



25 November - International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

35,000 Soroptimists standing united against violence!

Geneva, November 25th, 2013. On the occasion of the **International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**, **Soroptimist International of Europe** reiterates the firm commitment of its 35,000 professional women members in 58 countries across Europe and Africa to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

Violence against women continues to be a grave violation of their human rights. Whether it is physical, psychological or economic violence, and whether it happens in the home, at work, in public places, in peace or in times of conflict, violence in all its forms is an unacceptable violation of women's human rights. In Europe alone, estimated prevalence rates of violence against women average 24% over the course of their lifetime though in some countries around the world rates can be as high as 70%. However, violence against women can be eliminated or at least drastically diminished through sustained efforts, joint action initiatives, and active partnerships between international organizations, civil society, governments and local policymakers, academics, analysts and experts.

For Soroptimist International of Europe, November 25th is not just a day of yearly observance, but a reminder of the course of action they committed themselves to. Since 1921, Soroptimists have harnessed their expertise and passion for the cause of eliminating violence against women and girls and have dedicated human and financial resources to acting concretely and advocating incessantly against this critical issue. Amongst the thousands of projects undertaken by Soroptimists in this regard:

- A group of 2,500 Romanian and Danish Soroptimists undertook a joint initiative to fight trafficking which involved an awareness raising campaign in Denmark, an exchange of knowledge regarding prevention strategies, and a country-wide educational campaign in Romania targeting vulnerable age groups and communities.
- Austrian Soroptimists tirelessly and successfully advocated the enforcement of a national law for the protection of children's rights in the context of domestic violence.
- Italian Soroptimists advocated for the protection of children's rights in court and initiated the building of almost 50 protected courtrooms. More continue to be built across Italy.
- Turkish Soroptimists entered into a partnership with local authorities to improve services provided to victims of trafficking. They funded the restoration of shelters and are using their professional expertise to provide counseling and social support. This has improved the living conditions of more than 700 women and children in the Turkish city of Izmir.
- Soroptimists awarded their 2013 Peace Prize to Silvana Arbia, lawyer and former Registrar of the International Criminal Court in the Hague, who dedicated a decade of her life to reestablishing justice in Rwanda between 1998 and 2008 by ensuring those responsible for atrocities including genocide, crimes against humanity, and the use of using rape as a weapon of war are tried and convicted.

Soroptimist International of Europe will not cease to combat violence against women and girls until all women can enjoy living in a world which is *safe from fear, safe from violence*. Indeed, Soroptimists of Europe will continue to advocate for women's human rights and to aid international institutions such as the **United Nations**, the **Council of Europe** and the **European Women's Lobby** in their efforts to promote the signature, ratification, and implementation of the Istanbul Convention as a tool for change towards more effective gender equality.