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## THE STATE OF EU STUDIES IN FRANCE

France is one of the founding members of the European Communities. It has played an active role in the definition of the Community method. French lawyers have soon devoted much attention to European integration, since some were closely involved in the drafting of the treaties. Economists have also taken this phenomenon seriously at an early stage. On the contrary, for a long time, French political scientists paid little attention to Europe. In the 1980s, European studies were less developed in France than in the French speaking parts of Belgium, Switzerland or even Canada. Since the end of the 1990s, things have evolved significantly: today many French political scientists are working on EU matters and a significant number of them are defining themselves as EU specialists. However, the involvement of French scholars in the international debates remains quite limited and the landscape of French EU studies keeps its originality.

It may seem artificial to underline this French specificity since some of the most prominent EU researchers in France appear to be Austrian (Sabine Saurugger), Belgian (Renaud Dehousse), English (Andy Smith), German/Argentinean (Emiliano Grossman) or Finish (Niilo Kauppi). Also, many French scholars have made their academic education outside France, like Virginie Guiraudon (Harvard) or Nicolas Jabko (Berkeley), or are still holding positions outside France, in EUI Florence (Yves Mény, Pascal Vénesson), the LSE (Michael Bruter), Princeton (Sophie Meunier), *Université libre de Bruxelles/ULB* (François Forêt, Jean-Marc Ferry, Amandine Crespy) or Copenhagen Business School (Magali Gravier). Some others are neither French nor in France, while being very active in France, like Paul Magnette (ULB), Vivien Schmidt (Boston

University), Frédéric Mérand (University of Montréal) or Alistair Cole (Cardiff University).

It however makes sense to deal with the situation of EU studies in France, since it offers much contrast with countries like Germany, the U.K. or Italy. We will thus consider as “French” all the scholars, whatever their nationality may be, who belong to a French teaching or research institution. The main tools, theories and objects chosen by French EU scholars are quite specific, as well as the main debates. At the international level, the central cleavages are still the ones between international relations (IR) and comparative politics and between rational choice and constructivism. Both are quite irrelevant in the French context: there are few IR scholars involved in EU studies and not many specialists of comparative politics either. Rational choice is very limited in France and if many French scholars call themselves «constructivists», they have a quite specific conception of what constructivism is or should be. Neo-institutionalism is not very popular in France, since many scholars close from constitutional law never stopped studying institutions, and since most researchers coming from sociology consider that «institution» is not a relevant category to study political phenomena.

This chapter is divided in three main parts. The first will explain why the French political scientists were latecomers on EU studies. The second will present the reasons why things have changed so much in the 1990s and 2000s. The last part will give an overview of French EU studies today, using a specific database of articles published by French scholars about EU matters in 42 peer-reviewed journals between 2007 and 2010.

### 1. *Why did French political scientists discover the EU so late?*

Even if political science is a dynamic research area in France, its scholars did not pay much attention to European integration until the 1990s.

The teaching of political science is quite developed in France thanks to the system of *Instituts d'Etudes Politiques* (nine since 1991); contrary to universities, those *Grandes Ecoles* are selecting a limited number of students who enjoy good working conditions compared to the average French university students. The situation of research in political science is favorable as well – in contrast with other social and human sciences – because of the central role played by the *Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques* (FNSP). The discipline also benefits from the dynamism of the *Association Française de Science Politique*, which counts 540 full members and 14 standing groups, organizes a two-yearly congress and supports, since 1951, the *Revue Française de Science Politique*.

However, until the 1990s, very few French political scientists were involved in the study of the EU, and the ones who did were not very active at the international level. This situation results from three factors, developed below.

#### 1.1. *The specificities of political science in France*

In France, political science was born from public law, with authors like M. Duverger, G. Burdeau and J.L. Quermonne. It gained its independence from law only in 1971, when the first examination of *agrégation de science politique* established political science as an autonomous discipline at the university level. The first professors of political science selected through this new process were still close to constitutional law. In the 1980s and 1990s, there has been a strong reaction of sociologists against that connection. Academics and PhD students, inspired by the work of Pierre Bourdieu and by structuralism, called for the development of a «political sociology» against the old «political science» supposed to be positivist, legitimist and too focused on law and institutions. This trend of political science, which is mainstream today in France, is centered on the study of actors (citizens, social movements and mobilizations, politicians, other elites) with qualitative methods (interviews,

participating observations, archive analysis) borrowed from sociology, anthropology, ethnology and history. Political sociologists are also calling for a systematic deconstruction of institutions, constitutional models and ideas. Thus, they have abandoned to a large extent the study of institutions to lawyers and historians and rejected as irrelevant what they call «the Anglo-Saxon mainstream», symbolized by rational choice and quantitative methods.

Aside from this powerful sociological trend, mainly focused on France (as a field and as a scientific space), the rest of the discipline is quite fragmented. International relations (IR) and political theory are not very developed in France. The same goes for comparative politics, which are often limited to area studies and not really using comparative tools. In general, one can also notice a weakness of quantitative methods – with the exception of electoral studies – and very few connections between French political scientists and other fields such as economy, statistics and mathematics.

Because of the structure of the discipline, French political scientists were not inclined to pay attention to EU institutions and policies. Most of the public law oriented scholars shared the idea that there could be no political activity beyond the nation-state: what was happening in Brussels was to be studied by lawyers and economists. Sociology-oriented political scientists did not pay more attention to European integration, due to their reluctance to consider institutions, to their focus on national and local actors, and to their disregard for the «Anglo-Saxon mainstream». In France, EU studies were thus dominated by lawyers and, to a lesser extent, economists and historians.

### 1.2. *The difficult relationship of France with European integration*

Another explanation for the lack of interest of French political scientists in EU matters is the difficult relationship of France with

European integration. France is one of the founding members of the Communities, but its leaders have always cultivated a specific link to Europe. If some of them may be qualified as «true Europeans», like Robert Schuman, Georges Pompidou, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing or even François Mitterrand (in the late 1980s), they have all shared the idea that France should have a leading role in Europe, and was not a member state like any other. Those leaders were never more enthusiastic about European integration than when it was considered as a contribution to the French *grandeur*. But France has also counted numerous leaders that showed some reluctance towards the federalist dimension of the European integration experience, starting with Charles De Gaulle, as early as 1958. De Gaulle contributed – with the Fouchet plans (1961 and 1962) and the crisis of the «empty chair» (1965-1966) – to promote a more intergovernmental conception of European integration, one still vivid in France.

Today, Euroskepticism is a strong trend in French politics. The right wing (RPR, FN) and left wing (PC) «sovereignist» parties have been rejoined in the 2000s by all kinds of opponents to neo-liberalism and globalization and by various defenders of the «French socio-economical model» – whatever that may mean. This movement has led to the rejection of the European Constitutional Treaty by referendum in May 2005. More generally, if French leaders and citizens are, in majority, favorable to the project of European integration, they are quite critical of EU institutions, actors and policies, and also very prone to denounce its negative impact on national politics. They also tend to consider the process of integration as something technical, on the one hand, and intergovernmental, on the other hand. According to a majority of both academics and politicians, «the Nation» was to be the only frame for politics and democracy. As said, this conception encouraged political scientists to perceive European integration as a process with no political dimension, involving only administrative elites and diplomats, to be studied by lawyers and economists.

It is only at the occasion of the ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht by referendum (1992) that leaders and citizens

discovered (or pretended to) that European integration was a political process limiting French sovereignty. The creation of the European Union has deepened the political nature of European integration and highlighted its impact on member states at every level (administration, lawmaking, economy, citizenship). It has also created a strong reaction in public opinion with the rise and expression of Euroskepticism. In that context, French political scientists started to pay more attention to European matters.

### 1.3. *The limited internationalization of French political scientists*

The third main factor that explains the very limited involvement of French political scientists in EU studies in the 1980s is their weak internationalization. At that time, French political science was not very much connected to the international level for several reasons. The first one is the epistemological specificities of French political science: as said, «political sociologists» were mainly focused on the French case and found little interest in the international production. The branch of political science derived from constitutional law was also not very much internationalized – just as French lawyers have never been. A second reason is the lack of language skills: French scholars and students were not good at reading, speaking and writing in English in the 1980s. There were few international references in political science textbooks (or books and papers translated in French) and the teaching of English was not very well developed in French universities. It was thus easier for French scholars to concentrate on domestic debates and on publishing in French. A third element is the fact that it was possible for French social scientists to publish exclusively in their native language, since there are several peer reviewed journals in French and some serious publishers. The *francophonie* offers quite a large audience for political scientists writing in French. At that time, there

were also few incentives for scholars to make the effort to publish in English. In many cases, it was even risky. Until the end of the 1990s, French scholars or researchers could be sanctioned in their career because they were publishing too much in English, and not enough in the main French journals.

## 2. *The development of EU studies in the 1990s and 2000s*

A complex set of phenomena, initiatives and decisions led to an important development of EU studies in France in the 1990s and 2000s. Four main developments can be identified.

First, research on EU institutions and policies has been encouraged by funding opportunities. The central one was the program set up by the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS) on the issue of *l'identité européenne en question* («European identity in question»), that has funded more than 40 research projects between 1998 and 2000.

Second, some institutions (universities, FNSP, CNRS) have decided to hire EU specialists to encourage the development of teaching and research on that topic. The creation of the peer reviewed journal *Politique européenne* («European politics/polity») in 2000 was a third key event. It resulted from the initiative of a new generation of EU specialists (young scholars and PhD students) willing to encourage the development of EU studies in France in connection with the international debates. This journal publishes articles in both French (majority) and English, mainly around special issues. It has helped many young French researchers to present their work and favored the emergence of a debate with foreign EU specialists. France is today one of the few countries where there is a scientific journal devoted only to European issues.

A last element worth mentioning is the creation in 2000 of a European studies standing group within the AFSP by Christian

Lequesne and Paul Magnette. In 2005, this group was upgraded to the *Section d'études européennes/SEE* (by Olivier Costa and Paul Magnette) in order to improve the visibility of EU studies in French political science and to encourage the internationalization of French scholarship both in terms of publishing and participation in international research networks. The SEE is organizing thematic workshops and an annual congress. It is also running a bilingual website and publishing a seasonal bilingual newsletter gathering exhaustive information about EU studies (publications, calls for papers, conferences, jobs...).

More general trends of French political science have also played a role in the development of EU studies. We can mention, first, the internationalization in the 1990s of a new generation of scholars that studied or got positions abroad, were able to work in English and willing to participate in international conferences and to publish in international peer reviewed journals. Second, we must underline the involvement of new sub-disciplines in the study of EU politics, policies and actors, and of Europeanization. This started with a strong mobilization of public policies specialists in the 1990s; at the same time, some political-anthropologists got interested in the European microcosm. Finally, in the middle of the 1990s, some young scholars coming from political sociology and historical sociology started to study the actors and institutions of European integration.

The changes in the evaluation criteria of research centers and researchers were also a strong incentive for French scholars to publish in international peer reviewed journals and to get involved in international debates, like the ones on EU institutions and policies. In the 2000s, internationalization became a request to compete for large national or European research grants. The participation of the main French research centers in European or international networks, such as FP collaborative projects or networks of excellence has also dramatically increased the desire of French researchers to publish in English.

A last factor to mention is the constant reflection over the strength and weaknesses of French political science in the last decade. Several articles and books were devoted to the state of EU studies in France [Hassenteufel and Surel 2000; Smith 2000; 2004a; Irondelle 2006; Belot et al. 2008; Saurugger and Mérand 2010]. Moreover, several conferences, workshops and seminars were organized to make an appraisal of the French situation of EU studies and identify priorities for the future<sup>1</sup>.

### *3. EU studies in French political science today: an overview*

After a long process of EU studies empowerment, there are around 50 researchers or academics that can be considered as specialists of the EU in France today. A minority of them (20) may be qualified as true EU specialists, who devoted their PhD to EU policies, institutions or actors, are teaching EU matters and are mainly publishing on this topic. The other ones are scholars for whom EU was not a primary subject, but who are dealing with this topic among others. Since the end of the 1990s, there is also a constant flow of PhD students working on EU matters or questions related to EU – notably on Europeanization of policies, institutions, organs, groups of actors, etc., and bottom-up Europeanization.

In his article, Bastien Irondelle (2006) has proposed an overview of the production of French scholars in EU studies by looking at the five main French journals of political science (all published mainly in French). In order to get a more comprehensive view, we took another approach and searched for all the papers published by French academics in 42 French and international journals dealing, partially or exclusively, with EU matters from

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<sup>1</sup> There have been several SEE workshops devoted to this question on the occasion of the AFSP congress as well as an AFSP panel at APSA congress of 2007. Recently, a conference addressed this topic again: «*European Power Elites*»: *Où va la sociologie politique de l'Europe?*, Université Paris 1, June 10-11, 2010.

January 2007 to December 2010<sup>2</sup>. This wider approach seemed necessary to overcome the tendency of French EU scholars to overestimate their influence in the international scientific debate.

To give a full picture of EU studies in France, we will successively present the topics covered by French EU scholars, the research centers where they work and the situation of EU teaching in France. We will finally propose a global assessment of French EU studies.

### 3.1. *The main sectors of EU studies in France*

Historically, EU studies started in France with research that can be related to neo-institutionalism, focused on EU institutions and policy-making [Mény et al. 1995; Costa et al. 2003; Rozenberg and Surel 2003, Lequesne and Surel 2004; Smith 2004a; Woll and Jacquot 2010] and on the political challenges of European integration [Quermonne 1990; Soulier 1994; Duprat 1996; Leca 1997]. Today, there are French internationally renowned specialists of each EU institution: the Commission [Smith 2004b], the European Court of Justice [Dehousse 1998; Cohen and Vauchez 2008], the European Parliament [Costa 2001; Beauvallet et al. 2009; Navarro 2009], the Council and the European Council [Mangenot 2006]. Many French scholars are also working on European parties [Dakowska 2002; Seiler 2007; Sauger 2008; Roger 2009] and civil society organizations at the EU level [Balme and Chabanet 2002; 2008; Strudel 2002]. Some original initiatives, like the «European Institution Observatory» (directed by Renaud Dehousse) or the

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<sup>2</sup> This was done by summing up the content of the 17 issues of *i-SEE*, the info-letter of the *Section d'études européennes* which is providing 4 times a year exhaustive information on EU related publications. This letter is edited by O. Costa, C. Dri, J. Navarro and N. Brack (<http://see-afsp.webou.net>). I would like to thank Caroline Sagat, librarian at *Sciences Po Bordeaux*, for helping me gather the data.

project «EU Policy Agendas» (directed by Emiliano Grossman) are following that trend.

In the 1990, French anthropologists started to look at EU institutions and actors from another angle – as «tribes» – producing original researches [Abélès 1992]. However, this approach has remained marginal, with few exceptions [Foret 2008], at a time were the DG research finally acknowledges its importance.

A massive contribution of French political science to the study of EU came from the specialists of public policies analysis. Most of them were not EU specialists, but started to work in the 1990s on EU policies and, especially, on Europeanization [Mény et al. 1995; Surel 2000; Hassenteufel and Surel 2000; Le Galès 2003]. A new generation of «true» EU specialists came in the 2000s [Guiraudon 2000; Irondelle 2003; Grossman 2004; Smith 2004a; Jabko 2006; Jacquot 2010]. Those scholars have explored the question of Europeanization in many ways, by focusing on political and social institutions at national [Lequesne 1993; Emery-Douzans 2002; Foret and Itçaina 2008] and regional levels [Pasquier and Weisbein 2004] and on specific policies [Bigo 1996; Deloye 1998; Fouilleux 2000; Lequesne 2001; Guiraudon 2003; Woll 2006; de Maillard and Smith 2007; Muller and Ravinet 2008; Halpern 2010; Jabko 2010; Jacquot 2010; Palier 2010].

Many scientists involved in the study of elections [Deloye 2005; Duchesne and Frogner 2008; Boy and Rozenberg 2009; Cautrès and Sauger 2010], public opinion and citizens [Grunberg and Perrineau 2000; Sauger, Brouard and Grossman 2006; Brouard and Tiberj 2006; Leconte 2008; Neumayer 2008; Grunberg 2009] and political parties at local and national levels [Roger 2001; Belot and Cautrès 2005; Belot 2010] have started to look at the EU level in the 1990s.

Several French scholars coming from IR are dealing today with the EU. They do not necessarily propose an intergovernmentalist analysis of it, like many Anglo-Saxon IR researchers do, but instead consider the EU as an actor of IR and focus on its external policies and action [Irondelle 2003; Laïdi 2005; Petiteville and Terpan 2008].

The most prominent and debated contribution of French political science to EU studies is the one of political sociologists [Georgakakis 2002; Guiraudon 2006; Saurugger 2009; Mangenot and Rowell 2009; Favell and Guiraudon 2010; Saurugger and Mérand 2010; Mérand and Weisbein 2011]. It is often presented in a monolithic way but, beyond a common interest for actors and qualitative methods, there is a wide spectrum of approaches and objects, such as EU elites [Beauvallet 2003; Kauppi 2005; Georgakakis and de Lasalle 2007; Navarro 2009; Georgakakis and Weisbein 2010], media [Baisnée 2000], lobbyists and civil society [Balme and Chabanet 2002; Grossman 2004; Michel 2005; Saurugger 2005; Dakowska 2009].

### 3.2. Research centers active in EU studies

There are many French research centers working on EU matters, but not a single one of them is focusing exclusively on that. In fact, nearly all the main political science research structures in France are taking this dimension into account. Here is a tentative list in alphabetical order:

- Center Emile Durkheim (formerly SPIRIT) at *IEP de Bordeaux*
- CEE (*Centre d'études européennes*) at *Sciences Po Paris*
- CERAPS (*Centre d'études et de recherches administratives, politiques et sociales*) at University of Lille 2
- CERI (*Centre d'études et de recherches internationales*) at *Sciences Po Paris*
- CRAPE (*Centre de recherche sur l'action publique en Europe*) at *IEP de Rennes*
- CSPE (*Centre de sociologie politique européenne*) at *Université Paris I*
- CURRAP (*Centre universitaire de recherches administratives et politiques de Picardie*) at University of Amiens
- GSPE (*Groupe de sociologie européenne*) at *IEP de Strasbourg*

- LASSP (*Laboratoire des sciences sociales du politique*) at *IEP de Toulouse*

- PACTE (*Politiques publiques, action politiques, territoires*) at *IEP de Grenoble*

This dispersion is problematic, since none of those centers has the critical mass to compete or collaborate in a balanced way with the main European research centers involved in EU studies<sup>3</sup>.

### 3.3. Teaching EU and «normalizing» EU studies in France

With the ongoing process of «masterization» (Bologna system L-M-D), we have also witnessed the development of many masters in EU affairs, mainly in the nine *Institut d'Etudes Politiques* (Institutes of political science). However, at the same time, the situation of political science is declining in many law departments, where EU questions are more and more addressed only by lawyers.

During the last 10 years, many French scholars have filled the gap of French edition on EU. There are today several textbooks devoted to EU institutions and policies [Doutriaux and Lequesne 2007; Magnette 2009; Dehousse 2009; Bertoncini and Chopin 2010; Quermonne 2010; Costa and Brack 2011; Mérand and Weisbein 2011]. There are also some important books or journal special issues trying to clear the state of EU studies, at both international and French levels [Belot, Magnette and Saurugger 2008] or discussing the ways to teach EU matters [Smith, Belot and Georgakakis 2004]. Those initiatives are, however, seldom accessible to the English speaking political scientists, with a few exceptions [Deloye and Bruter 2008; Mangenot and Rowell 2009; Saurugger and Mérand 2009].

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<sup>3</sup> The CEE is no exception: it used to be completely focused on EU studies, but with a limited number of researchers. The situation has changed, due to organizational reform at *Sciences Po Paris*: the CEE is today a large research center, but some of its members are not EU specialists. It is, however, the largest French research center on EU matters.

### 3.4. *French EU studies in context*

The most positive point about EU studies in France is that they are quite well integrated into general political science, in terms of publication, teaching and recruitment. This situation is linked to two main factors. First, many French scholars are not working exclusively on the EU, but on other topics as well. They do not define themselves as EU specialists but as researchers belonging to all kinds of sub-disciplines (public policy analysis, neo-institutionalism, actors-centered political sociology, IR, party politics, political theory) interested in EU among other objects. Also, as previously mentioned, French EU studies, like French political science, are not structured along the cleavages that dominate EU studies at the international level (IR vs. comparative politics; rational choice vs. constructivism). They are thus escaping the trap of self-reference and are not dominated by EU specific debates but are much more engaged in general discussions about politics, policies and polity.

The situation of French EU studies is more problematic at the international level. When looking at international publications, the picture is less than flattering. Things are getting better, with a new generation of French academics that publish both in English and French. Some important foreign scholars are also quite positive about the efforts made by French researcher [Ross 2007]. However, the proportion of papers written by French academics in international peer reviewed journals is still limited. Taking into account the EU related articles of international journals of our database, we see that the global level of papers published by French authors in the main EU journals is lower than expected, if we consider the number of French political scientists. On a total of 1,776 articles dealing with EU matters, only 63 implied one or several French authors (3.5 percent). Matti Wiberg comes to the same conclusion, with a sample of 1,725 articles published in «European Union Politics» (EUP) (181), the «Journal of Common

Market Studies» (JCMS) (870) and the «Journal of European Public Policy» (JEPP) (674). Of a total of 46 articles, the French contribution is the following: 0.5 in EUP (article co-authored with a non-French author), 24.7 in JCMS and 20.8 in JEPP. French authors contribute thus to less than 2.7 percent in the three main international journals specialized in European integration.

There is a clear discrepancy between the appraisal made by the advocates of the «French touch» in EU studies and the actual level of publication of French EU scholars. The impact of the French sociology of EU elites is not really impressive in terms of papers published in international peer reviewed journals. Two explanations can account for this. First, it remains difficult for French scholars to get an article published in those journals, since their papers do not fit the common criteria used by the reviewers; this is especially the case with the journals that expect quantitative data. But many French scholars are also not really willing to diffuse their results at the international level and are – sometimes – not producing articles solid enough for that. There is some doubt about the author's effective knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon mainstream that they often caricature [Saurugger 2009].

There is no common diagnosis of the current state of EU studies in France among French scholars today. Some are underlying the originality and qualities of French approaches to EU studies that are enriching the picture and are more connected to the social reality and political science in general than the average EU studies. The focus on actors and practices, proposed by political sociology, is highlighting the EU political system from another point of view, less formal, abstract and normative. It opposes to the average top-down approach a bottom-up perspective. Those researches are also described as less self-referential than international ones, and more connected to the general paradigms, questions and methods of political science – at least in a French context.

Other observers are less convinced by the added-value of the «French touch». They are underlying the «Astérix syndrome» of French scholars being persuaded to be right against an «international



mainstream» which they do not really know, and often reduce to rational-choice and normative institutionalism. They are thus unable to participate in the scientific debate at the international level, and end to be themselves self-referential.

If some skeptics nevertheless consider that there is a contribution of French political science to EU studies, they also suggest that its originality should not be exaggerated [Favell 2007] and that its concrete impact is still limited in terms of research results, publications and visibility.

#### 4. Conclusion: strengths and limits of French EU studies

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the situation of French EU studies has evolved significantly. At first, there has been an important increase in the number of scholars involved in the study of EU politics and policies. In the 2000s, there has been a process of partial internationalization of those researchers thanks to several factors: more incentives to publish in international peer reviewed journals, the rise of a logic of contract-funded research, a better internationalization of the new generation of EU specialists, the development of international networks involving French institutions, the (relative) expansion of quantitative methods in France, the search for more dialogue with foreign scholars. Today, French political scientists specialized in EU matters are more internationalized than their French peers.

However, French EU studies still suffer from four main problems. The first one is the limited presence of French scholars in international journals and conferences, due to language abilities, lack of incentives, or selection criteria. The second problem is the absence of a major research centre on EU matters, comparable to the LSE, ARENA or MZES: it makes it difficult for French scholars to table research projects to the EU or to lead international networks. It is not surprising that few French scientists have been leaders of EU funded projects in political science, especially those dealing with the

EU. Finally, in France there is no Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence involving a significant number of political scientists, because of the limited number of political scientists teaching exclusively on EU matters and of their geographic spreading. Instead, there is a relative domination of lawyers, economists and historians in French EU studies.

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