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March 2016 | NEWS FROM KOLPING INTERNATIONAL

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International News

Dear Kolping Sisters and Brothers,
Dear Friends of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL!

In this Easter season, many feel uplifted by new hope. With the resurrection as a joyful hope in mind, those committed in the Kolping Societies in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas take on the challenges of the present instead of giving up. We celebrated Easter in different languages, cultures, and songs, but all those who work at Kolping have one thing in common: hope and faith are leading to the promotion of justice.

Medard Kehl, my professor in Frankfurt and spiritual director, has always expounded the words of the philosopher Sören Kierkegaard and talked about experiencing hope as the "passion for what is possible" and faith as the "serenity of the recipient". This is our Kolping tradition at its best. These International News show once again how people commit themselves with great passion for what is possible, because they do not give up hoping for a better world. My wish for all these people is the same serenity of the recipient which has sustained Fr. Kolping. He also knew that God is the ultimate key that allows good to succeed.

I wish you good reading, lots of inspiration, as well as passion and serenity.

Treu Kolping,
Your Markus Demele

International KOLPING 2017 – the start of Phase II

The second phase of the Association's development process KOLPING 2017 did, in fact, already start during the 2015 meeting of the International Board of Directors in Cologne. But now the International Executive Board has formulated a stimuli and question catalogue, which it wants to pass on to all groupings of the Kolping Society asking for collaboration.

Since in the first phase a new self-image document was being discussed, the focus is now on the Kolping Society's structures. The leading question is what is to be regulated in the International Constitution, which is, of course, binding on all members and National Kolping Societies, and in what areas could be differences between countries and cultures. A new look is also being taken at the legal entities which are established according to German law, and their order on the international level is scrutinized. So there is going to be lots of work in the international Association until the 2017 International Convention in Peru. Information on any up-to-date deliberations can be obtained from the national offices of the Kolping Societies or directly from the Head Office in Cologne.

Germany

Thanks to Kolping, Frechen is a Fair-Trade Town

"A successful project always needs a 'motor'. And that is what you are!", praised the Mayor of Frechen, Susanne Stupp, the President of the Kolping Family Frechen, Joachim Martin. On March 9, Frechen was given the title "Fair-Trade Town." At the presentation of the certificate, Meike Schliebs from the organization Fair-Trade Germany came up with impressive numbers. Even though the amount of fair-trade products is climbing, the market share of cocoa is only one percent according to Ms. Schliebs. "There is room for improvement!"

In a presentation, Joachim Martin showed the steps which had led to success within a year. First of all, a Council decision that Frechen is seeking the title "Fair-Trade Town" had to be obtained. Joachim Martin made the personal approach and found allies in the town's administration. In 2015, the Council decided unanimously to participate in the campaign. In addition to the kindergarten, the volunteers met open ears also among the businessmen and restaurateurs of Frechen. The former mayor of Frechen, Hans-Willi Meier, paid personal visits to the retailers and restaurant owners. He convinced them to add fair-trade products to their assortment and into their menus. By now, Frechen is far above the prescribed minimum of stores and restaurants.

The title "Fair-Trade Town" has to be defended in two years. Until then, the fair-trade steering group has a number of plans. Joachim Martin cordially invited people to attend the next meeting on April 20. Next to be established is a shopping guide for the citizens of Frechen. "We want to convince the citizens of Frechen to buy even more fair-trade products," said Joachim Martin.

Germany - Brazil

Celebrity launching of the campaign "Rio moves us" concerning the Olympics

With a loud bang, Hamburg's Archbishop, Dr. Stefan Heße, started the campaign "Rio moves us". More than one hundred children, youths, amateur and professional athletes ran the first solidarity kilometers for the people in the Brazilian metropolis Rio de Janeiro.

When medals are being presented there - starting August 5 for the Olympic Games and September 7 for the Paralympic Games - there should also be winners outside of the stadiums. To make this goal a reality, sports, youths, and adult organizations, education agencies, and players of global Church-related organizations joined to form the alliance "Rio moves us". In the subsequent panel discussion in Hamburg's House of Sports, a lively discussion took place on how sports can foster the starting opportunities for children and youths, particularly in the slums of Rio and in the disadvantaged regions of the world, and promote a more just world. "The Olympic Peace will become a reality when all citizens of Rio de Janeiro can participate in the Games, without discriminatory security measures excluding individual groups of the population due to their colour of skin or the part of the city from which they come," emphasized Stephan Jentgens, one of the speakers of the campaign alliance. To ensure that the fairness of the Olympics is not limited to the competitions, the population during the Games should already be part of the planning. "These civilians must be encouraged to confidently claim their rights and to shape their future independently. In order to strengthen their hope we, together with our project partners in Rio de Janeiro, make comprehensive education and training possible especially for the disadvantaged children and youths."

In a video message, Wilfried Lemke, the Special Advisor of the UN Secretary-General for Sports in the Service of Development and Peace, addressed the significance of sports: "Sports not only improve one's health and well-being, they also impart positive values that advance personal as well as societal development."

Germany - Tanzania

Medal of Values for Walter Mahr

During the nation-wide launching of the campaign "Rio moves us", the actress Eva Habermann and Walter Mahr from Kolping Hamburg were awarded Medals of Values for their outstanding social dedication to the One World. Walter Mahr,

who has been a member of Kolping Hamburg for over fifty years, established the development partnership of Kolping Germany with Kolping Tanzania. "The projects of Kolping Tanzania bring hope to the Tanzanian population and ensure fairness," stated the jury in its justification. In addition, Mahr is involved with refugees and asylum seekers in his hometown Hamburg. Heartfelt congratulations to our Kolping Brother Walter!

Germany - South Africa

Kolping South Africa visits refugee camp in the Diocesan Kolping Society of Augsburg

During their stay in Augsburg, Fr. Christian Frantz, National Praeses of Kolping South Africa, and Judith Turner, National Kolping Co-ordinator, found out how Kolping is helping young refugees. They visited the projects for unaccompanied under-age refugees in the Kolping Academy Kaufbeuren. "There should be such group homes for refugees in all of Germany," said Fr. Frantz after the visit to Kaufbeuren.

Academy Director Gerd Kirsch and his team told the visitors how young refugee seekers are being integrated into our culture by means of language courses, educational support, and counselling, and about the traumas and difficulties they have to overcome. The visitors from South Africa drew parallels to their Work Opportunity Program (WOP). With youth unemployment of over 50% in South Africa, its Kolping Society offers young people the opportunity to expand their skills and to find entry into the job market. National Praeses Christian Frantz recognized a common trait: "Kolping combines theory and practice and helps the disadvantaged."

Serbia

Successful only with networking

Kolping Serbia has close to 300 members in 10 Kolping Families. But the responsible staff members in Novi Sad, the seat of the National Office, know that, due to being a small organization, they can be successful only by networking with other players in the Serbian civil society. That is why they became part of a network of organizations such as Caritas, among others, that are involved in the area of social welfare. The area of care-giving is particularly important for Kolping in Serbia, because there is no comprehensive state-run program for people in need of care. But one also got involved in the areas of youth work, for instance in putting on the 2015 European Youth Week. With international support, one could even respond to actual emergencies – some families who were hit by the recent floods in March this year could be helped without delay.

Costa Rica

Colourful program in Central America

This is true diversity in the Kolping work: projects in which women do laborious handiwork together to produce decorative items to beautify gardens and houses; workshops for adolescents for the prevention of sexual violence in families and villages; people working together in designing a park area so that all may have a space for recreation; training for compiling organic compost; guitar lessons for children and youths.

So colourful is the work at Kolping Costa Rica. Because this Central American country also proves: Kolping generates community in order to accomplish more together. As varied as life is, so different are the offers in the areas of family, work, leisure time, and youth.

The Dominican Republic

National Convention takes a look at the future

Most people know the Dominican Republic only as an attractive destination on Hispaniola Island of the Greater Antilles, the island state between the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. But even there great social needs exist, which are addressed by people in the tradition of Fr. Kolping. The Kolping Families know as a strong partner not only KOLPING INTERNATIONAL to be on their side but also the Diocesan Kolping Society of Paderborn. The first Kolping Family in the Dominican Republic was established in Bonao in 1999. 17 years later, a National Convention of the Association was held once again in March,

which not only ratified important structural reforms. Debates were also held on how the various projects in the area of agricultural income generation can be continued by groups. About a quarter of the country's population suffers from malnutrition even today. Kolping is urgently needed here, too.

Vietnam

Consideration for Mother Earth – Laudato Si

Mr. Tam, the leader of the National Office of Kolping Vietnam, wondered how the Kolping members can be made aware of the ideas of Pope Francis in his encyclical Laudato Si. As a passionate cyclist, he went on a tour through this Asian country in an ecologically clean way. He started in February at the Notre Dame Cathedral in Saigon and subsequently visited the Kolping Families in the provinces of Dong Nai, Ba Ria, Binh Thuan, Ninh Thuan and Khanh Hoa. No Kolping Families exist so far in the Dioceses of Ba Ria und Phan Thiet. Through the reports of Mr. Tam in the parishes he visited, this might certainly change soon. The 600-km long trip was a living sign of the responsibility of human beings for God's good creation. To sustainably use it is a call for all those involved in the Kolping Society - even though it can sometimes mean aching muscles.

Benin

Tenfold increase in ten years

In 2006, Kolping Benin still had 480 members. Today, in 2016, there are more than 4,900. And this does have a good reason. The leaders of Kolping Benin are aware of the concerns and needs of the country's people and offer them concrete programs where they can work together to improve their situation. An important part of this work is the large Kolping Credit Union, where entrepreneurs can get small loans to invest in ideas. Besides, projects exist in almost 100 of the 142 Kolping Families, which directly improve the income situation: be they a joint acquisition of equipment to up-grade agricultural labour, or the purchase and sale of groceries, or collaborative work in the fields. All these activities improve their lives and create a happy community in the spirit of Fr. Kolping.