

**THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
ON THE LABOR MARKET IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS**

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Despite the fact that as recently as the last decade, the Republic of Belarus was considered an agrarian country, modern Belarus is now a nation with a highly developed information technology sector. A large number of IT companies operate within its territory, engaged in the production of software for various devices. The Belarusian government enthusiastically supports the IT sector. Benefits, simplified paperwork, and much more increase interest in this field within the Republic. In addition, the country has a High-Tech Park (HTP), which is supported by the state.

During its operation, numerous global projects have emerged from there. Some of them we use daily; are you familiar with applications such as World of Tanks, Maps.me, or perhaps Viber? However, at a certain point, this sector was heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Let's examine below why this happened [1].

Let's refresh our memory and recall how the pandemic began. In late 2019, an outbreak of pneumonia was recorded in China. During the study, the causative agent of a new disease, COVID-19, was identified. In 2020, the pandemic greatly affected workplaces and the labor market in general. Many people were left unemployed due to restrictions. At this point, people's interest in the IT sector increased exponentially. If, before the pandemic, this sector was "undermining" other industries, it now stabilized and helped them. Many IT companies quickly transitioned to a remote work format, and soon productivity was restored to its previous level, and in some cases, even increased. IT specialists, more than anyone else, were prepared for this format of work, and the transition took days, or in extreme cases, weeks.

In recent years, we have observed an active transition into the digital space, and the pandemic only accelerated this transition. The transition would have continued even without the help of Covid-19, but clearly at a

significantly slower pace. However, there are also a number of negative consequences of the pandemic that have affected the IT sector. Businesses focused on the tourism industry, the restaurant business, and air carriers were particularly hard hit. Many projects had to be «frozen» or cancelled, which led to large financial losses and deterioration in the development of these industries. This resulted in reduced funding and a decrease in the number of employees, so large teams are becoming a thing of the past, and outsourcing is taking their place [2].

Those companies that were not ready for the transition were forced to create a new development strategy. Thus, many small businesses entered into cooperation to facilitate survival in the conditions of a pandemic and an unstable situation where people are not as confident in investing in the development of new projects as they were before.

The transition to remote work saved millions of jobs, although not all of them remained active after the restrictions were lifted. However, more and more companies are practicing a flexible work environment based on remote or partially remote work, and this is due to a number of reasons: 1) profitability as there is no need to maintain an office with workplaces for each of the employees; 2) mobility to work from anywhere in the world; 3) comfort conditions for employees; 4) number of personnel [2].

Many Belarusian entrepreneurs were forced to start searching for good developers and information security specialists, as the risk of hacker attacks increased. In such a pace of global digitalization, the government of the Republic of Belarus, in order to maintain competitiveness, is stimulating the development of the IT sector in Belarus. The country's development vector is set by the “Digital Development of Belarus for 2021-2025” program.

References

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