



Chapter 36

European National Zonta Unions

Four national unions of Zonta clubs operate in Europe, covering Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy and the Principality of Liechtenstein.

The Union of German Zonta Clubs/Die Union deutscher Zonta Clubs (UdZC)

The Deutsche Frauenrat (German Women's Council) is a body of all national women's organizations in Germany which have consultative status with the government in each of the German states, collectively known as Bundesländer. Because membership was open only to German organizations with a unified bylaws structure, the Vice-Area Director of the German Area of District XIV, Irene Wiese-von Ofen, as early as 1976–1978, tried to organize all German Zonta clubs as a union.

However, at the International Convention in Wiesbaden in 1976, a resolution against national unions was passed, so the German area did not pursue the issue for some time. Nevertheless, the German Zonta clubs started to support service within Germany. For example, for several years, they sponsored a Friedlandhilfe effort to provide initial aid for German refugees returning from East Germany.

Since at least 1986, all German Zonta clubs have had a common project: giving a music award to an outstanding female musician every year. It was a special Zonta prize, given as part of the annual presentation of the German Music Council, which at the time was dominated by male musicians. Through this recognition, the clubs aimed to support talented young women in their artistic development.

As the 1990–1992 District XIV Governor, Irene Wiese-von Ofen convinced the International Board at the convention in Hong Kong that national unions should be permitted to advocate within nations, separated into different Zonta districts, because national laws demanded such unions if women's rights were to be advanced. At the District XIV conference in Lausanne, Switzerland, in October 1993, it was decided that each of the five European districts should host a German area. The response of the German Zonta clubs at a presidents' meeting in 1994 was to merge into the Union of German Zonta clubs (UdZC) with bylaws. On 24 September 1995, the revised second statute was adopted in Monchengladbach, Germany.

The UdZC involved the voluntary cooperation of existing German Zonta clubs to perform joint work for Zonta more effectively in German counties. The president is elected for two years and annual meetings have been held since 1994. The organizational structure of Zonta International remained unaffected as all clubs were aware that the UdZC was not an additional Zonta International body.

In 1997, the UdZC was finally included in the national Deutsche Frauenrat and received as a voting member in the respective state bodies, the Landesfrauenrat.

After the division of the former District XIV into five new districts, the German areas in those districts continued to exchange ideas regularly and advocate together for women's rights. After a few years of activity in the various districts, the bylaws were adjusted to bring together different interests, opinions and awareness and find an acceptable basis for further cooperation. With the agreement of Zonta International, the revised Bylaws for UdZC were approved on 13 November 1999 under the presidency of Margrit List in Nuremberg, Germany. At the same time, Irene Wiese-von Ofen, Karin Saeger and other German lawyers in the UdZC tried to dispel concerns about the union's loyalty to Zonta International.

The Jugend forscht (youth researcher)/German youth science competition and music award projects were continued but extended and changed. The national competition for chamber music was incorporated into the music award with the result that, occasionally an ensemble won the Zonta prize. Later, female conductors and young musicians were eligible for the music award. With regard to the science competition project, the General Assembly voted in 2005 for financial support of FEMTEC, a network to benefit young scientists and engineers working in MINT (Mathematik /Mathematics; Informatik/Computer Science; Naturwissenschaften/Natural Sciences; Technik/Technology).

In 2012, the value of the different music awards totaled 17,000 euro per biennium, and support of FEMTEC was 14,000 euro. As the UdZC had been founded as a tool for advocacy, and its first purpose was to achieve membership of the Deutscher Frauenrat, the union reviewed the music and technology awards with these original goals in mind as well as the programs of clubs and districts. Many projects which could be undertaken by clubs were added to the activities and several proposals for change were suggested. In 2014, all prizes, support and awards were abolished, and the bylaws were revised. All services and programs from then on were to be managed by the clubs, and the UdZC would concentrate solely on advocacy, support for members and networking.

Since 1 June 2014, the bylaws' preamble has read:

The Union of German Zonta clubs (UdZC) is the voluntary joining of German Zonta clubs. It is a non-registered association. The UdZC is not a part of Zonta International. It considers itself as a complement to Zonta International and takes on only those duties which are not carried out by Zonta International or its subdivisions (districts, areas, clubs) under their bylaws. It supports its members in achieving the goals of Zonta International and offers them the possibility to speak with one voice in Germany.¹

¹ Research: Karin Saeger, Irene Wiese-v.Ofen, Wiltrud Walther.

The Union of Swiss Zonta Clubs/Union Intercity Switzerland and Principality of Liechtenstein

In Switzerland, four languages are spoken: German, French, Italian and Romansh. In Zonta International, it has therefore been evident from the beginning that it was necessary to keep the clubs of these different cultures united. As soon as four clubs were founded in Switzerland, the idea of a Zonta union came up. A first draft of bylaws for Union Intercity Switzerland and Principality of Liechtenstein bylaws was drawn up in 1953.

An annual general meeting was scheduled, and later, the idea of a common service project was suggested. This was realized for the first time in the 1974–1976 Biennium when Union Intercity reached ten clubs.

The practice for the clubs was to submit projects to the service committee of the union, which were then submitted to the Annual Assembly, where delegates chose one service project to support. The chosen project was rarely a national one and, in most cases, involved only one of the four cultural regions. Projects continuously changed, which did not encourage the media to cover them, and Zonta's visibility was only on a regional level. As the years went by, this practice caused discontent within the clubs and projects were rejected.

Until 1993, when the previous District XIV was divided – a decision made at the District Conference in Lausanne – the Area Director of Area 10 in District 14 also assumed the role of president of Union Intercity. From 1994 until 2002, the Area 04 directors in Districts 28 and 30 alternately assumed the function of president. Splitting the Swiss clubs into two districts loosened the contact between the two areas, one that spoke German and one that spoke French and Italian.

A difficult moment for Union Intercity came in 2002 at the annual general meeting in Geneva. The clubs were not satisfied with the service choices, and a proposal for a complete reorganization of the structure of Union Intercity was submitted. The proposal was lost by only a few votes. In addition, the Area Director who was supposed to accept the role of Intercity president, refused to do so. The 2002–2004 Biennium began without a president.

Daniele Bridel, from the Zonta Club of Lausanne, asked Luisella Realini to become Intercity president. At the Annual General meeting in Sursee in 2003, she was elected president and presented her view for renewal of the union. She was given a mandate to conceive a new kind of service which would be organized on a national level, be repeated over the years to give visibility to Zonta International, and offer all clubs and regions a chance to identify themselves with projects to avoid discontent, bringing all cultural regions together.

Enhancing the role of women in the scientific field was proposed, in addition to supporting high-level women scientists who were active at the two federal polytechnic institutions. It was felt that this would provide a clear choice of service, avoid regionalism, give visibility to Zonta and offer young women new, modern role models – leaders who were capable of balancing family life and a demanding job. In 2004, the delegates accepted the idea of a Prix Zonta (Zonta prize) to be awarded to a woman researcher.

The Prix Zonta, valued at approximately USD\$30,000, is entirely financed by the fees paid by Zontians and is highly appreciated by the young prize winners. It is now beginning to be known at a national level, and the award receives attention from the national press. Since 2005, the

prize has been awarded six times, once every second year, and has become the jewel in Union Intercity's crown.²

Zonta clubs in France (ZCF): an association and a legal framework for service and advocacy actions

During the District XIV conference in 1993 in Lausanne, Switzerland, the delegates voted to divide the district into five parts: Districts 14, 27, 28, 29 and 30. Germany, which was present in all five of the new districts, and France, which was part of three, were authorized to organize one general meeting per year for advocacy and service reasons.

The Association of the Zonta Clubs of France (ZCF) was created in 1994, constituting three areas (the South, the Northeast and the Northwest) to oversee the French musical prize, well-known today as the France de la Chaise Mutin Musical Scholarship.

The following are the common service and advocacy actions undertaken by ZCF between 1994 and 2016.

- **Music contest**

France de la Chaise Mutin of the Zonta Club of Paris, who served as Zonta International President from 1976–1978, wanted to encourage artists. In 1976, the Zonta Club of Paris established contact with Gyorgy Cziffra and his wife, Soleika, president of the Cziffra Foundation, who helped fund the France de la Chaise Mutin Musical Scholarship. The first award was presented in 1978 and a long collaboration continued with the couple until 1994.

The internationally known pianist, Brigitte Engerer, was the president of the prize jury, and Simone Gerbaulet from the Zonta Club of Toulouse Isatis then took over in 1994. Thanks to concert pianist and Zontian, Claudine Perretti, all the music conservatories have been, and still are, involved.

In 2004, a committee of three members replaced Simone Gerbaulet: Monique Candau from the Zonta Club of Aix en Provence representing the South area, Geneviève Sauve from the Zonta Club of Lyon in the Northeast area, and Christiane Faller from the Zonta Club of Tours in the Northwest area, who served as the committee treasurer, chairman, and liaison with the music conservatories and jury members.

At a general meeting of the French Zonta clubs every odd-numbered year, delegates vote on which of two instruments (including voice) will receive the prize in the forthcoming year.

Every two years, in even-numbered years, the committee organizes a high-level music contest and presents the scholarship to an outstanding musician. Internationally known musicians from many different fields have become jury presidents, including operatic soprano Mireille Delunsch, cellist Anne Gastinel, organist Chantal de Zeeuw, harpsichordist Aline Zylberajch and harpist Isabelle Moretti.

In 2016, the honorary chairman was conductor Laurence Equilbey and the jury chairman was classical accordionist, Mélanie Brégant.

Since 2006, a scholarship of 4,000 euros has been given every two years to an established musician, and another, valued at 2,000 euros, to an emerging talent.

² Research: Susanne Trojani, Zonta Club Lugano.

Since 2014, the committee chairman has been Annie-Laurence Godefroy from the Zonta Club of Rouen in the Northwest, with Josie Amizet from the Zonta Club of Châtillon/Seine in the Northeast, and Monique Candau from the Zonta Club of Aix-en-Provence in the South as the other two members of the committee.

- **Literary prize**

In 2014, the Zonta Club of Nevers 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.³

The chairman of the Zonta Clubs of France Literary Prize, as of 2016, was Suzanne Lorenzo from the Zonta Club of Beaune in the Northeast.

In 2014, Deborah Levy-Bertherat received the award for her book, “Daniel Asher’s Travel” and in 2015, Sophie Brocas received the award for “The Women’s Circle.”

- **Performance scholarship**

In each area, a performance scholarship, organized by area committees, is presented every two years in odd-numbered years to an outstanding woman who has demonstrated her leadership in different ways and needs funding to realize a professional project in a traditionally male-dominated field.

- **Communication and public relations**

Three publications have helped increase Zonta clubs’ visibility and public relations efforts, and made the organization’s archives accessible:

- a newsletter, *Zinfocom*, about Zontian service and advocacy projects
- a magazine, *Zonta Mag*, focused on French Zontian events and advocacy actions from the past year, thanks to Simonne Mirabel from the Zonta Club of Paris III. Issues have covered subjects such as surrogacy (gestational or reproductive), abortion, egg donations, forced unions, education, equal pay, women in sports and legislation
- a new website, www.zontaclubsdefrance.com, thanks to Francine Taite from the Zonta Club of Metz.

- **Francophony**

Thanks to Geneviève Sauve from the Zonta Club of Lyon, the translated versions of all official papers, reports and newsletters from Zonta International, the Zonta International Foundation and international committees are forwarded to all French-speaking Zontians in different countries.

Interpreting in French for all French-speaking delegates to conventions and the District 27 conference is organized by a committee chaired at the time of writing by Madeleine Sauzet from the Zonta Club Issoire Thérèse Planiol. As a result more French-speaking Zontians have registered for international conventions and District 27 conferences.

³ Research by Maryse Fangain, Zonta Club of Bourg-Macon

- **Petitions to deputies and ministries**

A 2013 petition to the Ministry of Justice and Women's rights obtained some 5,000 signatures. The petition included the following passage:

We call for a true reflection of the differences found in the application of laws in France, leading to the creation of rational criteria for sanctions to be applied. We ask that the laws be enforced in the same way throughout our territory with the same penalty for various violent offences.⁴

The Union of Italian Zonta Clubs (Interclub Zontaltalia)

After the historic division of District XIV in 1992–1993, the Italian Zonta clubs were aggregated in areas in different districts, mainly in District 28 and District 30, with some in District 14.

While confirming the feeling of belonging to Zonta International, the Italian clubs felt the need to restore opportunities to meet, debate and share more effective advocacy actions at the national level. With similar motivations, the German, Swiss and French Zonta clubs had already previously configured their unions. Therefore, after thorough planning by a dedicated committee, a coordinating entity called Interclub Zontaltalia was created in October 2013 during a joint meeting of the Italian areas of District 28 and District 30, in the presence of both governors.

The newly born union, regulated by bylaws and led by a president elected every biennium, holds only advisory powers. Interclub Zontaltalia meets officially every two years on the occasion of an area meeting. Common advocacy initiatives and service projects are proposed and agreed, in line with the directives of Zonta International, but hopefully with a greater impact in terms of effectiveness, since they will be synergistically supported at national level.

Since the creation of Interclub Zontaltalia, some impactful campaigns have been realized. Every year during the period devoted to raising awareness about violence against women, as part of the international Zonta Says NO to Violence Against Women campaign, Interclub Zontaltalia has partnered with the Italian Rugby Federation to observe a minute of silence, in the presence of a delegation of Zontians, on rugby fields before every official game on a set date. A minute of silence is now also observed in Italian jails.

On the occasion of Milan Expo 2015, in October 2015, Italian clubs of District 28 and District 30 were invited to showcase the food-based educational project, Let's Play Seriously Not to Waste, organized by a local Zonta club. This involved several schools and students in different grades in a special workshop at Milan's Expo 2015 for women entrepreneurs and experts in avoiding food waste.

From March to April 2016, Interclub Zontaltalia participated in the month-long STEM initiative launched by the Ministry of Education, University and Research, and the Department for Equal Opportunities.⁵ The Zonta Pink Link project was created to facilitate Italian female students choosing science, technology, engineering and mathematics studies, overcoming a gender stereotype that is quite widespread and rooted in Italy.⁶

⁴ Research: Maryse Fangain, Zonta Club Bourg-Macon.

⁵ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/structures/italy/departement-equal-opportunities-presidency-council-ministers>

⁶ Research: Elena Federici Ballini, Wiltrud Walther.