Albania Investment Council

Improving Transparency and Investment Climate

ACTIVITY REPORT 2024

The Investment Council (IC) facilitates the development of mutual trust between the business community and government in Albania and contributes to an incremental institutionalisation of effective policy dialogue. It contributes to the national reform and economic transition process by enhancing institutions, laws, and policies that promote market functioning and efficiency.

IC is chaired by the minister responsible for the economy and composed of representatives from the government, the private sector, and development partners.

IC is supported by the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation (MEKI), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

IC Albania Investment Council

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ACTIVITY REPORT 2024

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The unique and key aspect that stands out about the Investment Council is the open and direct way of communication. This council is a platform where ideas and concerns are shared transparently, creating an honest and sincere space for dialogue. This approach contributes to increasing transparency, improving the business climate, and fostering investments in Albania. For this reason, I am very proud of this council and always value the open discussions that take place here.

Mr Blendi Gonxhja
Chair of Albania Investment Council
Minister of Economy, Culture and Innovation
12 November 2024

SCOPE OF WORK DURING 2024

In line with IC's main objective of building trust among main stakeholders and institutionalising the policy dialogue on the investment climate in the country, the work of the Secretariat was based on the following pillars:

ALIGNING THE IC AGENDA TO LOCAL BUSINESS CONCERNS AND INVESTMENT CLIMATE PRIORITIES
Achieved through conducting annual surveys, face-to-face consultations, desk research using national and international reports, providing semi-annual updates on the country's economic outlooks, and holding focus group meetings to gather insights. Additionally, the Secretariat's active participation in various initiatives, events, and platforms related to Albania's EU accession process has strengthened its ability to identify reform priorities and highlight the most pressing investment-related challenges for meaningful discussion within the IC.

COORDINATING INCLUSIVE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATION IN THE IC
The number of business association representatives with a two-year mandate was increased from four to eight through a structured rotation process designed to enhance diversity and ensure broader representation of business interests.

ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR STRUCTURED DIALOGUE
By preparing an inclusive and well-aligned agenda for IC meetings through a careful process of voting and consultation, organising plenary sessions with broad and relevant representation, and ensuring timely distribution of technical materials and follow-up minutes, the Secretariat enabled the conditions necessary for a focused and constructive dialogue.

ADVOCATING FOR PRIORITY POLICY ACTIONS
The Secretariat actively contributed to partner events and high-level panels, promoting key IC recommendations on the rule of law, innovation, and EU integration, reinforcing the importance of evidence-based reforms that aligned with business needs and national priorities.

SYSTEMIC MONITORING OF IC RECOMMENDATIONS PROGRESS
Regularly following up with responsible institutions to track the implementation of recommendations, maintaining an up-to-date results database, and publishing annual progress reports to ensure transparency and accountability.

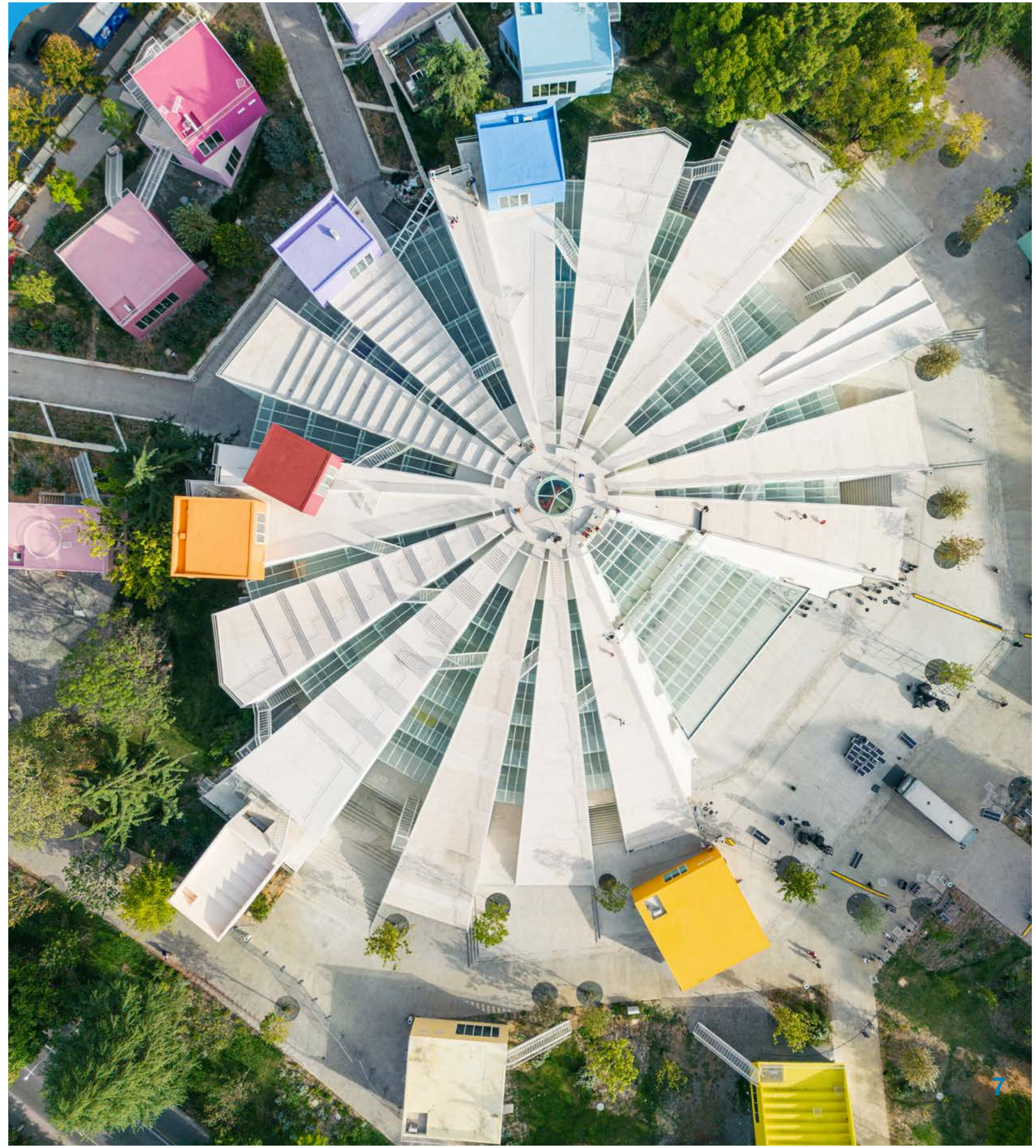
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2024 Annual Activity Report of the Investment Council (IC) in Albania. This report outlines the Council's initiatives, key achievements, and continued commitment to fostering evidence-based dialogue aimed at enhancing private sector competitiveness, including compliance with the EU acquis integration agenda.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2024, the Investment Council held three plenary meetings and seven technical roundtables, engaging 143 businesses and formulating 24 new recommendations.
- Since its establishment in 2015, the Council has endorsed 350 recommendations, of which approximately 47% have been significantly implemented, 17% are in progress, and 36% remain unaddressed, mainly related to legal security on property, investment potential, and alternative energy.
- In line with the IC's working principles, a rotation of non-permanent business association members with a two-year mandate was carried out, based on a list of proposals submitted by the Secretariat and approved by the Chair of the Council.
- Furthermore, a new structure of the Investment Council was introduced. In accordance with Council of Ministers Decision No. 754, dated 20 December 2023, the business membership of the IC was expanded by four members, bringing the total to 13 representatives of business associations.
- Members of the Investment Council voted to select the priorities for the 2024 agenda, focusing on enhancing the competitiveness and EU market access of Albanian non-food products, as well as addressing access to financing challenges for MSMEs.
- Building on the momentum of the EU–Albania integration process, a key feature of the IC's work in 2024 was aligning its agenda with private sector efforts to meet EU market standards and unlock new opportunities in the single market.
- Following the restructuring of government ministries, the Investment Council welcomed a new Chair, Mr Blendi Gonxhja, Minister of the newly established Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation, who led the Council throughout the year.
- The IC Secretariat conducted 10 technical analyses, including 5 targeted surveys that gathered feedback from 984 companies, providing data-driven insights to inform IC recommendations.
- The Secretariat also actively contributed to 16 high-level national and international events, participating as a panellist in several forums to better advocate for the IC's findings and recommendations. These engagements enhanced the IC's visibility, reinforced its credibility as a trusted partner in policy dialogue, and served as a valuable advocacy tool for advancing the implementation of the Council's recommendations.

Feedback from the IC Stakeholders Assessment Report 2024 demonstrates strong support for the Council's ongoing role, with 96% of members and partners recognising the IC as an essential platform for dialogue, advocacy, and inclusive policymaking. The Council's overall performance in 2024 reaffirms its important role in fostering conditions that promote inclusive, evidence-based policymaking, amplify the voice of the private sector, and support national efforts toward sustainable economic development.



TIMELINE OF MAIN ACTIVITIES during 2024

01 January

Information exchange with the National Economic Council (NEC) Secretariat on the findings in the façon sector and related IC recommendations

02 February

Jury Member at "Tung Ideas" competition organised by Epoka University

Contribution to Regional Workshop "Assessment & Guide on Readiness for Online Courts"

03 March

IC Meeting XXXIII "Private Sector Challenges: Informality, Productivity and Innovation"

Technical Note "Private Sector Challenges: Informality, Productivity and Innovation"

04 April

Contribution to the FEUT Labour Fair

Business Survey Findings: "Private Sector Challenges: Informality, Productivity and Innovation"

Information exchange with the NEC Secretariat on private sector concerns and IC recommendations regarding access to finance, informality, and inspections

Publication "Recommendations Monitoring Report 2023"

Publication "Summary of Albania's Outlook Indicators 2023"

05 May

Contribution to the ADBC Bright Mind Albanian Worldwide Awards 2024

Jury Member at "Get in the Ring Albania 2024" Start-Up Competition

06 June

Contribution to the Conference hosted by AmCham and Monitor Magazine "Economic Restructuring for a New Perspective"

Focus Group Meetings with businesses "Enhancing Market Access of Albanian Non-Food Products with European Standards" co-hosted with HBAA, CCI TR, Builders' Association, CCI DR

Publication "Activity Report 2023"

07 July

Business Survey Findings: "Enhancing Market Access of Albanian Non-Food Products with European Standards"

Publication "Progress on IC Recommendations: January-June 2024"

08 August

Publication "Summary of Albania's Outlook Indicators, January - June 2024"

09 September

IC Meeting XXXIV "Enhancing Market Access of Albanian Non-Food Products with European Standards"

Provision of official comments on the Mid-term Revenues Strategy 2024-2027

Contribution to Tirana Connectivity Forum 2024

Contribution to Helvetas Regional Webinar: Fostering interactions between the private sector and civil society, facilitating space for change

10 October

Technical Note "Enhancing Competitiveness and Market Access of Albanian Products with European Standards"

Business Survey Findings: "Enhancing Competitiveness and Market Access of Albanian Non-Food Products with European Standards"

Contribution to the 5th Summit of Albanian Diaspora Women, themed "Leading the Way to the European Union"

Focus Group "On the Improvement of Financing Instruments"

Provision of input to the Medium-Term Revenue Strategy 2024–2027 and its Action Plan

Open Consultation of the Detailed Plan of Durana Tech Park in collaboration with AIC

11 November

IC Meeting XXXV "On the Improvement of Financing Instruments"

Contribution to CEI/SEECP Workshop "Sustainable Economic Growth"

Contribution to Business Environment in Albania Survey 2024

Contribution to the workshop "Towards an Education for Circular Economy" hosted by Epoka University

Contribution to the workshop "Innovative Financing Solutions for Startups and MSMEs" hosted by WB/IFC

Publication of the Technical Note "Improving Access to Finance for MSMEs"

MSME Financing: Survey Insights from Banks, Microfinance, and Businesses

12 December

Contribution to Business Forum 2024 "Raise the Challenge" hosted by AIC

Contribution to the Closing Ceremony of the Week of Integrity hosted by the Minister of State for Public Administration and Anti-Corruption

Contribution to CDI Event "Increasing Albanian Civic Engagement Footprint in the Growth Plan"

Publication "Assessment from Investment Council's Members and Associates 2024"

INVESTMENT CLIMATE

Albania's economy grew by 3.96% in 2024, driven by strong performance in the tourism and construction sectors. Looking ahead, the World Bank forecasts average annual growth of 3.1% for 2025–2027, supported by strong domestic demand, increasing consumption, and sustained infrastructure investment.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rose by 5.6% year-over-year, reaching EUR 1.6 billion in 2024, with FDI stock accounting for 62.1% of GDP. Key investor countries included Turkey, Italy, and the Netherlands, with real estate remaining the dominant sector. Inflation declined to 2.2%, remaining below the central bank's 3% target since February 2024.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rose by 5.6% year-over-year, reaching EUR 1.6 billion in 2024

On the political front, Albania made substantial progress in its EU accession process, with formal negotiations launched on two key clusters in October and December 2024. Domestically, the establishment of an Anti-Corruption Commission marked a step toward governance reform, although limited involvement from the opposition reflected the persistence of political divisions. These developments align with the country's goal of EU membership by 2030.

At the institutional level, leadership changes and new initiatives were introduced to improve economic governance and stakeholder dialogue. Significant legislative developments included a new inspection law, a draft proposal for business compulsory membership in the National Economic Chamber, and a comprehensive data protection law aligned with EU standards. The government also approved a reform-oriented National Agenda and the 2025 state budget, although political polarisation limited broader parliamentary debate.

PLENARY MEETINGS

1. Private Sector Challenges – Informality, Productivity, and Innovation

What prevents companies from increasing investment, improving productivity, and competing in regional and global markets?

Why do Albanian companies struggle to allocate funds for R&D?

What are the main barriers to integrating Albanian enterprises into international value chains?

The discussion on informality, productivity, and innovation is particularly timely as Albania advances toward EU integration and seeks stronger participation in regional and global markets. The country's historic reliance on low-cost labour is increasingly unsustainable amid rising emigration and a widening skills gap. Informality continues to distort fair competition and reduce tax revenues, while low productivity and limited research and development (R&D) investment hinder competitiveness and innovation. Tackling these challenges is critical to driving sustainable growth, attracting foreign investment, and building a resilient, future-ready private sector.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Modernisation of Fiscal Administration:** This includes the development of a unified tax procedure law, a national strategy on revenue collection, and better coordination between central and local fiscal rules. The Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the General Directorate of Taxation, should simplify and standardise tax procedures to foster a predictable and business-friendly fiscal environment.
- **Fiscal Policy for Innovation and Productivity:** Fiscal incentives to support business innovation, such as accelerated depreciation and recognition of R&D expenses, as well as the integration of productivity objectives into fiscal planning. Tailored support to priority sectors, such as tourism, energy, and agriculture, to boost innovation and competitiveness. The Ministry of Economy, Culture, and Innovation should lead initiatives that encourage investment in technology, research, and development.
- **Sector-Specific Innovation Support Measures:** Inter-ministerial working groups (including the Ministries of Agriculture, Tourism, and Energy) to conduct in-depth analyses of strategic sectors. These efforts should identify concrete measures to enhance productivity and competitiveness through targeted innovation policies.
- **Raise Awareness of Public–Private Partnerships for Innovation:** National awareness campaigns to promote collaboration between the public and private sectors in developing R&D and innovation centres.

> *Greater coordination is needed for innovation and artificial intelligence initiatives, as these areas span multiple ministries and require higher-level collaboration. Establishing platforms such as councils or working groups can enhance coordination efforts and ensure Albania effectively harnesses and utilises talent for the country's benefit.*

Mr Grant Van Cleve
President of AmCham Albania, 26 March 2024

Read more: Technical Note "Private Sector Challenges: Informality, Productivity, and Innovation"

PLENARY MEETINGS

2. Enhancing Competitiveness and Market Access of Albanian Products to European Standards

Are Albanian businesses ready to compete in the EU market?

What is the role of institutional support in helping businesses align with EU standards?

How can businesses overcome the high costs of implementing and maintaining standards?

Improving competitiveness and market access for non-food products that meet European standards is a critical priority as Albania progresses toward EU integration. Many businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), struggle with outdated regulations, limited institutional support, and low awareness of compliance obligations. High compliance costs, lack of expertise, and weak infrastructure further constrain their ability to meet EU requirements. While some companies are investing in quality upgrades to access the European Union (EU) market, others remain focused on local or regional markets due to financial constraints. Ongoing efforts to harmonise legislation, strengthen market surveillance, and create tools such as single information portals are steps in the right direction. However, enforcement gaps, limited dialogue, and weak institutional coordination continue to hinder progress, making this a key area in need of reform.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Development of a National Producers Database & Export Potential Mapping.** The Ministry of Economy, Culture, and Innovation (MEKI) may consider developing a comprehensive database of domestic producers by product type and conduct sectoral analyses to identify and support those with high export potential.
- **Regulatory Alignment & Law Enforcement:** MEKI and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy (MIE) are encouraged to accelerate the transposition of EU regulations, especially in the construction sector, and enhance inspection systems by enhancing inspector competence, integrity, and transparency. Whistleblowing mechanisms could also be introduced to deter corruption.
- **Capacity Building for Chambers of Commerce:** Chambers and business associations could strengthen their technical capabilities to provide timely, sector-specific support and information to their members, particularly in export-oriented industries.

> *Albania should prioritise sectors where it has a competitive edge—such as agriculture, construction, and energy—to boost exports. Building a detailed database of export-ready products and securing international certifications like Global GAP are key to accessing global markets and improving quality. Success stories, like a farmer who overcame near-bankruptcy through certification, highlight the impact. By investing in education, specialised skills, and high-tech industries, Albania can follow the example of countries like Poland, Bulgaria, and Romania to grow its economy and global competitiveness.*

Mr Ardian Lekaj
Chair of the Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber , 03 September 2024

Read more: Technical Note "To Increase Competitiveness and Market Access of Albanian Non-Food Products with European Standards (Business Perceptions)"

PLENARY MEETINGS

3. Improving Access to Financing Instruments

What are the key barriers that micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Albania face when seeking financing, and how do these affect their growth and operations?

What steps can be taken to reduce bureaucratic obstacles and simplify the loan application process for businesses?

How can credit guarantee schemes be strengthened to increase their impact, particularly in supporting underserved groups such as women entrepreneurs?

Access to finance remains a significant obstacle for Albanian MSMEs. Despite moderate progress in aligning financial regulations with EU standards and expanding digital banking, MSMEs still face high collateral requirements, limited credit histories, complex loan procedures, and high interest rates. While digitalisation and fintech are emerging, tools like crowdfunding and open banking remain underdeveloped due to regulatory gaps. The large informal economy, around 30% of GDP, further limits access to formal financing. International financial institutions and microfinance providers offer partial guarantees and accessible credit, but uptake is low due to limited awareness and bureaucratic hurdles. Similarly, sovereign guarantee schemes remain underused due to inefficiencies. Government efforts to modernise payment systems and improve financial inclusion are ongoing, yet gaps in financial education, tailored financial products, and advisory services persist. Addressing these requires targeted reforms, greater public-private coordination, and expanded digital finance solutions to support a more inclusive financial environment.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Unified MSME Database and Institutional Coordination:** The Bank of Albania (BoA), INSTAT, and the Government may consider establishing a centralised database on MSME lending, including sector-specific, gender-disaggregated, and loan-purpose data to support targeted policymaking and financial product design.
- **Assessment of Sovereign Guarantee Schemes:** The Ministry of Finance, MEKI, and BoA are encouraged to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of current guarantee schemes, identifying bottlenecks and establishing performance and impact indicators.
- **Simplification of Lending Processes:** Government institutions, such as the State Cadastre Agency (ASHK), the National Agency of Information Society (NAIS), and the BoA could work toward improving financial institutions' data access via e-Albania, streamline collateral registration, and reduce administrative hurdles to facilitate lending.
- **Accelerated Digitalisation in Banking:** Banking sector is advised to fast-track the adoption of open banking principles and the deployment of digital tools to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and competitiveness of financial services.

> *Women entrepreneurs face major obstacles in accessing financing, including issues with collateral and property rights, which complicate loan applications. Although laws exist, they're often not enforced, creating barriers. Bureaucracy and limited financial literacy add to the problem, with many women lacking knowledge of loan procedures. Targeted financial education and sustained, tailored banking products, not just seasonal marketing, are needed. Collaboration with the Banking Association is essential. Additionally, long delays by the Cadastre Agency in verifying collateral further hinder access to credit. Addressing these issues is vital for a more inclusive financial system.*
>
> **Ms. Sabi Osmani**
> Executive Director of the Women's Economic Chamber, 12 November 2024

Read more: Technical Note "Access to Finance: On Improvement of Financing Instruments"

TECHNICAL CONSULTATIONS

In 2024, the Secretariat continued to serve as a key platform for structured public-private dialogue by organising seven technical consultations, including focus groups and expert sessions. These gatherings brought together technical representatives from government institutions, the private sector, and development partners to inform and validate IC recommendations.

» A dedicated focus group on **Informality, Productivity, and Innovation** brought together sector experts to examine key challenges and assess relevant draft policy recommendations. This consultation ensured that proposed measures reflected real market conditions and were relevant before submission to the IC.

» Three sector-specific focus groups were held on the topic of **Improving Access and Competitiveness for Albanian Products in the EU Market**, organised in collaboration with IC members and key stakeholders, including the Hellenic Business Association of Albania (HBBA), the Tirana Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Builders' Association (SHNSH). Discussions helped refine policy proposals by identifying sector-specific priorities and addressing critical barriers to market access and competitiveness.

» The Secretariat held two consultations on **Access to Finance**, in collaboration with the Women's Economic Chamber (WECA), the Association of Banks, and the Bank of Albania. The discussions were guided by the results of a dedicated MSME survey conducted by the Secretariat, focusing on simplifying procedures, reducing administrative burdens, and promoting alternative financing tools.

» An open consultation on the **Durana Tech Park Development Plan** was organised in cooperation with the Albanian Investment Corporation. More than 40 stakeholders, including international technology firms, local businesses, and startups, participated in this session to explore the park's potential in creating a collaborative innovation ecosystem and supporting Albania's digital transformation.

FULFILLED RECOMMENDATIONS DURING 2024

Since 2015, the IC has approved 350 recommendations to improve Albania's investment climate. The Secretariat continues to promote transparency through regular updates and accountability efforts.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS
(2015-2024)

47%	17%	36%
FULFILLED	IN PROGRESS	PENDING IMPLEMENTATION

KEY IMPACT AREAS IN 2024

Tourism

- A new law (Law No. 30/2024) was passed in April 2024 to formalise the sector and improve the quality of accommodations.
- New categories and classification requirements for tourist structures were introduced, requiring certification from the Ministry.
- A Committee for Statistical Data in Tourism was created to coordinate data reporting and improve policy design through better data analysis.

Agriculture

- The inventory and classification of agricultural land have continued, with land use data collected and digital land registers established in several municipalities. A WEB-GIS system was launched and is now accessible through the e-Albania portal.
- The 2024 National Support Scheme prioritised support for farmer groups and agricultural cooperatives. A sovereign guarantee scheme is being developed to support lending in the agri-food sector.
- The farm register has been updated and integrated with the Agricultural and Rural Development Agency (ARDA)'s systems and connected to national databases to streamline direct payment applications and enhance service delivery.
- A new department for statistics and analysis was established within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD). Formal cooperation with institutions such as INSTAT has been established to support evidence-based policymaking and sector planning.

Agro-Processing

- Albania reached agreements with Western Balkan countries for mutual recognition of phytosanitary certificates and has aligned its practices with global standards under the IPPC model.
- The CEFTA TRACES NT platform is now used for electronic phytosanitary certificate issuance. ISUV received funding to enhance laboratory capacity and is advancing pesticide residue accreditation.
- MARD facilitated the participation of Albanian exporters in international fairs, boosting the visibility and market reach of fruits, vegetables, wine, and medicinal plants.

All Sectors (Double Taxation & Electronic Procedures)

- Two directives were adopted in 2024 to modernize documentation for tax agreements, enabling electronic signature recognition and strengthening anti-evasion efforts. These reforms ease procedures for taxpayers and improve fiscal transparency.

Digital Banking & Open Banking

- The licensing of the first Open Banking institution (EasyPay) and ongoing efforts to digitise banking services aim to enhance market competition and improve access to finance, particularly for underserved groups.

Inspection Reform & Fiscal Strategy

- Law No. 99/2024 strengthened inspection processes, introduced unified procedures, and aligned them with EU standards. Additionally, the Medium-Term Revenue Strategy 2024–2027 was approved to improve economic governance and reduce informality.

National Reform Agenda 2025–2027

- A new EU-supported reform plan was adopted to boost convergence and competitiveness. It includes measures on human capital, education, and smart specialization, supporting 125,000+ enterprises.

Digital Payments for Public Services

- A memorandum was signed to enable online public payments via bank platforms and the e-Albania portal.

Employment Mediation & Cybersecurity

- The AKPA platform (puna.gov.al) has been updated with job offers, and meetings with institutions were held to boost participation. Simultaneously, NAIS has implemented cybersecurity and continuity plans to safeguard digital services and data.

Despite these advances, 36% of recommendations remain unimplemented, particularly in areas like legal security on property, energy diversification, and attracting investment. Accelerating progress will require stronger collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Read more: IC Recommendations Monitoring Report 2024

Strengthening Reform Implementation

The **implementation of IC recommendations** has been reinforced through targeted follow-up initiatives supported by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and financed by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

One such initiative is the technical assistance project supporting the Albanian Competition Authority (ACA), which began in September 2023 and continued throughout 2024. The project aims to enhance ACA's enforcement capacity, improve business compliance with competition rules in priority sectors, and support Albania's EU accession negotiations under Chapter 8. Progress was made under two main components: (1) aligning Albanian competition legislation with EU standards, including drafting amendments to the Competition Law and supporting the transposition of seven key EU legal texts; and (2) strengthening enforcement and fostering a competition culture, in collaboration with UNCTAD, which conducted a training needs assessment and delivered a two-day course for 15 judges and magistrates at the School of Magistrates. Additional training is scheduled for early 2025.

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

IC Albania Investment Council
Improving Transparency and Investment Climate

Communication and Visibility

IC Website

- +61,000 users in 2024

Social Media

- Active on Facebook, LinkedIn, X
- 21% increase in followers (4,857 in 2024 vs 4,013 in 2023)

Quarterly e-Newsletters

Distributed electronically to all IC stakeholders and shared on social media.

- January-March 2024
- April-June 2024
- July-September 2024
- October-December 2024

Article in the print media

- Interview with Ms Diana Leka, Head of Secretariat: "On the Challenges of Albania's Economic Competitiveness" – *Monitor Magazine*, 8 March 2024 (in Albanian)

Appearance on National TV Media

- **TV Klan**

Survey with businesses: Informality remains a challenge – 17 April 2024 (Albanian)

Albanian businesses show limited focus on innovation – 8 May 2024 (Albanian)

Competitiveness and access to finance in the focus of Investment Council – 5 September 2024 (Albanian)

- **Report TV**

Investment Council survey: Non-declaration of real wage increases – 16 April 2024 (Albanian)

Investment Council survey: Business sector needs over 5,700 employees; in-demand professions highlighted – 19 April 2024 (Albanian)

- **ABC News**

Banks increase lending as businesses takes loans to expand operations – 24 December 2024 (Albanian)

E-mail Mass Distribution (website news)

- 1,100 subscribers
- Distribution in English and Albanian
- Average open rate: 22%

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In 2024, the IC saw increased contribution and engagement from the private sector and new institutions.

143
business representatives took part in IC activities, including plenary and technical meetings

3
IC plenary meetings were chaired by the Minister of Economy, Culture, and Innovation, with an **88% member participation rate**

5
surveys conducted with 984 companies

7
technical focus group meetings with the participation of **73 business representatives and independent experts**

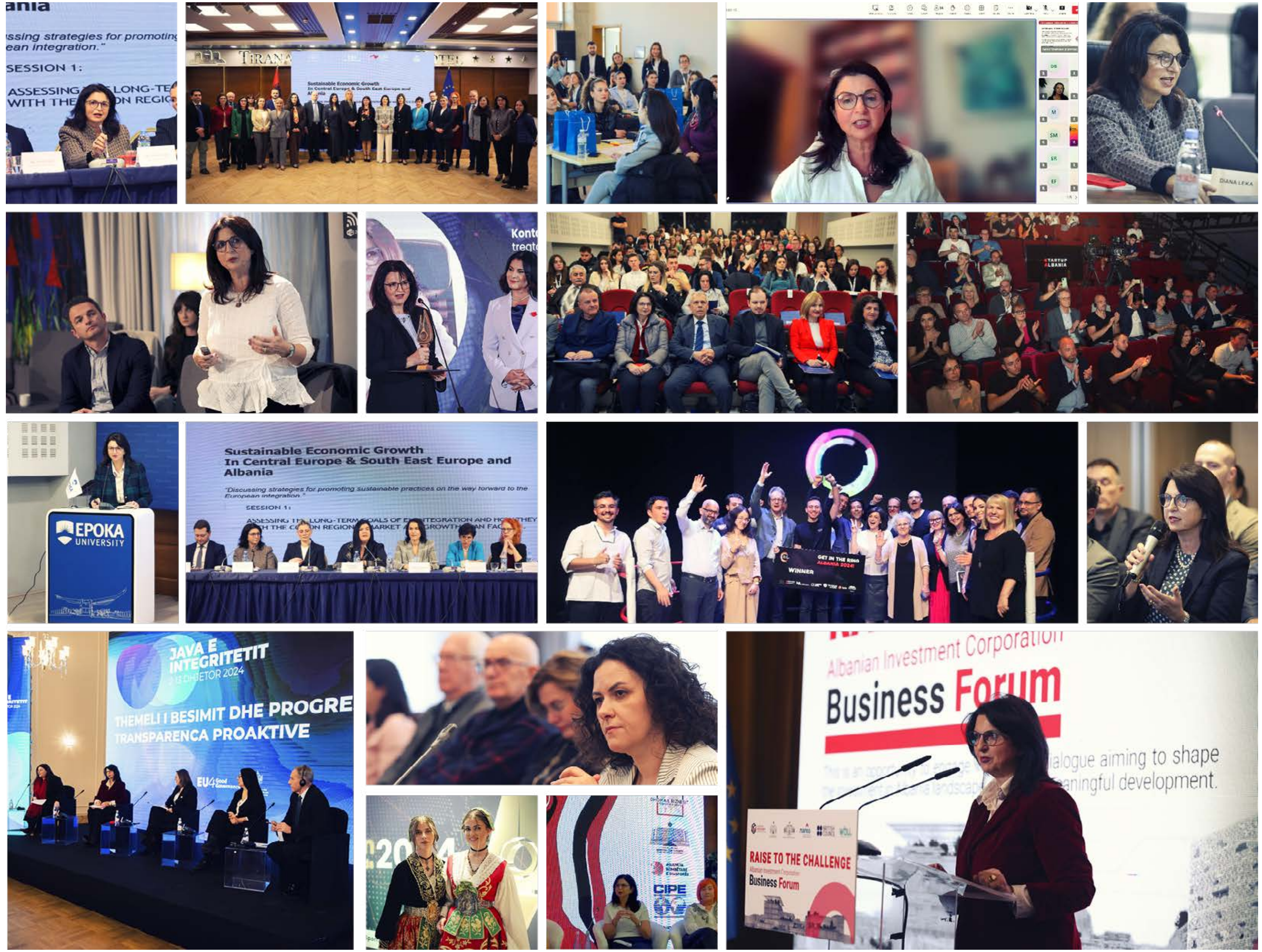
Gender balance in IC activities:

57% **women** | **43%** **men**

122
women attended meetings of the Council and Focus/ Working groups

Business associations and chambers within the IC represent the interests of **2,113 companies** (based on updated membership data).

New collaborations included a workshop with the Albanian Investment Corporation (AIC) and supporting efforts to raise awareness of IC recommendations at high-level events.



ADVOCATING AND AWARENESS RAISING

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

16	3	12	3	3
Contributions to partner events and conferences	Jury member in startup competitions	Presentations or panel discussions delivered by Secretariat staff	Collaborative initiatives with academic institutions	Regional or international webinars/ workshops participated in by Secretariat experts

Cooperation between IC and Academia – "Tung Ideas" Competition at Epoka University

23 February 2024

As part of the ongoing collaboration between the IC and Epoka University, established in 2017, the Head of the IC Secretariat participated as a jury member in the "Tung Ideas" startup competition. Designed as a workshop and inspired by best practices from leading international institutions, the competition aimed to equip students with entrepreneurial and problem-solving skills through Design Thinking methodologies. Over the years, this partnership has included student involvement in business surveys on various investment climate issues, the Secretariat's participation in university symposiums, and support for outstanding students in preparing and publishing scholarly works. These academic contributions are based on in-depth and comparative (2015-2024) analyses of the Secretariat's survey findings on business-related topics.

Assessment and Guide on Readiness for Online Courts

29 February 2024

The Secretariat's Legal and Regulatory Expert participated as a panellist in a regional webinar titled "Assessment of the Readiness of Online Courts," held under the EBRD Regional Framework Project. The event brought together stakeholders from 17 EBRD economies to discuss the current state of online courts and identify practical steps for their implementation. In his intervention, the expert highlighted the need for dedicated initiatives to support the digital transformation of Albania's judicial system. He emphasised that such reforms are crucial for enhancing access to justice, reducing legal costs, and improving efficiency, particularly for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

Cooperation with Academia: Advocating IC Recommendations on Human Capital and Skills Quality

23 April 2024

As part of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Faculty of Economy at the University of Tirana (FEUT), the Head of the IC Secretariat participated in a panel discussion during the FEUT Labour Fair. Since 2015, the Investment Council has actively promoted improvements in local skills and stronger collaboration between academia and the private sector. Recognising skills gaps as a major barrier to investment, the IC has consistently advocated for aligning educational curricula with market demands and supporting innovative training initiatives. In 2024, this focus remains central to the IC's efforts to strengthen Albania's competitiveness through human capital development.

Bright Mind Albanian Worldwide Awards 2024

11 May 2024

The Head of the Secretariat participated in the prestigious Bright Mind 2024 Gala, organised by the Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber (ADBC), a member of the Investment Council. She presented an award to the Association of Albanian Accountants in Italy (ADCAI) for their exceptional contributions. She encouraged their continued engagement through ADBC to share insights and support improvements in Albania's business climate.

Get in the Ring Albania 2024

28 May 2024

The Head of the Secretariat served as a jury member at Get in the Ring Albania 2024, a startup competition that unites young entrepreneurs with stakeholders from the public, private, and donor sectors. Her participation reaffirmed the Investment Council's ongoing commitment, dating back to 2016, to promoting innovation and entrepreneurship by supporting and guiding emerging business leaders within Albania's startup ecosystem.

Contribution to AmCham & Monitor Magazine Conference: "Economic Restructuring for a New Perspective"

24 June 2024

The head of the IC Secretariat joined the panel to discuss the challenges of informality and ways to strengthen Albania's economic climate. Drawing on the IC's analyses, she emphasised the importance of clarifying the national vision to understand informality better, enhancing the use of official data and comprehensive policy analysis, and aligning with major national reforms. She also stressed the need for sustainable and depoliticised policies to formalise informal access, broaden the taxpayer base, and support continuous education in collaboration with business groups.

The Secretariat Contributes to Tirana Connectivity Forum 2024

10 September 2024

At the Tirana Connectivity Forum 2024, during the panel "Increasing Private Sector Footprint in EU-Supported Connectivity Initiatives," the Head of the Secretariat shared insights from the IC's work on SME internationalisation and alignment with EU standards. She highlighted progress in digitisation and market compliance, while underscoring persistent challenges such as cybersecurity, digital infrastructure, and level of absorption of funding. She also noted improvements in SEPA, green lanes, and roaming infrastructure, while stressed the need for human-centred development to align green and digital investments with Albania's path toward the EU Single Market.

Contribution to Helvetas Regional Webinar: Fostering Private Sector–Civil Society Dialogue for Change

19 September 2024

At the Western Balkans regional advocacy webinar, organised by Helvetas in cooperation with Reconomy and the European Training Foundation (ETF), the Head of the Secretariat presented the IC's model and its shared values approach, which promotes dialogue among public institutions, the private sector, and development partners. It has enabled stakeholders to effectively advocate for their interests while establishing a platform that ensures a level playing field in Albania.

Contribution to the 5th Summit of Albanian Women of the Diaspora, "Leading the Way to the European Union"

11 October 2024

The Head of the IC Secretariat took part in the panel "Guiding Businesses Towards Integration into the European Market," sharing the Council's experience since 2015. She emphasised the importance of data-driven dialogue to increase transparency and improve the investment climate. She also addressed the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in internationalising their businesses and meeting EU standards. Despite these obstacles, women exhibit greater optimism than men, highlighting the need to strengthen digital skills, data security, cost management, and transparency. She called for the integration of gender indicators in upcoming sovereign guarantee packages and encouraged entrepreneurs to engage more actively in business associations to capitalise on EU integration opportunities.

Contribution to the Global Entrepreneurship Week

18-21 November 2024

During Global Entrepreneurship Week, the IC Secretariat actively contributed to four key events. At a regional workshop organised by MEKI, CEI, and SEECP, the Secretariat highlighted key findings on legal property security, cadastre challenges, investment potential, and the need to align legal frameworks with foreign investment standards.
At a forum on the Circular Economy hosted by Epoka University, building upon concrete business cases and concerns, the Secretariat emphasised the role of education and the private sector in promoting green, smart, and digital solutions that align with EU reforms.
Meanwhile, in a panel organised by the World Bank and IFC, it shared insights derived from the business surveys and analyses focused on access to financing, financial market competition, and product innovation, while building MSME capacity for access to finance.

Contribution to other events

December 2024

At a high-level business forum hosted by the Albanian Investment Corporation, the IC Secretariat emphasised the importance of inclusive dialogue and accelerated reform, particularly in cadastre and state property registration, as critical drivers of investor confidence. The Secretariat also emphasised the alignment of future investments with the objectives of the green and digital economy.
At the Integrity Week Closing Ceremony, organised by the Minister of State for Public Administration and Anti-Corruption, the Secretariat highlighted the role of transparent, accountable institutions in building trust and supporting businesses, drawing on IC analyses in areas such as inspections, taxation, and customs.
During an event co-organised by CDI and the Dutch Embassy on EU integration monitoring and the Growth Plan, the Secretariat reaffirmed the IC's long-standing role in fostering public-private cooperation.

2024 IC SURVEYS

KEY INDICATORS

5	984	3	265
Number of surveys conducted	Total companies surveyed	Areas tackled	Women-led businesses among respondents

Sectors represented:
Private enterprises, banking institutions, microfinance providers

In 2024, the IC continued its commitment to facilitating evidence-based dialogue by conducting five comprehensive business surveys, engaging 984 companies through carefully designed questionnaires developed by the Secretariat. These surveys serve as essential tools for capturing the real experiences and perspectives of businesses, in line with the IC's bottom-up methodology established since 2015. The surveys focused on key areas critical to Albania's private sector development:

Private Sector Challenges: Identifying key obstacles related to informality, productivity gaps, and innovation capacity, which hinder sustainable business growth.

Market Access: Evaluating the readiness of Albanian non-food products to meet European standards, aiming to expand export potential and regional competitiveness.

Access to Finance – Business Perspective: Understanding barriers and opportunities from the viewpoint of enterprises seeking financial support.

Access to Finance – Banking Sector Perspective: Evaluating MSME financing practices and challenges from the banking industry's standpoint.

Access to Finance – Microfinance Institutions' Perspective: Investigating the role and outlook of microfinance providers in supporting MSMEs.

Click to read more.

DOCUMENTS

MARCH 2024

- IC Meeting XXXIII - Agenda
- IC Meeting XXXIII – PPT Presentation
- IC Meeting XXXIII – Working Document "Private Sector Challenges: Informality, Productivity, and Innovation"
- Survey Findings – Private Sector Challenges: Informality, Productivity, and Innovation
- IC Meeting XXXIII – Matrix of Recommendations
- IC Meeting XXXIII – Minutes

SEPTEMBER 2024

- IC Meeting XXXIV - Agenda
- IC Meeting XXXIV – PPT Presentation
- IC Meeting XXXIV – Working Document "Enhancing Competitiveness and Market Access of Albanian Non-Food Products with European Standards"
- Survey Findings – Enhancing Market Access of Albanian Non-Food Products with European Standards
- IC Meeting XXXIV – Matrix of Recommendations
- IC Meeting XXXIV – Minutes
- PPT Presentation – Progress of IC Recommendations, H1- 2024

NOVEMBER 2024

- IC Meeting XXXV - Agenda
- IC Meeting XXXV – PPT Presentation
- IC Meeting XXXV – Working Document "On Improvement of Financing Instruments"
- Survey Findings – Business Perspective on Access to Finance
- Survey Findings – The Perspective of the Banking System on MSME Financing
- Survey Findings – The Perspective of Microfinance Institutions on MSME Financing
- IC Meeting XXXV – Matrix of Recommendations
- IC Meeting XXXV – Minutes

PUBLICATIONS

- Albania Economic Outlook Indicators, January-December 2023
- Albania Economic Outlook Indicators, January-June 2024
- Reporting on Progress of IC Recommendations (August 2023)
- Activity Report 2023
- Recommendations Monitoring Report 2023
- Assessment from the Investment Council Members and Associates

WHAT'S NEXT?

The IC will continue to serve as an important platform fostering constructive dialogue between the government and private sector in Albania, aimed at rebuilding investor confidence, enhancing the business environment, and addressing medium- to long-term development challenges. The 2025 IC Agenda, shaped through member consultations and voting, currently prioritises the issue of businesses' challenges with local government services, with particular attention to digitalisation.

2024 Key Numbers

3 IC MEETINGS	**24** APPROVED RECOMMENDATIONS
12 RECOMMENDATIONS IMPLEMENTED, **12** IN PROGRESS	**10** ANALYTICAL OUTPUTS
+20 BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS / CHAMBERS ACTIVELY ENGAGED WITH THE IC	**2,113** COMPANIES REPRESENTED BY IC'S BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS AND CHAMBERS
5 SURVEYS	**984** COMPANIES PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEYS
143 BUSINESS PARTICIPATION IN IC MEETINGS, TECHNICAL MEETINGS, AND OTHER ROUNDTABLES	**7** TECHNICAL MEETINGS (focus groups)
1 ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF IC RECOMMENDATIONS	**1,100** SUBSCRIBERS ON THE IC WEBSITE
88% PARTICIPATION RATE OF MEMBERS IN IC MEETINGS	**4,857** FOLLOWERS IN SOCIAL MEDIA
43% MEN **57%** WOMEN GENDER PARTICIPATION RATE IN IC ACTIVITIES	

IC Membership during 2024

Members, State Institutions	Minister of Economy, Culture, and Innovation
	Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Business Climate
	Bank of Albania
	Albanian Investment Development Agency (AIDA)
	Albanian Fund for Development of Diaspora
Members, Development Partners	World Bank
	EU Delegation in Albania
	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
	International Finance Corporation (IFC)
Business Members with Permanent Mandate	Chamber of Commerce and Industry Tirana
	Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UCCIAL)
	Albanian Chamber of Diaspora Business
Business Members with 2-Year Mandate	Association of Foreign Investors of Albania (FIAA)
	Albanian Association of Banks (AAB)
	International Chamber of Commerce (ICC Albania)
	Women's Economic Chamber (WECA)
	American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham)
	Albanian Electronic Commerce Association (AECA)
	Confindustria Albania
	Hellenic Business Association of Albania (HBAA)
Ad-Hoc Business Members	Albanian Tourism Association (ATA)
	Institute of Authorised Accounting Experts (IEKA)
	Pendl & Piswanger
	Emante Panel
	Albanian Microfinance Association (AMA)
	Proeksport Albania (PEA)

IC Albania Investment Council

Improving Transparency and Investment Climate

Secretariat of Albania Investment Council – Team

The work of the Investment Council is supported by the Secretariat, an independent body of professionals selected and contracted by the EBRD to directly engage with the business community.

Dr. Diana Leka (Angoni)
Head of Secretariat
lekad@investment.com.al

Elvis Zerva
Legal & Regulatory Expert
zervae@investment.com.al

Elida Fara
Economic Expert
farae@investment.com.al

Xaira Shurdha
Liaison and Monitoring Expert
shurdhax@investment.com.al

Elisa Lula
Administrative and Communications Officer
lulae@investment.com.al

Published by the Investment Council Secretariat (ICS), Dëshmorët e Kombit, Tiranë, Shqipëri
info@investment.com.al / www.investment.com.al / ICS is responsible for the content of this publication.

Albania Investment Council ALInvestCouncil Albania Investment Council

REPUBLIKA E SHQIPËRISË
MINISTRIA E EKONOMISË, KULTURËS DHE INOVACIONIT

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

Investment Council is supported by the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)