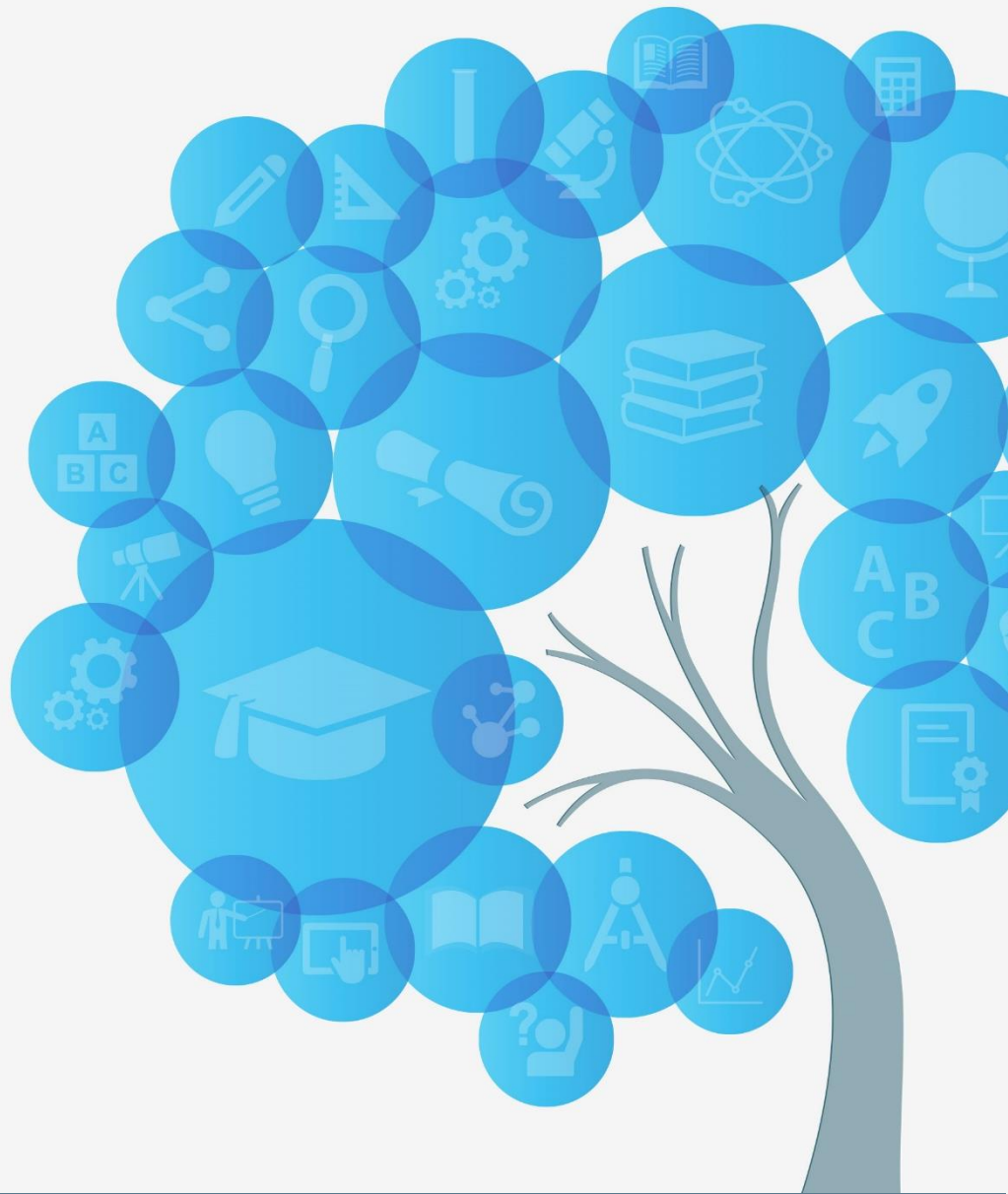




European  
Commission



# ET 2020 Newsletter

February 2020

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Member States committed to peer learning and the exchange of good practice, including the dissemination of outcomes when they adopted the new Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020) in 2009. This newsletter, which appears three times a year, aims to give a succinct overview of these outcomes.

For more information, see

[https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework_en)

## What's new in Education and Training?

### 2018 PISA Results - the EU has not yet met its target for underachievement

On 3 December 2019, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published the 2018 results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The survey compares the reading, mathematics and science performance of 15-year-old pupils around the world every three years. Over half a million 15-year-olds from 79 countries and economies, including all EU Member States, took the PISA test in 2018, with a special focus on reading. Overall, PISA 2018 results show that the EU has not yet met its target for underachievement. More than one in five 15-year-olds in the EU (21.7% in reading, 22.4% in mathematics and 21.6% in science) cannot complete even simple tasks in the tested domain. In the EU as a whole, over the past decade underachievement has increased in science and reading and remained stable in mathematics. Lastly, gender differences in underachievement are rather small in mathematics and science, but remain sizeable in reading, where girls strongly outperform boys in many countries. For more details, please visit the dedicated [PISA webpage](#).

### Ministers of Finance and Education meet to discuss the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of education

On 8 November in Brussels, EU Ministers of Finance and Education held a joint policy debate, *Pursuing effectiveness, efficiency and quality of education and training*, on the topic of a strong economic base for Europe. The key questions were focused on how to strike the balance between the cost of good, accessible and inclusive education for all in relation to the cost of its absence. European Commission Vice President Dombrovskis underlined that investing in education was fundamental for a well-qualified workforce for the future. In the context of the European Semester, investment in education is a key priority. Commissioner Navracsics stressed that investment in education and lifelong learning has to be smart and based on a thorough understanding of what works well.

### Rewarding high-quality teaching about the European Union

In November 2019, the European Commission launched the Jan Amos Comenius Prize for high-quality teaching about the European Union. The prize will reward secondary schools that help pupils learn about the European Union in inspiring ways and from a young age. The prize will provide EU-wide recognition and visibility to relevant work in each Member State and showcase inspirational teaching methods that engage pupils actively in learning about the EU, in view of helping spread these practices. Up to twenty-eight prizes of €8,000 each, one per EU Member State, are foreseen. Details on applications can be viewed on the [dedicated webpage](#).

### Eastern Partnership Education Ministerial

On 22 November, the [Eastern Partnership \(EaP\) Education Ministerial](#) meeting took place in Brussels, under the Finnish Presidency of the European Council. Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Education from the EaP countries met with their counterparts from the current EU Council Presidency trio, as well as representatives of EU institutions, to discuss the **Future of Learning and Teaching**. The meeting reviewed the current framework of cooperation in education, key trends in teaching and learning, challenges for education reform in all EaP countries and future opportunities for cooperation and support. Director-General Themis Christophidou and Director Antoaneta Angelova-Krasteva represented DG EAC.

### European Vocational Skills Week 2019

The fourth edition of the European Vocational Skills Week managed to reach more than 2,000,000 young people, parents, employees, employers, teachers, trainers and other vocational education and training stakeholders. The European VET community organised around 2,000 events promoting excellent, inclusive and career-long VET. The pan-European events, organised in cooperation with the Finnish Presidency of the European Council, took place in Helsinki from 14 to 18 October 2019. Details can be found on the Week's [webpage](#).

## Working Group on Schools blends expert seminars, meetings and peer learning



Image: Working Group on Schools blends expert seminars, meetings and peer learning  
© Hannah Clemson Grainger, 2019

Teachers and school leaders require continuous and structured support in order to provide high-quality student learning and development. The motivation of teachers and school leaders and their involvement in dialogue with stakeholders, external evaluators and critical peers can encourage reflection and help identify areas for future professional learning, both collaboratively and individually. This is a key overarching message from this Group.

### Seminars (9-10 September and 3-4 October 2019, Brussels)

These thematic seminars were designed to bring a number of experts into dialogue with Working Group members. The first focused on school leaders' competencies and careers, identifying different aspects of motivation and how these may be nurtured through recruitment processes and continuing training and development. Competence frameworks may have a role to play, but should not stifle autonomy and the capacity to exercise vision. Opportunities for distributed leadership may enable accountability to be shared and avoid a head teacher becoming isolated, while the 'middle ground' provided, for example, by the municipality or school boards, may provide an additional mediating layer of support.

The second seminar focused on how school self-evaluation/development can be supported through external evaluation; system-level stakeholder surveys; national student assessment and international student assessment. Discussions included reflections on the accessibility and relevance of data, and on how to engage all stakeholders in the design of these policies and their evaluation.

### Autumn Peer Learning Activity and Working Group Meeting

From 15-18 October, representatives from ten countries attended a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) in Larnaca, Cyprus. Here, they explored the relationship between the systemic requirements of school education for highly competent teachers; school-level staff needs for the development and implementation of strategies that benefit their community of learners; and the individual teachers' own motivations and sense of progression. The notion of a 'framework for teaching careers', which maps and manages the structures available to support the professional development of teachers, emerged from the discussions.

In Brussels, on 20-21 November, the Working Group held its fifth meeting. Participants shared the outcomes of the recent Seminars and Peer Learning Activity, and discussed how the external evaluation of schools can support the development of learners. This set the foundation for the next Peer Learning Activity (scheduled for February 2020). Planning was also undertaken for the final report on teachers' and school leaders' careers to be published in (March 2020).

## Working Group on Higher Education focuses on the key enablers of the European Education Area



Image: Working Group on Higher Education focuses on the key enablers of the European Education Area

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Academic integrity and automatic recognition of qualifications are crucial to European higher education policies and the goals of the European Education Area. These issues were further explored during the meeting of the Working Group on Higher Education, and contribute to a larger discussion around the higher education community's holistic approach.

### Academic integrity requires stronger policy focus

Representatives from 11 countries, students and staff, and members of the Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity and the European Network for Academic Integrity attended the Peer Learning Activity (PLA) in Cyprus (24-25 October 2019). This explored how authorities/institutions can enhance academic integrity, and involved discussion and assessment of the effectiveness of policies/practices.

At the Working Group (WG) meeting in Brussels (2 December 2019), discussions continued, and the group concluded that a holistic approach involving the higher education community, stakeholders and all of society is needed (involving regulation, quality assurance, detection technologies, awareness raising, training and monitoring, and research and analysis). The meeting also included updates on progress towards the European Education Area focusing on **brain circulation**, the **graduate tracking** initiative and the **post-ET2020** Framework. These observations will contribute to discussions at the meeting of the Directorate General for Higher Education under the current Croatian Presidency.

### Automatic recognition of higher education qualifications is progressing

A PLA in Brussels (3 December 2019) was dedicated to automatic mutual recognition, and focused on national and regional approaches to implementation of the [Council Recommendation on promoting automatic recognition of higher education](#). The experiences of the Baltic, Nordic and Benelux regions demonstrated the importance of trust and the value of preparation and resourcing. National approaches to recognition were provided by Portugal, Finland and Norway.

Discussions in parallel groups confirmed the need for greater efforts by Ministries to support the implementation of the Council Recommendation, while endorsing the Commission's continuous support for, and prioritisation, of its implementation. At the seminar, all National Academic Recognition Centres (NARICs) were invited to apply for the dedicated Erasmus+ support for NARICs.

## VET Working Group keeps learning in Finland and Hungary



Image: VET Working Group keeps learning in Finland and Hungary  
© Maria Melstveit, 2019

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) Working Group had its seventh meeting on 15 October during the 2019 European Vocational Skills Week in Helsinki, which included a Joint Session with the Adult Learning and the Digital Education: Teaching, Learning and Assessment Working Groups on artificial intelligence. The Group also held a PLA in Hungary on 5-6 December.

### Getting to grips with digital learning in Finland

During the Vocational Skills Week the WG learned about recent reforms in Finland, which aim to achieve an **innovative lifelong learning VET system**, merging IVET and CVT, and organised around personal study paths, broad-based competences, as well as close cooperation with working life. Under the new system, there are no fixed VET paths for anyone: rather, individual competence needs are addressed by offering learners the opportunity to acquire qualifications flexibly, attending programmes in education institutions, workplaces or digital learning environments. National digital solutions are a central part of implementing such individualised learning, including Arvo, a digital education management information service, and ehooks, an online service to support individual study paths.

At the Joint Session (which included the Cedefop Community of Practice and VET providers) participants learned about the application of **artificial intelligence** in VET and adult learning. Presentations and a panel discussion generated key messages to take forward for the report on the Coordinated EU Plan on Artificial Intelligence.

### How do we teach VET learners to be better than robots?

At its third PLA, WG participants learnt about recent VET novelties in Hungary, such as the establishment of the **VET innovation council (SZIT)** involving different stakeholders to provide advice and make recommendations for the changing VET landscape. Moreover, participants were asked the provocative question: how should we teach VET learners to be better than robots? The question was posed by Ádám Horváth, Centre of Digital Pedagogy and Methodology, who highlighted the employment risks inherent in the spread of digital technology in the economy. Developments like those in Hungary (e.g. developing digital learning materials and environments, and transforming teachers' daily practice), he argued, need to foster a number of competences alongside digital skills if people are to keep ahead of robots in the labour market, including **complex problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, group work and curiosity**. Further, digitising education needs to be seen, not as a goal in itself, but rather as a pathway to good education. Finally, participants visited the **European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)** to discuss how the links with VET might be reinforced, as well as the Budapest Centre Technical Vocational Education and Training, and saw first-hand the wide range of technical and key competences students had been able to develop.

## Working Group on Adult Learning



Image: Working Group on Adult Learning  
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After finalising the Stocktaking Report on the policy trends, developments and changes in Member States (in relation to the priorities of the European Agenda for Adult Learning), the Working Group on Adult Learning started work on the final deliverable - a report on adult learning and empowering adults (May 2020).

### Webinar on Individual Learning Accounts by the OECD

During a webinar on 14 November 2019, colleagues from the OECD presented their study, [Individual Learning Accounts: Panacea or Pandora's box](#). There is generally renewed interest in individual learning schemes (accounts or vouchers) that are attached to individuals, rather than jobs, as well as in making training rights more portable.

The webinar presented six examples from OECD countries and the lessons learnt, such as:

- governance and processes need to be kept simple;
- financial support needs to be high enough to promote participation and real upskilling;
- targeting can reduce deadweight but comes with other costs;
- accompanying measures are needed to increase the participation of under-represented groups;
- the link with employer-provided training needs to be taken into account;
- individual learning schemes reinforce the need for quality assurance;
- financing arrangements have distributive and sustainability implications.

### PLA on guidance in Kraków, Poland (25-27 November 2019)

The Working Group on Adult Learning organised a PLA, attended by 22 participants from 15 countries, on how guidance can empower adults to learn. Its aim was to identify the essential conditions for the success of policy approaches regarding outreach and guidance that empower adults to learn/upskill and reskill, by comparing and contrasting policies from multiple countries and regions. The PLA closely studied the structures established in the Polish region of Małopolska (partnership for lifelong learning, voucher system, quality label), which allow the Regional Labour Office to provide tailored and effective guidance to adults, as well as policies from Slovenia. On the basis of the policies analysed, the key elements of successful policies for guidance systems that empower adults for upskilling and reskilling (related to individualised approaches, as well as outreach) were identified: partnership; policy frameworks; quality assurance; information and guidance staff.

### Retirement of Paul Holdsworth

Mr. Paul Holdsworth, coordinator of the ET2020 Working Group on Adult Learning, and Team Leader on Skills for Adults in unit E3 of the European Commission, retired in December 2019. He has been a tremendous asset to the Group, who were always in good hands with him, and will be greatly missed by the Working Group Members and Commission colleagues.

## ECEC Working Group continues to focus on social inclusion and staff professionalisation

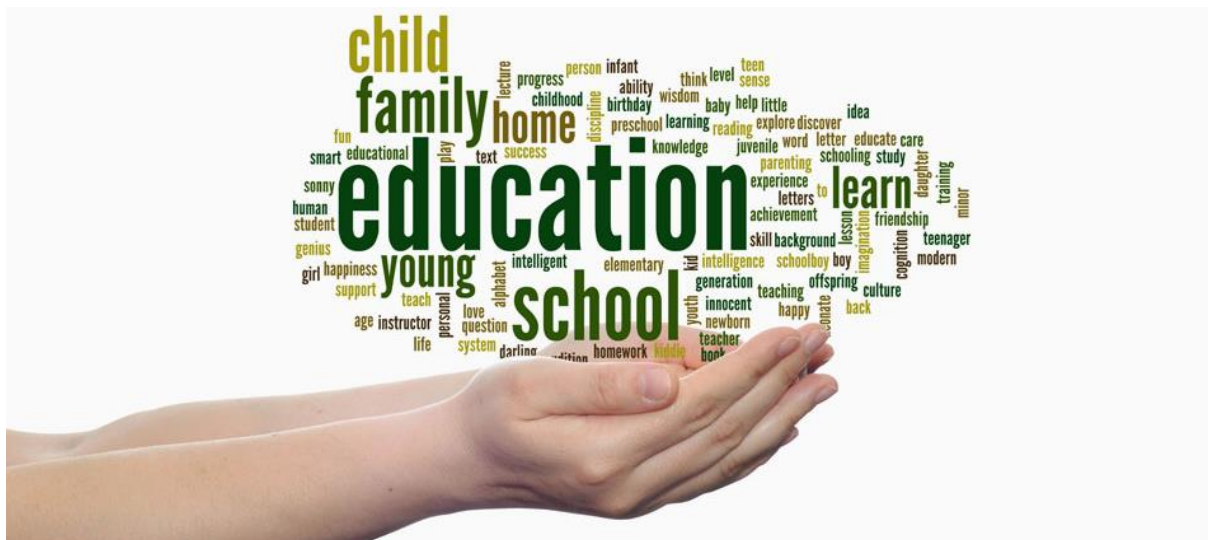


Image: ECEC Working Group continues to focus on social inclusion and staff professionalisation  
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The Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Working Group continues to focus on social inclusion and staff professionalisation in the sector. The third peer learning activity is being planned for March, and there is increasing focus on the final reports, which will be produced in Summer 2020.

### Peer Learning Activity in Milan (hosted by Eurocities)

In October 2019, Italian colleagues, ECEC Working Group members and European stakeholders from 13 countries met to discuss the professional development of ECEC staff. The discussion confirmed the value of creating core competencies for workers in the sector. As a minimum set of expectations, they can help policy makers, recruiters and the sector to establish and promote a consistent approach to working with children. Participants agreed that competencies alone would not address staff shortages - new approaches would be required to encourage applications from a range of candidates.

The importance of initial and continuing education and training for ECEC staff was also highlighted, along with the need to ensure the quality of ECEC provision. This requires quality assurance processes to be transparent, well understood and applied consistently. Outcomes from these evaluations should be publicly available and stakeholders should have a strong role in the measurement of the quality of provision.

### The fourth meeting of the ECEC Working Group

The Working Group met in Brussels on 21-22 January 2020. The first day focused on staff professionalisation and began with a review of the report and findings from the Milan PLA. The meeting reviewed the draft competencies for ECEC assistants, core practitioners and leaders. The first day also included an opportunity to review a number of case studies, which had been prepared by members of the Working Group. The second day focused on inclusion and included a review and discussion on some sample sections of a 'toolkit', which covers a range of issues associated with inclusion. The Working Group agreed on the final outputs of their work, including a set of core competencies for ECEC staff; statements on ECEC assistants/leaders; a report on raising the attractiveness of the ECEC profession and a toolkit on inclusion. They also discussed the draft programme for the third PLA in Dublin in March 2020.



## Digital Education (DELTA) WG explore grassroots innovation and data on the digital competencies of students



Image: Digital Education (DELTA) WG explore grassroots innovation and data on the digital competencies of students  
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In the last four months, the Digital Education WG has held two PLAs - one in Finland on *Innovation and Digitalisation: Boosting High-Quality VET and Higher VET*, and one on *Grassroots Innovation @ Futura Lucca*. The WG also convened in Brussels in September, and held an online plenary in December.

### Grassroots innovation in Education @ Futura Lucca

The *Grassroots Innovation @ Futura Lucca* PLA was held in Lucca, Italy (November 7-8 2019) and hosted by the Italian Ministry of Education. The purpose of the PLA was the discussion and exchange of experiences and opinions about innovation in education, its relation to digital education, and the challenges faced in making innovation more visible and scalable across education systems.

While the Futura (the future development platform for Italian schools) is an Italian solution to innovation dissemination, the PLA identified a number of key aspects present in the FUTURA and in a number of other innovative European projects. These included the need for strong leadership to bring about changes in digital education practices, the role of teachers in leading innovative practice (as opposed to just being consulted) and the need to underpin digital practices with innovative pedagogical approaches that enable young people to use these tools to solve real-world problems.

### Digital Natives are not Digital Experts

December's online plenary on *Emerging Practices in Digital Education* focused on the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS 2018) and selected analysis of the use of digital technologies from the PISA results. The ICILS report confirmed that, though young people live in an age where ICT is pervasive, they are not experts in using these technologies to support their learning. In this regard, schools need to teach students these skills.

Furthermore, the PISA results captured a change in student reading habits, with a decrease in reading books and magazines for leisure and an increase in reading online formats. The study also found that heavy (40+ hours per week) and high (30-39 hours per week) internet users outside of school are prone to feelings like fear and sadness. The role of schools, therefore, is key in enhancing digital skills and developing appropriate use habits.

## Working Group on Common Values and Inclusive Education holds PLA in Turkey



Image: Working Group on Common Values and Inclusive Education holds PLA in Turkey  
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Over the past four months, the Working Group on Common Values and Inclusive Education has discussed the topics of *Inclusion of Young Migrants in Education* (PLA - Turkey, October 2019) and *Gender Equality in Education and Training* (WG meeting - Brussels, November 2019).

### **Inclusion of Young Refugees and Migrants through Education (PLA in Turkey)**

In October 2019, a PLA on the *Inclusion of Young Refugees and Migrants through Education: access, transitions and values* was held in Istanbul, Turkey. Participants came from 7 EU member states and several international and stakeholder organisations, including the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) and the OECD. Panel discussions took place on the situation of young migrants in host societies (focusing on access to education and employment services) and the social and intercultural dimension of inclusion (values, democratic participation and socio-emotional support to young migrants). Breakout sessions focused on access to education for late arrivals/young people beyond compulsory school age, pathways of inclusion in VET, and access and transition to tertiary education.

Participants engaged in more in-depth discussions in a world café format, including on civic education and intercultural mutual learning, addressing the socio-emotional needs of young migrants in school and capacity-building for educators/professionals working with families and communities.

### **Gender Equality in Education and Training (WG meeting in Brussels)**

On 27-28 November 2019, the WG experts held their third plenary meeting in Brussels, on the topic of *Gender Equality in Education and Training*. The meeting gathered representatives from 16 EU Member States, as well as three candidate/EFTA countries, one social partner organisation and several international organisations, including the OECD, the Council of Europe and the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA).

After finalising the Thematic Fiche on the PLA in Turkey, the meeting included a number of updates from Commission representatives (DG RTD, DG JUST and DG EAC) on EU work in the field of gender equality. A particular highlight was Commissioner Helena Dali's new portfolio on gender equality. Representatives from the OECD, UNESCO and FRA informed the WG on their wide range of activities in the field of gender equality in education. The meeting also featured keynote speeches and country presentations tackling gender equality through a variety of lenses.

For more information on any of the ET 2020 Working Groups or for subscribing to the Newsletter, contact [EAC-ET-2020-WORKING-GROUPS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EAC-ET-2020-WORKING-GROUPS@ec.europa.eu)

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