

Declaration of Kolping Europe on the fight against youth unemployment (Frankfurt Declaration 2015)

Following a long tradition, **Kolping Europe** is engaged in and deeply committed to education and vocational training of young people. Already Adolph Kolping had promoted mobility across borders by providing journeymen a home in the various Kolping Houses and the so-called Kolping Families all over Europe.

Young people need opportunities and prospects

Unfortunately, youth unemployment has risen drastically in recent years. Every fourth young person under 25 is unemployed. Many of them have been unable to obtain any qualification at all. Even if in some European countries, e.g. in Germany, the unemployment rate is relatively low it is up to 50 % in Eastern and Southern European countries. What does this mean for societies in Croatia, Greece, Italy or Spain, if every second adolescent cannot start a working life, if the whole next generation finds itself on the street? The political disruptions which can be observed in some countries have their roots here!

With this background in mind, the European Union is trying to fight youth unemployment at all levels. Different instruments and contributions have been developed for this purpose. As an example one might quote the first EURES job within the context of a mobility programme meant to enable young people to undergo training in another EU country. In addition to assistance in finding training and employment EU also offers young people to pay for language courses and additional support during training as well, as to cover travel expenses.

Another example, even more important, is the European Training Alliance based on an agreement among Heads of State and of Government to offer young people training and jobs in Europe. Within the context of an educational reform in many countries the idea has been to offer young people training with a practical orientation and enable them to start a working life successfully. Better co-ordination between high quality training on the one hand and labour market demand and available training places on the other should allow young people to finish their training and - ideally - find a job in the company where they had been trained, or to continue working in their vocation learnt in some other company.

The European Training Alliance supplements this project as a platform for different actors from the training sector and the labour market, presenting instruments and successful programmes seen as "best practice" and co-ordinating them with a view to improving the offer of training places in all European countries. The further development of quality training in European countries as well as improved information about available programmes and the various training offers are meant to increase European training mobility and provide incentives for mobility.

Dual vocational training offers opportunities and prospects

Within this context many countries seem interested in what is called a "**dual vocational training system**" and consider whether this might be introduced in or adapted to their country. The dual training system produces very good results compared to other forms of training leading to a vocational

qualification. It has been noted that close contact with practice has been a key element in developing training systems. The more practical experience forms part of the training the better are subsequent employment prospects on the labour market. The successful vocational training system of Austria, Germany, Switzerland and South Tyrol might become a successful export item. Of course the dual system - recommended by the European Commission - cannot simply be copied, since it requires restructuring institutions. This might be a long-term operation, because enterprises have to be convinced of the need for investing in the training of qualified staff would involve more than just a short period of introduction. **Kolping Europe** might constitute a European platform informing about the advantages of the dual system in other countries, thus helping young people to receive successful vocational training with a practical orientation.

At home abroad - an offer for young Europeans

In order to achieve successful adaptation of a given vocational training system involving a higher percentage of practical experience as well as the necessary mobility among the member states of the European Union it will be absolutely vital not only to create training places but also supporting concepts and offers - in the sense of forms of assistance accompanying the training.

In this context **Kolping Europe** as a competent organisation provides an ideal offer in the form of its Kolping youth hostels in Austria, Germany, Switzerland and South Tyrol. These hostels are open to young people who wish to remain mobile within the framework of their vocational training.

Expert studies indicate that young people feeling mobile in their vocational training often tend to return home in view of the loss of friends, family contact and personal relations. A first evaluation of "My first EURES job" has shown that more than 30 % had given up their training abroad before the scheduled time, because they had not found any personal contacts at their new places of residence. The Kolping youth hostels are offering home atmosphere to young people abroad, since young people live together with peers of the same age spending also their leisure time together. The educational tutors in these hostels may not only be approached for every day problems and worries, they also share happy moments, for instance, when someone has successfully passed a training stage. Educational leisure time proposals - in common or individually - are providing young people with useful information and learning opportunities, thus helping them to master life as successful young Europeans.

Demands of Kolping Europe

Kolping Europe demands that questions of accommodation and modalities of life are included and also promoted in any discussion about European vocational mobility. These accompanying instruments are absolutely necessary and vital. They also require adequate financing. **Kolping Europe** considers that the **European Union** would first of all be responsible for this. Putting stress on guaranteeing training places and training alliances is not enough, in addition adequate support facilities and financial help have to be provided.

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KOLPING INTERNATIONAL

In 1849 the Catholic priest Adolph Kolping founded an association in Cologne for single journeymen in order to give them some help in solving their problems caused by the industrial revolution and being summarized with the term „social question“.

At the beginning it was a small association, but meanwhile it has developed to a world-wide society that counts today about 7,400 regional groups and 400,000 members in 61 countries. In spite of the enormous growth and the changed situation in society the Kolping Society has remained true to its original task and is still working towards the solution of the social question. However, this work is not only limited to the national level, it also includes the international level.

The Kolping Society sees itself as a Catholic social organization. It supports its members in a special way in developing their personal talents, it offers help to its members and society as a whole and it promotes the common good in the Christian sense with the activities of its members and groups.

The work of the Kolping Society is aimed at the integral individual, who is not only offered help and stimulation in all aspects of life, but also provided with an opportunity to share his problems and also his knowledge and skills. It is the close interconnection and interrelation of the individual spheres of life, which is the starting-point and the ground for the comprehensive work of the Kolping Society and its service towards the integral development of the individual.

According to this approach the work of the Kolping Society concentrates on the following aspects: work and profession, marriage and family, society and state, culture and leisure time.

The Kolping Society is a democratically structured organization, and therefore it feels responsible for the promotion of democracy, too. It also fights for the special human dignity in any phase of life and for the inalienable and inviolable human rights.

The Kolping Society in Europe feels in a special way obliged to the European idea – owing to its historical development and its programme – and co-operates intensively with the Council of Europe and the European Union or the European Parliament. Since 1974 it has held the „Consultative Status at the Council of Europe“ in Strasbourg as NGO (Non-Governmental Organization).

A special sign of this intensive co-operation are the European seminars realized annually for 30 years (1979) in Strasbourg (Palais de l'Europe).

Owing to its world-wide commitment it has furthermore the „Consultative Status at the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations“ and was admitted to the „Special List of Non-Governmental International Organizations of the International Labour Office (ILO)“.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 the International Kolping Society saw an important task in contributing to develop a civil society in the formerly communist states, and it did so by building up independent National Organizations. Meanwhile active organizational structures have developed in many Central and East European countries, like for example Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Albania etc.. These Kolping Societies have picked up important fields of activity like youth and family work, general and professional training, promotion of small enterprises and social work, but also socio-political education, and they have also undertaken urgent social tasks in self-responsibility.

Although the Kolping Society was founded in Europe and has still kept its international head-quarters in Cologne, it has extended its fields of activity all over the whole world in the meantime. The promotion of the international co-operation and solidarity is a central and important task, and the International Kolping Society contributes with its work to solve the international social question.

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