



**Written submission on the call for input on
equal participation of persons with
disabilities in political life**

**Submitted on the occasion of the 61st session
Of the Human Rights Council**

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The report at hand is mostly based on documents from the Austrian Disability Council, the umbrella organization of over 85 member organisations representing approximately 1.4 million persons with disabilities in Austria. These documents on a broad range of topics relate to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the life of persons with disabilities in Austria.



Table of Contents

1. Existing data as well as monitoring and data collection tools on the level of political representation of persons with disabilities within local and national elected bodies.	3
2. Legal restrictions on running in elections or holding public office based on disability, including for people with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, and specific examples of such legislation and policies.....	3
3. Existing stigma and ableist attitudes concerning the capacity of persons with disabilities to stand for elections and hold public office effectively.	4
4. Other barriers that persons with disabilities face to enter politics, stand for elections and reach senior roles, including structural inaccessibility, financial challenges, and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.	5
5. Examples of successful measures and supports to ensure equal rights to stand in elections and hold public office effectively for persons with disabilities, including through reasonable accommodation, as well as specific examples and individual cases.....	7

1. Existing data as well as monitoring and data collection tools on the level of political representation of persons with disabilities within local and national elected bodies.

There is no such data or monitoring and data collection tools available in Austria regarding the political representation of persons with disabilities within local or national elected bodies, at least none that we are aware of.

2. Legal restrictions on running in elections or holding public office based on disability, including for people with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, and specific examples of such legislation and policies.

There are no legal restrictions for persons with disabilities on running in elections or holding public office in Austria, including for persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.

In Austria, a person can lose their right to vote or to stand for election only in very limited cases. According to § 22 of the National Council Elections Act (Nationalrats-Wahlordnung)¹, this is possible only if a person has been convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to more than one year of imprisonment, and the court explicitly decides to withdraw the voting rights. This measure must be specifically justified by the court and is not applied automatically.

Importantly, disability - including intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities - is not a reason for losing the right to vote or to stand for election. The withdrawal of voting rights also cannot be based on guardianship (court-appointed adult representation) or a limitation of decision-making capacity.

The general eligibility requirements to run for the National Council (Nationalrat) are:²

- Austrian citizenship,
- at least 18 years of age on election day, and
- eligibility to vote in National Council elections (i.e. not being excluded from voting rights by a court decision).

¹ § 22 Bundesgesetz über die Wahl des Nationalrates BGBl 1992/471 i.d.F. BGBl 2025/50.

² § 26 Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz BGBl 1930/1 i.d.F. BGBl 2024/89.

Thus, unless a person has been deprived of their voting rights by a judicial decision - which is very rare and not disability-specific - persons with disabilities have the same rights to stand for election as any other citizen.

3. Existing stigma and ableist attitudes concerning the capacity of persons with disabilities to stand for elections and hold public office effectively.

There is no specific data or research in Austria on stigma or ableist attitudes regarding the capacity of persons with disabilities to stand for elections or hold public office effectively.

However, it can be observed that persons with disabilities in general continue to face stigma and ableist assumptions in society - including perceptions that they are less capable, less competent, or less credible in positions of responsibility or public leadership. Such attitudes contribute to the broader underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in political life and may discourage individuals from seeking public office or active political participation.

These barriers are often even more pronounced for women with disabilities, who experience intersectional discrimination based on both gender and disability, further limiting their opportunities and visibility in political roles.

The CEDAW Committee specifically recommended that Austria adopt temporary special measures and time-bound targets to increase the participation of women, including women with disabilities, in political and public life.³ Similarly, the CRPD Committee noted that participation in political and public life by children and young persons with disabilities is seriously limited, highlighting the need for measures that ensure political inclusion across all age groups.⁴

³ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW/C/AUT/CO/9, 5 (18a).

⁴ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Austria, CRPD/C/AUT/CO/2-3, 13 (67b).

4. Other barriers that persons with disabilities face to enter politics, stand for elections and reach senior roles, including structural inaccessibility, financial challenges, and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

There are several barriers in Austria that persons with disabilities face when entering politics, standing for elections, and reaching senior roles.

These barriers often begin early, in schools, where inclusive education is still lacking⁵, and political education for persons with disabilities remains insufficient. The Federal Constitutional Law in Austria identifies education that promotes an understanding of democracy and empowers participation in political processes as a key goal of the Austrian education system.⁶ However, outside of schools providing vocational education (Berufsschule), there is no specific subject dedicated to political education. The concept of political education is an instructional principle rather than a separate subject, which is why there is no specialized teacher training program for it. This principle of political education is meant to be integrated across all subjects. Typically, from the 9th grade onwards, political education is primarily taught as part of history and social studies lessons.⁷ As a result, political education is poorly covered in regular schools. For persons with disabilities, political education tends to play an even more subordinate role in Austria's still segregated education system, further limiting their opportunities for full participation in democratic processes.

Moreover, information about the political system, electoral processes, and key political issues is often not available in accessible formats, whether at the regional, national, European, or international level. This makes it significantly harder for persons with disabilities to actively engage in political discourse. Without equal access to political knowledge, meaningful participation remains limited. To promote true democratic inclusion, it is essential to ensure that political education is available in accessible formats for everyone.⁸

⁵ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Austria, CRPD/C/AUT/CO/2-3, 10 (57).

⁶ § 14 Abs 5a Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz BGBl. 1930/1 i.d.F. BGBl. 2017/138.

⁷ Parlament Österreich, Welche Bedeutung hat politische Bildung für eine Demokratie?, [Welche Bedeutung hat politische Bildung für eine Demokratie? | Parlament Österreich](#) (last accessed: 27.10.2025).

⁸ European Human Rights Report. Issue 6 – 2022. Human Rights Report on political participation of persons with disabilities (2022), https://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2022/10/edf_hr_report_issue_6_2022_accessible.pdf (last accessed: 05.02.2025) and FRA, Political Participation of People with Disabilities – New Developments (2024), <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2024/political-participation> (last accessed: 27.10.2025).

A key indicator of full political inclusion is the representation of persons with disabilities in parliaments and public office. Representation of persons with disabilities in the parliament in Austria has historically been very limited. This absence is a strong signal of the systemic barriers that still exist in political participation. Additionally, each party represented in parliament has its own spokesperson for disability issues, responsible for addressing the concerns of persons with disabilities. However, these representatives rarely identify as persons with disabilities themselves.

This lack of representation extends to the European level. It appears that no Austrian politician with a disability was included on any party list for the European Parliament elections, at least none who openly identified as a person with a disability. This reflects a broader issue: if persons with disabilities are already underrepresented at the national level, their presence at the European level becomes even less likely. The barriers at the EU level are even greater, as political campaigns often require extensive resources and international mobility.

However, three Austrian representatives are members of the Disability Intergroup in the European Parliament, although they are not persons with disabilities themselves, highlighting that disability-related issues are at least recognized.⁹

Moreover, local political parties, where one might begin their political career, are often not designed to be accessible or inclusive. As a result, persons with disabilities are excluded from the start, with limited opportunities to engage in political activities, join party structures, or gain experience in public office. This early exclusion creates significant barriers to political participation that persist throughout their lives.

The significance of local-level participation is undeniable, as it is often the closest point of interaction between citizens and political decision-making. However, persons with disabilities face major barriers to engagement at this level. Additionally, limited opportunities to represent themselves and external limitations further restrict their ability to engage fully in political processes.¹⁰

Moreover, there is a significant underrepresentation of women in political decision-making roles. Women are also notably underrepresented in high-level and

⁹ List of MEPs in the Intergroup by country, [Members of the Disability Intergroup - By Country - 2024-2029 - European Disability Forum](#) (last accessed: 27.10.2025).

¹⁰ Angela Wegscheider (2013): „Politische Partizipation von Menschen mit Behinderungen.“ SWS-Rundschau 53 (2), S. 216–234 (216).

managerial positions, as well as on the boards of private enterprises.¹¹ These issues are even more pronounced for women with disabilities, who face additional barriers to participation.

The underrepresentation of women in political leadership is partly documented. Currently, only 11.7% of Austrian mayors are women.¹² However, there is no data on how many of these women - or elected municipal council members - identify as persons with disabilities.

Overall, structural inaccessibility, insufficient political education, limited access to information, and intersecting forms of discrimination create a complex set of barriers that hinder the full political participation of persons with disabilities in Austria.

5. Examples of successful measures and supports to ensure equal rights to stand in elections and hold public office effectively for persons with disabilities, including through reasonable accommodation, as well as specific examples and individual cases.

No specific examples or individual cases of successful measures or supports to ensure equal rights for persons with disabilities to stand in elections and hold public office effectively, including through reasonable accommodations, are known to us in Austria.

¹¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Concluding Observations on the fifth periodic report of Austria (2015), CCPR/C/AUT/CO/5, 3 (13).

¹² Wissenswertes über unsere Bürgermeister*innen, [Bürgermeister:innen - Der Österreichische Gemeindebund](#) (last accessed: 27.10.2025).