

# 17<sup>th</sup> EMN ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2020

## EVALUATION REPORT

Between 13-15 October 2020, the European Microfinance Network held its 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Initially planned in Sofia, Bulgaria, this year's conference became a fully online event, to accommodate for the uncertainty surrounding large gatherings due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This year, the event was free of charge and open to the general public and all interested parties.

As every year, the EMN secretariat gathers specific information from participants at registration and also surveys attendees to collect feedback. This report will look at the profile of attendees as well as survey responses and feedback.

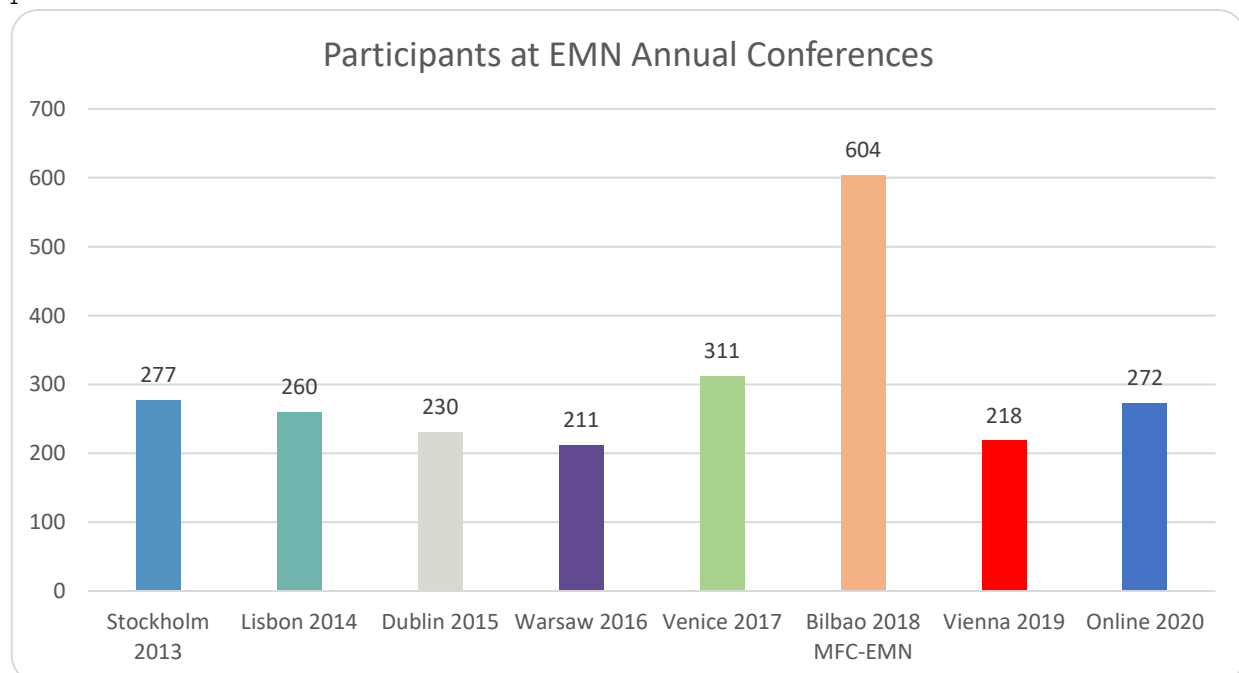
Given the simplified format of the conference, participants had to register one by one for whichever session(s) they wanted to attend. 9 webinar sessions were organised over the three days; the first and last sessions also included the opening and closing ceremonies.

Registration was launched on 22<sup>nd</sup> September and ran until the end of the conference. During this period, EMN tallied **1170 registrations** for the whole online Annual Conference. Of this, **746 registrants (63.8%) actually attended** the event.

In order to glean a more accurate view of participation and given that participants could register for and attend as many or as few sessions as they needed, this report will focus on individual attendees to the whole event, removing duplicate entries across the 9 sessions.

When looking at the whole event together, EMN counted **272 individual attendees**, including panellists and organisers.

<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Vienna 2019 participant number excludes panellists and organisers (15 people).

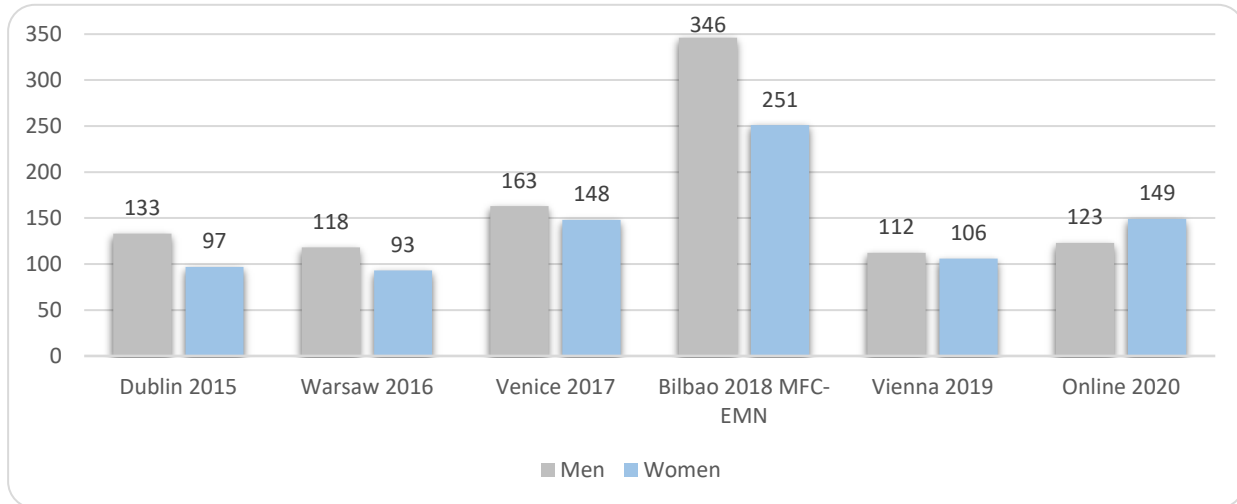
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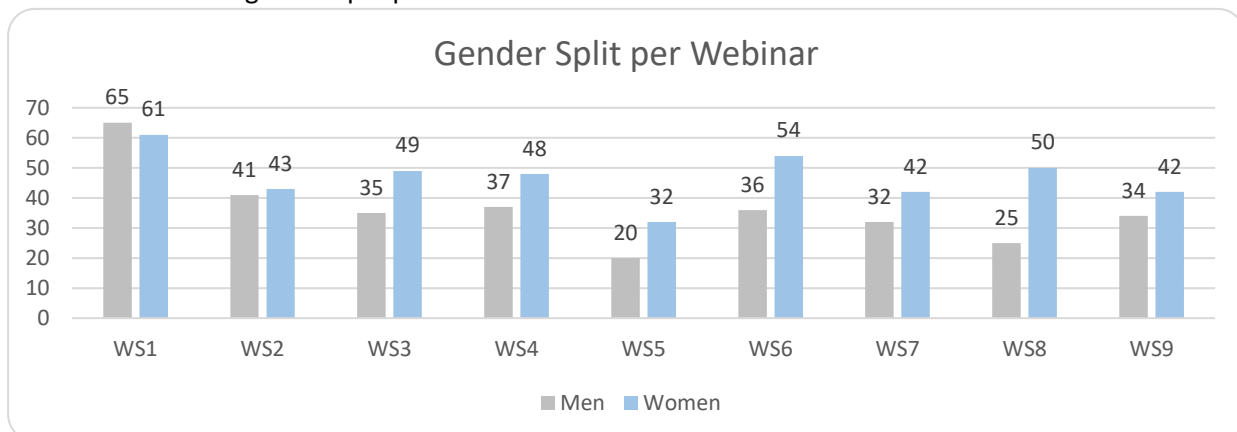
## Participant Profile

### Gender Split

Of the 272 individual attendees, **149 were women (55%)** compared with **123 men (45%)**. For the first time in over 5 years at an EMN conference, this gender split is higher for women than men.



**However, the composition of the webinar panels does not reflect this same split: only 44% were women compared with 56% men. Of 9 sessions, 4 of them had only one or no women on the whole panel.** We can also look at the gender split per webinar.

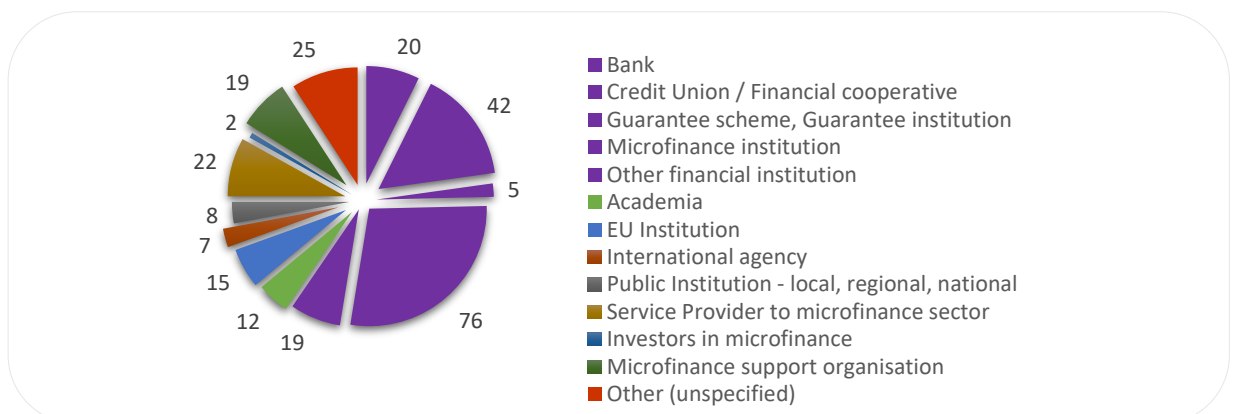


### EMN Members

Of 272 individual attendees, 143 (53%) were representatives of EMN-member organisations and 120 (44%) represented non-member organisations (3% organisers).

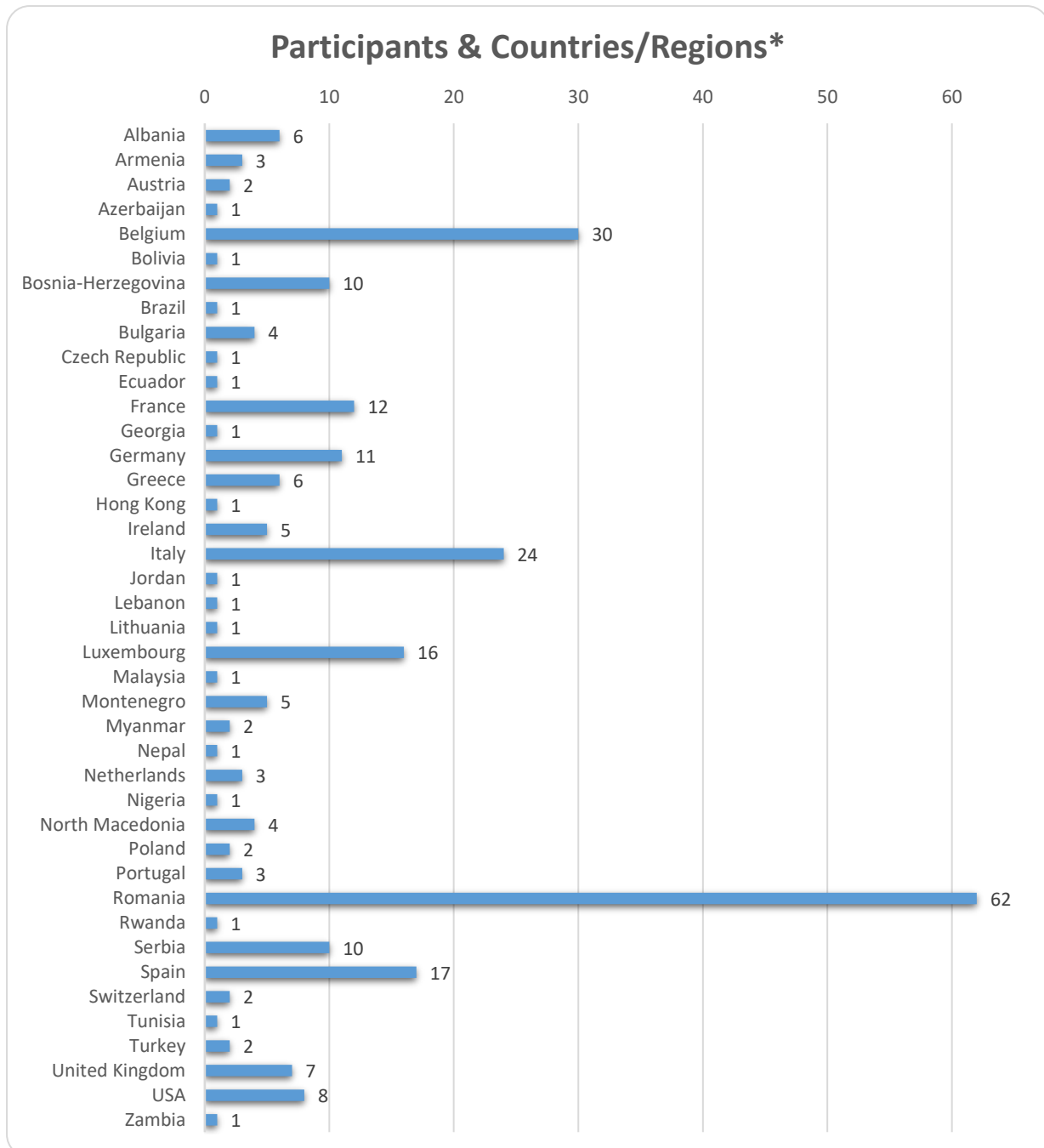
### Type of Organisation

The organisations that participants represented at the conference can be grouped according to different types. Just under 60% represented some type of financial intermediary (e.g. Bank, MFI, Credit Union) and just over 31% were spread among support organisations to the sector.



## Geographic Scope

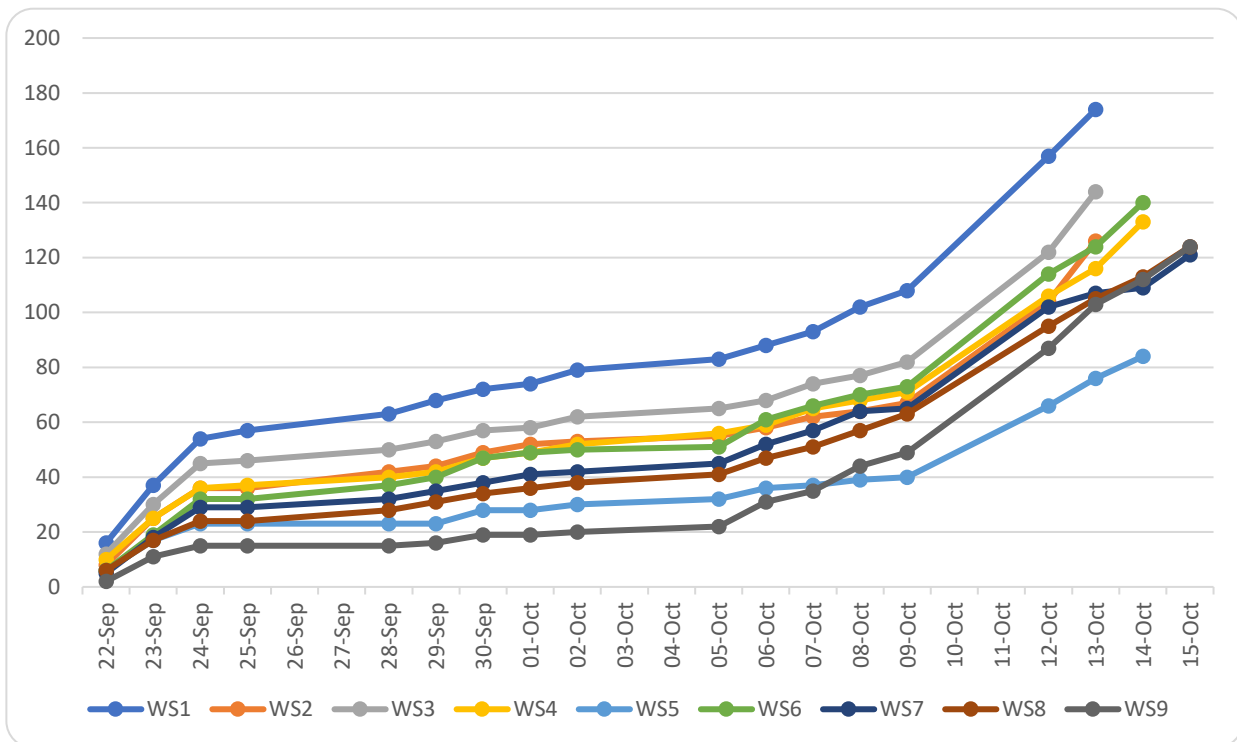
Participants at the conference came from a total of 41 different countries<sup>2</sup>. The vast majority of participants came from countries in geographic Europe. The highest total number of participants came from organisations based in EU-27 (199). The conference was online and free this year so the higher number of participants from outside Europe was to be expected.



<sup>2</sup> Based on country of work not nationality.

## Registration

Registration for the conference was opened on 22<sup>nd</sup> September and ran until the last day of the conference. The various webinars were popular, and registration rose steadily over the weeks and particularly following communication pushes. EMN tallied 1170 registrations for the whole online conference. Of this, 746 registrants (63.8%) actually attended during the three days. **Further, each webinar consistently saw more than half of the registered participants actually attend on the day, with an average rate of 63.4% attendance.**



	WS1	WS2	WS3	WS4	WS5	WS6	WS7	WS8	WS9	Total
Registrations	174	126	144	133	84	140	121	124	124	<b>1170</b>
Attendance	126	84	84	85	52	90	74	75	76	<b>746</b>
	72.4%	66.7%	58.3%	63.9%	61.9%	64.3%	61.2%	60.5%	61.3%	

Webinar 1 on *EU response to COVID-19 context and the future of the EaSI programme under MFF 2021-2027* was the most popular session and recorded the most registrations as well as the highest number of attendees (174 registrations with 72.4% attendance).

Overall, the wider programme of the conference proved interesting to attendees and **more than half of the participants registered and attended two or more webinars on the agenda (56.3%)<sup>3</sup>.**

<sup>3</sup> Excluding organisers

## Participant Feedback

### Total returned feedback forms

At the end of each webinar, participants were asked to fill in a feedback form. The number of completed evaluations per person per webinar was consistently low. For the whole event, only 226 evaluation forms were recorded (30.3%)<sup>4</sup>.

	WS1	WS2	WS3	WS4	WS5	WS6	WS7	WS8	WS9	Total
Attendance	126	84	84	85	52	90	74	75	76	746
Evaluation forms	34	24	28	32	12	31	29	33	3	226

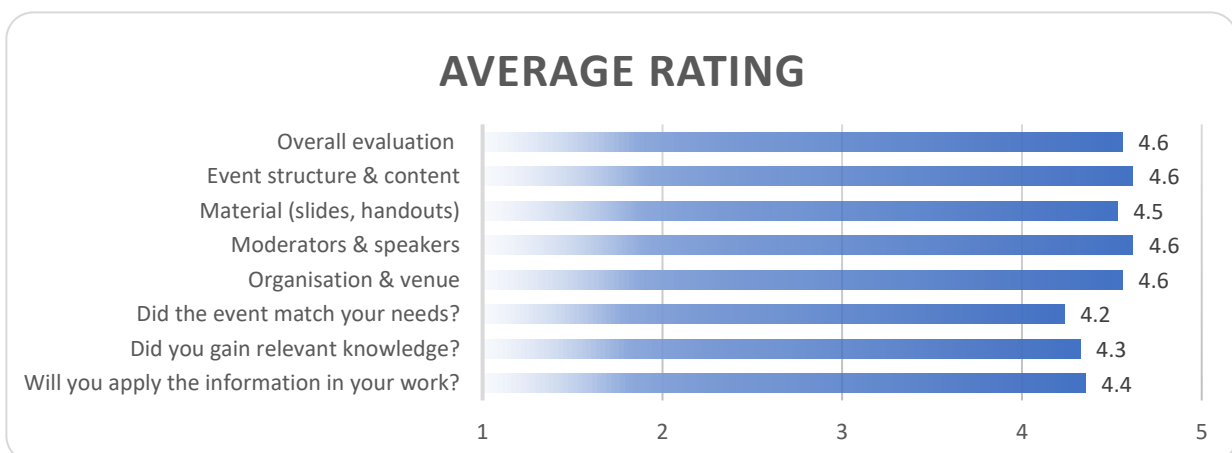
The low number of completed evaluations makes it difficult to fully analyse the results—no webinar saw more than half of the number of attendees return evaluations—but we can still glean some information from them. Participants were asked to rate various statements and questions on a sliding scale from 1-5, where 1 indicated a negative evaluation and 5 was positive.

### Webinar 1 & opening: EU response to COVID-19 & the future of the EaSI programme under MFF 2021-2027 (EaSI TA)

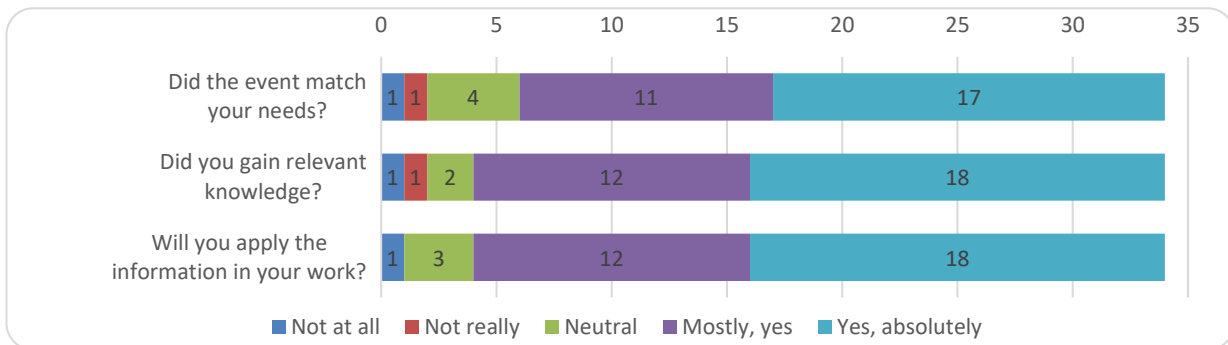
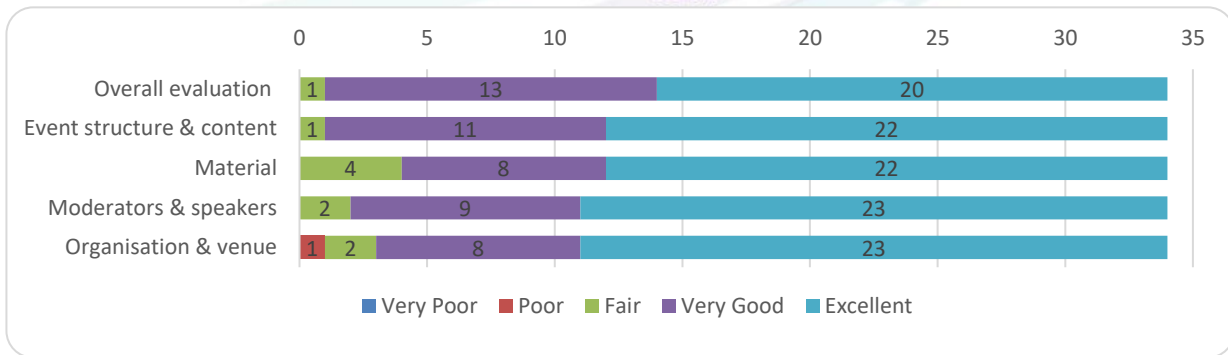
In general, this webinar was considered more than very good, with an average score of 4.5 out of 5. 34 attendees filled in the questionnaire at the end of the Webinar – this is more than any other session.

The **overall event** was considered more than very good, with an average score of 4.6 out of 5. Attendees appreciated the **Event structure & content, moderators & speakers, organisation & venue (WebEx)** as each received an average score of 4.6 out of 5, indicating more than very good. **Event structure & content** received the highest evaluation, with 11 out of 34 rating it as Very Good, and 22 as Excellent. Indeed, one attendee noted that the webinar was “well-structured and moderated”, and another said, “interesting speeches”, although another respondent noted that “more time for questions should be left at the end”. **Event material**, consisting of PowerPoint slides, scored well with 4.5 out of 5.

Participants were also asked to rate three questions on a similar sliding scale, where 1 is Not at all and 5 is Yes, absolutely. Asked if the **event matched their needs**, attendees indicated that it mostly met their needs with an average of 4.2 out of 5. For two respondents, the event did not at all, or did not really, meet their needs. This was the lowest scored survey question. Asked if they **gained relevant knowledge**, attendees indicated they mostly did with an average of 4.3 out of 5. One attendee noted that “valuable information [was] provided by the speakers”. Lastly, when asked if they would **apply the information gained in their work**, respondents noted that they more than mostly would with 4.4 out of 5 – indeed, 18 attendees indicated that they would absolutely apply the information in their work.



<sup>4</sup> The number of feedback forms is compared against the total number of attendees (746), given that the same person could attend multiple sessions and provide feedback per each session.

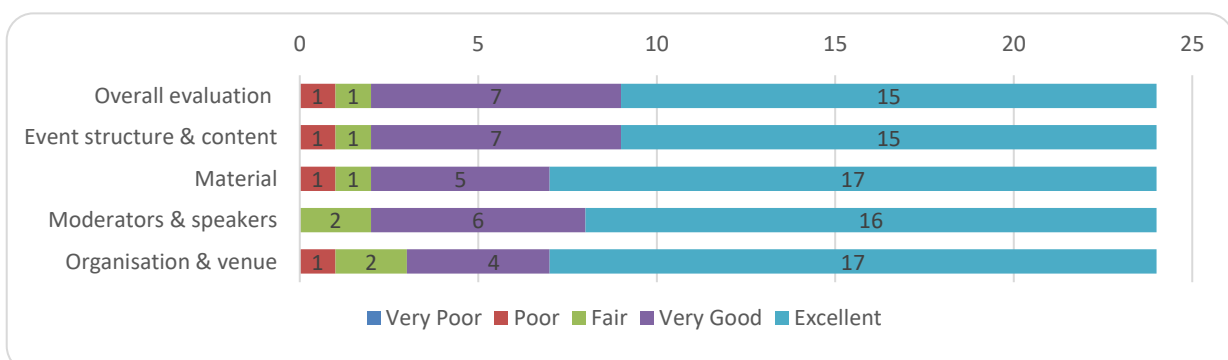
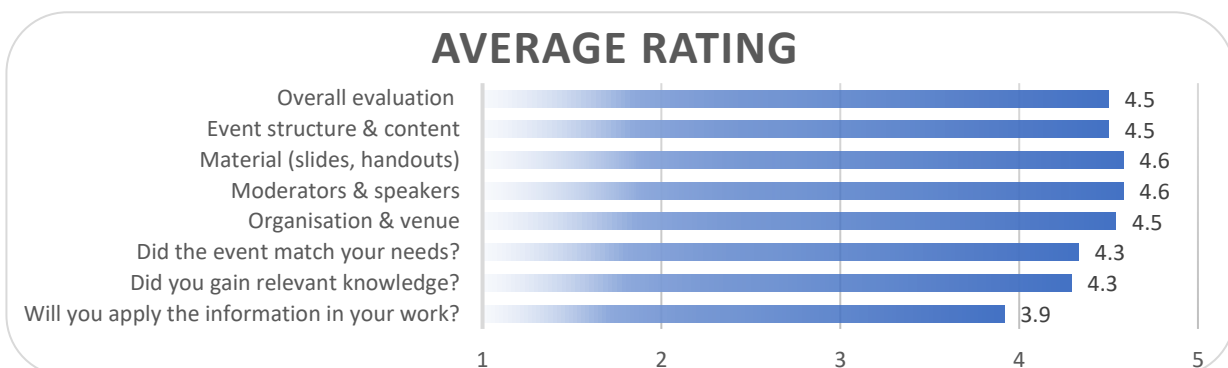


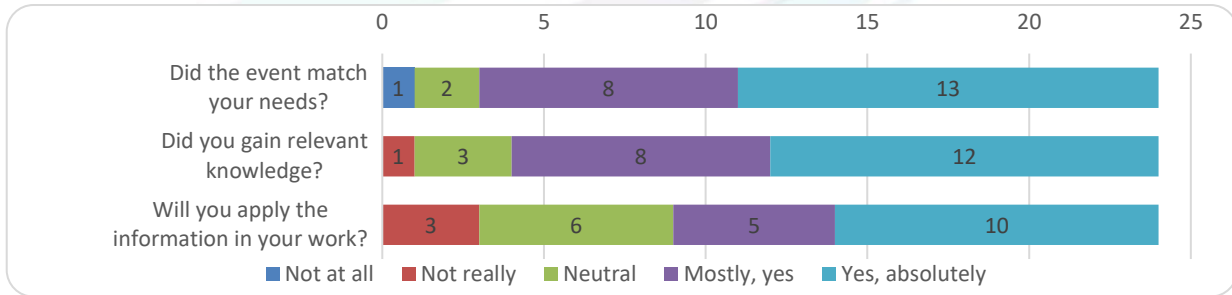
### Webinar 2: Deepening the data on microfinance: the ATLAS project (EaSI TA)

In general, this webinar was considered more than very good, with an average score of 4.4 out of 5. 24 attendees filled in the questionnaire at the end of the Webinar.

The **overall event** was considered more than very good, with an average score of 4.5 out of 5, with one attendee noting that “[these] kind of events are useful for networking and exploring potential collaborations”. Likewise, the **event structure & content** and **organisation & platform** were rated on average 4.5 out of 5. The webinar was described as “fresh and tangible” by one attendee. The **event material** and **moderators & speakers** were appreciated with average 4.6 out of 5. In fact, 17 and 16 out of 24 attendees rated the material and the moderators & speakers as Excellent, respectively.

Asked whether the **event matched their needs** and whether they **gained relevant knowledge**, attendees responded between mostly yes and absolutely yes, with an average of 4.3 out of 5. Asked if they would **apply the information in their work**, attendees were less sure with an average 3.9 out of 5, the lowest evaluation for this webinar.



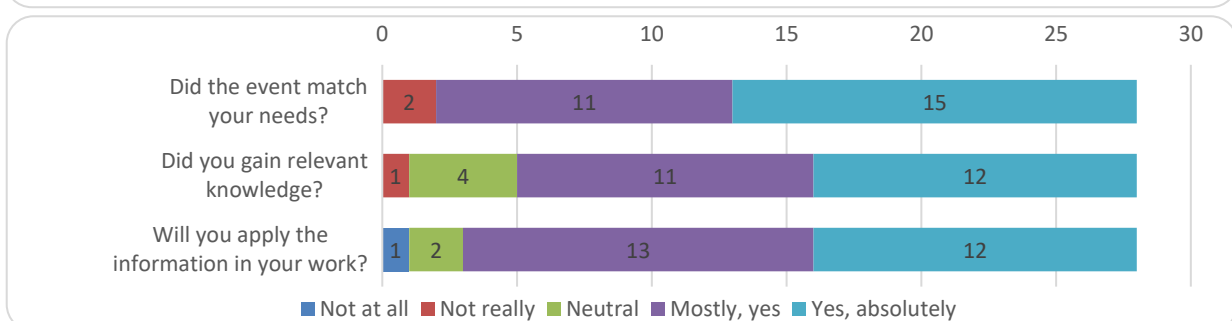
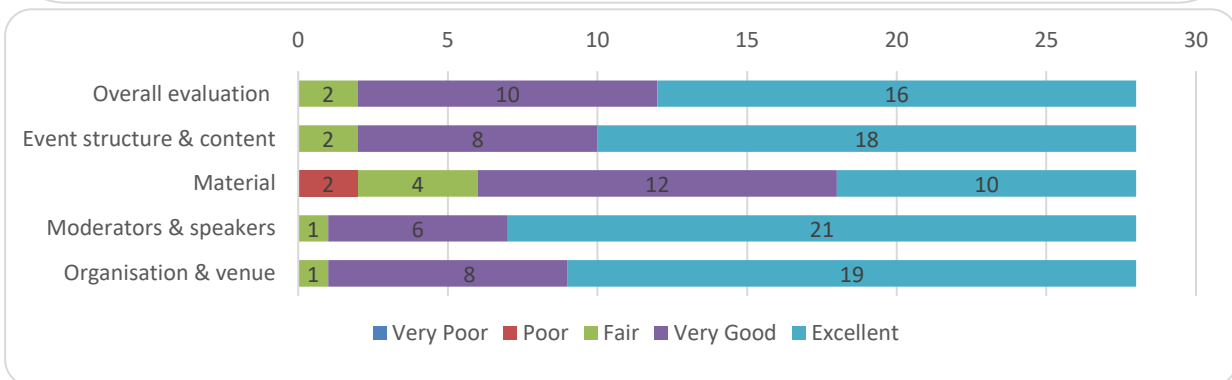
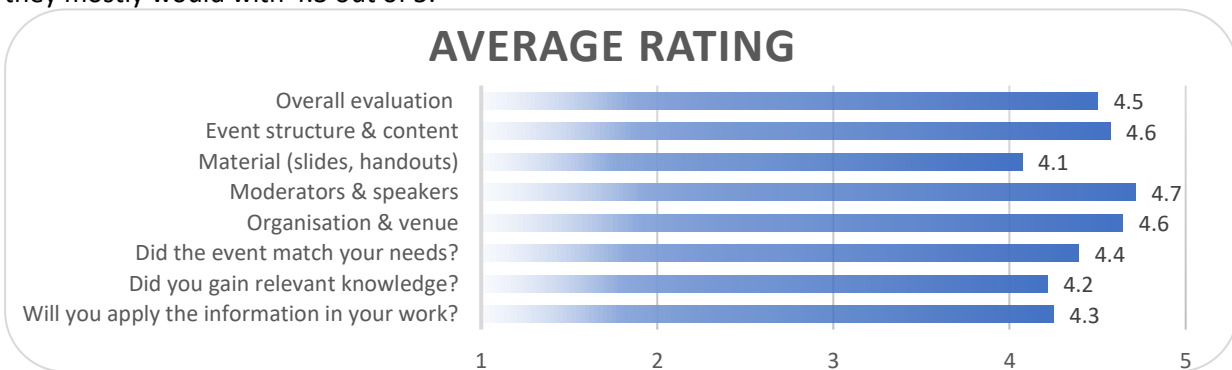


### Webinar 3: Enhancing the financial health of microentrepreneurs

In general, this webinar was considered more than very good, with an average score of 4.4 out of 5. 28 attendees filled in the questionnaire at the end of the Webinar.

The **overall event** was considered more than very good, with an average score of 4.5 out of 5. Attendees appreciated the **Event structure & content** and **organisation & venue (WebEx)** as each received an average score of 4.6 out of 5, indicating more than very good. Although one attendee did note they wanted “more information about the subject, maybe with specific details and examples”. **Moderators & speakers** received the highest evaluation, with an average of 4.7 out of 5. In particular, 6 out of 28 rated it as Very Good and 21 out of 28 rated it as Excellent. **Event material** scored modestly with an average of 4.1 out of 5.

Attendees indicated between mostly yes and absolutely yes, when asked if the **event matched their needs**, with an average of 4.4 out of 5. Although for two respondents it did not really match needs. Asked if they **gained relevant knowledge**, attendees indicated they mostly did with an average of 4.2 out of 5. Lastly, when asked if they would **apply the information gained in their work**, respondents noted that they mostly would with 4.3 out of 5.



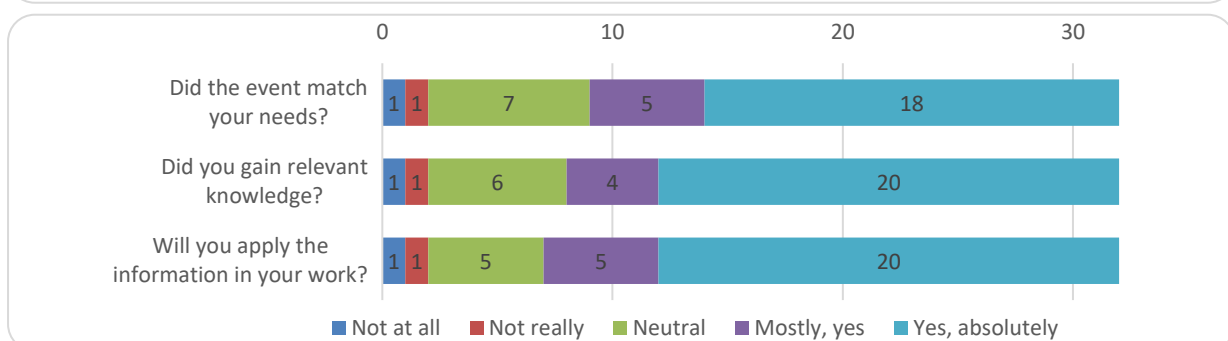
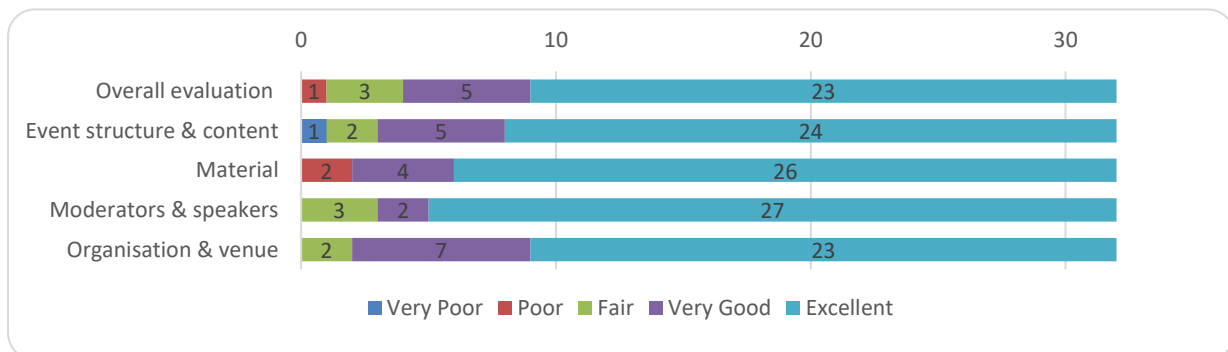
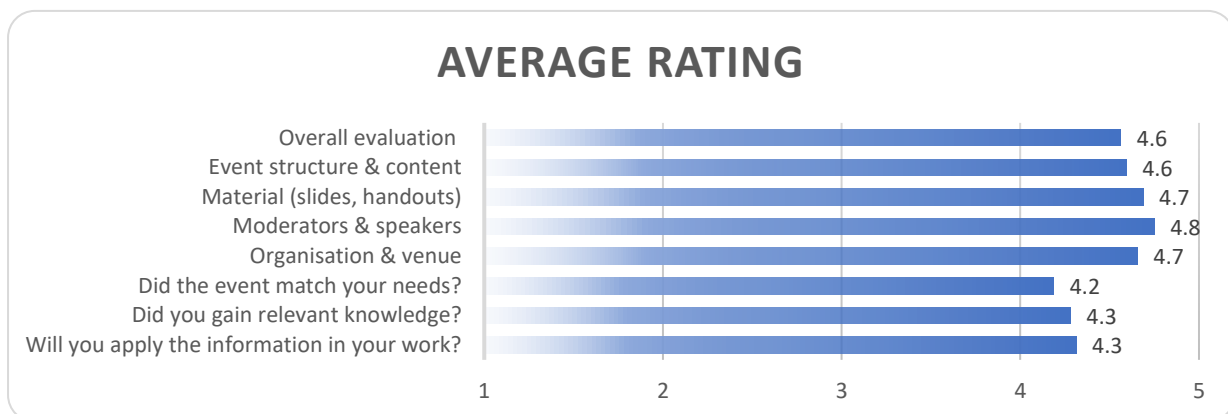


## Webinar 4: Social mission vs. sustainability: Covid-19 & the key challenges of a new way of working

In general, this webinar was considered more than very good, with an average score of 4.5 out of 5. 32 attendees filled in the questionnaire at the end of the Webinar.

The **overall event** was considered more than very good, with an average score of 4.6 out of 5. Attendees appreciated the **Event structure & content**, with an average of 4.6 out of 5. However, it must be noted that one attendee indicated that they “didn’t find anything related to social outreach aspects [and that] sustainability of microfinance was not addressed properly in this event”. Another respondent said, “Very nice presentation, but with limited relevance for the microfinance sector. Almost no reference to the main topic of *social mission*”. The **event material** and **organisation & venue (WebEx)** were appreciated with an average of 4.7 out of 5 each. **Moderators & speakers** received the highest evaluation with an average of 4.8 out of 5. Indeed, 27 out of 34 respondents rated the speaker as Excellent with one commenting, “Tony Tarantini was very good”.

The evaluations subsequently decrease when asked the following questions. Only an average of 4.2 out of 5 found the **event matched their needs**, with 7 respondents staying neutral to the question and 2 giving negative evaluations. Asked if they **gained relevant knowledge**, attendees indicated they mostly did with an average of 4.3 out of 5. One attendee noted that “it would have interesting to have the possibility to talk about how to interact with clients whose activities are and will be “the old normal” - repair-shops, hairdressers, bakeries, care services to elderly people, etc.”. Lastly, when asked if they would **apply the information gained in their work**, an average of 4.3 out of 5 was returned.

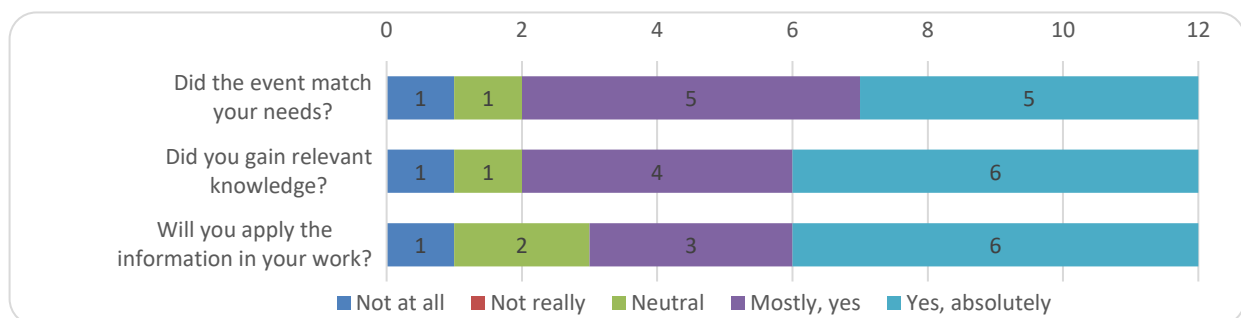
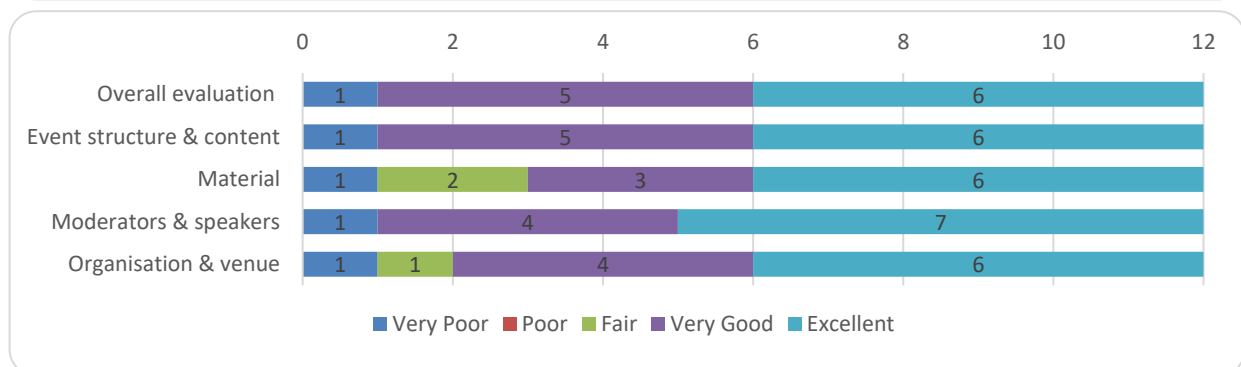
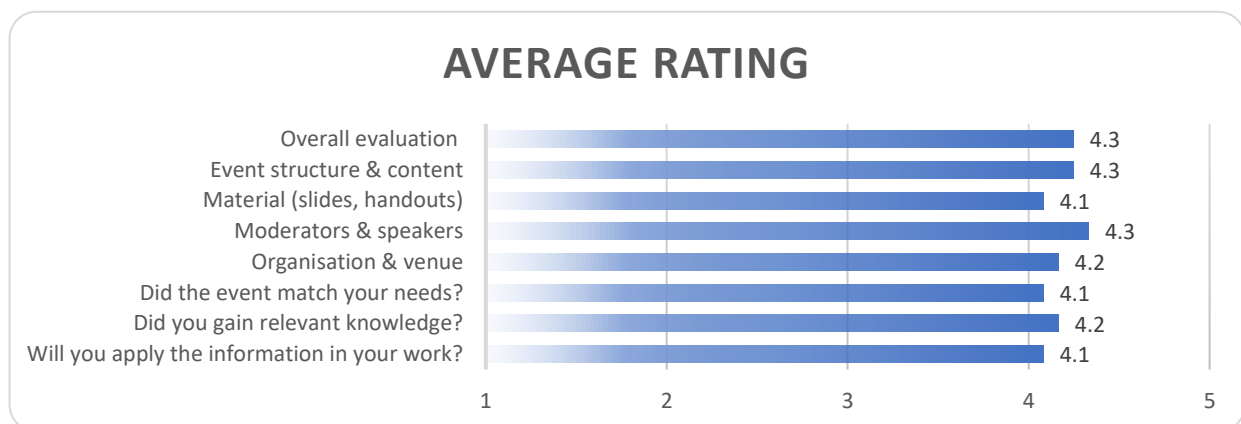


## Webinar 5: Expanding our network to cope with the challenges ahead

In general, this webinar was considered at least very good, with an average score of 4.2 out of 5. However, only 12 attendees filled in the questionnaire at the end of the Webinar.

The **overall event** was considered very good, with an average score of 4.3 out of 5. One attendee stated it was “super!”. The **Event structure & content** and **moderators & speakers** were appreciated with an average of 4.3 out of 5, though one participant wished that the subject were “more detailed”. **Event material** and **organisation & venue** fared relatively well with an average of 4.1 and 4.2 respectively out of 5.

Asked if the **event matched their needs**, attendees indicated that it mostly met their needs with an average of 4.1 out of 5. Asked if they **gained relevant knowledge**, attendees indicated they mostly did with an average of 4.2 out of 5. Lastly, when asked if they would **apply the information gained in their work**, respondents noted that they mostly would with 4.1 out of 5. It should be noted that one respondent negatively evaluated the entire event indicating very poor feedback.

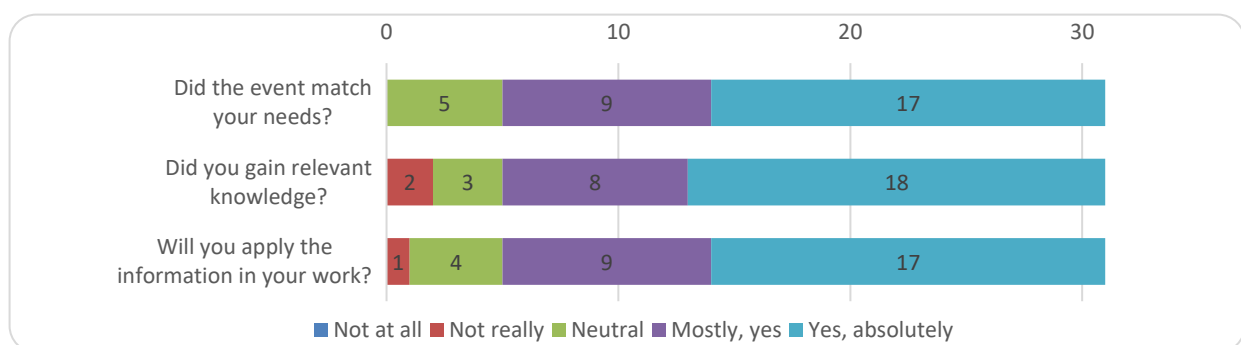
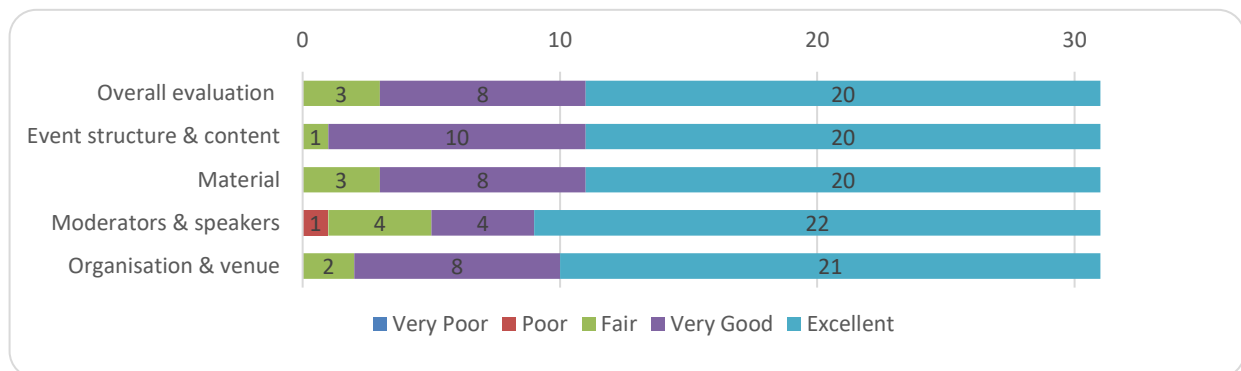
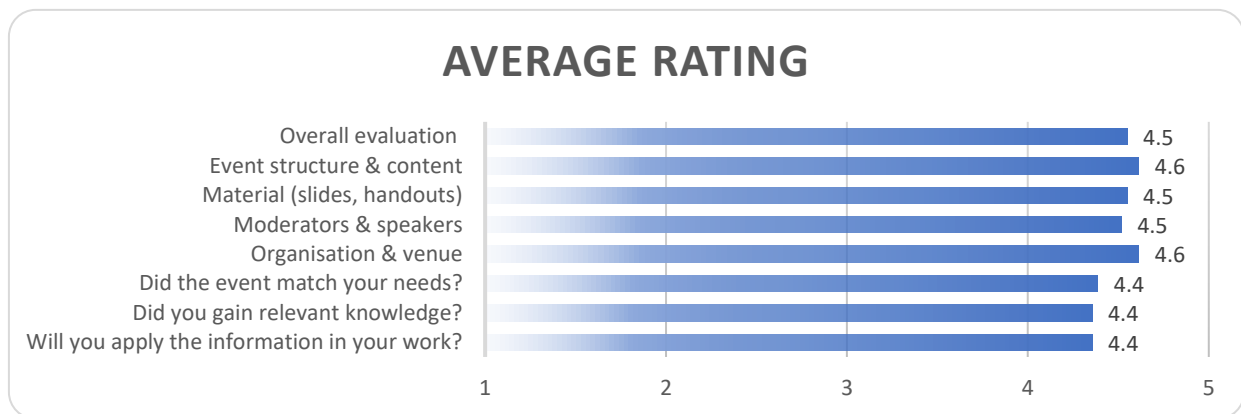


## Webinar 6: Delinquency Management and Collection Techniques (EaSI TA)

In general, this webinar was considered more than very good, with an average score of 4.5 out of 5. 31 attendees filled in the questionnaire at the end of the Webinar.

The **overall event** was considered more than very good, with an average score of 4.5 out of 5. Attendees appreciated the **Event structure & content**, and **organisation & venue (WebEx)** as each received an average score of 4.6 out of 5, indicating more than very good. Indeed, one respondent commented that the “structure was good [and] abstract knowledge was good”. **Event material** and **Moderator & Speakers** were well evaluated with an average of 4.5 out 5 each.

Asked if the **event matched their needs**, attendees indicated that it mostly met their needs with an average of 4.4 out of 5. Asked if they **gained relevant knowledge** and if they would **apply the information in their work** attendees indicated Mostly yes with an average of 4.4 out of 5. Although a few respondents did indicate that there should have been more “practical advice” on the topic and that it would be “[interesting...] to get further into this topic, with real life examples, during this pandemic”.



## Webinar 7: Contracts and signature digitalisation (EaSI TA)

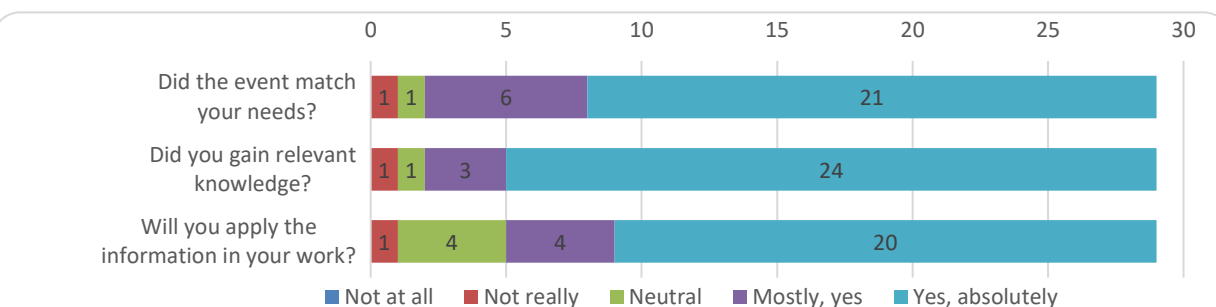
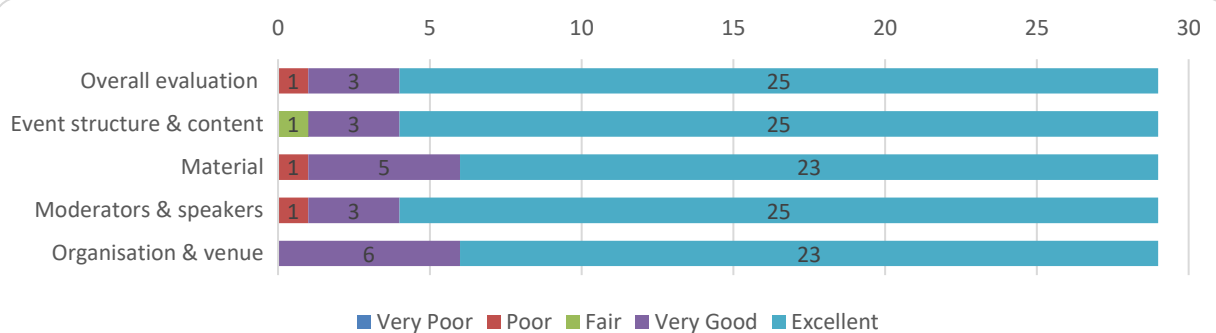
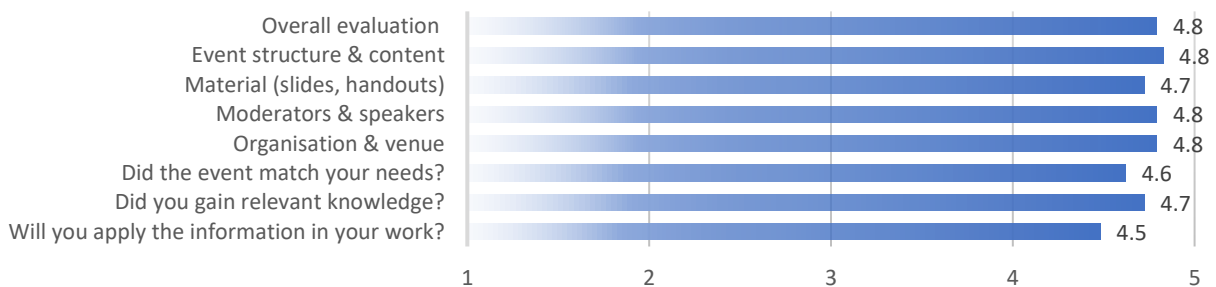
In general, this webinar was considered more than very good, with an average score of 4.7 out of 5. 29 attendees filled in the questionnaire at the end of the Webinar.

The **overall event** was considered very good, with an average score of 4.8 out of 5. **Event moderators & speakers** and the **event organisation** also received the appreciation of the respondents: both were considered more than very good with the same average score of 4.8 out of 5. One respondent noted that, “The event was extremely well organised [...]”. **Event material** also received the high rating of 4.7, with 1 respondent rating it as fair, 5 very good and 23 as excellent.

**Event structure & content** received the highest evaluation with an average score of 4.8 and with 25 out of 29 rating it as Excellent. The session was particularly interactive, thanks to the inclusion of a video and the participation of the public, who spontaneously intervened more than once, with questions and comments. One attendee noted that the event was “extremely well [...] structured with up to date topics” and another said it was “very interesting and [had] challenging presentations”.

The participants indicated that the **event matched their needs** with an average score of 4.6 out of 5. When asked if they **gained any relevant knowledge** respondents answered more than mostly yes with an average score of 4.7. Moreover, they were asked to rate whether they would **apply the information from the event in their work**, respondents gave an average score of 4.5 out of 5.

### AVERAGE RATING



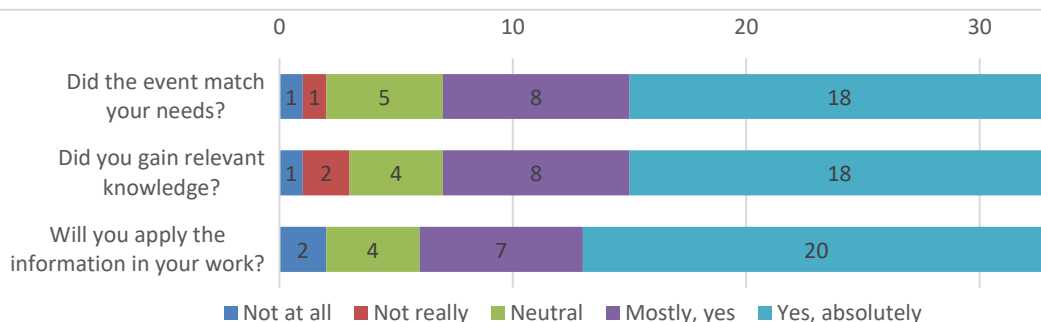
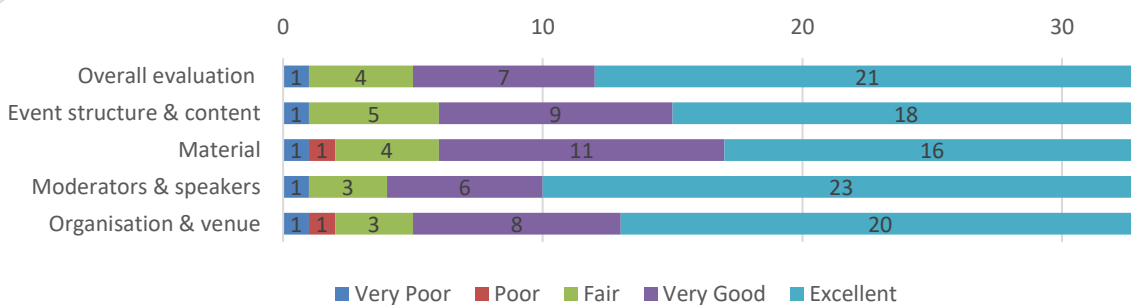
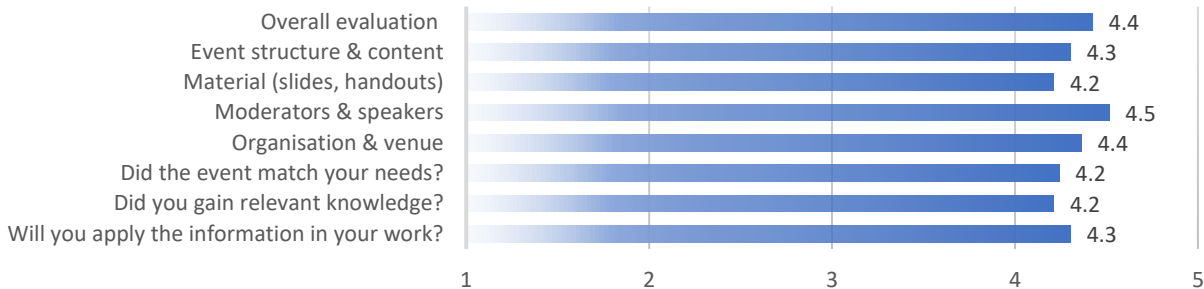
## Webinar 8: Update on the European Code of Good Conduct for Microcredit Provision: What next? (EaSI TA)

In general, this webinar was considered at least very good, with an average score of 4.3 out of 5. 33 attendees filled in the questionnaire at the end of the Webinar.

The **overall event** was considered very good, with an average score of 4.4 out of 5, with 21 out of 33 attendees rating it as excellent. **Organisation & venue (WebEx)** was similarly rated, with the latter seeing 20 out of 33 attendees rate it Excellent. **Event structure & content** and **Event material** were mostly well rated at 4.3 and 4.2 respectively out of 5. Attendees stated that the event was “very useful” and “well prepared and documented [...] informative”. One attendee however found that the “Code is an over-discussed topic from the perspective [...] presented” and another asked for the “same topic but more specific, [and to] get into more details [on] how to implement the code, with steps”. **Moderators & speakers** received the highest evaluation with an average of 4.5 out of 5 indicating between Very Good and Excellent. One attendee praised the, “balanced composition of the panel”, although another asked, “please choose some more speakers like Tony Tarantini”, suggesting that the usual line up is not groundbreaking enough.

Asked if the **event matched their needs** and if they **gained relevant knowledge** attendees indicated mostly yes, with an average of 4.2 out of 5 each. Lastly, when asked if they would **apply the information gained in their work** respondents noted that they mostly would with an average of 4.3 out of 5. 20 respondents out of 33 stated they absolutely would apply the information, with another 7 saying Mostly yes, although two respondents did indicate Not at all.

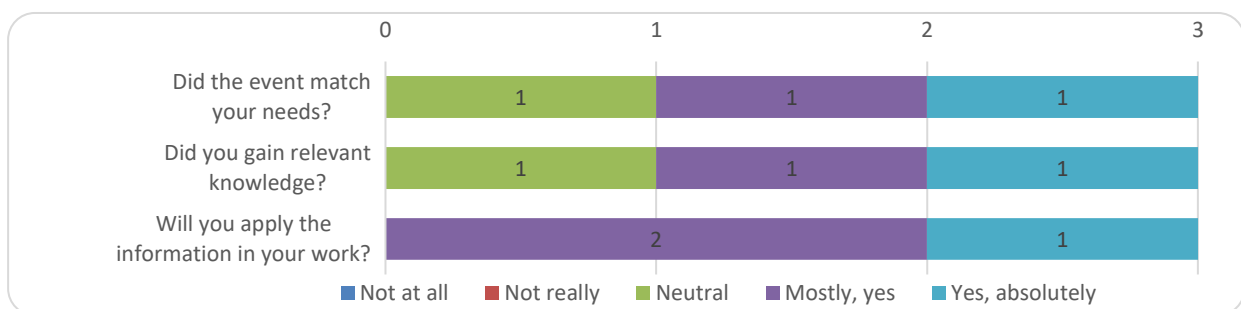
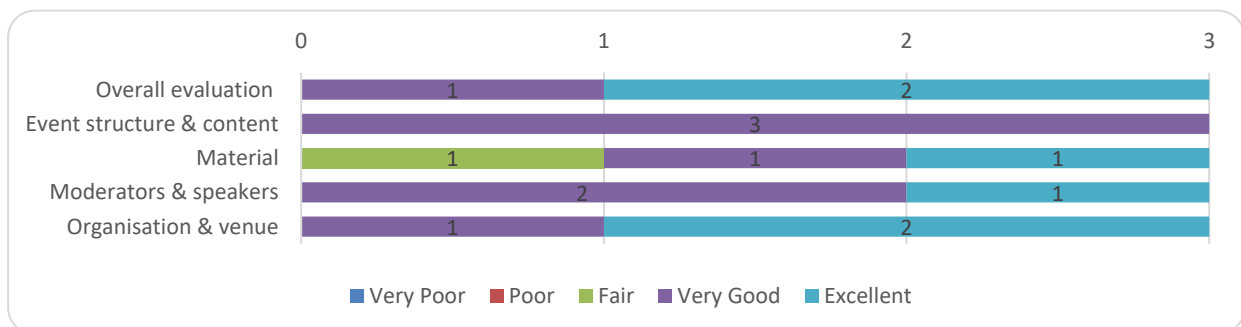
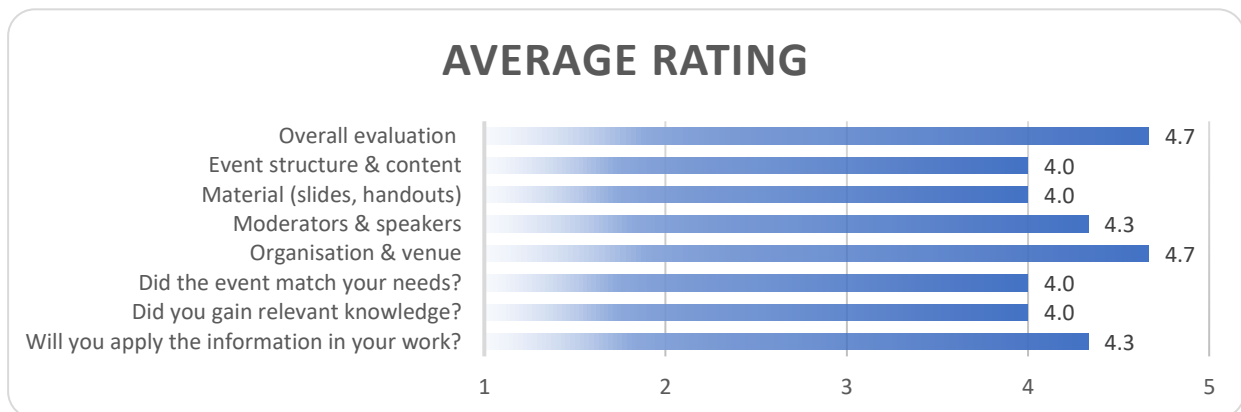
### AVERAGE RATING



## Webinar 9 & closing: Lessons learnt from the crisis & closing remarks

Unfortunately, this webinar only received 3 feedback forms out of a possible 76 so it is not possible to properly analyse the results.

It can still be said however that the **overall event** was considered more than very good with an average of 4.7 out of 5. One respondent stated that “this event is of utmost importance in the new world we are living in and helped all of us [think] about the challenges of a new way of working”.



## Topics of interest for future events

Respondents were asked to note what topics they would like to see discussed in other workshops/webinars. EMN received a lot of ideas, comments, and questions. They have been grouped below according to similarity and theme.

- EU: New developments & opportunities under EaSI (TA) and ESF+; more information on the EaSI Guarantee, the guarantee structure and options, as well as impact of EaSI guarantees on loans granted by MFIs; EaSI support for EU accessing countries, like Serbia. Should financial intermediaries include consulting companies?; Status of Bosnia and Herzegovina as regards EaSI; European programmes aimed at reducing the risk of poverty or social exclusion in rural areas; financial instruments for small MFIs and EC support for the microfinance sector in the coming years; EU support plans for Fintechs specialised in SSE; programmes relevant for microfinance and social enterprises under Invest EU.
- Covid-19: Continued information about crisis and how to deal with it; opportunities for support from the EU and current programmes supporting MFIs in this time; impact on MFIs and portfolios as well as on the microcredit consumer; real examples and steps on how to help MFIs and companies retain resilience and agility during Covid struggle and in the new normal; Microfinance in Europe post Covid; BDS in Covid context; how to maintain and/or orient the social focus during Covid?; how to reconstruct normality after Covid?; measures to reduce the risk of lending in post-Covid period.
- Digitalisation in microfinance: What are the major risks regarding digitalisation? What methods of prevention?; Digital education of our customers, how can we increase it?; How can our customers adapt to digitalisation?; Examples possible digital strategies to mitigate the risks caused by the current crisis; Procedures related to contract and signature digitalisation, digital identification of clients, signature on mobile phone; Digital lending process; Preservation of the credit unions in the far future and how to reconcile the move to digital documents when a great majority of CA clients still want paper documents?; the going paperless process and solutions for complete integration between management system and electronic signature solutions; encryption of data from loan agreements; online payments; CRM and chatbot for MFIs.
- European Code of Good Conduct: Relevant changes, implementation and evaluation; best practice examples of Code risk management; practical use of tools and cost of use of these tools; how to adapt Code to rapid changes in our daily life as previous updates took years to be operational?; content related to the specific technical assistance provided to MFIs working to implement the Code; evaluation of the Code and its impact; impact of applying the Code requirements on the activity of MFIs.
- Small/micro entrepreneurs: Enhancing the financial health of microentrepreneurs and maintaining financial health in post-Covid time; the importance of financial health in advising small entrepreneurs; funding the education and mentoring of micro entrepreneurs. Who and how?; BDS for lone entrepreneur clients; what are the needs of micro entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship?; connecting with micro entrepreneurs; combining financial and non-financial services for small entrepreneurs; non-financial support (capacity development) for grassroot entrepreneurs and measures for embracing entrepreneurship among young people; evaluation models for entrepreneurial ideas and projects.

- Extra-EU: Governance for non-EU members; equity investments in SMEs outside EU; capacity building in microfinance and experience sharing EU vs. non-EU.
- Delinquency management: How effective are the measures to prevent delinquency caused by Covid 19?; NPL management vs Delinquency management - ways and methods; how do the habits and behaviours of people in different countries influence delinquency?; more in-depth insight and practical advice on management of delinquency / collection of recoveries.
- Clients: how to maintain contact and how to reach new clients when an interpersonal relationship is what brings clients back to a company?; how can we, more precisely, offer our clients answers to their financial problems in times of crisis?; how can we support clients in developing liquidity demand projection?; services to our clients.
- Institutions/organisations: small vs big MFIs: an assessment of to what extent needs are different (and request tailored approach); microfinance case studies on successful and failed projects; management knowledge and practical examples/case studies from the practices of organisations; parallelism between similar institutions in different countries; legal requirements for MFIs: what a new institution needs to comply with in order to start functioning; new product development, green financial products, selling financial products through web tools.
- Miscellaneous: Peer-to-peer learning on building partnerships and common programmes; being resilient in the new normal, adapting business / focusing on new opportunities; access to funding; crowdfunding; social impact, social performance; data analysis; behaviours during crisis situations; ethical finance; access to finance for the missing middle; credit scoring; sustainability of microfinance and of MFIs; detailed risk management and reporting standards; financial outreach to the marginalised; financial education for children; gender and financial inclusion; examples of best practice in microfinance and tips for success; practical sessions for service providers based on good practices.