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*Erasmusplus strategic partnership*  
*"From Me to We, networks for empowering teachers and students"*  
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### A NEW DISCOVERY: SISU.

In those instances, in which you keep wondering about "that" moment for months, believing that an unimaginable amount of time separates you from it, the great day almost seems like a mirage.

And then you find yourself staring at your huge pink luggage, wondering about what you could have forgotten to bring, and knowing that the only thing between you and the airport is a night full of unattainable sleep. This was what was happening to the teachers, my travel friends and all the people involved in the "Me To We" Erasmus+ project, especially me, in the evening of the 13th of January 2018 in the "Me To We" Erasmus+ project. Luckily, the next day we took the plane in order to land in Pietarsaari, Finland.

My head was full of enthusiasm, but the usual spark of anxiety, of course, could not be missed. A new country, a new language, the unconceivable -14 degrees celsius, unknown people you would have to live with for a whole week. What if they were rude, non-English speakers, or distant and emotionless??

All of these preoccupations were replaced by the excitement of the moment we all looked down through the thick windows of the plane, then of the train, we saw the snow and finally admiring the amazing different landscape.

We were about to live a dream and we were all aware of this. The thing that impressed me the first moment that I got off the train and met the family, was their ability to make me feel comfortable. My prejudice about Northern people being shy

and absolute introverts was destroyed in a blink of an eye. I cannot say the same about our tendency to match the word "Finnish" with the word "sauna."

In fact, the first thing that our hosts told my new Croatian friend and me, as soon as we stepped into their wooden house was: "Now girls go upstairs and get changed. We are going to wait for you in the sauna." YES! They have saunas in all of their houses and NO! It does not feel like hell and you do not do it naked. The +75 degrees celsius in the sauna are just a frame of moments of relaxed and peaceful conversations.

There is no need to say that the first impact with cold temperatures was little far from traumatic, but ski clothes saved a lot of Southern lives and hands from freezing there. Of course, stepping into the warm wooden school was always a huge relief, because of the warmth and the welcoming feeling it gave.

After the first presentation and warming up activities, the ice was broken and we started getting to know each other. There were people from Germany, Finland, Croatia, Poland and Spain. English language had begun to get into our veins and our brains, making it difficult to switch from it to our mother-tongue language. At the end of the week, I would find myself dreaming and thinking in English at all times.

The main subjects of our project were photography and soft skills. They are traits of our personality that we should develop to succeed in life and work. Every day was centered on one of these skills: kindness, curiosity, SISU (Finnish word to mean courage and will to break our limits), self-awareness and hope. The school organized activities which were stimulating, different, fun by every point of view, and most of all useful.

Many of them made you really think and reflect about yourself, about the things that matter to us and that we find important, about how we impact other people's lives and actions, how each and everyone of us is part of something bigger. All of this was possible thanks to able and motivating teachers, whose lessons I will probably never forget in my life. Just an example: I have always thought of myself of not a very brave

person. Then I did ICE SWIMMING, and immersed myself in a freezing pool in the middle of the snow, and realized I had SISU. It was in all of us, while speaking a different language to people we had never met before, while opening up to other cultures and costumes, while living a life that was miles and miles away from our usual one.

At the end of the week, we found ourselves with amazing people, amazing friends, that we didn't want to leave, with our luggages full of presents, and our hearts full of hope. Because it was not an end, but only the beginning.

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