

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
The Chair

To the Chairperson(s) of the committee(s) concerned

**Subject: Invitation to the Interparliamentary Committee Meeting (ICM) -
“Participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process” -
Brussels, 4 December 2023**

Dear Chair,

In the framework of the European Parliament first “Disability Rights Week”, the European Parliament’s Committee on Employment and Social Affairs will hold an Interparliamentary Committee Meeting (ICM) to discuss the **participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process**.

On behalf of EMPL Committee, I would like to invite you to attend the ICM which will be held in the European Parliament on Monday, 4 December 2023, from 16.00 - 18.30h, in Brussels.

In accordance with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the European Union guarantees all citizens the right to vote as well as to stand as candidate in the elections to the European Parliament. European Union law and the national electoral laws need to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to vote, campaign and stand as candidates.

In the context of the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030, the Commission has committed to come up in spring of next year, in close cooperation with Member States in the framework of the European Cooperation Network on Elections, with a guide of good electoral practice addressing participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process.

Nevertheless, persons with disabilities are facing many legal, administrative, institutional and accessibility barriers which prevent them from going to vote or stand as candidate. According to Eurostat data, 87 million people aged 15 and over in the EU have some form of disability.

In its information report on ‘The real right of persons with disabilities to vote in European Parliament elections’, the European Economic and Social Committee concluded that for the 2019 European elections, none of the 27 Member States had ensured that the elections were accessible to all. Around 800.000 citizens in 16 Member States were unable to vote due to legal obstacles, alone. On the other hand, there were a lot of best practices in Member States to enable persons with disabilities to go and vote.

This event will gather - alongside national Parliamentarians, Members of the European Parliament from various committees, Council and Commission representatives, as well as main relevant NGOs. In view of the European elections 2024, it will first aim at identifying

the state of play regarding persons' with disabilities participation in electoral processes, progress made and remaining legal or accessibility barriers. Subsequently, all participants are invited to share best practices and discuss how improvements can still be made for the upcoming European elections.

In this discussion, the role of national parliaments is crucial. I therefore count on your participation and am looking forward to your fruitful contributions on this very important subject.

Please find enclosed the preliminary draft agenda. Practical details regarding the meeting, including a background note, will be sent at a later stage.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Karin SAUERTEIG (karin.sauerteig@europarl.europa.eu) and Astrid MEESTERS (astrid.meesters@europarl.europa.eu).

I look forward to welcoming you to the European Parliament on 4 December 2023.

Yours sincerely,



Dragoș PÎSLARU

Annex: 1) Draft programme