



European
Commission

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

EaSI Technical Assistance for Microfinance

1. Questions regarding EaSI Technical Assistance for Microfinance

Which services are available to selected microfinance institutions under EaSI Technical Assistance for microfinance?

Selected microfinance institutions are eligible to receive tailored and investment-readiness trainings, as well as trainings on the implementation of the [European Code of Good Conduct for Microcredit Provision](#) subject to budget availability. In addition, the institutions may receive an institutional assessment, or an optional rating, as well as an [evaluation of compliance with the Code](#).

Moreover, there are [events](#) such as Microfinance Workshops, Peer-to-peer trainings, Study visits and Webinars, which interested institutions may attend.

Finally, there is a [Helpdesk](#) - a free-of-charge service that aims to assist all institutions and individuals interested in European microfinance, which can provide questions to a multitude of topics.

Which services are available to the wider public?

The [EaSI Technical Assistance](#) team organises peer-to-peer trainings and microfinance workshops, designed to build-up knowledge within the European microfinance sector and facilitate the exchange and dissemination of best practices among a wider public. In addition, a dedicated [Helpdesk](#) serves as a gateway to share best practices and increase awareness of microfinance in Europe.

Who are the Service Providers?

The European Commission has contracted service providers to implement the EaSI Technical Assistance for Microfinance on its behalf. [Frankfurt School of Finance & Management](#) leads a consortium (FS Consortium) with the [Microfinance Centre](#) and the [European Microfinance Network](#) to implement the training services under EaSI Technical Assistance. [MFR](#) implements the rating, assessment and evaluation services for European microfinance institutions.

For more information, please do not hesitate to send an email to easi.ta@fs.de for EaSI Technical Assistance or to easi.ta@mf-rating.com for ratings, institutional assessments and Code evaluations.

Who is eligible to apply for EaSI Technical Assistance?

Public and private financial intermediaries (including greenfield microfinance institutions i.e. microfinance institutions that have been operating for less than three years, non-bank microcredit providers, licensed banks and guarantee granting entities) in all Member States of the European Union, as well as microfinance institutions from Albania, North

Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia and Turkey may respond to dedicated Calls for expression of interest to request EaSI Technical Assistance.

How can I apply for EaSI Technical Assistance?

Before applying, eligible institutions must first sign-up to or endorse the [European Code of Good Conduct for Microcredit Provision](#).

After signing up to the Code, institutions have 18 months (36 months for greenfield institutions - microfinance institutions that have been operating for less than three years) to implement the Code guidelines into their operations and be certified, which is a precondition to benefit from the EU-level financial instruments under the EaSI Programme. To access Technical Assistance, interested institutions should respond to an open [Call for Expression of Interest](#) – the selection period usually lasts from 4 to 8 weeks (depending on the pipeline). Once selected, the institution is contacted by the Service providers to design and implement relevant services.

How can I register for EaSI Technical Assistance events open to the wider public?

If you are interested in attending any of the upcoming EaSI Technical Assistance events, please register via the provided links in the respective event news release. Find all EaSI Technical Assistance events here ([link to EaSI TA microfinance events page](#)). If you have any questions, you can message us via the free Helpdesk platform.

How can I apply for institutional assessments and ratings made available under EaSI Technical Assistance?

Microfinance institutions selected to take part of the EaSI Technical Assistance may contact MFR on easi.ta@mf-rating.com in order to obtain information and apply for the institutional assessment or the different types of ratings, which are offered under this programme.

2. Questions regarding the European Code of Good Conduct for Microcredit Provision

What is the European Code of Good Conduct for Microcredit Provision?

The European Commission has developed the [European Code of Good Conduct for Microcredit Provision](#) to ensure high ethical lending standards and practices within the European microfinance sector. Complying with, or endorsing, the Code is a precondition of accessing EU funding under the EaSI financial instruments for microfinance.

The Code is a set of good practice guidelines that aim to enable microfinance institutions to face the challenges of accessing long-term finance, and encourages them to improve their internal processes and operations.

What are the standards and indicators of the Code?

The standards and indicators of the European Code of Good Conduct for Microcredit Provision refer to sound practices in the following areas:

- Customer and investor relations
- Governance
- Risk management
- Reporting standards
- Management information systems

that are common to the microfinance sector in the European Union.

These standards were selected with the intention to outline a set of common standards in terms of operation and reporting of microfinance institutions that benefit customers, investors, funders, owners, regulators and partner organisations.

Which institutions are eligible for the Code?

All public and private financial intermediaries (Greenfield microfinance institutions i.e. microfinance institutions that have been operating for less than three years), non-bank microfinance institutions, licensed banks and guarantee granting entities) active in Europe.

How does an institution sign up and get certified under the European Code of Good Conduct for Microcredit Provision?

To sign up to the Code, an eligible microfinance institution should submit a [sign-up form](#) declaring their commitment to applying the Code standards in their operations. The complete electronic form should be sent to EMPL-MICROFINANCE@ec.europa.eu. Alternatively, the institution can post a hard copy of the form to this address:

European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
Unit E1

B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

Afterwards, the institution should conduct a “self-assessment” to assess its compliance with the Code at that stage. Based on the results of this assessment, the beneficiary may request technical assistance in order to improve its compliance. This is followed by an implementation stage, which lasts up to 18 months and culminates with an evaluation of the compliance led by an external evaluator. The final step of a certification is in the hands of the Code Steering Group, which decides if an institution is compliant.

What happens when an institution passes or fails the certification process for the Code?

If an institution successfully passes the certification process for the Code it receives a compliance certificate valid for 3 years.

If compliance is not achieved, the institution may decide to receive further post-evaluation consultancy in order to make a number of additional changes to improve its level of compliance and reach the global marking. If so, the microfinance institution will submit evidence of the changes for review by the external evaluator, who will then inform the Code Steering Group if the changes are sufficient to achieve compliance with the Code.

Who is licensed to conduct the certification?

The external service provider that is licensed to conduct the Code Evaluation is MFR. When the microfinance institution has completed the [self-assessment file](#) and wishes to begin the Code Evaluation process, please contact MFR on easi.ta@mf-rating.com. Microfinance institutions are expected to successfully complete the Code Evaluation within 18 months from signing up for the Code. This timeframe is extended to 36 months for Greenfield institutions (i.e. microfinance institutions that have been operating for less than three years).

Who is responsible for making decisions regarding the certification?

A Code Steering Group chaired by the European Commission will make the final decision on whether or not to certify an institution based on the recommendation of the external evaluator. The Code Steering Group is composed of voting members that represent the European Commission and the industry and non-voting members, who represent the service providers involved in the EaSI Technical Assistance programme.

How will the Code information related to the certified institutions be used?

The news on all microfinance institutions that were successfully certified as compliant with the European Code of Good Conduct will be shared on the [European Commission website](#) as well as in any relevant events, trainings or communication material prepared by the service providers involved in EaSI Technical Assistance.

How often will the institution need to get re-certified?

The certificate for compliance with the European Code of Good Conduct for Microcredit Provision lasts up to 3 years. To obtain a re-certification, the institution needs to apply via the same process.

3. Questions regarding the EaSI MicPro application

How can I log in and input data on the EaSI-MicPro tool?

To log in and input data in the EaSI-MicPro tool, follow [this link](#).

What is the Helpdesk?

The [Helpdesk](#) is a free service developed by the European Commission and accessible at all times via the [EaSI MicPro platform](#). The tool is intended to act as a digital focal point available on a permanent basis to provide information on microfinance and social enterprise finance in Europe.

How can I use the Helpdesk?

To submit question users should fill out the [Helpdesk form](#) available on the EaSI MicPro platform. Once submitted, the question is processed by an expert team and an answer is sent within one week of submission.

4. Other questions

Where do I find more information about the EaSI Financial Instruments?

More information about the EaSI Financial Instruments is available [here](#) and [here](#).

How can I submit a complaint?

We are sorry that you have encountered problems with our EaSI Technical Assistance services. To submit your complaint, please send an email to easi.ta@fs.de. The more information you can provide about the situation, the easier and faster it will be for us to resolve the issue. If possible, please provide details about the type of product or service involved, as well as your interaction with it and other relevant details to your complaint, such as: date, location, service provider.