

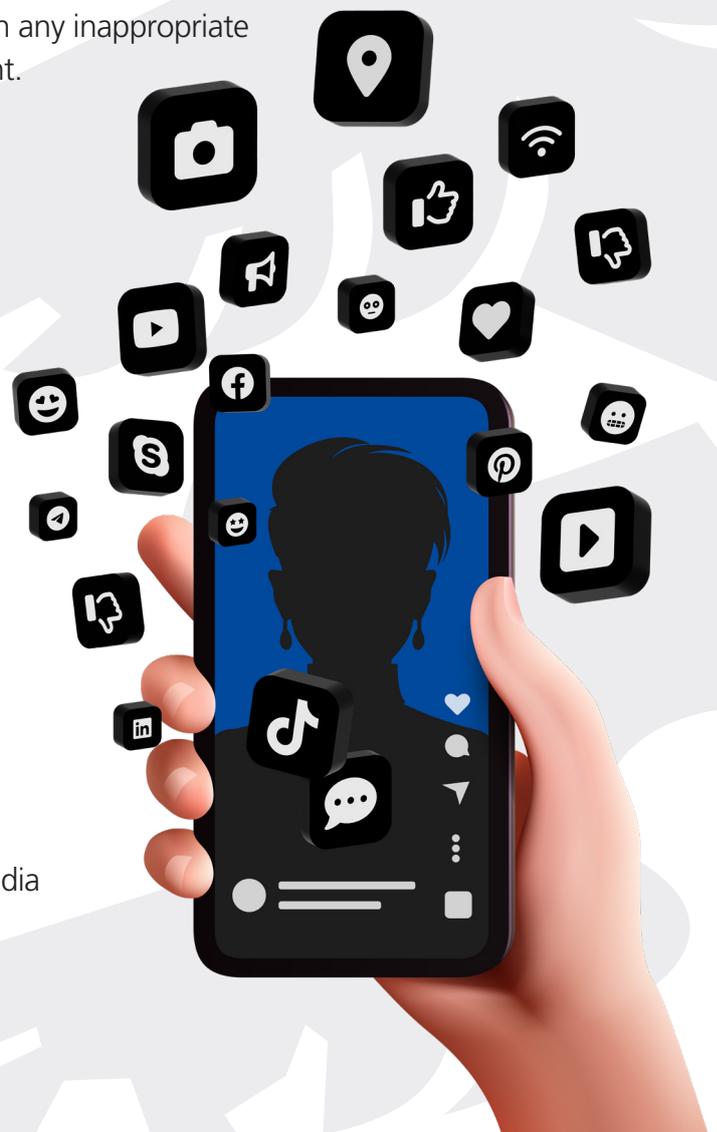
Tips for control of social media byproducts

So-called byproducts are part of social media. Some of these you can affect by your own actions, but others you cannot. Familiarising with the byproducts and their causes will aid you in how to deal with them.

Inappropriate comments and language use

Social media algorithms favour contents that arouse feelings which then often polarises the ensuing discussion. Some users of social media also provoke others on purpose, remain unable to control their behavior and project their negativity and unwellness on others. You decide how you view and react to this type of behavior. The following lists some practical tips to consider:

- When something tries to crawl under your skin, first take a moment to breath in. When provoked, people tend to do things on the spot that they then regret afterwards.
- You are not obliged to respond or participate in any inappropriate discussions on your private social media account. Your service position as a civil servant does not affect this. Often it is most effective just to ignore inappropriate comments.
- It may seem lucrative to strike back. Yet this hardly ever works. Rather it will just provoke the counterpart plus affect the image that other social media users have of you. Keeping calm tends to calm down the situation too.
- Learn to view your own actions critically. What is the tone of your communications? How would your parents, children, or spouse react to your messages?
- Social media platforms create a distance between the interactors and makes communications increasingly blunt. Yet real people exist behind the user accounts. All that is considered positive human interaction outside of social media is such also on social media.



“Social media post that goes viral” – sudden overflow of attention

It is characteristic of social media that the publications of an individual social media user may attract major attention. This phenomenon drains its target – also when the attention is positive. The tips listed below provide some suggestions for coping:

- Before anything else, breath in and assess the situation as it is. Social media operates as an echo chamber that tends to put things out of proportion. How big an issue is this? Does the situation require your reaction?
- Manage the load. You are not responsible for replying to or even reading all messages and reactions. You can also restrict the number of stimuli by setting restrictions to the apps and taking breaks from social media presence. It is easier for you to be in control of the situation when you are the one who decides when you react.
- A stir may be caused by a misunderstanding or malediction, but at times you also need to look in the mirror. If you notice that you made a mistake, it is most effective to be open about it, apologise for the mistake and learn from all this. Remember to put things in perspective: we all make mistakes sometimes.

Targeted bullying

Social media accounts with high numbers of followers are susceptible to becoming targeted by bullies. This refers to how a particular individual becomes the target of one or several bullies who post inappropriate or disturbing contents. In some extreme cases, this bullying may also be spread to real life. Social media platforms are an ecosystem that allows even a single bully to produce huge amounts of disturbing material. Targeted bullying can become a heavy and consuming experience for its target. The following lists some methods for controlling the situation:

- Bullies are often motivated by varying factors, but often they are after getting attention. If you refrain from paying attention to them, they move on to new targets. Often the best policy is to do nothing whatsoever.
- Even when being targeted by bullying takes its toll on you, bringing up the issue on social media may only make the situation worse. It is understandable to look for peer support but it is advisable to do so only among the near and dear, not in a public domain online.
- You need not take it. Serving as a civil servant does not mean that you need to tolerate bullying on your own social media accounts. You may silence or block bullying accounts. You need not give any grounds for doing so: you have the right to curate your own news flow. It is also possible to blow the whistle and name accounts that break the terms of use although social media services have varying policies concerning these notifications. You need to understand that a bully may create a number of new accounts to bypass any set restrictions.
- Continuous bullying online may equal a persecution and harassment offence. This may be the case if, for instance, someone targets you with unwanted contacting attempts or threats. If you are being harassed, collect the relevant data, and document in detail what is happening. This will make it easier to have the matter further processed as applicable.

