

The Government of Serbia and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) are stepping up their efforts to strengthen the investment climate, promote good governance and support the development of the private sector in the country.

To this end, EBRD President Sir Suma Chakrabarti and Serbia's Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the EBRD's Investment Climate and Governance Initiative for Serbia in Belgrade today.

The agreement creates a framework for cooperation between the government and the EBRD, aimed at reducing the informal economy and enhancing competition, facilitating the resumption of credit growth, strengthening corporate governance, supporting privatisation of publicly and socially owned enterprises and stimulating investment in infrastructure. To promote regional economic integration and help reduce informality, the EBRD will support the Serbian Business Registration Agency to establish a regional registry portal in the Western Balkans.

The Bank will also work to strengthen the capacity of the Commission for the Protection of Competition and work closely with the government in defining other areas of cooperation. In all areas covered by the MoU, the EBRD and the Government of Serbia will maintain an active dialogue with the business community, other international financial institutions and donors.

In addition to the EBRD's investments in the country, the Bank and Serbia have an intensive working relationship which includes policy dialogue and technical assistance in areas including non-performing loan resolution, privatisation and judicial capacity building.

At the signing, Prime Minister Vučić emphasised: "Improving the investment climate is a priority for the Serbian government. We are pleased to have the EBRD backing us in this crucial undertaking. Creating a strong, transparent business environment will help to stimulate Serbia's economic growth, and will support regional integration and boost the attractiveness of our country and the wider region."

EBRD President Chakrabarti added: "Serbia has taken important steps to implement the reforms necessary for attracting foreign and domestic investors. We are pleased to be further strengthening the investment climate and enhancing governance. Given Serbia's strong potential, such positive changes in what is the largest economy in the Western Balkans will have a wider impact throughout the region. The EBRD stands ready to assist in this process."

In August, Sir Suma Chakrabarti attended the Western Balkans Summit in Vienna, where he met with heads of states and governments from the region to discuss joint regional integration areas. The Bank is a leading investor in the region, and last year alone invested

more than €1 billion. The EBRD plans to host again a Western Balkans Investment Conference in London in February 2016.

Since the start of its operations in Serbia, the EBRD has invested over €3.9 billion in some 188 projects across the country. The Bank invests in the financial sector, industry, commerce, agribusiness, energy and infrastructure.