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LABOR MOBILITY IN CHINA: CHALLENGES AND TRENDS IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITALIZATION

**Zaitseva O., PhD in economics, Head of the Department of Management,
Chen Wenbo, graduate student**
*Vitebsk State Technological University,
Vitebsk, Belarus*

Free trade, free capital flows, and free labor mobility are the ultimate goals of globalization. Among these, free labor mobility is the most difficult because of culture, politics, and sovereignty.

Trends in labor migration are usually determined largely by economic conditions and political orientation in destination countries. This was the case in 2019, where labor migration in China continued to respond to destination country labor demand and policy changes. In 2020, however, the usual drivers of migration were disrupted by the global pandemic caused by the new coronavirus disease – COVID-19. The pandemic has affected most migration flows and corridors around the world, resulting in reduced migration flows. In China, normally very busy migration corridors suddenly closed for several months. Origin and destination countries applied strict entry and/or exit regulations to control the pandemic within their borders [1].

Deployment and outflows of migrant workers fell across the region, particularly during the first months of the pandemic. At the same time, in response to the spread of the virus, economic restrictions, including lockdowns, were implemented in host countries, which led to the return of many migrant workers to their home countries, including those whose jobs disappeared.

The economy of the People's Republic of China is expected to recover fully in 2021. The PRC's growth, forecast at 1.8 % in 2020, is expected to rise to 8 % in 2021. For most Asian countries, full recovery is expected in 2021, although the pandemic-related contractions amount to 1 year or more of lost growth [2].

To address the impact of these significant changes, policies in the region will have to adapt. Measures must be taken to ensure the rights of migrant workers in the workplace and in the host country, and policies must be developed for countries of origin to support migrant workers in difficult situations, repatriate those who need to return, and assist them upon their return in these difficult circumstances becomes urgent.

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ANALYSIS OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN CHINA AND DIRECTIONS OF REGULATION

**Zaitseva O., PhD in economics, Head of the Department of Management,
Li Zhenyu, graduate student**

*Vitebsk State Technological University,
Vitebsk, Belarus*

The labor force participation rate of young people (aged 15–24) has continued to decline. Between 1999 and 2019, despite the global youth population increasing from 1 billion to 1.3 billion, the total number of young people engaged in the labour force (those who are either employed or unemployed) decreased from 568 million to 497 million. While this trend reflects growing enrolment in secondary and tertiary education, resulting in a better-skilled workforce in many countries, it also highlights the substantial numbers of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), a large majority of whom are young women. Although the global youth unemployment rate is 13.6 per cent, there is considerable regional variation, from under 9 per cent in Northern America and sub-Saharan Africa to 30 per cent in Northern Africa. Unemployment is more prevalent among young women in most sub regions [1,3].

Significantly, young people are three times as likely as adults (25 years and older) to be unemployed. Although this is partly because their limited work experience counts against them when they are applying for entry-level jobs, there are also major structural barriers preventing young people from entering the labor market.

The Republic of China is not exception in the problems of youth unemployment. In 2020, the estimated ILO youth unemployment rate in China was at 10.52 per cent. The unemployment rate for those aged 16 to 24 was 13.1 % as of February of 2021, far above the national urban jobless rate of 5.5 %. In any case, the rates are much higher than the general population, which hovers above 4 per cent. The policy review has shown that China has recognized the scale of the problems facing its young people, and has been taking a proactive stance in the policy arena. In some areas the policy gaps are few – there are, for example, a large range of ALMPs concerning graduate unemployment. Therefore, the problem here is more one of implementing those policy measures and ensuring that implementation takes places on a scale large enough to reach the enormous number of