

# All Rights!

Youth rights in alcohol culture

*All right?*

“ Human rights are like armour: they protect you; they are like rules, because they tell you how you can behave; and they are like judges, because you can appeal to them.” With these words the “Compass - Manual on Human Rights Education with Young People”, published by the Council of Europe, starts the chapter about understanding Human Rights. While we teach young Europeans the virtues of Human Rights and their implications, the every day reality of the same young people is that the armour is being damaged, sometimes ripped apart; that they are more a box of chocolate where you never know what you get than rules that guide and inform behaviour. Alcohol, its heavy use all over Europe and the related harm on society around, plays a key role in violating Human rights of children and young people. In order for our common quest to make Human

rights the armour of young people’s growing up and the guiding principles for how to navigate in society we need to address the effects of alcohol in Europe on especially vulnerable people.

Therefore we put forward this booklet to show and explain the reality of children and young people in Europe and the role alcohol plays in their every day lives.

Human dignity and universality are the two key concepts that shine in every single article of the Universal Declaration of Human rights. Human rights define the basic standards necessary for human beings to live in dignity. And in this sense all human beings, no matter the age, the origin, the eye colour and the intellectual or economic capacities, are equally entitled to live in dignity. The vision painted by Human rights stands in conflict with the reality. Europe is the heaviest drinking region in the world. Almost

all social events and activities in Europe are being alcoholised which has led to tremendous harm being caused to society. Children and young people are bearing a disproportionate burden of this harm: for them alcohol is a gateway into other drugs, into criminality, early school drop out, long-term unemployment and into apathy. All this amounts to daily Human Rights violations due to alcohol and the related harm.

Young people are especially prone to the influence of the environment around them. Therefore the attitudes of parents, friends, teachers, leisure time leaders and role models towards alcohol do affect their attitudes and behaviours. We call this social heritage. Unsafe environments, where alcohol and other drugs are present and socially accepted, even expected in the case of alcohol, increase the risk for children and young

people to start to use drugs. In these kinds of environments young people are at particular risk to start drinking and thus expose themselves to the consequences of alcohol consumption.

Like any other drug, alcohol use brings with it a bunch of harm: medical, social, economical and democratic. Each and every harm means Human rights violations and together they pose an enormous threat to the fundamental values at the heart of the idea of Human rights: human dignity and universality. These core values entail several other values that make Human rights and their application in every day life more understandable. But they also help to clearly identify Human rights violations in daily life of European youngsters.

Freedom is one of them, “because the human will is an important part of human dig-

nity. To be forced to do something against our will demeans the human spirit.”

Respect for others is a second value, “because a lack of respect for someone fails to appreciate their individuality and essential dignity.”

Tolerance is yet another value derived from the core value of human dignity, “because intolerance indicates a lack of respect for difference; and equality does not signify identity or uniformity.”

And for this purpose the last but not least one is responsibility, “because respecting the rights of others entails responsibility for one’s actions.”

It’s not surprising that in this context we point to the well-known fact that alcohol is a drug and thus creates experiences that the user wants to feel again and therefore leads to mental addiction. The other part of the addiction is the complex physical effects of

the drug. When the addiction both mentally and physically has made the human being more or less powerless, alcohol will steer the life of the user. Obviously alcohol is a threat to the value of freedom we just mentioned. That in Europe 43% of 15 - 16 year old students report heavy episodic drinking during the recent month is both a threat to their freedom and to the freedom of other people, especially young people around them. The earlier one starts to drink, the higher is the risk of becoming addicted.

Respect for other choices that do not conform to the alcohol culture is largely lacking in Europe and limits the individuality and essential dignity of young people. In Europe today, due to the alcoholization of all social events and activities and due to ever-present alcohol marketing, the dignity, the individuality and the sacredness of children and young people growing up in alcohol free

environments are being violated.

Many young people tell about bullying at school, in their sports clubs and so on because of their choice not to drink. The same goes for young workers who just started their professional education and university students. Tolerance is vastly lacking. It should be possible in Europe, as the Human rights tell us, for children and young people to choose a lifestyle and pursue it to their happiness, free from commercial and societal pressure. Unfortunately it is not.

Alcohol is the most harmful drug, especially because of the consequences for others than the drinker him- or herself. This is a fact commonly known and recently proved. In a very recent speech given in November 2010, Mr Paola Testori Coggi, the Director-General for Public Health of the European Commission addressed this issue very clearly and said

that the social impact of alcohol had to be taken into serious consideration.

Nearly 25% of 15-year olds live with alcohol addicted parents in Europe, Ms Testori Coggi said. This group of children and young people is especially vulnerable to the harm in alcohol.

We made this booklet in order to address the Human rights violations children and young people face every day in Europe. It is about raising awareness and building political will to help especially vulnerable groups of Europe’s youth, like children of addicted parents. We cannot afford any longer to be blind and deaf to the Human rights violations behind closed doors, around the corner, in our own neighbourhoods and in children’s rooms all over Europe because of alcohol.

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## Convention on the Rights of Child

Discussing Human Rights violations and threats caused by alcohol consumption and the European alcohol culture from a youth perspective must take its starting point in The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) for it is the first international instrument that recognizes children as social actors and active holders of their own rights.

The CRC incorporates the full range of human rights - civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights - of children into one single document. That's its strength and profoundness.

The importance of Human Rights for children is mirrored in the fact that every country in the world has ratified the CRC (except of two). In this regard it's important to understand that all countries whose parlia-

ments have ratified the CRC are bound by it. The CRC outlines in 41 articles the human rights to be respected and protected for every person under 18 years of age. When we in the booklet use the word "child" or "children" we're following this underlying definition.

The CRC provides measures for how to ensure the respect and the protection of the rights of children and young people. It, for example, contains "special protection measures" whose ambition is to eradicate the most dreadful situations that children and young people can end up in: sexual exploitation and abuse, economical exploitation, drugs, street children.

The purpose of the CRC is to legislate on rights for children on the basis of their special needs and vulnerability. Analyzing the harms and threats alcohol use and the alco-

hol culture in European societies create, we realize that there is a vast lack of legislation that could do much more to protect children - from the dreadful situations the "special protection measures" address.

The CRC contains an important principle that has the potential - when applied by policy and decision makers - to relieve the current situation of rights violations faced by young Europeans: the Best Interest of the Child, article 3.

The Best Interest principle shall be considered across the board in decision making. Since all European countries ratified the CRC, they are compelled to take a child centered approach whenever deciding on legislation or other policies. In contrast to that, the analysis of reality by the following UDHR articles will show how European youth is exposed to rights violations.

*“In all actions concerning children whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration.”*

Article 3, The Convention on the Rights of Child

“Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person”

Article 3

Alcohol is socially the most harmful drug and much of the alcohol harm in young people happens when they are in or on the way home from drinking environments. So, the mix is explosive since almost all social and cultural events in Europe serve as drinking environments but the most usual ones are bars, pubs, nightclubs, football stadiums, Christmas markets.

The positive freedom to act only according to make self-determined choices is largely diminished and often violated in Europe's drinking environments. The high density of these environments, the singularity of their attractiveness, their opening times and the availability of alcohol in them add up to a harmful mix that threatens and often violates the right to liberty of young people in Europe.

In many countries young people's typical alcohol consumption on a night out in a city

drinking environment exceed the recommended limits for an entire week. It must be clear to all that in these settings, no matter your own choices, it is impossible to feel free, to act freely and to enjoy the full extent of the right to liberty.

One in five European nightlife users had been involved in violence in the last 12 months - which means that the “right to security of person” in and around drinking environments in Europe is largely threatened and often violated - even for those young people who choose not to drink. Since almost all social and cultural events are drinking environments, it is hard, if not impossible for young people in Europe today to escape alcohol's social harm even if they choose not to drink. The EU programme DAPHNE shows that 95% of Europeans consider alcohol to be a key factor behind violence against women and children.

*All rights*

“No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”

Article 5

In Europe there live about 9 Million children and young people in families with at least one alcohol addicted parent. It is among these that we witness the most severe and often most apparent violations of rights. Children who have to endure living with alcohol addicted parents often and repeatedly fall victim to “cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

Life in a family with alcohol addicted parents is dominated by conflicts and unpredictability. The children and young people understand that their own family doesn't function like other families. Often they develop feelings of shame and blame themselves for their parents' addiction. Many of these children and young people are victims of domestic violence. In Ireland and Iceland 71% of the cases of domestic violence are attributable to alcohol. Alcohol is estimated to be a causal factor in 16% of child abuse

and neglect.

Millions of European children and young people suffer from neglect in an age where they would need shelter and support to find their place in the world. That these children and young people have to clean the vomit of their parents, that they have to witness or to endure violence and abuse is clearly “cruel, inhuman and degrading”.

The fact alone that children and young people grow up in families with addicted parents in Europe is a cruel situation: 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 capacities and their mental health. Young people's rights inscribed in article 5 of the UDHR are under attack by alcohol and the European alcohol culture.

*All rights*

“The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state”

The family's role as a protector of and shelter for children is not questioned by anyone. Everyone agrees that it is at home where a child should feel safe and look forward to come to. Where else if not at home should a child find security, joy and a stimulating environment for the development of its full potential?

Unfortunately the reality is different. In millions of cases it's home where a child returns to alcohol intoxicated parents and it's home where a child has to take over the role of grown-ups and take care of a parent who is intoxicated by alcohol. There are 9 million children in EU living with one or both parents addicted to alcohol.

Children in presence of adults under the influence of alcohol (not necessarily drunk)

feel insecure; they have problems to read adults' emotions and to understand their behavior. It evokes worries and confusion in children's lives. Alcohol consumption of the parents erases the family's most important role - to protect. It tears down the safe shelter and robs the child of the right to grow up in a secure environment. All this has enormous consequences in a child's current and future life. The protection of children and young people exposed to these conditions and environments needs very strong consideration. Besides the crucial role of the state institutions to protect the exposed and vulnerable, it is society's responsibility to protect children and young people from the effects of European alcohol culture.

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“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through media and regardless of frontiers”

Freedom of speech, the right to hold opinions without interference and to express these opinions according to one's own choice is a value of such importance for European society that it can challenge even the Best Interest of the Child inscribed in the CRC. Nevertheless, the fact that Europe is dominated by an extreme alcohol culture making Europe the heaviest drinking region in the world, where it's no exception that already 11- and 12-year olds use alcohol, means serious threats for the right of children and young people to hold opinions and express them in self-determined lifestyle choices. Given that young people are especially prone to influences of the environment around them, the threat of the alcohol culture to freedom of speech and expression is serious. In Europe today, it's not an option for young people to choose a lifestyle free from alco-

hol. The portraying of alcohol in all forms of media, for example, goes beyond the role as information provider. In Europe media plays a significant part in normalizing drug use - through films that clearly target children and young people, TV programmes and glamorising alcohol marketing. These phenomena play an important role in the alcohol culture build by the grown up world. It is this European alcohol culture that limits, threatens and often violates young people's right to choose and follow a lifestyle free from alcohol and other drugs. Opinions, as well as world views and their meaningful expression that don't conform to the current extreme drinking culture are all too often exposed to heavy and continuous interference making it hard for children and young people to choose a different lifestyle.

“The will of the people shall be the basis of authority of government (...)”

Article 21.3

That “the will of the people shall be the basis of authority of government” means that Europe’s form of government is a democratic one. Democratically elected parliaments from all European countries have ratified the CRC. This means that all European governments have signed up to primarily consider the Best Interest of children whenever deciding on legislation or other policies. Unfortunately, for children and young people and for Europe as a whole, in most of the cases decisions are not made in the child centred approach. This has led to a situation where young people in Europe today bear a disproportionate burden of alcohol harm, where binge drinking among minors - who by law shouldn’t be drinking at all - is ever increasing all over Europe, where alcohol marketing has become highly aggressive targeting children and young people even in their homes.

If governments continue to ignore their own responsibilities taken by signing the CRC, they’re on the brink of violating democratically legitimate decisions by national parliaments.

The eurobarometer gives a hint of the will of the people that goes in accordance with the Best Interest of children: 89% of Europeans think that selling and serving alcohol to young people under the age of 18 should be banned; 77% of Europeans support a ban of alcohol advertising targeting young people. Moreover, drunken youngsters are neither active nor empowered citizens of the democratic society. Alcohol violates their capacity to express their will. This aspect of alcohol use needs to be considered when trying to improve European democracy, if article three from the UDHR shall continue to guide European society.

“Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization (...) of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality”

Europe bursts in seams by the need for support measures for children of alcohol addicted parents but the actual provision of facilities, places and activities for these children is almost equal to vacuum.

States and their communes need to invest more into alcohol free environments and open holiday facilities where children can develop their personality in safe and stimulating environments. These facilities are lacking all over Europe.

A survey among all Swedish municipalities shows that even in a welfare state like Sweden many municipalities close the doors of

their leisure time facilities and activities during holidays like Christmas. When societies in Europe celebrate, they do so with alcohol but they are blind to the needs of vulnerable children and young people. 49% of the municipalities that answered the survey closed all doors during the holiday, with the reason that they didn't "see a need". With 9 Million children and young people in Europe living in homes where parents are alcohol addicted, there is giant need for protection of social and cultural rights.

“The rights of all men are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened.”  
John Fitzgerald Kennedy

Every child has the right to grow up in a family that does not spend most of the private economy on alcohol.

“Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection”

Children do not work, thus they don't earn money. But it's in the Best Interest of the child that the parents get their incomes so the family can fulfill its function and provide good conditions for the child's physical and personal well-being and development.

At this point, it is important to zoom on the families with alcohol problems. In these homes the head of the family is alcohol. Alcohol is prioritized in all areas of family life, including the family budget. Therefore children are very often deprived of leisure time activities, cultural and sports events, books or even education materials that a family with alcohol problems can not afford.

All resources are bound by alcohol. Children to alcohol addicted parents have to take adults' responsibilities and feel very often guilty or ashamed for their parents' behavior. These are usually reasons for the children's exclusion from their peer groups and their position on the edges of the social networks. Parental drinking leads to violations of children's dignity. The remuneration ensuring the parents' and their family's existence is spent for alcohol consumption of the parents by which the purpose of this right is not met and the children's existence worthy of human dignity is not ensured.

“Everyone has the right to rest and leisure (...)”

Article 24

Meaningful free time activities in safe and enabling environments are crucial for children and young people to find their place in society, to understand who they are and what they want to do with their lives. Unfortunately this important right is often threatened in at least two ways in the Europe of the 21st century:

We know that children who grow up in families with alcohol addiction don't have time and don't feel they're allowed leisure activities; they're focused on helping at home. These children and young people in very many cases have difficulties to build up close relationships. The absence of communal projects and activities especially for children of addicts in almost all regions of Europe contributes to the violation of their right to leisure and rest.

Furthermore we need to recognize that many cultural events and activities have res-

tricted entry because it's more important to sell alcohol than to open doors for young people. This means that the overall offer of meaningful and safe leisure time activities in Europe is often rather limited due to the current alcohol culture. Where this is true, the principle of article 24 is not met to the extent it should be. It is in many sports clubs all over Europe that young boys start using alcohol. It is in youth clubs all over Europe where alcohol use is an integral part of leisure time activities, not to mention excursions of any kinds. All these examples paint a clear picture: young Europeans cannot enjoy their right to rest and leisure to the extent it would be and should be possible.

Meaningful leisure time activities do not include initiation into Europe's extreme drinking culture.

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“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services (...)”

Children to alcohol addicted parents grow up in environments that are ruled by insecurity and fear. They often witness or even become victims of violence. Children's and young people's needs are neglected in these families. The financial situation of the family with alcohol problems is endangered by the alcohol use of the parent and thus the natural obligations of parents towards their children's standard of living such as adequate food, clothing and medical care are all too often neglected.

Even children of so called normal alcohol user are negatively affected by parents' drinking. A study from Sweden shows that more than every fourth child and young person has felt discomfort during Christmas because of grown-up's drinking. During holidays and celebrations like Christmas the well-being of

children is clearly compromised for grown-ups need to use alcohol. Clearly the use of alcohol causes lowered standard of living and well-being in both dysfunctional and functional families.

Alcohol is also a health determinant that violates children's and young people's right to standard of living adequate for well-being before they even had a chance to make their mark on the world. Alcohol e.g. is responsible for 7,4% of disability and premature death in EU. Even low amounts of alcohol consumed by women while pregnant have huge impact on the fetus. The Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is a sad example of mother's drinking that violates the right to standard of living which should enable the physical, mental, spiritual and social development of Europe's children and young people.

“Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection”

Social protection of children’s and young people’s development cannot be overestimated. It means both that the community as a whole sustains norms and rules and that the political system designs regulations which help creating the most stimulating and sheltered environment for children and young people to grow up and develop in.

In Europe children and young people often encounter the lack of safe and enabling environments - instead children and young people are extremely exposed to marketing of the alcohol industry. It’s impossible to talk of “social protection” in the spirit of article 25, 2 when alcohol brands are put on baby clothes and on toys. Social protection of the most vulnerable groups of society wouldn’t pass any performance test, given the fact that Europe’s societies continue to sustain legislation that allows parents to encourage their kids to drink - long before the legal age

limit; societies that do not sanction unacceptable behaviour under the influence of alcohol; societies that expect and often pressure children and young people into using alcohol.

In much the same way the principle of “special care” is being neglected by European communities, who allow communal and municipal facilities and activities for children and young people to be closed over holidays, so that there’s no other place to go for children who have alcohol abusing parents at home. There is an overall lack of alcohol free environments in Europe that signifies the need to step up action in the attempt to meet the “special care” principle of article 25, 2. More alcohol free environments mean more enabling and open environments for children and young people and they mean less alcohol harm suffered by youngsters.

“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit”

Education is crucial for children and young people to develop understanding for society and to find their places in it. It's not only formal education, taking place in schools that should matter in terms of article 26. To ensure that the right to education is met with special regard to the needs of children and young people, it's essential to add the aspect of non-formal education.

Alcohol threatens the right of children and young people to formal education. Frequent alcohol intoxications increase the risk for school dropout. The special threat to the right enshrined in article 26, 1 comes from the drinking reality in Europe. In Germany e.g. between 2000 and 2008 the number of alcohol intoxicated youngsters ending up in emergency rooms increased by 170%. Given that alcohol intoxication predicts school dropout, the threat to the right of formal education in Europe is tremendous.

Many young people have seen class mates being brought (back) to school by the police. That's how serious society takes the right to education in Europe. Nevertheless we still today lack measures of similar profoundness that solve the problem of truancy and eventual dropout because of alcohol and other drugs. These threats can also be identified in non-formal education when children and young people meet to use non-formal methods to learn from each other. Even these settings are often dominated by alcohol which means that they are excluding certain children and young people who may not feel comfortable in environments of alcohol use and who may wish to make experiences free from alcohol. It means that they, too, play a part in perpetuating the current extreme alcohol culture in Europe. Young people's right to education is under attack by alcohol harm.

“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace”

Social expectations to consume alcohol at celebrations and cultural events are both intentionally and unintentionally presented and depicted in school classes and by too many educators.

Children and young people need to be equipped with knowledge, critical thinking and virtues of healthy lifestyle in order to be able to understand their rights and make conscious decisions regarding their situation. It's important that they are provided with the full picture about alcohol consumption, the glorification of alcohol by those actors who financially profit from heavy consumption. Only if education programs succeed in addressing this issue comprehensively can we say that education in Europe is “directed to the full development of the human personality”.

Alcohol consumption is presented and treated as the norm in education materials as

well as in teachers' discourse. This approach inhibits critical thinking and the development of abilities to question current social constructions - two skills highly important for “human personality” in a globalizing world.

For education in Europe to meet the principles outlined in article 26,2 teachers and caretakers need to have a mindful approach towards the alcohol norm constructed in European culture and to provide their students with three crucial things:

- Key-knowledge about media literacy to see that behind the glamorous cover of alcohol, the advertised effects and the social role of alcohol are mostly socially constructed;
- Abilities to critically think about cultural norms;
- Empowerment to choose a healthy lifestyle that doesn't need drugs for fulfilment and joy.

“Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”

Culture plays an important role in young people’s socialization. We all carry a backpack full of culture. Therefore children’s and young people’s access to culture - both for understanding and influencing it - is important. Culture contributes to better mental and physical well-being.

The full realization of the Human Right to freely access cultural life however, is hindered and often threatened by the current alcohol culture in Europe. Almost all cultural and social events are alcoholised which always means that some groups of society, for example children from alcohol addicted families, young people who choose to live free from drugs and several religious groups, are being excluded. Their right to “freely participate in the cultural life” is being compromised for the sake of an omnipresent alcohol culture. In many of the products of Western

and European cultural life alcohol is being glamorised and depicted in a way that links social success to alcohol use. This social construction of alcohol in Europe threatens the rights of all young people to freely and self-determined participate in cultural life. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 12 states that “everyone has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.” In contradiction to the principle of that article and the UDHR the grown-up world is perpetuating an intoxicating culture that continues to cause tremendous harm to young people both physically and mentally. The old continent clearly can and should do more to enhance its cultural life for the sake of “the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.”

“Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible”

Everybody in Europe is familiar with the fact that it's permissible to talk, while intoxicated with alcohol, about behaviour that would otherwise be frowned upon. It's often even okay to actually do things when being drunk that are beyond norms and rules.

When people openly talk of behaviours and actions that normally are considered vicious or nasty, they contribute to making the socially unacceptable acceptable. What happens is that norms of decency and morale, that are important to the functioning and the well-being of all in the community, are being flouted. The alcohol culture allows alcohol to serve as excuse for otherwise socially unacceptable behaviour. Like that alcohol threatens the free and full development of young people's personality in the community.

Moreover it is crucial to be aware of the myriad of social harm alcohol brings about in

Europe, to the society as a whole. The intangible social costs of alcohol, which describe the value people put on suffering and lost life, in the EU alone are estimated to be €270 Billion. In Europe, no matter if young people choose a lifestyle free from alcohol or not, you are made a passive drinker. In Estonia for instance 60-70% of violent crimes are linked to alcohol. And alcohol is a causal factor in 16% of child abuse and neglect.

All this clearly shows that the heavy alcohol consumption in Europe today threatens the development of personality of others - no matter whether they choose to drink or not. Communities in vast parts of Europe would function better and people in them would be able to live up to their "duties to the community" if alcohol consumption and culture were much less extreme.

“In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society”

All over the world and in all times of human history can we see impressive examples of taking risks and setting out on dangerous adventures and endeavours. Without them we wouldn't be able to fly over the Atlantic or to sail all around the world. Mountaineering, bungee jumping and many other forms of risky behaviour have become forms of cultural expression. However alcohol use, as we've seen in many examples above, harms millions of others than the user him/ herself. And young people in particular bear a disproportionate burden of the social harm of alcohol in Europe. In this context we need to be conscious about the question whether a specific human activity mainly is dangerous for the well-being of the individual or whether the activity threatens other people, too. Studies show that harm inflicted upon others is not merely a side problem but it is by far the most widespread problem related to

alcohol use. Social harm includes way more than violence, traffic accidents and children living with addicted parents. Alcohol harm is spread over a broad spectrum and can be found literally everywhere. Therefore it is essential to hold high article 29, 2 of the UDHR. The individual's right to freedom does not include the right to inflict harm upon others. This conviction can be found already in the French Declaration of Human Rights from 1789: "Liberty consists in being able to do anything that does not harm others." It cannot be called anything else but hypocritical that societies in Europe do regulate activities like driving a car, owning a weapon etc in order to protect the innocent, when at the same time the same societies build and perpetuate an alcohol culture that causes paramount pain and huge harm to Millions of children and young people.

” Human Rights start with breakfast” Leopold Senghor



7 years, Skopje, Macedonia



Ieva Aleksandra Pehako, 16 years, Jurmala, Latvia



9 years old child with disabilities, Skopje, Macedonia

These pictures are outcomes of the drawing exercise carried out by Active member organisations. The theme for drawings was: "Weekend with my family". It is important to note, that alcohol topic had not been mentioned at all prior to the announcement of the theme and children were encouraged to draw freely anything they associate with a family weekend. The pictures we selected to publish on these pages are not statistically representative but show nevertheless the reality of many childhoods.

*All right?*

This booklet shows emphatically that the availability, the affordability, the aggressive and specifically targeted marketing of alcohol in Europe amount to many threats and concrete violations of human rights negatively affecting all young Europeans.

This disastrous situation in today's Europe, the heaviest drinking region in the world, is even multiplied by the current alcohol culture that is created by the grown up world and imposed upon children and young people. It's not a question "whether" but "when" to start drinking.

Alcohol is made omnipresent and they way this alcohol culture treats the substance couldn't be further apart from the scientific facts of its harmful and dangerous reality.

The rights of children and young people are not met and often they are violated because the grown up world gives priority to selling

alcohol and having a so-called "good time" of their own and because decision-makers do not do what the Best Interest of the child compels them to do and are blind to the circumstances millions of young Europeans grow up in.

In Europe today it doesn't matter what your own position about alcohol is and whether you want to live a life free from alcohol and other drugs. Kofi Annan once said: "No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth." He gave expression to the spirit of the preamble of the UDHR and in doing so showed Europe what the problem on the old continent still is: children and young people are made using alcohol, the socially most dangerous drug, years before they are able to vote and

exercise their full rights as democratic citizens. What does that say about Europe and the status of Human Rights for young people? One quarter of EU citizens say they abstained from alcohol in the past 12 months. A significant minority. If we do what Mahatma Gandhi said and judge the European "civilisation [...] by its treatment of minorities", what would our conclusion be?

*“I have spread my dreams under  
your feet. Tread softly be-  
cause you tread upon my dreams.”*

W.B Yeats, He wishes for the clothes of heaven

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### Thank you!

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“ We are all, and me especially, responsible  
for everything and everyone”

Fyodor Dostoyevsky

”All Rights”  
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