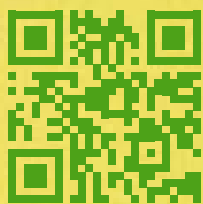


# Introduction to digital minority stress

WORKSHOP

MODULE A1



[www.queeresilience.eu](http://www.queeresilience.eu)

 Co-funded by  
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## Module A1

# „Introduction to digital minority stress“

## Overview

### Topic

An introduction to minority stress and how it shows up in digital spaces (social media, chats, games, platforms). Participants explore how online environments can both support and harm LGBTQ+ wellbeing, and why these reactions are understandable responses to systemic discrimination rather than individual weakness

### Objectives

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- » Explain in simple words what minority stress is and how it relates to mental health for LGBTQ+ people.
- » Recognise at least **three forms of digital minority stress**, including cyberbullying, digital microaggressions and vicarious exposure to online hate.
- » Distinguish between **external** stressors (e.g. harassment, platform policies) and **internal** stressors (e.g. self-censorship, internalised stigma) in digital spaces.
- » Describe how social media and other digital spaces can be both **protective** (community, information, identity affirmation) and **risky** (depression, anxiety, problematic use).
- » Identify at least **two personal or community resources** and **one digital resilience strategy** (e.g. muting, curating feeds, connecting to supportive communities) they can use when online spaces feel overwhelming.

### Duration

75-90 minutes

### Target Group

Young people between 16 and 25; mainly queer or marginalized youth, but also suitable heterogenous groups (No prior theoretical knowledge needed; participants should use digital media regularly (social media, chats, games, etc.)

**Group Size**

10 – 16 participants

**Complexity and Context**

This is an **introductory module** that:

- » Provides a first contact with **minority stress theory in a digital context**, in youth-friendly language.
- » Links to digital competences (e.g. DigComp – safety, wellbeing, managing digital identity and interactions).
- » Supports youth work competences such as:
  - Creating safer and more inclusive learning environments;
  - Addressing discrimination and power dynamics;
  - Supporting mental wellbeing and resilience of young people.

The content is based on research showing that social media is a “**double-edged sword**” for LGBTQ+ youth – it can reduce isolation and support identity, but it is also a major context for discrimination, cyberbullying, digital microaggressions and problematic use, which in turn are linked to depression and anxiety.

**Triggers**

Potentially triggering content includes:

- » **Cyberbullying and harassment:** repeated insults, threats, outing, spreading rumours, humiliating memes.
- » **Digital microaggressions:** “jokes”, “curious questions”, or “advice” that invalidate or stereotype LGBTQ+ identities (e.g. “You don’t look trans”, “It’s just a phase”).
- » **Outing and misgendering online:** sharing someone’s identity without consent; deadnaming; refusing to use correct pronouns.
- » **Vicarious exposure to hate:** seeing hateful content about LGBTQ+ people even when it is not directed at you personally.
- » **Mental health themes:** references to anxiety, depression, self-worth and (possibly) suicidal ideation/feelings of hopelessness, as they are often discussed in research on digital minority stress.

**How to mitigate**

- » Start with **clear safer-space agreements** (confidentiality, respect, right to pass, no pressure to share personal trauma).
- » Emphasise that participants can **speak about “someone like me”**, fictional characters or general examples instead of themselves.
- » Offer **opt-out options** for any activity: they can listen, write privately, or sit out an exercise.
- » Use **grounding techniques** if the group becomes overwhelmed (breathing, noticing the room, short break).
- » Prepare a **resource list** (hotlines, local NGOs, online services) and remind participants that this session is not therapy; it is okay to seek further help.

## Materials

### For facilitators

- » Laptop + projector / screen (optional) OR printed posters with key concepts (minority stress, digital stressors, resilience).
- » Printed **short input outline** on minority stress & digital minority stress (Annex A1.1).
- » Printed **scenario cards** with fictional stories of digital minority stress (Annex A1.2).
- » Flipchart / whiteboard + markers.
- » Sticky notes (2–3 colours if possible).
- » Timer or clock.
- » Copies (printed or digital) of the **support resources list** (Annex A1.3) – this is a list of local

### For participants

- » A4 paper or simple worksheet for the “Stressors & Supports Map”.
- » Pens and markers / coloured pencils.
- » Optional: their phones (only if useful – avoid live scrolling through stressful content).
- » Water / small snacks if possible.

## Additional Recommendations

This module works well before modules on:

- » Hate speech and counter-speech;
- » Digital wellbeing and self-care;
- » Digital advocacy or community management.

- When working with **trans and gender-diverse youth**, explicitly acknowledge that social media can be a lifeline for community and identity exploration and a site of intense gender minority stress (e.g. transphobic content, body policing).

- Keep the tone **non-pathologising**: social media itself is not “good” or “bad”. What matters is how it is used and what kind of environments youth are exposed to.

Be mindful of **intersectionality** – youth with multiple marginalised identities (e.g. race, class, disability, migration background) may face different forms of digital minority stress, and also may benefit differently from online interventions.

If possible, co-facilitate with someone who has **lived experience** as an LGBTQ+ person and is comfortable discussing digital life and mental health.

## Instructions

NB: If the activity 1 is either too emotionally straining or makes for a good discussion or the group is bigger, activity 2 can be left out and facilitators can focus just on activity 1.

### **Introduction : Arrival, pronouns & safer space ( 10 min)**

**Goal:** Welcome participants, build trust, agree on ground rules.

**Facilitator steps:**

1. Short welcome and self-introduction (name, pronouns, role).
2. Quick go-round (if group size allows):
  - » Name and pronouns (only if participants feel safe to share);
  - » One emoji / word for "how I am arriving today".
3. Present **safer-space agreements** on a flipchart and invite additions, e.g.:
  - » We listen without interrupting or judging.
  - » What is shared here stays here (with limits if someone is in serious danger).
  - » Sharing is always voluntary – you can say "pass" or share in writing instead of speaking.
  - » We talk about experiences in a way that does not target anyone in the room.
  - » It is okay to feel affected, and also okay to feel nothing in particular.
4. Name the topic lightly:

"Today we look at how being queer and being online can bring both support and stress. We'll learn a concept called minority stress and see how it shows up in digital life."

### Warm-up : “My online climate in one word” (10 min)

**Goal:** Surface everyday feelings about digital life without needing deep personal disclosure. “What is your favorite app?”

#### Facilitator steps:

1. Ask participants to think of the digital spaces they use most (e.g. Instagram, TikTok, Discord, WhatsApp, games).
2. Give them a moment and then ask them to write **one word or short phrase** on a sticky note finishing one of these prompts:
  - » “Right now, my online life feels...”
  - » “Most days, my feed feels like...”
3. Invite them to place their notes on a **simple line (spectrum) or two columns** on the flipchart:
  - » LEFT: more stressful / heavy / exhausting
  - » RIGHT: more supportive / fun / connecting
4. Ask a few short questions:
  - » “What do you notice when you look at this line?”
  - » “Does anyone want to share (without details) why they put their word where they did?”
  - » “Do you think queer youth see different things on their feeds than straight/cis people?”

#### Key points to highlight:

- Online space is often mixed – it can feel good and bad at the same time.
- You don’t have to choose between “social media is amazing” vs. “social media is toxic” – both can be true.

### Short input: Minority stress & digital minority stress (10 min)

**Goal:** Provide a short, clear explanation of the concepts in youth-friendly language.

**Note:** Use annex A1.1 as a **script (Annex A1.1)**

Facilitators can create a PowerPoint presentation or write the terms on flipcharts and then narrate them or add more keywords.

Suggested content:

#### 1. Minority stress – in simple terms

- » People who belong to stigmatised groups (e.g. LGBTQ+ people) experience **extra stress** because of prejudice, discrimination and social inequality – not because there is something wrong with them.

» Researchers talk about:

- **Distal (external) stressors:** bullying, hate speech, unfair treatment, laws or school rules that erase or punish LGBTQ+ people.
- **Proximal (internal) stressors:** expecting rejection, hiding parts of yourself, internalised shame or self-blame.

## 2. Digital minority stress

» All of this can also happen **online** – and sometimes more often, because people are “braver” behind a screen.

» Examples:

- Direct attacks (DMs, comments, “jokes”) about your sexuality or gender.
- **Digital microaggressions** – small, often “everyday” slights and invalidations, like “You don’t look non-binary” or “But you’re too young to know you’re gay.”
- Seeing constant news or posts attacking people “like you” (vicarious discrimination).
- Pressure to “perform” a certain kind of queer identity online or to always be educating others.

## 3. Social media as a double-edged sword

- » Research shows that social media can be life-saving for some LGBTQ+ youth (community, role models, information, activism).
- » The same platforms can also be a major source of depression and anxiety when youth are exposed to hostile content or use social media in compulsive ways.

## 4. Digital resilience

- » Studies with queer youth show that many develop digital resilience skills: choosing who to follow, curating feeds, supporting each other in chats, blocking/reporting hate, using creativity and humour to cope.
- » In this workshop we don’t fix everything, but we start by naming the stress – which is an important first step.

Ask briefly:

- “Does this idea of minority stress fit your experience or things you’ve seen?”
- “What parts of online life feel more stressful for queer people than others?”

## Activity 1 : Stressors & Supports Map (20 min)

**Goal:** Help participants see the complexity of digital experiences – what adds to minority stress and what supports resilience.

This activity might include triggers so facilitators should be extra careful and trying to “defuse” triggers by pointing them out at the beginning and inviting people to think about situations in general, not

specifically happening to them. Facilitators should also remind people about self-care policies (i.e. option to step out of the activity, not engage, etc.).

### Facilitator steps:

1. Divide participants into small **groups of 3–5**.
2. Give each group an A3 sheet and ask them to draw the following **4-quadrant map**:
  - » Top left: Stressful – People & content
  - » Top right: Stressful – Platforms & systems
  - » Bottom left: Supportive – People & communities
  - » Bottom right: Supportive – Platforms & tools
3. Ask groups to brainstorm and write examples in each quadrant. Encourage them to think about:
  - » Cyberbullying, digital microaggressions, forced outing, misgendering.
  - » Algorithms pushing harmful content, lack of moderation, “real name” policies.
  - » Supportive communities (queer servers, fandoms, mutual aid, identity-affirming content).
  - » Helpful features (block/mute, safety tools, content warnings, anonymous support spaces).
4. After ~15 minutes, ask each group to share 1–2 examples per quadrant (max 2 minutes per group).
5. Write repeating patterns on a central flipchart (e.g. “jokes”, “school group chats”, “queer Discord servers”, “block & mute”, “activist pages”).

### Debrief questions (5–10 min):

- » “What surprised you when you filled in the map?”
- » “Which quadrant was easiest to fill? Which was hardest?”
- » “What does this tell us about digital minority stress and support for queer youth?”

Emphasise: Minority stress online is not only about people directly attacking you – it is also the constant climate you move in, and the absence or presence of safe spaces.

A short break would be in order to help people “shake-off” any potential negative emotions they might have gathered. You can ask people to stand and shake their bodies to some energetic music (e.g. some Lady Gaga) or to go out.

## Activity 2 : Digital Minority Stress Stories (20 min)

**Goal:** Apply concepts to realistic scenarios; practise naming stressors, emotions and possible responses.

Again, this activity might include triggers so facilitators should be extra careful and trying to “defuse” triggers by pointing them out at the beginning and inviting people to think about situations in general, not specifically happening to them. Facilitators should also remind people about self-care policies (i.e. option to step out of the activity, not engage, etc.).

**Falicator steps:**

1. Keep participants in the same small groups (or mix them once).
2. Give each group one **scenario card** (Annex A1.2 contains an example of 6 scenarios, however, you are invited to create your own, if better suited to your context), for example:
  - » A bisexual teen is repeatedly called “confused” and “greedy” in a class group chat.
  - » A non-binary gamer is mocked and misgendered on voice chat whenever they speak.
  - » A trans girl sees viral videos debating “whether trans women are real women” on her TikTok.
  - » A queer youth of colour sees racist and homophobic memes shared by relatives on Facebook.
3. Ask groups to discuss and make notes on:
  - » **What is happening in this story?**
  - » **Which parts are distal (external) stressors? Which are proximal (internal) reactions)?**
  - » **What digital microaggressions or cyberbullying do you see?**
  - » **How might this person feel – emotionally and physically?**
  - » **What could help?** (friends, online communities, adults, blocking/reporting, changing settings, taking breaks, identity-affirming content etc.).
4. After ~10–12 minutes, ask each group to briefly present:
  - » 1–2 key stressors they identified;
  - » 1 thing that might support the person’s resilience.

**Plenary debrief (5–7 min):**

- » “What patterns do you see across these stories?”
- » “Where do you see the system (platform rules, school, family, laws) in these scenarios?”
- » “What could youth workers / teachers do differently if they understood digital minority stress better?”

**Highlight:**

- Cyberbullying and digital microaggressions are **common** and strongly linked to poorer mental health in LGBTQ+ youth, but they are also **changeable** through policy, education and support.
- Interventions that directly name minority stress and teach coping skills – even brief, digital ones – have shown promise in reducing internalised stigma and symptoms of depression/anxiety.

## 6. Individual reflection: My stresses, my supports (15 min) End the session with a

**Goal:** Quiet, private integration; identify personal digital resilience strategies and resources.

### Facilitator steps:

1. Give each participant a sheet of paper. Invite them to write/draw answers **for themselves only** to these prompts:
  - » "One thing about digital minority stress that I understand better now is..."
  - » "One thing I already do – or could start doing – that helps me feel safer or stronger online is..."
  - » "One person, space, or resource (online or offline) I can turn to if online stuff gets too heavy is..."
2. Remind them they **do not have to share** this with anyone.
3. Optional: invite volunteers to share **one coping or resilience idea** they wrote down, only if they are comfortable.

### Facilitator note:

If the group seems energised and safe, you can briefly collect strategies on the board (e.g. "curate feed", "DM a friend", "limit late-night scrolling", "follow affirming creators", "block/report") to make more visible.

## Closing & support reminder

**Goal:** Close the space in a contained and hopeful way; signpost further support.

### Facilitator steps:

1. Summarise key messages in simple language, for example:
  - » "Queer people often carry **extra stress** just for being who they are – online and offline."
  - » "This stress is not about being 'too sensitive'; it comes from **real discrimination and hostile climates.**"
  - » "Digital spaces can add to this stress, but they can also be places of **community, pride and resistance.**"
  - » "Naming what is happening and knowing where support is can be a first step towards feeling less alone."
2. Do a very short **grounding exercise** (e.g. 5-4-3-2-1 senses, or three deep breaths).
3. Show or hand out the **Support Resources List** (Annex A1.3) and briefly explain what kind of help each resource offers.
4. Quick "weather check" with fingers (1–5) for "How okay do I feel leaving this workshop?"
  - » Quietly follow up with anyone showing very low numbers if it feels appropriate and safe.

Thank participants and, if relevant, let them know about upcoming modules (e.g. digital wellbeing, memes & reframing, digital advocacy).

## **Annex A1.1: Short Input Script: Minority Stress & Digital Minority Stress (narrative version)**

(You can read this almost verbatim to participants, or adapt it to your style and language level.)

Today I want to talk about something called **minority stress**. It sounds very academic, but the basic idea is simple: when you belong to a group that is often judged, attacked or misunderstood – for example because you are lesbian, gay, bi, trans, non-binary or queer – you don't just deal with "normal" everyday stress. You carry **extra stress** that comes from prejudice and discrimination around you. That extra layer is what we call minority stress.

This kind of stress is not about being "too sensitive" or "overreacting". It is about living in a world where you regularly get messages that you are "wrong", "less than", or "not normal". Over time, this can affect sleep, mood, self-confidence, relationships and mental health. Many studies show that LGBTQ+ young people have higher rates of depression and anxiety, and minority stress is one of the big reasons why.

Researchers often talk about two types of minority stress. The first type is **external or distal stressors** – things that happen to you from the outside. That includes bullying at school, hearing slurs in the street, being excluded from family events, or seeing hateful political campaigns that target people like you. You don't choose these experiences; they come from the environment around you.

The second type is **internal or proximal stressors** – the thoughts and feelings that grow inside when you live with that external pressure for a long time. For example, constantly expecting rejection, watching every word you say, hiding your pronouns or partner, feeling shame about your identity, or blaming yourself when others behave badly. These reactions are understandable attempts to stay safe, but they can also be very heavy to carry.

Now let's bring this into our **digital lives**. Many LGBTQ+ people spend a lot of time online: on social media, in group chats, on gaming platforms, in fandom spaces, on dating apps, on Discord servers. These spaces can be hugely important. They can be the first place where you see people like you, learn the words for how you feel, or find community and support that you don't have offline. Some young people say that online spaces have literally kept them alive when offline life felt unbearable.

At the same time, digital spaces are also places where minority stress shows up **very strongly**. We talk about this as **digital minority stress**. It is the same basic idea – extra stress connected to being part of a stigmatised group – but happening in online environments.

Digital minority stress can take many forms. Sometimes it is very obvious, like **cyberbullying**: repeated insults, threats, humiliating posts, or group chats where people gang up on you because of your sexuality or gender. Sometimes it is more subtle, like **digital microaggressions** – small, everyday comments or "jokes" that send the message that your identity is not valid, not real, or not respectable. Examples might be "You're too young to know you're gay", "Non-binary is just a trend", or "You're trans? But you look fine as you are". On their own, one comment might not seem like a big deal, but dozens of them over months and years build up and can really hurt.

Another form of digital minority stress is **vicarious exposure to hate**. This means not only hate aimed directly at you, but also content about people "like you": comment sections full of slurs, viral videos that debate whether your gender is "real", news stories where politicians talk about taking away

your rights. You might not be named personally in those posts, but your body and brain still react. You may feel angry, scared, numb, or like you have to constantly defend your own existence.

There are also stressors that come from the **design of platforms themselves**. Algorithms might recommend you content that is sensational and polarising, because it keeps people clicking – including content that attacks LGBTQ+ people. Some platforms use “real name” policies that make it hard to experiment with identity safely. Others do not moderate hate speech consistently. All of this can create a digital climate where queer and trans people feel like they must constantly be on guard.

Of course, digital minority stress does not only stay “external”. Over time, it can turn into internal reactions: checking every post three times before you dare to share it, deleting photos that feel “too queer”, avoiding profile pictures with your partner, or staying silent when someone posts something hurtful because you are afraid of the backlash. You might unfollow LGBTQ+ pages that are important to you, simply because you cannot face the arguments in the comments. These are understandable strategies to protect yourself – but they can also cut you off from support.

It is important to say that the story is **not only negative**. Many studies describe social media as a “**double-edged sword**” for LGBTQ+ youth. On one side of the blade there is more exposure to hate, pressure, comparison, and problematic or compulsive use. On the other side there is community, representation, role models, mutual support, creativity, activism and joy. Online spaces are where many young people first find the language for who they are, see others living openly, or practice being themselves in a way that would be too risky offline.

Research with queer and trans young people shows that they do not just passively suffer from digital minority stress – many develop what we can call **digital resilience**. That means learning to use tools like blocking, muting and reporting; curating who they follow; moving from hostile spaces into safer ones; supporting each other in group chats; using humour and creative content to push back against stigma; and connecting to identity-affirming resources like supportive web apps or online interventions. Naming minority stress is also a resilience skill: once you understand that “it’s not just me being weak, it’s a pattern in the environment”, it can become easier to seek support and to push for change.

The point of this workshop is not to tell you to stop using social media or to say that digital life is all bad. Instead, the goal is to:

- » Put a name to the extra stress that LGBTQ+ people often experience online;
- » Notice both the **risks** and the **resources** in our digital environments;
- » Start thinking together about how to reduce the harmful parts and strengthen the supportive ones.

You are not alone in these experiences, and there is nothing wrong with you for feeling stressed by a hostile digital climate. The problem is the climate itself – and that can be changed, step by step, by communities, allies, professionals and platforms.

## Annex A1.2: Minority Stress & Digital Minority Stress (resource version)

Background resource for facilitators

Facilitators can translate these concepts into presentations, infographics, or flipchart summaries (e.g. "Distal vs. Proximal Stressors", "Risks & Resources of Social Media", "Digital Resilience Strategies"), adapting examples and emphasis to the local context.

### 1. Minority Stress: Core Concept

**Minority stress** describes the additional, chronic stress that people from stigmatised groups experience due to prejudice, discrimination and social inequality. In the context of this project, the focus is on sexual and gender minority youth (LGBTQ+ youth).

Key points:

- » Minority stress is **above and beyond** everyday life stressors.
- » It is rooted in **social conditions** (stigma, discrimination, structural inequality), not in individual weakness.
- » It helps explain why LGBTQ+ youth show **higher rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicidality** compared to their non-LGBTQ+ peers.

Research consistently shows that exposure to discrimination and hostile social climates is linked to poorer mental health among LGBTQ+ youth; minority stress is a central explanatory framework for these disparities.

### 2. Types of Minority Stress: Distal and Proximal Stressors

The minority stress framework usually distinguishes between:

#### a) Distal (external) stressors

These are objective events and conditions in the environment, such as:

- » Verbal harassment, bullying, and physical violence.
- » Social exclusion in school, family, community or religious settings.
- » Discriminatory laws, policies, or institutional practices.
- » Media or political messages that devalue or attack LGBTQ+ people.

- These stressors occur regardless of how the individual interprets them; they are direct expressions of stigma and inequality.

#### b) Proximal (internal) stressors

These are stress processes that occur within the individual, often as a response to ongoing exposure to distal stressors:

- » **Expectations of rejection** (e.g., constant vigilance, anticipating negative reactions).
- » **Concealment and self-censorship** (hiding one's identity or relationships to avoid harm).

- » **Internalised stigma** (absorbing negative societal messages about one's own identity).
  - » **Self-blame and shame** in response to discrimination ("If I were different, this wouldn't happen").
- These internal stress processes can be understood as coping attempts aimed at protection, but over time they may contribute to anxiety, depression and reduced wellbeing.

### 3. Digital Minority Stress

**Digital minority stress** refers to minority stress processes that occur specifically in **online environments** (social media, messaging apps, games, forums, etc.). The underlying logic is the same: stigmatised identities are exposed to hostile climates and unequal treatment, here within digital spaces.

Relevant phenomena include:

- » Cyberbullying targeting sexual and gender minority youth (e.g., repeated insults, threats, outing, sharing humiliating content).
- » Digital microaggressions: seemingly "small" or ambiguous slights, jokes or comments that question, trivialise or invalidate LGBTQ+ identities (e.g., "Non-binary is just a trend"; "You're too young to know you're gay").
- » Vicarious exposure to hate: frequent contact with anti-LGBTQ+ discourse (news, comment sections, viral videos, memes) directed at the group rather than the individual.
- » Platform and design-related stressors:
  - Algorithms amplifying polarising and hateful content.
  - Inconsistent moderation of hate speech and harassment.
  - "Real name" policies or design choices that limit safe identity exploration.

- These factors contribute to a digital climate in which LGBTQ+ youth may feel more visible and vulnerable, and where minority stress is continuously reinforced.

Digital minority stress interacts with traditional minority stress processes:

- Distal online events (e.g., cyberbullying, hostile content) increase the likelihood of proximal stress (e.g., self-censorship, internalised stigma).
- Over time, young people may change their online behaviour: restricting what they post, hiding aspects of identity, withdrawing from certain platforms or communities.

### 4. Social Media as a "Double-Edged Sword"

The literature increasingly describes social media for LGBTQ+ youth as a "**double-edged sword**":

#### Risks:

- » Higher exposure to **cyberbullying, harassment and microaggressions**, which are associated with depression, anxiety and reduced wellbeing.
- » **Problematic or compulsive use**, where high engagement is linked to rumination, comparison, and increased psychological distress.
- » Amplification of **hostile discourse** through algorithms that prioritise engagement over safety.

**Resources:**

- » Access to **community and peer support**, especially for youth who are isolated or closeted offline.
- » Opportunities for **identity exploration and affirmation** (e.g. following LGBTQ+ creators, finding language and role models).
- » Channels for **activism and collective action**, enabling youth to engage in advocacy and social change.
- » Spaces where LGBTQ+ youth can experience belonging, validation and joy.

The balance between risks and resources varies by individual, platform, country context and intersectional identities (e.g. race, class, disability, migration background).

**5. Digital Resilience and Interventions**

- » Despite the stressors present, LGBTQ+ youth are not only passive recipients of digital harm. Studies highlight various forms of **digital resilience**, including:
  - » **Content curation:** choosing who to follow/unfollow, muting or blocking hostile accounts, shifting to safer platforms or private groups.
  - » **Boundary-setting:** limiting time spent online, avoiding specific comment sections, using privacy settings strategically.
  - » **Peer support and community care:** supporting each other in group chats, sharing coping strategies, validating each other's experiences.
  - » **Creative and narrative strategies:** using humour, memes, art and storytelling to reframe negative experiences and resist stigma.
  - » **Engagement with identity-affirming digital tools:** web applications or digital interventions designed to address minority stress, promote coping skills, and reinforce positive identity.

Pilot trials and preprint studies indicate that **brief, digital interventions** focusing explicitly on minority stress and identity affirmation can reduce internalised stigma and improve coping in sexual and gender minority youth. Identity-affirming web apps and single-session online interventions are emerging as promising tools, especially when combined with community engagement and ongoing support.

**6. Implications for Youth Work and Education**

For facilitators and educators, the minority stress and digital minority stress frameworks offer several practical uses:

- » They provide a language to talk about LGBTQ+ mental health that centres social conditions rather than individual blame.
- » They highlight the need to address both offline and online contexts when discussing wellbeing and safety.
- » They support the design of workshops, curricula and policies that:
  - Recognise digital spaces as key environments in young people's lives;
  - Aim to reduce exposure to distal stressors (e.g. cyberbullying, hostile content);
  - Strengthen protective factors and digital resilience skills;
  - Emphasise identity affirmation, community, and access to support services.

## **Annex A1.3 : Scenario Cards**

### **Scenario 1 – Outed in the Class Group Chat**

Maja (16) is bisexual and out to a few close friends, but not to her classmates or family. One evening, someone in her class screenshots a private conversation where Maja mentioned having a crush on a girl and posts it into the class WhatsApp group with the caption: "LOL, look who's actually into girls ☐."

Within minutes, messages start rolling in: some classmates post laughing emojis, some say "I knew it," and a few write "that's gross." A couple of people privately message Maja saying "I support you!", but they stay silent in the main group.

Maja immediately deletes her profile picture, turns off her phone and spends the rest of the night replaying the messages in her head. She worries what will happen at school the next day, and whether someone will tell her parents.

### **Scenario 2 – "Just Jokes" on Gaming Voice Chat**

Noel (17) is a non-binary teen who loves playing a popular online team-based game. They usually keep their mic off, but one evening they join voice chat to coordinate with the team. Their voice is read as "feminine" by some players.

A teammate immediately asks, "Are you a girl or what?" Noel replies, "I'm non-binary." The channel goes quiet for a second, and then someone laughs: "So... what bathroom do you use? ☐" Another player imitates Noel's voice and says, "I identify as an attack helicopter," while others laugh.

When Noel goes quiet, one person says, "Relax, it's just jokes, don't be so sensitive." Noel finishes the match in silence, turns off the game and deletes their voice chat app. They consider never using voice chat again.

### **Scenario 3 – Hate in the Comment Section**

Rashid (18) is a queer young person of colour who follows a lot of LGBTQ+ activists on TikTok and Instagram. One evening, he sees a viral news post about a proposed law restricting trans healthcare and decides to read the comments "just to see what people are saying."

The comment section is full of transphobic and homophobic slurs, conspiracy theories, and people calling queer people "mentally ill" and "dangerous for kids." Some users have thousands of likes on their hateful comments.

No one is attacking Rashid personally, but as he scrolls for 20–30 minutes, he feels his chest tighten. He starts to wonder whether his neighbours, classmates or relatives secretly think the same things. He closes the app feeling numb and hopeless.

### **Scenario 4 – Family Group Chat "Debate"**

Lena (19) is a lesbian and has recently come out to a few close friends, but not to her extended family. She is part of a big family group chat on a messaging app. One day, an aunt shares a meme that says: "There are only two genders – the rest is just attention-seeking," with laughing emojis.

Several relatives react with "So true!" or send thumbs up. When another relative gently questions the post, Lena's cousin replies, "Come on, it's just a meme, don't be offended."

Lena feels a strong urge to write something and correct them, but she also fears being outed or starting a fight in front of the whole family. She deletes a long message she has written three times. That evening, she quietly leaves the group chat without saying why, then worries for days about what her relatives might think.

### **Scenario 5 – Activism Account Under Attack**

Jo (20) is a queer university student who runs a small Instagram account posting positive content about LGBTQ+ rights and mental health. They usually get a few dozen likes and supportive comments from friends.

One day, a larger political account shares one of Jo's posts with the caption: "Look what they're teaching your children now." Within hours, Jo's account is flooded with hundreds of hateful comments and DMs: slurs, threats, and accusations of "ruining society."

Jo spends the evening trying to delete and report the worst messages but can't keep up. They feel responsible for protecting their followers from seeing the hate. At the same time, Jo receives DMs from queer followers thanking them and saying the posts help them feel less alone. Jo wonders whether they should delete the whole account to make the harassment stop, or keep going because it clearly matters to people.

### **Scenario 6 – Intersectional Stress in the Classroom Forum**

Ana (17) is a queer Roma girl who loves art and posts her drawings in a private classroom forum where students share creative work. One week, she uploads a drawing that shows two girls holding hands with a rainbow in the background.

A classmate comments publicly under the drawing: "Nice drawing, but maybe don't push your lifestyle on us." Another writes: "First you people live off benefits, now you want special rights too ☐." Several students "like" the comments, but no one explicitly defends Ana.

Later that day, the teacher posts a general message in the forum saying, "Please remember to stay respectful, everyone," without naming the comments or offering specific support. Ana stops posting her art. She also starts turning off her camera during online classes and rarely speaks.

## Annex A1.3 : Support Resources List (Slovakia, Germany, Lithuania, Czechia)

### Note for facilitators:

This list is a starting point for signposting participants to help. It is not exhaustive and details may change – please check websites for the most up-to-date information before printing or presenting.

In any **immediate danger to life or health**, participants should contact **emergency services (112)** or the nearest hospital.

### 1. Slovakia

#### General crisis and mental health support

- **IPčko – Krízová linka pomoci**

24/7, free, anonymous psychological support for people in crisis (phone, chat, email, video). Especially oriented to young people.

Phone: **0800 500 333**

Chat / info: [ipcko.sk](http://ipcko.sk) and [krizovalinkapomoci.sk](http://krizovalinkapomoci.sk) ([IPčko.sk](http://IPčko.sk))

- **Linka dôvery Nezábudka (Liga za duševné zdravie)**

National emotional support and crisis intervention helpline.

Phone: **0800 800 566** (free, 24/7) ([findahelpline.com](http://findahelpline.com))

#### LGBTI+-specific counselling and community

- **InPoradňa – Iniciatíva Inakosť**

Social, psychological and legal counselling for LGBTI+ people and their families (online and in person), plus information on where to get urgent help. ([Iniciatíva Inakosť](http://Iniciatíva Inakosť))

- **PRIZMA – Komunitné a poradenské centrum (Košice)**

Community and counselling centre for LGBTI+ people offering free **social, psychological, legal and specialised counselling**, as well as support groups and community activities, in person and online.

Info & contact form: [prizma-kosice.sk](http://prizma-kosice.sk) ([PRIZMA KOŠICE](http://PRIZMA KOŠICE))

#### Helpline for LGBTI+ refugees from Ukraine (Košice Pride & PRIZMA)

Email: [help@pridekosice.sk](mailto:help@pridekosice.sk) (support for LGBTI+ refugees and people on the move). ([pridekosice.sk](http://pridekosice.sk))

#### Violence and gender-based violence

- **Národná linka pre ženy zažívajúce násilie**

Phone: **0800 212 212** – 24/7, free national helpline for women at risk of or experiencing violence. ([FENESTRA](http://FENESTRA))

### 2. Germany

#### General crisis and mental health support

- **Telefonseelsorge**

Nationwide, free, anonymous crisis hotline and online chat, available 24/7 for anyone in distress.

Phone: **0800 111 0 111, 0800 111 0 222** (and **116 123** is also used as a national crisis number)

Web / chat: **telefonseelsorge.de** ([13ReasonsWhyToolkit](#))

- **Nummer gegen Kummer – Kinder- und Jugendtelefon**

Free helpline for children and young people, with phone and online options.

Youth: **116 111**

Parents' line: **0800 111 0 550** ([13ReasonsWhyToolkit](#))

- **Queer youth and LGBTI+-specific organisations**

- **Jugendnetzwerk Lambda (Lambda Bundesverband)**

Nationwide queer youth association (approx. 14–27 years) offering peer support (email, chat, video), youth groups, camps and educational activities specifically for LSBTIQ youth.

Info: [lambda-online.de](#), [lambda-bund.de](#) ([equaldex.com](#))

- **LIEBESLEBEN – Get advice**

National counselling platform providing online and phone support on sexuality, gender identity, sexual orientation and harms such as conversion practices; can help connect to local counselling.

Info & contact: [liebesleben.de/en/get-advice](#) ([liebesleben.de](#))

### Queer-friendly professional support

- **Queermed Germany**

Online directory of queer-sensitive doctors and therapists across Germany, searchable by location, specialism, and identity-related filters.

Directory: [queermed-deutschland.de](#) ([queermed-deutschland.de](#))

- **It's Complicated**

Therapist search tool with filters including language, gender and identity, useful for finding LGBTIQ-affirming professionals. (Expatica)

## 3. Lithuania

### General and youth helplines

- **Jaunimo linija (Youth Line)**

24/7 free emotional support for young people by phone and online chat.

Phone: **8 800 28888** (within Lithuania)

Web / chat: [jaunimolinija.lt](#) ([findahelpline.com](#))

- **Vaikų linija (Child Line)**

Emotional support for children and teenagers via phone and online chat.

Phone: **116 111**

Web: [vaikuliniija.lt](#) ([findahelpline.com](#))

- **Vilties linija**

Free, confidential 24/7 support line for adults, including mental health and crisis issues.

Phone: **116 123**

Web / chat: **viltieslinija.lt** ([findahelpline.com](http://findahelpline.com))

#### **LGBTI+-specific organisations and support**

- **Lithuanian Gay League (LGL)**

National LGBT+ rights organisation with a community centre, legal counselling and an emotional support platform for LGBT children, adolescents and their parents/teachers.

Info: **lgl.lt** (Lithuanian Gay League) ([lgl.lt](http://lgl.lt))

- **Tolerant Youth Association**

Youth-focused organisation working on LGBT rights and diversity education; can be a useful contact point for queer youth and allies. ([Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tolerant_Youth_Association))

#### **4. Czechia (Czech Republic)**

##### **General crisis and mental health support**

- **Linka první psychické pomoci (First Psychological Aid Line)**

Nationwide free, anonymous crisis line for adults (phone and chat).

Phone: **116 123 (24/7)**

Chat hours listed on **linkapsychickepomoci.cz** ([linkapsychickepomoci.cz](http://linkapsychickepomoci.cz))

- **Linka bezpečí (Safety Line)**

Free, anonymous helpline for children and students up to 26, via phone, chat and email.

Phone: **116 111 (24/7, free)**

Web / chat: **linkabezpeci.cz** (Child Helpline International)

##### **LGBTI+-specific lines and online counselling**

- **LGBT+ linka (STUD, z.s.)**

Telephone counselling and support line for LGBT+ people and their close ones, focusing on issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Info: **lgbtpluslinka.cz** (project of STUD, z.s.) ([lgbtpluslinka.cz](http://lgbtpluslinka.cz))

- **sbarvouven.cz – Online poradna pro LGBT+ lidi**

Peer-to-peer online counselling for LGBT+ people dealing with coming out, rejection by family or friends, bullying at school, etc. Also offers **support groups (“Najdi svou barvu”)** and queer meet-ups in several cities.

Web / chat & groups: **sbarvouven.cz** ([Sbarvouven](http://sbarvouven.cz))

##### **Community and professional resources**

- **Prague Pride – Community Centre & “I need help” portal**

Community centre and support hub, with links to support groups, legal counselling and reporting hate violence.

Info: **praguepride.com** → “I need help” section ([praguepride.com](https://praguepride.com))

- **Queerpsychologie & LGBT zdraví**

Online directories for queer-friendly psychologists and helping professionals in Czechia (including those with experience with LGBT+ clients and hate-crime survivors).

Directories: **queerpsychologie.cz, lgbt-zdravi.cz** ([LGBT zdraví](https://lgbt-zdravi.cz))

### **Tips for Using This Annex in the Workshop**

- You can **print this list as a handout**, adapt it into a **slide or poster**, or create a **localised version** with city-/region-specific contacts added by participants.
- Encourage young people to **save at least one general crisis number and one LGBTI+-specific resource** into their phone during the session.
- Remind participants that reaching out for help is a **sign of strength**, not weakness, and that **they can also contact these services if they are worried about a friend**.

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