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ACCOUNTING TREATMENT OF DIRECT CONTRACT COSTS

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Abstract

This article examines the content and application of the provisions of the National Accounting Standard "Construction Contracts," the General Plan of Accounting Accounts, and other normative acts related to contractual cost accounting. The results presented mainly refer to issues related to direct contractual costs, such as the classification and characteristics of costs in construction contracts, the recognition, evaluation, documentation, accounting, and disclosure of information related to contractual costs in financial statements. These aspects are the result of changes made in the National Accounting Standards and the General Plan of Accounting Accounts, which were developed based on Directive 2013/34/EU and the General Framework for Financial Reporting and came into effect on January 1, 2020.

To address the aforementioned issues and ensure proper implementation of national accounting regulations, it is recommended to review the composition of direct contractual costs in accordance with legislative provisions, specify the recognition and evaluation of contractual costs, include a separate section in the accounting policies of construction entities for primary documents and accounting registers established by the entity independently based on the specificity of the activity and information needs of users, properly account for direct contractual costs, and make changes to accounting programs to generalize the information needed to prepare financial statements and their explanatory notes.

Key words: costs; direct contractual costs; evaluation; financial statements; recognition.

JEL Classification: M-41

I. INTRODUCTION

The integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European economic space requires harmonization of the accounting of local entities with the requirements of European Union (EU) Directives and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). This need refers specifically to the accounting of contractual costs, which is one of the most difficult and important sectors of any construction organization's accounting.

The method of accounting for operations related to construction contracts in the local practice is regulated by the National Accounting Standard (NAS) "Construction Contracts", which was implemented on 01.01.2014 and developed based on the provisions of the EU Directive and International Accounting Standard (IAS) 11 "Construction Contracts". Changes were made to the NAS and the General Chart of Accounts, including those related to the accounting and presentation in financial statements of contractual costs, which came into effect on January 1, 2020. These changes were developed based on the provisions of the Directive 2013/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on the annual financial statements, consolidated financial statements and related reports of certain types of undertakings, as well as the General Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting. Moreover, the general method of recognition, evaluation and accounting of costs in construction organizations is regulated by the Methodical Guidelines on the Accounting of Production Costs and Calculation of the Cost of Products and Services (hereinafter referred to as the Methodical Guidelines).

This article examines the aspects of direct contractual cost accounting resulting from the changes made in the NAS "Construction Contracts" and other national accounting regulations, which relate to:

- classification and characteristics of contractual costs;
- criteria for recognizing contractual costs;
- rules for evaluating contractual costs;
- documenting contractual costs;
- method of accounting for direct contractual costs;
- presentation of information on contractual costs in financial statements.

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II. MATERIALS AND METHODS APPLIED

In this research, European accounting regulations, International Financial Reporting Standards, national legislative acts, the results of investigations by domestic and foreign scholars were used. The research is based on a deductive approach from general to particular, starting from the current stage of knowledge of practical and theoretical aspects of contractual cost accounting. The study relies on the dialectical method with its fundamental elements: analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, as well as on methods related to economic disciplines - observation, comparison, selection, grouping, etc.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to the National Accounting Standard "Construction Contracts," contractual costs represent "the value of resources consumed and personnel costs for the execution of one or more construction contracts for the purpose of obtaining revenue, which are to be recovered by the beneficiary" (NAS "Construction Contracts," 2013, para. 4). According to the provisions of the Methodological Guidelines, costs represent "valued resources consumed for the manufacture of products/provision of services" (Methodological Guidelines, 2013, para. 5). We note that the NAS "Construction Contracts" contains specific elements of construction organizations related to the components of contractual costs presented in Figure 1:

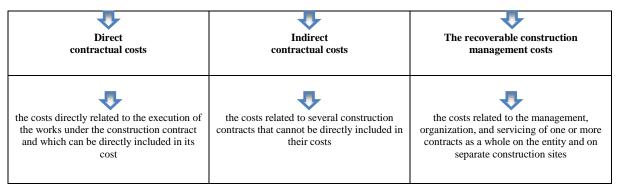


Figure 1 – Composition of costs in construction

Source: elaborated by the author based on the NAS "Construction Contracts"

From the information presented in Figure 1, the NAS "Construction Contracts" provides for the inclusion in the components of contract costs: direct contract costs, indirect contract costs, and construction overhead costs recoverable by the beneficiary (NAS "Construction Contracts", 2013). It is worth noting that the components of contract costs contain similar elements to those of production costs, the composition of which is established in the Methodological Guidelines. Also, according to point 12 of the Methodological Guidelines, production costs are divided into: direct and allocable material costs, direct and allocable personnel costs, and indirect production costs (Methodological Guidelines, 2013).

The NAS "Construction Contracts" provide for the requirements regarding the components of direct contract costs, which have been in force since 01.01.2014, as presented in Figure 2.

Direct contractual costs								
pre-contractual costs related to concluded contracts			direct costs of operating construction machinery and mechanisms	other direct costs				

Figure 2 – Composition of direct costs according contractuale

Source: elaborated by the author based on the NAS "Construction Contracts" (NAS "Construction Contracts", 2013)

Comparative analysis of the composition of direct costs provided in NAS "Construction Contracts" and in the Methodical Guidelines is presented in Table 1:

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Table 1. Groups and components of direct costs according to NAS and Methodical Guidelines

Groups and components of direct costs according to NAS and Methodical Guidennes							
NAS "Construction Contracts"	Methodical Guidelines						
NAS "Construction Contracts" Direct contractual costs including: 1. pre-contractual costs including: 1. pre-contractual costs: participation fees for tenders to obtain the contract; other similar costs; 2. direct material costs: 2. direct material costs: a) costs related to the salaries of personnel directly involved in technological operations and supervising the work specified in the contract; a) costs related to the salaries of personnel directly involved in technological operations and supervising the work specified in the contract; b) mandatory state social security contributions and mandatory health insurance premiums calculated on the salaries mentioned in point 3a) of this table; c) other direct costs related to personnel. 4. direct costs of operating construction machinery and mechanisms: a) costs related to personnel employed in the operation and servicing of machinery and equipment; b) costs related to personnel employed in the operation and servicing of machinery and equipment; c) mandatory state social security contributions and mandatory health insurance premiums calculated on the salaries mentioned in point 4b) of this table; d) depreciation of machinery and equipment; g) costs related to the transportation of machinery and equipment to/from the construction site; f) rental costs of machinery and equipment; g) costs related to the operation of machinery and equipment.	Methodical GuidelinesDirect costs including:1. direct and allocable material costs (related to service provision) including costs related to: materials that are an essential component for service provision; spare parts consumed for technological purposes; production services provided by third parties; all types of fuel, motor fuels and lubricants consumed for technological purposes; all types of energy (such as electricity, heat, compressed air, refrigeration, water) consumed for technological purposes; other direct and allocable material costs related to service provision.2. direct and allocable personnel costs including: remuneration for work performed, actual working time, calculated according to the forms and systems of remuneration applied by the entity; allowances and surcharges to salaries, calculated for achieved results; remuneration for annual and additional leave of personnel employed in the process of manufacturing products or providing services, or provisions made for this purpose, etc.; other remuneration for personnel directly employed in the production of products and/or provision of services; mandatory state social security contributions and mandatory health insurance premiums related to the remuneration of personnel directly employed in the production of services.						

From the information presented in Table 1, we can conclude that the nomenclature of contractual direct costs and production direct costs differs both in the naming of cost items and their composition. Thus, the direct contractual costs provided for in the "Construction Contracts" National Accounting Standard and in the Methodological Guidelines are divided into two groups: direct material costs and direct personnel costs. At the same time, the nomenclature of cost items provided for in the new accounting regulations is of a recommendatory nature and can be modified by the entity according to the specificity of its activity and the informational decision-making needs of users.

In our opinion, the contractual direct costs provided for in the NAS "Construction Contracts" should be divided into two groups:

- Direct material costs;
- Direct personnel costs.

This division will ensure a more rigorous control over the consumption of material and labour resources and, at the same time, will provide concrete information necessary for making economic and managerial decisions at all levels of entity management.

NAS "Construction Contracts" does not explicitly provide for grouping contractual costs by management periods, which significantly complicates their accounting and does not provide accurate information that is necessary for calculating the cost of construction-assembly or other types of works. In this context, we consider it reasonable to take into account the provisions of paragraph 6 of the Methodical Guidelines, according to which costs must be delimited by management periods as follows (Methodical Guidelines, 2013, para.6):

• *Current costs* - costs incurred and recognized in the current period (month, quarter, year) (for example, the cost of consumed materials, wages calculated for basic workers, consumed electricity);

• *Current costs* - costs incurred and recognized in the current period (month, quarter, year) (for example, the cost of consumed materials, wages calculated for basic workers, consumed electricity);

• *Preliminary costs* - costs that will be incurred in future periods, but are recognized in the current period (for example, provisions regarding the vacation of basic workers).

Thus, anticipated costs should not be taken into account when determining the size of current costs. At the same time, preliminary costs are included in current costs as well as in the cost of construction-assembly works.

In conclusion, we mention that the component of contractual costs according to NAS "Construction Contracts" contains some specific elements of construction organizations. This component differs from the cost structure established in the Methodological Guidelines for Cost Accounting of Production and Calculation of Product and Service Costs.

The component of contractual costs in NAS "Construction Contracts" also differs from that in IAS 11 "Construction Contracts." Thus, contractual costs according to IAS 11 "Construction Contracts" including:

• Direct costs related to the respective contract;

• Costs attributable to the contract activity in general and that can be allocated to the contract;

• Any other costs that can be specifically attributed to the beneficiary according to the terms of the respective contract.

If we refer specifically to the direct costs related to the contract, IAS 11 "Construction Contracts" presents its own treatment of their components: costs of materials used in construction, depreciation of technical installations and equipment used, as well as costs of transportation and rental, costs of design and direct technical assistance related to the contract, and other costs (IAS 11 "Construction Contracts"). The information presented denotes discrepancies regarding the typology of contractual costs, as well as the structural aspect of these costs in relation to the provisions stipulated in NAS "Construction Contracts."

Recognition involves determining the accounting period in which contractual costs can be recorded in the accounting and financial statements. According to the NAS "Construction Contracts," construction costs are recognized based on the following general criteria (NAS "Construction Contracts," 2013):

- They are directly related to creating assets (providing services) and can be included in their cost;
- They are confirmed by accounting documents, and their amount can be credibly evaluated;
- There is certainty that the entity will obtain future economic benefits from the use of the object.

According to IAS 11, contractual costs for which recovery is unlikely are immediately recognized as an expense. Such circumstances include contracts:

- That are not fully executable, meaning their validity is significantly in doubt;
- Whose completion depends on legislation or is the result of legal action;
- Related to properties whose confiscation or expropriation is certain;
- In which the beneficiary is not able to fulfill its obligations;
- In which the contractor is unable to fulfill its obligations.

Construction organizations face specific problems in recognizing costs because the construction contract's execution period may fall within or exceed a reporting period's duration. Thus, according to the NAS "Construction Contracts," if the construction contract was executed in a single reporting period, contractual costs are recognized in that period upon completion of the respective contract. If the construction contract is executed over several reporting periods, contractual costs are recognized by applying the stage of completion method for the contract (NAS "Construction Contracts," 2013).

Evaluation represents the process of determining the monetary value of accounting elements (Law on Accounting and Financial Reporting, 2017, Art.3). In economic practice, contractual costs are evaluated at the accounting value of stocks used in construction, depending on the current evaluation method, personnel costs,

depreciation of fixed assets used in the execution of construction contracts, and other costs that need to be included in the cost of construction services provided.

The recognized contractual costs must be confirmed by primary documents, including: fiscal invoices, accounting notes, handover minutes for construction-assembly works, consumption receipts, work receipts, order receipts, progress reports, calculation sheets, limit consumption sheets, record sheets, attendance reports, shift reports, etc., as well as calculations for allocating indirect contractual costs and other documents.

The requirements for drafting and applying primary documents related to costs are detailed in the literature and accounting regulations. Currently, standardized forms for production cost primary documents are missing, so entities use forms of self-developed documents, taking into account the specificities of their activities and informational needs. The elaborated documents must be approved by the entity's leader and attached to the accounting policies to avoid problems in justifying expenses for tax purposes. These documents must contain the mandatory elements provided by the Law on Accounting and Financial Reporting. Primary documents must be prepared during the operation, and if this is not possible, immediately after the operation or event.

The information from primary documents is summarized in accounting registers. In accordance with the Accounting and Financial Reporting Law, the entity establishes independently the nomenclature and structure of the accounting registers, but they must contain the following mandatory elements: the name of the register; the name of the entity that prepared the register; the start and end dates of the register and/or the period for which it is prepared; the date of the economic transactions, grouped in chronological and/or systemic order; the standards for recording economic transactions; the function, name, first name, and signatures of the persons responsible for preparing the register.

The information related to contractual costs recorded in primary documents and accounting registers is reflected in accounting accounts, whose operation is regulated by the General Chart of Accounts. Thus, in accordance with the General Chart of Accounts for the accounting of contractual costs and the calculation of the cost of construction and assembly works, construction organizations use the active calculation account 811 "Basic Activities".

In construction organizations, contractual costs are transformed into contractual expenses as the construction and assembly works are received and delivered. For the accounting of costs for services rendered and works executed, the active account 711 "Cost of sales" is designated, with the sub-account 7115 "Costs related to construction contracts" (General Chart of Accounts, 2013, 2019).

In accordance with the provisions of the NAS "Construction Contracts", pre-contractual costs are initially recorded as prepaid expenses (accounts 171 "Long-term prepaid expenses", 261 "Current prepaid expenses"), which are later included in contractual costs (account 811 "Core Activities") or reported as current expenses (accounts 713 "Administrative Expenses" or 714 "Other Operating Expenses") (NAS "Construction Contracts", 2013, article 28, General Plan of Accounts, 2013, 2019).

Pre-contractual costs are included in contractual costs if (NAS "Construction Contracts", 2013, article 27):

- they can be identified separately;
- they can be credibly estimated;
- there is a probability of concluding the contract.

Contractual direct costs may be reduced by the value of assets (technical installations, equipment, materials) sold, intended only for the execution of a specific contract.

In accordance with the requirements and composition of direct contractual costs provided by the NAS "Construction Contracts", construction organizations must prepare the accounting formulas presented in Table 2.

Cr.	Operation content	Corresponding accounts			
num ber		Debit	Credit		
1	 Pre-contractual costs related to concluded contracts: a) delegation costs; b) representation costs; c) participation fees for tenders to obtain the contract; a) other similar costs; 	811 811 811 811	226,532,261 etc. 226,521,522,544,261 226,532,261 etc. 261 etc.		
2	Direct material costs : cost of construction materials, cost of fuel, electricity, heat, compressed air, steam and water, other materials used in the process of executing the contract;	811	211,521,522,812 etc.		
3	Direct personnel costs:				

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Cr.	Operation content	Corresponding accounts			
num ber		Debit	Credit		
	a) costs related to the salaries of personnel directly involved in technological operations and supervising the work specified in the contract;	811	531		
	 b) mandatory state social security contributions and mandatory health insurance premiums calculated on the salaries mentioned in point 3a) of this table; 	811	533,541		
	c) other direct costs related to personnel.	811	532,544 etc.		
4	Direct costs of operating construction machinery and mechanisms:				
	a) costs of electricity, fuel, spare parts, and other materials used for maintenance and repair of machinery and equipment;	811	211,521,522,812 etc.		
	b) costs related to personnel employed in the operation and servicing of machinery and equipment;	811	531		
	c) mandatory state social security contributions and mandatory health insurance premiums calculated on the salaries mentioned in point 4b) of this table;	811	533,541		
	d) depreciation of machinery and equipment;	811	124,214		
	e) costs related to the transportation of machinery and equipment to/from the construction site;	811	521,522,544,812 etc.		
	f) rental costs of machinery and equipment;	811	521,522,544		
	g) costs related to mandatory insurance of machinery and equipment;	811	261,542		
	h) other costs related to the operation of machinery and equipment.	811	521,522,544,822,823 etc.		
5	Other direct costs: a) costs of transporting materials from the warehouse located on the construction site to the construction object, as well as from the central warehouse to the object;	811	211,521,522,544,812,822 etc.		
	b) costs of design and technical assistance directly attributable to the contract;	811	211,521,522,544,812,822 etc.		
	c) costs of borrowing directly attributable to the contract capitalized in accordance with NAS "Borrowing Costs";	811	511,512		
	d) costs related to litigation and claims recognized by the beneficiary or established on the basis of a court decision.	811	544,234,261 etc.		
	In case the beneficiary does not recognize the submitted claims, such costs are recognized as current expenses;	714	544,234,261 etc.		
	e) depreciation of intangible assets used directly in the execution of the contract;	811	113		
	f) costs of work and services provided by subcontractors and other third parties;	811	521,522,544,822 etc		
	g) mandatory insurance of personnel directly employed in construction work and construction carried out;	811	261,542		
	h) costs related to the security of the construction object;i) calculated depreciation of temporary constructions (not provided for in the list of titles);	811 811	521,522,531,533,541,544,822 214		
	j) provision made for warranty costs related to the construction contract;	811	426,538		
	k) costs of transporting workers to/from the construction object, as provided in the contract; and	811	521,522,544,822,823 etc.		
	a) other costs directly attributable to the construction contract.	811	521,522,544,822,823 etc.		

Source: developed by the author based on the NAS "Construction Contracts" and the General Plan of Accounts.

https://mf.gov.md/sites/default/files/legislatie/Planul%20general%20de%20conturi%20contabile.pdf

As the construction works are received and delivered to the beneficiaries, contractual costs are transformed into contractual expenses. Therefore, information regarding contractual expenses is presented in the profit and loss

statement. The presentation of financial statements is regulated by the provisions of the NAS "Presentation of Financial Statements" (NAS "Presentation of Financial Statements", 2019, art. 22), and of the explanatory note to the financial statements - by the provisions of the Accounting and Financial Reporting Law (Accounting and Financial Reporting Law, 2017, art. 22) and the National Accounting Standards "Construction Contracts" (NAS "Construction Contracts", 2013, pt. 37).

Thus, in accordance with art. 5 of the Accounting and Financial Reporting Law, the profit and loss statement is prepared by small, medium and large entities (Accounting and Financial Reporting Law, 2017, para. (2) and (3)), and the abbreviated profit and loss statement - by micro-entities and individuals registered as VAT payers (Accounting and Financial Reporting Law, 2017, para. (1)).

The profit and loss statement is prepared based on the information from the synthetic accounts and the summarized information in the sub-accounts of the revenue and expense accounts. Thus, the new format of the profit and loss statement reflects not only the total amount of sales revenue, but also the groups of revenue recorded in the sub-accounts of account 611 (sub-account 6115 "Revenue from construction contracts", row 013), and for expenses - not only the total cost of sales, but also the categories thereof recorded in the sub-accounts of account 711 (7115 "Costs related to construction contracts", row 023) (NAS "Presentation of Financial Statements", 2019).

It should be noted that the changes to the National Accounting Standards "Construction Contracts" as of January 1, 2020 also refer to point 51 regarding the identification of additional information on construction contracts to be presented in the explanatory note of entities that prepare complete financial statements (Amendments to NAS, 2019, p. 14 of the annex to MF Order no. 48/2019).

The explanatory note of entities that prepare complete financial statements, along with the information provided by the Accounting and Financial Reporting Law, must contain at least the following information:

- the amount of contractual revenue recognized during the reporting period;
- the amount of liabilities to beneficiaries arising from contractual works;
- information regarding contracts in progress at the reporting date;

• the amount of the provision created to compensate for the difference between the total expenses and total revenue related to a construction contract.

IV.CONCLUSION

Contractual costs constitute the fundamental accounting elements of any construction organization. They are characterized by certain particularities that result from the specific nature of construction activities.

The composition of contractual costs is established in the NAS "Construction Contracts" and includes: direct costs, indirect costs, and recoverable construction management costs for the beneficiary. In construction organizations, contractual costs are recognized based on the duration of the construction contract, either upon completion of the contract, if it falls within a management period, or at each stage of execution if the contract exceeds a management period.

As of January 1, 2020, changes were made to the NAS "Construction Contracts" in order to ensure compliance between national accounting regulations and Directive 2013/34/EU. Thus, in the case of construction contracts, problems arise regarding the identification, recognition, evaluation, documentation, accounting, and disclosure of information related to contractual costs in financial statements.

Currently, standardized forms of primary documents and accounting registers related to construction contracts are missing. This situation complicates the accounting of the aforementioned operations and does not ensure the comparability of information. To correctly apply the rules for accounting for contractual costs, it is recommended to:

- review the composition of contractual costs in accordance with the provisions of the NAS;
- specify the method of recognition and evaluation of contractual costs;

• include a separate department in the accounting policies of construction entities for primary documents and accounting registers established by the entity independently according to the specific activity and informational needs of users;

correctly account for direct contractual costs;

• make changes to accounting programs in order to generalize the necessary information for preparing financial statements and the explanatory note to them. The practical application of the above recommendations will provide all categories of users of financial statements with accurate information necessary for making economic and managerial decisions.

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