



European Generation Link

# Study on the Library Platform



European *Generation* Link

[www.european-generation-link.org](http://www.european-generation-link.org)



Education and Culture

# Socrates Grundtvig

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**EUROPEAN GENERATION LINK: PROMOTING EUROPEAN  
CITIZENSHIP THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL AND  
INTERCULTURAL LEARNING**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

In the context of current debates, it is sometimes conveniently forgotten that in the past decades, Europe has experienced several waves of internal migration and exile, including displaced persons before, during and after World War II, in the 1960s when “guest workers” were invited from South Europe to the richer states, after the fall of the Iron Curtain and through conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Despite the demonstrable fact that Europe is a continent of migration (both inwards and outwards), prejudices against migrants – almost invariably referred to as “immigrants” – linger on, especially among those who have little or no knowledge of European migration or migrants.

There are, furthermore, millions of older people who have not only experienced migration but who are “European citizens” in the sense that they have lived in several European countries, cultures and societies and who have thus collected considerable experience of “a wider Europe”. Promoting European citizens’ awareness of Europe has been one of the main objectives of European policy for many years but the treasure of those older people who have experienced a multilingual and multicultural life in Europe has hitherto been under-researched. “European Generation Link” has, therefore, developed a web-based platform that contains stories of people who were born in Europe and have, during their lifetime, lived in more than one European country. Because of the multinational nature of the United Kingdom, migration between its constituent parts is included.

## **2 THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT**

The stories in the library originate from Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Stories were also collected in Turkey. In some cases, the interviews were with migrants who had returned to their country of origin. The languages used are those of the countries involved but some stories were translated into English, French or German. Thus, the original 97 stories rose to 134 through translation. The periods covered begin in the 1920s, with several from the 1930s and even more from the 1940s. Some interviewees were younger than this but the important point was the age gap between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Some interviewees' migration experience included countries outside Europe, and in the case of the United Kingdom, with its curious constitutional set-up, migration between its constituent parts was included. Thus the countries involved in migration included Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Iraq, Israel, Latvia, Libya, Mauritania, Monaco, Morocco, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, USA and Yugoslavia.

The topics covered were wide-ranging, as shown in the analysis below; many stories also included glimpses of life long ago or in countries long quitted, such ways of celebrating Christmas. Thus they form a valuable addition to the more academic works on the history of Europe and also added interest to the intergenerational learning that took place.

In addition, many of the interviewees described the interview and their own feelings, and these observations throw light on the challenges of intergenerational and intercultural learning as well as the issue of teaching ICT to seniors. Some young people interviewed older friends and relatives and others strangers.

Some of the comments included:

Beatrix had previously used a mechanical typewriter almost 50 years ago and she admired the possibility to change and to correct without typing the whole text again. She had problems using the computer mouse, but eventually she succeeded.

Eva already had a computer, which her partner John had installed and set up. She was keen on learning more about the internet and surfing the web (...) It was not hard for me to show her how to find things on the internet. She was quite insecure at the beginning and continued to ask if she “really did things right”. Sometimes she made a mistake, sometimes she did it right. I told her that she could phone me later in case of any problem.

I was convinced that I didn't know any migrants. I didn't want to contact any strangers. [But] to meet Gotthold and to listen to his stories are both indications that one can trust one's luck sometimes. (...) It gave me much more than I would have expected and it was great fun. (...) Things became a bit hard in terms of the course assignment when we tried to find out which IT skills I could teach Gotthold. He is from Finland! He knows a lot more than I do about the internet and communication technologies, mobiles etc., and of course he always had his Nokia with him. Eventually, we found something. He wanted to prepare a PowerPoint presentation, work he brought along to do in his holidays. I showed him, for example, how to handle slides, background and slide crossovers. He learned fast and asked me to produce a short curriculum he can refer to in case of doubt.

The interview took about 90 minutes. It was a spontaneous get-together and again it was a nice atmosphere. Rudi Grün was happy to have the opportunity to tell his life story. Of course, it helped me a lot that I know Rudi Grün. I had some questions prepared in my mind, but I had to use almost none of them.

I wanted to preserve his memories, something I hadn't done with my grandfather, his brother. It was just the two of us, he on his bed, a cigarette always between his fingers, notwithstanding his 85 years. I am the same age as he was at the time of his capture. [I thought perhaps I would find]

resentment against the Nazis ... but I found otherwise: piety, serenity and understanding. And he had a lot of faith for the future<sup>1</sup>.

At the start, Delfina was a little reticent. But then she started speaking with great enthusiasm, telling impressive war stories. While she did so, it was clear how she had lived and how these experiences had marked her. Delfina attends computer classes. She felt the need to do so because she had only used the computer as a typewriter and wanted to learn more ... She claimed to have no interest in the internet. But perhaps this was because she didn't know how to use this resource. When we put in a query she appeared to be interested. It was pretty interesting to see an elderly person using the computer quite easily. The entire interview was revised by her, it perhaps had some linguistic errors that were beyond me. The truth is that it was far better after this revision and it also provided an opportunity for Delfina to practise on the computer. (...) I think we had, in fact, a genuine exchange. We both learned, I about her life experience and her a few things on the computer<sup>2</sup>.

I asked a friend of my mother-in-law (...) if she happened to know someone I could interview. Three hours later I was sitting face to face with Marie Tomanovska who was telling me her life story. I was using a small recorder. The interview took about two hours. "I was already thinking about cancelling the interview. I don't know what I should tell you. You are writing a book?" I explained what this project is about. She listened with great interest and afterwards started telling her story. To get this interview it helped a lot that I wasn't a complete stranger. (...) Again it was a very

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<sup>1</sup> My translation; the original: "Volevo conservarne la memoria, cosa che non sono riuscito a fare con mio nonno, suo fratello. Eravamo solo noi due: lui steso sul letto, con una sigaretta eternamente accesa tra le dita, nonostante gli ottantacinque anni. Io avevo la stessa età che aveva lui al tempo della cattura. Le domande erano ingenua, tese a scoprire qualcosa, forse il risentimento nei confronti dei nazisti, come non fossero stati uomini. Invece ho trovato altro: pietà, serenità, comprensione. E molta fede nel prossimo."

<sup>2</sup> My translation; the original: "Al principio, Delfina estaba un poco reticente. Pero luego empezó a hablar con gran entusiasmo contando historias impresionantes de las guerras. Mientras lo hacía, se notaba cómo las había vivido y cómo estas experiencias la habían marcado. Delfina acude a clases de informática. Sintió la necesidad de hacerlo porque sólo utilizaba el ordenador como una máquina de escribir y quería aprender más, así que se inscribió en un curso. Afirma no tener demasiado interés en internet. Pero quizás es porque no sabe cómo utilizar este recurso. Cuando realizamos una consulta pareció estar interesada. (...) Fue bastante interesante ver una persona mayor manejando el ordenador con bastante facilidad. Toda la entrevista fue revisada por ella, quizás tenía algunos errores lingüísticos que a mí se me escapan. La verdad es que quedó bastante mejor después de su revisión y además Delfina lo aprovechó para practicar en el ordenador. Me parece que hicimos, de hecho, un verdadero intercambio. Las dos aprendimos, yo de su experiencia de vida y ella algunas cosas más sobre el ordenador."

pleasant atmosphere. And again the outcome was the same: such life stories can give people an understanding of Europe as a home of different people and nations.

He received me warmly in the house where he lives with his wife. He told me his story with energy and emotion, alternating smiles with bitter silences. From his words one could see his love for France and his sadness about his infancy, his adolescence and his broken loves. His eyes were veiled, from time to time, from the sadness of his memories and were animated by the great strength of this man, who had seen and overcome great difficulties and painful events, and who finally enjoyed and reciprocated the great and unconditional love of all his family. (...) At the end of our conversation (...) he said “Au revoir, mademoiselle!”<sup>3</sup>

Mañe is a typical kind man that enjoys and is willing to talk about his life. He told me about his life and his experiences without restrictions. I believe he was comfortable. (...) About the objectives of the interview of teaching information technology, once more I had to change a little bit. He showed himself interested in learning more than he knows. But the truth is that he is taking classes on the internet.

She said that computers are not for her. She had never used one and did not know how to make a Word document. This was because it had never been necessary. There is a computer at home but she does not use it. She told me she had no interest in it. (...) What was interesting to listen to was that she was always talking about how things were and how they are now<sup>4</sup>.

These examples illustrate a number of things:

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<sup>3</sup> My translation; the original: “Mi ha accolto con calore nella casa dove vive con la moglie. Mi ha raccontato la sua storia con trasporto ed emozione, alternando sorrisi a silenzi di amarezza. Dalle sue parole si percepisce l’amore per la Francia e la tristezza per la sua infanzia, per la sua adolescenza e per i suoi amori spezzati. I suoi occhi si sono velati, talvolta, per la tristezza dei ricordi e si sono animati per la grande forza di questo uomo, che ha vissuto e superato grandi difficoltà e dolori, e che finalmente gode e ricambia l’amore immenso e incondizionato di tutta la sua famiglia (...) Al termine della nostra chiacchierata (...) mi saluta “Au revoir mademoiselle”!

<sup>4</sup> My translation; the original: Afirma que los ordenadores no son el suyo. Nunca los ha utilizado, la verdad es que no sabe hacer un documento del Word. Esto porque nunca lo ha necesitado, tiene un ordenador en casa pero nunca lo utiliza. Me ha dicho que no se interesa por esto. (...) Lo interesante fue escucharla siempre hablando de cómo eran las cosas y como son ahora.

- Some older people are already familiar with computers, though there is always something more to learn; others are willing to learn this new skill; while still others have no interest and cannot see the point for them.
- Even where computer skills were not taught, both could get a lot from the interview: knowledge and perspective on the part of the young interviewer and the opportunity for the interviewee to tell his or her story.
- It was initially easier for both young and old if they already knew each other; but even where they did not it was possible to build a rapport that led to interesting and enjoyable conversations.

### **3 METHODOLOGY AND SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

The stories are based on structured interviews, mainly carried out by young people. The purpose of using young people as interviewers was to transfer knowledge between generations and help to reduce prejudice and xenophobia among young people through greater understanding of European migrants. At the same time, the methodology included a mutual exchange of knowledge, in that the young interviewers taught computer skills to the older interviewees. The objective was to bring greater intergenerational respect.

The site is arranged like a real library, with individual volumes containing the stories, complemented by photographs and, in a few cases, audio files and video clips. Visitors may search the library using a variety of search parameters, including countries, periods, cultures and languages. Each story consists of a short biography, and at least three sections giving more details, and some include an account of the interview showing how the interview was conducted, what the tandem teams of young and old people learned from each other, which aspects they reflected on, what benefits they obtained etc. In some cases there is background information, for example, geographical and/or historical information, definitions of terms, an explanation of the education system, Christmas recipes etc. The detailed chapters fall into seven categories: family (including religious/family feasts like Christmas etc.); politics (World War II, Franco regime, flight ...); economic (“guest workers”, professions, career opportunities ...); environmental (fire / earthquake ...); love stories; education (school, vocational training, language skills, discovering ...); and social life (society in general, friends ...). This collection of materials can be used for a wide variety of measures and interactions aimed at the promotion of European citizenship.

All contributors had to ensure that the legal regulations and individual concerns on copyrights and privacy are met. Therefore the partnership agreed to change the names of persons involved, make use of aliases or initials and also modify the names of places in certain cases (e.g. small villages). The interviewees signed an agreement concerning the publication of their stories, pictures, audio and video

files, from which they could withdraw at any time. The provision of background information had to be in accordance with copyright law.

The interviews covered the whole life of the migrant. The questions suggested were only starters and interviewees were encouraged to elaborate on any topic as much as they wished. Interviewers were instructed to draw out details from stories for further information. They were told to ask only open questions (When? Why? How? Who?), instead of closed ones (yes-or-no questions).

### **3.1 The question areas for the interviews**

#### ***1) Background***

Where did you come from? Where did you grow up? Could you tell me about your childhood? What kind of memories do you have? What is your favourite childhood memory? Alternatively more concrete questions could be asked: What kind of people were your mother and father? How would you characterize your relationship with your siblings? What was the profession of your parents? What kind of life did your family have? What was your hobby? How would you describe the village/city/region where you grew up? Can you recall a political event that happened during your childhood? What was it?

#### ***2) Migration***

Why did you leave your country? How did you travel? Why did you come to Hungary? Did you know someone here before? What happened to you/your family after arrival? What happened to your acquaintances, relatives? What kind of memories do you have as to the arrival and the first times? How did this change later on?

#### ***3) School, work***

Where did you go to school? Did you like going to school? If the person attended school in Hungary: how difficult was it to integrate into a Hungarian school? How did other students, teachers react?

Where did you work? How difficult was it to find a job as a foreigner? How did your co-workers react?

#### **4) *Being a migrant – everyday life***

How is to live as a migrant in...? Is it an advantage/disadvantage? Why? Could you give me concrete examples? Do you think that people are open to foreigners?

#### **5) *How important is it for you...***

To keep your traditions; use your mother tongue; keep in touch with other migrants; keep in touch with relatives, friends living in your home country; watch TV, read newspapers from your home country? Have you ever revisited your home country?

#### **6) *Final words***

How does it feel to talk about your life? Do you often recall the past?

Have you ever told these stories to others? If so, when and in what conditions? If not, why not?

### **3.2 The stories currently in the library**

<b>Name of story</b>	<b>Original language</b>	<b>Other languages</b>
A Ruthenian girl from Slovakia ...	Czech	English
From the Greek mountains to Northern Moravia	Czech	English
Z Polska na Jižní Moravu	Czech	-
Cesta krásné Jugoslávky do moravské Kamenné	Czech	-
Ruský umělec z petrohradské Ermitáže do židovské čtvrti v Třebíči	Czech	-
A story of integration	English	French
Regina	English	French
Migration for love	English	-
From dishwasher to professor	English	-
Happiness through adult education	English	-
A better life in Scotland	English	-
Migration and unintended consequences	English	-
Migration for love	English	-
Education can save or poison your life!	English	-
From poverty to well-being	English	-
Kamila	English	-

Role reversal	English	French
An uncertain future	English	-
Enriching the experience of the world	English	-
Florent Canovas	French	-
Moi, le vagabond éternel ...	French	-
Maryse A. - de Casablanca à Albi ...	French	-
Julie, celle qui a trois passeports dans la poche	French	-
Barbara est née à Bielsko-Biala ...	French	Polish
Beatrix E.: From Bukowina to Upper Austria	German	English
Kasan - Deutschland	German	-
Vienna – Germany – Vienna	German	English
From Carinthia to Oulu, Finland	German	English
European champion in amateur harness racing and his life between Austria and Czech Republic	German	English, Czech
Von Nordmähren nach Niederbayern	German	-
Von Deutschland über Spanien nach Wien	German	-
Liebe in Bad Kötzing	German	-
Von Südmähren nach Wien und zurück	German	-
Rudolf Schneider von Sudeten nach Deutschland	German	-
Flucht	German	-
Griechische Militärdiktatur	German	-
Von Oppeln nach Bad Kötzing	German	-
Erste Spanierin im Landkreis Cham	German	-
Italien - Deutschland	German	-
Ez mind velem történt?	Hungarian	-
Bulgáriából Magyarországra	Hungarian	-
“1955 on board a very old plane speeding along a grass runway”	Hungarian	English
“Te örült vagy, egyrészt matematikus ...”	Hungarian	-
Rögös út vezetett Görögországból Magyarországra	Hungarian	-
Mila way from S.Petersburg	Hungarian	English
Magyarország-Hollandia-Magyarország	Hungarian	-
Szaharai Szlimes Hungaria	Hungarian	-
Hollandia – Magyarország. Útkeresés és találás	Hungarian	-
Bagdad – Budapest	Hungarian	-
Un presepe a Dachau	Italian	German
Un'infanzia difficile	Italian	-
L'infanzia nell'est	Italian	-
Germania tra studio e passione	Italian	-
Note da una doppia emigrazione	Italian	-
Dall'Olanda per amore	Italian	-
Aija Priedite	Latvian	English
Austris Grasis	Latvian	-
Ieva Lemane	Latvian	English
Historia Pana Henryka	Polish	-
Z Poznania do Helmstedt	Polish	-
Pan Ryszard	Polish	-
Szczęście w nieszczęściu	Polish	English
Ludmiła Maria Gołomska	Polish	English
Janina Dobrogowska	Polish	-
Pani Genowefa	Polish	-
Lilia Rewkowska–Awier	Polish	-
Jadwiga Roman	Polish	-

Muncă și aprecieri in Italia si Ungaria	Romanian	English
Intre Marea Neagra si Marea Adriatica	Romanian	English
Muncă și în România și Franța	Romanian	English
O punte de legatura spirituala intre Romania si Germania	Romanian	English
Unificarea mea culturala	Romanian	English
Nu departe de casă	Romanian	English
Aleš Oven	Slovenian	English
Borut	Slovenian	English
Darja Višnjić	Slovenian	English
Kamila	Slovenian	English
Lili	Slovenian	English
Lilijana	Slovenian	English
Marija	Slovenian	English
Miloš	Slovenian	English
Urszula	Slovenian	English
Viktor	Slovenian	English
Una vida para la unión de los pueblos	Spanish	-
The worker and the defensor	Spanish	English
Life as a migrant	Spanish	English
The life of a fighter	Spanish	English
Una vida de desafíos	Spanish	-
Una vida turbulenta	Spanish	-
Från grannlandet till Sverige	Swedish	-
Finskt krigsbarn som kom till Sverige	Swedish	-
Från Finland till en liten by i Sverig	Swedish	-
Från fattigt jordbruk i Finland till Sverige	Swedish	-
Från ett fattigt Jugoslavien till Sverige	Swedish	English
Kom till Sverige från ett land förstört av krig	Swedish	-

### 3.3 The stories analysed in this paper

Of the subjects of the stories analysed for this paper, 1 each originated from Greece, Northern Ireland, Montenegro, Slovakia, Bosnia and Morocco (the latter were ethnic French); 2 each from Latvia, Slovenia, Croatia and the Soviet Union; 3 each from Scotland and Austria; 4 each from England and Serbia; 5 from Poland; and 7 each from Romania and Spain.

The corresponding interviews took place in their current – mainly final – countries of residence, namely Slovenia (9); Scotland (7); Spain and Italy, 6 each; France and Romania, 5 each; Austria, the Czech Republic and England, 3 each; Latvia and Poland, 2 each; Sweden and Hungary, 1 each. They comprise 15 men and 32 women. The overall distribution reflects the number of stories written in or translated into English, French, Italian and Spanish, not the total number of stories collected.

Migrants generally have mixed fates on entering European countries. In the United Kingdom, for example, refugees have a high rate of unemployment, irrespective of their education and skills; women migrants are likely to suffer a decline in social and economic status that may take years to recover, if it ever does, although their safety and the life chances of their children dramatically improved, especially in the case of refugees (Clayton 2005). One important question to which a tentative answer is sought is this: did the European migrants interviewed also suffer more than they benefited from migration?

Although the method used is innovative, especially in the range of countries that participated in the partnership and the partnership between younger and older, and potentially useful for international comparisons, the answer can only be tentative, because the interviewees were not randomly selected, but the extracts presented here – which include only those in a language understood by the author (English, French, Italian, Spanish, totalling 47 stories out of the 100 odd in the library) – may provoke further research questions leading to more systematic enquiry. Above all, the interviews allowed people, who had never been asked before, to tell their own stories.

#### 4 REASONS FOR MIGRATION

Reasons for migration expressed in this study fall into the categories of love, economics and work, politics, war, adventure and family reunion or moving to a spouse’s home country. Classification of qualitative data, however, is always a thought-provoking experience, especially when using other people’s materials. In some cases, especially where several migrations had taken place, there was more than one reason, and one reason, such as moving with spouse or family, may or may not also come into the category of love. What is called love may also or instead be economics (I have excluded the latter possibility from the data, although I am sure it was sometimes the case, especially where marriages were arranged), and when one accompanies a loved one who is moving for work that is also economics. Politics and war also overlap but where the cause was unambiguously war, with risk of physical danger or death or actual displacement directly because of war, the migrants have been assigned to this category. Of course, most were very young and moved with their families, which adds another dimension.

Thus, my categorisation ended up like this:

**Table 1 Reasons for migration, from 47 case studies**

Reason	Love	Economic	Politics	War	Adventure	Family
<b>Love</b>	14	3	-	-	1	4
<b>Economic</b>	3	19	3	-	1	11
<b>Politics</b>	-	1	9	1	-	2
<b>War</b>	-	-	1	8	-	6
<b>Adventure</b>	1	1	-	-	4	0
<b>Family</b>	4	11	2	7	-	19
<b>Only reason:</b>	9	2	3	1 (7)	3	2

The numbers in the red boxes refer to the total number of people whose reason included the one labelled. Lines and columns do not add up to the numbers interviewed, as between 1 and 3 reasons were recorded.

The bottom line counts instances where there was only one motive. Thus, nine people moved purely for love; three only for political reasons (all refugees); one was taken from her country in time of war to do forced labour; and two moved for reasons of family reunification. Economic reasons were always connected with other factors (mainly family). The reason that war was the only reason for one person reflects the fact that the war migrants were mainly children who moved with their families – but the only reason the families moved was because of war and this is shown in brackets.

Thus:

- Love included family, adventure and economic motives – but not politics, war or adventure – and was the factor least combined with others;
- Economic motives included love, politics, adventure and family – but not war;
- Political motives included economics, war and family – but not love or adventure;
- War included politics and family – but not love, economics or adventure;
- Adventure included economics – but not politics, war or family;
- Family was included in every category except adventure – adventurers travelled alone.

In some cases, the interviewees had moved back to their countries of origin. This final migration is not recorded in the table. Again, by one or more of their reasons for migration and by ascending proportion of returners:

- Only 3 out of the 14 who moved for love returned home to their original countries;
- Only 2 of the 9 who moved for political reasons returned;
- Of the 19 who migrated with their families, 8 have returned;
- Of the 8 who were forced to move because of war, 4 have returned;

- Two of the 4 adventurers returned; the other returned for a long period but then went to her husband's country on retirement;
- Of the 19 who left for economic reasons, 11 have returned.

**Table 2 Age at first migration, from 47 case studies, by reasons of migration**

Age	1-15	16-30	31-45	46-60	61-65	Total
Love	-	11	1	1	1	
Economic	1	11	3	1	-	
Politics	3	3	3	-	-	
War	5	2	1	-	-	
Adventure	-	4	-	-	-	
Family	12	6	1	-	-	
<b>No. of individuals</b>	12	24	9	1	1	

As implied earlier, several of the interviewees had migrated more than once. In the table below, the number of countries listed includes the country of origin. Each country lived in is counted only once, even where there was more than one period of residence in a particular country.

As table 3 shows, the great majority of the interviewees had lived in only two countries, and the next highest category had lived in three. Furthermore, 20 had returned to their countries of origin, probably for good.

**Table 3 Total number of countries lived in, from 47 case studies, by reasons of migration**

Number of countries	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Love	9	2	1	1	1	
Economic	9	1	3	1	1	
Politics	4	5	-	-	-	
War	1	3	3	1		
Adventure	2	1	1	-	-	
Family	8	4	4	2	1	
<b>Number of individuals</b>	25	13	6	2	1	

In many cases the country they returned to had changed for the better. All the Spanish interviewees had left during the Franco regime, two of these only for political reasons, and returned after it. The two Latvians had been displaced after the Second World War when the Baltic States were occupied by the Soviet Union and returned after their independence.

**Table 4 Number of foreign languages known, from 47 case studies, by reasons of migration**

<b>Number of foreign languages</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6+</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Love</b>	3	4	4	2	-	-	-	
<b>Economic</b>	3	7	7	1	-	-	1	
<b>Politics</b>	-	3	5	1	-	-	-	
<b>War</b>	-	3	2	2	-	1	-	
<b>Adventure</b>	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	
<b>Family</b>	3	6	6	2	-	5	1	
<b>No. of individuals</b>	6	22	13	4		1	1	47

Only 6 people spoke no other language than their mother tongue, one Austrian who migrated to Germany and the rest British people migrating to Anglophone countries or within the United Kingdom. One person spoke over 6 languages although she had migrated only once. The foreign languages spoken were, by number of people reporting: French 16; English, 11 each; German 10; Slovenian 7; Russian 5; Swedish 4; Italian and Hungarian, 3 each; Czech 3; Croatian 2; and 1 each of Spanish, Belarusian, Slovak, Finnish, Bosnian, Montenegrin and Macedonian. In most cases, people had learnt other languages as a result of their migration but a few had learnt languages because of their work or for interest.

## **5 EXTRACTS FROM STORIES**

These three extracts from the stories analysed were chosen because they appealed to me in different ways. One of the stories, Ludmila, is a terrible reminder of the European past. The next story shows the other side of the coin, how the “victors” became part of the mass movement of displaced persons after the Second World War. The third, the only one chosen for economic migration, shows how this can be a complex issue.

### **5.1 Forced migration – war and politics**

Of the 16 people in these categories, 12 were forced to leave their countries and 4 chose to. One had fled the Greek civil war with her family, who were poor peasants, when their village was evacuated. The most striking and detailed stories, however, come from survivors of the Second World War. I have chosen two, both of women from prosperous families.

#### ***Ludmila – sent to forced labour***

Ludmila was 16, the daughter of a doctor and living in Russian-occupied Poland at the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1942. She was transported to German-occupied Poland, given a number, 219, and set to work in a factory making plane parts. One day a German told her how to commit sabotage and she had great fun doing this. Then she was sent in a cattle wagon to a penal camp in Hamburg and set to dig trenches. A transport of 250-300 women of different nationalities was formed. They were all sent to dig trenches in inhuman conditions [...] They were constantly chilled to the marrow, hungry and exhausted. [...] Every day they had to dig a hole to a depth of 150 cm. It had to be 2 metres long and 80 cm. wide. Girls worked all day long while at night they were supposed to move along the trench line. [...] Ludmila managed to find a way to recuperate. The girls linked their arms so that the one in the middle had a chance to rest or sleep as she was dragged by her companions. They changed after some time to provide another one with some rest [...]. Unfortunately, when someone was not strong enough to do

her workload she was killed with a rifle or shot by guards. Ludmila witnessed five girls being killed in cold blood.

“One day in May 1945, squeezing through a gap between barn planks, we saw, although it was a dark and gloomy day, Germans fleeing in panic. We heard whirring of tanks and some soldiers wearing different uniforms appeared on the horizon. They were British soldiers who brought us freedom,” said Ludmila.

The young women were physically exhausted, wrapped in dirty blankets. At first the British thought they were elderly women... However, when she had already experienced all the atrocities of war, the time of stability brought her a serious lung disease. She had the first symptoms of the disease at the turn of 1946-1947. Ludmila was astonished that the whole war period did not have any harmful influence on her health. Her stay in a health resort brought a lot of new things into her life. She started recovering and she met the love of her life, a Polish officer who became her husband.

### ***Beatrix – from darling of a Nazi family to Displaced Person***

Beatrix belonged to an upper-class Austro-German family settled in Romania. Her grandfather had been a Supreme Court judge working for the Austrian emperor Franz Joseph and her grandmother still kept her “salon” where once a month, between four and six old ladies came for tea and the big salon on the ground floor, or in summers the veranda, was filled with fragile voices exchanging the latest gossip.

Her father was also a judge but unlike his father-in-law favoured Germany rather than Austria. Beatrix recalls vividly the many garden parties where hoards of academics and students, with their colourful caps and sabres, patrolled the house and the garden, but she was also a little bit repelled by the violent singing and the arrogance of many of those visitors against Anna, the cook, an old Ruthenian woman who had lived and worked in the house for almost her whole life.

The prosperity of the household and the social status of her family did not automatically mean that Beatrix was a happy child. Despite the large number of persons who were around her, she often felt lonely [...] there was the elegant art nouveau residence of Simon Stein, where twins in Beatrix’s age lived. “But I was never allowed to go there and to play with them and they never came to visit me”, she recalls, “and it was only when I was six years

old and sort of insisted on seeing them that father explained to me: ‘German girls never play with Jewish brats’.”

In 1940, the well-protected world of Beatrix and her family came to an abrupt end. As a consequence of the Hitler-Stalin pact, “territorial and political rearrangements” forced German citizens in Romania to leave the country at short notice, or to stay in detention camps. The family opted for the first alternative and moved “home into the Reich”, into Silesia [now in Poland] that was at that time considered to be in the heart of Germany. Her father got a job very quickly at the “Wirtschaftspolizei” (economic police) and Beatrix joined the “Bund deutscher Mädel” (BDM, the Nazi Germany girls’ organisation) and later the “Reichsarbeitsdienst” (Reich labour service) where she worked as a nanny in various households.

In 1944, the war approached Silesia and the family moved to Sudetenland [...]; but then the Russian troops came closer again. Finally, in spring 1945, the family reached the bombed city of Linz in Upper Austria, where the Danube would become the border between the Russian and the American zones. They had lost their grandparents and three suitcases with the minimum for survival were the only possessions remaining from the Villa in Czernowitz...

Asked how she felt as a migrant, she replied that at the end of the war, almost everybody was a migrant. She felt some resistance from her husband’s family first, that he had married a “Reichsdeutsche” (a German woman from the Reich), but that episode is long forgotten. Also forgotten are her dreams of becoming a surgeon, but ironically, with her declining health, she is “quite often in company with surgeons, but on the other side on the operation table”, she jokes. Would she ever go back to visit Czernowitz? We know that the house still exists. Her answer is no. “I want to keep my memories intact and not open this chapter of my life again.”

Ludmila finally returned to her home country and a happy middle-class life again. Beatrix married an Austrian mechanic and never returned to Romania or became a surgeon, as she had dreamt of doing.

## 5.2 “Unforced” migration - economics

It is too easy to assume that economic migrants always act through choice. Some do but others are forced by extreme poverty to look for a more tolerable life. The extract here gives yet another angle.

### *Florent – stranded in France*

Florent was born in 1945 in Murcia, one of three children of an agricultural labourer. At the age of 9 he left school to work in a sandal factory for 3 pesetas a day [...] Conditions were hard and the foreman had no hesitation in hitting him when he worked too slowly. Soon he and his brother moved to their uncle’s farm where they worked for board and lodging [...]

Every year his parents went to South-West France for the grape harvest. In 1957 all the children were old enough to accompany them [...] But that year the family could not earn enough to make the expensive return journey to Spain along with sufficient savings. Thanks to the city mayor, the father and the elder son got jobs in a marble quarry [...]. Florent, however, was now able to return to school for a few years. He always regretted that the school leaving age was 14 instead of 16 as today.

He was then apprenticed to a wine grower but [...] he did not take to the work. At best, he would be an agricultural labourer. So he entered a factory – but after three months lost an arm in an industrial accident. Since he could no longer do manual work he needed to gain professional qualifications and after a long struggle, taking any job that came along in order to survive while he studied by correspondence course, he obtained a professional qualification in industrial design. He has done well financially and is thoroughly integrated.

For many years his parents thought that their stay in France was temporary, but Florent’s accident changed their destiny. In France he received treatment covered by social security and had the chance to learn a trade, which would not have been the case in Spain.

## 6 OUTCOMES OF MIGRATION

There are many ways to analyse this data but the research question posed was, was life after migration better or worse, economically, socially or personally? Where the migration was voluntary, was it worth it, in economic, political or personal terms? Where the migration was involuntary, was there a happy outcome or not?

In order to simplify this analysis, the stories have been divided only by the primary cause of migration. The evaluation of the socio-economic outcomes is based on final levels of education and economic position, compared with pre-migration data; the personal outcomes are based on the subjective assessment of the interviewees or my interpretation of their feelings where these were not clearly expressed. The category “neutral” means that their socio-economic or personal situation did not change through migration.

As table 5 shows, most of the men but just over half of the women benefited positively from migration in socio-economic terms, and the proportion of men whose final personal outcomes are positive is also higher than that of women. The only negative socio-economic effects were experienced by women.

- Love had mixed socio-economic effects but mainly positive personal ones.
- The majority of economic migrants either did well or remained at a similar level and were happy.
- Political migrants, who were mainly refugees, suffered socio-economically but not, finally, personally.
- Victims of war had mixed fortunes economically but all ended up happy.
- The adventurers are too few and too diverse for generalisation.
- Those who moved with or to join their families did well socio-economically and most had happy outcomes.

In all, socio-economic outcomes were poor for only 9 people, all women, and personal outcomes for only 5, 1 man and 4 women.

**Table 5 Final outcomes for migrants from 47 case studies, by sex and primary reason only for migration (M=male, F=female)**

Outcomes	Socio-economic			Personal			Total persons
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral	
<b>Love</b>	M2	-	M1	M3	-	-	9
	F2	-	F4	F3	F2	F1	
<b>Economic</b>	M5	-	M1	M6	-	-	10
	F2	F1	F1	F3	-	F1	
<b>Politics</b>	M1	-	-	M1	-	-	7
	F1	F4	F1	F3	-	F3	
<b>War</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
	F4	F2	F1	F7	-	-	
<b>Adventure</b>	M1	-	M1	M1	M1	-	4
	-	F1	F1	F2	-	-	
<b>Family</b>	M2	-	M1	M3	-	-	10
	F5	F1	F1	F3	F2	F2	
<b>Men</b>	11	-	4	14	1	-	<b>15</b>
<b>Women</b>	14	9	9	21	4	7	<b>32</b>
<b>Total</b>	25	9	13	28	4	6	<b>47</b>

## 7 CONCLUSION

As stated above, the data cannot be generalised since the sample is non-random, but it may act as a useful starting point for further research into the outcomes of migration. Above all, the stories of the interviewees are immensely valuable as first-hand accounts of a period that is rapidly becoming lost to collective memory. What I have not been able to show in this paper are photographs from private albums that illuminate these stories and bring them to life. I suggest that anyone who is interested in looking further into these lives go to the library and explore them:

**[www.european-generation-link.org](http://www.european-generation-link.org)**

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