

# THE CHALLENGE OF REPRESENTING YOUNG WORKERS IN THE XXI CENTURY

Report of the study session held by  
the European Trade Union Confederation

in co-operation with the  
European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest / Strasbourg  
1 – 6 November 2015

This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.



Strasbourg, February 2016

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Report prepared by;  
Zelimir Stanic (ZSS, Slovenia)  
Ilaria Costantini (ETUI, Belgium)  
Ignacio Doreste (ETUC, Belgium)  
Aleksandra Vidanovic (Council of Europe, external educational advisor)

European Trade Union Confederation  
Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5, B - 1210 Brussels  
tel: +32 (0)2 224 04 20  
E-mail: [etuc@etuc.org](mailto:etuc@etuc.org)  
website: [www.etuc.org](http://www.etuc.org)

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## Executive summary

This study session, organised by ETUC, took place in the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg, in period 1-6 November 2015, gathering participants from 14 countries, with the aim to build capacities of young trade unionist and to raise awareness of the values of the labour rights as essential human rights, and enhance their leadership skills to become actors of social change in their communities and countries. The study session had a strong focus on the human rights dimension of trade union movement and stressed the importance of solidarity and inalienability of human rights.

During the study session, the ETUC members had the opportunity of analysing the situation of young people in the labour market of each of the countries represented (Ireland, Poland, Turkey, Italy, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Slovenia, Germany, France, Hungary, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Sweden, Spain, and Belgium). The trade union approach was transversal to all the activities organised during the five days; that is to say, special attention was given to employment conditions and the fight against precariousness and discrimination in the labour market and in the society.

Human rights were transversal to all the exercises and debates developed. Working in partnership with the Council of Europe provided the opportunity to stress the mutual relationship between labour and trade union, and human rights.

The empowerment of young trade unionists in their organisations was an important element of the study session. Best practices in recruiting young workers and in organising young people in trade unions were shared. A critical approach to those organisations’ cultures which do not open channels of participation to young people was also present throughout the week.

The trade union movement, in particular the ETUC, is the legitimate actor for representing workers in cross-sectorial social dialogue at European level. However, unions are not the only stakeholders in society who are working for a fairer world. The cooperation with other civil society organisations and stakeholders was analysed by participants and already existing practices were discussed.

Individual skills for an effective leadership were developed. Young trade unionists reflected on the values of young trade unionists in order to represent their rights and interests properly. Participants were trained in negotiating skills for improving the working conditions at company level and also at higher levels (sectorial bargaining and social dialogue).

Last but not least, the role and function of the Council of Europe and the European Youth Foundation were presented. The Council of Europe is an ally of the trade union movement in its fight for democracy and the defence of human rights. A fair participation of workers in industrial relations and the fight against discrimination and precarious forms of work is also a line of action of the Council of Europe.

# Introduction

## Aims and objectives of the study session

The aim of the study session was to build capacities of young trade unionist to represent youth. The specific objectives were:

- to raise awareness of the values of the labour rights as essential human rights, and
- to develop leadership skills of participants and empower them to become actors of social change.

## Profile of participants

The participants were young trade unionists from the following countries: Ireland, Poland, Turkey, Italy, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Slovenia, Germany, France, Hungary, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Sweden, Spain, and Belgium. Their profile was broad and varied: youth officers of the ETUC affiliates organisations (that is to say, representatives in charge of recruiting and organising young workers in the trade union movement as well as to represent their rights at national level), shop stewards from companies, and activists at local level.

## Overall topic and list the main contents/issues discussed

The following thematic blocks were developed during the study session:

- Building of the identity of the group of participants;
- Sessions around the question: What would drive me as a young trade union leader?
- Sessions around the questions: Who are the youth? What do young people expect from the trade union movement? What are the youth policies of the trade union organisations?
- Sessions to develop or improve different leadership skills;
- General framework: The human rights approach.

## Background to the theme of the study session

The crisis and austerity measures implemented at national level in the last years have had a very negative impact on the working and living conditions of young people in Europe. Levels of unemployment were structurally higher than the general one already before the crisis, but after its outbreak the situation has worsened: youth unemployment continues to grow though it might do so at a slower pace.

Temporary jobs are extended practices for hiring young Europeans trying to make their way in the labour market. Fixed-term contracts are becoming the norm: in 2014, 42% (second quarter) of young people in the EU were working with a temporary contractual arrangement.

In general, trade unions across Europe have paid increased attention, since the outburst of the crisis, to young people’s interests and concerns on the labour market. The extent of such interest has been mainly influenced by the overall increase of youth unemployment and its impact on the affiliation rates of young people to trade unions.

Boosting young workers in the internal and external within decision-making process of trade unions has been a priority of the European Trade Union Confederation for a long time. The declaration of the ETUC Prague Congress (2003) already included a series of actions to be implemented by the European trade union movement to take action on some underrepresented groups, including young people. This commitment was stressed in the Seville Congress of 2007 with a call to incorporate and organise emerging groups of workers, such as young people, women, workers in the services sectors and SMEs, precarious workers, managers, executives and immigrants. In the last two years the ETUC Youth Committee has arranged some training activities with the support of the Council of Europe or the European Trade Union Institute to strengthen youth structures in trade unions.

# Programme – inputs and discussions

## Introduction of participants and organisations

Participants presented their organisations and get to know each other by taking part in different dynamic activities.

They also exchanged their expectations for the study session. In brief, their expectations were:

- To learn new skills;
- To exchange good practices;
- To network;
- To find solutions to problems
- To bring knowledge back home.

The youth political priorities of the ETUC – Youth Committee were presented. These are included in the document “European Youth Employment Policy Paper”, available here:

<https://www.etuc.org/circulars/quality-jobs-youth-our-way-forward-etuc-%E2%80%93-youth-employment-policy-paper>.

## What would drive me as a young trade union leader?

Values are guides of our behaviour, both in our personal and professional life. Young trade union leaders should be aware of what are those values which are driving their actions as workers’ representatives.

In order to analyse which are the most important values for the participants in the study session, an exercise named “The stock market of values” was performed. In the closing of the exercise it was pointed out that the words which were more repeated were:

- participation,
- equality,
- solidarity,
- inclusion, and
- freedom.

## Who are the youth? What do young people expect from the trade union movement? What are the youth policies of the trade union organisations?

This pedagogical block was developed during the study session throughout three different activities:

- a SWOT analysis on the situation of young people in every country represented in the group;
- an analysis about the expectations of young people at European level which followed the same structure as the related questions of the European social survey; and
- a SWOT analysis of the represented trade union organisations in which participants had to assess to what extent young workers were appropriately represented and defended.

The sharing of national realities was done through a SWOT analysis (a study of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) with the aim of identifying the situation of young people in each of the countries represented in the four working groups in which participants were divided. Given that the realities of the different countries might be quite different, the analysis should be completed by an identification of the main commonalities and differences.

The proposals differed slightly from one group to another. Below we show some of the ideas raised during the exercise in order to give a hint of the outcomes:

Strengths:	diversity of the youth, societal vision, potential of the organisation, young people of nowadays are the most interconnected generation, great mobilisation of young people, better access to quality education.
Weaknesses:	lack of representation in the board of trade unions, generational gap, external communication, snobbery of the highly educated youth, lack of solidarity, emigration, apathy, precariousness.
Opportunities:	involvement in civil society, good management and presence of social media, easiness for networking with other trade unions, young people are starting to divert from neoliberalism, young people have a better performance of second languages.
Threats:	attacks from the media to the trade union movement, increasing presence of SMEs, mechanisation and digitalisation of work, lack of leadership of young people in trade unions, TTIP, privatisation, and etcetera.

Another exercise focused on identifying who young people are and what are their expectations. The task assigned to the 4 groups, composed by members coming from same geographical regions, was to answer to a survey with 7 questions, concerning attitudes, beliefs and values of young Europeans under 35. These questions were taken from the last European Social Survey. The answers of all participants were statistically processed and shared in the plenary session. Participants thought that:

- young people are Eurosceptic, not interested in politics, not happy/satisfied with their life and job;
- In order to represent young people, we need to know them as much as possible;
- There are marked interregional differences in Europe;
- To develop trade union strategies at European level it's necessary to be aware of these differences and, at the same time, to set aims that are realistic and feasible.

Another exercise in the framework of this priority was a SWOT analysis on how trade union confederations are representing young people. Some of the conclusions of this exercise were:

- the importance of having independent youth committees;
- the participation at collective bargaining as a key opportunity;
- the need to change the balance of powers in the trade union confederations;
- efforts should be done in order to better represent young people, in particular students, precarious workers and unemployed.

The different trade union confederations which were taking part in the study session were distributed along four different models commonly used in human resources: hierarchy, web, grid and stars. Participants mainly thought that their organisations were hierarchical and consider that a mix of the four models could be a good solution for improving their functioning.

### **Let's do it! Improving leadership skills.**

The following activities were comprised in this chapter of improving leadership skills:

- A session on leadership competence development;
- A survey about leadership skills;
- A workshop on boosting self-confidence;
- A workshop on communication skills;
- And a role-play about negotiation.

The session on leadership competence development was based on the technique of the Forum Theatre, comprised within the "Theatre of the Oppressed" school of Augusto Boal. The aim of the activity is to understand organisational power, leadership and teams work.

The participants were invited to the centre of the room. Using only chairs they had to create different structures that represented power structure/leadership structure in their organisations. Another exercise within the framework of the Forum Theatre which was undertaken consisted on symbolising a power show, in which a director was appointed to create a scene of power in a



decision making situation. In the debriefing of the exercise, the activity was linked to real life situations. A reflective debate was opened afterwards in which many ideas were raised; “a boss is not the same as a leader” was one of the comments posed by participants.

Another activity consisted on a survey on leadership skills. Participants were asked to fill out a survey on the issue and to calculate the results for themselves. That helped them understand which competences they needed to develop further. After filling out the survey the participants were sorted into groups of 4 or 5 and discussed about what they discovered through the survey and shared the results. Some of the comments shared by the participants during the debriefing task were: “It is easier to decide than to implement” (yet some persons disagreed on this); points for and against delegation activities were given; “leaders are not the organisation themselves, they are backed by a collective”.

Last but not least, the group decided upon the basic skills of a leader: communication skills, adaptability, great capacity for empathy, humbleness, capacity to delegate and accountability.



Another activity within this chapter consisted on a workshop for boosting self-confidence. Participants were asked to identify a series of skills they considered to be necessary for a young trade unionist in his job of defending and representing young workers. They were asked to measure themselves with grades along the different skills identified. This exercise was performed on a first stage individually and later all the grades of the whole group were added in order to obtain a composite outcome. During the debriefing of the exercise it was concluded that a group is much better skills-equipped than a single individual.

Communication and negotiation skills were also developed throughout two different techniques: the exercise “Elevator pitch” and a role playing in which participants behave as employers and trade unionists during one of the sessions of negotiating the Framework of Actions on Youth Employment. The first exercise consisted on trying to sell an idea to a jury in less than 90 seconds (the average time a lift trip takes). Participants had to rehearse on how to present their proposal in a duly summarised and convincing manner in that period of time. For this purpose, they had to deploy different verbal and non-verbal communication strategies.

Before proceeding with the negotiation exercise, participants were introduced to the Social Dialogue procedure, one of the most important lines of action of the European Trade Union movement. The “Val Duchesse process” initiated in 1985 by the European Commission led to the emergence of EU cross-industry social dialogue. The agreement, reached by the European social partners in 1991, and incorporated in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, called for a much stronger role for the social partners in formulating and implementing Community social and employment policy. Following this, the European social partners also developed a more autonomous dialogue, thus diversifying their instruments. Social dialogue is one of the main pillars of the EU social model. Social Partners are consulted by the European Commission on a series of specific issues. If there is not agreement between Social Partners to undertake negotiations or there is a failure in the procedure to obtain an agreement, then the Commission takes action through normal procedures. If there is a successful negotiation, then the agreement replaces the Commission action. The implementation can be done through a Directive or by the own Social Partners means (framework agreement or framework of actions).

During the role playing itself, participants had to simulate one of the session of social dialogue on the framework of actions on youth employment. The group was divided in two: one sub-group represented the employers and the other the workers. Each group also had a facilitator and an assistant. They had to prepare their negotiation strategy separately and then the two teams met to simulate the negotiations. It is worth mentioning that many of the negotiation techniques deployed during the exercise actually happened during the real negotiations of the above-mentioned Framework of Actions on Youth Employment.

#### **General framework: The human rights approach.**

The defence of human rights and the mainstreaming of a human rights approach in the priorities of the trade union movement were ideas that comprised all the activities throughout the study session.

Promoting democracy at all levels (including industrial democracy) was another notion developed. As guarantor of human rights in Europe, the Council of Europe is an ally of the European Trade Union Movement in the mentioned purposes. Common lines of action were identified in the study session.

There was a specific activity on leadership, human rights and labour rights. Participants were asked who they considered their “heroes”. Each participant wrote on *post-its* the names of 3 heroes, respectively at global, national and every day level. All the *post-its* were collected and stacked on flip-charts. Then, the tutor asked participants to explain why they choose those names and facilitated a discussion in which the fight for human rights was underlined. The activity was concluded by an explanation of the different categories and generations of human rights and the “heroes” previously identified were grouped by following this generation criteria.

One aspect which has become crucial in the last years for the trade union movement is the strengthening of the relationship with other actors of the civil society. This was an element that was also tackled during the study session with a video forum over the movie “Pride”. It tells the story of the support provided by an association of defence of LGTB rights to the Scottish miners on strike during the 80’s. The aim of the activity was to raise their awareness on how important is solidarity as a crucial value for trade union action and to reflect on the role that unions can play in the society to promote the respect and improvement of human rights and labour rights.

The group also had the opportunity of visiting the European Court of Human Rights. The Court rules on individual or state applications alleging violations of the civil and political rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. Participants saw a short video presentation about the European Court of the Human Rights and had the opportunity of making a tour throughout the court rooms and other important locations of the court. The group was welcomed by a lawyer who answered questions regarding the work of the Court.

## Main outcomes of the study session

The link between the trade union action and human rights, the analysis of the need of leadership skills and changes in the trade union organisations for a better representation of young people in the trade union movement, and the training in specific skills for a more effective communication and negotiation, were the learning outcomes of the study session.

Participants created a personal commitment for the implementation of the above-mentioned aims. Also, four projects were designed, yet its creation was rather a virtual exercise than an actual and concrete plan. These projects were built over the inputs and reflections shared during the week. As a matter of fact, the projects presented on the last day included a transitional approach, human-rights and labour-rights oriented strategic actions, different skills (leadership, communication, project management) and innovative ideas. A summary of each proposal is presented below:

- **“Young coach for social Europe”**. This is an initiative to raise awareness among students throughout Europe on labour and trade union rights. This would be done with a van which would move from one campus to another in many different countries. A toolbox identifying the good practices in reaching students would be created. The project would have a duration of one year and it will count with financial resources from the ETUC, the municipalities, the local trade unions themselves and the universities. This is a project about facilitating gatherings of young people to encourage them to participate in the trade union movement. An international trade union youth festival would be created as part of this project. The ETUC would provide the organisers the contacts of potential participants to this festivals and the van.
- **“Project FULCRUM”**. FULCRUM would track down the implementation of the Youth Guarantee at European level with the aim of mapping the precariousness of such schemes and to denounce potential abuses of employers. As a result, the organisers will create a “black book” of the Youth Guarantee in which companies misusing this policy to create bad quality offers would be named and shamed.
- **“Shoot the child labour”**. This initiative consisted on a photo contest denouncing child labour. The role of the trade union movement in fighting against these practices would be highlighted. The funding would come from Unicef and crowd-funding. The result of the project would be the lobbying strategy itself as well as an itinerant exhibition.

Also, participants were asked to develop an individual action plan to deploy all the learning outcomes of the study session. The format chosen was a letter that they had to write to themselves. The organisers kept these letters, which will be sent back to participants in May 2016 (6 months after they were written) to assess to what extent the purpose has been accomplished!

According to the anonymous evaluation undertaken by participants, the main learning achievements they got during the study session were the following:

- Gaining a great deal of knowledge in a broad scope of areas, such as negotiation and leadership skills.
- Taking different roles in team work.
- Working with people of potentially different views on issues focusing on young workers from different EU countries.
- Better knowledge of themselves, self-confidence, and self-control.
- Receiving information about human and labour rights as well as about the labour markets of other countries.
- Getting to know the process of the European Social Dialogue.
  - Analysing the power structures of their own organisations through the SWOT analysis.

## Analysis of the study session

The last day participants were asked to fulfil comprehensive evaluation report in which the different learning and logistical elements of the study session were assessed.

The overall impression about the study session was quite positive, with a group average rate of 85 (over 100). Some of the comments illustrating this were:

- “I’m very pleased with the study session. I enjoyed the workshops, the presentations, the discussions. I only missed time/opportunity for more outdoor/physical activity, but I understand, we had time constraints”;
- “overall a very positive experience with only minor sections disappointing”;
- “I have never participated in a gathering so well organised; it was quite interesting”;
- “I’m really satisfied for being here, and for learning something that will definitely help me in future”.

The three learning objectives of the study session (raising awareness of the values, to develop leadership, and to improve communication and negotiation skills) were also evaluated with high marks. The quantitative evaluation was also accompanied by some comments, among which we have selected the following:

- “I think the workshops did help to improve our communication skills and presentation skills. I think more negotiation workshop could be implemented, I found that really useful”;
- “the communication training I felt somewhere focused too much on a pre-determined idea of that constituted “good” communication (i.e. public speaking) and overlooked individual skills”;
- “now I’m more confident in my leadership skills and also improved my communication between young trade unionists”;
- “I really loved the method used which created dynamics and exchange through different groups; it was more easy to learn about other countries, their policies and hope”;
- “very well developed especially for the methodologies used. Work in groups developed my strengths that I didn’t even thought I had”;
- “one week study session is not enough, but it is still very good training”.

Among the most useful elements participants bring forward the following ideas:

- the visit to the European Court of Human Rights;
- presentation of the European Youth Foundation;
- negotiation workshop;
- communication skills workshop;
- intercultural evening;
- working teams;
- experience different positions and situations;
- negotiation skills;
- communication skills;
- identifying what the qualities of a good trade unionist are;
- interesting to note how priorities differed from different countries;
- possibility to create network between us and the integrate;
- exchange of views on Europe and social issues;
- human rights and labour rights;
- sharing national realities, and exploring the values we live and work for.

# Appendices

## Final Programme, as executed

### Sunday, 1 November 2015

Arrival of participants

19:00 Dinner

20:30 Welcome evening

### Monday, 2 November 2015

09:30 Opening and introduction to the study session

Expectations, programme and participants' presentations

11:00 Break

11:30 Team building activity

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Sharing national realities

16:00 Break

16:30 Values we live and work by

19:00 Dinner

### Tuesday, 3 November 2015

09:30 Human rights and labour rights

11:00 Break

11:30 Definition of youth and youth policies

13:00 Lunch break

14:30 What do young people want

16:00 Break

16:30 Organisation cultures and structures

19:00 Dinner

20:00 Movie night - "Pride"

### Wednesday, 4 November 2015

09:30 Leadership competence development workshops

11:00 Break

11:30 Team roles workshops

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Boosting self-confidence workshops

16:00 Break

16:30 Communication skills workshops

19:00 Dinner

21:00 Intercultural evening

### Thursday, 5 November 2015

09:30 Negotiations competence development workshops

11:00 Break

11:30 Negotiations competence development workshops (continued)

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Visit to the European Court of the Human Rights

16:00 Free afternoon

19:30 Dinner in town

### Friday 6 November 2015

09:30 Individual and group action planning

11:00 Break

11:30 Group action planning

13:00 Lunch  
14:30 Group action plans presentation and presentation of the European Youth Foundation  
16:00 Break  
16:30 Final Q&A, evaluation and closing of the study session  
19:00 Farewell dinner

**Saturday 7 November 2015**

Departure of participants

# Participants list

## Participants (name and organisation)

### BELGIUM

Maité Snyders	CSC Mons-La Louvière Website: <a href="http://www.cscmonslalouviere.be">www.cscmonslalouviere.be</a>
Joly Aurore	Jeunes CSC
Ludovic Voet	

### BULGARIA

Borislav Dimitrov	Website: <a href="http://www.vodosnabditei.org/">http://www.vodosnabditei.org/</a>
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### FRANCE

Florian Rigaud	CFDT
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### GERMANY

Bjarne Wiedemann	DGB
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### HUNGARY

Rónai Margaréta	Szakszervezetek Együttműködési Fóruma (SZEF) Website: <a href="http://www.szef.hu/szefit">www.szef.hu/szefit</a>
Maria Judit Tóth	LIGA, Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions Website: <a href="http://www.liganet.hu">www.liganet.hu</a>

### IRELAND

Daniel Copperthwaite	CPSU (member of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions) Website: <a href="http://cpsu.ie">cpsu.ie</a>
Tanya O'Neill	CPSU (member of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions) Website: <a href="http://cpsu.ie">cpsu.ie</a>
Terry Murphy	Organization's name : CPSU (member of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions) Website: <a href="http://cpsu.ie">cpsu.ie</a>

### ITALY

Name: Davide Contini	Organization's name : CGIL Website: <a href="http://www.fisac-cgil.it/">http://www.fisac-cgil.it/</a>
Laura Fois	Organization's name : CGIL Website: <a href="http://www.cgil.it/">http://www.cgil.it/</a>
Andrea Donato	CGIL FIRENZE Website: <a href="http://www.firenze.cgil.it/">http://www.firenze.cgil.it/</a>
Jacopo Radussa	UIL Website: <a href="http://www.uil.it">www.uil.it</a>
Paola Redondi	CGIL Website: <a href="http://www.cgil.bergamo.it/NIDIL/">http://www.cgil.bergamo.it/NIDIL/</a>

## MONTENEGRO

Vedran Dragasevic	Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro Website: <a href="http://www.usscg.me">www.usscg.me</a>
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## POLAND

Mateusz Szymanski	NSZZ "Solidarność" Website: <a href="http://www.solidarnosc.org.pl">www.solidarnosc.org.pl</a>
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## SPAIN

Ernesto Martín Alfageme	UGT Website: <a href="http://www.ugt.es">www.ugt.es</a>
Violeta Carlavilla Ruiz	UGT Website: <a href="http://www.ugt.es">www.ugt.es</a>

## SWEDEN

Juan Chacon	Kommunal (TCO) Website: <a href="http://www.kommunal.se">www.kommunal.se</a>
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## “THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA”

Vladimir Bozhinovski	Trade Union of Public and State Administration (SADU, EPSU) Website: <a href="http://www.sadu.mk">www.sadu.mk</a>
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## TURKEY

Suat Terzi	TURK-Is Website: <a href="http://www.turkis.org.tr/">http://www.turkis.org.tr/</a>

### **Preparatory team**

Zelimir Stanic	ZSSS E-mail : <a href="mailto:zsss@sindikat-zsss.si">zsss@sindikat-zsss.si</a>
Ilaria Costantini	ETUI
Ignacio Doreste (course director)	ETUC
Aleksandra Vidanovic	Educational advisor, Council of Europe

### **Lecturers**

Salvatore Marra	ETUC E-mail : <a href="mailto:etuc@etuc.org">etuc@etuc.org</a>
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