



# Recommendations from the Council of Europe to European governments



## How to make sure people with disabilities can take part in political and public life



Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)14

**Easy to read version**



This is an easy to read version of the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life, as adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 16 November 2011 at the 1126th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

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French version:

*Recommandation du Conseil de l'Europe CM/Rec(2011)14 du Comité des Ministres aux Etats membres sur la participation des personnes handicapées à la vie politique et publique - Version facile à lire*

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## What is in this document?

This document is to explain how to make sure more people with disabilities can take part in political and public life.

It was written by the Council of Europe.

This document says:

- **What the Council of Europe is.**  
You can read about this on page 4.
- **What taking part in political and public life means.**  
You can read about this on page 5.
- **What makes it difficult for people with disabilities to take part in political and public life.**  
You can read about this on page 6.
- **What needs to be done** so that more people with disabilities take part in political and public life.  
You can read about this on page 7.
- **What the European governments should do** to make sure that more people with disabilities can take part in political and public life.  
You can read about this on page 10.

# What the Council of Europe is

The **Council of Europe** is a group of 47 European countries. These countries work together to make sure that every person in Europe has rights.

This means that people with disabilities have the same rights and chances as anyone else.

The Council of Europe has a plan to make things better for people with disabilities in Europe.

This plan is called the '**Disability Action Plan**'.

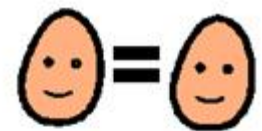
The 'Disability Action Plan' wants to make sure that:

- People with disabilities have the same rights and chances as other people.
- People with disabilities can be active and included in their community.

The 'Disability Action Plan' says what needs to be done to make this happen for people with disabilities.

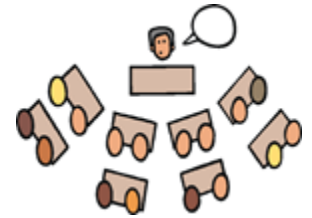
A part of the 'Disability Action Plan' is about the right to take part in political and public life.

This means that for the Council of Europe it is really important that people with disabilities take part in political and public life.



# Taking part in political and public life

When you take part in political and public life, you can have a say in the way things are run in your community.



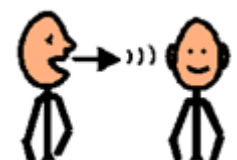
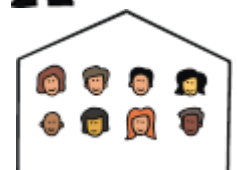
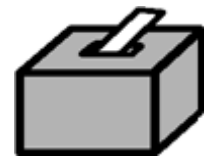
You can make things better and fairer in your community.

You can take part in political and public life in different ways.



For example, you can:

- Choose who will run your country, region or city. You can do this when you vote in elections.
- Become a candidate in elections. Tell others about your ideas on how to make things in your community better.
- Get information about the way things work in your community.
- Get together with other people to share ideas and fight for your rights.
- Start a political party or an organisation.
- Take part in public meetings and discussions.
- Say what you think about the way things are run in your community.
- Tell decision-makers what you think. Ask them to use this when they make decisions.
- Become part of the government or have public duties.



People with disabilities often find it difficult to take part in political and public life.



There are different reasons, for example:

- Laws in their country say that some people with disabilities cannot take part in elections.
- Some governments do not listen to their opinions.
- Information about politics and important things is often difficult to understand.
- Sometimes, the places where elections or public meetings take place are difficult to find and enter.



This means that these places are not accessible.

- Sometimes, the ways things, for example voting, are done make it difficult or impossible for people with disabilities to take part.
- People with disabilities often get little help to overcome these difficulties.



The Council of Europe wrote some recommendations on how to make sure that people with disabilities can take part in political and public life like anyone else.



These recommendations are for all 47 countries which are part of the Council of Europe.



You can read about these recommendations in this document on page 10.



## What needs to be done

The Council of Europe says that these things need to happen so that more people with disabilities can take part in political and public life:

### People with disabilities need equal rights and chances!

It is important to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights but also the same chances to take part in political and public life as anyone else.

Governments must to make it easier for everyone to take part and be active in the community life.

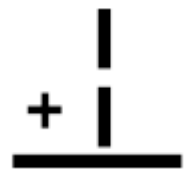
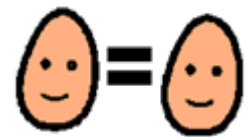
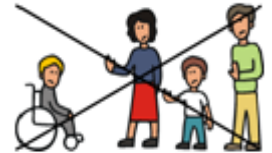
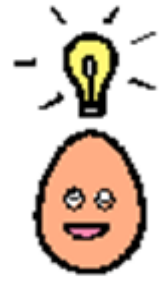
### People with disabilities need access to places, information, goods and services!

Public building and places, including polling stations, must be easy to find and enter.

The way things are done, for example voting, must be easy for everyone. Voting papers must be easy to use for everyone.

Important information must be easy to read and understand.

People with disabilities must be able to use public goods and services, for example transport, like anyone else.



## The laws must treat people with disabilities fairly!

All people with disabilities must have the right to make important decisions in their lives and have these decisions respected by the law.

This is called legal capacity.

This means that all people have the same right to take part in political and public life.

This right cannot be taken away because of a disability.

The laws in European countries must respect this.

## People with disabilities have a right to get support!

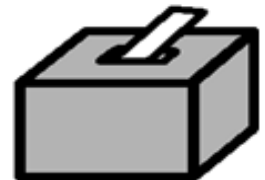
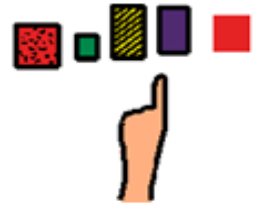
Every person with a disability should be able to vote as any other citizen: freely and in secret.

People with disabilities sometimes need extra support in order to enjoy their rights as other people.

For example, they might need extra support to express their choice or vote.

People with disabilities should be able to choose a person to help them express their choice or vote.

This is called supported decision-making.



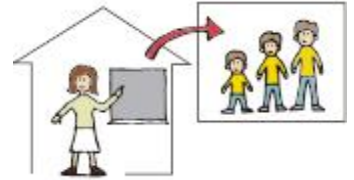


## Training on how to take part in political and public life

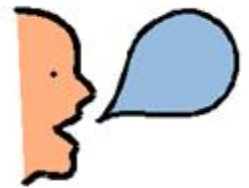


All children and adults should get training on how to become active members of the community.

Children with disabilities should take part in the life of their school.



They should be part of school councils and have a say in the way things are run.



People who work in public organisations and offices, for example schools, city councils or people who organise elections, should get training on disability issues.



## Governments should work together with people with disabilities!

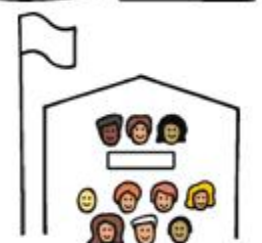
Every government should ask people with disabilities and their organisations what they think when making decisions that affect their lives.



Every government should support organisations of people with disabilities to make sure that they are able to take part and have a say in the way things are run.



Countries that agreed to the Convention of the United Nations on the rights of people with disabilities should work with organisations of people with disabilities to make sure the things in the Convention happen.



## What the European governments should do

The Council of Europe has 6 recommendations to the governments of the 47 European countries.

These recommendations will help the governments to make sure that more people with disabilities can take part in political and public life.

The Council of Europe wants the European governments to do the following:

- **Stick to the Disability Action Plan and these Recommendations.**

These texts were written by the Council of Europe to make things better for people with disabilities in Europe.

- **Make good laws that make it easier for people with disabilities to take part in political and public life.**

People with disabilities should get all the support they need to take part and become active members of the community.

Governments should make sure that more women, children and young people with disabilities are taking part.

- **Keep track of how people with disabilities take part in political and public life.**

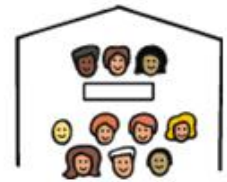
Governments should look for good examples and let everyone know about them.



- **Work together with the Council of Europe.**



At the Council of Europe, governments can talk together to see how they can better support people with disabilities.



- **Make these recommendations part of the laws in their country.**



- **Involve adults, young people and children with disabilities in making this happen.**

