

## The Finnish Hand surgery Fellowship experience.

Hello fellow. Congratulations on getting the fellowship. Yaaaaay you! I hope you did the happy dance. I sure did for myself and for you, whoever you are! Welcome to Tampere. Tervetuloa Tampere. Karibu Tampere( Swahili).

### 1. Where to start

If you are in Finland for 6 months, you need a resident's permit, not a Schengen visa. It took two months for me to figure it out. Hope this has saved you valuable time. Apply for it on <https://migri.fi/en/home>. It cost me around 490 euros when I applied. The department sends you documents to aid in your application.

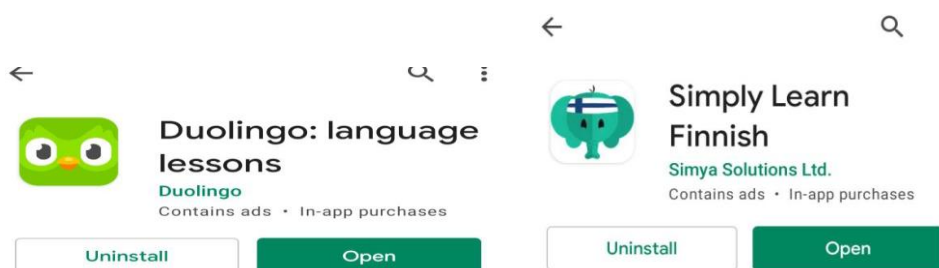
It takes 3-4 months to process once your documents are physically verified at the Finnish embassy in your country. If you are lucky, try to come earlier by a month, so that you can get administrative issues out of the way. I didn't check in a month earlier because processing a Schengen visa was problematic with Covid issues and EU restrictions. I truly hope that it will be easier for you.

### 2. A start to familiarizing yourself with Finland.

The department will send you a link and few reports from former fellows to get a feel of the place. In addition to this, I recommend you start practising a little basic Finnish on a language app. It will make your life easier because outside the hospital, you will need to go shopping in the supermarkets and most of the merchandise is in Finnish. I was lazy in this aspect so I got very confused in the shops. The shop attendants were really friendly though. They helped me out a great deal.

**Language apps-** I recommend Duolingo, Simply Finnish, found on Google play.

Screenshots below:



Also just learn Finnish because of the dark humor. See images of Finnish sayings attached at the end. They made me happy!

**Youtube sources- Wolters World:** I came across this YouTuber who gives great summaries. I discovered him when I got to Finland and these two videos were particularly helpful.

[Learn Finnish – 10 Finnish Words for Tourists](#)

[Learn Finnish – Basic Phrases for Tourists](#)

**Facebook groups-** There are Facebook groups you can join so that you don't feel overwhelmed by the Finnish experience. You can ask questions on these forums and you can also find activities to participate in for example if you play instruments or are into indoor rowing, or if you just want to practise learning the Finnish language. I recommend these two:

[Tampere Foreigners](#)

[Foreigners in Finland](#)

### **3. Registering a contract with your electricity provider**

One of the members in your department will help you register a contract. Quick warning, there is some culture shock. In my country, you don't really choose the source of your electricity. Plus they aren't open about the charges per unit usage. The power company just surprises you every month.

In Finland, you are spoiled for choice because you get to choose the source of your electricity. From hydroelectric, to wind, to green energy. I just chose one. Also, once you are here, you get your electricity bill after three months so don't panic about not seeing the bill, having your electricity disconnected and having to entertain the thought of a cold shower as a result. Thankfully this worst case scenario didn't happen in my case.

### **4. Travel**

Once your application goes through, you need to book your flight to Helsinki. To get to Tampere, you will need to book a train through this link [here](#). It takes around 2 hours to get to Tampere. There is a connecting train at Tikkurilla. You get to see lovely views of the country during the train ride. The train passes through the airport so when booking your ticket online book from Helsinki airport to Tampere. I booked my train to depart two hours after my arrival in Helsinki.

### **5. Covid regulations**

I had to be vaccinated with two Covid shots, travel with a negative test, and do a test at Tays once I arrived. Once you test negative for the repeat test, you can start work.

### **6. Arrival**

There was someone to pick me up at the railway station, and take me to the flats at the hospital. The flat is like 5-10 minutes walk from the hospital.

## 7. Hospital facilitation

Apart from living in hospital accommodation, you will get a locker at the hospital, and the hospital provides scrubs, and a white coat. In addition to this there is a flannel coat that is slightly warmer. The only thing you will need to get is hospital shoes. You can carry Crocs with you or you can buy them at Prisma Kaleva.

## 8. To do list

You need to register on mystratti. You need to book an appointment. Make sure you book an appointment as a foreigner and not as a citizen or local, this can be done [here](#). I made this mistake and my appointment was postponed.

Once you book your appointment, they need you to visit with your passport, residence permit, a letter from the hospital and a rent receipt or utility bill to prove that you live at the hospital. Once you do this, you get a letter from them in about a week's time which will be needed when you apply for a bank account. This should be done urgently so that you don't delay your salary.

## 9. Bank account

Nordea bank is the one bank that isn't fussy when it comes to customers who will only be in Finland for 6 months. Danske bank had a policy that they only get customers who will be in Finland minimum a year. I found this out after I had made approximately three appointments with them. They told me on my physical visit to the bank. S-pankki doesn't have an English option or so I have heard.

Make the appointment booking once you get the letter from the mystrati team. You will need the letter confirming your address, your residence permit, your passport and a letter from the hospital. Finnish financial legislation dictates that it takes 3-4 weeks to get your account number once the bank accepts your documents. They probably do background checks to ensure you aren't a criminal or doing money laundering.

Have an expense account to take you at least 3 months while sorting stuff out. Also make sure you inform your bank in your country that you are leaving so that they don't freeze your bank cards. I informed my banks but one still froze my bank card so hope you don't face that stressful situation. As for the Finnish side, patience EVENTUALLY pays, literally.

### ***Processing your Nordea account***

If you opted for Nordea, once you get your bank account number, business Id and key codes, download the Nordea app and the Nordea key codes app. If you are not Scandinavian, or do not have another account with the Finnish app, you will have problems being able to use the app.

Call the bank on the personal banking section of the Nordea website. You will be asked to input your business Id and key code during the call from the ones posted to you. Once you

do that the system connects you to one of the bank guys who will then activate the codes app for you when you ask him or her to do so. After this, you will be able to carry out your transactions.

FYI, this information on how to activate your app plus codes app if you are not Finnish isn't on the website( I didn't see it on there). Finnish people already in the system also didn't know exactly how to work around this. I kind of had to figure it out for myself. I truly hope this makes it easy for you.

### ***Taxation***

The salaries of doctors in Finland are taxed at 60-65 percent. However the hospital will help you apply for a waiver so that you are taxed 35 percent instead. I wasn't able to bring this figure lower neither was the fellow who was here before me.

### **10. Finnish ID card**

I had no idea that I might have needed this. Most services you might want are paid for online. You go on the website, and if you want to book an appointment, they ask for your bank details ( e.g. making a hospital appointment if you are sick, or checking your electricity bill online amongst others). The bank should activate this for you, but they can only do so when you have a Finnish Identity card.

I got my bank account 3 months into my fellowship, and found out this little fact in my fourth month. I couldn't book anything online that needed my bank details. I had to book via phone call and that is a hustle. If you think you want to access services online I would advise you to apply for a Finnish identity card as soon as you get here. The bank told me that you get those at the police station. Maybe see how you go about that.

### **11. Schedules**

The day starts at 7.30 am. You need to get to the hospital earlier so that you can change into scrubs and your white coat.

Mondays are usually Journal club days, Tuesdays and Thursdays, they discuss the cases of the week. The other days don't have a formal schedule per se.

The meetings are done in Finnish.

Pssst. Pssst. You will feel like this sometimes but as days go on it gets better, I promise. I will point out that I am not a grandpa. Neither am I a grandma, yet. Heheh. All on a light note.

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Grandpas will sit like this in the living room having no idea what anyone is talking about but just happy to be a part of the convo



The slides for PowerPoint presentations might be in English or have images that you can follow. As for the case discussions, those are done in Finnish. The way to get around this is to scrub for as many cases as you can so that you recognize the patients being discussed from their pre-op and post-op x-rays, photos of their deformities before correction, and photos of the limbs after surgery.

There is the trauma theatre and the elective theatres and the theatre in the eye hospital which schedules hand surgery operations on Tuesdays and Thursdays. You can choose where to go. You will also eventually learn the names of surgical instruments in Finnish. It makes everything easier.

Calls are voluntary. Most replantations are done during the calls. These surgeries take a long time, 15 hours or more, so eat, use the washrooms beforehand and be prepared to be in hospital till the wee hours of the morning.

You can also attend clinics. I made a point of attending several clinics. The adult hand surgery clinic, the pediatric hand surgery clinic( on Tuesday mornings) and the pediatric brachial plexus patients clinic( Friday). I learnt a lot in these clinics. The clinics are done in Finnish because this is what the patients speak, but one is still able to pick up a lot of tips.

Ward rounds are done daily and I attended some of them. The more you participate in the department activities, the easier it will be for you to follow the proceedings.

You will be expected to give a presentation or two. I did mine in English. The day typically ends at around 3 pm unless a case in theatre extends or you join the person doing the call.

If you have an idea for a research project you can ask for pointers. I am interested in doing a systematic review, and I got valuable pointers from the team.

## **12. Microsurgery course**

The department sponsored me to do a five day microsurgery course. This was a well needed opportunity, and I am grateful to the department for the chance.

If you have microsurgery experience, then you will find it particularly enjoyable.

If you don't have microsurgery experience, see below.

**Short version-** it is challenging but doable.

**Dark humor version:** This too shall pass. Like a kidney stone, a new born baby or constipation, but it shall pass.

### **Long version**

#### *Day 1*

- session 1-you suture a stretched out glove under a microscope. I truly hope you remember that you can keep changing the magnification on your microscope. Personally I didn't remember. It was disaster!

Verdict- there is this microscope in the department. Practise suturing there. There are microsurgery videos they will give you. Watch them and practise. I watched them repeatedly but there is something called amnesia under pressure.. I discovered it that day.



- Session 2- you suture a strip of glove under a microscope. Possibly mimicking a blood vessel. Again, remember that you can keep changing the magnification in your microscope.... I didn't remember.

Verdict- practise suturing in the department to avoid having an existential crisis... Nothing prepares you for the experience of suturing a strip of glove.

when the whole gang gets together !!



The instructor on the video keeps telling you not to cause your problems, you know at the back of your mind to be careful not to be the cause of your problems. The irony is finding out in the middle of your struggle that you are the cause of all your problems.

Me realizing I'm the very cause of 99% of my problems, it was all me...all along



- Session 3- you suture blood vessels in a chicken thigh. Thankfully this time I remembered that I could continuously adjust the magnification on my microscope. Verdict- this is doable.

*Day 2*

Rat femoral artery anastomosis. The real transition from macro to microsurgery.

Verdict:





What is happening?  
What is happening?!!  
What is happening??!!!!!!!

Again, existential crisis, see below:



Also, random fact. My inner child had the honor of experiencing the whole Finnish childhood experience in less than 8 hours. Part of me wanted to give up but I honestly couldn't. What do I mean by a Finnish childhood? See below image for reference.



I cried on the inside. No wonder Finnish people are so resilient.

*Day 3*

Rat femoral vein anastomosis. This is apparently harder than the rat femoral artery anastomosis.



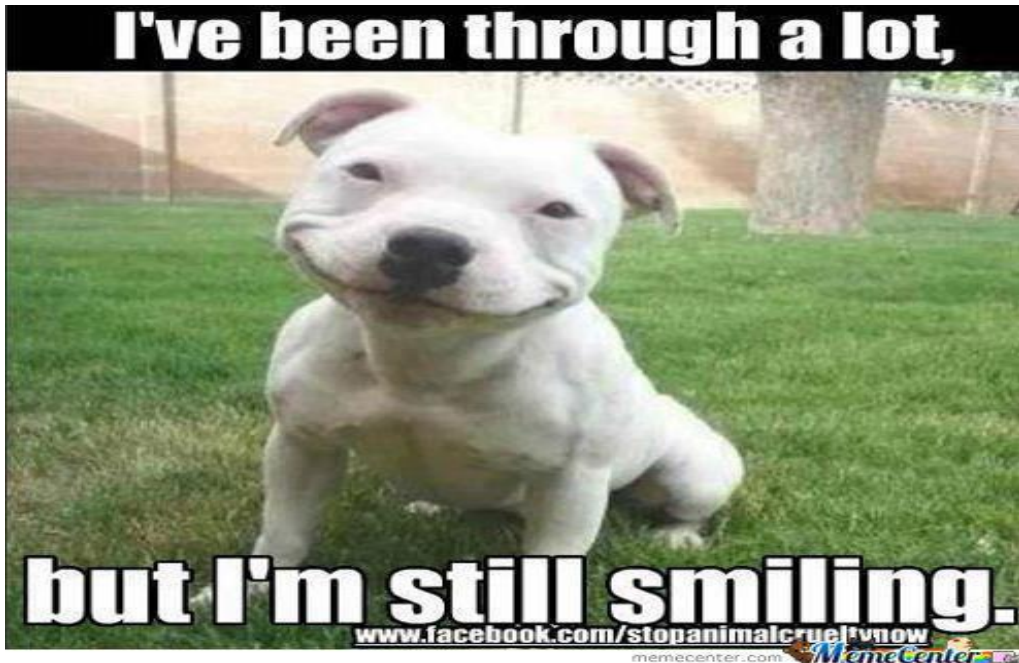
Verdict:

I shed PREMIUM tears. On the inside. Always on the inside. Can't ruin my imaginary mascara.

*Day 4*

You do an end to side anastomosis or a vein graft to the artery.  
I did the graft.

Verdict: Maybe this wasn't so bad after all.  
Didn't get 100 percent success, but it was doable.



Day 5

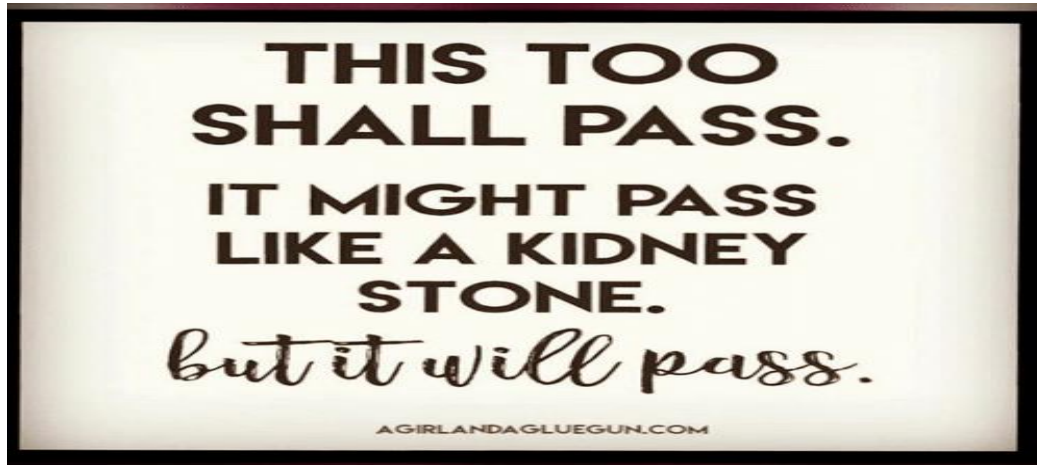
Suture the artery without flipping it both sides.

Verdict:

It's painstaking work. ( But we did it. We are so proud of ourselves. We are so proud of ourselves. \*Does happy dance yaaaaaaaayyyy!!!!\* My precioussssss!!!!)



Summary- This too shall pass, like constipation, a kidney stone or a new born baby;this too shall pass!



This too shall pass.. 🙄

On a more serious note, once you do the course a lot of the stuff done in replantation surgery starts to make sense. sessions.

**13. Hospitality matters-** If you have any dietary restrictions, just inform the team. I am vegetarian because of food allergies. The team informed the cafeteria. The cafeteria staff were exceptional in ensuring I had something to eat. They were really helpful.

#### **14. Sights to see in Finland.**

Now the academic bit is out of the way, here is what to see in Tampere.

I was here in July and had the privilege of doing a lake cruise with members of the department. That was quite a lovely experience.

If you are into fitness, you can go to the gym, or go swimming in the public pools or lake. I used to go running in the Kauppi forests. You can do a walk or run. You will spot rabbits or deer. I didn't see predators. They might be there, I don't know.



There is a historical site of interest in the Kauppi forest, an Anti aircraft gun used during world war 2.

Photo is on the next page.





This is a photo of the plaque on the anti aircraft gun. I hope you find it when you go exploring.

Photos of the lake shore along the Kauppi forest



In summer the arboretum is a lovely place to visit. Lots of flowers and bees to see.







If you love doing artsy Do it yourself projects, you can get supplies at the Taitava shop in the Koskikeskus mall. There are interesting shops in both Koskikeskus and the Ratina mall.

If you are into museums then you are in for a treat. There are several exhibitions at the Vapriiki museum. There was a medieval Europe exhibition, an exhibition about Finnish animals, one on the history of fire departments, one on Finlayson company, one on rocks and crystal formations, one on ice hockey, a video game exhibition, a rock band exhibition and one on the evolution of media (cameras, phones, the internet, newspapers etc). There is also a shop where you can buy gifts for your family.

There is also the Moomin museum.

Since I had never been to the North, I visited Rovaniemi, the capital of Lapland and also managed to visit the Santa Claus Village. The Arktimi museum had quite interesting information - on the forestry industry, on the indigenous cultures of Northern Finland and also on notable Finnish personalities born in Lapland. The temperatures were really cold, my phone stopped working so I didn't get nice photos. My colleague managed to get the below photo.




You can also get to do indoor rowing lessons. I was interested but never got round to doing it. Find a link to their website [here](#):

Lastly, see attached images that might inspire you to learn some of the language.

<h2 style="margin: 0;">brain fart</h2> <p><b>/aivopieru/ (noun)</b>          1. unconsidered and stupid comment or idea          2. when the waiter says "enjoy your food" and you say "you too"</p>  	<h2 style="margin: 0;">slipper hero</h2> <p><b>/tohvelisankari/ (noun)</b>          1. a man who is completely under his wife's control          2. apparently a man type so common it needed a word</p>  
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<h2 style="margin: 0;">get a shit stroke</h2>  <p><b>/saada paskahalvaus/ (exp.)</b>          1. to get very frightened or shocked          2. whenever you check your pocket and you can't feel your phone there</p> 	 <h2 style="margin: 0;">read like the devil reads the bible</h2> <p><b>/lukea kuin piru raamattua/ (exp.)</b>          1. to read a text and search only for mistakes or the parts that support your own views          2. Finns finding only the rankings where Finland is the best</p> 
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I wonder if a 'pilkunnussija' is the Finnish version of a Grammar police ( won't say the bad word)... I have been repenting my ways but after I came across this,I decided that I will repent my ways more!

<h2 style="margin: 0;">comma fucker</h2> <p><b>/pilkunnussija/ (noun)</b>          1. a person who makes it their mission to spot and correct even the tiniest mistakes that others make          2. a human type that especially thrives on the internet</p> 	 <h2 style="margin: 0;">piss in the sock</h2> <p><b>/kusi sukassa/ (exp.)</b>          1. to be very silent and to try to stay unnoticed          2. is there even a Finn without at least a little piss in their sock?</p> 
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This 'kusi sukasa' one brought up fond memories of when our Anatomy professor was giving us a lecture in undergraduate, and he would ask a question and all of us would shrink ourselves, refuse to look up and suddenly be very busy writing notes in our notebooks silently praying that he wouldn't pick us. This didn't deter him. He would ignore the eager ones in the front and pick each of us with dogged determination.

I can say no Finnish person told me anything about taking me behind the sauna. I got invited to the sauna, but they didn't tell me the phrase below. I have no idea if they randomly thought it though.

<p><b>take behind the sauna</b></p> <p><b>/viedä saunan taakse/ (exp.)</b>          1. to kill or to beat up 2. the Finnish sauna experience you don't want to have</p>  	<p><b>underpants drunkenness</b></p> <p><b>/kalsarikännit/ (noun)</b>          1. to get drunk in your underwear at home          2. the word, the myth, the legend</p>  
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Maybe the moomins one is me.

<p><b>not have all the moomins in the valley</b></p> <p><b>/ei ole kaikki muumit laaksossa/ (exp.)</b>          1. to be crazy 2. the mood after staying just at home for over a year</p>  	<p><b>like a bear shot in the ass</b></p> <p><b>/kuin perseeseen ammuttu karhu/ (exp.)</b>          1. to be angry and in a really bad mood          2. Finns when they lose a hockey game against Swedes</p>  
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<p><b>flower hat aunt</b></p> <p><b>/kukkahattutäti/ (noun)</b>          1. usually an older woman who is strict about morals and loudly shares her opinions          2. a person who needs to mind their own business</p>  	<p><b>fresh air poisoning</b></p> <p><b>/raitisilmamyrkytys/ (noun)</b>          1. when you have spent so much time outside that you notice its effects          2. a common phenomenon after a weekend at mökki</p>  
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## in the year of frankfurter and mashed potatoes

**/vuonna nakki ja muusi/ (exp.)**  
 1. something happened a long time ago  
 2. an expression that does a good job summarizing the Finnish cuisine



## suit ghost

**/pukukummitus/ (noun)**  
 1. a person who is always well-dressed but doesn't do any actual work  
 2. how Mondays at work be like



## lift the cat on the table

**/nostaa kissa pöydälle/ (exp.)**  
 1. to bring up a difficult subject  
 2. telling a Finn that Sweden won more medals at the Olympics



## face like the ass of a bird of prey

**/naama kuin petolinnun perse/ (exp.)**  
 1. to be very ugly  
 2. this is an expression we hope we'll never come across again



This bird of prey one has me laughing to myself at random times like a crazy person.

## a drop won't kill and you won't drown in a bucket

**/ei tippa tapa ja ämpäriin ei huku/ (exp.)**  
 1. an encouragement to drink alcohol  
 2. a verse from a song by Irwin Goodman that took off



## hunger anger

**/nälkäkiukku/ (noun)**  
 1. hangry; when you are so hungry that your lack of food causes you to become angry  
 2. feed me or I'll kill you



This one for hunger is relatable.

## piss rising up to head

**/nousta kusi päähän/ (exp.)**  
 1. to get cocky and arrogant  
 2. when you are better than others and you know it



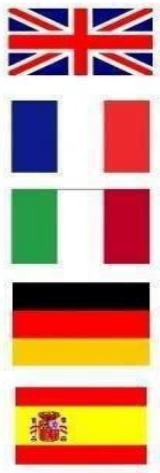

## squat wine



**/kyykkyviini/ (noun)**  
 1. a synonym for a cheap wine - in Finnish liquor stores, the cheapest wines are on the bottom shelves; therefore you need to squat to get them



When exercising I won't be able to do a squat without thinking of squat wine.




Batman

Batman

Batman














Batman



Batman





### DIFFERENZE LINGUISTICHE


## Simple!

 Simple	 Enkel
 Simple	 Enkel
 Simple	 Enkel
 Simple	 Einfalt
 Simplu	 Einfach
 Simples	 Eenvoudig
 Semplice	



/Yksinkertainen!?!/

## lepakkomies



It did take a while for this reality to hit me, that Finnish people have an equally hard time learning English because it is not even remotely related to it in any way. There I was feeling perplexed about the Finnish language when they were equally perplexed learning English. This was a humbling experience. Quite interesting. Quite interesting.

Finnish has a word for  
"I wonder if I should  
run around aimlessly?"



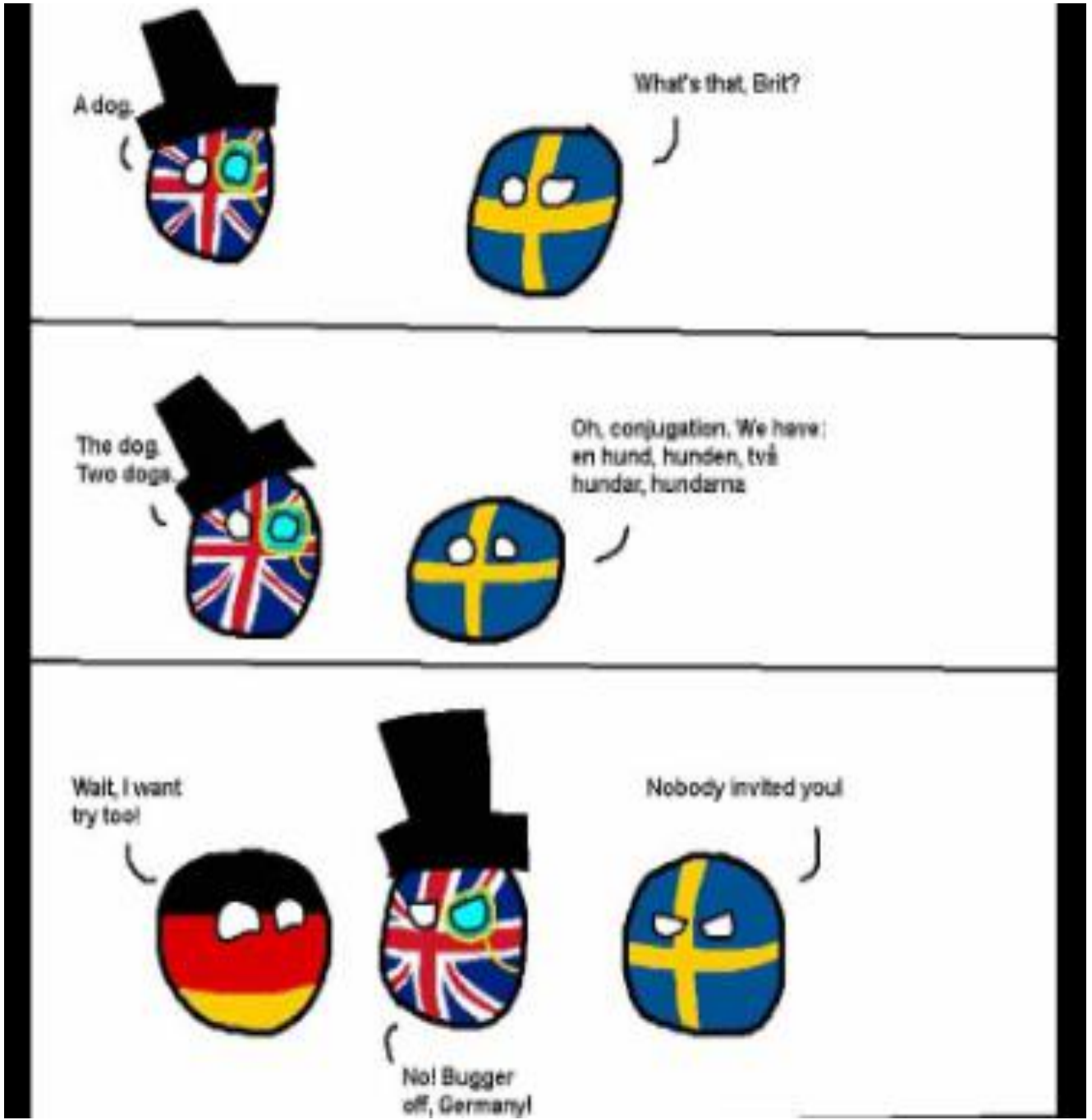
Juoksentelisinkohan?

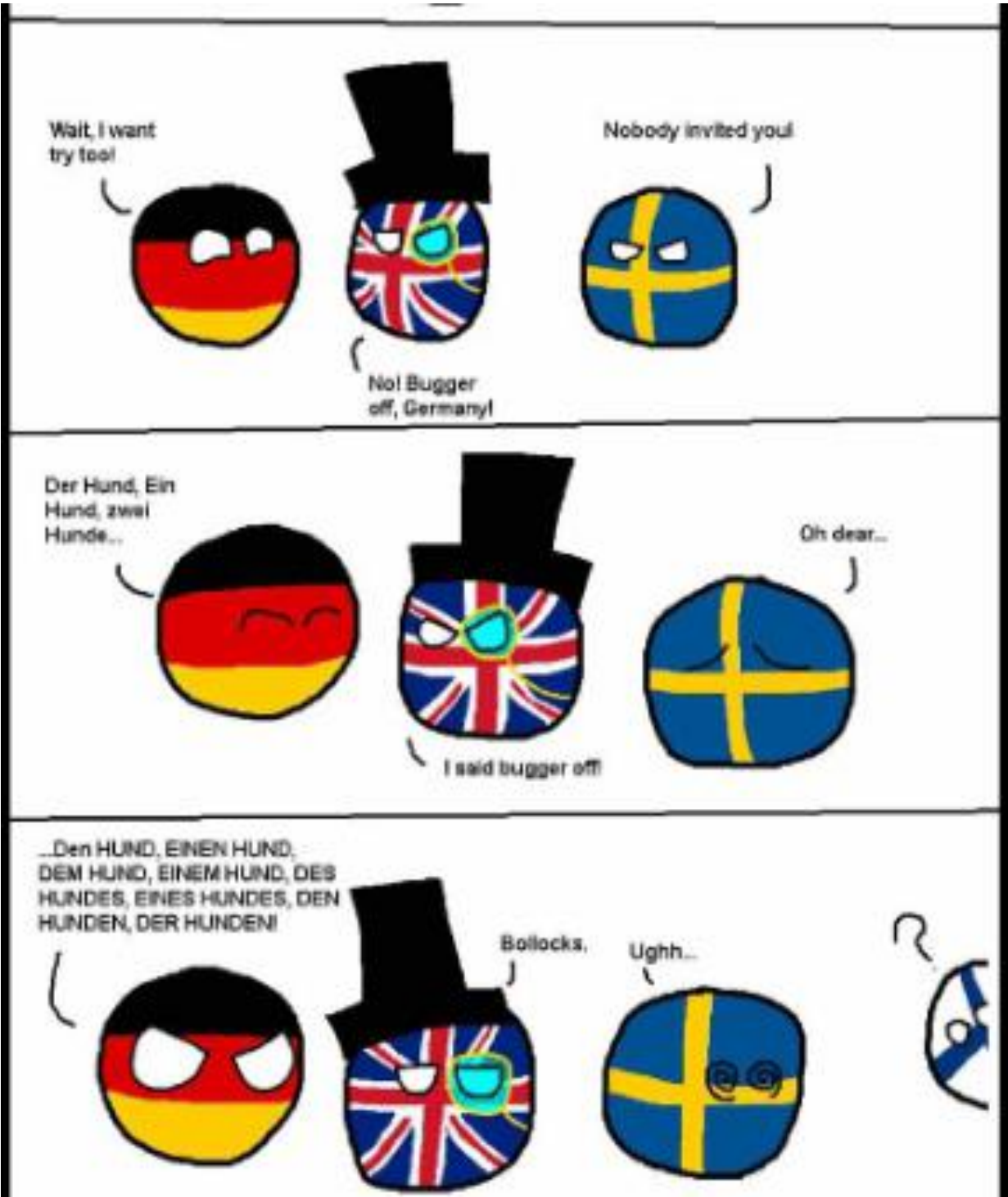




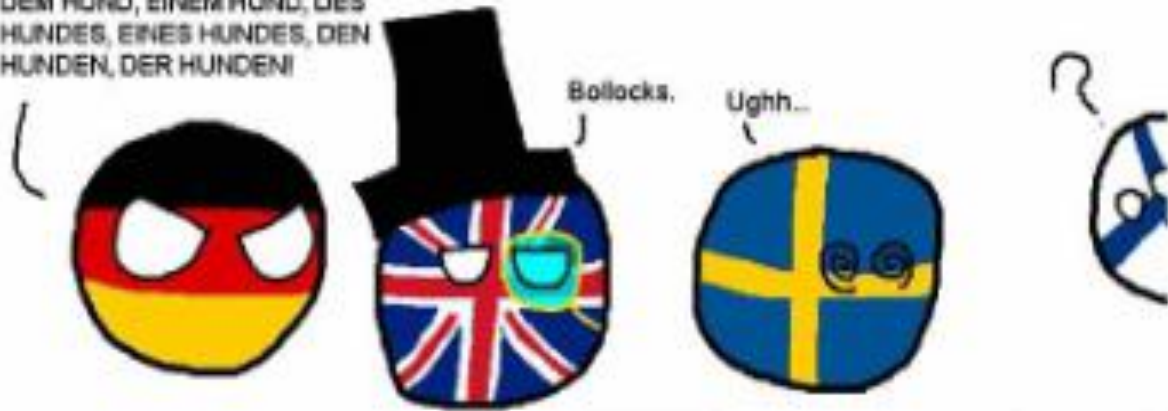
Funny thing when I saw this particular image, I pictured it the way a Finnish person would say it in a deadpan manner and it made me laugh. You won't get it now but you will after like two months.

This I found hilarious because this is typically Finnish to the core!





...Den HUND, EINEN HUND,  
DEM HUND, EINEM HUND, DES  
HUNDES, EINES HUNDES, DEN  
HUNDEN, DER HUNDEN!



Nein nein nein, yuo  
go away, Finland!



Dear God,  
no!



NEJ!

Hey, Sweden! Hey, guys!  
Can I join in?



Mein Gott...



Why is this  
happening?



Koirs, koirs, koirs, koirs again,  
koirassa, koirasta, koirs, koiralla,  
koiratta, koiralle, koirs, koiraksi,  
koiratta, koirineen, koirs



Mein Gott...



Why is this happening?



Koira, koiran, koiraa, koiran again,  
koirassa, koirasta, koiraan, koiralla,  
koiralta, koiralle, koirana, koiraksi,  
koiratta, koirineen, koirin



This are even worse than I had imagined...



"whimper"



keirasi, keirasi, keirassa, keiramme, keiranne, keirasi,  
keirasi, keirassa, keiramme, keiranne, keirassasi,  
keirassasi, keirassansa, keirassamme, keirassanne, keirastari,  
keirastasi, keirastansa, keirastamme, keirastanne, keirallani,  
keirallasi, keirallansa, keirallamme, keirallanne, keirani,  
keirani, keiransa, keiranamme, keirananne, keirakseni,  
keiraksesi, keiraksensa, keiraksomme, keiraksanne, keirattani,  
keirattasi, keirattansa, keirattamme, keirattanne, keirineni,  
keirinesi, keirinensa, keirinemme, keirineeni





Thank God it's finally over...



Can you speak some German again?



...and koirinennakokaant!



And now for the plural forms...



I had a lot of fun during my six months here. I learnt a lot from everyone on the team. I had the privilege of observing life different from what I am used to and it broadened my way of thinking. However in life all good things must come to an end. This better experience has to end to create space or room for even better. I truly hope you have as much, no wait, I hope you have more fun than I have had( and I had a lot of fun). Congratulations yet again on landing the fellowship. May abundance light your way. This is me off to my next adventure. Cheers ☐ ☺

One last one. The last one, I promise.

## own land strawberry, other land blueberry

**/oma maa mansikka,  
muu maa mustikka/ (exp.)**

1. there is no place like one's  
motherland 2. possibly the cutest  
way to praise your country  
over others

