

Press Release

Paris, March 23, 2009

“University Meets Microfinance” (UMM)

PlaNNet Finance and the Freie Universität Berlin launch a Scholarship / Award Programme for University Students

PlaNNet Finance and the Freie Universität Berlin invite master students to participate at the first Call for Research Proposals within the “University Meets Microfinance” project (UMM). Co-financed by the European Commission since January 2009, the “University Meets Microfinance project” aims at fostering the cooperation between microfinance practitioners and students from European universities.

“Through the granting of scholarships, UMM aims at encouraging students in Europe to realize on-the-field research in developing and transition countries. The additional offering of mentorship by experienced academics and practitioners will enhance the quality of students’ work and the usefulness for the further development of microfinance services.” says Pauline Bensoussan, head of **PlaNNet University**, PlaNNet Finance’s Training Center which developed the program with the Freie Universität Berlin.

For Prof. em. Dr Manfred Nitsch and Prof. Dr Barbara Fritz, Freie Universität Berlin - *“With the academic experience of the Freie Universitaet Berlin and the practical experience of PlaNNet Finance as a worldwide organization specialized in microfinance, the two partners have come together for the project University Meets Microfinance”.*

Students are encouraged to apply before April 30th 2009 for the first selection round. For detailed information, please visit: <http://www.planetfinancegroup.org/EN/actualites.php> or contact us at umm@planetfinance.org.

About University Meets Microfinance

The development of adapted financial services for the poor is one of the fastest developing sectors within the international development cooperation, the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Muhammed Yunus and the Grameen Bank in 2006 have increased the public awareness towards modern microfinance. The project “University Meets Microfinance” aims at fostering the cooperation between microfinance practitioners and students from European universities. UMM has received a 3-year support from the European Commission within the frame of the “Education to Development” Programme. The general objectives of the project are to increase awareness among European (future) decision-makers on microfinance, to support field research experience of students in Europe and to contribute to microfinance innovation. The expected results for the next 3 years are the participation of 400 students and 5 European universities in the project, the award of 15 Scholarships/ Best Research Prizes and the mentorship of 60 students. Regular workshops and seminars are also proposed in collaboration with the partner universities. UMM’s research priorities in 2009 include topics like mobile banking & ICT, rural microfinance, money transfers and microinsurance. Contact: umm@planetfinance.org

About PlaNet Finance

PlaNet Finance is an international non-profit organisation with the mission to alleviate poverty through the development of microfinance. Based in Paris, PlaNet Finance is active in more than 60 countries with an international network of 38 offices. Over the past 10 years, PlaNet Finance has supported 1,500 microfinance institutions that financed more than 9 million people.

www.planetfinancegroup.org

About Freie Universität Berlin

The Freie Universität Berlin is recognized as one of the leading German universities (2006 Excellency Award). Its Institute for Latin American Studies has been offering a special course on microfinance for more than 20 years. Every year, some students write papers on microfinance, which have unfortunately not been enough diffused until now. Prof. Manfred Nitsch (emeritus) has long-standing experience in microfinance and has written several books on the topic. The Freie Universität Berlin has around 130 cooperation agreements with universities around the world and several in new member states including for instance the Wroclaw University in Poland, the Eötvös Loránd University in Hungary or the University of Malta.

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