



PRESS RELEASE

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A small scandal, a major problem

Alcohol and sports don't belong together

Friday night, 1st April, in St. Pauli district, Hamburg a football match of the highest German league (Bundesliga) was abandoned. The reason: the assistant referee was hit in the back of his head by a plastic cup full of beer thrown at him from the stands. The match had to be broken off and the referees had to be guided from the pitch by guards.

“Not many in Europe might have paid attention to this incident”, says Andrea Lavesson, President of Active – sobriety, friendship and peace. “But we think that the dramatic incident from Friday night stands a symbol for the fact that alcohol and sport does not belong together at all.”

The act of violence occurred shortly after an official hearing in the European Parliament organized by the EPP group on 30th March. By this hearing the EPP group aimed at stressing “the importance of sports. The [...] Hearing on Sport [...] is a very important step in bringing new ideas and suggestions...” Commissioner Mrs Androulla Vassiliou, among others, expressed the strong role that sport plays in promoting active citizenship.

Andrea Lavesson from Active reacts by saying that “this is certainly right: playing a sport is important especially for young people. They learn cooperation, solidarity, respect and exercise values that European societies build on. But this function of sports comes with high demands on sports idols, sports events like Football – Bundesliga matches and sports clubs all over the continent: sports arenas should be alcohol free; sports clubs should be alcohol free and play an active role in preventing alcohol use and sports idols should not promote alcohol. Alcohol and violence in sports events are correlated in many countries, like the current example shows. Alcohol selling and serving in and around sports arenas should therefore be abandoned. Sports events should be safe environments to live up to their function of promoting positive values. Sports events should be occasions for family activities. Children and their parents should not need to be worried or stay away.

Relating more specifically to the EPP hearing to contribute with ideas Andrea Lavesson from Active suggests: “To further strengthen the positive role of sports in young people’s lives alcohol sponsorship should be banned. Grown-ups cannot talk about how good sport is for active citizenship and at the same time make sports a premium platform for the alcohol industry to target young people and promote their products that are evidently harmful for young people.”

“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.