



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE



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ANNUAL REPORT 2023



WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Soroptimists and Soroptimist supporters,

The last sentence of last year's annual report read, 'I can already predict the next annual report: an exhilarating wave of projects, inspiration, and empowerment, driven by the unwavering passion and dedication of the fiercely committed Soroptimists.' This statement set the stage for a year marked by extraordinary efforts and remarkable progress.

While last year reflected a collective eagerness to rebound after the prolonged lockdown, this year has seen an even stronger engagement among our members, to maintain the momentum of our rebuilding efforts. Embracing the 'rebuild, rethink, reinvent, and reposition' mindset, numerous innovative ideas emerged, surpassing our expectations. Each country, guided by its own cultural context, took appropriate actions, making Soroptimism a highly attractive organisation that every member and potential member aspires to join. Although membership figures are not detailed in this report, we are proud to note that we have successfully curbed the decline in membership, marking a fraction of losses seen in previous years. As President, I extend my applause to all our members across the 43 countries where we are present.

Last year's high number in projects was attributed to recovery efforts post-lockdown. This year, however, represents a clear continuum rather than a setback or a moment of rest. What we initially thought was a sprint turned out to be a marathon, and our members were more than ready to persist, replicate their efforts, and contribute even more, as this report proves.

Introducing change in a 100-year-old organisation is challenging. Yet, our members have demonstrated their reliance on the unconditional support and commitment of the board and committee members, who continuously addressed their needs and queries. They also witnessed the dedication and competence of our Headquarters, our sole professional body within Soroptimism. We are fortunate to benefit from their years of experience and expertise. With this unified talent, we created a 'safe space for change' which was my aim. I am grateful to all who joined me in my endeavours with their full commitment and dedication.

This year, we not only continued our Growth Academy for our members and enhanced our Leadership Academies with more targeted initiatives, including campaigns focused on mental health preventing domestic and digital violence, but we also responded to the many demands for repositioning our organisation. This report details the projects undertaken. Beyond action, we also focused on raising awareness and advocating, which are crucial as we navigate our identity as a non-political NGO. Many members voiced concerns about our perceived weak identity in this regard. Addressing this, we focused on the 'reposition' factor during the Programme meeting in June. Our strategic plan, objectives, and focus areas emphasise advocacy as much as projects.

The demand from our members to be better prepared and equipped with the necessary tools, knowledge, and skills to present strong arguments was justified and addressed. This acknowledgement not only recognised our identity challenge but also addressed it, serving as an eye-opener for many. It also stands as a tribute to the hard work of our representatives within our SIE umbrella organisations and the United Nations, especially amid humanitarian crisis in the Middle East, following a barbaric and strongly condemned attack where women were clearly targeted and violated. The result of this June Programme meeting, highlighting and responding to the need for our 'repositioning,' was nothing short of exponential as detailed in this report.

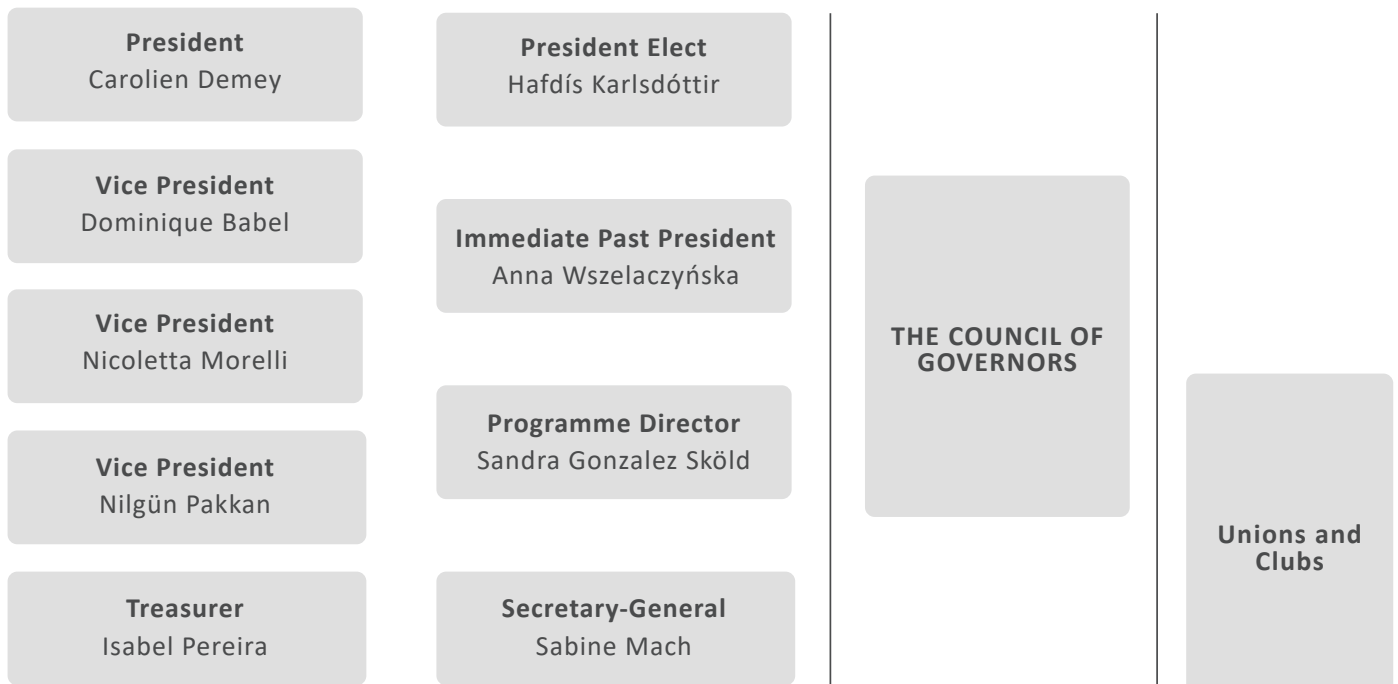
I am already thrilled to anticipate next year's report, as our members continually prove they not only stand up but also stand strong and determined in making our world a better place for women and girls. They are more empowered than ever to speak up. Stay tuned for more updates, and a sincere thank you to all of you for standing with us.

Carolien Demey
SIE President 2021-2023

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

THE RESTRICTED BOARD

MEMBERS



THE ENLARGED BOARD

HQ



ABOUT SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE

Soroptimists educate, empower and enable women and girls to improve their lives. Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) is a network of 30'149 professional women who work together at local, national and international levels to achieve this aim. SIE currently has 1'152 Clubs, operating across 43 countries in Europe, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. It is the largest of the five Federations making up Soroptimist International, which counts around 65'000 women as members.

Our ambition is to transform the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities. We want to see women and girls achieve their individual and collective potential, realise their aspirations, and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide. As Soroptimists, we strive for the advancement of women's status, high ethical standards, Human rights for all, equity development and peace through the advancement of international understanding and good will.

A part of Action and Awareness, one of the ways we achieve this is through advocacy. Soroptimist International of Europe 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. SIE also participates in the work of OSCE through its permanent representatives. This allows SIE to advocate at the international level and lobby for the ratification and implementation of treaties concerning women. We also demand that priority issues for women receive their rightful place on the sustainable development agenda.

Our members include women of all ages, representing a wide range of professions. As such, we are a platform to share our knowledge and experience. We want to ensure that all women and girls have the opportunity to become leaders in their communities, and we will continue to lobby for them at all levels of society.

30 149

Professional women

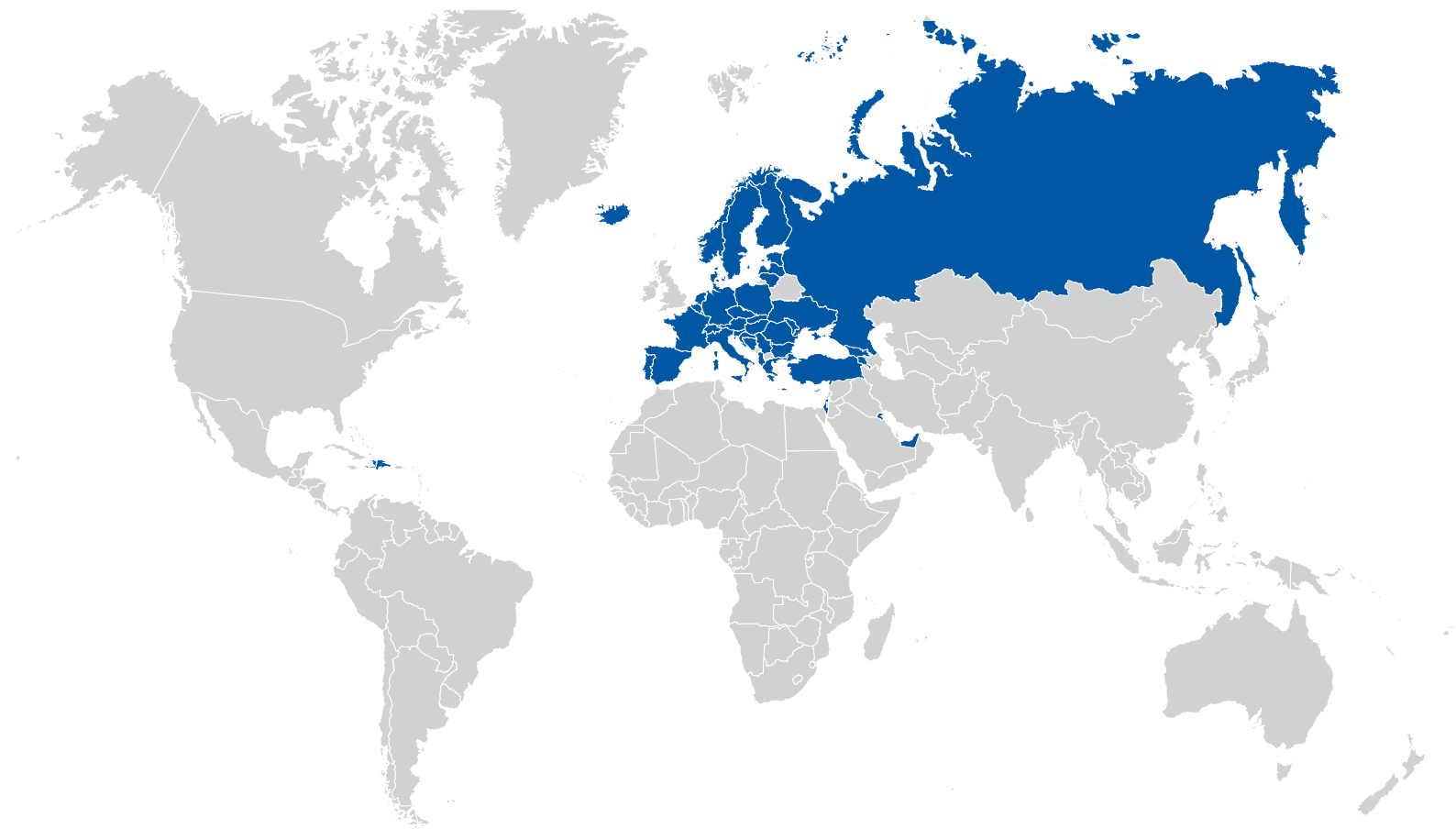
1 152

Clubs

43

Countries

WHERE WE ARE



43

Countries

21

Unions

50

Single Clubs

47 Europe

3 The Caribbean
& Middle East

OVERVIEW 2023

Every organisation involved in or near the field of human rights found 2023 to be extremely challenging. Soroptimist, with its focus on women's rights, experienced significant setbacks in gender equality. However, despite these disruptive challenges, we proved to be more resilient than ever.

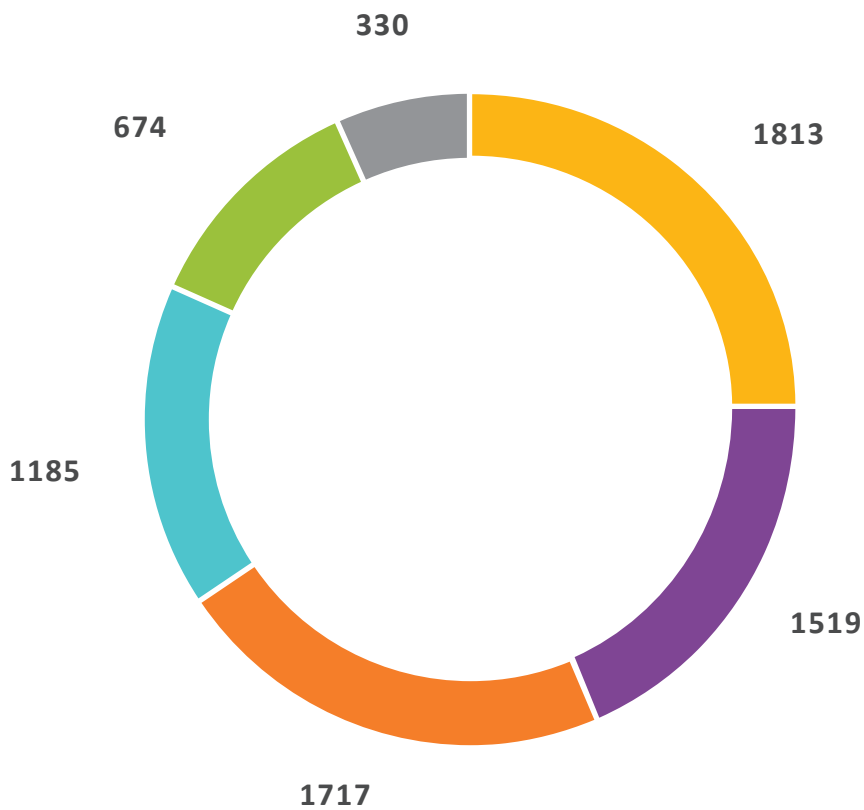
From the beginning of this biennium, our goal has been clear: to empower women and girls, providing them with greater opportunities to make their own choices in career planning, education, and life decisions. Our volunteers carefully selected core issues from a range of long-established goals and objectives across our five areas of focus. Additionally, each objective within our projects includes a gender equality-driven component, specifically centred on women.

The numbers this year tell a compelling story. Not only did our projects reach an unprecedented number of women, helping them realise their potential, but they also demonstrated the sustainability of the progress initiated last year after lockdown. By creating a safe space for change, revisiting our goals, adapting to our evolving world, boosting our members through Growth Academies and modifying our project approaches, we entered a new era. We developed new tools to enhance our visibility, recognition, and value on an international stage. Building on our past achievements, we reached new heights by combining projects with advocacy and raising awareness. Our transformative campaigns last year resulted in greater access to institutions, opening more doors, and increasing the number of Unions benefiting from our enhanced visibility.

Being recognised as a member of Soroptimist not only enhances the visibility of the organisation as a whole but also underscores the importance of our projects at local, national, and international levels. Each project contributes to our overall mission, and the recognition we receive amplifies our efforts, attracts more support, and expands our reach. This collective appreciation strengthens our capacity to implement transformative changes and achieve our goals on a broader scale, making a significant impact.

We acknowledge that words alone cannot fully convey who we are, what we stand for, and what we have accomplished. The following pages will present the data showcasing the progress made by Unions, Clubs and each and every member of Soroptimist International of Europe.

OUR PROJECTS



- Education
- Violence Against Women
- Sustainability
- Women's Empowerment
- Health and Food Security
- Other

From 1 January to 31 December, 2023, SIE members raised

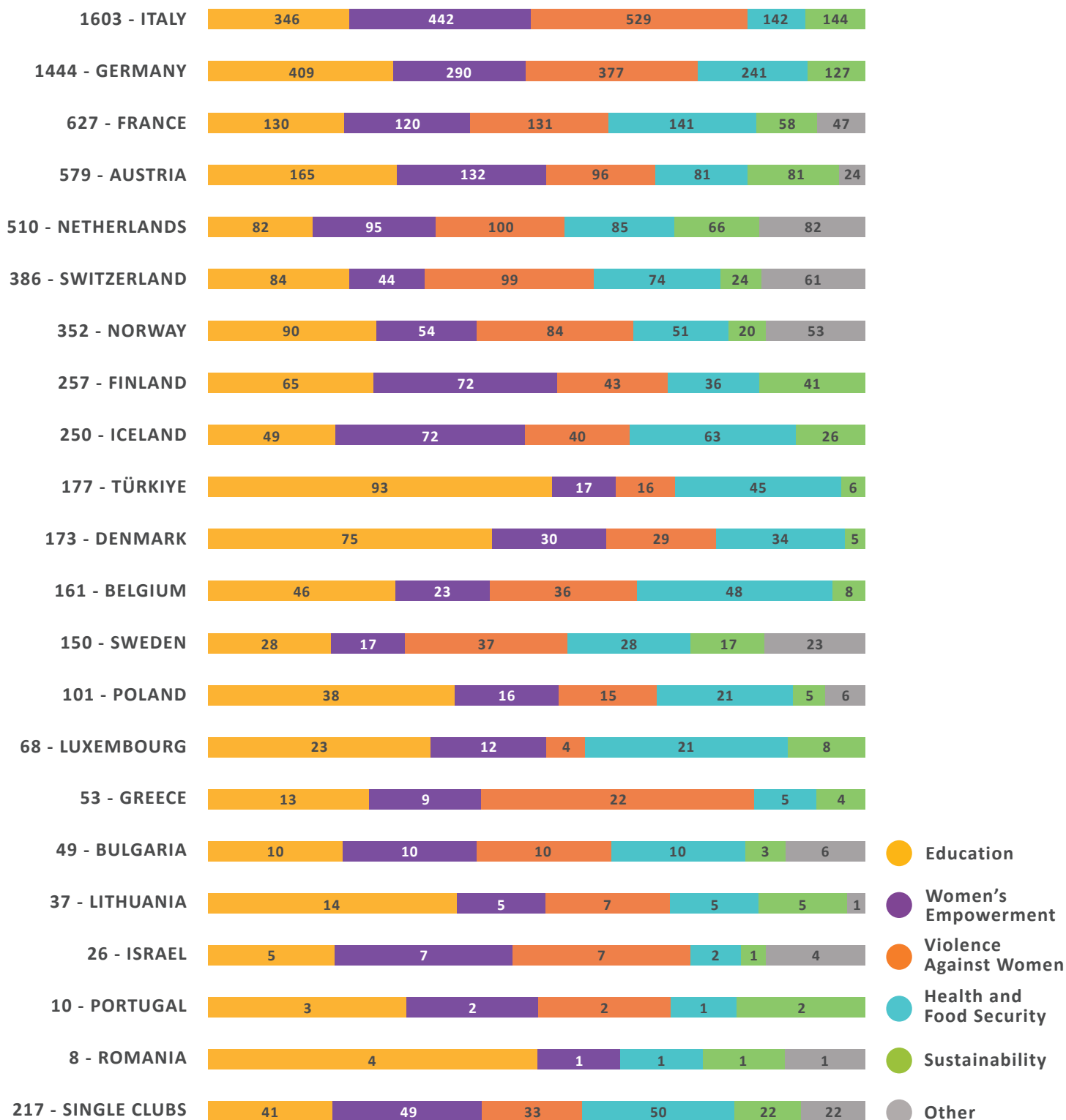
8 850 684 €

and carried out

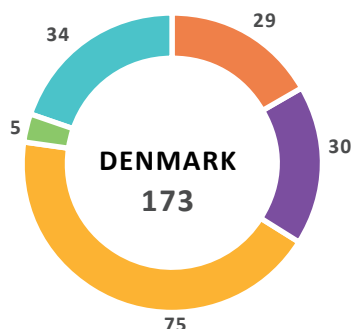
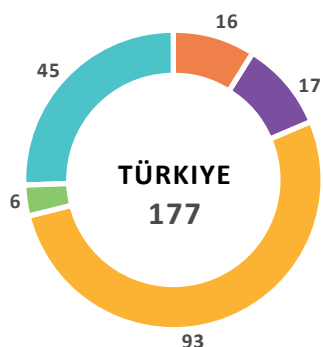
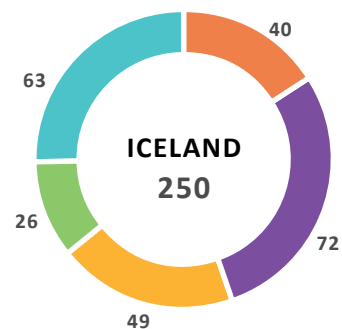
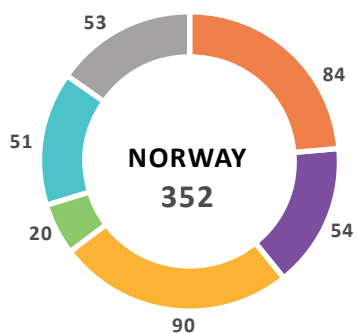
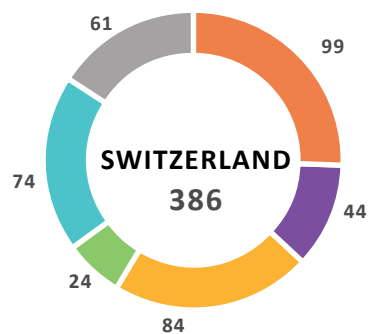
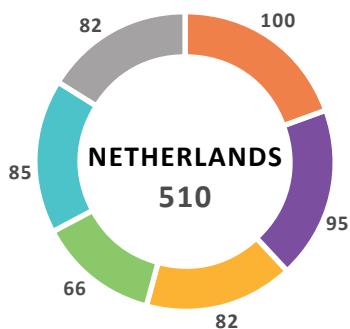
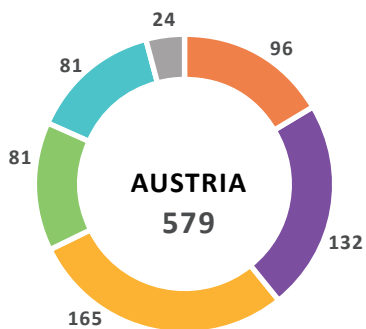
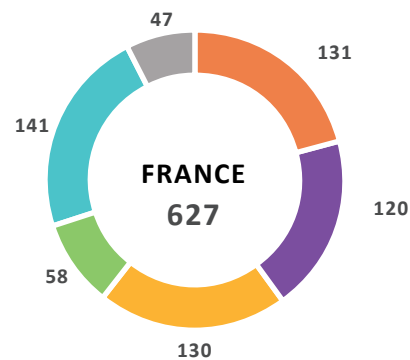
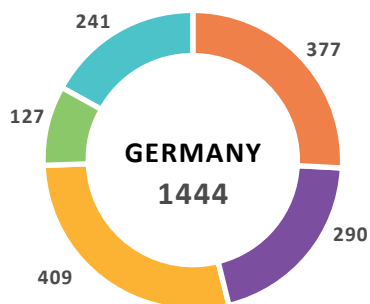
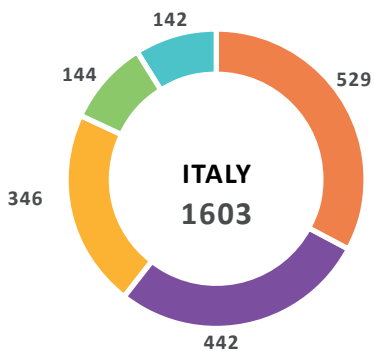
7 238

projects

OUR PROJECTS

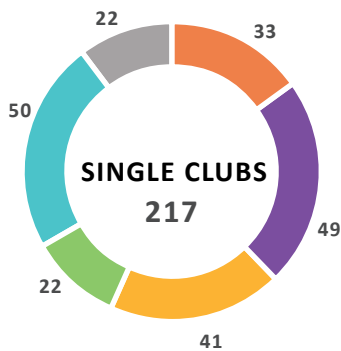
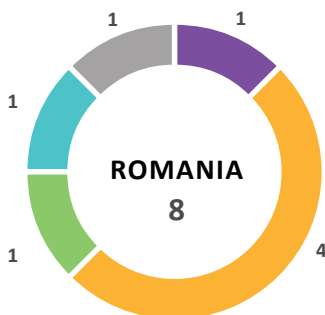
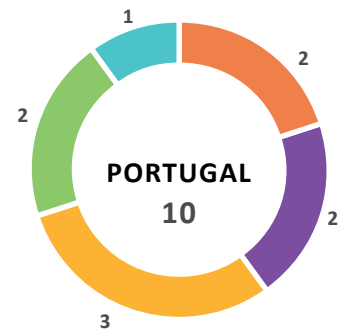
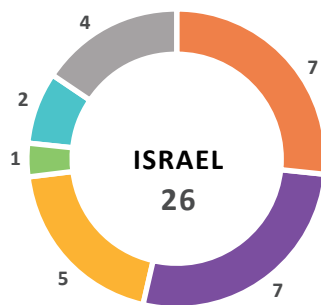
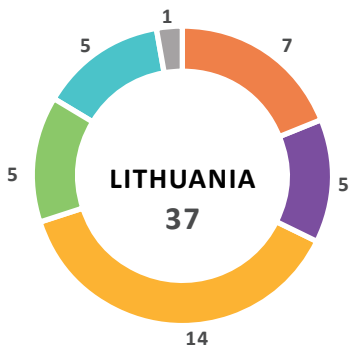
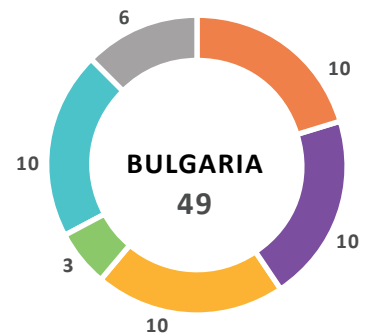
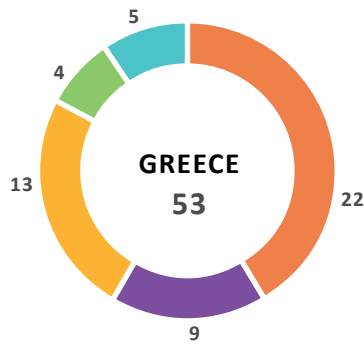
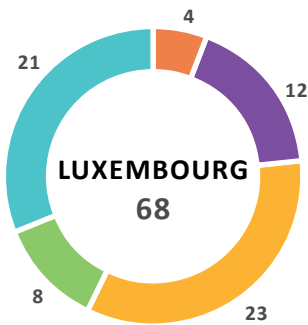
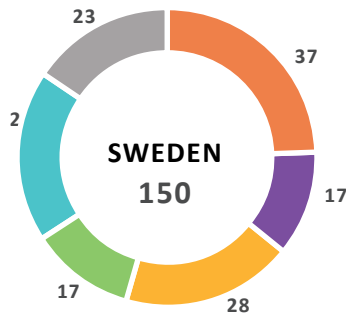
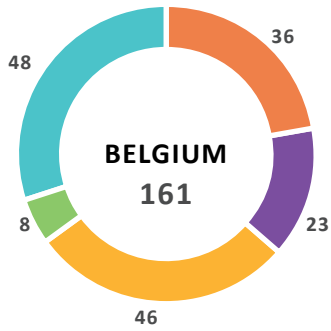


OUR PROJECTS



- Education
- Women's Empowerment
- Violence Against Women
- Health and Food Security
- Sustainability
- Other

OUR PROJECTS



- Education
- Women's Empowerment
- Violence Against Women
- Health and Food Security
- Sustainability
- Other

BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

SIE BIENNIUM AWARD



EDUCATIONAL MODULE

What you can do to eliminate violence against women & girls

Kingdom of the Netherlands and Suriname

The Soroptimists of SI clubs of Isalania Zwolle and Bilt-Bilthoven, in collaboration with the Seneca Publishing Company, developed a workshop aimed at empowering young adolescents to deal with and prevent gender-based violence. This initiative, part of the United Nations' Orange the World Campaigns of 2021 and 2022, aimed to dispel taboos around violence and encourage reflection among young people. The workshop, given to approximately 800 pupils at five schools in 2021 and expanded to 3 000 pupils across 18 schools in 2022, included informative presentations, films featuring interviews with former victims, and practical assignments.

Through this initiative, the Soroptimists sought to equip individuals with tools to prevent violence, empower students to voice their thoughts, and promote dialogue among teenage girls and boys, with the goal of creating a lasting impact for generations to come.

Funds raised by the Union

1 250 €

Women & girls reached

3 000

BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

SPECIAL AWARD 'NEW MEMBERS & VISIBILITY'



Dopo il diploma? **Scegli Informatica e cambia il mondo!**
Informatica. Crea, progetta, realizza.

WOMEN IN STEM! The NERD project

Union of Italy

In October 2021, the 'WOMEN IN STEM!' initiative, launched in cooperation with IBM, engaged 27 universities, 28 Soroptimist Italian Clubs, and 15 127 female students participating in STEM courses.

Its primary aim was to raise awareness among young women of their potential in STEM fields, focusing on education and empowerment. Through plenary sessions, workshops, and a three-day digital world workshop organized by IBM, female students were encouraged to pursue STEM careers. In the 2021-2022 academic year, 25 sessions were conducted across 25 Italian universities, and in the 2022-2023 academic year, the project expanded to include 27 universities.

In May 2023, an awards event honored the top 36 projects developed by students, aligning with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with IBM Italia's Chairman and CEO, Stefano Rebattoni, and SI Italy's President, Giovanna Guercio, in attendance.

Women & girls reached

15 127

BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

UNION BEST PROJECT AWARD

SI Poland War Zone Initiative - Project Matching

Union of Poland



When war broke out in Ukraine in February 2022, Poland became the country with the largest number of Ukrainian refugees, with over 200 000 people entering the country on the first day alone.

Polish Soroptimist Clubs immediately initiated emergency aid initiatives along the Poland-Ukraine border, focusing on assisting women and children who needed food, clothes, medical attention, legal assistance, and a safe place to rest. Soroptimists in Poland welcomed Ukrainian families into their homes, delivered meals, and organized collections of essential items.

To meet the growing needs and raise more funds, they promoted their actions through the SIE Project Matching platform, which became an essential source of funding. Through Project Matching and other fundraising efforts, over 170 000 € was collected, reaching 23 000 Ukrainian women and children with aid, including psychological support, social integration assistance, and family holiday trips to provide a break for those affected by the conflict.

Funds raised by the Union

171 243 €

Women & girls reached

23 000

BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

EDUCATION

BeOn-Mindful online in social media

Club of Ellwangen/Jagst
(Germany)



The digital world presents both opportunities and risks for children and adolescents, impacting their psychological development and posing challenges for adults and parents in the digital age.

In response, the Soroptimists of Ellwangen developed the BeOn - Mindful Online project, aiming to promote reflection on media consumption and foster a healthy approach to social media. Through workshops, videos for parents, peer-to-peer frameworks, and informational events, BeOn addresses online violence, hate speech, cyberbullying, and self-presentation.

Implemented across six secondary schools in Ellwangen, with approximately 1 500 students participating, BeOn will run for a minimum of four academic years, supported by the city of Ellwangen and funding from SI Ellwangen, donors, and sponsors.

Funds raised
by the Club

45 000 €

Funds raised
by partner(s)

5 000 €

(annual grant)

Women & girls
reached

1 500

(by completion this
number should increase
to over 6 000)

BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT



Standing up for women in times of crisis - Enhancing women's entrepreneurial skills

Club of Zagreb Centre (Croatia)

Members of SI Zagreb Centre collaborated with the Association of Female Entrepreneurs of Banovina to support female entrepreneurs in the area who chose to stay and rebuild their lives. They conducted a series of tailor-made workshops aimed at boosting essential skills for 13 female entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds.

These workshops covered topics such as project development, stress management, motivation, personal branding, work-life balance, marketing tools, and social media. Through these workshops, participants developed a tourist and catering project, complete with a logo and website to showcase their products and services in the Sisak-Moslavina region. The project culminated in a final meeting where the website was unveiled, accompanied by a round table discussion on the challenges and opportunities for female entrepreneurs in the Banovina area. The project received media coverage, including a feature on Nova TV.

Funds raised
by the Club

7 650 €

Women & girls
reached

13

BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| KORZYSCIAJ Tęży zespół prof. sztuki, każdy osoba, 2 Aktywa public... | | | | | UNIKA, POWIEŻ STOP! W Twoim związku prof. prawnic, każdy osoba, 2 Aktywa public... | | | | | | | | | | CHRONI SIĘ SZUKAJ POMOCY! Szkoli w medycynie rodzinnej, każdy osoba, 2 Aktywa public... | | | | | | | |

Przemocometr® (Violence Metre) - Let's fight violence together Club of Wroclaw (Poland)

The project led by SI Wroclaw and Plakaciarzy aimed to raise awareness of violence against women (VAW) in its various forms and provide individuals with tools to address it.

Central to the project was the development of the Przemocometr®, a 'violence metre' designed to assess the nature of relationships and identify signs of abuse. Through training, lectures, and the development of materials, the Soroptimists promoted the Przemocometr® and facilitated its integration into nationwide discussions on VAW.

The project, supported by experts and prominent figures, gained significant media coverage and increased awareness and knowledge about domestic violence while providing access to information on aid institutions. Additionally, it equipped specialists with a practical tool, expanded Soroptimists' visibility in Poland, and enhanced Club members' competencies through specialised training.

Funds raised
by the Club



Women & girls
reached



BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

HEALTH & FOOD SECURITY



Getting to know endometriosis

Club of Karsiyaka/Izmir (Türkiye)

Endometriosis, a prevalent gynecological condition affecting approximately 10% of women worldwide, often goes undiagnosed or is taboo due to lack of awareness.

The Soroptimists of SI club Karsiyaka/Izmir, recognising the need for action, collaborated with medical professionals to establish the Endometriosis and Adenomyosis Association and organised various awareness events. Their efforts included 'ENDO-MART', a march accompanied by educational campaigns and conferences, revealing alarming numbers of young girls exhibiting symptoms of the disease.

The ENDO-MART march served as a forum for information sharing, exchanges, and meetings, which were covered extensively by newspapers and media outlets. The work of the Turkish Soroptimists will continue with the aim to reach larger audiences.

Funds raised by the Club

1 350 €

Women & girls reached

1 672

BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

SUSTAINABILITY



'Ageing with dignity' and 'time donation'

Club of Trier (Germany)

The Soroptimists of SI Trier initiated the 'Ageing with dignity' project to support senior women living in nursing homes, aiming to address the gender pension gap and combat feelings of isolation and abandonment among elderly women.

The project offers monthly allowances of 100-120 € for wellness treatments such as pedicures, hairdresser visits, and purchases of cosmetics and body care products. In addition to fundraising efforts that successfully raised 18000 € for five nursing homes in the city, the Soroptimists launched a 'Time donation' project, where female students from local high schools visited residents of retirement homes to foster intergenerational encounters, maintain social ties, and combat loneliness.

The project's resounding success led the Soroptimists to continue it throughout 2023.

Funds raised
by the Club

18 000 €

Women & girls
reached

200-250

MENTORING

174

mentorships
offered

447

Soroptimist
mentors

229

Soroptimist
mentees

416

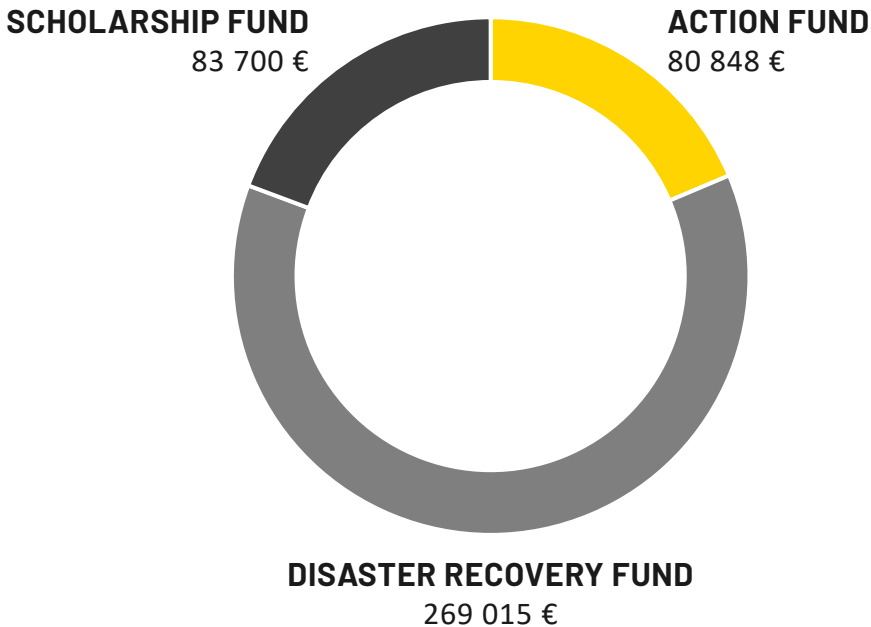
Non-Soroptimist
mentees

48

Non-Soroptimist
mentees
who became
Soroptimists



FUNDS



Action Fund

supports humanitarian projects and promotes educational programmes. The Federation awarded 80 848 € in grants.

Disaster Recovery Fund

targets the specific needs of women and girls recovering from the effects of natural disasters and armed conflicts. In 2023, the Disaster Recovery Fund remained extremely active with donations to continue targeted relief efforts. Overall, 269 015 € in grants were disbursed in earthquake relief aid for Türkiye and the Women in War Zones Initiatives.

Scholarship Fund

The Federation awards grants totaling in excess of 80 000 € per year to young women covering needs such as university fees, vocational training, and general support during studies. In memory of our founding President, the Dr Suzanne Noel Scholarship Fund provides financial assistance to female doctors to perfect their knowledge of, and experience in, plastic and reconstructive surgery.

Action Fund

80 848 €

Disaster Recovery Fund

269 015 €

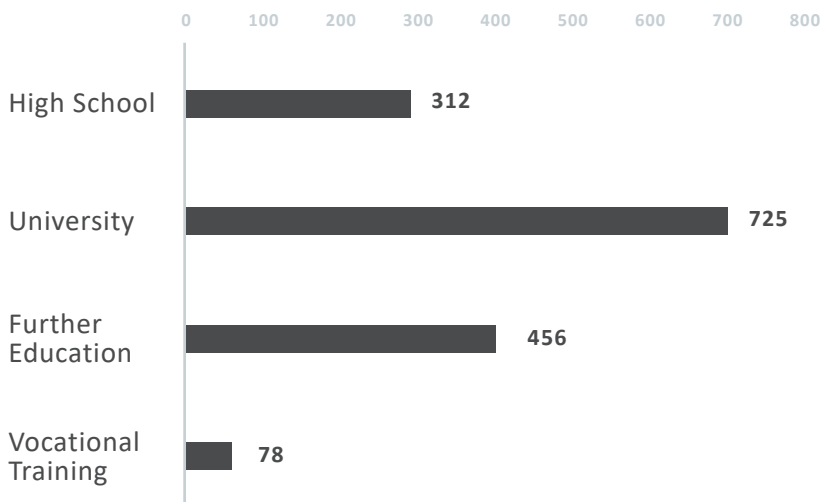
Scholarship Fund

83 700 €

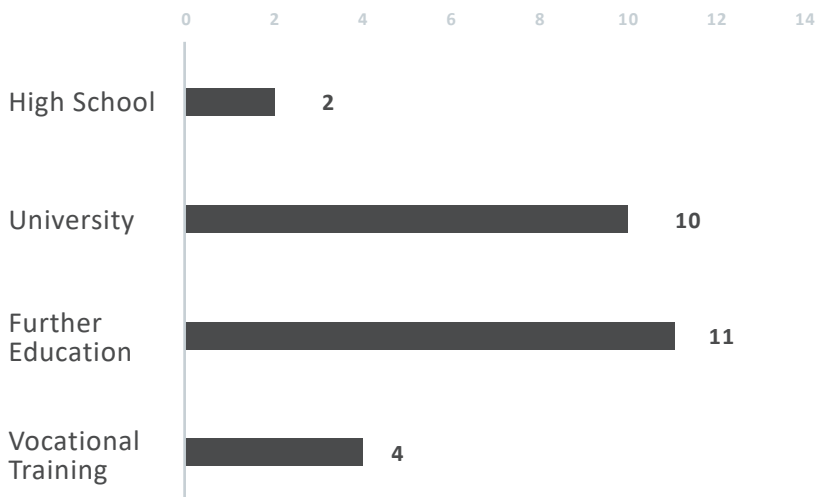
SCHOLARSHIP

SCHOLARSHIPS GRANTEES AWARDED

UNIONS



SINGLE CLUBS



SCHOLARSHIP GRANTED

1 598

SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS

967 062 €

DEVELOPING OUR DNA IN SCHOLARSHIP, LEADERSHIP, AND MENTORING

OUR COMMITMENT

Our commitment to Scholarship, Leadership, and Mentoring contributes to the core of our organisational DNA, epitomised by our motto 'We Stand Up for Women'. We recognise education as the cornerstone of empowerment and progress for women and girls across diverse cultures. Our strategic approach follows the path of Educate - Empower - Enable.

MISSION & GOAL

During this biennium, our mission was pursued through five distinct goals. Education, as one of these goals, comprises three key components: Scholarships, Leadership Academy and Mentoring.

SIE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

We provided scholarships to 23 female students, totaling 83 700 € in grant funding, enabling career development and advancement.

SIE SCHOLARSHIP FOR REFUGEES: This unique scholarship grant, designed to facilitate the integration of refugee women in host countries fostering financial independence, benefited 38 grantees. A total grant amount of 24 500 € was allocated for short-term vocational courses, education, or training to acquire new skills or to continue education in their chosen professions.

After awarding the scholarships, we continued to engage with grantees through online meetings, further fostering mentorship and participation in SIE Leadership Academies.

SIE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Partially funded by the Federation, two Soroptimist Leadership Academies (SIE LA) were hosted by Bulgaria and Italy. These Academies, both aligned with SIE Leadership Academy guidelines, equipped numerous women and girls with leadership skills, complemented by mentoring programmes.

SIE MENTORING

Following the Leadership Academy in France, the focus of mentoring shifted. We introduced new mentoring programmes for SIE Leadership Academy participants from Bulgaria. New guidelines were established to integrate mentoring with every scholarship grantee and Leadership Academy participant.

Our efforts in the biennium 2021-2023 have solidified our commitment to empowering women through education, leadership, and mentoring. By supporting scholarships, organising Leadership Academies, and fostering mentorship, we continue to stand up for women, ensuring they have the resources and support needed to thrive and lead in their respective fields.

TRANSFORMING SOROPTIMISM INTO A SPRINGBOARD FOR THE FUTURE

Soroptimism is built on work carried out in clubs [to improve the lives of women and girls](#). This legacy is a strength that many women's organisations don't have, but strive for. As Carolien Demey phrased it, transforming this solid foundation into a 'springboard for a new future', is [what Programme](#), which embraces both project and advocacy, is all about.

Derived from the Greek pro gamma, meaning public announcement, Programme serves as a platform to articulate our objectives and actions, amplifying our impact. In 2023, we fortified our efforts by developing the Project Focus Reports (PFRs) through training sessions and webinars, making them a means of telling our story. This approach not only enriches our understanding of our work but also invites others to join our cause.

Our motto 'We Stand Up for Women' sends a strong message. It contains our determination and achievements, illustrating the countless hours spent by dedicated women striving to improve the lives of other women and society as a whole. Notably, our initiatives such as the SIE Leadership Academies (in [Bulgaria](#) and [Italy](#)) and scholarships underscore our [dedication to education](#), while our efforts to support women in war zones in Ukraine and refugees, exemplify our movement's efficacy in responding swiftly and concretely to pressing challenges. The development of [SIE Project Matching website](#) has further facilitated knowledge exchange among our initiatives.

Our impactful advocacy efforts, particularly the comprehensive report '[Women in War Zones](#)' have resonated far beyond our organisation, garnering recognition in influential forums such as the European Women's Lobby (EWL), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).



The 'READ THE SIGNS' campaign is another example of turning cooperation between clubs and women's shelters into a joint journey of awareness.

Moreover, our embrace of the Istanbul Convention has armed us with new rhetoric and arguments to champion what we inherently know is just and right. These major achievements have been recognised far beyond Soroptimists in Europe and around the world.

By leveraging what has already been built, thought and invented, we position ourselves in the age in which we live, allowing us to have a voice while remaining deeply rooted in solid experience.

For further reading:

- [Rebuilding the lives of earthquake victims in Türkiye](#)
- [SI Club Merate Receives Special Prize for Women's Support Project in Sudan](#)
- [The leaders of tomorrow](#)

CHAMPIONING CHANGE THROUGH INNOVATIVE CAMPAIGNS

In 2023, Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) continued to make significant strides in advocating for gender equality and raising awareness about domestic violence through two groundbreaking campaigns that resonated across Europe. These initiatives, 'Walk in Different Shoes' and 'READ THE SIGNS', not only captivated the public's attention but also garnered the support of UN Women, showcasing the impactful work SIE is doing on the continent.

Walk in Different Shoes: a Step Towards Gender Equality

On March 8th, International Women's Day, SIE launched the 'Walk in Different Shoes' campaign, a creative and symbolic call to action for gender equality. The campaign encouraged members to literally walk in different shoes, filming themselves wearing two different types of footwear. This innovative approach served as a metaphor for the need to appreciate and understand diverse perspectives and the challenges women face daily due to gender inequality.

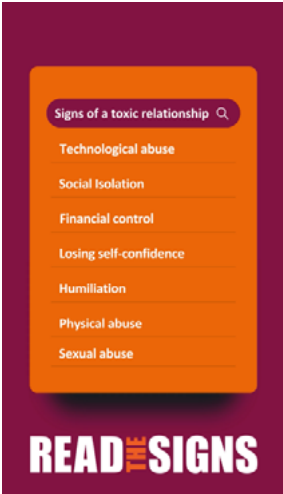
SIE provided all the necessary visuals and materials for the campaign, ensuring a cohesive and powerful message was conveyed across multiple countries. The creativity displayed by the members in their submissions was not only inspiring but also sparked conversations about gender equality in communities, workplaces, and online platforms. The campaign's success was a testament to the collective power of creativity and advocacy in pushing for societal change.



READ THE SIGNS: Addressing Toxic Relationships and Mental Health

Building on the momentum of the previous year, the ‘READ THE SIGNS’ campaign, initially launched to highlight the indicators of toxic relationships and prevent domestic violence, was expanded in 2023 to include a crucial component: Mental Health. Recognising the profound impact that abusive relationships can have on mental well-being, SIE added educational materials on mental health care and support, alongside the original seven signs of a toxic relationship.

The campaign, which coincided with the Orange Days aimed at eliminating violence against women, provided invaluable resources and guidance for recognising the early signs of abuse and the importance of mental health. The addition of mental health education to the campaign underscored SIE’s holistic approach to addressing domestic violence, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of abuse and its repercussions.



UN Women Geneva’s Support: a Milestone Achievement

The success and innovative approach of both campaigns did not go unnoticed. In a significant endorsement of SIE’s efforts, UN Women Geneva decided to support the ‘Walk in Different Shoes’ and ‘READ THE SIGNS’ campaigns. This collaboration highlights the importance of these initiatives and their alignment with global efforts to combat gender inequality and domestic violence. The journey towards equality and safety for all is long, but with initiatives like these, Soroptimist International of Europe is leading the way, one campaign at a time.



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!

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