



# Soroptimist International of Europe

A network of professional women



# WHO WE ARE

## Network, members & countries

Soroptimists educate, empower and enable women and girls to improve their lives. Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) is a network of almost 31,500 professional women who work together to achieve this aim. SIE currently has 1,162 clubs, operating across 43 countries in Europe, 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.

Staying true to the meaning of the name “Soroptimist”—a combination of the Latin words “soror” meaning sister, and “optima” meaning best – we want the best for women. This is why we implement projects across the world, advocate at local, national and international levels, and enable women and girls to reach their full potential through scholarships and mentoring.



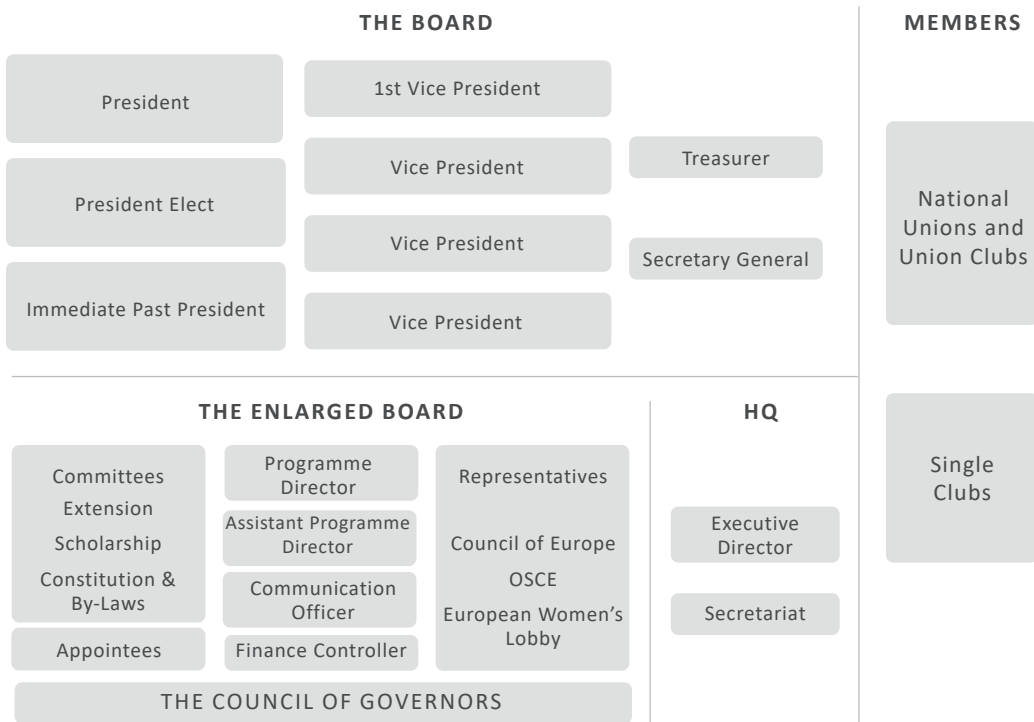
## History

The first Soroptimist club was founded in Oakland, California in 1921 with the aim to create a network of professional and community-spirited women who demonstrate high ethical standards in their work. Dr Suzanne Noël, a prominent plastic surgeon, initiated the movement in Paris by establishing the first Soroptimist International club in Europe in 1924. This inspired the establishment of many others in Continental Europe and Dr Noël went on to become the first President of the European Federation, founded in 1928.

## Why we are relevant

Soroptimists make a real difference in their communities and beyond. Every year members support, implement and/or finance on average 4,200 projects, and some 1.7 million women and girls have benefited from these efforts. Through its representatives at international institutions, SIE exercises a strong voice to defend women's rights. Because we are an independent and neutral organisation made up of women who all believe in the same core values and aim, we are able to achieve our goals whole-heartedly.

# ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE





# WHAT WE STAND FOR



## Mission, Vision and Principles

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, equality, development and peace, and the promotion of international goodwill and understanding.

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.

# OUR FIVE AREAS OF FOCUS





# EDUCATION

Educating women and girls enables them to realise their full potential and become financially independent. Furthermore, education has the potential to eliminate gender based illiteracy, establish female leaders in communities and professions, and eradicate violence against women. In a single year, SIE Unions and Clubs award over 3,500 scholarships to further women's and girls' education.



## WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

We help women gain the resources and skills to find gainful employment or to start their own businesses by conducting projects in partnership with micro-credit organisations, companies and other institutions. We reach out to women in rural areas who are stuck in a cycle of poverty and need to sacrifice much of their time to carrying out menial tasks. One way SIE helps is by building wells in communities to reduce the time women spend fetching water for cleaning or cooking and train women on how to increase their crop yields and sell their produce.



## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

We execute projects to respond to, prevent and eliminate violence against women. These projects are conducted in collaboration with local and national governments, policy makers and other institutions and include building shelters, aiding victims of violence, providing counselling, lobbying for improved prevention programmes and policies, and raising awareness. Examples of projects are “victim-friendly” interrogation rooms to aid the investigative process and drama therapy for victims of gender-based violence.



## HEALTH & FOOD SECURITY

Seroptimists work hard to ensure women and girls have access to food and the highest attainable standard of healthcare. We help to build and refurbish hospitals, provide medical supplies, provide tests and screenings and support the training of nurses and midwives. We address issues such as malnutrition, cancer, AIDS and water-borne diseases.



# SUSTAINABILITY

A sustainable environment is conducive to the well-being and empowerment of women. We initiate projects that improve the environment, address the needs of women and girls in their communities, mitigate the effects of climate change and provide aid after natural or man-made disasters. We also advocate for greater environmental sustainability at the local, national and international levels.



# HOW DO WE WORK?

# 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 and demand that priority issues for women receive their rightful place on the sustainable development agenda.



# Projects

SIE Unions and Clubs have implemented thousands of projects that focus on our key areas: education, women's empowerment, violence against women, health and food security, and sustainability. Each year, SIE grants Best Practice Awards to top projects. Every year, SIE awards the Best Practice Awards to the most successful projects.

## Funds

### **Scholarship Fund:**

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.

### **SIE Action Fund:**

supports humanitarian projects and promotes educational programmes.

### **Disaster Relief Fund:**

targets the specific needs of women and girls recovering from the effects of natural disasters and armed conflicts.

### **Roswitha Ott Fund:**

provides health care and education to children with special needs and children in need as well as financial assistance.





# Scholarship and Mentoring

In addition to the grants given out through the SIE Scholarship Fund, Unions and Clubs award numerous scholarships and organise various mentoring programmes. They pair up young women starting their careers with established professionals to gain insight and confidence and achieve success.

Mentoring is an essential part of the DNA structure of our organisation whose goals are to educate, empower and enable women and girls with the aim to improving their lives.

Mentoring is an effective and rewarding way of sharing SIE members' knowledge, skills and values, strengthening organisational capacity and creating powerful teams within its structure.



## PEACE PRIZE

For over fifteen years now, we have awarded the SIE Peace Prize to visionary women for their outstanding contributions towards the establishment or maintenance of peace in their own communities and abroad. Since 2005 SIE has awarded a biennial Peace Prize. From 2017 it will be presented at the SIE Congress to honour these individuals deserving special recognition for their remarkable achievements to promote peace.

Past Peace Prize recipients:

- Gégé Katana Bukuru, 2017
- Dr. Edit Schlaffer, 2015
- Silvana Arbia, 2013
- Sylvia Borren, 2011
- Valdete Idrizi, 2009
- Carla del Ponte, 2007
- Vera Bohle, 2005



## BECOME A SOROPTIMIST

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!



[www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org)



## SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE

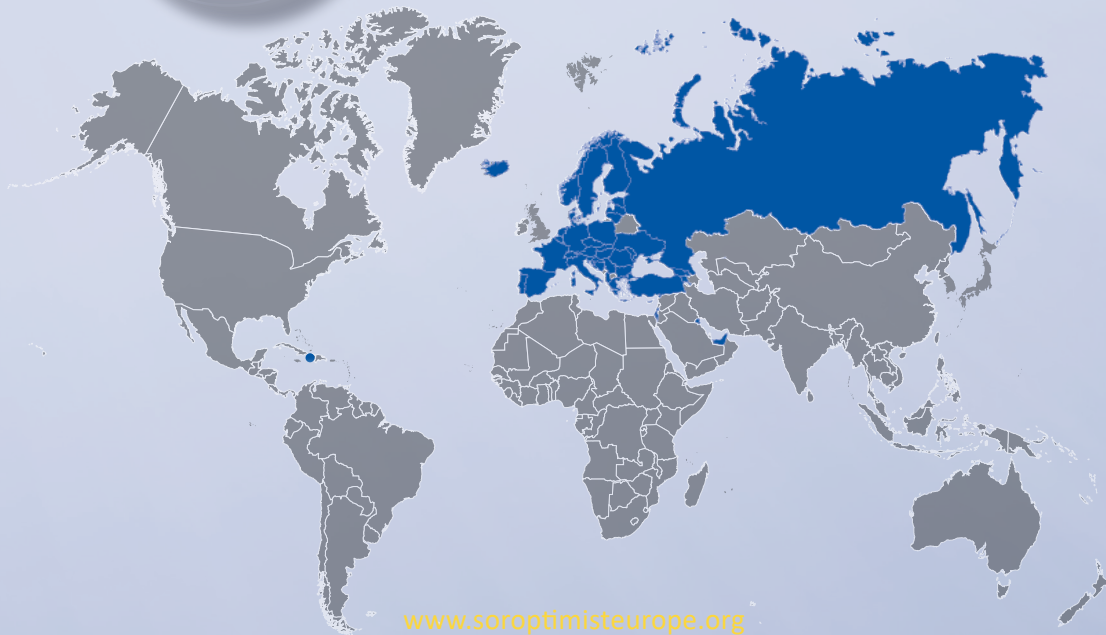
We are a worldwide network of professionally and socially diverse women.

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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