



# The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

## Guide for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities

How to get involved in a country review process and  
submit complaints



This is a guide for organisations of persons with disabilities on how to engage with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It gives information including **how to participate in a country review** and/or **submit a complaint**.

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## Abbreviations

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CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

CSO – Civil Society Organisation

DPO/OPD - Disabled Persons Organisation or Organisation of Persons with Disabilities ([see an non-exhaustive list of organisations of women with disabilities in Europe](#)).

LOIs – List of issues

LOIPR – List of Issues Prior to Reporting

UN - United Nations

# The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Committee) is the expert Committee in charge of **monitoring** the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by the countries that ratified it.

The CRPD is an international human rights treaty that reaffirms that all persons with disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It clarifies that all persons with disabilities have the right to participate in civil, political, economic, social and cultural life of the community just as anyone else. The CRPD clearly stipulates what public and private authorities must do to ensure and promote the full enjoyment of these rights by all people with disabilities. The European Union and all European countries (except Liechtenstein) have ratified the CRPD. The full list of the States parties is available [on the UN website](#).

The Committee is composed of [18 independent experts](#) elected by States (countries and other state parties that ratified the Convention).

The [full list of experts and their CV is available at this link](#). The members of the Committee serve in their individual capacity, not as government representatives. They are elected from a list of persons nominated by the States for a four-year term, with a possibility of being re-elected once

The Committee meets in Geneva, Switzerland, and holds two sessions per year. At these sessions, the Committee has the role to:

- ❖ **Review the implementation of the Convention** by the countries who ratified the Convention and **adopt concluding observations**.
- ❖ **Examine individual complaints and conduct an inquiry** concerning the violation of disability rights.
- ❖ Discuss the interpretation of articles of the Convention and **adopt General Comments** to guide countries in ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities.

Organisations of persons with disabilities/Disabled people's organisations (DPOs) can engage in each of these activities. DPOs' knowledge of the situation in their country is extremely valuable and important for the work of the Committee. It allows the Committee to have a better picture of how the Convention is implemented and what the main issues and priorities are.

## How to get involved in a Country Review

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You can **write to the Committee** and **talk to Committee members**. There are **2 sessions per year** in Geneva, Switzerland (usually in March/April and August/September) that last 4 to 5 weeks. The [schedule of past and upcoming sessions is available online](#).

Below is a timeline of how to get involved in the review. After the timeline, we will go into detail about how to write to the Committee and how to give a presentation at a pre-session. A full list of definitions can be found [here](#). The term Secretariat will be used only in reference to the Secretariat of the Committee.

### Reporting

**Find out when your country is scheduled for review and submit an alternative report to provide information beyond the State report.**

States must report initially within two years of ratifying the Convention, then every four years. **The report must cover every article of the Convention**. The State should consult your or other DPOs in the creation of the report. The Committee examines each report and make recommendations in a document called “**Concluding observations**”. This document is sent to the country, which should implement the recommendations of the Committee.

### Review

Sessions are a week where State Parties give an oral presentation and Committee members ask questions. This is known as “**interactive dialogue**”.

The pre-sessions are meetings **one week after the end of regular sessions** at which the pre-sessional working group adopts a LOI or List of Issues Prior to Reporting.

The UN does not provide funding for in person participation.

### Pre-Session

**Attend a private meeting with the Committee and stress which questions the pre-sessional working group should include in the List Of Issues (LOI).**

On the first day of the pre-session, the **pre-sessional working group has a private informal meeting with CSOs** of countries up for review to ask them questions before they adopt the LOI.

6 to 9 members of the Committee (**pre-sessional working group**) review a report and create a **List of Issues (LOIs) or List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR)**, a list of 20 questions with up to 3 issues each to highlight problems with the implementation and encourage solutions. The LOIs are **published** on the [Committee's website](#) in English a few weeks after the end of the session. The LOIPR is adopted in cases of an optional simplified review procedure.

After pre-session

You can

- Revise your alternative report (add more information) or submit it
- Submit an alternative reply to the LOI

The State Party must respond to the LOIs within 6 months.

## Session

**Attend a private meeting with the Committee and stress which recommendations should be included in the concluding observations. You may also attend the meeting between the State Party and the Committee.**

Interactive dialogues consist of **two 3-hour meetings** where the Committee:

- Evaluates how countries apply the Convention and formulates **Concluding observations** that include recommendations on what they must do to protect women's rights.
- Discuss how the Convention must be interpreted and implemented with the adoption of **General Comments**.
- Receives claims of violations of rights from individuals or groups of individuals
- Start inquiries into situations of systematic violations of women's rights.

**You may attend the session meeting between the State Party and the Committee but not speak at it.** Interactive dialogue are public events streamed [on UN WebTV](#). Participation via video-conference to the informal public meeting is possible. It needs to be scheduled in

advance with the Secretariat of the Committee (see the requirements in the “informative note for participation” published before each session).

Before meeting with the State Parties, there are two meetings with CSOs: an **informal public meeting** and a **lunchtime private briefing**.

- **Informal public meeting:** The Committee meets for 1h to 1h30 jointly with CSOs of different countries up for review during the session 3.
- **Lunchtime private meeting:** The Committee meets for 1h with CSOs of a specific country. The meeting is confidential- this means that nothing that is discussed can be shared outside of the room. You should send your request to participate in the private meeting and your statement to [crpd@ohchr.org](mailto:crpd@ohchr.org) before the deadlines. In the subject of the e-mail you should indicate “**private meeting/oral statement**” and the “**name of the country**” (e.g. “Private meeting/Oral statement Romania.”)

The Concluding observations are **published** on the [Committee's website](#) in English a few weeks after the end of the session.

**After sessions you can translate the Concluding Observations to your national language and use them in your advocacy and organise a press conference to present the recommendations or follow-up meetings with your government to discuss implementation of the recommendations.**

The Country must implement the recommendations adopted by the Committee and send a new report every four years following the same procedure, or if they accepted the **simplified review procedure** of the Committee, the next review will start by the adoption of a list of issues prior to reporting (LOIPR) by the Committee.

You can find examples of [List of Issues](#) and [Concluding Observations](#) adopted by the CRPD Committee on its website.

## Individual Complaint

**Submit an individual communication to the Committee.**

If you submit a communication on behalf of an individual, you must have written consent to act on their behalf.

For complaints concerning one or several women who have **exhausted domestic remedies** (including appeals, until the judgement cannot be

contested), the Committee adopts a written procedure called “**views on individual communications**”. **Complaints cannot be anonymous.**

**Translate the [guidelines for submission of communication](#)** from English to your national language so more people understand how to get involved.

The International Disability Alliance publishes [summaries of views adopted by the Committee](#). They concern issues of discrimination, accessibility, access to justice, right to vote, employment, and others.

## Inquiry

### **Submit information for inquiry to the Committee.**

The Committee can launch an [inquiry](#) for systematic violations (including anonymous complaints) which may include a country visit. The reports of inquiries are available on [the Committee's website](#).

As a DPO you can directly submit a communication or information for inquiry to the Committee. If you submit a communication on behalf of an individual, you must possess an authorisation to act on their behalf (written consent).

On the website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights you can find:

- [Guidelines for submission of communications to the Committee](#)
- [Information on the inquiry procedure](#)

You may always contact EDF for more information.

So far, the Committee examined two inquiry procedures concerning the United Kingdom (on the negative impact of welfare reform on independent living, social protection and work and employment of persons with disabilities) and Spain (on the structural exclusion and segregation of persons with disabilities from the mainstream education system).

## General Comments

### **Submit information to the Committee.**



General Comments are documents explaining in more details the content of one or several rights in the Convention and how they should be implemented by governments.

So far, the Committee has adopted [seven General Comments](#) on various articles of the Convention:

- General Comment No 1 on [Article 12: Equal recognition before the law](#) (Adopted 11 April 2014)
- General Comment No 2 on [Article 9: Accessibility](#) (Adopted 11 April 2014)
- General Comment No 3 on [Article 6: Women and girls with disabilities](#) (Adopted 26 August 2016)
- General Comment No 4 on [Article 24: Right to inclusive education](#) (Adopted 26 August 2016)
- General Comment No 5 on [Article 19: Right to independent living](#) (Adopted 31 August 2017)
- General Comment No 6 on [Article 5: Equality and non-discrimination](#) (Adopted 9 March 2018)
- General Comment No 7 on [Article 4.3 and 33.3: Participation with persons with disabilities in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention](#) (Adopted 21 September 2018)

Announcements of the work on new general comments are posted on the website of the Committee.

Organisations of persons with disabilities are invited to make written submissions and participate in Days of General Discussion on the topic of the general comments.

The requirements to submit written submissions and interventions vary. It is crucial to regularly consult the [Committee website](#) for information on new general comments and instructions on contributions. For questions, you may also contact EDF.

For example, before the adoption of General Comment No 6, the Committee organised a [Day of General Discussion on the right of persons with disabilities to equality and non-discrimination](#) to which organisations were invited to send written submissions and make oral interventions. To inform the discussion on General Comment No 7, the Committee made a [call for written submissions](#).

## How to prepare input

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### Alternative report

Reports must be submitted to the [Secretariat](#) at [crpd@ohchr.org](mailto:crpd@ohchr.org) with the subject “**submission**” and the “**name of the country**” (e.g. “Submission Spain”) **up to 4 weeks before the start of the session during which the country is considered for the LOI or Concluding Observations.**

- **Word limit:** of 10.700 words for alternative report and 5.300 words for other submissions.
- **Language:** The Committee works in English, French, Chinese, Russian, and Spanish but does not translate alternative reports so we recommended that you submit your reports in English.
- **Format:** Word or text **not PDF**

or

Submit a shorter report with thematic issues including a list of suggested questions for the **Lists of Issues or List of Issues Prior to Reporting.**

We suggest you coordinate a report with other organisations.

### Recommended structure

**A short introduction to your organisation/coalition:** its history and who it represents. The aim is to establish your credibility.

**An executive summary of the most relevant issues:** it should reflect what you think requires particular attention of the Committee when reviewing the State report.

**A critical analysis of the situation of people with disabilities in your country:** You can provide information on access to education, employment, justice, discrimination, violence, legal capacity, institutionalisation, etc.

- Include your sources and cross-reference to the State’s report (e.g. “para. X of the State report”).
- Use information provided to and by the CRPD Committee previously, including recommendations from the Committee on women and girls

with disabilities to stress that the issues have been condemned in the past.

- Use the correct terminology and quotation marks when referring to the language used by the State.
- Avoid abbreviations and acronyms.
- Each suggested question or recommendation must be linked to information provided in your report. Be specific, taking into consideration the kind of actions you aim to inspire from the questions or recommendations.

Do not expect the Committee to know anything about the issues faced by people with disabilities in your country. Your report must be self-explanatory.

Contact women's organisation to join forces and share information. You can make them more aware about the situation of women and girls with disabilities. [See the members of the European Women's Lobby here.](#)

## Examples of alternative reports

- For adoption of the list of issues: [Example of alternative report from the Greek National Confederation of Disabled People](#)
- For adoption of concluding observations: [Example of alternative report from the Civil Society Coalition from Norway](#)

## Statement in Geneva

**Coordinate with the other organisations who may be present during the meeting.** Contact your national equality body, human rights institution and women's rights organisations to know if they will participate. Most of the disability umbrella organisations / national council of European countries are EDF members. You can find the [list on our website](#).

## Statement at Pre-Session

**Stress which questions should be included in the LOI.**

**To participate, send a request** to the [Secretariat](#) as you submit your alternative report before the deadline for each session. Check the deadline [announcement on the Committee website](#).

**Prepare a very short oral statement** on the major issues in your country and submit it in writing by e-mail to the Secretariat a few days before your meeting. Coalition of organisations of persons with disabilities have in average 7 minutes and single organisations 5 minutes to deliver their oral statement.. **Focus on your priorities** and on providing additional information not in your alternative report.

You can participate in person or via videoconference that must be scheduled in advance with the [Secretariat](#). The UN does not provide funding for participation.

Interpretation is provided in English, Spanish, and French. To deliver a statement in other languages, you must bring an interpreter at your own costs.

You can **reach out to EDF and the International Disability Alliance** to let us know that you will be attending the meetings of the Committee so we can support you ([info@ida-secretariat.org](mailto:info@ida-secretariat.org)).

CSOs wishing to make oral interventions may contact IWRAW-Asia Pacific ([iwraw-ap@iwraw-ap.org](mailto:iwraw-ap@iwraw-ap.org)) for support.

## Statement at Session

**Stress which recommendations should be included in the concluding observations.**

To participate you must send a request to the [Secretariat](#) (as you submit your alternative report) before the deadline set for each session. To know the exact deadline, check the [announcement on the Committee website](#) or contact EDF.

Interpretation is provided in English, Spanish, and French. To deliver your statement in other languages, you must bring your own interpreter at your own costs.

Prepare a very short oral statement on the major issues in your country and submit it in writing by e-mail to the Secretariat of the Committee a few days before your meeting. All CSOs of one country are allocated up to 10 minutes, meaning you may only have a couple of minutes to speak, then the Committee members ask questions to the organisations.

## In short

1. The government submits a report to the Committee.  
**You can submit an alternative report.**
2. At pre-session the LOI or LOIPR are adopted.  
**You can attend and give oral input.**
3. The government replies to the LOI within 2-3 months.
4. At session there is the country interactive dialogue and Concluding Observations.  
**You can attend and give oral input.**
5. The government must implement the **Concluding Observations.**

## Definition recap

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- **List of Issues (LOI):** List of questions from the Committee to the State in light of its report.
- **Informal private meeting:** Meeting between the pre-sessional working group and CSOs where CSOs give oral input before the LOI is adopted.
- **Session:** Gathering in Geneva hosted by the Committee during which take place country reviews.
- **Informal public meeting:** Meeting between Committee and CSOs where CSOs give oral input before the Concluding Observations are adopted.
- **Lunch time private briefing:** One-hour meeting between the Committee and CSOs where CSOs reply to questions asked by Committee members during the Informal public meeting, before the Concluding Observations are adopted.
- **Interactive dialogue:** Meeting between the Committee and a State for its review. It is sometimes referred to as constructive dialogue.
- **Concluding Observations:** Document adopted at the end of an interactive dialogue which highlights areas of concern and recommendations.
- **Complaint:** Individual or collective complaint which has unsuccessfully gone through national courts. It cannot be anonymous.
- **Views on individual communications:** Written procedure adopted by Committee in response to a complaint
- **Inquiry:** Examination of systematic abuses in a country following a complaint.
- **Day of General Discussion:** Day separate from the country reviews where CSOs can give a statement to better inform General Comments.
- **General Comments:** Document that explains the content of the Convention in detail and how it should be implemented by countries.
- Visit the UN website for a [full glossary of technical terms](#).

## Document credits

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