

5th European Microfinance Research Conference

12-14 June 2017

University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom

Financial inclusion has become a reality for many poor and low income populations. Microfinance has played a key role in this regard, with the Microcredit Summit Campaign Report 2015 estimating that 3,098 microfinance institutions (MFIs) lent to more than 211 million borrowers across the world by the end of 2013. While microfinance is now approaching forty years of age, there is still much to do if poor and low income households are to be effectively integrated both from financial and social perspectives.

The objective of the **5th European Microfinance Research Conference** is to draw together ideas from Europe and beyond which tackle the inclusion problem. How do MFIs ensure they reach the financially excluded? How can microfinance products be tailored to meet the specific needs of different groups amongst the financially excluded? How can new instruments as agent banking and mobile money be put at the service of the poor? How can the microfinance sector keep its identity as a relevant development tool while facing traditional challenges - poverty, gender discrimination, client over-indebtedness? How prepared is the sector to face new challenges such as the impact of climate change and the refugee crises? Research has a crucial role in addressing these questions.

The European Microfinance Research Conference is one of the primary meeting places for academic researchers working on microfinance. Since the first conference in Brussels, Belgium, in 2009, and its successors in Groningen, Netherlands (2011), Kristiansand, Norway (2013), and Geneva, Switzerland (2015), the conference has been a unique platform for academics to exchange ideas, build and consolidate networks, give visibility to their projects and to identify gaps and different paths for new research. We cordially invite you to join us in June 2017 at the fifth European Microfinance Research Conference which will take place at Portsmouth (in the South of England), where we hope to continue this proud tradition. The Conference will be organized by Portsmouth Business School, in cooperation with the European Microfinance Platform (www.emf-p.eu) and CERMI (www.cermi.eu).

The main theme of the Conference is 'Microfinance and Financial Inclusion'. During the three days of the Conference, panels and parallel sessions will address key topics on the theme, including:

- Strategy and management of microfinance institutions;
- Responsible finance and client protection in microfinance;
- Gender issues in microfinance;
- Microfinance products and services, including mobile money and digital financial services;
- Policy, regulation and microfinance;
- Impact of microfinance.

These are, however, not exclusive topics so we will be happy to consider academic papers that fall within the broader remit of microfinance and the microfinance movement, including financial practices and informal finance; ethical issues in microfinance; funding of microfinance, including new sources such as crowdfunding; Islamic finance.

We are particularly keen to receive papers from PhD students working on microfinance related topics and the European Microfinance Platform will award a prize to the best PhD paper. Papers will be selected for presentation at the Conference by the Scientific Committee, based on criteria of academic quality.

Authors are invited to submit **full papers or extended abstracts** through the conference site below by **January 31st 2017**. Notification of acceptance/rejection will be given to the authors by March 1st 2017. The **full paper** needs to be submitted through the online submission system by **April 30th 2017**.

Members of the Scientific Committee include Arvind Ashta (Univ. Bourgogne Franche-Comté, Burgundy School of Business – CEREN, France), Bernd Balkenhol (University of Geneva, Switzerland), Johan Bastiaensen (University of Antwerp, Belgium), Isabelle Guérin (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, France), Marek Hudon (CERMI and Université Libre Bruxelles, Belgium), Annette Krauss (University of Zürich, Switzerland), Marc Labie (CERMI and University of Mons, Belgium), Robert Lensik (University of Groningen, The Netherlands), Roy Mersland (University of Adger, Norway), Daniel Rozas (European Microfinance Platform, Luxembourg), Ariane Szafarz (CERMI and Université Libre Bruxelles, Belgium), Laura Viganò (University of Bergamo, Italy) and Dirk Andreas Zetsche (University of Luxembourg). The Organising Committee includes Christoph Pausch (European Microfinance Platform, Luxembourg) and Professor Andy Thorpe, Joana Afonso and Michael O'Connor (University of Portsmouth, UK).

Portsmouth is home to the Royal Navy, the location of Nelson's flagship HMS Victory, Henry the VIII's flagship (the Mary Rose) and counts amongst its more famous residents Charles Dickens, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Peter Sellers and the creator of Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle. Constantly developing in the face of a changing world there are many new and developing attractions that make Portsmouth a great destination for this conference.

Further information on the Conference, including the programme, keynote speakers and conference registration will be available in due course at: www.port.ac.uk/microfinance2017