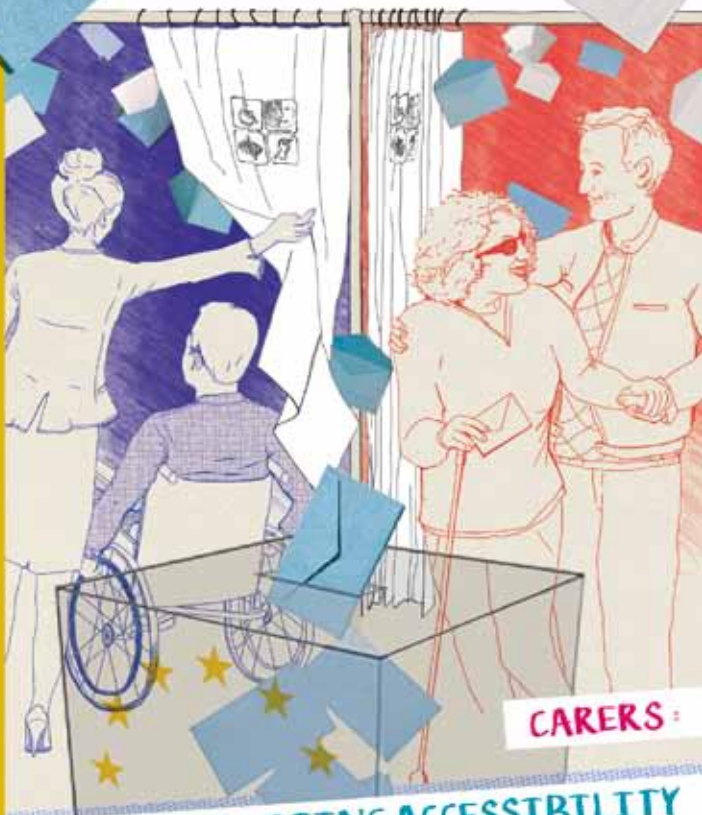




handéo

Voting and Disability



CARERS :

**PROMOTING VOTING ACCESSIBILITY
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

Your go-to guide of good ideas
to facilitate voting for people with disabilities





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The Handéo association pursues the following aims:

Through Handéo, its members wish to take concrete action to ensure the effectiveness of the right of people with disabilities to live in society. Handéo's actions fall within the scope of the implementation of the international Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ratified by France in 2010 and the European Union in 2011. To fulfil this mission, Handéo:

- ☑ Structures, coordinates and develops the service offering targeted towards people with disabilities, at all life stages and whatever the cause of their disability: personal and household services, mobility services, services associated with technical aids, social and medico-social establishments, etc.
- ☑ Guarantees quality services providing appropriate support tailored to the needs and expectations of people with disabilities (and the friends and family who care for them) by issuing Cap'Handéo approval and certification.
- ☑ Produces knowledge about carers and financial allowances to empower people with disabilities, through the French national carers observatory.

This guide aims to provide advice to making voting easier.

It is not intended to be exhaustive but rather offers some helpful ideas and tips to improve your involvement in elections by using a home care provider.

Enabling citizenship for all

This guide was produced through collaborative research into the “need for carers in order to facilitate voting” (Handéo, 2018).

By creating the Handéo association, its founders committed to a common goal: empowering people with disabilities, at all life stages and whatever the cause of their disability, by mobilising disability, home care and other support stakeholders. This ambition relies on providing support to people with disabilities to exercise their citizenship, notably through voting.

In France, the citizenship of people with disabilities is fully recognised by the French law of 11th February 2005 on “the equality of rights and opportunities, participation and citizenship for people with disabilities”.

One of the fundamental principles of this law is to enable people with disabilities to take control of their own lives in a society which advocates fraternity and equal rights.

Promoting voting by people with disabilities is one way of changing society to make it more inclusive. This guide is an invitation to take a step in this direction both by people with disabilities and those in their circle of support who can assist them.

This short guide is designed to be readily accessible to all. It can be used for instance for awareness-raising, information and support actions for people with disabilities, either during or outside of election periods, whether they have had their disability since birth, acquired it before the age of 60 or after 60.

Émeric Guillerrou

President of Handéo



Part 1

Understanding home care providers

1•1 What are carers?

A carer can be a **family member** (parent, child, sibling, etc.), a **non-family member** (friend, neighbour, work colleague) or a **professional** (care worker, social worker, etc.).

Carers are a way of offsetting the consequences of disability. They allow disabled people to pursue their life goals and thrive as citizens.

In this respect, carers contribute to the exercise of disabled people's fundamental rights.

To find a professional carer, it is possible to call upon "home care providers", which offer care and support services in the person's home. They also come under the umbrella of "personal and household services".

1•2 What are the main missions of home care providers?

- ➡ To provide assistance in essential activities of daily living (help and stimulation in washing, dressing, elimination, eating, etc.).
- ➡ To maintain and develop the person's autonomy, social and civic activities, as well as links with their family and friends.
- ➡ To take into account the person's educational and parental support needs.
- ➡ To help with everyday household tasks (such as housekeeping) and administrative tasks.
- ➡ To accompany them when moving around their home and outside the home: walks, help with mobility and transport, accompanying them to the polling station, etc.
- ➡ To supervise the person to protect them against danger to themselves or others and against the risk of wandering (getting lost).
- ➡ To support family and friends who provide care.



Point of vigilance

Home care services have financial implications. In France, the costs can be covered (either fully or partially) for instance by different allowances, in particular the '*prestation de compensation du handicap*' (PCH), '*allocation compensatrice pour tierce personne*' (ACTP), '*allocation d'éducation de l'enfant handicapé*' (AEEH), '*majoration pour tierce personne*' (MTP), or a '*pension d'invalidité*'. Financial aid can also be allocated through the '*allocation personnalisée à l'autonomie*' (APA) or the statutory social benefit granted by the departmental councils for home help.



It is recommended that needs related to voting be anticipated by including them in benefit or compensation applications.

1•3 Preconceived ideas about home care providers

- ➔ **Home care providers only work with elderly people**

FALSE

Certain home care providers also work with people with disabilities, whatever their disability or age.

- ➔ **Home care providers only cover housework**

FALSE

The staff employed by home care providers are not all housekeepers. Others have qualifications (in France ADVF¹, AVS², AES, etc.) and other skills enabling them to perform tasks related to your situation.

- ➔ **Home care providers only work in the home**

FALSE

Home care providers' staff can help you to get around and attend activities outside your home (leisure activities, work, health, holidays, etc.).

¹ *Assistant de vie aux familles* (family life assistant)

² *Auxiliaire de Vie Sociale* (social care worker). This qualification has been replaced by the *Diplôme d'Etat Accompagnant Educatif et Social* (AES). These professionals provide social care services on an everyday basis to help offset the consequences of disability of any origin or type.

Part 2

If you're 18 or over, you can vote!

In Europe, all disabled people have the right to vote in Austria, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Ireland, Denmark, Croatia, Latvia, Spain, France and Germany.



- **Examples of making voting more accessible**

Certain establishments and medical and social services also contribute to facilitating voting for people with disabilities:

- ✓ By raising awareness among their circle of family and friends.
- ✓ By instigating the creation of easy read documents for candidates' agendas and websites. For instance, in France, since the European elections in 2019, candidates can publish their election manifesto online in easy read on a dedicated website.
- ✓ By encouraging candidates to adapt their oral expression during meetings to make them more readily accessible (translation into sign language or easy ready for example).
- ✓ By organising role play, recreating a polling station.
- ✓ By organising civic workshops to familiarise participants with the different aspects of citizenship and the electoral process.

These actions could also be implemented or consolidated by home care providers.

Part 3

Stages in the voting process

3 • 1 Before voting

1. INFORMATION CAMPAIGN



2. TELEVISED DEBATE



3. RECEIVE POLL CARD, ELECTORAL AND CAMPAIGN DOCUMENTS AT HOME (manifestos, ballot papers, agendas)



3•2 On polling day



Source: Translated from the original French version in the guide produced by the Fédération APAJH entitled "Un vote accessible et autonome pour chacun"

What to do on polling day in France

- Stage 1: On polling day, I must remember to take proof of identity (in France this can be my national disability card) and my poll card. On arrival I show my proof of identity and my poll card¹.
- Stage 2: There are envelopes placed on the table. I take an envelope.
- Stage 3: On the table there are papers with the names of the candidates I can vote for: these are called ballot papers. I must take at least two different ballot papers so that my vote is confidential.
- Stage 4: I enter the polling booth and close the curtain. I choose the ballot paper with the name of the candidate I want to vote for. I place the ballot paper in the envelope. If I do not place a ballot paper in the envelope, I cast a blank vote. If I spoil or deface the ballot paper or mark it with a sign revealing my identity, or if I insert more than one ballot paper in the envelope, my vote is invalid and will not be counted. I leave the booth.
- Stage 5: I show my proof of identity and my poll card². I place the envelope in the ballot box.
- Stage 6: I sign the electoral register.

NB: certain polling stations are equipped with an electronic voting machine. It must be accessible to disabled people. The rest of the procedure remains identical.

^{1 & 2} In communes with less than 1000 inhabitants, it is possible to vote with only your poll card.

3•3 After voting

In France, most elections comprise two rounds of voting¹.

1. RESULT OF THE FIRST ROUND



2. SECOND ROUND, ONE OR TWO WEEKS LATER



3. RESULTS ANNOUNCED ON THE TELEVISION : ELECTION OF THE CANDIDATE(S)

¹ With the exception of European elections, referendums, or if one candidate obtains an absolute majority in the first round in presidential, municipal, legislative, departmental and regional elections.



Part 4

Why seek support from a care provider for voting?

4•1 To help me with administrative aspects

➔ To ensure that I am registered to vote

To register to vote or check that you are registered, you can call upon a home care provider. In France you can check your registration status on the website: www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/services-en-ligne-et-formulaires/ISE.



➡ To check that my identity document is valid



On polling day, you will be asked to show ID¹.

➡ To ask another person to vote for me (proxy vote)

Proxy voting is not possible in all countries. In France, to vote by proxy you must apply in writing. You can download the form online² or pick it up from a police station, gendarmerie or district court. It must be signed in the presence of a judicial police officer. If you have a severe illness or disability which prevents you from getting to one of these places, you can request that a judicial police officer, agent or delegate comes to your home to complete your proxy application.



In France, if you are under guardianship, you cannot appoint as your proxy your guardian or any person who hosts you, cares for you or is in anyway responsible for you in a social, medico-social or health establishment, or who works to support you.

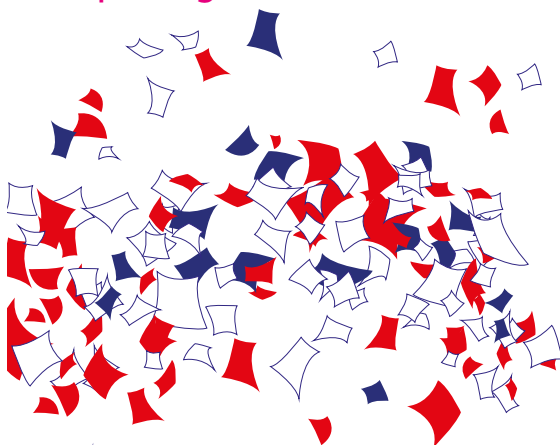
¹ In France, the accepted identity documents are: valid passport, national identity card, driving license, health insurance card, hunting license, etc.

² The form can be downloaded from the website <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/R12675>

4•2 To help me understand the candidate's manifestos

The candidates' manifestos and the televised debates are not always very accessible or readily understood. You can call upon the services of a home care provider which can organise an information meeting on how elections work and the different parties or candidates.

4•3 To help me get to the polling station



To show me where the polling station is and reassure me

Voting can be a source of stress (times, places) and may cause you to feel under pressure (for instance at busy times). You can call upon a home care provider to help you prepare and be organised. A support worker can also accompany you to the polling station (for example to remind you of the different stages in the voting process).



➡ To help me get there

You may wish to make the trip to the polling station in an electric or manual wheelchair but there are obstacles on the way, for instance, the pavements are not suitable, there are kerbs, slopes, etc. You can call upon a home care provider to have a professional carer help you get there safely (help you to reposition yourself in your wheelchair after going up a slope, push your wheelchair, help you to go up and down kerbs, etc.).



There is a slightly dangerous slope for wheelchairs on the way. I'm there mainly to make sure she is safe.

Testimony from a support worker



Upon request, prior to polling day the care provider can also locate parking spaces, measure the distance to the polling station, identify the presence of stairs, steps or any other architectural obstacles.

Furthermore, whatever your disability, voting has a strong social dimension and some people like to meet up for such events which bring the neighbourhood to life. Certain times of the day are therefore very busy. The time slot allocated by the care provider should therefore be well chosen, taking into account your preference and your difficulties.



Point of vigilance

Between 10:30 am and 12 noon and between 1:30 pm and 3 pm are often busier and therefore more complicated times.

4•4 To help me cast my vote



Point of vigilance

The presiding officer of the polling station takes all useful measures to facilitate autonomous voting by people with disabilities.

➞ Taking ballot papers

The lack of photo on ballot papers for instance can make it difficult to select the ballot paper of the candidate you wish to vote for, especially if you cannot read. If this is the case, you can ask a home care provider to help you choose the right ballot paper on polling day.

Another example is the lack of braille on ballot papers or of a voting machine with speech synthesis, which can be limiting for people who are visually impaired. If you are not under guardianship, you can seek help in voting from a home care provider.

A third example, for people who cannot use their upper limbs, except if you are under guardianship, professional carers from home care providers can help you to vote (for instance taking several ballot papers as well as the envelope before entering the polling booth).



It's my carer who takes the ballot papers and the envelope, who puts the ballot paper in the envelope, then places it in the ballot box.

Testimony of a disabled person



➡ **Placing the ballot paper in the envelope**

For voters who are unable to place the ballot paper in the envelope due to proven motor or visual impairment, you can seek help from a home care provider.

You and your support worker can enter the accessible polling booth together to ensure your vote remains confidential.



There's a so-called "accessible" booth where I vote, but it's not exactly luxurious, it's a real squeeze to fit two people in!

Testimony of a disabled person



➡ Placing the ballot paper in the ballot box

Smaller people or people in wheelchairs may find it difficult to place their ballot paper in the ballot box if it is positioned too high: a professional carer can help you or can do it for you if you are unable to yourself.

“

The ballot box is too high for my mother to slide the envelope into [...]. So I did it for her.

Testimony of a family carer

”



➡ Signing the electoral register

If you cannot sign the electoral register yourself, in France you can ask a carer to sign on your behalf. In this case, after his/her signature, the carer must write the words: "The voter is unable to sign" (art. L. 64 of the French Electoral Code).



When the carer signs for me, I ask him to write my name in capitals.

Testimony of a disabled person





I vote with my carers (...). The person needs to help me sign using my mouth by placing the pen in my mouth and holding it if necessary.

Testimony of a disabled person



I have a stamp with my initials. Every time I need to sign, I give the stamp to my carer.

Testimony of a disabled person



Point of vigilance

It is recommended that the support worker who is going to help you during the voting process takes his/her own poll card (L. 64 of the French Electoral Code).

4•5 The person must respect your freedom of choice

Whatever assistance is provided by another person (professional, family or friend, volunteer, etc.), including if this help involves explaining the parties' political agendas or defining political stances, your decision to vote or not to vote is yours alone. If you vote, it is up to you who you vote for.



Support workers are bound by the duty of confidentiality and neutrality.

Testimony of a disabled person



It is essential to trust your carer. Professional support workers from home care providers must be attentive to your needs and expectations. They must provide you with the necessary attention and listen to you.

You have the right to express your opinions openly or indeed to keep your choice confidential.



My carers have always respected my vote. They just help me to cast it. (...) I also choose who I want to go and vote with (...) based on our affinity and the values we share.

Testimony of a disabled person



- ➡ If you wish to keep your choice secret, below are various methods developed by people with disabilities:

Method n°1

- ✓ Gather the ballot papers that you have received at home, with help from a carer.
- ✓ Ask the carer to place them in a row on a table (you can ask him/her to place them in a specific order).
- ✓ Memorise the position of the ballot paper you have chosen.
- ✓ Then ask the carer to carefully stack all the ballot papers in a pile, keeping them in the same order.
- ✓ Later, tell another carer which ballot paper you have chosen (number in the pile).
- ✓ Ask him/her to place it in an "ordinary" envelope.
- ✓ On polling day, take this envelope with you and ask your carer to take out the ballot paper and place it in the "official" envelope.

Method n°2

- ✓ On polling day, ask the carer who is helping you to take several ballot papers (those indicated by you) and an envelope.
- ✓ Enter the polling booth with the carer.
- ✓ Ask him/her to present all the ballot papers in a fan facing you (this will only work with a limited number of ballot papers).
- ✓ Tell him/her which one you have chosen (for example, the second from the right).
- ✓ Ask him/her to fold it and place it in the envelope and it's in the bag!

4•6 To explain the result of the elections to me

The election results can also be explained to you by professional support workers from home care providers.



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See also practical guides:

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“Comprendre le handicap pour mieux accompagner les enfants et adolescents autistes”

Available for download at handeo.fr



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