IWGPS Meeting
OECD Headquarters, Paris, October 29-30, 2018
Minutes

Opening remarks
1. The World Bank IWGPS Chair and OECD hosts welcomed the attendees to the meeting. and highlighted the importance of this IWGPS meeting for reviewing the Consumer Price Index Manual update. The Chair explained that the meeting will decide at its conclusion whether the current timetable for the Manual update, which includes a global consultation in December 2018 and January 2019 and a UNSC endorsement at its 50th session in March 2019, can proceed without delays.

General remarks
2. The Chair noted that the update of the 2004 Manual would result in two separate publications:
   i) “Consumer Price Index Manual: Concepts and Methods”, focusing on CPI compilation issues. This publication will be presented to the UNSC for endorsement as an international statistical standard. The year of UNSC endorsement or publication can be attached to the name; and
   ii) “Consumer Price Index Theory”, which reviews the theoretical foundations of consumer price indices. This publication will not be presented for UNSC endorsement.
3. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:
   i) The content of the practical guide has been incorporated to a large extent into the Manual.
   ii) Future updating will take the form of supplemental “Guidance Notes”.
   iii) The Manual will need to be checked for accuracy in all numerical examples, and for consistency in formula notation.
   iv) All chapters should include an introduction and summary of recommendations.
4. The Editor and chapter authors introduced each chapter by reporting back on comments made by reviewers and compilers. Most chapters were in good shape and near completion. A few chapters required more restructuring and rewriting prior to finalization.

Chapter 1: An introduction to CPI methodology
5. As a summary section, Chapter 1 was discussed at the end of the meeting, after all the other chapters were reviewed. A rewrite of the chapter, preferably by the Editor, is necessary and can act as a light introduction to all other chapters. Ideally it will follow the structure of the Manual, providing an overview of pertinent points. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:
i) The main issues related to Consumer Prices Indices should be presented in a logical way, starting with a presentation of the main uses and concepts of CPIs.

ii) A discussion on the target index and on the need for different types of indices should be included.

iii) Elementary aggregation should be addressed before higher-level aggregation, and not the other way around.

iv) Currently, there are too many index formulas within Chapter 1, which can be moved to Chapters 8 and 9.

v) The section “Stage of Processing Framework” should be removed from Chapter 1. The table in Appendix 1.1 must be reviewed and adapted in order to better align with Supply and Use Tables. This whole discussion should then be moved to a new annex of the Manual where the relations between the different price indices can be explained.

vi) The title of “inflation targeting” is too narrow and should be replaced by “monetary policy” (1.13).

vii) The discussion on linking a cost-of-goods index (COGI) and a cost-of-living index (COLI) at the micro and the macro level is unclear (1.18).

viii) The net acquisition principle would be better explained when discussing second-hand goods (1.48).

ix) Content provided in Chapter 1 should not contradict the content that can be found elsewhere in the Manual. Inconsistencies were found, for instance, regarding statements on the use of National Accounts data for expenditure weights (1.80), on the use of hedonics (1.80) and on the treatment of internet purchases (1.37).

Chapter 2: Concepts, scope and uses of CPI

6. Changes to Chapter 2 since the last draft included: restructuring the chapter to begin with uses of CPI followed by concept, scope and classification; incorporation of specific references to the SNA; expansion of sections on COGI and COLI indexation; improvement in the layout, flow and organization of the chapter; and the addition of an introduction and summary sections containing key recommendations.

7. The Editor reported that some comments were not incorporated, such as those on flash estimates, and those on summarizing the characteristics of COGI and COLI proposed by UNECE, given that countries do not, in practice, publish a COLI Index, nor do they publish different indicators for different purposes given resource constraints. The Editor proposed that Chapter 2 focus on the need to compile a general-purpose index that is suitable for different purposes such as inflation targeting, monetary policy, indexing salaries, and the cost of living. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:

i) Alignment with SNA concepts should be clarified:
   a. a diagram showing the different consumption concepts of the SNA (showing which components enters into the different concepts) and how these compares to different coverage/scope of the CPI should be included;
b. the definitions of domestic (consumption on territory) vs. national (consumption of residents) should be aligned with SNA concepts (territory vs. residence principle); and

c. that no recommendation on which concept the CPI should follow should be presented, as it would depend on its purpose. It was agreed that, from a conceptual point of view, it would be helpful to include a discussion on what concept should be used for what purpose, and that, in practice, the domestic concept is often the most appropriate.

ii) SNA concepts and definitions that apply in Chapters 1 and 2 should be developed in Chapter 2 only.

iii) Recommendations are needed on the compilation of multi-purpose CPIs.

iv) A section covering the difference between consumer perception and official statistics could be added.

v) Mention that some countries now use national classifications rather than the preferred COICOP classification which enables international comparability. The Manual should strongly encourage countries to use the latter.

vi) Suppress the section on outlet rotation biases but add a reference to the research agenda.

vii) Some paragraphs about the digital economy should be included.

Chapter 3: Expenditure weights and their sources

8. The author of Chapter 3 confirmed that he would add an introduction and a conclusion to the chapter. The section entitled “Conceptual basis of the weights” and “Additional data sources” will be improved by dividing the text into several sub-sections and by referring to Chapter 2. The sub-section dealing with democratic/plutocratic weights will be expanded and references will be made to recent empirical studies that apply democratic weights. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:

i) Weights should be revised when accurate and reliable data become available, and at least once every five years. However, given that the weights at the lowest level of aggregation are likely to become out of date more quickly than upper level weights, the Manual should stress that it might be necessary to update these weights more frequently. Non-household expenditure survey data may be used for this purpose.

ii) The Manual should encourage countries to have a regular schedule of weight updating and that new weights should be incorporated as soon as they are available, to reduce the time lag between the weight reference period and the period in which the weights are introduced in the calculation of the CPI.

iii) There is a need for consistency between the classification used for index compilation and the one used for household expenditure statistics and national accounts.

iv) Additionally, there is a need for the alignment of concepts of consumptions used in the primary source of expenditure data with the concepts required for the main purpose of the CPI.
Sources of data on internet purchases and seasonal products are better covered by Chapter 11, and Chapter 3 should cross-reference to that, rather than repeating the same information.

Chapter 4: Sampling

9. The Editor and author reported that, compared to the sampling chapter in the 2004 Manual, the content on probability sampling has been reduced. Although being the preferred approach, it is not always feasible to apply probability sampling in practice. Instead, the chapter now emphasizes the multi-stage nature of the sampling process in a CPI. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:

i) Chapter 4 should address not only sampling in the field, but also central price collection such as rents, tariffs, scanner data and collection via the internet.

ii) The use of administrative data in the context of sampling and central price collection should also be mentioned.

iii) The collection of prices in a single supermarket or store that is representative of all outlets belonging to the same chain should also be included.

iv) As some of these topics are also covered elsewhere in the updated Manual, it would be sufficient to provide a summary and refer to the relevant chapters.

v) The formulas for variance estimation that were developed in specific countries are no longer included in the updated chapter. This is a difficult area and the development of uncertainty measures may well-suited to the research agenda. Rather than making specific references to countries, it is preferable to provide examples in more generic terms. The IWGPS also stressed that cost is an important element when optimizing samples and that this should be appropriately reflected in the chapter.

10. The issue of terminology used in this chapter and more generally throughout the Manual was raised. The Editor clarified that consistent terminology will be used in the Manual and that the terms will be defined in the glossary. Moreover, the IMF communication department will do the final review and editing.

Chapter 5: Price collection

11. The Editor reported that Chapter 5 is in good shape, and the author will provide a further draft in the next couple of weeks. The chapter currently gives weight to traditional “pen & paper” price collection. This is probably due to the global outreach of the Manual and the fact that many developing countries still rely on this approach. However, some countries have moved ahead with the electronic collection of prices, and the Manual should ideally reflect this. Eurostat and UNECE in their comments to the draft chapter provided more detail to be considered. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:

i) Some repetitive and detailed guidance on how to organise a traditional price collection could be edited further.

ii) References to antiquated terms (for example “floppy disks” and “faxes”) should be dropped.
iii) An acknowledgment that price collection is carried out by a centralised unit in some countries should be included.

iv) More guidance on the use of administrative data sources should be added.

v) The advantages and disadvantages of using tight or broad item specifications should be highlighted and potentially presented in a table.

vi) The point-in-time approach is not recommended practice and should be omitted.

vii) The chapter could recommend that the collected prices should aim to reflect the average price of the collection period, but acknowledge that, for practical and resource reasons, collection is often restricted to a particular period of the month or quarter, (for example the second and third week of the month, the dates 10th to 20th for every month, etc.). For products where the prices are known to vary significantly over the reference period the collection agency may collect prices for additional dates across the reference period. It should be stressed that the price collection period should be kept constant over time.

viii) The recommendations not to inform outlets/respondents about the price collection periods are not in line with the principles of official statistics and should be removed. The price collection period is an important aspect of the production of the CPI and as such it should be mentioned in the public documentation and metadata. Not providing this information to the outlets may jeopardize cooperation from respondents.

ix) More elaboration on the risks and benefits of including previous period prices in the collection sheet should be included. Previous prices may help to identify the right items for both the price collector, and owners of outlets that receive a questionnaire that they fill out themselves and submit to the collection agency.

x) The chapter should cover not only the checking of input data, but also provide recommendations on checking by impact or output data checking (see 9.163-9.165 in the 2004 Manual). In the section on the detection of outliers it should also be mentioned that prices that do not change over multiple periods may be erroneous and should be checked.

xi) References to an annex about web-scraping should be included.

Chapter 6: Adjusting for quality change

12. Chapter 6 now distinguishes between temporarily and permanently missing prices and its title has been changed accordingly. Editorial changes have been made, and most formulas have been moved to an annex. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:

i) The structure needs to be more logical and less prone to repetitions and would benefit from a thorough rewriting.

ii) A discussion should be included on how “quality” and “quality change” are defined, and how they are expected to be measured in the CPI (complement to Chapter 2). ESA 2010, which defines the quality of a product based on four characteristics (physical characteristics, services provided, time and location), could be a useful starting point.

iii) Further discussion should be included on the impact of digitalization (for example: how to deal with price differences between various outlets, more specifically price differences
between internet purchases and high street purchases; regular taxi services versus Uber etc).

iv) The chapter should note discussions on the measurement of prices of IT products (for example, are price declines overstated? What is the utility of a PC? It may have more processing power and external memory, but that does not necessarily mean more utility from a consumer’s perspective which simply needs those enlargements to use the same set of applications.)

v) A discussion on second hand goods should also be included (with references to Chapter 2 and Chapter 11).

Chapter 7: Item substitution, sample space and new products

13. The title of Chapter 7 had been updated to better reflect content. Overall, the chapter was in good shape. The author has incorporated comments received to date. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:

i) Utility gains through improved products and digitalization should be covered under Chapter 6, and some paragraphs on the digital economy should be included in Chapter 2.

Chapter 8: Calculating CPIs in practice

14. The Editor explained the rationale for splitting the 2004 Chapter 8 into two separate chapters, namely Chapter 8: Calculating CPIs in practice and Chapter 9: Updating weights and linking index series. He highlighted the overall positive comments made by the compilers. The Working Group discussed in detail the main concerns raised by the reviewers including the suitability of the terms “Laspeyres” and “Laspeyres-type” indices, and also the need to align the “price relatives or ratios” vs. “price index” terminology. Members also discussed the concept of “elementary aggregates” and the use of “non-expenditure” weights below elementary aggregate level, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of using arithmetic and geometric Laspeyres-type formulas. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:

i) Combining tables is one way to facilitate the comparison of elementary indices based on the Carli, Dutot and Jevons formulas, in direct and chained form. It was agreed that parts of Chapter 1 providing details on using chained series vs. direct indices should be moved to Chapter 8. Given the limitation of Jevons formula when the samples are very small, it was suggested that a cross reference to Chapter 12 is provided.

ii) While the use of geometric Laspeyres is consistent in aggregation with the Jevon index it is likely to overestimate the substitution among higher level groups. Therefore, it was concluded that it was not possible to recommend one method of aggregation over another and that this could be an item for further research.

iii) The chapter author and Eurostat and UNECE should discuss revisions to the chapter, such as further modifications regarding the terminology, definitions and numeric examples.
Chapter 9: Updating weights and linking of series

15. The Editor noted that compilers considered the topics covered by Chapter 9 to be very relevant. It was clarified that the annual overlap is the preferred approach for countries with infrequent rebasing, whereas the monthly overlap approach is appropriate in case of more frequent (e.g. annual) weight updates. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:

i) The choice between different overlap periods should be presented in a more balanced way.

ii) There are various numerical examples that illustrate the linking of series. To be more precise about the compilations that are applied, the mathematical formulas used for price-updating and chaining of indices should be provided in the chapter.

iii) Although no firm recommendations can be given on whether to price update or not, more references should be made to recent developments regarding this topic and the advantages and disadvantages should be well explained. Such a discussion also links to the choice of the target index. The section dealing with the estimation of substitution elasticities should become an annex to this chapter.

iv) Material should be included on the compilation of contributions to annual growth rates, especially in the context of annually chained indices. This topic is partly addressed in chapter 14 but only for fixed weight indices. The presentation of the techniques to compile contributions fits better with Chapter 9.

v) When aggregating the elementary month-on-month indices to higher levels, it should be made clear that the technique of “price-updating” the weights does not imply that new weights (referred to as cost weights) are being introduced in the compilation every month. Instead, the index is still based on the same initial weights.

vi) A mathematical annex for chapters 8 and 9 should be added.

Chapter 10: Scanner data

16. The Editor explained that the compilers welcomed this chapter and noted that the collection and use of scanner data will evolve quickly, making the chapter content potentially obsolete very soon. The comments and feedback from Eurostat and World Bank are being incorporated. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:

i) The chapter title should be “The Use of Scanner Data: Opportunities and Challenges”, to better reflect that this chapter does not present concrete guidelines.

ii) This chapter will require complementary Guidance Notes in the future to reflect the likely rapid developments in this area.

iii) A discussion should be included on new partnerships with scanner data providers and cover the legal framework and memoranda of understanding that would enable such partnerships.

iv) A discussion should be included on how scanner data can complement survey data and whether they do indeed present cost benefits and enhance quality and precision.

v) The box from Statistics Norway on product variety, and how tightly or loosely homogeneous products should be defined, should become a section.
vi) The chapter should cover the multilateral formulas for using scanner data.

vii) The annex table with all countries using scanner data should be eliminated, as this number is evolving continuously.

viii) References at the end of the chapter need to be moved to the bibliography.

ix) The annex on web scraping will be moved to Chapter 5 on data collection.

Chapter 11: Selected special cases

17. Each section has been drafted by different compilers. Overall, the chapter was in good shape. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:

i) The title of this chapter has been changed to “Selected Special Cases”.

ii) An introduction should be drafted.

iii) The section on seasonal products should be improved in line with comments made by IWGPS and moved to the front of the chapter. Also, the tables on seasonal products should be reviewed.

iv) The HICP concepts will be described in a dedicated annex to the manual.

v) Web-scraping will be an annex of Chapter 5 on data collection.

vi) Update references to COICOP to reflect changes implemented with COICOP 2018. For example, delivery charges are now recorded separately.

vii) Ensure consistency between the discussions of domestic versus national concepts with regard to internet purchases as discussed in chapter 2 and elsewhere. Remove references to specific company names. Refer to how the SNA treats internet shopping. This topic warrants further discussion as part of the research agenda.

viii) There were no concrete recommendations on housing; however, the editor noted that currently there is no consensus on the best approach for the treatment of owner-occupied housing.

Chapter 12: Errors and bias

18. Chapter 12 has undergone minor changes only since the previous draft. A section on procedures to minimize bias has been added. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:

i) The paragraph on elementary bias should be rephrased and elaborated on to clarify the message.

ii) The term “pure price index” is not clear and should be defined.

iii) The reference to Eurostat’s approach should be removed.

Chapter 13: Quality management and reporting

19. The Editor reviewed comments from compilers and ILO, and the Working Group recognized that Chapter 13 is very difficult to read and necessitates redrafting. It is not necessarily of
great interest to compilers as it stands. The Working Group also noted and agreed on the following:

i) The chapter should clarify why CPIs are “high risk” statistics and therefore why a quality management system is crucial.

ii) A summary of the different types of quality management, without going into too many details should be included, as should GSBPM.

iii) Concrete descriptions and recommendations on the steps of management and reporting – i.e. what to do and how to do it – should be included.

iv) Information on the quality reporting in the European Statistical System including standard metadata templates would be beneficial to the chapter.

Chapter 14: Publication, dissemination and user relations

20. Chapter 14 reflects the 2004 content and therefore is outdated and needs to be extensively revamped. The Working Group noted and agreed the following:

i) The importance of electronic dissemination should be highlighted while acknowledging more traditional methods of dissemination favoured by developing countries, such as press releases.

ii) Countries should be encouraged to disseminate more detailed CPI data down to elementary aggregates, measures and associated weights so long as data at this level does not break confidentiality constraints. This will increase accuracy, reliability, and transparency, and will improve consumer confidence in the results.

iii) The importance of publishing indices with decimal places, consistent with the precision of annual and monthly average rates, should be included.

iv) The dissemination of regional CPIs, where available, should also be encouraged.

v) The dissemination of more detailed metadata should be encouraged. This will help in alerting users to the limitations of the data.

vi) The chapter should note that there is a balance to strike between the timeliness of release and the quality and reliability of data.

vii) The paragraph on contributions should be extended and moved to Chapter 9.

viii) The chapter should encourage countries to publish their policy on correcting errors in the CPI.

ix) A reference could be made to SDMX as a standard for the exchange of CPI data and metadata.

The research agenda

21. The Working Group discussed the research agenda formed on the basis of UNECE’s proposals sent a few days before the meeting. This annex will be finalized by the Editor and UNECE. The research agenda currently includes 17 topics. The Working Group noted and agreed upon the following:
i) The research agenda should be grouped under themes, for example source data, welfare, digital economy, quality, index theory. Prioritization was also discussed. OECD proposed a pragmatic approach to provide concrete research output and recommendations before the next CPI Manual is released.

ii) Specific research necessary for Topic 2 on CPIs and the digital economy should be identified, for example telecommunications, substitution of outlets for traders (internet purchases, sharing economy), and new products.

iii) Topic 5 on the formula for calculation of higher level price indices should include a discussion on the use of arithmetic or geometric averages.

iv) Topic 6 on price expenditure of weights should include a discussion on the need to price update or not.

v) Topic 11 (big data) should be removed as Topic 10 (use of scanner data), Topic 12 (web prices) and Topic 13 (administrative data) already cover the subject.

vi) Topic 16 on the synergies between CPIs and purchasing power parities should be more generic and include representativeness.

vii) Topic 17 covers a wide range of topics which should be split. In particular, utility and quality changes should be a separate item.

viii) Housing, and owner-occupied housing, was part of a previous research agenda and could be reintegrated, but in very concrete terms.

ix) Reliability measures could be introduced as a new topic.

Other content

22. The contents of the other annexes were discussed. The Working Group noted and agreed upon the following:

i) The “Glossary of Main Terms” standardizes the terminology used across the Manual and drafting is underway.

ii) An annex presenting the most common index number formulas should be included as the publication on CPI Theory will not be published until later. Care should be taken in the notations used. The Appendix to the Glossary of the 2004 CPI Manual (pp. 451-452) would be a good starting point.

iii) Eurostat will provide an annex on HICP, with references made to the Eurostat HICP Manual, which will be published soon.

iv) The 2003 ILO resolution will be included as an annex.

v) The new 2018 COICOP classification will be included as an annex and will provide the full classification.

vi) Indexing and referencing are part of the formal editing process done by IMF and are underway.

vii) The acknowledgement and foreword are in draft and no comments have been received.
Publication of “Consumer Price Index Theory”

23. The Editor highlighted the rational for splitting the 2004 Manual in two publications (i) Consumer Price Index Manual: Concepts and Methods and (ii) Consumer Price Index Theory. The former is expected to be signed by IWGPS and endorsed by UNSC while the latter is to be endorsed only by IWGPS.

24. The publication on “Theory” is subject to the same review process as the Manual: once drafted the chapters will be reviewed by primary reviewers and then submitted for approval by IWGPS.

25. Both the outline and background of the publication on “Theory” have been prepared by Erwin Diewert and the draft chapters are expected to be available by the end of 2018. The major changes are expected in the theoretical chapters regarding methodological basis for scanner data and multilateral indices.

26. The harmonisation of the two volumes has been discussed, especially the impact of theoretical chapters on chapters on quality adjustment, on scanner data and on seasonal products. As the methodological part can be considered as a work in progress, references in the Manual to the “Theory” publication will be general in nature.

27. The meeting also discussed the status of the Foreword, Preface and Acknowledgements. All agencies were requested to provide comments on these and indicate the signatories of the Manual. It was also suggested to consult UNSD on their practice with other Manuals.

Summary of key issues, conclusions and next steps

28. IWGPS members have submitted detailed comments to the draft chapters. Authors should consider these comments and ensure they are incorporated in the chapters. In case of doubts or diverging views, issues should be resolved by the Editor, if necessary with the involvement of the IWGPS reviewer.

29. The Editor conveyed the following:

i) He will work closely with the authors and IMF during the month of November 2018 to reflect the Working Group’s feedback. Authors will have updated drafts ready before the end of November. Members will get track-changed chapters, as they become available, to check the incorporated revisions.

ii) Some direct communication between authors and reviewers is needed to resolve a few issues.

iii) The Manual needs to be of high quality; however, the update process cannot go on indefinitely. Some authors are contracted by IMF, while others volunteer. However, their offices do not want them working on this indefinitely. A concrete and tight timetable to finalize the update is needed.

30. The Chair proposed the following next steps, which were agreed by the Working Group:

i) Plan A: The IWGPS agreed to a conditional go-ahead with the global consultation, pending progress with completing the chapter revisions during the month of November. An IWGPS teleconference at end of November will decide whether the global consultation can proceed in December 2018 according to the current timetable.
ii) Plan B: The Chair and the IMF will develop a fall-back timetable, which will also be very tight and aim to complete the global consultation by mid-2019. The timetable would envision another IWGPS physical meeting in the spring of 2019.

31. On a separate topic, the Chair indicated that the IWGPS Report to the UNSC is being compiled based on inputs from IWGPS agencies, and a draft will be circulated at the beginning of November for final review.

32. On the CPI research agenda, the Chair noted that, once the CPI Manual update is complete, it would be useful for the IWGPS to develop a timetable for tackling some topics on the research agenda, such as digitalization and CPI for different income groups and geographical regions, with the objective of producing Guidance Notes on these topics.
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| 9:00 am – 9:15 am | **Opening remarks**  
WB (IWGPS chair) and OECD (host)                                           |
| 9:15 am – 10:00 am | **Chapter 4: Sampling**  
Summary of comments received and authors’ feedback (editor)  
Discussion on content                                        |
| 10:00 am – 10:45 am | **Chapter 8: Calculating CPIs in practice**  
Summary of comments received and authors’ feedback (editor)  
Discussion on content                                           |
| 10:45 am – 11:15 am | **Coffee break**                                                      |
| 11:15 am – 12:00 pm | **Chapter 9: Updating weights and linking of series**  
Summary of comments received and authors’ feedback (editor)  
Discussion on content                                           |
| 12:00 pm – 12:45 pm | **Chapter 10: Scanner data**  
Summary of comments received and authors’ feedback (editor)  
Discussion on content                                           |
| 12:45 pm – 2:00 pm | **Lunch break**                                                        |
| 2:00 pm – 2:45 pm | **Chapter 11: Some special cases**  
Summary of comments received and authors’ feedback (editor)  
Discussion on content                                           |
| 2:45 pm – 3:30 pm | **Chapter 2: Concepts, scope and uses of CPI**  
Summary of comments received and authors’ feedback (editor)  
Discussion on content                                           |
| 3:30 pm – 4:00 pm | **Coffee break**                                                        |
| 4:00 pm – 4:30 pm | **Other content and research agenda**  
(editor)  
Discussion on content                                           |
| 4:30 pm – 5:00 pm | **Publication on theory and concepts**  
Summary of current status (editor)  
Discussion on content and references                          |
| 5:00 pm – 5:30 pm | **Summary of key issues discussed on day 1**  
WB                                                               |
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Annex 2: Attendance

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