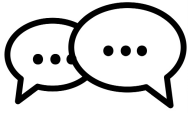# LESSON 4: MIGRATION FLOWS

Activity 2 – Why Do People Leave Their Home Countries?

Read the text. Divide yourselves into small groups and **develop a backstory of a fictitious person who has migrated internationally, internally or within Europe. As a group, think about why and how likely it is that this person chose to leave his or her home country (pay attention to the bolded terms).**

Types of Migration

Migration movements can be **international** (migration across national borders, which means from one country to another) or **internal** (migration within the borders of the same country). In Europe, the **Schengen Agreement** from 1985 created another category of migration, which since 1995, is known as European mobility. This agreement gives European Union (EU) citizens (about 505 million potential migrants) the right to move freely within the EU and to select where they want to live.

In contrast to what many people think, migration is a **selective process**. This means that not everyone can migrate since migration is a challenge for those that do want to migrate and it requires the availability of certain resources, such as **education, economic opportunities** and **life experience**. Individuals that are highly likely to migrate at least once in their lives are often those that have a very **good education** and a stable **economic foundation**.

When highly-qualified workers leave their home countries for places that offer better chances, then the origin country faces a so-called **"brain drain"**. This means that the investments that the origin countries made in the education of these individuals are lost when they migrate. The origin country misses out on the services that this individual, on the basis of his or her education, could bring to the country. This is the situation when, for example, a highly qualified computer programmer from India leaves his or her country to go to work in Silicon Valley in the United States. Or when a Spanish engineer moves to Germany to work in the wind turbine industry or a British doctor goes to work in an American hospital. When these types of people move back to their origin countries, this is known as "return migration".

Age is an important factor in regards to the migration process: People that are of a certain age when one usually gets married, gets divorced or enters retirement have a high probability of deciding to migrate.

Another influencing factor is **gender**. Traditionally, men are more likely than women to migrate, but in certain cases, female migrants are more likely due to, for example, a specific demand for them in the labour market. One example is in Spain at the beginning of the 21st century when there were many openings in the old-age care sector, which led to a high demand, specifically for female labourers. The end result was a high level of immigration by women from Latin America.

Finally, **social networks** also play a large role in migration flows. People do not simply decide to emigrate to a certain country on suspicion. In most cases, they have access to information from someone that is already in the destination country, usually a friend or relative, and that helps them to make the final decision to migrate. Potentially, via these channels, people also learn about local job offers, governmental support options in the social, economic and health sector or housing options. For those who want to emigrate, it is not only this preliminary information that is important, but also the help that they could probably receive from their

relatives or friends who are already living there once they arrive in the desired destination country. It is therefore no coincidence that migrants often look at residential areas in the destination country where they can live in neighbourhoods of their compatriots.