THE LINK

A global voice for women

SPECIAL EDITION

21ST SIE CONGRESS

STEM

24 high level external speakers

46 young women invitees

The Change Of Insignia

Governors Meeting



No. 00 - Biennium 2015 - 2017

Soroptimist International (SI) is a worldwide organisation for women in management and professions, working through service projects to build a better world for women. There are currently some 75,000 members in more than 3,000 clubs in 123 countries. Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) is one of four SI Federations. It has some 34,000 members in 62 countries. Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of members and international partnerships. For more information about the aims, activities and projects that characterise our organisation, please visit our SIE website at www.soroptimisteurope.org.

Soroptimist International of Europe

NEWS FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Dear readers,

The first trial of The Link e-edition was a resounding success, reaching more than 13,000 people, and attracting 225 likes and 195 shares within just 5 days of the announcement of the digital launch on facebook. And it is growing. As we finalise this magazine we have reached 17,244 people, with 267 likes and 258 shares.

This summer the highlight for Soroptimist International of Europe was undoubtedly our 21st Congress 'Own the Future, Education, your passport to a better life', which was held in Florence under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Thorbjorn Jagland. Over one thousand women attended the congress, together with around fifty young girls studying or working in the STEM sector. They were able to meet and interact with prominent women working in the STEM field. The handover ceremony between President Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis and President Elect Renata Trottman-Probst, who will take office on October 1st, the presentation of the Best Practice awards, "Women in Sport" awards, and the SIE Peace Prize, all provided a fitting closure to these 3 exceptional days.

The congress was preceded by the annual Governors Meeting with the election of the next board members and the President of Soroptimist International of Europe from October 1st 2019 to September 30th 2021.

These major events have all traditionally been communicated through The Link, so even though they were posted on facebook and the website, we felt it important to share them in a 2nd trial of The Link e-edition.

At this point, I would like to pay tribute to President Maria Elisabetta for having provided the impetus for these 2 e-editions of The Link, just as she did with the new website, now the responsive version, the annual report and the new SIE brochures, as well as her pertinent programme "Soroptimists Invest in Education" and all the other excellent work she undertook during her two years at the helm of Soroptimist International of Europe.

I would like to sincerely thank everyone who sent in their articles to me, as well as all the communications team at SIEHQ who have offered unfailing support during these past two years.

Wishing the very best of luck and success to President Renata and to my successor.

With best wishes,





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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Readers,

After the excellent reaction to the launching of the prototype numero zero of The Link on line, I am particularly happy that the editorial team made the effort to make a numero zero-zero dedicated to the 2017 Governors Meeting, to the 21st Congress of Soroptimist International of Europe and to the passage of the insignia. I hope that those of you who joined the Florence's gatherings will find pleasure in remembering some of the highlights and I wholeheartedly wish this issue full of information and testimonials will fill in the gap for those who did not attend.

This issue will be going live on line just a few days before the end of this biennium, I find it fit therefore to thank all the readers of The Link during these last two years for the interest demonstrated for this beautiful publication and I thank you for the support to the proposed changes to it. I am sure the next Board and the next Communication Team will keep your suggestions at heart. During this biennium the production has fallen on the Vice President for Communication and on the staff of Head Quarters. I wish to thank each and everyone of them for an exceptional hard and challenging work, which at times seemed insurmountable. Their determination and dedication was beyond the call of duty and I shall be forever grateful to them.

To you, to the new Communication Team my wishes for a better future and my renewed commitment to remain engaged with our Mission.

In Friendship

Maria Elisabetta Pietrangeli

Maria Elisabetta

SIE President
September 2017

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Prof. Luigi Dei
President of the University of Florence



Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis and Ulla Madsen





Leila Picco



Yvonne Simpson



Gerda Rosiers



RoseMary Reid



Ann Hodgson



Theresa Lyford



Red Cross Nurses





21st SIE Congress
Florence 2017





The organising team : Maria Luisa Frosio, President
Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, Susanna Raccis,
Flavia Pozzolini and Roberta Ghidoni

The 21st SIE Congress raised the interest of prestigious guests such as the Secretary General of the Council of Europe (CoE). The CoE gives great importance to gender stereotypes in education, thus the thematic of “girls studying in fields of STEM” appeared like an obvious choice for the institution which granted its patronage to the event.

This support of the CoE couldn’t have been possible without the successful work carried out by our SIE Representative to the CoE, Bettina Hahne. It is important to thank her and this letter from the office of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe is a wonderful recognition of her devotion to this cause.



PRIVATE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL
AND THE DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL
The Director

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 17 May 2017

Dear Ms Hahne,

Thank you for your patronage request of 18 April for the Congress “Own the future: your passport for a better life” which will take place on 14-16 July in Florence, Italy.

The theme of the Congress: involving girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) is fully in line with Council of Europe work around gender stereotypes in education, and the Secretary General is therefore pleased to grant his patronage to this event.

Please note that the patronage should be accompanied by the Council of Europe’s logo and use of the following sentence:

“Under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Thorbjørn Jagland”.

You will find the logo on our web site www.coe.int, under “Who we are”, “Official Logo”. This logo cannot be modified and must keep the title “Council of Europe”.

I should be grateful if you would inform our Directorate of Communications (Isabelle.kusztyk@coe.int) about the publicity materials on which the patronage and logo will be mentioned and forward some examples of this material.

Yours sincerely,

Leyla Kayacik

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President's Speech



Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, SIE President

The 21st SIE Congress took place in Florence, on July 14th to 16th 2017, under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Thorbjorn JAGLAND, and with over 1000 attendees. High level specialists in the fields of STEM spoke to a filled room, with 46 young women sponsored by SIE, the Unions, and Clubs to participate in this congress. All in all, 3 exceptional days of knowledge, exchange and friendship.
These are the words from SIE President Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, in her opening speech:

My fellow Soroptimists, distinguished Guests,

Benvenuti a Firenze!
Welcome to Florence!

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to my home country of Italy for the 21st SIE Congress. What a beautiful way to unite all together and reflect on the achievements of the last two Biennia. This Congress promises to be a great learning experience for all of us, with a lecture on the shining example of Marie Curie, a plenary session on inspirational women in STEM as well as theme sessions on "Shattering the crystal ceiling" and "Women in green." We will get to hear all about the successful SIE Pilot Projects which focused on sustainability, moderated by SIE Immediate Past President Ulla Madsen.

We will also have the privilege of witnessing the handing out of the Best Practice Awards, the Women in Sport Prize and the Peace Prize, giving the recipients the acknowledgement they deserve for their remarkable accomplishments.

Every Biennium, Soroptimists focus on a particular theme. As many of you are aware, SIE's 2015-2017 Biennium theme is "Invest in Education." I think we can all agree with Nelson Mandela who said that "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world." That is why for the past 2 years, Soroptimists have made a special effort to "Invest in Education." This effort definitely shows! Thanks to your tireless efforts within your SIE Unions or Clubs, 1625 projects in education have been carried out! Great job to you all.

With a particularly sharp antenna on society, our organisation has always been ahead of the curve. A major part of this biennium theme – "Invest in Education" – is supporting young women in STEM, which was a pivotal issue for us, way before the rest of the world started paying so much attention. It is our work in this specific field which earned the Congress the patronage of the Council of Europe of which too we should be very proud of.

As you know, several of the Unions and Clubs you belong to, as well as SIE as a Federation, have generously sponsored young women studying STEM fields, (46 in total!), to join us here today at the Congress. Welcome!

We as Soroptimists have never underestimated the importance of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. How could we when the first President of SIE, Dr. Suzanne Noel, was a master of plastic surgery already in the 1920s – a field which was, and remains, dominated by men? Way ahead of her time, Dr. Suzanne Noël was a pioneer of maxillofacial surgery and used her abilities for good, by reconstructing the faces of disfigured WWI soldiers.

These young women in STEM here with us today remind me a lot of Dr. Noël. They too, I believe, will be using their gifted minds to do good in this world by working towards creating more sustainable environment, improving people's health, and most importantly, breaking gender stereotypes.

When one hears the terms aerospace, mechanical, physical or industrial engineering; biotechnology; chemistry; mathematics; physics; and medical

biotechnology, it is not uncommon to picture men in lab coats or wielding heavy machinery. This is a sad reality due to patriarchal and societal norms, stigma, news, media, and existing educational structures. That women are not talented in these fields is a fallacy that is engrained in us since our childhood and follows us throughout our education and lives. It is now time to change that.

As the Executive Director of UN Women, rightfully pointed out, "girls and boys are strongly influenced in the development of their thinking and sense of themselves by narratives and stereotypes that start to be learnt at home and continue at school and through life, reinforced by the images and the roles they see in advertising, in films, books and news stories." Research shows that by age 6, girls are already less likely than boys to consider themselves smart and less likely to pursue activities focusing on so-called hard subjects like science, technology, engineering and math.

We need to change the narrative.

The world needs more women to study and pursue careers in STEM because, as António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, rightfully stated "for too long, discriminatory stereotypes have prevented women and girls from having equal access to education in STEM. [...] these stereotypes are flat wrong. They deny women and girls the chance to realize their potential—and deprive the world of the ingenuity and innovation of half the population."

In Europe, in 2014, only 4 countries could claim to have 15% female STEM graduates, and I doubt the number has risen very much since then. A survey carried out in 2015 over 42 countries found that the 3rd hardest jobs to fill were that of engineers, and the 9th hardest, information technology staff. The top 2 key reasons for this difficulty was found to be the lack of available applicants and the lack of technical competencies. When half the population is being discouraged from working in these fields, it is no wonder that many jobs remain vacant.

One of the best ways to encourage women to study STEM is by setting positive examples, as these women are doing, proving to young girls that they can excel in any subject or profession. We need more women in STEM to show that these fields are not just for men. Even though only 28% of scientific researchers in the world are female, women are just as capable in this domain, and just as capable of making breakthrough discoveries and winning a Nobel Prize, just like Marie Curie – who, by the way, won two.

And who knows? The next "Marie Curie" could be in this room with us right now!

The next "Marie Curie" could be in this room with us right now!



While they are few in number and despite the current landscape, there are other incredibly talented women who have managed to gain recognition for their work in STEM fields, proving it is not only a man's world. For example, Dr. France Allen is the first woman to win the A.M. Turing Award, also known as the "Nobel Prize of computing" in 2006. Dr. Carolyn Bertozzi, a chemist, was the first woman to win the MIT-Lemelson Prize in 2010. Just last year, physicist Dr. Fabiola Gianotti became the first female Director-General of CERN, the world's largest and most respected centre for nuclear research. Their hard work, determination and challenging of gender norms are an inspiration to us all.

Speaking of positive role models, we are lucky to have highly accomplished women in STEM with us today and I am very much looking forward to hearing their testimonials in the plenary session. What a treat it is to hear from brilliant minds from Europe's top universities who I am sure will inspire us all. I hope that they will animate you even more to develop ideas of how science, technology, engineering and math can help create a more sustainable environment for future generations.

I am thrilled that these past two years have built on the momentum of Ulla's Biennium theme: "Let's Go Green – working for a healthy environment" and hope that this issue will remain a priority for the next biennia. We must continue to support women and girls in STEM, not only because of their great contributions to the environment, but also to give them the possibility for employability and empowerment, or, in other words, to "shatter the crystal ceiling."

As members of Soroptimist

International of Europe, we have a long-standing tradition of caring for the environment, as made evident by the last two Congresses – Amsterdam in 2009 and Berlin 2013. We have been committed to reducing water waste and bring safe water where there wasn't any. We have worked hard towards improving sanitation in many places around the world. Ulla Madsen's Biennium theme encouraged us to advocate and to act in defence of a sustainable environment. There is so much we can still say and do in order to prevent the very worst of scenarios. We can advocate and encourage the development of new technologies – especially biotechnologies – to help fight hunger and to produce more food and less waste. We can encourage a return to local farming. We can create vegetables garden on city terraces and in home gardens. We can educate the new generations to search for alternatives and renewable energy and we have invested in education and in encouraging young women to enter the fields of STEM.

We owe it to future generations but we owe it also to our own organisational past. In fact, how can we forget the first ever Soroptimist Club project? With the "Save the Redwood" project, it was the Oakland Club and our Founder Violet Richardson-Ward who set the path for "our" love of the environment and "our" vocation for advocacy. In 1922, Soroptimists lobbied the legislature, took on powerful lumber companies, gained public support for their project, and in the end, succeeded in ensuring a major portion of the redwoods is set-aside in a protected reserve. This reserve still stands today.

It is time now, at this Congress, to celebrate our achievements, renew our commitment and take a stance for our individual and collective right to shatter the crystal ceiling in the scientific fields for a sustainable world.

Thank you so much to all of you for being here today. I hope you enjoy these next few days of idea sharing and community. Let's have a great Congress!





A review of 3 spectacular days

Josefine Stevens, SI Club Frankfurt am Main

Florence, one of the most beautiful cities in the world, is a magnet for travelers at all seasons, dedicated to art, architecture, landscape, and last but not least, Italian hospitality and exquisite cuisine. For three days in July 2017 Florence was also the center of the 21st European Congress of Soroptimist International. Their greetings personally brought SI President Yvonne Simpson and the Presidents of the Federations in front of club members from 56 nations.

It is no wonder that almost a thousand Soroptimists, some with friends or family, came to Northern Italy, despite the intense summer temperatures. The cathedral dome, together with the campanile, which dominates the townscape, were chosen as a memorable signet of the congress.

The Italian hosts, at their head, Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, President of SI Europe 2015-2017, and the Congress Chair Flavia Pozzolini, had chosen the motto "OWN THE FUTURE. Education, Your Passport to a Better Life". The motto was aimed at young women who are at the beginning of their studies, their choice of profession or career. The central part of the congress was devoted to the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) professions, with more than 50 young women from different countries invited to attend the congress in Florence: a welcome addition to the SIE Congress, a benefit and asset for both sides.

At the beginning Luigi Dei, Rector of the University of Florence, gave a most interesting speech about the unbelievable difficulties of the genius Maria Sklodowska Curie. She shared the 1903 Nobel Prize in Physics with her husband Pierre Curie and with physicist Henri Becquerel. Moreover, she won the 1911 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Definitely an early role model for Soroptimists.

Four role models were present in the plenary session "Inspirational Women in STEM", excellently moderated by SIE Past President Kathy Kaaf. They were internationally renowned and



highly decorated female scientists: Agnieszkca Zalewska (Nuclear Physics, Poland), Susanna Terracini (Mathematics, Italy), Corinna Salander (Engineering, Germany) and Christine van Broeckhaven (Molecular biology and genetics, Belgium), who have covered different fields of research and reported on their lives and their professional careers. Their credo: be active, follow your passion, be successful! Choose the right partner!

The most attentive public found it to have been an absolute highlight of information and outstanding cheerful atmosphere. The questions asked by the young attendees showed that they were indeed inspired by the successful female scientists who all had children and managed to cope with their work and private life.

Of course, the Opening Ceremony with the impressive flag parade and the anthems had guaranteed goose bumps and frenetic applause.

All the welcome greetings and the Corps of the volunteers of the Italian Red Cross provided a festive atmosphere. In addition, just in the same way the evening events at traditional venues were suitable for embracing old friends and getting to know new ones. Soroptimists know how to celebrate on happy occasions.

The afternoon on the first day was filled with highly interesting theme sessions on leadership, mentoring programmes, women in green: successful SIE-pilot projects in the field of environment.

The last day of the congress presented the projects of the 2013-2017 quadrennial: Ulla Madsen, SIE-Immediate Past President, and her "Let's Go Green" projects and Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis' "Invest in Education".

Finally, the Best Practice Awards were handed over, once again proving how much the Soroptimist movement has done, moved and donated. A nice brochure documents these important results.

The SIE Peace Prize has already become a tradition. This year it went to Gégé Katanu Bukuru of the Democratic Republic of Congo for her remarkable and courageous commitment in the fight for women's rights in her war-torn country for over a quarter of a century.

The "Women in Sport" prize was awarded for the first time in Florence to emphasise the importance of sport for a healthy life, especially for young women. The prizes went to Soma Zafer Sport Girls's Soccer Team, from SI club Marmara (Turkey), Alexandra Ana Maria Agiurgiuculese, an athlete from SI club Udine (Italy), and Cecilia Andrén Nyström, a football coach from SI club Luleå (Sweden). More in depth information can be found on page 18.

Finally, the Change of Insignia: Good-bye Maria Elisabetta, and welcome Renata Trottmann Probst from Switzerland, who will be the SIE President for the next two years. A big Thank You to Elisabetta for her hard work during her biennium and for the Congress, which is an vast extra-charge for each president.

With the Concluding Statement and in the presence of the 50 young STEM women, Soroptimist International of Europe reaffirmed its commitment to educate, empower and enable women and girls to reach their full potential as leaders in their respective fields.








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STEM Sessions & speakers












Testimonials from STEM attendees

Emilia Apostu



Emilia Apostu (23), a graduate from the faculty of Aerospace Engineering in Bucharest, received a one year traineeship at EASA (European Aviation Safety Agency) in Cologne. She stayed with me in Bonn in August in order to find an appartment in Cologne. I asked her to write her impressions on the congress in Florence where she was invited to by SIE.

Kathy Kaaf, SIE Past President

"Wow! I have never seen so many women in one place before!" was the reaction that most of the young STEM women and I had when we entered the room. Without knowing very much about the ongoing projects of the organization, we stepped into a fascinating world that seemed more like a beautiful dream than reality.

A question therefore rose in my mind: how could this idealistic idea of empowering women be realised in countries like mine, where having and caring for a family were the main purpose of many generations of women? On the second day of the congress I found a response to my internal struggle. We should believe in ourselves, we must support and encourage women to follow their dreams and passion, we need people around us (family, friends, a good partner) who acknowledge wholeheartedly the equality between men and women, and we should smile and make a joke when we are questioned about why we work in fields dominated by men. These ideas represent just a part of the multitude of the day's conclusions. I have found out that what I once considered a fantasy is achievable: the speakers proved it. Up to now, having both a family and a career seemed to me to consist of a constant battle, but the speakers gave me hope by presenting new laws, projects, charts and figures and in the end, themselves. Being able to interact so honestly with such knowledgeable women who want to share their wisdom was an incredible experience from which more young women could benefit. I would have loved to see a more diverse group of STEM candidates in order to understand what problems young women from all over the world face. During the first dinner we discovered that we were all Eastern European women with more similarities than differences, which gave me the feeling that we are part of a greater entity, a family.

I will leave this congress with very special memories, because it has motivated me to pursue my dream regardless of any difficulties I may encounter. As a young woman at the beginning of her career, I am far more enthusiastic and hopeful about my future, particularly now that I have direct evidence of strong, accomplished and successful women as role models. Thanks to the speakers, who have become mentors for my generation, I have established new relations, friendships and life paths. All in all, being a part of the Soroptimist family for three days was an unforgettable experience.

Silvia Torchio

A STEM "scholar" sponsored by
SI Club Milano la Scala

Extract from a letter sent following the congress:

Lastly I wish to say a few words on the activities more traditionally related to a congress. For me who, until a few days ago, ignored completely about Soroptimist International, I was fascinated to be part of the opening and closing ceremonies and to listen and learn about your history, your mission and your vision…

For your engagement, your dedication as a woman, I wish to thank you very much.

I am particularly impressed by your ability to translate your ideals in practical and tangible actions. I was in awe during the ceremony of the Best Practice Award. Thank you again for this unique experience and I will be happily at your disposal if you wish to keep in touch."

What the SIE Congress brought to young Kosovar women in STEM

Teuta Mullaademi, Programme Director of SI Prishtina

I was so delighted to attend such an interesting and inspiring SIE Congress. For all of us, particularly for the young Kosovar attendees, it was a wonderful opportunity to listen to experts in the field and amazing personalities. Since we are living in a science and technology era, the link between innovation and national economic prosperity is now well documented, as is the critical role of education in building the scientific and technological skills and literacy the next generation will rely on. Therefore, initiatives as the STEM congress motivate women to pursue degrees and careers in science and technology, where they can succeed in an innovation-driven future.

During this congress, a simple point was made – since half the population is female, why not half become scientists and technologists? This can help balance the gender gap in the industry.

We would like to extend a warm thank you to the European Federation, which sponsored two young women from our country, Kosovo, to join the senior Soroptimist sisters. Unfortunately, due to VISA issues, only one could participate and enjoy such an experience. Nonetheless, our young fellow, Diellza Malazogu, who is studying her bachelor degree in Financial Mathematics, had the chance to learn the insights of achieving a successful career in STEM and this is an opportunity that will definitely impact her growth.

After a delightful event, we returned to our homes enthusiastic with the mission to work diligently and assuredly towards enabling and empowering women to engage in education and to truly be able to have "a passport to a better life".

We sincerely thank the President, Maria Elisabetta, and all the staff for inviting us in the beautiful city of Florence and for working so hard to organize such a successful congress.

We congratulate you!



What an Experience!

The SIE Congress in Florence – a former Mentees´ Perspective

Shilpi Saxena, SI Germany (Berlin-Dorotheenstadt)

Where are you able to meet nearly a thousand women from all walks of life and from around the world? And then have the opportunity to discuss such topics as "Breaking the Glass Ceiling" (leadership) and "Women in Green" (renewables, clean technology)?

As a former mentee and a new SI member, I was very fortunate to encounter many of them during the 21st SI European Congress this July in the impressive surroundings of Florence's Fortezza da Basso. Even though I was only able attend the main Congress day on 15 July 2017 of the 3-day-programme, I was in awe of as well as exhilarated by listening to women in science who have had struggles and successes in their professional careers. The plenary session was concerned with problems, necessary factors, questions (e.g. how to deal with negative comments, family structure & support, pursuing your dream) and many more.

Whether as physicist, mathematician, engineer or molecular biologist – these are truly inspirational women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics). STEM is becoming a more and more important field worldwide for young women to be interested and educated in!

After the STEM plenary & interactive session, the afternoon was divided into two parallel sessions: Women who have shattered the glass ceiling (company founder, international company general counsel & association president, deputy police president, head of an international office at a university), while the other session focused on "Women in Green", i.e. women (& men) in the fields of renewable energy and clean technologies.

I attended the latter and heard about successful projects based on innovative ideas. A lecture by Simone Polfer, Deputy Director at the Luxemburg Ministry of Economy (& SI Luxemburg) kicked off the session. Her directorate helps companies in research and innovation (R&I), where she explained three key values for succeeding: 1. Open-mindedness – building bridges not walls, 2. Dynamism, 3. Reliability – trust. Each of these values was underlined with practical examples from Luxemburg. Conclusion: The ecosystem is based on three core values which foster innovative & disruptive technologies.

The SIE Congress gave me a wonderful opportunity as a former mentee (and an SI member since 2016) who participated in the German SI LEaR e.V.-Mentoring programme in 2015/16, to network with very interesting women in different areas of SI life from Europe and beyond!



Former German mentees & new SI members at 21st SIE Congress 2017 in Florence (from left): Barbara Muggenthaler, Kerstin Rietschel and Shilpi Saxena.




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Testimonials from SIE attendees



Evelyne Para, President SI France

The 21st Soroptimist International European Federation Congress held in Florence, will be, for many of us, etched in our memories for ever!

Bringing together over one thousand like-minded Soroptimists, in the presence of the SI and SIE Presidents, past, present and future, as well as the four SI Federation Presidents, this event highlighted "Education, passport to a better future", the key theme underpinning the term of office of Maria Elisabetta De Franciscis, SIE President 2015 - 2017.

The formal opening ceremony, the many testimonials notably from the young female engineers working in the science and technology sector (stem), the best practice discussions in the various workshops, together with the bonds of friendship forged beyond our geopolitical boundaries have all helped to strengthen our commitment, our spirit of service to promote women's role as leaders, and in particular our organisation.

Emotional moments were also shared during the presentation of the Best Practice Awards to the French Union, in the categories "Women Empowerment" and "Best SIE Project of the Year," as well as when Gégé Katana Buturu received the SIE Peace Prize in recognition for her work fighting for women's rights in DR Congo.



Catherine Smith, President SI Cognac, France

Attending the 21st Congress of Soroptimist International of Europe in Florence was a wondrous experience:

- *the sheer size of the auditorium cracking at the seams with women of good heart and brains to change the world in spite of enormous difficulties and minimal means in some countries,*
- *the immense pride of belonging to this prestigious organisation,*
- *the prevalent atmosphere of goodwill,*
- *the extremely moving opening ceremony: national flags being brought up one at a time,*
- *the occasion to meet women from many different countries with the same objective : making the world a better place for all humanity, and foremost improving the lives of women and girls regardless of their origin or faith,*
- *the faultless organization: our hotel was just a stone's throw away from San Lorenzo. Thank you!*
- *Luigi Dei's brilliant and inspiring lecture about Maria Curie.*

Last but not least the excellent quality of the speakers. Two of us attended session 1: "Shattering the glass ceiling", the other two enjoyed session 2: "Women in Green".

When one hears "Florence", one immediately thinks of the Renaissance, a time of great revival of art, literature and learning in Europe. Could this 21st Congress, and its inspirational speakers, be for us all a reawakening to the many sizeable opportunities we have to help change the world, a person at a time, a village at a time?

The small delegation from Cognac certainly thinks so: we left this great Congress, held in beautiful Florence, with a renewed heart and will endeavour to be, as never before, ambassadors (pity there is no feminine form of this word) of the values embodied by Soroptimist International.

All in all a most memorable event. THANK YOU SI Europe.



Claire Hublet, President SI Belgium Union

More than 60 Belgian Soroptimists were present at the congress in Florence where our country has received several awards. These 3 days were rich in friendship, encounters and conversations.

I have enormously enjoyed taking part in the congress of Florence and meeting all the young women there who are working in STEM subjects. Our 2 Belgian representatives, Alice Beghin, bio-engineer, and Caroline Lambin, student in industrial engineering, have come back full of enthusiasm, ambition and more confidence in their future.

Here are some extracts from their reports:

"I have had the chance to listen to women with very impressive career paths talking about their experiences. In the STEM morning, we have learnt that every determined goal can be reached, if one gives oneself the means to reach it. Whatever happens to us, we will always have to fight to reach our objectives and for sure we will never be able to put down our arms. Despite the obstacles placed in their way, the women found their way to success. They have given me a lot of encouragement and inspired me with confidence for my future."

"Soroptimists defend causes that I find very worthwhile. We have the good fortune to be born in a free country and to be able to aid those that have not had this opportunity. This is very important to me. I had the impression that this organisation resembles a big family. They all strive for the same causes and that brings them closer. Many women were interested in my particular career path and I have felt very welcome."

"The experience was awe-inspiring and I will remember it for the rest of my life. All these scientific women have achieved so much in their professional but also in their family lives. It was a great honour to listen to them. Now we must follow their example!"

The highlight for the Belgians present at the congress was the announcement of the winner of the Peace Prize 2017.

Gégé Katana of DR Congo, presented by SI Club of Marche-en-Famenne, has received the Peace Prize for her admirable and courageous engagement in the fight for women's rights in her native country, torn by war. Gégé Katana, called 'Maman Gégé' by everyone, has installed sustainable structures with her cells of peace, recognized by the United Nations and encouraged by Amnesty International. Her sense of responsibility and devotion has proved to be indestructible despite the heavy attacks that have often been levelled at her. Her qualities of tolerance, altruism and lack of personal interest are truly exemplary for especially given the frightful living conditions in her country.

As president Elisabetta said: "Why should we not be proud of the recognition that is given to all our projects?" She wanted to congratulate us for all our initiatives and our work for the advancement of women. She requested us all to read the final resolutions on the website of SIE, because she cannot see a better way of transmitting the spirit of this expression of friendship and goodwill that bring her biennium as president to a close.

As the motto for the congress proclaims, Soroptimists really help women: "Soroptimists own the future".

Awards



SI Club Cognac, France, receiving their award for Project of the Year

SIE Best Practice Awards 2017

The winners of the 2017 Best Practice Awards were announced at the 21st SIE Congress in Florence on 16th July 2017.

The project achieving the highest overall score by jurors was crowned 'Project of the Year'. This year that prize went to SI Club Cognac, France, for opening the Suzanne Noël centre for female victims of domestic violence in partnership with the ASERC (Socio-Educational Association of the Cognac region).

The Vocational Training & Employment Support Centre for Women (KIMIM), initiated by SI Club Etiler, Turkey, was selected as the year's best 'Educate to Lead' project for its effort to help unemployed women in an area of Istanbul with particularly high unemployment. Among other things, they introduced vocational training and coaching, thus securing jobs for 20 women.

For the full list of winners for each objective, please click ***HERE***

SIE "Women in Sport" Prize

At the initiative of several clubs, SIE has introduced the Women in Sport prize as a pilot project in 2017.

It recognizes women as role models and also promotes equal opportunities in sports, where gender inequality is still widespread. Through the idea of "mens sana in corpore sano" and with this prize, SIE hopes to raise awareness of the importance, for women and girls and for the community at large, of sports and activity to enhance physical and mental health, wellness and quality of life.

Two donations from clubs in Italy and Finland (€1000 and €1500, respectively) augmented the funding, thus allowing SIE to award €6000 in total. Therefore, prizes of €2000 have been presented to winners in the following three categories:

- Rhythmic Gymnastics Athlete: Alexandra Ana Maria Agiurgiuculese
- Football Team: Soma Zafer Sport Girls' Football Team
- Football Coach: Cecilia Andrén Nyström

To read more about it and discover the winners, please click ***HERE***

WOMEN IN SPORT
Mens Sana In Corpore Sano
SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE

From left to right, clubs from Italy, Sweden and Turkey receiving their awards for their roles in the Women in Sport programme









SIE Peace Prize

Extract from an interview with **Gégé Katana Bukuru**

At the SIE Congress in Florence, the Peace Prize 2017 was awarded to Gégé Katana Bukuru (DR Congo) also named "Maman Gégé". Gégé lives in Uvira, in the South Kivu province, where she created Solidarity of Active Women for the Defense of Human Rights (SOFAD), an organization to train activists. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, where sexual violence is taboo, Gégé teaches women to defend their rights.

The award was presented by the Soroptimist club of Marche-en-Famenne, Belgium, as recognition of her outstanding work for women and peace in a country ravaged by war and atrocities.

Despite the numerous death threats, arbitrary arrests, robberies and the systematic looting of her property, Maman Gégé has never given up on this struggle for peace.

In an interview with Amnesty International in July, "Gégé Katana, an exceptional woman - Do not leave room in our hearts for fear", she explains her work and expresses her gratitude for The SIE Peace Prize Award.

What is the current situation in the DRC?

The situation in the DRC, especially in South Kivu, is very critical. On the economic front, there is a real crisis, the population struggle very hard to survive. There is also a political crisis in relation to upcoming elections, communities are divided and in these cases women are always the first victims.

Because of this, women who run small businesses cannot always get the necessary supplies for their businesses and therefore they cannot develop. Sometimes they cannot even go to their fields because of military maneuvers or conflicts and thus not earn enough money to buy food for their family.

In these circumstances, they cannot work but they are also victims of violence?

Yes, there are many cases of sexual violence.

It is also women who have to take care of everything, educate children, seek money to support their families, etc., so when they are unable to provide for their family due to disability, illness or a rejection, it is a whole family that is in crisis.

What do men do then?

There are unemployment problems and those who work are not paid accordingly.

SOFAD, your organization, works in which areas?

We work for the participation of women in decision-making and in the management and prevention of conflicts.

We accompany women and girls who are victims of rape or violence. We defend human rights but above all women's rights.

What do you do when a woman or girl comes to you after sexual violence?

We start by finding her a place where she will be safe, then we ask her if she agrees that her file should be handed over to Justice. If so, we accompany her in all legal proceedings and medical orientations.

Afterwards we work on family integration, working together with families, followed by community reintegration. Especially when there is a child after the rape, this child must also be accepted by the community.

In the case of a young girl being raped, we also ensure her reinsertion into the education system and we make sure that she and her child, if any, are accepted by all!

This award received from the European Soroptimists not only has a financial impact, I also imagine a symbolic impact?

Yes, of course, this award is very important. Already the name, "Peace Prize", gives meaning to what we do. It gives visibility to the actions carried out by women for women, and the dignity of women. Dignity will be more respected and in addition it will give weight to the demands of the women as well as the courage to continue this fight without being afraid. For at the moment we are going through very difficult times. This prize is a great symbol for the reconstruction of Peace in my country.

*Extract taken by Gerda Rosiers, SIE Extension Committee Chair. You can read the full interview **HERE**, or watch it **HERE**.*

Concluding Statement

Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, SIE President
Ulla Madsen, Immediate Past President

In the presence of 50 young women studying in STEM fields, Soroptimist International of Europe reaffirmed its commitment to educate, empower and enable women and girls to reach their full potential as leaders in their respective fields.

To this end,

- Soroptimists encourage young women and girls to enter fields of STEM, also because scientific degrees are more likely to lead to management positions.
- Soroptimists actively support women and girls to further themselves by awarding scholarships and organising mentoring programmes.
- Soroptimists offer a network of professional women which 'paves the way so luck can find women'.
- Soroptimists act as advocates for gender equality and lobby to close the gender gap.
- Soroptimists advocate a leadership style which is inclusive.
- Soroptimists are active defenders of the environment and think 'green' in their daily lives.
- Soroptimists promote and participate in the development of innovative technologies to improve lives and to ensure a sustainable environment and food security.
- Soroptimists encourage women to believe in themselves and be visible in the workplace.

In short, Soroptimists help women OWN THE FUTURE!







WE STAND UP FOR WOMEN! 2017-2019

Renata Trottmann Probst, President Elect

As the biennium of SIE President Maria Elisabetta De Franciscis draws to a close on September 30th 2017, the President Elect Renata Trottmann Probst is preparing to assume her functions as SIE President on October 1st 2017, for the biennium 2017-2019. The SIE President Elect presents here the theme of the upcoming biennium "WE STAND UP FOR WOMEN".

"Dear friends, like many of you, I have hundreds of friends on my Facebook account. Before I go to bed, or early in the morning, I usually scroll through their posts, and every day I see news items indicating how women's rights are disregarded, limited or simply ignored.

Every day.

While defending what our grandmothers and mothers have achieved, we are also facing new challenges that are slowly pervading our society, such as trafficking, FGM, child marriages, forced marriages, cybercrime and, today, in Europe, we even have to defend our lifestyle.

This is the reason why I have decided to focus on women's rights in my biennium. Now more than ever, women's rights need to be defended. What we have achieved could easily be lost again. Our work is even more important in these challenging times, as some elements of society try to curb women's rights and liberties.

This is why, dear Soroptimists, my slogan for the next two years is

We stand up for Women!

Dear Soroptimists,

Distinguished guests,

We stand up for Women!

Because violating Women's rights is NOT acceptable!

Just as violating Women is NOT acceptable!

And when I say violating I mean not only in the physical sense, but also the violation of basic human rights for women, the right to education, the right to equal pay, the

right to equal access to justice, or simply the right to speak up and finish a sentence!

This theme is perfectly in line with SI's 'Where We Stand Statement' on 'Gender-based Violence', published earlier this year.

I am excited about working with all of you to make this world a better place by improving the lives of women and girls, by fighting for their rights.

I am enthusiastic about dedicating my energy and passion to women, to the organization, and to all of you.

You have already executed countless projects with a similar focus in past years. You have been engaged in various ways to make the lives of women better. Excellent projects have been realized, and many more are in progress.

- Take, for example, last year's Best Practice Award winner in the category Violence against Women, the Union of Turkey, with their outstanding and creative evolution workshop for the victims of violence.
- Or, the many projects that fight against human trafficking
- Or, the many projects presented during the 16 days of activism last year.

This is Soroptimism at its best.

New projects will be developed, and the Programme Team will support you with ideas.

The well-established PD trainings will be given a new twist: as a reflection of your feedback we will offer separate trainings for Unions and Single Clubs to better serve the needs of the participants.

And, we will revise the current programmes and awards.

I firmly believe in the effectiveness and power of Advocacy. Therefore, like Soroptimist International, our global organization, at Federation level we will engage in strong advocacy work for women as well.

Why this? Because this is where the Federation can play a strategic role thanks to the combined power of all the Unions and Single clubs.

As a Union, it is almost impossible to influence on a level beyond national boundaries. Supranational influence is clearly the task of Soroptimist International and the Federations. Of course, Unions will benefit from the impact of our efforts and profit from the knowledge and insight we can share with you.

To empower you on a national level, we will organize special sessions on advocacy and share best practices. We sincerely hope each Union will nominate an Advocacy Director to facilitate this work!

Another biennium focus that is close to my heart is our membership! Besides seeking to be more successful in retention, we must rejuvenate our organization by recruiting 'new blood'. Let's be honest: with an ageing membership, it becomes more and more difficult to attract younger members. And to keep our selling point and defining feature as a network of active and socially engaged professional women, we desperately need this population!

We are a great organization! But, if we want to remain a powerful force for women, if we want to continue influencing women's causes, we must gain the support of younger women. The ideas and energy of younger women who share our values are crucial to our future.

This is Soroptimism at it's best





We need to attract the younger generation who, together with us, will

Stand up for Women!

To reach these younger women, we have to use the communication tools of the 21st century!

Classical communication methods are no longer sufficient!

Blogs, Twitter, Webinars and Instagram, these are just a few of the many newer tools that need to have a greater presence at SIE.

At the moment, not enough of us have the skills or time to make effective use of these digital tools. This is why I have nominated a competent Soroptimist to be in charge of 'Modern Media' on the Board. I look forward to benefiting from her expertise, as we transition into the new media world.

You have already heard about the updated status of the Branding Campaign, and I want to stress that the new Board will pursue this roadmap as outlined.

Now let's talk about **strategies:**

As some of you may be aware, the current Strategic Plan for SIE will be completed by the end of 2019. Therefore, one of the key tasks of the new Board will be to shape the future of our organization. Of course, we welcome your views, so please share them with us as we discuss and draft a new Strategic Plan.

The strategy I have envisaged for my presidency will be discussed and adopted at the first Board Meeting at the end of September / early October.

All of you should have the possibility to see first-hand how Board members work, which is why I will continue to open Governors' Meetings to all who wish to attend. The only limitation will be the available space!

Among the other key questions that need to be addressed is whether we are organized and structured in the best way to cope with today's challenges.

As you know, SIE introduced a Triangle structure six years ago, and some Unions have followed this idea. Now is a good time to review whether this structure is the best one to lead us into the future.

For example, digitalization is changing our lives in a dramatic way and is even turning traditional companies upside down. It is thus obvious that digitalization is going to have an influence on an organization like ours and should be reflected in our strategy as well.

Another aspect of my strategic plan is to **shift focus to Eastern Europe.**

Over the past few years, SIE has strongly supported the establishment of the SI Future African Federation. With a constitution and task force in place, it is now up the African Soroptimists to get operations off the ground and increase membership, which ultimately will lead to a new African Federation.

In these circumstances, SIE will now shift its focus to Eastern Europe. It is time to revisit this part of Europe, especially in light of recent developments, and see how we can support our Soroptimist sisters there.

And finally, there is the issue of the SIE Constitutions and By-Laws.

Revising the SIE Constitutions and By-Laws has been on the agenda for quite some time now, and I am making its completion a priority. Therefore, I nominated a 'project lead new constitutions'. I am determined that the GM should be in a position to approve the new SIE Constitutions and SIE By-Laws by 2019.

Our only reward for serving on the Board is seeing that we have made a difference

It is also my intention to give members of Single Clubs the same rights as those afforded to members organized in Unions. As you have seen in the paper presented by the Constitution and By-Laws Committee, this will not be an easy task and will demand some very creative ideas. However, I feel confident that we will find a solution with the help of our experts.

I sincerely hope our members will be open to real change, because if we want to ensure a successful future for SIE, we must be willing to re-think our structure and the constitutions. If not, we can only achieve some cosmetic nips and tucks.

Dear Soroptimists,

I am very honoured to be your president for the next two years.

This function gives me the possibility – and indeed the mandate – to shape our future with your guidance and approval.

I will do my part with energy and passion.

My Board and I will do our utmost to achieve the plans I have shared with you today.

Your SIE officers invest a lot of their spare time into fulfilling their SIE responsibilities, and I want to promote a positive team spirit which is both motivating and supportive. We have to make the best of our limited financial and human resources.

After all, our only reward for serving on the Board is seeing that we have made a difference – by inspiring projects for women and girls and accomplishing strategic work for the organization.

And one thing is for sure: By motivating and supporting each other, we will be able to enjoy the time together and have fun while doing voluntary work for SIE!

Because this work is worth it!

Stand up for women – stand up for Soroptimists!

Thank you.

Congratulations

The Governors meeting 2017 took place in Florence just before the SIE Congress in July. During this meeting, the Governors elected Anna Wszelaczynska as President of the European Federation for the biennium 2019-2021. We congratulate Anna on her election!
The Governors' Meeting in Florence was also the occasion to elect the New SIE Board who will be working alongside the President Elect Renata Trottmann Probst. We extend our warmest congratulations to the SIE Board 2017-2019.

Anna Wszelaczynska, SIE President Elect

Being elected the President of the European Federation for the biennium 2019-2021 is a great honour, but also a great responsibility.

I'm proud to be a Soroptimist, a member of the biggest women's organisation working for women and girls all around the world, an organisation that will be celebrating its centenary in 4 years. I'm in a good company! When I think of it, I feel a sense of permanence and continuity, the feeling that, no matter what happens, Soroptimists do their work, they **Go Green Investing in Education** and **Stand up for Women**!

We have all joined Soroptimism to change the world. So let's change it together with the younger generation. We need them, they need us, we can be helpful to them. They really are not so different from us. Technology changes, but not people, their problems and desires. Maybe a solution to attract young members, apart from interesting projects, is to allow them to be associated rather than permanently linked – which is more attractive to young people nowadays. No permanent ties.

Another issue: What about Soroptimisters, our brothers in law? Shouldn't they be associated, or incorporated? Let's discuss how to involve them.

Modern social media is inevitable, so let's tame it and learn how to use it. Why don't we have courses organised for ourselves in clubs?

I will be responsible for writing an SIE strategy for the next 7 years. I'd like you all to be actively involved, prompting ideas and concepts. Emphasis should be put on extension, transparency, simplification and closer co-operation, but what else?

The strategy group will be sending letters to you asking for your opinions. I'm sure together we will work out good ideas, in close co-operation with the Immediate Past, Present President and the Board.

It will not be an easy task, but let's have fun while working!





President Elect 2019-2021 Anna Wszelaczynska with SIE President 2017-2019 Renata Trottmann Probst and SIE President Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis

New SIE Board Members

Board Members for the Biennium 2017 -2019

Renata Trottmann Probst	SIE President / SI Switzerland
Anna Wszelaczynska	SIE President Elect / SI Poland
Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis	SIE Immediate Past President / SI Italy
Regine Vögele	SIE Treasurer / SI Austria
Sigrid Ag	SIE Secretary General / SI Norway
Carolien Demey	SIE Vice President / SI Belgium
Elizabeth Otieno Nyadwe	SIE Vice President / SI Kenya
Zaneta Vysniauskiene	SIE Vice President / SI Lithuania
Verena von Tresckow-Bronke	SIE Vice President / SI Germany
Ingeborg Dietz	SIE Programme Director / SI Germany
Ingrid Withof	SIE Assist. Programme Director / SI Belgium
Signe Justesen	SIE Constitution Chairperson / SI Denmark
Nicoletta Morelli Magnini	SIE Constitution Committee / SI Italy
Karla Greipl	SIE Constitution Committee / SI Germany
Gerda Rosiers	SIE Extension Chairperson / SI Belgium
Marianne Mukankaka	SIE Extension Committee / SI Rwanda
Vesselina Tzvetanova	SIE Extension Committee / SI Bulgaria
Maria Luisa Frosio	SIE Scholarship Chairperson / SI Italy
Elena Savu	SIE Scholarship Committee / SI Romania
Britt Nordgreen	SIE Scholarship Committee / SI Norway
Maria Parlinska	SIE Finance Controller / SI Poland
Christine Cromwell-Ahrens	SIE Communication Officer / SI Germany
Bettina Hahne	SIE Rep. to the Council of Europe / SI Germany
Renate Smith-Kubat	SIE Representative to EWL / SI Belgium
Vera Maria Gregor	SIE Representative to OSCE / SI Austria
Sabine Mach	SIE Representative to OSCE / SI Austria
Erica Sollberger	New Media / SI Switzerland
Margrit Weber-Scherrer	Project Manager New Constitution / SI Switzerland

SIE 2017 Photo Competition Winners!

The fourth edition of the SIE Photo Competition entitled "Through the Eyes of Soroptimists" saw submissions coming from Austria, Israel, Madagascar, Dubai, Romania and a number of other countries where SIE is present and active. An impressive success!

Selecting the winners was no easy task, but using a set of predetermined criteria, each member of the Jury independently evaluated all the submissions. So, having announced the winners at the Governors Meeting in Florence, we are now proud to give their names to the world!

Promoting education in the field of STEM:

- 1st prize: " Veterinary Students women power" by Valentina Kubale Dvojmoc (Club of Celje, Slovenia)
- 2nd prize: La "Yzaline sur chantier 1" by Marianne Mukankaka (Club of Gisenyi, Rwanda)

Promoting empowerment of women and girls:

- 1st prize: "La jeune fille puisant de l'eau" by Bintou Diane-Konate (Club of Bamako Espoir, Mali)
- 2nd prize: "Cours d'alphabétisation pour autonomiser les femmes à Mboro au Sénégal" by Yvette Foubert (Club of La Rochelle, France)
- 2nd prize: "L'autonomisation par le biais de la couture" by Josiane Ralambotsirofo (Club of Antananarivo-Doyen, Madagascar)

The Jury was composed of Caroline Junier, Communication Officer Christine Cromwell-Ahrens, European Women's Lobby Representative Renate Smith Kubat and the winners of the 2016 Photo Competition Machtelt van der Straeten and Villy Makou.











1 - Veterinary Students women power
2 - Yzaline sur chantier 1
3 - La jeune fille puisant de l'eau
4 - Cours d'alphabétisation pour autonomiser les femmes à Mboro au Sénégal
5 - L'autonomisation par le biais de la couture

SIE Scholarship Grants 2017-2018

Since 1968, when the Scholarship Fund was established, Soroptimist International of Europe continues to empower women and girls through education opportunities. The scholarships are awarded to women in profession or business who want to undertake further training or a pending career change. To see the full list of awardees announced at the Governors' Meeting in Florence, please click ***HERE***

Extension Prize

Gerda Rosiers, SIE Extension Committee Chair

During the Governors Meeting in Florence, we handed out several Extension Awards; each year we try to introduce an element of surprise and reward a club or Union that stands out as having made great efforts to recruit new members.

The Union prize awarded to the Union having created the most clubs between 01.10.2016 and 30.09.2017 went to the Union of Italy with the creation of 5 clubs and the Union of Austria with 3 clubs.

The Union Trophy, created in 2016, for the Union with the strongest momentum in terms of 2017 recruitment was awarded to the Union of Kenya.

This year we also gave an award to the Union which has created a new club after a sustained period of "stagnancy", and this went to the Union of Norway.

Finally we awarded diplomas to newly-chartered clubs in recognition of their success in recruiting particularly young members (compared to the average Soroptimist!):

- SC Bizerte, Benjaoui Khouloud 1991
- SI Wörthersee-Pörtschach, Katharina Rudolf 1990
- SI Salo-Alto Garda Bresciano, Giorgia Casteletti 1990.



















Photo © Leamus - Thinkstock

Governors Meeting 2018

May 25th to 27th

Lucerne (Switzerland)

34 000 Soroptimists
in action to promote literacy!

Marlène Van Benthem, SIE Programme Director
Caroline Junier, SIE Assistant Programme Director

"We want to provide access to books for women and girls in need, within the 62 countries of the SIE Federation. The idea is to improve literacy and widen knowledge among women and girls. Literacy is the key to education and creates opportunities for jobs and economic empowerment".
That's the vision and ambition of our president Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, as you can read on the homepage of our federation project: https://www.sie-mybookbuddy.org

Fantastic collaborations started between clubs who made themselves responsible for a sustainable implementation at a school in their region and other clubs who came in action for fundraising for these schools. I call this FRIENDSHIPLINK 2.0! Working together on a project, bringing the expertise available in your clubs, share knowledge and celebrate successes.

Starting in Sofia at the Governors Meeting one year ago, the question is what have we achieved?

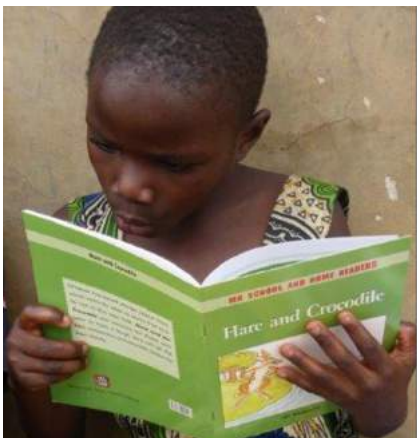
The results to date are:

- cooperation agreement with MBB
- beautiful website
- 21 countries involved
- 60 clubs active
- €35 000 donations received
- 45 applications received
- 12 schools now have MBB library system
- 3 clubs have organised bookathlons
- 2500 girls are reading every week a new book (at home)
- 4600 children have access to books now (boys and girls)

Stimulating literacy is in the heart of our organisation and will of course continue in many ways. We know that many clubs are still very active in organising sponsored reading events, this really is a fantastic way to bring our two worlds together. Although the project management at federation level of the My Book Buddy project stops at the end of this biennium, we are very happy to inform you that a group of Soroptimists from different countries have organised themselves as a project team, to see how they can support all the applications that have been brought in.

If you want to join them, you are most welcome! Especially experts on education, pedagogy, cultural anthropology and ICT we want to bring together as an expert group who can advise on working together on literacy promotion.





At the end of this biennium, we as the programme team of this board, want to thank you for all the work that has been done by so many, we loved to communicate with you all on the implementing process and work with you as one big federation project team.

Please go on to support all these kids in need, so they can read stories that give them hope and dreams for the future they want to live in.





SIE Workshop in Athens

From the 14th to 16th of September 2017 some Union Presidents Elect and Presidents with yet one more year of mandate and 7 Union Treasurers met in beautiful Athens for a workshop and training. The purpose of the meeting was for SIE to explain how the Federation operates and how it can concretely help the Unions in their everyday "front-line" activities, and at the same time listen to the needs and difficulties they experience.

It was also a great opportunity for SIE's President Elect Renata Trottmann Probst to explain to the participants the core of her program and her vision for the next biennium.

The Greek Union President and representatives of her Board were very generous and hospitable, offering us also some time of "pure" friendship and a visit to the Museum of the Acropolis.

The location, the friendly atmosphere, the exchange of useful information and the personal contact made these meetings in Athens a highlight of the biennium about to end.

Women, Water & Leadership

Hafdís Karlsdóttir,
Chair of the International President's Appeal

Women, Water & Leadership
SI President's Appeal 2017-2019

Women, Water and Leadership - the Soroptimist International President's Appeal for the 2017-2019 biennium, seeks to unite Soroptimists across the globe, increasing awareness of the vital role of women as equal partners at all levels of the water sector. The President's Appeal will support projects that educate, empower and enable women and girls, ensuring they have the capacity, experience and education needed to manage water resources and gain careers in water-related professions.

A growing population, climate change and demographic shifts lead to an increased demand for water. Women and girls take the strain as many are forced to be the primary water carriers for their families, instead of earning an income or attending school. It is increasingly accepted that women should play an important role in water management. Women are experts, agents of change, and perform an important role in achieving equitable access to water for all, and for all uses. Their expertise, if harnessed through education and empowerment, can position women as effective leaders.

To find out more about the Women, Water and Leadership and how to donate please contact Chair of the International President's Appeal Hafdís Karlsdóttir hafdis@in.is



Congratulations to Mariet Verhoef-Cohen

New President of Soroptimist International

Mariet Verhoef-Cohen, Past President SI Europe (2007 - 2009), was invested with tremendous support as the new President of Soroptimist International for the biennium 2017-2019 in Rotterdam. The inauguration took place during the SI Board meeting on July 29th 2017 in the Netherlands.

Mariet Verhoef-Cohen succeeds New Zealand's Yvonne Simpson as head of the worldwide organisation whose membership includes some 75,000 women in over 130 countries.

Calendar

New SIE club charters

23 September 2017
Grieskirchen (Austria)
Charter to be presented by Gerda Rosiers, SIE Extension Committee Chairperson
Club President - Eva Maria Pöttinger
Email: poeteva@poettinger.at

30 September 2017
Valdarno Inferiore (Italy)
Charter to be presented by Marie-Claude Bertrand, SIE Vice President Communications
Club President - Angela Lastrucci
Phone: +39 335 8306476
Email: angela@bacchereti.it

14 October 2017
Koori (Mali)
Charter to be presented by Marianne Mukankaka, SIE Extension Committee Member 2017-2019
Club President - Aminata Ouattara Diabate
Phone: +223 76 01 61 17
Email: nabilagare@gmail.com

4 November 2017
Gooische Meeren (The Netherlands)
Charter to be presented by Zaneta Vysniauskiene, SIE Vice President 2017-2019
Club President - Margriet Burnaby Lautier Bordes
Phone: +31 6 29 59 58 14
Email: margrietbordes@gmail.com

Forthcoming SIE events

28-29 September 2017
SIE Restricted Board Meeting - Leuven (Belgium)

30 September - 01 October 2017
SIE Enlarged Board Meeting - Leuven (Belgium)

Anniversaries

03 October 2017
25th Anniversary **- SI Kaunas (Lithuania)**

03 October 2017
25th Anniversary **- SI Utrecht-Nedersticht (The Netherlands)**

10 October 2017
25th Anniversary **- SI Trier (Germany)**

17 October 2017
25th Anniversary **- SI Thessaloniki "Macedonia" (Greece)**

24 October 2017
25th Anniversary **- SI Ringkøbing (Denmark)**

24 October 2017
25th Anniversary **- SI Stockholm-Södertörn (Sweden)**

24 October 2017
25th Anniversary **- SI Interlaken (Switzerland)**

31 October 2017
25th Anniversary **- SI Ringsaker (Norway)**

31 October 2017
25th Anniversary **- SI Isalanïa-Zwolle (The Netherlands)**

07 November 2017
25th Anniversary **- SI Lüdenscheid (Germany)**

28 November 2017
25th Anniversary **- SI Hoeksche Waard / IJsselmonde (The Netherlands)**

International awareness days and events

23 October - 17 November 2017
CEDAW's 68th session at the UN in Geneva

25 November 2017
International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

25 November – 10 December 2017
16 Days of Activism

10 December 2017
Human Rights Day

THE LINK ONLINE: Available at soroptimisteurope.org
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