

**Conference Spending Reviews -
Strengthening Fiscal Governance in the Western Balkans**

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Speakers

John Beazley, former OECD and the World Bank Senior Public Sector Specialist



Ivor Beazley is an independent consultant. He recently retired from the OECD where he variously led the OECD workstreams on Performance and Results, Financial Management and Reporting, and Fiscal Sustainability of Health Finances within the OECD Secretariat's Public Governance Division. Before that he was a Senior Public Sector Specialist at the World Bank who focused on public finance management issues in Europe and Central Asia. He is a development professional with 30+ years of practical experience with implementing financial management reforms in governments and state-owned enterprises around the world. He has worked at the World

Bank since 2003 and was previously deputy head of the Governance Department at the U.K. Department for International Development. He is qualified as a chartered accountant in the United Kingdom and is a graduate of Cambridge University.

Jose Maria Casado, Head of the Evaluation Policies Division, the Spanish Independent Fiscal Authority for Fiscal responsibility



José María Casado is the Director of the Public Expenditure Evaluation Division of the AIReF. He has been responsible for Public Policy Evaluation at AIReF and deputy coordinator of the Institution's Spending Review program. Prior to that he worked as Senior Economist the Bank of Spain from 2009 to 2018, Lecturer in the Department of Fundamentals of Economic Analysis of the University College of Financial Studies and the University of Zaragoza, senior economist (secondment) at the Bank of England, affiliated researcher of Spanish Foundation for Applied Economic Studies, and economist of the European

Commission research project AGMEMOD over the period 2001- 2004. His areas of research, in which he has various publications in international journals, are the microeconomic evaluation of public policies, inequality, fiscal microsimulation, consumer behavior and the household financial decisions. He holds a PhD from the London School of Economics, a master's degree in economics from University College London, a Diploma in Advanced Economic Analysis from the University of Zaragoza, and a degree in Economics from the University of Extremadura.

Jasmin Chakeri, Practice Manager, Macroeconomics, Trade, and Investment Global Practice, The World Bank



Jasmin Chakeri is Practice Manager in the Macroeconomics, Trade and Investment Global Practice of the World Bank, leading the team of economists working on the EU countries, the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. As a development economist with 20 years of experience, Ms. Chakeri has led World Bank studies on fiscal policy, trade and growth, as well as lending operations, in East Asia, West Africa, Latin America and Europe. She holds degrees from the University of Cambridge (UK) and Johns Hopkins University (USA).

Salvador Elmazi, Budget Director, Ministry of Finance, Kosovo



Salvador Elmazi is a Director of Kosovo Budget Department, at the Ministry of Finance of Kosovo. In his position, he manages the development of the annual state budget and the mid-term expenditure framework and assesses how the framework will impact on the budget. He is also a board member of the Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund. He served as a Program Manager at the Association of Kosovo Municipalities where he coordinated the work of sectoral collegiums on municipal budget and finance, public services, education, health, and other sectors relevant to municipalities. He has an extensive background and years of working in the public sector, as well as with international development institutions. He has worked as a Municipal Coordinator for Business Enabling Environment Program in Kosovo (BEEP), which was supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Chemonics International.

Floor de Jager, coordinating advisor at the Bureau of Strategic Analysis, part of the Budget Inspectorate at the Ministry of Finance, The Netherlands



Floor de Jager is coordinating advisor at the Bureau of Strategic Analysis, part of the Budget Inspectorate at the Dutch Ministry of Finance. As a key contributor to the Insight into Quality programme, he helped shift the focus within the Dutch evaluation framework; moving the emphasis from primarily accountability to a more comprehensive focus on learning. He has written and contributed to several Spending Reviews and the follow up of their recommendations, was responsible for the annual 'Savings overview' of the Budget inspectorate and for implementing several key instruments in the Dutch evaluation framework. He is currently working on increasing the quality of policymaking across Dutch national government.

Lars Høgsbro Østergaard, Deputy Head of Division and Senior Advisor in the Expenditure Division at the Ministry of Finance, Denmark



Lars Høgsbro Østergaard has an extensive career within the Danish government, having served at the Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister's Office, and as a counsellor at the Danish Embassy in Washington DC. He has also served as a senior advisor to the minister for public sector innovation. A seasoned participant in the OECD's senior budget officials' meetings, he has played a substantial role in shaping the Danish expenditure framework and within the overall framework he has been pivotal in shaping the spending review process at the Ministry of Finance.

Martijn Hoogeland, Statistical and Policy Analyst, European Commission DG ECFIN



After obtaining a degree in International Relations (MSc) and European Law (LLM) in Amsterdam and Ghent, Martijn worked in academia on EU law and later policy sciences. As of 2020, he works at the European Commission on several topics pertaining to fiscal policy. He now works on spending reviews and the Commission's Fiscal Governance Database, which contains indices that help measure the design strength of national fiscal frameworks.

Martin Halus, Director of Value for Money Department, Ministry of Finance, Slovak Republic



Martin Halus is currently a Director of the Value for Money Division at the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic. In leading the largest analytical unit in Slovakia, he draws on his previous professional experience. Passionate about promoting evidence-based policy making, he began his career at the Institute for Financial Policy at the Ministry of Finance. In 2016, he established an analytical unit at the Ministry of Environment - the Institute for Environmental Policy (IEP). He served as IEP's chief economist and director for 5 years. He joined Value for Money Division in 2021. Martin Halus graduated from Comenius University Bratislava in 2010 and from Barcelona School of Economics in 2013.

Sanja Madzarevic Sujster, Senior Economist, Macroeconomics, Trade, and Investment Global Practice, The World Bank



Sanja Madzarevic-Sujster is a Senior Economist in the Western Balkans unit, and a country economist for North Macedonia at the World Bank. Before that she worked on the EU and West Africa countries in the Bank. She led Bank's lending operations as well as economic and public sector analytical and advisory services in the European Union and the Western Balkans. Prior to joining the Bank, she worked in the Ministry of Finance, Croatia, and the Institute for Macroeconomic Analysis and Forecasts, Croatia. Sanja was also Associate Lecturer at the Public Finance cathedra at the Zagreb School of Economic and Management from 2003-2007. Sanja holds M.Sc. in Economics from the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Economics, and has undertaken several professionally related education courses at the London School of Economics, Joint

Vienna Institute, WIFO, World Bank Institute. Sanja's research focuses on macroeconomics and fiscal policy, governance, social sectors, competitiveness, and the informal economy. She is a task leader of the EU TF for Strengthening Fiscal Governance in the Western Balkans.

Massimo Mastruzzi, Senior Economist, Macroeconomics, Trade and Investments Global Practice, The World Bank



Massimo Mastruzzi is a Senior Economist in the World Bank's Macroeconomics, Trade and Investments Global Practice. Mr. Mastruzzi, an Italian national and economist by training, has been working on public finance and fiscal policy issues for over 20 years. He joined the World Bank in 2000 where he worked on a variety of innovative projects such as the flagship report on worldwide governance indicators, the implementation of governance and anti-corruption diagnostics, and the roll out of capacity building programs on stolen asset recovery. In 2010, he started the BOOST initiative to facilitate accessibility and use of budget data worldwide, and task managed the design and launch of the Open Budgets Portal, a cornerstone of the World Bank's expanding open budgeting program. He currently leads the Public Finance Review Support platform designed to assist in the revamping and implementation of the core diagnostic tool.

Besart Myderrizi, Economist, Macroeconomics, Trade and Investments Global Practice, The World Bank



Besart Myderrizi is an Economist in the World Bank's Macroeconomics, Trade and Investments Global Practice and a country economist for Kosovo. He is a public financial management professional with extensive experience and a proven track record in donor coordination and project management from his work for the USAID Kosovo Economic Governance Activity. Prior to that he worked as Macroeconomic Advisor in the Macroeconomic Policy Unit in the Ministry of Finance in Kosovo. He holds Master's Degree in Economics and Public Policy from the University of Bristol.

Aleksandra Nakjeva-Ruzin, Special Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Finance, North Macedonia



Former Macedonian Ambassador to Sweden, CEO, Swedish Institute advisor, WBG and UN consultant, and University lecturer, Dr. Aleksandra Nakjeva Ruzhin currently serves as a Special Advisor to the Minister of Finance of North Macedonia. She oversees the operations of the Ministry within the domains of public revenues and tax and customs policy, public financial management reforms, as well as the collaboration with the IMF FAD in the areas of tax policy, fiscal risks, spending reviews and energy subsidies. Her academic and professional background spreads across public and corporate finance, with over 25 years of distinguished career in the public service and the financial sector - including 20 years at senior management positions in policy making and in corporate executive - as also in academia and working with international financial institutions. She has previously held senior positions at the Ministry of Finance - most notably as State Advisor in charge of the Departments for Budget and Funds, Internal Audit and the Insurance Supervision, and has also served as external advisor for budget

and treasury to the Major of the City of Skopje during the initial period of fiscal decentralization in the country. She has also served on the boards of several business associations - the European Business Association, Chamber of Commerce of North Macedonia, Presidency of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Chamber of Commerce, and of the Council for Foreign Investors. Dr. Nakjeva Ruzhin is a lecturer of Public Finance/Fiscal Administration and Industrial Organization at the American College-Skopje, and has been a guest lecturer at the University of Leeds (UK), Stockholm Business School (Sweden), Pittsburgh University (USA), and at the Faculty of Economics in Skopje. She is author/co-author of a number of research papers in the areas of tax policy, fiscal policy and fiscal decentralization, and has been participating as a speaker and moderator of fiscal and environmental panels at numerous conferences in North Macedonia and abroad, as well as a motivational speaker on woman leadership and empowerment. She received her Master degree in Public Policy and Management with highest honors (Summa cum Laude) from the University of Pittsburg, PA, USA, and her PhD in Economics at the Faculty of Economics in Skopje. She is the recipient of the prestigious International Public Service Award for 2016 from the University of Pittsburgh, PA, USA and has received numerous recognitions for her work in North Macedonia and in Sweden.

Joonas Pärenson, Director of Strategy Department, Ministry of Economy and Communications, Estonia



Joonas Pärenson has long-term experience in the public sector in Estonia. He has worked 8 years in the Ministry of Finance, where he specialized in strategic and performance management. During his tenure, he played a pivotal role in coordinating spending reviews and spearheaded the implementation of Estonia's first pilot reviews. His expertise in financial oversight and strategic planning led him to his current position as Director of the Strategy Department at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. In his current role, Joonas is at the forefront of the spending review process at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, which was initiated by the government in autumn 2023. Overseeing approximately 7,5% of the state budget, he is instrumental in identifying areas for optimization and resource reallocation to drive economic growth and efficiency. Outside of his governmental responsibilities, Joonas is also an author, having co-authored the book "Agile Project Management Masterclass: 5 Steps to Succeed" in 2022. His belief in the agile approach stems from its adaptability and effectiveness in navigating dynamic environments. As he often emphasizes, "Agile approach helps us to succeed. It does not merely state what to do; moreover, it helps to explain how to get results in a changing environment." This is also vital in the spending review process.

Bojan Paunovic, Director General, State Budget Directorate, Ministry of Finance, Montenegro



Bojan Paunovic is a General Director of the State Budget Directorate in charge of budget planning, accounting, macroeconomic and fiscal analysis and forecasting, local self-government financing, and wage policy. In this role he oversaw the drafting and the implementation of the first Public Finance Management Reform Strategy and subsequent one. Previously he was a Head of Unit overseeing the coordination and management of EU funds in the Budget Directorate, Director general for CfCU, and a First Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Montenegro Mission to the EU in Brussels.

Emilia Skrok, Practice Manager, World Bank



Dr. Emilia Skrok is Practice Manager in the Global Fiscal Policy and Sustainable Growth Unit, Macroeconomics, Trade & Investment Global Practice of the World Bank Group. The unit provides assistance to internal and external clients in developing and implementing fiscal strategies that support sustainable development and economic growth. Through advising on the design of adequate fiscal policies, better quality spending, and improved domestic revenue mobilization, it helps foster tangible outcomes while ensuring that fiscal policies support inclusive and sustainable progress. She joined the World Bank in 2004. Since then, she has worked in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, West Africa, India, and Latin America on various issues related to middle-income traps, green transition, fiscal rules, tax, and subnational fiscal reforms. She led Bank's lending operations as well as economic and public sector advisory services in the European Union. Prior to joining the World Bank, she was Principal Economist in the Treasury Department of Bank PEKAO S.A., and an Assistant Professor at the Warsaw School of Economics, Department of International Comparative Studies. Before the private sector experience, Emilia worked as a Senior Economist in the Department of Financial Policy, Analysis, and Statistics, in the Polish Ministry of Finance. Emilia holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the Warsaw School of Economics, earned with distinction.

Álfrún Tryggvadóttir, Lead, Spending Reviews and Performance Budgeting, OECD



Alfrun Tryggvadottir is the Lead for Spending Reviews and Performance Budgeting at the OECD. Before working at the OECD, she was the Deputy Budget Director at the Ministry of Finance in Iceland, where she coordinated the implementation of spending reviews.

Xiaoqing Yu, Country Director, World Bank



Xiaoqing Yu is a Country Director for the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Serbia) in Europe and Central Asia in the World Bank. Prior to that she held a position of the Strategy and Operations Director in ECA. She joined the Bank as a Young Professional in 1996. She has held various positions including Human Development Sector Director for East Asia and the Pacific, Director of the Social Protection and Labor Global Practice, and Director of Strategy & Operations in both Human Development and EAP. In her current position, she is providing: (i) strategic directions to the World Bank's work in the Western Balkans in support of the governments' reform priorities; (ii) leadership to the country team with a focus on results, partnerships, and efficiency; and (iii) overall leadership to the Vienna ECA office.