



Active and Eurocare Press Release  
For immediate release: 14<sup>th</sup> February 2011

**Nine Million Too Many**  
**Active and partners launch action week for children of alcohol addicts**

Today, *Active - sobriety, friendship and peace* and partners from all over Europe join to pool and concentrate resources to bring attention to the **situation of children and young people who have to grow-up in families harmed by alcohol abuse.**

Approximately 9 Million children in the European Union are affected by their parents' drinking problems<sup>1</sup>. These children suffer from neglect, feelings of shame and self-blaming for their parents' addiction and from continuous conflicts at home. Many children and young people have to witness and suffer violence<sup>2</sup>.

It is estimated that in Europe alcohol is a causal factor in 16% of child abuse and neglect cases<sup>3</sup>. Studies from all over Europe have shown that children and young people from alcohol addicted families are much more exposed to other health risks, to negative influences on their intellectual capacity and to their mental health<sup>4</sup>.  
*"The problem is huge and needs to be taken care of immediately. On Valentine's day, when people take the opportunity to express their feelings to loved ones, we think of all affected children. Nine million are nine million too many!"* says Andrea Lavesson, President of Active. *"We need open dialogue about this issue. It can no longer remain taboo. We also need better support measures: states and municipalities need to invest into more alcohol free leisure time environments for children and young people."*

During the Europe-wide action week, Active will arrange meetings with parents and children, visit schools, cooperate with partner NGOs from the local community, participate in panel discussions and issue public statements. *"Already in 1998 a report by McNeill showed that 20% of children under the age of 15 were living in households affected by alcohol misuse<sup>5</sup>. That's 13 years ago,"* as Andrea Lavesson points out. *"Therefore we need this action week not only to bring attention but also to push for concrete measures in the communities."*

Children living in families with alcohol problems are one, however very acute, example of the devastating effects that alcohol has on the European society. In 2003 alone the intangible costs of alcohol (which describe the value people place on suffering and lost life) in the EU was estimated for €270bn<sup>6</sup>. And a recent study from Nutt et al. showed that alcohol is the most dangerous drug in terms of harm to others than the user him/herself<sup>7</sup>. The harm inflicted upon others is not merely a side problem but is by far the most widespread problem related to alcohol use<sup>8</sup>.

Mariann Skar, Eurocare (European Alcohol Policy Alliance) Secretary General supports this initiative: *"I hope that Active and its members' efforts to raise awareness and break the taboo around abusive alcohol consumption will be picked up by other stakeholders across Europe and lead to the creation of a European Week of Attention for Children of Alcohol Addicted Parents. All children and adolescents have the right to grow up in an environment protected from the negative consequences of alcohol consumption. We should all reflect on our alcohol consumption and consider if it has any negative impact on our surroundings."*



**Notes to editors:**

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**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. [www.activeeurope.org](http://www.activeeurope.org)

**EUROCARE** (The European Alcohol Policy Alliance) is an alliance of organizations working on the prevention and reduction of alcohol related harm in Europe. Member organisations are involved in research and advocacy, as well as in the provision of counselling services and residential support for problem drinkers, the provision of workplace and school based programmes and the provision of information to the public.

Eurocare advocates the prevention of alcohol related harm in Europe through effective evidence based alcohol policy. [www.eurocare.org](http://www.eurocare.org)

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, P. and Baumberg, B., 2006. *Alcohol in Europe*. London: Institute of Alcohol Studies.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> Mc Neill, A et al, 1998, Alcohol Problems in the family: A report to the European Union, Brussels, Eurocare

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, P. and Baumberg, B., 2006. *Alcohol in Europe*. London: Institute of Alcohol Studies.

<sup>7</sup> Nutt, David et al, 2010, Drug harms in the UK: A multicriteria decision analysis

<sup>8</sup> Fekjaer, Hans Olov, 2010, Passive drinking – the collateral damage from alcohol, Eurocare seminar in the European Parliament, February 2010