



## 20<sup>th</sup> EUROPEAN MEETING Split, 18<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2025

### MEETING MINUTES

The 20th European Meeting in Split was intended for the National Representatives and their Deputies of the following invited European Countries: Austria, Belgium/Luxembourg, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, FAMAT, Finland, Germany, Great Britain & Ireland, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, N. Macedonia, Norway, Romania and Moldova, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the DC of Iceland.

The 20th European Meeting was entitled **Motivate and Grow**.

### PARTICIPANTS

**Austria & Czech Republic** - Christine Bauer (NR), Gabriele Schruppf (EM Mentor)

**Belgium** - Charlotte de Vos (EM Mentor), Marie-Jeanne Laurent-Schroeder (NR)

**Bulgaria** - Rosica Jordanova (NR), Yanislava Ilieva (PBD)

**Croatia** - Nives Sklepić Premuš (NR), Ana Crnković (DNR) Sandra Neretljaković (PBD) Snježana Petrović Tkalčec (PBD)

**Denmark** - Judy Ann Rieneck (NP), Birgitte Bach

**Finland** - Eve Pylkkanen (NR), Pia Helkio (DNR)

**Germany** - Christiane Steinbrenner (NR), Sofia Kutsopapa (DNR)

**Great Britain & Ireland** - Pat Russell (NR)

**Greece** - Sissy Avgerinou (EM Mentor), Maria Nikolidaki (NR)

**Italy** - Donatella Polizzi Nicolich (EM Mentor), Luisa Vinciguerra (PBD)

**The Netherlands** - Marjolijn van den Busken-Both (NP), Nathalie Gruben (PNR), Marlies Arnoldus Luiten, Anita Meerdink Vlassak (OtW UNiTE Team)

**Northern Cyprus** - Zehra Deniz Yüksel (DP), Isin Ramadan Cemil, Munever Dizam, Imren Gurbasar (PDC)

**Romania & Moldova** - Veronica Claudia Jianu (DC)

**Sweden** - Ingrid Haggards (NR), Birgitta Salmen (NC)

**Switzerland & Liechtenstein** - Rosita Geiger (NR), Franziska Zaugg (DNR)

**Turkey** - Ilay Yilmazlar (VP), Iclal Kardicali (NR)

### PREPARATORY PHASE

Prior to the live meeting in Split, an online preparatory phase was conducted. A Zoom meeting was organized during which participants selected and discussed one of four workshop topics:

1. National Representatives
2. Proposals
3. Membership
4. Motivate & Grow

The four topics were addressed in advance by four working groups of 8–9 participants. Their findings were presented and discussed on 19 September. Throughout the summer, each group held several Zoom meetings to prepare their presentations. All registered members selected the topic they wished to work on. Each working group followed a structured process to explore its assigned theme through open discussion, collaboration, and research. This included reviewing the current situation in their respective countries, summarizing the European context, and identifying relevant developments and trends. The groups then worked collectively to define key challenges and specific needs related to their topic. An essential component of the process was identifying inspiring and successful initiatives - practical examples that have proven effective and could serve as models for others.

Each group prepared a concise summary presentation for the plenary session, followed by open discussion. The dialogue throughout the preparatory phase was constructive, respectful, and focused on practical solutions.

## **AGENDA:**

### DAY I, 19<sup>th</sup> of September

1. Welcome Greetings
2. Approval of the 19<sup>th</sup> EM Minutes
3. Session 1 – National Representatives PPT & Discussion
4. Session 2 – Proposals PPT & Discussion
5. Session 3 – Membership PPT & Discussion
6. Session 4 – Motivate & Grow PPT & Discussion

### DAY II, 20<sup>th</sup> of September

1. Orange the World
2. Breakout Sessions
3. Wrap Up and Call to Action Minutes
4. E-Clubs PPT Luisa Vinciguerra
5. Members Pool – Christiane Steinbrenner
6. Inner Wheel Ladies and Music – Iclal Kardicali
7. Announcement of the next EM organizer
8. Participants Reflection and Closing Remarks

The 20<sup>th</sup> EU NR meeting began at 9,30 a.m. The individual introductions were held the evening before, so the morning session started immediately with the scheduled agenda.

## **Welcome**

On behalf of the organizing team PBD Sandra Neretljaković extended a warm welcome to participants explaining the organizers approach to encourage independent group workshops via zoom and wished a fruitful live continuation in Split. On behalf of the Croatian district 191 NR Nives Sklepić Premuš presented key information about district activities and extended her welcome to all attendees.

## **Approval of Previous Minutes**

PBD Snježana Petrović-Tkalčec, presented the key points from the 19<sup>th</sup> EM Minutes (previously circulated by email). The minutes were unanimously approved.

## ***SESSION 1***

### **NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE ROLE**

**GROUP 1 members:** Christiane Steinbrenner NR Germany; Charlotte de Vos EM Mentor, Belgium; Gabriele Schrupf EM Mentor, Austria & Czech Republic; Birgite Bach NR Denmark; Eve Pylkkanen NR Finland; Rosica Jordanova NR Bulgaria;

**Presenter - CHRISTIANE STEINBRENNER NR Germany**

The group examined the role of the National Representative within the framework of the International Inner Wheel Constitution and Guidelines.

The purpose is to strengthen Inner Wheel in Europe by setting standards for NR and by supporting IW structures, fostering the cooperation across Europe; explain different way NR is integrated in European countries and marked it on the map – 9 countries without NGB but with NR and 10 countries with NGB. Based on IIW Constitution and Guidelines the position of NR is only briefly defined. However, the group counted down all the duties and responsibilities of NR in each different position with all the advantages and disadvantages, trying to set the standards; pointed out soft skill as very important, be a visionary and source of ideas; conclusion was that NR should inspire, innovate and motivate, even be an ambassador for international affairs, so far more complex role than it is in the constitution. It was highlighted that cooperation among NR's in Europe should continue throughout the year via zoom, working on global UN women campaign Orange the World, on proposals, new generation e-clubs, new strategies to gain new members... Discussion that followed described the differences in each country regarding the NR role and all was submitted in summary made by Christiane Steinbrenner (att)

#### **Conclusion:**

The NR role is significantly broader and more complex than currently defined. Ongoing European cooperation via Zoom throughout the year was strongly supported, including collaboration on UN campaigns, proposals, e-clubs, and membership strategies.

## ***SESSION 2***

### **PROPOSALS FOR THE CONVENTION**

**GROUP 2 members:** Rosita Geiger NR Switzerland, Janislava Ilieva PBD Bulgaria, Zivka Stojanova PBD Bulgaria, Rosalba Tufano DNR Italy, Judy Ann Rieneck NR Denmark, Donatella Politzi Nikolich EM Mentor Italy, Ana Crnković DNR Croatia

Proposals were presented by the proposer and immediately discussed looking for supporter if needed – ppt in attachment

## **Presenter - ROSITA GEIGER NR Switzerland**

Rosita introduced the group and first proposal – from the last convention - 2 candidates for the club president in the same year

Pat Russel – GB&I already doing in that way – do we need that proposal, as if it suites us in clubs we just do that rather than losing the members; Germany had the problem with 2 names in the directory which is not allowed, what about presenting the club in the country or internationally, what about problem of 2 qualifications... Sofia and Franziska agreed to be written and it means to be allowed, some propose that vice president can do the same job, clubs have to organize for themselves as it is the best for them, but to be allowed we need to be written, mostly one is a leader and other one does not want to step out;

*VOTING DELEGATES* – DNR if replacing NR – DNR as elected by all clubs in the country, in all situations she is replacing the NR, need to have the right to vote on the Convention;

Discussion: Swiss - Couldn't vote on the convention; DNR is elected and represents NR everywhere; Jeane Marie – can be approved from IIW, but is not written in procedure of convention; All agreed, seconder – Denmark, Turkey

### *QUALIFICATION, NOMINATIONS – IGB*

SWITZERLAND - ROSITA - Proposal for IGB - max 2 members from the same country in the IGB – in comparison with proposal from Bulgaria, Croatia – 1 member – which is maybe too restrictive in practice, 2 is more flexible if CC or treasurer are already from the same country

Discussion: Yanislava, Marlies, Sissy, Gaby, Franziska. Marlies - 2 from same country in the executive, 1 country can only nominee for 2 positions, country can choose 2, change voting in nomination papers, supporter, work together this 2 proposals in the proposal and amendment; adjust the text into positive motivation, if we are international organization, let's show it in our IGB; Gaby – club or district Austria & Czech Republic supporter;

BULGARIA - YANISLAVA – country can send 1 nomination for member in EC – 4 officers – as we have to be International IW. Proposal is reformed in positive motivation during the discussion and approved as better one.

ITALY - DONATELLA – General motion – the rule for all our elections – after the election to make public the votes for IGB – we have to be transparent as we are a democratic organization.

ITALY - DONATELLA – Proposed by D 209 Italy – International conventions to be organized hybrid, allow IW members to participate, if it's necessary in virtual. IIW has enough funds to partially finance organizing convention to enable more members to join the convention, expenses are too high

Discussion – Donatella, Marlies, Sissy, Franziska, Pat, Charlotte – business sessions to be done in hybrid, no need for young members to be in live on the convention, but to join hybrid – enlarge the number of participants

Donatella, Sandra, Marlies, Pia, Sissy, Natalie, Iclal – NR takes no part in running the district – make proposal to move the sentence out from the constitution, give explanation of the role of NR – do both as proposals

GB&I – PAT - DUAL MEMBERSHIP – a member of 2 clubs

Sofia, Natalie, Pat, Sissy, Marlies, Gaby, Luisa – not in the bylaws but in constitution, vote in one club, e-club as dual membership example

Yanislava – suggestion to EM organizers - IIW President and CC invite to join EM, Sofia – include some other members with more experience

### **Conclusion:**

Debate was active and constructive. Several proposals were reformulated positively during discussion to reflect the international character of Inner Wheel and ensure practicality.

## ***SESSION 3***

### **MEMBERSHIP ANALYSIS**

**GROUP 3 members:** Sissy Avgerinou EM Mentor, Pat Russel NR GB&I, Luisa Vinciguerra PBD Italy, Marjolijn van den Busken VNP Netherlands, Franziska Zaugg DNR Switzerland, Nives Sklepić Premuš NR Croatia

**Presenters - FRANZISKA ZAUGG DNR Switzerland & MARJOLIJN VAN DEN BUSKEN BOTH NP The Netherlands**

Group 3 conducted an advance survey on membership recruitment across individual European Inner Wheel countries.

#### **Results:**

Overall, the past year recorded an increase of approximately 560 new members. However, this was overshadowed by a decline of approximately 3,600 members. This negative trend is a matter of serious concern. It is the result of multiple factors, and it must be addressed decisively. During a series of Zoom meetings, the group analysed the membership situation in all European countries and summarised the findings in a PowerPoint presentation.

#### **Key Findings:**

- Five districts have closed; several others have merged or reduced in size.
- Many clubs are ageing, both in membership and leadership.
- Leadership succession is becoming increasingly challenging.
- There is a clear need to better demonstrate and communicate the core values of our organisation.
- The organisational structure should be simplified to become more active, flexible, and effective.
- Dual membership could be explored as an opportunity.
- Stronger focus on action and meaningful connection is essential.

#### **Discussion Highlights**

(Sissy, Sandra, Christiane, Natalie, Franziska, Marjolijn, Gaby, Judy, Munever, Pat, Marlies, Pia)

The discussion focused on practical, achievable steps to make club meetings more engaging and relevant:

- Developing educational programmes.
- Organising a “Bring a Friend” meeting once per year.
- Emphasising the value of meeting inspiring women whom members would not otherwise encounter.
- Reinforcing the fundamental importance of friendship.
- Encouraging members to change seating at each meeting (e.g., drawing numbers upon arrival) to foster new connections.
- Dividing into small discussion groups based on shared interests.
- Recognising that younger members are especially motivated by hands-on projects that create visible impact in the community.

### **Conclusion:**

Small, consistent steps at club level can make a meaningful difference. Clubs must remain places of genuine friendship, inspiration, and purposeful action. Without renewal and adaptability, decline will continue. With clarity, courage, and practical measures, growth is still achievable.

## ***SESSION 4***

### **MOTIVATE AND GROW**

**GROUP 4 members:** Pia Helkio NR Finland, Christine Bauer NR Austria & Czech Republic, Nathalie Gruben NR The Netherlands, Sofia Kustopapa DNR Germany, Ingrid Haggards NR Sweden, Maria Nikolidaki NR Greece, Iclal Kardicali PBD Turkey, Birgitta Salmen DNR Sweden

#### **Presenter - SOFIA KUSTOPAPA DNR Germany**

After outlining the key reasons behind the ageing of many European clubs and the steady decline in membership, attention turned to practical solutions. The focus was clear: renewal is possible, but it requires courage and action. **Inner Wheel must be enjoyable.** Fellowship has always been at the heart of the organisation, and that spirit must remain alive and visible.

Every club should reassess its structure and long-standing habits. If necessary, replace lecture-style meetings with formats that encourage genuine interaction and exchange among members. Dialogue builds connection; passive listening does not.

Younger members can be approached through universities and professional networks. A good example is the “Second Door” project in the Netherlands, where traditional lunchtime or afternoon meetings run alongside newly introduced evening meetings, with occasional joint events. This flexible structure respects established members while opening space for a new generation.

Meetings can also evolve in content and atmosphere. Theatre, music and cinema visits, boat trips, exhibition tours and cultural outings create shared experiences that strengthen bonds - far more effectively than routine, uninspiring gatherings. New members should never feel pressured to immediately take on offices or heavy responsibilities. Commitment grows naturally when people feel welcomed and valued.

Additional ideas include organising annual holiday trips and offering interactive formats. In Sweden, “paint & wine” evenings have proven especially popular. Clubs can also invite prospective members to contribute their own skills and interests - whether handicrafts, fitness sessions, yoga, walking groups or other activities. This approach fosters ownership and participation from the outset. The Netherlands – clubs working together on projects, lady circle - young women connected

E-clubs and growing through them - project orientation

### **Conclusion:**

The way forward is clear: preserve the spirit, modernise the approach, and lead with confidence. Growth will follow where openness, creativity and courage are present.

## **DAY II**

### **1. ORANGE THE WORLD**

#### **IW UNiTE Team**

Four members of IW OtW team was presented on EM in Split; Anita Meerdink (team leader), Sandra Neretljaković, Marlies Arnoldus Luiten and Christiane Steinbrenner. Anita and Sandra prepared and presented the PowerPoint presentation and motivational questions actively encouraging participants to engage, contribute ideas, and take ownership of the campaign.

#### **Inner Wheel’s Impact within the UN Campaign UNiTE & Orange the World**

From **25 November to 10 December**, during the 16 Days of Activism, we raise awareness and promote a fundamental shift in mindset - without taboos and without judgment. Violence that often remains unrecognized must be acknowledged as a societal issue. To create real change, we must also involve men in our activities.

Anita and Sandra emphasized that *Orange the World* is part of Inner Wheel’s DNA - rooted in **friendship, service, and internationality**. These are our foundations. Our role is to make the invisible visible, to connect local initiatives into one strong global movement, and to understand that shame is a social process that must be transformed. We must encourage open dialogue, foster hope, and show courage.

Key questions raised:

- What can we do?
- How do we respond?
- How do we create lasting impact?

#### **Proposed Actions**

- Form dedicated OtW campaign teams.
- Empower clubs and members to take initiative.
- Share ideas and best practices across clubs.
- Collaborate actively.

- Reach out through networks and platforms approved by UN Women.

A film showcasing various Inner Wheel activities from 2024 was presented.

## **Global Activity 2025 – A Visible Worldwide Force**

In 2025, we aim to demonstrate our global strength through a coordinated initiative: An **Awareness Walk/Run for Orange the World**, organized on the same day across hundreds of cities worldwide. One message. One movement. One visible force. Together, we can create meaningful change.

### **Group Work & Key Ideas**

After the presentation, participants returned to their previous groups to discuss key questions during the coffee break. Each group presented its conclusions.

#### **Group 1 – presenter Christiane Steinbrenner**

How can we connect IW members globally with others/groups? - “orange dinner”, contact universities or schools

How to be visible after the OtW walk? - spread message through all year

#### **Group 2 – presenter Rosita Geiger**

What creative ways can we use to show global IW movement? - invite famous people to join, show orange – with clothes, orange umbrellas, caps, vests, flowers in orange for hope, nail polish in orange, hats, flowers

What can clubs do after the campaign to stay visible? - talk and speak about it, print the QR codes on cards and spread them in bars and restaurants

#### **Group 3 – presenter Franziska Zaugg**

How do we cope with other activities like breast cancer - organize a lecture or conference with police and psychologists and spread info

Sharing ideas - the most important action - share regularly during the year and through all media, talk show, short videos on social media, regular posting on social media, same hashtags - not noticed only locally, we are a part of worldwide movement, record videos as it remains as a record, later can be used for annual reports..

#### **Group 4 – presenter Sofia Kutsopapa**

##### **Engaging men and boys - focus on values:**

- “I love my mother. I want her safe.”
- “Listen and believe. Don’t judge.”

##### **Education as the foundation:**

- Work with schools.

- Teach young people clearly what violence is and how to recognize it.

#### **Staying visible after the walk/run:**

- Make OtW an ongoing Inner Wheel topic.
- Involve influencers and singers.
- Use social media strategically.
- Promote mindset change, awareness, and solidarity.

#### **Conclusion:**

Inner Wheel has the structure, values, and international network to lead responsibly. What is required now is commitment, coordination, and persistence. If we remain consistent and courageous, we will not only raise awareness but we will contribute to real and lasting change.

### **4. PRESENTATION E – CLUBS BY LUISA VINCIGUERRA**

A PowerPoint presentation on E-clubs was prepared and presented by PBD Luisa Vinciguerra, including references to the relevant proposals. The presentation sparked an engaging discussion among participants, highlighting the potential for more modern approaches and greater flexibility in membership models. Participants shared thoughtful reflections on the criteria, structure, and requirements for establishing E-clubs, emphasizing the importance of clarity, consistency, and maintaining the core values of Inner Wheel.

#### **Dual Membership**

The topic of dual membership was also discussed. It was recognized as a potential extension of Inner Wheel's reach and influence. However, concerns were raised that such a model could result in artificial growth rather than genuine, sustainable development rooted in active engagement and commitment.

#### **Video presentation by Donatella Polizzi Nikolich IIW BD**

**Donatella** presented her video prepared for Non-districted clubs, containing essential and well-structured information about Inner Wheel. The presentation was clear, concise, and highly useful as a reference and promotional tool.

### **5. CHRISTIANNE STEINBRENNER - INTERNATIONAL IW CONTACT POOL**

German members have been working on this project for four years. National Representatives (NRs) are invited to complete the information and publish it on the homepage so that German clubs can see which members are open to visits or meetings with IW members included in the pool. This initiative is not intended to function as a tourist agency. Questions were raised by Marlies and Natalie regarding whether individual members can join and how privacy will be safeguarded.

## **6. INNER WHEEL LADIES AND MUSIC – PRESENTED BY ICLAL KARDICALI**

A unique and creative presentation illustrating the structure of Inner Wheel both figuratively and metaphorically, using the different sections of an orchestra.

## **7. SELECTION OF THE HOST FOR THE 2026 EUROPEAN MEETING**

Two candidatures were presented for hosting the 2026 European Meeting of National Representatives: **Basel, Switzerland**, presented by Franziska Zaugg and Rosita Geiger, and **Izmir, Turkey**, presented by Iclal Kardicali and Ilay Yilmazlar.

Both proposals were warmly welcomed and appreciated by the participants. Following the presentations, a vote was conducted among the participants. The result was tied (8–8). In accordance with the agreed procedure, the final decision was therefore made by drawing lots.

After consideration, it was agreed that the **2026 European Meeting of National Representatives will be hosted in Izmir, Turkey.**

Participants were also invited to share suggestions for possible improvements to the organization of future European Meetings. Printed questionnaires were distributed, encouraging members to reflect on what had inspired them most, what they found particularly memorable, and to provide constructive feedback for the continued development of future meetings.

Meeting Minutes prepared by;

Snježana Petrović Tkalčec IIW PBD

Sandra Neretljaković IIW PBD