

FIC OVERVIEW

The Foreign Investors Council (FIC) has been a reliable partner to the business community and the broader public, including government authorities, for more than 20 years in creating a favorable business and investment environment in Serbia. The FIC's story began in July 2002 when 14 companies joined forces, with the support of the OECD, aiming to improve the business climate, ethics, and competitiveness of the Serbian economy.

For a full 22 years, the FIC has been dedicated to enhancing the business and investment environment that enables the development of Serbia's economic potential, achieving tangible results in the process. We proudly emphasize that our member companies, through their collaboration with local enterprises as key suppliers, help Serbian businesses integrate into global supply chains and connect with European and global economic flows. This partnership provides Serbian companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, with insights into the latest technological and organizational solutions, enhancing their competitiveness.

In times of economic uncertainty, the role of our business organization becomes even more significant. Our members, as global companies, generously share their experiences and suggestions for overcoming challenges. The spirit of unity, the exchange of knowledge, and strengthening mutual trust are key factors that enable us to face challenges and emerge either unscathed or even stronger.

Long-term planning is a significant aspect of the FIC's work, as well as the business of our members. A clear commitment to the Serbian economy is a crucial prerequisite for achieving consistent and significant growth. One year after its founding, our members had invested a total of 150 million euros and employed 3,160 people. Today, the FIC has around 120 members who have collectively invested over EUR 45 billion in Serbia, directly employing around 116,000 Serbian citizens. The "White Book" before you is a clear indicator of the continuity of our work. Since 2003, our members have diligently analyzed business conditions in numerous sectors, relying on recommendations from the previous year, assessing the level of implementation of the FIC's recommendations, and simultaneously looking forward to align the Serbian economy with emerging trends. We pay special attention to our relationships with key stakeholders in improving the business environment in Serbia and proudly highlight that we are the only business association with an institutional framework for cooperation with the Government of Serbia through the Working

Group for the implementation of "White Book" recommendations. The European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development are permanent institutional members of the FIC and our Board of Directors, and we are committed to building relationships with other partners.

GREEN AND DIGITAL TRANSITION

The Foreign Investors Council is dedicated to finding the best solutions for Serbia regarding the green and digital transition that is already underway globally. We firmly believe that accelerating digital transformation and committing to environmental sustainability are prerequisites for Serbia's economy to reach its full potential.

We are proud of the results achieved through our digital transition initiatives. FIC members were the initiators of the digitization of promissory notes, the introduction of video identification and cloud-based signatures, and numerous other solutions that have already simplified business operations and improved working conditions. In cooperation with the National Bank of Serbia, we will continue our years-long work on digitalization solutions. Our main goal is to achieve "paperless work," accelerate digital transformation across society, and transform various business sectors. These processes have long been a focus of our efforts, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated them. In 2024, the FIC organized the second Financial Services Conference, where the main topics were digital solutions and financing green initiatives. We view such events as important opportunities for open discussions and charting future directions.

Environmental protection, social responsibility, and conscientious corporate governance (ESG) as well as green and digital transformation of business and society as a whole are deeply rooted topics in our work. In the EU and other economies from which our members originate, companies already have clear obligations regarding these issues. Their experience and expertise can be highly valuable in establishing these standards in Serbia and aligning with international ESG standards, and green and digital transition, but also finding practical solutions, business integration and regulatory frameworks related to the use of generative AI. We have also initiated discussions on regenerative agriculture and its innovative approach that helps restore and preserve natural resources and combat climate change while increasing agricultural productivity and ensuring sustaina-

ble food production for future generations. For companies within supply chains, this topic is important for adapting to new regulations, recommendations, and best practices in the EU.

COMMITTEES AS THE CORE OF OUR WORK

Committees form the core of our work, involving experts interested in the specific areas that each committee covers. The committees are the heart of the Council's operations, as they facilitate the exchange of knowledge and viewpoints, conduct policy and regulation analyses, and develop proposals to improve regulations, thereby enhancing the business and investment climate. This is also a dynamic system that aligns with the circumstances, needs, and priorities of our members. The Foreign Investors Council has nine working committees: the Committee on Combatting Illicit Trade and Food, the Financial Services Committee, the Human Resources Committee, the Infrastructure and Construction Committee, the Legal Committee, the Pharmaceutical Industry Committee, the Tax Committee, the Telecommunications and Digital Economy Committee, and the Tourism and Hospitality Committee.

CORE PRINCIPLES – GUARANTEE OF STABILITY AND SUCCESS

Since its founding in 2002, the Foreign Investors Council has evolved, adapted to circumstances, and anticipated upcoming changes. However, our core principles have remained unchanged, withstanding the test of time and maintaining the stability and continuity of our work. Our fundamental principles are independence, expertise, best practices, collaboration, and European integration.

INDEPENDENCE

The Foreign Investors Council represents the voice of the business community, advocating for the general interests of businesses. To fulfill this mission, independence and self-sustainability are essential, forming the foundation of our organization. A two-tier decision-making process ensures equal participation among members. The initial decisions are made within the working committees, with all interested members participating equally, aiming for consensus rather than simple majority voting. In the second step, the Council's Board of Directors reviews and decides on the proposed decisions from the working committees.

EXPERTISE

The FIC's greatest asset is the knowledge and expertise that our members generously share to improve the business climate in Serbia, ultimately leading to the economic prosperity of society. The "White Book" before you is the result of immense effort, professional knowledge, practical experience, and dedication from our members. Written by the members themselves, the "White Book" is a unique project and our main platform for dialogue on improving regulations and the business climate. It has also become a significant information source for the European Commission in preparing its annual Report on Serbia's progress toward EU membership. We have developed a unique, objective methodology for measuring progress in implementing the "White Book" recommendations, known as the "White Book Index," which ranks progress across all focus areas based on the fulfillment of previous recommendations. The criteria also include the time elapsed from the initial recommendation to its adoption, highlighting the pace of improvements in the business climate, which can significantly impact investment decisions.

BEST PRACTICES

Our members do not only bring investments and new jobs to Serbia but also high ethical standards, business ethics, sustainability concepts, and the application of new technologies. The FIC has continued its dedicated work in 2024, focusing on enhancing digitalization, environmental protection principles, social responsibility, and conscientious corporate governance. We proudly state that our members are good employers, committed to the well-being of their employees and the local community through various socially responsible projects. Regarding our commitment to the green agenda and waste management, our members are carbon-neutral, in line with the policies of their parent companies, mostly based in the EU.

COLLABORATION

Dialogue with all stakeholders interested in Serbia's economy is the backbone of our work to improve the business environment. Since its founding, the FIC has been open to joint initiatives and projects with the state, the EU, diplomatic circles, international financial institutions, development agencies, the academic community, and other business associations. We proudly emphasize our institutional

framework for collaboration with the Government of Serbia, known as the Working Group for Enhancing and Implementing “White Book” Recommendations, aimed at facilitating the effective and successful implementation of these recommendations.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The Foreign Investors Council believes that intensifying the negotiations for Serbia’s EU membership and harmonizing domestic regulations with European standards are key priorities. Although Serbia, as a candidate for EU membership, is not institutionally integrated into the EU, its economy is closely connected with the EU’s economy. We believe there is no doubt that Serbia should continue moving towards the EU. We are aware that European integration is a long and challenging process and that moments of crisis and challenges may test the country’s resolve to stay on this path. However, we strongly believe that this is the only path that will bring greater prosperity to Serbia in economic and social terms, opening new opportunities. The FIC can signif-

icantly contribute to Serbia’s European integration efforts and actively advocates for harmonizing Serbian legislation with EU regulations. Around 75% of our members are from the EU, while most others operate in the European market. The strong European context of our activities is also evident in our partnership with the European Commission, the European Investment Bank (EIB), and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

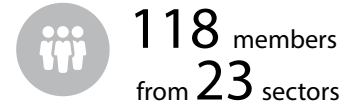
EXECUTIVE OFFICE

The backbone of all our activities is the FIC’s Executive Office. We are grateful to our small and efficient team that supports our initiatives, projects, and public appearances, and stands behind our events and successes. The Executive Office is responsible for implementing the FIC’s decisions, enhancing collaboration among members, and communicating with the FIC’s partners and collaborators. Thanks to the team’s efficiency, knowledge, and dedication, the office significantly contributes to our complex but proven successful mechanism.

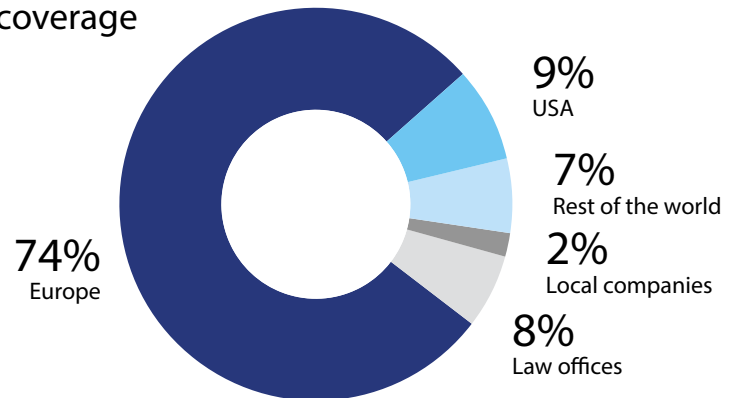
Key characteristics and values of FIC

Independence	Regulatory expertise	Consistency
Best Practices	EU promotion	Cooperation

Key FIC figures



Geo coverage



White Book 2024 in numbers

