



MOVEACT Policy Paper

‘All Citizens Now’: Intra-EU Mobility and Political Participation of British, Germans, Poles and Romanians in Western and Southern Europe

INTRODUCTION

Mobile EU citizens: Pioneers of EU integration?

A key aspect of the European integration process is the right to free movement. Such a right is actually seen by both citizens and policy-makers as the core element embodying the notion of EU citizenship. ‘EU movers’, notably mobile EU citizens who have exercised their free movement rights and settled in a Member State different from the one in which they were born or raised, represent between 2% and 3% of the total population residing in the EU27. Their numbers have increased since 2004 and especially since 2007, when the Central Eastern European countries joined the EU. Such recent intra-EU mobility has been primarily economically motivated: EU citizens from the new Member States look for better job opportunities and life prospects. However, mobility has been a feature of European integration from early-on: people have moved from their Member State of origin to another Member State to pursue job or study opportunities, for family reasons (marriage for instance) or simply for better quality of life (looking for warmer climates and a slower pace of life) since the introduction of free movement rights.

Who are they?

EU movers are a heterogeneous bunch: manual workers (mostly but not only from new Member States), high-skilled globally-oriented professionals, North-to-South retirees, students, life-style movers, bi-national family members. But whatever their personal trajectories, expectations and plans, these people can be seen as the ‘pioneers’ of European integration ‘from below’. They ‘embody’ EU citizenship as living testimonials of a truly transnational Europe.

Finding out more about their opinions and experiences of EU citizenship

The MOVEACT Project delves into the experiences and opinions of mobile EU citizens, asking several questions:

- Do EU movers endorse the European integration project and support it, or simply free-ride on its mobility and no-discrimination benefits?
- Do they ‘activate’ their citizenship by participating in social and political life?
- Are they integrated in the localities where they have re-settled?

This policy paper presents some novel data responding to the above questions. Our findings are organised in five main areas of interest: awareness of EU citizenship and attachment to the EU; political interest and information; voting behaviour; participation in civil society; profile of EU movers’ associations.

KEY FINDINGS

Awareness of EU citizenship and attachment to the EU

According to the most recent standard Eurobarometer (2011) data, collected at the same time as the MOVEACT survey, only 31% of EU citizens have a (very or fairly) positive image of the EU. On the contrary, Europe does conjure up a positive image for the majority of our sample (52%). This should not come as a surprise, since intra-EU movers are the ones actually enjoying what has been identified as EU's most significant feature, namely, free movement.

Do mobile EU citizens have a positive view of the EU?

A closer look at the data may offer us more insight on how the mobility experience shapes one's image of Europe. In the general population, the length of a State's membership to the EU and the EC does not necessarily make its citizens feel more European or have a more positive view of the EU. However, **citizens from the 'old Member States' who have migrated to Southern Europe have definitely more positive views** than their co-nationals at home. In fact, **the difference between 'movers' and 'stayers' is much less pronounced among citizens from the 'new' EU countries.**

Table 1: The image of the EU among EU movers (row %)

	Very positive	Fairly positive	Neutral	Fairly negative	Very negative
MOVEACT Survey					
By Nationality					
UK	12	35	25	15	13
Germany	20	40	23	12	5
Poland	16	33	38	11	2
Romania	18	35	25	14	8
By Country of Residence					
Greece	14	30	31	14	11
France	17	48	21	10	4
Italy	15	39	29	13	4
Spain	20	25	30	15	10
Total	16	36	28	13	7
Eurobarometer 2011					
UK	1	12	35	30	19
Germany	3	27	44	20	5
Poland	5	37	47	8	1
Romania	4	45	38	8	1
Greece	2	26	35	24	13
France	2	30	40	20	6
Italy	5	37	35	16	5
Spain	2	24	51	19	3
EU 27	3	28	41	20	6

The image of the EU and the economic crisis

The EU's positive image is higher in France than in Italy, Spain and Greece. Several interviewees have expressed their disappointment at the way the EU has dealt with the current economic crisis, exacerbating inequalities between the Member States. As a German interviewee who lives in Italy serving as town councilor in a small city eloquently puts it:

When I was in high school in Germany, they began speaking of Europe, united, without borders, and it was a wonderful idea. But we still have a long way to go to get there. What is lacking is a shared frame of mind for all of the countries. Each country thinks individually and Europe cannot function without a real European government. The Euro – the economic union – isn't enough to keep all the countries together. We need something else.'

How important is the right to free movement as an attribute of EU citizenship?

Free movement is the EU's most important attribute for the majority of movers (as it is for the general population). However, with time they learn to appreciate other aspects of the Union. The majority of EU movers who migrated before 1989 do not consider free movement the most important feature of the EU.

Table 2: The most important feature of the EU (row %)

	Free movement rights	A common currency	Common laws and democratic institutions	A common Christian heritage	Other
Migration Period					
Before 1989	47	18	27	8	0
1990- 2003	63	12	21	3	1
2004 or after	61	12	22	4	1
Nationality					
UK	57	17	18	6	2
Germany	47	19	29	4	1
Poland	59	8	28	5	0
Romania	69	11	17	3	0
Country of Residence					
Greece	68	9	18	4	1
France	50	14	30	7	0
Italy	59	16	22	3	0
Spain	57	16	21	4	2
Total	58	14	23	5	1

Intra-EU mobility and disillusionment

The overall rates of positive views of the 'new MS' movers are similar to those in their country of origin. However, negative views among these movers are more frequent than among co-nationals at home. The explanation for this polarization lies in their failed expectations. As described by a Romanian interviewee living in Greece:

For me it's just a coincidence that we are Europeans. But today I do not know if it means something good. We waited so long to become a member; I am talking about the EU. For the freedom to travel, to work

in the EU... and there is really nothing. On the contrary, you have much more to lose (...) Because you believe that you have equal rights with them but you don't have access anywhere; they only see you as a labour force and only in certain jobs. You're limited even if theoretically you have equal rights.

(Romanian woman, Greece, head of a Romanian association)

Are Europe and the EU synonymous?

Maybe as an expression of such disappointment, **more than half** of our respondents adopt a geographical definition of Europe and **do not identify 'Europe' with the EU.**

Table 3: Views on Europe and the EU (row %)

	No Europe beyond EU		EU is Europe	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Age Group				
39 and less	58	43	57	43
40 thru 59	59	42	64	36
60 and more	59	42	62	38
Education Level				
University	69	32	71	29
Lower	51	49	55	45
Nationality				
UK	67	33	70	30
Germany	59	41	63	37
Poland	60	40	65	35
Romania	47	53	47	53
Country				
Greece	61	39	58	42
France	69	31	59	41
Italy	36	64	69	31
Spain	67	33	58	42
Total	58	42	61	39

Are mobile EU citizens aware of their rights?

Four out of ten EU movers in our sample state that they have poor knowledge of their rights as EU citizens. Unsurprisingly, respondents with a university education tend to be better informed.

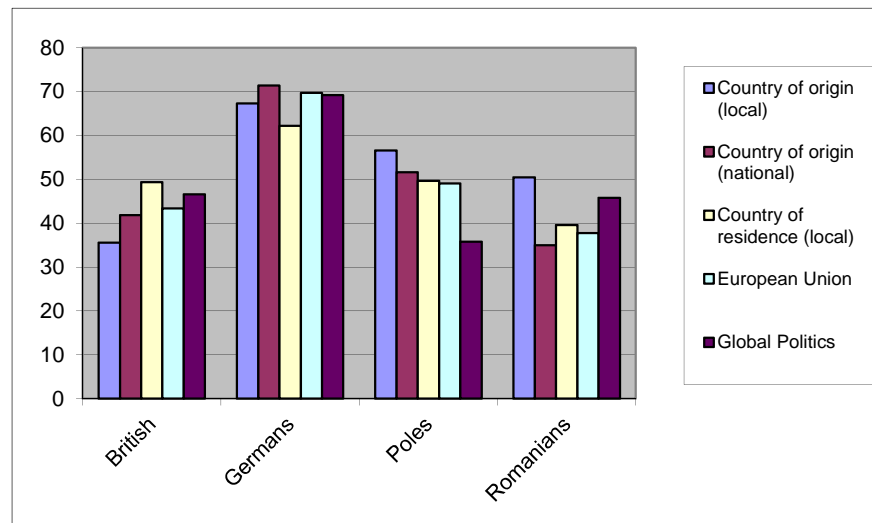
Those who migrated before 1989, and hence before the emergence of EU citizenship, are more aware of their EU citizenship rights. *Ceteris paribus*, German citizens' awareness over EU citizenship appears to be significantly higher than other nationalities'.

INTEREST IN POLITICS

A clear result of the MOVEACT survey is that **intra-EU migrants are generally more interested in the political life of the country where they live (COR) than the politics of the country of origin (COO).** Most of them nevertheless conciliate both dimensions and also pay more attention to EU and global politics than the general population.

Are EU movers more interested in the politics of their country of origin or of their country of residence?

Figure 1: Foci of political interest (somewhat and very much, %)



Although differences between the four countries of residence are small, a slightly higher interest toward country of residence politics is found in France, which is, however, contingent on the age of respondents (France hosts older migrants).

What are the factors that determine political interest?

The comparison between nationalities turned out to be more significant. Germans are more greatly interested in all dimensions of politics than the rest of movers, while Romanians are overall the least interested. In a nutshell, the political culture of the country of origin seems to affect EU movers' political interest more than that of the country of residence.

Interest in politics is not affected by gender but is influenced by age: Distrust in political institutions takes a higher toll among the younger generations. Young people are on the forefront when experimenting with new forms of political involvement, such as political consumerism, engagement in contentious politics and participation through new media, but they often declare to not be interested in politics because of their detachment from institutional politics.

Interest in home country politics tends to decrease among older movers, while interest in residence country politics tends to increase with age. However, for the bulk of EU movers there is not a trade-off between interest in COO politics and interest in COR politics, but rather an overlap. **People interested in politics are likely to follow both COO and COR politics.**

Media usage and political interest

To understand the relation of EU movers with their country of origin and country of destination, we asked them **where they first look for information if they hear about some important world event**. Do they still look for information in COO media or they prefer COR media? Attitude toward the sources of information depends upon nationality more than on resources and constraints of the country of residence.

The difference between ‘older’ and ‘newer’ Europeans is remarkable. British and Germans, even when interested in COR politics, are more likely to interrogate COO media. On the contrary, Romanians and Poles do not follow national media from their countries of origin.

Overall, the preference for COO media is significantly higher among the seniors (55.3% among over 60s), while younger migrants (under 39) are more likely to inquire COR media (60%). Finally, there is a relation to the duration of the migration experience. Migrants who moved prior to 1989 are more likely to look to COR media (57.6%), while newer migrants are more likely to look to COO media (56.3%).

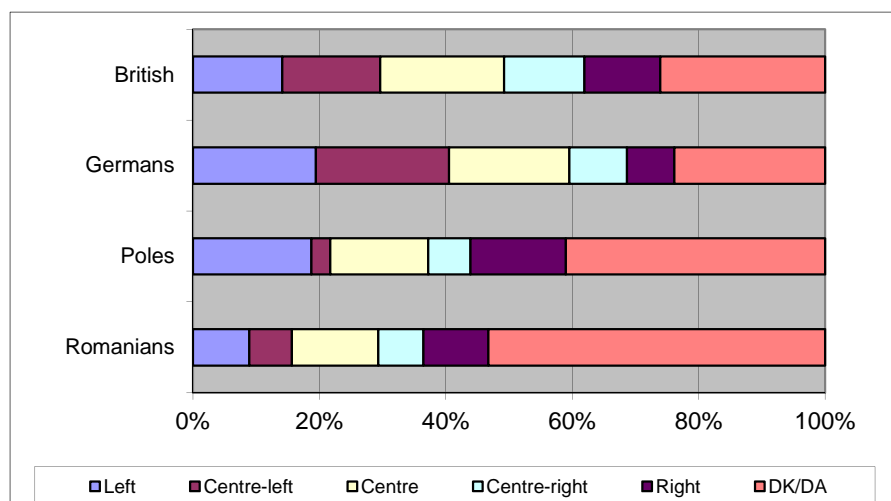
Education, language knowledge and occupational status intertwine, much as expected. **Media from the country of residence is the realm of the more educated and active in the labour market (or in schools) of the country of residence.** The unemployed, unpaid house-workers and retirees look more to home country media.

What is the meaning of Left and Right for EU movers from ‘old’ and ‘new’ Member States?

The left-right scale is a major conceptual tool for navigating political systems. However, we should not ignore that ‘left’ and ‘right’ may acquire different meanings for people living in different countries and/or socialised in different political systems. Thus, for instance, there is an important difference on how left and right are conceived by mobile EU citizens originating from ‘old’ Member States and by citizens coming from post-Communist countries. For the latter, being right-wing means being progressive, in favour of reforms, against tradition, while it is the opposite for the former.

Our data reveals that most British and Germans are quite comfortable with the traditional left-right scale. On the contrary, the scale is less effective in capturing the spectrum of political attitudes of the Polish and Romanian respondents. Both are strongly polarized, and centre-left and centre-right categories are almost entirely neglected.

Figure 2: Left and right-wing orientation of EU movers by nationality (%)



Most importantly, **more than 40% of the Poles and more than 50% of the Romanians sampled refuse to locate themselves on the left-right scale.** The rejection of the left-right paradigm can be explained with an anti-politics trend that spreads all across Europe, but is particularly strong in Central-Eastern European countries, where distrust and political apathy are exacerbated by an oppressively politicized past.

For EU movers, the unease with the left-right scheme is amplified by the difficulty in applying it to a different political context. Mobility experiences in some cases lead to political 'alienation', since people must orientate themselves in an unfamiliar political systems, where the translation of received meanings (like 'left' and 'right') is neither 'automatic' nor unproblematic.

EU CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION: VOTING BEHAVIOUR

Half of our respondents did not participate in any of the elections held in recent years, while 23% declared participation in one election, 19% in two elections and 8% were the most active migrants who participated in all elections (local, national and European).

Do mobile EU citizens vote at all?

Turnout is highest in local elections: 35.8% of our survey respondents have participated in them (the vast majority, notably 28.1% of the total, voted in their new country of residence). Just over one quarter of all respondents (27%) voted in the European Parliament elections and just over one fifth voted in the national parliamentary election in the country of origin (21.8%).

Table 5: Mobile EU citizens participating in elections (%)

EP elections		Municipal Elections		Home country general election (excluding UK migrants)	
Voted for MEPs of home country	11	Voted in home country	8	Voted	22 (24)
Voted for MEPs of destination country	16	Voted in destination country	28		
Did not vote	73	Did not vote	64	Did not vote	78 (76)

Which nationality groups are more active in voting?

Participation in the 2009 European Parliament elections was highest among German respondents (45%). These movers were a little more active than their compatriots living in Germany (where in 2009 the turnout was 43%). British movers care less for European elections. In our sample, only 24% of them voted (while 35% of UK residents did). Romanian movers are less likely to vote than their compatriots staying in the home country (19% to 28% respectively). Participation among Poles is low and stays at the similar level outside and in Poland (21% and 24% respectively).

Even though comparing voting turnouts for local elections is problematic because of the regional differences within countries, we observe a similar pattern with **movers from 'old' Member States being more active than movers from 'new' Member States.** This difference in participation in local elections is probably related to the patterns of participation inherited from the

country of origin. Participation at national elections is lower in Poland (2011) and Romania (2008) (49% and 39% respectively) than in Germany (2009) and the United Kingdom (2010) (71% and 65% respectively).

How is voting behaviour influenced by migration experiences?

One of the most influential factors on participation in elections is **the length of stay in the country of residence**. This factor has a positive influence on participation in the European and local elections (the longer a person is a migrant, the more active s/he is in voting). The same factor is negatively correlated with voting in the home country national election (the longer one lives in another country, the less likely s/he is to vote in the national election in the country of origin).

Length of stay and knowledge of the host country language lead to the polls

Knowledge of the language of the country of residence is an important determining factor for voting behaviour. **The better one knows the language, the more likely s/he is to vote in European and local elections.**

Attachment to the country of origin has an important influence on participation in the European and home country elections. For the latter, those who are attached are twice as likely to vote (25% and 12%). Surprisingly, we have found that the effect of attachment to the country of residence has a significant but negative effect on voting in the European Parliament elections. In other words the more attached one feels to the country of residence, the less likely s/he is to vote in EP elections.

In fact, attachment to the EU has a positive effect on participation in the European and local elections – the more respondents declare attachment to the EU, the more likely they are to participate in those two elections.

All four countries of residence studied here (France, Spain, Italy and Greece) have traditionally high voting turnouts. In the 2009 European Parliament elections, voter turnout was 65% in Italy, 53% in Greece and 45% in Spain. The turnout was, in other words, higher than the EU average (43%) and was also better than in our respondents' countries of origin. Only in France (41%) did the voter turnout lag behind the EU average, but was still higher than in most of movers' countries of origin. Similarly, the countries of residence studied have a high turnout rate in national elections (Italy 80% in 2008, Spain 69% in 2011, Greece 65% in 2012 and France 60% in 2007). Among movers, participation patterns are not at all similar. For them, European elections are more popular in Italy (35%) and France (30%) than in Spain (23%) and Greece (22%). Equally, local election turnout is highest in France and Italy (40%), followed by Spain (36%) and Greece (27%).

ASSOCIATIVE BEHAVIOUR OF EU MOVERS

Several factors affect the mobile EU citizens' participation in civil society. These include age, length of stay, education, social class and, to a lesser extent, nationality.

The age factor

The higher the age, the more active EU movers are in civil society. Among movers in their 20s-30s, 51% are involved in some association; between 40 and 59, the participation rate is 59%, while for respondents aged 60 years old or more, it reaches 66%.

Length of migration	Higher levels of participation also reflect the time of residence in the host country. Thus, participation is more intense among those who migrated prior to 1989: 41% of respondents participate in one or two associations, and 22% in three or four. Higher participation also corresponds to a higher level of education: participation is much more intense among the respondents with a university education compared to those without.
Education	
Are 'old' EU Member State movers more active than those of 'new' Member States?	By nationality, the highest participation occurs among the British and the Germans, followed by the Poles. On the other hand, low participation is clearly a characteristic of Romanians. There is greater participation in associations in France and Italy. Moreover, participation is higher among those residents whose partner's nationality is that of the country of residence.
What kind of associations do people get involved in?	EU movers are more likely to be involved in associations of a leisure type and less in social or economic associations (only 2.6% belongs to a political party, 7.7% to a trade union and 18.6% to a professional organization). Interestingly, 22.4% of respondents are involved in charity associations and 11.2% in religious associations. In the case of charities, participation is higher among the British and Germans. This is more common in France. In the case of religious associations, Poles and Germans express a higher participation, especially in France and Italy. Associations of co-nationals, with an overall participation of 9.2%, tend to cater to individuals with the longest residence, the more educated, bi-national couples and those from higher social classes.
Comparing levels of activism in the country of origin and in the country of residence	Comparing our findings with those of the Eurobarometer and the European Value Survey on EU citizens living in their country of birth (EU 'stayers'), we find that mobile EU citizens participate more than the general population in associational life, in all types of associations. Even if politically lukewarm about COR politics, once settled down EU movers show an enhanced willingness to play a part in the civil society of the receiving country.
THE LANDSCAPE OF ASSOCIATIONS OF MOBILE EU CITIZENS	EU movers' associations exist in all four countries examined, but in lower numbers in Greece, perhaps due to the smaller size of the country, the lower presence of migrants, as well as a larger share of unregistered organisations.
What kind of associations of EU movers exist in the four countries studied?	Legislation about the formation of associations differs in the four countries. In France, all organisations have to be registered officially. In Italy and in Spain, there is an incentive for associations to register because only registered organizations can receive public funding. This is the reason why many formerly informal networks (i.e. parish-based communities) are spurred to constitute a formal association. In Greece, there is no such incentive. Overall, the number of Romanian and Polish associations is higher. British and German associations are less widespread, but they are older, bigger and more institutionalised. The majority of associations (194

in the four countries) that we identified are active in the cultural field: they promote the history, tradition and language of their country. Cultural initiatives include music events, celebrated in churches or public houses, but also embrace larger events, organized in collaboration with home countries and local or national institutions, in the context of wider projects of cultural exchange. Some Polish and Romanian associations organize trips to the country of origin in order to promote reciprocal knowledge and tourism. This is also meant to be a way to challenge the prejudices still affecting Poles and, especially, Romanians in Southern Europe.

The importance of EU movers associations

A key finding of our study is that **mobile EU citizen associations are subjectively more important and objectively more widespread among Poles and Romanians**. Among 'newer' EU citizens, associations act as *migrant* organizations, while among 'old' EU citizens, they are seen rather as *cultural* associations. Citizens from the new Member States are more interested in sharing practical information and participating in discussions about life in the host country than pursuing any form of collective action. A novelty of the last decade is the growing use of online forums, web communities, and social media, in order to keep in touch with compatriots, share information and experiences in another country. Forums and internet-based social networks are used mostly by German and British citizens. New communication technologies contribute to changing the relationship among migrants in many ways, as well as between them and their home countries, often reducing the role of institutional bodies and structured organizations.

KEY MESSAGES FOR POLICY-MAKERS

Mobile EU citizens promote European integration 'from below'

The MOVEACT study shows that mobile EU citizens are indeed, to a certain extent, pioneers of European integration as they generally have a more positive view of the EU, are more politically active than their fellow citizens who have not engaged in intra-EU mobility, and are politically active at a transnational level (voting in local and EU elections in the country of residence and in national elections of the country of origin). They are also transnational and 'European' in their media consumption.

Measures that can enhance political interest and civic participation

There are, however, important gaps that need to be addressed so that EU citizens may exercise their right to free movement and truly engage in a European civic and political space – enhancing thus their role as 'carriers' of European integration. Such measures include:

➤ Make the mobility experience respectful of EU citizenship rights

Organise training courses for public administration officials concerning the rights of EU citizens and the related administrative practices so as to make mobility smoother for all intra-EU movers, regardless of whether they come from 'old' or 'new' Member States.

➤ Promote language knowledge

Foster the knowledge of the language of the country of residence not only

for children (through schooling) but also for adults through lifelong learning programmes. Language is key to political interest and civic participation.

➤ **Support EU movers' associations**

Provide opportunities for funding for mobile EU citizen associations so as to help them gain a more active and durable role. This is important both to the solution of more typical 'migration' aspects of mobility and to social and cultural integration in the country of residence.

➤ **Support the EU movers' integration into the new country's political system**

EU movers from 'new' Member States have been politically socialised in a different political regime than EU movers' from 'old' Member States. Initiatives could be taken by political parties and other NGOs to inform and explain the political system of the country of residence to EU movers' associations, who can then act as multipliers passing the message and information on to their members. Joint events and initiatives between mobile EU citizen associations and mainstream civil society organisations like trade unions, political parties and other NGOs is very important in this respect.

➤ **Harmonize and facilitate voters' registration across the EU**

Currently, each Member State has its own rules about registration for voting at European and local elections of foreign residents. A default-like registration and/or communication of voting rights to newly settled EU non-nationals may stimulate their political participation, lowering informal barriers to voting abroad (a common remark among movers is: 'I did not vote because I was not sure if I could do it'). E-mails could also be profitably used by local administrations to keep new residents informed and updated about their voting rights and other community events.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Selection of countries and nationalities

The MOVEACT project interrogated a random sample of EU movers from four Member States: two new (Poland and Romania) and two old (the UK and Germany) who have moved to four countries: France, Italy, Spain and Greece. These countries are favoured destinations for both British and German quality of life movers and for more recent economic migrants from Romania and Poland. In addition, Poles, Romanians, British and Germans are among the most mobile nationalities within the EU.

Methods used

The results presented in this policy paper are based on:

Survey of mobile EU citizens

1) A quantitative survey of 2,000 phone interviews with mobile EU citizens. We interviewed 500 EU movers in each country (that is, 125 of each nationality per country) in the period between November 2011 and March 2012. The interviews were conducted by phone on the basis of a random sampling technique. The questionnaires have been translated into the national language of the interviewees.

Survey of associations

2) A qualitative and quantitative survey with associations of EU movers was also conducted via internet and phone. We have captured all currently active associations in the field (194 in the four countries).

Qualitative interviews with association leaders

3) A set of qualitative interviews with mobile EU citizens who are civically active. We conducted 48 semi-structured interviews with people who are association leaders or generally show an active interest in the public sphere of their country of settlement.

PROJECT IDENTITY**MOVEACT in a few words**

The MOVEACT project (www.moveact.eu) aims to understand whether and in what forms EU movers are involved in public life in their countries of residence and to provide information and raise awareness among intra-EU movers about their rights and obligations as EU citizens in order to promote their political participation in their communities of residence.

Duration of the Project: 2 years (1st April 2011-31st of March 2013)

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