



Synergies between the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology

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1. Scene-setter

In the context following the 2020 communication on *A new European Research Area (ERA) for research and innovation*¹, Horizon Europe, the EU's framework programme for research and innovation (2021-2027), offers new opportunities to facilitate collaboration between its different components. One of the objectives of such collaboration is to reinforce the link between research, innovation and education to strengthen the impact of EU scientific research.

Since 1996, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) have become the Union's reference programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training. The programme has funded excellent research and equipped researchers, at all stages of their career, with new knowledge and skills, through mobility across borders and exposure to different sectors and disciplines. It also aims to have a structuring impact on higher education institutions, research centres and non-academic organisations. Between 2014 and 2020, the MSCA have supported over 65,000 researchers at all stages of their career, including 25,000 PhD candidates in more than 1000 doctoral programmes. It has also supported over 4800 companies, including SMEs.

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) was established in 2008 in order to contribute to sustainable economic growth and competitiveness by reinforcing the innovation capacity of the European Union and its Member States. With a strong emphasis on entrepreneurial talent, business creation and innovation skills, the EIT fosters the integration of higher education, research and leading business ('knowledge triangle') into innovation ecosystems. Under the auspices of the EIT, dynamic, long-term European partnerships called EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) have been set up. Each KIC contributes to addressing a specific global challenge, from climate change and sustainable energy to healthy living and food.

The EIT Community comprises over 3.000 leading partners including businesses, higher education institutions and research institutions and over 60 innovation hubs across the EU and beyond. It has supported more than 3.800 ventures and counts more than 3.800 graduates of its training programmes.

Both the MSCA and the EIT bring together a wide range of stakeholders from the knowledge triangle. For a considerable number of these stakeholders, both MSCA and EIT actions could be of potential interest.

In order to allow interested stakeholders to explore the full potential of the opportunities offered under the MSCA and the EIT programme, this guide provides an overview of the different types of actions under the respective programmes (see section 3) and it gives examples of how stakeholders involved in one programme could benefit from actions under the other programme (see section 4).

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0628&from=EN>

This guide can notably be used by organisations or individuals involved in one of the two programmes to consider how their project could:

- benefit from activities of projects and innovation communities working in the same research and innovation fields,
- provide the basis for a spin-off project in the other programme.

2. Legal basis

The Horizon Europe legal base encourages synergies between its different components, including between the MSCA and the EIT².

Synergies between the two programmes have to comply with the financial rules which notably prohibit the same activity from being funded by two different EU programmes:

Recital (130): Compliance with **the principle of sound financial management**, and in particular the principles of economy, efficiency and no double funding, should be ensured. For that purpose, simplified forms of financing should ensure that the resources employed are adequate to the objectives to be achieved, that the same costs are not financed more than once from the budget, that the co-financing principle is respected and that overall overcompensation of recipients is avoided. Therefore, simplified forms of financing should be based on statistical or accounting data, similar objective means or expert judgement. In addition, suitable checks, controls and periodic assessments should continue to apply.

Article 191: Principle of **non-cumulative award and prohibition of double funding**

1. Each action may give rise to the award of only one grant from the budget to any one beneficiary, except where otherwise authorised in the relevant basic acts.
A beneficiary may be awarded only one operating grant from the budget per financial year.
An action may be financed jointly from separate budget lines by different authorising officers responsible.
2. The applicant shall immediately inform the authorising officers of any multiple applications and multiple grants relating to the same action or to the same work programme.
3. In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the budget.³

3. Opportunities under the MSCA and EIT

3.1. MSCA types of actions

The MSCA provide support for research and innovation, as well as the training and career development of researchers, in **all fields of scientific research**, through different actions on the basis of annual calls for applications:

² See, for instance, Annex I (2.1) of the Council Decision and Annex II (2.2) of the European Parliament and Council Regulations establishing the establishing the Horizon Europe:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021D0764&from=EN>

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0695&from=EN>

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046&qid=1535046024012>

- **MSCA Doctoral Networks** implement doctoral programmes, including Industrial and Joint Doctorates, by partnerships of universities, research institutions and research infrastructures, businesses including SMEs, and other socio-economic actors from different countries across Europe and beyond. The action aims to raise the excellence of doctoral training in Europe and nurture creative, entrepreneurial, innovative and resilient doctoral candidates, able to face current and future challenges and to convert knowledge and ideas into products and services for economic and social benefit.
- **MSCA COFUND** co-finances new or existing doctoral or postdoctoral programmes managed by entities established in EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries. The aim is to spread the best practices of the MSCA including international, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary research training, as well as international and cross-sectoral mobility of researchers at all stages of their career. The programme can be co-financed with other resources, including EU programmes other than Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe. Funding synergies with Cohesion policy funds and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) are strongly encouraged.
- **MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships** support excellent individual researchers to implement an original and personalised research project, while developing their skills through advanced training, international, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral mobility. The scheme also encourages researchers to work on research and innovation projects in the non-academic sector.
- **MSCA Staff Exchanges** fund the short-term mobility of staff, including doctoral candidates, for a duration of 1-12 months. Exchanges need to be international, inter-sectoral and/or interdisciplinary, and are open to any type of staff contributing to research and innovation activities (researchers, PhD candidates, administrative/ managerial/ technical staff).
- **MSCA and Citizens**, through the European Researchers' Night and Researchers at Schools, brings research and researchers closer to the public at large, to increase awareness of research and innovation activities and to boost public recognition of science and research education. This action is implemented through a biennial call.

	Mono-beneficiary	Multi-beneficiary
Doctoral programmes	MSCA COFUND	MSCA Doctoral Networks (formerly Innovative Training Networks), including Industrial Doctorates
Postdoctoral Programmes	MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships MSCA COFUND	N/A
All career stages	N/A	MSCA Staff Exchanges MSCA and Citizens

3.2. The EIT and its Knowledge & Innovation Communities (KICs)

The EIT strengthens Europe's ability to innovate by powering solutions to pressing global challenges and by nurturing entrepreneurial talent to create sustainable growth and skilled jobs across Europe. It acts mainly through the EIT KICs.

The EIT KICs are partnerships that bring together organisations from higher education, research and the non-academic sector, including industry, businesses and SMEs, as well as public bodies, to address key societal challenges. They develop activities linked to entrepreneurial education, business creation, innovation projects, regional innovation, global outreach and citizen engagement. They manage an **integrated portfolio of entrepreneurship activities that cover the entire innovation chain**, including investment funds, business modelling, access to finance, SMEs support, scouting of entrepreneurs & business Ideas (pre-acceleration services), coaching (acceleration), incubation services, networking events, and entrepreneurial education. **Each KIC has its own legal entity and builds on its network of partner organisations.**

There are currently **eight KICs up and running**:

- EIT Climate-KIC (www.climate-kic.org) aims at mitigating and adapting to climate change by building a zero- carbon economy and a climate resilient society.
- EIT Digital (www.eitdigital.eu) activities are concentrated in strategic areas that are essential for European digital sovereignty such as digital tech, digital wellbeing, digital cities, digital industry, and digital finance.
- EIT Food (www.eitfood.eu) aims at securing an adequate supply of high-quality food.
- EIT Health (www.eithealth.eu) promotes healthy living and active ageing by increasing awareness of good habits and encouraging changes in behaviour, developing tools to help people to work more flexibly and live longer in their own homes and improve cost-effective healthcare, through innovations that empower patients.
- EIT InnoEnergy (www.innoenergy.com) is pioneering change in sustainable energy.
- EIT Manufacturing (www.eitmanufacturing.eu) aims at creating an integrated manufacturing system spanning the entire value chain from production, distribution and end-of-life treatment of goods, products, and services, based on a customer-driven innovation system.
- EIT Raw Materials (www.eitrawmaterials.eu) aims to explore, extract, process, recycle and substitute raw materials in an efficient, secure, sustainable and circular way.
- EIT Urban Mobility (www.eiturbanmobility.eu) aims at ensuring a smart, greener, more inclusive, and safer integrated urban mobility system.

A new KIC focusing on Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries has been designated in June 2022 and will become fully operational as of 2024.

One of the original features of the EIT is the integration of education within the innovation process. EIT-labelled Master's and Doctoral degrees combining excellent technical

knowledge with robust entrepreneurship education make up the EIT's flagship initiative in education. In addition, the EIT Community offers a long list of other education activities. The EIT KICs' education programmes and activities place a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship, digital, leadership, creativity and visionary skills. They propose courses for different audiences, including Masters, PhDs, online courses, executive education, courses for schools and trainings.

In 2021-2023, the EIT pilots the **HEI Initiative: Innovation Capacity Building for Higher Education (HEI)**⁴. The aim is to support HEIs at systemic level to develop their innovation and entrepreneurial capacity by providing expertise and coaching, access to the EIT innovation ecosystem, and funding. Furthermore, the initiative enables HEIs to develop innovation action plans and brings them together in innovation value chains and ecosystems across Europe.

4. Synergies and complementarities

Organisations can participate in different MSCA projects and EIT and EIT KICs activities, as long as there is no double funding and participants fulfil the requirements linked to the different actions (e.g. mobility rule or time spent under the action in case of the MSCA).

At present, most synergies between the MSCA and the EIT have been developed as part of doctoral programmes, in particular through MSCA Doctoral Networks (formerly called Innovative Training Networks) and MSCA COFUND (see list of examples in Annex 1).

Below are some examples of possible synergies and complementarities.

4.1. MSCA, EIT and EIT KICs education activities

KICs' partner organisations could apply for MSCA funding to develop doctoral or postdoctoral programmes, under MSCA COFUND or MSCA Doctoral Networks. Through these programmes, they could integrate the state-of-the-art training in innovation and entrepreneurship provided within the innovation community, while developing collaborations with partners within or beyond the KIC's network. Annex 1 identifies such examples among MSCA projects, involving KIC's partner organisations among the beneficiaries, sometimes supported by a KIC as an Associated Partner.

MSCA researchers could participate in some of the professional courses offered by the KICs to develop knowledge and skills in entrepreneurship, leadership and innovation⁵. Most MSCA grants include a 'Research, training and networking' contribution which, among other activities, covers the cost of training that contributes directly to the researchers' career development.

Organisations already collaborating in MSCA projects could participate together with EIT KIC partners in the EIT HEI Initiative. The initiative organises annual calls for proposals for consortia, involving at least one KIC partner recognised as a HEI, to design institution-wide action plans that will improve their entrepreneurial and innovation capacity across all institutional levels.

EIT alumni wishing to pursue a career in research can apply for:

⁴ <https://eit-hei.eu/>

⁵ <https://eit.europa.eu/our-activities/education>

- PhD positions in MSCA Doctoral Networks, including Industrial Doctorates, and COFUND following the successful completion of their Masters' degree (or equivalent);
- Postdoctoral positions under MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships and COFUND following the successful defence of their PhD thesis.

To be eligible for MSCA funding, mobility requirements apply to individual researchers.

4.2. Short staff and student mobility

KICs' partner organisations could set up complementary **exchange projects** under MSCA Staff Exchanges, with partners from within their community and beyond. While mobility projects are focused on the individuals, they create close links between the sending institutions. This combination of institutional familiarity and individual links between staff in particular can often become a fertile ground for considering new areas of cooperation.

In Annex 1, the EUREST-RISE project and EIT Health provide an example of how a staff exchange project can stimulate long-lasting partnerships in key fields of research and innovation for the KIC, fostering research activities and facilitating the interdisciplinary and intersectoral training of researchers.

4.3. Optional secondments under the MSCA

Under **MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships, Doctoral Networks and COFUND**, it is possible to send recruited researchers on short-term secondments worldwide. The maximum period for secondments varies depending on the action and the fellowship duration.

MSCA researchers could be seconded to any organisation, including those involved in the EIT KICs' networks, provided the secondment is in line with the project objectives, adding significant value and impact to the fellowship and career development of the fellow. The researchers need to be committed full-time to the MSCA project.

As announced in the *New European Innovation Agenda* communication on 5 July 2022⁶, the EIT and the European Innovation Council (EIC) will launch an **innovation intern scheme**, in collaboration with the MSCA among other Horizon Europe programmes. Internship opportunities will be provided by companies, SMEs and start-ups supported by the EIC and EIT KICs for students and researchers from the programmes involved, including MSCA fellows.

4.4. MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships' non-academic placements

Under Horizon Europe, the **MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships** offer the new option to add a period of up to six months at the end of the project to support researchers seeking a placement to work on R&I projects in an organisation from the non-academic sector.

The placement must be an integral part of the MSCA applicant's proposal, with clearly defined added value for the project and for the career development of the researcher. The objective of this new scheme is to **promote career moves** between sectors and organisations and **stimulate innovation and knowledge transfer**.

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0332>

The EIT KICs and their non-academic partner organisations could host a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships' placement. On the one hand, the MSCA fellow would acquire entrepreneurial experience and transferable skills, as well as additional benefits from the KIC's activities. On the other hand, the hosting start-up will gain access and insights into the latest scientific developments from the MSCA fellow. The placement could allow to **build on the MSCA project results and scale them towards the market.**

4.5. EIT KICs' entrepreneurship and innovation activities

The EIT KICs offer a wide range of **integrated business creation services** to entrepreneurs, start-ups and scale-ups from pre-incubation to business acceleration in their fields and industry sectors. All KICs also have their own innovation models to turn promising ideas into commercially viable services or products.

These funded activities are usually selected by KICs through **specific calls and competitions** aimed primarily at their partners, but which can also be open to individuals, including MSCA researchers looking into deploying a new idea, product or service.

In Annex 1, the MSCA FogGuru project and EIT Digital Rennes provide an example of how MSCA research projects, combined with resources of the KICs, can foster entrepreneurial skill development of researchers and research-driven innovation.

4.6. Dissemination, communication and events

Both the EIT KICs and MSCA have a strong focus on dissemination & communication activities in research and innovation and their stakeholders could benefit from the synergies and complementarities between the two programmes.

Among other opportunities, as part of the MSCA and Citizens call, KICs' partner organisations can submit a proposal to organise a European Researchers' Night, which includes as from 2022 Researchers at Schools activities. In turn, individual MSCA and EIT researchers can propose activities for selected European Researchers' Night events, including Researchers at Schools activities.

5. Want to find out more?

For further information on the individual actions listed above, have a look at the [MSCA](#), [EIT](#) and [KICs](#) websites.

For best-practice examples and inspiration, have a look at the examples listed below, and go check out successful projects on the EIT KICs websites and [CORDIS](#) Project & Results Platform.

Annex I – Examples of synergies

MSCA Innovative Training Networks – EIT Raw Materials

SULTAN: European Training Network for the remediation and reprocessing of sulfidic mining waste sites (MSCA ITN 2018)

- The consortium includes several EIT Raw Materials core members, including the MSCA project coordinator, other beneficiaries and associated partners.
- SULTAN has pooled the interdisciplinary and intersectoral expertise of leading EIT Raw Materials members, world-leading mining and chemical companies, covering all links in the tailings-reprocessing value chain.
- The 15 doctoral researchers have benefited from a unique soft-skills training programme, preparing them for intersectoral careers, including in the EU's tailings reprocessing/ remediation sector, as well as for geological surveys, teaching and scientific organisations, and public bodies.
- <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/812580>

MSCA Innovative Training Networks – EIT Raw Materials

CircEuit: Circular European Economy Innovative Training Network (MSCA ITN 2016)

- Seven top universities well embedded in the EIT KIC Raw Materials, supported by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, their CE100 network and various companies developed a multi-disciplinary approach to ensure a range of research perspectives particularly relevant for a transition towards circular product-service-system business models.
- CircEuit focused on the question of how to realise a circular economy, via educating a group of doctoral researchers determined to generate new knowledge that will help the transition to circularity.
- In total, 15 early-stage researchers were involved in this training network.
- <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/721909>

MSCA Innovative Training Networks – EIT Digital

RAIS: Real-time Analytics for the Internet of Sports (MSCA ITN 2018)

- EIT Digital is an Associated Partner in this Consortium, coordinated by Kungliga Tekniska Högskolan (Sweden)
- The RAIS consortium, comprising 6 beneficiaries and 7 fully committed partner organizations, aspires to establish the core for a fertile multidisciplinary research and innovation community with strong entrepreneurial culture.
- The RAIS European Training Network (ETN) provides for 14 doctoral candidates a world-class training within a broad spectrum of subjects, involving workshops, a Hackathon and entrepreneurship events.
- Within RAIS, the intersectoral collaboration between academia, entrepreneurs, business developers, and industry will strengthen novelty and impact by ensuring that relevant needs are addressed, and that research results are both economically and technically feasible.
- <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/813162>

MSCA Innovative Training Networks – EIT Digital

FogGuru: Training the Next Generation of European Fog Computing Experts (MSCA ITN 2017)

- The consortium brings together three EIT Digital partner organisations (two academic and one non-academic organisations) and the EIT Digital Rennes, as an associated partner.
- In addition to the EIT KIC partners the project pooled the expertise of another two successful high-tech SMEs.
- The project awarded 8 Industrial Doctorates, with an innovative and intersectoral research program to constitute the next generation of European Cloud and Fog computing experts.
- EIT Digital Rennes provided a state-of-the-art training in Innovation and Entrepreneurship to the cohort of doctoral candidates.
- València smart city living lab Las Naves provided living-lab experience for the cohort to deploy their technologies, engage with external beta-testers, and refine their technological innovation plans.
- <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/765452>

MSCA Innovative Training Network – EIT Climate-KIC

PIONEER: Plasma catalysis for CO2 recycling and green chemistry (MSCA ITN 2018)

- The EIT Climate-KIC France is an associated partner in this MSCA project coordinated by one of its core partners, the Sorbonne University.
- The main objective of the present ITN Joint Doctorate programme is the formation of a new generation of experts in the subject of CO2 valorization using plasma-catalytic coupled processes.
- The 15 doctoral candidates will be instructed in several fields, not only considering science but also other important skills, such as soft skills training, as well as specific formation on managing, marketing and business skills.
- <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/813393>

MSCA COFUND – EIT Digital, EIT Health, EIT Raw Materials and EIT Climate-KIC

SDGine for Healthy People and Cities (MSCA COFUND 2019)

- The beneficiary, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (UPM), is involved as a network partner in several KICs, including EIT Digital, EIT Health, EIT Raw Materials and EIT Climate-KIC
- The MSCA project aims to offer world-class training programme for 12 doctoral candidates mainly in the STEAM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering, Architecture, and Applied Mathematics)
- The doctoral training is aligned with major international programs in which UPM participates (EIT Digital, EIT Health, EIT Raw Materials and Climate Knowledge Innovation Community) and Horizon Europe Missions. It will involve international secondments, intersectoral collaboration agreements with industry and interdisciplinary PhD supervision.
- Moreover, the programme aims to enhance the innovation & entrepreneurship dimension of the PhD thesis projects.
- <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/945139>

MSCA COFUND – EIT Climate-KIC

PERSEUS: Doctoral programme for integrated research activities to unlock a potential of top-level in digital transformation for sustainability (MSCA COFUND 2020)

- The beneficiary, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), is a partner organisation of the EIT Climate-KIC.
- NTNU collaborates with 11 academic partners in 8 countries and 8 industrial partners in Norway within sectors of high societal relevance, to develop the PERSEUS doctoral programme.
- PERSEUS aims at fostering the training of 40 highly skilled doctoral researchers in thematic areas of Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Twins, Internet of Things, Extended Reality and Information and Cyber Security
- NTNU will offer to the researchers the state-of-the art laboratories, involvement into prestigious long-term and large-scale research and innovation projects funded by H2020 and the Research Council of Norway and will link the PERSEUS DP to numerous international networks and alliances such as EERA, ERCIM, Climate KIC and NordicFiveTech.
- PERSEUS will embed a set of digital skills, propose a substantial training in transferable skills, adopt carefully designed interdisciplinary and intersectoral approaches.
- The career perspectives of PhD candidates will be boosted by short term secondments (1-3 months) within the network of partner organisations.
- <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101034240>

MSCA COFUND – EIT Food

REP-EAT: Food quality and food innovative strategies to prevent reproductive and eating disorders (MSCA COFUND 2015)

- Both REP-EAT project and EIT Food kicked off in 2016 as entirely separate project (the REP-EAT beneficiary is not a member of EIT Food).
- A follow-up project was proposed in the final reporting of the MSCA project for future joint research and doctoral initiatives that will be combine with EIT Food and Food and Health Strategies within Horizon Europe.
- <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/713714>

MSCA Research and Innovation Staff Exchange – EIT Health

EUREST-RISE: European Regulatory Science on Tobacco Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (MSCA RISE 2020)

- The beneficiary, Imperial College London (ICL), has been leading the EU-wide project "EIT Health Innovation Days", implemented through the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). The project involves more than 25 partners across the European Union.
- The project focuses on one of the major health challenges (tobacco) and proposes an integrated series of research studies for the creation of a cohort of researchers (ESR and ER) who will be trained on state-of-the-art aspects of European tobacco product regulatory science.
- The cutting-edge tobacco control aspects addressed in EUREST-RISE will allow researchers to be at the forefront of European regulatory science on tobacco and will provide them with the tools for their future recruitment across a broad range of employers.

- The project consortium includes 9 participants from the academic and non-academic sectors and will offer 250 person months of secondments.
- <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101008139>

MSCA Individual/Postdoctoral Fellowships – EIT InnoEnergy

3D-PRESS: 3D-Printable glass-based Electrolytes for all-Solid-State lithium batteries (MSCA IF 2018)

- The postdoctoral researcher's host institution, the Institute for Energy Research in Catalonia, is a partner of EIT InnoEnergy.
- The EU-funded 3D-PRESS project aims to develop new printable materials that will facilitate the growth of the production of fully printable all-solid-state lithium-ion batteries.
- The host institute offers unique opportunities to re-enforce the technology transfer competences of the postdoctoral researcher by carrying out an industrial secondment and by the involvement in the KIC Innoenergy community.
- <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/841937>

Marie Curie Alumni Association – EIT Health

MCAA French Biotech Seminar, 15th April 2022

- The seminar organised by the MCAA France Chapter, the MCAA Bridging Science and Business working group and the training unit of the Institut Curie, brought together MSCA fellows, start-ups and other actors in biotech industry.
- The objective was to provide key insights for MSCA fellows on potential meaningful careers in biotech industry and/or gain advice from actors in the sector on creating their own start-up from their biomedical research.
- EIT Health France presented to the MSCA fellows and alumni their activities and network of partners involved in health innovation in France and Europe.
- <https://www.mariecuriealumni.eu/events/mcaa-french-biotech-seminar-2022>

Innovator Fellowship – EIT Food

- The Innovator Fellowship is a specific training for postdoctoral fellows to gain essential entrepreneurial skills and the networks to drive food system transformation through the mobilisation of research outputs.
- The fellowship is a 6-month training for selected Fellows
- Currently in its fourth year, so far 10 MSCA researchers have participated in the training with excellent feedback about the new skills acquired.
- <https://www.eitfood.eu/projects/innovator-fellowship>



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