

For immediate release 16th November 2011



Dear grown-ups, decision-makers in the European Parliament, in the national peoples' representations, in the national governments and ministries, in the European Commission,

We hope this letter finds you well.

We are not well. We are concerned because it looks like our future (is) broke.

In our organizations and for many of the young people and youth organizations we are cooperating with, the picture is clear: young Europeans are concerned, often even scared.

We are extremely aware of the tremendous burden that is being put on each and every single young European, who will have to make huge efforts, work relentlessly to master the debt challenges collected and piled up by the grown-ups who have been making decisions in the past and do so today.

Millions of young Europeans – in youth organizations, schools, universities and the public places all over the continent – ask: how are we ever going to be able to pay back these paramount debts that exceed any form of imagination?

With this question came another realization: we, Europe's youth, need the best possible conditions, tools and qualifications to be able to tackle the debt piled up by yesterday's and today's grown-ups. In that sense and in many other ways, **it is wrong to cut and try and save money on education, youth facilities, culture.**

It is especially wrong when other measures go largely unnoticed. Therefore Active and (only) 30 of its members collected during 2 hours in Rome last weekend more than 130 postcards from people whom they met. **130 ideas what €125 Billion could be spent on – instead of paying for alcohol related harm every year.**

€125 Billion is the amount of alcohol harm from the social costs: 25% of premature deaths of young men between 15 and 29 years old are alcohol related; 16% of cases of child abuse and neglect involve alcohol; 43% of 15 and 16 year-old pupils report heavy episodic alcohol use; more than 60% of all violent acts are alcohol related; 9 Million children and young people have to live with alcohol addicted parents; alcohol is the socially most harmful drug. The intangible social costs of alcohol harm in Europe – the heaviest drinking region in the world – are estimated to be €270 Billion.

Alcohol intoxication predicts school drop-out and unemployment. Alcohol is the second largest risk factor for disease burden in Europe. The World Economic Forum "Global Risks 2011" report pointed out that Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) are the 4th most severe risk in impact – where alcohol is a large NCD risk factor - and

thus Mr. John Dalli, European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy very recently highlighted that the “staggering €34 trillion NCDs are costing the world economy, gives all the more reason to commit ourselves to doing the right thing”.

**The right thing is to put in place a new and better EU alcohol strategy – because alcohol policies not only improve health.** They also improve the impact of EU spending of the European Social Fund. They contribute to fighting youth unemployment. They increase the inclusion of young people into society and improve human and social capital.

Alcohol policies increase the chances of the European Commission and each and every Member State to reach the headline targets of the EU 2020 strategy: improve employment; reduce school drop-out rates; reduce poverty and risk of poverty.

The right thing to do is to “increase taxes on alcohol, restrict access to alcohol and ban advertising”, which a 2011 World Bank Report clearly states.

The right thing to do is to implement what all EU member states signed in 2010: the WHO Global Alcohol Strategy that states that the right of children, young people and adults not to use alcohol should be protected.

**The right thing to do is to save money on alcohol harm, before saving money on youth and our future.**

In a period where literally every Cent is important, Europe cannot miss the chance to easily save €125 Billion a year – an amount which is more than the entire first rescue package for Greece.

In doing so, the impact of measures will be doubled and that is what the people in the streets suggest and what young Europeans deserve and demand from the grown-ups. Please give us a fair chance to tackle the debts you are burdening us with.

Yours sincerely,



Andrea Lavesson

On behalf of Active – sobriety, friendship and peace



Kristina Sperkova

On behalf of Human Rights Generation

**Human Rights Generation (HRG)** campaign's main aim is to focus on human rights issues in European countries. HRG takes up issues that specifically concern and affect youth. HRG identifies problems and their impact on the livelihood and future of the young generation and finds creative and innovative means to bring about change.

**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.