

OCC
The Order of Certified Accountants
PORTUGAL



Dra. Paula Franco, President of the Order of
Certified Accountants - OCC, Portugal

Professional Background and Role

Please briefly introduce yourself.

I am a certified accountant, tax consultant, and trainer. I worked in the OCC's technical department and subsequently served as an advisor to the two presidents who preceded me. On March 5, 2018, I became the third president (bastonária) in the institution's history. In addition to leading the OCC, I was also president of the Union of Portuguese-Speaking Accountants and Auditors (UCALP) and a member of expert groups at international organizations, specifically EFAA and CILEA, where I held one of the vice-presidencies of the latter Latin American organization.

How would you describe the role of your organization in the accounting profession and the broader Mediterranean community?

The OCC is one of the largest professional associations in Portugal, with approximately 68,000 members. It plays a crucial role in our business community, which is overwhelmingly comprised of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

Mediterranean Voices



For example, during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, these professionals were crucial in ensuring the support that the portuguese government had designed and made available to businesses. It was our tireless work that kept thousands and thousands of companies afloat. We were even called "the ventilators of companies."

Profession, Future and Sustainability

In your view, what are the main challenges and opportunities currently facing the accountancy profession?

I believe this is the most important profession in economics, and therefore carries a huge social responsibility. The government and companies are highly dependent on the work of these professionals. What we do can make all the difference in the country's future. However, due to constant changes in legislation, the need for updating and retraining is constant. Therefore, I believe that the need for professional training, along with sustainability, artificial intelligence, and attracting and retaining talent, are major challenges facing both those practicing this profession and the entity that regulates it—in this case, the OCC. Among peers, I advocate fostering a culture based on loyalty. Professional colleagues cannot be seen as competitors.

Mediterranean Voices



FCM Sustainability Conference | 2024

How is your organization preparing its members for technological developments such as digitalization, artificial intelligence, and ESG?

In all these areas you listed, we have been promoting training, conferences, and awareness-raising initiatives for certified accountants for several years now. Our participation in several international organizations—such as EFAA, IFAC, CILEA, and FCM—is also crucial for us to gain insights from professionals in the same field around the world.

What is the accountant's role in fostering economic and social sustainability today and in the future?

We want certified accountants to be central players in companies non-financial reporting. This would be a way to deepen their role as business partners and the invisible partners of entrepreneurs. If micro and small businesses delay or resist implementing the guidelines on economic and social sustainability, sooner or later, they will fall behind. This will be irreversible.

Relationship with FCM

What does being part of FCM mean to you and your organisation?

A source of pride and honor. In our current era, we are submerged in information, and only with credible, well-founded, and solid knowledge from other regions, and through the exchange of experiences, will we be able to progress. Therefore, learning from everyone we interact with is essential.



Mediterranean Voices



What benefits would you like to highlight from your participation in the FCM network?

OCC organized a major conference on sustainability at its Lisbon facilities in spring 2024, with representatives from the FCM. The proposed theme for the event was "Mediterranean ESG Framework." The conclusions were very interesting. The first is that accounting is the language of business that unites professionals. And the second is that only accounting will enable a more appropriate transition to a sustainable model and a more prosperous society. Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go in terms of sustainability. And only with multidisciplinary teams, including accountants and auditors, will the reliability of the information produced be guaranteed. Only then will it be possible to create a global corporate reporting system.

Is there a specific topic you would like to see FCM focus on more strongly in the coming years?

All those who are crucial to the growth of a profession that is fundamental in every company, every city, every country, and every continent. As someone said, I don't know if certified accountants will be able to save the world, but they will certainly make it a healthier and more desirable place to live.

Personal Dimension

If you could choose one Mediterranean destination for a short getaway, which one would it be — and why?

I recently visited Malta on a family trip and had a wonderful time. We thoroughly enjoyed the culture, hospitality, cuisine and beauty of the island.

Mediterranean Voices

Final Message

What message would you like to share with your fellow professionals and the wider FCM community?

I am committed, as the leader of an organization that is part of the FCM, to continuing to share and disseminate best practices and knowledge. The goal is always the same: to strengthen the prestige of this profession, anywhere in the world.

