



WOMEN IN WAR ZONES

Soroptimist



International of Europe

STANDING UP FOR WOMEN IN WAR ZONES



Soroptimist International was founded in California by 80 professional women just over a hundred years ago, in 1921. Since then, the organisation has grown to become an international network of over 72,000 women, across five Federations.

The European Federation, Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE), recently saw just how important this existing network is when war broke out in Ukraine in February 2022. The status of women had become one of a refugee, with human rights being violated daily, and peace inexistent. Having **Soroptimists on the ground, speaking the local language, embedded in local society meant that we could react quickly, thoughtfully, and in alignment with the real needs on the ground.** Grassroots projects gained international support and visibility through Soroptimist's connection, infrastructure, and members. Within days of war breaking out we structured a three-pronged approach to get aid where it was most needed and fast.

This report looks at what we have accomplished since war began and is testament to those relationships and connections formed by our members over years of dedicated service locally and internationally. Our size and global reach enabled us to help immediately, though it was the autonomous nature of our local clubs and the support they received from

our organisation, members, and public from across the globe which meant action could be carried out at scale. To date we have delivered € 650,000 in support of over 20 projects, aiding thousands of women and children affected by the war in Ukraine. This number continues to rise as the war continues to be fought and its consequences felt in Ukraine and abroad.

More people than we can mention stepped up to support women and children in Ukraine. Our thanks and recognition goes out to the many Soroptimists, Unions and Clubs who believe in our mission and have made such a difference.

The need remains high and in the future this need will increase and change. When rebuilding the destroyed war zone, we will be there. When education is re-established, we will be there. When peace talks are held and agreements reached, women must have a seat at the table.

Much has changed in the 100 years since Soroptimist was founded. We have seen war, pandemics, and global warming. Throughout all we have remained steadfast in our original mission: to stand up for women and embody the name of our organisation with solidarity by doing the best for women or 'Soror Optima'.

Carolien Demey
SIE President 2021-2023

THE WAR ZONE INITIATIVE

Within days of war breaking out, the UNHCR (The United Nations Refugee Agency) declared Ukraine a level 3 emergency – the highest level that exists.

Since February 2022, the mass exodus of refugees has persisted. Over 7.9 million Ukrainian refugees have been recorded across Europe, according to the UNHCR, an estimated 90% of whom are women and children. As a result, the Agency called upon the global community to provide humanitarian assistance.

Due to the urgency of the situation and in order to respond quickly and effectively to this human disaster, the SIE Programme Team mobilised and adapted an existing scalable online tool. Our 'Project Matching' tool which links projects, members and the wider public, was quickly adapted to support War Zone Initiatives in countries bordering Ukraine.

'Project Matching'

Project Matching is a virtual platform that links Soroptimist projects with expertise and funding in just a few clicks. Due to the agile nature of the platform, by March 2022 we had already posted our first projects related to Ukraine. Since then, 20 war initiative projects have requested support, which they received from our global network, amounting to over €477,679.19 in donations.

To find out more about these projects, please visit the [SIE Project Matching](#) website.

Total raised
€477,679.19

20 projects implemented under the War Zone Initiative

1	Hungary, SI Budapest Corvinus	€13,482
2	Hungary, SI Szombathely Phase 1	€10,200
3	Hungary, SI Szombathely Phase 2	€13,984
4	Hungary, SI Szombathely Phase 3	€23,355.51
5	Moldova, SI Chisinau	€19,919.79
6	Moldova, SI Edinet Phase 1	€5,518.38
7	Moldova, SI Edinet Phase 2	€15,151.91
8	Moldova, SI Edinet & neighbouring countries	€16,501.97
9	Moldova, SI Nisporeni Phase 1	€6,300
10	Moldova, SI Nisporeni Phase 2	€6,887.29
11	Moldova, SI Stefan Voda Phase 1	€14,663
12	Moldova, SI Stefan Voda Phase 2	€19,281.24
13	Poland, SI Union	€147,803.19
14	Poland, SI Warsaw	€33,434.24
15	Romania, SI Union	€52,073
16	Slovakia, SI Bratislava Phase 1	€16,235.40
17	Slovakia, SI Bratislava Phase 2	€15,000
18	Slovakia, SI Kosice	€14,049.11
19	Slovakia, SI Žilina Phase 1	€34,859.16
20	Slovakia, SI Žilina Phase 2	€20,000

**Informed
action,
tailored
to what
works best
locally**

With people leaving Ukraine by any means available, bordering countries have seen the highest need for action. This has been reflected in the countries where we have seen most projects and requests for support, which include Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.

The real power of these projects is that they are implemented by Soroptimists *in situ*, in direct response to specific local needs. Objectives are structured initially to meet basic human needs and to provide psychosocial support to those people affected by the conflict. Secondary objectives provide more sustainable, long-term support, in terms of housing; education; legal and psychological support; and access to information.

Unions and clubs involved are working hard on the ground to carry out their projects. The Programme Team liaises with project leaders fortnightly, to gather news and critical indicators of how activities are progressing, how funds have been employed and the status of each project. This information is shared publicly online on our dedicated [SIE Project Matching](#) website.

Since the first war zone initiative projects were uploaded at the beginning of March 2022, our **Project Matching platform has raised €477,679.19 for Women in War Zones**. Reaching such a colossal sum was only possible thanks to the unfailing engagement of Soroptimists across Europe and beyond. Indeed, all five Soroptimists Federations have contributed and played their part in this collective accomplishment, demonstrating, once again, that Soroptimist solidarity has no borders.

It was important for us to share this information and highlight the efforts made by everyone in this time of unprecedented upheaval, where we must work even harder to fulfil our mission: to improve the lives of women and girls.

Witness, adapt and respond

Mobilisation does not stop at the doors of Project Matching. Our impact comes from being able to act simultaneously at a grassroots and an international level. When a crisis develops, Soroptimists are already in place, actively and concretely engaged in their respective communities throughout the 43 countries in which Soroptimist International of Europe is present.

The organisation is structured with Federations, Unions, Clubs and members. Our clubs are purposefully independent, to ensure that crisis responses are never standardised. The result is informed action, tailored to what works best locally. In the cases of our Women in War Zones initiative, projects are aligned to the conditions of their respective countries and respond to the specific needs of the displaced people there.

What are Soroptimist International of Europe Unions and Clubs doing to help?

Responses from Unions and Clubs to support and help integrate women and child refugees fulfil three main objectives:

Financial support

- Monthly allowance for asylum seekers
- Housing assistance
- Provision for health costs
- Payment of transport costs

Support to integrate

- Language courses
- Aid to open a bank account in the host country
- Support to register children in schools or colleges

Provision of necessities

- Clothes
- Food
- Medicine

Programme and advocacy complete each other

At the heart of Soroptimist International's advocacy work is its relationship with the United Nations. The accreditation of Soroptimist International to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) demonstrates our credibility as a reputable partner organisation and as an informed voice on women and girls.

Project Matching is not only an essential tool in these troubled times, it also allows us to gather relevant, credible data that speaks of the reality on the ground. This data is shared on an international stage in Soroptimist International's high-level political forum report.

The [high-level political forum on sustainable development \(HLPF\)](#) is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development. It has a central role in the follow-up and review of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) at the global level.

Due to the current context in Europe, the theme proposed to SIE within the framework of the HLPF report was related to the situation in Ukraine and the displaced populations in neighbouring countries. Project Matching has made it possible to gather a wealth of information to complete this significant report.

This report provides Soroptimist International with a vital opportunity to provide policy recommendations and share information about projects that demonstrate best practices. Indeed, the projects in this report demonstrate the innovations that SI members bring to their own communities, supporting countries on their pathways to sustainable development.

To read the 2022 the HLPF Report, please click [HERE](#).

SIE Programme Team 2021-2023
Sandra Gonzalez Sköld
Jitka Kratochvílová
Bintou Koïta



SOROPTIMIST'S VOICE ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Soroptimist International of Europe has representatives in three key European institutions: the European Women's Lobby (EWL), the Council of Europe (CoE), and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). This is in addition to advocacy carried out by Clubs and Unions, and our relationship with the United Nations.

In April 2022, Soroptimist International of Europe attended the International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGO)'s General Assembly. SIE Immediate Past President, Anna Wszelaczyńska took part in a debate organised by the Social Rights Action Committee on 'How to ensure respect for economic and social rights in times of war and of declining multilateralism'. Anna highlighted Soroptimist's prompt action on the ground in Ukraine, and the importance of funding reaching those at a local level, both in Ukraine, and those displaced to neighbouring countries.

Furthermore, SIE President, Carolien Demey, and SIE OSCE representative, Dora Vrdlovec, attended the '22nd Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons' in April 2022, which was organised by the OSCE's Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. Here, President Carolien Demey presented action taken by members of Soroptimist's European Federation, including: our initiatives for Women in War Zones, and projects members accomplished in protecting, assisting, and preventing women and girls from being trafficked on the borders of Ukraine. For the first time, statements made by SIE were published on the OSCE's platform, both on the war in Ukraine.

WOMEN IN WAR ZONES

TASK FORCE SUMMARY

With an existing network of over 30,288 Soroptimists in Europe alone, when war broke out, Soroptimist International of Europe was well positioned to take immediate action at a local level in Ukraine and the surrounding countries.

To effectively harness our structure and streamline the response to the war in Ukraine SIE President, Carolien Demey, created an emergency task force. This was set up with immediate effect, with the kick-off meeting to its 6-month tenure being held on 23rd of March 2022. The Task Force was made-up of four teams of Soroptimist members selected to provide support to clubs on the front lines, as well as to Ukrainian people directly. Individuals taking part were chosen for their extensive first line contact with 'women in war zones' and/or experience in federation matters.

The task force established five goals, as well as the objective to create a data bank to collate information, transferring it to SIE's Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, to support informed decision making and strategy. This was formalised in a questionnaire which was carried out in each location where Soroptimists were taking direct action in the war zone initiative. Crucially, it provided an overview of what was happening on the ground and what was urgently needed.

Task Force Groups

1. **Switzerland** - Ukrainian people in Ukraine and in other countries and the Polish Union
2. **Norway** – for the Clubs in Moldova and Romania
3. **Austria** - for the Clubs in Slovakia and Hungary
4. **Current needs** – know-how, money, mentoring, strategy

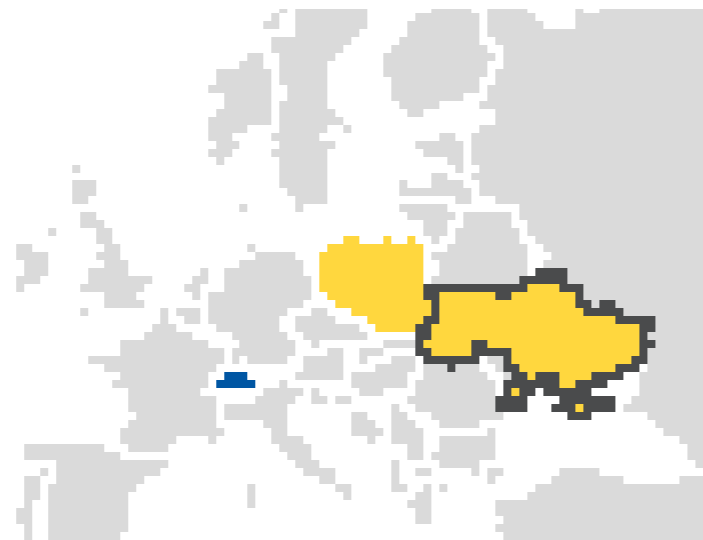
Task Force Goals

1. **Coordinate support for Clubs in the affected regions** - Ukraine, Moldova, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary and Romania
2. **Advise SIE's team at Headquarters on fund allocation** - Specifically where funds from the Disaster Recovery Fund (DRF) should be directed, based on the most urgent local requirements
3. **Develop a strategy to reconstruct livelihoods** - Based around mentoring, education, know-how, financial support
4. **Visibility** - Ensure our organisation and the difference it makes is visible to promote further support
5. **One voice** - Have a centralised, coordinated response, which follows and tracks all initiatives, and streamlines communication

SWITZERLAND

Supporting Ukrainian people in Ukraine and abroad, and the Polish Union

Task Force contact person: Alice Even (SI Luxembourg)



UKRAINE

5 Soroptimist Clubs
78 Soroptimist Members

For the past 13 years, SI Union Switzerland and the Ukrainian Single Clubs have been twinned. As a result, they have forged strong communications channels and ties with one another, which proved invaluable when war broke out in February 2022.

SI Lviv, Ukraine, located just 70 km from the Polish border, quickly became active distributing basic needs to those fleeing Ukraine. Swiss Soroptimists provided funding directly to the club's Ukrainian account to ensure immediate provisions could be provided for the refugees' needs as well as financing transport services and purchasing medical supplies for hospitals in Lviv.

Lviv's position close to the Polish border and active Soroptimist club meant that it acted as a hub for multiple initiatives. Not only by supporting refugees but also orphanages, and asylum centres in Ukraine and sending those trucks with goods to damaged cities in Eastern Ukraine (Kharkiv, Dnepropetrovsk and Chernihiv).

POLAND

11 Soroptimist Clubs
247 Soroptimist Members

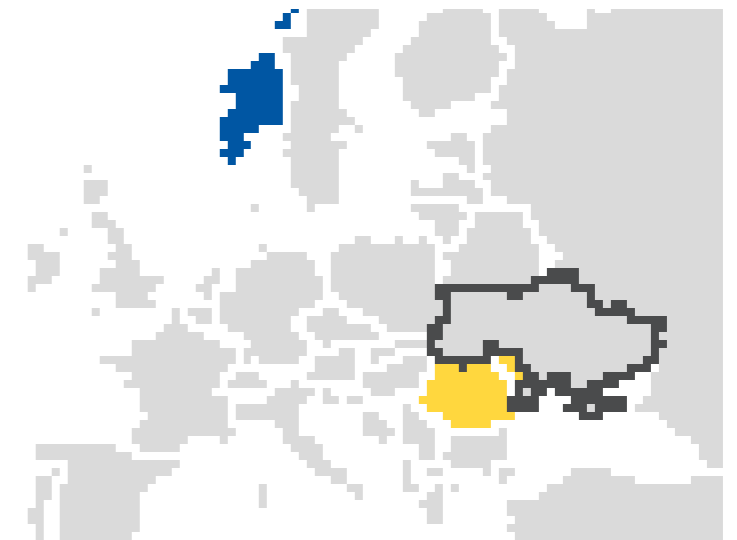
By the 9th of June 2022 Poland had already received 3,817,564 refugees. The majority wishing to stay in the south of the country, with the hopes of returning home as soon as possible. Given the severity of the situation, the Polish Union quickly launched a Project Matching initiative focused on supporting refugees, predominantly women and children. The project raised the full €150'000 it set out to, thereby ensuring the clubs of Poland had the means to provide emergency humanitarian aid, legal assistance; access to interpreters and translators; and psychological assistance.

Polish clubs have adapted to developing local needs, offering city tours, giving Polish language courses, providing funding for transport costs, holding trauma workshops, printing textbooks translated from Polish to Ukrainian, as well as launching an information portal named 'Ukrainian in Poland'.

NORWAY

Supporting Clubs in Moldova and Romania

Task Force contact person: Mihaela Aquelius (SI Sweden)



MOLDOVA

5 Soroptimist Clubs
66 Soroptimist Members

Moldovan clubs initially reacted by providing basic needs-adapted aid to refugees arriving from Ukraine. SI Club Edinet raised funds to equip four temporary refugee complexes in their municipality.

As the situation developed, so too did the type of provision needed, with clubs offering psychological support for women, and setting up projects such as SI Club Chisinau's project 'Overcoming the Fears of War through Friendship and Support', which is aimed at supporting children from Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova and their mothers.

A special mention goes to the efforts of SI Club Stefan Voda. Based in proximity to the border with Transnistria and not far from Odessa (100km), the traffic of refugees there is high. The club assisted both those people remaining in Moldova and those in transit, by meeting their immediate humanitarian needs and by holding educational meetings with refugees.

ROMANIA

7 Soroptimist Clubs
105 Soroptimist Members

During the three intensive months the task force was running, meetings were held twice a month. Initiatives were adapted to fulfil needs presented in each city. Broadly speaking clubs purchased clothing, hygiene articles, and other necessities, which they placed in backpacks and distributed among approximately 200 refugees in their cities. Adapting to the new needs of refugees remaining in Romania, Soroptimists printed 150 conversation guides from Romanian to Ukrainian. Clubs also acted to set up psychological sessions for refugees and print trafficking awareness flyers, which were handed to refugees at the Ukrainian-Romanian border.

AUSTRIA

Supporting Clubs in Slovakia and Hungary

Task Force contact person:
Evelyn Susanne Ernst-Kirchmayr
(SI Austria)



SLOVAKIA

3 Soroptimist Clubs
63 Soroptimist Members

The Soroptimists of SI Club Bratislava have acted to help Ukrainian refugees living in Bratislava with the day-to-day reality of being uprooted. In an effort to get support to people even before they arrive in Bratislava, they sent a vehicle filled with hygiene supplies, clothes, and medical materials to the Ukraine border. Both this club and SI Club Žilina worked in collaboration with the Association of Emergency Ambulances (AZZS), (an association that offers their ambulances to be filled with healthcare material to be sent to Kyiv's military hospital), by gathering and donating medical provisions.

SI Club Košice is located just 70 km from the border with Ukraine. Their close proximity means their efforts have been based around providing immediate material humanitarian help to the refugees. Additionally, they have been coordinating the purchase of goods needed by the clubs in the war zone itself, and organising transportation for people from the border.

HUNGARY

Task Force contact person: Csenge Rózsa-Jäger
(SI Austria)

2 Soroptimist Clubs
40 Soroptimist Members

Given Hungary's location bordering Ukraine, much of the response was related to front line activities.

This means providing direct humanitarian aid to refugees, especially women and children, coming across the border from Ukraine to Hungary: collection from the border and transportation to safe housing, accommodation, healthcare, food, medicine and toiletries.

Clubs also worked in cooperation with a pharmaceutical company and 'The Maltese Charity Service' to provide help by collecting and transporting medicine and bandages to Ukraine.

DISASTER RECOVERY FUND

€ 405,777

DONATIONS IN 2022

For over 10 years the Disaster Recovery Fund has provided urgent financial assistance to countries both inside and outside SIE. By applying a pragmatic, efficient authorisation process, the SIE Board and team at our Headquarters in Switzerland can approve grants and deliver the necessary funds to disaster-related projects within days.

In 2022, this fund saw a simultaneous surge in applications for support and donations. As Soroptimists worked hard to set up projects in war zone regions, as highlighted throughout this brochure, we received record-breaking donations reaching into the tens of thousands.

The continuity of the fund is solely based on the generosity of members and donations from individuals and organisations around the globe, without which many projects would not have been able to take place or would have been severely limited in reach.

If you are interested in learning more about our Disaster Recovery Fund, or would like to support the fund itself, please visit our website: <https://www.soroptimisteurope.org/donate/disaster-recovery-fund/>

€ 195,151

IN SUPPORT OF PROJECTS FOR WOMEN IN WAR ZONES



Main Donors

1. SI The Netherlands, Suriname & Curaçao (SIE)
2. SI Japan (SIA)
3. SI Belgium (SIE)
4. SI Iceland (SIE)
5. SI Philippines Region (SIA)



WHERE WE STAND SIE Statement

**We Stand up for Women in War Zones
- February 25th 2022**

In case of armed conflict, women suffer disproportionately. Women rarely seek war but are the most affected by war. In peace talks, they are usually absent, if not excluded. The conflict in Ukraine cannot leave us silent. We fear for the health and well-being of millions of women and girls who may suffer injury, loss of their homes and their jobs, displacement, loss of schooling, rape, and death. Women are much more vulnerable to war crimes than men.

We call upon the states to fully respect the human rights of all women and girls in Ukraine as stated in the Convention on Human Rights of the Council of Europe to which all Council of Europe member states agreed to adhere, including Russia and Ukraine.

We also urge all European countries to welcome citizens of Ukraine who flee the zone of combat and seek safety. Women and girls should receive special protection due to their greater vulnerability.

Our organisation, Soroptimist International of Europe, is present in most European countries, including Russia and Ukraine. We work on projects educating, empowering, and enabling women and girls – please join us in helping women in war zone.

SIE Statement
February 25, 2022

SI Statement

**SI Statement against the war in
Ukraine - March 4th 2022**

Soroptimist International, Associated Country Women of the World, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Graduate Women International, International Alliance of Women, Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO), Zonta International and NGO Committee on Aging-Vienna stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, who have found themselves in an unwanted conflict. During the 20th Century, Europe and the world strove to recover from devastating wars. Now, war has returned to the continent to the detriment of humanity. The human impacts of this war will reach far into the future. This conflict is in clear violation of international law, which forbids acts of aggression, the UN Charter and human rights for all. International humanitarian and human rights law must be upheld; the targeting of civilians constitutes a crime against humanity and a war crime. Together, we call for an immediate halt to hostilities, for all troops to be withdrawn, and for good-faith, peaceful, diplomatic negotiations to begin in a neutral territory. The actions of states must place the good of citizens and humanity at their heart, accordingly, all civilians must be protected.

War is never gender-neutral. Women and girls in all their diversity are always disproportionately affected by war, and it is no different in this conflict. The projections that millions will be displaced and will become refugees, are being realised with thousands fleeing daily. Many

of those on the move are women and girls; specific, targeted, gender-transformative programmes must be immediately developed and implemented to ensure that their lives, hopes and dreams are not irreparably damaged by this war.

Women and girls caught up in this humanitarian crisis will miss out on valuable education. They are at increased risks of early or child marriage, trafficking, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. Women and girls will now be unable to access vital medical services, including sexual and reproductive health treatment and support. The UNFPA has shared how pregnant women, new mothers and babies are having to be cared for in make-shift underground bunkers or are giving birth in metro stations as health facilities become unsafe or are too damaged to function. Older and disabled women struggle to escape conflict

areas as transportation becomes unsafe and usual support is no longer available. Girls and women of all ages are now facing an uncertain future with increasing fear under shelling. Many will be left with long-term trauma. The infrastructure damage caused by war sets back sustainable development, and the achievement of gender equality.

With the presence of working nuclear power plants in a war zone, the environmental risks are significant during a time when the world is already facing a climate crisis. Now, Russian nuclear forces are on high alert. The consequenc-

es of any nuclear fallout would be unimaginable and devastating to the Ukrainian people, the environment of neighbouring countries and the world. International institutions and the global political system have been constructed to avoid just such an eventuality. In 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was negotiated and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, both major steps towards a non-nuclear world. Any nuclear threats must be stepped down.



Civil society organisations such as Soroptimist International, Associated Country Women of the World, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Graduate Women International, International Alliance of Women, Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, Zonta International and NGO Committee on Aging-Vienna are frequently the first responders on-the-

ground, as they live in the affected communities, witnessing these challenges first hand, finding immediate solutions and distributing aid. Members of civil society open their homes to refugees, feeding those on the move, and promoting their safety. This is already happening in Ukraine and neighbouring countries; these humanitarian efforts must be supported. Due to the nature of refugee dispersal and internally displaced persons, collecting thorough and reliable disaggregated data on women and girls in all their diversity will be almost impossible. This will make it difficult to assess the total impacts of this war on women and girls, includ-

ing those living in rural and remote communities and those from indigenous communities less well-known outside of Ukraine.

The UN General Assembly and Secretary General António Guterres have called for an immediate cessation to the conflict, outlining that it contravenes the UN Charter. The UN General Assembly has now voted overwhelmingly to condemn the invasion of the Ukraine and has called for Russia to withdraw its forces. Soroptimist International, Associated Country Women of the World, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Graduate Women International, International Alliance of Women, Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, Zonta International and the NGO Committee on Aging-Vienna support these calls. Soldiers must be withdrawn from hostilities on Ukrainian soil and political leaders must seek a peaceful resolution. International law and diplomacy should always be the mechanism to peacefully address disagreements between states; the needless destruction of war is only to the detriment of all people. In our interconnected world, we can see first-hand the rapidly increasing impacts of this conflict. We can all learn from the human stories which demonstrate the pointlessness, futility and devastation of war. Protests and acts of resistance and human understanding are being joined worldwide. The signatories of this statement join the call of many across the world for this war to end now.

Ukrainian women refugees: their vulnerability to exploitation

More than two million people, mostly women with children, have fled from Ukraine by now. They are extremely vulnerable. They have lost almost all that made them feel safe and protected: their husbands who had to stay behind, their friends and neighbours, their jobs, their

cultural embedment. Many of them have traumatic war experiences. Coming to a safe country and receiving food and shelter is only a first relief. The future is more than uncertain for most of them.

And it can be dangerous:

These women, many of them pregnant or with small children, who are tired and frightened, are easy prey for criminals. They are in fear of being robbed of the few belongings they still have, and from being sexually assaulted. Criminals seek to traffic them into all types of exploitation. This is happening already, and it has to stop!

We know of women being offered transport at the Ukrainian border, but after gratefully having accepted it, they ended up in forced labour or prostitution. Others are relieved to find housing, only to discover that it entails domestic servitude or sexual services. This is trafficking in human beings and IT IS A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY. It is banned by international treaties.

Soroptimist International of Europe, true to its maxim "We stand up for women" calls upon all Europeans to protect Ukrainian refugees from trafficking and from any other forms of crime. All victims of trafficking, to a large majority of them women, need our protection and our support. We, Soroptimists in Europe, are ready to provide both.

Soroptimist clubs have already in the past been active to prevent trafficking and they have helped victims. In the present situation with millions of women at risk, our vigilance and our efforts will be multiplied.

Soroptimist International
March 16th, 2022

UNITED WE STAND

Our Unions brought their clubs and members together with the common purpose of helping women and girls in the war zone and at home. This goal went beyond borders, leveraging union, club and individual bonds and networks that have existed for many years.

Each of our Unions and their Clubs have approached this monumental task in a different way, adapting to local needs. The five country summaries that follow are representative of just some of the actions Soroptimists have taken. The scale of the response meant that we sadly could not mention all the incredible efforts made

GERMANY

International cross-club network for impact

Our strength is in our numbers and how we complement one another in terms of financing, experience, network and location. Maximising this means drawing together our individual club strengths and needs. In the case of the Ukraine war, German clubs worked together in support of projects for refugees living in Germany, as well as in the war zone and neighbouring countries.



Loading a 40 ton truck with supplies to bring to SI Uzhgorod (Ukraine)

German Soroptimists set up the means for receiving donations and developed channels to direct them to where they were most needed. **As of May 2022, 130 German clubs had donated over € 300,000 in aid, ranging from vouchers worth €100 for incoming refugees, to 5-figure donations for medical equipment for Ukraine.** Housing and equipment for refugees, as well as funding for lessons and learning materials for refugees in Germany, were provided by the clubs themselves or privately by club sisters. German clubs worked closely with Polish clubs in Gdansk, Warsaw and Wratistavia, as well as with the Ukrainian club SI Lviv.

SI Club Gdansk, Poland is a 'link club' of Cologne-Römerturm, Germany. The long-standing relationship proved itself when facing the war in Ukraine. As a result, many club sisters donated to SI Club Cologne to coordinate the support to our Polish sisters, so they could provide aid for refugees.

In addition to providing financial and basic aid to Polish clubs and supporting Ukrainian refugees in Germany, the German clubs carried out several specialised projects:

- Köln-Römerturm designed a medical history form in German and Ukrainian for gynaecologists, which is available online to download. SI Club Seeheim-Jugenheim has put together **16 emergency backpacks for doctors** - the club works closely with Ukrainian doctors in southern Hesse, who have up-to-date knowledge on what is required and organise transportation to Ukraine.
- Sometimes **support is as simple as food** - a necessity of life. SI Club Frankenthal, SI Club Speyer and SI Club Hagen realised

this basic requirement was not being fulfilled, so set about organising a food delivery, in cooperation with Aldi Süd, to the SI Club Lviv. In addition, a monetary donation was made directly to the SI Club in Lviv to purchase food on site. In total, the club estimates the value of the relief at €12,000.

- By maintaining constant contact with Soroptimist sisters in Uzhgorod, Ukraine, SI Club Cochem ensures they get the right relief to them. They bring urgently needed supplies to the Slovakian border, near the Ukrainian city of Uzhgorod. At the border, SI Club Uzhgorod receives the supplies and takes them to Uzhgorod to distribute among the refugees arriving daily.
- Not all people are able to flee. SI Club Marburg provides **direct aid for 60 Ukrainian families** with disabled relatives who are unable to flee from the war zone. To do so, they partner with Marburg-based association Terra Tech e.V. that has worked for many years with a Ukrainian aid organisation that looks after disabled people in Ukraine.



Part of the project "Ukraine Aid via our International SI Network"

© SI Cologne-Römerturn (Germany) & Gdansk (Poland)

© Soroptimist International Club, Gdansk (Poland)

NORWAY

A warm welcome goes beyond words

When Norway began receiving refugees it was clear that successful integration would be central to ensuring that people arriving from Ukraine would feel welcome and have a sense of stability. Arriving with few home comforts and generally not speaking the local language, Norwegian clubs set about structuring a response that would help the new arrivals feel at home and would go beyond meeting their basic needs.

SI Club Ringerike wanted to ensure anyone arriving would know they were welcome. The day before the refugees arrive, Soroptimists make the apartment as welcoming as possible.



Welcoming Ukrainian refugees in Ringerike

© SI Ringerike (Norway)

They add thoughtful additions to the necessities that the municipality provides. Depending on the age of the family members, the Soroptimists decorate the apartment with items like flowers, chocolate, fruit and coffee, tablecloths and cushions, toys and boardgames, extra sets of bedlinen and towels.

Once established in their new homes, the refugees are invited to attend social activities for children, mothers, and grandmothers. Avoiding isolation and helping Ukrainians to build their own local network was behind an initiative to bring Ukrainian and Norwegian women together. Government funding of this project allows the club to organise activities varying from meetings in the homes of Soroptimist members (where they cook traditional dishes from their respective countries or do handicraft), to excursions to places of interest.

As SI Norway has an ongoing project with clubs in Moldova, Norwegian clubs are also able to

contribute to projects occurring much closer to the actual war zone. The five friendship clubs of Tønsberg, Sandefjord, Holmestrand, Larvik, Rygge and Follo have provided, and continue to provide, financial support directly to their Moldovan friendship clubs, active in helping Ukrainian refugees who are crossing the Ukrainian-Moldovan border.



Maria Harcenko, Past President of SI Stefan Voda, filling a car to bring necessities to the refugee center in Popovka (just outside Stefan Voda).

© Soroptimist International Club, Stefan Voda (Moldova)

POLAND

Responding to more refugees than any other country

Over 6.5 million people crossed the Ukrainian-Polish border as refugees. The majority remained in Poland, where they have been welcomed by

the Polish people. With an enormous influx of people in such a short time, Polish Soroptimists have had to be agile and adapt to the serious nature of the situation quickly to provide refugees with the help they needed.

To this end, the Polish Union has carried out two major projects. The first was in immediate response to the need for aid within Ukraine. They raised the **€60,000 in donations** needed to send six trucks with food and medical aid to Lviv, Ukraine.

Their second project also benefited from the Project Matching platform's ability to connect projects urgently needing support with those able to provide it. As a result, **they collected €170,000**. The donations were distributed to clubs across Poland providing aid and continued support to women and children from Ukraine. The scale, severity and developing nature of



Transport and donations of basic goods for Ukrainian women and children

© SI Poland

the situation resulted in a multitude of aid projects. The Polish Union Board and all the Soroptimist clubs in Poland (Kracow, Bielsko-Biala, Katowice, Cieszyn, Wrocław, Warsaw, Wroslavia, Słupsk, Olsztyn, Gdynia) carried out initiatives that benefited tens of thousands of Ukrainian women and children. We have mentioned just a few below, to give an idea of the extent of what was needed and the response from Soroptimists nationwide:

- Offering Polish language courses for female refugees from Ukraine – [1,769 participants](#)
- Providing legal and psychological help – [1,493 participants](#)
- Initiative ‘Together against sexual violence against Ukrainian women’- [2,550 refugees](#)
- Giving a concert ‘Children for Children’ in which Ukrainian children participated to aid integration through artistic activities - [90 children](#)
- Cooperation with a social shop to provide 44 tons of food – [60,000 refugees](#)
- Purchasing kitchen equipment for distribution at refugee registration points - [600 mothers with children](#)
- Offering lunches for Ukrainian families – [6,000 refugees](#)

In addition to the funds obtained for Project Matching initiatives, Polish clubs also collected their own funds and received financial support from befriended Soroptimist clubs from around the world. The supplies and funds were employed where they were most needed. In some cases, this meant handing out food aid at bus stations for refugees arriving from Ukraine. In others, it meant sending supplies to the aid centre in Lviv, medical equipment to the cardiology hospital in Kiev, and delivering household appliances to refugees living in Poland. To further aid those remaining in Poland they delivered 200 sets of backpacks with school equipment, worth approx. PLN 20,000 and provided Polish language course books. This gave professional support to refugees, giving human resources and legal assistance concerning residency and



Transport and donations of basic goods for Ukrainian women and children



work permits for Ukrainian citizens living in Poland.

Our Soroptimist Sisters are extremely involved in helping, supporting, hosting, and comforting the women and children from Ukraine. Our empathy, quick action and many hours spent volunteering has meant that tens of thousands of women and children from Ukraine received the support they needed.

The financial support received from clubs in Poland, Europe and all over the world, has helped and continues to help provide this aid and make a difference to the women and children of Ukraine.

SWITZERLAND

War orphans

The Soroptimists in Switzerland and Ukraine have had a long-standing friendship for some years now.

As a result, immediately after SIE President, Carolien Demey’s call to action, at the beginning of the war (24 February 2022), they set up a highly effective ad hoc committee, which has been meeting weekly ever since.

The positive results of the action of the committee have not come about by chance; rather they are the fruit of this international partnership. They have been able to rely not just on official and personal contacts, but also on the trust that is essential when you have to transfer money and goods in times of serious conflict.

Within weeks **they raised CHF 420,000**, which was immediately set to work where it was most required. Contacts not only in Ukraine, but also in Poland and Moldova gave information on the developing situation locally, so they could adapt their action accordingly. By doing so, ensuring that support sent would be the most impactful, discovering the specifics of what was needed: be that kinds of medicines and medical devices, types of clothes adults and children required, and kinds of food.

As a result of their long-standing friendship they have been able to deliver goods and money across the Ukrainian border directly to the people who urgently need help. In such situations you discover special people and see just how generous they are. One such person is Monika Kesselring, an entrepreneur in Davos. Monika has twice successfully driven her truck full of goods and medicines to Ukraine. She explained that she is not afraid carrying out her mission, because, as she says, “In life, fear is the worst companion”.

In September, Swiss Soroptimists received

news from Natalya, the president of the Lviv Club. Her message shows the importance of financial support, voluntary work, sending goods and of emotional support. She wrote thanking Soroptimists for the funds they had transferred and highlighting the increasingly perilous, situation of orphans in Ukraine: “At the moment we are focusing our energy on helping orphans. For many years we have been helping two orphanages, but now more and more children keep coming to us. We need shoes, clothes, bed sheets, furniture, equipment for a rehab room, and so on. I admire your team for the wise decisions it takes. I want to hug you so much and to thank you for your help. And thank you as well for your appreciation of my work. It gives me the strength to continue and help more people.”



Helping orphans in Lviv

The committee is rallying Soroptimists and our network in Switzerland to provide the aid Natalya has advised us the orphans need. We have made requests for people to donate with specific outcomes in mind, such as to give money to pay for dental care for orphaned children.

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Volunteers collecting and providing goods (clothes, medicines, food) and money to the Ukrainian border.

AUSTRIA

Informed action is impactful action

Austria and Ukraine are close, not just geographically, but the nations have a shared history. This proximity meant that, on 24th February 2022, Austrian Soroptimists felt particularly shocked and motivated to take immediate action to support those women in the war zone.

Within the first days of March 2022, SI Austria opened an account 'Aktionskonto Austrian campaign for Ukraine' and carried out a campaign among clubs nationwide to donate. This centralised and organised donations from clubs, individual members, private individuals and companies who were aware of our activities projects.

As of today, the Austrian Union has been able to **transfer more than € 110,000** for use by official projects of the SIE War Zone Initiative (Project Matching). With clubs in Slovakia, Hungary, Moldova and Ukraine benefiting directly.

In Austria, club activities transformed from organising housing to accommodate the first refugees, to collecting goods to be sent to the war zone. SI Styria and SI Carinthia supported action taken by the Ukrainian Consul and, within weeks of war breaking out, 38 trucks



Free goods for refugees - Soroptimists from SI Club Bratislava, Slovakia



Arrival night on March 05th in Uzhhorod (Halina & Tetiana)

with relief goods were driven to Ukraine. An inspired effort saw Soroptimists supporting the Chernobyl Children's Hospital in Lviv by sending them two trucks with medical supplies and washing machines.

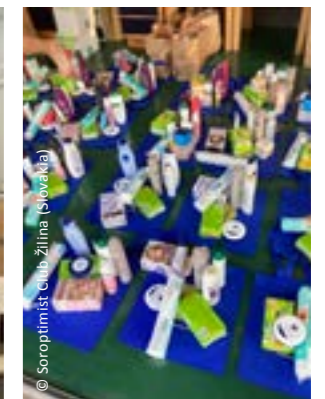
Back in Austria, integration is a consistent focus of the Soroptimists' efforts. This was encouraged by helping refugees to get full or part-time jobs, as well as providing language courses and opportunities to get to know their new surroundings and communities. In terms of recently arrived children, this meant registering them in schools, organising books and learning materials, and offering language courses.

Initially, information from the war zone and neighbouring countries was scarce and firm facts about what was needed where were lacking. Soroptimists wanted to contribute but required vital knowledge as to exactly what was needed and how to handle the bureaucracy.

Gradually the picture became sharper. Soroptimists collected valuable real information about the situation in Ukraine from the organisation's network. Many individuals and groups made this possible, Tetiana Machabeli in Uzhgorod, was one of them. Her multilanguage skills and the pictures she shared ensured that Soroptimist could support in an impactful way.

Without this knowledge, we would not have been able to send funds and organise teams to support initiatives for refugees in Moldova requiring fuel to continue their journey, or in Slovakia to send surgical instruments to Ukrainian hospitals, ordered from personal contacts working in medical institutions.

In Hungary, we saw this in Szombathely Colonia Savaria's Club carrying out the Project Matching initiative 'Medicine for Ukraine' with financial support from the Austrian Union. And SI Club Budapest Corvinus providing accommodation for refugees in partnership with the Dorcas Ministries. A Conference Centre has been transformed into a Refugee centre where they provide free shelter and meals three times a day to refugees, 50% of them are children of all ages, 80% are women and children. The vision is to provide this care as long as needed.



Left: Transport of medical goods to Ukraine in August 2022 (Martina Molitorová, SI Club Žilina, Slovakia)
Right: Transport of medical goods, vitamins, sanitary products to Ukraine on August 6th 2022. Financed by SI Austria



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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CLUB MEMBERS
GLOBALLY

121
COUNTRIES

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL of Europe

30 228
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1 152
CLUBS

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PROJECTS
ANNUALLY

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