

European Microfinance Platform Activities in the first ten months of 2009

Feedback European Microfinance Week 2008

Over 270 participants from 37 countries gathered at European Microfinance Week (12th to 14th November 2008) to share their experience and debate the latest issues in the microfinance sector. With more than 100 out of the 270 participants taking the floor, the European Microfinance Week was by far the most interactive conference in the microfinance calendar in 2008. Feedback on the event was very positive with 97% of participants surveyed saying they will return next year. More than 98 percent of survey respondents thought the conference organisation was excellent or good and more than 98 % found the conference facilities very good/excellent.

New website

After months of preparatory work www.e-mfp.eu, the new website of the European Microfinance Platform was launched in February 2009. Its attractive design and improved content make it a useful tool in facilitating communication. Further improvements are planned for the coming year – e.g. the members-only section will be activated and a Forum will be set up in 2010. We would ask our members to please consider adding www.e-mfp.eu as a link on their websites.



Website

Database

In March the e-MFP Secretariat updated the member's database on the website using the data provided by the European Microfinance Actors Directory survey. The database is now a unique 'Who's Who' of European actors in microfinance to be used as a 'first-stop' reference tool to answer such questions as: 'who is the contact point within an organization'; 'which organizations are active in Burundi'; 'which financial institutions are e-MFP members' etc. Searching can be done by country, region of intervention, type of organization or competencies, so that users can get a good overview of all e-MFP members' activities. e-MFP encourages members to inform us when any changes occur in their organisation so that the most up to date information will always be provided.

Publications

Newsletter

In spring 2009 e-MFP finalised the work on a new design and layout of its newsletter. The aim of the new version was to make the newsletter more attractive also to readers beyond our current membership. The newsletter was presented in April and received a very positive feedback. e-MFP's newsletter is published four times a year, the first three newsletters were each distributed to around 1000 contacts. As the character and quality of the newsletter very much depends on the input of the members, the e-MFP Secretariat welcomes any comments or suggestions which would enrich its content.



Newsletter

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Conference report

The conference report of the European Microfinance Week 2008 (EMW 2008) was published at the beginning of February. The 50 page report is a distillation of the discussions and presentations shared by participants at EMW 2008. In the publication all sessions of the Microfinance Week are covered. Before publishing the report the Secretariat contacted all (more than 100) speakers to secure their approval on the text of their session. The conference report was distributed to around 1400 contacts.

2nd European Microfinance Award finalists publication

In February e-MFP published a very attractive brochure presenting the three finalists of the 2nd European Microfinance Award 'Socially Responsible Microfinance', which was awarded during European Microfinance Week 2008. The leaflet gives background to the aims of the Award and details the initiatives of the winner Buusaa Gonofaa, Ethiopia and the two other finalists AMK (Angkor Microfinance Kampuchea), Cambodia and RFR (Red Financiera Rural), Ecuador.

European Dialogue on the 10 best applications for the 2nd European Microfinance Award

Under the coordination of the e-MFP Social Performance Working Group a new edition of e-MFP's publication 'European Dialogue' entitled '2nd European Microfinance Award, Social Responsibility in Microfinance' was produced. The objective of the 2nd European Microfinance Award was to highlight and stimulate initiatives which represented breakthroughs in promoting social performance in microfinance. From the 45 applications received, 10 were short-listed and these initiatives were included in the European Dialogue N°2 with a view to generating greater awareness and presenting examples of social performance management in action. The publication was finalised by the Secretariat in time to be presented at the Social Performance Task Force meeting at the beginning of June in Madrid.

European Microfinance Actors Directory 2009

In March e-MFP published the final version of the European Microfinance Actors Directory, a draft version of which was available at European Microfinance Week 2008. The primary purpose of the Directory is to provide a 'Who's Who' for microfinance and to encourage cooperation and collaboration between members. Data was provided by members during a survey carried out Autumn 2008. The directory (which also contains a classification of actors according to the peer groups of e-MFP) not only provides information on individual e-MFP members but also gives through the analysis of the data collected, a valuable insight into the current state of the European microfinance sector.

Who's Who in Microfinance Research

Coinciding with the First European Research Conference (2-4 June 2009), e-MFP published the European Microfinance Actors Directory 2009 – Research. This directory is a follow up publication of the European Microfinance Actors Directory 2009 and focuses on research activities in microfinance carried out by European organizations and individuals. The research directory is a guide to who is doing what in microfinance research and illustrates the impressive development of research in the sector.



Conference report



Award finalists publication



European Dialogue No.2

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Directory of Capacity Building Supporters

In November e-MFP presented the publication of the European Microfinance Actors Directory 2009 – Capacity Building Supporters. This publication is a follow up of the two above-mentioned Directories and focuses on capacity building activities in microfinance carried out by European organisations. e-MFP would like to thank MicoNed for their support and financial contribution which ensured its production.

Board meetings

The e-MFP Secretariat organized four Board meetings in 2009 (in London, Luxembourg, Brussels and Copenhagen, a short fifth meeting is planned to be held during European Microfinance Week 2009) and took responsibility for the preparation, organisation, minutes and follow-up activities.

Meetings with national microfinance actors

In association with the four Board meetings the European Microfinance Platform invited national microfinance actors to ‘meet the e-MFP Board’, giving them the opportunity to meet, discuss and network in an informal atmosphere.

After the Board meeting in London the e-MFP Secretariat organized with the Microfinance Club UK a discussion on the issue of social performance in microfinance. Main speakers at the event were Anton Simanowitz (Imp-Act Consortium) on “Avoiding a sub-prime crisis in microfinance: do we know how microfinance clients repay their loans...and should we care?” and e-MFP’s Deputy-Chairwoman Cécile Lapenu on “The role of investors in promoting social performance”. The event attracted approximately 80 participants.

After the Luxembourg Board meeting hosted by the European Investment Bank an exchange of views between the Board and the Luxembourgish Ministry for Development Cooperation was arranged.

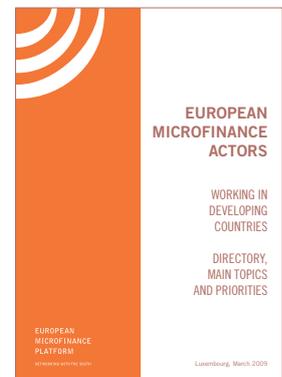
The June Board meeting was organized at the Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC) in Brussels and included presentations and a discussion of e-MFP’s and BTC’s activities.

The September Board meeting was held in Copenhagen, in the premises of e-MFP member DanChurchAid. The visit gave the Board the opportunity to learn more about DanChurchAid’s microfinance activities and to exchange views with them. On the occasion of the Board meeting in Copenhagen the Cooperative Bank Oikos organised in cooperation with e-MFP, an evening seminar at the Copenhagen Business School on the issue of ‘Microfinance and the Financial Crisis - how does it affect the borrowers, the MFIs and the investors?’ with e-MFP Board members Sébastien Duquet and Hans Dieter Seibel as speakers. More than 40 people attended this event.

The high number of participants shows the great success of the meetings with national microfinance actors. These events have increased the knowledge of e-MFP (among members and non-members), brought new membership applications and supported initiatives to create new national platforms.

Other personal contacts to members

The Secretariat and Board members made visits to and had meetings with several e-MFP members and non-members (e.g. CGAP, Caixa Cataluna, FARM, Horus, BNP Paribas, Planet Finance, Planet Rating, SOS Faim, CERMi, DanChurchAid, Entrepreneurs du Monde, Women’s World Banking, MEDA, MFTransparency,...). e-MFP was also present at this year’s MFC Conference in Belgrade.



MF Actors Directory 2009



Who's Who in Microfinance Research



Directory of Capacity Building Supporters

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Strengthening cooperation between e-MFP and EMN

The two European microfinance organizations, European Microfinance Network (EMN) and the European Microfinance Platform (e-MFP) with a combined total of more than 185 members, met in April and in September to discuss ways to strengthen their collaboration and operations. Convinced that their members would benefit from stronger links and exchanges, they decided that once a year a meeting will take place between the two organizations with the participation of the Executive Director/Secretary and a Board member to exchange information about the plans for the year to come. This should allow for better co-ordination of the two associations' activities/events, especially for the European Microfinance Award, the e-MFP European Microfinance Week and the EMN Annual Meeting. Since 2008 e-MFP also has an exchanged membership with the Microfinance Centre (MFC) for Central & Eastern Europe and the New Independent States to improve communication between the two organizations.



Meetings with national microfinance actors in London

New members

The Secretariat continued its activities to attract new members, as one of e-MFP's priorities is to increase its membership and become representative of all sectors of the microfinance community active in developing countries. As a result e-MFP has expanded its membership during the last year to 116 members (89 organisations and 27 individual members) from 16 European and 8 non-European countries (some additional applications received during the last weeks still have to be accepted by the Board).

e-MFP Members by Peer Group

Peer Group	Number (organisations only)
NGOs	34
Research institutions	6
Financial institutions	22
Consultants & support agencies	20
Government agencies	7
Total	89

Source: ULB



e-MFP/CERMi Research Conference

Information dissemination service for members

e-MFP's main objective is to facilitate the exchange of information and to promote cooperation among various European actors involved in microfinance in developing countries. The Platform is therefore very glad that its members are using e-MFP more and more to access a significant number of other MF organizations (e.g. calls for proposals, calls for papers, ideas for studies...). In 2009 we received requests from members in each peer group to disseminate information within their peer group or to a different target group.

e-MFP Working Groups

Two of the existing e-MFP Working Groups have been particularly active in 2009 with the Social Performance Working Group producing the material for the European Dialogue on the 2nd European Microfinance Award and the Research Working Group preparing the First European Research Conference on Microfinance (see below). In addition, an



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International Workshop on Microfinance Management and Governance, a joint event between Agder University and the e-MFP Research Working Group, was held at the end of August in Kristiansand, Norway. The 2-day workshop gathered 27 researchers (all academics) from many different countries on various topics related to governance and management of microfinance institutions.

e-MFP/CERMi Research Conference

The First European Research Conference on Microfinance organised by e-MFP member CERMi in collaboration with e-MFP and its Research Working Group gathered researchers from 50 countries, 2nd to 4th of June 2009 in Brussels. The conference was an opportunity for researchers to exchange scientific achievements and to think about new research fields, but also to meet each other and create new contacts. Over the three days, around 250 people attended the various activities organized for the conference. The high scientific quality of the presentations allowed a rich exchange of ideas. The conference was organised around three plenary sessions and eight workshop sessions with five simultaneous groups on different topics related to microfinance such as financial development, governance and microfinance performance, ethics, poverty and social capital. During the workshops, over 70 papers (out of 200 proposed), were presented and actively discussed.

Groningen University (NL) has indicated its interest in organising in June 2011 the next e-MFP Microfinance research conference.

Reform of e-MFP Working Groups – the new e-MFP Action Groups

In order to make the e-MFP working groups even more efficient and dynamic and to strengthen synergy between members a sub-committee of the e-MFP Board developed a new structure for the WGs. Main differences from the old system will be that the new WGs, now called Action Groups, will have starting and ending dates and a clearly defined output. Several e-MFP members (at least 4 Full members from 2 peer groups and 3 different countries) must be involved in the Action group. Propositions for new Action Groups should be issued through the e-MFP Secretariat. The e-MFP Secretariat will also ensure a close follow-up with each working group.

New Action Group

The first Action Group following this new structure is the e-MFP Action Group on the Legal Framework for Microfinance Funds in Europe which was set up at the initiative of e-MFP members BNP Paribas and INCOFIN. The objective of this Action Group is to create a level playing field for microfinance funds in Europe by qualifying microfinance investment funds as a new officially recognised asset class in the European Union, benefitting from a European passport. All participants of the Action Group agreed that an opening of the European retail market has to be sought, taking the examples of Luxembourg, Switzerland and the Netherlands as benchmarks. The action group, which consists of around 15 e-MFP member organizations and a number of non-members who joined the group to build a strong coalition, is currently considering a double action:

1 / at European level: create the conditions for a European Passport

- solution 1: create a new EU framework specifically for microfinance funds
- solution 2: inclusion as a new special category of UCITS in a future UCITS Directive (UCITS V?)

2 / at the national level:

- adapt the global framework to specific context, address the tax issues

A first meeting was held on June 10th at the e-MFP Secretariat in Luxembourg, a second one on October 13th in Paris, a third meeting is planned for 24th November in Luxembourg (during European MF Week 2009).

Code of conduct

During the Summer a code of conduct for e-MFP Board Members was drafted by the Secretariat. It was accepted at the September Board meeting and will provide a framework and guidelines for e-MFP Board members.

Business Plan

e-MFP has commissioned a strategic analysis to assist in planning for the coming five years and PwC Luxembourg was selected for the delivery of the assignment. Member's views are an integral part of this project therefore as part of the consultation process, 45 members from different countries and e-MFP peer groups were contacted and of these, 29 were interviewed. In addition, two one-day workshops (in Brussels and Luxembourg) were also held. A finalized draft will be presented and discussed at the General Meeting of Members on 24th November 2009.

European Microfinance Week 2009



The e-MFP Secretariat organised the European MF Week 2009 with around 30 sessions and more than 90 speakers. Around 70 proposals for workshops/panels/speeches were received. The e-MFP secretariat was this year not only in charge of the organisational aspects of the event but was also fully responsible for putting together the programme of the conference.

3rd European Microfinance Award

The Secretariat and the Board did preparatory work for the 3rd European Microfinance Award to be presented at the European MF Week 2010. The theme of next year's European MF Award will be announced at the EMW 2009.

Challenges for the next year, 2010:

- Putting into practice the reform of the working groups
- Implementation of Business Plan
- Sourcing additional funding for e-MFP



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NETWORKING WITH THE SOUTH

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