

# EBSN Memorandum of Understanding

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This agreement is set up to establish a common understanding among the undersigned members of the “European Business Support Network” (EBSN). EBSN has been established in 2012 as a personalised network partnership and a virtual service platform ([www.eubizz.net](http://www.eubizz.net)) to promote SME innovation, collaboration and access to interregional supply markets.

## 1. Background of the Agreement

The combined INTEREG IVB Baltic Sea Region/North Sea Region projects BalticSupply / NorthSeaSupplyConnect (BS/NSSC; 2009 – 2012) developed supporting structures for SMEs in order to facilitate access to inter-regional supply markets in Northeast Europe. The project established a service network of Regional Development Agencies, Business Development Organisations, government agencies and knowledge institutions that will help small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to identify new business opportunities and to cooperate across regional boundaries for sustained success on interregional supply markets. For this purpose the projects created the “European Business Support Network” (EBSN) as a personalised network partnership operating an internet-based service platform ([www.eubizz.net](http://www.eubizz.net)). EBSN and its network partners offer innovation, market development and training services to SMEs striving for enhanced competitiveness as innovative suppliers to buyer companies at interregional level. Market focus is on 3 clusters of industries: Maritime Industry, Food, Energy.

Building on the EBSN Business Plan 2012-2015 this memorandum sets out the aims and principles of collaboration within EBSN that BS/NSSC project partners have agreed for continued EBSN operations after the underlying projects have come to an end by September (NSSC)/December (BS) 2012.

## 2. Aims of EBSN

The principal aims of the European Business Support Network are

- to serve as an intermediary between the main players on interregional supply markets and SME support organizations, i.e. between buyers and suppliers on one side and Regional Development Agencies (RDA) and Business Development Organisations (BDO) on the other;
- to provide a range of services - the “EBSN Service Portfolio” - supporting innovative SME suppliers in accessing interregional supply markets;
- to maintain a managed, internet-based service-platform – “[www.eubizz.net](http://www.eubizz.net)” – to facilitate access to the EBSN Service Portfolio as well as collaboration among and with EBSN partners;
- to serve as an efficiency tool for RDAs / BDOs, cluster management organizations and other SME support organizations by supporting SME exports, SME innovation and SME cooperation through 3 basic service categories: market development services, innovation services and training services;
- to build up attractiveness for buyer companies as a source of cost-effective innovation, productivity growth and competitiveness driven by access to innovative SME suppliers;

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- to initiate SME transregional networking and collaboration to build up innovation partnerships among SME suppliers as well as with buyer companies.

EBSN partners having signed this Memorandum of Understanding strive for

- continuous provision and improvement of the services established and defined in the EBSN Business Plan,
- extension of the EBSN partnership network,
- market success of SME suppliers throughout Europe with Northern Europe as a starting point,
- best economic impact from EBSN operation for their home regions as well as for (Northern) Europe as a whole.

### 3. The EBSN Partnership

The EBSN partnership is structured by 4 categories of partners as listed in the following table.

Partner categories/ Partners	Roles and responsibilities
<b>1. Hub Partner organization</b>	Technical management of <a href="http://www.eubizz.net">www.eubizz.net</a> including updating of the service portfolio, contact point for EBSN partners and external inquiries, uploading of website contents, administration of Content Management System. Legal representative of EBSN and eubizz.net. <i>In collaboration with “Leading Service Delivery Partners”:</i> Admission of new partners to the EBSN.
<b>2. Leading service delivery partners</b> e.g. Knowledge institutes, Regional development agencies, Business Development organizations, Cluster management organizations, Chambers of Commerce etc. willing to take over the lead responsibility for a service within the EBSN network and present this service on the eubizz.net platform.	Overall responsibility for individual services as defined in the EBSN Business Plan including service definition, presentation on eubizz.net, service delivery, contact point.
<b>3. Contributing service delivery partners</b> e.g. Knowledge institutes, Regional development agencies, Business Development organizations, Cluster management organizations, Chamber of Commerce etc.	Support for delivery of specific services or provision of special competencies e.g. see all above services
<b>4. Supporting partners</b> Organizations responsible for political or administrative support of SME promotion, innovation, cluster management, interregional cooperation.	Give conceptual and political support to EBSN by dissemination activities. Are free to participate in EBSN meetings or activities.

## 4. The terms of the agreement

This agreement shall have effect from the date of first signature until 31.12.2015. A new partner enters this agreement upon signature of the accession document (see Annex 1). Such accession shall have effect 2 weeks after its announcement on [www.eubizz.net](http://www.eubizz.net) if no objection has been raised by other EBSN partners. Amendments to this agreement shall be done in written. They shall enter in force if two thirds of the partners accept the Amendment in written.

At any time a partner may declare to be no longer bound to this agreement.

### Principles for organisation and management of the agreement

EBSN partners will ensure that all their individual and joint activities are performed in a safe, ethical and effective way, supporting sustainable regional development through expansion of regional export bases and international SME collaboration and networking.

The Hub partner organization together with the Leading Service Delivery Partners (the “EBSN Coordination Group”) will take responsibility for overall coordination of the EBSN. They will agree on procedures to manage the network, to operate the website and to assure quality. In cases of grave violation of the above principles the EBSN Coordination Group is entitled to exclude a partner from the EBSN after due consultation among the EBSN partnership.

All partners agree to promote EBSN and [www.eubizz.net](http://www.eubizz.net) through regional and transregional media coverage and dissemination activities.

All partners commit to perform efforts aiming for extension of the partnership by new institutions and to promote involvement of companies (SME suppliers, buyers) from their respective regions. All partners are committed to support future common projects resulting from EBSN activities.

All partners name contact persons for all EBSN communication.

## 5. Communication

### Internal communication

The communication between the EBSN partner organisations will be established as follows:

- All contact persons share actions taken in terms of this agreement on a half yearly basis with the other EBSN partners;
- All partners shall meet on a yearly basis to exchange knowledge and to assess progress in EBSN service delivery and market development. These meetings can be held with support by appropriate conferencing tools;
- The Hub partner organization will provide a document repository to support storage, exchange, collaborative editing and versioning of all digital documents made available by the EBSN partner organizations within the [eubizz.net](http://eubizz.net) Intranet;
- The Hub partner organization shall set-up a message bulletin board server to enable one-to-one and one-to-many communication.

At the yearly EBSN meetings a progress assessment will be performed and actions for the next period will be agreed, e.g. service development and marketing, trade fair representation, conferences.

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### External communication and protection of intellectual property

As a general aim EBSN strives for public recognition and communication and promotes public sharing of knowledge and experience at international level. Therefore political support for the European Business Support Network as expressed by the Political Advisory Group will be promoted actively by EBSN partners in their respective regions. At the same time business clients of EBSN services may want to protect their knowledge and intellectual properties against competitors. In such cases EBSN partners assure to keep confidence about all information that is identified confidential. Precautions will be taken that intellectual property rights will remain at the originator.

## 6. Financial arrangements

For the first year participation in EBSN is free of charge, all partners pay for their own expenses. Later on distribution of costs shall be agreed among the active partners on an equal basis. The Coordination Group will propose arrangements for fair cost sharing procedures in 2013 onwards.

All partners shall seek for third party financing for long-term operation of EBSN and eubizz.net.

For individual services provided by EBSN partners fees may be charged to cover costs.

## Definitions

**EBSN:** European Business Support Network

**eubizz.net:** The EBSN website providing online services and access to personalized SME support.

**Buyer (company):** a company that buys technologies, components, systems and/or services from other companies for further processing.

**Supplier:** A company that offers technologies, components, systems and/or services to other companies for further processing.

**SME:** Small and Medium size Enterprise; the EU defines SMEs as companies with <250 employees, < 50 Mio € turnover or < 43 Mio € balance sheet total.

**RDA:** Regional Development Agency.

**BDO:** Business Development Organization, e.g. SME associations, cluster management organization.

**Cluster:** A cluster is a network of enterprises, knowledge institutions and other stakeholders grouped around a common business and/or knowledge sector. Binding the cluster together are “buyer-supplier relationships, or common technologies, common buyers or distribution channels, or common labour pools” (Enright 1996). Cluster companies and institutions often are linked by value chains, e.g. supplies of goods and services, exchange of knowledge or project partnerships.

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This memorandum of understanding was concluded allowing further partner organizations to access the EBSN. The list of partner organizations shown above will be maintained by the Hub partner organization. An updated version of this list will be distributed by the Hub partner organization within the EBSN as soon as changes occur.

### Effective dates and signatures

1. XXX, Hub partner organization

Contact person:

Signature and stamp (if available)

Place, date

2. Name

Contact person:

Signature and stamp (if available)

Place, date

3. Name

Contact person:

Signature and stamp (if available)

etc.

## Annex I

### EBSN Partner organizations

List of EBSN partner organizations (*possible examples*)

Partner organization Contact person	Cat.	Address	e-mail	phone
Hanseatic Parliament Dr. Max Hogeforster, D-Hamburg	HP			
WFB etc.	LSDP			
	CSDP			
Province of Groningen Caroline Couperus, NL-Groningen	SP			
Senator for Economics, Labour and Ports Caroline Privat D-Bremen	SP			

HP = Hub Partner organization, LSDP = Leading Service delivery partner,  
 CSDP = Contributing Service Delivery Partner, SP = Supporting partner