

**Investigation into disappearance continues**

# **Body of missing Maria van der Zanden identified after 29 years**

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**The body of the missing Maria van der Zanden has been identified after 29 years. This is reported by the Peter R. de Vries Foundation. There is a match with a body found in Germany in 1994.**

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“At the end of March 2023, the German police reported to them in response to a request made by the cold case team: there is a possible match between Maria and an unknown dead woman from Germany. After a number of weeks of thorough investigation – which included comparing fingerprints – it has been established that the unknown dead woman from Germany is indeed Maria van der Zanden,” said the Foundation.

The body was found at the end of August 1994 in the Möhnesee reservoir in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. The lake is located about 50 kilometers east of Dortmund. The police assumed suicide at the time. “Despite the fact that the German police do not assume a crime, it cannot be ruled out. The cold case team will therefore continue to

investigate the events surrounding the disappearance,” the Foundation reports.

## **Father 'overwhelmed'**

Maria's father is "overwhelmed" by the news. “After almost thirty years, I finally know where my daughter is. There are still many questions that we will hopefully get answered in the near future. For now, we want to let this news sink in”, says Ab van der Zanden.

## **Bicycle tour**

It is a scorching hot day when, on Saturday, August 6, 1994, Maria gets on her sports bicycle at her parental home on the Burgemeester Roosmale Nepveulaan for a tour through the Veluwe woods. De Puttense wants to go out for a while because she will leave for Spain that Monday with an EO youth trip.

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She agrees with her parents that she will be home for dinner. But when it is six o'clock, their only daughter does not appear at the table. A few hours later there is still no sign of the always punctual Maria and father Van der Zanden decides to call the police.

## **Boarding places**

When Maria stays away that night too, the Gelderland police distributes a description of the young woman to colleagues in the country. On Monday, all boarding points for the EO trip are secretly checked, but that check yields nothing. A day later, the police announced the missing person through a search message on television.

Tips came in, witnesses were spoken to and people were heard. The investigation did not lead to the solution of Maria's disappearance, and the things she left with were not found either. Maria had a backpack with her wallet, bread and some personal items.

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Maria's parents are soon convinced that their daughter is no longer alive. The idea that Mary has been taken from them is unbearable, but faith gives them the strength to "give their child into the hands of God" shortly after the mysterious disappearance.

Urielle van der Smissen, Maria's best friend with whom she attended the Evangelische Hogeschool in Amersfoort, also draws comfort from faith. "I try to see it in such a way that God knew in advance how Mary's life was going to turn out. What plan He had with her," the girlfriend told De Telegraaf in 2014.

Urielle went to live in Belgium after her studies and had intensive contact with Maria until Maria's disappearance. The letters are the only tangible reminder of their deep friendship. "When I read through them, there is nothing to indicate that she would just walk away or that there was anything to worry about," she says. "Mary was very dutiful, wrote scriptures that expressed hope, and was open about things that happened in her life."

## **Reward not paid**

The reward of 250,000 euros that the Peter R. de Vries Foundation had offered will not be paid. The foundation reports on Wednesday that Maria was found thanks to police information and that the amount will therefore be used to solve other cold case cases.

source: [https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/867965131/lichaam-vermiste-maria-van-der-zanden-na-29-jaar-geidentificeerd?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=seeding-telegraaf&fbclid=IwAR2puhCBIuyHbrKqHwkGmg45vzQqpkQXkxwFJxwe49EQ\\_i6SdHAOzvydIE4](https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/867965131/lichaam-vermiste-maria-van-der-zanden-na-29-jaar-geidentificeerd?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=seeding-telegraaf&fbclid=IwAR2puhCBIuyHbrKqHwkGmg45vzQqpkQXkxwFJxwe49EQ_i6SdHAOzvydIE4)