



# The Role of Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs) in Ireland



Meaningful participation is an ongoing process, based on partnership with the State and state bodies that entails listening and discussing concerns and issues identified by DPOs, and being willing to act upon them.



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# Glossary

## **UN CRPD**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) is a human rights treaty which exists to promote and protect the rights of disabled people, adopted by the UN in 2006. The Irish Government ratified the UN CRPD in 2018 and in doing so committed to promoting and protecting the rights of disabled people in Ireland.

## **Article 4.3 of the UN CRPD**

A provision of the UN CRPD which states that State parties shall consult and actively involve disabled people, including children, through their representative organisations, in the development and implementation of laws and policies to implement the UN CRPD.

## **UN CRPD Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

A group of 18 democratically elected independent experts who check how well governments are implementing the UN CRPD.

## **General Comment 7 of the UN CRPD**

A document by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which explains how disabled people should be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the UN CRPD.

## **UN CEDAW**

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, is a human rights treaty against the discrimination faced by women in various forms worldwide. It legally binds all States Parties to fulfil, protect and respect women's human rights. The Irish Government ratified the UN CEDAW in 1985.

## **Co-creation**

An inclusive and collaborative process that involves multiple stakeholders in actively participating in the design, implementation and assessment of products, services, policies and systems with the aim of improving their efficiency and effectiveness.

## **Disable Person's Organisation (DPO)**

An organisation that is led, directed and governed by disabled people for disabled people and has a stated commitment to the social model of disability and promoting/advancing the human rights of disabled people in accordance with the UN CRPD. They are also known as Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs).

## **Disability Service Provider**

An organisation that provides services to disabled people. Such services are also usually delivered on a contractual basis with funding from the State.

## **National Disability Authority (NDA)**

The independent statutory body that provides information and advice to Government on policy and practice relevant to the lives of disabled people.

## **Human Rights Model of Disability**

Recognition that disability is a natural part of human diversity and that disabled people are entitled to enjoy the same rights as everyone else in society and these rights need to be promoted for their full participation in society.

## **Social Model of Disability**

A way of understanding disability which says that the exclusion, inequality and discrimination experienced by disabled people are not the consequences of impairment, but instead are the result of the economic, cultural, social and political barriers operating in society.

## **Intersectionality**

A framework for understanding how class, disability, gender, race and other systems of oppression 'intersect' with one another to create different kinds of discrimination and exclusion for groups experiencing multiple oppression.



# 1

## Introduction

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DPOs are representative organisations or groups that are governed, led and directed by disabled people and in which disabled people make up a clear majority at all decision-making levels of the organisation.



# Introduction

This paper sets out the DPO Network's understanding of the role of Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs) in advancing the effective and meaningful participation and inclusion of disabled people in Ireland.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) recognises disabled people as having rights on an equal basis with others and in doing so emphasises their right to fully and effectively participate and be included in society.<sup>1</sup>

It further recognises DPOs as having the mandate to represent disabled people in issues concerning them, and through Article 4.3 of the UN CRPD, places an obligation on States to closely consult and actively involve DPOs.

The DPO Network acknowledges the vital role and responsibilities of DPOs in representing and advocating for the rights and interests of disabled people as well as how they contribute to the implementation of the UN CRPD.

This paper aims to raise awareness, understanding and the views of the DPO Network about the role of DPOs in Ireland. It is informed by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General Comment 7 (GC 7) which sets out how disabled people should be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the UN CRPD.

It begins with a number of key messages on the importance of DPOs as representative organisations in supporting the implementation of the UN CRPD. It then offers a definition of DPOs, identifies types of DPOs and their functions, highlights essential characteristics in line with international best practice and explores their importance in promoting effective and meaningful participation.

The paper concludes with a number of recommendations to ensure that DPO engagement becomes a core element of State action on the genuine implementation of the UN CRPD in Ireland. This position paper provides guidance to members of the DPO Network, local, regional and national DPOs, civil society organisations and the State.

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<sup>1</sup> General Assembly (2007). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, A/RES/61/106.



## 1.1 Who we are

The DPO Network is an alliance of five national Disabled Persons' Organisations in Ireland working together to advance the full implementation of the UN CRPD in Ireland.



The five DPO member organisations are:

- As I Am – Ireland's National Autism Advocacy Organisation ([www.asiam.ie](http://www.asiam.ie))
- Disabled Women Ireland (DWI) ([www.disabledwomenireland.org](http://www.disabledwomenireland.org))
- Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI) ([www.ilmi.ie](http://www.ilmi.ie))
- Irish Deaf Society (IDS) ([www.irishdeafsociety.ie](http://www.irishdeafsociety.ie))
- National Platform of Self Advocates ([www.thenationalplatform.ie](http://www.thenationalplatform.ie))

The DPO Network is led and informed by the active and collective participation of disabled people based on their lived experience, expertise and analysis. It provides a unique opportunity for a genuinely cross-societal analysis of the issues faced by disabled people.

The DPO Network is committed to the human rights and social model of disability which says that the exclusion, inequality, and discrimination that disabled people experience is not the consequence of impairment alone but a result of the economic, cultural, social, and political barriers which are created and persist in society.

## 1.2 What is the UN CRPD?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) is a human rights treaty adopted by the UN in 2006. The purpose of the Convention is to promote, defend and reinforce the human rights of all disabled people.

The Irish State ratified the UN CRPD in 2018 and in doing so committed to promoting and protecting the rights of disabled people in Ireland.

The UN CRPD recognises disabled people as active and equal partners in State action around disability. The full and effective participation of disabled people in society on an equal basis with others is set out in the purpose of the Convention.

Participation is also a cross-cutting issue under specific rights, such as the right to participate in political and public life.

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The UN CRPD is the first human rights treaty to include representatives of disabled people, through DPOs, in the implementation and monitoring of the treaty in partnership with State.

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### 1.3 What does the UN CRPD say about the meaningful participation of DPOs?

The UN CRPD acknowledges the importance of organisations of disabled people as representative organisations in advancing effective and meaningful participation.

Meaningful participation is the regular, effective and active engagement of disabled people and their representative organisations, DPOs, in decision-making processes. It acknowledges, respects, values and considers the unique role and perspective of DPOs as organisations representing the diversity of disabled people.

Meaningful participation is an ongoing process, based on partnership with the State and state bodies that entails listening and discussing concerns and issues identified by DPOs, and being willing to act upon them.

Meaningful participation requires the State to be transparent and responsible for communicating outcomes of consultations to DPOs in a timely manner.

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in GC 7 clarifies State parties obligation under Article 4.3 of the UN CRPD which requires that they prioritise close consultation and active involvement of disabled people and their DPOs on any matters which affect them.<sup>2</sup>

*"... States parties should give particular importance to the views of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, support the capacity and empowerment of such organizations and ensure that priority is given to ascertaining their views in decision-making processes." Para 13, GC 7*

GC 7 clearly establishes DPOs as representative organisations through which disabled people can engage with policy makers to represent and express the viewpoints of disabled people.

*"In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, State parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organisations"* CRPD Article 4.3

In addition, GC 7, under Article 33, provides guidance on how States should effectively ensure the participation of DPOs in the oversight and monitoring of the UN CRPD implementation.

*"Civil society, in particular persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, shall be involved and participate fully in the monitoring process".* CPRD Article 33.3

The UN CRPD, through articles 4 and 33, enshrines the principle of 'nothing about us without us'.

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<sup>2</sup> General Comment No. 7 (2018) on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention. Adopted on 9th November 2018. UN Doc CRPD. C/GC/7.

**Meaningful participation** is not just an outcome in itself, but also a process. As an outcome, it demonstrates the realisation of human rights of disabled people in all areas of life, and as a process - through engagement, consultation and recognition - it directly contributes to achieve this outcome.

 **See Part 3 for examples of DPO engagement in the realisation of rights.**



# 2

## Key Messages



# Key Messages

- DPOs are self-representative organisations in which disabled people make up a clear majority at all decision-making levels of the organisation and which promote, pursue and/or defend the equal rights of disabled people in all aspects of life of political, community, economic and cultural life in accordance with the UN CRPD.
- The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has emphasised that organisations of disabled people, DPOs, can only be those that are led, directed and governed by disabled people.
- The State has an obligation to recognise the representative role of DPOs as the voice of disabled people in engagement and consultation processes, in accordance with GC 7. In addition, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has clarified that States shall give priority to the views of DPOs when addressing issues related to disabled people.
- DPOs play a strategic role in monitoring implementation of the UN CRPD. To fulfil this requirement, DPOs require adequate and ongoing multi-annual core funding and resources. It is the responsibility of State to fund, support and nurture emerging DPOs in Ireland.
- DPOs can vary in their roles and functions however they all have an overarching focus on promoting the rights of disabled people. The work of DPOs is underpinned by a stated commitment to the human rights and social models of disability and the UN CRPD.
- Strong DPOs are essential for the empowerment of all disabled people, including children and other groups who are underrepresented, who are additionally marginalised and who experience multiple forms of discrimination.
- DPOs must have stated goals, rules, a membership base, clear decision-making structures and values aligned to the UN CRPD. DPOs are responsible for bringing their collective lived experience, expertise and analysis to policy spaces and are accountable to their members.
- DPOs are autonomous collective spaces for disabled people to bring about social and systemic change. They are distinct from disability service providers and charities delivering services to disabled people. DPOs cannot be sub-groups of service provider or civil society organisations.
- DPOs can provide supports to its members if such supports or services increase the capacity of members to live independent lives or to uphold their rights in a measurable and meaningful way.
- DPOs are part of civil society, however, they are distinct from civil society organisations. Civil society organisations (CSOs) do not meet the UN CRPD Committee's definition for DPOs.
- Some DPOs, in particular, the national DPOs, are committed to working in partnership with the State, state bodies and civil society organisations in the co-creation of policies and practices that support the establishment of a more inclusive society. This direct engagement of DPOs in policy spaces is a new and emerging process and reflects DPOs commitment to working with State parties to bring about social change.

# Co-Creation

An inclusive and collaborative process that involves multiple actors and stakeholders in actively participating in the design, implementation and assessment of products, services, policies and systems with the aim of improving their efficiency and effectiveness, and the satisfaction of those who take part in the process. ('SISCODE' 2019).<sup>3</sup> It is about creating solutions with people, not for them.

Key features include:

- the active involvement of stakeholders, from the exploration and identification of problems or needs to the creation, implementation and evaluation of solutions or initiatives.
- clear focus on stakeholders' experience
- direct interaction between stakeholders
- the creation of platforms that promote continual dialogue among stakeholders

<sup>3</sup> <https://siscodeproject.eu>



# 3

## Understanding DPOs

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# Understanding DPOs

## 3.1 Definition

Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs) developed in response to the societal barriers that have prevented equal participation and as a reaction against the control of disabled people by others. There is no universally accepted definition of what a Disabled Persons' Organisation (or DPO) is - the term has evolved over time to cover a variety of organisations made up of, or primarily governed by, disabled people.

The UN CRPD itself does not define what a DPO is. It does, however, give special recognition to organisations that represent disabled people by creating an obligation on State and state bodies to engage with them. As stated in Section 1.3, article 4.3 of the CRPD recognises the role of representative organisations as having the authority to engage with Government on the issues that concern disabled people.

The CRPD Committee provides additional information, defining DPOs as 'those comprising a majority of persons with disabilities – at least half their membership – and governed, led and directed by persons with disabilities.'<sup>4</sup>

DPOs are distinct from civil society organisations – charities, disability service providers, family advocacy groups, access and human rights groups within disability service providers and organisations run and controlled by non-disabled people.

### **The DPO Network defines a DPO as:**

*An organisation that is governed, led and directed by disabled people and in which disabled people make up a clear majority at all decision-making levels of the organisation.*

## 3.2 Membership

DPOs are organisations 'by', 'for' and 'of' disabled people and promote the philosophy of "Nothing about us without us".

DPOs may have a cross-disability focus, or represent disabled people with one type of impairment, or a single focus population group (for example, the Deaf community). They can be local, national or international in scope and diverse in their levels of operations as well as in their constituencies and memberships. This diversity is important in ensuring that policies and programmes are informed, through consultation, by the broad spectrum of disabled people's views, collective lived experience, needs and issues.

It is important to note that DPOs do not need to have a legal status as a pre-condition for consultation and engagement with them.

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<sup>4</sup> Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Guidelines on the Participation of Disabled Persons Organisations and Civil Society Organisations in the work of the Committee, CRPD/C/11/2 (April 2014)



**Types of DPOs include:**

**Single-impairment DPOs, which represent individuals with a particular type of condition. For example, As I Am.**

As I Am is the national advocacy organisation for Ireland’s autism community. Established in 2014, they work to create a society in which every autistic person is accepted ‘As They Are’ - Equal, Valued and Respected, and for an inclusive society for autistic people that is accessible, accepting and affirming. They provide a range of supports informed by the community and deliver training and accreditation programmes for businesses, community organisations and services to become autism-friendly.



**Population-specific DPOs, can be organised to represent a certain population group and their specific experience of disability.**

The Irish Deaf Society is the only national Deaf-led representative organisation of the Deaf, and it serves the interests and welfare of the Deaf community. It provides a number of education, personal and social services to Deaf adults and their families. IDS are members of the World Federation of the Deaf and the European Union of the Deaf and consult with national, regional and international Deaf organisations and representative bodies in relation to societal issues that impact Deaf people.



**Cross-impairment DPOs, which represent the interests of people with a diversity of impairments. For example, Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI).**

Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI) is a national representative organisation that promotes the philosophy of independent living and works to build an inclusive society. It is underpinned by the belief that policy decisions that impact on the lives of disabled people have to be directly influenced by those whose lives are directly affected. Established as a Centre for Independent Living in 1992, it seeks to remove societal barriers that prevent active equal participation of disabled people, challenge the denial of people’s rights and promote the philosophy of independent living.







The National Platform of Self Advocates is led and managed by people with intellectual disabilities. The focus of the organisation is to advocate for policy change to ensure human rights for people with intellectual disabilities. It is a membership organisation highlighting the need to respect and facilitate communication differences, and the need for support for people to live independently.



**Intersectional DPOs, which represent groups of people who experience multiple forms of inequality and disadvantage. For example, Disabled Women Ireland.**

Disabled Women Ireland (DWI) is the only dedicated organisation advocating for the rights of self-identified women, girls and non-binary/genderqueer/ gender non-confirming disabled people in Ireland. It is a cross disability organisation whose members have a diverse range of impairments and intersecting identities. DWI believes the only way to achieve real change is to advocate from an inter-sectional feminist approach.



**Umbrella DPOs, which represent networks/alliances of DPOs at a national, European and global level. For example, the DPO Network, the European Network of Independent Living (ENIL) and the World Federation of the Deaf.**

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is an international non-governmental organization representing Deaf people worldwide. A non-profit organization, WFD works for human rights and equal opportunities for Deaf people everywhere. It aims to improve the status of national sign languages, improve access to information and services and promote establishment of deaf organisations.





### 3.3 What do DPOs do?

The specific functions of DPOs can vary from group to group. However, the general roles of DPOs include the following:

- Collective campaigning and lobbying for social change.
- Capacity building and provision of technical guidance on disability inclusion.
- Education and awareness-raising within society.
- Collective empowerment of disabled people through the development of shared analysis and strategic policy work.
- Facilitating access to information and in some cases offer membership support services.
- Monitoring human rights/acting as a 'watchdog' on disabled people's rights.
- Collaboration with other DPOs, civil society organisations and State bodies.
- Partnership building.
- Provision of peer support to members.
- Participation in policy analysis and development on a local, national and international level and in measuring its impact.
- Representing and mobilising organisations of disabled people.

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DPOs have the collective, shared expertise of lived experience and bring a unique perspective to speak on the needs and issues of disabled people. They foster the empowerment of disabled people by enabling participation in the decision-making processes that affect their lives, which can lead to better quality of life outcomes.

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### 3.4 Characteristics

In 2014, a group of DPOs that work together to advocate for the rights of disabled people in New Zealand, called the New Zealand DPO Coalition, developed a checklist of the characteristics an organisation should have to qualify it as a Disabled Persons' Organisation.

These characteristics are based on the UN CRPD. The DPO Network adapted this checklist for Irish DPOs and recommends that organisations meet the following characteristics as criteria for identifying as a DPO.

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#### Recommended key DPO characteristics

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- 1 The organisation has a formal structure and focus i.e., it must demonstrate it exists as a group of individuals with certain rules that bind them to a common purpose or goal.
  - 2 The organisation upholds and promotes the philosophy that disabled people have the right to participate collectively in decisions that impact their lives.
  - 3 The organisation's primary goal, objectives and operations reflect and support the primary purpose and principles of the UN CRPD.
  - 4 The organisation is open to all disabled people who meet its membership criteria.
  - 5 The organisation must be governed by a significant majority of disabled people who reflect its community of interest and meet its membership criteria.
  - 6 Only disabled people who meet the organisation's membership criteria may elect and vote for its governing body.
  - 7 A significant majority of the organisation's members are disabled and reflect its community of interest.
  - 8 The organisation demonstrates that it has authority to speak on behalf of its members.
  - 9 The organisation responds to and is driven by the collective voice of its disabled members who reflect its community of interest.
  - 10 The organisation has a variety of ways to ensure its members are informed of key decisions at both a local and national level.
  - 11 The organisation must operate autonomously: independent of the State, state bodies and other non-DPO organisations.
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<sup>5</sup> Appendix 1 DPO Attributes, A review of Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) and their participation in implementing and monitoring the UNCRPD National Disability Authority (NDA) November 2021



### **3.5 What does meaningful participation look like?**

Below are examples of DPO engagement in decision-making processes that support effective participation and inclusion in Irish society.

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#### **Case Study 1: Participation of Sligo DPO in decision-making processes at local government level through Sligo Public Participation Network**

Sligo DPO, a cross-impairment group in Sligo is run by disabled people for disabled people and takes a human rights approach to social inclusion using the social model of disability. It aims to empower disabled through advocacy and provision of supports and to influence local public policy in respect of access and inclusion in Sligo.

It is an active member of the Sligo Public Participation Network (PPN). A PPN is a network that allows local authorities connect with community, voluntary, social inclusion and environmental organisations. The Sligo PPN is the main way in which Sligo County Council and other formal bodies engages with groups, like Sligo DPO, in giving people a greater say in local government decisions which affect their own communities. As part of its work in influencing local public policy, Sligo DPO have delivered disability equality and rights training to local councillors and local authority staff.

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#### **Case Study 2: Engagement of the DPO Network in the development of policy**

Members of the DPO Network participated in consultation events with the Housing Agency in the development of the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027, in particular, the inclusion of appropriate disability terminology. The vision of this strategy is to support disabled people to live independently with the appropriate choices and control over where, how and with whom they live, promoting their inclusion in the community. The participation of DPOs in the development of the strategy ensured that the voices of disabled people were heard and acted upon.

In addition, the DPO Network is engaging with the Housing Agency in the development of an Information and Communications Strategy as part of the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027 implementation plan.



### **Case Study 3: Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI) collective empowerment of disabled people through capacity building to inform local and national policy structures**

DPOs, when resourced, can bring disabled people together to build collective shared analysis of how society needs to change and how disabled people can engage in actions, including policy structures, to bring about that change.

“Strategies for Change” was an online activism programme developed by ILMI and funded by Rethink Ireland. It was delivered online with emerging disabled activists developing collective learning, sharing and collaborating to help build a New Ireland where disabled people can fully participate in an inclusive society as equals.

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### **Case Study 4: Engagement of the National Platform of Self-Advocates in the work of the Disability Matters Oireachtas Committee**

The National Platform of Self Advocates is an independent national organisation run by people with an intellectual disability for people with an intellectual disability. They were set up to make sure that the voices of people with intellectual disability are heard at all levels of public decision-making. The organisation is frequently invited to participate in the Disability Matters Oireachtas Committee meetings to speak on subjects of interest to their membership.

At Oireachtas Committee meetings all questions are asked at the same time and members use jargon and acronyms which can make meetings inaccessible to self-advocates. The National Platform of Self Advocates put together a guidelines document to demonstrate how to run an accessible meeting. This is shared with the Disability Oireachtas Committee each time the National Platform attends a meeting. Accessible meetings benefit everybody.

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### **Case Study 5: Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI) resourcing collective policy making with disabled people on the development of Personal Assistance Services (PAS)**

ILMI created spaces (in person and online) to bring disabled people together to discuss the provision of Personal Assistance Services (PAS). This allowed disabled people collectively to explore not only the challenges experienced, but the time and space to reflect on how an ideal PAS should function. With paid policy workers, not only could these spaces be facilitated but the policy context and framework could be brought to the discussions with disabled people. This approach allowed for disabled people to design a collective approach that was strategic and would meet the needs of all disabled people seeking a PAS.

Having the time to build collective capacity meant that in this instance a DPO was able to ensure that when policy submissions were made or ILMI representatives met with policy makers, the experience was based on the collective views of disabled people and not the individual lived experience of the disabled person delivering the message.



### **Case Study 6: Irish Deaf Society building the capacity of state bodies on Irish Sign Language**

The Irish Deaf Society (IDS) has a long relationship with the Citizens Information Board (CIB). An example of a collaborative project is a series of videos about “Deaf Awareness Training” developed by the Citizens Information Board (CIB) in collaboration with (IDS). CIB’s aim in producing these videos was to ensure their staff had a sufficient level of Deaf Awareness. They also decided to publish the series on their website to ensure that the information is available to anyone who is looking to learn more about the Deaf community. Awareness of the Deaf community is needed at all levels of public service to reduce barriers and highlight the experience and the issues Deaf people face daily.

Not only did the project demonstrate CIBs understanding of the importance and value of Deaf Awareness Training, but the process also led to a deeper understanding of the how English is translated to ISL, the costs, how changes to content involve re-shooting and editing of video content, and how the structure of ISL is very different to English and translation is not direct and involves adaption of English content.

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### **Case Study 7: Participation of Disabled Women Ireland in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reporting process**

Disabled Women Ireland (DWI) recently made a submission to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW, like the UN CRPD is one of the United Nations Human Rights Conventions, adopted in 1979 and ratified by Ireland in 1985. The submission that DWI made was in relation to a List of Issues that the CEDAW Committee will put to the Irish State in terms of reporting on the situation of women in Ireland.

In the case of DWI, we requested that questions be asked on the following areas affecting disabled women’s lives.

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- 1 Disabled women’s access to healthcare

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  - 2 Gender-based violence and the experience of disabled women and

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  - 3 Disabled women’s financial independence.

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These areas were identified in consultation with DWI members and following desk-based research. Ireland has obligations to disabled women under both the UN CEDAW and the UN CRPD.

Despite the ratification of both treaties, disabled women continue to face discrimination and barriers to their full participation in society as a result of intersecting identities - both as disabled people and as women. The opportunity to contribute to the development of the List of Issues was something that DWI saw as important in terms of holding the State to account on the issues affecting disabled women. This is the first step in the treaty reporting process. At a later date we will contribute further by developing a shadow report to the CEDAW Committee ahead of the State report.



### **3.6 Key considerations for meaningful participation**

DPOs require essential supports from the State and state bodies to realise their meaningful participation. These essential supports or pre-conditions include:

- Recognition of DPO's right to be partners in decision making and consultation processes, in accordance with the UN CRPD;
- Engagement of DPOs as partners in the planning, design and implementation of consultation processes. Such consultation to be based on transparency, mutual respect and meaningful dialogue set with reasonable and realistic timelines;
- Empowerment and capacity building of DPOs to effectively engage with the State and state bodies including the development of technical, administrative and communication skills;
- Provision of reasonable accommodation including personal assistance (PA) support and information in accessible formats such as Irish Sign Language interpretation, screen reader assistive technology, Easy to Read and plain English;
- Accessibility to all facilities and procedures related to decision-making and consultation processes;
- Allocation of funds for disability related costs to DPOs to attend meetings and participate in decision making and consultation processes;
- Provision of multi-annual funding of DPOs to enable them fulfil their functions which will allow DPOs the time and space to grow and support the collective capacity of their membership to engage and actively participate in key policy fora;
- Consultations with DPOs that authentically represent collectives of disabled persons in all their diversities including women, children and other individuals who experience multiple forms of discrimination;
- Periodic review of the effectiveness of existing participation and consultation mechanisms.



# 4

## **What DPOs need from the State: Recommendations from the DPO Network**



“States parties should strengthen the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities to participate in all phases of policymaking, by providing capacity-building and training on the human rights model of disability, including through independent funding. States parties should also support persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the development of the competencies, knowledge and skills required to independently advocate for their full and effective participation in society...”

**Para 60, GC 7**



# Recommendations from the DPO Network

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- 1 Agree criteria for DPO recognition and support DPOs to meet these criteria. Currently, there is no national organisation or Government department designated to determine whether an organisation qualifies as a DPO, in accordance with the definition of a DPO set out by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in GC 7. The DPO Network recommends that the State adopts the suggested checklist included in this position paper.

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  - 2 Establish and maintain a national register of DPOs. There must be a national register. The DPO Network recommends that the National Disability Authority (NDA), as the independent statutory body, providing evidence-based advice and research to Government on disability policy and practice, develop and maintain such a register.

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  - 3 Ensure DPOs have adequate, multi-annual core funding and resources to effectively participate in implementing and monitoring the UN CRPD. Having access to adequate core funding and resources to support their operations, organisational development and advocacy priorities will enable DPOs perform their role(s) with independence, autonomy and adequate capacity.

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  - 4 Support DPO technical and organisational capacity development. Such support will allow DPOs to acquire skills and to meaningfully engage in local level and national policy development and monitoring. This should include targeted support to foster representation of the most marginalised and underrepresented group of disabled people.

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  - 5 Develop comprehensive strategies and mechanisms to ensure that disabled children, young people and women and other underrepresented groups can participate in consultations, decision-making processes and policy development that affect their lives. For instance, by strengthening, supporting leadership and developing the voices of young people, women and other marginalized groups of disabled people. This is to ensure that under-represented groups who face intersectional discrimination are included. Paying particular attention to underrepresented groups of disabled people is important. Some groups may be excluded from consultations or participation because they lack access to information and opportunities.
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# Resources



General Assembly (2007). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, A/RES/61/106.

<https://tinyurl.com/5xer6564>



Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment No. 7 (2018) on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention

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