Geographical mobility is a constant factor in European history. Migration is also a factor behind the current composition of population and mix of ethnic groups, not least in the Baltic Sea Region. In this region people have always been on the move. Nowadays we make a pronounced distinction between *international migration*, i.e. when people cross borders between countries, and *internal migration*, when people move within a country. This distinction is important because migration over the borders might have implications on the relations between the countries involved. From the individual’s point of view the distinction between internal and international may be less important. What does it mean in terms of work, income and material well being? How does migration affect the relations to family and kin? Is it possible to join one’s church, speak one’s language and feel at home culturally in a new country or in another part of one’s own country? What is the possibility of return? Individuals who move out of free will more or less consciously make a calculation and summing up of the pros and cons. Internal moves can be long-distance ones and lead to drastic changes. Imagine the extreme shift of environment for someone who leaves an agricultural village in Ostrobothnia (Österbotten) in north-western Finland, where the everyday language is Swedish, and moves to the Finnish capital, starts work in an industrial environment and has to use Finnish as his or her main language. In contrast, a businessman and his family who move from Stockholm to Hamburg in Germany or to Houston in Texas, may experience much less change and frustration, if they can move into equivalent job positions and similar social environments.

1. *Past migrations*

The old agrarian society was not immobile, but migration mostly took place within short distances, primarily within and between neighbouring parishes. Changes in the economic structure during the 18th and 19th centuries had strong effects on mobility. With industrialisation and the growth of cities, there was a need for mobile labour. Seasonal migration became important, and labourers spent part of the year away from home. Within the Baltic Sea Region seasonal migration was significant, and a steady flow of labour migration led to permanent settlements. All expansive large cities in the Baltic Sea Region were surrounded by areas from which they attracted immigrants, Riga, Hamburg, Copenhagen etc. After St Petersburg was founded in 1703, it attracted seasonal labour and permanent settlers from the surrounding countries. There is a strong element of tradition in migration patterns. It is possible to record
an almost constant emigration from coastal areas in Finland to Stockholm from the Middle Ages up to today.

Migration also occurred in the wake of political expansion and economic contacts between the countries. Hence, population movements were part of the German expansion eastwards during the Middle Ages. Germans colonised Prussia during the 13th century, and the Baltic Prussians who lived in the area were pushed away or slowly assimilated. The Teutonic Knights sought early to Christianise the Balts; one consequence was German immigration into contemporary Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In all the Baltic territories the German (later called the German-Baltic) nobility came to hold a dominant position for centuries to come. Swedish expansion in the Baltic Sea Region in the 17th century stimulated mobility within the enlarged realm; farmers moved from Finland to the recently conquered Estonia.

You may regard the colonisation of northern Europe as a frontier movement. When population increased and the pressure on the land grew, some individuals and families had to make a choice: either to become marginalised in the agricultural sector, to move into a nearby city, or to seek their fortune in far away places in their own country or abroad. In the 19th century the Scandinavian countries had an “America within their own borders”, and there was much internal migration in order to populate regions in the north. In Finland, where industrialisation was late and urbanisation fairly slow, the result was a strong growth of the lower strata of the rural population which, in its turn, resulted in strong social tensions in the beginning of the 20th century. In Polish areas much of the “excess population” moved to industrial work in Germany during the decades around 1900. Large parts of Russia were colonised in a gradual movement eastwards, often in encounters with native peoples, some of whom were sedentary, others nomads. In Norway, Sweden and Finland the movement was directed to the north, and partly resulted in the subjugation and “colonisation” of the Saami population. These colonisation movements continued into the twentieth century.

People have moved extensively within the Baltic Sea Region. Many of the ethnic and linguistic minorities in the region are a result of population movements in the past. Place-names in Sweden and Norway testify to a large-scale immigration from eastern Finland in the 16th and 17th centuries. There is a recently awakened interest in this group, which maintained cultural and language characteristics for many generations. The Kven minority in northern Norway has its origin in the migration from northern Finland to northern Norway during the last two centuries.

2. Emigration to America

During the 19th century, the Baltic Sea Region, especially its western and southern parts, was increasingly integrated in the Atlantic economy, and there was a strong connection between internal migration and transatlantic mobility. For many individuals emigration was a gradual process, first from the countryside to some nearby city, then from the city to America.

One main result of the population increase was transatlantic migration. America as a continent opened up for European colonisation in the 16th and the 17th centuries, but the real mass movement took place between 1830 and 1930. The western countries of the Baltic Sea Region were affected earlier by emigration than those east of the Baltic Sea. This timing was also decisive for where the migrants settled. Danes, Norwegians, Swedes and large numbers of Germans tended to settle in rural surroundings in the American Midwest, while Estonians,
Latvians, Lithuanians and Russians, who arrived later, settled in large cities and industrial areas in the United States.

The existence of overseas populations has had a lasting impact, into our days, on the relations between America and Europe. For certain countries the national awakening during the decades around 1900 was a result of interaction between the European and the overseas parts of a nation’s population. Agricultural workers in America who came from Polish areas discovered and developed their Polish identity in America and realised that they belonged to a nation, a European nation. Their national awakening had an impact on their compatriots in Poland proper. To provide other examples: Norwegians in America supported Norway’s struggle to break up the unpopular union with Sweden in 1905, and the Finns in Finland had a strong backing from Finnish Americans during the two wars with Russia (1939-1940, 1941-1944). During the new liberation of Central and Eastern Europe in the years around 1990, some have returned to Europe. Emigrant Lithuanians and their descendants in overseas countries number more than a million. A country like Estonia has been able to draw on its many exile communities (in Canada, United States, Australia, Sweden) in her new phase of nation-building, a sign, if it can be counted as such, of the importance of international networks for small communities.

3. Deportations and war refugees

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between internal and international migration. Would a move from Ukraine to Estonia before the break-up of the Soviet Union be considered internal or international? It is important, though, to note, that many moves were not voluntary but forced.

It may be worthwhile to place the last century’s migration in the Baltic Sea Region in a wider context. In Europe, World War II resulted in fewer changes to the political map than World War I. However, the demographic effects were greater in 1939-1945 than 1914-1918, partly because of larger losses on the battlefields, sufferings among the civilian populations, and genocide. Population movements in the wake of World War II resulted in considerable losses to certain countries. A combination of “precautionary” and other measures led to forced population movements and deportations in the Soviet Union. Crimean Tartars, Volga Germans and Don Cossacks were forced away from their areas of residence. The alterations of the western border of the Soviet Union were preceded and followed by population transfers. The Nordic countries were affected by what happened in the eastern and southern Baltic Sea Region. In round figures 40,000 Estonians, 100,000 Latvians and 80,000 Lithuanians moved eastwards, coerced by Soviet authorities. During the final phase of the war Balts fled en masse overseas, with Sweden and Denmark as their ultimate goals. Some also sought refuge in Germany. To many Balts this was a first stage in a flight to non-European countries: the United States, Canada, Australia.

The adjustments of the borders between the Soviet Union, Poland, and Germany caused domino effects in terms of population movements, when masses of Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians moved into former Polish areas, while Poles were moved or fled to East Prussia and other areas which became Polish but had earlier been German. Germans (Reichsdeutsche as well as Volksdeutsche) on the other hand left these areas on their way west.
4. Post-war migration patterns

The migration picture changed dramatically in another respect during the early post-war period. Population losses during the war and low birth rates in combination with economic reconstruction programs created a demand for manpower in Western Europe which could not be supplied from within these countries. Fairly soon after the war a pattern of migration from southern to western Europe emerged.

There are some distinct flows in European migration after World War II. One way to classify them is presented here:
1. Migration in the wake of World War II
2. Labour migration
3. Migration from colonies to European mother countries
4. Refugee migration
5. Family reunion migration
6. Homeland-oriented migration
7. Re-migration

During more than five years of intensive warfare (1939-45) on the European continent, many people had been moved to theatres of warfare. Troops from belligerent states were far from their homes when the war ended. The home transportation of soldiers, forced labour, slave labour in nations occupied by the Nazis, deported people, Jews and others in camps took a large toll in bitterness, pain and suffering, and in many cases the homecoming was less than glorious. Add to this the extensive relocation of people as a result of border changes. Not least the German population was affected by the re-drawing of the European political map. Sweden was affected in different ways by these post-war movements. Baltic refugees arrived in large numbers during the last war year. Refugees who had come to Sweden during the war returned to their home countries, primarily Norwegians and Danes. Finnish war children, who had been placed in Swedish homes primarily during the Continuation War 1941-44, returned to their home country, numbering between 60,000 and 70,000. A smaller number of German soldiers returned home from Norway after a stop-over in Swedish camps, some of them quite unwillingly. Poles stranded in Sweden were forced to, and aided by, Polish authorities to go back to Poland.

5. Labour migration

Contrary to many pessimistic prognoses made by economists and politicians, Europe did not experience any post-war depression of the kind that hurt the area after World War I. In Sweden and Switzerland, where production capacity had been unaffected, and even invigorated by the war, scarcity of labour made itself felt almost immediately after the truce in May 1945. One way of recruiting both skilled and unskilled labour was to make labour force agreements with other countries. Sweden did so in the late 1940s with Central and South European countries, and this model was taken over by West Germany in the 1950s. The gradual establishment of the Nordic Labour Market (of which more below) can be seen in this context, and the system of free flows of labour between the European Union countries has a clear resemblance to the Nordic common labour market model. In some countries labour migrants were labelled guest workers, for example in Denmark and Germany. Sweden never
used this term, and the absence of the “guest worker” label reflected that Sweden hardly saw this migration as temporary.

The labour migration period in post-war European history ended at the beginning of the 1970s. West European governments stopped labour immigration, and this happened during the so-called oil crisis and a strong recession in the world economy. The economic crisis of the early seventies was, however, only one of several reasons why population mobility changed character in the 1970s. Since 1970 the number of refugees on a global scale has been rising almost constantly. Although many Third World countries have received larger numbers of refugees, many West European countries have been affected by refugee flows caused by growing intolerance and repression in non-European countries. It is hard to distinguish between refugees and economic migrants, but given the fact that East-West migration in Europe has been of large magnitude during the second half of the twentieth century, the role of refugees is anyhow substantial. The large and dramatic migration flows that have affected Western Europe during the 1980s and the 1990s have not taken place within the organised frameworks. The flows of manpower within the regulated international labour markets (the Nordic countries, the European Union) are small compared to the much larger flows of asylum-seekers, refugees and family reunion migrants. On the other hand, European co-operation for controlling the flow of asylum-seekers has led to lower figures of those who seek refuge in some countries, e.g. Sweden.

Two of the neutral European countries during the war, Sweden and Switzerland, gained an economic and social lead. With a strong economic potential they were prepared for post-war production and these two countries were the first to open their gates to foreign labour. Within the framework of these systems, from the mid-1940s to the early 1970s an area developed in Western Europe with immigration countries: France, Switzerland, West Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Great Britain, Sweden, and later on also Denmark and Norway. Pronounced countries of emigration were Finland, Portugal, and the Mediterranean countries Spain, Italy, Yugoslavia, France, and Turkey, as well as the former French colonies Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. To complicate the picture, even emigration countries were targets for migration. Somewhat schematically, three zones may be recognised:

1. Centre (West Europe)
2. Semi-periphery (parts of South Europe)
3. Periphery (rest of South Europe, bordering parts of North Africa and West Asia).

Parallel systems for migration recruitment also emerged in Europe: one in Eastern Europe, and one in Western and Southern Europe. With the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961 the flow between these systems almost stopped. Before this date smaller migration streams reached Scandinavia from the Baltic area (1944-45), Poland (the years around 1945) and Hungary.
Few immigrants arrived from East Germany after 1948. Yugoslavia, hanging between east and west, was integrated early in the Western system, and the regime in Belgrade not only permitted but also exhorted its citizens to seek employment abroad. Of the Nordic countries first Sweden, then Denmark, welcomed Yugoslavian labour.

From the beginning of the 1970s there was a slackening, even a reversion, of the labour migration streams to Western Europe. Several circumstances inter-played, most notably a deep economic recession, unemployment and the so-called oil crisis. Country after country in West Europe embarked on a restricted immigration policy. Free migration, to the extent that it existed, was stopped. Gradually, many governments sought measures (including economic benefits) to stimulate guest workers and their families to return to their home countries.

While the chances for labour migrants of entering a West European country became almost nil, the possibilities for the reunion of families increased. Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have embraced this pattern. Thus, as immigration was choked, the effect has nonetheless been a continued immigration in the wake of labour migration. The early 1970s also saw another significant change, the increase in refugee migrations to the free countries of the world.

Migration between the Nordic countries has taken place within a framework of extensive political cooperation. As early as 1943, Sweden abolished the requirement for labour permits for citizens from the other Nordic countries. Visa requirements were abolished for Danes, Icelanders, and Norwegians in 1945 and for Finnish citizens in 1949. This last measure opened the sluices for large-scale migration from Finland to Sweden. A full common Nordic labour market became a reality in 1954 when the same steps were taken in all Nordic countries. In 1955 another agreement improved social security for Nordic immigrants. Seen from a non-Nordic immigrant's perspective, a Nordic citizen in another Nordic country is the object of preferential treatment, or positive discrimination, if you like.

The factors behind the large inter-Nordic movements were mainly economic. The streams between Finland and Sweden have mainly followed the business cycles in the two countries. The community in culture and language has facilitated the intra-Nordic migration. As far as language is concerned, one exception is Finnish-speaking Finns; the language situation of this group has been one of the most discussed issues in Swedish-Finnish cooperation during recent decades. One should, however, not overestimate the ease of settling and adjusting in a neighbouring Nordic country. Some observers have pointed out that adjustment to a rather similar culture contains its special problem complex. The immigrant author Marianne Alopeaus, a Swedish-speaking Finn who moved to Sweden, has written about decades of cultural surprises in her new homeland.

6. Re-migration and repatriation

Return migration is an important part of international population flows, as said above. Every migration in one direction results in another flow in the opposite direction. The breakdown and fall of the Soviet Union and the communist regimes in Eastern Europe led to a “return” or homeland-oriented migration by the so-called Aussiedler Germans to Germany and Russians to Russia. Many of these referred to the fact that distant forefathers had left German territories several generations, and even several centuries, ago. A much discussed issue in Western Europe today is to get primarily non-European immigrants to return to their countries of origin. This is also effectuated, sometimes with quite substantial economic incentives.
The dissolution of the Soviet Union had a definite effect on the migration picture. One tendency is that people tend to return to their “home republics”: Russians return to Russia, Kazakhs to Kazakhstan. There is also a stream out of the former Soviet Union: Ethnic Germans return to Germany. One could label this trend as “the Return to the Homeland”.

A much-discussed topic among government people and scholars is: How large is the migration potential from the east to the west? The former Soviet Union is considered a possible source of enormous emigration. One might just recall the mass emigration from Russia and Central Europe around the turn of the 20th century. Some observers send out warning signals for large-scale “uncontrolled” migration, others say that there is no infrastructure that can channel large-scale migration. Transports, currency systems, information channels and social contact systems are not developed enough to make such a large-scale population movement possible. One must remember that migration always takes place in certain systems that are economic, political, and social. There is, of course, also a scenario of terror, namely that ecological or political catastrophes, like in Yugoslavia, will send people out on the roads.

Migration is bringing Europe closer to the rest of the world. Many countries which have traditionally been large emigration countries including Spain, Italy, Greece, Hungary and Poland, are now receiving people from nearby and remote areas. This is evident in southern Europe, but also a country like Finland, a traditional emigration country, has recently experienced an influx of refugees from the Third World.

7. Challenges to the immigration countries: the Scandinavian case

International migration has been a very important factor during the post-war era and has, indeed, served as a dynamic element in Nordic societies. Migration has altered the ethnic composition of populations, has added to the cultural and linguistic variety, and has confronted individuals and local communities with a spectrum of new life-styles. Immigration has also served as a challenge to traditional behaviour and policies in a variety of spheres: education, administration of justice, the medical service, and church-life. These changes have taken place in varying degrees in the five Nordic countries. The process started at different times. For the Nordic area as a whole, the last war years (1943-45) were important. One must remember, though, that the Nordic area has always been a target for international migration. Hence the countries have at all times received small numbers of immigrants from the countries around the Baltic Sea and the North Sea as well as Central Europe. All Nordic countries have experienced Jewish immigration, Denmark as early as during the seventeenth century.

Where do migrants settle? Most immigrants who have arrived in the Nordic countries have sought their abode in urban areas. Only during the early post-war years could agriculture and forestry absorb new labour. For example, many Estonians who arrived in Sweden in 1944 were directed to farms, and as late as 1947 there was a recruitment of agricultural labourers to Swedish farms from Hungary.

As long as immigration was practically free and unregulated up to the years around 1970, market factors and especially the demand for labour in industry and the service sector steered immigrants to cities and expansive industrial centres. The capital regions especially and the large industrial cities (København, Århus, Oslo, Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö) attracted immigrants. During the years 1945-70 around 40 percent of the immigrants in Sweden settled in the Stockholm metropolitan area.
Border areas have their own patterns. For example, German immigrants have made up the largest immigrant group in Southern Jutland and the Danish islands. Danes in Sweden tend to settle in the southern provinces, and Finnish immigrants to Sweden are to be found in the central part of the country with a concentration on a broad axis from Stockholm to Gothenburg. There are also other regional ethnic patterns among non-Nordic immigrants. Turks are primarily concentrated to the largest cities, among them Copenhagen. The same holds true for Pakistanis: in Norway and Denmark they are mainly found in the Oslo and Copenhagen metropolitan regions, respectively. Balts in Sweden tended to settle in south-eastern Sweden making up clusters in certain cities (Eskilstuna, Borås) whereas, on the other hand, immigrants from the United States and Great Britain tend to spread.

In some cities certain neighbourhoods are more strongly flavoured by immigrant culture than others, and immigrant districts exist in some larger cities, such as Ishøj in København, Rosengård in Malmö, and Tensta and Rinkeby in Stockholm. In Oslo immigrants have concentrated to the older workers’ districts such as Grünertlokk. Many factors are behind the immigrants’ choice: economic standard, housing market, availability of apartments, housing policy, and the immigrants’ own cultural strategies. When labour immigration grew rapidly in the 1950s and early 1960s a housing shortage steered immigrants to old, inconvenient apartments in the old parts of the cities. In Sweden, the construction boom during the so-called record years (rekordåren) during the 1960s resulted in many new-built areas. Much of the new immigration was directed to these areas. In the 1980s there was a tendency in Denmark, Norway and Sweden to distribute refugees to a large number of communes. This has been one aspect of refugee reception programmes, in which the ambition of the governments has been to equalise the burdens of refugee reception. Within the communes the location of immigrants and refugees is largely a combined function of the public services and housing policy. As opposed to many world cities, where new arrivals cluster in slum areas in the city centres or bidonvilles in the outskirts, the tendency in the Nordic countries has been rather to place immigrants in large numbers in newly-built areas of decent standard.

In a few areas the strong concentration of immigrants from many parts of the world has led to unique cultures and even ephemeral hybrid linguistic variations. The clustering of immigrants in quarters of a city or town is sometimes an expression of discrimination and forced ghettoisation. But the settlement and housing patterns are also a reflection of the infrastructure of immigrant groups, as well as the need and ambition of individuals and families to support each other during an initial phase. One factor which influences concentration is chain migration; especially striking are the links created by clustering immigrants from Kulu, a rural area in Anatolia, and certain districts of Göteborg and metropolitan Stockholm.

Figure 111. Finnish children returning home after having lived in Swedish families during the war (1945). Many of the so-called war-children never returned. Photo: Arbetarrörelsens arkiv, Stockholm
8. Immigrants’ cultural strategies

The various immigrant collectives behave quite differently in their new countries. A long series of factors decide the ambitions of both the individual and the group: the cause of migration, time of arrival, the sex composition and social structure of the group, level of education, basic values, and intention to return to the homeland. The collective strategies fall between two extremes, one to preserve as much as possible of the traditional culture in isolation from the host society, and the other to integrate as fully as possible. In the Nordic societies the former extreme is unusual. In reality the attitudes of ethnic groups are a compromise between the host society’s demands and expectations, and the ambitions of the ethnic groups. One condition for the survival of ethnic groups (as ethnic groups) is the control of primary socialisation and the ability to keep the groups together in religious and secular organisations. The ambition to preserve the cultural heritage in modern Westernised societies is, generally seen, different between labour migrants and refugees.

Certain immigrant and ethnic groups are collectively anonymous and have a low profile in the Nordic countries. This category includes Norwegians, Danes, and Swedes in other Nordic societies: the migration is individual or based on single families; marriage migration is common; the geographical concentration in the immigrant societies is low; the spirit of association is weak. Language problems are minimal; hence the integration is rapid. This includes the Swedish-speaking Finns. (The Finnish-speaking Finns were discussed above.) As ethnic groups, French, Germans, Dutch, other West Europeans and North Americans have been fairly invisible during the post-war period, although some of them are among the most numerous immigrant groups. Baltic and Latin American groups in exile have had strong ambitions to preserve cultural traditions from their home countries. The political situation in the home countries has preoccupied Latin American expatriates. The mentality of exile has also
characterised the second generation, brought up in the Nordic countries. One effect, at least in Sweden, is that exiles from various countries in South America and Central America have come together and formed a Latin American community with an all-Latin-American culture and created an awareness of the continent that is not common in Latin America proper.

Chain migration is also of vital importance for the cultural life of ethnic groups. Thus, the arrival of Jews from Poland by the end of the war and during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s from Central Europe has vitalised the Jewish minorities in Denmark and Sweden. The existence of the state of Israel has also meant an injection of life into the Nordic Jewish minorities, while on the other hand several Nordic Jewish families and individuals have emigrated to Israel.

9. New regional identities

Glasnost, perestroika, and the far-ranging political and social movements in Eastern Europe after 1985 have brought new prospects for the ethnic and cultural situation in the Nordic countries, too. Scandinavia’s geopolitical situation has changed, and within the new framework of regionalism in Europe there are tendencies to re-establish old links and create new combinations. This also has repercussions in the ethnic minorities of the Nordic countries. New identities are to a certain extent shaped, and even the concept of the “North” (Norden) is undergoing a change. This is not least the result of ambitions among the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) to gain a foothold in Nordic co-operation, something which they have already partly achieved through occasional observer status in Nordic Council meetings and by the rapid acceptance in many quarters of the idea replacing or complementing the Nordic Council with a Baltic council with much the same function. There is a strong likelihood that the Baltic countries, when their recently acquired independence becomes more established, will achieve a more permanent status in Nordic voluntary organisations and NGOs. This seems to have an effect on the identity building around the Baltic Sea.

It is interesting to see how old historical combinations around the Baltic influence the immigration policy and the conditions of ethnic groups. Denmark’s and Sweden’s roles as former regional great powers are reflected in attitudes to the Baltic groups. Estonians, especially, refer to the good old days of the late 16th and the 17th centuries, when Estonia was a Swedish province. The Swedish rule is contrasted to that of the German, the tsarist, and the Soviet regimes, sometimes with a romantic colouring.

Perestroika has led to a reactivation of support for the home countries by the Baltic immigrant groups in Sweden. The linguistic competence of exiles and their children has been used by the Swedish government and by Swedish firms in their contacts with the countries on the other side of the Baltic. Author Andres Küng is an example of a Swedish-born Estonian and he has even assumed the responsibility of serving as a member of the Estonian national assembly; other Balt-Scandinavians with him have taken on roles to promote cooperation between the Baltic area and the Nordic countries.
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Figure 122. Seal hunters, a detail of *Carta marina* by Olaus Magnus, published 1539 in Venedig. Ill.: Uppsala University Library

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