

Soroptimist



International of Europe



BEST PRACTICE AWARDS 2024

WHO ARE SOROPTIMISTS?

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

What are the key focus areas Soroptimists work in?

Education
Women's Empowerment
Elimination of Violence Against Women
Health and Food Security
Sustainability

What are Soroptimist Clubs?

Soroptimists are organized into Clubs in their cities/towns/villages. All projects you will read about here are the work of one or several Clubs. Soroptimist Clubs have been around since 1921.

What are Soroptimist Unions?

When a country has more than 5 Clubs and at least 100 members it forms what's called a Union. There are 21 Soroptimist Unions across Europe, the Middle East & the Caribbean.

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

Currently, 29,778 women are members of the 1,146 Soroptimist Clubs in this Federation!

How do Soroptimists advocate for women's rights?

Soroptimist International of Europe holds a consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), a participatory status at the Council of Europe and the European Women's Lobby and contributes to the work of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

We are 'a global voice for women'!





“

*Without our projects
to back up our
advocacy work, we
would not be the
global voice for
women.*

Dear Soroptimists,

“Sorores ad optimum” – the best of women, that is who we are, doing the best for women. Thousands of projects in the Programme Focus Report database and over 100 Best Practice Award (BPA) submissions showcase our great work. The BPA team’s task of selecting projects was challenging but rewarding. Thank you all for your great work!

The Soroptimist vision is that “Women and girls will achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide.”

We realise this vision through **awareness** utilising gatherings, social media, local papers, and newsletters to inform members and the general public about the status of women and girls, to draw attention and showcase our projects.

We realise this vision through the **actions** of our Club or Union. We Educate, Empower and Enable women and girls. Our strength comes through programme work at Union and Club levels where we take action and work on our objectives to achieve UN SDG 4 Quality Education and SDG 5 Gender Equality with emphasis on Gender based violence, Digital Gender Divide and Sustainability and the unequal impact on women.

We realise this vision through **advocacy** when we lobby via our representatives and within our own community. With the active participation of Soroptimists in national and international debates and discussions, our voice is being heard.

Our Programme Focus Reports are essential to show our **actions**, as without our projects to back up our **advocacy** work, we would not be *the global voice for women*.

SIE’s UN consultative status at ECOSOC and representation at the Council of Europe, OSCE, and European Women’s Lobby reflect the combined strength of our Programme and Advocacy efforts.

This brochure showcases the BPA-selected projects exemplifying our commitment to Educating, Empowering, and Enabling Women and Girls, and Sustainability. We also award a Union for excelling in “New Members’ Visibility” as it is through our projects that we are known within the community. The real impact of teamwork on our community and our shared achievements are the key drivers of motivation, commitment, and growth. Here lies the answer to our identity and attractivity.

Many thanks,

Hafðís Karlsdóttir
SIE President 2024-2025

IT'S A WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR...

Who does not like when Spring finally gives way to Summer? Everything is in bloom, we can finally enjoy the warm weather, but it is not yet too hot. For us, the Programme Team, it is one of the busiest times, though such a joyous time of year. It is the time when together with our jurors, we divulge in reading through and discussing the projects you have submitted to our annual Best Practice Awards. This year's competition was again incredibly tough, over a hundred projects, but we are excited to share with you the most inspiring projects in all our five areas of focus. In addition, three special prizes have been awarded – one for the best Union project, the Biennium award for UN SDGs 4 and 5, and we also continue the tradition of showcasing a project that attracted new members and elevated our organisation's public visibility.

We were thrilled to see that many of your projects involve partnerships with other organisations sharing similar goals, incorporating advocacy in your projects, and boost Soroptimist presence through social media. This is vital for raising our organisation's profile – you are doing a great work, so don't be shy - show it!

We will continue our efforts to highlight your projects based on your reports by preparing presentations and summaries for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) Report and various International Days organised by Soroptimist International. We would not be able to do this without the professional guidance and ongoing support of SIE HQ Senior Programme Officer Bintou Koïta.

In line with the CSW68 priority theme, our biggest campaign of the year - Orange the World - will be Read the Signs of Cyberviolence. We hope that you will join us in our effort to make also the digital space a safe place for women and girls, free of violence and bullying.

Big thanks to all of you who participated in this year's BPA and for all your project reports! We hope you will be inspired by this year's winning projects and who knows, maybe next year it will be your club that is awarded. Keep up your amazing work for the benefit of women and girls!

Inge SCHOLTE
Programme Director

Jitka KRATOCHVÍLOVÁ
Assistant Programme Director



Jitka Kratochvílová (on the left) and Inge Scholte (on the right) at the SIE Officers Training that took place in February 2024 in Lisbon (Portugal).

Jury 2024

Inge SCHOLTE
SIE Programme Director, Chair of the Jury

Jitka KRATOCHVÍLOVÁ
SIE Assistant Programme Director

Sabine REIMANN
SIE President Elect

Rita NOGUEIRA RAMOS
SIE Vice President

Claudia DEISS
SIE Representative to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

SIE BIENNIUM AWARD 2024

REBUILDING TÜRKİYE: RESHAPING LIVES AFTER THE EARTHQUAKES Union of Türkiye

Time passes, but the trauma persists. After the devastating earthquakes of February 6, 2023, the populations of Türkiye remain in shock. These earthquakes claimed the lives of over 55,000 people in Türkiye and Syria, making them the worst tremors the region has experienced in 20 years¹. In the face of such a humanitarian catastrophe, quick action was imperative: the Soroptimists of the Union of Türkiye swiftly organised to deploy initial emergency responses and provide essential support to the affected populations. As you read this, the Soroptimists remain mobilised, continuing to implement actions day by day.

Among these initiatives are targeted and structured projects born from the collective effort of the Turkish Soroptimists. They quickly established a series of projects named “**Rebuilding Lives - From Tragedy to Resilience**”. Each project tackles a specific angle and aligns with the areas of focus of SIE, but they all share the common goal of addressing this tragedy.

REBUILDING LIVES – From Tragedy to Resilience:

- **Earthquake Disaster Scholarships & Workshop:** Soroptimists provided scholarships to students unable to continue their education post-earthquake, alongside an Earthquake Disaster Workshop to aid local clubs in effective project implementation.
- **Container Homes for Besni Women's Cooperative:** Adiyaman province, devastated by the earthquake and subsequent March 2023 flood, received 10 container homes from Soroptimists to support the Besni Women Entrepreneurs Cooperative.
- **Women in the Earthquake Disaster Zone:** The Turkish Soroptimists created social media content to highlight

the disproportionate impact on women in natural disasters and wars.

- **Amputated Children:** Thousands in Türkiye lost limbs due to the earthquakes, prompting Soroptimists to provide prosthetics to support young girls facing disabilities.
- **Support for Iskenderun Centre for Women:** In response to poor hygiene conditions in post-earthquake shelters, the Soroptimists donated 25 washing machines to the Iskenderun Centre for Women.
- **Seed Funding for Farmers:** Recognising agriculture as vital for income and food security, Soroptimists swiftly distributed cotton seeds for immediate planting in fertile Türkiye soil.
- **Hatay Yellow Silkworm Atelier:** The Soroptimists backed a local Hatay woman producer to revive the endangered Hatay Yellow silkworm, ensuring the preservation of Hatay's cultural heritage after earthquake losses.

These initiatives exemplify Soroptimists' commitment to rebuilding lives and fostering resilience in the wake of catastrophe.

1 - <https://www.redcross.org.uk/stories/disasters-and-emergencies/world/turkey-syria-earthquake>

PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Distributing essential aid items and providing emergency relief,
- Assessing needs to provide a targeted, long-term response,
- Mobilising all the Clubs in the Union and drawing on the skills and expertise of each to offer tailor-made support.

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

20,491 (all projects combined)

FUNDS RAISED BY THE UNION:

€123,400 (all projects combined)

PARTNERS:

- Joint collaboration of all the Soroptimists Turkish Clubs,
- Istanbul Ecology Rotary Club,
- Hatay's Tayfur Sokmen district and Sacakli Village.





SPECIAL AWARD “NEW MEMBERS & VISIBILITY”

SIOLENCE Union of Austria

An old Chinese saying goes: “May you live in interesting times.” And in effect, the current era is nothing if not interesting. The world is facing a pandemic, lockdowns, increased levels of stress, war in Europe, and economic crises - a confluence of deficits such as those never seen before. When families are confined and people are confronted with existential fears, tensions increase. Disputes turn into violence. Statistics show that in these crises, domestic violence is increasing, and that women are at risk. The houses that were to become harbours of peace became places of suffering.

Trapped by fear, shame, and a lack of escape routes, victims of domestic violence often stay silent. Society, too, tends to hush up these brutal truths, treating them as taboo. For the Union of Austria, the imperative was clear: **give a voice to these silenced women.**

How to shatter the oppressive silence? The Austrian Soroptimists found an answer in a powerful equation: Violence + Silence = SIOLENCE.

SIOLENCE, with its unique approach, targets this very silence. By breaking it, the Soroptimists have enabled seven women to share their harrowing stories-through images and, for the first time, their own voices.

The campaign’s centrepiece is an Austria-wide traveling exhibition. Fourteen exhibitions in prestigious galleries, museums, and institutions across the country feature the work of star photographer Elfie Semotan, who has sensitively captured the seven women’s experiences. Complementing the visuals is a podcast series where the

victims narrate their stories of violence. This potent mix shines a light on the suffering perpetuated by societal silence. Already, the exhibition has drawn over 15,000 visitors and will continue its tour from November 2023 to December 2024.

SIOLENCE’s innovative approach ensures a lasting impact. After the campaign’s debut, the University Preparation Programme of the University of Vienna eagerly joined. Students from various countries and cultures created their own event, and Iranian singer [Samira Dilmaghani](#) composed a song, “Speak Up,” as an anthem for SIOLENCE. This spontaneous side project underscores the campaign’s reach and resonance.

The campaign tackles a tough issue, prompting deep reflection, and therein lies its triumph. It calls on each one to quietly contemplate and then to courageously raise voices. In doing so, SIOLENCE stands as a resounding success

PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Assessing the situation of women in Europe who are victims of domestic violence,
- Showcasing a nationwide traveling exhibition with photographs and podcasts that tell the harrowing stories of seven women,
- Launching a powerful campaign to raise awareness and encourage action against domestic violence.

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED: 3,000,000

FUNDS RAISED BY THE UNION: 50,000€

PARTNERS:

- <https://www.univie.ac.at/>
- <https://www.mqw.at/>
- <https://www.designforum.at/>
- <https://www.galerie21.at/ausstellungen/>
- <https://kultur-burgenland.at/>
- <https://vorstudienlehrgang.at/dewien/ueber-uns>
- <https://www.museumangerlehner.at/>
- <https://www.fh-kufstein.ac.at/>
- <https://www.friedensburg.at/>
- <https://www.salzburger-landestheater.at/de/start/index.html>
- <https://www.deutschlandsberg.at/component/jem/venue/276-stadtgalerie>
- <https://www.kuenstlerstadt-gmuend.at/galerien>
- <https://www.museum-joanneum.at/kunsthaut-graz>
- <https://www.oebb.at/>
- <https://vorarlberg.at/-/amt-der-vorarlberger-landesregierung>
- https://www.noe.gv.at/noe/St-Poelten/Bezirkshauptmannschaft_St_Poelten.html



Die Gesellschaft schweigt.

Hunderttausende Frauen in Österreich leben im Stillen mit Gewalt, physisch, psychisch oder sexuell. Die Opfer haben gelernt zu schweigen – aus Angst und Scham. Und auch die Gesellschaft schweigt, weil Gewalt ein Tabuthema ist.

Insight:

Nicht darüber reden lässt Gewalt weiterleben. Die Stille um das Thema verstärkt den Teufelskreis. Nur offener Dialog und Sichtbarkeit – von Opfern, von Beobachter:innen, von der Politik – können diesen Zyklus brechen.



Idee:

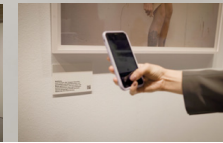
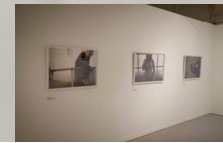
Die Kampagne stellt, einzigartig in der Kommunikation um das Thema Gewalt, die Stille ins Zentrum. Und bricht ebendiese auf: indem sieben Frauen ihre Geschichten teilen – im Bild und erstmals auch verbal. Herzstück der Kampagne ist eine Wanderausstellung von und mit Starfotografin Elfie Semotan, begleitet von einer Podcast-Serie, in der die Opfer erstmal öffentlich ihre Gewaltgeschichte erzählen.

Durch die innovative Herangehensweise an das Thema Gewalt gegen Frauen schafft SILENCE nachhaltigen Impact.

Mehr als 15.000 Besucher:innen nach 4 von 13 Ausstellungsstopps.

Über 17,21 Minuten durchschnittliche Verweildauer auf der Website.

Nationale und internationale Medienberichterstattung.



Silence

Silence

Gewalt als zeitliche Unkunst. Ein Wochenende Tipp, der mitschlägt, Gewalt ein Ende zu setzen.

UNION BEST PROJECT AWARD

THE REBIRTH OF THE “SOUNDING FOREST” Union of Italy

The project stemmed from the Italian Union's ambition to undertake a significant initiative that would embody both the Union's values and the collective effort of its members towards a shared objective, in celebration of the Soroptimist International Centenary.

In 2018, the Vaia windstorm devastated Val di Fiemme (in the Trentino Province), felling over two million trees.

In response, **Italian Clubs collaborated to replant the trees and support the affected women and their families.** This initiative aimed to help the **community recover from the environmental disaster and sustain their economy**, deeply connected to the forest and the land.

Challenges included finding a location that was both symbolically significant and in need of restoration and identifying a community willing to embrace the Soroptimist's efforts. After numerous inspections and discussions with local technicians, they ensured that seeds and young trees to be planted were locally sourced, aligning with sustainable forest management practices. An agreement was made with the landowner in November 2021, reflecting the values of both the community and the Soroptimists.

The members also connected with local women from various sectors (crafts, culture, industry, tourism) to engage them in the project. They promoted the initiative through official channels of communications; media coverage across magazines, newspapers, TV, and

social media engaged a vast audience, with institutional Facebook posts receiving **122,244 views**.

Furthermore, the Italian Soroptimists organized several conferences and debates to raise awareness and support:

- “Man and Trees: An Alliance Against Global Warming” in Perugia, with the help of the Soroptimist Clubs of Perugia, Terni, and Valle Umbra.
- “How a Forest Sounds” in Cremona, with the Soroptimist Club of Cremona.
- “Taking Care of the Environment” in Lecce, with the Soroptimist Club of Lecce.

The project is considered a success, inspiring a range of local initiatives, including the creation of orchards, vegetable gardens, reforestation efforts, concerts, poetry and literature meetings, and discussions on related topics. It achieved its identity value, generated enthusiasm among younger generations, and heightened interest in Soroptimist and its mission, aligning with the UN 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals: [SDG13](#) and [SDG15](#)

PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Being engaged in supporting the community affected to sustain its economy,
- Organising conferences and debates to raise awareness on environmental disaster,
- Connecting with local women so they can participate in the project.



WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED: 285,000 (WOMEN AND MEN)

FUNDS RAISED BY THE UNION: €112,880

PARTNERS:

- Magnifica Comunità della Val di Fiemme - (Institution, Forestry and Nursery Technicians, Museum and Archives)
- Municipality of Cavalese
- Municipality of Predazzo
- University of Turin - Department of Agricultural, Forestry and Food Sciences - (Prof. Maria Lodovica Gullino)
- Geological Museum of the Dolomites in Predazzo TN
- APT of Cavalese - Val di Fiemme
- Ciresa Enrico S.R.L
- Val di Fiemme Women's Association “La voce delle Donne”
- Musicians



Con il patrocinio di
 **Cremona**
COMUNE DI CREMONA
 **Museo del Violino**



Rinasce la foresta che suona
il Soroptimist International Club Cremona
invita al Convegno

Il suono della foresta

Domenica 25 settembre 2022, ore 11.30

all'interno di
Cremona Musica International Exhibition and Festival
Music Publishing Area (Padiglione 2)

CremonaFiere, Piazza Zellioli Lanzini, 1 - Cremona

Saluti e introduzione

Giovanna Guerco
Presidente Nazionale Soroptimist International d'Italia
Elisabetta Bondoni
Presidente Club Cremona
Gianluca Galimberti
Sindaco del Comune di Cremona

Il progetto del Soroptimist International d'Italia "Rinasce la foresta che suona"

Anna Paganoni, Referente Nazionale del Progetto

La Valle di Fiemme e il legno di Stradivari

Piera Ciresa, Ditta E. Ciresa srl Tesero - Val di Fiemme (TN)

La conservazione e valorizzazione degli

strumenti storici
Fausto Cacciatori, Conservatore del Museo del Violino di Cremona

Conclusioni

Lorella Del Rio, Referente Nazionale Soroptimist Concorso
"Giovanissimi Talenti Femminili della Musica - Alda Rossi da Rios"

2021-2023  acceleriamo il cambiamento

CREMONAFIERE
SCELTA DI BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES
CREMONA MUSICA
INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

CremonaFiere, Piazza Zellioli Lanzini, 1 - Cremona

3 ottobre 2021 Il Progetto del Centenario del Soroptimist International d'Italia

*Divelti, piegati, a terra uniti
do, re, mi,
non sarete nulla forma, nulla opera,
non minori o maggiori,
ricordi impossibili in mani che volevano,
solo frammenti sciolti per donarci figli rossi.
Saliremo la valle per ascoltare il suono del loro esistere.
Sempre spinti dal nostro cercare,
saliremo il monte Analogo,
che unisce il cielo alla terra,
perché ciascuno possa diventare ciò che è.*

Bente Bevilacqua - 3 ottobre 2021
Club Venezia



The rebirth of the Sounding Forest
Soroptimist International Italian Union
Soroptimist International of Europe - Italy
01.10.21 - 31.12.23

Project's impact
Climate change # Forests' sustainable management # Protect, restore, promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems

Path
CO₂ → O₂ → 1 TREE FOR EACH MEMBER OF ITALY

In Italy, the "Bel Paese", which is universally known for its cultural heritage, naturalistic aspects are suffering from increasingly frequent threats: storms, fires and droughts, shrinking glaciers, rising sea levels with saline waters seeping into rivers and aquifers are transforming what surrounds us.

Oct. 2018
Alps 200 km/h **NATURAL DISASTER** More than 40 million of tall trees felled

The storm also killed millions of animals who found food and shelter in wooded areas, an unprecedented natural disaster.

It is precisely at the epicenter of this storm, in the Fiemme Valley, that on July 2, 2022, Soroptimist Members have deepened their roots and replanted 40,000 SQM of slopes with 6,000 trees: larches, maples, ash trees and birches, but especially spruces with the collaboration of the Magnificent Community of Fiemme.

Among them some will become very special trees that will continue the tradition of becoming the most famous violins. It is on that territory that the world's most famous violin makers and musicians walk through the woods to recognize the timber with the best resonance (i.e., Antonio Stradivari - Cremona 1644-1737).

**JUNE 5, 2023
II planting** **WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL DAY** **+ 6,000 trees**

FOR A TOTAL OF 12,000 trees

**22 Marzo 2022
ore 18.00**

Il convegno potrà essere seguito in modalità
on line su piattaforma Zoom al link
<https://bit.ly/36enNrG>

Nell'ambito del Progetto del Soroptimist International d'Italia "Rinasce la foresta che suona"
il Soroptimist International Club Lecce invita al convegno:

PRENDERSI CURA DELL'AMBIENTE

Moderata Giuseppina Cantoro - Dottore Agronomo, Soroptimist International Club Lecce

Saluti e introduzione

Maria Eugenia Congedo
Presidente Soroptimist International Club Lecce
Giovanna Guerco
Presidente Soroptimist International d'Italia
Paolo Foresto
Assessore Attività Produttive Comune Lecce

Interventi

Boschivo: una minaccia per l'abete rosso, le strategie della Magnifica Comunità della val di Fiemme
Andrea Bertagnoli - Tecnico Forestale, Magnifica Comunità Valle di Fiemme
Studio, conservazione e propagazione delle specie forestali per contrastare l'impovertimento della biodiversità
Lorenzo Gai - Centro Nazionale per lo Studio e la Conservazione della Biodiversità Forestale, Perù (VR)
Xylella fastidiosa: l'impatto sul territorio e le prospettive oltre l'emergenza. Stato dell'arte della patologia: ricerca e prospettive
Donato Boscia - Dirigente di ricerca ISPSP - Istituto per la Protezione Sostenibile delle Piante, CNR Bari
Approcci di pianificazione sostenibile per una nuova ruralità salentina: l'esperienza del Laboratorio di pianificazione territoriale dell'COAF Lecce
Fabio Lazzari - Presidente dell'Ordine dei Dottori Agronomi e Forestali di Lecce
Sylva: rigenerare il territorio ripartendo dagli alberi
Anna Piccini - Direttrice Generale, Fondazione Sylva

Conclusioni

Giovanna Guerco - Presidente Soroptimist International d'Italia

Seguici su FB: Soroptimist
International Club di Lecce
leccesoroptimist@gmail.com
www.soroptimist.it/club/lecce



EDUCATION

Increase access to learning opportunities

Soroptimists educate women and girls to lead



FREE TUTORING

Club of Lisboa Caravela, Portugal

RUNNERS-UP:



Tailor training for young women regarding self-sufficiency in Kisoko Dida, Tororo, Uganda
Soroptimists from Haderslev, Rodding-Gram-Toftlund, Kolding, Tønder, Sønderborg, Varde, Aabenraa, Grindsted-Billund and Vejen, Denmark

Provide young women with tailor training and skills, offering them education and the chance to attain financial independence.

PFR: 25843



Bir-iz

Soroptimists from Uludag Bursa, Türkiye

This project, initiated after the earthquakes in 2023, aims to enhance the well-being of young survivors and protect them from trauma.

PFR: 25321



Promoting positive sexual health among high school students

Soroptimists from Young Soroptimist Amsterdam, Kingdom of the Netherlands and of Suriname

Through an educational webinar and art exhibition, members raised awareness and collected donations for an organisation that focuses on promoting positive sexual health among vulnerable high school students.

PFR: 25661

EDUCATION

TOP PROJECT

FREE TUTORING

Club of Lisboa Caravela, Portugal

The Soroptimists of Lisboa Caravela are championing access to quality education in Portugal through an innovative tutoring program aimed at empowering students. Tutoring offers several key benefits, including personalised learning tailored to individual needs, abilities, and learning paces, which enhances understanding and knowledge retention. Additionally, tutoring can significantly reduce failure and dropout rates by maintaining student engagement and overcoming obstacles. It also provides psychological benefits, boosting learners' self-confidence, autonomy, and motivation.

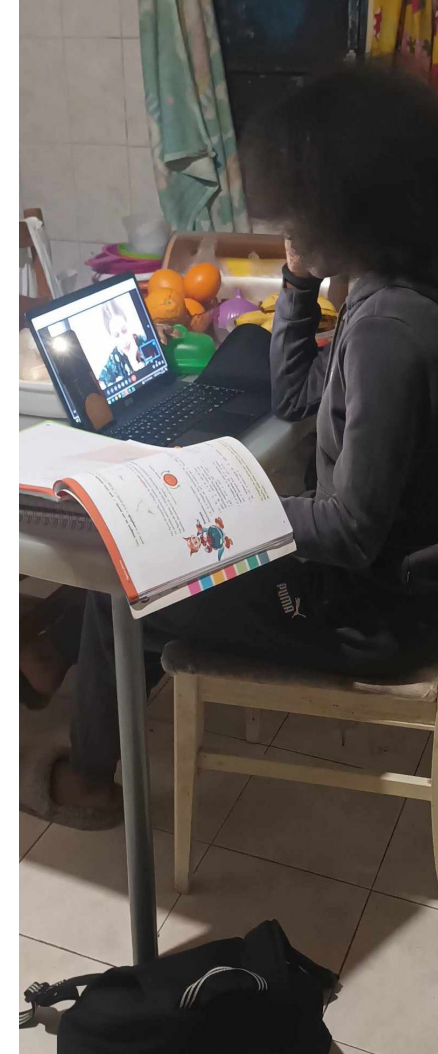
In response to numerous requests for academic support, the Soroptimists have established a university volunteer pool to address these needs. This comprehensive project aims to foster a more just and equitable society by ensuring:

1. **The human right to education:** Providing quality education to students who lack access due to economic constraints.
2. **Equity and inclusion:** Targeting students facing hardships to promote equal opportunities for all, regardless of background.
3. **Community support:** Building connections through collaboration with universities and organizations, showcasing support for the most vulnerable.
4. **Empowerment:** Offering long-term benefits that empower students and help break the cycle of poverty, providing tools for a better future.

This pilot project in the Lisbon area involves university volunteers providing free classes to institutionalised children, adolescents, and young students facing economic and family hardships. These classes help overcome diagnosed difficulties and promote both personal and academic success.

The initiative is crucial for the Soroptimists, as it offers study support that would otherwise be inaccessible due to the high cost of individual tutoring. The programme has already seen success, with students improving their academic performance and achieving good grades. Subjects covered include mathematics, language, history, and citizenship, with a strong emphasis on equality values, especially for students from troubled family backgrounds.

While students and parents have adapted well to the online format, the Soroptimists' next goal is to arrange in-person meetings with tutors to further enrich the learning experience and assess progress!



PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Setting up a success support system of university volunteer pool,
- Building connections through collaboration with universities and organisations.

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

1,500

*by completion this number
should increase to over 6,000*



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Increase economic empowerment

Soroptimists empower women to find employment



FINANCE COURSES FOR WOMEN

Club of Aarau, Switzerland

RUNNERS-UP:



Sisters hand in hand and e-commerce

Soroptimists from Izmir, Türkiye

Members provided a series of advanced training sessions for girls and women, focusing on essential business skills and boosting their self-confidence.

PFR: 24865, 24040, 23870, 23759, 23869, 24149, 24148, 24151, 24156, 24157.

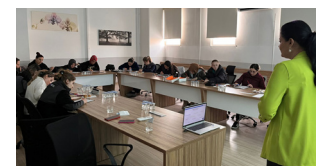


A Film Club for women in prison: a movie, a talk, an afternoon together

Soroptimists from Merate, Italy

Members started a monthly Film Club in Bollate prison's women's section, offering a meaningful experience and a window to the outside world, providing psychological support and cultural education.

PFR: 25927



Awareness circle

Soroptimists from Uludag Bursa, Türkiye

A training programme on legal rights, gender equality, and domestic violence was implemented to raise awareness among women and increase the number of informed individuals in the country.

PFR: 25194

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT TOP PROJECT

FINANCE COURSES FOR WOMEN Club of Aarau, Switzerland

Globally, women lag behind men in financial education, with a 2020 OECD study revealing that men score an average of 4 points higher out of 100 in financial literacy tests ¹.

Regardless of income level, women also tend to have significantly less confidence in their financial skills compared to men. This disparity spans several areas, including saving and investing, personal tax management, and credit management ².

In Aarau, the Soroptimists are tackling this issue head-on with their “**Finance courses for women**” project, aimed at boosting women’s financial literacy in their community. The Soroptimists identified a crucial gap: many women were not fully aware of their personal finances, social insurance, or the options available within the Swiss pension system. They also noticed that various lifestyles affected budgeting and pension planning, leading to potential financial difficulties.

To address this, the Soroptimists partnered with [Budget- und Schuldenberatung Aargau Solothurn](#), a local state budget and debt counselling service, to develop and offer three tailored courses. These courses, focusing on budgeting and retirement planning, were held at a co-working space in Aarau and provided free of charge.

To reinforce the lessons learned, the Soroptimists created a comprehensive brochure titled “[Everything about your budget](#)”. This resource allowed participants to revisit and apply the course material in their daily lives.

The project’s impact has been profound. One participant shared that, for the first time, she was able to create and stick to a budget, significantly reducing her stress levels, especially at the end of the month. Her story underscored the initiative’s importance and transformative potential.

Overall, the project aimed to empower women through education, equipping them with the financial literacy necessary to confidently navigate their economic landscape. The positive feedback and success stories from participants affirm the value and necessity of the Soroptimists’ efforts.

1 - <https://n26.com/fr-fr/blog/les-femmes-et-les-finances-reduire-les-inegalites>

2 - <https://educparagne.ca/nouvelles/inegalites-financieres-a-la-retraite-les-femmes-plus-vulnerables/>

Budget- und Schuldenberatung Aargau – Solothurn

Alles rund ums Budget

Eine Informationsbrochure der Budget- und Schuldenberatung Aargau-Solothurn

KOSTENLOSE KURSE FÜR FRAUEN
HAST DU DEINE FINANZEN IM GRIFF?

Das Thema Geld und Finanzen begegnet uns allen täglich und trotzdem befassen gerade wir Frauen uns viel zu wenig damit. Das muss aber nicht so bleiben.

Du möchtest mehr Klarheit über dein eigenes Budget gewinnen? Du möchtest wissen, wie du dich für das Alter absichern kannst oder möchtest verstehen, wie du deine finanzielle Unabhängigkeit in einer Beziehung bewährst? Dann melde dich noch heute an einen oder mehrere unserer kostenlosen Kurse an.

JETZT ANMELDEN!

Scanne dafür den QR Code und fülle anschließend das Formular aus. Bei Fragen melde dich unter events@aarudigital.com.

Dieses Angebot wird ermöglicht durch den St. Club Aarau in Zusammenarbeit mit der Budget- und Schuldenberatung Aargau – Solothurn.

Kursort:
BYRO Kaffeebar und Coworking Space, Rathausgasse 6/8, 5000 Aarau

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Kurs: Budget machen und einhalten - so gelingt es!</p> <p>In diesem Kurs lernst du die Grundlagen einer Budgetplanung kennen und verstehst wie du dein Budget besser einhalten kannst. Außerdem erhältst du für dein Budget wertvolle Tipps im Umgang mit Sozialversicherungen und erfährst, welchen Einfluss Geld auf deine mentale Gesundheit hat.</p> <p>Datum: DI 28.3.23 von 19.00-21.00 Uhr oder SA 1.4.23 von 10.00-12.00 Uhr</p> | <p>Kurs: Der richtige Zeitpunkt für deine Altersvorsorge ist jetzt!</p> <p>In diesem Kurs lernst du deine Handlungsoptionen innerhalb des Schweizer Altersvorsorgesystems besser kennen. Du verstehst die 3 Säulen der Altersvorsorge und welche Auswirkungen Care- oder Teilzeitarbeit auf deine Altersvorsorge haben.</p> <p>Datum: DI 2.5.23 von 19.00-21.00 Uhr oder SA 6.5.23 von 10.00-12.00 Uhr</p> | <p>Kurs: Finanzen im Griff - auch wenn sich dein Leben verändert.</p> <p>In diesem Kurs lernst du, welche Auswirkungen unterschiedliche Lebens- und Familienformen (Patchwork, Trennung & Scheidung, Altersrenten, Konsum, Telearbeit, Ehe) auf dein Budget und deine Altersvorsorge haben.</p> <p>Datum: DO 11.5.23 von 19.00-21.00 Uhr oder SA 13.5.23 von 10.00-12.00 Uhr</p> |
|---|--|--|

PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Identifying a major problem and working with credible partners,
- Offering personalised support,
- Working on a tool kit compiling targeted information to support the women concerned.

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

45

PARTNER:

Budget- und Schuldenberatung Aargau Solothurn



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Eliminate violence against women and girls

Soroptimists fight violence against women and girls



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE SPOTLIGHT: SAY NO TO FEAR

Club of Ruse, Bulgaria

RUNNERS-UP:

Year-round focus on 'Stop Violence Against Women' with an orange mosaic bench
Soroptimists from Almere, Kingdom of the Netherlands and of Suriname



Almere's high rates of domestic violence highlight a troubling trend in the country. Members aimed to raise year-round awareness by creating a meeting space with a mosaicked "Social Sofa."

PFR: 25799

Health, psychological and educational support for women at risk of social exclusion

Soroptimists from Gdansk, Poland



Women in a centre for homeless single mothers, and victims of domestic violence, face increased social exclusion risks. The project aims to provide comprehensive support, including health, psychological, and educational assistance.

PFR: 23871

Pallas Project - teaching teenage girls how to react against violence and harassment

Soroptimists from Zug, Switzerland



Members launched this project to empower young girls against violence, teaching them effective strategies to prevent and manage harassment in various settings, enhancing their confidence and assertiveness.

PFR: 23352

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TOP PROJECT

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE SPOTLIGHT: SAY NO TO FEAR

Club of Ruse, Bulgaria

Bulgaria is intensifying efforts to combat violence against women; nevertheless, significant gaps persist as the incidence and severity of such violence in Bulgaria surpasses the EU average ¹.

The Soroptimists of Ruse meticulously planned their project around the annual campaign of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, focusing on raising awareness as a preventive measure against domestic violence and supporting the women's shelter in Ruse. Their initiative aimed not only to assist potential and current victims but also to educate young people, who often witness this persistent issue firsthand.

Key outcomes of the project included the establishment of new networks and partnerships, as well as increased visibility. The Soroptimists implemented a wide range of initiatives with specific activities such as:

1. Organising a flashmob in the city centre,
2. Illuminating the Pantheon in Ruse with orange lights,
3. Presenting a theatre performance (confessions of victims), performed by students to raise awareness and foster empathy,
4. Hosting an online presentation of the book "[The Faces of Unborn Butterflies](#)" by a former US police officer, comparing legal frameworks in Bulgaria and the USA,
5. Conducting "Flying Helpers" sessions where club members and police officers discussed domestic violence cases with students, accompanied by a poignant photo exhibition,
6. Signing a **Regional Agreement with 11 businesses and NGOs** in the Ruse region for joint actions to support violence victims,
7. Mentoring young women in empowerment programmes,
8. Providing training for Youth Red Cross members with role-playing and discussions led by club members,
9. Organising a round table discussion with representatives from the City and Regional Court, Regional Police, Forensic Medicine University Hospital Ward, and Regional Governor of Ruse,
10. Supporting and participating in the "**Ahimsa: Nonviolence**" exhibition organised by the [Indological society "East-West"](#) under the auspices of the Ambassador of India to Bulgaria,

¹ - European Institute for Gender Equality. Gender Equality Index. Available at <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2019/compare-countries/index/bar>

11. Participating in an International Conference on "A Multidisciplinary Approach for Prevention, Recognition, Screening, and Dealing with Different Forms of Perinatal Violence – MAP", exchanging best practices with Bulgaria, Slovenia, Greece, and Italy.

These initiatives by the Soroptimists **have resonated positively** through local communication channels, including print media, radio broadcasts, and public talks in venues such as libraries.

PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Carrying out large-scale awareness-raising actions,
- Collaborating with major stakeholders and professionals in the field, emphasising the voices of victims,
- Garnering media attention for greater resonance.



FUNDS RAISED BY PARTNERS:

€1,600 Zonta Club Ruse

€200 University of Ruse (printed materials).

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED: PARTNERS:

1000

FUNDS RAISED BY THE CLUB:

€2,400

Zonta Club Ruse, University of Ruse, Association Centre Dynamica, Youth Red Cross, Ruse (beneficiary and volunteers technical support), Municipality of Ruse, Regional and City Court, Regional Police Headquarters, Forensic Medicine Ward of Kaneff University Hospital, University of Ruse, Theatre workshop "Patilanci", Ruse (participants with expertise).



HEALTH & FOOD SECURITY

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

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



ENHANCING BREAST CANCER CARE: THE DEDICATED "BREAST UNIT" MODEL FOR LOMBARDY COMPANIES

Club of Varese, Italy

RUNNERS-UP:



"Centre Pride" support for women and children who survived after destruction of the Kakhovka Dam
Soroptimists from Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine

In June 2023, Kakhovka Dam damage flooded the Kherson region, forcing thousands to evacuate to the Nikolayevsky region. With Austrian Union support, members supplied essential aid to the displaced.

PFR: 26002



Looking above & beyond food waste

Soroptimists from Gulf-Dubai, UAE

Expanding a pilot project on food security to provide essential income to a community of women in Uganda's Kabemaraido district, one of the country's most impoverished areas.

PFR: 24142



Les voiles de l'espoir

Soroptimists from Ouest Ile De la Réunion, France
Alcohol use among pregnant women remains stigmatised and contributes significantly to preventable disabilities in unborn babies. To combat this, members placed prevention pictograms on canoe sails in coastal towns, ensuring constant dissemination of prevention messages.

PFR: 25574

HEALTH & FOOD SECURITY TOP PROJECT

ENHANCING BREAST CANCER CARE: THE DEDICATED “BREAST UNIT” MODEL FOR LOMBARDY COMPANIES

Club of Varese, Italy

The project seeks to enhance women's awareness of breast cancer prevention and treatment by educating them about the Breast Units' pathways in the Insubria territory (Lombardy). A key focus is on reaching young women under 45, who are not typically included in the oncological screening programs conducted by local health authorities.

In the province of Varese alone, over **900 women** are diagnosed with breast cancer annually. As the most common type of cancer in Italy, breast cancer sees more than **55,000 new cases each year**. While these numbers are alarming, there's hope: **the cure rate exceeds 90% if detected early**. Early diagnosis and personalised prevention are crucial in combating this disease.

To achieve their goal, the **Soroptimists of Varese, in collaboration with the Soroptimist Clubs of Busto Arsizio - Ticino Olona and Como**, utilised the expertise and connections of their members directly involved in breast care. Members from Varese and Busto Arsizio - Ticino Olona contributed their experience in breast unit care, while entrepreneur members from Varese and Como leveraged their corporate network contacts. Together, they decided to:

1. Promote breast cancer prevention by educating about the Breast Unit model, which comprises a multidisciplinary specialist team. They organised **two webinars** featuring experts who provided detailed information on diagnostic, therapeutic care, and rehabilitation processes. These webinars reached around **7,000 women and involved 16 local companies**, health and regional institutions, and several associations. Some participants reported being unaware of Breast Units before the webinars.
2. Raise awareness among companies about the importance of promoting values that support the well-being of their employees, encouraging them to take responsibility for their health.

The webinar model proved highly effective, reaching a large number of working women at convenient times and demonstrating significant dissemination potential. The approach is easily replicable and impactful.

Recordings of the webinars are available on the Soroptimist International Union of Italy's website, accessible to all Italian clubs and other companies in the region. This initiative aims to widely circulate information and raise awareness about this critical public health issue.

PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Planning awareness-raising initiatives in the region (information, support, webinars, etc.),
- Forming partnerships with associations, institutions, businesses, retailers, etc.,
- Using the expertise and contacts of members directly involved in breast care.

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

7000

FUNDS RAISED BY THE CLUB:

€6,000



PARTNERS:

- C.A.O.S o.d.v. (Breast Cancer Listening Centre association)
- Lombardy Regional Council (President of the Commission for Social Sustainability Home and Family)
- Varese Chamber of Commerce, Confartigianato (Confederation of Artisans Varese and Confindustria (Confederation of Industries Varese)
- ATS Insubria (Local Health Authority)
- Sponsoring by Fondazione Onda (National Observatory on Women's and Gender Health), Europa Donna Italia, What's Health (a group of people promoting health in companies).



SUSTAINABILITY

Improve environmental sustainability for the specific needs of women and girls

Soroptimists help improve the environment and promote sustainability



“TREES FOR PEACE” IN VERDUN: HONOURING DR. SUZANNE NOËL

Clubs of Metz & Strasbourg, France

RUNNERS-UP:



Creation of two groves of trees in the city of Athens

Soroptimists from Athens Lycabettus, Greece
Trees are essential to the balance of nature. Members planted 50 small trees in a park in central Athens, and 60 trees in the city of Rafina-Attica with the help of the municipalities.

PFR: 25806



Feed your optimism

Soroptimists from Costa del Sol, Spain
The aim of this project was to raise awareness about the significance of our food system, emphasising the use of local and seasonal produce to alleviate environmental impact.

PFR: 25665



Içel Soroptimist Club Atatürk Park

Soroptimists from Içel Mersin, Türkiye
The Club established a green area in the city centre, including a safe playground for children, aiming to integrate nature with urban life, particularly for children's enjoyment and well-being.

PFR: 23677

“TREES FOR PEACE” IN VERDUN: HONOURING DR. SUZANNE NOËL

Clubs of Metz & Strasbourg,
France

Forests, once seen as essential partners in mitigating climate change due to their CO2 absorption capabilities through photosynthesis, are no longer fulfilling this role. Recent data from [Citepa](#), an air pollution monitoring organisation, reveals that forests have transitioned from carbon sinks to CO2 emitters in recent years. This shift is largely attributed to ongoing droughts and heatwaves, which have severely affected forest ecosystems. Many forests are now overrun by bark beetles, small insects that proliferate in warm conditions and burrow beneath tree bark, resulting in the demise of various tree species.

The Soroptimists of Metz and Strasbourg have taken on this issue with a commitment to action. They initiated a **reforestation project** for a plot destroyed by bark beetles, which proliferate during droughts caused by climate change. This plot is located in Verdun, a **highly symbolic site of World War I battlefields and a UNESCO World Heritage site**. The Soroptimists have partnered with the [National Forests Office \(ONF\)](#) from 2021 to 2024, aiming to plant **11,000 trees in a 5.5-hectare area**.

The Soroptimists proposed **associating the project with the name of Dr. Suzanne Noël**, the founder of the Soroptimist movement in France in 1924, who, as a surgeon, reconstructed the faces of soldiers mutilated in combat. This project, undertaken in collaboration with the National Forest Office, which has turned the site into a laboratory for sustainable planting techniques, has generated **tremendous enthusiasm from more than thirty French and European clubs** (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg) as well as the **founding American club SI Oakland, California**. The project combines the themes of Environment, Peace, and the Memory of the Soroptimist Movement.

The project is expected to be completed by 2024, but will be extended with the creation of a directory of remarkable women from World War I.



PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Engaging concretely on the theme of climate change,
- Highlighting the duty of remembrance and Soroptimist values,
- Involving many Soroptimists across Europe and beyond.

EXTERNAL LINKS:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB1w-rPJ6XY&t=6s>
(clip in French)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGo8G0FS0Bs&t=5s>
(clip in English)

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

2000 Around
and future generations

FUNDS RAISED BY THE CLUB:

€66,458

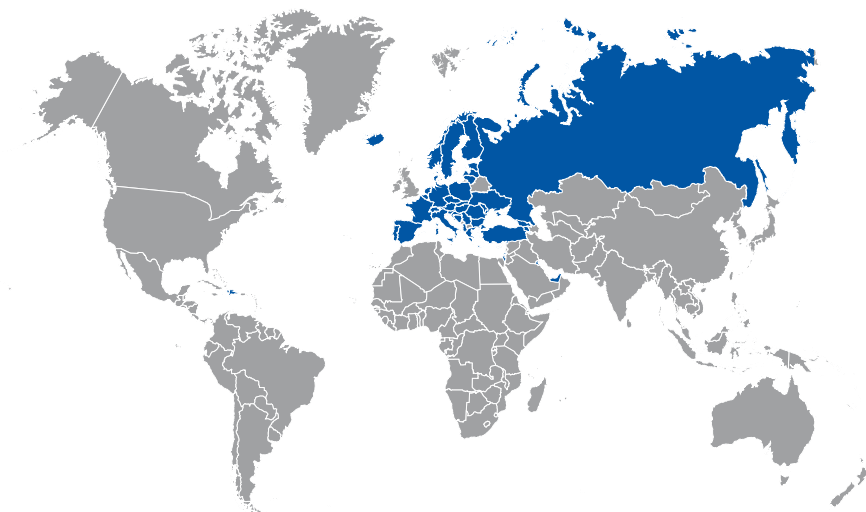
PARTNERS:

National Forests Office (ONF),
External sponsors: Ahlstrom Co (BE), La Marseillaise Real Estate (Strasbourg)






SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE

We are a worldwide network of professionally and socially diverse women.
We are a platform to serve communities, share knowledge and experience.
We educate and empower women and girls to lead.
We fight violence against women and girls.
We give women a voice by lobbying at all levels of society.



www.soroptimisteurope.org

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