Questionnaire on

Breaking the glass ceiling: equal participation of persons with disabilities in political life

The policy of the Republic of Türkiye in disability is to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy their human rights without discrimination and participate in social life equally with others.

The international basis of the national disability policy is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), while the Constitution and the Law No. 5378 on Persons with Disabilities published in 2005, a framework law in disability, constitute the national foundation. The CRPD adopted by the United Nations in 2006 to promote and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities and to strengthen respect for their human dignity was ratified by the Republic of Türkiye in 2009 and the Optional Protocol to the Convention was ratified in 2015.

The focal institution responsible for promoting the implementation of the CRPD is the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS). Accordingly, MoFSS carries out activities to determine policies and strategies at national level, to provide social services for persons with disabilities, and to ensure cooperation and coordination with relevant institutions and CSOs in the field.

The full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in all spheres of social life constitutes one of the fundamental elements of democratic governance. Direct involvement in decision-making processes ensures that persons with disabilities are not only beneficiaries of services but also active stakeholders in policy making. In this regard, Türkiye has taken comprehensive steps to empower persons with disabilities through a rights-based approach and to enhance their participation in society.

Efforts are being undertaken to strengthen the representation and participation of persons with disabilities in policymaking through national legislation, institutional structures, and cooperation mechanisms with CSOs. These initiatives aim to make policy formulation processes more inclusive and participatory.

Ensuring that all disability-related policies and practices are sustainable and inclusive is only possible through the active participation of persons with disabilities, their families, and CSOs. Policies and practices that respond to the diverse needs arising from different disability types can only be developed through a participatory and inclusive approach. In line with this, the Law

on Persons with Disabilities stipulates that policymaking and implementation in the field of disability shall be carried out through participatory processes. This legal provision constitutes a fundamental basis for realizing participatory democracy in decision-making.

Participation in decision-making is not limited to involvement in administrative or consultative mechanisms; it is also closely linked to the exercise of the right to vote and to be elected, which forms the cornerstone of democratic representation.

Türkiye's 2030 Barrier-Free Vision Document, which articulates the national vision of "building an inclusive society where persons with disabilities can realize their full potential," was developed with the contributions and participation of CSOs that are active in the field of disability.

The Vision Document identifies 31 goals and 107 action areas under the following policy areas:

- Inclusive and Accessible Society
- Protection of Rights and Justice
- Health and Well-being
- Inclusive Education
- Economic Security
- Independent Living
- Disaster and Humanitarian Emergency Situations
- Implementation and Monitoring

The Vision Document is designed to be implemented through action plans. With strong coordination, multilateral cooperation, and the active participation of representative CSOs, the National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2023–2025), serving as the first implementation tool of the Vision Document, was published as the Presidential Circular in the Official Gazette dated February 3, 2023 and numbered 3293. The Plan continues to be implemented with diligence by all stakeholders, while the preparatory work for the Second National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2026–2028) has commenced with the active participation of CSOs.

The Action Plan sets out activities aimed at:

- Removing legal and administrative barriers to participation in political life,
- Ensuring the independent participation of persons with disabilities in electoral processes,
- Strengthening the right to stand for election for persons with disabilities,
- Enhancing the accessibility of media broadcasts during electoral periods,
- Building the institutional capacity of CSOs working in the field of disability, and
- Strengthening the participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making mechanisms related to policy formulation and implementation.

The Government of Türkiye established the Monitoring and Evaluation Board on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2013 to ensure effective coordination in the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities. The structure of the Board was revised in 2021 to further strengthen the participation of CSOs. Comprising senior representatives from relevant public institutions and two national-level CSOs with the highest representational capacity in the field of disability, the Board functions as an active coordination mechanism for the implementation of national disability policy.

Additionally, the Ministry of Family and Social Services, as the focal institution in the field of disability, holds Public–CSO Meetings with organizations representing various disability groups on a regular basis. These consultation meetings serve as a platform for discussing challenges and proposing solutions, and their outcomes are systematically reflected in policy processes.

Despite the progress achieved, further efforts are needed to eliminate persistent social prejudices regarding disability; to promote a rights-based approach in all areas of disability policy; to enhance the institutional capacity of CSOs working in the field; to address remaining legal and administrative barriers such as restrictions on voting and candidacy for individuals under guardianship and the absence of accessible ballot templates for persons with visual impairments, and to ensure that all electoral processes are fully accessible.