

**STUDENT-TO-WORKER TRANSITION AS A FACTOR  
OF CHINESE LABOR IMMIGRATION TO EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

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In the globalized world, international migration becomes more common and diversified. In modern migration-related studies, researchers analyze the impact of international migration on bilateral trade between the countries. The impact on bilateral trade can be explained by three possible factors. Firstly, migrant networks alleviate incomplete information. They can help to overcome informal trade barriers related to language, culture, and institutions. Ethnic networks often share valuable market information and thus help in identifying business opportunities and creating business partnerships. Secondly, migrant networks reduce frictions related to asymmetric information. For instance, co-ethnicity can raise contract enforcement since members of the same ethnic network are less likely to cheat each other. These two mechanisms constitute the trade cost channel. Thirdly, via the preference channel, migrants boost imports to the host country if they derive higher utility from the consumption of goods made in the country of their ethnic origin [1]. However, the preference factor in imports is more important for first-generation immigrants, because the second-generation better adjust themselves to the host country's local cuisine and habits.

With an estimated size of approximately 65 million, the overseas Chinese are considered to be one of the largest diasporas in the world. Those from the Chinese diaspora can be expected to have a better idea of the Chinese bureaucracy apparatus, contract law enforcement issues, or even the importance of government relations, and being able to trust key partners in China may prove to be very valuable, as uncertainty is reduced. Some studies show that the growth of Chinese diaspora in one's country has a positive effect on its bilateral trade with China. For export sectors, effects found were strongest for food, as well as for machinery and transport equipment. In regards to imports, largest effects were found for raw materials, machinery and transport equipment, and chemicals [2]. Nevertheless, overseas Chinese are diversified, and there are different groups based on different places of origin, spoken dialects, social status, etc. For example, in Italy and France, a significant part of diaspora consists of Wenzhounese Chinese.

Overseas Chinese live all around the world, with the biggest diaspora residing in South-East Asia, North America, and Europe. In Europe, the main destinations of Chinese immigration are Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands. In 1980–1990s, immigration through illegal means was one of the main sources of Chinese immigration to those countries. The illegal immigrants often used

some judicial loopholes, for example, residence amnesty, that helped them obtain the legal status in the country of residence after living there for a few years. This policy was especially common in Italy and Spain. There were cases when Chinese immigrants who resided in other countries like France and the UK obtained legal residence status in Italy, because it was much easier there. A certain amount of immigrants who got into Europe illegally were not educated, many of them haven't studied in high school, so they didn't have an advantage in terms of human capital accumulation. Thus, it was difficult for them to integrate into the residing country's society [3]. Because of the rapid economic growth in China, the overall quality of life in the country has grown significantly. At the moment, illegal immigration from China to Europe has significantly decreased. Overseas Chinese in Europe often keep their Chinese citizenship, because in China the dual citizenship is not allowed. But with the long-term residence status, they can move inside EU borders without any problems while being able to return or travel to China anytime.

While entrepreneurship has long characterized Chinese migration to Europe (and elsewhere in the world), highly skilled professionals and graduates are now diversifying ethnic Chinese communities all over Europe. Compared with previous Chinese migration communities, which were dominated by low-skilled Chinese labor from Zhejiang and Fujian, Chinese students and professionals are relatively heterogeneous in terms of provenance, social class, cultural identities, political loyalties, and the way they increasingly interact with local mainstream societies. The changing compositions of Chinese migrants are transforming urban city landscapes, labor markets and ethnic Chinese communities in Europe in terms of burgeoning political activism for citizenship rights and protection against violence, xenophobia, and racism. This brings new political and economic implications for the relationships between China and European nation-states [4]. One distinctive immigration scheme in this context has been the vending of citizenship and residence permits in return for financial investments embraced by more than 20 European countries. During the last decade, these schemes have particularly attracted Chinese real estate investors and their families to European countries such as Portugal and Greece.

Nowadays, the main way for Chinese to get into European countries for the long-term is by obtaining student, working, family or investor visa. By 2016, Italy had the largest stocks of Chinese workers;

Spain, France, and the Netherlands had the largest stocks of Chinese admitted on family visas; and the UK and Germany had the largest stocks of Chinese students. Only Italy hosted more Chinese admitted for employment than for education or family reunification. Spain, France, and the Netherlands hosted the largest numbers of Chinese admitted on family reunification grounds, while the UK and Germany as students. Different profiles of Chinese residents have different labor market integration needs. In the case of students, they are usually young, highly skilled, and usually more integrated into the host country's society. On the job market, they are not thought to compete with natives for the same jobs, because their wage expectations are often lower than natives' [5]. In the academic sphere, foreign PhDs are more likely to stay in the research labs than to choose work in the private sector.

With the rise of quality of life in China, many parents choose to send their children to study abroad. While the main destination is still the US, more Chinese student migration could be expected in Europe soon. Chinese students can provide a locally available supply of well-integrated, highly skilled workers. The UK, France, Germany, and the Netherlands developed attractive programs for international students. By doing this, the countries can raise the quality bar for the labor migration. That can assure that new workers will be educated, high skilled, used to live in the country, speak the language. The recognition of EU diplomas and the freedom of labor mobility may attract Chinese students to non-traditional countries of student migration with the assumption that having secured the first job, for example in Italy, they would eventually be able to secure one in Germany. The EU Blue Card has made such a process possible. Among the six destination countries, Germany has received the largest proportion of Chinese EU Blue Card applicants [5]. During the last few years, there was an increase in Chinese students studying in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe.

Chinese students decide whether they want to stay in Europe or move back to China, but a certain amount of them would prefer to stay. Certain factors affect the student-to-worker transition. Firstly, the country's legislature towards the issuance of working visas. Secondly, the length of the post-graduation adjustment period. For example, in 2018 Germany offered the longest (18 months long) transition period during which non-EU graduates of

German universities could remain in the country to look for a job. Spain, on the other hand, required foreign alumni of Spanish universities to find a job immediately upon graduation. Thirdly, the language barrier. While Chinese students tend to choose English-taught programs in the universities, the employers usually favor those who could fluently speak the local language, for example, French in France. Fourthly, the cultural networks. Existing cultural and social ties between countries make it easier for students to find a job. In the case of the UK, those from the Commonwealth are easier to get a working visa, and its easier for Latin Americans to stay on working visa in Spain. For Chinese, one of the strongest ethnic networks is in Italy because of historical reasons.

The student-to-worker transition can be one of the desirable sources of immigrants for European countries because former students are usually well integrated with the host countries' labour markets and society, can speak the local language and have a decent educational background. In addition to this, international students bring funds to fee-charging educational institutions, for example, the private ones. Countries without the benefit of a widely spoken language or history of international student migration, such as Germany or the Netherlands, have begun to recruit in China, created English language programs, and facilitated diploma recognition. To provide better chances of successful student-to-worker transition, the governments need to adjust the working visa legislature, set reasonable post-graduation adjustment periods, and provide necessary language programs.

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