



ZONTA
INTERNATIONAL

**Zonta European
Interdistrict Seminars**

1995 - 2025

European Conferences and Seminars – 1995–2025¹

European Conferences

When established in 1962, District XIV encompassed 27 clubs in seven countries: one in Austria, three in France, eleven in Germany, one in Iran, one in Italy, nine in Switzerland and one in the United Kingdom.

In 1994, District XIV was divided into five new districts. At that time, the district encompassed about 240 clubs, including 18 clubs and clubs in formation in Eastern European countries (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Russia, Croatia, Ukraine) with nearly 7,000 members.

Several criteria were defined in the division procedures, especially two items concerning continuity which would allow:

- different ways of cooperating with and in national institutions to open participation in national legal procedures concerning advocacy for Zonta International 's goals,
- and
- Inter-district conferences like those held in the 1970s and 1980s to extend information sharing, friendship, projects and social contacts beyond the new district borders – and to offer a continuation of the European spirit.

Despite the commitment to Inter-district Conferences, only three were organized: in 1995, 1997 and 1999. They failed because of large distances to the respective cities and venues, which were all over Europe, and because of complicated organizational and financial burdens within the five new districts. Since 2001, the five districts have organized their own district conferences.

1995: San Remo, Italy. Inter-district Conference of the five districts, including individual district meetings

1997: Vienna, Austria. Inter-district Conference of four districts. District 29 began a separate District Conference

1999: Montpellier, France. Inter-district Conference of four Districts. District 29 had a separate conference.

¹ Research compiled by Irene Wiese v Ofen, Karin Saeger, Eva Nielsen and PIP Maria Jose Landeira Oestergaard.

European Seminars

With the European seminars considered to be a special format, cross-border meetings have continued to the present, hosted in various European countries. The agendas for these meetings reveal both Zonta themes and passionate concerns about women's issues, worldwide. The seminars are open to all European districts but interested Zontians from other parts of the world are also welcomed. The seminars are financed by the participants and are usually held in February or March in odd years in order not to compete with other Zonta events, conferences or conventions.

The seminar structure offers an open forum for learning from key-note presenters, exchange of knowledge and experience and reflection. In workshops, the themes are intensified, and in the evening, music or arts presentations change the atmosphere. On the last day, site visits are possible. The event format, created in Europe, is an effective and inspiring alternative to district conferences and conventions where most of the time is dedicated to elections, budget, rules and regulations.

- 1995:** 1st International seminar for Europe in Lübeck, Germany, 31 March–2 April 1995
How to be a Zontian: Women and health, environment and multi-culture
- 2002:** 2nd European seminar in Stuttgart, Germany, 15–17 February 2002
Zonta in a changing society responding to European challenges
- 2006:** Not numbered. European seminar in Lahti, Finland, 2–4 February 2006
The status of women in a changing Europe
- 2009:** 3rd European seminar in Bonn, Germany, 13–15 February 2009
Zonta's way forward: How to implement women's rights
- 2011:** 4th European seminar in Bonn, Germany, 15–17 April 2011
Keep up women's rights: Zonta's ability to improve the status of women
- 2013:** 5th European seminar in Tampere, Finland, 8–10 February 2013
Women in the 21st Century – old problems, new solutions?
- 2015:** 6th European seminar in Brugge, Belgium, 6–8 February 2015
Empowering women in decision-making
- 2017:** 7th European seminar in Vienna, Austria, 3–5 February 2017
Zonta in a changing society: Ways and responses to European challenges
- 2019:** 8th European seminar in Tartu, Estonia, 8–10 February 2019
Zonta Values
- 2023:** 9th European seminar in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 28–30 April 2023
Women and Finance – between Challenges and Chances
- 2025:** 10th European seminar in Copenhagen, Denmark, 2–4 May 2025
Stepping up for diversity, equity and inclusion

1st European Interdistrict Seminar in Lübeck, Germany (31 March–2 April 1995)

“How to be a Zontian: Women and health, environment and multi-culture”



Past Governor Cornelia Klauser-Reucker, of Switzerland, and Past Governor Leena Kankainen, of Finland, invited the European clubs, and Zontians came from all over the world for this weekend seminar to discuss the U.N. Year of Tolerance, which covered body, soul, health and multi-culture, along with environmental and sustainability themes.

International President 'Folake Solanke outlined Zonta's biennial multiculturalism and tolerance goals. Her vision was the “triple h” of health, human rights and world harmony. She underlined internationalism as one of the pillars of Zonta, a multicultural experience being one of the resources the organization offers. She felt Zontians should contribute more to this field.

Past Governor Irene Wiese-von Ofen, chairman of the newly organized Zonta International Environment Committee, took the initiative to look for a presentation that linked to the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.² 'Folake Solanke, with the committee, supported an orientation to more sustainability, as defined in the U.N. goals. She told the audience about the discussion she had with U.N. Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who had outlined his world vision of sustainability. Zonta, by supporting the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), became an important partner in eradicating violence and poverty and working for the vision of a sustainable, harmonious world.

The workshops at the seminar had the following themes and presenters:

- Women's Situation in Islamic Countries by Dr. Meltem Göben
- Women's Situation in Islamic Countries by Ulrike Neumann-Meyer
- Tolerance and Multi-culture by Zonta International Vice President Val Sarah
- Women's and Children's Health in the U.N. by Fiorina Maggi, U.N. Representative, Geneva, Switzerland
- Women's Work and Health by Marie-Claire Seguret from the Zonta Club of Geneva
- Women's Health from the Mental Point of View by Dr. Marianne Kastrup, from Denmark
- Environment and Health by Els Boelsma, Zonta Club of Den Haag, the Netherlands
- The Human Genome Project by Ursula Friedrich from Denmark
- Genetic Outlook by Professor Leena Palotie-Peltonen from Finland.

Social programs, site visits and many opportunities to meet with the more than 250 Zontians who attended the seminar rounded out the inspiring weekend.

² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/milestones/unced>

2nd European Interdistrict Seminar in Stuttgart, Germany (15–17 February 2002)

Zonta in a changing society responding to European challenges



The theme, Zonta in a Changing Society: Responding to European Challenges, was proposed by the eight 2000–2002 European Governors: Mari Ramsten Vangdal (District 23), Barbara Riedel (District 14), Barbro Salste (District 20), Monica Thurell (District 21), Ina Thys-L'abbé (District 27), Monique Schlegel (District 28), Lesje Vermeueln (District 29) and Karin Nordmeyer (District 30).

Karin Nordmeyer was not only the coordinator of this seminar and those that followed, but also their “spiritus rector” (guiding spirit) – she influenced programs, recommended, found and invited high-level speakers, and was in charge of the seminar résumés. As a representative of Zonta International to the Council of Europe, she was able, through her personal knowledge and commitment, to make the European topics recognized by the Zonta International board, as well as by the Zontians who participated in the seminars.

The keynote speaker in Stuttgart was Elisabeth Rehn, honorary member of Zonta International. In 2001, she was appointed as one of the two UNIFEM independent experts to assess women's role in peacebuilding on a global basis. She was U.N. under-secretary-general, member of the European Parliament, minister of defense and equality affairs in Finland, and special rapporteur for the human rights situation in the Yugoslavian War. Rehn also chaired international conferences and gave many official addresses.

Her European seminar speech discussed women as peacebuilders in regions of war and conflict. Women's role in peacebuilding is a long-standing international discussion. Looking at international conflicts, we rarely find women in responsible roles in peace negotiations, although violence against women is one of the main weapons used in conflicts. Rehn concluded her speech by saying Zontians have an important role as advocates and communicators around the world. She urged us to be "a doctor, not a judge" and to support other women.

The afternoon workshops were the responsibility of each district:

- District 13: "Legislative Awareness and Advocacy", Kirsten Theisen, Past International Director and Status of Women Service Committee Chairman
- District 14: "Women and the Democratization Process in Countries of Central and Eastern Europe"
- District 27: "The Enlargement of the EU, Benefits for Women in the Candidate Countries", Els van Winckel, Zonta Club of Brussels, Belgium

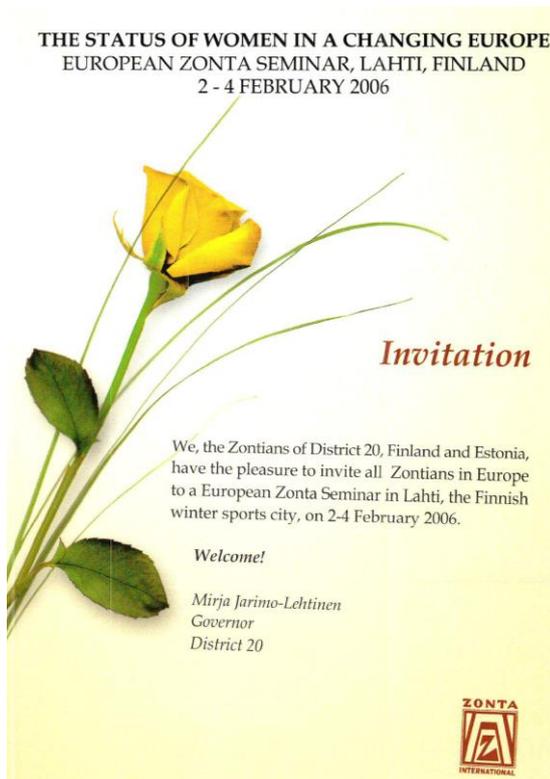
- District 28: "Reconciliation of Family, Partnership and Professional Work," Ursula Gehring, Zonta Club of Marburg, Germany
- District 29: "FGM in Europe", Daniele Bugeon, Zonta Club of le Havre, France
- District 30: "Sustainable Development – a Societal Choice", Regine Aquier, Zonta Club of Montpellier, France
- District 30: "Managing Diversity", Cornelia Klauser, Zonta Club of Lugano, Switzerland
- District 20: "Women as Peace Builders" (following the keynote address)
- District 21: "Legislative Awareness and Advocacy". Margit Webjörn, International President-Elect, presented her idea of legislative awareness and advocacy as new Zonta focal point.

A reception hosted by the mayor of the host city was an evening highlight demonstrating to the local authorities the importance of Zonta International as a partner. The eight governors responsible for the event wrote a 20-page summary. The whole seminar brought many new insights, good information on laws and European positions, statistics and published papers, and discussions, as well as reviving friendships and creating sympathetic new encounters.

European Interdistrict Seminar in Lahti, Finland (2-4 February 2006)

The status of women in a changing Europe

Organized by the Zontians of District 20 Finland and Estonia and coordinated by Mirja Jarimo-Lehtinen (Governor of District 20), Irma Ertman (District Chairperson of the Status of Women and Service Committee and representative of the City of Lahti) and Marja Koivula (President of the Zonta club of Lahti)



The program started with a reception at the City Hall of Lahti hosted by the city of Lahti, followed by a concert of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra at the Sibelius Hall. The concert was conducted by Hannu Lintu and tenor Mati Turi accompanied by The Polytech Choir performed Sisyphus Dreams Op. 47 from Kaipainen, Thuma from Merikanto and Faust from Liszt.

The seminar took place at the Congress Center Fellmanni on the 3rd and 4th of February. A Zonta market was organized by District 20 as part of the seminar and was opened by Mirja Jarimo-Lehtinen (Governor of D20) and Irma Ertman (District Chairperson of the Status of Women and Service Committee and representative of the City of Lahti).

Before the workshops, a keynote was given by Member of Parliament Piia-Noora Kauppi.



After lunch, 3 workshops run in parallel:

1. “Impact of the EU in the Status of Women”, facilitated by M.A., journalist Heli van der Valk from the Zonta club of Gothenburg II.
Focus was on the European 2020 Lisbon 10 year strategy to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, and the establishment of the Institute for Gender Equality, set up to support EU institutions and the member states in promoting gender equality and combating gender-based discrimination. After presenting an example of the established programmes – “Daphne II” – the workshop focused on Zonta International’s role as European actor. “Advocacy is the expression of support for or opposition to a cause, argument or proposal. Advocacy may include influencing laws, legislation or attitudes”.
2. “EU-Gateway to Prosperity or to Trafficking in Human Beings?”, facilitated by Professor Tertu Utriainen from the Zonta Club of Rovaniemi.
The workshop dealt with trafficking in women and children in Europe, which is connected with prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation. Data from different countries were presented. More information about the subject can be found in the UN report from 2000 “Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against transnational organized crime”
(<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/ProtocolonTrafficking.pdf>)
The role of Zontians is to make this form for slavery visible and work against it at the national and international level.
3. “Integration in Europe – Barriers and Possibilities”, facilitated by Zonta International Director Ph.D. Maria Jose Landeira Oestergaard from the Zonta Club of Copenhagen I
This workshop presented the barriers immigrants face for successful integration. Data from different countries regarding the number of immigrants, their origin, level of employment and the economic support received from the government were presented. Three initiatives were highlighted as key to remove those barriers:
 - Access to language lessons from the first day
 - Access to the labor market and educational institutions
 - Access to more varied housing estates to avoid ghettos.

Examples of initiatives and projects in deprived urban areas addressing the three initiatives illustrated how it was possible to achieve a more successful integration:

- Aarhus (Denmark) – Integration, diversity and equality of opportunity policy
- Rotterdam (The Netherlands) – Effective Policy on Minorities along with an overall strategy on cultural diversity
- Komotini (Greece) – Sustainable city for all
- Brussels (Belgium) – The solidarity house
- Haninge (Sweden) – An integrated plan for Jordbo
- Sarcelles (France) – Local platforms improving access to public services

- Anderlecht (Belgium) – Démarcherie – equality in access to public services
- Hillingdon (England) – Porters Way
- Gräsviken, Helsinki (Finland) – Built based on the Programme against social exclusion and segregation
- Graz (Austria) – Culture as the driving force for urban development
- The Hague (The Netherlands) – Self-employment initiatives
- Les Mureaux (France) – Individual language training aiming at employment
- Copenhagen (Denmark) – Job match project from 2003.
- Scheffield (UK) – Reversing racism and social exclusion in the local labour market
- Utrecht (The Netherlands) – Ethnic minority entrepreneurs in local urban areas.
- Est Brighthon (UK) – Local equalities steering group
- Shoreditch (UK) – Peer education programme
- Frankfurt (Germany) – tackling prejudices and violence against foreigners
- Bradford (UK) – Anti racial harassment project
- Berlin (Germany) – Citizen deputies
- Södertälje (Sweden) – Residents council, a pilot scheme for democratic renewal
- Bologna (Italy) – Metropolitan forum on non-EU citizen’s associations
- Barcelona (Spain) – The municipal immigration council of Barcelona
- Lisbon (Portugal) – Cooperative project on promoting political participation
- Rotterdam (The Netherlands) – Increasing the election turnout and political activity among immigrant voters.
- Madrid (Spain) – Active participation of ethnic minority communities in urban political life

After the workshops sightseeing to the Sibelius Hall and the Ski Museum including the Ski jumping show and the Lahti Sports Center. The Seminar dinner was held at the Hollolan Hirvi restaurant.

On Saturday the 4th, after a short music introduction, Ambassador Anne Zigure gave a keynote speech about “Latvian Women and the Winds of Change”.

The keynote was followed by presentations of the summaries of the workshops.

After the farewell lunch, it was possible to visit the Gallery Nuovo guided by the owner, Zontian Riita Nuorivaara-Luhtanen.

After the seminar, the following recommendation was sent to Zonta International on behalf of the participants at the seminar:

“The European Zonta Seminar, arranged by Zonta International District 20 in Lahti, Finland on 2-4 February 2006.

Bearing in mind that Zonta International is a non-governmental organization,

Stressing the need to strengthen the position of Zonta International as an international non-governmental organization and

Wishing to develop advocacy as a mean to increase the influence of Zonta International on different levels of society,

Urges the Zonta International Board to consider “**Zonta International and Regional Structures**” as a topic on the agenda of the Zonta International Convention in Rotterdam 2008”

3rd European Interdistrict Seminar in Bonn, Germany (13–15 February 2009)

Zonta's way forward: How to implement women's rights



The team organizing the third seminar included Karin Nordmeyer, Zonta International Council of Europe Committee chairman; Annette Binder, past international director; and Gabriele Brübach, vice president of the Zonta Club of Dortmund.

The seminar was entitled, "Zonta's Way Forward: How to Implement Women's Rights", and was thought of as a think-tank to help develop more effective strategies to achieve Zonta's mission. The results were published online.

The keynote speaker on Sunday was Irma Ertmann, ambassador for Finland to the Council of Europe, with her speech, "From Cinderella to Cyberella...can Zontians make a difference?"

The entire Saturday concentrated on workshops, with topics such as:

- Zonta's credibility as a women's NGO – how to take advantage of Zonta's strength, led by Hela Prosteder, District 14 governor, and facilitated by Barbara Devin from the Zonta Club of Fünf-Seen-Land
- Making our clubs fit for international service – how to close the gap between the global and the local level, with moderation and an introduction by Irene Wiese-von Ofen, Zonta International Fund vice president from 2005–2007, and facilitators Susanne von Bassewitz, past District 29 Area Director, and Britta Gerling-Köhne from the Zonta Club of Essen II
- Zonta advocacy, with respect to CEDAW – how to meet the challenge, led by Ute Scholz, District 27 governor, and Anna Lukasiak from the Zonta Club of Gdansk
- Visibility – how to make Zonta and Zonta's vision better known in a world where branding is so important, with workshop leader Kari Vieth, District 13 governor, and facilitator Poula Helt from the Zonta Club of Frederiksberg
- Zonta's response to the challenges women face in society – an outlook to our future actions and visions, led by Karin Saeger, District 30 governor, and facilitated by Juliane Bardt from the Zonta Club of Bonn-Rheinaue
- Zonta advocacy mechanisms – how to implement legal instruments against trafficking, with workshop leader Jaana Sippus, District 20 governor, and facilitated by Aune Brotherus-Kettunen from the Zonta Club of Helsinki II.

Talking with Zonta International President Beryl Sten was an important part of discussion at this time because of the financial transactions concerning the Zonta building in Chicago, the conflict with the foundation involving buying and selling the building, and the removal of the Zonta International Fund directors and executive director. While questions about intended changes to the core structure of Zonta administration and the consequences of financial transactions could not be answered, Beryl answered and solved many other questions. The main questions were left to be answered at the forthcoming convention because issues had not yet been finalized with the legal advisor.

A pleasant reception for seminar guests was held at the Old Town Hall of Bonn.

4th European Inter-District Seminar in Bonn, Germany (15-17 April 2011)

Keep up women's rights: Zonta's ability to improve the status of women.



Enhancing Zonta's ability to improve the status of women in the future was the motto of this weekend seminar. Karin Nordmeyer, chairman of the Zonta International Council of Europe Committee and the seminar treasurer, was again responsible for planning the event, along with Gabriele Springer from the Zonta Club of Essen I.

While Zonta International President Dianne K. Curtis was not able to come to Bonn, she sent a personal message, and Vice President, Maria Jose Landeira Oestergaard, was present as a member of the Copenhagen I club.

In a dinner speech on Friday evening, the Bonn Mayor, Angelica Maria Kappel, gave an impression of the situation female politicians face and the extremely diverse responsibilities and activities our cities involve. Cities are the basis of democracy, and, in the hierarchy of the federal republic, countries and local authorities, this level is the most important because of the direct influence on citizens' lives. More and more, the capacity of women is being recognized, increasing the percentages of women serving the public as mayors or ministers, whereas in sizeable companies, the percentage needs to increase.

Seven workshops were offered, the purpose of each of which was to inform participants about the different positions and define strategies and find mechanisms to improve women's rights in respective fields to prepare Zontians to become active agents for change.

The subjects included:

- “Who we are? And where do we want to go?” led by Susanne von Bassewitz, Zonta Club of Düsseldorf, with Isabell Ziegler, Zonta Club of Düsseldorf as rapporteur
- “Visibility: how to make Zonta International better known?” with workshop leader Claudia Seifert, Zonta Club of Bonn, and rapporteur Tuija Heikkilä, Zonta Club of Tampere I
- “Let's read together: practical Zonta action with migrant women” with workshop leader Raija Kalimo, Zonta Club of Helsinki I, and rapporteur Anu Hamailainen, Zonta Club of Lappeenranta
- “Women and health: today's evidence, tomorrows agenda” with workshop leader Annette Binder, Zonta Club of Hamburg-Elbufer and rapporteur Chantal Platteau, Zonta Club of Waasland and Wiltrud Walther, Zonta Club of Frankfurt
- “Zonta: Catalyst for intercultural and personal development” with workshop leader Cornelia Klauser, Zonta Club of Lugano and rapporteur Eva Heikkilä, Zonta Club of Hämeenlinna
- “Legislative Awareness and Advocacy Mechanisms” with workshop leader Barbara A. Devin, Zonta Club of Fünf Seen Land and rapporteur Fiona Ruff, Zonta Club of Bad Soden-Kronberg and Getraud Ribitsch, Zonta Club of Graz
- “Reconciliation of family and work” with workshop leader Alexandra Wachendorfer and Irene Wiese-von Ofen, Zonta Club of Essen I, as rapporteur.

The rapporteurs drafted a common concluding statement which was discussed with Karin Nordmeyer and read to the plenary by her.

The concluding statement was unanimously accepted and included the following:

- Where do we want to go? Develop the organization by:
 - improving visibility
 - combining advocacy and service
 - advocating and influencing legal processes for reconciliation of family and work.
- Where do we want to go? Personal development in and for the organization by providing:
 - skills to learn
 - encouragement through role models
 - greater awareness of different decisions and support projects, and a campaign concerning women and health.

Many details were discussed, and Zontians could take home many concrete best practice examples for their club activities. The Council of Europe's NGO unit and the public relations division provided excellent informative material. Finally, the reception in the Old Town Hall of Bonn was an enjoyable social event in a remarkable atmosphere – a building standing for urban culture in an old university city.

5th European Interdistrict Seminar in Tampere, Finland (8-10 February 2013)

Women in the 21st Century – old problems, new solutions?



The weekend seminar was organized by District 20 Governor Tuija Heikkilä and her team: Irma Ertman, Tarja Hopeakangas, Anu Hämäläinen, Tuija Kirveskari-Tähtinen and Erja Lindholm. The initiative came once more from Karin Nordmeyer, the chairman of the International Council of Europe Committee.

President-Elect Maria Jose Landeira Oestergaard, and Vice President, Sonja Hönig Schough attended the seminar, contributed presentations, and took part in discussions. The keynote speaker was Sirpa Rautio, director of the Human Rights Centre, Office of the Ombudsman, Finland. The lecture was about violence against women. It was remarkable how this male speaker was of the same opinion as the Zontians. He stressed that the movement against violence should be supported by Zontians in their own parliaments to eradicate violence against women, especially on the international level,

A second lecture was about the role of women in conflicts and in peacebuilding. Especially with the growing experience in the Iraq and Syrian wars, Zontians were told they must recognize that violence against women has reached new levels of indignity and harm to women. The speaker was of the opinion that U.N. initiatives should be seconded by any national initiative, organization or NGO, such as Zonta.

The necessity of peacebuilding was underlined by Maria Stefanova, member of the Zonta Club of St. Sofia in Bulgaria, who reported about the Yugoslavian War experience.

A workshop on rape as a weapon of war was introduced by Terttu Utriainem, a professor of criminal law. Eva Nielsen, Zonta Club of Esbjerg, was the commentator, along with Anita Schnetzer-Spranger, Zonta Club of Mainz. The event corresponded to Zonta's international programs on violence against women.

At the workshop on the role of NGOs in the social integration of immigrants, Irene Wiesevon Ofen presented some best practice examples from the Ruhr district, where immigration has been a resource of economic power since the beginning of industrialization, and where immigration is consequently a daily challenge in schools, universities, the arts, music, housing, gardening and many other fields. However, the region had learned to live with conflicts and to pacify a city and region using various strategies. NGOs like Zonta, can generally help a lot because civil society is able to invent initiatives other than a formalized administration. The best model is for both entities to work together.

Sunday morning, attendees visited the private homes of Zontians and took a walk in the hills in the snow, with a wonderful view of the city.

6th European Interdistrict Seminar in Brugge, Belgium (6-8 February 2015)

Empowering women in decision-making

6th European Interdistrict Zonta Seminar

EMPOWERING WOMEN in DECISION-MAKING

February 6-8, 2015 in Brugge, Belgium

The weekend seminar was organized by Frieda Demey and her team along similar lines to the previous seminars organized by Karin Nordmeyer. Zonta International President Maria Jose Landeira Oestergaard attended the seminar, along with President-Elect Sonja Hönig Schough. Rapporteurs and moderators came from institutions in Brussels, so the program offered a high level of knowledge.



Vivian Redding, former vice-president of the European Commission and member of the European parliament, enriched the seminar with her presentation on women in politics, European policy and the participation of women in the decision-making process. She encouraged Zontians, with humor as well as with her precise observations, to trust in their abilities and use any chance they had to be part of decision-making processes.

The second keynote came from Professor Anne de Paepe, the first female rector of the University of Gent, who urged a different approach to education for women. The afternoon brought outstanding women into a dialogue with winners of the Young Women in Public Affairs Award, the Jane M. Klausman Women in Business Scholarship and the Amelia Earhart Fellowship.

The definition of the smart woman, used in the program, became more and more visible and characterized the women. Zonta could be proud of these young, distinguished prize winners – it is no wonder that they wanted to continue having contact with Zonta, and Zonta with them.

For District 29, Irene Wiese-von Ofen, past Zonta International Foundation vice president, proposed to build an alumni network to strengthen the award recipients' contact with each other and Zonta.

Participants also discussed the necessity of a systematic approach to all three categories of prizewinners, i.e. the Young Women in Public Affairs (YWPA), Jane M. Klausman Women in Business (JMK) and Amelia Earhart (AE) awardees. This District 29 proposal was also in accordance with the views of International YWPA Award Committee Chairman, Ute Scholz. However, more importantly, it corresponded with the wishes of the awardees, who were present in Brugge.

District 29 has already experienced the successful area program “Great girls meet Great Women”, which Susanne von Bassewitz implemented as former area director. International Director Sharon Langenbeck, as a former AE Fellow, expressed strong interest in including the AE Fellows in this intended network.

In the evening, a sympathetic reception at the town hall – an extraordinary building – was a special seminar highlight and offered many opportunities to exchange experiences and learn from each other. Finally, the Sunday walking tours in the city of Brugge exemplified the high level of European medieval urban culture in buildings, open spaces and landscape architecture. This mixture of meeting extraordinary women and exploring extraordinary sites is a supplementary value of these European Zonta weekend seminars, showcasing the cultural richness of Europe.

7th European Interdistrict Seminar in Vienna, Austria (3–5 February 2017)

Zonta in a changing society: Ways and responses to European challenges



Organized by Past International Director Ingeborg Geyer, of Vienna, and her team, the keynote addresses included:

- “Challenges to the European Union,” a video message from Sebastian Kurz, minister for Europe, integration and foreign affairs of Austria, and Chairman of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), 2017
- “The Right to the City – The Urban Agenda 2030”, by Irene Wiese-von Ofen, Zonta Club of Essen

- “The Female Dimension of Security in Europe,” by Cordula Geinitz, first secretary, permanent mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the OSCE
- “New Challenges for Women in the European Labour Market”, by Martina Maurer, Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) who spoke about her country’s active employment policy for women.

The workshops held were:

- “Securing Human Rights: Women’s Rights are Human Rights”, introductory notes by Shams Asadi, head of the Vienna Human Rights Bureau, and Anita Schnetzer-Spranger, chairman of the Zonta International Council of Europe committee
- “Combating Violence Against Women – Trafficking”, introductory notes by Karin Nordmeyer, Zonta Club of Schauinsland, president of the U.N. Women National Committee Germany, and Austrian politician BM a.D³. Helga Konrad, regional implementation initiative to prevent and combat human trafficking, with contributions/interventions and presentation of a project supported by the Zonta Club of Vezprem concerning the organization “Missing Children”
- “Job Market: Challenges for Women”, with introductory notes by Claudia Gamon, NEOS⁴ deputy, and Els van Winckel, Zonta Club of Morges-La Cote, Switzerland, and Zonta International U.N. Representative for Geneva.
- “Sustainable Development Goals and Zonta’s Mission”, introductory notes by Zonta International President Sonja Hönig Schough, Susanne von Bassewitz, Zonta International president-elect, and Professor Jadranka Mustajbegovic, M.D., Ph.D. from the Zonta Club of Zagreb.

³ Abgeordnete zum Nationalrat Bundesministerin ohne Portefeuille.

⁴ *Das Neue Österreich und Liberales Forum*, a liberal pro European Union Party, founded 2012.

8th European Interdistrict Seminar was held in Tartu, Estonia (8–10 February 2019)

Zonta Values – Do values become older?



The 8th Interdistrict seminar was chaired by Tiina Rebane, past Governor of District 20 (2006-2008) and was held at Vanemuine Concert Hall, Tartu, Estonia. The theme "Do Values Become Older?" aimed to explore the relevance and evolution of Zonta's core values as Zonta International approached our centennial anniversary.

- How do the values on which the Zonta organization is based 100 years ago sound today?
- Which values are leading our life in the society at present?
- How to defend our values?
- Which values and attitudes weaken or empower us?

The seminar was open by Tiina Intelmann, Ambassador of Estonia to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, with the speech "How we can understand values?" The opening was followed by a presentation of Zonta values in 100 years, by Eva Nielsen, Zonta historian and Past Governor of District 13.

The other presentations were:

- The obvious and the timeless values in today's Europe
Aija Sakova, literary critic who passionately loves life and seeks the courage of living
- Values in our daily life
Tiina Rebane, Past Governor D20
- Women as value creators, panel discussion
Presenters Zonta International Vice President Ute Scholz and writer Aija Sakova
Moderator Ambassador Irma Ertman, Zonta Club of Helsinki II
- Do we await the future or do we create the future
Mery Crystal Ra, cosmopolitan glass and light artist
- Engineering and empowerment of women
Henrik Roonemaa, one of Estonia's best known tech journalists

Salla Tuominen, Zonta International and Zonta International Foundation Director summarized the event and presented the final conclusions.

As previous Interdistrict Seminars, the event provided opportunities for participants to connect, collaborate, and strengthen mutual ties across European districts.

9th European Interdistrict seminar in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 28 - 30 April 2023

Women and Finance – between Challenges and Chances



The seminar was held in the Großer Saal - Ev. Akademie and chaired by Dietlind Stürz, past Governor of District 28 (2016-2018). The organization team comprised also Bettina Weigune, Fiona Ruff, Daniela Daus, Renate von Köller, Susan Georgijewitsch and Michaelae Künzel.

It included key-notes and workshops. The program included, as it is the tradition, a social program with Opening Ceremony at the Historical Museum and excursions after the seminar.

The welcome address was given by Christine Dersch, ZC Marburg, District 28 Governor 2022-2024, followed by greetings from Ute Scholz, ZC Verden, Zonta International President 2022-2024.

The 3 key-notes in the morning were given by

- Prof. Dr. Alexandra Niessen-Ruenzi, Director of the Centre for Doctoral Studies in Business (CDSB), University of Mannheim
- Dr. Barbara Böhnlein, Managing Director MUFG Bank (Europe)
- Dr. Katarina Barley, Vice-President European Parliament, Member of ZC Trier

A panel discussion followed the key-notes, facilitated by Bettina Weiguny (journalist and book author) with the panelists Prof. Dr. Alexandra Niessen-Ruenzi, Dr. Barbara Böhnlein, Dr. Ricarda Engelmeier, Dr. Katarina Barley, Karin Nordmeyer, UN Women (Germany), Honorary President and Katharina Gehra, CEO & Co-Founder of Immutable Insight.

The panel addressed the facts that women in finance are still an exception, especially at the top. But it's more than that – women seem to avoid financial questions in general, even at home. So what are we dealing with here – a gender bias or personal preferences? We might be facing old boys' clubs in traditional banking, but what is it that prevents women from founding a brand new Fintech company? Why do women leave personal

investments, tax and pension matter to their partners? And most important of all: What does it take to change that? Or is the young generation of women already doing the math?

The themes of the workshops were:

Workshop 1: Securing women's rights. International standards - achievements and gaps at, facilitated by Irma Ertman, Vice ZI Representative at the Council of Europe national level.

Panelists:

Dr. Ingeborg Geyer, ZC Vienna/D14, ZI Representative at the UN Vienna

Anita Schnetzer-Spranger, ZC Mainz/D28, ZI Representative at the Council of Europe

Workshop 2: How do women get smarter about money?

Facilitated by Claudia Rankers, ZC Mainz/D28, Dipl. Bankbetriebswirtin, CEO of Family Rankers Office

Workshop 3: What kind of chances can new finance technologies offer?

How "Blockchain Technologies" can boost your career or business

By Dr. Su-Zeong Fröhlich, Co-founder Fox and Happy Blocks GmbH, Web3 Consulting & Education

Workshop 4: Sustainable investments - quo vadis?

By Lara Lorenz, Investment Advisor – Pictet Asset Management

Workshop 5: Great entrepreneurs tell their stories: What is it that prevents women from founding a brand new company?

Facilitated by Bettina Weiguny

Claudia Lässig - Lässig GmbH, Lässig Fashion

Dr. Julia Meinhold-Heerlein - "Mühlenplätzchen Patisserie, custom baked goods and catering"

Dr. Desiree-Jessica Pely - founder of loyee.io/San Francisco and metawealth.tech/Berlin

Workshop 6: Fundraising in challenging times - new ideas and best practices

Facilitated by Susan Georgijewitsch, Business Coach, ZC Frankfurt

Ann-Kathrin Linsenhoff- Linsenhoff -Stiftung

10th European Interdistrict Seminar in Copenhagen, Denmark, 2-4 May 2025

Stepping up for diversity, equity and inclusion



The seminar was held at University College Copenhagen and was chaired by PIP Maria Jose Landeira Oestergaard.

The steering committee was comprised by the Governor of District 13 Ruta Jasioniene, Past International Directors Ragna Karlsdottir and Heddy Tangen Steffensen and vice AD from Denmark Susanne Søndergaard.

The organization team included also Marianne Due, Bente Lindgaard, Anne Nordsted and many Danish Zonta volunteers in addition to PIP Maria Jose Landeira Oestergaard and vice AD from Denmark Susanne Søndergaard.

On Friday the 2nd, a visit to the UN City hosted by Mette Strandlod from UNFPA was arranged.



There was also the possibility to join a guided tour in Copenhagen Center “Women in History” including a visit to the Danish Parliament to see the Tribute to women politicians in Danish politics.

The Opening Ceremony was held at Copenhagen Townhall by Maria Sofie Petersen, Deputy Chairperson of the Employment and Integration Committee in the Municipality of Copenhagen and member of the Citizens' Representation for the Unity Party.

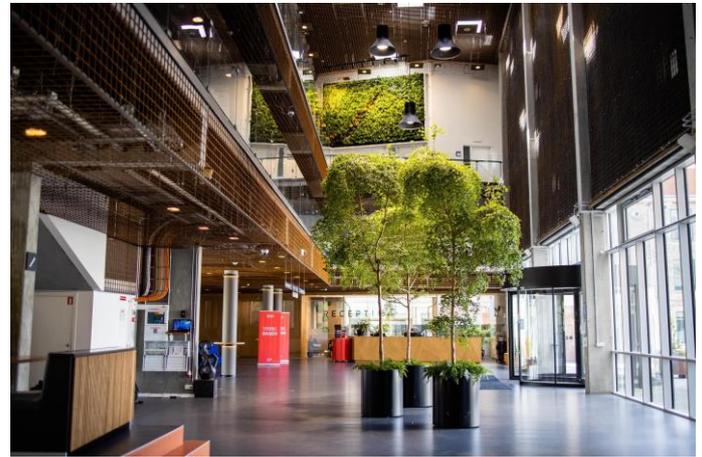
Zonta Past International Director and Past Governor Karin Nordmeyer held a speech about the European Zonta Seminars, with the themes and experiences from those seminars.



The final speech, given by the ZEIDS chair, Zonta Past International President and Chairperson of the Women's Council Maria Jose Landeira Oestergaard, focused on the current challenges women face and included encouragement to continue our Zonta work.



The seminar with keynotes and workshops was held on the 3rd of May at the University college, Sigurdsgade campus.



The two keynotes were:

- Wellbeing economy, by Mads Falkenfleth (<https://www.wellbeingeconomylab.com/>)
- Be a Champion of Allyship and Counter Ethnic Minority Stress, by Muneeza Rosendahl (<https://www.ligeadgang.dk/>)

After each key-note workshops were held, facilitated by where participants discussed 6 key-issues:

Wellbeing Economy

- How can Zonta members promote activities that focus on people's wellbeing and address how environmental disasters disproportionately impact women?
- How can Zonta members help others understand new ways to measure progress, not just using GDP?
- What are the first 2-3 actions your club could take tomorrow to make a difference?

Allyship and Countering Ethnic Minority Stress

- How can Zonta members learn more about the challenges ethnic minorities face and how it affects their mental health and job opportunities?
- How can Zonta clubs support efforts to reduce discrimination and encourage diversity and inclusion in workplaces and communities?
- What are the first 2-3 actions your club could take tomorrow to create safe spaces for ethnic minorities in your community?

The workshops were facilitated by members of the different European districts:

- Past International Presidents Sonja Hönigh Schough, Susanne von Bassewitz and Maria Jose Landeira Oestergaard
- Past International Directors Annette Binder, Mari Ramsten Vangdal and Christina Rylander Bergqvist
- Past Zonta International Risk Manager and past member of Zonta International Finance and Investment committees and the International Nomination Committee Britt Gustawsson.
- Past Governor Jutta Trube
- Zonta District 13 UN Committee member Hanne Friis Olesen
- Past AD Zonta District 13, Area 01 Denmark Aase Schmidt
- Leaders of Zonta Denmark's goalfive.org project Bente Lindgaard and Susanne Bach Bager.
- President of the Zonta club of Copenhagen 1 Biola Reuther
- Member of Zonta Denmark Advocacy committee Pia Krogh Albrechtsen
- Webmaster, Estonia, Anne Vomm Kimme,

After the workshops, the answers to the 6 questions were presented in plenum by representatives from the different workshops. The material was collected by the working committee to compile the answers and prepare a catalog to be disseminated at a later stage.

After the seminar most of the participants joined the seminar dinner, where the oldest Zonta Club in District 13, Zonta Copenhagen 1, was congratulated for its 90 years anniversary and received a certificate from Zonta International President-Elect Fernanda Gallo-Freschi.

The seminar ended with excursions on Sunday the 4th in Copenhagen and at Kronborg castle in Helsingør.

A total of 345 participants registered for this seminar

WORKSHOP 1: WELLBEING ECONOMY

Below is a consolidated list of actions and ideas suggested by participants to promote a wellbeing economy, with a focus on gender, sustainability, and community impact. These ideas reflect a holistic, action-oriented approach for Zonta clubs to champion the wellbeing economy, emphasizing education, advocacy, community engagement, women's empowerment, and sustainable practices. The answers included ideas related to the [Wales wellbeing economy program](#), see about this program in pages 3 and 4 of this document.

First Steps for Immediate Impact

- Organize knowledge-building events and invite external speakers.
- Share best practices and collaborate with local schools.
- Engage in visible, sustainable actions (e.g., recycling, tree planting, supporting local initiatives).
- Be role models and make sustainable behaviors visible.
- Support women from other ethnic backgrounds and break economic barriers.

Education and Awareness

- Organize workshops, lectures, and discussions on wellbeing economy, inviting external experts and collaborating with other NGOs.
- Incorporate wellbeing economy and sustainability topics into club meetings, events, and educational programs for youth and the community.
- Use storytelling, visual statistics, and accessible language to communicate the importance of wellbeing economy.
- Include wellbeing economy modules in platforms like goalfive.org and school curricula.
- Promote continuous learning through online training and by sharing best practices and examples from other countries (e.g., Wales).
- Prepare comprehensive, easy-to-understand materials for non-experts.

Advocacy and Policy Influence

- Engage in policy dialogue with local and national decision-makers to promote wellbeing economy principles.
- Advocate for new ways to measure progress beyond GDP, such as quality of life, social capital, and environmental indicators.
- Campaign for the recognition of unpaid care work and its inclusion in economic measures.
- Challenge local politicians and demand the appointment of "commissioners for wellbeing economy."
- Write to ministers and participate in public forums to raise awareness and influence policy.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

- Initiate community projects such as community gardens, cultural exchanges, second-hand markets, recycling workshops, and tree planting.
- Collaborate with local schools, universities, businesses, and sustainable companies to promote wellbeing economy.
- Build networks and alliances with like-minded organizations and influencers.
- Support local sustainable initiatives and companies and engage in joint service projects with organizations like UNFPA.

Women's Empowerment and Leadership

- Increase women's participation in crisis management, civil protection, and decision-making roles, especially regarding environmental disasters.
- Promote women's involvement in climate change research and policy.
- Identify and support female leaders, role models, and women from sustainable businesses.
- Establish mentorship and support groups and provide platforms for women to share experiences.

Communication and Outreach

- Use social media and public campaigns to spread information about wellbeing economy and sustainability.
- Create shareable content (e.g., elevator pitches, short videos, commercials) for use in public and online spaces.
- Maintain a section on club websites dedicated to wellbeing economy, sustainability, and the impact of climate change on women.
- Organize open seminars, panel discussions, and community fairs to engage a wider audience.

Practical Initiatives and Club Practices

- Make sustainable choices in all club meetings, seminars, and events (e.g., reduce travel, use online meetings, carpooling).
- Organize fun, purposeful activities focused on wellbeing economy, such as "orange walks," "share garden economy," and babysitting for mothers.
- Support and participate in local and global environmental actions like "world clean-up day."
- Establish a wellbeing economy committee at the club level.
- Include wellbeing economy in the "Zonta says NOW" campaign and develop tools and best practices for clubs.
- Encourage reflection on club traditions and challenge the undervaluation of "women's work."

Measurement and Recognition

- Develop and use indicators for wellbeing (access to nature, happiness, job quality, mental health, etc.).
- Create award programs to recognize best practices in wellbeing economy.
- Facilitate events and platforms to share and celebrate successes.

The Wellbeing Economy program in Wales represents a pioneering approach to economic development, placing people's quality of life, social equity, and environmental sustainability at the heart of policy and decision-making. Rather than focusing solely on traditional economic growth metrics like GDP, Wales's wellbeing economy seeks to ensure that economic success translates into better health, reduced inequality, and a healthier planet for current and future generations¹⁵.

Key Features of the Wellbeing Economy Program in Wales

- Legislative Foundation: The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to work together and with communities, taking a long-term, holistic approach to address persistent challenges such as poverty, health inequalities, and climate change³⁵.
- Holistic Goals: The program is guided by seven national wellbeing goals, aiming for a more equal, prosperous, healthier, resilient, and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture³.
- People and Planet First: The mission is to reshape the economy to protect communities from widening inequality, support better health, and ensure environmental sustainability. This includes redirecting wealth back into local economies and placing more control in the hands of local people¹.
- Innovative Initiatives: Examples include a basic income pilot for young people leaving care, and efforts to embed wellbeing into budgeting and service design⁵.
- Measurement and Accountability: Success is measured through wellbeing indicators and annual reporting, moving beyond GDP to assess factors like fair work, skill levels, poverty reduction, and environmental impact¹³.
- Cross-sector Collaboration: The program involves government, businesses (including social enterprises), and communities, ensuring that wellbeing objectives are integrated at local, regional, and national levels¹².
- International Recognition: Wales is recognized as a leader in this area, with its approach spotlighted by the World Health Organization as an example of how to build economies that prioritize trust, social cohesion, participation, and environmental stewardship⁵.

Recent Developments

- The Future Generations Report 2025 provides 50 recommendations to further advance the wellbeing economy, focusing on urgent action for climate, health, inequality, and long-term resilience. The report calls for more cross-sectoral action and scaling up successful initiatives⁶.
- Forums and festivals, such as the Wellbeing Economy Forum and Wellbeing Economy Cymru Festival of Ideas, foster knowledge sharing and community engagement to drive the movement forward²⁴⁸.

Impact

Wales's wellbeing economy program is creating a cultural shift in how economic and social progress are understood and pursued, aiming to ensure that prosperity benefits everyone and that the needs of future generations are not compromised by today's decisions¹⁵⁶.

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7. <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2025-04/mental-health-and-wellbeing-strategy-2025-to-2035.pdf>
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WORKSHOP 2: ALLYSHIP AND COUNTERING ETHNIC MINORITY STRESS

Below is a consolidated list of ideas suggested by participants to promote allyship, counter ethnic minority stress, and foster diversity and inclusion. These ideas reflect a comprehensive, multi-level approach for Zonta clubs to actively advance diversity, inclusion, and support for ethnic minorities, both within their own organizations and in the broader community. The answers included ideas related to the safe space programs, see about this program in pages 3 and 4 of this document.

Strategic Steps

- Start with club events in cooperation with other organizations.
- Present on diversity and inclusion at meetings.
- Invite minorities to become club members and identify mentors.
- Develop focused action plans to minimize ethnic minority stress.

Learning and Awareness

- Organize knowledge-sharing sessions within clubs about ethnic minority stress and inclusion.
- Invite organizations or individuals from ethnic minorities to share their experiences and challenges.
- Use storytelling, role-play, and drama-based learning to foster empathy and understanding.
- Collect and present scientific facts and research on equality and potential.
- Encourage members to self-reflect and discuss their own biases.
- Summarize learnings about other cultures at the end of meetings to reinforce positive attitudes.
- Include education modules about diversity and minority stress in club activities and platforms (e.g., goalfive.org).
- Promote reading and discussion of relevant books.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

- Collaborate with minority-driven organizations, NGOs, schools, and employers.
- Organize joint events such as workshops, seminars, and cultural activities (e.g., cooking events, concerts, exhibitions).
- Partner with local institutions to empower minority women and support community projects.
- Establish alliances to act as multipliers for anti-discrimination efforts.

Advocacy and Public Awareness

- Run awareness campaigns on social media and in the community to counter stereotypes.
- Promote inclusion and diversity in schools (Z- and Golden Z-clubs as ambassadors).
- Influence local politicians and advocate for inclusive policies and consistent legislation.
- Use club events to raise awareness during initiatives like the 16 Days of Activism.
- Create podcasts, videos (including VR experiences), and other media highlighting minority perspectives.

Visibility and Representation

- Invite and proactively recruit members from ethnic minorities.
- Identify, present, and support role models from diverse backgrounds.
- Increase presentations and workshops led by ethnic minorities.
- Make membership campaigns inclusive and accessible to women from all backgrounds.
- Avoid reproducing a homogenous club culture ("white Zontian bubble").

Support and Empowerment

- Establish mentorship programs and assign mentors to new minority members.
- Provide language support and sponsor language courses.
- Assist with job finding, navigating bureaucracy, and accessing scholarships.
- Create safe/open spaces and anonymous platforms for minority women to share experiences.
- Organize tolerance and inclusion training.
- Support minority entrepreneurs and sponsor events where they can showcase their products.

Club Culture and Practices

- Build a welcoming, patient, and tolerant club environment.
- Develop and implement guidelines for inclusive and safe spaces.
- Regularly survey members to ensure principles of safe spaces are upheld.
- Encourage authentic curiosity, active listening, and empathy.
- Model inclusive behavior and intervene when discrimination occurs.
- Adjust club traditions to be more supportive of ethnic minorities.

Practical Initiatives

- Arrange practical support projects (e.g., "Mein erster Schulanzen" for school supplies).
- Sponsor food-related activities to encourage cultural exchange.
- Make scholarships more accessible for students from minority backgrounds.
- Develop "Girls in Leadership" programs and other targeted initiatives.
- Host multilingual platforms and spaces as needed.

A "safe spaces" program for women from different ethnic backgrounds is a structured initiative designed to provide physical and emotional safety, foster empowerment, and ensure inclusivity for women and girls who may face intersecting challenges related to gender, ethnicity, and culture.

It is not just a physical location, but a holistic, culturally attuned support system that empowers women, builds community, and addresses both immediate safety and long-term inclusion¹²³⁵⁷
Below are the key components and features such a program could include:

Core Features of a Safe Spaces Program

Physical and Emotional Safety

- The space is women-only (and may include gender-diverse individuals, depending on the context), ensuring participants are free from violence, harassment, and judgment²⁴.
- It is a place where women can express themselves openly without fear of discrimination or harm²⁶.

Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusion

- The program is intentionally designed to be culturally safe and responsive, recognizing and addressing barriers such as language differences, cultural norms, and experiences of discrimination³⁵⁷.
- Staff and facilitators are trained in cultural competence and may include women from the communities being served to ensure relevance and trust¹³.

Access to Services and Support

- Provides entry points for women to report protection concerns, access referrals to gender-based violence (GBV) response services, legal aid, medical support, and psychosocial counseling¹².
- Offers information and resources tailored to the unique needs of women from various ethnic backgrounds, including translated materials and access to interpreters³.

Empowerment and Skill-Building

- Facilitates workshops, seminars, and activities that build knowledge, skills, and confidence, such as health literacy, financial planning, entrepreneurship, and leadership development¹²⁶.
- Encourages social connection and community building to reduce isolation and foster solidarity among women of different backgrounds³⁶.

Community Engagement and Advocacy

- Engages women in discussions about safety and inclusion, using their lived experiences to inform strategies and program design⁵⁷.
- Raises awareness about issues affecting women from diverse backgrounds and advocates for policy changes to improve safety and access to services¹⁷.

Example Activities

- Support groups and peer mentoring sessions for women to share experiences and advice⁶.
- Language and cultural orientation classes to help newcomers navigate local systems³.
- Legal clinics and information sessions on rights and protections¹².
- Health and wellness workshops, including access to culturally appropriate health information³.
- Community events celebrating cultural diversity and fostering cross-cultural understanding⁴⁷.

Principles for Effective Safe Spaces

- **Survivor-centered:** Prioritizes the needs and well-being of each woman, empowering her to make informed decisions¹².
- **Culturally relevant:** Adapts services and activities to reflect the values, traditions, and languages of the women served³⁵.
- **Inclusive and participatory:** Involves women from different backgrounds in program planning and evaluation to ensure their voices shape the space⁵⁷.
- **Confidential and trustworthy:** Maintains strict confidentiality to build trust and protect participants' privacy²⁶.

Challenges and Solutions

- **Resource constraints:** Partnering with local and international organizations can help secure necessary resources and expertise¹.
- **Navigating cultural norms:** Ongoing staff training and community awareness campaigns can foster acceptance and support for the program¹³.

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