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EVALUATION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

SEPTEMBER 28, 2025

THROUGH THE LENS OF THE DISABILITY DIMENSION

Report Summary

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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 persons with disabilities.

The report brings together the results of five thematic monitoring activities:

- 1. analysis of electoral programs of political competitors;***
- 2. assessment of websites accessibility;***
- 3. monitoring of electoral debates and mass media;***
- 4. observation of polling stations and infrastructure;***
- 5. institutional assessment of parties and candidates;***
- 6. monitoring of election day.***

The collected data show that, although the normative framework

of the Republic of Moldova is aligned with international standards, its practical application remains fragmentary, and real accessibility – limited.

Keywords: monitoring, disability, parliamentary elections, accessibility.

Note:

The report summary represents a generalization of the results of the Project "Free and Inclusive Elections – Precondition for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and for a Functional Democracy in the Republic of Moldova", implemented by INFONET Alliance and financially supported by the East European Foundation from the resources provided by Sweden. The authors of the separate reports are Vitalie Meșter, Ion Ciobanu, Valerian Tăbîrță, Ion Cibotărică, Ion Bulicanu, Vitalie Cazacu, Ludmila Jalbă, Gheorghe Bosîi, Radu Bobeica. The Project Consultant is Mihaela Gherasim. The extended reports on each aspect monitored in the 2025 Parliamentary Elections on the disability dimension can be consulted at: <https://.md/news/26>

1. The Electoral Observation Mission on the Disability Dimension

Observing the electoral process from the perspective of the inclusion of persons with disabilities is of major importance. It does not merely concern formal respect for the right to vote, but also the real quality of access, respect for diversity, and the capacity of state institutions to ensure equal participation for all citizens.

INFONET Alliance, a member of the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections, within the framework of the "Access to Vote for All" Campaign, in partnership with approximately 10 non-governmental organizations and initiative groups, monitored the Parliamentary Elections of 28.09.2025 from the perspective of the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

In September 2025, ten observers from as many districts across the country – Edineț, Glodeni, Fălești, the municipalities of Bălți and Chișinău, Florești, Criuleni, Căușeni, Cantemir, and Cahul – participated in a comprehensive electoral process monitoring exercise, including on election day. The primary goal of the activity was to assess how political parties and candidates respect the principles of accessibility and inclusion, with an emphasis on the rights of persons with physical, visual, or intellectual disabilities.

2. Reflecting the Disability Dimension in the Electoral Programs of Electoral Competitors

Monitoring the Parliamentary Elections of September 28, 2025 from the perspective of how the issues of persons with disabilities are

addressed in the electoral programs of competitors, and the degree of accessibility of their online communication platforms, is of great importance. The monitoring tracked how political parties integrate the principles of inclusion and equal opportunities into their electoral discourse and practice, as well as the level of access by persons with disabilities to electoral information.

The analysis included an examination of the websites and Facebook accounts of electoral competitors, a review of the existence and accessibility of electoral programs, and observation of televised debates.

2.1. General Conclusions Regarding the Reflection of the Disability Dimension in Electoral Programs

- Analysis of electoral competitors' websites identified electoral programs for only 17 out of 23 competitors; one electoral competitor submitted their program via e-mail (Figure 1).
- 17 (74%) have an electoral program (published and identified);
- 6 (26%) have no electoral program or it was not found.

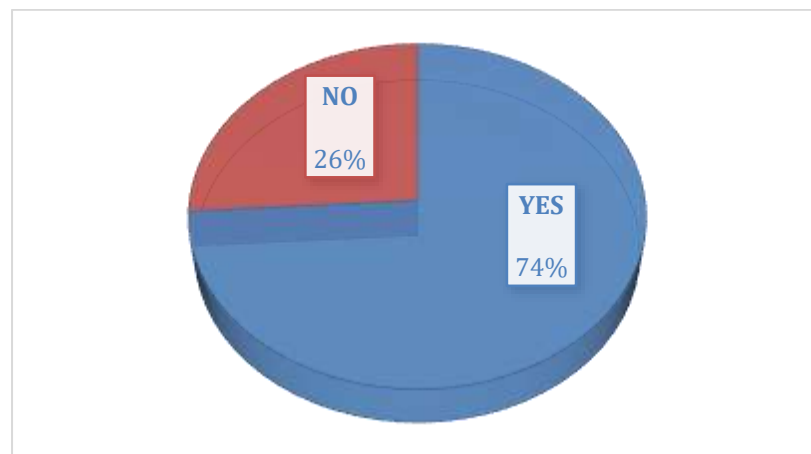


Figure 1. Electoral programs published by electoral competitors in the 2025 Parliamentary Elections

- **11 electoral competitors have electoral platforms that include the disability dimension, while 1 competitor makes only a tangential reference to disability.**
- **One of the identified issues is that political parties often use different names for their electoral program— for example, political program, party vision, popular program – which creates confusion for readers and requires an additional clarification: whether the document relates to the Parliamentary Elections of September 28 or not.**
- **For 6 electoral competitors, the programs are well structured on the disability component, incorporating the social, medical, and rights-based dimensions. A rights-based vision is also present, by creating conditions for persons with disabilities to become active members of society – i.e., to have access to education, employment services, and participation in community life.**
- **For 3 electoral competitors, persons with disabilities are placed in the category of "vulnerable persons," alongside the elderly and low-income families. This approach primarily reflects a social perspective focused on support and protection, without developing medical aspects or a rights-based vision (participation, inclusion, independent living). A positive note: no demeaning language toward persons with disabilities was identified in the electoral programs of this election.**
- **There is a negative trend compared to the 2021 Parliamentary Elections in terms of the percentage of electoral candidates reflecting the disability theme in their programs: 61% of all electoral competitors in 2025, compared to 73% in 2021 (Figure 2).**

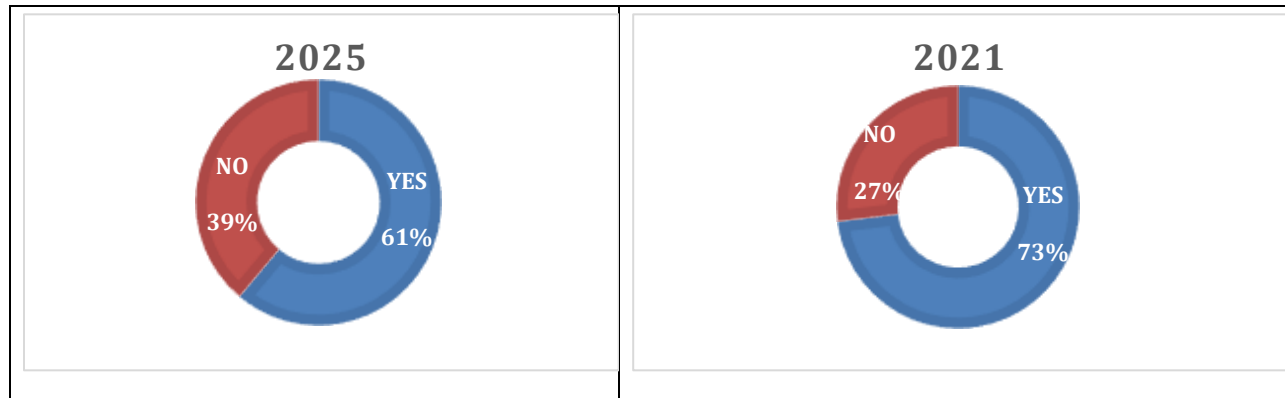


Figure 2. Mentions of the disability dimension in electoral programs (comparative data 2025 vs. 2021)

- **Most electoral competitors do not have chapter summaries on their websites that would allow easy identification of topics of interest to voters, such as the chapter concerning persons with disabilities. Thus, to find information about a party's political proposal, an additional keyword search is required – something not accessible to everyone, or requiring more advanced computer skills. There is also no adaptation of electoral programs in an easy-to-read or easy-to-understand format for persons with intellectual disabilities.**
- **Similarly, no electoral programs translated into sign language or Braille are available.**
- **No electoral competitor mentioned the subject of disability in the electoral debates held on ProTV, N4, CINEMA 1, and Moldova 1.**
- **A generalized approach to social policies is evident in electoral discourse, along with the absence of a coherent vision regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities.**

- A gap is also observed between institutional efforts to promote accessibility and the way in which political actors actually integrate this dimension into their public communication.

2.2. Specific Conclusions Regarding the Reflection of the Disability Dimension

- Of the 23 electoral candidates, 19 parties, blocs, or candidates have both a website and a Facebook page.
- 3 independent candidates have only a Facebook page.
- 1 candidate has neither a website nor a Facebook page.
- 17 (74%) have an electoral program (published and identified in the analysis).
- 6 (26%) have no electoral program or it was not found.
- 11 (61%) explicitly or tangentially mention disability in their programs (Figure 3).
- 7 (37%) make no mention of disability whatsoever (Figure 3).

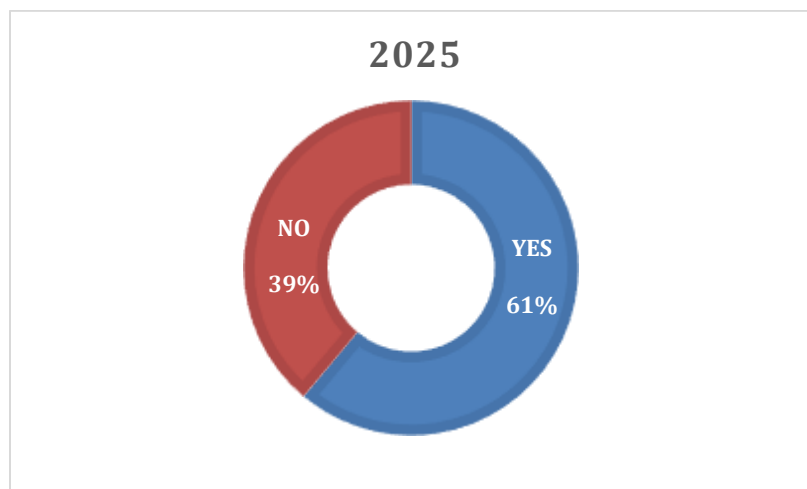


Figure 3. Mention of the disability dimension in the electoral programs of candidates in the Parliamentary Elections of September 28, 2025

- **Of the 11 candidates who explicitly mention disability in their program, 7 directly indicate the integration of persons with disabilities into various fields (education, schooling, social life, the labor market, etc.).**
- **Most electoral competitors have included provisions relating to pensions and benefits for persons with disabilities.**
- **The issue of accessibility (physical access and access to public services) appears in the platforms of 2 electoral candidates.**
- **The issue of deinstitutionalization is present in the platforms of 2 electoral candidates.**
- **Most electoral candidates have included in their program's activities providing assistance to persons with disabilities (subsidies, pensions, etc.).**

2.3. Recommendations Regarding the Reflection of the Disability Dimension in Electoral Programs

- **Electoral competitors are encouraged, in the future, to develop chapter-by-chapter text summaries of their electoral programs.**
- **To ensure the presentation of the electoral program in sign language and audio formats, with a direct link to YouTube, so that persons with hearing disabilities and those who are visually impaired can easily access the electoral offering.**
- **To create an adapted version of the electoral program in an "easy-to-read and easy-to-understand" format.**
- **The title of the electoral program should be clearly formulated, explicitly indicating for which type of elections it has been prepared. Currently, the websites of some electoral**

competitors use terms such as "political program," "popular program," "vision," or "theses," which creates confusion. Readers often discover only at the end that the document refers to elections that have already concluded.

- **De lege ferenda.** After registering in the electoral race, competitors should be required to submit to the Central Electoral Commission, in addition to their statutes, also their electoral programs. This practice would facilitate the identification of documents, especially given that the experience of the September 28, 2025 elections showed that in the case of 6 electoral competitors, programs could not be found.

3. Assessment of the Accessibility of Electoral Competitors' Websites

3.1. General Conclusions about the Website Accessibility Assessment

3.1.1. The Overall Level of WCAG Compliance of Websites is Very Low

The analysis of electoral competitors' websites for the 2025 Parliamentary Elections shows that the overall level of compliance with international web accessibility standards (WCAG) is low. Only a few parties achieved acceptable scores, such as the Party of Action and Solidarity (77%) or the European Social Democratic Party (71%), while the vast majority of websites (10 out of 14) fall below the 50% threshold. This demonstrates the lack of a systematic and consistent approach to digital accessibility. Given that technology is the primary channel of political communication, deficiencies in

information access lead to the indirect exclusion of persons with disabilities from public debates and electoral processes. Most political actors likely treat accessibility as a secondary matter, even though it represents a moral obligation and a key element for ensuring equal opportunities. Without corrective interventions, a significant portion of the electorate will not be able to benefit from equal access to information, which also affects the transparency and credibility of the electoral process.

3.1.2. Common Problems Across Most Websites

It is concerning that most accessibility issues identified recur consistently across almost all analyzed websites. The most frequent deficiencies include: the absence of accessible names for links and buttons, insufficient contrast between text and background, the lack of correct labels on form fields, and poor heading structure. Moreover, the use of ARIA attributes and landmarks is often incorrect, which does not facilitate but rather complicates navigation for screen reader users. Instead of providing a clear semantic structure, many pages transmit contradictory signals to assistive technologies, generating confusion and limiting access to content. This situation demonstrates the lack of technical expertise and accountability on the part of those managing the digital communications of the parties.

3.1.3. Lack of Accessibility-Specific Tools and Use of Inaccessible Documents

Another major conclusion is that none of the analyzed websites offer dedicated web accessibility tools. For example, features such as accessibility widgets or buttons (allowing contrast adjustment, text enlargement, or simplified navigation) – considered best practices

in the digital field – have not been implemented. Moreover, the published content frequently includes PDF-format documents that in many cases are not optimized for screen readers. Although not a widespread practice, some web pages publish essential documents in image format, making them completely inaccessible to persons with visual impairments. Such digital barriers prevent voters from accessing electoral programs, official press releases, or other public interest information. For the electoral process to be truly democratic and participatory, it is necessary for parties and candidates to ensure the publication of materials in a format accessible to all citizens, regardless of their abilities.

3.1.4. Accessibility for Persons with Hearing Disabilities and Those with Intellectual or Psycho-social Disabilities is Almost Entirely Absent

Video and audio content is not accompanied by subtitles or transcripts, and in some cases, there are no visual or textual alternatives to facilitate access for deaf persons. At the same time, texts published by parties are often dense, written in technical or bureaucratic language, difficult to understand for persons with cognitive difficulties. The lack of plain language versions, visual summaries, or a logical page structure leads to the indirect exclusion of large categories of citizens who are unable to access and understand electoral information. This situation contravenes WCAG standards and the principle of equal opportunities, reducing the transparency and trust in the electoral process.

3.2. Recommendations for Improving Website Accessibility

3.2.1. Electoral Competitors are Urged to Ensure the Accessibility of Official Websites

It is recommended that all parties, electoral blocs, and independent candidates ensure their websites comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1), level AA. Currently, the average website accessibility score is only 44%, indicating a low and uneven level of compliance. Adherence to the standards would eliminate recurring identified problems (links and buttons without accessible names, incorrectly structured headings, insufficient contrast, missing landmarks) and would facilitate access by persons with disabilities to electoral information.

3.2.2. Creation and Publication of Accessible Digital Content is Necessary

Electoral documents must be published in accessible formats, avoiding the use of inaccessible images or PDFs. PDF documents must be correctly tagged for screen readers, and visual materials must be accompanied by descriptive alternative text. It is also recommended to integrate accessibility widgets or buttons allowing users to adjust contrast, modify text size, and navigate in a simplified manner.

3.2.3. Greater Attention to Accessibility for Persons with Hearing, Intellectual, or Psycho-social Disabilities is Required

This includes the integration of subtitles, transcripts, and sign language interpretation for audiovisual materials, as well as the drafting of essential documents in plain and easy-to-understand

language, accompanied by visual summaries or infographics. The website must be logically structured, with clear headings, lists, and short paragraphs, to facilitate content navigation by all users.

3.2.4. Training of Technical Teams and Institutionalization of Web Accessibility Must be Treated as a Mandatory Requirement

Political parties must train their communication teams and web developers in digital accessibility. At the same time, the Central Electoral Commission should establish minimum mandatory accessibility requirements for the websites and online materials of electoral competitors. The implementation of a monitoring and reporting mechanism would strengthen transparency, prevent the exclusion of persons with disabilities, and guarantee the equal participation of all citizens in the electoral process.

4. Assessment of the Disability Dimension in the Activities of Electoral Competitors

4.1. Conclusions Regarding the Assessment

The actions proposed by competitors do not ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes, in the development of policies and programs – including those that directly concern them – in accordance with the principle "Nothing about us without us" from the Preamble of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This principle presupposes the simultaneous assurance of the following elements of participation: information, consultation, involvement, cooperation, monitoring and evaluation, including the empowerment of persons with disabilities.

The core values promoted through participation are:

- **Involvement of those who are affected by or interested in a particular decision in the decision-making process.**
- **Soliciting the opinions of participants at the stage of designing how they will participate.**
- **Providing the necessary information, including in an accessible and easy-to-understand format, to participants with different types of disability so that they can contribute effectively.**
- **Recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participant-persons with disabilities, including to decision-makers.**
- **Empowering the public, including persons with disabilities, in such a way that their contributions influence the decision.**
- **Communicating how the input of participants has affected the decision.**

4.2. Recommendations

To facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities and the organizations representing them in the process of developing electoral platforms, electoral competitors are recommended to take into account the following basic principles:

- **Transparency, including timely access by persons with disabilities and the organizations representing them to draft electoral platforms, as well as to all public interest documents relevant to the participation process.**
- **Impartiality, particularly concerning organizations representing the rights of persons with disabilities, as these have the right**

to act independently and to advocate for positions different from those of the authorities.

- **Openness and accessibility, since participation processes must be open and accessible to all, including persons with disabilities, based on an agreed framework for participation.**
- **Accountability and efficiency, whereby the participation of persons with disabilities and the organizations representing them must be result-oriented, in order to have a real impact on content, including making electoral competitors accountable to the public regarding consultation processes and reporting on outcomes.**
- **Non-discrimination, equal treatment and inclusion, in particular equal access for all citizens, including addressing the needs of persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged persons who wish to participate.**
- **The independence of organizations representing the rights of persons with disabilities, including refraining from requiring them to engage in decision-making processes or to advocate specific positions.**

Additionally, it is recommended that a series of additional principles guiding the process of civic participation of persons with disabilities and their representatives be respected, including commitment, recognition of rights and responsibilities, resources, allocation of sufficient time, recognition and feedback, and evaluation.

We encourage political entities to attract persons with disabilities into party activities, to make the spaces in which they operate accessible, and to contribute to informing society about their

activities in a format that is accessible and easy to understand for persons with different types of disability.

Electoral competitors are urged to ensure the accessibility of official websites. It is recommended that all parties, electoral blocs, and independent candidates ensure compliance of their websites with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1), level AA.

Electoral documents must be published in accessible formats, avoiding the use of inaccessible images or PDFs. PDF documents must be correctly tagged for screen readers, and visual materials must be accompanied by descriptive alternative text.

Increased attention must be paid to accessibility for persons with hearing disabilities and for those with intellectual and psycho-social disabilities: the inclusion of subtitles, transcripts, and sign language interpretation for audiovisual materials, as well as the drafting of essential documents in plain and easy-to-understand language, accompanied by visual summaries or infographics.

Electoral competitors are recommended to develop chapter-by-chapter text summaries of electoral platforms. They are also suggested to ensure the presentation of the electoral program in sign language and audio formats as well, with a direct link to YouTube, so that persons with hearing disabilities and those who are visually impaired can easily access the electoral offering. They should create an adapted version of the electoral program in an "easy-to-read and easy-to-understand" format. The title of the electoral program should be clearly formulated, explicitly indicating for which election it has been prepared.

After registering in the electoral race, competitors should be required to submit to the Central Electoral Commission, in addition

to their statutes, also their electoral programs. This practice would facilitate the identification of documents, especially given that the experience of the September 28, 2025 elections showed that in the case of 6 electoral competitors, programs could not be found.

5. Assessment of the Accessibility of Electoral Debates and Reflection of the Disability Dimension in Mass Media

- **The overall level of accessibility of televised electoral debates is low, with only formal compliance with the obligation regarding sign language interpretation.**
- **Only 3 television stations included a sign language interpreter, but with windows that were too small and peripherally placed, limiting the real accessibility for persons with hearing impairments.**
- **Most TV stations did not provide sign language interpretation, highlighting a direct violation of legal norms and a structural deficit of specialized human resources.**
- **The disability subject is reflected in the media with moderate frequency, primarily as a social issue.**
- **The tone and language used in press materials are generally correct, non-discriminatory, and professional, with positive accents on inclusion and respect for the rights of persons with disabilities.**
- **In online press and television, the subject is tackled predominantly from a civic angle, while on social networks the tone is more mobilizing and oriented toward raising awareness among young audiences.**

- **Journalists acknowledge the importance of the topic, but consistent coverage is obstructed by commercial considerations, editorial pressures, and limited resources for producing social content.**
- **There is a strong consensus regarding the need for training media professionals – both practicing and future journalists – for a more adequate and professional treatment of the disability subject.**
- **Online accessibility coverage was often incidental, inserted into broader articles about the electoral campaign, without being treated as a central topic, indicating a secondary perception of the theme in the media agenda.**
- **Persons with disabilities were rarely interviewed directly by the media, indicating a lack of authentic representation of their voices in the public sphere.**
- **On social networks, although there were innovative initiatives (TikTok, video explanations), these remained isolated and without editorial support from established newsrooms.**
- **Regional differences were identified: the local press more often addressed concrete issues of access to polling stations, but with limited resources and without in-depth analysis.**
- **There is an evident discrepancy between the well-structured normative framework on accessibility and its actual application, indicating a clear gap between official commitments and media reality.**

5.1. Recommendations for Effective Media Accessibility

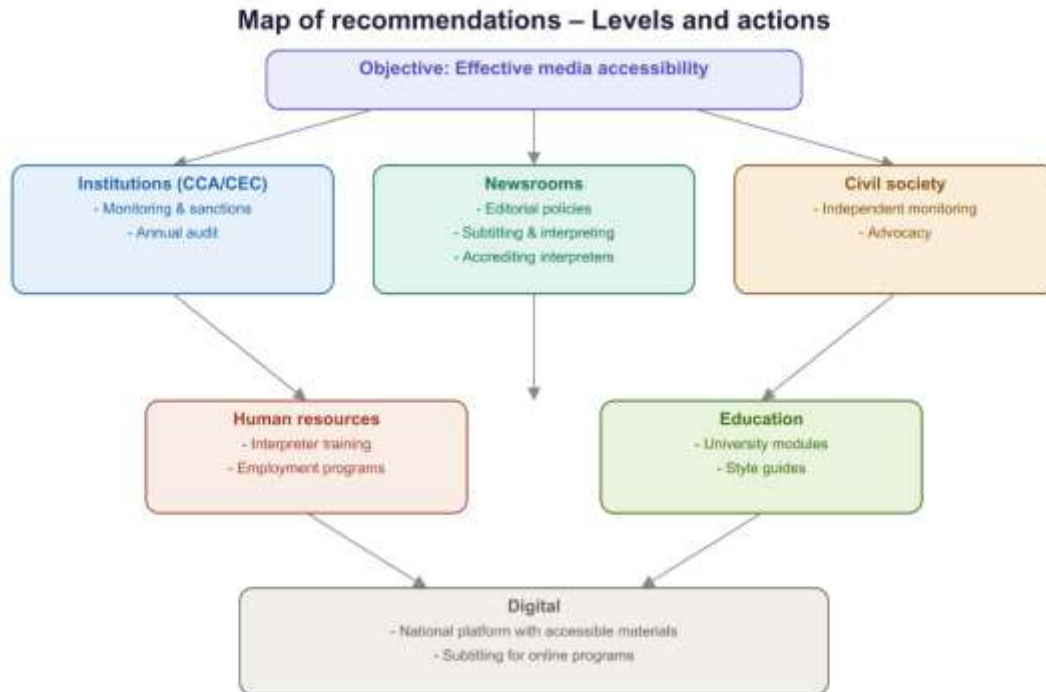


Figure 4. Map of Recommendations

- **All television stations must commit to full compliance with CCA Decision No. 61/2024, ensuring a visibly present sign language interpreter with the appropriate window size and positioning (1/3 of screen) according to standards.**
- **Development and implementation of special training and employment programs for sign language interpreters for broadcasters, as an essential resource for audiovisual accessibility.**
- **Broadcasters must consistently include the disability theme in their programs and editorial content to increase the visibility and social inclusion of persons with disabilities.**

- **Media institutions must develop and implement editorial policies that promote correct, respectful, and stereotype-free language in all materials concerning the disability dimension.**
- **The Central Electoral Commission and the responsible authorities should establish clear mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating, and sanctioning non-compliance with accessibility obligations within and outside the electoral process.**
- **Organization of practical training sessions, thematic workshops, and the development of style guides dedicated to active journalists, to improve the quality of coverage and avoid stereotypes.**
- **Mandatory introduction into journalism faculty curricula of modules on inclusive journalism, the rights of persons with disabilities, and best practices in accessible communication.**
- **Promotion of editorial and social campaigns proving that social topics, including disability, can generate interest, audience, and positive impact in society.**
- **The press in the Republic of Moldova has an essential role in shaping a correct and respectful attitude toward persons with disabilities, grounded in equality of rights, and journalistic efforts in this field must be supported and developed in the medium and long term.**
- **Creation of a permanent consultation mechanism between the CCA, broadcasters, and organizations of persons with disabilities to constantly evaluate the application of accessibility measures.**

- **Establishment of financial incentives or tax reductions for TV stations that fully comply with regulations and consistently introduce the accessibility theme in their programming.**
- **Development and periodic broadcasting of awareness video materials for the general public, explaining the importance of access to information for persons with disabilities.**
- **Encouragement of media content production (documentaries, reports, podcasts) created together with persons with disabilities, to foreground their direct experience.**
- **Creation of a support fund for regional and local television stations that face difficulties in hiring interpreters or in applying technical accessibility standards.**
- **Making subtitling mandatory for all electoral programs broadcast online by television stations, to extend access to persons with hearing impairments who do not follow classical TV.**
- **Implementation of external media accessibility audits, conducted annually by independent organizations, with subsequent publication of results in a national report.**
- **Integration of the accessibility theme into the official civic and electoral campaigns conducted by the CEC, so that information regarding the rights of persons with disabilities becomes a standard part of the electoral process.**
- **Creation of a national online platform with accessible explanatory materials (video with sign language interpreter and subtitles), always available to voters with disabilities.**

5.2. Final Conclusion: Media Accessibility as a Test of Democratic Credibility

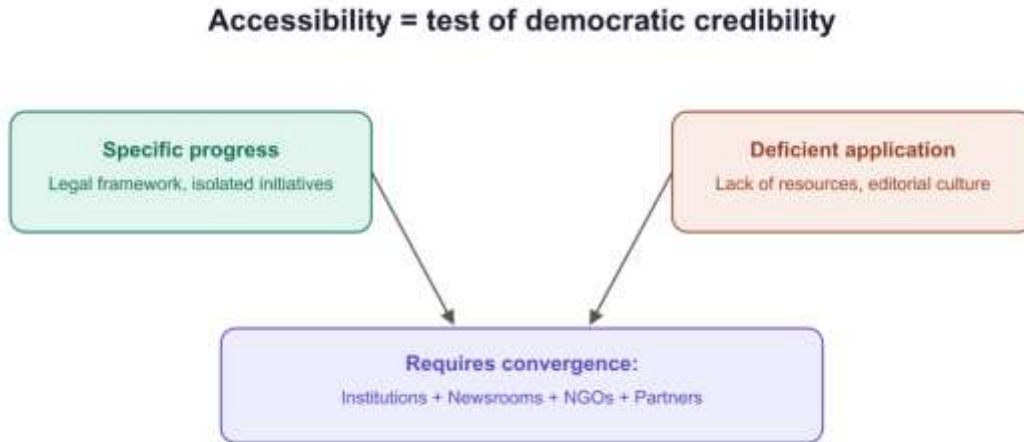


Figure 5. Accessibility = Test of Democratic Credibility

Media accessibility during electoral periods is not a mere technical detail or a bureaucratic formality. It constitutes a test of democratic credibility and alignment with European standards regarding the respect for fundamental rights.

The Parliamentary Elections of September 28, 2025 demonstrated, on the one hand, the existence of a well-structured normative framework, harmonized with international provisions, but on the other hand, also demonstrated the fragility of implementation mechanisms.

Specific progress – a few television stations that introduced sign language interpretation or online portals that addressed the disability theme – is insufficient to compensate for structural deficiencies.

The lack of specialized human resources, the absence of an editorial culture of inclusion, and the perception of accessibility as a peripheral and inconvenient task keep the topic at an insufficient level.

A mature democracy is measured not only by the number of competing parties or by the technical correctness of the electoral process, but also by how it manages to include and represent the vulnerable categories of society.

As long as persons with disabilities cannot follow electoral debates on equal terms and cannot form an informed opinion, the democracy of the Republic of Moldova remains incomplete and vulnerable.

This reality also raises a strategic question: can the Republic of Moldova claim to be consolidating a European and democratic path if it leaves in the shadows the rights of a significant portion of its population?

Beyond the legal aspect, accessibility is a test of trust for citizens and an indicator closely observed by the country's external partners.

Change is possible, however, and depends on:

- the editorial will of newsrooms, which must understand that accessibility does not diminish the quality of programs but enriches it;**
- the firmness of regulatory institutions, which must not be limited to issuing decisions, but must apply sanctions and stimulate good practices;**
- the involvement of civil society, which can maintain public pressure through monitoring and advocacy;**
- the support of international partners, who can offer expertise, resources, and models of success from other European states.**

External pressure from the European Union, the growing interest of journalists in training, and the emergence of innovative initiatives in the digital environment create a unique opportunity for change. If these forces converge, accessibility can move from the status of a formal obligation to a daily, visible, and functional reality.

In conclusion, media accessibility must be viewed not as a concession, but as

a democratic duty and an indicator of state modernization. The Republic of Moldova has the opportunity to demonstrate that it is prepared to treat all its citizens as equal participants in public life. Achieving this would mean not only a victory for persons with disabilities, but also a victory for the entire society, which would thereby confirm the maturation of Moldovan democracy.

6. Conclusions of the Disability Dimension Electoral Observation Mission Regarding the Setup of Party Headquarters and Polling Stations

Monitoring of the campaign and election day shows, consistently and from multiple sources, that the right to vote of persons with disabilities remains predominantly formal rather than effective. Although a few specific initiatives were recorded (e.g., the PAS program in Braille, some live broadcasts, or a functional ramp in a few party offices), the overall picture is one of limited accessibility and inconsistent inclusion.

During the analyzed period (September 2025), only 3 out of 55 party offices were functionally accessible, most events were held in spaces with evident architectural barriers, and electoral materials – offline

and online – were not systematically adapted for persons with visual, hearing, or intellectual disabilities.

On election day, numerous polling stations presented improper ramps, narrow doors, high thresholds, unadapted voting booths, and inaccessible restrooms; assistive equipment was temporarily missing or incorrectly used (for example, the stencil envelope sent with the mobile ballot box), and confidentiality was sometimes compromised in residential centers.

The human dimension confirms the same conclusion: electoral bureau members generally acted in good faith, but lacked sufficient practical training in interacting with persons with disabilities, which led to procedural hesitations and discriminatory language situations. In parallel, the ban on transporting voters, unaccompanied by a public adapted transport mechanism, further limited participation, especially in rural areas.

At the data level, collection is incomplete: other types of disabilities (intellectual, mental, multiple) are not recorded, and the place of voting (at the polling station or via mobile ballot box) is not noted. Furthermore, accessibility is often assessed intuitively by observers without technical expertise, generating inaccurate reporting. Without standardized indicators and a preventive infrastructure assessment, problems are discovered only on election day and cannot be resolved in time.

Overall, the report confirms that persons with disabilities demonstrate civic will and seek ways to participate, but are systematically impeded by physical, informational, organizational, and attitudinal barriers. A few positive examples (including two visible candidacies) show that change is possible, but without a unified approach – encompassing infrastructure adaptation,

accessible communication, practical training of electoral bureau members (EBM), adapted transport mechanisms, and rigorous data collection – equal participation remains an exception rather than a rule.

6.1. Recommendations Regarding Polling Station Setup

- **All polling stations should be set up at ground level or equipped with compliant ramps with a reduced inclination angle, handrails, and non-slip surfaces, to ensure safe access for persons with reduced mobility.**
- **Access doors must be sufficiently wide, without high thresholds or obstacles, to allow wheelchair passage.**
- **Restrooms must be adapted for persons with disabilities: equipped with support bars, wide doors, and sufficient maneuvering space.**
- **Access routes to polling stations must be clearly, visibly, and adequately illuminated, to facilitate orientation for persons with visual impairments and/or reduced mobility.**
- **Each polling station must permanently have at least two stencil envelopes for voters with visual impairments, to guarantee the possibility of independent voting.**
- **Each polling station must have a mobile voting booth adapted for wheelchair users, which can be used by teams with the mobile ballot box without depriving other voters of this right.**
- **A national procedure must be developed regarding the provision of adapted transport for voters with disabilities, particularly from rural areas, to enable them to safely reach polling stations without violating legislation on voter transportation.**

- **The infrastructure of public buildings used as polling stations must be adapted and modernized to meet the minimum accessibility standards provided by law.**
- **A preventive accessibility assessment of all polling stations must be conducted before each election, with sufficient time to remedy identified issues.**
- **Clear national indicators on physical accessibility must be introduced to allow comparison of inclusion levels between districts and localities.**
- **Local public authorities must be involved in the process of adapting electoral infrastructure, including through the allocation of necessary funds for ramp construction, restroom adaptation, and installation of visual and tactile signage.**
- **All accessibility equipment (ramps, mobile booths, stencil envelopes) must be functional, correctly installed, and available throughout the entire election day.**
- **Technical staff and electoral bureau members must be trained on the correct installation and use of accessibility equipment, to prevent situations where these remain unused or incorrectly installed.**
- **The data collection system regarding the participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process must be improved by including in electoral bureau reports information about types of disabilities (including intellectual, mental, and multiple) and about the place where the vote was cast – at the polling station or via mobile ballot box – to allow a complete and well-founded analysis of the real degree of accessibility and inclusion.**

- **A rapid reporting mechanism for accessibility problems on election day must be created, to enable immediate intervention and the removal of barriers preventing the participation of voters with disabilities.**
- **All political parties, local authorities, and the Central Electoral Commission must consistently apply the principle of "equal access for all" in the setup and management of the electoral process.**

The right to vote is a fundamental right and a pillar of democracy. For it to be real and not merely theoretical, joint efforts are required from the authorities, political parties, the mass media, and civil society.

At the same time, persons with disabilities play a decisive role: only through their active participation at the polling stations and in electoral processes can the stereotypes and prejudices that still persist be dismantled. The presence of these voters at the polls sends a clear message that they are equal citizens, with full rights, who must be respected and included in all decisions concerning the future of the country.

General Conclusions and Recommendations

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The integrated analysis of the five monitored dimensions – infrastructure, electoral programs, web, mass media, and participation – confirms that the Republic of Moldova has built a solid normative framework, but its real application remains partial, fragmentary, and uneven.

General Findings

Physical accessibility of polling stations is limited: only 5 polling stations among those monitored had fully compliant access ramps. The lack of standardized ramps, accessible restrooms, and visible signage affects real participation.

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

Media coverage remains superficial. The disability theme is rarely presented, often in general terms and with victimization overtones. Public television stations only partially complied with legal obligations regarding sign language interpretation.

Political parties treat inclusion as a marginal issue. Of the 23 analyzed electoral competitors, only 11 explicitly or tangentially included the disability theme, and only 7 treat the integration of persons with disabilities in fields such as education, work, and social life.

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

The participation of persons with disabilities in voting increased slightly (approximately 55% according to the CEC), but remains below the national average. The main barriers identified are the lack of adapted transport, inaccessible information, and discriminatory attitudes.

Detailed Thematic Conclusions

Physical dimension: CEC Regulation 1187/2023 is well formulated, but without a sanction mechanism. Local public authorities lack dedicated funds for accessibility adaptation of polling stations.

Digital dimension: An accessibility culture is absent. Parties lack IT specialists or consultants specialized in inclusive design. Although the CEC's electoral platform complies with WCAG standards, parties do not follow suit.

Media dimension: The Audiovisual Council (CA) has a regulatory framework (Decision 61/2024), but implementation is chaotic. Commercial media lacks resources for interpretation and subtitling, and public television stations have no dedicated budgets.

Institutional dimension: No political formation includes persons with disabilities in governing bodies. The accessibility theme is absent from statutes, internal regulations, and organizational development plans.

Strategic Conclusion

The Republic of Moldova has advanced legislatively, but not operationally. Without dedicated budgets and clear institutional responsibilities, the rights of persons with disabilities risk remaining merely a declarative objective. The next electoral cycle must be centered on implementation, not just on regulation.

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

General Recommendations

- 7. Institutionalization of accessibility: each institution involved in the electoral process (CEC, CA, APL) must have an annual accessibility plan with measurable indicators and a dedicated budget.**
- 8. A National Electoral Accessibility Fund, constituted from budgetary contributions and international donors, transparently managed by the CEC, dedicated to the setup of polling stations, digital adaptation, and personnel training.**
- 9. Annual reporting mechanism: all authorities and parties must present a report on implemented accessibility measures, and the CEC and CA must publish a consolidated report.**

Sectorial Recommendations

For the Central Electoral Commission (CEC)

- To integrate accessibility criteria into all public tenders regarding electoral infrastructure and equipment.**
- To include training modules on interaction with persons with disabilities in the training sessions for electoral bureau members.**
- To ensure the presence of assistive kits (magnifying glasses, voting stencils, audio guides) in all polling stations.**
- To develop a Visual Guide to Polling Station Accessibility, to be transmitted to local public authorities.**

For the Audiovisual Council (CA)

- **To apply sanctions for non-compliance with Decision No. 61/2024.**
- **To create a special budgetary line for audiovisual accessibility.**
- **To publish annually a list of compliant and non-compliant stations.**
- **To support the development of a common national interpretation and subtitling service, available to all broadcasters.**

For the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection

- **To integrate electoral accessibility into the National Inclusion Strategy 2026–2030.**
- **To ensure continuous training of civil servants in the field of disability.**
- **To develop a data collection system regarding the participation of persons with disabilities in elections.**

For Political Parties

- **Introduction of a "disability quota" – minimum 5% of budgetary subsidies for adapting websites, materials, and events.**
- **Adoption of an Internal Accessibility Policy and its inclusion in statutes.**
- **Publication of electoral programs in accessible formats (DOCX, HTML, audio, digital Braille).**
- **Attracting and promoting persons with disabilities in governing bodies.**

For Mass Media

- **Development of an Editorial Guide on Inclusive Communication.**
- **Training of journalists in the field of disability.**
- **Promotion of a discourse based on rights and participation, not on compassion.**

For Civil Society and External Partners

- **Continuation of independent monitoring of electoral cycles.**
- **Launch of an annual accessibility barometer.**
- **Development of pilot projects (e.g., accessible online platforms, materials in simplified language).**
- **Technical support for authorities in applying WCAG 2.1 and CRPD standards.**

Legislative and Public Policy Recommendations

10. **Amending the Electoral Code to introduce mandatory minimum accessibility criteria for the validation of polling stations.**
11. **Adoption of a national framework of standards for accessible design in IT and public infrastructure.**
12. **Inclusion of accessibility indicators in national CRPD implementation reports.**
13. **Creation of a national accessibility coordinator function within the Government of the Republic of Moldova.**

Final Recommendations

- **Revision of the websites of political parties, first and second-level local public authorities, central authorities, state**

institutions and agencies, and their accessibility according to international standards for web accessibility – WCAG.

- **Development of electoral programs and materials by electoral competitors in accessible formats for different types of disabilities (sign language, Braille, audio, easy-to-read and easy-to-understand, etc.).**
- **Organization by persons with disabilities and civil society organizations (CSOs) promoting their interests of advocacy actions directed at representatives of political formations/electoral competitors, with the aim of placing disability-related topics on their political agenda (election simulation exercises, "user safari," meetings at party headquarters, voter meetings, public debates in electoral TV programs, etc.).**
- **Assessment of the accessibility of all polling stations based on a common assessment instrument applied by the CEC, by organizations of persons with disabilities, and by organizations active in the disability field, and the inclusion of assessment results on the Accessibility Map.**
- **Training of electoral officials on special needs and the correct provision of necessary support to persons with disabilities during the electoral period, including on election day.**
- **Ensuring the translation into sign language of CEC announcements on election day and the online transmission of announcements on channels dedicated to persons with hearing disabilities.**
- **Media coverage of the accessibility issue as a precondition for the realization of other rights in the buildings where polling stations are located.**

- **Involvement of persons with disabilities as national observers in parliamentary elections.**
- **Implementation of information campaigns/civic and electoral education activities for persons with disabilities, promoting proactive participation in public and political life.**
- **Focusing on qualitative rather than only quantitative indicators, since the aim is to promote changes in perception and mentality, based on respect for the rights and equal participation of persons with disabilities.**
- **Going forward, more active encouragement is needed for the press and electoral competitors to treat the disability theme not merely as part of a general social discourse, but as a distinct priority linked to equal opportunities and the full participation of persons with disabilities in political and social life.**

Final Finding

Inclusion is not a cost, but an investment in democracy. Persons with disabilities must 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.