**Accessible polling stations**

Indicators on political participation

of persons with disabilities

2014

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**Are polling stations accessible?**

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| **EUMS** | **Source and supporting information** |
| AT | For an Austria-wide referendum that took place in January 2013 in the province of **Vorarlberg** there were 81,6% (279 out of 342) polling stations accessible for persons with disabilities. Seven out of these 279 accessible polling stations were installed in long-term institutions. However, the election authorities of Vorarlberg did not provide information whether these buildings are accessible for all impairment groups. Mobile electoral commissions were installed in every municipality of Vorarlberg.[[1]](#footnote-1) In the province of **Styria**, there is one polling station barrier free accessible in every municipality (there are 539 municipalities). The election authority did not provide information whether the accessibility meets the needs of all impairment groups.[[2]](#footnote-2)In the province of **Tyrol** there were 76% (431 out of 567) polling stations accessible for persons with disabilities during the last municipality elections 2010[[3]](#footnote-3). No information about whether these polling stations are accessible for all impairment groups. In the province of **Salzburg** there were 433 polling stations accessible for persons with disabilities during the state elections 2013. 26 of these polling stations were located in a home for pensioners. In 10 municipalities there were mobile electoral commissions installed.[[4]](#footnote-4) There are 119 municipalities in Salzburg.[[5]](#footnote-5)In Vienna there are 550 polling stations accessible for persons with disabilities. Vienna did not provide the total number of polling stations. The City of **Vienna** together with the Austrian National Council of Disabled Persons (ÖAR) elaborated a catalogue of criteria which have to be fulfilled to call a polling station ”barrier-free”. This document is not publicly available. These criteria meet the accessibility requirements of different groups of impairment. During the European Parliament elections 2009 there were 37 and during the municipal elections 2009 there were 35 mobile election commissions installed in Vienna. Special polling stations in long term institutions were 51 during the EU-Parliament elections 2009 and 46 during the municipal elections 2010.[[6]](#footnote-6)There was no information provided by the provincial Government of **Burgenland** on an information request.An evaluation of the participation in elections of persons with disabilities by A. Wegscheider revealed the following: Sometimes polling stations are declared to be barrier-free if the entry is accessible with a wheelchair. Nevertheless it is occasionally not considered that there are more polling stations within a building which are only accessible by stairways.Furthermore some polling stations do not have a guidance system for blind and strong visually impaired persons.Regularly it is forgotten to provide voting devices with appropriate additional texts in braille.[[7]](#footnote-7) |
| BE | In accordance with the Ministerial Decree of 6 May 1980 amending the Ministerial Decree of 10 August 1894 on the electoral furniture of the municipal and provincial elections,[[8]](#footnote-8) for every five voting bureaus, in each building where several voting bureaus are established, a voting booth must be especially adapted to accommodate persons with disabilities. The voting booth must have at least area of 1 meter square of space and have a chair available near the booth. No data is collected on how many polling stations are accessible to persons with disabilities. |
| BG | Every Regional Electoral Commission (REC) is responsible to announce on its website the number of polling stations accessible for persons with disabilities (articles 73 and 75 of the Electoral code). The RECs have websites since April 2013. This is why the only relevant information is from the early parliamentary elections in May 2013. 15 out of the 31 RECs did not announce a list with the addresses of the accessible polling stations. The other 16 RECs announced a total of 451 stations (the overall number of the polling stations for the elections in May 2013 is 11,902), along with all polling stations in buildings located on the first floor. The pointed polling stations are accessible for all persons with disabilities.[[9]](#footnote-9)The only criteria used to determine whether a polling station is accessible for persons with disabilities, pointed by the Central Electoral Commission, is the location of the polling station. Such section should be placed on the first floor of the building and be specifically indicated.[[10]](#footnote-10) Following the election monitoring report of the OSCE/ODIHR of the early Parliamentary elections of 12 May 2013, some 340 polling stations observed (53 % of observed polling stations) were not readily accessible for people with disabilities, while the interior layout of some 195 stations was also found not suitable for such voters.[[11]](#footnote-11)During the Presidential and municipal elections of the 23d and 30th of October 2011, many polling stations visited by the OSCE/ODIHR did not have ramps or other facilities for wheelchairs.Additionally, the Electoral Code provides for mobile voting if at least 10 voters with permanent disabilities that prevent them from exercising their voting right have requested it.[[12]](#footnote-12) Mobile voting was conducted by 97 special Precinct Election Commissions (PECs) in as many municipalities. OSCE/ODIHR LEOM interlocutors explained that this low number was due to the early application deadline for mobile voting and lack of information about the provisions.[[13]](#footnote-13) |
| CY | There is no specific number of accessible polling stations. The centres are prepared prior to each election based on where the persons with disabilities will vote. There is no separate registration procedure for persons with disabilities. The persons who are already registered to vote and are also members of the Cyprus Paraplegics Association inform the Association about their intention to vote. The Central Elections Service obtains this information every time by requesting it from the Cyprus Paraplegics Association. According to this information, the location where each person is registered is identified by the Service which in turn places the access ramps at the specific polling stations to facilitate the access for paraplegic persons. For the most recent elections the estimated number of polling stations made accessible is 201.[[14]](#footnote-14) [[15]](#footnote-15)As confirmed by the Central Elections Service there are no other facilities addressed for other impairment groups. Regarding the persons with visual impairment, the ballots are not available in braille thus the persons are allowed to vote with the help of one family member or any other person acting as an escort. Such provisions cannot be found in the relevant legislation.[[16]](#footnote-16) Following the final report of the OSCE regarding the parliamentary elections of the 22nd of May 2011, polling stations visited were easily accessible to voters with disabilities.[[17]](#footnote-17) |
| CZ | It is not possible to answer this question. Polling stations in individual election districts in the Czech Republic are chosen by the local government based on the decision of the mayor before elections take place. Acts (491/2011, paragraph 31; 62/2003, paragraph 33)[[18]](#footnote-18) only establish what the necessary equipment for polling stations should be. Following the election monitoring report of the OSCE/ODIHR EAM, the polling stations visited the during the presidential elections of the 15th of September 2011, were generally only accessible by steep stairs with no ramps or elevators, making access difficult for disabled or elderly voters. The law, however, provides for homebound voting, with a phone call or a request on election day by a relative or a neighbour being sufficient for a team of two PSC members to be sent to the address of the voter in need of assistance.[[19]](#footnote-19) |
| DE | As the responsibility for the accessibility of the polling stations lies with the municipalities, most state returning officers were unable to answer this question. Few states provided figures on results of the state elections: Berlin (2011) 67,3%; Hamburg (2009) 29,7%; Saxony- Anhalt (2011) 41,2%.According to the Federal returning officer (*Bundeswahlleiter*), great differences exist between states and also regarding the understanding of accessibility.[[20]](#footnote-20) The local authorities have to take care that suitable and accessible polling stations are chosen where possible and have to determine the kind and degree of accessibility. Traditionally, accessibility has mostly been understood as being accessible for wheelchairs. To enhance a common understanding, the Federal Competence Centre for Accessibility (*Bundeskompetenzzentrum Barrierefreiheit e.V*., BKB) has prior to the Bundestag election 2013 produced a brochure for local authorities with recommendations on how to determine accessibility of polling stations for different kind of disabilities (e.g. walking disability, visual impairment, cognitive impairment).[[21]](#footnote-21) The project has been supported by the Federal Government and has been distributed to all local municipalities nationwide. Furthermore, each voter prior to an election receives an official notification about the location and the accessibility of his polling station. The notification contains a telephone number were further information about the kind and degree of accessibility of the polling station (or where the voter could alternatively cast his vote) can be obtained. |
| DK | In 2008 the Equal Opportunities Centre for Disabled Persons *(Center for Ligebehandling af Handicappede)* carried out a questionnaire survey asking the 98 municipalities in Denmark about the accessibility to polling stations for persons with disabilities.[[22]](#footnote-22)The survey shows the municipalities’ own impression of the accessibility to their polling stations. The survey was carried out in May – July 2008, so it does not cover the most recent elections.The survey shows the following:75 municipalities, which is equivalent to 76, 5% of all 98 municipalities, have answered the question concerning accessibility to the polling stations. Accessibility is defined as free of any levels, meaning steep ramps or steps. There are 1.175 polling stations in the 75 municipalities and 876 of these have free access according to the municipalities. This amount is equivalent to 74, 6% of all polling stations, and 27 municipalities which is 36% of all municipalities reports level free access to all polling stations in their municipalities. 69 municipalities, which is 70,4% of all 98 municipalities, answered the question on how many of the municipalities offers reserved parking spots for disabled near by the polling station. There are 1.075 polling stations in the 69 municipalities and 62% of these, which are 666 polling stations, report that they have parking spots reserved for disabled near by the polling station. 24 out of the 69 municipalities answer that they have reserved parking spots for persons with disabilities nearby all of the polling stations. 78 municipalities, which is 79% of all 98 municipalities have answered the question on how many of their polling stations have voting rooms with room for three persons at one time. This is important, as some voters have a special need to have assistance. The 78 municipalities have 1.261 polling stations altogether, and in 982, which is 77,9% of the 1.261 polling rooms, there are voting rooms with room for three persons at one time. In 57 of them, which is 73,1% of the 78 municipalities, they all have voting rooms in their polling stations that are big enough to have three persons at one time.Regarding voting rooms, with room for three persons where one of them uses a wheelchair, 77 municipalities which is 78, 6% of all 98 municipalities, answered this question. These 77 municipalities have 1.207 voting rooms and 781 of them, which is 64, 7% of the 1.207 polling stations have voting rooms big enough to hold three persons at one time, where one of them uses a wheelchair. 45 of the municipalities, which is 58,4% of the 77 municipalities that answered the question, report that all of their polling stations have voting rooms big enough to hold three persons at one time, where one of them uses a wheelchair. 63 of all 98 municipalities, which is 64, 3%, answered the question on whether there is a rest room suitable for disabled people nearby the polling station. In these 63 municipalities there are 889 polling rooms and in 522 of them there is a rest room suitable for persons with disabilities nearby, which is 58,7% out of the 889 polling stations. 12 municipalities, which is 19% of the 63 municipalities, report that they have a rest room suitable for persons with disabilities nearby all of their polling rooms in the municipalities.67 municipalities, which is 68, 4% of all 98 municipalities have answered the question on making an assessment of all the conditions. This concerns the level of free access to the polling station and reserved parking spots for persons with disabilities, restrooms suitable for disabled persons nearby the polling stations and rooms big enough for three persons when one of them uses a wheelchair. In these municipalities there are 1.049 polling stations and concerning 375 of these, which is 35,7% of the polling stations in the 67 municipalities, answered that they live up to all the criteria. But only 7 of the municipalities, which is 10, 4% of the 67 municipalities, could give a positive answer to all the conditions regarding all of their municipalities polling stations. God Adgang[[23]](#footnote-23) (The Accessibility Label Scheme) is a company, which registers and labels the accessibility to service providers with a focus on accessibility. People with different disabilities can search information about which places are accessible in accordance to their needs. The company was established in cooperation between different organisations and companies and Disabled Peoples Organisations Denmark (*Danske Handicaporganisationer*) and follows standards set between the partners. Currently 32 polling stations are registered[[24]](#footnote-24). The Accessibility Label Scheme has reported the following results for those 32 polling stations:-Difficulties in reading: No problems encountered.-Development disabilities: No problems encountered.-Asthma and allergy: No problems encountered.-Hearing-impaired: No problems encountered.-Visually-impaired: In 27 polling stations, no problems were encountered. In 5 polling stations, problems were encountered.-Walk-, arm-, and hand-impaired: 17 has uncounted no problems, problems with 15-Wheelchair-users: 5 has uncounted no problems, problems with 27 Only 5 polling stations are accessible in all 7 categories, that is, 27 have problems in one or more category. |
| EE | The official statistics about the accessibility to polling stations is not collected.[[25]](#footnote-25) Polling stations are appointed by local governments, and most of them are accessible with a wheelchair.[[26]](#footnote-26) The electoral committee of Tallinn made an overview of the accessibility of planned polling stations in 2012 and the results were the following: 57% of them were easily accessible with a wheelchair and 25,8% were accessible with difficulties (which probably means they were accessible only with someone else's help).[[27]](#footnote-27) The findings of this overview are not publicly available. |
| EL | There is no data on the percentage of polling stations accessible to people with disabilities. However, before the elections, the Ministry of Interior issues guidelines to district authorities to select polling stations (these are schools or other public buildings) accessible to all citizens and to electoral committees to assist people with disability in exercising their right to vote. In specific, people with disabilities have a priority in voting.  |
| ES | According to the law and regulations, all polling stations should be accessible. According to the Royal Decrees 422/2011 and 1612/2007 the Ministry of the Interior *(Dirección General de Política Interior*, Electoral Management Body) elaborates evaluation reports on accesibility to the electoral processes. The report regarding the accessibility of polling stations, presented in 2013 (March) at the Plenary of the National Council on Disability, includes following findings:- Only 7% of the buildings proposed by the Municipal Councils (Ayuntamientos) to be used as polling stations (see article 23 LOREG) had accessibility problems (mainly, Town Halls with steps). - Once accesibility problems were detected during the local/municipal elections (May 2011), many obstacles were removed so that when the Parliamentary elections were held in November 2011, the accesibility of more than 200 buildings proposed by Municipal Councils was improved. |
| FI | One of the goals in Finland’s Disability Policy Programme 2010–2015 (*Vammaispoliittinen ohjelma 2010–2015, VAMPO/ Finlands handikappolitiska program 2010–2015, VAMPO*) is to make all polling stations accessible to physically disabled persons. The Ministry of Justice has issued guidelines for all polling stations to be accessible, but they have not been followed by all.[[28]](#footnote-28) These guidelines are not available for the public.Not all polling stations are wheelchair accessible and not all polling stations have special voting booths. There is no statistical data available on wheelchair accessible polling stations. Although candidate lists are now available in Braille, ballots or other method of independent voting for the blind are not. The vote for blind people is currently compromised as they continue to be dependent on an assistant to mark their ballot.This is confirmed in the OSCE report regarding the 2011 parliamentary elections, stating that full compliance is yet to be reached with various international and Finnish legal documents that require every citizen to be guaranteed the right to a secret ballot and the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability.[[29]](#footnote-29) |
| FR | No overall information exists about the accessibility of polling stations in France.For the next elections in France (municipal and European), in 2014, all the polling stations in Paris (869) are accessible for persons with disabilities. The accessibility concerns any type of disability. The website of the city of Paris specifies that polling stations are fitted with a ramp, some polling booths are low to be accessible to people in wheelchairs, the height of the ballot boxes is 0, 80 cm and that presidents of polling stations are especially aware of assisting persons with disabilities. In this sense, they will receive a document with the main legal provisions and rules of conduct for receiving persons with disabilities.[[30]](#footnote-30)  |
| HR | Information is not available, and the NEC does not have information on the number of accessible polling stations, regardless of the type of impairment.[[31]](#footnote-31) The individual election laws in Croatia regulate the issues related to polling stations in a practical identical way, including their distribution and physical characteristics. Specifically, regarding decisions on where to establish a polling station, criteria of the number of voters, accessibility, spatial distribution of polling stations, and size of the room designated for voting have to be considered.[[32]](#footnote-32) |
| HU | Currently there are 10397 polling stations in Hungary. 5094 polling stations can be reached barrier-free. The additional terms of barrier-free voting (e.g. polling booth accessible by wheel chair, table of sufficient height, etc.) are provided by the local election office before the polling day.It is to be noted that the new Election Procedure Act provides under Article 166 that in each of the voting districts of every settlement there must be at least one fully accessible polling station. |
| IE | There is no data available on a national level regarding the proportion of polling stations which are accessible for persons with disabilities.However, information was available in respect of Dublin city, where it is estimated that 130 of 135 polling stations are accessible to all voters[[33]](#footnote-33) Following a paper titled “[Voting facilities for people with disabilities](http://www.nda.ie/CntMgmtNew.nsf/DCC524B4546ADB3080256C700071B049/3B27344EEB77108880257B6600507DBE/%24File/JAMES_BARRY_NDA_CONFERENCE.pptx)”, “accessibility checklistsare completed for polling stations to assess accessibility for all voters”. The paper also notes that “each polling station is provided with the following: large print copy of the ballot paper; an accessible booth; a seat for voters to use – if required; standard booths for standing voters and those with walking aids”.In 2008, the NDA attempted to collect information from Returning Officers on the accessibility of polling stations. This led to considerable discussion about definitions of accessibility, and how it should be measured. It proved difficult to collect reliable information, without taking the expensive and time-consuming step of commissioning formal access audits of each polling station. There was no published report resulting from this investigation. |
| IT | It is not possible to state what proportion of polling stations are accessible because the Ministry of the Interior does not provide such data. However, it is possible to deduce this from the proportion of accessible primary schools where most polling stations are located. According to the National Institute of Statistics (*Istat*), in 2010 85% of school buildings respected the stairs accessibility, 75% were equipped with accessible toilets. In 67% and 62% of schools, internal and external spaces are completely accessible[[34]](#footnote-34). While Law 15/1991 stipulates that prior to elections an adequate number of authorised doctors must be available to issue certificates needed for assistance of voters in the ballot required under (see indicator 13), media reported that in some instances, medical certificates were not issued due to a lack of doctors[[35]](#footnote-35). |
| LT | Although voting rights for persons with disabilities are guaranteed by the Constitution of Lithuania and electoral laws, the representatives of the CEC are aware that most polling stations are not designed for the persons with disabilities.[[36]](#footnote-36)In the 2012 national elections there was a joint initiative by CEC and the Lithuanian disability forum (*Lietuvos neįgaliųjų forumas*) as well as the Lithuanian association of persons with disabilities (*Lietuvos žmonių su negalia sąjunga*) to assess the accessibility of polling stations for persons with disabilities. There were 554 polling stations accessible to persons with disabilities from the total number of 2017 polling stations throughout the territory of Lithuania (27.47%)[[37]](#footnote-37) (for more results see data provided in the Annex). There is no information on the criteria used to determine whether a polling station is accessible for persons with disabilities. According to the DPOs that participated in the assessment, there were short guidelines prepared and presented for assessing the polling stations, but no unified criteria[[38]](#footnote-38). |
| LU | According to internal information provided by the City of Luxembourg, all polling stations for the European elections in May 2014 should be accessible for disabled persons as far as this is possible. However, due to an increase in numbers of eligible voters for EP elections (European foreigners are entitled to vote which is not the case for national elections), no guarantee has been given for this yet.[[39]](#footnote-39)According to ‘Only with us’, the city of Luxembourg allows persons with physical disabilities to use one of the polling stations (which is not necessarily the one the person should use) where accessibility is fully provided. Normally, the polling stations are too small for wheel chairs and the desks are too high.[[40]](#footnote-40) |
| LV | The polling stations are set up by municipalities, predominantly at schools, public libraries, culture houses, and information about polling stations is forwarded to CEC. There are no criteria used to determine whether a polling station is accessible for persons with disabilities.[[41]](#footnote-41) No special equipment for persons with sight or hearing impairments is being used at the polling stations in Latvia.[[42]](#footnote-42) According to information provided by the Central Election Commission (CEC), during the last municipal elections on the 1st of June 2013, out of total 950 polling stations, 447 (47%) were accessible for persons with movement disabilities.[[43]](#footnote-43)Additionally, in cooperation with the “Easy Language Agency”, easy-to-read information booklets have been published several times, explaining the voting procedures as well as an information leaflet about the possibility to apply for voting at home.[[44]](#footnote-44) The booklets and information leaflet were available at the polling stations as well as distributed to social institutions housing people with intellectual disabilities.[[45]](#footnote-45) Some of the materials are available online at the homepage of CEC:-easy language information booklet: <http://cvk.lv/pub/upload_file/Sa10/viegli_lasit/Brosura_viegla_valoda.pdf> - easy language information leaflet how to apply for voting at home: <http://cvk.lv/pub/upload_file/Sa10/viegli_lasit/Info_lapa.pdf> |
| MT | During elections, all buildings that are used as polling stations and that may not be accessible to all are adapted for physical access using ramps and other means. However, persons with certain physical impairments are not given the right to vote in secret and must use the assistance of the assistant commissioners.Although blind people have the option of using a Braille template and playback listening device, not all blind people can use the template. No provision of sign language assistance is provided at polling stations.[[46]](#footnote-46) The Election Commission and KNPD confirmed that there is no statistical data available. |
| NL | No data is available regarding European Parliament elections or municipal elections.[[47]](#footnote-47) The only data available refers to the national elections of 2012.[[48]](#footnote-48) The evaluation report of these election shows that only 2% of polling stations was accessible for persons with disabilities. The criteria that are used to determine the accessibility of polling stations mainly concern accessibility for people with physical and visual impairments (e.g. specific parking spaces, clear signs, wheelchair accessibility, low voting booths).[[49]](#footnote-49) These criteria originate from a checklist developed for the parliamentary elections on the 12th of September 2012 and refers to the four categories of accessibility, namely communication (*communicatie*), accessibility (*bereikbaarheid*), enterability (*betreedbaarheid*) and usability (*bruikbaarheid*).[[50]](#footnote-50) |
| PL | In 2009 elections to the European Parliament, according to official data presented by the National Election Commission, 25,412 (numbers given cover only polling stations created within the territory of Poland) polling stations were created of which 6,241 were accommodated to the needs of persons with disabilities.[[51]](#footnote-51) The criteria used to assess the accommodation of polling stations to the needs of persons with disabilities were set forth in a Regulation of 31 July 2001 (see indicator 13).The 2011 Regulation provides the currently valid criteria. In 2010 municipal elections, according to official data presented by the National Election Commission, 24,175polling stations were created of which 6,256were accommodated to the needs of persons with disabilities.[[52]](#footnote-52) The same year, Poland held presidential elections. Official data published by the National Election Commission states that 25,774 polling stations were created among them 6,941 polling stations accommodated to the needs of persons with disabilities.According to official data presented by the National Election Commission, in the last national elections to the Sejm and Senat in 2011, 25,722 polling stations were created (numbers given cover only polling stations created within the territory of Poland) of which 7,718 were accommodated to the needs of persons with disabilities. This is the only election after the last Regulation was adopted. The previous Regulation was in place since 2001. It was, therefore, in force during 2001, 2005, 2007 Sejm and Senate elections; 2005 and 2010 presidential elections; 2004 and 2009 European Parliament elections; 2002, 2006, 2010 local government elections; and 2003 national referendum.In comparison, in 2007 national elections to the Sejm and Senat, there were 5,487 such polling stations. The number of accommodated polling stations **in 2011 almost fulfilled the legal requirement of one-third**. Nevertheless, as the Human Rights Defender states in its report of September 2012, “in practice, however, the degree to which single communes fulfil the requirement imposed on them is not uniform around the country.”[[53]](#footnote-53) However, as indicated by the results of the inspections carried out by both the Ombudsman and the Supreme Audit Office, the vast majority of polling stations designated by the commune as adapted to the needs of people with disabilities **are in fact not available for this group of voters**. The Supreme Audit Office, after the inspection of 100 selected stations, found irregularities in 62% of them. At 90 polling stations inspected by employees of the Office of the Ombudsman shortcomings were noted in 72, which accounted for 80% of all visited buildings visited. As indicated above, the Electoral Code[[54]](#footnote-54) provides that one-third of all polling stations should be accommodated to the needs of voters with disabilities, but it does not establish any deadlines for adjustments. Whereas, the Act introducing the Act-Electoral Code[[55]](#footnote-55) specifies that by 31 December 2014, one-fifth of all polling stations in the territory of each commune should be accommodated to the needs of voters with disabilities. |
| PT | There is no data available from national or local governments or election authorities, or other survey data on this question.The CNE stressed that, in spite of the non-existence of official data, most cases received by the CNE [number of cases unknown] related to difficulties in exercising the right to vote experienced by persons with disabilities concern the **lack of physical accessibility** **of the polling stations** as well as the requirement made by the polling stations staff of a medical certificate of clear and publicly known disability.The APD, in a written reply, although recognising that some municipalities have been making an effort to locate the polling stations in accessible places, states that there are still many polling stations not accessible for persons with disabilities. The APD also highlights the existing difficulties regarding accessibility for persons with physical impairments; and to persons with visual impairments given the **lack of information in Braille in the ballot papers**; these clearly limit the exercise of the right to vote.The Portal Ajudas, in a written reply, gave information about the outcomes of two studies conducted by the I Want to Vote Movement.One of these studies , ‘I Want to Vote Movement – To Vote is the Right of Everyone’ (*Movimento Quero Votar - Votar é um direito de todos*) [not available online] involved 1,320 old persons or persons with disabilities. Some of the main results:* Over 80% of these persons are not able to exercise their right to vote without the help of another person.
* Over 60% are forced to give information about his/her electoral choice, thus compromising confidentiality of voting.
* In over 90% of the cases in which help was requested from the polling station staff, immediate help was not available, given their lack of awareness on how to proceed in these cases.

The second study,‘Barriers to the right to vote’ (*Barreiras ao direito de sufrágio*) [not available online] aimed at identifying physical barriers to the right to vote. Some of the main results:* Over 90% of the persons with a physical impairment identified the existence of physical barriers. The main barriers are: stairs to access the polling stations; long and inaccessible routes to wheelchairs and other supports to mobility; inadequate furniture; steps and uneven grounds; lack of conditions and room for persons who must be accompanied by pet animals.
* Over 60% did not vote because of physical barriers.
* About 40% was able to exercise their right to vote but with the help of other persons.

The website of the *I Want to Vote Movement* estimates that over 100,000 electors are prevented from exercise their voting rights due to the lack of appropriate access to the polling stations or due to the fact that the means used to vote (i.e. the ballot paper) is not adapted to their needs.[[56]](#footnote-56)Following the most recent election for the President of the Republic, the Association of Blind and the Partially-Sighted of Portugal (*Associação dos Cegos e Amblíopes de Portugal*, ACAPO) issued a communiqué on 31 January 2011.[[57]](#footnote-57) According to this Communiqué, once again in that election, the voting rights of citizens with visual impairments were not awarded full equality and autonomy. The ACAPO therefore proposes that an accessible voting system is implemented: an alternative voting model composed of two items, the ordinary ballot paper and a Braille matrix. This will allow people with a visual disability to exercise their voting rights in a direct and secret way.  |
| RO | According to the AEP Decision 4/2008, when establishing where to place the voting section, spaces on the ground floor of buildings, in accessible public places will be considered in particular.[[58]](#footnote-58) The provision aims at better organizing of the operations and facilitating the flow of people. It makes no reference to persons with disabilities.Another provision of the same decision states that special ramps must be arranged for at the voting section for persons with a physical disability.[[59]](#footnote-59) Also, the AEP recommends that a special voting booth for persons with physical disabilities at the “adequately dimensioned and marked”.[[60]](#footnote-60)The AEP informed the NFP that it does not have the information as to what proportion of the polling stations is accessible, but mentioned that, when the AEP controls whether regulations are respected during elections, the existence of the ramp is one of the aspects that are checked. Where the ramp does not exist, local authorities, the mayor in particular are asked to remedy the situation.[[61]](#footnote-61) |
| SE | The number of electoral districts and thus the number of polling stations was 5,668 in the 2010 general elections to the Riksdag, county assemblies and local government. In the report published by the Election Authority (*Valmyndigheten*), “Experiences from the Elections 19 September 2010” (*Erfarenheter från valen den 19 september 2010)[[62]](#footnote-62)* the municipalities requested in 17 cases for permission to use voting premises that do not satisfy the requirement of accessibility during the General Elections in 2010. In all cases, the County administrative boards (*länsstyrelsen*) decided to approve the inaccessible premises[[63]](#footnote-63). From 1 January 2014, the provisions in Chapter 4 Section 20 of the Election Act (*Vallagen*), that allow municipalities to seek exemption from accessibility criteria’s are removed.[[64]](#footnote-64)The Swedish Disability movement's alternative report to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stated that persons with reading and writing difficulties are currently unable to exercise their right to vote for individual candidates while maintaining secret ballot. With the current system, it is not possible for a person with reading and writing difficulties to make a personal vote without having to ask someone for help.[[65]](#footnote-65) |
| SI | 2012 – presidential elections (latest elections held in Slovenia)- Total no. of polling stations: 3,337;- No. of officially designated polling stations accessible to persons with disabilities, defined as polling stations without architectural barriers: 1,148 (34,4%). Specific accessibility criteria have not been laid down, but the National Electoral Commission adopted the opinion that an accessible polling station shall be a polling station with no architectural barriers (e.g. stairs) preventing access of persons with disabilities.[[66]](#footnote-66)- No. of officially designated accessible polling stations with an voting machine to particularly assist persons with visual impairments and physical disability (persons with tetraplegia and muscular dystrophy): 30;- No. of polling station with stencils to assist persons with visual impairments: 3,337.[[67]](#footnote-67)Organisations of persons with disabilities have criticised the slow implementation of the UN CRPD concerning their right to vote and to a secret ballot. In their opinion, even in the 2012 presidential elections persons with disabilities continued to face architectural barriers and unavailability of the vast majority of polling station. Similarly, notifications and materials that voters receive were not accessible to persons with disabilities in appropriate and usable forms. They found particularly unacceptable that the state provide for accessible polling stations which are 10 or more kilometres far from a voter’s residence.[[68]](#footnote-68)  The legislation currently in place only requires that at least one polling station is officially designated as accessible to persons with disabilities in each electoral district area. In practice, it is understood that such a polling station shall have no architectural barriers. Also in practice, this means that competent district electoral commissions, provided that they officially designate one accessible polling station, are free to choose the total number of accessible polling stations. If their “domestic” polling stations are not accessible, persons with disabilities are only allowed to vote at polling stations officially designated as accessible. For this reason, in case of insufficient number of designated polling stations, or, indeed, by chance, a person with disabilities may have to travel a distance to cast their vote, while there may be an actually accessible polling station which is less remote, but is not on the list of officially accessible polling stations. [[69]](#footnote-69) |
| SK | The information of this kind is not statistically examined in Slovakia; however, the valid law spells out various alternative solutions regarding the suffrage of persons with disabilities.[[70]](#footnote-70)Pursuant to Article 30 Voting of Law No. 333/2004 Coll. on Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic (*Zákon č. 333/2004 Z.z. o voľbách do Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky*), *(6) the voters who are unable to fill out the ballot themselves as the result of their disability are entitled to be accompanied behind the screen by another person, provided that person is not a member of the district electoral commission, who fill out the ballot in compliance with their instructions and insert it into the envelope; (8) the voters with material limitations, particularly disability, may ask the district electoral commission to allow them to vote away from the polling station. To such voters, the district electoral commission shall dispatch at least two of its members equipped with a portable ballot box, official ballots and envelopes; (9) the voters who are unable to insert the ballot into the ballot box themselves as the result of their disability may ask another voter, provided that voter is not a member of the district electoral commission, to insert the ballot into the ballot box on their behalf and in their presence*. |
| UK | The Handbook for Polling Station Staff indicates in Appendix 1 the adjustments that may be required in order for all polling stations to be made accessible for disabled voters and to accommodate voters of different impairment groups.[[71]](#footnote-71) The Electoral Commission do not produce official data regarding the proportion of polling stations that are accessible for persons with disabilities. In their report on the administration of the 2010 general election, the Electoral Commission used the data from the Scope ‘Polls Apart’ report (which is reproduced below) in their analysis of the accessibility of polling stations. The Electoral Commission assessed that the majority of polling stations are accessible:*“This meant disabled entrances were well signposted with usable ramps in place, low polling booths were available for wheelchair users, and large-print ballot papers and tactile voting devices were available for voters with visual impairments. We are also aware that many electoral services managers have been more proactive in including access issues as part of their polling station staff training*.”[[72]](#footnote-72)Scope, in their 2010 report Polls Apart, outlined their findings following a survey of polling stations from the 2010 General Election. The survey addressed physical barriers to voting, such as , steps into the entrance, narrow doorways and corridors, or the lack of a low-level polling booth, how adequately the polling station provided alternative formats including a large print version of the ballot paper and a tactile voting device and addressed negative attitudes and assumptions.[[73]](#footnote-73) The report covers a wide range of impairments including: physical impairments, visual impairments, co-ordination impairments, learning difficulties, low literacy, mobility limitations and dexterity issues. In advance of the survey on 6 May 2010, Scope sent a Freedom of Information Request to all Chief Executives of Local Authorities asking if a self-assessment of the accessibility of all polling stations under the section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (which placed a new requirement on local authorities to review the accessibility of all polling stations to disabled voters and ensure every polling place, and prospective polling place, for which it is responsible is accessible to disabled voters ‘so far as is reasonable and practicable) had been carried out by the local authority.Scope received response from 70% of all polling stations, of which 89% had undergone a section 16 review wherein 14% were found not to be accessible to voters. On the day of the 2010 General Election, Polls Apart carried out a survey of 1000 polling stations; it found 67% of polling stations had 1 or more significant access barriers. The main barriers encountered by persons with disabilities included: * A tactile voting device to help visually impaired
* voters vote independently;
* A large print version of the ballot paper;
* Level access into the polling station; including an adequate ramp when required.
* A low level polling booth

Registration documents and a polling card that was easy to read and understand.[[74]](#footnote-74) |

1. Information provided by the Provincial Government of Vorarlberg *(Amt der Voralberger Landesregierung)* on 3 July 2013 in a response to an information request. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Information provided by the Provincial Government of Styria *(Amt der Steiermärkischen Landesregierung)* on 4 July 2013 in a response to an information request. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Information provided by the Provincial Government of Tyrol *(Amt der Tiroler Landesregierung)* on 10 July 2013 in a response to an information request. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Information provided by the Provincial Government of Salzburg *(Amt der Salzburger Landesregierung)* on 10 July 2013 in a response to an information request. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Austria, Salzburg, Municipalities (*Gemeinden),* available at: <www.salzburg.gv.at/buerger-service/ls-az/ls-fg/ls-gemeinden.htm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Information provided by the City of Vienna *(Magistrat der Stadt Wien)* on 10 July 2013 in a response to an information request. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Austria, Wegscheider, A. (2013), ‘Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities’ (*Politische Partizipation von Menschen mit Behinderungen)* *SWS-Rundschau* Vol. 53, No 2, pp. 216-234 [p. 223]. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Belgium, Article 1 Ministerial Decree of 6 May 1980 amending the Ministerial Decree of 10 August 1894 on the electoral furniture of the municipal and provincial elections ([*Arrêté Ministériel du 6 mai 1980 modifiant l'arrêté ministériel du 10 août 1894 relatif au mobilier électoral pour les élections législatives, provinciales et communales*](http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&nm=1980050607&table_name=titre) *- Ministerieel Besluit van 6 mei 1980 tot wijziging van het ministerieel besluit van 10 augustus 1894 betreffende de kiestoestellen voor de parlements, provincieraads- en gemeenteraadsverkiezingen*) ; see also the following guide of good practices, available at: <http://www.passe-muraille.be/pdf/isoloir/Du_citoyen_a_l_isoloir.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Bulgaria, Central Electoral Commission, available in Bulgarian at: <https://www.cik.bg/contacts_rik>. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Bulgaria, Central Electoral Commission, available in Bulgarian at: <http://www.cik.bg/442> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. OSCE/ODIHR election monitoring reports, P. 20 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Requests must be received no later than 30 days before election day. For these elections, requests for mobile voting had to be made by 22 September. Mobile voting requests had to be submitted by written application, accompanied by a copy of a certificate of disability issued by the Medical Expert Board. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. OSCE/ODIHR election monitoring reports, P. 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Information obtained from the Central Election Service (Κεντρική Υπηρεσία Εκλογών). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Information obtained from the Cyprus Paraplegic Association (Οργάνωση Παραπληγικών Κύπρου): The Association’s list includes only the persons who address to it to be registered. This list does not represent the actual number of paraplegics in Cyprus. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Information obtained from the Central Elections Authority (Κεντρική Υπηρεσία Εκλογών). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. OSCE/ODIHR election monitoring reports, P. 16, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/82242>. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Czech Republic, 491/2001, Act on Elections to Representative Bodies of Municipalities and on Amendments to Certain Other Laws (*Zákon o volbách do zastupitelstev obcí a o změně některých zákonů*), 31 December 1993. Available at [www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2001-491](http://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2001-491); Czech Republic, 62/2003, Act on Elections to the European Parliament and on Change of Selected Acts of Law (*Zákon o volbách do Evropského parlamentu a o změně některých zákonů)*, 4 March 2003. Available at [www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2003-62](http://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2003-62) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. OSCE/ODIHR election monitoring reports, P. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Information obtained from the Federal Returning Officer (*Bundeswahlleiter*). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The brochure is available at: http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/de/barrierefrei/barrierefrei\_org.html [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Demokrati for alle – en gennemgang af valgloven m.v.,* [Copenhagen, Center for Ligebehandling af handicappede, pp. 29-35. Hyperlink accessed 24 July 2013: http://www.clh.dk/fileadmin/templateclh/filer/rapporter\_og\_notater/Demokrati\_for\_alle/demokrati.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Danish hyperlink accessed 24 July 2013: http://www.godadgang.dk/. English hyperlink accessed 24 July 2013: http://www.godadgang.dk/gb/main.asp [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Hyperlink accessed 11 September 2013: http://www.godadgang.dk/dk/steder/soegresultat.asp [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Information obtained from the National Electoral Committee [Valimiskomisjon]. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Information obtained from the Estonian Chamber of Disabled People [Eesti Puuetega Inimeste Koda]. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Information obtained from the National Electoral Committee [Valimiskomisjon]. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Finland’s Disability Policy Programme 2010–2015 (Vammaispoliittinen ohjelma 2010–2015,/ Finlands handikappolitiska program 2010–2015, VAMPO). Available at (accessed 29.7.2013): <http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=1087414&name=DLFE-12157.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. OSCE: REPUBLIC OF FINLAND. PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 17 April 2011. Pages 5-6. Available at (accessed 22.7.2013): <http://www.osce.org/odihr/81121> [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. “Independent vote and accessible to all” (*Un vote autonome et accessible pour chacun*), website of the Paris municipality. Available at: [www.paris.fr/politiques/elections/un-vote-autonome-et-accessible-pour-chacun/rub\_7526\_stand\_113872\_port\_17401](http://www.paris.fr/politiques/elections/un-vote-autonome-et-accessible-pour-chacun/rub_7526_stand_113872_port_17401) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Information obtained from the NEC and to the Ministry of Public Administration (*Ministarstvo javne uprave*). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Information obtained from the Ministry of Public Administration (*Ministarstvo javne uprave*) (2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Conference paper by James Barry, Dublin City Returning Officer, titled “[Voting facilities for people with disabilities](http://www.nda.ie/CntMgmtNew.nsf/DCC524B4546ADB3080256C700071B049/3B27344EEB77108880257B6600507DBE/%24File/JAMES_BARRY_NDA_CONFERENCE.pptx)” at the NDA Conference on Participation in Public and Political Life by People with Disabilities, 24 May 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. # Istat (2013), *Indagine sugli alunni con disabilità nella scuola primaria e secondaria di I grado statali e non statali (*Survey on students with disabilities in public and private primary and lower secondary schools), available at: [www.istat.it/it/archivio/60454](http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/60454)

 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. <http://lanuovasardegna.gelocal.it/carbonia/cronaca/2012/06/09/news/certificati-medici-voto-a-rischio-per-molti-disabili-1.5225957> . [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Lithuania, Central Electoral Commission (*Vyriausioji rinkimų komisija*) (2011b) communication of NFP-Lithuania, 20 October 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Central Electoral Commission, written answer of the 10 July, 2013 (No. 2-517 (1.5) to the request of NFP-Lithuania. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Lithuanian association of persons with disabilities (*Lietuvos žmonių su negalia sąjunga*), Oral communication of 14 August, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Information obtained from the city of Luxembourg, on the 30d of October 10 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Information obtained from ‘Only with us’ (*Nemme mat eis)* , on the 23d of July 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Information provided by Chairperson of the NGO „Apeirons” on 12 September 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Information provided by the Central Election Commission on 31 July 2013 (Information Letter No.02-017/171). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Information obtained from the Central Election Commission on 31 July 2013 (Information Letter No.02-017/171). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Information obtained from the Central Election Commission on 31 July 2013 (Information Letter No.02-017/171). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
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46. Reply received in writing from the National Commission Persons with Disability, 29 July 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Information obtained from ProDemos Knowledge Centre for Democracy and the Rule of Law, 19 July 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
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49. Jägers, A., Zonjee, M., Schalkwijk, M., Kanne, P. (2012), Evaluation of the elections of the members of the House of Representatives 2012 (*Evaluatie verkiezingen leden van de Tweede Kamer 2012*), Amsterdam: TNS Nipo, available at: http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/bestanden/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2012/11/30/rapportage-tns-nipo-over-verkiezingen-leden-tweede-kamer-2012/rapportage-tns-nipo-over-verkiezingen-leden-tweede-kamer-2012.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Project Bureau Accessibility (*Projectbureau Toegankelijkheid*) (2012), Accessible Polling Stations (*Toegankelijke Stemlokalen*), Utrecht: Projectbureau Toegankelijkheid, available at: www.vng.nl/files/vng/vng/Documenten/actueel/beleidsvelden/bestuur/2012/20120622\_checklist\_toegankelijkh\_stemlokalen.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Poland, National Election Commission (*Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza*), Information on the activity of the National Election Council and National Election Bureau in 2009 (*Informacja o działaniu Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej i Krajowego Biura Wyborczego w roku 2009*), available at: <http://pkw.gov.pl/informacje-o-dzialalnosci-panstwowej-komisji-wyborczej-i-krajowego-biura-wyborczego> [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Poland, National Election Commission (*Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza*), Information on the activity of the National Election Council and National Election Bureau in 2010 (*Informacja o działaniu Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej i Krajowego Biura Wyborczego w roku 2010*), available at: <http://pkw.gov.pl/informacje-o-dzialalnosci-panstwowej-komisji-wyborczej-i-krajowego-biura-wyborczego> [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Poland, Human Rights Defender (*Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich)*, *Gwarancje korzystania z czynnego prawa wyborczego przez osoby starsze i osoby z niepełnosprawnościami. Analiza i zalecenia*, wrzesień 2012, p. 59 available at: [www.rpo.gov.pl/sites/default/files/13499530090.pdf](http://www.rpo.gov.pl/sites/default/files/13499530090.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Poland, Electoral Code (*Ustawa z dnia 5 stycznia 2011 Kodeks wyborczy*). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Poland, The Act introducing the Act-Electoral Code (*Ustawa z dnia 5 stycznia 2011 Przepisy wprowadzające ustawę – Kodeks wyborczy*) [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. [www.querovotar.com/default.asp](http://www.querovotar.com/default.asp) [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. [www.acapo.pt/miss-o-e-estrategia/representac-o-de-interesses](http://www.acapo.pt/miss-o-e-estrategia/representac-o-de-interesses) [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
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60. Permanent Electoral Authority Decision 4/2008 on the conditions which the spaces of voting sections must fulfill for the election of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate/*Hotărârea Autorităţii Electorale Permanente Nr. 4/2008 privind condiţiile pe care trebuie să le îndeplinească localurile secţiilor de votare pentru alegerea Camerei Deputaţilor şi Senatului,* Article 6, par. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Letter No. 10684/05.09.2013 from the Permanent Electoral Authority (*Autoritatea Electorală Permanentă*) to the Centre for Legal Resources, . [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Sweden, Election Authority (*Valmyndigheten*), “Experiences from the Election 19 September 2010” (*Erfarenheter från valen den 19 september 2010),* Report 2011: 1 (rapport 2011:1), available at: [www.val.se/om\_oss/rapporter/rapport\_2011\_1\_erfarenheter\_2010.pdf](http://www.val.se/om_oss/rapporter/rapport_2011_1_erfarenheter_2010.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Sweden, Election Authority (*Valmyndigheten*), “Experiences from the Election 19 September 2010” (*Erfarenheter från valen den 19 september 2010),* Report 2011: 1 (rapport 2011:1), p. 10, available at: [www.val.se/om\_oss/rapporter/rapport\_2011\_1\_erfarenheter\_2010.pdf](http://www.val.se/om_oss/rapporter/rapport_2011_1_erfarenheter_2010.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Sweden, E-voting and other electoral issues, SOU 2013:24 (*E-röstning och andra valfrågor, SOU 2013:24*), available at: [www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/21/48/78/89002b33.pdf](http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/21/48/78/89002b33.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. The Swedish Disability movement’s alternative report to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Information provided by the National Electoral Commission (*Državna volilna komisija*) upon request (written response of 5 September 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
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69. Also see: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) (2012) *Republic of Slovenia: Early elections of the National Assembly: OSCE/ODIHR Election Assessment Mission Final Report*, Warsaw: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), 7 February 2012, pp. 21-22, available at: [www.osce.org/odihr/elections/Slovenia/87786](http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/Slovenia/87786). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
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