

## Erasmus in Finland, 28-24 Februar 2018

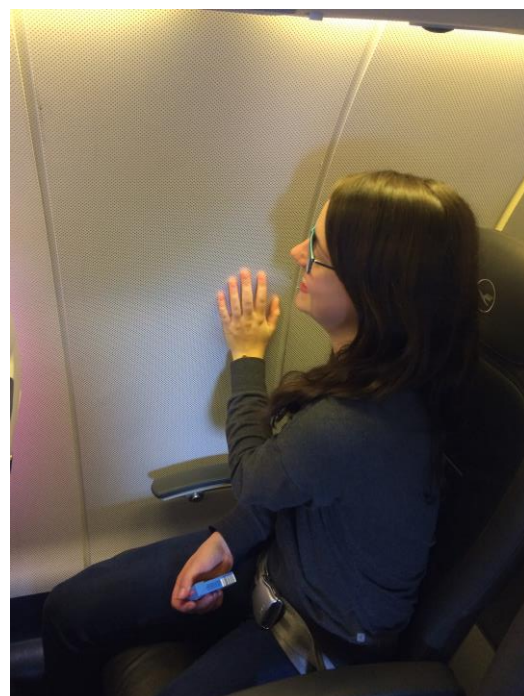


### Political participation of young people

#### Sunday 18th February

Sunday morning I woke up at 9 o'clock. While breakfast my mom fixed some warm gloves with a lot of holes because she was afraid that I'll freeze to death in Finland. Leonie and her parents picked me up at 10:30 am to the airport. We met there with our teachers and the other 5 students at 11:15 am for our journey to Finland. I wasn't nervous at all because I already knew my host sister Katja and some other Finnish students and they were all so friendly and cute. I was happy to meet these wonderful people again and the other students from Estonia, Italy and Scotland.

Our first flight from Stuttgart to Munich took only half an hour which was good because the airplane wasn't very big and quite loud. The worst thing though was that Leonie and I haven't had a seat next to the window so we saw only other people looking out of the windows whilst we had to stare against the rather boring walls. In Munich we had a quick stop of one hour to board our connection flight. This flight, Leonie and I managed to get window seats so we could enjoy the view and see the clouds, houses and all the tiny looking things far below us. Finally, at 7 pm we arrived in Helsinki Airport!



The Italian, Scottish, and Estonian people waited for us to take the bus together to Sastamala/ Vamala. It was a little bit weird in the beginning because the Scottish only talked with Scottish- the Estonians with Estonians and the Germans with Germans and so on. But we all were very tired so the most time we slept, read books or listened to music. Then we arrived in Vamala! I was very happy to see Katja and all the others again. After the welcome we took a car to Katja's house. She lives 20 minutes away from school in the middle of the woods. Her whole family, including her dogs and cats welcomed me warmly.

Katja showed me all the house: it's a very cozy house and I especially liked that not everything was super tidy so it felt like home ☐

For dinner we ate some delicious pancakes with jam and cream.

After a very long day I could finally lay in my bed- very very tired but also very very happy and excited about the things to come.

### Monday, 19th February

Today I stood up at 6:10 am. After breakfast Katja's mom took us with the car to the bus station.

There's a school-bus for all the students in the area. We drove about half an hour. I was very tired so it was hard to not fall asleep. At school we met with all the other guys. We attended a small introduction about the upcoming week and the topics that were about to be discussed in this political exchange week.

Our goal would be to create a panel discussion about young people and political participation. After a short break with coffee, tea and buns we made three groups. In my group was Katja and Eli (my host and another Finnish girl) who showed us their school. It was pretty interesting because the classrooms in Finland are different than the ones in Germany or France. Not the teacher has his own classroom, but each subject has a specific room. So you will find one floor with all the languages, another one with science, then mathematics and so on.

After the tour we met in the gymnasium to learn our first words in Finnish- I have to admit: I can't remember a single word. Having completely different roots than the German language, Finnish seems almost impossible to understand. I struggled to pronounce all these weird sounds with all the ä ö and k. Still- it was a very funny and interesting experience.

After the little language lesson we had lunch in the canteen. The food wasn't as bad as I expected.

After lunch, the Finnish teacher explained our first task. We split up into our project groups.

In my group is Salla from Finland, Märt from Estonia, Magan and Niamh from Scotland and Jana and me from Germany. Another teacher taught us about the panel discussion and how it works. After, we went in our groups and talked about our countries politics. It was interesting but it was so hard to understand the Scottish girls because English is their native language so they speak very fast.

At 2 pm we finished and we took the bus back to home. This time we had to walk from the bus station to home: it was so beautiful with the snow, the forest and the shiny sun.

At home we made a very nice pizza. After eating Katja showed me their planes and their big estate: I already mentioned that Katja lives in the middle of the woods. Near their house is a small lake which was frozen at that time. It was my first time standing on a frozen lake. I couldn't believe the beauty of the nature. While standing on the lake, the sun set and the sky turned into thousands of beautiful colors. All I could think about was this: I'm in Winterwonderland.

When we returned at home I realized how many cars my family had. They are very old and don't function anymore so they stand around the house and on the surrounding fields.

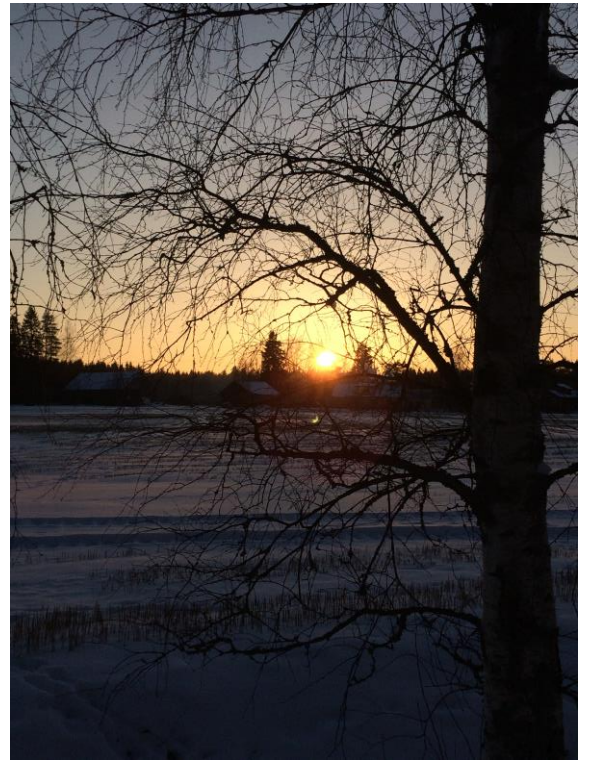
I wondered why they would need so many cars? When I asked Katja she explained that her father has a flawless to fix things which could explain the whole matter. I asked Katja if she knows how many cars they have- she had no idea but was sure that I'd be more than ten. Back at home we relaxed a little bit and went down to the welcome party around 6pm.

In the beginning the party was boring but after a while it got better. You could see that all the students were very tired from the long trip and the different weather conditions.

Back at home Katja and me had a very nice, hot chocolate and soon went to bed to get some rest for the next day: We were about to wake up very early for a trip to Helsinki.

### Tuesday, 20th February

This morning we woke up at 5:30am. It was hard but I was looking forward to see Helsinki a second time. I was there in 2014 with the school orchestra and we played a few concerts there. After 2 1/2 hours we arrived at Helsinki. Our first stop was the Parliament. To get inside we had to do a security check like we had to do in the airport. Once through the procedure we met our guide who showed us the parliament. It was the first Parliament I've ever visited so it was quite interesting.



After the tour we got some coffee and met the Minister of education: Jukka Gustafsson. He told us about the politics in Finland, about their political system and finished with a question-answer-round. It was interesting but I had problems to understand everything:

In Finland the people vote directly the candidat who is going in the parliament. The Minister was very Proud to say that finland is the savest country in the world.

After the visit we had lunch with our group- members. It was nice because we learned more about each other. After lunch we visited the city. I like Helsinki but I think the are more interesting cities in Europe. The city isn't really special, but I only saw a small part of this city. We went with another group in a coffee because it was freezing outside. We talked about our countries wether we are proud to be finish or German and what the country is special for . It was interesting and I enjoyed listening to the other people talking about their daily life. I have to say this are very cool people and I'm very happy that I met them.

I bought some finish chocolate (The important question- what is better: Finish chocolate or Ritter Sport?) and a cozy blanket.

Unfortunately we had to go home in the afternoon. It was a very nice day and I enjoyed the atmosphere between the students.

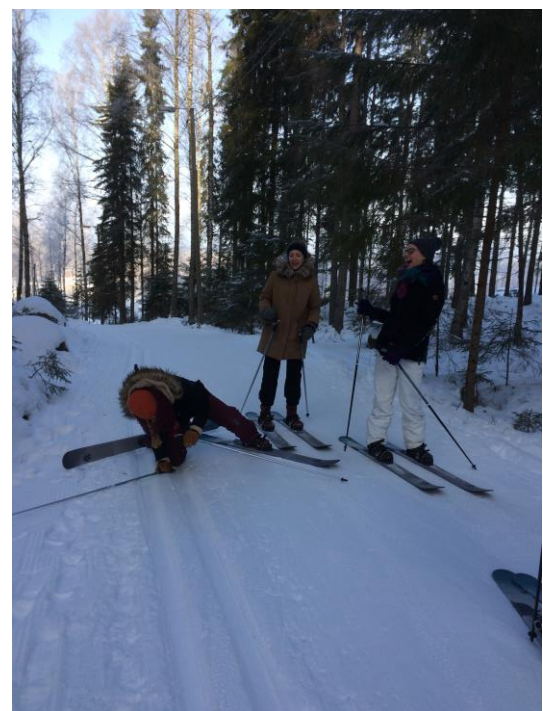
### Wednesday, 21th February

Today was winter fun at Ellivuori.

There were 5 different activities to do: my group started with bowling.

After, we played football in the snow. It's absolutely different to normal football which I play in Germany. It is very hard to play in the snow, not to mention that the ball was white- which made it not easier.

After playing football we went skiing. It was the first time for me so it wasn't easy to control my skis and I fell down a lot of times in only a couple of minutes. Although it was difficult it was great fun. I really enjoyed walking and later riding with a big bike through the forrest. Everything was so beautiful. I really love when the sun is shining



because everything sparkles and for one moment you can be in another world. A magic world.

After riding our bikes we went for lunch. We took it in a very small house and in the middle there was an open fire where some teachers made sausages and pancakes for us. Cockaigne! It was really nice and I said to Leonie that I could sit here my whole life looking in the fire, eating pancakes and talking with nice people! But we had to continue because our last station was waiting. We got some sledges and we drove down a small hill. It was awesome and I felt like being a little child again. We had a nice view over a frozen lake.

After sledging Katja's dad picked us up and we went out for some food. At home I relaxed and Katja's big sister arrived with her two year old son. In the evening we met the other people in a house with a sauna. After talking little bit we went in the sauna. There were just girls from Scotland Finland and Germany. It was funny and really hot inside but it was very good. When it got to hot we went outside for a swim in the snow. What a great feeling! When we finished with the sauna we gathered together and talked about different topics. Our teachers had the idea that every nationality should sing a song. We chose „Hejo spann den Wagen an“. It wasn't perfect but it wasn't that bad. It was funny to listen to the other songs and the singing skills. Maybe our next project together should be a choir project.

Thursday, 22th February

Today was a workday. We met in school and prepared our panelist- or better we tried to prepare something but we couldn't do that much. The erasmus project in Germany was different because our final goal was a debate in british steal ?and we got our topic and a position. Here we are doing a discussion with only one topic. So the panelist has to be very confident because she has to manage all her knowledge in front of an audience. We' ll see tomorrow how it will



work.

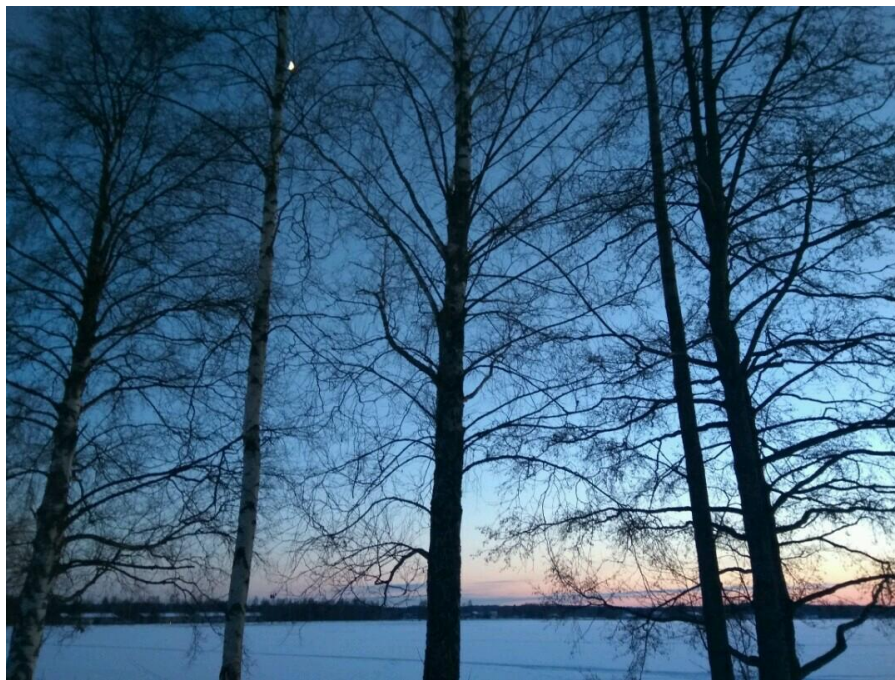
After lunch we went to a very nice coffeeshop and I drunk a very very nice hot chocolate. Today we had - 20 degree so drinking a hot chocolate is the best thing to keep you warm. In the afternoon we went into a book museum. It was a little museum with very cute furniture inside. The stairs inside the museum are very creative: on the top of every step is written a little wisdom.

We went to hang out in a bookshop and then went to Ella. A short tea break later we visited a very big frozen lake. It was a wonderful place and I was happy to be there. Finland has an amazing nature with all kinds of hidden secrets. What's under the frozen water? Katja told me that when she was little she thought there is a monster, why not?

We met some other people from the Erasmus and together we went sledging. In the beginning I was a little bit afraid because it doesn't look very easy but after the first try it was just pure fun. We tried to find new routes looking in the beautiful sunset behind the big lake. Spectacular! After a while my hands and my feet started to hurt because of the cold, which made us go to our warm home.



I had so much fun today and I don't want to think about Saturday when we'll leave this beautiful country with these lovely people. Finland is a country flooded by magic.



### Friday, 23th February

The day started with a very nice breakfast. Katjas dad made potatoes with bacon and egg. In Germany we eat breakfast like this very rarely. Her father took us to school. It was the last time I saw him but I didn't know that so i couldn't say good bye to him. He's a very cool dad who was always joking with me and Katja.

In school we organized the last things for the discussion and after a short break the it started: the panelists were Anita from Estonia, Jana from Germany, Lucy from Scotland, Tomaso from Italy and two finish students.

All in all the discussion was a success but it wasn't really a discussion it was just like a question-answer-thing. Despite that, it was still interesting and they did a great job.

After lunch we evaluated the whole project and the Scottish girls showed us some typical dances from their country. It was very funny but also very hard. At home I packed all my stuff because this night I'm went to sleep in Eli's house, the host of Leonie. Katja started to get sick so she stayed at home while I went with Leonie, Elli, her father and her sister to visit their grandma and

grandpa. Once there, we drove with a snow mobile. In the beginning It felt like i'm about to die but after a while it was great fun.

Back at the grandparents home we had a hot chocolate and a little snack. They live in a very beautiful house. At 6 o'clock we picked Katja up and went to Ellis house. In the evening we went to a farewell dinner and a karaoke pub. I really didn't want to go home. All these people have been so wonderful and lovely.

We had so much fun together and I think if we would stay longer here we are going to be a big family. I saw that evening with a smiling eye and with a crying eye.

Now I'm sitting in my bed writing down my memories and don't want to sleep because when I'll wake up we have to leave.



### Saturday 24th February

After breakfast we went to school. The parting was quite fast which was good because I don't like long good byes.

I gave Katja a big hug and even started crying. She was the best hostsister I could have ever imagined. She is not a normal girl: she is special- a very special sister to me. She loves reading books and wants to study everything. I'm gonna miss you Katja! Yesterday we promised to see us once again and I'm sure we will! I'm proud that I can say I have a sister like Katja in another country.

In the bus we were sad but after 20 minutes the Scottish girls started to sing loud and the mood got better. We arrived in Helsinki and said good buy to the Estonians. They went home with the ferry.

Now it was our turn. We stopped at the airport, said good buy to the Scottish girls and the italian boys and checked in. We had some time so I enjoyed my last hot chocolate and even managed to buy the cup of the coffee shop- my very own souvenir!

The boarding begun and we said good buy to this wonderful country.



Back at home I understood that something changed. I changed. I'm full of wonderful experiences and great memories.

Back home a friend asked me how it was and I had wasn't able to answer it. After a while i said it was one of the best weeks in my life.

„We leave something of ourselves behind when we leave a place, we stay there, even though we go away. And there are things in us that we can find again only by going back there“



### Thank you

Thank you Erasmus + for this wonderful time. Working together in international teams, traveling in an other country, living with a host family, making new experiences, all this made myself richer. I want to thank the teachers for a very good organization and your patience. Thank you Katja for being the best host sister i could ever have. Thank you Finland for the great hospitality.

