

# National Policy for Electronic Accessibility

Draft

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## 1. Preamble

The Constitution of India ensures equality, freedom, justice and dignity of all individuals and implicitly mandates an inclusive society for all including persons with disabilities. In the electronic age, [Information & Communications Technology and Electronics](#) (“ICTE”) are used in all areas of life such as education, health, employment, leisure, banking, etc. The electronic age can eliminate the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in India as well as help them to participate independently in day-to-day life. It is [therefore](#) imperative to ensure that the electronic age is an enabler and provides persons with disabilities equal opportunities.

This National Policy ([“Policy”](#)) on Electronic Accessibility recognizes the need to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disabilities and to [facilitate](#) equal access to ICTE. The National Policy also recognizes the diversity of persons with disabilities and provides for their specific needs.

The Policy therefore covers accessibility requirements in the area of ICTE. It recognizes the need for ensuring that accessibility standards and guidelines and universal design concepts are adopted and adhered to.

The policy expands on:

- The Constitution of India.
- The United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ratified [by India on](#) October 01, 2007.
- Persons With Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
- The [Proclamation](#) on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asia Pacific Region, [1993](#).
- The Biwako Millennium Framework for action towards an inclusive, barrier free and rights based society, [2002](#).

## 2. Definitions

“**Universal design**” means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. “Universal design” shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed. [Reference: UNCRPD – Article 2]

“**Discrimination on the basis of disability**” means any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination including denial of reasonable accommodation. [Reference: UNCRPD – Article 2]

“**Hardware**” means any Information & Communication Technology and Electronics (ICTE) equipment and parts thereof.

“**User Interface**” refers to that part of ICTE with which the user interacts.

### **3. Objectives of the Policy**

The objective of the National Policy on Electronic Accessibility is to provide persons with disabilities equal access to ICTE and related services.

### **4. Scope & Applicability**

Scope of the policy covers access to ICTE products and services by persons with disabilities in the areas of universal design, assistive technology and independent living aids.

This policy shall be applicable to the following:

- All Central Government Ministries, Departments and agencies thereunder
- States/UTs Departments and agencies thereunder
- Public Sector Undertakings
- Private Sector
- Publicly funded organizations
- R&D organizations
- Essential service providers
- Disability Organisations
- Civil Society Organisations
- Academia
- Any other activities related to ICTE access

### **5. Strategy & Action Plan**

The following strategies shall inform implementation of this policy:

- Creating awareness on accessibility and universal design

- Capacity building
- Creating, adopting and Implementing standards and guidelines on accessibility and universal design
- Conducting Research & Development
- Developing and implementing Schemes, programs and projects
- Developing and enforcing Procurement Guidelines

## **5.1 Awareness**

5.1.1 Stakeholders shall undertake to create awareness through campaigns, research, conferences, workshops, seminars, etc. about ICTE accessibility - barriers and solutions.

5.1.2 Awareness must be created about the availability of existing and new assistive technologies and independent living aids as well as schemes for the same. Such information shall be made available in public domain.

## **5.2 Education**

5.2.1 ICTE curricula must include universal design and accessibility standards and guidelines. Such curriculum must be updated and new courses introduced as appropriate.

5.2.2 Assistive Technology Labs/ Rehabilitation centers shall be setup across the country to help persons with disabilities identify the right types of assistive technologies. These assistive technology labs may be setup at public libraries, government schools, universities etc.

5.2.3 Curricula in Special Education and Rehabilitation shall include assistive technologies and independent living aids.

## **5.3 Research & Development**

All Research & Development projects in the area of ICTE shall involve persons with disabilities in design, development and testing.

5.3.1 Research & Development in ICTE shall encompass universal design and accessibility standards and guidelines, wherever applicable.

5.3.2 All Research & Development in the area of assistive technology and independent living aids must encompass universal design & accessibility standards and guidelines.

- 5.3.3** Incentives should be provided to organizations that invest in R&D for ICTE solutions with universal design & accessibility standards and guidelines.
- 5.3.4** Information about research and development projects in the area of assistive technologies & independent living aids must be provided in [the public domain in](#) accessible formats.
- 5.3.5** Funds should be allocated for Research & Development of ICTE solutions for assistive technologies & independent living aids [which comply with](#) universal design and accessibility standards and guidelines.
- 5.3.6** Funds should be allocated to ensure that research and development in the area of local language ICTE solutions [for user interface that are compliant with](#) universal design & accessibility standards and guidelines should adhere to universal encoding standards such as Unicode.
- 5.3.7** Educational institutes [should be encouraged](#) to undertake **research and development** of ICTE [solutions, which comply with](#) universal design & accessibility standards and guidelines.
- 5.3.8** Information about government schemes for R&D in assistive technologies and independent living aids must be made available in [the](#) public domain in accessible formats.
- 5.3.9** Funding for research and development in the area of ICTE solutions, especially for assistive technology & independent living aids, should be approved by a Committee that has representation of person(s) with disabilities.

## **5.4 Accessibility Standards**

Accessibility Standards and Guidelines are an important [means to achieve Universal Design](#). While Persons with disabilities in India will have their own specific requirements, for example, Indian language support, etc., it is important to harmonize the Indian standards and guidelines with international standards [and guidelines](#).

- 5.4.1 All [ICTE](#) accessibility standards and guidelines or any [other standard and guideline](#) that includes [or refers to](#) universal design and accessibility for [ICTE](#) will become a subset of [this](#) Policy.

## **5.5 Accessible Formats for Content**

- 5.5.1** All [content](#) in print and electronic formats including publications, periodicals, journals, [multi-media](#), etc. and educational [materials](#) including text books [etc.](#) must be produced in accessible format.

5.5.2 Contact details for obtaining content in accessible formats must be provided in the public domain.

## **5.6 Implementation and Monitoring**

An empowered committee shall be constituted within one month from the date of notification of this Policy by the Government to monitor the implementation and review of this Policy.

This committee shall include representation of:

- Concerned Central Government Ministries, Departments and agencies thereunder
- States/UTs Departments and agencies thereunder
- Public Sector Undertakings
- Private Sector
- Publicly funded organizations
- R&D organizations
- Essential service providers
- Disability Organisations
- Civil Society Organisations
- Academia
- Experts in the area of universal design and accessibility standards
- Any other nominee related to ICTE access as deemed fit

The Committee shall:

- Develop a framework for implementation, monitoring and review of this Policy.
- Oversee adoption and development of Universal design & accessibility standards and guidelines for ICTE.
- Meet at least once every quarter
- Release a consolidated report on the progress of implementation and review of this Policy on a bi-annual basis.
- Have Representation/ participate in national and international bodies which develop accessibility standards and guidelines

## **5.7 Procurement Strategy**

5.7.1 All procurement guidelines and processes of stakeholders related to ICTE must include the relevant accessibility standards and guidelines.

## **5.8 Schemes for Funding & Promotion**

**5.8.1** Availability of assistive technology & independent living aids for persons with disabilities in rural and urban areas at affordable prices must be ensured by:

- I. Formulating schemes whereby funding is provided for people with disabilities to procure and use assistive technologies, independent living aids, mobility aids etc and thereby enable them to carry out their day-to-day activities independently.
- II. Maintaining and updating a resource-list/ catalogue of assistive technology and independent living aids.
- III. Formulating special schemes for persons with severe disabilities and those with multiple disabilities.

**5.8.2** Ensure that all assistive technology products and independent living aids as identified in the resource-list/ catalogue in 5.1 (ii) above are exempt from import duty and taxes.

## **6. Review of the Policy**

This Policy shall be reviewed and updated from time to time.