

The Accounting Profession from Romania in the Digitized Economy

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ABSTRACT

The change of the current economic environment due to globalization and digitalization, the evolution of information technology and their diversification have led to a change in financial and accounting services. Information is a power today, and many economic entities may choose to obtain data by any means in the hope that they will reach the highest level of competitiveness on the digital market. Professional accountants who understand the digital age well will play an important role in questioning these systems and processes that support the acquisition, management, analysis and distribution of this information. Through this approach we set out to make an incursion into the accounting profession in Romania in the current context of digital evolution, so that by successfully exploiting the new technologies emerging, we will be able to evaluate the opportunities, challenges and trends in order to implement and consolidate them in all areas of interest, public or private.

Keywords: *accounting profession, digital economy, information technologies, digital accounting, online platforms*

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital technology of the 21st century will affect almost all aspects of economic life and modern society. By rapidly changing technology, economics and thinking, professions are forced to change according to the world order, and professional organizations are looking for new models of approach. At present, digitization of professions has become a necessity rather than a choice and those who do not respect technological changes will disappear from the market, becoming history. As with other professions, the accounting profession changes and develops as a result of digitalization and technological development. Through the information systems, the workload of the accountants has been reduced and the complicated and difficult accounting operations carried out using traditional methods are done quickly and easily. For the future of accounting, the need for digitization and transformation is imperative, and traditional accounting methods are eventually replaced by internet-based accounting systems (such as the cloud system and blockchain technology) [1]. In the face of this continuous evolution of digitalization, the accounting industry is ready for this revolution. The influence of digital transformation continues to affect almost all sectors of society, including the field of finance and accounting. This digital transformation goes far beyond the transition from a traditional economy to a digital economy and begins with an understanding of digital trends, new technologies, ICT services, IT policies and many other elements of the Internet of things included

in the “second age of the machine” or “the fourth industrial revolution” [2, 3].

The current use of smart technologies, artificial intelligence, opportunities and benefits seems unlimited, leading to increased productivity, safer working conditions, creating opportunities for these professionals to become informed about new technologies, in addition to creating jobs, higher value work resulting from digital transformation.

The phenomenon of digitizing information flows and their interaction with the accounting profession highlights the process of expanding computerized accounting, the acceptance of increasingly intelligent technologies in daily practice and the conduct of transactions in virtual environments, leading to the “disappearance” of the traditional professional and replacing it with a knowledgeable person in handling data, information and accounting knowledge [4]. From this point of view, aspects have been reported regarding the way in which the accounting profession in Romania will evolve, based on its connection with the digital economy. In this regard, it is insisted on the idea of the continuous change of the accounting profession, by adapting to the technological environment of the digital economy under the pressure of the challenges to which the profession must be receptive in order to identify possible solutions [5]. With regard to cloud computing, as a trendy digital technology, at present, among the accounting professionals there is the idea that this might make it difficult to integrate the accounting information system of a modern entity and even there may

be some question marks regarding the harmonization alleged by cloud computing, on the one hand, and on the other, standards and legislation on audit and information security. The problem of information security in the Romanian digital economy is also identified in the case of auditing information systems as supporting technologies for the current digital business environment [6]. But what particularly draws our attention are the studies that even reveal the problem of the concrete interaction between digital technology and accounting professionals, in the sense that they are not familiar with the facilities available to the technology.

For accountants there are various reasons why they should accept and apply modern digital solutions. Thus, they are the factors that can have a significant impact and can be a motivation for the technological changes for the accounting professions, such as: fulfilling the accounting tasks within the set deadline and the importance of providing better and timely information for different users. Therefore, by using the technology, the quality and relevance of the accounting information will be improved and the period required for preparation will be shortened and the information will be available in real time without any delay [7]. With the automation of accounting processes less time is consumed, accounting professionals become more connected to their clients and increase their consulting services when it comes to daily business operations. There are authors who have stated that digitization and automation are used to eliminate or minimize routine and repetitive tasks, so that accounting professionals are allowed to focus on more creative, non-routine and unstructured tasks, which requires more thinking and additional skills [8]. Such a change in approach will impact the future activities of experienced accounting professionals. Since most services are now cloud-based and financial data is readily available, companies are willing to change accounting firms faster than in the past if they are not satisfied with the services received, so technological development and technologies such as cloud, artificial intelligence and blockchain will strengthen the role of accounting professionals and the entire financial industry, as manual data entry is reduced and speed, quality and accuracy of data are improved [9]. In the current stage of the digital economy, the accounting profession needs a new model capable of responding to technological changes and the evolution of the process of digitization and e-transformation, so that it becomes more efficient. Therefore, a professional accountant is a person who can adapt to technological developments and can actively use technological products in professional practices, combining practical and theoretical knowledge with philosophy, mathematics and technology [10].

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Technological evolutions, globalization and increasing competition force the professions to change constantly. Undoubtedly, the accounting profession is at the forefront

of the professions that are most affected by technological developments at the moment, where many of the digital systems that did not exist a few years ago are now actively used. The accounting profession of this century needs a new model capable of responding to the technological changes and the evolution of the process of digitization and e-transformation, so that it is efficient and ready for the future, imposing some changes in fields such as thinking, education, culture and technology. In this context, our initiative started by consulting the national and international specialized literature relevant to this field, papers presented at conferences, specialized magazines, books, existing in various available databases, as well as from the site of Romanian professional bodies, such as: CECCAR/BEACAR (Body of Expert Accountants and Chartered Accountants of Romania), CAFR/CFAR (Chamber of Financial Auditors of Romania), as well as international bodies such as: IFAC/IFA (International Federation of Accountants), Accountancy Europe (Federation of European Accounting Experts), PAODC/CDPAO (Committee for Development of Professional Accounting Organizations). Among the research methods used to carry out this paper we mention, observation, analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction. Based on the methodology used and the synthesis of the available information, we conducted an analysis on the accounting profession in Romania in the current context of the digitized economy as well as the main platforms used for the evolution of this profession.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Considerations regarding the accounting profession in Romania in the current context of the digital economy

At the present moment of the internationalization of business, the evolution of the digital economy and the development of information technologies, the accounting profession must adapt to the new technological alternatives on the market that prove to be superior to the traditional accounting system. The new technologies with which digitization operates, have also entered the field of accounting that will lead to increasing the efficiency of the activity carried out in this field, with a strong impact on the Romanian business environment [11]. Therefore, in the digital economy the accounting professionals who exercise their profession individually or are set up in accounting and/or accounting expertise companies are forced to adapt to the new requirements imposed by the digitalisation of the economy, because they are the ones who will act appropriate for the management of some of the systems and processes that will help the management in the acquisition, analysis and distribution of information in this

field. Currently, for a professional accountant the routine techniques used will have to be surpassed in order to replace them with useful knowledge in using the new information technologies that are connected to the digitization and which will provide benefits for their implementation at the level of the entities where they operate [12].

The phenomenon of digitization leads to important changes regarding the redefinition of the accounting profession and its implication in making short, medium and long term decisions. Thus, all accounting professionals by adapting to the progress in the IT field, it is necessary to transform from individuals of the figures into business professionals who will make a substantial contribution in the analysis, planning and consulting of this field, designing the information system, as well as in its control and evaluation [13].

The issue of digitization of this profession is widely debated within the various congresses and conferences organized by the Body of Accounting Experts and Authorized Accountants of Romania (CECCAR), where some authors, affirm that the association between computers and communications, respectively the new digital economy, has changed and change fundamentally the activities in all fields and whose alert rhythm is widespread throughout the world. In order for the accounting profession to be relevant and in the future, **changes** are needed to support the challenges currently facing this profession, among them we mentioned [14]:

- ✓ *adding new value to accounting information (data).* These professionals can no longer remain, as data holders, they will have to intervene effectively in improving the financial situation and the performance of the entities, making a substantial contribution in providing various recommendations and solutions for the evolution of a business;

- ✓ *based on the information received in real time, relevant decisions will be taken to implement integrated information systems at the level of each entity.* This involves the use of cloud-based technologies that ensure access and processing of real-time information by all beneficiaries;

- ✓ *resizing accounting reports, in order to prioritize information that is truly relevant to investors and other users;*

- ✓ *the audit will be carried out by verifying all the data existing in an entity and not only certain samples;*

- ✓ *the progress made by accounting science and the implementation of accounting standards, in which intellectual property becomes essential;*

- ✓ *promoting the ethics and integrity of the accounting profession;*

- ✓ *diminishing the possible risks and preventing the obstacles generated by the digital crime.*

Both the Romanian academic environment and the CECCAR institution that governs this profession for almost a century, have and are constantly involved in the good management of its transformation in accordance with the requirements of the business environment and the globalized digital market.

Among the requirements of the current economy characterized by internationalization and digitization is the need for entities to have professionally trained accounting professionals with skills in the field of information technologies. Responding to such requirements, the accounting profession in Romania will be able to be located at the international level imposed by digitization, having important roles as consultant and partner in the evolution of the entities in which it operates.

3.2. Using online platforms by the Romanian accounting profession

The advancement of information technologies is also felt in the field of accounting and the platforms with which they operate on the market have the capacity to analyze information by making various connections between them. At the international level, a study was conducted based on which the automation capabilities were tested among digital accounting platforms, based on artificial intelligence (AI) applications, such as: OneUp, QuickBooks Online, SageOne and Xero and where an accuracy of 77% and 95% of them was highlighted, that is, an extremely high capacity of applications to recognize transactions without human intervention [15]. The large-scale development of these applications will create the possibility of their evolution and penetration in the financial - accounting activity, where professionals in the field will have multiple opportunities, so that they will become more efficient in serving clients, giving them various information, consulting and analysis as soon as possible [16].

In a report of the World Economic Forum, it is shown that accounting is the field in which computerization is very powerful, and the profession of accountant, as it has evolved at this moment, will change radically until 2022. Also, CECCAR - he carried out a research that shows that the accounting profession has evolved so that 97% of the activities are suitable for digitalisation, thus imposing the need to adapt to the new reality and to reconfigure the activity of this profession. The impact of the information technology at the level of the accounting activity causes the professionals of the field to reconfigure their activity, generating innovation by creating start-ups such as digital accounting platforms [17, 18].

For Romania, there are several such platforms, among them, a truly innovative platform is the ***Keez platform***, a Romanian start-up that brings accounting to the level of business requirements from 2020, offering complete online

accounting services for SMEs, financial and business education of clients, and which joins the Romanian Commercial Bank within the Start - Up Nation program whereby businesses at the beginning of the road benefit from free products, applications and dedicated services. This platform works with digitization and digitalization elements supported by Artificial Intelligence, as well as technologies used by global companies such as Google, Oracle, Facebook, Netflix and Microsoft. Through the Kez Mobile application (facilities also available in the web version), you benefit from:

- ✓ *online submission of documents for carrying out accounting activities;*
- ✓ *24/7 online access to all financial documents plus billing mode;*
- ✓ *complex and simplified reporting available in real-time on desktop and mobile;*
- ✓ *real-timekeeping and automatic generation of employment contracts for employees;*
- ✓ *preparation of financial accounting, VAT journal, balance, compulsory accounting records, realization of financial statements;*
- ✓ *filing taxes and taxations declarations, making payroll documents and Technical Labor Inspection (ITM).*

Basically, this Kez digital platform holds the accounting records, to which the access is in digital format anytime, from anywhere - practically, the company and all its accounting documents are in the mobile phone.

The SAGA platform has multiple modules, including SAGA P.S. which keeps the accounting and stock records in single party, for authorized individuals - law firms and notaries, homeowners associations, medical offices, financial experts and other liberal professions and SAGA C.P. is an integrated accounting program for the main patrimonial elements of the company (fixed assets, stocks, salaries, suppliers, customers, treasury). In addition to covering the needs of financial accounting, the program also allows efficient tracking of expenses, revenues and profit respectively on user-configurable profit centers and on the specific sources of income of the activity / carriers (goods, products, services).

The SmartBill platform is the best friend of the Romanian entrepreneur, used by approximately 65,000 companies and PFAs (Authorized Individuals) from Romania, with over 13 years experience. It has a mature accounting software, which is in step with current legislation and technology, developed to meet the current needs of professional accountants to streamline their work. In addition, through the ManagerConta module comes to streamline the management of an accounting firm and the easy tasks of managing clients and the declarative obligations they have in relation to the state. It is a module independent of SmartBill Conta and works for all accounting firms, regardless of the accounting software

used. In case the accounting record has been kept through the SAGA platform, the database can be easily taken over in the SmartBill Conta [19].

The CIEL platform offers an accounting software application designed to meet the current requirements of the accounting profession, in order to be permanently connected to the information of interest, so that nothing in the repetitive routine processes is part of its activity. Any legislative change also means an automatic update in the program.

The ExpertAccounts platform offers an online accounting program, created by people with accounting training, in cooperation with accounting experts. According to the fiscal code and the legislation in force, it ensures the recording and keeping of all primary documents and obtaining the financial-accounting statements, complying with all the requirements of the Ministry of Public Finance.

Therefore, the role of online platforms is to use information and communication technologies to facilitate user interactions, but also to collect and use data on these interactions. These have a significant contribution to the innovation of today's digital and economic society, and choosing such a means of promoting a business will have multiple benefits and varied possibilities for user interaction, multiple functionalities, increasing the efficiency and competitiveness of the field in which it is activated.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The introduction of new information technologies in all spheres of economic, social and political life of the digitized economy also required for the accounting profession the need to update strategies, to improve current practices, to reset the way of interaction with clients in the field, in order to successfully implement all new technologies that have appeared on the market. All actions taken in this regard, have the ability to create added value for both the profession and the clients of the accounting professionals, or for various users of the information provided by the accounting (tax authorities, banks and other financial institutions, etc.). The future of the accounting profession and the excellence in the profession largely depend on the aspirations of the professional accountants, the skills acquired skills and the ability to understand and adapt to the demands imposed by the new digital age.

In general, through this study we have tried an overview of the aspects that have been recorded in the accounting practice over time, and subsequently directed to the technological development, respectively the digitization of the activities in this field. The impact of the information technologies in the digitalized economy will force the accounting profession to reconfigure its activity, in the

sense of generating innovation for the creation of new digital accounting platforms that will allow the possibility of aggregating the information in an appropriate form for making managerial decisions at all hierarchical levels. Therefore, the accounting profession will be perceived according to the new conditions imposed by digitization, while offering multiple opportunities regarding the diversification of the services offered. Although, the process of implementing the new technologies continues in Romania, also having the advantage of an ICT infrastructure that ensures a very good speed of the Internet, which theoretically should be an incentive for the transition to the new technologies, there are a number of problems, mentality in accepting some changes and deficiencies of vocational education in the spirit of these new developments [20]. The multiple possibilities offered by the information technologies will bring to the accounting profession challenges such as: digital disruption, artificial intelligence and cyber security, which will turn them into opportunities, especially if they are supported by national and international profile associations. The accounting profession and its adaptation to the requirements imposed by the digital economy is the main vision of the European Strategy for the Digital Single Market, which will represent an important resource for economic growth, competitiveness, innovation, job creation and social progress.

The final conclusion from this approach is that the accounting profession in Romania, although it has evaded much in recent years, there are various aspects and important differences from those stated on the international market. In this sense, their recovery, permanent evolution and international recognition, with all the beneficial effects arising, can only be achieved through competition between all stakeholders of the accounting profession.

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