The Soroptimist International (ROI) annual Public Speaking competition is well underway in its 42nd year. Local and regional heats of the competition are now completed. We have 8 finalists who will participate in the National Final competition on Saturday March 04, 2023 in the Riverbank Hotel @2pm. Our warm congratulations to all those who have qualified. We extend best wishes to all of the speakers and to Wexford SI who will host the event.

A very appreciative “thank you” to the four clubs and their convenors who hosted the regional events: Ennis, Bray, Dublin and Cork. The public speaking competition remains a significant event in all SI club activities across the country*.* It is an outstanding and enduring initiative that is of benefit to and for girls in upper secondary schools.

We remain indebted to our sponsor, Siobhán Matthews, SI Membership Officer and to her company, *SCF Global Campus* for their very generous support. This enabled the National Executive to approve support of €300 for each of the 4 regional events and €1,000 for the club hosting the final, with a further sponsorship of an Ipad for the overall national finalist. This supported the host clubs with basic expenditure for venue, refreshments, small tokens/prizes and adjudicator costs. Siobhán also kindly offered to print the respective certificates and update and print the programmes for the regional and final competitions; this reduced the cost and onerous work involved for all convenors and was very warmly received and appreciated.

In the interests of good governance and best practice, the National Executive has requested that each club makes a return to the Public Speaking National Convenor of the expenses incurred for the regional and final events, with vouchers as appropriate. It is hoped that this will help to standardise costs across all competitions. Convenors were reminded that the practice of giving expensive gifts to adjudicators, speakers and teachers is not encouraged; it is suggested that as all speakers receive certificates, book tokens or something small/similar are quite adequate. We must remember that the experience for those participating and the honour bestowed on the various schools through their involvement is invaluable.

We are grateful for the positive, enthusiastic, appreciative and encouraging support and feedback from the many participating girls, teachers and schools. We sincerely salute and acknowledge the sustained support and magnificent cooperation from the speakers, their teachers and schools. They help to uphold and maintain the strong traditions of our public speaking programme.

Nothing would be possible without the strenuous efforts of the PS convenors in our clubs – we have to acclaim their continuous work, willingness, organisation and cooperation that has ensured the implementation and delivery of the public speaking competition for over 40 years.

Finally, and personally - I offer my sincere appreciation to the Convenors in all clubs, to the SIROI President Éadaoin Lawlor and the SIROI executive for their constant and generous guidance and support throughout the year.

\* I invite all SI members and especially SI Convenors to consider the position of a new National Public Speaking Convenor as my term will end in March 2023.