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# The Activities of Young Kolping as an Alternative to the Contemporary Crisis of the Young Generation

Działania „Młodego Kolpinga”  
alternatywą dla współczesnego kryzysu  
młodego pokolenia

## ABSTRACT

Today's world of youth is characterized by a consumerist approach to life and there is a lack of role models or people that the younger generation can follow. The socio-cultural space of young people is most often filled by the Internet and social networking sites. Young people rarely talk about the values and the ideals of their generation, often being unable to plan their future or set goals for life. The unbalanced identity of the younger generation is a result of the lack of social activity in their environments. The article discusses the crisis of the young generation inter alia in terms of values, it indicates the activities of religious organizations as an answer to the crisis. It presents the activity of Young Kolping, a group functioning within The Kolping Family Associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating throughout Poland as an example of an alternative. This is one example of how the commitment of young people, as part of a religious and at the same time social movement of specified purposes, can meet the challenges of the crisis in youth. The mission of the

## KEY WORDS

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values, social activity,  
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## SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

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work of Kolping is based on four strong pillars: prayer, family, work and activity in the local community. In modern times of family and youth crisis they can be a foundation to build identity and to strengthen the awareness of belonging to a local group and community.

## ABSTRAKT

Współczesny świat młodzieży charakteryzuje się konsumpcyjnym podejściem do życia. Brakuje wzorów i osób, które młodzi mogliby naśladować. Przestrzeń społeczno-kulturową młodych osób wypełnia najczęściej Internet i portale społecznościowe. Młodzi ludzie rzadko rozmawiają na temat wartości i ideałów swojego pokolenia, często nie potrafią planować przyszłości i nie potrafią wyznaczać celów. Zachwiana tożsamość młodego pokolenia przedkłada się na brak aktywności społecznej w swoich środowiskach. Artykuł omawia kryzys młodego pokolenia, między innymi w zakresie wartości, oraz wskazuje działalność organizacji religijnych jako odpowiedź na kryzys. Prezentuje aktywność „Młodego Kolpinga”, grup działających przy Stowarzyszeniach Rodzin Kolpinga oraz organizacji pozarządowych aktywnych na terenie całej Polski. Jest to jeden z przykładów zaangażowania młodych w ruch religijny i zarazem społeczny, o określonych celach, który potrafi sprostać wyzwaniom kryzysu młodych. Misja Dzieła Kolpinga opiera się na czterech filarach: modlitwie, rodzinie, pracy i aktywności w środowisku lokalnym. Stanowiąc one mogą w czasach dzisiejszego kryzysu rodziny i młodzieży podstawę do budowania tożsamości oraz wzmacniają świadomość przynależności do grupy i społeczności lokalnej.

## Introduction

The work of Kolping and within its framework Kolping Family Associations that is the non-governmental organizations operating in local parishes have been dynamically developing in the Polish Catholic community since they were introduced in 1990. From year to year, the numbers of these organizations have increased with the work of Kolping in Poland in the year 2000 consisting of 31 Kolping Families, with the number today at 41.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Data from May 2015, information: Central Association for Kolping Work in Cracow.

The activities of these associations focus primarily on social activity in local communities. These include running clubs for children, clubs for unemployed, legal counselling, senior clubs, organizing food collections and other activities or social campaigns related to the unique nature of the environment in which they live and work.

There are also youth groups operating within the Kolping Families. An example of an activity of such groups in their local communities is the Young Kolping. The contribution of these young people is reflected at various levels of social work, such as volunteering or activity in international organizations. It is based on four pillars: prayer, family, work and civil support. This kind of social activity of young people contributes to the success of this kind of work and builds their self-esteem, respect for work and responsibility for other people. It may therefore be an alternative, helping in overcoming the crisis of values and identity in young people.

The aim of the paper is to present the activities of the Young Kolping as an alternative to the crisis of values and identity of the young generation.

The article will present the characteristics of the crisis of values in youth, a short presentation of Young Kolping groups and their activities. The author will also indicate the aspects of formation, activities, and values that members of Kolping follow. These may be an answer to the selected aspects of the crisis of young generation.

### Identity crisis of young generation

The contemporary types of crisis relate to many social issues. In addition, they affect young people and are clearly reflected in the crisis of the values the young people adhere to. "Youth" is a social group that has large reserves of strength, life, vitality, ideas, etc. Being young we often associate with being an outsider, a person other than all, outstanding among others. Therefore the interactions with other people play a crucial role in developing young people, especially in shaping their identity, it also forces young people to look inside themselves, to their inner potential.

Who are then the young people? R. Leppert says that "when we talk about young people we most often bear in mind those who have



stopped being children but are not adults yet.”<sup>2</sup> Young people are a group characterized by enthusiasm, joy, eagerness for life, insatiable desire and curiosity about the world. Their energy and enthusiasm should be positively used and young people should be taught how to properly use their potential. This is the period of life when young people ask themselves who they are.

It is a question about their own identity. The uniqueness of each person is shaped from an early age. The rules and principles that a young person develops during adolescence will become a system of values in his or her adult life. Therefore, it is very important for every child to be brought up in the spirit of positive values.

The foundation of mature identity is a relatively long-term engagement of an individual in different areas of activity resulting from undertaking commitments. These in turn should be the result of internalized by the individual system of values. The individual's maturity is the effort to develop a concept of his or her own life on the basis of the adopted system of values which means that the set goals, programs, decisions concerning their own future are personal and obliging, organize and direct a long-distance activity of the individual and give the meaning to it.<sup>3</sup>

Young people who enter the world of adulthood with the system of values shaped in their adolescence are confronted with the world of adults where the values are sometimes different and far from perfect. It was justified by K. Mannheim, who stated that “a person undergoing the process of maturation is not only biologically in the state of ferment but sociologically enters a new world where habits, customs and systems differ from those known so far.”<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, an adult as a mature person accepts new challenges in a learnt and more mature way while young people are often under the influence of impulses. It also happens that the youthful world of idealised values collides with the sophisticated world of adults. The penetration of these two worlds means that a young person learns a new look on future, he or she often drops the ideals and adapts to the expecta-

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<sup>2</sup> R. Leppert, *Młodość – świat przeżywany i tożsamość*, Kraków 2010, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> A. Oleszkowicz, A. Senejko, *Psychologia dorastania. Zmiany rozwojowe w dobie globalizacji*, Warszawa 2013, p. 236.

<sup>4</sup> K. Mannheim, “Problem młodzieży w nowoczesnym społeczeństwie”, in: *Młodość jako problem i jako wyzwanie ponowoczesności*, ed. K. Szafraniec, Toruń 2011, p. 14–15.

tions of the adults who are set for success and material profits. In this situation, it is important to help young people to find the missing role models and rebuild their world of values. The meaning of life should be based on personal and creative exploration. A lot of contradictory information acquired by the young people during their growing process causes chaos and difficulties in finding the right direction in life. Also, the lack of adult role models from the closest surroundings, the proper behavior in adhering to values means that a young man in today's world is lost.

The apparent solution to the problems of the young generation who cannot see any other alternatives, is to escape to the world of the unreal, something which only creates delusions of reality. Any experiences that this world involves quickly go astray in the real world and the young man remains in emotional emptiness.

The problem of loss and loneliness in young people was examined by B. Ostafińska-Molik and in her considerations she emphasized the fact that while functioning in a society, young people more often face the problem of loneliness, alienation and uprooting. Not being able to find their place in the world of adults they escape into the world of illusions. "The young generation that is left alone without ideals and role models escapes into the beautifully looking, but only superficially, world of fiction."<sup>5</sup>

In the identity crisis of the young generation a large role is played by the lack of silence, personal reflection, meditation, transcendence. This problem was studied by E. Wysocka<sup>6</sup> and W. Drzeżdżon<sup>7</sup>. Today's world offers most of all the attitude towards consumption and cheap short-lasting emotions in the form of different types of drugs. It often becomes unfashionable in the behavior of young people to help or to offer selfless help and free time to others. The crisis of

<sup>5</sup> B. Ostafińska-Molik, "Zagubienie młodzieży – samotne dryfowanie w strumieniu społecznych interakcji", in: *Dzieci i młodzież w niegościnnym świecie: zagrożenia rozwojowe i społeczne*, ed. E. Wysocka, Warszawa 2012, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> E. Wysocka, "Wschodząca dorosłość a tożsamość młodego pokolenia – współczesne zagrożenia dla kształtowania tożsamości. Analiza teoretyczna i empiryczne egzemplifikacje", *Colloquium Wydziału Nauk Humanistycznych i Społecznych AMW* 2013, no. 1, p. 69–96.

<sup>7</sup> W. Drzeżdżon, "Badania nad wartościami młodzieży w dobie dokonujących się przemian. Konstatacje pedagogiczne", *Studia Gdańskie* 2010, vol. 7, p. 101–112.

identity of the young generation not only relates to consumerism but it also applies to social attitudes and behavior, we often observe negative and aggressive behavior among young people.

The problem of materialism prevalent in the lives of the young generation today is also noticed by A. Kulik-Jęsień. She states that the modern society, especially the young generation that is concentrated on “consumer addictions” needs support and clearly defined principles<sup>8</sup>. It should be remembered that looking for life goals, setting a direction for further development but also the emotional immaturity, mood changes, the search for identity and answers to the questions: who am I? what do I want to achieve in life? are common questions of the young generation. The answers and examples the young people will receive from adults will influence development of their identity.

The political, cultural, social changes are important for the world of values of the young generation, as noted by A. Błasiak:

it is so difficult and dangerous for humans that these changes are nowadays often marked by spiritual and ethical infirmity associated with the lack of clear moral criteria which often give the choice of what is only useful for the man.<sup>9</sup>

A similar problem is also noted by B. Ostafińska-Molik:

imposed by the media: unlimited consumerism and pop culture can lead to weakening the national consciousness of the young generation of Polish people (failure to respect the old traditions, customs and national symbols). In addition, promoting ‘new morality’, a new style of living can degrade the quality of life of young people, that is to deprive them of real and universal values.<sup>10</sup>

Summarizing the problem of the identity crisis among young people, a few points can be highlighted. The crisis appears in the focus on our private lives, on ties within our immediate family, it is connected with indifference and lack of interest in the fate of other members of our society.

<sup>8</sup> A. Kulik-Jęsień, *Głos Jana Pawła II wobec negatywnych zjawisk społecznych w środowisku dzieci i młodzieży*, Mysłowice 2009, p. 232.

<sup>9</sup> A. Błasiak, *Młodzież – świat wartości*, Kraków 2002, p. 355.

<sup>10</sup> B. Ostafińska-Molik, “Dzieci i młodzież wobec wzorów kulturowych. Wybrane aspekty”, in: *Dzieci i młodzież w niegościnnym świecie: zagrożenia rozwojowe i społeczne*, op. cit., p. 159.

Another determinant is the large importance applied to the material values, appearance, consumer values, combined with a constant effort for a comfortable and prosperous life and entertainment. In the event of crises in family relations and the difficulty in satisfying the high material expectations this results in the further consequences to experience loneliness, alienation, low self-esteem and ultimately leads to the problems with the building identity.

The crisis of identity is linked to the crisis of values. The decreasing interest in faith, religion and lack of interest in religious values often go hand in hand with the lack of interest in the superior, universal values, such as truth, goodness, the value of human life.

One of the alternatives to the problems of the young generation can be the idea and message of Adolf Kolping, for whom the directions of action and basis of activity are religion and faith, work and job, family, society and the country. They form the foundation of life and the goal for the aspirations of the Young Kolping. They treat faith as a basis that should be nurtured, developed and that its principles should be learnt and experienced. This idea is served by the spiritual formation of Young Kolping (related to religious practices including reading the Holy Bible, organizing pilgrimages, retreats, active participation in Holy Mass). The road to the development of our own potential leads through work. While the awareness of belonging to the community and involvement in social life young people learn through activities in their local community. Therefore, the aim of Kolping is to serve God and people, to become a better person and more aware citizen. The model of education based on such spiritual formation and activities of the parish, results in effective direction of the young generation. It is implemented in many groups and organizations functioning around parishes.

Young people involved in voluntary activities within Kolping Families not only conduct activities by providing help but simultaneously continue their religious formation.

The members of the group of Young Kolping derive their role models of conduct from the ideals, example and thoughts left by the blessed Adolf Kolping. He preached that any negligence in the sphere of religion and spirituality has a significant importance to a man and his or her development. Thus, these spheres should be taken care of, particularly in relation to young people. Moreover, it should be noted



that the action and activity of young people involved in the work of Kolping is linked to and derived from the commandment to Love Thy Neighbor and which is also referenced in the Christian concept of human education. The duty of a Christian is to help others and this is what people committed to the Kolping Families do in their family and civil lives.

### The values in the period of post-modernity

A young person needs moral foundations on which he or she can build their adult life. Without these foundations young people will not be able to find their own place in adult life. A positive attitude to the responsibility for our own actions is also associated with a system of values.

Pope John Paul II used to appeal to young people to discover values. He would describe them as a foundation, the basis of undertaken activities, decisions, borders of actions and acquired strategies which 'build life in a society'. He strongly emphasized the inconsistencies in separating the personal and social values. He perceived this inconsistency in the quarrelsome attitude connected with the lack of severity towards oneself. By better understanding and better actions we improve the personality for ourselves and for others.<sup>11</sup>

Values are the motor that runs our motivation to work, define also our attitudes towards reality. W. Stróżewski states that "the value considered in itself belongs to another (transcendental) order, however, its realization is realistically possible and in such way the reality is transformed and becomes something «valuable»."<sup>12</sup>

Today's youth often perceives and identifies the values with the achieved success in various spheres of life. The values are verified on the way towards a particular success. Without it these values fade and stop the interest of young people.<sup>13</sup>

Despite everything, a yearning for universal values remains in a young person anyway because "a man is freedom and as a free

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Młodzież nadzieją Kościoła. Orędzia na Światowe Dni Młodzieży*, Warszawa 2005, p. 194.

<sup>12</sup> W. Stróżewski, *W kręgu wartości*, Kraków 1992, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. ibidem, p. 43.



human is responsible for his or her actions. What lies within the human is also the desire and longing for what is really good and what is constantly present in his or her horizon.”<sup>14</sup> In addition, the essence of humanity is to make a deep personal relationship with another human being. The younger the person, the bigger impact a relation has on his or her development. We should agree with J. Tischner that

the primary source of ethical experience is not to experience values but to discover another person next to us. Not the values, norms, nor commandments come ‘first’ but the presence of another human being. [...] I am the value myself and the values are different situations of a man to man communication.<sup>15</sup>

Whereas building interpersonal ties involves good communication where the foundation is based on speaking and listening. Good relationships influence human’s development as a person, prepare a young man to live in a community. An unusual relationship between experiencing a meeting, human ties and experiencing values also points out J. Zamorski: “Values such as goodness and hope explain both the variety of human experiences and the essence of humanity itself, being a good man and a man of hope, that is experiencing values combines with experiencing another person, thus experiencing the meeting.”<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, activity in a community, which through the experience of meeting leads to acceptance and adherence to identical values, ideals, objectives and actions for the benefit of another person, can become an alternative to the crisis or the sense of alienation. The associations and NGOs that are dynamically operating in local areas are often communities of so called “small families”. Within such a “family” a young person can learn a voluntary activity, develop his or her character as well as self-awareness and later become a mature and responsible for his or her choices as an adult person.

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<sup>14</sup> J. Zamorski, *Dylematy egzystencjalno-religijne jako problem współczesnej młodzieży*, Sandomierz 2012, p. 137.

<sup>15</sup> J. Tischner, “Etyka wartości i nadziei”, in: *Wobec wartości*, ed. D. Hildebrand, Poznań 1994, p. 55.

<sup>16</sup> J. Zamorski, *Dylematy egzystencjalno-religijne...*, op. cit., p. 152–154.



Work in all kinds of communities gives a sense of acceptance, teaches respect for the work and sensitivity for the needs of other people. This happens to young people who go to the Associations of Kolping Families—a group of Young Kolping and there they realize their talents, passions and use their potential for another person. This group adheres to and forwards Christian values in life every day. The purpose and mission of every member of the community is to help others in the spirit of Christian values.

A group of Young Kolping helps young people in determining their place and gives them a sense of belonging and the awareness of being needed. On one hand, the proposal from Kolping is corresponded to by young people with certain expectations and on the other hand, there are also people seeking and in many cases finding themselves in the community and, consequently, they notice the meaning of action for other people.

### Pillars of Christian education

The idea of the importance of the young generation as a social group and the role it plays in the society was pointed out in research by A. Oleszkowicz and A. Senejko. They call youth as one of the most important “hidden spiritual resources needed to revitalize our society.”<sup>17</sup> That is why the appropriate development of this young generation is so important and vital for the future of the whole society.

Upbringing and communication of values starts from the smallest social community or family. The family has always been and still is the first and fundamental school of values. If the family is in crisis then it influences all its members. Therefore, as D. Luber accurately states: “raising a child—means making him or her a worthy person, not by what they have, but for who they are, not for what they receive, but for what they share with the others.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> A. Oleszkowicz, A. Senejko, *Psychologia dorastania. Zmiany rozwojowe w dobie globalizacji*, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> D. Luber, “Wartości zagubione w wychowaniu rodzinnym a demoralizacja dzieci i młodzieży”, in: *W kierunku bezpiecznego życia dzieci i młodzieży*, ed. A.M. Szymański, E. Krzyżak-Szymańska, Mysłowice 2007, p. 92.

The family provides a starting point and a reference for the younger generation and is the first environment of acquired values. If this basic social community a young person learns respect for diversities of each human being, respect for work, love, help others, then as an adult he or she will follow such values.

In conversations with young people, we often hear words, that family, love, career success are the most important to them in life. These words were confirmed in a research conducted by A. Błasiak:

for the young people the family is in the first place, then it is followed by the moral values, health, education, self-development, a suitable profession, religious values, aesthetic values, material values and at the end the social prestige.<sup>19</sup>

This was also confirmed by a study of E. Wysocka:

the meaning of life is seen by youth in terms of activities for the loved ones, in the realization of personal goals, in a happy family life, and at the end of the list the realization of their ideals, norms and moral principles. This brings a standard image of man who is decent, of integrity and therefore happy.<sup>20</sup>

In this approach, the entire commitment is carried out in relation to the immediate family and young people do not predict another one.

The lack of authority among parents results in the lack of role models in the young people's closest surroundings. Adults, parents stopped being authorities or role models important in children's lives. The examples of adults do not stimulate young people to action and allow for laziness which may result in a lack of prospects. Meanwhile making young people face challenges, creating situations which would provoke children to act, to help others, is one of the ways of success in the educating sphere.

An important place for learning about Christian values is also the church. However, in order for God's truth to be close to the young generation it must reach them directly, it must be introduced in their experience and communicated through modern examples from everyday life. "The proclamation of the Word of God is unknown for a young person if it does not concern him or her

<sup>19</sup> A. Błasiak, *Młodzież – świat wartości*, op. cit., p. 357.

<sup>20</sup> E. Wysocka, *Młodzież a religia Społeczny wymiar religijności młodzieży*, Katowice 2000, p. 44.



directly. And here we have achieved the essence of the problem. For the preached word to be adopted it must relate to problems which a young person could face today.”<sup>21</sup>

The Catholic Church has always been the guardian of Christian values. Many young people actively participating in the life of the Church were able to find themselves in adult life. The parish groups of various types became a complement for the activities of many groups of young people gathered in groups of scouts, school interest clubs.

As J. Mariański considers, the parishes need the lifespan that is brought in by the developing movements and communities. In the Polish religious landscape, beside the traditional groups within the parishes, there are new movements and religious communities associated with the Catholic Church and attended by thousands of Polish people, especially young ones. These movements and communities undertake various activities in order to actively participate in the life of the community of Church. They work not only “on the principle of partnership in the mission of the Church”<sup>22</sup>, but what is more, as noticed by a sociologist undertaking research on religion in Poland, these groups work in accordance to faith and thus they are more radical. They shape the moral life of their members but also what is more significant “they are an important factor co-creating in an active way the whole infrastructure of the third sector of social life.”<sup>23</sup> Thus their influence on the whole of society and in particular young people may be important in overcoming the crisis that is experienced by young people.

This relatively new movement that is rapidly growing is the Work of Kolping in Poland within which young people organize themselves in a group of Young Kolping. The patron and founder of the Work of Kolping also based his pedagogical and moral system of the young generation on Christian values:

the priest Kolping could not imagine a society without any form of relationship with Christianity. In his opinion, the real duty of a Christian is

<sup>21</sup> K. Pawlina, „Jak ewangelizować młodzież”, in: *Młodzież a ewangelizacja w perspektywie wyzwań XXI wieku*, ed. M. Nowak, Olsztyn 2000, p. 55.

<sup>22</sup> J. Mariański, “Religijność młodzieży wobec wyzwań reewangelizacji Europy”, in: *Młodzież a ewangelizacja w perspektywie wyzwań XXI wieku*, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, p. 35–36.

to help another human being. This help is based primarily on the education of young people that has to be based on religion and virtue, harmony and love, diligence and conscientiousness, good mood and humor.<sup>24</sup>

The introduction of Christian values in life takes place through a specific action that is connecting the spiritual values with everyday life, common thinking and acting in the spirit of Christian values. The responsibility for the loved ones or for the local community and the common desire to ethical and religious renewal by giving a testimony to their faith and conscious apostolate, teaches young people the responsibility for themselves and others.

T. Ożóg presumes that “religious movements are «axiologically rich» because in modern times they are a valuable educational proposal as a counterweight to the «axiological emptiness»”.<sup>25</sup>

This takes place in a group of Young Kolping. Fulfilling the mission of the blessed Kolping in everyday life and work for the benefit of other people who are often weaker and in need is the core and goal of the group interactions.

The young generation that contributes to the social activity of the Church consists most of all of people connected with Catholic associations operating within the given parishes. I will present the activity of one of these groups on the example of Young Kolping.

### Young Kolping an active contemporary citizen

Social activity in our country began to develop rapidly in the 1990's as then many non-governmental organizations and associations were formed. The present years can be called a triumph of the third sector which has created a number of foundations, organizations and groups operating in almost all areas of social life. It is also the area of activities of the young people who, contrary to many earlier negative opinions, are increasingly willing to take part in voluntary activities. A special type of activity is the social activity. This is shown

<sup>24</sup> T. Solski, *Życie i działalność błogosławionego księdza Adolfa Kolpinga (1813–1865)*, Kraków 2001, p. 72.

<sup>25</sup> T. Ożóg, “Wychowanie chrześcijańskie w kościelnych ruchach religijnych”, in: *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie. Między tradycją a współczesnością*, ed. A. Ryńcio, Lublin 2007, p. 956.



in the action as well as the willingness to act, it is a conscious participation in social life which not only makes the change of social surroundings but also makes the change in the humans themselves and their the perception of themselves too. This activity relates to the social and civil areas and sets the direction of solving social problems.<sup>26</sup>

The mission of the Work of Kolping that is “strong persistence in faith, care for the family, appreciating the values and dignity of work and helping local communities.”<sup>27</sup> “Time will show you what to do”—these are the words of the patron and the main idea of the work of the associations of Kolping Families operating in Poland. Since 1990, many people throughout Poland have begun to operate and organize themselves and start local groups of action for their communities. This was the beginning of the new associations of Kolping Families.<sup>28</sup>

A selected section of youth operating within Kolping Family is called Young Kolping. It is set up as a result of the willingness of at least 10 young members of the Kolping Family.<sup>29</sup> An International organization of Young Kolping operating within the Work of Kolping brings together young people who are open to contact with other people and are eager to undertake some action. Young Kolping is a local youth group that operates within the structures of the Work of Kolping in Poland which in turn, derives from a widely operating Work of Kolping in Germany. It is not a very large group in Poland but it consists of about 200 people across the country.<sup>30</sup> A member of the Young Kolping must be between 16 and 30 years of age, meet the

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. W. Kosowska-Maca, “Aktywność społeczna wyzwaniem dla obywateli”, in: *Podmioty, środowiska i obszary edukacyjne. Wyzwania i zagrożenia połowy XXI wieku*, ed. N. Majchrzak, A. Zduniak, Poznań 2014, p. 202–203.

<sup>27</sup> Available at: <<http://kolping.pl/onas>> (access: 21.05.2016).

<sup>28</sup> W. Kosowska-Maca, “Project «Myśl solidarnie, działaj lokalnie – program edukacji globalnej» jako przykład aktywności społeczności lokalnych, do większego zaangażowania się w rozwiązywanie problemów globalnych”, in: *Edukacja międzykulturowa w warunkach kultury globalnej. Od rozważań definicyjnych do praktycznych zastosowań*, ed. E. Ślachcińska, H. Marek, Poznań 2014, p. 443.

<sup>29</sup> Terms and conditions of Young Kolping – materials available in the Central Association of Work of Kolping in Poland.

<sup>30</sup> An interview with a specialist for the European youth cooperation Patrycja Kwapik, data relate to the year 2015 (Cracow, 17.06.2016).

conditions of a membership in the Kolping Family and accept the aims and objectives of Young Kolping.<sup>31</sup>

The activity of groups of Young Kolping as for each association, depends primarily on the management of strong leadership and attitudes that it presents. The President of the group is selected from among the members of the Young Kolping gathered at the foundation meeting, he or she cares in a special way about an active action and development of the group.<sup>32</sup>

It is the driving force for any organization which attracts other people by commitment and visible lasting effects of its work. The actions that the Young Kolping undertake derive from statutory objectives, which are also a response to the needs of local environments in which they operate. Contemporary groups united within Young Kolping often evolved and do not call themselves Young Kolping. Currently, 13 groups<sup>33</sup> of Young Kolping operate in Poland and their names often differ from the original. These are, for example, the volunteers of Kolping, a group of young Kolping, the volunteers of the priest Kolping—often called “young”. They continue to implement the goals and objectives of the blessed Adolf Kolping. They form the Union of Young Kolping in Poland and also for a part of the International Young Kolping.

The objectives and tasks of Young Kolping are determined based on the parent Kolping Family aims. The aim of the Young Kolping, defined in the Statutes include among others: organizing youth meetings, conduction of training, refresher courses, organizing lectures, symposia, training camps, pilgrimages and other forms of business formation, supporting the exchange of information and experiences, organizing cultural, entertainment, recreational and sport events, assisting in the organization of projects for children, general cooperation with national and international groups of Young Kolping also in the organization of the above mentioned tasks, activities for the parish and the local community.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Statut, paragraph 12, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. B. Harasimowicz, A. Wiśniewska, *Kolping. Współpraca bez granic. Nasze rodziny. Nasze partnerstwa*, Kraków 2010 (data confirmed in the interview with Patrycja Kwapik – Cracow, 17.06.2016).

<sup>34</sup> Statut “Young Kolping”, paragraph 5, p. 1, Central Association of the Work of Kolping in Poland.



The idea of the Board of Young Kolping Europe (a Youth Federation which consists of the members of the Young Kolping from all over Europe)<sup>35</sup> is for young people to open themselves to their peers from other countries, get to know them, and thus compare the stereotypes with reality. Due to the fact that Poland and Germany are neighbouring countries, the Polish groups of Young Kolping have the opportunity to establish cooperation with their German partners. The activity of the Kolping Group is reflected primarily in four major spheres of activity: in social life, in the church community, citizenship community and the European community.

The first concerns the involvement in the immediate social environment. Young people characterize their activity in the following manner: As a local group we operate in the area where we live. And here you can describe many of our activities, such as; care and help for children with homework, visiting people in a hospice (Young Kolping Tczew), organizing activities and projects for children and young people (festivals, discos) and also for the elderly (artistic meetings, Young Kolping Chelmek), support for Kolping Families in which we operate. In addition, we have the possibility of holding annual voluntary service abroad in any chosen NGO. So far, the members of the Young Kolping have helped in the center for disabled people in Austria, in the common club for children in the UK and in the activities of the Young Kolping in Germany.<sup>36</sup>

The next sphere of the activity of Young Kolping relates to the spiritual life within the church community (“Active in the church community”). The Young Kolpings express themselves on the topic in such way: Young Kolping as a group operating locally are present in religious life, they co-organize the setting during Mass and prepare prayer meetings. In March 2007 they held a retreat for young people from across Poland and the priest and leader Z. Myszk invited them to Leba for a few days to prepare for the Easter holidays. Every year, they want to organize these formation meetings.

Civic activity is important for the development and maturity of young people who will be conscious future voters. A group of Young

<sup>35</sup> Available at: <<http://www.kolpingjugend.de/ueber-uns/kolpingjugend/wer-wir-sind/>> (access: 21.05.2016).

<sup>36</sup> B. Michałek, *The interview with the president of Young Kolping in Europe*, Kraków 2016.



Kolping are committed to the national and international arena by participating in meetings and seminars on social problems in Europe.

The president of Young Kolping in Poland, B. Michałek, has described the meetings: Young Kolping every year, as part of an international organization, sends its members to Strasbourg (France) to a seminar on active participation in social life. Poland is usually represented by 2 people and there are 65 of young participants from across Europe. This visit is an opportunity to look at closely the life of the Euro-MPs and to find out about the European structures or to meet with representatives of the EU Parliament and take part in plenaries.

In year 2006, young members of Kolping could also participate in political practices—accompanying the Members of Parliament in Warsaw for a week. This year we are planning similar internships but this time we would like to invite young people to Brussels.

The last major sphere of the Kolping is the activity among the other members of the Young Kolping across Europe.

The president of Young Kolping in Poland says that as part of the Young Kolping Europe (15 countries) we have the opportunity to participate in meetings of youth, training for leaders or holiday trips. In 2002, we organized an international meeting in Cracow which was attended by about 47 people from 13 countries (from Switzerland to Romania) and a year later we went to a meeting in Portugal. This summer Young Kolping Czech Republic is organizing a European Youth Week. We will also take part in an international meeting in Russia (three weeks) and Lithuania (9 days).

What we have already done: we organized 42 meetings for young people in Poland and in other countries (including Germany, Portugal, Ukraine and Austria), we enabled 847 young people to participate in an international exchange, we sent 17 young people to the annual volunteering abroad, we conducted work placements in Germany for 15 people and set up 11 theatre and music groups.<sup>37</sup>

The activities undertaken by the young people allow them to better understand themselves, their capabilities and limitations. These

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<sup>37</sup> B. Michałek, *Young Kolping activities 2006*, Kraków 2006.



activities allow them to interact with the other participants, realize their own vocation, identify themselves with similar personalities of other cultures. They also create the opportunity to develop our own interests and passions.

The analysis of documents and interviews conducted with young people shows that the Young Kolping give the opportunity for active participation in social life and building a civil society.

I present a few statements of young people involved in the activities of the Young Kolping who I asked about the reason that influenced their decision of becoming involved into the activities of Kolping Family and about the changes that in their opinions occurred in their lives after joining the organisation. Each of these people who I interviewed noticed the changes.

I became interested in Kolping, because I like to help and I had heard in school that a voluntary group was to be set up. After joining Kolping and the voluntary activities I experienced changes in me, most of all in the terms of self-esteem. I am a very shy and modest person and through the activities in the group I became more open to other people. I have been noticing changes in my brother who is also in a voluntary group. Before people were indifferent to him and now he engages in all actions of voluntary activities. During trips we gain a lot from the discussions with a priest about values and what for us as Christians should be in life in the first place (W. Śniadek).<sup>38</sup>

One of the interviewed members of Kolping took part in the foundation of the Young Kolping group in Luborzyca.

The motive for setting up the group of Young Kolping was the earlier activity in a theatre group affiliated with the Kolping Family Association in Luborzyca and the desire to extend contacts with other people, writing joint projects and planning the development of this activity. As a Young Kolping we were able to go to other countries and meet with young people who just like us worked in Kolping groups. The change that I saw in my life after engaging in the activities of Young Kolping was above all, openness to new contacts. I believe that travelling educates and thank to the journeys I took part in I met many interesting people. These meetings enriched my personality; spending free time together, as well as participation in civil courses taught me the respon-

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<sup>38</sup> An interview with Weronika Śniadek engaged into the activities of the Voluntary Group of the Father Kolping in Chelmek (1.07.2016, materials available from the author of the paper).

sible perception of the world. It was also very important that all our Kolping meetings were accompanied by prayer.<sup>39</sup>

A. Blajda from Luborzyca expressed her experiences and reflections related to her engagement in Young Kolping Group in a very emotional way.

The interest in people from other Kolping Families and their involvement, was the main reason for me to join the Young Kolping. Meeting other people as well as the community in Kolping were important to me. I developed thank to other people who represent values as I do. I saw that there are people in other places who do similar work for the others. Joining Kolping was amazing itself, I deeply experienced this event. People who work within the Kolping Family in Luborzyca are a model for us that we want to follow. In the vast majority these people are the so called 50+ but they are full of energy and enthusiasm to work for others. The atmosphere within in the family of Kolping and the members of the group supporting each other in every situation in life works for me like a magnet.<sup>40</sup>

The above statements prove the influence of this organization on people engaged in its activity. All of them testify to the openness and the development of social responsibility and social relationships acquired by Kolping members as well as the reflection and discovery of values. Therefore one can be tempted to state that Young Kolping in carrying out the goals meets the expectations and problems of the younger generation. There is no movement nor religious society in Poland which would involve the process of education, though, sometimes it happens without formalizing the foundations, objectives, methods used. The education takes place through other activities and thus young people receive “an image of the world, the understanding of social reality, the experience of the supernatural reality, all present in the thinking and social exchange information, symbols, characters, and values”<sup>41</sup>, that is, those that have the anthropological and axiological nature. In this way the young members of Kolping gain the basis for shaping proper attitudes. It is about the Christian

<sup>39</sup> An interview with Maciej Grątkowski contributing to Young Kolping in Luborzyca (4.07.2016).

<sup>40</sup> An interview with Agnieszka Blajda engaged in the activities of Young Kolping in Luborzyca (4.07.2016).

<sup>41</sup> T. Ożóg, *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie w kościelnych ruchach religijnych*, op. cit., p. 959.



and human values to become “the subject of internalization” by the young generation. It needs to be clearly stated that the educational functions carried out by the Young Kolping are not limited only to the spiritual and intellectual dimension. The programme takes into consideration support for people at all levels of life. This association gives young people an opportunity for the activity in various areas and thus satisfies their need to be noticed and appreciated. The clearly defined program helps young people to become more mature and creative in achieving the optimal level of reflectivity. In addition, the young person can also think about faith and the basis of Christian morality, explore a vocation in the Church and be prepared for life in all its dimensions.<sup>42</sup>

## Conclusion

There are young people in the modern world who, despite many negative opinions, represent Christian values and are guided by these values in their actions. The activity of Young Kolping group is a prime example.

The alternative of Young Kolping in the presence of identity crisis of the young generation is the social commitment of its members that creates a bond with the local community which in turn is the basis for developing and strengthening identification with the public and in further consequence building national identity of young people. This attitude and activity overcomes the feeling of loss, alienation and rootlessness of young people and this is a problem that sociologists and pedagogues write about.

Working for other people, creation, deepening and establishing new relationships as well as involvement in Kolping groups overcomes the crisis of hope in young people that usually brings feelings of alienation and loneliness.

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<sup>42</sup> Mentioned and other functions are carried out in other religious movements and associations. Cf. A. Skreczko, U. Piętka, “Wybrane aspekty pedagogii Ruchu Comunione e Liberazione (Komunia i Wyzwolenie)”, in: *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie. Między tradycją a współczesnością*, ed. A. Rynio, Lublin 2007, p. 993; Cf. also T. Ozóg, *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie w kościelnych ruchach religijnych*, op. cit., p. 955; cf. also A. Rynio, “Wychowawcza metoda ks. L. Giussaniego”, in: *Wychowanie człowieka otwartego: Rola „Zmysłu religijnego” Luigi Giussaniego w kształtowaniu osoby*, ed. A. Rynio, Kielce 2001.

In any activity undertaken by Young Kolping, the primary value is the second person. Respecting personal values over material ones is another alternative of Young Kolping in the crisis of youth, that is the materialism and consumerism.

Developing the moral criteria based on religious values, that is the organization and active participation in prayer meetings opposes the contemporary crisis of youth in which there is the lack of silence and reflection on our own lives.

The variety of actions that the young people conduct as part of the Young Kolping, as well as part of other groups of young people affiliated with the Associations of Kolping Families and calling themselves the “The Volunteer Group of Father Kolping”, “Support Group” or simply “the Young”, confirms the fact that the Christian values introduced in an early age, being one of the pillars of Christian education, then nurtured in the family are beneficial to a particular activity for another person.

Young Kolping in their social activity and private life are guided by the highest values, they infect others with their enthusiasm and willingness to selfless help. Based on numerous interviews and discussions with young people as well as my own observations I would like to conclude that the communication and introduction of Christian values from an early age builds the next generation in awareness of their personality, goals and aspirations.

Young Kolping allows some of the young people to develop values acquired in the family homes and other young people find these values during their activities in the community. Young Kolping is an alternative to the contemporary crisis of the young generation as through its social and voluntary activities it is also an example of the activity of the youth in the local community. The basis of the Kolping activity is the highest value and therefore the work of Kolping is rapidly developing.

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