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# A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY TEAM!

What does being a Soroptimist mean to you? How do you explain what Soroptimist International is? In the many years that I have been a member of this wonderful organization, I have heard members articulate their vision of being a Soroptimist in myriad different ways. We share a strong set of values: service to our communities, working in friendship, creating value for women and girls who happen to be less privileged than we are. Beyond this, each of us articulates her own vision of what it is to be a Soroptimist, slightly differently. In the firm belief that each of these visions can enrich us and our sense of what we can achieve together, we will invite members of our Federation's Board to tell us what

their vision of being a Soroptimist is. We hope that you will enjoy and be inspired by this series of articles in this and future editions of Programme & Advocacy News!

Renata Trottmann Probst, President Elect and head 'Programme & Advocacy'

# This month we talk about :VISION

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o you know that Soroptimist International is the largest women's service organisation worldwide? Is large good or bad? In

my opinion large doesn't really mean anything. It all comes down to the results. As a small group you can be very effective, BUT as a worldwide organisation we are a real force to reckon with.

Do you know that we have worldwide over 3,000 clubs in 134 countries, with about 75,000 members active in at least 4,000 projects per year!

We are not only advocacy and not only programme; we are both and that is our unique selling point. Let me give you an example: we raise money for a project to rescue young girls from

forced prostitution. We report the project and make the information available to our 16 representatives at the UN (in New York, Geneva, Paris, Nairobi, Rome, Vienna ) and also at the Council of Europe. They take up this information, draft statements and give these girls a voice to help end this child abuse.

My vision is that every woman would love to be a member of our interesting organisation. BUT to achieve this, we have to use our whole chain of activities - from fundraising, implementing projects, reporting our results and acting as an advocate - for our work at UN level.

Our statements are not just theoretical or scientific; they are built on facts. Our PFR database is a gold mine, and we know exactly what we are talking about. We are a global organisation, and our



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experience shows that many of today's challenges can only be solved with such a great worldwide network!

Please let's connect from the grassroots up to the UN level and vice versa. Let's use the whole chain to empower women and girls, create opportunities, facilitate education and access management positions. Let's be sisters to each other, be ONE in spirit and put our egos aside. Let's be a close sisterhood that stands strong together, supports each other and fights for a better place for every women and girl.

The motto of Madeleine Albright springs to my mind: "There is a special place in hell for women who don't support other women". So let's work together; we are 75,000 powerful women. What an incredible force! I am proud to be a member of our organisation. I am proud to be a Soroptimist.

Marlène van Benthem, Programme Director

## HOW ARE MARCH 8 & CSW RELATED? WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT FOR SOROPTIMISTS?



The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) attracts nearly 4000 NGO representatives each year. The priority theme of this year's CSW60 was **"Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development".** This

is a unique arena for leaders in gender equality and women's empowerment to influence the UN agenda and to make sure that the Beijing Platform for Action is integrated in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Close to 70 Soroptimists from the four SI Federations attended this year's CSW in New York from 14 – 24 March. We were all proud and excited to see SI representative to the UN in New York, Bette Levy co-chairing the proceedings on behalf of the NGO CSW Committee.

Ambassador Antonio de Aguiar Patriota from Brazil, Chair of this 60th CSW session, focused on the important role of civil society and its contributions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Data collection will be an important tool for statistics and we hope to capitalize on all the Program Focus Reports (PFRs) submitted by our clubs.

The NGO CSW NY Committee and UN Women invited non-governmental organizations to morning sessions to share progress on discussions of the text, and Soroptimists for sure made their voices heard in Conference Hall 1. The sessions were followed by Soroptimist briefings coordinated by our excellent SI Director of Advocacy, Pat Black Ash.

**President Elisabetta headed the European delegation to CSW**. She was also invited to meet with the Italian country mission to present Soroptimist's view. This was also the case for Soroptimists from Iceland, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Norway just to mention a few.

Finally I would like to underline the important and excellent work conducted by our UN representatives in New York, Bette Levy and Marie D'Amato-Rizzi. They spend long days helping to give women and girls a global voice at the UN by attending meetings and contributing to committees.



Sigrid Ag, Vice President Advocacy

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# HAVING AN IMPACT ON THE WOMEN'S GLOBAL AGENDA

Every year in March, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) holds its annual two week-session at the United Nations in New York bringing 6,000 together over representatives of 193 states. UN entities. and about 400

ECOSOC-accredited NGOs, such as Soroptimist International of Europe.

Soroptimist International, is a well-recognised contributor with four accreditations, SI as the umbrella organisation, SIE, SIGBI and recently SISWP. Amongst its rights – but also its obligations - NGOs like Soroptimist International engage in contributing to the global agenda, in our case in advancing the women's status, improving their lives, conditions and rights.

### **Fulfilling our Goals**



If every Soroptimist is closely related to the motto associated to our logo "A global Voice for Women", it is actually less known that it is the Goal # **2** of our strategic plan: Advocacy. It describes this other important Soroptimist role in more

detail: "SIE will be a global voice for women and girls and an advocate at all levels for their increased access to education and leadership positions".

Decades after decades, SIE Board members have taken this role very seriously engaging Unions and Single clubs across the Federation in raising the voice of women and girls at national and international level. In the 30s and 40s much of their energy was dedicated at influencing women's conditions and empowering them economically. Minutes of the SIE Board Meetings of the 60s show the intense fights that SIE Presidents made for equal rights, a few years later their engagement in Peace resolutions and advocating for the role of women as agent of change. The past couple of years, through major statements and speeches, SIE Presidents together with Programme and Advocacy Directors have managed to make the voice of the least privileged women in many major areas, such as combating violence or ensuring equal access to quality of education and life-long education for all. But let's remember: such advocacy activities can and must also take place at local and national

levels. To support change, every discrimination or inequality needs Advocacy!

Anne Simon, SIE Executive Director

### GOOD PRACTICES: FUNDRAISING!



We as Soroptimist are known as good fundraisers, and for sure there are a lot of clubs who have been successful very in raising money for their projects. Looking at what we have achieved proud. Do you know

that we as Soroptimists worldwide raise every year about 7 million dollars, of which half comes from SI Europe?

Not bad isn't it? The question is can we do better? Have you all asked for a contribution from another fund in order to match your fundraising, like the SIE Action Fund or any other fund of which I know there are many and some of them give 100% matching! Why not?

Do we know how many girls and women we have helped with our money? From our database I learn that there are about 1 million per year worldwide, of which about 700.000 are helped by SI Europe. Again a number to be proud of! And although this is excellent I would like to challenge you to raise even more money. I am sure we can double this! Let's try 25% more next year! BUT: not by asking money from your family and friends! Why should we not ask the crowd! Have you ever considered crowdfunding, such as www.onepercentclub.com?

The challenge is, that with crowdfunding you can hope to get money because you have a good project. The focus of your club is on the project and not on fundraising activities. This means that your clubmembers bring in different competencies than before and that you have to find a way to create the same energy in doing something together as before, because in that we empower each other and that is an important factor of being a club.

Interesting story you probably say, but where do I start, how can I do this?

My question to you all is: Who has experience in crowdfunding and want to share your approach with us? Please send me an email and I would love to discuss with you how we can make your experience available for the other PD's.

Looking forward to hear from you!

Marlène van Benthem, SIE Programme Director

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### **35,000 SOROPTIMISTS ARE ENGAGED IN PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY** For Soroptimists, the month of March is very particular! On the occasion of International Women's

particular! On the occasion of international women's Day, 8th march 2016, Soroptimists renew their pledge to combat any form of violence against women and girls, and to support women's and girls' education and empowerment. This year again, Soroptimists have been very active!

**Soroptimist International Club of Monaco** 

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, SI Monaco attended conferences organized by the Club of Menton on the theme of Women and Architecture presenting a speaker who was the first female architect in Monaco

The Club has also invested 300 euros in the site Babyloan, the first European secured loan site that allows users to lend to micro-entrepreneurs of their choice in fifteen countries. It helps them develop their own activity in order to support women and their projects by granting them a loan.



speakers, suggestions for curricula, lectures on scientific and technological subjects and giving girls hands-on experience. As agreed with the Ministry of EO, Soroptimists also addressed the issue of equal opportunities at these events.

### Soroptimist International Club of Costa del Sol

SI Club Costa del Sol in Spain performed on stage at the Las Lagunas Theatre in Mijas (Spain) on occasion of the International Women's Day 2016. They showed how Soroptimist International is working towards equality in every stage of a woman's life.



Please have a look at the video with the performance of Club Costa del Sol at the Laguna Theatre this past 8th of March 2016. Click <u>HERE</u>

### Soroptimist International Club of Lomé I

### Soroptimist International Union of Italy



Responding to an initiative of the Ministry of Universities and Research and the Ministry for Equal Opportunities, several clubs of SI Italy have participated in

special events in high schools over a three-week period to encourage girl students to study STEM subjects. These included talks by inspirational



To mark this important day, the Club of Lomé in Togo has initiated a local health action and more precisely

an information, awareness and breast cancer screening day. This action that sparked the enthusiasm of many partners was held in collaboration with several hospitals, clinics and associations enabling to conduct the operations on multiple sites and reach a greater number of women.

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# WANT TO MAKE EDUCATION A SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT?

A look at SIE's projects on education over the years shows that not many Unions and Single clubs have taken advantage of the resources that Mentoring can provide for programmes that invest in education. Mentoring is the most direct and palpable means of using Soroptimist skills, professional expertise, talents and

devotion in order to lead by example and empower women and young girls through education.

I had the privilege of talking with Katrien Wayenberg, a young entrepreneur who was a mentee, is now a Soroptimist and continues to be actively involved in mentoring projects. Katrien talked about the experience that changed her life in 2005. And here's a story about the impact of mentoring on a woman's life...



"At a moment of my life, when the next step in my professional development was at the core of my attention, I found the advertisement in а leading newspaper: it was an invitation to apply for the Mentoring Programme of S.I. Germany. And I applied. The mentoring

programme enabled me to discover my strengths and talents and enriched me with the reflections and feedback of trainers, of my mentor and of the other mentees. During the programme I had the opportunity to reflect on my thoughts and beliefs, to question my decisions and certainly to reconsider my position and strategy for the future. Looking back I can say that these 3 cornerstones turned the S.I. mentoring programme into a life-changing journey towards carefully chosen goals.

This programme was definitely a turning point for me! At the dining table of my mentor, Christine Cromwell-Ahrens, I developed my business idea and then ventured out into entrepreneurship. I now run 2 of my own businesses and appreciate entrepreneurship as the most encompassing profession I have ever had. And I owe the courage I needed to start and the confidence to continue to Soroptimist International!"

Katrien's straightforward words tell us **that mentoring means nurturing other women to transform, grow and reach their full potential**. Isn't that the actual **investment in education** that all Soroptimists would like to make?

Elena Savu, SIE Scholarship Committee Member & Responsible Mentoring programme

Katrien Wayenberg, SI Hannover2000-Germany

# **NEWS FROM OUR REPS!**



As the Council of Europe representative, I need you to help me with my task to lobby for women's rights. What I need are your Programme Focus Reports (PFRs). Before I became the representative to the Council of

Europe, I never understood why they are so important. Now I know. There might be other reasons, too, but for my work, the reports are simply essential.

First of all, people look up and won't forget the name 'Soroptimist' any more when I tell them that our members reported 4500 projects in 2014/2015 and raised € 12 million. But I also need the PFRs for other reasons: politicians at the Council of Europe need grassroots examples of good practice in civil society, and they need to know from civil society where the shoe pinches concerning human rights. A search in the PFR database has already helped me more than once. Above all, however, your numerous projects taken together, even if they seem only a drop in the bucket, are a strong message for women's rights. So, please, report. Your projects will not only serve those directly involved, but also our overall goal: women's rights and empowerment. Thank you for reporting !

Bettina Hahne, Representative CoE

### WOMEN WINNERS OF THE PEACE PRIZE



Did you know that up to now the Nobel Prize has been awarded to 822 men, 48 women and 26 organisations? Most women have been recognised for their

contributions to peace, we count 16 women winners of the Nobel Peace Prize, 14 for literature, 12 for physiology/medicine and two for physics. Our campaign to encourage girls to pursue careers in STEM disciplines is of great actuality given these numbers!

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Some of the winners are no longer alive: Bertha von Suttner (1905), Jane Addams (1931), Emily Greene Balch (1946), Mother Teresa (1979), Alva Myrdal (1982) and Wangari Maathai (2004).

Club Bruxelles Doyen had the opportunity to host Princess Esmeralda of Belgium, daughter of King Leopold III and his second wife, Lilian, as guest speaker. Herself a journalist, she decided to research and interview the women winners of the Nobel Peace Prize. Each and every one of them has an individual story to tell. Their courage to take life -threatening risks and the profound desire for change are common to them all.



**Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan**, co-founded "Women for Peace", an organisation dedicated to encouraging a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Northern Ireland. They were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 for their tireless efforts to create peaceful ties among the people badly affected by sectarian violence.

**Aung San Suu Kyi** was put under house arrest in Burma (now known as Myanmar) for many years by the military junta. She went on hunger strike to defend her cause against the dictatorship and won the Nobel Peace Prize for her fight for democracy in 1991. She has since been released and is now a Member of Parliament.

Interesting isn't it ? To read more on these inspiring women, please click <u>here</u>.

Renate Smith-Kubat, Representative of EWL





### OSCE EVENTS ON 8 MARCH 2016, THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

### <u>Vienna:</u>

1. Statement of OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier, who called on OSCE participating States to reaffirm their dedication and to increase their efforts toward gender equality and the equal participation of women in conflict prevention and peace processes.

Emphasis in the statement was given on the need to:

- ⇒ enhance the role of women in conflict resolution, crisis management and post conflict rehabilitation,
- $\Rightarrow$  combat violence against women in all its forms
- $\Rightarrow$  recognize the critical contribution of women to their societies.

2. Power breakfast invitation of the Gender Section at the occasion of IWD. The theme on the meeting was "Women's safety in public spaces" and featured the contributions of Lieutenant-Colonel Daniela Tunst, National Police, Austria and Major Michael Holzer, Ministry of Interior. This meeting was rather a briefing session and discussion forum on the range of measures taken in Austria to protect women in public places.

3.Interview with Ambassador Miroslava Beham, Head of OSCE gender section, Vienna:

The OSCE membership is unique in the field of security. Close co-operation with the Gender Section in Vienna is important, in order to learn about what is happening next, the agenda, where and how.

- ⇒ One forthcoming event to watch: Conference on the migration flows to Europe, envisaged for May, June – not yet specified further.
- ⇒ One other useful information: The newsletter of the Gender Section will be reactivated as an early information tool. SIE should be among the recipients.

### Warsaw:

In OSCE/ODIHR (Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights), the OSCE Chairperson's Special Representative for Gender Issues (Ambassador Melanne Verveer) and the Director of ODIHR Michael Georg Link reflected on the progress of women in the social, economic and political spheres, but also reminded the challenges women continue to confront.

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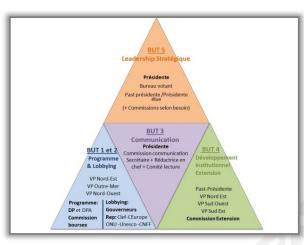


# COUNTRY FOCUS FRANCE

92 years old – a long life that has had to deal with difficult times in history as it **resists** 

and continues to pave the Soroptimist way. Times have changed and the Soroptimists of the Union of France have understood this.

Today there are 117 clubs + 2 being chartered + 3 being formed.



We have set up the SIE strategic model to be in tune with more contemporary ways of working requiring interaction and synergy between the various positions. A triangular and inter-club information "shuttle" system has allowed us to break down the partitions of a pyramid structure that did not reflect the true image of the Union Board, locking it in an ivory tower. Union projects have inspired work between the various positions, commissions and clubs, enabling us to make the most of each member's skills and fulfil our aim of being useful and taking pleasure in accomplishing а mission in a friendly atmosphere in order to flourish and be effective in our union and clubs.

### I, You, She, WE learn

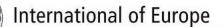
In an increasingly individualistic society, it is becoming difficult to recruit members and find candidates for the various positions, whether for the Union or our clubs. We have deployed a policy of community, listening and exchanging practices and training. Instead of a "door-todoor" system, VPs now organise interclub meetings bringing together 5 to 8 geographicallyclose clubs. This approach has turned out to be very instructive for everyone concerned, and inspiring for ailing clubs. In addition, region-wide meetings mean that we can organise training sessions in a chosen field, take stock and discuss matters between clubs and, by combining this with a Soroptimist event (e.g. club anniversary), it has become a successful model that brings together work, friendship and festivities. The two national meetings offer training in topical matters such as mediation, the role of the club President, appreciative inquiry, etc.



Training, March 2016 – The Joy of Being a Soroptimist. Though our daily and collective action, we will give every woman the freedom to choose her life and career, to discover her vocation and to flourish...

### I, You, She, WE take action

Although smaller than those of some other countries, the work we have accomplished shows that these medium-sized clubs have been very active. For several years, work has focused on Education. This year, our clubs and Union have awarded almost €100,000 in scholarships.



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Our programme has expanded from the first link in the educational chain - **literacy/beating illiteracy** – to the final link before entering or returning to professional life – **setting up a mentoring system.** 

The mentoring system that began in autumn 2014 made significant progress in the first year. A specific theme has emerged from the desire for this 2-year period to **forge partnerships with other Unions** in order to be stronger and more visible – a mentoring platform between the French and Swiss Unions is being finalised. And the idea is spreading; our Reunion club and the club being set up there are working on a similar project with Madagascar.

**Pooling resources, means and skills and making the most of the professional women** we are through mentoring, contribute to creating a dynamic image of our movement.

Creating prizes for "Best Project for a Better World" and "Women & Technology" have been catalysts for the clubs, rewarding their work and paying tribute to them. The "nuggets" discovered by the VP and PD/APD teams show that all the clubs are putting their heart and soul into representing Soroptimists in their area.



8<sup>th</sup> March 2016 - the 1<sup>st</sup> "Women & Technology" Soroptimist prize

### I, You, She, WE communicate

It has become easier to communicate and share our expertise using the many tools created and made available to clubs, such as the Soroptimist leaflet and brochure, newsletter, PowerPoint, diverse approaches kit, updated review, dynamic website and Facebook page, mentoring platform underway, etc. Communicating, sharing and working with various partners (e.g. universities, companies, foundations, etc.) as well as the other Unions on joint projects gives meaning to and highlights our international dimension. Thanks to different European and international meetings, several new partnerships were forged in 2015:

- With SI Dubai: political science scholarship for a student from Bangladesh,
- With SI Netherlands: "Syria Back to School", receiving our friends for the COP 21 conference in Paris,
- With SI Switzerland: mentoring project, joint project to build an educational centre in Nepal,
- Spanish clubs: twinning.

### I, You, She, WE make progress

Working with the clubs on recruitment and strengthening existing teams have allowed us to shore up our numbers. A wide range of tools helps them communicate with one voice, make our organization better known and **make people want to join**. The goal is to breathe new life into the clubs by introducing new members and preparing future leaders in a conscious desire for an intergenerational organisation.

Well aware of all that remains to be done, stabilising our numbers is still an issue given the average age of our members. We are delighted to be creating 2 new clubs this year, which is encouraging us to persevere with the new initiatives.



Françoise Lathuille, President SI Union of France

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# **GENERAL NEWS**

# SIE PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY TRAINING SEMINAR LISBON 2016

Programme is our raison d'etre, and this is why it is important that we invest in the knowledge and skills of the Soroptimists who are responsible for this work.

At this year's Programme Director (PD) training from 20th-22nd May in Lisbon we hope to set the next step in creating a European Programme Team! Many questions were raised last year on the function of the Programme Director (PD) on Union and Club boards and on the PFR system, so both these issues will be prioritised on the agenda. We hope to meet many PDs this year, because we have a lot to discuss. One special topic is your cooperation on a special Federation project. We are very enthusiastic about our idea, but would like to get your opinion. I won't reveal any more yet, so please come to Lisbon!



We also want to focus on the advocacy process in the whole chain of realising a project, how to have our voice better heard at the UN and the Council of Europe, and how to use social media to create awareness.

Please send us details of your best project to use as an example by sending us an email with your PFR number. We will get back to you if we have questions on your project.

Most important is that we get together to exchange experiences and to inspire and consult each another on questions related to projects or any aspects of programme and advocacy.

# Please confirm your attendance by 5th April to programme@soroptimisteurope.org

We look forward to seeing you (again) in Lisbon!

Renata, Sigrid, Marlène, Caroline, Anne and Bintou



# THROUGH THE EYES OF SOROPTIMISTS Photo competition 2016

Soroptimist International of Europe is organizing its third

Photo Competition newly entitled *Through the Eyes of Soroptimists* and all members of Soroptimist International of Europe are invited to participate!

The SIE 2015 -2017 biennium theme "Soroptimists invest in Education" has guided those of the competition which are:

- Promoting education in the fields of STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) for women and girls,
- Promoting empowerment of women and girls

The conditions for participation and the entry form are downloadable in the members' area of the SIE public website www.soroptimisteurope.org.



The deadline to submit your photos is just around the corner! 15<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

The 2016 Jury is composed of the three winners of

the 2015 competition, Ismet Arikanturk (SI Turkey), Helena Sandman (SI Finland), Maria Fitcal (SI Romania) and of Christine Cromwell-Ahrens, SIE Communications Officer and Bintou Koïta, SIE Programme & Lobbying Assistant. The Chair of the Jury is Caroline Junier, SIE Assistant Programme Director, all together they will be happy to study each photo submitted and then select the winners.

The winners of the competition will be announced at the **Governors' Meeting taking place in Sofia**, **Bulgaria between July 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and a selection of photos will be displayed there**. The winners and the photos will receive recognition on **the SIE website**, in the Programme & Advocacy News, and in *The Link*.

The artistic sensibilities and the creativity of the Soroptimists will part of the competition this year again. So...we look forward to discover you work by **15th April**! Image courtesy of AHF and Conor Ashleigh

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# **GENERAL NEWS**

### EDUCATE TO LEAD: NEPAL



On December 10, the SI President appealed to the generosity of Soroptimists to support women and girls in Nepal following the earthquakes of 2015. Aligned with theme SI

Education and Leadership, it will continue until 2017.

News from Nepal indicate that the living conditions are still difficult. Foodstuffs and essential supplies are blocked at the border, such as fuel and building materials, preventing transport and work on damaged buildings. The emergency assistance does not reach all the remote areas. Women and girls are at risk.

Thanks to the first donations received through the President's Appeal, three projects have been initiated and are in good completion phase. All of them provide access to education and offer livelihood opportunities to 200 Nepalese women and girls. Thank you very much for your contribution. For more information on these three projects www.soroptimistinternational.org (appeal).

But this is only the beginning! Many other projects have been considered by the committee in charge of this SI Appeal. They are waiting for your donations to be activated, thus enabling many Nepalese women and girls to access to vocational trainings and become agents of reconstruction and change in their country.

Our European Federation brings together 34,000 members and through donations we can make a difference in Nepal.

Thank you for your support.

For donations see <u>www.soroptimisteurope.org</u> (December 10th, SI President's Appeal 2015 - 2017)

Caroline Junier , Assistant Programme Director & Committee Member Education & Leadership : Nepal

### **INTERVIEW WITH ARTE**



Congratulations to Esra Çaglar of Soroptimist International Union of Turkey for her excellent work of representation of our organisation for the **ARTE Yourope TV** series on private organisations in Europe!

You can see the German and French versions of her interview via the following links:

- For the German version click on the third clip under "Unsere Beiträge": <u>access to video</u>
- For the French version click on the third clip under "Nos reportages": <u>access to video</u>

This is great advertising for Soroptimist and we encourage you to relay the brilliant contribution of Esra to promote our organisation!

### **IMPORTANT DATES**

- April 7 World Health Day
- April 22 International Mother Earth Day
- April 25 World Malaria Day

### **HAVE COMMENTS?**

This is YOUR newsletter! If you have a comment, document, link, or anything else that you would like us to communicate in an upcoming edition of the newsletter, please share it with us! Feel free to send your news to:

programme@soroptimisteurope.org

### CONTRIBUTORS

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