



Chapter 32

District 28 – Europe (1994–2019)¹

Since 1920, Zonta International has grouped clubs by district. The following is information on the formation of District 28. As of 2019, District 28 has 56 clubs in Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Turkey.

District 28 is a successor of the division of District XIV in 1994. It currently has three Areas covering Germany (with clubs in the Federal States of Hessen, Rheinland-Pfalz and Saarland), Italy (with clubs in the North, Center and South), as well as Turkey, the German speaking area of Switzerland, and the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Area 02

The first club in Area 02 was founded in 1954 in Wiesbaden by the Zonta Club of München I, followed by Mainz in 1956 and Bad Homburg in 1960.

Area 02 consists of 27 Zonta clubs (14 in Hessen, 10 in Rheinland-Pfalz, and three in Saarland). Most clubs have been formed since the 1990s and since then, Area 02 has increased from ten to 27 clubs.

Various clubs of Area 02 were involved in establishing and nurturing new clubs in Area 02 but also in other districts and across national boundaries. Three clubs deserve particular mention: Wiesbaden, Mainz and Bad Soden-Kronberg. The oldest club in Area 02, the Zonta Club of Wiesbaden, has been most active in this respect. Wiesbaden acted as the SOM club for 24 clubs: 10 in Germany, three in Austria, one in Greece, one Switzerland and nine in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The Zonta Club of Mainz founded a new Zonta club in its twin city of Dijon in France and after reunification in 1989, the Zonta Club of Bad Soden-Kronberg was involved in establishing new clubs in one of the new German Federal States, Thüringen. These became the Zonta Clubs of Weimar and Suhl.

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One of the most exciting and challenging events in Area 02 was the organization of the International Convention in 1976 in Wiesbaden. The clubs of the neighboring towns, Wiesbaden and Mainz, worked together to make this convention a great success.

Looking back on nearly 60 years, Area 02 shows the strong commitment of all clubs to the goals of Zonta International.

Over the years and decades, not only international but also local projects changed according to the needs of society. Support was given to widows and orphans after World War II, refugee relief was supplied after the Hungarian revolution in 1956, and support was provided for women and their children in the German Democratic Republic.

District 28 Zontians are involved in various projects to reach the goals of Zonta International. They are committed to Zonta International Service Projects and to advancing the status of women worldwide by direct support and activities. They are also eager to gain new members and to establish new clubs.

To date a great number of projects have been established by clubs in Area 02:

- Female genital mutilation has been a topic in many clubs and in 2006 nearly 10 Zonta clubs of the Rhein-Main-Neckar-Mosel region organized a major seminar with an audience of 600 people. On 6 February, the International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation, Waris Dirie, the Somalian model, writer and human rights activist, read from her autobiography *Desert Flower* that went on to become a bestseller.
- Equal Pay Day awareness campaigns were initiated by many clubs to draw attention to the problem of the gender pay gap. European Equal Pay Day makes note of the days that women have been working for free since 1 January when compared to the pay men receive. For example, for every 12 months that men work, women may have to work 15 months to earn the same amount.
- Forced marriages have been a subject of strong interest in recent years. There were readings and panel discussions with well-known writers and campaigners like Seyran Ates and Sabatina James.
- Poverty among elderly women is another sensitive issue covered by many clubs.
- Shelters for women are supported by most clubs in various ways of cooperation with public institutions.

The Zonta Rose is a symbol much more than a lovely flower. Since 1999, it has served as the symbol of Zonta Rose Day, which falls on 8 March and coincides with International Women's Day. On this special day, many clubs publicly distribute yellow roses, or items bearing the image of yellow roses, accompanied by information about Zonta International and issues relating to improving the lives of women. Apart from that, some clubs have planted yellow Zonta roses in public gardens in their hometowns, continuously raising awareness of Zonta in their community.

Since 2015, Area 02 has organized periodic alumnae meetings for the awardees and applicants to the Young Women in Public Affairs award, Jane M. Klausman Scholarship, and Amelia Earhart fellowship. More recently, these meetings have become a district project. Throughout

the years, the alumnae meetings planted the seeds from which our two Golden Z Clubs and one e-club would grow.²

Remarkable Zontians from Area 02:

- Elke Johler-Duriez, Zonta Club of Bad Homburg, Governor 2004–2006
- Anita Schnetzer-Spranger, Zonta Club of Mainz, Governor 2010–2012, International Director 2012–2014
- Ingrid Gräfin Solms-Wildenfels, Zonta Club of Bad Soden-Kronberg, International Director 1994–1996
- Hannelore Kohl, Zonta Club of Ludwigshafen, spouse of former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl
- Eva Lohse, Zonta Club of Ludwigshafen, Mayor of the City of Ludwigshafen
- Marie-Luise Pelzer, Zonta Club of Frankfurt am Main, took initiative on the Zonta Preis beim Deutschen Musik Wettbewerb (German Zonta Music Award) in 1986
- Lucia Puttrich, Zonta Club of Nidda Oberhessen, Federal State Minister for Environment and Agriculture (Hessen).

Area 03

Zonta came to Italy at a time of great renewal for Italian society: the 1960s.

In 1947, the nation's Constituent Assembly had debated whether or not to recognize women's rights to pursue a career in the judiciary. The debate revealed deeply ingrained prejudices: a woman was expected to remain the "queen of the house", the belief being that if she did not, the family would disintegrate. The speech made on 11 November 1947 in the Assembly by Antonio Romano, a Sicilian magistrate and representative of the Democratic Party, is still widely quoted today:

With all due respect to the intellectual capacity of women, I have the impression that they are not suitable for the difficult art of judging. This requires great balance and sometimes this balance is lacking in them for physiological reasons. This is my opinion: women should stay at home.³

The Constitution was amended, but it took 15 years from the date when it came into force for Parliament to pass Law No. 66 of 9 February 1963, allowing women access to all public offices, professions and positions, including the judiciary.⁴

When Zonta was introduced in Italy there were two strong associations: the Communist Party's UDI (Union of Italian Women) and the ecclesiastical hierarchy with the CIF (Italian Women's Centre). Zonta, a nonsectarian and nonpartisan organization, was a new opportunity.

Zonta's growth in Italy must be credited to France de la Chaise Mutin, Zonta International President 1976–1978, who convinced some prominent women to start a club in Milan. Milan was selected because it was the capital of Italy for both technological and industrial innovation, and because of the many new and interesting careers for women available in the city.

² Information from Fernanda Gallo Freschi forwarded by Wiltrud Walther to Eva Nielsen, 19 Dec 2019.

³ Online archives of the Italian Parliament - Official transcript of debates in Constituent Assembly, 11 November 1947.

⁴ Time for Equality, Thematic Fact sheet. Women and the Judiciary in Italy

Eight years passed after the opening of the Zonta Club of Milan before another club was formed. This was in Naples in 1972, following the award of an Amelia Earhart fellowship to Renata Cecchi. After that year, other Zonta clubs were founded regularly. Some years saw particularly intense Zontian activity. For example, in 1982 the clubs of Bologna, Parma and the first club of Rome were founded, in 1988 Triggiano and Venice, in 1989 Latina, Barletta and Gioia del Colle, and so on until the most recently formed club, Roma Capitolium, was formed in 2016.

Each club implements service in line with the Zonta mission to support women all over the world. Since 1972, Area 03 has had the privilege of presenting Amelia Earhart Fellowships to young Italian women. In 2017, a group of Italian Amelia Earhart fellows formed the district's first e-Club: Italy I.⁵

Of particular significance was undoubtedly the service that involved all the clubs of Area 03 as a result of the earthquake in the Abruzzo region, near Rome. The clubs also had the support of the International Academy of Image in L'Aquila to allow students to recover and catalogue the materials dispersed under the rubble. Again in 2017, following another earthquake, this time in Lazio, Area 03 launched a service project to build the House of Women in Amatrice, a place where women and girls could restart their business or profession. District 28, under Governor Dietlind Stuerz, also contributed economically to this service.⁶

A contribution of EUR10,000.00 was donated to the Amelia Earhart Fund in Rome in December 2009 from then director, Sonia Albanese, at a premiere screening of the movie "Amelia".

Area 04

The oldest Zonta club of Area 04, and of the whole of Switzerland, is the Zonta Club of Bern. It was founded in 1948 due to the initiative of Magda Lang, who had worked at the Swiss consulate in Canada and in the United States for many years. Further Zonta clubs were established in Basel in 1951, Zurich in 1953 and Schaffhausen in 1955. In 1964, the Zonta Club of Lucerne was founded, followed by the Zonta Club of Vaduz in 1985.

In the 1990s, several new clubs were founded: the Zonta Club Bern Ursa in 1990, the Zonta Clubs of Chur and Liestal in 1996, and the Zonta Club of Eastern Switzerland in 1998. The Zonta Club of Engiadina was formed in 2011. In 2014, the Zonta Club of Eastern Switzerland was dissolved.

Besides Magda Lang, there were other women who pioneered Zonta clubs in Switzerland. Among them were Maud Renfer, founder of the Zonta Club of Basel, Vera Wegelin, who established the Zonta Club of Zurich, and Gertrud Schärner, founder of the Zonta Club of Schaffhausen. Sonja Herting, the first European woman glacier pilot and president of the Zonta Club of Lausanne, also contributed to a number of Zonta clubs in Switzerland. Annaliese (Lule) Grütter from the Zonta Club of Bern was one of the forerunners of women's emancipation in

⁵ Correspondence from Fernanda Gallo Freschi to Wiltrud Walther, forwarded to Eva Nielsen 19 December 2019.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Switzerland. She had already been involved in the foundation of the Swiss Association of Female Academics (Schweizerischer Verband der Akademikerinnen) in 1924.

Zonta and women's suffrage in Switzerland

Switzerland lagged behind Europe regarding women's political rights for a relatively long time. This backwardness stood in stark contrast to Switzerland's democratic tradition as well as to the very progressive measures taken in other areas, such as women's admission to university. Tireless and persistent mobilization of all the women's organizations of Switzerland was required in order to gain the rights to vote and to stand for election. A prominent role was played by the Bernese Zontian Marthe Gosteli. Born in 1917, she served as president of the Bernese Women's Suffrage Club (Bernischer Frauen Stimmrechtsverein) from 1962 until 1968 and as Vice President of the Association of Swiss Women's Clubs (Bund Schweizerischer Frauenvereine) from 1967 until 1971, remaining on its board until 1972. In the decisive years of 1970 and 1971, when the draft for women's suffrage was discussed in parliament and voted on by the Swiss public, Marthe Gosteli was president of the Consortium of the Swiss Women's Associations for the Political Rights of Women (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der schweizerischen Frauenverbände für die politischen Rechte der Frau). Due to her position in this organization, she was able to advocate decisively on the issue of women's suffrage. In 1982, Marthe Gosteli founded the Archive for the History of the Swiss Women's Movement (Archiv zur Geschichte der schweizerischen Frauenbewegung) in her country house, which, through the establishment of the Gosteli Foundation, was funded by an independent body. She died in 2017 at the age of 99.

Women's equality enshrined in Switzerland's Constitution

A further important step towards women's political equality was the Equality Act which, on 14 June 1981, became enshrined in Switzerland's Constitution. The Equality Act guarantees the formal equal treatment of women and men and obligates authorities and lawmakers to eliminate existing instances of discrimination. Here, it was again a Zontian who was crucially involved: Lydia Benz-Burger from the Zonta Club of Zurich. Beginning in 1957, she was on the board of directors of the Women's Suffrage Club Zurich (Frauenstimmrechtsverein Zürich) and editor of "Female Citizen" ("Staatsbürgerin"). From 1960 until 1968, she was president of the press commission of the Swiss Association for Women's Suffrage (Schweizerischer Verband für Frauenstimmrecht). From 1968 until 1971, she was president of the Association for Female Swiss Academics (Verband Schweizer Akademikerinnen) and was a member of Zurich City Council, for the LdU, a list for independent candidates, from 1970 until 1974. A particular concern of Benz-Burger was equal education for both sexes: "There is no female or male work. There is only talent, which can be brought to fruition at work".⁷ From 1975 until 1981 she was president of a committee promoting an initiative called Equal Rights for Man and Woman (Gleiche Rechte für Mann und Frau).

Zonta clubs in District 28 today

Sponsorship of talented young female scientists in natural sciences and IT has been a focus of District 28 clubs. The Zonta clubs in Switzerland and Liechtenstein (Union Intercity) have been awarding the Prix Zonta since 2005. Every two years, this prize worth 30,000 Swiss Francs is awarded to young female scientists who have achieved success in typically male-dominated

⁷ From the programme of the "women's list" of the Canton of Zurich

fields of science, IT, engineering or biochemistry. The aim of the prize is to support the winners as well as to motivate and encourage other young women.

Switzerland, traditionally an immigrant country, has a large share of foreign nationals – over 22 per cent, which is the highest percentage of all European countries. The cultural and social integration of immigrants who bring with them a variety of different experiences, beliefs and values, is a challenge for the federal government and the cantons. Therefore, dealing with the direct consequences of globalization is an important and urgent issue for Switzerland. The Zonta clubs of German-speaking Switzerland also got involved – not just in alleviating female poverty abroad, but also by promoting better integration of foreign women at home.

In 2008, the Zonta Club of Zurich organized, in association with the Artefiz Art Hall of Contemporary Artists and the Zonta Club St. Petersburg, the Zurich Feminnale. For nineteen days, eleven artists from Russia and Belorussia presented their art at the Artefiz Art Hall in Zurich. Thirty per cent of all proceeds went towards The House of Small Mothers in St. Petersburg, an organization that supports under-age pregnant women and under-age mothers. Together with six other Zonta clubs of the “border triangle” (Switzerland, Southern Germany and France), the Zonta Club of Basel awards the Zonta club’s Regional Art Promotion Prize every two years to a young female artist of the region. The aim of this prize is to introduce the young artist’s work to the broader public.

On the occasion of its 60th anniversary on 6 September 2008, the Zonta Club of Bern organized a panel discussion with the title “Compatibility of Family and Career: yes!...but now action is required!” The keynote speaker was federal councilor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, a Zontian herself and cofounder of the Zonta Club of Chur. Before and after the panel discussion, many different organizations presented their work in the foyer of the Town Hall. Members of the Zonta Club of Bern Ursa took part in the “Initiative for family-friendly day schools” (Initiative für familienfreundliche Tagesschulen). Additionally, many clubs, including the Zonta clubs of Bern and Engiadina, fund crèches.

Looking back upon the history of Zonta in German-speaking Switzerland and Liechtenstein, it is evident that Zonta clubs have, from the beginning, played an important role in the advancement of women’s emancipation in Switzerland. Zontians have had a strong presence in the most important phases of the long process of obtaining political equality for Swiss women. Personalities like Marthe Gosteli and Lydia Benz-Burger have a firm place in the history of the Swiss women’s movements. Also, Federal Councilor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf has made history with her acceptance of nomination for election to the federal council in 2007 against the will of her own party, the SVP (Swiss People’s Party). As well as the active participation in the campaigns of ZI, such as the Zonta Says NO to Violence Against Women campaign and the Young Women in Public Affairs Award, the Zonta clubs of Area 4 have been able to set priorities according to their own interests, which reflect the variety and complexity of the Swiss “microcosm”.

ZI Directors from District 28

- 1994–1996: Ingrid Gräfin zu Solms Wildenfels.
- 2012–2014: Anita Schnetzer-Spranger.
- 2016–2018: Sonia Albanese.

Zonta International Conventions in District 28

- 1976: Wiesbaden.

District 28 Conferences

- 1995: San Remo, Italy
- 1997: Vienna, Austria
- 1999: Montpellier, France
- 2001: Venice, Italy
- 2003: Darmstadt, Germany
- 2005: Parma, Italy
- 2007: Luzern, Switzerland
- 2009: Frankfurt am Main, Germany
- 2011: Rome, Italy
- 2013: Winterthur, Switzerland
- 2015: Hanau, Germany
- 2017: Milan, Italy
- 2019: Basel, Switzerland.

Timeline of district history highlights.

1994: Three areas:

- Area 02: Germany and Czech Republic.
- Area 03: Italy and Turkey.
- Area 04: Liechtenstein, Switzerland.

1998: 52 clubs in three areas:

- Area 02: 19 clubs.
- Area 03: 21 clubs.
- Area 04: 12 clubs.

2002: 58 clubs in three areas:

- Area 02: 25 clubs.
- Area 03: 22 clubs.
- Area 04: 11 clubs.

2006: 60 clubs in three areas:

- Area 02: 27 clubs.
- Area 03: 22 clubs.
- Area 04: 11 clubs.

2016: 63 clubs in three areas (Areas 02, 03, and 04). Countries are in the same areas as in 1994.

- Area 02: 29 clubs.
- Area 03: 23 clubs.
- Area 04: 11 clubs.

2018: 1,457 members as of March. 1,412 members as of August.⁸

2019: 1,342 members.⁹

History of the formation of District 28 clubs

Czech Republic

Year Chartered	Club Number	Club Name	Area as of 2018	Closed
1991	1330	Zonta Club of Prague-Bohemia		2018
1993	1413	Zonta Club of Prague City		2001
1993	1441	Zonta Club of Nachad		2001

Germany

Year Chartered	Club Number	Club Name	Area as of 2018	Closed
1954	0322	Zonta Club of Wiesbaden	02	
1956	0353	Zonta Club of Mainz	02	
1959	430	Zonta Club of Schaffhausen	04	
1960	0466	Zonta Club of Bad Homburg	02	
1963	0515	Zonta Club of Frankfurt/Main	02	
1975	0767	Zonta Club of Darmstadt	02	
1975	0770	Zonta Club of Hanau	02	
1977	0818	Zonta Club of Herborn		
1980	0951	Zonta Club of Rheingau-Rheinhessen Area	02	
1980	0955	Zonta Club of Koblenz	02	
1986	1162	Zonta Club of Bad Nauheim-Friedberg	02	
1987	1179	Zonta Club of Bad Soden-Kronberg	02	
1990	1295	Zonta Club of Marburg*	02	
1992	1393	Zonta Club of Burg Staufenberg/Giessen Area	02	
1994	1486	Zonta Club of Ludwigshafen-Pfalz	02	
1996	1530	Zonta Club of Frankfurt II Rhein-Main	02	
1996	1546	Zonta Club of Saarbrucken		2018
1999	1632	Zonta Club of Landau-Suedpfalz	02	
2000	1652	Zonta Club of Saarpfalz		2019
2000	1667	Zonta Club of Wetzlar	02	
2001	1698	Zonta Club of Bad Vilbel-Karben	02	
2002	1711	Zonta Club of Trier	02	
2002	1718	Zonta Club of Koblenz Rhein-Mosel	02	
2002	1722	Zonta Club of Bad Bergzabern	02	
2003	1749	Zonta Club of Saarlouis	02	
2005	1801	Zonta Club of Neustadt an der Weinstrasse	02	

⁸ ZI Directory online

⁹ ZI Directory online

2006	1809	Zonta Club of Speyer-Germersheim	02	
2008	1850	Zonta Club of Nidda-Oberhessen	02	
2011	1883	Zonta Club of Wiesbaden-Rheingau		2019
2016	1958	Zonta Club of Seligenstadt	02	

* Name changed from the Zonta Club of Marburg-Giessen in 1998.

Italy

Year chartered	Club Number	Club Name	Area as of 2018	Closed
1964	0518	Zonta Club of Milano		2014
1972	0686	Zonta Club of Naples Area	03	
1977	0805	Zonta Club of Taranto I	03	
1979	0889	Zonta Club of Milano-Sant Ambrogio	03	
1980	0917	Zonta Club of Bari	03	
1982	0998	Zonta Club of Rome I, Italy	03	
1982	1011	Zonta Club of Bologna	03	
1982	1030	Zonta Club of Parma	03	
1984	1097	Zonta Club of Bitonto Area		2009
1985	1122	Zonta Club of Rome II		2016
1986	1142	Zonta Club of Reggio Emilia Area	03	
1988	1195	Zonta Club of Venezia Area	03	
1988	1205	Zonta Club of Triggiano Area		2013
1989	1247	Zonta Club of Barletta-Trani	03	
1989	1248	Zonta Club of Gioia del Colle/ Bari District 28		2008
1989	1255	Zonta Club of Taranto II District 28		1997
1989	1259	Zonta Club of Latina		2011
1990	1287	Zonta Club of Roma Parioli III	03	
1991	1332	Zonta Club of Firenze Area		2006
1992	1361	Zonta Club of St Angelo di Brolo Area, Sicily		2011
1996	1552	Zonta Club of Cremona Area	03	
2002	1726	Zonta Club of Cosenza	03	
2003	1754	Zonta Club of Roma Ostia		2016
2007	1822	Zonta Club of Potenza	03	
2007	1823	Zonta Club of Martina Franca		2018
2012	1897	Zonta Club of Palermo ZYZ	03	
2015	1934	Zonta Club of Palermo Triscele	03	
2015	1935	Zonta Club of Matera	03	
2016	1951	Zonta Club of Roma Capitolium	03	

Liechtenstein

Year Chartered	Club Number	Club Name	Area as of 2018	Closed
1985	1128	Zonta Club of Vaduz	04	

Switzerland

Year	Club	Club Name	Area as	Closed
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Chartered	Number		of 2018	
1948	0205	Zonta Club of Bern	04	
1951	0268	Zonta Club of Basel	04	
1953	0308	Zonta Club of Zurich	04	
1959	0430	Zonta Club of Schaffhausen	04	
1964	0527	Zonta Club of Lucerne	04	
1990	1282	Zonta Club of Luzern Landschaft	04	
1990	1302	Zonta Club of Bern Ursa	04	
1996	1529	Zonta Club of Liestal	04	
1996	1545	Zonta Club of Chur	04	
1998	1600	Zonta Club of Ostschweiz District 28		2014
2011	1879	Zonta Club of Engiadina	04	

Turkey

Year Chartered	Club Number	Club Name	Area as of 2018	Closed
1991	1342	Zonta Club of Istanbul	03	

e-Club

Year Chartered	Club Number	Club Name	Area as of 2018	Closed
2017	1969	Zonta e-Club of Italy	03	