



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Press contact:

Maik Duennbier, [alcoholpolicy@activeeurope.org](mailto:alcoholpolicy@activeeurope.org)

0046 73 704 20 95

Letizia Gambini, [press@youthforum.org](mailto:press@youthforum.org)

0032 49 104 13 78

### **Barroso promotes special interests instead of welfare of young Europeans**

The financial crisis in Europe is affecting young people's overall emotional well-being and capacity to learn. A report from Glasgow City Council highlights how pupils' emotional stability underpins their ability to learn. In Estonia a notable rise in abuse of alcohol among youth is reported. However, EU countries report that social spending is bearing the heaviest austerity burden: e.g. the German "savings package" requires 37% of the savings to be taken from social spending.

At the same time the President of the European Commission Mr. Barroso finds the time to attend a gala of the alcohol lobbyist Brewers of Europe, to join their special interests by recognizing the "important contribution to European economy. And the value added of the sector to the economy is estimated at €50 Billion."

The costs of the social harm caused by alcohol every year in the EU, however, are more than twice of that sum: €125 Billion.

"Mr. Barroso displays exactly the kind of thinking that got us into the crisis in the first place. Short-term profit thinking instead of long-term vision rooted in sustainable policies", says Andrea Lavesson, President of Active – sobriety, friendship and peace.

The EU is the heaviest alcohol consuming region in the world. Only the economic consequences, let alone the social and democratic harm, are enormous: productivity losses because of alcohol (absenteeism, unemployment and premature death) amount to €59 Billion per year.

In the face of these facts, it remains a riddle how the President of the European Commission can say things like: "And indeed the Commission looks to your industry as a key partner in pushing forward our growth agenda towards a more smart, inclusive and sustainable Europe, our Europe 2020 agenda."

The EU 2020 Strategy contains five headline targets out of which three are related to alcohol harm: 1) Employment – 75% of the 20-64 year-olds are to be employed. 2) Education – school drop-out rates are to be reduced below 10%. 3) Poverty – at least 20 Million fewer people are to live in or at risk of poverty.

“Obviously Mr. Barroso has not gotten the facts right. Why would he show such misunderstanding of the situation of young Europeans?” asks Andrea Lavesson, President of Active – sobriety, friendship and peace.

25% of pre-mature deaths of young men are alcohol related. 43% of 15 and 16 year-old pupils report heavy episodic alcohol use. Alcohol intoxication predicts school drop-out. 16% of all cases of child abuse and neglect involve alcohol. In the EU today, there are 9 Million children and young people living in families with alcohol addicted parents.

“The World Economic Forum, the World Bank and the World Health Organisation, joined by all EU Members States have made it clear that alcohol harm is a danger for growth, people’s health and societal development,” says Andrea Lavesson, from Active. “Their recommendations are clear: raise taxes, ban alcohol marketing, decrease accessibility and protect the choices of youth who want to live free from alcohol.”

“The costs of youth unemployment and exclusion are becoming increasingly apparent as the impacts of the economic crisis and austerity measures filter down to the most vulnerable in society,” says Peter Matjašič, President of the European Youth Forum.

“Unfortunately the European Commission has so far underestimated the role and power of youth organisations to protect young people, to combat the crisis and to strongly contribute to achieving the EU 2020 targets. The European Youth Forum and its members work for the general well-being of young Europeans. Through this work, we generate creativity, know-how and entrepreneurship which will lead Europe out of the crisis. It is this work that should receive attention and more support – for example through an independent Youth in Action Program – because here true inclusion, innovation and sustainability are generated.”

The European Youth Forum (YFJ) is the independent, democratic, youth-led platform, representing 98 National Youth Councils and International Youth Organisations from across Europe. The YFJ works to empower young people to participate actively in society to improve their own lives, by representing and advocating their needs and interests and those of their organisations towards the European Institutions, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

“Active- sobriety, friendship and peace” is a non - governmental organisation gathering European youth temperance organisations working for a democratic diverse and peaceful world free from alcohol and other drugs where an individual can live up to her full potential. Active has more than 25 000 members in 26 European countries.