



**Fostering civic and political engagement  
of mobile EU citizens**

## **Guidelines for local authorities**



Co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship  
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## 1. Introduction

The presence of non-national EU citizens in most Member states has grown significantly in recent years, passing from 4.7 million in 2005 to more than 15,5 million in 2016 (source: Eurostat). Most intra-EU mobility flows still originate in the Central and Eastern European Member States, despite a substantial increase recorded in the flows from southern Member States affected by the crisis. These flows have led to a significant increase in the number of non-national EU citizens of voting age in several Member States but their inclusion in the political life of their countries of residence is still very low. Latest studies<sup>1</sup> show a very low level of active engagement, both inside and outside political parties, and identify many obstacles to participation. These include procedural obstacles to registration in the electoral rolls; lack of or limited information available as a result of poor commitment by local institutions; low interest on the part of eligible EU citizens due to the feeling that political participation has no impact on their daily lives; difficulty of understanding the specific dynamics of a different political system; limited involvement in political activities due to a lack of interest on the part of political parties in engaging non-nationals as active members.

This handbook has been written in the framework of the European project 'Participation Matters', co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union, which addresses the issue of insufficient political inclusion and participation of EU citizens residing in member States of which they are not nationals. This project has been implemented in Italy, Austria and Spain with the main agents of change: local authorities, that are primarily responsible for providing information and removing procedural obstacles and associations of EU mobile citizens, which have proven to be the real propulsive forces of participation and engagement.

Activities with local authorities included the testing of innovative procedures and practices aimed at promoting a complete and effective information on voting rights through practical tools and at facilitating the enrolment of EU movers in the electoral rolls. These procedures and practices have been identified during participatory meetings with civil servants working in municipal offices directly responsible for services related to the exercise of voting rights. The present handbook illustrates the activities implemented in Italy which have been proven effective and can be easily replicated by other local authorities that experience the same patterns of participation. The activities suggested in this handbook will inspire all the local authorities that are willing to identify new ways of involving non-national EU citizens in the political life of their territories.

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<sup>1</sup>A detailed analysis of the political participation of EU mobile citizens in some European countries is available at: <http://www.operationvote.eu/download-2/pubblicazioni/?lang=en>.





## 2 The situation in Italy

There are 1,519,52 5EU foreign citizens living in Italy for work, study or personal reasons. 115,744 have taken up residence in Tuscany, in its 276 municipalities, while in Emilia Romagna there are 119,214 residents over 334 municipalities (Istat, 2017).<sup>2</sup>

These two regions remain two of Italy's great immigration areas for both EU and non-EU citizens. As far as EU citizens are concerned, that they constitute 22.5% of the total foreign citizens in Emilia Romagna and 28.9% in Tuscany. The above figures are numerically important because these two regions of central Italy are preceded only by the regions of Lazio, Lombardy and Piedmont, which are much larger.

In Italy, the distribution by origin as of 1 January 2017 can be summarized as shown in the table below.

Tab. 1 – Distribution of EU citizens by origin with percentage variation for 2016 and 2017

Country of Citizenship	2016 a.v.	2017 a.v.	% variation 2017/2016	% of males 2017
Romania	1,151,395	1,168,552	1.5	42.6
Poland	97,986	97,062	-0.9	26.5
Bulgaria	58,001	58,620	1.1	37.0
Germany	36,661	36,660	0.0	37.4
France	28,634	29,281	2.3	38.8
United Kingdom	26,634	27,208	2.2	44.9
Spain	22,593	23,828	5.5	31.5
Slovakia	8,505	8,567	0.7	26.8
The Netherlands	8,106	8,243	1.7	43.8
Hungary	8,034	8,181	1.8	27.5
Greece	7,015	7,274	3.7	52.4
Austria	6,134	6,186	0.8	29.8
Portugal	5,815	6,088	4.7	43.2
Czech Republic	5,805	5,717	-1.5	16.4
Belgium	5,509	5,624	2.1	41.4
Lithuania	5,070	5,162	1.8	19.2
Sweden	3,042	3,059	0.6	31.1
Latvia	2,793	2,862	2.5	18.1
Ireland	2,724	2,839	4.2	45.5
Slovenia	2,564	2,506	-2.3	46.7
Denmark	2,046	2,024	-1.1	37.4

<sup>2</sup> Processing by Anci Toscana on 2017 Istat data





Finland	1,609	1,614	0.3	21.5
Estonia	1,174	1,215	3.5	16.5
Malta	699	717	2.6	32.8
Luxembourg	244	238	-2.5	44.1
Cyprus	179	198	10.6	41.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,498,971</b>	<b>1,519,525</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>40.5</b>

It is clearly visible that the absolute majority of citizens come from Eastern European countries, especially Romania. Romanians constitute the most representative community with over one million and one hundred thousand residents in Italy, followed by Poles and Bulgarians but with much lower percentages. Behind them, the flows of citizens from “old Europe”, Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen and Spaniards. As for gender, female flows are higher due mainly to the link with Italy’s rather consolidated care work system.

This trend is also perfectly reflected in the two regions on which began the test pertaining to the project.

Data collected by COSPE through the Operation Vote project, which offered a specific overview of Tuscany in 2014, showed particularly evident low voter participation to the European Parliament elections.

Tab. 2. Registration in additional electoral lists for administrative elections broken down by nationality in relation to the number of residents - Tuscan provinces - %

Comune	Bulgaria	France	Germany	Poland	Romania	U.K.
Arezzo	9.7	7.9	13	12.3	15.9	18
Florence	4.7	18.8	30.2	5	3.9	17.2
Grosseto	10.3	18.6	11.3	13.2	15.3	9.1
Livorno	5.7	19	24.2	4.6	4.5	11.1
Lucca	4.1	29	23.1	7.4	18.9	10.6
Massa	15.8	26.1	27.7	4.9	21.6	15.4
Pisa	0	10.3	14.5	1.5	0.16	10.8
Pistoia	26.3	15.1	34	4.9	5.1	9.8
Prato	0	18.3	16.0	4.5	3.6	18.9



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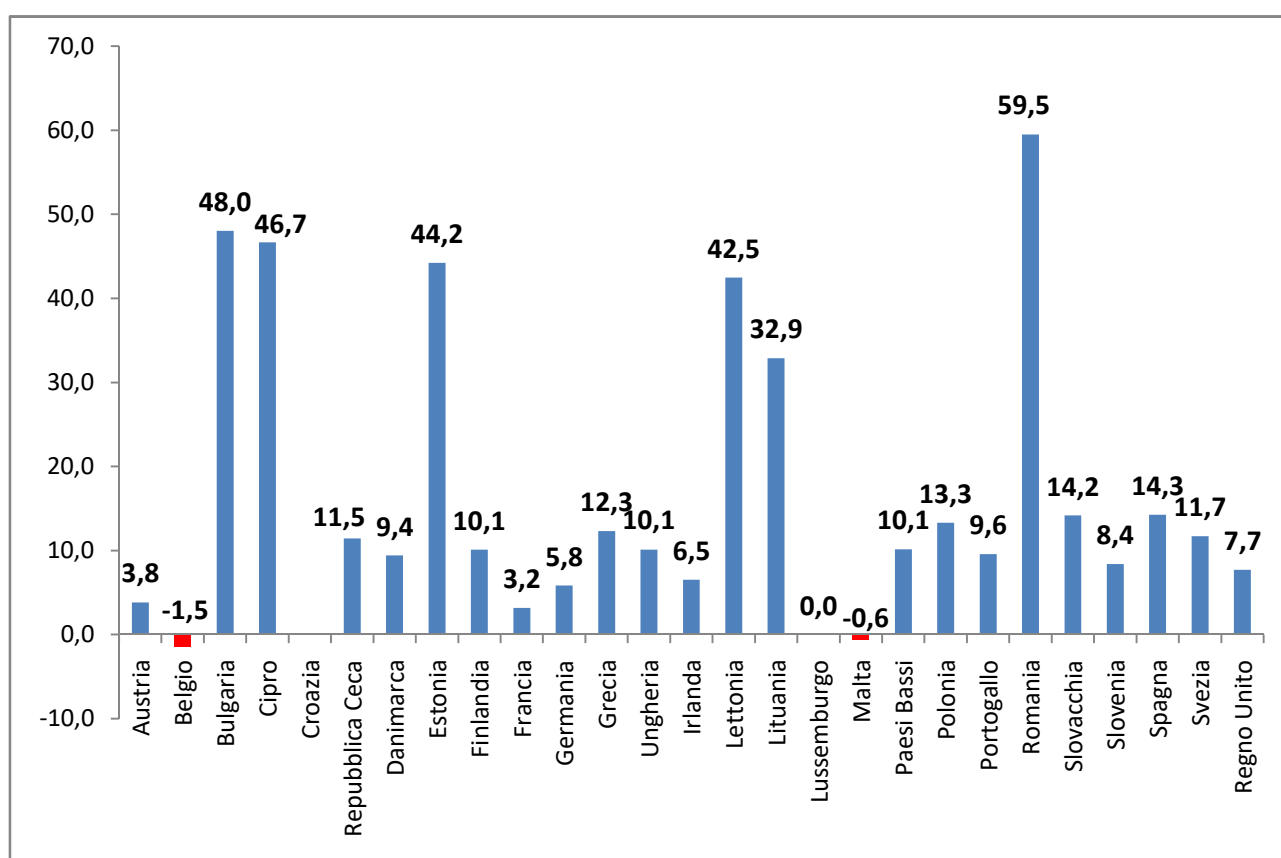




<b>Siena</b>	18.9	20	22.2	9.7	12.7	20.4
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This notwithstanding, between 2009 and 2014 it is possible to note a positive, although still insufficient, percentage variation of those registered in additional electoral lists in Italy to vote for the European Parliament broken down by citizenship<sup>3</sup>.

Graph 1 - Percentage variation of EU citizens registered in additional electoral lists in Italy between 2009 and 2014



As far as local elections are concerned, the latest research work carried out by the Cittalia di Anci National Foundation provides further indications which are shown below.<sup>4</sup>

EU foreigners residing in the municipalities surveyed and among the most important Italian cities are registered mainly in the additional electoral lists for administrative elections. In Asti, Florence, Forli, Padua and Reggio Emilia more than 9 out of 10 of those registered for at least one list are registered on the list for the election of the Mayor, the Municipal Council and District Councils.

<sup>3</sup> Source: processing by COSPE on Ministry of the Interior data

<sup>4</sup> Giovannetti M., Perin G., (2012), I cittadini comunitari e la partecipazione al voto, Fondazione Cittalia





Tab. 3 – Registration in additional electoral lists, municipal and European elections year 2010  
absolute values

Municipality	Municipal Abs. val.	European Abs. val.	Total	EU Residents (2010)
Alessandria	353	121	428	3,326
Asti	151	53	163	1,769
Bologna	1,123	549	1,428	9,629
Florence	1,095	720	1,159	11,583
Forlì	197	40	211	3,541
Genoa	541	715	816	6,350
Monza	-	110	110	2,564
Padua	997	320	1,004	9,518
Parma	213	190	335	3,850
Reggio Emilia	207	160	210	3,177
Turin	590	952	1,7	56,520
Varese	135	113	204	1,448
Verona	360	382	665	9,893

In addition, among EU citizens registered in at least one additional electoral list within the scope of the survey, on average over 70% are registered in municipal lists while slightly more than 40% are registered in EU lists. The graph above shows that Romanian, English, Bulgarian, Danish, Greek and Czech citizens are interested in the local context, whereas Estonians, Lithuanians and Maltese are interested in the European one.



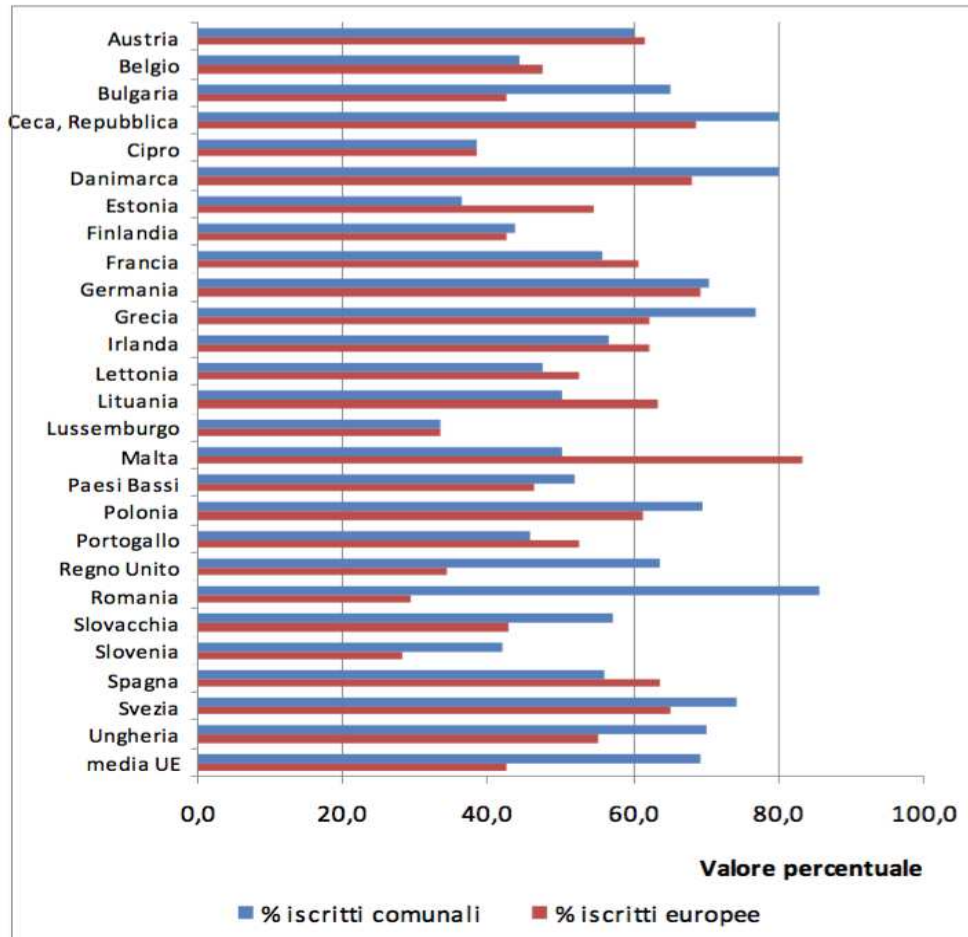
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Graph 2 – Voters registered in additional municipal electoral and EU lists by country of citizenship, year 2010 (percentage values) – Source: processing by Cittalia on municipal data



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## 2 Law and rights: current legislation and how to exercise the right to vote

Italy was the first European country to implement EU Council Directive 94/80 of 19 December 1994, concerning the procedures for exercising the right to vote and being eligible for municipal elections regarding EU citizens residing in a Member State of which they are not citizens<sup>5</sup>. A couple of years before, Italy had implemented EU Council Directive 93/109 of 6 December 1993, concerning the procedures for exercising the right to vote and being eligible for European Parliament elections regarding EU citizens residing in a Member State of which they are not citizens<sup>6</sup>.

European citizens who, due to professional, family or lifestyle choices, decide to move to another Member State can exercise their right to vote in the elections of the Municipality where they live and elect the Mayor, Municipal Council and district members. They can also stand for and be elected as municipal councillors or district council members. Standing for Mayor and Deputy Mayor is not provided for.

They can also stand for the European Parliament and express their preference for Italian candidates to the European Parliament. In this system of elections, one can only vote once, so those who vote Italian representatives to the European Parliament in Italy give up the right to vote their country's representatives in their country of origin.

As regards voting procedures in Italy, it is necessary to register in special lists by applying at the offices of the Municipality where one resides. Every municipality has two additional electoral lists, one for the administrative elections and one for the European Parliament elections; each list must be applied for separately. According to registration requirements, one must be:

- at least 18 years of age
- a citizen of a EU country
- a resident of the Municipality where one votes
- and enjoy full rights as a citizen

Applications must be filed at the municipal offices or sent by fax or emailed. Some municipalities have this application form online. A copy of an identity document must be attached to the application. This documentation can be submitted at any time until 40 days before the date of the administrative elections and 90 days before the date of the European elections.

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<sup>5</sup> The implementing degree is Legislative Decree no 197 of 12 April 1996

<sup>6</sup> The implementation had been carried out with Law Decree no 408 of 24 June 1994, (Urgent provisions for European Parliament elections), converted into law with amendments by art. 1 of Law no 483 of 3 August 1994





Registration in these lists remains valid unless a cancellation is requested, some Municipalities require a new registration application when the residence address changes. If one changes address within the same municipality, they will receive a sticker with the new address to be placed on their electoral card. This is the document issued by the Municipal Electoral Office following registration on the lists and which must be shown in order to vote, together with a valid identity document. On the electoral card are indications with the address of the electoral centre where one is supposed to vote.

EU citizens can also stand for election in their municipality for the position of Municipal Councillor or District Councillor and stand as Italian representatives for a seat in the European Parliament. In this last case, the following is requested:

a formal declaration stating citizenship, current residence and address in the country of origin;

a certificate (dated no less than three months prior) of the competent administrative authority of the State of origin from which it appears that the person has the right to be elected (with an Italian translation certified by the competent diplomatic or consular representation or by an official translator);

only for the European elections, a document declaring not to be nor to want to be standing for the same election to the European Parliament in another EU State.

Admission is notified by the District Electoral Commission for local elections and by the Court of Appeals for European elections. In case of refusal the same forms of judicial protection allowed to Italian candidates can be activated.



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### **3 Promoting participation: good practices implemented and to be developed**

#### **Data monitoring**

What has emerged is that serious planning to promote participation requires the essential work of data collection, starting from a numerical survey of the electoral office and involving other offices such as the register office, the immigration office, the URP and the cultural affairs office. As has happened the first time with this test, we wish for the involvement of all those offices that manage citizen relations and communication tools and that in some cases can also make use of communication and relation tools aimed at the various local communities (for example, specific mailing lists).

The project took into consideration a time span of almost one year, with numerical surveys on those registered in the electoral lists at the time the project was launched and at the end, when activities were completed and results were returned.

#### **Public meetings and operations meetings**

Anci Toscana and Anci Emilia Romagna carried out various coordination initiatives; one involved the organization of public meetings between local administrators and the most representative communities, another involved operations meetings with municipal technicians working in different municipal offices such as General Affairs, Immigration Service, Electoral Office and Cultural Affairs.

The strengths of Anci Emilia Romagna's work in this area consist in having organised wide-ranging initiatives, open to the local communities and including personal accounts by EU citizens standing for election, political activists and prominent spokespeople from the most representative communities. Anci Toscana focused instead on specific operations meetings for technicians from different offices in order to gather their skills and define communication tools to convey information on voting rights and making them accessible to a wider user base.

The risks for this type of activity are the difficulty of implementing participated initiatives and realizing the numerical implementation of those registered at the offices. To such ends, it may be useful to seek the participation of community leaders in various meetings and serious communication work that the offices can carry out jointly.

#### **Information material**

Following the data collection, specific communications were sent to those entitled to vote including the procedures for registering on electoral lists. Each municipality chose a letter model



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to be sent with all the information and contact details of the offices. Clear and exhaustive communications on voting procedures, better if translated into the languages spoken by EU citizens, is not only a question of incentive to participate, it is necessary because in Italy there are bureaucratic issues that make registration procedures difficult still, in particular, registering on the lists at least 90 days before the European elections and 40 days before the administrative elections. Moreover, unlike what happens for Italian citizens, who are automatically registered, in some municipalities, registration must be carried out again every time one changes their place of residence. This mechanism is clearly still perceived as discrimination to overcome. For this reason, for as long as additional electoral lists are kept in place, it is vitally important to bolster information and communication channels to facilitate the dissemination of practical information using specific pages the municipalities' websites.

With the Participation Matters project, we then chose to develop dedicated information material by creating a video on young people's participation in public life with shots taken in Tuscany, which can be used to promote various initiatives in different settings. On the basis of relationships with local high schools, the municipalities identified some students who were available to talk about the participatory activities in which they are involved, political activity in Italy, what it means to exercise one's vote and their impressions on how well the system is able to involve the new generations in participatory mechanisms. One can thereby evince that second-level secondary schools are a privileged observatory of integration and participation processes. The video is important dissemination material to be targeted at young people. Students and teachers can watch the video on YouTube, which will offer them a motivating proposition for discussions on the subject in all youth related contexts. To this end, local administrations worked in concert with schools to organize meetings on the topic inside schools between local students and administrators. The video will also be used in the future for other events organized by the Administrations which will involve youth centres, associations, schools and other local authorities.



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## Recommendations

- Starting from the numerical surveys of the electoral offices, it is necessary to organize meetings to share information on the data to clarify the situation in the field regarding potential voters, starting from a discussion on those who can exercise the right and how many are already registered on the electoral lists. We therefore recommend a moment of pre and post electoral evaluation.
- With the ambitious goal of combining the European, domestic and residence levels in the slow European citizenship consolidation process lagging behind as far as being internalized by all citizens, it is clear that the organization of public meetings should go hand in hand with the exchange of skills and sharing between technicians of local administrations. This is a long-term objective that sees the involvement of local administrations and politicians with local communities and associations of EU citizens (and also non-EU citizens), in an ongoing relationship essential at this particular historical moment. It is therefore always good to organize public meetings and exchanges between technicians of the administrations on office practices.
- During project meetings, it became clear that to disseminate information as effectively as possible, it is necessary to provide for the sending of informative material, in several languages, several times during the course of the year and not just right before election time, so as to guarantee a constant and continuous flow of information. Producing dedicated audiovisual material strengthens a privileged communication and promotion channel and young people's involvement in local public and political life through planned participation systems is essential above all. Indeed, at a time of difficulty for encouraging new ways of participating in order to deal with the gap between institutions and citizens, it is even more difficult to activate a useful mechanism that will really engage young mobile European citizens. Hence, it is a good idea to provide information through multimedia tools and channels in addition to the standard tools used by municipalities, such as sending letters.
- In general, whatever material is available to local authorities, it is highly advisable that, at the time of registering with the register office, the forms for registering in the electoral lists be handed out as well together with the information on the right to vote for administrative and European elections in Italy. This is as a good practice not yet implemented but extremely important in encouraging participation and useful in overcoming a bureaucratic obstacle that unfortunately still maintains the characteristic of discriminating between Italians and non-Italians. Provisions should also be made to have right





to vote material available in different languages at public relations and register offices. Another good practice is for municipalities to make available all registration materials on their websites.



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## Good practices

### **Good practice no 1**

**Target:** Young people, second-level secondary school students

**Place:** Tuscany

**Activity carried out and results achieved:** Creation of a six-and-a-half-minute video featuring interviews with Italians young and old on the subject of participation in public life and the exercise of the right to vote. The video is important dissemination material to be targeted at young people. Six high school students were interviewed on the topic of participation. It is easily viewable by all teenagers who are familiar with multimedia products and offers a motivating proposition for students to discuss the subject in all youth related contexts. This material is available to schools for meetings on participation with students and representatives of municipal administrations.

**Material produced:** click link below to watch the video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cE2WQxTOOqM>

### **Good practice no 2**

**Target:** Municipal administrators and mobile European citizens

**Place:** Emilia-Romagna

**Activity carried out and results achieved:** 3 of the region's Municipalities (Novi di Modena, Budrio, Riolo Terme) were involved in contacting resident mobile European citizens by sending a letter and information material. In addition to publishing access to vote information on their institutional websites, each of the Municipalities of Budrio and Riolo Terme organised a public meeting to dialogue directly with mobile European citizens, provide information on how to register and distribute communication material.



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