



# eSMEs

## BEST PRACTICES IN THE USE OF eBUSINESS STANDARDS FOR EUROPEAN SMEs



### eBUSINESS AND EUROPEAN STANDARDS – BENEFITS FOR SMEs

Increasing competitive pressures and a changing legal and administrative environment are compelling over 23 million European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to optimize their business processes, cut costs and enter new markets in Europe and the rest of the world.

eBusiness standards are an important tool for companies. By integrating eBusiness and eBusiness standards, each SME can:

- Optimize relationships with suppliers
- Shorten response times
- Improve security in planning
- Reduce costs
- Increase customer satisfaction
- Acquire new customers
- Enter new markets
- Improve the company's image
- Create a distinctive profile
- Boost revenue



Focus Group



# HELPING SMEs EMPOWER THEIR eBUSINESS



## WHAT IS eBUSINESS AND WHAT ARE eBUSINESS STANDARDS?

The following functional areas are supported by eBusiness applications. These applications rely on eBusiness standards for their integration and function, and they are essential for achieving efficiency in corporate processes:

- CATEGORY MANAGEMENT: Improving product range policy and marketing.
- COLLABORATION ON PLANNING, FORECASTING AND REPLENISHMENT: Reducing transport and distribution costs and optimizing collaboration along the supply chain.
- CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT: Better understanding of customers and increased customer loyalty.
- ELECTRONIC EXCHANGE OF DATA: Automatic ordering, billing and notification of dispatch.
- ELECTRONIC CATALOGUES: Updating electronic catalogues at the push of a button.
- ELECTRONIC MARKETPLACES: Benefiting from sales opportunities in global markets.
- ePROCUREMENT: Using supplier shops and rationalizing purchasing.
- JOINT FORECASTING: Optimizing logistics and the flow of goods.
- ONLINE-SHOPS: Discovering new distribution channels and making sales around the clock.

→ MASTER DATA MANAGEMENT: Achieving security in planning for all business processes.

→ VENDOR-MANAGED INVENTORY: Reducing stock levels and accelerating product innovation.

## eBUSINESS STANDARDS – THE KEY TO ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS

Internationally accepted and cost-efficient standards are fundamental to the implementation of eBusiness activities. They ensure that a company's work processes are fully digitized and not interrupted by changes in media.

## CONTRIBUTING TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S DIGITAL AGENDA FOR SMEs

Helping SMEs go digital is a priority for the European Commission. The Commission has set up a European Portal for SMEs, the eYouGuide portal and the eBusiness support network.

eBusiness standards facilitate policy implementation, and, in order to cope with eBusiness and standards in their daily work, SMEs need tailored information and tutorial training. The CEN Focus Group 'eSMEs' addresses, on a European level, the tutorial support that SMEs need in order to integrate eBusiness standards into their operations.

Five categories of standards are addressed:

→ IDENTIFICATION STANDARDS - Identification standards are used to identify products and services, organizations and companies, locations, logistics and transport. Their use is fundamental in eBusiness for the transaction of goods and services between companies as well as the use of



scanner technology (Barcodes). An advanced technology in the form of RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) is also gaining importance. Examples of identification standards: EAN/GTIN, GS1 128 and EPC/RFID.

- CLASSIFICATION STANDARDS - Classification standards describe products consistently and align them in a hierarchical system for grouping materials, products and services. This is done according to a logical structure with a level of detail that corresponds to the product-specific properties. Examples of classification standards: CPV, eCI@ss, ETIM, GPC, and UNSPSC.
- CATALOGUE EXCHANGE FORMATS - For facilitating the exchange of catalogue and product data, trading partners need a standardized exchange format. Electronic catalogue data can also be exchanged with platforms. Examples of catalogue exchange formats: BMEcat, cXML, Datanorm/Eldanorm and PRICAT.
- TRANSACTION STANDARDS - Consistent messages are needed for the electronic exchange of electronic invoices and bills. Transaction standards enable the creation of these messages. Examples of transaction standards: EANCOM®, EDIFACT, GS1-XML, OAGIS, ODETTE, openTRANS and UBL.
- PROCESS STANDARDS - Process standards enable standardization of entire business processes. Process standards are not as common in the manufacturing industry as they are in the consumer goods industry where joint forecasting and vendor-managed inventory are state of the art. Examples of process standards: Category Management, CPFR, ebXML, Joint Forecasting, OSA, RosettaNet and VMI.

#### **CEN FOCUS GROUP: eSMEs**

The objective of the CEN Focus Group eSMEs is to help SMEs integrate eBusiness procedures into their daily work. The group's main activities are:

- Collecting and disseminating practical knowledge, information and experience as well as guidelines concerning the use of eBusiness and eBusiness standards.
- Identifying SME support gaps in the area of eBusiness and eBusiness standards.
- Creating a wiki for planning and communicating recommended actions to overcome identified gaps.
- Developing courses and tutorials targeted specifically to small and mid-size enterprises in the areas of product data description and exchange standards.
- Developing a methodology to effectively disseminate information and material.
- Creating an eBook on the results of the Focus Group.

#### **REPORT AND eBOOK**

The Focus Group's final report and eBook will be published in June 2010 on the CEN website and distributed throughout the European Commission's eBusiness Support Network.



## ABOUT eSMEs

The CEN Focus Group eSMEs has been proposed by the PROZEUS project and the University of Hagen. A variety of stakeholders participate in the Focus Group, including non-profit organizations, trade associations, public agencies, IT consultants, software vendors and standards developers.

The project team comprises: Jan Goossenaerts, Pragmeta Knowledge Clout (Belgium) → Tony Hittema, AFNOR – Association Française de Normalisation (France) → Aurélie Virgili, Independent Consultant (Belgium) → Jens Bröking, Semaino Technologies (Germany) → Michel Declunder, Periscope (France) → Romano Klein, Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln Consult (Germany).

The work is supported by the European Commission, the Directorate General Enterprise and Industry, and the European Free Trade Association.

## USEFUL LINKS

[www.cen.eu/go/FGeSMEs](http://www.cen.eu/go/FGeSMEs)  
[www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sme/index\\_en.htm](http://www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sme/index_en.htm)  
[www.ec.europa.eu/eyouguid](http://www.ec.europa.eu/eyouguid)  
[www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e-bsn/index\\_en.html](http://www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e-bsn/index_en.html)  
[www.prozeus.de](http://www.prozeus.de)  
[www.epme.eu](http://www.epme.eu)

## ABOUT CEN

The European Committee for Standardization (CEN) is a business facilitator in Europe, removing trade barriers for European industry and consumers. Its mission is to foster the European economy in global trading, the welfare of European citizens and the environment. Through its services, CEN provides a platform for the development of European Standards and other technical specifications.

CEN's 31 National Members work together to develop voluntary European Standards (ENs). These standards have a unique status, since they are also national standards in each of the 31 member countries. With one common standard in all of these countries, and every conflicting national standard withdrawn, a product can reach a far wider market with much lower development and testing costs. CEN helps to build a European Internal Market for goods and services and to position Europe in the global economy. More than 60.000 technical experts, as well as business federations, consumer and other societal interest organizations, are involved in the CEN network, which reaches over 480 million people.

For further information please visit: [www.cen.eu](http://www.cen.eu)



CEN-CENELEC Management Centre  
Avenue Marnix 17 – B-1000 Brussels – Tel: + 32 2 550 08 11 – Fax: + 32 2 550 08 19 – [infodesk@cen.eu](mailto:infodesk@cen.eu) – [www.cen.eu](http://www.cen.eu)