

Information brochure

"Remote mobbing exists!"



REMOTE MOBBING

E X I S T S



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1. About the project: "Remote mobbing exists!"

In the context and challenges of the modern labor market in the era of dynamic digitization and the spread of hybrid and remote work, the boundary between the professional and private spheres has become blurred. Although technology facilitates communication, it has also become a tool for new forms of psychological violence. The "Remote mobbing exists!" project was created as a direct response to the growing problem of cybermobbing, a phenomenon that often remains invisible to control systems and has a devastating impact on the mental health of employees and the effectiveness of institutions.

The project is implemented within the Vocational Education and Training sector, which emphasizes our focus on practical staff training. International cooperation between Poland (ByMind) and Bulgaria (I am you peace global) allows for the exchange of experiences and the development of universal employee protection standards that transcend national borders.

2. Main objective:

Building a "Digital Shield," our priority is to equip specialists: career counselors, employment agencies, recruiters, HR employees, and public institutions with the advanced skills necessary to effectively combat online harassment.

We achieve the project's objectives through:

- Identification: we teach how to recognize subtle signs of cyberbullying (e.g., digital isolation, aggression in instant messengers, "ghosting") in a remote environment.
- counteracting: we provide ready-made procedures and tools (Checklists, Help Maps) that allow for a quick and lawful (PL/BG) response.
- support: we promote a Trauma-Informed Administration approach to ensure that assistance to victims is professional, empathetic, and effective.

Why is this important?

We believe that digital security is not only about data protection, but above all about protecting people. By better preparing intermediaries and advisors, we are building a violence-free labor market where every employee, regardless of where they work, feels safe and respected.

3. What is remote bullying (cyberbullying)?

3.1 Remote mobbing is the systematic and prolonged harassment of an employee using digital technology. In an online environment, violence rarely takes the form of shouting; more often it is "aggression in white gloves."

- Digital isolation (ghosting): deliberately omitting an employee from invitations to online meetings, excluding them from groups on instant messengers (e.g., Slack, Teams) or ignoring their messages, which leads to a feeling of being "suspended" in a vacuum.
- Public humiliation: mocking an employee's competence in general chats or during video conferences in front of the team.
- Digital harassment: sending work messages at night or during vacation and pressuring for an immediate response.

3.2 History of mobbing

Phase 1: The beginnings (1990s - early 2000s). The era of email

This is the earliest form of cyberbullying in the office. Before instant messaging and social media came along, email was the primary tool.

- Information isolation, deliberately excluding an employee from important email threads or removing them from "carbon copies" (CC/DW) so that they do not have access to key information.
- Humiliation, sending humiliating or overly critical messages, often with a copy to supervisors or the entire team, to publicly ridicule the victim.
- Spreading rumors, using emails to send false information about a coworker.

In this phase, harassment was mainly asynchronous (did not require an immediate response) and limited to working hours at the computer.

Phase 2: Development (2000-2010). The era of instant messengers and smartphones

The emergence of internal instant messengers (e.g., Gadu-Gadu, Skype, Lync) and the growing popularity of smartphones fundamentally changed the dynamics of mobbing.

- Immediate (synchronous) harassment. The ability to send humiliating messages that appeared on the victim's screen immediately, interrupting their work.
- Blurring of the work-home boundary. Smartphones have made employees "always available." Mobbing could continue after working hours via private instant messengers or text messages.

- Cyberstalking. Perpetrators began monitoring their victims' activity on early social media platforms, using private information in the workplace.

Bullying became more invasive and began to encroach on employees' private lives.

Phase 3: Explosion (2020 - present). The era of pandemic and remote work

The global shift to remote and hybrid work caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst for new, sophisticated forms of cyberbullying. The physical isolation of employees in their homes paradoxically increased their vulnerability to psychological attacks through the screen.

- Mobbing during video conferences has become one of the most severe forms. It includes publicly humiliating an employee "live" in front of the entire team, deliberately interrupting them, mocking their appearance, and even their background (e.g., "unprofessional home office," clutter, children appearing).
- Digital isolation: This is a new form of "team exclusion." It involves deliberately not informing someone about key online meetings, not sending links, removing them from messenger channels, or ignoring messages when they are visibly "online."
- Harassment outside working hours. Remote work has blurred the boundaries of time. Perpetrators (often supervisors) have begun to force employees to work at night and on weekends, sending messages and expecting immediate responses, violating the "right to be offline."
- Excessive control (Bossware), the introduction of software that tracks every mouse click, takes screenshots, or monitors keyboard activity. Used not to measure results, but to intimidate and exert constant psychological pressure.

3.3 Example of abuse:

In the era of widespread transition to home office mode, many employers faced the challenge of how to manage a team that cannot be seen. Unfortunately, for some, the answer was technology used in an oppressive manner. One of the most high-profile cases in Europe, which went all the way to court, became a key reference point for remote mobbing regulations in Poland and Bulgaria as well. The story concerned a company that imposed a strict requirement on its employees that their webcams had to remain on for the entire eight hours of work, and their computer screens had to be constantly available for viewing by management. The official reason was to "maintain discipline and efficiency." One of the employees, feeling increasing anxiety and a violation of his privacy, refused to allow constant video transmission from his home. His resistance was considered a gross violation of his duties and he was dismissed immediately.

The court ruled that a home is not a factory floor, and therefore sided with the employee. It was decided that an employee's home, even if it temporarily serves as an office, remains a protected area. Constant video surveillance was deemed to be a violation of human dignity. The judges emphasized that work efficiency is measured by results, not by physical presence in front of the camera. Permanent observation was classified as a form of psychological abuse, leading to chronic stress and a feeling of being cornered.

This case teaches us that cyberbullying is not just name-calling in chat rooms. It is also excessive technological control that deprives employees of their sense of security. Forcing video transmission without substantive justification is a form of surveillance, not management.

Remote work requires a redefinition of trust, and every institution should remember that, in accordance with the spirit of the regulations (including Art. 94 of the Labor Code in Poland and Art. 127 of the Labor Code in Bulgaria), protecting the dignity of employees is an overriding value that does not end when the office door closes.

4. Assertive self-defense

Assertiveness online is not aggression, but clearly setting boundaries. The following messages have been designed to protect your dignity without giving the perpetrator an excuse to accuse you of unprofessionalism.

4.1. Protecting your private time

You receive emails or instant messages late in the evening or on weekends.

Message: "Thank you for your message. In accordance with my working hours, I will address this issue and prepare a response tomorrow morning (or next Monday) from 8:00 a.m. Best regards."

Why does this work? You are not apologizing for not working. You are stating a fact and giving a specific deadline, which is an expression of professionalism, not avoidance of work.

4.2. Responding to public criticism

Situation: Your supervisor or colleague ridicules your mistake on a general channel visible to everyone.

Message: "I appreciate your vigilance and desire to improve the quality of the project. However, I suggest that we discuss the details in a one-on-one conversation or in a private thread. This will allow us to explain the issue without involving the entire team."

Why does this work? You calmly but firmly move the conversation from a "public spectacle" to a professional setting. You show that you are not afraid of the substance, but you do not accept the form of attack.

4.3. Limits of surveillance

Situation: Forcing someone to keep their camera on when it is not necessary for substantive reasons.

Message: "My presence at today's meeting is fully active in audio form. Due to technical conditions at my current remote workplace, I only turn on my camera during key meetings and workshops, which allows me to maintain the highest level of concentration on the content of the conversation."

Why does it work? You refer to "concentration" and "technical conditions." These are substantive arguments that are difficult to dispute without taking on the role of a surveillant.

4.4. Fighting ignorance

Situation: Your questions are displayed but deliberately ignored, which prevents you from working.

Message: "With reference to my previous questions (dated...), I am sending a reminder. The lack of a decision on this point is holding up the implementation of stage X. Please provide feedback by 3:00 p.m. so that I can continue my work according to schedule."

Why does this work? You shift the responsibility for the delay to the person who is ignoring you. You document the fact that you tried to get in touch, which is crucial when proving harassment later on.

4.5. Responding to harassing phone calls

Situation: Someone calls you repeatedly without warning, interrupting your concentrated work (so-called phone *bombing*).

Message (text/chat): "I see your calls. I am currently working intensely on task Y. Please send me a short message explaining what the matter is, or schedule a call in my calendar for tomorrow."

Why does it work? You teach the other party to respect your working time. You show that you are available, but on clear, professional terms.

5. Legal aspects

The project is based on a comparative analysis of the legal systems of both countries, indicating that protecting employees online is the responsibility of every employer:

Poland: According to the Labor Code (Art. 94), employers are required to prevent workplace bullying. The law protects the dignity and personal rights of employees, regardless of whether they work in an office or from home.

Bulgaria: Protection is based on two pillars:

- Labor Code (Art. 127(2)): imposes an obligation on employers to protect the dignity of employees in the performance of their duties.
- Protection Against Discrimination Act (PADA): defines harassment (including on the grounds of gender, age, or race) and is a key tool in combating toxic behavior that may accompany cyberbullying.

6. Where to report abuse and what help can you expect?

If you are experiencing remote bullying, the state offers specific support mechanisms.

Remember! The first step should always be to officially report the problem within the organization (e.g., to the HR department or management) in both countries. Having proof that you tried to resolve the issue internally strengthens your position in the subsequent proceedings before state authorities. Collect evidence (screenshots, emails, recordings of online meetings).

IN POLAND:

1. State Labor Inspectorate (PIP): You can file a complaint against an employer who has failed to fulfill their obligation to prevent mobbing. Inspectors can conduct an inspection at the company and issue corrective recommendations.
2. Labor Court: This is where you can seek compensation. In mobbing cases, the burden of proof lies with the employee, but courts are increasingly recognizing logs from company systems and chat histories as key evidence.
3. Free legal aid: There are Free Legal Aid centers (financed from the state budget) throughout Poland, where advisors will help you draft a letter to your employer or a lawsuit.

IN BULGARIA:

1. General Labor Inspectorate (Glavna Inspeksia po Truda): The main body responsible for enforcing labor law. You can report violations of employee dignity and remote working conditions there.
2. Commission for Protection against Discrimination (KZD): If online harassment involves discrimination, this Commission is the most effective body. It can impose heavy financial penalties on employers and order them to cease toxic practices.
3. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs): The Bulgarian state often cooperates with organizations such as the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee and the PULSE Foundation, which offer free legal and psychological support to victims of violence, including cyberbullying at work.

7. Warning signs: How to recognize "hidden victims"?

When working remotely, we cannot see our colleagues' body language, so we need to be sensitive to the "digital symptoms" of exclusion:

- *fear of logging in*: the employee avoids turning on their camera, speaks less often during group conversations, even though they were previously active.
- *Sudden drop in productivity*: a person who has worked reliably until now begins to make simple mistakes or miss deadlines (often the result of paralyzing stress before contact with the bully).
- *withdrawal from "virtual coffee"*: avoiding informal channels of communication and limiting interaction to the absolute technical minimum.
- *Change in communication style*: switching to an extremely formal, defensive tone in emails or excessive justification of every minute of work.

8. Dedicated sections: Checklists

Personalization is the key to effectiveness. Select your role, check off completed items, and use the Help Map to professionally support your clients and employees.

7.1 Recruiter and HR: "Guardian of Well-being"

As the first line of contact, you shape the company's ethical standards as early as the recruitment stage. *Your goal is to build safe processes from the very first contact.*

- Digital respect: Has every candidate received feedback? (Avoiding ghosting as a form of exclusion).
- Manager Audit: Do I respond to passive aggression or inappropriate comments from decision-makers during online interviews?
- Onboarding: Does the employee know their "Right to disconnect"?
- Monitoring: Are the company's activity tracking systems transparent and not used for intimidation?

7.2 Employment Agency: "Safe Place Auditor"

Before referring a client to an employer, verify that the workplace guarantees mental well-being.

- Verification of offers: Does the employer impose unrealistic standards of 24/7 availability?
- Interview with the employer: Ask about anti-harassment procedures specific to remote work.
- Client preparation: Have I informed the client of their rights under Art. 94³ KP (PL) or Art. 127 LC (BG)?
- Warning signs: Does the client who has returned from recruitment show no fear of contacting the company online again?

7.3 Institutions and NGOs: "Support and Standards Center"

Implement systemic solutions that protect staff and build public trust.

- Trauma-Informed Administration: Do our reporting procedures protect the victim from re-traumatization (secondary victimization)?
- Evidence Archiving: Have we trained our team on how to take screenshots with metadata and secure system logs?
- Digital Accessibility (WCAG): Do our tools exclude people with disabilities (which may be a form of discrimination)?
- GDPR transparency: Do we inform employees what data we collect about their remote work?

7.4 Career Advisor: "Architect of a New Path"

Restore agency to people who have experienced digital violence.

- Situation analysis: Have I helped the client name specific behaviors (e.g., "It was digital stalking," not "Your fault")?
- Assertiveness training: Did we practice messages that protect boundaries (e.g., "I will respond to your email during business hours")?
- Exit strategy: Did we develop a job change plan that focuses on the client's strengths?
- Stabilization: Does the client know that changing a toxic environment is a professional decision to protect their own health?

8. First Aid Algorithm: "Digital Footprint"

In the digital world, evidence that you don't secure within minutes may disappear forever. Learn how to professionally document abuse so that your report is indisputable to HR, the Labor Inspectorate, or the court.

STEP 1: Screenshot, the full context matters

Never cut out just the "bubble" with the message text.

How to do it correctly? Take a screenshot of the entire screen (PrintScreen)

The evidence must include:

- the taskbar with the visible system date and time.
- the address bar (URL) if you are using a browser (e.g., the web version of Teams).
- the list of participants, if the aggression takes place in a group chat.
- context: messages preceding and following the incident, so that the perpetrator cannot accuse you of taking words out of context.

STEP 2: Archiving emails. "Unforgeable" evidence

A PDF or screenshot of an email is not enough, as it is easy to fabricate.

Save the harassing message as a file in .eml or .msg format (the "Save As" option in Outlook/Gmail).

Why? Such a file contains so-called technical headers (metadata). This is a digital fingerprint of the message that contains the IP address of the sender and the server. For a computer forensic expert, this is proof that the email is authentic and has not been manipulated.

STEP 3: Logbook, your line of defense

Mobbing is a process. A single screenshot may be considered an incident, but ten entries in the logbook are proof of persistence.

Create a spreadsheet (Excel/Notepad) in which you keep track of:

- who and when? (exact date and time of the event).
- where? (name of the tool: Slack, Teams, WhatsApp, Zoom).
- description of the event: a dispassionate description of the facts (e.g., "My supervisor turned off my microphone during a presentation and called my work amateurish in front of 12 people").
- your reaction (e.g., "I asked for substantive comments in writing, no response").
- Witnesses, list of people who were logged in/present at the meeting.

STEP 4: External confirmation of time (time-stamping)

You must prove that the evidence was created on the day of the incident and was not "created" later for the purposes of the trial. Send all screenshots and saved email files immediately to your private email address (outside the company server).

An independent email provider (e.g., Google, iCloud) will give your message its own indelible timestamp. This is the simplest and cheapest method for obtaining a so-called "certain date" for evidence.

Remember! "According to case law in Poland (Art. 94 KP) and Bulgaria (Art. 127 LC), digital evidence is fully admissible in mobbing cases. Remember: the perpetrator can delete the message from the company server, but cannot delete the evidence that you have secured on a private medium."

9. SELF-DIAGNOSIS SHEET EXISTS

Has the boundary between your work and your private life been violated? Do you feel that the digital space is no longer safe? Answer the following questions honestly, marking YES or NO.

I. PHYSICAL REACTIONS AND EMOTIONS

Do you feel physical discomfort (e.g., stomach ache, heart palpitations, sudden tension) when you hear a notification sound from a company application (Teams, Slack, Mail)?

[YES] [NO]

Do you feel anxious about logging into the system in the morning or check your work messages just before bed to avoid the "morning wave of criticism"?

[YES] [NO]

II. CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE

Does your supervisor require you to be constantly available on "green status" (active) and hold you accountable for a few minutes of inactivity on the keyboard?

[YES] [NO]

Do you feel pressure to keep your camera on at all times in situations that do not require it (e.g., individual work), feeling that you are being "watched" in your own home?

[YES] [NO]

III. RELATIONSHIPS AND ISOLATION (DIGITAL GHOSTING)

Do you feel that you are deliberately being left out of invitations to important online meetings or excluded from working groups where decisions about your work are made?

[YES] [NO]

Do your messages and substantive questions get seen by your team or manager but are systematically ignored (no response)?

[YES] [NO]

IV. PUBLIC CRITICISM

Are your mistakes or errors discussed publicly on general channels (group chats) instead of in a private conversation with your supervisor?

[YES] [NO]

Do you experience sarcasm, ridicule of your home background, or your appearance during video conferences?

[YES] [NO]

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

- 1-2 "YES" answers are a warning sign. Your boundaries are being tested. This is the best time to use assertive communication and explain the rules of cooperation.
- 3 or more "YES" answers indicate a high risk that you are experiencing remote bullying. Your mental health and dignity are at risk. Don't wait for the situation to get worse.

REMEMBER!

Remote bullying rarely starts with shouting. Most often, it is "silent violence": isolation, excessive control, and slowly eroding self-confidence.

10. International Help Map

When legal or psychological intervention is needed, give these addresses to your client:

Country	Institution / Organization	Scope of Assistance
Poland	National Labor Inspectorate (PIP)	Complaints against employers, inspections of working conditions.
Poland	Anti-Mobbing Associations	Psychological support and support groups.
Bulgaria	Commission for Protection Against Discrimination (CPAD)	Key body for harassment and discrimination cases (PADA).
Bulgaria	General Labor our Inspectorate (GLI)	Supervision of labor law and safety (Art. 127 LC).
Bulgaria	Animus Association Foundation	24-hour helpline for victims of violence (0800 1 86 76).
Bulgaria	CITUB / Podkrepia	Trade unions providing support in disputes with employers.

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