The National Digital Accessibility Policy

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1.	**All State Administrative Apparatus units and the Private Sector**

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1- Introduction

There is a vast amount of information and services available on the internet, but the inability to access many of them still poses a barrier for people with disabilities and elderly. The concept of digital accessibility is summarized by ensuring that all electronic information, services, and applications are accessible and easily usable by all individuals, including those with disabilities and the elderly.

The main aim of digital accessibility policy is to ensure equal and fair life opportunities for people with disabilities and elderly to access the services and information available on information and communication technology platforms and devices. It also aims to remove barriers that hinder their access.

2- Terms and Definitions

Administrative Apparatus of the State. are the ministries, military and security authorities, councils…etc. These executive units that derive their authority from the state, whatever it is, and this includes Public bodies responsible for managing public service or economic facility such as, public authorities and institutions.

The Ministry: The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology

The Authority: Telecommunication Regulatory Authority

Regulating entities: Includes ministries, public authorities and institutions concerned with regulating the sectors that are under their supervision. (In the context of this policy apply to(Telecommunication Regulatory Authority, the Central Bank, Authority for Public Services Regulation).

Disable people: "Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" means that individuals with long –term impairments whether physical, mental, intellectual or sensory that might affect their ability of communicating with different barriers such as, the full and effective participation in the society like others.

Elderly people: Not less than 60 years old and due to their advanced age their functional ability to interact normally with information and communication technology devices have decreased.

Digital Accessibility: Measuring to what extent the disabled and elderly people are able to have an equal access to ICT services and products as the normal ones do.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT): Includes a wider category of equipment, software, hardware, computers, formats and systems that enable communication through electronic means.   And a range of hardware and software used to retrieve this information, as well as those used to communicate in real time with other people.

Public access or public access communication services: information and communication technology services provided to the public in public facilities, including persons with disabilities, on a stand-alone basis through paid public telephones or on a joint basis through devices placed in public places such as cyber labs and internet cafes, call centers, multi-purpose community centers, automatic kiosks, public community access points to the Internet, and automated teller machines (ATMs).

International Web Accessibility Standards: The current policy refers to the WCAG 2.0 standard developed by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and consists of a set of guidelines for making content accessible and includes 3 levels (A) and (AA) and (AAA):

Level (A): refers to the minimum level of adequate compatibility that a website must meet.

Level (AA): refers to the average level of adequate compatibility that a website must meet after fulfilling all of the Level A and Level AA success criteria.

Level (AAA): refers to the highest level of adequate compatibility that a website must meet after fulfilling all of the Level A and level AA success criteria.

Website on the Web: Refers to a complete set of electronic files accessible through a specified domain name and includes all. It includes all website homepages, and pages of web applications (including services and dynamically generated content).

Digital Media: It is the media that uses all available communication means to reach the audience and includes multiple tools such as interactive TV stations, digital terrestrial TV, IP TV, Internet TV, video on demand, electronic journalism, discussion forums, blogs, personal/institutional and commercial websites, and social networking sites and digital broadcasting, etc.

Website: A set of related Internet pages including media content, which are usually identified by a common domain name and published on at least one Internet server. The website can be accessed via a public Internet Protocol network such as the Internet or a private local network through Refer to a unified address for information that identifies the address of a website on the network

Digital Platform: An electronic portal through which the user can obtain all services and access more than one service in one place

Assistive Technology (AT): Any related information and communication technology, products, devices, equipment and related services used to maintain, increase or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with special needs or disabilities**.**

3- Objectives

1. Ensure that all members of society in the Sultanate, especially persons with disabilities and the elderly, have access to ICT platforms and equipment, and benefit from their digital advantages and the opportunities and prospects they provide.

2. Ensure the participation of all segments of society in achieving the objectives of the National Program for the Digital Economy and Oman Vision 2040 with all its pillars to raise the level of quality of services provided to people with disabilities and the elderly to enable them to live independently and ensure their effective participation in the development process.

3. Fulfilling the Sultanate's international and regional commitments related to enabling people with disabilities and the elderly to access government websites.

4- Purpose
Establishing an enabling environment to ensure to ensure that people with disabilities and the elderly have access to public products, information and services based on ICT platforms and equipment.

5- Scope of implementation
This policy applies at the national level of the state and includes units of the state's administrative apparatus and private sector institutions (governmental and private) subject to regulation by the regulatory authorities (the Ministry of Information, the Central Bank, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, and the Public Services Regulatory Authority) .

6- Policy statements
To ensure access for persons with disabilities and the elderly to services and products based on information and communication technology, the following provisions must be applied:

1- Units must adopt international standards for accessing the Web according to the controls set by the Ministry when making any new investment or development in platforms, websites, mobile phone applications, or digital content.

2- Units must , within (24) months of adopting this policy, start converting their current digital services published on platforms and websites and within mobile phone applications into services enhanced with digital accessibility and with a minimum level (A) of the World Wide Web Consortium standards for web accessibility.

3- Units must, within (4) years from the date of approving this policy, move to level (AA) of the World Wide Web Consortium standards for accessibility to the Web and their digital services published on platforms and websites.

4- Regulators supervising private sector must require institutions to design and upgrade their existing websites and platforms in line with international standards for web accessibility to enhance full access to their information and services.

5- IT department/ sections and website administrators are responsible to ensure compliance with this policy and to prepare transitional plan for digital access.

6- In the case of designing the websites by third party sources, units must ensure that these sources comply with the requirements for web accessibility.

7- The Ministry is committed to set standards, controls and guidelines for digital access to the web and updating them as needed.

8- The Ministry is committed to provide support and assistance to units to ensure the implementation of web accessibility requirements.

9- The Ministry of Information is committed to set standards, controls, and guidelines for digital access related to media and digital content, and updating them whenever necessary.

10- The entities covered by the scope of this policy must provide assistive technologies for their employees with disabilities in order to enable them to perform their job duties

11- Units must include "accessibility" as a required feature in information and communication technology procurement, according to international standards for access to information and communication technologies.

12- Units must include accessibility requirements, for contracts that deal with the development of a product or service that is intended to be used by segments of society or by unit employees in the specifications for the functions and performance of the product or service to be developed as an integral part of the contract.

13- Regulators supervising private sector institutions that provide public access services must oblige these institutions to apply improvements to existing information and communication technologies in public facilities to ensure that a reasonable percentage of information and communication technology devices and services are accessible to persons with different types of disabilities.

Awareness

1- The Ministry of Social Development is responsible for raising awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities in ICT sector, accessible services, and the advantages of assistive technologies.

2- The Ministry in cooperation with relevant stakeholders from the private sector, academic and organizations of persons with disabilities are responsible for spreading awareness of web accessibility tools available and benefits of accessible ICT to persons with disabilities and the rest of society.

3- Promoting awareness among society segments about how disables use public accessible facilities is the responsibility of the relevant regulators, operators and service providers.

7- Document Management

1- This policy is owned by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and will be subject to revision whenever necessary.

2- This policy shall be implemented by the date of its approval and circulation by the Ministry of Transport Communications and Information Technology.

8- Policy Compliance

1- The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology shall monitor the compliance of the units and present the results of compliance to the Council of Ministers.

2- Relevant publications

- Telecommunications Regulatory Law issued by Royal Decree No. (30/2002)
- Qatar e-Accessibility Policy (2011)
- ITU Digital Accessibility Policies Report (2021)
- Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report – ITU (2014)
- Australian Accessibility Policy Guidelines (2019)
- Regulations on the Provisions of Telecommunications Services to Persons with Disabilities (no. 41/2014) - of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) 2018 https://www.w3.org