

ANNUAL REPORT



SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Soroptimists,

As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2024, I am filled with deep pride and gratitude. This year has been marked by meaningful progress, unwavering commitment, and collective achievement for Soroptimist International of Europe. Our efforts across the Federation continue to demonstrate the power of our shared vision: a world where women and girls reach their full potential and contribute to strong, peaceful communities.

Guided by the SIE Strategic Plan 2024–2025 and grounded in the long-term strategy adopted in Zagreb in 2019, we translated our mission into action—through education, empowerment, and enabling opportunities. Whether addressing gender-based violence, promoting sustainability, or supporting leadership development, our programme work has made tangible differences in the lives of women and girls across Europe and beyond.

Our Federation's strength lies in its members. It is through your dedication – the clubs and Unions – that our vision becomes reality. I extend my heartfelt thanks to every Soroptimist who has contributed time, expertise, and passion to our cause. To the devoted SIE Officers, I offer my sincere appreciation for your steadfast collaboration. Your efforts, carried out in the spirit of our biennium theme "Together as a Team," have been instrumental in aligning the strategy with impact. A special thank you goes to the SIE Headquarters team for their professionalism and for being the source of continuity between biennia.

We have amplified our voice on the international stage, continued our advocacy on key global issues such as the Istanbul Convention, Cyberviolence and embraced digital innovation to stay future-ready. We have also strengthened our governance and financial transparency, enabling sustainable growth while remaining true to our mission, vision and objectives.

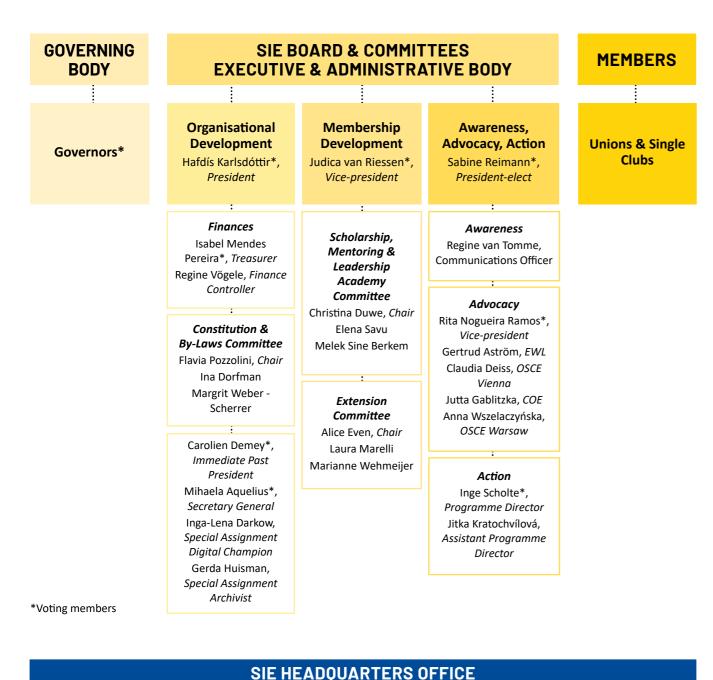


As we move forward, we do so with a clear purpose and an unwavering belief in our collective power to transform the lives of women and girls. The path ahead may seem uncertain on the global stage, yet I am confident that—united in our mission—we will continue to lead with impact, dedication, integrity and inclusivity - being the best of women, doing the best for women.

With warm regards, Hafdís Karlsdóttir, SIE President 2024-2025

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

WHERE WE ARE









50

SINGLE CLUBS

47 Europe **3** The Caribbean & Middle East

ABOUT SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE

OVERVIEW 2024

Soroptimists Educate, Empower and Enable women and girls to improve their lives. Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) is a network of 29 778 professional women working together at local, national and international levels to achieve this goal. With 1 146 clubs across 43 countries in Europe, the Middle East, and the Caribbean, SIE is the largest of the five Federations that make up Soroptimist International, a global organisation with about 65 000 members.

Our ambition is to transform the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities. We strive for a world where women and girls achieve their full potential, realise their aspirations, and have an equal voice in shaping strong, peaceful communities. As Soroptimists, we advocate for the advancement of women's status, high ethical standards, Human rights for all, equity development, and peace through international understanding and goodwill.

A part of our **Action and Awareness** efforts, advocacy is a key tool in driving change. SIE 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**. We also contribute to the work of OSCE through our permanent representatives. These affiliations allow SIE to advocate at the international level, lobbying for the ratification and implementation of treaties concerning women. And ensuring that women's issues are prioritised in the sustainable development agenda.

Our members span a diverse range of professions

and generations, making SIE a powerful platform for sharing knowledge and experience. We are committed to ensuring that all women and girls have the opportunity to become leaders in their communities, and we will continue to advocate for them at all levels of society.



DRIVING IMPACT THROUGH AWARENESS, ADVOCACY, AND ACTION

In 2024, Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) reaffirmed its commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, with a particular focus on SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). Guided by our mission to Educate, Empower, and Enable women and girls, we put this vision into practice through our "Triple A" approach—Awareness, Advocacy, and Action. This framework ensures that our initiatives are not only purposeful, but also impactful, driving lasting change throughout the Federation.

We realise our vision through awareness via internal and external communication. From gatherings, and newsletter to social media and local press, we spotlight the status of women and girls, draw attention to inequalities, and showcase our projects. We realise our vision through the actions driven by programme work at both the Union and club levels. And we realise our vision through advocacy when we lobby via our representatives and within our own community.

Programme Work with Purpose

At the core of our impact lies grassroot projects work, coordinated at both Union and club levels. Soroptimists in Europe supported hundreds of initiatives across our five strategic focus areas, addressing challenges such as gender-based violence, the digital gender divide, and the unequal impact of climate change on women.

To reinforce the long-term impact of the Federation's work, Soroptimists promoted sustainable, outcome-oriented projects over

short-term fundraising. Clubs were encouraged to share best practices and apply for international recognition, such as the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education.

Global Advocacy, Local Impact

Through its ECOSOC status, SIE is an active voice at the Council of Europe (CoE), Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the European Women's Lobby (EWL). Throughout 2024, we championed gender equality through:

- Participation in international events such as CSW68 in New York
- Hosting educational webinars
- Developing multilingual advocacy glossaries and policy resources

Promoting the Istanbul Convention

In response to growing backlash against women's rights, SIE launched a dedicated initiative to raise awareness about the Istanbul Convention—a landmark treaty combatting violence against women. Specially trained promoters from each Union now lead this initiative, using developed multilingual resources and strategic advocacy and educational tools.

A United Voice, A Stronger Message

Strong advocacy needs clear communication. That's why we invested in tools and campaigns that unify our voice and increase our visibility. Campaigns tied to International Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence reached broader audiences through social media, workshops, and tailored messaging materials.

OVERVIEW 2024

OVERVIEW 2024

EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITY

A strong and diverse membership is the foundation of any effective movement. SIE focused on creating lasting conditions for membership growth and engagement—ensuring that its network remains resilient and future-oriented.

Our success in recruitment and retention hinges on what we offer to our members: opportunities for growth, leadership, and impactful connections. By providing scholarships, leadership training, and mentoring, we empower women to build the skills needed for personal and professional development. These initiatives allow women to learn, grow in their careers, and become part of a global network of empowered individuals.

Scholarships and Education

In 2024, SIE awarded 21 scholarships, totalling 94 400 €, with an additional 12 000 € in Dr. Suzanne Noël Scholarships. These scholarships support women's education and training, helping them achieve their goals. We foster relationships with recipients through mentoring and follow-up support, reinforcing their bond with the Soroptimist network.

Leadership Academy: Developing Future Leaders

The Soroptimist Leadership Academies (SLA) are at the heart of our commitment to developing women leaders. Through these academies, participants gain essential leadership skills. In 2024, SLA were successfully held in Greece and Norway, receiving high praise from participants for their impact on their personal and professional growth. To ensure ongoing support, post-Leadership Academy mentoring programmes

provide continued support for SLA participants, as they continue their leadership journeys.

Mentoring: Empowering Through Guidance

Mentoring plays a critical role in empowering women and fostering their development. Mentoring Coordinators help connect members with growth opportunities, while webinars for Mentoring Coordinators and general members ensure mentoring remains a vital pillar of our work.

Strengthening Clubs: A Path to Growth

A strong, engaged club attracts new members and creates a positive, thriving environment. Six new clubs were chartered in 2024 (in Austria, Greece, Belgium, and Iceland), expanding our global reach and strengthening our impact and network.

Our commitment to international collaboration is also reflected in our twinning initiatives. Twinnings are active partnerships, such as those between Switzerland and Ukraine, and Norway and Moldova, which continue to make a difference. Additionally, new twinning projects (Portugal-Luxembourg) aim to focus on membership development and create sustainable, long-term partnerships.

Looking Ahead

As we move forward, our focus remains on equipping women and girls with the tools they need to succeed. Our scholarships, mentoring programmes, and Leadership Academies continue to serve as pillars of support, offering members opportunities for education, professional growth, and leadership development.

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Behind every effective mission is a well-managed organisation. In alignment with its Constitution and By-Laws, SIE continues to strengthen its governance and internal operations to effectively implement its strategic goals. The Board, as the executive and administrative body of the Federation, ensures good governance and efficient management, working closely with SIE Headquarters to support consistency and professionalism across biennia.

Enhancing Strategic Oversight

Processes and procedures were reviewed and updated to align decision-making with SIE's long-term strategic goals. The focus remained on dialogue with regular meetings between key stakeholders, and in-person training enabling

effective coordination and shared learning. Three specialised taskforces were established to shape the Federation's next strategic cycle: Strategic Plan Task force, Artificial Intelligence Task force and Corporate Identity Task force. Financial resilience was secured through rigorous oversight, regular budget reviews, and planning. Strategic financial forecasting and prudent reserve management ensured operational continuity.

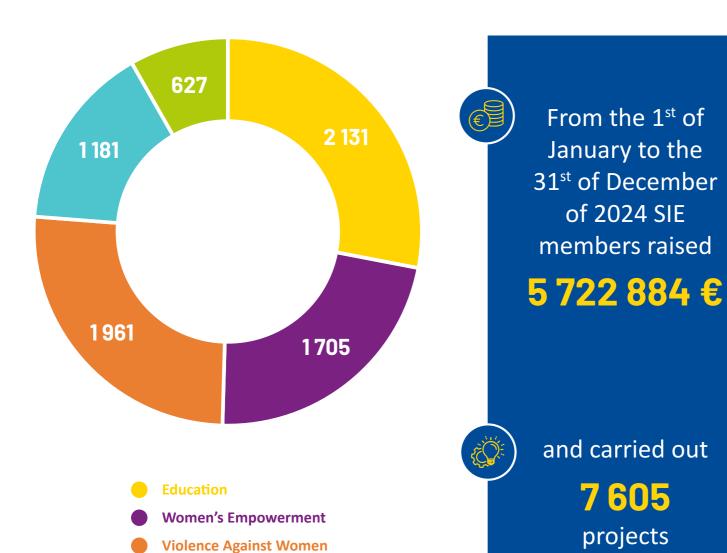
Preserving Legacy

In a major heritage initiative, SIE launched a project to preserve its archives dating back to 1928. Restoration efforts began under the guidance of the Geneva City Archives, where the collection will be permanently housed from 2027. This work ensures that nearly a century of women-led advocacy is properly preserved for future generations.



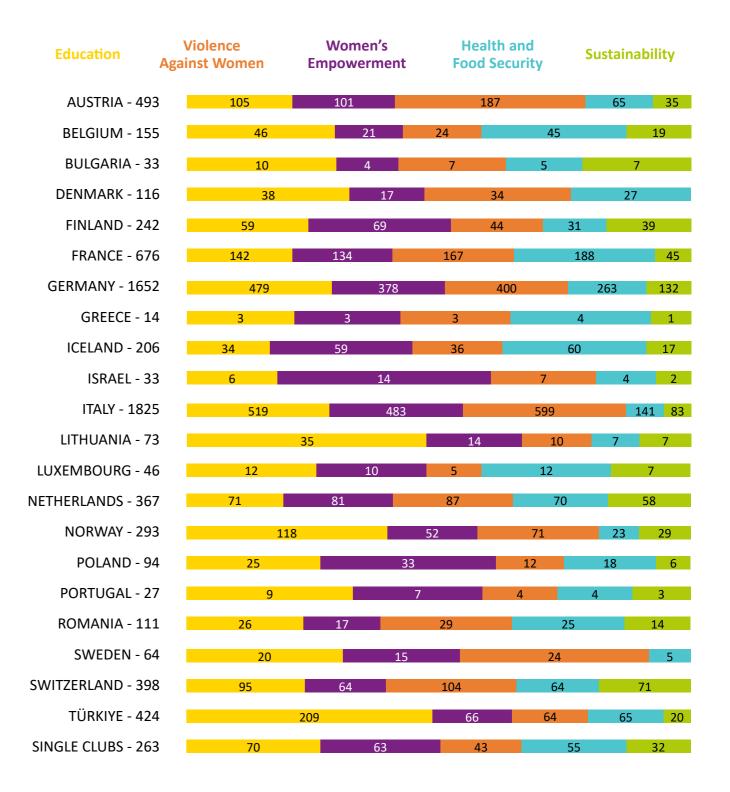
OUR PROJECTS

OUR PROJECTS



Health and Food Security

Sustainability



BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

The Soroptimist Best Practice Awards celebrate the most impactful projects by Clubs and Unions that improve the lives of women and girls.

Awards are given according to our five areas of focus: Education, Women's Empowerment, Elimination of Violence Against Women, Health and Food Security, and Sustainability.

Additional prizes include a Union Award, a Biennium Award - highlighting a project that supports <u>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and/or 5</u>, and a Membership Award for projects that boost visibility and attract new members.

These awards honour innovation, dedication, and the power of collective action.



BEST PRACTICE AWARDS 2024

SIE BIENNIUM AWARD 2024





Funds raised by the Union

123 400 €

REBUILDING TÜRKIYE: RESHAPING LIVES AFTER THE EARTHQUAKES

Union of Türkiye

In response to the devastating earthquakes in Türkiye, Turkish Soroptimists launched the «Rebuilding Lives — From Tragedy to Resilience» initiative, implementing targeted recovery projects.

They provided scholarships for students affected by the disaster and organised a workshop to support local clubs in relief efforts. To offer shelter, 10 container homes were donated to the Besni Women Entrepreneurs Cooperative. They raised awareness of women's vulnerabilities in disasters and funded prosthetics for amputated children.

To improve hygiene, 25 washing machines were donated to the Iskenderun Centre for Women. Recognising agriculture's role in recovery, Soroptimists distributed cotton seeds to farmers. They also helped preserve cultural heritage by supporting the revival of the Hatay Yellow silkworm.

These initiatives reflect Soroptimists' commitment to rebuilding communities and fostering resilience in times of crisis.



Women & girls reached

20 491

BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

SPECIAL AWARD "NEW MEMBERS & VISIBILITY"



SIOLENCE

Union of Austria

Victims of domestic violence often remain silent due to fear, shame, and a lack of escape routes, while society, too, treats the issue as taboo. SI Austria launched SIOLENCE, a campaign to break this silence and give survivors a voice.

The centrepiece is a travelling exhibition featuring photographs by Elfie Semotan and a podcast series where seven women share their harrowing experiences. Hosted in prestigious galleries and institutions, the exhibition has already drawn over 15 000 visitors and continued until December 2024.

SIOLENCE's impact extends beyond Austria—the University of Vienna hosted its own event, and Iranian singer Samira Dilmaghani composed «Speak Up» as the campaign's anthem. By encouraging reflection and action, SIOLENCE challenges societal silence and stands as a powerful force for change.



Funds raised by the Union

50 000 €

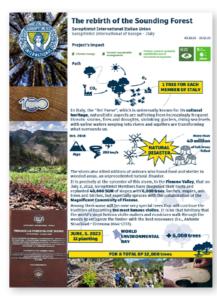


Women & girls reached

3 000 000

UNION BEST PROJECT AWARD







Funds raised by the Union

112 880 €

THE REBIRTH OF THE "SOUNDING FOREST" **Union of Italy**

In response to an environmental disaster, Italian Soroptimist Clubs collaborated to replant trees and support affected women and families. Their initiative aimed to restore the community's economy, deeply connected to the land and forest. After thorough planning and discussions, the project sourced local seeds and trees, ensuring sustainability. An agreement with the landowner was finalised in November 2021.

The initiative engaged local women from various sectors and gained significant media coverage, reaching over 122 000 views through social media and press. Soroptimists organised several events, such as «Man and Trees: An Alliance Against Global Warming» in Perugia and «How a Forest Sounds» in Cremona, to raise awareness.

The project inspired local initiatives like orchards, vegetable gardens, and reforestation efforts, generating enthusiasm, especially among younger generations, and aligning with the UN 2030 Agenda's SDGs 13 and 15.



Women & men reached

285 000

BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

EDUCATION





FREE TUTORING

SI Lisboa Caravela, Portugal

In response to the growing demand for academic support, the Soroptimists of SI Lisboa Caravela have established a university volunteer pool to provide free tutoring to institutionalised children, adolescents, and young students facing economic and family challenges. This pilot project in Lisbon aims to promote a more equitable society by offering study assistance in subjects like mathematics, language, history, and citizenship, with a focus on equality and personal growth. By addressing the high cost of private tutoring, the initiative has helped students improve their academic performance and achieve better grades. The programme, delivered primarily online, has been well-received by students and parents. Soroptimists' next step is to arrange in-person meetings with tutors to enhance the learning experience and assess progress. This initiative is essential for empowering students to overcome obstacles and succeed academically.









4

FINANCE COURSES FOR WOMEN

SI Aarau, Switzerland

In Aarau, the Soroptimists launched the "Finance Courses for Women" project to boost financial literacy in their community. Recognising a gap in women's understanding of personal finances, social insurance, and the Swiss pension system, they partnered with Budget- und Schuldenberatung Aargau Solothurn to create three tailored courses focusing on budgeting and retirement planning. These free courses, held at a local co-working space, were complemented by a brochure, "Everything About Your Budget", to reinforce the lessons. The project had a significant impact, with participants reporting improved financial confidence. One participant shared how she could finally create and stick to a budget, reducing her monthly stress. This initiative has empowered women with the skills needed to navigate their finances, with positive feedback highlighting its transformative potential and the importance of financial education.

BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



Funds raised by the Union and its partners

4 200 €

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE SPOTLIGHT: SAY NO TO FEAR

SI Ruse, Bulgaria

The Soroptimists of Ruse, Bulgaria, are intensifying efforts to combat domestic violence through a comprehensive initiative during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. Their project focuses on raising awareness and supporting the local women's shelter. Key activities included a flashmob, orange lighting of the Pantheon, a theatre performance by students, and an online presentation of the book *The Faces of Unborn Butterflies*. They also hosted "Flying Helpers" sessions, signed a Regional Agreement with businesses and NGOs, and provided mentoring and training for Youth Red Cross members. A round table discussion with key stakeholders and participation in the "Ahimsa: Nonviolence" exhibition furthered the conversation. The initiative has gained attention through media coverage, public talks, and an international conference on perinatal violence, reflecting the project's broad impact in raising awareness and fostering collaboration.



Women & girls reached

1000

HEALTH & FOOD SECURITY





SI Varese, Italy

In Varese, over 900 women are diagnosed with breast cancer annually, with more than 55 000 new cases reported across Italy each year. Early detection and personalised prevention are crucial, with a cure rate exceeding 90%. The Soroptimists of Varese, in collaboration with SI Busto Arsizio-Ticino Olona and SI Como, launched the «Breast Unit» model to promote prevention. They organised two webinars, reaching 7 000 women, with expert discussions on diagnostics, therapy, and rehabilitation. The webinars raised awareness about the Breast Unit model and its multidisciplinary approach to care. Additionally, the initiative encouraged companies to promote employee well-being and health. This successful model is easily replicable, with recorded webinars available online, spreading awareness across Italy and beyond.



Funds raised by the Union

6 000 €



Women & girls reached

7000

TWO CAMPAIGNS, ONE MISSION: **EQUALITY AND SECURITY**

SUSTAINABILITY



"TREES FOR PEACE" IN VERDUN: HONOURING DR. SUZANNE NOËL

SI Metz & Strasbourg, France

The Soroptimists of Metz and Strasbourg launched a reforestation project in Verdun, a UNESCO World Heritage site, to combat climate change's effects, specifically bark beetles which thrive during droughts. In collaboration with the National Forests Office (ONF), the goal is to plant 11 000 trees over 5.5 hectares by 2024. The project honours Dr. Suzanne Noël, founder of SI France, who reconstructed soldiers' faces during World War I. With support from over thirty Soroptimist clubs across Europe and the SI Oakland club (California), the initiative ties together environmental conservation, peace, and the movement's history. After completion, the project will continue with the creation of a directory to honour remarkable women from World War I.





Women & girls reached

2000

In 2024, Soroptimist International of Europe strengthened its commitment to driving gender equality and combating gender-based violence through two dynamic campaigns that echoed across the Federation: 'Walk in Different Shoes' and 'READ THE SIGNS'. These initiatives showcased the solidarity, and determination of Soroptimists to raise awareness, inspire dialogue, and promote meaningful change in both physical and digital spaces.

'WALK IN DIFFERENT SHOES': EMPOWERING CHANGE THROUGH SOLIDARITY

For the second year in a row, on **International Women's Day** (March 8th, 2024), SIE called on its members to participate in 'Walk in Different Shoes', a creative and symbolic campaign that encouraged Soroptimists to wear two different shoes as a metaphor for walking in the experiences of others.

The campaign emphasised how gender equality is essential to eradicating poverty and building a caring, sustainable society. Members across Europe responded with passion and creativity, sparking conversations online and offline about the diverse and persistent inequalities faced by women. With unified visuals and strong participation, the campaign reinforced the power of collective action in shifting mindsets and advocating for a fairer world.



TWO CAMPAIGNS, ONE MISSION:

EQUALITY AND SECURITY



'READ THE SIGNS': TACKLING CYBERVIOLENCE - A PREVENTIVE APPROACH

As part of the annual Orange the World Campaign during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, SIE launched the third edition of its 'READ THE SIGNS' initiative—this time focusing on the urgent and growing issue of cyberviolence.

While digital spaces offer opportunities, they also expose women and girls to new forms of violence—from online harassment to *doxxing* and *cyberstalking*. Many victims suffer in silence, and underreporting remains a major barrier to justice. Recognising this, SIE's 2024 campaign took a preventive approach, centered on:

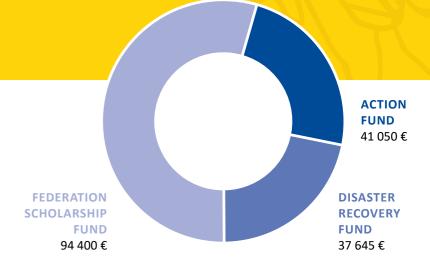
- Advocacy for safer digital environments
- · Raising awareness of cyberviolence
- Promoting digital literacy
- Supporting victims and encouraging reporting

By engaging in advocacy, education, and community activities, Soroptimists across Europe brought visibility to an often-overlooked issue. These campaigns not only raised awareness but also inspired meaningful action at local, national, and international levels. As we look ahead, SIE remains committed to creating lasting change—amplifying women's voices, challenging inequality, and building a future where every woman and girl can thrive in safety, dignity, and equality.

FUNDS

Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) manages dedicated funds to support women's education, empowerment, and recovery.

In **2024**, a total of **173 095** € was allocated across three key funds:



ACTION FUND

The **Action Fund** supports **humanitarian projects** and promotes **educational programmes** that empower women. Through targeted funding, SIE helps create opportunities for women to develop skills, gain knowledge, and improve their lives, fostering long-term positive change in communities.

DISASTER RECOVERY FUND

The **Disaster Recovery Fund** provides targeted support to women and girls recovering from **natural disasters and armed conflicts**. While immediate aid is crucial, SIE prioritises **long-term recovery projects** that offer sustainable solutions. Single Clubs and Unions can apply for grants to assist those affected by **earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, storms, volcanic eruptions, and conflicts**. To date, the fund has supported projects benefiting victims of **armed conflict, flooding, and earthquakes**, helping them rebuild their lives and communities.

FEDERATION SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The **Scholarship Fund** supports women (Soroptimist or non-Soroptimist) in advancing their education and careers. It offers two types of grants:

- **1. Dr. Suzanne Noël Scholarship**, founder of Soroptimist International of Europe, provides financial aid to female doctors specialising in **plastic and reconstructive surgery**.
- 2. The Federation Scholarship supports women pursuing continuing education, career changes, or vocational training. These grants help women enhance their expertise and professional opportunities.

Action Fund 41 050 €

Disaster
Recovery Fund
37 645 €

Federation
Scholarship Fund
94 400 €

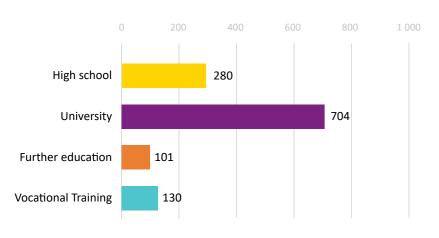
SCHOLARSHIP

ALLOCATION OF SCHOLARSHIPS GRANTED BY UNION AND SINGLE CLUB

MENTORING

SCHOLARSHIPS GRANTEES AWARDED

Unions & Single Clubs

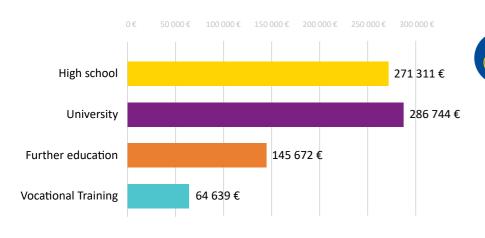


Scholarship granted 1215



SCHOLARSHIPS GRANTS AWARDED

Unions & Single Clubs



Scholarship grants

768 366 €

Non-Soroptimists mentees who became Soroptimists

EMPOWERING FUTURE LEADERS

The Soroptimist Leadership Academy (SLA) is a flagship initiative designed to empower young women through leadership training, mentorship, and international exchange. It brings together experienced Soroptimist and non-Soroptimist professionals to share knowledge, inspire growth, and support participants in becoming confident leaders in their own lives and communities.

The SLA fosters collaboration between Soroptimists from different countries, strengthening a Europe-wide network of professional women. Aligned with our mission to Educate, Empower, and Enable, the Leadership Academy promotes leadership and gender equality. Participants gain essential skills that support their personal development and professional aspirations, while also deepening their understanding of global and local leadership issues. It exemplifies SIE's enduring commitment to investing in young women—preparing them to lead with confidence, clarity, and compassion in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.



Soroptimist Nordic Leadership Academy

- Tjøtta, Norway
- 23-29 June 2024
- Number of participants: 25
- S Participants' countries of origin: Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland
- Theme: 'Women Leadership Body Mind & Heart'

Leadership Academy of SI Greece

- Kavala, Greece
- 19-23 August 2024
- Number of participants: 24
- S Participants' countries of origin: Greece, Türkiye, Italy, the Netherlands, France, Austria, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, Romania, Hungary
- Theme: 'Woman Leader in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: New Challenges and Prospects'



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.

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!

> soroptimisteurope.org @SoroptimistInternationalofEurope









Headquarters: Av. Jules-Crosnier 16, 1206 – Geneva, Switzerland siehq@soroptimisteurope.org