

National Poverty Watch Report

Portugal

1. Introduction

EAPN - European Anti-Poverty Network / Portugal (EAPN Portugal) is a non-governmental organization established in Portugal since 1991. It's mission is to contribute to build a more just and solidarity society, where all citizens have access to a decent life, based on the respect of Human Rights and the full exercise of an informed, participative and inclusive citizenship. EAPN Portugal is implemented throughout the national territory by regional networks in each of the country's 18 districts.

During the last 26 years, EAPN Portugal has sought to be an organization attentive to the poverty and social exclusion phenomena, not only at national and local level, but also at European level, focusing its action on the organizations that work directly with these problems, promoting the participation of people who experience situations of social vulnerability and producing critical thinking that is an added value for the definition of more effective social policies. In this sense, its action covers training, information, research and lobby activities.

In this context, this document aims to briefly outline a portrait of the situation of poverty in Portugal, not only presenting some official information on this issue, but also a set of concerns expressed in messages by the voice of those who experience this reality. In one way and another, it is intended not only to inform society about this problem, but also to raise awareness about the outlines that it undertakes in Portugal and in Europe, and to present a set of recommendations that can be discussed and implemented.

Recommendations:

- Promoting the definition and implementation of a National Strategy for the Eradication of Poverty and Social Exclusion.
- Ensuring that social protection is strengthened and provide the required basis for an adequate minimum income scheme.
- Investing in quality training, that makes a difference and capable of a lasting professional integration of the young.
- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the ESF 20% allocated to the fight against poverty and social exclusion.
- Promoting the follow-up of the Europe 2020 objectives and strengthening the social cohesion axis with a special attention to the European Pillar of Social Rights.
- Promoting the effective participation of civil society and people living in poverty in the European semester, specifically in the preparation of the key documents produced in this scope.

2. What do we mean by poverty?

In 2016 and within the framework of the work developed by the National Citizens Council, EAPN Portugal published the Guide “Pobreza e a Exclusão Social: um Olhar na Primeira Pessoa” (*Poverty and Social Exclusion: A Look in the First Person*). This Guide, as well as presenting the concepts of poverty, exclusion and material deprivation, also includes the views of people living in poverty about the myths that exist about the vulnerability of these people and what can be done to fight poverty and exclusion.

The National Citizens Council (NCC) is an advisory body of EAPN Portugal that was created in 2009 and is composed of a representative of each Local Citizens Council (LCC). There are 18 LCCs (one in each district of the country) and each one is made up of people living or that lived in situation of poverty and social exclusion. Each LCC is monitored and coordinated by the district/regional EAPN Portugal networks.

The definition of poverty and social exclusion can be found in several published documents, both at national and European level. The Guide points to a clear and easier definition namely: "Poverty is related to the lack of material resources that do not allow a person to equally participate in the society in which he/she lives in. One also lives in poverty when he/she doesn't have the opportunity to participate in activities and doesn't have the normal living conditions and comfort, as for example, the access to cultural and educational activities, and to healthcare services"¹.

“Poverty is not a condition that is born with us. Poverty is, above all, the lack of justice.”

Member of the NCC

Poverty can be relative or absolute. In the case of Absolute Poverty, people live in a severe situation of poverty. Absolute or Severe Poverty "refers to a condition where people do not have the income to meet the minimum requirements for the most basic living needs (food, housing, health, education, among others)."² The United Nations (UN) focuses their efforts on the eradication of extreme poverty all over the world. The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have defined as the first objective the reduction of extreme poverty and hunger. In the current UN Sustainable Development Goals this Objective gave place to the first two 2 goals: *End poverty in all its forms everywhere* (ODS 1) and *End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture* (ODS 2).

In the case of Relative Poverty, we are dealing with situations where the lifestyle and the income of some people are well below the standard of living of the country or region in which they live. The European Union adopts the definition of relative poverty.

Since this is a multidimensional phenomenon, that is, poverty is related to the lack of income, but also to a whole set of exclusion situations that prevent / hinder the full participation of people in society, to measure poverty is not an easy task. In 2010 and within the framework of the presentation of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Commission has set up a composite indicator to measure poverty. This indicator (*The rate of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion* – AROPE) corresponds to the sum of persons who are in one of the following 3 situations: 1) at risk

¹ *A Pobreza e a Exclusão Social: um olhar na primeira pessoa*, Porto, EAPN Portugal, 2016, p.8.

² *Op. Cit*, Porto, EAPN Portugal, 2016, p.8.

of poverty (below the poverty line); 2) severely materially deprived; 3) living in households with very low work intensity.

3. What is happening to poverty? Who are the groups most affected?

In Portugal, after a period in which the *at risk of poverty rate* decreased, the post-troika period (between 2011 and 2014, Portugal was submitted to an Economic Adjustment Program) significantly worsened the poverty figures. According to the National Statistics Institute (INE) in 2016, 25.1% of the Portuguese population was *at risk of poverty or social exclusion* (2 595 million people). A slightly lower percentage when compared to 2015 (26.6%). In 2013 and 2014 this rate reached 27.5% of the population. However, the most recent data, released at the end of November, refer to a change of scenery. According to INE³ and the survey carried out in 2017, there were 2 399 people living in poverty and social exclusion in Portugal, i.e. 23.3% (-1.8 pp over the previous year).

Considering that this is a composite indicator, it can also be seen that the *at-risk poverty rate* was 18.3% in 2016⁴, the *severe material deprivation rate* was 6.9% (2017) and the *work intensity rate per capita* was 8.0%.

"We spend as little as possible and we do not always make it; sometimes even the help of friends and the community is not enough. Quite often we must abdicate of buying the medication, so we can buy a pair of shoes. With all this sometimes we cannot make it, and we are doing some small things in crafts which I try to sell at low prices to get some money " - " I must cut down on food since I do not have family support. That's because of all this that I have a very low quality of life. "

NCC Member

Children remain the group most affected by poverty, although there has also been a decrease in these figures between 2015 and 2016 by 1.7 percentage points, i.e. the rate in 2015 was 22.4% and in 2016, 20.7%. In the case of the elderly, there was also a decrease to 17.0% in 2016 (in 2015 it was 18.3%).

In 2016, the risk of poverty continued to affect women with the greatest impact: 18.7% *versus* 17.8% for men. Since 2003 the figures show a trend towards the greater vulnerability of women to poverty. The difference between one group and the other goes from 0.7 percentage points in 2011 to 1.4 percentage points in 2015⁵.

From the point of view of the composition of the household, the *at-risk poverty rate* is highest among households with dependent children when compared to households without dependent children. It should be noted that INE considers as dependent children all individuals under the age of 18, as well as people between the age of 18 and 24 who are economically dependent. In 2016, 19.7% of the households with dependent children were at risk of poverty (slightly lower than in 2015 - 21.0%), while this rate was 16.9% for households without dependent children (slightly higher than 2015 - 16.8%).

³ INE; *Rendimento e Condições de Vida 2017*, Destaque do INE de 30 de Novembro de 2017. Available in: https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_destaques&DESTAQUESdest_boui=281441156&DESTAQUESmodo=2

⁴ *O Inquérito às Condições de Vida e Rendimento* carried out in 2017 based on 2016 data.

⁵ *Igualdade de Género em Portugal: Indicadores-chave 2017*, CIG, April 2017.

Among the households with dependent children, the single parent households (one adult with at least one child) and large families (two adults with three or more children) remain those with the highest *at risk of poverty rate* in 2016 (33.1% and 41.4%, respectively) (in 2015 it was 31.6% and 42.7%). It should be noted that in 2013, there was a peak of *at risk of poverty* (38.4%) in single-parent families (1 adult with at least one child). In the case of households with two adults and three or more children, this peak occurred in 2015, after having slightly decreased between 2013 and 2014.

The situation of the working poor is equally noteworthy at national level. In 2015, 10.9% of workers were vulnerable to poverty, with a slight decrease to 10.8% in 2016. It is important to underline that, in 2016, 44.8% of the unemployed were *at risk of poverty*, a percentage higher than in 2015 (42%). The same occurred for "other inactive" (31.2% in 2015 and 32.3% in 2016).

Regarding the retired population, there was an increase in the *at risk of poverty rate* between 2012 and 2015, from 12.8% to 16.0%; but in 2016 there was a decrease to 15.1%. Unemployment is also considerable among young people and the long-term unemployed. In the second quarter of 2017, youth unemployment was 22.7% and the proportion of unemployed looking for a job during the last 12 months or more (long term) was 59.2% (the long-term unemployment rate was 5.2 %). The situation of the NEETs (young people who were not employed, nor in education or training) is also significant (10.8%). In global terms, and despite the seriousness of these situations, these rates have been decreasing in recent years among all the identified groups.

In general, unemployment in the third quarter of 2017 was 8.5%, 2.0 pp lower than in the same quarter of 2016. Gender also plays an important role as the women unemployment rate (9.2%) is still higher than the men unemployment rate (7.7%). The same occurs with the employment rate, being higher among men (59.8%) than in women (49.4%). The overall employment rate was 54.3%. The CIG report also indicates that in 2015, 12.5% of women worked part-time compared with 7.1% of men. However, the proportion of involuntary part-time workers is quite significant in Portugal. While among men the difference is only 2.5 percentage points, in the case of women the differential reaches 28.7 percentage points. The report concludes that this situation is quite revealing of the difficulty that women have to work full time when compared with men. This situation has an impact on the earnings and, in the long term, on the retirement pensions that the female population will receive. In terms of remuneration, the average basic salary is higher for men (990.05 €) than for women (824.99 €) and the higher the level of qualification, the greater is the difference between men and women, 26.4% in senior management.

Portugal is also one of the most unequal countries in the EU. In 2016, 20% of the population with the highest income received approximately 5.7 times the income of the 20% of the population with the lowest income (in 2015 it was 5.9). This inequality is even greater when we find out that 10% of the richest population earn 10.0 times the income of the 10% of the poorest population. In both cases there is a decrease compared to 2015, 5.7 in the S80 / S20 ratio and 10.0 in the S90 / S10 ratio.

Regarding the targets set in by the Europe 2020 Strategy, Portugal has seen a very positive development in reducing early school leaving. Between 2010 and 2016 Portugal reduced this rate by 14.3 pp, from 28.3% (2010) to 14.0% (2016). In the Europe 2020 Strategy the target is 10%.

Regarding the reduction of the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, EAPN Portugal had already stated that the national target lacks ambition since it was intended to reduce poverty by 200 thousand people in 10 years. The National Reform Programme 2017 states that Portugal has seen a positive evolution and has reduced the number of people in poverty in 168

thousand; however, it is also important to note that the number of people living in poverty has risen between 2012 and 2013 and it was only from 2014 onwards that it gradually started to reduce.

4. What are the key challenges and priorities? What do people in poverty think?

EAPN Portugal seeks to monitor the several dimensions of poverty both in terms of the problems associated with it and the groups most affected. Despite this global view, there is a set of phenomena and groups for which more specific attention is sought, thus enhancing aspects that require a more specific intervention. Based on the above data, it is important to highlight the situation of children living in poverty. Though children live in disadvantaged households (children "are not poor on their own") there are inherent aspects of their well-being that need to be highlighted and addressed. For this reason, and within the framework of the working group on child poverty promoted by EAPN Portugal, a set of proposals considered as priorities in this area have already been identified, namely:

- "The need to carry out a solid and up-to-date diagnosis of children's living conditions (...) the implementation of a national strategy for the eradication of poverty and social exclusion in general and child poverty and social exclusion in particular; a clear, inclusive and mainstream approach to develop and design policies and programs that guarantee the best interests of the children ... and the obligation for funding children's participation in project design and evaluation"⁶. It also should be noted the political and symbolic significance of the Commission Recommendation of 2013: "*Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage*", which remains without a practical application in our country. EAPN Portugal has been addressing this failure in various position papers on this matter. We welcome the fact that the European Pillar of Social Rights has restored this Recommendation.

The fight against discrimination is also a focus on the organization's activities and one of the major national challenges. At this level, it is important to highlight the situation of Roma that, adding to the situation of poverty in which they live, they also have to face severe stigmatization which affects their lives in many ways, particularly in their access to employment, education and housing.

People should look at Roma without prejudices. They must be treated as anyone else, as human beings. I don't introduce myself as a Roma, but I don't hide it either. I am proud to be a Roma, but deep down, I am simply a person like any other".

*Damaris Maia*⁷

The homelessness issue has been a priority for EAPN Portugal and has become an important subject at national level. In 2009, Portugal presented a National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People, which was internationally recognized, being the first of its kind among the countries of Southern Europe. From the beginning, the Organization has been a member of the Strategy

⁶ Fátima Veiga e Sandra Araújo, "A promoção do Bem-estar infantil: o desafio, uma prioridade!", in Amélia Bastos e Fátima Veiga (Org.), *A análise do Bem-estar das crianças e jovens e os Direitos da criança*, Vila Nova de Famalicão, Edições Húmus, November 2016, p.136.

⁷ Testimony of Damaris Maia that integrates the publication, Maria José Vicente e Sérgio Aires, *Singular do Plural*, Porto, EAPN Portugal, November de 2016. This publication gathers 20 testimonies of Roma men and women from 18 to 65 years old who claim the right to be treated as citizens of full right. For more information see : <http://www.eapn.pt/publicacao/216/o-singular-do-plural>

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Group and has been systematically working to have the strategy improved. In July 2017 the Council of Ministers approved the new Strategy 2017-2023. The situation of homeless people is also revealing the problems in the access to housing by those experiencing poverty and by the poor housing conditions in which many of them live. According to the European index on housing exclusion, Portugal is ranked 18th in terms of severe housing deprivation (5.5%)⁸. In Portugal, the access to housing was severely hampered during the economic and financial crisis, and remains very limited to people living in poverty, not only because of the high rental prices, the struggle in accessing bank credit, but also because of the economic insufficiency of these groups to cope with the multiplicity of housing-related and daily expenses:

"I have been living in the same house for 17 years, always with many difficulties, but in recent times these difficulties have increased. After all, with only €178 of RSI, I have to fight hard to pay the rent of 200€".

"Unemployment forced us to move to a social house".

"I know many difficult situations to solve. Families who had to hand over to the banks their houses, with loss of the value already paid, that went to live with the parents in smaller houses. There should be a way to negotiate with the banks so that there are no further evictions ..."

Members of the Local Citizens Councils

Another priority concerns the significance of an adequate minimum income, together with the inclusion in a more inclusive labour market and access to quality services. The adoption of an active inclusion strategy has never taken place at national level. Portugal has always dealt with high levels of unemployment, namely youth unemployment and long-term unemployment. Despite the statistics show a gradual drop in these rates and an increase on job creation it remains some doubts about the quality of jobs that have been created.

"Organizations look for people who are receiving or have already received the unemployment benefit, to hire through IEFP measures and thus they don't have to pay; at the end of these contracts they send people away."

"I have had a lot of difficulties in the employment centre, I think they are more concerned with the implementation of (active) employment measures than with the actual jobs, which are few and precarious."

"In 2008 I lost my job in the library. I was on a short-term employment contract and not eligible for the unemployment benefit. I suffered a nervous breakdown".

Members of the Local Citizens Councils

Similarly, during the crisis there were restricted measures to access some social benefits, such as the Social Integration Income (RSI). This benefit is targeted at people living in poverty and has an impact on reducing the harshness of poverty. Since December 2016 and the new Government, this benefit has undergone some changes, both in the amount and in the access procedures. These changes made it possible to extend the scope of the measure, but those who benefit from it continue to face serious difficulties, not only because of the amount of the benefit is far from adequate (€ 183.84 per

⁸ *Housing Exclusion Index*, Portugal Country Fiche 2016. Available on: <http://www.feantsa.org/en/country-profile/2016/10/19/country-profile-portugal?bcParent=27>

recipient), but also because its beneficiaries are a target of prejudice, often being labelled as people who "do not want to work" and "subsidy-dependent" of the social protection system.

5. What is the role of EU and national governments?

The 2016 National Reform Program (NRP) shows a more specific focus on social issues such as poverty and social exclusion and on the extent of social inequalities that have worsened since 2011 with the economic crisis and the austerity measures. The weight of this pillar is significant, with the largest number of measures - 34 (the Pillar of Territorial Enhancement is close, with 32 measures), being 44% underway and 26% completed.

To achieve two specific objectives - *to ensure the efficiency, sustainability and justice of the healthcare and social security systems and to reduce the level of poverty and social exclusion* - it is crucial to mention that a set of measures have been put in place to restore the rights that had been withdrawn in the Troika period. Some of the most significant were:

- Updating the amounts of the family allowance and an increase for single parents.
- Replacement of the reference values of the Solidarity Supplement for the Elderly (SSE) and the Social Integration Income (SII).
- The updating of the value of the Social Support Indexation.
- Updating the disability supplement and increasing the monthly amount of the constant attendance allowance...
- Extra financial support for the Long Term Unemployed.
- Increase of the minimum monthly wage.
- Promotion of equity in the access to health services.
- Broaden the network of the long-term healthcare (National Network of Integrated Continued Care).

We recognize the importance of the above-mentioned measures, especially the impact that some of them have on reducing the harshness of poverty, but the continuous decrease of the number of SSE (Solidarity Supplement for the Elderly) and the number of SII beneficiaries remains a matter of concern. In last July the Government announced some changes in the access and renewal of the SII (the annual renewal request is no longer mandatory and access to the measure is broader and may be requested by persons with assets over 25 thousand euros). Nevertheless, the concern already announced by EAPN Portugal is related to the linkage of the SII with the activation measures. There is a clear commitment to "sustainable activation of the beneficiaries of active policies", but to what extent is this also a commitment to inclusion in quality work?

The NRP also considers the need to create a system of social precarity warning indicators (school drop-out, health problems, etc.) that allow monitoring the impact of policies and measures. In this context it is important to stress the urgency of establishing this panel of indicators to also monitor the implementation of the 20% of the European Social Fund allocated to combating poverty and social exclusion. Delays in the implementation of the Structural Funds and the absence of this subject in the Assessment of the first 6 months of the NRP implementation and in the reviewed document (in 2017) remain worrying.

From the European point of view and based on the European Commission Report on Portugal there is a clear reference to the fact that "while the Portuguese economy has continued to recover for the fourth consecutive year, it remains vulnerable to shocks ". Regarding the NRP, the Commission's report states that "overall Portugal has made limited progress on addressing the 2016 country specific recommendations". This raises some questions regarding the inclusion of the recommendations by government measures and / or the adequacy of those to the national reality. From the point of view of the measures considered to be positive, the Commission emphasizes the replacement of the reference values of the SII and SSE mentioned above. But it is worrying that Portugal remains one of the countries with the highest level of inequality in income distribution.

The long-term unemployment and youth unemployment are highlighted as serious problems at national level. The report stresses that Portugal continues to have a problem of labour market segmentation that particularly pushes young people into precarious jobs. The Commission considers that "measures were taken in the area of employment support to promote hiring on open ended contracts" had a limited impact on reducing the labour market segmentation. It is also noted that the strong increase in tourism will have contributed to the increase of employment, but nothing is said about the type of employment that was created, since in the Tourism sector the risk of precariousness is higher due to seasonal and temporary employment.

Despite the warnings, the European Commission does not present any specific recommendations directly related to Poverty. Concerns about unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, are reflected in Recommendation No 2, but the Commission still question the economic recovery of the country, as the Portuguese economy is still vulnerable.

However, in a press release the Government stated that the "deficit will not exceed 2.1% of GDP in 2016, below all the IMF estimates (...) [and that] Portugal will continue to meet its national and international commitments: in 2017 the deficit will be 1.6%⁹¹⁰." The press ends with a reference to the National Reform Program as the instrument aimed at "increasing its potential growth and ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth", enabling the achievement of the objectives of correcting "economic and social imbalances, consolidating the positive progress achieved in the areas of public accounts, unemployment and external accounts".

6. What is EAPN doing?

- ***Definition of a National Strategy for the Eradication of Poverty***

In 2013, EAPN Portugal created a Working Group called *National Strategy for the Eradication of Poverty and Social Exclusion*. This group of experts and organizations in the social area aimed to reflect on the issues of poverty and exclusion and to lay the foundations for the definition of a National Strategy. After the presentation of a Manifesto (*A Pobreza Mata!* - "Poverty kills!") in October 2014 and the organization of seminars in the Portuguese National Parliament, meetings with political parties and the President of the Republic, the proposal was presented in September 2015: *Eradicating Poverty Commitment for a National Strategy*. This document has been presented and discussed with decision-makers in order to gather consensus for its subsequent implementation.

⁹ *Quinta Missão de Monitorização Pós-Programa do FMI a Portugal*, Nota à Comunicação Social, Gabinete do Ministro das Finanças, 22 February 2017. This news release follows the Report of the 5th Monitoring Mission Post-IMF in which is recognized the progress of the country economy, but the IMF *shows some doubts regarding the sustainability of the results*.

¹⁰ According to recent news (2018) the Government plans to cut the public deficit to 1% of GDP.

For more information see: <http://www.eapn.pt/publicacao/204/rediteia-48-2015-erradicar-a-pobreza-compromisso-para-uma-estrategia-nacional>

- **National Awareness Campaign: *Direito a ser o que quiserem (the right to be what we want)***

In June 2017 EAPN Portugal launched, in partnership with the Secretary of State for Citizenship and Equality, the National Campaign – *The right to be what we want*. The main aim of this campaign is to seek to positively influence the social image of the Roma communities in the majority society, by confronting it with the unjust and violently discriminatory way in which this ethnic minority is treated daily and, calling for a change of behaviour.

Publicly presented on June 24 - National Roma Day - this Campaign was also hosted and promoted by a group of public figures and marked the beginning of a more effective partnership with the Secretary of State to stimulate other actions to combat discrimination and promote greater inclusion of Roma communities.

For more information see: <http://www.eapn.pt/campanha/30/campanha-contra-a-discriminacao-das-comunidades-ciganas-direitoaseroquequiserem>

- **Local and National Citizens' Councils**

Since 2009, EAPN Portugal promotes the Local and National Citizens' Councils. These Councils are made up of people experiencing or who have experienced poverty and social exclusion and are intended to give voice to people to express their realities, needs and priorities and to create space for them to actively participate with EAPN Portugal in the fight against poverty. Over the years, these Councils have developed a set of different activities (workshops, debates, campaigns, theatre plays) on different subjects related to poverty. Since 2009 they have been the protagonists of the National Forum which annually celebrates the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and Exclusion Social (17 October).

For more information see: <http://participacao.eapn.pt/>

- **The National Observatory for Combating Poverty and The Observatory for Combating Poverty in the City of Lisbon**

In 2017 EAPN Portugal launches the bases for the creation of a National Observatory for Combating Poverty. The knowledge of the national reality is a major condition for creating more effective instruments and design policy measures to combat poverty.

This challenge is based on an experience of 10 year that EAPN Portugal has as the promoter of the Observatory of the City of Lisbon.

For more information see: <http://observatorio-lisboa.eapn.pt>; <http://www.eapn.pt>

- **Publication on Children well-being (*Estudo do Bem-estar Infantil*)**

Following its experience on social research in the areas of poverty and social exclusion, EAPN Portugal will start in 2018 a national study on Child well-being in partnership with several

Universities and Research Centres throughout the country that work in this specific area of childhood and youth and are part of the Working Group on Child Poverty that EAPN Portugal has been promoting since 2009. The main objective of this study is to improve the knowledge on child poverty based on updated and systematized information on the living conditions of children in Portugal, to guarantee appropriate action to the dynamics and problems perceived.

For more information see: <http://www.eapn.pt/investigacao-e-projetos/estudos>

7. Key Recommendations

At European level:

- Definition of an Integrated Strategy for the Eradication of Poverty and Social Exclusion
- Strengthening of the European Pillar of Social Rights in all Member States and definition of real strategies for their effective implementation.

At national level:

- Promoting the definition and consolidation of a National Strategy for the Eradication of Poverty and Social Exclusion.
- Ensuring that social protection is strengthened and providing the necessary foundation for an adequate minimum income scheme.
- Investing in quality training, that makes a difference and capable of a lasting professional integration of young people.
- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the ESF 20% for the fight against poverty and social exclusion.
- Promoting the monitoring of the Europe 2020 objectives and strengthening the social cohesion axis with specific attention to the European Pillar of Social Rights.
- Promoting the effective participation of civil society and people living in poverty in the European semester, especially in the preparation of the key documents.

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