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Volunteering driven by religious inspiration: is it really doomed to death?

Religion is widely recognized as the principal driver of volunteering for social solidarity and voluntary associations linked to religious institutions have been an important actor in the social services field in all Europe, regardless of the welfare regime. Now, recent research trends show that religious voluntary associations are under pressure: traditional life-long membership-based participation declines, intermediary corps are losing appeal, religious participation has plummeted.

Counter-intuitively, Ksenija claims that religious volunteering can rely on an important resource to re-invent itself in the future. Religious voluntary associations as we have known them are but a practice-based tool, embedded in time and space, an operational function of a holistic value system, that connects the individual to humankind, and through meaningful relationships with the “other”, to God. The quest for meaning being infinite, volunteers of religious inspiration will devise with time institutional forms better apt to favor their collective engagement.

Changes in volunteering patterns that have been observed during Covid-19 pandemics and refugee crises indicate that this is already happening.

Starting from the results of her doctoral studies, published in a book (2023), Ksenija will explore the potential for furthering this line of research in comparative and interdisciplinary perspectives and share her experience of international practitioner and PhD candidate at the WWU - University of Münster in Germany.

Ksenija Fonović (2023), *Double Trouble. Distinctive Nature and Future Prospects of Religious Voluntary Associations. Vincentian Voluntary Groups in Italy: An Organizational Case Study in the Historical Neo-Institutional Perspective*. Wissenschaftliche Schriften der WWU Münster, Reihe VI, Band 33, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim.