

WorldDAB recommendation on station branding

Background

New vehicles entering the market are being fitted with DAB radios with colour screens. These screens are also used to display a lot of other information, and for digital radio to look good, accurate branding for all radio stations is needed. A similar story is emerging with domestic DAB radios which increasingly come with colour screens.

DAB allows the station branding – often known as logos – to be broadcast as part of the signal with the audio, but not all broadcasters are doing this yet, and this leads to an inconsistent presentation of services to listeners, and makes it harder for receiver designers to create attractive User Interfaces, without gaps and blank spaces. There can be a variety of reasons that service providers are not broadcasting branding, including:

- they don't know they can
- they don't know how
- their ensemble provider doesn't make it easy
- the regulation (licensing) appears to prevent it

The theme common to all these reasons is uncertainty, and WorldDAB recommends taking action to reduce the uncertainty and enhance the experience of digital radio for all, whether they are in a new car or listening on a portable or mobile device with a colour screen.

Recommendation

WorldDAB recommends that all DAB ensembles carry a minimal SPI service which provides the station branding for all services carried in the ensemble. This takes the form of a packet data service using as little as 1% of the total ensemble capacity.

This could be done by a multilateral agreement amongst all the service providers in a country, or it could be included in the regulation for ensemble providers.

WorldDAB believes that whatever the mechanism, it needs to achieve a level playing field amongst all service providers so that the uncertainty around whether or not to provide a logo is removed. We recognise that a single SPI service per ensemble may not be immediately possible (for example, if the ensemble is already full of audio services), but mechanisms exist for branding to be carried on other ensembles for an interim period.

Technical details

The SPI (Service and Programme Information) is a hybrid digital radio specification, ETSI TS 102 818.

A minimal SPI service contains a description of which images link to which services and four image files for each service containing branding.

These objects can be broadcast on DAB using a data carousel to ensure that whenever the radio is tuned in, and whichever service is being listened to, the radio will accumulate the branding for all services. The images are retained in the radio and are automatically renewed if a service changes its artwork and if a new service is launched, the radio automatically adds the new artwork without any user intervention.