



# REPORT

## ON THE INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE 2025 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Monitoring the accessibility of infrastructure, the digital environment, the media and institutional processes during the 2025 electoral campaign





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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	1
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	2
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	3
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	4
<b>REGULATORY FRAMEWORK</b>	5
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	6
<b>MONITORING RESULTS</b>	6
<i>I. Reflecting the issues of people with disabilities in the electoral programs of electoral candidates</i>	6
<i>II. Accessibility of electoral candidates' websites</i>	6
<i>III. Accessibility of electoral debates and reflection of the disability dimension in the media</i>	6
<i>IV. Parliamentary elections from the perspective of the disability dimension</i>	6
<i>V. Disability assessment of electoral candidates</i>	6
<i>VI. Monitoring of the election day</i>	6
<b>GENERAL CONCLUSIONS</b>	6
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	6
<b>ANNEXES</b>	6

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The parliamentary elections of September 28, 2025 were a crucial moment for the consolidation of participatory democracy in the Republic of Moldova. For the first time, the electoral process was analyzed in depth from the perspective of accessibility for people with disabilities.

The report brings together the results of five thematic monitoring:

- analysis of electoral programs of political candidates;
- assessment of accessibility of web pages;
- monitoring of electoral debates and mass media;
- observation of polling stations and infrastructure;
- institutional evaluation of parties and candidates;
- monitoring of the election day.

The collected data shows that, although the regulatory framework of the Republic of Moldova is aligned with international standards, its practical application remains fragmentary, and real accessibility – limited.

### *Main findings*

1. Out of 23 electoral candidates, **only 11 explicitly address the topic of disability**.
2. **None of the electoral candidates' websites** comply with international web accessibility standards (WCAG).
3. Only **3 television stations** (TVR Moldova, Moldova 1, ProTV Chișinău) provided sign language interpreters.
4. Out of **55 party headquarters**, only 3 were accessible.
5. No party has an **internal accessibility strategy** or persons with disabilities in its governing bodies.

### *Overall conclusion*

The Republic of Moldova has a solid legislative framework, but its implementation requires clear mechanisms for monitoring, financing and sanctioning. The inclusion of persons with disabilities in political life must be treated as a **fundamental right**, not as a charitable or symbolic action.

*Priority recommendations*

1. Full implementation of CEC Regulation No. 1187/2023 and BCC Decision No. 61/2024.
2. Creation of the **National Electoral Accessibility Fund**.
3. Introduction of a “**disability quota**” for the use of public subsidies by parties.
4. Development of **inclusive media programs** with interpretation, subtitles and audio description.
5. Continuous training of journalists, electoral officials and political actors on inclusive communication.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AOPD</b>	- Alliance of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities
<b>LPA</b>	- Local Public Authorities
<b>AC</b>	- Audiovisual Council
<b>CRPD</b>	- Center for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>CEC</b>	- Central Electoral Commission
<b>CRPD</b>	- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>ETR</b>	- Easy-To-Read
<b>EEF</b>	- East European Foundation
<b>IT</b>	- Information Technology
<b>SL</b>	- Sign Language
<b>MAN</b>	- National Alternative Movement
<b>MEDD</b>	- Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization
<b>MLSP</b>	- Ministry of Labor and Social Protection
<b>NGO</b>	- Non-Governmental Organization
<b>SDGs</b>	- Sustainable Development Goals
<b>PAS</b>	- Action and Solidarity Party
<b>PLDM</b>	- Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova
<b>UNDP</b>	- United Nations Development Programme
<b>PSRM</b>	- Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova
<b>TVR</b>	- Romanian Television Company channel for the Republic of Moldova
<b>EU</b>	- European Union
<b>WCAG</b>	- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

## INTRODUCTION

The 2025 parliamentary elections marked an important milestone in the consolidation of the rule of law and participatory democracy in the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, it provided an opportunity to analyze to what extent the electoral process reflects the principles of **equal opportunities and non-discrimination**, especially for persons with disabilities, a social group often invisible in the political space.

### *General context*

The Republic of Moldova has over **150,000 persons with disabilities with the right to vote**, approximately 5% of all citizens with the right to vote. However, their effective participation in civic and political life remains limited, due to physical, digital, informational and attitudinal barriers.

In recent years, state institutions have made significant legislative progress: the adoption of **Law No. 60/2012 on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities**, the revised **Electoral Code (2022)**, and the **AC Decision No. 61/2024** on audiovisual accessibility. However, the present analysis shows that the gap between the legal framework and reality remains considerable.

### *Institutional context*

The monitoring was carried out in partnership with:

- **Central Electoral Commission (CEC)** – coordination on infrastructure and organization;
- **Audiovisual Council (AC)** – media monitoring;
- **Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP)** – expertise in social inclusion;
- **Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization (MEDD)** – integration of digital accessibility;
- **Civil society organizations**: AOPD, CRPD, Motivation;
- **International development partners**: EU, Sweden, East European Foundation, UNDP.

This inter-institutional approach allowed for a complete picture of the degree of accessibility in all stages of the electoral process: pre-election, campaign, election day and post-election.

*The purpose of the report* is to provide a detailed analysis of the level of inclusion of persons with disabilities in the 2025 electoral process, through the lens of:

- compliance with international standards;
- institutional and administrative practices;
- visibility in political programs and the media;
- direct participation in voting and in political structures.

### *Justification of the report*

The need to prepare the report derives from:

- the international obligations assumed by the Republic of Moldova by ratifying the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**;
- **Agenda 2030** and the objectives of SDG 10 and SDG 16 on reducing inequalities and creating inclusive institutions;
- the process of **alignment with European Union standards**, which requires the adoption of the principle of "nothing about us without us" in all public policies.

# OBJECTIVES

## *General objective*

Evaluate the degree of accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities in the 2025 electoral process, by analyzing the physical, informational, digital and institutional components.

## *Specific objectives*

1. Evaluation of electoral infrastructure: determining the accessibility of polling stations, spaces and equipment.
2. Analysis of electoral programs: how parties have integrated the principle of inclusion into political platforms.
3. Digital accessibility audit: testing the compliance of websites and online materials with WCAG standards.
4. Monitoring electoral debates and the media: identifying the presence of sign language interpretation, subtitles and audio description.
5. Evaluation of civic participation: analyzing the perceptions and barriers encountered by voters with disabilities.
6. Identifying discrepancies between the legal framework and its practical application.
7. Formulating concrete recommendations for improving future electoral policies and practices.

## *Expected results*

- Creating a database on electoral accessibility;
- Development of a set of measurable indicators for permanent monitoring;
- Identification of good practices and systemic gaps;
- Formulation of strategic recommendations for alignment with European standards.

## REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

### *International legal basis*

The Republic of Moldova is a state party to the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, ratified by the Law No. 166-XVIII of July 9, 2010. Article 29 of the CRPD stipulates that states parties “shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and equal opportunities to exercise them”, including the right to vote and to be elected, ensuring:

- **accessible and understandable voting procedures and materials;**
- **the possibility of voting independently and secretly;**
- **facilitating participation as candidates or members in public institutions.**

Also, the **UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, through the **Goal 10 (“Reduced inequalities”)** and **Goal 16 (“Effective, accountable and inclusive institutions”)**, requires states to adopt measures for the full participation of persons with disabilities in the public life.

In the European context, the **EU Directive 2010/13 on audiovisual media services**, amended by the **EU Directive 2018/1808**, provides for the obligation of states to ensure the accessibility of programs for people with visual and hearing impairments, including through:

- subtitling,
- sign language interpretation,
- audio description,
- clear signaling of adapted programs.

### *National framework*

The Republic of Moldova has incorporated these principles into its domestic legislation, creating a solid legal basis for ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process.

- **The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova**

**Article 16** guarantees the equality of all citizens before the law, without discrimination.

**Article 38** enshrines the universal right to vote and be elected, without arbitrary restrictions.

- [Electoral Code \(Law No. 325/2022\)](#)

Provides for the obligation of electoral authorities to ensure the accessibility of polling stations and the training of electoral office members. Article 13(4): "The electoral authority shall ensure conditions for the equal participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process."

- [Law No. 60/2012 on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities](#)

Establishes the obligation of authorities to ensure access to information, infrastructure, and public services, guaranteeing full participation in community life.

- [Law No. 174/2018 on audiovisual media services](#)

Imposes rules on the accessibility of audiovisual programs and the obligation of broadcasters to guarantee interpretation, subtitling and signaling.

- [Audiovisual Council Decision No. 61/2024](#)

Adopted on April 15, 2024, it establishes clear standards for the accessibility of public interest programs:

- sign language interpreter must be visible **on at least one-third of the screen**;
- subtitles must be **synchronized and legible**;
- adapted programs must be **clearly signaled**;
- providers who do not comply with the rules may be penalized.

- [CEC Regulation No. 1187/2023 on the accessibility of polling stations](#)

This regulation establishes the **minimum mandatory requirements**:

- access ramp with an angle of less than 10°;
- doors with a minimum width of 90 cm;
- adapted voting booth (table height  $\leq$  80 cm);
- information materials in Braille and simplified text;
- clear visual signage.

#### *Distribution of institutional responsibilities*

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Main responsibilities</i>
<b>CEC</b>	Regulating and monitoring the accessibility of the electoral process; training the staff.
<b>AC</b>	Monitoring media service providers, sanctioning non-compliance issues.
<b>MLSP</b>	Developing and implementing policies on social inclusion.
<b>MEDD</b>	Coordinating digital accessibility and adapting public platforms.
<b>LPA</b>	Setting up polling stations and adapted transport.
<b>Civil Society</b>	Independent monitoring, advocacy, training and public awareness.

### *Summary*

The legal framework of the Republic of Moldova is complete and compatible with European and international standards. The main problem is not the absence of norms, but **the deficient implementation**, lack of control and of budgets dedicated to accessibility. Therefore, this report proposes measures for institutional and financial consolidation to transform the principles from the paper into applicable practices.

# METHODOLOGY

## *Methodological principles*

1. **impartiality** (uniform criteria for all candidates);
2. **transparency** (all documented stages);
3. **professional rigor** (validated tools);
4. **replicability** (applicable methodology in future cycles);
5. **participation** (direct involvement of persons with disabilities and of journalists).

## *Sources and tools for data collection*

- 55 polling stations in 10 raions (districts);
- 16 election events;
- 10 television stations (TVR Moldova, Moldova 1, TV8, Jurnal TV, ProTV Chișinău, N4, ONE TV, RLIVE, Vocea Basarabiei TV, Cinema 1);
- 49 online media and social media resources;
- 20 journalists and 24 voters with disabilities interviewed.

## *Tools used*

- polling station observation form (20 physical indicators);
- TV monitoring grid (sign language interpreter, positioning, window size, readability);
- online media analysis form;
- questionnaire for journalists (perceptions and professional barriers);
- WCAG 2.1 table for assessing website accessibility.

## *Indicators used*

**For polling stations:** ramps, doors, restrooms, signage, adapted booths.

**For televisions:** presence of an interpreter, window size, readability, subtitles.

**For online media:** tone and context of articles, terminology used, involvement of persons with disabilities.

**For websites:** contrast, keyboard navigation, screen readers, alternative formats.

### *Limitations of the research*

- Reduced duration of the monitoring period;
- Limited human resources;
- Partial access to TV archives;
- Small sample size for generalization;
- Influence of social media algorithms on the content visibility.

### *Methodological advantages*

The methodology applied combines political, institutional, and media analysis in a unified approach. It allows for:

- comparability between domains and electoral cycles;
- identification of gaps and good practices;
- development of operational recommendations for decision-makers.

# MONITORING RESULTS

The analysis of the results is structured into five thematic components that reflect the main dimensions of the inclusion of people with disabilities in the electoral process:

- I. Reflection of the disability theme in the electoral programs of the electoral candidates**
- II. Accessibility of the websites of the parties and electoral candidates**
- III. Accessibility of the electoral debates and coverage in the media**
- IV. Physical accessibility of the polling stations and organization of the voting process**
- V. Institutional evaluation of the parties from the perspective of disability**
- VI. Monitoring of the election day**

## **I. Reflecting the problems of people with disabilities in the electoral programs**

In the analysis it was identified electoral programs for only 17 electoral candidates, and 1 nominee sent his electoral program by e-mail. For the other candidates we analyzed their messages on social networks or in public debates. Thus, out of 23 electoral contenders, only 11 have electoral platforms that include the disability dimension.

*Table 1. Integration of the disability theme in electoral programs*

Nr	Candidate	Disability mentions	Approach type (dominant)	Key elements (synthesis)	Short conclusion
1	PAS - Action and Solidarity Party	Yes	Social + Medical + Rights	Inclusive education (kindergarten-post IX), assistive devices, "after-16" services, personal assistance, mobility, compensated dental services, dedicated council	Comprehensive, coherent and CRPD-aligned program; operationalizable
2	Democracy At Home Party	Yes	Social + Employment	Employment in institutions, incentives for employers; sports for people with disabilities	Provisions on points; full program sent only after the elections

3	Coalition for Unity and Welfare (CUB) Party	No	—	No explicit mention	No policies dedicated to disability
4	Andrei Năstase (independent candidate)	No	—	Theme focused on justice/economy	Does not address disability
5	ALDE -Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	Yes	Social + Rights (with medical evaluation component)	Distinct chapter; social model of disability; deinstitutionalization; educational/professional inclusion	Modern, rights-oriented approach; requires health details
6	Olesea Stamate (independent candidate)	No	—	No dedicated measures	Disability policies are missing
7	Party of European Social Democrats (PSDE)	Yes	Social + Rights + Medical	Employment, social protection, access to public services, inclusion	Inclusive vision, but predominantly formulated principles
8	Moldovan National Party (PNM)	Yes	Social + Medical	Pensions/allowances; mental health services; educational programs; access to schools	Emphasis on support; limited explicit rights dimension
9	Patriotic Bloc of Socialists, Communists, The Heart and Future of Moldova	No	—	Lack of consolidated program	No public offer on disability
10	ALTERNATIVE Block	Yes	Social + Medical	Social protection, medical services (including dentistry, mental health, autism), accessibility of school infrastructure	Predominantly social/medical; rights dimension poorly reflected
11	Respect Moldova Movement	No	—	Public program without specific provisions	Disability is not addressed
12	TOGETHER Block	Yes	Social + Rights	Implementation of legal framework, deinstitutionalization, personal assistants, independent living, pension increase	Combination of social + rights; strong pro-inclusion orientation

13	League of Cities and Communes	Yes	Social	"Vulnerable people" (including disabilities) in the quality-of-life chapter	Generic mention, without concrete measures
14	Alliance for the Unification of Romanians Party (AUR)	No	—	"The 10 Steps to Reunion" without reference	Lack of disability policies
15	Victoria Sanduța (independent candidate)	No	—	No dedicated references	Disability absent from priorities
16	The MOLDOVANS Alliance	No	—	Program focused on general vision; no mentions	No social/medical/disability rights approach
17	Greater Moldova Party	No	—	"Theses" without explicit mentions	Disability is missing from the document
18	National Unity Bloc (BUN)	Yes	Social	(on the National Liberal Party platform) with general references to "equal opportunities"/ compensations	No measures dedicated to disability; declarative level
19	New Historical Option (NOI)	No	—	No mention; in video material – discriminatory term ("invalid children")	Absence of policies + inappropriate language
20	Liberal Party	Yes	Social + Employment	Home care/community centers; labor market integration	Useful but fragmented steps; integrated strategies are lacking
21	Christian-Social Union of Moldova	No	—	No references	No dedicated initiative
22	Tatiana Crețu (independent candidate)	No	—	Extensive program in other areas; disability is absent	Specific provisions are missing
23	Our Party	Yes	Social + Rights (procedural)	Elimination of annual reconfirmation of the degree of disability; accumulation of age limit pension + disability; mentions of special education	Empathetic and corrective approach; requires a comprehensive strategy

For **6 electoral candidates, the electoral programs are well structured around the disability component**, including the social, medical and rights-based dimensions. There is also a rights-based vision by creating conditions for people with disabilities to become active members of society, i.e. to have access to education and employment services and to participate in community life.

For **3 electoral candidates**, people with disabilities are included in the category of “vulnerable people”, along with the elderly and low-income families. This approach mainly reflects a social perspective, focused on support and protection, without developing medical dimensions or a rights-based vision (participation, inclusion, independent living).

*Positive observation:* no devaluing words were identified in the electoral programs of this election.

*Negative observation:* compared to the 2021 Parliamentary Elections in terms of the percentage of electoral candidates reflecting the theme of people with disabilities in their electoral programs there is a decrease, 61% of all electoral nominees in 2025 compared to 63% in 2021.

### *Conclusions*

Out of the 23 electoral participants analyzed, 19 had a website and/or Facebook page, and 17 (74%) published electoral programs. Out of these, 11 (61%) explicitly or tangentially include the topic of disability, but only 7 deal with the integration of people with disabilities in areas such as education, employment and social life. Most are limited to financial support measures (pensions, allowances), and accessibility and deinstitutionalization are mentioned sporadically, by only 2 nominees. Overall, the approach remains predominantly social-welfare, not rights-based.

### *Recommendations*

- Electoral candidates should publish electoral programs **in an accessible format**, including videos with sign language, audio and an “easy-to-read” version.
- The programs should be **clearly named** (“2025 electoral program”) and easily identifiable online.
- After registering for the race, nominees should also submit the official version of the **program to the Central Electoral Commission**, for archiving and public transparency.

## II. Accessibility of electoral candidates' websites

In the digital age, party websites are the main source of information for voters. The series of recommendations called **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)** provide clear criteria for creating websites that are friendly to people with disabilities. From the first version (WCAG 1.0, 1999) to the most recent (WCAG 2.1 in 2018 and WCAG 2.2 in 2023), the standards have evolved along with digital technologies.

The four fundamental principles of WCAG, which constitute the basis of accessibility, are as follows.

- **Perceivable** – content must be visible or audible to at least one of the user's senses (e.g., alternative text for images).
- **Usable** – the website interface must be able to be used by various means, including with just the keyboard.
- **Understandable** – clear language, predictable and logical interfaces that support understanding.
- **Universal** – compatibility with various platforms, devices (phone, tablet), browsers and assistive technologies, current or future.

Based on these principles, WCAG defines three levels of compliance: **A** (minimum), **AA** (intermediate) and **AAA** (maximum). In total, there are over 60 success criteria that provide a precise framework for evaluating the accessibility of a site.

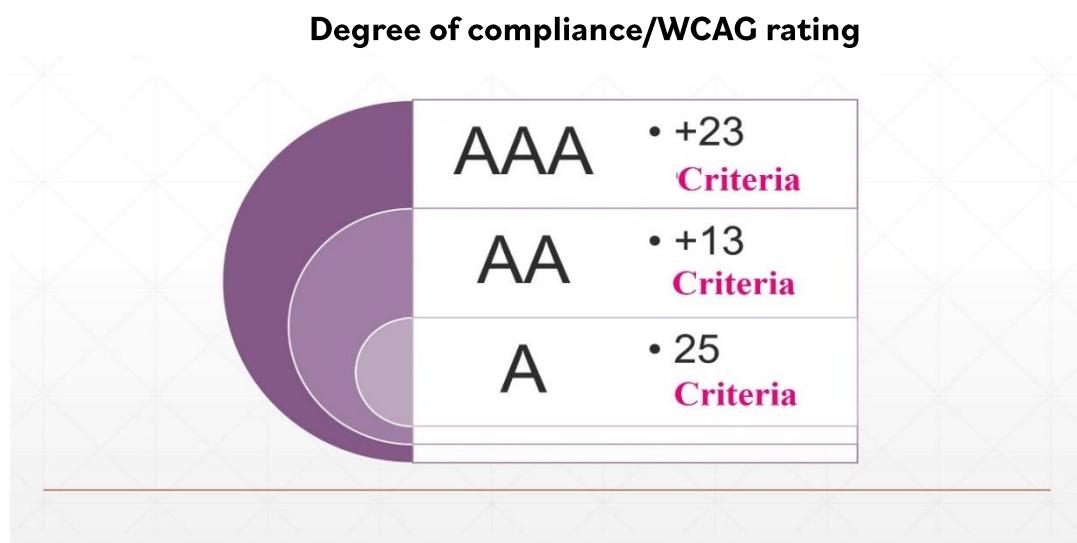


Figure 1. WCAG compliance level

*Table 2. Website accessibility analysis performed by AccesibilityChecker.org and manual scanning*

Nr.	Name of the electoral candidate	Website	compliance with WCAG standards /Website score	Presence of accessibility tools "widgets"	Lack of documents in image format
1	Action and Solidarity Party (PAS)	<a href="https://pas2025.md">https://pas2025.md</a>	×	77%	×
2	Democracy At Home Party	<a href="https://pda.md/">https://pda.md/</a>	×	44%	×
3	Coalition for Unity and Welfare Party (CUB)	<a href="https://coalitiacub.md">https://coalitiacub.md</a>	×	47%	×
4	Andrei Năstase Independent candidate	-	-	-	-
5	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE)	<a href="https://alde.md/">https://alde.md/</a>	×	23%	×
6	Olesea Stamate Independent candidate	-	-	-	-
7	Party of European Social Democrats (PSDE)	<a href="https://psde.md">https://psde.md</a>	×	71%	×
8	Moldovan National Party (PNM)	<a href="https://pnm.md/">https://pnm.md/</a>	×	29%	×
9	Patriotic Bloc of Socialists, Communists, The Heart and Future of Moldova	-	-	-	-
10	ALTERNATIVE Bloc	<a href="https://blocualternativa.md">https://blocualternativa.md</a>	×	59%	×
11	Respect Moldova Movement	<a href="https://respect.md/alegeri2025/">https://respect.md/alegeri2025/</a>	×	29%	×
12	TOGETHER block	-	-	-	-
13	League of Cities and Communes	<a href="https://loc.md">https://loc.md</a>	×	59%	×
14	Alliance for the Unification of Romanians Party (AUR)	<a href="https://partidulaur.ro/republica-moldova">https://partidulaur.ro/republica-moldova</a>	×	47%	×
15	Victoria Sanduța - Independent candidate	-	-	-	-
16	The MOLDOVANS Alliance	<a href="https://aliantamoldovenii.md">https://aliantamoldovenii.md</a>	×	35%	×
17	Greater Moldova Party	<a href="https://moldovamare.md/md/">https://moldovamare.md/md/</a>	×	17%	×
18	National Unity Bloc (BUN)	-	-	-	-
19	New Historical Option (NOI)	-	-	-	-
20	Liberal Party	<a href="https://www.pl.md">https://www.pl.md</a>	×	41%	×
21	Christian-Social Union of Moldova	-	-	-	-
22	Tatiana Crețu - Independent candidate	-	-	-	-
23	Our Party	<a href="https://partidulnostru.md/">https://partidulnostru.md/</a>	×	38%	×

### *General Results*

Out of **the 23 electoral candidates**, 14 have websites, and 9 parties, blocs or candidates have a dedicated Facebook or their own pages. At the same time, **2 electoral platforms** – the Patriotic Bloc of Socialists, Communists, The Heart and Future of Moldova and the National Unity Bloc (BUN) – used either the websites of the alliance members or the website of one of the members of the electoral bloc. The National Unity Bloc (BUN) used the website of the National Liberal Party.

**None of the websites fully comply with international web accessibility standards (WCAG).** The average accessibility score of the candidates' websites is approximately 44%, which reflects a low level of compliance with WCAG standards.

Main **problems** and their frequency:

- Links do not have accessible names, and the problem was found on at least 10 sites (screen readers only read "link", without providing context).
- Title elements are not structured correctly in case of 7 sites.
- Buttons do not have an accessible name on 6 sites (screen readers only announce "button", without reading the function/description).
- Insufficient contrast between text and background on 5 sites (affects readability for people with visual impairments).
- Lack of landmarks or their incorrect use on 5 sites (lack of semantic structure `<header>`, `<main>`, `<footer>` makes assisted navigation difficult).

### *Conclusions*

- Very low WCAG compliance. Only a few parties reach acceptable levels (e.g. PAS ~77%, PSDE ~71%); most sites (10/14) have below 50% score, a sign of the lack of a systematic approach to digital accessibility.
- Recurring deficiencies on almost all sites. Links/buttons without accessible names, insufficient contrast, incorrectly ranked titles, forms without labels, landmarks/ARIA used inappropriately, which makes navigation with assistive technologies difficult.
- Lack of accessibility tools and accessible formats. There are no widgets/buttons for adjustments (contrast, text magnification, simplified

navigation); unlabeled PDFs or even images with text, inaccessible to screen readers, are frequently published.

- Informational exclusion for certain groups. Audio-video content does not have subtitles/transcriptions; there are no easy-to-read versions; The texts are dense and technical, which affects deaf people and those with intellectual/ psychosocial disabilities.

### *Recommendations*

1. Adherence to WCAG 2.1 level AA. Electoral candidates should correct recurring issues (accessible names, contrast level, structure of titles, form labels, correct landmarks) to increase access to electoral information.
2. Publishing in accessible formats. Avoiding inaccessible images/PDFs; properly labeling PDFs; adding ALT text to visual materials; integrating accessibility widgets (contrast, text magnification, simplified navigation).
3. Access for people with hearing and intellectual/psychosocial disabilities. Subtitles, transcriptions and, where appropriate, sign language interpretation; writing in plain language, with visual summaries/logical structures (clear titles, lists, short paragraphs).
4. Trainings and mandatory rules. Training communication teams and web development on the subject of accessibility; establishing mandatory minimum requirements by the electoral authority and implementing a compliance monitoring and reporting mechanism.

### III. Accessibility of electoral debates and media coverage

The media monitoring was carried out over a 30-day electoral campaign period, covering the main national and regional television channels, online portals and social networks.

*Table 3. Level of accessibility of TV debates*

TV channel	Sign Language Interpreter	Subtitles	Window $\geq 1/3$	Positioning	General compliance
TVR Moldova	Yes	Partial	Partial	Correct	Medium
Moldova 1	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial	Medium
ProTV Chișinău	Yes	No	Partial	Partial	Low
TV8	No	No	No	No	Low
Jurnal TV	No	No	No	No	Low

#### *Qualitative results*

Only 3 televisions offered sign language interpreter, but none fully respected the AC rules about the dimension of the window ( $\geq 1/3$  of the screen). No TV stations offered full synchronous captioning. Online programs did not include text descriptions or sign language translation.

#### *Media tone analysis*

Among 163 online materials that mentioned disability:

- 71% had a neutral tone,
- 18% – a positive one (promoting inclusion),
- 11% – a negative tone (associating disability with dependence or vulnerability).

#### *Conclusions*

- The general level of **accessibility of TV debates** is low, with sign language interpretation applied **only formally**.
- **Three TV stations** offered sign language interpreters, but with **small and peripherally positioned windows**, limiting the real access of people with hearing impairments.

- Most TV stations **did not provide interpretation**, violating legal requirements and highlighting the **lack of specialists** in the field.
- The topic of disability is reflected moderately and **predominantly as a social issue**, not as a rights related issue.
- **The media tone** is generally **fair and respectful**, with positive accents on inclusion.
- Journalists recognize the importance of the subject, but are limited by **editorial pressures and lack of resources**.
- There is **consensus on the need** for training media professionals on the correct coverage of disability field.
- **People with disabilities are rarely interviewed directly**, lacking authentic representation of their voices.
- Local press has more frequently addressed issues of **physical access to polling stations**, but with **limited resources**.
- **A major gap persists between the regulatory framework and practical application**, which reduces the efficiency of media accessibility efforts.

#### *Recommendations*

- Strictly implement ACC Decision No. 61/2024;
- Develop an Editorial Guide to Inclusive Language;
- Subsidize subtitling and interpretation;
- Train journalists – 85% admitted that they have no training in inclusive communication.

## IV. Parliamentary elections through the lens of the disability dimension

### 1. Accessibility of the infrastructure

Out of 55 of electoral contestants' headquarters visited, only 3 presented functional elements of accessibility for people with special needs:

- Edineț (Party "Action and Solidarity" – PAS)
- Florești (Party "Respect Moldova")
- Bălți (Party MAN)

The other 52 headquarters were found to be inaccessible. The problems found were recurrent in all monitored districts and reveal the lack of implementation of minimum accessibility standards of headquarters.

Among the most common deficiencies were:

- **steep stairs and high thresholds**, which make access impossible for wheelchair users or people with reduced mobility;
- **improvised ramps, with excessive inclination angles or lacking handrails**, often installed only for "decoration", but not safe to use;
- **narrow doors and lack of visual contrast**, which makes it difficult for people with visual impairments to find their way;
- **premises located on upper floors, without elevators**, lifting platforms or other technical solutions that allow independent access.

### 2. Informational accessibility

The analysis of electoral materials (printed, online and on social networks) highlighted reduced accessibility for people with visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities.

**Printed materials** (newspapers, publications) were difficult to navigate: dense texts, small fonts, technical language and the absence of adapted versions (large font, simple language, Braille).

**Leaflets and posters** had a more visually friendly design, but the information was superficial and inaccessible to people with intellectual disabilities due to the lack of easy-to-understand language.

On **social networks**, parties did not apply minimum standards of digital accessibility:

- **alternative descriptions** (alt-text) for images are missing;

- **chromatic contrast** is often insufficient;
- **video subtitles** are rare and incomplete;
- there is no **interpretation in sign language** or audio versions.

The **notable exception** was the Party PAS, which produced a version of its electoral program **in Braille format**, but its distribution was limited, without significant impact.

### **3. *Events and the election campaign***

Between September **1-21, 2025, 16 election related events** were monitored (launches, debates, meetings with voters) in **10 districts** of the country.

Most locations were not adapted for persons with disabilities, lacking ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms. People with reduced mobility encountered difficulties entering and moving around; in some cases, they were unable to attend. Outdoor events provided relatively better physical access but lacked basic comfort measures: there were no shaded areas, adapted seating, or accessible furniture.

Weather conditions (high temperatures) and the lack of adapted infrastructure reduced the participation of persons with disabilities, highlighting the failure to integrate the principle of accessibility into the organization of the electoral campaign.

### **4. *Presence and representation of persons with disabilities in the electoral campaign***

The participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral campaign was extremely low, with their presence limited to that of spectators rather than active participants. In the ten monitored districts, no candidates, volunteers, or campaign team members with disabilities were identified, except for two isolated cases (Leova and Cantemir).

Political parties had no inclusion strategies or concrete measures for involving persons with disabilities; commitments regarding “equal opportunities” remained merely declarative.

#### *Positive observations:*

- In Leova, **Radu Raicu (ALDE)**, a person with a locomotor disability, participated in public debates on accessibility.
- In Cantemir, **Ludmila Adamciuc (PAS)**, mother of a child with a disability, addressed the issue of inclusive education.

In other districts (Edineț, Criuleni, Căușeni, Cahul, Chișinău, Bălți, etc.), persons with disabilities were not involved and, in some cases, could not even attend physically due to architectural barriers.

Attitudinal barriers were also observed: lack of invitations, condescending tone, and perception of their participation as a symbolic gesture. No political party provided personal assistance, sign language interpretation, or accessible materials, which completely limited active participation.

Overall, the political representation of persons with disabilities remains almost non-existent, and the lack of accessibility and institutional openness continues to sustain structural exclusion from political life.

## **5. Accessibility on social networks**

The presence of political parties on social media between **September 1-21, 2025** was active but poorly adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities.

- **PAS** was the only party that partially used subtitles in some video materials, but without consistency.
- **PSRM** and **Respect Moldova** frequently published visually appealing materials, but without alternative descriptions (alt-text) and with dense, hard-to-understand texts.
- **ALDE, AUR, and Blocul Alternativa** broadcast online spots and debates without subtitles, sign language interpretation, or descriptive audio versions.

**No party consistently applied good digital accessibility practices** – subtitles, simplified language, and sign language interpretation were missing. The use of contrasting colors and visible fonts was insufficient to compensate for the absence of essential accessibility elements, confirming the **digital exclusion of persons with disabilities** from online electoral communication.

### *Partial conclusion*

Overall, **equal access to electoral information was lacking**: persons with disabilities were practically excluded from complete and fair information. The absence of alternative formats and digital adaptations shows that political messages were not designed for all citizens but continue to reproduce communication barriers and exclusion of vulnerable groups from the democratic process.

### *Recommendations*

- National fund for adapting polling stations;
- Minimum mandatory standard for all local public authorities (LPA);
- Equipping each polling station with assistive kits (magnifiers, stencil, audio guide);
- Training of electoral staff on interaction with voters with disabilities

## **V. Disability assessment of electoral contestants**

Out of the 66 registered political parties, **11 have their activity limited by court decisions**, and **10 have an expired presidential mandate**, indicating deficiencies in institutional updating and transparency.

Official documents (member lists, statutes, reports) are published in **PDF format scanned from photos**, making them inaccessible to persons with visual impairments and unreadable by screen readers.

In the **numerical and nominal list of party members**, certain data (IDNO, date of birth, election date) are blurred – some justifiably (personal data), but others unjustifiably, which limits transparency and access to public information. The lack of publication of the list of political party founders reduces clarity regarding the composition and internal accountability of the formations. The **Ministry of Justice** has cited reasons such as personal data protection, the large volume of information, and the delegation of competence to the **Public Services Agency** to refuse public access to these data.

By comparison, the **Estonian model** provides a good practice: all data on parties, members, statutes, financial reports, and contributions are available online, in accessible and digitally readable formats, within an **interoperable system between authorities**.

This example shows that **transparency and digital accessibility do not contradict data protection**, but rather complement it, increasing public trust and informed citizen participation.

## Conclusion

The **Republic of Moldova** needs an integrated and accessible digital mechanism that allows the viewing, downloading, and processing of information about political parties in an inclusive, transparent, and user-friendly way for all categories of users, including persons with disabilities.

*Table 4. Evaluation of political parties (score 0-10)*

Contestant	Accessibility strategy	Accessible web page	Adapted materials	Internal representation	Scoring
PAS	No	Partial	Partial	No	4
PSRM	No	No	No	No	2
PLDM	No	Partial	No	No	3
MAN	No	No	No	No	1
CUB	No	No	No	No	1

## Observations

- No party has an internal strategy regarding accessibility.
- Internal materials and statutes are published exclusively in scanned PDF format, which is inaccessible.

## Partial conclusion

- Inclusion is perceived as an external topic, not as an institutional responsibility.
- The need to condition public subsidies on the existence of accessibility plans is becoming urgent.

## Recommendation

Given that most political parties have “failed the disability dimension test” (lack of accessible offices and web pages, absence of publications in accessible formats, lack of theses and references to disability in statutes and/or electoral platforms, etc.), experts and the disability community propose bringing to public debate the topic of a **“disability quota.”**

By this term, we understand the **obligation of political parties subsidized from the state budget to allocate a certain portion/percentage of resources to the disability dimension.**

Political parties would be **legally required to spend a specific percentage of subsidized resources** to make their office/headquarters or website accessible, to hire and adapt the workplace for an employee with disabilities, to build a ramp, etc.

## VI. Election day monitoring.

### *Context, scope and coverage*

On election day, a team of 10 observers monitored **55 polling stations** in **10 districts** (urban and rural), following the entire operational process: from the opening of the stations to the closing of the ballot boxes. The main objective was to **assess accessibility for persons with disabilities** and their actual ability to participate in voting under conditions of respect, safety, and confidentiality.

Four dimensions were analyzed:

- (a) **physical access** (entrances, ramps, interior circulation, booths, restrooms)
- (b) **informational accessibility** (displays, assistive equipment, alternative formats)
- (c) **interaction with electoral offices** (attitudes, language, practical skills)
- (d) **mobile ballot voting** (procedure, confidentiality, perceptions).

The method combined direct observation, short interviews with polling station members, and the collection of perceptions from voters (questionnaire – 24 respondents).

### *Physical access in polling stations*

Out of the 55 stations visited, **only 11 had access ramps**, and only **5 of those were usable by wheelchair users**. The rest presented major architectural barriers – steps, high thresholds, uneven sidewalks.

In several cases, persons with reduced mobility waited outside, unable to enter the building; election staff acknowledged the **lack of practical training and empathy** in their interaction with voters with disabilities.

Inside, the **voting booths and signature tables were not adapted**: narrow booths, unstable partitions, and tables too high, which affected the confidentiality of the vote for some people.

Restrooms were, in the vast majority of cases, **inaccessible**: in rural areas – located outside, without ramps; in urban areas – without support bars or space for wheelchairs. In some cases, **access to toilets was prohibited by internal decision**, even for voters.

**Conclusion:** These findings show that **accessibility is treated superficially**, as a technical issue, and not as an essential dimension of **human dignity and equal participation** in the electoral process.

#### *Informational accessibility*

Posters with candidate lists were often placed too high, with small font size, in poorly lit areas. Information boards were missing or difficult to see from a wheelchair. **Magnifiers and stencil envelopes** were available in almost all stations but were rarely used; often they were stored in **unlabeled cabinets or boxes**, and staff did not know where they were located. **No materials in Braille**, easy-to-read texts, or **audio supports for blind voters** were identified.

**Conclusion:** Informational accessibility was treated **formally**: the equipment exists, but it is **not integrated into the workflow** and is **not proactively offered**.

#### *Interaction with members of the electoral offices*

The overall atmosphere was one of goodwill; however, **practical training for interaction and communication was missing**. Trainings covered procedures but **did not include empathetic communication or reasonable accommodations**.

#### Example of a linguistic barrier and bad attitude:

- „Do you mean handicapped people?”
- „No, I mean people with disabilities.”

The persistence of **stigmatizing terminology** indicates the urgent need for awareness-raising and **standardization** of language.

#### Positive examples:

There were practices worth replicating: **adapting the tone, discreet support, calmly explaining the steps, seeking solutions (including directing to the mobile ballot when physical access was impossible)**. In one case, the chairperson of a polling station personally went down to speak with a voter with a disability who remained at the entrance.

### *Voting via mobile ballot box and participation of voters with disabilities*

For many people with **severe disabilities**, the mobile ballot box was the **only real option**. From the point of view of the procedures, teams met deadlines and arrived on time at voters' homes; communication was generally **respectful**.

In **residential centers**, several people voted simultaneously in the same room, sometimes in the presence of staff. Although the intention was supportive, **confidentiality was affected**.

- *"The polling station members were polite and fair, but the voting took place with several people in the room. There was a silent fear of making a mistake."*

Voters described voting as a recognition and a **form of dignity**:

- *"I cannot go to the school, but I am glad they come to me. That way, I also feel part of the world."*
- *"Even if it's hard for me, I come to vote every time. It is my right, and I want to use it."*

Voters' voice – survey results (N = 24)

### *Profile and participation*

Residence: 66.7% rural / 33.3% urban.

Declared types of disability: physical 70.8%; vision 12.5%; intellectual 8.3%; "prefer not to say" 8.3%.

Participation: 87.5% voted in the last elections.

### *Voting method*

At the polling station: 91.7% (22 people).

Mobile ballot: 8.3% (2 people).

Those who did not vote cited polling station inaccessibility and lack of adapted transport. One particular case – a sick personal assistant prevented submitting the request for a mobile ballot.

### *Barriers encountered (frequent reports)*

Steep or improvised ramps; thresholds; narrow corridors.

Insufficient visual markings for the visually impaired; poor lighting.

Inaccessible toilets (sometimes in the yard).

In total, 14/23 respondents mentioned at least one barrier; only 9 reported no difficulties.

#### *What would facilitate participation*

**"Having access to the polling station"** – 57.1% (dominant response).

Adapted transport (2), accessible information (1), support for mobile ballot requests (1), personal assistance (1).

#### *Subjective perceptions*

Respect and safety: 87.5% reported feeling respected.

Support: mainly family (19), less often the electoral office (1) or personal assistant (1).

#### *One person highlighted personal progress:*

— *"I was glad that this year I managed on my own. It was the first time."*

#### *Direct messages*

- *"For wheelchair users, the polling station is not accessible."*
- *"No one thinks about people with reduced mobility. A simple plank ramp would have helped."*
- *"There is no accessibility at the polling station"*

*Conclusion:* voters have **civic will**, but **the system is making it difficult for them** to exercise their right.

#### *Synthetic Findings (Briefly)*

**Incomplete data** in office reports (types of disability limited to locomotor/vision/hearing; no distinction between polling station voting vs. mobile ballot box).

**Deficient physical access:** steep/improvised ramps, narrow doors, difficult-to-access secondary entrances.

**Inaccessible sanitary facilities;** in some cases, prohibited for public use.

**Adapted booths** – rare or unavailable (taken with mobile ballot).

**Stencil envelopes** – temporarily unavailable (taken with mobile ballot).

**Confidentiality affected** in residential centers (simultaneous voting, presence of staff).

**Lack of adapted transport** – major barrier in rural areas (transport by private actors is prohibited).

**Training focused on procedure**, not on communication/accommodations; sometimes **lack of knowledge** on how to act.

**Stigmatizing language** used occasionally (“handicapped”, “invalids”).

**Inaccessible materials** (no Braille/audio/LMG; posters placed high, small font).

**Unused or incorrectly installed equipment**; ramps unused due to lack of knowledge.

**Lack of designated staff** for support – assistance depends on the goodwill of available members.

**“Intuitive” monitoring** of accessibility (without technical expertise).

**Lack of preventive assessments** and **standardized indicators** – problems are observed only on voting day.

### *Conclusions*

- Physical accessibility remains the greatest vulnerability: without minimal arrangements, the right to vote becomes theoretical.
- Information accessibility is formal: equipment exists but is not integrated into the polling station workflow and is not offered proactively.
- Practical competencies of offices are insufficient in communication/accommodation – creating inequalities between polling stations.
- The mobile ballot partially compensates for barriers, but confidentiality must be ensured more rigorously (especially in residential centers).
- The civic will of persons with disabilities is high; the system must rise to the level of this will.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The integrated analysis of the five monitored dimensions: infrastructure, electoral programs, web, media and participation, confirms that the **Republic of Moldova has built a solid regulatory framework, but its practical application remains partial, fragmented and uneven.**

### *General findings*

**The physical accessibility** of polling stations is limited: only 5 polling stations monitored had fully compliant access ramps. The lack of standardized ramps, accessible toilets and visible signage affects real participation.

**Digital accessibility** is the most deficient dimension – 92% of party websites are inaccessible, meaning that thousands of visually impaired voters cannot access essential information about electoral programs.

**Media coverage** remains superficial. The topic of disability is rarely presented, often in general terms and with an emphasis on victimization. Public television only partially complied with legal obligations regarding sign language interpretation.

**Political parties treat inclusion as a marginal issue.** Of the 23 electoral contestants analyzed, only 11 explicitly or tangentially included the topic of disability, but only 7 deal with the integration of people with disabilities in areas such as education, work and social life.

**Public language** about disability has improved compared to previous campaigns – obvious slippages have disappeared, but neutral formulations, lacking an active perspective on participation, predominate.

**Voting participation of people with disabilities** has increased slightly (estimated 55% according to the CEC), but remains below the national average. The main barriers identified are the lack of adapted transport, inaccessible information and paternalistic attitudes.

### *Detailed findings*

#### 1. Physical dimension

The CEC Regulation no 1187/2023 is well formulated, but without a sanctioning mechanism.

LPA do not have dedicated funds for insuring accessibility in the polling stations.

## 2. Digital dimension

The accessibility culture is absent. The parties do not have IT specialists or consultants specialized in inclusive design. Although the CEC electoral platform complies with WCAG standards, the parties do not follow it.

## 3. Media dimension

AC has a regulatory framework (Decision no. 61/2024), but its implementation is chaotic.

Commercial media lack resources for interpretation and subtitling, and public television stations lack dedicated budgets.

## 4. Institutional dimension

No political party includes people with disabilities in its governing bodies. Accessibility is missing from statutes, internal regulations and organizational development plans.

### *Strategic conclusion*

The Republic of Moldova has made legislative progress, but not operational progress. Without dedicated budgets and clear institutional responsibilities, the rights of persons with disabilities risk remaining a mere declarative objective. The next electoral cycle must focus on implementation, not just regulation.

**In essence:** Inclusion is not a gesture of solidarity, but a condition for authentic democracy.

## RECOMMENDATION

### *General recommendation*

1. **Institutionalizing Accessibility** – every institution involved in the electoral process (CEC, AC, LPAs) must have an annual accessibility plan with measurable indicators and a dedicated budget.
2. **National Electoral Accessibility Fund** – established from budgetary contributions and international donors, managed transparently by the CEC, intended for the adaptation of polling stations, digital accessibility, and staff training.
3. **Annual Reporting Mechanism** – all authorities and political parties must present a report on the accessibility measures implemented; the CEC and CA shall publish a consolidated report.

### *Sectoral recommendation*

#### **For the Central Electoral Commission (CEC)**

- Integrate accessibility criteria into all public tenders regarding electoral infrastructure and equipment;
- Include training modules on interaction with persons with disabilities in the training sessions for polling station members;
- Ensure the presence of assistive kits (magnifiers, voting templates, audio guides) in all polling stations;
- Develop a *Visual Guide on Polling Station Accessibility* to be distributed to LPAs.

#### **For the Audiovisual Council (AC)**

- Apply sanctions for non-compliance with Decision no. 61/2024;
- Create a special budget line for audiovisual accessibility;
- Publish annually a list of compliant and non-compliant broadcasters;
- Support the development of a national joint interpretation and subtitling service available to all broadcasters.

#### **For the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection**

- Integrate electoral accessibility into the National Inclusion Strategy 2026–2030;
- Ensure continuous training of public servants in the field of disability;
- Develop a data collection system on the participation of persons with disabilities in elections.

### **For political parties**

- Introduce a “disability quota” – at least 5% of budgetary subsidies to be used for adapting websites, materials, and events;
- Adopt an internal Accessibility Policy and include it in party statutes;
- Publish electoral programmes in accessible formats (DOCX, HTML, audio, digital Braille);
- Recruit and promote persons with disabilities in leadership bodies.

### **For mass media**

- Develop an Editorial Guide on Inclusive Communication;
- Train journalists in the field of disability;
- Promote a rights-based and participatory discourse, rather than one based on compassion.

### **For civil society and external partners**

- Continue independent monitoring of electoral cycles;
- Launch an annual Accessibility Barometer;
- Develop pilot projects (e.g., accessible online platforms, easy-to-read materials);
- Provide technical assistance to authorities for the implementation of WCAG 2.1 and CRPD standards.

### *Legislative and Public Policy Recommendations*

1. Amend the Electoral Code to introduce minimum mandatory accessibility criteria for the validation of polling stations.
2. Adopt a national framework of standards for accessible design in IT and public infrastructure.
3. Include accessibility indicators in national reports on CRPD implementation.
4. Create a position of *National Accessibility Coordinator* within the Government.

### *Final Recommendation*

Inclusion is not a cost, but an investment in democracy. Persons with disabilities should not be treated as passive beneficiaries of policies, but as equal citizens, with the right to decide, to be represented, and to participate fully in public life.