

Online #EMW2021 Opens, with Call to Action on Climate Change and Women's Empowerment

- *Three-day online conference with over 50 sessions across various formats – fireside chats, interviews, panels and plenaries*
- *Topic streams on climate change and green finance; outcomes measurement; crisis management; WASH and energy, technology, and inclusive health care*
- *Plenaries on climate finance post-COP26; access to inclusive health care; the impact of the pandemic and the response of investors; and 'crisis and opportunity -where do we go from here?'*
- *Launch of e-MFP publication 'The First Wealth is Health'*
- *Hybrid European Microfinance Award ceremony takes place on Thursday 12pm CET*

Wednesday 17th November 2021

For Immediate Release

For the second straight year, European Microfinance Week 2021 is online. Opening today, the annual conference typically welcomes over 500 professionals to Luxembourg from around the world leading global experts, opinion-leaders, policy-makers and investors from the financial inclusion sector. But with some travel restrictions still in place and the Covid context still highly precarious, the decision was taken to build on 2020's successful online event and run the conference online again. This means abundant opportunities – to bring the work, initiatives, ideas, and discussions to a much broader international audience, while at the same time adapting the format of sessions to maximise interactivity and engagement.

EMW2021 opened with a welcome from e-MFP's Executive Secretary, Christoph Pausch, who described the conference's *"unprecedentedly diverse programme that reflects a sector of growing complexity, facing new and diverse challenges, which requires understanding both the past and the present and a holistic view of financial inclusion in order to discuss the solutions for tomorrow"*. There would be a wide range of topics covered, he outlined, from *"the renewed relevance of health care for vulnerable populations, the continued critical importance of adaptation to climate change, understanding the twin threats and opportunity of the digital revolution, and developing assessment and measurement frameworks to ensure that actions align with words"*.

Christophe Schiltz, General Coordinator at the Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs at the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, then gave opening remarks, saying that Luxembourg's new strategy on innovative and inclusive finance *"stresses the importance of mobilising additional resources through public-private partnerships, in addition to Luxembourg's traditionally grants-based financing policy"* and that *"by increasing the availability and usage of financial services such as credit, insurance or savings, we aim to promote the development of economic opportunities for vulnerable populations, especially women and young people"*. He finished by referencing the recent COP26 climate summit, and the importance of not just slowing climate change down, but ensuring that *"vulnerable and excluded communities can adapt...how do we avoid that precarious households fall back into poverty, due to the climate crisis?"*

The need to accelerate the empowerment of women was the key theme of the following keynote address, by Daniela Konietzko Calero, President of Fundación WWB in Colombia. Describing why humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters have a greater impact on women, she explained why the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic are more severe for women, as well as adversely affecting their personal and financial autonomy. *"Our task", she said, "is to accelerate women's inclusion in the financial system, in employment and management positions in companies and the public sector, in information and communication technologies, in terms of production means, and in terms of guarantees against gender-based violence"*.

These opening speeches kick off three days involving over 50 sessions across a variety of online formats, several Action Group working meetings, the launch of e-MFP's new publication on the topic of the European Microfinance Award, *The First Wealth is Health*, and four plenaries: on climate change and financial inclusion; access to inclusive health care, the impact of the pandemic and the response of investors; and a closing plenary that is both retrospective on the past 18 months and looks to the changes that will endure.

Beyond these plenaries, the sessions of EMW2021 will cover smallholder finance, climate and green finance, social performance – with a strong focus on outcomes and impact management, digital financial inclusion, Covid-19 and financial inclusion, health care and women's financial inclusion. Other topics covering the most relevant issues of the sector include remittances, WASH, energy, child labour, capacity building and youth – among others. They will take place as working sessions, fireside chats, interviews, as well as more traditional panel sessions – all designed to be as interactive as possible.

Finally, and as always, a highlight of EMW is the ceremony for the €100,000 [European Microfinance Award](#) - this year on *'Inclusive Finance and Health Care'*, which will

profile the three finalists and announce the winner. A hybrid event this year which will be live streamed, the ceremony will take place at 12pm CET on Thursday.

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The European Microfinance Platform (e-MFP) is the leading network of organisations and individuals active in the financial inclusion sector in developing countries. It numbers over 130 members from all geographic regions and specialisations of the microfinance community, including consultants & support service providers, investors, FSPs, multilateral & national development agencies, NGOs and researchers. Up to two billion people remain financially excluded. To address this, the Platform seeks to promote co-operation, dialogue and innovation among these diverse stakeholders working in developing countries. e-MFP fosters activities which increase global access to affordable, quality sustainable and inclusive financial services for the un(d)erbanked by driving knowledge-sharing, partnership development and innovation.

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