

AB IPBox

New Manufacturer in Central Europe

AB IPBox was only established in January 2010, which might have you think it would take some time to get a foothold in a highly competitive market. On the contrary, AB IPBox counts on the expertise and technical know-how of its owners and employees. We wanted to find out more about this new player and visited the company in the small Slovak town of Topoľčany. After all, it doesn't happen every day that a new start-up enters the receiver playground.



■ A few months ago newly founded receiver manufacturer AB IPBox moved into this new building in Topoľčany, Slovakia. The same building also houses wholesale distributor AB-COM.

Satellite receivers

AB IPBox



■ Juraj Masaryk (right), managing director of AB IPBox presents the new AB IPBox 9900HD receiver to TELE-satellite editor-in-chief Alexander Wiese. This particular model comes with various different front panel designs, which can be seen on the display shelf.

We are greeted by familiar faces in the brand-new office and manufacturing premises of AB IPBox: The managing director is Juraj Masaryk, who used to hold the same position at wholesale distributor AB-COM. Incidentally, AB-COM is located in the same building and so it comes as no surprise when Juraj Masaryk informs us that AB-COM acts as exclusive wholesale distributor for AB-IPBox in the Czech and Slovak Republics. „We do, however, also cooperate with additional exclusive distributors,” Juraj Masaryk adds, „namely in Germany, Russia, the Ukraine, Switzerland and – above all – Italy.” What an unexpected surprise: A company that was founded

only a few months ago already has in place exclusive distribution arrangements in much of Central and Eastern Europe. „In addition, we work with dealers in other countries such as the Baltic states, Poland and the Balkan states as well as Austria, of course,” Juraj Masaryk goes on.

If you look at a map of Europe it becomes obvious that Slovakia is a brilliant location for serving all countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Transport routes are short so that receivers can be shipped with very high efficiency.

Which leads us to the big question:

What is so special about AB IPBox that makes this new player so successful in all of these countries? Juraj Masaryk goes back to basics and highlights one of the major rules of any successful businessman: „We never rely on a single solution but always follow a concurrent strategy.” Not only has Juraj Masaryk a plan B up his sleeve at any time, he even works on plans A as well as B at the same time. „Experience has shown that you can never completely rule out

■ AB IPBox's top-of-the-range model: The 9900HD boasts two DVB-S2 tuners, two CI slots, two smartcard readers, two scart euroconnectors and of course PVR. A test report for this box is scheduled for one of the coming issues of TELE-satellite.



unexpected problems. But if and when they occur, they must never stop operational processes." Juraj Masaryk uses the following example to explain what he means by that. „Once we detected a software bug in one of our receiver lines, which caused the image on the TV screen to freeze after a given time. This problem could only be solved by re-setting the receiver."

What this meant was that the products could not be released for sale. „At the time we already had a second receiver in store with totally different software, otherwise we would have had to stop supplying the market with our products." Without a plan B a major problem like a software bug has the potential to ruin a company. „This has taught us to never ever rely on a single solution only," Juraj Masaryk emphasises the company credo and refers to AB-COM wholesale distribution sharing the same building. „Thanks to close cooperation with AB-COM even our distribution processes are based on two pillars and don't have to rely on a single product group."

So what product range is on offer from a company that deliberately decides to offer much more than a single product group? Juraj Masaryk has a convincing answer: „In general, we have two product lines. On the one hand we offer Linux-based receivers which are developed and manufactured by us. On the other hand we offer SKD (semi knock down) boxes sourced from Asian pro-



■ This is what it looked like in August of 2009...

viders which produce them according to our own specifications and for which the final assembly takes place in our manufacturing hall in Europe." Final assembly in Europe has two important advantages: All boxes are submitted to stringent tests and meet all European requirements. What's more, they are classified as local products and obtain the „Tested in Europe" seal.

We at the TELE-satellite are of course interested the most in the Linux-based receiver line. „A team of four software engineers is currently working on that line, particularly on drivers for those receivers," Juraj Masaryk explains. Three models are currently available, with all of them geared towards the

higher end of the market. „The AB IPBox 9900HD Plus with two DVB-S2 tuners, two CI slots, two smartcard readers, two smart euroconnectors and of course PVR is our top-of-the-range receiver." With the two USB interfaces that are also a standard feature this box can be turned into a genuine miracle machine. „For example, you may want to hook up a DVB-T tuner stick," Juraj Masaryk suggests and shows us one USB interface on the back panel and a second one behind a flap on the front panel. „This way you have a triple receiver or – if you so desire – even a quadruple receiver."

AB IPBox 99HD and 55HD are the designations of the two other Linux receivers from AB IPBox. Juraj goes on



■ The realm of AB IPBox sales managers.



■ ... and again in 2010. The two-storey administrative building can be seen in front, with warehouse and dispatch and repair facilities in the back.

by revealing another little secret: „We will make available the SDK (Software Developer Kit) for this series shortly!“ By the time you read this issue of TELE-satellite it should already be available for download from the AB IPBox website at www.abipbox.com. „With the SDK all software tinkerers are free to whip up new software solutions and creative features,” says Juraj Masaryk and adds that a whole range of additional software plugins will be already available from the AB IPBox website for those who want even more features for their box. Internet radio, YouTube, weather forecasts or picture viewers are only some of the plugins that can be installed. „If any of your readers believes they have come up with a worthwhile application

they are free to get in touch with us and we might even decide to add it to our existing range,” Juraj Masaryk says. It’s refreshing to see that AB IPBox is open to ideas from independent software developers.

While the new HD100 series is based on the Linux operating system it is nonetheless just as interesting. „This series is characterised by value for money and is intended for use as second or third receivers,” Juraj Masaryk explains. The idea behind is that for the living room one of the usual suspects is chosen as satellite receiver, while brand and features play little or no role when used in the bedroom, children’s bedroom or even kitchen. „You don’t need to show

off your receiver in these secondary rooms, all you need is a box that works and can be hidden behind the TV,” Juraj states and at the same time hints at the reduced size of HD100 series receivers. „They are available for all transmission standards from DVB-S2 to DVB-T, DVB-C and all the way to IPTV.” If justified by demand, AB IPBox will also offer this series of receivers for ATSC and ISDB-T.

Which leads us right to the next question: What is the customer segment targeted by AB IPBox? „It is especially with HD100 series boxes that we clearly focus on the provider market,” Juraj says. „The new up and coming IPTV providers in particular are interested in low-cost

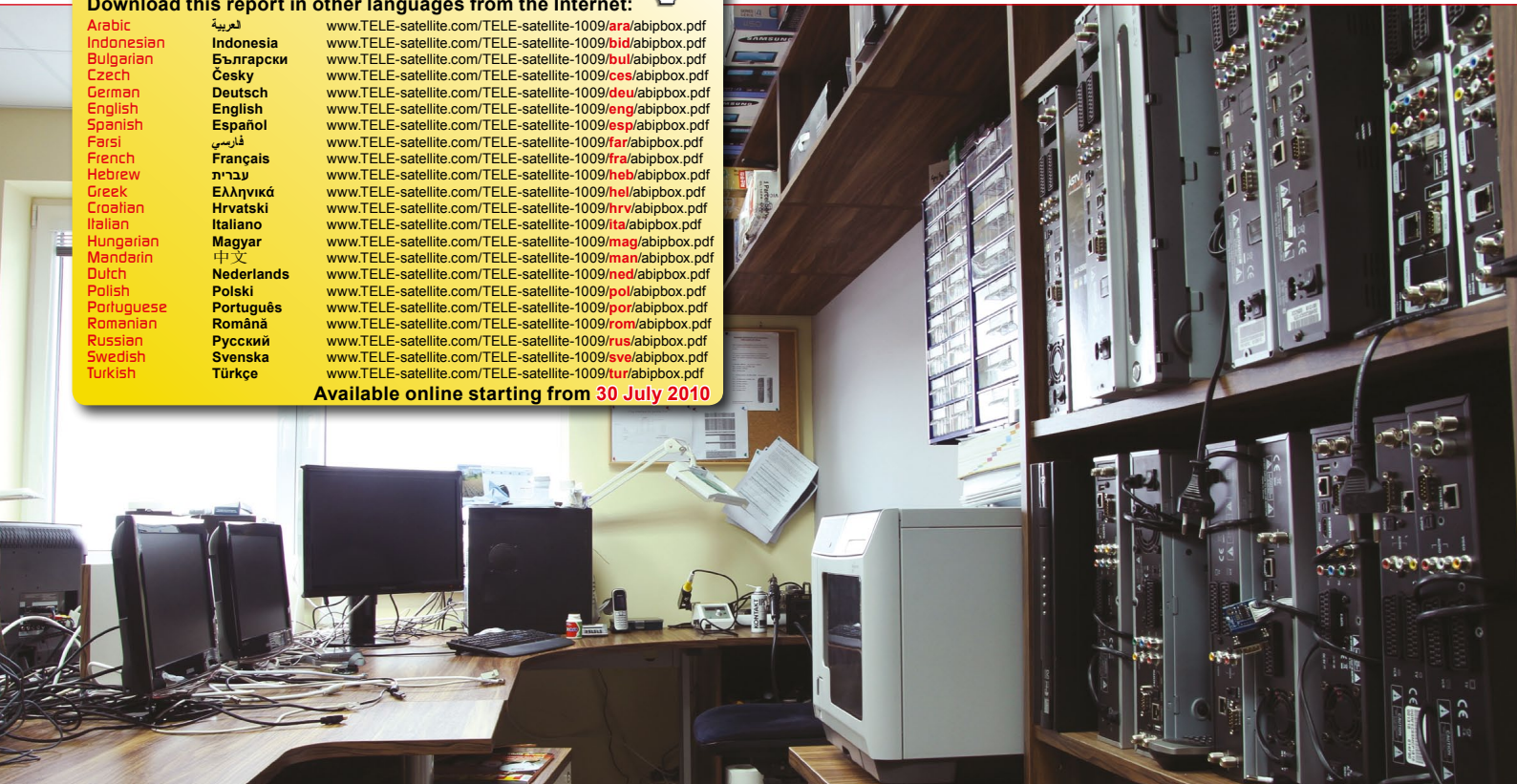


■ View of the warehouse which is jointly used by receiver manufacturer AB IPBox and wholesale distributor AB-COM.

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Available online starting from 30 July 2010



■ View of the repair shop. In case a receiver shows a malfunction AB IPBox does all repairs right here on-site.

receivers,” Juraj Masaryk continues and also states that IPTV end customers in most cases already use other receivers. „In such a case size does matter – only that here smaller is better, and this is exactly one of the key features of the HD100 series.”

It might come as a surprise that AB IPBox is a very lean company, despite its comprehensive product range. “A total of 24 staff are employed,” Juraj Masaryk has the numbers. “16 of which work in receiver manufacturing, four are responsible for sales and another four take care of technical support.” If you’re interested in meeting those responsible at AB IPBox in person and in looking at all their products you may want to visit EEBC in Kiev/Ukraine this year or ANGA in Cologne/Germany next year. “Of course we also use local fairs and exhibitions as platforms for our company, such as INVEX in the Czech Republic and HI END in Slovakia. Both will take place in November,” Juraj Masaryk adds.

It turns out that all that diversification talk is not just marketing chatter. For one thing, AB IPBox falls back on two different operating systems for added flexibility. And then there are the products themselves, which clearly target different market segments. Even with this multi-faceted strategy AB IPBox manages to keep prices low and remain competitive, which seems to be just the right recipe for success.



■ AB IPBox reception area: The national sales team works on the ground floor while the first floor hosts the export sales team, marketing department and management.





AB IPBox Employees

1. Radovan Cífra, Sales Manager
2. Ing. Michal Grežo, Marketing Manager
3. Svetlana Masaryková, Accountant
4. Martin Ďurisný, Service Engineer
5. Michala Kováčová, Accountant
6. Juraj Halo, Sales Manager
7. Juraj Bobula, Sales Manager
8. Peter Valo, Sales Manager

An
AB IPBox
Receiver
is Born:



1. The SDK (semi knock down) receiver components are assembled by AB IPBox to create the final receiver.

2. A female member of staff does some soldering on the receiver's main board.

3. Finished receivers waiting for final inspection.

4. Ready for dispatch: All that's still missing is the users' manual which is added with the languages required for various markets.

