Overview of the Draft National Broadband Policy 2013

The Department of Communications has initiated a consultation on a new Broadband Policy for South Africa through the publication of a draft Broadband Policy in the Government Gazette on 3 April 2013. Comments may be submitted to the Department until midnight on 15 May 2013.

This overview is not intended to be comprehensive and focuses on the actual policy indications (reproduced largely verbatim) made as well as implementation and institutional arrangements.

[Full copy of the draft Policy](#)

Vision: To ensure universal access to reliable, affordable and secure broadband infrastructure and services by 2020 and stimulate sustainable uptake and usage.

Definition of Broadband for South Africa: In South Africa broadband is defined as an always available, multimedia capable interactive network connection with characteristics, as determined by Ministerial Policy and published in Regulations by the Authority from time to time.

Implementation

- A broadband mapping exercise will provide guidance in identifying broadband infrastructure gaps in all nine provinces.
- A National Broadband Strategy will be developed in collaboration with all key stakeholders. The strategy will include the implementation of programmes aimed at advancing penetration such as schools connectivity, health facilities connectivity, rural connectivity, and connectivity of government institutions at national, provincial and local level; and the provision of public access points.
- A Broadband Implementation Plan which details how various initiatives will be supported and implemented will also be developed.
- An impact assessment on the effectiveness of the policy should be conducted on annual basis.

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Key Policies:

Key policy area	Policy
Access to international backbone networks	[2.3.1.3] Whilst the ECA has made it easier to land and operate submarine cables in South Africa, further interventions are required to bring about further competition in the provision of international bandwidth. Government's target is to ensure that there is sufficient international bandwidth capacity by 2020 and beyond, to meet the growing demand as more individuals and enterprises would be connected to the broadband grid. [2.3.1.4] It is not government's intention to crowd out private investment in submarine cable, but rather to bring about equitable access to international bandwidth capacity by all operators. In this regard, the policy seeks to; a) Encourage and promote private sector investment in international backbone networks. b) In the event of market failure, government will intervene to ensure competitively priced international bandwidth availability. c) All submarine cable landing stations are declared essential facilities and shall be accessible transparent fair and non-discriminatory.
Access to National Backbone Networks	[2.3.2.1]…In terms of this policy, Government shall play a critical role in the deployment of broadband backbone networks especially in rural and underserviced areas, which are regarded as not being commercially viable by operators. [2.3.2.2] Furthermore, this policy advocates for the deployment of wholesale backbone networks by the public and private sector players. The wholesale networks will be operated on open access and non-discriminatory principles to allow innovation and competition by service providers in the provision of services to consumers. The Authority will develop requisite wholesale regulations to support service-based competition. [2.3.2.3] Telkom will provide the bulk of the core backbone infrastructure. Telkom will be supported by other state-owned companies and the private sector.
Local Access Networks	[2.3.3.2] Even though the rapid deployment of wireless and mobile access networks has contributed to the increasing penetration of communication services into the poor rural areas, in the long term, the delivery of fixed line services to households and businesses still remains a key element in delivering true broadband speeds that are necessary for quadruple-play and multi-play applications. [2.3.3.3] In this regard, this policy requires the deployment of optic fibre to the premises and homes in the long term. To complement this, requisite radio frequency spectrum will be made available for

	mobile broadband applications and to support other last mile access technologies in the short term.

[2.3.3.4] Despite the Policy pronouncements in 2.3.3 above, it is recognized that there will always be certain areas where radio-based technologies will be the only viable means of providing broadband access, even in the long term.

[2.3.3.5] In economically viable areas this policy provides for infrastructure and service based competition.

[2.3.3.6] The policy further provides that there will be infrastructure sharing in non-economically viable areas by way of a wholesale open access network competition will be confined to the provision of services. |
| **Availability of Radio Frequency Spectrum for broadband** | [2.3.4.2] The kind of technology chosen determines the efficiencies to be driven in the use of the radio frequency spectrum. In order to promote the availability of broadband services in the rural and underserviced areas, the allocation and assignment of radio frequency spectrum bands, which are generally suited to low-capacity large coverage areas will be prioritised.

[2.3.4.3] The future allocation of this scarce national resource shall be guided by the need to balance the country's developmental needs and commercial imperatives.

[2.3.4.4] Therefore, in support of this policy, sufficient allocation and appropriate licensing of radio frequency spectrum in order to promote universal access to broadband services and stimulate the economy will be prioritized. In this regard, all future allocation of the radio frequency spectrum for broadband shall be done in a manner that advances competition, black economic empowerment, the quality of service, universal service and access principles. |
| **Minimise infrastructure rollout costs** | [2.3.5.1] Deploying broadband backbone infrastructure is capital intensive and investment decisions are based on return on investments. It is generally understood that underserviced and rural areas are unattractive to private investors. Therefore interventions aimed at encouraging investments in these areas are being developed.

[2.3.5.2] Firstly, the cost of deploying a broadband network depends on the costs that electronic communications network service providers incur to access publicly and privately-owned servitudes. These costs are a significant contributor to the final retail prices of broadband products and services charged to the consumers and can act as barriers to entry by new service providers and also limit the existing operators from extending their networks. Hence the need to ensure that these costs are addressed in order |

	to encourage the existing and new electronic communications network services providers to deploy broadband infrastructure. Accordingly, the policy advocates for the implementation of regulatory measures to promote the availability of both publicly and privately-owned servitudes to facilitate rapid broadband rollout in the urban, rural and underserviced areas.
	[2.3.5.3] Secondly, there is a need to ensure coordination of broadband rollout projects with other civil works to be undertaken when utility infrastructure such as roads, water, sanitation and electricity are undertaken in the county. It is therefore a matter of policy that ducts will be installed in all major publicly funded utility infrastructures, at construction phase, to facilitate the extension of existing networks and the rollout of planned broadband networks.
	[2.3.5.4] Thirdly, the construction of electronic communications facilities requires that approvals for rights of way, land acquisition and environmental impact assessments are obtained. In this regard, the ECA enjoins the Ministers of Communications, Provincial and Local Government, Land Affairs, Environmental Affairs to develop guidelines on rapid deployment of electronic communications facilities in the country. Lowering these costs and expediting approval processes involves all three spheres (national, provincial and local) of government. Consultations between and amongst these spheres of government and service providers is very critical to facilitate the rapid deployment of electronic communications facilities. Therefore there is a need to fast track the development of the rapid deployment guidelines on electronic communications facilities and establish a one-stop shop to facilitate approval of way leaves.
Increase uptake and usage of broadband services	[2.3.6.1] The policy provides for the relevant Executive Authority, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Ministers, to develop strategies to address the following:
	[2.3.6.2] Access to end-user equipment: The deployment of broadband infrastructure will require affordable end-user equipment such as mobile devices, computing devices and digital set-top-boxes that connect to the broadband service provider networks thereby enabling online transactions. In this regard strategies to promote the availability of affordable end-user equipment will be developed and implemented.
	[2.3.6.3] Development of content and applications: The policy advocates for the implementation of strategies to provide amongst others, e-health, e-education and e-government services to all citizens.
	In the education sector, the provision of the broadband services should assist in strengthening the teaching and learning processes,

	creating equitable access to online educational resources and strengthening administrative processes with the aim of improving the quality of education in the country. In the health sector, the provision of the broadband services should create more online access to quality health services, improve health data capturing and use as well as the dissemination of such data. In the government sectors such as municipalities, the citizens should be able to use the broadband services to improve their interaction with government so as to increase access to government services. Furthermore, government agencies and departments at national, provincial and local level will serve as broadband anchor tenants for rural and underserviced communities. Having government agencies act as anchor tenants can sufficiently reduce the risk of infrastructure rollout making it commercially viable. A Research and Development programme to support the development of local applications by the public and private sectors will be implemented. Research institutions, universities and centres of excellence should be used to develop these broadband applications. The development of innovative and local applications should also be encouraged
Provision of support to consumers	[2.3.6.4} …this policy provides for the implementation of interventions aimed at supporting consumers to afford broadband services and end-user devices. Such interventions prioritise supporting needy persons as defined by the Universal Service and Access Agency of South Africa. Incentives need to be provided to encourage uptake of Broadband in all sectors of society by Government and Private operators for example by implementing subsidised premises, equipment, low cost computers etc. Furthermore the policy provides for the implementation of campaigns to educate and create awareness with regard to the benefits of broadband. This will build confidence in the use of broadband services thereby increasing uptake and usage of such services. Digital literacy and e-skilling are also critical to the increase of uptake and usage of Broadband services.

Clarification of roles

[3.2] The rollout of broadband initiatives by national, provincial and local governments is fragmented due to the fact that there is no national broadband rollout plan. In this regard, all broadband initiatives by national, provinces and municipalities will be done in accordance with the National Broadband Policy and coordinated at a central point in order to streamline and maximize government investment. This will ensure that a uniform, integrated homogenous and coordinated

government approach is developed in the provision of broadband services within the country and ensuring that all provinces and municipalities receives equitable attention irrespective of their economic and financial status.

Entity		Role(s)
National Government	Department of Communications	Custodian of ICT Policy in SA and responsible for facilitation implementation of Broadband Policy. May from time to time by means of policy direct ICASA to create an enabling regulatory environment for the private and public sector to develop infrastructure, services and applications towards the increase of access to and affordability of Broadband services.
	National Treasury	To provide the necessary funding for broadband initiatives in line with the provisions of the National Broadband Strategy implementation.
	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs	To provide a cooperative governance framework in support of broadband initiatives in various provinces and municipalities.
	Economic Development	To ensure that the broadband built programme contributes to job creation and inclusive economic growth through supporting local value addition in broadband technologies.
	Department of Public Enterprises	To ensure that SOCs deploy networks in accordance with the National Broadband Strategy and Implementation Plan.
	Department of Trade and Industry	To provide incentives in support of building excellence in the manufacturing of affordable end-user equipment.
	Department of Science and Technology	DST administers a national research and development programme. Its role in this project is to support R&D initiatives aimed at supporting various broadband initiatives including the development of applications.
	Department of Arts and Culture	To ensure that heritage and cultural content is made available online.
	Department of Basic Education	To ensure the availability of educational content online in line with the national e-Education Policy of the country.

	Department of Health	To ensure the availability of health content online in line with the national e-Health Policy of the country.
	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform	To identify rural sites for connectivity.
	Department of Public Service and Administration	To ensure the availability of government information online.
Provincial Government		1. Define the provincial broadband requirements to enable connectivity and access; 2. Establish Broadband Implementation focal points within established Intergovernmental Relations Fora; 3. Collaborate with DoC in connecting provincial governments and their entities with Broadband services and enabling the distribution of e-government services to drive the demand for Broadband and promote uptake and usage; 4. Invest in the development of local content and Broadband awareness to support uptake and usage of Broadband services; and 5. Align and implement existing and new broadband policies and strategies with the National Broadband Policy.
Local Government		1. Define municipal broadband requirements to enable connectivity of municipal offices 2. Ensure the provision of electronic communication network services in cooperation with the provincial and national government 3. Facilitate approval processes with regard to rights of way 4. Collaborate with provinces and DoC in connecting local government offices and their entities with Broadband services and enabling the distribution of e-government services to drive the demand for Broadband and promote uptake and usage 5. Invest in the development of local content and Broadband awareness to support uptake and usage of Broadband services; and 6. Align and implement existing and new municipal policies and strategies with provincial policies and strategies.

State Owned Companies		Government will use SOCs for the provisioning of electronic communications networks services in line with the national broadband infrastructure rollout plan.

Institutional Arrangements

The Policy recognises that coordination of the various activities between and amongst key role players is vital to the success of the national broadband programme. It recommends forming a dedicated Inter-Ministerial Committee to set strategic direction for ICTs for government use, set ICT investment priorities, provide oversight and understanding with regard to Broadband Rollout in the Republic.

This Committee will fall within the framework of the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC) and will comprise the Ministers of:
- Communications
- Finance
- Public Enterprises
- Trade & Industry
- Higher Education
- Basic Education
- Health
- Public Service and Administration
- Economic Development
- Environmental Affairs; and
- Science and Technology

The Policy also recognises the important role that the private sector plays in the establishment of broadband infrastructure and services, a joint Government/Private Sector Liaison Committee will be established to co-ordinate broadband activities.

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