



Sobibor Foundation, April 2023

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Bernolf Kramer, secretary

Marijke Sterman-Vleeschdraager, treasurer

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Fergal van de Wouw

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## DEAR DONORS AND INTERESTED PARTIES,

In this annual report 2022, we can thankfully look back on a 'reasonably' ordinary year. 'Reasonably' because war broke out in Ukraine and this had and still has quite an impact on daily life in neighbouring Poland. This was the reason that the International Youth Conference did not take place.

This year was also characterised by a board change. It is always unfortunate when board members turn their attention to other activities, but it is also good when a board is reinforced by the arrival of new enthusiastic members.

It keeps you on your toes and we will introduce them to you in this annual report.

How proud we were of our first commemoration at the Vondelpark. The monument with the mirror and the text board is very appealing. Every time you walk past it, you stop to think about what happened in Sobibor and think about how we can make this discussible

in today's world. We are grateful that we have been given the responsibility to pay attention to this every year!

This year's commemoration of the Kindertransporten in Vught was also a special one with children from primary school de Schalm performing as the masters of ceremony. Everyone is always working on new forms of commemoration and involving young people.

Both the International Field Trip and the Commemoration Trip were full and intense. We presented the Rachel Borzykowski Medal during the Commemoration Trip at the museum in Sobibor to two Polish teachers on 14 October. A special event at a special place, a special date and special audience. It was also the day we could place the first stones from the memorial avenue in their new place.

Finally, at a slightly later date, we commemorated the Sobibor uprising together with the Resistance Museum. Talking to war children remains impressive to listen to.

We look back on a good year. As always, I would like to thank my fellow board members and other volunteers who worked for us.

With heartfelt greetings,

Christine Gispen-de Wied  
Chair

### Resetting memorial stones

As reported in the 2021 annual report, the memorial stones from the memorial avenue for over a year have been stored at the site. The memorial avenue had to make way for the construction of the wall depicting the Himmelfahrtstrasse; the last road the victims had to travel to the gas chambers.

Although the completion of the redevelopment of the site was still in full swing, we could symbolically replace a number of stones in their new place. We placed the stones on 14th October, the day of the commemoration of the uprising under great interest.

A moving moment.



### Preserving historical heritage

Following a tip about the possibility of purchasing the green Kommandanturshaus from

private ownership, the foundation, in collaboration with the Province of Gelderland and the District Administration in Wlodawa made a carefully oriented investigation. Unfortunately, that did not result in us being able to preserve the house in a responsible way to preserve it as historical heritage and negotiations have been halted for the time being.





### Rachel Borzykowski medal

On 14th October, at the museum in Sobibor the Rachel Borzykowski Medal was presented to Iwona Kryczka and Joanna Trzcionkowska. Both are teachers at a Polish secondary school in Lublin and every year they and their students spend a day with the participants of the Remembrance Journey. Their enthusiasm for bringing Sobibor to the attention of their pupils is particularly appealing. That this does not miss its impact was evident from the large number of pupils present at the ceremony. Rozette Kats spoke on behalf of former president Jetje Manheim.

### Sobibor tapes winner 'De Tegel'

The jury of the annual awards for journalism (De Tegel) awarded the prize for best background documentary to the Sobibor tapes by Piet de Blaauw and Jan Pieter Tuinstra. The jury called the documentary impressive and very poignant with a special stratification due to the three time periods it contains. A production that will last forever.

Watch the documentary [here](#)



# RESTRUCTURING SOBIBOR

## Restructuring

During our visit to camp Sobibor in September 2022, work was still underway to restructure the site.

Both the Himmelfahrtstrasse and the gas chambers are symbolised by knee-high grey walls of grey bricks. In addition, a high wall of grey stones was placed around the ash fields. This gave an oppressive feeling. The Sobibor Foundation considers it important that the ash fields remains a (partially) open place of remembrance.





## RESTRUCTURING SOBIBOR





# INTERVIEW PROJECT

In 2022, the Sobibor Foundation (board member Petra van den Boomgaard) together with students (Annika Hofman, Alexei Delanghe and Nikita Wolfs) from University College Utrecht continued with the interview project. Students from the college continued interviewing first-generation Holocaust survivors. The war story and the impact of the war on them was captured on film and made available to family and friends. The interviewees have sometimes told the story many times before in classrooms and some even on television. For others, it was the very first time. An exciting experience. This also applies to the students, the interviewers.

Annika, for instance, tells us that her first interview was also the interview that she attended for the first time. "There had been no viewing before, so to speak." She was "extremely nervous" but enormously motivated at the same time. The lady she was going to interview had never before told her whole war story. Nikita explained that the very first time, a lot had to be organised. There was so much stress because of the organisation that she had gone into it with a "naive enthusiasm". Beforehand and during the interview, everything went fine. Nikita knew that at certain moments she had to distance herself from the content. She was aware of it. But what she hadn't taken into account was the processing only began "as soon as the person we had interviewed walked out of the room". "The first time Annika had conducted an interview, we also all had quite an emotional moment and then we also developed a kind of battle cry "we cry afterwards". And chatting after, of course.

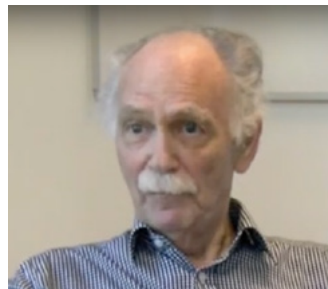
For Alexei, the nerves were mainly related to the responsibility. "For instance, you have to try to let people tell their own story, while at the same time you also want to get certain important details or insights from the story." Preparation is everything. And "after the first few interviews you get used to that process and become more confident in your own ability, but you always remain nervous."

Read the interviewers' experiences further on our [website](#) – in Dutch



Betty Radema-Metzelaar, deceased in 2022.  
She was the first interviewed survivor of the project (English subtitles)

## KIJK INTERVIEWS



Louk van Mourik



Hetty Day



Philip Frank

## Herdenkingen bijgewoond door bestuursleden

- 30 January National Holocaust Commemoration in Amsterdam  
Christine Gispén-de Wied
- 19 April Commemoration Liberation Camp Amersfoort  
Marijke Sterman-Vleeschdraager
- 4 May National Commemoration in Amsterdam  
Fergal van de Wouw
- 1 June Commemoration Sobibor at the monument with the sign "For Jews Prohibited" in the Vondelpark, Amsterdam  
The entire board
- 12 June Commemoration of Kindertransporten Vught  
Christine Gispén de Wied, Bernolf Kramer and daughter, Marijke Sterman-Vleeschdraager
- 14 October Attending commemoration of Sobibor uprising  
Christine Gispén-de Wied, Petra van den Boomgaard
- 9 November Commemoration Kristallnacht - Portugese Synagoge  
Menno Visser



## 1 JUNE COMMEMORATION

In 2022, the Sobibor Foundation's first commemoration took place at the monument 'Sobibor-what are you doing?'. The monument, a mirror the size of the sign 'For Jews Forbidden' that once hung there, is appealing. And so was our get together. Christine Gispén-de Wied, chairman of the Sobibor Foundation explained how the monument came about and who Jules Schelvis was, founder of our foundation. She pointed out how important it is today to keep looking in the



mirror; the world did not become more tolerant after the war and she illustrated this with the rise of the Apartheid, the negative attitude towards guest workers in our country and the worrying developments of establishing of LHTBI free zones in Poland, even in the area where Sobibor is located. Impressive was the reading of testimonies by Menno Visser, Hajo Kapitein and Joost Erkamp. Not only the testimony of a victim, but also that of a perpetrator and bystander were read.



# COMMEMORATIONS

This gave the commemorative an extra dimension that is thought-provoking. Moreover, it made you directly aware of what is at stake: 'what do you do when it comes to exclusion or discrimination?' Are you tolerant towards others? Special moments were shared by Kadija Arib and Coen van Dijk. Both brought their memories of Jules Schelvis into the limelight; both told how they were inspired by his perseverance in continuing to tell the story of Sobibor. A moment of silence was followed by the laying of stones at the monument. Marianne Schelvis, daughter of Jules Schelvis, had brought a beautiful stone with a fish on one side and a Star of David on the other. Followed by Niels van Deuren, initiator of the monument, she laid her stone first, after which everyone present followed her example. That moment of passing by the monument and laying stones characterised the intimacy of this special gathering. With thanks to the Amsterdam 4 & 5 May Committee and the municipality of Amsterdam, Zuid urban district, we are looking forward to the next commemoration on 1 June 2023.



## COMMEMORATION CHILDREN TRANSPORTS VUGHT

On Sunday 12 June 2022, the National Monument Camp Vught hosted the annual commemoration of the children's transports of June 1943, in cooperation with the Sobibor Foundation. It was 79 years ago that nearly 1300 Jewish children were put on transport to Sobibor extermination camp, where almost all of them were murdered immediately upon arrival. As always, this was commemorated

at the children's memorial. This memorial features the names of the deported children with their names and age.

Apart from the usual programme items, Vera Bergkamp, Speaker of the House of Commons, and Evelyn Askolovitch-Sulzbach (1938) gave a speech. Evelyn narrowly escaped child transports and survived the camps Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen. "I keep telling this because nobody should forget, and I tell it now here, in the same place where it happened, in Vught, because we all have to be careful that something like this can never happen again". The presentation this year was in the hands of pupils of group 7 of primary school De Schalm from Vught. Prior to the commemoration, pupils read out the names of Jewish children who were deported to Sobibor in 1943.



Bestuurslid Bernolf Kramer met dochter  
Foto Monique vd Brink



## SOBIBOR MEETING RESISTANCE MUSEUM: LOST WAR CHILDREN

A memorial meeting was held on 20 November to commemorate the 14 October 1943 uprising at the death camp Sobibor. This gathering is organised together with the Resistance Museum every year.

Journalist Thomas Sijsma spoke about his personal search for the child Harry Davids. Harry survived the war in hiding with the family of Berend and Jetje Bakker: Thomas' great-grandparents. Together with his uncle Harry, named after the war child, Thomas set out to find him. Thomas told about it during the event in the Resistance Museum and also about the contact with Harry Davids. On the basis of the beautiful book 'Lost War Child', Thomas explains the wartime history of both families.

After the introduction, Loek van Mourik and Philip Frank, two war children, told about the search for their murdered family, growing up in a foster family, the lack of a Jewish upbringing and the sense of purpose.





# INTERNATIONAL FIELD TRIP

## Introduction Day

In preparation for the International Field Trip, we met at the Goethe Institute on the Herengracht in Amsterdam. With thanks to former participant Mirko Marseille and volunteer at the stolpersteine foundation, we then had an appointment at the only stolpersteine atelier outside Germany. At the atelier Alexander Stukenberg explained his activities. For many, it was new to hear that a stolperstein is not only for Jewish victims, but for all victims of World War II. After lunch and the visit to the studio, we walked towards the National Holocaust Names Memorial and the monument 'Shadow Quay'. Along the way, we paused at some houses and places, related to the Second World War.



## COMMEMORATION TRIP

On the Thursday before departure, KLM cancelled our flight. We therefore went to Warsaw by train this year. As a result, we arrived in Warsaw late and had to skip the Polin Museum. Only after midnight we reached our hotel.

There were 16 of us, about half of them were teachers. The rest of the week had the same programme as in 2021. Three exceptions. Each day, we asked participants to share their top three experiences from the previous day. This produced great reflections, see next page. Secondly the teachers' evening looked different this year. Each teacher pitched a lesson component or lesson idea. It was striking how many different ways the Holocaust can be approached educationally.

Saturday was slightly different, as we only flew back later in the evening, therefore we had time to visit the Polin Museum.

### **Good cause: support our teachers' programme.**

For one thousand euros, the Sobibor Foundation can take a Dutch teacher on the eight-day International Field Trip. You can always support the teachers' programme by making a donation to your liking. Please indicate clearly that it is for the teachers' programme and it will be marked as such.

Idea: adopt a teacher! Are you celebrating an anniversary and asking your family and friends for money for a good cause? Our teachers' programme might be this cause.

## Reflections in the What's-App group

1. Chelm and the gratitude of Anita (Polish supervisor) which you included in the programme.
2. De "boeken"-suggesties (in de bus mocht elke deelnemer iets vertellen over een interessant boek over de Holocaust) aangeven waardevol voor verdere verrijking
3. Hoe de nazi's probeerden hun daden te verdoezelen, de waarheid is boven gekomen, ook in de vorm van materieel erfgoed."

1. Het feit dat Treblinka geen nationale status heeft oid, maar bijv een (primitief) lokaal museum heeft. Het lijkt alsof Joden geen Polen zijn en dus minder van belang.
2. De kennis [over het kamp] en het eigenbelang dat zovelen in en in een grote cirkel rondom het kamp hebben gehad. Wat zegt dit over de mens?
3. De rust en herfstgeur nu, in vergelijking met de hel die Treblinka in de oorlog was."





# COMMEMORATION TRIP

After two and a half years of waiting and three postponements, the Commemoration Trip could take place again from October 12-15.

The trip was accompanied by board members Petra van den Boomgaard and Christine Gispén-de Wied.

Lees een uitgebreid [blog](#) over de ervaringen van Iris Verhoeven – deelnemer aan de reis.



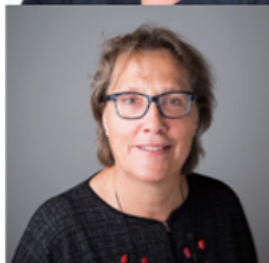
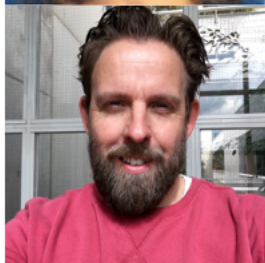


## The board of the Sobibor Foundation December 2022

- Christine Gispén-de Wied, chair
- Bernolf Kramer, secretary
- Marijke Sterman-Vleeschdraager, treasurer
- Petra van den Boomgaard
- Menno Visser
- Fergal van de Wouw
- Ingrid Zylstra

## New board members

After more than 3 years of serving on the board with great enthusiasm and energy, Matthijs van der Tang and Gerben Hoogterp ended their board membership during the spring. They were responsible for, among other things, setting up our teacher policy and promoting the objectives of the Sobibor Foundation in the North. Fortunately, we were able to welcome three new board members. Menno Visser, responsible for the International Field Trip and the teachers' programme, Fergal van de Wouw in the new position of board member Youth and Bernolf Kramer as secretary.



## Nieuwsbrief

7x een nieuwsbrief verstuurd naar 700 nieuwsbriefabonnees. **U kunt zich opgeven via onze [website](#)**

Facebook 1,500 followers

Twitter 1,500 followers

Website Average of 1,600 visitors per 30 days. Visits via desktop 54% - Mobile 43% Visits are mainly from the Netherlands, with the US in second place

## Bezoek aan Sobibor

The former camp site is still closed. The museum is open.

The official opening is expected 12 October 2023.

You can contact the museum in advance. You can do so by phone ( +48) 82 572 60 30) or by e-mail ([info@sobibor-memorial.eu](mailto:info@sobibor-memorial.eu)).

For up-to-date information, see the visitors' page on the museum's [website](#)



Museum Sobibór

IN 2022, 11,450 EUROS IN DONATIONS WERE RECEIVED FROM INDIVIDUAL DONORS.

## COMMEMORATION TRIP

Subsidies

**Monuta** 



*maror*



PROFOUND

Stichting Door Geven

## INTERNATIONAL FIELD TRIP

Subsidies





## DONATIONS

The Sobibor Foundation is a foundation that is led by volunteers. We can only organize our activities with the support of donations and grants. The foundation organizes activities such as trips, commemorations, conferences and publications. We are grateful for every donation, small or large. We welcome you as one of our supporters. When you are paying your income taxes in the Netherlands your gifts are tax deductible. For more information please contact us at [info@sobibor.org](mailto:info@sobibor.org). Any amount is welcome.:

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