



SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL SWITZERLAND

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WE STAND UP!

Dear Soroptimists – Dear Interested Friends

It is a great need for us to thank you in the clubs very much for your commitment. Thanks to you and your great commitment, our solidarity with the Ukrainian club sisters is possible! This time, too, we can report on a transport of relief supplies to Ukraine. Entrepreneur and chauffeuse Monika Kesselring has just returned from her journey.

We wish you an inspiring reading of the latest news!

AdHocGroup Ukraine SI Union Switzerland



Chauffeuse Monika Kesselring on the way to Ukraine!

"For me, it was like a mission to go to the war zone." Monika Kesselring, entrepreneur and chauffeur, has already transported relief supplies for Club Lviv to the Ukrainian border twice since April for SI Union Switzerland. We had the opportunity to meet the energetic woman in mid-June 2022 and have been in contact with her ever since, even directly in the truck cabin.

A few weeks have passed since chauffeuse and entrepreneur Monika Kesselring made her first trip to Ukraine in April 2022 to transport medical supplies for Soroptimists. We met the dedicated woman for a conversation near Lake Constance, from where she had originally left at the end of the eighties. Since then, she has lived in Davos and often travels from there to surrounding countries.

Kesselring says of herself that she is at home everywhere. In everyday life, the entrepreneur transports fruit and vegetables in refrigerated trucks in particular. Well-organized and structured action is part of this. She picked up her cargo for Ukraine, organized by Jolanta Jozefowski, at Mendrisiotto, where she had offered a colleague: "If you need someone, get in touch. Here I acted from the gut.« "You drive kilometre after kilometre towards war" Via Germany, Monika Kesselring drove to Przemyśl on the Polish-Ukrainian border. "What happened to me weirdly is that you drive kilometre after kilometre towards war." It was acoustically perceptible and especially bad at night, "24 hours helicopters and airplanes. From NATO or the Polish army – I can't say, but for 24 hours it roars."

On the roadside, despite the cold weather, the refugees were often on the road in bad shoes and wrapped in a few clothes. "I also stopped. Gave away two shirts, a gilet and a pair of flip-flops. I couldn't do without. So that at least this person had a rubber sole under his bloody feet again." On the one hand, there were the clear signs of everyday life during the war, which the chauffeuse also noticed in Poland. On the other hand, Monika Kesselring always finds positive aspects. She tells of encounters in this regard: "I had magnetic boards on the site, with 'we support Ukraine'. And they honk your horn. They sent you hearts out of the cars. They sent you kisses from the cars. They conveyed their gratitude to you – what you do for Ukraine. For you. And at the Polish gas station, strangers came and they hugged you."

This woman, who moves in a male domain, bridges waiting and traffic jams in the truck, with office work, knitting or reading, experienced the last journey to the Ukrainian border as an extraordinary challenge and says: "You always have to combine the 'must with the beautiful', or the necessary with the beautiful." When I hear her descriptions, this juxtaposition is for me as a listener both an inspiration and a reflection on my own life in the security of our country. We are trapped in our Swiss prosperity. "And I think that's often the tragedy; only when something happens again, then the people are back. They think it's made with money – but it's not made with money alone," muses the entrepreneur.

Medical goods and food are in good hands with entrepreneur Monika Kesselring. Kesselring, a farmer's daughter from Thurgau, had changed geographies and industries after a commercial apprenticeship and several years of experience in banking, moved to Davos at the end of the eighties and has been working at Früchte Waser ever since. A wholesaler of fruits and vegetables. Over the years, she worked her way up from secretary to finance and logistics manager and company owner. Even now, with seven employees, it is important to the committed woman to continue to drive through Europe behind the wheel. The offer to make oneself available for transport to Ukraine is both a matter of the heart and a commitment to peace, freedom and democracy in Europe. Monika Kesselring meticulously schedules the delivery between her other orders. Only through this, together with their commitment and the financial support of donors, is this possible.

The next transport: "Fear is always the worst companion in life."

In exchange with Monika Kesselring, we will be able to share which aspects will be important for the trip at the end of June. Once again, medical supplies are waiting in Ticino, and this time also food that we Soroptimists have co-financed. With regard to transport, Kesselring points out the advantages of the long-standing cooperation between Swiss and Ukrainian Soroptimists: "Because the Soroptimists have contacts out there, these urgently needed goods can be delivered to the hospitals and other places.

At the same time, a lot of material does not go to the right places in other aid transports. Chauffeuse Kesselring explains the circumstances why she only wants to deliver to the Polish-Ukrainian border: "The problem for us is that we (in Ukraine) are not insured in a non-Schengen country – neither the car nor the goods. So if something were to happen, I would have to pay for it all myself."

- Entrepreneurially calculated risk! Once again, Monika Kesselring was confronted with unforeseen moments, of which she was already convinced in advance. She speaks openly about it at our meeting in mid-June.

Monika Kesselring is not afraid, because "fear is always the worst companion in life," she says. On the first trip it was language problems. Monika Kesselring, who is used to negotiating in German, French, Italian, Spanish and English in her working life, says: "But my biggest problem was that nobody speaks a language that I speak. I am not used to this. I can't communicate with five languages! Finally, someone spoke a language I could understand, namely Italian. I was also able to call a Polish friend so that he could translate."

On June 28, Monika Kesselring set off again and reached the Polish-Ukrainian border after 18 hours of driving. "It was an exhausting journey there, as I had to drive the many kilometres to my destination in a short time, so I had to make do with little sleep. I didn't want to risk being stuck in Germany over the weekend as a result of the driving ban." However, customs did not release the cargo until the morning of 30 June, and our informants were then able to receive the cargo.

Already on July 3, the chauffeuse crossed the Swiss border again. What were the experiences and challenges on this journey? Monika Kesselring explains: "There is not much to tell about this trip, because it was a trip like many - like any other. I didn't notice anything about the war, except for a few convoys transporting army vehicles to Ukraine. For outsiders or travelers, the world seems to keep turning; normal everyday life or madness has taken over again, and - who knows - war is already 'normality' in people's minds."



Both with passion and calculation, Monika Kesselring makes her expertise, her commitment and her vehicle available to transport medical and other necessary goods to the Polish border. Monika Kesselring's journey to Ukraine – symbolically as a journey through life. She is already thinking ahead in a positive sense and says: "What I could imagine is that there will be a second phase in which you could or should help – when it comes to reconstruction."

"I would like to thank the Soroptimists for the trust they have placed in me - trust in my reliability and professionalism. It makes me happy that, thanks to the donated medical supplies of the Soroptimists as the driver of these two transports, I also became a small piece of the puzzle for the Ukraine picture.

Hopefully this will be put back together at some point! I am also proud of the fact that I completed the 6593 km of the two trips without any accidents and without much difficulty."

Monika Kesselring



Picture: Children in the Carpatians

News from the Club Lviv/Lviv

«One of the few positive events ...»

Soroptimist Nataliya, with her crew, responsible for the distribution of relief supplies in Lviv and other areas, tries again and again to bring us positive news. She wrote in an email on June 30:

"We distributed food parcels in Ukraine and Lviv. Almost every day we receive photos of children from the Carpathians. Today, this is one of the few positive events that pleases us. The most negative thing is the fear of an offensive by Belarus and chaotic missile attacks throughout Ukraine."



... at the last minute

The insulin and tumor drugs have just arrived at the hospital in Kiev, thanks to the cooperation with the Ukrainian delegation that was in Lugano at the beginning of the week.



Finance

In general, we can look back on a large flow of donations, but it has become noticeably smaller in the last two months. By the end of June, donations totalling CHF 356,788 and EUR 30,760 had been recorded in the Ukraine account. Of this, 227,504 SFr. and 33,039 euros were spent mainly on direct aid to Ukraine.

Direct aid to Ukraine in particular continues to be extremely urgent, which is why we are reaching you with a renewed appeal for donations.

With a support of 50 francs, you can donate to a food package that allows a family of four to eat for three days!

On our website www.swiss-soroptimist.ch/solidaritaet-ukraine you will find the [blog of our President of the Union Brigitte Mantilleri](#) as well as other [Shortnews from Ukraine!](#)

Contacts to our Ad-hoc Commission: ukraine@swiss-soroptimist.ch

We are looking forward to echoes of the news from Ukraine 6!

The news from Ukraine No. 7 will be published in September after the summer break.

Account in Swiss Francs

Soroptimist International Union Schweiz

Aargauische Kantonalbank

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