



UNGDOMENS NYKTERHETSFÖRBUND

Press release

For immediate release

” Civil Society Organizations to leave the European Alcohol and Health Forum : We call for a revised structure and a renewed EU Alcohol Strategy”

A call for stronger regulations, abandoning of the self-regulation policy and exclusion of industrial interests follows the announcement of civil society organizations to step out of the European Alcohol and Health Forum, a European Commission body formed to address and reduce alcohol-related harm.

Alcohol related harm represents a significant burden for the functioning of European societies. With Europe being the heaviest alcohol consuming region in the world, **the annual costs for covering the damages caused by alcohol use in the European Union rise up to 156 billion euro¹.**

In addition to the economic impact, alcohol has a wide social impact - **it is the second risk factor for disease burden in Europe²**, in relation to the development of non-communicable diseases and mental health problems, especially in young people. Therefore, taking action for reducing alcohol- related harm through addressing availability, affordability and exposure to alcohol is needed.

We, as organizations working on national and European level, work towards creating better, more democratic societies. We stand for creating free, safe and inclusive environments - through the empowerment of young people and through addressing alcohol- related harm. Consequently, we value the initial efforts made by the European Commission to address the problem of alcohol consumption and related harm. Guided with the idea to create dialogue and joint alcohol policy work with the European Institutions and peer organizations, we have also entered the European Alcohol and Health Forum (EAHF).

Conversely, **the work done within the EAHF from the civil society perspective and additionally, the evaluation of the EU Alcohol Strategy from 2013³ both show that the EAHF as such has not produced any tangible results in reducing alcohol related harm.** We strongly question the evaluation’s conclusion that EAHF has contributed to strengthening the self-regulatory systems covering alcohol marketing. We have consequently held that evidence shows that self-regulation is not effective in reducing alcohol related harm.

¹ AMPHORA project –([available here](#))

² World Health Organization fact sheet - ([available here](#))

³ Assessment of the Added Value of the EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol-related harm ([available here](#))

"The EAHF, created by the European Commission in 2007, has become a platform where the work of the civil society is shared, but the commitments of the alcohol industry are discussed. This orientation means stepping out of the course of evidence based methods that would lead towards actual alcohol harm reduction. EAHF continues promoting self-regulation as a way to go forward, despite the concerns from the civil society and researchers that the policy is not working" - states Simon Olsson, President of Active-Sobriety, Friendship and Peace.

We stay positive to European cooperation to reduce the alcohol-related harm in Europe. However we consider that a future forum should restrict the involvement of alcohol industry and include NGO: s, researchers and representatives from the European institutions. We see great value for these parties to cooperate and share ideas in order to reduce alcohol-related harm. We encourage a change of structure of the European Alcohol and Health Forum, where commercial interests are excluded from the discussions and focus is placed on evidence based methods. The industry, however has no place in policy making or in health issues and as concluded, the current Forum has not been sufficiently effective in reducing alcohol related harm.

We have made the decision to leave the European Alcohol and Health Forum, but our efforts and actions to reduce alcohol related harm and our dialogue and joint actions with the European institutions will continue and advance. Our call for a revised and strengthened Alcohol Strategy for the European Union remains. We urge the European Commission to revise the Strategy as requested by the Member States and the civil society.

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President

Active - Sobriety,
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Anna Carlstedt

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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.

2. IOGT - NTO

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IOGT-NTO is the largest temperance organization in Sweden with 32,000 members in over 700 local associations across the country

3. European Youth Forum

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The European Youth Forum is the platform of youth organisations in Europe. Representing 97 youth organisations, both National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations, we believe youth organisations are the tool through which we empower, encourage, involve, represent, reach out and support young people. The Youth Forum brings together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe, organised in order to represent their common interests.

4. UNF - the Swedish Youth Temperance Association

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The Swedish Youth Temperance Organisation, UNF, is the country's largest youth organisation promoting a sober life style. Our vision is a democratic and solidary world without drugs. The UNF has 7500 members spread in 125 clubs all over Sweden. All members are aged 13-25 years and have chosen a life without alcohol or other drugs. Member activities range from sports, molding public opinion in drug issues, engaging in social projects, to just hanging out in a friendly drug free environment.