



**PECOS  
4SMEs**

PERSONALIZED TRAINING  
ON CROSS BORDER  
e-COMMERCE

## **PECOS4SMEs – D2.8 Focus Groups BELGIUM**

Work Package 2  
Version 1.0 – 25/09/2013

<b>Project</b>	PECOS4SMEs		
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<b>Reviewer(s)</b>			

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Lifelong  
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## Revision History

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(\* ) Action: C = Creation, I = Insert, U = Update, R = Replace, D = Delete

## Referenced Documents

ID	Reference	Title
1	507562-LLP-2012-GR-Leonardo-LMP	PECOS4SMEs Proposal
2	D2.1	Country Report - BEL

## Applicable Documents

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## 1 The Belgian Vendors Questionnaires and the related Focus Groups

### 1.1 Introduction

This documents presents an analysis of the activities related to the implementation of the Focus Group action organised together with the Vendor Questionnaires which contributed to the creation of the deliverable 2.1 "Country Report" for Belgium for the PECOS4SMEs project (henceforth, "Project").

The Focus Group action has been performed in Belgium while meeting e-commerce companies for the implementation of the Vendor questionnaires survey. The complementary feedback obtained provided an extra source of information which lets a fine tuning of the project action focusing, in particular, on main barriers and difficulties for the operators of the sector and exploring more in details their need, in view of a improved effectiveness of the training support of PECOS4SMEs..

### 1.2 The Vendors' questionnaires and the Focus group action

The Vendor questionnaire survey represented for EBN the occasion to implement the Focus group action thanks to the meetings specifically organised with e-commerce companies in Belgium.

In most of the cases the questionnaires have been directly filed by e-commerce companies' managers in presence of an EBN expert during meeting specifically organised or during public events related to EU funded project or EU activities. In this way it was possible to gather opinions in a quicker and more effective way , all this in line with the qualitative requirements of the PECOS4SMEs project.

In all these occasions informal focus groups procedures made possible to improve the level of analysis of the feedback obtained via the questionnaires and, in this way, to deepen the understanding of the state of the art for the use of e-commerce practises in Belgium both from a SMEs and from a customer point of view. A good level of propensity in cooperating by SMEs and customers was registered.

As regards the outcomes coming from the meetings, they evidenced a general concordance with the answers provided via questionnaires. A comment registered in more than one case concerned the request, for future occasions, to elaborate the feedback necessary for the report via personal meeting rather than via the use of questionnaires.

Main confirmations coming from the Focus groups evidenced:

- an increase in the volume of sales for Belgian companies which decided to integrate the use of e-commerce with other traditional selling methods or to exclusively made use of it;
- a general lack of confidence in the payments methods especially in case of cross border sales;
- that cross border sales are mainly resulting from visits on vendors' website and, therefore, are more connected to external factors (e.g. reputation of some Belgian products abroad) rather than from direct marketing actions by the sellers;
- all technology aspects connected to the use of the e-commerce slowly in time have been talked by Belgian SMEs and a general increase in the level of qualified ITC personnel for SMEs of the sector in Belgium demonstrate this trend.

In addition to the comments and remarks above, the organization of Focus groups together with the questionnaire made possible an improvement of the quality and number of answers collected. In many cases, in fact, EBN experts collected negative comments on the length of the questionnaire (mostly vendors) and to the complexity in understanding some questions (mostly consumers). SMEs selling via e-commerce also evidenced a certain difficulty in identifying the industry of reference among the multiple choices proposed and explained their use of the "Other" field present on the questionnaire.

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### 1.3 Follow-up

During its dissemination activity aimed at diffusing knowledge about project goals and results and thanks to its participation in various main events in the EU and beyond (directly organised or in which it was invited) EBN took the occasion to approach other e-commerce stakeholders. In this way, via informal conversation, EBN was able to acquire additional information and comments useful for better appreciating the situation of the Belgian market while comparing differences and similarities with several markets abroad. All this contributed to fine tune the results of the questionnaires and the outcomes of the Focus groups.

### 1.4 About the project

PECOS4SMEs will develop a training programme concentrated on the provision of suitable knowledge and tools, which the SMEs can use to increase cross-border E-Commerce revenue. This includes changing sales and marketing strategies and new types of organisation and knowledge about E-Commerce technologies in a future world dominated by pervasive Internet.

The promotion of useful e-Commerce strategies for SMEs includes transfer of knowledge and practices from top performing countries in e-Commerce to lagers thus bridging the cross-border sales gap between Northern and Southern Europe and helping the economic recovery of the hard hit South. As a consequence of the introduction of new technologies and concepts facilitating cross-border e-Commerce, (e.g. effective link building, search engine user attitudes etc.), SMEs will make their businesses more profitable and improve their ICT and methodological competence for interactive and collaborative learning.

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