

# FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the new edition of the Foreign Investors Council's set of recommendations for improving the business climate in Serbia: the White Book 2021. As they do every year, our 121 members, highly skilled professionals investing over €36 billion and employing more than 100K people, have taken the pulse of what the most relevant stakeholders think, summarised it and made a solid basis for further concrete improvements in Serbia's business environment.

Before you is a serious analysis of 54 sectors of the Serbian economy, with 346 recommendations made by around 50 companies. This year, our scorecard system is back, while the overall analysis is structured around the areas that we see as priorities: taxes, labour, inspections and food safety, infrastructure and real estate, bankruptcy and Forex, with digitalization, health and e-commerce. I know that the experts have been anxiously anticipating our report and will highly appreciate it, so I invite you to browse through it, hoping it will motivate you to join us in making Serbia a better place to invest. Our members have given their best effort to advice on how to overcome the challenging times we are all facing, always with an eye on the benefits for all sides. Once again, I would like to thank them and the entire FIC office staff for their excellent work and express my highest gratitude to each and every one of them.

Although the pandemic has become the new reality, it is still setting the course for the rest of 2021 and 2022. The overall outlook depends on how effectively the economic policies deployed during times of high uncertainty can limit the damage. Our team acknowledges Serbia's determination to improve the business environment under tough times. Yet, there is much work ahead of us when it comes to Serbia's long-term recovery. Our joint mission should be to increase productivity and sustainable investments that stimulate economic growth.

These were the main topics of our intense conversations with the Government and other relevant stakeholders, including the European Union, international financial organisations,

the diplomatic corps and relevant associations. During 2021, we have been providing concrete proposals for regulatory improvements through eight working committees, while various working groups have been identifying issues impeding our business operations and initiating ways to resolve them. Among our latest accomplishments are the launch of the initiative for Digitalisation of Financial Services, a conference on Personal Data Protection with the Ministry of Justice and the Commissioner's Office, and active participation in several public discussions about set of energy sector draft laws, Company and Bankruptcy Law, the Law on Electronic Communications, Safety and Health at Work and many others.

What we see as a positive signal is that accelerated digitalisation can help in driving a constructive shift, which was the FIC's main priority in 2021. Some international predictions say that frontier technologies could grow to \$3.2 trillion by 2025, offering excellent opportunities for those ready to catch this technological wave. The world needs to think more about how to help advanced technology achieve its full potential. It fundamentally transforms the way we live and work, making a profound impact on businesses in all sectors through its effects on productivity, employment, skills and the environment.

To conclude, it is more than evident that, in 2022, the word "COVID" will still be in our vocabulary. The end of the pandemic may not be near, but this is no longer an unknown or scientifically dubious topic. So, we can't avoid COVID, but we must continue to focus on those activities that will accelerate further growth, while taking steps to support governments and the people as they continue to embrace new ways of living and working.

To that end, the FIC looks forward to continuing the positive trend by deploying the White Book Task Force as an institutional mechanism for continuous and successful dialogue between the Government and business. I want to assure you that the FIC won't stop looking for new opportunities to help and contribute, while being a strong ally, a unified voice and the driving force in making Serbia a great place to invest.

Enjoy reading and stay safe and healthy.

**Mike Michel**  
FIC President