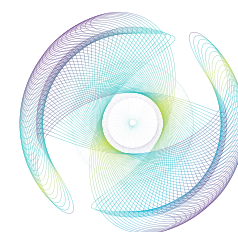




Ireland's EU Presidency Halftime Priorities

○ Emma Richardson



FUTURE
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EUROPE





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FIRST HALF:

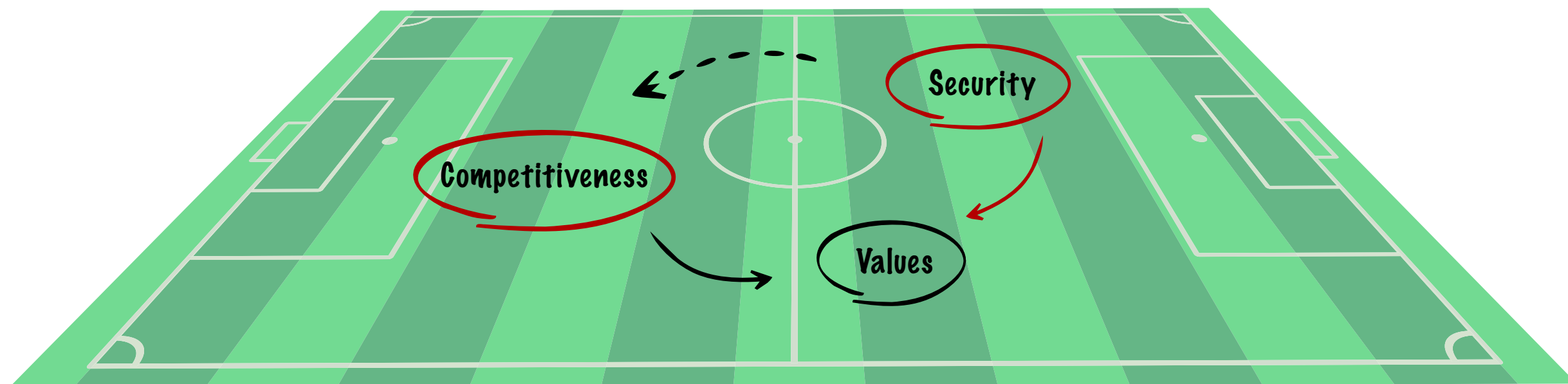
Agenda-setting, convening of high level meetings, and beginning work on key legislative files

HALF-TIME:

Assess the priorities and the work that needs to be done before the end of 2026

SECOND HALF:

Delivery and handing over to Lithuania who are next in the Presidency Trio





The Key Players of the Irish Presidency Priorities

The Defensive Line

1. Europe's Security and defence

Responding to Russia's war against Ukraine, conflicts in the Middle East and Gulf, and new forms of warfare.

2. Rule of law and democracy

Protecting the EU's core values, including democracy, equality, human rights and the rule of law.

3. Critical infrastructure and resilience

Security including cybersecurity, hybrid threats, maritime security, military mobility and critical infrastructure, alongside strengthened preparedness for climate-related risks and natural disasters, and greater resilience of essential energy, water and transport systems.

The Midfielders

1. Other EU Member States

The Council represents the governments of the 27 Member States, whose ministers negotiate and adopt EU laws.

2. European Commission and European Parliament

The Presidency needs to work with both institutions to advance priority files and reach agreement.

3. Citizens and civil society

Ireland's priority of 'Values' outlines that EU decision-making should be informed by people and civil society.

The Forwards: Goals to be scored

1. One Europe One Market Roadmap

Competitiveness includes simplifying rules, reducing administrative burdens, supporting start-ups and helping firms scale across the Single Market.

2. Ukraine and candidate countries

Support for Ukraine is a defining priority, while enlargement is framed as an investment in peace, security, stability and prosperity.

3. Young people, communities and culture

Ireland's Presidency includes youth engagement, community connections and a cultural programme across Ireland and Europe.

4. International partners

Ireland aims to strengthen EU relationships with neighbours and partners, including the UK and US.

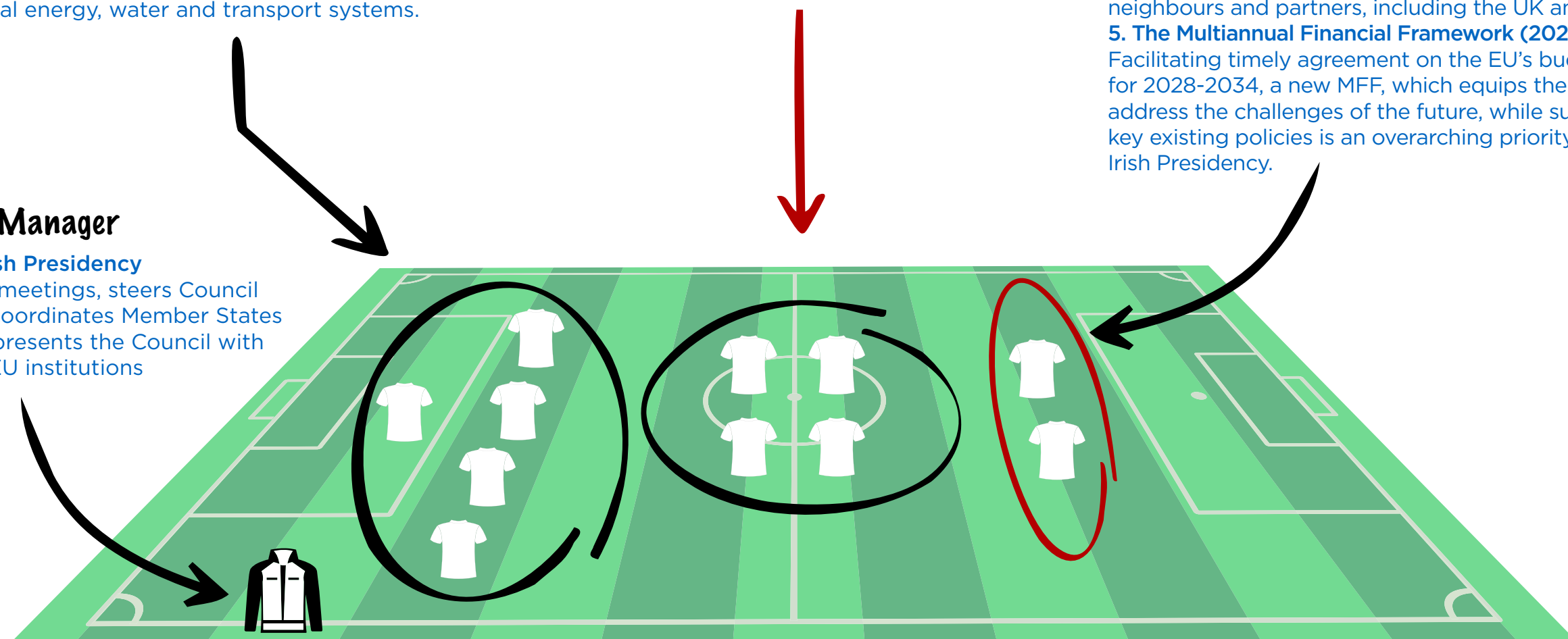
5. The Multiannual Financial Framework (2028 - 2034)

Facilitating timely agreement on the EU's budget for 2028-2034, a new MFF, which equips the EU to address the challenges of the future, while supporting key existing policies is an overarching priority for the Irish Presidency.

Team Manager

The Irish Presidency

Chairs meetings, steers Council work, coordinates Member States and represents the Council with other EU institutions





The Game Plan

1. Competitiveness

✕ **The aim:** Make Europe a better place to start, grow, invest and innovate, while supporting a fair green and digital transition.

○ **Focus:** Simplified, more coherent EU rules; a deeper Single Market with fewer barriers; stronger trade and resilient supply chains; affordable, secure and sustainable energy; and greater European capacity in AI, cloud, digital networks, and subsea connectivity. The Presidency programme also links competitiveness to housing, research, health innovation, farming, fishing, skills, and access to investment.

2. Values

✕ **The aim:** to promote democracy, human dignity, equality, human rights, and the rule of law at national level, within the EU, and globally.

○ **Focus:** Sustained support for Ukraine and international law; democratic resilience, civil society and action against disinformation; equality, inclusion and minority rights; safer online spaces, particularly for children; peacebuilding and multilateral cooperation; and enlargement as an investment in peace, stability and prosperity. Social cohesion, quality jobs, health, culture and participation also fall under Values.

3. Security

✕ **The aim:** to help Europe prepare for a more dangerous and uncertain security environment, while building the capacity to prevent, withstand and respond to crises.

○ **Focus:** Active support for Ukraine; European defence readiness and joint capability development; military mobility and defence procurement; cybersecurity, hybrid threats and critical infrastructure; maritime security and counter-terrorism; preparedness for climate, health, food and economic shocks; stronger action against serious organised crime; and implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum.



The Key Players



1. One Europe, One Market Roadmap

○ Status: Turning possession into goals

The One Europe, One Market Roadmap is the central delivery framework for the EU's competitiveness agenda and a core priority for the Irish Presidency. It brings together actions to simplify rules, remove Single Market barriers, help businesses start and scale, mobilise investment, strengthen trade, and accelerate the energy and digital transitions.

As part of this, the Presidency aims to reach agreement with the European Parliament on the digital, environmental, automotive, and food and feed safety simplification packages by the end of 2026. It also hopes to advance additional packages concerning taxation, energy products and citizens.

The Roadmap offers clear targets, but success will depend on negotiations between the Council and European Parliament across several complex files.

✕ What to watch:

Can Ireland reach the targets set to be completed by the end of 2026 into agreements, while ensuring that simplification means better regulation, not lower standards?

The Presidency will focus on delivering a more integrated Single Market, with progress on the Savings and Investments Union and the Digital Euro helping to channel savings into productive investment and support European competitiveness.



2. The Multiannual Financial Framework (2028 -2034)

○ Status: Discussing the game plan

Ireland will seek to advance negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2028-2034, including the proposed European Competitiveness Fund, Global Europe Instrument, and the new National and Regional Partnership Plans. The Irish Presidency has also proposed a package of new own resources to help finance the next MFF and ease pressure on Member State contributions. The aim will be to leave EU leaders with a sufficiently advanced negotiating framework for the major political and financial decisions that follow.

The MFF requires Member States to reconcile competing demands across competitiveness, security, agriculture, cohesion and global engagement. Ireland can advance the negotiating framework, but a complete agreement may extend beyond its Presidency.

✕ What to watch:

Two groups of Member States have emerged, a fiscally cautious group including Germany, Sweden, Austria and the Netherlands seeking a budget cap closer to 1.1% of EU GNI, while a coalition of sixteen Member States, including Italy, Spain and Poland, has pushed back against any reduction in budget ambition.

The Irish Presidency has published its revised Negotiating Box for the 2028-2034 MFF, proposing a €1.62 trillion budget that seeks to balance new priorities with continued support for cohesion and agriculture. Following discussions at the October European Council, negotiations will now intensify with the aim of reaching agreement before the end of 2026." However, the European Parliament has already raised concerns about the proposed spending reductions, can the Presidency bridge the remaining differences and secure a compromise on time?



3. Enlargement

○ Status: Coming off the bench

The Presidency aims to work towards completing accession negotiations with Montenegro and to advance the drafting of its Accession Treaty. It also wants to make substantial progress in negotiations with Ukraine, Moldova, and Albania. Ireland will also seek to advance discussions on the reforms needed to ensure that EU institutions, policies and decision-making remain effective as the Union prepares for new members.

The European Commission's new 'Preparing for a Wider Union' package sets out how the EU's policies, institutions and budget will need to adapt for future enlargement, alongside measures to strengthen gradual integration and uphold the rule of law.

There is political momentum behind enlargement, but progress remains dependent on candidate countries meeting accession requirements and on agreement among all Member States.

✕ What to watch:

How can the narrative shift towards the Irish Presidency's stance that Enlargement "...is the ultimate guarantee of security for the European continent".

The Commission's 2026 Enlargement Package, due by the end of October, will assess the progress made by candidate countries and help shape the next stage of the accession process. How will the Irish Presidency translate these assessments, and the wider debate on EU preparedness, into momentum for enlargement?

Will Canada become the first EU Associated Member following President Von der Leyen's State of the Union Address, and what effects will this have on the case for Enlargement?



4. Energy Security

○ Status: Possible moving into extra time

Ireland will seek to deliver the European Grids Package and advance the Energy Security Framework and proposals concerning network charges and energy taxation. The objective is to modernise electricity grids, accelerate infrastructure permitting, integrate additional renewable energy and reduce Europe's exposure to volatile fossil-fuel markets.

The Presidency has a specific legislative target, but grid reform involves difficult questions concerning infrastructure, permitting, financing, energy prices and national responsibilities.

✕ What to watch:

Can Member States agree on the infrastructure and regulatory changes needed to make European energy more secure, affordable and sustainable?

How will increased demand encourage new international partnerships to ensure energy security?





5. European Defence Readiness



○ Status: Filling the gaps in the defensive line

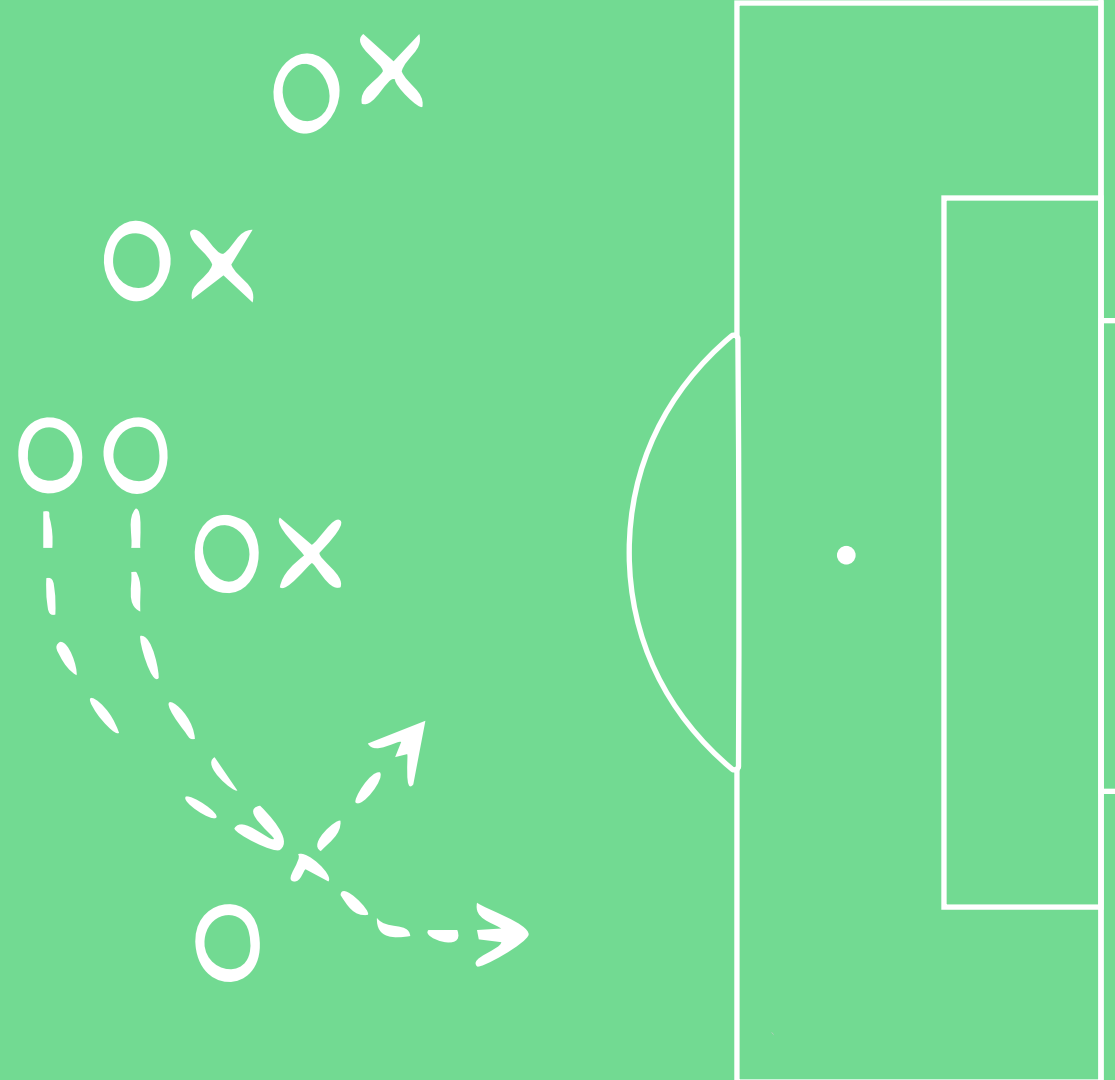
The Presidency will look to make progress on the Regulation on Military Mobility, the revision of the Defence Procurement Directive, the Defence Readiness Roadmap 2030, and the proposed European Security Strategy. The priorities also set out to encourage greater cooperation on critical capability gaps, joint procurement, maritime security, and resilience to hybrid threats.

Following the October European Council, the focus is now on delivering these commitments at pace, including through increased defence investment, stronger industrial capacity and greater cooperation on joint capability projects.

✕ What to watch:

Member States still differ on defence financing, procurement, national responsibilities and the balance between EU, NATO and bilateral cooperation. Can Member States turn the EU's 2030 defence readiness ambition into joint investment, stronger industrial capacity and progress on critical capability gaps?

Can Ireland build consensus around a more ambitious EU defence agenda while navigating the constraints and sensitivities of its own military neutrality?



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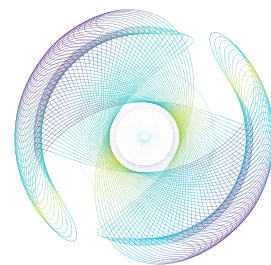
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This paper is part of the Future Proofing Europe project, which is kindly supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland.

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