

The right of persons with disabilities to take part in elections



Easy read version

PACE Resolution 2155 (2017)
on the political rights of persons
with disabilities: a democratic issue



This text is an easy read version of Resolution 2155 (2017) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the political rights of persons with disabilities: a democratic issue, adopted on 10 March 2017.

This easy read version was prepared at the request of the secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe by Inclusion Europe in accordance with the European standards for making information easy to read and understand.

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Transgender identity illustration by
Frank Duffy ©Diversity Trust

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



Who are we?

We are the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Council of Europe is made up of 47 countries in Europe.

We want to make things better for everyone who lives in Europe.

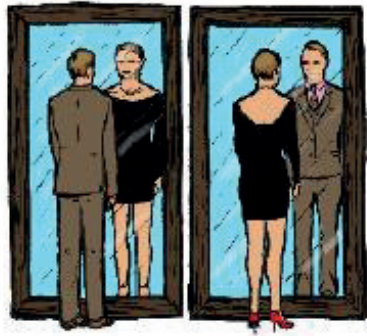
We are different from the European Union.

We cannot make laws but can make sure that countries do what they agree to.

The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination checks if people are being treated fairly and equally. People cannot be discriminated against because of:

1. how old they are;

2. a disability;



3. their transgender identity – people who are born as one sex and want to live as the other sex.

For example, a person who looks like a man may feel inside like a woman;



4. a marriage or civil partnership;



5. having a child;



6. their skin colour;



7. their religion or beliefs;



8. being a man or woman;



9. being gay, lesbian or bisexual.



What is this booklet about?

Taking part in **elections** is a human right.

You have a right to say how you think your country should be run.

This includes standing in elections and voting.



An **election** is when each person who is 18 or older gets to **vote**.

Elections decide who should speak for us and make choices for us.



It can still be hard for disabled people in Europe to vote because:

- information about the election is not easy to understand;



- the **polling station** is not easy to enter or vote in;

A **polling station** is the place where you vote;



- there is no support for the different sorts of disabilities;



- people who do not have **legal capacity** are not allowed to vote.

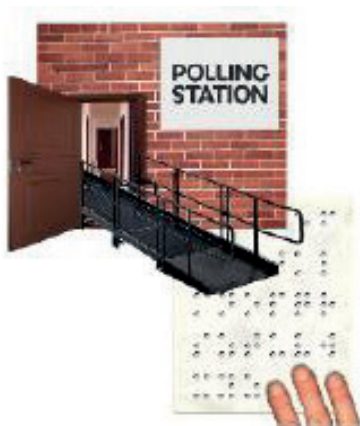
Legal capacity – being able to make a particular decision or choice at a particular time.

There are laws about how to decide if someone has legal capacity.



- **political parties** do not seem to want to change things.

A **political party** is a group of people who think the country should be run in a certain way.



Countries in the Council of Europe must make it easier for disabled people to participate in elections.

This booklet says what can be done.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



A convention is an agreement between countries.

This convention says what the rights of disabled people are.



The convention says countries cannot treat people differently or unfairly because of their disability.



It shows how countries can make sure disabled people have the same rights as everyone else.



Countries that have agreed to the convention must make sure disabled people have access to their rights.

Not all the countries in the Council of Europe have signed this convention.

They need to agree to the convention and make it work.



Legal capacity



People who do not have legal capacity still need to be able to vote.



In some countries other people can make decisions for you when you do not have legal capacity.

This is sometimes called guardianship.

The court decides on a guardian for you.

This needs to change.



With help, you can make your own decisions, such as who to vote for.

A person you trust can help you to understand what the political parties want to do.



This person can also go into the polling station to help you vote for the party you choose.

This means all disabled people can take part in voting in elections.



Ways to end discrimination



Discrimination is being treated unfairly or not getting what you need because you are disabled, or for another reason.



Disabled people are discriminated against when elections are not made easy for them.



We need to:

- talk about the **political rights** of disabled people.

Political rights are the rights to stand for election and to vote;



- have activities and events that show disabled people can vote and stand for election.

These events should be on TV and social media like Facebook;



- see disabled people on TV programmes about elections.



TV programmes about elections must be made so that everyone can understand them.

Sign language and easy-to-understand language can help.



We need information that everyone can understand about:



- how to vote;



- what the different political parties say they will do.

Making elections accessible



Accessible describes something that is easy to use for people with disabilities.

What helps to make things accessible?

- ramps to get into a building;
- information in easy read versions or braille;
- sign language interpreters.



We need to make sure that:

- all buildings are accessible. This includes all government buildings and at least one polling station in every area;
- everything about voting is available in:



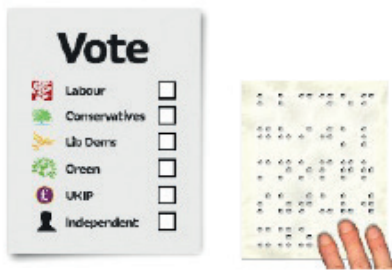
– easy read versions,



– videos with sign language and sub-titles,



– braille,



- the paper you vote on is easy to use and in braille;



- political parties only get government money when they make everything accessible.



Disabled people who stand for election need extra money to get the support they need.

Governments need to give them this money.

Making voting easier



You must be given help with voting, when you ask for it.

This may help you to decide who to vote for.

Your vote must be for who you choose, not the choice of the person helping you.



To do this, we need organisations of disabled people to help with:

- training for anyone who may be involved in helping you to vote.

This includes people at polling stations;



- rules on how to help people vote;



- different ways of voting, such as voting on the internet for people who cannot go to a polling station.



Any changes need to be made with the help of organisations of disabled people.

Sign language needs to be accepted as a language in every country.

Hard words

Accessible describes something that is easy to use for people with disabilities, for example:

- ramps to get into a building,
- information in easy read versions or braille,
- sign language interpreters.

Legal capacity is being able to make a particular decision or choice at a particular time.

There are laws about how to decide if someone has legal capacity.

Discrimination is being treated unfairly or not getting what you need because you are disabled, or for other reasons.

An **election** is when each person who is 18 or older gets to vote.

Elections decide who should speak for us and make choices for us.

A **political party** is a group of people who think the country should be run in a certain way.

Political rights are the right to stand for election and to vote.

A **polling station** is the place where you vote.

The Parliamentary Assembly is one of two statutory organs of the Council of Europe. It was the first European parliamentary body after 1945 and today is Europe's biggest political forum. With its 324 Representatives (and the same number of Substitutes) from national parliaments, the Assembly represents the main political currents of the member states of "greater Europe".

Council of Europe
Parliamentary Assembly
Secretariat of the Committee
on Equality and Non-Discrimination

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, consisting of representatives from the 47 national parliaments, provides a forum for debate and for submitting proposals on Europe's social and political issues. Many Council of Europe conventions originate from the Assembly, including the European Convention on Human Rights.

