



Figure 1 EIB Women Climate Leaders Network Annual Gathering - Luxemburg

Professor Phoebe Koundouri's Participation at the EIB Group Forum and EIB Women Climate Leaders Network Annual Gathering

The [EIB Women Climate Leaders Network \(WCLN\)](#) held its first anniversary gathering in Luxembourg from March 5 to 7, 2025, alongside the [EIB Group Forum 2025](#). The three-day forum at the European Convention Centre brought together leaders to discuss solutions for Europe's economic, social, and political challenges, with a focus on sustainability and security. EIB President Nadia Calviño emphasized the link between economic growth and security. The forum featured the launch of the [Investment Report 2024/2025](#), highlighting the importance of market integration and innovation.

The main takeaways from the forum were that security and economic prosperity are interconnected, stronger communities are essential for a safer Europe, and global partnerships are crucial for building a better future. Achieving these goals requires investment across all sectors of the economy. To this end, the EIB announced a doubling of housing investments, new support for Ukraine, progress toward gender equality, and a reinforced partnership with the World Health Organization to build healthier societies.



Figure 2 EIB Group Forum 2025

The **WCLN gathering** provided a platform for women leaders to exchange ideas and develop recommendations to accelerate green investments across Europe. The meeting was opened by **Teresa Ribera**, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for Clean, Just, and Competitive Transition and European Commissioner for Competitiveness.



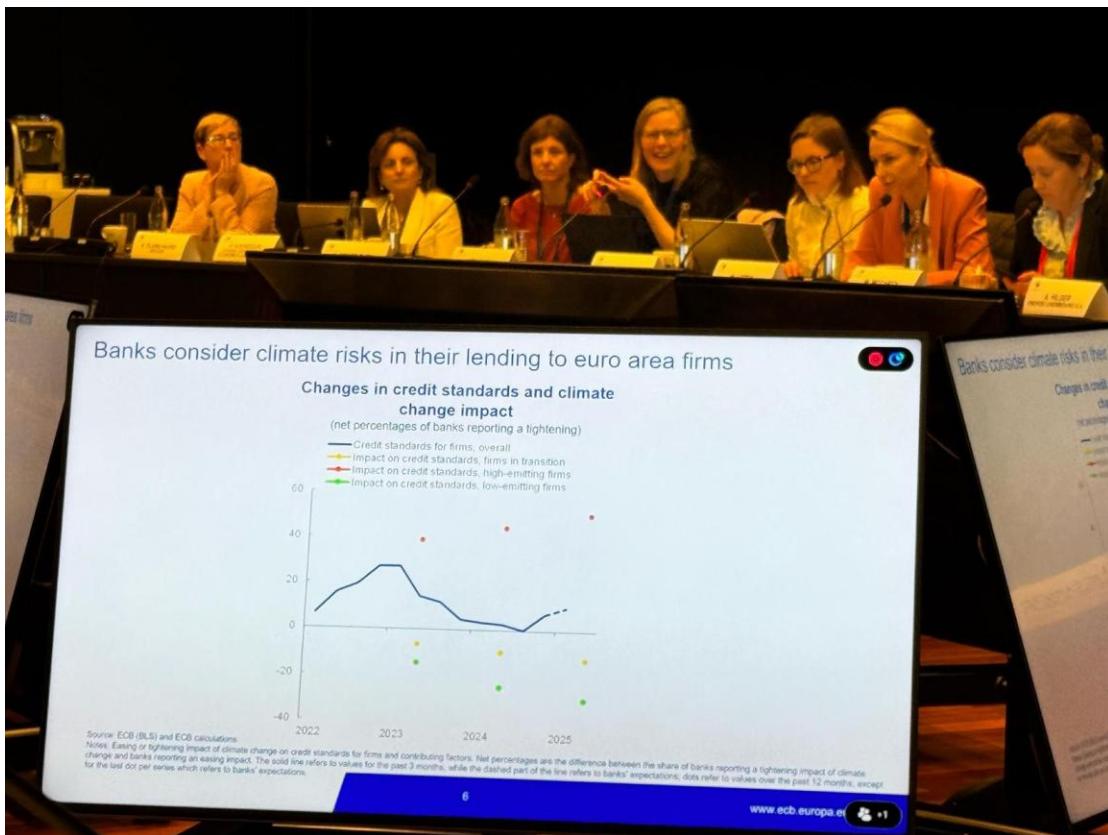
Launched by the **European Investment Bank (EIB)**, the WCLN unites **48 distinguished women leaders** from the private sector across all **27 EU countries**. These leaders play a crucial role in shaping climate policy, finance, and sustainable development.

Professor Phoebe Koundouri, as a member of the WCLN and the working group on **Greening SMEs and Green Innovation**, participated in the annual gathering, contributing to discussions that resulted a **paper with actionable recommendations** aimed at supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and mid-sized companies in adopting greener business practices and innovations.

Professor Koundouri and her research team **AE4RIA** - affiliated with the **ReSEES Research Laboratory – Athens University of Economics and Business** and the **Sustainable Development Unit – Athena Research Center** - developed two **innovative tools** designed to enhance **business sustainability**, which were included in the working group's published recommendations:

- **AE4RIA Metrix** – A comprehensive ESG integration tool that aligns businesses with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and global ESG reporting standards.
- **AE4RIA AI Skills** – An AI-powered platform that maps sustainability workforce needs, linking EU Green Deal policies to job roles and skill development.

During the event, Professor Koundouri underscored the importance of scientific quantification in driving sustainable market transformation. She highlighted how AE4RIA's tools provide essential frameworks for industries navigating sustainability transitions amidst risk and uncertainty.



Policy Recommendations for Greening SMEs

The **WCLN working group** presented **key policy proposals** to facilitate the **green transition** for SMEs. WCLN considers that targeted financial support for distinct company segments is more effective at promoting transformative investment. Mid-sized companies are instrumental for Europe's productivity growth and green innovation capacity but suffer financing constraints. Recommendations further include local knowledge-sharing platforms, simplified reporting, capacity building, and linking green to business benefits. Additionally, the Network advocates for enhanced policies to scale green innovation through temporary tax incentives, adjusted financial regulations, and regulatory sandboxes.

Furthermore, the Network emphasized the need for a single-entry guidance framework within the EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework, ensuring that SMEs have seamless access to available funding for green investments.

As the Women Climate Leaders Network moves into its second year, it remains committed to fostering a greener, more inclusive European economy by supporting businesses and policymakers in achieving sustainable growth.

