

11th EMN Annual Conference - Lisbon

The European Microfinance Network (EMN) will hold its 11th Annual Conference in Lisbon, Portugal on June 19th and 20th, 2014. The intention of the event is to be a meeting of minds, ideas and experiences. Over 350 participants are expected to attend, including EMN member organizations, speakers, and representatives of other institutions active in the microfinance sector.

Microfinance practitioners from both Europe and developing countries beyond European borders will be invited to share, exchange and challenge best practices in microfinance. The conference aims to achieve in-depth and interactive sharing through plenary sessions, workshops, roundtable meetings, and open space dialogue.

One central theme: “Employment – Challenges and Opportunities for Microfinance”

Europe faces one of the most serious economic crises in history.

- Eurostat estimates that 26.338 million men and women in the EU27, of whom 19.071 million were in the euro area, were unemployed in February 2013. Compared with January 2013, unemployment increased by 76.000 in the EU27 and by 33.000 in the euro area. Compared with February 2012, unemployment rose by 1.805 million in the EU27 and by 1.775 million in the euro area.
- Among the Member States, the lowest unemployment rates were recorded in Austria (4.8%), Germany (5.4%), Luxembourg (5.5%) and the Netherlands (6.2%), while recording the highest in Greece (26.4% as of December 2012), Spain (26.3%) and Portugal (17.5%).

Microfinance and microcredit in particular play an important role in job creation and help people achieve their goals. As we cross this period of crisis, microfinance can help create opportunities for entrepreneurs, people with the will and initiative to succeed. Here we include young people, with a university degree, that seek an opportunity to create their own jobs. This is a new and growing trend for which we must be prepared.

In many countries, young people are facing a bleak future of joblessness with far-reaching repercussions and talk of a lost generation, the effects of which will ripple far into the future. Policy-makers in the EU appear to be powerless to halt this trend, despite trying hard to put measures into place to counter it.

- In February 2013, 5.694 million young people (under 25) were unemployed in the EU27, of whom 3.581 million were in the euro area. Compared with February 2012, youth unemployment rose by 196.000 in the EU27 and by 188.000 in the euro area. In February 2013, the youth unemployment rate was 23.5% in the EU27 and 23.9% in the euro area, compared with 22.5% and 22.3% respectively in February 2012.



- In February 2013, the lowest rates were observed in Germany (7.7%), Austria (8.9%) and the Netherlands (10.4%), and the highest in Greece (58.4% as of December 2012), Spain (55.7%), Portugal (38.2%) and Italy (37.8%).

The conference will focus mainly on the challenges linked to this new European landscape:

- What is microfinance doing to give a proper response to the current environment?
- What are the challenges and opportunities for microfinance that arise from this context?
- What is the true impact of microfinance in entrepreneurs' lives?
- How can the social impacts be effectively measured?

This conference will be a unique opportunity for the participants to analyze how the sector in Europe should respond to the various challenges that have emerged after the financial crisis to build a more social, financial and entrepreneurially inclusive Europe while also supporting an effective response to unemployment.