



CELEBRATING TEN YEARS OF INCLUSIVE FINANCE AT EUROPEAN MICROFINANCE WEEK 2016 (#emw2016)

- *Over 470 practitioners, investors, academics and support providers gather at Abbaye de Neumünster in Luxembourg*
- *Day of Action Group meetings, plus 2 conference days with plenary sessions and 24 workshops across several thematic streams*
- *Opening Plenary on Access to Education celebrates 10 years of e-MFP; presents European Microfinance Award finalists; video testimony from Dominican student Aryslady Cottés with finance to study for degree in Tourism Administration*

Luxembourg

Thursday, 17th November 2016

For Immediate Release

[European Microfinance Week](#) (#emw2016) began today in Luxembourg, hosted by the European Microfinance Platform (e-MFP) in its tenth year. Now a major annual event of the microfinance industry, the conference hosts high-level discussions by all sectors of the European microfinance community working in developing countries. The conference each year welcomes among the 400 participants much of the Platform's membership, now over 120 organisations and individuals.

The tenth anniversary of e-MFP's activities is being recognised throughout this conference; with EMW a great opportunity to reflect on the achievements so far, and look ahead as well. Over the past ten years, the scope of the Platform's focus has broadened beyond microfinance into various aspects of financial inclusion – mirroring the trends in the sector as a whole. e-MFP members believe that everyone should have access to financial services and that microfinance contributes significantly to this development. Enabling synergies and knowledge sharing, fostering innovative action and research, and advocating sustainable and responsible microfinance are key to achieving this challenging goal.

To this end, European Microfinance Week is a chance for the Platform's Action Groups, which work year round, to come together as they did yesterday in a series of all day meetings to present their work, and discuss what to do over the coming year. Publications and papers are presented, reflecting the core vision and mission of the platform: to build a memberships base that can leverage their actions and networks to increase impact and foster responsible financial inclusion.

This year's main conference, held today and tomorrow, will provide equal focus to six main streams: green microfinance; investors, donors and funders; rural finance; social performance; and digital innovations and the 2016 European Microfinance Award topic of *Access to Education*.

Within these six broad streams, there is a range of plenary sessions on: 'Access to Education'; 'Microfinance and Housing, One Brick at a Time'; and 'Digital Finance: Full Inclusion or Empty Promise?' and over twenty workshops on Thursday 17th and Friday 18th November, complementing the work of the Action Groups and the issues laid out in the plenary sessions. They include financing sustainable energy, agricultural value chain finance, microfinance for refugees, several on client protection and impact evaluation, and a series of sessions over both days related to the big theme of education – including education and child labour, and a double session on financing of education, covering both implementation and funding.

The opening plenary of the conference this morning, on Microfinance and Access to Education, brought together the three finalists of the [European Microfinance Award](#) to discuss their initiatives. The plenary kicked off with a welcome address by e-MFP Executive Secretary Christoph Pausch. Moderated by Sam Mendelson, who outlined the context, topic, and evaluation process of the Award, the introduction included a moving video speech by Aryslady Cottes, a student from the Dominican Republic, who recounted what the finance to pursue her tertiary studies meant to her. She described how access to a dedicated loan enabled her to pay for tuition and a computer for her studies in Tourism Administration, and her aspirations to work for the Ministry of Tourism when she graduates.

Representatives of the three finalists, Edgardo Pérez from Fundación Génesis Empresarial of Guatemala; Roshaneh Zafar of Kashf Foundation in Pakistan; and John Robert Okware from Opportunity Bank of Uganda Ltd were the three panelists, and took questions on their initiatives, challenges, sustainability, medium term plans, and the role of profitability and the private sector in addressing issues traditionally the role of governments – providing basic services to poor or vulnerable groups.

The winner of the Award with its €100,000 prize will be announced in tonight's ceremony which takes place at the European Investment Bank.

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The European Microfinance Platform (e-MFP) is a multi-stakeholder organisation representing the European microfinance community, and comprises banks, financial institutions, government bodies, consultancies, NGOs researchers and academics. Its aim is to promote cooperation among European microfinance bodies working in developing countries. It facilitates high-level debate and research on key issues in inclusive finance, and is an invaluable opportunity for stakeholders to share Good Practice in a rapidly-evolving sector.

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