

Soroptimist International of Europe



**BEST
PRACTICE
AWARDS**

2019

Who are Soroptimists?

Soroptimists are professional women who are actively engaged in their communities, who have a global vision of the world and of women's issues, and who are in touch with local challenges for women, their conditions and their rights.

What are the key focus areas Soroptimists work in?

1. Education
2. Women's Empowerment
3. Elimination of Violence Against Women
4. Health and Food Security
5. Sustainability

What are Soroptimist Clubs?

Soroptimists are organised into Clubs in their cities/towns/villages, each having approximately 30 members. All projects you will read about here are the work of one or several Clubs. Soroptimist Clubs have been around since 1921.

What are Soroptimist Unions?

When a country has more than 7 Clubs and at least 150 members it forms what's called a Union. There are 24 Soroptimist Unions across Europe, the Middle East, Africa & the Caribbean.

How many members and Clubs are there in Europe, the Middle East and Africa?

Currently, over 34,000 women are members of the 1,257 Soroptimist Clubs in this region! (Or 1,258 if you start the next one?)

How do Soroptimists advocate for women's rights?

Soroptimist International of Europe holds special consultative status at the United Nations' ECOSOC and participatory status at the Council of Europe and the European Women's Lobby.

We are a real 'global voice for women'!





Standing up for yourself is standing up for women everywhere!

Recognising excellent SIE projects by conferring Best Practice Awards is our way of acknowledging that Soroptimists are truly efficient agents of change in their respective communities. While we celebrate an “SIE Project of the Month” in The Link online bulletin, exemplary projects in our five Areas of Focus receive the recognition they deserve through annual Best Practice Awards. The wide variety of exceptional projects implemented by the Unions and Clubs of our Federation demonstrates the strong commitment to our SIE Programme Focus Objectives.

As SIE President, I am proud to see how hard all the Clubs and Unions have worked and the great results they have achieved in line with the mission of Soroptimist: “transform the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities”.

Inspired by our current biennium theme **We Stand up for Women**, Soroptimists have shown once again how they help empower and educate women and girls to fully leverage their potential to address global and local challenges.

Active programme work is and remains the core business of our organisation. We as professional women will continue to work so that all women and girls can enjoy equality and live in safe, healthy and equitable environments. All the projects described in this brochure have changed the lives of women and their families for the better and, as they are sustainable, they will continue to do so for a long time!

I would like to thank and congratulate all members involved in these projects and encourage others to be inspired to realise their own successful projects. May I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to the **SIE Programme Director** and **Chair of the Jury Ingeborg Dietz**, as well as the jurors for their outstanding work in supervising the evaluation of each of the 91 project entries. At the same time, I would like to thank SIEHQ Senior Programme Officer Bintou Koita for her professional guidance and on-going support.

Congratulations to all!

Renata Trottmann Probst, SIE President 2017-2019

Congratulations from the SIE Programme Team 2017-2019!

Soroptimist International of Europe continues to be a dynamic organisation for professional women who work together at local, national and international levels to educate, empower and enable women and girls with the aim of improving their lives and status as women in their societies. In running and supporting excellent projects all over the European Federation and beyond, Soroptimists inspire action, provide creative opportunities and achieve positive and sustainable results.

You, our fellow members, have all proven again that, as Soroptimists, we CAN and DO make a difference! SIE Programme Team congratulates all the winners of the Best Practice Awards 2019.

This year, the BPA jury will be handing out, alongside SIE president Renata Trottmann Probst, 7 awards aligned with the five Programme Objectives: **Education, Women's empowerment, Violence against women, Health & Food security, Sustainability** :

- **5 Club Awards** for each of the Programme Objectives
- **1 Union Award** amongst the Programme Objectives

- **1 special SIE Biennium Award** to celebrate the biennium theme 2017-2019 "We Stand Up for Women"

These awards are not only a recognition of all your hard and ambitious work, but also prove your commitment to empowering women and girls worldwide. SIE can be proud of its clubs and members who tirelessly spend time, creativity, impulses, skills, money and effort on a voluntary basis. The BPA jury 2019 had to evaluate and to vote on 91 project applications. We were highly impressed by the quality of the submissions.

However we estimate that a large number of projects go unreported, which is regrettable. For this reason we do hope that these awards can become an incentive for all clubs to send their reports on all their valuable projects and initiatives in future.

Since Programme and Projects are still the heart of our organisation, we would like to encourage all our members to continue their great work to better the lives of women and girls by championing Awareness, Advocacy and Action.

SIE Programme Team 2017-2019

Ingeborg Dietz, Programme Director
Inge Withof, Assistant Programme Director



2019 Jury

Ingeborg Dietz

Chair of the 2019 Jury and Programme Director

Inge Withof

Assistant Programme Director

Bettina Hahne

Representative to the Council of Europe

Sabine Mach

Representative to the OSCE

Gerda Rosiers

Chair Extension Committee

SPECIAL SIE BIENNIUM AWARD 2017-2019

Orange the World campaign 2018

Union of Austria

November 25th is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. It marks the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign, an organising strategy by individuals and organisations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

This campaign, also known as “**Orange the World**” uses orange as its unifying colour throughout all its activities. It is a symbol of a brighter future, free from violence against women and girls.

The Soroptimist Union of Austria launched a nation-wide campaign “**Orange the World 2018**” in cooperation with **UN Women NKÖ** and **HeforShe Graz**. The Austrian Soroptimist Clubs were called upon by the Union’s Executive Committee to illuminate — **in orange** — at least one building/monument/site in their city/region in order to send a visible signal. To support the campaign, a well-known Austrian actress agreed to be — pro-bono! — the “face” of the campaign. Videos shot with her were published on the homepage www.orangetheworld.at. Furthermore, statements from politicians and religious dignitaries were posted and photos were published in magazines. The video was

shown, among others, on video walls in public transportation in Vienna.

The results are conclusive:

- 40 (out of 58) SI clubs participated in the campaign with their own activities and 70 famous buildings and monuments will be illuminated in orange, ensuring that every region of Austria pays tribute to the cause,
- More than 300 regional and national press reports appeared and a series of radio and television interviews were broadcast. Two musicians composed a “rap” on the topic,
- New potential members were attracted. Cooperation among Soroptimist clubs improved & bonded the members. Soroptimist International of Europe also increased its national profile through this campaign.
- Last but not least, the campaign will be continued in November 2019!



PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- LIGHTING UP BUILDINGS IN ORANGE
- USING MEDIA TO RAISE AWARENESS
- COLLABORATING WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

ALL CITIZENS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY WHO SAW ILLUMINATED BUILDINGS, READ THE NEWS, SAW VIDEOS, ATTENDED EVENTS

FUNDS RAISED BY THE UNION:

3600€

FUNDS RAISED BY THE PARTNERS:

3600€

PARTNER(S):

UN WOMEN, NATIONAL COMMITTEE AUSTRIA, HEFORSHE GRAZ



UNION BEST PROJECT

Soroptimist Nordic Leadership Academy 2018

Union of Norway

The Soroptimist Nordic Leadership Academy (SNLA) is about encouraging young women to be leaders in their communities and professions. Based on a model started in Macedonia in cooperation with the Union of Turkey in 2014, the SNLA started in 2017, takes place on an annual basis during the summer vacation in a Nordic country on a rotating basis. The Union of Norway hosted the second edition of the SNLA 2018 in the city of Røros from 25 June to 29 June 2018.

The idea behind the SNLA is to create an educational environment which will help awaken a sense of possibility in young women. The Soroptimists want young women to feel empowered to take care of themselves and to help others. The SNLA is addressed to young women living in the Nordic countries – between the ages of 18 and 30, who are interested in leadership and want to make a contribution to society.

Twenty-five motivated young girls participated in this five-day event which revolved around a series of workshops, presentations and activities. Topics covered included Soroptimist

activities for women's rights, role models, communicative leadership, mental training, the #metoo movement, project planning, intercultural communication, start-ups and economics, music and emotional intelligence. The Soroptimists and the participants were also honoured to have SIE President Renata Trottmann Probst present a session.

Both for the participants and for the presenters there were a mix of abilities, competences and backgrounds that contributed to the success of the SNLA. A third edition of the SNLA is planned in Rauma, Finland June 23-29, 2019.



PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- CREATING AN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT
- SUPPORTING YOUNG WOMEN TO FEEL EMPOWERED
- ORGANIZING SERIES OF WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

25

FUNDS RAISED BY THE UNION:

25000 €

PARTNER(S):

NORDIC UNIONS, LOCAL SPONSORS,
SI RØROS



EDUCATION

TOP PROJECT

Be a STEM Star! Club of Szeged, Hungary

Empowering girls and women to enter STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields, and stay the course, is imperative.

As Ministers of Education and other stakeholders pointed out during the UNESCO International Symposium and Policy Forum on the topic (Bangkok, 2017¹), this requires holistic and integrated responses that cross sectors and engage girls and women in identifying solutions to persistent challenges.

Drawing on this, the **Soroptimists from Szeged** have decided to follow this path. They are working on raising interest among women toward STEM areas: they are establishing direct links and communication between secondary/higher education institutions and enterprises. Do to so, they have selected high school girls based on the recommendation of their teachers and mentors. In the first semester, the Soroptimists organized visits to science workshops at the **University of Szeged**, in the newly **ELI (Extreme Light Infrastructure) Laser Research Centre** and the offices of **EPAM** (an international company combining software with business consulting and technology innovation services): the girls could

meet women with impressive careers. These girls could also meet role models from various fields – Hungarian and foreign Soroptimists, highly reputed female researchers and **Judit Polgár**, the world famous chess champion. In the second semester, the Soroptimists organized special developing courses (together with **EPAM**) concluding with a project competition of 8 teams with four members each dealing with sustainable development.

One way to encourage girls is to use appropriate role models to talk to and inspire them, indeed young girls need individuals they are more likely to relate to if they are to be persuaded not to abandon their STEM potential. The Soroptimists have fully understood this, and this project has gained great success and was covered by local and regional media several times over!

1 - <https://en.unesco.org/unesco-international-symposium-and-policy-forum-cracking-code-girls-education-stem>



MORE TO READ:

- [HTTPS://WWW.DELMAGYAR.HU/SZEGED_HIREK/LANYOKRA_IS_HAJT_A_MERNOKI_KAR/2544855/](https://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged_hirek/lanyokra_is_hajt_a_mernoki_kar/2544855/)
- [HTTPS://CAREERS.EPAM.HU/COMPANY/NEWSROOM/COMPANY-NEWS/2018/CULTIVATING-FUTURE-STEM-STARS](https://careers.epam.hu/company/newsroom/company-news/2018/cultivating-future-stem-stars)

PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- ORGANISING DIFFERENT AWARENESS-RAISING EVENTS
- MOTIVATING THE TARGET GROUPS WITH INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

100

FUNDS RAISED BY PARTNERS:

9200 €

PARTNERS:

NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR TALENTS, MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCES





2

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Increase economic empowerment

Soroptimists empower women to find employment



TOP
PROJECT

Supporting young single and struggling mothers
in Kópavogur
Club of Kópavogur, Iceland

RUNNERS-UP:

1. Soroptimist Künstlerinnenpreis Linz 2018 / female artists award Linz 2018

Soroptimists from Linz I, Austria

For the encouragement of young female artists and talents, the Soroptimists sponsored three awards in combination with an exhibition. *(In collaboration with the Soroptimist Clubs Linz Fidentia and Linz Lentos)*



2. More girls in school thanks to empowerment

Soroptimists from Cotonou Doyen, Benin

The project consists of equipping women with high-performance production equipment to help improve girls' schooling rate.



3. Weaving studio in Kegums

Soroptimists from Ogre Kegums, Latvia

Increase professional competence of rural women (especially those without any professional education) through gaining ethnic handicraft skills.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

TOP PROJECT

Supporting young single and struggling mothers in Kópavogur Club of Kópavogur, Iceland

The project involves supporting young single mothers in our community for a better life by helping them build a strong self-image as well as encourage them to gain further education.

The club helped provide school supplies, supported mentoring programmes and offered babysitting as well as Christmas gifts and food gifts.

The Soroptimists of Kópavogur, consulted The Welfare Department of the town in choosing single and struggling mothers to participate in the project; the young women chosen were on welfare and, due to trauma, had lost hope in returning to school or work. The Soroptimists engaged the District Court Attorney Lilja Bjarnadóttir, mediator and experienced mentor, to hold diverse seminars for the girls twice a month over a few months. The seminars helped them approach the objectives of goal setting, self-esteem strengthening, communication, financial and technology literacy.

Professional expertise of the seminar was a key factor as many of the young mothers in

the trainings were, for various reasons, coming from positions of social isolation. The goal was therefore to help them improve their lives for the better by helping them **build confidence and grow their ambition to create a more positive view of their future**. As a result, some of the young women who participated in the courses went back to school and others were eager to integrate themselves into working life.

The Soroptimists consider this initiative a long-term project and will continue to work with the welfare department and as well as the local high school. After the first course was offered, three similar courses were held, as well as an advanced course for those who completed the first seminars. Lilja, the instructor, has followed her students closely and gives them personal time to encourage them to break the destructive thought patterns that had been keeping these women from returning to society.



PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- ORGANISING SEMINARS
- SUPPORTING YOUNG GIRLS TO REGAIN CONFIDENCE THROUGH PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

110

FUNDS RAISED BY THE CLUB:

7500 €

PARTNER(S):

THE KÓPAVOGUR WELFARE DEPARTMENT



3

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Eliminate violence against women and girls

Soroptimists fight violence against women and girls

TOP
PROJECT

The support of collaboration between local police & general welfare work
Club of Veurne-Westhoek, Belgium

RUNNERS-UP:

1. Orange days VS violence against women

Soroptimists from Xanthi, Greece

Wide social message to eliminate violence against women and girls, with a large awareness campaign at local and national levels.

2. TRAMPOLIEN

Soroptimists from Tongeren Epinona, Belgium

TRAMPOLIEN is a non-profit association originated by the work of the Soroptimists. It offers financial and psychological support to women and their children who are victims of domestic violence.

3. Implement anti-porn-filter in public schools

Soroptimists from Kungsbacka, Sweden

Increase number of women working in STEM sector in Poland. The Soroptimists have taken different actions to influence politicians to implement firewalls to block pornography in schools. *(In collaboration with the Soroptimist Club Varberg)*



1



2



3

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

TOP PROJECT

Supporting the collaboration between local police & general welfare work Club of Veurne-Westhoek, Belgium

Domestic abuse is a gendered crime which is deeply rooted in the societal inequality between women and men. Intimate partner violence does not discriminate, and it can affect anyone; regardless of income, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion.

One in three women will be a victim of violence in her lifetime. The paths that lead to these crimes often start at home and within relationships that should be sanctuaries of trust and love.

The Soroptimists of Veurne-Westhoek, Belgium have a strong conviction that taking action can make the difference. They want to bring awareness to this issue, to educate, and to develop and implement prevention. They **work with local organisations** to ensure that women and girls have access to the support they need. The Soroptimists convened global leaders and change-makers to help make sure women and girls are understood, supported and fairly treated when they seek help or report abuse.

This initiative serves to guide women victims of domestic violence:

- *Where to go and what to do in case of severe partner violence?*

- *How to cope with physical, psychological, sexual, economic and honour-related acts of violence?*

The outcome and impact of this local action have been really encouraging. Indeed the Soroptimists have managed to spread their message widely; calls from female victims increased shortly after publications of various articles in the local press and broadcasting of interviews on television.

A lot of groundwork was done and meetings were organized with the local police and welfare centres, involving the design of orange flags sold for a fundraising project. Last but not least three orange-tinted gatherings were organized with the members of our clubs at different regional councils during the weekend of 24 and 25 November 2018.



PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- WORKING JOINTLY WITH ORGANIZATIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY
- COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY TO A WIDE AUDIENCE
- USING THE MEDIA TO RAISE AWARENESS



WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

25000

FUNDS RAISED BY THE CLUB:

1000 €

PARTNER(S):

PZW(POLICE); CAW(WELFARE)





4

HEALTH & FOOD SECURITY

Ensure women & girls have access to the highest attainable standard of health care

Soroptimists help provide access to better health and living conditions for women and girls

TOP PROJECT

Breast Health - "heart pillows" - support for women with breast cancer
Club of Mödling, Austria

RUNNERS-UP:

1. Health screening and providing for the needs of women in prison

Soroptimists from Ankara, Turkey

Educate female prisoners about hygiene and health issues and to improve their skills for their future.

2. Bike for Think Pink

Soroptimists from Hamont Achel Noord Limburg, Belgium

The Soroptimists organized a bike challenge. The funds raised serve to raise awareness on the prevention of breast cancer and to help finance research. *(In collaboration with the Soroptimist Clubs Antwerpen-Anthos and Genk)*

3. Keeping our girls in school, every day of every month, all year round

Soroptimists from Kisumu, Kenya

Train young girls on proper menstrual hygiene practices, self-awareness and dignity to build confidence in themselves and keep them in school. *(In collaboration with the Soroptimist Clubs Oakland, El Cerrito, Oceanside Carlsbad in California, USA)*



HEALTH & FOOD SECURITY

TOP PROJECT

Breast Health - “heart pillows” - support for women with breast cancer

Club of Mödling, Austria

The Soroptimists of Mödling want to respond to a serious public health concern by helping women suffering from breast cancer.

Fewer and fewer women are dying as a result of breast cancer thanks to a combination of improved early detection and the continued development of new and existing therapies. However, it remains difficult to face this ordeal, to support the treatments, to find a normal life and to live. A large number of women have to undergo a mastectomy, a painful operation both physically and emotionally.

With the “Heart pillow project”, in cooperation with a school of fashion design, the Austrian Soroptimists have been supporting women after surgery (to support the healing) and organizing events (with a run, a discussion and an exhibition for example) to raise awareness on breast cancer and its prevention. The pillows which are designed to fit comfortably under the arm, thus relieving pain around the surgical area after the operation. The pillows also provide emotional comfort: patients know they aren't alone and others are thinking of their needs.

The Soroptimists provided the materials to design the pillows and found a local fashion school. The – mostly female – students produced **52 pillows**. The pillows were given to three hospitals for their patients and to the **Austrian Cancer Aid**. The Soroptimists also organized various activities to raise funds for the **Organisation of Cancer Aid** and they initiated an information meeting with experts and women who had survived breast cancer on the topic “*Breast cancer - prevention, screening and treatment*”. More than 500 women have benefited from the pillows and this initiative has been reported on by the local press.

PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- RAISING AWARENESS VIA VARIOUS ACTIVITIES
- ORGANIZING ROUND TABLES AND DISCUSSIONS
- PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS, EXPERTS AND WOMEN



WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

MORE THAN 500

FUNDS RAISED BY THE CLUB:

8000 €

PARTNER(S):

AUSTRIAN CANCER AID, NÖ AND SCHOOL FOR FASHION DESIGN OF MÖDLING



Address the specific needs of women and girls by improving environmental sustainability

Soroptimists help improve the environment and promote sustainability



TOP
PROJECT

Access to drinking water for women's empowerment in the village of Goutonou
Club of Cotonou Doyen, Benin

5

SUSTAINABILITY

SUSTAINABILITY

TOP PROJECT

Access to drinking water for women's empowerment in the village of Goutonou Club of Cotonou Doyen, Benin

Today in Africa, 320 million people still do not have access to safe drinking water that meets basic hygiene standards. In rural areas, women and girls still spend an average of two to four hours a day fetching water, with the supply points sometimes being far from the villages. This is an alarming fact that pushes the Soroptimists of Cotonou Doyen to act!

The Soroptimists have enabled the building of a large-diameter well equipped with a pumping device and connected to a water tower for the village of **Goutonou in Benin**.

In the village of Goutonou, which is known to be difficult to access geographically, women and girls are responsible for covering the water needs of the whole family. The project aims to facilitate access to drinking water, to liberate more time for women for income-generating activities and girls for schooling which is often disrupted and sometimes even interrupted because of this heavy task. In addition, this project aims to protect people from waterborne diseases.

Several actions led to this result:

- organization of a gala evening to raise the funds needed to finance the project

- negotiation with the population to obtain the construction site
- solicitation of the town hall for its technical support (monitoring and control)
- signing the various implementation contracts with the service providers
- monitoring of the club for the proper performance of the tasks assigned to the service providers
- organization of the official delivery of the finalized project to beneficiary populations

This project is perfectly consistent with the goals of sustainable development because it generates social, economic and environmental benefits, including support for health, food security, sustainable growth and decent jobs.



PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- RAISING FUNDS THROUGH CLUB ACTIVITIES
- ASSESSING WOMEN AND GIRLS' NEEDS IN THEIR COMMUNITY
- BUILDING A DWELL

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

MORE THAN 1000

FUNDS RAISED BY THE CLUB:

5335 €

PARTNER(S):

TOWN HALL OF ADJOHOUN





SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE

We are a worldwide network of professionally and socially diverse women.

We are a platform to serve communities, share knowledge and experience.

We educate and empower women and girls to lead.

We fight violence against women and girls.

We give women a voice by lobbying at all levels of society.



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