

## OPEN LETTER

Press contact: Stefan Slooten  
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1<sup>st</sup> March 2013

### RE: Protecting European children with a new Alcohol Strategy

Dear Commissioner Mr Borg,

We hope this letter finds you well.

We would firstly like to welcome you in the name of all our members to your new position at the Directorate General for Health and Consumers. We wish you much success in making Europe healthier and happier for us young people in the upcoming years.

My name is Simon Olsson and I am the President of *Active – sobriety, friendship and peace*. *Active* is a European youth umbrella NGO with 32 member organizations in 24 countries from all over Europe.

I would like to start with telling you that I really enjoyed reading your blog on the Children Cancer Day (date 15/02/2013) and the wonderful examples you are mentioning. In particular we support and commend your recognition that "Like all parents, we do what is best for our children's health and we make sure they come to no harm".

In this spirit, perhaps you noticed that the 5-15<sup>th</sup> of February was dedicated to the children of alcoholics. As a youth organization we – like you – believe that many political and social issues can be simplified by looking at them from the eyes of young people. It is in this matter of protecting children's health that we are calling upon to Commission for more decisive action. In the EU only, there are 9 million children – about the population of Sweden – living with at least one parent who is addicted to alcohol (See [research](#) and a [video](#) on this). And we believe, like you, that these are not merely only numbers; if health is wealth, then we have a mandate to protect the physical and emotional wellbeing of those in vulnerable situations, specifically children with alcohol addicted parents, children that have the right to have their childhood back.

Children with alcohol addicted parents are a vulnerable part of society at much higher risks than others. You can see this in the lower levels of physical or mental health, lower grades at school and higher dropout rates, and often continue the cycle of substance abuse to the next generation ([see more](#)). In fact the UK Government published a [recent article](#) which showed that "troubled families" require as much as ten times more financial support as an average family – i.e. in West Cheshire a "troubled family" requires about £76,190 in financial support in comparison to £7,795 for an average family per year. As you know, alcohol is a major factor here and wreaks havoc in families throughout Europe, which is why we need stronger regulation on alcohol.

These facts bring us to the broader picture of the alcohol problem Europe is facing, as the biggest [alcohol consumption region in the world](#). Despite the fact that children were supposed to be the first priority in the alcohol strategy of the EU, DG Sanco has still not developed a new alcohol strategy since the old one expired in 2012. We believe that Europe needs to recognise that it has a problem with alcohol, especially in the norms that we are creating for children through alcohol advertising. Being serious about protecting children and young people means that such strategic action.

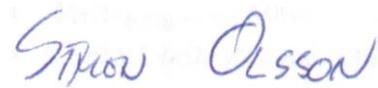
A very recent [analysis](#) shows clearly that children are much more exposed to alcohol advertising than adults. Namely, we can see 10% to 50% more alcohol advertising compared to our parents. This is not the Europe we want to live in – it is not a Europe in which we feel secure.

For all the above mentioned reasons, we ask you to help us bring the joy of childhood back to the young people of Europe. We ask you to put the interests of the youngest at top priority that should lead to development a new alcohol strategy that will protect us from the harm of alcohol. The young people of Europe deserve better, deserve healthier, deserve happier.

Mr Borg, we thank you for your time and attention and wish you and your staff good luck in working with the public health concern. We would be more than happy to discuss with you any further questions or remarks that you have from this letter, either via email or in person.

Thank you very much.

Yours Sincerely,



Simon Olsson,

President of Active – sobriety, friendship and peace

*"Active- sobriety, friendship and peace"* is a non - governmental organisation gathering European youth temperance organizations 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 24 European countries.

