

Affordable Housing Headlines Day One of European Microfinance Week 2017
(#emw2017)

- *Over 450 practitioners, investors, academics and support providers from over 80 organisations gather at Abbaye de Neumünster in Luxembourg*
- *Day of Action Group meetings, plus two conference days with three plenary sessions and over 30 sessions*
- *For first time, a TED-style session on digital and customer-centric solutions*
- *Three plenaries: “Microfinance for housing” (the topic of this year’s [European Microfinance Award](#)), “Women clients ≠ women empowerment: beyond the numbers” and “Microfinance: positioning ourselves for the next decade”*
- *European Microfinance Award ceremony at European Investment Bank tonight; winner announced*

Luxembourg, Thursday, 30th November 2017

For Immediate Release

The [European Microfinance Week](#) (#emw2017) conference opened today in Luxembourg, hosted by the European Microfinance Platform (e-MFP). A member-driven conference supported by the Luxembourg government, EMW continues to grow as one of the most important annual events in the microfinance industry, bringing together all branches of the microfinance sector, including e-MFP’s own members, to discuss trends, innovations, challenges and opportunities in inclusive finance in developing countries.

Reflecting the broader trends in this sector, the Platform’s focus has broadened beyond microfinance into various aspects of financial inclusion, from FinTech to behavioural economics, and from branchless banking to agri-finance. This focus, made possible by the work and expertise of the Platform’s over 130 members, fosters innovative action and research to advance sustainable and responsible microfinance around the world.

As always, this year’s European Microfinance Week started with yesterday’s day of Action Groups, which are supported by the e-MFP Secretariat as they conduct year round research on particular themes, such as inclusive green finance, digital innovations, SME finance and rural finance.

Each conference day is headlined by plenary sessions that bring together all members, delegates and speakers. This morning's opening plenary presented the finalists of the European Microfinance Award – this year on Microfinance for Housing.

The plenary started with a keynote speech by Sandra Prieto from Habitat for Humanity's Terwilliger Center for Innovation in Shelter, in which she outlined the challenges in affordable housing, including designing financial products suitable for low-income households on volatile incomes, verifying land title and partnering to provide construction technical assistance to clients. The keynote was followed by a lively discussion between the panel moderator Lucie Astier Such from Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and representatives from the three Award finalists: Ivaro Aguilar Ayon (Cooperativa Tosepantomín, Mexico), Augusto Paz-Lopez Lizares-Quiñones (Mibanco, Peru) and Frank van der Poll (The First Microfinance Bank – Afghanistan). 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.

Housing is a key theme of this year's conference, with sessions today on "The View from the Field", "Funding Strategies, and "Enabling Environments", which together with the plenary will give a complete overview of the demand, the challenges, the investment needs and the market infrastructure required to take pro-poor housing finance from niche to mainstream within the industry.

This opening session will be complemented by two plenaries tomorrow – "Women clients ≠ women empowerment: beyond the numbers", and "Microfinance: positioning ourselves for the next decade" – as well as an especially exciting programme of workshop sessions that reflects e-MFP's member-driven approach, with workshops put together based on proposals from the Platform's membership base. e-MFP is proud to bring together over 100 leading experts speaking on topics across various thematic streams, among them sessions on financial education, rural youth and agriculture, social performance in FinTech, asset finance, finance for refugees, and managing political risk. For first time, a TED-style session on digital and customer-centric solutions will also feature.

End

The European Microfinance Platform (e-MFP) is a multi-stakeholder organisation representing the European microfinance community, and comprises consultants & support service providers, investors, multilateral & national development agencies, NGOs and researchers. With the valuable support of the Luxembourg government 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.

For more information, contact: Niamh Watters, nwatters@e-mfp.eu; www.e-mfp.eu