



## Chapter 31

### District 27 – Europe (1994–2019)<sup>1</sup>

Since 1920, Zonta International has grouped clubs by district. The following is information on the formation of District 27. As of December 2019, District 27 had 76 clubs in Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and Ukraine.

#### **History of District 27 from 1994–2019**

District 27 is a successor of District 14, reaching from northeast France, across Belgium, Luxembourg and northeast Germany to Ukraine.

Since its beginnings in June 1994, District 27 grew rapidly. Having started with 45 clubs and 1,248 members in four areas, by the end of May 2014, it comprised 77 clubs and 1,911 members in seven areas. In more recent years, however, membership has been stagnating with losses balanced mainly by chartering new clubs.

There has been an increased commitment to supporting the Zonta International Foundation's education awards at club and district levels and this has resulted in several international award recipients of the Young Women in Public Affairs Award, the Jane M. Klausman Women in Business Scholarship and the Amelia Earhart Fellowship.

Over the years, the significance of Zonta as an internationally recognized NGO has successfully been enhanced in the minds of District 27 Zontians. This is also reflected in the fact that several district Zontians have served at the international level, both on the Zonta International Board and on various committees.

It has never been a problem to find Zontians to stand for election at the district level. Moreover, in District 27 there has been a relatively balanced national representation in the sequence of board positions and the choice of locations for international conferences.

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<sup>1</sup> Research and text by Annette Binder, edited by Eva Nielsen, March 2016, with small additional amendments as of 22 January 2020 by Annette Binder and District Governor Regine Deguelle. Additional contributors are listed at the end of this document.

The District 27 atmosphere can be characterized by friendly cooperation among Zontians of the various countries. The reports of past governors all mention the international composition of the district, and how rewarding it was for them to work with Zontians of so many different countries, despite the language barriers.

It is also obvious that the active involvement of Polish and Ukrainian Zontians was most significant and rewarding. Zontians of the West learned about the experience of life in non-democratic countries and under limited conditions; Zontians from the East strove for the experience of international friendship and networking in order to serve and improve their societies. For some months after the creation of the district, members felt deeply concerned about the political and economic drawbacks in the Ukraine and the impact this might have on fellow Zontians. However, since 1994, there has been a district tradition to support these clubs financially.

The former District XIV was divided according to the historical conflict lines in Europe and based on certain criteria: no division of France and Germany; no division in a way that would leave the former Eastern Bloc countries on their own; and no division of northern and southern European countries. Some countries, among them Poland and Germany, would only stay together in a whole-of-Europe model. Indeed, the design of District 27 contributed to rapid membership growth, and increased Zonta friendship and networking across the borders between East and West.

District 27 has been very active in founding Z and Golden Z Clubs since the first one was chartered in Metz in Area 02 in 2014. As of January 2020, District 27 has nine student clubs in all Areas.

District 27 has been a great success story for Zonta International. For the District 27 Zontians this story inspires them to continue working for Zonta's future of advancing the status of women.

### **Germany (Areas 03 and 07)**

Hamburg became the first Zonta city in Germany when the Zonta Club of Hamburg was chartered as the second club in Europe in 1931. Elizabeth McK. Scott of the Zonta Club of New York, had presented the Zonta idea to Harriet Wegener and Frieda Radel. Within a few months, 39 founding members made this idea a reality. The next year, the Hamburg club organized a club in Dresden. While that club was never chartered, several others were initiated in Germany by the Hamburg club, beginning with the Zonta Club of Munich in 1952, then the Zonta Club of Lübeck in 1968, the Zonta Club of Hannover in 1974, the Zonta Club of Hamburg-Elbufer in 1987, and finally, 60 years after the first unsuccessful attempt, the Zonta Club of Dresden in 1993, after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

In Nazi Germany, international organizations were forbidden. Two years after chartering, the Zonta Club of Hamburg closed its official registration as a charitable organization. However, the members continued to meet privately until 1949 and District 27 members look proudly upon the Zonta clubs which did not exclude their Jewish fellow Zontians, unlike other service organizations. Despite this, sadly, six founding members emigrated and three committed suicide.

After World War II, the Zonta Club of Hamburg was reinstated and became an official member of Zonta International again in 1949. As club president from 1937 until 1963, Harriet Wegener led the club wisely through these hard times and saw the club's pre-War number restored in 1956.

The family of five clubs in Hamburg works well together, each with its own character.

Berlin is home to three clubs, one of which is the Zonta Club of Berlin, chartered in 1966. In 1992, the Zonta Club of Berlin 1989 (named to commemorate the year in which the Berlin Wall fell) became the first club to unite women from former Eastern and Western Germany. When the Zonta Club of Berlin-Mitte was founded in 2004, it drew members naturally from both the former Eastern Germany and Western Germany. In Berlin, the history of Zonta clubs has always been closely connected to German history. Over the decades, Berlin Zontians experienced the Cold War on a daily basis. When the wall fell in 1989, the consequent changes had a tremendous impact on the clubs' advocacy and service activities. In addition, other German clubs located geographically close to the former border actively supported service projects relating to refugees from Eastern Europe.

Today many clubs have specialized in various kinds of educational support for young women and girls. Cooperation with Femtec, a career-building program for students in natural sciences and technology, was initiated and led by the Zonta Club of Berlin in 1989. Over the 20 years since then, German clubs have increasingly committed themselves to the Zonta International Foundation by offering awards and donating to the Foundation. Many of the fundraising projects have become an established tradition, advertising Zonta's brand to the public. The significance of Zonta's internationality among German members has increased as well. This is also reflected by more Zontians serving as officers or directors at district and international levels.

In order to improve area management, the former Area 03 split into two (Areas 03 and 07) in 2008. In both German areas, there has been rapid growth in membership, mainly by the chartering of new clubs. Zontians actively spread the word about Zonta's ideals and there has evidently been a demand. Clubs like the Zonta Club of Lübeck and Bremen each founded several clubs and in more recent years, new clubs have been developed, keeping Zonta and Zontians fresh and receptive to new ideas. In 2014, the Zonta Club of Hamburg Hanse chartered the first Golden Z Club in Germany. In December 2019, the Zonta Club of Hamburg Hanse chartered the Zonta e-Club of Germany, with the help of the Zonta Club of Hannover.

### **France (Area 02)**

As Area 02 Historian, Geneviève Sauve, concluded: "Here is the story of a happy Area – its only sorrow is the loss of the Zonta Club of Montbard in 2011". Indeed, clubs of this Area enjoy working together for Zonta's mission but also to celebrate successes. Moreover, it is notable that Zontians in France reached out to expand Zonta to Poland and Ukraine.

In 1957, Zonta history in this region began with the charter of the Zonta Club of Lyon. The person who spread the word about Zonta was France de la Chaise Mutin, from the Zonta Club of Paris, a remarkable and celebrated Zontian who became the first – and up to now only –

Zonta International President from France. She also initiated several other clubs in France and Belgium and took Zonta to Poland, including the now-closed Zonta Club of Warsaw in 1991.

Two other French Zontians helped introduce Zonta to another Eastern country – Ukraine. When the Zonta Club of Warsaw founded the Zonta Club of Lviv, past governors Annie Becquer and Jacqueline Shernetzky acted as advisers to the new club and to the Lviv-Zamok and Odessa clubs.

As a great result of Franco-German friendship, the Zonta Club of Dijon was founded in 1980 by Ursula Blaise, a German living in Dijon. In 1994, Ursula Bouchard, also originally from Germany, created a new club in Beaune. Franco-German life on a daily basis has been experienced by members of the Zonta Club of Wissembourg. This club was originally founded in Alsace, France by five women from France and 19 women from Germany who were living and working on both sides of the border. Within ten years, a balance of members from both countries had been established. However, language is an ongoing challenge, and all spoken words need to be translated. The Zonta Club of Wissembourg closed in 2016.

There is a remarkably high level of cooperation between the clubs of this Area. Not only inter-club celebrations of events but also joint achievements like the publication of a book, “Famous Women in Our Regions” (2006).

In 2014, the Zonta Club of Nevers in France initiated an annual competition for a prize of 1,000 euros for a woman for her first novel, as a contribution to “Salon des Dames”, a book fair organized by the Cultural Association of Nevers which is devoted primarily to women’s writing. The reading committee of “Salon des Dames” selects five first novels for the competition and readers in all the French Zonta clubs in the three Areas form the jury for the Zonta prize.<sup>2</sup>

### **Belgium (Areas 01, 05, 06)**

“Give Women Wings” is the Belgian interpretation of Zonta’s mission to advance the status of women and the biennial theme of Past Governor Frieda Demey. Zonta clubs in Belgium were initiated by France de la Chaise Mutin and the first club, the Zonta Club of Brussels, was founded in 1967.

Zonta life in Belgium is very active, cooperative and cheerful, facilitated by short distances and clubs which are close neighbors. Moreover, the reorganization of Areas to take into account the Flemish-speaking members (Areas 05 and 06) and the French-speaking members (Area 01, central and southern Belgium and Luxemburg), led to even better communication and cooperation. There was rapid membership growth and several new clubs were founded. Having three Area Boards in operation also means an increased number of Zontians engaged as officers and directors and in committee positions. Belgium has provided the largest number of District 27 governors and, before District 27 was founded, two International Directors: Irène Verschuren from 1986 to 1988 and Mimi Raemdonck from 1988 to 1990.

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<sup>2</sup> Research by Maryse Fangain, Zonta Club of Bourg-Macon

Service, advocacy and fundraising actions have been inspired by the close proximity of the many European institutions located in Brussels, particularly in relation to securing speakers for public lectures. Also, the presence of the Royal family at fundraising events makes a valuable contribution to Zonta's visibility.

Some Belgian clubs and members have advocated strongly for education and greater awareness of the issues surrounding the use of stem cells in umbilical cord blood, particularly in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 concerning universal reproductive rights.

### **Luxembourg (Area 01)**

Zonta was brought to Luxembourg by Belgian Zontians Claire de Somer, Mimi Raemdonck, and Josette Hecht. Soon after the charter of the Zonta Club of Luxembourg in 1993, its members spread the Zonta spirit and created the Zonta clubs of Esch-sur-Alzette in 1996, Eisléck in 1999 and Luxembourg-Multicultural in 2002, the latter founded with members from ten different nations, thus reflecting the international significance of Luxembourg.

Zonta Club of Luxembourg historian and Past District Governor, Florence Fischer-Herber, is a strong advocate for developing strong Zonta friendships by working with other members in support of Zonta's mission, spending time together locally, or travelling together to visit Zonta clubs in other cities.

Frequent advocacy activities have been jointly organized by the four clubs of Luxembourg, thereby strengthening power, visibility and outcomes for their clubs. In 2013, Viviane Redding, vice president of the European Commission, spoke at an inter-generational workshop organized by the Zonta Club of Luxembourg-Multicultural.

Several Zontians in Luxembourg clubs have worked at the district level, on the International Board and on committees where their skills in multiple languages have helped progress the work.

### **Poland (Area 04)**

In reflecting on the establishment of Zonta in Poland in 1991, the historian of the now-closed Zonta Club of Warsaw, Malgorzata Armatys, said: "We had to learn everything, starting from basics, and we had the best teachers – Zontians from France, Germany and Switzerland". Some years later, Polish Zontians proudly passed on the support they once received to the Ukrainian clubs.

The history of Zonta in Poland began during several visits of France de la Chaise Mutin. Around 1988–1989 she met Jadwiga Jablonska. As a result, the Zonta Club of Warsaw was chartered in 1991, followed by clubs in Krakow and Gdansk in 1993, all three of them supported and sponsored by various French and German Zonta clubs.

The Zonta Club of Warsaw built relationships with Zontians all over the world by organizing sightseeing tours on the occasion of club anniversaries and conventions in Europe. International panel discussions and seminars also took place. The Zonta Club of Warsaw proudly presented several international Zonta International Foundation awards to girls and young women.

Together, these efforts contributed to recognition of the Zonta Club of Warsaw locally and internationally.

The Zonta club of Krakow disbanded in 2003, the club in Gdansk in 2010, and Warsaw in late 2019. With the closure of the Zonta Club of Warsaw, Poland was lost as a Zonta country. The financial challenges faced by members were a major factor in these closures. Despite district support, meeting the costs of membership, particularly international dues, was difficult when many women were working in two or more jobs in order to survive and had only limited time to devote to fundraising.

### **Ukraine (Area 04)**

From the beginning, it was clear that Polish Zontians would promote Zonta in Ukraine, a country charged with good and bad emotions in the historical memory of Poles. In 1995, Olha Sydorenko from Lviv was listening to the Polish radio station when Jadwiga Jablonska from Warsaw presented a news briefing about Zonta. Olha took action and in 1997 became president of the newly chartered Zonta Club of Lviv, actively supported by the French Past Governors Annie Becquer and Jacqueline Shernetzky.

Thanks to Olha, Annie and Jacqueline, some years later in 2001, the Zonta Club of Lviv-Zamok was established, as well as a third club in Odessa in 2002. The fourth Ukrainian club, the Zonta Club of Uzhgorod, was founded in 2003 as a result of the efforts of Peter Bober, a member of the District 08 Zonta Club of Corvallis in Oregon, who frequently visited Ukraine as a member of the Corvallis Sister City Association. Since then, there have been several exchange visits between Zontians of Corvallis and Uzhgorod. For some years, the Zonta Club of Hamburg-Alster in Germany supported the Zonta Club of Uzhgorod by donating to their local service projects and exchanging visits. Financial support by the district had meanwhile been decreased in order to initiate self-supported clubs.

### **Sources**

This history of District 27 has been compiled by district historian and past international director, Annette Binder, with the commitment and support of clubs and Zontians throughout the district. It is based on the histories of the district's clubs and Areas, recognizing that it is not possible to include all of the many club activities that have taken place in the district.

### **Zonta International Officers and Directors from District 27**

- 2004–2006: Annette Binder, Zonta Club of Hamburg-Elbufer
- 2016–2018: Ute Scholz, Zonta Club of Verden
- 2018-2020: Ute Scholz, Zonta Club of Verden, Zonta International Vice-President.

### **District 27 Conferences**

- 1995: San Remo, Italy, 12–15 October (inter-district conference)
- 1997: Vienna, Austria 3–5 October (inter-district conference)
- 1999: Montpellier, France, 8–10 October (inter-district conference)
- 2001: Gdansk, Poland, 22–24 June
- 2003: Berlin, Germany 26–28 September
- 2005: Ghent, Belgium, 23–25 September
- 2007: Lyon, France, 21–23 September

- 2009: Luxembourg, 2–4 October
- 2011: Bremen, Germany, 30 September–2 October
- 2013: Antwerp, Belgium, 1–13 October
- 2015: Metz, France, 25–27 September
- 2017: Berlin, Germany, 15–17 September
- 2019: Dijon, France, 20–22 September.

### **Timeline of district history highlights**

**1994:** 1,240 members in 45 clubs in four areas:

- Area 01: Belgium and Luxembourg
- Area 02: France
- Area 03: Germany
- Area 04: Poland.

**1998:** 52 clubs in four areas:

- Area 01: 17 clubs
- Area 02: 16 clubs
- Area 03: 15 clubs
- Area 04: four clubs.

**2002:** 65 clubs in four areas:

- Area 01: 22 clubs
- Area 02: 17 clubs
- Area 03: 20 clubs
- Area 04: Six clubs.

**2006:** 75 clubs in six areas:

- Area 01: eight clubs in Belgium and Luxembourg
- Area 02: 18 clubs in France
- Area 03: 26 clubs in Germany
- Area 04: Six clubs in Poland and Ukraine
- Area 05: 10 clubs in Belgium
- Area 06: Seven clubs in Belgium.

**2008:** Seven areas were formed due to the division of Area 03 into Areas 03 and 07.

**2014:** 1,911 members in 77 clubs in seven areas.

**2016:** 74 clubs in seven areas as follows:

- 22 clubs in Belgium between Areas 01, 05 and 06
- 17 clubs in France in Area 02
- 25 clubs in Germany in Areas 03 and 07
- Four clubs in Luxembourg in Area 01
- One club in Poland in Area 04

- Five clubs in Ukraine in Area 04.

**2018:** 1,858 members.<sup>3</sup>

**2019:** 1,881 members.

### History of formation of District 27 clubs

#### Belgium

Year Chartered	Club Number	Club Name	Area as of 2018	Closed
1967	0583	Zonta Club of Brussel		2016
1973	0717	Zonta Club of Gent I	05	
1976	0796	Zonta Club of Antwerpen	06	
1978	0864	Zonta Club of Kortrijk*	05	
1979	0878	Zonta Club of Brussel Zavel	06	
1979	0886	Zonta Club of Brussel II		1990
1980	0952	Zonta Club of Brugge	05	
1985	1121	Zonta Club of Gent II	05	
1986	1145	Zonta Club of Waterloo Braine L'Alleud Area		2008
1986	1160	Zonta Club of Mons	01	
1988	1204	Zonta Club of Dendermonde	06	
1989	1252	Zonta Club of Aalst	06	
1989	1256	Zonta Club of Waasland	06	
1993	1445	Zonta Club of Saint Hubert Redoute	01	
1995	1498	Zonta Club of Gent III		2016
1997	1553	Zonta Club of Leuven		2008
1999	1639	Zonta Club of Damme	05	
1999	1640	Zonta Club Ieper	05	
2002	1719	Zonta Club of Tielt	05	
2005	1803	Zonta Club of Roeselare	05	
2006	1807	Zonta Club of Halle Pajottenland	06	
2006	1811	Zonta Club of Middelkerke-Westkust	05	
2008	1851	Zonta Club of Lier	06	
2009	1854	Zonta Club of De Haan	05	
2012	1901	Zonta Club of Waregem	05	
2014	1922	Zonta Club of Diksmuide	05	
2015	1941	Zonta Club of Leuven	06	

- Formerly the Zonta Club of Zuid West Vlaanderen Area.

#### France

Year Chartered	Club Number	Club Name	Area as of 2018	Closed
1950	0238	Zonta Club of Paris I/ Elysees*		2013

<sup>3</sup> Zonta International Directory online



1957	0392	Zonta Club of Lyon I	02	
1959	0439	Zonta Club of Moulin-Allier		2014
1964	0533	Zonta Club of Vichy	02	
1966	0577	Zonta Club of Nancy Area	02	
1976	0789	Zonta Club of Lyon	02	2003
1976	0797	Zonta Club of Nevers Area	02	2015
1979	0883	Zonta Club of Roanne Area	02	
1980	0912	Zonta Club of Luneville	02	
1980	0919	Zonta Club of Vitry-Le-Francois	02	
1980	0940	Zonta Club of Dijon Area	02	
1982	1028	Zonta Club of Montbard	02	2011
1984	1076	Zonta Club of Bourg-Macon	02	
1989	1236	Zonta Club of Pont-A-Mousson	02	
1994	1479	Zonta Club of Beaune Cote D'Or	02	
1996	1533	Zonta Club of Chatillon sur Seine et Region	02	
1997	1562	Zonta Club of Toul	02	
2001	1701	Zonta Club of Clermont-Ferrand	02	
2002	1731	Zonta Club of Wissenbourg District 27		2016
2002	1735	Zonta Club of Issoire Therese Planniol	02	
2008	1848	Zonta Club of Metz	02	

\* See District XIV.

### Germany

Year Chartered	Club Number	Club Name	Area as of 2018	Closed
1931/ 1949	0118	Zonta Club of Hamburg	03	
1966	0562	Zonta Club of Berlin	07	
1968	0613	Zonta Club of Luebeck	03	
1974	0739	Zonta Club of Hannover	07	
1975	0766	Zonta Club of Goslar	07	
1980	0938	Zonta Club of Bremen	03	
1987	1170	Zonta Club of Braunschweig	07	
1987	1171	Zonta Club of Hamburg-Elbufer	03	
1991	1315	Zonta Club of Neumuenster	03	
1992	1359	Zonta Club of Hamburg-Alster	03	
1992	1378	Zonta Club of Leipzig	07	
1992	1388	Zonta Club of Salzgitter	07	
1992	1392	Zonta Club of Berlin 1989	07	
1993	1404	Zonta Club of Dresden	07	
1999	1634	Zonta Club of Kiel	03	
1999	1642	Zonta Club of Goettingen	07	
2000	1670	Zonta Club of Leipzig Elster	07	
2000	1978	Zonta Club of Oldenburg	03	
2002	1707	Zonta Club of Osnabruck	03	
2002	1730	Zonta Club of Goslar St. Barbara	07	
2003	1753	Zonta Club of Leipzig 2003		2008

2004	1757	Zonta Club of Verden	03	
2004	1770	Zonta Club of Hildesheim	07	
2004	1780	Zonta Club of Berlin-Mitte	07	
2006	1806	Zonta Club of Hamburg-Hanse	03	
2008	1855	Zonta Club of Leer-Ostfriesland	03	
2011	1874	Zonta Club of Aumuehle-Sachsenwald	03	
2012	1905	Zonta Club of Hamburg Hafen	03	
2013	1910	Zonta Club of Lueneburg		2016
2017	1967	Zonta Club of Potsdam	07	
2018	1979	Zonta Club of Diepholz-Vecta	03	
2019	1986	Zonta Club of Osnabrück Westfälischer Friede	03	
2019	1995	Zonta E-Club of Germany	03/07	

### Luxembourg

Year Chartered	Club Number	Club Name	Area as of 2018	Closed
1993	1407	Zonta Club of Luxembourg	01	
1996	1548	Zonta Club of Esch-Sur-Alzette	01	
1999	1636	Zonta Club of Eisleck	01	
2001	1694	Zonta Club of Luxembourg-Multiculturel	01	

### Poland

Year Chartered	Club Number	Club Name	Area as of 2018	Closed
1991	1334	Zonta Club of Warszawa		2019
1993	1411	Zonta Club of Krakow		2005
1993	1424	Zonta Club of Gdansk		2012

### Ukraine

Year Chartered	Club Number	Club Name	Area as of 2018	Closed
1997	1563	Zonta Club of Lviv	04	
2001	1682	Zonta Club of Lviv-Zamok	04	
2001	1706	Zonta Club of Odessa		2018
2003	1739	Zonta Club of Uzhgorod	04	
2015	1945	Zonta Club of Kyiv		2019

### History of formation of District 27 Z and Golden Z Clubs

Year Chartered	Club Name	Area as of 2018	Country
2014	Golden Z Les Louisettes Saverne	02	France
2014	Golden Z Club Hamburg Hanse	03	Germany
2017	Golden Z Club Hannover	07	Germany
2018	Golden Z-Club Young Brugge	05	Belgium
2018	Golden Z Young Antwerp	06	Belgium
2018	Golden Z Young Luxembourg	01	Luxembourg

2018	Z Young Luxembourg	01	Luxembourg
2019	Golden Z Young Ghent	05	Belgium
2019	Z Club Young Lviv		Ukraine

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