

FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the 2024 edition of the White Book – our key, flagship project and the highlight of the year for all of us at FIC. Our Council is the driving force of the Serbian economy, with 122 member companies, more than €44 billion in investments, and over 115,000 direct employees.

We know that Serbia is a great place to invest and a regional leader, drawing in around €4.52 billion in foreign direct investment last year. However, recent events, especially in Europe, have disrupted supply chains and impacted the delicate investment ecosystem. While foreign investors continue to invest, they do so with caution. That is why we all need to work together to build a better environment – one with effective governance, more competitive businesses, and a higher standard of living for everyone. The FIC offers its knowledge and experience in navigating this process, and the White Book is a perfect platform to get the job done.

This year's edition features 451 recommendations. We highlighted that the most significant progress was made in energy and digitalization.

We are the long-term and reliable partner to the government and society at large, taking on multiple positive roles in Serbia: bringing in new investments and creating jobs; introducing modern technologies, facilitating innovation; promoting ethical business conduct, and involving local

SMEs in our value chains and integrating them into global markets. In 2024, we at FIC not only continued our activities but expanded them. We have established excellent cooperation with the National Bank of Serbia and also raised awareness of the importance of ESG, green and digital transformation, transfer pricing, the need for business integration, and developing regulatory frameworks for generative AI. In 2024, the FIC and EBRD organised the second conference on financial services with a focus on green and digital transformation, and we hosted "FIC Insight into the Telecommunications Sector", a successful event where we discussed the importance and impact of continuous investment in the mobile telecommunications sector on service quality for users.

One thing that remains constant is our strong emphasis on intensifying negotiations with the EU regarding membership status. To attract more investments, we need further economic integration with the EU market. More specifically, Western Balkan countries, including Serbia, should continue working on structural reforms and aligning their policies with the EU to boost competitiveness and secure a place in supply chains. We must always keep in mind that domestic companies also play a crucial role, and it is essential to push for both foreign and domestic investments to sustain the ecosystem. More private domestic investments are needed to close the gap.

I invite you to explore the White Book and enjoy the read. You can never have too much learning and dialogue.

Mike Michel
FIC President