

**Online co-teaching between Finland and France:  
overcoming distance and spatial frontiers**

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One member of COST Action [Women on the Move](#) (CA19112), [Francesca Falk](#), once suggested to develop co-teaching classes between members of the network, and this has led to punctual interventions such as Vice-Chair [Maija Ojala-Fulwood](#)'s (Tampere University, Finland) in one online class for [Veronika Capska](#)'s course (Charles University, Czech Republic). WG2 co-leader [Pirita Frigren](#) and Chair [Marie Ruiz](#) decided to launch an experiment over a semester in a shared Master's class entitled "Women on the Move – perspectives on historical and contemporary female migration".

This online international co-teaching experiment on Migration studies took place in the Fall semester of 2021, and gathered Finnish and French students. The idea was to meet on Zoom every week on Thursdays in a class that would introduce the students to the basic principles and methodologies on migration, as well as international cooperation. Each class was the occasion to welcome international experts from a variety of academic backgrounds presenting their works on migration and their cooperation with COST Action Women on the Move (CA19112).



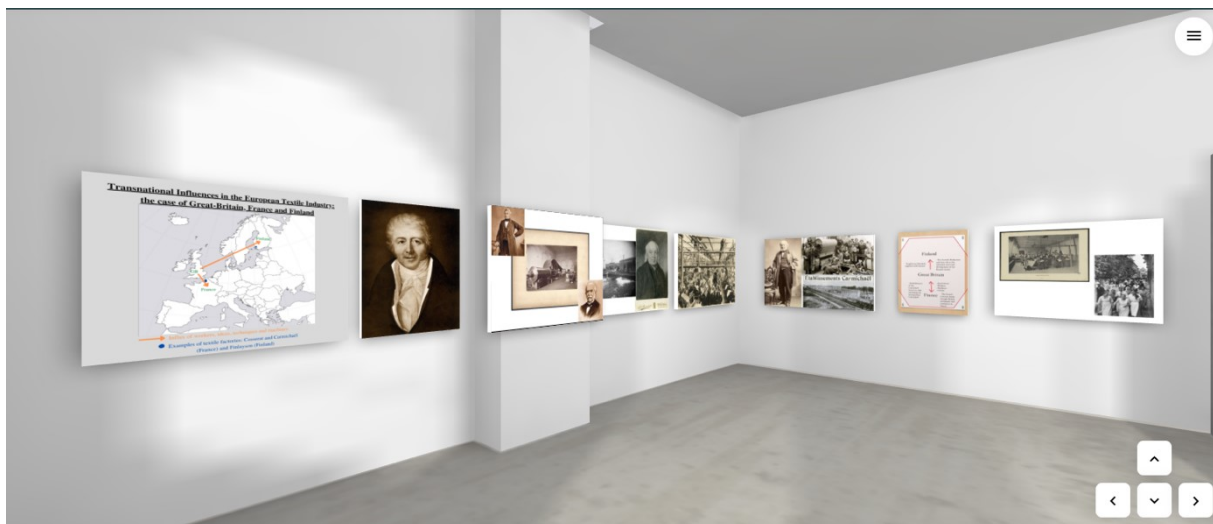
After two introductory classes on methods, concepts and historiography, including interactive group works, the students were ready for lectures from researchers from a variety of disciplines and nationalities, starting with our Irish colleagues [Graham Finlay](#) (UCD, Dublin) and [Elaine Moriarty](#) (Trinity College, Dublin) who respectively spoke about “migration justice or human rights” and “young Irish and Polish graduates on the move” for the first lecture. There was time for group works, interaction and discussions with the students after all lectures. Then, a lecture by [Marko Lovec](#) (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) on “development of the EU's migration policy since the 1980s (the Dublin-Schengen regime)” and [Snjezana Vasiljevic](#) (University of Zagreb, Croatia) on “migration and European law” was the occasion to better grasp the legal and political rationales of current migration policies. Our colleagues from the United Nations mandated University for Peace (UPeace) [Adriana Salcedo](#) and [Uzma Rashid](#) spoke of “migration, gender and peacekeeping”, which led to lively discussions.



The lecture by Tiina-Riitta Lappi from the [Migration Institute of Finland](#) on “displacement, placemaking and well-being: European cities and women” was another occasion to learn more about Finland and its migration history. A compelling intervention by [Joana Pujadas Mora](#) (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain) on “demography and migration” and [Jenny Bronstein](#) (Bar-Ilan University, Israel) on “narrative methodologies” offered complementary perspectives, methodologies and analyses of migration phenomena. The lecture series concluded with a round table on “women at sea” by [Pirita Frigren](#), [Alexandra Yingst](#) (University of Iceland), [Julia Stryker](#) (University of Texas at Austin, USA) and [Constantin Ardeleanu](#) (University of Galați, Romania), and a very dynamic and interactive participation from students around a Flinga wall.



The students were gathered in groups and worked together on several final tasks such as creating a [blog](#); a [video](#) based on oral history methods with the mock interview of a migrant; the [short story](#) of an unknown migrant woman, and finding landmarks commemorating migrant women for the COST Action’s [interactive map](#); creating a [video](#) on historiography on a documentary mode; and finally creating a [virtual exhibition](#) of textile migrant workers in Finland and France.



A trip to Finland marked the climax of this co-teaching experiment. Funded by the [University of Picardie Jules Verne](#) and its [language department](#), a trip was organised in November 2021 for the students to meet and work on their final tasks. The French students were generously welcomed by a warm Finnish team and were guided around the culture of a fascinating country. Starting with a guided tour of historical Turku by historian Mari Välimäki. Raita Merivirta then took the group to the Migration Institute of Finland to meet its Research Director Elli Heikkilä. Then came an encounter with the University of Turku's students and French language lecturer Maarit Mutta. The next stop was in Tampere where the French group was welcomed by Ulla Ijäs and [Maija Ojala-Fulwood](#) for a tour of the university campus. They then met the History department and Professor Pirjo Markkola presented COST Action [Who cares in Europe?](#) Touring the Vapriikki and Finlayson museum was another telling experience for the students to discover the interplay between migration and the textile industry in Tampere. Next stop was Pori where the students were welcomed by Professor Tarmo Lipping, Director of the [University Consortium of Pori](#), Professor of Cultural Heritage Studies Anna Sivula and Interdisciplinary Exchange Programme Director Kimmo Ahonen. The afternoon at UC Pori was the occasion for French and Finnish students to work together in groups on their final tasks. One of the French students' reflection on the experience was shared by all: "Meeting in real life these people with whom we shared so many Thursday afternoons virtually was a great experience." It boosted the students to engage even deeper in their final tasks, as another student put it: "I think that one of the most interesting moments of the trip was when everyone met at the Pori university to work together. Even if we had worked before on Zoom, this day was special as we were able to see each other directly for the first time and it really boosted us to give our best to our assignment!"

Some students also attended [Pirita Frigren](#)'s lecture on "Migration in the history of Pori". The evening was the highlight for many French students who were warmly welcomed by the UC Pori Student Union Kulma at the student house [Saikku](#). Games and fun activities were organized for students to bond and interact, which was a success. A minibus was hired by UC Pori on the next day to tour Pori and its surroundings starting with its flea market, the Harbour of Kallo, discovering [Yyteri beach & nature conservation area](#). We then visited Pori's historical theatre house and town hall. The afternoon was marked by the inspiring [Ars Pori Megastore](#) art exhibition. The trip ended with a tour of Helsinki by Anna Koskinen with sightseeing and museum visiting (Finnish National museum), and the unforgettable experience of swimming in the Baltic Sea at the Allas Sea Pool, Suomenlinna.

We can gladly say that this experience has been one of the most touching, human and stimulating pedagogical experiences for both teachers, and it has sealed long-term friendships

between the students across distance and frontiers. Their reactions are telling, as during our very last class when final tasks were presented by each group, all were asked to describe the “best moments” and these included “meeting the students and learning from another culture”; “working with my team”; “listening to different professionals from different fields”; “party at the Student Union in Finland” and “swimming in the Baltic sea”. One student said “I discovered what the work of a researcher really was. For the first time it became concrete for me”. Finally, one student summarized the feeling we all shared “I feel lonely when the class stops”.

A couple of months after the class, we were most happy to receive some feedback from the students about their experience (cited with permission):

Johanna Guilbert (France): “As for some reactions to the experience, it was fantastic to take part in this! Heta and I are keeping in touch (we sent each other Christmas cards!!) and this amazing friendship would have been impossible without you and Marie. We truly enjoyed working on the project and following each week's presentation which were given by some very interesting guests on a great variety of topics. The week we got to spend in Finland was marvellous and everyone we met was sooo kind and welcoming, plus we visited some really cool places. Honestly, it was the experience of a lifetime and I am very grateful for that.”

Heta Linnavuori (Finland): “This course provided me with new perspectives on the international migration of women and showed me what distance learning can be at its best. Through this course I was able to participate in lectures held by international scholars and build new friendships with the other students.”

Bathilde Babol (France): “The whole co-teaching course was a very interesting experience that allowed me to learn a lot of things about migration but also about how to do research and if I had the opportunity to do it again I definitely would. The trip to Finland was clearly one of the best experiences of my life. Discovering a new country, working with our fellow Finnish friends, meeting new people (I'm still in contact with some of them on social media!), it was awesome and I made memories that I will cherish forever. I felt like home in Finland and I can't wait to come back!”

Elina Kukkonen (Finland): “As an experience, the course was really nice. It was great to see how smoothly the co-operation went even though we live in two different countries and are physically separated from one another by the distance and the pandemic. I really enjoyed our groupwork and think that we did well with delegating the tasks and taking everyone's strengths into notice. In the planning phase it was inspirational to notice how our different backgrounds give us all a different kind of knowledge of the past and the present and how our know-hows fulfil each other.”

Lisa Lemoine (France): “I believe that this experience of co-teaching was very enriching and thrilling, getting to listen to all these wonderful lectures and lecturers was a great experience! Besides, our group tasks gave us the opportunity to learn what groupwork in research is like, and definitely gave us a fantastic first experience of research, of course completed and fulfilled by the trip to Finland!”

Elina Haapanen (Finland): “The course was a very educational and fun experience. Working with people from another country was a bit scary at first but I quickly realised that it was also super interesting and a lot easier than I had expected. I will cherish the moment we met face to

face and could share our thoughts on not only our group work but also on how our cultures differ.”

Manon Martel (France): “The experience of this co-teaching was incredibly rich, varied, and useful. Working with your class in Finland allowed us to be more aware of the history of migration in Europe, and especially to see this part of history as a much more tangible topic. Thank you for your dedication and for all the great lectures we were lucky to attend.”

Arthur Van Brabant (France): Concerning my personal experience I enjoyed the course very much. The classes with the many speakers were interesting, the meetings in the break-up rooms were both fun and interesting and due to the good atmosphere in the group, I am very happy and consider myself very lucky to have had this experience with this group.

I think that one of the most interesting moments of the trip was when everyone met at the Pori university to work together. Even if we had worked before on Zoom, this day was special as we were able to see each other directly for the first time and it really boosted us to give our best to our assignment! And after that the best night of trip was definitely the student party between French and Finnish students. Games, pizzas, beverages, and friends gave me a lot of very good memories!

This experience was really great, what I love the most was the way we had many visits scheduled and could see a lot of various interesting places: the Yyteri beach, Suomenlinna, the Finlayson area and many more! But also discover some typical Finnish activities, such as the Sauna and sea pool, many restaurants, as well as the visit of the campuses.

We also developed a special friendship with the Finnish students as we have been working together for months before finally meeting in person, so when we met, we immediately knew what to say and what to do: we chatted about the work we did together, but also about our experiences and lives, it was very natural. And personally even 3 months after the mobility our group still talk and exchange from time to time.

And their smiles was the teachers’ greatest reward:



One great news is that this experiment is going to lead to a more official partnership within an Erasmus+ Intensive Hybrid course welcoming Slovenia, our colleague [Marko Lovec](#) and his students from 2022 on.

**The co-teaching experiment also mentioned in:**

Frigren, Pirita, Maija Ojala-Fulwood & Jean Lukkarinen, ”Naisten siirtolaisuuden historia ja julkinen muistaminen” (Women’s Migration History and the Public Memory”). [Agricola – Suomen humanistiverkko](#), October 21, 2021.

[UC Pori News no. 84](#) “Muuttoliiketutkimus toi ranskalaiset Poriin” (“Migration Studies brought French guests to Pori”) by Jyri Luonila & Maria Ojanen.

[University of Turku News](#), October 26, 2021. “Kulttuurituotannon ja maisemantutkimuksen tutkinto-ohjelmalle vieraita Ranskasta” (“Degree Programme of Cultural Production and Landscape Studies having guests from France”).