



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الإتحاد من أجل المتوسط

Mediterranean Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform

Biannual Newsletter on Sustainable Blue Economy

Welcome to the 18th issue of the biannual newsletter on Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean region!

Explore the most updated information related to the work of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and its partners to promote the SBE in the Mediterranean region.

April 2025 | Issue no. 18

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→ Read our [Quick user and onboarding guide](#) to get the most out of MedBESP.

Latest News

1. 17th UfM Regional Platform on Sustainable Blue Economy (19-20 February 2025, Barcelona)

On February 19, 2025, UfM countries, observers and experts gathered together at the UfM Secretariat premises in Barcelona, Spain, for the 17th meeting of the UfM Regional Platform on Sustainable Blue Economy. UfM countries and Mediterranean SBE stakeholders gathered together in order to continue to set the path towards the implementation of the [2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on SBE](#) and its related [Roadmap](#), focusing on (inter alia): the agreed upon Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation mechanism; Joint emerging and ongoing initiatives, including ongoing synergies with WestMED ; funding opportunities; and the launch of the [new UfM publication on 'Advancing towards SBE in the Mediterranean'](#). The meeting was organized back-to-back with a study visit (20/02) co-organized with the World Ocean Council (WOC) and structured around Barcelona's Blue Tech Port and SBE ecosystem. [Learn more here.](#)



2. MED Talks: Fostering dialogue between Northern and Southern shores (16 December 2024, Online)

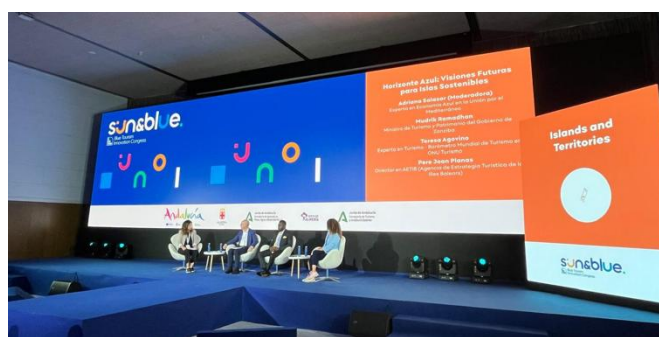
Together with Interreg Euro MED, the Union for the Mediterranean organized the second edition of the “MED Talks: Fostering Dialogue Between Northern and Southern Shores”. The webinar, which built on the success of the first edition, focused on the progress



achieved by the 56 projects selected under the Interreg Euro-MED Programme’s four missions: **strengthening an innovative sustainable economy, protecting the natural environment and heritage, promoting green living areas, and enhancing sustainable tourism**. Special attention was given to the **progressive involvement of partners from non-EU countries**, sharing concrete examples of activities that have already been implemented, as well as those planned for the near future. [Learn more and access the recording of the webinar here.](#)

3. Sun&Blue - Blue Tourism Innovation Congress (20-22 November, Almeria)

Coastal and maritime tourism is one of the main economic and strategic sectors for Mediterranean countries, accounting for 13% of Med countries’ exports and 23% of the service sector. Now in its second edition, Sun&Blue has gained prominence as a relevant annual gathering on Sustainable Maritime and Coastal Tourism and Sustainable Blue Economy. Taking place on November 20-22, 2024, at the Cabo de Gata Exhibition and Conference Center in Almería, Spain, the congress offered a unique platform for experts and stakeholders to



explore the latest trends and solutions in Sustainable Blue Tourism, encompassing a wide range of sectors and tracks, including destinations, ports and cruises, islands, gastronomy, hospitality, culture, heritage, and more. During the congress, the UfM notably participated in two key events: The **Official Side Event of the WestMED Initiative, aimed at launching WestMED’s new Technical Group (TG) on Sustainable Tourism**; and as moderator of a panel on **‘Blue Horizon: Future Visions for Sustainable Islands’** within the Plenary of the Congress (Islands and territories track) including as speakers the Minister of Tourism and Heritage of Zanzibar, the Tourism Strategy Agency of the Balearic Islands (AETIB), and UN WTO. [Learn more.](#)

4. 9th UfM Working Group on Environment (29 January, 2025, Online)

In its 9th edition, the [UfM Working Group on Environment](#) brought together online on January 29, 2025, UfM countries, stakeholders, and experts to continue making progress towards the implementation of the [2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Action](#) and its implementation roadmap, the so-called [GreenerMed Agenda 2030](#).

Among the key agenda items discussed were (inter alia) relevant policy developments at regional level (chiefly: biodiversity COP 16, climate COP 29, desertification COP16, progress towards the BBNJ, Global Plastics Treaty; and COP 24 of the Barcelona Convention); latest activities under the GreenerMed agenda (including the Medpan/World Ocean Council/[UfM Webinar on ‘Other Effective Conservation Measures \(OECM\)’](#); the 8th Mediterranean Forest Week; and the Interreg EuroMed/UfM Med Talks 2025); and emerging and ongoing joint projects and activities. [Learn more.](#)



5. MEDIGREEN project, MPA Europe, and Mediterranean MSP Community of Practice join forces in Madrid (29 January, Madrid and online)

Bringing together key players in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), the EMFAF-funded [MEDIGREEN](#) project partners gathered in Madrid on 27-29 January for a dynamic three-day event structured around the Opening Conference of the project and on accelerating the [European Green Deal](#) transition through MSP across the Mediterranean Sea,

including in Algeria and Tunisia. The event kicked off on 27 January 2025 with the **MEDIGREEN Steering Committee meeting**, where partners reviewed the project's objectives and set strategic priorities for the next phase of implementation. On 28 January, momentum continued with a **joint conference of MEDIGREEN and MPA Europe projects**, where the UfM presented the UfM's SBE policy framework and related support to the Med MSP process. The final day, 29 January, featured the **Mediterranean MSP Community of Practice meeting**, continuing to lay the groundwork for stronger regional cooperation. [Learn more here](#) and [here](#).



6. Ecomondo 2024 Conference - Accelerating Blue Interregional Cooperation in the Mediterranean Basin (7 November 2024, Rimini and online)

On November 7th, 2024, in the framework of ECOMONDO 2024, maritime clusters were in the spotlight with the organization by Cluster BIG 'Blue Italian Growth' of a Session on **"Accelerating blue interregional cooperation in the Mediterranean basin - Sharing a common strategic vision, creating transferrable collaboration models"**. In particular, the UfM took part in Session 1 on the **internationalization of maritime clusters in the Mediterranean Sea basin**. Indeed, maritime clusters are powerful levers to strengthen regional and cross-border cooperation – on Sustainable Blue Economy and beyond. As maritime clusters reach maturity, gain more access to finance, and build more solid and more diverse partner and stakeholder ecosystems, the **internationalization of maritime clusters** (the unique capability of maritime clusters to support, to boost, and fast-track the expansion of 'local Blue Economy industries' into international markets) **is also increasingly emerging as a powerful lever and need**. The event explored emerging clusters initiatives in the southern Med with a focus on the various cooperation models and direct testimonies by clusters coming from northern and southern shore countries. [Learn more](#).



7. 26th 'Forum International des réalités' Challenges and new trends in the Mediterranean tourism sector (27-29 November 2024, Hammamet, Tunisia, and online)

The 26th edition of the 'Forum International des réalités' launched on November 27 in Hammamet, Tunisia, bringing together experts and tourism stakeholders around the theme: "Challenges and New Trends in the Mediterranean Tourism Sector." At the heart of the discussions: a sector undergoing rapid transformations in the face of environmental, technological, and economic demands. Together with key partners, including GIZ, and key stakeholders including the Swiss Cooperation and private sector representatives (i.e. Barcelo group), the UfM took part in a roundtable discussion on Sustainable and responsible tourism in the Mediterranean. [Learn more](#).



8. Launch of S3 Thematic partnership 'Shipbuilding Propulsion Systems Alliance' with 26 partners from 3 EU sea basins

Maritime transport and Ports represent a cornerstone sector to win the challenge of sustainability of the Blue Economy, considering its impact in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA) and job creation across the EU and its neighboring regions. Greening the EU maritime transport is therefore pivotal to 'green' the EU



blue economy at large (including tourism, aquaculture, biotech, and marine renewable energy). But a green transition for the EU maritime transport sector requires a common vision to equip ports and fleets in a coherent way, within a network capable of ensuring their operativity. In this framework, within the work of the [WestMED Technical Group on Green Shipping](#), the strong need emerged to work towards re-configuring the shipbuilding supply chain and creating the production capacity to equip fleets with propulsion systems, using alternative fuels. For this reason the WestMED Technical Group on Green Shipping, the EU Seabasin Assistance Mechanism, and with the promotion of CINEA and DG Mare, have supported the establishment of a dedicated Smart Specialisation (S3) Thematic Partnership in this area, encountering the interest of the impacted territories where shipbuilding operations are mostly located, and involving different stakeholders – authorities, research and innovation centres, businesses and investors. [Learn more.](#)

9. Interreg NEXT MED 2nd Call for Proposals on Green Transition Projects (Deadline: 15 May 2025)

The Interreg NEXT MED Programme is pleased to announce the official launch of the Call for Green Transition Projects, providing €83.7 million in European Union's funding to address climate challenges across the Mediterranean region. Building on the success of the first call for proposals, which saw 630 projects submitted, this second call aims to drive scalable, innovative, and collaborative solutions, reflecting the collective ambition of the 15 participating countries for a low-carbon, climate-resilient Mediterranean. [Learn more.](#)



10. WestMED Implementation report 2023-2024

You can now [access the 2023-2024 West Med Implementation Report](#) and read all about the

achievements of these past two years. In 2024, the WestMED Initiative completed six years of implementation and it's time to take stock of the achievements made so far regarding its objectives, namely to help achieve a safer and more secure maritime space, create a smarter and more resilient



Blue Economy, and improve the maritime governance in the Western Mediterranean. Next to the objectives and progress made in general, it gives an overview of the co-presidencies; the new ministerial declaration (adopted in Malta in 2023); the activities of the five thematic/ technical stakeholder groups; cooperation with key partners such as the UfM, World Ocean Council, Ascame, and Interreg; synergies across seabasins with the Atlantic and the Black Sea; and a list of projects supported during this time-frame. [Learn more.](#)

11. Marine litter on the EU coastline down by almost one-third

The newly published EU Coastline Macro Litter Trend report found that the amount of marine macro litter (items bigger than 2.5 cm) in the EU coastline has dropped by 29 % between the baseline period (2015-2016) and the assessment period (2020-2021). While the largest reduction in terms of percentages is seen at the Baltic Sea (45%), major efforts at the Mediterranean and the Black Sea have led to impressive reductions in absolute numbers of litter items on the beaches. On the EU coastlines, single-use plastic was reduced by 40 %. Fisheries-related items decreased by 20 % and plastic bags were down by 20 %. This achievement is the result of multilateral, national, regional, and citizen efforts triggered by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. [Learn more and download the report here.](#)



12. EU Mission 'Restore our Ocean and Waters': 19 projects to receive technical assistance under Horizon Europe

What do Seagrass aquaculture, plastic waste removals, restoring biodiversity and circular economy have in common? They all play a crucial role in advancing the [EU Mission 'Restore our Ocean and Waters'](#) – one of five missions under [Horizon Europe](#), the EU's research and innovation programme. 19 projects, spanning from fishery communities to ports and islands, start receiving technical assistance from top-notch experts in their field. This technical assistance will help communities across the different sea-basins to scale up and further develop their project with tailor made and dedicated support.

The selected projects are expected to play an important role in the implementation of the Mission in particular in the deployment and upscaling phase of the Mission. Specifically, of the 19 selected projects, 14 focused on the first objective of the Mission (biodiversity conservation and restoration), 7 on the second objective (pollution prevention and elimination), and 12 on the third (sustainable blue economy), highlighting their intricacy as some of them simultaneously tackle multiple objectives. The projects have been selected following a call for proposals launched in spring 2024. A broad geographic representation is ensured as the projects span across all [four Mission Ocean and Waters Lighthouses](#). [Learn more.](#)



13. EU and neighbourhood countries agree 1st shared EU-Albania fisheries restricted area and other measures to protect Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and biodiversity (8 November 2024, Rome)

During the 47th annual meeting of the [General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean](#) (GFCM), which took place on 4-8 November in Rome, the EU and neighbourhood countries agreed on important measures in favour of sustainability of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The EU and neighbourhood countries agreed on measures to continue strengthening sustainability strategies at sea basin level, including through subregional cooperation. They also agreed to consolidating the overall **management framework** for the Adriatic and Black Seas on the principles of the common fisheries policy (CFP), an important delivery of the GFCM subregional approach that is supported by the EU as main financial donor. [Learn more.](#)



14. Commission supports Maritime Spatial Planning globally

Since 2017, the Commission, in partnership with IOC-UNESCO, is supporting/funding the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Global initiative to promote the better use of maritime space at a global scale. It aims to meet the ambitious goal of covering at least 1/3 of the global maritime areas under national jurisdictions with marine spatial plans by 2030. In October 2024, at the 6th International Maritime Spatial Planning Forum in Bali, Indonesia, the Commission announced that the MSP Global Initiative would continue with the MSPglobal 3.0 project. This edition of the Maritime Spatial Planning Forum gathered over 100 participants from 46 countries for three days of intense discussion. It was co-organised by the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries of the Republic of Indonesia (MMAF) together with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (UNESCO-IOC) and the Commission. [Learn more.](#)



15. EU Maritime Spatial Planning Week 2024: a decade of activities and support to cross-border cooperation (22-24 October 2024, Marseille)

The EU Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Week marked a decade of EU support to cross-border cooperation on maritime spatial planning. The European Maritime Spatial Planning Week brought the MSP community together in Marseille (France) to reflect on the achievements made across European seas, discuss current policies, and plan for the next steps to tackle new challenges for maritime spatial planning in the EU. Since the establishment of the MSP Directive in 2014, a lot has happened in the European sea-basins. 20 EU coastal Member States have developed MSP plans, 2 others are working hard to get there. [Learn more.](#)



16. Advancing MSP in the Mediterranean: Key Takeaways from the 3rd MSP Working Group Meeting (20 March 2025, online)

On 20 March 2025, the 3rd Meeting of the Working Group on MSP took place online, bringing together 18 participants from Mediterranean countries, the European Commission, MedCITIES, and PAP/RAC. The discussions centered on providing technical input for the Position Paper: Advancing MSP in the Mediterranean, as well as reviewing updates on the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD). [Learn more.](#)



17. BlueMissionMed Spanish Hub On-Line Policy Workshop "Solutions to Face Plastic Pollution" (24 March 2025, online)

On March 24th, the online Policy Workshop of the BlueMissionMed project took place. The event focused on addressing solutions to tackle plastic pollution in oceans, seas, and other bodies of water, with an emphasis on innovative and transformative approaches to two key challenges specific to the Mediterranean region. The session aimed to strengthen the capacities of decision-makers in implementing effective policies against plastic pollution and to better align policy and governance tools with the objectives of the Mission. [Learn more.](#)



Resources and Opportunities

1. 3rd (2024) Edition of the UfM Publication on 'Advancing towards Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean'

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) has published the third edition of its periodic publication on the status of the Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean, following the 2021 and 2017 editions. The aim of this publication remains to provide an accurate depiction of the **status of Sustainable Blue Economy sectors in the Mediterranean region, focusing on key emerging trends and drivers for the sustainable development of BE sectors based on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative data available**. For each of the sectors addressed, an overview of the main economic indicators is provided, paired with key environmental, technological and social considerations. The **main regional cooperation platforms, initiatives**, and projects are highlighted. Recent developments in terms of policy frameworks and technical cooperation - and particularly the role of the Union for the Mediterranean - are also outlined. In addition, the report provides an assessment of the **future outlook (2025-2030), based on observed trends, drivers and challenges**. Lastly, the present edition of the report places once more a specific focus on **employment opportunities and blue skills**, providing an overview of expected career pathways and skills needs for each sector/ministerial priority. [Learn more here](#). And access the full report here: [English version](#) / [French version](#) / [Arabic version](#).



2. New EMFAF call for tenders (Deadline: 07 May 2025)

The subject of this call for tenders is to provide support towards **streamlining, enhanced accessibility, harmonisation, and efficiency of Article 19(3) 'primary' data management of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive**. The call has a budget of € 7,310,00, with a maximum contract duration of 26 months. [Learn more](#).



3. Challenge of the Year 2025: Blue citizenship: engaging citizens, organizations and institutions (Deadline: 16 May 2025)

Every year the EU4Ocean Coalition selects and funds a (limited) number of projects for one year that contribute to the **strengthening of ocean literacy in Europe**, focusing on the topics identified in the 'Challenge of the year'. In 2025, the Challenge of the Year is entitled "Blue citizenship: engaging citizens, organizations and institutions" and will deepen the work started in 2024 on Blue Citizenship. The selected projects contribute to 'collective action', meaning that they bring together members of the communities to work together on concrete ocean literacy activities related to the topic covered by the Challenge of the Year. The selected projects are implemented within one year after their selection. [Learn more](#).



4. EU Commission Study to support and design skills development in the Blue Economy - Survey Results

On 4 November 2024, a Blue Skills Survey took place as part of the “**Study to support and design skills development in the blue economy**” commissioned by the European Commission’s [Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries](#) and [CINEA](#).

The survey report with the results is now available online on the [Maritime Forum](#). You can access the report via [this](#) link.

Blue economy skills survey
Presentation of results
and key findings



5. EU Fish Market report 2024 reveals trends and insights

The Commission released the [EU Fish Market report 2024](#), which focuses on the fishery and aquaculture market’s performance in 2022-2023. Key conclusions highlighted by the report include: 1) Europeans eat less fresh seafood at home because of rising prices; 2) Deterioration of the EU trade balance, and 3) Apparent consumption: aquaculture products gain ground. Furthermore, the apparent consumption of fishery and aquaculture products was 1% lower than in 2021. [Learn more](#).



6. Commission releases recommendations and good practices for sustainable aquaculture

The European Commission has published three new staff working documents to promote sustainable aquaculture in the European Union. These documents focus on three crucial topics: **access to space and water for freshwater and land-based aquaculture, climate-change adaptation, and energy transition**. These three new publications elaborate on the recommendations included in the strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture. Developed in collaboration with EU member states, aquaculture producers, the aquaculture advisory council, and scientific experts, they consolidate good practices and provide concrete examples to support EU countries in promoting sustainable aquaculture. [Learn more](#).



7. BlueInvest Platform: Accelerating the European blue economy

The European Union's BlueInvest platform is a pioneering initiative aimed at **accelerating innovation and investment opportunities in the sustainable blue economy**.

The European blue economy has grown faster than the overall land-based economy over the past decade and has been rapidly modernising. Alongside its traditional sectors (fisheries, aquaculture, transport, ports, coastal tourism), innovative blue economy activities, such as ocean renewable energy, blue bio-economy and bio-technology, and desalination, are evolving. To support the sustainable blue economy and mobilise private capital, the European Commission set up BlueInvest in 2019 with a **total budget of € 9.8 million to help maritime startups and SMEs that have transformative innovations in accessing private capital**. Since its launch, BlueInvest has directly benefited over 330 start-ups and scale-ups in the sustainable blue economy, helping them secure more than € 300 million in investments. The platform has also engaged over 300 investors and enabled the launch of new dedicated blue funds. [Learn more](#).



8. Mission Ocean & Waters Immersive Web Experience

The Mission Ocean and Waters Immersive Web Experience invites everyone to explore the Mission in a new, unique and interactive online platform that showcases the Mission goals, Lighthouses, and the diverse community working to restore Europe's ocean and waters. Through dynamic visuals and compelling content, this web experience offers an unexpected and fresh way to discover the many ways Mission Ocean and Waters is fostering collaboration between science, policy, and communities to tackle marine issues. Unlike traditional media, this uniquely blended platform's immersive scenes and opportunities for interaction provide visitors a one-of-a-kind web experience and learning opportunity, making ocean and waters conservation a fun and accessible endeavor for all. Visit <https://missionoceanwaters.eu> for the experience.



9. Call for tender: "Enhancing coordination and synergies in the field of Ocean Observation in the EU" (deadline: 02 June 2025)

The aim of this call for tender is to **map the EU Ocean Observation landscape**, and to develop and propose methodologies to enhance synergies and coordination of Ocean Observation including the description of two use cases and a strategy for stakeholder consultation and validation, including by a Member States Expert Group. Further details and how to apply via [this link](#). **Deadline is 2 June 2025.**



10. Calls for Proposals for Associated Regions

To address the impact-driven approach of the Mission and the nature of Innovation Actions, **funding under the Mission 'Restore our Ocean and Waters' projects is also available for Associated Regions**. The goal of these calls is to showcase the feasibility, replicability, and scalability of solutions developed within these projects in other areas. Associated Regions represent ecosystems (**e.g. neighbouring regions and/or regions in a different sea or river basin**) and/or less-developed regions that can benefit from the demonstration activities, with the view to build capacity to implement the innovative solutions to restore marine and freshwater ecosystems. Associated Regions need to be located in Member States or associated countries that are not part of the original Mission 'Restore our Ocean and Waters' project consortium. Calls are specifically targeted at local and/or regional public authorities. **The calls are published regularly [here](#). [Learn more.](#)**



Upcoming events

1. [European Maritime Day \(EMD\)](#), 21 – 23 May 2025, Cork – Ireland
2. [One Ocean Science Congress](#), 04 – 06 June 2025, Nice - France
3. [EU Digital Ocean Pavilion](#), 04-13 June 2025, Nice – France
4. [Monaco Blue Economy and Finance Forum \(BEFF\) 2025](#), 7-8 June 2025, Monaco
5. [UN Ocean Conference \(UNOC-3\)](#), 9-13 June 2025, Nice – France
6. [Mediterranean Day in the framework of UNOC-3](#), 10 June 2025, Nice – France (Centre Universitaire Méditerranéen)
7. [Annual S3 Conference](#), 18 June 2025, Brussels - Belgium
8. [From the Green Deal to the Oceans Pact: Strengthening Policy Coherence for Our Most Ambitious Marine Goals](#), 23 June 2025, Brussels & online
9. **Interreg Mediterranean Multi-programme Mechanism (MMM) coordination joint event Paths That Last - Collaborating for a Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean**, 25-26 June, Split – Croatia
10. **EMFAF-funded GREENMARINEMED Project Final Summits**, 01-02 July, Barcelona – Spain
11. [UfM Conference: The Tourism Sector; Employment-related opportunities and challenges](#), 02 - 03 July 2025, Athens – Greece
12. [5th annual Marine Robotics Summer School](#), 07 – 18 July 07 2025, Azores – Portugal
13. [International Conference on Marine Protected Areas in Marine Spatial Planning](#), 09 – 12 July 09, 2025, Bodø – Norway
14. [European Research and Innovation Days](#), 6 - 17 September 2025, Online & The Square, Brussels – Belgium
15. [EMSEA 2025 Conference](#), 17 – 19 September 2025, Ostend – Belgium
16. [8th Euro-Argo Science Meeting](#), 23 – 25 September 2025, Crete – Greece
17. [EU Macro-Regional and Sea Basin Strategies Days 2025](#), 24 – 25 September 2025, Brussels – Belgium
18. [SEAFUTURE 2025](#), 29 September to 02 October 2025, La Spezia – Italy
19. **18th UfM Regional Platform on Sustainable Blue Economy**, 14-15 October 2025 (Alexandria, Egypt, TBC)
20. [UNFCCC COP30](#), 10-21 November 2025, Belem – Brazil
21. [3rd 'Sun & Blue' Blue Tourism Innovation Congress](#), 19-20 November 2025, Almeria - Spain

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The present newsletter is financially supported by the European Union through the CINEA grant BEinMED.



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