

**Chapter 4**

**Zonta International District XIII 1962 – 1986**

Eva Nielsen, reviewed by Ulla Mikkola and Bodil Segura-Ulate

**District XIII 1962-1975**

In 1962, Zonta International Convention in New Orleans adopted the establishing of District XIII comprising two clubs in Denmark, eleven clubs in Finland, two clubs in Iceland, two clubs in Norway and fourteen in Sweden. (Zonta International Convention also adopted District XIV comprising the clubs in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, England and France)

From 31 clubs in 1962, District XIII grew to comprise 57 clubs in 1975, in Denmark 2 clubs, in Iceland 3 clubs, in Norway 4 clubs, in Sweden 24 clubs and in Finland 24 clubs. In Iceland, ZC Selfoss was organized in October 1972; ZC Reykjavik was the SOM club. In Norway, Maaghild Haarberg and Barbara Jakhelin, ZC Oslo, organized a new club in Trondheim in 1967, which was chartered in February 1968. ZC Oslo II was organized in June 1974. (No further information found, the club disbanded 2012).

District conferences were held every second year and European Meetings every fourth year. The language of the European meetings was English.

The service project, Support to a Vocational and Teacher training Center in Ramallah, proposed by the Nordic Zonta Council in 1961, and adopted at the 1962 Zonta International Convention, was recommended to the clubs at the European Meetings and several clubs donated to this project. The mother of the Ramallah project was Helvi Sipilä, who became acquainted with the situation of the Palestinians when she visited the area as representative of World Girl Scout Association.

Even if they had worked together in the Nordic Zonta Council, the Nordic Zonta clubs had different approaches to the new District XIII Bylaws, which were not finally adopted until 1967. Should the district bylaws and the proceedings be in English or in Scandinavian? Could the governor represent an area, or was each area to be represented by their AD? Should each **club** have a vote at the district conference or should each **area** have a vote?

The language in District XIII became Scandinavian, which meant either Danish, Norwegian or Swedish slowly spoken and distinctly pronounced. In March 1959, the Finnish Zontians established the Secretariat of Finnish Zontians, which worked until 1986; first to assist the Finnish representative in Nordic Zonta Council and since 1962 to assist the Finnish representative in District XIII Board and to promote the connections between the Finnish Zonta clubs and Zonta International

The eldest Nordic club, ZC Copenhagen, wanted one area one vote; all other Nordic clubs wanted “One club, one vote”. It is easily understood, why there were these differences. In the opinion of ZC Copenhagen it was impossible to create new Zonta clubs in Denmark at the same rate as clubs popped up in Sweden and Finland, so ZC Copenhagen wanted each area to have one vote regardless of how many clubs were in the area. It was a way to try to maintain influence, which of course could not be accepted by clubs in the other areas, neither could the other Danish club accept one area one vote.

There were also different opinions on what sort of an international organization Zonta International was or should be. Again, ZC Copenhagen clearly stated that they wanted their own interpretation stressing the network between Zontians was more important than Zonta as an organization advocating for women´s rights and empowering women through international service projects.

The debate on the meaning of “Internationalism” showed some tensions in the organization, of which both PIP Helvi Sipilä (1968-70) and ZI President 1972-74 Harriette Yeckel were aware. At the district conference in 1973, Harriette Yeckel gave a speech on responsibility. Among other items, she stressed that European Zontians “*do not do nearly as much as you should, to assume your share of common responsibility which each Zontian, the world over, has for our international service projects.”* Moreover, “*with increased rights and privileges in Zonta, go increased responsibilities on your part.”*

Harriette Yeckel ´s speech in Oslo caused great anger in District XIII. Governor Annikki Mäkinen met with PIP Helvi Sipilä in Helsinki to discuss the speech. PIP Helvi had not attended the district meeting, and she had heard little of the speech until she read it in the Zontian. Governor Annikki described PIP Helvi ´s reaction in a letter to the district board dated 9 September 1973*. “My dear friends I can tell you, it was very hard on her, she took it highly personally - which also was the intention of the speech. ZI Executive Committee has almost ten years ago accepted the way clubs in District XIII handle the Ramallah Project and donations to this project. It has functioned satisfactorily; however, HQ has not registered our donations. Harriette was not on the committee when decision was taken during Ruth Knight’s biennium (1964-66), and she is not well informed. Helvi was very upset and wanted to answer Harriette´s speech in the Zontian. She promised we will see the text before it will be published…”* The minutes of the district board meeting 29 May 1974 shows that Governor Annikki had received PIP Helvi‘s letter meant to be published; which it was not. With Helvi‘s accept, she read the letter aloud to the board members. (The letter is not in D-XIII archives and no further explanation is in the minutes.)

The theme of the 1975 district conference was **“Equal Career Opportunities – Fiction or Fact?”** The district board decided to publish all papers from the conference i.e. the lectures, minutes of the debate and all proposals made by the clubs. The publication was ready in December 1975 and each club received a copy. **Honorary member PIP Helvi Sipilä brought the publication to the United Nations as a contribution from the European Zontians because of the “International Women´s Year”**

**District XIII 1975-1986**

The number of clubs in Sweden and Finland in 1976 was the same: 24 clubs in each country, while the clubs in the remaining three countries only added up to nine; 2 clubs in Denmark, 3 clubs in Iceland and 4 clubs in Norway. Over time, the number of clubs grew in all the Nordic countries; however, the lack of balance in the number of clubs was the same at the end of the period. In 1986, Sweden had 44 and Finland 43 clubs; Denmark had 8, Iceland 4 and Norway 9. The imbalance in number of clubs did not prevent the division of the district, the structure of the International Board did. With the Bylaws amendments effective as of July 1986 District XIII was divided into District 13 Denmark, Iceland and Norway, District 20 Finland and District 21 Sweden.

It was not an easy job to be governor of District XIII in the period 1976 – 86. The total area of the district was huge and the number of clubs expanded fast, modern technological communication was in its very beginning and travelling still very expensive. The five governors in this period were from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. None came from Iceland.

During the decade, the debates about the objects of Zonta continued; many Nordic clubs still wanted to have their own interpretation, and stressed more than once that Zonta must allow for different cultures and ways of life. Many Nordic Zontians wanted Zonta to be the network where they could share experiences and ideas on business leadership, where they could discuss education of women and career opportunities. Of course, they appreciated women´s rights, but they did not see this as a first priority for Zonta. However, it is also possible to see another trend, Nordic Zontians putting their names up for the highest positions in Zonta. After having served as second and first vice president Helvi Sipilä, ZC Helsinki I, was Zonta International President during the biennium 1968-1970. During the last biennium of the decade Annikki Mäkinen, ZC Helsinki II served as International President. They wanted to make Zonta International a strong, influential NGO advocating for women´s rights in cooperation with the UN.

**Attitudes and Background of the European Career Women, a Survey among the European Members of Zonta International.**

In 1977 -1978, Zonta International researched and launched a publication with the title “Attitudes and Background of European Career Women, a Survey among the European Members of Zonta International”. PIP Helvi Sipilä explains the background in the preface. . “From the early 1950s until her death, Dr. Gertie Deneke, ZC Basel, acted as Zonta International´s observer at the United Nations in Geneva. In this capacity, she followed the activities of the United Nations in all fields of interest to Zonta International. These included all questions related to the status of women. Dr. Gertie Deneke passed away in September 1974. In her will, she had expressed her wish that part of her legacy be used for the purpose of International Women´s Year.” The governors of the two European Districts and the European members of the Executive Committee of Zonta International, agreed to the proposal that the study would be undertaken by the Institute of Social Psychology of the University of Helsinki, Finland, and the necessary questionnaires could be sent to all Zonta Clubs of Europe. From the minutes of the District XIII Board meeting in February 1977, we can see that more than fifty percent of the questionnaires that were returned in the research came from District XIII.

**Zonta International Scholarship Project (ZIS) 1977 - 1982**

In 1977, the District XIII Conference body in Reykjavik adopted a proposal from the Zonta clubs in Gothenburg regarding a new international service project to be presented at the Denver Convention 1978. It was a revolving project, the goal of which was to educate women in developing countries to become teachers, instructors, or coaches, who afterwards would educate women in their own countries. Unfortunately, the Denver Convention body did not approve the proposal; however, they promised District XIII that it would be on the agenda for the Washington Convention 1980 without the need for a new motion.

District XIII appointed a committee and named the project “Zonta International Scholarship” (ZIS). Past Governor Karen-Margrethe Ahlmann-Ohlsen ZC Copenhagen I was chair of the ZIS committee; the other members were Valborg von Ehrenheim ZC Malmö and Ingrid Rydgren. From time to time, there were other members. The first ZIS Committee meeting was March 8, 1980, much too late for presentation of the ZIS project at the Washington Convention. However, the committee continued to work on the project.

During spring 1980, the committee wrote to nineteen Zonta clubs in Africa and Asia to seek their opinion of the project and to receive their ideas. PIP Helvi Sipilä, the then UN Assistant General Secretary, and UNESCO received a letter from the ZIS Committee asking if UN Voluntary Fund might be a partner for the ZIS project. During 1980 convention, Karen- Margrethe Ahlmann-Ohlsen organized a meeting for delegates from Districts XII, XVII and Region II, as well as meetings with delegates from District XIV and members of the International Service Committee.

At the District Conference in Turku (Åbo) 1981, the delegates adopted, “Draft Proposal for Resolution at the San Diego Convention 1982”. The ZIS project goals were to help women in developing countries starting in Asian countries with educational grants or financial support to local educational projects concentrating primarily on education, home economics and business. Women wanting to study in their own countries would have a priority. A Committee appointed by Zonta International and with local representatives for the receiver regions would select the women.

In November 1981, Karen-Margrethe Ahlmann-Ohlsen presented the ZIS project at the District XVII Conference in Bangkok, where the conference body approved the project. The ZIS Committee held three meetings after the Turku (Åbo) Conference before, on 9 January 1982, forwarding a Plan of Action for the Initial Stage of a ZIS project with a budget, comments and attachments to the chairs of International Resolutions Committee, Long Range Planning Committee, and Service Committee as well as to the members of the Executive Committee.

First, a message from ZI told District XIII that an International Committee was working with the project to be presented at convention 1982; later a new message explained that the ZIS project had not been selected for presentation. Nevertheless, Inge Egeskjold and Ulla-Britta Lagerroth recommended the ZIS project to ZI Board at the board meeting immediately before the convention; in vain; the Convention body did not approve the ZIS project. A last attempt was made to rescue the project by turning it into a Scandinavian service project under the name *Zonta International Scandinavian Scholarship ZISS.* The end of the story is that the Scandinavian project in many ways was similar to ZI projects, and consequently dropped.

In 1979, San Remo hosted the Eighth European Meeting and the D XIII and D XIV Conferences. The keynote speakers were Dr. Adriaansen and Professor Dr. Zijderveld. They spoke on *“Service in the Welfare-State, an American Idea in European Dress”.* The two district boards had sent questionnaires to all European Zonta clubs and received answers prior to the conference. Prof. Dr. Zijderveld commented on the answers. Next on the agenda were presentations of the answers by the two governors and a panel discussion***:*** *Zonta International 60 Years: our Challenge for the Future****.*** The participants were Past District XIII governor Kata Jouhki, AD Great Britain Norma Turbett, Club President ZC Hamburg Barbara Hauke, and Nanna Dahlerup from ZC Copenhagen II as well as the keynote speakers. Ingrid Sundberg from ZC Malmö was facilitator. The items covered were, service, organization, communication, recruitment, image of Zonta International, international character of ZI and Amelia Earhart award.

The UN hosted the World Conference on Women in Copenhagen in 1980. The ZC Copenhagen II organized a booth at the conference venue, the Bella Centre, where members sold more than 2,000 scarfs, designed and made for the occasion by Inge Toft (Ingetoft), a member of ZC Copenhagen II. When, in the early spring, PIP Helvi Sipilä, UN Assistant Secretary-General, was visiting Zontians in Copenhagen, she expressed her wish to locate a manufacturer willing to produce, under franchise of the Fund for the Decade for Women, an article carrying the Decade symbol. Overnight, IngeToft, produced a lovely scarf with the reproduction of the Decade symbol on each quarter. It was sold for 13 USD, of which one dollar was donated to the Voluntary Fund.

Members of the two Copenhagen Zonta clubs hosted two evening events for Zontians who attended the conference. A reception at Danske Bank HQin the center of Copenhagen and a visit to the home and studio of Sculptor Helen Schou, member of ZC Copenhagen I.

Convention 1986, finally adopted the decision of dividing District XIII into District 13 comprising the Danish, Icelandic and Norwegian clubs, District 20 comprising the Finnish clubs and District 21 comprising the Swedish clubs.