



**Seroptimist International of Europe
ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020**



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WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Soroptimist year 2019 – 2020 started as usual in October, I was looking forward to quite a few new clubs that were to be chartered. I was honored to charter, end of 2019, the SI Club Nairobi Central in Kenya, upon reflection the most attractive feature of Soroptimist is its ability to unite women with different backgrounds, experiences and cultures.

We are working under a common goal: projects directed to educate, enable and empower women. As a person brought up in a homogenous society it is very important that no matter the country, Soroptimists are the same: intelligent, receptive, resilient, brave and sensitive. One can always count on them, all of these features were observed when quiet and unremarkable year changed into something that children would be learning about - The Pandemic.

Beginning of 2020 was the onset of a global panic, dramatic scenes reported from many countries. Our members immediately got involved in the fight, at its forefront, our Unions and Clubs implemented all sorts of COVID-19 related activities and projects. We also quickly found ourselves flung into full digitalisation.

As pandemic pushed us to virtual reality, we witnessed an evolution where even the most reluctant were meeting online, the concept of e-membership started few years ago was organically transformed and accelerated. There have been tremendous benefits to our digital transformation, for example, the offering of the Holistic training fully online reached a larger audience to



help understand the role each of us play in being an advocate for our organisation and ensuring it's future. We continued as usual and with our goals regarding mentoring, leadership academy, advocacy initiatives and campaigns, all of this is highlighted in the pages of this report.

I would like to thank all the Unions and Clubs who have contributed to this report, it enables us to have a holistic view of the status of our organisation, where we are strong and where our focus needs to continue. Even with the exceptional challenges we experienced in the first year of my biennium, we can say as individuals and an organisation we stood up for women.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Anna Wszelaczyńska'.

Anna Wszelaczyńska
SIE President 2019-2021

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

THE BOARD



MEMBERS



THE ENLARGED BOARD



HQ



THE COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS

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 32'500 professional women who work together at local, national and international levels to achieve this aim. SIE currently has 1'222 Clubs, operating across 57 countries in Europe, Africa, 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, equality, development and peace, and the promotion of international goodwill and understanding.

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.

32'521

**Professional
women**

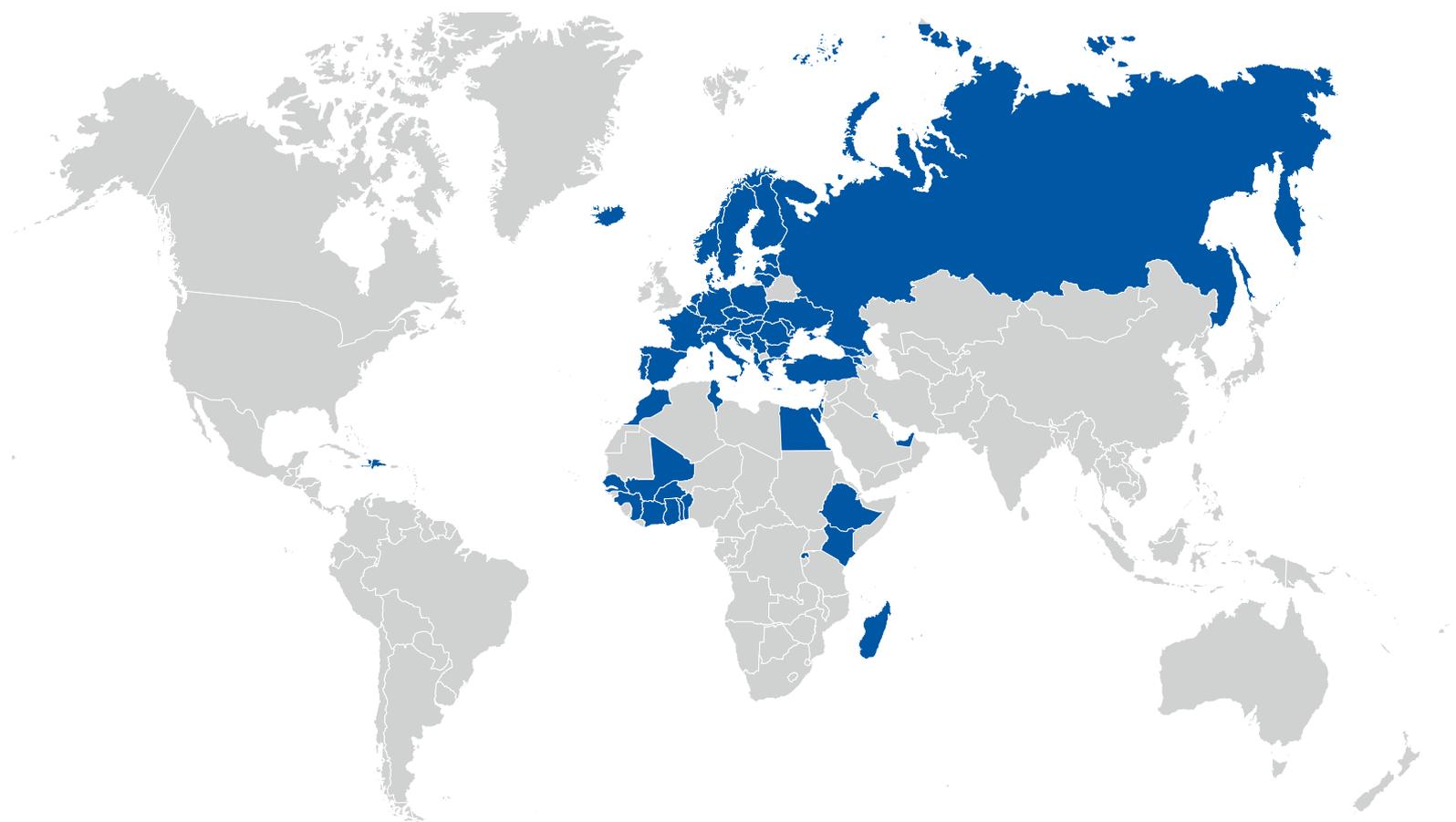
1'222

Clubs

57

Countries

WHERE WE ARE



57

countries

24

Unions

83

Single Clubs

Europe **50**

Africa **30**

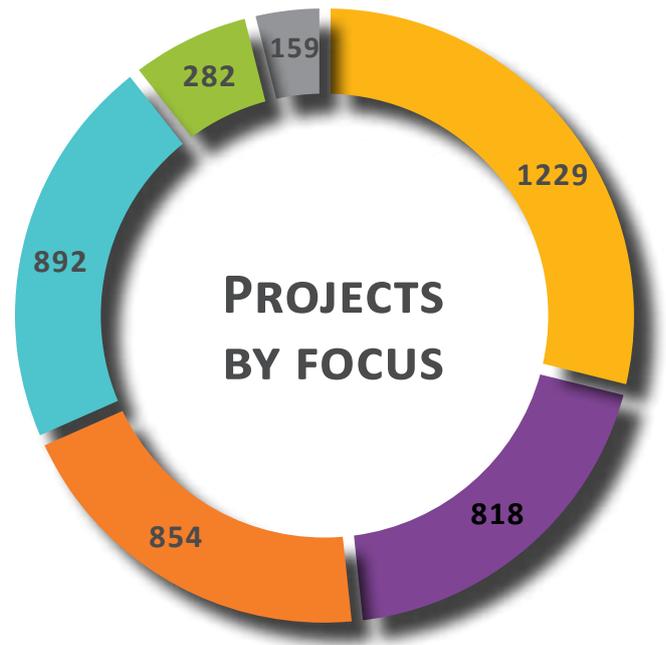
The Caribbean
& Middle East **3**

The Unions and Single Clubs located in Africa have joined the new Federation of Soroptimist International of Africa during summer 2020.



OUR PROJECTS

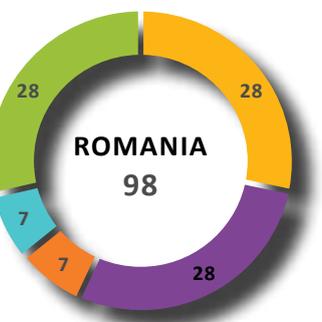
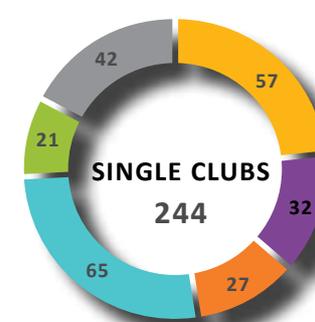
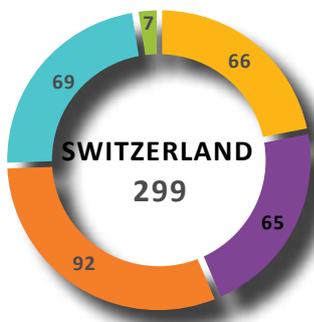
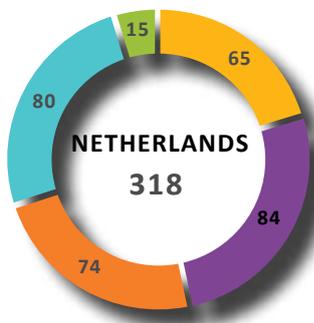
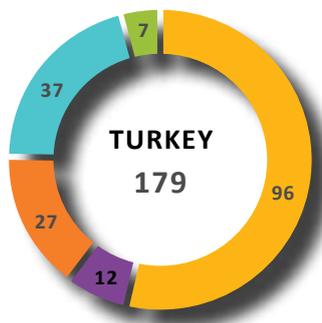
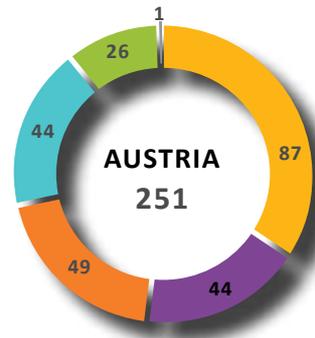
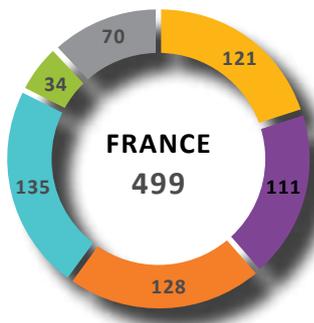
Single Clubs and Unions implement projects that focus on five main areas.

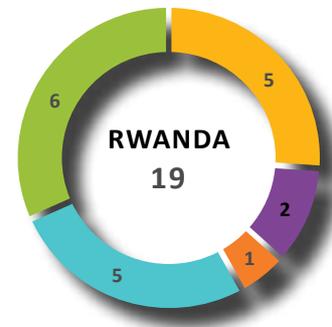
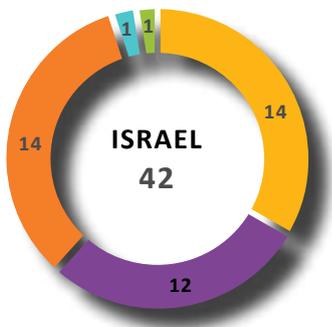
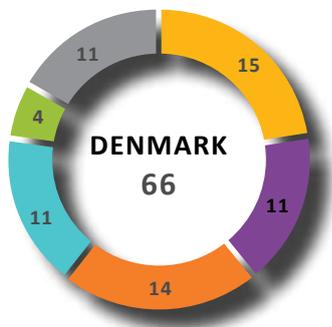
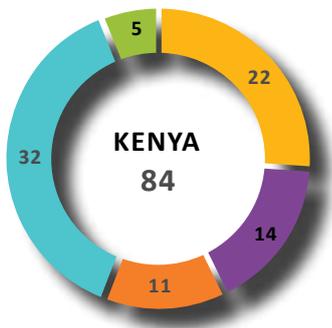
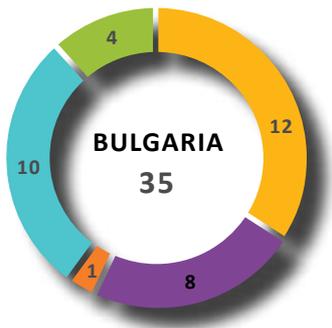
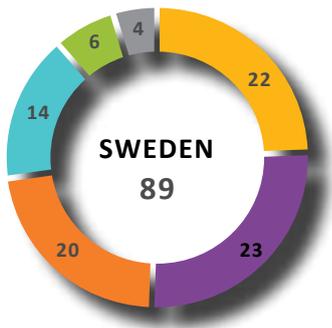


From October 2019 to September 2020, SIE members raised

5'580'869 €

and carried out **4'234** projects.







BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

**SPECIAL SIE
BIENNIUM AWARD
2019-2020**

**Funds raised by the
Clubs**

4'000 €

**Women & Girls
reached**

12'000

THE WALL

(The 30th Anniversary of the German Wall Fall-Down)

**Clubs of Budapest Corvinus (Hungary),
Hof/Saale, Plauen/Vogtland (Germany)**

The Club of Budapest Corvinus was invited by its Godmother club - Hof-Saale in Germany - to their event dedicated to the 30th Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall. Hungary also played a key role in the opening of the borders in 1989, thus, the Club of Budapest felt inspired by this project. They decided to target the millennial generation to have them not forget what it meant to live in a divided Europe, by using art as the channel for education. Art is borderless and can bridge between generations and nations.

To implement the project, the Hungarian Soroptimists selected an East Hungarian secondary school - focused on arts education - with the objective to give their students international exposure, as well as financial support. Multiple objectives were successfully obtained: the Soroptimists not only supported a school in need, they also ensured that the new generations remember such an important moment in history.



UNION BEST PROJECT

Funds raised by the Union

90'000 €

Funds raised by partners

40'000 €

“DONNE@LAVORO SI SOSTIENE IN CARCERE”: A NEW DIMENSION OF FREEDOM FOR WOMEN IN PRISON THROUGH JOB TRAINEESHIP

Union of Italy

Italian Soroptimists endeavoured to focus their efforts in promoting gender equality through two main objectives: education and economic empowerment. Through a collective action of Soroptimist clubs, the Union of Italy initiated a national project in order to improve the future of women in prison granting support through professional training courses and working activities. At the end of the training women receive a final certificate to be used in the employment market.

The Protocol signed by the Union of Italy in 2017 and renewed in 2019 with the Ministry of Justice was fundamental to allow the collaboration between the clubs and Prison Administrations. The expectation of this collaboration is to give women an opportunity to achieve economic emancipation inside the prison and give them better perspectives for their return into society through economic independence at the end.



TOP PROJECTS

EDUCATION

Funds raised by the Clubs

15'043 €

Women & Girls reached

800

GIRLS DAY 2019 EVENT AT THE FINNISH SCIENCE CENTRE HEUREKA

Clubs of Helsinki-Meri in collaboration with SI Espoo, SI Espoo-Meri, SI Helsinki, SI Helsinki III, Helsingfors, SI Helsinki-Erottaja, SI Kauniainen-Grankulla, SI Vantaa (Finland)



There is still not enough women in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) to create equality. To help close the gender gap Soroptimists in Finland took action to inspire girls!

Eight Soroptimists clubs arranged a “Girls day programme at the Finnish Science Centre Heureka” targeted to girls in secondary schools. The goal of the project was to arrange a hands-on workshop with STEM role models, to promote girls’ interest in science and technology.

The Soroptimists procured some sponsors and volunteers to set up several stands to familiarize in different STEM fields.

The project was a great success among young girls and the Soroptimists in Finland have agreed to arrange this kind of event again.



TOP PROJECTS

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Funds raised by the Union

2'620 €

Women & girls reached

400

MEETING THE NEEDS OF VARIOUS VOCATIONAL WORKSHOPS FOR WOMEN IN PRISON

Club of Ankara (Turkey)



The main objective of this project is to empower women to spend their time effectively, with vocational training whilst detained in the Women's Prison and Detention House in Sincan (Turkey).

Investing in women in prison should enable them to become productive and law-abiding members of society after release by providing them with basic life skills, improving their education, and increasing their employment opportunities. The Soroptimists of Ankara supported these women with the financial help of members and donors, provided supplies of handicraft, painting, knitting and doll making courses. Considering the cost of supply and inability of these women to purchase the materials, Soroptimists

providing the necessary equipment had a significant impact on the effectiveness of these courses. The hope is that what they learned during the workshops

will help them survive as a self-sufficient individual in free society and to prevent them from returning back to prison.



TOP PROJECTS

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Funds raised by the Union

3'626 €

Women & girls reached

741

CONNECTED BRACELETS FOR “ELLES”

Clubs of Agen (France)



In France, a woman dies every three days at the hands of her companion. Therefore, it was obvious for the Soroptimists to act, and the members of the Club of Agen mobilized.

The members have heard of the free application called App-Elles and the possibility of using connected bracelets via this application which allow alerting in the event of danger. By activating the bracelet, a woman who is subjected to violence turns on the mobile's microphone and GPS via the App-Elles application. Soroptimists worked with the Delegate for Women's Rights and Equality and took charge of handing over the 241 connected bracelets to

associations and shelters for women victims of violence. They also met and sensitized



 **App-Elles**
Alertes, En Partir, Agir

Stop aux violences faites aux fem

500 students with education and prevention sessions on violence against women.

The Soroptimists have the ambition that other clubs could assimilate this action in order to ensure the protection, information, and necessary assistance to “save lives”. The project received wide media coverage at a regional level.

TOP PROJECTS

HEALTH & FOOD SECURITY

Women & girls reached
600

TAP - THALASSEMIA AWARENESS PROJECT 2019

Clubs of Kuwait (Kuwait)

The Soroptimists in Kuwait spread awareness about blood-related diseases, especially Thalassemia, because the numbers of patients in the Arab Gulf region is the highest in the world. The government has an effective service process especially pre-marriage testing for inherited diseases; however, the region doesn't have specialized centre for Thalassemia treatment.

TAP 2019 was a first partnership with another regional NGO (Loyac), to raise awareness about the above objectives. SI Kuwait developed a curriculum to educate, enable, and empower youth to spread awareness about the disease and encourage them to join the advocacy movement.

Due to this joint awareness and advocacy action, SI Kuwait was able to change one of the governmental policies regarding blood pumps. In the past it was distributed for free only for citizens. Now it is for all nationalities that suffer from the disease who live in Kuwait.





EDUCATE TO LEAD

Soroptimists have a mission to “Educate to Lead” – to give young women a better chance to develop and to take on leadership roles in society, politics, work and many other aspects of modern life. During 2019-2020, Soroptimist International of Europe’s Board, established a new way of working: instead of working on Scholarships, Leadership Academies and Mentoring as three separate areas, these three areas were bundled under the umbrella of Leadership Development. This enables us to leverage synergies and offer support to young women in a longer, more streamlined and personalized way. We want to create stronger ties with beneficiaries and enable them to achieve their long-term goals, and at the same time Soroptimist will learn from younger women about their ideas and needs.

To further the benefits of all parties involved, scholarship grantees now contribute to Soroptimists’ work and mission by working with the endorsing club. In the future, the aim is to have the sponsoring club committed to offering a mentor to the scholarship grantee in order to provide holistic guidance - from financial support to mentoring. The aim being to support the grantee during her studies and give her the opportunity to be more exposed to Soroptimist.

The Leadership Academy concept was established after careful design and layout. Several webinars took place to inspire, convince and motivate Unions to adapt the Leadership Academy as a model across the Federation. The foundations have been laid

out and the forecast is looking bright for the Leadership Academy.

The same way as Soroptimist International of Europe plans to link Scholarships with Mentoring, the plan is to build a similar bridge between the Leadership Academy and Mentoring. This is currently being piloted in the Nordics. During the Soroptimist Nordic Leadership Academy mentoring is presented to the participants to continue supporting them in developing their skills and strengths.



This planned approach of Soroptimist International of Europe to bundle these elements of leadership development will support the younger women in forming strong and lasting networks of contacts. The approach should result in stronger ties with beneficiaries who will be able to achieve their long-term goals and at the same time Soroptimist will learn from younger women. The willingness of the members of Soroptimist to offer these young women their time as role model is of great value! For example, if 10% of Soroptimists in Europe once mentors one young woman, we can support 3.000 young women!



MENTORING

263

mentorships
offered

522

Soroptimist
mentors



426

Soroptimist
mentees

625

Non-Soroptimist
mentees

138

Non-Soroptimist
mentees who became
Soroptimists



ADVOCACY

Advocacy emerged in the constellation of roles and objectives of Soroptimist International Europe as a priority in the 2019-2025 strategy and remained a pinnacle focus during the first year of the biennium 2019-2021. Our members understood and responded particularly well to this appeal, engaging to the highest possible level.

Members have been pushing for legislative action, raising public awareness, acting to change stereotypes, informing, alerting, providing practical guidance, arguing for better conditions, campaigning. They are amplifying the Soroptimist voice through advocacy!

International Campaign for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

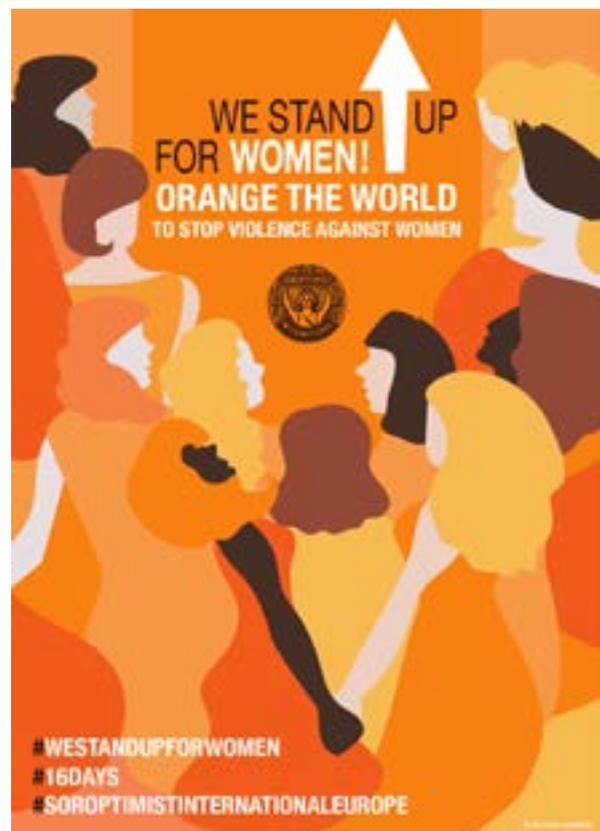
The Sustainable Development Goal – eliminating Violence Against Women (VAW) has been a focus. VAW is one of the most pervasive human rights violations, defined explicitly by the World Health Organization (Forty-Ninth World Health Assembly, 1996) as a significant health problem. It is entrenched in our cultures, societies and needs to be confronted and combatted.

The 2019 campaign, 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, our members mobilized their efforts to bring awareness:

- Posters and banners were put in local areas with high traffic, leaflets were distributed, meetings with decision makers

were conducted and messages were sent through social media.

- Public orange furniture and various art pieces were conceived for this event and put in public gardens or in front of public buildings.



- Hundreds of buildings, monuments, bridges, stadiums and statues were lit in orange and Soroptimists were standing aside them to talk to anyone walking about the importance of this UN emblematic date, and about the need to eliminate violence against women.

- Statements were delivered to all the Embassies across Europe, asking Ambassadors to join our Orange Campaign.

- Ambassadors received and met Soroptimists, heard our major concerns and those meetings gave visibility and credibility to our joint action. Conferences and trainings on violence against women were promoted. Along with flash-mobs, demonstrations, interviews to local radio and newspapers.

Our poster appeared in hundreds of countries, with the message STOP VIOLENCE.

Significant attention by all stakeholders, comprehensive policies and resources are more urgent, our Soroptimist network and our members are ready to address this problem.

The Impact of the Pandemic



Lock down due to COVID-19 in March 2020 showed how fragile public aid and protection measures are still in relation to violence.

Soroptimists in Europe realised the importance to launch messages urgently through social media platforms calling

upon the need to implement escape plan samples / emergency & help lines / shelters.

CSW64 was cancelled, yet for the first time ever in our history, Soroptimists who had travelled to New York were received by the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres. We were able to meet and discuss important topics relating to both European Women's Lobby and Soroptimist with Mr. Guterres.

As the United Nations was marking its 75th anniversary, the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 10th anniversary of UN Women, our members had the opportunity to participate in a variety of remote sessions, discussions and webinars which trained them to perform advocacy in the Unions.

Soroptimist supported several initiatives through statements and petitions:

- Statement on Reproductive Health and Women's Rights – 13 November 2020;
- The adoption of the ILO Convention C190 on Violence and Harassment in the place of work;
- Poland's political decision to withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

COVID-19 is causing the largest female-to-male gap seen since 2000, with surveys already showing that the situation is leaving severe wounds on sustainable development. Soroptimists will continue taking bold action in the fight for gender parity. Let's advocate!



FUNDS

SIE has established funds to allocate resources to specific areas of work.

Federation 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.

Disaster Relief Fund

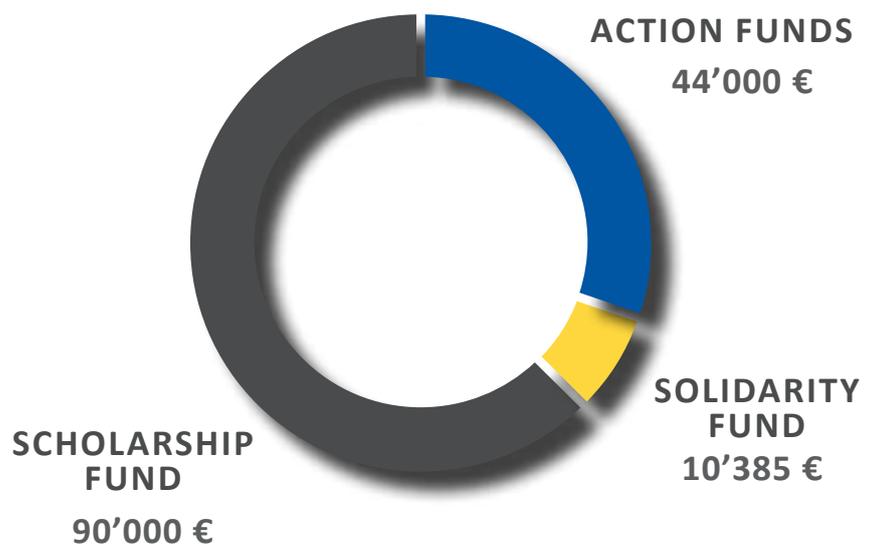
targets the specific needs of women and girls recovering from the effects of natural disasters and armed conflicts.

SIE Action Fund

supports humanitarian projects and promotes educational programmes.

Roswitha Ott Fund

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





SCHOLARSHIP

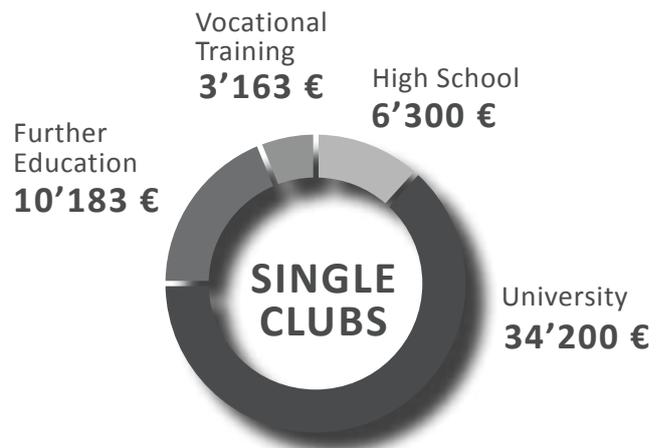
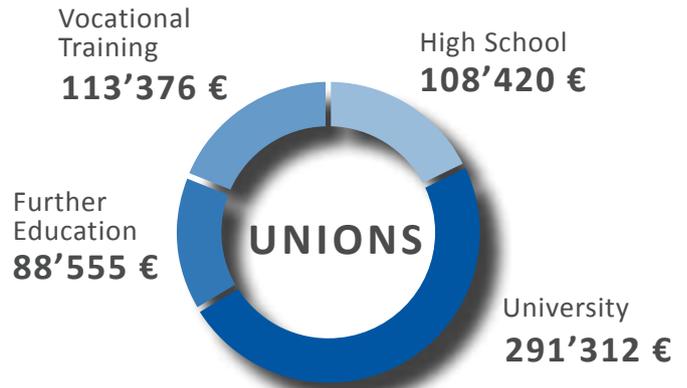
3'613

SCHOLARSHIPS GRANTED

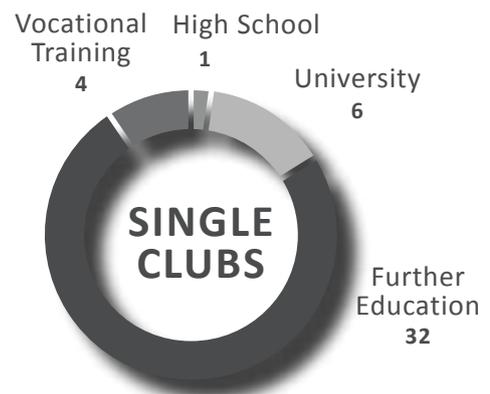
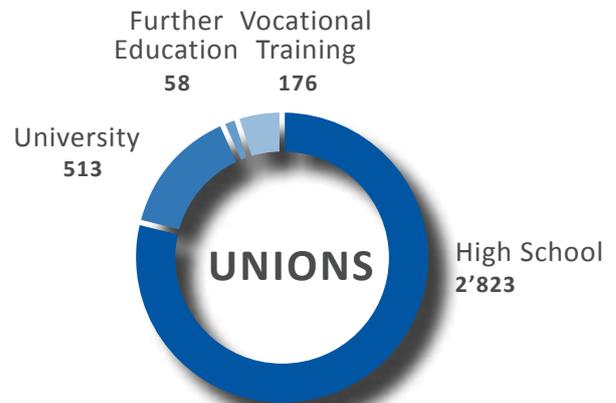
655'509 €

SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS AWARDED

AMOUNTS AWARDED 2019-2020



SCHOLARSHIPS GRANTEES AWARDED





GROWING MEMBERSHIP 2020

The continuation of a journey

An urgent need:

As an organisation, we could no longer witness the declining membership, the fact of a higher average member age, the competition of more attractive networks, meeting formats not adapted to the modern active woman, we had to act to help reverse the trend.

At the threshold of SI centenary, our Federation needed to encourage growth in order to secure our future: Virtual Development being a key strategy.

Curiosity & agility: Unions, the key to success

Building on the concept outlined in the previous biennium, quick action to the implementation phase was needed. First, soliciting and involving Unions in order to familiarize them with the concept of virtual membership; which is a club that can function online. Several presentations, meetings, and webinars followed to encourage ownership of the project and to learn from the testimonies and experiences from the online Clubs that were being implemented, by 2020 summer there were 6 clubs in progress.

In the troubled times of the pandemic, adapting support and taking action was the motto. Soroptimists have answered all over the world and succeeded to ensure continuity in their projects and actions. Using digital communication tools became essential, with face-to-face meetings no longer allowed until further notice, hosting meetings and managing projects online became second nature.



There are Soroptimists in our organisation who can make it possible for the organisation to continue into the next century. By allowing women who are interested in our values and our projects to join our

organization, regardless of their place of residence, their agendas, their mobility, their younger age, race, results in a more inclusive club format, which will help usher in a new Soroptimist century with more active forces to defend the status of women. Isn't it our "raison d'être"?



SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL of Europe

Soroptimists are women in professions and business who work together at local, national and international levels to educate, empower and enable women and girls with an aim to improving their lives. We are a strong international network of over 70'000 women, who are powerful and effective advocates of women's and girls' rights.

If you want to help us make a difference for girls and women in your community and beyond, if you would like to extend your network, we invite you to find out more about us!

www.soroptimisteurope.org



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