

National Policy on Universal Electronic Accessibility

1. Preamble

The Constitution of India ensures justice, equality, liberty and fraternity and assures dignity of the individual and quality of status and opportunities to all its citizens including differently abled persons. It also ensures the fundamental rights to equality, non-discrimination, freedom of speech and expression and the right to life and liberty to all.

In the electronics age, Electronics and Information & Communication Technologies (ICTs) are used in all areas of life such as education, health, employment, entertainment, banking etc. Electronics & ICTs can mitigate the barriers faced by differently abled persons as well as help them to participate independently in day-to-day life. It is imperative to ensure that Electronics & ICTs are accessible to differently abled so that they act as an enabler for providing equal opportunities to the differently abled.

The National Policy ("Policy") on Electronic Accessibility recognizes the need to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disabilities and to facilitate equal access to Electronics & ICTs. The National Policy also recognizes the diversity of differently abled persons and provides for their specific needs.

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

The Policy *anchors to:*

- (i) The Constitution of India.
- (ii) The United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ratified by India on October 01, 2007 (UNCRPD - Article 9 and others).
- (iii) Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
- (iv) The Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asia Pacific Region, 1993.
- (v) The Biwako Millennium Framework for action towards an inclusive, barrier free and rights based society, 2002.
- (vi) National Policy for Persons with Disabilities of the Government of India (2006).

2. Definitions

- (i) "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.
- (ii) "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 differently abled persons where this is needed.

3. Policy Statement

This policy is hereby notified by the Government of India in order to facilitate equal and unhindered access to Electronics and ICTs products and services by differently abled persons (both physically and mentally challenged) and to facilitate local language support for the same. This shall be achieved through universal access to Electronics & ICT products and services to synchronize with barrier free environment and preferably usable without adaptation.

4. Scope

4.1 Scope of the policy covers *technological aspects including* access to Electronics & ICTs products (both hardware & software) and services by differently abled persons in the areas of universal design, assistive technology and independent living aids.

4.2 The policy envisages broad roles and functions of different Stakeholders. The roles and functions of Stakeholders are described below:

Ministries/Departments/Organizations	Roles and functions
Central Government Ministries/ Departments and agencies there under	To implement the policy and create awareness
States/UT Departments and agencies there under	To implement the policy and create awareness
Public Sector Undertakings/Private Sector Organizations	R &D and manufacturing on Electronics & ICTs product
Publicly funded organizations	To implement the policy and create awareness
Research & Development and Design organizations	To develop Electronics & ICTs product in furtherance of the Policy

Essential Service providers	To provide services to the differently abled
Disability Organizations	To promote usage of Electronics & ICTs products among differently abled
Civil Society Organizations	To create awareness about the policy
Educational and Vocational Training Institutes	To impart training on usage of Electronics & ICTs products for differently abled.

5. Strategies and Action Plan

The following strategies are envisaged for the implementation of the Policy:

- (i) Creating awareness on universal electronics accessibility & universal design
- (ii) Capacity building and infrastructure development
- (iii) Setting up of model Electronics & ICTs Centres for providing training and demonstration to special educators and physically as well as mentally challenged persons
- (iv) Conducting Research & Development, use of innovation, ideas, technology etc. whether indigenous or outsourced from abroad
- (v) Developing programmes and schemes with greater emphasis for differently abled women/children
- (vi) Developing procurement guidelines for Electronics & ICTs for Accessibility and Assistive needs.

6.1 Awareness

6.1.1 Awareness shall be created through media, campaigns, conferences, workshops, seminars, etc. about Electronics & ICTs accessibility - barriers and solutions in urban and rural areas. Department of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India will take the lead role in this regard. Other Ministries and Department and their agencies, State/UT Departments and their agencies will also be responsible for creating awareness.

6.1.2 Awareness shall be created about the availability of existing and emerging assistive technologies and independent living aids as well as schemes for the same. Such information shall be made available in public domain including in local languages.

6.2 Education

6.2.1 Electronics & ICTs curricula shall include accessibility standards and guidelines and universal design concepts.

6.2.2 Assistive Technology laboratories/ rehabilitation centres shall be setup across the country to facilitate differently abled persons to identify the right types of assistive technologies and greater usage.

6.2.3 Special Education and Rehabilitation Curricula will be designed to cover assistive technologies and independent living aids.

6.3 Research & Development

6.3.1 Research & Development to include development of assistive technology and independent living aids to encompass accessibility standards and guidelines and

universal design concepts for the Electronics & ICTs product development. Such Research & Development projects to associate differently abled persons also.

6.3.2 Incentives to be provided for R&D for Electronics and ICTs solutions with accessibility standards & guidelines and universal design concepts.

6.3.3 Schemes to be formulated to support Research & Development and Design Organizations for Electronics & ICTs solutions including assistive technologies and independent living aids involving private sector in PPP model.

6.3.4 Representation of *rehabilitation professionals* and person(s) with disabilities be ensured in formulation, implementation and monitoring of schemes.

6.4 Accessibility Standards

6.4.1 Accessibility Standards and Guidelines be formulated or adapted from prevailing standards in the domain including W3C accessibility standards and guidelines such as given below amongst others:

- ATAG (Authoring Tools Accessibility Guidelines)
- WCAG 2.0 (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)
- UAAG (User Agent Accessibility Guidelines)

6.4.2 In addition to the Government Web sites and those dealing with the disabilities issues, accessibility compliance of citizen centric sites shall be monitored and due diligence shall be maintained by thoroughfare traffic and consumer transaction sites of high impact to the public.

6.5 Accessible Format for content

6.5.1 Content in electronics format including publications, periodicals, journals, multi-media, etc. and educational material including textbooks etc. be produced in accessible format including local language support.

6.6 Implementation and Monitoring

6.6.1 A High Level Advisory Committee be constituted, with *multi-stakeholders participation*, consisting of the concerned Government Ministries/Departments, industry, academia, representatives including from the organizations representing differently abled at national or state level for overall guidance and monitoring the implementation of the Policy,

6.6.2 The Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) shall be the nodal department for monitoring the implementation of the Policy.

6.7 Procurement Strategy

6.7.1 Electronics & ICTs procurement guidelines and processes be evolved to confirm to this Policy.

6.7.2 The cost of hardware and software compliant with Universal accessibility standards may be costlier. This aspect may be kept in mind while finalising the budget of any scheme. Incentives to be provided to facilitate procurement of Universal accessibility products and solutions.

6.7.3 Many initiatives are being taken by different Ministries/Departments of Government of India/State Government/other organisations for the differently abled. Any new scheme formulated in this regard to synergize, to the extent possible, with ongoing initiatives in the area.

6.8 Affordable Access

6.8.1 Schemes be formulated for affordable access to Electronics & ICTs for differently abled persons in rural as well as urban areas. Open source usage be promoted.

6.8.2 Information about beneficial schemes in the area of assistive technologies and independent living aids be provided in the public domain in accessible formats and in local languages.

6.9 Amendment in Information Technology (IT) Act

6.9.1 Information Technology Act be amended suitably to protect differently abled persons who inadvertently violate some provision of the law.

6.10 Skill Development

6.10.1 Schemes to be formulated for skill development of differently abled persons.

6.10.2 Schemes for capacity development within the Government about Universal accessibility and assistive technologies under the Policy be taken up.

7. Review of the Policy

The Policy shall be reviewed from time to time by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology.