European Cooperation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research - COST -

Secretariat

Brussels, 27 August 2008

COST 244/08

DRAFT SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Subject : 171st meeting of the COST Senior Officials Committee (CSO) held in Belgrade, Serbia on 18 - 19 June 2008

The welcome address was given by Professor Viktor Nedović, Assistant Minister, Department for International Scientific and Technological Cooperation, Ministry of Science of Serbia.

The CSO President opened the meeting[1] by welcoming the participants, in particular the new National coordinators:

- Trude DYPVIK, Norway,
- Cristina ANANIA, Romania,

and all those attending the CSO for the first time[2].

[1] Objections were noted from the FR and DE delegations that the meeting was held without interpretation.
[2] See complete list of participants in Annex I.

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The Committee adopted the agenda as set out in CM 1808/08 of 16 May 2008 (agenda items in Annex II) with only some adjustment to the order of items.

2. APPROVAL OF SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS OF THE 170th MEETING

The Committee approved the Summary of Conclusions of the previous meeting as set out in doc. COST 209/08.

3. INFORMATION FROM THE CSO PRESIDENCY

The President informed the Committee of

- the COST Days in Israel on 19 - 23 May 2008 (Tel-Aviv University, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Technion Institute of Technology, Haifa and Hebrew University of Jerusalem)[3],

- his participation at the ESF Governing Council meeting in Istanbul (TU) on 18 - 19 April 2008,

- his meeting with Prof. Raoul Kneucker (Rapporteur) and Prof. Marja Makarow (ESF CEO) on 13 June in Rome regarding the ongoing re-examination of Legal Status and Governance of COST,

- his scheduled meetings in Brussels the following week:
  = with the COST Office Science Officers on 23 June,
  = the 3rd meeting of the High Level Commission/COST Strategic Group on 24 June[4],
  = with the COST Secretariat and the Director of the COST Office on 25 June, and
  = the informal working lunch "*EUREKA and the ERA: from Ljubljana to Lisbon and beyond*" at the European Parliament on 26 June,

[3] Detailed information is available on the website: *http://www.cost.esf.org/index.php*
[4] As established by the doc. COST 270/04.

- his intention to attend the Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF) in Barcelona on 18 - 22 July,

- the appointment of Professor Georges Wanet as the Coordinator of the COST Trans-Domain Proposal Standing Assessment Body (TDP-SAB), and

- the new COST publications that have been issued recently: COST Guidelines, About COST 2008 and the COST Annual Report 2007. Delegations should inform the COST Office of the number of copies they wish to receive of the publications.

The Vice-President informed the Committee of his participation, on behalf of the CSO President, at the information event organised by the Commission in Tirana (AL) on 6 May 2008 to mark the association of Albania and Montenegro to the FP7. He highlighted the role that COST could play as a pathway to participation in the Framework Programmes, and strongly encouraged similar joint events to be organised in cooperation with the Commission.

4. INFORMATION FROM

- delegations

The Croatian delegation informed the Committee of the meeting of the Steering Platform on Research for Western Balkan Countries that had been held on 13 June 2008 in Ljubljana (SI). A general presentation on COST had been given by the Bulgarian CSO delegate, Dr Vutsova. The Croatian delegation had given a presentation on their experiences in COST and EUREKA.

- COST Office

The COST Office informed the Committee of

- the keynote address by the Director of the COST Office at the GRAD skills "Research Futures 2008" conference on 30 May 2008 at St Andrews University, Scotland. The one-day event had attracted more than 250 early stage researchers. Opportunities within COST had been highlighted and in the ensuing discussions several ideas for COST Action proposals had been identified;

- the preparations for the ESOF conference in Barcelona on 18-22 July, at which a COST Scientific session "Science and Preservation of Cultural Heritage", 3 COST Early Stage Researchers' workshops and an exhibition stand are foreseen.

5. COST SEMINARS, COST OFFICE ACTIVITIES AND FUTURE EVENTS

The COST Office presented a document dated 4 June 2008 on future COST Seminars and other activities supported by the COST Office.

6. STATUS OF THE FINAL EVALUATION AND PROGRESS REPORTS OF COST ACTIONS AND COST WEBSITE

The COST Office presented statistics on the Final and Evaluation reports of Actions that had ended between June 2006 and June 2008. The Committee was informed that the question regarding the final report of COST 530 had been clarified and the report would be soon available.

7. INFORMATION ON THE COST CONTRACT IN FP7

It was recalled that, as a matter of good management practice, the ESF provides summary activity reports on a half yearly basis to the CSO for information[5]. The first periodic report covering the period from 2 June to 31 December 2007 had been made available to delegations prior to the meeting.

The COST Office informed the Committee that the first part of the contract had ended on 2 June 2008. The subsequent amendment had been signed by the Commission on 13 June 2008. It was noted that due to internal technical reasons of the Commission, the signing process regarding this first amendment had been slower than expected.

In this context the Committee was informed of the audit regarding the COST contract in FP6 and the question of the decommissioning contingencies. It was recalled that since similar contingencies were not possible in the FP7 contract, it was necessary for the ESF to retain the contingency funds established under the FP6[6]. The Committee agreed that the CSO President would communicate this in a letter to the ESF CEO.

8. PREPARATION FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE IMPACT STUDY FOR THE MID-TERM EVALUATION IN 2010

The COST Office presented a draft set of assessment criteria to be used for the terms of reference regarding the comprehensive impact study for the mid-term evaluation in 2010. To ensure a solid and comprehensive foundation for the impact study an independent High Level Expert Panel had been appointed. In response to questions from some delegations regarding the composition of the Panel, the COST Office explained that the Panel members had been appointed based on the scientific excellence and, in particular, their experience of impact assessments. It was expected that a tender regarding the study would be launched during the second half of 2009.

[5] COST Contract, WP 2.1.3.
[6] CSO Conclusions in June 2007, doc. COST 230/07, p.5.

During an exchange of views some delegations drew attention to the definition of the COST objectives and the importance that the exercise takes adequately account of the impact of COST networks related to aspects such as integration and international cooperation, COST addressing issues of a pre-normative nature or of societal importance, industrial applications etc. The Commission representative expressed satisfaction with this work so far and underlined the importance of the impact study for the mid-term evaluation in 2010.

The President concluded by asking the COST Office to circulate an updated document, taking account of delegations' observations, to CSO members for information, and subsequently to proceed with the preparations of the impact study.

9. COST STRATEGY ON EARLY STAGE RESEARCHERS

The COST Office gave an implementation report on the actions taken by the COST Office based on the COST Strategy towards increased support for Early Stage Researchers (doc. COST 212/07) approved by the CSO in March 2007. A copy of the report had been made available to delegations prior to the meeting.

It was noted that an implementation report - also including statistical details when more evidence is available - would be provided to the CSO on an annual basis.

10. ACTION-RELATED ITEMS

a) Results of the 4th collection date (28 March 2008). Schedule of the Assessment process

The COST Office presented the results of the 4th collection date (28 March 2008) and the schedule of the assessment process[7]. As anticipated at the previous CSO meeting, the financial situation would allow up to 30 proposals to be approved. A shortlist of new proposals, following the evaluation procedures as set out in the COST guidelines, would be presented to the CSO in November 2008 for approval.

[7] The presentation has been made available on the CSO website.

In this context the Committee discussed, on the basis of the report by the COST Office, the functioning of the Open Call system.

b) JAF decisions on the requests for extension or prolongation of COST Actions

The Committee took note of the decision by the JAF Group, at its meeting on 14 - 15 May 2008, to approve the following extensions of COST Actions with no budget implications:

727: Measuring and forecasting atmospheric icing on structures (5 months)
A28: Human Rights, Peace and Security in EU Foreign Policy (6 months)

c) JAF decisions on the requests for participation of institutions from non-COST countries

The Committee took note of the decision by the JAF Group, at its meeting on 14 - 15 May 2008, to approve the requests for participation of institutions from non-COST countries as set out in doc. COST 210/08.

d) Status of the COST Grant system

The COST Office recalled the delays in the introduction of the COST Grant system (CGS) as reported to the CSO at its meeting in March, and informed the Committee that the CGS was expected to be operational in September 2008. A complete manual on the CGS was being finalised and would be available electronically and also as a printed booklet.

The Commission representative recalled that the CGS was a deliverable within the COST contract and therefore it was important to keep the Commission informed of any deviations to the envisaged timetable.

11. APPROVAL OF NEW COST ACTIONS

The President recalled the selection procedure of new Actions, as set out in the COST Guidelines: "On the basis of the final ranking lists for the three Clusters, and of an overall proposal of the COST Office, the JAF group will propose a definitive list for the CSO to approve within the available funding."

The COST Office gave a presentation of the 25 proposals for new COST Actions that were recommended by the JAF Group for the approval by the Committee (doc. COST 211/08). A booklet illustrating each Action was circulated to delegations at the meeting.

The Committee approved the 25 new COST Actions.

In this context the question of the economic dimension of an Action was raised as an important element of estimating the impact of COST. It was noted that it would be interesting to compare the estimate to the final figure at the end of an Action. The President recalled the definition in the Guidelines[8] and stated his intention to discuss the question also with the Science Officers when meeting them next week.

12. MODIFICATIONS TO ARTICLE 8 OF THE CSO WORKING METHODS

The Committee examined a proposal by the JAF Group, as set out in doc. 212/08, to modify Article 8 of the CSO Working methods (doc. COST 326/05). The JAF had proposed to streamline the use of the written procedure by eliminating the requirement for a "quorum" of positive votes, which in practice had proved difficult to achieve, whilst not otherwise changing the procedure.

The Committee approved the amendments as proposed. A new updated version of the CSO Working Methods is set out in COST 242/08.

[8] COST Guidelines, doc. 205/08, p. 31

13. COST STRATEGY FOR COOPERATION WITH INSTITUTIONS FROM NON-COST COUNTRIES

The President informed the Committee that the JAF Group, at its meeting on 14-15 May 2008, had concluded that there was no immediate need to reconsider the general COST strategy as approved by the CSO in June 2007[9].

The COST Office gave a presentation illustrating the level of non-COST participation during the past years, observing the impact of the specific measures undertaken recently (pilot schemes, support to near neighbours). Contacts for enhanced cooperation were ongoing with countries such as South Africa, India and Argentina, also jointly with the Commission.

The Committee endorsed the JAF conclusions to maintain the general COST Strategy as set out in the current document and to continue to review the situation at least annually. It was recalled that a Commission Communication on international S&T cooperation was expected to be issued in September 2008.

During the exchange of views it was proposed that discussions regarding a "common strategy" on international cooperation with other ERA actors, in particular with EUREKA, could be raised at the Presidency level.

14. COST STRATEGIC SCIENTIFIC INITIATIVES

The Committee examined the proposal by the JAF Group (doc. COST 213/1/08 REV 1) regarding the planning and approval of COST Workshops, COST/ESF High Level Research Conferences and Strategic Scientific Initiatives. The proposal was approved with some editorial amendments, and the final version is set out in doc. COST 243/08.

[9] Doc. COST 229/07: COST Strategy for cooperation with institutions from non-COST countries

15. APPOINTMENT OF TWO MEMBERS OF JAF

The Committee noted that the mandates of Dr Eva KLAPER (CH) and Dr Ángeles RODRIGUEZ PEÑA (ES) as JAF members would expire in June 2008.

In accordance with the proposal by the CSO President as set out in doc. COST 214/08, the Committee appointed Dr Julia KIPPER ALBERTINI (DE) and Ms Ülle MUST (EE) as new members of the JAF Group for three years starting from June 2008.

The CSO President, on behalf of the Committee, expressed his gratitude to both departing members for their contribution to the activities of the JAF Group.

16. RE-EXAMINATION OF THE LEGAL STATUS AND GOVERNANCE OF COST

Professor Raoul Kneucker, the Rapporteur, gave a presentation of his preliminary report on the re-examination of the legal status and governance of COST. A copy of the draft report had been made available to delegations prior to the meeting.

The Committee had a preliminary exchange of views. On the basis of delegations' indicative orientations it appeared that two options could be further examined by the Committee:

- maintaining the current status with further improvements to the governance or
- establishing a legal entity as an international association under Belgian law (AISBL).

Several delegations stressed that the position of the ESF on its willingness to continue to be the implementing agent for COST after the end of FP7 would need to be clarified with a view to a well-informed decision of the CSO on the question. Another issue that was raised concerned the question of gradually transferring all ESF networking research activities to COST whilst keeping the research programmes under ESF. The CSO President will address a letter to the ESF President regarding these two issues.

The Committee agreed to prolong the Rapporteur's mandate until the end of 2008[10]. His final report would be made available to delegations in October 2008, with a view to reaching conclusions on the item at the CSO meeting in November 2008.

17. COST MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

The President recalled that the Swedish Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications had examined the possibility to hold a COST Ministerial Conference during the Swedish EU Presidency in the second half of 2009. As this had not turned out to be feasible, the President had sent a letter to all COST delegations asking them to consider the possibility of hosting a COST Ministerial Conference during the second half of 2009[11]. Proposals had been requested to be sent to the President by 15 October 2008 at the latest, to be examined by the JAF Group in November. It was recalled that support from the COST Fund would be available for the organisation of the event.

Furthermore, the President informed the Committee of the tentative planning for a "40 years of COST" event in Brussels in the margins of the CSO meeting in the spring of 2010. In this context an envisaged exhibition at the European Parliament could again provide a useful opportunity to promote COST.

18. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee examined the list of future meetings as set out in doc. COST 202/2/08 REV 2. The next CSO meeting would take place on 24 - 25 November 2008 in Brussels. Considering the substantial agenda item of that meeting (the re-examination of legal status and governance) it was agreed to postpone the joint meeting with the DC Chairs to a later stage.

The President noted that the dates for 2009 were tentative and might need to be modified in the light of the possible Ministerial Conference. Furthermore, an additional CSO meeting might need to be convened in preparation of the Ministerial Conference.

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[10] It is recalled that the expenses of the Rapporteur related to this exercise would be covered by the COST Fund (doc. COST 269/07, p.11)

[11] Copies of letters in Annex III.

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- The Vice-President briefly summarised the outcome of the informal discussions on 18 June on how to strengthen communication between the COST Office and the CSO. The session had been considered useful and it had been proposed that a similar session could take place in the margins of the CSO meeting in March 2009.

- The delegate of the fYR of Macedonia informed the Committee that EUREKA Ministerial Conference in Ljubljana (SI) on 6 June 2008 had confirmed their full membership in EUREKA.

- The President, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Serbian delegation for the excellent organisation of the meeting in Belgrade.

ANNEX I

List of participants[1]

PRESIDENT	:	Mr Francesco FEDI
VICE-PRESIDENT	:	Mr John BARTZIS
AUSTRIA (AT)	:	Mr Florian HAUG Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs Ms Katharina KRYSZTOFIAK Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology
BELGIUM (BE)	:	Mr Hendrik MONARD Federal Science Policy
BULGARIA (BG)	:	Ms Milena GLAVCHEVA Ministry of Education and Science
CROATIA (HR)	:	Mr Bozidar BIONDIC University of Zagreb Mr Damir JELICIC Ministry of Science
CYPRUS (CY)	:	Ms Constantina MAKRI Research Promotion Foundation
CZECH REPUBLIC (CZ)	:	Mr Milos CHVOJKA Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Mr Bedrich PEKAREK Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
DENMARK (DK)	:	Mr Gorm BRAMSNAES Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation Ms Dorte MUNCH NIELSEN Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation
ESTONIA (EE)	:	Ms Ülle MUST Archimedes Foundation

[1] Regrets had been received from the Italian and Spanish delegations.

FINLAND (FI)	:	Ms Eili ERVELÄ-MYREEN Finnish Academy Mr Raimo PULKKINEN TEKES
fYR of MACEDONIA (MK)	:	Ms Katerina SUMANOVSKA Ministry of Education and Science
FRANCE (FR)	:	Mr Michel GORLICKI Ministry of Higher Education and Research
GERMANY (DE)	:	Ms Julia KIPPER-ALBERTINI EUREKA-COST Bureau
GREECE (EL)	:	Ms Laura ALIPRANTI General Secretariat for Research and Technology
HUNGARY (HU)	:	Ms Orsolya TOTH National Office for Research and Technology
ICELAND (IS)	:	Ms Hjördis HENDRIKSDOTTIR The Icelandic Mission to the EU
IRELAND (IE)	:	Ms Rita WARD Enterprise Ireland
ISRAEL (IL)	:	-
ITALY (IT)	:	-
LATVIA (LV)	:	Ms Maja BUNDULE Ministry of Education and Science Ms Ieva CIPRUSE Ministry of Education and Science
LITHUANIA (LT)	:	Ms Danute STANKEVICIENE Agency of International Science and Technology Development Programmes Ms Jurga TROTIENE Agency of International Science and Technology Development Programmes
LUXEMBOURG (LU)	:	Mr Carlo DUPREL Ministry of Research
MALTA (MT)	:	-

NETHERLANDS (NL)	:	Mr Herman van der PLAS Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
NORWAY (NO)	:	Mr Bjørn BJØRNSEN The Research Council of Norway
		Ms Trude DYPVIK The Research Council of Norway
POLAND (PL)	:	Mr Marek ZDANOWSKI Ministry of Science and Higher Education
PORTUGAL (PT)	:	Ms Fernanda SOUTO SEPULVEDA Foundation for Science and Technology FCT
ROMANIA (RO)	:	Ms Cristina ANANIA National Authority for Scientific Research
SERBIA (RS)	:	Ms Biljana STOJANOVIC University of Belgrade
		Ms Jasmina MILENKOVIC University of Kragujevac
SLOVAKIA (SK)	:	-
SLOVENIA (SI)	:	Mr Primoz PRISTOVSEK Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology
SPAIN (ES)	:	-
SWEDEN (SE)	:	Ms Birgitta BOMAN VINNOVA
		Mr Stefan CAIREN Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications
SWITZERLAND (CH)	:	Ms Eva KLAPER SER
TURKEY (TU)	:	Mr Mehmet KURAN TUBITAK
UNITED KINGDOM (UK)	:	Ms Janette McNEIL Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills

COMMISSION, DG Research	:	Mr Jan-Arne EILERTSEN
COST OFFICE	:	Mr Martin GRABERT Mr Afonso FERREIRA Mr Gian Mario MAGGIO Ms Carine PETIT Mr Günter SIEGEL
COUNCIL SECRETARIAT	:	Mr Kimmo PEIPPO Ms Ulla MESIÄ Ms Laurence VANHULLE

AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Approval of Summary of Conclusions of the previous meeting

3. Information from the CSO Presidency

4. Information from
   - delegations
   - COST Office
   - COST Secretariat
   - Commission

5. COST Seminars, COST Office activities and future events

6. Status of the Final Evaluation and Progress Reports of COST Actions and COST website

7. Information on the COST Contract in FP7
   - 1st periodic report

8. Preparation for the comprehensive Impact Study for the Mid-term Evaluation in 2010
   - Status report

9. COST Strategy on Early Stage Researchers
   - Implementation report

10. Action-related items

    a) Results of the 4th collection date (28 March 2008). Schedule of the Assessment process
    b) JAF decisions on the requests for extension or prolongation of COST Actions
    c) JAF decisions on the requests for participation of institutions from non-COST countries
    d) Status of the COST Grant system

11. Approval of new COST Actions *(http://www.cost.esf.org/index.php?id=1517)*

12. Modifications to Article 8 of the CSO Working Methods

13. COST Strategy for Cooperation with institutions from non-COST countries

14. COST Strategic Initiatives

15. Appointment of two members of JAF

16. Re-examination of the Legal Status and Governance of COST
    - Presentation of the preliminary report by Professor Raoul Kneucker
    - Decisions on the follow-up of the report

17. COST Ministerial Conference

18. Future meetings

19. Any other business

European **CO**operation in the field
of **S**cientific and **T**echnical Research

President

Mrs. Maud Olofsson
Minister for Enterprise & Energy
Ministry of Enterprise, Energy & Communications
S-103 33 Stockholm
SWEDEN

Rome, 30 October 2007

Dear Minister Olofsson,

I am writing to you in my capacity as President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO).

As you know, COST- the acronym for European **CO**operation in the field of **S**cientific and **T**echnical Research - is the oldest and one of the widest European intergovernmental networks for coordination of nationally funded research activities. Established by a Ministerial Conference of 19 European States in November 1971, COST is at present serving the scientific communities of 35 countries to cooperate in common research Actions supported by national funds. COST contributes to reduce fragmentation in research investments in Europe and to open the European Research Area to the cooperation on a world basis.

The latest COST Ministerial conference was held in Dubrovnik in 2003. The COST CSO decided that it would be necessary to hold a new Ministerial Conference in the second half of 2009. During this period the EU Presidency will be held by Sweden.

Also considering the important role that Sweden has always had in COST, among other things holding the Vice-Presidency of COST CSO in the triennium 2004-2007, I take the liberty to ask you whether you could consider to insert a COST Ministerial Conference in the Agenda of the Swedish EU Presidency on the occasion of a meeting of a Competitiveness Council. The COST Ministerial Conference should not take more than a half day either in the morning or in the afternoon.

The advantage of this solution is that many Ministers who will be in Brussels for the Competitiveness Council meeting could easily participate in the COST Ministerial Conference. In case you could consider this possibility viable, you should chair the Conference and invite to participate in this Conference the 35 COST countries which include the 27 EU member States.

If the Ministerial Conference could not be held in the Justus Lipsius building, COST would be ready to take care of finding a suitable venue for the Ministerial Conference in Brussels.

I do hope you could consider positively this possibility.

Looking forward to hearing from you, with my best wishes for the Swedish EU Presidency and best regards,

Yours sincerely

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European **CO**operation in the field
of **S**cientific and **T**echnical Research

President

To : COST CSO members
From : COST CSO President
Re : COST Ministerial Conference 2009
Date : 05 May 2008

Dear Colleagues,

You may recall that on 30 October 2007 I wrote a letter to Mrs. Maud Olofsson, Minister for Enterprise & Energy of Sweden, asking to consider to insert a COST Ministerial Conference in the Agenda of the Swedish EU Presidency on the occasion of a meeting of a Competitiveness Council. The letter is attached for your convenience.

Up to now I have not received any formal answer. However, Mr. Stefan Cairen, our past Vice-President, very recently kindly informed me that Mrs. Maud Olofsson will not be able to chair a COST Ministerial Meeting during the Swedish EU Presidency second half 2009 and that I will soon receive a proper answer in a formal letter.

Consequently, I ask the COST CSO Delegations to consider the possibility of hosting the COST Ministerial Conference in the second half of 2009 in their countries and to let me know by 15 October 2008 at the latest so that the various proposals could be examined during the JAF meeting next November. The COST Fund is available to partially support this event.

Looking forward to seeing you all in Belgrade next June, with my best regards

Yours sincerely

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REGERINGSKANSLIET

Dnr N2007/8877/EIS

23 April 2008

Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications

Secretariat for EU and International Coordination
Deputy director
Tim Brooks
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Prof. Francesco Fedi
Via Paolo Bentivoglio 29 B
00165 ROMA
Italy

Dear Mr Fedi,

On behalf of the Minister for Enterprise and Energy, Ms Olofsson, I would like to thank you for your invitation to hold a Cost Ministerial Conference as part of the agenda for the Swedish EU Presidency on the occasion of a meeting of the Competitiveness Council.

Unfortunately it will not be possible for us to facilitate this solution. As I am sure you can appreciate the preparations for the Presidency are complex and the timeframe relatively short. This means we do not have the capacity for the initiative that you have proposed.

I hope that you can find another suitable host for arranging the Cost Ministerial Conference during 2009.

Yours sincerely

Tim Brooks

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