



SKILLS4LIFE : IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

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The Skills4Life Implementation Guide



Introduction

This document, titled “Skills4Life: Implementation Guide” summarizes the experience of the project partners who have developed and implemented the project activities in four different European countries.

The Skills4Life project focused on young offenders’ personal development and tried to make provisions that they are provided the opportunity for personal self-growth and self-development during their life course, so as to gain a sense of direction and prepare for release. Apart from the project research activities, a set of activities involved the development and implementation of the Skills4Life Workshops targeted at young people in conflict with the law. This set of activities included the development of the Curriculum and additional educational materials, of the Trainers’ Guide and of the Students’ Handbook. It also included the application of these outcomes in different groups of justice-involved youth in the participating countries.

The aim of this Guide is to provide a manual for all interested parties who wish to adapt, localize and replicate the project approach in different settings and in different countries. The present document targets other settings, other organizations and other correctional institutions which wish to replicate the project’s approach and use the project’s results. It also targets the educators who will undertake the implementation of the project’s workshops in the future.

This document contains the steps to be taken in order to organize and effectively implement the Skills4Life Workshops in any country across Europe and beyond. It also includes tips, recommendations and advice for future users, so as to take advantage of the project outcomes in the best possible way.

All the products and outputs referred to in this document can be freely downloaded from the project's website (<https://skills4life-project.com/>) in four different languages: English, French, Italian and Greek.

Why implement the Skills4Life curriculum in your structure:

Skills4Life is a transnational European project whose partners are from France, Italy, Greece, Norway and The United Kingdom.

This document is the result of the Skills4Life - Sowing the Seeds of Social Inclusion for young Offenders project, a two-year project co-funded by the Erasmus+ program KA2 - Strategic Youth Partnerships, Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices.

The project is implemented by a partnership of five organizations: Institut Saumurois de la Communication (France, coordinator); European Prison Education Association (Norway); University of Gloucestershire (UK); Athens Lifelong Learning Institute (Greece); CESIE (Italy).

Skills4Life focuses on the personal development of young people in conflict with the law. By applying the principles of desistance and agency theory, the project has developed and implemented an intervention that values people for who they are and what they could become, rather than judging them, reject or confine them to what they have done.

The objective of the project is twofold:

1. To create a new context, in which young people in conflict with law can create new identities and project themselves towards new life paths away from crime,
2. To provide them with the tools they need to resume their lives after their release.

To achieve its objectives, the S4L project proposed the development of a learning program that considers the needs of the individual so the learner can:

- develop personally.
- successfully face challenges - both while serving their sentence and after their release
- access a fulfilling life

Skills4Life has a different approach to training offered in prisons insofar as its approach is based on the real needs of young people.

The Skills4Life program:

- ✓ Is designed for secure framework/ setting.
- ✓ Is adaptable to the needs of the participants and the skills of the educator.
- ✓ Is dynamic to support a population in transition.
- ✓ Takes into account other activities carried out within the framework.
- ✓ Presents a way to have a complete and holistic Curriculum to prepare youth for the transition back into the community.
- ✓ Offers a large number of varied educational resources.

The project objectives:

- ❖ Understand how young people feel about the training received in prison and determine what will be useful to them once released,
- ❖ Develop skills that could help them become more responsible and guide them towards individual development to live in society.
- ❖ Equip young people with the necessary life skills to help them meet the challenges they will face during their sentence and after their release.

This objective can be achieved by:

- ❖ Exploring emotional responses to problems.
- ❖ Showing how to foster healthy relationships
- ❖ Teaching them to plan and organize themselves so that they can meet the demands of education and employment.

To achieve the objectives of the project, we have developed:

A curriculum composed of 4 modules:

Module 1: Empowering Yourself

Module 2: Social bonds and personal relationships.

Module 3: Life skills

Module 4: Moving on

Along with:

- ✓ 1 Student handbook
- ✓ 1 Trainer's book detailing the 4 modules.
- ✓ 1 Implementation guide

This guide presents the process for setting up the Skills4Life program in your structure and answers the questions you may have before implementing this methodology in your setting.

Desistance refers to the process of letting go of crime.

If the notion of desistance initially implies an exit from delinquency, and therefore abstinence from committing offences, researchers have extended this notion to the process by which individuals maintain this cessation of delinquent acts (e.g. Bushway, Piquero, Broidy, Cauffman & Mazerolle, 2001; Laub & Sampson, 2011; Maruna, 2001).

Research on the subject examines the factors associated with desistance and tries to understand what drives people with a history of delinquency to turn away from it.

Desistance is generally theorized in terms of the explanatory factors believed to determine the process. Among the different classifications of theories explaining desistance, those of Maruna (1997) and Barry (2010) are the most dominant in literature. Maruna (1997) dichotomizes theories of desistance according to the ontogenetic and sociogenetic paradigms.

- ✓ **The ontogenetic paradigm** is based on the assumption that age is the cause of resistance.
- ✓ **The sociogenic paradigm** refers to the social factors believed to cause change, such as social boundaries and informal social control.

Barry (2010) distinguishes three classifications of theories of desistance which she defines as individual, structural and integrative.

- ✓ **Individual theories** offer two main orientations: those based on the maturation process (in reference to the ontogenetic paradigm of Maruna, 1997) and those relating to rational choice theories (Cornish and Clarke, 1985). These refer to the ability of individuals to make decisions to start and stop committing crimes.
- ✓ **Structural theories** are based on factors believed to explain desistance, including social ties, employment, and marriage. This category fits into the sociogenic paradigm of Maruna (1997).
- ✓ **Integrative theories**, which combine the first two categories.

What is "agency"?

- ✓ An actor, in the first sense of the term, is a person who acts, who has a role, who is part of a project. **Agency is a person's power to act, his "ability to intervene in the world and on others"**.

In psychology, agency is the perception of oneself as an actor in the world who makes things happen, and not just as someone to whom things happen. It can be conscious or not, and intentional or not. An agent usually, but not always, has some sort of direct perception of its activity; some are also aware of the objectives of their activity.

According to Albert Bandura, "self-efficacy is the key variable of agency".

Agency or the art of acting on one's learning:

In pedagogy, it is the power of a learner to act on his learning and to be an actor in his own learning. When learners are active and use their power, they are agents of their actions and therefore demonstrate agency. In education, Hayward (2012) defines agency as the ability to develop independent thought and the ability to act freely on one's ideas.

"Prison education can provide the structural opportunity necessary for the development of a new identity." (Szifris et al. 2018)

As studies on the subject point out, engagement is considered the key to learning and success in school (Crick, 2012; Fredricks, Filsecker and Lawson, 2016).

Many young people in conflict with the law are disengaged from formal education and many have dropped out of school (Ahmed Shafi et al., 2018). Involvement has also been shown to have beneficial effects on delinquent behaviors such as school truancy, substance abuse and delinquency (Hirschfield & Gasper, 2011; Wang & Fredricks, 2014).

Emphasis should therefore be placed on creating an environment in which the learner is not merely reactive, but proactive and contributes to their own knowledge and experiences.

It is important to promote engagement with a program for it to be effective. These ideas are supported by the United Nations (2018), which highlights that programs based on desistance theory need to promote motivation, human capital - such as self-efficacy and agency - and social capital, which includes factors such as supportive relationships and employment.

Participating in prison education can promote a positive identity (Szifris et al., 2018). In their theory of prison education, Szifris et al. (2018) argue that "prison education can provide the structural opportunity required to develop a new identity". However, this only happens when two key elements are present:

- When facilitator/educator promotes a culture of growth and development within the program
- When the children and young people are engaged with the education program

Conclusion:

It is therefore essential that young people are involved in the formal and informal learning process to ensure their engagement and enable their involvement in educational programs.

The project results.

1. Review of the Missing Social, Emotional and Personal Skills of Young Offenders

This report was developed using data collected from the young people we seek to help. We want to make sure that the skills we teach them are the ones they really need.

We therefore used data from interviews with 80 young people from France, Italy, the United Kingdom and Greece.

Among the young people interviewed, 40 came from detention centers and were preparing to be released, and 40 had just been released from a detention center.

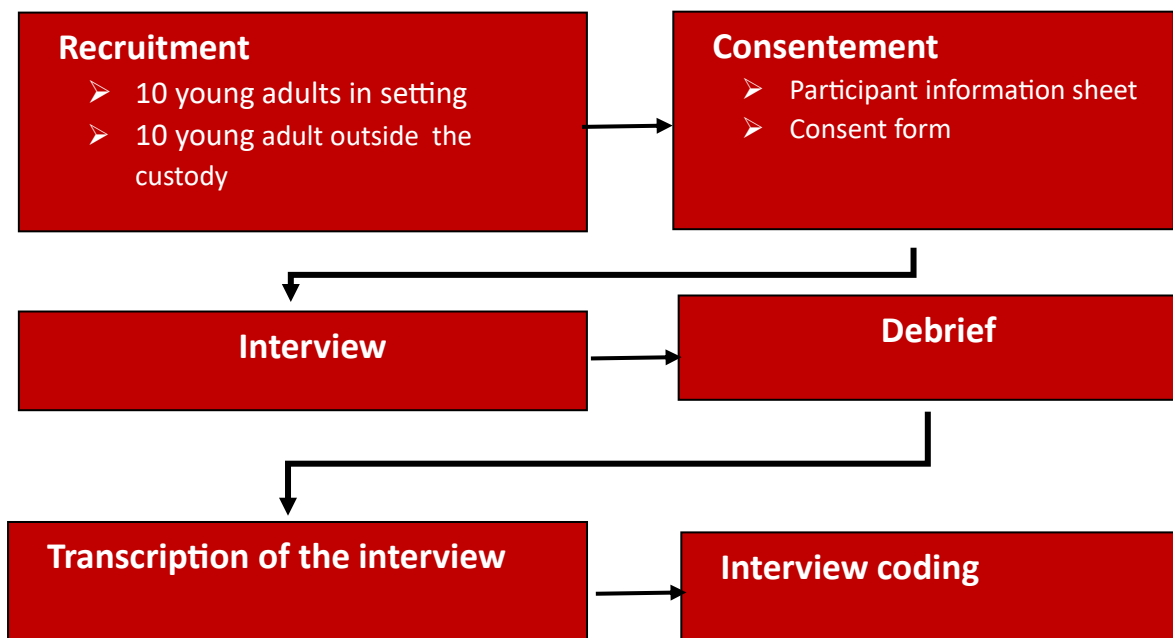
We focused on previous educational experiences, as well as those lived in prison, in order to obtain a balanced view.

The content of the educational program as designed was based on the results of this analysis;

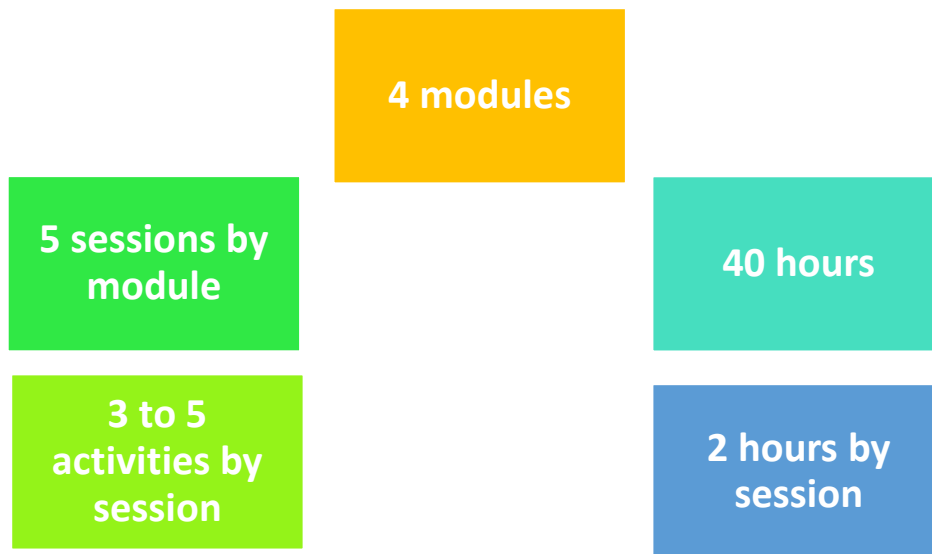
In doing so, the program builds on the experiences and needs of young people themselves.

How did we proceed?

This methodological review has been organized in chronological order. We started with recruiting participants. Then we conducted the interviews. We collected the data and analyzed it.



2. Skills4Life curriculum in figures:



The curriculum in detail:

Module 1. Being Yourself: The objective of this module is to make the young person feel empowered as an individual.

Module 2. Building Relationships: The aim of this module is to help young people in detention to maintain and improve their relationships.

Module 3. Life Skills: This module focuses on 'applied' life skills and aims to prepare young people to make practical decisions in everyday life.

Module 4. Moving on: This module focuses on the practical aspects of life after release and their effective planning as a means of reducing the prospects of recidivism and therefore promoting desistance.

3. The Skills4Life pedagogical resources

✓ **The Trainer's Guide:** this booklet will guide the trainer throughout the training, providing additional explanations concerning the support, the tools and the approach. It also provides activity templates, links to videos, etc.

✓ **The Student's Handbook:** is intended for young participants, in order to allow them to navigate through the content of the training. It follows the structure of the program but contains illustrations and simplified content.

It also contains an individual booklet which is completed during the individual coaching sessions. Each young person will leave with a list of useful addresses to find a job, accommodation, an association to help fight addiction, pass their driving license, etc., but also the description and the sequence of the different stages to be completed in order to achieve their goal.

It must be printed and distributed to each young person who will follow the training.

4. Additional teaching and learning materials

- ✓ Pre and post training questionnaires
- ✓ Evaluation forms



How the results were tested

The validation of the results was done through workshops comprising the 4 modules of 10 hours, i.e. a total of 40 hours per workshop and per partner country.

Country	Number of settings who piloted the Curriculum	Number of Educators trained	Number of young people who completed the curriculum piloting
UK	2	19	16
ITALY	5	13	18
GREECE	3	3	20
FRANCE	1	2	20

Following the workshops, we carried out an evaluation test. Here are some comments from educator / trainers and evaluation from trainers and trainees.

The proposed program: *“The adaptability and flexibility of the program. Its modular structure made it possible to organize the activities in a flexible and accessible way, and to adapt them to the needs of the setting. Each trainer was able to adapt the order of the modules and sessions. »*

Educational material: *“ The material is well adapted to the target population”. Most of the trainers will use it in the future.*

The personal benefit: *« The project allowed young people to start thinking about what they want to do in the future and what steps they need to take to achieve their goals».*

The relation trainers/trainees: *« The project has improved the relationship between educators and young people. It put them in a new and different role and allowed them some one-on-one time. Some educators also participated in activities with young people, sharing their emotions and their challenges. ».*

However, certain points should be kept in mind:

The language: *« It is sometimes difficult to communicate in the same language when you have a group of migrants who speak different languages. »*

The duration: *« If you want to follow all the modules, count about 5 months».*

The temporality of the sentence: *“It happens that young people leave the center, and that new people arrive. Training must therefore be as flexible as possible.».*

Setup advice:

- ✓ Organize activities internally, including more staff and allowing the program to fit into other activities already planned.
- ✓ Create mapping tools to check which aspects of the program have already been covered.
- ✓ Work in small groups
- ✓ Allow educators to participate as well, in order to create a more horizontal educational framework. Perhaps include guidelines on how to proceed if they wish.
- ✓ Have printed material.
- ✓ Select trainers carefully.

How to implement the results of the Skills4Life project in your structure

Here are the steps to follow to implement the Skills4Life program in your setting.

I. Preparation:

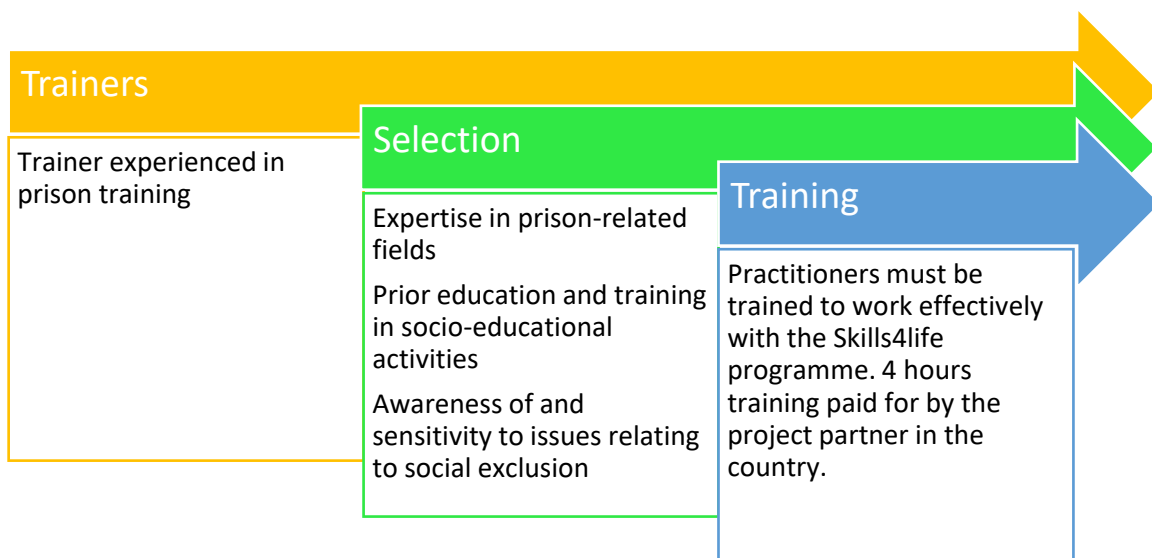
Order or download the Skills4Life program	Print positioning tests	Satisfaction questionnaires	Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Trainer's guide• The S4L Curriculum (PDF or PPT)• The pedagogical resources• The Student handbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• pre positioning• post positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For students• for trainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• www.skillforlife.org• isc-saumur.fr (France)

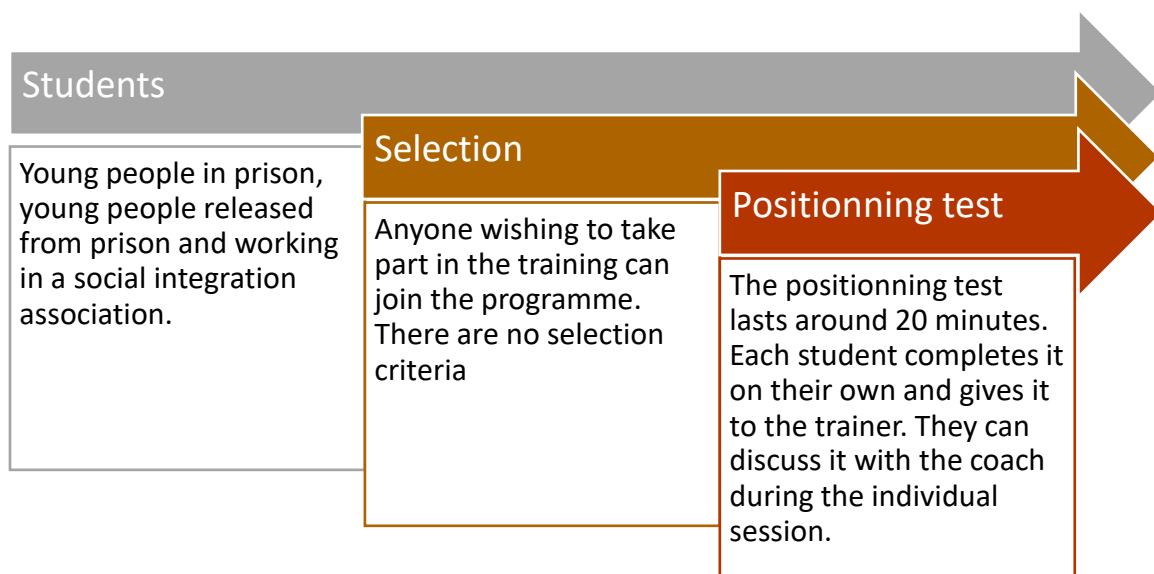
Frequently Asked Question

What happens if a young person does not have time to take the pre-training questionnaire before starting training?

It's not serious. He can do it later. The positioning test serves above all to bring out the needs of the young person and to help him become aware of them. It is also useful for the trainer to know on which module he should insist.

Preparing to set up the Skills4life program.





Frequently Asked Question

How many young people should attend each session?

Small groups are preferable because each young person will have to talk about themselves, and it is easier in small groups.

What happens if one of the participants cannot read or write?

The modules are designed in such a way that almost all the resources are visual. If writing is required, you can write for them.

How should participants be selected?

Training should be voluntary. It is therefore wise to present the program to them and to organize it with them. It is a good way to involve young people in their own learning.

Delivery of training

The training is best delivered in small groups (8 participants maximum) in order to facilitate communication and especially exchanges between the young people and the trainer. Too large a group can sometimes lead to the isolation of one or two people. Take the pre-training questionnaire. Then insofar as each module is independent, it is possible to start the training with module 3 for example. However, it would be good for each young person to have their exit booklet completed according to their own problem.

Before starting the training, it is advisable to read The Trainer's Guide. It is the tool to follow because it includes all the different stages, the progress at the level of each module, the exercises offered, the links to the videos.

Each student will receive his/ her student's handbook which will allow him /her, in addition to following the course, but also to note in the last part of the booklet, the result of his progress, the results of the work carried out in progress and during the coaching sessions (address book, CV, cover letter, etc.)

Frequently Asked Question

If the release is near, which module to use?

As the educator, you may assess whichever Module is best suited to support the learner. For example, it may be Module 4 or Module 1 depending on their needs.

Should the order of the modules be respected?

No, you can organize the modules according to the needs of the young people.

What if you are not able to implement the entire program in the order listed?

Refer them to the Trainers Guide and the new Planner to see how the program can best be adapted to your existing offer.

What if learners don't engage?

This is a common problem across all subjects, if some parts are hard for the students to engage in because it's a hard subject to talk about, you could go to another task and maybe return to it later.

It is important to find the "hook" which interests the group and work from there. Consider relevant rewards within your setting and take breaks. Enlist the help of popular staff and young people who have completed the curriculum sessions.

Sometimes, you may need to change the session or just wait till next time.

What if you have a new group of learners but are in Module 2?

A new group of learners means you have to start at the beginning of the program. But if you know that some learners are able to handle the content of module 2, for example, you can choose to continue. It all depends on your professional judgment.

What if the learners have different levels?

All sessions can be adapted to the different ability levels of a group, but you as a professional will need to consider how best to present the activity to make the most of different ability levels. It may be necessary to adapt certain supports.

What happens if a learner is released before completing all modules?

When selecting participants, we must ensure that they will participate in all modules. But if one of them has to leave before the end of all the modules, you can work with him/her on module 4 and give him/her the "Release booklet".

The different evaluations:

The opinions of the people trained, whether in terms of content, pace, teaching method, etc. should be taken into account in order to adapt the training offer accordingly, and above all in order to bring continuous improvement to the training program and the workshops.

The post training questionnaire at the end of training allows to:

- ✓ Check that the young person has progressed.
- ✓ Ensure the effectiveness of the training.
- ✓ See which module the young person has followed.
- ✓ Know what are the points to review if necessary
- ✓ Know if the resources have been used.

The training satisfaction evaluation test allows to check:

- ✓ If the training met the expectations of the young person
- ✓ If the trainer was able to adapt to the group
- ✓ If the communication was effective
- ✓ If there are any suggestions for improvement
- ✓ If the content of the training is relevant, useful and well structured.
- ✓ If young people found the training interesting, engaging and motivating.
- ✓ Whether learners have acquired new skills or knowledge as a result of the training.



Summary

The Skills4life project is an innovative and ambitious project, but we have succeeded in creating course materials that are both:

Adaptable: to different audiences, whether in reception facilities for young people in conflict with the law, whether in prison or outside, the project modules meet the needs of young people. When piloting the project, we found that this program could also meet the needs of incarcerated both older adults and ex-prisoners.

Modular: you can present the modules in the order that corresponds to your needs, work only on one or more modules.

Sustainable: the modules can be improved and modernized to follow the evolution of society as closely as possible.

Enriching: the content of the various modules and other educational resources is complete and accompanied by numerous sources that allow you to deepen your knowledge.

All the best with using Skills4Life in your setting with your learners!

The Skills4Life team



All Skills4Life materials can be downloaded for free from the Skills4Life website:

<https://skills4life-project.com/>

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Project internet website

Scan the following QR Code to access to the project website



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