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Action plan to raise awareness and engage youth

According to many psychologists, today's society offers young people materialistic content rather than the transmission of ethical, moral, and humanistic values, which can have a negative influence on their education.

The age between 13 and 25 years represents a critical stage in the formation of the person, of his values and his conception of his role in the world. Indeed, this is the stage that will determine the degree of a person's involvement in the world around him or her in terms of ethical and moral issues. It is also the stage in which young people will take a leading role as activists of the causes they adhere to.

Values are deep convictions of human beings, which determine their way of being and guide their behavior and attitudes. They are also beliefs or convictions that something is preferable and worthy of appreciation, and they involve feelings and emotions.

Thus, the reinforcement of values in adolescence allows young people to develop in different aspects, such as:

- **Orientation of their behavior according to the social context and contribution in the formation of their morals and personality.**

- **Strengthening of their position in relation to the values of the world and the society in which they are developing.**
- **Intellectual maturation and development of their reasoning abilities, linked to their personality.**

Values such as **justice, love, peace, loyalty, honesty, discipline, solidarity, respect for people, nature, and all those that humanize life, favor coexistence, respect for life and people**, smoothing the differences that we may have among human beings. All of them should be taught by fathers, mothers, educators, teachers, and in general by the society.

Values must be taught repeatedly; a few times is not enough for them to be engraved and internalized by children and teenagers. When the values are not transmitted with certain frequency, they tend to be forgotten, for that reason we must make **propaganda, publicity, and awareness campaigns** of the same ones, to speak of them frequently and to transmit them with the example, mainly of the adults.

Why is it important to involve youth in the fight against sexual exploitation?

- Youth choose the causes they want to defend; they get more involved in social causes and promote future activists.
- Youth have fresh and innovative ideas. They are connected to the world of today.
- Youth are our future generations. Their ideas will shape the world of tomorrow.
- Young people are the most legitimate voices to speak out and educate other young people in this fight.

We are convinced that the future of this cause lies in the awareness and mobilization of young people. They will be the actors of tomorrow to whom we must pass the baton. Recognizing and valuing their work is essential so that they can unite in a great global fight, and coordinate their actions to be more effective, sharing their skills, knowledge, and good practices.

The Liberanos strategy aims to mobilize young people in the condemnation of prostitution and human trafficking, considered a violation of the human person and a crime against humanity worldwide.

Main approach:

Reasons to eradicate human trafficking

We wanted to focus on a strategy based on clear, concise and real arguments, through which young people can reflect and understand more about this issue, while also addressing emotional aspects. Indeed, taking into account the continuous information overload received by young people in today's society, (social networks, internet, digital media, etc...) our message will be more effective the simpler and more impactful it is.

These are the main arguments that we need to convey to young people about the fight against human trafficking:

- It does not respect human rights

Human rights are essential elements in the life of every person, since they promote their development, offering them guarantees of justice, religious freedom, in order to live in a healthy environment, in an egalitarian manner, and to live, in short, a healthy and full life. Any activity that does not respect them cannot be tolerated in today's societies. We cannot allow the continued existence of an activity that puts the sexual pleasure of men and the wealth of pimps before the full wellbeing of human beings.

- Comorbidity with disorders such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder of trafficked victims.

Due to the terrible working conditions and inhumane work that victims must perform, they suffer in many cases from various psychological disorders. The mental health of the victims of trafficking is something to consider, since most of them will have to deal with great emotional and psychological wounds that will mark them for life.

- Perpetuating mafias and criminal organizations

Human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is run by a multitude of mafias and criminal organizations, so its existence means that these mafias and organizations continue to exist and grow. We cannot allow criminals to continue to profit from this crime against humanity.

- Promotes sexism

More than 90% of the victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation are women, so the vast majority, if not all, of those who consume and profit from this crime are men (both those who run the mafias and those who come to enjoy the services). This creates a clear macho hierarchy, where men are the ones who "use" women, who are objectified and at the mercy of the clients' sexual pleasures and the pimps' lust for wealth.

- Promotes rape culture

In many cases, victims of trafficking must give in to the pleasures of their clients, as the failure to do so would lead to serious consequences for the pimps. In this way, they are coerced and forced to do what the client asks them to do without complaining, thus having to put up with a multitude of daily rapes.

- There is a legal limbo where people immersed in trafficking networks feel helpless and forgotten.

It is necessary that governmental bodies create a support network for the victims of crimes such as these. It is not possible that, after such a traumatic experience as being a victim of human trafficking can be, there is so little psychological and social support.

- Perpetuating social injustice and legal injustice

Many pimps take advantage of women's poverty to recruit them into trafficking networks by promising them a better life. The reality is that, under false promises and hopes, the pimps, who know the precarious situation of the women they target, make them believe that they can earn easy money without complications, a claim that is totally false. Moreover, in many cases, the criminals are not prosecuted, and the victims are socially excluded. We must prosecute the criminals, protect the victims, prevent these crimes, and stop putting the sexual pleasure of men and the wealth of pimps before the well-being of human beings.

The main objectives of the Youth Network

- Promote prevention and victim care actions.
- Strengthen family structures to build a more just, equitable and inclusive society.
- Empower youth to play a leading role in the state and civil society to change the paradigm and imagine a new world without violence, prostitution, and human trafficking.

Young people play an important role with governments in the implementation of social actions. Their humanistic and moral commitment, along with the skills and opportunities to develop their potential, gives them the opportunity to make the world a better place for all. Youth-led organizations should be encouraged and involved in the implementation of projects at local, regional, and national levels.

We need youth because they can identify and challenge existing power structures, obstacles to change, as well as expose contradictions and prejudices. In addition, there are a growing number of young activists around the world who are connected through social networks. They often have direct knowledge and understanding of issues that are not always accessible to adults and have a better understanding of the problems they face, which allows them to propose new ideas and alternative solutions.

Main phases and chronology of the action plan

1. Preparation of awareness and information materials specifically created for youth.
2. Sending an official letter of contact co-signed by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and Liberanos, where it will be proposed to youth organizations to collaborate with this project. The young people we will contact will be able to contact other potentially interested youth organizations.
3. Bilateral communication with the organizations contacted that would be interested in working with us and identification of their priorities and needs. Write a report highlighting all the requests they have made.

4. Adhesion of the member youth organizations in the Liberos website to make their work known.
5. Organization of virtual meetings with several youth organizations to share knowledge, resources, and good practices.
6. Possible organization of a seminar in Rome with representatives of these member organizations.

Youth projects with replicable best practices

Support to the National Plan against Gender Violence 2009-2011 - Cape Verde

The project took place from 2009 to 2011 in the **Republic of Cape Verde**. The main objective was to contribute to the **prevention of gender-based violence**, to protect the victims and to facilitate their social and psychological reintegration.

The action focused on the use of **education as a method of communication** for behavior change and the development of critical thinking and focus on human rights.

The initiative was implemented in a decentralized manner by various institutions in the country, with **multisectoral partnerships** between the Institute for Equality and Equity of Cape Verde (ICIEG), municipalities, NGOs and the national police. In this way, the project was perceived more openly and supported by high-level institutions in the country.

The campaign led to the adoption of the Law on Gender-Based Violence in Cape Verde, which was enacted in March 2011 and now provides an improved set of preventive measures against gender-based violence. The project trained 52 magistrates, 200 police officers, and 5,742 victims of gender-based violence received support and participated in counseling and training sessions.

Liberanos Analysis and Possible Implementation:

Given the enormous impact of the Cape Verdean project, we believe that Liberanos could run a similar campaign, but focused on **European youth**. The **multi-sectoral relationship** that the ICIEG project was intended to have is very relevant for such a proposal to be heard and considered by the states where we intend to implement it.

We think it is important to carry out projects like this in Europe with the **active support of young people**, whether through social networks by spreading the campaign or in person by participating in discussions and debates that can be developed for the project.

An initiative like this one can draw the attention of young people to a Europe that is interested in the **fight against human trafficking and that educates new generations in the defense of human rights** in an integral way.

Plan Against Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery in Asia (2021-present) – Asia

The Mekong Club of Hong Kong has developed a project that aims to develop a plan to inform people across Asia about the reality of products made in the region and how they are directly linked to **human trafficking**, so that corporate practices are considered before consuming their products.

By creating a **cross-regional network of activists from all over Asia, mainly youth**, the goal is to disseminate the plan as widely as possible and build a network that can, from different angles, cross borders and raise awareness throughout the region.

The Mekong Club is an organization that since 2015 has been seeking **an alliance of companies to defend decent work in Asia** and fight against modern slavery.

Analysis and possible implementation of Liberanos:

We noticed that there are a lot of **young students involved in this plan**, also because in Asia the issue of modern slavery is more known to the population than in Europe. So, we think that such a plan, led by our organization on the model of the Mekong Club, would be of **great interest to young Europeans**.

To do so, we should be able to gather many young activists from all over Europe, thus building a **network that could generate a great impact on local institutions** and the **European Union** on the issue at stake.

Human Trafficking Prevention Projects, Good Shepherd – Taiwan

In recent years, the **Good Shepherd Sisters** have been trying to involve people outside the organization, especially lay people, who could continue the mission and adapt to modern times.

In this project, they seek to hold numerous **workshops** at the organization's headquarters to **inform and educate the youth of the region**. The inclusion of experts and new activists in the field, as well as bringing a religious perspective to the organization.

This is not the only project they have conducted on the topic; the organization has also rolled out an alliance in 2019 of different congregations across Asia for anti-trafficking, called "**Talitha Kum**". This alliance aims to address the lack of **education on human trafficking among youth in Asia**.

Analysis and possible implementation of Liberanos:

The project development and advocacy as developed by these organizations seems to us to be quite close to the goal of Liberanos. However, the vision provided by these organizations in Asia seems to be more aggressive in **incorporating people from outside the congregations into projects** and developing plans that are not overly ambitious in **informing youth about trafficking**.

Following the lead of these organizations seems essential to achieving results in Europe, but **new methods of education and youth relations** will need to be adapted for the project to be considered a success.

Women's Resource Center (WRC) – Cambodia

The center, located in **Siem Reap, Cambodia**, is primarily a drop-in center that invites women to ask questions about all aspects of life and provides basic **psychological**

support. WRC helps all women by providing information, education, and psychological support with a well-developed and researched referral system that ensures that the appropriate support women need is specific to their situation.

They have also been conducting **educational workshops on migration since 2015** that take place in villages they identify as being in need, through surveys, to raise awareness and **inform people about national and international migration.**

Analysis and possible implementation of Liberos:

The project has generated a lot of interest on our part, given its enormous importance to the region and its mission. We believe that it could be transposed to our reality in the **areas most affected by immigration** or in the **centers for migrant minors under guardianship**, who need great **support to understand their situation and often the support of institutions is insufficient.**

The creation of a support and training center would mean the establishment of the organization as a major player in the countries and could lead to new collaborations that would increase the range of our activity.

We believe that by combining this project with the dynamism and the capacity of diffusion of young people, we could establish networks capable of helping many people in the fight against human trafficking.

Involving the community in the process of identification, referral and assistance to victims of trafficking – Albania

Since 2004, the NGO "Different and Equal" in Albania has been helping victims of abuse, exploitation and trafficking through shelters and social services. Since July 2013, they have been operating with mobile units in Tirana, with the aim of **identifying victims of trafficking in the communities** and trying to get them out of the cycle of exploitation.

Their activity is based on **integration in the areas most affected by poverty**, mainly broken families, in order to inform and prevent traffickers from recruiting girls and women in these areas. When faced with really dangerous situations, they serve as a **contact between the police and the victims.**

In recent years, they agree that youth groups in schools and high schools have been successful in **raising awareness and preventing many cases of trafficking**. Despite this, they say there is still much work to be done, especially in the **development of laws against violence against women**.

Analysis and possible implementation of Liberanos:

The project is really captivating and takes us through the problem faced in a country as hard hit by economic crises as Albania. The activity of this NGO is closely related to **youth organizations in poor regions**.

The scope of the project and its results seem to us to be **replicable in other parts of Europe**, although we think that it must permeate the whole society to become a major issue to be considered by local governments.