



BABEŞ – BOLYAI UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT DEPARTMENT

Abstract of doctoral thesis **RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS – TRANSFER PRICING ISSUES**

Scientific coordinator: Prof. Phd. Adriana Tiron Tudor

> PhD Student: Alexandra Corlaciu (Rogojan)

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"It is a great happiness to widen the boundaries of human knowledge." Alexander von Humboldt (1769 – 1859)

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KEY WORDS

Related party, related party transactions, IAS 24, transfer pricing, the OECD guidelines on transfer pricing, BEPS, information on related party in the financial statements of companies listed on BVB, the perception of Romanian professionals on transfer pricing

INTRODUCTION

The development of related party transactions is facilitated by current globalization phenomenon whose manifestation is becoming stronger. Thus, according to statistics, more than a third of world trade and over 80% of transactions that transfer technologies are carried out between related parties (Li, 2006, p.28).

Among the most obvious reasons behind intra-group transactions and companies internalisation are: economies of scale, reduction of fixed costs, the existence of unused production capacity, the avoidance of negotiation and transaction costs, splitting the production process, specific characteristics of the products, the need for security, the need for commercial secrecy, accounting policies, tax avoidance, regional treaties provisions (EU, NAFTA), the abolition of protectionism (Georgopoulos et al., 2007, p 45, and Lall, 1978; Dunning , 2000, cited by Georgopoulos et al., 2007, p 48).

The table below shows the synthetized main reasons underlying transactions within a group:

REASON	EXPLICATION
The advantages of specialization / economies of scale	Subsidiaries acquire semi / intermediate goods that are further processed with their own techniques and then are transferred to other entities in the group dealing with the next phases of the production process until the final product is obtained. In this way, the group as a whole enjoys the benefits of specialization and economies of scale achieved.
Quality control of intermediate products	Purchases of intermediate products in the group are significantly safer in terms of quality than the products purchased from third parties.
Exploiting low production costs	Groups have the ability to place certain operations in countries where the cost of raw materials and labor are low, which brings an advantage. Certain companies in the group performs research & development

Table 1. The main reasons for intra-group transactions

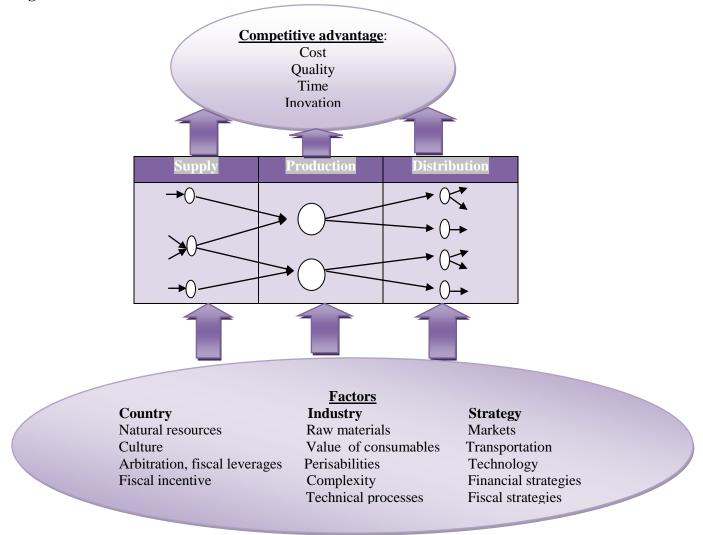
Depreciation costs of	expenses for new products or technologies development. To exploit the
research -	R&D, there are created new branches which applies those results and
development	which are invoiced by the company performing the R&D activities.
Knowhow	By creating new subsidiaries applying the research results instead they are
protection against	sold to third parties, the knowhow remain in the group, being protected
competitors	from a possible "theft" by the competition.
Exploiting global sales and marketing network of the parent / group	The groups generally hold global sales and marketing networks, used by all subsidiaries (in this sense, a company that is part of a group has an advantage over a company that operates independently because the first has access to group developed network of clients, while the self must find by itself the customers).
Fiscal reasons (tax	Groups have the ability to structure transactions so that the activities that
avoidance)	bring the greatest profits to be made in low-tax countries.
Maximizing the profit of parent / group as a whole	The profit of the group as a whole is maximized as a result of efficient operations (the benefits of specialization, economies of scale achieved by the placement of activities in countries where costs are low, the opportunity to share the costs of research - development between subsidiaries using research results, etc.).
Sou	urce: processed from Georgopoulos et al. (2007, p. 52)

It is already known the idea that global competition has the potential to change the way goods

are produced and distributed worldwide, so that the various activities of the groups creating added value are dispersed in various countries and coordinated in order to gain competitive advantages. However, to benefit from the competitive advantage it is necessary that creating value-added activities to be carried out in jurisdictions that provide unique comparative advantages. In this regard, a good manager must identify and take control of factors influencing the group performance in each of the three main stages of the value creation process, namely: supply, production and distribution (Prasad & Sounderpandian, 2003, p 241). The same authors believe that in order to gain competitive advantage through global value creation chain, a MNE must: provide the highest quality (De Meyer et al., 1989, Fawcett et al., 1993), to the lowest cost (Goonatilake, 1990), in the shortest time (Haug, 1985, Fawcett & Office, 1992), including after sales service (Porter, 1986).

Graphical representation of a global value creation chain (focusing on factors favoring performance) is shown in the figure below:

Figure 1. Global value added chain



Source: Prasad & Sounderpandian (2003, p.242)

In order to achieve the above aim, to maintain supremacy over competitors and to obtain bigger profits, entities within groups (due to their relationship) have the ability to perform transactions that independent parties would not do. For here lies the importance of regulations in the field of financial accounting reporting, whose objective (among others) is also to ensure that the financial statements of entities holding related parties are not distorted by their presence or by transactions conducted with them.

In the same time, the prices of related party transactions, known as transfer pricing, and in particular their fiscal valence, are of an overwhelming and growing importance, both for MNE

and tax administrations, because these prices have a major impact on the fiscal outcome of the groups (and therefore on the level of taxes due by those).

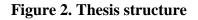
In this context, we considered that studying the "related party relationships" and how the "prices of transactions carried out between them" are fixed, is a multidisciplinary field analysis (accounting, auditing, taxation, corporate governance, etc.), complex and delicate at the same time, which can be subject to an extensive scientific research, whose result we hope to be interesting and to bring added value on this field knowledge.

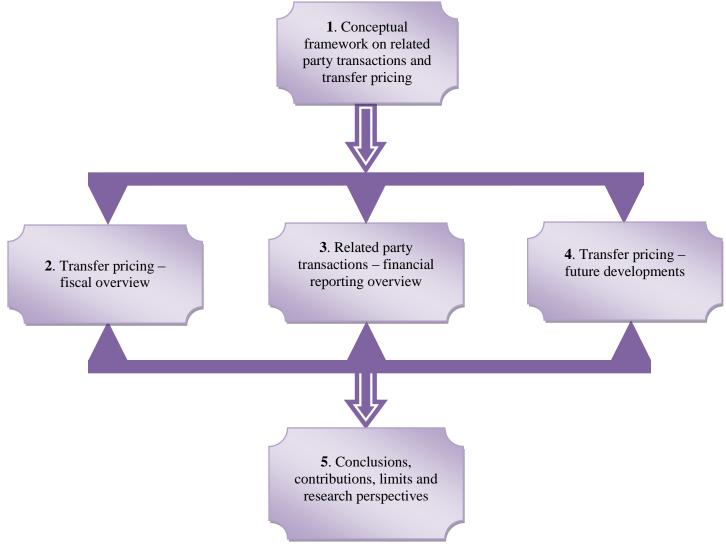
Therefore, the main objective of this scientific endeavor is the *development on related party*, *focusing on transfer pricing*. This field is of a relatively new importance for Romanian market (interest shown at the beginning of XXI century, after 2000), but it is highly debated and analyzed in developed countries since the second half of the twentieth century (primary variantes on transfer pricing legislation have been in force since the first half of the twentieth century in the UK - 1915 and USA - 1917).

This *fundamental objective is decomposed into four operational objectives* which have been achieved individually in the first four chapters of this study (the last chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the final conclusions, the contributions, limitations and the perspectives of research), as follows:

- ✓ Objective 1: Shaping the conceptual framework of related parties and transactions carried between them, with focus on transfer pricing issues, by relying on the results of previous academic research.
- ✓ Objective 2: Presentation and analysis of key aspects of transfer pricing regulations from a tax point of view, on three subsequent levels, namely: international, European and national.
- ✓ Objective 3: Presentation and analysis of key aspects of financial accounting regulation on related party existing at international, European and national levels, and also testing the compliance of Romanian companies with these regulations.
- ✓ Objective 4: Presentation of the directions in which the regulations on transfer pricing at international, European and national level is possible to be developped, and also evaluating the perception of Romanian professionals on transfer pricing.

In view of the above, the structure of the thesis can be illustrated as follows





Source: realized by author

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Any scientific approach is based on a specific research methodology that includes methods, techniques, procedures and tools used to achieve the proposed objectives.

As regards the present study, it was structured in such a way that the research methodology used to achieve the four operational objectives has been presented in detail in each chapter, which treats all by such an objective. This structure was chosen with the intention to highlight more clearly the relationship between the proposed objective, assumptions, methodology and results. The figure below shows the overall synthesis of the research methodology used to achieve the fundamental objective set at the beginning of this scientific endeavor.

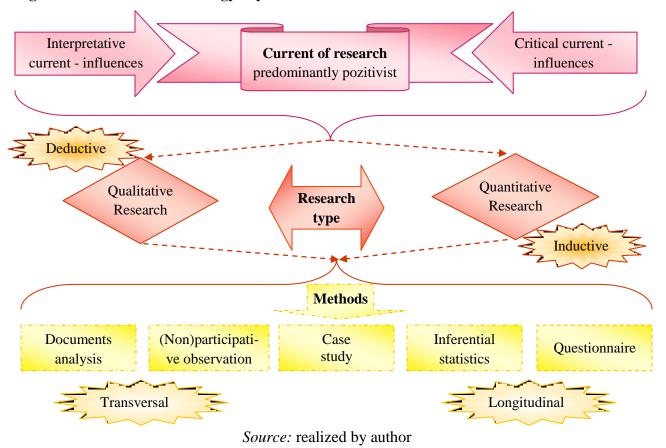


Figure 3: Research methodology - synthesis

SYNTHETIC PRESENTATION OF THE CONTENTS OF THESIS CHAPTERS

The aim of the **first chapter** of thesis was to shape the conceptual framework of related party transactions (by one side) and transfer pricing (by the other side) by reference to scientific literature.

To reach that goal, it was outlined, first, a sample of scholarly articles in the literature, which was then subject to quantitative and qualitative analysis.

With regard to *related party transactions*, they are perceived in the literature as a "double-edged sword," according to two opposite theories. One is *the efficiency theory*, according to which related party transactions are economically efficient, favoring the economies of scale, the reduction transaction costs, the increase of operational and financial profitability, the increase of return on assets, the increase of competitiveness, the risk reduction, the optimal allocation of internal resources etc. On the other hand, according to *the theory of conflict of interest*, related party transactions are considered harmful, favoring the expropriation of minority shareholders by the majority shareholders, the handling of financial results for various purposes, the misappropriation of assets, the overstatement of profits. To facilitate the propagation of beneficial effects associated with intra-group transactions and to counter the negative ones, the regulators and supervisors in the field should adopt a *contingent approach* in which these two theories coexist. In this way, the related parties transactions would be supported and their associated risks would be reduced, while the costs of monitoring requirements would not increase unduly.

With regard to *transfer pricing*, they are analyzed in the literature from two different perspectives. The *economic perspective* address transfer pricing from a technical point of view, separating them from political and economic context in which they are developed and used. According to this view, transfer prices are instruments of resource allocation within the group, using both for MNE coordination, in order to achieve the proposed objectives, and as well for the performance appraisal of subsidiaries / managers (they are therefore used for internal purposes). *Fiscal perspective* seeks to outline the tools to be implemented in order for the transfer pricing to not deviate from market values and to not distort competition and tax base in the various

jurisdictions in which a multinational operates (thus, they are used for external purposes). Even though there are arguments that support economic - tax decoupling (such as: tax prices are dominated by regulations and do not have the ability to capture the economic implications, or tempering the performance – tax relationship) and legislation allowing such release (e.g. USA) in practice, the economic and fiscal transfer pricing are highly integrated (due to simplicity, to the higher costs involved by two sets of reports, or to avoid the authorities to obtain information that can be used to reclassify transactions).

Therefore, related party transactions and transfer pricing that they behave is a multidisciplinary area of study (economics, accounting, taxation, corporate governance, audit, finance, marketing, legal science, international relations, etc.) involving many actors (corporations, accountants, governments, international organizations, lawyers, consultants, etc.). Apart from the complexity, difficulty and the level of knowledge or information that the effective management of related party transactions and transfer pricing requires, we conclude by quoting Rosenthal (2008), according to which the natural lens of these processes have to be the *correctness*.

The aim of the **second chapter** was the presentation and analysis of key aspects of the area of transfer pricing regulations existing on three subsequent levels, namely international, European and national.

At *international level*, the OECD Guidelines on transfer pricing is the main tool recognized by most states, which provide essential information and advice on how to set the transfer pricing for tax purposes. The report was first presented in 1979, was updated and adopted in 1995 and then re-updated in 2010.

The cornerstone behind this guide is the arm's length principle (en. Arm's Length Principle - ALP), whereby, transactions between related parties must be conducted as if there were no affiliate relationship, i.e. by respecting the market value. This standard is based on the principle of separation of entities and focuses on the nature and characteristics (circumstances) of transactions.

The essence of ALP principle is represented by the comparation of controlled transactions with similar independent transactions (a process called "comparative analysis"). The indicators that

are to be compared are the price or profit margin (gross or net). Depending on the availability of relevant information for the analysis, comparable independent transactions may be internal or external. The most important factors analyzed during the comparative analysis are: the characteristics of goods / services, the functional profile of entities (including assets, risks, functions), the contractual terms of transactions, the business strategy, the economic circumstances. The importance of these factors depends on the method used for determining transfer pricing, method which in turn depends on the availability of relevant information. The OECD Guidelines recognize five methods for determining transfer pricing, divided into two categories: traditional transaction methods (CUP, CPM, RPM), which requires a higher degree of comparability and transactional profit-based methods (TNMM, RPM). The purpose of the comparative analysis is to identify the range of the market which is in fact the range of values of price / profit of comparable transactions conducted by independent comparable companies.

The OECD report contains recommendations on transfer pricing documentation and their administration by the competent authorities (including aspects of APA procedure). The guide also includes details of some transactions considered most problematic in terms of transfer pricing, due to their substance and ambiguous characteristics - it is about transactions involving intangible assets, services, cost sharing arrangements, business restructuring.

At *European level*, the European Commission attaches great importance to the transfer pricing because they have the ability to influence the functioning of the internal market. The Commission acknowledges the OECD work in this area and is a supporter of the principle of market value. The EU Member States have concluded an arbitration agreement which is a tool for eliminating double taxation arising on transfer pricing adjustments made by the tax authorities with the purpose to comply with ALP principle. In order to find solutions to help the practical implementation of arbitration convention, the European Commission proposed, in 2002, the establishment of an European Forum on transfer pricing. Since then, the Forum agenda widened, and it seeks to find pragmatic solutions to problems involved during the practical application of transfer pricing and, at its recommendations, the Council adopted two codes of conduct regarding TP (one on the application of the arbitration convention and one on transfer pricing documentation).

The European Commission proposed, in 2011, a model for a Directive on a common consolidated tax base, which aims to consolidate the tax base of group companies with the EU. So far Member States have not reached a consensus on the adoption of the Directive, most of them arguing that the project do not comply with subsidiarity principle, restricts their sovereignty on direct taxes matters and results in a reduction of tax revenues. As far as the draft directive will be approved in the future, the transfer pricing formalities for tax purposes will disapear for entities that are part of a tax group under the Directive.

At *national level*, the transfer pricing tax legislation follows the OECD principles and it has been implemented relatively recent. The detailed regulations and methodology for transfer pricing setting were introduced in the Romanian legislation only in 2004, with the entry into force of the Tax Code and its Implementing Norms. The Romanian legislation contains provisions on transfer pricing documentation (which follow the principles of the EU Code of Conduct in this area) and the procedure for issuance of advance pricing agreements. If authorities conclude that a transaction carried out between related parties does not respect the market value, they have the right to adjust the proceeds from the transaction and tax them accordingly with a 16% profit tax rate (plus interest and late penalties).

Although the domestic legislation in the area of transfer pricing has developed quite a lot in the last period, we consider that it should be deepened by adding at least the following aspects: i) the minimum threshold above which is necessary to prepare transfer pricing documentation (for to avoid any uncertainty and unnecessary costs) and ii) the introduction of annual tax reporting requirements on transfer pricing (to facilitate the assessment of risky transactions from the tax authorities side).

It should also be noted that transfer pricing regulations is a dynamic area, continuously updated by the competent bodies at international, European and national level to meet the changing realities of the globalized economy. On the other hand, as mentioned in the OECD report, tax transfer pricing is not an exact science, but rather is based on professional judgment in conjunction with knowledge of at least: TP legislation, operational activities of the entity analyzed and transaction specificity for which transfer pricing under market value principle are to be determined. The aim of the **third chapter** is the presentation and analysis of accounting regulations on related party at international, European and national level, and, as well, testing the compliance of Romanian companies with these regulations.

Therefore, in *the first part* of the chapter there were analyzed the provisions of international accounting standard IAS 24 - Related parties disclosures. Moreover there were presented the evolution and development of this standard and the similarities and differences between this standard and other international standards on the same topic (U.S. GAAP - ASB 850, JP GAAP - Statement 11). Then, we analyzed the existing regulations on related parties at European level and at national level.

As regards the domestic legislation, there was tested the level of formal harmonization between privisions of IAS 24 and the two Romanian rules governing accounting practices - OMF 3055/2009 for adoption of accounting regulations compliant with European Directives, respectively OMF 1286/2012 for approving the Accounting Regulations in accordance with international Financial Reporting standards applicable to companies whose securities are admitted to trading on a regulated market. Following this analysis it was concluded that the similarity of the first normative act with IAS 24 is 69% and the similarity of the second act is of only 12% (a paradoxical result, given that the purpose of this rule is even approval in accordance with IFRS regulations, and it was expected that the provisions regarding the related parties to be much closer to the requirements of IAS 24).

In the *second part* of the chapter, there was conducted an empirical study on Romanian companies listed on BVB in order to test the extent to which they exhibit, in the annual financial reports, information on related parties as required by IAS 24. In the same time, there was tested the level of information regarding the transfer pricing presented by the analyzed companies in their annual reports (despite the fact that there is no law requiring disclosure of such information).

Therefore, for each company in the sample and for each year of the study (2008 - 2012), there was calculated a disclosure index (DI) by quantifying the elements binding to be presented in accordance with IAS 24 versus actual items presented by the analyzed companies. For this index

there was calculated the *annual value* (DI for each company and for each year), the *aggregate value* (arithmetic mean of five years DI for each company), the *synthesized value* (arithmetic mean of DI values for each year and for all companies together) and the *global value* (arithmetic mean of DI for all companies and all years together).

The analysis results show that there are companies that, in some years, do not disclose any information regarding related parties, or disclose very little detail (DI value 0 or 0.06), but at the same time there are a lot of companies disclosing many aspects regarding their related parties (DI 0.84 value). On the other hand, the survey results clearly illustrate the evolution of disclosures regarding related parties during the period analyzed, as the DI values increased steadily between 2008-2011. In 2012 there was again a paradoxical result, because the value of DI decreased slightly from the previous period (by 0.02 points). This decrease is unexpected, even abnormal, especially considering that in 2012 all companies have prepared financial statements under IFRS referential, and normally the value of DI was expected to increase. During the collection of information from financial reports, it was noted that in 2012, compared to 2011, companies that have been reporting under IFRS financial statements have changed the template, giving more lengthy information on general accounting policies and on aspects regarding the application of IFRS, but failed to pose some information on related parties (it is about especially on information regarding the management remuneration term - specifically, companies have not included anymore the phrase stating that they did not pay pension obligations for management or not granted loans, guarantees or other benefits thereof).

In the second phase of the empirical study, we used the inferential statistics (correlation analysis and simple and multiple linear regression) to verify the dependency of disclosure index regarding related party on quantitative and qualitative factors, such as: turnover, total assets, net financial result, net assets, capital origin, nature of capital, shareholding structure, category listing on the stock exchange, the accounting referential on which financial statements are prepared, the quality of external auditors. The results of the analysis indicate that, in general, there is a medium to low correlation between the disclosure index and the ownership structure, on the one hand, and the quality of the external auditors, on the other hand, while between the other factors referred to above and DI there is no correlation. As regards information on transfer pricing, more than half of the analyzed companies make no reference to this issue. The remaining companies make general references, such as the existence of transfer pricing legislation in Romania, and certain companies mentioned some more specific aspect, such as declaring that the transfer pricing practices followed market values, indicating the methods used for determining transfer pricing etc. In the same time, the statistical analysis revealed that there is a medium correlation between the disclosures index on related parties and the disclosures on transfer pricing.

The objective of **chapter four** was, on the one hand, the presentation of directions in which it is possible to develop transfer pricing regulations on international, European and national level, and on the other hand, the presentation of Romanian professionals perception on certain transfer pricing issues.

Thus, *in the first part* of the chapter, there was presented the report known in the literature and specialty practice by the acronym BEPS - "Base Erosion and Profit Shifting". This report was issued by the OECD in February 2013 at the initiative of the G20 leaders following the June 2012 meeting and in July 2013 there was issued an Action Plan to implement BEPS.

As evident from its title, the goal of this report and its related action plan is to eliminate opportunities for erosion of the tax base and for profit shifting. Such possibilities are currently available to multinationals through apparently legal techniques (but non - ethical) that are favorable to their approach to pay taxes as low, much lower compared to the operations they carry out.

Four of the 15 actions of action plan are related to transfer pricing, and their completion will result in significant changes in OECD Guidelines. These actions include the alignment of tax paid with the operations performed in each jurisdiction, or, in other words, the economic substance of transactions (focusing on intangible assets used, the actual risk assumed and the level of capitalization required). In addition, the principle of transparency is likely to bring additional obligations for taxpayers regarding transfer pricing documentation. Specifically, they will have to provide to the tax authorities a holistic picture of a group's operations performed

globally by providing, in a required template, certain types of information (global income allocation, economic activity carried out in other jurisdictions, taxes paid in other states, etc.).

As many officials mentioned, BEPS project has the ability to significantly change the fundamental principles of international taxation. Naturally, changing international regulations on transfer pricing will determine the subsequent change of European and national regulations in the field.

Regarding the practical approach of the Romanian authorities on transfer pricing, this is a major objective of NAFA medium term strategy for 2012-2016. In the same time, it appears that the level of knowledge in the field of tax inspectors has increased significantly, the number of tax inspections on the subject is also the ever-growing, the same the transfer pricing adjustments made in order to align them with the market values (so far, the biggest adjustment made by the authorities in Romania was EUR 30 million).

In *the second part*, there was conducted an empirical study (through a questionnaire) on Romanian specialists in the financial – accounting field (CCF, CAFR and CECCAR members) in order to assess their perception on certain transfer pricing issues. The questionnaire was constructed using the funnel technique (which involves moving from general to specific) and the 19 questions were grouped into four distinct categories of information (general information about the respondents, information on domain knowledge, information on technical aspects of transfer pricing, information on the Romanian legislation in the field).

The interpretation of responses obtained showed that most respondents have been working in the area of financial advisory services / tax / accounting, and have a work experience of over 15 years (aspects that provide us with a certain level of assurance as regard the quality of responses).

As regards the personal knowledge on transfer pricing, most respondents evaluate themselves as having medium knowledge in this area, while in a national context the knowledge is regarded as weak. In the same time, according to the responses received, the attendance on courses / seminars on transfer pricing depends on the professional organization in which respondents are part (most of CCF members attended training courses at the initiative of the respective chamber,

while the majority of the CAFR and CECCAR members did not attend courses in the area and those who followed made it on own initiative). Furthermore, respondents believe that, for their professional development, it is useful to attend training courses and, as well, professional organizations should be involved in the training of specialists in the area of transfer pricing.

Moreover, respondents considered that transfer prices are important in the global business strategy and that, at the same time, these prices may be used as tools to manipulate the fiscal result. In their view, the most important factors that have the ability to counteract the transfer pricing handling for tax purposes are the legal regulations and the transparency of financial – accounting practices. The most important external factors causing difficulty of transfer pricing determination is the lack of detailed guidance and the lack of necessary technical knowledge while internal factors include: the lack of comparable transactions and the business features. The respondents believes that, in order to achieve a complete transfer pricing documentation, the process of its preparation should involve both specialists in the finance department and specialists from operational departments. As regards the Romanian companies, the professionals surveyed believe that they do not treat with sufficient attention the issues relating to transfer pricing and also that they are not able to provide clear and sufficient information on the prices they used in dealing with affiliates. However, the most important factors determining the companies in Romania to give importance on transfer pricing issues are the legislative regulations followed by the group policies.

As regards the Romanian legislation in the field, most respondents believe that as it stands, this is ambiguous and far too brief. In the same time, the respondents are of the opinion that the authorities in Romania do not have enough technical knowledge in the area of transfer pricing, that they have an attitude as abusive and apply the form of the law, not its substance. Most respondents belonging to the CCF and CECCAR believe that the obligation to prepare annual tax reporting relating to transfer pricing would not be beneficial, while most respondents from CAFR considered such a measure as beneficial. On the other hand, almost all respondents believe that the minimum threshold on the value of transactions under which the existence of transfer pricing file is not required would be an efficient legislative measure.

The last chapter, fifth, aimed to present the overall conclusions of the scientific approach which we are committed to, the own contributions that we believe we have manage to bring in the

knowledge on related party and transfer picing field, the research limitations and the future prospects of research in this complex area. These issues are discussed in the next section – "conclusions, contributions, limitations and research perspectives".

CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, LIMITS AND RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

General conclusions

As it was mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the primary objective of this initiative was to develop and deepen the knowledge on related party relationships, focusing on transfer pricing, goal which was achieved through the four operational objectives: i) a current state of knowledge in the field, ii) presentation and analysis of transfer pricing tax regulations iii) presentation and analysis of regulations in the field of financial-accounting reporting on related party, iv) presentation of directions in which it is possible to develop the regulations in the field of transfer pricing.

The first operational objective was achieved by analyzing academic research in our area of interest at the international level (as national literature in the field is less developed, since issues on related party transactions, respectively on transfer pricing, represent interest for local regulators and researchers from a relatively recent period of time - especially after year 2000), while for the following three objectives there were considered issues specific to our interest area existing at international, European and national level.

Each operational objective was developed under a different chapter, resulting in four chapters, which together converge towards the achievement of the fundamental objective and finalize the research that we have undertaken.

Therefore, in the first chapter there was defined the conceptual framework on related party transactions and on transfer prices by reference to scientific literature. Firstly, there was shaped a sample of articles by searching in three scientific databases using the terms "related party transactions" and "transfer pricing", sample which was then subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis. It was noted that related party transactions are perceived as a "double-edged sword," according to two diametrically opposed theories: the theory of efficiency (these transactions favoring economic development) and the theory of conflict of interest (that

transactions are harmful to economic progress). In order for the beneficial effects of related party transactions to be propagated and the negative ones to be offset, the solution lies in the adoption of a contigent approach, where the two theories to coexist. Transfer prices are analyzed in the literature from two different perspectives: economic perspective (which invloves a technical approach and separe these prices from the political and economic context in which they are used) and fiscal perspective (which is trying to develop tools in order for the transfer pricing to not deviate from market values). In practice, these two approaches are highly integrated.

In the *second chapter* there was analyzed the main aspects of transfer pricing tax regulations. Internationally, the OECD transfer pricing guide provides the essential information and guidance for determining transfer prices under free market rules. This guide is built around the fundamental principle of the market value (i.e. arm's lenght principle), according to which the related party transactions should be conducted as if there were no affiliate relationship. This principle focuses on the nature and circumstances of the transaction and its application is based on the comparative analysis which generally takes into considerations five factors: characteristics of the goods / services, functional profile (active, risk, functions), terms of trade, business strategy, economic circumstances. The importance of these factors depends on the method chosen for determining transfer pricing (CUP, CPM, RPM, TNMM, PSM), which in turn depends on the availability of relevant information. At European level, the European Commission recognizes the work of the OECD in the field of transfer pricing, and plans not to double the OECD efforts, but trying to find pragmatic solutions for practical application of OECD principles within the European Community. Nationally, transfer pricing legislation has been implemented recently, however, both the legislation and knowledge of the tax authorities in the field have been developed a lot lately. This fact emerges from the case study as well, which compares the transfer pricing legislations of Romania and Poland, showing that there are no differences between the core principles implemented in these two legislations.

In the *third chapter* there were analyzed the key aspects of regulations on financial reporting regarding the related party relationships and transactions. The international standard that outlines how to report these types of relationships and transactions is IAS 24 -, Related party disclosures". This standard is recognized at European level and adopted gradually at national level. After testing the degree of formal harmonization of IAS 24 and OMF 3055/2009,

respectively OMF 1286/2012, it was concluded that the similarity of the first piece of legislation with the international standard is 69 % and the similarity of the second law is only 12% (an abnormal result, because the purpose of this rule is actually the Romanian regulatory approval in accordance with IFRS, and there was expected that the provisions regarding the related parties to be much closer to the requirements of IAS 24). After the empirical study conducted on Romanian companies listed on BVB (by taking into account the financial reports prepared by them for the last five years, i.e. 2008 to 2012) it was concluded that, overall, the disclosure requirements of IAS 24 in respect of related parties are observed on a medium level (overall DI = 0.42 points). In the meanwhile, the factors influencing somewhat disclosure of such information is the shareholding structure and the quality of auditors, while factors such as: turnover, total assets, net financial result, net assets, capital origin, nature of capital, listing category, accounting referential, have no influence on the level of information on related parties disclosed by the analyzed companies in their financial reports. On the other hand, over half of the companies in the sample make no reference to their transfer pricing practice, some of these make general references on the transfer pricing legislation and some companies present certain more concrete aspects (the compliance with market value, the method used to determine transfer pricing). At the same time, the study conducted reveal the fact that there is a medium correlation between the related party disclosures index and the information on transfer pricing presented by companies in their financial reporting.

In the *fourth chapter* there were presented the directions in which it is possible to develop the transfer pricing regulations. Internationally, the OECD is working to eliminate the potential for erosion of the tax base and profit shifting. In this regard, in 2013 there were issued the report and the related action plan collectively known as BEPS ("Base Erosion and Profit Shifting"), whose implementation will have significant effects on the transfer pricing regulations. At European level, given that the European Union recognizes the OECD work in this area, is more than certain that the BEPS project will significantly influence the Community rules on transfer pricing. Finally, the changes that will take place at international and European level in the field of transfer pricing will be reflected, naturally on the national regulations. In terms of perception of specialists from Romania on transfer pricing issues, from the empirical study conducted among members of the CCF, CAFR and CECCAR there was concluded that the professionals

indicate their level of knowledge in the field is a medium one, and thd evel of knowledge in a national context as a weak one. Moreover, the respondents consider that transfer prices are used as mechanisms for handling tax income, and, among the most important factors that have the capacity for countering such practices are the legal regulations and the transparency of financial-tax practices. Difficulty of determining the correct transfer pricing is due to external factors (lack of detailed guidance, lack of technical knowledge in the field) and to internal factors (absence of comparable transactions, business characteristics). As regards the companies from Romania, according to experts interviewed, they do not pay enough attention to transfer pricing and are not able to provide clear and sufficient information on prices used in affiliates dealings. However, the most important factor determining the Romanian companies to provide some importance to transfer pricing is the legislative requirements. Notwithstanding the above, as regards the Romanian legislation, the respondents consider it ambiguous and too brief. A potential modification such as the introduction of the obligation to prepare annual tax reporting on transfer pricing is seen as non-beneficial by the respondents, while a set threshold below which the supporting documentation is not needed is perceived as an efficient measure.

In conclusion, related party transactions and transfer pricing is not only a complex and delicate field, but also a dynamic one, continuously updated by the competent bodies to suit the changing realities of the globalized economy and to eliminate the negative effects, which, due to intrinsic characteristics, it can have on the society as a whole.

Own contributions

In this section there will be presented the added value that we believe we managed to bring on the knowledge on the related party transactions and transfer pricing.

Thus, the major contributions brought at the conceptual level refer to:

✓ Through the study on international scientific literature there was gleaned the following: i) related party relationships are addressed in the literature in terms of two opposing theories, namely the theory of efficiency and the conflict of interest theory, in practical approach these theories should coexist ii) transfer pricing are analyzed through two persectives, namely economic perspective and fiscal perspective perspective, in practice, these are highly integrated.

- ✓ Presentation and analysis of conceptual approaches to transfer pricing existing at international, European and national levels. We believe that the way we analyzed the main tools of transfer pricing regulations (arm's length principle, comparative analysis, indicators compared, the methods of transfer pricing, etc.) by providing examples that simulate real situations allows practitioners the opportunity to become familiar with these concepts, thus facilitating their practical application.
- ✓ Making a radiography of the Romanian legislation on transfer pricing by reference to the Polish law in the same area, which revealed the aspects that should be improved in the Romanian legislation.
- ✓ Presentation and analysis of conceptual approaches regarding financial reporting on related party relationships and transactions, existing at international, European and national levels.
- Presentation of possible directions for the development of regulations on transfer pricing on international, European and national levels.

At an empirical level, the main contributions made by this scientific approach refers to:

- ✓ Through analysis on the level of accounting harmonization (using Jaccard coefficients) of IAS 24 and Romanian accounting rules on related party was established that the degree of similarity between MoF Order 3055/2009 and IAS 24 is 69%, while degree of similarity between MoF 1286/2012 and IAS 24 is only 12% (an abnormal and unexpected result).
- ✓ Through the study performed on companies listed on the BVB there was made a radiography of the practice of Romanian companies regarding disclosure on related parties in their annual reports.
- ✓ The same study delineates the factors that influence the ability of disclosures on related party in annual reports.
- Moreover, the study provides a picture of the practice of Romanian companies regarding disclosure on transfer pricing in their annual financial reports.
- ✓ Through empirical study on Romanian professionals in finance accounting field there was made an overview of their perception about the area of transfer pricing, focusing on the following: the level of knowledge, technical aspects and issues related to transfer pricing legislation.

In conclusion, we dare to believe that the fundamental objective set at the beginning of this research, namely the development and deepening the knowledge on related party relationships, focusing on transfer pricing, has been reached.

Limits

Any scientific approach involves, in addition to the significant contributions that it can brought to the knowledge in the area of interest, certain limitations that are inherent. In this case, we believe that the main limitations of the scientific approach conducted by us are as follows:

- ✓ Because the literature in the field is extremely vast, making a comprehensive study was impossible, which is why it was created a methodology for limiting the scope of analysis to achieve the proposed objective. Moreover, due to the inherent subjectivity of the researcher, it is possible that some articles of the sample have been classified incorrectly in certain categories of analysis (e.g. field, research topic, research perspective).
- ✓ Analysis of key aspects on: transfer pricing, financial reporting on related party relationships and transactions, possible directions for development of regulations on transfer pricing may be influenced by the inherent subjectivity of the researcher.
- ✓ Making a radiography of Romanian legislation in the field of transfer pricing compared to many state laws would help in drawing several shortcomings of the Romanian legislation, and therefore the proposal of several solutions for improvement (we limited the comparison with Polish law for lack of space, to not expand research too long and to not get bored).
- ✓ The empirical study on the Romanian companies was limited to the availability of information required (although the initial sample was 70 companies, for each year of the five years analyzed, there were some companies for which the needed information was unavailable).
- ✓ The results of empirical study conducted on the Romanian specialists in the financial accounting field may not be representative, given that the response rate is quite small compared to the actual number of emails succesfully sent. Moreover, the questions are general in nature because we wanted to avoid requiring a great effort from the respondents (and thus obtaining a possible response rates even lower).

Finally, we express our conviction that the fundamental objective of the research, namely the development and deepening the knowledge on related party relationships, focusing on transfer pricing, was not jeopardized, essentially, by the limits shown above.

Research perspectives

Regarding prospects for future research in this area, they are largely related to the desire to annihilate the limits of the research presented in the previous section. Therefore, we believe that in the future, further research could be carried out, such as:

- ✓ Extending the study on the literature, possibly outlining a targeted strategies that take into account, from the start, only articles stated by reference to transactions between related parties, respectively transfer pricing (possibly starting from topics of the journals where the articles are published).
- ✓ Make a radiography of transfer pricing Romanian legislation by comparing it with transfer pricing legislation of several countries (possibly with legislation of all 28 EU Member States, or with that of the OECD Member States, or with that of the first 10 to 20 countries around the world considered to have the most developed legislation in this area) in order to propose effective solutions to improve the Romanian legislation, starting from the experience of other countries.
- ✓ Extending the study on related party disclosures in the financial statements on a larger sample of companies, by including in the research companies listed on Rasdaq, or create a sample that includes the top 50 companies (based on indicators and net turnover and operating profit) of each county in Romania, or, why not, expanding research on foreign companies that are located in certain countries or certain listed on capital markets.
- ✓ Extending the study regarding the level of information on related parties presented in the financial statements by including new influence factors such as operating industry, quality of management, etc.
- ✓ Replication of the study on related parties disclosures in the financial statements in the same form, but for the next two to three years following 2012 in order to dinamically evaluate the impact of adopting IFRS on disclosures made by the Romanian companies.

- ✓ Development of some research in order to determine the factors that would have the ability to compel companies to comply with the requirements of IAS 24 regarding the disclosures on related parties.
- ✓ Extending the sudy on perception of Romanian professionals on transfer pricing issues by developing more technical questions to assess the practical difficulties and to propose possible solutions to address them.
- ✓ Carried out certain studies in order to assess the impact of BEPS to the regulation and practice of transfer pricing.

Finally, we wish to express our belief that the many research perspectives outlined above merely reiterate once again that the related party transactions and transfer pricing is a complex and vast filed, being an inexhaustible source of research due to the major influence that it has on the development of businesses and, in a last instance, on the development of the society as a whole.

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D. Legislation

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E. Web pages of companies listed on BVB (chapter 3)

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