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Citizens Channel

Citizens' Panels: A New Way to Engage in Parliamentary Processes

17-19 October 2024 Tirana

Disability Rights

Purpose of Topic: To make recommendations for improving the lives of people with disabilities

Key issues for persons with disabilities:

Session 1. Accessibility and Services for People with Disabilities

This session addresses the barriers individuals with disabilities face in accessing public spaces and digital platforms. It will explore current challenges in accessibility, discussing both local and national strategies for improvement. The session will highlight the importance of collaboration between communities and policymakers to create inclusive infrastructure and enhance digital accessibility. Additionally, the discussion will focus on the obstacles that individuals with disabilities encounter in accessing healthcare services and how healthcare providers can better meet their needs. Additionally, the session will examine the integration of assistive technologies into daily life and public services, identifying existing barriers to their adoption to foster greater independence and accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Lastly, discussions will address the financial treatment of personal assistants, focusing on ensuring fair pay and support for these essential roles.

Experts:

- Suela Lala, Expert and representative of "Together Foundation" (Lead Expert)
- Aferdita Seiti, Expert, "Help the Life Association"
- Nertila Topulli, Director of Social Policies, Ministry of health and Social Welfare
- Eneida Capo, Head of the PwD Sector, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
- Irena Mitro, Directorate of Social Inclusion and Gender Equality Policies, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

1. What are the biggest barriers to accessibility in public spaces and digital platforms today? How can these be addressed at both local and national levels?
2. How can communities and policymakers collaborate to ensure more inclusive infrastructure and digital accessibility? What effective strategies can be employed to advocate for better implementation of existing accessibility regulations?



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3. What are the main barriers that individuals with disabilities face in accessing healthcare services? How can providers and healthcare systems be better prepared to meet the needs of these individuals?
4. How does living with a disability impact mental health? What types of mental health resources or support systems are most effective in addressing these challenges?
5. What strategies can be implemented to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive adequate preventive care? How can healthcare professionals be better trained to understand and meet the preventive care needs of this population?
6. How can assistive technologies (e.g., mobility aids, screen readers, adaptive software) be better integrated into daily life and public services to enhance independence and accessibility for individuals with disabilities? What barriers exist to the adoption and access of these technologies?
7. What changes are necessary in the financial treatment and pay structures for personal assistants to ensure fair compensation?

Session 2. Inclusive Education and Employment

This session will explore the benefits and challenges of integrating students with disabilities into regular classrooms and discuss strategies to enhance inclusivity in education. The session will examine the training needs for educators to better support these students and how schools can implement such training. It will also focus on how parents can be empowered to advocate for inclusive education. In terms of employment, participants will analyze current employment rates for individuals with disabilities and propose solutions to increase job opportunities and combat workplace discrimination. The session will highlight the importance of effective workplace accommodations and how employers can be encouraged to adopt inclusive practices.

Experts:

- Emiliano Lule, Inclusive Education Expert, Institute for the Blind (Lead expert)
- Zela Koka, Inclusive Education Expert, MEDPAK
- Stefan Paloka, Inclusive Employment Expert
- Ema Kasapi, Education Expert
- Bledar Taushani, Inclusive Employment Expert, Ministry of Economy, Culture, and Innovation

1. What are the benefits and challenges of inclusive education? How can we improve the integration of students with disabilities in regular classrooms?
2. What training is needed for educators to effectively support students with disabilities? How can schools implement this training?



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3. How can parents of children with disabilities be better supported in advocating for inclusive education?
4. What are the current employment rates for individuals with disabilities? What can be done to increase employment opportunities and combat discrimination?
5. What accommodations are most effective in supporting employees with disabilities? How can employers be encouraged to implement these measures?

Session 3. Participation in Political and Public Life

The session will explore barriers preventing individuals with disabilities from fully engaging in political life, such as voting or running for office. It will also focus on how governments, communities, and citizens can collaborate to create more inclusive systems, and the importance of diverse representation in leadership. The session will also consider ways to improve voting processes for equal access.

Experts:

- Flora Kalemi, expert, ADRF (Lead expert)
- Suela Lala, Expert and representative of "Together Foundation"
- Stefan Paloka, Caritas Albania

1. What are the main barriers preventing individuals with disabilities from fully participating in political life, such as voting or running for public office? What practical steps can we take as a community to reduce these barriers?
2. How can governments and communities collaborate to make political systems more inclusive for people with disabilities? What role can ordinary citizens play in supporting these efforts?
3. Why is it important to have individuals with disabilities in leadership positions in government and public life? How can we encourage and support more diverse representation?
4. How can voting processes be improved to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access? What can we do to help facilitate these changes?



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