



2025

Business in Serbia – a CFO perspective

TPA Serbia
Research





RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this research is to gain insight into market trends within the economy, as well as into the reorganization plans of legal entities from the perspective of finance executives. Special attention is given to the challenges faced by finance departments in both global and domestic companies. The insights and findings are intended to support CFOs, as well as managers from other departments, in improving the quality of planning and decision-making. A total of fifty CFOs participated in the study.

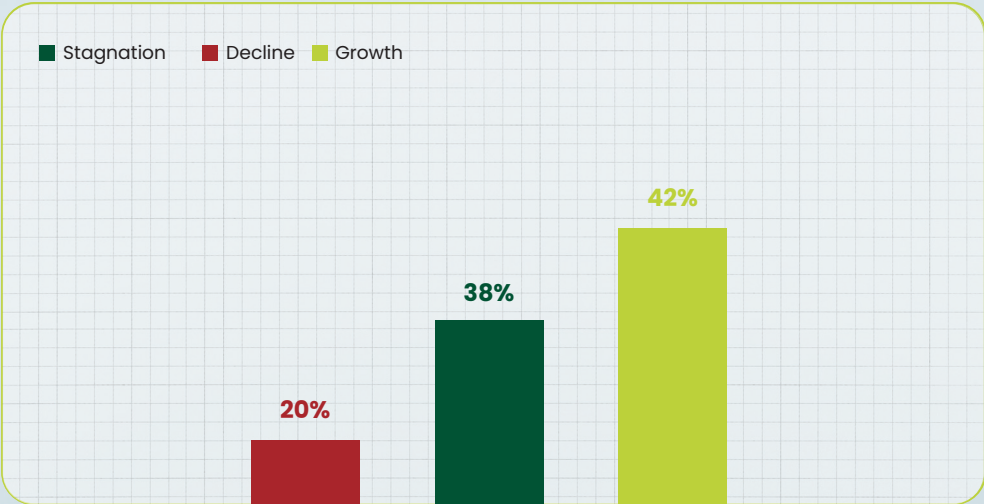
RESEARCH FIELDS

Global and local market conditions in the Republic of Serbia raise several key questions:

- What are the most important trends in economic developments?
- What are the strategic priorities in corporate operations?
- Which business risks are perceived by executives as the most significant?
- When is the implementation of artificial intelligence planned in any segment of the company's operations?
- How do companies intend to invest their excess liquidity?

The research findings will serve as a roadmap for improving the planning process, with the aim of optimally managing corporate resources and making well-informed decisions.

Based on your financial statements, did your business experience revenue growth or decline in H1 2025 compared with H1 2024?

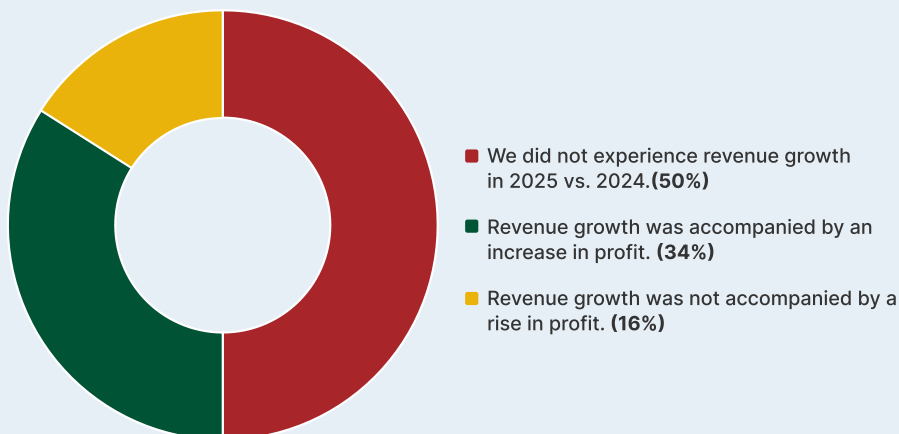


Most companies reported revenue growth in the first half of 2025, indicating a positive business trend and a relatively stable market environment. However, a considerable portion of firms showed no change, while one fifth recorded a decline, pointing to a slowdown in economic activity. This contrast is further emphasized when compared to last year’s survey, in which nearly 70% of companies reported revenue growth during comparable periods.



Bojan Žepinić
Managing Partner,
TPA Serbia

If your business experienced revenue growth in H1 2025 compared to H1 2024, was this increase accompanied by higher or lower profitability?



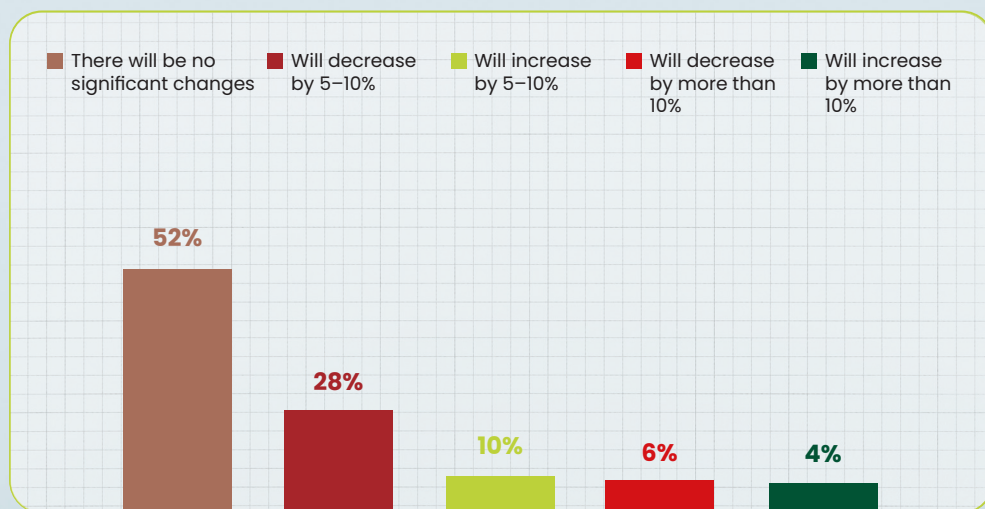
Half of the companies did not achieve revenue growth in 2025, indicating a challenging market environment, now also confirmed by macroeconomic indicators. Nevertheless, one third of firms reported growth in both revenue and profit, demonstrating that certain sectors managed to maintain efficiency and business stability. In contrast, 16% of companies experienced revenue growth without an accompanying increase in profitability, suggesting ongoing pressure on costs and margins.



Bojan Žepinić

Managing Partner,
TPA Serbia

How do you expect the total number of employees in your company to change from January 2025 to January 2026?



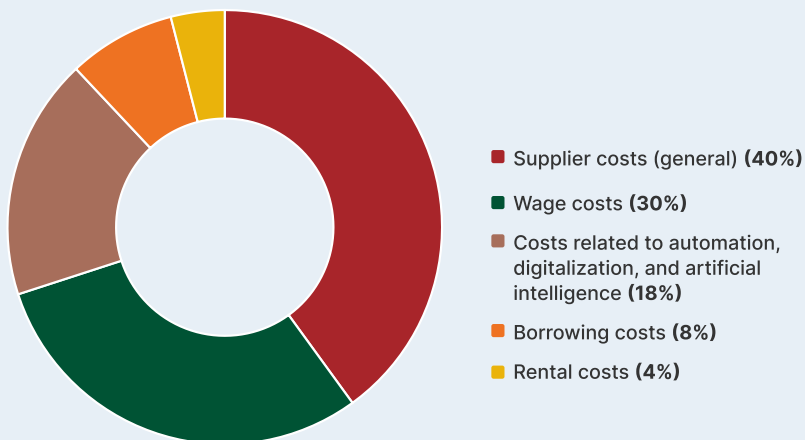
The findings indicate that most companies (52%) do not expect significant changes in their workforce, reflecting a stabilization of business expectations after a period of intense adjustments due to inflation and rising operational costs. Meanwhile, a relatively high share of respondents (34%) anticipate workforce reductions, highlighting continued pressures on cost optimization, digitalization, and process automation. A smaller portion of companies (14%) expects to increase headcount, likely in sectors experiencing growing demand and investment inflows. Overall, this pattern of responses points to a stabilizing labor market with targeted adjustments in sectors facing slower growth.



Ognjen Jovanović

Director of Accounting & Payroll Department,
TPA Serbia

Which of the following expenses do you expect to increase the most in your 2026 budget compared to 2025?



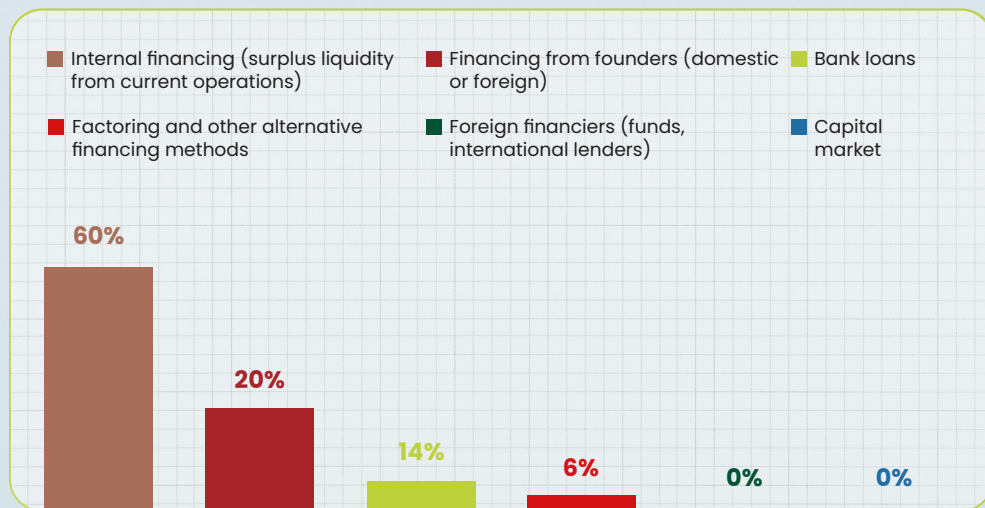
The largest proportion of respondents (40%) anticipate an increase in supplier costs, reflecting ongoing pressure on input prices. This trend is likely influenced by global fluctuations in energy, raw material, and transportation costs, as well as persistent domestic inflationary pressures. Wage growth is expected to be driven both by increases in the minimum wage and employers' efforts to retain skilled staff. Rising costs associated with automation, digitalization, and the adoption of artificial intelligence indicate that many organizations plan to invest in technological transformation to boost productivity and competitiveness. In comparison, increases in borrowing and rental expenses are expected to be more moderate, suggesting relative stability in these areas.



Jelena Hadžić

Director of the Audit Department,
TPA Serbia

What will be your main funding source in 2025?



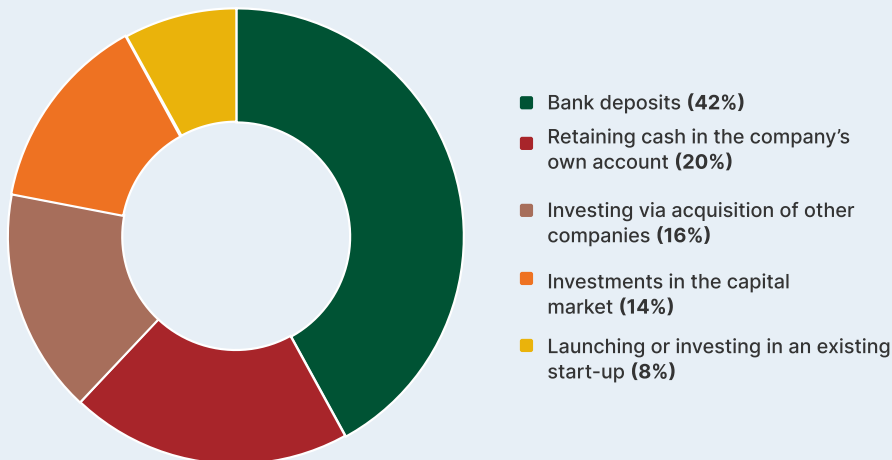
The predominant reliance on internal financing (60%) reflects an environment in which interest rates are gradually declining but still remain above previous cycle levels, prompting companies to focus on liquidity and adopt a conservative management approach. The limited use of alternative financing sources and capital markets reflects the structure of Serbia's financial system, in which the banking sector remains the primary channel for lending, exercising caution amid global uncertainties. Overall, CFO expectations suggest a cautious investment strategy in 2025, with an emphasis on strengthening internal financial discipline and pursuing selective borrowing.



Ognjen Jovanović

Director of Accounting & Payroll Department,
TPA Serbia

How do you manage, or how would you manage, excess corporate liquidity?



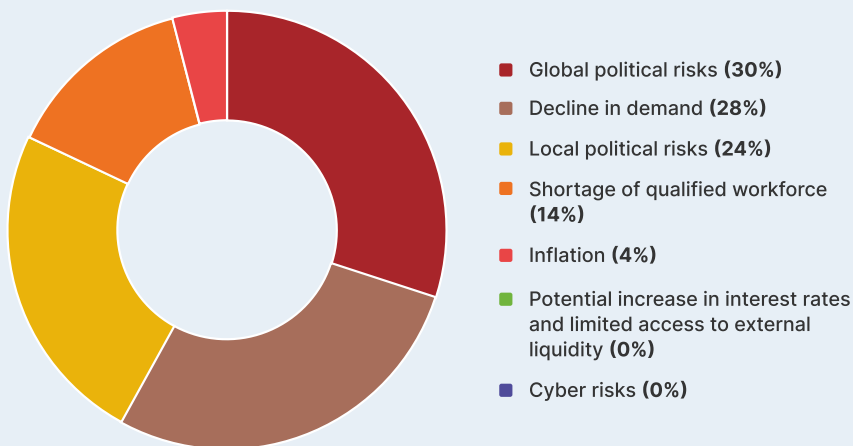
The findings show that most companies favor security and liquidity (62% combining deposits and holding cash), while a smaller share views surplus liquidity as an opportunity for growth and investment (38% combining acquisitions, capital market activity and startup involvement). Overall, companies seek to balance capital preservation with value creation, maintaining a distinctly conservative stance.



Jelena Hadžić

Head of Audit Department,
TPA Serbia

Which of the following factors do you anticipate will present the greatest risks to your business in 2026?



According to the available data, the most significant business risks for 2026 are global political instability and a decline in demand, indicating that companies are most concerned about uncertainty in the international environment and a potential drop in consumer activity. Local political risks also account for a substantial share, reflecting domestic uncertainty. The shortage of qualified workforce represents a moderate, though still relevant, challenge. Inflation, potential interest rate increases, and cyber risks are currently considered the least concerning factors.

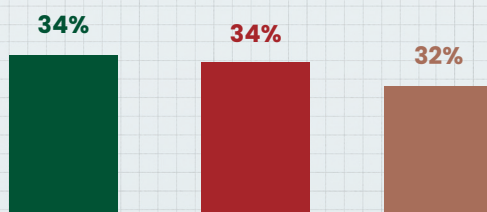


Thomas Haneder

Managing Partner,
TPA Group

In H1 2025, the Serbian economy experienced significantly lower GDP growth, driven by domestic political challenges and global economic trends. Although GDP increased by roughly 2%, this was below all prior projections. Have you adjusted your company's projected budget in response to this?

- Yes, we adjusted the projected budget to the decline in business activity, as it is estimated that the GDP decline will affect our company's revenue in 2025
- We did not consider the impact of changes in macroeconomic conditions on business.
- No, we did not adjust the projected budget to the decline in business activity, as it is estimated that the GDP decline will not affect our company's revenue in 2025.



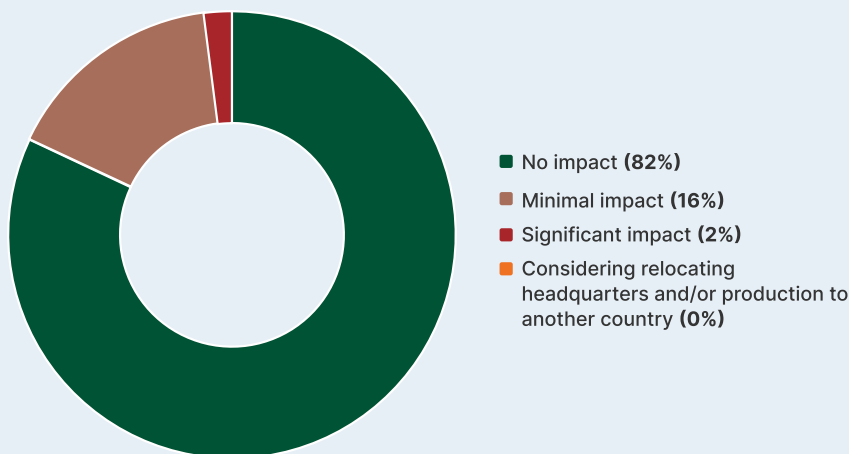
Slower GDP growth is not altering plans for most companies. Despite Serbia's slower economic growth in the first half of 2025, companies have responded differently when it comes to adjusting their financial plans. According to the survey, 34% of firms revised their budgets in anticipation of lower revenues due to weaker GDP, while 32% do not expect the slowdown to impact their operations and have left their projections unchanged. Another 34% report that they have not considered the potential effects of macroeconomic changes on their business results. These results indicate a split within the business sector between companies actively adapting to new economic conditions and those that do not yet view them as a risk.



Miloš Đukanović

CFO,
Henkel

Does the increase of tariffs to 35% on Serbian exports to the USA affect your company's business?



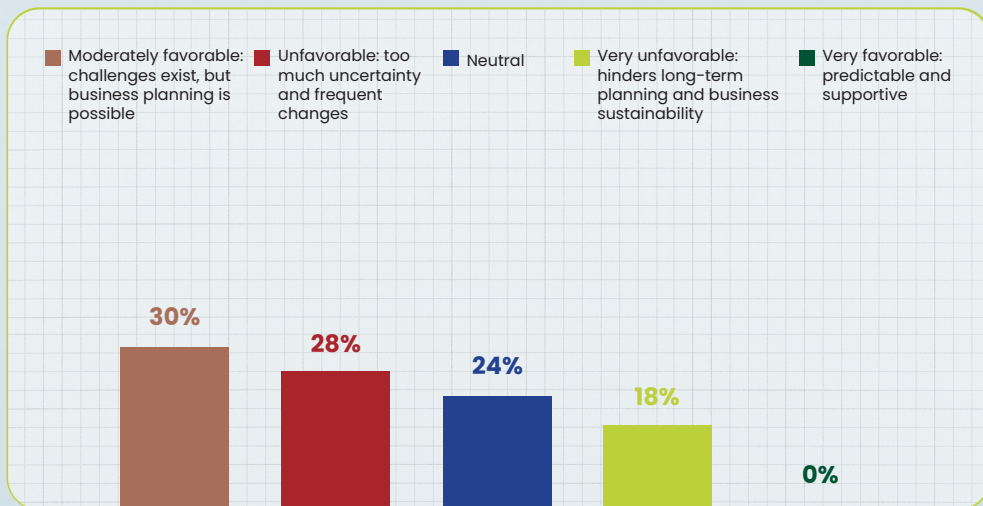
The increase in tariffs does not disrupt domestic exporters. Most Serbian companies do not feel the impact of the higher U.S. tariffs on Serbian goods. According to the survey, as many as 82% of respondents stated that the new tariff rate has no effect on their business, while 16% indicated that there is an impact, but it is minimal. Only 2% of companies reported being significantly affected, and none are considering relocating production or headquarters as a result. These findings suggest that exports to the U.S. market are of limited importance for most Serbian exporters, and that the effects of the increased tariffs are not currently felt across the broader economy.



Miloš Đukanović

CFO,
Henkel

How do you see Serbia's regulatory and tax environment for business?



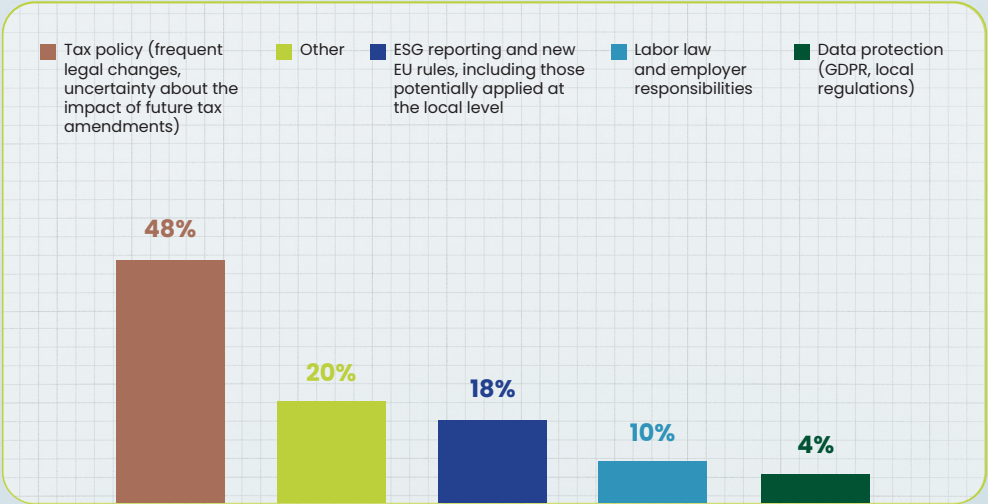
These results indicate that most respondents view Serbia's regulatory and tax environment as moderately favorable or neutral. At the same time, nearly half of the companies (46%) consider it unfavorable or very unfavorable, pointing to frequent regulatory changes and uncertainty in enforcement. Notably, none of the participants described the environment as very favorable, highlighting a potential concern for policymakers.



Bojan Žepinić

Managing Partner,
TPA Serbia

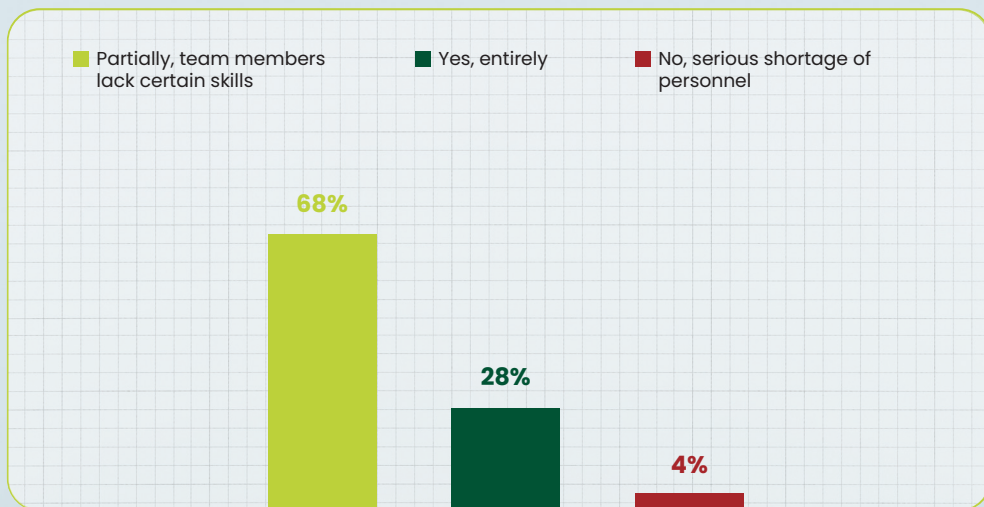
Which regulatory areas are the most significant challenges for your company?



48%

of respondents consider tax policy to be the biggest challenge for companies in the regulatory domain.

Do you have a sufficient number of qualified team members?



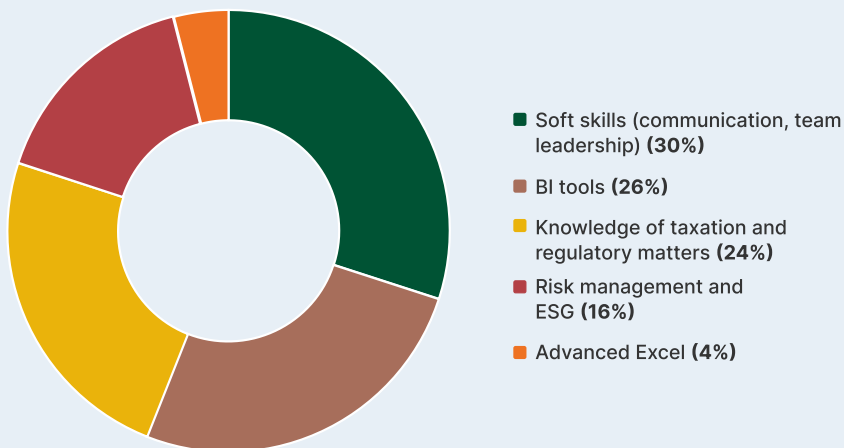
The results show that the majority of organizations (68%) have a solid foundation of qualified team members, though there is room for improvement in certain areas and for acquiring new skills. This is typical in rapidly changing environments, especially in industrial sectors where requirements and technologies are constantly evolving. These findings highlight that investing in targeted employee development programs, upskilling, and internal knowledge transfer is crucial for maintaining team and company competitiveness and stability. A more significant challenge is faced by 4% of respondents. Overall, the results are positive, indicating that there is a strong foundation on which further growth can be built.



Nenad Vučinić

General Manager,
Telesign and Proximus Belgrade

Which skills are most needed in your team?



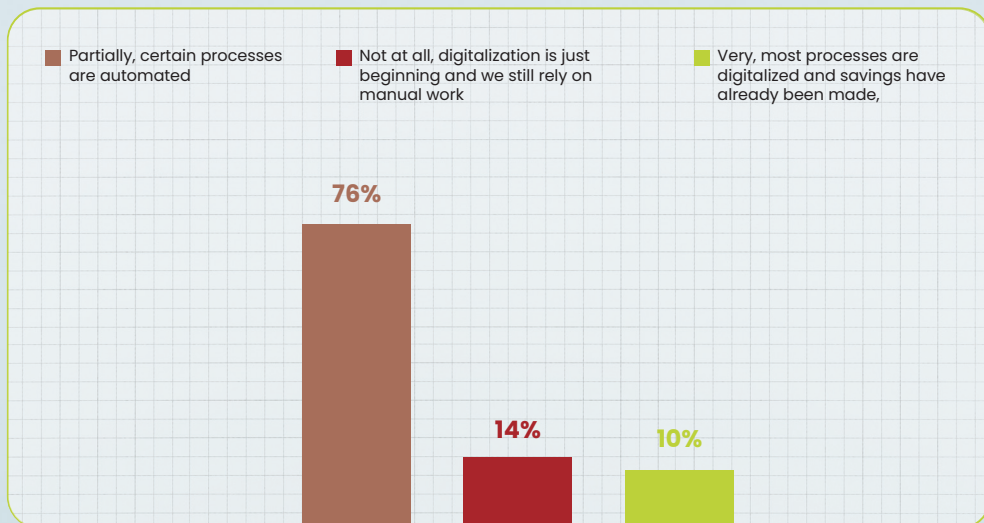
The research findings indicate that companies place nearly equal importance on advanced soft skills and specific technical competencies, reflecting the need for a balanced mix of interpersonal and professional abilities to navigate increasingly complex business and regulatory requirements. When considered individually, the strongest demand is for the development of soft skills, which is unsurprising in an environment that requires effective communication and strong team leadership. A slightly smaller, yet still notable, proportion of respondents highlight the need to enhance technical competencies, particularly in areas such as BI tools, taxation and regulatory matters, as well as risk management and ESG.



Nenad Vučinić

General Manager,
Telesign and Proximus Belgrade

How “digitally mature” do you believe your function/ department is?

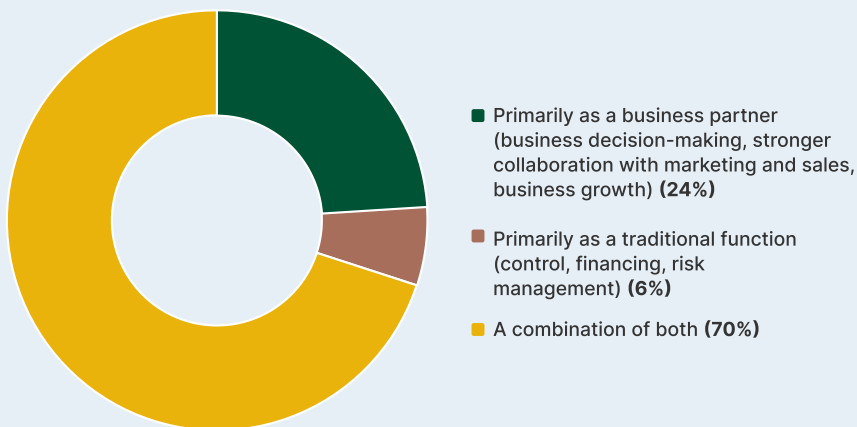


ONLY

10%

of companies regard themselves as highly “digitally mature.”

How do you see your role as CFO over the next five years?



ONLY

6%

of CFOs see their role over the next five years as primarily traditional (focused on control, financing, and risk management).



TPA Serbia

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Bojan Žepinić has been the Managing Partner of TPA Serbia since 2010 and is responsible for the overall operations of the company. Since 2020, he has also served as the Chair of the TPA Group Management Board.

Bojan is a guest lecturer and a recognized expert author in the fields of taxation and M&A.

TPA Serbia is a member of the TPA Group and ranks among the leading companies in Serbia in the fields of accounting, tax advisory, auditing, and IT solutions in finance.

Today, the TPA Group employs more than 2,100 professionals across 34 offices located in Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Montenegro.

In September 2020, TPA Serbia became a full member of Baker Tilly International. Through this collaboration, the 12 countries that make up the independent TPA Group are now globally connected, enabling us to deliver high-quality services across all major business hubs and regions worldwide.