

GOVERNMENT NOTICES • GOEWERMENTSKENNISGEWINGS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the undue attention two of the country's languages enjoyed during the colonial and apartheid eras and the suppression of all other languages, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, makes it clear that all the official languages of the country have to be used equitably and also recognises other languages such as Nama, Khoi, San and Sign Languages.

In order for the National Department of Labour to cater to the widely diverse stakeholders all around the country, a Language Policy has to be adopted by the National Office as well as all Provincial Offices.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

In terms of the Use of Official Languages Act 12, 2012 (Act 12 of 2012), each department has to:

- a. Regulate and monitor the use of official languages for government purposes by national government
- b. Promote parity of esteem and equitable treatment of official languages of the Republic
- c. Facilitate equitable access to services and information of national government
- d. Promote good language management by national government for efficient public service administration and to meet the needs of the public.

3. SCOPE

This Language Policy will be adopted by the Department of Labour, after consultation with all stakeholders.

Provincial Offices with language needs specific to their demographics will be required to come up with a separate provincial language policy, which will be adopted in the province, after consultation with stakeholders in the particular province.

4. CONSTITUTIONAL AND RELEVANT LEGISLATIONS

Section 6 of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996) and the following pieces of legislation are applicable:

- a. The Use of Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act 12 of 2012).
- b. The National Language Policy Framework.
- c. Pan South African Language Board Act 59, 1995 (Act 59 of 1995).
- d. Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act 2 of 2002).

5. USE OF A “WORKING LANGUAGE OF RECORD”

According to **Section 6(3)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa**, national and provincial governments must use at least two of the official languages for the purposes of government subject to considerations of practicality, expense, regional usage and circumstances as well as the needs and preferences of the public as a whole (or in the province concerned, in the case of a provincial language policy).

Historically the Department of Labour has made use of English as the official “working language of record” and in rare cases, Afrikaans was also used until the mid-to-late-1900’s.

As the Department’s website, social media engagements and other correspondence also favour English as the working language, it is recommended that the use of English as first working language be maintained.

It is still the prerogative of staff and clients to use any other official language to communicate and for the purposes of conducting meetings or performing specific tasks every effort must be made by Departmental officials to utilise language facilitation facilities such as translation and/or interpreting (both consecutive and simultaneous, as well as whispered interpreting) where practically possible. This is also true in the case of official correspondence and oral communication.

With regards to official departmental publications, a functional programme of multilingualism should be followed in the cases that do not require publication in all 11 official languages.

Where the effective and stable operation of government at any level requires comprehensive communicated information, it must be published in all 11 official languages, including the official languages of the province in the case of a provincial campaign.

It is further subscribed by the National Language Policy Framework, that in cases where government documents will not be made available in all 11 official languages, national government departments must publish documents in at least six languages simultaneously. The selection can be made out of at least one from the Nguni group, at least one from the Sotho group, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, English and Afrikaans.

International communication by all government departments will normally be in English or on an ad-hoc basis, the preferred language of the country concerned.

6. BUILDING HUMAN CAPACITY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR’S LANGUAGE POLICY

As it follows logically that the demand for translation, editing and interpreting services will increase after the implementation of this policy, it implies building the capacity to render these services in government departments as well as the private sector (service providers). This implies the establishment of language units in all national government departments. The National Language Service (NLS) will provide guidance on the training, development and operational requirements of translators, editors and interpreters.

A National Termbank will be made available for both government and freelance language practitioners, which will address areas of terminography and terminology.

The Department of Labour has embarked on a national-wide organisational overview in the form of Project Shanduka. Requirements for a Language Unit have been addressed by this project and will be rolled-out according to project specifications.

7. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Progressive phased implementation of the policy in the short, medium and long-term will be the preferred strategy to follow (in conjunction with the phased roll-out of Project Shanduka objectives).

The phased rollout will give the Department the opportunity to plan the budget accordingly and influence the MTEF allocations over time, as well as pragmatically implementing the translation methodology of government publications.

This will also allow time to develop monitoring mechanisms and benchmarking with other similar units.

Eventually the infrastructure requirements can be implemented on a national level to manage intra and interdepartmental oral and written communication in all spheres, including with the public and the Department's clients.

Implementation mechanisms such as the Language Code of Conduct for Public Servants, the SA Language Practitioners' Council, and a Telephone Interpreting Service for South Africa, a strategy for the development of the previously marginalised languages and an Human Language Technology Strategy, will follow as the different units in the government departments are established.

8. EVALUATION

Implementation of the Language Policy of the Department of Labour will be monitored by the NLS from the Department of Arts and Culture and the EXCO of the Department of Labour.

9. CONCLUSION

The Language Policy of the Department of Labour was informed by the mentioned pieces of legislation and it will be changed or amended in line with any amendments to legislation informing or having impact on the policy.