of its processes, infrastructure, staff or output)? *Yes/No/I don't know*
 - a. If yes, please specify when and what the results were, and if any significant changes were made following the review/audit.

Support and accessibility measures

1. Are parliamentary buildings and offices fully or partly accessible to MPs, staff and visitors with disabilities? *Yes/No/I don't know*
 - a. If yes, please specify which parliamentary buildings are fully or partly accessible to MPs, staff and visitors with disabilities.
2. Does the parliament have any other measures in place to support MPs with disabilities, including reasonable accommodations, specific technologies or aids? *Yes/No/I don't know*
 - a. If yes, please specify them. Include the procedure for obtaining reasonable accommodation and who decides on this.

- b. Are there any specific technologies or aids available for MPs with disabilities?
- 3. Does the parliament have any other support/accessibility measures in place to support the wider parliamentary community, such as parliamentary staff and visitors, including specific technologies or aids? *Yes/No/I don't know*
 - a. If yes, please specify any other support/accessibility measures in place to support the wider parliamentary community, such as parliamentary staff and visitors, including specific technologies or aids.
- 4. Are there any specific training or awareness-raising programmes available for MPs or parliamentary staff on disability issues? *Yes/No/I don't know*
 - a. If yes, please specify any training or awareness-raising programmes available for MPs or parliamentary staff on disability issues.

Additional comments

- 1. Is there a particular practice, policy, or activity related to disability inclusion that you would like to highlight as a good practice?
- 2. Do you have any further information about work being done in relation to the political participation of persons with disabilities in parliament that you believe would be useful for our research?

Annexe 6

Sample parliamentary accessibility checklist: physical infrastructure

This is a sample checklist that can be used to assess the accessibility of the physical infrastructure of parliamentary buildings. Parliaments are advised to consult local OPDs, members of the parliamentary community, staff working in facilities or building maintenance, and the working group before completing this checklist to see how it can be amended for the local context. If possible, parliaments should work with accessibility experts. Parliaments should consult national building regulations and international standards when conducting the audit.

Accessibility standards vary across national contexts. At the bottom of this checklist, there is a glossary of key terms for parliaments, in case national standards do not contain guidance on such topics, such as minimum width, accessible height, accessible parking space and accessible restrooms.

Area 1: Access and building entrance

- ☐ Path from the public sidewalk is step-free, continuous and unobstructed.
- ☐ Path and ramp surfaces are firm, stable and slip-resistant, with guardrails on ramps.
- ☐ Minimum width is maintained on all paths and ramps.
- ☐ Ramps meet minimum width, slope and landing requirements.
- ☐ There are no abrupt level changes.
- ☐ At least one accessible entrance is available during working hours.
- ☐ There is accessible signage leading to the entrance.
- ☐ Accessible main entrance doors are easy to operate, preferably with automatic door openers at an accessible height. Tactile floor guidelines lead from public areas to the accessible entrance.
- ☐ There is an explanation online in simple language on how to reach the accessible main entrance.

Area 2: Parking

- ☐ There is an adequate number of accessible parking spaces available.
- ☐ Accessible parking spaces are clearly marked with signage.
- ☐ Accessible parking spaces are sufficiently wide and have dedicated access aisles.
- ☐ There are van-accessible spaces and the maximum acceptable height of a vehicle is shown on the approach to the car park.
- ☐ The path from the accessible parking spaces is short, step-free, continuous and unobstructed.
- ☐ If accessible parking spaces are located outside, a weather shelter is provided.

Area 3: Signage

- ☐ Accessible routes around the building are clearly marked.
- ☐ Maps or directories are available in various formats, including tactile letters, Braille and Easy-to-Read.
- ☐ Signage and information are written in accessible fonts using mixed-case lettering.
- ☐ Rooms for visitors are labelled with tactile letters, Braille and high-contrast visual signs.
- ☐ Tactile wall-mounted signage and information are placed at an easily accessible height.
- ☐ Tactile information is placed at an easily accessible height

Area 4: Horizontal main paths

- ☐ Corridors meet minimum width requirements and, if not, passing places are regularly allocated.
- ☐ Turning space is available at key intersections.
- ☐ For long corridors, seating is provided roughly every 50 metres, in contrasting colours.
- ☐ Floor surfaces are firm, stable and slip-resistant.
- ☐ Step-free access is provided throughout the building.
- ☐ Main connecting routes for visitors are equipped with tactile guidance systems.

- ☐ Walls are light-coloured, non-reflective and contrast with the floor.

Area 5: Vertical access

- ☐ Elevators are available to access all public floors.
- ☐ Elevator cars have adequate turning space.
- ☐ Elevator buttons are at an accessible height, have tactile and Braille labels, and are tonally contrasted from the surrounding wall.
- ☐ There are audible and visual floor announcements.
- ☐ Elevators are in a contrasting colour to the surrounding wall.
- ☐ The emergency system in the elevator is accessible for persons with disabilities, including wheelchair users and persons with visual or hearing impairments.
- ☐ If available, lifts and platform lifts have clear instructions for usage.
- ☐ Tactile and contrasting markings are used at the bottom and the top of stairs to indicate the beginning and end of the stairway.
- ☐ Each step is identical in terms of its height and depth and complies with standards.
- ☐ Stairs are well lit and slip-resistant.
- ☐ Handrails on the stairs are equipped with tactile signs indicating the floor number and an arrow pointing to the exit.

Area 6: Public areas and meeting rooms

- ☐ Reception/service counters include an accessible height section.
- ☐ Desks and tables are available at an accessible height.
- ☐ Tables and seats are tonally- and colour-contrasted.
- ☐ For visitors and participants, accessible seats are available, distributed equally and are not inferior to other seats.
- ☐ Entrance doors to the meeting rooms are accessible.
- ☐ Meeting rooms have space to manoeuvre.
- ☐ Assistive listening systems are available in meeting rooms and reception/service counters with clear markers.
- ☐ Room controls (e.g., lights, thermostats, intercoms, card readers and security systems) are available at an accessible height and are labelled with high-contrast text and tactile/Braille signage.

- ☐ Meeting room technology (e.g., computers and touchscreens) complies with accessibility standards.²⁸
- ☐ Room controls are placed in the same position from floor to floor and are not blocked by furniture or signage.
- ☐ There are waste bins to be used for those with assistance dogs, with clear signage in tactile lettering and Braille.
- ☐ Plaques next to the building's artwork contain information in tactile lettering and Braille.
- ☐ The first information point after the entrance is connected with tactile and contrasting guidelines.
- ☐ Coat racks in the building, if available, can be used by wheelchair users or persons of short stature.

Area 7: Restrooms

- ☐ At least one accessible stall is provided per restroom.
- ☐ Accessible stalls/restrooms are indicated by a tactile sign.
- ☐ There is at least one accessible family or gender-neutral bathroom.
- ☐ Accessible stalls have correct turning and transfer clearances.
- ☐ The doors of the accessible toilets open outwards.
- ☐ There are accessible stalls that provide for both right- and left-handed transfers.
- ☐ Grab bars are installed.
- ☐ Taps on sinks are levers or automatic.
- ☐ Toilet paper, sinks, coat hooks, dispensers and dryers are at an accessible height and are tactile labelled.
- ☐ Accessible restrooms have an emergency alarm or call-for-assistance cord, positioned between the WC and wash basin.
- ☐ The floor, walls, door, WC, washbasin and other fittings have a good level of tonal or colour contrast.

28 For more on online accessibility standards, see [Annexe 7: Sample parliamentary accessibility checklist: communications infrastructure](#).

Area 8: Lighting, acoustics and sensory environment

- ☐ Adequate, even lighting is used throughout the building.
- ☐ Highly reflective surfaces are not used for floors or walls.
- ☐ Fluorescent, flickering or strobe-like lights are not in use.
- ☐ Signage and wall-mounted information has adequate lighting.
- ☐ There are acceptable noise levels and reverberation control.
- ☐ A quiet room and sensory space is available.
- ☐ Public areas are not overstimulating, with, for example, bright colours, blinking screens and fast-moving digital signage.

Area 9: Emergency procedures

- ☐ The emergency evacuation procedure has been reviewed from the perspective of disability inclusion and accessibility.
- ☐ Staff are trained on how to assist persons with disabilities during an emergency.
- ☐ The posted emergency plan is available in accessible formats and in plain language.
- ☐ Emergency drills and risk assessments are inclusive and include considerations from the perspective of disability.
- ☐ Audible alarms are paired with visual strobes.
- ☐ Fire extinguishers, alarms, pull stations and first aid equipment are placed at an accessible height.
- ☐ Emergency signage is clear, high-contrast and illuminated.
- ☐ Emergency exit doors open outwards, are not heavy or difficult to operate and indicated with tactile and Braille, high-contrast signage.
- ☐ Evacuation routes are accessible and are not blocked.
- ☐ For people who are unable to escape via the stairs independently, there are safe meeting points that are clearly signposted and equipped with an emergency calling system.
- ☐ Escape filter masks are available at the waiting areas.
- ☐ Evacuation chairs are available, placed close to stairwells and staff are trained on how to use them.

Area 10: Maintenance and operations

- ☐ Snow and ice removal plan or operations includes keeping accessible routes clear, where applicable.
- ☐ Equipment, such as automatic door openers, assistive listening systems and platform lifts, is tested regularly.
- ☐ There is a plan to ensure that meetings and other temporary set ups are accessible.
- ☐ Staff are trained on accessibility in parliamentary buildings.
- ☐ Regular testing of building accessibility is carried out with the active involvement of persons with disabilities.
- ☐ Regular monitoring is conducted to ensure that accessible parking spaces remain available for persons with disabilities.
- ☐ Contact information for accessibility feedback is available.
- ☐ Responsibility for accessibility in the building and in operations is defined and easily identifiable for employees.

Area 11: Outdoor areas (if applicable)

- ☐ Paths are available that are step-free, continuous, even and unobstructed.
- ☐ Paths comply with minimum width requirements.
- ☐ Benches are provided on even ground, with adjacent wheelchair seating space, at an accessible height and with armrests.
- ☐ Adequate lighting is available.
- ☐ There is an accessible, step-free route to the outdoor area.
- ☐ There is accessible signage to navigate around the outdoor area.
- ☐ The area is regularly maintained with attention paid to overgrown vegetation blocking paths or signage; clearing ice, leaves and mud from accessible routes; and clearing loose stones or debris from the pathways.

Glossary of physical infrastructure for sample parliamentary accessibility checklist²⁹

Minimum width: A width of 2000mm should be provided on all paths, corridors and other throughways. This allows space for two wheelchair users to pass. If this is not feasible due to physical constraints, then 1500mm can be considered as the minimum acceptable width.

Ramp width, slope and landing requirements: Ramps should meet the minimum width requirements outlined above. The absolute maximum of a ramp gradient should be 1 in 12, but 1 in 20 is preferable. 1 in 12 gradient should not be used for longer than 2000mm. For every 1000mm of ramp, there should be a level landing to allow people to rest. The length of the landing should be equal at least to the width of the ramp and should be covered, if outside.

Accessible entrance: Doors and entrances should have a clear width of 1200mm (900mm is the minimum acceptable). A clear level area should be allocated of at least 1500mm on each side of the doorway. Automatic doors are preferable but if manual doors are used then the handles should be of the lever type and it should be possible to open to door with minimal effort. Handles or switches should be at an accessible height. Doors and their handles should both be tonally and colour contrasted with their surroundings.

Accessible height: Mechanisms should not be more than 1200mm high or below 750mm.

Accessible parking space: An accessible parking space should be 4800mm long and 2400mm wide. 1200mm should be provided on each side as an access aisle and 1200 mm provided at the rear. They should ideally be located no more than 50m from the building entrance. The surface of the parking space should be even and stable. The minimum vertical clearance

29 These guidelines are taken from [Inclusive Mobility: A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure](#), Department of Transport of the United Kingdom, December 2021. These are intended as indicative guidelines, but national standards should be consulted over these recommendations. In the absence of national standards, parliaments may wish to consult these guidelines and other, similar documents for more in-depth guidance.

in the car park should be 2600mm. Around 6 per cent of all total parking spaces should be accessible.

Accessible restrooms: Restroom doors should be a minimum of 925mm wide. The handles should be large and easy to operate. The stall should be at least 2800mm wide and 2200mm deep. The WC should have a height of 480mm.

Tactile signage and labelling: All information should be embossed rather than engraved and raised from the surface of the sign by 1 to 1.5mm. The stroke width (of non-Braille characters) should be 1.5 to 2mm and each character should be at least 15mm in height. The preferred accessible font is sans serif. When Braille is used, grade 1 is permissible for single words but for signs with more than one word contracted grade 2 Braille must be used.

Assistive listening systems: These include hearing loops, telecoil, infrared, FM/radio, and others.³⁰

Adequate lighting: Attention should be paid to ensuring that reflection is minimized through the use of non-reflective surfaces, glare is reduced by positioning lighting outside of people's range of vision and through the use of adjustable blinds on windows, and that shadows do not mask hazards. The table below provides recommendations of minimum acceptable illumination levels.³¹

Location	Minimum illumination level
Accessible restrooms	100 lux
Inside elevators	100 lux
Entrances to buildings	150 lux

30 More information on assistive listening technologies can be found at [Assistive listening systems in public venues](#), Royal National Institute for Deaf People, 7 May 2026.

31 These are also taken from [Inclusive Mobility: A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure](#), Department of Transport of the United Kingdom, December 2021, p. 122.

Location	Minimum illumination level
Corridors	150 lux
Steps and stairs	200 lux
The top and bottom of ramps	200 lux
Landing areas of elevators	200 lux
Where there is signage, maps or important information	200 lux
Ticket machines	200 lux
Reception counters	250 lux

Annexe 7

Sample parliamentary accessibility checklist: communications infrastructure

This is a sample checklist that can be used to assess the accessibility of the communications infrastructure of parliament, including websites, digital documents, video communications, social media and online tools for public engagement, such as petitions, surveys and committee submissions. Parliaments are advised to consult local OPDs, members of the parliamentary community, IT staff within parliament and the working group before completing this checklist to see how it can be amended for the local context. Parliaments should work with accessibility experts, and consult national and international standards when conducting the audit.

All ICT systems should comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 Level A and AA as a minimum.³² Parliaments, including IT staff, are strongly recommended to familiarize themselves with these guidelines and others before conducting an accessibility audit.³³ A range of Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools are available depending on the level of expertise and what is being tested³⁴. Automated tools such as WAVE³⁵ are useful to identify certain issues, such as whether an image has alternative text, but do not assess quality, such as whether the alternative text is meaningful. Manual checks and additional tools, including a contrast checker³⁶, are therefore also recommended.

Throughout this checklist, 'accessible' refers to the WCAG Guidelines' four principles of digital accessibility: perceivable, operable, understandable and robust.

32 [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.2: W3C Recommendation](#), World Wide Web Consortium, 12 December 2024.

33 The UK government has also published detailed guidance on [Doing a basic accessibility check if you cannot do a detailed one](#), UK Government Digital Service, 30 September 2024.

34 A full list of web accessibility evaluation tools is available at [Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools List](#), [Web Accessibility Initiative \(WAI\)](#), W3C.

35 [Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools \(WAVE\)](#), WebAIM, Utah State University.

36 [Contrast Checker](#), WebAIM, Utah State University.

Area 1: Websites

- ☐ The website has a clear outline using proper HTML headings (H1-H6).
- ☐ The website has consistent navigation across pages and predictable layouts.
- ☐ There are multiple ways to navigate the website beyond the search bar, such as a sitemap.
- ☐ Text is distinguishable and readable, using high-contrast colours.
- ☐ Content is visible (reflows) when zoomed in or magnified to high levels (for example: 400%).
- ☐ Visuals are high contrast.
- ☐ Titles are clear and pages don't duplicate titles.
- ☐ Skip-to-content links are available and functional.
- ☐ Breadcrumbs are available and functional.
- ☐ Hyperlinks have clear and descriptive text (for example: "Download the Report" rather than "Click Here").
- ☐ Instructions are styled properly to be accessible for persons with visual disabilities (for example: not "Click the round button" or "Click the red button").
- ☐ Interactive elements (such as links, buttons, and form inputs) are big enough and spaced far enough apart.
- ☐ All features are operable using only a keyboard.
- ☐ Visible focus indicators are available.
- ☐ There are no keyboard traps for keyboard users (for example, a user navigating with the Tab key can move away from a pop-up or dropdown menu without needing a mouse).
- ☐ Screen reader compatibility is regularly tested.
- ☐ Accessible Rich Internet Applications (ARIA) roles and attributes are used appropriately and do not hinder accessibility.
- ☐ Error messages are clear, and accessible.
- ☐ Colour is not used to convey meaning (Example: text fields in red are mandatory).
- ☐ Users can disable animated or moving content.
- ☐ There is no media content that plays automatically.
- ☐ There is a help button located in the same place across pages.

Area 2: Documents and publications (PDFs, Word/HTML reports)

- ☐ Documents and publication have descriptive title that explain clearly what they are.
- ☐ Content is in the proper reading order to support screen readers.
- ☐ Tables are accessible with headers and captions to support screen readers.
- ☐ Headings are written using built-in styles and properly tagged rather than manually styling text to create a navigable structure for screen readers.
- ☐ Titles are clear, and pages do not duplicate titles.
- ☐ Alternative text is provided for images, charts and other visual content.
- ☐ Images do not include text (with the exception of logos or brand names).
- ☐ Bookmarks are provided for long documents.
- ☐ Text is selectable, not scanned or image-only.
- ☐ Hyperlinks have clear and descriptive text (for example: “Download the Report” rather than “Click Here”).
- ☐ Colour is not used to convey meaning or, if so, there is a text alternative (for example: “countries in green have adopted the legislation”).
- ☐ Accessible templates are used consistently.
- ☐ All documents are regularly tested for screen reader compatibility.
- ☐ Text is distinguishable and readable, including when zoomed in or magnified.
- ☐ Documents in more than one accessible format are recommended (for example in Word, PDF, ePub, HTML).

Area 3: Video communications (live video)

- ☐ Live captioning is available.
- ☐ Caption accuracy is monitored.
- ☐ Caption text is highly contrasted with the background and readable.
- ☐ Sign language interpretation is provided.
- ☐ High contrast visuals are used.
- ☐ The player controls keyboard is accessible.

Area 4: Video communications (recorded video)

- ☐ Captioning is available and accurate.
- ☐ Caption text is high-contrast with the background and readable.
- ☐ Transcripts are provided.
- ☐ Audio description is provided for essential information.
- ☐ The player controls keyboard is accessible.
- ☐ No flashing content is used beyond safety thresholds and, if used, a warning is given at the beginning of the video.

Area 5: Social Media

- ☐ Alt text is added to images.
- ☐ Images do not include text (with the exception of logos or brand names).
- ☐ Words within hashtags are capitalized (for example: #HumanRightsCommittee).
- ☐ Images are posted with an accompanying description.
- ☐ Videos posted include readable and accurate captions.
- ☐ Auto-playing audio is not used (for example: videos or audio clips are not set to play automatically when a page loads).
- ☐ Links to documents direct users to the accessible version.
- ☐ Shortened URLs with no context are not used.
- ☐ High-contrast visuals are used.

Area 6: Online public engagement tools³⁷

- ☐ Instructions are available in plain language.
- ☐ Tools are fully keyboard operable.
- ☐ CAPTCHA alternatives are provided.
- ☐ Form labels are clear about the information that the user needs to enter.
- ☐ Online forms have labels that are correctly linked to form field to support assistive technologies.
- ☐ Form elements are consistent across forms.
- ☐ Error messages are specific, accessible, and tell the user how to remedy the error.
- ☐ Time limits are adjustable or removable.
- ☐ Users can review their answers before submitting a form.

Area 7: Understandability

- ☐ Plain language is used for communication to the general public.
- ☐ Easy-to-Read³⁸ versions are available for major announcements and key content.
- ☐ Summaries are provided for long parliamentary documents.
- ☐ Jargon and acronyms are avoided or explained.
- ☐ Consistent terminology is used throughout parliamentary communications.
- ☐ High-contrast visuals are used in all communications.

Area 8: Alerts and notifications

- ☐ Text alerts are accessible.
- ☐ RSS feeds or email subscriptions are accessible.
- ☐ Emergency or urgent notices are accessible.

³⁷ Such as petitions, surveys, committee submissions and public consultations.

³⁸ Easy-to-Read is a communication standard designed for people with intellectual disabilities, using short sentences, simple words and supporting images. It goes beyond plain language, which simplifies text for a general audience but does not follow the same structured format. See the [Easy to Read standard by Inclusion Europe](#).

Area 9: Maintenance and operations

- ☐ Parliament's accessibility statement is published and up-to-date.
- ☐ Contact information for accessibility feedback is available.
- ☐ Parliament's ICT systems are regularly tested for accessibility, including user testing by persons with disabilities.
- ☐ Staff are trained in accessible content creation.
- ☐ There is a policy to ensure that online events are accessible.
- ☐ Procurement requires digital accessibility compliance.

Further Reading

Disability Quotas for Parliamentary Elections, OSCE/ODIHR, 31 December 2025.

Guidelines on Promoting the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities, OSCE/ODIHR, 15 March 2019.

Helping People with Disabilities to take part in Politics: Easy-to-Understand Information, OSCE/ODIHR, 16 September 2019.

Making sure people with disabilities take part in politics and public life: Easy to understand information, OSCE/ODIHR, 2 December 2020.

Persons with Disabilities and Ensuring their Right to Participate in Political and Public Life, OSCE/ODIHR, 13 September 2017.

Promoting the Political Participation of People with Disabilities, Factsheet, OSCE/ODIHR, 2022.

Promoting the Political Participation of People with Disabilities: Easy to Read Version, OSCE/ODIHR, 11 April 2023.

Promoting the Political Participation of People with Disabilities: An Interactive Tool for Parliaments and Political Parties, OSCE/ODIHR, 2023.

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