



## HEALTH

*Creating a new culture of reflection-based risk taking*



## GERALD KOLLER

Ashoka Austria/CEE

Elected in 2011



### ! PROBLEM

Addictive behavior, burnout and depression are growing problems all over Europe. With an estimated 330,000 alcoholics and 870,000 people living with a problematic attitude towards alcohol consumption, Austria has one of the highest alcoholism rates in the EU. In Austria, every eighth client of the Austrian debt advice services is younger than 25. Nevertheless, parents and teachers avoid risk education. They are often overprotective and do not empower young people to develop a risk balance and responsibility.

### 💡 INNOVATION

In contrast to previous approaches, Gerald doesn't regard risk as a problem that should be avoided. Instead, he advocates responsible risk taking and teaches skills to evaluate risky situations in order to be able to act responsibly and avoid dangerous situations or even addiction. For this purpose he developed a method called risflecting®, which stands for reflective risk taking. Gerald trains educators, parents and citizen organizations to develop responsible behavior in risky settings.

### ❤️ MOTIVATION

Born into a difficult social background, Gerald was exposed to alcohol abuse and its implications for families at a young age. Later on he realized the value of open dialogue and young people's need to be heard and appreciated. In his time as a school teacher he encountered a very rigid system of intimidating teaching techniques as well as hierarchies between students, parents, and teachers. His experience with addicts and the understanding that the problem of irresponsible behavior has to be solved, served as drivers to his work.

### 🌍 IMPACT

Gerald has trained experts in Austria, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and Switzerland, most of them graduating from his training programs as certified risk educators. Different programs implemented by his network of experts to improve risk balance in traffic, sports, alcohol or shopping have proven to be so effective that they have been adapted by bars, schools, tourist locations and municipalities across the German-speaking world.

### 🎯 VISION

Gerald envisions a world in which people treat each other with empathy and consciously reflect on their relationships. To increase the awareness of the risflecting® approach, Gerald established the "High + Responsible Award" to honor measures according to the concept of "risk-balance" in the Austrian leisure industry.

### 👥 CONTACT

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