



## SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL SWITZERLAND

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### DEAR SOROPTIMISTS – DEAR INTERESTED FRIENDS!

The Swiss Union has maintained intensive contacts with the clubs from Ukraine for years. In this context, personal friendships have also developed over time. Soroptimist International is, so to speak, an open network. At our Duo Sorop event on September 24th, 2022 in Berne, Switzerland, two Ukrainian women were there, one as a role model and one as a participant. Friendly relations can therefore also lead to sustainable support.

Brigitte Mantilleri, President SI Union Suisse

### «For the whole club, the door to Europe has opened..»

She is still intensively involved today and calls Nataliya in Lviv at least twice a week: Katharina Streuli from Club Rapperswil.

Katharina Streuli, who traveled with her husband Jürg 1995 for the first time to Liviv/Lemberg, is since more than 25 years our guarantor to the Ukraine. An East support was contemplated at that time.

One could count on the mediation of Father Robert Hotz, a Zurich Jesuit, who mostly accompanied projects in Ukraine. All developments are present to Katharina as if it were yesterday. Post-Soviet Lviv in the mid-nineties, shortly after the fall of the Iron Curtain: a city with a rich culture, often referred to as the Pearl of the East.

And a little later, Katharina Streuli became soroptimistically active there, meeting Nataliya for the first time. With Wiltraud Entress from the Club Kreuzlingen, Katharina Streuli soon received a worldly companion. The two let the SIE know that they wanted to found a club in Lviv quickly, did not let themselves be deterred by anything and prevailed in particular thanks to the Swiss Union and the active support of the then Union President Ros-witha Ott.

### **Nataliya acts with 20 Soroptimists in Lviv!**

#### **From the founding of the club and the first renovation of a children's home**

In Lviv itself, Nataliya had already become active and had been able to inspire 20 professional women to found a club SI. It was striking for the Swiss women how active and agile the "Eastern women" were towards the new idea. For her, the founding of the club also meant that "the door to Europe has opened", as Katharina Streuli notes.

In 2000, the foundation of the Lviv Club became a reality. Sponsor clubs were Rapperswil and Kreuzlingen. A group of dedicated Soroptimists from these clubs as well as from St. Gallen and Chur were present at the charter celebration.

The support from Switzerland began with the renovation of a children's home in the middle of the old town of Lviv. In several Swiss clubs, an unparalleled collecting activity began. In addition, the Soroptimists repeatedly traveled to Ukraine. These trips served both to verify the donated funds and to cultivate friendship. This made it possible to build trust between the different clubs in Ukraine and Switzerland. After SI Lviv, seven other clubs were founded in Ukraine, namely Kiev, Dnepro, later Simferopol, Tyachev, Chernovitz, Ushgorod and Kharkiv. – The SIE commissioned Union Switzerland to look after the Ukrainian clubs.

In the early 2000s, traveling to Ukraine was expensive and challenging. The possibilities of transporting money were also uncertain. How often did our Soroptimists bravely move on the edge of legality and have the money hidden in their pockets! Ursula Jutzi, finance expert and former president of the Soroptimist Union, also travelled frequently to Ukraine with Sina Stiffler. She thinks that a bank account was not possible at that time. "That's why we just took a lot of money informally with us."



Katharina Streuli, Wiltraud Entress, Nataliya (v.l.) 2008 in Lviv

### **Ukraine Commissioner Sina Stiffler organizes, visits and structures**

Sina Stiffler has been the Ukraine Commissioner of the Swiss Union for more than ten years. She is committed to understanding, according to needs, on both sides. With her knowledge of Russian and her previous contacts to Ukraine, she was able to advance her work extremely successfully during the last ten trips as well as in telephone and e-mail contact.

Often Sina accompanied several people on their travels and visits to the clubs in Ukraine. Some of the clubs were unstable, and Sina insisted with «unburdon her heart» for more stability, was often successful. Nevertheless, the two oldest more than 20-year-old clubs Lviv and Kiev offer the most stability.



Sina Stiffler (second l left, below) brings a check to the Club Lviv in 2017 for the expansion of the children's hospital Briukovichi.

### **The task of the Ad Hoc Commission: Direct aid to Ukraine**

Since the end of February, the war has been raging and the Union Switzerland offers direct help to the Soroptimists in Ukraine or on the flight. We have the duty to carry out our task in a party-politically neutral manner, to provide emergency aid for other affected persons and Soroptimists in Ukraine and neighboring countries.

### **Transports in general**

Transports are sometimes made possible on winding paths. Thus, the transport of medical goods, which began at the beginning of October in Lugano, could be brought via the Misox and Winterthur at the beginning of October in Rapperswil by Jürg Streuli jun. to the Polish border and then to Lviv.

### **Finance & Donations – Christmas Cards for Ukraine Aid**

**Fatal, but true – the war continues, and our aid is more important than ever! «Don't leave Ukraine at the door» is Katharina Streuli's urgent appeal.**

**In mid-October 2022, we still had SFr./EURO 60,000 available for emergency aid Ukraine. We plan to continue to use the money as needed, including for the medical care of the children in the orphanages. The war is still not over and winter is approaching. A difficult time for the people of Ukraine. Help us to continue to actively support them.**

**We are very pleased that the direct Aid Ukraine was received with interest and great willingness to donate at the charter celebration of the new club Moesano in Grono**

## Our next action



A set of 5 Christmas cards with different motifs, designed by Ukrainian artists, can be ordered for the price of SFr. 20.- at the President's Conference or from the end of October at our shop

[www.swiss-soroptimist.ch/produkt/weihnachtskarten-set](http://www.swiss-soroptimist.ch/produkt/weihnachtskarten-set)

Contacts to our Ad-hoc Commission: [ukraine@swiss-soroptimist.ch](mailto:ukraine@swiss-soroptimist.ch)

**We are happy about echoes to the news from Ukraine 8!**

The news from Ukraine no. 9 will be published at the beginning of December.

### Account in CHF

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