

# Disability and Belonging to Different Groups in Ireland’s Local and European Elections 2024



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Easy Read Version created by Emma Burns1 using Photo Symbols.

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# Important words in this report

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| People standing in front of voting booths | **Voting** is a way for a group of people to make a choice.  When a group of people vote it is called an **election**. |
| A hand holding a pen over a ballot paper listing local council election candidates with their names, addresses, party symbols, and checkboxes. | A **local election** is when people vote for local councillors. Councillors represent people in local government. |
| A blue ballot box with a European sign on it. A vote for the European election is going into the box. | A **European election** is when people vote for Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). MEPs represent people in the European Parliament. |
| A group of election candidates from different backgrounds. | **Candidates** are the people who want to be elected. |
| Two individuals, one knocking on a green door and the other holding a clipboard. | A **campaign** is the work that candidates do right before an election to let people know who they are and to get people to vote for them. Campaigns can involve putting up posters, knocking on people’s doors and talking with them, or talking on TV, on the radio or in the newspaper. |

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| Group of five diverse individuals with disabilities smiling and standing together. | **Disability** is when a person with a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory difference faces barriers that stop them from having full rights. In this report we use the words **disabled people** to talk about people with disabilities. |
| A man smiling and pointing at himself, wearing a black beanie and jacket, with blurred silhouettes of people in the background. | **Identity** is all the things about a person that combine to make them who they are. It can include their nationality, gender, age, religion, whether they have a disability or not, and other things. There are disabled people from every identity group. |
| **S big mix of disabled people from different groups** | In Ireland, a set of laws called The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 protect **nine different identity groups.** These are gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community. |
| A Black woman sitting in a wheelchair and a young Deaf gay person. | **Intersectionality** is when different parts of a person’s identity cross over in ways that affect their lives. It means they belong to different groups.  An example of a disabled person with an intersecting identity could be a woman with a learning disability, a young Deaf LGBTQ+ person, or a Traveller who is a wheelchair user. |

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A person wearing a Pride t-shirt is giving a thumbs up. Pride symbols are usually in rainbow colours. They show support for the rights of LGBTQ+ people. | **LGBTQ+** means a person who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer. The **+** means it includes lots of other identities too. |
| Woman holding scales labelled 'Right' and 'Wrong'. | **Discrimination** is when someone is treated unfairly because of their identity. |
| Four individuals standing in a row. Each one looks as if they are upset, sad or angry. | **Marginalisation** means the ways that different communities are discriminated against. When we use this word in this report, we are talking about how a group of people is being treated rather than an individual person. |
| Four diverse individuals, three standing and one in a wheelchair, raising their hands in front of speech bubbles. | A **Disabled Peoples Organisation or DPO** is an organisation for disabled people that is run by disabled people, has members who are mostly people with disabilities, and is not part of a government. Disability services and charities that aren’t run by disabled people are not DPOs. |
| Three individuals, one in a wheelchair, stand beside a 'UN Disability Rights' sign, expressing solidarity and empowerment. | The **CRPD** is the short name for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is an agreement between countries to guarantee the human rights of people with disabilities. Most countries have agreed to the CRPD, including Ireland. |

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A group of election candidates from different backgrounds. | This report is about disabled people from different groups who wanted to be elected in the local and European elections in 2024. |
| Three individuals, one in a wheelchair, stand beside a 'UN Disability Rights' sign, expressing solidarity and empowerment. | The CRPD says that **disabled people have the right to be elected** and to take part in political life. Countries have to work to make sure that all disabled people can equally take part in elections. |

# Introduction

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| Logo of the National Disability Authority | This research was funded by the National Disability Authority (NDA). The NDA is an independent organisation that advises the Government on disability policy in Ireland. |
| Photo of Aoife Price. She is wearing a black jacket and red top. She has dark hair and is smiling. | The research was done by Dr Aoife Price and Dr Vivian Rath. |
| Photo of Vivan Rath. He is wearing a grey tween jacket and a bow tie. He has brown hair and is smiling. | They are disabled researchers and activists who are interested in politics and disability. |
| Photo of Eilionóir Flynn. She is wearing a black top. She has glasses and long brown hair. | They worked with Professor Eilionóir Flynn of the Centre for Disability Law and Policy at the University of Galway. |
| Photo of Emma Burns. She has dark hair and is wearing a black top. | Emma Burns of the Centre for Disability and Policy made the Easy Read report. |
| A group of election candidates from different backgrounds. | The researchers wanted to know more about the experiences of disabled election candidates from different groups in the Irish local and European elections (2024). There was very little research done on this topic before this. |
| A photo of the Dáil with a red X over it. This shows we are not talking about the election of TDs. | The research team did not include the general election. It took place too late in 2024 to be included. They would like to study general elections in the future. |

# Literature Review

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A selection of reports about disability. | This part of the report tells you what we learned from books and research about disabled election candidates who belong to different groups. We looked at books and reports about things that happen in Ireland and in other countries. |
| A group of election candidates from different backgrounds. | Most of the books and research only talked about disabled people running for election. Most did not talk about disabled people from other groups running for election. We did find some research that talked about disabled women running for election. |
| A group of people seen through a  magnifying glass | We learned three main things from the books we read.   1. We need a bigger mix of disabled people to run for election. 2. We need more research to understand what happens when disabled people from different groups run for election. 3. When we make it easier for disabled people from different groups to run for election then we make things better for everyone. |

### Having a bigger mix of disabled people run for election

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A big mix of disabled people from different groups | Reports show that there are more people than ever from different groups running for election in Ireland and around the world. For example, we see more women running for election, and people who come from different countries running for election too. |
|  | This is good because there is a big mix of people living in every country. Politicians should represent the big mix of people who live in each country. |
| A group of election candidates from different backgrounds. | Disabled people are also part of all these different groups. This means that when we see disabled people running for election they should also belong to different groups. |
| Three people, two in wheelchairs, holding megaphones and smiling. | The disabled people from countries like the UK, Canada and Indonesia who have run for election are usually people who did a lot of disability advocacy before getting involved in politics. |

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
|  | Sometimes family members of disabled people run for election too. While this can be good, we still need to work on making sure more disabled people from different groups can get elected. |
| A group of disabled men. | When disabled people start to get involved in politics it is often more likely to be men with physical disabilities who run for election. We need to do more to support disabled women and disabled people from different groups running for election. |

### More research to find out what happens in elections

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A voter is giving the thumbs down to a Black woman election candidate. | Some research on disabled women running for elections in the UK shows that voters think they aren’t good enough for the job. People often treat them as if they are not the same as other candidates. |
| Two people are bullying a Black woman. | Disabled women running for election also feel like they stand out from the crowd. Sometimes this helps them to get elected. Other times they feel treated unfairly because people think they are too different. |
| A woman in a hospital bed. | Disabled women running for election in the UK told researchers they had to work twice as hard as other candidates to get elected. One woman worked so hard in her campaign that she ended up in hospital. |
| Man in a dress shirt and tie making a shushing gesture with his finger over his lips. | Sometimes disabled people from different groups don’t like to talk about their disability when they are running for election. They might even hide their disability or not tell people about it. |
| 3 election candidates looked at through a magnifying glass. | We need more research to understand what it is like for disabled people from different groups to run for election. This will help us to see what needs to be changed to make it easier for them to run for election. |

### Making it easier for disabled people from different groups to run for election

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| Entrance to a train or subway car with open doors and a metal ramp. A woman is smiling while pushing a baby in a stroller. | Some of the things that would help disabled people running for election would help people in other groups as well. If election events are in accessible buildings that is easy for parents with buggies to be there too. |
| A woman looking unhappy in a noisy pub. | Sometimes election meetings are held in pubs. A lot of pubs are not accessible for disabled people. People who don’t drink alcohol because of their religion might prefer not to go to a meeting in a pub. |
| Trainer at a podium with students raising hands in classroom. | When organisations are training people from different groups on how to get elected, they need to include disabled people in their work. For example, groups that help women to get elected should make sure they are helping LGBTQ+ women, disabled women and Traveller women to get elected too. |
| A group of disabled people seen through a  magnifying glass | It is important to include disabled people in all research about people from different groups getting elected. When we do research on disabled people getting elected, we should also check how many people from different groups are running for election. We need to ask more questions to understand what this is like for them. |

# Irish Context

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A map of the island of Ireland | This part of the research describes disability, other identities and population in Ireland. Population is how many people live in a country. |
| Group of five diverse individuals with disabilities smiling and standing together. | There are 1,109,557 disabled people in Ireland. This is 22% of the total population.  There are slightly more disabled women (52%) than disabled men in Ireland (48%). This is about the same as for non-disabled people. |
| A diverse group of people smiling, including one person in a wheelchair with a service dog. | 87% of people are White Irish or other White background. Irish Travellers make up 0.6% of the population. Black or Black Irish people make up 1% of the population. Asian or Asian Irish people are 3.2% of the population. |
| Two women are holding hands. | We don’t have information on sexual orientation or gender identity. |
| **A big mix of disabled people from different groups** | This information shows that Ireland has a large number of disabled people, but we don’t know how many disabled people belong to other identity groups. |

## Rules about Elections

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A graphic showing a map of Ireland, a rule book and an sign that means over 18s only. | Ireland used to have laws that could stop some disabled people from standing for election or voting, but some new laws have changed that.    There are no rules that could stop people from other groups from standing for election.  For local and European elections, candidates must be **over 18 and live in Ireland**. |
| A woman is standing beside 3 men. | Some countries have a **quota system** for the election of people from marginalised groups. A quota means there must be a set number of candidates for that group. Ireland doesn’t have a quota system for any groups for the local or European elections. |
| A burlap sack filled with 20 euro banknotes, featuring a large Euro symbol on the front. | Some **rules about money** can make it harder for disabled candidates to take part in elections. Candidates have to pay a deposit (€100 for local candidates and €1800 for European candidates). Candidates in local elections can’t claim back expenses like accommodation or additional childcare costs. |
| Photo showing a bus, accessible taxi, a black cab and a train. | In Ireland, the State does not give any funds to support disabled people to stand for election. Disabled people are more likely to live in poverty and often have extra costs that other candidates don’t have, like transport. |

## Election timeframe

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A clock showing an urgent sign. | The local and European elections in Ireland took place on 7 June 2024. Candidates had only 2 weeks to do the paperwork that allows them to become a candidate. They had 6 weeks to campaign. Disabled candidates often need more time to prepare their campaigns. |

## Abuse in elections

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A group of election candidates from different backgrounds. | The 2024 local elections had more candidates from **racial and ethnic minorities** than ever before in Ireland. A racial or ethnic minority is a community like Travellers or Black or Asian Irish people. |
| Two people are bullying a Black woman. | There were reports of abuse against women and racial or ethnic minority candidates and their teams. The research team didn’t find any reports of abuse against disabled candidates in this election. |
| Two people are bullying a gay couple. | Lots of different research shows that abuse in political life is a problem that happens all the time. Women, LGBTQ+ and ethnic minority candidates are most at risk, including disabled people from other groups. |
| A man has his finger on his lips and is saying sssh. | Fear of abuse causes other problems, like candidates quitting or being afraid to talk about some topics. |

## Action plans for different groups

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A picture of a document with the word 'Plan' on the front. Inside, it describes what the government plans to do about a particular problem. | Most of the government action plans are out of date. The newer ones have some good ideas about supporting people from different groups to stand for election. |
| Trainer at a podium with students raising hands in classroom. | The National Action Plan Against Racism 2023-2027 says it will give training for people from minority ethnic communities who want to run for election. |
| Photo of  Senator Eileen Flynn at the Oireachtas. She was the first Traveller woman to become a Senator. | The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028 says it will support Travellers and Roma to run as election candidates and that it will support Traveller and Roma women to become leaders in politics. |

# Methodology

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A group of election candidates from different backgrounds. | The research team wanted to find out about the experiences of disabled people with intersecting identities who ran as election candidates in the local and EU elections in Ireland. |

## Research Plan

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A group of people doing research together | The team chose to do the research following a **human rights-based disability research** plan. This means that:  1. The research was led by voices of disabled people  2. The research is about a human rights problem that disabled people have.  3. The results of the research are given back to disabled people. |
| A close up of a stamp which reads APPROVED | The Research Ethics Committee at the University of Galway checked that the research was safe to do. |
| A logo showing a file with someone's personal information and a padlock | The research team checked that all of the information they got would be stored safely. Their plan was double checked by the Data Protection Officer at the University of Galway. |

## Literature Review

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A magnifying glass over several folders | First the team did a literature review. A literature review is when the research team reads the books and reports that were written before about the problem they are researching. |
| A person sitting at a desk with a computer | They searched for reports in online libraries using the words “intersectionality”, “disability”, “candidature”, and “marginalisation”.  The literature review for this report showed that there has not been a lot of research with disabled election candidates with intersecting identities. |
| Two people in a video call. | The research team decided to do two types of online interview. People who took part chose a fake name to protect their privacy.  The first type of interview was with disabled people with intersecting identities. They were asked about their experiences of being election candidates. |
| Person in checkered jacket in front of a laptop with participants in a virtual meeting on the screen. | The second type of interview was with different organisations. They gave their views on what was hard for disabled people from different groups running for election, and what helped. |

## Interviews with election candidates

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A group of election candidates from different backgrounds. | To take part in the research, people had to:   * Be a disabled person * Be over 18 years of age * Be a candidate in the local or EU elections in Ireland in 2024 * Have at least one other intersecting identity. |
| A research consent form. | Eleven people were invited to take part. Seven agreed to be interviewed. Five of these were disabled women and two were disabled LGBTQ+ men. |
| A hand holding a pen over a ballot paper listing local council election candidates with their names, addresses, party symbols, and checkboxes. | All of the people interviewed were local election candidates. The research team couldn’t find an EU election candidate who was a disabled person with an intersecting identity. |
| A close up of a magnifying glass | It was hard to find people to interview. Very few disabled people run for election. Many disabled people do not talk in public about their disability. It was even harder to find disabled people who belonged to different groups. |
| A group of women shaking hands | The team found people to talk to by searching online to find disabled candidates. People we spoke to recommended other disabled people we could talk to. |

## Interviews with organisations

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| Trainer at a podium with students raising hands in classroom. | The research team talked to organisations working with different groups like women and Travellers and to organisations that train people to run for election.  Nine people took part in the interviews from eight different organisations.  In total, 16 people took part in the research. |

## Data analysis

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A group of people looking at a research plan. | All the information from the interviews was gathered together. The research team worked together to find out what views were shared and what views were different between the different people they spoke to. |

# Findings and Analysis

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A group of diverse disabled people posing for a photo | There were seven candidates. Two ran for Party A, two ran for Party B, one ran for Party C, one ran for Party D, and one was an independent candidate.  Two of the seven candidates were elected, including the independent candidate. |
| A group of Black women posing for a photo | The research team spoke to women’s organisations, organisations working with LGBTQ+ people, organisations working with people who have come to Ireland from different countries and Traveller women. |
| Trainer at a podium with students raising hands in classroom. | Two political education and training organisations took part in interviews. Both of these groups worked to get women candidates elected.  Two DPOs were interviewed. One works with disabled women. One works with disabled people in general. |

## Deciding to stand for election

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| Two people holding climate action signs. | Most of the candidates were involved in politics from a young age. Some had been in political parties. Others were part of disability advocacy or other action groups. |
| A group of people are standing behind a woman. They are her friends and supporters. | Some people felt they had to run for election because they had supports that other disabled people didn’t have. An example was having support from family or a political party. |
| A voter is giving the thumbs down to a Black woman election candidate. | Some people said that it can be hard for disabled people to get involved in politics. The way politics works is not very disability-friendly. It can be hard for people from other groups like women, Travellers, Black people and others to get elected too. |

## Election Campaigns

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| **A big mix of disabled people from different groups** | Everyone agreed it was good to have more disabled people from different groups running for election. |
| A disabled person is sitting on a chair. Two non-disabled people are standing up and talking over their head. | Many of the candidates said that election campaigns are not accessible. They had problems with election posters and taking part in debates. It was hard for some candidates to get their message out to everyone. |
| A group of people is shouting abuse at a Black disabled woman. | Some people had bad attitudes to disabled candidates from different groups. Politicians can get a lot of abuse and sometimes this is worse for disabled people, women, LGBTQ+ people and other groups. |
| A burlap sack filled with 20 euro banknotes, featuring a large Euro symbol on the front. | It costs a lot of money to run for election. Disabled people and people from different groups might need to spend more money on things like transport and childcare. |
| A man in a wheelchair is holding a sign to say he disagrees with something. | Some people did not have a lot of support to help them to campaign. One candidate talked about how most of her friends were disabled and had the same problems she did with access, so it was hard for them to help her. |
| A group of people are standing behind a woman. They are her friends and supporters. | Some people had lots of support from their political party, family and friends.  Other people wanted more support from political parties and organisations that represent different groups like women and disabled people. |
| A man has his finger on his lips and is saying sssh. | Some candidates did not talk about their disability at all in the election.  Other people felt they had to explain a lot about their disability even if they didn’t really want to. |
| A man and his son are standing together. The father is an election candidate. | Family members of disabled people running for election can also be good, but it is not the same as disabled people doing it themselves. |

# Discussion

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A picture of the same woman 3 times. She is agreeing, disagreeing, and saying that she is not sure. | The people we talked to agreed on a lot of things that disabled people and people from other groups need to run as election candidates.  There were a few things people we talked to disagreed on or were not sure about. |
| A map of Ireland. | We also talk about how Ireland is different from the other countries we know about where disabled people from different groups run for election. |

## What people agree on

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A person being interviewed by a person holding a microphone | Disabled candidates from different groups need support with money, help with organising their campaign, training to become a candidate, and help with talking to the media. |
| A diverse group of women from different backgrounds. | Support for disabled candidates needs to include people who belong to different groups, like disabled women, disabled Travellers and others. |

## What people were not sure about

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A man thinking. | Some people were not sure where exactly the support for disabled people from different groups should come from. |
| The official logo of the government of Ireland and the logos of the main Irish political parties. | People had different ideas about this. Some said the government should do most of the work. Others said political parties should do most of the work. |
| A group of people sitting in chairs and having a discussion. | Some said they wanted to see organisations working with different groups like women, disabled people and Travellers do a lot more work. |
| A person holding up his hand saying stop. | Some people and organisations are worried that people think bad things about disability. They think this might stop disabled people from different groups running for elections. Others did not talk about this. |

## How Ireland is different from other countries

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A group of disabled people protesting with a People First sign. | In other countries, many disabled people get involved in politics because they have experience of disability advocacy. Only one of the seven candidates we spoke to got involved in politics because of disability. |
| Two people holding climate action signs. | Most of the people we spoke to got involved in politics in school or college politics, through their families, through workers unions, family, or other campaign groups. |
| A map of Ireland. | We think this difference in Ireland might be because we have very few disabled people’s organisations (DPOs). Most of Ireland’s DPOs do not have a big mix of disabled people from different groups like disabled Travellers or disabled Black people in them. |
| Photograph of Leinster House in Dublin. | DPOs in Ireland can work on getting a bigger mix of disabled members from different groups. They can also help their members to run for election in future. |

# Conclusions and Recommendations

## What we learned from doing this research

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A form for gathering personal information. | Information on the types of people running for election from different groups is not collected when a person becomes an election candidate. |
| Two men in formal attire, smiling and pointing at each other. | Some candidates said being part of different groups helped them to get on well with lots of different people. |
| A person in a suit with a badge  AI-generated content may be incorrect. | Many organisations we talked to did not think about disability when doing their work. This was not on purpose. They said they will try to do better in future. |

## Limits of the research

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A close up of a magnifying glass | It was hard to find disabled election candidates from different groups. Some people don’t talk about their disability or don’t talk about the other groups they belong to. |
| A woman and a gay couple. | The only two different groups this research found were disabled women and disabled LGBTQ+ people. This tells us that there is not a big mix of people in Irish politics. |

## Future research

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A magnifying glass showing a big groups of different kinds of disabled people. | We would like to know more about how people get involved in politics.  We would like organisations to include more disabled people and other groups in their work with election candidates. |

## Recommendations

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A signpost pointing in lots of different directions. | We came up with recommendations for government, for political parties, and for advocacy organisations that are not part of government. |

### *Recommendations for Government*

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A magnifying glass showing a big groups of different kinds of disabled people. | The government should collect information from election candidates about disability and whether they are part of other groups.  This information will help Ireland to see if we are getting a bigger mix of people running for election. |
| A burlap sack filled with 20 euro banknotes, featuring a large Euro symbol on the front. | Disabled candidates from different groups should be given extra money to support their campaign.  Government should fund advocacy organisations to support disabled people from different groups to run for election. |
| A woman is standing with a group of 3 men. | Government should talk to disabled people and other groups who are running for election to see what they can do to help them. |

### *Recommendations for Political Parties*

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A diverse group of five people standing closely together, smiling, and holding hands. The logos of the main political parties are behind them. | Political parties should make sure that disabled people from different groups can fully take part in their work. |
| A person in a wheelchair using an accessible ramp to go to a meeting | They should only choose accessible meeting places and make sure that communication with party members includes everyone. |
| Two men in formal attire, smiling and pointing at each other. | They should also make sure that the people who work for the party understand disability and people from other groups. Parties can learn how to do this from DPOs and organisations that support different groups. |
| A disabled person choosing one of two candidates. | When a local councillor is elected to the Dáil, their political party can pick someone to replace them as a councillor. This is called **co-option**. Political parties should think about disability and people from other groups when they pick a person for co-option. |

### *Recommendations for Advocacy Organisations*

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| **Picture** | **Information** |
| A burlap sack filled with 20 euro banknotes, featuring a large Euro symbol on the front. | Advocacy organisations should be funded to run training and mentoring sessions for disabled people, including people from other groups, who are interested in running for election. |
| A meeting of disabled people. | DPOs should support their members to run for election. They support a big mix of people from different groups when doing this work. |
| A group of people sitting in chairs and having a discussion. | Organisations who work with different groups should support their members, including disabled people, to get involved in politics, and to run for election. |