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TOWARDS MORE EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPENDING: EU ALIGNED REFORMS IN PUBLIC INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT AND SPENDING REVIEWS



6 May 2026 | Tirana International Hotel | Tirana

PANELISTS' SHORT BIOS

Opening Remarks



Mimoza Dhëmbi
General Director
of Budget
Ministry of Finance

Mimoza Dhëmbi holds a degree in Economics and Finance from the University of Tirana. She has extensive professional experience in public administration, with over 34 years of service at the Ministry of Finance of Albania.

Throughout her career, she has made a significant contribution to the development of public finance in Albania, holding leadership positions for nearly three decades in key areas such as budget and treasury management. Since April 2005, she has been serving as the Director General of the State Budget.

In this role, Ms. Dhëmbi has gained comprehensive expertise in public expenditure management, leading the preparation and implementation of the state budget, as well as key reforms of the budget system. She has also been actively involved in Albania's EU integration process, including negotiations with international financial institutions and participation in numerous international forums.

Since December 2025, she has been the holder of the title "Officer" of the Order of Skanderbeg, by decree of the President of the Republic of Albania.



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Ritva Heikkinen
Head of Cooperation
at the
Delegation of the
European Union

Ritva Heikkinen has over 20 years of experience in EU enlargement and financial cooperation, having served at the EU Delegation in Croatia during the country’s accession process and at the European Commission in Brussels.

Throughout her career she has specialised in public administration reform in the accession context, and has worked in both strategic and thematic roles in this field in the Commission. Before taking up her current position, she was responsible for coordinating programming of financial assistance for enlargement and neighbourhood regions.

She holds Master’s Degrees in Political Science from the University of Tampere, Finland, and in European Studies from the College of Europe, Belgium.



Milva Ekonomi
Chair,
Committee for
Economy, Employment
and Finance
Parliament

Milva Ekonomi is a Member of the Parliament of Albania, representing the Durrës constituency, and currently serves as Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Economy, Employment and Finance. She also leads the Subcommittee on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is member of the Parliamentary Committee for Social Welfare.

She has held several senior government positions, including Minister of Economic Development, Tourism, Trade and Entrepreneurship (2016–2017), Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (2020–2021), and Minister of State for Service Standards (2021–2023). Earlier in her career, she served as Deputy Minister of Health (2013–2015).

Ms. Ekonomi brings extensive experience in public policy and statistics, having served as Director General of the Institute of Statistics of Albania (1994–2005) and worked with international organisations such as the EU, UN agencies, World Bank, IMF, and OECD.

She holds degrees in Economics and an MBA from the University of Tirana and has contributed to academia and research, including as a lecturer and co-founder of the Agenda Institute. She is fluent in English and Italian.

Panel 1 - Making Public Investment Spending More Effective

Moderator:
Sabina Ymeri
PFM Expert

Sabina Ymeri is a public finance management, evaluation, and public policy specialist with over 15 years of experience in improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of public spending, with particular attention to budgeting, public investment, service delivery, and results-based reform.

She has extensive experience in public expenditure analysis, value-for-money assessment, fiscal decentralisation, intergovernmental finance, programme evaluations, and performance monitoring.

Her expertise is closely aligned with current PFM reform priorities, including public investment management and spending reviews, including a practical, evidence-based perspective on how expenditure choices and institutional arrangements can be better linked to policy priorities, measurable results, and improved public services.



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REPUBLIKA E SHqipëRIE
MINISTRIA E FINANCAVE



Keynote Introduction:

Dr. Cristiana Belu

Manescu

Senior Economist

DG ECFIN

European Commission

Dr. Cristiana Belu Manescu is a Senior Economist at the Directorate for Economic and Financial Affairs at the European Commission, with a decade's long experience on quality of public finance issues, particularly the management of public investments and fiscal rules. Previously, at the European Central Bank, Cristiana developed the new ECB oil forecasting model used in the ECB quarterly macroeconomic projection exercises. Cristiana holds a PhD in Financial Economics from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and has published work on public investment management, fiscal rules, oil markets and corporate social responsibility.



Dr. Ferdinand Pot

Senior Policy Advisor

SIGMA Programme

Dr. Ferdinand Pot is a Public Finance Management expert with extensive international experience in reform projects in the domain of budget management. Based on a career in the public administration of the Netherlands and extensive international consulting work, he is currently Senior Policy Advisor at OECD-SIGMA advising governments of EU candidate countries in the approximation process towards EU accession. He is key author of SIGMA publications on public accounting, budget management and the Single Project Pipeline. He has a doctorate degree in Economics from Erasmus University Rotterdam.



Renald Petriti

Director of

Public Investment

Management

Ministry of Finance

Renald Petriti is the Director of Public Investment Management at the Ministry of Finance, with over 12 years of experience in public financial management. He previously served as Head of the Public Investment Monitoring Sector and as a Budget Analyst within the General Directorate of Budget. In his current role, he leads the planning, management, and monitoring of public investments financed by the state budget and foreign funding, ensuring alignment with fiscal priorities and regulatory frameworks. He oversees the preparation of investment proposals within the annual and medium-term budget process, monitors implementation, and supports decision-making through analysis and reporting. Mr. Petriti also contributes to the development of the legal framework for public investments and provides strategic advice on project selection, fiscal sustainability, and efficient allocation of public funds. He coordinates closely with government institutions and international partners to strengthen public investment management practices in Albania.



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Eridana Çano

SASPAC,
Director General of
the State Agency for
Strategic Planning and
Aid Coordination

Eridana Çano is the Director General of the State Agency for Strategic Planning and Aid Coordination since August 2024. She has extensive experience in public administration and international organizations, having previously led the Agency for Dialogue and Governance with Citizens for seven years, where she played a key role in strengthening citizen engagement with public institutions. Additionally, she managed the Center for Openness and Dialogue (COD) at the Prime Minister's Office and in four regions of Albania.

From 2015 to 2017, she served as Deputy Director in the Cabinet of Prime Minister Edi Rama, overseeing European integration processes, public administration reforms, donor coordination, and strategic projects. She contributed to major initiatives such as the Berlin Process and the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO). Previously, from 2013, she was Chief of Staff to the Minister of State for Local Government and Anti-Corruption, where she played a key role in drafting and implementing the National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2015-2020, the Whistleblower Protection Law, and the electronic anti-corruption platform.

With 14 years of prior experience in international organizations, she has worked on governance, anti-corruption, and human rights projects with the Council of Europe, UNDP, the World Bank, and the Soros Foundation in Albania, Kosovo, and Moldova. She advised Kosovo's Anti-Corruption Agency and Ombudsperson, helped draft Kosovo's first National Anti-Corruption Strategy, and led EU-funded projects on democracy, rule of law, and institutional development in Moldova.

In 2012, she spearheaded a cultural diplomacy initiative with Kosovo's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aiming to strengthen ties with EU countries that had not recognized Kosovo's independence.

Eridana holds a degree in Sociology from the University of Tirana and is fluent in English, Italian, also knows French and Spanish.



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Panel 2 – From spending to results: how Spending Reviews can help



Moderator:

Erjon Luçi

PFM Expert, Economic
Advisor

Erjon Luçi is Economic Advisor to the Government of Albania, providing strategic guidance on fiscal policy, public finance management and structural reforms. He brings more than 25 years of experience at the intersection of macroeconomic policy, budget reform and public expenditure analysis, in Albania and across the Western Balkans.

From 2013 to 2020 he served as Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy, where he led Albania’s Public Finance Management reform programme in close cooperation with the EU, IMF and World Bank. He oversaw the preparation and execution of the State Budget, treasury and debt management, and fiscal risk oversight, and personally led the introduction of a more strategic Medium-Term Budget Programme and of performance budgeting with programme-level Key Performance Indicators. He also steered the extensive revision of the Organic Budget Law, the rollout of the Financial Management Information System, and the design of the institutional architecture for monitoring fiscal risks from PPPs and state-owned enterprises.

Earlier, as Senior Economist at the World Bank (2006–2013) covering Albania and the Western Balkans, he contributed to Public Expenditure and Institutional Reviews, PEFAs, Country Economic Memorandums and budget support operations across the region. He has also advised the Bank of Albania, where he headed the Research Department and led the move to an inflation targeting framework, and has more recently consulted for the World Bank, UNDP, KfW and Expertise France on fiscal, energy and financial sector reforms. Erjon holds a Ph.D. and an M.A. in Economics from Staffordshire University and a B.A. from the University of Tirana.



Keynote Introduction:

Ferry Philipsen

EU4GG Spending
Reviews Expert

Ferry Philipsen is the Technical Director of Ecorys’ International Development Unit and currently serves as the Project Director for the “EU for Good Governance” (EU4GG) project in Albania. With a professional career spanning more than three decades, Ferry has delivered high-level technical assistance across the Western Balkans, Central Asia, and the Asia-Pacific region, specializing in Public Finance Management, Public Administration, Anti-corruption and Justice Reforms—including his current role as Team Leader for justice sector reforms in Armenia. A centrepiece of his recent work under the EU4GG project is his direct support to the Ministry of Finance in Albania, where he was responsible for developing the Methodology on Spending Reviews to ensure more effective and transparent public spending. This technical contribution is informed by a global track record in designing and reviewing performance-based budgeting systems and expenditure review frameworks in various countries. Furthermore, as a seasoned learning and development specialist, Ferry is a well-recognized trainer who has equipped senior government officials and donor staff worldwide with the analytical tools necessary for rigorous budget analysis and sustainable PFM reform.



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Álfrún Tryggvadóttir
Senior Policy Analyst,
Spending Reviews and
Performance Budgeting
OECD

Álfrún is a Senior Policy Analyst at the OECD, working in the Public Management and Budgeting Division. She leads work on spending reviews and performance budgeting, supporting governments across OECD and partner countries in strengthening the efficiency, transparency, and strategic use of public expenditure. Prior to joining the OECD, she served as Deputy Budget Director at the Ministry of Finance in Iceland.



Esida Bujupi
Economist
The World Bank

Esida Bujupi is the Country Economist for Albania at the World Bank, where she works on macrofiscal monitoring and policy dialogue, including budget support operations in Albania and across the Western Balkans. She has more than 15 years of experience in central banking and public finance, including roles in the Research Department at the Bank of Albania, the Central Bank of Kosovo, and the Economic Policy Department at Kosovo's Ministry of Finance. Her expertise includes macroeconomic modelling, econometrics, fiscal policy analysis, and public financial management.



Gentian Opre
Director of Budget
Analysis and
Programming
Department,
Ministry of Finance

Mr. Gentian Opre is a senior public finance professional currently serving as Director of the Budget Analysis and Programming Department at the Ministry of Finance of Albania. He holds a Master of Arts in Public Policy and Management from Erasmus University of Rotterdam, The Netherlands (2008–2009) and completed his undergraduate studies in Economics at the University of Tirana (1996–2000). Mr. Opre has over two decades of experience in public financial management. He began his career at the Ministry of Finance of Albania as a Budget Analyst (2000–2006) and subsequently served as Head of the Budget Analysis Division within the General Directorate of Budget (2006–2009). Throughout his career, he has played a central role in budget formulation, fiscal analysis, and medium-term budget programming, contributing to the strengthening of Albania's budgetary framework and alignment with international and EU standards.



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Anjeza Gjuzi
Director, Budget and
Financial Management
Directorate
Ministry of Health and
Social Welfare

Ms. Anjeza Gjuzi is a seasoned public finance specialist with extensive experience in budget administration, currently serving as Director of Budget and Financial Management at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. Holds a degree in Finance and a Professional Master's in Public Administration, with over 15 years of experience across both public and private sectors. Demonstrates strong expertise in financial management, public procurement, reporting, and budget policy development. Internationally trained in contract management, health system financing, and risk management. Recognized for strong analytical and organizational skills, as well as a commitment to improving financial processes within public administration.



Alma Lahe
Together for Life

Alma Lahe is an accomplished team leader with extensive experience in project management. With a solid educational background in law and engineering from the University of Tirana, she has built a multifaceted career that blends technical expertise with a strong commitment to promoting government transparency and civic engagement. Alma has been instrumental in leading initiatives that enhance civic activism and improve accountability in both local and central governments.

Throughout her career, Alma has held key positions in various institutions, including her current role as Project Manager at Together for Life Association. She has successfully managed projects funded by international organizations such as the UN, ILO, and the European Union, focusing on empowering vulnerable groups, fostering good governance, increasing citizen engagement, and creating alliances against corruption.