



ACCESSIBLE POLLING STATION – 2020

FINAL REPORT OF THE PROJECT
“TEAM UP! FOR INCLUSIVE ELECTIONS”



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TEC	Territorial Election Commission
PEC	Precinct Election Commission
CEC	Central Election Commission
Software	Software Programs

INTRODUCTION

After adoption of the Election Code in Ukraine in 2019 and before the 2020 local elections, the Fight For Right NGO through the support of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Global Affairs Canada and UK aid implemented a unique project – “Team Up! For Inclusive Elections”.

During the years of Ukrainian independence, the public sector, activists and people with disabilities drew attention to an inaccessible voting environment. Inaccessibility of the election process is no exception.

Election process inaccessibility within the experiment, conducted by the Fight For Right team and in this publication means:

- Information inaccessibility in elections;
- Architectural inaccessibility of polling stations;
- Lack of knowledge and motivation among Territorial Election Commissions and Precinct Election Commissions and local government to provide accessibility and support to people with disabilities.

Information inaccessibility includes:

- Inaccessibility of information on the election process and its changes (information provided by the CEC and local authorities);
- Inaccessibility of information on existing mechanisms of protecting electoral rights and complaints related to election violations;
- Inaccessibility of information to polling stations;
- Inaccessibility of information on the candidates and parties and their programs as provided and distributed by the candidates and parties.

Architectural inaccessibility includes:

- Nonconformity of buildings, selected for polling stations, and adjacent territories with SBC requirements B.2.2-40:2018. Inclusive buildings and structures;
- Locating voting premises in the basement area or on the second floors of buildings which are not equipped with an accessible elevator;
- Lack of inside and outside navigation signs;
- Inaccessibility of buildings surrounding grounds and roads to the polling station;
- Organizing voting in the premises with inappropriate design (the premises are too small, narrow, or dark with limited access; and,
- Lack of or additional accessibility measures implemented directly on the site.

Lack of knowledge and motivation among TEC and PEC members and local government authorities to ensure accessibility that includes support to people with disabilities and other voters that belong to low-mobility populations include:

- Lack of knowledge on equipment and functions in an accessible polling station;
- Lack of knowledge of one's responsibility and role in the process of ensuring accessibility;
- Lack of knowledge on providing support to people with disabilities and other people belonging to low-mobility populations; and,
- Lack of desire to bridge knowledge gaps and motivation to perform one's duties.

For the purposes of the project, the Fight For Right team developed an election process inaccessibility assessment from the viewpoint of how persons with a disability and those who temporarily or permanently belong to low-mobility groups exercise their voting rights.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The goal “Team Up! For Inclusive Elections” was to determine how to ensure accessibility of the polling station on a tight schedule and budget. Analysis of the experience enabled the project team to develop methodological guidelines for local authorities and the CEC – steps that should be taken until 2025 to ensure accessibility of the electoral process for people with disabilities according to requirements of the Election Code.

Project Tasks

- Check current condition of the selected polling station;
- Establish feasibility, taking into consideration specific schedule and available resources to reequip or readjust stations to make them accessible;
- Trace the algorithm of interaction between central and local government authorities and the civil society to improve polling station accessibility;
- Calculate the budget of refurbishment to improve polling station accessibility;
- Prepare a report for local government and the CEC to understand polling station accessibility for low-mobility population groups through 2025, according to the Election Code.

Budget

General budget to install polling station accessibility elements in Kyiv, Bila Tserkva and Troyanivka Village amounted to **139,365 UAH**.

Cost Allocation

- 45 percent – materials and parts for repairs;
- 30 percent – purchase of tablets, accessible polling booths and curtains, tables for polling booths, magnifying glasses and portable lamps with lighting degree regulation;
- 15 percent – developing models, drawings, and layout; and,
- 10 percent – assembling and transportation services.

Project Schedule

- Preparation for project implementation started in July 2020. Requirements for polling stations were discussed with the CEC and options were identified and potential polling stations were approved for assessment.
- In July and August 2020, polling stations were assessed for their condition, reports were prepared and plans for construction were approved.
- September-October 2020 – equipment purchase.
- In October 2020, one week prior to election day, equipment was assembled and members of the polling stations, or Precinct Election Commissioners, were trained.

The process took four months. According to results, the Fight For Right team saw that with the available algorithm of work, assessment methodology, specification for equipment purchasing and training materials it is feasible to replicate the procedure for two to three months and extend it to all of Ukraine. The prerequisites are the will of central and local government authorities to cooperate and authorizing a minimum budget.

Fight For Right Team Expresses Gratitude to:

- The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Global Affairs Canada and UK aid for funding and technical expertise;
- The CEC for support and cooperation in this experiment and, generally, on development of electoral accessibility in Ukraine;
- Local authorities in Kyiv, Bila Tserkva and Troyanivka Village for cooperation in this experiment;
- Election commissions at all selected polling stations; and,
- Election day volunteers monitoring accessibility of selected polling stations.

POLLING STATIONS ACCESSIBILITY BEFORE 2020 LOCAL ELECTIONS

During preparation and administration of the 2020 local elections, there was considerable monitoring of polling station accessibility and results revealed a great deal of work to be done on accessibility until 2025 in compliance with the Election Code.

Polling station accessibility monitoring results, conducted by the OPORA NGO in July and August 2020, showed that, among 500 polling stations, only 15 (three percent) are accessible for low-mobility groups of the Ukrainian population. Two hundred and eighty-one (56.2 percent) have low accessibility and 204 (40.8 percent) are inaccessible¹.

“The key drawbacks of poorly accessible premises for voting is their location higher than the first floor without elevators (65 polling stations), lack of entrance ramps (413 polling stations) and lack of normative ramps if there are staircases on the way from the entrance of the building to the premises for voting (143 polling stations)”, asserted the monitoring result report. “Very often inside the very premises there were obstacles on the way – high thresholds, staircases”².

Election accessibility monitoring from the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights, or Ombudsperson in 2020, also provides disappointing results.

“During October 19 – 22 we checked and monitored architectural accessibility in 881 polling stations,” said Lyudmyla Denisova, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights. “I would like to draw your attention to the fact that only one percent are accessible for exercising the voting rights for people with disabilities and low-mobility population groups. 88.5 percent do not have architectural accessibility at all. It means that people living in these regions, who are registered as voters in these polling stations, won’t be able to exercise (their voting rights). If a person is in a wheelchair, he or she won’t be able to get to this station.”

According to the Ombudsperson, results of the Ukrainian monitoring show that **10.4%** of polling stations offer conditional accessibility.

“What is conditional accessibility? The criteria were identified and adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on October 9 and if these criteria are met, the polling station will be accessible for people with disabilities and low-mobility population groups,” explained Denisova. “Certainly, there should be a ramp; if a ramp is available, the polling station will get into 10.4 percent. If there is ramp and handrails, we already consider this station to be accessible. And, if there are no ramps, and one cannot get to the polling station at all, these are 88.5 percent (inaccessible polling stations.)³.

¹ Full text of the research on polling station accessibility by the public network OPORA is available at <https://www.oporaua.org/report/vybory/vyborchi-ombudsmeni/dostupnist>

² ОПОРА research data, more information in the report “Polling Stations Accessibility” available at <https://ombudsman.oporaua.org/dostupnist>

³ The majority of polling stations are inaccessible for people with disabilities – Denysova [Electronic resource] // Ukrinform. – 2020. – Resource access mode: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-elections/3122501-bilsist-viborcih-dilnic-nedostupni-dla-ludej-z-invalidnistu-denisova.html>

The Fight For Right NGO received more than 100 requests on improving polling stations accessibility during the 2020 local elections.

All this data is are the tip of the iceberg, as up until now, not one state institution or public organization managed to assess accessibility of all polling stations in the country, including special polling stations in penitentiary institutions or any places that deprive liberty.⁴

Research data conducted by Fight for Right in May and June of 2020 that addressed the experience, opinion and wishes of voters with disabilities titled, "[Recommendation on the Accessibility of the Election Process for People with Disabilities](#)", with support from IFES, USAID, Global Affairs Canada and UK aid revealed that:

"The majority of respondents from all four focus groups try to come and prefer voting at the polling stations. Those who choose voting at home, state that they have to do it, because not only their polling station is inaccessible, but even the route to it (with the assistance of many people is needed).

Almost unanimously, people with disabilities participating in the research, stated that the possibility to vote at home is not a full-fledged and suitable substitute for voting at the station. The majority try to go to the polling stations and vote together with all citizens of Ukraine. All the respondents state that the voting right is important for them and that they want to exercise it as all other citizens.

The current procedure of voting at home: Automatic inclusion of low-mobility voters to the lists of those, who have to vote at home, without consulting voters themselves and considering their opinion, – all the respondents consider it to be degrading for their dignity⁵."

The research findings identified five groups of barriers. Removal of these barriers was the objective of the Fight for Right experiment on arranging model polling stations.

⁴ Places of deprivation of liberty, according to the meaning of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, are all the institutions, places of deprivation of liberty is a place, where a person is kept in custody or incarcerated or is placed under state or private custody and/or care, which this person cannot leave at his/her own wish, at the order of any judicial, administrative or any other authority. Including places of deprivation of liberty in social area: medical institutions, boarding-like institutions on providing social services to different vulnerable groups of populations, educational institutions for children. More information is available at <http://khpg.org/index.php?id=1318519641>

⁵ Recommendation on electoral process accessibility for people with disabilities according to the results of the focus group discussions [Electronic resource] / NGO "Fight for Rights". – 2020. – Resource access mode: <https://ffr.org.ua/sites/default/files/publications/Рекомендації%20за%20підсумками%20фокус%20груп.pdf>

Barriers

Measures to Remove Them

- | | |
|---|---|
| ● Lack of independence in decision-making/degrading treatment | Improving architectural accessibility and training members of election commissions; replacement of polling stations that cannot be outfitted in future. |
| ● Architectural inaccessibility | Improving architectural accessibility, using reasonable adjustments and targeted measures and replacement of polling stations that cannot be outfitted ⁶ . |
| ● Information inaccessibility | Improving accessibility of CEC materials, local activities of election commissioners and work with candidates and parties on improving information accessibility of all election materials. |
| ● Sensor barriers | Trainings for election commissioners, work on voter flow distribution and organization of the electoral process, including polling station outfitting. |
| ● Communication barriers in attitudes to voters with disabilities | Trainings for election commissioners on ethical communication with voters and assisting voters with disabilities. |

Considering the scale of the problem and its complexity, it is not sufficient to amend only the Election Code to make all Ukrainian polling stations accessible. It is necessary to understand how to make them accessible, to audit current problems, ensuring polling station accessibility and train all stakeholders

These prerequisites were reasons for the experiment on outfitting model accessible stations during the 2020 local elections conducted by Fight For Right with the support of IFES, USAID, Global Affairs Canada and UK aid.

⁶ First of all, it is necessary to replace polling stations situated in the premises which are higher than the first floor or are located in semi-basement premises, not equipped with elevators.

Election Code of Ukraine

Article 62 of the Election Code defines requirements for the PEC and voting premises:

“Premises of the Precinct Election Commission and premises for voting shall meet all the requirements of this Code, as well as established sanitary and technical norms, state building codes, including unimpeded access for people with health problems (due to disability, temporary health problems, age) and other low-mobility population groups.

Norms of equipping the premises of the Precinct Election Commission and premises for voting are established by the Central Election Commission.

In case the premises of the Precinct Election Commission and premises for voting cannot be fully adjusted to meet the needs of people with health problems (due to disability, temporary health problems, age) and other low-mobility population groups, the relevant local executive bodies and local self-government bodies, head of institutions, organizations, polar station of Ukraine, captains of ships, where there are special polling stations, heads of the diplomatic institutions of Ukraine abroad, military units (formations), deployed beyond the territory of Ukraine, where there are foreign polling stations, shall organize unimpeded access of the aforementioned persons to such premises”⁷.

This Article also obliges PECs to use reasonable adjustment:

“To create proper conditions for personal voting of a voter with health problems, (due to disability, temporary health problems, age) such a voter shall be provided in the premises for voting with reasonable adjustments (assistive devices) according to the procedures and in cases stipulated by the Central Election Commission”.

Apart from this, the article requires accessible voting booths and adjustments of premises for voting so that a person with disabilities, for example, in a wheelchair, can have unimpeded access to voting.

“Placement of the equipment in the premises for voting shall be planned in such a way that places where ballot papers are given, entrances and exits from the voting booths, ballot boxes were within the line of sight of Precinct Election Commission members and people, who according to this Code, have the right to be present in the premises for voting, and also to ensure unimpeded movement of voters, including people in wheelchairs and other low-mobility population groups.

One of the voting booths shall be adjusted for voting of people with health problems (due to disability, including for people in wheelchairs, temporary health problems, age) and other low-mobility population groups according to the requirements established by the Central Election Commission”.

⁷ Here and further are the quotations from the Election Code in the edition of 24.10.2020 available at the Ukrainian Parliament website <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/396-20>

Article 65 of the Election Code establishes the right of the voter to lodge a complaint about inactivity of the election commission should the polling station be inaccessible. The explanation, “this is the polling station we have, we cannot do anything about it”, cannot justify a PEC’s lack of engagement. According to the Election Code, local authorities are obliged to ensure due condition of all the polling stations through 2025. That is they are required to make polling stations accessible for the election’s participants. The Election Code also obliges the Cabinet of Ministers to:

- *“... develop and adopt accessibility criteria for people with disabilities and other low-mobility population groups, given to the Precinct Election Commissions at the usual polling stations to organize their work and conduct voting;*
- *To ensure constant monitoring and assessment of accessibility for people with disabilities and other low-mobility population groups, provided by the local executive bodies and local self-governance bodies, other officials who exercise their duties according to the law, to the Precinct Election Commissions of the polling stations to organize their work and conduct voting, and take into account their results in the process of development and implementation of nationwide programs on ensuring exercise of rights and meeting needs of people with disabilities for the corresponding year”.*

Other amendments to the Election Code are related to ensuring information accessibility for voters with visual and audio impairments; For example, Article 107 on information posters, Article 116 on arrangement of premises for voting and placement of information that voters with disabilities can have unimpeded possibility⁹.

Unassisted voting of citizens with severe visual disabilities, automatic inclusion of voters with disabilities to the list of citizens voting at home, polling station technical issues and correspondingly accessible elections remain unregulated¹⁰.

CEC and Cabinet of Ministers regulatory documents prepared prior the 2020 local elections 2020;

CEC documents, explaining to TEC and PEC members amendments on accessibility to the Election Code and requirements prior October 25, 2020, can also be referred to “minimum accessibility standards”. This takes into account that local authorities and election commissions still have time until 2025 to meet all the CEC and state building code requirements.

⁸ Article 65 of the Election Code of Ukraine provides detailed description of the complaint procedure depending on the type of the elections and responsible stakeholders – see full text of the Election Code of Ukraine <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/396-20>

⁹ Guarantees of the free use of the Ukrainian sign language are also enshrined in the Law of Ukraine “On the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as State Language” of 25.04.2019. Article 18 defines that election campaign materials shall be adapted for the people using signs by means of the translation into Ukrainian sign language and/or subtitling into Ukrainian. Full text available at <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2704-19>

¹⁰ Local Elections-2020. How Inclusive New Election Code is [Electronic resource] / Ivank.info. – 2020. – Resource access mode: <https://invak.info/zakony-i-prava/miscevi-vibori-2020-naskilki-inklyuzivnij-novij-viborchij-kodeks.html>

Prior to the October 25, 2020 local elections, the CEC with support of a wide range of human rights advocacy groups developed two major resolutions that could improve accessibility on condition of their timely interpretation and processing by TECs, PECs and local government authorities.

Resolution Number 164 from August 8, 2020¹¹ defines requirements for premises, where voting takes place, identifying areas local authorities should focus on to improve accessibility of polling stations. These requirements are not numerous; therefore we call them “minimum accessibility standards”:

- PEC premises should be suitable for unimpeded access of all people, including low-mobility population groups;
- PEC and voting premises should meet Election Code and state building code requirements, especially unimpeded access through a ramp or a flat entrance;
- Should PEC and voting premises in not be fully adjusted to the needs of low-mobility groups, the relevant local executive bodies and local self-governance authorities shall organize unimpeded access for aforementioned people;
- For convenience of voters belonging to low-mobility groups, PEC and voter premises will be marked with accessibility signs to indicate safe routes and directions and voting booths;
- In the voting premises, ballot papers are provided, voting booths are located and ballot boxes do not entrance impede the free movement of voters, particularly those in wheelchairs and other low-mobility groups;
- An accessible voting booth is mandatory with booth entrance width no less than 110 centimeters, booth depth 110 – 120 centimeters, a table or shelf not higher than 75 centimeters inside the booth and space below at least 67 centimeters to place a wheelchair.
The booth should not have thresholds and should be marked with an accessibility sign; and,
- Election information at the polling station shall be placed taking into account its accessibility for voters with disabilities.

Disability and other low mobility groups of population to the premises, given to the precinct election commission of usual polling station to organize their work and voting.

¹¹ Resolution # 164 of August 8, 2020 «On the Requirements to the Premises of election commissions and premises for voting, provisions for outfitting the premises of the precinct elections commissions and premises for voting, list and norms of providing election commissions with vehicles, communications means, equipment, tools, other material values, types of services and works, the purchase of which can be done by district and territorial election commissions from the funds of the State Budget of Ukraine, the corresponding local budget to organize preparation for and conducting relevant elections» is available at CEC website at the link <https://act.cvk.gov.ua/acts/pro-vimogi-do-primishhen-viborchih-komisiy-ta-primishhen-dlya-golosuvannya-normativi-oblashtuvannya-primishhen-dilnichnih-viborchih-komisiy-i-primishhen-dlya-golosuvannya-perelik-ta-normi-zabezpechenn.html>

Resolution Number 385 from October 15, 2020¹² explains the order of election information support, in particular for voters with disabilities:

- Voter Information posters arrangement;
- Fonts and size of letters;
- Information requirements for its readability for different software¹³;
- Background and color requirements.

However, prior to the 2020 local elections, the CEC did not prepare a resolution or explanation on the means and obligatory use by PECs the of “reasonable adjustment” when adjustment is necessary for a specific voter or to improve inaccessible elements polling stations according to requirements of Article 62 in the Election Code.

Because the term “reasonable adjustment” is new for Ukrainian legislation¹⁴, it is doubtful it can be left to the discretion of local authorities without additional explanations from the CEC.

PECs and local authorities shall know the requirements of the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution Number 962 from October 9, 2020 titled, “On Adopting Accessibility Criteria for People with Disability and Other Low-Mobility Groups of Population in the Premises Given to the Precinct Election Commissions at the Usual Polling Stations to Organize their Work and Conduct Voting”¹⁵.

Mentioned in CEC regulatory documents, the Resolution defines important requirements to the organization of the electoral process and its arranging accessibility of polling stations:

- Free vehicle parking for people with disabilities and drivers transporting people with disabilities shall be placed at a distance of no further than 50 meters from the entrance to the building housing the polling station.

¹² Resolution # 383 of October 15, 2020 “On the Procedure of Election Information Support for People with health problems (due to disability, temporary health problems, age)” is available at <https://act.cvk.gov.ua/acts/pro-poryadok-informatsiyogo-zabezpechennya-viboriv-dlya-osib-z-porushennyam-zdorov-ya-u-zv-yazku-z-invalidnistyu-timchasovim-rozladom-zdorov-ya-vikom.html>

¹³ Namely, use of accessible formats that ensure usage of specialized hardware and software for the translation of poster information into Ukrainian sign language, reproduction of information in the audio formats and special text digital format, accessible for people with visual impairments.

¹⁴ The term “reasonable adjustment” was introduced into the Law of Ukraine “On Fundamentals of Social Protection for People with Disability” in 2014 (using the meaning of the UN Convention on the rights of people with disability). “Reasonable adjustment” means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms; full text of the Convention available at https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_g71#n40

¹⁵ Full text of the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers # 962 of October 9, 2020 is available at <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/962-2020-n#Text>

- Parking stations near buildings housing polling stations shall have at least 10 per cent of their capacity (a minimum of one place) for free parking of vehicles driven by drivers with disabilities or drivers transporting people with disabilities.
- Roads to buildings housing polling stations and passages inside the buildings shall meet requirements of the state building codes and display navigation signs.
- Roads to the entrances of buildings housing polling stations' shall be equipped with navigation and information means for people with visual and audio impairments.
- Surfaces of pedestrian walks, pavements and ramps shall be flat. Use of bulk and big construction materials and obstacles in the form of curbs preventing movement in wheelchairs or with crutches, is unacceptable.
- Pedestrian walks' widths with oncoming traffic shall be at least 1.8 meters. Entrance width to the adjacent territory and the width of doors and gate (if available) shall be at least .9 meters.
- If there are stairs on the way to the building housing the polling station, at its entrance, or inside on the way to the polling station premises, they shall have a ramp and have contrast marking of the first and last stair edge.
- Ramp slope shall be no more than eight percent along both sides of all stairs and ramps. There shall be a fence with handrails, ramp handrails shall be placed at a height of .7 and .9 meters and the last handrails elements shall be prolonged horizontally for .3 meters (both up and down).

STEP BY STEP PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

STEP 1

Experimental polling stations were selected in cooperation with the CEC. However, instead of three polling stations, the experiment was conducted in five polling stations. The facility in Bila Tserkva had three polling stations in one large gymnasium.

Project Geography

**City of Kyiv – one polling station;
Bila Tserkva – three polling stations; and,
Troyanivka Village in Volyn region – one polling station**

STEP 2

Polling station conditions were assessed (a general methodology for all stations – see the scheme in Appendix 1), the list of possible changes was prepared, the purchase list of equipment and expendable materials was made and separate budgets were made for every polling station. There were two teams: One working in Kyiv and Bila Tserkva and the second in Troyanivka¹⁶.

STEP 3

An information campaign was conducted with the objective of drawing attention of people with disabilities and encouraging them to come to the polling station. A separate webpage was created <https://election.ffr.org.ua> and motivational videos “Let’s vote!” were produced and distributed. The videos feature people with disabilities communicating about their voting experience, the value of their vote and the importance to make independent and conscious choices while actively participating in political life and complying with safety rules under COVID-19 pandemic conditions during the elections.

STEP 4

Launching of a chat-bot in Telegram with the possibility to get free legal aid on electoral accessibility @FFR_election_bot.

STEP 5

Negotiation with local authorities. In Bila Tserkva, local authorities took on the obligation to adjust and make accessible a lavatory at one of the polling stations.

¹⁶ To conduct the assessment of the polling station current stage preliminary visits to each of the stations were made, measurements taken and reports made focusing on areas that require changes, description of potential changes (without capital works) and budget. The aforementioned scale of works was approved by the teams and donors. Also there were negotiations with local authorities (with the support of CEC) that some works, namely repairs of the lavatory at the polling station # 321130 in Bila Tserkva, will be done by local authorities.

STEP 6

Equipment and material purchase and arranging accessibility for all facilities one to three days before election day¹⁷.

STEP 7

Organizing training for PEC members on communication fundamentals and support of voters that belong to low-mobility groups, including recommendations on proper communication with voters with disabilities and providing them with adequate support three days before election day.

STEP 8

Recruitment of volunteers and monitors and their training for the election day at the selected polling stations. Monitors' tasks included observing PEC members, help with communication and assistance to voters belonging to low-mobility population groups and preparing observation reports.

STEP 9

Report analysis of persons responsible for polling station arrangement, monitors' who spent election day at all selected stations, of the Fight For Right NGO and its members' voting experience and feedback about chat-bot and comments at the organization website.



¹⁷ The training was partially conducted offline with all safety measures being met, as it was impossible to ensure online presence of all PEC members. Another part of the training was held online at the webinar platform. In future the training can be done on a larger scale. However, there is a problem with technical provision of the webinars: not all the PEC members have computers and can independently connect to the platform; some of them should improve their distant learning skills.

MODEL POLLING STATIONS: CONDUCTED WORKS

Bila Tserkva – three polling stations are located in Bila Tserkva Gymnasium #1

The facility is a secondary school – Brovary Educational Association “Bila Tserkva Gymnasium #1” – first level school – located in the central part of the city. The facility is surrounded by multi-story residential buildings on the north and east, and by business on the west and south. Polling stations number 321128, 321129, 321130 are located in three adjacent premises of the facility.

Then (what was missing)

- Entrance is a gate, there is a free passage 900 millimeters wide. The curb is 90 millimeters high (non-standard lowering). The surface requires minor repairs (concreting).

- The passage from the gate to the accessible entrance to the building is barrier-free, although the paving in some places requires repairing or replacing.

- The pedestrian crossing across Dmytrivska Street from the UTOS (Ukrainian Association of the Blind) building at 39 Kozheduba Street) needs to be brought in line with state building codes (restoration of paint, lowering of the sides and installation of traffic lights).

Passage to the accessible entrance is complicated by three curbs 150-200 millimeters high and an uneven asphalt surface.

The number of curbs will be reduced to one after organizing pedestrian traffic on the roadway.

- The passage to the accessible entrance to the building is barrier-free; however, there is a lack of navigation and positioning aids.

- The ramp has a six to eight degree angle, which meets the standards of state building codes. The ramp has no protection from the weather (canopy). Handrails of the ramps need updating. According to regulations, handrails must be arranged on both sides of the ramp. The surface of the ramp is quite slippery, which poses a risk of falls and injuries.

Now (what we did)

- A ramp was designed, produced and installed to overcome the threshold at the accessible entrance with a ramp. The material is lathed pine board, corrugated metal sheet, ship paint, enamel 3 in 1 over metal, abrasive anti-slip tape 50 millimeters wide.

- Potholes in the surface at the entrance to the territory of the gymnasium from Kavkazkyi Alley were asphalted (“cold asphalt”).

- Navigation elements that meet the requirements of state building codes for readability and informativeness were designed, manufactured and installed, including plans, diagrams and signs. The material is foam cardboard, pine bar 50 * 40.

- Four standard temporary ramps were designed, manufactured and installed (2 meters long, 10 percent slope angle, lifting height is up to 0.2 meter). The material is lathed pine board, corrugated metal sheet, ship paint, enamel 3 in 1 over metal, abrasive anti-slip tape 50 millimeters wide.

- An abrasive anti-slip contrast tape was attached. Also, the handrails were painted.

- The front door of the accessible entrance is wide; but it has a threshold 85 millimeters high. Then, a visitor enters a number of consecutively connected rooms of the building and moves within one floor.
- A 50 millimeter wide contrasting abrasive anti-slip tape was attached to the stairs at the entrance in accordance with state building code requirements. 85 millimeter high threshold at the entrance was equipped with a temporary ramp. Inside the room there is a 50 millimeter wide contrasting abrasive anti-slip tape. The tape creates safe passages between three polling stations, registration desks and desks for issuing ballots, voting booths and an accessible lavatory. The voting booths are equipped with elements of accessibility.
- The doorway threshold of the corridor leading to the polling station is 20-40 millimeters high.
- Access points for thresholds in the corridor between polling stations were designed, manufactured and installed.
- There is no inclusive lavatory (with a universal stall). The repairs were being carried out, but they have currently been suspended. There is no inclusive navigation like signs. Attention should be paid to ensuring proper lighting of polling stations in education premises.
- The lavatory had been repaired before election day at the cost borne by the local budget.



Kyiv – Polling Station Number 800064 is located at 9 Kostanaiska Street

The facility is a part of the campus of the National University of Ukraine on Physical Education and Sport. This is an apartment-type dormitory for 275 students, located in the Holosiivskiy District of Kyiv. The facility is sparsely surrounded by medium and multi-story residential buildings. There is a Polling Station Number 800064 on the ground floor of the dormitory.

Then (what was missing)

- Pedestrian pavements in the surrounding territory do not meet state building code requirements in width (1 meter, while the standard is 1.8 meters). Spontaneous parking on pavements makes it impossible to use them and complicates pedestrian circulation, including low-mobility groups. There is no external navigation.

Now (what we did)

- A ramp was designed, manufactured and installed to overcome the threshold at the accessible entrance. The material is lathed pine board, corrugated metal sheet, ship paint, enamel 3 in 1 over metal and abrasive anti-slip tape 50 millimeters wide.

- The passage to entrance of the building is paved with concrete slabs which have seams up to 50 millimeters wide (with permissible 15 millimeters).
The curb is 200 millimeters.
The pavement is worn, and the surface has numerous major irregularities (differences from 0 to 9 degrees per .5 meter).
 - Entrance to the building is 1,100-1,300 mm with both doors open. There is a 220 millimeters high step on the way to the entrance.
 - A visitor enters the polling station immediately after passing the front door. The floor is covered with light-reflecting tiles and becomes particularly slippery when there is water on it.
 - The passage to the lavatory is through a wide door right from the polling station without thresholds. The entrance width and the room size generally meet spatial requirements to an inclusive lavatory.
 - The seams between the concrete slabs at the entrance to the polling station were asphalted ("cold asphalt"). The unobstructed "corridor" of pedestrian circulation more than 1 meter wide was created in front of the entrance to the polling station.
 - Two standard temporary ramps were designed, manufactured and installed (2 meters long, 10 percent slope angle, lifting height is up to .2 meter). The material is lathed pine board, corrugated metal sheet, ship paint, enamel 3 in 1 over metal, abrasive anti-slip tape 50 millimeters wide.
The installation was negotiated and agreed to with police on duty.
 - A 50 millimeter wide anti-slip abrasive tape was attached inside the room. The tape creates secure passages to voter registration and ballot desks, voting booths and an accessible lavatory. Accessible voting booths were installed.
 - The lavatory was equipped with two high-quality stainless steel handrails with a diameter of 32 millimeters, a wall handrail and a folding floor handrail with reinforced rack. The installation was accomplished by means of factory fastenings (dowels) and fixed by a chemical anchor.
- Note: there are no standard handrails on both sides; the washbasin, mirror and hygiene products are located too high and inconvenient for the user of a wheelchair.

Troyanivka Village, Volyn Oblast – Polling Station Number 070715

Village Community Center. The facilities are subordinated to the Troyaniv Village Council. The population of the village is 899. Polling Station Number 070715 is located in the center of the village on the ground floor of the Community Center.

Then (what was missing)

- There are four columns of contrasting color on both sides at the entrance to the building. On the way to the entrance there are two dented and uneven steps 12 centimeters high. The stairs are duplicated by a ramp 90 centimeters wide and the slope is 14 percent. The entrance to the building is equipped with a two-part door; one part is 67 centimeters. Threshold is 1.5 to 2.5 centimeters high.
- The visitor enters a spacious bright hall. The floor is wooden, not slippery. The plastic door has two parts, the open one is 67 centimeters wide. The threshold meets the standard of 1 centimeter.
- Passage to the lavatory is through a wide door right from the polling station, without thresholds. The room is 1.5 meters by 1.8 meters wide. There are not enough handrails on both sides of the toilet.

Now (what we did)

- The ramp and stairs were repaired, the threshold of the front door was lowered, the handrails were installed on both sides of the ramp. Information boards for voter navigation were installed indoors and outdoors.
- An accessible voting booth was installed with additional lighting, a table and a magnifying glass.
- Handrails were installed on both sides of the toilet.



CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

- It was difficult to obtain timely information on technical and material support of polling stations. This support includes the number of voting booths, tables for polling station members and places for observers and ballot boxes. This information was necessary to understand where it is better to place an accessible voting booth and plan arrangement of an accessible polling station;
- Lack of communication from election commission chairs. Lack of information on persons in charge of the facilities where the polling stations are located and those charged with storage, installation, purchase of materials for voting booths and furniture;
- Judging from questions and comments received, it seemed not all commission chairs and members were familiar with the Election Code's requirements for elections accessibility and did not read and review CEC resolutions explaining implementation of these provisions during the 2020 local elections;
- Little attention is paid to arrangement of polling stations – placement of furniture, signs and other items – as well as to movement of people and considering voters' comfort and safety;
- Cabinet of Ministers Resolution Number 962 expands Election Code requirements and in accordance with the standards of state building codes also sets requirements for adjacent territory. It is obvious that given the deadlines for meeting requirements of this resolution (it was adopted on October 9, 2020), local authorities did not have time to familiarize themselves with it and begin addressing on shortcomings of territories adjacent to polling stations. However, according to monitors' observations on election day, the movement of voters to the polling station was complicated by lack of space on pavements where residents of neighboring buildings parked their cars, uneven pavement surface and lack of depressions on pavements.
- Election commissioners do not have sufficient knowledge of ensuring accessibility. They make decisions at their own discretion without taking into consideration low-mobility voters' needs. In Bila Tserkva, members of one polling station decided to protect themselves from drafts and locked the door inside the room. However, they forgot it was the door leading to the only accessible entrance for voters of all three polling stations located in this gymnasium. Election commissioners were convinced they did not close the entrance to their polling station because there was an entrance on the other side. However, this particular entrance was not accessible;
- Monitors pointed out that placing an international accessibility sign on a universal voting booth literally scared voters away. They did not use the booth. In the COVID-19 pandemic conditions at the 2020 local elections it was decided at one of the polling stations to not place a sign on the universal booth to avoid queues and evenly distribute voters in free booths;
- Not all observers representing the parties and candidates understand limits of their authority and some, probably with the best intentions, try to help a voter with a disability or another in need of support or consultation and election commission members do not always remark).

ISSUES REQUIRING FURTHER CONSIDERATION AND EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

- It is necessary to think whether it is possible to avoid booths of different sizes (so-called "ordinary" booths and separate accessible booths) and making all booths universal. That is, larger, without a threshold and equipped with tables and additional lighting;
- Lighting in the voting room and additional lighting in each voting booth;
- Creating a list of guidance points and a short tutorial for election commission members, such as "10 Steps to Make Your Polling Station More Accessible", which each commission member would receive so they can arrange minimum accessibility, including additional lighting, floor markings, navigation signs and installation of necessary software;
- Communication between local authorities, the election commission chair and the local police chief to ensure safety and free movement in the territory adjacent to polling stations, including prohibiting vehicle parking.

PROJECT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

As a result of this project, the Fight For Right team suggests brief guidelines on checking accessibility of polling stations on your own which can be useful for local authorities and electoral activists who work on improving accessibility.

Where the experiment was held, local authorities received:

- Converted, accessible polling stations converted at minimum cost;
- Recommendations and instructions on how conversion occurred; and,
- PEC training and the experience of working at accessible polling stations.

The project team hopes all involved parties understand why and for whom an accessible polling station is necessary, how many inaccessibilities surround people in everyday life and more attention will be paid to accessibility issues in the future which will improve many people's lives.

The project team must also note that due to the general lack of knowledge about accessibility and rights of people with disabilities among all participants of the election process (especially PECs and local authorities), the issue of accessibility is, unfortunately, not a priority in their work.

However, promoting elections accessibility without proper control on behalf of the CEC and other public sector organizations will not become a focus until 2025 without the first step in arranging several accessible polling stations before the 2020 local elections. This is significant and this experience could serve as an example for all election stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on project results, recommendations have been elaborated for various participants in the election process which will help understand how to ensure accessibility.

Recommendations for the Central Election Commission

- Complete the regulatory framework for the explanation of Election Code accessibility issues; Promote methodology for auditing accessibility of polling stations and its approval by the Cabinet of Ministers;
- Adopt a resolution on reasonable accommodation;
- Explain layout of facilities at a polling station, taking into consideration the flow of voters, including low-mobility groups;
- Develop training materials for raising voter awareness of accessible elections;
- Develop training for election commissioners on their responsibility for accessible elections; and,
- Assist local authorities with timely audits of polling station accessibility with preparation of further action.
- Audit accessibility of all premises used for elections;
- Based on the audit results, compile lists of accessible, partially inaccessible and completely inaccessible voting premises;
- Seek replacement for premises that cannot be made accessible;
- Draw up a roadmap for local authorities to improve the accessibility of premises by 2025; and,
- Invite local organizations of people with disabilities to conduct an audit and compile and implement an action map.

Recommendations for Election Commission Chairs and Members

- Appoint a person responsible for accessibility during preparation for elections and on election day;
- Train election commissioners in the basics of communication and support for voters belonging to low-mobility groups; and,
- Raise awareness of election commissioners about human rights and Ukraine's commitments.

Recommendations for Activists and Civil Society Organizations

- Actively assess accessibility of polling stations and assist in drawing up action maps; and,
- Conduct information and education campaigns and encourage people with disabilities to actively defend their voting right and vote in every election.

APPENDIX 1. CHECKING ACCESSIBILITY OF THE POLLING STATION - A SELF-CHECKING TOOL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND ELECTION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Facility	Required size and configuration according to State Building Code B.2.2-40:2018. Inclusive buildings and structures ¹⁸	Actual size and configuration	Conclusion: Accessible/ NOT accessible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adjacent territory - entrances and pedestrian zone, presence of exits or ramps, condition of the pavement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Entrance gate is 900 millimeters and more; the pavement surface is level, without holes. Pedestrian routes with oncoming traffic are at least 1.8 meters wide. 	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● External stairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The stairs must be level and solid with a rough surface. The steps must be at least .4 meters wide, the rises must not be higher than .12 meters. The staircase must have at least three but not more than 18 steps. Single steps must be replaced with a ramp. 	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Entrance group – accessible entrance or ramp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The angle of the outer ramp and on traffic routes must be no more than eight percent. The ramp with one-way traffic must be 1.2 meters wide; with two-way traffic - 1.8 meters wide. Maximum height of the ramp lift must not exceed .8 meters. The ramp must be equipped with handrails on two sides, have a non-slip surface and preferably be equipped with a protection from the weather – a canopy. It is not allowed to use swing doors, revolving doors and turnstiles in the routes of low-mobility groups. If there is a threshold at the entrance, its height must not exceed .2 meters. All thresholds must be contrasting. 	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Location of the polling station on the first (or ground) floor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If the polling station is located on the second floor or in the basement, an elevator must be available, according to requirements of DSTU (State Building Standard of Ukraine, EN 81-70). 	●	●

¹⁸ Available at https://dbn.co.ua/load/normativy/dbn/dbn_v_2_2_40/1-1-0-1832

- Barriers inside
 - Interior passages and doors must be at least .9 of a meter wide.
 - Thresholds must be not more than .2 meter high. In other cases, thresholds must be duplicated by bevels and ramps not more than .3 meter long.
 - The floor surface must not be slippery, there must be a guide tape and/or abrasive non-slip tape.
 - The lighting of the room must be sufficient; it's necessary to increase it by one level compared to the requirements of State Building Code B.2.5-23 and State Building Code B.2.5-28. The difference in lighting between adjacent rooms and areas must be no more than 1:4.

- Accessible (universal stall) lavatory
 - The size of a universal lavatory: width - 1.65 meters and depth - 1.8 meters (if it is located in the common lavatory). Such a stall must have a toilet with a bidet function or a faucet with a hygienic shower connected to the toilet.
 - The sink is attached so that there is the space of .7 meter under it, and its upper surface is at a height of .8-.85 meter from the floor.
 - The .9 meter wide door must open to the outside. There must be an .8 meter high horizontal handle on the inner side of the door.

- Navigation signs
 - Presence of tactile accessibility elements for the visually impaired. Tactile strips and tactile information signs.
 - Visual information must be placed on a contrasting background and the size of the signs must correspond to viewing distance.
 - Information boards, informers and indicators, or IBII, must be present in an enlarged font, in contrast to the font colors and must be located at a height of 1.20-1.60 meters, convenient for free visual perception. Indicators of movement direction must be visible in relation to each other. IBII background, on which fonts or graphic symbols are applied, must be matted without reflection and glare.

- Accessible voting booth
- The booth for secret ballot must have at least 110 centimeters wide entrance, 110 - 120 centimeters deep, in which there must be a table or a shelf not more than 75 centimeters high, with at least 67 centimeters space from below suitable for a wheelchair. Such a booth must not have thresholds and must be marked with an accessibility sign.
- Lighting
- Lighting of premises and communications should be increased by one degree in comparison with the requirements of State Building Code B.2.5-23 "Design of electrical equipment for civil facilities" and State Building Code B.2.5-28 "Natural and artificial lighting". The difference in lighting between adjacent rooms and areas must not be more than 1:4.

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APPENDIX 2. IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY OF POLLING STATIONS: PHOTOREPORT



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Project, Production and Assembly:
Universal Design Studio ORFO,
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ORFO universal design
& inclusive spaces

POLLING STATION NUMBER 800064

Dormitory Number 5 of the National University of Ukraine on Physical Education and Sport, 9 Kostanaiska Street, Kyiv, 03118

- Inclusive lavatory was equipped (installation of two high-quality stainless steel handrails with a diameter of 32 millimeters, a wall handrail and a folding floor handrail with reinforced rack). The installation was by means of factory fastenings (dowels) and fixed by a chemical anchor.

Before



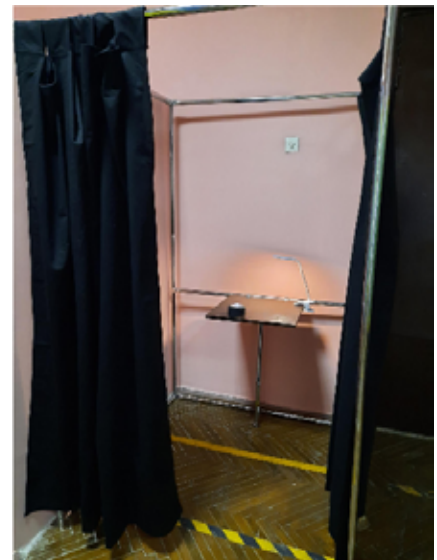
After



- Two standard temporary ramps were designed, manufactured and installed.



- A 50 millimeter wide anti-slip abrasive tape was attached inside the room. Inclusive voting booth was installed.



- Navigation and information elements were designed, manufactured and installed.



- Obstacles on the way to the polling station premises were removed.

Before



After



POLLING STATIONS NUMBERS 321128, 321129, 321130

Bila Tserkva Gymnasium #1

56 Yaroslav Mudryi Street, Bila Tserkva, Kyiv Region, 09100

- Potholes at the entrance of the gymnasium from Kavkazkyi Alley were asphalted ("cold asphalt").

Before



After



- Navigation elements were designed, manufactured and installed.



- A 50 millimeter wide anti-slip abrasive tape was attached inside the room.



- Four standard temporary ramps were designed, manufactured and installed.



POLLING STATION NUMBER 070715

Village Community Center, Meeting Hall

Troyanivka Village, Luhova Street, Volyn Region, 44601

Expertise: Natalia Shysholik, Andriy Rybachuk, Iryna Korniychuk and Andriy Maksymchuk

- Unimpeded entrance to the polling station is arranged.

Before



After



- Navigation and Information elements were installed.

