The following agenda points were covered during this meeting:

1. **The report on the achievements of the eBSN 2003-2005**
   Costas Andropoulos informed that there are two eBSN reports in the pipeline:
   - One is the report “eBSN 2003-2005: Progress and the way forward”, which is a publication of about 70 pages outlining the main achievements of the eBSN, examples of good policies, and their strengths and weaknesses, information on the eBSN workshops and the challenges for the future. 2,500 copies of this publication are expected by the end of June and they will be distributed to all eBSN members, as soon as they are available. Costas invited all members of the Steering Group to take appropriate actions to further distribute these publications to regional/local stakeholders, and in relevant events and conferences.
   - The other report is a Commission staff working document with the same title, “eBSN 2003-2005: Progress and the way forward” This document is shorter version of about 20 pages and it will be forwarded to the Council, the Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. This is expected to raise awareness and further disseminate the results of the eBSN among European, national and regional institutions.

2. **Information update on the on-going calls for grants by the Commission services.**
   - the study to assess the impact of ten (10) national or regional e-Business policies, conducted by Databank, was completed in February 2006. The final report is available on the eBSN portal.
   - the call for grants on “Train the trainer: educating independent business advisors”, whose objective is to promote world-class training for independent e-Business advisors through SME support networks: The file has been completed and 8 grants (out of 13 proposals) have been awarded.
   - the call for grants on “Enhancing the cooperation between SMEs and ICT suppliers”, aiming at promoting closer collaboration and mutual understanding between ICT suppliers and SMEs with a view to improving the availability of e-Business solutions adapted to the
needs of SMEs: The file is awaiting the approval of the financial department. The aim is to award 9 grants (out of 19 proposals).

- the call for grants in order to **“Support best practice exchange of e-Business policies for SMEs”**, whose objective is to support the exchange of e-Business policies and improve synergies between e-Business policy stakeholders in the EU: The file is awaiting the approval of the financial department. The aim is to award 5 grants (out of 5 proposals).

- the call for grants on **“Dissemination of good e-Business practices”** with the objective to identify and promote selected good e-Business case studies among European enterprises, in particular SMEs, has been cancelled.


**Studies, grants and projects**

During 2006, three calls for tender and one call for grants were launched:

- a study on **“benchmarking sectoral policy initiatives in support of e-Business for SMEs”**, aiming to collect information and assess key existing sectoral policy initiatives and public-private partnerships promoting e-business for SMEs at national and regional level, notably in the EU-25 countries, EEA countries, the US, Canada, China, India and South Korea. (Budget 250.000 Euro, call launched in April with deadline 9 June 2006)

- a study on **“benchmarking commercially available e-Business solutions and services for SMEs”**, aiming to collect information and assess the various commercially available products and services that address the e-business needs of SMEs. Moreover, it will develop an intelligent tool that will be able to assess and map the current needs of an SME wishing to transform to e-business to appropriate, market available e-Business solutions and services. (Budget 400.000 Euro, call launched in April with deadline 9 June 2006)

- a call for tender on **“technical assistance for the eBSN”** aiming to continue the operations of the eBSN portal, namely the collection and presentation of information material about existing e-Business policy initiatives, as well as the management and maintenance of the eBSN portal, under the Europa server of the Commission. (Budget 120.000 Euro, call launched in April with deadline 9 June 2006)

- a call for grants on **“Reinforcing synergies between public policies in support of e-business for SMEs”**. The objective of this grant theme is to support and facilitate the exchange of best policy practices between e-business policy makers and/or SME support networks, within and outside the EU. The ultimate beneficiaries of this action are the European SMEs, which would be allowed to better understand e-business processes, improve their skills and participate in e-business networks. (Budget 900.000 Euros for a maximum of 6 projects of 150.000 Euros each; the call was published on the 22/05/06 with a deadline of 24/07/06).
Taking into account the increasing importance of sectoral policy approaches vis-à-vis the uptake of ICTs by SMEs, as well as the relevant policy shifts in certain Member States, including France, Denmark, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands, it may be envisaged to launch in 2007:

- an initiative on “Promoting the development of cross-border digital value chains in the Single Market”. The idea is to enlarge the scope of support actions from single enterprises to entire value chains. To improve their profitability and competitiveness, SME’s have to co-ordinate their strategy in accordance with the sector strategy to which they belong. “Sector strategy” involves particularly the harmonisation of the processes and the data exchange model used between each player of the sector. Therefore, in order for enterprises to reap full benefits from the uptake of ICTs, the need to transform the broader business model of the entire value chain becomes apparent. It’s time to shift the gear from the individual dimension to the collective dimension of groups of enterprises interacting along a value chain, at European level. Costas Andropoulos invited the Steering Group members to reflect on this concept and to contact Dana Eleftheriadou, in order to discuss in more depth and shape this initiative.

**Workshops**

For 2006, the following eBSN workshops are scheduled:

- the eBSN workshop on “Preparing for cross-border eInvoicing: experiences and future challenges” organised in the frame of the 19th Bled eConference “eValues”, in Slovenia, on 5-7 June 2006.
- the eBSN workshop on "Successful e-business models, especially measures to support the uptake of e-business by SMEs", Vienna, 14/6/2006, under the Austrian Presidency, organised in the frame of the conference on the European Charter for Small Enterprises. The workshop features successful policies promoting eBusiness for SMEs, such as:
  - Promotion of e-business skills among SMEs through integrated processes and standards, PROZEUS, Germany
  - Electronic commerce as a means for developing SMEs, Hungary
  - Austrian e-commerce trust mark, Austria
  - PME-Digital Initiative, Portugal
  - Meeting point Wermland - easier e-business for the municipalities and companies in Värmland, Sweden
  And the findings of the recently completed study on “Assessment of the impact of e-Business policies: lessons to be learnt”, by empirica GmbH Germany
- the eBSN workshop on “e-Business solutions for SMEs”, in Oulu, 7-8 December 2006, under the Finnish Presidency. The objective of this workshop will be to set the scene and review the developments in the main eBSN priority areas. The event is expected to attract high level political representation and support.
The following expressions of interest have been received for organising eBSN workshops within 2007 – 2008:

For 2007:

1. Workshop on “e-Business solutions”, by COPCA, Barcelona, 1st quarter 2007; This workshop is proposed to take place in the frame of the annual 2Bdigital-Europecom conference, aiming at the dissemination of good e-business practices among SMEs.


3. Conference E-COMM_LINE_2007 (it was proposed for 2006, but is an annual event, so they may wish to organise it in 2007), by the Ministry of Education and research, and a number of Romanian universities and research agencies. Its objective is to encourage access of the candidate countries to the Single European eMarket, September 2007, Bucharest, Romania (to be confirmed).


5. Potential eBSN workshop under the Portugeuse Presidency, in the second half of 2007, in Portugal.

For 2008-2009 the following eBSN events are envisaged:

6. eBSN workshop in the frame of the 21st Bled eConference eCollaboration: extending borders through multi-channel collaborative business, under the Slovenian Presidency, Bled, June 16-18, 2008

7. Workshop on “sector specific e-Business policy approaches”, by the Regional Vice Ministry for Telecommunications and Information Society, Valencia, Spain; The objective would be to present the state of play in e-Business policy making, to share innovative experiences, to promote innovative partnerships among policy makers, business representatives, intermediary bodies and academia and to set policy priorities.

8. Workshop on “experiences and trends in sector specific policies for e-Business for SMEs”, by the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry, in the second half of 2008, under the French Presidency, France;

9. Workshop on “Practical experience in implementing eInvoices between organisations and/or enterprises and relevant standardisation work”, by NUTEK, Sweden;
4. **Any other business**

The next eBSN SG meeting will take place in Oulu, back to back with the workshop “*e-Business solutions for SMEs*”, in the afternoon of 7 December 2006.