



ZONTA INTERNATIONAL

District 13

District 13 History

District 13 was officially formed in 1962 and consisted at that time of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. However, the first two clubs in the district were chartered as early as 1935, the first one in Copenhagen, Denmark and the second in Stockholm, Sweden. The first club in Iceland was chartered in Reykjavik in 1941, the first in Norway in Oslo, 1947 and the first in Finland in 1947.

During the early years, the Nordic clubs did not have regular communication with Zonta International and there was a general feeling of independence concerning club bylaws and service projects. Only from 1954 and onwards did the district send a few delegates to Conventions on a regular basis. However, the clubs in the Nordic countries met with each other regularly, and in 1958 - 62 a Nordic council with a representative from each country was already acting as kind of District board.

With more clubs and better and easier communication, visits from Zonta International presidents, contacts at Conventions, and more Zonta members with an international outlook, the idea of becoming a district within Zonta International became an issue. The Nordic meeting in Oslo in 1961 thus became very important. Here it was decided to form a closer connection to the international organization and change from "non-districted" to district status, however the Nordic way of running the clubs etc. was to be kept intact. During the following years, bylaws for the district were agreed upon and gradually Zonta International as an organization has become more integrated in the life of clubs and members.

During these years, where more women received a good education and became active in jobs outside the home, more clubs were organized, but mainly in Sweden and Finland. This meant that in 1986, with approximately 4000 members, the district had become unmanageable. It was therefor decided to divide the district into three districts, where Finland and Sweden were to be District 20 and 21 respectively and Denmark, Norway and Iceland were left in District 13.

The new District 13 consisted of only 20 clubs in three countries divided by water: 7 clubs in Denmark, 4 in Iceland and 9 in Norway. Totally the district had less than 700 members, and each country was an area. Previously the common language had been English, now it was decided to use "Scandinavian" as the official language of the district in writing and in meetings.

The new and smaller District 13 was initially quite concerned about the future without their two "big sisters", and knowing that the considerable distance between the three countries would make communications and meetings more difficult and expensive. However, contrary to the expectations of some Zontians, District 13 has prospered both concerning members, clubs and activities.

In 1994, after the fall of the "iron curtain", a new country was welcomed into District 13: Lithuania with 3 clubs as of May 1998. This means that District 13 now has a total of 40 clubs. However at least 3 more clubs are presently being organized, and they are expected to be chartered in the coming months, bringing the total to 43 clubs in 1998: 21 clubs in Denmark, 7 in Iceland, 12 in Norway, and 3 in Lithuania. In order to spread the word about Zonta International and the value of service organizations in a democracy, the clubs in Lithuania are being sponsored for the first years by the rest of the District 13., although Lithuania is still part of Area Denmark, renamed to Area Denmark + Lithuania.

Totally District 13 now has about 1250 members plus more than 50 on their way in the months to come, so the number of members have almost doubled during the 12 years after the new District 13 was born.

Clubs and Areas have their local service projects. Among the larger projects may be mentioned:

- Economical support from the Icelandic clubs to families with children suffering long term illnesses.
- Economical support from the Norwegian clubs to help women with rheumatism, especially pregnant women and women with small children, as well as support to a research project on the effects on women after cancer treatments.
- Economical support from the Danish clubs for establishing a model physiotherapy room in the University Hospital in Vilnius for children and for training of their parents, as well as economic help in getting Crises centers (shelters) for women (ZISVAW) started in Lithuania. This is a new concept in Lithuania. The Lithuanian clubs are in charge of the organization.



Kirsten Theisen, District 13 Governor

Ref: Valborg von Ehrenheim, Zonta International District 13 development until 1986