

Implementation concerns remain around ICT Policy White Paper

South Africa's Internet Service Providers' Association has welcomed government's recently published [National ICT Policy White Paper](#) as being "broadly positive", while urging that the focus shift to how the proposals in the White Paper will be implemented.



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"In general the White Paper is broadly positive and forward-looking, and it reflects a much better understanding of contemporary electronic communications and related markets," said ISPA regulatory advisor, Dominic Cull.

"The policy revision is long overdue and many issues have been held back by the delays in finalising it. While we understand that some of the proposed interventions will not be universally welcomed, we now need to get a move on," said Cull.

Creating practice out of policy

ISPA and its 178 Internet Service Provider (ISP) members are worried, however, about implementation and creating practice out of policy. The Association's primary concern is that the White Paper does not convincingly outline how the capacity and expertise shortcomings of the regulator, or policy maker, will be addressed.

"Our fundamental reservation is that the White Paper still does not address the inability of the current institutional structures to implement its provisions," Cull says.

"ISPA agrees with comments by the acting director general of the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services that there is a need for the status quo in the telecommunications industry to be upended, but this will not happen unless the status quo at the policymaker and regulator are also upended."

"For example: while measures to change the funding-model of the regulator are relevant, the fact that we need to increase its budget dramatically and ensure that it has the necessary skills to implement evidence-based interventions is not accorded the prominence it requires."

Historical failure to implement policy is reflected in the fact that most of the proposals in the White Paper are not new. ISPA now hopes attention will shift to upskilling the regulator and policymakers so that implementation of the White Paper does not take us another decade," Cull concludes.

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