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"We need Europe to be effective and strong!"

Declaration by Kolping Europe on the 2019 European Parliament elections

On the occasion of the European Parliament elections from 23 to 26 May 2019, Kolping Europe must concede with concern that the increasingly strong group of Eurosceptics is gaining in influence. The board of Kolping Europe urges European citizens to participate in the European elections and only vote for parties that promote the political, economic and social integration of Europe!

On their own, the countries of Europe will not be able to achieve much in Europe, not to mention in a global context. The focus here is on the self-assertion of our continent and our lifestyle, our way of living and safeguarding and defending our values in a world that is becoming faster and faster and more complicated. In so doing, this is also about shaping a good future for young Europeans. Our values of rule of law and democracy, freedom and solidarity serve as our compass.

Many citizens expect solutions from the European Union, and not words without deeds. The most important task in the coming years will be to show citizens that Europe can protect them – and in a wide variety of areas of life at that. During this time that challenges us with politically and religiously motivated terror as well as aggressive behaviour of external forces like Putin's Russia, we need Europe to be able to defend itself.

Europe needs unity since it is being forced to take its destiny into its own hands. This includes increased security, foreign and development policy commitment to one day put forward a common foreign and security policy.

Europe needs cooperation to offer shelter to the people in need of this world and to stop illegal migration as far as possible. This will only be possible together and in cooperation with the United Nations. If Europe wants to prevent national borders and controls from being commonplace again, it has to work much harder on securing its shared border as well as fulfilling its humanitarian duties to resolutely combat reasons for fleeing one's country.

Europe needs a Marshall Plan to face the challenges of the 21st century. Given the scarce natural resources, social imbalance, growing unemployment, demographic challenges and the increasing intensity of knowledge and technology of economic activity, Europe must reposition itself and mobilize its strength for a better, more social, more prospering, more democratic and more peaceful future.

Europe needs an awakening if it wants to offer Europe's youth a good future. Programmes like Erasmus+ or an Interrail ticket for all 18-year-olds will be required to achieve this aim. Labour market policy calls for a joint approach as well. Young people must be given a professional perspective and be able to qualify themselves for the labour market. Programmes like the EU Youth Guarantee and EU Youth Strategy must be expanded and granted more funding.

Europe must face its responsibilities towards Africa. Our commitment to our neighbouring continent needs to be intensified. So far, we are doing too little to give Africa a stable and positive perspective for the future and therefore becoming a prospering continent and trade partner.

Kolping Europe is convinced that Europe's future will depend on being successful in protecting people and in securing our unique and liberal European way of life.

Populist right and left parties continue to gain in importance in the European Union member states. The European Parliament also has parties that criticize or even reject European integration. Political currents that talk down and combat the European unification process must not gain in influence in the next European Parliament.

To prevent this from happening, we will need people with values and ambition, hope and political will. In this case, the principles of Catholic social teaching – human dignity, subsidiarity and solidarity – give an orientation for a sustainable European policy committed to the common good.

We have an opportunity in May 2019 to elect dedicated and committed parliamentarians to the European Parliament to promote the European integration process with unwavering determination.

Cologne, 1 February 2019

On behalf of Kolping Europe

Margrit Unternährer
President of Kolping Europe

Josef Holtkotte
European Praeses

Anton Salesny
Commissioner for Europe

Kolping Europe

In 1849 the Catholic priest Adolph Kolping founded an association in Cologne for single journeymen with the aim of helping them cope with the problems resulting from the industrial revolution and which are summed up in the “social question“.

Developing from a very small to an internationally operating association, KOLPING INTERNATIONAL is a Catholic social association with currently some 7,800 local groups and more than 400,000 members worldwide. This growth was achieved because the Kolping Society kept addressing the challenges of a changing society and changing circumstances in many different ways and in so doing tries to help find a solution to the social question on a national and international level.

Kolping Europe is a continental association of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL. Kolping Europe is active in Albania, Germany, Italy, Kosovo, Croatia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Switzerland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Ukraine. A part of a democratic and intergenerational association of members, Kolping Europe is prepared to face up to the current and future challenges.

Owing to its historical development and its Programme, Kolping Europe is strongly committed to the European idea and cooperates intensively with the Council of Europe, the European Union and the European Parliament. Since 1974 it has held a consultative status with the Council of Europe (Conseil de l'Europe) in Strasbourg as an NGO (non-governmental organization).

For further information:

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