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## A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY TEAM!



In this issue, we continue exploring the connection between Programme and Advocacy and the many ways in which they complement and reinforce each other. Combining programme and advocacy can make your projects reverberate far in your communities, in your countries and even internationally.

Wishing you all a productive, active and joyful new year 2016!

*Renata Trottmann Probst, President Elect and head 'Programme & Advocacy'*

## This month we talk about :NEW LANGUAGE

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**D**o you know that SIE has members in 63 countries? Imagine what it could mean for Gender Equality if we all would work together to realize equality!

But does gender equality involve the same challenges in all our 63 countries? More importantly is the (historical) context in all countries the same? Due to war, climate change, natural disasters, economic crisis, the (social) media, this context changes almost daily. Look at the current refugee problem. We all observe, see what's happening and try to solve the issue but at the same time our perspective and mind-set is changing constantly.

The title "new language" might have surprised you. I have learned from **Ellen Hey, a Soroptimist and Professor of Public International Law in The Netherlands** that we have to deal with 'wicked problems'. We all have our assumptions but to create solutions we first have to respect each other's opinion and **look for a "new language" to communicate - an 'in-between' or relay language.** We all have different cultural backgrounds, values, habits and beliefs, so we cannot communicate any longer in our own

language and in our own way. **Active listening is a must. It would definitely help to understand each other if we would use our intuition in the way of communicating.**

Realizing this, we should wonder how successful we could be in working together on one big issue - like gender equality. **The MEETINGS OF THE Committee on the Status of Women (CSW)** that are scheduled in New York every March **ARE** a big challenge for Soroptimists worldwide to deal with this 'wicked problem'.

As a member of an international organization, **I invite you to open yourself, without losing yourself or without renouncing our values and principles, and look for cooperation across borders and cultures to realize this one goal: gender equality.**

**Friendship links are an excellent possibility to start active listening and exercise an "in-between language".** Accomplishing a project together is an interesting way to acquire these qualities.

Let's start creating a new friendship link style and please share good practices with us, because many of present-day challenges can only be addressed at a global network scale!

*Marlène van Benthem, Programme Director*



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## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY



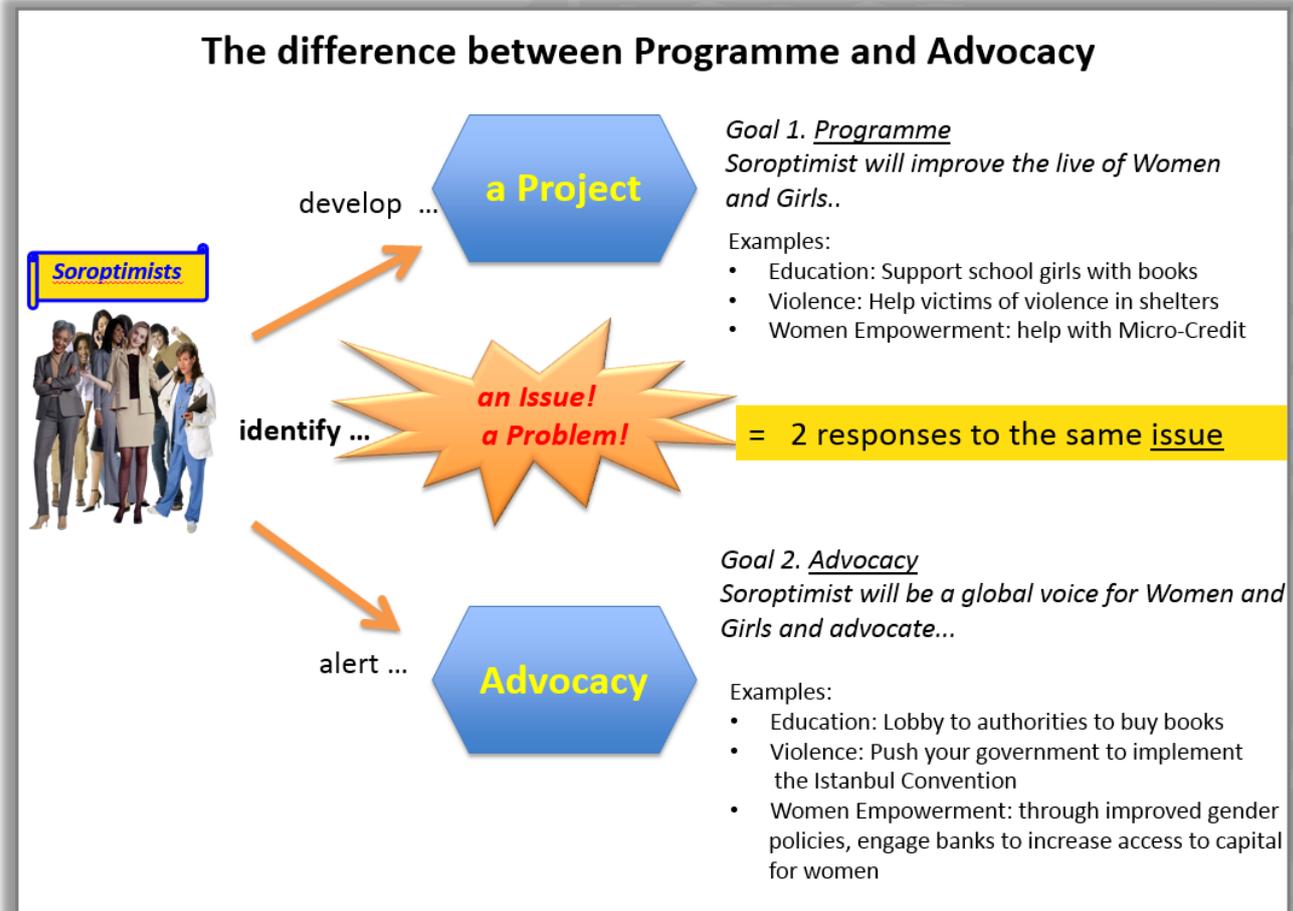
**Advocacy** is a relatively newly introduced term in SIE. We know that many unions and clubs have discussed the definitions of advocacy and some uncertainty has been **expressed when trying to define “advocacy” and distinguish it from “programme”**. Advocacy can take many shapes and forms but **its aim is to influence or change public policy**. This can be awareness raising, mobilization of communities around a particular issue, production of information material or articles for the internet or newspapers. Participation in panel debates or seminars are other ways of advocating the soroptimist mission.

The SIE Advocacy Team consists of Renate Smith-Kubat, SIE representative to the European Women’s Lobby, Bettina Hahne, SIE representative to the Council of Europe, Vera

Gregor, SIE representative to the OSCE and myself. Bettina, Renate and Vera are ready to update you on the latest topics and news from their institutions. The four of us skype regularly and one of the topics discussed is how we best possible **can assist soroptimists with and facilitate their advocacy work**. There are several ways of doing so and we are currently working on an “advocacy toolbox” which will to introduce to you this spring.

As for the **Programme Team**, coordinated by Marlène van Benthem, **the focus is on project work, action and cooperation**. I would like to give you one example of the difference between Programme and Advocacy: As you know the SIE theme 2015-2017 is **Soroptimists Invest in Education**; the programme/project would be to support girls with books whereas advocacy would be to lobby to authorities to buy books for the girls. There are many examples to follow and we look forward to keeping in touch with our members.

*Sigrid Ag, Vice President Advocacy*



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## OUR ECOSOC STATUS WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

### The importance of the PFRs



We have **Rights** but also **Obligations!**

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is the United Nations' central platform for reflection, debate, and innovative thinking on sustainable development.

Our accreditation clearly acknowledges our **credibility** as a reputable **partner organization** and as a **trustworthy voice for women and girls**

**OUR RIGHTS:** The ECOSOC Status grants us yearlong access to all UN Centers around the globe and attendance to conferences and forums. Moreover, it grants us the right to engage in discussions with a wide variety of stakeholders – policymakers, parliamentarians, academics, foundations, and other NGOs.

**OUR OBLIGATIONS:** Soroptimist Clubs and Members are **credible witnesses** of the **realities** in their communities. Our duty is therefore also to relate what is happening at ground level, and to alert the UN institutions of any raising problems. In addition to our participation to UN meetings, the thousands of **projects** that Unions and Clubs report through the **PFR database** serve to shape our **report** to the United Nations. Whether in awareness raising, in direct project development or in lobbying, such information is most critical.



Anne Simon, SIE Executive Director

## Keep sending us your PFRs!



The PFR system is no longer just a form that you fill out and don't hear from again!

All PFRs reports you submit appear on the SIE Interactive Map promoting your excellent work, but are also stored in your Union's / Club's profile and in your own profile on the SIE member's area; **PFRs are YOURS!**



### So how do I get my Unions' /Club's project onto the system?

- Go to the SIE homepage at [www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org) and click on the **toolbar OUR PROJECTS** then **Add a PFR**. Insert a public username (**sie**) and password (**geneva**); the same as the ones used to log into the SI PFR system.

OR

- Go to the SIE homepage at [www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org) and log into the **Members' Area** by clicking on the padlock icon. Enter your personal ID and Password. Then click on the **PFR** tab, and then on the **Add a PFR** button.

### Do I have to submit the project report in only in English?

Not anymore! The PFR system is available in several different languages!

### More?

You can download a **FAQ** document on the PFR [HERE](#).

You can still contact your Programme & Advocacy Team at: [programme@soroptimisteurope.org](mailto:programme@soroptimisteurope.org)

Bintou Koïta, SIE Programme & Advocacy Assistant



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## FRIENDSHIP LINKS AND TWINNING: THE HIGH VALUE OF SUCH PROGRAMMES



**Friendship and international understanding play an important role in Soroptimist International.**

Club members of SI establish 'friendship links' - a very close connection between two Clubs in different countries and federations.

They afford the opportunity for Clubs to become acquainted with the different cultures and conditions of life. They allow to help each other, give advice and generally support one another in a whole host of ways, especially in times of tragedy.

**The cooperation facilitates the realization of projects of common interest.** A resultant success provides new stimuli to the life of a club. Joint projects, including the resulting PR, achieve more general attention. Objects of Soroptimism are more likely perceived.

**Friendship is based on exchange of ideas and discussions** – via letters, electronic media or whenever possible personal meetings. This allows the friendships to develop as a part of the club activity. To visit each other is the icing.

**Only active links are enriching for both sides.**

**Twinning between mature Unions and young Unions or Single Clubs is a double win situation, the younger win by learning, the mature win by mentoring** (periodic personal contact): through help in structuring, assisting to set aims and objectives, guidance and participation in projects.

*Elisabeth Meisinger, Extension Committee Member*



## APPLICATIONS FOR SIE SCHOLARSHIPS ARE OPEN FOR 2016-2017!

Since 1968, when the Scholarship Fund was established, Soroptimist International of Europe continues **to empower women and girls through education opportunities.** The scholarships

shall be awarded to women in profession or business who want to undertake further training or a pending career change. Also women who have started a professional and/or vocational training may be awarded the resources they need to improve their education, skills, and employment prospects when they are living in a developing country with an existing SIE Club.

We hope to receive a high number applications of excellent candidates from Unions and Single Clubs. **Please remember that the deadline for the online applications is February 15th 2016.**



This year a particular attention will be given to candidates who intend to pursue careers in the **STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) areas. There are just not enough women going into these fields. We need to encourage them by making funding available to women who want to pursue a life in science.** The hard sciences have typically been male-dominated fields. Recent awareness campaigns have helped expose many women to careers in science who may not have felt welcome before.

One of the things that we can do to help disband the stereotype that this areas are mainly for males, is really to expose these young girls and young women to female role models who are successful in the field. **Mentoring and coaching together with funding are very important to increase the number of women involved in the STEM areas.**

Soroptimist is ready to play a significant role since we strongly believe that strengthening girls' and young women's involvement in such areas can be a **powerful accelerator of gender equality, sustainable development and economic empowerment.**

For more information please click [HERE](#)

*Maria Luisa Frosio, Scholarship Committee Chair*



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## 35,000 SOROPTIMISTS ARE ENGAGED IN PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY

*Some highlights of recent projects conducted by Soroptimists within our Federation!*

### Preventing human trafficking

The Soroptimists from Slatina in Romania developed a campaign to **sensitize young students from rural schools about trafficking to make them less vulnerable to this terrible abuse**. Though priority was given to rural areas, they developed the project in urban schools and were assisted by psychologists to organize conferences in schools and initiate a debate with students.

The dialogue between students and experts was fruitful and very enriching on both sides who learnt a lot. The Soroptimists believe that this project has contributed to the reduction and of trafficking in their community.



### For refugee women

Refugee women having received legal protection should have access to education, housing and work in order to integrate themselves in society, but the Italian government welfare does not always have financial resources to ensure such rights. Thus, **Soroptimists from Torino** cooperates with CISV (Comunità Impegno Servizio Volontariato) and Opera Barolo for the start-up of a **new association that will take care of women** (and their children) concerned by these problems.

**Club members with specific qualifications as lawyers, fiscal experts and accountants have made themselves available** for the start-up of CISV's spin-off project for refugee women. In long term, the Soroptimists from Torino, hope that they will manage to **enhance opportunities** for a maximum refugee women and assist them to have access to housing, education, and employment.

### Soroptimists invest in education



Encourage children to fall in love with reading! This is the goal to achieve for the **Soroptimists of Abidjan Ivoire**. In December 2015 the Club launched the inauguration of a library in the primary school of Houantoué Abobo in Abidjan.

The ceremony was attended by the President of the Club, Aïda Alassane N'Diaye Aida who was accompanied for the occasion by members of her Club, and the SI Abidjan Flamboyant. **This action is part of the celebration of the Human Rights celebrated on the 10th December**, but also importantly, this Club project is in line with the 2015-2017 biennium theme led by President Elisabetta "**Soroptimists Invest in Education**".

### 16 days of activism - The orange mobilization



Last November, the **Soroptimist Club of Genève Fondateur in Switzerland** organised together with **Solidarité Femmes**, a huge event in the old town of Geneva (promenade de la Treille) – The

**"Orange Mobilization"**. The idea was to raise awareness on domestic violence by encouraging people to sit down on a famous large bench of the city (more than 120 meters). The action was a great success with **more than 400 people** dressed in "orange" to demonstrate solidarity. The event draw the attention of the media and the Geneva's famous "Jet d'eau" was illuminated in orange!

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## COUNTRY FOCUS THE NETHERLANDS

***Almost 90 and still alive and kicking!***

In 2018 the Soroptimists in the Netherlands, Surinam and Curaçao, will not only celebrate the friendship days, but also celebrate the 90th Union's birthday.

- ⇒ **88 years young,**
- ⇒ **101 clubs**
- ⇒ **2 clubs in the process of being inaugurated (Ede/Bennekom and Aruba)**
- ⇒ **3.200 members.**



*The organizational model of SIE is really helpful to arrange our activities but.... pig-headed as we are we gave it a private twist and turned around the triangles Communication and Strategy and Organization. We did this because the "listening" aspect of communication comes more into its own if in the triangle it is (also) facing outside and not sandwiched between the other triangles.*

### STRATEGY AND ORGANIZATION

Functions in boards should be made more attractive for working women with or without care responsibilities. How about to get to an average of 8 hours work a week? That needs a professional headquarters, which at this moment is coming on nicely. **The on-going professionalization efforts can also be recognized in the sharing of knowledge on project management, the making of scripts for fundraising and other advocacy activities.** We work according to multi-annual Union management plans. An international section in these plans is directed to how to get active

involvement of the clubs in the international context of SI as worldwide service organization.

### PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY

Alive and kicking? Absolutely! Already quite some years our **101 clubs realize yearly about 250 projects with financial result: € 750.000,-**. And: from just 2 very concerned members to the efforts of at least 80 clubs....: Meg van Hoeve and Dielindt Seijsener developed and are still the thriving forces behind a gigantic project – together with Unicef.

**'B2S' = 'Back to school' is a project for Syrian fugitive children** - in exile in Turkey – to get schooling again and not be known as "a lost generation". **For a period of 3 years clubs and individual members allied to raise € 100.000,- a year and the 2 first years they managed it! There is no fear for the outcome of the 3rd year.**



The Union pays much attention to the balance between being a professional service organization and enjoying our sisterhood. Next to the 2 official general meetings **we organize yearly a conference during which in a "out of the box way" we translate our goals into actions.** The conference in March 2015 – in the presence of our SI president Ann Garvie - was dedicated to the importance of friendship links. **We are convinced that there is (personal) value in having international friendship links.** So the Union promotes each club to have at least one active friendship tie with a club in another country: one of the reasons why we are happy to organize the friendship days in 2018 in Leeuwarden, the – then - cultural capital of Europe in the North of the Netherlands.

**Very proud we are on our grounding of a Chair**

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at the University of Utrecht on Women’s Rights. The focus will be: how to teach these in a way that will stick in people’s minds as self-evident that the slighting of women and girls is an abnormality and not a benchmark. Thanks to a generous inheritance we can maintain this Chair for at least 5 years and of course there will be a female professor appointed. Extra benefit: all Soroptimists are – initially – welcome at all lectures.

The Union board has started talks with Soroptimists from Belgium and Luxemburg on mentoring young women in their work environment and if it is advisable to do this in a Benelux setting. **As on-going professionalization is and will remain of great importance this can become an important focus point in the near future.** We have a long standing international scholarship-fund, yearly trainings for all kind of SI board functions and a cooperation with a national educational foundation to mentor fugitives.



Our Governor Luc de Wit joined, together with Anneke van Veen and 25 Soroptimists from Belgium and France the walk “Climate miles” to

Paris to get the attention for the Climate conference.

**EXTENSION**

Alongside establishing new clubs, attention is also directed to the welcoming of new members in existing clubs. **During regional meetings we talk with clubs about how to keep Soroptimism interesting for modern young women! Clubs that struggle to attract new members are actively approached and supported.** More and more women approach Soroptimism via the website; the Union has made a process description how to lead these applications to memberships.

**COMMUNICATION**

We want to be a strong generally known “mark”: Soroptimist International? Oh, yes that group of professional women that strive to defend and improve the position of women and girls all over the world!

This message should be spread more or less uniformly and repeatedly. **In this context, the Union board has started - next to our “time-honoured” annual reports -, to write a so-called social annual report.** Plans are to yearly distribute these reports for example in waiting rooms and other spaces where the general public can read or glance through them. **And for the Soroptimist use of social media we are preparing a protocol on do’s and don’ts when we put messages online.**

It goes without saying (a lot about it) that the Dutch Union looks forward to **support and stand by our next SI President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen** in every way she will need us during the years of her presidency.

*Ingrid Blaauw, President of SI Netherlands*





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**GENERAL NEWS**

**BEST PRACTICES 2016**



This year again, your Federation wants to reward the best projects and thus pay tribute to your work and your commitment to improving the lives of women and girls. We will be giving out

11 awards: one **Project of the Year Award** and two **Awards for each of five Programme Objectives**. The winning projects will be announced at the **Governors' Meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, in July 2016**.



Each Union/Club/Single Club is eligible to submit two projects. Each project that is submitted should correspond to one of the following five Programme Objectives: **Education, Economic Empowerment, Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls, Health, Sustainable Environment**. Projects must have been implemented **between October 2014 and September 2015**. The deadline for submission is **March 15, 2015**. On the private area of the public website [www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org) you will find all detailed information and a registration form.

Come and share the best of your projects. They will inspire other Soroptimists, generate perhaps collaborations and also increase the visibility of our organization. We look forward to hearing from you.

**SI PRESIDENT'S APPEAL 2015 - 2017**  
Educate future leaders in Nepal



The SI President 2015-2017 calls for the generosity of our four Federations to support women and girls of Nepal in rebuilding their lives following the earthquakes of April 25<sup>th</sup> and May 12<sup>th</sup> 2015. **Launched December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015, under the SI theme education and leadership, this call will continue until 2017.**

For two years, it will fund tangible and sustainable projects that meet the specific needs of Nepalese women and girls regarding education. The building of schools, the distribution of scholarships, the transmission of skills to generate an income, the training of women and girls to prevent them from trafficking, will constitute among others the various projects drawn up in partnership with the on-site organizations looking for financing. Further information on the ongoing work and funding will be transmitted regularly.

Through the European Federation, **we encourage you to participate to this appeal made by Yvonne Simpson, our SI president, allowing Nepalese women and girls to become agents of reconstruction and change as well as leaders in their households and communities.**

Thank you for your support.

For more information on the December 10th, SI President's Appeal 2015-2017, please click [HERE](#)

*Caroline Junier, Assistant Programme Director  
Committee Member education and leadership in  
Nepal*

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## GENERAL NEWS

### SIE PHOTO COMPETITION 2016



You have recently received a call of participation to the **third edition of the Soroptimist International of Europe Photo Competition** entitled *Through the Eyes of Soroptimists*.

The increase in participation between the first and second editions of this competition has encouraged us to continue with a third edition. We are eager to receive many excellent photos from you this year as well. If you have any questions about the process or haven't received the form, make sure you **contact the SIE Programme Team** at [programme\[at\]soroptimisteurope.org](mailto:programme@soroptimisteurope.org).

You can also download the form from the SIE members' area. Just log in, click on "**Downloads**", then on "**Programme & Advocacy**", and then on "**Photo Competition 2016**".

All submissions must be in by **April 15th 2016**.

We look forward to hearing from many of you!

## PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY TRAINING SEMINAR

Again in 2016, your SIE Programme & Advocacy Team will be hosting its **annual 2-day Programme & Advocacy Training Seminar for SIE Programme Directors** on **20 –22 May 2016** in the beautiful city of **Lisbon!** Stay tuned for more details which will be coming to all Unions and Single Clubs shortly!



## ACTION FUND 2015 –2016

The deadline to submit your application form for the **SIE Action Fund** is just around the corner! Please send your request to :

- Immediate Past President Ulla Madsen ([ulla.madsen@soroptimisteurope.org](mailto:ulla.madsen@soroptimisteurope.org)),
- with a copy to SIEHQ ([siehq@soroptimisteurope.org](mailto:siehq@soroptimisteurope.org)).

### IMPORTANT DATES

<b>Feb 6</b>	International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation
<b>Mar 1</b>	Zero Discrimination Day
<b>Mar 8</b>	International Women's Day
<b>Mar 21</b>	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
<b>Mar 22</b>	World Water Day

## 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](mailto:programme@soroptimisteurope.org)

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