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User Guide

Proud Ambassadors

Online Support Forum

By Sensus

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the **Proud Ambassadors Online Support Forum**.

This forum is part of the **Proud Ambassadors** project (*“Support of the Inclusion and Reporting of LGBTQIA+ Youth and their Mental Well-being in Europe”*) and is developed within Work Package 4, which includes the creation of synchronous and asynchronous training opportunities, as well as the development of the Support Forum for peer-guidance. The project foresees that the forum will support users through trained Proud Ambassadors and will function as a digital space connected to the broader project objective of supporting the inclusion and mental well-being of LGBTQIA+ youth.

The forum is hosted through Discord and is intended to provide a safer and more accessible online space where participants can:

- Connect with others;
- Exchange experiences;
- Ask questions & feedback;
- Receive peer guidance;
- Access useful information and support resources;
- Participate in respectful community dialogue related to LGBTIQ+ inclusion and mental well-being.

This guide explains:

- What the forum is;
- Who it is for;
- How to join and navigate it;
- What kind of participation is expected;
- What rules apply;
- What is not allowed;
- How moderation works;
- How safety, privacy, and reporting issues are handled.

This guide should be read by all users before they begin participating in the forum.

2. Purpose of the Proud Ambassadors Support Forum

The Proud Ambassadors Support Forum is designed as a **peer-support and peer-guidance environment**.

Its purpose is to:

- Create a welcoming online space for respectful interaction;
- Promote awareness and inclusion related to LGBTQIA+ topics;
- Support young people and those working with young people;
- Help users access guidance, resources and signposting;
- Foster community dialogue based on dignity, empathy and non-discrimination;
- Allow trained Proud Ambassadors to apply the knowledge and skills acquired through the project's training activities in a practical online setting.

According to the project description, the Support Forum is part of the project's support solutions and is linked to the provision of peer-guidance by trained Proud Ambassadors.

The forum is therefore not just a general chat space. It is a **structured, moderated support environment** connected to the educational and social inclusion aims of the project.

2.1 What the forum is

The forum is:

- a moderated online community;
- a place for peer exchange and peer support;
- a place to ask questions and receive guidance;
- a place to learn from others' experiences;
- a place to find useful resources and signposting;
- a place for inclusive and respectful discussion;
- a place supported by trained Proud Ambassadors and administrators.

2.2 What the forum is not

The forum is not:

- a crisis intervention service;
- a professional psychotherapy or counselling service;
- a medical advice service;
- a legal advice service;
- an emergency response mechanism;
- an unmoderated social media group;

- a place for hate speech, hostile behavior or harmful content.

This distinction should be made very clear to users from the first page of the guide and ideally also inside the server itself, especially in the **welcome, rules** and **safety information** channels.

3. Who the Forum is for

The forum is intended for people who are connected to the aims of the Proud Ambassadors project, including:

- LGBTQIA+ youth and young people seeking a respectful and informed community space;
- youth workers;
- educators and facilitators;
- trained Proud Ambassadors;
- users interested in inclusion, anti-discrimination and mental well-being in relation to LGBTQIA+ youth;
- project-related participants and community members, where applicable.

Because the forum deals with sensitive themes, all participants are expected to use the space responsibly and respectfully.

The partnership may wish to further clarify whether:

- the forum is open to the broader public;
- the forum is open only to selected participants;
- users need to complete a registration or verification step before entering;
- the forum is intended mainly for beneficiaries or also for professionals.

4. Core Values of the Forum

The Support Forum should operate according to a clear set of shared values. These values should be reflected in the guide, in the server channels, and in moderation practice.

4.1 Respect

Every member deserves to be treated with dignity, regardless of:

- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- gender expression

- sex characteristics
- age
- ethnicity
- nationality
- religion or belief
- disability
- language
- social background
- migration or refugee background
- any other personal characteristic

4.2 Inclusion

The forum aims to be inclusive and affirming. Members should feel able to participate without fear of ridicule, discrimination or exclusion.

4.3 Safety

The forum should promote emotional and social safety. While no online environment can guarantee total safety, the forum should be actively moderated to reduce harm and respond appropriately to problematic behavior.

4.4 Confidentiality and privacy

The forum should encourage responsible sharing and protect participants' privacy as much as possible.

4.5 Supportive dialogue

The purpose of the forum is not to “win arguments” but to promote understanding, information-sharing, peer-guidance and constructive community exchange.

All participants will receive this message when they get the direct link to the discord server; all participants need to agree on the terms to be able to get the direct link. The same message is pinned on the first page of our discord server.

COMMUNITY RULES & SUPPORT RESOURCES

Welcome to our server! Please read before posting.

Communication Guidelines

To keep this a safe and respectful space for everyone, we ask all members to follow these simple rules:

Be kind and respectful — treat others the way you'd like to be treated

No hate speech, harassment, or discrimination of any kind

Stay on topic in each channel

No spamming or self-promotion without permission

Use trigger warnings when discussing sensitive topics

Listen to moderators — their decisions are final

Response Time

We do our best to answer every question and message. Please allow up to 48 hours for a response. We appreciate your patience! 🙏

In Case of Emergency

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please don't wait — reach out to a helpline immediately. They are free, confidential, and available 24/7:

- Sweden — Mind Självordslinjen: 90 101, SOS: 112
- Italy — Telefono Amico Italia: 02 2327 2327 (10:00–midnight)
- Slovenia — Klic v duševni stiski (Psihiatrična klinika Ljubljana): 01 520 99 00 (every day between 19.00-07.00); Zaupni Telefon Samarijan in Sopotnik: 116 123 (every day 24/7)
- Greece — National Social Solidarity Centre: 10306
- Belgium — Télé-Accueil / Tele-onthaal: 107
- 📞 EU-wide emergency number: 112 🌐 Pan-European mental health line: 116 123 (available in most EU countries)

5. Beginner Guide: How to Join Our Discord Server

5.1. Step 1: Join the Server

OPEN THE DISCORD LINK:

👉 https://discord.com/register?redirect_to=%2Fchannels%2F%40me

5.2. Step 2: Create a Discord account

If you don't have an active Discord account:

- Click **Sign Up**
- Enter the required information
- Create a username
- Complete any necessary verification steps required by the platform

5.3. Step 3: Choose an appropriate username

Users are encouraged to:

- Sign up with an anonymous username
- Choose a username that they feel comfortable using
- Avoid usernames that are offensive, threatening, discriminatory, or sexually explicit
- Avoid impersonating moderations, Proud Ambassadors, or partner organizations

5.4. Step 4: Complete the entry steps through the Proud Ambassadors website

Before full participation, users shall be required to:

- Read the welcome message
- Read the server rules
- Read the privacy and safety notice
- Confirm acceptance of the rules
- Receive access to the main channels

This acceptance step is important as it establishes a shared basis for participation.

👉 First, access the Proud Ambassadors website here:

Then, you need to confirm agreement with the rules of participation and privacy and safety notice, using the **Microsoft Forms below**.

After filling out the form, where you agree to the terms and rules of the community, you will receive a direct link to the Discord server. By ticking the agreement box in

our Microsoft Form, confirming that you agree to our rules and terms, you have accepted the community guidelines.

Microsoft form to be filled out:

<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/BQp1MkgNK2?origin=lprLink>

6. Guide how to navigate in Discord

Should you need further assistance on how to navigate in the Discord platform, you may watch the following video, step to step guide how to create a account and navigate in Discord:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5c6Bc-S0TI>

Beginners guide to Discord is accessible via the link below:

<https://support.discord.com/hc/en-us/articles/360045138571-Beginner-s-Guide-to-Discord>

7. After You Join the Server

Below we explain the **onboarding flow** of the Server, once you have joined:

7.1. Welcome area

When users first join, you will land in a limited-access area containing:

- Welcome message
- Short *About the forum* notice
- Rules of participation
- Privacy and safety notice

Users ought to read carefully the rules of participation and privacy notice, before posting.

7.3. Server roles & responsibilities

See the different roles below:

Once the user accepts the rules, they receive a dedicated role as: Member

Administrators — Project Partners Administrators have full control over the server structure and settings.

This includes:

- Managing server settings and appearance

- Creating and deleting channels
- Managing all roles and permissions
- Inviting and managing bots
- Overseeing the overall structure of the server

We will have **1–2 Administrators** on this Discord server. Our **Project Partners** hold the administrator role. **Sensus will be the main responsible party throughout the entire process** and will create a schedule to divide responsibilities fairly among administrators.

Moderators — Proud Ambassadors Moderators help keep the community safe, respectful, and running smoothly. This includes:

- Removing inappropriate messages
- Muting, kicking, or banning members if needed
- Monitoring conversations and enforcing community guidelines
- Welcoming new members and supporting the community
- Escalating issues to administrators when necessary
- The moderators answer questions max 48 hours after they have been posted.

Our **Proud Ambassadors** take on the moderator role — they are the heart of this community.

The responsibility schedule is managed by Sensus, ensuring clear and shared ownership of the server at all times.

8. Navigating the Server

The current section notes what channels appear within the Proud Ambassadors Discord server.

8.1. What are channels?

Channels are separate spaces inside the Discord server where different types of communication take place.

Each channel has a **specific purpose**. This helps keep the forum organized and makes it easier for users to find the right information and conversations.

8.2. Proud Ambassadors Discord Channels

On the **left side**, you'll see different channels (for example: #general, #chat). More analytically, the channels one may access are:

- Welcome Message & Rules
- Community channels:
 - Introduction
 - General chat
 - Peer-support
 - Questions & Guidance
 - Well-being Resources
 - Events & Updates
 - Swedish channel
 - Greek channel
 - Italian channel
 - Belgian channel
 - Slovenian channel

To access a channel, simply click on to open it and start communicating. Each channel has a different purpose (chatting, information, etc.).

8.3. Sending Messages

In order to properly communicate within each channel of the forum, you can start typing your message within it. More analytically, to send a message:

- a) Open the relevant channel
- b) At the bottom of the screen, there is a text box
- c) Type your message
- d) Press **Enter** to send

✓ Your message will now be visible to others in that channel.

8.4. Before sending a message

Before sending a message to any of the forum's channels, the users are encouraged to ask themselves:

- Is this the right channel for this message?
- Is my message respectful?
- Am I sharing more personal information than I want to/should?
- Could my message be harmful, offensive or triggering to someone else?
- Am I asking for peer support, or do I actually need professional and/or emergency support?

8.5. Good participation practices

Users are also encouraged to:

- Write clearly and respectfully

- Stay on topic
- Avoid flooding the channel(s) with repeated messages
- Give other members space to respond
- Use content warnings if discussing sensitive themes (where relevant)
- Remember that written messages can be misunderstood more easily than face-to-face conversations

Messages that required extra care

Users should be especially careful when posting:

- Personal stories involving trauma
- Content involving themes/topics of violence
- Experiences of discrimination
- Content related to mental health difficulties
- Content involving self-harm and/or suicidal thoughts

In such cases, moderators may intervene to redirect, support or signpost appropriately.

9. Private Messages: Contacting Proud Ambassadors, Moderators and Admins (SENSUS123)

According to the Support Forum's purpose and objectives, the users may contact admins and Proud Ambassadors/Moderators privately, in order to seek personalized and more concrete guidance.

9.1. Who can help?

Users may see different roles in the **members list** (at the **right side** of the server).

- **Admin:** Responsible for the overall technical and governance management of the server.
- **Moderator:** Responsible for enforcing rules and supporting safe participation.
- **Proud Ambassador:** Trained member able to provide peer guidance in line with the project's aims.

9.2. When to contact a Proud Ambassador, Moderator or Admin

Users should contact the Proud Ambassadors, Moderators and Admins, based on the following categoration of (non-exclusive) scenarios:

- **Admin:** when they need extra help using the forum or, in general, facing technical difficulties that require expert's assistance or intervention.
- **Moderator:** in a variety of cases, such as when:
 - They experience harassment
 - They feel unsafe using the server
 - They witness discriminatory behavior
 - They came across harmful and/or inappropriate content
 - They have questions regarding the rules of participation
 - They want to report a message or a member
- **Proud Ambassador:** in a variety of cases such as when:
 - They need extra knowledge and/or information regarding a resource, a good practice, or a support service
 - They need personalized guidance regarding an incident/problem, in terms of support lines, services and/or authorities, at EU or national level(s)
 - They would like to receive personalized guidance on counselling and/or support LGBTIQA+ youngsters in relevant professional/activistic contexts

9.3. How to send a private message

In order to send a private message:

- Look at the **members list** on the **right side** of the main page

- Locate the **moderator, admin (SENSUS123) or Proud Ambassador** in the list
- Click the name
- Select **Message**
- ***A private chat will open***
- Type your message
- Press **Enter**

Then, the respective member will answer your request in due time.

9.4. What users should expect

Users are reminded of what they may expect when communicating with Proud Ambassadors, moderators and/or the admin:

- Moderators and the Admin aim to respond as soon as reasonably possible
- Response times may vary due to multiple factors (different timezones, national holidays and/or PTOs, etc.)
- The forum **is not monitored as an emergency 24-hour service** (since this is not the purpose of the forum itself)
- Users in crisis should use local emergency and/or professional support services

10. Detailed Community Guidelines and Rules

The present section includes further rules and guidelines for proper conduct and community engagement within the project's Support Forum, including prohibition of -inter alia- racism, homophobia, transphobia, harassment and threats.

10.1. Respectful Conduct

All users **must**:

- Treat others with dignity and respect
- Interact in good faith
- Respect the fundamental values of the European Union as reflected in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and relevant EU equality and anti-discrimination directives. Users must not engage in discrimination, harassment, or hate speech based on characteristics such as gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, or other protected grounds.
- Acknowledge that members may have different lived experiences
- Avoid hostile, mocking or dismissive language
- Respect chosen names and pronouns
- Respect boundaries when others do not wish to discuss a topic further
- Communicate without intimidation or manipulation

Any action and/or notion that is reported to or even considered by the moderators as breach of the above, non-exclusively listed rules, will pose reason for exclusion from the forum.

10.2. Non-Discrimination

The forum does not allow discriminatory conduct based on any protected or personal characteristic.

This includes but is not limited to:

- racism
- homophobia
- transphobia
- biphobia
- interphobia
- sexism
- misogyny
- ableism
- xenophobia
- age-based discrimination

- religious discrimination
- anti-migrant or anti-refugee hate
- discrimination based on social class or background

This applies to:

- direct insults
- coded or indirect hate speech
- stereotypes
- “jokes” targeting identities
- exclusionary behaviour
- discriminatory slurs
- denial of identities
- misgendering used intentionally
- harassment based on identity

10.3. Harassment, Bullying and Intimidation

The following are not allowed:

- repeated unwanted contact
- aggressive targeting of a member
- public shaming
- humiliation
- ridicule
- threats
- intimidation
- bullying
- dogpiling
- stalking behaviour within the server
- pressuring users to disclose personal information

Even if no explicit slur is used, behaviour may still be considered harassment if it creates fear, discomfort or humiliation.

10.4. Hate Speech and Harmful Language

Users must not post language or content that:

- promotes hatred
- dehumanises people
- advocates discrimination
- incites hostility
- celebrates violence against individuals or groups
- normalises abuse against LGBTQIA+ people or any other group

Hate speech is grounds for immediate moderation action and may lead to immediate removal depending on severity.

11. Privacy, Confidentiality & Personal Information

Privacy is especially important in a forum dealing with sensitive personal experiences.

11.1. Users should protect themselves

Members are encouraged to:

- use an anonymous username if they prefer
- avoid sharing full names, addresses, phone numbers, workplace details or school details
- avoid sharing information that could expose themselves or others
- think carefully before posting personal stories publicly

11.2. Users must protect others

Members must not:

- reveal another user's identity without consent
- copy and paste private conversations into public channels
- share screenshots from the server outside the forum without permission
- dox, expose or identify another member
- pressure someone to "prove" their identity or experience

Any action and/or notion that is reported to or even considered by the moderators as breach of the above, non-exclusively listed rules, will pose reason for exclusion from the forum as well as for potential legal action by any affected party.

11.3. Confidentiality expectations

Although the forum aims to be respectful and privacy-conscious, users should also understand that:

- Discord is an online platform and no online system is completely risk-free
- moderators may need to review messages when responding to reports or rule violations
- content may be acted upon if safety concerns arise

12. Content Rules for Sensitive and Triggering Topics

Because the forum relates to mental well-being and lived experience, users may sometimes discuss difficult issues. The present section of the guide clarifies how to do this responsibly.

12.1. Sensitive topics may include (non-exclusive list)

- discrimination
- family rejection
- social exclusion
- mental health struggles
- gender identity exploration
- bullying
- trauma
- violence
- self-harm thoughts
- suicidal ideation

12.2. Expectations when discussing sensitive topics

Users should:

- avoid graphic descriptions
- avoid sensationalising traumatic experiences
- avoid presenting harmful acts in a way that may encourage imitation
- use care and empathy in responses
- use content warnings where relevant if the forum adopts that practice

12.3. Content that is **not allowed**

The forum will **not allow**:

- graphic depictions of self-harm or violence
- instructions for self-harm or suicide
- promotion of eating disorders, self-harm or risky behaviour
- glorification of abuse or violence
- encouragement of substance misuse
- sharing exploitative or abusive content

13. Misinformation and Unqualified Advice

Because users may ask for support or personalized information, the guide clearly states that members must not present themselves as professionals unless explicitly authorised and qualified. Moreover, as previously explained, the purpose of the forum isn't to provide professional and/or crisis management support. It is rather intended to host a safe space for peer-guidance, knowledge/resources exchange and guidance on where to seek further help and/or assistance.

The following **is not allowed**:

- presenting personal opinion as medical fact
- giving diagnosis
- pressuring users to reject professional help
- giving any advice about medication, health or crisis situations
- circulating false or harmful information about LGBTQIA+ identities or mental health

Encouraged:

- sharing reliable resources
- speaking from one's own experience while making clear that it is personal experience
- signposting rather than diagnosing

14. Spam, Promotion and Unrelated Use of the Forum

The forum is not intended for spam or unrelated promotional use. The following non-exclusive list presents **not allowed actions**:

- repeated irrelevant posting
- commercial promotion
- unsolicited advertising
- posting referral links
- bot spam
- mass direct messaging of members
- posting off-topic material in multiple channels
- attempts to recruit members into unrelated groups without permission

Disclaimer: Only the official partner organizations of the **Proud Ambassadors** project may decide whether certain *project-related* dissemination posts/messages may be allowed in a dedicated channel of the forum.

15. Illegal/Sangerous Behavior

The forum must not be used to:

- threaten people
- plan or encourage violence
- distribute illegal content
- exploit minors or vulnerable persons
- encourage criminal conduct
- share non-consensual intimate content
- share blackmail material
- facilitate stalking or doxxing

Such behaviour may lead to immediate removal and, where required, escalation according to applicable law and safeguarding obligations.

16. Membership Acceptance Process

This is a core and critical aspect of the Support Forum's use.

16.1. Why membership acceptance matters

The Support Forum, due to its themes and purposes will not function as a completely uncontrolled open-entry environment without clear expectations.

Accordingly, the membership acceptance process:

- Clarifies the purposes of the forum
- Ensures that users have read the rules
- Helps protect the engaged community
- Creates a stronger basis for moderation
- Reduces confusion and misuse

16.2. Acceptance process

Stage 1 – Entry

The participant opens the invite link (Microsoft Forms or Wufoo) and fills in their details, then receives a direct link to the Discord server.

The participant joins Discord by creating an account.

The participant can now join our server and will see the pinned welcome message, which includes the community rules, communication guidelines, and navigation instructions on how to use the server.

16.3. Member responsibilities

By participating in the forum, members agree to:

- follow the rules
- participate respectfully
- protect their own privacy
- respect others' confidentiality
- use the correct channels
- avoid harmful or discriminatory conduct
- avoid sharing dangerous misinformation
- report harmful behaviour when they see it
- understand that moderators may intervene when needed
- understand that forum access can be restricted or removed if rules are violated

17. Reporting Problems or Inappropriate Behaviour

The present section elaborates on how the users may contact moderators and adfmins to report problems with the server or inappropriate behavior.

17.1. What should be reported

Users should report:

- harassment
- discrimination
- hate speech
- threats
- unwanted private messages
- suspicious or unsafe behaviour
- privacy violations
- impersonation
- repeated rule violations
- harmful or triggering content
- any behaviour that makes them feel unsafe
- technical problems
- need for further assistance/guidance regarding technical use of the forum

17.2 How to report

According to the previously explained hierarchy, the users are encouraged to report problems based on the expertise of different roles within the Forum. Accordingly:

- **Technical problems:** They are reported to the admin by tagging them in the “Report any issues” channel.
- **Inappropriate behavior or content-related problems:** They are reported to the Moderators by tagging them in the “Report any issues” channel.

17.3. Moderation Measures and Member Removal

Moderation is not related to punishment for disagreements, but its purpose is to protect the community, reduce harm and maintain respectful and inclusive dialogue within the forum.

Moderators’ actions may vary, depending on the situation, and a non-exclusive list of actions is presented below:

- remind a member of the rules
- delete or edit inappropriate content, where platform tools permit
- issue a verbal or written warning
- temporarily restrict posting
- mute a user
- temporarily remove a user
- permanently ban a user

For several violations, a progressive approach will be established:

1. reminder
2. warning
3. temporary mute
4. temporary removal
5. permanent ban

In cases that require immediate action, such as immediate removal or ban, the moderators will intervene accordingly. Such incidents include (non-exclusively):

- hate speech
- credible threats
- doxxing
- targeted harassment
- graphic harmful content
- severe discriminatory abuse
- repeated harassment after warning
- deliberate endangerment of another member

Where/when appropriate, the concerned user will be informed about:

- Which rule has been violated
- What moderation measure is being applied

Accordingly, no appeal and/or review process is being applied.

18. Important Safety Information

18.1. Disclaimer

The Proud Ambassadors Support Forum provides peer support and peer guidance only. It does not provide professional mental health treatment, crisis intervention, medical advice or emergency assistance.

Moderators and Proud Ambassadors:

- are not emergency responders
- may not be online at all times
- cannot guarantee immediate intervention
- cannot provide professional therapy through Discord

18.2. Support for users in crisis

If a user is:

- in immediate danger
- experiencing suicidal thoughts
- at risk of self-harm
- being threatened or abused
- in an urgent mental health crisis

they should:

- contact local emergency services
- contact a trusted adult, friend or family member
- contact a mental health professional or crisis line in their country
- seek immediate in-person help if needed

18.3. Local and international emergency information

Due to the project's multinational approach, below we provide an extensive list of emergency number.

Specifically, in an emergency, contact your local emergency number immediately.

- Sweden — Mind Självmodslinjen: 90 101, SOS: 112
- Italy — Telefono Amico Italia: 02 2327 2327 (10:00–midnight)
- Slovenia — Klic v duševni stiski (Psihiatrična klinika Ljubljana): 01 520 99 00 (every day between 19.00-07.00); Zaupni Telefon Samaritan in Sopotnik: 116 123 (every day 24/7)
- Greece — National Social Solidarity Centre: 10306
- Belgium — Télé-Accueil / Tele-onthaal: 107

-  EU-wide emergency number: 112  Pan-European mental health line: 116 123 (available in most EU countries)

Need Help?

- Ask in a channel
- Consult the Discord's Safety and other technical support functions
- Or contact the admin (**SENSUS123**) directly



Creating Space for LGBTQIA+ Youth to Thrive