

FRAMEWORK FOR DUAL CAREER POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN ESTONIA

Second turn – employability after the sport (SUPPORT)

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INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, the concept of dual career (DC) has received considerable attention from all stakeholders of sport in Europe. This was as a result of growing concern that young elite sports persons were finding it increasingly challenging to combine their sport and education while actively competing, often compromising to a large extent their lifestyles and post-athletic career planning. The findings from one of the earlier pan-European research studies (*Education of young sportspersons, Final Report, PMP in partnership with the Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy, Loughborough University*) indicated strongly that elite athletes often struggle to achieve a balance between sporting, academic and personal life due to the intensive training and competition requirements placed upon them.

Currently, it is still challenging because dual career arrangements are relatively recent in the majority of Member States and sports. In Member States where these arrangements have been developed for some time, they sometimes lack solid agreements between the sport system and either the educational sector or the labour market. They may also lack a legal framework or a sustainable governmental policy.

According to international research, one-third of all participants between the ages of 10 and 17 withdraw from sports each year as they consider that sport takes up too much of their time and prevents them from pursuing other things in life (e.g. to study). More efforts therefore need to be made to coordinate and support athletes' dual careers to keep talented young people in sports and educational systems and make them aware of the benefits of a dual career. This process will enhance the responsibility of young athletes while making them aware of the benefits of a dual career. There is no single model to be recommended on how to include all related policy domains in the dual career framework, nor can it be said which sector should take the lead in this coordination process.

Dual career management in this context refers to the duration of time in which individuals combine their education/professional career together with high performance sports. This could last from a period of a few months to a number of years and overlap with compulsory schooling (in the case of early specialisation sports such as gymnastics), post-compulsory schooling (including Higher Education and vocational education and training (VET) sector), up until a post-

athletic career is attained. Therefore, a successful combination of education, training or work with sport can enable an individual to reach his or her full potential in life.

In terms of dual career, Estonian athletes face a lacking awareness, information and education. More than this, coaches, sport clubs and even the parents are putting a lot of pressure on young athletes for top results, but nobody thinks what those athletes will do at the end of their career or in case of injury which prevents them to continue a sport career.

Dual career initiatives should at their core be about personal development of the athlete off the field of play. At its best, dual career work will explore an athlete's identity outside the game and their emotional wellbeing. Players have to have better self-awareness and motivation to get back into the mind-set of learning new skills and thinking about how they can become a better person and have an impact off the field of play during and after their career as an elite athlete.

The framework supervising SUPPORT project should overlook sport governing bodies, educational institutes, employers and other interested stakeholders to create the right environment for dual careers of athletes, including an appropriate legal and financial framework and a tailor-made approach respecting differences between sports in Estonia.

CURRENT EU ANALYSES CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENT IN SPORT

Employment in sport represents more than 1.3 million people in the EU-27 and is steadily raising

In 2019, 1.37 million people worked in the field of sport in the EU-27. Regarding gender balance, men (54%) outnumbered women, a percentage aligned with the one observed in total employment (see Table 1). The picture was more specific when considering age groups: in sport employment, the share of young people aged 15-29 was 35 % - twice the share observed in overall employment, while the 30-64 age group accounted for 63% (17 percentage points less than the share reported for total employment).

Regarding the educational attainment level, 46 % of persons employed in sport had a medium educational attainment level (ISCED levels 3-4), followed by 39 % with a high level (ISCED 5-8) and 15 % with a low level (at most ISCED level 2). These percentages are close to the proportions recorded for overall employment; in the case of low and medium levels of education about two percentage points below the average in the total employment, and in the case of high educational attainment exceeding that average by more than four percentage points.

Employment in sport, EU-27, 2019

Socio-demographic characteristics		Number of persons employed in sport (thousand)	Distribution of persons employed..	
			...in sport (%)	...in overall employment
Total		1.365.8		
Gender	Women	622.7	45.6	45.9
	Men	743.1	54.4	54.1
Age group	Aged 15-29	473.0	34.6	17.5
	Aged 30-64	854.4	62.6	80.0
	Aged 65+	38.4	2.8	2.5
Educational attainment level	Low (ISCED 0-2)	203.9	14.9	17.2
	Medium (ISCED 3-4)	629.0	46.1	48.2
	High (ISCED 5-8)	529.4	38.8	34.4

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sprt_emp_sex, sprt_emp_age, sprt_emp_edu, ifsa_egan and ifsa_egised)

Table 1: Employment in sport, EU-27,2019, Eurostat

In 2019, in the EU-27, the number of people in sport employment grew by almost 200 000 more in comparison with 2014, equivalent to an overall increase of 17 %. This rise was also observed in relative terms, with sport employment representing 0.69 % of total employment in 2019, up from the 0.63 % in 2014 (see Table 2). The number of people employed in sport increased in 24 out of 27 EU Member States between 2014 to 2019. Five Member States accounted for more than half of the total increase in EU-27 sport employment during the five-year period under consideration: Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Italy and France.

Sport employment, 2014 and 2019

	Number (1 000 persons)		Share of total employment (%)		AAGR 2014-19 (%)	
	2014	2019	2014	2019	Sport employment	Total employment
EU-27	1 172	1 365.8	0.6	0.7	3.1	1.3
Belgium (*)	20.1	24.0	0.4	0.5	3.8	1.2
Bulgaria	9.3	14.4	0.3	0.4	9.1	1.5
Czechia	29.0	35.5	0.6	0.7	4.2	1.3
Denmark (*)	27.1	30.3	1.0	1.1	2.3	1.6
Germany	218.8	262.2	0.6	0.6	3.7	1.2
Estonia	6.3	5.1	1.0	0.9	-0.6	1.4
Ireland (*)	19.6	24.0	1.0	1.0	4.1	3.2
Greece	14.2	21.1	0.4	0.5	8.2	2.0
Spain	187.9	215.5	1.1	1.1	2.9	2.7
France	167.1	176.3	0.6	0.7	1.3	0.6
Croatia (*)	6.1	11.0	0.4	0.7	12.5	1.4
Italy (*)	120.2	133.7	0.6	0.6	2.2	1.0
Cyprus (*)	2.1	3.0	0.8	0.7	7.4	2.8
Latvia	5.7	10.3	0.6	1.1	12.6	0.6
Lithuania	5.9	5.8	0.5	0.4	-0.3	0.9
Luxembourg (*)	1.2	1.7	0.5	0.6	7.2	3.3
Hungary	14.2	22.6	0.4	0.5	9.7	1.9
Malta	1.3	1.8	0.7	0.7	6.7	5.8
Netherlands	66.6	82.6	0.9	1.0	4.4	1.7
Austria	27.8	30.9	0.7	0.7	2.1	1.2
Poland	68.7	67.8	0.4	0.4	2.9	0.7
Portugal	32.2	38.0	0.7	0.8	3.4	1.8
Romania (*)	10.8	15.3	0.1	0.2	7.2	0.2
Slovenia	4.0	4.8	0.5	0.5	3.7	1.4
Slovakia	12.5	10.5	0.5	0.4	-3.4	1.8
Finland	30.8	32.3	1.3	1.3	1.0	0.9
Sweden	72.7	81.2	1.5	1.6	2.2	1.5
United Kingdom	285.0	424.5	1.3	1.3	1.9	1.3
Iceland	3.5	4.3	2.0	2.1	4.2	2.5
Norway	23.9	32.4	0.9	1.2	6.3	0.7
Switzerland	44.7	57.1	1.0	1.2	5.0	1.0
Montenegro (*)	1.4	1.5	0.7	0.6	2.7	2.4
North Macedonia	1.9	2.4	0.3	0.3	4.8	2.9
Serbia (*)	13.8	14.3	0.5	0.5	0.7	2.6
Turkey	65.0	97.4	0.3	0.4	8.4	1.6

(*) Break in time series.

(*) 2014: low reliability.

(*) 2019: low reliability.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sport_emp_sex and the_egan)

eurostat

Table 2: Sport employment, 2014 and 2019, Eurostat

Employment in sport is still small part of total employment

In 2019, employment in sport represented 0.69 % of total EU-27 employment, ranging from 0.2 % in Romania to 1.6 % in Sweden (see Figure 1). For the majority of EU Member States, sport employment shares did not surpass the 1 % threshold; in addition to Sweden, only Finland, Latvia, Spain and Denmark exceeded 1 %. Compared with total employment, jobs in sport still accounted for relatively small shares, but the contribution of sport was steadily growing: this rise was observed in 23 of 27 EU Member States. In this sense Lithuania is one of the bottom

countries of total EU-27 countries, where Estonia has showing better statistics, nevertheless for both countries serious steps have to be made in order to improve employment in sport area.

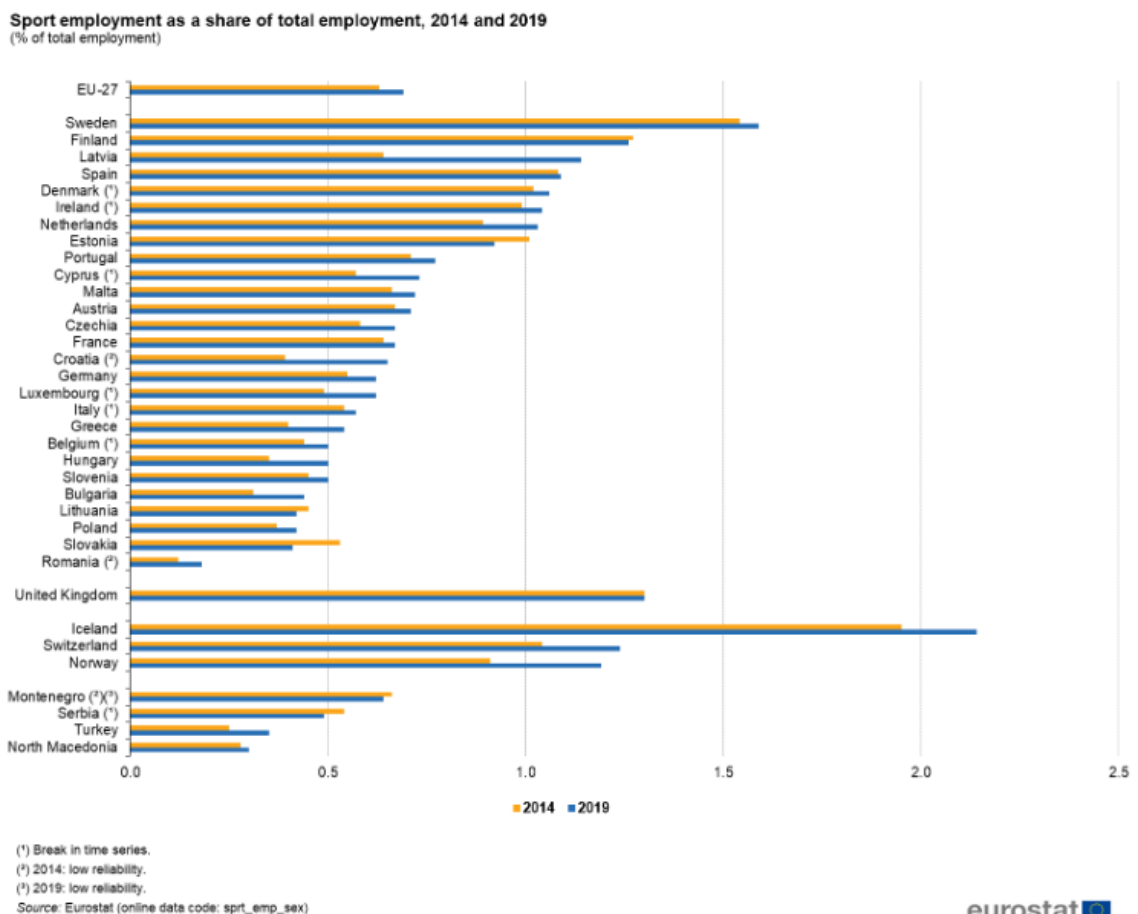
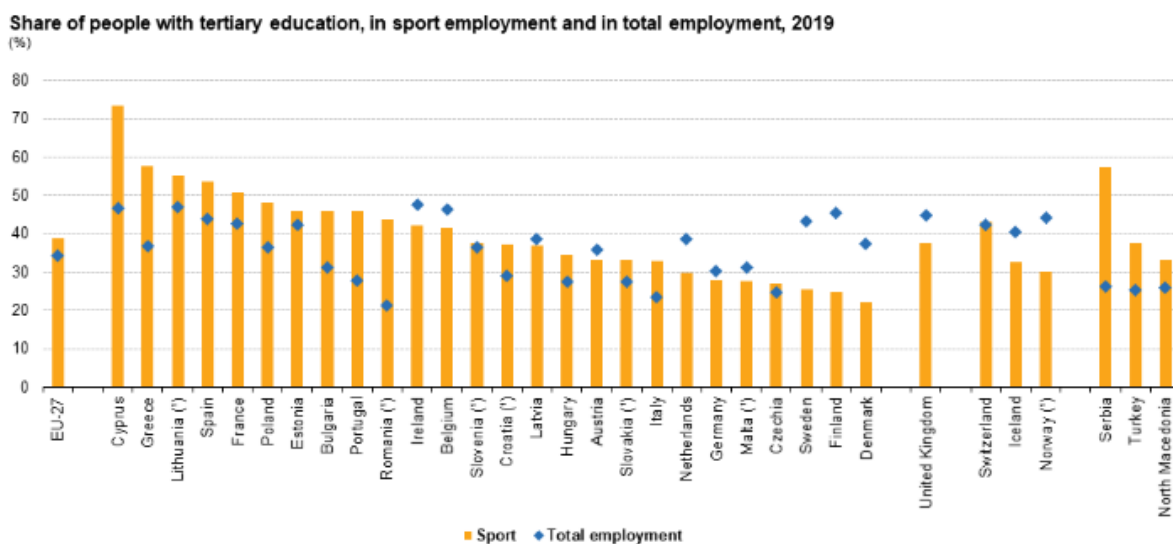


Figure 1: Sport employment as a share of total employment, 2014 and 2019, Eurostat

Educational background of persons employed in sport

Considering the educational background of persons employed in sport in the EU-27 in 2019, 39 % had completed tertiary education (see Figure 2). This figure was slightly higher than the share of tertiary graduates in total employment (34 %). In Lithuania (55 %) is at least half working in sport were tertiary graduates. In comparison with total employment, Estonia had almost (45 %) of sport workers with a tertiary education, this shows that education in both countries among the sport workers are important factor.



Note: Data on people with tertiary education in sport not reliable and therefore not published for Luxembourg and Montenegro.
 (*) Sport employment: low reliability.
 Source: Eurostat (online data codes: sprt_emp_edu and lfsa_egised)

Figure 2: Share of people with tertiary education, in sport employment and in total employment, 2019, Eurostat

CHALLENGES RELATING TO DUAL CAREERS

The success of dual career arrangements often depends on the goodwill of persons in key positions of an organisation or institute, while in fact a systematic approach based on general and sustainable financial and legal arrangements is needed. The increasing trend that athletes regularly train and/or compete abroad makes the combination with study more complex. The organisation of individualised pathways in education or distance learning is demanding while extra 'holidays' are a problem in the labour market. Athletes are reported to be in a disadvantaged position compared to other workers in the labour market. Enterprises may perceive it as difficult to adapt to the changing employment needs that athletes have at different stages of their careers. Governments, various organisations and athletes have called attention to these challenges as well as to concerns about the quality of education and supporting services for young people involved in elite sport in Europe. The main challenges are:

- The safeguarding of the development of young athletes, especially of children in early specialisation sports, young people in vocational education and training, and disabled athletes;

–The balance between sports training and education and, at a later stage of life, the balance between sports training and employment;

–The end-of-sporting-career phase of athletes including those who leave the system earlier than planned.

DUAL CAREER STRUCTURE

Dual Career is a multi-faceted domain involving several actors (e.g., individuals, stakeholders, organisations, and Governments) with specific roles, responsibilities, and interactions in the establishment of a positive support for the student-athlete. To pursue a successful Dual Career, athletes not only have to be strongly motivated to rely on personal resources, but also need a supportive entourage based on a well-structured cooperation system at inter-personal (e.g., relationships with parents, peers, teachers, coaches, sport managers), organizational (e.g., organization of sport clubs/federations and educational institutions), and global (e.g., international, national, regional, local governing bodies policies) dimensions level.

Due to specific cultures and organizations, in Europe and worldwide a multiplicity of national approaches to Dual Career emerges in relation sport and education/work requirements. Therefore, the recognition of the student-athlete's status and the provision of Dual Career programs and services differ significantly.

THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STAKEHOLDER GROUPS IN DUAL CAREER

In order to disclose the roles and responsibilities of the four different stakeholder groups in DC: education, government, sports and the labour market (private sector) EU (RESEARCHREPORT//DUALCAREER, December 2015) prepared the recommendations which could be adopted in Estonia:

Education

-There is inequality between sports at universities, as well as gender inequality.
-Consistent policy across educational institutions is needed, as well as consistency in its implementation.

- Create DC awareness at a young age, through information, counselling, parents, etc.
- Encourage international cooperation and mobility between educational institutions in Europe.

Government

There are both “benefits” and “needs” associated with DC policy and policymaking.

-Benefits. Securing a good education facilitates lifetime employment, which generates taxes during the post-sporting career. Moreover, the group in question is motivated, hard-working and disciplined: it is “low-hanging fruit”.

-Needs. The system determines the possibilities and potential. An interministerial approach is required. An organisation to create linkages and communication between stakeholders. For effective policy, best practices need to be shared.

Other needs:

- focus on lifelong learning;
- policy (starting point);
- international exchange of best practices;
- development of DC professionals

Sport

-Federations, managers, coaches and trainers need to be taught to be more flexible towards education (everyone says schools need to be flexible, but sport is not flexible at all).

- Coaches and trainers also need to be educated in providing DC support.
- Raise awareness about “forming” young people for lifelong productivity.

Labour market

-The age 15-16 is a major milestone: do we go to the gym, to college or to work? Employers should be more involved at this stage, to link people to their organisations by offering traineeships, scholarships and flexible work experience. Every day counts!

-Mentors and role models are needed, especially in the early (talent) phase-Germany: as an elite athlete, you are given a certain “key word” which guarantees that you reach the interview

stage in a job application procedure, where otherwise you would probably be rejected in the preliminary selection round due to lack of relevant work experience.

- Incentives for the private sector: stipends to offer jobs or work experience.
- Sponsorship of Olympic committees with job opportunities rather than money.
- Partnerships (labour market, sport, schools).
- It is “low-hanging fruit”: the government invests, the private sector can harvest at the end.

CURRENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES SITUATION REGARDING DC IN ESTONIA

In Estonia, the Dual Career policy is organized at national level, involving governmental departments and the world of sports (National Olympic Committee, sport federations) to provide flexible study plans and scholarships in Universities/schools. This approach is reflected in the following features:

- A Cross-sectorial, inter-ministerial approach at national level: in Estonia, sports are in the administrative field of the Ministry of Culture. There is good cooperation between the Estonian Olympic Committee, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Research. The topic and its importance are well acknowledged by all parties;

– Sport organizations (sport academies and high-performance training centres; coaches and other members of performance teams; supporting services): Dual Career issues are less well acknowledged than in other countries but good progress has been made in recent years. There is mainly good understanding and supportive attitude towards Dual Career at the coaches and staff level;

– Education (school education; vocational education and training; higher education; distance learning): Estonia has one state-supported special sports school named Audentes, which provides young sportsmen with the opportunity to combine high-level training with obtaining secondary education. Across Estonia, there are some special sport classes, which also allow flexibility in combining training and education but further expansion of this practice would be desired. The co-operation with universities depends on the university and faculty concerned. The higher education institutions are mostly sports friendly but there are also exceptions;

– Employment (combination of work and sport; transition to the post-sport career; social dialogue): there are no special policies and programmes in this field in Estonia. Nevertheless, courses for coaching qualifications are provided to elite athletes for their professional development.

– Financial incentives for athletes (scholarships; other financial support; social security, health protection and pension plans): Ministry of Education and Research in co-operation with the Estonian Olympic Committee has a special scholarship programme to support the studies of top athletes in vocational and higher education institutions.

Common practices:

- Educational scholarships;
- Flexible study plans.

Constraints:

- Help adaptation to the labour market.

DUAL CAREER SYSTEMS PROPOSITION FOR ESTONIA

The ultimate objective is to improve Dual Career systems in Estonia taking into account the different roles and responsibilities of each player in this system, according the previously done content analyses the framework could consist from the five parts.

The athlete at the centre, with four principal “dimensions” in their orbit: the Cooperation and coordination (coaches, tutors, parents, etc.); stakeholders in sport, education and the labour market; national governments; and the EU (see Figure 3).

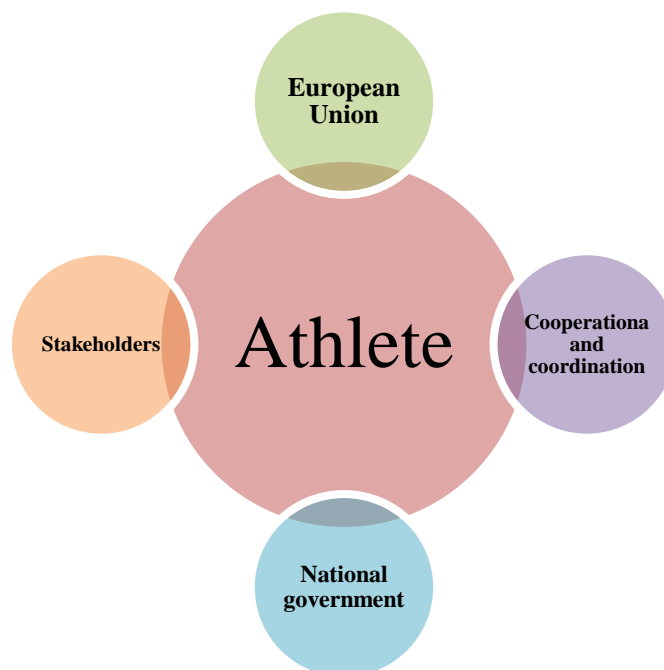


Figure 3: Suggested DC framework for Estonia

1. Athlete: the athlete is at the centre of a framework. This is because each sport and each individual athlete is different. They need different services at different career stages at both system and personal levels. Those services should, therefore, be as personalised as possible. At the same time, full personal commitment on the part of the athlete is also essential.

2. Cooperation and coordination: the impact and success of policies, programmes and services for Dual Career depend on their implementation at personal and professional level close to the athlete. The direct influencers in this respect are the coach and sport club manager, together with the teacher or employer, and the social network of parents and friends. This cooperation is crucial in providing the support and flexibility needed to successfully develop as an athlete and a professional;

3. Stakeholders: there are stakeholders at both the organisational and the sectoral (i.e. sports, education, labour market) levels. Ideally, they should bear responsibility for the implementation of existing national legislation or policies and should translate these and their own policies to the entourage and athlete. This requires communication between stakeholders and between different organizational levels (from policy to practice).

4. National government: national governments provide the legislation and policy framework needed to encourage sectors to take responsibility for talented athletes to assure the safe professional development of student athletes. The quality framework offers governments a comprehensive overview of services to be developed (if they are not already in place), including tools to initiate them from the government's perspective, taking into account its responsibilities. It also offers those governments with an established system a tool for its monitoring and improvement.

5. European Union (EU): The implementation of the dual career concept depends to a large extent on the existence of networks with a high level of expertise that bring together athletes' organisations, educational institutions, sports organisations and private enterprises at national and international level and can provide concrete and practical guidance. EU should provide support to the European activities of dual career networks. It should be kept in mind that the topic of dual careers is not an isolated topic that could be addressed exhaustively by networks created for that purpose. In view of the useful role already played by the existing networks, networks active in the future should not supplant the existing networks but rather build on them. The exchange of information and good practice provides a useful model to emulate.

CONCLUSION

In order to avoid that the sport success comes at the expense of the educational achievements some adjustments have to be made:

- 1) to establish national, minimum standard of dual career services;
- 2) to provide specific educational programmes for dual career service providers able to negotiate flexible requirements at academic and sport levels, as well as for those having a close relationship with the athlete and a strong supportive dual career role (e.g., parents, coaches, and university staff); and
- 3) to inform the athletes on their dual career rights, policies, programmes, services, financial resources, and logistic support in place in Estonia.
- 4) to elaborate between dual career stakeholders and media in developing communication campaigns degrading DC opportunities in Estonia.

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