

# Soroptimist International of Europe



**BEST  
PRACTICE  
AWARDS**

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**2017**

## Who are Soroptimists?

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

### What are the key focus areas Soroptimists work in?

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

### What are Soroptimist Clubs?

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

### What are Soroptimist Unions?

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

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

Currently, 34,123 women are members of the 1,257 Soroptimist Clubs in this region! (Or 1,258 if you start the next one?)

### How do Soroptimists advocate for women's rights?

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

## We are a real 'global voice for women'!





## Thank you for an impressive year!

Dear Friends,

For the past four years, I have been closely following the Best Practice Awards process, first as Programme and Advocacy Lead, then during my two years as President. This year, I am, as ever, impressed by the quality and diversity of the 86 projects submitted! Being a Professor for more than 30 years, I firmly believe that education is key to forging the world of tomorrow, and especially to bringing about true gender equality. I am therefore absolutely thrilled that the projects in this brochure testify of how relevant Education has been to the work of the Federation during this last biennium.

I would like to thank all of our members, who tirelessly put their energy to the service of the Federation's five objectives. This past year, they have created and implemented projects as impressive and diverse as: delivering vocational training to unemployed women, raising awareness on gender-based violence, providing safe water and better sanitation for school girls, to teaching children how to recycle and be agents of environmental change in their communities... the list goes on, as you will find out while reading this brochure.

As Soroptimists, we educate, empower and enable women and girls to reach their full potential. The projects you are about to discover are but a glimpse of the tremendous work that is being achieved every day in each of the 62 countries of our Federation. The dedication and determination of each and every Soroptimist to fight for women and girls, together with their Club or Union, will never cease to amaze me!

It is thanks to these thousands of projects that we are able to have a direct impact on the lives of women and girls, but also to act as a global voice for women in international fora. Congratulations to all Soroptimists for this years' achievements!

**Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, SIE President 2015-2017**

## Soroptimists can be proud !

It has been truly thrilling to receive and read the 86 applications submitted for the 2017 Best Practices Awards. Once again, Soroptimists have proven they know how to embrace the challenges of our times and come up with innovative solutions, with their usual dedication and energy. Their eagerness to share their experiences and best practices with Soroptimists all over the Federation is really uplifting.

The projects held in this brochure are a testimony to the diversity and creativity of the members of our organization. Not only do Soroptimists have direct impact on the ground, in the fields of Education, Women's Empowerment, Elimination of Violence Against Women, Health & Food Security, and Sustainability, but they also embody and reinforce women's empowerment, through collaboration, friendship, sharing best practices and leading by example.

The selected projects are a reflection of our exemplarity in all situations. They are stories of empathy, helping hands, fruitful partnerships, collaboration, overcoming challenges and bringing about change that all contribute to one goal: promoting women's empowerment and gender equality.

This year the selection of winners was not easy for the Jury – not only were we as ever impressed with the quality of the projects we received, but the selection process was slightly modified. Along with our traditional “Project of the year” and “Educate to lead” awards, this meant that we had to select one winner and three runners-up, rather than two winners and three runners-up that were nominated last year in each Programme Objective category, Environment being the exception with only one runner-up.

I would like to thank the Jury Members for their time and commitment. Sigrid Ag as Chair of the Jury did a wonderful job coordinating the Best Practice Awards process with SIEHQ and our expert Jury Members, Marlène Van Benthem, Emine Erdem, Marie-Claude Bertrand and Bettina Hahne.

Being part of the Best Practice Awards process makes me proud to be a Soroptimist, and to belong to a community of women as inspiring as the ones that make all these remarkable projects come to life and contribute to changing the world. Thank you to all of you who participated and congratulations to this year's winners and runners-up for their accomplishments!

**Renata Trottmann Probst**  
President Elect and Lead Programme and Advocacy



## 2017 Jury

### **Sigrid Ag**

Chair of the 2017 Jury and Vice-President Advocacy

### **Marie-Claude Bertrand**

Vice-President Communications

### **Emine Erdem**

Vice-President Extension Africa

### **Bettina Hahne**

Council of Europe Representative

### **Marlène Van Benthem**

Programme Director

## PROJECT OF THE YEAR

### Opening of the Suzanne Noël reception centre for female victims of violence

#### Club of Cognac, France

In the spring of 2013, the Soroptimists of Club Cognac noted the lack of local support for the victims of spousal violence in their town. The women affected were forced to seek refuge 45 kilometres away in the town of Angoulême. Faced with this situation, the Soroptimists decided to do something about it. They persuaded the ASERC (Socio-Educational Association of the Cognac region) to form a partnership with the Club, and undertook to provide some of the centre's long term funding.

A year later, in **June 2014, the Suzanne Noël Reception Centre was born.** An apartment at an undisclosed location in the city centre provides emergency accommodation for people who have suffered domestic violence.

Thanks to the **excellent relationship the Club has developed with the local media** (radio and print press), both the centre and the Soroptimist commitment to women's causes are now well known in the region. In 2016, this visibility led to the Club being selected as a beneficiary of a major fundraiser, La Part des Anges. Associative structures, police services and other local

organisations also now regularly refer victims to the centre.

None of this would have been possible without the **devotion and determination of the Cognac Soroptimists!** Every year, in addition to their flagship event, the Women's Talent Salon, they organize film screenings, shows, and are always looking for ways to attract more sponsors. As a result, they have been able to honour their commitment to **donate between 6,000 and 7,000 euros each year** to ASERC, thus ensuring the long-term viability of the project.



#### RESULTS ACHIEVED

- **65 WOMEN BENEFITTED FROM COUNSELLING, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND LEGAL SUPPORT SINCE THE OPENING OF THE CENTRE**
- **12 WOMEN AND 25 CHILDREN HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SEEK SAFE SHELTER IN THE APARTMENT - OFTEN FOR STAYS LASTING OVER THREE MONTHS.**
- **GRAND-COGNAC UPPED ITS SUBSIDY FROM 2,000 TO 3,000 EUROS, SEEING THE DEMAND FOR THE CENTRE**





# 1

## EDUCATION

### Increase access to learning opportunities

*Soroptimists educate women and girls to lead*

TOP  
PROJECT

**AFRIpads Foundation**

Soroptimists from De Bilt-Bilthoven,  
Netherlands

#### RUNNERS-UP:

##### 1. Me and my city

Soroptimists from Milano alla Scala & Milano Fondatore, Italy  
A training course aimed at introducing concepts of economy, work, conscious consumerism and society to middle school children.

##### 2. Inspiring Hope in Prison

Soroptimists from Icel, Turkey  
Provision of vocational training in the Tarsus Prison for Women to enable them to join the workforce after their release.

##### 3. Talent Scout

Soroptimists from Crema & Cremona, Italy  
Providing students with skills that will be useful for their entry into the labour market, in partnership with local companies.



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EDUCATE  
TO LEAD  
AWARD

**Vocational Training & Employment  
Support Centre for Women (KIMIM)**

Soroptimists from Etiler, Turkey

## EDUCATION

TOP PROJECT

### AFRipads Foundation

#### Club of De Bilt-Bilthoven, Netherlands

In rural areas of Uganda, irregular school attendance and eventual school drop-out is common among girls who reach the age of puberty. Sanitary towels are rare and toilets are often inadequate, which has a direct impact on girls' school performance.

**Soroptimists from the Club De Bilt-Bilthoven decided to partner with the AFRipads Foundation, which provides washable sanitary towels to girls so that they can attend school during their periods.** The towels are locally produced by AFRipads Ltd, a Ugandan legal entity employing about 150 Ugandan women, therefore contributing to the economic empowerment of women in the region. The members of the Club raised 9086 € for the project. Thanks to those funds, **10 schools were visited in Uganda and over 3000 girls received AFRipads washable sanitary towels**, together with health education regarding hygiene, menstrual periods and sexual health.

Through their action, Soroptimists from SIE De Bilt-Bilthoven contributed to promoting education for girls, as the targeted girls were able to attend school longer. They also supported the protection of the environment and the economic empowerment of women. Thanks to these environment-friendly sanitary towels, the girls have improved their chances to get better jobs and have a higher income in the future.

#### FUNDING ACHIEVED BY:

- A BRIDGE CARD GAME GATHERING
- PROJECT DINNERS: ONE SOROPTIMIST COOKS FOR THE OTHERS, WHO PAY A CERTAIN AMOUNT IN EXCHANGE
- A FILM EVENT: SCREENING OF MOVIES FOR A PRIMARY SCHOOL OF 500 STUDENTS AND TWO PUBLIC AUDIENCES, AND SET UP OF A LOTTERY
- DONATIONS FROM THE CLUB'S GENERAL FUNDS (1,000 €), THE CLUB OF WILDE GANZEN (3,333 €) AND THE ALGEMEEN FUND OF THE DUTCH SOROPTIMIST UNION (3,000€)



## Soroptimist International long-term theme **EDUCATE TO LEAD AWARD**

### **Vocational Training & Employment Support Centre for Women (KIMIM) Club of Etiler, Turkey**

A famous historic district at the heart of Istanbul, Fatih has one of the lowest women's employment rates in the city. Due to a lack of skills and education, most of these unemployed women have never entered the professional world.

To help solve this problem, the Soroptimists from the Club of Etiler decided to establish a Vocational Training and Employment Support Centre, in the Balat Soroptimist Culture House, targeting unemployed women between 18 and 40 years old. The club partnered with expert organizations like USLA (international Hospitality Academy) to deliver relevant trainings. They also hired a full-time recruitment specialist to find suitable job openings, prepare CVs and arrange interviews. When the time came to recruit trainees however, Soroptimists ran into a difficulty. Because of cultural and social norms, women of the district were reluctant to join the trainings.

**To raise awareness about the project and encourage women to join**, the Soroptimists took action and distributed posters, leaflets, and seven press releases. They made a series of short films about the Centre, the positions and "Why women work?" which they tirelessly promoted on social media and their own

website (<http://www.kimim.org.tr/>). Finally, they extensively promoted the centre themselves, visiting no less than 2000 homes and calling more than 500 women!

Last but not least, they contacted and gained the support of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, the Istanbul Provincial Directorate, ISKUR (Turkish Employment Agency), the Fatih Municipality Career Center and many local NGOs. Thanks to all of their hard work, they were able to expand the project's coverage to larger Istanbul, and included women residing in shelters as well as eligible Syrian refugees.

Thanks to the members' tenacity, hundreds of women were reached throughout the city of Istanbul. There were 67 applicants in total, of which 57 attended the program, and 43 earned a certification. With the help of the Centre, **20 women were able to secure jobs**, 15 of which are currently still employed.

"My friend was aware of KIMIM, she directed me to the Centre. They were so close, loving and sincere that they convinced me to attend the course [...] I got the job the very next day after I finished the course.

A month before if someone had told me that I would have something like this, I would not have believed it and would have laughed!"

Sengul, mother of two, graduated from the Service Personnel Training Program



#### RESULTS ACHIEVED:

- THREE SHORT-TERM VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS, BETWEEN 90 TO 120 HOURS, CONDUCTED IN THE AREAS OF HOUSEKEEPING, STEWARDING AND FOOD & BEVERAGES SERVICES
- A NUMBER OF GENDER EQUALITY AWARENESS SEMINARS
- TWO COACHING SESSIONS ABOUT WORK AND FAMILY LIFE
- 67 APPLICANTS, 20 JOBS SECURED
- MORE THAN 2000 HOMES REACHED, THROUGHOUT THE CITY OF ISTANBUL





# 2

## WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

### Increase economic empowerment

*Soroptimists empower women to find employment*

TOP PROJECT

Inter-company Crèche  
Soroptimists from Fort de France, France

#### RUNNERS-UP:

1. **One Step at a Time with Female Inmates in Kisumu Women's Prison**

Soroptimists from Kisumu, Kenya  
Restoring dignity of inmates by providing counselling and training opportunities to ensure reintegration into society.

2. **The STEM Competences and the Scientific Subjects for Women's Condition**

Soroptimists from the Italian Union  
Advocating to promote education and employment of women in the STEM areas.

3. **Empowering Mentally Ill Women**

Soroptimists from Reykjavik, Iceland  
Supporting the provision of empowering means for women recovering from mental illness.



1



2



3

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

TOP PROJECT

## INTER-COMPANY CRÈCHE

Club of Fort de France, France

The first ever inter-company crèche in the French overseas department opened its doors in 2016 and now has places for 40 pre-school aged children. This innovative initiative of the SIE Soroptimist Club Fort-de France, took four years to come to fruition.

Construction started on 23 March 2012. At the time, **the central region of Martinique was the most under-served area in terms of pre-school care provision** on the island. With this in mind and conscious of the restraints for women trying to reconcile family and professional life, the Soroptimists decided to take matters into their own hands.

**They first set about contacting, convincing and bringing on board all the necessary partners.**

The project, which cost a total of €1,704,000, gained the support of key state institutions, such as the regional women's rights delegation, the family allowance agency and the local authorities. The town of Lamentin made available a 2,685m<sup>2</sup> plot of land, and the Soroptimists created a partnership with the company "Crèche Attitude", a national leader in the creation and management of "turnkey" company crèches.

**Today, the nursery is helping to empower women in the region.** Mothers who are working, looking for work or in training, can now take advantage of organised, communal care for their young children.

Salaried parents are not the only winners; their employers also reap the benefits associated with the local crèche. Its many advantages include a longer working day, less absenteeism, greater productivity, less travelling time, tax credits, waiver of charges, and a family-friendly image for member companies.

As for the Soroptimists, they have clearly demonstrated their ability to successfully lead a major project!



### PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- CONVINCING AND GAINING SUPPORT OF KEY STATE INSTITUTIONS
- CREATING AND MANAGING PARTNERSHIPS



# 3

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

### Eliminate violence against women and girls

*Soroptimists fight violence against women and girls*

TOP  
PROJECT

Orange Heroes – Supporting the  
HeForShe Campaign  
Soroptimists from Marmara, Turkey

#### RUNNERS-UP:

- 1. Flashmob - Violence, We Can Do without You**  
Soroptimists from Wien-Riengstrasse, Austria  
Advocating for respectful treatment of women and girls all over the world.
- 2. Sensitization on Gender-Based Violence**  
Soroptimists from Cotonou Doyen, Sika Or, Amazone, Gazelle, et Calavi Colombe, Benin  
Sensitizing public opinion and contributing to the elimination of the violations of the fundamental rights of women
- 3. Seven Steps towards Women's Health**  
Soroptimists from Silute, Lithuania  
Coaching to encourage women from all age groups and social backgrounds to take the first steps to change their lives for the better.



# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

TOP PROJECT

## ORANGE HEROES - SUPPORTING THE HEFORSHE CAMPAIGN

### Club of Marmara, Turkey

Convinced of the necessity to have the opposite gender on their side in order to achieve gender equality, Soroptimists from Marmara Club wanted to encourage men to get involved in the efforts to eliminate violence against women. They conducted a project to support UN Women's HeForShe Campaign.

The men who volunteered to speak up against gender-based violence were from all kinds of socio-economic backgrounds. A few of them chose to read the pre-prepared text that was offered to them, but most used their own words to express their engagement opposing violence against women. Videos of the Orange Heroes were made and shared widely on social media, including the facebook, twitter and Instagram accounts of the Club, Soroptimist Turkey and HeForShe Turkey.

The campaign was a success, and contributed to spreading the word of the HeForShe Campaign. The Soroptimists' project was also given as a positive example in a training delivered by "The Things Project," a community movement coordinated by the Bilgi University Social Incubation Centre. Some of the men involved received unpleasant comments from their peers, but were so dedicated to the cause that they encouraged them to side with women as well, thus acting as **true gender equality champions!**

#### PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- CONTACTING THE HEFORSHE TURKEY OFFICE, WHO EXPRESSED STRONG ENTHUSIASM FOR THE CLUB'S PROJECT
- DESIGNING AND DISTRIBUTING BROCHURES TO INFORM MEN AND INVITE THEM TO JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST VIOLENCE
- SUPPLYING ORANGE SCARVES FOR THE UN'S ORANGETHEWORLD CAMPAIGN, WHICH AIMS TO RAISE AWARENESS ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
- ASKING MEN TO SAY NO TO VIOLENCE ON CAMERA, WHILE WEARING THE SCARVES



*HeForShe is a solidarity campaign for the advancement of gender equality initiated by UN Women. Its goal is to engage men and boys as agents of change by encouraging them to take action against inequalities faced by women and girls.*

#### RESULTS ACHIEVED:

- 112 MEN TAKING A STAND AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
- 3 CORPORATIONS JOINING THE CAMPAIGN: GLAXOSMITH&KLINE TURKEY, CANCER FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION AND TRIO VASSAGO HAIRDESIGN
- 30.000 VISITS OBTAINED BY THE ORANGE HEROES!





## 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*



**Safe Water, Sanitation and Green Energy (SWAG) for Kenyan Schoolgirls and Communities**  
Soroptimists from the Union of Kenya

# 4

## HEALTH & FOOD SECURITY

### RUNNERS-UP:

- 1. Ageing in Place**  
Soroptimists from Bergamo, Italy  
Raising awareness of senior women's well-being and enabling them to grow old in their own home.
- 2. Breast Clinic Arlon**  
Soroptimists from Arlon, Belgium  
Providing financial and psychological support in the form of pillows to women with breast cancer.
- 3. Helping Mentally Ill Mothers to Connect to and Nurture Their Small Children**  
Soroptimists from Reykjavik, Iceland  
Mentoring programme for mothers dealing with long term mental illness and their small children (age 2-5).



## HEALTH & FOOD SECURITY

TOP PROJECT

### SAFE WATER, SANITATION AND GREEN ENERGY (SWAG) FOR KENYAN SCHOOLGIRLS AND COMMUNITIES

#### Soroptimist International Union of Kenya

Six Kenyan Clubs united their efforts in coordinated and holistic action to improve sanitation and access to safe drinking water in seven schools and communities. The aim was to increase the attendance of girls in schools, thus improving their academic performance and future economic empowerment.

“Most of the time I had to wait for people to go away so that I can go to the nearby bush to change my sanitary towel. I am happy I will have time to change and attend my classes.”

Atieno, a student in class 8 in Uradi Primary School

To implement their ambitious two-years project, the six Soroptimist Clubs of Milimani, Karen Blixen, Kisumu, Kisumu Winam, Eldoret and Kakamega joined forces with partners such as the Women for Water Partnership; Lou Cabassou BV; county governments; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Public Health; the management boards of selected schools, and the local communities.

**The SWAG project has been a great success for girls' health and education.** It directly led to higher school enrolment and regular attendance of girls in school; improved academic performance; improved access to safe drinking water, the adoption of proper hygiene practices and behavioural changes which meant less incidences of diseases; better forest conservation and improved health due to wise use of stoves, fireless cookers and solar lanterns; economic empowerment of women who benefited from trainings on income-generating activities.



#### RESULTS ACHIEVED:

- NUMEROUS WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH) TRAININGS PROVIDED IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES
- 29 HYGIENIC TOILETS, 7 BATHROOMS AND 8 HAND-WASHING FACILITIES CONSTRUCTED IN SEVEN SCHOOLS
- 16 TANKS FOR RAIN WATER HARVESTING ERECTED TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER
- CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS PROVIDED ON THE CONSTRUCTION AND WISE USE OF
  - ENERGY SAVING STOVES: 100 HOUSEHOLDS
  - FIRELESS COOKERS AND SOLAR LANTERNS: 360 HOUSEHOLDS
  - SOLAR LANTERNS: 360 HOUSEHOLDS
- PLANTATION OF HIGH VALUE TREES FOR INCOME AND FOOD SECURITY



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

*Soroptimists help improve the environment and promote sustainability*

### TOP PROJECT

**Collect and Recycle to Change the World**  
Soroptimists from Mezitli, Turkey

### RUNNERS-UP:

#### **Giant Picnic to Help Plane Trees of the Canal du Midi**

Soroptimists from Carcassonne, Toulouse, Narbonne, Béziers, France

Raising funds and participating in the national replanting program of the sick plane trees on the Canal du Midi.



# 5

## SUSTAINABILITY

# SUSTAINABILITY

TOP PROJECT

## COLLECT AND RECYCLE TO CHANGE THE WORLD

### Club of Mezitli, Turkey

The Club of Mezitli decided to take a chance on children to promote recycling in their communities. They set out with the idea that conscious children can persuade their parents and neighbours to take action to protect the environment.

The Club brought the issue of recycling to the municipality of Mezitli, who offered their support. The environmental engineer of the municipality prepared an interactive presentation on the importance of getting involved in order to protect the environment. With the help of the Soroptimists, the engineer encouraged the children to become Environmental Hunters.

The project was a success. The environmental engineer consultant delivered his presentation to the children as planned. The Club members were present to chat with the students, hand out brochures and give information on the banner competition, which was announced all over the primary and high schools of Mezitli. The awards for the winners of the competition were delivered on **June 5th, on World Environment Day**. They included tablets, free courses and bicycles, provided by both the municipality and the club.

In total, about **2.500 primary school students** benefitted from the project – and therefore about as many households!

#### PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- CONSULTING THE SCHOOLS' ADMINISTRATION AND REQUESTING NECESSARY PERMITS FROM THE DIRECTORATE OF NATIONAL EDUCATION
- DISTRIBUTING ENVIRONMENTAL HUNTERS BROCHURES TO THE STUDENTS DURING THE PRESENTATIONS
- ORGANIZING A BANNER COMPETITION, ASKING CHILDREN HOW THEY SEE THE IMPORTANCE OF RECYCLING



*Environmental Hunters are children who bring what they have learned during the interactive presentation into their everyday lives. They were asked to deliver brochure hangers to their families and neighbours to raise awareness about recycling.*



## SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE

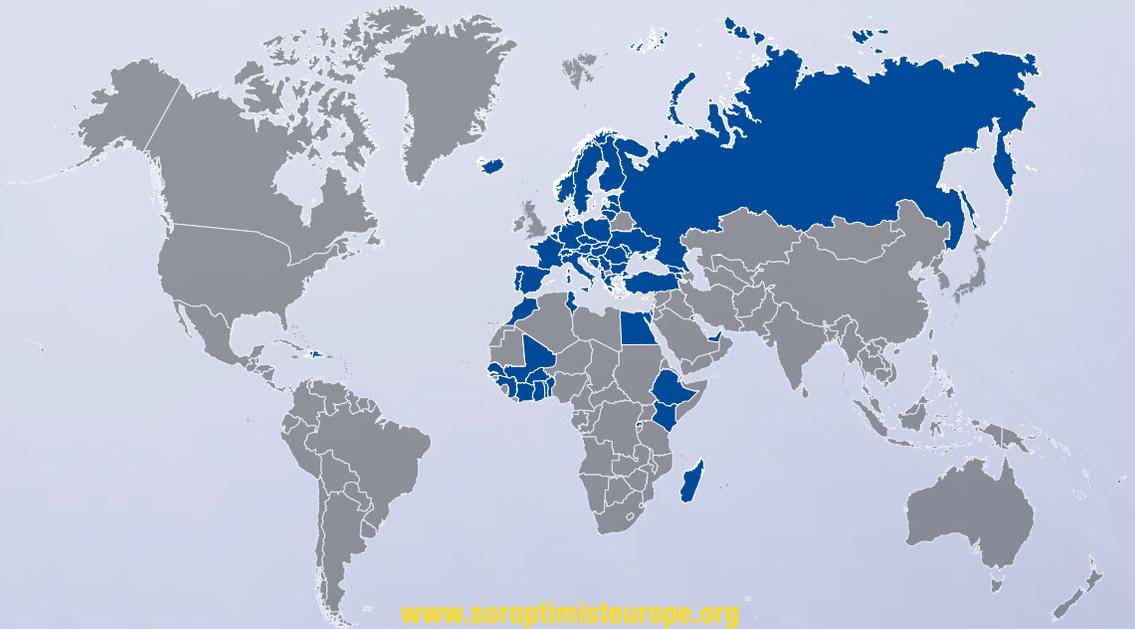
We are a worldwide network of professionally and socially diverse women.

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

We educate and empower women and girls to lead.

We fight violence against women and girls.

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



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