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1. Introduction

The project Erasmus+ *young professionals. Say no to bullies* has been created out of the **needs of young people** who enter the job market and are not familiar with their own rights and the realities of the professional life, and hence they face difficult situations in the working environment. The second reason for creating the project was related to the **needs of the organizations** that work with the youth and do not have appropriately trained personnel capable of providing support for young people facing problems at work, and who also look for the knowledge and tools for eliminating such problems. The lack of the knowledge about coping in professional environment among young people often leads to experiencing inconvenient situations which may have serious psychosocial consequences. It is necessary to improve the knowledge about pathologies in working environment, and prepare the youth to enter the job market. It is also necessary to prepare the people who work with the youth to perform their tasks in this field more efficiently. The awareness of how important the problems are will allow for implementing preventive measures and informative campaigns. It will also help to work on further preventive initiatives.

The main objective of the project is to spread the knowledge of the abuses such as mobbing, discrimination, and harassment that might be experienced by young employees who enter the job market. The awareness and good knowledge of mobbing and discrimination may prevent young people from experiencing such problems and help them to manage problematic situations. The knowledge of such issues is even more relevant if the law regulations do not sufficiently protect the workers from pathologies such as mobbing and discrimination. In many countries such law regulations are either minimal, or non-existent.

The following brochure is to provide basic knowledge about mobbing, discrimination and sexual harassment. Due to the wide variety of legal regulations and used terminology in the countries participating in the project the brochure mainly focuses on sharing the knowledge related to the aspects and types of the discussed issues, and the preventive measures. The brochure also focuses on psychological basis of mobbing and discrimination, and indicates the symptoms of such behaviours. However, it does not refer to the legal regulations. For this reason the terminology and nomenclature are of secondary importance here. The most relevant aspects of the brochure are related to raising the awareness of the issues among young people, making them vigilant so that they realise that the boundaries of appropriate behaviour are crossed.

The second element of the publication refers to the aspects of self-esteem and assertiveness, which should be enhanced so as to cope with the conflict situations, and the cases of mistreatment.

As the following publication is first of all dedicated to the organizations partnering in the project, apart from the knowledge about the problems, it also includes the hints related to organizing and holding meetings and workshops on the prevention of mobbing and discrimination.

2. Mobbing

Definitions

Mobbing, bullying, and mental molestation are just a few terms used for describing long-lasting and persistent harassment, or threats which employees may experience from their colleagues, or employers.

The International Labour Organization defines mobbing as offensive and revengeful behaviour expressed through violent, malicious, or humiliating attempts to hurt an employee, or a group of employees who are ultimately subject to harassment. Mobbing includes constant negative

remarks, or criticism, gossiping or spreading false information, and it drives harassed persons to seclusion.

The symptoms of mobbing behaviour

The list of features that can be referred to as mobbing behaviours was created by a Swedish doctor and psychologist Heinz Leymann, who was the first person to use the term mobbing in the context of professional situations and working environment. On the basis of his study, Leymann distinguished 45 types of behaviour which were classified in 5 categories. According to Leymann, it is enough to be exposed to only one of the classified types of behaviour so that the situation can be referred to as mobbing.

The actions which have negative impact on communication processes at work:

- Restraining and impeding employees when they want to give their opinion
- Constant interruptions
- Reacting to the opinions and remarks in a raised voice, shouting, invectives, insults and threats
- Constant criticism of the performed work, professional and private life
- Harassment over the phone
- Written and oral threats
- Humiliating and insulting gestures, looking at the victim in an outwardly negative manner
- Allusions, not being direct

The actions which have negative impact on social relations at work:

- Avoidance of conversations with the victim
- Isolating the workplace of an employee, implementing a ban on contacting colleagues
- Implementing a ban on contacting the victim
- Ignoring, intentional negligence of the victim in the working environment, being indifferent towards the victim

The actions which have negative impact on the perception of a person at work:

- Slandering, gossiping, creating offensive nicknames
- Attempting to ridicule and discredit the victim with reference to different spheres of life
- Making fun of the victim's private life
- Mocking the victim's way of walking, speaking, gesturing and facial expressions
- Attacking the victim's political views, religion, worldview
- Attacking and mocking the victim's nationality, skin colour, and sexual orientation
- Mocking the victim's disability, or any victim's peculiar features
- Suggesting mental disease, referring the victim to diagnostic tests
- Addressing the victim with offensive, or humiliating terms
- Making sexual proposals

The actions which have negative impact on the victim's quality of professional and private life:

- Delegating tasks which include offensive aspects which disturb victim's dignity
- False assessment of victim's professional involvement
- Questioning of the decisions taken
- Not delegating any tasks to the victim in order to prove his/her redundancy
- Delegating particular tasks followed by the ostentatious cancelation

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- Giving absurd, contradictory, or meaningless orders
- Delegating tasks which are below, or above the victim’s skills and qualifications
- Delegating constantly new tasks with unrealistic deadlines so as to discredit the victim

The actions which have negative impact on the victim’s health:

- Delegating tasks which are harmful and physically unsuitable for the victim
- Threatening with physical violence
- Physical abuse
- Making a particular employee bear the costs
- Sexual activity, sexual harassment
- Causing mental harm at work or at victim’s home

The repertoire of behaviours typical of mobbing is ampler than the one presented by Heinz Leymann, and it seems impossible to identify all mobbing behaviours. It depends on the mobber’s creativity and skills what behaviours will be used for achieving the assumed goal. However, the presented list identifies the spheres in which mobbing can occur, and it depicts the behaviours which should trigger our vigilance if we are exposed to them.

The characteristics of mobbing:

- The behaviours are persistent, consequent, and repetitive – they are never random and incidental
- The behaviours are long-lasting – the length of mobbing period is individual and may stretch from a few weeks to a few years
- The action is intentional – the person who uses mobbing is aware of his/her conduct and the consequences that the mobbing behaviours may have on the victim – these consequences are the mobber’s goal; it should be remembered that mobber will never admit to harassing his/her victim, what’s more, mobber’s negative behaviours will often be intermingled with kindness and affection so as to relax the vigilance of the victim and the people around
- The behaviour often has the form of mental, rather than physical terror, though the latter occurs as well
- The person who is exposed to mobbing feels humiliated and ridiculed; at a certain level of the exposure to mobbing, the employee usually secludes himself/herself from his/her colleagues spontaneously (as he/she blames himself/herself for the negative experience), or as a result of mobbing practices he/she is eliminated from the personnel
- Mobbing practises often embarrass and confuse the victim who cannot clearly understand what is happening and blames himself/herself for being oversensitive; such feelings are exacerbated by mobber’s interchangeable use of positive and negative actions and frequent acts of mobbing ‘in disguise’
- It should be remembered that mobber cares about staying unexposed, hence the actions are supposed to remain unnoticed, so that the mobber could not be caught red-handed

It should also be remembered that:

- A mobbing employee (mobber) makes use of his/her advantages over the victim which can be related to authority, age, professional relationships, interpersonal popularity etc.
- In the majority of cases, mobbing processes are not conducted by only one person but by a group of people who cooperate on harassing the victim; these people do not have to be actively involved in the process but can be referred to as mobbers if they do not react to the harassment they witness, do

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not take the victim's side, or being influenced by the active mobber treat the harassed person not as a victim but as a culprit, or the source of problems

- Mobbing process are usually hidden from the public view, and take place “behind closed doors”, “with clean hands”, only in front of the people involved in harassing the victim; as soon as the third uninvolved party appears nearby, the processes are stopped, and sometimes they may turn into polite and helpful proceedings, which are of course illusive and are to mislead witnesses
- The harassed person and the people around are usually persuaded that the victim suffers from mental disorders: the mobber warns people from the victim's circles that “there is something wrong with this person”; such actions are dangerous because they have a negative impact on harassed people who being under pressure may collapse and start behaving in an unconventional way; victims may become easily irritable, impetuous, weepy, and withdrawn – such behaviours may make other people believe that indeed “there is something wrong with this person” – especially if such an opinion is supported by the mobber
- Destroying a good opinion people may hold on the victim is a typical characteristic of mobbing processes
- People who commit acts of mobbing most often aim at: eliminating a particular person from the working environment; questioning the victim's competences and qualifications; making this person resign from the post; people who usually become the victims of mobbing pose a threat to the mobber, of course in his/her view, because of their competences, skills, and qualifications etc.

Mobbers and their victims

Everybody can become a mobber, or a victim. However, there is a set of personality features typical of people prone to becoming a harasser, and likewise, a set of features typical of people prone to becoming harassed. Knowing these features allows for being vigilant about certain people, and protective of others. It should be remembered that not all the features have to be noticed to make us vigilant, or protective.

Features typical of people who commit acts of bullying

- A person with exaggerated self-esteem, who overrates his/her skills and competences, incapable of bearing criticism and objections
- A person with significantly low self-esteem presenting himself/herself as self-confident who through mobbing practices, harassment, persecution, and focusing on the vices of the others – usually weaker people boosts his/her self-esteem; such a person needs to experience the feeling of appreciation, which is achieved at the expense of other people
- A person who prioritizes his/her benefits and treats colleagues as obstacles, or threats in the realisation of his/her goals; a person who opts for competition rather than cooperation; a person who is capable of doing a lot in order to achieve his/her goals, even at the expense of others; a person who is envious of other people's successes; the person who is capable of destroying somebody in retaliation for even an insignificant success; a person who makes use of others and treats them as the source of benefits and information; a person who ingratiate himself/herself with others so as to make use of their competences, information, contacts
- A person who has a strong need for control and power
- A person who has a strong need for stimulation and is bored with monotonous working environment – in order to get excited and ‘have some action’ such a person hurts other people, such a person also likes gossiping, and often creates rumours on his/her own so as not to be bored

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- A person who experiences strong feelings of insecurity and anxiety, which can be diminished only if other people are made to feel insecure and anxious: cowardice and uncertainty about his/her reputation
- An unqualified person, aware of his/her low competences – feels threatened to have his/her low competences revealed which will result in being fired; for this reason such a person chooses to disclose the incompetence and lack of knowledge of other people; such a person feels threatened by qualified, well-trained and skilled colleagues
- A person who is ambitious and eager to rule not because of his/her competences and management skills, but because of the willingness to feel superior and better than others
- A person who displays high levels of aggression, is impulsive and impetuous, the person who does not reflect on his/her behaviour but prioritizes his/her goal, the person who is guided by being envious of other people’s competences, skills, properties and affection
- A person who is unnaturally kind, apologetic and ingratiating, yet aggressive and fierce, the person who is unpredictable
- A person who is sociable, physically and interpersonally attractive, able to attract other people’s attention and ingratiate himself/herself with them, and subsequently making use of the gained trust by mobbing weaker people and persuading others to mob

People prone to mobbing

- A person who stands out from the others with the appearance, viewpoints, or behaviour
- A person who is talented, competent, skilled, outstanding, successful, conscientious and hard-working which pose a threat to the mobber
- A person who is kind, respected and liked and thus posing a threat to the mobber
- A person who is honest, frank, trustworthy and looking for the truth
- A person who is young, well-qualified / well-trained, who knows foreign languages, A person who is the first to be asked for advice in an important matter
- A person who is creative, expansive and with initiative – the person who is predisposed to be successful
- A person at pre-retirement age who professionally performs his/her tasks but because of his/her age does not fit in a young team; such a person may become the victim of mobbing practices and consequently be forced to resign
- A sensitive person, a bit naïve, prone to manipulation, having an optimistic approach, unsuspecting the trickery behind other people’s actions
- A person who clearly expresses his/her opinions and beliefs, even if they are unpopular and may cause objections and aversion of other people
- A person who protects his/her colleagues, willing to do a lot, even at his/her own expense, in order to fight for the rights of others
- A person who has detected irregularities in the functioning of the company
- A person who has been given a promotion
- A solitary person, or the person who is lonely in the working environment, the person A does not belong to any formal group (i.e. trade unions), or informal society, or group (shared coffee breaks, or celebrations), the person who is an individualist and does not belong to any specific group at work
- An introvert person who is shy, inept, and unable to protect himself/herself, and who bears harassment burden alone
- A person who has personal problems; suffers from personal crisis, diseases etc. and for that reason is prone to being hurt

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The above mentioned features should be treated as hints for employees as to how to recognize the people prone to being harassed, and the people who may become harassers. However, it is not confirmed that the people who display other features are not likely to become the elements of the discussed phenomena, therefore the presented characteristics should not be treated as the premise of becoming either responsible for, or victimised by mobbing practises.

The course of mobbing

Mobbing is a dynamic phenomenon which lasts for a particular period of time, is continuous and consequent. Mobbing may take different forms so it is impossible to identify one template of its course which could be applied in all situations. However, there are certain regularities that occur in many mobbing situations.

Phase I: the first event in which mobber uses discriminating and harassing practices. At the begging the victim is surprised, does not understand the situation and tries to resolve the problem. The mobber, however, does not find it necessary to resolve anything as he/she declares that no conflict takes place and shows friendly attitude towards the victim. By doing so, the mobber relaxes the visctim’s vigilance, at the same time using mobbing practices interchangeably with polite and friendly attitudes. Such behaviour makes the victim feel uneasy, as it is not clear for him/her what is happening – on the one hand – kindness and friendliness, on the other – aversion and bad treatment.

Phase II: mobbing behaviours escalate, especially if not witnessed, and they take the form of passive indirect aggression through the usage of legal measures and professional tasks. The victim tries to clarify the ambiguities but he/she is reassured that there is nothing to worry about. At the same time, the mobber spreads gossip and slanders the victim questioning his/her skills and qualifications. As a result the victim gradually becomes alienated from his/her colleagues. At the same time, due to the incomprehension of the situation and frustration caused by the inability to solve the problem, the victim happens to lose control, burst in tears, raise his/her voice, which make other people believe that there is ‘something wrong’ with the victim and it is the mobber who is right. In this way, the harasser finds co-operators who being unaware of the situation become accomplices in the act mobbing as the mobber’s supporters.

Phase III: the victim starts realising that the situation in the company is changing. Interpersonal relationships are disturbed. Apart from his/her close relatives, people turn their back on the victim who is no longer treated as an equal partner in professional issues and is being eliminated from the professional circles. The victim becomes less efficient at work, and due to the psychic tension, his/her work becomes less efficient. The harassment goes on, though more people are now involved. Gossip, slander, condescending smiles are now the reality. The victim starts suffering from psychosomatic ailments, the stress is at a very high level and enables the victim to focus on work and be efficient. At this level, unsatisfactory results at work start concerning the management who begin to reprimand the victimised employee. Ultimately, reprimanding and rebuking become the order of the day, which may even lead to making the victim redundant. The victim starts thinking that he/she is to blame and the whole turmoil is caused by his/her inability to adapt to the reality. The accompanying health ailments make the victim go on leaves.

Phase IV: the person is unable to work, resigns, or is made redundant for negligence of duties. The victim may find it difficult to work in a different place and become a member of a new team.

Counteraction against mobbing

The familiarity with the course of mobbing and its characteristics, as well as the features of harassers and victims help to create the list of following regulations which may be efficient in opposing bad behaviours and practices:

1. Get familiar with the relevant legal regulations considering mobbing.
2. React to all types of unacceptable behaviours which you are exposed to, either as a witness, or an active partaker. It should be remembered though that the mobber often acts ‘in disguise’ so we first notice our feeling, and only then look for its cause. If anybody crosses the boundaries, insults us, delegates overwhelming tasks which are beyond our competence, makes us feel humiliated, or neglected – we must react, ask questions, clarify the situation, and be direct. The same concerns being a witness to such situations. Our reaction will be a clear indicator for the harasser that we are aware of his/her intentions and we do not accept such a treatment. If we react to mobbing as witnesses it informs the harasser that other people start intervening in his/her actions, and for the victim it is a clear message that he/she is not the only person who has noticed inappropriate behaviours and that the reaction is advisable. We must remember that the victims of mobbing need our support, understanding, and trust. Our reactions to the inappropriate treatment of the harassed may initiate the victim’s reactions and belief that something unacceptable is taking place. The witness’s basic role is the reaction: we must not stay indifferent to mobbing and turn a blind eye even to its slightest signs. The observer should remark on the mobber’s actions, talk to the victim, or even inform the employer. Other employees should also be informed about the mobber’s behaviour so that it does not remain hidden and therefore accepted.
3. Talk about my experiences and observations related to harassment with as many people as possible. The most common mistake made by the victims of mobbing is remaining silent and experiencing harassment alone. Such behaviours are usually caused by shame and the sense of guilt. It must be remembered that the victim of mobbing is never to be blamed for the situation that takes place! If the victim reveals their mobbing experiences, they make other people more aware and vigilant, and consequently more focused on the victim’s situation. What is more, witnesses may react to what they see as they are not under pressure, they are more assertive, self-confident, and calm. Mobbers attempt to remain undisclosed, only then can they be efficient and achieve their goals. For that reason it is extremely important to make mobbing practices public.
4. It is also very beneficial for us to have an authority on our side, especially when we are doubtful about mobbing practices we are exposed to, or when we are afraid that nobody will believe us. The person who is respected by employees will be our support. In the cases of mobbing, the bigger the support, the better for the victim, especially if it comes from the respected figures.
5. You should avoid talking to the mobber in private, or behind closed doors. Somebody should always witness the talk. The mobber will not be willing to present his/her practices in front of witnesses. It should be remembered that the victim is capable of disarming the mobber if the conditions favourable to mobbing are avoided.
6. If the negative actions escalate and our interventions have not yet been made, or have not been successful, we should take notes of the experienced mobbing practices, i.e. when and where they took places, by whom they were witnessed, what was said and in what manner. Such notes may be very useful for future references as after some time we may not be able to remember the details and be less credible.

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7. Resolving conflicts – it may happen that mobbing results from conflicts which are treated as an excuse for harassing, blaming and tormenting a particular person. Conflict situations should be treated seriously, talked over, and resolved as soon as possible so that negative behaviours cannot escalate. If we are unable to cope with a particular situation, we should ask our colleagues, or employer for help.
8. Looking for support – when the cases of mobbing occur, it is very important not be secluded from colleagues as they may help by talking to the victim, informing the employer, and reacting in different ways. It should be remembered that the mobber will use any possible occasion to blame the victim for the situation. The mobber will convince the people around that it is the victim who is sick, quarrelsome, and disturbed. Isolating from others will only exacerbate mobber’s attitude and actions. The support for the victim is another important aspect. After an act of mobbing has taken place, it is important to ask the victim if such acts happened earlier, and if he/she needs any help. The victim is to have the sense of support and awareness that he/she has not been left alone. What is more, if we are approached by anybody who claims to have been harassed, we should spare some time to listen to hear him/her out attentively. We should not advise, or reassure the person, but after hearing the story we should try to come up with any potential solutions. One of the most important things for the victims is the sense of being supported and not being left alone!

9. Assertive behaviours help to react in an appropriate way.

If all the behaviours mentioned above are combined and used in the case of acts of mobbing it is very likely that the mobber will be discouraged and abandon his intentions. Additionally, it may be expected that the victim’s expenses will be much lower than in the case of acts of mobbing committed behind closed doors.

It must be remembered though that even a singular negative behaviour should not take place and is unacceptable and should cause our reaction. If we believe that our dignity, or somebody’s dignity is violated, we must react, otherwise we may not achieve anything.

3. Discrimination and sexual harassment

Definitions

Discrimination is a very broad term that covers uneven, harmful and unjust treatment of particular people in terms of their belonging to a particular social group (men / women, the disabled, the elderly, homosexuals / heterosexuals etc.). As in the case of mobbing, the regulations considering discrimination may vary in different countries. As the phenomenon of discrimination is broad and multi-layered, and more common than mobbing (most of us discriminate without realizing it), it is important to understand how it occurs. Being familiar with this mechanism may help us to eliminate discrimination in our and other people’s acting.

Image

Generalized beliefs about the group (stereotypes) >>>> attitudes based on stereotypes and feelings (prejudice) >>>> behaviours towards people belonging to a stereotyped group (discrimination)

Discrimination is the consequence of stereotypes and prejudice

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are the opinions and beliefs amongst a particular group about other social, or cultural groups. These beliefs are based on ignorance, unfamiliarity with a particular group, and may arise from a singular encounter with a member of one group. Stereotypes are usually harmful generalizations about a group of people. Stereotypes occur and remain when the differences between groups are significant.

Characteristics of stereotypes:

- They are simplistic – they simplify the world (short terms, trivial descriptions) – Germans are like that; Italians like this and that; women can...;
- They are common, well-known, passed on the generations. Even if we do not believe in them, we all know them;
- They contain generalizations – very general opinion about one person who belongs to a particular group is to reflect the opinion about the whole group, and vice versa

All of us use stereotypes. It is our nature to simplify the surrounding world and the stereotypes definitely help us to achieve that. However, the world is not simple and using the information about one person in reference to somebody else may be very erratic.

Prejudice

The second step on the way to discrimination is prejudice – negative attitudes towards a particular group of people, or a member of this group. Prejudice is based on stereotypes and have emotional content such as feelings towards a particular social group (regardless of being familiar, or unfamiliar with this group). Prejudice is the tendency to create preconceptions based only on the fact that somebody belongs to a particular group.

It may result in discrimination – uneven treatment – which may present itself in a variety of ways such as harming, refusal, violence.

Discrimination at work usually manifests itself in one of the following ways:

- Refusal of employment
- Refusal of promotion
- Refusal of further training and development of professional skills
- Denial of the rights entertained by other employees (for example a leave)
- Unfair remuneration caused by somebody’s belonging to a particular group

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment, which also belongs to the category of discrimination, is defined as the act that involves the making of unwanted sexual advances or obscene remarks which violate somebody’s dignity and create the atmosphere of hostility, violence and humiliation.

Sexual harassment in the workplace has two basic forms:

1. Sexual blackmail – offering employment, pay rise, promotion in return of providing sexual services (which is conveyed directly, or indirectly)
2. hostile working environment
 - suggestions, obscene allusions

- flirting which may be offensive
- sexual advances
- jokes with sexual subtexts
- comments on somebody’s sexual life

Actions can be classified as sexual harassment, if they are unacceptable, unwanted, and the harassed person clearly protests against such actions. It must be remembered that in the cases of sexual harassment, out personal views do matter. Everybody may define acceptable, or unacceptable behaviours differently. One person may expect compliments, whereas the other may find the same compliments awkward, intrusive, unwanted, and unacceptable. Crossing the boundaries of acceptability is perceived as sexual harassment if in the view of the harassed person the harassing actions are not stopped, regardless of his/her protests.

Counteraction against sexual harassment

Individual counteraction against discrimination and sexual harassment largely depends on our awareness of experiencing such actions, and our awareness of being rightfully capable of counteracting against such actions. For that reason, knowledge about sexual harassment, assertiveness, adequate self-esteem and self-confidence are very important in effective reaction to sexual harassment. Protesting, saying it loud, informing other people about what I am exposed to are the most important behaviours taken by the harassed, or discriminated person. Sometimes it is necessary to be isolated from the harasser as it is not always possible to change his/her behaviour, however, it is definitely possible to change ours.

In the case of all pathologies taking place in the workplace, the attitude of the employer, his/her actions and decisions are extremely important. These actions will not be presented here due to the purpose of this publication. However, it is essential to be familiar with the state regulations, legal actions that can be taken, what can be expected from the employer. **Knowledge and awareness are the basic tools of defence!**

Successful management of difficulties, stress, and bad treatment depends on our knowledge about these phenomena and the support we get. But to a great extent it depends on who we are, i.e. what features of personality we have: if we are self-confident; if we are doubtful about our feelings, thoughts, beliefs; if we believe in ourselves, or are mostly influenced by other people and their actions; if we give ourselves right to making mistakes, having urges, or desires; if we are assertive and care about our needs; or if we can be pushed around. Our decisions depend on who we are. It should be remembered that self-confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness can be developed. There are people who had these virtues instilled in them by their parent and families. For them it is easy to implement such virtues. There are also people for whom applying the same values seems much more difficult. In both cases, though, the mentioned features can be trained, practised and developed.

4. Assertiveness

Assertiveness is the skill of expressing emotions, views, and opinions honestly, which allows for defending your rights, with the simultaneous respect for others and their rights. Assertiveness is also the skill of being able to say NO and defending your views in a constructive and specific manner, which is based on facts, rather than opinions. Assertiveness manifests itself both in body language, and vocabulary we use. The assertive person has a straight posture, raised head, keeps an eye contact with the interlocutor and shows open attitude. Such a person is specific and clear, and bases his/her ideas on facts, presenting his/her views with the phrases such as “I think

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that...”, “in my opinion...”, “in my view...”. At the same time such a person asks his/her interlocutors about their opinions and views.

The assertive person reacts when he/she feels that the boundaries are crossed and he/she is hurt, offended, or treated badly. The assertive person clearly states that such behaviours are unacceptable, and he/she wishes they would stop. If, however, there is no reaction, this person calmly repeats the arguments and asks the interlocutor to abandon his/her intentions.

Mobbers often use groundless criticism just to offend their victims. The assertive reaction to such a criticism may discourage mobbers from further negative behaviours and show him / her that the harassed person is capable of self-defence and does not accept such practices. Criticism always includes facts (objective elements in relation to the task, or project in progress) and opinions (subjective attitude towards the realization of the task, or project). Facts should be agreed with, but the opinions may be discussed / disputed, and reflected with your own views.

The example of the criticism and assertiveness:

“It is not done / made properly” – “I understand that you don’t like how it is done. I don’t agree with you. In my opinion is done properly. Could you please let me know what you don’t like it?”

Very often such a reaction gets on the aggressor’s nerves and he/she may start raising his/her voice, react aggressively because he/she does not have any solid arguments based on facts which would support his/her opinion. Under such circumstances, we should calmly keep repeating “Please, don’t scream at me”, “Please stop offending me”.

Assertive behaviors can be learnt, and later practiced in various everyday situations. Additionally, such skills may be learnt from the literature on subject, or from the training sessions during which it is possible to learn and practice assertive attitudes.

Assertive people fight for their rights, talk about them, because they know that they deserve them. Assertive people know that their merit is the same as the others’. Apart from assertive attitude, there are also aggressive and submissive attitudes.

AGGRESSIVENESS	SUBMISSION	ASSERTIVENESS
<u>Behavior:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We protect our rights ignoring the rights of others • We dominate over others, humiliating them sometimes • We don’t listen to others • We make decisions without considering rights of others • We are hostile or defendant 	<u>Behavior:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We ignore our rights, let others infringe them • We don’t express our needs, beliefs and feelings • We behave dishonestly –our we don’t do what we intend to do which results in anger and anxiety escalation 	<u>Behavior:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We defend our rights, acknowledging the rights of others • We express our needs, beliefs and feelings • We are self-confident in relations with others
<u>Meaning:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ That is what I think – if you think otherwise, you are stupid 	<u>Meaning:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It matters what you think, it doesn’t matter what I think 	<u>Meaning:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ That is my opinion ▪ That is how I feel ▪ That is how I see it

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ These are my feelings, yours don't count ▪ That's the situation. I don't care how you see it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Your feelings count, not mine ▪ It's important how you see the situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I would like to know what your opinion is, how you feel about it. Maybe we will be able to find the solution that satisfies both of us
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<p><u>Why do we behave aggressively?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We are afraid not to get what we want ➤ We have low self-esteem ➤ It used to work ➤ We want to catch other people's attention ➤ We want to demonstrate our power ➤ We want to manipulate others ➤ We want to give vent to our feelings (it's often the result of unrealistic expectation) 	<p><u>Why do we behave submissively?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We are afraid of losing others' support ➤ We are afraid of others reaction ➤ We consider it as a polite behavior ➤ We want to avoid conflicts ➤ We want to manipulate others 	<p><u>Why do we behave assertively?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We are happy with ourselves and others ➤ We respect ourselves and others ➤ It helps us in accomplishing our goals and fulfilling the needs ➤ We hurt people less ➤ Our self-esteem is being built up ➤ It gives us control over our life ➤ We are honest and fair toward ourselves and others
<p><u>What do we risk?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Conflicts with others (they feel threatened) ✓ Loosing respect for ourselves ✓ Loosing respect for others ✓ We will be disliked ✓ Enormous stress ✓ Violence situations ✓ Results opposite to expectations 	<p><u>What do we risk?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Losing your self-esteem ✓ Feeling hurt, angry, frustrated ✓ Encouraging others to dominate ✓ Aggression as a result of accumulation of emotions 	<p><u>What do we risk?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We might be disliked for expressing our opinions ✓ Changes in our relation with others – not everyone will accept assertiveness

It is important to know which attitude is dominant in my case so that I can use the most suitable one in a particular moment and in particular situation (sometimes it is better to be submissive than assertive, and it is advisable to learn how to assess situations we are involved in).

ASSERTIVE TECHNIQUES - they will help you to behave assertive:

- Speak openly about what you think, or feel in this situation. If it is difficult, you can admit that

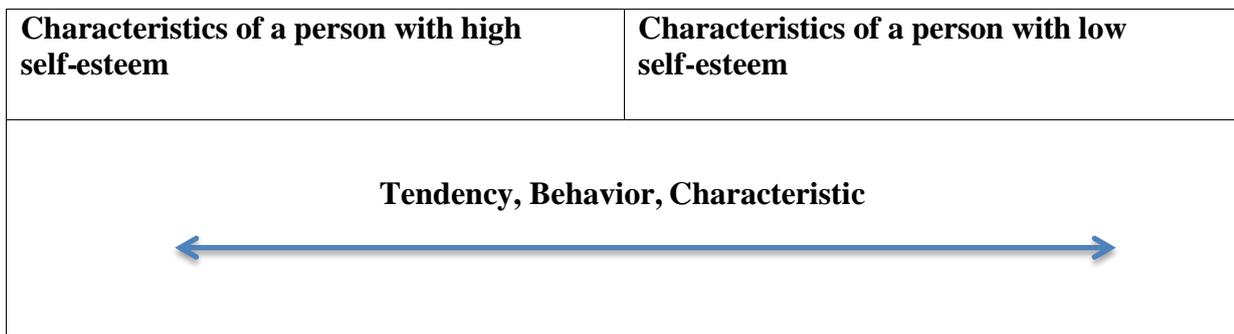
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- Exposing hints – name what is happening. If someone indirectly insults you, name it directly asking if that is what he/she meant because this is how you understand it
- If you don't know how to react, or what to say - don't. Think it over, give yourself some time, admit that you need it.
- Anticipate the criticism – if you expect being criticized, you can say it first. It helps to soften your partner and it shows that you treat him fair and see your mistake and take responsibility for it
- Changing the general criticism into detailed – to talk exactly what is being criticized
- Separate content from the form – You can agree with the criticism, yet don't agree with the form you are being criticized with
- From the matter to the process – switch your attention and the conversation from what is being said to how it is being said and what is happening between you and your partner during that conversation
- Using phrases starting with I – “I want, I feel, I think, I need” – instead of “you are...”
- Repeating your answers over and over again
- A statement supporting your relation with your partner – “I care about You..”, “Our friendship is important to me”
- Coming back to the facts
- Mentioning consequences (gently)
- Protect Yourself

5. Self-esteem

We all evaluate ourselves – everyone thinks about themselves in a good, or in a bad way, everyone likes, or dislikes themselves. The way we think about ourselves influences our behavior and the manner we let other people treat us. Our low, or high self-esteem depends on the following factors:

- ✓ how we think about ourselves – I'm good / I'm hopeless
- ✓ how we treat ourselves – with respect, care, indifference, hostility, harshness; if we remember about ourselves, take ourselves under consideration or if we leave ourselves out
- ✓ how we perceive ourselves in the relations with others – our rights, beliefs, feelings – more important / less important / as important as others
- ✓ what our attitude to our skills is – if we appreciate it, if we develop it, if we build it up, if we notice it, if we shrug it off, if we play it down, if we neglect it, if we underestimate it
- ✓ how we feel about ourselves – acceptance, tolerance, love, kindness, indifference, lack of patience, aversion, anger
- ✓ what our rights and duties are – we give ourselves a right to be the way we are, make mistakes, love, to be happy, we feel obliged to be perfect, always good



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SELF ATTITUDE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Respect ➤ Noticing your needs & taking care of them ➤ Responsibility for yourself ➤ Making decisions in your own matters ➤ Ability to admit making a mistake ➤ Confidence of your opinion, ability to verify it ➤ Knowledge of your advantages, talents, limitations and weakness ➤ Taking care of your psychophysical condition (health and safety) ➤ Having positive feelings towards yourself (kindness, love, pride, contentment, understanding) ➤ To have realistic expectations towards yourself, self – development ➤ Knowledge of yourself, your feelings, thoughts, behaviors ➤ Sense of self-identity & self-dignity ➤ Ability to experience success – noticing it, deriving joy and satisfaction ➤ Ability to experience your failures – to acknowledge it, to draw conclusions, to judge your mistakes and not yourself as a person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of acceptance, hostility, indifference ➤ Negative self-assessment ➤ Inability to take care of your needs in a constructive way ➤ Inability to take responsibility for yourself, or to pass responsibility on others ➤ Fear from making mistakes and admitting them ➤ Ignorance of your advantages or disbelief that you actually got them ➤ To expose Your disadvantages or to hide them ➤ Acting in a dangerous way that may cause you harm (addictions, heavy diets, risky sexual behaviors, aggression towards yourself) ➤ Experience mostly negative feelings towards yourself: dissatisfaction, feeling useless, aversion, disgust, hate, impatience ➤ Lack of expectations towards yourself or feeling duty ➤ Uncertainty of what you feel and think ➤ Being strict towards yourself ➤ Insecurity of who you are ➤ Lack of satisfaction from your achievements, acknowledging them as something worthless ➤ Exorbitant concentration on failures, or not recognizing them purposefully
BEHAVIOR, ACTIONS, ATTITUDE	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Being active and with initiative➤ Ability to collaborate➤ Taking challenges➤ Letting yourself make mistakes, being good enough, accurate enough (not necessarily the best)➤ Clarity of motives and intentions, lack of manipulations➤ Solving conflicts➤ Professional, personal and intellectual progress➤ Openness for new things and stabilization➤ Being successful➤ To have realistic goals and accomplishing them➤ Work-life balance➤ Behaving according to acceptable values➤ Ability to experience the presence, deal with the past and plan the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Being passive and submissive➤ Being dominant, rely “your life” on someone➤ Being overwhelmed by challenges or avoiding them➤ Being perfect or exorbitantly careless➤ Acting a role of a victim or a ruler➤ Avoiding conflicts or playing it up➤ Lack of your professional, personal or intellectual progress➤ Avoiding what is new➤ Excessively seeking for challenge and adrenaline➤ To have unrealistic goals➤ Lack of work-life balance➤ Behaving against your values, needs, lack of steady hierarchy of values➤ Concentration to the past or fear from the future
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INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Creating close relations ➤ Ability to sustain and deepen bond with others ➤ Taking care of your autonomy ➤ Setting your own limits and respect others ➤ Assertiveness ➤ Shaping relations mindfully ➤ Ability to recognize toxic relationship and letting them go ➤ Tolerance on diversity ➤ Using help and asking for it ➤ Calmness, certainty ➤ Ability to show positive feelings ➤ Accepting and giving praises ➤ Accepting criticism, reacting to psychological harms ➤ Giving constructive criticism ➤ Ability to confront different opinions ➤ Distinction between your and others' responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of close relations ➤ Creating unequal one-sided relations ➤ Shallow relations with others ➤ Taking other people's opinions as yours, taking their lifestyle as yours ➤ Lack of Your limits and violating others' ➤ Lack of assertiveness ➤ Being in toxic relationships ➤ Lack of reaction on experienced violence, psychological harms ➤ Lack of acceptance of diversity of opinions and beliefs ➤ Compulsory need of being self-sufficient ➤ Using others or not taking any help ➤ Uncertainty, anxiety ➤ Making distance, lack of accepting and giving positive feelings ➤ Confusion and embarrassment in case of appraisal ➤ Defense from criticism, attack if you are criticized, or accepting it without consideration ➤ Anxiety from criticizing others ➤ Taking responsibility for others' actions |
|---|---|

EMOTIONS WHILE CONTACTING OTHERS

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Respect ➤ Safety ➤ Calmness ➤ Stability ➤ Awareness of individuality ➤ Ability of acting spontaneous ➤ Openness for other’s success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of respect ➤ Anxiety, threat ➤ Liability ➤ Tension, tiredness ➤ Lack of awareness of individuality ➤ Call of duty ➤ Need of self-control ➤ Envy
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ACTIONS IN CRISIS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feeling your emotions ➤ Looking for solutions ➤ Using help and support ➤ Looking for confirmation of your worth and efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do not feel your emotions ➤ Being overwhelmed with problems, lack of reactions for aggravated difficulties ➤ Total dependency on others or rejecting support ➤ Looking for confirmation for your mediocrity
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Self-awareness, i.e. who I am; what feelings and what behaviours towards other people are dominant; is an essential factor necessary for a change and learning. The table above may help you to see what your self-esteem in different spheres looks like. It must be remembered that the people who have low self-esteem are more often prone to becoming victimised, and for that reason it is very important to build an appropriate sense of self-esteem.

6. Achieving goals

Working on Your self-esteem or your assertiveness is a process that has no end. That requires your effort and engagement. To be effective you have to determine your goals very precisely.

GOOD GOAL – SMART GOAL

- Specific steps – exactly WHAT do you want to achieve? WHO will be engaged? WHERE is the goal achieved?
 - I intend to be more self-assure at the meeting (not specified enough)
 - + I intend to talk 3x during every meeting which is once a week

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- Measurable outcomes – how you will know you have achieved what you wanted? What will change?
 - I will behave more confident among my friends (what does it mean? Not specified enough)
 - + I will feel more relaxed while my friends tell me nice things. I will be able to say thank you and keep an eye-contact
- Attainable – realistic, goals that are able to achieve
 - I intend to be more confident that everyone I know
 - + I will react when Peter shouts at me
- Relevance – the goal has to be important to you, ambitious and exciting; it has to have a meaning
- Time-based – When will you achieve your goal? How much time you give Yourself to achieve it – it has to be very specific.

7. Holding meetings on preventing discrimination and mobbing

Being a good coach requires not only knowledge of a given subject, but also specified attitudes, skills of running classes preparing them appropriately.

1. Prepare the class syllabus, i.e. what you want to present to your trainees – mobbing and discrimination, or only one of the phenomena; what you want to talk about, and what aspects to focus on – conveying knowledge about a particular issue, or one particular element of the issue – think about what goal you have and what you want to achieve with your classes – a good answer to this question will make the preparation of the classes and methodology easier;
2. It is important to know how much time you have, how numerous the group is, and who you talk to so that the prepared classes can be properly adjusted to your attendees, their needs and the time you can spend with them;
3. It is a good idea to ask the attendees what they expect as it may turn out that their expectations cannot be fulfilled, as they go beyond the program, or are unattainable for different reasons. If it happens we should say it aloud so that the attendees know exactly the content of the training program. It may turn out that we are capable of fulfilling the attendees’ expectations even though at the beginning we did not take raising certain issues into account. We should think then if we have enough time for this particular issue, and if it is significant and worth our focus. Only then can we take a decision. It is very important for the attendees to know what topics they will be taught, and what will not be included in the program.
4. If we are not familiar with something we should admit that. Being clear in that matter and insuring the attendees that the information will be checked and conveyed later shows our sincerity and serious attitude towards the attendees. The same concerns the mistakes we may happen to make. Admitting to a mistake builds respect and shows our human face. It is worth remembering that only those who do nothing do not make mistakes;
5. A coach should be trustworthy, credible, and should be confident about the subject he/she deals with. If one of these factors is not fulfilled, the attendees will notice that immediately;
6. A coach should be open towards different points of view; pay attention to all attendees, not leave unanswered questions. If a particular issue cannot be discussed at a given moment, a coach should inform the attendees about it;

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7. Make sure that you instructions are clear;
8. It is very common to divide attendees into groups during classes – good preparation that will provide different ways of dividing attendees into groups is advisable here.
9. Be flexible – modify the course activities to adjust them to the attendees’ needs;
10. Different views of the participants may lead to conflicts, but a good coach must always remain calm. Although it is a good idea to talk over the situation, a coach should not spend too much time discussing one issue with one person only. The purpose of the workshop / meeting is to share the views with others, gain knowledge, and get to know something about yourself – the attendees do not have to agree with each other.
11. A good sense of humour is a great addition to the discussed content – try to use it freely, adjusting it to the group’s needs;

What should be avoided during classes?

1. The classes should not be coach-oriented. The coach’s knowledge is important but the participants’ attention span is limited, so long monologues, coach’s personal opinions should not be predominant. The participants learn more by talking to each other, or by trying out and practising different behaviours rather than by listening to prolonged lectures.
2. Devoting too much, or too little time to discussions – it is very important to pay attention to the group’s dynamics. Sometimes a very lively discussion should be interrupted if it does not lead to any useful conclusions. It is important to use the time wisely so that the topic can be exhausted but at the same time the attendees remain interested in it, rather than bored.
3. Not reacting to the phenomena related to the process of group learning. The interactions between the participants are not only related to the content of the meeting. Somebody may become a leader, somebody may remain silent, people start addressing and treating each other differently. These interactions are parallel to the essential course of the meeting. If something starts attracting your attention, or something disturbs you – react. If you are disturbed by something, the others must feel the same. And for that reason your reaction is essential. Of course the process of group learning depends on the time it takes – two-hour workshop is different from one-day workshop, and totally different from a-few-day workshop. The longer the meeting, the more happens among the people who take part in it, especially if they may spend time together before, or after classes. It is important to pay attention to the interactions that take place in the group;
4. Not giving positive feedback to the participants. People who actively take part in the course need to feel that their active partaking is noticed and appreciated;
5. Prioritizing your benefit over the group’s benefit.
Elaborating on a given issue just because I feel convenient with it, even though it is not necessary for the group. The course and content of the classes should not be adjusted the needs of the coach, but to the expectations and needs of the participants.



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It must be remembered that adults learn more efficiently through empirical techniques. Of course not all aspect of the course content can be taught empirically, but the methodology and techniques should be versatile so that the participants can have a chance of experiencing particular scenarios, and consider what they would do in a particular situation. It is also possible to convey hard knowledge through different methods of group teaching, collective analyses and discussion. Such techniques should be used as often as possible.

In order to prepare exercise for the workshop on counteraction against mobbing and discrimination verify if you can determine the following aspects of the exercise:

- The subject – what aspects are to be raised in the exercise?
- Aims – what are the participants to learn, or to get to know? What are they to consider? What are they to experience?
- Time – how long should be the exercise?
- Resources – what resources do you need to realise the exercise?
- Methods – what methods are you going to use?

Depending on the group, aims, and duration, the participants may be encouraged to get to know each other. As mobbing and discrimination are difficult subjects, getting to know each other may help the participants to open themselves so that they can fully benefit from the course. It is essential to be fully aware of what we want to achieve and how much time we have. Sometimes it is necessary to leave out certain topics. The classes and meeting should be prepared realistically so that we can have enough time to realize the program.

In the classes on discrimination, it is very important to be aware that everybody discriminates and everybody can be discriminated. Presenting a chain reaction of discrimination may help to understand its mechanisms, whereas being put into the role of the discriminated may help to realize that the discrimination does exist. The application of role-play and identifying with the members of the discriminated groups are very precious and eye-opening experiences. However, it is very important to be observant and vigilant so as to see and control how the participants perform their tasks. It must be remembered that we are all different, groups comprise of various people and the successful realization of exercises depends on the involvement and openness of the participants, interactions between them, and the group processes.

Apart from workshops / meetings that raise awareness of mobbing and discrimination problems, it is equally important to attract people’s attention by posters, websites, or even short notes that may raise interest. It should be done in the countries where the mentioned problems have not been thoroughly discussed, and the media might be interested in propagating the issue. It depends on us what approach we take.

What is the most important is to make local communities aware of the existence of discrimination and mobbing.

Good luck!

Useful resources:

1. *All Different, All Equal. Education Pack*, Secretariat of ECRI Council of Europe, Strasbourg 1995

(http://www.youthdeved.ie/sites/youthdeved.ie/files/All_Different_All_Equal_Ireland_2006.pdf)

2. *Teaching Human Rights. Practical Activities for primary and secondary schools*, United Nations Publication, Geneva 2004

(<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/ABCChapter1en.pdf>)