

## FACTORS FORMING THE POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND CULTURE OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the ongoing reforms in the field of education in our country, the support for youth with disabilities, and reflections on educational privileges provided to them. It highlights our views on the implementation of inclusive education for youth with disabilities, alongside the new edition of the Law on Education, which emphasizes inclusive education and equality for all in the educational process.

**Keywords:** education, inclusive education, UN, Development Program, Law on Education, development, reform, talent.

The formation of the political consciousness and culture of persons with disabilities is a complex, multifaceted process that relies on the interaction between an individual's internal psychological state, the social environment, and the institutional conditions created by the state. In analyzing the factors influencing this process, it is essential to emphasize that the existence of an inclusive political environment serves as the fundamental cornerstone. Legal guarantees provided by the state—namely, the adaptation of electoral legislation, the reflection of the interests of persons with disabilities in the programs of political parties, and mechanisms for their participation in public administration—play a decisive role in the formation of political consciousness. If state policy has transitioned from a "medical model" of disability (viewing the individual solely as an object of treatment) to a "social and legal model" (viewing them as an equal subject), it fosters confidence and a sense of responsibility regarding political rights within these individuals.

The next critical factor is the openness and flexibility of the information environment. Political culture is shaped through the reception and analysis of information. Providing information about political processes to persons with disabilities in Braille, sign language, or easy-to-read formats broadens their worldview and creates opportunities for making political choices. Conversely, being cut off from information leads to political alienation and "political passivity." Furthermore, the level of education and social rehabilitation serves as a direct influencing factor. The presence of an inclusive environment in educational institutions helps youth with disabilities feel like full members of society from an early age and aids in the formation of their civic stance.

Individuals with higher levels of education possess a significantly stronger motivation to understand and participate in the political system.

From a socio-psychological perspective, the proactiveness of public organizations and disability communities is considered a crucial factor. Non-governmental organizations operating under the principle of "Nothing about us without us" foster collective identification within the individual. These communities teach individuals how to elevate their issues to the political level and develop their "civic competence." Simultaneously, the physical accessibility of the environment (universal design) indirectly influences political consciousness. If an individual cannot independently access a polling station or a government office, a sense of distrust toward the state and alienation from political processes emerges. A barrier-free environment is a necessary condition for an individual to physically exercise their political will.

Another distinct factor is the family environment and societal stereotypes. The support of family members and their own political activity serve as a model for a person with a disability. "Paternalistic" views in society—viewing persons with disabilities solely as a segment in need of assistance—can stifle their political agency. Conversely, the emergence of persons with disabilities as successful political leaders (e.g., being elected as deputies) serves as a powerful motivational factor for others. Finally, digital technologies and social media have become the fastest tools for shaping political consciousness in the modern era. Participating in political discussions via the internet, signing online petitions, and the possibilities for remote voting are elevating the political culture of persons with disabilities to a new level, remaining one of the strongest factors ensuring their full integration into social life.

To further develop the political consciousness and culture of persons with disabilities, it is appropriate to emphasize the following:

First, the creation of an inclusive and open platform for political information: The formation of political consciousness is directly linked to the availability of information. Therefore, it should be made a mandatory standard to provide all political processes, including election programs, draft laws, and political party speeches, in formats adapted to various types of disabilities (sign language, Braille, audio formats, and "easy-to-read" text). This ensures the transition of the individual from an object to a subject in political processes.

Second, the implementation of specialized modules for civic education: It is necessary to organize special seminars and training courses on civic education and political jurisprudence for youth with disabilities within the higher and secondary specialized education systems. These lessons should cover the social model of disability, human rights, and mechanisms for participating in political decision-making. This educational approach fosters the skill of feeling like a full member of society.

Third, expanding quotas and representation in state and public administration: The most effective way to enhance political culture is through direct participation. It is recommended to introduce voluntary or mandatory quotas for persons with disabilities within political parties and legislative bodies (among candidates for deputies). The appearance of "model leaders" with disabilities in the political arena serves as a motivational factor for others and eliminates social passivity.

Fourth, applying the concepts of Universal Design and "Barrier-Free Politics": The exercise of political rights should not be limited by physical capabilities. Polling stations, buildings where political debates are held, and government offices must fully comply with universal design requirements. The removal of physical barriers fosters a sense of being valued by the state, which in turn increases trust in the political system and enhances political consciousness.

Fifth, strengthening the cooperation mechanism between political parties and NGOs: Non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) representing the interests of persons with disabilities should serve as key advisory councils for political parties. Engaging experts with disabilities in the "Think Tanks" of political parties ensures the viability and social orientation of party programs.

Sixth, expanding opportunities for digital democracy and online participation: It is necessary to legally and technically improve opportunities for persons with limited mobility to participate in political processes through digital technologies (remote voting, online petitions, electronic appeals). This allows such individuals to influence social life regardless of geographical and physical constraints.

Seventh, promoting the transition from "Paternalism" to "Partnership" in society: Political culture must be formed not only within the person with a disability but across society as a whole. It is essential to implement social campaigns through the media that frame persons with disabilities not as a segment in need of aid, but as an intellectual and political resource for society.

The formation of the political consciousness and culture of persons with disabilities is a complex and systemic process, relying on the harmony between an individual's civic identity and socio-political relations in society. Research indicates that the mere existence of legal norms is insufficient to elevate the political culture of this group; a complete transition to the social and legal model of interpreting disability in society is of decisive importance. While traditional paternalistic views and the "medical model" relegate the individual to the level of a passive object, the modern inclusive approach recognizes the person with a disability as an equal and active subject of state and public administration. It was found that the openness of the information environment—specifically the provision of political and legal information in accessible formats for

all—and the removal of physical barriers are fundamental factors that foster trust in the state and a sense of responsibility within the individual.

At the same time, modern information and communication technologies and digital democracy tools are creating a "field of equal opportunities" for increasing the political activity of persons with disabilities. The development of remote participation formats renders physical limitations a secondary issue and serves to reveal the intellectual and political potential of the individual. In conclusion, shaping the political culture of persons with disabilities is not merely a matter of social protection, but an integral part of building a state based on the priority of human rights and ensuring democratic stability. The success of this process depends directly on the institutional readiness of the state, the inclusive openness of political parties, and a new way of thinking in society, free from stereotypes.

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