



Hear. See. Engage.

Summary of Global Disability Legislation

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The State of Hearing Accessibility Legislation

Most countries have some form of equality legalization for those with disabilities; however, the areas of guaranteed equality may be limited to education, government services, or employment only. It may not include private services, or all public services.

Many countries do not have specific laws requiring accommodations for those with hearing disabilities. Several countries have laws requiring access to information for public services, but this requirement is usually met with written material (such as closed captioning on government-produced videos). The provisioning of audio equipment is usually not required, especially for private venues.

Alternatively, some countries provide subsidies for individuals to purchase products to assist with their disabilities. This usually covers part of the cost of hearing aids or other personal hearing amplification devices. There usually is no subsidy for businesses to provide equipment.

Enforcement of accessibility laws may be lacking in some countries. Even when a country has an appropriate legislation, they may not have the funding to enforce the legislation, or the appropriate oversight measures are not in place to ensure enforcement.

Some countries have special accessibility enforcement groups for ensuring public and/or private services are as accessible as possible. Complaints can be filed with these groups if a location or service is inaccessible; however, not all enforcement groups have the legal backing to do much beyond make recommendations on how to improve accessibility.

Summary of Legislation

Below is a summary of disability legislation for a selection of countries.

Many of these countries have adopted the [UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#), but implementation and enforcement per country varies.

Australia

- Guidelines called **disability standards** are created by the legislature to enforce fair treatment of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are specifically protected against discrimination in employment, even if they work on commission or as a contractor. Persons with disabilities are also protected in the areas of education, and access to locations and services.
- The **Australian Human Rights Commission** has been created to help promote, monitor and improve Australian disability standards.
- **Hearing Augmentation Systems** are required in many buildings, and can include loops, FM and IR technologies.

Read More:

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)

Canada

- The Canadian Human Rights Act **forbids discrimination based on disability**, as well as other categories such as gender and race.

- The **Canadian Human Rights Commission** was created to promote the Canadian Human Rights Act and to ensure that it is enforced and upheld. Complaints may be filed, and the commission will then **investigate the claim**, and (if appropriate) demand compensation for the victim and/or a change in behavior from the discriminator.
- In 2018, Canada is expecting to heavily update their disability legislation, which will include **access to information laws** for the internet and beyond.

Read More:

[Constitution: Charter of Rights & Freedoms \(1982\)](#)
[The Canadian Human Rights Act; and the Employment Equity Act](#)
[ODA Committee – Ontarians with Disability Act](#)
[What will Canada’s new accessibility law in 2018 look like?](#)

China

- The **China Disabled Persons’ Federation (CDPF)** is a national organization for individuals with disabilities that aims to represent and safeguard the rights and interests of disabled people.
- The **Disabled Persons Protection Law** promises the right to work and protection for anyone with a disability. Jobs are created and specifically reserved for those with disabilities via an enforced quota system.
- **Accommodations** will be provided to help individuals with disabilities access any services or information. Some services, such as public transport, rehabilitation services, or legal aid, may be offered to individuals with certain disabilities for free.

Read More:

[Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Disabled Persons](#)
[The China Disabled Persons’ Federation \(CDPF\)](#)
[Guide to Discrimination Law in the PRC \(PDF\)](#)

Finland

- According to the Finnish Constitution, **everyone is equal** and should not be treated differently, including those with disabilities.
- A person unable to full provide for themselves has the **right to subsistence and care**, including medical care. Interpretation and assistive devices can be arranged.
- Everyone has the **right to education** that is appropriate for their ability and special needs.

Read More:

[Constitution \(2000\)](#)
[Questionnaire on the Provision of Support to Persons with Disabilities \(DOC\)](#)

France

- The **Services and Supports for Persons with Disabilities Act** was created in 2005 to promote equal rights for those with disabilities.
- Although efforts to encourage locations to be more accessible, these efforts have not seen widespread acceptance and enforcement. **Many locations are inaccessible** to those with disabilities.
- People with disabilities must make up **6% of workplace staff** and be provided reasonable accommodations, or the employer will be fined.

Read More:

[The 2005 Disabilities Policy In France \(PDF\)](#)

[Code Penal; Code de Travail; Loi no. 91-663 \(July 13, 1991\) \(French\)](#)

[France -- Decree no. 98-543 \(French\)](#)

[France -- Decree no. 99-756 \(French\)](#)

[Decree no. 99-757 \(French\)](#)

Germany

- The German constitution guarantees that "**no one may be disadvantaged** because of his handicap."
- German law protections for people who **are disabled by at least 50%** (or otherwise determined) for at least six months in employment and other areas.
- Those with hearing disabilities can **request subsidized hearing assistance devices** under the integration support of German social code.

Read More:

[German Constitution \(1949, amendments to 1998\)](#)

[Constraints in access to assistive technologies — and communication — for hard-of-hearing people in the Russian Federation and in Germany](#)

Hungary

- Hungary's constitution promises that the citizens of Hungary **will have the support required** to live with disability.
- Hungary's disabled will have accessible **access to information** about public interests or disability benefits. The Information is considered accessible if the person living with disability can perceive it and if it can be correctly understood.
- Caretakers of the disabled person will be provided with **education on how to best provide care**.

Read More:

[Hungary Constitution](#)

[Disability Act](#)

[OHCHR Disability Summary](#)

India

- All children with disabilities have the **right to a free education** until they are 18 years old.
- **Accessible accommodations are not common**, including a lack of closed captioning and sign language interpretation.
- **Preferential treatment for the allotment of land** will be given to those with disabilities for houses, businesses, research centers, schools, and other beneficial centers.

Read More:

[Persons with Disabilities \(Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights & Full Participation\) Act, 1995 \(no. 1 of 1996\) Hearing in India – All Aspects \(PDF\)](#)

Ireland

- Those with **substantial, long-term, or progressive ailments** are considered disabled. Individuals with HIV, cancer or multiple sclerosis are considered disabled as soon as diagnosed.
- **Assistive devices** may be covered by the Health Service Executive scheme.
- Employers are required to **accommodate disabled employees**, and the government will take progressive action to hire those with disabilities.

Read More:

[Equal Status Act, 2000](#)

[Disability Act 2005](#)

[Definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010](#)

[HSE Schemes](#)

[OHCHR Disability Accommodation Form](#)

Israel

- The Equal Rights for People with Disabilities Law was created in order to "to enable [a disabled person] to live **with maximum independence, in privacy and in dignity, realizing her/his potential....**"
- Communications Basket for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired provides for a **reimbursement for assistive hearing devices**, including personal amplifiers and FM systems.
- The **Commission for Equal Rights for People with Disabilities** was created to promote and enforce equality.

Read More:

[Equal Rights for People with Disabilities Law, 5758-1998](#)

[Summary of rights for the deaf and hard of hearing](#)

Japan

- In 1993, the Law for Promotion of Research, Development and Distribution of Technical Aids and Equipment was created to help **provide technical assistance** for those with disabilities.
- Employers must accommodate employees with disabilities and about **2% of their workforce** should be made of disabled individuals.
- Japan was one of the later countries to develop disability rights legislation, only **declaring those with disabilities must be treated equal** in 2014.

Read More:

[Japan -- Human Resources Development Promotion Law Education, Vocational Guidance and Training \(Japanese\)](#)
[List of Japanese disability laws](#)

South Korea

- The **National Information Society Agency (NIA)** provides subsidies for assistive devices for hearing impairment for as much as 80% of cost.
- Employers should not discriminate, and those with disabilities are expected to **provide self-support as much as they are capable**.
- The government believes that students can become more self-reliant with **equal educational opportunity and training** through special education. Students must be provided appropriate access and education for their abilities.

Read More:

[Welfare Law for Persons with Disabilities \(no. 4179, Dec. 30, 1989\)](#)
[Act Relating to Employment Promotion of the Handicapped \(no. 4129, Jan. 15, 1990\)](#)
[The Special Education Promotion Law \(amended on Jan. 7, 1994\)](#)
[Disability assistance summary for South Korea \(Doc\)](#)

South Africa

- The bill of rights states that everyone, including those with disabilities, should have protection and benefits according to the law. **Discrimination is prohibited**.
- South Africa admits to challenges with the inadequate provision of appropriate assistive technologies, although they have written **The Policy on Reasonable Accommodation and Assistive Devices for the Public Service** to help address these issues.
- Income support is available through **disability grants**, but this program is not well-known throughout the country

Read More:

[Constitution-Bill of Rights \(1996\)](#)

[Employment Equity Bill \(B60-98\)](#)

[Portfolio Committee Amendments to Employment Equity Bill](#)

[OHCHR Summary of Disability Legislation](#)

Sweden

- People living with certain functional impairments (such as mental retardation, autism, or other intellectual impairments) not due to aging are **eligible for assistance and financial support**. This does not cover hearing assistance.
- The 2009 Discrimination Act **prevents discrimination during employment and education**. It applies to disabilities and other potential discriminatory factors, such as gender.
- The **Disability Ombudsman** will ensure that employers do not discriminate against those with disability.

Read More:

[Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments \(SFS 1993: 387\)](#)

[Ban against Discrimination against Disabled Persons in Working Life \(Law 1999:132\)](#)

[Sweden Disability Policy](#)

Switzerland

- The Swiss Constitution declares that everyone, including those with disabilities, has the **right to assistance when in need**, the right for a basic education that meets any special education needs, and calls for the elimination of any inequalities.
- The UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been adopted by Switzerland, however **they do not have a process for investigating complaints**.
- Some political videos are available in sign language to provide clarity of information.

Read More:

[Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation](#)

[Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

Thailand

- Disability legislation and advocacy is run by the **National Office for Promotion and Development of Life Quality of Disabled Persons**.
- Employers **must employ disabled workers** where appropriate.
- Disabled **individuals must have access to public buildings**.

Read More:

[Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act \(2007\)](#)

[Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Thailand](#)

Turkey

- Persons with Disabilities can **apply for financial assistance** when buying assistive equipment, including listening systems.
- Disabled individuals should have **access to buildings, employment, and other services**.
- While written into law in 2006, **disability policies have not been heavily enforced**.

Read More:

[Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Conference of the State Parties \(word\)](#)

[Disabled Law Itself a Handicap for Disabled \(May 2006\)](#)

[On Social Protection Programs Regarding Persons With Disabilities](#)

United Kingdom

- People with disabilities have the **right to access** employment, education, location access, promotions, and public functions.
- The **Disability Rights Commission** enforces the rights of those with disabilities, and promotes the rights of the disabled in the UK.
- The right to access includes the right to auxiliary aids and services, including accessible information, and **assistive listening devices**. This legislation was updated in 2018 to have more specific standards.

Read More:

[Disability Discrimination Act 1995 \(PDF\)](#)

[UK Equality Act 2010: Disability Information](#)

[Disability Rights Commission Act 1999 \(*Repealed\)](#)

[Definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010](#)

[Northern Ireland, Disability Discrimination Regulations 1996](#)

United States

- The **American's with Disabilities Act (ADA)** provides rules for employers, public accommodations, transportation, and phone communication to make services and locations more accessible for those with disabilities.
- The ADA can be **enforced in court**, and the Department of Justice will ensure a business makes adjustments for any complaints.
- Businesses can receive **tax relief** for keeping their facilities in line with the ADA building code.

Read More:

[Introduction to the Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) 1990](#)

[Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended in 2008](#)

[ADA Standards for Accessible Design](#)

[U.S. Department of Education: Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)

[ADA Standards for Accessible Design -- Table 219.3 Receivers for Assistive Listening Systems](#)

[Tax Incentives Packet on the Americans with Disabilities Act](#)

[United States Department of Justice: Justice Department Makes the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design Available to Online Viewers Nationwide](#)

[OHCHR Response from USA](#)