White paper a framework for new ICT legislation

By Mariska van Zweel and Simone Gill

In an attempt to revamp South Africa's current outdated and misaligned ICT policies - and to take account of rapid changes in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector - former Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services, Minister Carrim, earlier this year published the National Integrated ICT Green Paper.

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The Green Paper covers, among other matters, telecommunications, broadcasting, postal services, e-services and cyber-security. The aim of the Green Paper was to set the process of changing and developing the ICT sector in motion. National and provincial public hearings on the Green Paper were held in March 2014.

According to the recently appointed Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services, Dr Cwele, the ICT Policy White Paper would be finalised by February 2015, some six months later than initially anticipated. The White Paper will be government's formal policy position on key issues relating to ICT and is to provide a framework for new ICT legislation in South Africa. The White Paper will, however, first have to be presented to the policy review panel before being finalised and published for public comment.

ICT is rapidly developing and impacts not only the manner in which we communicate, but also the manner in which we access information and services. Development of South Africa's communications services, infrastructure, technologies and electronic communications facilities leasing is key to the development of South Africa on an economic, cultural and social level. It accordingly goes without saying that the White Paper is eagerly awaited.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

[[https://www.bizcommunity.com/Profile/MariskavanZweel Mariska van Zweel]] is a senior associate and [[https://www.bizcommunity.com/Profile/SimoneGill Simone Gill]] is a director in the Technology, Media and Telecommunications practice at Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr.

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