

INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY

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**DECLARATION BY THE “INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY”
ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE’S
CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIAL DIMENSION
(2007 European Declaration, Teisendorf / Germany)**

In broad sections of Europe’s population, support for the European integration process has declined. The increasing social insecurity and Europe’s new responses – which the public regard as inadequate – to the challenges of globalisation and demographic change are one reason. It is therefore understandable and necessary for Europe to look again at what it sees as the European social model and adapt the latter to the changed circumstances.

The EU resumed this debate under the German Presidency and the Portuguese Presidency is expected to carry the discussions forward when preparing the reform treaty. However, the COUNCIL OF EUROPE has also in the past made a substantial contribution to the values underpinning the European social model and the Social Charter has successfully combined different approaches and traditions. As recently as its June 2007 session, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution on the revised European Social Charter.

As a COUNCIL OF EUROPE NGO, the INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY

- supports the COUNCIL OF EUROPE in its efforts against the background of the ongoing discussions with a view to achieving the full application of the revised European Social Charter and drawing up a new strategy for social cohesion that preserves the social dimension of the European model in the face of globalisation.

In connection with these efforts by the COUNCIL OF EUROPE, it makes the following proposals:

1. Complete acceptance of the obligations under the revised European Social Charter by the member states

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- notes that eight COUNCIL OF EUROPE member states (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Montenegro, Russia, San Marino, Switzerland and Serbia) have still not ratified either the 1961 European Social Charter or the 1996 revised Social Charter and only 12 member states allow collective complaints under the 1995 Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter;

- regrets the fact that only 22 member states have ratified the 1991 Turin Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter and that the failure of Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Turkey and the United Kingdom to ratify it has so far prevented the members of the European Committee of Social Rights being elected by the Assembly;

- underlines that this situation highlights the COUNCIL OF EUROPE's fundamental problem in obtaining ratification of conventions – with the current exception of the European Convention on Human Rights – by countries which are no longer covered by a Parliamentary Assembly monitoring procedure;
- supports the COUNCIL OF EUROPE's efforts to speed up the process of ratification of the Social Charter by the relevant countries and inform the committees concerned in the national parliaments more effectively about the commitments under the Social Charter which their states have not yet accepted;
- hopes that, in the course of the ratification procedures, the individual member states will also make the rights under the Social Charter enforceable in domestic law;

2. Shortcomings in information and practice concerning the revised European Social Charter

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- is pleased to note that the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Committee of Social Rights jointly intend drawing up proposals to supplement the Social Charter with minimum standards concerning the opening up of labour markets and services and international freedom of establishment. The aim is to achieve the liberalisation that is desired in principle and overcome public fears regarding the different social standards in the various European countries by establishing European standards;
- points out that, in 2000, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe issued Recommendation R (2000) 3 to the member states calling on them to grant all persons in a situation of extreme hardship an enforceable right to food, clothing, shelter and basic medical care, and recommends checking the extent to which all 47 member states have implemented the recommendation;
- regrets the fact that the Assembly's proposal to give the Charter a more catching name along the lines of the European Charter of Fundamental Economic and Social Rights has not yet been taken up. Particularly among the general public, that would make it clearer that the Charter is a legal instrument in the human rights field.
- suggests that the COUNCIL OF EUROPE should present an annual report on the Social Charter supervisory procedure, also covering the collective complaints dealt with under the 1995 protocol and including the measures taken by the governments concerned in response to the Committee of Ministers' recommendations;

3. A social cohesion strategy for the 21st century

The INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY

- supports the COUNCIL OF EUROPE in its efforts to strengthen social cohesion in Europe and equip it to cope with the challenges arising from globalisation, innovative information and communication technologies, job insecurity and population ageing. With regard to working conditions, particular emphasis should be placed here on the increased global supply of labour, the more unequal distribution of income and the weaker negotiating position of workers in the industrialised states;

- agrees with the COUNCIL OF EUROPE that social cohesion is a vital requirement for democratic security and sustainable development, as inequality and exclusion are not only unfair but also threaten stability in the long term. Only promoting economic growth is not enough; society must be developed correspondingly. Millions of Europeans are currently excluded from the economic and social progress which the COUNCIL OF EUROPE seeks to promote under its Statute. It is therefore appropriate that the second Council of Europe Summit defined social cohesion as one of the key requirements of Greater Europe and a vital component for promoting human rights and human dignity;
- supports the COUNCIL OF EUROPE's efforts to identify effective measures and solutions for combating poverty and exclusion, ensuring fair access to social rights and protecting vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly;
- welcomes the fact that, in implementing this policy, the COUNCIL OF EUROPE, is increasingly issuing recommendations to the member states, promoting exchanges of experience on best practices and providing additional practical assistance for certain member states in eastern and south-eastern Europe;
- supports the Parliamentary Assembly in its efforts in the context of the globalisation debate to find ways, for instance through closer co-operation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), to promote and improve social standards in countries outside Europe, thereby giving globalisation a more social dimension;
- in view of the growing number of migrants living illegally in Europe, calls for a minimum standard of human rights to be ensured in accordance with Recommendation 1755 (2006) and expects member states to ratify the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS 197, 2005) as quickly as possible.

In adopting this declaration and sending it to 1 650 leading public figures throughout Europe, the INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY wishes to support the activities of the COUNCIL OF EUROPE. Through its educational work in the 21 COUNCIL OF EUROPE member states where it is represented, it also seeks to ensure that the significance of the COUNCIL OF EUROPE's role in furthering European integration, upholding human rights and consolidating democracy is properly recognised in society at large.

Cologne / Teisendorf, 28 October 2007

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International Kolping Society (IKS)

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 6,000 regional groups and 500,000 members in **60 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 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.