



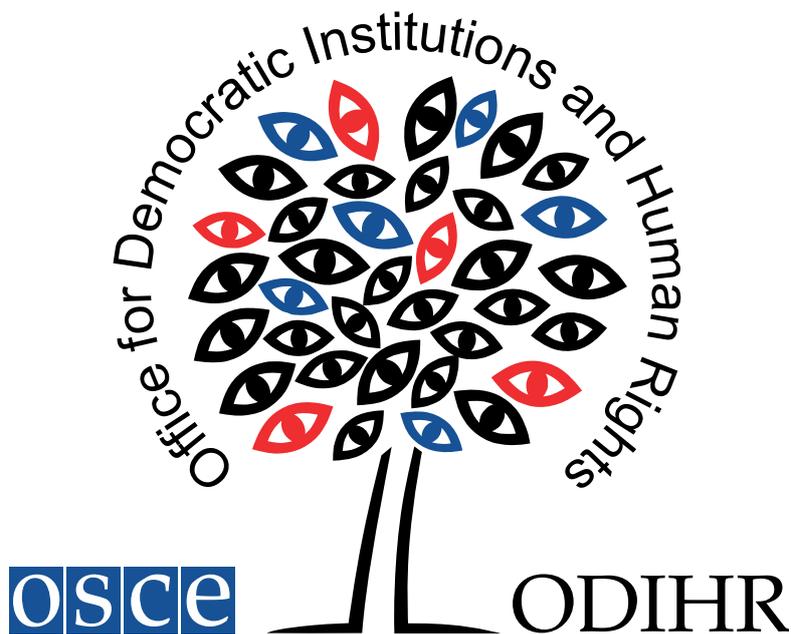
Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Conference

**POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION
OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Belgrade
16-17 October 2018**

OSCE/ODIHR Event Report



**Warsaw
30 November 2018**

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Conference

POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Belgrade
16-17 October 2018

MEETING SUMMARY

On 16 and 17 October 2018, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), together with the Balkans Independent Disability Framework (BIDF) organized a conference *Political and electoral participation of persons with disabilities*.

The event was organized in the framework of ODIHR's projects "Our right to Participate – Promoting the Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Political and Public Life" and "[Support to Elections in the Western Balkans](#)", forming part of the Office's assistance to the participating States in promoting inclusive democratic societies and following up on ODIHR's electoral recommendations.

The conference served as a platform to raise awareness about the limited participation of persons with disabilities in political and electoral life across the Western Balkans and to identify measures that can facilitate more diverse and inclusive democratic institutions and decision-making processes.

Altogether 82 participants (42 women and 40 men), including prominent activists in the field of disability rights, current and former parliamentarians with disabilities, academia, representatives of disabled people's organizations (DPOs) and experts from other international organizations, including the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) mostly from the Western Balkans region, attended the event. During the conference, 23 speakers and moderators (13 women and 10 men) shared their experiences, views and suggestions on how to increase the participation and impact of persons with disabilities in electoral and decision-making processes across the region.

During the discussions, the participants recognized that persons with disabilities remain largely under-represented in political and public life in the Western Balkans due to various barriers. Among these barriers are the unclear definition of disability, inaccessible environment and information, including during electoral processes, restrictions on the right to vote resulting from deprivation of

legal capacity, lack of disability-disaggregated data, low quality education and prevailing stereotypes regarding persons with disabilities.

To address these issues, the participants noted the need to raise awareness among political parties, members of parliaments (MPs) and various government structures about the challenges that persons with disabilities face when deciding to engage in political life. Participants stressed repeatedly that the most efficient way to challenge the stereotypes and educate public officials and members of political parties is by providing them an opportunity to work with someone who has a disability. Close allies in parliaments, governments, DPOs and with organizations representing other traditionally vulnerable groups are crucial to ensure that persons with disabilities have an impact in decision-making processes. DPOs need continued support, including financial, to be able to carry out their disability policy advocacy work. Similarly, continuous support and capacity building is necessary to ensure effective functioning of inter-parliamentary groups on disability, which exist in some parliaments in the region.

Ambassador Andrea Orizio, Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, **Mr. Ekmel Çizmecioglu**, Programme Manager at the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia, **Ms. Brankica Janković**, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of Serbia, **Mr. Zoran Dobraš**, the President of BIDS and **Ms. Tiina Kukkamaa-Bah**, Chief of Democratic Governance and Gender Unit at ODIHR delivered opening remarks.

The speakers acknowledged the lack of visibility of persons with disabilities in political and public life in the region. They noted that in reality, persons with disabilities are not able to enjoy all their rights, and they often find themselves in a less favourable situation compared to other citizens. The position of women with disabilities is particularly difficult, as they often face multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination. Among the barriers that prevent full participation of persons with disabilities, speakers mentioned limited accessibility of the physical environment and information, lack of inclusive education, unavailable disability disaggregated data, low rates of employment among persons with disabilities and prevailing stereotypes and prejudices. At the same time, all speakers emphasized the importance of involvement of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes.

The speakers recognized that participation without discrimination is at the very core of democracy. They stressed that regional co-operation, as well as partnership between national institutions and civil society organizations is essential to improve the political participation of persons with disabilities. DPOs should work together to ensure they have a strong and united voice. The

speakers also recognized the importance of having such events, stressing that this was the first time when discussions at a regional level on political participation of persons with disabilities take place.

Following the opening remarks, **Mr. Damjan Tatic**, Vice-Chairperson of the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) Committee shared the main recommendations and findings of the Committee with respect to the Western Balkans region. He noted that the Committee has adopted recommendations for Serbia in April 2016, for Bosnia and Herzegovina in March 2017, for Montenegro in September 2017 and for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in September 2018. Most of the Committee’s recommendations related to issues such as lifting legal capacity restrictions, increasing efforts to include Roma and women with disabilities in political and public life, training election officials on disability rights, ensuring secrecy of the vote and allowing unhindered access for persons with different kinds of disabilities to electoral processes.

BIDF country co-ordinators then presented their reports on the compliance of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with the UNCRPD, in line with the UNCRPD Committee’s recommendations.

Ms. Milena Stojanović, BIDF co-ordinator for Serbia noted that in 2016 the Committee issued 68 recommendations with respect to Serbia, covering different areas of life, such as education, accessibility, rights of women and children with disabilities. In line with the recommendations, in the last few years Serbia has adopted several legislative amendments. Some of them have been positive, whereas some have had negative impact, for example, on healthcare allowances. She stressed that currently it is difficult for persons with disabilities to engage in public and political life in Serbia due to inaccessible environment and information, and lack of inclusive education, which would allow persons with disabilities to achieve their full potential. The information provided by political parties is not accessible to persons with sensory disabilities. Finally, she noted some of the undertaken initiatives, including by the Serbian Electoral Commission, which aim at increasing the involvement of persons with disabilities in political processes.

Ms. Nataša Borović, BIDF Co-ordinator for Montenegro and the President of the BIDF General Assembly, stressed that legislation in Montenegro has not been fully harmonized with the UNCRPD. Financial resources are not being adequately spent or invested. For example, one of the UN Committee recommendations requires Montenegro to provide adequate funds for DPOs. However, in the recent years, it has been more difficult for such organizations to

survive than in the past. The definition of disability is another pivotal issue, with certain laws failing to recognize different types of disabilities. Various government institutions in Montenegro assess disability in different ways. Lack of disability disaggregated data and failure to implement laws are other important problems. When imposed by court, restrictions on legal capacity prevent persons with mental disabilities from voting. Ms Borović stressed that such provisions should be urgently reviewed and amended in order to comply with the UNCRPD.

Speaking about the most recent developments in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, **Mr. Zvonko Savreski**, BIDD country Co-ordinator, noted that he did not believe that any of the public officials had read the UNCRDP recommendations. Nor have there been any visible efforts in implementing them. He stressed that it is important to engage with members of parliament, so that they would understand and address the problems faced by persons with disabilities.

The last speaker of the session, **Mr. Suvad Zahirović**, BIDD Co-ordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina, stressed that when it comes to political participation and exercising the right to vote, very few things have been achieved. Regarding the accessibility of political processes, the situation is similar as in the other countries in the region, which again means that persons with disabilities cannot obtain accessible information from political parties, their possibilities to participate in decision-making processes is limited. He stressed that despite some small advancements, persons with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina remain sidelined from mainstream society.

The conference was then divided into **three panel discussions** focused on the challenges and positive practice examples from the Western Balkans in different areas of political and electoral participation of persons with disabilities:

- Panel I: Co-operation and partnership of persons with disabilities with government institutions: challenges, good practice examples, recommendations for improvement;
- Panel II: Inter-parliamentary lobby groups and political parties: challenges and opportunities of disability policy advocacy;
- Panel III: Electoral participation of persons with disabilities.

Panel I: Co-operation and partnership of persons with disabilities with government institutions: challenges, good practice examples, recommendations for improvement.

Among the speakers of the first panel were **Ms. Ljupka Mihajlovska**, Member of Parliament (MP) from Serbia, **Mr. Ethan Young**, Civic Participation Officer at Inclusion Scotland, **Ms. Tijana Borovčanin-Marić**, Senior Associate at the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina and **Ms. Vesna Škulić**, Former MP from Croatia. **Ms. Anete Erdmane**, Associate Democratic Governance Officer at ODIHR, moderated the panel.

Ms. Ljupka Mihajlovska noted that when discussing the participation of persons with disabilities in political life in the Western Balkans, it is important to mention the general political context in the region. She noted that in these countries, there are more or less always the same leaders, just like in the disability movement. There are very few new activists, which is a regrettable situation. “Whatever change we want to make, we have to engage in politics, because somebody in the Parliament has to initiate it”, she said. At the same time, she also stressed that a more democratic society in general is needed to ensure that there is motivation to act. She also informed that the Parliament in Serbia has established a group on disability, which could contribute to improving legislation. However, since its establishment, it has only met twice.

The next speaker of the panel, **Mr. Ethan Young**, noted that Inclusion Scotland is co-funded by the Scottish government, which allows them to do the majority of their work. He stressed that it is important for persons with disabilities to be part of decision-making processes to bring their lived experience - not just around their own disability but from their own life experience too - so it can filter into all policies that are made.

As part of their work, Inclusion Scotland assessed the barriers which prevent persons with disabilities from engaging in politics, and subsequently established the Access to Elected Fund funded by the government to provide financial support to potential candidates. The support relates to communication, assisted technology, personal assistance, transport and a whole range of other costs that nondisabled candidates would not encounter. The pilot project was very successful and out of 44 applications for funding for the last local council elections, 39 of the applicants became candidates through political parties and 15 were elected. The government has committed to the fund for the elections coming up in 2021 and currently Inclusion Scotland is receiving applications. Mr. Young stressed that it is important for the fund to be set up far in advance, so that persons with disabilities have time to work through political parties, join a political party, raise the profile, and stand a fighting chance with the aim of becoming elected in 2021.

Ms. Tijana Borovčanin-Marić then informed about the work of the national co-ordination mechanism on disability rights, which was formed in December

2010, after Bosnia and Herzegovina ratified the UNCRPD. The body initiates and participates in monitoring of the implementation of strategic plans and bylaws related to rights of persons with disabilities. It also co-operates with governmental and non-governmental organizations, and co-ordinates activities that will help institutions prepare reports and recommendations related to protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. The co-ordination mechanism includes ten representatives of governmental institutions and ten representatives of non-governmental organizations. Ms. Borovčanin-Marić stressed that strong engagement of civil society and close co-operation with the parliament and relevant ministries is crucial in ensuring efficient work of the mechanism.

The last speaker of the panel, **Ms. Vesna Škulić**, shared her experience of being elected as the first woman with a disability in the Parliament of Croatia for three terms. She noted that initially her work was difficult, as she was not seen as a serious politician. In addition, the media coverage mostly emphasised her disability, instead of what she wanted to change or achieve. Ms. Škulić stressed that she does not want to be defined by her disability and wants to engage in political life based on her interests and position as a politician. She informed that her political party provided her support when she was running to be a chairperson of the party, including a driver and a car, as the public transport in Croatia is not accessible to persons with disabilities. She noted that currently she is a member of the main Council of her party, and a chairwoman of the Council for Persons with Disabilities. She has been working as an adviser to the President on issues related to disability.

During the discussion, the participants focused on the benefits and challenges of being an independent MP. Some speakers noted that it is not entirely possible in the existing political setting and neither it is always beneficial in achieving the set out goals. Another point related to politicians using disability related language with derogatory connotation and as insults. The speakers were invited to suggest how to best address such issue. As a response, it was noted that in Scotland, a new justice minister intends to define abusive language as a hate crime, punishable by a prison term.

Further, the participants discussed which mechanisms are needed to enable sustainable participation of persons with disabilities in political processes, regardless of whether political parties are interested or not. What should the institutions of government and political parties do for this process to be open, in order for the partnership to be functioning?

One speaker noted that political parties often do not see the importance of having persons with disabilities in their ranks because it is costlier than with

candidates without disabilities. Thus, the only thing that can serve as strong motivation for political parties is a guaranteed seat in the parliament for persons with disabilities. Other speakers did not support the idea of quotas and stressed the need for allies and people who fully understand the barriers that disabled people face and believe in the democratic right of disabled people to be involved. This involves strong allies in the parliament, government, DPOs and with organizations representing other traditionally excluded groups.

The conference continued with *Panel II: Inter-parliamentary lobby groups and political parties: challenges and opportunities of disability policy advocacy?*

The speakers included **Mr. Bogdan Moysa**, representative of the National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine, **Mr. Zvonko Šavreski**, BIDF Co-ordinator for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and **Ms. Ljubica Lukačić**, MP from Croatia. The moderator of the panel was **Mr. Zoran Dobraš**, BIDF President.

Mr. Bogdan Moysa presented the focus group discussions, commissioned by ODIHR, which his organization conducted earlier this spring in Ukraine on political participation of persons with disabilities. The focus group participants included political party members at the local level, candidates and members of political parties with disabilities and representatives of DPOs from different regions in Ukraine. One of the main findings was that political parties have insufficient knowledge and understanding about the problems that persons with disabilities face. There was also a lack of knowledge how to include persons with disabilities in political life. At the same time, the motivation to gain such knowledge and understanding was limited. Another challenge stems from the first one, and it is the presence of stereotypes and prejudices. On a positive note, there is a slow shift in the society from the medical to human rights model of disability. However, this is happening very slowly. To conclude, he highlighted the insufficiently accessible environment, which makes it difficult for the elected MPs to perform their duties.

Ms. Ljubica Lukačić elaborated that when she was elected to the Parliament of Croatia in 2008, it was not an easy start. The majority of her colleagues did not have experience working with persons with disabilities. They did not know how to approach them or deal with any disability related legal regulations. She noted the importance of having MPs with disabilities to increase awareness and bring the experience of disability to the Parliament.

Ms Lukačić then informed about the work of the Commission of the Government for Persons with Disabilities, which is reviewing all the laws and regulations pertaining to disability issues before they are submitted to the

Parliament. She noted some of the achievements, including amending 20 regulations related to persons with disabilities and ensuring sign language interpretation during the parliament sessions. Finally, Ms Lukačić stressed her role as a link between DPOs and the parliament and government, which helps her to include the needs of the disability community in decision-making processes.

Inter-parliamentary groups on disability were at the focus of **Mr. Zvonko Šavreski’s** intervention. He shared the experience of the inter-parliamentary group in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, noting that already early on his organization realized that there might not be many or any persons with disabilities represented in the Parliament. Thus, they decided to focus on MPs who are sensitive to disability issues or have family members with disabilities. Currently, the inter-parliamentary group consists of 46 MPs, all without disabilities. He stressed that setting up a new group after the elections was a difficult task. Providing continued assistance to the group is crucial to ensure its functioning, including for example by educating MPs and providing advice on legislation.

Following the panel, some participants noted that elected persons with disabilities should not always be expected to work on disability rights and might prefer instead to focus on different issues. Some participants asked MPs how they manage to remain consistent with their principles and agenda in political negotiation processes. It was noted that lobbying in the parliament and government has a crucial role in achieving any changes. Regarding the inter-parliamentary lobby groups, it was stressed that to ensure their adequate work, MPs need to be continually assisted with team building training, capacity building and support. Finally, some participants discussed the importance to proceed with de-institutionalization efforts in countries, as people in institutions are also represented by those in parliaments.

Panel III: Electoral participation of persons with disabilities

The speakers of the panel included **Mr. Goran Kustura**, Secretary General of the National Council of Slovenian Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and **Ms. Daina Podzina**, representing Apeirons organization from Latvia. The moderator of the panel was **Ms. Lusine Badalyan**, ODIHR Senior Election Adviser.

The panel was structured as a discussion with panellists answering the questions of the moderator. The main topics were: accessibility of polling stations for persons with various types of disabilities; accessibility of information and

election materials; electoral reform and the engagement of DPOs in the process; and the limitations to suffrage rights based on legal incapacity.

Mr. Goran Kustura presented the experience of Slovenia in overcoming barriers for persons with disabilities. He talked about taking the case of inaccessible polling stations to courts, which resulted in the Constitutional Court decision enforcing the necessity of making polling stations accessible. Following that, a survey was conducted in co-ordination with the national election commission on polling stations’ accessibility, and currently around 80 per cent of the polling stations are accessible for persons with disabilities. Mr. Kustura also highlighted the importance of information to be accessible, and talked about the meetings and discussions that were organized between politicians and persons with disabilities. He also mentioned the importance of the use of new voting technologies to attract and increase the participation of persons with disabilities in elections. Mr. Kustura indicated that Slovenian DPOs are being consulted on the issues and draft legal amendments pertaining to them. It took several years for these consultations to become regular. Mr. Kustura also presented his experience on preparing an alternative report on the UN CRPD to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Ms. Daina Podzina told about her organization’s experience of working with the Central Election Commission of Latvia for making both the polling stations and electoral information available for persons with various types of disabilities. She showed the information available in different formats on the election commission’s website. Ms. Podzina indicated that polling stations are usually located in public buildings which are not accessible (municipalities were responsible for selecting the polling stations). A good example to counter this challenge was to open a polling station in a shopping centre. Ms. Podzina also presented the situation with suffrage rights of persons with disabilities in Latvia.

Participants from the audience presented experiences from other countries on the topic, as well as addressed questions to the speakers, including, for example on alternative voting methods, engaging persons with disabilities in election management bodies and election observation missions.

During the final session of the conference, the participants were divided into four working groups focusing on the following topics:

- 1) Women and youth with disabilities in political life;
- 2) Right to vote – methods of advocacy for the implementation of ODIHR election observation recommendation on participation of persons with disabilities;
- 3) Participation of persons with disabilities in political parties;

4) Inter-parliamentary lobby groups.

The moderators of the working groups briefly reported on the main conclusions of the discussions. **Ms. Nataša Borović**, BIDF co-ordinator for Montenegro and the President of the BIDF General Assembly, noted that in the working group on women and youth, the participants acknowledged that there is an evident lack of disability and gender disaggregated data. The data are crucial to develop necessary policies related to the inclusion of women with disabilities. It was stressed that women with disabilities often face intersectional forms of discrimination, based on their disability and gender. As a result, women’s political participation is lower compared to men. Girls with disabilities are often receiving low quality education, which further limits their future opportunities.

The participants agreed that the challenges and difficulties are similar in the countries they represent. The recommendations of the working group included providing support mechanisms, including social support, for women with disabilities, improving the quality of education for girls with disabilities, raising awareness, mainstreaming disability into policies on gender and vice versa and ensuring that there are monitoring mechanisms to oversee relevant developments.

Ms. Vera Kelava, Director of Development at Agency for Cooperation, Education and Development (ACED) from Bosnia and Hercegovina was the moderator of the second working group.

The group agreed that it would be good to have an analysis on what political parties in different countries have done to increase political participation of persons with disabilities. Advocacy is difficult without an analysis and evidence, thus a baseline analysis should be conducted in all countries of the region and it should be repeated after certain periods, for example every five years.

Specific examples on engaging persons with disabilities in political processes were provided from Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, and Serbia. The group discussed, for example, regulation of the right to vote of persons with disabilities, particularly blind persons and persons with low vision. In the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, after a comprehensive analysis of the situation, a civil society organization prepared guidelines on elections, later advocated with political parties and decision-makers, and created a voting template for blind voters.

Another topic was the voting rights of persons deprived of legal capacity either partially or completely. A suggested good practice could be to deliver training

courses to judges that could help to decrease decisions related to complete deprivation of legal capacity of persons with disabilities.

Multi-sectoral networking and lobbying with both opposition and governing parties was emphasized. These actors have the greatest impact on amendments and legislative changes. One experience that has been recognized in the entire region as a possible model and good practice is the work of inter-parliamentary lobbying groups supported by organizations of persons with disabilities.

The moderator of the third working group, **Ms. Milena Stojanović**, President of the Center for Independent Living of Persons with Disabilities in Kragujevac, Serbia, elaborated that one of the biggest challenges for political participation is insufficient information about political processes and political parties. There is a lack of written material during elections, and absence or insufficient support services to allow persons with disabilities to develop and be more active in the society, including attending meetings of political parties on a regular basis or joining political campaigns. Society often fails to recognize persons with disabilities as political actors, due to prevailing stereotypes and prejudices.

The participants also stressed that there are even less women than men with disabilities who are politically active due to various reasons. Poverty and limited financial means were noted as important obstacles to political activism. At the same time, the participants agreed that persons with disabilities should be active and take a leading role in political life, including through their representative organizations. Political parties should not be considered as private entities but as organizations, which have a distinctive role in the political life of the country and thus must adhere to certain laws and rules when implementing their activities.

Ms. Ljupka Mihajlovska, MP from Serbia, moderated the last working group, and **Ms. Katerina Bajdevska**, the Advisor to the Interparty group for persons with disabilities in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, presented the main conclusions. She noted that the main role of the inter-parliamentary group is to advocate on disability issues and to monitor policies and laws which affect persons with disabilities. The members of working group can assess whether legislation is in line with the UNCPRD and submit amendments to harmonize certain pieces of legislation with the Convention.

Ms. Bajdevska noted two issues which usually slow down the work of the group. First, lack of consent on how to address a certain problem. The members of the group come from different political parties and often have different views on how to solve emerging issues and finding common ground is not always easy. The second challenge is limited knowledge about the UNCPRD, often

manifested as lack of interest to work on disability issues. Thus, one of the important tasks to ensure an ongoing work of the group is to provide regular training to all members of the group about the implementation of different articles of the UNCRPD.

Conference Agenda

| DAY 1 – 16 October 2018 | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Time | Agenda | Details |
| 9.30 – 10.00 | Registration of the participants Media statements | |
| 10.00 – 10.30 | Opening speeches and introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moderator: Suvad Zahirović, BIDF Management Board ▪ Ambassador Andrea Orizio, Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia ▪ Ekmel Çizmecioglu, Programme Manager, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia ▪ Brankica Janković, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Serbia ▪ Zoran Dobraš, President, BIDF ▪ Tiina Kukkamaa-Bah, Chief of Democratic Governance and Gender Unit, ODIHR ▪ Gordana Rajkov, Director for Political Development and Planning at BIDF Co-ordinating organization for Serbia, CIL Belgrade |
| 10.30 – 11.30 | Presentation: UNCRPD compliance reports in the program countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and the Former | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Damjan Tatić, Vice-Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ▪ Suvad Zahirović, BIDF Co-ordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina ▪ Mimica Živadinović, BIDF Co-ordinator for Serbia |

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| | Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and updates on UNCRPD committee recommendations) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nataša Borović, BIDF Co-ordinator for Montenegro and President of the BIDF General Assembly ▪ Zvonko Šavreski, BIDF Co-ordinator for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia |
| 11.30 – 12.00 | Coffee break | |
| 12.00 – 13.30 | Panel discussion 1: Cooperation and partnership of persons with disabilities with government institutions: challenges, good practice examples, recommendations for improvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moderator: Anete Erdmane, Associate Democratic Governance Officer, ODIHR ▪ Ljupka Mihajlovska, Member of Parliament, Serbia ▪ Ethan Young, Civic Participation Officer, Inclusion Scotland ▪ Tijana Borovčanin-Marić, Senior Associate, Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, Bosnia and Herzegovina ▪ Vesna Škulić, Former Member of Parliament, Croatia |
| 13.30 – 15.00 | Lunch break | |
| 15.00 - 16.30 | Panel discussion 2: Inter-parliamentary lobby groups and political parties: challenges and opportunities of disability policy advocacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moderator: Zoran Dobraš, President, BIDF ▪ Bogdan Moysa, National Assembly of People with Disabilities in Ukraine and Analyst in the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union ▪ Zvonko Šavreski, BIDF Co-ordinator for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ▪ Gordana Rajkov, Former Member of Parliament, Serbia ▪ Ljubica Lukačić, Member of Parliament, Croatia |
| 16.30 – 17.00 | Conference day 1 conclusions | |

| DAY 2 – 17 Oct 2018 | | |
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| Time | Agenda | Details |
| 9.30 – 10.00 | Opening speech and introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Suvad Zahirović, BIDF Co-ordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| 10.00 – 11.30 | Panel discussion 3: Electoral participation of persons with disabilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moderator: Lusine Badalyan, Senior Election Adviser, ODIHR ▪ Goran Kustura, Secretary General of the National Council of Slovenian Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, Slovenia ▪ Daina Podzina, Apeirons, Latvia |
| 11.30 – 12.00 | Coffee break | |
| 12.00 – 13.00 | <p>WORKING GROUPS (<i>separate venues</i>)</p> <p>WG1: Women and youth with disabilities in political life</p> <p>WG2: Right to vote - methods of advocacy for the implementation of ODIHR election observation recommendations on the participation of persons with disabilities</p> <p>WG3: Participation of persons with disabilities in political parties</p> | <p>Moderators</p> <p>WG1: Nataša Borović, President of the BIDF General Assembly</p> <p>WG2: Vera Kelava, Director of Development, ACED</p> <p>WG3: Milena Stojanović, President CIL Kragujevac</p> |

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| | WG4: Inter-Parliamentary lobby groups | WG4: Ljupka Mihajlovska , Member of Parliament, Serbia |
| 13.00 – 14.30 | Lunch break | |
| 14.30 - 15.00 | Rapporteurs from Working Groups: conclusions | Moderator: Suvad Zahirović , BIDF Co-ordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| 15.00 – 15.30 | Conference conclusions and closing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gordana Rajkov, Director for Political Development and Planning at BIDF Co-ordinating organization for Serbia, CIL Belgrade ▪ Anete Erdmane, Associate Democratic Governance Officer, ODIHR |

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With funding from the Austrian Development Agency



Balkan Independent Disability Network



OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

ABOUT ODIHR

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is the OSCE's principal institution to assist participating States "to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to abide by the rule of law, to promote principles of democracy and (...) to build, strengthen and protect democratic institutions, as well as promote tolerance throughout society" (1992 Helsinki Summit Document). This is referred to as the OSCE human dimension.

ODIHR, based in Warsaw (Poland) was created as the Office for Free Elections at the 1990 Paris Summit and started operating in May 1991. One year later, the name of the Office was changed to reflect an expanded mandate to include human rights and democratization. Today it employs over 150 staff.

ODIHR is the lead agency in Europe in the field of **election observation**. Every year, it co-ordinates and organizes the deployment of thousands of observers to assess whether elections in the OSCE region are conducted in line with OSCE Commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections and with national legislation. Its unique methodology provides an in-depth insight into the electoral process in its entirety. Through assistance projects, ODIHR helps participating States to improve their electoral framework.

The Office's **democratization** activities include: rule of law, legislative support, democratic governance, migration and freedom of movement, and gender equality. ODIHR implements a number of targeted assistance programs annually, seeking to develop democratic structures.

ODIHR also assists participating States' in fulfilling their obligations to promote and protect **human rights** and fundamental freedoms consistent with OSCE human dimension commitments. This is achieved by working with a variety of partners to foster collaboration, build capacity and provide expertise in thematic areas including human rights in the fight against terrorism, enhancing the human rights protection of trafficked persons, human rights education and training, human rights monitoring and reporting, and women's human rights and security.

Within the field of **tolerance** and **non-discrimination**, ODIHR provides support to the participating States in strengthening their response to hate crimes and incidents of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. ODIHR's activities related to tolerance and non-discrimination are focused on the following areas: legislation; law enforcement training; monitoring, reporting on, and following up on responses to hate-motivated crimes and incidents; as

well as educational activities to promote tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding.

ODIHR provides advice to participating States on their policies on **Roma and Sinti**. It promotes capacity-building and networking among Roma and Sinti communities, and encourages the participation of Roma and Sinti representatives in policy-making bodies.

All ODIHR activities are carried out in close co-ordination and co-operation with OSCE participating States, OSCE institutions and field operations, as well as with other international organizations.

More information is available on the ODIHR website (www.osce.org/odihr).