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A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY TEAM!



As we greet you for the first time within this new biennium 2015-2017 and on behalf of the entire Programme & Advocacy Team, I would like to congratulate and thank our predecessors for their guidance throughout the transformation of SIE Programme strategies. As the new head of the Programme & Advocacy Team I have inherited of an excited position with a new team made up of dedicated and enthusiastic professionals women committed to follow the thematic of President Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis "Soroptimists Invest in Education" - a theme that will be detailed and explained as you read this newsletter.

You will also noticed that as agreed by the SIE Board 2015-2017 during its first meeting last September in Frankfurt (Germany), it has been decided to merge the Programme News and the Advocacy News in order to end up with a one and unique newsletter for better clarity - a perfect symbiosis to speak with one voice.

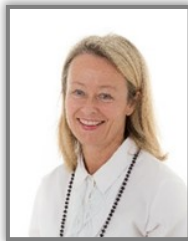
I hope you will enjoy reading this freshly new edition of your Newsletter, the result of a collective effort as I am convinced that with teamwork, we can make "a difference" on a small and large scale.

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

SOROPTIMISTS INVEST IN EDUCATION!

AN INTRODUCTION TO YOUR PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY TEAM!

Sigrid AG - 1st Vice President Advocacy
SI Harstad, Norway



Sigrid Ag holds a bachelor's degree in linguistics and economics and a master's degree in strategy and leadership.

Her current employer is the world's northern most university - UiT, the Arctic University of Norway where she heads the international office. She has served as a national expert on the harmonization of European higher education for nine years. She has also worked for the European Commission in Luxembourg. Sigrid has served SI Norway as its 1st Vice President and then Union President. She is also a board member of the largest umbrella organization for women's organizations in Norway, Forum for Women and Development representing 650 000 members. The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research has recently appointed her as a deputy member on the board of the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education, SIU from 2015-2019.

As SIE's VP for Advocacy, Sigrid's role will be to develop the Federations' lobbying activities with various institutions such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and EWL. Liaising with Unions and SC, she shall determine the most critical issues / problems that are affecting women in their respective communities - and by reporting the most alarming ones to the UN - will ensure that Clubs truly act as Global Voices for Women.

Marlène van Benthem, Programme Director
SI Scheveningen, Netherlands



Marlène van Benthem is a senior advisor at the Netherlands Space Office.

Amongst her position, she has been representing the Netherlands at the European Commission for 10 years on the European Earth observation programme Copernicus. Her background in economics, also led her to work for the ministry of Economic Affairs, and Water management & Infrastructure as policy advisor and Head of department.

Marlène has been the initiator of many innovation processes with special attention for user demand research & development, monitoring and evaluation and communication. She is an inspirational and a popular speaker at conferences. She started with two Soroptimist friends the CERES foundation, stimulating awareness on the role of women in the process to create food security, connecting women as consumers to women producers.

Marlène is a Soroptimist since 2002, member of club Scheveningen in The Netherlands and from 2012 till 2015 Programme Director in the board of the Dutch Union.

Amongst her strategic priorities, Marlène intends to further the knowledge development and sharing of Unions and Clubs, such as projects and PFRs, and to inject a new dynamism and energy through actions and cooperation. Communications and trainings shall be at the heart of the programme's plan.



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**Caroline Junier, Assistant Programme Director
SI Neuchâtel, Switzerland**



Caroline Junier was a curator, member of the steering committee and museum director of the Museum of Art and History in Neuchâtel, an institution maintaining collections of international interest. She has run numerous projects, exhibitions and publication at national level.

She studied at the University of Geneva, where she graduated in History of Arts (Bachelor). She later studied Leadership and Management. In addition to her activity in the fields of museums, she taught Museum studies in an Art School and at the University of Neuchâtel, until 2014. Caroline is now a Board member of different foundations, and actively participates in museum projects.

As Assistant Programme Director, Caroline supports Unions and Clubs to develop and promote programmes and projects. Amongst other specific tasks, Caroline shall be responsible for the development of programme activities such as the Best Practices, Photo Competition, the SIE contribution to the SI President Appeal, and a couple of other new projects that shall be announced shortly. Stay tuned!



EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



'Promoting Education is a crucial investment to empower women and girls, fight gender-based inequalities, eradicate poverty, eliminate violence, and more generally, to improve the lives of women and girls', stressed President Elisabetta.

The Board of Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) held its first meeting in Frankfurt on 26-27 September 2015. On this occasion, the board members

approved unanimously the thematic direction and plan of their new SIE President Maria Elisabetta de Francis "Education and Women's Economic Empowerment" for her biennium starting October 1st 2015.



During her presentation, the President observed that while the status of women is indeed much higher than in 1921, the founding year of Soroptimist International, numerous challenges still have to be dealt with to improve the lives of women and girls and to remove inequalities between women and men. She also underscored the importance of the newly adopted Fourth and Fifth United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): Quality Education and Gender Equality.

Vice President Advocacy Sigrid Ag and Programme Director Marlène van Benthem are currently finalizing the Programme & Advocacy Business Plans. More to read from them in the November issue!

As part of her programme "Soroptimists Invest in Education", President Elisabetta has defined three areas of focus:

Let's explore and describe these areas of focus in details!





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Soroptimists Invest in Education

The strategic objective is to enable women to achieve equality and freedom from social, economic and cultural constraints by promoting education. Our aim is **to empower women and girls to realise their dreams and potential.** *Education*—enabling women and children to pursue lifelong learning. *Education* - as a mean to empower women. *Education* - as a tool to eradicate and prevent Violence against Women.

ERADICATION OF GENDER BASED ILLITERACY

Education: The concept of literacy goes well beyond simply knowing how to read.

Literacy is something much broader:

- ...**Literacy** enables women to pursue knowledge
- ...**Literacy** enables women to be independent
- ...**Literacy** teaches women their rights
- ...**Literacy** helps women to cope with the changes in their societies
- ...**Literacy** is showing women the benefits of education for their children
- ...**Literacy** enables to think critically...

How can Soroptimists Invest



'Adopt' a school

To improve quality education, help access to secondary and tertiary education and support lifelong training

- build schools or classrooms
- rehabilitation of schools / furniture
- set up a library for a school
- improve the supply and quality of textbooks
- provide girls scholarships for secondary schools
- mentoring young adults
- support computer courses

- vocational training
- train teachers
- etc

EDUCATE WOMEN AND GIRLS TO BE LEADERS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES AND PROFESSIONS



Women empowerment:

- ...**Empowered women** fulfil their potential to become leaders
- ...**Empowered women** access tertiary quality education and professional training
- ...**Empowered women** access economic power and obtain gender equality in professions
- ...**Empowered women** attain sustainable employment opportunities
- ...**Empowered women** can develop in sciences and technology professions (STEM)
- ...**Empowered women** access vocational training to reach out to employment
- ...**Empowered women** get out of gendered division / stereotypes
- ...**Empowered women** to be enrolled in non-discriminatory (migration, ethnic minorities, disabled, etc.) education and training

How can Soroptimists Invest



'Adopt' a woman community centre

Through education, improve access to economic empowerment and sustainable opportunities for the employment of women

- clubs to open their network for the professional reintegration of women
- help girls who dropped out of school
- mentoring: Share / exchange of skills and knowledge and professional guidance
- scholarships for women to pursue professional development to support career advancement
- etc

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Soroptimists **Invest** in Education

'Adopt' a migration centre

Through education, help women integrate rapidly the host country's society and the economy

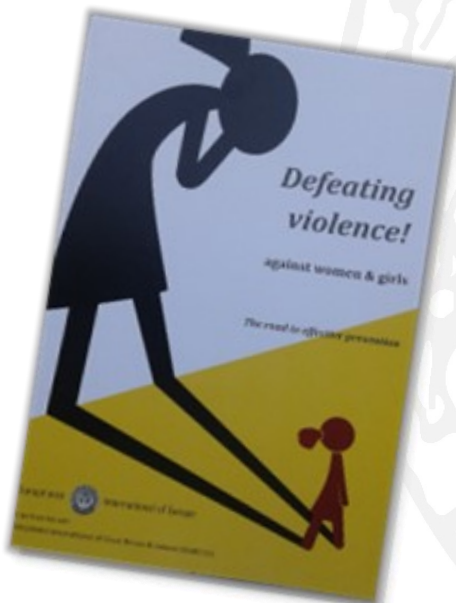
- teach women the language of the host country
- help women understand their 'new' rights and obligations
- teach women the local habits and customs
- guide women in the maze of employment
- give women scholarships and vocational training
- etc.

EDUCATION AS A MEAN AND TOOL TO DEFEAT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against Women:

- ...**Education** as awareness raising
- ...**Education** prevents trafficking
- ...**Education** to helps rebuild confidence of victims
- ...**Educate** women to raise their voice
- ...**Educate** women to take their space in conflict resolutions
- ...**Educate** women to refuse FGM and child marriage for their girl child
- ...**Educate** women to fight stereotype generating violence

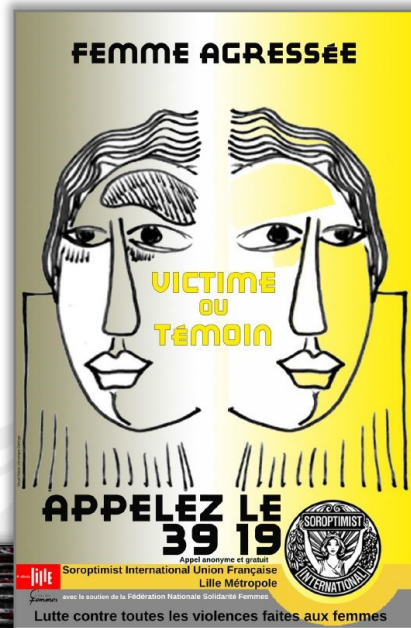
How can Soroptimists Invest



'Adopt' a shelter

Offer head of shelters your competences in specific fields

- build a library
- help women understand their rights
- help women to build back their lives and regain confidence
- assist to get women back to work
- provide legal counselling for women who have been victims of violence
- Etc



The **25 members of the Board 2015-2017** will facilitate the implementation of this programme and assist the 34,000 members of Soroptimist International of Europe in developing Education projects at local and national levels.

'We will have to adjust the Soroptimist mission and organisation to better meet the current and future needs of women and girls and support them in overcoming societal changes', said President Elisabetta.

[Examples of projects on the theme Education](#) downloadable in PDF



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16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



November 25th is approaching and marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the

start of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. The 16 Days of Activism end on December 10th, International Human Rights Day.

What is the 16 Days Campaign?

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign



originating in 1991 from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute and

coordinated by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership. Since then, **over 5,100 groups in 187 countries have taken part in the campaign!** Their activities take the form of art competitions, exhibitions, memorials, film screenings, postcard and poster campaigns, information stands, and media campaigns.

The 16 Days Campaign provides us all with the **opportunity to break the silence around domestic violence.** By organising events in our local communities that highlight the issue of domestic violence, we make the issue visible, we give hope to women who are suffering, and we hold perpetrators of abuse to account.

Why those dates?

Taking place between the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Human Rights Day, the campaign highlights **the link between violence against women and human rights.** Today, women and girls are subjected to many forms of human rights violations solely on the basis of their gender.

What are the aims of the Campaign?

The 16 Days Campaign is an **opportunity for individuals and groups around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women by:**

- ◆ Increasing women's safety
- ◆ Highlighting the nature and prevalence of violence against women
- ◆ Raising awareness of violence against women as a human rights issue
- ◆ Establishing a clear link between local and international work to end violence against women
- ◆ Showing solidarity among women around the world
- ◆ Promoting women's leadership
- ◆ Lobbying governments
- ◆ Strengthening local work to tackle violence against women

Soroptimists across our Federation are engaged in the fight against gender-based violence. The 16 Days of Activism are an ideal opportunity to raise awareness in our Clubs, communities and countries.

So, what will you do to get involved in the 16 Days of Activism?

Renate Smith-Kubat, SIE Rep to the EWL



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35,000 SOROPTIMISTS ARE ACTIVELY INVESTING IN EDUCATION

Some highlights of recent projects conducted by Soroptimists within our Federation!

Soroptimist Leadership Academy

Soroptimists from the Club of Struga in the (FYROM), together with the Union of Turkey, decided to create an educational environment which will help awaken a



sense of possibility in young women. They wanted young women to feel empowered to take care of themselves and to help others.

USCH.I - Unsere Schulinitiative (school initiative)

To do so, they set up the **Soroptimist Leadership Academy for Young Women**, a ten-day event that through a series of workshops, presentations, and activities sought to show participants – young women from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds – what it means to be a leader and to serve a community, how to behave like a leader, and



to understand the impact this can have on their future."USCH.I", is a school project helping single mothers receiving state benefits to obtain a middle school degree. Young women with no or low educational background are being taught in small courses, catering for their particular needs, while educated staff is looking after their toddlers. The young mothers are being

prepared to graduate from ordinary state-maintained schools in Kiel in order to help them find their place in society.

The Soroptimists members from SI Kiel Baltica in Germany have actively contributed to this long lasting project and have offered their knowledge and expertise to these women to:

- offer professional application courses in a vocational school

- teach how to optimally present their applications

Some 80% of the women aged between 25 to 30 years old, finished last year's courses with a basic middle school degree (Hauptschulabschluss).

Support illiterate women



Soroptimists from SI Gaziosmanpasa / Ankara in Turkey have made an evaluation of the literacy level in their country and found that there are currently about four million adults in Turkey who are illiterate and that about two-thirds of that number are women.

Because of this alarming observation, the Soroptimists participated in an action to support illiterate women teaching them how to read and help them to take their place in the society. The programme is conducted by volunteer instructors who provide course training as well as supervision and consultancy services. The programme consists of three-hour classes that are held three times a week and lasts four months.

Benefit of educating young women



Millions of young girls around the world are deprived of education. An educated girl is less vulnerable to violence, less inclined to marry and have children when she is herself still a child and is more likely to acquire knowledge and for a better adulthood.

Some international reports have shown also that education protects girls from HIV, sexual harassment and human trafficking.

The Soroptimists from Craiova, Romania set up to parents and their children an awareness project, to advocate for the education of girls. They presented several cases of girls who have left school and came to be trafficked, abused etc. Their objective is to strive to make people understand that educating young girls in our community is a benefit in the long term. The message was understood and triggered lot of discussions with women fully committed to spread the words in their communities.



NEWS FROM OUR REPS!

CONTACT WITH THE HEAD OF

EQUALITY DIVISION AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE MRS LIRI KOPAČI - DI MICHELE



On Thursday, July 16, I had an appointment with **Mrs. Kopači at the Council of Europe.**

We had met at the SI Istanbul Convention, where she had participated in a round table on advocating for gender equality.

Thanks to Anne Simon we had had the occasion to talk to each other.

Mrs Kopači said that she had never heard of Soroptimists, but that she **was genuinely enthralled by the enthusiasm of the participants and organizers of the Convention.** She could not believe that the members had paid themselves for their participation. She was very pleased that all the leaflets she had brought to Istanbul were taken. I got the impression that our congress motivated her for her job as she saw that what she works for is highly appreciated by our NGO.



She had taken her current position in 2011 when the Istanbul Convention had been ready for ratification. **Thanks to her lobbying, it came into force only three years later. This is close to a miracle as it has 80 articles contrary to other conventions like the Lanzarote Convention or the Convention against trafficking of human beings which only have 16 or 18.** The more articles there are, the more controversy there might be and the more new legislation and implementation of measures by the member states may be needed ensuing a long delay between the elaboration of a Convention and its coming into force. In addition, the Istanbul Convention has very high standards which were not easy to convey to some countries.

Her Division has published a **quite comprehensive analytical study on the legal and practical state of protection of women in the CoE member states.**

("Analytical study of the results of the 4th round of monitoring the implementation of Recommendation Rec (2002)5 on the protection of women against violence in Council of Europe member states")

At present, she elaborates on the different articles of the Istanbul Convention, e.g. there is a brochure on article 12 "preventing violence against women" describing approaches to this topic. Another brochure gives examples for article 13 "raising awareness of violence against women". Both brochures could inspire Soroptimist actions.

Another one of her studies compares the Istanbul Convention with the CEDAW.

She deplores the fact that the term "gender" does not exist in many languages and that even the concept of its meaning cannot be grasped by quite a few people.

One of her other topics is the **access of women to justice.** Few women go to court to fight for their rights. She will make a survey on the reasons. However, the number of female judges has risen considerably in the last years. She thinks that the reason is rather a question of pay: good male lawyers tend to seek a well-paid job in a company leaving the positions as judges for women.

What Soroptimists can do? :

- When GREVIO (the monitoring committee of the Istanbul Convention) detects violations of the articles of the Istanbul Convention, we should immediately write to the government why they did not fully implement those articles.
- We can make shadow reports, i.e. present facts of non-conformity with the Istanbul Convention in a clear and well-documented way.
- Talk of the Istanbul Convention, make it known, create a link to it on our websites: http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/convention-violence/default_en.asp. We can ask her office for CoE brochures.

Bettina Hahne, SIE Representative CoE

Read more about the work of our Reps!

[Report about the summer session of the conference of INGOs.](#)

[Last minute... The Netherlands ratified the Istanbul Convention](#)

[News about the Istanbul Convention](#)



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NEWS FROM OUR REPS!

LAUNCH OF EIGE'S GENDER EQUALITY INDEX 2015

On 25th of June 2015, EIGE launched their Gender Equality Index 2015. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is an autonomous body of the European Union, established to contribute to and strengthen the promotion of gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in all EU policies and the resulting national policies, and the fight against discrimination based on sex, as well as to raise EU citizens' awareness of gender equality. The institute is located in Vilnius, Lithuania.

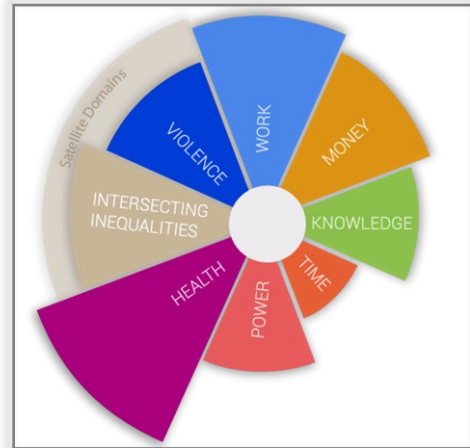
EIGE's research is essential for monitoring the effectiveness of gender equality policies at EU and national level. The Gender Equality Index is a unique measurement tool that synthesizes the complexity of gender equality as a multi-dimensional concept into a user-friendly and easily interpretable measure.

EIGE organized a high-level event in Brussels for their launch conference, which included speakers from European-wide organizations, academia, institutions and civil society.

The EU-28 achieved an average score of **52.9 out of 100** points (2012 data) showing that **Europe is only halfway towards a gender-equal and cohesive society**. Moreover, progress since 2005 has only been marginal, when the score was 51.3. The day was broken down into 3 specific topical sessions:

- The first session presented the **updated methodology** for the domain of work and reveals the **score** of the Gender Equality Index at 3 different time points: 2005, 2010 and 2012.
- The second session presented the **Gender Equality Index in a broader context**. Gender Equality is a stand-alone goal, but needs to be incorporated into other policy areas

- The third session concentrated on Composite Measures of **Violence against women**. The Gender Equality Index for the first time also focused on violence against women, using data of the extensive Survey of the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) performed last March



To sum up the outcome of the day:

There is still a lot of work to be done, decision-makers, politicians and academia have to work towards improvement. Creativity, thinking out-of-the-box and different approaches must be used.

What we as Soroptimists can do:

Following our 'Educate to lead' programme, we could try to help build self-esteem for girls to enter STEM subjects. We could work towards bringing girls into non-traditional jobs. We could help fight against gender stereotypes in education.

To consult the EIGE index online, here are some links, including a full recording of the day:

- The [online interface of the Gender Equality Index](#)
- The [Gender Equality Index Report 2015](#) and the [Country Profiles](#)
- The [full video recording](#) of the event and [agenda](#) (including the presentations)
- The [promotional clip](#) on the Gender Equality Index

Renate Smith-Kubat, Representative of EWL (with thanks to the EIGE website)



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GENERAL NEWS

THE EU ANTI-TRAFFICKING DAY



The EU Anti-Trafficking Day, marked since 2007 on October 18th, is a yearly reminder that “trafficking is an international phenomenon, knows no borders, nationality or religion.” According to EUROSTAT, women and girls remain by far the largest group (80%) of victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation continues to be the most widespread form (62%) of trafficking in the EU. Each year, this day is also an opportunity to reflect on the responses to trafficking that policy makers, civil society and our own organisation have given so far. The 35,000 members of SIE have condemned trafficking through many projects: building shelters, providing counselling and rehabilitation services, establishing protected courtrooms, raising public awareness. We should continue calling on our governments to sign, ratify and implement legal instruments such as the Istanbul Convention, which recognises gender violence as one of the root causes of human trafficking.

TRAINING IN BELGIUM FOR SIE PRESIDENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE

A brand new 2-day Training Seminar for SIE Presidents in Eastern Europe took place in Leuven, Belgium 16-18 October 2015. With the encouraging number of 50 SIE Presidents attending the training, this was a unique opportunity for them to extend their knowledge about our organization and get now the tools to be even more efficient in their communities! Stay tuned for more details which will be coming on the outcome!

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

WELCOME TO SI KUWAIT !

The weekend of the October 23, has been a fantastic time! It has been a privilege to be in Kuwait, to recognize the numerous outstanding achievements of the many women that compose this country. Her Excellency, Mrs. Hind Al Subeih, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour and Minister of State for Planning and Development Affairs of Kuwait honored us by delivering an official address and celebrating together with us the advancement of Women in Kuwait. I would also like to express my sincere greetings to Stacey Al-Ghawas, President of SI Kuwait and her Board and congratulate them on behalf of Soroptimist International of Europe.

The chartering of the SI Kuwait, was followed by a gala dinner with more than 180 guests, including Soroptimists members from all Federations, local dignitaries, media and esteemed guests from Europe. Welcome aboard!

To see photos of the event, please click [here](#)

Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, SIE President



IMPORTANT DATES

- Nov 20 Universal Children’s Day
- Nov 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
- Nov 30 United Nations Climate Change Conference
- Dec 10 Human Rights Day

CONTRIBUTORS

- Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, President
- Renata Trottmann Probst, President Elect
- Sigrid Ag, Vice President Advocacy
- Marlène van Benthem, Programme Director
- Bettina Hahne, Council of Europe Representative
- Renate Smith-Kubat, EWL Representative
- Anne Simon, Executive Director
- Bintou Koïta, Programme & Advocacy Assistant