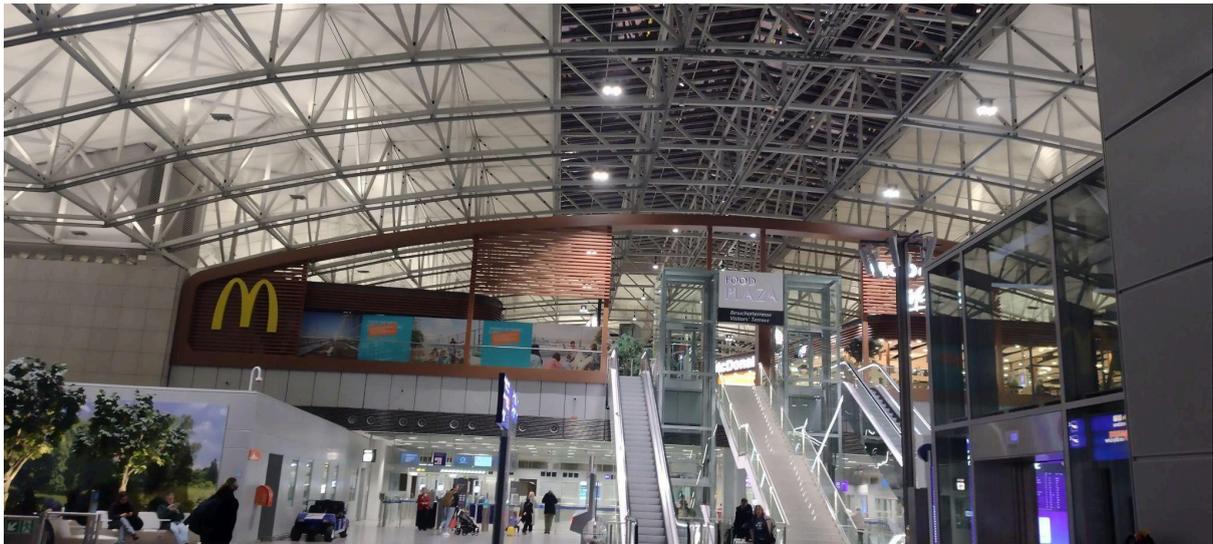


Sunday, 23.11.2025

Waking up in the early morning was quite difficult. The train rides went smoothly, before long I, with the rest of the Finnish group, were in the Helsinki-Vantaa airport awaiting our flight to Stuttgart first through Amsterdam. After having a nice airport meal we were given unfortunate news by the teachers: our flight to Amsterdam was delayed. The plane switch would've been tight, so we didn't have time for delays. We had to go and wait in line for information regarding a replacement flight. Finally after half an hour we had a new flight to Frankfurt am Main. From there we could fly all the way to Stuttgart. We passed our wheeled bags to the storage area and a long wait began. I passed the time by exploring the port with a friend and goofing around at the large escalators. When the time finally came, we passed through the security inspection without any problems. This was my first time on an airplane and luckily I got a window seat.

Taking off was some of the best fun I'd had in a while. In the air I just got back some rest taken by the early leave from home. This was very effective, as soon we were all in Frankfurt. It was a bigger airport than the one in Finland. It was of course already dark outside. Moving my watch to the local time didn't help either. In Frankfurt I ate one of my supermarket sandwiches I had bought at a store in Finland. After that it was another wait, this time even longer than the last one. I was too tired to do anything around the port, so I just sat down near a window. The port was really empty because of the late hour we were there, so a seat was not hard to find at all. I once again got some sleep until over an hour later we had to go through security once again. I forgot I had a little water in my jacket pocket, but it was apparently fine. We boarded the plane once again, this time I had a hallway seat. Our group was bunched up in the back, so we chatted the whole time. The flight went by very quickly because of this. Stuttgart airport was our final common destination and we were pretty tired there. All in all the trip had taken around 16 hours.

All of us got our wheeled bags and met the hosts for the first time. Nikola got to host me. He was a tall one with glasses, his father was also there, he looked similar to Nikola but with a beard. I departed from the rest of the group and started walking with Nikola and his dad. We talked for the whole walk to their Mazda and the drive to their home as well. We talked mainly about the differences between Finland and Germany, like the weather, getting a driver's license and so on. At their apartment I met their mother who had made potato soup. It was good, tasted like mashed potatoes but as a thick soup. We talked even more while I was there. I also got introduced to the family's three cats. Luckily I'm not allergic. I was understandably very tired so I took a quick shower before heading to bed. It was an air mattress in the corner of Nikola's room. It was very nice.



Amazing Frankfurt airport. Strangely I didn't do too much there, probably because I didn't have the time.

Monday, 24.11.2025

The first real day in Ostfildern began. After a breakfast together with the boys, those being Nikola, his brother and the Czech guest also living there I went with Nikola to the train station. Little did I know I would be commuting by train every day. The station was close by, so the ride didn't take long. After a quick walk we were at the Otto Hahn gymnasium. We all went to the auditorium, I got a front row seat. The teachers talked about what the program's about and how important it is for European unity. We got to watch informative presentations about the guests' own schools. After that we got a guided tour of the German school.

The tour ended and we were directed to the gym hall. Luckily I was well prepared because I had my sports shoes with me. We first played competitive rock, paper, scissors. I got to the top but fell to the bottom again. After that we played a new version of tag. If you were touched in this game you had to stand still and wait for someone to carry you to the hospital. The "hospital" was two big blue mattresses. We all then moved to the next room with benches. We had to stand on the benches and order ourselves by some factor without falling off. Some interesting strategies were developed for that one. Next up was a river crossing game. We went on mattresses as groups and had to use two mattresses in total to cross the length of the room. It was a race so time was money. My group came in second and then last place. The final game was dodgeball. The room was split down the middle into two groups. Once you got hit with a ball you went behind the other team and got a new role. I survived the whole game so I couldn't find out what it was. That was the final sports hall game.

Afterwards I, Nikola, my friend and a few others started as a group walking back to the school and further. I think I went home with Nikola for a short while to eat some more soup.

Soon after we were on the move again. The youngsters had agreed to go bowling that evening. We went bowling at the local bowling alley. There I got my first ever double strike. Despite that I didn't win a single game. Post-bowling we as a small group went for dinner. A burger place was nearby, so we decided to go there. I ordered a delicious burger with something called spezi. Apparently spezi is a soda mix of cola and Fanta. Whatever it was, I loved it and would order it in future restaurants as well. If only it was sold in Finland as well. Finally after dinner we all went home for the rest of the day. A shower later I was soundly asleep.



Delicious burger and fries with a side of spezi. The drink had me hooked at first taste.

Tuesday, 25.11.2025

Another German breakfast before a German walk to a German train stopping at a German train station near the German school. Of course this is all in Germany. I was starting to get the hang of the routine every day: a guided session at the school in the morning, a free timey thing among the boys in the evening. Today would seemingly continue the pattern. Once we got to the school we were properly introduced to the local drama teacher. Afterwards we started pretty much immediately playing all sorts of group games. Many of them were some sort of improv. Three hours flew by in the auditorium. Many of us had a very good time laughing and participating, me included. After the long session we set up a kind of Europe museum. All of the students were told to bring an item they thought represented Europe to them. I brought a rubik's cube, which many thought was kind of a good one. Honestly I just made it up on the spot, I had completely forgotten about the task. The Europe museum was apparently going to be a part of the final drama project of the week.

After the drama workshop we once again as a small group began walking in some direction. I didn't really know where, but judging by the time, probably for lunch. We got to a café and

I had a little trouble with the menu. Eventually I ordered a flammenkuchen and, of course, a spezi. The flammenkuchen was some kind of pizza with a creamy sauce instead of tomato sauce. I liked it and it was properly filling. Afterwards we proudly trotted back to the school. This time for a cookie-themed evening.

Half of the group was sent to the kitchen for baking cookies. I didn't get to bake, instead I got to build a cookie house on a long table. I sat kind of at the head of the table, so building materials were sparse. I did get some kind of tower set up though, after three hours of working. It didn't really look like anything at all, but as it was my first ever cookie house, I was quite proud of it. It was getting late, so we cleaned up the cookie house station and all headed home. Surprisingly this wouldn't be the last time I'd see my cookie house.

The way home was pretty uneventful. The only interesting thing about it was the eerily empty train we went on. Once we got on there was basically no-one in the train car. The train also stood at the station for a weirdly long time until taking off. Basic evening routine and I hit the haystack after the day.



Delicious flammenkuchen with a side of Spezi. It was sometimes just called cola mix.

Wednesday, 26.11.2025

Halfway through the programme, Wednesday began like any other, with bread and orange juice. Some days it was sparkling water, I wasn't sure which one I preferred. A hop, skip and a train ride later I was back at the school.

Ahead was another drama workshop. This time after some new games we made some short scenes as a pair. I naturally paired with Nikola. Our short scene was about how Europe should or shouldn't change. The scenes were going to be a part of the final project too. Speaking of part of the final project, we went to the choir workshop next. We made

little name tags out of tape, so the choir teacher could know our names. We sat in a big circle in the music class and went through the songs over two hours. First was the Czech song, then the Spanish one, the Finnish one and finally the German one. I didn't really know how all of the parts were going to come together on Friday, but I was sure the teachers had something figured out. After the choir workshop, it was soon time for the main activity of the day - the Esslingen Christmas market.

After school we went home for a while, probably to recharge batteries and to wait for it to get dark outside. Before getting there though, Nikola and I stopped at a kebab place. He ordered a döner for me, it was my first one ever. The döner was really tasty and filled the stomach well. After just hanging around the house for a while, suddenly I was asked if I wanted to go to the christmas market. I agreed, of course, so we went there by train. There was a lot of stuff going on, shops selling food and medieval-themed stuff. First me and Nikola walked around looking at things whilst talking about travelling around. At one point Nikola mentioned a shop stand which I was interested in. We found it among the crowds and I decided after a while to buy a souvenir from there. I don't think I'll be forgetting it for a good while after the trip.

Eventually we found some other Erasmus+ students and joined them. One in the group was one of my friends back in Finland, so we chatted about mixed stuff for the evening while the others were talking about something in German. At one point a part of the group was lost and we had to search for a long time before finding them again. I think we were having fun the whole time. After a while, though, we decided to head back home. The train took us home and soon after that I was watching Harry Potter 4 for some reason with some other people who had come to visit. Then after that I was soon back in bed.



Delicious döner kebab, my first one ever.

Thursday, 27.11.2025

Thursday was the day I'd been waiting for the most when coming to this trip. The morning went as usual: to the train station after breakfast. This time, though, we wouldn't be going to the schoolhouse but to meet at the last station of the line. After a quick recap of things to come, all of us hopped on the train to Stuttgart. It was longer than other train rides for the week, so I got a little nauseous, but luckily our stop came before things went south. At the station was one of those cool little public pianos. One of the Spanish students knew how to play, so we stood there listening to him play. I was also enjoying, but simultaneously was handling my light travel sickness. After the longish piece, we all gave an applause worth playing for.

Once all of us got off the station, we walked over to Die Staatstheater Stuttgart. It was a big and fancy-looking building, at least from the front. The inside wasn't all that different. We were directed to leave our coats and bags at the hangers. From somewhere appeared a bald man in a black shirt and jeans. He was one of the employees at the theater, and he would be guiding us through the theater. For security reasons we weren't allowed to photograph or film anything and for the same reasons I'm not going to tell all that much here. We were shown the main stage, the balcony, the costume department, the art department with really big canvases and some prop storage. It was all very, very interesting and I think expanded my views on theater working. We all took a big group picture or two and went our own ways. The next stop was the Christmas market.

The market was only a short walk away, and once we got there, it reminded me of the Esslingen market. This one, however, was more organized, higher-budget and took place in the daytime. There were a bunch of food stands, one of which sold hotdogs but with normal curved sausages. My friend's host bought me one, and I put ketchup and mayo on it. It tasted really good, especially after having not eaten anything for the past few hours, since this sausage was apparently lunch. I bought some licorice myself, the long tubes. They were really expensive compared to Finland, 2,50€ a pop. On the other hand they were thicker, so I think the deal was worth it. I bought four for 10€. After chilling at the market for a while, our group went walking in some direction. I got to see some of the city, when I was tagging along behind the others. At some point we got to a bookstore. The others apparently had a good reason to be there: just hanging around. I wasn't opposed to it and the couches there were really comfortable. Perfect nap time. I time travelled forwards in time until we had to go meet up with the rest of the students. We all got some fruit candies for some reason, and began travelling to our next destination. After the train we were at the place, the great, the most important, the one at least I had been waiting for all week, the Mercedes-Benz museum.

Once we got to the museum's front yard, we all took another group picture and went inside the automatic rotating doors. We were instructed to leave our coats and bags in a big box downstairs. Once that was done, the real museum experience began. We were given little phone-like things with screens attached to a lanyard and headphones. The headphones

didn't have muffs, so the ears had better airflow with them on. As small groups we went into a small elevator, which eventually took everyone to the top. From there, the museum offered presumably Mercedes-Benz cars to look at through the years, slowly becoming more modern as floors were walked down. The phone thing was used to listen to information about each of the cars using a little symbol beside them. I was intrigued and amazed at every floor. I was so amazed that I completely lost track of time and accidentally made everyone wait for me downstairs at the coat box. I did get to keep the lanyard. I once again got into the same group with Nikola, my friend, his host and a few others. We hung around near the museum cafeteria for a little while until deciding to go home.

We took the bus, the train and finally the bus again to get home. The switch from the train to the bus was kind of spicy, since we had to run to get to it. We didn't make it, instead we had to wait for the next bus. At home this time I didn't do much. I did have some traditional Bosnian dinner Nikola's family had made. It was like a thing we have in Finland except not at all. This evening was rich with chats, after which I went to bed. The day had been long and the next day was going to be important, so sleep was well needed.



Beautiful Grand Mercedes, once owned by none other than Wilhelm II of Germany

Friday, 28.11.2025

The day began like any other, with breakfast, train and school, in that order. This time the school day was an extra special one: the general practice for the final project. We practiced the drama bits and the choir bits and quickly it was finally time to present. It was quite a simple project, we simply did a few things with songs in between. We got applause, the German teacher gave a speech and handed out certificates with an assistant. There were so many of us and so many weird names that one was indeed needed. After that we got paid, kind of. We got paid with pizza and dessert.

The pizza was alright, I had had better but eating was very enjoyable and tasty. There was salami, tuna, mushrooms and some other pizzas. Luckily I didn't see any pineapple. There were a lot of boxes, I'm sure the pizza parlor they were ordered from was glad to get a profit boost. Although it was a lot, 60 teens in their growth spurt age could devour a horse if it came down to it. Afterwards it was time for dessert. Each of the students had brought something from their own home country. The Spanish brought jamón, the Czechs brought spa wafers, us Finns brought chocolate and other stuff. I brought Vihreät Kuulat, green balls of marmalade eaten during christmas. Everyone brought something different, but I didn't get to eat nearly all of them, there wasn't enough time. I said farewell to some of the students and headed back home with Nikola and some others. To the station, to the train, to the house we went.

It was time for my last evening in Germany. Nothing much happened at first, but then it was time for dinner. Nikola and I went to the local döner place and got a few döners, even one for Nikola's mom. Once we got back, they'd decided to watch the first Hobbit film. The movie was great and the food even greater, but the food was finished before the movie was. Surprisingly, Nikola's dad came with snacks: chips, chocolates and some wafers. I would've liked to have some, but one of their three cats decided to have a nap on me, so for much of the movie I simply couldn't. After the film I packed my bags. said the first goodbyes to the family and headed to bed.



Delicious mostly former pizza for all the students and teachers to enjoy.

Saturday, 29.11.2025

The dawn of the final day was upon us. I had breakfast with Nikola, his brother, his guest and their dad. I said bye-bye to their mom and left with my stuff, I didn't think I'd forgotten about anything. We all hopped into their Mazda, I got the middle seat. I was of course used to cramped cars, I do have many experiences of them. Once we got to the airport I said farewell to Nikola's dad and the others. Nikola still did accompany me to the airport. I'd arrived kinda early so I did have to wait for a while for the others. They did eventually show up. It was the Finnish group once again about to go through the airport rodeo. There were other hosts there as well, including Nikola's dad. I said the last goodbyes of the trip to him and Nikola and began waiting in line for my wheeled luggage to be put into storage.

After that it was the familiar shenanigans. No problems with TSA and into the terminal. I did buy a cool Deutschland t-shirt and a sandwich for later at the airport. This time the trip would actually go through Amsterdam. We got on the first plane. I sat next to my friend on the aisle seat. We mostly just goofed around and before long we had already landed. In Amsterdam it was a quick plane switch, no time for horsing around. We were basically already in the second plane once we landed there. Coming up was the longest flight of the four during the trip and I got the middle seat. Luckily the person on the aisle seat was watching *Interstellar* so I got to watch the end of that again. My friend had gotten a headache at the end of the previous flight so after the movie finished I just caught some Zs.

Once back in Finland, home was only a few more train rides away. At the train station in Helsinki there was a bit of waiting, but it was a-okay. Everyone was hungry after the 13-hour trip, so most people got sushi and I ate a burger. Finally the train arrived, we hopped on, another, broken-down train's passengers hopped on, we switched trains and finally at long last were back in Sastamala. Now it was only the writing tasks ahead, at least for me.



Delicious airport burger & fries in Finland.