

# THE **LINK**

A global voice for women



## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**16** days of  
**orange**  
activism

**2017 SIE CONGRESS**  
Italy awaits you!

**SCHOLARSHIPS**  
for science careers

**MENTORING**  
Try it!

Soroptimist International (SI) is a worldwide organisation for women in management and professions, working through service projects to build a better world for women. There are currently some 75,000 members in more than 3,000 clubs in 123 countries. Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) is one of four SI Federations. It has some 34,000 members in 62 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).

Soroptimist



International of Europe

## News from the editorial team

Dear friends,

Our sincere wishes to you all for a very happy new year. We look forward to seeing our projects prosper in 2017, making a real difference to the lives of women and girls.

Soroptimist activity in the last quarter of 2016 has been largely focused on the **16 days of activism** to raise awareness of the scourge of **violence against women**. We are convinced that education is the effective tool to crush it and to also put an end to many other types of discrimination.

We will have the occasion to discuss this in depth during the **21st SIE Congress on 14-16 July 2017** in Florence, entitled **'OWN the Future, Education your passport to a better life'**. The programme promises high level seminars, and gives us the opportunity to invite young female students interested in studies and careers in **STEM** (the fields and disciplines of science, technology, engineering and mathematics). The **7th SIE Peace Prize** will be awarded at the Congress.

We also have the pleasure to introduce you to **Meltem ZOURDOS** named **SIE Executive Director** – we congratulate her and are delighted to welcome her to the role.

Thank you to all our loyal subscribers and those who have contributed to the drafting of this last magazine in its current form.

We hope you all enjoy it!

With our very best wishes,



**Marie-Claude Bertrand**

Vice President, Communication  
[mc.bertrand@sfr.fr](mailto:mc.bertrand@sfr.fr)



**Bintou Koïta**

Programme and Advocacy Officer  
[bintou@soroptimisteurope.org](mailto:bintou@soroptimisteurope.org)



# Message from the President

## Dear Soroptimist Friends

I am very proud of this issue of **The Link**, which covers the outstanding efforts made by our Clubs and Unions during the 'sixteen days of activism' to combat **violence against women**. It analyses in depth the reality of violence in Kenya and it focuses on our **advocacy** tools to fight these crimes.

I hope you will find inspiration in reading about the Federation's many initiatives to make our voices into one stronger voice. Indeed, this is the aim both of our partnership with 'My Book Buddy' and our special focus on **STEM** fields within our educational projects.



### 2017 SIE Congress

On a completely different note, I am particularly happy to share all the latest information about our quadrennial **Congress** which will be held in Florence, Italy from 14 to 16 July 2017. I hope you will be enticed by the programme and the venue because I count on seeing you all there.

### New approaches to communications

This is also the last issue of The Link in its present format. As you know, with the valued help of some Soroptimist communication experts, we at SIE are preparing a new **branding campaign** and are also about to launch our **new website**. In light of these two innovations in our communications approach, the paper edition of our magazine will be temporarily suspended. In light of our choices for the branding campaign, it will be presented in a new format, perhaps with different content.

### Last printed issue of The Link

Each and every one of us owes great gratitude to Vice President Marie-Claude Bertrand, to Bintou Koita and the SIEHQ staff for their immense efforts, the passion they showed and the professional skills they willingly learned in order for us to receive our magazines. The last four issues were actually all produced in-house. Bravo, Congratulations, Proficiat and Merci, Thank you, Danke!

As we send this last issue of The Link to the printer, I feel all the sadness of a 'farewell', while already looking forward to its future version with the expectations of a celebration.

*Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis*

*President, Soroptimist International Europe*

January 2017

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# Standing tall *in orange*



## Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, SIE President

Last year's **UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women** marked the beginning of the so-called '**16 Days of Activism**' leading up to **International Human Rights Day** on 10 December. Over these 16 days, Soroptimists joined governments, international organisations, NGOs and women around the globe to raise awareness of gender-based violence.

In line with the UN Secretary General's call to 'orange the world', the Unions, Clubs and members of Soroptimist International of Europe have championed our campaign. They have provided relevant messages on Facebook and websites, showed examples of our many projects addressing this issue and have even persuaded local authorities to orange streets, schools or landmarks. By standing tall in orange, we wanted to express our solidarity with one in three women experiencing violence worldwide.

We sincerely hope that the campaign initiated by UN Women will bring concrete results. Clearly, there is more to do, and therefore, we will continue to raise awareness beyond this specific campaign!

Although many countries have laws and policies to fight against the various forms of violence, the problem often lies in eliminating gender-based violence in a sustainable way. The ultimate goal is to convince politicians to commit to concrete action and to provide adequate resources.

As a leading human rights organisation, the Council of Europe has undertaken a series of initiatives to promote the protection of women against violence since the 1990s. The Council of Europe Convention (Istanbul Convention 2011) on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

is the most important milestone to date. It sets harmonised legal standards to ensure that victims benefit from the same level of protection everywhere in Europe. Signatory states are committed to fully address all forms of violence against women and prosecute perpetrators.

Many countries have yet to ratify the Convention or are behind in passing legislation in line with the Convention itself. This is a great opportunity for our Clubs and Unions to make our voices heard in spurring their governments to achieve results.

**I would like to take this opportunity to thank our members for their commitment to championing women's issues and helping women and girls throughout the world. We are making a difference in many ways, as participation and feedback during the 16 days of activism has demonstrated!**

*"Clearly, there is more to do, and therefore, we will continue to raise awareness beyond this specific campaign!"*

Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, SIE President

# Lobbying with international institutions



**Sigrid Ag, SIE Vice President Advocacy**, describes how European Soroptimists lobby international institutions to commit to and invest in actions designed to improve the lives of women and girls around the world.

In her statement on the **International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women** on 25 November, UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka highlighted effective interventions, and reiterated that the pandemic of violence against women and girls can end, but it will need commitment and investment, nationally and internationally<sup>1</sup>. The campaign initiated by **UN Women** to "orange the world" was actively supported by Soroptimist International of Europe.

With the new global **UN 2030 roadmap** and **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) approved by UN Member States on 25 September 2015, goal number 5 will be one of the important goals for Soroptimists; namely to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The target is to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere and to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation<sup>2</sup>.

## Opportunities for Soroptimists to influence policy

For two weeks every March, the **UN Commission on the Status of Women** (CSW) turns the focus of the United Nations towards women and gender related issues worldwide. At the same time, civil society is given the opportunity to participate in the NGO CSW Forum. NGOs from around the world meet to discuss issues pertaining to women and girls, to network, share strategies/good practices, and to lobby governments to implement resolutions and treaties to the benefit of women and girls across the world. The priority theme of **CSW 61 in March 2017 is 'Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work'**. The focus area will be the empowerment of indigenous women. SIE holds 20 of the 80 Soroptimist passes to this event and **we hope to see many**

**Soroptimists in the European delegation** that will be headed by SIE president Elisabetta.

There are five more **UN** centres located in SIE's geographical sphere; and we have SI representatives to all of them; Geneva, Paris, Vienna, Rome and Nairobi. I am proud to say that all of them work endless hours to advocate the Soroptimist mission. The UN Office in Geneva hosts the **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW). The convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and is often described as an international bill of rights for women. The CEDAW Committee, consisting of 23 experts on women's rights from around the world, also meet with NGOs to hear their concerns and to gather inputs for the consideration of government reports. This is just one of the tasks of our SI representative to the UN in Geneva.

In her video message marking the end of **16 Days of Activism**, SIE President Elisabetta praised the imagination and creativity of Soroptimists around the SIE Federation in raising awareness of the elimination of violence against women and providing support through projects<sup>3</sup>.

In addition to the SI reps to UN offices, it is a pleasure to introduce you to the SIE representatives to the **Council of Europe** (CoE) - Bettina Hahne; **European Women's Lobby** (EWL) - Renate Smith Kubat; and the **Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe** (OSCE) - Vera Gregor. In the following interviews with The Link, they give you a small taste of their SIE tasks.

1 - <http://www.unwomen.org/en#sthash.Z6ukuYt0.dpuf>

2 - <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs#sthash.k2vdDg3m.dpuf>

3 - <http://www.soroptimisteurope.org/activities/news/day-16-a-video-message-from-the-president-marks-the-end-of-16-days-of-activism>



*"I will never understand what it means to feel less free simply because of the gender I was born into. But I do understand that here in Europe, we must be better than that. We are a beacon of freedom and equal rights around the world."*

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe



## International *action*

**Bettina Hahne, SIE Representative to the Council of Europe tells us about international efforts to eradicate violence against women**

**The Link:** *The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) is the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights, can you tell us more about it?*

**Bettina:** Serious international efforts to eradicate violence against women started in 1979 when the UN adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The body that monitors its implementation is the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW. Our SI representatives are active at its headquarters in Geneva. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action focusing on the empowerment of women followed in 1995. The UN Women Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York follows up on this and resulting Sustainable Development Goals. SIE members join SI UN representatives in New York for CSW's yearly meeting in March.

These important international conventions, including the Maputo Protocol of the African Union, encompass **all** aspects of gender inequalities. The Council of Europe Istanbul Convention, in contrast, **focuses on violence**. The reasoning is that violence against women, be it physical or psychological, is the most annihilating factor for the empowerment of women and above all, a blatant violation of human rights. While the above-mentioned treaties remain rather vague, the Istanbul Convention is very clear and pinpoints all aspects of violence against women in order to prevent it, to protect victims and to prosecute perpetrators. The Group of Experts (GREVIO) monitors progress in the member states and makes concrete propositions. At least two countries are examined per year, such as Monaco and Austria in 2016.

What makes the Istanbul Convention so far-reaching? It is exemplary in many aspects, especially in being so explicit and uncompromising. Most European countries have to adapt their legislation in order to be in line with it: 'no is no' was just recently adopted by the German government. Other articles of the convention state that stalking and sexual harassment, for example, must be treated as criminal and not trivial offences. Another states that no cultural, social or religious norms or habits can ever justify violence against women.

**The Link:** *Do you see promising developments in countering gender-based violence? Are there reasons to be optimistic in Europe?*

**Bettina:** In Europe, thanks to the Istanbul Convention and due to awareness-raising campaigns by political bodies – but also by NGOs – there has been slow progress over the years. It is no longer acceptable to argue, for example, "it was her own fault, she should have known not to go there after midnight", although many people, including women, still think so. So, yes, we can be somewhat optimistic.

However, I fear that in the long run the overall ultra-right development in Europe will have a very negative impact on women's rights in Europe in general, and gender-based violence will get less attention by politicians. It certainly does not help that internet hate speech – often directed against women just because they are women – is on the rise and very influential. Soroptimists and other women's organisations need more than ever to combat this development.

*Further reading:*  
CEDAW : <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/CEDAWIndex.aspx>  
CSW : <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>  
Istanbul Convention : <http://www.coe.int/fr/web/istanbul-convention/home>





*Gender equality and a life free of violence are at the heart of the values of the OSCE and preconditions for security, stability and prosperity.”*

Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, Secretary General of the OSCE (June 2005-June 2011)

# 95 ways to combat violence against women

The Link asks **Vera Gregor**, SIE Representative to the **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**, about important actions it is taking to help combat violence against women and its inspirational publication that compiles over 95 examples of best practice.

**The Link:** *How does the 16 Days of activism against women and girls ('16 Days') campaign link to the wider work of the OSCE?*

**Vera:** OSCE activities cover a wide range of security issues, including promoting the full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is under this heading, that OSCE recognises equal rights and opportunities for women and men, principles fundamental to achieving comprehensive security, and has committed to ensuring that a gender perspective is integrated into all its activities.

The OSCE's work takes the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women and peace and security as a starting point. The resolution recognises the pivotal role women play in societies.

Yet violence against women remains one of the most widespread and persistent human rights abuses in the world, stemming from deep-rooted notions of women's unequal status. However, through the deep suffering and harm caused to victims, violence against women leads to severe disruption to families, communities and societies, therefore harming far more than the immediate victims.

Violence against women is no longer viewed as an inevitable part of family life, of social relations, of the workplace or of war. It cannot be justified under any circumstances and must be punished.

The Ambassador of Iceland to the OSCE and Chair of the OSCE MenEngage Network, Audunn Atlason, was very outspoken in his statement: *“There is nothing masculine about violence against women and girls. Men and boys – as partners and supporters – have a key responsibility and a crucial role to play in social and cultural change. Let's all speak out against violence against women and girls”.*

In this year's **16-Days** campaign, the OSCE

- documented the order of magnitude of the problem in OSCE participating countries
- highlighted the deficits in these societies and need for further work at all levels
- provided examples from its member countries
- called for remedial action, and
- called on stakeholders to support the 16 Days campaign.





**The Link:** *The OSCE has produced a publication called ‘Bringing Security Home: Combating Violence against Women in the OSCE Region - A Compilation of Good Practices’. How can it inspire Soroptimists in their daily involvement in combating VAW?*

**Vera:** Activities to help prevent and combat gender-based violence is an important and regular focus of OSCE field operations. These include technical expertise to legislative reform processes, support for victims’ access to justice, training for police officers, as well as medical authorities, judges, prosecutors and lawyers.

‘Bringing security home’<sup>1</sup> documents over **95 examples of good practice** to help eliminate gender-based violence, and highlights their impact in preventing violence against women, protecting victims and prosecuting offenders. Strategies for involving men and young people in anti-violence activities are also described.

Although published in 2009, the situation described in ‘Bringing Security Home’ has not dramatically changed for the better. These good practices are still relevant and can, of course, be adapted to actual situations both in OSCE member countries as well as in other regions actively engaged in combating violence against women.

Acknowledging both the difficulty of this subject and highlighting ways to orchestrate remedial measures, the conclusion asserts, “Eliminating violence against women is a process requiring political will, adequate resources and concerted and long-term effort, carried out by multiple actors”.

## **Inspiration for your own campaigns**

Particularly useful chapters include: Understanding Violence against Women, Research and Evaluation; Prevention; Protection and Assistance; and Prosecution.

The compilation highlights a range of campaigns and projects led by government agencies, NGOs or intergovernmental agencies, as well as private businesses, and the importance of working in partnership with these stakeholders. Common features that underlie good practices include finding creative solutions to a universal problem and focussing on those interventions that show real impact.

In planning your own actions, remember that it is essential to:

- have a good understanding of your actual local situation
- adapt and try out practices that have worked elsewhere.

**I hope this publication will inspire you to design your own strategies and programmes and to develop new and effective approaches to combat violence against women.**



Read or download the full 130-page OSCE publication: A Compilation of Good Practices (ISBN: 978-92-9234-534-1) at <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/37438?download>



## The *hidden data* on domestic violence

**Renate Smith-Kubat, SIE Representative to the European Women's Lobby** tells us about how data is collected in Europe on violence against women, its prevention and protection, and how it is used to lobby for action.

**The Link:** *The European Women's Lobby (EWL) Observatory on Violence against women is a key player on the issue of violence against women at European level. Please tell us more?*

**Renate:** The EWL Observatory was set up in 1997, two years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action when states committed to take action to combat violence against women.

Thanks to the extensive experience of its 30 or so members from across Europe, the EWL Observatory has been a key laboratory of innovation and visibility. It was the first organisation to provide **European-wide data on the huge prevalence of domestic violence in Europe (1999)**<sup>1</sup>.

Over almost 20 years, the EWL Observatory has acted as a watchdog of policy and practice developments to combat the prevalence of violence against women, giving visibility to what is really happening and what prevention and protection policies and services are offered to women in each country. In 2001, the Observatory produced the first ever **European framework**<sup>2</sup> to monitor progress on combating male violence against women in the EU, including concrete indicators of protection services for women and girls.

The Observatory's latest report – **'Barometer on rape in the EU 2013'** – takes into account standards set by the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention and provides a European overview of the needs for change in legislation data collection systems and support services for women victims of sexual violence.

The EWL Observatory continues to be a key instrument for change, mobilising relevant and influential stakeholders to create change collectively both at European level and national level. Since 2010, it has been fundamental to strengthening and coordinating advocacy action for effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

**The Link:** *In 2013, the EWL coordinated a joint project with the Council of Europe under the common slogan 'Act against rape! Use the Istanbul Convention!' during the 16 days of activism against violence against women. What were the results of this joint project and what should be retained?*

**Renate:** The project **'Europe mobilises against rape and for the Istanbul Convention as a tool for change'** demonstrated good cooperation between all parties involved.

The Istanbul Convention is considered a tool for change. Building on the national results compiled in the **'Barometer on Rape in the EU 2013'**<sup>3</sup>, in November 2013 a variety of public events and lobbying meetings were organised in 28 European countries to help increase awareness of national situations compared to the standards set by the Istanbul Convention and of what changes need to be made.

The events helped to consolidate alliances between NGOs and key stakeholders and to build new contacts and possibilities for cooperation with MPs and other authorities. They also helped clarify monitoring mechanisms for implementing the Istanbul Convention and how to participate or monitor the process.

Further lobbying strategies and tools to ensure ratification of the Istanbul Convention and adequate implementation were designed and developed. Letters were sent to relevant decision makers and petitions, online petitions or joint declarations were initiated in several countries.

The project also helped increase cooperation between NGOs and key experts and academics working in the field of violence against women to develop a common strategy. Engagement between NGOs and different government units were facilitated to organise further cooperation on the Istanbul Convention.

This project was a first step towards further actions aimed at promoting the signature, ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

**I strongly encourage Soroptimists to participate in lobbying actions wherever possible! They are really very effective.**

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Sources and further reading:

1 – <http://www.womenlobby.org/Unveiling-the-Hidden-Data-on-Domestic-Violence-in-the-EU>

2 – <http://www.womenlobby.org/Towards-a-common-European-framework-to-monitor-progress-in-combating-violence>

3 – <http://www.womenlobby.org/2013-EWL-barometer-on-rape-report>

50,000  
women affected



## Saving donkeys to improve women's lives in rural Kenya

**Elizabeth Nyadwe**, SI Union of Kenya, IPP SIFAF Vice Chairperson Eastern Africa Region

Kenya has only about 1.8 million donkeys and rural women own most of them. The donkeys provide a support system for rural women especially in the arid and semi arid areas (ASAL). The donkeys are known as 'bread winners' for women and their families. They enable the women to buy food, clothing and healthcare, pay school fees and lighten their burden by reducing their labour (fetching water, firewood, transport to markets and ploughing farmland). The donkey therefore contributes tremendously to a rural woman's daily life and her family's livelihood. But women's use of this valuable resource is now threatened, affecting their livelihoods and causing an increase in domestic conflict.

### Demand for donkey meat behind rise in domestic violence

Recently, the government licensed a Chinese owned donkey abattoir in Baringo County with a slaughtering capacity of 100 donkeys per day. The donkey meat is supposed to be exported to China though the abattoir has yet to meet enough supply for export. This has both increased the value of the donkey and created a huge demand.

The men have now started trading in donkeys. This is creating a big conflict in the community because the men are selling the women's donkeys in disregard of its benefits to the woman and the family. Cases of domestic violence in homes have risen in the area, especially in homesteads where women own donkeys. The men sell the donkeys and the money from the sales doesn't reach the women. Theft of donkeys has also become rampant.

### Women suffering economically and socially

This situation has affected the economic status of these women by denying them the income from donkey services and has left them to bear the burden of carrying household items like water, firewood and farm produce. Recent studies have shown that the donkey is these women's invisible helper and also increases their access to social opportunities such as those found in community self-help groups.

### Education could help resolve the conflict

Donkeys are not commercially reared in Kenya and their supply to the abattoir has not matched demand. Donkey breeding management has not been emphasised in the past. An intervention is needed to educate the community on rearing and caring for donkeys. This will encourage the women to start rearing donkeys commercially so that they can supply to the abattoir in order to increase their economic status and in turn reduce or even stop conflicts arising from domestic violence and theft.

Working on the theme of ending violence against women, **SI Karen Blixen Club Nairobi** is making contact with women's groups in Baringo County and exploring how we can intervene and help the women support their economic status, their well being and prevent domestic violence. So far an estimate of about 50,000 women are affected because of the donkey trade, with about two cases per week reported to the County administration office due to quarrels attributed to the donkey conflict.



*"Donkeys are bread winners for women and their families"*





## 16 days of 'orange' activism SIE Union and Club projects

### SI CLUBS OF MONS-BORINAGE, SOIGNIES AND TOURNAI (BELGIUM)

The clubs funded and helped organise a campaign to raise awareness of violence linked to honour and forced marriages.

Following information sessions at the **Soignies** and **Tournai clubs**, the clubs decided to collaborate with the **Mons Borinage club** and help finance the campaign. Three members of the Mons Borinage club who are active in the non-profit 'Violence and Forced Marriage' (VMF asbl) were involved personally in organising an awareness-raising conference-debate for the **International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women** (25 November), which brought together stakeholders from both the judicial and political sectors and others active on this issue.

This was a successful project. The public came in large numbers. The debate was very interactive and animated, which helped greatly to increase awareness of VMF asbl activities and to enlighten the young audience about the existence of the laws to protect them.



### SI CLUB OF GENÈVE-FONDATEUR (SWITZERLAND)

For the launch of the '16 Days of Activism' to end violence against women and girls, the **SI Club Genève-Fondateur** in Switzerland raised public awareness through an 'oranging' action.

"We asked for two landmarks of our city – the Jet d'eau and the lighthouse of the Pâquis – to be illuminated in orange in order to draw public attention to violence against women: a problem all too often passed over in silence", explains Club Programme Director Donatella Benjamin.

Violence against women continues to be a global pandemic: far from being limited to a few isolated cases, physical or sexual violence involves one woman in three internationally. In Switzerland, one woman in five will suffer from physical, sexual or psychological violence during her lifetime.

### UNION OF FRANCE

The **Union of France** launched an important communication campaign for all of its clubs to support the '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence'.

More than 90 French Union clubs were involved in a project with French National Cinema, which involved hundreds of cities in France presenting previews of an Indian film called 'The New Classmate'. The film evokes the violence suffered by many women and girls. A violence not of beating and injury, but which is economic and social: a result of the state of ignorance of many women around the world when they lack access to education.

To support this campaign, in October 2016, the French Union designed a new communication tool in the form of a poster, entitled "**Oranger le monde**" (Orange the world).





## SI CLUBS OF ANTANANARIVO (MADAGASCAR)

The three **Soroptimist Clubs of Antananarivo – Antananarivo Doyen, Antananarivo Mandrosoa and Antananarivo Tanamasoandro** – worked together to broadcast a video spot on national television giving a toll-free number to dial in case of violence. The project is designed to make the largest audience aware of this global scourge.



## SI CLUBS OF COTONOU (BENIN)

The **Soroptimist Clubs of Cotonou** organised a conference on gender-based violence. The six Clubs in Benin highlighted two specific aspects: the extent of this problem in Benin; and the application of texts voted by Benin to repress violence. The US Ambassador honoured the



Soroptimists with her presence and support. The Clubs also organised a public awareness session in the presence of the authorities and international NGOs involved in the protection of human rights, especially women and girls. There were testimonies from victims and a presentation on the history of women's rights according to customs and practices.

## SI CLUB OF KUWAIT

The United Nations Secretary-General's campaign 'UNITE to End Violence against Women' proclaimed the 25th of each and every month as "Orange Day," a day to raise awareness of and take action to end violence against women and girls. In line with these global efforts, SI Club Kuwait launched the **Orange Kuwait Campaign**, a local initiative to raise awareness of the cause through various projects and advocacy events throughout the year, and described below.



### 1. Orange identity

Starting with a visual identity, the campaign was launched initially using social media to reach multiple demographics.

### 2. Social media awareness

SI Club Kuwait accepted the 'Mannequin Challenge' and generated a conceptual message to promote 'Orange Kuwait', bringing awareness to the issue of violence and reflecting SI's objectives to eliminate violence against women.

### 3. Survey

As believers in advocacy, we also developed a survey to collect data on what local people feel about violence against women.

### 4. Information brochure

A brochure was developed to introduce local people to international and local statistics, definitions of violence, types of violence and abuse. This was also, and most importantly, an opportunity to communicate the message in two languages.

The 'Orange Campaign' will continue to develop various projects throughout the year to improve awareness, through constant advocacy and on-going activities.

## SI CLUB OF COSTA DEL SOL (SPAIN)

SI Costa del Sol (Spain) Soroptimists promoted an informative campaign they had initiated in 2011 to support the rights of victims of gender violence.

With the large local foreign population in mind, the aim is to provide help and advice to those who miss out on important information because they lack fluency in Spanish.

The Club has members of 10 different nationalities who use their contacts and language skills to raise awareness of a free helpline, which is run by the regional government. Offered in 46 languages, the helpline assistance provides information about advice available for women who are victims of gender violence, as well as those experiencing work or education-related problems.

SI Costa del Sol works along with the local foreign press to advertise the helpline and to place posters, stickers and flyers at important locations such as hospitals, police stations, municipal offices and social clubs.



# Florence

## Plans well advanced for our 2017 Congress in Italy

**Flavia Pozzolini**, SIE Secretary General, tells us how she is organising the 21st SIE Congress to be held in Florence on 14-16 July 2017: the first time a SIE Congress will be held in Italy.

*When, a year ago, President Elisabetta asked me if I would like to organise the quadrennial SIE Congress, my answer was “why not?”. A Soroptimist for over 25 years, I have held many different positions, but never organised an International Congress. Thank you, Elisabetta, for having given me this great new task!*

### Where to start?

Firstly, we needed to find an agency specialised in conference organisation with wide international experience, able to deal with different cultures, countries, life styles: we chose the OIC agency.

### Building a close team

We needed to gather some friends to share choices, hard work, stress, expectations, and, perhaps, something positive at the end. First of all, I thought of **Elisabetta**, a friend for over twenty years; then **Maria Luisa Frosio**, another long-time friend and esteemed for her expertise and dedication to Soroptimist; finally, **Roberta Ghidoni**, a younger friend, a scientist.

### Finding a venue big enough

We needed to find a venue large enough for all of us. We chose the largest congress centre in Florence, a renaissance fortress in the heart of Florence: the Fortezza da Basso.

### Creating an appealing title

We then needed an extra motivation for Soroptimists. We needed an inspiring title, an instant message, something recognisable as Soroptimist branding.

I mentioned at the General Meeting in Sofia that the chosen Congress title was the work of four hands: those of Elisabetta and mine. **‘Own the future. Education, your passport to a better life’** is both a positive affirmation and a wish for the future of all women who benefit from Soroptimist dedication.

### Choosing a relevant theme: STEM

In designing the Congress programme, we started with the fact that there will be a need for 1,300,000 people with technical skills by 2020: currently, women make up only 17 per cent of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) workforce, greatly reducing women’s chances to change their lives.

So we decided to focus the Congress plenary session on STEM. STEM expertise is also increasingly necessary in the green economy: from renewable energies to clean technologies and best practice. STEM offers the perfect link between current and past SIE biennia (2015-2017 and 2013-2015).

### Young women in STEM invited to participate

We then came up with the idea of offering young women performing scientific studies, or recently engaged in a scientific career, the possibility to meet STEM leaders and the passionate minds invited to the Congress. We believe that these scientists could offer great inspiration to younger women just at the beginning of their life in STEM.

The Board embraced the challenge and approved the project: young women in STEM will be invited officially to participate in this SIE Congress.



*“Own the future.  
Education, your passport  
to a better life”*

2017 Congress theme



The organising team: clockwise from top left: Flavia Pozzolini, President Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, Maria Luisa Frosio, Roberta Ghidoni

I believe this is the first time SIE has approved a project opening up the quadrennial Congress to young non-Soroptimist women. I think it could be very important in many ways. These young women in STEM will not only have the opportunity to meet the inspiring scientists invited and ask them questions, but also get to know our Soroptimist world during our most important quadrennial meeting. They will get to know the club that nominates them and, hopefully, become new STEM Soroptimist members in the near future.

### Other Congress sessions

The plenary STEM session will be followed by two parallel sessions: **‘Shattering the crystal ceiling’** and **‘Women in green: renewable energy, clean technologies and best practices’**. Both panel sessions will open with an introductory lecture.

The last (third) part of each session will be devoted to **SIE projects**.

The **‘Women in green’** session is dedicated to the most significant projects from president Ulla Madsen’s biennium 2013-2015. The last part of the **‘Shattering the crystal ceiling’** session is devoted to leadership and mentoring programmes, with the aim of comparing the different models, favouring the exchange of ideas, and contributing to the definition of a new SIE working model.

At this stage, I prefer not to give away too many details and to let you discover everything on offer for yourselves.

I look forward to seeing you in Florence and to raising our glasses together on Saturday 15 July in a very special venue: the New Opera Theatre, a building with a very modern architecture. There we will have our gala dinner and some surprises....

**Find out more about the Congress at**  
**[www.soroptimistflorence2017.com](http://www.soroptimistflorence2017.com)**.



**21<sup>st</sup> Congress Soroptimist International of Europe**  
14 -16 July 2017 - Fortezza da Basso - Florence (Italy)



**OWN THE FUTURE**  
Education, your passport to a better life

**How to register young women in STEM to attend the congress**

Every Union, Single Club and Club that wants to participate, can directly register an unlimited number of young women candidates online via the **‘STEM project’** link on the congress website: [www.soroptimistflorence2017.com](http://www.soroptimistflorence2017.com)

**Sponsorship available**

SIE has also set aside €30,000 to fund young women in STEM – nominated by Unions and Single Clubs and located in economically disadvantaged areas – to attend the Congress. They will be chosen on a **‘first come, first served’** basis, as only one participant will be sponsored by SIE per country.

# Support science careers for women and girls

## Maria Luisa Frosio, SIE Scholarship Committee Chair

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing world, we need to look for new opportunities for growth and development to address the challenges we are facing. But when we look at the presence of women and girls in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), we know that the road ahead is still long. We must work resolutely to increase the participation of women and girls in these fields.

In 2016, the United Nations invited all Member States, all organisations and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as civil society (including NGOs and individuals), to observe the International Day of Women and Girls in Science in an appropriate manner through education and public awareness-raising activities.

"11 February 2016 marked the first UN International Day of Women and Girls in Science: "to promote the full and equal participation of women and girls in education, training, employment and decision-making processes in the sciences, eliminate all discrimination against women, including in the field of education and employment, and overcome legal, economic, social and cultural barriers thereto..."

In support of the UN's call and reflecting our 2015-2017 biennium theme 'Soroptimists Invest in Education', SIE aims to encourage young women in STEM areas to pursue their studies in the typically male-dominated, hard-sciences fields with confidence and without fear of prejudice.

However, only a handful of SIE 2016 Scholarship candidates were in STEM disciplines. Their stories remind us of their hopes, of the difficulties they faced, and of how SIE's financial support is crucial to their ability to pursue their dream professions.

**Strengthening the involvement of girls and young women in STEM areas can be a powerful accelerator for gender equality, sustainable development and economic empowerment. Let us help more women and girls with a thirst for new knowledge to pursue their career ambitions in the STEM disciplines! To find out how you can invest in a scholarship, see page 23.**

A few STEM grantees are very young, but already can serve as role models for younger girls. A 21 year-old project designer from Portugal, **Anisa Shahidian**, is continuing her studies in 'Intelligent and Robotic Systems' with



a one year master's degree geared towards helping children (particularly those with special needs) to interact with computers. For her, computer engineering is the future, and, in time, she hopes to set up her own company to be able to make a difference in the world.



At 26 years of age, **Seher Kosar**, a grantee from Turkey, whose role models are Rosalind Franklin and Marie Curie, is focusing on molecular neuroscience with a view to a possible PhD. The joint tri-national master's programme

in neurosciences created by the universities of Basel (Switzerland), Freiburg (Germany) and Strasbourg (France), and partially supported by Neurex (the most important European network in the field of neuroscience) allows the SIE grantee to carry out laboratory work on the molecular and cellular mechanisms underlying neurodegenerative diseases which is crucial for a future professional research career.

*Applications for SIE Scholarships for 2017-2018 are open!*

SIE continues to empower women and girls through education opportunities. We hope to receive a high number of applications from excellent candidates from both Unions and Single Clubs. Please remember that the deadline for online applications is 15 February 2017.





# What is *mentoring*?

**Elena Savu**, SIE Scholarship Committee Member and SIE Mentoring Programme Leader, helps demystify the meaning of mentoring, explains its importance in achieving Soroptimist goals, and inspires more of us to put mentoring into practice.

Since taking on mentoring responsibility for Soroptimist International Europe, I have been wondering why mentoring – despite its significance and relevance to Soroptimist goals – is found only in a few programmes run by SIE Unions. When the Governors raised the question “What is Mentoring?” during the 2016 General Meeting in Sofia and asked for an extensive definition, I realised that most of us don’t really understand what mentoring involves. This may explain the low number of initiatives to launch mentoring programmes across the European federation.

## How BeNeLux does it

In an effort to find an answer to this important question and to build on the knowledge, motivation and inspiration of what works, I approached Marlise Binder, Communication Co-ordinator of the recently launched **SI Belgium, Luxembourg and Netherlands** Mentoring Team (called BeNeLux) and asked her to share some of the practical wisdom she has gained working on the front lines of mentoring. Here is what she had to say on behalf of the BeNeLux team:

*“The Unions of Belgium and Luxemburg already participated in two mentoring programmes along with SI Germany and SI Sweden in 2010-2011 and 2012-2013. Mentoring is part of SIE’s ‘Investing in leadership’ goals and creates visibility to younger women who can provide the source of continuity for the Soroptimist organisation.*

*“By definition, mentoring is a process in which a more experienced person becomes a discussion partner for a less experienced person who is interested in advanced experience. In this way, mentoring has also proven to be a successful way of empowering women to take leadership in their professional lives. On a regular basis, young women (the mentees) discuss with experienced women (the mentors) issues preventing them from progressing in their careers, and the steps they need to take to address these problems. Having a role model and a trusted advisor is not only inspiring, but can also build confidence and lead to discovering new ways to achieve goals.*

*“The Soroptimist community possesses a rich pool of members who achieved leadership in their own careers. I believe that it is a Soroptimist responsibility to transfer their knowledge to younger women and, in so doing, fuel a much-needed rejuvenation of the organisation itself.*

Finally,

- *we are aware that, as Soroptimist members, we can share our experience and time as role models*
- *we include mentoring in our Unions’ identities by fitting it into the framework of SIE calls that can reach potentially hundreds of women at different levels*
- *building on the experience of these two pilot projects we are motivated to start an ‘educate to lead’ project at the end of 2017, together with the Union of Netherlands.*

*“The whole BeNeLux team contributed to this statement: Rita Knott, SI Luxembourg; Lucy Broeyer, SI Belgium; Ingrid Ghys, SI Belgium; Edith Koetsier, SI Netherlands; and country co-ordinators, Simone Polfer (Luxembourg); Ellen Joy Groosman (The Netherlands); and myself from Belgium”.*

From talking with Marlise, I believe that listening to Soroptimists with mentoring experience could remove the shadow of confusion and inspire all of us to try out mentoring. I am aware it takes effort but am certain that if anyone can do it in a great way, then it is we, the Soroptimists, who can.

If Soroptimists wish to do more than just improve the lives of women and girls and dream ‘big’ to empower women to become leaders in their communities, then mentoring is a great way to achieve it. It is great because it provides opportunities for Soroptimist members to build the future together with the women and girls they want to help.



## SIE Peace Prize

Marie-Claude Bertrand, SIE Vice President Communication

During the 21st SIE Congress in Florence, under the presidency of Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, the president elect Renata Trottmann Probst will present the **7th SIE Peace Prize**, which rewards a person or an organisation for their remarkable contribution towards peace. The first SIE Peace Prize was presented in 2005 at the Vienna Congress to Vera Bohle for her fight against the use of landmines. Peace is one of the core aims of Soroptimist International: we ask ourselves how it is that peace is as fragile as ever today, and what can we do to stop the radicalisation of young people?



# Preventing youth radicalisation

Bintou Koïta, SIE Programme & Advocacy Officer

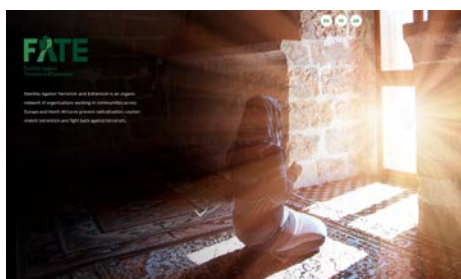
Since the attacks in **Madrid** (2004) and **London** (2005), the problem of radicalisation has been at the heart of European debates on tackling terrorism. More recently, in the last two years radicalisation has again hit the headlines following attacks that shook Europe from Paris to Brussels via Berlin or Istanbul among others. One thing the attacks have in common is that they were nearly all committed by young people born in, or residents of, the countries they attacked. What makes these young people lash out at their own countries? Why are they radicalised?

### The roots of radicalisation

Firstly, segregation or 'ghettoization' has led to institutionalised social immobility of the working class – and in particular those of the second and third generation of immigrants. Young people who live in these areas are the most neglected social group, who feel left behind and ignored by public policies.

They read rejection, inequality, violence, marginalisation and discrimination in today's political discourse. These young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are increasingly isolated from the rest of society and their feelings of hatred and injustice are growing. Their identities are formed in a logic of stigmatisation in which they feel discredited.

Secondly, recent events show that these young people on society's margins, unemployed and without hope for the future, are ideal candidates and perfect victims of manipulation by extremist groups attracting them through a 'collective ideological project' with which they can identify themselves – feeling part of a group – and serve a good cause. Religion becomes a pretext. They become radicalised by feeling recognised instead of excluded and invisible. They become part of something that offers them a major role in destabilising a State that, they perceive, has shown them nothing but rejection.



FATE - Families Against Terrorism and Extremism website

### Do something – but what?

To prevent radicalisation, we urgently need to restore the notion of citizenship and its values in marginalised areas. It is vital that we come together, listen, advise and respect each other. If this happens, education will help prevent youth radicalisation and protect the pluralism of European societies. To rise to this challenge, we need concrete action on national, regional and local levels –

actions that promote an inclusive education that tackles all kinds of inequality and encourages the development of a civic spirit. This echoes the words of Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General, The International Organisation of La Francophonie, on 8 April 2016 during the Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism in Geneva: *"We need to act pre-emptively, and also agree to recognise our errors and failings, and to change our behaviours, our mentalities and our certitudes [...] We must act pre-emptively through development, yes, but a sustainable and above all fair development, and act pre-emptively through education and training for all."*

Governments must knuckle down to recreate social support, build social bridges and collaborate with civil society, NGOs and local and national organisations whose hard work with families gives them a better understanding of the reality on the ground. The contribution of women as "agents of change" should also carry greater weight in resolving this social crisis.



## Meet Meltem Zourdos, new Executive Director of SIE headquarters in Geneva

**Meltem Zourdos** is 43, holds Swiss and German citizenship and lives with her husband and daughter in Geneva. Fluent in German, English, French and Turkish, she holds Master's degrees in Political Science from the Freie Universität Berlin and in Corporate Communication from Erasmus University Rotterdam, as well as a postgraduate diploma in International Studies from the Johns Hopkins University in Bologna.

### *The Link: What interested you about SIE?*

**Meltem:** SIE's advocacy with organisations such as the UN, the Council of Europe and the European Women's Lobby helps shape politics at an international level. What I particularly like, however, is the grass roots approach – your very concrete and hands-on initiatives are truly improving the lives of women and girls in communities. Starting my new job, I talked to family and friends about SIE, who were as impressed as I was, but also surprised they had never heard about SIE before.

### *The Link: How does your work background qualify you for the job?*

**Meltem:** I have worked in programme and project management and then, early on in my career, quasi fell into my communications roles. In my last position as Head of Internal Communication/Deputy Head of Communication, I worked with leadership on communication strategies and drove employee engagement, branding and web projects. Although I have very specialised knowledge, I am also an all-rounder. Having worked in diverse areas – such as the UN affiliated International Organisation for Migration, the more commercially oriented International Air Transport Association and a corporate environment at GF Machining Solutions – gives me a broader perspective.

### *The Link: What was the most interesting project you worked on in your career?*

**Meltem:** It was a programme called 'Simplifying the Business'

at the International Air Transport Association. Our team was small, and we each had to wear at least two hats. But we had great chemistry and worked passionately to revolutionise the passenger experience. We led the industry into e-ticketing, self-check-in kiosks and Smartphone-enabled boarding passes. It was very exciting to be part of the team behind such innovation.

### *The Link: What is your working credo?*

**Meltem:** Trying to please everyone is the best way to failure. I have a rather diplomatic nature and reminding myself of this credo has helped me make tough calls when needed.

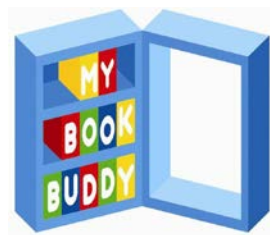
### *The Link: What is the best advice anyone ever gave you?*

**Meltem:** Actually, my grandmother gave me two great pieces of advice. First, always remember that there is strength in calmness. I have found this to be very true in all sorts of situations. Second, never judge people by their actions alone, but by their intentions. I try to understand where people are coming from before forming an opinion.

### *The Link: What is your favourite place in the world?*

**Meltem:** Tuscany, hands down. I discovered Tuscany at the age of 28 during my postgraduate studies in Bologna, and I have fond memories of this time. Apart from the obvious things like the culture, breath-taking landscape and the food, I experienced a certain peace there that I've never found anywhere else before.

## SIE PROJECT



# The *power* of sisterhood!

Marlène Van Benthem, SIE Programme Director

Dear Soroptimists,

I believe in the power of working together – all 34,000 members of our federation with all the programme directors of our 1,265 clubs and Unions – to really make a difference in the lives of girls who urgently need books to improve their literacy and to create opportunities for their future in our 63 countries!

We have received applications for 15 schools now, which means 200 bookcases benefitting a total of 4,000 girls!

Imagine all these children getting the opportunity to have access to books, bring them proudly home and involve the whole family in reading! Imagine that on 8 September 2017 Soroptimist International of Europe has the honour to speak at the UN Literacy Day at UNESCO in Paris and we can tell the world that we Soroptimists have taken responsibility to give so many girls the chance to read and be literate and make their dreams come true!

Imagine if all the Soroptimists in our SIE federation gave 1 euro for this project and asked all your family and friends to support you with this gesture, how many children could benefit from this fantastic opportunity?

Let's connect to each other and feel the pride of being one big organisation that can create a difference! See: <https://sie-mybookbuddy.org>

**My wish for 2017 is that we all work closely together with our Programme Directors in Unions and Clubs and that our 34,000 members really are going to make the dreams possible of so many girls!**

I wish you all a very happy New Year!

---

## News on Extension

Gerda Rosiers, SIE Extension Committee Chair 2015 - 2017



One of the themes of the 2017 SIE Congress is promoting careers in the STEM fields to young women. This provides us with an excellent opportunity to sponsor young women interested in these subjects, whilst also introducing them to Soroptimist International.

And it follows that we should go on to make every effort to integrate these young women into our organisation later: an excellent

and effective way to 'rejuvenate' our membership!

To attract young women to your clubs, don't forget that it is imperative to offer activities tailored to young professional women, in particular opportunities to get involved with initiatives related to improving the status of women and girls, hooking them up with our professional network, and above all encouraging these young members to take an active role. They often apply new creative thinking to problem solving.

**We are counting on you to attract these young women to your clubs!**

*"To attract young women to our clubs, remember to offer activities tailored to young professional women"*





## SI NORWAY

# Educational support for women in developing countries



**The Education Foundation of the SI Union of Norway** was established to support the professional training of women in developing countries. Application for support must be recommended by a Soroptimist union or club.

In 1985, the Norwegian Union started a foundation and offered its first grants in 1990. **The primary goal** of this foundation is to promote, through funding, the education and training of women who otherwise would not have the financial resources needed to continue their education. The support of women's professional training in developing countries is at the heart of this foundation.

On behalf of the Norwegian Union we are pleased once again to invite SIE clubs in developing countries to submit applications for the academic year 2017/2018.

Preference will be given to applications from non-Soroptimist candidates for basic professional training, at secondary school level, in the home country. Advanced courses and study abroad, will be given lower priority.

**Deadline for applications: 1 March 2017**

**The Education Foundation of The SI Union of Norway:**  
[www.soroptimistnorway.no](http://www.soroptimistnorway.no)

**Contact: Kristin Ruder: [ruder@online.no](mailto:ruder@online.no)**

## SI BRASOV (ROMANIA) & SI RUSE (BULAGRIA)

# Supporting young musicians

Last year, **SI Club Brasov**, Romania received a proposal from **SI Club Ruse**, Bulgaria to support young musicians in our countries, giving birth to a joint project: "Music – one language for ALL nations".

SI Ruse, Bulgaria first launched the project for the March Music Days – an International Festival held from 11 to 27 March 2016, and one of the oldest and most reputed festival stages in Bulgaria. Founded in 1961, every year the festival turns the city of Ruse – the biggest and most beautiful Bulgarian city along the Danube – into a real capital of music bringing together top-class musicians from Europe and around the world.

In March a master class was organised with the famous Bulgarian violinist Master Mincho Minchev, with auditions held on 14 and 16 March followed by a concert by the violin master class on 18 March. The SI Club Brasov, Romania, along with the Brasov music school, selected a 6th grade student – Maria Izabella Dicu – to participate in the festival. The Brasov and Ruse clubs covered the costs of transport, accommodation, fees and some food and organised other activities for the student and her father.

We enjoyed meeting more Soroptimists from Brasov and Ruse, attending concerts together, admiring the student's achievement and progress, and receiving her diploma.

There was much media coverage of the project, both in print and on local and national television, in Bulgaria and Romania.

Later, at our April monthly meeting held at the Japanese Cultural Centre in Brasov Maria Izabella performed Nicolo Paganini's Capricio no 16 for us. We enjoyed a wonderful evening together, watching the tea ceremony and Japanese dances by students from the Cultural Centre.

This year, Dimitar Dimitrov, a student from Ruse, will come to Brasov to perform at a Philharmonic Orchestra concert organised on 31 May in honour of International Children' Day on 1 June. He will perform Carl Reineke's Concert in C major, Part I.



## SI SITGES (SPAIN)

### Catalonian government honours Soroptimist work

The Soroptimist International Club of Sitges Vilanova was honoured by the Government of the Generalitat de Catalunya, through the Institut Català de les Dones (ICD) at an event in the Palacio de la Generalitat on 25 May 2016.

The minister of the presidency, Neus Monté, and the president of the Institut Català de les Dones, Teresa Ma Pitarch, chaired the Government of *la Generalitat's* annual homage to and public acknowledgement of women's associations. This year's award went to those associations that had accomplished 25 years of activity in 2015. Neus Monté emphasised the essential task of associations to promote equality and affirmed the Government of Catalonia's awareness of the importance of women's associations as agents of change and continuing the transformation to create a freer and more advanced society.

She stressed Catalonia's strong roots in equality, an indispensable factor in achieving better democratic quality and improving governability. She also said: "Modern societies are written by women and men".

Teresa M. Pitarch, president of the Institut Català de les Dones

(ICD), underlined the valuable role of women's organisations "contributing to the construction of a fairer country with more social equality". She also asked these associations to help develop the 'Law of effective equality between men and women' and announced that the ICD would encourage the contribution of women's associations to the political agenda.

38 associations, including our Soroptimist Club of Sitges Vilanova, were awarded a beautiful metal plate, representing a female figure, with her arms outstretched towards the phrase: "Continue is the word..."

Currently, there are 1,056 women's associations in Catalonia, 543 of which are located in Barcelona.



Soroptimist Club of Sitges Vilanova  
with their award

## SI BAMAKO LUMIÈRE (MALI)

### Soroptimist school bag project

Our Soroptimist school bag project is still going strong and is now in its 17th year. This year the project involved two regions: Segou and Sikasso (Bougouni Cercle). On Saturday 8 October 2016, 60 secondary school pupils in Segou, Macina, Niono, and Markala were each given a school bag containing all the student supplies they would need during the year.

On Saturday 15 October 2016, 80 students in Bougouni each received a school bag: 60 girls in year 9 of the second cycle of primary education and 20 secondary school girls in year 11.

School officials and parents, together with Bamako Lumière and Bamako Espoir Soroptimist Clubs attended the two ceremonies. Our thanks go to the Soroptimist Club partners of Austria, Germany, Belgium, Italy and France for their financial support. In particular we would like to thank members of the Soroptimist Club of Bregenz in Austria for their commitment to girls' education in Mali through the Soroptimist school bag project.

Last year's results were excellent and we are hoping that this year's will be even better. Wishing all our recipients a successful school year!



## SI SZEGED (HUNGARY)

Dear Soroptimist Sisters,

Please save the dates of 29, 30 September and 1 October 2017, to join us and celebrate the 25th anniversary of chartering the Soroptimist Club Szeged in Hungary. We truly hope that we can welcome many of you to enjoy this weekend in Szeged, the city of sunlight, among breath-taking art nouveau buildings and to discuss how we can continue working for the causes of the Soroptimist movement. A detailed programme and registration forms will follow. We look forward to meeting you in the South of Hungary.

## Invest in a science scholarship!

Invest in a Scholarship and give a woman or a girl the opportunity to realise her dreams and potential. The grant will be attributed to a female student interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

Our biennium theme is "Soroptimists Invest in Education" and surely, education is one of the greatest gifts we can give to the next generation - with your help we can make this a reality!

Show your solidarity, your support will truly make a difference!



### How to donate

If your bank account is in the Euro zone:  
CREDIT AGRICOLE DES SAVOIE,

74160 Saint Julien en G – France

BENEFICIARY: Soroptimist International of

Europe SWIFT OR BIC: AGRIFRPP881

IBAN: FR76 1810 6000 3496 7040 0803 955

If your bank account is outside the Euro zone:

UBS, CH – 2001 Neuchâtel, Switzerland

BENEFICIARY: Soroptimist International of Europe

SWIFT OR BIC: UBSWCHZH80A

IBAN: CH30 0029 0290 IN10 5239 0

- Always write precisely whom the payment comes from (Club, Union SI...)
- Always write precisely what it is intended for (ex: Invest in a Scholarship)
- Clearly indicate to your bank that you will bear the cost of transfer. We will be obliged to ask for reimbursement of any bank charges should they occur due to a lack of correct instructions.

## SI President's Appeal, 10 December: Nepal

**Caroline Junier**, SIE Assistant Programme Director / Committee Member Education and Leadership in Nepal

On 10 December 2015, Yvonne Simpson, SI President 2015-2017, launched her appeal to the generosity of our four Federations to support women and girls from Nepal in rebuilding their lives after the devastating earthquakes of April and May 2015. This appeal from the SI President, supporting the SI theme of Education and Leadership is currently underway and continues next year. Your support is most welcome.

Your first donations have already helped to develop four major sustainable projects in regions particularly affected by the destruction. Among them, two projects are managed by Soroptimists. They include training of female teachers, computer literacy courses for discriminated women, scholarships with school accommodation for girls and a shelter for women and girl victims of trafficking.

Many other projects await your generosity to allow Nepalese women and girls to become actresses of reconstruction and change, as well as leaders in their households and communities.

For more information on current projects and how to donate, please refer to the SIE website:

[www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org)

A very big thank you for the donations to date and in the future.



Picture courtesy of AHF: Conor Ashleigh



# Calendar

## New SIE club charters

18 February 2017

### Tromsø (Norway)

Charter to be presented by Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis,  
SIE President

Club President - Halldis Valestrand

Email: halldis.valestrand@gmail.com

25 February 2017

### Grand Casablanca Maroc (Morocco)

Charter to be presented by Emine Erdem,

SIE Vice President Africa

Club President - Samira Oulahna El Idrissi

Phone: +212 665 897 021

Email: sam.idrissi@hotmail.com

11 March 2017

### Benevento (Italy)

Charter to be presented by Maria Luisa Frosio,

SIE Scholarship Committee Chairperson

Club President - Annarita Della Camera

Phone: +39 333 6406715

Email: annaritadellacamera@gmail.com

25 March 2017

### Aversa (Italy)

Charter to be presented by Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis,  
SIE President

Club President - Maria Pina Velardi

Phone: +39 338 7906831

Email: mariavelardi62@yahoo.it

25 March 2017

### Fürstenfeld AquVIn (Austria)

Charter to be presented by Ursula Jutzi,

Governor – Union of Switzerland

Club President - Yvonne Sammer

Phone: +43 664 54 88 158

Email: moderation@yvonne-sammer.at

## Forthcoming SIE events

28-29 January 2017

SIE Restricted Board Meeting - Geneva (Switzerland)

12-13 July 2017

SIE Governors' Meeting - Florence (Italy)

14-16 July 2017

SIE Congress - Florence (Italy)

## Anniversaries

20 January 2017

50th Anniversary - SI Marmara (Turkey)

02 February 2017

50th Anniversary - SI Imatra (Finland)

26 February 2017

25th Anniversary - SI Zürich-Turicum (Switzerland)

06 March 2017

50th Anniversary - SI Järvenpää (Finland)

28 March 2017

25th Anniversary - SI Mechelen (Belgium)

28 March 2017

25th Anniversary - SI Givatayim (Israel)

04 April 2017

25th Anniversary - SI Murgtal (Gaggenau/Rastatt) (Germany)

04 April 2017

25th Anniversary - SI Fianarantsoa (Madagascar)

18 April 2017

25th Anniversary - SI Thessaloniki Byzantio (Greece)

23 April 2017

50th Anniversary - SI Foggia (Italy)

27 April 2017

50th Anniversary - SI Pisa (Italy)

30 April 2017

50th Anniversary - SI Cagliari (Italy)

## International awareness days and events

6 February 2017

International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital  
Mutilation

11 February 2017

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

8 March 2017

International Women's Day

14-24 March 2017

CSW61 in New York

**THE LINK:** Quarterly magazine of Soroptimist International of Europe, published in English and French.

SIE President: Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, Via Vigna Brigida 15, 81029 Tuoro di Caserta CE, Italy • Tel. +39 360 934 313 • me.defranciscis@gmail.com

Editor: Marie-Claude Bertrand, SIE Vice President Communications, 118, rue Jean-Claude Pirotte, 16430 Champniers, France • Tel. +33 675 44 36 01 • mc.bertrand@sfr.fr

Headquarters: 72, route de Florissant, CH-1206 Geneva, Switzerland • Tél. +41 22 346 08 80 • Fax +41 22 789 04 43