

STATE POLICY OF UKRAINE'S EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Abstract. The article examines the relationship between the state policy of the European integration of Ukraine and the innovative development of social entrepreneurship as an important tool for solving socio-economic problems. The role of social entrepreneurship in ensuring sustainable development, creating new jobs for vulnerable groups of the population, and introducing innovative approaches to solving current social challenges is considered. Special attention is paid to the European experience of supporting social enterprises through social investment mechanisms, tax incentives, integration into public procurement, and the development of sustainable ecosystems in cooperation with civil society organizations and the private sector. The article also highlights the main barriers to the development of social entrepreneurship in Ukraine, including the lack of a clear legislative framework, limited financial resources, insufficient coordination between state institutions, and poor public awareness of social business. Recommendations for the implementation of the state strategy aimed at integrating European standards, developing social investment, stimulating innovations, and creating a favorable environment for the functioning of social enterprises in Ukraine are proposed. The research methodology includes a systemic, comparative, and structural-functional analysis, which provides an integrated approach to studying the impact of the European integration process on the development of social entrepreneurship. The results confirm that the implementation of European practices will contribute not only to increasing the efficiency of social entrepreneurship but also to solving important socio-economic problems Ukraine faces.

Keywords: *social entrepreneurship, European integration, state policy, sustainable*

development, social investment, regulatory framework.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *socialinis verslumas, Europos integracija, valstybės politika, darnus vystymasis, socialinės investicijos, reguliavimo bazė.*

Introduction

Social entrepreneurship plays an important role in Ukraine's European integration course, contributing to solving social challenges and sustainable economic development. Despite the effectiveness of European models, this sector in Ukraine remains normatively unregulated and insufficiently researched, which is especially relevant in the context of post-war reconstruction (Klenin and Mishchenko 2023). Financial mechanisms can ensure the scaling of social enterprises, but the lack of a clear legal framework and sustainable support makes it difficult to implement best practices (Kosach et al. 2021). Scientific discussions are mostly limited to theoretical advantages, without analyzing the practical implementation of the European integration policy. Therefore, it is necessary to determine regulatory, financial, and institutional mechanisms for adapting the European experience to Ukrainian realities. The novelty of the study lies in the substantiation of strategic approaches for the effective involvement of social entrepreneurship in overcoming socio-economic challenges and post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

Methods

The study is based on qualitative methods and an interdisciplinary approach, since social entrepreneurship in Ukraine is just beginning to form, and there is no official legislative regulation or state statistics. This complicates the systematic analysis of the sector and limits access to statistical data. Because of this, the main emphasis is placed on comparative analysis, which allows for comparing the Ukrainian context with European models of social business support and structural and functional analysis, which reveals the relationships between regulatory, financial, and institutional factors that could contribute to its development. Due to the lack of an extensive empirical base in Ukraine, the study uses available quantitative data from international organizations, including the European Commission, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the British Council, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Thus, the results of the analysis of the dynamics of the sector's development, reflecting the growth trends in the number of social enterprises in 2008–2020, are included (Kamenko 2020). The study also takes into account the analysis of data from the Catalogue of Social Enterprises, which records 56 active initiatives. This allows us to outline the main areas of activity of social enterprises in Ukraine, namely services, education, culture, and food products. The main emphasis is not on assessing the existing state support mechanisms, which actually do not exist in

Ukraine, but on developing potential approaches to their creation, strategies for financing, institutional development, and adaptation of European practices that can contribute to the formation of social entrepreneurship in Ukraine.

Literature review

Social entrepreneurship, as mentioned above, is becoming a key tool for solving socio-economic problems in the world. For Ukraine, in the context of European integration, public policy reforms contribute to the development of the innovation potential of this sector. According to the concept of inclusive growth, social entrepreneurship has a dual role: It creates social innovation and ensures the sustainable development of society (Bakker and McMullen 2023). It solves problems that are often not covered by the state or traditional businesses (Swanson and Zhang 2012). European integration opens up new opportunities for access to financial resources, European markets, and best practices. Social entrepreneurship is an activity focused on social impact through market mechanisms. It combines business profitability and solving important societal problems (Boldyzhhar and Khokhlova 2024). Social entrepreneurs, according to Melro and Oliveira, are “agents of change” who create innovative models to address social challenges (Melro and Oliveira 2017). This allows for the mobilization of human and financial resources to achieve goals that go beyond ordinary business. Among the key features of social entrepreneurship are innovation and the ability to optimize resources and scale social impact. Social entrepreneurs work in niches that are left out of the attention of the state or business (Byelov et al. 2023). Contemporary challenges, such as social inequality, unemployment, environmental crisis, and a lack of inclusiveness in the economy, require new approaches. In this context, social entrepreneurship is both an alternative and a catalyst for change (Bansal et al. 2019). It generates new opportunities for those facing significant constraints (Nepal 2024) and, through innovative business models, ensures economic sustainability and efficiency. According to Dotsenko and Matvichuk (Dotsenko and Matviychuk 2021), a proper assessment of the investment attractiveness of enterprises becomes the basis for the formation of sustainable development models, which can serve as an important factor in supporting social entrepreneurship. At the same time, Ilchenko (2022) emphasizes that innovation is a key conceptual element for overcoming socio-economic challenges and building effective social entrepreneurship in Ukraine. Other scholars share a similar view: Kravchuk et al. (2021) analyze the strategic management of business processes in the field of innovative entrepreneurship, emphasizing the need for flexible management decisions. The study by Lukianchuk and Tkachuk (2019) suggests that the implementation of an innovation strategy is positively correlated with the economic effect for both traditional and social enterprises. In turn, Braunagel and Anfilov (2022) emphasize that social entrepreneurship can be a modern vector of economic development because it is aimed at solving social problems, which are not always covered by traditional business models. In the post-war reconstruction of

Ukraine's economy, social enterprises are becoming even more important. Klenin and Mishchenko (2023) identifies the conceptual foundations of state support for social entrepreneurship, which include institutional and financial assistance, as well as tax incentives. At the same time, Kosach et al. (2021) consider the financial mechanism of innovation and investment development as one of the key factors that can ensure the sustainable development of enterprises, in particular, social ones.

Results

In the context of Ukraine's European integration, social entrepreneurship plays an important role in the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as eradicating poverty, ensuring equal access to education and healthcare, and promoting environmental sustainability (Sustainable Development Goals 2024). The European model demonstrates effective interaction between the state, civil society, and business, relying on institutional support, tax benefits, grants, and infrastructure for the development of social initiatives (Social Enterprises and Their Ecosystems in Europe 2020). In Ukraine, social entrepreneurship is a promising but underdeveloped area that faces challenges such as legal uncertainty, lack of funding, and limited access to markets (Kokot 2020, p. 27). This is in contrast to European countries, such as the United Kingdom, where the Better Society Capital fund operates to support social initiatives ("Our impact" 2023). European practice is based on the creation of sustainable ecosystems with the interaction of state institutions, communities, and business (Social Enterprises and Their Ecosystems in Europe 2020, p. 138), which is promising for Ukraine. Research highlights the ability of social entrepreneurs to respond innovatively to challenges, due to flexibility, compared to traditional government structures (Gigauri and Damenia 2020).

This approach is optimal for Ukraine, where state support for social problems remains limited. Ukraine's European integration policy creates opportunities for cooperation with European partners, in particular through social impact investments and EU grant programs. Social entrepreneurship requires not only state support but also the active involvement of the private sector, international organizations, and civil society to build partnerships (Gigauri and Damenia 2020). Access to financial platforms, such as EU4Business and Horizon Europe, and grant programs opens up new prospects for the implementation of social impact projects (Directory of Donors and Financial Institutions 2024).

In Europe, social enterprises are focused on solving social problems and are often funded by government subsidies, grants, and donations. The British model adopted by Ukraine provides for a clear social mission, reinvestment of profits, independence from the state, and accountability. To support social enterprises in the UK, Better Society Capital operates, which invests in the sector through financial intermediaries, as well as popular crowdfunding mechanisms and "community shares." At the same time, the government creates conditions for the development of the sector, as social entrepreneurship contributes to economic

revival in depressed regions. The United States of America follows a more liberal approach, where social entrepreneurship is identified with the entrepreneurial activities of public organizations that earn money from the administration of services and direct income to statutory activities. Historically, this sector has grown out of the field of philanthropy, and since the 1980s, non-governmental organizations have begun to actively commercialize their activities. The state supports this direction less than in Europe, limiting itself to funds such as the White House Social Innovation Fund (American and European Pathways of Social Entrepreneurship 2013).

Despite the support of donors, the development of social entrepreneurship in Ukraine depends on institutional support, a transparent legal framework, and effective coordination at the level of public policy (Hladkii and Momot 2023; Lubberink 2019; Tišma et al. 2024). Ukraine needs to develop legislative initiatives to create favorable conditions for social entrepreneurs. European experience shows that a successful regulatory framework includes tax incentives and simplified access to financial resources (Hemels 2022). The Nordic model can serve as an example of effective policy. It combines public funding, citizen participation, and cooperative traditions. The state creates infrastructure through educational programs, incubators, and research centers, promoting innovation to solve social problems. Support includes public-private partnerships, public procurement, and flexible regulation that promotes inclusive development and social solidarity. Social enterprises in this system become laboratories for social welfare renewal, involving vulnerable groups in economic life (Lundgaard Andersen et al. 2016).

The assessment of the dynamics of the development of social enterprises in Ukraine is complicated by the lack of complete statistical data. However, the available information shows an increase in the number of such enterprises from 2014 to 2020. Until 2014, the sector was in its infancy. The increase in activity began in 2015, thanks to the social activity of citizens and support programs. Especially rapid growth was observed in 2018–2020, when socially oriented businesses became more active as a response to socio-economic challenges.

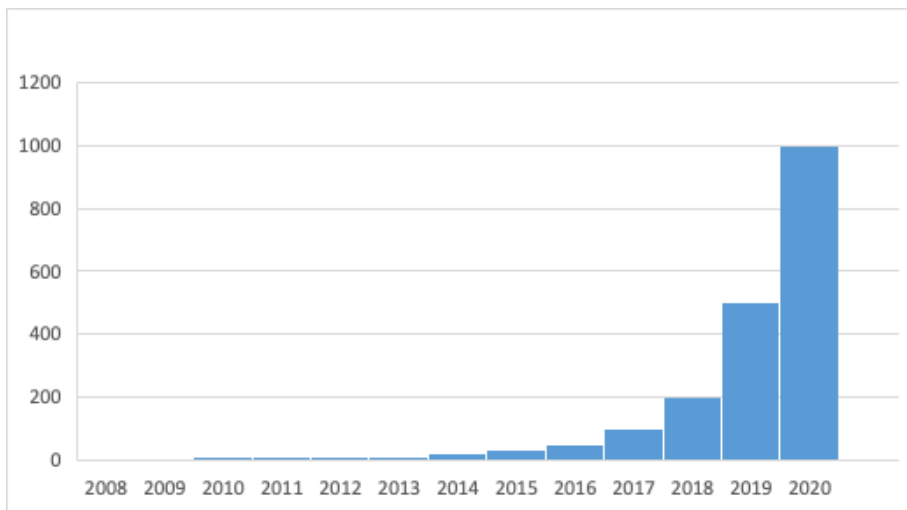


Figure 1. Dynamics of the development of social enterprises in Ukraine in 2008–2020

Source: independently formed by the author based on Kamenko (2020), Social Entrepreneurship in Ukraine: Economic and Legal Analysis

The lack of a legal definition and a state register of social enterprises in Ukraine makes it impossible to systematically record these enterprises. The sector is developing mainly due to public initiatives and international support, but due to the lack of official recognition and state incentives, the monitoring of its activities remains fragmented. The negative connotation of the term “social” and the lack of incentive measures further complicate the identification and study of this area. An analysis of data from the Social Enterprise Catalog, which includes 56 enterprises, revealed the main market trends. Social enterprises mainly operate in the service, education, culture, and food sectors. These industries traditionally combine economic activity with solving social problems, which makes them the most convenient for social business. Due to the lack of a consolidated register of social enterprises, this analysis is based on available sources, but it confirms the importance of systematizing information and state support for the development (Ilchenko and Kiselev 2020).

Structure of Social Enterprise Activities in Ukraine

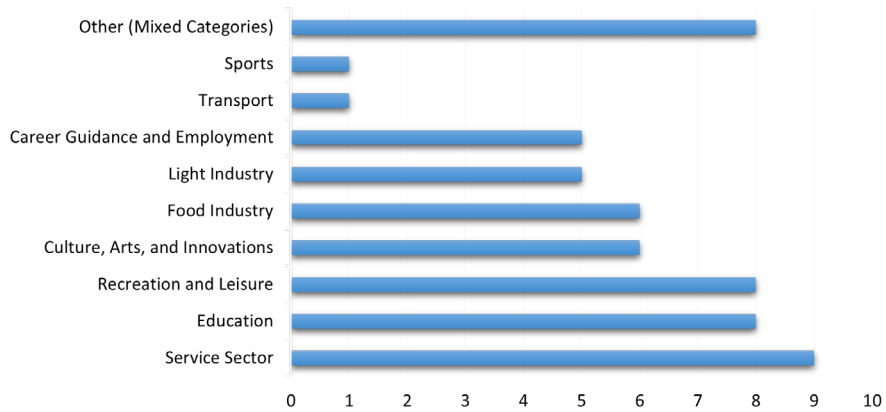


Figure 2. Structure of social enterprises in Ukraine

Source: independently formed by the author based on Free Thread (2025), Social Enterprise

Social entrepreneurship is an innovative business model that combines profit with solving social problems. In today’s world, social entrepreneurship plays an increasingly important role, contributing to solving global problems and having a positive impact on society. For example, TOMS®, which operates in countries such as the United States, Mexico, India, and Haiti, implements the “One Purchase, One Help” program: For every pair of shoes sold, it donates a new pair of shoes to children in need. Another socially responsible company, Warby Parker, implements vision correction initiatives in developing countries, including India, Ghana, Rwanda, and Bangladesh, providing access to glasses for millions of people. Meanwhile, KickStart International focuses on improving the lives of rural people in Africa, especially in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia, by implementing innovative agricultural technologies that help increase farmers’ yields and income. The US-based Ashoka Foundation supports social entrepreneurs with high social impact in more than 90 countries, including India, Brazil, Nigeria, and the Philippines, providing them with financial resources and expert assistance. These examples highlight how social enterprises drive change and develop society on a global level (Mykhailchuk and Bendiuh 2021). In Ukraine, social entrepreneurship is constrained by the lack of legislative regulation. Despite attempts to create a special status for such enterprises, they remain within the general tax framework due to the imperfection of draft laws. However, thanks to grants and the support of foreign investors, successful social initiatives, such as environmental projects or services for people with disabilities, are developing in the country. Legislative consolidation of social entrepreneurship could become the basis for large-scale implementation of social innovations and

effective solution of social problems (Plissa, Tsyupka, and Muntyan 2024). In 2022, 179 such enterprises operated in Ukraine, which is 31% less than in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and military aggression. These enterprises provide jobs for people with disabilities, who make up 67% of employees, even though 80% of enterprises suffered economic losses, and 35% lost fixed assets. The majority faced high energy prices (52%), lack of working capital (48%), and low solvency of customers (46%). Financing is mainly carried out at the expense of profits (70%), but it is not enough - only 15% receive grants, and 8% use loans. To resume operations, 63% of enterprises need up to UAH 1 million, and 48% need affordable loans for equipment modernization. At the same time, 22% of enterprises have refocused on the production of goods for humanitarian needs, demonstrating flexibility and ability to respond to challenges (Analytical Report on the results of a survey of social enterprises of public associations of persons with disabilities in Ukraine on their condition and needs during the war 2023).

Social entrepreneurship in Ukraine is not developing fast enough due to a serious obstacle, namely the lack of legislation that would determine the status, functions, and mechanisms of support for social enterprises (Mykhalchuk and Bendiuh 2021). With the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, social entrepreneurship in Ukraine has gained special importance, and entities are responding to social challenges and receiving active support from international grant programs. The war led to an increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), destruction of infrastructure, and loss of jobs, to which social enterprises responded by creating new jobs, retraining the population, and providing psychological assistance. Grant programs have made it possible to scale their activities, introduce new technologies, and contribute to economic recovery. An example is the EU4Youth project "Recovery through Social Entrepreneurship," where students developed innovative business ideas to solve social problems. In June 2024, at the project's award ceremony in Kyiv, 15 winning projects received grants for the development of initiatives in the field of healthcare, inclusion, ecology, and technology (in particular, bionic prostheses, adaptive clothing, and mobile applications for accessibility). The project is supported by the EU and international organizations that provide financial and educational assistance. Such initiatives confirm the role of social business in the recovery of the country, promoting economic activity, integrating youth into entrepreneurship, and strengthening civil society. (Junior Achievement Ukraine 2024).

Within the framework of modern social conditions of Ukraine, the development of social entrepreneurship has become an important element in solving social problems, such as unemployment, economic recovery, and support for vulnerable groups of the population. As stated in the research, social entrepreneurship in Ukraine is based on innovative ideas and innovative business models that allow solving complex social problems through entrepreneurial activity.

One of the key features of social entrepreneurship is its focus on solving specific social problems using sustainable business mechanisms. This allows for the creation of employment opportunities for vulnerable populations, such as persons with disabilities, war

veterans, or IDPs, as well as the offer of innovative products and services that contribute to societal change. Ukrainian initiatives, in particular the Recovery through Social Entrepreneurship project, demonstrate the effectiveness of supporting youth business ideas through grant programs. This project has become a catalyst for the creation of new enterprises operating in the fields of ecology, healthcare, and education. Not only does it financially support the development of innovative solutions, but it also creates a conducive environment for entrepreneurs to learn and grow. Social entrepreneurship also stimulates the integration of new approaches to solving environmental problems, in particular through the development of renewable energy, waste recycling, and the use of environmentally friendly materials. At the same time, the role of social businesses in expanding access to important services such as health care, inclusive education, and mental health support is growing (Novyk 2022).

Social entrepreneurship in Ukraine has significant potential, especially among young people, who perceive it as a tool for influencing society and solving current problems. According to the EU4Youth project "Recovery through Social Entrepreneurship," 59% of young people are familiar with the term "social entrepreneurship," and 36% are interested in starting a social business. The main motivating factors for setting up social business are the opportunity to combine earnings with socially useful activities, influence positive changes and support local initiatives. Despite the interest, there are significant obstacles to the development of social entrepreneurship. Young people identify the main challenges as the long war (65%), electricity shortage (59%), tax increases (51%), and low purchasing power of the population (43%). The possibility of fraudulent schemes in this area (28%) and doubts about business profitability (27%) are also of concern. (Social Business: Young People's Opinion on the New Direction of Entrepreneurship 2024). This indicates the need to support young entrepreneurs through legislative regulation and the creation of a stable environment. The most promising areas for social entrepreneurship are the provision of social services (32%), the creation of jobs for vulnerable categories (29%), and the production of socially significant goods (25%). The vast majority of respondents plan to implement projects locally (49%) or online (36%), which emphasizes the potential for the development of regional and digital initiatives. Young people show a high interest in learning business skills.

However, the active interest of young people, combined with educational programs and institutional support, creates favorable conditions for the development of social entrepreneurship as an important tool for change in society. If we consider the results of a survey among young people aged 16–35 conducted in 2024 by the Center for Analysis and Sociological Research (CISR) of the International Republican Institute (IRI) within the framework of the USAID "Dream and Act" program, the first thing that catches the eye is that among working respondents who are not entrepreneurs ($n=1200$), 71% said that they have already thought about starting their own business, while 29% do not even consider such an opportunity. The main factors hindering young people from starting a business were the lack of start-up capital (39%) and general instability due to the war (24%), followed by the lack of special knowledge and skills (11%). At the same time, 9% admitted that they do not

want to do business at all, and 8% do not feel confident enough. Another 7% do not have a clear business idea, and 4% point to age restrictions, working conditions, or lack of formal rights. Finally, several other obstacles, such as taxes, bureaucracy, or fears of corruption risks, also have their percentage, but in total they score less than the main barriers (Results of the Ukrainian Youth Survey 2024).

Discussion

Social entrepreneurship in Ukraine has significant potential in solving socio-economic problems, but its development is limited by the lack of a regulatory framework, lack of funding, and insufficient state support. European experience shows that the successful integration of social business into the national economy involves complex financial mechanisms, tax incentives, and institutional support. At the same time, in the EU countries, social enterprises receive state subsidies and grants, while in Ukraine, this sector remains dependent on international donors. Comparative analysis confirms that the adaptation of European models can contribute to the development of social entrepreneurship in Ukraine, in particular through the creation of specialized financial instruments and the legislative definition of its status. Institutional support and the introduction of stimulating tax policies can contribute to the growth of social entrepreneurship and its integration into the country's sustainable development strategy.

Conclusions

1. Social entrepreneurship in Ukraine has significant potential in solving socio-economic problems, but its development is complicated by the lack of legal regulation, financial incentives, and state support.
2. Comparison with European models shows the effectiveness of the system of subsidies, tax benefits, and social investment, which ensures the sustainability and scalability of social business.
3. The war and economic instability have affected social entrepreneurship in Ukraine, but thanks to the active support of international grant programs, the sector continues to adapt, expanding humanitarian activities and creating jobs for vulnerable groups.
4. Lack of access to finance remains a key problem for the development of social entrepreneurship, which requires the creation of specialized support mechanisms at the national level.
5. To ensure the sustainable development of social entrepreneurship, it is necessary to adapt European approaches, including the development of a national strategy that combines legislative, financial, and institutional support mechanisms.

Recommendations

1. Legislative regulation is the adoption of a law that will determine the status of social entrepreneurship and criteria for its identification, as well as registration and reporting mechanisms.
2. Financial support means the creation of specialized programs of preferential lending, subsidies, and grants for social enterprises, as well as the involvement of international financial partners.
3. Tax incentives are the introduction of reduced tax rates or tax incentives for enterprises that reinvest profits in social projects and employ vulnerable categories of the population.
4. Institutional support means the creation of a state register of social enterprises and the development of training programs and consulting centers for social entrepreneurs.
5. Promotion of social entrepreneurship involves conducting educational campaigns and integrating social business into public procurement and regional development strategies.

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UKRAINOS VALSTYBĖS EUROPOS INTEGRACIJOS POLITIKA IR JOS POVEIKIS INOVATYVIAI SOCIALINIO VERSLUMO PLĖTRAI

Anotacija. Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas Ukrainos valstybinės integracijos į Europą politikos ir socialinio verslumo, kaip svarbaus socialinių ir ekonominių problemų sprendimo įrankio, novatoriškos plėtros ryšys. Svarstomas socialinio verslumo vaidmuo užtikrinant darnų vystymąsi, kuriant naujas darbo vietas pažeidžiamoms gyventojų grupėms ir diegiant inovatyvius būdus sprendžiant dabartinius socialinius iššūkius. Įmonėms pasitelkiant socialinių investicijų mechanizmus, mokesčių lengvatas, integruojant į viešuosius pirkimus ir kuriant tvarias ekosistemas bendradarbiaujant su pilietinės visuomenės organizacijomis ir privačiu sektoriumi. Straipsnyje taip pat akcentuojamos pagrindinės kliūtys socialinio verslumo plėtrai Ukrainoje, įskaitant aiškios teisinės bazės nebuvimą, ribotus finansinius išteklius, nepakankamą valstybės institucijų koordinavimą ir menką visuomenės informuotumą apie socialinį verslą. Siūlomos rekomendacijos įgyvendinti valstybės strategiją, skirtą europinių standartų integravimui, socialinių investicijų plėtrai, inovacijų skatinimui ir palankios aplinkos socialinėms įmonėms funkcionavimui Ukrainoje kūrimui. Tyrimo metodika apima sisteminę, lyginamąją ir struktūrinę-funkcinę analizę, kuri suteikė integruotą požiūrį į Europos integracijos proceso įtakos socialinio verslumo plėtrai tyrimą. Rezultatai patvirtina, kad europinių praktikų diegimas prisidės ne tik prie socialinio verslumo efektyvumo didinimo, bet ir prie svarbių socialinių-ekonominių problemų, su kuriomis susiduria Ukraina, sprendimų.

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