

EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK

Call for proposals

The European Investment Bank Institute proposes a new EIBURS sponsorship under its Knowledge Programme

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The Knowledge Programme of the European Investment Bank Institute channels its research grants through different schemes, one of which is:

— **EIBURS**, the **EIBUniversity Research Sponsorship Programme**

EIBURS provides grants to university departments or research centres associated with universities in the EU, candidate or potential candidate countries working on research topics of major interest to the Bank. **EIBURS** sponsorships – of up to EUR 100 000 per year for a period of three years – are awarded through a competitive process to interested university departments or research centres with recognised expertise in the selected area. Successful proposals entail the delivery of a variety of outputs that will be the subject of a contractual agreement with the European Investment Bank.

For the academic year 2020/2021, the **EIBURS** programme is seeking proposals on a new research theme:

‘Impact of gender mainstreaming in infrastructure projects’

1. Focus of the Project

The EIB Group Strategy on Gender and Women's Economic Empowerment (GS) took effect in January 2017. This Strategy aims to embed gender equality and women's economic empowerment into the EIB Group's activities both inside and outside the EU. The GS is implemented through the Gender Action Plans (GAP), which provide a roadmap and specify activities for the EIBG to undertake so as to ensure fulfilment of commitments made under the Strategy (2017-2022).

The GAP includes four areas of activities, amongst which is enhancing the impact of EIB operations on gender equality. To ensure that EIB operations mainstream due attention to gender into the investment process, the EIBG is introducing a gender tag, akin to a classification system, at the appraisal stage. The purpose of the tag is to readily identify, *ex-ante*, those operations likely to have an impact on gender equality. Such *ex-ante* assessments are particularly important for investments not targeting gender equality as a specific outcome or objective but that could, with the right design features or in the right geographies/sectors, have significant effects on gender equality. For example, evidence seems to indicate that incorporating gender concerns into the design and implementation of infrastructure projects makes project benefits more accessible and inclusive, and enhances the projects' development impact (ADB 2019) ⁽¹⁾. Similarly, it is expected that infrastructure investments designed in a gender-responsive manner may increase women's economic resilience and well-being, for instance through time saving, increased sense of safety and security, increased mobility, higher bargaining power or by overcoming social norms that cause barriers (e.g. digital investments overcome norms that limit women's mobility and therefore access to banking or information), etc. ⁽²⁾ However, at this pilot stage, progress is required in developing rigorous *ex-ante* estimations to guide project design and measurement approaches in relation to gender equality outcomes and impacts of the EIB-supported infrastructure operations.

The EIB is currently considering using women's time usage as a proxy indicator of the impact that infrastructure investments can have on freeing up women's time to engage in productive activities and hence to reduce the gender wage and pension gaps. However, the suitability and effectiveness of using this indicator still has to be tested. The EIB has thus approved a pilot phase during which such an indicator, its use and validity will be explored alongside its potential practicable application to EIB infrastructure investments.

In light of the above, we propose to focus the research on the following key questions:

⁽¹⁾ ADB (2019), 'Gender in Infrastructure: Lessons from Central and West Asia'.

⁽²⁾ Jacobson, J., Mohun, R., and Sajjad, F. (2016). 'Infrastructure: A game changer for women's economic Empowerment'. UKaid and ICED.

In which ways can improvements, generated through infrastructure investments (e.g. public transport or affordable housing), to women's access to productive resources (such as finance, land and other natural resources) and economic opportunities (decent jobs) enhance their economic resilience and well-being?

Based on which transversal indicators can the EIB most effectively estimate the possible differential effects of infrastructure investments on women and men and ensure that the projects' outcomes will address existing gender gaps? In particular, is the time poverty ⁽³⁾ dimension an appropriate indicator?

To respond to those research questions, researchers will need to provide a conceptual framework, develop a research hypothesis and carry out an empirical study. The latter will focus on one specific infrastructure project ⁽⁴⁾ and set the stage for a rigorous impact evaluation of the socioeconomic impact and improvements in women's economic resilience and well-being. The research work will include appropriate data collection mechanisms (qualitative and quantitative), build a relevant database and identify the optimal design to establish a counterfactual. In addition, it will carry out rigorous statistical analysis on the baseline.

2. Challenges

Three main challenges will need to be addressed by the research team. First, the identification of an optimal methodology for estimating – *ex ante* – the impact of infrastructure investments on wider societal gender inequality and the selection of the most appropriate indicators that could apply across sectors and regions. Since this methodological challenge is recurrent when appraising EIB support, the research team should develop a rigorous methodology, backed by academic research, that can be used in a simple way to inform EIB gender tagging and project selection and design where relevant.

Second, given the long-term nature of infrastructure projects, the three-year time frame for the empirical work might appear challenging. However, the research work is expected to collect data at the onset of the project, when the project has not yet influenced the outcome variables of interest (i.e. women's economic resilience and well-being). This, combined with the identification of a valid comparison group, will make it possible to compare baseline data with the same indicators collected *ex-post*. The research team is expected to engage in discussions with the relevant EIB services and project promoter to explain the approach and its implications.

Finally, infrastructure investments also have the potential to have indirect and induced impacts on women's prospects, and these are harder to measure. Nevertheless, they are also important to consider in terms of both risks and opportunities in designing projects.

3. Deliverables

Given the three-year time frame, the research work should include intermediary deliverables and final deliverables.

Year 1:

- a review of the related academic literature ⁽⁵⁾;
- a brief note formulating the research hypothesis based on a conceptual framework investigating how women's access to productive resources and economic opportunities enhance their economic resilience and well-being, and the relevance of time savings in this regard;

⁽³⁾ More time spent working in unpaid work-related activities means less leisure and less time to engage in productive activities, and therefore higher 'time poverty' and often poverty itself. Women's time poverty can be due to gender/social norms that mean that women disproportionately engage in certain unpaid caring responsibilities or activities that take up time away from more productive ones. These can relate to lack of access to care services, poor access to safe public transport and, outside the EU in particular, to firewood and water collection?

⁽⁴⁾ To be defined in collaboration with EIB based on a preselection of projects.

⁽⁵⁾ As well as a review of *ex-ante* social/gender impact assessment approaches and related proxy indicators used by other financial institutions, including but not limited to IFIs, MDBs, DFIs and also by academic/research/think tank institutions (e.g. European Institute for Gender Equality EIGE, GROW in Canada).

- empirical analysis:
 - selection of the most appropriate infrastructure project supported by the EIB for a rigorous impact evaluation, in collaboration with the EIB, based on a preselection of projects;
 - a methodological note on the design of the impact evaluation, specifying the identification of a valid comparison group, the preparation of qualitative and quantitative data collection tools/survey questionnaires/interview guides and required indicators, the modalities of data collection (e.g. sampling strategy and power calculations, training of the enumerators, pilot mission, organisation of focus group discussions) and a calendar of the activities.

Year 2:

- baseline data collection (timing to align with the project timeline);
- construction of the indicators, data cleaning and creation of the project-relevant databases (e.g. in stata, R or Excel format).

Year 3:

- a report presenting rigorous statistical analysis on the data collected at baseline and including triangulation of various data sources (qualitative and quantitative);
- a methodological note on the implications for the EIB in the appraisal of infrastructure projects, based on the study results. This note should also provide guidance on the best indicator for the EIB to use as a proxy of gender equality impact through investments in infrastructure, in particular considering time poverty as an indicator of particular interest to the EIB. It should provide recommendations on how such an indicator can be tracked (including data sources for triangulation etc.);
- dissemination of research results with the EIB (such as seminars/conferences).

Proposals should be submitted in English by 30 September 2020 24:00 (CET). Proposals submitted after this date will not be considered. Proposals should be sent by email to:

Events.EIBInstitute@eib.org

For more exhaustive information on the **EIBURS** selection process and on the EIB Institute, please visit: <http://institute.eib.org/>
