

ADAPTABILITY OF THE FINNISH WORKPLACE DEVELOPMENT MODEL AND METHODS IN HUNGARY AND ROMANIA

Ulla Kotonen¹, Miika Kuusisto², Marja-Leena Savonen², Anu Suomäki²

¹*FUAS - Federation of Universities of Applied Sciences (FINLAND)*

²*Lahti University of Applied Sciences (FINLAND)*

Abstract

This paper is based on the ADAPTYKES project which takes experiences from the Finnish workplace development programme (TYKES Programme). The TYKES Programme aimed at promoting performance and the quality of working life by furthering innovation-supporting modes of operation and employee skills at the Finnish workplace. The ADAPTYKES project analyses the adaptability of the Finnish workplace development model and methods in Hungary and Romania, and develops long and short term training for the local SME managers in the target countries. The paper focuses on the first results of the project, investigation and analyses the similarities and differences between work organizations. As a result of the first phase, the paper describes the similarities and differences of SME sectors in the participating countries and formulates recommendations in favour of the successful adaptation of the programme and the curriculum development. In addition to the analysis, similarities and differences on the work organization models and especially the manpower and knowledge use and development practices of SMEs, the paper summarizes the main results from a questionnaire survey in the SME sector in Hungary and Romania to find out the development needs and the competence shortages of the companies. The paper provides empirical basis for the re-design and reflexive adaptation of the Finnish TYKES Programme in Hungary and Romania, evidence-based inputs to the content development of the various curricula and methodological experiences for the pedagogical and didactical innovations.

Keywords: Workplace development, SMEs, Finland, Hungary, Romania.

1 INTRODUCTION

Previous research papers have pointed out the necessity of workplace development with social innovations in the workplaces in order to convert technological breakthroughs into productivity benefits. The ADAPTYKES project is based on the experiences from the Finnish workplace development programme (TYKES Programme). The aim of the TYKES Programme was to promote performance and the quality of working life by furthering innovation-supporting modes of operation and employee skills at the Finnish workplace. In the TYKES Programme the improvements of organizational performance were monitored through the productivity of work, the quality of products and services, the quality of operations, customer service and flexibility, smoothness of the operations while improvements of the quality of work were monitored from such aspects as the quality of team-based working at the workplace, cooperation between management and staff, social relations at the workplace, employee opportunities for developing professional skills at work and mental the well-being of employees on the organizational side.

The ADAPTYKES project analyses the adaptability of the Finnish workplace development model and methods in Hungary and Romania, and develop long and short term training for the local SME managers in the target countries. The concrete objective is to develop SME-related curricula by adapting LUAS education in the field of sustainable workplace development. The indirect objective is to facilitate longer engagement of the elderly in the workplace making this latter more attractive with the social and organisational innovations. The project impacts on the training culture of the participating institutions and SMEs participating in the project and the pilot training sessions during the project and additionally, on the vocational training culture and workplace management practices development in the target countries over the long run. The main tasks of ADAPTYKES project are the following: 1) to investigate and analyse the similarities and differences between work organization models, knowledge use patterns and innovative activities of SMEs in the participating countries, 2) to train Hungarian and Romanian future leader trainers, 3) to develop short and long term training

programmes for SME managers, and 4) to develop learning materials for Hungarian and Romanian circumstances.

This paper focuses on the first results of the project, investigation and analyses the similarities and differences between work organizations. As a result of the first phase, the paper describes the similarities and differences of SME sectors in the participating countries and formulates recommendations in favour of the successful adaptation of the programme and the curriculum development. In addition to the analysis similarities and differences in the work organization models and especially the manpower and knowledge use and development practices of SMEs, the paper summarizes the main results from a survey taken among the companies represented by the Budapest Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the APM Cluj-Napoca to find out the development needs and the competence shortages of the companies. The paper provides empirical basis for the re-design and reflexive adaptation of the Finnish TYKES Programme in Hungary and Romania, evidence-based inputs to the content development of the various curricula and methodological experiences for the pedagogical and didactical innovations.

2 METHODOLOGY

In the case of organizational practices, several studies pointed out that these practices cannot be transposed mechanically from one context to another. Solutions implemented in one workplace function as generative ideas for the others. **Translating generative ideas into functional practices requires local redesign and creativity by the adapter [1]. Successful redesign requires from the adoptive workplace a retrospective, collaborative and research-based analysis of its own mode of operation. Thus the transfer of Finnish practices cannot be the direct adaptation of the training to the beneficiaries' contexts. The possibility of the training adaptation and re-design has to be based on understanding of similarities and differences between the SME sectors of countries. In order to be able to better understand similarities and differences between the SME sectors of the countries, the project team carried out a desk top analysis by secondary investigation of statistical data (e.g. Eurostat and National statistical offices), research results and other relevant documents focusing on the work organization models and especially the manpower and knowledge use and development practices of SMEs.** The national analysis consisted of 1) a brief overview of the national economies (share of sectors, size distribution of the whole economy), 2) an overview of the national SME sector (size distribution of the SME sector, environment of the SME sector, and competitiveness of the SME sector), and 3) knowledge use and innovation in the SME sector (training and knowledge use practices, innovation activities, product and process innovation of SMEs). Chapters four and five in this paper are based on national SME sector analysis (National Report Finland [2], National Report Hungary [3], National Report Romania [4]) and comparative analysis of the SMEs of Finland and the two target countries, Hungary and Romania.

In addition to the national analysis, a survey was organized among the companies represented by the Budapest Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the APM Cluj-Napoca to find out the development needs and the competence shortages of the organisations. The survey was based on the questions that were originally used by TYKES Programme in a situation where they wanted to know the current state of procedures in those companies who received money for their development work. The main findings from the Finnish survey done by TYKES Programme and results from Hungarian and Romanian survey done by ADAPTYKES project are presented in Chapter five. Chapter six is based on previous analysis [5] of development approaches and methods used in Finnish workplace development projects.

3 FINNISH WORKPLACE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Finland has a good reputation in international comparisons particularly in studies of the operating environment of companies and other institutions. [6] There has been programme-based workplace development in Finland since the 1990s. The Finnish Workplace Programme (TYKE) started in 1996 and continued with the new Finnish Workplace Development Programme (TYKES) from 2004 - 2010. [6] [7] The idea was to accelerate workplace development of productivity and the quality of working life and support research and development expertise. The Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (TEKES) continues workplace development funding of Liideri – Business, Productivity and Joy at Work Programme 2012–2018. The objective of the Liideri Programme is to renew the business operations of companies through developing management and forms of working and actively utilising

the skills and competencies of their personnel. The vision is that in 2020 Finland will have Europe's best workplaces. [8]

The TYKES Programme' supported 1) workplace development projects and the preparatory basic analyses for them, 2) method development projects, and 3) learning networks. The majority of the projects within the programme are workplace development projects focused on the organization of work, work processes and working methods, and the development of leadership and human resource management as well as cooperation and interaction within the work community, external networking, wage and working time systems, and working environment. Method development projects focused on the potential of new technologies, new forms of work organisation, companies' changing business models, operating models based on collaborative development of products and services by the producer and the client, production partnership from the perspective of the value chain, cross-sectoral cooperation in service production by producing new working, organization and management practices, and new development methods, models and tools. Learning networks were new forms of joint learning forums for working-life research and development units and workplaces. [7]

The programme funded 1 168 projects to a sum over 71 million euros. TYKES Programme funds were divided among development projects so that 55 % was granted to private consulting firms, 30 % to universities and their R&D units, R&D institutes and universities of applied sciences. In development projects and basic analyses, the consultants' percentage was 63% and in methods' development projects, 74 % of the funds were granted to universities and R&D institutes. [7]

At Lahti University of Applied Sciences (LUAS, several TYKES funded projects have been analysed. The LUAS's own TYKES funded project "Tietopankista työvälineeksi – From a Database to a Tool) compiled and developed further the various plans, results and evaluated outcomes of the previous development projects funded by TYKES in Finland overall. Based on the results and tools LUAS has developed training materials and training courses in adult education for the SME sector in order to introduce social innovations into the managerial-organisational profile of the enterprises. Short-term training courses have focused on specific needs of SMEs, while long-term development training programmes such as Master's degree programme of Small and medium size enterprises produce in-depth insight and development within enterprises. Furthermore, LUAS has run several regional ESF or ERDF supported projects in cooperation with companies that enhance the business operating environment of the SMEs.

4 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WORK ORGANISATIONS IN TARGET COUNTRIES

4.1 SME sector in Finland

The SME sector can be regarded as the foundation of the Finnish economy. In 2011, 96 per cent of the companies registered in the company register kept by Statistic Finland were SMEs. There is a freedom of trade in Finland, which enables anyone to operate in the business environment as long as it's lawful and in accordance with rules, regulations and good practices. **In 2011, a little over fifty per cent of the people employed by companies in Finland were in SMEs.**

The Finnish taxation system can feel complex, but it is something the welfare society is based on. There are several taxes the companies and the entrepreneurs must pay, and keeping accounts and getting insurances is a legal obligation. The ease of doing business ranking has lowered by one from the year 2012. The start-up process itself fell the most but in other sectors of the research, Finland has mainly stayed at the same level and is still the 11th easiest country for doing business in worldwide. The latest research on the entrepreneurship revealed that the companies feel that the SME operating environment has weakened. According to the research, the essential issues lie in the lack of professional leadership. Another matter affecting the competitiveness is the problems in the knowledge of different financing options.

Finland has always been ranked high when talking about the level of education. Normally the high level of education is attached to the basic and degree education, but it must be noted, that the additional training and internal education in companies is growing all the time. Adult education in the forms of continuing training and speciality courses is very popular especially in times of tight financial situations. The economic situation leads to the ease, or better the difficulty of external financing. Banks and financing companies are much more careful to grant loans to new companies or company operations. However, there are several financing operators in Finland who to turn to and negotiate

with in financing some sort to one's business operations. These same companies usually offer guidance on the internationalization processes, where the problem in the Finnish SMEs normally is attached to the lack of marketing skills and the development competence.

Finland is going through a challenging phase in the current economic situation. As Finland is an innovation-driven country that depends highly on exports, it also suffers from the economic crises much more than some other countries. Therefore the economy must invent new products or new ways of operating if it wants to continue on the successful path it has created during the recent decades.

4.2 SME sector in Hungary

As well as in Finland, the SME sector plays a very significant role in the Hungarian economy both in terms of employment as well as in the creation of value added. The contribution of Hungarian SMEs to the overall economy as measured by the added value is – compared to the EU– visibly weaker (50 % vs. 58 % in the EU). The reason lies in the productivity of Hungarian small companies which are less innovative than the EU average due to the lack of solid financial resources and contribution for innovation and even due to the shortage of innovation management capabilities. The stratification of the SME sector by the different size-classes is very close to the EU average. Additionally, the pattern of sectoral distribution in the SME sector is almost the same as in the EU. For example services are the most important sector.

The most important fields in the SME sector are manufacturing (18,5%) and wholesale and retail trade (12% of all enterprises). SMEs are underrepresented in capital-intensive sectors, such as infrastructure supply. The economic reform in 1968 brought about the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises after the golden age of large state owned firms during the state-socialist period. The time after the economic reform saw the transformation of many new SMEs through genuine greenfield investment, spin-offs, foreign direct investments and spontaneous privatisation.

The overwhelming majority (**99.9%**) of enterprises in Hungary is small and medium-sized and they provide more than two thirds of employment and 80% of GDP [8]. Thus their competitiveness fundamentally influences the performance of the whole economy. However, a clear dualism appeared between the modern foreign-owned sector and the less dynamic domestic sector. [9] The aggregated share of service sectors represent almost the same share (17.5%) as the wholesale and retail trade sector.

The key issue of the recovery process after the financial and economic crisis is the dynamic adaptation to changes of the entrepreneurship. The opportunity for the economic development of Hungary might lie in the reserves of the SME sector, as they produce half of the GDP and employ half of the workforce. However, the SME sector is stagnant in Hungary since at least 2005. Micro-firms are of particular importance as they provide more than 36% of the business economy. Hungary is still trailing other EU-countries in 8 out of 10 SBA areas, although in many there has been a recent gradual improvement of the situation. Government is remaining active in SME policy, but selected measures threaten to have a detrimental effect on SMEs.

The main disadvantage is that the SME sector lacks innovative thinking. Hungarian SMEs still do not see the main idea of the innovation. However, organizational innovations are much more often introduced than product innovation due to the lack of financial sources.

4.3 SME sector in Romania

Compared to EU-15 countries, Romania has 3.2 times less commercial societies per 1000 inhabitants, and the distribution across the eight Development Regions is uneven. In 2004, SMEs density was 42.2 SMEs per 1000 inhabitants in Bucharest-Ilfov Region, while the national average was 19.3 SME/1000 inhabitants and in the least developed North-West Region, 12.6 SME/1000 inhabitants. The Western, North-Western and Central Romanian regions have shown the most positive evolution regarding entrepreneurial development, while the situation in South-West, South and South-East regions presents a slight recovery. In North-East, South-East, South and South-West regions the weak entrepreneurial development is correlated with a low level of occupied educated population and low level of urbanization, which makes these regions less attractive to investors. In 2004 micro-enterprises formed the main share of the SME sector with a percentage over 85%.

Romania is at the low end when compared to the other EU countries both in terms of overall percentage of employees in SMEs and of average number of people employed by SMEs. According to the Observatory of European SMEs, only 40% of Romania's labour force is employed by SMEs, compared to 72% in other candidate countries and 66% in Europe-19 (EU-15 plus Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein). The average number of people employed by an SME in Romania is 4.8, while in the Europe-19 the number is 5.5. The fields of activity of Romanian SMEs and those of other European countries reveals a much higher share in Romanian SMEs' activity in trade activities and a lower share in tourism, transportation and other services compared to other European countries. This imbalance might be the result of Romania's priority of putting the basic needs of people in poverty first, but also of the fact that the total number of SMEs in Romania is proportionally three times smaller than in Europe. Thus the overdevelopment of the trade sector of SMEs is purely statistical.

The Romanian Government has created The Romanian Regional Operational Programme 2007-2013 which states that at regional level the structure for business support (industrial, scientific, technological, logistic and business parks) sustains the SME-development only to a limited extent, because the number of SMEs is insufficient and the businesses are largely poorly operated. Business incubators are also weakly represented, especially in some of the regions, for instance West and North-West regions having only one business incubator. Most businesses' support structures are confronted with difficulties in accessing finance and weak infrastructure of benefits.

4.4 Similarities and differences between SMEs in target countries

Finland and Hungary share a similar status in the SME sector, when it comes to the sector's importance in the economy. In Romania, the commercial development has been slower. Romania is still building its SME sector and trying to make it more efficient. In Hungary, the SME sector functions much better and provides two thirds of the employment but the innovative thinking is lacking. Finland on the other hand is a definite leader in innovations but is now struggling with the economic crisis, perhaps even more than the other two countries, which were in quite a different situation when the crisis began and perhaps are not as dependent on exports as Finland.

In each country, the Governments are constantly developing the SME sector but the challenges are also rather big. In Romania the problems lie in the difficulties in acquiring finance. In Hungary, the problem is the lack of innovative thinking and in Finland it is the costs and the bureaucracy that affect the ease of doing business. All three countries' SME sector suffers from the lack of or the difficulty of getting financing. This forces the sector to develop and increase innovativeness. This has been acknowledged in Finland and Hungary which are perhaps a little ahead of Romania, where the SME sector is still under construction and development.

5 DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND COMPETENCE SHORTAGES OF SMES IN TARGET COUNTRIES

5.1 Development needs of Finnish SME sector

TYKES Programme defined the objectives of development projects on the basis of implementation plans included in workplace project applications. In general, individual projects had more than one objective, on average there were four to five different objectives. The most common objectives concerned the development of work processes, leadership, teamwork, external networking, work methods, working atmosphere and working ability and coping with work load. [7]

TYKES Programme carried out a preliminary survey and a final survey about workplaces' procedures and changes in them during TEKES funded development projects. The same, but slightly shortened preliminary survey was used in the ADAPTYKES-project in Hungary by the Budapest Chamber of Commerce and in Romania by APM Cluj-Napoca. According to the surveys, development needs and competence shortages in Finnish SMEs concerned leadership, work processes and internal networking. The importance of the internal networking issue was emphasized in workplaces of over 50 employees. The importance of the quality of products and services was highlighted especially in smaller workplaces but also price, delivery accuracy and flexibility were considered important. The bigger the workplace the more important for the success was the ability to continuously develop products and services. Development work was continuous only in less than a quarter of small

workplaces. The amount of personnel that participated in training paid by the employer varied and training focused mostly both on work tasks and general issues.[11]

5.2 Development needs of in Hungarian SME sector

Based on the ADAPTYKES preliminary survey carried out among Hungarian SMEs, development needs and competence shortages were found in the following areas: information technology, other technology related issues, organisational structure and working conditions & working environment. Also products & services, leadership, quality management, organisational structure, work processes and customer satisfaction were areas found which needed development.

In Hungary, company education and training is considered a function of HR management, however the Hungarian small companies lack consistent human resource (HR) departments or dedicated HR personnel. The survey results show that SMEs provide training for their employees much less than larger companies (40% vs. 65%). The SMEs send 25% of their employees for training as the same ratio is 29% with larger companies. Compared to EU-15 countries, this data placed Hungary in the last position in 2010. Based on the previous data, the necessity for projects like ADAPTYKES supporting education of employees of the Hungarian SMEs is clearly demonstrated. "In knowledge-based societies the qualification of the labour force is a decisive factor in the country's economic potential. The EU uses a variety of indicators for the measurement of innovative and learning abilities of the Member States. Amongst Hungary's weaknesses are lower-than-EU-average rate of higher education level qualifications in the active-age population and the low proportion of those with academic degrees in science and engineering. The low rate of participation in adult education and PhD training also produces some handicaps in global competition." [3]

The level of participation in lifelong vocational training statistics shows downward trend. Lifelong learning and training has decreasing participation data (8-8.5% and 3% in average). Decreasing participation ratios with 40 and 50% are shown for both job related and non-job related education and training.

ADAPTYKES project is focusing on organizational innovation and the National Report presents the need for this support: the share of firms which introduced any kind of organizational innovation was **13%** in 2010 (larger companies: **47%**). A great majority of small enterprises (10-49 employees) did not implement any types of organizational innovations. Behind the fact that Hungarian SMEs are less innovative, is the possibility that there is a lack of risk-taking attitude and a lack of human skills necessary for innovations.

When comparing the Hungarian SME sectors competitiveness to other EU-15 countries, it seems that one of the main development needs is to promote innovative thinking among SMEs in Hungary. However, it is important to notice that organizational innovations are much more often introduced than product innovation, due to the lack of financial sources. Lack of financial resources is reflected in R&D expenditure (20.7% of total), which is as well considered very low.

5.3 Development needs of Romanian SME sector

As described in the previous sections, the Romanian economy has a large number of small enterprises employing less people but accounting for half of the sales revenue and has a very small number of large enterprises.

At the same time the Global Competitiveness report [12] shows that Romania's rank position has worsened from 2006 to 2012 in all of the following indicators: overall index, basic requirements, efficiency enhancers, innovation and sophistication factors, higher education and training, labour market efficiency and innovation. The nation's development structure is fragmented where at the same time there are regions that are very developed and very undeveloped when considering SMEs' activity and productivity. [13]

Based on the pre-survey carried out in Romania, there were found needs which are quite similar to Hungarian and Finnish ones. The pre-survey gave results in the following areas of development: products & services, information technology, internal co-operation, co-operation with companies, other technology related issues, competence of personnel. Romanian SMEs tend to show clear emphasis towards the company's internal development needs.

Even so, the levels of education and training have grown statistically over the past years in Romania but these are mainly because of the larger companies. Therefore the need for development projects such as ADAPTYKES carries great importance as it can improve the SMEs training patterns.

Innovation activities were found also found to be quite poor in Romania and it seems that SMEs have not understood the potentials of innovation activities. Only **17%** of SMEs had introduced new innovation in 2010 [13]. Organizational innovations are much more often introduced than product innovations, this is due to the lack of financial sources which was found in one development area.

6 DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES AND METHODS USED IN FINNISH WORKPLACE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

In order to examine the management approaches and tools used in Finnish workplace development, the most typical and actual approaches and methods mentioned in recent management literature were listed by TYKES and then it was asked whether the expert parties (R&D, Training and educational institutes, private consulting firms) used them in their development projects while cooperating with workplaces.

There were altogether 20 management approaches, three of which were of Finnish origin, and 25 tools. The use of different approaches by expert organizations were the following: Action research, BSC (balanced score card), BPR (business process reengineering), Cooperative development (FIN), Deep change model (FIN), Developmental work research (FIN), Development cycle, Experimental development research (FIN), EFQM (European quality management), IIP (Investors in people), ISO standards, JOT, JIT (just-on/in-time), Lean management, Malcolm Baldrige, NLP (neuro-linguistic processing), KM (knowledge management), PBL (problem based learning), Process consultation, SHRM (strategic human resource management), Sociotechnical approach and TQM (total quality management).

The expert organizations used many different tools as part of their development approaches. The most typical tools used by all the expert organizations were the analysis, development groups, evaluation, management training and team building/development. These tools describe rather well the basic model of organizational development activities. Analyses are the most important tool that can be used for different purposes and different phases of the development project e.g. as a basic analysis to invent the development needs of the work organization, as a competence analysis of personnel or as a task analysis. It is also typical to organize development activities through the development groups consisting of the representatives of the work organization and others. The focus of development is often on both management training and development of personnel e.g. team building and development.

In order to assess the outcomes, different types of evaluation are being used. There are some statistical differences in the use of tools between the different expert organizations. The consultancy firms more often used tools directed towards managers, such as management group training, management training, strategy work, but also process design, meeting practices and SWOT analysis than the others. The academic R&D units more often used basic research as part of their development activities than the consultancies and training and educational institutes. The training and educational institutes in turn more often used vocational education, benchmarking, ICT solutions and simulation.

The most common development approaches and tools were teams, employer-employee discussions and activities for maintaining and improving ability to work and employee well-being. The bigger the workplace the more common all development approaches and tools became. Especially quality award criteria, balanced score cards and human resource accounting for personnel planning assessment were seldom in use in workplaces under 100 employees. Also a quarter of workplaces under 25 employees did not have teams at all.

In addition to the above-mentioned approaches and tools the consultancies named about 30 other different methods. Many of them were created by the consultancies themselves (e.g. Aristos method, Tiimiggo, Soluggo, Senior-Junior model, Critical Incident Interview, Solution-Based Development), whereas the other methods were more well-known (e.g. internal entrepreneurship, psychological tests, grounded theory, PID method and dialogue methods). Only a few other methods were mentioned by the academic R&D units and training and educational institutes (e.g. strategy map, narrative approach, learning by developing, group guidance).

The findings of the study about Innovation generating model suggest, among other things, that the structure of development coalition should be acknowledged as an important factor when implementing organizational practices. Both performance and the quality of work-life can be improved through broad collaboration during the development process. The external experts can have several roles in development projects which can help with the successful implementation of practices. In addition to the participation of employees and management, the organizational practices can undergo a critical external examination with several expert organizations, which can improve the quality and legitimacy of the practices. The expert organizations can also support the implementation of practices in many ways such as with motivation, encouragement, education, organizing learning, giving new knowledge and methods etc.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The adaptation of the Finnish workplace practices has an international character assuring transnational knowledge and experience transfer. The ADAPTYKES project helps Hungary and Romania catch up with the more developed western partners in the field of social development of workplaces by contributing to the competitiveness and capacity of SMEs in target countries. Workplace development is a significant part of the broad-based innovation policy and it should be strengthened in target countries. Working-life research and workplace development should be combined in order form curricula to answer to the development and competence needs of SMEs. Employee skills and competences, broad-based participation and cooperation are success factors which have to be taken into account strongly as a cross-cutting principle in innovation policy in the target countries. Combining Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) and innovation management will be a key area in future in the development of working life. [7] In Hungary and Romania, special attention should be paid to the following topics; co-operation with other companies/workplaces, Strategy making, Knowledge Management, Quality Circles/Groups, Interdisciplinary groups, Integration of functions, Autonomous working groups. In addition, both countries have reported a low usage of scientific publications and involvement with Universities and research institutions. Employee skills and competences in target countries are perhaps the hidden reserve which needs to be given proper attention when promoting innovation activities and workplace developments tools with various tools and methods among beneficiaries as well as forming a cooperative culture between the SMEs, universities and research institutions.

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