

l'Université de Genève

2021-2022

PREPARATION
exchange application process
This went very well, it wasn't difficult.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
I have gotten great support from the International Exchange Office from the UU
academic preparation
I didn't have to prepare any academic work before commencing my studies in Geneva
language preparation
None, I got French classes after arriving in Geneva
finances
SEMP scholarship

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD
study programme (content and organisational issues)
I did the law program called Certificate Transnational Law, which was very nicely put together and fun to study
academic quality of education activities
The quality of the education is noticeably very high; very good professors and reading materials
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
There was an email address where you can send all your questions to, which has always been super helpful
transfer of credits

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
There was a welcome week organized by ESN (Erasmus student network) and they kept organizing events throughout the semester which was great
accommodation
I rented an apartment with a roommate
leisure & culture
Many museums are free which is nice, but other activities are usually very expensive
suggestions/tips

Go to the events organized by ESN; they're super cheap and it's a great way to meet other exchange students

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

I would recommend the university it for law, specifically the CTL program I'm doing, but just for the city I wouldn't choose it as everything is super expensive so you can't do very much.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

2019-2020

PREPARATION
exchange application process
Firstly we had to write a motivation letter and fill out our study plan. When choosing my top 3 destinations I kept in mind places in Europe, I was only planning to go for one semester, destinations where French was the primary language, and certain courses. I choose UNIGE for these reasons. I specifically liked the fact that for the law faculty there is the CDT/CTL programme which consists of 5 courses amounting to a certain certificate, a minor you could say. I preferred this over loose courses. Geneva is also the hub of international law and has a lot to offer in that field. I picked the Spring semester based on the course selection and on my personal preference for summery weather. After nomination by the UU, you receive an email from the UNIGE (around april) with details on how to register at the host university. Any questions I had about the application process were easily and quickly answered either via email or telephone by the office at UNIGE.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
In Utrecht there was a possibility to take a course of intercultural learning, which starts before leaving on exchange and ends after returning. There was also the possibility to participate in a Buddy System in Utrecht, to get to know someone from your future host university and show them around Utrecht. In my experience I did not have a very succesful match.
academic preparation
For the CTL 120 credits of legal courses are required. Otherwise there wasn't much academic preparation that I did. Fo some courses on EU law, it might be interesting to keep your notes of the UU EU-law course on your laptop. Professors do expect you to have a certain level of knowledge and some courses will be more of an interactive setting (discussions) instead of really a lecture-style class.
language preparation
In (Belgian) high school I ended with a B2 level of French but after 3 years this ofcourse wasn't as good anymore. I watched French movies and series on Netflix as a passive preparation. But for law courses this is of course not enough, most of the legal vocabulary you of course just learn in class and this went pretty well, even with COVID19 (and having to leave Geneva after a month) I feel my level of French is better than before my exchange. I recommend joining ESN Genève and signing up to the buddy system. If you want to practice French and not just speak English: when meeting other exchange students, start your conversations in French instead of English and with a bit of luck that will become the norm between you. I know in Geneva there are also some French courses offered (over summer or in January before the start of the Spring semester), friends of mine can recommend this. These courses are not free and you will have to find accomodation for that time period aswell, plus it might not be possible to do this in January if you still have classes in Utrecht. During the semester the 'Maison des langues' also offers some French support courses, 2 per week are free. I did this but haven't tried to get the 3 ECTS per course recognized by the UU. This is also a great place to meet people that are not necessarily in your law courses. Another detail is that many if not most professors are originally not Swiss or french speaking either, so they will be lenient.
finances
Geneva is more expensive than you think. Definitely freeze your studentenreisproduct and get 90- euro per month for that. At the start of your exchange, open a bank account in Geneva (I recommend the Campus account at UBS). As soon as you have your Swiss IBAN you can pass this on to the Swiss Government and you will get 2200 CHF scholarship money transferred to your Swiss account. Personally, I saved up money by working before going on exchange. It will be very hard to find a job in Geneva. You would get paid a lot !! per

hour but you need a Swiss health insurance (extra costs) and you need a different kind of 'permis de sejour' (verblijfsvergunning) than those who do not work. You would be limited to a maximum of 15 hours per week. Also, there are not so many jobofferings for students. It is really only worth it if you go for a year, thanks to all the paperwork that slows you down. If you do get a Swiss insurance (only compulsory if you plan to work in Switzerland!), you will have to cancel that before leaving and for cancelling you will need another statement from the government saying that you are leaving the country etc etc... they really love their forms.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I did the CTL: 4 courses in English, 1 in French. Comparative tort law, Introduction to Common Law, Contemporary Challenges of Public International Law, Sociology of Family Law and Droits de l'homme. The first 3 courses were my favourites and I would have loved to do those in person. I 100% recommend doing Contemporary Challenges of PIL. As in my semester COVID19 forced most students to return home, I had a lot of time in self-quarantine to focus completely on the online courses. This made the study load easy to handle, even though it were 5 mastercourses. In a normal semester with social events and trips going as planned, 5 courses are a bit much. Other than those doing the CTL, almost no one in my circle of friends did more than 4 courses. The organisation of the courses is different than in Utrecht: the first two weeks you can sit in on any course you like, 2 weeks after arriving you have to sign up for the courses you plan on taking definitively, 4 weeks after arrival from that selection you pick the courses of which you want to sit the exams. So be quick in making your choice of courses and passing it on to the UU's examcommission or you risk the chance that you sign up for a course that won't be recognized in Utrecht. The exam session is a month long and at the end of the semester, you hear only quite last minute which days exactly you will have an exam. In my case, 1 was a paper and 4 were oral exams via Zoom. For some courses you could get a bonus grade for active participation: ex taking part in discussions or giving a powerpoint-presentation. I really recommend doing this as you will be surrounded by more motivated students and it is a way to get to know other students, maybe even Swiss students. The courses I did for the CTL were all lecture style. I had 1 block of 2 hours per course per week. This means there is a lot of self-study time and reading to do beforehand as there was (at least for my courses) no seminar group.

academic quality of education activities

The professors are all experts in their field, with often impressive jobs and experiences in practice (at international organisations, or abroad for example). I did not pick any courses at the Graduate Institute, but I heard that these were also highly recommended.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

During the application process I was able to have all my questions answered either via phone or email. There was also the possibility to go by the student advisor in case of any struggles after arrival.

transfer of credits

A week after the end of the exam period my grades (the transcript of records) was put online on the Swiss version of Osiris. The physical transcript of records should be mailed to my home adress. I am still waiting for this but I suppose everything will run smoothly.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The Friday before the first week of class all exchange students were expected at the university and given a general welcome session: info on how to get your 'permis de sejour', info on how to get your health insurance

recognized (easy), and all sorts of general questions. In the afternoon every faculty had their own introduction programme where more academically related questions could be asked.

This was all that the university did. I recommend arriving at least a week before the start of the semester. ESN Genève organises activities everyday of the week before, to get to know other exchange students but also Swiss students. They even organized a campus tour per faculty and a city tour. In the third week of the semester they organized a huge party for the start of the semester.

accommodation

When it comes to accomodation, you will want to be super early. In my case the application for university accomodation opened on June 1st and I applied the same day. A room at the Cité will be around 500 CHF and it won't get cheaper than this. You have a small room with a sink, shared bathrooms, toilet, kitchen, fridges. There is a reception in the building. There is a laundry room and linnen and towels are provided. In the shared kitchen you will have a small oven and microwave. The equiptment of the kitchen varies completely per floor. I made do with the pots and pans, and cutlery that exchange students before me left there. Have a look at what your kitchen has before going full-out at ikea or any other place and maybe coordinate with other floormates. It is about a 30minute walk into the city centre but there is a great bus connection which goes every 6minutes or so.

There are also other university accomodation options in a neighbourhood called Carouge. For accomodation in other student residences, so not completely private but neither via the university, you better start doing research and look at places and their deadlines before even getting the acceptation of UNIGE. When I looked at those places, most were either already full or the deadline for application had passed.

leisure & culture

Geneva is expensive. More expensive than you think. A normal beer in a studentbar can be around 8 CHF (8 euro). The supermarket is also more expensive than here in Utrecht. There is also an Aldi in Geneva, there is also a supermarket and drugstore in Annemasse (France), where you can get to with a direct tram. For nice places for eating out or getting coffee, I tried to go where the local students go. I can recommend a bar called 'Le Kraken' and the whole street on which that is situated. And also the 'Bar du cercle des Bains'. Locals recommended L'Usine aswell. Beware of the neighbourhood called Coulouvreniere Rois and the parc des Bastions at night. Honestly, Geneva is and feels like one of the safest cities I've ever been but those two places are not that nice to walk through alone.

For cultural activities there is a lot to do such as visiting the UN, the Red Cross Museum, the Oldtown etc. Watch out for these kinds of activities being organized by ESN and try to join those excursions. There will be a lot of excursions to nearby cities and even to Bern. My friends from further away (Australia, Canada etc) even planned some weekends away to London or Paris for example. So keep in mind that your group of friends might want to explore the whole continent and that for those weekends you can join ESN and stay more close to Geneva.

suggestions/tips

Open a bank account at the same bank where you do your rental security deposit and do this asap, it will take some time to receive the Swiss banking cards etc. Make sure you have your limit from your Dutch debitcard high enough that you're allowed to withdraw (in my case) 600 CHF cash on the same day for the rental security deposit. Don't use a credit card as the transaction costs will be extemely high!

Research some phone companies before departure and focus on prepaid alternatives. For a phone subscription they will most probably ask for a deposit which will be a struggle to get back after leaving Switzerland. Avoid using Salt. They are way too overpriced.

On Sundays every shop is closed in the city, even supermarkets!! Keep that in mind so you don't end up having to go to the trainstation for a sandwich.

Take enough passport pictures with you.

Look around at the fleamarket in Plainpalais for a second-hand bike. Maybe get the public transport card for the first month but really try to find a bike. The busline that stops at the cité, also stops at the city centre but to get

to the university building you would have to either walk for 10minutes or take a tram additionally. The last bus is quite early in the night.

Friends of mine got a train subscription, which gave them a percentage of discount. Sadly with COVID19 this was a fail but in other situations, that is also a possibility if you think you will be visiting a lot of places in Switzerland. The ESN student card (10CHF) gives you a discount for Flixbus, so book your trips after joining ESN. Try to join a sports class via the university or look at theatre or artistic workshops offered by the university. It is a way to speak and hear more French and to meet Swiss students also. Furthermore, it will be the cheapest option. I bought a bike on anibis.ch, the Swiss 'marktplaats'. Have a look around in the university building as lots of students sell things or offer French lessons in exchange for other languages.

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

Don't expect to go dancing multiple times a week as this will be a very expensive habit and all foreign students will be shocked by the prices of things so if you want to party through your exchange, Geneva is not the place for you. If you are more serious about your studies and want to be surrounded by other highly motivated students, if you want to attend symposia and conferences and enjoy a very very international environment, definitely look into going to Geneva for your study abroad. I definitely recommend Geneva and the Certificate of Transnational Law. I am considering going back for a summerschool course as my semester abroad has been cut short after a month.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

For the application process: really keep in mind all deadlines, especially for accommodation.
For the courses: form your own studygroups with other students, speak French with other students when studying for a French course. Exams might be oral (don't worry), so practising the language is a plus!
Keep up with your workload and don't try to push everything towards the end of the semester, the semester is longer than in Utrecht and 5 courses is a lot to work through last minute.
In general, try to mingle with Swiss students. They are super nice, helpful, motivated but not competitive and very interested in socializing with exchange students too.

2017-2018

preparation
exchange/placement application process
The exchange/placement application process with Geneva was very smooth. Additionally, they were quick and precise with responding to specific questions.
counselling/support at home university
The support from the Utrecht International Office was excellent.
academic preparation
The courses within the CTL in Geneva are not particularly easy but definitely doable for end bachelor students.
language preparation
Courses in Geneva can be followed in both French and English. I only followed English courses, which I had done before so language preparation was not necessary.
finances
Switzerland is very expensive, but doable with a maximal student loan and the study grant you receive from the Swiss government (in cash!), which is bigger than the regular Erasmus grant.
study/placement abroad period
study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)
<p>I followed the Certificate Transnational Law at Unige (University of Geneva), the English version of Certificat de Droit Transnational. This basically means that you only follow English courses and no French courses. These are master level courses in Switzerland. Choosing courses is a particular process, very different from the Dutch system. It is well explained so do make sure you understand the process.</p> <p>Within the CTL program you can also follow up to two courses at the Graduate Institute, which is a different university at the other side of town in the international quarter near for example the UN and WTO. I strongly recommend this. The courses here are somewhat more difficult but definitely better taught than the courses at Unige. However, availability here is limited. The process to get into a class is to show up at the first class of the course at the Graduate institute and see whether you can follow the course. Just go to a lot of courses and see which ones you like.</p>
academic quality of education/placement activities
The academic quality of the courses at Unige was alright. Classes were quite big and usually lecture style. However, the subjects of the courses are generally taught by experts in their field which makes the lectures

interesting. At Unige I enjoyed 'WTO law and practice' and I particularly enjoyed the course 'Climate change and international law' at the Graduate institute.

counselling/support at host institution/organisation

Support at Unige is very good: most prejudices about the Swiss are quite true. Be prepared to sign a lot of forms.

transfer of credits

Transfer of credits was not a problem.

student life

welcome/orientation programme

Good! Definitely go.

accommodation

Accommodation through the university is very limited. Make sure to register for the **two different** housing organisations of the university as soon as possible. Additionally, the university provides a list of independent housing organisations. I stayed at Foyer St. Justin, which was good value but somewhat an odd place. It has around 100 residents. There did not stay much students from the University of Geneva, but people ranging from interns, international professionals and students. It is a community style flat with small rooms and a large communal kitchen and living room. Would definitely recommend if you do not mind much about a different surrounding than the usual exchange student with Unige.

leisure/culture

Geneva is a beautiful city. I brought my race bike, cycling in the mountains surrounding Geneva was very beautiful. Running in the park in front of the UN at the lake is also a recommendation, if it snowed it is a winter wonderland. Pubs and cafés are generally very expensive, just as about everything in Switzerland. Student life therefore mainly exists in the private sphere, make sure to make some good friends to hang out with. There are also some good clubs and venues which are worth a visit at night if you're into that.

suggestions/tips

Get a bike. Geneva is quite a busy town with a lot of tram tracks which makes cycling a bit difficult in the beginning, but it definitely makes you very flexible and you get to know the town very fast. Eat cheese fondue.

conclusions

would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain

I would definitely recommend to study in Geneva if you are interested in international law. Unige is a good starting point but if you really want to be academically challenged make sure to also follow courses at the Graduate Institute.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Read Swiss Watching: Inside the Land of Milk and Money by Diccon Bewes.

2016-2017

preparation
exchange/placement application process
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counselling/support at home university
Support from home university was good, international office was always willing to answer questions the exchange and were very helpful in doing so.
academic preparation
When participating in the CTL-programme, be aware this are actual master courses and not quite comparable to courses at the University of Utrecht. However, in my experience, if you keep track of all the classes and assignments this will not cause any issues or problems. In the first weeks you can actually first attend classes before actually them definitely, this helps in choosing the subjects that interest you.
language preparation
Geneva is of course a French speaking town, but due to its international environment most of the people speak proper English (unlike regular francophones). Courses are most of the time in English, however if you want to challenge yourself there is of course the possibility to attend classes in French. As this are master courses in French do not underestimate the level of the language.
finances
Life in the city of Geneva is expensive. I would strongly suggest saving some money before moving to this wonderful city. A nice extra is of course the scholarship that you obtain from the Swiss State, however this is not enough.
study/placement abroad period
study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)
I really enjoyed the study programme. Geneva is somewhat the heart of international law and if this is something you're interested in, Geneva is the place to be. What's even more exciting when following some courses is the guest lectures from high delegates from big international organisations and visits to this organisations. You'll never get bored.
academic quality of education/placement activities
Very good professors and a very motivated environment due to the selected students in the CDT programme.
counselling/support at host institution/organisation

Very helpful.

transfer of credits

Not a problem at all, University of Geneva takes care of most of it.

student life

welcome/orientation programme

First weeks are quite hectic, there is an information session in the beginning and another sessions particularly for Law students, but other than that no welcome or orientation program.

accommodation

It very difficult for international students to find a place to live in Geneva. There are some organisations that will help you find a room. Try to get a spot in the Cité Universitaire. Rents are not high at all for Geneva standards and it's really nice to life with students from all over the world.

leisure/culture

Geneva is quite a 'calm' town, however it's close to many cities like Milan and Lyon which you can easily visit during the weekends. And of course when you're a ski fan, exciting ski resorts are just an hour away by car from the city.

suggestions/tips

Try to find for a location at an early stage and safe money.

conclusions

would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain

Yes, Geneva is such an inspiring place to study. Incomparable to Utrecht. I met some of the most ambitious students there and now back in Utrecht I really miss it.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

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2016-2017

preparation
exchange/placement application process
Hoewel het veel papierwerk was, die ook allemaal per post naar Zwitserland moest worden verstuurd, was het hele proces wel duidelijk. Je wist in alle gevallen wat je precies waar naartoe moest sturen.
counselling/support at home university
Hier heb ik zelf niet echt gebruik van hoeven maken, omdat het proces dus al zo duidelijk was. Volgens mij had ik als het nodig was geweest wel altijd bij het international office aan kunnen kloppen.
academic preparation
Voor het programma dat ik ging doen in Zwitserland had ik 120 ECTS in juridische vakken nodig. Ik heb me niet extra voorbereid.
language preparation
Omdat er in Zwitserland ook genoeg engelstalige vakken waren heb ik me niet echt zorgen gemaakt over mijn frans voor de vakken inhoudelijk. Wel was mijn frans verbeteren een van de redenen voor mij om naar Genève te gaan. Voorafgaand aan de uitwisseling heb ik aan de Université de Genève een zomercursus frans gedaan, die gericht was op mensen die daarna zouden gaan studeren.
finances
Ik heb gebruik gemaakt van mijn spaargeld, mijn stufi, de Zwitserse exchange beurs, de OV-vergoeding en evt. een bijdrage van mijn ouders.
study/placement abroad period
study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)
In Genève heb ik het Certificate in Transnational Law gevolgd. Dit is een programma dat openstaat voor uitwisselingsstudenten die in de laatste fase van de bachelor zitten (120ECTS gehaald). In het programma volg je 5 mastervakken, waarvan een verplicht is, en je de andere vier mag kiezen. Omdat Genève een internationale stad met veel internationale organisaties is, zijn veel van de vakken ook gericht op de rechtsgebieden van deze organisaties. Zo heb ik o.a. WTO-Law (wereldhandelsorganisatie), International arbitration, en international gezondheidsrecht gevolgd. De organisatie op de universiteit was goed, hoewel die vanuit Nederlandse ogen soms misschien wat ouderwets was. Zoals gezegd ging de aanmeldingsprocedure per post, maar ook boeken kopen gebeurde bij een servicebalie. Ook je beurs moest je bij een balie ophalen, in cash. Inschrijven voor de vakken ging wel digitaal.
Naast het rechtenprogramma biedt de universiteit ook twee gratis francursussen per week aan voor uitwisselingsstudenten. Dit is zeker de moeite waard!

academic quality of education/placement activities

De kwaliteit van de vakken vond ik over het algemeen erg goed. Grotendeels komt dit misschien ook omdat de vakken zoals gezegd op masterniveau waren. Wel verschilde de hoeveelheid stof nogal per vak. Hoewel alle vakken alleen hoorcolleges hadden, en dus geen werkgroepen zoals in Utrecht, moest je voor sommige vakken veel meer voorbereiden dan voor andere. De professoren waren voor alle vakken goed, ook didactisch. Het waren stuk voor stuk experts op hun vakgebied, vaak ook met veel praktijkervaring. De docente voor WTO Law zat bijvoorbeeld al twintig jaar in het rechtsprekende orgaan van de organisatie. Dit zorgde er op een of andere manier voor dat ze altijd de volledige zaal bij de les hield.

De eerste dag was er een welkomstdag, waar iedereen door de stad werd rondgeleid en nieuwe mensen leerde kennen. Ook werd er uitleg gegeven over hoe alles organisatorisch werkte. Dit was erg nuttig, en zorgde ervoor dat je niet in het diepe werd gegooid.

counselling/support at host institution/organisation

De begeleiding was erg goed. Zoals gezegd werd er op de welkomstdag duidelijk gemaakt waar je met vragen terecht kon komen. Ik heb dit zelf nauwelijks nodig gehad, maar werkelijk voor elk denkbaar probleem was er wel een informatiepunt of hulp beschikbaar, van psychologische hulp tot hulp bij het vinden van een baan, etc.

transfer of credits

Ging over het algemeen vrij makkelijk, behalve voor een vak. Voor dit vak (Introduction to Chinese Law) was er namelijk geen beschrijving beschikbaar over de concrete inhoud van het vak. Na wat heen- en weergemail met de professor heeft die mij uiteindelijk een beschrijving met handtekening gestuurd waardoor de credits omgezet konden worden.

student life

welcome/orientation programme

Het welkomstprogramma was meer gericht op de studie zelf. Wel leerde je er natuurlijk mensen kennen. Dagenlang feesten zoals in Utrecht was het niet.

accommodation

Ik zat in de Cité Universitaire, waar ik ook al tijdens mijn zomercursus frans zat. De cité is een groot complex waar je een kamer hebt met wasbak. De kamers waren klein, maar door handige kasten en een slimme indeling voelden ze toch best ruim. Een keer in de twee weken werd er schoongemaakt en kon je je beddengoed vervangen. Op de verdieping zijn er verder vier douches, twee wc's en één keuken, die je met 15 anderen op je etage deelt. Alles was wel schoon, maar de keuken was erg klein en donker. Er was dus niet echt een woonkamer of een andere gezamenlijke ruimte waardoor je je étagegenoten beter leert kennen. Wat dat betreft moest je echt zelf met mensen afspreken om samen te gaan eten, anders maakte iedereen gewoon zelf wat en at dat in zijn eigen kamer op.

leisure/culture

Gèneve is door de hoge prijzen niet echt een bestemming om naartoe te gaan om veel te feesten. Een biertje kost als snel rond de 6 euro. ESN organiseert elke week een pubnight waar veel uitwisselingsstudenten naartoe gaan. Verder zijn er wat straten met bars en zijn er een paar clubs. Musea zijn op bepaalde dagen gratis, en zo niet dan is er altijd wel een studentenkorting. Ook is het vanuit Genève om andere plekken in Zwitserland te bezoeken met de trein. Sport wordt door de universiteit aangeboden. Dit is meestal gratis, en voor sporten met veel materiaal vaak een klein bedrag. Zelf heb ik geroeid voor 50CHF per semester. Dit deed ik in Nederland al, en was meteen ook een leuke manier om wat meer Zwitserse studenten te ontmoeten. Daarnaast was het natuurlijk prachtig om elke week het meer van Genève op te gaan in een boot.

suggestions/tips

Ik zou het erg aanraden om de franscursus voor de exchange te doen. Behalve het feit dat je natuurlijk je talenkennis verbetert leer je ook de stad kennen in de zomer, wanneer het lekker warm is en er allerlei evenementen zijn. Zo is er twee weken lang het fête de Genève eind juli, een groot zomerfestival met allerlei optredens, is er gedurende de hele zomer een gratis buitenbioscoop in een park, en kun je de nationale feestdag van Zwitserland, 1 augustus vieren.

conclusions

would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain

Ik zou deze bestemming zeker aanraden, maar je moet wel goed je verwachtingen erop afstemmen. Als je een halfjaar wil feesten is Genève misschien niet helemaal de goede plek. Aan de andere kant is Genève ook geen Cambridge waar je een half jaar alleen maar aan de studie zit. Voor een leuke combinatie van goed onderwijs, culturele activiteiten en een of twee keer per week uitgaan zou ik Genève zeker aanbevelen!

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Neem van tevoren veel pasfoto's mee, die heb je voor heel wat administratieve formulieren nodig!