



# **ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022**

**SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE**



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

## CONTENT

Word from the President .....	3
Organisational Structure .....	5
About Soroptimist International of Europe .....	6
Where We Are .....	7
Overview 2021-2022 .....	8
Our Projects .....	9
Best Practice Awards 2022 .....	13
Mentoring .....	21
Funds .....	22
Scholarship .....	23
Advocating for Women's Rights .....	24
Read the Signs Campaign .....	25
Growing Soroptimist's Leaders of the Future ..	27
Contact .....	29



# WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Soroptimists and Soroptimist supporters,

As you go through these pages, reporting on what our members have achieved in the first year of this biennium, one could wonder whether we are really a volunteering organisation.

We implemented over 9'000 projects, helping thousands of women and girls to reach their full potential - all carried out by volunteers. Volunteers with professional backgrounds, drawing from their networks and knowledge, challenging whatever may stand in the way of their ground-breaking projects and impactful advocacy endeavours.

Volunteering and engagement go hand in hand. As I started this biennium with a new board, we knew that the post-lockdown world would never be the same again. The principles that had guided us for a century, while remaining foundational, needed to be revisited. And so, we launched a journey of 'developing differently' using our past as a springboard for a new future. The world has changed, compelling us to 'Rebuild, Rethink, Reinvent and Reposition' our volunteering organisation. Our board and committee members, embodying commitment and engagement, were instrumental in propagating this idea throughout our entire organisation, their wholehearted support serving as testament to their dedication.

Soroptimists all over the Federation entered a new era, with renewed approaches. We accelerated this by offering the chance for our members to learn and develop leadership skills in our first 'Growth Academy'. Here, Soroptimists focused on those skills so needed to be a successful volunteering organisation: Strategy, Communication and Leadership.

Following the success of our first Growth Academy held in Belgium last year, and at the request of our members, we have held subsequent academies, reaching even more Soroptimists.

This report gives only a glimpse of what our Clubs and Unions have achieved as a result of their unwavering commitment to standing up for women and girls.

We witnessed a wave of solidarity throughout the 43 countries comprising our Federation, helping women in war zones. This outreach transcends the borders of Ukraine, encompassing surrounding refugee zones and those further afield. The initiatives undertaken go beyond the projects reported, as many immediate response actions were taken by members joining forces, in the absence of established projects.

Inspired by these challenges to human rights, our efforts to advocate for the women of Ukraine were recognised on an international stage. Soroptimist representatives to the European Women's Lobby (EWL), Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) highlighted Soroptimist initiatives, reported data from our members on the ground, and advised how our projects were successfully standing up for women and girls.

This year, our annual campaign on violence against women shifted from drawing attention to its existence, to working towards proactive prevention. This transformative approach was welcomed by our members and was reflected in the success of our 'Read the Signs' campaign, which was officially recognised and supported by UN Women. Over the years we have developed an extensive international network of institutions and politicians dedicated to providing shelters and support to female victims of violence. Once again, they welcomed Soroptimist International of Europe by supporting our campaign and using it to raise awareness among potential victims at a critical age.

After this first year, a year in war, I can only applaud all the efforts of each of you who have volunteered your time, network and expertise and be grateful for the way you recognised yourselves in wanting to 'Rebuild, rethink, reinvent and reposition' our organisation and embraced this initiative. The best is yet to come and will propel us towards extraordinary achievements!

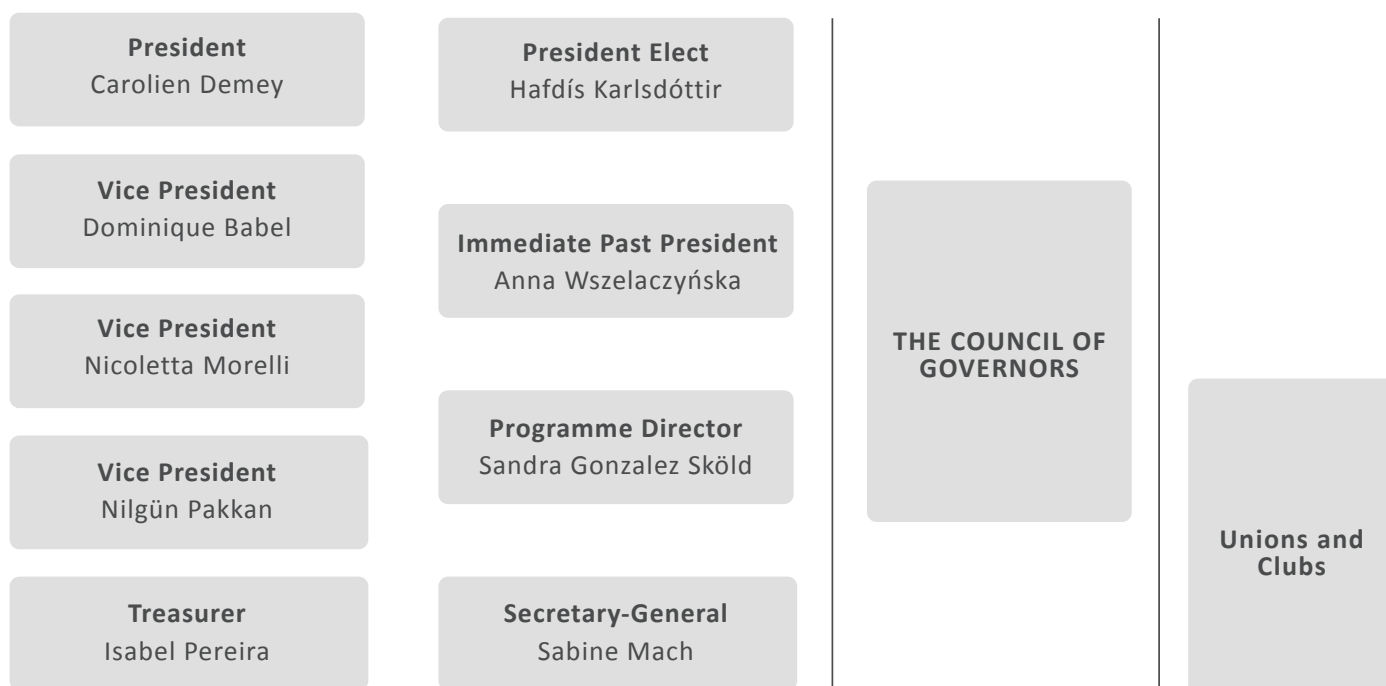
I can already predict the next annual report: An exhilarating wave of projects, inspiration, and empowerment, driven by the unwavering passion and dedication of the fiercely committed Soroptimists!

Carolien Demey  
SIE President 2021-2023

# ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

## THE RESTRICTED BOARD

## MEMBERS



## THE ENLARGED BOARD

## HQ



# ABOUT SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE

Soroptimists educate, empower and enable women and girls to improve their lives. Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) is a network of 30'228 professional women who work together at local, national and international levels to achieve this aim. SIE currently has 1'152 Clubs, operating across 43 countries in Europe, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. It is the largest of the five Federations making up Soroptimist International, which counts around 70'000 women as members.

Our ambition is to transform the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities. We want to see women and girls achieve their individual and collective potential, realise their aspirations, and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide. As Soroptimists, we strive for the advancement of women's status, high ethical standards, Human rights for all, equity development and peace through the advancement of international understanding and good will.

A part of Action and Awareness, one of the ways we achieve this is through advocacy. Soroptimist International of Europe holds general consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and participatory status at the Council of Europe

and the European Women's Lobby. SIE also participates in the work of OSCE through its permanent representatives. This allows SIE to advocate at the international level and lobby for the ratification and implementation of treaties concerning women. We also demand that priority issues for women receive their rightful place on the sustainable development agenda.

Our members include women of all ages, representing a wide range of professions. As such, we are a platform to share our knowledge and experience. We want to ensure that all women and girls have the opportunity to become leaders in their communities, and we will continue to lobby for them at all levels of society.

---

**30 228**

**Professional  
women**

---

**1 152**

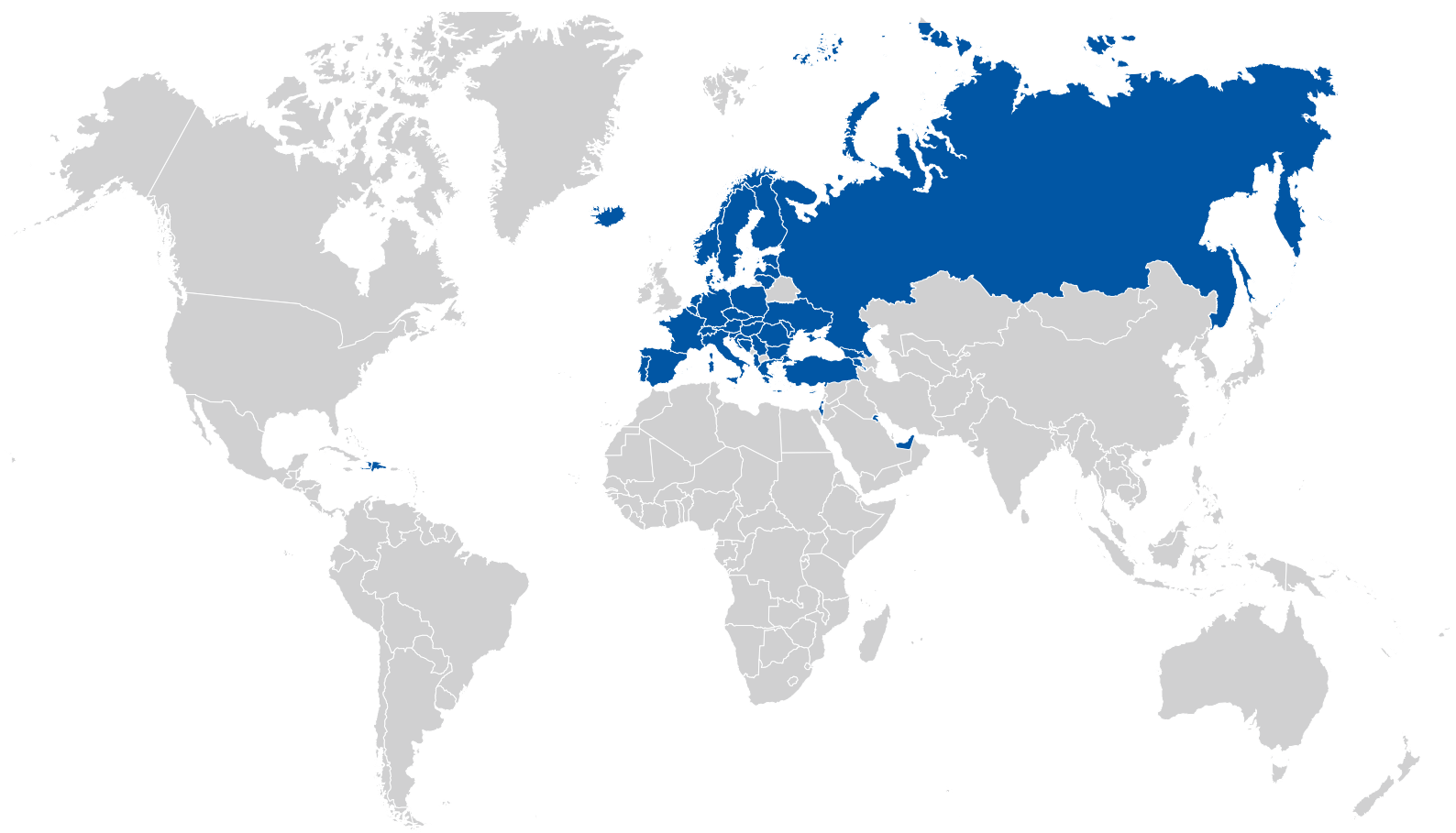
**Clubs**

---

**43**

**Countries**

# WHERE WE ARE



**43**

Countries

**21**

Unions

**51**

Single Clubs

**48** Europe

**3** The Caribbean  
& Middle East

# OVERVIEW 2021-2022

Our annual reports showcase the uniqueness of each year's accomplishments. As a volunteer organisation, we reflect, amplify and report on our members' activities and the core issues they have chosen to prioritise. These are guided by longstanding goals and objectives established over many decades.

This year's report is even more different to previous ones as we have not only come out of lockdown, and are living through war in Europe, but have also initiated a process to 'develop differently' within our organisation. We revisited our goals, adapting to our changing world by modifying our approach to projects and developing new tools to become more visible, recognised, and valued on an international stage. By adding value to what came before, we reached new levels, combining projects with advocacy, raising awareness, and setting up transformative campaigns which resulted in gaining access to institutions that opened more doors.

An essential milestone was the launch of our Growth Academies, which fostered Soroptimistic spirit and the development of core skills within our members. By training future leaders, we aimed to equip them with enhanced leadership skills, strategic thinking, and improved communication channels. An integral aspect of this developmental process was strengthening how we communicate to the outside world what we stand for.

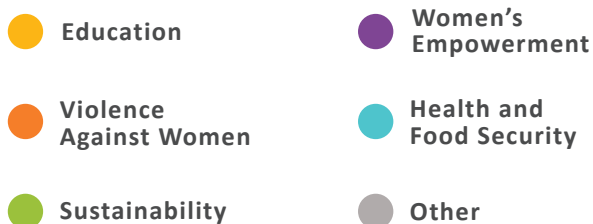
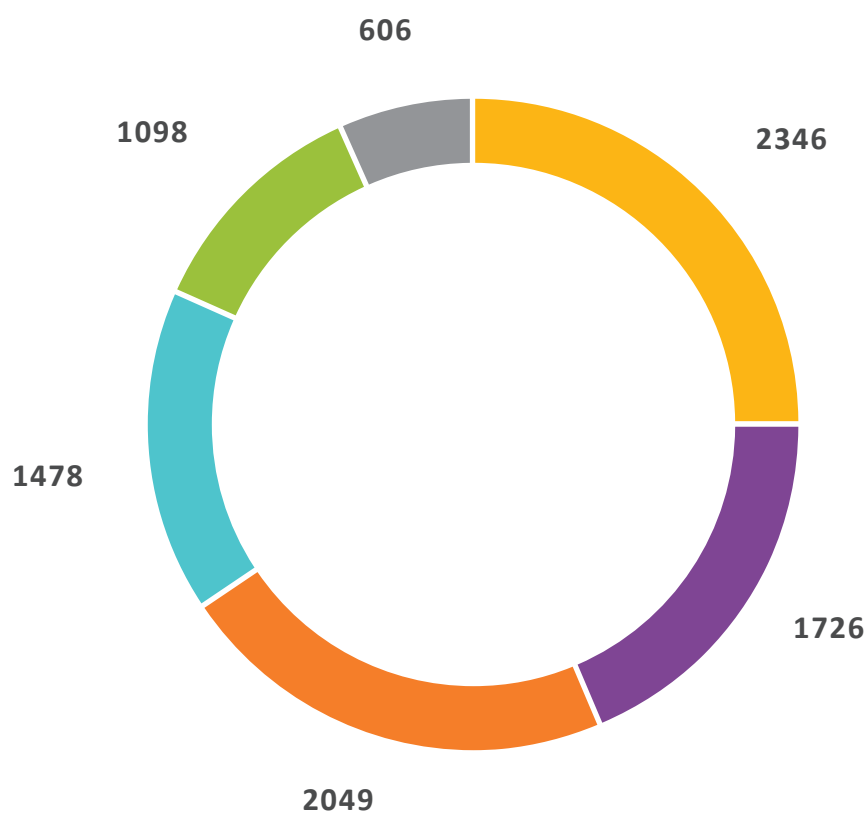
In addition to the challenges of coming out of lockdown, we faced a war within our Federation. The wave of solidarity and creativity of our members is nothing short of historical. They stood up for women in war zones, delivering lifesaving aid and demonstrating yet again how important our organisation is in delivering swift, local, knowledgeable and impactful action.

We recognise that words only tell part of the story when it comes to communicating to the world who we are, what we stand for, and what we have achieved.

The following pages will tell you the extraordinary truth in words, images and numbers...



# OUR PROJECTS



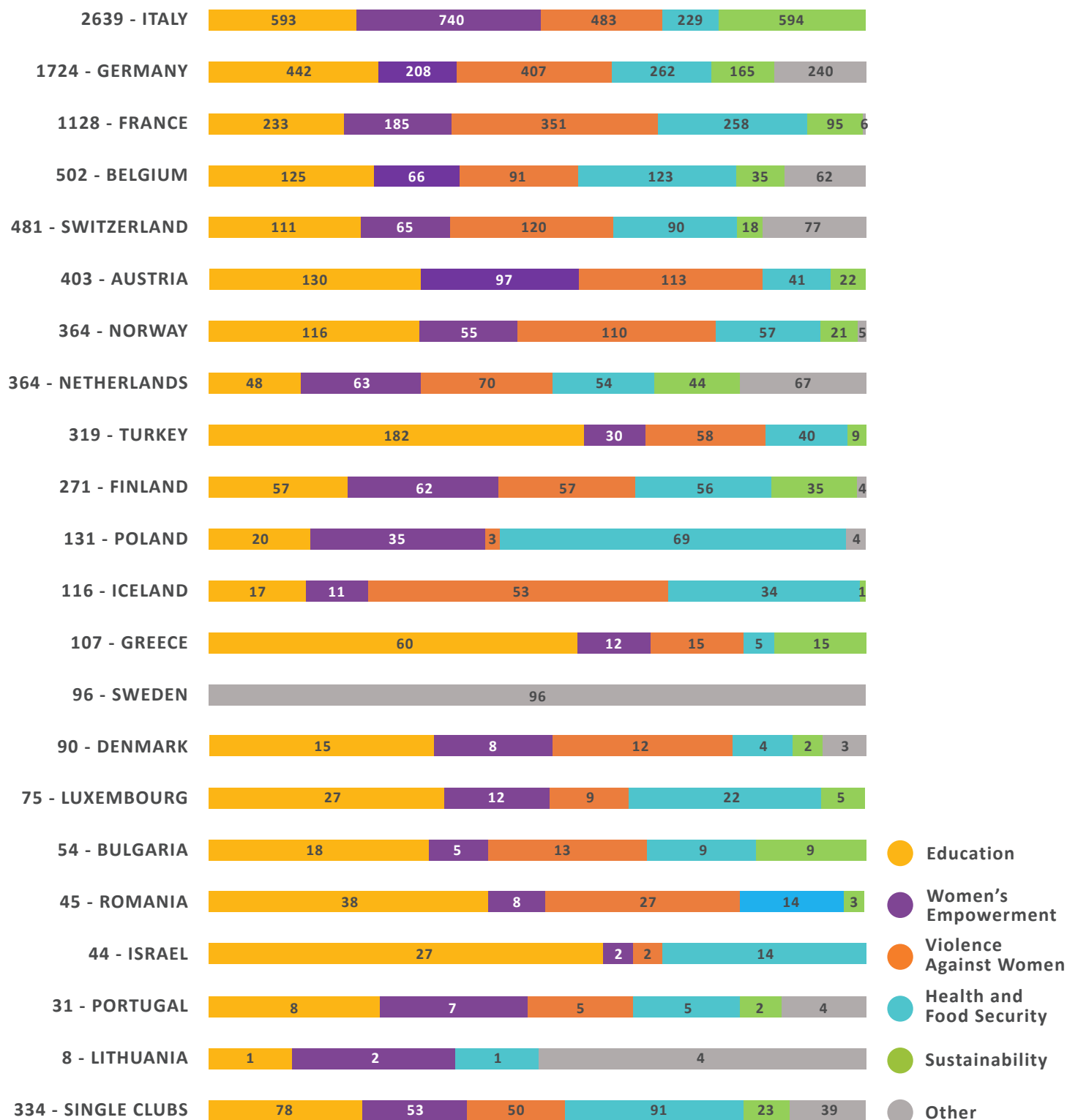
From 1 October, 2021  
to 31 December, 2022,  
SIE members raised

**9 369 897 €**

and carried out

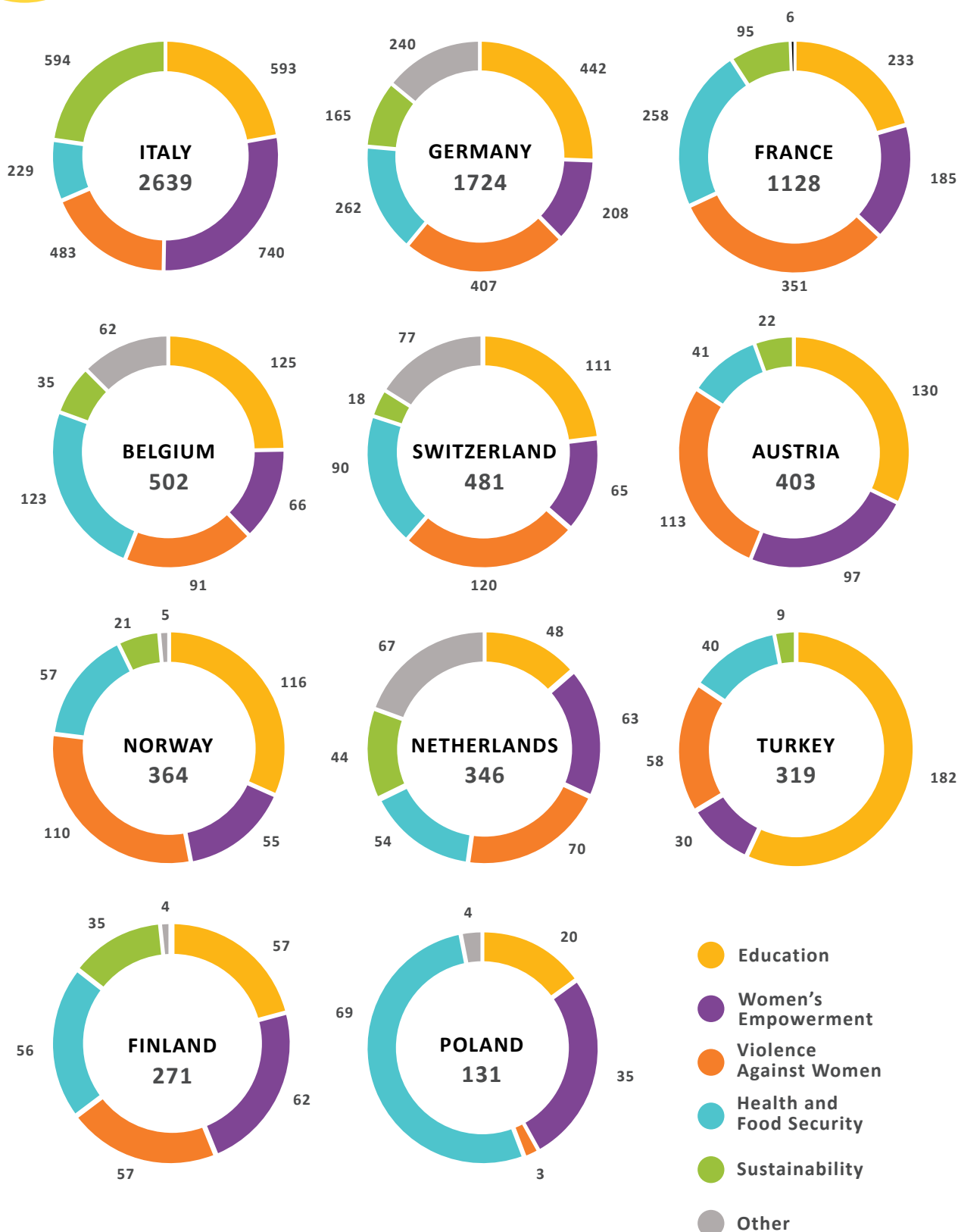
**9 303**  
projects

# OUR PROJECTS



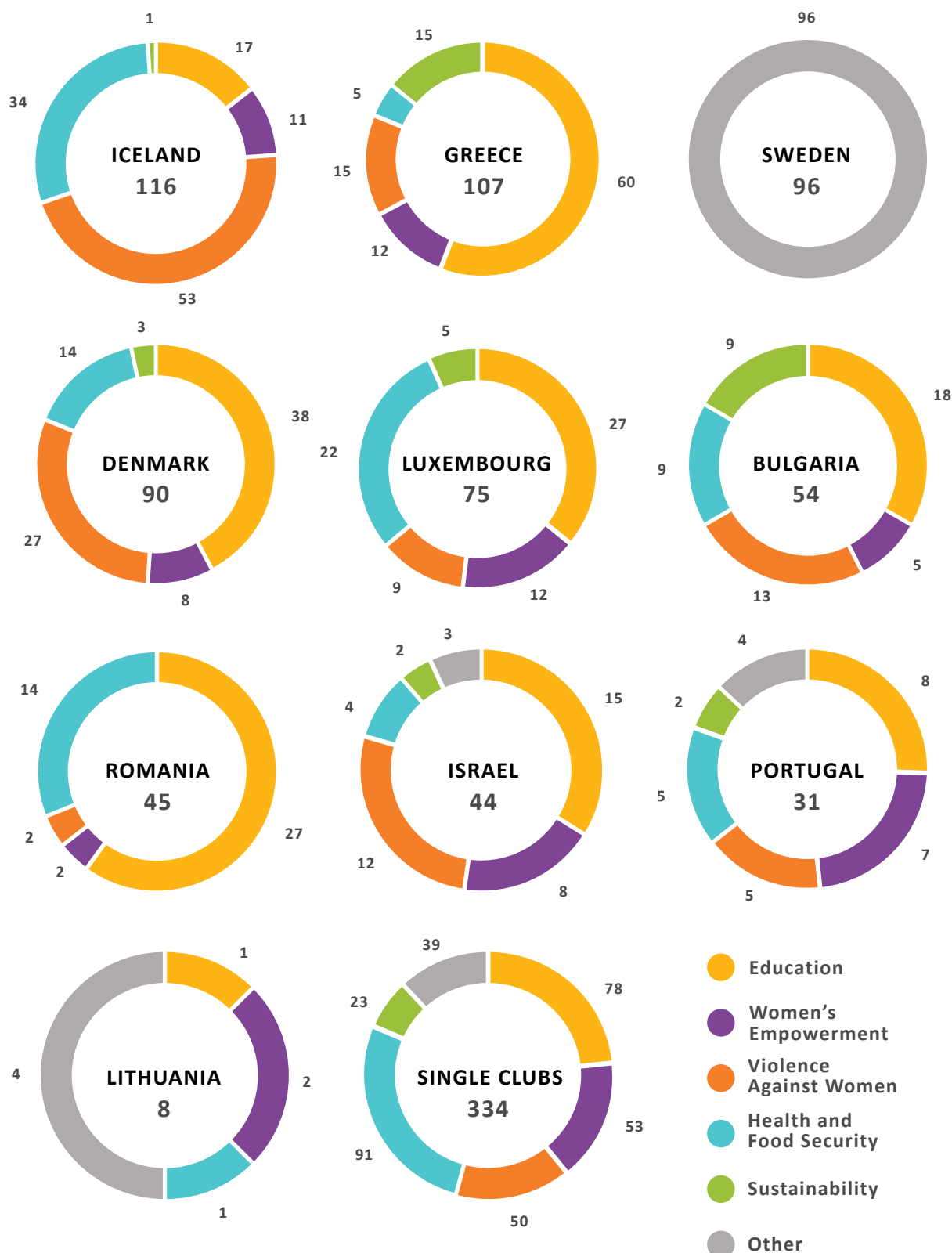
Data collection period: 01.10.2021-31.12.2022

# OUR PROJECTS



Data collection period: 01.10.2021-31.12.2022

# OUR PROJECTS



Data collection period: 01.10.2021-31.12.2022

# BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

## SPECIAL SIE BIENNIUM AWARD 2022



### Green Oases to save the bees

#### Union of Italy

Soroptimists in Italy have stepped up and implemented a project to raise awareness about bees being on the verge of extinction. A total of 117 Soroptimist Italian Clubs, together with SI Hermagor (Austria) implemented over 150 projects.

Their concrete action was to create an 'oasis for bees' in every city in Italy with melliferous plants in parks, flowerbeds and balconies, thereby creating a specific habitat for bees and other pollinating insects. In addition, they donated over 300 hives to female beekeepers to support them in their work. These female entrepreneurs contribute to the development of local biodiversity and pass on their knowledge to others. Furthermore, a thousand trees have been planted and more than 50 teaching hives have been donated and set up in primary and secondary schools.

This project, which combines SIE-specific themes such as education and women's empowerment with an environmental approach, was a great success.

Funds raised  
by the Union

100 000 €

Women & girls  
reached

100 000

# BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

## SPECIAL AWARD

### “NEW MEMBERS & VISIBILITY”



## The Road to Equality

### Union of Austria

As part of Soroptimist International's centennial celebrations in 2021, a catalogue was created, listing the most important requirements for achieving equality. **SI Austria** selected four topics from this catalogue: Finance and Women, Women's Health, Women and Housing, and Life free from Violence and united them under an awareness campaign: **'The Road to equality'!**

Soroptimists organised a major awareness hike. It started in Vienna and, after 100 days, participants reached the finish line. Each club was responsible for a particular route segment and for passing the Soroptimist catalogue on to the next club, like an Olympic torch. The **Austrian clubs walked an enormous 3,752 km**. The involvement of local decision-makers and multipliers was particularly important. **More than 50 mayors and hundreds of high-profile visitors** took part.

The Soroptimists achieved all their objectives and gained particularly impressive results in external communications. The concept of all clubs holding events in a specific campaign period, under a common 'content umbrella', has proven to be very fruitful!

Funds raised  
by the Union

87 000 €

Women & girls  
reached

2 700 000

# BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

## UNION BEST PROJECT AWARD

### Financial Education – Women Matter

Union of Italy



In 2020 in Italy, on average, men earned approximately 11.5% more than women. SI Italy decided to carry out an educational project to foster economic empowerment and independence, while promoting female employees and working towards closing the gender gap in economic and financial matters. The project targeted women in vulnerable situations and aimed to teach them to manage their own money well. Good financial management extends into other Soroptimist objectives, such as the elimination of violence against women, because it improves economic independence, personal well-being, and gives a future to vulnerable women and their children.

SI Italy launched the project 'Financial Education - Women Matter' and partnered with Banca d'Italia. Together with the Banca d'Italia and the National Committee for financial education, they developed the topics and programme for a practical financial course. The goal was to promote and finance initiatives aimed to raise women's financial, insurance and social security knowledge and competencies.

Some 300 Soroptimist members attended an online training course for financial literacy educators. Everyone taking part had been selected to become a future financial educator, destined to teach a vulnerable female population in their region. The project was a big success with 3'000 women learning about finance!

Funds raised  
by the Union

10 000 €

Women & girls  
reached

3 000



# BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

## EDUCATION



## Autonomy through education for women in shelters

Club of Almere (The Netherlands, Suriname & Curaçao)

It is well-known that women often return to their abusive partners due to economic dependence. Education reduces the chances of that, especially when it is chosen with a future job or career in mind. It also gives women more self-confidence and sets a good example for their children.

Knowing this, the Soroptimists of Almere stepped up with their own project to help women in women's shelters become more autonomous and economically independent through education. After completing a selection process, the next step was to choose targeted and realistic education programmes, together with each candidate. The women received support and follow-up from members of the Education Committee while participating in the programme.

SI Almere secured visibility and support for their project through a variety of means and media. The club already plans to support more women through this education programme. In addition, this project can be easily replicated by other Soroptimist clubs and Unions all over the world.

Funds raised  
by the Club

33 000 €

Women  
reached

2

(with more planned  
for the future)



# BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

## WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT



## Female power talks during the COVID-19 pandemic

### Club of Mödling (Austria)

During the COVID-19 pandemic personal meetings were not possible, leaving many people feeling isolated in their own homes. In Austria, SI Mödling stepped up to create a sense of community by holding 'Female Power Talks'. They started an online presentation series, to anyone interested, bringing interesting lectures, encouraging words and solidarity to people's homes - all of which were possible online.

Experts spoke on powerful topics, including: **Stronger together** - breast cancer (prevention, therapy) and COVID-19; **How do I tell?** - conduct difficult conversations well; **Self-empowerment and safety**; **Pension gap** - women have to save differently; **Stress less**; **Digital** - real - mindful use of digital media.

The club successfully reached people outside of their network who did not previously know anything about SIE and raised their interest. They managed to bring people close DESPITE distance, without health risks and without travel effort. The 'Female Power Talks Online' created a sense of community and personal relationship, despite the need for social distancing.

Funds raised  
by the Club

5 300 €

Women  
reached

350

# BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

## ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



### “I stand with her” - Orange Kuwait

#### Club of Kuwait (Kuwait)

With one in three women experiencing physical or sexual harm worldwide, gender-based violence continues to be a global pandemic. SI Kuwait stood together with Soroptimists and people everywhere to ‘Orange the world’ to bring awareness to violence against women. During their own awareness drive, they focussed on how men can support women. For their powerful theme ‘I stand with her’, they asked men to send in videos explaining how they were supporting the women in their lives.

Working with important local companies (The Body Shop, TONS), SI Kuwait launched a kick-off event to present the Orange Kuwait project, their activities and alert the media about their upcoming activities. In addition, many prominent buildings around Kuwait were lit up in orange in support of the campaign.

The campaign ended with a panel event, where male panellists spoke about how men can stand up for women. The results of this campaign, spanning the whole of Kuwait, were many, including huge awareness around ending violence against women.

Funds raised  
by the Club

6 061 €

Women  
reached

100

# BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

## HEALTH & FOOD SECURITY



### Stroke prevention in Guyana: 'Pran swen di to tcho'

#### Club of Cayenne (France)

The World Health Organisation has warned that **cardiovascular diseases are the top global cause of death. Every day, they kill 200 women in France and 25,000 worldwide.** Many delays in diagnosis and treatment are linked to the fact that women do not feel concerned by these diseases, which are therefore insufficiently detected.

As part of a prevention and awareness-raising initiative, the Soroptimists of Cayenne implemented a large-scale project called '**Pran Swen Di To Tchò**' (stroke prevention). They carried this out in French Guyana, in partnership with the Regional Union of Health Professionals and Pharmacists of French Guyana, and the College of Cardiology of French Guyana. In agreement with their partners, the Soroptimists equipped all pharmacies in French Guyana with a new, effective and easy-to-use tool called '**My Diagnostick**', a cardiovascular diagnostic tool, similar to a blood pressure monitor. All people aged 25 and over can benefit from the detection device.

This project has been a huge success because it serves the entire Guyanese population across the whole country, as all the pharmacies in Guyana, as well as the College of Cardiology, have joined in.

Funds raised  
by the Club

5 000 €

Funds raised  
by partner(s)

26 000 €

Women  
reached

100 000

# BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

## SUSTAINABILITY



## A visionary take on airport waste

(Bergamo Orio al Serio International Airport)

Club of Bergamo (Italy)

Reducing waste means saving the planet's exhaustible resources, as well as limiting the impact of production and management. This is what motivated the Soroptimists of Bergamo, who have conceived and implemented an ingenious initiative with their C&C project (Culture & Coltura): **The education of women for eco-sustainable crop cultivation – Education and fight against waste.**

The project educates people about food and crops, from production to the consumption of quality food, while avoiding waste. This initiative also plans the collection of objects and food that do not comply with airport security or are left in lost and found. Everything collected is divided, weighed, verified, cleaned and redistributed for new life to schools and associations.

The **C&C Environment working group** of the Club of Bergamo is active in promoting the initiative at other airports and will seek synergies with airport authorities to extend the project.

Women & girls  
reached

200

# MENTORING

150

mentorships  
offered

343

Soroptimist  
mentors

118

Soroptimist  
mentees

217

Non-Soroptimist  
mentees

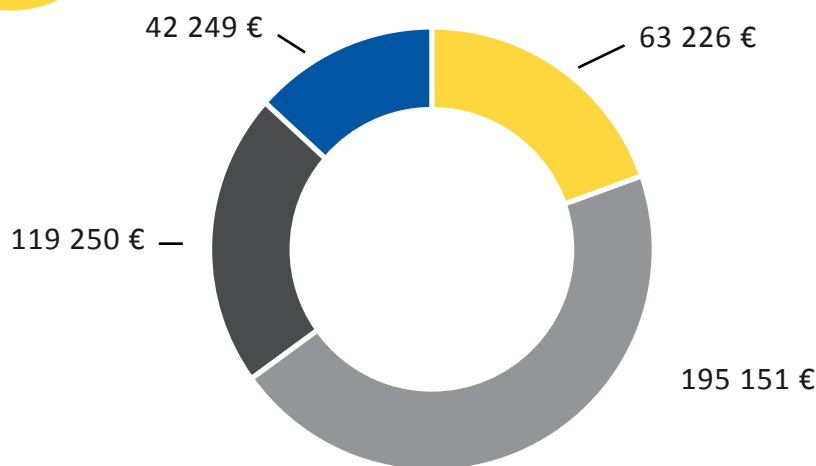
37

Non-Soroptimist  
mentees  
who became  
Soroptimists





# FUNDS



## Action fund

supports humanitarian projects and promotes educational programmes. The Federation awarded 63 226€.

## Disaster Recovery Fund

targets the specific needs of women and girls recovering from the effects of natural disasters and armed conflicts. In 2022, this fund saw a surge in applications, to particularly support women and girls in war zones, and donations. We received a record-breaking donation of 407 953€ and granted a total amount of 195 151€

## Scholarship Fund

The Federation awards grants totaling in excess of 100 000€ per year to young women covering needs such as university fees, vocational training, and general support during studies. In memory of our founding President, the Dr Suzanne Noel Scholarship Fund provides financial assistance to female doctors to perfect their knowledge of, and experience in, plastic and reconstructive surgery.

## Roswitha Ott Fund

provides health care and education to children with special needs and children in need as well as financial assistance Roswith Ott Fund awarded 42 249€.

*Data collection period: 01.10.2021-31.12.2022*

## Action fund

**63 226€**

## Disaster Recovery Fund

**195 151€**

## Scholarship Fund

**119 250€**

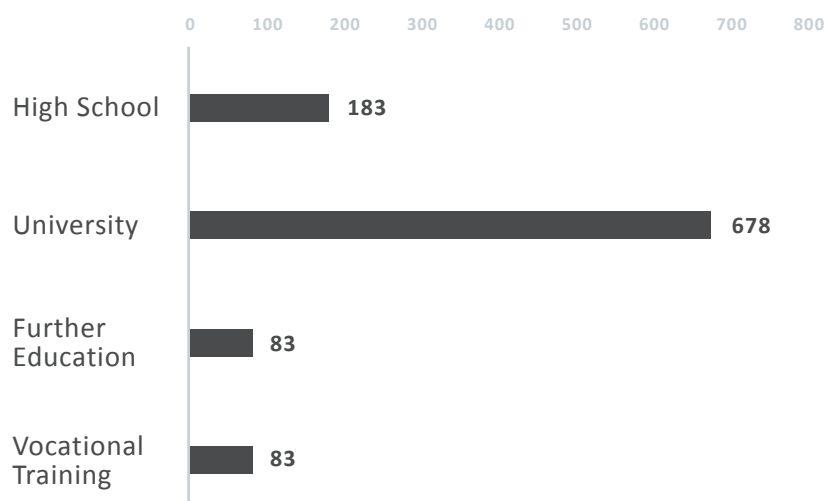
## Roswitha Ott Fund

**42 249€**

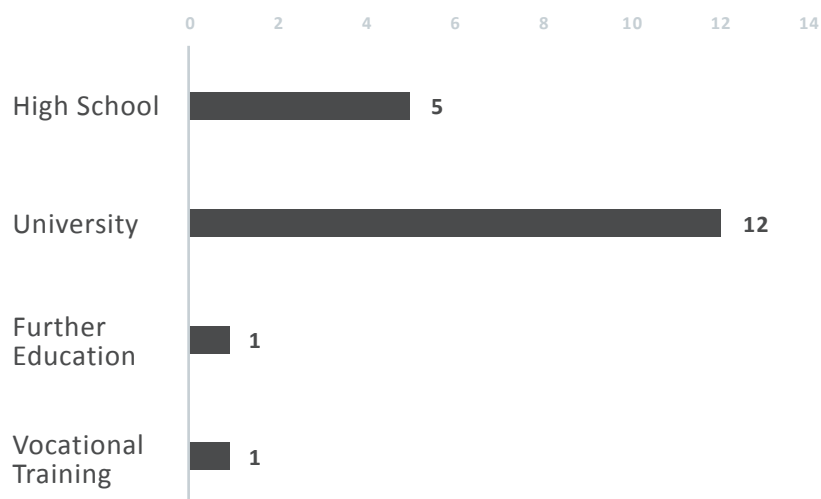
# SCHOLARSHIP

## SCHOLARSHIPS GRANTEES AWARDED

### UNIONS



### SINGLE CLUBS



## SCHOLARSHIPS GRANTED

1 046

## SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS AWARDED

770 300 €

# ADVOCATING FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO LIVE A LIFE FREE FROM VIOLENCE

So, what exactly do we mean? With our glasses on, our vision goes from blurry and suspecting something is not right, to clearly seeing and knowing that it is not. We can then take that knowledge and convert it into action for change.

Women's rights organisations have managed to 'put the glasses on' many people and bodies and are some of the most successful of all public movements. We owe today's progress to women standing together over a century ago. One of the birthplaces of women's rights is said to be Seneca Falls, in the US. There, in 1848, women organised a convention to advocate for citizenship, suffrage and equality with men.

Since then, women's rights have continued to progress. One of the most notable achievements of women's advocacy is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) - an international treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. Violence against women was not included in CEDAW, but the treaty's adoption opened the way to reach important milestones.

Today, violence against women is now part of international treaties. This was most comprehensively stated in the Beijing Platform for Action, a resolution adopted in 1995, and most precisely expressed in the Istanbul Convention, which was opened for signature in 2011.

The Istanbul Convention's landmark treaty established legal standards on violence against women, including those related to prevention, protection, and prosecution. Soroptimist's Clubs use these same standards as a guide for our projects and to build alliances with organisations sharing these core values and advocating for the right for women to live a life free from violence.

While we have made significant progress, it is essential to acknowledge that our journey is far from complete. Recognising this, Soroptimist International of Europe took a visionary approach to last year's 'READ THE SIGNS' campaign.





# ‘READ THE SIGNS’ CAMPAIGN

Soroptimist’s ‘READ THE SIGNS’ campaign is officially recognised and supported by UN Women



In 2022, during the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign, Soroptimists across Europe embarked on a new, impactful campaign focusing on PREVENTION.

Instead of just focusing on ‘saying NO to domestic violence’, we taught women to recognise the first signs of a toxic relationship. As never before, this cross-media campaign captured the public’s attention through concrete indications and attractive design. Our kick-off video reached over 100,000 people and our Instagram campaign reached over 50,000 accounts. Posters and banners were put up across Europe – they each included a QR code, taking you in seconds to a dedicated webpage giving links for anyone requiring help, and describing eight key signs of domestic violence: Intensity, Jealousy, Control, Isolation, Criticism, Sabotage, Blame, and Anger.

Unions and Single Clubs used extraordinary creativity to place ‘**READ THE SIGNS**’ banners, translated into their local language, on baguette bags, buses and billboards. Press releases and panel discussions were also held to amplify visibility. To ensure language was not a barrier to women accessing this valuable, lifesaving information we translated Soroptimist’s dedicated READ THE SIGNS webpage into English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, and Slovenian.

We also leveraged social media, releasing seven powerful video clips, each presenting a precursor SIGN of violence. All materials were accessible to our Unions and Single Clubs on a dedicated content creation platform. This allowed Soroptimists to translate the video clips and schedule them to go live across their local social media pages. The campaign started and ended with the following impactful video messages from our SIE President Carolien Demey.



We are proud to have received the official support of the UN Women for this campaign and to have been invited to use their logo in our materials. This has raised our image and ensured increased visibility, a genuinely remarkable Soroptimistic, and international collaboration.





# GROWING SOROPTIMIST'S LEADERS OF THE FUTURE

Last year, Soroptimist International of Europe launched our first-ever Growth Academy (GA). This was born of the visionary idea to offer our members the opportunity and tools to develop into future leaders of our organisation, and to become a more attractive organisation.

The project, conceived by SIE President Carolien Demey, and initiated with the support of her extended Board, took shape, with the GA taking place in Kortrijk, Belgium. The event was open to Soroptimist Members wishing to develop their skills as leaders of our organisation.

All objectives of the GA were chosen to support action to impact and advocate for women's rights, and were structured around three core areas:

1. Inclusive and innovative leadership
2. Moving through change using the power of communication
3. Building a successful strategy in our frantic world

We wanted to create the right environment for women, concerned with the pursuit of shared research, and exchange of knowledge to act as a community. This was reflected in the attitude and mood of the sessions. Attendees were invited to share their experiences, discuss strategies, and find ways to develop the specific skills required to lead in a volunteer organisation.

The workshops were held by experts in female leadership, coaching, strategy and communication – all of whom were Soroptimist Members. Each was an active member with a profound understanding of the needs, limits, and characteristics of our organisation. The future leaders were driven by the knowledge that we have a legacy spanning over 100 years and exceptional potential, while conscious that we need to make a shift, find new ways to involve communities in our mission, and increase engagement with our members.

The brainstorming sessions held proved to be incredible for our speakers and attendees. The benefits went beyond the academy, with participants taking their knowledge and enthusiasm back home, and sharing learnings with their Unions and Clubs.

The initial GA has been amplified with additional, local editions taking place. This has extended our initial success while reinforcing our goals to get changemakers involved, embrace innovations in strategy and communication, and secure the continued success of Soroptimist International so we may continue to stand up for women and girls for many years to come!







# **SEROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL** of Europe

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

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

We educate and empower women and girls to lead.

We fight violence against women and girls.

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

If you want to make a difference in your community, further women's issues on a wider scale, extend your professional network and make new friends outside your normal circles, we invite you to find out more about us!

**[soroptimisteurope.org](https://soroptimisteurope.org)**  
**@SoroptimistInternationalofEurope**



Headquarters: route de Florissant 72, 1206 Geneva, Switzerland  
[siehq@soroptimisteurope.org](mailto:siehq@soroptimisteurope.org)