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LATVIA

Latvia – At a Glance

Population:	2.3m (2007)
TV homes:	0.9m (max est)
Cable homes:	360,000+ (Q1 2009 est)
Digital cable homes:	40,000-50,000 (Q1 2009, est)
Leading operators:	Baltkom, Izzi
Main CA providers:	Conax

MARKET OVERVIEW

Baltkom and Izzi, formerly known as Telia Multicom, have dominated Latvia's cable industry for a number of years. Baltkom was the first operator in the country to introduce triple play, and has since – like Izzi – gone on to become a quadruple play company.

Baltkom, though not Izzi, participated in a DTT tender that was ultimately won by the incumbent telco Lattelecom in January 2009.

Latvia's cable industry also received a

shock in the same month when the VAT on cable service was increased from 18% to 21%. The VAT on goods and services in general was meanwhile increased from 18% to 21%, and as a result operators were forced to raise their subscription fees.

As of Q1 2009, operators were also involved in a dispute with Viasat Broadcasting over the latter's plans to impose of fee for the distribution of TV3, which had previously been available free of charge.

KEY PLAYERS

Baltkom

Baltkom was established in the early 1990s and backed by Metromedia International until 2003, when the latter sold its 50% stake in the company to SIA Alina for \$14.5 million. Alina then became the majority (95%) shareholder in Baltkom, with the remaining (5%) stake held by the national transmission company Latvian Radio and TV Centre (LVRTC).

Baltkom is the largest cable operator in Latvia, claiming a total of 230,000 subscribers for its TV, internet and fixed and mobile telephony services in Q1 2009. Its digital TV operation, which was launched in February 2004 and employs Conax conditional access, meanwhile had 140,000 subscribers in Q3 2008.

Baltkom has both cable and MMDS networks, the former principally in the capital, Riga. As of Q1 2009, its digital offer in cable networks consisted of 'Basic' (61 channels) and 'Extra' (88 channels) programme packages, costing LVL9.90 and LV12.90 a month respectively.

That in MMDS areas meanwhile consisted of 60 and 90 channels, costing LVL12.50 and LVL14.90 a month respectively.

Viewers were also offered a choice of four premium packages, ranging in price from LVL3.8 (movies) to LVL5 (adult programming) a month.

Triple play packages included internet access at speeds of up to 15Mbps.

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