F&S i.MX6-SoloX Linux

First Steps

Version 2.3 (2024-01-25)

















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About This Document

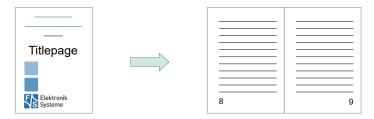
This document shows how to bring up F&S boards and modules under Linux, how to update firmware and how to use the system and the devices. It covers also compiling bootloader, Linux kernel and root filesystem as well as how to build your own applications for the device.

Remark

The version number on the title page of this document is the version of the document. It is not related to the version number of any software release! The latest version of this document can always be found at http://www.fs-net.de.

How To Print This Document

This document is designed to be printed double-sided (front and back) on A4 paper. If you want to read it with a PDF reader program, you should use a two-page layout where the title page is an extra single page. The settings are correct if the page numbers are at the outside of the pages, even pages on the left and odd pages on the right side. If it is reversed, then the title page is handled wrongly and is part of the first double-page instead of a single page.



Typographical Conventions

We use different fonts and highlighting to emphasize the context of special terms:

File names

Menu entries

Board input/output

Program code

PC input/output

Listings

Generic input/output

Variables

History

fsimx6sx fsimx6sx fsimx6sx fsimx6sx fsimx6sx	M A,M A, M A M M M M M	* 2.3, 3.3.1, 7.14, 8.2, 8.5 7.*, 8 6.2.* 9.3 1 2 2.1.2 2.2, 2.3	Ported from fsimx6ul to fsimx6sx; many small modifications regarding i.MX6-SoloX Address differences between multiple documents Change NBoot upgrade info, formatting, add mkimage tool installation Add chapter 8 'Graphical Environment' merge similar subchapters and remove them Command should be nand erase.part Explain new version of install-sources.sh with optiondry-run Add NetDCUA9 and PicoCOM1.2 to list of available platforms Add reference to F&S development machine	PH PH HK HK
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V Version

A,M,R Added, Modified, Removed

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Table of Contents

1	Intro	duction	1		
	1.1	F&S Board Families And CPU Architectures	1		
	1.2	Scope of This Document	2		
2	Setti	ng up the Board	3		
	2.1	Locating the Connectors on the Starterkit	3		
	2.1.1	efusA9X(r2)	3		
	2.1.2	PicoCOMA9X	5		
	2.1.3	PicoCoreMX6SX	7		
	2.2	Serial Connection	8		
	2.3	Start Board	9		
3	Softv	ware Installation	10		
	3.1	Download Images From F&S Website	10		
	3.2	Enter NBoot	12		
	3.3	Erase Flash	12		
	3.4	Create Partitions	13		
	3.5	Download and Save U-Boot	13		
	3.6	Install Kernel, Device Tree And Root Filesystem	15		
	3.7	Set MAC Address	15		
	3.8	Restart Board	16		
4	Next	Steps	17		
	4.1	F&S Workshops	17		
	4.2	Further Information	17		
5	Appendix				
	List of Figures				
	List of Tables				
	Listings				
	Important Notice				



1 Introduction

1.1 F&S Board Families And CPU Architectures

F&S offers a whole variety of Systems on Module (SOM) and Single Board Computers (SBC). There are different board families that are named NetDCU, PicoMOD, PicoCOM, armStone, QBliss, efus and PicoCore (see Table 1).

Family	Туре	Size
NetDCU	Single Board Computer	80 mm x 100 mm
PicoMOD	System on Module	80 mm x 50 mm
PicoCOM	System on Module	40 mm x 50 mm
armStone	Single Board Computer	100 mm x 72 mm (PicoITX)
QBliss	System on Module	70 mm x 70 mm (Qseven)
efus	System on Module	62 mm x 47 mm
PicoCore	System on Module	40 mm x 35 mm

Table 1: F&S Board Families

Linux is available for all of these platforms. F&S combines releases for platforms with the same CPU – or rather SoC (System on Chip) – as so-called *architecture releases*. All the boards of the same architecture can use the same sources, and the binaries can be used on any board of this architecture. Please note the difference: *board families* are grouped by form factor, *architectures* are grouped by CPU type, i.e. they usually contain boards of different families.

Table 2 shows all the architectures that are currently supported by F&S.

Architecture	CPU	Platforms
fsvybrid	NXP Vybrid VF6xx	PicoCOMA5, NetDCUA5, armStoneA5, PicoMOD1.2
fsimx6	NXP i.MX6	efusA9, QBlissA9, QBlissA9r2, armStoneA9, armStoneA9r2, PicoMODA9, NetDCUA9
fsimx6sx	NXP i.MX6-SoloX	efusA9X, PicoCOMA9X, PicoCoreMX6SX
fsimx6ul	NXP i.MX6-UL/ULL	efusA7UL, PicoCOM1.2, PicoCoreMX6UL
fsimx7ulp	NXP i.MX7ULP	PicoCoreMX7ULP

Table 2: F&S Architectures



Introduction

Remark

In December 2015, the two companies Freescale and NXP merged and both companies are now working under the brand name NXP. The name Freescale will disappear in the future, which is why we only use "NXP" throughout this document now. However some programs still output "Freescale" at some places. We have not touched this output to reflect the situation as it is.

1.2 Scope of This Document

This document describes the *fsimx6sx* architecture. That means all F&S boards and modules based on the NXP i.MX6-SoloX SoC (i.MX6SX). The steps in this document will help you getting to know your board and do some basic operations in Linux, so that you can try out all the periphery and do some first tests and comparisons.

The additional document LinuxOnFSBoards_eng.pdf explains the more generic ideas and concepts of Linux on F&S boards and modules. So after having become acquainted with the board, you should continue reading that Linux document to get a more in-depth knowledge of the board and software.



2 Setting up the Board

In this chapter we will show how to connect the board to the PC. For a first test of the board functions, we only need a serial connection between PC and board. So as a first step, we will introduce all the boards and Starterkits of the *fsimx6sx* architecture and show the location of all connectors, especially the debug port.

2.1 Locating the Connectors on the Starterkit

2.1.1 efusA9X(r2)

The Starterkit includes all components that are required for an initial setup. This includes:

- Cables (Ethernet, serial, power, USB, ...).
- Software (source, binaries, install scripts, examples).
- Starterkit carrier board that offers connectivity for most interfaces available in efusA9X.
- efusA9X module.

For basic operation please make sure that power and Serial A debug port are connected correctly.

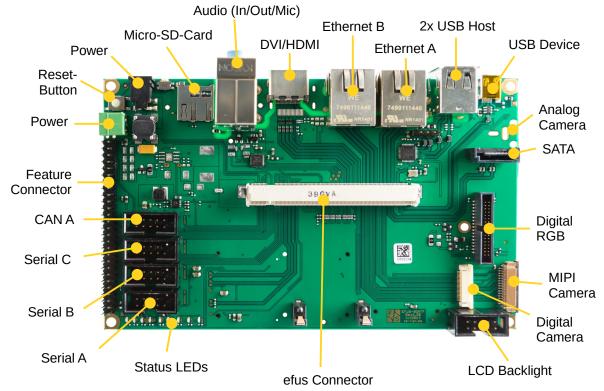


Figure 1: Top side of efus SKIT carrier board



Setting up the Board

Figure 1 shows the connectors available on the top side of the efus SKIT carrier board. This carrier board is also available for other efus modules like the efusA9 and efusA9UL. Not all features are available on all efus modules. For example the efusA9X has no support for DVI/HDMI, SATA and MIPI cameras. The Micro-SD-Card slot can only be used if no on-board WLAN is equipped.

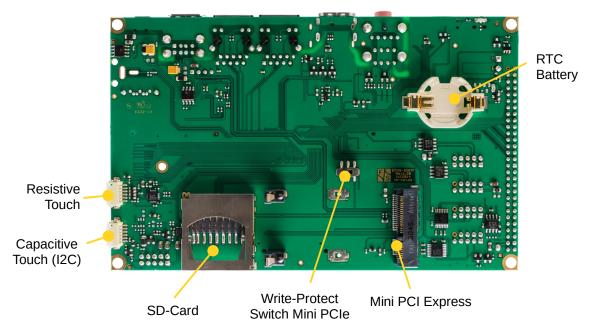


Figure 2: Bottom side of efus SKIT carrier board

The connections available from the bottom side of the efus SKIT can be seen in Figure 2. The efusA9X module itself is shown in Figure 3.

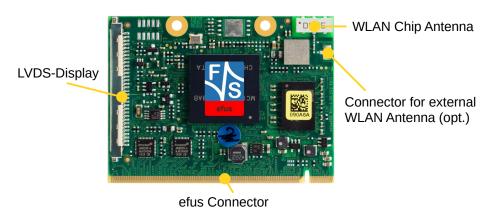


Figure 3: Top side of efusA9X module

More detailed information about connectors available on the SKIT and the efusA9X can be found in the "Hardware documentation for efus Startinterface" and the "efusA9X Hardware Documentation".



2.1.2 PicoCOMA9X

The Starterkit includes all components that are required for an initial setup. This includes:

- Cables (Ethernet, serial, power, USB, ...).
- Software (source, binaries, install scripts, examples).
- Starterkit carrier board that offers connectivity for the PicoCOMA9X interfaces
- PicoCOMA9X module.

Figure 4 shows the Starterkit baseboard For basic operation please make sure that power and UART A debug port is connected correctly.

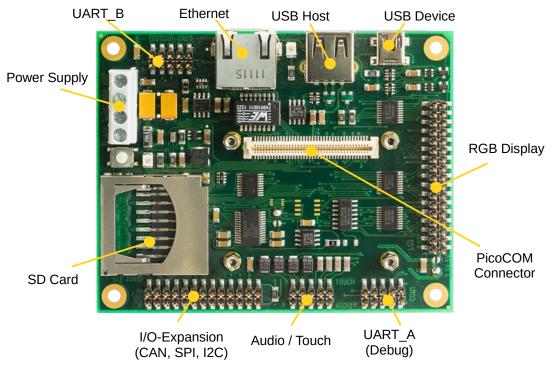


Figure 4: PicoCOMA9X Starterkit carrier board

Figure 5 shows the PicoCOMA9X module itself.

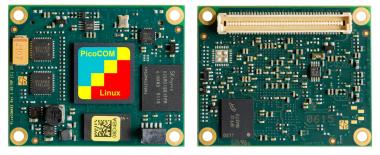
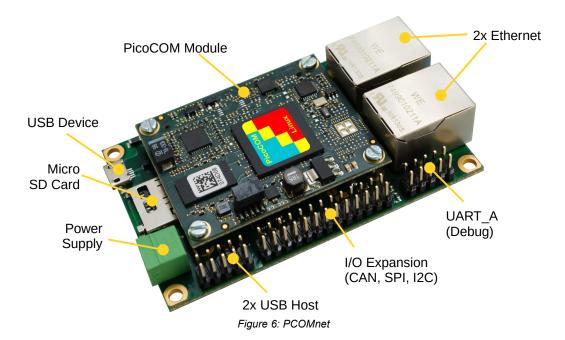


Figure 5: PicoCOMA9X module top and bottom view



Setting up the Board

In addition to the regular Starterkit there is also a small baseboard available called PCOMnet. When using this board and the correct PicoCOMA9X version, you have support for two Ethernet ports. Figure 6 shows the PCOMnet.





2.1.3 PicoCoreMX6SX

The Starterkit includes all components that are required for an initial setup. This includes:

- Cables (Ethernet, serial, power, USB, ...).
- Software (source, binaries, install scripts, examples).
- Starterkit carrier board that offers connectivity for most PicoCoreMX6SX interfaces.
- PicoCoreMX6SX module.

Figure 7 shows the Starterkit baseboard. For basic operation please make sure that power and UART_A debug port are connected correctly.

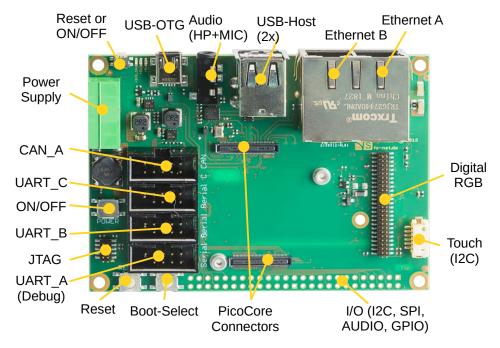


Figure 7: PicoCore Starterkit carrier board

Figure 8 shows the PicoCoreMX6SX module itself.

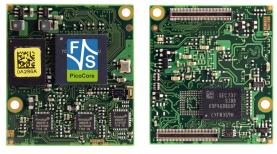


Figure 8: PicoCoreMX6SX top and bottom view



2.2 Serial Connection

To work with the board, you need a serial connection with your PC. Use the provided Null-Modem cable and connect the debug port of the board (or Starterkit baseboard) with the serial port of a PC. Please refer to chapter 2.1 for the location of the COM ports. A serial port is mandatory on your PC, because we control the whole board via the serial port. If your PC does not provide a serial port, you have to either use a USB-to-serial adapter or you need to install a PCIe extension card with a serial port.

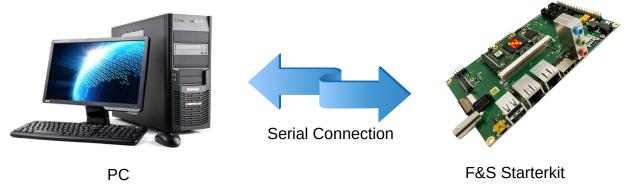


Figure 9: Serial connection from board to PC

For a first test, a Linux PC is not necessarily required. You can also use a Windows PC. But later for development, you definitely need a Linux PC, either native or as a Virtual Machine. With a Virtual Machine, you compile your software in Linux but you can still have the serial connection done in Windows and use tools from Windows. This uses the best of both worlds.

On your PC, start a terminal program and open a serial connection to the board. Use 115200 baud, 1 start, 1 stop bit, no flow control. We recommend a terminal program that supports a 1:1 binary download and also supports ANSI Escape Sequences for colour and text highlighting. Examples are:

- TeraTerm (Windows)
- Putty (Windows/Linux, does not support 1:1 download)
- minicom (Linux, does not support 1:1 download, but not needed in Linux)

F&S also provides a small terminal program for Windows called DCUTerm. You can find DCUTerm in the Tools-Section of the Download Area (in *My F&S*). However DCUTerm does not support ANSI Escape Sequences, which means the output of a Linux command like 1s is nearly unreadable. Instead of different colours for different file types, you will see a mixture of file names and verbatim escape sequences. Also accessing the command history with the up and down arrow keys is not possible in DCUTerm. So DCUTerm is not suited very well for Linux. However it supports a 1:1 binary download. So DCUTerm is actually a good companion for PuTTY. Use DCUTerm for serial downloads and PuTTY for everything else.



2.3 Start Board

Connect a power supply to the board. Please refer to chapter 2.1 for the location of the power supply pins. You need to supply +5V.

Now switch on the power supply. Quite immediately the terminal program should show boot messages from the booting Linux system. This will go on for a few seconds and then a login prompt should appear.

```
Welcome to F+S i.MX6SoloX fsimx6sx login:
```

Enter root to log in. In the default configuration, no password is required.

If everything went well, you can skip the next chapter and proceed with entering Linux commands.



3 Software Installation

When you get a Starterkit from F&S, the Linux system is usually pre-installed and boots to the Linux login prompt right away. In this case you can skip this chapter. But if you are switching over from a different operating system, if you are upgrading from a previous release, or if your board is empty for some other reason, the following sections describe how to install some standard software on your platform.

Here we will only show a very simple automatic installation procedure using an SD card or USB stick and some pre-compiled images from the F&S website. This is the easiest way to get to a running system. Of course, there are other ways to install software, for example via network (TFTP). However, this would go beyond the scope of this First Steps document.

3.1 Download Images From F&S Website

To download any software, go to the F&S main website

https://www.fs-net.de

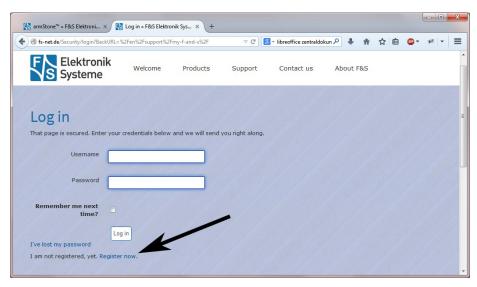


Figure 10: Register with F&S website

To download any software, you first have to register with the website. Click on *Login* right at the top of the window and on the text "I am not registered, yet. *Register now*" (Figure 10).

In the screen appearing now, fill in all fields and then click on *Register*. You are now registered and can use the personal features of the website, like the Support Forum and downloading software.

After logging in, you are at your personal page, called "My F&S". You can always reach this place by selecting $Support \rightarrow My$ F&S from the top menu. Here you can find all software downloads that are available for you. In the top sections there are private downloads for you or your company (may be empty) and in the bottom section you will find generic downloads for all registered customers.



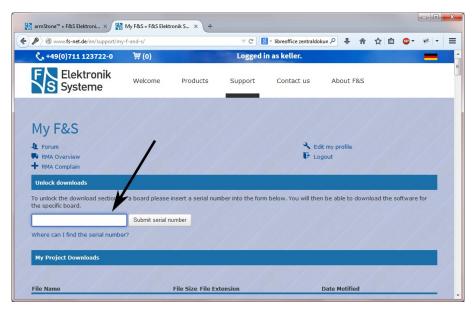


Figure 11: Unlock software with the serial number

To get access to the software of a specific board in the bottom section, you have to enter the serial number of one of these boards (see Figure 11). Click on "Where can I find the serial number" to get pictures of examples where to find this number on your product. Enter the number in the white field and press *Submit serial number*. This enables the software section for this board type for you. You will find Linux, Windows CE, and all other software and tools available for this platform like <code>DCUTerm</code> or <code>NetDCUUsbLoader</code>.

First click on the type of your board, e.g. efusA9X, then on Linux. Now you have the choice of Buildroot or Yocto. For the first steps here, we will use the newest Buildroot release, because this is the software that is also installed on our Starterkits. So click on Buildroot. This will bring up a list of all our Buildroot releases. Old releases up to 2018 had V < x > . < y > as version identifier, new releases use B < year > . < month >. We will abbreviate this as < v > from now on. Select the newest version, for example fsimx6sx-B2019.11. This will finally show two archives that can be downloaded.

fsimx6sx-<v>.tar.bz2.....This is the main release itself containing all sources, the binary images, the documentation and the toolchain.

sdcard-fsimx6sx-<v>.tar.bz2 Files that can be stored on an SD Card or USB stick to allow for easy installation.

For board specific releases the name consists of the name of the board instead of the architecture. (e.g. picocoremx6sx instead of fsimx6sx)

For now we will only need the SD card archive. This archive contains some pre-compiled images of bootloaders, Linux kernel, device trees and root filesystem. It is compressed with bzip2. To see the files, you first have to unpack the archive, for example in Linux with

tar xvf sdcard-fsimx6sx-<v>.tar.bz2



Software Installation

This will create a directory <code>sdcard</code> for NAND and <code>sdcard_mmc</code> for eMMC that contains all necessary files. Choose the right directory for your device or else the system will not boot. Now copy these files to an SD card or USB stick. We will call this the <code>installation media</code>. It has to be formatted with the FAT filesystem. Do not create any subdirectories, the files have to reside directly in the top directory of the media.

3.2 Enter NBoot

NBoot is a small first-level bootloader that is running before the main bootloader. It is the same for Linux and Windows CE and always remains on the board, even if the whole flash memory is erased. As long as NBoot is available on the board, it is always possible to bring up the whole system again without the need for any special hardware or software tools.

Normally, NBoot is completely invisible and just loads and starts the main bootloader. Then the first output on the serial port is from the main bootloader itself. But now we will use NBoot to erase any old content and download the correct U-Boot image. This means we have to stop the boot process right at the beginning and enter NBoot.

This requires the serial setup as explained in Chapter 2.2. And we need a 1:1 download option, which means PuTTY is not suited for this. So use one of the other terminal programs. Open the serial connection, then press and hold key s (lower case S). While holding this key, switch on power of the board (or press the reset button). This should bring you into NBoot. You should see something like this (output is taken from PicoCOMA9X, the real messages may vary slightly depending on the board type and software version):

```
F&S Nand Loader VN39 built Nov 14 2019 14:31:34

PicoCOMA9X Rev. 1.20
...

Please select action
'd' -> Serial download of bootloader
'E' -> Erase flash
'B' -> Show bad blocks

Use NetDCUUsbLoader for USB download
```

3.3 Erase Flash

To erase any old content, simply press *E* (upper-case e). This removes everything that was on the board before. Don't be afraid, this won't erase NBoot itself.

For the eMMC only version of NBoot the erase command currently isn't supported.



3.4 Create Partitions

Note

The following part of the chapter is only viable for devices with eMMC only and NBoot version 43 or higher. Functionality was added to store the U-Boot together with Kernel and Device Tree in a FAT partition, which is different from earlier implementations.

For eMMC only devices a FAT partition and MBR must be present at the User partition to write U-Boot. To initialize the partitions press w (lower-case W). Automatically a FAT partition with the size 40 MB and an ext4 partition with the size of 800 MB will be created. You can define more partitions with partition type and size (e.g. 0x83 for ext4 and 40960 for 40 kB). The characters typed in will not show on the terminal. If you don't need any further partitions, you can simply press Enter without typing in values for type and size. When all partitions are defined, a prompt is shown to validate the writing of the partitions. This will result in overwriting any current partition table.

```
Creating boot partition 0 (FAT16, 40MiB)
creating partition 0 with type 0x06 and size 40 MiB
Creating rootfs partition 1 (Linux, 800MiB)
creating partition 1 with type 0x83 and size 800 MiB
enter additional data partition 2
filesystem type:filesystem size in MiB:
WARNING: writing the MBR will delete all data!

Enter 'y' to proceed, any other key to exit
writing MBR
writing FAT
```

3.5 Download and Save U-Boot

Unfortunately NBoot for fsimx6sx is not capable of accessing files on an SD card or USB stick. Which means you have to download the U-Boot image via the serial line. This is the part where the 1:1 download comes in. While still in NBoot, press d (lower-case D). This will show some message similar to this:

```
Waiting for bootloader...
```

Now the steps are different, depending on the terminal program that you use.

In DCUTerm, go to File → Transmit Binary File... and open the file ubotmx6x.nb0 from the sdcard directory. This starts the serial download.



Software Installation

- In TeraTerm, go to File → Send File... and activate the Binary option checkbox. This
 is important! Then open the file ubotmx6x.nb0 from the sdcard directory. This
 starts the serial download.
- In Linux, you can copy the U-Boot image ubotmx6u.nb0 from the sdcard subdirectory directly to the serial port device. This is possible even if the terminal program does not support a 1:1 download function. For example if /dev/ttys0 is your serial port, just use a separate shell and enter:

```
dd if=ubotmx6x.nb0 of=/dev/ttyS0.
```

Just note that you must not enter any characters in the terminal program while download is in progress. The character would also be sent to the serial port and would be inserted at an arbitrary position in the sequence of bytes. This would shift the remaining file content and would result in a damaged and unusable download.

Note

After pressing d, you have exactly 60 seconds to start the download. Then the download command times out and the menu is shown again. This means if you start to send the file too late, every byte of the file is interpreted as an own NBoot command, which is definitely not what you want.

During download, progress is shown by an increasing number of dots and the number of transmitted bytes from time to time.

```
..... 196608 Bytes
     458752 Bytes
          ..... 524288 Bytes
Success, checksum: 0xaa7d
>>> U-Boot image loaded (524288 bytes) <<<
Please select action
'f' -> Save image to flash
'x' -> Execute image
'd' -> Serial download of bootloader
'E' -> Erase flash
'B' -> Show bad blocks
Use NetDCUUsbLoader for USB download
```

When download is complete, you see a checksum (which may differ in your case) and the menu again, which now has additional entries. Save U-Boot by pressing f (lower case F). This should show

```
Saving U-Boot...Success
```



For devices with only eMMC the MBR and partitions have to be present. If they are not, then you need to initialize them with w (lower case W) first, before saving the U-Boot. (Refer to Chapter 3.4)

Also the NBoot MSD (Mass Storage Device) can to be activated by pressing Z (upper case Z). When the USB port is connected to the Host-PC, the partitions will be shown as USB storage devices and the U-Boot can simply be put in the right partition. The naming of the U-Boot file is critical, so be sure to use the same file name. (uboot.nb0)

3.6 Install Kernel, Device Tree And Root Filesystem

Now insert the installation device into the board or Starterkit baseboard. The remaining installation is fully automatic and is done by U-Boot. As U-Boot is still available in RAM from the previous step, you can directly start it by pressing *x* (lower-case X). This will show something like this:

```
U-Boot 2018.03 (Nov 19 2019 - 12:17:26 +0100) for F&S
       Freescale i.MX6SX rev1.2, 996 MHz (running at 792 MHz)
      Extended Commercial temperature grade (-20C to 105C)
CPU:
Reset: POR
Board: PicoCOMA9X Rev 1.20 (2x LAN, 1x DRAM)
I2C:
      readv
DRAM: 512 MiB
NAND: 256 MiB
MMC: FSL SDHC: 0
Loading Environment from NAND... OK
In:
      serial
Out:
      serial
Err: serial
     FECO [PRIME], FEC1
Net:
Hit any key to stop autoboot: 3
```

The number in the last line will count down to zero, then the installation procedure will start. The files are loaded from the installation media and are stored in NAND flash on the board. When the installation is over, you will see the following line

```
Installation complete
Please set/verify ethernet address(es) now and call saveenv
```

3.7 Set MAC Address

When we erased the flash content in Chapter 3.3, we also erased the U-Boot environment including the MAC address for the Ethernet chip. We have to set it again now and save it permanently.

The MAC address is a unique identifier for a network device. Each network device has its own address that should be unique across the whole world. So each network port on each board needs a unique MAC address.



Software Installation

A MAC address consists of twelve hexadecimal digits (0 to 9 and A to F), that are often grouped in pairs and separated by colons. The first six digits for F&S boards are always the same: 00:05:51, which is the official MAC address code for the F&S company. The remaining six digits can be found on the bar-code sticker directly on your board (see Figure 12).



The full MAC address for this example would be 00:05:51:07:93:4B. If your board supports two Ethernet ports, you need two MAC addresses. The second one is the first one plus 1, i.e. 00:05:51:07:93:4C.

Figure 12: Barcode sticker

The following two commands will set the MAC addresses and stores the current environment (including the newly set MAC addresses) in NAND flash. Of course you have to replace xx:yy:zz with the six hex digits from the bar-code sticker on your board (and xx:yy:vv with the six hex digits plus 1).

```
setenv ethaddr 00:05:51:xx:yy:zz
setenv eth1addr 00:05:51:xx:yy:vv
saveenv
```

Warning

If you do not set this unique address, a default address is used that is the same for all boards of this type. This will definitely lead to problems in real networking scenarios.

3.8 Restart Board

Installation is complete. To check if everything was done correctly, restart the board. You can either enter U-Boot command, ...

```
reset
```

... or press the reset button, or simply switch the power off and on again. Like in chapter 2.3, the terminal program should show boot messages from the booting Linux system. This will go on for a few seconds and then a login prompt should appear.

```
Welcome to F+S i.MX6SoloX fsimx6sx login:
```

Enter root to log in. In the default configuration, no password is required.

If this is still not working, you should repeat the steps from the whole chapter.



4 Next Steps

This document only showed a very basic usage of the board and the Linux system. The next logical step is the generic Linux documentation <code>LinuxOnFSBoards_eng.pdf</code>. It will show you the ideas and concepts behind the F&S Linux environment and how you can work efficiently with these boards.

4.1 F&S Workshops

F&S also offers several workshops. Especially if you are new to working with embedded boards or even new to Linux, we recommend visiting the workshop "Linux on F&S Modules". Working with an embedded system is quite different to working with a desktop Linux. This workshop will show you a basic introduction to Linux, how to use NBoot, U-Boot and Linux on an F&S board, how to compile the system software, how to download files to the board, and how to write your own programs. The workshop lasts four hours and takes place in Stuttgart at the F&S company building. It may save you many hours of reading, trying, and even frustration.

Additional workshops are available for working with Buildroot, Asymmetric Multiprocessing, Secure Boot, Working with GIT. Please look at our website for any additional offerings.

4.2 Further Information

Many additional resources of information are available on the F&S website.

Document	Description
AdvicesForLinuxOnPC.pdf	Explains how to install server software and tools on a Linux development PC that is used with F&S Linux boards.
*-GPIO-Reference-Card_eng.pdf	Lists all pins of the board and which GPIO number needs to be used in Linux
*_Hardware_eng	Hardware documentation; there are separate documents for each board and also for the Starterkit baseboards. F&S also offers Eagle layout files for some of our Starterkits.

Table 3: Important documents, available on the F&S website

We do not include all these documents in the release to make sure that you always get the newest version when you start. The following sections give direct links to important places like documentation and add-ons.



Next Steps

You can find further documentation in the Documents section of your board at https://www.fs-net.de

A good source for information is also our internet forum. If you have any questions or specific problems, please feel free to go to: http://forum.fs-net.de/



5 Appendix

List of Figures

Figure 1: Top side of efus SKIT carrier board	3
Figure 2: Bottom side of efus SKIT carrier board	4
Figure 3: Top side of efusA9X module	4
Figure 4: PicoCOMA9X Starterkit carrier board	5
Figure 5: PicoCOMA9X module top and bottom view	5
Figure 6: PCOMnet	6
Figure 7: PicoCore Starterkit carrier board	7
Figure 8: PicoCoreMX6SX top and bottom view	7
Figure 9: Serial connection from board to PC	8
Figure 10: Register with F&S website	10
Figure 11: Unlock software with the serial number	11
Figure 12: Bar-code sticker	14
List of Tables	
Table 1: F&S Board Families	1
Table 2: F&S Architectures	1
Table 3: VPU based GStreamer plugins	20
Table 4: Important documents, available on the F&S website	30

Listings



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