



PRESS RELEASE

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Young Europeans alarmed over public health ignorance shown by Council President Van Rompuy.

Active sends its updated alcohol policy paper to the European Council President

The EU is the heaviest drinking region in the world, where the consumption per drinker amounts to 15 litres per year. This is an alarming fact and has caused both the European Commission and the EU member states to act. This spring the WHO adopted a global alcohol strategy, signed by all European countries. Clearly today, there is no doubt among European governments and citizens that alcohol places a paramount burden on all aspects of human life in Europe.

"It has been a long way to understanding the harms alcohol causes in society, but we see now political will to tackle the problems caused by alcohol in Europe", says Andrea Lavesson, president of the European Youth Temperance movement.

Despite these facts, the alcohol industry continues to euphemize the vast problems. The latest example is a "gala" organized by the beer lobbyist Brewers of Europe, gathering industry lobbyists and political leaders. "Europeans have to drink less alcohol and this threatens the profit interests of the alcohol industry. Of course the alcohol industry wants to hinder political measures that can accomplish change. That doesn't surprise anybody. But what is truly alarming is", according to Andrea Lavesson, "that the President of the European Council joins their 'gala' and holds a speech in which he underlines the role of alcohol in culture."

Mr Van Rompuy is to be quoted assigning "an important social role" to beer. "This is what happens when politicians join the cause of particular interests. They obviously don't see the whole picture and miss significant facts", states Andrea Lavesson. The past year, 7 million Europeans were exposed to violence connected to alcohol. 9 million children grow up in families with at least one alcohol addicted parent. These are the facts commonly known and giving a clear picture of the social harm caused by alcohol. "It worries the young people in Europe that the President of the European Council doesn't consider these numbers, that indicate human and citizen rights violations inside the Union he is supposed to enhance sustainable policy making for" urges Andrea Lavesson. Mr Van Rompuy showed yet another misjudgement when saying that beer was "culture and tradition [and] also economy". Active's president answers that "alcohol causes the European tax payers 125bn € easily avoidable expenses every year, which is more than twice as much as the entire alcohol industry is calculated to contribute to economies. I'd like to tell Mr. Van Rompuy that young people have to shoulder a disproportionate amount of the alcohol burden, caused by the grown-up world. Therefore I'll send him the Alcohol Policy Paper that the congress of the European Youth Temperance Movement updated this summer."

"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 35 000 members in 26 European countries.