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May-June 2016 | NEWS FROM KOLPING INTERNATIONAL

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## International News

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

Before many people go on holidays during the summer months in the northern hemisphere, much has happened in the international Kolping world in May and June. It is wonderful to see that in many countries Kolping gives an example of the commitment for people who are fleeing from hunger and lack of prospects. As much as we wish that flight and banishment does not even take place and people can live in their beloved homeland, so comforting it is that our Kolping communities are setting thousand-fold signs of Christ's love by following his call to assist strangers. These signs are even more significant, since in some countries even bishops are opposed to accept refugees who do not share the Christian faith. Be it in Germany, Hungary, or Tanzania – Kolping can provide a new home and, above all, help people who believe in their own potential. Enjoy finding out about some Kolping activities during the past two months.

Treu Kolping,

Your Markus Demele.

## International Passion for international partnerships and solidarity

At its spring meeting, the officers for the International Partnership Work of the Diocesan Kolping Societies from Germany, Switzerland, and Poland met in Duderstadt in eastern Germany. They exchanged experiences in their work and gave each other suggestions as how to set up the visits of their partners in Germany. Lisa Hermann, campaign director of Fair Trade, informed the participants how a municipality can become a Fair Trade Town and about what kind of support is available. The participants reported numerous examples, in which Kolping Families have been the driving force for their towns being recognized as Fair Trade Towns and were motivated to approach even more Kolping Families. In addition, the delegates discussed the encyclical of Pope Francis "Laudato Si", after a skilled introduction by Rolf Michael Schulze from the Diocesan Kolping Society of Hildesheim 's expert panel "Preservation of Creation". The promotion materials of the alliance "Rio Moves: Us" were checked out.

**International****Kolping at the International Labour Conference at the United Nations**

Decent work, fair wages, social security – if only 90% of the around 500 million small and medium-sized companies worldwide can be considered to be part of the formal economy, then much remains to be done to promote social dialogue and to establish social peace. This situation was questioned by Dr. Hildegard Hagemann, representative of Kolping International at the meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO) of the United Nations in Geneva. During this year's meeting from May 30 – June 11, some 4,000 delegations from all around the world looked into the unjust conditions of workers worldwide.

"With the activities of the Catholic international organizations with consultative status at the United Nations, we want to show during the annual international labour conference that we are actively involved in the value-based discussion concerning the future of work and the implementation of goal 8 of the Agenda 2030," states Hildegard Hagemann and calls for a more rigorous approach. "Global value-added chains are phenomena of a globalized economy which require binding rules to ensure that the dignity of the person who creates value through his/her work is respected and protected." "Decent work along global value-added chains – a call for responsibility and an opportunity for solidarity" was the name of the workshop that was organized as part of the ILO meeting by, among others, the International Kolping Society. "The deliberations are still ongoing – an intensive dialogue is necessary on how to protect the rights of the workers through instruments of the ILO along the global value creation chains," says Manuela Tomei, expert of the ILO's informal economy.

Many National Kolping Societies are grappling with the topic of decent work and trying to improve the local situation. This commitment to the rights of the workers has been a key concern of the Kolping community since the days of Fr. Kolping.

**Europe****Help where help is needed – Kolping Europe deliberates on the aging society and the refugee crisis**

For one weekend, Vienna was the centre of Europe – at least from a Kolping point of view: about 45 delegates from the almost 20 member states of Kolping Europe held their annual continental meeting there from May 20 – 22. Kolping Europe is the continental working level of the Kolping Society, where all National Kolping Societies of Europe can deliberate and share their experiences. In addition, common positions on European topics are continuously formulated. Along with the reports of the European President and Praeses and addressing questions regarding structure and constitutions, the delegates dealt in an educational part with the topic: "Communities of generations". In virtually all countries of Europe, the question of aging and loneliness in old age poses a great challenge, which the Kolping Society addresses with various approaches, from specific programs and visiting services, to "home care" and special facilities for the elderly. On this occasion, Kolping Austria introduced the concept of the two Vienna Kolping Houses "Living together", where people in need of care and mothers with children live under the same roof.

Furthermore, the delegates of Kolping Europe examined the current refugee crisis – a challenge that, according to Kolping Europe's Praeses, Fr. Joseph Holtkotte, can be overcome only by working together. Instead of fearing the refugees, the priority should be the resolve to treat them according to their dignity: he cited the biblical figure of the Good Samaritan as an example.

**Germany****Day of the Catholics in the Eastern part of Germany**

Every two years, the Day of the Catholics is a large gathering of dedicated Catholics in Germany. More than 30,000 people come together for several days to discuss current political, societal, and religious issues. In addition, various organizations, associations, and dioceses are presented with booths, where interested people can inform themselves about the respective work. Kolping Germany, with all its various services and active Diocesan Kolping Societies must, of course, also be part of it.

Many prominent politicians, including ministers of the federal government, looked in on Kolping and paid tribute to the contribution that Kolping makes to the German society. Radio reports also showed, for instance, the Minister of Labour of the Social Democratic Party impressed by the commitment of the Kolping Families in the area of assisting refugees. But even cardinals and bishops attended the booth and were pleased with the commitment of the Kolping Families in their dioceses. There were also discussions on international issues: one of them was the campaign "Rio moves: Us", as well as the peace process in Colombia, in which many human rights groups are involved.

## **Germany**

### **Collaboration in the building of the Church's future**

A highlight of the conference of Kolping Germany's Diocesan and Provincial Praesides was the inter-communication with the Auxiliary Bishop of Essen, H.E. Ludger Schepers on the word of the German bishops concerning the pastoral renewal, entitled "Being the Church together". The Praesides as well as the pastoral ministers met May 8 to 10 in Cologne for the annual conference. Together with Auxiliary Bishop Ludger Schepers, they celebrated Holy Mass in the Blessed Adolph Kolping chapel in the Kolping House International. The inter-communication took place among the attendees as well as with the staff of Kolping Germany's head office.

## **Germany**

### **Shoes for the International Adolph Kolping Foundation**

Starting on the 2016 Kolping Memorial Day, Kolping Germany will conduct an annual collection of shoes in favour of the International Adolph Kolping Foundation. This began with the encouraging campaign during the 2015 Kolping Day, where 25,000 pairs of shoes were donated in Cologne. All those who could not participate at that time now have the opportunity to donate used shoes every year. The campaign also provides an opportunity to approach acquaintances, friends, and neighbours, who want to up-grade their footwear, to do a good deed. The technical and organizational implementation and processing will be carried out again in co-operation with the Kolping-Recycling GmbH. The goal is to have every member donate at least one pair of shoes in the period of December 1 – 31, 2016. The International-Adolph-Kolping-Foundation supports Kolping Families and National Kolping Societies around the world through the work done at the Head Office in Cologne. The objective is to accompany the work of Kolping world-wide as sustainably and comprehensively as possible.

## **The Czech Republic**

### **Break for families**

For many years there has been a Kolping-run women's shelter in Prague, where women in difficult family situations live with their children, because they have experienced violence, the partner has left or is in jail, or because of financial problems. The reasons are regrettably manifold. During a visit two years ago, members of the German Diocesan Kolping Society of Regensburg's executive board had invited the women and their children for a recreational holiday in Lambach.

In early May, 8 mothers with their 12 children arrived by train from Prague to spend a few days at the Holiday House Lambach. "The week was very good for the mothers and, of course, also for the children. They had never experienced anything like that before," said Jana Zemanowa, the manager of the women's shelter in Prague. The women did not have to do any housework and could therefore play freely with their children, go for walks, or undertake small outings.

All praised the many options in the house, whether the gym, the games room, or the playground in front of the house. Special praise went to the good food and the friendly and helpful staff at the home. The cost of the stay was covered by the Diocesan Kolping Society's special account for needy families: An international partnership for body and soul!

**Brazil****Consistency in the political storm**

First the Soccer World Cup and now the Olympics – Brazil is the venue of major sporting events and the focus of global public opinion. There is however, at this point in time, a political debacle in play, which paints the picture of an overwhelmed political class and leaves behind a vast country with enormous economic problems. Particularly the uncertainty concerning the future makes many Brazilians cringe. However, the economic down-turn affects, above all, the people who already have very little to live on and struggle daily to feed their families.

“This makes the work of Kolping even more important during these months of uncertainty for Brazil,” said Markus Demele, General Secretary of the International Kolping Society, during his visit. In addition to Rio de Janeiro and Fortaleza, he also had talks in Sao Paulo. A special gift are the many partnerships that exist with many European Diocesan and National Kolping Societies: They have a great history and are building a living bridge of common solidarity during these difficult times. While Germany’s official development-political work with Brazil puts the focus on the issue of climate policies, the Kolping structures support a wide variety of fields of action. From kindergarten to occupational training, as well as the construction of water reservoirs, Kolping Brazil’s local groupings support people where they live.

**Tanzania****Saving the lives of refugees from Burundi**

There is hardly any news coverage about it, but martial law still prevails in Burundi. Members of Kolping Families have also had to leave the regions where supporters of the president and the opposition confront each other violently. The Mtendeli refugee camp was set up in Tanzania for the fleeing people. Around 1,500 new people arrive there every week. By July there will be 50,000 people living there instead of the present 30,000.

Medical care is absolutely essential, especially for pregnant women and their unborn children. This is now being offered by the Kolping Society on behalf of the Maltese in the camp. Operating rooms are being built and basic parameters created in order to provide midwifery, and perform cesarean sections for instance. In a next step, a water supply system for the medical facilities but also for patients will be set up that allows good hygiene and a constant water supply.

Kolping Tanzania was commissioned because it has established itself in the region over the past decades as an effective self-help organization. People and administrations know and recognize the expertise of Kolping Tanzania. This makes sustainable help possible.

**Vietnam****Pilgrimage for the Year of Mercy**

In the Diocese of Can Tho, located in the Mekong Delta in southern Vietnam, about 250 Kolping members celebrated the Year of Mercy in a pilgrimage. Despite scorching heat, the members gathered in the open and prayed the Rosary. The joint celebration of the Holy Eucharist was followed by an adoration. In subsequent group work, the members dealt with the question as to how mercy can be concretely lived in everyday life, but also in the passing on of the faith on the local level in Vietnam.

Especially in a Communist country, the passing on of faith and the mutual reassurance in Christian togetherness is important. In Vietnam Kolping is a vibrant faith community where the joy in the Good News comes alive and can be experienced.