

E2. Moroccans Migrate to Europe

Many Moroccans have migrated – temporarily or permanently – to Europe in the past century. During World War I and World War II, France urgently needed workers and recruited tens of thousands of Moroccan men for factories, mines, and the French military. Most returned home after the war, but the precedence for ‘circular migration’ – to Europe for a few years, then back to Morocco – was set.

Economic factors (work opportunities) motivated many Moroccans to migrate (often temporarily) to Europe and led many European countries to welcome them. France, of course, was a preferred destination as most Moroccans spoke French as a second or third language. France was eager to recruit Moroccans for work in factories and mines, especially in the 1950s and early 1960s when they stopped recruiting Algerians (who were fighting against them for independence). Between 1949 and 1962, the Moroccan population in France jumped from 20,000 to 53,000.

Between 1965 and 1972, the demand for unskilled labor grew throughout Europe. More than 400,000 Moroccans went to Europe to work – and they went not only France, but to the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Spain, and Italy as well.

During the oil crisis of 1973, Western Europe stopped accepting guest workers. Ironically, instead of decreasing the number of Moroccans abroad, the new restrictions caused many Moroccans to stay permanently in Europe. Workers feared that if they returned home and had difficulty finding a job there or fitting in with the then-repressive government, they would be unable to return to work in Europe. So they didn’t return to Morocco at all, ending the pattern of circular migration.

European countries allowed family reunification, so Moroccans continued to move to Europe in the 1970s and 1980s. There was, however, return migration. Between 1985 and 1995, some 314,000 returned to Morocco.

Up until today, many Moroccans go to France to study. Some of them, who began as ‘temporary migrants,’ ended up becoming permanent ones with jobs and families in Europe. Others continue to arrive in Europe on family visas.

All in all, two million people of Moroccan descent currently live in Western Europe. Many of them continue to send money back home to their families. (In 2003, Morocco was the fourth largest remittance receiver.)

Assignment: You are a Moroccan, thinking about immigrating to France. Write 2 diary entries, each at least one double-spaced page long. Choose names for your characters that are authentic. Also, include at least 5 facts or factual details drawn from the history/geography of the area. (Be sure to look up additional information in addition to the information found in this reading.) Underline the pieces of information you include in each of your diary entries.

- In one diary entry, it is 1965, and you are a 19-year-old who has arrived in France a few months ago to work in a factory. Describe your reasons for leaving your home. What difficulties have you encountered in France? What factors have helped in your adjustment? What are your hopes for the future?

- In another diary entry, it is 1975. You are the teenager, a much younger sibling of the writer of the first diary entry, so of course, you stayed behind in Morocco. You are thinking now of going to Europe under the family reunification policy. Why might it be a good idea to move? (Read about the “Years of Lead” in Morocco. Also, consider work and school opportunities.) Would your leaving be difficult or beneficial to your family in Morocco? (Explain.) What would be challenging about moving? Do you expect it to be easy or difficult to find work in France (in 1975)?