Workshop outline for recruitment and HR specialists

"The recruiter as a guardian: How not to become a mobber and how to build safe remote recruitment processes."

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Target group: Recruiters (in-house and agency), HR specialists, hiring managers involved in recruitment.

Main objective of the workshop:

To raise recruiters' awareness of cyberbullying and discrimination in the remote recruitment process and to equip them with tools to conduct ethical, legally compliant (PL/BG) recruitment processes.

Specific objectives:

After completing the training, participants will:

- Define cyberbullying in recruitment, be able to recognize bullying behaviors specific to online processes, such as deliberate digital isolation (ghosting), public humiliation during online assessment centers, or cyberstalking of candidates.

- Be familiar with the legal framework (PL and BG), understand the difference between selection and discrimination in the light of regulations (Labor Code, PADA Act in Bulgaria), and know what questions are not allowed to be asked during remote interviews (e.g. about private life visible in the background of the camera).

- Identify with the role of "a guardian," is able to notice and assertively respond to toxic behavior of hiring managers (management) towards candidates or remote employees.

- Avoid unconscious mistakes. Is aware that certain "standard" practices (e.g. assigning tasks "for yesterday", on weekends, mocking a candidate's home conditions) may be legally considered harassment or a violation of dignity.

- Support organizational culture. Knows how to implement onboarding procedures that protect new remote employees from exclusion and isolation from their first day on the job.

Methods:

- Interactive lectures, presentation of legal definitions and psychological mechanisms of cyberbullying.

- Case studies. Analysis of real situations from recruitment processes (e.g. "Difficult Hiring Manager," "Candidate ridiculed in a video conference").

- Role-playing, playing the roles of Recruiter-Candidate and Recruiter-Manager, aimed at practicing assertive responses to attempts at discrimination.

- Self-diagnosis (checklist). Working with a checklist of recruiter behaviors to identify one's own risky habits.

- Group discussions. Exchange of experiences on the boundaries between stress resistance testing and mobbing.

Training materials:

- Multimedia presentations containing statistics on the scale of the phenomenon in Poland and Bulgaria, as well as legal definitions.

- Information brochure, a compendium of knowledge about cyberbullying, paths to help, and good practices.

- Worksheets, sets of exercises for case studies, and forms for simulating conversations.

- Recruiter's checklist. A tool for auditing your own recruitment processes in terms of legal and image risks.

Results:

- **Increased awareness.** Participants will understand that recruiters can unknowingly become perpetrators of bullying (e.g. through improper management of the online process) and will be able to prevent it.

- **Professionalization of the recruitment process.** Implementation of standards that protect the dignity of the candidate (e.g. transparency in the use of online tools, respect for the "right to be offline" in communication with the candidate).

- **Increased legal competence.** Knowledge of anti-discrimination laws in Poland and Bulgaria will allow recruiters to avoid risky questions and behaviors, protecting the company from lawsuits.

- **Better selection.** The ability to identify candidates or managers who exhibit mobbing tendencies, which will protect teams from the introduction of toxic individuals.

- **Ready-made tools.** Participants will receive specific procedures and interview scripts (included in the brochure and materials) that they can immediately apply in their work.

Duration: 6 teaching hours.

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Workshop schedule

1. Introduction (15 min)

Building an atmosphere of safety and trust (key when discussing mobbing), aligning participants' expectations, and diagnosing their initial level of knowledge.

At the beginning, the most important principle will be presented. The principle of confidentiality (particularly important when discussing the organization's own mistakes).

A. Welcome and project context

The trainer welcomes the participants, introduces themselves, and briefly discusses their experience in the context of HR/work psychology. They also point out that the training is part of a broader international project (Erasmus+) aimed at combating exclusion and cyberbullying. They explain that the goal is not only to learn legal definitions, but above all to understand the role of the recruiter as a "gatekeeper" who can prevent a bully from entering the company or protect a candidate from a toxic manager.

B. Contract and work rules

Jointly establish the rules for the training. The instructor writes them down on a flipchart.

Key points to consider:

1. **Confidentiality and anonymity.** This is the most important rule. Participants can share examples from their companies ("My hiring manager did..."), but without giving names or company names. The "Las Vegas" rule, i.e. what happens in the room stays in the room.

2. **Respect and non-judgment.** We do not judge each other for past mistakes. The goal is to learn, not to stigmatize.

3. **Turn off phones/focus.** A request to be "here and now," especially important when discussing subtle signs of cyberbullying.

4. **Openness.** Encouraging difficult questions.

C. Preliminary survey (pre-test)

Distribute a short survey to participants (paper version or link to an online form).
The aim is to assess the participants' level of knowledge before the training so that we can measure the effectiveness of the workshop.

D. Icebreaker: "Recruitment sins"

Breaking the ice, integrating the group, and smoothly transitioning to the topic of mobbing by identifying toxic behaviors that participants know from personal experience.

- **Course of the exercise:**

  1. The instructor asks participants to recall one situation from their professional life (their own or observed in other recruiters/managers) that was a "sin" against a candidate.

  2. **Round:** Each participant briefly (in one sentence) describes this behavior.

  3. The trainer writes the keywords on a flipchart (e.g. "lack of feedback," "asking about pregnancy," "being late for a meeting," "ridiculing a resume").

Trainer's summary (bridge to the substantive part).

E.g. The trainer points to the flipchart and says: "Look at this list. Many of these behaviors, such as lack of feedback (ghosting) or inappropriate comments, are not just 'slip-ups'. In the light of the law and psychology, if they are repetitive or violate dignity, they can constitute elements of cyberbullying. Today we will learn how to avoid these 'sins'."

Tips for the trainer!

If the group is passive, have your own examples of "sins" ready (e.g. ghosting a candidate after stage 3 of the recruitment process, a form of digital isolation).

Make sure that participants do not confuse "recruitment stress" with mobbing – this will be the subject of a later module, but it is worth pointing out now.

2. The dark side of remote recruitment. Definitions and scale (45 min)

Module objective: To make participants aware that the specific dynamics of recruitment (power vs. dependence) combined with digital tools create an ideal environment for abuse, which often goes unnoticed or is downplayed as an "industry standard."

A. Extreme power asymmetry, the mechanism of abuse.

Tips for the trainer: Start by drawing a scale on a flipchart. On one side, write "Recruiter/Company" (resources, decision-making power, tools), and on the other, "Candidate" (lack of knowledge, fear of evaluation, need to earn money).

Substantive comment: "Recruitment is not a meeting between two equal business partners, even though we often talk about it that way. It is a power relationship. The candidate is in a 'begging' position and is subject to constant evaluation. This extreme asymmetry of power makes candidates afraid to report unethical behavior for fear of losing their chance of employment. In a remote environment, this asymmetry is exacerbated, as the recruiter has control over the technology (who speaks, who is visible, who is muted), which gives them a sense of impunity and anonymity. The online candidate is a 'guest' in the employer's system, which makes them vulnerable to manipulation."

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B. Definition of cyberbullying in recruitment

Cyberbullying in recruitment is not just open insults. It is any repetitive, deliberate action using digital tools that aims to humiliate, intimidate, or isolate a candidate, violating their dignity.

Key distinction - a distinction must be made between a one-off discourtesy (lack of manners) and continuous harassment (mobbing), although in the recruitment process this line is thin due to the short duration of interaction.

C. Catalog of toxic behaviors, detailed analysis.

Move on to discussing specific forms of cyberbullying that participants may not have thought of in terms of violence.

1. Ghosting (digital isolation and disregard)

Description of the phenomenon: This is not simply "forgetting" to send an email. It is deliberately keeping the candidate in limbo (a virtual loop), especially after involving them in a multi-stage process (tasks, tests).

Why is it cyberbullying? It is a form of digital isolation. Systematically ignoring attempts to contact the candidate, while being "online" on LinkedIn, is a demonstration of disregard and a violation of human dignity (enshrined in the Labor Code).

Example: The candidate completed an 8-hour recruitment task. For 3 weeks, the recruiter does not respond to emails, and then posts on LinkedIn about "respect in business."

2. Violation of privacy (cyberstalking and "home test")

Description of the phenomenon: Using technology to surveil a candidate's private life.

Forms:

- background checks, commenting on the appearance of the apartment visible on the webcam, mocking the home environment or the presence of household members.

- Social media surveillance, judging the candidate based on private vacation photos on Facebook/Instagram (unrelated to professional profiles), which can lead to discrimination.

- Requesting the installation of software, forcing the installation of invasive software that monitors the screen/eye movements during online tests without full transparency.

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3. Public humiliation and exclusion (Online Assessment Center)

Description of the phenomenon: Using online group dynamics to demonstrate power.

Forms:

- Mute & Humiliate, criticizing a candidate in a group forum while their microphone is muted by the moderator or other participants have their cameras turned off - this creates a feeling of being cornered.

- Digital Isolation in the group, deliberately not sending a link to the meeting to one candidate or "freezing" them in the virtual waiting room while others are already being processed.

- Interrupting and belittling, persistently interrupting the candidate during a video call, belittling their experience with tone or facial expressions, generating fear and intimidation.

D. Summary of the module

Reflection (question to the group), e.g. "Which of these behaviors occurs most often in our industry and is 'normalized'?"

Trainer's conclusion, e.g. "Technology facilitates the process, but removes ethical barriers. What would seem like a gross faux pas in real life (e.g. leaving the room without a word – the equivalent of hanging up/ghosting) comes easily in the virtual world. The task of a professional recruiter is to impose "self-censorship" and ensure transparency."

3. Law in recruitment, or where does selection end and discrimination begin? (Duration: 45 minutes)

Module objective: To equip recruiters with the knowledge necessary to distinguish between permissible questions (related to competencies) and prohibited questions (violating personal rights or discriminatory), with particular emphasis on the specifics of Polish and Bulgarian law.

A. Poland: Labor Code and "List of Prohibited Questions"

Legal basis: Art. 18 (prohibition of discrimination) and Art. 22 the Labor Code (list of data that may be requested).

The recruiter has the right to ask about qualifications, experience, and education. Questions beyond this list are risky. In Poland, "family plans" are a particularly sensitive area.

- Case study: "innocent questions" about children.

  - *Recruiter's question:* "I see you have two small children. How will you arrange childcare in case of illness?"

  - This is a question that discriminates on the basis of gender and parenthood. It suggests that the candidate will be less available than a man.

  - *Consequences (what are the risks?).* A candidate who has been refused employment for this reason may sue the prospective employer for compensation (not less than the minimum wage), and the company risks a crisis of image.

B. Bulgaria, two pillars of candidate protection.

Tip for the trainer: explain to participants that Bulgarian law is very restrictive in certain aspects and is based on two key acts.

1. Protection Against Discrimination Act (PADA):

This is a key piece of legislation. Asking questions about protected characteristics (age, gender, marital status, disability) during the recruitment process may constitute direct or indirect discrimination.

Online recruitment is also subject to these regulations – technology does not exempt you from complying with the law.

2. Protection of Dignity (Art. 127(2) of the Labor Code):

The employer is obliged to protect the dignity of the employee (and the candidate in the recruitment process).

In remote recruitment, this means prohibiting humiliating behavior, such as mocking a candidate's appearance on camera or their home environment.

C. Case Study: "stress test" or aggression?

Description of the situation: During an online interview, the recruiter notices a mess and a child running around in the background. He begins to comment loudly: "I see you have a 'home nursery'. In our company, we value professionalism, and this office does not look very serious." The candidate feels ridiculed and discouraged.

Group discussion: Is this an acceptable stress test?

Legal analysis (conclusions to be communicated by the trainer):

- This is not a test. Such behavior is a violation of personal dignity. In Bulgaria, this constitutes a violation of Art. 127 of the Labor Code (obligation to protect dignity).

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- Signs of discrimination, comments about family life (child in the background) may be considered harassment/bullying within the meaning of the PADA Act if they refer to protected characteristics (parenthood).

- Conclusion: using video calls to assess a candidate's private life (their home, family) is illegal and unethical.

D. Exercise: "Green and Red Light"

Objective: Quick verification of question-formulation skills.

Procedure: The trainer reads the question, participants raise a card
(Green – Legal / Red – Illegal/Risky).

Sample questions:

1. *"Are you ready for frequent business trips?"*
   -> Green (Concerns availability).

2. *"Are you planning to get pregnant in the next year?"*
   -> Red (Discrimination based on gender/family plans).

3. *"How old are you? I'm asking because we have a young team."*
   -> Red (Age discrimination – PADA/KP).

4. *"Do you have the right conditions at home to work in silence?"*
   -> Green (acceptable for remote work, but must be asked tactfully, without invading privacy).

Tip for the trainer! Emphasize that in remote recruitment, the recruiter "enters" the candidate's home through the camera. This imposes a double responsibility on them to respect privacy boundaries. Making fun of what can be seen in the background is a violation of this boundary.

4. Workshop: "Am I a toxic recruiter?" – Self-diagnosis (60 min)

Module objective: Critical analysis of participants' own working methods and defining the boundary between a demanding recruitment process and behavior that constitutes mobbing or discrimination.

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A. Introduction to the exercise

We often think of mobbing as shouting or overt harassment. However, in recruitment, mobbing often takes on the guise of "professionalism." We call it "stress testing" or "verifying commitment." In reality, many of these 'standard' methods are forms of violence , which are becoming more prevalent in a remote environment. Today, we will stand in front of the mirror. Your task is not to judge each other, but to honestly evaluate the behaviors we encounter in the market.

B. Group work

The trainer divides the participants into teams of 3-4 people. Each team receives a set of cards with descriptions of situations (based on the table from the outline).

Task: Participants must assign each situation to one of three categories:

1. Professional (acceptable behavior, in line with best practices).

2. Risky (balanced on the edge, depends on the context, not recommended).

3. Mobbing/Discrimination (violation of law, ethics, dignity).

C. Case analysis and moderated discussion

The trainer discusses each case with the group, asking them to justify their choice. Below is a "cheat sheet" for the trainer with legal and psychological arguments.

Situation 1: Comments about appearance/background

"Oh, I see you just got out of bed" / "But you have a mess in the background."

Correct classification: mobbing / violation of dignity.
Comment for the trainer:

- o In a remote environment, publicly mocking a candidate's appearance, background (e.g. "unprofessional home office," mess) or household members is a form of humiliation.

- o Such behavior violates the dignity of the person (Art. 127 of the Labor Code in Bulgaria, Art. 11^1 of the Labor Code in Poland) and has no connection with the assessment of professional competence.

- o Conclusion: The recruiter has no right to evaluate the candidate's private space, which they have "entered" through the camera.

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Situation 2: Weekend assignment ("due yesterday")

"Please prepare a marketing strategy for Monday morning. I know it's Friday at 6 p.m., but we are looking for dynamic people."

Correct classification: risky/mobbing.
Comment for the trainer:

- o Forcing people to work on weekends and sending tasks at unusual times is a form of harassment outside of working hours.

- o It violates the "right to disconnect."

- o In recruitment, this is testing for submissiveness and lack of assertiveness, not competence. Setting unrealistic deadlines that are not described in the job posting can be perceived as humiliating or deliberately making the task more difficult.

Situation 3: Deliberate interruption and pressure

"Interrupting the candidate mid-sentence, questioning their words, smirking ironically – to see how they cope with stress."

Correct classification: Risky (if incidental) / Bullying (if systematic).
Comment for the trainer:

- o Persistent interrupting, humiliating, or belittling a candidate during a video interview (even under the guise of a "test") qualifies as psychological harassment.

- o If such behavior causes fear and intimidation, and the candidate has not consented to a "stress interview," it is a violation of dignity.

Situation 4: Recording without consent

"The recruiter turns on the recording of the meeting on Teams/Zoom without informing the candidate in order to show it to the manager."

Correct classification: Violation of the law / Cyberbullying.
Comment for the trainer:

- o This is a violation of privacy and data protection regulations (GDPR).

- o Recording, evaluating, and showing the recording to third parties in the company without the candidate's explicit consent and knowledge is a form of digital abuse.

o The candidate has the right to know that they are being recorded and who will have access to the recording.

Situation 5: Questions about childcare

"The job is remote, and I can hear a child. Who will take care of them while you are working?"

Correct classification: Discrimination.
Comment for the trainer:

o Asking questions about protected characteristics (such as marital status, parental status) instead of focusing on qualifications is considered discrimination (e.g. under Bulgarian PADA law).

o This question suggests that a parent (often a woman) will be a worse employee, which is a violation of equal treatment principles.

Group work, behavior analysis. Participants receive a list of behaviors and must classify them as: *Professional / Risky / Bullying / Discrimination*.

Behavior	Classification and justification
"Commenting on the candidate's appearance on camera (e.g. 'Oh, I see you just got straight out of bed')."	**Harassment/Violation of dignity.** Humiliation, unrelated to competence.
"Assigning a recruitment task for the weekend with a deadline 'for yesterday'."	**Risky/Mobbing.** Violation of the right to be offline, testing submissiveness rather than competence.
"Deliberately interrupting the candidate mid-sentence to test their assertiveness."	**Risky.** If persistent – mobbing. Using stress techniques without consent and justification.
"Recording a conversation without the candidate's explicit consent."	**Violation of the law/cyberbullying.** Violation of GDPR and privacy.
"Asking questions about childcare in the context of remote work."	**Discrimination (PADA/KP).** Asking about protected characteristics (gender, parenthood).

D. Summary and "examination of conscience"

Each participant is given a moment for quiet reflection.

Question to the group: "Which of these behaviors have we justified in the past as 'necessary for business'?"

Trainer's conclusion, e.g. "Remember that the recruiter is the face of the company. If a candidate experiences harassment at the recruitment stage (e.g. through unrealistic deadlines or discriminatory questions), they will consider the entire organizational culture of the company to be toxic. Your job is to be a filter that stops these practices, not a tool that applies them."

5. The recruiter as a guardian "Hiring Manager Management" (45 min)

Module objective: To equip recruiters with the skills to identify toxic attitudes among management (hiring managers) and with tools for assertive intervention that protect the company from legal and reputational risks.

A. Introduction - The recruiter as a "gatekeeper"

We often think that the recruiter's role ends with delivering a candidate. In reality, you are "gatekeepers." You have a dual responsibility, i.e.:

1. Protecting the company – you cannot let a candidate who is a bully and will destroy the team into the organization.

2. Protecting the candidate – you cannot 'let in' a good candidate into a toxic team (managed by a bully), because it will result in the employee leaving quickly (turnover), financial loss, and a potential lawsuit. Today, we will focus on the second aspect, how to manage a difficult hiring manager.

B. Red Flags, Manager-Bully Profile

The facilitator asks the group to list the behaviors of managers that raise a "red flag" for them during a recruitment briefing.

Discussion of key signals (based on sources):

1. **Expecting 24/7 availability (boundary violation)**:

Signal: the manager says: "This is a dynamic startup, I'm looking for someone with no private life," "They have to reply on Slack in the evenings."

Analysis: this is a sure way to lead to harassment outside of working hours. In the eyes of the law (especially in Bulgaria and under new remote work regulations), this violates the "right to be offline."

Conclusion: such a manager is not looking for commitment, but submissiveness.

2.   **Obsession with control (Bossware):**

Signal: questions such as: "Can IT install a program that takes screenshots every 5 minutes?" or "How can I check if he is working at home and not cooking dinner?"

Analysis: Excessive digital control (monitoring every click) is a form of cyberbullying used to intimidate, not to measure results.

Conclusion: A lack of trust from the outset is the foundation of a toxic relationship.

3.   **Depreciating predecessors:**

Signal: "The previous employee was an idiot," "No one on this team can work."

Analysis: Publicly criticizing and humiliating employees is a classic precursor to bullying. If a manager says this about a former employee to a recruiter, they will say the same about a new employee to the team.

C. Assertive intervention techniques, or how to say "STOP"?

Recruiters are often afraid to oppose a manager who is higher in the hierarchy. The key is to change the narrative: we don't say "no, because no," but "no, because it's a risk to your business."

Scenario analysis (ready-made scripts):

Situation 1: Parental discrimination

Context: A manager rejects an excellent candidate after an online interview: "She has a small child, I saw it in the background. She'll be heard, she'll take time off. She's out."

Recruiter's mistake: Silent acceptance ("Okay, let's keep looking").

Legal intervention (PADA/KP): rejecting a candidate because of their family situation is direct discrimination. In Bulgaria, this violates the PADA law (protection based on gender/personal status), and in Poland, it violates the Labor Code.

o   *Assertive script:*

"I understand that availability is important to you (validation of the goal). However, rejecting a candidate because she has a child is illegal (PADA/KP) and exposes our company to a lawsuit for damages. What's more, she performed best during the technical interview. Can we afford to lose the best candidate in terms of expertise because of a risk that we can manage differently (e.g. by setting quiet hours)?"

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Situation 2: Surveillance request (Bossware)

Context: The manager wants to include a requirement to install mouse tracking software in the job ad or interview.

Image Intervention: The use of such software signals a toxic culture of micromanagement, which will scare away talent.

- o *Assertive script:*

"As your HR partner, I must warn you. Introducing such controls is perceived in the market as a form of digital pressure and may be classified as harassment. The best candidates will withdraw from the process when they see such a lack of trust. I suggest that instead of screen time, we measure specific results (KPIs) and completed projects. It's safer legally and more effective for business."

Situation 3: "I'm looking for someone 24/7"

Context: The manager is pushing to recruit someone who will work weekends without additional pay/time off in lieu.

Health and safety/wellbeing intervention: Violation of working time standards and the right to rest.

- o *Assertive script:*

"Clearly stating such requirements is evidence of planning to violate employee rights (the right to be offline). If we hire such a person, in 3 months we will have a vacancy due to burnout or a case in the Labor Court. Let's recruit someone who manages their time effectively during working hours, not someone who is available non-stop."

6. Simulations - difficult recruitment interviews (60 min)

Module objective: To practice responding to crisis situations in recruitment in a safe environment. Participants will experience firsthand the difference between pressure-based and partnership-based recruitment and learn to set boundaries with their superiors.

Facilitator: "Now we will move on to practice. We will divide into groups of three. Remember that this is a testing ground, you can make mistakes, because that's why we're here. It is important that you get into your roles 100%."

Scenario 1: "Stressful conversation"

Educational objective: to empirically prove that a stressor (aggressive recruiter) lowers the quality of the candidate's answers, which leads to wrong recruitment decisions.

Procedure:

1. Division of roles into groups of three: Recruiter, Candidate, Observer.

2. Part A (Pressure - 3 minutes): The recruiter behaves toxically.

3. Intervention: The trainer says loudly, "STOP! CHANGE MODE."

4. Part B (Support - 3 minutes): The same Recruiter immediately changes their style to a supportive one, continuing the conversation with the same Candidate.

Instructions for roles:

1. Role: Recruiter (aggressive)

Body language: lack of eye contact (looking at your phone or notes), sighing, drumming your fingers, stone face.

Communication: interrupt mid-sentence ("Get to the point, we don't have time"), ask questions in rapid succession ("Why did you leave? What did you do? What are your weaknesses? Quickly."), question competence ("Is that all you've achieved in 5 years?").

Task: make the candidate feel like they are being interrogated.

2. Role: Recruiter (Supportive - after the STOP command)

Body language: smile, open posture, nod your head to show understanding.

Communication: give them time to think ("Please take your time"), paraphrase ("I understand that was a challenge"), use open-ended questions.

Task: make the candidate feel heard and safe.

3. Role: Candidate

You are a specialist, but you care about the job. React naturally to the recruiter's behavior. In part A, try to answer the questions despite the stress. In part B, see if it is easier for you to collect your thoughts.

4. Role: Observer

Note the differences in the Candidate's behavior in parts A and B. Did they stutter or lose their train of thought in part A? Were their answers more substantive in part B?

Debriefing (discussion):

- Question for the Candidate: "How would you rate the quality of your answers in the first vs. the second part? In which part did you 'sell' more of your knowledge?"

- Question to the recruiter: "What information did you obtain by applying pressure? Did you learn anything about the candidate's competencies, or only about how people react to aggression?"

Scenario 2: "Intervention with the Manager"

Educational objective: Training in assertiveness towards a superior (Hiring Manager) in a situation of violation of the law and ethical standards.

Procedure: One-on-one conversation (Recruiter vs. Manager). The observer notes the arguments used by the Recruiter.

Instructions for roles:

1. Role: Hiring Manager (Toxic)

You are the head of sales/IT, and results are what matter to you. You believe that HR "invents problems."
Your goal: You want to ask a "forbidden" question because you have had bad experiences.

Issues to use:

- *About pregnancy:* "Listen, the last girl got pregnant after a month. We can't afford that. Ask her directly what her plans are, or at least if she already has children. I need to know."

- *About politics:* "I saw some weird flags on her Facebook. Ask her who she votes for because I don't want ideological conflicts in the team."

- *Resistance:* "I decide who I hire, not you."

2. Role: Recruiter (Guardian)

You have to block this question. You can't offend the Manager, but you have to be firm.
Your tactic: Use the "Legal Shield" and "Business Interest" arguments.

Task: Bring about a situation in which the Manager gives up on asking this question.

3. Role: Observer

Pay attention to whether the Recruiter apologized (mistake!) or set boundaries. Did they use legal arguments (Labor Code, PADA)?

Sample scripts for the recruiter (to be handed out as a "cheat sheet" during the exercise):

- *Soft (Educational) Variant:* "I understand your concerns about the continuity of the team's work (validation). However, asking about family plans is expressly prohibited

by the Labor Code. If we do so, the candidate may sue us for damages, and you and I will have to explain ourselves to the board. Instead of asking about pregnancy, let's ask about her availability and plans for development in the company."

- *Hard (protective) option:* "As a recruiter, I am responsible for the legality of this process. I cannot ask this question because it is discriminatory. If the candidate records this conversation (which is easy to do online), the company will lose its reputation, and we risk an inspection by the Labor Inspectorate. Let's focus on competencies—they deliver results, not political views."

Debriefing (discussion in a forum):

- Question to the manager: "What convinced you to let it go? Was it the argument about the law, money, or perhaps the recruiter's attitude?"

- Trainer's conclusion: Managers are often unfamiliar with the law. Your role is not to be nice, but to be a competent advisor. By protecting the candidate, you are actually protecting the manager from his own legal ignorance.

Summary of the simulation block:

- The trainer asks the participants: "What was more difficult: being nice to the candidate after being aggressive, or standing up to your boss?"

- Hand out "Intervention Cards" to participants (small cards with ready-made assertive phrases to keep in your wallet).

7. Prevention and onboarding, first days (30 min)

Module objective: To make participants aware that recruitment does not end when the contract is signed. Proper onboarding is a necessary tool that prevents employee isolation, one of the main mechanisms of mobbing.

A. Introduction: why is a "newbie" the perfect victim?

Example: "Congratulations, you have recruited a candidate. But it is now, in the first 3 months, that the risk of them becoming a victim of mobbing is greatest. Why?

1. Lack of a support network.
    The new employee has no allies and does not know who to trust.

2. Ignorance of the 'unwritten rules'.
    In the office, they would see who drinks coffee with whom. When working remotely, they cannot see the power dynamics, which can easily be used against them.

3. <u>Isolation.</u>
   If they are not actively included in groups, they will become a 'digital ghost'. Your task is to design onboarding that is not just 'drowning in paperwork' but 'building a safety net'.

B. Tool 1: The "Buddy" system, a mentor, not a boss

A "buddy" is a peer who does not evaluate the new employee but introduces them to the company culture.

Why does this protect against mobbing?

- It reduces social isolation (the main technique used by bullies).

- It gives the new employee a safe channel to ask "stupid questions" without fear of being judged or ridiculed.

- The buddy acts as an "early warning system" – if a new employee starts to be harassed, the buddy will be the first to know.

Task for the recruiter/HR: Include the appointment of a buddy as a mandatory item on the onboarding checklist before the first day of work.

C. Tool 2: Digital Roadmap, clear communication channels

In remote work, exclusion from the flow of information (e.g. not being invited to a regular meeting, not having access to a Slack/Teams channel) is a form of passive aggression and isolation.

<u>Solution (Technical Checklist):</u> HR must ensure that the new employee is added to all *formal and informal* groups (e.g. "casual channel," "online coffee") on their first day.

<u>Tip for the trainer:</u> "Remember that in the office, you can hear laughter coming from the kitchen. On Teams, if you're not on the #random channel, there's silence. It's that silence that creates a sense of exclusion."

D. Tool 3: Information brochure "vaccine" against mobbing.

The trainer shows the participants the Information Brochure (Project Result).

Use in onboarding (welcome pack).
The brochure should not be just another PDF on the intranet. It should be handed out (digitally or physically) as a welcome gift with a clear message:

"In our company, we care about high standards. Here is a guide that tells you how we care about relationships and where to find support if you feel uncomfortable. This is our 'safety constitution'."

Psychological value:

- o For the employee: The signal "I am in a safe place, the company knows what bullying is and counteracts it."

- o For a potential mobber: A warning signal: "The company educates its employees, so my actions will be quickly recognized."

Discussion of the contents of the New Employee Brochure:

- o Definitions (how conflict differs from mobbing).

- o Channels for reporting irregularities (internal and external).

- o Advice on digital hygiene and the right to be offline.

Closing question: "Does onboarding at your companies include training on how *not* to be bullied, or just how to fill out Excel spreadsheets?"

Conclusion: Safe onboarding is an investment. Employees who feel safe from day one become effective more quickly and become loyal ambassadors for the company.

8. Summary and Evaluation (30 min)

Module objective: To consolidate the knowledge acquired, equip participants with tools for immediate use (checklist), and formally assess the increase in competence (project requirement).

A. Summary of content and checklist

Sample trainer narrative: "Over the last few hours, we have gone from the definition of cyberbullying, through the intricacies of the law, to difficult conversations with managers. To ensure that this knowledge does not remain in the training room, we have prepared an 'Ethical Recruiter Checklist' for you. Treat it as a 'safety net'. Before sending an invitation for an interview or asking a question, take a look at it."

- Hand out printed cards (or send a PDF) with the following content to participants.

Card: Rules of "Fair Play in Remote Recruitment" (Checklist) *(to be distributed to participants)*

1. Technological transparency.
   Have I informed the candidate what tools we will be using? Have I obtained explicit consent for possible recording?

2. Respect for privacy.
   Do I refrain from commenting on the background, home environment, or appearance of the candidate visible on camera?

3. Legality of questions.
   Do my questions relate solely to competence? Have I eliminated questions about family life, pregnancy plans, and views (in accordance with the Labor Code and PADA)?

4. The right to be offline.
   Do I respect the candidate's time by not sending recruitment tasks over the weekend and not calling at unusual times?

5. Stop ghosting.
   Have I provided each candidate (even those who were rejected) with feedback within the agreed time frame, avoiding digital isolation?

6. Protection against toxicity.
   Have I verified that the Hiring Manager does not exhibit bullying behavior (e.g. excessive control, disrespect) and have I responded assertively?

B. Q&A Discussion Panel.

Open discussion. The trainer moderates the conversation, encouraging participants to share their concerns about implementing the new rules in their companies.

Supporting questions (if the group is silent):

- o "Which of the points on the Checklist will be the most difficult for your Hiring Managers to accept?"

- o "How do you plan to use the Information Brochure in the onboarding process?"

- o "Do you feel ready to say 'STOP' when your boss tells you to ask a discriminatory question?"

Attachments to the outline (evaluation tools)

The following surveys have been developed in line with the attachments from the workshops for career counselors and employment agencies, with the questions adapted to the specific nature of a recruiter's work.

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Appendix No. 1

PRE-TRAINING SURVEY

(To be completed before the training)

PART A: Self-assessment of competencies
(Scale 1-5: 1 = I do not feel confident at all, 5 = I feel very confident)

1. I can define cyberbullying in the context of the recruitment process (e.g. ghosting, isolation).
   (1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

2. I am familiar with the legal provisions (Labor Code / Bulgarian PADA Act) regarding prohibited questions in recruitment.
   (1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

3. I can recognize when a hiring manager's behavior constitutes bullying of a candidate.
   (1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

4. I know how to respond assertively when my supervisor expects me to ask a discriminatory question.
   (1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

5. I know how to use onboarding to prevent the isolation of a new remote employee.
   (1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

PART B: Knowledge test
(TRUE / FALSE)

1. Asking questions about family plans is acceptable if the recruiter wants to check the candidate's availability.
   TRUE
   FALSE

2. Mocking the mess in the background during a video interview may be considered a violation of personal dignity (Art. 127 of the Labor Code in Bulgaria).
   TRUE
   FALSE

3. Ghosting (not responding after the process) is merely a lack of manners, not a form of psychological violence/isolation.
   TRUTH
   FALSE

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4. Using software that tracks every click (bossware) without transparency is a good management practice.
   TRUE
   FALSE

5. In Bulgaria, the key piece of legislation protecting against questions about age or gender is the Protection Against Discrimination Act (PADA).
   TRUE
   FALSE

Appendix 2:

FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE (POST-TRAINING)

(To be completed after training)

PART A: Self-assessment of competencies (after training) *(Scale 1-5)*

1. I can define cyberbullying in the context of the recruitment process.
   (1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

2. I am familiar with the legal provisions (KP / PADA) concerning prohibited questions.
   (1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

3. I can recognize toxic behavior in a hiring manager.
   (1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

4. I know how to assertively block a discriminatory question during an interview.
   (1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

5. I know how to implement "safe onboarding" procedures (e.g. the Buddy system).
   (1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

PART B: Knowledge test
(TRUE/FALSE)

1. Asking questions about family plans is acceptable if the recruiter wants to check the candidate's availability.
   TRUE
   FALSE

2. Mocking the mess in the background during a video interview may be considered a violation of personal dignity (Art. 127 of the Labor Code in Bulgaria).
   TRUE
   FALSE

3. Ghosting (not responding after the hiring process) is merely a lack of manners, not a form of psychological violence/isolation.
   TRUTH
   FALSE

4. Using software that tracks every click (bossware) without transparency is a good management practice.
   TRUE
   FALSE

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5. In Bulgaria, the key piece of legislation protecting against questions about age or gender is the Protection Against Discrimination Act (PADA).
TRUE
FALSE

PART C: Training evaluation
(Scale 1-5: 1 = Very poor, 5 = Very good)

1. **Content:** The content was useful for my daily work as a recruiter.
(1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

2. **Workshop:** Role-playing helped me practice difficult conversations with managers.
(1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

3. **Trainer:** The trainer was competent and engaging.
(1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

4. **Materials:** The Checklist and the Brochure are useful tools.
(1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

5. **Organization:** The timing and pace of the training were appropriate.
(1)-(2)-(3)-(4)-(5)

Open questions:

- Which one technique (e.g. assertive refusal, manager audit) will you implement in your work starting tomorrow?

- What was the biggest surprise for you in the legal context (PL/BG)?

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