



PRESS RELEASE

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## Boo! This is taboo!

Action week for children of alcoholics comes to an end but momentum must last

From Norway to Turkey have Active members worked for raising awareness about the problems that children and young people have to grow up in families with alcohol addicted parents. "We've been on the streets, have established co operations, been in contact with both politicians and the media and we've occupied the cyberspace," says Andrea Lavesson, President of Active – sobriety, friendship and peace, and continues: "We need this momentum that Active and many, many other organizations created all over Europe to continue and grow because one week is not enough to bring about change. 9 Million children in the EU alone long for change and we need NGOs, authorities and the media and their long-term commitment to make that happen."

12% of children in the EU have to live with parents who are alcoholics. Data from Germany, where more than 2 million children are affected, shows that 1/3 third of these children will become alcohol addicted themselves. Another 1/3 will develop psychological and other social problems.

"These facts show that there are children of alcoholics to be found in every school class, in sports clubs, everywhere. It's something that the children are exposed to because of their parents' drinking but it is the children who will bear the scars and consequences all life long," explains Andrea Lavesson from Active.

Research done by STAD in Stockholm indicates the magnitude of the problem by showing that 67% of schools lack a policy on alcohol and narcotics. Schools that have these policies are much more likely to identify and help children of alcoholics.

"We believe it's a reality all over Europe that schools and teachers know too little about how to identify children of alcohol addicted parents. To improve this is important. Obviously, if we cannot identify the children they'll remain invisible and without help," points out Andrea Lavesson. "Schools need to start acting now by developing policies and educating teachers and communes need to support this by investing into more help groups and more alcohol free environments for children and young people."

As many other organizations, like NACOA in Germany and the UK or CAN in Sweden, have emphasized, these political measures need to be accompanied by action in society that makes the stories of children of alcoholics visible. Many children of alcoholics who suffer from neglect and the exposure to violence blame themselves for the situation at home. "This topic has been taboo in Europe and cause these children to alone and ashamed. Therefore we need open dialogue in society that breaks the taboo around children of alcoholics. Together we need to make sure that affected children and young people see and feel that it is not their fault that parents ended up in addiction. This week and the activities in many countries were important but it needs to last, for the sake of Europe's children."

"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.

9 million too many