

## **Abstract**

In the contemporary socio-political landscape, pursuing gender equality encounters multifaceted challenges, including in the European Union. Yet, the European Investment Bank (EIB) emerges as a significant actor, particularly in the realms of EU development finance and gender equality initiatives. This paper employs critical policy discourse analysis to investigate the EIB's conceptualization of gender and potential policy implications for the EU Financial Architecture for Development. While the EIB champions women's empowerment and economic inclusion, and some progress is seen in incorporating intersectionality and a broader understanding of gender as a social construct, its approach generally often echoes a 'smart economics' paradigm, relegating gender equality to a tool for justifying neoliberal policies to increase economic efficiency and growth. A unique narrative was identified about EIB's instrumentalization of gender equality within climate finance, underscoring a broader trend of prioritizing economic and environmental objectives over intrinsic gender justice. Results point towards the imperative for nuanced approaches that transcend binary frameworks, address systemic inequalities, and center genuine gender justice as a foundational pillar of socioeconomic transformation.

**Keywords:** gender, development, European Investment Bank, women's economic empowerment, critical policy discourse analysis