



SEROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL SWITZERLAND

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Dear Soroptimists – Dear Interested Friends!

For more than 20 years, we have maintained an intensive exchange with clubs SI from Ukraine. For the DV in Interlaken Nataliya Podzdorova, the president of the Club SI Lviv/Lemberg, visited Switzerland.

The entire board and all those present were very happy about their presence and their poignant presentation! In the meantime, Nataliya is already back in her home country, continuing to help with her club sisters on the front line – those who need it most. This is also possible thanks to our support.

Catherine Schuppli, President SI Union Switzerland 2023-2024

Interview with Nataliya Podzdorova, Lviv

The idea came spontaneously at the first physical meeting of the Adhoc Commission after about 35 Zoom sessions: We invite the founding president of the Club Lviv, Nataliya Podzdorova. With her we have been working since the beginning of the war, to DV 2023 in Interlaken. The implementation of the plan was then more complicated than we had imagined: The night train from Ukraine to Vienna stopped for hours in Hungary, and Nataliya realized that she would not be able to catch up with the flight from Vienna to Zurich. Ursula Jutzi managed the miracle: she soon organized an airplane ticket from Budapest to Zurich, Nataliya was redirected by mobile phone call, left the train in Budapest and barely made it onto this flight to Switzerland.

After two quiet days in Switzerland, she suddenly had panic attacks at night: What if something happens to her son or grandson at home – and she is far from home? Also again and again the news of the war. Add to that the excitement on the stage in front of the assembly of the delegates, fright because of the speech she would give there in Interlaken in front of the Soroptimists. – Your touching lecture impressed us all very much afterwards.

We did this interview two days later in Chur. Nataliya was very relieved after passing the challenges, almost in a holiday mood. There was a lot of laughter during the conversation, but tears flowed every now and then.

Nataliya, tell us about your first impressions in Switzerland.

It's a completely different life here than it is in our country. It's quiet, I hear birds whistling. There are no sirens at night. When sirens sound at home, my pulse rises and I panic. At home, there are also messages on the radio and on mobile phones throughout the day.



Delegate Assembly of the Soroptimists in Interlaken

How did you experience the delegate assembly in Interlaken?

Everything was very well organized. Club Interlaken organised the whole event well. I had many friendly encounters. The sisters showed a lot of understanding for the situation in my country. I also liked the booths of the individual clubs.

The excursion in the evening was wonderful. Because the weather was nice, the world from above seemed like a doll's house. I also liked the alphorn player and the cow on the observation deck.



Union president Catherine Schuppli with Nataliya Podzdorova

You have been working every day in Lviv since the beginning of the war.

This was only possible thanks to the help of the Swiss and Liechtenstein Soroptimists: you collected money from the very beginning. Club Vaduz sent us 8'000 Euros via Poland on March 4, 2022. We used it to buy what was needed in children's homes and two children's hospitals: bedding, hygiene products, medicines. In Lviv, a nine-story building was occupied by refugees from Kharkiv. Every day we brought the relief supplies we needed. We also sent relief supplies by private cars to Kharkiv. In Verchni Bilka, two gyms were occupied by refugees. We were told what they needed, we shopped and brought what they needed. We were able to buy all this with your help.

In the beginning, half the club was abroad because of the war. Ten women did all the work. Gradually, everyone returned. Now it is mainly the retired who do the work, the working people often help on weekends.

What is the situation now?

The flow of refugees is over. At the moment, we mainly support the orphanage in Lyubin Veliky with 56 children from war zones and the orphanage in Livchizi with 47 children. The state can only pay a little for Lyubin Veliky – only for the bare necessities. The farmers donate potatoes and beets and other vegetables. With the money from Switzerland, we always buy fresh food. The director of the home tells us what to buy.

An American has donated a small bus to the home. This allows the children to be driven to the doctor and dentist, for example, but only if there is gasoline. Soroptimist Nina Smolar repaired the children's teeth. You donated 5000 euros for the material.

With your help, we can also pay for some gasoline.

In winter it was very cold, with your support we got generators for various social institutions.



President élect Jolanta Jozefowski and the appointee Sina Stiffler discussing with Nataliya Poodzdorova (from left to right)

Thanks to Nataliya for the conversation. We wish you all the best!

The interview was undertaken by the appointee for the Ukraine Sina Stiffler.

Members of the Ad-hoc Commission Ukraine are: Catherine Schuppli President SI Union Switzerland, Sina Stiffler (Delegate for Ukraine), Franziska Brändli (Events), Iris Burkhalter (Finances, Contact SIE), Annelies Debrunner (Communication, News from Ukraine), Claudia Meister (Finances, Communication, SIE), Irene Muggler (Communication, Blog), Ursula Jutzi (Coordination), Martine Rossier (Translations).

Advice for communication and translation into English: Heinz Bonfadelli.

On our Website <https://swiss-soroptimist.ch/solidaritaet-ukraine/> you will find the blog about the Ukraine war and short news.

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

We are looking forward to echoes of this news from Ukraine 15!

Account CHF

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