



Global Immigration Trends and Highlights

July to September 2025



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Overview

This document provides a snapshot of corporate immigration developments worldwide. It is designed to support conversations regarding policies that have been proposed or implemented in key jurisdictions in the Americas, Asia-Pacific and EMEA (Europe, Middle East, India, Africa) regions.

Policy changes across the globe are being proposed and implemented daily. This document is updated on a quarterly basis. Not all jurisdictions are reflected in this document. The contents of the articles linked herein are true and accurate as of their publication dates and have not been updated from the time of publication.

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For the latest immigration updates, see [here](#). For further guidance or information regarding immigration policies and/or requirements in specific jurisdictions, contact the EY professional with whom you work.

At a glance



Shawn Orme
EY Global Immigration Leader
[EY People Profile](#)

Governments worldwide are intensifying efforts to protect local labor markets and continue to enact measures that significantly impact organizations relying on foreign workers. The US further tightened its nonimmigrant visa programs, ending interview waivers and launching a visa bond pilot program targeting countries with high overstay rates. Saudi Arabia introduced a new work permit classification system designed to strengthen the local workforce through knowledge transfer and training opportunities. Malaysia restricted eligibility for Professional Visit Pass applications to reduce the risk of international workers displacing local talent. The Netherlands and the UK are increasing salary and eligibility thresholds for applicants to reduce net migration.

In a bid to strengthen talent pipelines, jurisdictions across Asia passed targeted measures to attract foreign specialists, signaling a shift toward more business-friendly policies. Vietnam streamlined work permit rules, broadened exemptions and created a special card that grants executives, investors and experts visa-free stays over a five-year period. Hong Kong launched a new Technical Professional Stream for skilled individuals without academic degrees. Indonesia simplified its immigration classifications to support employers with accessing foreign workers.

Business visa policies continue to critically impact how multinational companies manage short-term talent deployments. In a move that signals a push toward deeper integration with emerging markets, the Chinese mainland and Ghana expanded visa-free access for nationals of Azerbaijan, Russia and travelers from Africa and Latin America. In contrast, Colombia and Ecuador tightened entry requirements for visitors and individuals in transit, reflecting shifting diplomatic allegiances and rising security concerns.

Digital systems are increasingly driving efficiency in immigration procedures while reinforcing surveillance and control mechanisms. New online platforms in Kuwait and Nigeria, as well as Malaysia's digitization of company interviews and "document sighting" requirements, are expected to simplify onboarding and other employer obligations. The phased rollout of the EU's Entry/Exit System marks a new chapter in digital border control across Europe.

For more insights and analysis, watch our webcast on [EES and ETIAS essentials](#) and other updates from across the EU; read the latest edition of the [Global Immigration Index: Remote Work and Digital Nomads](#) for high-level information about jurisdictions offering visas and permits for remote workers; and explore the September 2025 [Geostrategic Analysis](#) for updates on global trade shifts, labor market dynamics, and AI governance trends.



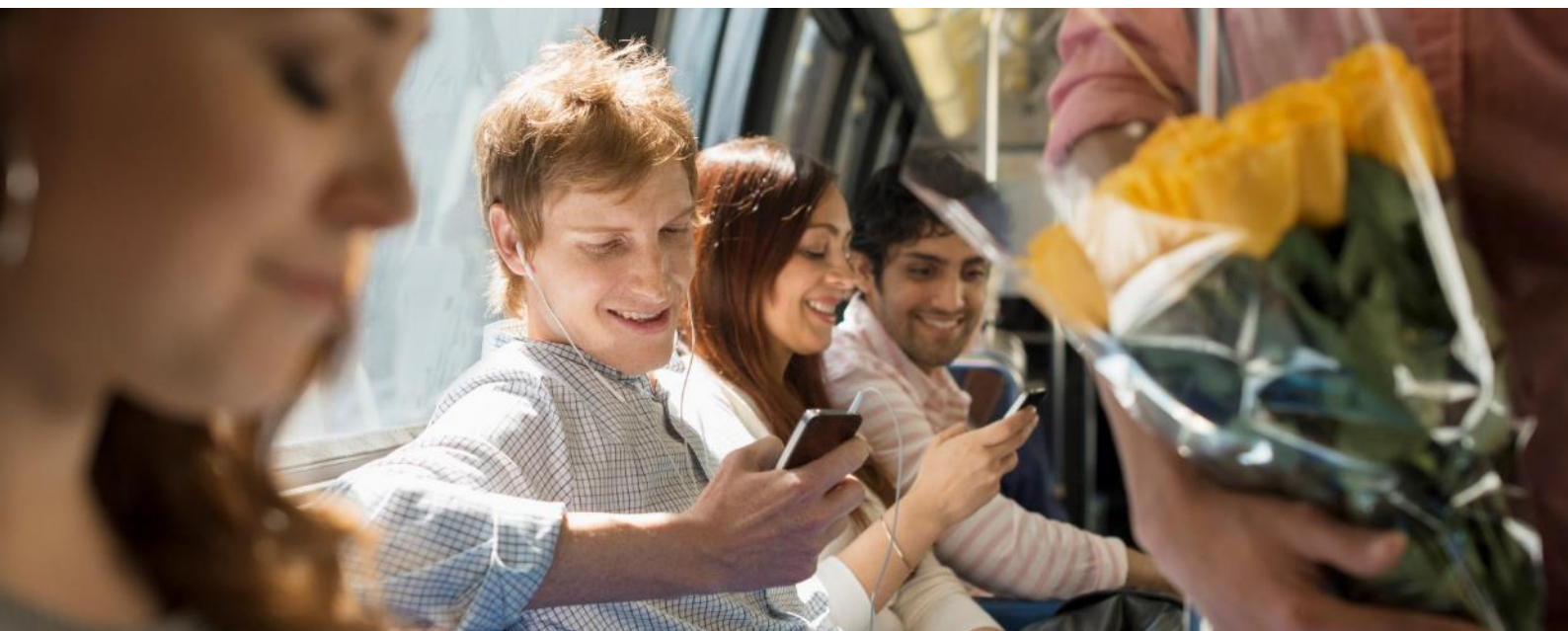
Americas

New immigration laws/policies

- [Argentina](#) amended its Citizenship Law to allow foreign nationals who make a “significant investment” in the country to apply for Argentine citizenship by naturalization. The authorities are expected to publish regulations regarding its evaluation criteria and process for citizenship by investment applications in the coming months.
- The [US](#) Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published a notice of proposed rulemaking to amend its regulations by changing the admission period in the F, J and I nonimmigrant visa classifications from duration of status (D/S) to admission for a fixed time period. If codified, this proposed rule would also establish a new procedure for applying for an extension of status and would reduce the grace period for F-1 students from 60 to 30 days. Public comments on the proposed rule are required to be submitted by 29 September 2025, after which the agency will review and address the comments before finalizing the rule.
- which ran from 7 March to 24 March, USCIS received approximately 336,153 registrations for eligible unique beneficiaries. Of these, USCIS selected 118,660 unique beneficiaries, resulting in a total of 120,141 selected registrations in the initial selection for the FY 2026 H-1B cap.
- The [US](#) Department of State (DOS) updated its instructions affecting scheduling of nonimmigrant visa (NIV) interviews. Effective immediately, NIV applicants are instructed to schedule their visa interview appointments at a US embassy or consulate located in their country of nationality or residence. This represents a shift in DOS policy, which previously employed a more globally connected approach and sought to leverage appointment availability in third countries. Nationals of countries where the US government does not conduct routine NIV operations must apply for a visa at a designated US embassy or consulate, unless they reside elsewhere.
- In the [US](#), the Department of Homeland Security published a proposed rule to amend the H-1B visa cap-subject selection process. Currently, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services conducts a random lottery to select registrations when the number of registrations submitted exceeds the statutory cap. The proposed rule introduces a weighted selection process, designed to favor higher-paid workers while still preserving opportunities for all wage levels.
- In the [US](#), a new presidential proclamation called “Restriction on Entry of Certain Nonimmigrant Workers” prohibits entry of H-1B workers to the United States unless their H-1B petitions are “accompanied or supplemented by a payment of

Employer obligations/benefits

- [Ecuador](#) announced that nationals of 45 jurisdictions are required to obtain a transit visa before transiting through Ecuador. This requirement applies to individuals transiting by air, land or sea.
- [US](#) Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that it has received enough petitions to meet the congressionally mandated regular and advanced degree H-1B caps for fiscal year (FY) 2026. Consequently, USCIS will not conduct a second H-1B lottery for FY 2026. During the registration period for the H-1B cap for FY 2026,



\$100,000” with certain exceptions. The restriction “shall expire, absent extension, 12 months after the effective date of [the] proclamation.”

Individual obligations/benefits

- [Argentina](#) announced that nationals of the Chinese mainland may enter the country without an Argentine visa for up to 30 days per entry for business purposes, provided they hold a valid business visitor visa issued by the United States.
- In [Colombia](#), the immigration labor union began a work-to-rule protest, which has resulted in significant delays in immigration processes, including border entry and exit, visa registrations and administrative procedures. In addition, an earthquake that struck in June 2025 led to the temporary relocation of the Bogotá Andean Regional Office, which operated at 40% capacity due to infrastructure and staffing constraints.
- [Colombia](#) announced that nationals of Israel are now required to obtain a visa prior to entering the country for business, tourism or family visit purposes. The new visa is valid for up to two years, and allows them to remain in Colombia for up to 180 days per stay.
- [Ecuador](#) announced that certain travelers are required to complete a customs declaration form (Formulario de Registro Aduanero) prior to entering or departing from Ecuador. The customs form must be completed online and may be submitted up to three days prior to entering or departing the country. After completing the form, travelers will receive a QR code and a PDF file, either of which can be presented to the immigration authorities.
- [Ecuador](#) also announced that nationals of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia and Peru are no longer required to present an International Certificate of Vaccination against yellow fever when entering Ecuador.
- In the [US](#) many nonimmigrant visa applicants are no longer eligible for an interview waiver and therefore need to attend an in-person visa interview at a US consular post abroad. This new policy further restricts the more expansive visa interview waiver program rolled out in recent years.
- The [US](#) Department of State (DOS) published a temporary final rule in which it announced the commencement of a 12 month-long visa bond pilot program. Visa applicants subject to this program will include nationals of countries identified by DOS “as having high visa overstay rates, where screening and vetting is deemed deficient” who apply for a B-1/B-2 visa (visitor to the United States for business and/or pleasure), as well as individuals who obtained Citizenship by Investment, if that citizenship was obtained absent a residence requirement.

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The US continues to tighten its non-immigrant visa programs, ending interview waivers for many applicants, and launching a visa bond pilot program targeting countries with high overstay rates. Other governments in the region are also tightening immigration controls. Ecuador now requires transit visas for nationals of 45 countries and online customs forms, while Colombia introduced a visa requirement for Israeli nationals.



– George Reis, EY Americas Immigration Leader, [EY People Profile](#)

Looking ahead

- In the [US](#), a new Executive Order directs the establishment of the “Gold Card” program, a new immigration pathway designed to expedite immigrant visa adjudications for individuals who make “a significant financial gift to the [United States].” The program will be administered by the Secretary of Commerce in coordination with the Secretaries of State and Homeland Security and is intended to “prioritize the admission” of those who “affirmatively benefit the Nation.”

Asia-Pacific

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Across Asia, governments are introducing new immigration pathways and simplifying procedures to attract foreign talent. Hong Kong's new pathways for skilled workers without academic degrees address acute talent shortages in key trades. Vietnam's new Special Visa Exemption Card and streamlined work permit rules respond to feedback from businesses, making it easier for executives, investors and experts to work and stay in the jurisdiction.



– Linda Rowe, EY Asia-Pacific Immigration Leader

New immigration laws/policies

- [Hong Kong](#) launched the Technical Professionals Stream (TP Stream) under two existing immigration schemes, namely the General Employment Policy and the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals. The TP Stream allows qualifying professionals who do not hold an academic degree to apply to enter and work in Hong Kong in certain skilled trades, in connection with which there is currently an acute talent shortage locally.
- [Vietnam](#) implemented changes to the rules governing the issuance, renewal and revocation of work permits and work permit exemptions for foreign workers. The changes aim to streamline administrative procedures and enhance transparency.

Employer obligations/benefits

- In [Australia](#), following the Migration Strategy reforms to Australia's employer sponsored visa programs implemented in December 2024, further significant change is not expected during the rest of the current government's term in office. However, changes are proposed to the Core Skills Occupation List which underpins employer sponsored visa programs.
- In [Malaysia](#), a six-month “cooling-off period” has been imposed on Expatriate Services Division (ESD)

accounts found to be in breach of compliance with requirements related to foreign nationals' applications. In addition, companies are now able to manage several pre-application requirements for new Employment Pass and Professional Visit Pass applications processed by the ESD, the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation and the Iskandar Regional Development Authority, through the Xpats Gateway platform.

- [Malaysia](#) also digitized the company interview and “document sighting” requirements in an effort to simplify and modernize the Employment Pass and Professional Visit Pass application processes.
- In [Malaysia](#), the Expatriate Services Division updated and shortened the list of eligible positions for Professional Visit Pass (PVP) applications to ensure greater alignment between the list and applicants' actual scope of duties while on the PVP.

Individual obligations/benefits

- The [Chinese mainland](#) announced that nationals of Azerbaijan are now eligible to enter for business, tourism or family visit purposes, or transit through the jurisdiction, without a visa.



- The [Chinese mainland](#) also announced that nationals of Russia are eligible to enter the Chinese mainland for business, tourism or family visit purposes, exchange visit purposes, or transit through the jurisdiction, without a visa. This visa-free policy will remain in effect until 14 September 2026.
- [Indonesia](#) implemented new regulations that reduce the list of visa classifications to 110 (down from 133 previously). The change aims to streamline the visa application process for foreign nationals and the companies that sponsor them.
- In [Vietnam](#), certain categories of foreign nationals, including business executives, investors and experts, are eligible for a Special Visa Exemption Card, which grants them visa-free stays in the country for five years.
- [Vietnam](#) also lifted its temporary suspension on work permit processing and resumed processing work permit applications filed in Ho Chi Minh City.

Looking ahead

- [Japan](#) announced new requirements for foreign nationals applying for work and residence authorization under the Business Manager category. The new requirements are set to take effect in mid-October 2025.
- [Singapore](#) introduced updated salary benchmarks under the points-based Complementarity Assessment (COMPASS) framework that will apply to new Employment Pass (EP) applications effective 1 January 2026, and to renewal applications for EPs expiring on or after 1 July 2026.

Europe

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Digital transformation continues to shape border control and immigration frameworks across EMEA. The EU will implement its Entry/Exit System in phases starting in October 2025. Meanwhile, Kenya updated its electronic travel authorization exemptions and Nigeria launched a new online application platform to streamline immigration processes, reflecting a broader move toward tech-enabled mobility management.

– Ben J Willis, EY Global Immigration Competency Lead, [EY People Profile](#)



New immigration laws/policies

- In the [EU](#), the European Council adopted an EU law enabling the gradual implementation of the Entry/Exit System (EES) over a six-month period. The [European Commission](#) then announced that the EES will be implemented progressively starting on 12 October 2025.
- The [EU](#) also adopted updated rules for Turkish nationals seeking to apply for Schengen visas. Turkish nationals with an established travel history may now obtain multiple entry Schengen visas which are valid for a longer duration.
- The [Netherlands](#) announced plans to tighten the knowledge migrant scheme to focus on attracting top talent while reducing overall net migration and misuse of the system. This initiative reflects the government's commitment to maintaining a robust labor market while protecting local workers' interests.
- [Poland](#)'s president vetoed a proposed amendment to the Ukrainian Special Act, thereby eliminating automatic extensions of residence permits for Ukrainian nationals effective 1 October 2025. The president then signed [a new amendment](#) that extends the legal stay for certain Ukrainian nationals until 4 March 2026 and introduces stricter benefit eligibility and procedural requirements for those who remain in the country.
- [Portugal](#) introduced a series of legislative measures including extending the validity of certain residence permits and allowing holders of expired permits to continue residing and working in Portugal legally until 15 October 2025.
- [Portugal](#) also announced a new action plan to address immigration challenges and reform the nationality law that is focused on more efficient regularization processes, stronger integration requirements and revised pathways to citizenship.

Employer obligations/benefits

- [Belgium](#) increased the registration fee for citizenship by naturalization applications. Additionally, as of 1 September 2025, EU citizens applying for residence permits are subject to stricter documentation requirements.
- [France](#) announced that third-country nationals who apply for certain categories of work-based residence permits are subject to new salary requirements.
- [North Macedonia](#) introduced amendments to the Law on Foreigners, simplifying the procedures for obtaining temporary residence permits based on employment.



- The [UK](#) government published a Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules implementing the first substantial wave of changes outlined in the Immigration White Paper released in May 2025. The changes impact all employers of sponsored workers.

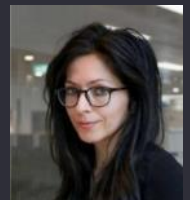
Individual obligations/benefits

- [Bulgaria](#) enacted a new law which creates a one-year residence permit for digital nomads and implements other changes that impact third-country nationals who seek to work in Bulgaria, including holders of EU Blue Cards.
- [Cyprus](#) began accepting applications for EU Blue Cards from qualifying third-country nationals. Separately, the Cypriot authorities have increased enforcement efforts related to holders of BCS Temporary Residence Permits.
- In the [EU](#), the European Council approved the extension of the Temporary Protection Directive until 4 March 2027, ensuring the continued residence and work rights of Ukrainian nationals in the EU.

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Bulgaria is the latest country to embrace the global shift toward remote work by introducing a residence permit for digital nomads. This move aligns with a growing number of jurisdictions worldwide, including 10 since the start of 2024, that have adapted their immigration frameworks to attract location-independent professionals and streamline mobility.

– Seema Farazi, Partner, Global Immigration, [EY People Profile](#)



Looking ahead

- In the [EU](#), the European Commission announced an updated processing fee related to the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS). The updated fee will apply once ETIAS goes into effect, which is expected in the last quarter of 2026.
- In [Germany](#), the minimum wage will increase in two stages, ultimately reaching EUR 14.60 gross per hour by 2027. The Federal Ministry of Labor is expected to formally implement the commission's decision in the coming months.
- [Ireland](#) announced that circus artists who seek to work in the country and are not citizens of Ireland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, or the Member States of the European Economic Area, or the European Union, will require Irish employment permits and residence permissions to work from 1 November 2025.
- [Lithuania](#) introduced changes to the list of countries where applicants can submit requests for temporary residence permits or national visas through an external service provider. These changes will take effect on 22 October 2025.

Africa, Middle East and SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)

New immigration laws/policies

- In [Nigeria](#), the Immigration Service and Federal Ministry of Interior hosted a forum with senior government officials and diplomatic and private sector representatives to discuss the implementation status of key immigration reforms and initiatives announced on 1 May 2025. These reforms aim to streamline immigration processing, enhance national security, and improve the overall experience for foreign nationals and their employers in the country.

Employer obligations/benefits

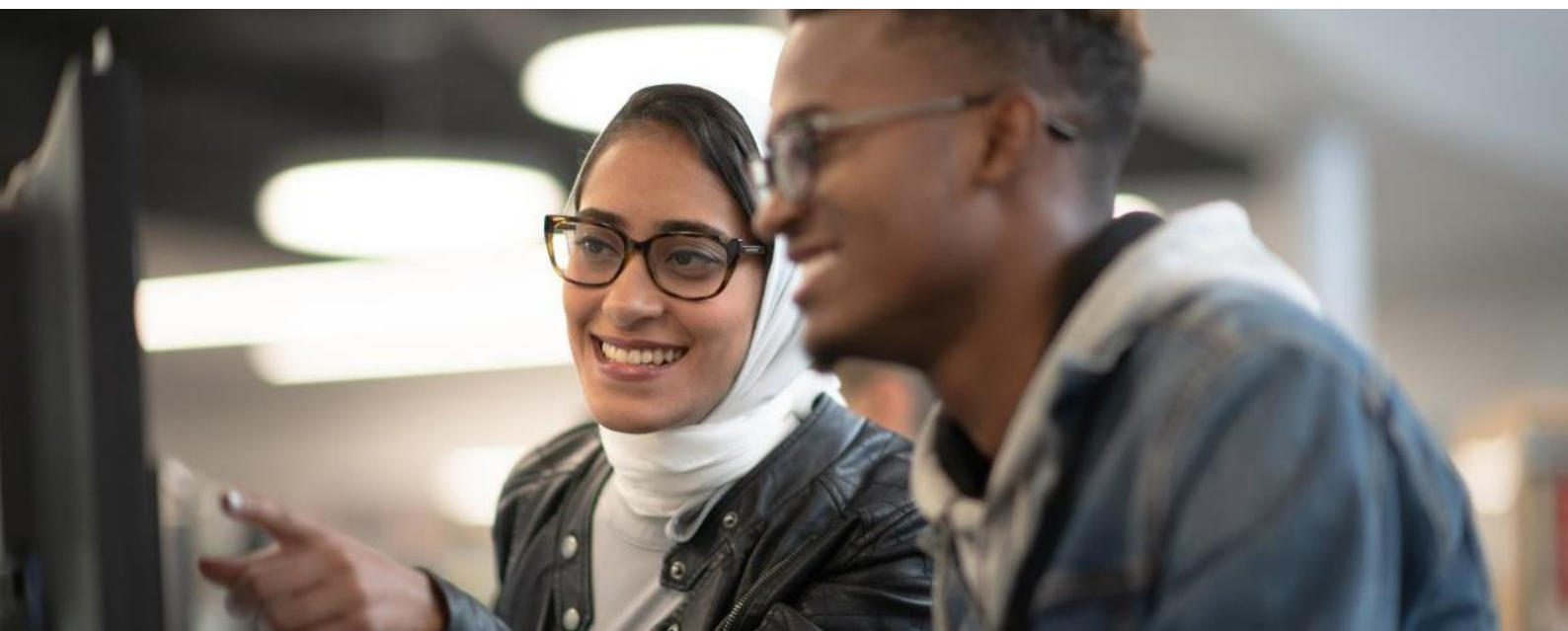
- [Nigeria](#) launched the Electronic Comprehensive Expatriate Residence Permit and Automated Cards (e-CERPAC) platform to streamline immigration processes. In addition, the Federal Ministry of Interior introduced a new “Legacy Records” section on its Citizenship & Business (C&B) platform to synchronize existing permits with e-CERPAC.
- [Saudi Arabia](#) introduced a new classification system for work permits. This system categorizes work permits by skill level and is being implemented in two phases. The first phase is effective from 5 July 2025 for foreign nationals currently working in Saudi Arabia. The second phase went into effect on 3 August 2025 for new applicants who seek to work in Saudi Arabia and are not currently present in the country.

Individual obligations/benefits

- [Ghana](#) introduced a visa-free policy for nationals of Colombia, Dominica, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe. Nationals of these countries may now enter Ghana for business purposes without a visa for up to 60 days per entry.
- [Kenya](#) updated the list of foreign nationals who are exempt from the requirement to obtain an Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA) prior to admission to Kenya. The eTA portal is a semi-automated system that determines foreign nationals' eligibility and provides them authorization to travel to Kenya.
- [Kuwait](#)'s Ministry of Interior launched a new online platform called “Kuwait Visa” that allows foreign nationals and their employers to apply for business visas and other visit visas electronically.
- [Qatar](#)'s Ministry of Public Health announced that nationals of the Philippines who seek to reside in the country are now required to undergo a second medical examination upon arrival.
- [South Africa](#)'s Department of Home Affairs (DHA) extended the temporary concession period until 31 March 2026 for eligible foreign nationals with pending waiver or appeal applications as of 26 September 2025.

Looking ahead

- [South Africa](#) announced that it will roll out a new ETA visa in phases, starting in mid-October 2025.



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