



Erasmus+



WAS UNS BEWEGT

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1.) Short summary:

a.) European Parliament

There are three European Parliaments in whole Europe, that are in the city of Luxembourg, Brussels and Strasbourg. We were able to visit the one in Strasbourg through the Erasmus Project "Was uns bewegt" in December 2016. The European Parliament is the directly elected parliamentary institution of the European Union. It exercises the legislative function of the EU, together with the Council of the European Union and the European Commission. The 751 members of the Parliament represent the second-largest democratic electorate in the world. It has been elected every five years since 1979.

There are 28-member states in the Parliament. The most members are from Germany with a percentage of 12.8%, the second most from France with a percentage of 9.9% and the third most from Italy with a percentage of 9.7%. Only 2.4% of the members are from Austria. The current President of the European Parliament is Antonio Tajani, who was elected in January 2017.

Neither the European Parliament nor the Council have the power of legislative initiative, which means they do not have the power to propose a new law. The Parliament can amend and reject legislation, but to make a proposal for legislation, it needs the Commission to draft a bill before anything can become law.

b.) Council of Europe

The Council of Europe was founded by 10 members with the Treaty of London in 1949. Only seven year later, Austria joined the council, Germany in 1959 and Finland in 1989. It's a regional intergovernmental organization which headquarters are in France, in Strasbourg. French and English are the two official languages but the Committee of Ministers, the parliamentary assembly and the congress also use Italian, German, Russian and Turkish for some of their work. The Council of Europe has 47-member states, which covers approximately 820 million people.

The Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland from Norway carries the responsibility for strategic management. The 47 ministers of foreign affairs meet once a year and their duty is, to discuss European problems on an equal footing, to find collective responses to all challenges

and to make decisions. The Ministers' Deputies are the permanent diplomatic representatives of the Council of Europe and meet weekly. They work in seven rapporteur groups in depth to prepare decisions for Committee of Ministers without debate, but they have no decision-making power. The European Council has an annual Budget of half a billion euros. It is an international organization whose stated aim is to uphold human rights, democracy, rule of law in Europe and promote European culture.

c.) European Court of Human Rights

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) is an international court set up in 1959. Since it has been set up, the ECHR has to deal with very different problems than they had 50 years ago.

It rules on individual or state applications alleging violations of the civil and political rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. This Convention was opened for signature in Rome on 4th November 1950 and came into force in 1953. This was a very special moment for the world's history, as it was the first instrument to give effect to certain of the rights stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Through this convention they become very binding too.

There have been 13 judges serving the ECHR since 1959. They have served as Presidents of the ECHR. The presidents are elected for a three year term by the plenary Court, which is composed of 47 national judges.

In 50 years the Court has delivered more than 10 000 judgements, that were binding in the countries concerned.

Asylum is not written as a right in the convention and Refugees can only bring charges against a violation of Articles of the Convention.

The European Court of Human Rights is recognized everywhere in the world because of its architecture, which was designed by the British architect Lord Richard Rogers in 1994.

2.) Shared practice and experience

Stay in regular contact with your friends from Austria, Finland, Germany and Italy

We have a WhatsApp-Group with all the students from the Erasmus project. Sometimes we give us news about the refugees in our home countries and we shared some experiences. When we were in Finland we had a lot of projects with refugees and we also had “Was uns bewegt” meetings.

Each Wednesday we either did activities with the refugees that attended the host school or all the participants of this project (Finish, German and Austrian participants) met and we prepared stuff for interviews or just worked a bit on the portfolio. With the finish teacher, who supported and helped us with our work, we also had a group on WhatsApp where we talked about our meetings.



Cooking with the refugees from OYK, Finland

We did not only have a group chat with the finish students tough, we also had one with all the refugees we worked with. Additionally, we have a Facebook Group including all the teachers and students who are taking part. In this group we shared the documents and experiences which we did in Finland.

Document practices and experiences (via a closed Facebook group, no photos to be included)

Task 1 (Summary of online papers)

In 2016 Austria expected about 85.000 asylum seekers and had 42.073 applications for asylum but only 36.030 of them were accepted. The most refugees are from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. There is a refugee camp in Traiskirchen since 1955 for 1.800 refugees but currently there are 4.500. In 2015 Slovakia assumed 500 refugees from Austria, because Austria did not have enough space. Some politicians are concerned about the safety of the

refugees because they started to deal with drugs and they came into conflicts with other asylum seekers. The charge of one refugee per year is 10.724 Euros.

Young asylum seekers have the right to go to public schools and some teachers volunteer to offer a German course for them. In the different communities some people also volunteer to offer some activities for their leisure time to integrate them in our culture.

Sources:

- <http://derstandard.at/2000055148547/Soziologe-Oesterreich-zog-aus-Fluechtlingskrise-falsche-Lehren>
- <http://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/5100067/Fluechtlinge-kosten-zwei-Milliarden-Euro>
- <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traiskirchen>

Task 2 (Questions for the interview with Jutta Kivistö)

We heard that you were one of the founders of this organization which helps asylum seekers and we wondered what inspired you to support the asylum seekers?

What does this organization do exactly?

Of which country do you have most refugees?

Why is the financial support from Veikkaus?

How many asylum seekers do you have in your organization?

How many employees do you have in that organization?

In which language do you communicate, or do you have translators?

TUTUKSI is getting to know each other

We interviewed Jutta Kivistö at the beginning of May. We are taking part in an Erasmus project called "Was uns bewegt" which is a project financed by the EU. Many youngsters from Europe belong to this project that is dealing and working with the refugee situation. That's why we went to see Jutta Kivistö, an activist who is one of the founders of

Turvapaikanhakijat ry. We had some tea and cookies and talked about her job and the refugee situation. Turvapaikanhakijat ry. is an organization that is trying to help asylum seekers and immigrants to integrate in our community.

Currently millions of refugees live in Europe. Dealing with the refugee crisis is one of the biggest challenges of our time. It is not only giving them a place to stay, it is about giving them a chance for a fresh start, a new life in countries that are more different to their own than we can imagine. Far away their home they have to get used to another way of life.

Without people who help them integrate, this is a task that is nearly impossible. But luckily volunteers all around the world stand up for these people and help them. And we the students that are taking part in the "Was uns bewegt" project try to do our part as well.

Before she and her friend Susanna started the project Jutta Kivistö was studying art. After that she was working for Elisa for 10 years. She quit her job, and went to work for community café where a lot of asylum seekers came and hung out. She realized that she wanted to make a difference and help others in need, so she gathered some volunteers and started Turvapaikanhakijat ry. with her friend.



Interview with Jutta Kivistö

The organization is helping refugees and asylum seekers in 14 cities in Finland. Right now, there are about 670 asylum seekers involved in the project. In the organization only Jutta and the other founder Susanna are getting paid for their job. Other people involved are volunteers. In Turvapaikanhakijat ry. there is a project called "TUTUKSI". The name comes from the idea of getting to know each other and other cultures.

What they basically do is that they help asylum seekers and refugees to integrate to the community by searching them a group that shares the same interests. Those groups can be for example some football teams, cooking groups or art groups. There are many choices and the staff makes the decisions based on their interests and wishes. Many groups are willing to take and help the asylum seekers voluntarily, but some groups are called and asked by the organization. Turvapaikanhakijat ry. advertise themselves on Facebook and look for groups and volunteers.

When a person gets to go to a new group, often one volunteer goes with them, so they do not have to go alone, and they feel more comfortable.

All in all, the work Turvapaikanhakijat ry. organization is doing is one of the most important things you can do to help refugees and asylum seekers in the first place. Talking to *Jutta* inspired and motivated us even more to keep doing the help we are already doing. Thank you, *Jutta*, for giving us this opportunity!

Text Lucas Hellström, Nea Rastas, Joel Christ, Lili Jagersbacher, Nadine Harrer, Natalie Heindl

Status quo during the Strasbourg meeting in Dec. 2016

Before Strasbourg I did not really know much about what is going on in all the participating countries. I knew a bit about the refugee crisis in Austria and I read an article, which was given to us by a teacher, to inform myself more before going to Strasbourg. Additionally, I participated in an event called “Fest der Begegnung” where citizens of my municipality can get to know the refugees living in the surroundings. Our teachers arranged to go there, and we also met the refugees who attended our school at that time.

When we arrived there, I did not know any of the students from the other countries, that’s why our teacher mixed the rooms. There was a student of each country in each room. In that way I got to know the other people very well and we became friends. I did not know the city too, since I have never visited it before, but the sight-seeing tour helped me to get to know it better.

In addition, we visited the European Parliament, the European Council and the European Court of Human Rights and we had guided tours to see the building and presentations to get

information about what these buildings are made for. Not only did we listen to presentations from experts in these buildings, but also to presentations from our teachers and pupils in a room which was provided by the hotel. The presentations about the refugee situation in each country was very informative, because I did not know any of it. Furthermore, I gained a lot of new knowledge and all in all I really enjoyed the stay.

Status quo when starting the exchange in spring 2017

I am making an exchange in Helsinki, Finland for three and a half months. My plane took off in Graz on the fifteenth of February. When I first came here it was very exciting, but also weird, because I have never been here before and everything was new. New family, new friends, new language, new landscape, new climate, new city, new school. An advantage, which made it easier for me to make friends, was that I already knew two girls very well. They have made an exchange in Austria as well, and stayed with my friends and my family, so they introduced us to their friends and now – 1 month later – I get along well with everyone. There are exchange students from other countries aswell and it was easy to become friends with them because they knew how I felt. They are from Germany, France and Zimbabwe and I learn a lot about their home countries, because they keep telling me very interesting things about them.

At first Finnish people seemed very shy and not very sociable, but when I made the first step and just talked to them and got to know them I figured out that they are incredibly nice and funny. In the beginning, it has been very weird for me to hear the Finnish language all the time, but I got used to it and I even understand some words now, because I am attending a finish course. Nevertheless, I do not think that I will keep any of these words in my mind, since it is a very complicated and confusing language and I will not be able to speak finish when I am back in Austria, so I will probably just keep on speaking English, which is the language I really want to improve my skills in.

My new family has been super nice since the beginning, and still is. I couldn't wish for a better one, I love to spend time with them. They already told me, that they have made some plans. They want to travel to Stockholm, Sweden, with me and another exchange student for

a weekend. I get along very well with both of my host sisters, since we have many common interests. I know already, that I will be missing all of the family members incredibly much.

It was also easy to get used to the public transport here. It is very well-regulated, and you get to various places so easily and quickly at the same time. You do not have to wait for the busses longer than ten minutes, unless it is Sunday or late in the evening. The trains also go every ten to fifteen minutes. One main aspect I noticed immediately and still blows my mind is the price. Everything is much more expensive than in Austria, there is only a few things that has almost the same price, but I have to live with it. Another thing, which in my opinion is amazing for me, is that all of the shops and grocery stores are open on Sundays. The grocery stores are even open until ten O'clock in the evenings. I guess this is a disadvantage for the people working in these shops, but it is a very big advantage for me and it is going to be weird not to shop on Sundays in Austria.



Sightseeing in Helsinki

Helsinki is a very beautiful city, although it looks very monotonous, especially in the winter time. When it snows here, the snow does not last long on the streets and becomes very dirty and muddy in the city, because of all the cars driving through the streets, and all the people walking through the town. In the surroundings of Helsinki, it is the complete

opposite. The snow stays on the ground for a long time and it is always beautiful and sparkling white, in exception of the streets. Moreover, the houses in the surroundings are very colorful and I love the architectural style.

The school I am attending is called "Oulunkylän Yhteiskoulun" and I only have to take the bus for twenty minutes to reach it. It is a wide area and in contrast to Austrian schools, every teacher has its own classroom and the students have to change classes for every course. In Austria every class has its own classroom and the teachers are the ones that have to change rooms every hour. Another very positive aspect is, that Finnish people have a long lunch

break and get warm lunch. This is definitely the thing I am going to miss the most about this school.

Furthermore, I have already had the chance to get to know more of Finland. My friends host sister took us with her to her cottage. By the way, I noticed that all of the Finnish people own cottages. Not one but often two – one for the winter and one for the summer. They are spending some time there in almost every holiday they have got. We visited their winter cottage, which is located in Ylläs. The landscape in Lapland is unbelievably beautiful and the woods look stunning with the fresh powder snow.

Status quo when finishing the exchange

On June seventh our exchange will take its end. During my stay I gained a lot of knowledge, experience, self-confidence and I am definitely more independent now than I was before. I know now that the stereotypes are not important and partly not true. Finnish people may seem shy and calm, but when you get to know them they are the complete opposite – they are open and very lively. I did not only travel through Finland, I also had the chance to see other countries such as Estonia and Sweden. I travelled to Tallinn two times, once with my host sisters and friends, and the other time with my family when they visited me. I also went to Stockholm for one weekend with my host family, since they invited me and another exchange student, and it was a beautiful experience.

I tried a lot of new food and I also tried some finish habits. An example for this is that I went to sauna for the first time. It was in Lapland in the winter cottage of my finish friend. We stayed there for one week and went skiing, and it was very weird because I am used to ski on high mountains and not small hills. Still, it was worth a try and it was an amazing experience. The finish landscape is beautiful. The weather is not exactly what I would describe with awesome, but that was not what I expected so it was oaky. The climate definitely is different to the Austrian one, since the winter lasts for an estimated eternity. When I got there it was snowing, and it kept on raining and snowing for almost all of the other months. It was always really cloudy and everything looked grey and gloomy. Something that was very surprising for me is, that it even snowed in May. Winter lasted until May, even though we sometimes had over five degrees. But in the second week of May it finally started to become spring. The

trees started to bloom and it looked beautiful. Since that time, I could even go outside without wearing a jacket, and I still can.

I got used to the Finnish school system very fast and easily and there are actually a few things that I will miss when I am going back to Austria. For example, the warm lunch and some of the teachers and their lessons. I attended a Finnish course for about a month and a half, since a teacher volunteered to do it in her free time. The school provided us some books, so we could do some exercises at home. I was very curious to learn the language, but it's very complicated, and I had to put a lot of effort in it.

It was also quite easy to get used to the public transport and I like it way more than the one in Austria. My journey was amazing and at the end of the day I made a lot of friends and I hope I will stay in touch with them for a long time. My host family is like my second family and it will be very hard for me to leave them. It always feels like home when I am with them.

Projects concerning refugees in Austria

Not only during our long-term exchange in Finland (Helsinki) we concentrated on working with the refugees by having several activities with them, but also now in Austria, after our stay in Helsinki, we are continuing to work with the asylum seekers, especially the ones from our school.



"Fest der Begegnung" 2016 – Popal's presentation

Already before we joined the Erasmus project, we knew some of the asylum seekers in our school because we met them in our courses like maths, biology and physics. They have always been really nice to us and we could see that they put effort in integrating themselves in our class. In our municipality, there is an event once a year called "Fest der Begegnung", which allows the citizens of Gratwein-Straßengel to get to know the refugees living in the surroundings. They also have the opportunity to gain insight into their culture, traditions and local specialities. The first time me and my school colleagues participated at the "Fest der Begegnung" with some of our teachers, was in 2016. We met two of our classmates,

Moschtaba and Popal, and they held presentations about their experiences in their home countries and in Austria after their escape. All the refugees prepared some of their local specialities, and everybody had the chance to taste anything they wanted. The main focus of the event “Fest der Begegnung” in 2016 was sportive activities.



"Fest der Begegnung" 2016 - local specialties

The already mentioned event took place in 2017 again. This time the main focus was food, games, traditional clothing and presentations. Just like in 2016 the asylum seekers prepared some of their local dishes again, but Austrian specialities were also served. Again, everybody could eat whatever they wanted. In another room, which was located next to the meeting room, we could play games. The refugees prepared typical games of their home countries, me and my school colleagues brought games called “Mikado” and “Skipo”, which are Austrian. Since two of the Finnish exchange students were currently on their exchange here, they

presented two card games called “Ristiseiska” and “Kolme Homoa”. We could play whatever we liked and the ones that brought the game with them were responsible to explain the game and teach us the rules. It was a really nice experience to play games from Afghanistan or Syria. After those games some Austrians and some of the asylum seeker organized a fashion show. Austrian women presented the traditional “Dirndl”, and Austrian men the traditional “Lederhose”. Of course, every other country presented their traditional clothing very proudly. Furthermore, one of the refugees of our school called Anas, from Syria, had a fascinating and touching presentation about escape routes. Just like the previous year the mayor of Gratwein-Straßengel had a short speech at the very beginning to welcome all the participants and to start the event.

The following month we got the opportunity to interview Astrid Schatz, an integration commissioner, which means that she is responsible for the integration of the refugees in our community. I gained a lot of new knowledge and it was very interesting to hear about her work and experience in that area. Astrid helps the asylum seekers who contact her to fill in

important papers which are mostly written in German, because they might not be able to understand everything. Her office is located next to the so called "Kostnix-Laden", where asylum seekers get things what they need for their daily lives for free. In addition, she is looking for volunteers who can help the refugees. These volunteers can provide strollers or prams or other things which are needed for them. Moreover, they can get furniture, like wardrobes, chairs and desks. The integration commissioner also helps to find jobs for them, because it is very complicated. The asylum seekers are not allowed to earn more than 110 Euros per month, and they are only allowed to work in the municipality. They can do jobs like building up stages for small concerts, cutting hedges, cleaning up the mess after a football match, mowing the lawn, painting walls and renovating in our primary and secondary modern schools.

Astrid Schatz told us that there is no special education for that job, it is more or less learning by doing. It is not only hard work and a lot of organization, but it also affects her emotionally, because many of her clients are not allowed to stay in Austria since some of them get negative decisions. Nevertheless, she puts a lot of effort in her work and we have the feeling that she really loves what she is doing.

One of our other projects was the ZEBRA workshop, which presented us one man and one woman who work for ZEBRA. We have done the workshop in our school in Rein, during our school lessons for four hours for two days. ZEBRA is a non-profit organization which was founded in 1986 in Graz. ZEBRA has an interdisciplinary offer that addresses different levels (legal, social, political, medical, psychotherapeutic and psychiatric). Audiences are especially Asylum seekers and Convention refugees, Torture victims, traumatized person, migrant workers and their family members. Zebra is also a Department for Migration-Specific Legal Issues and they are free, freely accessible and supported by interpreters.

ZEBRA explained us two different definitions: 1) asylum seekers, 2) Refugees / Asylum-entitled. Ad 1) Persons applying for refugee status and are currently in the process, i. about their application yet has been decided.

Ad 2) have asylum from the Austrian state within the meaning of the Geneva Convention received awarded.

Then we spoke about the different life situations of the asylum seekers in Austria. They are accommodated in special accommodations for refugees. Often the accommodations are

empty gym halls, old schools, old and empty hotels or only in some tents. The asylum seekers have often to wait long time for the examination and so most of them are really bored, because it is also really difficult for them to get an employment opportunity and so they are often the whole time at home and do nothing. But they have a chance to do some volunteer work, like landscaping, take care of parking, leisure and sports facilities and maybe they can get a service check can earn a little bit money. A lot of them are also scared about their other family members, which are still in their home countries and maybe surrounded by war.

Then, our presenters, told us some numbers, data and facts about refugees. Nowadays there are sixty-five million people on a flight on the entire world. In Austria the most people who want an asylum came from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. In our federal state, Styria, we have now 8.825 asylum seekers housed in these special accommodations. Most of the accommodations are accessible with the public transport, so the asylum seekers do not need an own car. They also told us, that the turkey, Lebanon and Pakistan housed the most refugees. But also, Ethiopia and Sudan host a lot of refugees from Syria and Afghanistan. The most people flew, because of War, armed conflicts, terror Personal Pursuit Attacks on the civilian population: missing or murdered relatives Forced recruitment and forced marriage No / insufficient medical care No educational opportunities for children and adolescents Lack of food supply.

At last point we learned how to organize a project with asylum seekers and how we can get a support by money from the state. In small groups we started to fill in one of these application lists. My group decided to organize a football tournament in Gratkorn with the asylum seekers from our school.

My classmates and me were also in Rothleiten, it is a little village between Graz and Bruck/Mur. In Rothleiten there is a kind of a UMF-Quartier (Unbegleitete-Minderjährige-Flüchtlinge = Unaccompanied minor refugees) with the name "Welcome"-Quartier. Currently there are about forty unaccompanied minor refugees who live in an old and empty castle in the countryside of Rothleiten. Some of them attend also our school and we see them sometimes. At the "Welcome"-Quartier they get help from social workers, who worked for caritas. Also, they get all the things they need like food and drink, clothes and pocket money.

We went there on Monday the sixteen, October 2017 after school together with our

teachers, by car. At Rothleiten the unaccompanied minor refugees prepared for us drinks and a lot to eat, which they have cooked. We ate the traditional food “Bolani”. “Bolani” is a flat-bread from Afghanistan, baked or fried with a vegetable filling. I ate a lot of it, because it was so good, and I tried to cook it at home, but it was not as good as the refugees cooked it. After the perfect meal we played tabletop football, listened to music and chatted about the champions league or the last football-league games in Italy, Germany, England and Spain, because some of the asylum seekers are interested in football like me. We talked also about a lot of other current things in life. We were there for the whole afternoon and we really enjoyed it. Before I went to sleep I was really thankful for the wonderful day in Rothleiten.

3.)

a.) Diary during the exchange

My long-term exchange – probably one of the best journeys in my life – started on the fifteenth of February in 2017. During my stay I made a lot of experiences and with my friends and host family I explored a lot of Finland and other countries. I really love Finland and I think I made a great decision in choosing Finland as the country of my exchange, because I see it like this: I would not think of travelling to Finland any time in my summer holidays if it was not for school or some other occasion. Italy would



My two host sisters, my exchange colleague's host sister, my exchange colleague and me at the last day of school

probably be one of my first choices to go to in my free time like summer holidays, because you can go and swim in the sea and it is very hot in the summer. In addition to this, Italy is a beautiful country and the food is just delicious. But since I did not want to visit a country

which I could easily go to each summer, and since I did not want to make an exchange in Germany, because they speak the same language as me and I wanted to improve my English skills, I chose to go to Finland. Finnish people also speak better English than Italian people, I think they have a better education in it, but of course I can only tell my opinion in this case.

First Month:

I came to Finland on a Wednesday. I arrived at the evening and had very good dinner with my host family. We got to know each other and everyone was so nice to me from the very beginning. I have to admit that the father was the one who talked the fewest. Nevertheless, he is a very nice person, and of course by time we talked a lot and got along really well. My host mother was super nice, because she always offered me her help and asked if everything was okay and showed me everything and she also told me so many things about the family and Finland etc. Sini and Jasmin, my both host sisters, are like my real sisters now. Just from other parents. Already since the first time we met there was this connection, I do not know if this is a girl thing, but I am really happy that it was like this. I kind of knew Sini before I came to Finland, because we had contact via social networks like Snapchat and WhatsApp. She is the best friend of the girl who stayed with my family during her exchange in Austria, so that is how I got to know her. It also made it kind of easier to get to this family, since we already knew a little bit about each other. My two host sisters are really outgoing, lively, open and incredibly kind people. They are a little bit crazy, which definitely is a very positive thing, because I am too. I have the feeling, that this is one of the reasons why we immediately got along perfectly.

The day after my friends (she is also a part of this project) and my arrival we already went to school. I took the bus with Sini, she is attending the same school, and she showed me the way, so I would know how to get to school myself. We did not have the same curriculum, mine was much easier and less stressful. One of the teachers, she is the organizer of many events and trips, helped us to find the classrooms we needed. She gave us a short tour around the school, told us important things, explained us our curriculum and how their school system works, and she told us what we needed to do. She is a German teacher and speaks it very well and fluently, which made it easy for us to understand. That day we did not have lessons though, because it was "Penkkarit". "Penkkarit" basically is some kind of Finnish graduation tradition. The third graders, who are graduating, had a speech in the

sports hall, and they seemed to entertain the students and teachers. I do not know what happened exactly because it was in Finnish and I did not understand one word, but I do know that it was a little bit crazy. They had bags full of sweets and when they left the sports hall they were throwing some of them in the crowd. After that everybody met outside and there were two or three trucks waiting in front of the school. The graduating students got on them and were really noisy, the trucks were decorated with the school's short name "OYK", and they left throwing sweets. Everyone who wanted to could go to the city, and since this is a tradition in whole Helsinki and the cities next to Finland, every school's trucks and graduating students drove to the city, one after another. All of them were shouting something and all the viewer cheered. Of course, they threw the candy into the crowds again. To be honest, I really do not know why Finns have a tradition like this, but I figured out that this is not the only crazy tradition they have got. I actually like these traditions, because that is how you can get together and spend time.

At the same evening, the second graders had their "Wanhat". It is the Finnish prom. My host sister danced in it and it was so exciting to experience their prom, because it differs so much from the Austrian "Maturaball" and the American prom – not that I have experienced it, but I have heard of it. The next day "Wanhat" took place again, for the students. And in the evening, they had an afterparty, and we were invited, because we were the host sisters of two of the dancers.

The second week of our stay we have been in Lapland, to be exact in Ylläs, and we were skiing. I also visited a museum and the snow village which was very pretty. When we came back we did not do anything special for the whole month, except for the few days where a friend of mine visited me for four days. We did a lot of sight seeing and exciting things. Additionally,



Skiing in Ylläs

Natalie, another Erasmus participant, started her exchange and joined us in Finland.

Second Month:

In the second month there happened some exciting things. We threw a surprise party for a Finnish friend, because she turned 18 and she was really happy about it. The days after were not that great, because at that party I caught a virus. It made me vomit for two days.

My friend's host family invited her and me to an ice hockey game, because we really wanted to see one. Ice hockey is a very popular thing there. The third exchange student had her 17th birthday in March, so we threw a party with all her new Finnish friends. She was so happy about it, she even cried. I have also been in Ireland for one week, but since it was a project of our Austrian school, which was already planned before Finland, I will not go into further detail.

Third Month:

In May my host family, my friend and me went to Stockholm for a weekend. Stockholm is such a beautiful city and it was so weird to go there, because there was already spring. In Helsinki it even snowed when we got back. But on Mother's Day my family visited me for a week, and that was when it finally started to be spring. We even could go outside without jackets! We did a lot of exciting things with my family, like sightseeing, going to Suomenlinna, and we went to Tallinn, Estonia for a day. They really enjoyed their stay, and I enjoyed theirs too. The rest of the month we were just doing things like buying souvenirs and enjoying the last few days. I was spending time with all my new friends, the exchange students from the other countries and especially with my host family. On the seventh of June I left Helsinki, my second home. I cannot describe in words how much I miss it, but I can say that I look forward in visiting my second family and all of my friends again.

b.) Personal report in form of an essay "Tell your own story/experience as a student short term migrant"

I have made a long-term exchange in Helsinki, Finland, which had a duration of three and a half months. I enjoyed it very much, I had a lot of fun and I can only recommend it to everyone. I would do it again any time if I had the chance to.

At first, I felt a bit insecure. I have never visited Finland before, so everything was completely new to me. I did not have any experience in having exchanges of myself, but I had an

exchange student who lived with my family and me for three months in autumn 2016. The girl is called Elina and luckily she is going to the same school I attended in my exchange. In that way I could make friends easier, because she introduced me to all of her friends.

Since I am a very adventurous and curious type of person I did not feel anxious about the new stuff at all. I love to meet new people, to explore new cities and landscapes, to learn new languages, something about new cultures and new traditions. To get to the point: I love to travel so I took this opportunity right away.

I stayed in a host family and I had lots of luck, because all of the family members were super nice to me during the whole stay and I immediately felt welcome and like it is my home. My host mother works as a kindergarten teacher, so she was at home at the afternoons. My host father is a very busy business man. He was on business trips so often. Both of them were super nice to me, I think I had a better connection with my host mom though. She always helped me when I had struggles and she showed me the whole house and told me what to do and what not to do. She drove me to school or grocery stores or picked me up from time to time. My host sisters and I had an immediate connection. We share a lot of the same interests and I even made them watch some TV Shows that I love, so we talked about them a lot. We did a lot of things together, but especially shopping. I loved spending time with them and I hope I can do it again soon. My host family also invited me and a friend of mine, who also made the same exchange since she also is a participant in this Erasmus project, to make some trips. It was amazing and since I love travelling it made the exchange even better.

Of course, before I came to Finland I heard a lot of stereotypes. For example, that Finnish people are very shy and that they keep distance from people and that they are very calm and do not show their emotions and that they are very tall, have blonde or strawberry-blonde hair and blue eyes. Additionally, I heard that Finns always go to sauna and everyone has a sauna in their house. If you do not like sauna and live in Finland – you are not really a Finn. I also heard that they do not care about nudity and they swim together naked, or go to sauna. And through all my experiences that I have made I can say that most of these stereotypes are true. Finnish people really seem shy and distanced when you first meet them, but actually you just have to get to know them and talk to them, because they are really nice and very open and lively. Though, it is not true that most of the Finns have blonde

or strawberry-blond hair. They really have various hair colours. Some have blonde hair, some have brown. It really does not matter at all. It is true though, if you do not like sauna and live in Finland you will definitely be outed as a weirdo. Every house and almost every flat owns a sauna and they use them very often. They go there naked, also in public saunas. They have this tradition that they sometimes go ice bathing, that means they are going into the ocean or lake for a short time, completely nude, and then they get into the sauna. This confirms the next stereotypes. Of course, there are many more stereotypes than the ones that I just listed, but these were the ones that are most popular in my opinion. I have experienced the Finnish sauna myself. When I was in Lapland I used it about three times and I have never done it before. It was kind of weird at the beginning, because it was so hot and I could not breathe properly because the humidity was so high.

I had some dreams before I got there but I am sad that I have to say that not all of them came true. I really wanted to see reindeers and I thought I would see them in Lapland, because usually you find them there, but sadly I did not see one of them. It would have been so nice to see them in real life and maybe make pictures of or even with them. I want to pet a reindeer too, but that will have to be a plan in my future. Since I stayed in Lapland for one week I had really high expectations and hopes of seeing northern lights, because one of my friends told me that they are visible until April, and when we went there it was February. Of course, it depends on the weather and the day, you can not always see them, you have to be a bit lucky. It is sad to say that I did not see them either. I would have loved to see such a stunning spectacle going on in the sky. I have seen many videos and pictures of northern lights, but I am convinced that they look much better in real life. Although the most important thing came true. Travelling. I am so honored that I even got the chance to make that exchange. I am sure that I will never forget this experience and it will always have a special place in my heart. I did not only see Helsinki, I got the chance to explore Lapland a little bit, to be exact the small village called Ylläs, and I got the chance to try skiing. I explored the beautiful landscape all around the hill where we skied and we drove even further than Ylläs. We visited a museum where everything is made out of snow and ice. It was called the "Ice hotel" and there were hotel rooms where you actually could sleep in, even though it was made out of ice and snow. For the decoration there were many ice sculptures and they were incredibly beautiful.

Furthermore, I visited Tallinn, Estonia for one day, two times. The first time I have been there with my two friends, my host sister and my friend's host sister. It was very exciting to see a new city and the Tallinn Old Town is such a beautiful city. It is right next to the ocean



Visiting the old town in Tallinn, Estonia

and when you are on the very top you have a beautiful view all over the rest of the city and the ocean and the harbor. The second time I have been in Estonia was with my family. My mother and my father decided to visit me for one week, they arrived on Mother's Day, and it was a beautiful gift for my mother and me. Since my friend's parents visited her at the same time, we decided to go to Tallinn all

together and we took a friend with us. Again, it was a very lovely experience. It made me really happy that they visited me even though I would have seen them just one month later. It was also an advantage for them, because in that way they had the chance to explore a new city. With our family we also decided to go to the small island called "Suomenlinna". It is an inhabited small sea fortress which is built on six islands. It was a very interesting place, since we do not have anything like that in Austria.

Additionally, my host family invited me and a friend of mine, who is also participating in the Erasmus project and did the three months exchange with me, to go to Stockholm, Sweden for one weekend. We went there by ship, which took many hours, so we have only been in Stockholm for one day, and went back over the night. Stockholm is a very beautiful city, and we went there in May, when Finland was still gray and cloudy. It was amazing to see the cherry trees blooming, and the spring starting. But right after we came back, spring finally started in Finland too.

Lucky me, I got the chance to go to Bray and Dublin in Ireland too, it was a planned trip though, since my Austrian school – BG Rein – plans to do this trip with all the sixth graders every year. I have been there for a week and saw all my friends again, which made me really happy. Travelling really makes me happy and I do hope that I will get the chance to travel many times in my further future.

My friends and I had a lot of happy moments, probably my whole exchange is a whole big happy moment. We laughed and had fun all the time and we did a lot of activities. We went to the cinema, we ate a lot of delicious food, we shopped very much, we met new people, we cooked Austrian food for our families, we had the honor to join Wanhat, the Finnish prom, and the graduation of the third graders, we made many new friends etc. Most of my friends went to the same school as me which made it very easy to talk to them and meet them. I also had friends outside of school. Elina, the girl that stayed in my family when she made her exchange in Austria, introduced me to her floorball teammates. They were all super nice and they even invited me to play floorball one time, so one evening we all met and played floorball and I loved it.

I have to admit that I pretty much liked everything about my exchange. There are absolutely no things that bothered me. Everybody was nice to me and helped me where they could. The only thing I did not like that much was, that I was sick for about three days. I caught a virus which made me vomit, some of my friends had it too. The days I missed in school would have been cool days, because we would have had an interview with some politicians that came to the school. What was a bit exhausting is, that we had to learn everything we missed in our Austrian school. In our summer holidays we studied all the time, especially the languages like Latin and French were very hard to study, because we did not have a teacher who taught us the things, we had to learn them by ourselves. But honestly it was definitely worth it. I would do it again, but maybe not in this school year, since I have got my graduation next year and this year we do a lot of work and it would not be very helpful to miss all of it this short time before graduating.

I did not have any special expectations or wishes when I came here, I just hoped that everybody would be nice to me and help me out if I needed anything. That clearly came true. I wished to make many new friends, which I did indeed. I hope that I will not be forgotten that quick in their school and I hope that I will stay friends with them for a very long time, and that I will meet them again in either Finland, Austria or even another country. I truly believe that my host sisters are friends for life, and that even after decades we will be visiting each other. They are like my real siblings, just from other parents.

During our stay in Luxembourg on our fifth day, we got the opportunity to meet a social worker from Caritas and interview him. His name was Malik and he works for Caritas since 2003. At the beginning he gave us some information about what he is doing and after that we started to ask some questions.

Student: Which nations of refugees are there in Luxembourg?

Malik: Altogether there are 45 different nationalities of the migrants, but the majority comes from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Before the winter we had many migrants from the Balkan, but most of them have to go back to their home countries.

Student: How many homes have you got?

Malik: There are twelve foyers, and the houses have the capability of 50 beds up to 300 beds. All in all, 1500 beds are available, but currently two thirds are occupied.

Student: Are there private or bigger refugee homes?

Malik: Well, not exactly. But the citizens of Luxembourg can provide them apartments or houses. The social workers are responsible to ask the hirer if they provided the apartment to refugees for a lower price than they would offer for the inhabitants.

Student: How many unaccompanied minors do you have?

Malik: In the foyer my colleague and me are responsible for, there are about fifty minors without parents. I am sorry, but I don't know about the other foyers.

Student: Are the children allowed to attend school?

Malik: Basically, they are allowed to, but at the age of 17 they don't have to attend school anymore. Though, they have to attend courses like French, Math's and Science, which are provided in their foyers.

Student: Do they get food, or do they cook themselves?

Malik: They can not cook in the houses by themselves, even though they have multiple kitchens in their foyers. I don't know why, but the ministry does not want them to cook. There are two or three houses out of twelve in which they are allowed to cook by themselves. They get the food provided and trucks bring it to their foyers, but it is more

expensive than in the supermarkets. We also try to give them the food which comes from their country if they ask for it, but we cannot assure it.

Student: Do refugees get the possibility to work?

Malik: Yes, but they are only allowed to small jobs, like painting etc.

Student: How much money do they get?

Malik: First of all, it depends on their age. Adults get 25 Euros per month, while minors only get 12 to 20 Euros. If they get the positive decision, they get 100 Euros for medicine, for doctor visits and for tickets, but they have to calculate everything on their own.

Student: Do the inhabitants of Luxembourg accept the refugees in public?

Malik: Well, this is a very difficult question. Do you think that people in Austria accept the refugees?

Student: More or less. I think it depends on the person.

Malik: See, I think it is the exact same in Luxembourg. I also think it depends on the education, the origin and the background of each person.

Student: Thank you that you took your time to answer our questions.

Malik: Well, thank YOU, that you are so interested in the situation of the refugees and our work, because you are the future. I wish you good luck for your further education. Merci beaucoup pour votre attention!

MERCI!