


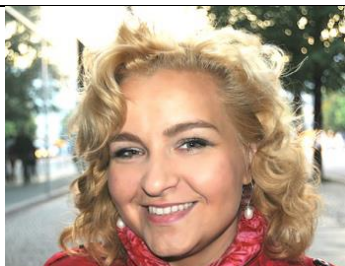


Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights



Advisory Panel on the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities

Convened in 2021, the panel provides advice, guidance and recommendations to ODIHR to increase and improve the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life. The panel is composed of independent experts from across the OSCE region, the majority of whom self-identify as disabled. Members serve in their personal capacities as experts and do not represent any organization or participating State. ODIHR makes the Panel's expertise available to participating States, OSCE field operations and non-governmental organizations.


Expert Profiles

	<p>Ms Virginia Atkinson</p> <p>Virginia Atkinson has 15 years of international advocacy and capacity building experience. She is the senior global inclusion advisor of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). Atkinson has extensive field experience having led and/or participated in over 50 missions to 29 different countries around the world for programs supporting youth groups, disabled people's organizations, election observers, and journalists. Atkinson is actively involved in numerous international human rights groups including as an adviser to the General Election Network for Disability Access in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.</p>
	<p>Ms Karina Chupina</p> <p>Karina Chupina, PhD (cand.), is an expert in social inclusion with the focus on cross-sectoral capacity building in disability and youth inclusion in Europe and Eurasia. As a person with a profound hearing loss, Karina has been a passionate disability inclusion advocate and trainer for more than 20 years. Ms. Chupina has worked as an independent consultant in conceptualizing and implementing disability-inclusive programmes with the consideration of intersections with gender, SOGI, ethnicity, child and youth dimensions. Her experience also includes working with the European Commission, UNDP, UNICEF, UN DESA, World Bank, Disability Rights Fund and CBM Global Disability Inclusion.</p>

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

	<p>Mr Patrick Clarke</p> <p>Pat Clarke is CEO, retired, of Down Syndrome Ireland and Past-President of Down Syndrome International. Pat is Vice president of the European Disability Forum. He has had a long involvement with the disability sector since his son David, who has Down syndrome, was born over 40 years ago. He serves on the boards of Down Syndrome International and the European Down Syndrome Association. He has been a long-time advocate for the full inclusion of people with Down syndrome in particular and all people with disabilities in general in society at every level.</p>
	<p>Mr Martin Conway</p> <p>First Visually impaired member of the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament), elected in three successive Seanad elections. He is the Fine Gael Seanad Spokesperson on Health and a Member of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health. Currently serving on the NCBI Board of Directors advocating and developing supports for visually impaired people. Also joined the Board of CARA Centre Sport Inclusion Ireland who provide a platform to enhance sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities.</p>
	<p>Ms Anna Drabarz</p> <p>ODIHR mourns the passing of Anna Drabarz in March 2025.</p> <p>From 2010, she taught and conducted research on anti-discrimination law and the socio-legal aspects of disability at the Faculty of Law, University of Białystok (Poland). In 2016, she initiated the Podlaskie Federation of People with Disabilities, where as president she promoted effective and professional advocacy for the interests of people with disabilities. In 2019, she became a board member of the Polish Disability Forum. She also worked with public institutions, from 2019 as Plenipotentiary of the Podlaskie Voivodeship Board for Persons with Disabilities and with the Polish Ministry of Development Funding and Regional Policy.</p>

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

	<p>Mr János Fiala-Butora</p> <p>János is a Lecturer in International Disability Law at the Centre for Disability Law and Policy, National University of Ireland Galway. János is a human rights attorney with extensive experience in representing persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and persons deprived of their liberty before the European Court of Human Rights, the UN Committee on the Right of Persons with Disabilities and other international bodies. His experience also includes work with the Mental Disability Advocacy Center (MDAC), the Disability Rights Center (DRC), Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE), Central Europe Program of the Harvard Law School Project on Disability (HPOD), and Validity (former MDAC).</p>
	<p>Ms Lyazzat Kaltayeva</p> <p>Lyazzat is a member of the Senate of Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan and a member of the National Commission on the Family and Women's Affairs. She was also the chairperson of the Association of Women with Disabilities «Shyrak», the chairperson of Central Asian Disability Forum (CADF), the member of local Parliament of Almaty city. She is also an advisor on disability issues to the government. In addition, she is a member of the National council on Disability, coordinator of the Central Asian Network of Women with Disabilities, author and trainer of training modules on the rights of persons with disabilities, and has won the Asia-Pacific Disability Champion Award (UNESCAP), 2013. Lyazzat is a woman who is a wheelchair user due to spinal injury.</p>
	<p>Ms Janet Lord</p> <p>Janet E. Lord is currently senior fellow at the Harvard Law School Project on Disability where, among other things, she leads advocacy and research on political participation and election access. She also serves as senior advisor to the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. During the drafting of the CRPD, she advised several lead governments, the UN and civil society and was integrally involved in the drafting of Article 29 of the CRPD. She has designed and implemented disability inclusive election access</p>

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

	<p>projects in more than 15 countries worldwide and led consultations with numerous governments and election management bodies on law reform for UNDP, OHCHR, USAID, DOS, and the EU.</p>
	<p>Ms Helga Stevens</p> <p>Helga Stevens was the first deaf person in Belgium to receive a law degree (Licentiate in Law) in 1993 from the Catholic University of Leuven and a Master of Laws degree (LL.M) in 1994 from the University of California in Berkeley Law School, USA. In 1996 she joined the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) as Sign Languages Project Coordinator. Later she moved on to become EUD General Secretary and then Director. She was President of EUD from 2005 to 2007. She was a Member of the Flemish Parliament from 2004 to 2014. From 2007 to 2014 she was also a Senator. Helga Stevens served as Vice President of the Senate from July 2010 to October 2011. In 2014 Helga Stevens was elected as a Member of the European Parliament (MEP). She was appointed Vice President of the European Conservatives and Reformers (ECR) group and Co-Chair of the Disability Intergroup.</p>
	<p>Ms Iryna Tekuchova</p> <p>Iryna Tekuchova is a human rights expert with over six years of experience in advancing rights of people with disabilities in Ukraine. She works as the Director of the Disability Research Center, long-term initiative of the organization of people with disabilities "Fight For Right", which assists the Ukrainian Government and authorities in integrating disability as a cross-cutting issue with national policies and strategies related to people with disabilities. Iryna is a member of the Accessibility Working Group at the Central Election Commission. In 2019 she participated in the development of provisions on accessible elections for the Electoral Code of Ukraine.</p>



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights



Ms Amu Urhonen

Amu Urhonen is a long-term disability activist living in Finland. Her work history includes national and international NGOs, public government and politics. At the moment she is working on a research project about disability activism in Finland. She is active in party politics and contributed to the guidelines on disability inclusion that ODHIR published in 2019. She is a wheelchair user.