



# The Link

A global voice for women

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*20<sup>th</sup> SI Convention in Istanbul*  
A Diverse and Enlightening  
Programme Awaits You!

*CSW59/Beijing+20 in New York*  
Commitments Are Still  
Far from Realised

*Expo 2015 – Living the Future*  
Milan Is Ready, and  
So Is Soroptimist !

Soroptimist International (SI) is a worldwide organisation for women in management and professions, working through service projects to build a better world for women and children. There are currently some 85,000 members in more than 3,000 clubs in 127 countries. Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) is one of four SI Federations. It has some 35,000 members in over 1,250 clubs in 60 countries. Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of members and international partnerships. For more information about the aims, activities and projects that characterise our organisation, please visit our SIE website at [www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org).



Note from the Editor

# IT'S OUR TURN TO LEAD THE WORLD!

It's hard to find any uplifting news these days. For months, the media have been full of horror stories: beheadings in Syria, the abduction of Yazidis in Iraq, kidnapped schoolgirls in Nigeria, massacres of Coptic Christians in Egypt, the Taliban shooting innocent pupils in Pakistan and now a similar murdering spree at a school in Kenya. And let's not even start on the rape cases in India. But perhaps most upsetting is that so many of the victims are innocent women and children. This sad reality is only compounded by the fact that precious little has been achieved for women's

and girls' rights in the 20 years since the Beijing Conference. The strong Soroptimist presence at the CSW59 is a glimmer of hope. Along with many other organisations, we made our voices heard. We women are demanding our rightful place in decision-making processes. And for that reason our Soroptimist theme to educate women to lead is spot on: Because without our input and our humanity, there is little chance of an end to these atrocities.

*Christine Cromwell-Ahrens, Editor, The Link*

Cover page



Young Italian Soroptimist Gaia Paradiso is committed to furthering women's empowerment in her United Nations work.

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## Dear Soroptimist Friends

I have just returned from an exciting, fruitful and instructive week at the CSW59 in New York. The SIE delegation was strong in number and competence, and I am extremely grateful so many Soroptimists volunteered at their own expense to take part in this important event for women and girls.

### Standing up for gender equality

Everyone was very enthusiastic and participated in many UN meetings, side events and parallel events to raise the voice for women and girls in discussions about gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. In the meantime, Soroptimist is well known and respected for its efforts and projects to stop violence and abuse against women and girls. The four-page spread in this issue gives some insight into the outcome of the meetings and the personal experiences of our participants during these two weeks. You will also have seen the coverage in the Advocacy News, on the SIE Website and on Facebook. Please take the time to read these reports because our SIE work at the UN is vital for women and girls and for the reputation of our organisation.

### Women and girls won't wait another 20 years!

By the end of the session in New York it was clear that UN Member States are expected to reaffirm the norm-setting role of CSW on gender equality and empowerment of women. It is equally evident that the CSW will have to contribute to the follow-up of the post-2015 agenda and SDGs (sustainable development goals). The message women communicated to the UN at large was unequivocal: 'We want you to COMMIT to the Beijing Platform for Action, ACCELERATE its implementation and INVEST in women's rights.' So let us Soroptimists work together and push our governments to fulfil the goals obtained for gender quality, empowerment of women and girls and for the rights of women and girls.

### Dealing with currency issues

At the end of January, the Restricted Board held its ordinary meeting in Geneva. There were many important topics on the agenda, including the repercussions of the Swiss National Bank's decision to end the fixed exchange rate between the Swiss franc and the euro. Obviously, this step will

affect our Federation's economic situation so the Board decided on immediate and short-term measures to alleviate the impact. Please see the article by SIE Treasurer Anne-Marie Hendrickx about the background of these currency developments. Further information will be provided at the Governors' Meeting in Lisbon.

### Many reasons to celebrate at the GM

Several new clubs have been or will be chartered in the second year of my biennium. As SIE President I am very pleased about this expansion, which is also absolutely necessary to secure the long-term survival of the organisation. As you know, we added Serbia to our SIE map by chartering SI Subotica in November. And now in April we will welcome the next new country to the Soroptimist movement, when SI Gulf Dubai will be chartered. I would like to congratulate the initiators and the Extension team for their excellent work - they are truly doing a fantastic job!

The Governors' Meeting is fast approaching and the Board, SI Portugal and I are all looking forward to welcoming the participants. It is a great satisfaction to see how many Soroptimists have been nominated as candidates for the different positions on the Board and Committees for the biennium 2015-2017 and also how many Soroptimists would like to participate as silent observers. This is promising for the future of SIE!

### See you in Istanbul!

Last but not least I would like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who have already registered for the SI Convention in Istanbul in July 2015. The response has been positive, but we still encourage many more of you to join us for this important Soroptimist event. It is a perfect occasion to celebrate our unique organisation and meet Soroptimists from all over the world. We want your voices to be heard in the discussions about 'Fresh ideas empowering women'. But also do not miss this opportunity to experience the brilliant speakers highlighting the programme and to visit the fascinating city of Istanbul. I look forward to seeing you there!

Yours



SIE President Ulla Madsen featured as a speaker as part of the *Girls and Poverty* side event at the CSW59 in New York.

# A DIVERSE AND ENLIGHTENING PROGRAMME AWAITS YOU!



UNESCO named the Mevlevi Sema Ceremony, also known as Whirling Dervishes, one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

In just a few weeks some 1200 participants will gather in Istanbul for the 20<sup>th</sup> SI Convention from the 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July. For the programme, SI President Ann Garvie had a single request: it should reflect the diversity of the four SI Federations and nearly 90,000 members of our organisation.

We all have shared the same goal since 1921: achieving the best of and for women. Over these years, we have appreciated and valued the differences in our cultures, approaches and projects. It is in this context and in this spirit that the Convention programme was prepared. It includes 24 sessions, plenaries, interactive sessions and workshops, offering more than 80 speakers and panellists over three days.

The programme is structured around our core long-term SI theme, *Educate to Lead*, adopted by the Federations in 2011. In the meantime, we have been widely acknowledged for our successes in fighting for education as a right for all, education as the enabler to women's empowerment, education as the weapon to escape poverty and education as a second chance in life. Indeed, the United Nations, the Council of Europe and many other reputable institutions and bilateral organisations

have recognised the added value of Soroptimist International in improving the lives and conditions of millions of women and girls.

## Taking different perspectives

Inspiring speakers, including Ingibjorg Gislodottir, Regional Director of UN Women for Europe and Central Asia, and Liri Kopaci-Di Michele, Head, Equality Division, the Council of Europe, will address issues from very different perspectives in the panel discussions and interactive sessions.

The programme also has a wonderful and thematically appealing Turkish spin. We will learn how women's visionary leadership and social entrepreneurship actively contribute to society and to the economy of Turkey as an emerging country. Prominent speakers, such as bestselling author Elif Şafak and Vice President of Intel New Technologies Ayşegül İldeniz, will enlighten and inspire us.

## The challenges facing women

The programme as a whole will reflect challenges women face in their communities. For example, *The Power of a Second Chance* session will bring together speakers from different regions and different backgrounds: a psychotherapist, an educationist and a drug and alcohol abuse counsellor. Based on their individual experience, they will pro-



vide very distinctive views and perspectives on how to ensure women are offered equal opportunities during their life journeys.

Whether through building shelters, raising awareness or developing educational material, many SI Clubs are addressing the problem of violence against women. From Australia to Canada, from Norway to South Africa, this issue has galvanised our members. *A Defeating Violence!* plenary session will bring together both experts and victims. Former Registrar of the International Criminal Court in The Hague and Chief Prosecutor at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda Silvana Arbia has a wealth of experience in combatting this scourge. Founder of *The Voices and Faces Projects* Ann Ream will share her own perspectives as a survivor of violence and now a writer and advocate of women's causes. In another session on slavery and trafficking Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, the UN Special Rapporteur on human trafficking particularly in women and children, will report on the status of this worryingly increasing global crime.

## Workshops with practical support

In addition to numerous other sessions, there will be workshops offering Soroptimists the opportunity to further develop their knowledge of project development – from Design to Delivery. And a session on *Making your Voice Heard* will offer members concrete advocacy tools for their own club work.

It is a wonderfully diverse programme which is sure to appeal to the varying interests of our members! We look forward to seeing you in Istanbul!

Anne Simon,  
Executive Director, SI Convention Programme & Planning

## SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

A lot of thought has gone into the social programme in order to offer Convention participants a unique experience in Istanbul, which TripAdvisor named a top destination in 2014.

At the Friendship Evening you will spend a fabulous time with old friends while meeting new ones at the pool side of Hilton Istanbul Bosphorus Hotel. A magical Convention Dinner promises superb cuisine, along with a spectacular view of the Bosphorus from the terrace of Lutfi Kirdar Convention & Exhibition Centre. Both events will also offer very special surprises. An Open Heart Open Door Lunch awaits you, as well as the not to be missed Chat Line Lunch!

Fantastic optional events are planned for the evening of 10<sup>th</sup> July, including a VIP cruise on the Bosphorus, a traditional Henna Night at the Citadel Hotel, a marbling course, a folkloric dance performance and food workshops at the Balat Culture House. There will be a traditional Turkish night at the President Hotel and a breathtaking whirling dervishes ceremony which you won't want to miss. Please hurry to register for your desired event, as some have almost reached the maximum attendance level!

Pre- and Post-Convention Tours have been organised to sites of ancient civilisations and geographic wonders, such as Ephesus and Cappadocia and the historically eminent cities of Edirne, Bursa and Iznik. The Gallipoli tour, co-organised by SI Izmir, will mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canakkale War. And the Izmit/Sapanca tour, co-organised by SI Izmit, will allow you to visit a club while enjoying a hidden paradise near Istanbul.

You haven't registered yet? Please go to [www.si-istanbul2015.org/?page=registration](http://www.si-istanbul2015.org/?page=registration). A fact sheet with details of the social programme can be downloaded from [www.si-istanbul2015.org/?page=social\\_programme](http://www.si-istanbul2015.org/?page=social_programme).



## COMMITMENTS ARE STILL FAR FROM REALISED

*'Twenty years after the 189 Member States of the United Nations adopted the Beijing Platform for Action,' the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon warned at the opening of the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 59), 'progress remains too slow, and our gains are not irreversible.'*

These were sobering remarks at the start of CSW 59, which marked the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and was envisaged to be the place to make a truly big push to ensure women's rights get the place they deserve in the future Sustainable Development Goals.

As every year, the two-week session of the CSW saw thousands of representatives of women's organisations gather in New York to take women's rights one step further in the right direction, one step further to equality. As in recent years, Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE), together with representatives from the three other Federations, was present in full force. President Ulla Madsen and 12 other members of the SIE delegation ensured that the voices of 35,000 Soroptimists from Europe, the Middle East and Africa were heard loud and clear. The members of this year's delegation - Immediate Past President Kathy Kaaf, 1st Vice President Tonny Filedt Kok Weimar, Constitution and By-

Laws Chair Renata Trottmann Probst, Assistant Programme Director Emine Erdem, Liaison for Africa Mariet Verhoef-Cohen, former SIE Finance Controller Hafdis Karlsdóttir and IPP SI Belgium Gerda Rosiers, as well as Amelia Martinez Hockley and Nora Eleonora of SI Costa del Sol in Spain and Gulriz Ozyildirim of SI Bosphorus - covered a great number of events and consolidated SIE's relationships with other NGOs.

This otherwise fruitful networking, however, comes under the shadow of a final political declaration issued by the Member States of the UN, which falls well short of expectations. Many delegates shared a sense of bewilderment that so many of the commitments made twenty years ago are still far from being met. NGO representatives, including Soroptimist International of Europe, felt excluded from the process of drafting the political declaration and protested that the declaration 'falls short in reaffirming key language for women's human rights and also by the lack of strong language on ending all forms of violence against women and girls'.

The latter is of particular concern to SIE which is launching the *Defeating Violence* project, in response to Ban Ki-moon's call for quality evidence made two years ago at the CSW 57. Indeed, in a parallel event focused on violence against women, SIE President Ulla and SIE Constitution & By-Laws Chair Renata spoke of the need to 'bring about a deeper, more nuanced understanding of violence against women [in order to] contribute directly to the creation of

more effective prevention strategies and programmes'. Alarmed by the fact that cases of violence against women are actually rising in some countries, they jointly presented the *Defeating Violence* project, 'one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken by a women's service organisation', to a deeply interested audience.

Within this context, President Ulla is calling on all SIE members to urge their respective governments to commit to the Beijing Platform for Action, to accelerate its implementation and to invest in women's and girls' rights. In particular, SIE is encouraging its Clubs and Unions to start working with men's and boys' organisations to promote a mutual understanding and support of gender equality.

At another side event under the motto *Voices from the grassroots*, President Ulla was invited to speak about girls and poverty. 'When put together those two single words, girls and poverty simply translate as the most disadvantaged on the planet', she laments. 'As Soroptimists, we witness this phenomenon around the globe. In the world's poorest areas, girls are more likely to be affected, more likely to be denied access to education and more likely to be malnourished... Simply because they are young and female!'

Faced with all the challenges presented at the CSW59, President Ulla had a clear message: 'Women and girls truly cannot afford to wait another 20 years for change!'

*Ana Barfield, SIE Programme and Advocacy Officer*



The SIE delegation to the CSW59 gathered for a business dinner to discuss strategies and reaffirm its standpoint on the Beijing Platform for Action.



SIE President Ulla Madsen and Constitution and By-Laws Chair Renata Trottmann Probst presented the SIE *Defeating Violence!* project.

Just last year, Soroptimists conducted more than 4,500 projects helping thousands and thousands of women and girls around the world on the issue of violence against women: building shelters and protected courtrooms, funding and providing counselling services, conducting numerous awareness raising programmes, running anti-trafficking initiatives. '[Now,] Soroptimists have decided to embark on what is one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken by a women's service organisation. [...] In essence, our project, called *Defeating Violence!*, will reveal the causes, risk factors, and barriers to the eradication of violence against women across 60 countries. A set of tailored prevention campaigns and educational materials will be developed based on its findings.'

Renata Trottmann Probst, Chair of the Constitution and By-Laws Committee

My first event at CSW59 on Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> March was a disturbing experience: three former prostitutes from Europe and the United States gave testimonials of their sufferings. No one in the audience, among them quite a few men, was left untouched. These brave women, who suffered visibly when speaking of their experiences, were given a standing ovation. As survivors of forced prostitution, they appealed to participants to continue the fight against sex trafficking and the human rights abuses inherent in the sex trade.

Kathy Kaaf, SIE Immediate Past President

I am especially proud that a packed room of international delegates and guests joined co-conveners Women for Water Partnership (WfWP), International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW) and Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) at the Dutch Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York on *Women's Role in Water Diplomacy as Key for Empowerment*. The more than 80 participants signed the conclusions and recommendations, which, among other things, acknowledged women as leaders, experts and agents of change in water management and demanded that they are included in decision-making processes.

Mariet Verhoef-Cohen, SIE Africa Liaison and WfWP President

The 2015 *Women's Empowerment Principles* (WEPs) event was held as part of the official CSW59/Beijing+20 programme with the theme of *Unlimited Potential: Business Partners for Gender Equality*. The opening remarks of Ban Ki-moon and keynote address of Hillary Clinton made 'a direct call to action' to 'make it happen', the theme of Women's Day this year. Businesses have the capacity to shape the agenda of gender equality by direct measures and concrete steps in



SI President Ann Garvie (right) and SIE APD Emine Erdem (left) marched for gender equality.

the workplace, marketplace and community. Encouraging our own business contacts to sign up to the WEPs is one great move we can all make to put equality and fairness at the heart of business!

Emine Erdem, SIE Assistant Programme Director 2013-2015

After participating in the NGO Consultation Day at the famous Apollo Theatre, we hurried not to miss the march for Gender Equality and Women's Rights organised by UN Women in collaboration with the City of New York, NGO-CSW, the Working Group on Girls, the Man Up Campaign and the UN Women for Peace Association to mark International Women's Day on 8<sup>th</sup> March. Thousands of women, men and children met to march through the streets of New York. The



march was a celebration with singing, raising slogans, showing solidarity and pointing out the existing gaps and barriers to achieving gender equality. The participants wore banners with slogans and requests for equality; our group proudly held the Soroptimist flag and reminded the world of Beijing+20!

Hafdis Karlsdóttir, former SIE Finance Controller

SIE President Ulla Madsen and former SIE Finance Controller Hafdis Karlsdóttir celebrated Beijing+20.

Panelists at the *From Commitment to Action: Financing Gender Equality in the Post-2015 Agenda* event discussed the barriers to gender equality and the need for transformative social agendas to enable women to contribute economically and to participate fully in society. There is a persistent gap between developing norms and laws and their implementation because of a lack of resources. Resource mobilisation is therefore crucial to finance this agenda, and it is clear that more women in the labour force can stimulate economic growth. Indeed gender equality is an essential dimension to the financing for development necessary to underpin the implementation of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. Gender equality is vital if we want sustainable development!

Gerda Rosiers, IPP of SI Belgium

Grateful and thankful to have participated in CSW for the first time, my impression was that the whole world was present in one UN building. All these wonderful, and in their own way powerful, women and men talking, discussing, sharing their AHA-moments, voicing, laughing, loving, crying about the progress made since the adoption of the Beijing Platform in Action. In the words of UN Women Executive Director Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, 'We must seize all opportunities at the institutional, national, regional and global levels and give new impetus to the achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of women and women's and girls' enjoyment of their human rights.' I am thrilled to be part of the Global Voice for or Women!

Nora Eleonora, APD, SI Costa del Sol, Malaga, Spain

As the world's leading environmental authority, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has a long history of helping States meet the challenges of environmental governance. UNEP recognises gender as a crosscutting priority, and its programme promotes women's participation in all environmental protection and sustainable development activities. *The Global Gender and Environment Outlook* side event underlined that women stand in the front line in terms of poverty, yet provide invaluable contributions to sustaining communities and managing the earth's biodiversity and natural resources. Despite their role and know-how, women's contribution is regularly undervalued. Therefore, UNEP is committed to internal capacity building on gender mainstreaming, utilising various strategies, including workshops and training, changes in policy and practice, and real accountability for implementation. Achieving gender equality and equity is a matter of shifting existing power relationships to benefit those that are less empowered. There is no doubt that our biennium's theme *Let's go green – working for a healthy environment* is perfectly in line with UNEP's programme by not only addressing environmental issues, but also demonstrating that gender equality for women and girls is indissolubly linked to a healthy sustainable environment.

Ulla Madsen, SIE President

## Scholarship recipients

# HELPING WOMEN ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS

Assunção Fernandes Tavares from Portugal and Arianna Marchiori from Italy tell their stories and thank Soroptimist International of Europe for the grants that supported them in pursuing their two very different careers.



Assunção Fernandes Tavares (above left) started her path to a qualified social worker as a volunteer handball coach for young girls.

Arianna Marchiori (right) trained incredibly hard at the San Francisco Ballet School and after working as a dancer at the Dortmund Theatre will now go to London.



Assunção Fernandes Tavares (48) celebrated the completion of her Master in Social Service with her three sons, three grandchildren, the athletes in the girls' handball programme that she created some 25 years ago and her fellow Soroptimists of SI Estoril Cascais.

When she migrated from Cabo Verde to Portugal as a young mother with two children and a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education, she settled in an immigrant neighbourhood. In 1990, she started coaching handball for young girls. Working by day, coaching at night and weekends, and raising her family, she still managed to finish secondary school.

'After working and coaching for many years, I came to the conclusion that to serve my immigrant community better would require higher education,' says Assunção. So, she took a course in intercultural mediation, and eventually earned a degree in social work with the help of financial aid from the Portuguese Government, tuition reduction from Catholic University and some support from Banco BIG. Club members also helped with additional tutoring. But the Master Programme was even more demanding, in both financial and academic terms.

'The Soroptimist Scholarship was essential for the Master's programme, since tuition fees were much higher and financial aid was cut back,' says Assunção who also benefitted from the tutoring offered by various Soroptimists. The single mother completed the Master's coursework with some of the best grades in her class and wrote a thesis on sports as a strategy for the social integration of immigrant girls.

Assunção has been involved with SI Estoril Cascais since 2008, when she invited Club members to provide role models for the young athletes. In her other work, she recently turned to the Soroptimists to help furnish homes provided by the municipality for homeless men. In December 2014, Assunção became a member of SI Estoril Cascais: a fitting consequence of a close relationship!

### Support for a ballet talent

Nominated by SI Vicenza in 2013-2014, Arianna Marchiori required a SIE Scholarship in order to complete her training in ballet and modern dance. Despite her young age (born in 1996), she had already demonstrated talent and sheer determination, considering her acceptance to training programmes at both the Boston Ballet School and the San Francisco Ballet School. Tuition and living overseas required considerable financial resources and for this reason she applied for a grant.

Based on the well-prepared and well-documented application submitted by SI Vicenza, the SIE Scholarship Committee recommended Arianna for a grant to cover tuition fees, the course and clothing. She chose the San Francisco Ballet School and ultimately graduated with best certificates.

'I can't even explain how special and helpful this amazing experience was,' enthuses Arianna about her training. 'I grew up so much in so many differ-

ent ways.' During her year abroad, she also had the opportunity to dance with the SFB company, performing in *The Nutcracker*, *Giselle*, *Cinderella* and *La Bayadère*, which was an important transition from student to professional dancer. 'I left my heart (in San Francisco) and can't be more grateful,' wrote Arianna in her thank-you note. After working as a dancer at the Dortmund Theatre in Germany, she is now pursuing her career in London.



## MILAN IS READY, SO IS SOROPTIMIST!

'Expo: Feeding the planet, Energy for life' will open in Milan on the 1st May. The 'Expo 2015: Living the Future' hospitality programme proposed by the Milan clubs, SI Fondatore and SI alla Scala will run from 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> June. All Soroptimists from near and far are invited to experience the world fair and to discover Milan. Soroptimist will be at the Italian pavilion, where President of SI Italy and ambassador of 'We Women for Expo' Anna Maria Isastia will introduce the joint project with Rwanda on show from 5<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> June.

Bocconi University will host a conference, moderated by Governor of SI Italy Adriana Bazzi, with several prominent speakers, including SIE President Ulla Madsen. Pirelli group's *Hangar Bicocca*, famous as a showcase for contemporary art, will be the venue of the welcome cocktail. The Friendship Dinner, following a tour of the premises and organised by the *Politecnico*, will be held at the University of Milan. The *Pinacoteca Ambrosiana* will give visitors the chance to see some masterpieces of Caravaggio and Leonardo; the *Gallerie d'Italia* will show its collections and an exhibition on World War I, and the Golinelli Foundation will amaze with an unusual workshop on food and senses. Soroptimists are also invited to see Bizet's *Carmen* at La Scala.

For those who wish to buy the full package, there will be also the opportunity to get to know Italian Soroptimists from other clubs who have organised trips to Como, Verbano, Bergamo, Parma, Vicenza, Ferrara, Torino, Bassano del Grappa, Alto Novarese and Casale Monferrato.

Please register now at the site [www.soroptimistforexpo.com](http://www.soroptimistforexpo.com) and keep up-to-date by visiting the Facebook page, Soroptimist for Expo. You can subscribe up until a few days before the event.

For information and details please contact AIM secretary: [soroptimistforexpo@aimgroup.eu](mailto:soroptimistforexpo@aimgroup.eu), SI Milano alla Scala: [segreteria@soroptimistmilanoscala.org](mailto:segreteria@soroptimistmilanoscala.org), SI Milano Fondatore: [soroptimist.mi.fondatore@virgilio.it](mailto:soroptimist.mi.fondatore@virgilio.it)

Alessandra Dubini Braghenti, SI Milano alla Scala



Paralegal Courses in Rwanda: a joint project with SI Rwanda is honoured to be on display at the Italian pavilion as a winner of the Visibility and Communication award.

# YOUNG SOROPTIMISTS SHAPING OUR FUTURE

In the second article of the series on young Soroptimists, we present Gaia Paradiso of SI Piacenza in Italy.



Clockwise from top: It all started with the Bocconi Leadership Programme, sponsored by SI Italy in May 2012.

Young Soroptimist Gaia Paradiso is committed to furthering women's empowerment.

Gaia is shown here with Club President Giuseppina Dagradi at a meeting of SI Piacenza.

My name is Gaia Paradiso. I am 27 years old and studied business management with a focus on international marketing and social entrepreneurship for development.

Curious to discover the world, I have always been passionate about getting to know people and other cultures. News savvy and interested in geopolitics, I decided to pursue a Masters degree in international relations and political science in 2014.

Keen on languages and travelling, I host a blog on the Huffington Post online news aggregator which focuses on sustainability, women, culture, tourism and food. I work for the United Nations, and I believe in the power of women to instill compassion, solidarity and act as powerful engines for development, economic progress and social welfare for our generation and the ones to come.

**How did you hear about Soroptimist International?**

**GP** One day my mum and I were having a coffee, and she mentioned a SI Leadership programme for young women, advertised in the local newspaper of my hometown, Piacenza. I applied and a few weeks later, I got a call from the then President of SI Piacenza for an interview. I was accepted into the Bocconi University Leadership Programme and the exciting adventure began. That was May 2012.

**What inspired you to join a club, and when did you become a member?**

**GP** While browsing the website for the application, I was astounded by the great activities carried out by Soroptimists around the globe. The advocacy, awareness and service initiatives and projects at local and national levels truly inspired me. Although geographically widespread, they were clearly united in their efforts to empower, educate and enable women and girls to achieve gender equality. I became a member in March 2013.

**Has your club life met your expectations?**

**GP** I feel I am learning every day from members of my club. As the youngest woman in the club it is an immense honour and privilege to listen and learn from these highly experienced professionals. It is inspiring to see how they devote their spare time to contribute to the social, cultural, environmental and economic empowerment of women. In the club I am responsible for the new website and help with technical and social media tasks.

**What would you suggest we do to attract more members of your age?**

**GP** As more and more young women are on social media, I would suggest expanding the awareness and the visibility of SI on these platforms by presenting our engaging, fun and educational activities, such as the Leadership programme in Italy. I would also offer online and offline knowledge platforms for exchanges and idea sharing. To me, involving thoughtful and engaged girls and women means generating more

valuable and resourceful ideas to change behaviour and improve society, especially in terms of gender perceptions and violence against women.

**Would you be interested in taking on positions at higher levels of the organisation?**

**GP** I am deeply engaged in gender issues and would one day hope to represent our organisation at the UN.

**What do you feel are the benefits of joining SI?**

**GP** To me, the benefits of joining SI are meeting committed, passionate and knowledgeable women from all professional, cultural and religious backgrounds who can teach you and inspire you to deliver and spread an example of human rights, respect, tolerance, women's rights, leadership and empowerment in all spheres. Working together we can achieve a more inclusive, just, meritocratic and equitable society, in which concrete actions truly make a positive difference in the world.

**How do you see the future of the organisation?**

**GP** I see Soroptimist as the leading service organisation willing to partner up with other women's organisations and create synergies to improve the status of women worldwide. These global partnerships should be guided by the higher aspirations of improving the future of our planet. The aim must be to influence political leaders to give higher priority to and to act upon women's issues by implementing concrete legislation. In addition to campaigning for gender equality in the workplace, we must be drivers in addressing domestic violence, cyberbullying, and social media education.

The secret to success, as one professor at the University of Bocconi taught us back when my Soroptimist journey started in 2012, is a commitment to continuous learning, curiosity, self-esteem and confidence. But above all, we must have a big bag of achievable dreams!

## SIE Working Group

## EDGING TOWARDS NEW CONSTITUTIONS

In recent years, many measures have been taken to reverse the decline of SIE's membership. An organisation striving to develop and thrive needs to adjust its strategy and actions to fit socio-economic and societal changes. The statutes of our organisation, i.e. the Constitutions, are an essential framework for its day-to-day management and governance. But they can – and should – also be a powerful instrument to drive its institutional development.

However, when those statutes are repeatedly amended and consequently become more and more detailed, and articles are added decade after decade, there is a real risk they can become too complex. Consequently, they may actually end up a hindrance to development.

To rectify this situation, the SIE Board proposed at the 2014 Governors' Meeting to develop 'leaner' Constitutions, only containing the most important articles. The Governors accepted this proposal.

With new leaner Constitutions, we aim to prepare SIE for the second centennial of SI, to better accommodate the needs of clubs and members and to leave more room for national singularities. Revising these Constitutions is, however, no easy task and requires much thought. Indeed, it is crucial to bring in as many views as possible to reflect the diversity of our membership and the various jurisdictions. At the same time, we must ensure that our values are preserved. It is both a challenge and an excellent opportunity to implement the bottom-up approach.

Last autumn, we invited Union and Club Presidents to nominate Soroptimist lawyers to join this unique working group. Regardless of their function at Club/Union level or their previous SIE positions, we welcomed all those willing to contribute their time, knowledge and energy for the future of our organisation.

I am very pleased that six highly qualified Soroptimists answered the call. They are Irene Jacobi, Past President of SI Germany, Popi Athanassiou, former SIE C&BL Committee Chair of Greece, Roswitha Briel, Governor and Past President of SI Germany, Agnes Vogt and Margrit Weber, C&BL Chairs of SI Norway and SI Switzerland, respectively, and

Evelyne Bastin, an experienced editor from Belgium. We were also delighted that SIE President elect and my C&BL predecessor Maria Elisabetta de Francisca has joined the Group.

It has been a new experience for all of us to work on such complex issues in a virtual team. The cultural diversities were already apparent in this small team when bringing together our experience and different expertise. Stepping back to look at the Constitutions with fresh eyes makes our task even more challenging, but – as we have all already seen – all the more exciting! The Working Group will present the first results of its efforts at the Governors' Meeting at the end of May in Lisbon.

Renata Trottmann Probst, Chair C&BL Committee

## Joint effort after Typhoon Yolanda

## SIE FUNDS RELIEF PROGRAMME

Typhoon Yolanda (also known as Typhoon Haiyan) struck the Philippines on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2013 causing huge material devastation as well as horrific human suffering. The islands of Carles were among the hardest hit, but received very little help from the initial aid programmes. Many homes and most of the fishing boats were destroyed. SI Philippines Regio and a local NGO provided some early assistance by purchasing 46 fishing boats.

SI Iloilo took up the cause and set up a \$25,000 aid programme. The aim is to rehabilitate families by building up women's professional, social and personal capacities. In this way they can contribute to their families' social rehabilitation and make lasting improvements to women's and children's health and social wellbeing.

The budget will be allocated as follows:

\* Women will participate in fishing with their husbands, prepare bait, mend nets and will be in charge of conserving and selling the fish. They will receive training in boat maintenance (with their husbands), learn new techniques to conserve and sell fish and help develop new fishing-related activities. They will also be advised about women's rights, their political rights in the community and how to

take an ecological approach to their activities.

\* Women will be responsible for a programme to renovate homes, given that they carry out most of their professional activities there.

\* Women will fight malnutrition in children by distributing vitamin supplements and facilitating the restarting of school activities.

\* Victims will receive psychological support. With the help of the University of Iloilo and local mental health professionals, victims will be given direct help and mothers will be trained to support and aid their families in the event of other disasters.

The ambitious project will be funded by SIE and monitored by SI America and SI Philippines Regio.

Anne-Marie Hendrickx, SIE Treasurer



Project organisers invited 87 women islanders to discuss their interests and abilities that can ultimately be put to use in small businesses. Lectures also covered topics such as violence against women, birth control, responsible financing and anxiety issues after the super typhoon.

## Monetary issues

## THE EURO PLUNGES AGAINST KEY CURRENCIES

SIE Treasurer Anne-Marie Hendrickx explains recent currency developments, which have both a direct and indirect influence on our Federation. Details of the repercussions and the measures taken to alleviate the consequences will be discussed at the Governors' Meeting in May:

On 6<sup>th</sup> September 2011, the Swiss National Bank (SNB) set an unofficial EUR/CHF floor ensuring that one euro could not buy less than 1.20 Swiss francs to reduce the massive over-valuation of the CHF. This problem became acute during the summer 2011, after several months of uncertainty and the continuous rise of the CHF against the EUR since the end of 2008. From September 2011 till 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015, Swiss policymakers and the SNB aimed to keep the EUR/CHF floor at 1.20 no matter what the price, which meant that the SNB had to buy enormous amounts of euros. During this period of relative calm on the currency market, the exchange rate from euro to Swiss franc oscillated between 1.20 and 1.25.

On 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015, the SNB unexpectedly abandoned the EUR/CHF floor rate of 1.20, and chaos ensued across currency and financial markets. The CHF surged by more than 20%, and the exchange rate EUR/CHF fell even below parity. After a few days, the SNB started to purchase euros again. Since the end of January 2015, the exchange rate has fluctuated between 1.039 and 1.079. The most obvious change in months ahead is that the EUR/CHF rate will be even more volatile than in recent years, and that the CHF is likely to re-establish its traditional role as a safe haven currency, especially in light of the troubled times in the Eurozone. Many unknowns remain, including the impact of the European Central Bank's quantitative easing programme, the future of Greece inside or outside the Eurozone and the slow revival of the European economies.

The SNB recently commented that the CHF continues to be significantly overvalued, but that 'it will remain active in foreign exchange markets, as necessary, in order to influence monetary conditions'. Forecasts in such a volatile environment give no comfort to the buyers or sellers of CHF. Leading banks are speaking of a range in the value of the euro between 1.05 and 1.10 Swiss francs ahead of 2016 and an exchange rate of 1.10 for 2016. However, the economic and political uncertainties in Europe and the Eurozone are too huge to allow forecasts.

As a result of these challenges in Europe and the Eurozone, as well as the stronger economic recovery in the United Kingdom, the euro has also been steadily declining against British pound sterling (GBP) since August 2013. The steps taken by SIE to mitigate this unfavourable exchange rate in transactions with SI will also be announced at the Governors' Meeting.



SIE C&BL Chair Renata Trottmann Probst is very pleased to have six highly qualified Soroptimists on the working group to revise the Constitutions.





Women for Women International

## SOROPTIMIST APPOINTED RWANDA COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Sharing a commitment to helping women affected by war, Soroptimist International and Women for Women International (WfWI) began a partnership, *Project Independence: Women Survivors of War*, in 2003. SI members worldwide raised over \$2 million and sponsored 2,680 women survivors of war in Afghanistan, Rwanda, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through WfWI's yearlong empowerment training, the sponsored women learned practical vocational and business skills to support their families. They also received information on health, nutrition and their legal rights and gained a support network of women through the WfWI programme.

Soroptimist Antoinette Uwimana recently joined WfWI as the Rwanda Country Director. 'SI funding enabled us to expand our programmes in marginalised rural communities throughout Rwanda. I am proud to be a part of both WfWI and Soroptimist International because they share the service goals of economic and social development through education, health, human rights, and international goodwill and understanding,' says Antoinette.

In 2005 a group of Soroptimists, including the then SI president Joan Cromer, the then SIE president Heidrun Konrad and Tonny Filedt Kok-Weimar, President of SI The Netherlands at the time, visited the office of WfWI.

Since its opening in 1997, WfWI Rwanda has served over 66,000 marginalised women in six districts. One year after graduating from WfWI's programmes, women, on average, realise a 50% increase in daily income. Nearly 97% report they have more self-esteem and their general health improved by 68%. Women earn an income through their chosen vocational skills of hairdressing, farming, tailoring, animal husbandry, basket making and bead making. Two years after graduation, 97% of participants say they are able to save a portion of their income, which allows women to meet the basic needs of food, clothing and healthcare for their family, to send their children to school, to purchase land and build a home and to reinvest in their business enterprises. An additional victory for many of these women in Rwanda is that their newfound confidence has led many of them to be elected leaders in their communities!

To learn more about the WfWI Rwanda programme, please go to [www.womenforwomen.org/rwanda](http://www.womenforwomen.org/rwanda). Stories of success in the other countries that Soroptimists supported can also be found on the SI website and on the [womenforwomen.org](http://womenforwomen.org) website.

Tonny Filedt Kok-Weimar, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President SIE



After graduating from WfWI's vocational programmes, women can increase their daily incomes by 50% on average.



To raise awareness of violence against women, Belgian Soroptimists participated in the One Billion Rising demonstration in Brussel.

Demonstrating against violence

## ONE BILLION RISING IN BRUSSELS

Did you know that one in three women across the globe will experience violence during her lifetime? That's ONE BILLION WOMEN AND GIRLS!

On Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> February, Soroptimists from SI Belgium and many other women's organisations joined #OneBillionRising, the biggest worldwide mass action to end violence against women. Between rainstorms, a small but dedicated group met and danced the by now famous 'Break the Chain' moves, choreographed to raise awareness of this scourge of humanity. Participants watched a demonstration from an experimental Belgian youth dance group, whose flexibility and seeming disjointedness amazed us all.

The event took place in front of the Central Station in Brussels and created a lot of interest from the passers-by. And Soroptimist visibility was assured!

Renate Smith, SI Bruxelles Doyen and SIE Representative to the EWL

## LANGUAGE COURSES FOR 2015

Once again SI Vichy is offering a scholarship to Soroptimists who wish to attend intensive French language courses at CAVILAM (Audiovisual Center of Modern Languages). The two-week courses for Soroptimists having some knowledge of French are from 11<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> Octobre 2015, or from 25<sup>th</sup> October to 7<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

Travelling, board and meals costs are the responsibility of the participant. For example, it will cost € 25.50 per day for half-board at family's house.

Please submit applications no later than 10<sup>th</sup> May 2015 to Beatriz Zimmermann, B.P. 2733, 03200 - Vichy, France or to her email address [beatrizim@wanadoo.fr](mailto:beatrizim@wanadoo.fr).



Located on the Allier River, Vichy offers delightful French charm combined with eclectic architecture.

A Weekend in Krzyzowa

## REMEMBERING THE PAST TO CELEBRATE THE FUTURE

On the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Wall in October 2014, more than 70 Soroptimists from Poland, Germany and Lithuania came together in Kreisau/Krzyzowa (Poland/Silesia) to strengthen the ties between Eastern and Western Europe. With the aim to improve communication, they exchanged ideas about a unified Europe, talked about their personal experiences and discussed ways to create a better understanding.

They spent a weekend learning about the history of Silesia: During World War II the von Moltke family founded the so-called 'Kreisauer Kreis' (Krzyzowa Circle) in Krzyzowa. This group met conspiratorially to talk about the time after Hitler. Sadly, they were denounced as traitors, and Henry James von Moltke was incarcerated and sentenced to death in January 1945. His widow Freya and their two sons fled but later rebuilt Krzyzowa as a centre for international youth meetings.

Soroptimists from Potsdam and Gdansk organised summer camps for Polish and German schoolgirls. As the interest in summer camps seems to be diminishing, the main aim of the meeting in October was to identify measures to revive and intensify cooperation between Eastern and Western women. Soroptimists from 15 German clubs, 6 Polish clubs, members from SI Alytus in Lithuania and some women from Walbrzych in Poland who intend to charter a new club came together and experienced

Soroptimists from Germany, Poland and Lithuania spent a moving weekend together in Krzyzowa, remembering the past and celebrating the future.



the international spirit of tolerance and understanding in Krzyzowa.

For the Germans the weekend started in Görlitz at the German-Polish border, where they visited a Museum of Silesian history. All participants then toured the Peace Church in Swidnica, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

As it happened, the eldest son of Henry James and Freya von Moltke was visiting Krzyzowa the same day as the Soroptimist gala dinner. He accepted our invitation and spoke movingly at the event.

The unforgettable weekend ended with a guided tour in Wrocław. The Soroptimists promised to keep in touch and meet again very soon.



### 7<sup>th</sup> Soroptimist Film Festival for Kids

## RAISING AWARENESS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

For the seventh time 10 SI clubs in the Netherlands organised the Best Practice Award winning Soroptimist Film Festival for Kids (SFFK). Aimed at raising awareness of Children's Rights, this annual festival offers youngsters aged from 8-12 insight into the lives of children in less privileged situations. Watching the film with their own school class, they saw children who are forced to work, who have no opportunity to get an education, who have no parents, who suffer from violence or who are neglected. With the help of Unicef's educational materials, teachers were able to delve deeper into the subject. And let's not forget the fun part of going to the cinema with your classmates!

This year's festival focused on the *SyrieBack2School* project, which the Dutch clubs have initiated in cooperation with Unicef. The aim of this project is to enable Syrian refugee children living on the streets or in the countryside outside the camps in Turkey to go to school. The school offers them greater safety and a secure place to pursue their education.

Initiated by three clubs in 2009, this year's festival was supported by 10 clubs at nine locations with



over 7000 participants. A foundation has been set up to coordinate the selection of the films, oversee the public relations and support the local clubs, thus taking a more professional approach. And

### SI Germany

## COOPERATING WITH THE WELTHUNGERHILFE IN TURKEY

'A whole generation of children are growing up without school education in the refugee camps at the Turkish-Syrian border,' says President of SI Germany Magdalena Erkens. 'Thousands of children and young people of school age have no chance of receiving regular lessons. Clearly, the global community must urgently do something to rectify this situation.' Like the Dutch Soroptimists with their UNICEF cooperation and the Turkish Soroptimists with their own efforts, German Soroptimists recognised the need to do something. In their case, SI Germany sought the help of a strong partner: the *Welthungerhilfe*. 'We are very pleased about our cooperation with this well-respected aid organisation,' says Magdalena.

The partners have set up a school for Syrian refugee children in the province of Mardin on the border to Turkey. SI Germany and *Welthungerhilfe* are jointly campaigning for donations. In the meantime they have engaged a local partner, Mardin Syrian Solidarity Platform (MSSP), which has been offering refugees humanitarian aid since the beginning of the civil war. MSSP have provided the buildings, the *Welthungerhilfe* are organising and running the school on site, while SI Germany will coordinate the fundraising. The course programme will be tailored to the Syrian

each year more clubs have joined the campaign, so that more and more children can learn about Children's Rights!

Each location interprets the festival in its own way. The opening of the SFFK is decided by each club and varies per year and location. For example, this year SI Waterland organised the SFFK for the first time, and so, before the film, the children watched an interactive presentation and discussed their meaning of children's rights. At another location the town's mayor opened the festival together with a 'mayor' specially appointed by the children.

For more information, go to [www.sffk.nl](http://www.sffk.nl) or contact Esther Aarse: [reestlanden@soroptimist.nl](mailto:reestlanden@soroptimist.nl) or Luc de Wit-Ybema: [assen@soroptimist.nl](mailto:assen@soroptimist.nl).

The youngsters enthusiastically participated in the discussions about children's rights at the Soroptimist Film Festival events.



Thanks to the successful cooperation between SI Germany, the *Welthungerhilfe* and MSSP, young Syrian refugees have been able to resume their school lessons in the Turkish province of Mardin.

lesson plan. The children and young people will be taught in their respective mother tongue.

'After just three months, SI Germany has already exceeded its expectations by collecting €70,000, which is being used to fund the wages of 24 teachers, school coaches and the repair of the school roof,' explains Magdalena Erkens. Currently some 650 are registered for the school programme, however, usually only 350-400 attend on a daily basis. Further donations will be required to achieve all of the designated targets. For more information on the project, go to [www.soroptimist.de/fluechtlingsprojekt-welthungerhilfe/](http://www.soroptimist.de/fluechtlingsprojekt-welthungerhilfe/).

Eva Reinhold-Postina,  
Communication Coordinator of SI Germany

SI Iceland

## IMPLEMENTING THE SIE STRUCTURE



Hafdis Karlsdóttir explains the principles of the SIE organisational model to Icelandic Soroptimists.

For the past year SI Iceland has been implementing the organisational model introduced in the European Federation in 2012 with great results. The structure that has proven to work so efficiently at SIE level is also a good tool at Union and Club level.

When working with a club, we start by assigning the respective Board Members to the correct triangle. A number of positions and responsibilities vary between levels so positions within each triangle differ. A Governor at Union level can have a different responsibility and communication line from a Delegate on Club level, but, for instance, Programme Directors should have the same responsibility and communication line on all levels.

Next a presentation is given to club members, which usually leads to a lively discussion that aids in setting goals. After the club meeting, we clarify the responsibility of each Club Board Member and determine with whom each will be working. By grouping Board Members and their responsibilities according to the Goals, the organisational model ensures that the assigned tasks are better achieved and that no-one works in isolation. In addition, they can focus on specific objectives while working together in groups.

In line with the Strategic Plan, each group then works on the Goal within the triangle for

which they are responsible. By doing so Club Board Members can make the best use of their time and improve performance management and decision-making.

After having visited 14 clubs in Iceland we are delighted to see the enthusiasm of club members and to hear how they feel it is helping them realise their goals and streamline their work.

Implementing this structure will not only help our clubs achieve our international goals, it will also make our lives as club members so much easier, while at the same time promoting greater results.

Hafdis Karlsdóttir,  
Project Manager Structure & Strategy, Union of Iceland.

Dealing with crimes of violence in Italy

## THE WHITE ROSE CODE TO HELP VICTIMS



Thanks to the ingenuity and tenacity of Vittoria Doretti of SI Grosseto, the White Rose Code campaign was introduced in Tuscany in 2010. The project assures victims of violence special admittance to emergency wards, without any discrimination due to gender or age – whether men, the elderly, immigrants, homosexuals, but above all women. Specially trained staff then



With the help of SI Italy, special 'rose rooms' are provided for victims of violence in emergency wards and hospitals.

assign the level of the code depending on the degree of gravity.

Once the code is in place, a task force consisting of doctors, nurses and psychologists is assigned to the case, and the police, public officials, anti-violence centres and shelter houses also become involved. They assist the victim, prepare the necessary legal action and support the victim after dismissal from hospital. This project has even aroused interest in other countries, such as Haiti, where it has already been put into force, as well as Mexico and Egypt.

More than 50 clubs in Italy have worked or are working to sensitise and support the institutions that are willing to introduce the White Rose Code. There is also help for anti-violence centres and shelters and for projects aimed to create so-called 'rose rooms' in medical facilities. Italian Soroptimists also finance training courses for pharmacists, physicians, police and teachers who hope to convince victims to report abuse and expose abusers early on. In addition, they are campaigning to make the project better known throughout Italy.

In short, the White Rose Code (*Codice rosa bianca*) project aims to harmonise procedures in cases of violence, whose victims are mostly women. But the idea is also to prevent these terrible crimes of violence, which have become a real public health problem.

Francesca Calabrese De Feo, Vice President of SI Italy

SI Mainz-Rosengarten

## GOING STRONG INTO YEAR TWO

SI Mainz-Rosengarten, the 206<sup>th</sup> Club of SI Germany, celebrated the first anniversary of its chartering at the end of 2014. Club members have wonderful memories of a very busy time preparing for the charter on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2013, which turned out to be a great weekend of unforgettable speeches, dinners and successful meetings. Union President Magdalena Erkens and Annabeth Studer Meyer, then Chair of the SIE Scholarship Committee, who presented the char-



Union President Magdalena Erkens (right) and Annabeth Studer Meyer presented the charter in 2013.

ter, attended the anniversary celebration, together with the 26 founding members, aged from about 30 to over 80 years.

Indeed, SI Mainz-Rosengarten is a vibrant club with a good mix of professions, ages and intentions. Current President Ursula Ebert is an experienced member from SI Mainz. During its first year, SI Mainz-Rosengarten's interesting and challenging programme has assured a lively club-life with guest speakers, including women ministers, fundraising events and speeches about themes concerning SIE and local projects. Friendship meetings provided the opportunity to make new connections and network.

In October 2014 five new members joined the club, and further prospective members are currently visiting the meetings. SI Mainz-Rosengarten is clearly going strong into its second year!



Vibrant SI Mainz-Rosengarten has an excellent mix of motivated members aged from around 30 to over 80.

SI Vaduz's generous support

## FROM MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO A MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP



Dorottya Stani, who received a scholarship for her music studies, performed at a concert organised by SI Vaduz.

SI Vaduz, Liechtenstein organised a Christmas market last year which resulted in € 5,000. These proceeds will be used to purchase medical supplies for women and children in a small village in Nepal. Another € 5,000 funded a scholarship for Dorottya Stani, a young Hungarian musician studying viola at the arts university in Graz. To show her appreciation, she performed a concert for the club at its Christmas meeting.

Despite their hard work, poverty and bad nutrition are still very much a part of life for the people of Nepal. About a 20-hour drive from Kathmandu in Banjhakateri, German doctor Dr Klaus Eckert has set up a small medical centre with a medical assistant, a midwife and an assistant. There is also a pharmacy, and seminars teach new agricultural methods. Nutrition has improved markedly since the introduction of these changes. Our Club Vice President, Dr Jolanta Budissek, knows Dr Eckert well, and therefore it is assured that our contributions are used for the declared purpose of improving women's health.

On the last weekend in January Soroptimists from SIE, SI Austria, SI Vaduz and SI Goldes, Styria enjoyed a skiing weekend in Kals near Grossglockner, Austria's highest mountain. In the lovely surroundings of this spectacular countryside, the weekend offered the opportunity to renew old friendships and form new ones, while at the same time forging new projects and discussing ideas for the future.

SI Le Locle and SI La Chaux-de-fonds

## JOIN US FOR 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

SI Le Locle and SI La Chaux-de-Fonds have decided to jointly celebrate their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. Soroptimists are warmly invited to Switzerland for this special occasion at the Château des Monts in Le Locle on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

In the morning participants will have the chance to explore the Chateau's clock-making museum or the Museum of Fine Arts, renowned for its collection of etchings. After the official ceremony, a festive



meal will be served at the Grand Hôtel des Endroits in La Chaux-de-Fonds. During the afternoon, guests can visit the UNESCO World Heritage town by tourist mini-train.

If you would like to register or find out details of the programme, please contact Christiane Romano by email: [romano-menuiserie@bluewin.ch](mailto:romano-menuiserie@bluewin.ch)

Registration will close on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015. We look forward to seeing you in September!



From left: Moderator Monica Brouwer of SI Rhenen/Veenendaal, Nermina Kundic, Corinne Dettmeijer spoke frankly about the problems and signs of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Marking Human Rights Day

## 'HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS NEARER THAN YOU THINK'

As worrying as the subject is, human trafficking specialist Corinne Dettmeijer also had good news to report at the Human Rights meeting of the *Midden Nederland* region, organised by SI Rhenen/Veenendaal. As our National Reporter on Human Trafficking and Sexual Violence against Children, she is well informed about the problems, but also works on prevention and remedies. The topic of her speech, 'Human trafficking is nearer than you think', provided several examples of exploitation, often very near to our own doorsteps. With the help of drama students and a panel, we were encouraged to ask ourselves, what we can do to address this problem.

The students set the tone by role-playing examples of exploitation, from organ trade and child abuse to (sexual) slavery. Sexual exploitation makes up for about 66% of the reported cases. Although most victims are between 18-25, the number of under-age victims is rising in the Netherlands. Most alarming is, however, that human trafficking is on the increase. 'People are the cheapest commodity, easy to replace and to deliver,' says Dettmeijer. Open borders and social media further facilitate this 'trade'. Nonetheless,

the fight against trafficking is also showing successes. Law enforcement and heavier sentences are making the business more risky.

Prevention and early warnings are important in fighting human trafficking. Panellist Nermina Kundic, former police officer and now alderman of Veenendaal, reported positive outcomes due to the improved approachability of police teams. Drama teacher Marthie Overeem, who also works in an asylum for refugees, urged us to be vigilant about certain signals. Trustworthy people, safe houses and phone numbers for advice can be crucial for those affected.

Corinne Dettmeijer reminded us of the important role played by teachers and family doctors, because many victims are reluctant to seek help for fear of punishment or humiliation. However, as parents, neighbours or friends, we all must stay alert to the signs. Let us remember Corinne Dettmeijer's closing message: human trafficking is slavery and exploitation, and therefore illegal. But most disturbing of all, it is closer to home than we think.

*Ally de Vries, Editor of De Soroptimist*

Please submit your contributions to the next issue by 25<sup>th</sup> May 2015!

## NEW SIE CLUBS TO BE CHARTERED

### 21<sup>st</sup> March 2015

Astrida Butare (Rwanda)  
Charter to be presented by  
Asha Abdulrahman, SIE  
Extension Committee  
*Club President*  
Petronille Uwizeye  
Phone: +078 835 009  
Email: petronilleu@yahoo.fr

### 21<sup>st</sup> March 2015

Fermo (Italy)  
Charter to be presented by  
Carolien Demey, Governor,  
SI Belgium  
*Club President*  
Tunia Gentili  
Via Pio Panfili 113  
63822 Porto San Giorgio (FM)  
Phone: +39 338 7076036  
Email: tuniagentili@yahoo.it

### 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015

Tavira (Portugal)  
Charter to be presented by  
Adriana Bazzi, Governor, SI Italy  
*Club President*  
Aurizia Anica  
R. Eduardo Guerreiro 4  
8800-392 Tavira  
Phone: +39 338 7076036  
Email: aanica@sapo.pt

### 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2015

Bonn (Germany)  
Charter to be presented by  
Ulla Madsen, SIE President  
*Club President*

Barbara Hillen  
Gregor Mendel Strasse 29  
53115 Bonn  
Phone: +49 228 8862429  
Email: b.hillen@ihre-biografie.com

### 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2015

Single Club Stefan Voda (Moldova)  
Charter to be presented by  
Elena Savu, SIE Vice President  
*Club President*  
Aurelia Turcan  
str. Libertatii 1  
4201 Stefan Voda  
Phone: +373 60319300  
Email: aurelia.turcan@gmail.com

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS FOR SIE

### 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Vicenza (Italy)

### 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2015

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Gorizia (Italy)

### 5<sup>th</sup> May 2015

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Uludag/Bursa (Turkey)

### 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Beziers (France)

### 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Toliara (Madagascar)

### 19<sup>th</sup> May 2015

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Glückstadt (Germany)

### 19<sup>th</sup> May 2015

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Uzès (France)

### 26<sup>th</sup> May 2015

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Single Club SI Sitges/Vilanova  
(Spain)

### 26<sup>th</sup> May 2015

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Thessaloniki Panorama (Greece)

### 30<sup>th</sup> May 2015

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Biella (Italy)

### 30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> May 2015

Governors' Meeting  
Lisbon (Portugal)

### 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July 2015

20<sup>th</sup> SI Convention  
Istanbul (Turkey)

## INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS DAYS AND EVENTS

### 5<sup>th</sup> June

World Environment Day



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