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Educational and labor migration in the new horizons of economic integration in the Eurasian Economic Union

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The paper focuses on clarifying the cause-effect relations of educational and labor migration in implementing the social investment model of economic growth in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The paper aims to investigate the role of educational and labor migration in implementing the social investment model of economic growth in Russia under the new horizons of economic integration in the EAEU. The authors use the correlation analysis method to determine the role of educational and labor migration in implementing the social investment model of economic growth in the EAEU. The experience of implementing the social investment model of economic growth based on educational and labor migration in the EAEU has been studied using the case study method. The authors present their forecast for implementing the social investment model of economic growth in the EAEU up to 2024. The conditions for developing educational and labor migration in the EAEU in 2022 are determined. The novelty of this research lies in studying educational and labor migration as factors of economic growth in the social investment model in a new perspective of economic integration. The research contributes to the literature by developing the scientific foundations of the concept of the knowledge economy through clarification and rethinking of the role of human resources in the social investment model of economic growth under conditions of economic integration. The practical significance of this research lies in the fact that the developed policy implications for the regulation of educational and labor migration under the new horizons of economic integration make it possible to most effectively implement the social investment model of economic growth in the practice of the EAEU.

KEYWORDS

educational migration, labor migration, social investment model of economic growth, economic integration, Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)

Introduction

Economic integration is a promising tool for implementing the socio-investment model of economic growth. This is due to the fact that the acceleration of this growth could be a synergetic effect of economic integration, which is achieved due to the optimization of labor division and removal of customs limitations on the international movement of commodities and production factors. In particular, economic trade ensures favorable conditions for educational and labor migration, which facilitate the optimization of the international flows of social investments (Anh Do and Bui, 2022; Bishnoi and Bishnoi, 2022; Dankyi et al., 2022; Moran and Ward-Christie, 2022; Siyahhan and Ghodusi, 2022).

In this paper, educational and labor migration is understood as a combination of the free flow of foreign students and the flow of labor migrants, achieved due to the common inclusive social environment – the absence of customs barriers and the society's openness (AbuJarour, 2022; Ghouse et al., 2022; Ramlackhan and Catania, 2022; Remme et al., 2022). It should be noted that these two processes are implemented not separately but in a systemic manner. That is, there is no strict differentiation between educational and labor migration, which is implemented and stimulated in a comprehensive manner (Thomas, 2008; Shen et al., 2021).

Education, the development of human resources, and the realization of human potential are at the heart of a new social investment model of economic growth (Sibirskaya et al., 2019). This model was shaped by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is especially important in the Decade of Action when the implementation of SDGs has reached the finish line (Popkova, 2021; Popkova et al., 2021). Massively accessible and quality education (SDG 4), opportunities for human development with social equality (SDG 5 and SDG 10), and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) systemically form the social investment model of economic growth (Popkova et al., 2017).

Thus, according to *World Population Review* (2022), the top 10 countries with the Best Educational Systems – 2021 showed high resilience to the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, while the decline in economic growth in 2020 was 3.27% globally, it was only 0.004% in Australia. In 2021, when the global average economic growth rate was estimated at 5.80%, the economic growth rate was 7.44% in the USA and 6.96% in France (World Bank, 2022).

Increased resilience to crises and accelerated post-crisis economic recovery after crises determine the high relevance of the social investment model of economic growth and the attractiveness of its practical implementation by countries worldwide (Singh, 2022). The problem is that this model

conflicts with the current trend of globalization because it implies limiting the outgoing flow (outflow) of social capital (Wang, 2022). This links the social investment model of economic growth with the mercantilist model, in which similar restrictions were imposed on financial capital.

This is the contradiction of economic growth in the social investment model, since freedom of international trade and the international division of labor are essential conditions for economic efficiency and economic growth (Ashraf and Goodell, 2022). At the current stage of development of the world economy, globalization is so strong and spontaneous that limiting it is difficult and threatens the global competitiveness of the economy (Bajraktari et al., 2022).

As a promising solution to the problem and resolution of this contradiction, this paper proposes the development of economic integration to support the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth.

The socio-investment model of economic growth implies that the key manifestations of this growth are not only the growth of GDP but also the number of personnel involved with R&D. The factors of economic growth in the considered model, from the position of educational and labor migration, are as follows: (1) share of skilled personnel (determined from the position of the share of employees with higher education in the structure of the employed and the unemployed by the level of education); (2) activity of attraction of foreign students (number of students in the educational organizations of higher professional education) and 4) international migration of the population.

The paper aims to investigate the role of educational and labor migration in the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth in Russia under the new horizons of economic integration in the EAEU. The novelty of this research lies in the study of educational and labor migration as factors of economic growth in the social investment model in a new perspective of economic integration.

The paper's contribution to the literature is the disclosure of the unique and promising experience of implementing the socio-investment model of economic growth in the EAEU. This experience could be useful for other developing countries. The design of this paper is as follows. The first research task is to identify the role of educational and labor migration in the implementation of the socio-investment model of economic growth in the EAEU. The second task is to perform a case study of the implementation of the socio-investment model of economic growth based on educational and labor migration in the EAEU. The third task is to develop policy implications on the regulation of educational and labor migration under the conditions of new horizons of economic integration in the EAEU.

Literature review

Underpinning theory

The theoretical basis of this research is the scientific basis of the concept of the knowledge economy. According to this concept, human resources are the key – the most valuable and systemic factor of production in the economy (Santos-Hermosa and Atenas, 2022; Xu et al., 2022). In this regard, when managing labor migration, public authorities seek, on the one hand, to prevent the outflow of personnel from the economy, the so-called “brain drain” (Agrati and Vinci, 2022; Atjonen et al., 2022).

On the other hand, they seek to attract the best human resources from around the world, creating favorable employment opportunities (including international recognition of diplomas and support for the social adaptation of migrants) and life in the country (high quality of life) (Eschenbacher, 2022; Fang and Huang, 2022; Westerveen et al., 2022).

Some countries, especially those that are “aging” and experiencing a demographic crisis (negative natural population growth), are interested in an influx of migrant personnel of any kind without strict educational requirements (Galos, 2022). For example, some remote areas of European countries have resettlement programs aimed at attracting young families.

State management of educational migration in the knowledge economy in implementing the social investment model of economic growth is carried out according to the same principle (Holliman et al., 2022). In international university rankings, including QS and THE, the presence of international students and professors is considered a competitive advantage for universities (Al-Qadri et al., 2022).

The outflow of students and teachers is not noted as an advantage. Such indicators are not considered due to their negative interpretation, although the international exchange of knowledge and experience, including international educational internships for students and teachers, is interpreted positively (Finch and Finch, 2022).

Relationship between variables involved in this research

The literature review revealed a high degree of elaboration of educational and labor migration as factors of the social investment model of economic growth. However, the existing publications consider the countries of the world in isolation, which is a limitation of the available literature. Economic integration, actively practiced in the world economy, provides a transition from isolated to the systemic economic growth of integrated countries.

For example, after the formation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the five countries (Russia and Belarus – Western Europe, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan – Central Asia, and Armenia – Fore Asia) began to implement common strategies for the socioeconomic development of member countries; common macroeconomic statistics of this integration association began to be maintained (Jemeljanova et al., 2017; Kiselev et al., 2019).

The uncertainty of the effects of educational and labor migration on economic growth in the implementation of the social investment model under conditions of economic integration is a gap in the literature. This raises the research question (RQ) of what role educational and labor migration play in the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth in the new horizons of economic integration in the EAEU.

The hypothesis of this research is based on the evidence of migration support for economic growth in the EAEU noted in the literature (Dorskaliyeva et al., 2017; Antonova and Kashevarova, 2022; Yelikbayev and Andronova, 2022) and consists of the fact that educational and labor migration supports economic growth in its social and investment model in the new horizons of economic integration in the EAEU. To fill the research gap identified in the literature, the authors clarify the causal links between educational and labor migration in implementing the social investment model of economic growth in the EAEU.

Materials and methods

The methodology of this research is based on the method of correlation analysis. It is used to assess the level of connection between the economic growth rate and the number of personnel involved with R&D (separately) and the factors of educational and labor migration. The data were collected through the systematization of the official statistics of the Eurasian Economic Commission. The indicators of the results of implementing the socio-investment model of economic growth is the economic growth rate and the number of personnel involved with R&D (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2022a).

The factors of educational and labor migration are as follows: (1) share of employees with higher education in the structure of the employed by the level of education (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2022a); (2) share of employees with higher education in the structure of the unemployed by the level of education (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2022a); (3) number of students of educational organizations of higher professional education who arrived from other countries – EAEU members – at the start of

the academic year; 2020/2021, people (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2022b) and (4) International migration of the population in January-December 2021 (number of individuals registered with authorities during the change of permanent residence; people), arrived (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2022c).

The research is conducted in three stages. The first stage determines the role of educational and labor migration in the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth in the EAEU. To verify the hypothesis and determine the role of educational and labor migration in the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth in the new horizons of economic integration in the EAEU, the authors conduct a statistical analysis. The research is based on data current as of the beginning of 2022 (based on the results of 2021).

The authors apply the method of correlation analysis to determine the relationship between indicators of educational and labor migration and the results of the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth: (1) with the number of personnel engaged in research and development and (2) with the index of physical volume of GDP as a percentage of the previous year (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2022a).

The indicators of educational and labor migration are as follows: (1) the share of employees with higher education in the structure of employment by level of education (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2022a); (2) the share of employees with higher education in the structure of the unemployed by level of education (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2022a); (3) the number of students in educational institutions of higher professional education who came from other EAEU countries (at the beginning of the academic year 2020/2021) (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2022b); (4) international migration of the population in January-December 2021 (the number of persons registered in the bodies of internal affairs at the change of permanent residence; people arrived) (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2022c).

The research hypothesis is considered proven if a positive correlation is detected. The second stage studies the experience of the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth based on educational and labor migration in the EAEU. The case study provides a socioeconomic and legal overview of the regulation of educational and labor migration in the EAEU.

The third stage develops policy implications for improving state regulation of educational and labor migration in the context of the new horizons of economic integration in the EAEU. In developing the recommendations, the authors make and consider the forecast of the implementation of the socio-investment model of economic growth in

the EAEU up to 2024. The authors also consider the conditions for developing educational and labor migration in the EAEU in 2022.

Results

The role of educational and labor migration in the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth in the Eurasian Economic Union

To determine the role of educational and labor migration in the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth in the new horizons of economic integration in the EAEU, the authors determined the correlation of indicators of educational and labor migration with the results of the social investment model of economic growth (Table 1) using the method of correlation analysis.

The results obtained in Table 1 revealed a very strong relationship between the number of personnel engaged in R&D and international migration (99.92%), a strong relationship with the number of students in educational institutions of higher professional education who arrived from other EAEU countries (42.42%), and a moderate relationship with the share of employees with higher education in the structure of employment by level of education (20.90%). There is also a strong correlation of the index of physical volume of GDP as a percentage of the previous year (the rate of economic growth) with the share of workers with higher education in the structure of the unemployed by level of education (32.50%) and with international migration (33.28%). The authors also found a moderate relationship between the share of workers with higher education in the structure of employment by level of education (18.54%) and the number of students in educational institutions of higher education who arrived from other EAEC countries (8.30%). The connection between the number of personnel engaged in R&D and the index of the physical volume of GDP as a percentage of the previous year (the rate of economic growth) was strong (30.81%).

Thus, the correlation coefficients are predominantly positive and significant. This indicates a close relationship between the indicators of educational and labor migration and the results of the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth. Consequently, educational and labor migration is important in implementing the social investment model of economic growth in the EAEU, which confirms the hypothesis put forward.

TABLE 1 Correlation analysis of educational and labor migration with the results of the social investment model of economic growth in the EAEU in 2021.

Correlation analysis of educational and labor migration with the results of the social investment model of economic growth in the EAEU in 2021	Share of employees with higher education in the structure of employment by level of education, %	Share of employees with higher education in the structure of the unemployed by level of education, %	Number of students in educational organizations of higher vocational education who arrived from other EAEU countries (at the beginning of the academic year 2020/2021 people)	International migration of the population in January-December 2021 (the number of persons registered in the bodies of internal affairs at the change of permanent residence; people arrived)	Number of personnel engaged in R&D (people)	Index of physical volume of GDP (in percent to the previous year)
EAEU	35.7	25.1	91854	697333	736614	104.6
Armenia	33.5	28.3	2379	10200	4499	105.7
Belarus	33.8	22.6	10570	0	25622	102.3
Kazakhstan	42.5	37.0	63835	10982	22665	104.1
Kyrgyzstan	23.4	19.4	8602	8229	4495	103.6
Russia	35.5	24.0	6468	667922	679333	104.7
Correlation with the number of personnel engaged in R&D,%	20.90	-18.06	42.42	99.92		30.81
Correlation with the index of physical volume of GDP,%	18.54	32.50	8.30	33.28		

Compiled by the authors based on the materials of [Eurasian Economic Commission \(2022a,b,c\)](#).

Case study of the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth based on educational and labor migration in the Eurasian Economic Union

The best practices of the EAEU in creating a single labor market and comfortable social standards of living for citizens of member countries are highly appreciated by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and form the basis of recommendations for the forthcoming Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration ([Eurasian Economic Commission, 2022d](#)).

The materials of the [Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences \(2022\)](#) point out that the prevalence of the Russian language in integrated countries, the cultural inclusiveness of the societies of these countries, and the openness of universities to international students and professors play a key stimulating role in the development of educational migration in the EAEU. Joint development of educational programs, exchange of students and graduate students, and faculty internships have been practiced for many years.

In 2022, the [Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation \(2022\)](#) proposed the creation of a common digital science and education space in the EAEU. The cooperation implies the access of researchers to domestic and international projects of the EAEU countries of the “megascience” class, as well as the development and joint use of the latest digital services for users in science, education, and entrepreneurship in the integration union.

The EAEU actively and comprehensively supports labor migration through a coordinated policy of regulating labor migration within the union. This provides benefits in the form of full social security, medical care for workers of EAEU countries, credit for work (insurance) experience, export of pensions, direct recognition of education documents without any procedures, and legal guarantees for the education of children of migrant workers on an equal basis with local residents in the EAEU countries. Migrant workers are not required to fill out a migration card and register in the state of employment if they stay in the country for up to 30 days. The case studies on the regulation of labor migration from the EAEU countries in each EAEU country are also systematized ([Eurasian Economic Commission, 2022e](#)).

In Armenia, Public Employment Organizations, which cooperate with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, organize internal and external labor movements as part of the state program to regulate employment.

In Belarus, the Ministry of Internal Affairs develops and implements state programs, carries out international cooperation, prepares proposals for improving legislation and concluding international agreements, coordinates informational (advertising) announcements about employment outside the country of citizens and foreigners permanently residing in the country, licenses activities related to employment outside the country, and collects and makes available to other ministries statistical and tax information on emigrant workers.

In Kazakhstan, the formation of policy in the field of migration is the responsibility of the Department of Social and Migration Policy and Development of State Bodies. This department organizes and cooperates with the authorized bodies of foreign countries and international organizations in the regulation of migration processes, analyzes the migration situation in Kazakhstan, makes recommendations on improving the management of migration processes, and performs implementation and monitoring functions.

In Kyrgyzstan, the Ministry of Labor and Social Development and the State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic perform the functions of social and legal protection in the field of labor, employment, and migration.

In Russia, the Federal Migration Service is creating programs to attract highly qualified specialists and skilled workers in professions that are in short supply and demand on the Russian labor market. The Federal Migration Service of Russia develops programs for the organized recruitment of foreign workers. It creates mechanisms to encourage foreign workers in demand on the Russian labor market to sign long-term employment contracts and obtain permanent residency status in the Russian Federation. It simplifies entry and removes restrictions for labor activities and training of family members of foreign workers who have signed long-term labor contracts. Additionally, the Federal Migration Service is responsible for creating a mechanism for attracting foreign workers to jobs that cannot be replaced by Russian workers.

The Federal Migration Service of Russia also improves the mechanism for foreign citizens to work based on patents and simplifies the procedure for entry, exit, and stay in the Russian Federation for foreign citizens involved in investment and entrepreneurial activities. The Federal Migration Service of Russia improves the system of issuing permits for labor activity, creates centers to assist immigration into the Russian Federation and medical examination of immigrants, including those abroad, and provides free legal assistance to foreign citizens through its territorial subdivisions and overseas offices.

Policy implications for the regulation of educational and labor migration in the context of the new horizons of economic integration in the Eurasian Economic Union

Nowadays (mid-2022), favorable conditions for developing educational and labor migration processes in the EAEU have been created. These conditions include successful mass vaccination and minimal coronavirus restrictions on educational and labor migration to the EAEU. In addition to the loyal customs control of educational and labor migrants from EAEU countries (compared to general international migrants and even migrants from CIS countries), this opens up great opportunities for the development of migration in the EAEU.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the crisis caused by international sanctions, which worsened in 2022, allows us to make the author's forecast for the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth in the EAEU until 2024, according to which educational and labor migration will act as a significant catalyst for economic growth.

For the most successful implementation of the role of educational and labor migration in the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth in the new horizons of economic integration in the EAEU, the authors offer the following recommendations for improving the state regulation of educational and labor migration.

First, it is proposed to make fuller use of the opportunities of the digital economy of the EAEU through the infrastructural and regulatory provision of opportunities for remote employment and distance learning as innovative forms of educational and labor migration. It is also advisable to improve the mechanism of the digital labor market by improving and institutionalizing the practice of remote job search and registration of documents for employment with the subsequent arrival of migrants with their families in the host country.

Second, it is recommended to organize special educational courses aimed at supporting the social and labor adaptation of migrants in the EAEU. It is advisable to conduct literacy courses for migrants in the field of labor law in the country of residence, as well as individualized courses to fill gaps in professional competencies (if necessary).

Third, it is suggested that migrant workers be more fully included in national programs to overcome personnel shortages in remote areas and in certain sectors of the economy. These programs should be conducted at the level of the EAEU.

Fourth, it is recommended to expand the range of support and guarantees in the profession for educational migrants along with local graduates of professional and higher education organizations.

Discussion

The paper develops the scientific foundations of the concept of the knowledge economy, clarifying and rethinking the role of human resources in the social investment model of economic growth under conditions of economic integration. The contribution of this research to the literature is to justify the need to consider the context – the individual economic growth of countries or the systemic growth of integrated economic systems. The reviewed best practices in the regulation of educational and labor migration in the EAEU revealed their significant contribution to the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth.

In contrast to [Agrati and Vinci \(2022\)](#), [Atjonen et al. \(2022\)](#), [Santos-Hermosa and Atenas \(2022\)](#), and [Xu et al. \(2022\)](#), this research substantiates that educational and labor migration, unlike individual economies, has a specific, positive impact on economic growth in its social and investment model, implemented under conditions of economic integration. The best practices of the EAEU demonstrate that educational and labor migration does not lead to a brain drain but rather ensures overcoming personnel shortages where they can be observed and balancing the labor market. For workers, educational and labor migration provides improved opportunities for professional employment and career building, making it possible to reach the fullest human potential.

In contrast to [Al-Qadri et al. \(2022\)](#), [Eschenbacher \(2022\)](#), [Fang and Huang \(2022\)](#), [Finch and Finch \(2022\)](#), [Galos \(2022\)](#), [Holliman et al. \(2022\)](#), and [Westerveen et al. \(2022\)](#), it has been proved that the approach to state regulation of educational and labor migration in conditions of economic integration (as opposed to the approach in the individual economic growth of countries) should involve stimulating social mobility and creating social (educational and labor) elevators rather than retention of personnel. Artificial retention of human resources in the country leads to their degradation and unemployment, while the creation of a single education market and the labor market in the integration association of countries (as in the successful example of the EAEU) makes it possible to free the flow of human resources and most effectively manage them in full economic freedom in support of the implementation of social investment model of economic growth.

The key conclusion of this research is that economic integration provides advanced capabilities for the implementation of the socio-investment model of economic growth. The advantages of economic integration for the implementation of this model are, first, an increase in the capacity utilization of universities due to the inflow of foreign students. This allows for the most complete development of the export potential of the higher education system and the maximization of its contribution to economic growth.

Second, stimulation of the inflow of skilled personnel in the process of migration. After graduation, foreign students can

stay in the host country and become highly qualified personnel. Third, integrated economies have better opportunities for knowledge exchange. To train the required personnel, they are not necessarily limited to their own universities; the gap in their activities could be filled by partner universities in other countries, within integration unions.

Conclusion

Thus, this research filled the identified gap in the literature and answered the posed RQ, proving the hypothesis put forward. Using the EAEU as an example, the authors demonstrate that, in the conditions of economic integration, educational and labor migration plays an important role and supports economic growth in its social investment model. The obtained results allow us to draw the following conclusions. First, the best practices of the EAEU in creating a single labor market based on legal unification and a wide range of social guarantees provide favorable conditions for educational and labor migration.

Second, educational and labor migration supports the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth in the EAEU. Thus, increased employment and reduced unemployment of highly qualified personnel (workers with higher education), an increased number of students from EAEU countries, and an influx of international migrants increase the number of personnel engaged in R&D and accelerate the rate of economic growth.

Third, in 2022, conditions for educational and labor migration in the EAEU will be favorable. The forecast for the development of these processes until 2024 is optimistic. The authors provide recommendations for improving the state regulation of educational and labor migration in the new horizons of economic integration in the EAEU.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that transition from predominantly labor migration to systemic educational and labor migration generates a synergetic effect in the form of the development of the knowledge economy. The inflow of unskilled personnel, which raise the unemployment level, is replaced by highly qualified personnel with recognized diplomas, which, in particular, can be received in the territory of the host country. The successful experience of the EAEU shows that the systemic educational and labor migration supports the implementation of the socio-investment model of economic growth, accelerating economic growth through knowledge-intensive employment and the development of human potential.

The theoretical significance of the research is due to the fact that it clarifies the causal relationship between educational and labor migration in the implementation of the social investment model of economic growth in the EAEU. The practical significance of the research lies in the fact that the developed policy implications for the regulation of educational

and labor migration under the new horizons of economic integration make it possible to most effectively implement the social investment model of economic growth in the practice of the EAEU. The social implication of this research lies in its describing the systemic interconnection between SDG 4, SDG 8 and SDG 17. The paper proposed a promising new tool for the achievement of SDG 8 – educational and labor migration, which is ensured due to economic integration.

The conclusions and proposed recommendations are reliable and useful not only for the EAEU but also for other integration associations of countries. Nevertheless, a prerequisite for the reliability of the author's conclusions and the effectiveness of these recommendations is the creation of a single labor market in the integration association of countries. It is proposed to devote further research in the continuation of this article to an in-depth study of the prospects for meeting this condition and the development of recommendations for the creation of a single labor market in other integration associations of countries (e.g., in the EU and NAFTA).

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

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Author contributions

Both authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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