



100 years-100 Soroptimists

#100FOR100

a global voice
for women

Soroptimist International Europe

#100FOR100
OUTSTANDING SOROPTIMISTS



Gerda Rosiers, Chair Centenary SI 2021
SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL EUROPE

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Czieslik Annemarie SI Club Lübeck / Bad Schwartau (Germany)

Dagain Christine SI Foix (France)

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Doretti Vittoria SI Grosseto (Italy)

Eberle Marie-Louise SI Liechtenstein (Liechtenstein)

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Gartcheva Lidia SI Sofia II Boyana (Bulgaria)

Glaser Annelise (1922–1993) Germany

Gökdoğan Nüzhet T. SI Istanbul (Turkey)

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Heptonstall Sonja SI Genève Rhône (Switzerland)

Ibach Heide SI Remscheid (Germany)

Isastia Anna Maria SI Roma (Italy)

Izzet Tarzi Pakize SI Istanbul (Turkey)

Jónsdóttir Hildur SI Suðurland(Iceland)

Järkkäinen Päivi Irmeli SI Tampere (Finland)

Khom Manuela SI Murau (Austria)

Krogh Ulla SI Silkeborg (Denmark)

Kusarova Lilyana (Bulgaria)

Lataillade Edith SI Port au Prince Haïti

Liland Gunvor SI Mo I Rana (Norway)

Loko Aballo Joséphine, SI Cotonou Doyen (Benin)

Magerle Renate SI Kitzbühel (Austria)

Maggioni Malaguzzi Valeri Renata SI Bari (Italy)

Maiolo Anna Teresa SI Milano alla Scala (Italy)

Margulis Inna SI SC Moscow (Russia)

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Mazzuca Carla SI Roma (Italy)

Modek Fannette SI Haifa Neve Shaanan Israel

Molvig Gerd Louise SI Ryggy (Norway)

Mosca Liliana SI Napoli (Italy)

Muratore Maria Rosaria SI Lecce (Italy)

Nurkka Niina SI Lappeenranta (Finland)

Ott Roswitha SI Bad Ragaz (Switzerland)



Palm Ulla-Brita SI Göteborg-Bohus (Sweden)
Pasteur Marie-Claire SI Grenoble (France)
Peritz Edith (1897–1985) SI Berlin (Germany)
Perviz Erdem Emine SI Etiler (Turkey)
Pftzner Charlotte M.D. SI Bayreuth (Germany)
Piontek Danuta SI Warsaw (Poland) 1937–2021
Pucci Elda SI Palermo (Italy)
Rangoni Machiavelli Beatrice SI Roma Tiber (Italy)
Ricatti Maria Grazia SI Vicenza (Italy)
Rinaldi Amendola Maria SI Bari (Italy)
Romann Sabine SI Kiel Baltica (Germany)
Röpke Sabine SI Magdeburg (Germany)
Rössel Agda 1910–2001 (Sweden)
Salo Aila SI Rauma (Finland)
Samartzidou Mary Byzantio Soroptimist Club (Greece)
Saulle Maria Rita SI Roma (Italy)
Schang Linda SI Stockholm City (Sweden)
Scheffler Erna (1893–1983) SI Karlsruhe (Germany)
Scholl-Sabbatini Bettina SI Esch-sur-Alzette (Luxembourg)
Serrano Iglesias Amparo (Spain)
SI Batumi (Georgia): Natela Dumbadze
– Rena Sarishvili – Mari Khalvashi – Chito Omeradze – Meri Zoidze
SI STAR TEAM SI Mainz (Germany)
Sonne-Schmidt Birthe SI Skive (Denmark)
Speiciene Danute SI Vilnius Old Town (Lithuania)
Stenström Marja-Leena SI Jyväskylä (Finland)
Thörnblad Majken SI Ystad (Sweden)
Tiarks-Jungk Petra SI Bad Nauheim (Germany)
Tobisch-Kohlbecker Ulrike SI Bad Herrenalb/Gernsbach (Germany)
Vainio Tuire SI Järvenpää (Finland)
van Hüllen Helgard SI Isartal / Bad Tölz (Germany)
Varis Kirsti SI Helsinki (Finland)
Vos Marie Elise SI De Bilt-Bilthoven (Netherlands)
Wladysława Magiera SI Cieszyn (Poland)

Zanetti Maria Assunta SI Pavia (Italy)
Zourouthi-Saligaros Passithea (1896–1989) SI Athens Founding
Club (Greece)

Applications not selected for # 100for100

1930–1934 Dr. Suzanne Noël – Paris (France)
1934–1936 Dr. J-J van DULLEMEN – Rotterdam
(Netherlands)
1936–1938 Dr. Clara MEYERS – Amsterdam (Netherlands)
1938–1939 Dr. Madelaine GAROT – Brussels (Belgium)
1945–1948 Dr. Madelaine GAROT – Brussels (Belgium)
1948–1950 Mrs. Mary BARRAT DUE – Oslo (Norway)
1950–1952 Mrs. Clara HAMMERICH (Denmark)
1952–1954 Avv. Olga MONSANI – Firenze (Italy)
1954–1956 Dr H. PANTHALEON VAN ECK
– The Hague (Netherlands)
1956–1958 Mlle. Jacqueline CHEVALIER (France)
1958–1960 Mlle Elisabeth HOETER – Switzerland
1960–1962 Mrs. Antonietta TOINI NIKANDER (Finland)
1962–1963 Mrs. Tasia BAFFY (Greece)
1963–1964 Mrs. Sigrid OECHEL-HAUESER (Germany)
1964–1966 Mrs. Gunnel HAZELIUS-BERG (Sweden)
1966–1968 – Dr. Fée VAX (1909–1992) (Luxembourg)
1968–1970 Mrs. Eva KREUZER – Vienne (Austria)
1970–1972 Mrs. Lida BRAMBILLA LONGONI (Italy)
1972–1974 – Dr. Lucie HEUSKIN – Brussels (Belgium)
1974–1976 Prof. Rahel SHALON (Israel)
1976–1977 Dr Eva BENGTSOON (Sweden)
1977–1979 Dr. E. FREDERIKS – Den Haag. (Netherlands)
1979–1981 Dr. Charlotte von LOEPER – Mülheim (Germany)
1981–1983 Mrs. Sadun KATIPOGLU – Sisli-Istanbul (Turkey)
1983–1985 Dr Gertie von KAAAN-PAKESCH (1924–2009
Graz (Austria)
1985–1987 Ms. Eva SKAARBERG – Oslo (Norway)



1987–1989 Mrs. Marie-Jeanne BOSIA-BERBERAT
– Paradisio (Switzerland)

1989–1991 Prof. Elisabeth BACK IMPALLOMEINI – Padova (Italy)

1991–1993 Nina KOUMANAKOU – Papagos (Greece)

1993–1995 Gisela FREUDENBERG – Weinheim (Germany)

1995–1997 Irmeli TORSSONEN – Turku (Finland)

1997–1999 Hélène VAN THEMSCHE – Liège (Belgium)

1999–2001 Ayla SELCUK – Izmir (Turkey)

2001–2003 Hanne JENSBO – Viby J. (Denmark)

2003–2005 Heidrun KONRAD – Spittal/Drau (Austria)

2005–2007 Monique RIVIERE – Ramonville-Saint-Agne
(France)

2007–2009 Mariet VERHOEF-COHEN – Zwolle (Netherlands)

2009–2011 Eliane LAGASSE – Zuid-Oost Vlaanderen – Zottegem
(Belgium)

2011–2013 Kathy KAAF – Bonn (Germany)

2013–2015 Ulla MADSEN – Copenhagen (Denmark)

2015–2017 Maria Elisabetta de FRANCISCIS – Caserta (Italy)

2017–2019 Renata Trottmann Probst – Zug (Switzerland)

2019–2021 Anna Wszelaczyńska Krakow (Poland)

Dear Soroptimists, dear readers

The first part of this e-book, produced on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Soroptimist International, consists of the biographies of 100 remarkable Soroptimists who have been active in our organisation during the 100 years since its creation in October 1921.

In the second part you will find the biographies of the Presidents of the European Federation created in 1924. Unfortunately, some data is missing as it was not possible to find the necessary documentation to write the articles.

In order to produce this document, which I hope you will like and enjoy, a request was launched in March 2019 where we encouraged you to write to us about a Soroptimist from our Federation who has been a particular model in terms of profession or achievement, someone who has made an extraordinary contribution to their community, someone who embodies our values or has changed the lives of women and girls in a unique way.

It was a great success with 235 applications submitted! The selection was very difficult. All the applications received show that we can be proud of our Soroptimists past and present.

With the help of Maria Luisa Frosio I read and reread the beautiful stories of our Soroptimists. We were amazed and proud to learn more about the lives of our elders and all that they achieved during, sometimes, very difficult times. All the women aware of their duties towards other women who did not always have a voice. More than ever 'We Stand Up for Women' has made sense, and that's what all these exceptional women have been doing since 1921!

To celebrate our Centenary a special prize was established for the winning project, a monetary prize as well as a sculpture on the theme of the Centenary. The winner of the award, Bettina Scholl-Sabbatini, was chosen from among these #100for100.

I would like to thank the people who helped me with the creation of this e-book. First and foremost SIE President Anna Wszelaczyńska for supporting me through 'thick and thin'; Maria Luisa Frosio for all the assistance in reading, rereading and rereading again all the applications and making the very difficult selections; Bo Zdzitowiecki for the rewriting and correction of the texts in English; Past-President Renata Trottman Probst, President of the 'Centenary' Jury, as well as the jury composed of Past-Presidents Mariet Verhoef-Cohen, Kathy Kaaf, Ulla Madsen and Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis.

We will not have memories of the Congress celebrating 100 years of Soroptimist, which promised to be extraordinary but which, for health reasons, was cancelled, but you will at least have this e-book to read and to share.

Download it and share it in order to make known the exceptional life and the extraordinary projects of our Soroptimists past and present. Spread it to the whole world! They are worth it!

It has been a real pleasure for me to have had the opportunity to read and process all the stories of our Outstanding Soroptimists. I am sure you will enjoy it too!

It would be a cliché to say that the biennium 2019–2021, which started in the usual way, turned out to be a most unusual one. The pandemic which turned our world upside down locked us in our homes. An awful time of uncertainty came and lives settled down into a pandemic mode. Plans had to be modified or changed, events and meetings postponed or simply cancelled. The Congress fell victim to the pandemic too, even though we looked forward to it so much, and to the centenary celebrations which were originally intended to be a part of it.

But the new way of life brought with it new – digital – opportunities. This speeded up many things such as chartering new clubs which meet only online, organising training courses, webinars, social meetings on screen. We have even managed to vote for the much-needed new Constitution. As both Governors Meetings were virtual an enormous amount of work was required of the Unions and SIE CBLC.

Plans to celebrate the centenary at the congress were 'gone with the wind'. Something else had to be done. The Congress & Centenary Chairperson Gerda Rosiers has managed to combine the tangible with the virtual: a very intense and successful tree planting project, and a tribute to our founding mothers by creating an e-book and publishing profiles of outstanding Soroptimists on social media.

Trees were planted across Europe allowing us to have a small contribution in saving our planet and reminding us that the first Soroptimist Club was founded to save red-wood trees.

But the outstanding Soroptimists' achievements should not just remain in the virtual cloud. We should have an opportunity to return to these eminent biographies and read about these extraordinary women and be proud of them. This booklet will also allow you to boast about such wonderful women and to show it, and them, to the outside world.

Always yours
Anna Wszelaczyńska
SIE President 2019 – 2021

Alberti **ISOLDE** SI Berlin-Charlottenburg (Germany)



After retiring from her job as a dermatologist our club sister Isolde Alberti has worked since 2009 as a doctor for the NGO German Doctors in Dhaka/Bangladesh.

In connection with her activities there she became acquainted with a slum school with two thousand pupils. As a lot of girls have to leave the school after the 8th class in order to work in textile factories or as house-maids or to be married, her desire to do something about it grew.

Her idea was to provide these girls from the poorest families with a professional perspective by offering financial support. This would enable them to escape the poverty trap. With qualifications the girls could gain financial independence leading to a later marriage and better childcare.

This resulted in a scholarship, financed by donations and contributed, to a great extent, by the four Berlin SI clubs and the SI club Meran.

The scholarship is valid for five years, starting with the 9th class. It pays for the school and further education (vocational training), as well as partly for living costs. The donations for the scholarship are paid into the account of the NGO German Doctors and are tax-deductible for the German donors. The grant recipients and the persons responsible for this in Dhaka receive scholarship contracts and contracts of employment. Rights and duties are established. Breaking these rules can result in termination of the contract.

In January 2012 the scholarship project in Dhaka was launched in a ceremony with twelve girls from the 9th and 10th classes. Twenty-five girls benefit from the scholarship at any one time. The first girls graduated from college (HSC exam) at the end of 2016 and left the scholarship programme. Fifteen of these young women are studying economics at the university of Dhaka. The first of them completed her Bachelor degree in summer 2020.

Since 2018 four more young women students are being supported by university scholarships.

Once a year Isolde Alberti travels to Dhaka. The next time probably, if possible, in spring 2021 to check the orderly conduct of lessons, the number of examinations passed and how the grants were expended.

“Constant dripping wears away the stone” or each educated girl will be a woman with a self-determined and better future.

Alving **BARBRO "BANG"** (1909–1987) (Sweden)



Barbro Alving was a well-known Swedish journalist and reporter, one of the most famous in Sweden and a ground-breaker in Swedish Press history, talented both linguistically and stylistically. She was also a member of the Stockholm Soroptimist club.

At the age of 11 she decided to become a journalist. After her baccalaureate she began working as a volunteer at one of the Stockholm newspapers. Earlier on she had started using the nickname 'Bang', a combination of the letters in her first and last name, but also a word for a sudden loud noise. Significant for her?

Barbro was employed as editorial secretary at a women's weekly magazine after working there for only one month. One of her colleagues was Selma Lagerlöf, the 1909 Nobel Prize winner in literature. In 1934 Barbro was employed by Dagens Nyheter (DN), one of the biggest Swedish daily newspapers. Her dream was to be a 'flying reporter'. She travelled and reported from wars, revolutions, Olympic games, sport events, Hiroshima after the atomic bomb, to mention but a few. Eighteen days of reporting from the Spanish Civil war won her a place in Swedish Press history with her upsetting article on the extremely high price the civilian population was paying. She was a Christian pacifist, humanist and lesbian pioneer, at a time when homosexuality was illegal. In the 1930's she left for Paris where she lived a double and somewhat secret life. She had a fiancé at home and a mistress at the boarding house.

She became pregnant by a married man, a colleague, who did not want to take on the responsibility of the baby. Bang became thus a pioneer as a single mother, independent, earning her own living, and a role model – the 'new woman'. Her daughter, Maud Ruffa, was called a 'Bang-baby'. The young girl had to adapt early to a travelling mother. But Barbro's new partner, Loyse Sjöcrona, the first president of the Stockholm Soroptimist Club, stayed at home and they brought up the daughter together.

Barbro Alving was a journalist of astonishing measure, always writing, travelling around the world and lecturing in Sweden on women's issues and peace matters, including in Soroptimist clubs. She spent a year in India where she interviewed both Nehru and Gandhi, and, as she said, 'was confronted with the second reality' where poverty and suffering became ordinary. Barbro reported from many war zones even though she opposed war. In a Swedish Broadcasting programme, she said that women should refuse to work in the war industry, 'If women made a revolution'.

Barbro refused to take part in a civil defence exercise and was sentenced to one month in prison, where she arrived with three suitcases, a lamp, a typewriter and 50 tea bags. In 'Diary from Långholmen Prison' (1956) she wrote about routines at the institution – food, postal service, smoking, walks and limited space – and on warm and friendly relations between prisoners, but also about social exclusion, prostitution and alcoholism.

Barbro Alving was radical in her pacifism and antagonism to nuclear weapons, but also in women's struggle for equality. Her opposition to nuclear power made her leave DN for a job on a weekly magazine. Her talent, her skill, capacity and engagement gave her the freedom to choose assignments. She was a news anchor and had a status as star reporter but also as a radical debater.

Viola **AMHERD** SI Brig (Switzerland)



With her election in December 2018 Viola Amherd has reached the height of her political career. She is not the first female Federal Councillor in the Swiss government, but she is the first female head of the Department of Defence and the first Soroptimist to be a member of the Federal Council.

Her career step by step:

Viola Amherd was born in the Canton Wallis, home territory to the Christian Democratic People's Party, where Catholicism and conservatism prevail. As her father was already a party member, she, too, started her political career in this party. At the age of thirty, with a degree in law, she was elected into the town government of Brig, a town of around 12,000 inhabitants. It is said that she needed some persuasion to become involved in politics. However, with this beginning her career picked up pace and slowly but steadily she climbed the ladder.

In 2001 she became mayor of the municipality Brig Glis and only four years a member of the National Council. Her political position did not always find approval with the Catholic and conservative surroundings. Her commitment to abortion on demand in the first three months of pregnancy (*Fristenlösung*), for example, provoked some opposition from party members.

Soroptimist charter member

Brig was the starting point not only of Viola's political career, as also ran a lawyer's office there and became a charter member of the local Soroptimist club. Regarded

as someone not eager to be in the public eye, she is a silent and conscientious worker with a thorough command of everything she takes on. She is a very down-to-earth, unpretentious, easily approachable woman.

Having been a member of the Federal Parliament for thirteen years and backed by her party, she stood for the Federal Council. At that point she was hardly known to the general public. However, her fellow parliamentarians seemed convinced of her abilities and with their strong support she was elected member of the Federal Council with a clear majority.

The position as head of the Department of Defence may not have been her first choice as her male predecessors were not too successful. However, she faced up to the challenge, studied the files meticulously and took decisions. Decisions that drew attention and interest because they were unconventional in this particular department. By putting women in positions where they had not been before, Viola Amherd wants to use her power to promote women. She intends to provide educational opportunities for women, to make the Swiss army more attractive for them and to increase the percentage of women in her department. In that sense she is a real Soroptimist.

She motivates women, encourages them to commit themselves, to participate actively and to speak up in order to succeed in professional and political life. Seize your opportunities and believe in yourself – that is Viola Amherd's conviction – and be competent in everything you do.

Aslan **DILER** SI Denizle (Turkey))



In Denizli, Diler is an exemplary sister, instrumental in the establishment of our club. Her aim it is to help women to come together in non-governmental organisations and to achieve better living conditions by supporting each other in an organised way. She still participates in the club as a member and supports our activities.

Her scientific and case studies have led to new beginnings in the lives of many students and to many success stories.

In addition to her education in Boğazici and Ege universities, as long-term Head of the Department of Medical Biochemistry she provided well-equipped university education at Pamukkale University. At Pamukkale University Teknopark she developed a working environment which turned into a centre that students can benefit from in their studies.

By establishing the Civil Society Development Centre in our city, Diler provided a professional approach for CSOs and especially women's organizations to carry out all kinds of cooperation and project work.

The Centre provides various types of training and greatly helps women to increase their knowledge and skills in life and to have a voice in the national and international arenas.

Thus, she once again showed us the importance of pioneering and effective Soroptimist in our development and life in society.

Diler organised comprehensive workshops to provide young business people with the possibility to expand, to adapt to business life, meet with business people who can be role-models in helping with their goals, to understand the full quality of the criteria and learn by looking at examples.

In the past, when women paid a heavy price where violence was concerned, we all worked together to establish the Women's Shelter House in Denizli, but our dear exemplary member, the Club's

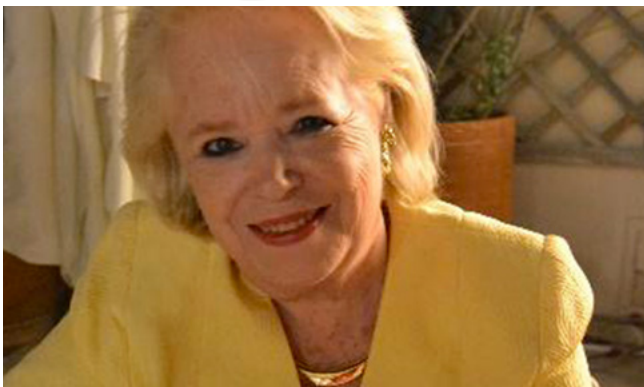
Doyenne, our mentor *Diler Hanım* ('dear lady' in Turkish) ensured, through dialogues with various organisations, that the house was transferred to the social services to ensure its continuity.

She made great contributions to our cooperation with the university and the participation of different businesses and women's organisations in our activities to fight violence.

Since the establishment of our club in 1985, thanks to her vision and great work, she has managed to increase the number of our members.

We hope that she will be with us for a long time and that she will continue to light our way. . .

Athanasiou **POPI** SI 'Kifissia-Ecali' (Greece)



Everything started in October 1985, at a concert in Athens, where Popi (Calliope) Athanasiou was introduced to Angela Frantzeskaki, a charming lady and President of Soroptimist International Greek Union. Angela talked so passionately about Soroptimist and its values that Popi became infected by the bug.

Four months later, Popi, with thirty-six distinguished professional ladies, founded the SIE Club 'Kifissia-Ekali' (Greece), becoming its founding President. On June 1, 1986 she welcomed Eva Skaarberg, the SIE President, in Athens. The same evening, during a wonderful ceremony widely covered by local media, the SIE President Eva delivered the Charter of the SIE Club 'Kifissia-Ekali'. That evening Popi's official Soroptimist life started. A life full of enthusiasm and loyalty to the Soroptimist values and ideals, and a genuine desire to create a lasting and positive impact in the communities we touched.

Popi Athanasiou did so, both as a normal Soroptimist Club member, and as a serving leader. Some of her positions included: SI Club President (three times), Club Coordinator for Human Rights, Chair of the Club's CBLC, Club Delegate to the Union, Union VP, Union President, Governor, Representative of the Greek Union in different Forums, member of SIE CBLC, Chair of Federation CBLC, member of SIE Working Group for the new Constitutions, etc.

Allow us also to show you some selected examples of the projects she and the Club have worked on and the impact these projects have had:

- During Popi's first Presidency the Club initiated an ambitious project: sponsoring the teaching of the Greek language in Marioupolis (Ukraine). This project continued for ten full years and in 2001 earned an SI Award given by SI President Jane Zimmerman during an interim SI Board Meeting in Potsdam. The relationships built and the impact created lasted for years to come.
- Another highlight was Popi's ten-year collaboration with UNHCR. Her Club contributed selflessly by providing medicines, food items, personal hygiene products and clothes to refugees. For this service the High Commissioner of UNHCR in Geneva, Mr. Sadako Ogata, granted the Club two Awards.
- A very special project during Popi's term as Union President was the International Campaign for the Olympic Truce in cooperation with the 2004 Olympic Games, organized in Greece. Ten thousand copies of a 64-page booklet dedicated to Soroptimists around the world was published. The booklet was sent to all SI Clubs requesting them to become Ambassadors of the Olympic Truce in their countries, to promote peace and try to save thousands of women's and girls' lives. This project was in line with Heidrun Konrad's (SIE President 2003–2005) motto '*Women Building Peace*'.

Other projects with a demonstrable humanitarian impact include:

- A free medical examination of 270 underprivileged women, providing them with mammograms, 480 wigs and other material required by women undergoing chemotherapy. This project was carried out in collaboration with the Cancer Hospital of Athens and Brustkrebs Deutschland.
- The supply of special chairs/beds to the women's wards of the Cancer Hospital in Athens.
- The reconstruction of a nursery school in Kalamata after the disastrous earthquake in 1986.
- The supply of sanitary equipment (toilets, washbasins, shower cabins) to the municipality of Kifissia after the 1992 earthquake in Athens.

Other special moments in Popi's Soroptimist life include:

- On four occasions she represented SIE Presidents in the Constitutive Assemblies and Chartering of Clubs in Vaduz (Liechtenstein), Follo (Norway), Apeldoorn II (Holland) and Arad (Romania). She also presided in the Constitutive Assembly of the 2nd SC in Paphos (Cyprus), in the presence of SIE President Eliane Lagasse.

- Her trips to Georgia as representative of SIE President Heidrun Konrad to help in the creation of a Union.
- Being the Godmother of SC Varna (Bulgaria)
- Participating in seventeen GMs, eight SIE and two European Union Congresses.
- Being the trainer on the subject of the Procedural Manual in several seminars in Greece and Cyprus. The Manual was edited by Kirsten Sveder and translated by Popi into Greek.
- Organizing a multinational Congress in Athens (August 30 – September 1, 2002) with the theme 'Women of the Mediterranean Sea over the Centuries', with guests including SIE President Hanne Jensbo, SIE VP Aliya Kadem, Union Presidents of Israel and Italy, the Representative of New Guinea Club, and many others.

Finally, thanks to her studies (Civil Law, 1st degree, Economic and Political Sciences, 2nd degree), Popi has devoted a lot of time and effort to Constitutional matters of Soroptimist and participated, in one way or another, in all phases of amending the Constitutions and By-Laws of our Organization, especially in GM 2008 in Warsaw.

Working with such enthusiasm for Soroptimist has given Popi, and continues to give her, great satisfaction!



Bähnisch **THEANOLTE** Sl Hannover (Germany)



Founding the very first German Soroptimist club in 1930 in Berlin, as well as the companionship and friendship of many distinguished women, greatly influenced Theanolte's life.

Fundamental Soroptimist stances on social responsibilities of women were formed at that time. The hostility against the National Socialists and the deep friendship with Jewish Soroptimists was a binding element for all Soroptimists until the club was dissolved in 1933. However, this also extended to the later period when the members had to convene in secret. Some could only save themselves by leaving Germany and going into exile. Theanolte Bähnisch exchanged letters with many of these club members even after she had left Berlin.

Dorothea, née Nolte, sat the university entrance exam in 1919 in Cologne and went on to study law in the city of Muenster. In 1923 she started her training as an administrative officer. She was the first female administrative lawyer in the Berlin police headquarters. After she married her colleague, Albrecht Bähnisch, she had to fight to stay in her job. However, after her husband became county commissioner in Merseburg, she lost her job because of a law, which existed at that time, stating there could not be two earners in one family.

'Theanolte' Bähnisch (a combination of 'Doro-thea' and her maiden name 'Nolte') founded a publishing house and had two children in 1931 and 1933. After her husband had been dismissed from his position by the Nazis the couple

opened a law firm in 1933 and frequently represented politically persecuted clients. After the start of the war Theanolte Bähnisch lived with her children without her husband, as he had been immediately drafted into the army. In 1943 he was reported missing in Russia.

In March 1946 she was called to work as a chief administrative officer, since she was one of the few legal professionals in Germany that were unburdened by the past. She directed her efforts to organising the reconstruction of the country and finding shelter for thousands of refugees. Theanolte Bähnisch was chief administrative officer in Hannover for thirteen years until 1959.

Theanolte Bähnisch was an extraordinary and talented leader, especially in the pursuit of her numerous commitments to society. Through her voluntary work, and using her vast social network, she greatly contributed to the development of the West German women's movement. After the war she became convinced that long-term peace could only be achieved with the help of women. Therefore, she built a network consisting of both German women and women from other countries. She mediated between different stakeholders and appeared in public at conferences and in the media speaking on topics such as cross-party and cross-community women's policy. She was committed to including German women in the international and European women's movement and she pursued the re-integration of West Germany into the Western cultural and political sphere.

As early as 1947 Theanolte Bähnisch initiated the 'Organisation of Women of the British occupation zone' during a women's conference. In October 1949 she became the first chairwoman of the cross-party and cross-community *Deutscher Frauenring*, which was founded by several women's organisations from West Germany and West Berlin. Thanks to her open-minded personality she managed to include the German women's organisation as an official member in the International Council of Women. When the fifth German Soroptimist club was founded in Hannover, Theanolte Bähnisch again was a founding and permanent member.

Belger **YILDIZ** SI Göztepe (Turkey)



Yıldız Belger became a member of the Soroptimists in 1979. She was a business woman, a shop owner of Turkish artifacts. She has served as a member of the club board many times and as president in 1982–83 and 1983–84.

Yıldız was the IGU coordinator and governor of SI Turkey. In 1991, and again in 1995, she was elected as IGU coordinator of SIE and served two terms.

She represented our club in the Coalition of Women's Clubs in İzmir and served as its first president for three years when the Coalition became officially recognised by the municipality of İzmir.

She has been a leader in many of our Club activities, especially those concerning international projects such as youth exchange programmes and repeated friendship weeks organised for Soroptimist sisters from Europe and the club's friendship links (Austria, England, India, Australia).

Being an IGU person most of her Soroptimist life, Yıldız Belger initiated a club project in 1999: a book of short stories by well-known Turkish woman authors. The book was prepared and printed in English and a thousand copies were given as presents to Soroptimist sisters from all over the world during the 1999 SI Convention in Helsinki, with the belief that friendships should be based on knowledge and literature is one of the best ways of communicating that knowledge.

For the past twelve years Yıldız Belger has been actively involved in an ongoing joint project between our

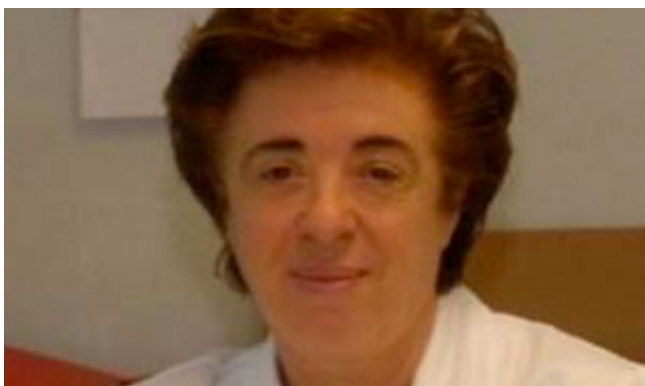
Club and Gündoğdu Çağdaş Toplum Gönüllüleri Club. The project is called 'Evimiz' meaning 'Our House'. The aim of the project is to help in the education of bright children of migrant families from Eastern Anatolia, who live on the outskirts of İzmir. We offer our services by renting and opening activity centres in their neighbourhood. Children are helped with their homework and subjects they are struggling in. They are taken to cultural activity centres such as concerts, plays, opera, ballet, museums, art exhibitions, public libraries.

Seminars are given to mothers on the subjects of civil rights, healthy food and cooking, hygiene, childcare, violence in the family, etc. Also courses in sewing, knitting and other handcrafts are offered.

The project started with one centre in Bornova and now we have nine centres in different neighbourhoods. Yıldız Belger has been on the Executive Committee of the joint project from the beginning. She works with the mothers and also takes groups of children on excursions. The services given are on a voluntary basis and many of our Club members join in with their professional know how.

Considering her lifelong dedication and service to Soroptimist ideals of friendship and understanding and to Göztepe Club activities, we would like to nominate Ms Yıldız Belger for the SIE Celebrates 100 Years- 100 Soroptimist Activities.

Bernardi **ANNAMARIA** SI Rovigo (Italy)



Annamaria Bernardi, born 1945, MD, founder member of Soroptimist International Club of Rovigo is an eminent doctor who has always worked with women and for women helping them to grow and improve their life and health.

She graduated in 1969 in Medicine and Surgery in Padua and specialised in Haematology, Medical Nephrology, Internal Medicine, Food Science and Clinical Nutrition, and Endocrinology. In 1976 she was the first woman in Italy to be appointed Head of Nephrology and Dialysis in Rovigo. She also gave lectures at the University of Padua for forty years. Her professional activity and her social commitment have always been shared with the direct participation in the Soroptimist programmes, involving the Club in the projects it carried out for dialysis patients and for groups of vulnerable people (the elderly, women and children) of the Province, recognised as one of the most deprived in the country.

Between 1977 and 1990 she created the first holiday units for dialysis patients and dialysis units on cruise ships. In 2007, with the Soroptimists of Rovigo, she founded the first dialysis unit in Ifakara, Tanzania. There she trained two Tanzanian doctors and two nurses and sent her technicians and nurses to open the unit which is still operational. In 1995 she was appointed Head of Dietetics Services at provincial level and in 2000 she created, in collaboration with the Padua University Unit for Eating Disorders (anorexia, bulimia, obesity), the first Unit in the Veneto region.

Annamaria was a founding member of the Soroptimist International Club of Rovigo in 1979 and twice the President of the Club. On a national level she promoted the National Osteoporosis project (2007–2009); the Woman's Heart project (2009–2011); the project on Gender Medicine (2013–2017); and in 2019 the project Talking about the Heart. In the field of Gender Medicine, she organised more than sixty-five conferences at national level for health professionals and the general public, involving several specialist medical members of SI as speakers, thus encouraging the promulgation of rules about 'Gender equality also in medicine'.

Social sphere: Annamaria is a member of the Women's Red Cross. She was the medical director of AVIS (1977–2015). She founded the AIDO (Italian Association of Organ Donors) and was its Health Director until 2015. She organised so many conferences and meetings with the general public that the province of Rovigo became the first national area for organ and tissue donors. In 2010 she founded the AVO (Association of Hospital Volunteers) and gave numerous training courses for volunteers, which were also attended by Soroptimist members. She organised several initiatives with Soroptimists about Violence against Women, Violence towards Minors, Assistance for the Elderly.

She became involved in a survey promoted by our Club on the subject of 'Violence against women in the home' in collaboration with the ASL and published at regional level. This survey received an award from the National Commission for Equal Opportunities in 2005.

In the 1980s she collaborated in literacy courses for women in Basso Polesine. In 1984 she carried out a survey on 'Part time, realities and perspectives', repeated in 2000 with the publication of the results on a national scale. In 2005 she was awarded the title of Commander of Merit of the Republic for her health care activities and in 2006 the Certificate of Merit of Public Health for her high professional skills and for the qualified assistance to renal patients in our country.

Bernardi **PAOLA** SI Pavia (Italy)



Paola Bernardi has been Rector of the Collegio Nuovo, Sandra and Enea Mattei Foundation (Pavia), since it opened in 1978. She was appointed by the Founder Sandra Bruni Mattei, a visionary entrepreneur.

The Collegio is one of the fifty Italian University Colleges accredited by the Ministry of University as Colleges of Merit. Its goal is to enhance the talent of deserving female students, even those from disadvantaged backgrounds, by offering them an enriching life experience and an excellent education in an international and multidisciplinary environment, to make them grow as leaders, both professionally and as agents of positive social change, without forgetting the values of being a woman.

Paola dedicated her entire professional life to women's education, in accordance with the Statute of the Foundation. Under her direction the College has always been committed to offering its students a rich and innovative educational programme in addition to the university one. Above all, courses for the development of soft and life skills, mentoring and professional orientation, internships, meetings with personalities from the field of culture and of various professions, especially women, in the belief that meeting women at the top strengthens the students' self-esteem and gives them confidence that women can aspire to such positions. We need to mention but two names: the Nobel laureate Rita Levi Montalcini and the CERN director Fabiola Gianotti.

Well aware of the value of the international dimension, Paola, together with the Foundation Board, promoted various partnerships with universities and colleges in Europe (Cambridge, Heidelberg, Mainz, Pasteur Institute); the USA (Barnard College-Columbia University, Giovanni Armenise Harvard Foundation); and Asia (Dubai Women's College, Ochanomizu University, China Women's University). Approximately two thirds of the College alumnae have benefited from this.

Paola has overseen the education of over a thousand students, and has also followed them in their careers. The results of the College activity are certainly valid, sound and clearly seen, as its alumnae have all found work in their professions, not only in Italy but also in other countries. The College really changed their lives for the better. We especially need to mention two names: Barbara Casadei, the first woman to become Full Professor of Cardiology at Oxford and President of the European Society of Cardiology, and Annalisa Malara, the young doctor who was the first in Europe to identify a Covid sufferer.

In 2007 Paola was honoured by the President of the Republic with the honour of Knight of the Italian Order of Merit and in 2011 by the President of Lombardy with the *Rosa Camuna* Award, given to women who have contributed to the improvement of society.

In 2004–2005 Paola was President of CCUM, the Association of Italian University Colleges of Merit. From 2007 to 2015 she was on the Executive Committee of WEW – Women's Education Worldwide, an association of the most prestigious women's colleges in the world. She has lectured on the topic of women's education at many colleges on all continents. As a result of this activity in 2013 the Collegio Nuovo was invited to collaborate with the Women in Public Service Project, launched by Hilary Clinton to increase the presence of women in public life.

Paola is married and has a son of Lebanese origin.

Beth **MARIANNE** SI Vienna (Austria)



Marianne was born in Vienna on 6 March 1890, the daughter of the, then, well-known lawyer Dr Ernst Franz von Weisl. At that time in Austria women did not have the same access to education as men. It was not until 1896 that a ministerial decree for the first time allowed women to take the *Matura* (school leaving certificate). When, following thorough preparation thanks to private lessons at the Academic High School which at that time was only open to boys, she passed the *Matura*, the examiner asked her very sceptically: "Well, you can speak Greek. But that doesn't mean much. Can you cook potatoes, too?", which she could proudly affirm, as she later recalled.

At the time women were not allowed to study law, so Marianne chose Oriental Studies and immersed herself in Babylonian cuneiform, Hebrew and Aramaic. Here she met Professor Dr Karl Beth, a religious scholar, and married him some time later. She completed her doctorate studies just six weeks before the birth of her first child, Erich in 1912. Soon a second child, Nora, followed. Meanwhile, together with her husband Marianne studied Egyptian and translated it into English.

The years of the First World War brought severe cutbacks for the family. She often had to queue for food for her family as early as 2 am and thus became a convinced pacifist. Friendship among people became an important concern for her. As soon as law schools were opened to women, she took the opportunity and began her studies.

As early as 1921 she was the first woman in Austria to receive her doctorate in law and joined her father's law firm. She also passed a state examination in English and was the first woman in Austria to be appointed court interpreter for the English language at the Vienna Higher Regional Court. She completed her legal training in Upper Austria and in Baden near Vienna. She used to commute regularly by train between her place of work in Baden and her family in Vienna. Occasionally she would find herself wrapped up, perhaps coughing a little, absorbed in a book. Her industrious hands were busy knitting small jackets for children. At the same time, she was described as a skilful hostess who could entertain her guests well and cook excellently. She was also highly praised as a successful speaker in large gatherings. Her simplicity and kindness on the one hand, and her professional qualities on the other, were always admired.

In July 1928 Dr Marianne Beth was the first woman in Austria to be entered on the list of lawyers. From that time on she ran her own law firm in Vienna and repeatedly dealt with issues that particularly affected women, such as marriage law or children's maintenance rights. Numerous publications date from this time. The equality of women was a central concern of hers. She was therefore also strongly involved in the women's movement. In addition to her work in the Soroptimist Club she was at that time also secretary of the Society of Friends (Quakers), secretary general of the International Bar Association, on the

board of the Federation of Austrian Women's Associations and the Austrian branch of the International Association of Working Women and much more. In 1930 she was the winner of one of the four main prizes of the *Kant-Gesellschaft* with a contribution on the psychology of faith. Needless to say, she was once again the only woman and this time also the only Austrian.

The year 1938 was very decisive in her life. She had to apply for the dissolution of the Soroptimist Club and, as a converted Jewish woman, was removed from the list of lawyers and from the list of court interpreters. Through her connection to the Quakers it was still possible to take a number of children – also from Soroptimist Jewish fam-

ilies – to England. She herself fled to the USA after her law firm was dissolved in early 1939.

There she worked from 1939 to 1942 as a visiting lecturer for Sociology and German at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, in a girls' orphanage, and collaborated on various journals. In 1944 she acquired American citizenship, became deputy director of the Universal Translation Bureau in Chicago in 1955, and then worked in the oil industry. She died in New York on 19 August 1984.

Dr Marianne Beth was a pioneer in her field and an example to many women. We admire her for her professional achievements and untiring commitment and we value her human qualities.



Bonifacie **VALENTINE** SI Kourou (Guyana)



A big smile, palpable energy, Valentine Bonifacie – 56 years old, two marriages, six children – has had a forty-year career as a technician at the National Centre for Space Studies in Kourou, Guyana.

Valentine was the eldest of her sisters (eight siblings), a difficult role she arguably escaped by marrying extremely young, at the age of 15. Not yet of legal age, she had to apply for permission to have a 'love marriage' with a Parisian of Italian origin who was doing military service in Guyana.

The first child arrived when Valentine was seventeen and the fourth when she was twenty two. By the time she graduated from college, she had four children and then she began accounting classes. But she did not want to become a secretary and took night classes in electronics and computer studies at CNAM (a higher education establishment). At that time there were thirty boys and only two girls in the class.

She continued her studies by taking courses in mechanography at CESI (computer science college), where she graduated first in her year. She found a job immediately, but her wish was to return to Guyana to help her mother pay for her sisters' studies. The Kourou National Space Centre is a major provider of jobs in Guyana. Valentine was employed as a mechanical secretary, but once again she had other ambitions.

After a year she applied for the very technical job of monitoring the rocket launcher in real time, a key job in

the Kourou Centre. She was told "we don't hire women because they have children." However, she was stubborn and finally got the job that no woman had ever held before. She was to be the only woman there for a very long time and has always said that as a woman, and black, she always had to work three times as hard and prove her skills three times as much.

A committed soroptimist

A job that takes up to thirteen hours of her day, a husband, six children. All this is not enough for Valentine. She is also engaged in Soroptimist. How does she do it? "It's a question of organisation", she replies simply.

She took part in the creation of the Kourou club and then the Arouman club in Guyana. She trained her sisters in both clubs. She was also instrumental in creating the Saint Laurent du Maroni club following a conversation in an airport when she was returning from SIE to Geneva, where she was able, also in the French Union, to help create the websites.

She has been a Knight of the National Order of Merit since 2016, has been invited to the Elysée Palace as part of the creation of Guyanese Pioneers, a business incubator that campaigns for female entrepreneurship which she created and developed to 'bring every woman towards her own leadership'.

She has just been promoted to Chevalier in the Order of the Legion of Honour in recognition of her work.

She has held all the positions in her club as well as the positions of head of the communication committee and webmaster at the Union, and vice president of the overseas region, all this with a lot of energy.

Brazdilova **JARMILA** SI Brno (Czech Republic)



The year 2021 will be a great one: Soroptimist International will celebrate 100 years since it was founded in 1921. Our Brno Club in the Czech Republic will have been in existence for thirty years. And one of our dearest sisters, Jarmila Brázdilová, will be seventy years old!

Everybody who has met her calls her Jarmilka. And everyone from our friendship link clubs around Europe asks about her when she happens not to be present. Whenever there is fun and singing, you can be sure she will be in the centre of it. She is one of the founders of our club, one of the most active members, who would not miss any club meeting or an event organised by the club or by our link clubs. Not only did she take an active part in the founding of our club, but she also helped with the founding of other clubs both in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. She is always ready to share the stories about the history of our club with new members and by using her experience she has been guiding us in our work.

Being a founding member, Jarmilka became the third president of the club in 1995. As her motto was 'Learning foreign languages', she organised language courses in

cooperation with clubs in Bamberg (Germany) and Wels (Austria).

In 1993 she carried out one of the SIE projects – 'Plant a tree, plant hope'. A lime tree avenue was planted in Žabovřesky, a district in the city of Brno. Most of the trees are still there, despite a massive reconstruction of the area.

In 2011 she registered a spring in the National Register of Springs as part of the 'Soroptimists Go for Water Project (Water above all)'. Our club has been looking after the spring since then.

Over the years she has played an active role on the Board in many positions: Treasurer, Programme Director, Assistant Programme Director.

As teacher and researcher at Masaryk University, Faculty of Science, Department of Geography, Laboratory of Geoinformatics and Cartography, in Brno she has inspired hundreds of young women students. At the same time, she strived to connect the academic environment with the general public and non-governmental institutions by organising various events and lectures.

Jarmila Brázdilová definitely is a true Soroptimist and an inspiring personality in our region.

Bredaki-Marinelli **ELENI** SI Heraklion/Crete (Greece)



Soroptimist Eleni Bredaki-Marinelli, born in Heraklion, Crete, in 1950, studied Civil Engineering (1973) and Economics (1977) at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and pursued post graduate studies in Road Traffic Safety and Project Evaluation Techniques in France and the UK, as a fellow of UNDP and the IBRD.

Distinguished for her high sense of volunteering and community service, cultivated since her early childhood within the context of Girl Scouts, Eleni became a founding member of Heraklion's Soroptimist Club Aretoussa in 1990, and has since been working with enthusiasm and dedication for the Club in many different roles.

She has served multiple times as Coordinator for the sectors of Education, Environment, Sustainable Development and Empowerment, and was also elected President of the Club for the periods 2000–2002 and 2012–2014. She is also President elect for the period 2020–2022. Last year, she conceived and launched the successful project 'Women 65+, lifelong learning', aimed at the empowerment of pension age women.

This, as well as other projects of the Club where Eleni has had a leading role (e.g., establishment of the Children Village SOS, Road Safety campaigns, handcrafts workshops, training courses on environmental matters), has had a substantial social impact and significantly enhanced the recognition and visibility of Heraklion's Soroptimist Club. As part of her active engagement with Soroptimism Eleni has been serving since 2016 as Governor of

the Greek Soroptimist Union at the SIE. She has been the President of the Scholarship Committee of the Greek Soroptimist Union (2002–2004) and was recently nominated as e-Club Coordinator of the Union of Greece in SIE. Additionally, she was the godmother of the Soroptimist Club of Chania, Crete, chartered in October 2015.

In parallel with her soroptimist activities, Eleni has been a very successful professional civil engineer who served as a civil servant for more than thirty-five years and promoted in practice the sustainable development of the public works sector in Greece. Between 1985 and 2000 she was Chief Project Manager for the delivery of the EU-funded infrastructure projects in Crete, while between 2000–2009 she was appointed General Director of the Managing Authority of the Region of Crete, responsible for the management of the total allocation of the European funds for Crete. As part of her duties Eleni contributed to the successful delivery of infrastructure projects of critical importance for the local society including roads, hospitals, schools, water supply and sewage projects and waste management projects. Furthermore, she undertook important roles in negotiations on European Regulations between the Region of Crete, the Greek Ministries and the European Commission. She completed her career as Secretary General of the Prefecture of Lassithi, Crete (2009–2011).

Her contribution to the overall development of Crete has been widely acknowledged by many regional and local authorities.

She continues to serve the local society as an active member of many associations including the Hellenic Red Cross, the Association Supporting Cancer Patients, the Cultural Centre of Heraklion, the Association 'Diazoma' for the restoration of ancient theatres, etc.

Eleni is married to Kyriakos Marinellis and they have two daughters, civil engineers and academics, both permanently settled in the UK.

Campanato **GRAZIANA** SI Padova (Italy)



Graziana Campanato was born in Mestre, Venice, on 30 June 1941. She graduated in law in 1964 and in psychology in 1978. She also obtained a diploma in piano at the Conservatory.

She was one of the first women in Italy to become a judge in 1967. She held the office of District Magistrate and was also Head of the Juvenile Court of Venice, Counsellor at the Italian Supreme Court of Cassation and Head of the Court of Appeal of Brescia. She left this office in November 2015 when she was suffering from the illness of which she died just one month later.

During her professional career Graziana chaired trials of subversive offences and serious crimes, among which the ones against '*Autonomia Operaia*' and '*La Mala del Brenta*', were the first trials in the Veneto region against the Mafia. Due to her involvement in these trials, Graziana and her family had to be given protection for several years.

She lectured on several courses and at the Postgraduate School in Legal Professions at the University of Padua. She also wrote essays, articles and books on legal matters.

Graziana was highly committed to civil and social rights, and she was devoted to women and the vulnerable both in her professional and personal capacity. She fought for women's protection and gender equality. During the 1970s she was one of the founders of the Women's Group of the Court of Justice Committee in Padua, joined not only by women judges but also by lawyers, accountants and registrars who shared a common

commitment to the fight for women's rights and gender equality.

In 1990 Graziana was among the founders of the Italian Association of Women Judges (ADMI), which she chaired from 2008 to 2014. As a member of ADMI she was the first woman who took the floor at the Congress of ANM (National Association of Judges) in June 1991 to ask for a higher level of visibility for women in the Judiciary.

Graziana was the European director of the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), a member of the Committee for Equal Opportunities at the Superior Council of the Judiciary, president of the Committee of Bioethics at the Health Directorate of Venice, and a member of the Equal Opportunities Commission at the Board of the Italian Court of Cassation.

She promoted countless meetings and debates about women, and she organised many events to help women in difficult situations. For instance, in 2012, in her role as Head of the Court of Appeal of Brescia, Graziana developed the first Listening and Consultancy Service Against Gender-based Violence and Witnessed Violence (effects of domestic violence on children) in an Italian Court of Justice. Two Soroptimist Clubs – Brescia and Iseo – were involved in this project.

Graziana was also engaged in international adoption. She was a member of the Board for Intercountry Adoption at the Italian Prime Minister's Office, from where she held meetings and conferences in Italy and abroad. She

also developed investigations and research into the procedures for intercountry adoption and the integration of foreign minors into adoptive families.

In the social field Graziana carried out the Helping the Elderly at Home project to promote care of the elderly in a family or other relationship environment. She drew up a suitable bill approved by the administration of the Veneto region by way of law no. 3 of 15 February 2015: 'Regulation of care services for the elderly, people in need or in situations of social difficulty'.

Graziana joined the Soroptimist club in Padua in 1986 and held the offices of Director, Delegate and President. She was also Vice-President of the Italian organisation from 2007 to 2009.

As President of Soroptimist Club Padua Graziana promoted the setting up of benefits for young women in a difficult family or social situation. She also involved other service clubs of the city and the municipality of Padua, which permanently employed a number of those women.

Graziana encouraged the organisation of meetings to support a project to help children in Georgia. She involved local institutions and other local service clubs, and she met the ambassador of Georgia and the delegate of Caritas.

She involved the club in a project to help children in Burkina Faso.

Graziana fostered and coordinated an exhibition and a publication on Abandoned Children, in cooperation with the Municipality of Padua and SEEF, a care facility for mothers and children with problems.



Ciucu **VICTORIA** SI Slatina (Romania)



Victoria embraced the ideals of Soroptimist and was a model of leadership through the way she repeatedly led the club as president, and also as president of the Union.

She worked on various commissions, at club and union level, in which she played a key role: the charter of the SI Târgoviste Club, the project of educating Roma students in an after-school programme, rewarded by the Federation with Best Practice Award in 2012, and many projects on health, environment and civic education.

Victoria campaigned for the rights of disadvantaged women, whom she counselled or represented in courts in cases where they were unconditionally right but unable to obtain justice.

As club president she initiated projects such as the specialisation of nurses in the application in orthopedics of light bandages made of synthetic resins and the establishment of a dental surgery in Slatina for people with modest incomes. The dental surgery was equipped by the Danish club from Skanderborg through a donation made by Hanne Hagn-Meincke.

She carried out advocacy activities to advise young mothers to encourage breastfeeding and to establish the profession of Nurse in Human Lactation, a health discipline newly established in Romania. Together with the Slatina Transfusion Centre and the Arendal-Grimstad SI Club she became involved in an extensive lobbying process for blood donation and first aid training.

Victoria participated in the project on the sexual education of young people which was successfully carried out by our club. She changed the lives of many women and girls; she organised introductory computer courses and English language learning for club members; as SI Varde Club of Denmark awarded scholarships to talented but poor students, she found cases of deserving girls who needed scholarships to begin or continue their studies. Victoria is a mentor to two students in the current mentoring programme of the SI Union of Romania. She is actively involved in all the projects of the club, including Against Trafficking in Human Beings, regardless of who was the project coordinator. She takes care of reporting on the activities of the club, which she publicises in the local press or through television appearances, and she also writes the club's PFRs. As President and Governor, she represented USIR with dignity and in a responsible manner at international meetings. She established friendship links with soroptimists from Norway, Denmark and, more recently, with Austria to boost the club's activities and she invests a lot in correspondence with foreign clubs.

The members of our club know of many good deeds done privately in the community where Victoria has her summer residence. She gives not only logistical but also material aid to the poor people helping them obtain their administrative or judicial rights.

She is a defender and a fighter for the respect of women. Her merits or concrete deeds are hard to encompass in 500 words, but her spirit of justice and the way she imposes the values of Soroptimist, teamwork, altruism and good understanding all entitle her to be on the panel of 100 exemplary Soroptimists and to represent Romania.

Clarich **GABRIELLA** SI Trieste (Italy)



Gabriella, born in Trieste in 1954, is an oral and maxillo-facial surgeon at the Burlo Garofalo Children Hospital in Trieste. She became a Soroptimist member in her early adulthood.

In 1993, when professor Giuseppe Rossi, Chief Surgeon in the oral and maxillofacial department, retired, Gabriella took his place. In 2000, after a hard selection, her position was confirmed and there she remained until 2017 when she retired.

Unfortunately, following severe complications during the birth, the second child, Giuliano, has since suffered from a serious disability. Gabriella lost her husband in 1996 when Cristina was 13, Giuliano 11 and Eleonora only 2.

Having directly experienced the importance of oral disease prevention and cure in disabled patients, Gabriella developed a special dental service for handicapped people in her hospital department. The patients were treated both when awake and deeply sedated. This way she could treat willing, partially willing or non-willing disabled patients.

The city of Trieste has strong links with the city of Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina, because, during the Balkan war in the early 1990s, three reporters from Trieste – Lucchetta, Ota, D'Angelo – who went to Mostar to report on the tragedy of war, lost their lives after an ambush when they made a shield with their bodies to save a child.

In 2005 Caritas in Mostar asked for help for the Sacred Family Centre, a community of up to fifty young disabled people living alone, having lost their families. These peo-

ple were suffering from severe dental diseases and did not have access to the national health system. Counting on the help from the Burlo Garofalo Hospital, the generosity of many dentists from Trieste and the logistic support offered by Caritas in Trieste, a clinic was created at the Centre. In one year many patients were treated using local anaesthetic. However, it was impossible to treat the non-willing ones. Gabriella asked for the support of the intensive care unit of the city hospital and persuaded the Chief Surgeon, who was deeply moved by her and her team's involvement with the disabled patients, to arrange the shipping of the entire equipment needed for deep sedation to Mostar.

Gabriella herself travelled eighteen times to Mostar. Each time ten to fifteen disabled patients, deeply sedated, were treated for descaling, filling, root canal therapy and tooth extraction in one session. Two technicians and two or three dentists, who also became drivers on those occasions, took part in each mission. During the first missions all the volunteers came from Trieste. Later they also came from different Italian cities.

In all of Bosnia-Herzegovina there is no other centre which treats disabled people with complex dental diseases who need deep sedation. News of this centre spread fast and people came from far and wide to the centre to seek help.

The Soroptimist International Trieste Club supported the project. In order to improve dental hygiene a book

written by Gabriella was published in Mostar, both in Italian and Croatian. One thousand copies were distributed in centres for the disabled and in kindergartens for parents and teachers to have access to short lessons full of illustrations.

In Gabriella's ten years of travels to Mostar oral hygiene and prevention have improved dramatically, as has the idea that disabled patients can undergo oral disease prevention and cure.

In 2004 Gabriella took part in a medical mission to the Village of Hope in Dodoma, Tanzania, where children with AIDS, abandoned by their families, are taken in and treated. There were more than 170 children,

aged from less than one to seventeen. No dentist had ever visited them.

The work was hard. Together with her daughter, Cristina, who is a virologist, Gabriella prepared mental records of all the children, with a record of their dental health. After each visit the children received a colourful toothbrush as a gift. Their sanitary problems were communicated to the nearby American hospital, which took care of them.

Gabriella has always been active in the Soroptimist Club, both as a Counsellor and as President in 2016–2017. During those two years many services in the fields of education and social responsibility were carried out. At present she is vice-delegate for the Club.



Crusell **JYTTE** SI Kastrup-Taarnby (Denmark)



Jytte Crusell became a Soroptimist in 2005, and since then she has held several posts in our club.

For a time, the number of members went down, but when she became president her leadership, enthusiasm and positivity were instrumental in reversing the decline.

Jytte is a true entrepreneur. As a very new soroptimist she organised, inspired by our local Lions Club, a game of bingo for the members of our club and for guests.

After the club had visited a local language school, Jytte's interest was aroused to help immigrants and refugees have a better future in Denmark by learning the Danish language. Jytte has been working every week at the language school as a volunteer for four years, and she has made many contacts with women from all over the world.

A very important reason to nominate Jytte is her efforts for the annual charity bazaar of our club. From the very beginning, she has made contact with the stall owners and kept their interest alive, so they sign up year after year. She is a true hostess. She is a factotum during the bazaar and always has a kind word for the stall owners, the guests and the members of our club. The profits have grown steadily, and in 2019 the profit from the bazaar was donated to Centre Delwende (CD) in Burkina Faso and Maternity Care in Amager, Denmark. In 2020 our club held a virtual game of bingo, and the profits were donated to local causes. Once again Jytte was very active in helping to bring in the funds.

Interest in the CD began in 2018 when our club held a lecture by Anne Simonsen who was then working for

the Danish Embassy in Burkina Faso. She talked about the CD which takes care of 200 women, who are accused of being witches.

The women earn their living by making cotton yarn from scratch. Jytte has become a "yarn ambassador", and she sells the yarn sent from Burkina Faso in Denmark. The profit has been used to teach the women to knit and by that to improve the women's possibility of making their own living.

Furthermore, the profit from the bazaar has helped to improve the options for the education and empowerment of the women, as all the residents at the CD are illiterate but eager to learn. In cooperation with the local Soroptimist club, named Princesses Yennega, in Ouagadougou, the purchase of teaching materials was organised and a female teacher was employed for one year.

So far twenty-five women have been taught mathematics, and to read and write in the local language to be able to start up a small shop when they leave the centre.

A course in hygiene has also been held, and waste sorting bins, wash basins and water bottles have been bought. This has resulted in better understanding of tidiness, toilet cleaning and of hand hygiene and as a result diarrhea has almost disappeared.

The projects in CD have become Jytte's 'baby'. She really shows how much she involves herself with women in the society and helps to change the lives for these women. Jytte now gives lectures on the yarn project, and by doing this she again shows energy and commitment.

Czieslik **ANNEMARIE** SI Club Lübeck / Bad Schwartau (Germany)



A 'cry for help' in the international SI chat room reached Annemarie Czieslik, Soroptimist of Club Lübeck / Bad Schwartau in August 2001: the daughter of a Soroptimist in a club in Mongolia was suffering from leukemia and was in very unwell. Lifesaving medication was unavailable. Annemarie was about to travel to Mongolia for a vacation. Immediately, she was determined to act and, with financial support from Soroptimists of her club, purchased the medication and took it to Mongolia. Before returning to Germany Annemarie visited the child at the hospital.

This experience prompted Annemarie to consider further steps, as it was evident the girl would die, because in Mongolia, at that time, physicians did not have the expertise, technical equipment or adequate medication for chemotherapeutic treatment. As many Mongolians are nomads, they often discontinued their children's treatments because they had no accommodation in the city.

Annemarie focused all her energy on launching a fund-raising campaign to enable the girl to be treated in Lübeck and ultimately accomplished much more!

The entire treatment in Lübeck, maintenance medication and travel expenses for follow-up visits between 2001 and 2006 were all made possible through Annemarie's tireless initiative and thanks to the support from more than 500 individuals and organisations in and around Lübeck and from more than twenty-six Soroptimist Clubs from thirteen countries. Finally, the girl was cured and is now mother of two children.

In 2002 the girl's mother and Annemarie began work to set up a shelter house for parents on the hospital campus in Mongolia. To support the project financially Annemarie launched annual charity winter markets selling Mongolian handicrafts, which she brought back from visits to Mongolia. SI Club Passau and the Fund of SI Germany made significant donations. The shelter was inaugurated in 2005 by the Mongolian SI clubs and has housed 600 members from 240 families of children undergoing treatment at the hospital.

In 2006 Annemarie arranged for a Mongolian surgeon to shadow a surgeon in Lübeck in order to study the placing of port devices for the administration of chemotherapeutic drugs. Our club donated port devices and surgical instruments, basic diagnostic equipment and dental instruments for a newly opened dental practice and sponsored the studies of a Mongolian student in Berlin.

Between 2003 and 2010 Annemarie organized six trips to Mongolia for twenty-three Soroptimists from nine clubs, and other interested participants, who returned infected with the idea of the project. Other SI clubs worldwide joined in to help by developing an information booklet for parents of children with leukaemia, enabling internships for Mongolian nurses in Germany, donating money and infusion pump systems, and running a marathon to support the shelter.

In 2013 and 2014, after retiring from her professional life as a psychotherapy physician, during four three-week sojourns with the Senior Expert Service of the German government, Annemarie assigned herself to the challenging task of establishing and developing the first Balint groups in Mongolia. Over the past two decades Annemarie has travelled to Mongolia around twenty-five times and has studied Mongolian. Thanks to Annemarie's initiative and commitment many individuals and Soroptimists worldwide have supported and promoted projects in Mongolia raising approximately €100,000 and helping more than 1,000 children and adults.

Dagain **CHRISTINE** SI Foix (France)



In 1995 Christine was a member of the French delegation to the international Soroptimist convention in San Francisco where she carried out a study on noise.

In 1998 her activities were rewarded with an SI 'Noise' best practice award.

From 1997 to 2001 she was environmental coordinator at the European Federation and in 1998 she founded an association to help deaf children around the world, which has been working tirelessly with very poor children in Brazil for twenty years. Since the creation of this association more than 1,210 new devices and 810 recycled and adapted devices have been supplied during annual missions in which Christine actively participates. She has also collected and distributed more than 100 kg of toys per year, plus books and medical equipment.

From 2001 to 2003 she was SI representative at WHO and between 2003 to 2010 SI representative at Unesco.

In 2005 Christine was awarded the 'Soroptimist Shining star' for her services!

From 2005 to 2007 she was secretary of SIE.

In 2012 she took over the presidency of the French Union, after having been governor and then Vice-President.

She launched a major campaign to name streets after women, and in this way to honour Suzanne Noel. Today Christine is the point of reference on everything there is to know about our founder.

She also initiated Operation Cinema during the campaign on fighting against violence towards women. The operation aims to bring together all French clubs around the same film, at the same time and to organise round tables or conferences to raise awareness of this subject. All the presidents who followed her have continued with this remarkable tradition.

Her presidency has been significant as Christine has worked hard, has had good and close relationships with all the clubs and is known for her kindness and compassion.

She is an extraordinary Soroptimist ambassador, has spoken out tirelessly, and has been instrumental in the creation of several clubs including the Bizerte club founded following a hearing aid fitting mission with deaf children. She has also been the godmother of many Soroptimists both in her club and elsewhere. Recently she was strongly involved in the creation of the first European e-Club: the Suzanne Noel France club, of which her daughter-in-law is the president. She has helped many Soroptimists to become involved both in clubs and in our Union.

She is truly remarkable. She has come to the attention of the local and national government for her efforts and as a result was distinguished by becoming an Officer of the Legion of Honour on 4 July 2009.

de Bettencourt **MARIA DE LOURDES** SI Lisboa Caravela (Portugal)



Maria de Lourdes was the first President of the first Soroptimist Club in Portugal. She is a “role-model in terms of her profession and achievements; someone who has made an extraordinary contribution to her community, and who embodies our values, having changed the lives of women and girls in a unique way.” Maria de Lourdes was born in Ericeira in 24 January 1919, the daughter of a primary school teacher and a customs officer. Driven by curiosity, she learned to read by herself when she was only four years old. She was equally curious about human nature and as a young adult studied psycho-pedagogy. By 1947, and at the age of 28, she had become a qualified teacher in the field, and started working at the Júlio de Matos Hospital where she was responsible for approximately fifty disabled children.

The Júlio de Matos Hospital is a psychiatric and mental health hospital located in the city of Lisbon. It was considered one of the best in Europe at the time and was the first to establish a Psychosurgery Unit to Portugal. It also introduced several innovations to clinical psychology. It was in the Psychosurgery Unit that the leucotomy surgical method was developed by Professor Doctor Egas Moniz. He would later receive the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine.

Maria de Lourdes was part of Egas Moniz’s team and wrote many articles that appear in the Annals of the Hospital.

In 1953 Maria de Lourdes married Luís Tedeschi Bettencourt, a pilot officer in the National Air Force. In 1954 she was forced to leave Júlio de Matos Hospital to tend to her husband who had suffered grave injuries resulting from a plane crash. Meanwhile she completed a course in Applied Psychology and continued publishing articles as well as a book about parenting entitled ‘My child’s life’. In the 1960s she wrote, taught and worked in fields such as organisational psychology, conflict management and clinical psychology.

However, her husband’s worsening health had its toll on her. In her own words, “The emotional pressure was getting more and more intense and my emotional fatigue grew. The years were speeding by, without evidencing anything that distinguished one from the other, and I just kept living, adapted to a faceless monotony... I felt something was lacking in my mental activity. My family and professional life weren’t enough to satisfy me.” In 1984 Maria de Lourdes heard about a small group of professional women, many of them German and some Portuguese, who wanted to form a Soroptimist club in Portugal. A year later, in October 1985, the first SI club in Portugal was founded. The club consisted of twenty members. Maria de Lourdes was its President. Maria de Lourdes has been heralded by many as the embodiment of the Soroptimist spirit because of her perceptiveness, the passion with which she embraced her profession, and the love with which she dedicated herself to others, especially to the rights and needs of children, and in particular disabled children. Well into her 90s, and while she was already living in a retirement home (the *Casa da Cidade*), she continued working as a volunteer providing psychological assistance. It is my honour to present her as a candidate. I have just had the opportunity to convey to her our decision and, despite the fact she is 102 years old, she showed a lot of enthusiasm to participate in the SIE Congress & Centenary Event 2021.

De Souza **GÉNÉROSE** SI Lomé Aurore (Togo)



Générose de Souza is the president of the Soroptimist Club Lomé Aurore. She entered the club thirty years ago, strong and full of dreams. After only a few months, thanks to her passion and dedication, she was inducted.

She was twice secretary, several times counsellor and three times president. Her last term is still ongoing (2019–2021). How not to describe such a woman as persevering and a fighter? Very rigorous in her profession, Générose de Souza kept her post until her retirement.

Highly appreciated by her colleagues and the members of her club, Générose enjoys singing and taking part in concerts, and she invites the sisters to follow her on her tours. Générose even paid our dues out of her own pocket to keep the Soroptimist flame alight.

Rigorous on certain subjects but gentle and happy, Générose considers her club mates as members of her own family. She is used to saying that the Soroptimist organisation is like a big family which has accompanied her for decades and which has allowed her to realize not only her own potential but also the potential of all these women that our societies have pushed aside. In her eyes Soroptimist is synonymous with evolution.

Despite the existing internal 'bickering', Générose calms conflicts with her sense of humour, her joy of living, her understanding of others and above all her solidarity, which are values that Soroptimist embodies throughout the world.

During her mandate a borehole in Eklipoké, on the outskirts of Lomé, as well as latrines for the villagers, were built.

We had to repair the roofs of a public school in Sigbehoué and we constructed a classroom. We have been running the adult literacy evening course for over fifteen years.

The flagship project is to open a four-class school in Eklipoké in order to avoid long, difficult journeys over rough terrain for the children of this village. We have already built two toilets in this village to prevent the contamination of the water table with human waste in the open.

Générose has put in place a reliable financial system in order to avoid the accumulation of late fees. She fights against violence towards housewives and young girls.

With the support of Sister Générose our action to help premature babies has gained new momentum as it has encouraged the cleaning of hospital rooms for mothers of premature babies. We have also made contributions to purchase small materials and prenatal milk.

In view of all this we believe that Sister Générose is an outstanding Soroptimist who has made a difference through her extraordinary contribution to our club and who embodies the values of Soroptimist.

Thanks to her dedication and her way of being, Générose is that model which young girls could aspire to be. This is how she instinctively provides assistance to poor girls in her neighbourhood and to female porters in the market.

We believe she is an outstanding Soroptimist who has made a difference through her extraordinary contribution to our club and who embodies the values and ideals of Soroptimist International.

Deonna **LAURENCE** SI Genève Rhône (Switzerland)



Honorary member of the Geneva Rhône Soroptimist Club, writer, photographer, world reporter, UNESCO Peace Education Prize recipient

Laurence Deonna was born into Geneva upper bourgeoisie in 1937. At a very young age she broke free from the city's pervasive Calvinism that was at odds with her quirky and adventurous temperament, the same temperament that was to make her an exceptional pioneer of outstanding women's reporting. With her lively and colourful style, exuding both empathy and humour, Laurence has reported on life stories from countless countries, with the Middle East and former Soviet Central Asia her favourite regions. Laurence was president of the Swiss section of Reporters Without Borders from 2000 to 2003, and has been involved with a broad range of media, including the British channel Frontline, which, as its name suggests, films on the front lines. She has also never shied away from taking risks and even managed to penetrate Evin, Ayatollah Khomeini's formidable political prison, in Tehran in 1984.

Laurence herself has been the subject of a number of filmed portraits. She has exhibited photos from her reporting assignments in Switzerland, Europe, the USA and Canada, and is the author of fifteen or so books, most of which have been translated into other languages.

The second phase of Laurence's life has been one of commitment, with her work reflecting the condition of women. As a staunch feminist she never fails to question and seek answers from women wherever she goes in the

world. In doing so she has gained entry not just into intellectual circles but also the harems of Arabia and Yemen.

War has also been a constant in Laurence's work, and specifically women living through war. She has sought to give a voice to those who have no say, or so little say, when wars are waged. Denouncing war through women's stories has therefore become a *leitmotiv* for her, particularly in two of her books, *Mon enfant vaut plus que leur pétrole* (My child is worth more than their oil), and especially in the pages of *La guerre à deux voix* (War with two voices), which brings together the accounts of Israeli and Arab women – enemies on opposing sides.

Translated into several languages *La guerre à deux voix* was the subject of a documentary film that was shot on location. It has also been dramatized and staged in theatres in a number of countries. Sadly, it remains more topical than ever.

This work has earned Laurence many awards, including the *Médaille Genève Reconnaisante*, which she received from her city in 1987. Also in 1987 Laurence was the recipient of UNESCO's Prize for Peace Education. At the award ceremony the Director-General of the organisation introduced her thus:

Ms Deonna is deeply committed to Human Rights and especially Women's Rights. Her work is a shining example of what information and communication, not to mention talent and courage, can bring to international understanding by combining the passionate search for truth and the constant quest to separate fact from fiction in people's cultural backgrounds.

Doretti **VITTORIA** SI Grosseto (Italy)



Vittoria Doretti is a sunny woman whose enthusiasm and vitality are contagious and engaging. She has devoted her life to the redemption of women who have been mistreated, abused or raped by their husbands or partners. For years she has been at the forefront of a project which began ten years ago and which today has become a magnificent concrete reality. She is an MD and director of the Complex Operational Unit – Promotion and Ethics of Health of the Local Health Board of South East Tuscany in Grosseto.

After years of seeing battered women arriving at the hospital and being treated, but often with no attention being paid to their dramatic situation, together with magistrates, law enforcement agencies and most of all anti-violence centres, she helped develop the 'Rose Code', whose symbol is a white rose.

This is linked to other hospital codes allowing highly qualified staff to identify victims of violence upon arrival who are then treated according to a specific, protective and dedicated protocol. It is essential to train social workers and healthcare personnel, create a safety network around these women, enabling them to get a real chance to find a way out of the violence they have experienced. Launched at the Grosseto Public Hospital in 2010, Dr Vittoria Doretti's project progressively spread over the Tuscan Region where it has been adopted by all public structures and has spread throughout Italy as well as abroad. Vittoria is advisor to Health and Equal Opportunity Ministries.

She has collaborated in the drafting of laws to fight violence towards women, is a consultant in many Italian parliamentary commissions in matters related to femicide and hate crimes, and coordinates international co-operation projects.

She took a master's degrees in Forensic Sciences (Intelligence, Investigation, Security and Criminology) as well as Bioethics, and deals with health and gender medicine. She is a point of reference for both the corporate world and regional and national organisations dedicated to contrasting gender violence, as well as for all the victims of the crimes committed against members of the Grosseto Club since 2009.

She has also involved the Soroptimist Association in its mission in favour of women disseminating and helping more than fifty clubs to implement the Rose Code in hospitals of many Italian cities.

The "Rose Code" became a Soroptimist national project in Italy during the presidency of Anna Maria Isastia (2013–2015). During this period Vittoria Doretti devoted herself to going wherever her presence was required to explain, organise, and increasingly disseminate the protocols of the Code.

She teaches in schools and universities spreading her values and principles everywhere. She has received many awards and acknowledgments for her activities.

In 2018 the President of the Italian Republic conferred to her the Honour of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic "for having conceived, developed and promoted, with particular dedication and professional commitment, the Rose Code operational protocol, dedicated to victims of gender-based violence and hate crimes, incorporated into national guidelines on aid and assistance to women victims of violence." The Italian Union awarded her the Soroptimist Award of Italy 2015. Vittoria Doretti is a woman and a soroptimist who makes a difference and who is constantly committed to improving the condition of women.

In 2016 She was named by "Corriere della Sera" among the 100 most influential women in the world.

Eberle **MARIE-LOUISE** SI Liechtenstein (Liechtenstein)



Marie-Louise Eberle is a Soroptimist who not only lives the ideals of the Soroptimist movement herself, but has had a positive influence on the lives of many girls and women and has raised awareness in our club of the importance of development work. Marie Louise Eberle was born on 21 April 1946. She is a founding member of the Soroptimist Club Liechtenstein, which was launched in 1991.

During her professional career she was significantly involved in the development of the Liechtenstein Refugee Aid and worked for thirty years on the Board of Trustees of the Liechtenstein Development Service. As head of this working group, it was her central task to represent the concerns, problems and needs of the refugees to the government, to various offices and public authorities. She always fulfilled her tasks with the greatest respect for the people in need and pursued her goals with the greatest commitment. Even after her retirement she continues to support people in need. The result of her former work and her current passion was the close cooperation of the Soroptimist Club Liechtenstein with the Liechtenstein Development Service. This is currently also reflected in the annual Refugee Day which we hold in Liechtenstein together with various politicians and organisations.

One of Marie-Louise's dearest wishes is a development project in cooperation with Caritas in Ethiopia. The Catholic Mission in Meki, Ethiopia, established a small boarding school for girls on its premises. Thirty girls between eight and eighteen years of age live here. Almost all of them

come from very difficult social backgrounds, have been sent to work instead of school by their parents or relatives, have been beaten, exploited, raped or sexually abused. In the Girls Hostel they find protection, help, care, friends, and have the opportunity to attend school. In short new life perspectives open up for them!

Another very important project we support on Marie-Louise's initiative is the 'Donkey-Project' which is part of a Women Workload Reduction Project in Meki, Ethiopia.

Water is scarce in rural communities. Women and children have the responsibility to fetch water from distances as far as six kilometres from village to water source. Thanks to the project the workload of hundreds of poor women and children is reduced through the provision of donkeys and carts as a means of transport.

Some of our club members have already had the opportunity to visit these projects together with Marie-Louise. She also regularly shares with us the progress of these women through presentations and reports. She opens to our club a view to a completely different world, to all the needs but also to its beauty.

We would like to thank Marie-Louise for these special insights and experiences. She herself usually works in the background and doesn't look for publicity. We would like to nominate her as an outstanding Soroptimist who has made an extraordinary contribution to the community, changed the lives of women and girls in a unique way and thanks to this made a real difference to our Soroptimist Club Liechtenstein.

Ekue **MICHÈLE** Si Lome 1 (Togo)



Michèle was born on 29 September 1943. She obtained her baccalaureate after the independence of Togo in 1962 and pursued literary studies at the University of Rennes, France. After three years of law in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, she obtained her diploma as a tax inspector in 1973 at the National Tax School in Clermont-Ferrand, France. Back home she held the post of Tax Inspector which until then had been reserved only for men. In carrying out her work she realised that women were not aware of their rights. At that time, together with her sister, she joined a group of intellectual women representing the elite and they created the first Soroptimist club in Togo.

Within the club she occupied the positions of Treasurer, Delegate and served as President from 1981 to 1983. Thanks to her rigour and availability the club continued its projects connected with access to drinking water and education. Her experience, her sense of diplomacy and her negotiating skills allowed her to forge partnerships and raise funds. She constitutes one of those institutional memories to which the members refer and plays the role of mentor for young people. She contributed to the expansion of Soroptimism in the sub-region. She worked on the Goodwill and International Understanding and also economic and social committees.

Having become Deputy Director of Taxes Michèle was appointed Minister of Trade and Prices in 1994.

Strong in her convictions Michèle founded, with other women, the GF2D – Reflection and action group: Women, Democracy, and Development – in 1992. This organisation aims to make women aware of their rights and enable them to participate in public life in their country. The GF2D led to the creation of CRIFF – Centre for Research of Information and Training for Women – which in turn led to the creation of the *Maison de la Femme*, a Listening and Legal Assistance Centre, and the publication of a magazine 'Woman differently'.

Michèle is also a founding member of WILDAF / FeDDAF / TOGO – Women, Law and Development in Africa – which promotes the emergence of women at local, national, regional and international levels. Created in 1997 it trains them in law, microfinance and leadership. Michèle is committed to fighting violence towards women and early marriage.

A tireless activist, Michèle is also a member of the CCOFT – Consultative Council of Women of Togo, and of REFAMP-TOGO – Network of African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians of Togo.

Michèle Ekue embodies a model of humility and self-sacrifice for the cause of women and children and deserves to be in the spotlight.

Emery **COLETTE** SI Aurillac (France)



Colette was national coordinator of the Human Rights and Women's Conditions Commission from 1986 to 1990, Vice-President of the SI French Union, President of the French Union from 1992 to 1994, head of the extension committee from 1994 to 1998, editor of the *Sorop Magazine* from 1993 to 2005.

In 1993, as President of SI France, she launched a major national campaign for AIDS research and prevention. As a result, a cheque for one million francs was given in 1994 to Professor Montagnier in the presence of Simone Veil, former Minister for Health, and the presidents of SIE and SI and 500 Soroptimists representing several Unions. These funds were to be used to create an AIDS research laboratory in Abidjan. In 1996 Colette worked alongside Professor Montagnier and Federico Mayor for the inauguration of this laboratory, which bears the Soroptimist *Union Française* plaque. In 1995, at the behest of Simone Veil, Colette became a Knight of the National Order of Merit, then an Officer in 2009.

She then took steps with elected officials in Paris to have Suzanne Noël entered in the register of celebrities buried in the Montmartre cemetery. An official ceremony took place at the cemetery in the presence of numerous French and European elected officials and Soroptimists.

Colette used the moneys given in recognition of her tenure as President of the French Union to give an award to a woman inventor at the Monaco International Inven-

tors Prize in the presence of Prince Albert. She established contacts with the Soroptimists of Monaco. This was followed by a twinning with the Aurillac Club and joint action for the benefit of patients with Alzheimer's disease. A football match was organised in Aurillac in the presence of Prince Albert.

In 2004 a tribute was paid to Marie Marvingt, native of Aurillac, universal sports woman and pioneer of aviation medicine, by creating cards and a stamp bearing her picture.

In 2015 Colette designed plaques for the entrance hall of the Hospital of Aurillac to pay tribute to Suzanne Noël. They were unveiled by architect Françoise Lathuille.

It should be noted that in parallel with her unflinching commitment to Soroptimist International, Colette founded the Departmental Committee for UNICEF in 1976 and became administrator of the French UNICEF Committee from 1990 to 1996 in charge of missions in Niger and Mali. She was President of CIDFF, Cantal from 1992 to 1999, regional manager of CCNFF (in 1997 French delegation to the GA of the International Council in Ottawa), member of the International Council of Francophone Women.

In 1997 Colette met with Boutros Boutros Ghali in Paris.

She knew how to carry the values of the Soroptimists high, was its ambassador and was the subject of numerous articles in the local and national press.

Eren **PEYMAN** SI Gaziosmanpaşa (Turkey)



Gerd Louise Molvig was born in 1943. She is a dedicated Soroptimist. Through her professional work and positions held in the organisation, she has been, and remains, a clear voice in the fight to improve women's issues, nationally and internationally. She truly is a Global Voice for Women.

Peyman Eren was born in 1937. She graduated from the Technical Higher Education Institute for Girls in 1960. After graduating she began working as a high school teacher at Trabzon Girls Vocational High School.

In order to be educated and trained to be recruited at the Ministry of National Education to fill the required posts, she was sent to the United States of America for one year. When she returned to Turkey, she was awarded a twelve-month scholarship by the French Embassy in Turkey to develop her experience in various cultures and educational systems in line with the Turkish-French Cultural and Technical Cooperation Programme.

In the following years she was first appointed principal at the Vocational High School for Girls, and later at the Technical Higher School for Girls.

Since Peyman was a very hard-working, dedicated person with very comprehensive skills and knowledge on the education of girls and women, and she was well-deserving of this, she was promoted to the position of General Director at the Ministry of National Education in 1986, and became responsible for the vocational education of girls. She provided invaluable added value on the education of girls and women contributing to opening various

vocational courses and schools throughout Turkey. After a long and invaluable service of more than thirty years, she retired in 1994.

Peyman has always believed in the importance of non-governmental organisations. Therefore, she started working on this while she was General Director at the Ministry. She assumed a significant role in organising the Training for Peace Symposium, which was arranged in collaboration between the Ministry of National Education and the Turkish Soroptimist Clubs Union in 1986. She was one of the founders of Gaziosmanpaşa Soroptimist Club in 1988 and Başkent Society Training Centre in Ankara in 1998.

Başkent Society Training Centre was established as a hub for mutual and coordinated cooperation among the Soroptimist Clubs in Ankara. The goals and objectives of this Centre are to help girls and women from rural areas to adapt to life in Ankara. Thanks to Peyman's personal initiative to establish a local healthcare centre within this Training Centre, a vaccination campaign for Hepatitis B was carried out. The illness was very common between 1998 and 2000.

Peyman has been serving as a Soroptimist educational coordinator from the beginning of this venture. She supported and arranged the openings of literacy courses, vocational courses, meetings on women problems. In addition, she is currently cooperating with the respective institutions of the Ministry of National Education in order to make education of girls and women more widespread.

She demonstrated our handcrafts and delivered a speech during the exhibition on 'Our disappearing handcrafts' which was organised by Sarajevo Soroptimist Club together with the Ministry of Culture, with the participation of Soroptimists from various countries. The exhibition took place on 08–20 October 2002.

Peyman served as President of Gaziosmanpaşa Soroptimist Club in Ankara between 2003 and 2005.

She gathered all the material on her background and experience in a book entitled 'A Life dedicated to Education'. The book included details of her hard work dedicated to Soroptimist efforts. It was published in 2020 and Peyman donated part of the proceeds from its sale to Gaziosmanpaşa Soroptimist Club.

Peyman Eren has been a very good example not only in the professional arena, but also by contributing to the change of lives of women and girls in a unique way.



Ferit **TEK** Müfide SI Istanbul (Turkey) 1892–1971



Müfide Ferit Tek, together with fourteen other women, inaugurated the Soroptimist Istanbul Club in 1948, the first club in a Muslim-secular country. The SI Turkey Müfide Ferit Tek Fund gives scholarships for art and literature in her memory.

Müfide Ferit Tek was one of our first female novelists.

Her father was an officer in the army and her mother was the daughter of a Plevne Victory (1877) martyr. Due to her father's posting she began primary school in Trablus (today's Libya), and attended the St. Joseph School, where she learned Italian and French. In 1903 she was sent to the Versailles Highschool in Paris. She met and married Ahmet Tek, a member of the Turkish foreign affairs office in Paris. In 1921 she graduated from *Ecole des Sciences Politiques*. Due to diplomatic mission postings she was away from her homeland for twenty two years living in Paris, London, Warsaw and Tokyo. Her novels '*Aydemir* (a man's name), '*Pervaneler*' (Moths) and her third novel '*Affolunmayan Günah*' (*Die unverzeihliche Sünde* or Unforgivable Sin, 1933) were published in German when she was abroad. The subject of the last novel was the Turkish War of Independence.

How Müfide became a Soroptimist:

At a meeting in Paris with the French Ambassador's wife, Mme Arsene-Henry, Müfide learned about Soroptimist International, an organisation which gathered intelligent professional women with the idea of doing good for society, and was introduced to Dr Suzanne Noel. After selecting the founding members, she took action. Dr Noel came to Istanbul and they began the pioneering work. Dr Noel

gave speeches and conferences explaining the meaning of being a Soroptimist. After receiving permission from the Turkish Council of Ministers, European Federation Chairperson Mary Baratt from Norway came to the inauguration of the Istanbul Soroptimist Club in 1948. With the founding of the Ankara Club, Müfide became Union President.

She was the first romantic nationalist, an idealist novelist who used literature to spread the view of 'Turkishness'. As the founder Chairperson of the Club, she always believed in the values, competence and strength of Turkish women, worked to present the Turkish women on the international platform, to promote the women to a better status. She was a leader for the Soroptimist mission for twenty-three years. Being a true 'Republic intellect', she gave importance to promoting Turkish culture and art in foreign countries and encouraged workers in all fields.

She died in Istanbul on 24 March 1971. Two main streets in Istanbul's Moda district and in Gaziantep were named after her. She has a place among the unforgettable, intellectual women in the community.

MÜFİDE FERİT TEK SCHOLARSHIP

For our founder Chairperson, a pioneer of the female movement, for the ideals to which she devoted her life, our Union has created the Müfide Ferit Tek Scholarship Fund. We organise competitions in various fields of culture and art; we create scholarship opportunities for women university students and introduce them to the Soroptimist mission and concept.

Filmer **SABAHAT** SI Istanbul (Turkey)



Sabahat Filmer started her life struggle during the Balkan Wars, the First World War, and when İstanbul was occupied by foreign forces.

To quote from her book *'Atatürk Yolunda Büyük Adımlar'* (Big Steps On The Way of Atatürk):

"At such a time, finding Mustafa Kemal Pasha, my father's friend, was the biggest happiness and most valuable benefit of my life. Inspired by him, we lived the national excitement, supported humane and social services, carried the fire of revolution rising from his soul."

After graduating from Teacher School, she went on to higher education when women students began to be accepted. During her school years she was a nurse in the Red Crescent, taught at a war orphans' school and worked as an activist for the National Combat.

Her connection with filming began when she did her university internship at the Military Film Centre. She advanced from dubbing to scenario writing, from production to distribution, up to cinema management.

Women's movements started in İstanbul in the first half of the 20th century. Sabahat was one of the most influential members of the Modern Women Union founded in 1918. In 1919 they organized three consecutive demonstrations against the occupying forces. In one of those she gave a speech. Approximately 200,000 women took part in the demonstrations, closely watched by the occupying forces. The demonstrations were filmed by Sabahat's husband. These recordings were used many times in the

founding years of the new Republic. In İzmir Sabahat was proud to show the first film screening without a curtain separating men and women. Atatürk congratulated and encouraged her and her women friends for their role in the national combat and in filming. This was the most exciting memory for her. The young Republic valued contemporary art and the fledgling art form of cinema.

In 1940 Sabahat became Head of the Management Board of the Lale Filming,

Movie Making & Film Distribution Company. She established relations with the international cinema world, signed agreements with film companies abroad, bought the best films. She was a pioneer of the newly formed local film industry.

Famous for her grace, charm and perfect command of two foreign languages she was the 'lady of the cinema industry'. In Europe, then in Hollywood, the name 'Sabahat' was synonymous with 'Turkish Cinema'. She is commemorated as the cornerstone of cinema history.

In 1949 she became a member of SI Istanbul Club and served for forty years. In 1965, in the 'Combat Illiteracy' year adopted by both UNESCO and Soroptimist International and with the great support of SIE, Sabahat worked with the young members to prepare and found the Gültepe Community Education Centre.

For many years she continued to support local women by teaching them about the art of cinema and how to thrive in the business.

Finocchiaro **GIUSELLA** SI Bologna (Italy)



Giusella Finocchiaro, founder and owner of the Finocchiaro Law Firm (Bologna – Milan), is a Full Professor of Internet Law and Private Law at the University of Bologna, and a member of the Academy of Science of the Bologna Institute, Faculty of Moral Sciences.

Giusella is an extraordinary example of a professional woman, who since her youth, has been capable of combining a successful academic career with several national and international accomplishments.

After graduating *cum laude* in Law from the University of Bologna in 1996 she obtained a PhD in Information Technology Law at the European University Institute, being one of the first women to specialise in this field. In parallel with her university career, she has been practising law since 1990 and has been admitted to work as defence counsel in the *Corte di Cassazione* (the Italian Supreme Court).

As a result of her research activity she is the author of several books and over one hundred articles in the field of electronic commerce, personal data protection, Internet law, computer contracts, electronic signatures and intellectual property rights.

If we look at scientific journals, she is Director of the Subjects and New Technologies field of the *Giustizia civile* review; a member of the Steering Committee of the *Contratto e impresa* review and of the *Rivista di Diritto Sportivo* review; a member of the Scientific Committee of the *Diritto dell'Internet* review, of the *Diritto di Internet* review,

of the *Rivista italiana di informatica e diritto* review, and of the *Diritto Mercato Tecnologia* review. She is also Head of the DPO-RTD and Reputation Manager Observatory of the Italian Digital Revolution Association and a member of the Editorial Board of the publisher *Ediciones Olejnik*.

Besides her academic profile, as an Information Technology Law expert, she has both organised and participated in numerous international conferences, workshops, and seminars.

At present she is working on various national and international scientific projects.

To mention only a few of them: since 2014 she has been the Chairperson of the UNCITRAL Working Group on Electronic Commerce; since 2015 she has been a member of the IAP Jury (Italian Advertising Standards Authority); since 2017 she has been the Chairperson of the Commission in charge of drafting legislative decrees on personal data protection for the Italian Ministry of Justice. Furthermore, she is a legal expert of the World Bank, a consultant for several law firms in Brussels, a member of the Ethics Committee of IVASS (Institute for the Supervision of Insurance), and the Italian correspondent for several EU Commission projects.

It is also worth mentioning at least a couple of her most significant past professional assignments. From 2008 to 2012 she was a member of the ENISA (European Network and Information Security Agency) Permanent Stakeholders Group. From 2008 to 2013 she was also a member of

the international group of experts for the Accountability-Based Privacy Governance project of the Centre for Information Policy Leadership with the collaboration of the European Data Protection Commissioners.

Ultimately, Giusella Finocchiaro's profile would not be complete without highlighting her great social engagement. Since 2015 she has been the Chairperson of the *Fondazione del Monte di Bologna e Ravenna* Banking Foundation, and a member of the ACRI (the Italian Bank Foundations Association) Board of Directors. Thanks to this role, and being one of the few women to preside over a Banking Foundation in Italy, she has always demonstrated a strong commitment to the local community of Bolo-

gna and Ravenna, both in supporting disadvantaged social groups such as migrants, children and the elderly, and in promoting gender equality through projects dedicated to women and mothers in economic and social difficulties.

In 2014 Giusella drafted the protocol for the use of 'A Room of One's Own' created at the Police Headquarters by SI Club Bologna. As President of the *Fondazione del Monte*, together with other institutions, she financed a study 'Research and reflections on the city from a gender perspective' promoted by the Club in 2016, which was then presented during a conference that took place in the Unicredit Headquarters in Bologna. In 2019 she again secured funds for the 70th Anniversary of the club.



Franck **PASCALE** SI Antwerpen Anthos (Belgium)



As graduate in criminology and remedial educationalist Pascale Franck was regularly confronted with the real gaps in our Belgian system when it came to providing a safe shelter for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. Too often the victims were sent from one department to another, and gave up their struggle and hope for a safer place. Perpetrators of violence also dropped out of the rescue service system, with a higher risk of recidivism.

So, Pascale started dreaming of the creation of a Family Justice Centre where victims of family violence could find everything they needed to be back in control of their own lives, and where all the stakeholders were working together under one roof so that a victim feels supported and safe. Following the example of similar centres in the United States, Pascale was the main driving force behind the creation of Family Justice Centres in Belgium, where she implemented a real chain approach, enabling several organisations from different fields of care, safety, law enforcement and administration to collaborate in a multidisciplinary manner. Pascale is also active in this field on a European level through the European Family Justice Centre Alliance, enabling this multidisciplinary approach in many countries, and on an international level by giving training

and organising conferences on this topic, whereby the emphasis is always placed on what a victim needs and their empowerment.

Pascale is co-author of the book 'One Safe Place for Hope and Empowerment' which gives an inside view in the development of FJCs and a lot of practical tips concerning the creation of an FJC.

We are really blessed with Pascale Franck's membership in our Soroptimist club. Since the beginning of her membership, she has been a very passionate Soroptimist and a real team player when it comes to organising all kinds of club activities. For several years now she has been the PR officer in the club.

Pascale stands for long-term, sustainable progress when it comes to fighting violence towards women and children. During the Covid pandemic when we have observed a sharp increase in domestic violence, Pascale has been working hard with the official authorities to enable the continuation of care in this field within the frame of the Covid-19 directives.

More information about Pascale's work, mission and vision see: www.efjca.eu and on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/franck-pascale-92b2773/>

Contact: pascale.franck@telenet.be

Frommknecht **CHRISTA** SI Dortmund (Germany)



Since 1980, and thus more than half of her life, the 75-year-old Christa Frommknecht, who comes from Stuttgart and has lived in Dortmund since 1970, has been committed to the Soroptimist goals not only in the private sphere, but also far beyond the borders of SI Dortmund Club. Foreign countries, whether in Europe or in other parts of the world, had fascinated the foreign correspondent as a young girl. As chairwoman of the German-Chinese Society and Vice-President of the North-Rhine-Westphalia Foreign Office, she played a key role in the organisation of the highly regarded China exhibition in Dortmund in summer 1990, which included original figures from the Yang Terracotta Army.

At that time, as club President, she was busy building her own aid organisation for the Dortmund Club. This *SI Hilfswerk Dortmund e.V.* was founded in June 1991 to manage a donation bequeathed in the will of the deceased Dortmund Club sister Impa Strick.

Under the chairmanship of Christa Frommknecht, ten years after German reunification, twenty-six young women from the new federal regions, in which the Soroptimist goals and values were previously completely unknown, were each provided with finances for a language course in the twinned city of Leeds in the UK. Twenty-four of them reached Proficiency level in English, or 'master's', and were given significantly higher chances in their professional life.

Through years of commitment Christa Frommknecht has, not only in the selection of the fellows themselves,

but also in constant contact with the club sisters in Leeds where the young women were housed in families, contributed to a significant expansion of professional opportunities for women, a successful network of the sisters in Leeds in the Soroptimist field, and the dissemination of Soroptimist goals and visions in an outstanding and sustainable manner.

Since 2002 the *SI Hilfswerk Dortmund e.V.* helps students to graduate from the Technical University of Dortmund, the University of Applied Sciences, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Chamber of Crafts and Music, Art and Culture.

Today, around 100 prizes of €1,000 each are awarded to young women and girls. The money is acquired predominantly by Christa Frommknecht and the women are selected after personal contact. Her decision is based on Soroptimist values.

It should also be mentioned that under her presidency the annual general meeting of the German Union took place in Dortmund in April 1990. She promoted the Soroptimist International mission in the regional media.

Thanks to her social and economic networking she successfully implemented numerous projects and fundraisers, such as the fundraiser in November 2005 in Dortmund City Hall — Dortmund Women Help in the World. The money raised helped such projects as *Shanti Leprahilfe Dortmund e.V.*, the Dortmund Circle of Friends of Cusco, Peru, and the Chak-e-wardak hospital in Afghanistan.

The fundraising event in November 2008 in Dortmund City Hall should also be highlighted: Dortmund Women help a women's centre, a kindergarten and a sports programme for cancer-sufferers and also well women.

Gartcheva **LIDIA** SI Sofia Il Boyana (Bulgaria)



Lidia Gartcheva is an outstanding professional with a successful career. She is one of the most prominent haematologists in South East Europe. As part of a team working for the Hospital for children with onco-hematological diseases in Sofia, she implemented the procedure of stem cell transplantation in Bulgaria. At present Lidia works for the National Hospital for Haematological Diseases. It is due to her efforts that the first umbilical cord blood stem cells bank in Bulgaria was opened and developed. Lidia has specialised in haematology at leading medical institutes in Italy, Germany and France. She is an author of multiple scientific publications in peer-reviewed academic journals and a member of the Bulgarian Haematology and Transfusion Society.

With her dedicated work Lidia has had a significant contribution to women's health care and well-being in Bulgaria. She helped many women and girls with oncologi-

cal diseases to outlive the diagnosis and to strive for a normal life afterwards.

Lidia Gartcheva has been an active Soroptimist for twenty years. She has been elected for multiple positions including President of SI Sofia Il Boyana Club and President of SI Bulgarian Union. Her continuous work to strengthen and develop Soroptimist in Bulgaria is highly appreciated by the SIE Federation. During the biennium 2016–2018, when Lidia was Union President, numerous projects of SI clubs in Bulgaria were awarded grants by the SI Federation. She is the driving force for a sustainable union project 'Look ahead – the road is in front of you' that stands up against violence and raises scholarship funds for women and girls at risk.

Lidia is behind the chartering of the latest SI club in Bulgaria – Sofia St. Ivan Rilski Club. She continues working for its growth and development as well as for spreading the Soroptimist spirit at Union and Club levels.

Glaser **ANNELISE** (1922–1993) Germany



Without Annelise Glaser the German Soroptimists would never have been re-accepted into the global community of Soroptimist International so soon after the Second World War. Annelise's personality and her complete integrity was a guarantee for a different Germany. The daughter of a Hamburg pharmacist from a cosmopolitan family, she worked as a journalist and consultant for business enterprises. It is characteristic of her courage, strong will, independent spirit and desire for freedom that Annelise was one of the first women to learn the sport of motor flying.

As an alert witness of the 20th century, she rapidly identified the injustices of the National Socialist system, having retained memories of the monarchy and the horrors of the First World War in which her beloved brother had been shot down in a plane. She regarded her marriage to a national economist, which lasted only four years, as an interim period. A few days after the Reichstag fire in Berlin, Annelise emigrated to Paris. Life in Germany had become unbearable for the liberal and tolerant.

After returning home in 1945, the committed democrat was resolute: "I will help shape Germany's political structure." In Berlin she became managing director of the Society for Civil Rights. In 1951 she moved to Bonn to set up the Information Service for Women's Issues, from which The German Women's Council developed. Today this umbrella organisation incorporates sixty women's organisations representing approximately twelve million women,

the largest women's political lobby in Germany. For twenty-two years Annelise was its managing director and editor of the association's magazine. All the furniture she had in her first office was a large box on which her typewriter stood and a small one on which she sat. She combined meticulous diligence and painstaking conscientiousness ("I never accepted information without researching it first.") with a talent for bringing people together and motivating them firmly but kindly for the common task.

In addition to her intensive professional activity and her commitment to equality for women, Annelise dedicated herself with great earnestness, verve and perseverance to the revival of the first Berlin Club that had gone underground during the Nazi regime. At the first Soroptimist meeting of war-torn countries in 1948 in the English town of Harrogate, Norwegian Soroptimist Mary Barratt Due dared to plead for the reintegration of the German Soroptimists. Danish member Clara Hammerich followed her appeal by tackling the psychological and organisational obstacles until the Berlin Club was reinstated in 1951. After Frankfurt it was Bonn where Annelise Glaser chartered the third club in Germany, for the first time with guests from the Diplomatic Corps.

At the suggestion of Jacqueline Chevalier, President of SI French Union, Annelise was elected Vice-President of the European Federation in 1956. At the Paris Congress in 1958 Annelise Glaser was awarded the honour of giving the acceptance speech for the guests from sixteen countries at the reception in Paris City Hall. It is hard to imagine the joy this recognition meant for Annelise at that time.

In 1956 the Dutch Club Zaanstreek agreed to receive its charter from a German Soroptimist: Annelise Glaser.

Based on numerous conversations and goodwill trips by individual club sisters, Annelise also managed to achieve a new start with the Israeli Soroptimists, an accomplishment that she considered one of her greatest personal successes. It was also the highlight of her life's work, to which she had tirelessly devoted herself: the reconciliation after the terrible Nazi era.

Gökdoğan **NÜZHET** T. SI Istanbul (Turkey)



When you observe with the telescope, there is only the space and you. It is an overwhelming feeling. You feel you are just a dot in the universe. To observe the universe is an extraordinary feeling. It is something immense.

Nüzhet Gökdoğan

She was one of the first women scientists of the Turkish Republic, the first space scientist and first woman Dean of Istanbul University's Faculty of Science, the first Turkish Associate Professor of Astronomy, the author of the first postgraduate thesis registered at the Faculty of Science. She was the role model for girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

After graduating from Erenköy Girls Boarding High School in 1928 Nüzhet went to France to study mathematics and physics. To be an astronomer, she received her mathematics Bachelor's degree at Lyon University in 1932. She studied physics at Paris University in 1933 and did her internship at the Paris Observatory. She returned to Istanbul and applied to work at the Istanbul Kandilli Observatory, but was rejected because she was a woman.

In 1934 she was assigned to Istanbul University Institute of Astronomy. She was the first woman Associate Professor of the Institute. In 1936 she was assigned to Istanbul Technical University as Associate Professor; she was the first woman employee. In 1948 Istanbul University Sen-

ate promoted her to professorship. She was selected to be the first woman Senator.

To improve the status of women, promote quality of life, human rights and to solve women's

problems by forming public opinion, to work for equality, progress and peace, Nüzhet joined the founders of the Istanbul Soroptimist Club (1948). In 1949 she was one of the founders of the Turkish Universities Women Graduates Association. She led the way for female students to be interested in scientific branches and represented intellectual Turkish women in Turkey and worldwide.

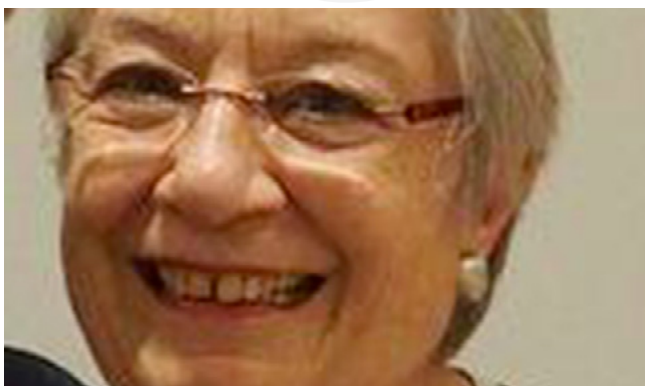
In 1948 she was one of the founders of the Turkish Mathematics Association and in 1954 the Turkish Astronomy Association.

In 1951–1952 she worked in Michigan, US, at many observatories. In 1954 she was elected the first female Dean of Istanbul University's Faculty of Science and held the position of the Head of the Faculty of Astronomy for twenty-two years. She developed research programmes with observatories in Meudon and Nice in France, Basel in Switzerland and Asiago in Italy. In 1971 she organised the Kepler Symposium in which Turkish and Balkan astronomers took part.

Nüzhet organized the 2nd National Astronomy Congress (1978). This was very important because the idea of the National Observatory was discussed, and this was finally established in 1997. She retired in 1980 as Dean and Head of the Faculty.

Nüzhet translated six textbooks, wrote three textbooks and published thirteen scientific articles. She supported the founding of TÜB İTAK (Turkish Scientific and Technological Research Association) National Observatory. Istanbul University still continues to give the Professor Dr Nüzhet T. Gökdoğan Astronomy Science Award.

Goldmann **MONIKA** SI Dortmund Club (Germany)



After studying sociology, psychology and modern history in Frankfurt and Berlin, Monika Goldmann obtained her doctorate in Dortmund. She gained many years of international research experience in the fields of sociology of work, gender politics in organisations, gender mainstreaming, demographic change and globalisation. For more than ten years she was deputy director of the *Sozialforschungsstelle*, (Social Research Centre), an institution of the Technical University of Dortmund.

In 1992, together with other committed women, she founded the *Dortmunder Forum Frau und Wirtschaft*, e.V. (the Dortmund Woman and Business Forum). She was its chairwoman for twenty-four years.

The aim of the association is to win over corporate management to a gender-sensitive personnel policy, to increase the proportion of women in managerial positions in the local and regional economy and to empower women, to communicate their interests and to represent them actively. As part of her leadership role, Monika brought together an impressive network of interested companies and their leaders on issues of gender equality, which in turn created a scientific and economic lobby for women's interests in and around Dortmund. The association's advisory board is composed of top-level talent and is headed by the city's mayor.

Monika was involved in several international projects on questions of demographic change and the need for

reforms in the areas of healthcare and long-term care. Beyond simply conducting her research within the context of such cooperative network structures, she actively founded a women's policy network. It was, and is, her constant goal to create opportunities for and to improve the lives of women and girls, especially in professional terms, and to provide dynamic exchange in lively networks so that women can benefit from the experiences of other women.

As a Soroptimist, she maintained her professional focus on women and gender issues and has enriched our club life in Dortmund by doing so.

Thanks to her well-founded and broad knowledgebase, she infused the Soroptimist goals with life and in response inspired curiosity, enthusiasm, engagement, and commitment from the other club members. As the current president she leads the club in an energetic and dynamic way, with the constant aim of introducing young women to Soroptimist.

One of the milestones of the Dortmund Forum under the leadership of Monika Goldmann is the Total Equality Campaign. Together with the City Representative for Gender Equality and the head of the *Kompetenzzentrum Frau und Beruf* (Woman and Profession), Monika relied on her extensive professional network to bring the Total Equality Award to the Ruhr metropolitan region in 2013. This national recognition is awarded to organisations that implement gender-sensitive HR policies.

The aim is to encourage companies to confront the issue of equality and to incorporate them into their personnel decisions.

Since then, the award campaign has become an integral part of the work of the Dortmund Forum *Frau und Wirtschaft* and twenty-seven organisations have received the award.

In 2016, Monika, together with the *Grone Bildungs Zentren NRW GmbH*, initiated the PerMenti project – Corporate Mentoring for Educated Refugee Women. PerMenti's goals include the professional integration of qualified refugee women in the German labour market and to make the professional potential of immigrant women visible. Between 2016 and the present the project has re-

ceived multiple funding grants from the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, as well as the *RAG Stiftung* (RAG Foundation), which significantly expanded the programme and initiated a knowledge transfer initiative to share lessons learned with other regions.

Her retirement notwithstanding, Monika Goldmann is not slowing down. Tirelessly and with ever-new innovative ideas, she advocates equality between men and women to improve the professional context and the lives of women. She has fought to expand opportunities for women, often on a volunteer basis.

Monika Goldmann is an outstanding Soroptimist, who is deeply committed to the values of Soroptimist International.



Gosch **CAROLA** SI Wien Vivata (Austria)



Carola Gosch lives according to her values not only in her Soroptimist life, where she is always ready to take on new functions, but also in her professional life.

Carola is a graduate engineer in technical mathematics and information technology and holds a Master's degree in Business Engineering as well as Administration. Her attitude towards the environment and society has also been expressed in her post graduate studies in Technical Environmental Protection.

In 2013 she founded the association Roots for Life and is its chairperson. She is also responsible for the content of the project work for around 150 working days per year. With the association she started numerous projects which she oversees and manages intensively both remotely from Austria as well as on site in Nepal. Twice a year she spends six weeks on site. Due to the pandemic this was not possible in 2020. She achieves a lot through networking with other organisations and authorities on site, but also in Austria and internationally.

Wien Vivata Club considers Carola a suitable candidate because she supports women and girls in a region which is insecure geographically and socio-politically. The founding of the association Roots for Life was her own idea. In addition to the association's income she also brings in an enormous amount of her own commitment and resources. In return Carola is respected and engaged as a coach and mentor by all those involved, including official entities.

The empowerment of women and girls takes place through sustainable and complementary projects. These range from school education and hygiene education to the establishment of an organic model farm and the development of sewing workshops for the production of washable sanitary napkins.

This creates a dynamic in a local society in which women are given a different status, girls are no longer forcibly married off as children, income is generated and qualified work can be performed.

Gratziou **MARIA-EVRIDIKI** SI Komotini (Greece)



Dr Maria-Evridiki Gratziou is a Full Professor on Water and Wastewater Treatment Management, with postgraduate training in GIS and Remote Sensing models, Occupational Health and Safety, Environmental Engineering and Economics, Systems and Data Analysis, Methods, Water diplomacy and Postdoctoral Training and Research on Hydrodynamic Models at the Centre of Water Research of Western Australia University (CWRWAWU). She is a Professor in the Department of Civil Engineering (DCE) at the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH).

Maria has taught six graduate and five postgraduate modules for over thirty years. She has supervised PhD, Master and Diploma theses and been a mentor to over fifty young women engineers. She has carried out seminars at the CWRWAWU and at the Hellenic Productivity Centre. She has received an award for best postgraduate teacher.

Maria has run the Long-Life Learning Academy (LLLA) of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Region and taught there.

She has led seven scientific research projects and been a scientific team member of another ten projects. She has written four books on scientific subjects and more than 100 articles and papers.

She is a member of three European and two International Scientific Associations and is a reviewer of four international scientific journals.

Maria has held many administrative positions: (i) President of Rodopi Mountains Management Agency (RMMA).

(ii) member of Xanthi Prefecture Environmental Committee. (iii) At DUTH: director of the Hydraulic Engineering Sector (HES), representative of the Committee of the LLLA, representative in the Senate, member of the CED General Assembly, HES, postgraduate programmes, and president of several committees.

She has been a consultant engineer for the Hellenic Army and the Municipality of Topiros.

Before commencing her academic career, she worked as a designer and supervisory engineer for seven years in multiple international projects. These included BOBA airport and numerous highway projects in Libya. She worked for twenty years as a design engineer on forty-nine public projects (environmental impact studies, wastewater treatment plants, regional planning and transportation, roads and highway, topographic surveys etc.). Maria was President of the Professors' Association at DUTH Polytechnic.

She is very active in the cultural and social life of her city. She has made contributions to, and works closely with, cultural organisations and institutions such as the Lyceum Club of Greek Women, Xanthi Progressive Union and Academy of Thracian Art. She has written articles on environmental and women rights issues in local newspapers. She has offered enthusiastic support as a technical consultant for municipalities, prefectures, and the RMMA.

Maria has been a continuously active Soroptimist since 2000. She has held the positions of President, Vice President, secretary, environmental coordinator and delegate in SI Xanthi Club. Additionally, she was a successful Union President between 2018 and 2020. Within the Union she also held the positions of Vice President, environmental coordinator and president of the scholarship and arbitration committees. She has organised conferences and events for the Greek Soroptimists and, as President, introduced a modern, digitalised way of constant updating, communication and training. She is currently a delegate and member of Komotini Club.

Gurresch-Kainz **SABINA** SI Mödling (Austria)



Sabina is a physical therapist with her own practice, specialising in oncological therapy. She lives and works in Mödling, is married and is a mother of three adult daughters.

Sabina has been a particularly active club member since the SI Mödling Club received its charter in October 2015. She was Vice President during the first two years and Club President between 2017 and 2019.

Her commitment has been and remains outstanding. In particular, she has introduced the women's health subject of breast cancer into our club. She launched the heart pillow project, in collaboration with the Mödling Fashion School, for which the Club received the SIE Best Practice award in 2019. Sabina also initiated and actively co-organised our annual breast cancer run with a follow-up event – a symposium of specialist doctors, affected women and therapists. The run was a remarkable event with about 200 participants both in September 2018 and September 2019. The aim of the breast cancer run was to raise awareness about breast cancer, thereby also demonstrating an act of solidarity with those affected by it. Focusing on this 'taboo' subject allows society to show empathy towards women suffering from, and traumatised by, this disease.

It was also Sabina's wish to support the Cancer Aid Society in Lower Austria, which operates without public funding and makes a valuable contribution to wom-

en affected by this disease. Sabina's objective was also to sensitise young people to this issue! She succeeded brilliantly by involving the Mödling Fashion School, with which our club now works closely. A connection has been created between the female students who sew the pillows and the sick women, especially since the girls are also involved in handing over the heart pillows in the hospitals. The heart pillow project was also the initial spark for positive follow-up activities. For example, the students designed, sewed and modelled a pink evening dress which was raffled off among the symposium guests at an evening event held for the specialists. They also sewed small heart-shaped key chains and distributed them among guests for a donation.

Following that the girls sewed orange garments for Orange the World and modelled them at the *Posthof* in Mödling at a specially organised dance on 24th November 2019. In this way Sabina has succeeded in introducing young women to other important social issues on the subject of health and raised their awareness.

Despite her busy professional life and great commitment as President, she has always been willing, and is still willing, to listen to the concerns of others, be they club sisters or outsiders, such as the refugee girl who is supported by our club. Sabina is not only an outstanding organiser, but also a particularly warm-hearted person who is good at listening and mediating. Sabina gathers strength by running in the woods and lives by the motto *carpe diem*. For her, Soroptimist means "togetherness – to commit oneself to making a difference".

Sabina is a special role model for us because of her humanity and her energetic commitment to the sick, and also to our club. Through the activities described above she has made an extraordinary contribution to the principles of Soroptimist in our district, in Austria and also in the Federation, and has had a considerable positive influence in the recognition of name of Soroptimists!

Hadri **TEUTA** SI Gjakova (Kosovo)



Teuta Hadri's purpose in this world is to help others. She was born in 1956 in Gjakova and in her formative years she was already working towards female equality by creating a theatrical environment where boys and girls would act together in different plays in their neighbourhood. At the age of nine she saved her friend from drowning – a heroic act still remembered today by her friends and family.

As an adolescent she continued to fight for equal rights in student networks and organise activities resisting apartheid in what was then Yugoslavia. As a medical graduate Teuta was one of the few female students who participated in student protests and she was unfairly arrested and subsequently imprisoned.

Following her release from prison in 1988 Teuta was determined to continue her medical studies and went on to specialise in medicine in Zagreb, Croatia. During her studies, colleagues and friends had an influence on her views about her home country of Kosovo and this motivated her to volunteer in charity groups and endeavour to send aid to Kosovo. After specialising in 1990 Teuta returned to Kosovo to open her own gynaecology clinic.

As the situation in Kosovo worsened, in 1992 Teuta founded the Gjakova branch of the Human Rights Council and served eight years as a member while also working as a volunteer for a philanthropic organization called 'Mother Theresa' where she often delivered up to fifty babies a day. As her professional and personal life became one, Teuta and her husband transformed their bedroom

into a visiting room where women and girls could come for a medical visit whenever they needed to.

At the peak of the Kosovo War in 1998–99, when hospitals were shut down, Teuta was mortified by the fact that women were giving birth on the streets or in their homes, so she joined the army and served as a gynaecologist. This was a pivotal time in her life that steered her determination to work towards the rights and the protection of women.

After the war ended, Teuta served as Deputy Minister for Health for Kosovo under the UN administration, voted for by the people; she was also a member of parliament for 3 terms. As a member of parliament, Teuta focused on female empowerment and women's rights, and supported and voted on the law for abortion.

In 2003 Teuta founded the SI Pristina Club and was elected as its first President. The success of the first SI Club in Pristina led to the chartering of two more clubs in Kosovo.

Teuta has received numerous awards and recognition in the field of medicine and as a women's rights activist. These include the Ambassador Award for Peace and Achievement for Humanity (2017). She has published three books including a journal of her experiences in the Kosovo War which was published in 2016.

However abundant her achievements, she has wisdom in abundance too. She always credits her success to simple virtues – treating others with respect and being honest. Teuta is a respected Soroptimist and a woman who aims for fundamental rights.

Hálfdanardóttir **HILDUR** SI Kópavogur (Iceland)



Hildur Hálfdanardóttir is born 22.02.1931 in Reykjavík, Iceland. She is married to Karl Karlsson, has 3 children, 7 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. One of her children is Hafðís Karlsdóttir, the present SIE Secretary General, and if someone thinks Hafðís is doing a good job as a Soroptimist, then Hafðís says “just wait until you meet my mother, I am just a copy!”

Hildur has a degree from the Commercial College of Iceland. Her carrier spans over half a century, and from 1975 she was the Chief Office Manager of the Magistrates Office in Kópavogur until she retired in 2001.

Immediately after SI Club Kópavogur was inaugurated in June 1975 the needs of the local community were considered. The most urgent need was found to be taking care of the aging community.

During the summer of 1977 the club prepared and run an indication of a nursing home for five elderly living at home being cared for by their family. As the need was this obvious the club approached other service clubs within the community, the church and the Red Cross. Nine organizations joined hands and in 1982 a nursing home was built in Kópavogur. Hildur was the primus motor behind this project, and she took a leave of absence from her work from the Magistrates Office, to become the CEO of the Nursing home; to see it get off the ground and manage it through its first year. From the start Hildur was the Secretary of the Board until 2009. Her well written board

minutes are a source of information and were used for a book published in 2019 telling this amazing story.

Besides dedicating herself to the nursing home and the wellbeing of its occupants and staff, who are mainly women, she was on the board of one of the political parties where she had a valued input on decisions made on the wellbeing of the aging population.

Besides the two important actions above Hildur has worked with the Red Cross formulating and volunteering the “Silverline” which is a help line for the elderly living at home. Then she worked with a founder of a school for young girls in India where she is still funding two girls with the assistance of her SI club.

For all her outstanding humanitarian work and merit for Iceland the President of Iceland honoured her with the Order of the Falcon in 2002, which was well deserved.

As a Soroptimist Hildur has held many offices on both club and union level, such as president and governor. On SIE level she was the 1st Vice President in 1995–1997 and as such was responsible for coordinating SIE celebrating 75th Anniversary of Soroptimist International. She has inaugurated two clubs, in Germany and Denmark. She has been the contact person for the friendship links within her club and made sure the link stays strong. Although reaching the age of 90, she is still an active member of both her club and union, and she is very active on Facebook reaching out to the large Soroptimist world.

Hannesdóttir **SIGRÚN** Klara SI Reykjavík (Iceland)



Dr Sigrún Klara Hannesdóttir, born in 1943, has been a member of the Reykjavik Soroptimist Club since 1984. She has held many important positions in the club, as well as in SI Iceland. Her primary interest over the years has been the organising of educational and empowerment projects for vulnerable young women in Iceland.

Sigrún runs Friends of Peru, a philanthropic association which supports schools in impoverished districts in Peru. Friends of Peru now supports the women and children of the small village of Cancha Cancha. The association previously established a school library in Quebrada Verde, bought books and computers for other schools, and set up several school kitchens where children can be given hot meals every day.

Sigrún completed a BA in English, Icelandic and Library Science at the University of Iceland in 1967 and an MLS in Library Science and Information Theory from Wayne State University, Michigan in 1968. She was the first Icelander to obtain a Doctorate in Library Science and Information Science. This was at the University of Chicago in 1987.

Sigrún travelled to Peru in 1968 to work for the Bank of International Development as a consultant for the University in Trujillo. Between 1971 and 1975 she was the school library director of Reykjavik City. Between 1975 and 1998 she was assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor at the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Iceland. She was the first woman professor at the Department. Between 1998 and 2002 she was the direc-

tor of NORDINFO in Helsinki, Finland. Between 2002 and 2007 she held the positions of National Librarian and Director of the National and University Library of Iceland. She was the first woman to hold this position.

Sigrún has lectured in many parts of the world, on such subjects as information society, knowledge management and school libraries.

She has written about 300 articles in domestic and foreign journals about knowledge management, the information society, electronic libraries, school libraries, bibliographic control, Universal Availability of Publications, the ethics of information professionals, children's literature, children's reading and accessibility to reading materials, etc. In recent years she has done research into the history of women from Seyðisfjörður, in Eastern-Iceland.

Sigrún was one of the founders of the Professional Librarians Association in Iceland. She was on the first international committee of school libraries within the International Federation of Library Associations and Institution between 1976 and 1997, the president of the association 1995–1998, and for years a member of the board of directors of the International Association of School Librarianship. She was a founding member of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International in Iceland in 1975, and Europe Regional Director for that Society between 2002 and 2004.

Awards and Recognition

- The Icelandic Order of the Falcon, on 1st January 2003, for her contribution to library and information science
- Honorary member of the Professional Librarians Association (Iceland) 2007
- Distinguished Alumna Award from Wayne State University 2009
- Delta Kappa Gamma Honorary Award in Iceland in 2015
- Delta Kappa Gamma European Achievement Award in 2013
- Delta Kappa Gamma International Achievement Award in 2013, DKG's highest recognition

Heptonstall **SONJA** SI Genève Rhône (Switzerland)



Dr Sonia Heptonstall, born in 1931, remained proudly British for almost half a century after moving to Switzerland as an expatriate wife with her husband John and son Simon. She passed away on 19th March 2020 of COVID-19.

Sonia was a Soroptimist through and through, as her mother had been, and was a loyal friend to her club, Genève Rhône.

A historian by training, with a doctorate in Sociology of Education from Harvard University, Sonia dedicated her life to the promotion of health and education, which she believed "[...] was going to save the world and make it a more equal place for everybody to live in". She taught at a number of academic institutions and was still working as a visiting professor of International Relations at Geneva Business School at the age of 87.

Sonia worked within the United Nations as a consultant for the ILO and for numerous NGOs. She was on the NGO planning committee for the World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi in 1985, and the 1995 follow-up in Beijing, dedicated to equality, health and the empowerment of women throughout the world. She was also Convenor of the NGO Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Working Group on Women and represented Soroptimist International at the UN

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_2YKN6gM90).

We recently asked her son what she might have considered to be her proudest achievement. He believes that this would be her pioneering work on Female Genital Mutilation with Berhane Ras-Work of the Inter-African Committee, beginning in the 1980s before this vile practice had entered the public consciousness.

Her commitment to women's health and sustainable development issues led to her longstanding involvement with Solar Cookers International. Based in Sacramento, California, SCI produces solar ovens which allow women to prepare food safely and autonomously. For many years, Sonia worked as their representative at ECOSOC, arguing for the benefits of solar cooking and its integration into UN development programs.

<https://www.solarcookers.org/about/blog/sci-tribute-dr-sonia-heptonstall>

Current research often identifies a lack of female role models as hindering the future prospects of girls and young women. Sonia chose two of the finest for herself: Suzanne Noël, a pioneer of reconstructive plastic surgery who founded the Soroptimist women's movement in Europe, and Eleanor Roosevelt whose commitment to human rights she admired greatly. She has followed in their footsteps to become a shining example herself for Soroptimists and young women everywhere.

Ibach **HEIDE** SI Remscheid (Germany)



For almost forty years the Soroptimist principles of 'awareness, advocacy and action' have determined the thinking, life and work of Heide Ibach.

Born in 1939, Heide became a member of SI Remscheid Club in 1983. Heide is married and has three children. From the very beginning of her membership her enthusiasm for these principles has been shared by her whole family. A remarkable career was to begin.

She saw herself in her responsibility towards the values of SI as founding president of SI Bamberg Kunigunde Club in 1991, as President of SI German Union between 1997 and 1999, as delegate of SI Germany or as a member of the Extension Committee at European level.

As a qualified educator, her concern for the education of women and girls has been a common thread running through all her offices and functions. Great projects such as the Union project 'More Education for Women and Girls' or the Bamberg club project 'Knowledge is fun', running extremely successfully now for five years, have attracted attention nationwide and received recognition through many awards. The SI Germany project 'Fight against female genital mutilation' was initiated and launched by Heide. After receiving an award for SI Germany at a global level, the project was submitted by all SI federations – SI as an NGO – to the relevant bodies within the United Nations in New York. By these means engagement in this

particular problem could be intensively supported and advanced.

Her talent for rhetoric when passing on her own conviction and enthusiasm for SI to an audience was of benefit to her during her twenty years of engagement in the Extension Committee. Numerous club charters in Eastern Europe after 1990, and two club charters in Africa, can be ascribed to her, often under adventurous travel conditions.

She has promoted the spreading of Soroptimist ideals with the same commitment across Germany. She always remained faithful to the main theme of 'Tolerance' at the Extension Meetings, a theme which today remains as important as ever for a Soroptimist coexistence of women of all colours and nations. Five club sponsorships can be credited to her account – clubs that are still heartily attached to their godmother.

Heide was a mentor in the SI Mentoring Project, Congress Director of the SI European Congress in Berlin 2013 and Chairwoman of the Tripartite Meeting 1997 in Bamberg on the 75th anniversary of SI.

Even though her Soroptimist activities have been somewhat reduced, she continues in her commitment as chairwoman of the *Denk-Mal* Foundation. This foundation promotes the cultural education of young people of different origins within a framework of sponsorships for monuments.

Isastia **ANNA** Maria SI Roma (Italy)



Anna Maria Isastia is an extremely sympathetic and empathetic woman. She was born in Rome in 1945 and during the course of her professional and private life she has always been engaged in activities intended to give women more dignity.

Anna Maria was a professor of Contemporary History at the University of Roma La Sapienza. As a historian she highlighted the role of women, which had previously usually been ignored or overlooked. She organised a number of university courses and academic conferences relating to Women's Studies through which she analysed different aspects of women's lives – the family, battles for the right to vote and equal opportunities, right through to firm and concrete actions. She has published several biographies of women involved in fighting during the Italian *Risorgimento* in the 19th century. Her involvement in Soroptimist has been characterised by her strong will to create something tangible for women.

In 1999, as President of Soroptimist Roma Club, Anna Maria requested that Parliament discuss a bill permitting Italian women to join the Army. This was the last obstacle for women's equal opportunities in terms of employment. Its removal would give further stability to the principle of gender equality, as set forth by the Italian Constitution, and would allow women to exploit new professional opportunities. Anna Maria's efforts were rewarded when the bill was finally passed. Anna Maria's professionalism and competence as a historian is evident in her book *Don-*

ne ottimiste. Femminismo e associazioni borghesi nell'Otto e Novecento (Optimistic women. Feminism and middle-class societies in the 19th and 20th centuries) published in 2002. In it we can read and observe how women's societies developed in the Western world as part of, and being linked to, the great historical and cultural events of the last two centuries. In 2004 Anna Maria was co-writer of *Italiane* (Italian women), a book backed by the Italian Government to highlight and share the contribution of Italian women in history, culture, employment and society.

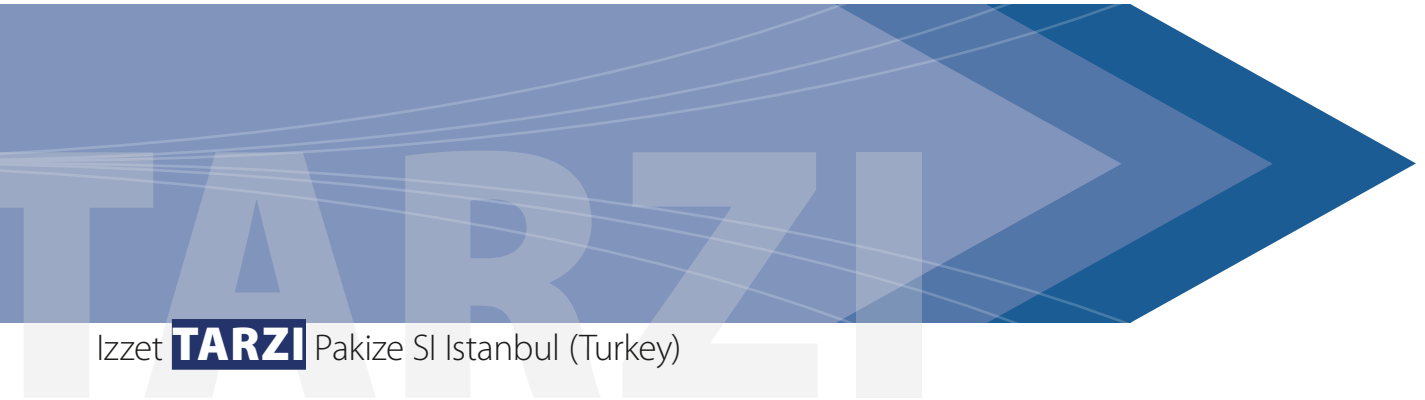
As a member of the Soroptimists, between 2005 and 2007, Anna Maria coordinated a project called *Maternità nascosta* (Hidden motherhood) conceived to raise awareness about a law to share the law on 'anonymous birth' aiming at trying to prevent child neglect and abortion. Over fifty Soroptimist Clubs supported this project through their own club activities.

Anna Maria was President of SI Italian Union between 2013 and 2015. In this two-year period great attention was paid to gender education to prevent violence towards women. A protocol between Soroptimists and the Italian Ministry of Education was signed to fight against gender stereotypes, while great significance was given to education relating to leadership.

In 2015, the year of the Expo in Milan, Anna Maria coordinated the activities of Soroptimist Clubs in respect of environmental sustainability.

Since 2016 Anna Maria has been President of the *Fondazione Soroptimist club di Roma*, which for years has supported poor girls with their education and now directs them to engage in STEM. Since 2020 she has overseen a series of books called *La memoria e le fonti. Identità e socialità* (Memory and sources. Identity and sociality).

She has also written a history of Soroptimist in Italy: *Una rete di donne nel mondo. Soroptimist International, un secolo di storia 1921–2021* (A network of women in the world. Soroptimist International, a hundred years of history from 1921 to 2021) published at the beginning of 2021 on the centenary of our organisation.



Izzet **TARZI** Pakize SI Istanbul (Turkey)



Pakize was born in 1912 in Halep, Syria, living through the First World War and the last years of the Ottoman Empire. Her biggest dream was to become a doctor. To attend the Istanbul University Medical School her age was raised by court order. She was the first female student to graduate successfully from the Medical School in 1932.

While at the Medical School, she was assigned to President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's project for female students to visit villages. She was involved in attending to village women's health problems. Having observed women refusing to be examined by male doctors, being in the care of midwives, and also seeing the use of primitive methods of abortion, and deaths as a result of difficult deliveries, she decided to become a gynaecologist. She worked at the University Women's Diseases Clinic as Professor Wilhelm Liepman's assistant. She became the first woman gynecologist in the medical history of Turkey.

Following graduation, her dynamic personality and her eagerness to demonstrate female strength led her to be successful also in sports. In 1932 she swam 6.5–7 kilometres across the Istanbul Bosphorus, the strait between Asia Minor and Europe. She became the first woman swimmer in Turkey to do so.

In 1935 Pakize married Prince Fettah Tarzi, brother of Afghan Queen Süreyya. Owing to her husband's work, Pa-

kize lived in Europe for some time. However, because of her insistence on practising her profession in her homeland, they returned to Istanbul.

She valued civilian community organisations very highly. In 1948 Pakize was one of the founders of the Soroptimist Club in Istanbul, and a year later she was also one of the founders of the Turkish Universities Women Graduates Association. Her aim was to improve the lives of women and girls.

She actively worked to educate women in reading and writing and encouraged families to send their girls to school.

Her interest in animals since childhood led her to found the Animal Protection Association.

One day, following the birth of a child, Pakize asked the nurse to bring the baby to her. There was a delay and she asked the reason for it. The nurse said that she had to wash a tuberculosis patient first as the patient was covered in blood. Pakize decided then that it was unwise to keep new-born babies with other patients in the same hospital. She fulfilled another 'first' on 21 July 1949 by opening the first Birth and Maternity Clinic, which is still operating. This also created employment for many workers.

Poor patients in her hospital were treated free of charge. Over forty-nine years, thousands of babies have been delivered and hundreds of women have undergone surgery and received health care. Pakize has represented Turkey in many Gynaecology Congresses in Turkey and worldwide. She told her life story in a book called *Anılar* (Memories). She passed away on 19th October 2004, leaving behind her a highly respected name.

And respectfully bowing before her memory, we leave the last words to her: "To achieve moral satisfaction a doctor should love and respect humanity, nature and know to give without return."

Jónsdóttir **HILDUR** SI Suðurland(Iceland)



We nominate Hildur Jónsdóttir from SI Suðurland Club (Southern Iceland) for her leadership and excellent work on the Victory Heights project, a service centre for women and girls over the age of eighteen who have been victims of gender-based violence. Victory Heights is the first and, hitherto, the only specialist and comprehensive service of this type in the whole of Southern Iceland. The project was initiated and is led by SI Club of Southern Iceland, with Hildur as its director.

The aim of the project is to offer women in Southern Iceland, who have been victims of gender-based violence, a safe platform and the coordinated and comprehensive help of professionals to work through trauma rooted in violence, whether it be emotional, mental, physical or sexual.

The established collaborative model of Victory Heights involves all the major relevant players in the South, namely the social services of all municipalities in the region, the Southern District Police, the Public Medical Institute psychiatric team, the Women's Legal Counselling Service, the

Icelandic Coaching Association (executive coaching) and the Soroptimist Club of Southern Iceland.

Gender equality and human rights have been the main focus of Hildur's professional life since the 1980s. She was the first gender equality officer in the City of Reykjavík, a position she held for ten years, during which some major achievements in the field of gender equality were reached. To name only a few, they included milestones such as equal representation of women in leading positions within the capital, the implementation of three months' paid paternity leave for fathers, a large project on Work Life Balance that brought together leading employers of both the public and private sector in Iceland and the implementation of the first systematic reform of pay equity of Reykjavík's wage structure as an employer. Her work for the city of Reykjavík also included some of the earliest projects on integration of the immigrant population in Iceland.

Hildur has managed preparations for this project with great enthusiasm.

Kärkkäinen **PÄIVI** Irmeli SI Tampere (Finland)



SI Club Tampere, Finland, established in 1953, hereby nominates our candidate for your 'We stand up for Women for 100 years – SIE celebrates 100 years – 100 Soroptimists'. We propose Päivi Irmeli Kärkkäinen as our candidate. She was born in 1955, is married and has two adult children. Päivi is a highly regarded member of our club, which she joined in 1993.

Päivi is a true role model for girls and women when one considers her academic achievements and position at Tampere University, as well as her professional career. She began her studies at Tampere University in 1974, completing her MA in 1979 and Licentiate of Philosophy degree in 1985 in the Finnish language, literature and communication. Between 1981 and 1993 she worked as a lecturer in the Faculty of Communication Studies at Tampere University where she and her colleagues launched a new subject, Speech Communication, which covers communication studies and vocology. She has been a board member at Tampere University since 2004.

Päivi became well-known to Finnish audiences while working at YLE, the National Broadcasting Company, starting off in 1986 as a freelance journalist and then moving on to programme production. Her focus was on award-winning environmental and customer-based programmes combining fact and fiction. Päivi was promoted first to Programme Manager in 1994, then to Programme Director of YLE 2 (2002–2006). Her aims were

to carry out reforms in YLE and broaden international contacts.

Päivi has been an active and loyal member of our club, sharing our united values and aims of empowering women. She was Vice Delegate of SI Finland between 1999 and 2001.

She broke the glass ceiling by becoming the first woman to become General Director of the Finnish National Opera and Ballet, a position she held between 2007 and 2018. The management culture of the Opera was reformed during her period, leading to a balance in the economics, artistic goals and working atmosphere of the organisation. One significant accomplishment was the creation of a strong international network which helped the Opera and Ballet become one of the leading cultural houses in Europe. In her role as Director General Päivi made an extraordinary contribution to the cultural life of Finland, setting an example to all women.

Between 2014 and 2017 Päivi was a member of the board of the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet, as the only non-Norwegian member. Her managerial skills also led her to be invited to become a board member of numerous other national institutions.

During her period as Director General of the Opera, Päivi showed exceptional courage in battling against a severe illness and talking frankly about it in public, thus becoming an encouraging role model for women in a similar situation.

Päivi Kärkkäinen has received several honours and awards throughout her career, specifically for investigative journalism and for leadership skills.

SI Tampere finds Päivi to be a very credible candidate to be included among the 100 celebrated Soroptimists.

Khom **MANUELA** SI Murau (Austria)



Manuela Khom was born in 1963 in Austria. She is a woman like you and me. She is a mother, housewife, entrepreneur, worker, politician and feminist all rolled into one person, and a founding member, in 2003, of the Soroptimist Murau Club in Styria.

Beginning in the early days, when our club sister Manuela began her political career, she saw it as her personal duty to speak for those who need a louder voice, for families and for women in her home region. She became the leader of the women's organisation of the Austrian People's Party in her region, and later for the whole province of Styria. Manuela has been a delegate since 2010, and, since 2019, the President of the Styrian Parliament and the representative of the women in her party.

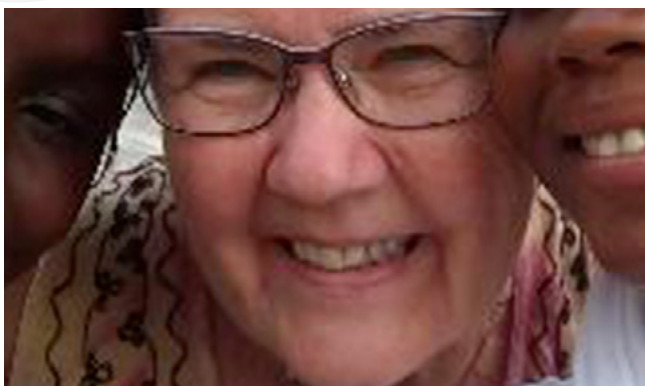
There are a lot of achievements Manuela Khom accomplished in her tireless effort for equality and to support women of every age in her homeland. Among a lot of other things, she founded an advice centre for women and girls in her region which has helped and supported many women since it began. As a businesswoman and the head of the WOM-Association for economic drives in

our region, Manuela was a driving force in establishing a Women for Women project to strengthen females in the economy. Since then goals and tasks have been worked on constantly in connection with women and the economy and for equality and equal opportunities for women all around the region.

One of the greatest recent achievements of her political career was the launch of the 'Zipper-System', requested by Manuela Khom in the People's Party, in connection with the elections in Styria. Thanks to this milestone in Styrian history, almost half of the delegates in the People's Party in the Styrian Parliament are women.

For 100 years Soroptimist has been shaped by strong women. In the future we also need strong and brave women like Manuela Khom. Strong and brave women, who are never afraid to stand up for equality, women's rights and fairness. Women who dare to speak out on topics many people do not want to hear or to face. It is now time for more women like her and this is why we nominate Manuela Khom as a role model member of our community.

Krogh **ULLA** Sl Silkeborg (Denmark)



Ulla Krogh became a member of our club in 1997 and has since been a very committed member and a Soroptimist at heart, in the sense that you can find all the ideals of Soroptimist in her everyday behaviour.

Ulla has developed and initiated many successful projects over the years. Of the many projects over the years we would like to highlight the following:

Water tower and water pipes to a village in Gambia

Ulla travels to Gambia at least once a year to follow up on all our other projects there. She has raised money from Danish Soroptimist clubs to finance a water tower linked to a newly dug well in Kabekel, Gambia. She ordered the materials for the tower and, when it was completed, she made an agreement with the head of the village for the village men to dig the water pipe trenches for free, with Sl Banjul Club checking on progress. Now the women and girls of the village grow vegetables instead of spending time and effort on fetching water. Clean water and an improved diet have replaced the former twice-yearly worming treatments for children which has resulted in greater attendance at school and improved education.

Education in Gambia

For many years our club has paid the school fees for two girls in primary school and one young woman in a skills centre, and Ulla herself privately funds another girl's education in primary school. Our club additionally pays for

two girls in SOS Children's Villages. Each year, when in Gambia, Ulla visits the schools and talks with the children and the teachers. She also takes the children out to the beach where they enjoy a lovely bathing experience, as most of the children have never seen the ocean before.

Ulla has been given last season's shoes for free from shoe shops in Denmark, has taken them to Gambia and handed them out to girls. In Gambia you have to wear shoes to be allowed to attend school.

Projects in other countries

Ulla has initiated and implemented health projects in three villages in Nepal. These have been very successful. She has also for many years been a member of a regional group of Soroptimist clubs working to support women and children in Romania.

Our local community

Ulla has initiated and been very engaged in establishing a network for battered women once they have moved out of a shelter, and another one for refugee women who cook and eat together and go on excursions to see the sights of Denmark.

Money Making

Ulla participates in money making ventures e.g. organising flea markets, picking and preserving berries for sale and being active in other revenue-generating events.

Extension

She has been active in recruiting new members to our club in all her years as a Soroptimist.

Kusarova **LILYANA** (Bulgaria)



Lilyana Kutsarova is one of the remarkable faces of Soroptimism in Bulgaria, not merely because of her long-term membership and the positions she has held, but especially because of the active charitable and diverse activities she engages in.

She was born in the Strandzha massif, not particularly close to the capital, famed not just for its still pristine beauty and preserved nature, but also for its songs and folklore. This is probably the reason for our sister's specific favourable attitude towards cultural activities and performances.

In her professional life she is the owner and president of Aquasource, a company through which she has established a scholarship for two students from the High School of Art in Sofia for the duration of their training. Two young artists took on the difficult path of their profession and today they are enjoying recognition and success.

Love for her homeland is expressed not merely through emotion but also through being proactive. She is the main benefactor of the community centre in the village of Gramatikovo. She is also one of the main sponsors for an organisation which cares for elderly people in difficulty in her home village.

Music is one of her many interests. She has organised four free concerts in the city of Burgas and in Strandzha, using only her own means. She has given the young singer Kostadin Mihailov the opportunity to perform on the big stage and has fund-

ed the release of three of his CDs and two of his books about Strandzha and the surrounding area.

She has also provided financial assistance for schools where genuine Strandzha music is popularised. She is the godmother and main supporter of a children's music school.

There is a home, not far from the capital, run by a Bulgarian priest who cares for street children. Lilyana has regularly supported this home with food and money for heating.

Lilyana is a major driving force for organising events connected with the first Bulgarian orphanage, established more than 100 years ago by an Irishman called O'Mahony. She actively works with the Bulgarian-Irish Society for Friendship for Cultural Exchange between the two countries and popularises Bulgarian *kukeri* and *nestinari* in Ireland and the Irish mummers in Bulgaria.

She provides financial and moral support to talented disadvantaged children participating in the 'Fire of Orpheus', the International Summer Academy of Arts.

She has received many awards from the Guardians of the Bulgarian Foundation for her great philanthropic activities.

Her active work for the benefit of society and young people is further demonstrated through her contributions to the Bulgarian Business Leader Forum. For several years she was a lecturer in their Master Classes, striving to awaken leadership qualities in young people. Her teaching is characterised by a series of completely free lectures for the student organisation AISEC across the five economics universities in Bulgaria.

Lilyana chaired the Association for Direct Sales in Bulgaria for many years, using the 'Business in the Light' philosophy. It offers support to more than 300,000 Bulgarians allowing them to work in a more legal and untroubled business environment.

Lataillade **EDITH** SI Port au Prince Haïti



The Soroptimist Club of Port au Prince has the privilege of nominating Edith Lataillade as our Outstanding Soroptimist. The club was founded on 16th January 1999 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. It was awarded its charter by Dr Metregis, then President of the Basse-Terre Club. This club was affiliated with the French Union and the Federation of Europe.

Edith was a founding member of our Club at that time.

She was President of our club twice, once in 2000–2001, and also in 2011–2012. Edith has always been a leader within our club. She has always had great ideas which she shares with all the members and is always at the fore-

front when projects are drafted. During her tenures Edith always did her best to undertake projects in the various fields advocated most by Soroptimist, namely education, health, environment and human rights.

A writer by profession, her latest project concerns prostheses for disabled women. Her book entitled 'The Anger of the Earth' was given to the Soroptimists to help those women who were victims of the earthquake on 12th January 2010. The proceeds from the sale of the books were donated to an organisation called Healing Hands Haiti to provide these women with prostheses and to empower them.

Liland **GUNVOR** Si Mo i Rana (Norway)



Gunvor, born in 1950, has worked as Health secretary at Helgeland Hospital in Mo i Rana since 1971. For a period, she also served as Chief Safety Representative.

Dedication to children's sports in Rana municipality.

Since the 1970s Gunvor has been strongly engaged in children's sports in Rana. In 1973 she was involved in establishing 'Rana Turn', a gymnastics organisation, where, for over twenty years, she was active as both a participant and instructor for younger and older children and adults. In the early 1980s Gunvor was involved in setting up 'Project Children's sport' in Rana, where the goal was to create a more diverse range of sports and activities for children in the area.

Adoption and dedication to adoption processes in Norway. Gunvor and her husband adopted two children from Guatemala. The experience of going through the adoption process herself inspired Gunvor to help other families and children who had been through, or were about to go through, the adoption process. Gunvor chose to take up a role as member of the national board of the Norwegian Adoption Council whose goal, amongst other things, is to be the link between the institutions involved and a forum where families can share their knowledge.

Dedication to the future of children in Guatemala.

Gunvor has a strong commitment to Guatemala, which includes supporting Clinica Nouruega in Guatemala financ-

ing education for young women wanting to become nurses. Gunvor has suggested that the next project for Mo i Rana Soroptimist Club should be in collaboration with this organisation.

Family contact via 'Home-Start Rana'.

Gunvor has volunteered as a family contact since the establishment of 'Home-Start Rana' fifteen years ago and has since then been an invaluable resource for a number of families providing childcare for their young children, aged 0 to 6 years, on a weekly basis, for at least two hours per week. As a family contact, Gunvor has helped out where necessary. This ranges from 'nanny work', picking the children up from daycare, seeing them through various outdoor activities, to even arranging activities for them in her own home.

One of the principals in the Cancer Association's 'Treffpunkt' (meeting point) arrangements

When, two years ago, the Cancer Association established their 'Treffpunkt' arrangement in Rana, Gunvor was one of six adults who immediately volunteered to lead the initiative. This involves participating every other week in organising meetings for children who have either experienced death or serious illness in their immediate family. The objective is for children, aged six to sixteen years, to meet others in similar circumstances in a safe environment where one is permitted to laugh and have fun, but also be in a place where it is okay to talk about illness, grief and loss.

Member of Mo i Rana Soroptimist Club.

Gunvor joined our club in 1998. She has held roles as Vice President, deputy representative to the board, and member of the Extension Committee.

Loko Aballo **JOSÉPHINE**, SI Cotonou Doyen (Benin)



Joséphine Loko was born in 1942 in Cotonou. She did her primary and secondary schooling in Porto-Novo, capital of Benin, and her higher pharmacy studies in Dakar. On her return she worked for the State for several years before opening her own dispensary in Cotonou, the Pharmacy du Rond-Point, which she ran until her retirement, passing on the baton after that to a younger colleague.

She married Georges Aballo; they have two daughters, Muriel and Viviane, and six grandchildren. But in her heart her sisters, brothers, children and grandchildren are innumerable. Joséphine is an exceptional personality with multiple affectionate nicknames relating to her friendly, professional, family nature, and associative commitments in the city and beyond.

Her love for God and her neighbours, her humility, her generosity, availability, discretion, delicacy, kindness ... Depending on their specific relationship with her, she is 'da Josée', 'mother', 'grandmother' or 'angel of Gbégamey', 'godmother', 'benefactress' ... She has started and continues to lead several charities and development associations, formally or informally, on behalf of children and women to whom she brings the joy of life, health, peace, autonomy and fulfilment ... She is a born Soroptimist, innately bearing all the ideals of SI in her soul, her heart and in her projects. Her large heart is always at work in and beyond her family, trying to ease difficulties, to educate and to bring joy to everyone.

It is for all these reasons that the late Béatrice Aguessy included her in the foundation of Soroptimist International in Benin. She immediately assumed the ten principles of Dr Suzanne Noel and became a founding member of the first club, SI Cotonou Dean Club.

She considered extension very early on, and a few years later, under her instigation and thanks to her dynamism, the second club was born, SI Cotonou Amazone Club, of which she is godmother. Through her leadership and dedication, she has motivated and encouraged members to continue the work of club building in Benin and in the sub-region.

She contributed much to the advent of the African Federation and participated in all the preparatory meetings. In her heart she works and ardently hopes for the birth of a Union of SI Clubs in Benin. We can say without hesitation that she is the memory, the glue and the cohesion of our Soroptimist movement.

Her wisdom, loyalty, unifying spirit and dedication have made her the founder and president of several projects, of which we will list only a few: Foundation PEV (Extended Vaccination Program), GAPOB (*Groupeement d'Achat Pharmaciens of Officine du Bénin*), AFBBD (Association of Beninese Women for Development), Collective of service clubs and women's associations for the fight against breast cancer, the 'Comfort Ayindé Loko' tournament for the promotion of women's football, Christmas parties for destitute children, orphans and the disabled. She is sensitive to all types of misery and is constantly in action on behalf of women in distress, or non-educated, sick or disabled children ...

In the opinion of all her protégés, and in light of the immensity of her works, Joséphine is bound to become an angel.

Magerle **RENATE** SI Kitzbühel (Austria)



Since its foundation, Renate Magerle, as a Club Sister, has shown herself to be a remarkably innovative and powerful 'doer' in SI Kitzbühel Club. Her professional, personal and Soroptimist curriculum vitae reflect significant and extraordinary contributions to our community, to the population, and in particular to the lives of women and girls in our political region.

As a result of her tireless efforts, despite great obstacles, she has prevailed over the course of several years with the following public welfare projects:

- We are particularly proud that SI Austria began participating in the Orange the World campaign while she was President of the Union and that collaboration with other organisations at this time works so well. Renate has been a member of the campaign committee from the very beginning.
- Girls and Women's Counselling Centre. Ten years ago Renate was responsible for the initial drive towards the foundation and continuous development of this district-wide institution. Since then, with only a short break while she was President of the Union, she has also personally led the centre as its chairwoman. In the course of its operation six psychosocial and legal counsellors have been employed, two of them on a voluntary basis. Eight women with their chil-

dren can be accommodated for a certain time in two emergency apartments and two shared apartments. The women are usually victims of violence, both psychological and physical. They come here to recover and consultants support them in developing future strategies.

- Kitzbühel Service Clubs Association: The six service clubs in the district – Soroptimist, Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Roundtable, Club 41 – have been working on joint projects for many years. In 2008, on Renate's initiative, the above-mentioned societies formed the 6 S Club, and since then Renate has continuously been re-elected as its chairwoman. Solving a major accessibility problem to free therapy for children with special needs was made possible by Renate. This is an example of her commitment. After years of negotiations with the state of Tyrol and the regional health insurance fund, the 4Kids therapy centre, a pilot project, began operating in November 2016.

In 2020 the social platform Cura was created for the district of Kitzbühel. This EU-funded LEADER project, in collaboration with the regional service clubs, offers various counselling centres, social clubs and service providers in the district and helps people cope with everyday difficulties.

Maggioni Malaguzzi Valeri **RENATA** SI Bari (Italy)



Renata Maggioni was born in Legnago, Veneto in 1909. In 1939, after her marriage, she moved to Bari and it was there, in her adopted city, that in 1962 she became one of the founders of the Soroptimist International Bari Club. She committed herself entirely, both inside and outside the club, and in later years in Rome, to the cause of homeless children and to women's emancipation. She held a number of important public roles during her life, most notably that of ONMI Prefectural Commissioner for the Municipality of Bari, a position which allowed her to set up three important day-nurseries and a permanent nursery for children under the age of three, saving, and providing a home for, around 400 abandoned children.

After graduating from classical high school, she was an honorary judge at the Juvenile Court of Bari for the prevention of juvenile delinquency, and there she was also President of an Association for Families with children suffering from cerebral palsy. She worked for the development of *S.O.S. villaggi dei bambini* aimed at providing childcare, and also with other international associations with the same goal.

In 1972, as the President of the SI Italian Union, she presented two proposals to Parliament for amendments to the reform of a new family law to promote equality between husbands and wives. As a delegate and *ad hoc* member of the Permanent National Extension Commit-

tee, she worked tirelessly for women who, in the 1960s and 1970s, were not yet prepared to enjoy their rights.

Within the Bari Club, Renata held the roles of President, Vice President, Councillor and Delegate. In carrying out these roles she always claimed that the main task of the Soroptimists was to help a woman break free from the subordinate role assigned to her by centuries of socio-cultural conditioning and to work for "the achievement and enjoyment of those rights that she has formally conquered, but which she does not fully enjoy".

At the same time, she was often very critical of the approach of many groups belonging to the 'women's liberation movement' active in this period such as Witch, Scum and Now, which aimed at liberation from men through the use of masculine methods. She was convinced that a woman should realise her potential without antagonism towards men but by enjoying social equality and the same rights.

A classically trained pianist, as Vice President of the Italian-British Association of Bari, and as a board member of both the *Camerata Musicale Barese* and the Niccolò Piccinni Foundation she also dedicated herself to the wider field of culture and art.

In the last few years which she spent in Rome; Renata Maggioni was awarded the Gold Medal for the *Adelaide Ris-tori* Prize on the occasion of the centenary of *Roma Capitale*.

Maiolo **ANNA** Teresa SI Milano alla Scala (Italy)



Anna Teresa Maiolo was born in Asti in 1932. In 1989 she became the first woman in Italy to hold the position of Full Professor in Haematology, a specialty to which she dedicated her entire life, split between teaching, research and health care.

Anna Teresa was, in fact, interested in three aspects of adult haematology: as Director of the first school of Specialisation in Haematology at the University of Milan, she taught 4th year medical students and postgraduate students on the subjects of clinical and laboratory haematology; research, focusing on onco haematology and documented in more than 150 publications in international journals and chapters in Italian medical treatises; and health care, carried out at the IRCCS Ca' Granda, the Policlinico hospital of Milan, where Anna Teresa was entrusted with the direction of a Haematology Diagnosis and Treatment Service, later transformed into Unit 1 of Haematology. Anna Teresa received important awards for her scientific work, financed by the Ministries of University and Health and by Foundations and other voluntary associations. Such awards included the Antonini Prize from the Province of Milan (1968), and the *Premio di Operosità Scientifica* from the University of Milan for her work carried out in the year 1972–73.

Following her retirement her passion for haematology led Anna Teresa to make significant donations to the IRCCS Ca' Granda for the establishment of the DEmA Centre – for the Haematological Diagnosis of the Elderly, later

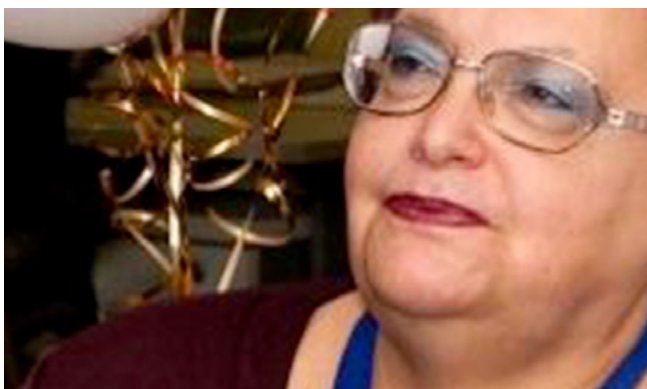
expanded to the Haematological Diagnosis of Adults. Following these donations, the Ca' Granda recognized Anna Teresa as a major donor and commissioned her portrait by a young painter selected by the Brera Art Gallery. This is now included in the Benefactors of the Ca' Granda Collection, well known to the people of Milan since 1600.

Anna Teresa's commitment to Soroptimist Club Milano alla Scala, in which she served as President from 1996 to 1998, as a delegate and twice as secretary, was particularly significant. During her tenure as President round tables such as the *La comunicazione vissuta dalla donna* (Communication as experienced by women), the Conference *Madri nubili, padri celibi: il destino dei figli naturali* (Single mothers, celibate fathers: the fate of natural children) were held, and presentations of books such as *Anoressia e femminilità* (Anorexia and femininity) by Pierrette Lavanchy were made.

During that same time the Club made a significant donation of sports equipment to the National Association of Equestrian Rehabilitation to allow the development of hippotherapy activities for young disabled people. It also supported the reconstruction, after the devastating earthquake in Umbria and Marche in September 1997, of a multipurpose 360m² building in Scopoli near Foligno. The building, inaugurated on 4th July 1998, was donated to the municipality with an integral obligation to host a sewing company there for twenty-four women over two years, and then become a social and cultural centre. The project involved other Clubs and was organised with the guidance of the Union President.

In the same two-year period the Club also delivered 1500 books to Italian communities in Istria (Koper, Parenzo and Pula). The project, initiated by Giancarla Mursia and implemented with the collaboration of many other clubs in the Union, was continued in subsequent years by the Club Milano alla Scala.

Margulis **INNA** SI SC Moscow (Russia)



Inna Margulis joined the Club almost at the very beginning and immediately became an active member. Her appearance at the first club meeting attracted interest and surprise: a young, modern-looking woman... in a wheelchair. She was modest and dignified. And it was clear that she herself was wondering how she was being perceived by others?

Inna introduced herself as a teacher of English and French. She had graduated from the Maurice Thorez Moscow State Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages. She had heard a lot about the activities of Soroptimist International and Moscow Club's projects. A desire to be an active woman, to help others, and to make a change brought her to our club. When, at the suggestion of the Italian Soroptimists, the first Russian club was chartered in Moscow in 1991, it was a very difficult time for our country. But women from different countries shared their experience and supported us. They were also interested in discovering the 'new' Russia, and we were glad to welcome delegations of Soroptimist clubs and undertake joint events and projects. Inna, as a good interpreter, always played an active role.

Despite being confined to a wheelchair since childhood, Inna began, after the late 1980s, to actively engage in public work. Having strong leadership qualities, she was elected Chair of Moscow district for the All-Russia Society of the Disabled which helps people with disabilities to have equal rights and opportunities and participates in creating an obstacle-free environment. They conducted the first-ever Moscow city tour for people with disabilities and be-

gan a programme which provided disabled people with amenities for living. This has now become a federal government programme.

Inna initiated the establishment of a sewing enterprise in Moscow, where only the disabled would work, and Soroptimists helped to open it in 1992. Six hundred people received jobs.

"I remember well how we created our enterprise," Inna recalls. "Two months after a presentation by the International Women's Club, members of a Norwegian SIE Club sent us Japanese sewing machines, fabric, threads, scissors, and other stuff – all that was necessary to start working. Inspired, we registered the enterprise and started producing napkins, tablecloths and bedding. We supplied our sewing products to eighteen of the largest department stores, hospitals, hotels and cafes!"

On many occasions Inna proved by her own example that, even in a wheelchair, you can live an active life, have a family (she had a loving son and two granddaughters), travel around the world and live in such a way that able-bodied people will say: "What an interesting life you lead!" She was twice elected President of Soroptimist Single Club Moscow and has done much to empower and enable girls and women from diverse backgrounds.

Having been elected as a Counsellor at the Municipal Assembly, she resolved the problems of local people who requested her help and these difficulties were not exclusively restricted to disability.

Her articles were published in various newspapers and magazines. She was a member of the organising committee of the International Film Festival 'Cinema Without Barriers' and was an honorary member of the jury at the All-Russian festival 'Look at me as an equal'. Inna, like all women, also wanted to look good! At the All-Russian contest 'Special Fashion' she participated as model and displayed clothes for the disabled. She managed to make life around her bright and warm. Although Inna is no longer with us, she is still remembered not only in Moscow but also in the rest of Russia and abroad!

Mazzocchi Scarzella **ELDA** SI Milan Fondatore (Italy)



Elda Mazzocchi Scarzella was born in Milan in 1904 into a family of upper Milanese bourgeoisie. In 1921 she moved with her husband to Domusnovas in Sardinia. It was on this island that Elda came into contact with a world of backwardness and poverty and she did her utmost to improve the social conditions of the population, especially of women and children from the poorest families.

This tragic and human experience led Elda to affirm the idea of a central role of women in the formation of individuals and society. With this conviction in mind, she established a nursery school in 1923 open to children of miners and to their mothers, as well as a canteen for the children of the village and their breastfeeding mothers.

In 1933 she returned to Milan. Later, during the Nazi occupation, Elda provided clandestine assistance to Jews and worked with various institutions on behalf of people in need. After 25th April 1945, at a time when Milan became a focal point for thousands of refugees returning from the concentration camps in Germany and Poland, as well as from the war in Russia, she was commissioned by the Liberation Committee of Northern Italy to organise the first rescue work on behalf of these survivors.

She, therefore, set up an aid centre for returnees whom she welcomed at the Central Railway Station, to which the convoys first came. Among the many cases brought to her attention there were mothers who arrived from German camps, with children conceived during captivity, frightened at the prospect of returning to their families.

Based on the need to provide assistance to pregnant returnees and mothers, Elda conceived the idea of what was to become the 'Mother and Child Village'. Differing from the standard forms of assistance provided to single mothers at that time, mostly founded on blame and on separation from the 'child of sin', she offered women a comfortable place to continue the pregnancy, helping mothers to rid themselves of feelings of guilt and inadequacy, which inevitably inhibited the acceptance of the baby.

The Village was designed with small houses within a garden setting, where each guest had her own room, furnished according to her own tastes.

The Village was a cultural, pedagogical and psychological centre that constituted a 'scandal' in the 1950s, battling, as it did, against the confinement of pregnant women in other institutions, and providing dignity and autonomy to desperate young women rejected by society. It ultimately promoted a new culture of children's rights, to the extent that its model is still studied in Europe and in the USA today.

With time the Village has developed greatly, adapting to new demands. Thousands of women and children have found a home, care and support in the institution first established and personally managed by Elda Mazzocchi, while she had the strength to do it. If we look back through the 92 years of Milano Fondatore Club's history, Elda is one of the most prominent members, committed to helping and supporting the weakest members of human society.

Mazzuca **CARLA** SI Roma (Italy)



Carla Mazzuca, born in Rome in 1943, is a very compassionate woman and has always been very determined in her professional life. She enjoys sport – sailing and horse riding – and is fond of culture. And she is especially keen on reading historical novels.

Carla, as a professional journalist, has been chief editor for over a decade at the *Corriere Medico*, a newspaper dealing with health issues and part of the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*.

At the end of the 1980s Carla created an association called *Madre per scelta* (Mother by choice) to inform and assist women wanting to apply for medically assisted reproduction, a brand-new technology at the time.

Between 1990 and 2001 she founded and managed *inOltre*, a monthly magazine covering politics and culture, promoted and written mainly by women, through which she cultivated Italian women's skills in all professional, cultural and civic fields. *inOltre* organised a meeting aimed at legislators concerning the need for a new law to help women gain access to institutional offices. Such an event was extremely significant since, following it, the Italian Parliament approved an electoral law which provided a balance in gender representation in fixed proportional electoral lists, although just in a few cases (local elections, not national, 1993). She joined the Commission for the Promotion of Equality at the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. Carla chaired the UNESCO Club in Rome between February 2012 and January 2016. Carla was a member of the Managing Board of

the Italian Republican Party under the leadership of Giovanni Spadolini. She dealt mainly with civil rights, the protection of children, and health matters. She led the party's Women's Movement and was on the front line in the major feminist battles of the 1970s to achieve equal rights for women. She supported Segni's referenda aimed at extensively reforming Italian politics at the beginning of the 1990s.

She entered the Italian Parliament in 1994, and there she fought to pass the 1976 bill dealing with violence towards women, which only became law in 1996. Carla chaired an enquiry committee, formed by members of both chambers of the Italian Parliament, which held similar powers to those of a magistrate, to investigate the thorny matter of the ACNA industrial complex, closed down owing to illegal disposal of toxic waste.

Carla was appointed member of the Italian Senate and then President of a special committee dealing with the protection of children. This committee had legislative authority and passed new bills including ones opposed to sexual exploitation of children and concerning national adoptions, with a wide consensus of opinions.

Between 2000 and 2005 Carla was Vice-President of the Italian Democrats, a majority party at that time. She managed financial bills during the entire term on behalf of the President. She met the representatives of various economic sectors and after learning about their problems, made sure that suitable political and economic measures were issued.

In her role as President of SI Roma Club (2007–2009) Carla set the foundations for a regeneration of the club, which was joined by several young and motivated new members. Aside from the important issues of Soroptimist, she proposed events and discussions about the need for the further presence of women in Italian public life.

Carla Mazzuca celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Club in 2009 by decisively and enthusiastically involving all members in the organisation of an event which was attended by representatives of almost all the Italian Clubs, as well as representatives from Vacaville Club (USA) and Brussels Club (Belgium), both twinned with SI Roma Club.

Modek **FANNETTE** SI Haifa Neve Shaanan Israel



Fannette Modek, President of the SIE Halfa Neve Shaanan Club, Israel, was born in Courbevoie, France, in 1930 and grew up in the US where she attended the Maxwell School of Social Sciences at the University of Syracuse, graduating Magna Cum Laude in 1952.

Later she completed a Certificate Programme in Sociological and Anthropological Aspects of Developing Countries at Paris University.

Between 1953 and 1958 she lived on a kibbutz in Israel with her husband. After returning to the US in 1962 she received a Master's degree in Adult Education and Community Development from New York University, while working as Programme Director at the public housing Community Centre in Brooklyn.

In 1964 Fannette returned to Israel where she began her career at the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre, founded in 1961, placing gender issues on the international agenda. She initiated and conducted a series of training programmes, specially designed for women in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, placing the emphasis on female leadership, education, social justice and women's rights and economic empowerment.

Throughout her life Fanette has dedicated herself to activities which provide a sense of urgency to the need to change prevailing social attitudes towards women and empower them to claim their rightful role in their nations' progress. A mother of three boys, she has fulfilled

many roles, carrying out evaluation missions and on-the spot training in several countries, in collaboration with UN specialised agencies, as well as with local and regional women's organisations. As Centre Director (1986–1996) she attended many international meetings, including the Beijing UN Women's Conference in 1995.

Following her retirement, Fanette continued to take on short term assignments. She also coordinated special seminars for Palestinian and Israeli women. The purpose of these seminars was to provide free and unbiased space for women of all ages, religions and socio-economic backgrounds in the region, encouraging mutual understanding and creating a dialogue promoting peace and non-violence.

In parallel with her work responsibilities Fannette became an active member of the Haifa-Neve Shaanan Soroptimist Club which received its charter in 1974. She took on different roles in the Club and at national level and established links with other Soroptimist sisters while on work missions to different countries across the world. Furthermore, in collaboration with SIE, she organised an International Women Leaders Conference in Israel in 1985 on the topic of 'Adult Education – New Trends in the Education and Occupation of Women'. Over the years she has attended meetings of the European Federation and served as Chair of the Human Rights & Status of Women Programme, submitting the final report at the SIE Congress in Istanbul in 2001.

In 2007 Fannette participated in the 8th Biennial Women's Fair organised by the Club of Menton for SIE Clubs bordering the Mediterranean Sea, and enjoyed meeting Soroptimist sisters from Tunisia and Morocco.

As an avid Soroptimist and lobbyist for the rights of women and for the rights of retired people, in 2010 Fannette received the highest honour the City of Haifa offers, in recognition of the work she has done in the international arena.

In conclusion, during her long professional career Fannette has given a voice to the Soroptimist values which passionately promote women's involvement in the process of development, keeping in mind that gender inequality is an obstacle to the achievement of sustainable socio-economic development.

Today, at the age of 90, Fannette continues to be an active Soroptimist, keeping in contact with Sister Clubs, especially the Mainz Club in Germany, which actively worked with us on a project dealing with the economic empowerment of Bedouin women in Rahat.



Molvig **GERD** Louise SI Ryggy (Norway)



Gerd Louise holds a Cand. Phil. degree (cf. Master's degree) from the University of Oslo and for twenty-five years was employed at Malakoff Upper Secondary School in Moss, where she worked as a teacher of German, head of educational programmes and assistant principal. As part of her work she was responsible for international student and programme exchanges between eleven countries. In 2011 her school received Her Majesty Queen Sonja's School Award. Each year this prize is awarded to a school that has excelled in promoting inclusion and equality for all students. Gerd Louise gave lessons to Moss auxiliary prison students for six years. For the same number of years she worked at Moss public cultural office, in which, among other issues, she was involved in improving the integration of refugees. Throughout her career she highly valued and stressed the importance of internationalisation, inclusion and equality.

Gerd Louise has unique organisational experience. She was the Norwegian Rural Women's Association (NBK) deputy leader for four years and leader of NBK's international committee for six years. This experience led the way to the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW). She served as deputy chairperson of the ACWW's UN Committee for six years, where her primary responsibilities were to target women and education and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She has attended several sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), including as a guest speaker, and for many years she par-

ticipated in the follow-up work of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. International advocacy took her to meetings in London, New York, Paris, Geneva and Bonn, under the auspices of the UN.

She has a big heart for international project work and has been deeply engaged in collaborative projects in Senegal, South Africa and Guatemala, countries she visited several times.

Gerd Louise has been in the management of the Norwegian umbrella organisation FOKUS (Forum for Women and Development Issues) for six years and was the board's chairperson for four years. She has participated in national and international conferences, attended meetings with ambassadors, ministries and directorates. She was the FOKUS contact for SI Norway and has participated in many world conferences and, on behalf of the Soroptimist organisation, given plenary talks about international work for women.

Gerd Louise is a member of Rygge Soroptimist Club, where she has also been the President. Furthermore, she has been a member of the SI Norway Board and served as Vice Delegate. She is the contact person for Rygge's friendship club in the UK.

Gerd Louise is an energetic person with a strong commitment to equality and opportunities for all women, something she has demonstrated through participation in local government politics. For instance, for eight years she was the chairperson of the local community's Main

Committee for Upbringing and Culture. She was the deputy mayor in Råde municipality for four years and politically active in the Rygge municipality for eight years.

She has been a female pioneer on many boards, in councils and committees, including The Women's Council of Moss and Surrounding Areas, for five years as chairperson of the board of the friendship association CAAM (Moss – Aguacatan, friendship town in Guatemala), and for three years a national board member of the Norwegian Red Cross. Furthermore, she has been the leader of the Conciliation Board of Rygge, Råde and Våler municipalities and the leader of Råde Municipality Parish Council/Communal Council for four years, in addition to being a member of its board for another four years.

Gerd Louise's motto has been that it is important to say YES when opportunities for a position are given. Thus, we can all help make a difference. She keeps an impressive international network of knowledgeable contact persons, whom she follows up and encourages with small greetings, etc.

As visible proof of her outstanding commitment to volunteer work, she was awarded the Norwegian *Ildsjelsprisen*, a prize given to volunteer enthusiasts who make an invaluable effort in their area of interest. The award was given by the County Governor, and Gerd Louise received it for her Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) work. The awarding ceremony took place at the Royal Castle in Oslo, followed by a reception.



Mosca **LILIANA** SI Napoli (Italy)



Liliana holds a Law and Political Science degree, and is the Full and Adjunct Professor of History at the Institute of African and Asian Countries at the Federico II University of Naples where she was also Dean of the Political Science Department. Since April 2015 she has participated in several events as Soroptimist representative to the FAO and writes reports for the Soroptimist International blog.

As Vice President and President of the Italian-Malagasy Friendship Association, as well as being a Member and President of the NPO Pro Madagascar Manjakasoa for more than twenty years, she has helped women and girls in the Manjakaray area of Antananarivo to improve their living conditions by having access to food, health care and education through the opening of a sewing

and computer science school, and by providing for teachers' salaries.

Her commitment to Madagascar is as strong as ever. During the past five years she has been involved in the construction of a new wing at the local hospital and of a high school with a student population of 640 in the town of Anosy Avaratra.

She is very engaged in Soroptimist International Italian Union club projects, with an emphasis on promoting the empowerment of African women and developing the STEM project. Since 1992, as a member of the Napoli club, she has supported and advocated consolidation of a relationship with the Madagascar Union. She currently works for Zero Hunger, a project she drafted to fight undernutrition and malnutrition.



Muratore **MARIA** Rosaria Si Lecce (Italy)



The empowerment of women in the context within which they live, and also in politics, their reading, music, knowledge of languages, and travel. A curiosity for life lived in the kaleidoscope of time and events. Love, family, cooking, nature, agriculture as a primary resource and as a fly-wheel for tourism. It is so important firstly to inspire, and then to translate that inspiration into an approved and distinctive regional law, the first in that area, and all promulgated under the presidency of Governor Salvatore Fitto.

There is a long list of passions enshrined within Maria Rosaria Muratore, born in 1922, founder and first President of the Soroptimist Club of Lecce, founder of the provincial Agritourism Department, along with numerous associations dedicated to women's world. Woman and grandmother, mother and manager, wife and partner. Talking about her might almost sound like rhetoric and hagiography, which she herself rejects with the cynicism of her almost ninety-eight years – aging gracefully thanks to kindly DNA and an intellectual vitality – the envy of most of us!

The formal approach of addressing her does not work. Neither does Maria Rosaria accept the age argument. "Call me by my first name", and the tone is authoritative. It is the tone of someone who has lived a long time, won many battles with life, seen much, and learnt a lot. The tone of someone who is convinced that battles must always be fought and must be fought together. "You don't get anywhere on your own," she says, "Women must join together to assert themselves today, as they did in the

past. Many steps forward have been taken, but there is still a long road ahead."

The subject of the tragedy of femicides is like a flare in the dimly lit living room of the beautiful bourgeois house. Her interpretation is as follows, "I think that some men are jealous of the fact that a woman can be worth so much and more than them, that the woman is self-confident. They sense this, and want to feel like masters, and so they kill".

Self-confident women: is this the Soroptimist mission? "The mission is broader, it aims to empower women in their professions, in society, within their families – in the context in which women live".

Has the mission been accomplished in Lecce? "We did our best and as much as was within our power," she says. "In Lecce the club was chartered on 14th September 1970, following a suggestion made by Italy's Union President at the time, Renata Malaguzzi Valeri, a friend of mine, whom I had met in Bari where I lived with my husband for some years. I founded the Club with twenty-two members. I have always firmly believed that women could and should assert themselves in society and in the workplace. Lecce had not yet experienced a boom in women career professionals; indeed, it was not a widespread phenomenon. Yet I, on the other hand, strongly believed in the potential of the female universe – for too long it had been squeezed between a patriarchal mentality and objective economic and social difficulties".

I am insistent: has the mission been accomplished then? "As far as it has been possible for a club like ours, yes. As for me, I have always promoted women's associations because I am deeply convinced that together we can be powerful. And, starting with this conviction, I have given life to numerous women's realities, and also to the Soroptimist Club."

A reality, however, confined to the high-end of society, the good people within the bourgeoisie of Lecce. Wasn't that an obstacle, especially in the years of feminism, protests and civil battles? "No, a coat of arms was not required of the members, but a commitment to careers and work in general. Class or wealth held no weight, you didn't have to be a somebody, but simply a real woman. A woman of culture, in the sense of being open to life and to the world, of possessing an intelligent curiosity about life around us, with a fervent desire to improve the female condition."

How has the female universe changed today? "There have been many changes in terms of independence, awareness, freedom, the practice of professions without preclusion – or almost. But the women had to pay a high price for every single achievement and had to choose between work and the right to motherhood."

Don't politicians support them? "A little." But what kind of politics is it which we find ourselves dealing with? The answer is vigorous: "I am interested in politics; I like the people less. It seems to me that in all party formations there are few people of culture. That is the issue."

There are two small dictionaries, French and English, lying on the table next to the armchair. "Yes, I like to practise. I speak French well, English less so."

Favourite reading material? "Mysteries, but not violent ones. I like De Giovanni and I like books with a psychological background. But I keep up to date by read-

ing *Corriere della Sera* every morning and following debates on TV."

She looks around and alights on another of her passions: "Music. I love American music, soft jazz. You know, I have a nice collection of records."

Is this treasure chest of passions the secret to long life? "Perhaps, but above all it is optimism and positive thinking. My friends, when they are sad or have a problem, they come to me. I have a wonderful relationship with my children, my daughters-in-law and especially with my grandchildren. I never feel alone."

There is a book with illustrations on another table, entitled 'Grandma, tell me about yourself'. She explains, "My grandchildren gave it to me as a present and in this book, I have written the story of my life."

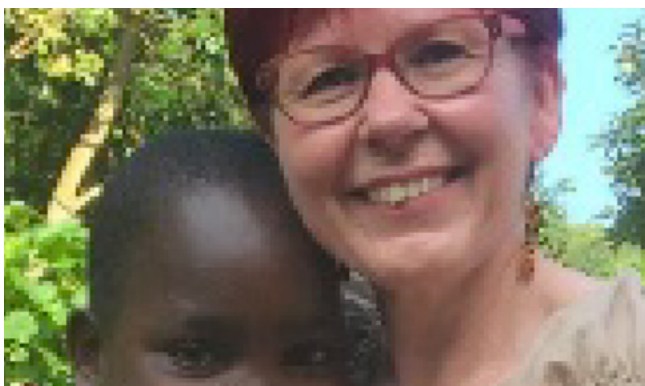
The mobile phone, which she wears suspended around her neck, rings. At the other end of the line is one of her four children. A brief exchange and we pick up our conversation again. Before I leave she asks me for my phone number, opens her mobile phone and types it in. Without hesitation. Not even new technology frightens someone like her who, during the horrors of the Second World War II, with a plan and a woman friend as accomplice, managed to get her Filippo – a medical officer and her fiancé at the time – back from Albania, where he had been imprisoned.

There is only one war, the pandemic, the one we have been experiencing over these past months, that has the power to stifle the tone in her voice: "Yes, it's difficult living through this scourge because it completely isolates you. Let's hope we can get out of it".

Being on one's own. This is the refrain. You can't live, you can't get anywhere on your own, and women must bear this in mind if they want "to be strong, create critical mass and spur on those who are in the control room".



Nurkka **NIINA** SI Lappeenranta (Finland)



We at SI Lappeenranta, Finland, are confident that Niina Nurkka is our best nominee for the 100 Soroptimists.

Niina is an enthusiastic and energetic mother of two daughters who has impacted and encouraged girls and young women in an exceptional way to embark on technical studies. She holds a PhD. Her doctoral thesis was about developing the teaching of physics in physiotherapy education.

Niina has worked as principal lecturer in the Department of Social and Health Care at the Saimaa University of Applied Sciences for ten years. Since the beginning of 2020 she has worked as degree manager in the Department of Technology at LAB UAS. Niina has written many reviewed publications and two textbooks (medication calculations and biomechanics). She is extremely skilled professionally in research and teaching in higher education and well-known for her inspirational pedagogical skills.

Niina believes that through education, empowerment and enabling of opportunities made available to girls and women it is possible to improve their lives, and this is in alignment with the principles and mission of Soroptimist. This can all be seen in the following specific activities that she involves herself in:

- Encouraging and getting students interested in mathematics, especially girls who are not motivated to study mathematics or have special needs.
- Team-teaching and collaborative work with colleagues.

- Her own family has been working for eight years as a support family for twin girls who have special needs and whose family requires support. These 'bonus daughters' stay with them one weekend a month and during holidays.
- In her spare time, she likes to travel, read, go to concerts, meet friends and do voluntary work.

As an active member of SI Lappeenranta Club, she is a splendid example to others, and she has carried out many administrative responsibilities. In March 2020 Niina and her colleagues undertook two and a half weeks voluntary work in Bukoba Municipality in Tanzania. The main agenda included motivation of the schoolgirls to do science subjects and talking to them about health, hygiene issues and self-confidence. Before the visit Niina arranged for SI Lappeenranta Club to sew eighty reusable sanitary towels to take to schoolgirls studying in Kabugaro secondary school. Niina visited three different schools in Bukoba. The inspirational presentations and hands-on workshops for over 1400 students and sixty teachers impacted upon them in many ways. This is exemplified by the following testimonials: Newton Makweta, a teacher in Kabugaro secondary School wrote "Niina changed the mind-set of our students, and especially girls, to learn mathematics, awareness and how they should cooperate in their learning helping each other to reach their goals. Her teaching methodologies and sharing of experiences on planning and reaching goals are remarkable".

Father Reverence Modest wrote "The volunteers impacted much to the whole community of Bukoba by their initiatives of empowerment of the girls in science subjects and capacitating them in self-realization to achieve their life purposes and carriers of their choices. In the long term their impact can be seen in generating adequate expertise in science fields such as engineers, doctors and innovators of technical solutions".

Ott **ROSWITHA** SI Bad Ragaz (Switzerland)



Mama Africa'

Her tireless engagement in the field of human rights, for women's rights, and her long-time commitment and dedication to the African Soroptimists and their multifaceted projects have made her a legend.

Roswitha Ott, 2011, Madagascar

Roswitha Ott, born in 1933, was one of seven children in a family of craftsmen in Spreitenbach. During the Second World War, with her husband absent owing to military service, Roswitha's mother ran the blacksmith's shop business, in addition to managing the household and the education of the children. Everyday life involved a lot of work for the children.

Roswitha was a gifted student. At the age of only eighteen she qualified for university with top marks and used her first semester at the University of Zurich to work out in which direction her path should go. To earn money, she taught at a primary school and this reinforced her decision to become a teacher, but at a different level.

To broaden her horizons, she took a break from her studies and travelled to the USA. She found a job in Vermont in a multiracial school run by a Jewish family, which, for reasons of safety, was hidden in a forest. This was the first time young Roswitha was confronted with the reality of racism.

Back in Switzerland she completed her studies at the Faculty of Philosophy and began work as a schoolteacher.

er. She taught at a variety of secondary schools until her retirement. Roswitha married Theo Ott in 1960 and seven years later her daughter Bettina was born. As her husband was still studying, Roswitha was responsible for the family income for four years. She soon realised that married women had few rights in Switzerland at that time and were dependent on their husbands. This fact motivated her to engage in politics. Roswitha was very active in the campaign for votes for women and women's suffrage was finally introduced in Switzerland in 1971. It was now possible for the young mother to participate in political life. She joined a party, was elected as a school councillor and, in addition, was a lay judge in her district court for twelve years. She was also the president of a retirement home for twelve years. Together with other women she founded a women's party to tailor women for political positions. In her own role as a judge she was further very actively involved in the fight for a revision of the marriage laws. This came into force in 1988.

The SI Bad Ragaz Club was founded in 1976 with Roswitha as a founding member. "I was hesitant to become a Soroptimist", she says in retrospect, "but, in the end, it was a logical step after all this fighting for equal rights." In 1998 she became President of the Swiss Union. The Soviet Union collapsed during this time and the populations in Eastern European countries suffered as a result: children's homes and old people's homes did not have enough food and equipment, and tuberculosis was widespread. As Pres-

ident, Roswitha decided to call her Union project 'Aid to Romania and Bulgaria'. Thanks to the appeals made by her, considerable funds were raised to fill many lorries which transported medical equipment and all kinds of other material from Switzerland to these two countries.

In 2001–2003 she was SIE Vice President, and later member of the SIE Extension Committee and Follow-up Africa, and Project Manager Africa. For Hanne Jensbo, then President of SIE, aid to Africa was of primary concern. She saw Roswitha Ott as the right person to engage on behalf of Africa. Roswitha, somewhat reluctantly at first, became involved, but already by 2002 was doing so happily and with dedication.

The most important objectives were the development of the future African Federation, the training and advancement of women and girls, the fight against circumcision and child marriage, education and access to jobs for women, health and safe birth procedures, prevention of HIV, and access to clean water. Over a period of twenty years Roswitha visited (often at her own expense) Senegal, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Guinea, Togo, Ghana, Benin, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Egypt, Tunisia and Haiti, and many of these countries' multiple times. She was able to build up a large African network, and this helped many projects to be achieved. The focus was always on 'water, bread, health and education'. More than 200 projects have

been developed and implemented in seventeen countries in Africa and Haiti through the initiatives of Roswitha Ott, her own Fund, and pragmatic work.

Roswitha is a very gifted and well-connected fundraiser. In the past twenty years she has been able to raise close to one million Swiss francs for her projects in Africa. One of the keys to her success is the close relationship she has with trusted Soroptimists in Africa, the follow-ups on the projects, and the reports to the donors. To ensure proper administration of monies raised by Roswitha, the Roswitha Ott Fund was established in 2012 to promote 'Children in need and children with special needs. Roswitha is responsible for fundraising and the appropriate management of this Fund. It has enabled, and still enables, the financing of many projects in Africa.

Roswitha Ott's entrepreneurial and educational competence, coupled with her love of people, her commitment to human rights and to the disadvantaged, and also with an understanding of the African mentality, are probably the drivers of this twenty-year success story of over 200 accomplished projects. Other key factors contributing to her success are the deep roots in her Club Bad Ragaz and its support.

The Swiss Union honoured Roswitha for her lifelong achievements and dedication with a special award in 2012 and with honorary membership in 2019.



Palm **ULLA-BRITA** SI Göteborg-Bohus (Sweden)



At an age when most people retire, Ulla-Brita Palm, a member of SIGöteborg-Bohus Club, started a tremendous project which supported women and children living and scavenging on a huge rubbish tip in Quito, Ecuador. Today, at the age of 91, Ulla-Brita still attends club meetings. Even though she was a widow with small children, she was an enthusiastic Soroptimist from the very start, "I felt important and chosen when I was given the Soroptimist badge" she said when interviewed for the Swedish Soroptimist Jubilee book, published in 2021.

"The sisterhood was extremely positive, but we did not believe we could influence the world around us and had no projects at that time". Many years later, Ulla-Brita would work for twenty-eight years on her own project, the rubbish tip in Quito, Ecuador.

Inspired by another Soroptimist leaving for missionary work in Latin America, Ulla-Brita, who was working at the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation at the time, arranged to work for three months at an ecumenical radio station in Quito. There she saw for herself the living conditions of the extremely poor in the big city. One day she went to the tip with the wife of the Swedish ambassador to donate some cast-off clothes. "That day changed my whole life", says Ulla-Brita. "The women and the children in this awful, stinking place were literally dressed in rags; they were dirty and toothless. The men, mostly drunk, lay asleep in shabby cartons".

Ulla-Brita was shocked, and back in Sweden she woke up in her bed during the first few nights with the stink still in her nostrils and an image of the bare-foot women and children. She eventually decided to try to do something for these poor people. She wrote an article in the internal review and asked people for clothes for the women and children.

To begin with she collected 100 kgs of clothing and 6000 Swedish crowns. She bought a ticket to Quito with 80 kilos excess baggage but managed to negotiate with the management to pay for the additional costs. In Quito, she sold each garment for approximately €0.05. She persuaded a woman doctor to give antibiotics to fifty sick children. The money sufficed to buy the first medical instruments. Ulla-Brita bought fifty pairs of rubber boots for the women whose daily task was to collect what they could from the rubbish. The children got pens and papers, and ten of them received scholarships for schooling.

The project continued with great success after that. Ulla-Brita placed all her energy into this initiative until she closed the *Soptippen* foundation in 2018, handing over responsibility to the government authorities. "The women now make their own living", says Ulla-Brita. Her work has resulted in schools and education for the children, a day care centre, a big health centre with doctors, dentists, nurses and a pharmacy. She has contributed to a sewing training course for the women and to establishing a sewing factory. In recognition of her extraordinary efforts and achievements, Ulla-Brita has received grants and awards from many organisations, including Rotary's Paul Harris Fellow Award. She has visited most of the Swedish Soroptimist Clubs, many of which have supported her work over the years.

Ulla-Brita Palm has been a great influencer in her work to change the life of so many women and children. She is courageous and speaks to people in the same way, whether they be children, poor people, or the highest dignitaries in Ecuador. The centre at the rubbish tip, *Centro Comunitario de Salud Ulla-Brita Palm*, was named after her.

MARIE-CLAIRE

Pasteur **MARIE-CLAIRE** SI Grenoble (France)



Whilst following a brilliant career as an insurance agent, a family life devoted to her daughters and grandchildren, as well as an unwavering commitment to community life, Marie-Claire has conducted her life with professionalism and enthusiasm by putting herself at the service of the community.

Marie-Claire joined the Soroptimist Club of Grenoble in 1982 at the age of 49 and was twice President. She was a Member of the Board in various roles for many years, and her charisma and knowledge of Soroptimist International have helped to recruit no fewer than twenty-five new members.

Marie-Claire has led and implemented local initiatives, supporting various associations and organisations, while always in line with the programmes offered by the SI, the SIE or the French Union. She has also encouraged the Grenoble club to organise regional and national meetings: Inter-clubs, the General Assembly of Delegates and the Annual Meeting of Presidents.

In 1994 Marie-Claire's involvement in SI progressed to a national level when she became Vice-President.

Her roadmap included:

- Meeting the clubs during statutory meetings, listening to their concerns, attending to them, all in close collaboration with the Union President and the board
- Helping to set up and facilitate new links between clubs
- Establishing a communications relay within the large chain of the SI.

In 1996 Marie-Claire was elected President of the French Union. The Union comprised 120 clubs and 3200 members spread across mainland France and overseas.

At the head of a team united by her dynamism and rigour, she mobilised all clubs in support of public health action: organ donation and, in particular, donation of umbilical cord blood. The clubs organised awareness-raising meetings, bringing together more than 12,000 people and raising more than €128,000 for three cord blood banks located in France for transplants for children being treated for leukaemia.

In 1998–2002 she was Delegate of the French Union, representing it with conviction and dedication.

Marie-Claire has always been committed to local community life: The Parent Student Association; reintegration of drug addicts back into society; helping the homeless with papers, work, etc; being a member of the Social Action Committee in her municipality; representing users of the healthcare system during meetings with healthcare professionals to improve the system, and so on.

In 1986 she was an initiator of the Isère Drugs Prevention League, together with the whole family of service clubs, and became its president. Under her leadership, the League encouraged preventive action in primary and secondary schools and family associations in the region.

Marie-Claire is an exceptional woman who throughout her professional, associative or soroptimist career has trained, motivated and influenced various groups of people (women for Soroptimists) always with altruism, without self-interest but for the good of Soroptimists or other associations and always with a lot of kindness. Her journey leaves a strong imprint and a lasting influence on all who cross her path.

Peritz **EDITH** (1897–1985) SI Berlin (Germany)



Edith Peritz was born in Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland) in 1897 into the Jewish family of Meyer Peritz, a doctor. She grew up with a sister and a brother who later became a surgeon. Edith studied medicine in Breslau and was awarded a doctorate in paediatrics in 1922. In 1925 she was appointed assistant doctor at Berlin's Rudolf Virchow hospital, working in internal medicine and later in surgery.

In 1927–28 she spent several months in Paris, continuing her studies under Dr Suzanne Noel, who achieved international renown in 1926 with her benchmark work *'Cosmetic Surgery and its Social Role'*. Here Peritz mastered the operational techniques of face-lifting and eyelid correction.

In 1928 she opened an ever-increasingly popular public plastic surgery practice in Joachimsthalerstrasse in Charlottenburg. The young German doctor, nineteen years Dr Noel's junior, struck up a friendship with her illustrious mentor, the pioneer of plastic surgery in France. 'Madame Noel', as Soroptimists call her even today, spoke passionately of her private project to found Soroptimist clubs in Europe based on the American model. The first club on the European continent was established in Paris in 1924, with fifty-six founding members. Suzanne Noel enjoyed combining professional lecture tours and operations in numerous foreign countries with her initiative to found women's service clubs abroad.

Suzanne Noel succeeded in stimulating the enthusiasm of her pupil Edith Peritz for the idea of a club in the Ger-

man capital and agreed to act as godmother. Dr Peritz was well-connected in Berlin society, and in May 1929 invited eight professional women from the fields of art, science, economics and medicine to explore the potential of what was termed a 'club for the working woman'. From June onwards the rapidly expanding circle held regular meetings. When Madame Noel attended the World Women's Conference in Berlin in June, she met many members of this provisional club.

In October 1929 about thirty women signed the application, and on 13th January 1930 the first official German Soroptimist club held a tea-time reception at the *Deutsche Gesellschaft* in the company of the Berlin elite. As club President, Edith welcomed their Parisian godmother, who delivered an inspirational speech dressed in a 'dahlia-coloured ball gown'.

Up to forty members attended SI Berlin's weekly Tuesday meetings. Edith Peritz remained President until she was succeeded by lawyer Dr Freda Herzfeld-Hoffmann in February 1933. The National Socialists' election victory inaugurated a grim era that was soon to adversely affect the club, in particular its numerous Jewish members.

Jewish doctors lost their health insurance accreditation as early as April 1933. In 1927

Dr Peritz had been elected to the Chamber of Physicians, in 1930 had become a member of the Society of Surgeons, and since 1931 had chaired the Brandenburg branch of the German Association of Women Doctors.

Now she was deprived of her licence and all official posts. She moved her practice and residence to nearby Hardenbergstrasse, where she was permitted to treat private patients. She still considered herself an integrated and respected figure in Berlin society. Her Soroptimist club arranged secret meetings by telephone. These were held exclusively in private locations.

In early 1936, with only a tourist visa and a small amount of luggage, Edith departed for New York, where her siblings' families had emigrated a year earlier. Shortly afterwards she received bad news from Germany that the return of Jewish citizens was now impossible. She remained in New York, having left behind all her personal and professional possessions. In 1936 she received a work permit but was denied recognition as a medical consultant. She briefly worked at Helena Rubinstein's Body Department before moving to the Institute for Reconstructive Surgery as a medical supervisor.

Her next post was at the Infirmary for Women and Children, one of New York's oldest hospitals, founded in the

mid-19th century by the Quaker Elizabeth Blackwell and funded entirely by private donation.

In 1937 Edith Peritz was granted American citizenship. She married Karl von Lojewski, ten years her senior, and bore his name until his death in 1960. In 1940 two of her former club members, Lotte Jacobi and Marie Frommer, arrived in New York and she opened a private practice, at the same time becoming a member of the Rudolf Virchow Medical Society. Little is known of her later life and work. In 1958 she requested compensation for the compulsory forfeiture of her Berlin practice and in 1960 received a mere 11,500 Deutschmarks as compensation for the loss of an extremely promising career at the age of forty. Even in old age she enjoyed travelling and a journey to Australia prevented her attending her Berlin club's fortieth anniversary. Nonetheless, she retained lifelong contact with SI in Berlin and America.

Edith Peritz died in New York in 1985 at a ripe old age. Since 2018 the town of Dortmund and the Dortmund Soroptimists have awarded a joint annual Dr Edith Peritz Prize for Equality on International Women's Day.



Perviz Erdem **EMINE** SI Etiler (Turkey)



The Life of a Women's Rights Advocate Devoted to the Struggle for Justice, Freedom and Equality

Emine Perviz Erdem was born in Istanbul in 1959. After graduating from the French College, she studied at the Faculty of Law at Istanbul University. She worked as Legal Counsel for twenty-seven years for Turkish Airlines and has been a Member of the Board of Directors and Legal Advisor of Erdem Holding, a leading telecommunications company in Turkey, since 1985.

While undertaking her legal profession commitments with great success and passion, she also works for various non-governmental organisations, where she makes intense efforts to prevent violence towards women, promote gender equality and help women realise their own strength and secure their rights.

Inspired by its mission she joined the Union of Soroptimist Clubs of Turkey (TSKF) in 1988 as the founding member of SI Etiler Club, where she later became the President. She served as President of the TSKF in 2008–2010; she was a member of the Board of Soroptimist International Europe in 2013–2017, President of the International Soroptimist Convention in 2015, and Vice President of Soroptimist International Europe in 2015–2017.

While President of Etiler Club, she spearheaded the establishment of a Carpet Workshop in Mardin, an ancient city in South-Eastern Anatolia, bordering Syria. She worked enthusiastically in this workshop teaching the women the traditional art of carpet weaving.

As her husband was from Mardin, she had a good opportunity to observe the women in the region, and, as someone brought up in the western culture, she developed a life perspective based on a synthesis of the East and the West. She helped to create employment opportunities for women in the region and introduce these decorative, traditionally patterned carpets to the rest of the world.

While serving as President of TSKF she worked with determination and resoluteness to establish the Cultural House project in Balat, one of the oldest quarters of Istanbul and included on UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List. The women in the Cultural House were provided not only with training in cookery, but also employment opportunities to apply what they had learned. Balat Cultural House helped the women in the region to become financially independent, the children to improve their educational achievements thanks to the courses they attended, and young women to gain self-confidence through the projects they had put into practice. It also brightened up the social life of the quarter through the training undertaken there, as well as through cultural and artistic activities.

Erdem is a social activist on various other platforms. She is President of the Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey (KAGİDER), where she leads various projects such as Young Ideas for Empowering Women, and Women Leaders of the Future. She served as the Turkish Senator in the World Business Angels Investment Forum in 2020, and she is a member of the Gender Mainstreaming Expert Committee of the Turkish National Commission in UNESCO. Observing Erdem's life as if through a kaleidoscope, one can see that her struggle is testimony to a life dedicated to women's rights. It is an inspiration and provides hope for the future.

Pfitzner **CHARLOTTE** M.D. SI Bayreuth (Germany)



“What can I do to help?” This is Dr Charlotte Pfitzner’s motto in life. She has been a dedicated member of SI Bayreuth Club, Germany, since 1996. She has been a doctor for more than thirty years and has worked as a general practitioner, with a surgery of her own, helping people with medical problems. But it is not only sick people that she cares for. She is especially interested in alternative medicine that focuses on prevention.

One of the methods that Charlotte Pfitzner firmly advocates is the ‘Buchinger fasting cure’. “Although a fasting cure is often recommended to people already suffering from disease, the best protection against disease is to undergo an annual fasting cure.”

In 2000 she organised a therapeutic fasting cure week for Soroptimists and friends. It was so popular that she decided to organise this event in subsequent years also. To date women not only from different regions of Germany like Bayreuth, Trier, Bonn or Hameln, but also Soroptimists from Italy and the Netherlands have participated in this special event. This year was the twenty-first time that Charlotte’s fasting cure week took place.

Under the care of an experienced naturopath the participants are offered not only healthy drinks and teas, but also mud-baths and massages, as well as hiking tours or excursions to interesting places in the area. Meditation, lectures and discussions distract from ‘unhealthy’ thoughts. And last but not least — most of the mon-

ey that the participants pay for this cure goes to a good cause, because Charlotte Pfitzner always donates the operating profits to *KARO e.V.*, an initiative on the German-Czech border. Over the course of time she has donated an unbelievable €50,000 euros in support of this organisation. What a generous gesture!

KARO e.V. battles against forced prostitution, human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children, as well as trafficking of women and children. Their aim is to protect, support and provide help to women and children who are affected or threatened by physical, psychological and sexual violence. Being an NGO, the association is dependent on sponsorship and donations and they are very grateful for the financial aid that our club regularly provides thanks to Charlotte.

We believe that Charlotte Pfitzner embodies the values of Soroptimist and has always lived up to our ideals. Despite her large family with four children and lots of grandchildren, and despite her demanding profession, she has always been a good Soroptimist and a role model of social commitment. She has been a caring President and delegate of our club and has linked our club with SI Prague Club to consolidate the friendship with our neighbour to the east. She has contributed greatly to international understanding and the support of women in need. That is the reason why our club has nominated Charlotte Pfitzner as our outstanding Soroptimist.

Piontek **DANUTA** SI Warsaw (Poland) 1937–2021



Founder of SI Club in Poland

Danuta introduced the idea of Soroptimist to Poland by establishing the First Warsaw SI Club in 1990. She invited representatives of various professions and environments to work together.

Mentor of the establishment of SI clubs in Poland and Eastern Europe

Danuta was the initiator of the formation of new clubs in Poland. In 1995, thanks to her activities, the Union of SI Clubs in Poland was established, of which she was the first President. She held this position twice, once in 1995–1997, and again in 2008–2010. It should be emphasised that she was involved in promoting the formation of the first clubs in Eastern Europe.

Initiator of projects

She supported projects that were implemented both at Polish Union level and in the Warsaw Club. The results included scholarships for young talented women in the fields of music, medicine, social and civic life. It is also worth mentioning the many fundraising activities:

- for the training of unemployed women: 'Hat Ball' at the Summer Residence of the Kings of Poland; Warsaw Car Rally 'Baby Jagi' ; Car Rally 'Karotka Fortuna'
- for children: holidays for children from an orphanage in Rudka; Children's Day in Fort Piontek.

Animator of SI meetings

She understood the idea of Soroptimist as getting to know Soroptimists from all over the world, making friends, learning from each other, working together for the development and improved position of women. She organised trips to link and friendship clubs. Thanks to her professional position and international experience, Polish Soroptimists gained a 'window to the world'. Under her patronage and thanks to international contacts, the First Warsaw Club organised the Great Chopin Weekend in 1994, hosting Soroptimists from all over the world in Poland.

Businesswoman

In the 1970s, while in Nigeria, Danuta began work as the manager of Magwan Water Tank Restaurant in the state of Kano. This job brought her prestige and fame as the only woman employed in such a high position in a Muslim country. After returning to Poland, she continued her business activities, including establishing one of the first Polonia companies (these were companies set up in Poland but with capital from Poles abroad).

A woman of strong character

Work also gave her freedom, fortitude and extraordinary organisational skills, which she used in her later life. During the period of martial law, she ran an open house, organising parties where people with various political views could meet. It was a brave and pioneering action, because

at that difficult time this required courage and great imagination.

Patron

Danuta sponsored exhibitions of graphic artists, people with great talent, and supported orphanages. The courage to take up challenges as an entrepreneur and leader was appreciated both abroad and in Poland. These features, as well as the results of her actions, made her a woman

generally admired but also criticised. With her leadership, strong character and the will to be the first in achieving and overcoming obstacles, she inspired other women to act, demanding a lot from others, but above all from herself.

Danuta devoted thirty years of her life to building Soroptimist both in Poland and beyond, and through this helped to support the development of women.

She died on 18 April 2021.



Pucci **ELDA** SI Palermo (Italy)



Elda Pucci was born in Trapani in 1928.

In 1951 she graduated in Medicine and Surgery with top grades and honours from the University of Palermo. In 1954 she specialised in Paediatrics and Childcare and gained top grades. She continued working at the University Medical Clinic of Palermo and the Giovanni di Cristina Children's Hospital, undertaking studies and research there.

She was the author of approximately forty clinical research publications. Upon completion of her university and post-graduate studies, she began to practise as a paediatrician in the poorest quarters of Palermo, still damaged by the war, where she tended to her small patients at no cost and gave continuous instructions in hygiene and childcare to the mothers, many of whom at that time were often illiterate. In 1964 she obtained her *Libera Docenza* (doctorate) at the Paediatric Clinic. In 1971 she became Head of Paediatrics (*primario di pediatria*) at the Di Cristina Children's Hospital, managing the children's intensive care department. In the mid-1970s she held the position of Director of Health for three years at the Di Cristina Hospital.

In 1980 she accepted an invitation to enter politics and was elected city councillor, cultivating her dream of ameliorating the conditions of the poorest in Palermo.

She was then appointed Mayor of Palermo, 1983–4, the first female mayor of a large Italian city. During her term of office the Palermo municipality became a civil party in a Mafia trial for the first time. In April 1985, as a result of her courageous denunciations against the mafia, her country

villa was destroyed in a bomb attack deliberately carried out by the Corleonesi mafia.

For many years, after 1986, she worked with *Il Giornale* in Milan, anticipating the realities of the *tangentopoli* (political scandals) and Mafia *pentitismo* (repentance).

From 1987 to 1989 she was President of Soroptimist International Italian Union, working to intensify the network of contacts between clubs and women around the world. It was during these years that she was also invited to Mansion House in London with other women of the time who had attained elevated positions mainly in the medical professions. Between 1988 and 1993 she was also President of the Doctor's Order of Palermo and its province, the first woman to be appointed in the history of the Italian Order. In 1989 she was invited to run as a candidate in the European Parliament and in March 1992 she became a European deputy, carrying out several projects especially in support of women's emancipation and their greater and more meaningful participation in politics. After 1983, and continuing until her death, she lived protected and under high security because of the frequent threats to her life. She died on 4th October 2005, at the age of 77, of a severe pulmonary disease. But never during her painful illness did she lose her courage and she always offered kindness and smiles to those who came to see her. When she died there were very many expressions of condolence. A year after her death the Soroptimists organised a celebration at the University of Palermo, attended by numerous high dignitaries, including the future president, Sergio Mattarella, who gave a speech in memory of her highly regarded commitment to politics.

Lawyer Achille Gattuccio, a well-known jurist in Palermo, wrote Elda's biography entitled *Elda Pucci: onorevoli si nasce* (Elda Pucci: You were born honourable). Lastly, but not least, she was a very successful paediatric doctor, deeply loved by her small patients and their parents, for her extraordinary ability to enter their hearts and instil confidence and serenity. For her, the first medicines to be administered to small patients were always a smile and a caress.

Rangoni Machiavelli **BEATRICE** SI Roma Tiber (Italy)



Beatrice Rangoni Machiavelli, a political science and physics graduate, has been a journalist, essayist, politician and activist. Being a woman of great culture, devoted to European convictions, she has dedicated her entire life to social work, always engaging herself in great battles in support of human rights and in particular women's rights. For her this has been a moral and existential choice.

From an early age she joined all the feminist movements, including *Les Femmes d'Europe*, the first in Europe to promote initiatives for women's emancipation, in which she actively worked to support the rights of women in prison. In 1985 she participated in the Italian Delegation World Conference on Women in Nairobi, contributing to the definition of a new orientation for the United Nations with programmes that provided for specific recognition of constitutional rights for women.

Beatrice shared the initiative of scientist Rita Levi-Montalcini, whose foundation supported women in developing countries, especially in Africa, where over 400 associations were formed. She was Italian correspondent for the 'Women of Europe' publication and national secretary of the National Association for Women's Votes.

She took on several important assignments, always assuming 'primacy' as being the first woman to be given responsibility for the assignment.

Her incisive contributions for the benefit of our country, such as the reform of the outdated family law based

on 'marital authority' and the approval of divorce laws, are worthy of note.

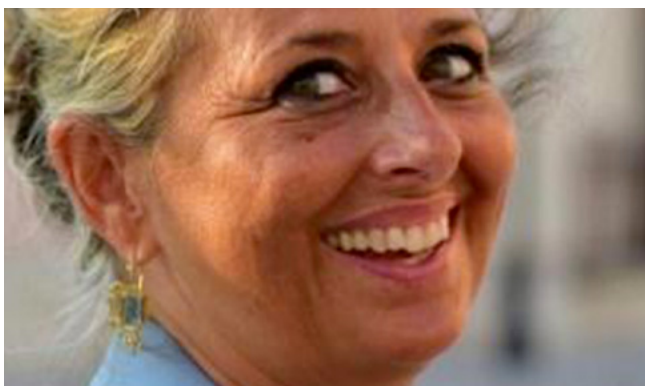
It can be plausibly accepted that Beatrice's accomplishments, strong as she was in her conviction and culture, have been in favour of the development of a European consciousness free from all discrimination, and beginning with equality of the sexes.

Many international awards in a wide range of areas have been conferred upon Beatrice. She represented excellent female skills in both a prestigious and distinctive manner. These include:

- being elected President of the Economic and Social Committee of the EU in 1998. It was the first time that a woman, a representative of civic society, was called upon to hold this important office. In the CESE Beatrice was always involved in the defence of human and civil rights, in particular those of women;
- being the first European to receive the prestigious 'Women Who Make a Difference' award in the United States conferred by the International Women's Forum;
- being President of the Italian Council of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation. She was the first Italian woman to be decorated with the highest honour of the Federal Republic of Germany (*Großes Verdienstkreuz*);
- being awarded the order of *Officier de la Légion d'Honneur* in November 2001 by the President of the French Republic for her exceptional contribution to services in European construction;
- being appointed Grand Officer of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic in 2005 by President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi.

During the more than thirty-five years of her membership in our Club, Beatrice has always displayed her acute intelligence, her culture, her generosity towards Soroptimist, and has accompanied us in our communal labours. For us all she remains an exceptional model of womanhood and, at the same time, she is a friendly, witty and smart sister.

Ricatti **MARIA** Grazia SI Vicenza (Italy)



An open and welcoming smile, admittedly a Soroptimist smile, always ready to embrace you — this is the distinctive feature of Maria Grazia Ricatti, member of SI Vicenza Club since 2009 and currently member of the club council. She is a young, tenacious and determined woman. When she embraces an idea, she carries it out to the full, regardless. Very much into volunteering, she knows how to listen and if anything arouses her curiosity, she puts her heart and soul into it and works hard to develop and progress it.

On joining the board, Maria Grazia immediately asked for greater transparency to be shown towards all members in respect of communicating subject matter and decisions made by the Board, as she is insistent upon the importance of sharing knowledge and an awareness of all issues, as one would in a family, to which she also devotes herself with passion and commitment.

She has always worked hard to submit projects aimed at helping people with visual disabilities, under the slogan 'don't lock yourself up at home'. In 2018 this impelled her to start working on an idea which would eventually become a club project called 'Soroptimists swim with you'. This is in collaboration with *Uic* and *Gsnv*, *Centro Sport Palladio* and Cristina Albicini, a visually impaired swimming champion who won two silver medals in 2018 at the Absolute Swimming Championships.

Maria Grazia is a pharmacist with a managing role at San Bortolo Hospital in Vicenza, and she is also the person to contact at the hospital in the field of rare diseases. She

knows the loss of autonomy that a disability entails, but never burdens anybody with her problem. On the contrary, she makes the people around her more sensitive towards the various issues faced daily by those affected by a physical impairment. That is why she keeps fighting to find the best way to allow a disabled person to know their own body better and gain more autonomy, especially through sport. The worsening of her own illness has made her much stronger, not only in the management of her family, where she commits herself to raising two children, but also, and above all else, in everyday life, especially at work, which indeed she has never neglected.

Her serious and professional attitude, as well as her great adaptability, have allowed her to accept and understand all the necessary precautions in order to be able to carry out her duties steadily and successfully. She has never abandoned her passions. She is a determined sports woman — she swims, skis, goes diving and does Tai chi. And she also enjoys singing. When Cristina Albicini was no longer given financial help by the sports federation towards her equipment, Maria Grazia immediately accepted the young swimmer's request for help and involved the whole club in giving her everything she needed to accomplish her goal. She competed under the Soroptimist logo.

Being the sincere and pure person that Maria Grazia is, her enthusiasm is so contagious that at the Club's 2018 Christmas dinner, for instance, after presenting the project that she had in mind, the attending guests donated two guide dogs to the Vicenza Association for the Blind.

She has also contributed to the club's cultural life by writing articles about the club's activities in *La voce delle Donne*.

In addition to this, she is liaising with the management of Vicenza Calcio, the local football team, to raise awareness among fans of violence towards women. The idea is to pre-empt 25th November's 'Orange the World — stop violence towards women' with a strong message sent from a huge screen inside the stadium during all November games.

Rinaldi Amendola **MARIA** SI Bari (Italy)



Maria Rinaldi Amendola, founder and beacon of the Soroptimist Club of Bari, sadly passed away last August, shortly after reaching the milestone age of one hundred years. With her lively personality and acute intelligence, she guided our club, which she herself had founded together with a small group of women, back in 1963. At the time, the town of Bari was quite provincial in mentality and the ruling patriarchy and male chauvinism relegated women to a purely ancillary role.

Associations were for men only, and a woman's worth in society was measured solely by her role as wife or daughter.

As a result, it is hardly surprising that the creation of an unprecedented, exclusively female association left all utterly dumbfounded. This is what happened in Bari, a town in Southern Italy, culturally vibrant and commercially thriving, yet linked to millenary stereotypes which, albeit to a lesser extent, also existed in large pockets of the more emancipated North.

Maria held all the top and leading positions within Soroptimist International at local level, and also served as national Vice-President. In 2013 she published a fifty-year history of the Club's service, and for sixteen years, from 1989 to 2005, she was Chief Editor of the Italian Soroptimist Union Newsletter.

As a young woman, Maria Rinaldi Amendola had already shown clear signs of being ahead of her time. She graduated in law, thereby breaking traditions which re-

gated women to pursuing only those careers viewed as being more strictly suited to a woman's main role as that of a family caregiver.

Maria married Antonio Amendola, also a lawyer, and together they had two children, Giandomenico and Serena. Maria had an impact upon Soroptimist International, both locally and nationally, by contributing the fruits of her multiple life experiences, not only as a professional, but also as a wife and mother. Through example Maria demonstrated that a woman's different roles in life could be a source of enrichment for all of society.

With her versatile intelligence and strong sense of commitment in various spheres, Maria was the precursor of female lawyers in Bari. She practised as a lawyer up to the age of ninety-five, and was well-respected by all her colleagues, including those of the opposite gender, for her professional competence and rigour. Maria was also a keen journalist for over fifty years, as attested by a commemorative plaque conferred upon her by the Italian Order of Journalists. Amongst her other activities, Maria also founded and, for many years, directed, the historical local TV broadcasting station Telebari.

Maria's role as Vice-President of the Juvenile Protection sector of the Court of Appeal favoured her prevailing and vigorous commitment to helping socially disadvantaged families, as well as to the protection and rights of women and minors. Her court role and social commitments have inspired not only many local and Club pro-

jects, but also a parliamentary debate which ultimately led to the formulation of a new family law in 1975. Her advocacy of female emancipation also inspired her work within the Regional Women's Council for which she drew up the Statute.

In recognition of her great commitment to a multitude of social and professional areas, in celebration of her ninetyeth Birthday, Maria was awarded the title of Commander of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

Maria Rinaldi Amendola was a woman who best interpreted and conveyed the ideals and objectives of Sorop-

timist. She was strong-willed and forthright, dealt with problems head-on, and was never concerned about appearing disagreeable in situations which required firmness. Maria was a strong woman with strong values, a feminist not with proclamations, but examples from life. She battled relentlessly for what she believed to be a just cause. She was the forerunner of female victories which, today, have still not been completely achieved.

Maria Rinaldi Amendola was a woman who has brought change and emancipation to the life of Italian women from the 1950s onwards.



Romann **SABINE** SI Kiel Baltica (Germany)



Sabine Romann, aged 62, works as an independent events manager in the north of Germany.

She joined Kiel Baltica Club as a Soroptimist in 2005.

Her management skills comprise being helpful and caring, networking with other people, organising, collaborating and always being positive and looking for solutions for impending problems.

All these qualifications make her an exceptional Soroptimist and businesswoman. Through her calm manner Sabine proves herself to be self-confident and she is possessed of strong nerves.

Voluntary work is her strength. She has been organising the Christmas market for many of our service clubs in the city for the last ten years. This event is held and enjoyed around one of our big churches for one Sunday only in December and is a get-together beloved by young and old alike. It is a real magnet, a must-go-to event! Over the last few years this charity event has raised around €325,000, which has been donated to different social projects in our city.

Kiel is a maritime city, well-known for its famed Kiel Week, one of the greatest sailing competitions in the world. But the surrounding area also offers superb facilities for playing golf. For ten years now Sabine has run a very well-organised annual tournament to finance our main SI project 'U.Sch.I.', an acronym for Our School Initiative, which helps single mothers obtain the school certi-

cate. Since 2013 we have been able to donate €75,000 to this important project for women in need.

Sabine is always involved and one of the leading initiators, whenever our club is in charge of an event, for example the *Wertekongress* in 2013 and 2015, the *Bezirkstreffen* in 2013 and 2015 or the *DFT (Deutschsprachiges Freundschaftstreffen)*, which unfortunately had to be cancelled in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic. When not organising events, she is ever passionate about combining interests shared by different social services, such as the Rotary Club or different communities e.g. *Trauernde Kinder*, helping friends and looking after her big family.

It was Sabine who created the idea of coming together annually in November in a nice small hotel, staying overnight and discussing and planning our SI programme for the coming year. Over the last years it has been a great opportunity for all our Sorores in Kiel Baltica Club to share common interests and work closely together. It is an annual highlight.

Whether Club President, Vice-President, Programme Director, Treasurer or special representative, Sabine has never hesitated to accept responsibility for the welfare and aims of Soroptimist, building a better world for women.

With her open-minded attitude and her willingness to find satisfactory solutions to problems, she is a perfect role model and proven problem solver for us as Soroptimists.



Röpke **SABINE** SI Magdeburg (Germany)



Small in stature, big in moving things for others

Sabine Röpke has been President of our Soroptimist Club Magdeburg for two years. But even before that, she was always an active member in various roles, constantly focused on pushing things forward for the well-being of women.

Sabine is a professional ophthalmologist and runs her own practice. Her consulting room is always busy, but even after a challenging day at work, having dealt with many patients and their various problems, she meets us at the club still radiating optimism. She invariably arrives with the hope that our world can become a better place and that suffering can be avoided.

Most nights before going to bed, she sends out an email evaluating the day. She invites us to think and reflect on what is happening in the world or in our immediate surroundings.

Saying that she is a bundle of energy is an understatement. All her actions are performed out of conviction. Driven by her inner voice, you might even say she is on a mission. She can neither accept that girls in Africa must remain without education, nor that trees in our environment are dying. She welcomes open dialogue, looks for opportunities to spread her ideas and is involved in many organisations and projects. With Sabine as a President our club has become a partner of many institutions and has implemented many important changes.

Sabine can probably only find peace in the evening when she has succeeded in getting something off the ground. She collects schoolbags for children in need, shoes for the Orange Days, and always finds opportunities to place our club in society ensuring that our banner is visible in town. Should the desired amount of money for a charity project not be raised, Sabine adds her own money, but does not wish for this to be mentioned, as she feels it is her responsibility.

Normally, Sabine thinks at a faster pace than the rest of the team, but she knows also that you cannot succeed purely on your own and therefore helps us to understand. She also needs Father Clemens, her comrades-in-arms of the art school, the other service clubs and, again, her inner voice that guides her. Her constructive restlessness is driven by several sources of energy: her intellectual demands, her practical understanding and the solidarity of her club sisters.

When thinking of Sabine, the way she is inclusive of everyone on an equal footing, no matter what the age, she reminds me of a fairy-tale by Russian writer Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, 'The man who smelled of roses and you didn't know where the scent was coming from'.

Sabine is a woman who also smells like a rose and, luckily, we know where the scent is coming from – from her devoted commitment to the Soroptimists. And we, as her sisters, are keeping the scent going!

Rössel **AGDA** 1910–2001 (Sweden)



In an interview two or three years before she passed away, Agda said that she was always 'strong as iron'. Her dream as a young girl was to be a nurse, but a long-standing illness put paid to that. Instead, she moved to Stockholm and worked as a hairdresser's assistant.

She worked during the day to make a living, but she was ambitious and studied in the evenings, before finally being accepted into the School of Social Studies. Agda began to work with children and the elderly, and she became involved in the labour union and public administration.

She strived for equality and to support women to make their lives easier, with the provision of good child-care as an example.

Agda cared very much for young people. She took two and a half years' leave to put her energy and experience to good use working for international charity Save the Children (*Rädda Barnen*), dedicating herself to work on behalf of young refugees adrift in Europe. She found the lack of education especially disastrous. Her primary wish for the youth of the world was the right to free and compulsory education.

She was later employed by the Swedish Labour Market Board, and mainly tasked with the training of women and other persons only partially able to work for the war industry – work that she disliked and which was against her values. She expended much energy working for refugee camps during the Second World War, and also during the Hungarian crisis in 1956.

Agda became a member of the UN Commission on Human Rights, which gave Eleanor Roosevelt and international women's circles much satisfaction. She was the first woman in the world to take on a post in the United Nations General Assembly in 1958. Her nomination, however, was not well received by the Swedish Foreign Office. The nomination was unexpected and many had considered the job to be theirs. Such comments as "from lowly secretary to the absolute top" were to be heard. Ambassadors were mostly professional diplomats. Agda was regarded as being a very competent individual in the Labour Market but was not deemed worthy or dignified enough to be a UN Ambassador. The criticism was extensive and widespread in Sweden. However, a gentleman signing himself 'Diagones' in the *Suisse Welt-Woche* paid tribute to her, "The gracious, grey-eyed Swedish Agda Rössel, whom we recently met in Geneva, was perceived to be the most able of them all to win over even the stuffiest male opponent to women's rights".

Agda might not have been able to devote much time to Soroptimist activities, but her engagement in, and struggle for, women's rights, for democracy and humanity has certainly helped.

Swedish Soroptimists carry on her spirit. She was an early opponent of female genital mutilation when working for the UN, where the issue there was very controversial, as it was even in the Swedish Soroptimist clubs. In Swedish Soroptimist archives we have found the minutes of her 'ego' speech, or a lecture about her life, entitled 'A remarkable ego'. Agda was brought up in a small Swedish village in the far North. She was eager to learn, was encouraged by her father and could already read by the age of five. Many political discussions took place in their home, and she listened and wished to understand everything. At the age of seven she asked her father what an editorial page was. He answered: "It is the second page in the newspaper. You can already read, so look it up." Was he already able at that time to foresee greatness in his inquisitive little daughter?

Salo **AILA** SI Rauma (Finland)



Through hardships to the stars

Our Best Sister Aila Salo was born in 1928 in Koivisto in Finnish Karelia, close to the Soviet border.

At the age of nine she joined the 'Little Lottas', an organisation offering hands-on training for girls, teaching them to show reverence for their fatherland and its people through socially correct behaviour. By the age of ten 'Little Lotta' had learnt the principles of signalling, how to identify cloud types, altitudes and foreign aircraft. During the Second World War she served in Food Supply and Air-raid Warning, always displaying a responsible attitude, readiness to take action and cooperation for the good of all. Aila was one of the last Finns evacuated from Karelia to Finland in spring 1944 when her home was ceded to the Soviet Union. Since the inauguration of Rauma Club in 1959 our Charter Member has contributed both her bright, innovative ideas and her inexhaustible drive to our work. She is an inspiration to us all when carrying through plans together with us. There are members sixty years younger than her in our Club, and their experience of life is totally different, yet she finds this a blessing and views it as enhancing for the sisterhood. She is a socialiser with a natural tendency to build relationships and to be influential. She has represented us at the Nordic and European SI meetings on frequent occasions, making friends and bringing home new ideas. Aila has run several local projects in the club, one of which was provision of a fully equipped palliative care ward for the local hospital. An example of her involvement in international projects

is the four-year occupational training of girls in Peru. As a prominent influencer in our community, she has initiated many reforms to enrich life in Rauma, famed for its ancient tradition of making bobbin lace. To elevate its status to something more spectacular, she has upgraded the craft to a dance performance which represents the extreme dexterity of lace makers. You can watch the show in the centre of Rauma every summer. In the early 1960s Aila was one of the founding members of a much-needed new grammar school in town. It is typical of Aila to notice a person or organisations in need of help and encourage them with respect and support them in their efforts.

The sea and ships are a second family for this mother of five children. From the age of twenty she actively participated in running the family shipyard founded by shipbuilders from Koivisto. As a member of the Permanent Board in a hyper masculine world, she has shifted company policy firmly towards a more personal type of leadership by valuing customer relationships and by fostering the well-being of both workers and stakeholders.

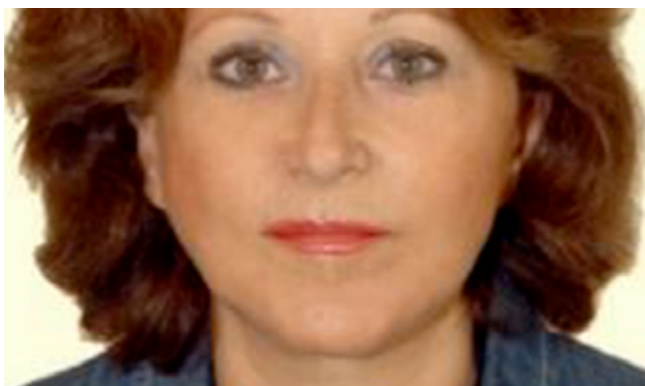
Visual art is an essential part of her life. Trained in welding at the shipyard, she has created several public metal sculptures, such as a monument called 'Through hardships to the stars' – *Per aspera ad astra*. It depicts the six-year-long, exhausting journey of Karelian evacuees and their faith in the future. It is also an interpretation of the sculptor's attitude to life: move forward regardless of obstacles.

Through hardships to the stars

A further example of her versatility in the visual arts is jewellery, such as the exquisite bracelets designed and presented to the godmothers of a series of scientific research vessels the shipyard built for the Soviet Union. Each bracelet is unique, symbolising the specific function of each ship.

In all the activities that our candidate undertakes she uses her multiple skills for the good of her community, and it comes naturally to her to follow the principle of 'gain by giving away'. It is our pleasure to put her forward as one of the 100 outstanding Soroptimists of the century.

Samartzidou **MARY** Byzantio Soroptimist Club (Greece)



Mary Samartzidou is a lawyer and lives in Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece. Her professional career has been focused mainly on family law, as well as public limited company law as a legal advisor for Klimalevitehniki Technical S.A.

She was elected member of Thessaloniki City Council on numerous occasions (1982–1998), while also serving as Deputy Mayor of Social Policy and Deputy Mayor of Thessaloniki. Some of her achievements include the creation of childcare facilities and programmes, under the auspices of the EU, which support single mothers. Furthermore, for the first time in Greece, she created employment and work for women in prisons, with many clothing manufacturers providing sewing machines, fabrics and designs with the prison warden's permission. She has also created a municipal blood bank. Last but not least, she has contributed to local special needs daycare through various collaborations and by organising the meetings.

Whilst Deputy Mayor of Social Policy and Deputy Mayor of Thessaloniki, Mary was also president of Agios Stilianos, the second largest foundation for abandoned children in Greece (1993–1996), a management board member of Thessaloniki's School for the Blind (1986–1990), as well as a member of the local Archaeological Council. She has been awarded gold and silver medals, the city's two highest decorations, for her many contributions to Thessaloniki and Northern Greece. In 2003 she founded *Alkyoni*, a women-only citizen movement, in order to address is-

suues such as women's unemployment and underemployment, the declining birth-rate in Greece, the lack of environmental policies, and immigration and refugee management in the 21st century.

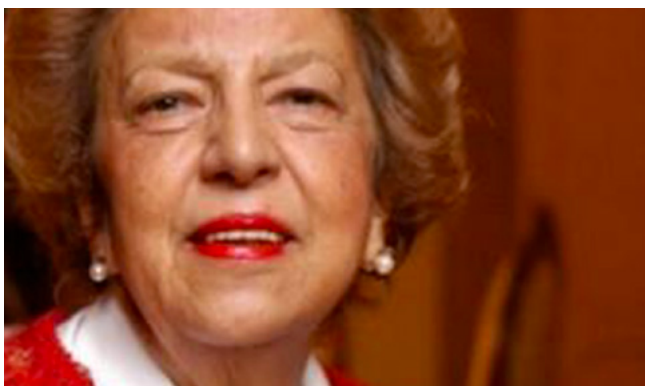
She was a founding member of the Byzantio Soroptimist Club in Thessaloniki, in existence since 1992. As its president (2010–2012) she addressed issues regarding women minorities who have lived in the city for centuries, contributed to libraries in Pomak villages in North-eastern Greece and supported women immigrants and refugees on their journey to a better life.

In 2013 she was elected President of the Greek Soroptimist Union (2014–2016). During her term of office she strengthened the role of each club as important building blocks in the union, empowering and encouraging many members to participate even more in their respective club activities. She put the union's finances in order, thus providing a financial safety net for her successors.

She provided substantial support to the refugees, who flooded Greece, in the form of medical supplies offered to the Red Cross, hypoallergenic dairy products and milk, as well as weaning pills which were donated by the European Federation of Soroptimists as a token of appreciation for her support.

On a final note, she solved the decade-long problems of relations between the Soroptimists and the Church of Greece, creating partnerships and shared actions in aid of all persons in need.

Saulle **MARIA** Rita SI Roma (Italy)



Humanity and professionalism: perhaps these are the distinctive traits of an exceptional personality such as that of Maria Rita Saulle. She was one of those people whose successful career, commitment and innumerable achievements did not prevent her from being an unpretentious and friendly woman.

Maria Rita's specialty was human rights and, in that field, she was the first to develop the idea of the right of humanitarian intervention in conflicts.

She also engaged in activities to defend women's rights. Maria Rita was a member of the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality between Men and Women at the Presidency of the Italian Council of Ministers (1984–1987) and she drew up the Women's Code relating to international public, private and community law. For years her speeches and papers have been a benchmark for women along the way to achieving legal equality. It is likely that Maria was the first woman in Italy to denounce the speciosity of women's exclusion from the Army. That is the reason she joined the Advisory Board of the Chief of Defense Staff in 2000.

She worked with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1985 Maria Rita participated in UN conferences in Nairobi and Vienna as a member of the board appointed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

She also worked hard to help children. She was sole negotiator for Italy at the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN in 1989. She was proud of the

fact that this convention was the one which gained the highest number of ratifications across the world. Apart from the USA and Somalia, all UN Member States ratified it.

Maria Rita represented Italy at the UN during negotiations concerning Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. These were approved by the General Assembly in 1993.

She was a member of the Italian delegation at the Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, also in 1993.

Maria Rita chaired the Board for Human Rights at UNESCO's National Commission and was appointed International Vice President of WRA (World Refugee Association), which studies the problem of refugees.

She was the first female President of the Commission for Real Property Claims (CRPC), established by the Dayton Peace Agreement, which is committed to returning real property to displaced persons and refugees of the war in Bosnia. Maria Rita considered this Commission to be one of her personal achievements since she was entrusted with this task when there were no funds or staff available. It was she, in fact, who found the necessary funds to operate it.

When she chaired UNESCO's Communication Board, she submitted a resolution on behalf of Italy to declare Sarajevo's library, severely damaged by bombings, a world monument to inter-ethnic peace.

Maria Rita was Full Professor of International Law at the Faculty of Political Science where she developed and supervised a master's programme in International Protection of Human Rights.

From 1984 she was a member of the Soroptimist Club in Rome, always making her expertise available to her club and to the Italian Union. We are unable to count the number of times she lent advice and took part in meetings and conferences.

In November 2005, Maria Rita Saulle was one of the first women to become a judge at the Italian Constitutional Court.

She died in Rome in 2011.

Schang **LINDA** SI Stockholm City (Sweden)



The Soroptimists have the capacity, competence and experience to do this and her dream is to have Soroptimist Leadership Academies throughout the world. To that end a dissemination project is in process at the moment.

Soroptimist in SI Stockholm City since the Charter in 1995

Profession – Human Resources Management. Prior to retirement a few years ago, she was Global Graduate Trainee Programme Director for Ericsson Telecommunications, and is currently working part-time with a consultancy for leadership issues.

Soroptimist Roles:

Club: President, secretary, nomination committee etc

Union: Delegate, Project Coordinator Soroptimist Nordic Leadership Academy (SNLA)

SIE: Scholarship Committee member

Other roles: board member of Swedish Women's Lobby 2016–2022

Board member of European Women's Lobby 2016–2022

Linda is originally from the UK. She came to Sweden in 1974. She has had a long experience of working with leadership and training throughout her career in HR which she began after leaving university in 1970.

With that in mind, she participated as a teacher at the SIE Soroptimist Leadership Academy 2016 in Northern Macedonia, and, with their blessing, she copied the concept and translated the ideas into the Nordic environment.

The first SNLA took place in Sweden in 2017, the next in 2018 in Norway, and in 2019 in Finland. The Danish SNLA, 2020–2021, is happening on-line (Covid19!). She works together with the Nordic Unions, along with the SNLA, to help young women who are interested in taking on the challenges of all forms of leadership.

Motivation

Linda Schang, our nominee, is a soroptimist to her very core. She stands for strong values, development and empowerment of women. She is professional in business and a steadfast friend. From the very beginning Linda has made a significant difference in our club being a firm, knowledgeable and focused sister, with high ethics in every task she has undertaken.

She works away from the spotlight, in the quiet, so even the club does not always know what she is up to.

In addition to the dedicated work in her profession as a global HR Director, she has her heart in our club.

When Linda retired, she happily accepted the nomination as Delegate of SI Sweden, which, she says, gave her the opportunity to work full time for the Human Rights of Women and Girls and Soroptimist International's mission.

She has made an impact in many areas within SIE. Aside from her formal responsibilities she has executed several visionary tasks. She has an eye for the future – the membership of tomorrow.

Leadership is Linda's passion and profession. Her greatest achievement so far has been the founding of the Soroptimist Leadership Academy which she started in the Nordic countries in 2017.

Educate, empower, enable – Soroptimist DNA – will continue to have an impact on thousands of young women through the Soroptimist Leadership Academy worldwide and attract young women to become Soroptimists.

Scheffler **ERNA** (1893–1983) SI Karlsruhe (Germany)



Erna Scheffler was a founding member and the first President of the SI Karlsruhe Club in 1963. At that time, she had already completed a twelve-year, extremely influential term as the first female justice in the newly founded Federal Constitutional Court of Germany. Here, as ever, she was the only woman among men, but in her funeral eulogy she was described as “the best man of all”, clearly meant as a compliment in 1983.

Her professional life came to an end at the age of seventy, but with her usual formidable approach, she plunged into her new role as a political activist for women’s rights, for which she had been an advocate beforehand as a judge at all levels of jurisdiction, as a practicing lawyer and legal consultant, and as a legal scholar, speaking and writing about the subject. This was an extraordinary career for an outstanding individual who was denied access to regular graduation from school and university, even though externally she had passed exams with distinction and was in each case among the first to be admitted to the professions above. For thirty-five years she had suffered from all kinds of discrimination – for not being a boy; as a wife who needed her husband’s consent for employment or her own bank account; as a divorced and single mother; and, last but not least, for ten years unable to marry for a second time because her father was of Jewish origin. Thus, acutely aware of discrimination and endowed with a sharp intelligence and female skills, she finally had at her disposal the means and opportunities to change women’s lives for the

better by declaring discriminating laws null and void. No wonder that she succeeded as one of our most remarkable *Sorores Optima*, promulgating gender equality, sisterhood, tolerance and peace. She knew that women need strong voices to be heard and alliance partners to gain influence. She joined and presided over the German Association of Women Academics and represented Business and Professional Women and the German Women Lawyer’s Club in their respective international federations. She never failed to raise her voice against discrimination and to encourage younger and junior members.

SI Karlsruhe Club established the ‘*Erna-Scheffler-Förderpreis*’ in her memory, a prize for young women scientists with an excellent master’s or doctoral thesis in mathematics, engineering, physics or information technology or *MINT*. KIT, the technical university in Karlsruhe, puts forward candidates every two years and the Club chooses two laureates with CVs often shaped by the female experience, thus accentuating the enduring real obstacles in life faced by women in these fields.

Erna Scheffler, a pioneer of her time, made great strides for future generations by enforcing gender equality before the law. Real equality in daily life – equal pay, equal careers, equal work-life-balance – is still waiting to be attained. We honour Erna Scheffler not only with a prize in her name, but by sustaining her spirit and determination which ultimately are identical with the values and aims of Soroptimist International.

Scholl-Sabbatini **BETTINA** SI Esch-sur-Alzette (Luxembourg)



She is a Luxembourg sculptor, born 1942 in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg, into a family of Italian origin.

1971: Bettina joined SI Esch-sur-Alzette club

1980–1982: President of her club

1995–1997: President of the Luxembourg Union During this tenure, she came up with the idea of creating the Soroptimist Luxembourg Fund, a fund-raising association, acknowledged as an NGO by the Luxembourg Government, and able to receive grants for collaborative projects in developing countries.

Since 2013: President of Soroptimist Luxembourg Fund.

Bettina acted as an Extension Officer for Africa for SIE for eight years. Her first journey took her to Rwanda in 1989, where she succeeded in founding the Kigali club in 1992, uniting women of Hutu and Tutsi origin. Sadly, when she returned to Kigali in 1995, after the genocide, the club had shrunk to four members. This did not deter Bettina from rebuilding the club.

Thanks to her determination and perseverance in motivating various Luxembourg organisations to raise funds, and with grants from the Luxembourg government, twenty houses were built near Butare, Rwanda, for twenty widows each caring for five orphans of the genocide.

Bettina has visited Africa countless times and has founded seventeen clubs in Burkina Faso, Egypt, Guinea, Haiti, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Rwanda and Togo.

Thanks to her initiative and persuasive skills numerous projects were completed in these countries in respect of

local and foreign service clubs as well as local and governmental authorities. As an example, mention might be made of the San Marco Centre, a schooling and vocational training project of the Kigali club, named after Bettina's late husband Marco Scholl, and towards which Bettina succeeded in raising funds through numerous European clubs.

Between 2003 and 2005 Bettina served as 2nd Vice President of SIE under the leadership of Heidrun Konrad, whose motto 'Women building Peace' gave Bettina the inspiration for the Peace Dolls Project and the International Peace Marathon in Rwanda.

Peace Dolls made of cotton were manufactured and decorated by artists and Soroptimists in the member countries of SIE and sold to benefit peace projects in developing countries.

The first International Peace Marathon, for which Bettina managed to gain the support of the Rwandan government, took place in Kigali on 15th May 2005, with 1600 runners from all over the world, amongst them many Soroptimists. This Peace Marathon is still organised every year by the Rwandan government.

Bettina also designed the Peace Prize statue that has been awarded by SIE every two years since 2005 to an outstanding woman working for peace.

Bettina's commitment to Africa, and especially to Rwanda and its traditions and culture, was rewarded when she was designated as a curator, alongside Professor Gaddo Mompurgo, for the participation of the Republic of Rwanda in the 12th International Exhibition of Architecture at the Biennale of Venice 2010. Rwanda's theme was 'Tradition and innovation in vegetable fibre design'. It had been Bettina's idea to bring back the ancestral technique of basket-weaving in order to design modern jewellery using natural fibres, thus enabling young people to provide for their own income.

Serrano Iglesias **AMPARO** (Spain)



Amparo joined Soroptimist International in 1981 as the founding President of SI Valle de Aran Club, the first Soroptimist Club in Spain*. During these years, when Spain was changing from a dictatorship to a democracy, it was difficult to start up a club, especially for women.

She is an active member of SI, fighting for human rights and for an end to violence towards women, always looking for ways to improve the lives of the women in her community. A good example of this is the Soroptimist funding of the first breast screening centre, so local women did not have to travel 300 km for the test.

Collaboration with the Cancer Association has resulted in numerous advantages for the local population, raising funds to buy equipment such as a gastroscope. For several years now children with cancer from all over Spain have been welcomed to Valle de Aran in July for a holiday together.

Working together with other clubs in Spain is very important to Amparo. In 2010 she was actively involved in organising the European Meeting and Friendship Days in Mijas and in 2018–2020 she was the national coordinator.

As far as club membership in Spain is concerned, we see that the club in Valle de Aran is very stable, with around twenty members. Attendance at the annual Gala Dinner to celebrate the club's birthday is a great experience and one can see the high standing of the club in the local community. When you meet a lady like Amparo you immediately respect her. She is clear about where

she stands and loves a good discussion, striving for the best solution for everybody involved, and she has a big heart. We enjoy our friendship, always looking forward to meeting in person. We don't only work together, but we also have a very good time because Amparo has a wonderful sense of humour.

Amparo Serrano Iglesias was born in 1948 in Vielha (Valle de Aran). She studied to be a technical architect in Barcelona and has a graduate diploma in Tourism.

- A woman technical architect, she worked in the world of real estate, collaborating in the development of subsidiary regulations for the Valle de Aran, making it possible to reorganize the Aranese territory.
- She held the position of *Sindica* for two years, the highest authority in the territory. Valle de Aran has its own government called *Conselh Generau d'Aran*.
- She was advisor to the Presidency Department of the *Generalitat de Catalunya*.
- Now retired, she is currently the president of a retirement home in the municipality of Vielha-Mijaran, where she helps retired people to be active and avoid loneliness.
- She has created the University Classroom for older people.

* Due to the geographic location of Vielha in the Pyrenees near the French border, it was easier to travel to France instead of other parts of Spain. In 1979 Amparo met the Soroptimists of Luchon-Cominges, who inspired her to start up a Soroptimist Club in Spain.

SI Batumi (Georgia): **NATELA** Dumbadze – **RENA** Sarishvili – **MARI** Khalvashi
– **CHITO** Omeradze – **MERI** Zoidze



The thirty-year history of SI Batumi Club should be viewed from the perspective of the period when Georgia was still in the Soviet Union, during times when European values – democracy and independence – were deemed unacceptable. This Club was the first international women's organisation in the Soviet Union. The 15th SIE Conference in 1992, held in Nottingham, hosted Batumi Club. Prominent women leaders of that time, unable to live with the Soviet reality, and against a background of difficulties, persecution and obstruction, founded and maintained the first, the most successful and most recognisable club in Georgia today.

The founding ladies were:

Professor Natela Dumbadze / Rena Sarishvili, Minister of Social Protection in the Republic of Adjara / Meri Khalvashi, Director General of the Women's Garment Factory and Member of the Adjara Parliament. / Chito Omeradze, Deputy Chairperson of the Government of Adjara and Meri Zoidze, Assistant to the Mayor of Batumi.

During the closed period of the Soviet Union the club began to integrate step-by-step into the European realm. Because of the language barrier, the club published a conversation book in Georgian, English, French and German. The founders of the club gathered together intellectually strong women who made a great contribution to the growth of future women leaders. Abkhazian Professor Feride Atsamba paved the way for the education of several Abkhazian girls who were victims of violence.

On a par with the great heroism of these ladies a residence for persecuted women was established in 1993. It offered them protection in Russian-occupied Abkhazia. In conjunction with SIE and the International Red Cross, they were able to carry out a project to demine the territory of Abkhazia after the war. During the COVID-19 pandemic the club assisted four medical clinics in Abkhazia which were suffering from extremely difficult working conditions in the Russian-occupied territory. These clinics are run by women. The work of the club is motivated by the fight against gender inequality and violence towards women.

Our senior ladies have all been club presidents over the years and every major project can be connected to them. In Georgia there has been a big problem with gender inequality and the women have opened four clubs in different towns. Today, following their own model, they wish to open clubs in the mountain region, where there are serious problems related to early marriage. They wish to set up a shelter for women who are victims of violence.

One great initiative was to refresh and rebrand the club so that there is no gap between the generations. The club's work was evident during the pandemic when they formed a group of volunteers who proved to be a great help to elderly persons at home and to single mothers with many children. The women have prepared a book in Georgian and English entitled 'In the Hope of a Bright Future', which is connected with the 100th anniversary of SIE and the 30th anniversary of Batumi Club. A video has also been made about the history of the club.

Georgia's 3,000-year history reveals that women have probably genetically inherited leadership skills. Christianity was preached by Saint Nino; Queen Tamar created the era of the Georgian Renaissance, and today we have a female president who returned to Georgia from France where her family had emigrated from the Soviet Union following the Russian Revolution.

SI **STAR** TEAM SI Mainz (Germany)



The SI STAR is a biennial award for women filmmakers and it has taken the German film business by storm. So we would like to introduce you to the team of Soroptimists who founded it in 2015, who have persuaded twenty SI Germany Clubs to date to fund it, and who continue to organise it every 2 years.

In 2015 seven women working in the media industry from SI Mainz Club decided to channel their Soroptimist support towards women who call the shots. Statistics recorded in the Annual German Filmmaking Report were remarkable – almost half of film school graduates were women, but not even 20% of films shown in the cinema were directed by women. By 2019 the number had grown to 22%.

The Mainz Soroptimists declared that they wanted to see more diversity in German films and more interesting and authentic female and male roles on the big screen, on TV and on the Internet. SI STAR was born and received its first award in February 2016 at the *Berlinale* in Berlin in the Representation of Rhineland-Palatinate category.

The founders began by convincing the Soroptimist Clubs of Rhineland Palatinate to contribute €1000 each to SI STAR (SI Mainz donated €2000). In this way SI STAR accumulated a fund totaling €10,000. They invited the Minister-President of Rhineland Palatinate, Malu Dreyer, to act as SI STAR patron, to which she whole-heartedly agreed. In 2018 the SI Clubs of Berlin and Potsdam expressed interest in participating in the SI STAR project and it was agreed

that in 2020 they would provide a promotional award valued at €3000. And in 2020 four more Clubs from SI Germany – Göttingen, Wiesbaden, Augsburg and Frankfurt – financed an SI STAR special award valued at €2000. Today twenty SI Clubs participate in the SI STAR project, and Soroptimist interest in it continues to grow.

Most of the SI STAR Clubs have been visited and kept informed in person by members of the Mainz SI STAR team about ideas behind the media award, about its aims and successes. The team has also put in work to arrange private sponsoring and partnerships in the film world (see website). They have contacted stars in the German media for support, e.g. actress Jasmin Tabatabai from Pro Quote Film, actress Désirée Nosbusch and media scientist Professor Elizabeth Prommer. Stars like Veronica Ferres and Maren Kroymann have also expressed their support. And Malu Dreyer, as SI STAR patron, continues to invite Soroptimists and people connected with the film scene to the award ceremony in Berlin, with more than 200 guests.

The SI STAR award honours women responsible for high-profile projects in the media and film business, directors who shape the image and views of gender and diversity on screen and in the cinema. SI STAR celebrates outstanding work by female filmmakers and promotes them to further acclaim within the larger German and international film scene.

A jury of experts from Mainz and, since 2020 also from Berlin, nominates seven directors whose latest films have

been released within the previous two years onto the German film scene. These seven films are then presented to the public at the relatively new Film Festival FILMZ in Mainz in November. So, in addition to the biennial gala in Berlin, there is an annual film event in Mainz in autumn each year. The SI STAR Network, which offers support, exposure and sometimes even commissions – for instance, the invitation for tenders for the 2021 Centenary SID picture film – is composed of not just award-winning directors but all the SI STAR nominees.

The SI STAR has become a sought-after award on the German film scene and filmmakers nominated for it to date, as well as previous winners of the SI STAR awards, thrive in the media business and create powerful, new and diverse visions, images and stories.

The founding women in the media industry from SI Mainz are:

Dr Susanne Becker, TV journalist
Bianca Charamsa, 3sat editor and filmmaker
Dominique Henz, film scientist

Christiane Schauder, painter
Margrit Stärk, film buyer for ZDF Enterprises
Claudia Tronnier, Head of *Das Kleine Fernsehspiel* department for ZDF
Barbara Trottnow, documentary filmmaker

The SI STAR 2020 Jury members were:

Dr Susanne Becker, TV journalist
Dominique Henz, film scientist
Regine Peter, photographer (SI Berlin Mitte)
Christiane Schauder, painter
Sabine Siegl, SWR editor (SI Mainz Rosengarten)
Margrit Stärk, film buyer for ZDF Enterprises and representing SI STAR winning filmmakers in 2018, director
Carolin Genreith,

Claudia Tronnier and other ladies from SI Mainz continue to assist the Jury in their capacity as SI STAR team members, e.g. Anke Sprenger organises publicity and Bertine Habets manages the website.



Sonne-Schmidt **BIRTHE** SI Skive (Denmark)



Birthe Sonne-Schmidt (b. 1944) is a charter member of SI Skive and is the epitome of an active, positive, curious and helpful Soroptimist, always well informed and conscious of being a Soroptimist.

Among her other roles, Birthe is the webmaster of our club and has helped several other clubs with setting up their websites. She is simultaneously webmaster of Region 1 in Denmark, updating members with news of the successful cooperation between Angolan NGO *Mamas Optimistas da Ganda* in Angola (M.O.A.) and Region 1, focusing on local Angolan women and their community, women working together.

The committee in Region 1 was established ten years ago with two representatives from each of the six clubs in this region, and Birthe, as a representative of SI Skive, has been outstanding and is the driving force of this committee.

Birthe has been responsible for the finances and the budgets of the collaboration between M.O.A. and the Danish committee, being in constant contact with both. She has been very eager to establish new local Angolan projects and raise money to realise them, always ensuring that both partners are kept informed and aware of their responsibilities.

The project began with Water Cleaning Systems in Angola and, thanks to Birthe's persistence, it has developed into projects within the health, education, business and

economic sectors. One of the education projects is still running successfully.

Birthe is responsible for receiving reports and images from M.O.A., and she has recently asked the Committee and Soroptimists in Region 1 to increase their interest in the Angolan projects and further inspire the clubs in Region 1 who have already successfully raised around €100,000 towards these projects. Everything has been managed efficiently and with commitment and respect from all the members involved.

Above all else, the Angolan projects have changed the lives of many Angolan girls and women, who have won respect, influence and gained work in their community in Ganda, Angola. It has also strengthened the feeling of solidarity and pride of Soroptimists in our Region.

Birthe has been responsible for writing several PFRs about these Angolan projects. At the same time, her enthusiasm and helpful manner means that she is an inspiring Chairperson for the Extension Group in Region 1.

Always fully cognisant of Soroptimist regulations and ideals, Birthe has undertaken the roles of President, Correspondence Secretary and Club Secretary in SI Skive. She has also been a member of the Extension Group and a representative of the SI Danish Union. In the Danish Union she has been a member of the Law Committee, the Secretary, Deputy Delegate and Delegate. She has also acted as the SIE Secretary General.

As a highly respected Soroptimist, Birthe has been nominated as an honorary member of SI Skive on its 25th anniversary. She is a *Sorores ad Optimum*, being a Global Voice for Women, and at SI Skive we are very proud to put forward Birthe Sonne-Schmidt as our outstanding Soroptimist among the 100 outstanding Soroptimists worldwide.

Speiciene **DANUTE** SI Vilnius Old Town (Lithuania)



- Member of the Club Board (Liaison coordinator) 1999–2000
- Deputy Delegate 2000–2001 and Delegate of SI Lithuanian Union/LSU 2002–2003
- Vice-President 2003–2005, President elect 2005–2006 and President of LSU 2006–2008
- Immediate past President and Programme Liaison of LSU 2008–2010
- LSU Governor 2012–2013
- Member of the Constitution and By-Laws Committee 2014–2015 and chairperson 2016–2018

Danute Speiciene (b. 1940) became an associate professor at the Propaedeutic Department of Vilnius University Medical Faculty (1979–1990) after defending her doctoral thesis. Since 1991 she has been associate professor and consultant gastroenterologist at the Centre of Hepatology, Gastroenterology and Dietetics at Vilnius University Hospital Santaros clinics. She is a qualified and experienced clinician, teacher of medical students and doctors. Her basic scientific and clinical interests centre on immunology and hepatology, mainly viral and autoimmune liver disease. She has over 330 publications and two inventions to her name. Danute is a creative and energetic person who actively participates in social life and activities. She was longstanding (1983–2001) general secretary of the Lithuanian Society of Gastroenterology and has been an honorary member since 2001. She made every effort to integrate this society into European and World gastroenterology organisations and to establish clinical and scientific contacts with them.

She was a coordinator and board member of the Association of Patients with Liver Disease and Medical Doctors (2004–2008). She still works actively as a consultant gastroenterologist and is highly valued by her patients and colleagues for her competence, empathy and tolerance.

She became a member of SI Vilnius Old Town Club in 1993 (the club was chartered in 1995) and actively joined in club activities:

- President of SI Vilnius Old Town Club 1997–1999

She was the initiator and responsible for a social project called 'Future' (1997–2001) which provided care and support for multiple-children families. She actively participated in and coordinated a long-lasting social project called 'Swallow' (1997–2007) which helped establish a special centre for disabled young people, assisting them with integration into society. She was also an initiator and active participant in a Union project called 'Help with Migraine' (2004–2006) and collaborated in the implementation of a project called 'Strive against violence in the family and on the streets'.

As Union President she initiated and coordinated a project called 'Sorooptimists for Millennium Lithuania' (2006–2008), which comprised three programmes – Health, Environment and Culture.

Danute actively participated in implementing a project entitled 'Recover with beauty' (2010–2011), designed to help women with oncological diseases improve their psychological and physical well-being and ability to re-integrate back into society. Thematic lectures and seminars were delivered by professional lecturers. Special workshops, in which the patients participated without charge, for the creation of esthetic-looking headwear (designed to be worn after radiological treatment) were organised.

In conjunction with 'Senevita' and other shelters, she also took part in the implementation of a project called 'Aged and happy' (2015–2017) dedicated to elderly persons.

Stenström **MARJA-LEENA** SI Jyvässeutu (Finland)



Dr Marja-Leena Stenström is a professor emerita at the University of Jyväskylä (JYU). JYU's research in education ranked 36th in the Shanghai Global Ranking of Academic Subjects in September 2020. Since 1977 Marja-Leena Stenström has worked full-time at the Institute for Educational Research, JYU. Her research interests have included vocational education and training (VET), higher education, the relation between education and working life, and educational and gender equality.

Owing to her distinguished expertise, extensive experience and personal engagement in Vocational Education and Training Theory and Research, she was appointed honorary member of the International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training (2016) as well as an honorary member of the Finnish Vocational Educational Research Association (2012).

She has served as the scientific/academic leader and the researcher responsible for several national and international research projects. In the 2000s she was involved in thirteen international projects and fifteen national projects. In addition to leading research projects, her international experience has involved collaboration with international researchers from Europe, the USA and Australia. She has also served as National Editor of the Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research (2010–2013) and was editorial board member of the Journal of Finnish Vocational Education and Training (1999–2013), a member of the Journal of Career and Technical Education (2002–2004) and

of the International Journal of Vocational Education and Training (1996–1998). She has also been a board member of VETNET (2006–2015) and the Finnish Association of Vocational Education and Training (1994–2014). She is one of the founder members of the above-mentioned association. She has steered almost twenty licentiate and doctoral theses. She has pre-examined and examined nearly forty doctoral theses both in Finland and abroad. She has been a referee for a number of scientific/academic manuscripts. She has published over fifty referred articles and books, and over fifty other publications. Furthermore, she has been the expert in several local and national projects for developing vocational education and training in Finland.

Marja-Leena Stenström has been an active member of SI Jyvässeutu since 1996. She has been a member, a secretary and President of the club. During her presidency (2016–2018) SI Jyvässeutu began a friendship service to help women who had served on the frontline during the Second World War, war veterans and the spouses of those injured in battle. The average age of these ladies was ninety. This was done to celebrate Finland's 100 years of independence in 2017. This friendship service included chatting, music and planting flowers at an assisted living complex for the elderly. Furthermore, during Marja-Leena's presidency, in 2018, SI Jyväskylä applied for a scholarship grant for an Afghan woman from Iran, a single mother and quota refugee. This scholarship made it possible for her to start studies as a nurse. A mentoring group was established and this proved to be a very positive experience in enhancing her studies. Receiving an SIE scholarship and supporting women's education was something new for the club.

Thörnblad **MAJKEN** Si Ystad (Sweden)



Majken Törnblad was a role model in her profession, she made exceptional contributions to her community and she changed the lives of so many girls and women at home and abroad. Let me tell you how!

In her professional life she was the first manager of Ystad tourist agency, from where she put Ystad on the map at home and abroad. Coming from an underprivileged family and being unusually talented, not only intellectually but also as an athlete, she won scholarships to see her through school, as a consequence of which she felt comfortable with both fishermen and ambassadors alike. She genuinely loved her community and would share it with foreign tourists in four languages, taking them on captivating walks through the medieval city.

Did she make an extraordinary contribution to her community? She became Mrs. Ystad, the person whose house was constantly open! When a Polish ferry sank in the harbour where was the crew to be accommodated? In Majken's house, of course! But to have real influence over the life of the community she went into politics, became deputy head of the Municipal Assembly, head of the Social Welfare Committee as well as that of the Culture Committee. She would know and be known by just about everybody. Strong and opinionated, never afraid to hold her own, she was not always popular with the men in power. For she was often the only woman. And a beautiful woman, an excellent speaker, and a talented singer at that! The mother of three girls, she also knew how to be a role

model for women at home. She made a difference to girls and women. A Soroptimist since 1964, she, as a founding member, was club President, Governor and Union President in 1982–1984. She introduced the making of Christmas wreaths to be sold for six girls' schooling in Hungary via SOS Children's Villages. Seven girls were given a good education and training at the Pammakaristos Catholic convent in Greece instead of being married off at the age of fourteen. In 1981–82 (when martial law was imposed) people in Poland were cold and hungry, so she called for all schoolchildren in Ystad to collect food and clothing. And so, in January 1982, a lorry with twenty-three tons of food and clothing set off for Szczecinek and the Solidarity convent school for girls. Majken of course was there to sort things out.

The training of nurses in Poland in the 1980s and 1990s was rather poor, so Majken arranged for some of the young nurses to have their training in Sweden and, of course, stay at her house.

Women standing up for each other make a difference and so she brought professional women of Zabrze, Poland, together to form a club. She was their godmother.

Strong, outspoken, a doer and not a talker, she would stand up for women, was unwaveringly loyal to her friends, was criticised by her enemies, but she always maintained her good mood.

She had a long and happy life, active until her last breath at 92, she was still truly a role model for all women, Soroptimists or not.

Tiarks-Jungk **PETRA** SI Bad Nauheim (Germany)



Petra has worked as a senior physician for the humanitarian consultation clinic at the Frankfurt Health Department for twenty years. She is a pioneer in this remarkable project where the official authorities take on the task of taking care of undocumented people from third world countries who live as unregistered immigrants in the Frankfurt am Main region. She has a passionate interest in helping them as they do not have official access to the regulatory health system. Petra and her team conduct humanitarian consultation hours every week on Mondays and Thursdays.

On average, over these two days, they look after 700 patients with 1,700 consultations held annually. The team is also socially active and arranges other offers of assistance such as organising medicines and surgeries.

Our SI Club Bad Nauheim supports the admirable work of our club sister with regular donations.

In 2007 Petra's team expanded their services to include a childbirth programme. Pregnant women were seeking medical help far too late, thereby endangering their own lives and that of the unborn child, as they feared losing their residential status and deportation to their home country. Through persistent and passionate negotiation Petra convinced six Frankfurt maternity clinics to provide outpatient delivery treatment for these women. Now the city of Frankfurt contributes €100 towards each female patient. The programme has expanded in collaboration with the social welfare offices and the immigration office. Female genital mutilation is another subject studied inten-

sively by Petra. One of her goals is to contribute to ending this brutal violence towards girls and women. She uses her expertise and status to deliver regular statements to the Ministry of Immigration in order to help prevent these girls and women from being returned to their countries and being at risk of circumcision.

In addition, since 2014, Petra has been the supervising doctor at the medical faculty at Goethe University in Frankfurt. It is a pioneering project in Germany, inspired by American free student clinics, where students run a clinic under her supervision for patients with no access to the regulatory medical system. The students gain both technical and social competences and acquire key intercultural and social skills. Within the first five years 967 patients from sixty-seven countries were cared for by the students and their supervising doctors. In 2017 Petra and her colleagues were awarded the Hessian University Award for Excellence in Teaching by the Hessian Ministry of Science and Art. Since 2017 she has been involved in another project at Oxford University. It is a Europe-wide concept called City Initiative on Immigrants with Illegal Status in Europe (C-MISE). She gives guidance to cities and municipalities across Europe on how to develop individual strategies when dealing with unregistered immigrants.

The greatest and most recent professional recognition was in September 2019 when she was invited to speak at the UN and WHO in Geneva as a best practice model for 'promising local practices for immigrants' right to health'.

ULRIKE

Tobisch-Kohlbecker **ULRIKE** SI Bad Herrenalb/Gernsbach (Germany)



‘Nothing is impossible for love’ – this was the title of a 45-minute TV feature that Ulrike Tobisch-Kohlbecker filmed in 1986, together with a team from SWF (now SWR) Television in Portugal. It was an ARD report about Portugal’s first women’s shelter, the *Casa Sant’ Ana* near Lisbon. As a consequence of this television film, the founder of the women’s shelter, Maria do Divino Redentor, was voted ‘Woman of the Year’ by the International Women’s Club in Frankfurt and was awarded a prize of 4000 Deutsche Marks.

Club Bad Herrenalb/Gernsbach celebrated its charter on 9 November 1979. Ulrike Tobisch-Kohlbecker was the founding president. In August 1981 Ulrike followed her husband, Stefan Tobisch, who was working for GTZ in Lisbon, to Portugal.

Ulrike completed an intensive Portuguese language course and worked as a freelance journalist for German press, radio and television.

Soon after her arrival in Portugal she set out to promote Soroptimist International in her area, which proved not to be such an easy task! It took four years to persuade the number of women required to found a club. This finally took place in October 1985 and made its godmother Ulrike very happy. Club Lisboa Fundador was the first club to be chartered in Portugal. Today there are eight clubs, which constitute the SI Portuguese Union. *Casa Sant’ Ana* has, since 1985, been a long-term project of Club Lisboa Fundador and in particular that of Club Bad Herrenalb/Gernsbach.

With more than €150,000 in club donations, and the assistance of the SI relief fund, it has been possible to realise quite a number of projects, including the renovation of the women’s shelter building, *Dona Ulrike* kindergarten, a computer room, a heating system with hot water supply, a stove for the communal kitchen, and the expansion of the children’s daycare centre. With its School for Women, *Casa Ana* now provides residents with the information and knowledge they need to prepare for a new life outside the shelter.

Following her return from Portugal in 1985, Ulrike became involved at SI German Union level becoming a delegate in the *Deutscher Frauenrat* (National Council of German Women’s Organisations) and member of the Extension Committee. She became godmother of Club Überlingen (1988) and Club Murgtal (Gaggenau/Rastatt) (1992). Together with Club Lisboa Fundador and her club, she took on the patronage of the SI Club Gjakova/Kosovo (2007).

Whilst undertaking freelance communication work for the Arbeitgeberverband Gesamtmetall, (German Employers Association of the Metal and Electrical Industry), she initiated the group *Frauen in der Metall- und Elektro-Industrie* (Women in the Metal and Electrical Industry). Around the same time the first *Mädchen-Technik-Tage* (Girls’ Tech Days) were held.

Through Ulrike’s connection to Namibia, the club has supported the studies of Hedwig Kapuko from Ojiwaron-

go and financed her school education until she graduates from Martin Luther High School.

Ulrike was responsible for the foundation of women's shelter *Frauen- und Kinderschutzhaus Baden-Baden und Landkreis Rastatt e. V.* in 1994, and was its first chairwoman.

It was at Ulrike's initiative that the archive for the works of composer Violeta Dinescu was established in the garden house of Baden-Baden municipal library.

Ulrike is since many years responsible, on a voluntary basis, for the public relations of Club Bad Herrenalb/Gerns-

bach; since 2008 for food bank *Gaggenauer Tafel*, which covers the entire Murg valley area, and since 2013 for Kulturlöge Baden-Baden e.V., they arrange tickets for people with less money.

Awareness, Advocacy and especially Action – this is the source of energy that drives Ulrike to constantly invigorate the club with new ideas. Her latest club project is *Zeitzeugen der Demokratie* (contemporary witnesses of democracy). Ten personalities from all sectors of the region will go to schools to share their personal experiences of democracy.



TUIRE

Vainio **TUIRE** Si Järvenpää (Finland)



Tuire Si Järvenpää, Finland, presents Tuire Vainio, aged 71, as an exemplary sister. She has been a Soroptimist since 1983. She has been able to simultaneously combine successes as a mother and homemaker with being an active sister in the club. While doing this, she has built up her cosmetics company into becoming a major employer within her own community of Järvenpää.

This company is an excellent example of small entrepreneurship among women. Over the years it has employed dozens of women and has supported the healthy values of professionals in the beauty business.

Tuire's basic training and strong work ethic originated in nursing. In her work as the owner of a cosmetics shop and as an entrepreneur in the beauty business, her goal has been to help women find their own body positivity, recognise their strengths and build their identity founded on positive things.

Support for a healthy lifestyle and charity have been an important part in Tuire's work. She is a role model. She has been involved in supporting girls' basketball and women's golf. She too has had success in Soroptimist golf competitions.

As a Soroptimist she has been on the club's board of directors several times over the years. She has served as President, secretary and treasurer. Her sisters describe Tuire as an altruistic caretaker of common interests and as a person who has very generously supported both the Soroptimist club and local charity. She has been involved in

various entrepreneurial associations both locally and nationally. Her work is characterised by a high level of professionalism.

The sums of money allocated to charity have increased significantly thanks to Tuire's involvement. For example, she has launched a luncheon event, developed in collaboration with the annual regional concert event called 'Our festival'. Its profits have, in a very practical way, contributed towards enabling young women's musical interests and the well-being and health of girls in general. These initiatives have also supported campaigns relating to weight management and the fight against weight problems for families who have suffered from COVID-19.

Tuire is also a major influencer and pioneer in Finland. She has been active in the National Association of Cosmetics Trade and has also promoted the position of female entrepreneurs and small entrepreneurs in many ways, both in her own community and nationally. She has built extensive social networks, through which the activities and values of Soroptimists have also been made visible. She has created a local women's one-day fair, where women, industry entrepreneurs and experts from various fields have been able to meet and connect.

She has been a pioneer in the development of her industry's practices. At a very early stage in the 1990s she implemented IT solutions to assist her customers in finding their own different and personal hairstyles. Her company has been very innovative over the years. The goal has always been to support the customer's own identity. One key element has been in the support of mental and physical resources, thus strengthening resilience.

van Hüllen **HELGARD** SI Isartal / Bad Tölz (Germany)



Helgard has always been a particularly focused and determined woman! She studied law – one of only very few women in the early 1960s to do so – and was awarded her doctorate in labour law at the age of twenty-three. Promoting *Gerechtigkeit* has always been at the core of Helgard's many professional and volunteer activities. This German word does not translate easily into English. It has various meanings: 'justice', 'fairness', '(financial) equality', 'justness'. Thus, Helgard represents, as only few of us do, the values and aims of Soroptimist.

Education: Whenever Helgard sees the need for action, she takes the initiative. She does not merely put up with shortcomings but looks instead for solutions – and finds them. This is how in 1988, as a teacher in legal studies, she simply wrote her own textbook when she was unable to find a suitable one. It has become a standard textbook in higher education, currently in its seventh edition. Through her teaching, and by means of this book, she continues to lay the foundations for a sound understanding of our democratic legal system among thousands of young people. She enables them to understand and value our governmental framework, encouraging them to explore their own possibilities to shape our society.

Ending Violence against women: Since 1993 Helgard has been an active member of the charitable organisation *Weißer Ring e.V.*, devoting thousands of hours to helping victims of violence and crime, and to crime prevention. She heads its office in Bad Tölz. Since 1989 she has

been a member of the German Governing Board and is currently the Vice-President. She has been representing the organisation on a European level for the last twelve years. She has advanced its causes in many ways through lobby work for prevention and by developing an educational programme for volunteers. Her expertise was key in establishing the 2012 European Directive on minimum standards for the rights, support and protection of victims of crime.

Helgard's commitment has bestowed upon her the highest honours and medals from the federal government.

Economic independence of women is probably the most effective means of enabling women to live a self-determined life and any progress in this area promotes justice and equality for women. It is a main concern of Helgard's work at the *Weißer Ring* when supporting victims of domestic violence. She encourages them to make their own way in life, shares her knowledge and connects them to resources within the local network, advising them where they can seek financial assistance and how to build a secure economic future to become independent from their abusers.

Helgard's work extends even beyond German and European borders as she has co-founded a charity for Social Projects in South Morocco. This initiative supports single mothers who strive for independent sources of income, to voice their own opinions and break down the ruling patriarchal structures.

Helgard's advice on how to be and stay so productive is: "You need to have a good team. You need to delegate and plan comprehensively. And you need to take care of yourself and have breaks when you need them."

Here at SI Club Isartal-Bad Tölz we are proud and grateful to have Helgard as both a sister and a role model. She inspires and encourages us in her very own, quiet but persistent and knowledgeable way, proving that every one of us can make a difference and make our world a little better.

Outstanding Awards

- 2013: *Bundesverdienstkreuz am Bande* for commitment to crime victims and Museum Association
- 2019: *Bayerische Verfassungsmedaille* (silver)

Milestones

- Born in 1942 in Berlin, grew up in Leverkusen and Krefeld, Germany
- Legal Studies at the universities of Freiburg, Berlin and Münster, LL.D. (1961), Employment Law

- 1986 – 1989 Institute for International and Comparative Law, University of South Africa, Pretoria
- 1978–2007 Teacher of Law in Bad Tölz and Benediktbeuern

Voluntary Work

- 1976 – Member of the founding committee of *Vereins der Museen Burg Linn e. V.* (Roman and Franconian excavation site museum)
- *Weißer Ring e.V.*, since 2006 Head of the local branch in Bad Tölz; since 1998 member of the German Board; since 2006 member of the executive board; 2012 Vice-president. Key focus: European and international issues, telephone helpline for victims, young members
- Victim Support Europe – various positions since 2008, including those of treasurer and Vice-President
- 2002 – Co-founder *Soziale Projekte Südmarokko e.V.*, board member, treasurer



Varis **KIRSTI** SI Helsinki (Finland)



SI Helsinki presents Kirsti Varis, a Soroptimist sister. She is committed to our cause and has made an outstanding contribution to her own club, SI Finland, SI Europe, as well as to SI on a global level. It is fair to say that she “embodies our values” by developing Soroptimist activities in a real and physical way. Her input has been considerable.

Kirsti joined the Helsinki club in 1983. “I was happy and privileged to meet the founders of our pioneer club in Finland. They provided a model that has inspired me greatly”. Kirsti has taken their example and is a role model herself by serving faithfully, with spirit and commitment, in all positions from President to Programme Director in her club, from Board Member to Governor on Union level, and on numerous committees relating to local and international activities.

Organising the SI Convention in Helsinki in 1999 provided a challenge when Kirsti was elected Chair of the Local Organising Committee.” It was my ‘high school’ in the SI organisation. I worked in close collaboration with SI and SIE presidents and other officers for six years and I learned a lot. I was in a position to promote Finnish ideas about how to host the convention. Our theme was ‘Working with Joy’ and it united all the Soroptimists of Finland to collaborate as an efficient team.”

Next, Kirsti was entrusted with the SI PR Liaison role during 2001–2003 term. It proved to be ‘university-level work’ in Kirsti’s Soroptimist life. Her mission was to crystallise the concept of Soroptimist in a new image. The visual

identity of SI was published at the Sidney SI Convention 2003. The design, colours and manual that were compiled at that time are still in use today.

In addition, Kirsti wants to single out two projects that have given visibility to the Soroptimist organisation. ‘Women Building Peace’ was initiated by SIE President Heidi Konrad. Kirsti’s contribution was to organise an exhibition of ‘Posters for Peace’ in 2005–2009. She acquired donations from twenty-three famous graphic designers from sixteen different countries for this exhibition. Some had been published previously and others were specially made for the exhibition which was displayed in libraries, city halls and other public places, and even in the Finnish Parliament house and at the SI Convention in Glasgow 2007. The project achieved much media publicity for SI work.

In 1993 Kirsti co-ordinated the first golf tournament ‘Soror Optima Golf’. It has been an annual event since then and has spread across other Nordic countries and SI Conventions. A charity feature is also involved, with donations going to SI projects.

As a person Kirsti is cheerful, courageous and creative. She has an excellent record of merits for services to the Soroptimist organisation, especially in the promotion of its public image. She has received several international awards, e.g. for Outstanding Service to SI in Public Relations Liaison 2001–2003. She has been an Honorary Member of SI Finland since 2005.

MARIE

Vos **MARIE** Elise Sl De Bilt-Bilthoven (Netherlands)



"Soroptimist belongs to all women, regardless of rank, status or money"

On the fifth floor of De Schutsmantel residential care centre in Bilthoven, we meet Marie Elise Vos, eighty-nine years old and a unique member. The familiar white hair, previously put up, has been cut. It makes her look more youthful. Her room looks like her past home: there is a lot to read and do at the table at which she likes to sit. There she can also enjoy the beautiful view of the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, for which she has done so much.

We visit Marie Elise to reminisce about the time when she was an active member of Soroptimist Club De Bilt-Bilthoven, SI Netherlands and SI Europe. Marie Elise Vos is an example to all Soroptimists. Not only was she very involved for decades, but above all else she is an optimist through and through. Her motto: "Being an optimist is optimising. You can become one and learn about it. Never just be, but keep trying."

After Marie Elise Vos became acquainted with Soroptimist in 1978 thanks to her roommate, she soon became involved in the founding of De Bilt-Bilthoven club. As club President, she organised the very first *Landdag* (now *Inspirada* – an annual nationwide Soroptimist summer conference in the Netherlands with a number of workshops and activities, organised by Soroptimist clubs in their own towns.) for no fewer than 325 participants in 1985.

Modest

After a year as Vice-President of the Union, in 1988 Marie Elise became the Union President for the following two years. In addition, she was President of the General Fund and she contributed to the establishment of the Sor Mentor Fund, a product of sixty years of SI Netherlands. Significant at this time was the approval by the ministers responsible for this to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women. As Union president, Marie Elise sought ways to keep clubs young and active and continued to advocate for nationwide work meetings wherever possible. She was a member of the Interservice Netherlands Foundation and promoted collaboration with other organisations in service projects.

Modesty is also a characteristic of Marie Elise. During our visit she says of her presidency: "Well, I was nominated and even though I said I did not aspire to such a position and did not consider myself capable, they just persisted and I did my duty."

Power of Soroptimist

After Marie Elise gave up her job as a social worker through the 55+ scheme in 1990, she embarked on a second career as Union Governor. This ensured that in 1991 the Union got its own flag for the first time. She contributed to the founding of Soroptimist clubs in the Netherlands and travelled to various countries including Hungary, France and Sardinia, to set up and guide new clubs internationally.

During our visit she speaks enthusiastically about her experiences with clubs in Eastern Europe. The straightforwardness of the members appealed to her. Anyone could join a club, not just the better educated or the well-off. We bid farewell with her words: "Make sure that Soroptimist remains for all women, regardless of rank, status or money. That is the power of Soroptimist worldwide."

WŁADYSLAWA Magiera SI Cieszyn (Poland)



Born in 1955 in Rybnik she spent all her life, however, in Cieszyn Silesia. A graduate of the University of Silesia, majoring in history, she worked at the University of Silesia Institute of History and later as a teacher at the Agricultural and Technical School in Cieszyn. She has been promoting the concept of 'her-story' — as opposed to he-story/his-story — over many years, fighting for the notion of equality when presenting history, with fair recognition of women's participation.

Committed to the promotion of the achievements of women in various realms, she has brought the accomplishments of many women to general awareness, especially those who, throughout history, have been at the forefront of the struggle for women's rights and power.

She has published six biographical books, describing over 100 women. She continues to write academic publications, articles for the local press, hold meetings, and participate in radio programmes promoting the heroines of her books and preserving their achievements from oblivion.

Władysława is the author of 'The Tourist Trail – the Cieszyn Women's Trail' and is one of the initiators of the Women's Street in Cieszyn and the first commemorative plaques in the region dedicated to famous women.

On her initiative Telewizja Polska (Polish Television) made a film about Cieszyn women, which has also been broadcast on TV Polonia. Władysława Magiera, as co-founder of Soroptimist International Cieszyn Club, methodically promotes Soroptimist and the achievements of the Club, of-

ten far beyond Cieszyn Silesia. The following Club projects were created thanks to her initiative and commitment:

- 2016 'Women of Cieszyn Silesia' – aimed at local students, who received badges and participated in multimedia meetings promoting heritage and the achievements of women
- 2016 A successful proposal to name one of the streets in Cieszyn after a woman of merit
- 2017 'Women of Cieszyn Silesia for Independent Poland' — publishing of a calendar promoted by a series of lectures addressed to various social groups: youth, students and seniors
- 2018 Participation of the SI Club in a competition, thanks to which a short film was made about the achievements of women members of the National Council of the Duchy of Cieszyn; used for educational purposes in schools (available on YouTube)
- 2018–2020 Two exhibitions about the women of Cieszyn Silesia, presented in many cities in the region
- 2019 Creation of eight cartoons for children about women (produced by the City Library in Cieszyn, with Soroptimist logo), used for educational purpose in schools (available on YouTube)

Awards:

- 2011 Award granted by the City of Cieszyn for the Promotion of Culture
- 2016 Laurel of the Silver Resident of Cieszyn of the City of Cieszyn and Badge of Honour for Services to the Silesian Voivodeship – a distinction awarded to people for particular services to the local community
- 2018 Golden Badge of Merit for services to the Silesian Voivodeship
- 2018 Winner of the 'Women of Silesia' competition commemorating the 100th anniversary of Polish Independence, organised by former President of the European Parliament Professor Jerzy Buzek
- 2020 100 Influential Women of the Silesian Voivodeship

Zanetti **MARIA** Assunta SI Pavia (Italy)



Maria Assunta Zanetti, PhD, is Associate Professor at the University of Pavia, Department of Brain and Behavioural Sciences. She's currently teaching Psychology of Development. She collaborates with the Italian Ministry of Education and other Institutions to promote mental health and she is leading several projects to support well-being in schools. Her main research interests include socio-emotional development, resilience, youth risk behaviours, bullying and cyberbullying, vocational guidance, decision-making processes and early achievement and gifted children's development.

From 2001 to 2020 she held the position of president at the Guidance and Vocational Centre of the University of Pavia. In 2009 she founded and became director of the Italian Laboratory of Research and Intervention for the Development of Talent, Potential and Giftedness at the University of Pavia. She is a member of the committee of the Italian Ministry of Education to prepare guidelines for the gifted and talented.

Since 2015 she has been vice-president at the Migration Recognition Gender Diversity (MERGED) Centre and member of the Strategic Project Migrat-IN-G, University of Pavia. She is involved in programmes for the prevention of gender-based violence and discrimination, organising university training courses in respect and diversity education.

Maria Assunta is a member of the European Network and also director of the Italian Journal *Psicologia dell'Educazione*.

She is engaged in advocacy and volunteering projects. Since 2005 she has been engaged in hospitality projects for the Pavia Families Project with Chernobyl Association. Since 2015 she has been President of CAV, a pro-life centre in Pavia supporting motherhood and parenthood. Maria Assunta has good interpersonal, teamwork and research skills in planning interventions in educational contexts for the promotion of well-being and development of good leadership.

Areas of Expertise

- Giftedness and talent development among high ability students
- Bullying and cyberbullying behaviour, classroom climate and educational resilience
- Digital identity and risk behaviours in social networks
- Vocational guidance: decision-making, career monitoring, soft skills
- Prevention of discrimination and violence towards women

Networking with Soroptimists

Within her specific research areas Maria Assunta tried to involve the Soroptimists in the realisation of certain projects. The subject of giftedness has seen her engaged in projects aimed at supporting boys and girls endowed with high cognitive abilities or possessing a specific talent and ability in a field (gifted), to develop their full potential, taking care, therefore, not only of the cognitive aspects but also of the emotional and relational ones.

In this respect our interventions are aimed not only at students, but also at families and teachers, indispensable support and reference points during growth. Specifically, Maria Assunta involved the club in the project *KALEIDOSPRO*, funded by *MIUR*, Ministry of Education, to reduce the gender gap in the promotion of STEM at school level.

The phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying have been the subject of projects of prevention in schools *Per*

una crescita responsabile, also supported by the Soroptimist Club of Pavia. In 2018 Maria Assunta introduced the subject of prevention of discrimination and violence towards women as a course for students at the University of Pavia under the title 'Prevention of gender-based violence: educating to respect'. The establishment of a scholarship promoted by the Soroptimists of Pavia will finance a prevention project that will be carried out in the schools of the city of Pavia and integrated into the school curriculum.



Zourouthi-Saligaros **PASSITHEA** (1896–1989) SI Athens Founding Club (Greece)



The spirit of Soroptimist was enthusiastically embraced by Passithea. She assembled sixteen young women, all successful professionals in the fields of science, the arts, trade, communication, and public administration, willing to offer voluntary services to society, and introduced them to the principles of Soroptimist. In December 1950 the first Soroptimist Club of Greece, the Athens Founding Club, was chartered by Dr Noel and SIE President Clara Hammerich. Passithea founded five more Soroptimist Clubs and a venture club. She became the first President of the Soroptimist Union of Greece in 1960. As President of the Athens Founding Club, in collaboration with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Passithea supervised the relocation of a large number of refugees from Russia, the Black Sea, Romania and Armenia to Karea-Attica, Greece. Soroptimists backed the cost of housing construction and equipment for sixteen families, around sixty-four people. Passithea cared for the elder members of these families until the end of their lives.

Together with Swedish Soroptimist Varberg Club, Passithea supported a special school for girls in Kavala. Her Soroptimist activities also included the donation of an electric knitting machine to a women's vocational training association in a Greek village and donation of books to

another border village. She supported the victims of earthquakes in Kalamata (Greece) and Turkey. Furthermore, she promoted the friendship and hospitality of Soroptimists from abroad in Greece.

Passithea was also founder of other women's associations such as the Association of Professional and Business Women, the Symi Association of Intellectual Women, the AETIDES Girls' Corps, and Sunday Schools in Piraeus. She also served as President of the Women Scientists Association Board.

During the German Occupation of Greece, 1941–1944, Passithea took an active role in the national resistance movement, communicating information from the BBC and the exiled Greek Government. She had responsibility for the women in Attica and Piraeus.

Passithea served in Public Administration as President of the Cholargos Community and as Chairperson of the Municipal Council. There she established a social centre in her mother's memory. Her house, which she donated to the Cholargos Municipality, today functions as a social and cultural centre. She herself paid for the construction of a nursing home where she lived until her death in 1989. In 1963 King Constantine honoured Passithea with the Grand Cross of the Beneficence Order, an award for women for outstanding special services.

Applications **NOT SELECTED** for # 100for100

In all, we received 235 applications, all very interesting and believe us the choice was very difficult but as our organization is turning 100 years and the project was #100for100, we had to make a selection. This does not mean at all that they are not exceptional Soroptimists, because, they all are exceptional!!!

You will find below the list in alphabetical order of the unsuccessful candidates with mention of the club that submitted the candidacy.

Akti Kerttu	Järvapää	Finland
Allegri Graziella	Padua	Italy
Aribal Alyot Lütfiye	Istanbul	Turkey
Arkun Remide	Izmir	Turkey
Autengruber Ursula	Vienna-Donau	Austria
Baldursdóttir Laufey	Akureyi	Iceland
Bascheira Pia	Pordenone	Italy
Battistini Maria Paola	Valle d'Aoste	Italy
Benal Inceer	Goztepe	Turkey
Bergün Kardeş	Goztepe	Turkey
Biggiero Velia	Caserta	Italy
Bildt Heidy & Webster Gwendolen	SI Germany	Germany
Bjerke Siri	Svolvaer	Norway
Björnvinsdóttir Gudrun Erla	Bakkar & Sel, Reykjavik	Iceland
Brand Elisabeth	Dortmund	Germany
Cerra Laura	Valsesia	Italy
Congiu Germana	Iseo	Italy
Dietz Ingeborg	Köln-Römerturn	Germany
Fanelli Marini Rita	Valle Umbra	Italy
Fritzer Erika	Lienz	Austria
Gerstein Barbara	Dortmund	Germany
Glaser Renate	Mainz-Rosengarten	Germany

Gökçen Deniz	Bursa	Turkey
Guðmundsdóttir, Alma	Hóla og Fella í Reykjavík	Iceland
Güvener Ayten	Emek	Turkey
Hagh-Meincke & Andersen Irma	Skanderborg	Denmark
Hämmerle Helga	Bregenz/Rheintal	Germany
Haug Urdal Solveig	Moss	Norway
Heinonen Anneli	Salo	Finland
Henkels Sigrid	Wuppertal	Germany
Holoubek Luise	Maria Theresia Wiener Neustadt	Austria
Houben Hilde	Genk	Belgium
Ihamak Päivi	Salo	Finland
Inger Callisen Karen	Ringsted	Denmark
Jacobi Irene	Bielefeld	Germany
Jacobi Lotti	Landshut	Germany
Jadwiga Grzbiela	Bielsko-Biala	Poland
Jalkanen Marja	Rovaniemi	Finland
Järveläinen Maritta	Salo	Finland
Jean Charles Lucienne Elize	Fort de France Martinique	France
Kluge-Kahn Hertha	Braunschweig	Germany
Kohlo Heli	Vantaa	Finland
Koleva Evgenia	Boyana Sofia 2	Bulgaria
Koski-Ahonen Liisa	Oulu	Finland
Koutselini Helen	Lykabettus	Greece
Kroemer Marianne	Graz I	Austria
Kükey Müfide	Istanbul	Turkey
La China Laura	Siracusa	Italy
Lagona Sebastiana	Catania	Italy
Leboroni Maria Elisa	Perugia	Italy
Leopold Dorothea	Ulm/Donaustadt	Germany
Mach Sabine	Lungau/Tamsweg	Austria
Maciuca Rodica	Brasov	Romania
Marchetti Maria Grazia	Perugia	Italy
Marenk Marianne	Valkeakoski-Vanajavesi	Finland
Marlara Maria Aria	Reggio Calabria	Italy
Marx Lilli	Düsseldorf	Germany

Massimo Luisa	Genova	Italy
Mitterlehner Wilbrig	Rohrbacher Land	Germany
Moll Arsnes Birgit	Grenaa	Denmark
Mureddu Cionu Maria	Nuoro	Italy
Mursia Giancarla	Milano alla Scala	Italy
Neuenschwander Leni	Mannheim	Germany
Nikander Marja-Leena	Säkylä	Finland
Oberleitner Elisabeth	Wörthersee-Pörtschach	Austria
Ongun Ükkü	Icel	Turkey
Ørbæk Petersen Ruth	Sl Tønder,	Denmark
Ovüc Refia	Istanbul	Turkey
Parlińska Maria	Warsaw	Poland
Peer Christine	Wien Donau	Austria
Pelkonen Solli	Savonlinna	Finland
Pirson Claude-Thérèse	Bruxelles Sablon	Belgium
Raisini Giovanna	Alessandria	Italy
Remouchamps Suzanne	Mons-Borinage	Belgium
Rosmaninho Teresa	Porto Invicta	Portugal
Saarnivaara Kristi	Turku	Finland
Sandvik Magnhild Aase	Voss	Norway
Savela Kaarina Elisabet	Pohjois-Pirkannaa	Finland
Savu Elena	Bucharest	Romenia
Schildberg Elke	Gelsenkirchen-Buer	Germany
Scridon Monica	Cluj-Napoca	Romenia
Sl Arendal-Grimstad		Denmark
Sl Bogese-Nordfyn		Denmark
Silvennoinen Pirjo	Järvenpää	Finland
Södurland Ann-Christine	Umeå	Sweden
Sokullu Sanay	Marmara	Turkey
Studer Monica	Vaduz	Liechtenstein
Sundling Elsa	Uppsala	Sweden
Sveder Kirsten	Stockholm-Ehard	Sweden
Tagliaferri C arla	Roma Tre	Italy
Tamminen Anita	Hyvinkää	Finland
Tarkan Sembol	Meztli	Turkey

Tiberii Paola	Pescara	Italy
Tobiassen Mette	Odder	Denmark
Torpe Mette	Nyborg	Denmark
Tremi-Sieder Helga	Augsburg	Germany
Vedder Gerda	Düsseldorf-Pempelfort	Germany
Veleva Simeona	Sofia	Bulgaria
von Barsewisch Gisa	Hamburg	Germany
von Frenckell Asta	Pori	Finland
von Janson Annemarie	Hamburg	Germany
Wegele Ushi	Ludwigshafen	Germany
Westermeyr Gerdi	Priem am Chiemsee	Germany
Yurdadoğ Uğurlu	SI Emek	Turkey
Zika Nelie	Tessaloniki	Greece



1930–1934 Dr. **SUZANNE** Noël – Paris (France)



Suzanne Noël, pioneer in two ways.

The right to dispose of one's body – The right to dispose of one's destiny.

Suzanne Noël was passionate about studying medicine, then dermatology, which she undertook at the beginning of the 20th century, in a predominantly male environment. She was encouraged and supported by both her first and her second husband, both doctors, as well as by her teachers. She became an extern in the Hôpitaux de Paris in 1908. She defended her thesis in 1925.

Suzanne was a pioneer in the implementation of new surgical techniques and thus contributed to the development of reconstructive and aesthetic surgery with methods which represent the bases of current techniques: liposuction, lifting, etc. . . She was also a pioneer in cosmetic surgery and brought a more humble and more human vision of medicine.

As Marianne Prévot stresses in a report from France Culture:

"She campaigned for patient respect and drew up a social charter, which she kept to in her surgical practice, proposing to give complete and honest information to patients

Elle milite pour un respect des patients, élabore une charte sociale qu'elle respecte dans sa pratique chirurgicale, en proposant de donner une information totale et franche aux patients.

unlike other descriptions of surgical techniques, Suzanne Noël focuses on how to give an injection without causing the patient pain, or how to apply a bandage, considered to be a task for nurses."

contrairement aux autres descriptions de techniques chirurgicales, Suzanne Noël s'attarde sur la façon de piquer pour ne pas faire mal ou sur la façon de faire un pansement ce qui est considéré comme une tâche dévolue aux infirmières

Suzanne Noël operated on soldiers, disfigured by shells during the First World War, to give them back an identity, thus healing their wounds both physically and psychologically. She redrew the faces of resistance fighters and Jews during the Second World War. She erased the marks on the bodies of survivors of concentration camps. She repaired, but also remodelled, the stars of the time.

Convinced of the social role of cosmetic surgery, she operated on women without taking payment or taking payment according to their means, in particular on workers made redundant because they were considered too old.

"Cosmetic surgery, therefore, appeared to me to be a real social benefit, allowing both men and women to extend their work opportunities in an unexpected way" 'Cosmetic surgery, its social role' Suzanne Noël, published 1926.

By allowing women to remain independent thanks to cosmetic surgery procedure, Suzanne Noël fought in her own way against unemployment, loneliness and depression.

She travelled to conferences in many countries and tirelessly communicated the two messages that were close to her heart: the benefits of cosmetic surgery and the empowerment of women.

Equal rights, equal duties

In parallel with her work as a surgeon, Suzanne Noël was also involved in the feminist struggle.

"I wore a ribbon on my hat with 'I want to vote' in gold letters. I also specialised in plastic surgery, unknown until then, and people said I was doubly crazy", Suzanne Noël.

Obtaining the right to vote for women by organising a tax strike was the way for Suzanne Noël to demand the same rights for women, who, through their work, participated in the economic prosperity of their country.

Aware of the world and its injustices, Suzanne Noël founded the first Soroptimist club in Paris in 1924, after being contacted by Stuart Morrow, American lawyer and organiser of men's service clubs. A true Soroptimist ambassador, she created clubs in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. The clubs weave a network of solidarity to support the rights and status of women, and help to have a large number of friends, of committed and independent women.

Suzanne Noël's work and her fight for feminism come together in her way of thinking and practising her profession.

Leila Slimani: "Her feminism is also based on a reflection on beauty. She says "beauty is capital". Being deprived of beauty is a handicap that will lead to discrimination, psychological discomfort. And therefore, cosmetic surgery will allow those who do not have beauty to conquer this capital. So, she is a pragmatic feminist. When operating on her patients, she always warns them not to do it for their husband, but to regain an individual, personal power and strength. "

Suzanne Noël, the first female cosmetic surgeon, after a life spent repairing, supporting and defending to allow everyone to be in control of their own life, passed away at the age of 76 in 1954.

Some key dates:

- Born in Laon in the Aisne on 19 January 1878
- In 1897, at the age of 19, she married dermatologist Henry Pertat
- In 1905, encouraged by her husband, she began studying medicine
- In 1908 she was appointed extern at the Hôpitaux de Paris. She met extern André Noël
- In 1909 she joined Professor Brocq's dermatology department at Saint-Louis Hospital. Beginning of first cosmetic surgery procedures. She came fourth in *the Internat des Hôpitaux de Paris* examinations. Met Sarah Bernard
- 1914–18 Suzanne repairs broken faces
- 1918 death of first husband Henry Pertat from poison gas
- 1919 marriage to André Noël
- 1922 death of her daughter Jacqueline from Spanish flu
- 1923 she calls on working women to strike on paying taxes as the state did not recognise their rights. She

was contacted by Stuart Morrow, organiser of service clubs

- 1924 depressed after the death of daughter Jacqueline, André Noël committed suicide
- 1924 Suzanne founded the first Soroptimist club in Europe in Paris, dedicated to the empowerment of women
- 1925 she defended her thesis, opened her practice and was interested in surgeries other than on the face. She began reshaping the body, breasts, bellies, buttocks. She invented the liposuction technique and instruments such as the craniometer and the jig
- 1928 Suzanne received the Legion of Honour and the Recognition of the Nation, for her contribution to French scientific renown on the international scene

Suzanne NOEL (1878–1954) Le destin d'une femme
Quel destin fabuleux Pour cette femme d'exception
Qui a œuvré avec passion
Pour que les femmes de tout milieu
Puisse défendre leur statut
Et partager leurs idées et des valeurs
Dont elles étaient jusque-là exclues.
Quelle énergie incommensurable
A-t-elle déployée de par le monde
Pour que se crée notre ONG Internationale !
D'Oakland en Californie à Paris,
Elle aura arpenté sans relâche
Toutes les couches d'une société
Qui sentait un réel besoin d'évoluer.
De sa Picardie natale,
Elle aura gardé sans ambages
Une détermination inébranlable
De poursuivre des études supérieures
Et se spécialiser dans la chirurgie esthétique
A un moment où notre pays faisait naufrage
Engagé dans des combats cruels et cyniques.
Ah, cette guerre de 14–18,
Elle en aura fait des prisonniers,
Elle en aura fait des « gueules cassées » !
Et toutes ces familles meurtries
Qu'allaient-elles devenir
Une fois que les combats auraient cessé ?
Allaient-elles vivre encore ou survivre ?
Quel destin fabuleux
Pour cette femme d'exception
Qui se distingue en premier lieu
Par ses « soins de beauté sociaux »
Disaient nos amies d'Outre Rhin !
Ses méthodes hautement scientifiques
Allaient faire naître la chirurgie plastique.

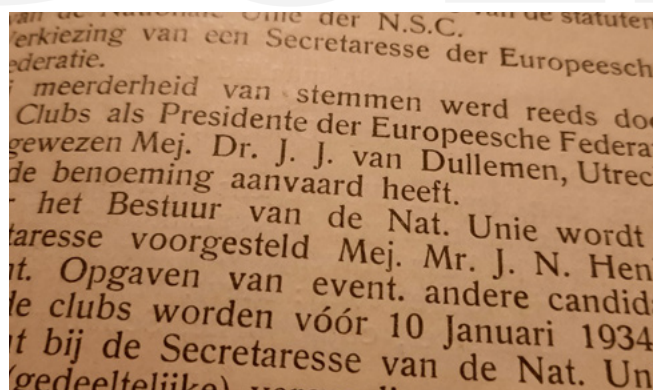
Reconnue par ses pairs,
Emportée par un succès grandissant
Elle doit gérer au même moment
La mort brutale de sa fille unique
Puis l'inévitable suicide du père,
Meurtri de ne plus écouter la musique
De leur fille qu'il chérissait tant.
Quel destin fabuleux
Pour cette femme d'exception
Qui posera les bases de notre mouvement.
Ce mouvement de femmes moquées
Et devenu souvent la risée
Des gens « les mieux pensants »
Des milieux d'affaires et des gouvernements !
Pour faciliter les liens entre les clubs
Elle compose les douze commandements
Qui seront repris le soir dans les pubs
Par nos amies en cours de recrutement.
Elle aimait se souvenir
Qu'il était dit pour la maudire
Qu'elle était « deux fois folle ».
Mais les clubs connaissaient son rôle.
Ils avaient décidé de la suivre
Avec fidélité et une rage de vivre.
Quel destin fabuleux
Pour cette femme d'exception
Qui a créé il y a cent ans déjà
Nos clubs soroptimist en France
Mais aussi bien au-delà.
Chacune se souviendra
De son chapeau bordé d'une frange blanche
Sur laquelle étaient imprimés
Ces mots en lettres dorées : « Je veux voter ».
Qu'importe pour elle d'être appelée
« La suffragette » trop pressée
Qui taclait les pouvoirs publics
Comme si pour elle il n'y avait plus de limites.
Sa notoriété dépassait les frontières.
De cela, les clubs en étaient fiers

Et ne cessaient de retracer sa carrière.
Quel destin fabuleux,
Quelle femme d'exception !
Elle avait le génie de susciter des vocations.
Si le premier club « Paris Fondateur »
A permis d'entraîner dans son sillon
Plus de cinq cent membres actifs très vite
Chacune gardera tout au fond de son cœur
Une diffusion rapide de l'idée « Soroptimist »
Leur assurant alors un succès définitif.
Aujourd'hui, cette femme d'exception
Serait traitée de « féministe »
Et probablement pointée du doigt
Pour avoir dénoncé tous ces courants sexistes.
Sachons toutes ensemble relever le défi,
Celui qu'elle s'était fixée au nom d'une liberté
La liberté des femmes et leur égalité
Au nom d'une véritable démocratie partagée.
Par un soir froid de novembre
Elle est allée rejoindre sa fille et son mari
Au cimetière de Montmartre à Paris.
Sur nous toutes depuis, son ombre
Scrute nos moindres gestes qui tremblent.
Ces gestes si incertains et parfois dangereux
Qui risquent de détruire ces couleurs « jaune et bleue »
Symbole d'un mouvement né sans bruit
Au lendemain d'une guerre sombre.
Pussions-nous nous souvenir
Qu'un jour, ce destin hors du commun
A permis au-delà des frontières,
Et nous en sommes toutes fières,
A des milliers de femmes
D'être des citoyennes sachant lire et écrire
Et de circonscrire parfois des drames
Qui les jetait au bord du chemin.
Quelle femme d'exception !
Quel fabuleux destin !
Sachons lui reconnaître son merveilleux dessein
Et partager ensemble nos projets pour demain.

Fait A Paris, le 2 décembre 2020

Rina Dupriet
Past Présidente S.I. de l'Union Française (2006–2008)
Past Gouverneur S.I. (2008–2009)
Past Vice-présidente Europe du S.I. (2009–2011)
Représentante à l'UNESCO du S.I.

1934–1936 Dr. J-J van **DULLEMEN** – Rotterdam (Netherlands)



By majority vote, was appointed by the clubs as President of the European Federation

Ms Dr. J.J. Van Dullemen, Utrecht, who has accepted the appointment.

1936–1938 Dr. **CLARA** MEYERS – Amsterdam (Netherlands)

1938–1939 Dr. **MADELAINE** GAROT – Brussels (Belgium)

1945–1948 Dr. **MADELAINE** GAROT – Brussels (Belgium)



Dr Madelaine Garot was the founding member of the first Soroptimist club which was in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1930. In 1938 she was elected President of the European Federation of Soroptimist International and, as such, handed over the Charter to the Brussels club of which she became a member in 1957. She was a paediatrician.

In Belgium in the years between 1940 and 1945 only a few private meetings were possible to maintain the links already established and to transmit messages of solidarity and hope between Soroptimists. As Madeleine recounted, members of the club met at each other's houses just before curfew and spent the night together, probably busy mending or making clothes, preparing what people need-

ed. They returned home early the next morning when the curfew ended.

Soroptimists on the European continent continued to live their daily lives helping their fellow citizens and refugees, even when no meetings or correspondence were possible.

In Belgium, as almost everywhere in Europe, Soroptimists resumed their activities in 1945 with reduced numbers but with a lot of courage!!

After the war Madelaine was the linchpin of the Soroptimist organisation in Europe, and in 1948 succeeded Miss Howes as liaison secretary between the various federations.

1948–1950 Mrs. **MARY** BARRAT DUE – Oslo (Norway)



9 April 1888 in Bergen, Norway – 24 December 1969 in Oslo, Norway

Mary Barratt Due was known as one of the most influential Norwegian pianists in the 20th century. She received a scholarship and, when only fourteen years old, travelled to Rome, Italy to study at the traditional St. Cecilia Academy. There she spent six years in an international and exuberant musical environment, where music theory and language were also part of the curriculum. In 1906 she made her debut in Oslo.

In 1916 she married the violinist Henrik Adam Due, and together they founded the Barratt Due Institute of Music in 1927.

Mary Barratt Due was a member of the first Norwegian Soroptimist club, SI Oslo, founded in 1933.

In 1937 she represented the club at the Federation Meeting in Paris.

Mary Barratt Due became a leading light in the organisation, enthusiastically promoting Soroptimist during every concert tour. When the Oslo club re-opened formally in 1945, after living in hiding during the Nazi occupation, she became its President. Three years later, when Norway took responsibility for the Federation, she was the natural SIE President who, among many other tasks, helped initiate The Link. Her Presidency culminated with a large international congress in Oslo in 1950.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Barratt_Due
<https://arendal-grimstad.soroptimistnorway.no/media/7562/jubileumsskrift-engelsk.pdf>

1950–952 Mrs. **CLARA** HAMMERICH (Denmark)



Clara Hammerich is a name Soroptimists still remembered nationally and internationally.

During her Soroptimist life 'Claes' worked to establish clubs and unions to enable contact and friendship between Soroptimists. She chartered thirty-six clubs and became honourable member of the SI Danish Union.

In 1936 Clara Hammerich was the founding member of SI Copenhagen, the first Soroptimist club in Denmark. She was President of her club twice, and also President of SI Danish Union in 1942–43, as well as President of SI European Federation in 1950–52.

In 1952 she was in charge of the Convention in Copenhagen, for which the Danish Queen Ingrid was patron. Eight days with 1,200 guests and a splendid professional, cultural and entertainment programme. The spokeswoman from the American delegation gave a heartfelt appeal for "spreading the spirit of democracy and charity all over the world through Soroptimist". There was entertainment and dinner, fireworks in Tivoli, and days of friendship in clubs throughout Denmark. Queen Ingrid even invited a group of the international guests for tea at her summer residence in Gråsten.

Clara Hammerich spoke fluent English, German, Dutch and French. She was a professional translator. She was a member of the International PEN club and became its chair in 1961.

The experiences during her many travels to Soroptimist clubs in France, Italy, Turkey, England, Scotland, Sweden, Finland and America took place at breath-taking speed and the number of people she met is most impressive.

SI Copenhagen and the Danish Union projects in which Clara Hammerich was involved were, in the early years, mainly to support women's education by offering grants for studies and travel. There was also a need to finance the travel and hospitality in Denmark of Soroptimist guests from other countries. The first decade for Danish Soroptimists was dominated by war. People lacked basic necessities. However, the members of the Copenhagen club were well off and so they decided to collect their best used clothes and meet in each other's house to sew and transform the clothes into children's outfits. All the recycled clothes were donated to children and families in need. After 1945 Danish Soroptimists were greatly involved in distributing food packages through the Red Cross and Soroptimist channels to families in the UK, Norway, the Netherlands and Hungary. The international contacts between Soroptimists secured the success of this project.

The finances for these projects were derived partly from popular lotteries, where the winnings were the new exciting goods and merchandise arriving from the USA at that time. Charity was important throughout the forties and fifties in a society of shortages. As most Soroptimists at that time were well off, they were able to collect for charity and the donations found their way to where there were the worst shortages and where there was no surplus for pleasures. In the years 1950–52, when Clara Hammerich was President of the European Federation, several of the Unions in countries that had suffered under German occupation were opposed to former German Soroptimist clubs being reborn and welcomed back into the Federation. But the Danish club, SI Lyngby, had personal contacts with the former SI Berlin, and Clara Hammerich took the initiative to interview the eighteen remaining members of SI Berlin who had suffered a lot during the war, but had to the end kept up the Soroptimist ideals and spirit during the oppression of the Nazi regime.

These testimonies and Clara's tireless advocacy overcame the resistance from the neighbouring Unions and the new SI Berlin club was welcomed back into the Federation, soon followed by other German Clubs.

1952–1954 Avv. **OLGA** MONSANI – Firenze (Italy)



Olga Monsani was born in Florence on 10 May 1891. She lived through the two World Wars of the 20th century, through Fascism, the Resistance, and the democratic reconstruction of Italy.

She obtained a Diploma in Elementary Teaching, a Red Cross Nursing Diploma, a French Teaching Certificate, and a Law Degree. She succeeded in establishing herself in the legal environment, marked by a substantial prevalence of men and, in 1928, ranked first in the Prosecutor examinations beating 100 men and four women. She placed her legal culture and professional expertise as a lawyer, initially applied in criminal law and then in civil law, at the service of democracy and the advancement of women and the improvement of women's position in society.

During the First World War she was active in relief associations and was awarded the Silver Medal for War Merits by the Red Cross. She dedicated herself to helping mutilated and disabled persons and directed the municipal office of assistance to war orphans for almost fifteen years until she abandoned all welfare activities as she did not want to join the fascist party.

In 1917, together with Gina Lombroso Ferrero and Amelia Pincherle Rosselli, mother of Carlo and Nello Rosselli, Olga founded the Italian Women Disseminator Association. Its aim was "to encourage women to participate in the country's scientific, social, political and philosophical development". Olga was also active in the Lyceum Women's Club in Florence.

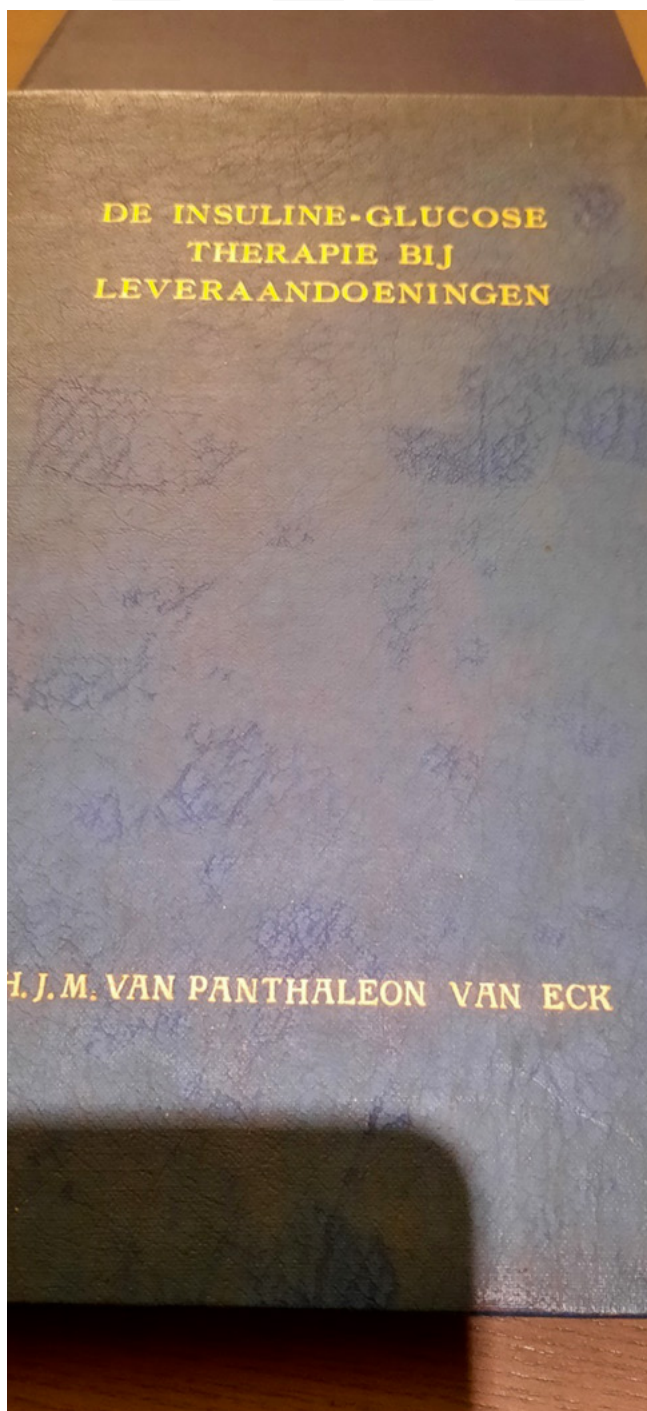
As an 'irreducible' anti-fascist she served in the ranks of the Justice and Freedom movement and was a member of the Action Party since its foundation in 1942. Immediately after the armistice of 8 September 1943 she was active in the Resistance with the Justice and Freedom movement, in the clandestine service of Radio Cora. Her activities included the gathering of valuable information on raids by Nazi-Fascist forces, thwarting their effectiveness. After the Italian Liberation in 1945 she participated in the first national congress of the Italian Women's Union (UDI) and was one of the Tuscan candidates of that party in the elections of the Constituent Assembly.

In 1950–1951 she was the promoter and President of the Florentine Section of the Italian Federation of Women Arts and Business Professions (FIDAPA), established in Rome in 1945. She supported the legal claims of women and their professional development.

On 12 May 1949 the Soroptimist International Florence Club was inaugurated. It was the fourth Club founded in Italy, following the ones in Bologna and Rome and the one in Milan, founded in 1928, and then dissolved by the fascist government and re-formed in 1948. Olga Monsani was one of the founding members of the Florentine Club and, after a few months, together with President Nannetta Del Vivo and the Milanese Club, was involved in the foundation of the Italian National Union. At the same time, she was elected Governor and in 1951–1952 she was Vice-President of the European Federation of Soroptimist, of which she was elected President for the successive two years, 1952–1954. In the Federation she was a member of the Statutes and Regulations Committee from 1954 to 1956 and was President of the United Nations Committee from 1956 to 1960. Her commitment to the SI Florence Club would continue until 1960. She held another important position as member of the Soroptimist International Association Council from 1954 to 1958.

In her memory the Florence Club set up a prize awarded annually for many years (1984–2000) to a law graduate recommended by the Faculty Council of the University.

1954–1956 Dr H. **PANTHALEON** VAN ECK – The Hague (Netherlands)



"Insulin-glucose therapy for liver disorders", studies by
H. Panthaleon Van Eck

1956–1958 Mlle. **JACQUELINE** CHEVALIER (France)

Jacqueline Chevalier who was also SIE treasurer from 1954 to 1956 before being SIE President from 1956 to 1958

1958–1960 Mlle **ELISABETH** HOETER – Switzerland



1960–1964 – SI President / représentante du SIE auprès de l'Unesco à Paris de 1964 à 1967 et à l'ECOSOC à Genève en 1967

Elisabeth (Lily) Hoeter, a remarkable Soroptimist, was a member of the Neuchâtel club.

She was one of the first Presidents of the club. In Neuchâtel she was also a teacher and director of the girls' high school.

In September 1964, as International President, Elisabeth was in Lausanne where she chaired the debates of the International Bureau. She also chaired the Seventh Quadrennial Congress of the International Soroptimist Association held at the Palais de Beaulieu.

Elisabeth Hoeter was European President in 1958–1960 and International President in 1960–1964. She was an Honorary President of the Swiss Union until her death on 18th March 2003.

During her mandate as President of the European Federation she successfully organised 'Study and Friendship Days' for the European Federation of Soroptimist Clubs. This took place in Lausanne between 30th August and 2nd September 1959. She also prepared for the future with a new quadrennial theme 'Looking to the future' for the years 1960–1964.

Elisabeth invited Soroptimists from all over the world between 2nd and 8th September 1964 to Lausanne for the Seventh Quadrennial Congress of Soroptimist International.

During these long years of activity at all levels of the Soroptimist organisation, which she held so dear and which occupied an essential place in her life, passionate Elisabeth Hoeter, strongly believing in the Soroptimist mission, its goals and its objectives, wanted us to conform to its brand image which for her meant:

- willingness to excel in one's profession, the joy and pride in doing the best possible
- willingness to serve others, never oneself, to promote respect for life, for human dignity, by being interested in the social, civic and political affairs (philosophy and not partisan politics) of the community
- promote international understanding and peace

In her welcome message to more than 1,500 Soroptimists, who had come to Lausanne in 1964 from all over the world to attend this Seventh Quadrennial Congress, Elisabeth said how happy she was to welcome so many Soroptimists to Switzerland.

Amongst other things, she told them:

"Your presence is a testament to the common ideal that unites us across borders despite our different ways of thinking, feeling and acting.

You come cheerfully to meet each other ready to take on new tasks, new responsibilities.

Isn't a Congress the best opportunity to give and to receive? But giving and receiving are ultimately one and the same when you have your heart and mind open to the

world, because you can then capture currents of new energy to transmit them further.

Here in Lausanne, a charming city in a magnificent region of lakes and mountains, we have come with the hope of strengthening the spirit of service, friendship and international understanding which constitutes our Soroptimist ideal."

In Lausanne Elisabeth asked us to define what our attitude should be to the problems that society, in its rapid evolution, poses to an individual conscious of his responsibilities.

SI President Elisabeth's motto for the four years was 'Look to the future'.

During the plenary sessions, following Elisabeth's motto of 'Looking to the future', Soroptimists were particu-

larly concerned with the advancement of women. At the time it was a question of discovering what careers would be open to women in the West in the years to come and to promote the best for future women and girls in their professions.

"For me, the usefulness, the future, the life of Soroptimist International depends above all on the quality and the state of mind of the individual Soroptimist" Elisabeth Hoeter said. For her, the finest relationships, the finest speeches were only of value if they produced a gesture of love.

"If Soroptimists in their various professions and their respective countries, wherever they may be found, defend and radiate these universal values, and communicate amongst themselves with fervour and friendship, the greatness of Soroptimist International is assured."



1960–1962 Mrs. **ANTONIETTA** TOINI NIKANDER (Finland)



Antonietta Toini Nikander, an Ambassador of Soroptimism
"Dear readers of the Link magazine. Today we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of Soroptimist. Last summer in London (1960) it was decided to celebrate International Soroptimist Day on the anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December. I would like to remind you that we are members of an international service organisation and we are spreading the message of that declaration." This is what Antonietta Toini Nikander wrote in the Link magazine in 1961 (June, No. 20, p. 27).

Toini Nikander, known by her performer's name of Antonietta Toini Nikander, was born in 1901 in the Grand Duchy of Finland in Rauma. She studied singing at the Helsinki Conservatory, today the Sibelius Academy, between 1919 and 1921 and became an opera singer. Antonietta's childhood and youth took place in the midst of many changes and turmoil in Finland which eventually became an independent sovereign state. Between 1924 and 1959 she travelled extensively as an opera singer and performed under various conductors. In the late 1920s she appeared in Milan, Monte Carlo and Paris. In the 1930s she performed in Germany, Austria and the Nordic countries. Antonietta sang at concerts and church music events in opera roles composed by sixteen composers. Music lovers in Finland and the Netherlands introduced her to the ideas and goals of Soroptimist.

Antonietta lived in Tampere and was the founding President of SI Tampere Club in 1953. Tampere Club was

one of five clubs which formed the SI Finnish Union (SI Finland Ry) the same year. *"Antonietta conveyed an air of internationalism. She acted rigorously and correctly as a Soroptimist following the rules and courteous practices of the organisation. She encouraged the Soroptimist brand and stressed regular attendance at meetings. She advised on how to act in various situations and encouraged international projects. When she came to the meetings, she stopped to greet everyone personally. She knew each sister in her club personally."*

Antonietta took a significant step forward in international Soroptimist activities when she was elected the sixth President of the European Federation of Soroptimist Clubs (EFSC) in Lausanne in Switzerland in 1959 for the period 1960–1962. European countries at that time were experiencing a period of strong reconstruction and growth. The values and activities of Soroptimism deepened in Finland as the young Finnish Union took over the presidency of the European Federation and its administration. On 10th May 1960 Antonietta endorsed SIA President Elisabeth Hoeter's proposal to celebrate International Day of Soroptimists on the anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights in December. A joint celebration by all Soroptimists would unite the federations, unions and clubs of the organisation. The first International Soroptimist Day was celebrated in the European Federation on 10th December 1960. This Day of Human Rights continues to be celebrated among Soroptimists worldwide.

1962–1963 Mrs. **TASIA** BAFFY (Greece)



Anastasia (Tasia) Baffy was a founding member of the first Soroptimist Club in Greece – the SI Athens Founding Club established in 1950. She was General Director of the Greek State Accounts and an author of many articles on economics and accounting. In 1956 Tasia represented the SI Greek Union at the Soroptimist Interna-

tional Congress in The Hague. In 1961, at the Governors Meeting in Tampere, Finland, Tasia was elected President of the Soroptimist International European Federation for the biennium 1962–1964. Unfortunately, Tasia filled this position for only one year and then had to resign for health reasons.



1963–1964 Mrs. **SIGRID** OECHEL-HAUESER (Germany)

At the beginning of the 1970s, the German Union only had 22 clubs, but nevertheless a German club sister – Sigrid Oechelhäuser – was elected European Federation President for the first time.

1964–1966 Mrs. **GUNNEL** HAZELIUS-BERG (Sweden)




SI President 1969–1971

Gunnel Hazelius-Berg was originally closely associated with Skansen, the world's oldest open-air museum, and Sweden in miniature, established by her grandfather Arthur Hazelius. Gunnel worked for many years as a registrar at the museum and was a prominent researcher in historical costumes as well as all manner of textiles. She was also involved in creating the costumes gallery at Skansen in 1934. However, once she married a colleague, she had to leave her managerial post at the museum, probably much to her regret.

This was possibly to the benefit of Swedish Soroptimist. Gunnel took on new tasks, both professionally and

in non-profit associations. These included being head of the Swedish arts and crafts association. She was one of the founders of the Swedish Soroptimist Union in 1950. Gunnel became President of the Swedish Union, President of the European Federation and finally, between 1969 and 1971, SIA President (later changed to SI). With her excellent knowledge of languages, her initiative and organisation, she travelled around the world. As an eloquent speaker, she filled people with enthusiasm.

Gunnel's last mission was as President of the Swedish National Handicraft Association, where she passed on her loyalty and engagement to a younger generation, just as she did in Soroptimist.



1966–1968 – Dr. **FÉE** VAX (1909–1992) (Luxembourg)

Fée Vax was a Soroptimist for fifty years, between 1949 and 1991. In 1949 she became a founding member of the first Soroptimist club in Luxembourg, Club Luxembourg Ville, today Club Luxembourg-Doyen.

Between 1955 and 1957 Fée was Governor of the Luxembourg Union, currently Soroptimist International Luxembourg Union. She was President of the Luxembourg Union in 1963–1965.

At the Governors Meeting in Gothenburg in July 1965 Fée was elected President of SI European Federation for the 1966–1968 tenure.

During her presidency Fée stressed the problems of illiteracy in certain European countries, expressed

deep concern about discrimination against women, and promoted the creation of Venture clubs, a principle adopted by the Federation, as a means of working with young women. She also insisted on the importance of continuing to collaborate with United Nations agencies.

In March 1967 Fée brought together the Board of Governors in Echternach, Luxembourg. This annual gathering is today known as the Governors Meeting

In 1974 she initiated the Dr Fée Vax Grant of the Luxembourg Union, the aim of which was to promote vocational training, secondary or post-secondary studies, and retraining.

1968–1970 Mrs. **EVA** KREUZER – Vienne (Austria)



Eva Kreuzer, a professional who managed a travel agency, was a trained and eloquent translator who travelled extensively. Her dedication to Soroptimist began in the early 1960s as a member of Club Wien 1, Austrian Union, founded in 1929 and reinstated in 1956. During her travels she was always able to combine professional trips with Soroptimist meetings and thus established numerous professional and international club contacts. She was elected President of the European Federation for the biennium 1968–1970.

The goals of Soroptimist International were important to her, so she played a leading role in club expansion in Austria. She was a founding member of the 2nd Vienna Soroptimist Club in 1966, the Wien Donau Club, and supported numerous further club launches. During Eva's tenure as President, Austria had seven new clubs.

During her SIE presidency the 1969 Governors Meeting was held in Graz. Fuelled by her linguistic versatili-

ty, it was her goal to engage as many like-minded people in Soroptimist as possible, focusing on strengthening international understanding and peace. Therefore, immediately following the 1970 GM in Vienna, the 'International Friendship Days' took place for the first time, bringing numerous international guests to the capital. This subsequently developed into the European Congress, now organised every four years with a long-lasting impact on SIE Federation's calendar.

During her term of office, she repeatedly stressed that the existence of as many clubs as possible in a divided world was of tremendous and ever-growing importance. On the one hand, to create a better understanding among people, and on the other to maintain unalienable values such as tolerance, solidarity, fairness and loyalty, values that for various reasons were so greatly endangered ... and still are. Fifty years on, this is still so true!

1970–1972 Mrs. **LIDA** BRAMBILLA LONGONI Milano (Italy)



Lida Longoni Brambilla, to date the only Italian President of Soroptimist International, was born in Florence in 1913 and moved to Milan in 1934 where she began her professional career.

Between 1938 and 1945 Lida was the technical director and co-owner of a textile company. She then embraced a new profession at that time, one of business consultant in the textile sector, a remarkable example of a change in profession – from entrepreneur to business consultant. She was also involved in activities and projects in the textile sector abroad in Switzerland, France, Spain, the UK, North America and South Africa, always paying particular care and attention to the problems of women in the working environment.

Between 1953 and 1958, as an expert in economic development, Lida was invited to India to organise vocational training for girls. She then worked for the Japanese government, where she dealt with the transition from craft activities to small industries, and then in Greece as an envoy of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). Between 1967 and 1968 she worked in Kenya, on behalf of the *Bureau International du Travail* (International Labour Office), where she prepared a plan for the development of craft activities, with a special focus on women's community centres.

In 1948 Lida joined the Soroptimist Milan Club, which had just started up again after an interlude resulting from Fascism and the Second World War, and, thanks to her nat-

ural inclination towards international relations, she enthusiastically committed herself to Soroptimist International. In 1958 she was elected Vice Governor and then Governor of the Italian Union, and in 1970 she was elected President of the European Federation.

Finally, in 1973, Lida became SI World President. She was invited to attend important international conferences. She spoke several times at the UN about women's participation in the social and economic development of their countries. She represented Soroptimists at the 1975 World Conference in Mexico City on the occasion of the UN's International Year of Women, a very important milestone for women all over the world.

In July 1975 she concluded her mandate with the X World Congress of Soroptimist International which focused on 'Women builders of the future', a theme strongly supported by Lida who in her speech reminded the delegates that every woman was called upon to play a new role in the world: "every woman must fight her battle for emancipation [...] and women must walk side by side and work together." "We are women who build the future", concluded Lida, sealing her mandate, and launching a challenge to Soroptimists all over the world.

From 1977 until 1995 Lida held various positions within Soroptimist International.

She remained in Milano Fondatore Club until 1984, and in the same year became a founding member of Milano alla Scala Club which she helped create.

It is also thanks to Lida and her tireless international activity that Soroptimist International is accredited with UNICEF and UNESCO and enjoys a consultative status with ECOSOC.

To commemorate the figure of Lida Longoni Brambilla, the two clubs in Milan, Fondatore and alla Scala, organised a conference in Milan on 26th September 2002 entitled 'Women who build the future. Models for the third millennium', in line with the interests cultivated by this extraordinary Soroptimist throughout her life, both in her career and in the organisation.

1972–1974 – Dr. **LUCIE** HEUSKIN – Brussels (Belgium)



1974–1976 Prof. **RAHEL** SHALON (Israel)



What an impressive woman, role model and pioneer!

Rahel Shalon was born in Poland into a Hasidic family. She studied chemical engineering at the Municipal Polytechnic in Warsaw and later studied building engineering at the Technion (Israel Institute of Technology), becoming the first women engineer in the country.

She emigrated to the land of Israel and served in the Israel Defence Forces as an officer with the rank of Major with the formation of the 'Haganah', Jewish underground military organisation.

Shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel Rahel was appointed as Chairperson of the Professional Committee for Building within the Science Council of the Prime Minister's Office.

Between 1931 and 1973 she was a faculty member of the Civil Engineering department at Technion.

During these decades Rahel served as Vice-President of the Research faculty at Technion, Vice-president of Academic Affairs and was Dean of the Graduate School.

In 1952 she was appointed associated professor and thus became the first woman to be elevated to this position at the Technion. In 1956 she was awarded the full status of professor.

In her public activities she was one of the first members of the Council for Higher Education, Planning and Budgeting of the Council.

In 1954 Rahel founded the Israeli branch of Soroptimist International for working and professional women and was elected President of the European Federation in 1972.

In 1959 she was elected President of the International Organisation of Materials and Construction Research laboratories (RILEM) and in 1962 to the Board of Directors of the International Council for Research and Innovation in Building and Construction.

In 1960 Rahel was appointed member of the National Council of Science Research and Technical Development in the Prime Minister's Office and a member of the Department of Academic Workers at the Histradut (Israel's national trade union centre).

In 1980 Rahel was among the torchbearers at the Independence Day ceremony.

In 1988 she was awarded an honorary doctorate at the Technion.

In 1929 Rahel married engineer Uriel Shalon with whom she set up a fund to finance the establishment of dormitories for students in Haifa. Later she was awarded the title of Honorary Citizen of the City of Haifa.

1976–1977 Dr **EVA** BENGTSSON (Sweden)



Eva was a Swedish teacher and a linguist by profession.

She studied at Lund University and became a licentiate in philosophy in 1941. She obtained her Doctorate in Romance languages in 1942. She was a supply teacher at the Cathedral School in Lund in 1944–1945, became a senior lecturer at the Higher General School in Hässleholm in 1945 and at the Higher General School in Eslöv in 1949 and then at the Cathedral School in Lund in 1958, where she worked until her retirement in 1975.

Eva was one of the founders of SI Lund club and played a crucial role in the establishment of the club. She was SI Lund club's second President in 1954–1957.

She was President of Soroptimist International European Federation in 1976–1977.

During Eva's Federation presidency SI Lund club hosted the European congress. Soon the club's name became known in wider circles within Soroptimist.

We have received the following descriptions of Eva from two of our club sisters:

- Elegant, authoritative, impressive, intelligent, and a charming worldly lady.
- Was markedly clear about the notion of Soroptimist



1977–1979 Dr. E. **FREDERIKS** – Den Haag. (Netherlands)



1979–1981 Dr. **CHARLOTTE** von LOEPER – Mülheim (Germany)

1981–1983 Mrs. **SADUN** KATIPOGLU – Sisli-Istanbul (Turkey)



SI President 1985–1987

Sadun Katipoglu was the first Turkish President of Soroptimist International.

She was a successful student, an ambitious career woman, a sensitive wife, a compassionate mother and grandmother, a women's right activist, and a perfectionist leader.

Sadun Katipoglu was born in Istanbul in 1914. After successfully graduating from Robert College in 1934 with high honours, she immediately started her career in the business world working for various enterprises.

Within a few years she was appointed as head of the Turkish Economic and Social Committee. She also demonstrated her business acumen and entrepreneurial spirit in the world of non-profit society. Sadun proceeded to found various organisations.

During an interview in 1985 Sadun was asked the key behind her incredible success as President of Soroptimist International, in her professional career and in her marriage. She was humble enough to give credit to her husband and to her boss by saying "with the help of two important men".

She was a humanitarian who worked passionately for social and economic development of women and girls not only in Turkey but also in Europe, Africa and all around the world. As a member of SI Bosphorus Club, she served as the President of the SI Turkish Union in 1972–1974, and as President of Soroptimist International Europe in 1981–1983. Through her extraordinary success in creative pro-

jects relating to the development of women's status and her talent in international friendship and relation management, she was elected as President of Soroptimist International for 1985–1987. One of her main and significant achievements was the raising of funds at the SI Istanbul Convention in 1985 for the purchase of SI Head Office in Cambridge, UK. During her presidency of SI, Sadun commenced work on the Senegal Water Well Project to help fight against the drought and famine in Africa. It was a joint project with UNICEF, selected as best practice, and documented to be presented at the Melbourne Convention in 1987.

As part of the President's Appeal in 1986 two more projects were on her target list – medical equipment for the delivery of babies in hospitals in Kordolan, Sudan, and awareness projects to develop women's status in the Dominican Republic.

Sadun Katipoglu was a true leader and a role model as the embodiment of the spirit of Soroptimist International. She was a source of honour and pride for SI Bosphorus Club and the Turkish Union. She was always outspoken about gender equality and a strong believer that this equality would bring peace in the family especially and in the world in general. She always believed in the important role Turkish Soroptimists played in the education of girls and empowerment of the social and economic status of women. She constantly supported all projects aimed at raising awareness in education, health and environment. International relations were her utmost priority.

Sadun Katipoglu will always remain a source of pride and an icon of success for Turkish Soroptimists who keep her esteemed memory in respect.

GERTIE

1983–1985 Dr **GERTIE** von KAAAN-PAKESCH (1924–2009 Graz (Austria))



Gertie von Kaan (married name Kaan-Pakesch) came from a musical family. She studied musicology in Graz, gaining a doctorate in 1952. After training in Salzburg and Lucerne she began an international career as a concert pianist. She performed as a soloist and chamber music partner in many European concert halls.

Gertie later served, among other positions, as chairwoman of the Cultural Commission of the European Women's Commission. As a musician herself she was particularly dedicated to empowering young musicians and made this a focus of her club in Graz.

While a member of the Soroptimist Graz Club, founded in 1958 as the second Austrian club, Gertie was President of the Austrian Union in 1966–1968, during which time she initiated the first meeting of Swiss and Austrian Soroptimists in 1968. The fact that it was expanded to the German-speaking countries proves Gertie's foresight in bringing this language group together every two years. She tested her wings as first Vice-President of SIE in 1977–1979, was President of the European Federation in 1983–1985, and Programme Liaison Officer of the European Federation in 1989–1991. During Gertie's Federation presidency, the Governors' Meetings were held in Linz in 1984 and in Graz in 1985. A highlight of her presidency was the European Federation Congress which was held in the Graz Congress Centre in 1985 where she handed over the presidency to her successor. For the first time workshops were offered within the framework of this Congress. These

were so well received that from then on they became a permanent feature of Federation Congresses, as well as of International Conventions. Testament to her extension work are the following clubs founded in Europe: Freiburg (Breisgau), Mainz, München-Schwabing, Schwetzingen, Rovaniemi (Finland), Lulea (Sweden), Mestre (near Venice), and Denizli (Turkey). In Austria five clubs were established under her auspices: Salzburg, Linz, Klagenfurt, Leoben and Bruck/Mur.

With her dedication to Soroptimism Gertie Kaan-Pakesch contributed numerous ideas towards its further development. She was a tireless ambassador for the Soroptimist vision and spoke on the subject in many lectures both at home and abroad. Numerous club foundations throughout Europe can be traced back to her commitment. She was a memorable personality, full of knowledge and education, kindness and an interest in people. All this was coupled with elegance and poise. Gertie's vision of a Soroptimist was one who has a personal commitment to the betterment of women and girls' ability to live their lives to their fullest. As a woman who had already managed to reconcile family and career Gertie was a role model for her generation. She thus left a lasting mark not only on Austrian Soroptimists but also on Soroptimists around the world.

Dr Gertie Kaan-Pakesch interviewed by her son Prof. Peter Pakesch (from a commemorative publication marking SI Graz Club's 50th anniversary)

► When the club was founded, was there anything comparable for women in Graz?

No, the Soroptimist Club was the first club for working women. Before that there were only men's clubs. Renate Maier, secretary to the mayor, and Edith Rendi were extremely helpful in founding it.

► How was the founding of the club received?

The founding was very well received, but public awareness is still not satisfactory.

► What were your personal reasons for joining?

There were a few. For example, the opportunity to form new friendships, travel opportunities and above all insights into other professions. The whole communicative aspect, the exchange between the clubs with invitations and events. Establishment of scholarships.

► Has the club changed anything in your personal life?

Many things have changed for me. For example, my exchange with and participation in other clubs and my connection between club and professional life. ... Soroptimist Clubs (Overseas). Higher functions associated with greater time commitment and therefore less free time.

► What would you consider to be the most important merits of the club?

The Club's merits are permanent and rooted in our goals. Globally, we work in six programme areas:

- STATUS OF WOMEN
- EDUCATION
- ECONOMY
- HEALTH
- ENVIRONMENT
- GOOD WILL

► Which is of greater importance? The local activities, the supra-regional or international orientation?

The local activities are mostly permanent projects. In the case of Graz, the support of scholarship holders of the music university, and the supra-regional and international projects are mostly limited in time.

At the moment local projects are:

An annual benefit concert to contribute to German lessons for students and as a performance opportunity for the singers. Recently, very active cooperation in the 'Rosalie' house for women in need. But also, the one-time cam-

paign of the '*Berufsberatung für Maturanten*' or years ago the immediate earthquake relief for Friuli and clothing donations for Croatia. At the beginning of the club, years of music lessons in the Stübing Children's Village. Participation in the Graz Women's Fair several times.

► How has the club changed and developed in its orientation and activities over the years?

The club has changed. On the one hand, as far as the promotion of the position of women is concerned, because the development in favour of the position of women has improved a lot, and on the other hand, the charitable projects have increased a lot, partly due to current events. The geopolitical situation has also changed with the fall of the Iron Curtain. At the time of its foundation, there could be no contacts with the East. The club was oriented towards its western neighbours – Germany, Switzerland and Italy. These countries helped us a lot in the beginning.

► Highlights from your point of view?

Founding of the German-speaking three-country meetings: Germany, Switzerland, Austria, every two years since 1969, originating from the pilot meetings Switzerland/Austria in 1967 in Salzburg, and Germany/Austria in 1968 in Gmunden. Large European Congress (1985) with 500 participants on the occasion of the handover of my office as Federation President. The Union News was founded by me in 1969, has existed ever since and was continued for many years by Evi Wunder.

The personal highlight from my time as Federation President was the charter of many new clubs: Mestre, Toulon, Barcelona, Mainz, Rovaniemi, Lulea, Denisli, Larissa, Freiburg, Munich II, Schwetzingen.



1985–1987 Ms. **EVA** SKAARBERG – Oslo (Norway)



1987–1989 Mrs. **MARIE-JEANNE** BOSIA-BERBERAT – Paradisio (Switzerland)



SI President 1995–1997

Marie-Jeanne grew up in the Franches Montagnes, in the Swiss Jura canton, and has been living in the Ticino canton with her husband Jean Mario Bosia since 1961. She has four daughters and seven grandchildren.

She studied commerce, accounting, languages, pedagogy, programming and beauty treatment. She founded her own fiduciary business, a beauty centre and pharmacy, as well as managing a construction and real estate company.

Marie-Jeanne's community life revolved around involvement in professional groups, cultural and service associations. She was a committee member, then National Vice-President of Alliance F and President of the Beauticians Association in Italian-speaking Switzerland. The profession is recognised by the cantonal authorities. She was President of the Silvana Arbia Foundation for the protection of African children at risk of enrolment as child soldiers. She was also president of the SORATO Foundation, providing aid to emerging young musicians. Marie-Jeanne was also involved in the scouting movement, her first volunteer and service experience.

As a Soroptimist member Marie-Jeanne has undertaken the following prominent roles:

24 September 1977 Founding President of the Lugano Club

1982–1884 President of the Swiss Union

1987–1989 President of the European Federation and President of the SIE Congress 1989 in Lugano

1995–1997 President of Soroptimist International and President of the 1995 SI Convention in San Francisco.

1982–1984 participant in the despatch of medicinal products worth over 100,000 Swiss francs to Madagascar. She has participated in or been a representative at the following international congresses and events:

1985 UN Vienna, 'Family and the environment', a presentation regarding SI's position in favour of single-parent families

1985 Turkey, where Marie-Jeanne ran the international conference 'Education for Peace'

1987–1989 Senegal, where she supported '*les foyers améliorés*' (improved stoves). She also monitored the International Water Project for Senegal thanks to money received from UNICEF in Geneva

1988 Council of Europe, in a presentation of our Soroptimist projects in Africa

1988 Athens round table, Council of Europe and UN, NGO from the North and from the South, in defence of women from the south, often overlooked

1989 UN Vienna, participation in the round table on women entrepreneurs

1989 SIE Congress, Lugano, 'Our common future'

1993	SI President, UNESCO Assembly position statement on behalf of women's NGOs 'Education in favour of Women'	'Education of women, the key to progress' was Marie-Jeanne's leitmotiv during her Soroptimist career and was also the theme for the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. At the UN in New York a declaration in favour of educating women was included in the Action Plan.
1993	UN Human Rights Committee, protection of Somalian women refugees in Kenya	1995–1999 she was a liaison between SI and UN agencies
1994	Copenhagen forum 'Education of women, the key to progress'	1997–2003 she was editor of SIE magazine <i>The Link</i> . 10,000 copies were produced four times a year in English and French
1994	UN Cairo, Population and Development where Marie Jeanne chaired a seminar on the status of Egyptian women	1999–2003 international project 'Limbs for Life' was set up with the ICRC
1993	UN Human Rights Committee, protection of Somalian women refugees in Kenya	1996 Stockholm World Congress on Sexual Exploitation. Marie-Jeanne argued that education is the best prevention against sexual exploitation of young girls for commercial purposes
1994	ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), reuniting families in ex-Yugoslavia	2002 ECOSOC Geneva, in defence of women and girls from the poorest rural areas
1991–1995	SI project 'In the service of children in Bangladesh', underlining the importance of educating young girls	2012 FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation), Rome, where Marie-Jeanne presented a Swiss 'micro-credit' project.
1995	SI Convention San Francisco 'Accepting the challenge and facing it', Dr Cornelio Sommaruga of the ICRC was guest of honour. Dr Yan Suin, China, spoke on the infanticide of girls.	

Marie-Jeanne also invited Rwandan Scolastique Mukasonga to speak about women of that country at war During the SI Conference Marie-Jeanne created a climate of tolerance, understanding, friendship and love, in favour of building peace.

On 12 March 2004 Marie-Jeanne was nominated Honorary President of the Swiss Union.

It is thanks to her spirit of dedication, her boundless energy, a sense of initiative and great willpower that all the activities and achievements listed above have been made possible.



1989–1991 Prof. **ELISABETH** BACK IMPALLOMEINI – Padova (Italy)



Elisabeth Back Impallomeni, was Professor Emerita in International Law at the University of Padua.

She passed away on 28 June 2018.

She was an expert on space law and a Member of the ECSL Board continuously from 2006. Her contributions to ESA activities were remarkable and she worked with energy and enthusiasm, never failing to fulfil her commitments.

After obtaining a law degree in Vienna (her native town) in Austria, she travelled the world to perfect her education. She studied in Italy, in Paris, Manchester, the Hague, and in New York as an intern in the United Nations.

She was a member of several international organisations such as the International Law Association (ILA); Space Law Commission; International Institute of Space Law (IISL); European Centre for Space Law (ECSL); International Academy of Astronautics (IAA); IAA Board of Trustees, Section 4, Social Sciences; European Society of International Law (ESIL); *Società Italiana di Diritto Internazi-*

onale (SIDI); American Society of International Law (ASIL); *Oesterreichischer Voelkerrechtstag (OeVRT)* Austrian Society of International Law.

Besides being a member of several international associations, she also had a profound sense of being part of international communities, which she expressed very well within Soroptimist International in her dedication to serve our purposes and in particular as Governor (1985–1987), Vice Governor (1981–1983; 1983–1985) for the Union of Italy, and indeed when she took the lead of the Federation of Europe as SIE President in 1989–1991.

She was generous and a real philanthropist, supporting students in developing their careers.

During her biennium as Federation President, she again supported the younger generation and acted in support of the European Union. She arranged two so called 'Youth *Croisières*' for young students from all over Europe to travel around and show unity and international connections in preparation for the EU.

1991–1993 **NINA** KOUMANAKOU – Papagos (Greece)



Catherine (Nina) Palli-Koumanakou was a famous and acclaimed lawyer at the Supreme Court of Greece, the wife of award-winning General Georgios Koumanakos, a volunteer Red Cross nurse who had seen action and gained experience in the Greek mountains during the Second World War and other war zones during her life.

A commendable Soroptimist – eager, friendly, discreet, smart, optimistic, with a sense of humour, strict but fair, she deservedly advanced within the hierarchy of Soroptimist:

- Treasurer and President of her club Athens-Founder
- Several times Governor of the Greek Union
- Twice President of SIE Constitution Committee 1979–1981, 1989–1991
- Vice President of SIE 1981–1983
- President of SIE 1991–93
- President of SI Constitution Committee 1997–1999

With her creative mind, with her formidable ability to spread her wings far and wide and with her fighting spirit Nina was the wise and prudent 'Nestor' of the Soroptimist Greek Union. Her home was open house to all Greek Soroptimists. She was a cordial hostess. Greek Soroptimists appreciated, respected and loved her. Soroptimists from other countries, meeting her during Soroptimist events, shared these feelings.

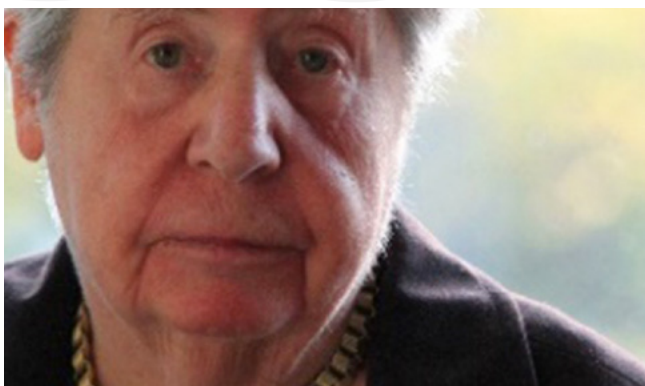
She had good administrative skills. And she was known as the 'Little SIE General'.

Nina was against continuous revision of the SIE Constitution and during her SIE Presidency a resolution was passed that revision should be undertaken every ten years. She believed in the necessity of expansion of Soroptimism and an increase in the number of clubs, so during her SIE Presidency she inaugurated many new clubs, resulting in the SIE Federation stretching from Siberia (Magadam) and the Ural Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean. She visited all the African countries where Soroptimist programmes were running in order to have a personal awareness of the possibilities, development and prospects of creating an African Federation. During the SI Congress in Noordwijk, Netherlands, Nina, a staunch supporter of the potential to create an African Federation, gave the new SI President, Joan Backs, a candelabra with five arms, four open and one closed, symbolising a missing African Federation.

The motto of Nina's presidency was 'Reforestation', a programme for a better quality of life. During the 1992 Governors Meeting in Athens, she announced the creation of a Soroptimist Olympic Grove at the archaeological site of Ancient Olympia, as a symbol of friendship, cooperation and mutual understanding. Together with other Greek Soroptimists Nina visited the area granted to them by the Greek Ministry of Culture, and she planted the first tree, a wild olive, the sacred symbol of Olympia. The mayor of Ancient Olympia, hosting the Soroptimists, said: "I believe that International Soroptimist is the modern Olympism".

During Nina's Presidency the European Soroptimist Congress 1993 of was held in Athens, at Pnyx Hill, a location symbolic of the Ancient Athenian Republic, the area where the 'Church' (assembly) of the citizens of Ancient Athens municipality had convened in olden times. This Congress, focusing on the environment, made an excellent impression on the Soroptimists participating as well as other distinguished guests – Presidents and former Presidents of SI and SIE, along with academics and scientists with expertise on climate change and biodiversity.

1993–1995 **GISELA** FREUDENBERG – Weinheim (Germany)



Gisela Freudenberg was Union President in 1982–1984. During her term of office there was a three-country meeting in Schwetzingen, where the theme was 'Living with History'.

Gisela was Federation President in 1993–1995. The end of her term of office coincided with the 100th German SI Club being founded in Schwerin.

The major project during her term of office was 'Friendship without Borders'.

She encouraged unions to organise meetings with neighbouring countries in order to get to know each other better and, above all, to engage with highly positive-thinking 'young', lesser-known countries, in order to make personal contacts.

Liechtenstein, Ukraine, Russia and Turkey, and the first Georgian club sisters, were noticeably involved on several occasions within the German group. Club sisters from these countries were invited to German clubs to learn German. Emergency aid for Batumi also took place at this time, medicines and food being sent there. A concert tour across Germany by a Ukrainian musician was organised and the proceeds went to children with leukaemia in Ukraine. An 'Art, Culture and Friendship Weekend' was organised with these countries in Bald Tölz. At a European level there were to be many other groups of countries which cultivated friendship during similar meetings and activities during Gisela's term of office.

Two impressive Governor Meetings, in Hanover and Heidelberg, took place during Gisela Freudenberg's tenure.

East European club sisters also took part for the first time in the meeting in Heidelberg. After the ethnic unrest in Rwanda the seat of the governor from Kigali remained empty, which touched us all markedly, especially since Gisela's outstanding efforts for extension work in Africa was an important feature of Soroptimist International.

Gisela put the concept of 'friendship without borders' into practice during the Governors' tour following their Heidelberg meeting, where representatives from several countries got to know Franconia during three eventful days. The tour concluded in Bamberg with breakfast in our facility dedicated to monument preservation.

Czech Soroptimists from Brno also visited Bamberg, joining Gisela and Hanna Bremer in a week of culture for Soroptimists in Franconia organised by Bamberg-Kunigunde Club. All these activities clearly demonstrate how much 'friendship without borders' meant to Gisela, especially at a European level following the fall of the Wall, and how she put this concept into practice with much commitment.

One more personal point to end. Gisela Freudenberg's support for World President Hilary Page at the 1999 Annual General Meeting in Bamberg was particularly impressive and helpful. Two great women as guests.

1995–1997 **IRMELI** TORSSONEN – Turku (Finland)



SI President 2001–2003

Irmeli, known as 'Imme', was a Soroptimist in every sense of the word. Her actions were first to change the Soroptimist world at the European level, and she then left her mark on the entire international organisation. She was a pioneer among the Finnish / Nordic / European Soroptimists as well as for young girls in Africa. Soroptimists 'Make a Difference' – this is what Imme did with a warm heart.

Imme was born into a large family with many siblings, a family forced to leave their home in the east of Finland due to the war. She became the youngest ever manager for travel and tourism in the city of Turku and, as a social, determined and international woman with a great sense of humour, she joined SI Turku Club in 1971.

Imme's Soroptimist résumé is truly wide-ranging. During the 1970s she held various positions in her club and rapidly progressed at Union level. In the 1980s she initially served as a governor, and then as Vice President of Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE). She became familiar with African projects and was a natural bridge builder in her role as Friendship Links Officer. During her SIE presidency in 1995–1997 she inaugurated several clubs in Africa and laid the foundations for the future African Federation.

As Imme had no children of her own, she directed her love towards the children of the world. The Soroptimist International President's Appeal 2001–2003 project focused on peace education in a war-torn African country. She chose the International Girl Scouts Organisation as her partner. No staff

from abroad travelled to the destination country but a local girl spread the knowledge to other local girls. This happened at a time when vertical leadership and local project implementation was new, at least in the Soroptimist organisation. The Soroptimists raised commendable funds and the project produced good results, both financially and through new practices. Imme was also active with other volunteer organisations during her SI presidency and always emphasized the importance of cooperation: "Our selfless efforts to help women and children, to improve the lives of disadvantaged people, to believe that we can do good, have not disappeared. No one can achieve any real result alone. That is why it is important to work with other like-minded organisations that share the same goals."

Imme chaired the XVI Soroptimist International Convention in Helsinki in 1999. Many of us remember the relaxed and unique international atmosphere of the Convention (please see video (<https://youtu.be/EmcdP5i8glc>)).

As a Soroptimist leader Imme was very skilled. She was a good listener, quickly understood the main points of any topic, was able to focus on the most important of these and proceeded logically, not getting stuck on detail. She had a clear vision and clear goals and was infinitely patient. Imme brought Nordic logic and efficiency into our organisation! In difficult situations she relied on humour and often succeeded in resolving a conflicting situation with a smile on both sides.

Imme had excellent language skills and she understood different cultures, built bridges and promoted collaboration. She was an exceptional leader with a warm heart.

Our friend Imme was open and fair – she never betrayed a friend or left a friend in trouble. She was always ready to speak up for a person and encouraged us Soroptimists to take on international positions. She was modest, never promoted herself but spoke directly regarding the matter in hand. She was happy and positive. Humour always helped, and she used to say: "Doing Soroptimist work should be fun!"

We value the ideals and legacy left to us by Irmeli, the global voice of a strong woman.

1997–1999 **HÉLÈNE** VAN THEMSCHE – Liège (Belgium)



Hélène Van Themsche joined SI Liège Club in 1972.

She very quickly became a Board member of SI Belgian Union as deputy national secretary in 1974, a member of the Statutes Committee and then a Governor.

At club level Hélène was President in 1977–1979, and again for the club's 50th anniversary in 1997–1999. It was a great success with a symposium on the relationship between parents and children.

The highlight was an exhibition of works by Soroptimist artists at the Musée de Art Wallon.

Eighty artists from fourteen different countries presented their works. A gala dinner was held at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art.

At SIE level, Hélène was a member, and then President, of the Statutes Committee. She was Federation President in 1997–1999. As President she was proud to have actively participated in the opening of the SIE to the countries

of Eastern Europe. She gave the charter to several clubs in such countries as Georgia, Lithuania and Estonia. She facilitated the admission of these clubs by offering an equitable solution for the payment of their contributions to the SIE through the mutual aid fund.

She also participated in the first debates concerning the creation of an African Federation.

As SIE President, and in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva, she took over the SI project 'Limbs for Life', the fight against anti-personnel mines and to help landmine victims regain their dignity, reintegrate themselves into society and lead a normal life.

Finally, at SI level, she was a Procedural Consultant under the Presidency of Marie-Jeanne Bosia.

Currently, she is still very active at Club of Liège level as a member of the Extension Committee.

1999–2001 **AYLA** SELCUK – Izmir (Turkey)



Ayla Selçuk is a founding member of Alsancak Soroptimist Club which was founded in 1976. She has worked hard at the various stages of her Soroptimist career, perfectly reflecting our Soroptimist values in her character. In her professional life she was an active pharmacist.

Ayla was SI Turkish Union President in 1992–1994 and SIE President in 1999–2001.

In 1994 Ayla initiated a community service project to establish the Aegean Adult Education Centre (*Ege TEM*) in Buca, a district of Izmir which had the highest immigration rate at the time.

She organised a painting competition among art faculty students as part of this project and put a lot of work into exhibiting art pieces deemed worthy of being displayed in Turkey and in various cities across Europe. Selected art pieces were printed on postcards, badges and t-shirts, and these were put up for sale during the exhibition. The income generated through cultural and artistic fundraising activities, with contributions from both Turkish and World Soroptimists, played a significant role in laying the foundations of the project and its implementation.

The building, paid for through various fundraising activities, was completed and put into service in 1995. The Aegean Adult Education Centre, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, provides training in literacy, IT, hairdressing, handicrafts and tailoring for approximately 1000 women and men each year. The conference room in the building where Alsancak, Göztepe, Izmir, Karşıyaka and

Kordon Soroptimist Clubs in Izmir hold conferences, is named after Ayla Selçuk, Founding President of *Ege TEM*.

In 1996 Ayla attended the Human Settlements (Habitat II, İstanbul) as an official representative of SI.

During her SIE presidency Ayla's project was 'Into the 21st Century with Youth'. She received an excellence service award from SIE President Irmeli Torssonen. In this project Soroptimists and teenagers in Africa worked hand in hand to contribute to the prevention of the spread of AIDS. Kenya Nakuru Club toured various towns in Kenya to present their play 'Teens against AIDS'. As president, Ayla oversaw almost two hundred projects all over Europe and in several African countries.

Ayla started the Peace and Contemporary Civilisations Project in March 2016 with the aim of preventing future acts of terrorism which were on the rise both in Turkey and worldwide. The aim was to achieve the tenets of this project through the principles and reforms of Atatürk under his motto of 'Peace at Home, Peace in the World'. The funds generated were spent on scholarships for two women music conservatory students. One of these students, cellist Irmak Özdemir, came third in a music competition for adults held in Lithuania. This ongoing project has now become a Turkish Union project.

Throughout her personal life, as well as in her Soroptimist life, Ayla has worked for the establishment and maintenance of peace and she continues to strive to sustain peace.

2001–2003 **HANNE** JENSBO – Viby J. (Denmark)



SI President 2009–2011

'Actions Speak Louder than Words' This was Hanne Jensbo's motto when she was the SI President from 2009 to 2011. The saying is so typical of her. She goes 'all in' for 'action', both in her personal life as well as in her professional life. And of course, also as a Soroptimist!

Hanne was born in 1939 in Herning, Denmark. She worked as a lawyer for many years, including throughout the time when she was a single mother to her two sons. Over the years she has been active and busy in Save the Children Denmark, in a sports club, a theatre and a school in her community, and also as the driving force for a business club for women.

Hanne Jensbo has been a Soroptimist since 1984 and her impressive CV in the organisation includes being the SI President, SIE President, and of course holding more positions within the Danish Union organisation and in her own club in Aarhus.

Throughout the years, she has been a breath of fresh air, filled with new ideas and eager to make a difference. She is also a very impatient character: "Come on, less talking and more action" is something which she has often said to her fellow members.

Hanne has changed many people's lives for the better, especially in Romania. After seeing a television docu-

mentary in 1990 showing the poor conditions in orphanages, together with a group of Danes she took the initiative to send several buses filled with clothes and toys to Romanian orphanages.

She visited Romania a countless number of times in the years that followed and helped to found more Soroptimist clubs in Romania. She has also welcomed Soroptimists from Romania in her own home in Aarhus.

Throughout the years Hanne Jensbo has also initiated projects in places like Kenya, Afghanistan, Moldova, Albania and St Petersburg, in a constant effort to improve girls' and women's rights and opportunities.

She has been following the progress of countless numbers of children and young women throughout their lives, encouraging them to get an education, so it came as no surprise that Hanne Jensbo's motto as SIE President in 2001- 2003 was: 'Education – the Key to Progress'.

The members of Hanne Jensbo's own club in Aarhus, Denmark, have tried their best to uphold her high ambitions and ideas to help, which have provided the club members with infinite and enriching experiences. Many have been smitten by Hanne's enthusiastic efforts to help women and girls, as well as to create a network of women, even though very few have accomplished it in as skilled and joyful way as Hanne Jensbo!

2003–2005 **HEIDRUN** KONRAD – Spittal/Drau (Austria)



Heidi Konrad is widely known among CS as a very committed and imaginative Soroptimist. To a certain generation of European Soroptimists, she needs little introduction. As a founding member of the Spittal/Millstättersee Club (1985) and European Federation President (2003–2005), she founded numerous new clubs and repeatedly contributed ideas for projects. The initiative for the international 'Youth Croisières', for example, was at Heidi's instigation.

This involved young people from all over the world being accommodated by Soroptimist host families as the youth travelled as a group through Austria. This was a project and contribution to the theme of peace and tolerance, so important to her, immediately after the founding of the Spittal/Millstättersee Club.

The concept of 'Open Heart – Open Door' (1995) was, and still is, used by many Soroptimists worldwide. The 'Peace Dolls' were also a contribution to Heidi's theme of 'Women Building Peace'. In 2005 she organized the SIE Peace Congress at the Hofburg in Vienna and introduced the Peace Award. Standing up for peace and tolerance in public, also towards refugees, was always important to her. Of great significance to her was an audience with Pope John Paul II with refugee women from Sarajevo, as was a visit to Tirana during the Kosovo war, where, as a Federation IGU, she was able to raise a good deal of money for water pipes in a large refugee camp.

Heidi enjoys making contacts and international friendships, but the local youth has always been close to her

heart. She demonstrated this in her job as an HAK/HAS teacher when organising several international school projects which included finding a partner school in Iceland for an EU project through SI. It was a complete success for all participants – getting to know the country and its people, working together and a contribution to peaceful coexistence. School projects were also carried out in conjunction with Italy and Lithuania.

Another success story in her own club, organised by Heidi between 2012 and 2020, is the project 'Reading Adventure' with over 100 mentors for over 100 children with reading difficulties in elementary schools and new middle schools in the area of Spittal/Drau and surrounding areas. Through this project many shortcomings in the children's reading skills were remedied and their joy in reading was awakened. Follow-up projects from this were the Reading Festival at VS West Spittal, for which the children wrote a book entitled 'New Fairy Tales from Spittal', and the Reading Umbrella Festival.

Heidi Konrad is currently involved in the 'Heart Pillow', a project for breast cancer patients began by the Spittal/Millstättersee Club in autumn of 2019.

In March 2020 women's names were used for the first time in the district town of Spittal/Drau for traffic and relaxation areas in public spaces. Heidi was very much involved in this.

The list of achievements goes on. Heidi Konrad is an enthusiastic and active Soroptimist who never runs out of ideas. In 2014 she was ceremoniously presented with the 'First Ring of Honour of the Austrian Union of Soroptimist International' in Graz for her commitment to social projects around the world.

In January 2020 she was awarded the Decoration of Honour of the Province of Carinthia.

2005–2007 **MONIQUE** RIVIERE – Ramonville-Saint-Agne (France)



Convinced that continuity of actions reinforces the renown of Soroptimist, it is with the continuation of the previous biennial theme, 'Women artisans of peace', chosen by Heidrun Konrad, that Monique Rivière marked her presidency and defined action, communication, member training and outreach as inseparable priorities.

The 'Let's build peace through local heritage' project proposes to develop actions aimed at respecting tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It falls within two of the eight areas of the United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace in the International Decade 2001–2010:

- Develop understanding, tolerance and solidarity
- Promote sustainable economic and social development

In the first area, traditions have been used to promote the idea of peace, such as marathons and marches, bells, trees of peace, releases of balloons or doves. Among the notable achievements or actions during Monique's mandate we can cite the restoration of Hougoumont Chapel, the scene of bloody battles during the Battle of Waterloo, restored by Club de Val Brabant and supported by the Belgian Union. This became a dedicated monument to peace and bears the Soroptimist emblem. Also, the Peace Marathon in Kigali (Rwanda) and strong declarations such as that of the Foix club 'Religious wars – never again' in Montségur, the stronghold of Catharism, or 'Civil

wars – never again' in Kigali (Rwanda) where the Soroptimists carried the flame of peace.

In the second area:

- Support for women's rights, campaigns against prostitution, against female genital mutilation, etc.
- Micro-credits, professional training, promotion of leadership through prizes awarded to young business leaders, etc.
- Promotion of healthy traditional food, medical care, prevention, etc.
- Knowledge and preservation of the natural heritage with awareness of forest fires and floods
- Access to drinking water, sanitation

Flyers were handed out, and each project was recorded on the Culture of Peace website along with a giant map of actions.

In conclusion, a Forum of Women for Peace was organized at UNESCO for the 'Let's build peace through local heritage' project and two prizes were awarded:

- The prize for 'Understanding, Tolerance and Solidarity' was awarded to the Val Brabant Club for the restoration of the Hougoumont Chapel
- The prize for 'Sustainable Economic and Social Development' was awarded to Tunis Founder Club for the 'FEE' project (Women Children Water) which continues to this day

A training manual, translated into twenty-four languages, has been posted on the Federation website to serve as a basis for recruiting future members, creating new clubs and organising seminars.

Thirty-two clubs have been created within various Unions and also ten individual clubs, which includes the first to be established in Tunisia – the Tunis Founder club.

Respect and tolerance are the keywords upon which Monique Rivière's presidency programme was built. Since the foundation of Soroptimist these have been the core values which advocate a culture of peace.

2007–2009 **MARIET** VERHOEF-COHEN – Zwolle (Netherlands)



SI President 2018–2020

Mariet Verhoef-Cohen became a member of SI Zwolle Club, the Netherlands, on 12 January 1998. She soon became active in her club and was therefore quickly elected to the Dutch Union board. She was President of the Dutch Union in 2002–2004. The themes important to her, which she developed as primary spurs, were a modern organisation, facilitating members, empowering clubs and international awareness.

She led the 75th anniversary of the Union.

Mariet was president of SIE in 2007–2009 and prioritised the following themes:

- the improvement of delegates' knowledge; analysis of SIE members; setting up training seminars,
- professionalisation; better communication.

It was during her presidency that Mariet chose the theme 'Sorooptimists go for Water'. She organised a wonderful conference in Amsterdam. And she already had a special focus on Africa. Thanks to her enthusiasm and focus €2,000,000 was raised in 2009 for her SIE water project.

In 2011 she was specially charged with the development of clubs in Africa and the founding of the African Union. She also became a delegate to the Women for Water Partnership organisation.

In 2012 she was co-organisier of the preparatory conference of the sixth World Water Forum in Marseille.

In 2013 she attended the conferences for Gender and Water Cooperation and organised the preliminary conference for the seventh World Water Forum in South Korea.

For this she travelled extensively and visited many Sorooptimist projects and the different

SI Federations. She also attended the CSW and other sessions at the UN more than once and actively participated in four World Water Forums as an official representative. She has also had the honour to be a panellist and speaker at several high-level sessions and conferences, including at Stockholm Water Week. In her capacity as president of Women for Water Partnership (WfWP) she was invited by the Dutch government, as the only NGO representative, to take part in the economic and water mission to South Africa. Wherever she went, she always tried to involve local or national Sorooptimists to help achieve our goals.

She became SI President-elect in 2016 and then SI President in 2018. In May 2019 she delivered the concluding remarks at the 'Thirsty for Change: Promoting a Gender-Responsive Approach to Achieve Water Security' panel at the UNESCO International Water Conference in Paris. The panel discussed ways of empowering women through better water management and policy making.

During her presidency she achieved many goals where women took the lead in developing water projects in their neighbourhoods. She supported the Mwhoko women in Kenya who were able to grow their own crops thanks to a successful irrigation project. Mariet's achievements included:

- A resource centre & demonstration plot
- Equipping of a training hall
- Soil testing, ploughing, planting, irrigation, training on value chains
- Water pans, water tanks, multi-storey gardens, Chepkube stoves & fireless cookers, solar lanterns, bee-keeping training

In Bulgaria she supported a sanitation project and also trained women to maintain their water pipelines.

In the Indonesian region of Lombok, she supported another sanitation project as well as vocational training and development of work in traditional weaving. She did that also in the Malaysian region of Kalimantan.

In total, 4226 people were provided with better water and sanitation. Of this number, 448 women actively participated in the projects, mainly by attending training sessions.

The Evolutionary Business Council (EBC) announced Mariet Verhoef-Cohen as the winner of its prestigious GLOBAL IMPACT Award for 2019 in the sixth Annual EBC Awards of Excellence. With a total member reach of over 614 million worldwide, the EBC is an invitation-only, global council of thought-leaders dedicated to teaching the principles of business success and personal transformation. Teresa de Grosbois, Chair of the Evolutionary Business Council: "Mariet Verhoef-Cohen has demonstrated remarkable innovation in cutting edge, transformational, and global impact."

We conclude that, through her activities, Mariet Verhoef-Cohen has actively supported three (nrs 1, 4 and 5) of the following SIE themes:

1. Access to Education
2. Elimination of Gender-Related Violence and Discrimination
3. Women's Rights and Justice
4. Women & Leadership
5. Economic Empowerment

We also recognise that as a Soroptimist she has achieved all of the following criteria:

1. Long-term, sustainable and exemplary work
2. Sense of responsibility and dedication to a cause
3. Altruism and selflessness
4. Transparency and tolerance



2009–2011 **ELIANE** LAGASSE – Zuid-Oost Vlaanderen – Zottegem (Belgium)



Eliane Lagasse, founding president of Soroptimist Club Zottegem South-East Flanders (1988) and Belgian Union President in 2002–2004, during her Biennium as SIE President (2009–2011), dedicated herself to defending and promoting the principles of Soroptimist International within the European clubs. In an intelligent and enthusiastic way, she confirmed the image of Soroptimists as modern, independent women who were aware of their possibilities but also cared about the problems of others.

Her field of action was extended to African clubs. She decided to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of women in Africa. Her aim was always to give children worldwide access to drinking water, healthcare and a proper education. She showed us the way to the heart of Africa. Her biennium theme therefore became 'Safe Water, Safe Life'.

She was co-founder of the Roswitha Ott Fund, a fund that focuses specifically on children with special needs.

As a member of the Board of Directors she was responsible for the selection of the projects. There were projects in Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Mali, Togo and Benin, to name but a few.

In Adouanko, in the south of Benin, she worked hard for the establishment, the proper design and operation of a new maternity ward, mainly financed by club SI Cottonou Doyen. She visited the projects several times to ensure a good follow-up.

We said our last goodbye to Eliane Lagasse on 19 January 2013, after a project visit she made to Parakou, a reformatory for the visually impaired, one of the many projects of SIE Roswitha Ott Fund.

She was barely 63 years old.

She had passed on her knowledge and love for Benin to others, so that it would never be forgotten.

Her sudden death triggered the Eliane Lagasse Fund, a fund that further completed projects in Benin.

2011–2013 **KATHY** KAAF – Bonn (Germany)



It was a fortunate day for Soroptimist International when Kathy Kaaf decided to abandon the restrictions of classroom life. Much as she enjoyed her job teaching English and French at a secondary school, the lure of the new proved irresistible. Kathy switched to journalism, for which curiosity is a basic requirement, and in 1983 this led to her first contact with Soroptimists in Bonn. It was the springboard for what was to become a remarkable career in SI.

Not many clubs can boast a member who has held the post of President of SI German Union, SIE delegate to the Council of Europe, and President of SIE. And not content to rest on her laurels, Kathy still supervises the long-standing, highly successful 'Play Beethoven' project, initiated during her club presidency in 2007–09.

Kathy Kaaf, 75 years young this year, joined the Bonn-Bad Godesberg Club, Germany's third oldest, in 1984. Encouraged by Annelise Glaser, she soon assumed responsibilities at club level and beyond. In addition, as a brand-new Soroptimist, a long stay in Paris with contacts to SI Paris-Fondateur taught her the international significance of SI at first hand. By now a seasoned journalist with a talent for languages, excellent public speaking skills, a stylish appearance and a friendly, outgoing nature, she became a sought-after partner in international SI dialogues at top level.

New opportunities arose when, as a club delegate, she met members such as Heide Ibach who were soon to be-

come invaluable companions. Kathy subsequently acted as one of the vice-presidents of SI German Union's President Elke Schildberg, and in 1995 took over Elke's post as her chosen successor. Her former experiences in teaching and journalism informed and illuminated all her presidential activities, among them her 'More Education for Girls' project, her emphasis on professionalising SI Germany's internal and external public relations, and her introduction of effective marketing products. The highlights of her term of office were the SI European Friendship Days in Düsseldorf, the celebration of SI's 75th anniversary, incorporated into the German-speaking Friendship days in Bamberg, the launching of the first SI German Union website and, as a basis for efficient networking, the publication of the first directory of Soroptimists by profession.

Kathy's clearly written brochure for the 50th anniversary of the Human Rights Convention, drawn up when she was SIE delegate to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg from 1997 to 2005, has been used by the Council's politicians. In her three-year chairmanship of the NGO Gender Equality group, she also endeavoured to ensure that women's rights were properly observed — an issue that continued to concern her and also inspire her speeches in various women's conferences in New York.

In Warsaw in 2009 Kathy was unanimously elected SIE President for 2011–13. She chose as her theme a continuation of her predecessor Mariet Verhoef-Cohen's 'Soroptimists Go for Water' project, extended to include 'food'. This resulted in numerous sustainable international campaigns, including a children's calendar in Kenya. Africa is a continent she has frequently travelled to. She retains particularly fond memories of her outstanding European Congress, SIE's 20th, which took place in 2013 in Berlin under the motto 'Visions of Paradise'. 1,800 Soroptimists took part and Barack Obama's sister, Auma Obama, was keynote-speaker.

Kathy Kaaf, who received the Federal Cross of Merit in 2002, is a committed Soroptimist and is also involved in other women's organizations such as GEDOK.

2013–2015 **ULLA** MADSEN – Copenhagen (Denmark)



Ulla is not very tall. With the subtlety of Danish humour, you can ask her to get up, even though she is already standing! In all other aspects, Ulla is great in stature, a woman of strong character whom you will notice in a very positive way. Many Soroptimists, and other people, will agree with the following statements about her.

Leadership skills at a very high level are one of Ulla's strengths. It was something that the SIE Board 2013–15 greatly appreciated.

Ulla was the one who constantly provided the big overview in all debates. Everybody could have their say or express their opinion. Ulla was eager to reach conclusions on which all could agree, whether it was about heart-breaking subjects (e.g. the Swiss Franc turmoil) or positive debates (e.g. planning the SIE Congress in Istanbul).

Likeable and loyal, it is easy to like Ulla because of her winning nature and an ability to show sincere interest in her fellow human beings. Ulla often smiles, and her happy infectious laughter clearly indicates where to find her in a large party situation. She is always very loyal to people and projects, but she also expects loyalty to be returned.

Adventurous, Ulla is good at finding new ways of looking at things. One of the best examples from her tenure as SIE President was the launch of the Bottom-up principle, where the whole organisation was turned upside down, so that the members and the clubs came into focus.

Most of all, Ulla is hardworking. For many years, she has held countless positions throughout the organisation, in

the Club, in the Union, in the Federation and worldwide. Other organisations, however, have also benefited from Ulla's tireless efforts. .

Ambitious in a well-organized and productive way, Ulla carefully thinks through and prepares each step. Furthermore, Ulla is also ambitious on behalf of others and wants all the best opportunities for her fellow human beings.

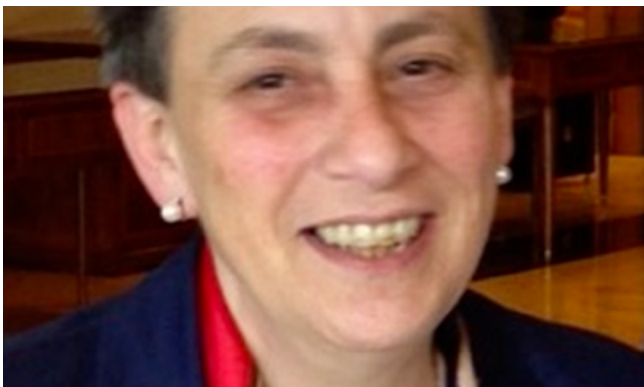
Dynamic and positive in attitude and full of energy and new ideas, Ulla's 24-hour days seem to be made up of more minutes than anyone else's. Ulla manages to switch from one agenda to another in a split second, and she juggles both Danish and English languages at home.

Soroptimist at heart and with all her life and soul, Ulla is usually thinking about Soroptimist, be it working on a project, preparing for a webinar or attending an event.

Environment is one of Ulla's key issues. So, the symbol of Ulla's biennium as SIE President was naturally a little green tree with a red heart. Over the past years the number of Programme Focus Reports about the environment had ranked amongst the fewest, but all that changed with Ulla's focus on the subject.

Negotiations and discussions at top level constitute Ulla's natural strengths. Whether she is prepared or not, Ulla thinks quickly, talks fast and makes decisions without hesitation. Nevertheless, she always finds time to listen to everybody's opinion, and if your arguments and proposals are the most appropriate, she can be won over and is just as happy.

2015–2017 **MARIA** Elisabetta de FRANCISCIS – Caserta (Italy)



Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis was born in Naples (Italy) on October 30, 1956 of Neapolitan father and American mother. Growing-up in a multicultural family and city, raised her awareness of the “other” and stimulated her interest in understanding the mechanics of adaptation between governmental institutions, faiths, cultures, and the history of the various nations.

The latter, and the knowledge of several foreign languages, led to her degrees in Political Science with a major in comparative legal studies: she holds a Master Degree from the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II and a Master Degree and a Ph.D. from The University of Connecticut (USA). She began teaching while still in Connecticut continuing upon returning to Italy at first in Rome then in Cassino and finally, at her Alma Mater.

Very much interested in gender equality and women rights she has extensively researched and lectured on these subjects encouraging the young women who attend her classes to be aware of their rights, to challenge the stereotypes and to aim at leadership positions. Mentoring her students for decades after their graduation is the norm for her and never refusing a helping hand is a trademark that characterized her life.

She was introduced to Soroptimist International by the Founding President of SI of Italy Club Caserta who had taken upon herself (as the Union Constitution and by-Laws Chairperson) to update the Italian version of the Union and Club’s Constitution. In the past, translations had been

made from English to French to Italian although English was to prevail when in doubt.

Not yet a member, Elisabetta was asked to oversee a direct translation from English to Italian and when in 1993 she was inducted in Soroptimist International of Italy-Club Caserta she immediately became involved with all aspects of Club and Union life. Her heart in programme areas, she instead offered her professional skills to the Italian Union (2005–2009) and then to SIE (2009–2013) by chairing the Constitution and By-laws Committees for four years at each level. She participated as a silent observer/consultant to the Italian delegation attending the Governor’s Meeting in Warsaw (2008) when the first modern-day rewriting of the Federation Constitution was approved and then again, she was involved with the early stages of the most recently approved new SIE Statutes. Constitutional issues were again the focus of her attention during the almost decade in which she had active roles in Soroptimist International, firstly as a consultant and then as a Board member participating in the long and difficult evolution from Association to Limited and in the Restructuring Task Force for the necessary changes due to such a drastic organizational and operational transformations. Throughout these years of professional contribution to our organization Elisabetta’s beacon was “Renew while Conserving”.

Everyone can agree that Elisabetta is quiet, polite, always willing to listen to her interlocutor, that she has a sound cultural background and a similarly strong knowledge of Soroptimist at all levels.

For sure, as all of us, she also has imperfection; the one most evident is that she does the utmost to avoid direct quarrels especially with those who confront her rudely or aggressively.

Elisabetta’s personality is fully represented in her first choice-no choice. That of deciding not to choose a motto for her biennium as president, so as to shed maximum attention to the international motto “a global voice for women”. A clear determined reminder to the global inter-

nationality of Soroptimist, across all borders of whatsoever nature, the graceful waiver of temporary personalisms.

The fil rouge of her presidency can be found in the educational mission of Soroptimist, so much so that the pin she gifted all members of the board was an open book: a symbol of knowledge available to all and not reserved to a few. Books were likewise at the heart of the project she strongly supported of spreading children's libraries, everywhere but especially in Africa, then still a part of our Federation, and also in partnership with the My Book Buddy Organization. Education, in fact, had been at the core of Soroptimist initiatives for almost a century, but Clubs were now encouraged to not only invest energy and passion but also funds in innovative means and tools and fields of studies. Thus, the encouragement to young women to choose studying in the STEM; introducing the crowd funding for Soroptimist actions; increasing Scholarships funds and opportunities. The seeds for the SIE mentoring programme that was launched by her successor were planted during Elisabetta's presidency.

Education in all fields, was the theme of the 21st Congress of the European Federation that was held in July 2017 in Florence, attended by more than a thousand Soroptimist members and whose overarching title was "Own the Future: Education, your passport to a better life". Here too, Elisabetta's attention to youth was the inspiration behind the selection of more than one hundred young ladies in the STEM to participate in the Congress on Clubs, Unions and Federation sponsorship.

Those who attended undoubtedly remember the ceremony of the flags being carried by volunteers of the Italian Red Cross in high uniform to the sound of Sir Edward Elgar's march no.1 "Pomp and Circumstance". A unique emotion that today, when looking at the pictures, still gives goose skin. Well then, the idea was hers! She succeeded in persuading the National Inspector General of the Italian Red Cross Volunteer Nurse Corps to come from Rome and to ask the Tuscan region volunteers to be the ensigns of the flags of all the nations in our Federation. What better visual suggestion/herald of peace in the world!

Building on her predecessor's "bottom-up" approach, Elisabetta was also the first to open the GM in Sofia in 2016 to paying members, not being part of the official delegations and not selected by their Unions as silent observers. A very wise choice to favour a wider knowledge of SIE by the membership and at the same time bring a little respite to the Federation coffers. Likewise, also Renata Trottmann, the following president, maintained this opening and in so doing confirmed the goodness of the choice. This same approach to a wider knowledge of SI, was behind the opening to the membership to participate at the CSW in New York in 2016, opening which was likewise maintained by her successors. To be also remembered is the first workshop for Union President-Elect held in Athens in September 2017 which paved the way to a different operative style for SIE and that through the years has become a must within SIE planning.

In brief, this was the biennium that saw the members participating in all Federation activities: from study groups, consultation groups and task forces to institutional events.

Amongst the tasks a world afar from her background and her style, that Elisabetta had to tackle in a direct manner there was the reorganization of the Geneva HQ. Those closer to her in that period can remember several conversations and many truly not easy situations that Elisabetta succeeded to manage with fatigue and determination. The same can safely affirm that by the end of her mandate the situation was by far much better than the one she found at the start.

Unfortunately, natural disasters and terroristic attacks throughout the territory of SIE marked the biennium that also saw fundraising initiated by the Clubs and co-sponsored by the Federation. One for the many, was the building of a Community Centre in devastated Acquasanta Terme in the Italian Marche Region. Amongst the simpler gestures of empathy and friendship that characterized Elisabetta's style was her visit to Belgium in the immediate aftermath of a terroristic attack. Many will remember her willingness to listen and dedicate personal time, the long conversations and her laughter preferably in front of a glass of cold beer and best in spaces where she could smoke.



2017–2019 **RENATA** Trottmann Probst – Zug (Switzerland)



Renata, President of SIE 2017–2019, is the third Swiss woman to reach this high position in our organisation. She is a member of the Zug club.

Renata is from the south of Switzerland on her mother's side and has remained very attached to the canton of Ticino in this part of the country.

Renata's Curriculum Vitae informs us of her high-level training and professional skills.

She holds a Master's degree in law from the University of Bern, Switzerland, and a Master's degree in law from the Institute of Comparative Law at McGill University in Montreal, Canada.

She also developed her leadership and management skills through executive programmes at Columbia University in New York and Steinbeis University in Berlin.

After more than twenty years of professional experience in national and international banking, she founded her own consulting company and provides legal advice to international clients on issues of real estate. She is a member of the Board of Directors of several Swiss foundations.

Renata was also a member of the Constitution & By-laws Committee of the SIE European Federation.

Her flawless career, her enthusiasm, her abilities and her skills are greatly appreciated. Marie-Jeanne Bosia was Renata's mentor and she shared her many experiences in our organisation with her. They always have great discussions together. They may not always be of

the same opinion, but a magnificent dialogue, important and constructive between two Soroptimist generations, develops.

During the meeting of Governors in Lisbon in 2015 Renata was chosen as President-Elect of our Federation.

Since that day Renata has not stopped working to make Soroptimist International, and SIE in particular, more successful. She decided to focus on women's rights in the broadest sense, choosing a motto that would appeal to women in Iceland, Kenya, Portugal or Ukraine. Since that day Renata has taken her pilgrim's staff and toured Europe, Africa and the world to publicise her Soroptimist motto.

'We stand up for women' was the declaration of our President Renata and is her appeal to all Soroptimists of the European Federation. This was her slogan, an essential feature of her magnificent speech as President at the meeting of Governors and European Congress in Florence in 2017.

She decided to focus on women's rights during her biennium. She argued how much women's rights still have to be defended today and that what we have won can be too easily lost. Our work is even more important today, in these challenging times, when elements of society try to restrict the rights and freedoms of women.

"We stand up for women", she told us, because violating women's rights is not acceptable, just as raping women is not acceptable.

‘We stand up for Women’ was her motto during her two years of Presidency and will remain so for the next few years. We believe this is a wonderful and ideal motto for us Soroptimists, but also for all women.

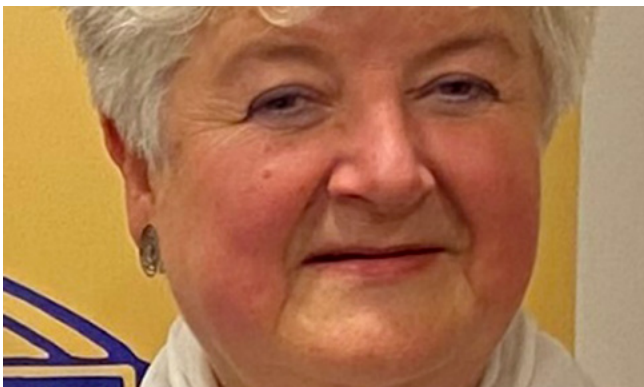
During her tenure as President, Renata has masterfully led our Federation, working hard and intelligently in all areas that constitute part of our business. She was always travelling, be it for a charter presentation, a birthday, a special meeting, a meeting of friends, a personal meeting with a Soroptimist, to meetings

with other Federations during international meetings where she knew how to defend the European point of view and shine. She represented us magnificently in international UN meetings, as for example in New York. Her remarkable charm and elegance have also been a very important asset for our Federation and for our organisation.

But to find out more, switch on your computer and visit her site. You will get to know Renata Trottmann, our SIE Past President even better, and be amazed.



2019–2021 **ANNA** Wszelaczyńska Krakow (Poland)



First President from Eastern Europe, from Poland. She has a different background to many other Soroptimists living under communism for 30 years. She was born in the last century, B.C. – before the CHANGE from communism into market economy.

The change had turned inside out the economy and people's lives. In 1989 Poland and Krakow were moving forward very fast.

The change provided a wonderful opportunity to learn and do new things, fascinating challenges bringing immediate rewards. Unfortunately, not all people could face this challenge successfully, some needed help. So, Soroptimist provided opportunities to empower and enable.

Born in a right place and right time. Although under communism human rights were limited, but her family provided a loving environment, critical judgement and good education. It has never crossed her mind she could be inferior to men. Therefore, she thinks she owes other women who were not that lucky, help and assistance in access to education and independence. In communism most of women worked. There were professions completely feminized, like doctors, nurses, judges, notaries, teachers, administrative workers. The then Poland was a country of constant shortages but women had professions, worked, had their own bank accounts, were going to eateries on their own, were travelling (within the coun-

try, travels abroad were banned) wherever it was allowed, on their own free will. There were several political restrictions on people in general, but not on women specifically.

Under communism many women were dreaming of staying at home and not working, but it was rather unrealistic for economic reasons.

Unfortunately, due to pandemic there is a huge backlash in women's rights, so it is time to fight again and not taking anything for granted. Rights disappear overnight in patriarchal societies, like in Poland where over the last 30 years the country covered a span from abortion on demand to women becoming an object not subject of human rights.

Anna's term of office started in October 2019 quite as usual, but very quickly the biennium turned into unusual as pandemic hit Europe. All plans went bust. Meetings were cancelled. No one knew what to do. Several options were considered. Everything went on the screen, but not projects which were very tangible and aimed to satisfy local needs. Modern technologies provided new opportunities and boosted some processes like new online clubs, training, webinars, Leadership Academy, mentoring, even both Governors' Meeting were online. But virtual meeting allowed for a great success – voting the New Constitution!

So, the overall evaluation of the biennium is traumatic but positive and successful.