

## *Workshop outline for career counselors*

*"Remote bullying exists! The role and tools of a career counselor in identifying and supporting victims of cyberbullying."*



**REMOTE  
MOBBING**  
E X I S T S



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**

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**Main objective of the workshop:**

To broaden the competence of career counselors in working and cooperating with people (clients) who experience or are at risk of mobbing in remote work (cybermobbing).

**Specific objectives:**

After completing the training, participants will:

- Be able to define bullying (including cyberbullying) in a psychological and legal context (Poland and Bulgaria).
- Be aware of the scale of the phenomenon in both countries and understand the difference between surveys and official complaints.
- Be able to identify warning signs in a client who may be experiencing mobbing, including during remote recruitment.
- Have the skills to conduct conversations and motivate victims of mobbing to change their situation.
- Know how to strengthen the client's social skills (assertiveness, self-esteem).
- Know the basic paths of support (psychological and legal) in Poland and Bulgaria and be able to point them out to the client.

**Methods:**

- Interactive lectures
- Group discussions
- Practical exercises
- Case studies
- Simulations and role-playing

**Training materials:**

- Multimedia presentations
- Case studies
- Worksheets for practical exercises
- Information brochure

## **Results:**

### **1. Increased awareness and understanding:**

- Participants will have a solid understanding of cyberbullying terminology, which will help them communicate and create a supportive environment for the client.
- Understanding the problems and challenges (psychosomatic, anxiety) faced by victims of cyberbullying will enable participants to better support them.

### **2. Knowledge of legal regulations:**

- Participants will be aware of the legal regulations (PL and BG) concerning mobbing and the consequences of non-compliance by employers.
- Thanks to their knowledge of the law, participants will be able to effectively direct clients to the appropriate channels of assistance.

### **3. Better Counseling Practices:**

- Participants will avoid discriminatory mistakes and secondary victimization in the counseling process (e.g. downplaying the problem, blaming the victim).
- The counseling process will be more sensitive to symptoms of trauma and acquired low self-esteem.

### **4. Support for people experiencing mobbing:**

- Participants will be active allies to clients, which will improve the atmosphere and sense of security in the counseling process.
- Participants will have specific support plans for clients, which will increase their chances of regaining balance and returning to the labor market.

### **5. Practical skills:**

- The practical skills acquired during the exercises (listening, validation, reinforcement) will enable participants to effectively apply the knowledge they have gained in their daily counseling work.

Training duration: 6 teaching hours (plus breaks).

Training venue: Training room with access to a projector and flipchart, accessible to people with disabilities.

## Workshop schedule

### 1. Introduction (15 min)

1. Introduction of the workshop leader.
2. Presentation of the work plan and the aim of the workshop program.
3. Integration exercise (e.g. "Two Truths and a Lie") to integrate participants, break the ice, and create an atmosphere of openness.
4. Establishing the rules for the workshop (e.g. silencing phones, no judging, respect, confidentiality).
5. Completing a preliminary survey (pre-test) to assess the initial level of knowledge in the area of cyberbullying.

### 2. Overview - Introduction to the topic of Remote Bullying (30 min)

1. **Moderated discussion/brainstorming:** What does the term "cyberbullying" mean? What are your first associations with bullying in remote work?

The term "**cyberbullying**" (also known as remote bullying or cyberbullying in the workplace) is a form of bullying that is carried out using digital technologies and electronic means of communication.

In short, it is **the transfer of traditional bullying behaviors** (such as harassment, humiliation, isolation) **to the online world**.

#### **How does cyberbullying differ from traditional bullying?**

The main difference lies in **the tools** used and **the characteristics** of those tools:

- **constant availability (24/7)**, cyberbullying does not end when you leave the office. The victim can be harassed at any time of the day or night (e.g. via email, text messages) in their own home, blurring the line between private and professional life.
- **a wider audience**; a humiliating comment in a group chat or in an email sent to many people has a much greater and more immediate reach than gossip whispered in the office kitchen.
- **anonymity (or the appearance thereof)**: perpetrators may feel more immune from punishment when acting "through a screen."
- **permanence of evidence**: unlike words that evaporate, digital messages leave a permanent trace (which is crucial in the evidence process).

## Examples of cyberbullying in the workplace

In order to be considered bullying, these behaviors must be **persistent and long-lasting**:

- **public humiliation**, deliberate criticism or ridicule of an employee in a public forum (group chat, teleconference).
- **isolation**, systematically excluding an employee from remote meetings, project groups on instant messengers, or deliberately not informing them about important arrangements.
- **harassment outside working hours**, forcing an employee to work at night or on weekends, sending offensive or harassing emails and text messages at unusual times.
- **excessive control**, using software to track every click an employee makes (so-called *bossware*) in order to intimidate them, not just to monitor their performance.
- **spreading rumors**, using instant messaging or email to spread false information about an employee.

## 2. A mini-lecture on the history and significance of cyberbullying:

- Definition of remote mobbing.
- Transferring traditional methods of harassment to the digital world (remote work, teleconferencing).
- Examples: offensive messages, forcing employees to work at night, public criticism during teleconferences, telephone harassment, exclusion from remote meetings, excessive digital control.
- Horizontal mobbing (employee-colleague) and vertical mobbing (superior-subordinate).

The history of cyberbullying in the workplace is inextricably linked to the evolution of communication technologies in the office. This phenomenon did not arise suddenly, but went through several key phases, adapting to new tools.

### 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 appeared, email was the primary tool.

- Tools: Electronic mail (e.g. Outlook, Lotus Notes).
- Forms:

- 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.

- Tools, corporate and private instant messengers, early social media, smartphones.
- Forms:
  - 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." Bullying could continue after working hours via private messaging apps 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.

- Tools: Video conferencing (Zoom, Teams, Meet), advanced platforms (Slack, Teams), monitoring software (*bossware*).
- New forms:
  - 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 private 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 disconnect."
- 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. Scale of the phenomenon – Data analysis (Poland and Bulgaria):

- Presentation of the results of the project's internal survey (e.g. 52% do not know if remote mobbing exists).
- Public data (Poland): Polls (e.g. 41.4% have experienced mobbing) vs. Official complaints (PIP). Conclusion: The problem is widespread but hidden.
- Public data (Bulgaria): The problem of low reporting rates is similar to that in Poland.

#### Situation in Poland

In Poland, the problem has been well researched, and the data clearly shows the "dark figure effect" (a large number of unreported cases).

- Survey scale (cyberbullying). Studies (including CIOP-PIB) indicate that over 48% of Polish employees have experienced at least one form of cyberbullying in the last year, and 12.8% have been exposed to it regularly.
- Survey scale (general mobbing). Other reports (e.g. UCE RESEARCH, 2023) confirm that 41.4% of Polish employees have experienced behavior that could be classified as mobbing.
- Official statistics. These data are in stark contrast to official complaints. For example, in the first quarter of 2024, the National Labor Inspectorate (PIP) received only 255 complaints of mobbing.
- The problem of reporting. The low number of complaints is not due to the absence of the problem, but to employees' fear of the consequences (loss of job) and the difficulty of proving mobbing in court (in 2021, only 18 out of 215 cases ended in a victory for the employee).

## The situation in Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, there is a lack of such detailed public reports on *mobbing* as a general category. The available data focuses on narrower but related phenomena.

- No data on mobbing. There are no publicly available, broad survey studies directly addressing the scale of *mobbing* in the workplace.
- Proxy data (harassment). Available reports (e.g. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2024) indicate that 18.9% of employees have experienced *sexual harassment* in the workplace (which is a form of bullying).
- The problem of reporting. As in Poland, there is a problem of low reporting rates. Only 10.7% of victims of sexual harassment reported the incident to their supervisor.

## 3. Polish and Bulgarian law and workplace bullying (45 min.)

1. Overview of current regulations (mini-lecture):

### Legal context (Poland).

The legal basis defining mobbing in Poland is the Act of June 26, 1974 – the Labor Code. Article 94 is key in this regard.

### Legal definition (Article 94 § 2 of the Labor Code)

"Mobbing means actions or behaviors concerning an employee or directed against an employee, consisting of persistent and long-term harassment or intimidation of the employee, causing them to underestimate their professional usefulness, causing or aiming to humiliate or ridicule the employee, isolating them or eliminating them from the team of colleagues."

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### Key prerequisites for mobbing

In order for a given behavior to be legally recognized as mobbing, all of the following conditions (premises) must be met cumulatively.

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1. Persistence. This means actions characterized by ill will, repeated and systematic. It is not a one-time negative event, but a process. Examples include constant criticism or systematic undermining of an employee's competence.



2. Duration. Bullying must continue for a certain period of time. However, Polish case law is moving away from a rigid limit (e.g. 6 months). It is assumed that in cases of very intense harassment, even a shorter period (e.g. a few weeks) may be sufficient for it to be considered long-term.
3. Systematic nature. The actions must be directed against a specific person (or persons) and repeated in a planned manner.
4. Asymmetry of the relationship (imbalance of power). This is a key feature that distinguishes mobbing from conflict. In a conflict, the parties are equal. In mobbing, there is always an imbalance of power – there is a perpetrator (mobber) and a victim who is in a weaker position and unable to defend themselves effectively.
5. Negative effects (Goal or result). The mobber's actions must cause or aim to cause negative effects for the employee. The Labor Code lists them precisely:
  - Underestimation of professional competence.
  - Humiliation or ridicule of the employee.
  - Isolating them from their team of colleagues.
  - Elimination from the team.
  - Health problems – although mentioned in § 3, this is the most common effect of mobbing (e.g., depression, anxiety disorders, psychosomatic symptoms).

### Legal context (Bulgaria)

The legal situation in Bulgaria differs from that in Poland. Bulgarian legislation does not have a single, direct definition of "mobbing" (harassment in the workplace) in the main legal act, which is the Labor Code (LC).

Instead, employee protection is based on three main legal pillars, which together form a framework for protection against harassment:

#### **1. Pillar: Protection of dignity (Labor Code - LC)**

Basic protection is provided by Article 127 (2) of the Labor Code, which imposes a general obligation on the employer to "protect the dignity of the employee" in the course of their work. Violation of this dignity (e.g. through humiliation) is grounds for claims.

#### **2. Pillar: Protection against discrimination (PADA Act)**

This is a key pillar in the Bulgarian system. **The Protection Against Discrimination Act (PADA)** defines harassment (including sexual harassment) as a form of discrimination.

However, it should be noted that this protection is only activated when the harassment is directly **related to a specific protected characteristic**, such as gender, age, race, disability,

sexual orientation, etc.

### 3. Pillar: Health and safety (OSH)

**The Occupational Health and Safety Act** includes **psychosocial risks** (such as bullying or a hostile work environment) in the employer's responsibilities. The employer is required to assess and prevent these risks.

#### Application to remote work (cyberbullying)

Amendments to the Bulgarian Labor Code have introduced regulations on remote work, including **the "right to be offline"** (employees do not have to respond to communications outside of agreed working hours).

It is important to note that all existing pillars of protection (the obligation to protect dignity and PADA anti-discrimination provisions) are **fully applicable to cyberbullying** and digital communication.

### 4. Mobbing and Conflict: Where is the line? (45 min)

1. The importance of distinguishing between conflict (natural in the workplace) and mobbing (a destructive process).

Understanding the fundamental difference between conflict and mobbing is crucial for proper diagnosis and counseling intervention. Confusing these two phenomena is a serious mistake that can deepen the client's trauma.

Conflict is a natural part of work. It concerns "something" – a dispute over resources, methods, or goals. The parties, even in a heated dispute, remain in a (relatively) equal relationship. The goal of conflict intervention is mediation and finding a compromise.

Mobbing, on the other hand, is a pathology and a destructive process. It does not concern "something," but is an attack aimed at "someone" – at human dignity. There are no equal parties here, but rather an asymmetry of power (perpetrator and victim). The goal of mobbing is not to solve a problem, but to humiliate, isolate, and eliminate an employee.

The use of methods typical for conflict (such as mediation) in a mobbing situation is ineffective and constitutes a form of secondary victimization, strengthening the position of the perpetrator.

Conflict is part of professional life; mobbing is a violation of the law (in Poland, Art. 94 of the Labor Code; in Bulgaria, it violates, among others, Art. 127 of the Labor Code). Correct differentiation determines the effectiveness of the support provided to the client.

2. Presentation of a comparative table of key differences:

Criterion	Conflict	Mobbing
Parties	Equal, both express their arguments	Asymmetrical, one party dominates
Time	Short-term, one-off	Long-term, minimum several months
Regularity	Sporadic, incidental	Systematic, recurring
Purpose	Resolution of a dispute, compromise	Humiliation, isolation, elimination of the victim
Effects	Can be positive (new solutions)	Always negative for the victim's health

3. Practical exercise: Short case study - group discussion.

- The instructor presents 3-4 short descriptions of situations.
- Participants in groups analyze: Is this an acute conflict or mobbing? Justification of the decision. Presentation to the forum.

Time for group analysis: 15 minutes Time for presentation and discussion: 15 minutes

Task for groups: Analyze the following situations. Decide whether the situation described is a serious conflict or mobbing. Justify your decision by referring to key differences (e.g. asymmetry of power, purpose, regularity, effects).

**Situation 1: Argument about a deadline.** Anna and Jan, two specialists in equivalent positions, argue very loudly during a team meeting. Anna accuses Jan of not providing her with key data on time, which caused her to fall behind with her part of the project. Jan claims that Anna changed the specifications at the last minute. Their manager interrupts the argument and tells them to "work it out after the meeting." The situation is very tense, but this is the first time it has happened in this form.

- *Is this a conflict or mobbing? Why?*

**Situation 2: Criticism in chat.** For six months, Tomasz's supervisor has been regularly criticizing his work in a group chat, often using sarcasm ("As usual, Tomasz did not disappoint us"). He ignores Tomasz's messages when he asks for help, but immediately replies to others. During online meetings, he notoriously interrupts Tomasz mid-sentence or ignores him in discussions, asking questions to everyone except him. Tomasz has started

having trouble sleeping and severe stomach pains before every Monday.

- *Is this a conflict or mobbing? Why?*

**Situation 3: New manager** Maria is the new department manager. She has introduced very high standards and publicly (but matter-of-factly) criticizes *every* mistake, saying "in my previous company, this would have been unthinkable." The whole team feels stressed and under pressure. Last week, there was a heated exchange between Maria and the two most senior employees, who accused her of "instilling terror."

- *Is this a conflict or mobbing? Why?*

**Situation 4: Remote employee** Piotr works 100% remotely, while the rest of his team works hybrid. For several months, he has noticed that key project decisions are made "over coffee in the office," and he finds out about them after the fact. When he logs into the weekly online meeting, he often waits 10 minutes for the team to "come over from the next room." His requests to be included in project chat discussions are ignored. He feels completely overlooked and has informed his career advisor that he "probably isn't a good fit for this company."

- *Is this a conflict or mobbing? Why?*

## 5. Identification – How to recognize a victim of cyberbullying? (45 min.)

### 1. Warning signs in the work of a career counselor (interactive lecture):

Introduction: Clients rarely say outright, "I am being bullied."

When meeting with a client, a career counselor must be aware that clients rarely communicate the problem of mobbing directly. This experience is often hidden behind feelings of shame, guilt, or a lack of awareness that certain behaviors are unacceptable. The counselor's role is to actively listen and identify warning signs that may be hidden behind seemingly different problems (e.g. burnout, low self-esteem, or a general desire to change jobs).

#### What to look out for:

- **Avoiding the topic of previous work or a sudden change in behavior.** A clear warning sign is a change in the client's behavior when the conversation touches on the topic of their previous workplace. This may be sudden tension, a change in tone of voice, or avoidance of eye contact. The client often uses generalizations ("the

atmosphere was bad," "we just didn't get along"), clearly avoiding giving details. Such a reaction may indicate trauma and unresolved experiences of humiliation.

- **Low self-esteem and self-deprecating language.** Mobbing is legally defined as an action that causes an employee **to underestimate their professional usefulness**. In a counseling conversation, this manifests itself through self-deprecating language. The client systematically belittles their competence, using phrases such as: "I'm no good at anything," "I think I'm too stupid for this," "I always mess everything up." . The counselor's task is to distinguish between ordinary lack of self-confidence and a deeply ingrained, learned sense of worthlessness, which is a direct result of prolonged harassment.
- **Somatic symptoms (psychosomatics).** Prolonged stress caused by mobbing almost always manifests itself in the body. The counselor should be sensitive when the client "casually" mentions health problems such as chronic migraines, insomnia, stomach problems (e.g. irritable bowel syndrome), panic attacks, heart palpitations, or chronic fatigue. These are classic psychosomatic symptoms that may signal that the client's work environment is toxic.
- **Fear of technology (in the context of cyberbullying).** This is a key signal specific to cyberbullying. Pay attention to **the client's nervous reaction to communication tools**. This may include flinching at the sound of an email or messenger notification, reluctance to check their phone, or a clear fear of video conferencing. In the process of cyberbullying, a work tool (computer, smartphone) becomes a tool of harassment (e.g. through aggressive messages after hours or public criticism on Teams). Fear of technology is therefore an acquired response to a threat.

## 2. The problem of "hidden victims" (Discussion):

This module draws attention to professional groups that are particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying and whose experiences are often "hidden" from support systems. The specific nature of their work means that traditional mechanisms for identifying bullying (e.g. observation by colleagues) fail.

- Remote workers: physical isolation, difficulty in verification, digital isolation.

Physical isolation from the rest of the team creates an ideal environment for the bully. There are no physical witnesses to interactions, and the perpetrator has complete control over communication channels. Digital isolation becomes a powerful tool – it involves deliberately excluding an employee from important online meetings, discussion groups, or email threads. The victim is cut off from the flow of information and collegial

support, making it extremely difficult to verify their situation. This is confirmed by project data, which indicates complaints from remote employees about mistreatment by their office-based colleagues.

- Telemarketers: high pressure, constant monitoring, normalization of mistreatment.

This group has been identified in the project as particularly vulnerable. The specific nature of this work involves high pressure to perform and constant monitoring (of conversations and working time). In such an environment, control tools can easily become tools of harassment (e.g. public criticism of results in chat rooms, excessive control of break times). High turnover in the industry often leads to the normalization of mistreatment—it is mistakenly perceived as "standard" or "management style" rather than unacceptable psychological abuse.

- Recruited online: extreme asymmetry of power, fear of negative evaluation.

This is a group with which career counselors have direct contact. The problem here is extreme asymmetry of power. The candidate is in a position of asking for a job and is being evaluated. Fear of negative evaluation and losing the chance of employment means that candidates almost never report unethical or humiliating behavior on the part of recruiters (e.g. inappropriate questions or humiliating comments during a video interview).

## **6. Case study analysis (45 min)**

Practical exercise in groups. Participants receive case descriptions (based on project surveys).

### **Purpose of the exercise:**

- To apply theoretical knowledge (legal definitions, warning signs) in the practical analysis of real situations.
- Developing diagnostic skills in distinguishing mobbing from other phenomena.
- Training in formulating in-depth questions necessary in a counseling conversation with a client.
- Understanding the emotional and psychological effects of various forms of cyberbullying on the client.

### **Materials:**

- Worksheets with case descriptions (4 case studies).
- Flipcharts or large sheets of paper.
- Markers.

### **Course of the exercise:**

- The instructor divides the participants into 4 small groups.
- Each group receives a worksheet with a description of one case study.
- The task of each group is to read the description and analyze it in the context of the knowledge they have acquired.

### **1. Case descriptions:**

#### **Situation 1**

Isolation of a remote worker. The client (remote worker) reports: "My colleagues treat me badly because I work remotely and they work at the company's headquarters. Key decisions are made 'over coffee,' and I find out about them after the fact. I am systematically overlooked in arrangements and excluded from informal communication channels. I feel like a ghost."

#### **Situation 2**

Harassment and discrimination. A client (remote worker) reports: "I feel forced to work nights and weekends. My boss regularly sends instructions at 9 p.m. and expects an immediate response. In addition, I found out that I was the only one on the team who did not receive a bonus, which my supervisor unofficially argued was due to 'the nature of remote work.'"

#### **Situation 3**

Public humiliation. The client (a young employee) reports: "My boss assigns me tasks with unrealistic deadlines. When I fail to complete them, he publicly criticizes me in a group chat, using sarcasm ('As usual, you can be relied on'). When I try to defend myself or ask for help, he ignores my messages. I feel humiliated and worthless."

#### **Situation 4**

Mobbing in the recruitment process. The client (job seeker) reports: "I had an online job interview. The recruiter was unpleasant from the start, asking inappropriate questions about my private life and family plans, and then loudly mocking my 'home office' when a child appeared in the background. I feel ridiculed and discouraged from continuing my search."

### **2. Questions for discussion:**

- What characteristics of mobbing (or discrimination) do you recognize in this case? (Please refer to the legal premises: persistence, duration, purpose, asymmetry of power).
- What key warning signs (e.g. psychosomatic, behavioral) would you look for in this client as a counselor?

- What probing (diagnostic) questions should be asked of the client in order to fully understand the situation without suggesting answers?
- What mistakes in communication with this client could a career counselor most easily make (e.g. downplaying, judging)?

### **3. Presentation of conclusions to the group.**

After the group work is completed, a spokesperson from each group presents the conclusions to the forum. The facilitator moderates the discussion, summarizing the key conclusions from each case and emphasizing how different forms (isolation, harassment, public humiliation) affect the client and their professional situation.

## **7. Intervention – How to support and motivate the client? (45 min)**

Equipping counselors with specific communication and intervention techniques necessary to work with clients affected by mobbing. The goal is to move the client from the position of a victim (helplessness, shame) to an active position (regaining control, planning action).

### **1. First contact and building trust (mini-lecture and discussion):**

The introduction to the module discusses the key stage of first contact. Clients affected by mobbing are often distrustful, ashamed, and feel guilty because they have experienced a breach of trust in the workplace. The role of the counselor is not to judge or give immediate advice, but to create a safe space to name the problem.

#### **Active listening and emotion validation techniques:**

The goal of these techniques is to show the client, "I hear you, I believe you, and I am here for you." They include:

- Paraphrasing, repeating what the customer has said in your own words to confirm understanding. (e.g. Customer: "He kept sending me emails at 2 a.m." Advisor: "If I understand correctly, you felt harassed outside of working hours.")
- Clarification (questioning), asking for clarification of general statements in order to fully understand the situation. (e.g. Client: "My boss has it in for me." Counselor: "What exactly do you mean by 'has it in for me'? What specific behaviors do you mean?").
- Emotion validation, a key step in recognizing that the client's reaction is normal in an abnormal situation. It is an antidote to the client's self-criticism. Instead of saying, "Don't worry about it," the counselor uses phrases such as, "What you are describing



sounds extremely stressful. You have every right to feel angry/anxious" or "It's not your fault."

### **Conducting a conversation that motivates change (without pressure):**

The goal is to stimulate the client's internal motivation to act, not to impose solutions on them from an expert position.

- Avoiding pressure. Remembering that the client is already under enough pressure, the counselor avoids authoritative phrases such as "You must..." or "You should...", which increase resistance.
- Exploring ambivalence. The client is often stuck in a contradiction ("I hate this job, but I'm afraid of losing it"). The counselor helps them explore this ambivalence by asking questions such as, "What will happen if nothing changes and you stay in this situation for another year?" or "What would your ideal solution look like?"
- The "Small Steps" technique. Victims of mobbing are often paralyzed by the prospect of radical action ("going to court"). Instead, the counselor helps identify one small step that the client feels capable of taking (e.g. "saving one email to a separate folder," "checking out assertiveness training courses").

### **2. Strengthening the client's social skills (workshop):**

The introduction to the module emphasizes that this workshop pursues the direct objectives of the project, **namely increasing social skills, self-esteem, and assertiveness**. Mobbing is legally defined as an action that causes "**an underestimation of professional competence**," and the aim of this workshop is to reverse this destructive process.

#### **Exercise 1 - rebuilding self-esteem**

- "Success Inventory." This exercise involves the counselor asking the client to describe not abstract "strengths," but a specific task or project (even a small one) that they were proud of *before* the mobbing began. By asking supporting questions (e.g. "What skills were needed for this?", "Who else appreciated this work?"), the counselor helps to ground the client in the facts and real competencies that they possess, which the mobber tried to devalue.
- "Reframing – Changing Perspective." The counselor actively helps the client reframe their experience. The bully's narrative is: "You are incompetent and weak." The counselor suggests a change of perspective (reframing): "The fact that you persevered in such a toxic environment for X months is a testament to your tremendous mental resilience and strength. Please treat this as a competency."

## Exercise 2: Assertiveness training (in remote communication).

- **"Assertive Refusal" (based on Case Study 2: "Forcing to work at night"):**

Situation (Cyberbullying): At 10 p.m., the client receives a text message from their boss: "You need to correct this presentation immediately. I'm waiting for it."

Analysis of reactions. Three types of reactions are discussed. Passive (silence and working with anger), aggressive ("again?! It's nighttime!"), and assertive (setting boundaries): "This is my private time now. I'll take care of it tomorrow morning at 8:00 a.m.". In the Bulgarian context, one can additionally refer to the "right to disconnect."

- **"Stopping public criticism" (based on Case Study 3: "Criticism in a group chat"):**

Situation: The boss writes in a group chat: "Another mistake in Kowalski's report. As usual."

Analysis of reactions. The assertive technique of transferring communication is discussed. Publicly in the chat: "Thank you for the information. Please send the details to my email so that I can correct it." And (optionally) privately to the boss: "Please direct any comments about my work to me directly, rather than in the group forum."

## 8. Simulations (Role-playing) (45 min)

### 1. Practical exercise in groups of three (Advisor, Client, Observer).

Purpose of the exercise:

- Practical application of communication techniques in a controlled, safe environment.
- Practicing conducting a counseling conversation with a client exhibiting typical symptoms (guilt, anxiety).
- Developing the ability to give and receive feedback on communication style.

Course of the exercise:

1. The instructor divides the participants into groups of three. In each group, the participants take on the roles of: Advisor, Client, and Observer.
2. Each group receives one of two scenarios to work through.
3. Roles:
  - Advisor: Their task is to actively apply the techniques they have learned: paraphrasing, clarification, validation of emotions, and elements of

motivational conversation (avoiding pressure, the "small steps" technique).

- Client: Their task is to play the described role, trying to convey the emotions and attitude of the person in question.
  - Observer: Does not participate in the conversation. Notes the use of specific techniques by the Counselor, paying attention to what was supportive and what was a mistake (e.g. judging, downplaying).
4. The simulations last about 5-7 minutes per scene. Each scene is followed by a short (3-5 minute) feedback round in a small group (first the Observer, then the Client).
  5. After practicing both scenarios (if time allows, with role reversal), a summary is presented to the group.

## 2. Scenarios to be played out:

### Scenario 1: Client who blames himself for the mobbing situation

- Instructions for the "Client": You are convinced that it is your fault. Use self-deprecating language ("If I were faster...", "I'm not cut out for this job...", "Maybe if I didn't make mistakes, he wouldn't be so hard on me").
- Goal for the "Advisor": Avoid forceful denial ("That's not true, you're great"). Validate emotions ("I hear that you are very hard on yourself") and try to find evidence to the contrary (e.g. referring to the "Success Inventory" exercise).

### Scenario 2: A client who is afraid of changing jobs ("because it's the same everywhere")

- Instructions for the "Client": You are resigned. Your experience of mobbing has taught you that "all employers are like that." You say: "I'm afraid to change because I'll be jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. At least here I know what to expect" (learned helplessness).
- Goal for the "Advisor": Avoid false optimism ("We'll definitely find something great"). Use motivational conversation ("I understand your concerns. What will happen if you stay here for another year?") and the "small steps" technique ("How about we just check the market for now? Let's treat it as data collection, not a final decision").

## 3. Discussion of conclusions from the perspective of forum observers.

The facilitator moderates the plenary discussion, gathering key conclusions from observers and advisors. The most common challenges (e.g. refraining from giving

"golden advice") and the most effective techniques (e.g. the power of validation "It's not your fault") are discussed.

## **9. Prevention and Tools – What Next? (30 min)**

The introduction to the module emphasizes that this is an absolutely crucial first step for any client considering any action. Without evidence, in the eyes of the law (both in Poland and Bulgaria), mobbing did not take place. The lecture makes clients aware that in the case of cybermobbing, evidence is easily accessible, but it is also fleeting and must be properly secured.

### **1. Digital security and documenting mobbing:**

Discussion of key documentation methods that the counselor should communicate to the client:

- Emails. Discuss the need to archive offensive, humiliating, or harassing messages. The key advice is to immediately forward such messages (with full headers) to a private, external email address (e.g. Gmail, Outlook) . Storing evidence exclusively in a work email account is risky, as the employer has full access to it.
- Screenshots. Discuss this method as the basis for documenting mobbing on instant messengers (Teams, Slack, WhatsApp, SMS). Emphasize that in order for a screenshot to be reliable evidence, it must contain the content of the message, a clear sender (name, number), and the date and time.
- Login times and overtime. Explanation of how an employee can independently create digital traces if they are forced to work non-standard hours. The advice includes, for example, sending an email to yourself (or your supervisor) at 2 a.m. with the content "As instructed, I am now finishing the report." This creates dated proof of work completion.
- Harassment log (crucial for court). Emphasize that the client must keep a systematic log (in a private notebook or file). This helps to prove the "duration" and "persistence" of the harassment. Participants learn the recommended format for recording: date; time; event (e.g. "Public ridicule during a teleconference"); witnesses (who was present at the meeting?); my state (e.g. how I felt, how I reacted).

### **2. Presentation of the Information Brochure:**

- Discussion of the content (developed with a psychologist and lawyer).

The presenter explains that the Brochure is a practical tool, serving as a "road map" and "first aid kit" for people experiencing mobbing. They emphasize that it was developed in collaboration with experts (a psychologist and a lawyer) to ensure the accuracy and practical usefulness of its content. The brochure will be available in three languages (Polish, Bulgarian, and English) and will be fully digitally adapted to the needs of people with disabilities.

- For the Advisor
  - Checklist "How to identify mobbing?" Discussion of how a counselor can use this checklist during a conversation with a client. It allows them to quickly identify whether the behaviors described (e.g. isolation, persistent criticism) meet the definition of mobbing or are rather a conflict.
- For the client
  - Legal aspects ("What, where, and how to report?"): The brochure clearly outlines the paths to help in Poland and Bulgaria (which will be discussed in detail in the next section). The client receives specific information, eliminating the need to search "blindly" on the internet.
  - Psychological aspects ("How to deal with stress?"):
    - Psychological "first aid" techniques (e.g. breathing techniques, grounding).
    - Emotion validation (confirmation that fear, shame, and anger are normal reactions).
    - Explanation of psychosomatic symptoms (headaches, stomachaches, insomnia).

Discussion: How can counselors use this brochure in their daily work with clients?

### **Pathways to help – Where to refer the client for support?**

- The role of the counselor as a "guide" to the support system (the counselor is NOT a lawyer or therapist).

The role of the counselor as a "guide" through the support system The introduction to the module emphasizes a fundamental principle: a career counselor is NOT a lawyer or therapist. The role of the counselor is "signposting" – that is, pointing clients in the right direction and referring them to the appropriate specialists and institutions.

We do not provide legal advice or therapy. Our task is to help the client prepare for contact with these institutions (e.g. by collecting the documentation discussed in the previous section) and to make them aware of the available professional forms of assistance.

Support in Poland. The support system for victims of mobbing in Poland is based on two main pillars: legal and psychological.

- Legal path:
  - State Labor Inspectorate (PIP): This is the first point of contact. The client should be informed that PIP may conduct an inspection at the workplace and identify irregularities (e.g. regarding working time, health and safety, or violations of labor law). However, a PIP inspector cannot rule on mobbing (only a court has this power), but their post-inspection report may constitute an important piece of evidence in a possible court case.
  - Labor Court: This is the only body in Poland that can legally determine the existence of mobbing and award the employee appropriate compensation (for damage to health) or damages (if the employee terminated the contract due to mobbing). The client should be made aware that a court case requires strong evidence (documentation, witnesses).
- Psychological path:
  - Therapists - explain to the client that mobbing is a form of trauma. Referral to a psychotherapist, especially one specializing in crisis intervention or trauma therapy, is crucial for regaining balance.
  - Support groups - informing the client about the existence of local anti-mobbing associations or support groups where they can meet people with similar experiences. This gives a sense of community and reduces isolation.
  - Psychiatrist (sick leave) - this form of help should be destigmatized. If somatic symptoms (insomnia, anxiety, panic attacks) prevent the client from functioning normally, a visit to a psychiatrist is necessary to obtain a professional diagnosis, treatment, and (if necessary) sick leave. Regaining mental strength is a prerequisite for taking any further legal or professional steps.

Support in Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, the path is different because there is no single "anti-mobbing law." Protection is based on three pillars: protection of dignity (KP), anti-discrimination law (PADA), and occupational health and safety. The advisor should inform the client about the following step-by-step procedure:

- Step 1: Internal procedure
  - This is a crucial first step. It involves submitting a written complaint to the employer.
  - Why is this important? If the harassment is discriminatory (e.g. related to gender, age, race), the employer has a legal obligation to immediately investigate the matter and stop it, in accordance with the PADA.
- Step 2: State institutions
  - General Labor Inspectorate (GLI). This is the equivalent of the Polish National Labor Inspectorate. Clients can report violations of the general obligation to protect dignity (under Article 127 of the Labor Code) and violations of health and safety rules (e.g. failure to prevent psychosocial risks).
  - Commission for Protection Against Discrimination (CPAD). This is the key institution to report to if the mobbing is discriminatory (related to gender, age, disability, etc.). The Commission investigates the case and may impose administrative penalties.
- Step 3: Court (civil lawsuit)
  - Regardless of the administrative steps, the client has the right to file a civil lawsuit in court.
  - They can sue their employer for compensation for moral damages resulting from:
    1. Violation of dignity protection (under Article 127 of the Labor Code).
    2. Discrimination or harassment (under the PADA Act).
- NGO (non-governmental organization) support
  - As in Poland, there are non-governmental organizations offering support. The information brochure will refer the client to specific places, such as the Animus Association Foundation, which operates a nationwide, 24-hour support line for victims of violence (including psychological violence).

## 10. Summary and Q&A Session (15 minutes)

1. The presenter summarizes the key objectives and conclusions from all training modules and thanks the participants for their active participation and engagement.
2. Opening of the discussion panel (Q&A), exchange of insights after the training. A moderated question and answer session, giving participants the opportunity to share their insights after the training, ask additional questions, and clarify any doubts.

3. The instructor distributes questionnaires to participants to complete:
  - Post-training knowledge survey (post-test).
  - Evaluation surveys. To gather opinions on the substantive and organizational quality of the workshop.





## Appendixes:

### Appendix No. 1

#### Preliminary survey (Pre-Test)

*Please rate your current level of confidence in the following areas  
(where 1 = I do not feel confident at all, 5 = I feel very confident):*

1. I can define what cyberbullying is in remote work.  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
2. I am familiar with the basic legal framework regarding workplace bullying in Poland.  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
3. I am familiar with the basic legal framework regarding mobbing in Bulgaria.  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
4. I can distinguish between a serious conflict at work and mobbing.  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
5. I can recognize subtle signs (e.g. somatic, anxiety) in a client showing that they may be experiencing mobbing.  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
6. I know how to conduct a supportive conversation with a person who blames themselves for experiencing mobbing.  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
7. I know what specific legal steps a victim of mobbing can take in Poland (e.g. PIP, Labor Court).  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
8. I can show a client how to strengthen their social skills (e.g. assertiveness) after experiencing mobbing.  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)

*Please select one answer (TRUE or FALSE) that you think is correct:*

1. Under Polish law (Labor Code), mobbing must last at least 6 months to be recognized by a court.  
**TRUE**  
**FALSE**
2. The fundamental difference between mobbing and conflict is that in mobbing there is always an asymmetry of power (victim vs. mobber).  
**TRUE**  
**FALSE**

3. Bulgaria has one main "anti-mobbing" law that comprehensively regulates this phenomenon.

**TRUE**

**FALSE**

4. Somatic symptoms (e.g. headaches, stomach problems) are rarely associated with mobbing, and the counselor should not focus on them.

**TRUE**

**FALSE**

5. It is unprofessional but legal for a recruiter to ask questions about family plans or make fun of a home office during a remote interview.

**TRUE**

**FALSE**

6. The key advice for a client experiencing cyberbullying is to immediately delete offensive messages so as not to "poison their mind."

**TRUE**

**FALSE**

7. In Bulgaria, the key institution for reporting harassment based on, for example, gender or race is the CPAD (Commission for Protection against Discrimination).

**TRUTH**

**FALSE**

8. Validating emotions (e.g. "You have a right to feel angry") is a key element of supporting victims, more important than immediately giving advice.

**TRUE**

**FALSE**

Thank you for completing the survey!

REMOTE  
MOBBING  
EXISTS

## Appendix No. 2

### Final Survey (Post-Test)

*Please select one answer (TRUE or FALSE) that you think is correct:*

1. Under Polish law (Labor Code), mobbing must last at least six months to be recognized by a court.  
**TRUTH**  
**FALSE**
2. The fundamental difference between mobbing and conflict is that mobbing always involves an asymmetry of power (victim vs. mobber).  
**TRUE**  
**FALSE**
3. Bulgaria has one main "anti-mobbing" law that comprehensively regulates this phenomenon.  
**TRUE**  
**FALSE**
4. Somatic symptoms (e.g. headaches, stomach problems) are rarely associated with mobbing, and the counselor should not focus on them.  
**TRUE**  
**FALSE**
5. It is unprofessional but legal for a recruiter to ask questions about family plans or make fun of a home office during a remote interview.  
**TRUE**  
**FALSE**
6. The key advice for a client experiencing cyberbullying is to immediately delete offensive messages so as not to "poison their mind."  
**TRUE**  
**FALSE**
7. In Bulgaria, the key institution for reporting harassment based on, for example, gender or race is the CPAD (Commission for Protection against Discrimination).  
**TRUTH**  
**FALSE**
8. Validating emotions (e.g. "You have a right to feel angry") is a key element of supporting victims, more important than immediately giving advice.  
**TRUE**  
**FALSE**

*Please rate the following aspects of the training (where 1 = Very poor, 5 = Very good):*

1. **Overall assessment of** the training:  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
2. **Content:** The content was useful and relevant to my professional needs.  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
3. **Materials:** The presentation and information brochure were clear and helpful.  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
4. **Trainer:** The trainer was competent, engaging, and communicated knowledge clearly.  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
5. **Workshop part:** Case study analysis and simulations (role-playing) helped me practice my skills.  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
6. **Organization:** The timing and pace of the training were appropriate.  
(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)

**Open questions:**

1. What was the **most valuable** element of this training for you?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What one specific thing (knowledge, skill) did **you** learn during this training that **you will use in your work** with clients?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Are there any elements that **should be improved** or developed in future editions of this training?  
\_\_\_\_\_

REMOTE  
MOBBING  
EXISTS