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ADVOCACY NEWS

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR ADVOCACY TEAM!

As we extend our heartfelt wishes to each one of you for a Happy New Year 2015, we have to say we are thrilled to see that more and more of you are sending in your contributions to the this newsletter and sharing the fabulous work you are doing in your communities and in your countries to advocate for women's rights! We hope that this trend continues—the Advocacy Team is always delighted to hear your news and to share it with the Federation. We would also like to invite you to contribute to the strengthening of our Federation's advocacy work. You can do this by helping us identify organisations and institutions in your country and by sharing with us names of Soroptimists who can be advocates (see page 7). Thank you all in advance!

Elena Savu, Vice President for Advocacy

Maria-Elisabetta de Franciscis, President Elect & Head of Programme & Advocacy

This month we talk about…

STRENGTHENING OUR ADVOCACY WORK

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

What would our world be like if all people in the world had their right to education fulfilled from kindergarten through twelfth grade and even university? Would there still be discrimination, inequality, poverty, poor health or an epidemic of violence against women?

Within the wide framework of human rights, **the right to education remains a fundamental prerequisite for the exercise of all other human rights**. Education is essential because it **promotes individual freedom** and **empowers us to develop**. Yet millions of people, women in particular, remain deprived of educational opportunities. Thirty-one million girls still do not have access to primary education and an equal number are deprived of secondary education.

Against this 'backdrop', **at the end of last year, the Nobel Peace Prize was given to two ardent defenders of the right to education, Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi,** for their "**struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education**." The award sent **a resounding message to the international community on the importance of education for building a peaceful and sustainable world**.

That the award was given to a 17-year old girl from Pakistan is also highly significant. As we know well by now, Malala Yousafzai has been fighting for girls' education for several years. Despite her youth she has shown by personal example that children and young people can contribute to improving their own situations, even under the most difficult of circumstances. **It is no exaggeration to say that it is in large part owing to her constant activism that the topic of basic education for young girls has in recent years become more and more present in the media and in international organisations worldwide.** Among other things, it has led to UNESCO and the Government of Pakistan launching **the Malala Fund for Girls' Education** in 2013, which tackles disparities and discrimination through teacher training, community advocacy and the introduction of gender-sensitive education policies.

The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to a young girl comes as **an encouragement for all of us to redouble our efforts to ensure that no child is deprived of education**. To me as a Soroptimist, **Malala represents hope for the future**: she is one of the many girls I advocate for, she represents some of the Soroptimist aspirations I stand for. She is not alone in her struggle and I am not alone in my endeavours.

Elena Savu, SIE Vice President for Advocacy

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SOROPTIMISTS CELEBRATE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATES IN OSLO

Education for all children, especially girls, and the fight against child labour were high on the agenda as **Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo on December 10th, 2014**. Seventeen-year old Malala is the youngest person in history to receive this prize, yet she is already a longtime activist for education and women's rights. Sathyarthi has dedicated his life to helping children out of slavery.



Education and combatting trafficking in human beings have been important issues for Soroptimists in Norway for many years. It was therefore only natural that we, as representatives of SI Norway, participated in the celebration of the laureates.

After the official ceremony, CNN reporter Christiane Amanpour interviewed the laureates in Oslo City Hall in a live television presentation. SI Norway was invited, and Governor Aud Skare and I attended. To see and listen to such dedicated and courageous persons was of great inspiration for us as Soroptimists.



According to Malala, there is **too much talk and too little action among leaders when it comes to access to quality education for all children**, and Sathyarthi said **civil society was an important partner in the work against child labour**. This tells us that with all our educational projects we are doing the right thing, and it is inspiring for further Soroptimist work in this field.

In the early evening, **Soroptimists from the Clubs of Moss, Drammen, Bergen Syd, Oslo and Baerum, took part in the torchlight parade to celebrate the laureates**. The parade ended outside the Grand Hotel where the laureates came to wave to the public. It was touching to see them in person.

More local Clubs seized the oppurtunity and wrote reports to local newspapers to congratulate the laureates and promote Soroptimist eductional projects, including the **SI Norway Education Foundation**. In our opinion, it gave good public visibility to our organisation and project activities.

Kirsti Guttormsen
1st Vice President, SI Norway

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COUNRY FOCUS: THE NETHERLANDS!

What can we as Soroptimists do to create awareness and be a global voice for ending violence against women? When SIE Programme Directors received the call from Elena Savu, SIE Vice President for Advocacy, to join this UN action, we knew we wanted to do something but the question was what?

What we chose to do was **a 16-day awareness -raising calendar**, which you can see here. I designed a website and then the work started. We needed to structure the information we wanted to present and to do a lot of research. There was a whole team actively working on this project, emailing each other what we found. As we sought to show what was at stake worldwide when it comes to violence against women, I must say we got more and more depressed. **How is it possible that 1 in 3 women experience violence in their lifetime? How is it possible that there are over one hundred million women in the world who have been circumcised?** Even in the Netherlands about 14,000 girls are at risk of becoming victims of female genital mutilation! **How is it possible that every year 14 million girls under the age of 15 are forced to marry an older man and to have no education?** WHAT IS HAPPENING? Personally I was very impressed by the Girls Not Brides foundation. I love their ambition to end forced marriage in one generation – so why not cooperate with them?

In the Netherlands, we have many different advocacy-focused projects: helping women and girls who have been victims of violence, organising a film festival for children to raise awareness about human rights, organising lectures on women's rights across the country on Human Rights Day... But do we do enough in terms of advocacy? **The calendar project showed us that the problem is huge and close to home and that action is really neccessary. Being a global voice for women has to be more than simply putting up a couple of sentences on our websites!**

So let's start now. Let's prepare a worldwide Soroptimist action for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence in 2015! Let's start to make ourselves visible with our expertise on the different aspects of violence aganist women, let's create a community of professionals worldwide, and let's come up with an action plan. I suggest we discuss this idea at the next Programme Directors Training Seminar in Geneva. See you there!

Marlène van Benthem
Programme Director, SI Netherlands



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RAISING WOMEN'S VOICES AT THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

"In my unique role as women's representative to the UN, I want to make a moral appeal to the political, economic, religious and spiritual leaders of this world: It is unacceptable that one in three women are victims of sexual violence. Don't allow your silence to say to women and girls that you aren't interested in protecting their rights. Use your leadership to stop the violence. Your rights are their rights."

Margriet van der Linden, in her speech to the UN GA, 13 October 2014

Did you know that each one of the 193 UN Member States has the right to include a formal women's representative in their state's delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in New York? And do you know how many countries use this right? Only one!

This year, the Netherlands was once again the *only* state in the world to include a women's representative in their official delegation. Selected by the Netherlands Council of Women (NVR), this year's representative was **Margriet van der Linden**, former editor-in-chief of a Dutch feminist magazine. On October 13th, 2014, when she took the floor at the UN General Assembly, her role was to speak on behalf of all women in the Netherlands. **She focused on violence against women and sexual violence in particular and called on world leaders to protect women's rights.** She highlighted the fact that women's rights are often trampled on despite advancements in the international legal framework: **"Are human rights violations not important enough if the victims are women?"**, she asked.

SIE First Vice President Tonny Filedt Kok-Weimar who is not only a member



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of NVR but a member of the selection committee which chooses the women's representative each year, believes that having such a representative on state delegations is **a unique opportunity to bring women's issues to the attention of world leaders.** She underlines that having a women's representative in a delegation is **good PR for the country – and for the organisation which lobbies the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to send a women's representative.** In the case of the Netherlands, the NVR, a women's umbrella organisation representing 52 organisations and almost 1 million women, not only supported the MFA in the selection process but provided continuous guidance and coaching to support the representative in her year-long role.

The Soroptimist International of Europe Advocacy Team, as well as Vice President Tonny who has directly participated in this process, would therefore like to **urge you to actively encourage your government, and particularly your MFA, to use its right to include a women's representative in next year's delegation to the UN General Assembly.**

In particular, on the recommendation of the NVR, we encourage you to:

- **inform fellow Soroptimists and other national and local women's organisations about the possibility of having a UN women's representative**,
- **build rapport with your national government and lobby your MFA**, the Ministry of Social and Economic Affairs and/or Women's Issues to include a women's representative in your country's delegation to the UNGA,
- **form a network of women from your country who have worked or are working with the UN** and ask them to help identify suitable candidates,
- **hold a yearly competition or call for a national UN women's representative** and make sure to make the selection process fair and transparent,
- **get in contact with former and current women's representatives from the Netherlands** to help you through this entire process.

Of course, if you have any questions or need additional assistance, don't hesitate to contact Vice President Tonny at tl.filedtkok@gmail.com or your SIE Programme Team at programme@soroptimisteurope.org or.

Ana Barfield
Programme & Advocacy Officer

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WE ASKED OUR REPS…

WHAT DOES ADVOCACY MEAN TO YOU?



Renate Smith, Representative to the European Women's Lobby

What does advocacy mean to you?

Renate: EMPOWER! Advocacy is the sharing of issues important for women in the 21st century. I am passionate about wanting to improve the conditions for women and girls, and I would like to pass this on to others!

What do you think are the keys to effective advocacy?

Renate: EDUCATE! Good understanding of the subject, and a desire to communicate. Putting oneself into the shoes of others to see the issue from the other side. Having facts and figures at hand helps to convince people.

How would you like to see SIE advocacy evolve in the future?

Renate: ENABLE! I think of a slightly more formal structure to the SIE Advocacy Team to avoid duplication and achieve synergies. The use of prepared texts and documents should be encouraged and all SIE members can participate in advocacy wherever they are.

Bettina Hahne, Representative to the Council of Europe



What does advocacy mean to you?

Bettina: Big societal changes are only possible with massive lobbying from a huge number of stakeholders. We cannot expect immediate results. But with patience and perseverance, progress can be made. A trickle will disappear in the sand, but a river can move rocks.

What do you think are the keys to effective advocacy?

Bettina: Advocacy needs to be done on all levels as the mindsets of not only politicians but also of citizens and of local authorities need to evolve. As Soroptimists we ARE present at all levels: local, regional and European, including important African countries.

How would you like to see SIE advocacy evolve in the future?

Bettina: I would like all SIE clubs and unions to advocate for the implementation of human rights for all women everywhere, as one big common movement. We should become the river!

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Irena Coufalova, Representative to the OSCE

What does advocacy mean to you?

Irena: Advocacy means raising awareness about important issues, drawing attention to them, so that they can be solved. Advocacy also means expressing our viewpoints so that they can be heard at the international, national and local levels.

What do you think are the keys to effective advocacy?

Irena: Synergy at the national and international levels, a profound exchange of information and a tight connection between the advocacy work of Soroptimists in their towns and countries and of SI representatives.

How would you like to see SIE advocacy evolve in the future?

Irena: The advocacy work done by Soroptimists in their communities is absolutely crucial for me. Concrete projects are our strength and our best means of advocacy. It must be the primary task of every representative to seek every possibility to present them at the international level.

THE ADVOCACY TEAM NEEDS YOUR HELP!

To build up our Federation's network of advocates for women's rights, to better coordinate position papers internationally, and to further strengthen our Federation's national and international lobbying efforts*, the Soroptimist International of Europe Advocacy Team is committed to putting together a **"BANK OF ADVOCATES"** in all the countries our Federation is present in.* ***We would therefore like to ask Union Presidents and Single Club Presidents*** *to share with us the following:*

- **a list of International / EU organisations** within each Union's / country's geographic boundaries
- **the names of competent members willing to participate actively in advocacy work,** possibly resident close to these organisations' headquarters

Please send this information to ***programme@soroptimisteurope.org by March 20th*** *with the* ***subject "Bank of Advocates".***

We thank you in advance!

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35,000 SOROPTIMISTS ADVOCATING FOR WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS!

Advocacy session

In May 2013, **the Soroptimist Club of Tunis Fondateur** ran an advocacy session on Tunisian laws on preventing and prosecuting violence against women. The session welcomed 51 teenage girls. Different forms of violence were discussed, including verbal and physical abuse. Emphasis was put on the role of law and the judicial process to strengthen women's rights and to prevent violence.

Learning about conflict resolution

Soroptimists from the Club of Garda Sud in Italy initiated an awareness-raising project to educate young men and women about peaceful conflict resolution. A team of four psychologists from the Social and Family Mediation Institute in Brescia ran workshops for parents, teachers, and pupils. Among them, some were chosen to be "mediators" who will help their schoolmates solve conflicts.

Regional campaign against trafficking

To prevent human trafficking, **Soroptimists from the Club of Craiova in Romania, in partnership with the Union of Denmark,** ran an information campaign addressed at young people. They involved them in various educational activities including movies, theatre shows, conferences, etc. Students learned about the dangers of trafficking.

Preventing cyberbullying

Soroptimists from the Club of Worms in Germany focused their project on cyberbullying and ensuring children's safety online. The aim of the initiative was to inform parents about this topic and explore how to prevent cyberbullying. Lectures, presentations, and discussions with different parties (police, teachers, associations etc.) were used as a means of exchanging experiences and expertise and of raising awareness.



Women's health

The Soroptimist International Club of Antananarivo Mandrosoa in Madagascar organised an awareness raising conference on breast cancer screening, which was part of a bigger initiative of the Union of Madagascar. Access to health facilities is quite difficult for women from remote areas of Madagascar. The presentation also included information about the plague which has recently reappeared in the country.



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GENERAL NEWS

FEBRUARY 28TH – AN IMPORTANT DEADLINE FOR YOUR CALENDARS!

BEST PRACTICE AWARDS 2015

The Best Practice Awards 2015 are already upon us! Each year, **the Best Practice Awards are a unique opportunity to celebrate the amazing work you are doing** in your communities and beyond to help less privileged women and girls. **So, please, don't be shy – tell us about your fantastic work!**

BEST PRACTICES 2015

Like last year, **the process for submitting a project for the Best Practice Awards is very simple**. All you need to do is **fill out a one-page form and send it back to programme@soroptimisteurope.org by February 28th, 2015**. Your project should have taken place during the Soroptimist year 2013-2014. **The form has already been sent out to all Unions and Single Clubs** – if for any reason you have not received it yet but would like to submit your project, just contact your Programme Team at the email address cited above.

This year once again, **we will be giving out 11 Best Practice Awards**. Two awards will be given in each of the following categories: Education, Economic Empowerment, Elimination of Violence Against Women, Health, and Sustainable Environment. One project will be selected as the overall Project of the Year.

Last year, an incredible 113 projects were submitted to the Best Practice Awards! **Let's try to top that number this year! The winners will be announced at the Governors' Meeting in Lisbon in May 2015.** All winning projects will be widely publicized including in the Best Practice Awards brochure, on the SIE website and the SIE Facebook page, in *The Link* and further. **All Unions and Clubs are encouraged to participate!**

PHOTO COMPETITION 2015

The end of February is also the deadline for submitting your photos to the Soroptimist International of Europe Photo Competition! In its second installment this year, the Photo Competition is an **opportunity for Soroptimists and non-Soroptimists alike to showcase their artistic talents** – and their keen eye for women in action!

The Photo Competition this year has **three different themes**: "Women and girls securing a sustainable future",

"Women and girls promoting better nutrition", and "Women and girls raising awareness of climate change". All participants should be 18 or older and they should be the authors of the photos they are submitting.

A Jury chaired by SIE Programme Director, Christine Peer, will choose the winners who will be awarded at the Governors' Meeting. The winners and the photos will receive recognition on the SIE website, in the Programme News, and in The Link. The Jury is greatly looking forward to receiving your creative submissions!

The form for the Photo Competition has already been distributed but if you have not received it, just write to: programme@soroptimisteurope.org.

an opportunity to **shine a light on these brave women, to celebrate them and the importance of their work, and to give them a platform to promote their cause**.



PEACE PRIZE 2015

For ten years now, the SIE Peace Prize has awarded and celebrated the outstanding contributions of certain visionary women towards the establishment or maintenance of peace in their own communities and much further afield.

This year, as SIE marks the 10th anniversary of the Peace Prize, Unions and Single Clubs are invited to nominate women who are not necessarily "big names" – women who have made exceptional contributions towards peace but who are not yet "household names". The Peace Prize is

The SIE Board and the Jury of the 2015 SIE Peace Prize have jointly decided to extend the nominations deadline for the SIE Peace Prize to February 28th, 2015.

The form has already been circulated but if you have not received a copy, please be sure to contact us at programme@soroptimisteurope.org.

To give this Prize and its winner the deserved international exposure, **the Peace Prize will be awarded at the Soroptimist International Convention in Istanbul, Turkey, in July 2015!**

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PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY SEMINAR 2015

Following the great success of last year's Programme & Advocacy Seminar which saw the participation of Programme Directors from 29 different countries across our Federation, the SIE Programme & Advocacy Team has committed to holding a similar training seminar in 2015 too!

This year, the Programme & Advocacy Seminar will be taking place in Geneva, Switzerland, in April 2015. The Seminar is open to Programme Directors from:

- Unions which participated in last year's Seminar are all invited to participate on the condition that their Programme Directors has submitted a report to the SIE Programme Team on training activities they conducted since the last Seminar.
- Unions which were unable to participate last year.
- Single Clubs selected on a rotational basis in countries where there are at least three Single Clubs. (Please note, however, that a separate training for Presidents of Single Clubs from countries that only have one or two Clubs is envisaged for the Governors' Meeting in Lisbon.)

All those eligible to participate will soon be receiving an official invitation letter and Registration Form from the SIE Programme & Advocacy Team.

Like last year, the Seminar is an excellent opportunity for Programme Directors to explore international institutions based in Geneva and to get a taste of how SIE can advocate for the improvement of the status of women at the international level. It is also the opportunity to discuss and explore project work, project reporting, and our organisation's programme focus areas.

The Seminar aims to equip all participants with the tools and skills to pass on newly acquired knowledge and contacts to Club Programme Directors within Unions and to other Single Clubs in the same region, thus further increasing the reach of the Seminar.



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CSW 59

This year is a big year for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Marking 20 years since the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (BPfA), the 59th session of CSW will be the occasion to make a global assessment of how far women's rights have come since the definition of this key document for the advancement of the status of women in 1995.

Like every year, **Soroptimist International of Europe, which holds special consultative status with the United Nations' ECOSOC, will be participating in the two-week CSW meeting.** The 59th session of CSW will take place between March 9th and 20th at the UN in New York.

Thank you to all of those who have submitted applications to be part of SIE's delegation! You will be contacted by email with more information.

Once again, we are looking forward to an exciting two weeks in New York, lobbying for women's rights, networking with other organisations, and promoting the Soroptimist cause.

President Ulla, who will be leading the delegation, and all Soroptimists representing SIE will keep you posted about CSW 59 through *Advocacy News!*



SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION IN ISTANBUL

Registrations are coming in swiftly for the Soroptimist International Convention in Istanbul. We would like to thank all of you who have already registered, and we're hoping that many more will sign up soon! **You can register here.**

We're also glad to announce we have secured **flight rebates from our sponsor, Turkish Airlines, which you can take advantage of.** You can find more information here.

The Convention will welcome a number of renowned speakers from different fields, and we will keep you updated on who our 'star' participants will be. This and more exciting news to come!



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TRUST WOMEN CONFERENCE IN LONDON

On the 18th and 19th of November, experts at the forefront of the fight against human trafficking and those working at different levels to empower women to know their rights gathered in London for the **Thomson Reuters Trust Women Conference**.



Among the topics discussed were: the challenges and opportunities for women to obtain financial empowerment; how to prevent labour exploitation and slavery in the production chain of different consumer goods; the role of labour brokers in facilitating trafficking and labour exploitation; and case studies of how to prevent these inhuman practices.

Among many distinguished participants, **Nobel Laureates Mohammad Yunus and Kailash Satyarthi were keynote speakers.** Mr. Satyarthi launched the End Child Slavery week, a global campaign to eradicate child slavery. Slavery survivors from around the world also gave powerful and emotive accounts which prompted a discussion of real solutions to help them and others on the road to recovery.

Soroptimist International of Europe was represented by **Constitution and By-Laws Chair Renata Trottmann Probst and Executive Director Anne Simon.**

Monique Villa, CEO of the Thomson Reuters Foundation, has expressed great interest in the Soroptimist *Defeating Violence* Project and its goal to create effective prevention strategies to eliminate violence against women. We're very excited to have the Thomson Reuters Foundation and their TrustLaw collaborators on board!

IMPORTANT DATES

Feb 6 International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation

HAVE COMMENTS?

This is YOUR newsletter! If you have a comment, document, link, or anything else that you would like us to communicate in an upcoming edition of the newsletter, please share it with us! Feel free to send your news to programme@soroptimisteurope.org.

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