

# My student journey

*Silvia Popova*

from Second English Language  
School in Sofia to an ICT  
degree in the Netherlands



# Who am I?

If motivation, will to fight, actually having the ability to fight, friendliness and love for friends and family created a person, it would definitely be me. I am Silvia Popova - a girl from Sofia, with a big family, that trains martial arts, and dreams of succeeding in the IT world.

After graduating Second English Language School in Sofia with a humble 6.00, I started aiming at a higher point. Since I was little, my father always taught me to go for the hardest routes that no one takes, because even if I don't go all the way to the end, I will learn a lot more about myself and will achieve more. As they say: Easy choices - hard life, hard choices - easy life. That lesson is engraved in my decision-making and that is why I have turned out the way I am - a stubborn little girl with big dreams, hard kicks and a huge hunger for success and development.



Finally being able to close chapter 18 of my life feels surreal. Dreaming of studying abroad and actually booking my flight and saying my last goodbyes with friends and family are two different things. I personally can say that I will be leaving Bulgaria with a heart filled with incredible memories and valuable friendships, and a mind with useful knowledge to succeed. I am happy, i truly am!

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# Discovery

## 1. Wanting to study abroad

I started considering my higher education quite early on - being born in a family of perfectionists, it was inevitable. Going on several World education fairs in 8th grade sparked my will to study abroad. Having the ability to meet international competitors on my martial arts' tournaments helped me understand how incredible and hard-working people abroad are. The plan of where exactly I wanted to go changed several times until it became my new reality.

## 2. Where in Europe?

In the beginning, my choice was oriented mostly towards Denmark, which country's culture and lifestyle I adore, and partly towards Germany, where my father was born. That goal was quickly changed after the closure of English bachelour programmes in Denmark and the need of high-

knowledge of German for the best courses in Germany. I stumbled upon UNIFY one day and decided to give the Netherlands a chance. And from then it's history.

## 3. What programme?

I always knew I wanted to do something related to computers and mathematics, and after going through amazing sounding degrees, and trying to change my initial will, I ended up where I started from - the idea of studying ICT excelled all other options. I looked through different universities, offering that programme, but I fell in love with HZ University because of its welcoming environment and the fact that the students are their main priority. They do their best to offer the best education and comfort.



# Application

## 1. When?

The platform for application for a university in the Netherlands opens around 1st October. However I still didn't have the full package of documents as I was waiting for my English Certificate. Whenever I gathered everything required, I uploaded it on my UNIFY profile and within minutes my advisor sent my application and the short wait for the university's answer began.

## 2. What documents did I need?

One meeting with UNIFY was enough for me to understand all the requirements for my degree. A document with my marks from the last 4 years or so called "академична справка", had to be translated and legalised and sent to the university. I managed to get my one from the school concelour very early on - in July, as I later found out, all the students submitted their document to receive this academic reference

at the same time and they had to wait between 2 to 6 weeks to get it. I felt privileged to have obtained it the very next day of my documentation signing.

The next step, which was planned quite some time ago, was to take the English language test. Since I had attended courses in preparation for the Cambridge Certificate exam since I was little, this exam was my most obvious choice. I took the exam





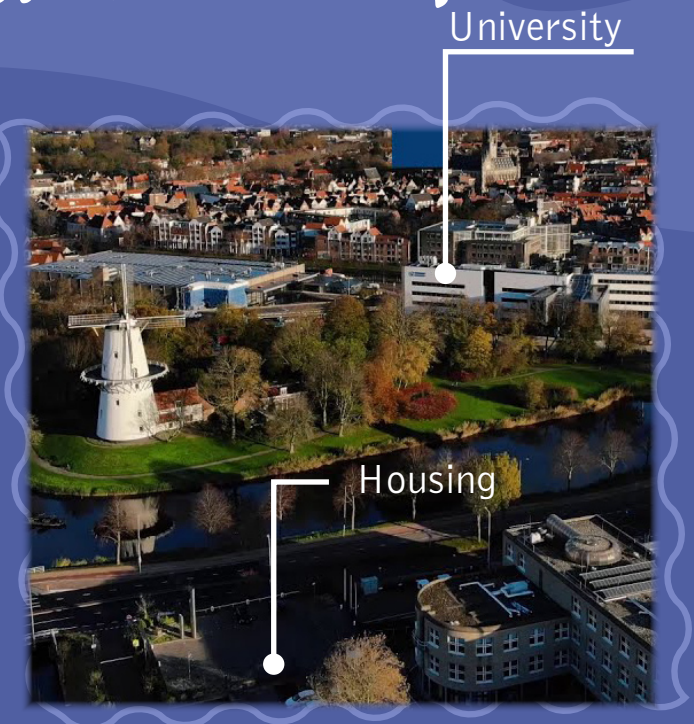
# What follows #1

## 1. Acceptance letter

Only a week after all those mentioned documents were sent to the university, I received an acceptance letter from HZ that confirmed my "unofficial" acceptance. I remember the exact moment I received the email with the letter as I had just arrived for my last kickbox conditional camp for the year. The feeling was unmatched.

## 2. Finding accommodation

I could say that I am quite lucky to say that I didn't have any trouble with my accommodation as HZ University of Applied Sciences offers a Housing for its first year students. The building is a short walking distance from the university building. I send an email in January to the Housing agency - APV Housing, who quickly answered all my questions. It was just a matter of time that I had send my deposit and booked a room (probably around



mid February). Two months afterwards I received an online contract, which I signed and officially had secured my room. As I picked a studio for 2 people, the agency gave me the contacts of the girl they have partnered me with, which turned out to be a very nice girl from Sofia, who was applying via UNIFY as well.

## 3. Paying tuition fee

The tuition fee changes every year but fortunately the first year it is lowered by 50% for us. Its payment is around mid June/July.

## 4. Getting to know people who study there

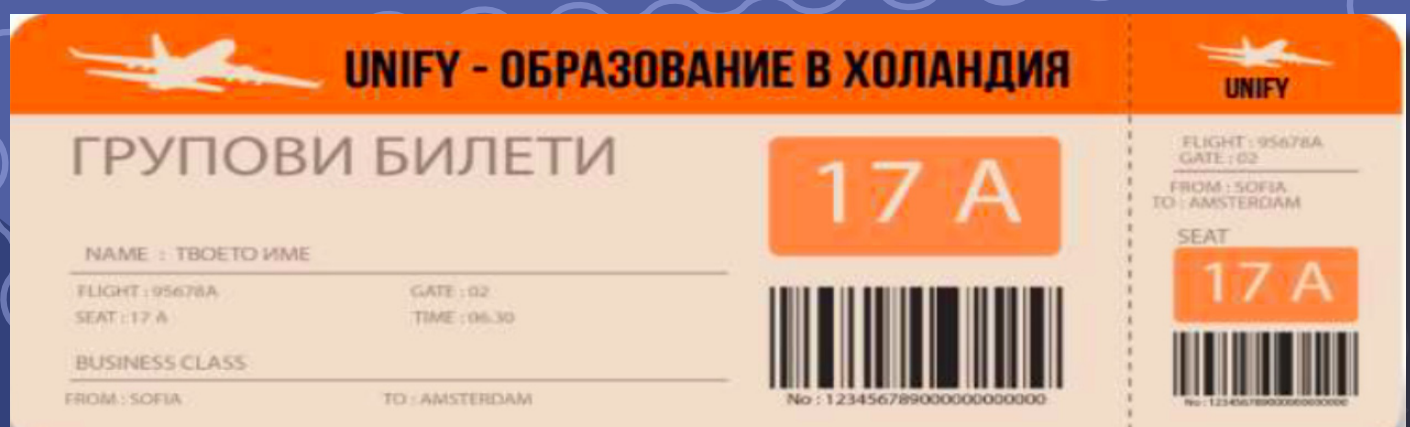
As I took part in the UNIFY Ambassadors programme I was able to meet incredible people during educational fairs who were following the same degree course in my university - we all clicked on immediately.

## 5. Departure

In the middle of April, UNIFY booked several flights with which students and their parents can travel together to the Netherlands. After filling some documents, I had purchased my one-way ticket. Maybe around that time was when I started to realise how real everything was and how quickly the time has passed.

The months of April and May were packed with exams. I

had decided, to take a second mandatory exam on advanced math. Although it was not required for my application, I wanted to test my capabilities. I also took the preliminary exams for Sofia and Technical University - mainly as preparation for the upcoming matura, but I also wanted to prove to myself that even if I had stayed in Bulgaria, I could have been accepted. At the time, my friends didn't know my intentions to study in the Netherlands, and they were amazed when they later found out what unnecessary stress I was putting myself through. However, I am proud of myself because I achieved high results in the matura and scored a 6.00 in the Sofia Uni exam - proving again that everything I do, I do it with my heart and achieve it with my knowledge and will.



# Evaluation & Assessment

## 1. Sadness

The journey to the Netherlands also includes a big goodbye with the ones closest to you. You know that the friendships you have built here, the memories and the people will always be in your heart and you can keep in touch with them. However by travelling abroad you definitely build a small border between your current life and the one you leave behind. It may be quite sad at first, a challenge that may seem impossible to solve, but with time you understand that distance is only an excuse. You can keep your friendship and even strengthen them - nothing can stop you from that. The best thing is that whenever you come home, you know that there will be people who are waiting for you.

## 2. Gratitude

Going through everything together with my parents and seeing how much they give from themselves so I can have a chance to prove myself

abroad only raises my respect and gratitude. The UNIFY team has also helped me shape my goal and has given me the opportunity to meet such incredible people and experience many things I would have never experienced. I am grateful for every one and everything they have done for me.

## 3. Excitement

Starting a new chapter in your life is a very exciting thing. You can't even comprehend how many things are waiting for you around the corner and the thought of what may come is a great feeling. I am excited to see what my future holds and even happier to follow my dream to the end.

