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North American Broadcasters Association (NABA)

AUDIO LOUDNESS CONTROL FOR TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

The North American Broadcasters Association (NABA, www.nabanet.com) is an association of broadcasters in Canada, Mexico, and the United States, and the NABA Technical Committee is its standing technical body. NABA is thus in a position to present the technical viewpoints of the most authoritative association of professional North American Broadcasters in television and sound programme production, post-production, and distribution for terrestrial, satellite, and cable broadcasting.

NABA is a Sector Member of ITU-R and a long-time participant in ITU-R Study Groups, Working Parties, Task Groups, Rapporteur Groups, etc. NABA numbers among its members Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and members of the above groups. NABA also participates widely in the ITU work on radio, television and multimedia services and has a strong interest in international programme production and distribution.

NABA members have been studying the subject of digital audio programme loudness and believe that the problems of loudness fluctuations between programmes and especially fluctuations between programmes and short segments such as commercial announcements need further study beyond the PDNR in Annex 5 to the Working Party 6C Chairman's Report (Document 6C/133) entitled "Operational practices for loudness in the international exchange of digital television programmes".

In recognition that there presently exists no audio metadata standard, NABA, in Document 6C/93 urged the development of an ITU-R Recommendation on an audio metadata system to be employed at the point of programme production, and able to be bound to the programme essence as it moves throughout the delivery chain. Such digital audio metadata for television, should comply with the ITU requirements to be reflected in an ITU Recommendation and include a metadata format to indicate programme loudness of the full programme mix employing the metadata loudness measurement method specified in Recommendation ITU-R BS.1770.

The metadata so processed should remain intact with the audio essence and should be used to set the metadata value indicating loudness level at the programme destination point.

When metadata is not available or does not remain intact with the essence, NABA believes that a target value for dialogue loudness should be specified by the ITU-R as a metadata substitute. Studies to define an audio target value are underway in WP 6C and at the Advanced Television Systems Committee (ATSC) and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) where the work is rapidly proceeding on an intensive schedule.

NABA strongly believes that the adoption and approval of an ITU-R audio loudness target value Recommendation should await the completion of the ATSC and EBU work later this year.
