



**the dpsa**

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Department:  
Public Service and Administration  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGE POLICY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND  
ADMINISTRATION**

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## **1. Definitions**

In this Policy, unless the context indicates otherwise, the following meanings are hereby assigned to the words and expressions hereunder:

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| the Act          | :The Use of Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act No. 12 of 2012);  |
| the Constitution | :The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;  |
| DPSA             | :Department of Public Service and Administration;   |
| Director-General | :Director-General: Department of Public Service and Administration;   |
| The Minister     | :Minister responsible for language matters;   |
| PanSALB          | :The Pan South African Language Board, established in terms of the Pan South African Language Board Act, 1995 (Act No. 59 of 1995); |
| This Policy      | :The Language Policy of the Department of Public Service and Administration; and  |
| the Republic     | :The Republic of South Africa.  |

## **2. Legislative Instruments**

2.1. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

2.2. The Use of Official Languages Act, 2012

2.3. Regulations in terms of section 13 of the Use of Official Languages Act, 2012

## **3. Purpose of this Policy**

The purpose of this Policy is to give effect to section 4 of the Act which provides that:

- (1) every national department, national public entity and national public enterprise must adopt a language policy on its use of official languages; and
- (2) a language policy adopted in terms of sub-section (1) must:
  - (a) comply with the provisions of section 6(3)(a) of the Constitution;

- (b) identify at least three official languages that the national department, national public entity or national entity or national public enterprise will use for government purposes,
- (c) stipulate how official languages will be used in effectively communicating with the public, official notices, government publications, and inter and intra-government communication,
- (d) describe how the national department, national public entity or national public enterprise will effectively communicate with members of the public whose language of choice is not one of its chosen official languages or South African Sign Language,
- (e) describe how members of the public can access the language policy,
- (f) provide a complaints mechanism to enable members of the public to lodge complaints regarding the use of official languages by a national department, national public entity or national public enterprise, and
- (g) provide for any other matter that the Minister may prescribe.

#### **4. Principles**

The principles underpinning this Policy reflect:

- (1) a commitment to the promotion of all languages in the Republic in order to ensure constitutional language equity and language rights as required by a democratic dispensation;
- (2) the recognition of multilingualism as a source to maximise collaborative partnerships in nation building, economic development and social cohesion;
- (3) the promotion of good language management by the DPSA to ensure efficient public administration that meets the needs of the public and ensures equitable access to the services and information of the DPSA;
- (4) the prevention of the use of any language(s) for the purposes of exploitation, domination and discrimination within the DPSA;
- (5) an enhancement of people-centeredness by addressing the interests, needs and aspirations of language communities through on-going dialogue and debate;

- (6) a recognition of a community-based approach, i.e. a decentralised and participatory approach to language planning and policy implementation in which each government structure is given the power to identify its own working languages, as the most viable manner in which to promote multilingualism given South Africa's highly pluralistic society; and
- (7) the support for special redress programmes for previously marginalised official indigenous languages, and the learning and teaching of all the official languages of the Republic at all levels of schooling.

## **5. The Constitutional and Legislative Mandate of the DPSA**

5.1. The Department of Public Service and Administration draws its mandate from section 195(1) of the Constitution which sets out basic values and principles that must govern the public administration which includes:

- (a) a high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained;
- (b) efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted;
- (c) public administration must be development-oriented;
- (d) services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias;
- (e) people's needs must be responded to and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy making;
- (f) public administration must be accountable;
- (g) transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information;
- (h) good human-resources management and career-development practices, to examine human potential, must be cultivated; and
- (i) public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on

ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation.

5.2. In terms of the Public Service Act, 1994 the Minister for the Public Service and Administration is responsible for establishing norms and standards relating to:

- (a) the functions of the public service;
- (b) organisational structures and establishments of departments and other organisational and governance arrangements in the public service;
- (c) labour relations, conditions of service and other employment practices for employees;
- (d) the health and wellness of employees;
- (e) integrity, ethics, conduct and anti-corruption; and
- (f) transformation, reform, innovation and any other matter to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the public service and its service delivery to the public.

5.3 The DPSA conducts its business at Batho Pele House, 546 Edmund Street, Pretoria, 0001

## **6. The DPSA Language Unit**

The DPSA shall establish a Language Unit to support this Policy. The functions of the Language Unit will be to:

- (a) advise the Director-General on the development, adoption and implementation of this Policy;
- (b) monitor and assess the use of official languages by the DPSA;
- (c) monitor and assess compliance with this Policy;
- (d) compile and submit a report to the Minister and the PanSALB in terms of section 9 of the Act;

- (e) promote parity of esteem and equitable treatment of the official languages of the Republic and facilitate equitable access to services and information of the DPSA;
- (f) promote good language management; and
- (g) perform any other functions that the Minister may prescribe.

## **7. Assistance to employees of DPSA**

In order to achieve the professional and efficient implementation of this Policy, the DPSA Language Unit will provide guidance and assistance to employees of the DPSA.

## **8. Official languages of the DPSA**

The DPSA hereby adopts the following official languages of the Republic as its official languages for purposes of this Policy:

- (a) English;
- (b) Setswana; and
- (c) IsiZulu.

## **9. Use of official languages by the DPSA**

9.1. The following factors will be taken into account in arriving at the choice of official language(s) the DPSA will use in each context/situation:

- (a) Usage;
- (b) Practicality;
- (c) Expense;
- (d) Regional circumstances; and/or
- (e) The balance of needs and preferences of the public it serves.

9.2. The table below indicates how the DPSA will use the official languages adopted in terms of paragraph 8 above:

| <b>DPSA purpose</b>  | <b>Language(s)</b>  |
|--|---|
| Inter and intra-government communication   | English or, upon request, any of the languages adopted by the DPSA in terms of paragraph 8 of this Policy with due regard to the criteria outlined in clause 9.1 above. |
| Communicating with members of the public (official written correspondence)   | English or, upon request, any of the languages adopted by the DPSA in terms of paragraph 9 of this Policy with due regard to the criteria outlined in clause 9.1 above. |
| Communication with members of the public (oral communication)  | English or, upon request, any of the languages adopted by the DPSA in terms of paragraph 9 of this Policy with due regard to the criteria outlined in clause 9.1 above. |
| Compiling official forms (“z” forms)   | English and one other official language adopted by the DPSA in terms of paragraph 9 of this Policy with due regard to the criteria outlined in clause 9.1 above.        |
| Official publications intended for public distribution (notices on the DPSA website, advertisements, forms and signage on buildings) | English or, upon request, any of the languages adopted by the DPSA in terms of paragraph 9 of this Policy with due regard to the criteria outlined in clause 9.1 above. |
| In government reports, documents, records, transcripts and other official publications intended for public distribution              | English or, upon request, any of the languages adopted by the DPSA in terms of paragraph 9 of this Policy with due regard to the criteria outlined in clause 9.1 above. |
| Public hearings (Izimbizo) and other official proceedings  | English or, upon request, any of the languages adopted by the DPSA in terms of paragraph 9 of this Policy with due regard to the criteria outlined in clause 9.1 above. |
| International communication  | English   |

**10. Communication with members of the public whose language of choice is not one of the official languages contemplated in paragraph 8 above**

10.1. A member of the public who requires a communication from the DPSA to be in a language that is not one of the official languages contemplated in paragraph 8 above may request the Director-General, in writing, to consider providing the said communicate in another preferred official language.

10.2. The Director-General must consider the request within 30 days and may, after due consideration of the criteria outlined in 9.1, approve such request.

10.3. The DPSA will arrange for the appropriate translation of the said communicate within 20 working days of the approval of the request by the Director-General.

**11. Communication with members of the public whose language of choice is South African Sign Language**

11.1. A member of the public who requires a communication from the DPSA in South African sign language may request the Director-General, in writing, to consider providing the said communicate in such sign language.

11.2. The Director-General must consider the request within 30 days and may, after due consideration of the criteria outlined in 9.1, approve such request.

11.3. The DPSA will arrange for the appropriate translation of the said communicate within 20 working days of the approval of the request by the Director-General.

**12. Publication of and access to this Policy**

12.1. This Policy will be published in all the official languages contemplated in paragraph 8 above.

12.2. This Policy will be available electronically on the DPSA website at [www.dpsa.gov.za](http://www.dpsa.gov.za) and a hard copy of the Policy may be obtained from the offices of the DPSA situated at 546 Edmund Street, Pretoria, 0001.

12.3. This Policy will be available in Braille or audio, on written request.

### **13. Complaints mechanism**

- 13.1. Any person who is dissatisfied with a decision of the DPISA regarding its use of the official languages may lodge a complaint, in writing, to the Director-General:
- (a) by delivery to:  
Batho Pele House  
546 Edmund Street  
Pretoria  
0001
  - (b) by registered post to:  
The Department of Public Service and Administration  
Private Bag X 916  
PRETORIA  
0001
  - (c) by email to: [Puleng.Sibanda@dpsa.gov.za](mailto:Puleng.Sibanda@dpsa.gov.za)
- 13.2. Any complaint must be lodged within three months of the complaint arising.
- 13.3. Any complaint lodged must state the name, address and contact information of the person lodging the complaint.
- 13.4. Any complaint lodged must provide a full and detailed description of the complaint.
- 13.5. The Director-General may request a complainant to supply any additional information necessary to consider the complaint and attend a meeting for the purpose of making oral enquiry into the complaint.
- 13.6. The Director-General must consider the complaint and make a decision no later than three months after the complaint was lodged and inform the complainant, in writing, of the decision.
- 13.7. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision of the Director-General as contemplated in paragraph 13.6, he or she may lodge an appeal within one month of the Director-General's decision, in writing, with the Minister for the Public Service and Administration.

- 13.8 The appeal must state the name, address and contact information of the person lodging the appeal and provide a full and detailed description of the complaint.
- 13.9 The Minister for the Public Service and Administration must consider the appeal and make a decision no later than three months after the appeal was lodged and inform the appellant in writing of the decision.

**14. Review of Policy**

This Policy will be reviewed whenever necessary but at least every five years.

**15. Effective date**

This Policy takes effect on the date of adoption and shall be published in the *Government Gazette* within 90 days of adoption.

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**Adoption by the Director-General**

**Date of adoption:**