10/2014

PROGRAMME NEWS



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PROGRAMME TEAM!

This time, a slightly different *Programme News*! Thanks to your fantastic input and the success of the Membership Consultation, we are delving deeper into a question that is absolutely crucial to the future of our organisation: the question of retention and recruitment. We also take this opportunity to wish a warm welcome back to SIE Programme Director Christine Peer who is returning to her duties after a year's leave of absence. You will hear from her shortly!

Maria-Elisabetta de Franciscis – President Elect and Head Programme & Advocacy
Emine Erdem – Assistant Programme Director

This month we talk about… EXTENSION

SHAPING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

In a few years' time, Soroptimist International will celebrate its 100th anniversary. Whether in Iceland, Ethiopia, Germany, Portugal or Turkey, all Soroptimists will proudly reflect on our history. Many things have happened in 100 years as illustrated by the constant growth of our organisation. Most importantly, **thousands of projects have been implemented that have improved the lives of countless women and girls**. Each and every Club can be proud!

However, **the world has also changed** in those 100 years – and definitely faster than Soroptimist. Some new countries have appeared on the map, while others have disappeared. The world's population has almost quadrupled, and the demographics are changing. New technologies have transformed the face of the globe.

To sustain our future, it is crucial to know your thoughts and views about the state of our organisation and to hear your challenges in retaining and recruiting members. It is equally important to understand what makes Clubs successful and attractive. **Through the Membership Consultation, to which 707 SIE Clubs responded, you shared your concerns**.

On the eve of the Governors' Meeting in Copenhagen, **Governors, Union Presidents and Single Club Delegates reviewed the first results of the Consultation and presented their thoughts and analyses on the challenges we face**. They brainstormed together and proposed potential solutions.

Now it is our turn to share the results of the Consultation with all our members. **You can read about the interesting overall results in this edition of *Programme News***. Also, during the summer months, every question in the survey was analysed in depth, and **each Union and Single Club received a series of slides pertaining to its own results**. We hope these results reach as many members as possible.

Many organisations around the globe envy our model. Our values and concrete impact on the lives of women and girls are unique. However, **we must always endeavor to adjust to the rapid changes in society and to younger generations**.

Please rest assured that SIE President Ulla Madsen and the whole SIE Board, supported by the staff at SIE Headquarters, will continue to address your concerns in the second year of the biennium!

Maria Luisa Frosio, SIE Extension Committee Chair
Anne Simon, SIE Executive Director

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PROGRAMMES NEWS

MEMBERSHIP CONSULTATION: OVERALL RESULTS

A few months ago, all 1,255 Clubs that make up Soroptimist International of Europe were asked to give their thoughts on four questions that have a crucial bearing on the future of our organisation **– questions concerning the retention of existing members and the recruitment of new members**:

What does your Club see as the main reasons for members leaving the Club?

What does your Club see as the main obstacles to recruiting new members?

What has helped your Club retain members?

What has helped your Club attract new members?

Even though the responses you sent in varied considerably, **certain clear trends emerged**, giving an intricate picture of the challenges Clubs face when looking to retain members or get new ones:

REASONS FOR MEMBERS LEAVING

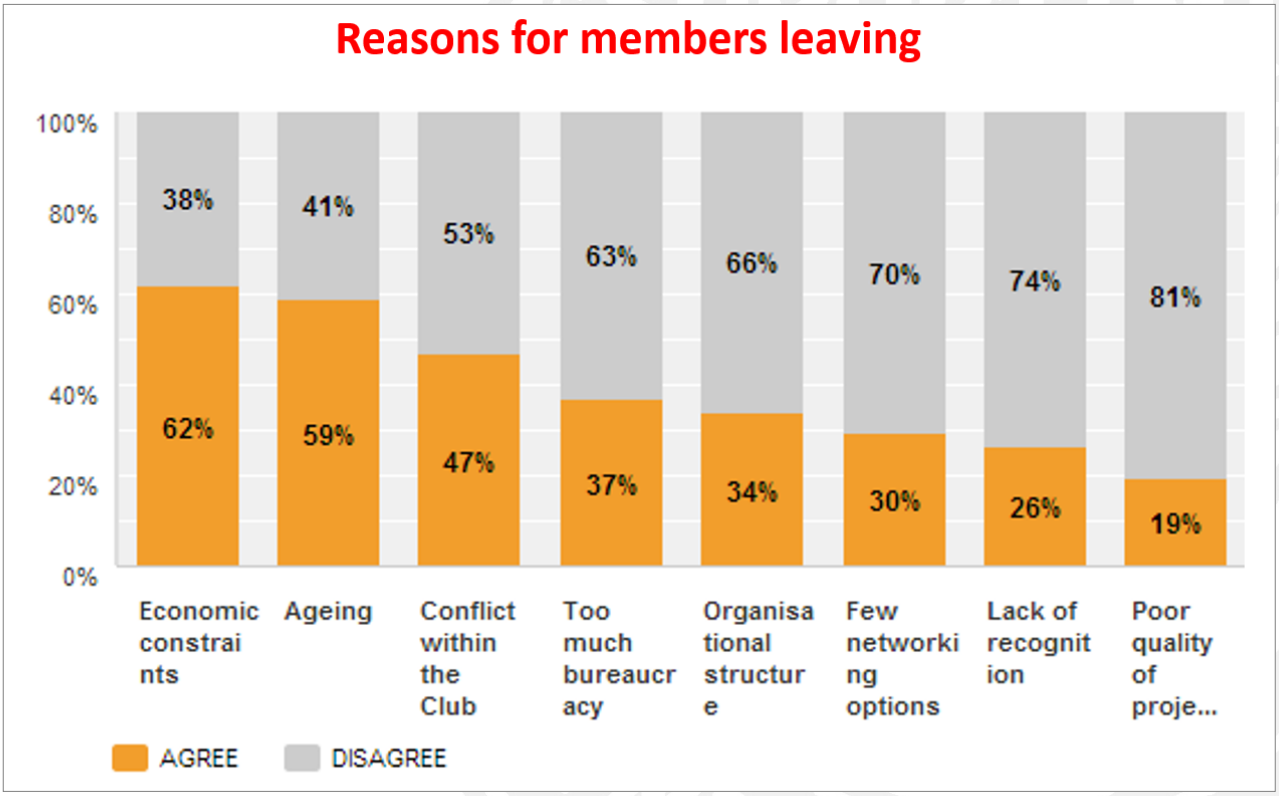
Economic constraints - 62% agree
Ageing - 59% agree
Conflict within the Club - 47% agree

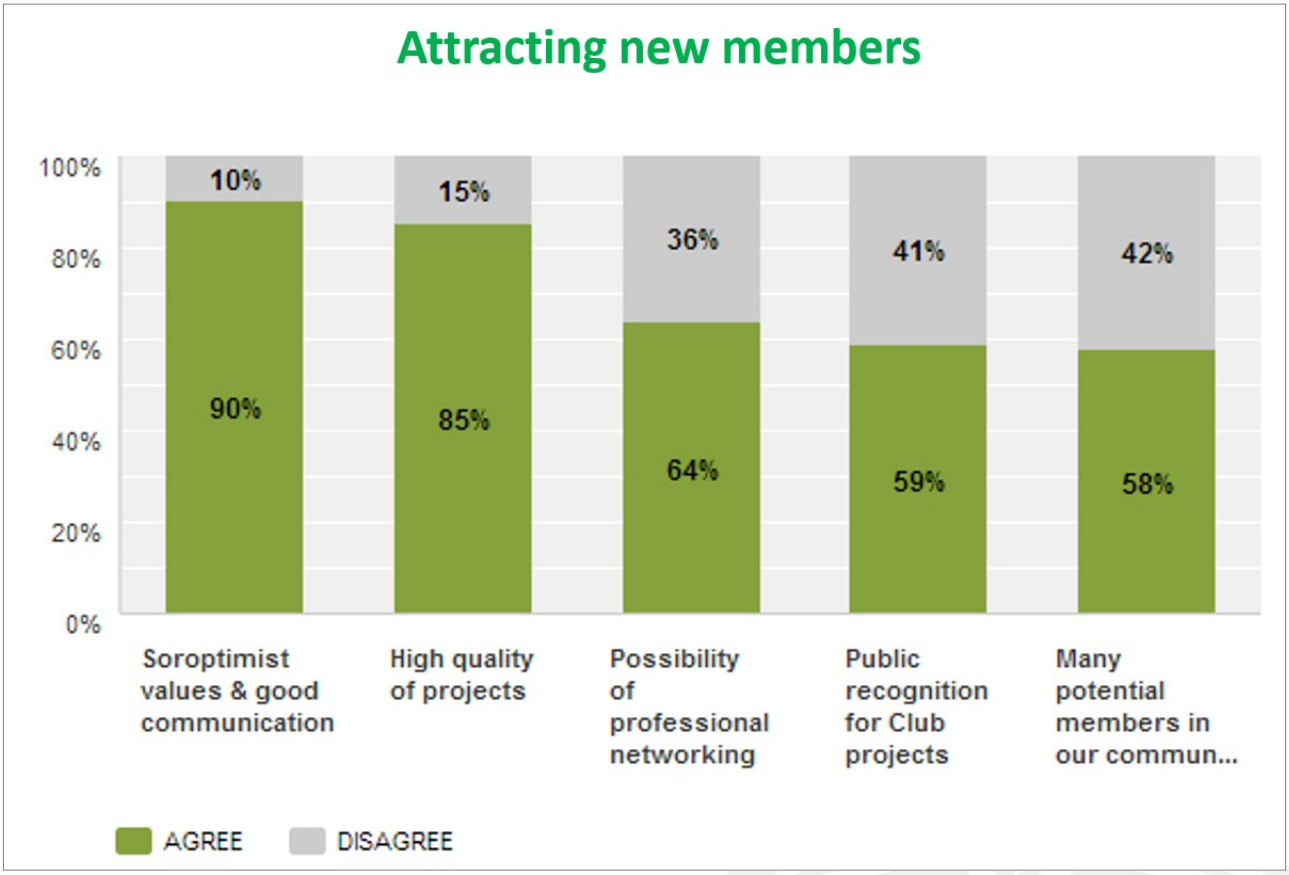
OBSTACLES TO RECRUITING

Ageing - 70% agree
Economic constraints - 70% agree
Lack of visibility of the organisation - 67% agree

RETAINING MEMBERS

Friendships - 95% agree
Teamwork - 94% agree
High quality of projects - 90% agree





ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS

Soroptimist values - 90% agree
High quality of projects - 85% agree
Possibility of professional networking - 64% agree

As was announced in an earlier edition of *Programme News*, the results of the Membership Consultation were first presented at the Governors' Meeting in Copenhagen in July this year. The presentation was followed by **a series of lively discussions where Governors and Presidents gave their thoughts on how to respond to the challenges you highlighted**. Many different creative ideas were shared, and already tested strategies and tactics were exchanged. Here are just a few:

- ◊ *Pronounce 'Soroptimist' proudly, without shyness, and don't say: 'It's like Rotary or Lions'!*
- ◊ *Ensure our website isn't boring, overloaded & internally oriented!*
- ◊ *Attract public figures to be Soroptimists!*
- ◊ *Focus more on professional networking!*
- ◊ *Promote partnerships with NGOs & public institutions!*

Most recently, a detailed analysis of the responses received from each Union was sent to the Union leadership. All of you are encouraged to **contact your Union to get a copy of the results pertaining to your country** – and to see how your responses compare to those of Soroptimists elsewhere.

The Board and Headquarters cannot thank you enough for your participation in this first Membership Consultation. **We look forward to continuing this important dialogue with you!**

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PROGRAMMES NEWS

INTERVIEW WITH SIE EXTENSION COMMITTEE CHAIR MARIA LUISA FROSIO

Ana Barfield, SIE Programme & Advocacy Officer, sat down with SIE Extension Committee Chair Maria Luisa Frosio to talk about the Membership Consultation results in some more depth



SIE Extension Committee Chair Maria Luisa Frosio

Ana: Let's start at the very beginning: What motivated the launch of this Membership Consultation?

Maria Luisa: Membership is the backbone of our organisation. We need to keep growing if we want to continue our mission, to be a strong voice for women. This is why over the years, SIE Presidents and Boards have given much attention membership growth. We are currently in a long period of stagnation in terms of membership growth. Clubs are facing many societal and economic challenges, and they are in the unique position to express their views and concerns about recruiting and retaining members.

What do you understand to be the main results of this Consultation? What's your overall interpretation of what our members are saying?

The first great result is the response rate itself: 707 clubs representing 53% of all clubs in the Federation and a total of about 19,500 members. That's an excellent outcome! As Chairperson of the SIE Extension Committee, I would like to express once more my appreciation to all Clubs that responded! During the summer, the results were further analysed and each Union and Single Club received a more detailed analysis. The remarkable number of Clubs that participated tells us that Clubs have a great interest in being active and constructive players in the future development of our organisation. The bottom-up approach has proven to be a very powerful tool for understanding membership issues at the grassroots level!

Among the results we obtained, which do you find most alarming? Did you see any "red flags" go up?

Economic constraints and **ageing** are considered by almost 70% of respondents as the main obstacles to both recruiting and retaining members. Ageing is also creating a **generational gap**, making the recruitment of younger members a real challenge. The high percentage of respondents (47% overall and more in Western Europe and Africa) who see **conflicts within the Club** as a reason for members leaving the organisation is also worrying. This ought to be looked at and monitored very carefully.

And which responses did you find to be the most encouraging?

The majority of respondents agrees that **Soroptimist values** (90%) paired with the **high quality of projects** (85%) are the main boosters for attracting new members. And almost all respondents see strong **friendship** (95%), **good teamwork** (94%), and the **high quality of projects** (90%) as the real tools for keeping members. This confirms the idea that projects and recognition for club projects (76%) are crucial for attracting and retaining members. Also, one interesting point raised is the role of the organisation as a **professional network**, which is considered a positive factor for both recruiting and retaining members by about 60% of respondents.

The results suggest a great diversity of issues among Clubs in different regions, belonging to Unions of different sizes… How can we manage this diversity in order to respond to all the different needs?

Diversity is certainly a plus in a service organisation like Soroptimist International. SIE, with Unions and Single Clubs scattered from Continental Europe to Africa and to the Caribbean, must take into consideration the different needs that exist. This is why in the analysis of the results we used different criteria (Regional, Small vs. Medium vs. Big Unions and Unions vs. Single Clubs) to get the most out of the results. Let me emphasise that the Federation stands ready to respond to the call of Unions and Single Clubs to have a more direct relationship and to work together to address concerns and challenges.

What do you see as some concerns that we can address relatively quickly? What are some concerns expressed by members that might take longer to remedy?

Lack of visibility requires immediate attention. Clearly we need to strengthen the image of our organisation and to re-brand to adjust to a fast changing-world. The SIE



SIE Extension Committee (left to right): Asha Abdulrahman, Maria Luisa Frosio, Françoise Murebwayire, Tonny Filedt Kok-Weimar and Mihaela Noditi

website should become a real point of reference with different types of up-to-date information. This can be done relatively rapidly. Other areas connected to the Constitution and By-Laws or requiring strategic thinking will need more time, but Clubs' priorities are clear:

- **Professional networking** is considered a plus factor and SIE will therefore set up a database of members' professions.
- **The "one member per profession" rule** seems to be an obstacle to the recruitment of members and is something that will be closely evaluated.
- **"By invitation only" membership** is seen as a barrier to recruiting for Single Clubs (overall 54%) and in particular for Single Clubs in Africa (67%).



Representatives of the Union of Rwanda, Jeanne Nyirakamana and Appoline Kangabire, receive the 2014 Extension Award at the Governors' Meeting in Copenhagen

Each Union and Single Club region has received a detailed analysis of the results coming from its members. What do you see as the next steps now? What are some concrete ways for them, and for our members, to act upon these results?

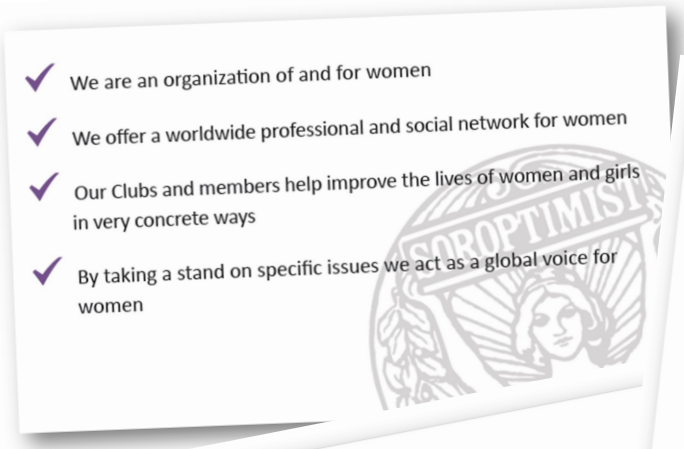
We hope that Unions and Single Clubs will take the time to analyse the key findings and to learn from the overall results from across the Federation. We are very grateful to all Unions that have shared the results with their clubs. Now is the time for action. For a start, I encourage everyone to look at the concrete recommendations already given by our Governors in Copenhagen.

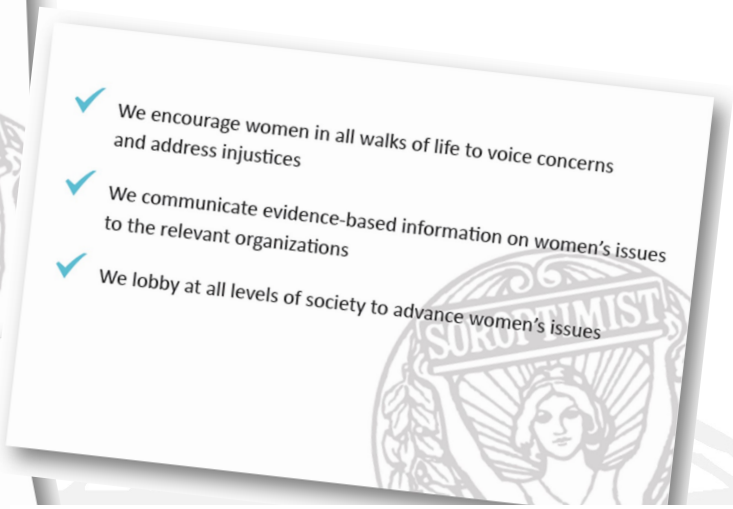
Having had time to reflect on all the results, and having discussed them in depth with the Governors in Copenhagen this summer, what do you think this Consultation says about the direction our organisation should take in the future?

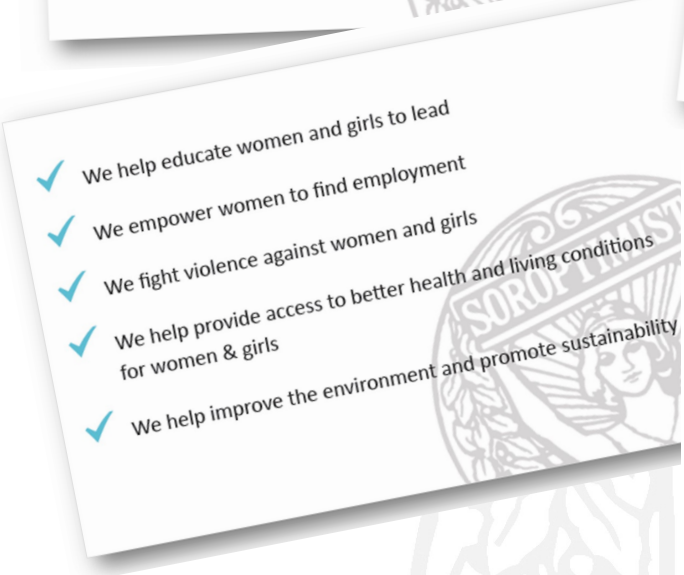
Governors and Presidents had the opportunity to review the results of the survey and to analyse the findings in working groups. They presented their thoughts and gave ideas and potential solutions to the different challenges. We need to actively recruit and retain members. We need to reinforce the image of our organisation with clear and motivating key messages (*Who we are - What we do - How we influence - Why we are Soroptimists*). We need to support and strengthen our Unions and Clubs. We need to be aware and proud of the thousands of projects that touch the lives of women and girls around the world. The past is encouraging but the future is the real challenge. If we work together we will not fail!

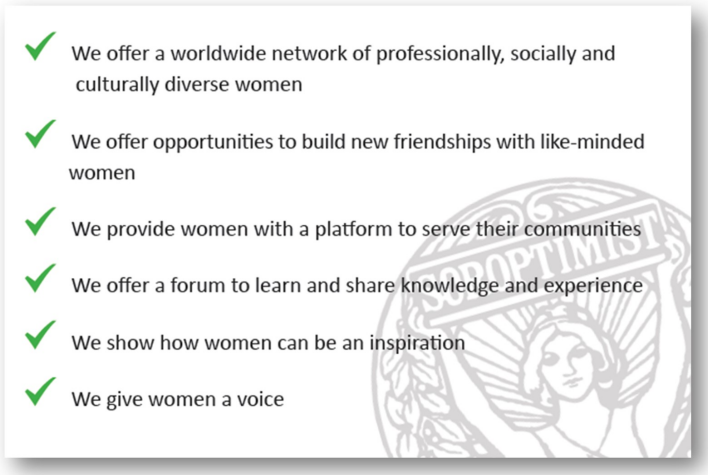
KEY SOROPTIMIST MESSAGES

Do you ever have trouble describing our organisation and what it's about in just a few words? Do you ever find that you describe Soroptimist and its mission differently from other members of your Club?









To help you communicate about our organisation to the outside world and especially to potential new members, we have developed a series of "key messages" about Soroptimist that cover our organisation as a whole as well as Programme, Advocacy, and Extension!

What is more, Soroptimists from many different countries have kindly helped us translate the "key messages" into their languages – the cards you see below are now available in 20 different languages! If you can't find them in your language, feel free to send us a translation and we will add it to the current list. Simply write to us at: programme@soroptimisteurope.org.

To download the messages, simply log onto the Extranet at www.soroptimisteurope.org and go to **Downloads -> Communications -> Key Soroptimist Messages**. We encourage you to download the messages in your language, print them out as cards, and distribute them widely!

EXTENSION:
THE GERMAN SUCCESS STORY

The Union of Germany has won the Extension Award on several occasions in recent years, including in 2014 This is owed not only to the marvellous work of our dedicated Extension Committee members but also to the many highly motivated German Soroptimists who act as role models and inspire other outstanding women to become Soroptimists.

Moreover, the following actions, instruments and events give an idea of the joint efforts of German Soroptimists to recruit and retain members:

- Each of the 4 members of SI Germany's **Extension Committee** is responsible for 2 out of 8 regional districts. They accompany new initiatives and recently chartered Clubs, as do the Clubs' Godmothers. At least two Godmothers are recommended for new Clubs and if possible from different neighbouring Clubs.
- The President of SI Germany and the Vice President responsible for the district in which the new Club will be chartered **visit** the new sisters at least once before the chartering. Furthermore, the new sisters are encouraged to visit as many Soroptimist events as possible – nationally and internationally.
- At our **annual Extension Meeting**, Godmothers and future Soroptimists gather for a two-day workshop. There they discuss topics such as the organisation of SI, project work, the basics of being a Soroptimist, fundraising, and so on. Also, members of the most recently chartered Clubs illustrate their experiences of chartering. We offer an information package that includes special guidelines for Godmothers and details about the process of founding a Club.



Representatives of the Union of Germany after receiving the 2014 Extension Award at the Governors' Meeting in Copenhagen (left to right): Hanne von Schaumann-Werder, Dagmar Lipper and Magdalena Erkens



- The Extension Committee follows the development of the initiatives of Clubs that are soon to be chartered. They do so on a monthly basis by using **monthly protocols**. This allows them to get involved quickly if necessary.

- The acting President of SI Germany, Magdalena Erkens, has clarified that "Extension isn't just about chartering new Clubs, but also about gaining new members in existing Clubs". Hence she made this topic a **principal theme** of a recent meeting of Club Presidents and Secretaries. Lectures and workshops were held on relevant questions, including:

  ◊ What do the Statutes say?

  ◊ What makes Club life interesting, what might motivate enthusiastic young women to join Soroptimist?

  ◊ How can we ease the integration of new members into a Club?

- Also, statistics concerning **membership development** of Clubs are analysed on a yearly basis. For example, when one discovers problems, such as a shortage of members, the Vice Presidents responsible for the development of Clubs in Germany contact the Club in question and try to help. Everything is done to emphasise that continuous growth in membership is essential for ensuring a spirited Club life, conserving diversity, and giving new inputs. **Finally, we should not forget that the acquisition of interesting women for SI is also an instrument of public relations**.

Magdalena Erkens, President, SI Germany
Elisabeth Meisinger, Vice President, SI Germany
Miriam Erkens, Member, SI Isartal/Bad Tölz
(translation)

2014 EXTENSION AWARDS

In addition to **SI Germany**, there were two other winners of the Extension Award at this year's Governors' Meeting in Copenhagen! The **Unions of France** and **Rwanda** also won an Extension Award for their exceptional work in starting new Clubs and growing their membership. **Among the 15 new Soroptimist International of Europe Clubs that were chartered in the first year of this Biennium, two were in France, two in Rwanda, and an impressive seven in Germany!**



Christine Dagain, 2012-2014 President of the Union of France, receives the 2014 Extension Award at the Governors' Meeting in Copenhagen

20TH SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Mark your calendars! **The 20th Soroptimist International Convention will be taking place in the breath-taking city of Istanbul in Turkey between July 9th and 12th, 2015. You are all invited!**

Carrying the **overarching theme of *Educate to Lead***, the Convention will be the **opportunity to discuss our experiences of the challenges faced by women and girls around the world** and to **celebrate the outstanding work done by our members across 130 different countries**! The three-day event will see plenary sessions on the topics of "Educate to Lead: Far we've come, far we need to go", "Defeating violence against women and girls," and "Listening to the voices of the future." Numerous other interactive sessions on topics related to education, empowerment, advocacy and other key areas of concern to Soroptimists will fill these exciting three days. Participants will have the chance to hear from world-renowned leaders in their fields, including Judge Silvana Arbia, former Registrar of the International Criminal Court and former Chief Prosecutor at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Professor Feride Acar, Member and former President of the UN CEDAW Committee, Güler Sabanci, Chairperson of Sabanci Holding, and others.

Registration for the event will soon open on the SI Convention website at www.si-convention2015.org. Stay tuned for more information on this exciting global Soroptimist event which takes place every four years only!

Soroptimistanbul
20th International Convention
July 9 to 12, 2015 - Istanbul, Turkey



FACEBOOK GROUP FOR PROGRAMME DIRECTORS

Has anyone got good ideas on how to promote Friendship links? What do you think will be the most important goal in the next Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) we as Soroptimists should promote? How can I find my Union's old PFRs? These are just some of the questions that have started a debate in the new Programme Directors' Facebook group!

Following requests voiced by Programme Directors at the Programme & Advocacy Seminar that took place in Geneva earlier this year, **a closed Facebook group has now been created for all Union and Single Club Programme Directors and Assistant Programme Directors**!

The group is supposed to be a work tool for knowledge sharing since PDs across different countries are likely to be facing similar challenges. If you are eligible to join, simply write to us at programme@soroptimisteurope.org and we will add you.

The PD and APD of the Union of the Netherlands, Marlène van Benthem and Marja de Reunis, have kindly agreed to moderate the group for a few months. We thank them both in advance!

FEDERATION WEBSITE

Noticed anything different about the SIE website lately? Perhaps not but there is a lot to see! While the homepage of www.soroptimisteurope.org is largely the same as before, **most of the content on the *Who We Are*, *Programme*, *Advocacy*, and *Resources* tabs has been completely revamped**!

The SIE website is getting an increasing number of visitors, so it's crucial we communicate who we are and what we do in a way that is immediately understandable to people who know little or nothing about Soroptimist and our movement. **We believe that this new updated website reflects more clearly and more prominently the remarkable work you do in your communities.** It's just another step in 'making more noise' about your fantastic projects and sharing with the rest of the world the proud and important work Soroptimists do!

Do take a look – we are always happy to receive your feedback!

WELCOME, NEW CLUBS!

Soroptimist International of Europe welcomed 15 new Clubs between October 2013 and September 2014. Read about the Charter Projects of a few of our newest Clubs here!

SI MONT-BLANC (FRANCE)

With our Charter Project we took the long-term view that making our organisation known by the local community and the local authorities will give us more legitimacy and help us in our future project work. We chose International Women's Day, March 8th, as the occasion to organise an event for the public: a women's talent fair. Arts and crafts created by women from our local community were exhibited and sold. Our goal was to help women artists network and approach customers – and to showcase female creativity in general! The response was great, particularly from young women in our community – the event really helped them get off the ground professionally. We will be running this economic empowerment project once again in 2015!



SI CIESZYN (POLAND)

Our Charter project was taking care of design exhibitions at the Castle in Cieszyn, which receives many local, national and foreign tourists. Since then, we have engaged in a more ambitious project. We raised funds for computer equipment. This has enhanced our capacity to deliver educational projects, promote our city, and strengthen the quality of support provided to women by our Club. We are now aiming to create an "Information Centre on Women's Rights and Family" where women from the district of Cieszyn can receive free legal advice on labour and family law.



SI SZOMBATHELY (HUNGARY)

Our Charter Project is called "Esther". We are looking to help small children living in the Ernuszt Clement Children's Home in Gencsapáti, Hungary, through activities and financial support. We aim to help the children develop and prepare for an independent life. Just before our Chartering, we involved them in a number of different activities: an art competition and a 15-kilometer hike that we did together, in order to help them create a bond and a friendship with our Club members.



SI ESSLINGEN (GERMANY)

We called our Charter Project "Home away from home." Initially, members of our Club established contact with social workers at a small refugee centre in our town. We learned about the needs of women and girls there and decided to get involved. Through our contact with an Iranian woman at the centre the idea for our first public activity was born: "Life & Literature in Iran – The situation of women". The evening was a great success, with lots of publicity, good press and new members. Importantly, it was an event not for, but with refugee women, all of whom were very proud to participate! The project also taught us about the reasons women are forced to flee. As a result, we initiated "Home away from home" – language courses for refugee women and girls, giving them a place learn, discuss and receive support. The project was so successful that the Minister of Integration of Baden-Württemberg agreed to speak at our Charter weekend! Most recently, Club members started financially supporting the rescue of three Yezidi girls from Northern Iraq. It was our greatest moment when the girls, having spent five months in an orphanage in Istanbul (with the great support of our Turkish sisters!), arrived in Germany in February and met their mother after four years of separation! The school the girls are attending now in Esslingen is giving great support for their integration. Due to this success, the school staff have decided to offer special programmes for refugee and migrant children!



OTHER NEWS FROM OUR FEDERATION

A joint musical initiative by Soroptimists from Poland and Israel

On the request of Elisabeth Latocha-Gatarek, from the Soroptimist Club of Gdansk in Poland, in this issue we are also highlighting the new Polish-Israeli "Project on Drums" run by the Club of Gdansk in Poland and the Union of Israel. The project has seen the introduction of a new scholarship programme supporting two young women: a musician from Poland and a musician and music therapist from Israel. The two women are currently working on a joint project of their own, which is a fusion between their musical and personal backgrounds, combining ancient and modern instruments and styles. They will create a recording together and also give concerts and workshops. The concerts will be the occasion for Polish Soroptimists to visit Israel and for Israeli Soroptimists to visit Poland, to learn each other, to present our Clubs' achievements and to share best practices!

IMPORTANT DATES

Oct 11	International Day of the Girl Child
Oct 15	International Day of Rural Women
Oct 16	World Food Day
Oct 18	European Anti-Trafficking Day
Oct 17	International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
Nov 19	World Toilet Day
Nov 20	Universal Children's Day
Nov 25	International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

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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