Workshop outline for employment agencies

"Remote mobbing exists! The role of employment agencies in auditing employers and safely introducing clients to the market."

Target group: Employment agencies (public and private), employment agents.

Main objective of the workshop:

To improve the competence of employment agencies in identifying the risk of cyberbullying among employers and in providing safe and ethical services to clients (including vulnerable groups) in the context of remote work.

Specific objectives: After completing the training, the employment agency will:

- be able to define mobbing (including cybermobbing) in a legal context (PL and BG).

- be aware of the scale of the phenomenon and understand the specific nature of "hidden victims."

- be able to conduct **a** basic **audit of the** employer's **organizational culture** in terms of the risk of remote mobbing.

- be able to identify warning signs in a client who has experienced mobbing and will know how to adapt the mediation process to them.

- have the skills to discuss anti-mobbing standards and remote work with the employer.

- know how to use the Information Brochure (project result) as an educational tool for both parties (client and employer).

- know the support channels (PL and BG) to be able to intervene when the process of placing a client on the labor market goes wrong.

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

Training materials:
- Multimedia presentations
- Case studies (based on project data and employer audits)

- Worksheets for practical exercises (e.g., "Intermediary Checklist")
- Information brochure (Erasmus+ project result)

Results:

1. **Increased awareness and understanding:**
   - Participants will have a solid understanding of cyberbullying terminology, which will help them communicate with clients and employers.
   - Participants will understand the problems and challenges (anxiety, psychosomatic) faced by victims of cyberbullying and enable participants to better support them.

2. **Knowledge of legal regulations:**
   - Participants will be aware of the legal regulations (PL and BG) concerning mobbing.
   - Thanks to their knowledge of the law, participants will be able to effectively direct clients to the appropriate channels of assistance.

3. **Better Mediation Practices (New Skill):**
   - Participants will acquire a new skill – the ability to audit employers for mobbing risks, which will improve the quality of their mediation services.
   - They will avoid mistakes (e.g. secondary victimization of the client) and be able to assertively discuss remote work standards with employers.

4. **Support for people experiencing mobbing:**
   - Participants will be active allies (advocates) of clients in the job search process, which will improve the client's sense of security.
   - Participants will be able to prepare clients for job interviews (in the context of a "difficult past") and safely "sell" them to a new employer.

5. **Practical skills:**
   - The practical skills acquired during the exercises (auditing, reframing, simulations) will enable participants to effectively apply the knowledge they have gained in their daily 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 to bring participants together, icebreaking, and create an atmosphere of openness.

4. Establishing the rules for the workshop (e.g., silencing phones, no judgment, respect, confidentiality).

5. Completing a preliminary survey 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 related to 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 "behind a screen."

-Permanence of evidence: unlike words that evaporate, digital messages leave a permanent trace (which is crucial in the evidentiary process).

<u>Examples of cyberbullying in the workplace</u>

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).

- isolating, 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:**

   o Definition of remote mobbing.

   o Transferring traditional methods of harassment to the digital world (remote work, teleconferencing).

   o Examples: offensive messages, forcing employees to work at night, public criticism during teleconferences, telephone harassment, exclusion from remote meetings, excessive digital control.

   o Horizontal mobbing (employee-colleague) and vertical mobbing (supervisor-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 beginning (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 appear 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 messengers or text messages.

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

Mobbing 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 in the background).

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- 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 working hours. 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. **Scale of the phenomenon – Data analysis (Poland and Bulgaria):**

   o Presentation of the results of the project's internal survey (e.g. 52% do not know if remote mobbing exists).

   o Public data (Poland): Polls (e.g. 41.4% have experienced mobbing) vs. Official complaints (PIP). Conclusion: The problem is widespread but hidden.

   o 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).

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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.

4. 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 94³ § 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."

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.

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:

   o Underestimation of professional competence.

   o Humiliation or ridicule of the employee.

   o Isolating them from their team of colleagues.

   o Elimination from the team.

   o 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.

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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.

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

1. **Introduction:** 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 fierce dispute, remain in a (relatively) equal positions. 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

6. Employer Audit – How to recognize a toxic remote environment?

    1.   Warning Signs in the Client (job seeker)

Objective: To identify clients who require special care and need a safe place.

The introduction to the module emphasizes that in order to perform their job effectively and ethically, employment agents must not only be experts in the labor market, but also skilled diagnosticians. Identifying clients who have experienced mobbing is crucial for their future career path. Such clients are particularly sensitive to conditions in a new workplace, and their re-placement in a toxic or even just highly stressful environment can deepen their trauma and lead to rapid failure of the placement.

The instructor discusses key warning signs that the agent should be alert to when talking to a client:

1. Low self-esteem and self-deprecating language. Mobbing is legally defined as an action that causes an employee to have a "low assessment of their professional usefulness." In a conversation with an agent, this manifests itself through self-deprecating language. The client systematically belittles their own competence, using phrases as: "I'm no good at anything," "I think I'm too stupid for this," "I always mess everything up." For the intermediary, this is a signal that the client will need an employer with a supportive organizational culture, and that the recruitment process may require additional reinforcement.

2. Somatic symptoms (psychosomatics). Prolonged stress caused by mobbing almost always manifests itself in the body. The agent 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. For the agent, this is information that the client may need a job with low pressure or flexible hours, rather than a "firefighting" environment.

3. Fear of technology (in the context of cyberbullying) is a key signal specific to cyberbullying. The agent should 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 cyberbullying, a work tool (computer, smartphone) becomes a tool for harassment (e.g. through aggressive messages after hours or public criticism on Teams). For the intermediary, this is a signal that 100% remote work in a company based on constant communication (e.g. Slack 24/7) may not be suitable for this client.

4. 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 a 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 an unresolved experience of humiliation. In this situation, the agent should not press the issue, but note that this is a sensitive area for the client.

2. "Red Flags" at the Employer – Agent Audit

Teach intermediaries to proactively check companies before sending a client there to minimize the risk of placing them in a toxic work environment. This is a key competence that distinguishes an intermediary from a career advisor.

Unlike a counselor, an intermediary has a dual responsibility – to the client (to ensure a safe job) and to the employer (to provide a valuable candidate). Therefore, their role requires actively auditing the company to minimize the risk of placement failure resulting from a toxic organizational culture. The audit is divided into external (research) and internal (interview with HR/Manager) steps.

A. External Audit (research and data analysis)

Before offering a position to a client, the intermediary should conduct in-depth research:

1. **Analysis of opinions on websites (GoWork, Glassdoor, etc.):**

   o How to distinguish hate speech from patterns of mobbing? A single negative opinion may be the result of dismissal or personal conflict (so-called hate speech). The intermediary must look for patterns and recurring keywords that indicate a constant problem.

   o Keywords to search for: "toxic," "exploitation," "overtime," "yelling," "micromanagement," "constant availability," "lack of respect," "guilt," "turnover."

   o Context verification: If ten reviews from different years mention the same manager as a bully, this is a strong red flag.

2. **Turnover analysis (huge red flag):**

   o The intermediary should check whether the company is constantly looking for employees for the same position.

   o High turnover in a department or a specific position is the most objective indicator of problems with organizational culture. It can mean excessive

pressure, poor onboarding, lack of support, or bullying. If a client who has been bullied ends up in a company with high turnover, their chances of recovery are minimal.

B. Internal Audit (interview with HR/manager)

An internal audit involves introducing **the "Intermediary Checklist"** into the recruitment/business interview – a set of assertive questions aimed at assessing the remote work culture and anti-bullying standards.

Workshop: Creating an "Intermediary Checklist"

The following questions should be asked by the intermediary in a professional manner as part of the employer verification process:

Audit area	Question to be asked by the intermediary	Red flag (alert response)
Remote work policy	**"What is your policy on remote work? Is it formalized?"**	No formalized rules, answer: "We agree on an ongoing basis."
Measuring effectiveness	**"How do you measure the effectiveness of a remote employee?"**	Answer: "We monitor working time and screen activity" (indicates a lack of trust and micromanagement, which is a form of cyberbullying).
Anti-bullying procedures	**"What are your anti-bullying/anti-discrimination procedures? Who is the Ethics Officer?"**	Answer: **"We don't have any procedures, we have a good atmosphere here"** (this means that the company is not prepared for a crisis, which is a legal mistake).
Onboarding	**"What is the onboarding process for a remote employee?"**	Answer: "They get a login and have to get up to speed. We give them a lot of autonomy" (this means that they are "thrown in at the deep end" without support, which encourages isolation and mobbing).
Boundaries and availability	**"What are the expectations regarding availability after working hours (e.g., in the evening or on weekends)?"**	Answer: "We operate dynamically and expect availability when needed" (ignoring **the "right to be offline"** and violating customer boundaries).

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3. Case Study: The "dream company" that is a nightmare (group discussion)

Description of the situation:

An agent has a great, high-paying offer (100% remote) at a young, dynamic startup. The employer says: "We are like a family," "We are looking for someone who is available 24/7," and "We don't have procedures, it's the results that count, not the paperwork!".

Questions for discussion:

1. What **red flags** should immediately alarm the recruiter? (Analysis of phrases: "Like a family" – no boundaries; "24/7" – exploitation; "No procedures" – chaos and legal risk).

2. Why is the phrase **"We are like family"** often a toxic signal in a professional environment (it means blurring the boundaries between private life and work, which is a breeding ground for mobbing)?

3. Would you send a client who **has experienced mobbing trauma** there, despite the high salary? How would you ethically justify your decision?

7. Intervention and advocacy

1. **Preparing the client for the process (intermediary perspective)**

Objective: How to support a client who has experienced mobbing in the process of looking for a new job and how to prepare them for **a safe and assertive self-presentation** in front of a potential employer.

Clients who have experienced mobbing (even cybermobbing) often carry a sense of shame with them, low self-esteem, and fear of being hurt again. In a job interview, it is crucial to control the narrative. The intermediary's task is to coach the client so that their story about leaving their job is professional, neutral, and focused on the future, rather than dwelling on the past. This helps to avoid secondary victimization by the recruiter (who may perceive the client as a confrontational or demanding person).

Workshop: How to answer the question "Why are you leaving your previous job?"

The instructor analyzes various answer options with the participants, focusing on the client's defense mechanisms and the recruiter's perception.

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Answer option	Example	Risk analysis and why it is a "bad answer"
Pouring out grief and focusing on blame (emotional option)	*"My boss is a bully, he destroyed me psychologically, harassed me with emails at night, and HR did nothing."*	**Risk of stigmatization:** Recruiters are afraid of "conflictual" people. Even though the client is a victim, the recruiter may only see a person who tends to blame others and file lawsuits. **Lack of professionalism:** The answer is too emotional and inconsistent with the formal language of recruitment.
Self-blame (passive variant)	*"I guess I didn't measure up to the challenge. I was too weak. I'm not cut out for this job."*	**Risk of low self-esteem:** This confirms the low self-esteem that the client has acquired as a result of bullying. The message to the recruiter is: "I am a low-value candidate who does not believe in my own competence."
Lack of consistency (escape variant)	*"I just felt it was time for a change."*	**Risk of lack of credibility:** This answer is too vague and may suggest that the client is hiding something or is professionally unstable.

Good answer (assertive and neutral) – "reframing" technique

A good answer should use the **reframing** technique, in which the client turns a negative experience into a positive need.

- **Option 1 (Focus on organizational culture):**

*"I am looking for a work environment with greater **transparency** and a culture based on **mutual respect**. I decided to make a change because my current workplace did not offer clear communication procedures, which was inconsistent with my expectations for professional cooperation."*

Comment: This is assertive, professional, and does not blame anyone. It focuses on **the** client's **values** (respect, transparency).

- **Option 2 (Focus on development and the future):**

"My values and work style, which focus on measuring results rather than time spent in front of a computer, were no longer compatible with the organizational culture of the company, which emphasized micromanagement. I am now looking for a place where my skills will be fully utilized based on trust."

Comment: This is neutral and focused on finding a better fit, which is a natural part of a professional career.

The role of the facilitator in the workshop:

The role of the mediator is crucial in this exercise and includes:

1. Validating the client's emotions. Acknowledging that the client has a right to feel angry and bitter, but explaining why these emotions cannot be the dominant narrative in recruitment.
2. Modeling: the mediator models and suggests safe, ready-made phrases that the client can use (as above).
3. Practice. Joint role-playing (the mediator as the recruiter, the client responds) until the client feels confident with the new, professional narrative.
4. Realizing that the goal is to find a healthy workplace, not revenge or clearing the air at the previous company (the latter is a task for lawyers/the court, not the recruitment process).

2. Simulations (role-playing)

Practical exercise of key skills of a job broker in the area of assertive client protection (conversation with an employer) and strengthening client motivation (conversation with a person who has experienced mobbing).

The exercise is carried out in groups of three: Agent, Employer/Client, and Observer. The role of the Observer is to take notes and provide constructive feedback on the techniques used by the Agent (e.g. asking probing questions, validating emotions).

a. Pair 1: Mediator – Employer (Pushing "overtime")

Scenario: The Intermediary is talking to a manager recruiting for a remote position and needs to verify the actual working conditions, which may pose a risk to a client who is sensitive to pressure.

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Element	Details of instructions	Goal for the Intermediary
Instruction for the "Employer"	"We need someone **'right away'**, work under pressure, there will definitely be **overtime**, but we pay well. Will your client be able to handle it? We need to be sure that this is not a 'half-measure'."	Test the agent's resistance to pressure and money.
Objective for the "Intermediary"	**Assertive negotiation and auditing.** Do not be thrown off track by rash promises. **Ask for details** ("What exactly does 'working under pressure' mean?", "How is overtime calculated – is it formally recorded and paid?").	
Key technique (Reframing)	**Assertively present the client's limits** (without revealing their trauma): "My client is very organized and values **a healthy work environment**, which translates into **high efficiency** during standard working hours. I am confident that they will deliver the expected results without the need for constant overtime."	

b. Pair 2: Agent – Client (Afraid to return to the market)

Scenario**:** The intermediary has a highly competent client who, however, after being bullied, shows a strong fear of returning to the market and gives up further job search.

Element	Details of instructions	Goal for the Agent
Instructions for the "Client"	"I'm afraid it's the same everywhere. Remote mobbing will get me in the new company too. Maybe I'd better stay on benefits..."	The participant must confront the client's fear, passivity, and sense of hopelessness.
Goal for the "Intermediary"	**Reinforce and validate the client's emotions.** **1. Use validation:** "I understand your concerns. It's natural that you feel fear after such an experience. You have every right to	

	feel these emotions." (Building a safe relationship). **2. Use of the "Small Steps" technique:** "We don't have to send out 100 resumes right away. Let's check out **one** company that **I've audited** in terms of work culture and that has clear anti-mobbing procedures. I suggest we just prepare a resume and cover letter. This is supposed to be **a safe step**."	
Key technique (contrast and safety)	The mediator uses **the results of their own audit** (Module 2) as proof that not all workplaces are the same and as a tool to build client trust.	

8. Tools, prevention, and long-term support

1. Building a legal shield and professional diligence
    Objective: To protect the legal and reputational interests of the intermediary and to ensure continuity and transparency of support for the client (job seeker).

Employment agencies operate in a sphere where relationships and promises can be fragile. Proper documentation is proof of professional diligence, which is crucial in the event of potential disputes or claims. Training the participants will make them aware of the need to keep business notes on key findings:

a. **Notes from conversations with the client (job seeker):**

    o   Risk assessments: note whether the client reported experiences of bullying or other difficulties (trauma, fear of technology) that require special attention.

    o   Findings regarding expectations: record the client's acceptance of a specific job search strategy and types of work environments to avoid.

    o   Issuing materials: note that the Information Brochure (Project Result) and other educational materials have been provided to the client (this is evidence of active support and prevention).

b. **Notes from conversations with the Employer (internal audit):**

    o   Audit questions and answers: strictly note the questions asked as part of the Intermediary's checklist (e.g. about anti-mobbing procedures, remote work rules, how effectiveness is measured) and the answers obtained.

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- Turnover indicators: recording the results of your own research on employment stability in the company.

2. Crisis intervention. The role of notes in the event of a customer complaint

Scenario: The client returns after a trial period and says: *"You placed me in a company that bullies, despite my warnings!"*

Audit notes are the first line of defense and proof that the intermediary acted in good faith, not relying solely on general declarations, but actively verifying work standards. The intermediary can then demonstrate:

- Proof of due diligence: *"My notes show that at the meeting on [date], [Employer Name] declared that there are formal anti-mobbing procedures in place and that overtime is not expected. We need to verify this, as it contradicts the statements on the basis of which I placed you there."*

- Legal support: The documentation allows for a quick analysis of whether the client's current situation violates the conditions promised by the employer, which makes it easier to decide on further intervention (e.g. informing HR or indicating legal recourse).

9. Presentation of the Information Brochure

1. Presentation of the Information Brochure (one of the project's outcomes) as a key, ready-to-use tool for intermediaries, which supports both the client and serves an educational function in relations with employers.

The participants in the training will be familiarized in detail with the structure of the Brochure, with particular emphasis on its practical application in the work of an intermediary:

a. **Checklist: how to identify remote mobbing?**

This section allows the client to verify their experiences (whether it is just a sharp conflict or mobbing). For the intermediary, it is **a diagnostic tool** that helps the client name the problem based on criteria (consistency, asymmetry of power, negative effects).

b. **Legal aspects (Poland and Bulgaria):**

It contains a summary overview of regulations and formal procedures in both countries (Labor Code, PADA, role of PIP/GLI/CPAD). It is **a guide to action** that indicates where and how to seek legal assistance and what evidence to collect.

c. **Psychological aspects and coping strategies:**

It offers advice on managing stress and anxiety, as well as assertive communication techniques (e.g. *how to set boundaries in remote communication*). This section is crucial for **empowering clients** who need to regain a sense of agency.

2. **The key role of the Brochure for the Mediator:**

The mediator should treat the Brochure not only as material for the client, but as a professional communication resource, that increases their credibility and effectiveness in negotiations:

- **For the client (handing over the brochure as real support):**

  o Handing over the Brochure reinforces the knowledge gained during counseling and helps the client in further self-analysis.

  o The client receives a specific guide that reduces feelings of loneliness and helplessness, which is particularly important for victims of mobbing. The intermediary acts in an ethical and comprehensive manner.

- **For the employer (use as an educational tool and a pretext for conversation):**

  o The brochure becomes a neutral pretext for a conversation about anti-mobbing standards, without the need to accuse the employer. It is a *prevention* tool in business relations.

  o The mediator can use the following wording: *"As part of our cooperation, I would like to leave you with materials on good practices in remote work, developed as part of a European project. They contain up-to-date checklists that help create a healthy work environment. I believe that this is in line with your high standards."*

  o Through the provision of this material, the intermediary subtly reminds the employer of their obligations (e.g. the legal obligation to prevent mobbing), while strengthening their image as a partner who cares about ethics and safety at work.

10. Help Paths (PL and BG) – What to do if the placement is unsuccessful?

Making employment agencies aware of their role as **"guides"** to the legal and psychological support system and equipping them with **verified knowledge** about the institutions available in Poland and Bulgaria.

The role of the intermediary as a "guide" to the system:

An employment agency is not a lawyer or psychologist and should not provide advice in these areas. Its role is to validate the client's experience and indicate proven, formal courses of action. Participants should understand that their intervention is crucial in the first moment of crisis, as it often prevents the problem from escalating or the client from giving up work altogether.

   a.   Support paths in Poland

In Poland, the legal definition of mobbing is contained in the Labor Code, which sets out the main courses of action:

Path	Institution/Organization	Role and powers
1. Administrative (Control)	**National Labor Inspectorate (PIP)**	The fastest and free path. PIP may conduct **an inspection** at a company based on an anonymous (at the client's request) or open complaint. It verifies whether the employer has implemented anti-mobbing procedures (which is their obligation) and whether they comply with health and safety regulations (including psychosocial risks). PIP does not rule on mobbing, but its reports can be valuable evidence in court.
2. Judicial (Formal)	**Labor Court**	**The only institution that can rule on mobbing** and award the client (employee): **1.** Monetary compensation for health impairment and **2.** Compensation (if the employment contract was terminated due to mobbing). The client must prove that mobbing had occurred (which is why documentation is crucial).
3. Support (Mental health)	**Psychiatrists / Psychologists / NGOs**	Mobbing causes symptoms of anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic disorders. The mediator should recommend that the client **seeks urgent professional help** (a psychologist for therapy, a psychiatrist for possible sick leave or pharmacotherapy) and refer them to local NGOs or support groups (often free of charge) specializing in

		helping people who have experienced workplace trauma.

b. Support pathways in Bulgaria

Bulgarian labor law does not contain a single, comprehensive definition of mobbing, which complicates the procedure. Protection is based on the provisions of the Labor Code (protection of dignity) and the Protection Against Discrimination Act.

Step	Institution/Organization	Role and powers
1. Internal	Internal HR/Body (if any)	It is recommended that the customer first file an internal complaint (if the company has procedures in place). This precautionary step creates a formal record.
2. Regulatory (Inspection)	General Labor Inspectorate (GLI)	Equivalent to the National Labor Inspectorate. Deals with general violations of the Labor Code, including violations of the employer's obligation to protect the dignity of the employee (Art. 127 sec. 2 of the Labor Code).
3. Anti-discrimination	Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPAD)	A key institution if harassment is based on discrimination (e.g. gender, race, age, orientation). The CPAD has the power to issue mandatory orders to employers, impose penalties, and rule that a violation has occurred.
4. Judicial	Court	The final avenue for pursuing claims, in particular compensation for non-material (moral) damage resulting from a violation of dignity or discrimination.
5. NGOs	Animus Association / BCNL (Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law)	NGOs offering free legal and psychological advice and shelter for victims of violence/harassment. These organizations often provide the most

		immediate and comprehensive support in the initial phase of a crisis.

Key tip for the mediator: Regardless of the country, the mediator should always emphasize to the client **the need to collect evidence** (emails, screenshots, dates, witnesses) before leaving the workplace.

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).

11. Summary and evaluation

Closing session. The intermediary as an active promoter of healthy workplaces (discussion)

Objective: To consolidate the role of the employment intermediary as a key figure in creating ethical standards in the market and to transition from the role of "CV provider" to "strategic partner for sustainable employment."

Key questions for discussion:

- Paradigm shift: what specific, everyday activities (apart from auditing) distinguish an intermediary who is only *a CV supplier* from one who is a promoter of healthy workplaces?

  - Proactively rejecting offers that do not meet remote working standards, educating employers about the "right to be offline," and using *value-based* language (respect, transparency, trust) instead of *transaction-based* language (price, time, quantity).

- Impact on reputation. How can active advocacy for ethical work standards enhance the reputation of your agency/institution in the eyes of both the best candidates (clients) and the most responsible employers?

  o An intermediary who filters out toxic offers attracts the best candidates and becomes a reliable partner for companies with an ethical culture.

  o Ethical challenges: how to deal with economic pressure that forces you to place clients in companies that you have diagnosed as having "red flags"?

  o Discussion on setting your own boundaries and the long-term costs of placing a client who has experienced trauma in a dangerous environment (e.g. high turnover, the need to re-recruit).

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

1. The facilitator summarizes the key objectives and conclusions from all training modules and thanks participants for their active participation and engagement.

2. Opening of the discussion panel (Q&A), exchange of insights after the training. 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:

   o Post-training knowledge survey (post-test).

   o Evaluation survey. To gather opinions on the substantive and organizational quality of the workshop.
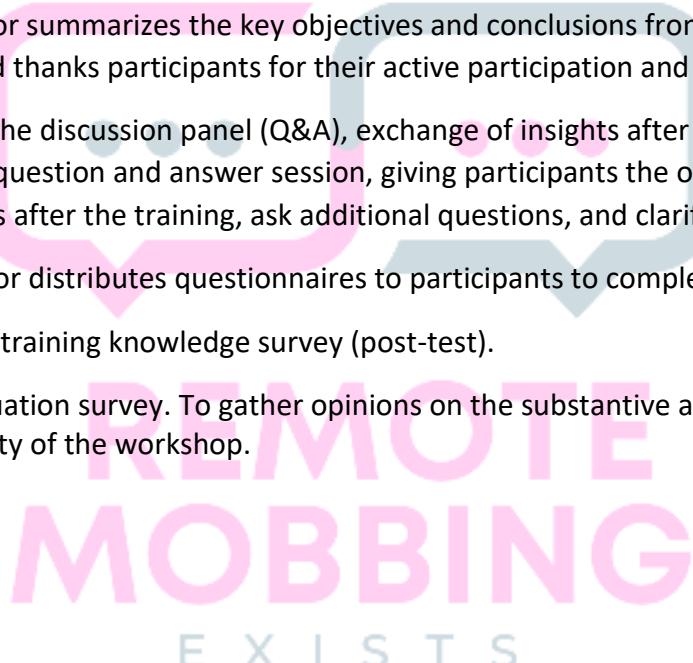
Appendix No. 1

PRE-TEST

Workshop title: "Remote mobbing exists! The role of an employment agency in auditing employers and safely introducing clients to the market."

PART A: Self-assessment of competencies

(Please rate your current level of confidence in a given area, where 1 = I do not feel confident at all, 5 = I feel very confident):

No.	Area of competence	Rating (1-5)
1.	I can define remote bullying (cyberbullying) and distinguish it from acute conflict.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
2.	I recognize subtle warning signs in a client (e.g. fear of technology, low self-esteem) who may have experienced bullying.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
3.	I can conduct **an active** employer **audit** in conversation with HR to check for the risk of a toxic remote work culture.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
4.	I know how to prepare a client who has been bullied to respond neutrally and assertively to the question "Why are you leaving your previous job?".	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
5.	I know institutions (in Poland and/or Bulgaria) to which I can refer a client in the event of legal claims related to mobbing.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)

PART B: Knowledge test (TRUE / FALSE)

(Please select one answer: TRUE or FALSE):

No.	Question	TRUE	FALSE
1.	In the Polish Labor Code, the legal definition of mobbing requires that the harassment continuous **for at least 6 months**.		
2.	High turnover in a department or a specific position is **a red flag** for an intermediary and an indicator of potential problems in the organizational culture.		

3.	The recruiter's question to the employer: "How do you measure the effectiveness of a remote employee?" is intended to examine the risk of **micromanagement** and lack of trust.		
4.	After experiencing mobbing, the client should describe the unethical behavior of their previous boss in detail during the interview in order to build trust with the recruiter.		
5.	In cases of suspected discrimination in the workplace (e.g. on the basis of gender), the main support institution in Bulgaria is the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (**CPAD**).		
6.	If a remote company declares that it "has no formal procedures, only a good atmosphere," this is a signal to the recruiter that there is **an increased risk** of chaos in communication.		

REMOTE
MOBBING
E X I S T S

Appendix No. 2

FINAL SURVEY (POST-TEST)

Workshop title: "Remote mobbing exists! The role of the employment agency in auditing employers and safely introducing clients to the market."

PART A: Competence Self-Assessment (after training)

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

No.	Area of competence	Rating (1-5)
1.	I can define remote bullying (cyberbullying) and distinguish it from acute conflict.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
2.	I recognize subtle warning signs in a client (e.g. fear of technology, low self-esteem) who may have experienced bullying.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
3.	I can conduct **an active** employer **audit** in conversation with HR to check for the risk of a toxic remote work culture.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
4.	I know how to prepare a client who has been bullied to respond neutrally and assertively to the question "Why are you leaving your previous job?".	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
5.	I know institutions (in Poland and/or Bulgaria) to which I can refer a client in the event of legal claims related to mobbing.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)

PART B: Knowledge test (TRUE / FALSE)

(Please select one answer: TRUE or FALSE):

No.	Question	TRUE	FALSE
1.	In the Polish Labor Code, the legal definition of mobbing requires that the harassment continuous **for at least 6 months**.		
2.	High turnover in a department or a specific position is **a red flag** for an intermediary and an indicator of potential problems in the organizational culture.		

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3.	The recruiter's question to the employer: "How do you measure the effectiveness of a remote employee?" is intended to examine the risk of **micromanagement** and lack of trust.		
4.	A client who has been bullied should describe the unethical behavior of their previous boss in detail during the interview in order to build trust with the recruiter.		
5.	In cases of suspected discrimination in the workplace (e.g., on the basis of gender), the main support institution in Bulgaria is the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (**CPAD**).		
6.	If a remote company declares that it "has no formal procedures, just a good atmosphere," this is a signal to the recruiter that there is **an increased risk** of chaos in communication.		

PART C: Open questions and evaluation

1. What was the most valuable element of this training for you that will directly affect your work? (Please describe one specific thing).

_____

2. Please provide one example of a neutral and assertive sentence that you would advise your client to use in response to a question about the reason for leaving their last job after experiencing mobbing.

_____

3. Please rate the usefulness of the workshop (where 1 = Very poor, 5 = Very good):

   o   Substance and content of the program: (1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)

   o   Usefulness of simulations (role-playing): (1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)

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Appendix No. 3

EVALUATION SURVEY (AFTER TRAINING)

Workshop title: "Remote mobbing exists! The role of employment agencies in auditing employers and safely introducing clients to the market."

Instructions: Please complete the survey after the training. Its purpose is to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of the program.

PART A: Increase in knowledge and competence (Post-Test)

*(Please rate your **level of confidence** after the training in a given area, where 1 = I do not feel confident at all, 5 = I feel very confident):*

No.	Area of competence	Rating (1-5)
1.	I recognize subtle warning signs in clients (e.g. fear of technology, somatic symptoms) who may have experienced bullying.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
2.	I am able to conduct **an active** employer **audit** in a conversation with HR, using questions about remote work standards and anti-bullying procedures.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
3.	I know how to assertively defend the client in a conversation with the employer (e.g. by negotiating work boundaries, including after-hours availability).	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
4.	I understand why it is important to keep **detailed records** (notes) of employer audits and client conversations.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
5.	I am familiar with the available sources of assistance (legal and psychological) and am able to refer clients to them in the event of unsuccessful employment.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)

PART B: Training Quality Assessment

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

Aspect	Rating (1-5)
Overall assessment of the training	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
Content: The content was useful and relevant to my professional needs.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)

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Workshop part: Simulations (role-playing) helped me practice my skills.	(1) - (2) - (3) (4) - (5)
Trainer: The trainer was competent, engaging, and communicated knowledge clearly.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
Materials: The Information Brochure and Intermediary Checklist are useful in practice.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)
Organization: The timing and pace of the training were appropriate.	(1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5)