



IWG

Women & Sport

**International Working
Group on Women & Sport**

2022 PROGRESS REPORT

SUMMARY

International Working Group on Women & Sport
Aotearoa New Zealand Secretariat 2018-2022
Women in Sport Aotearoa,
Ngā Wāhine Hākinakina o Aotearoa

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LEADING CHANGE



The participation of girls and women in sport and active recreation is subject to ‘intersectional influences issuing from mainstream culture, religion and patriarchy’.

WOMEN IN SPORT/INTERNATIONAL

1.1 CONTEXT

In May 1994 the ‘Women, Sport and the Challenge of Change’ conference took place in Brighton, England, organised and hosted by the former British Sports Council and supported by the International Olympic Committee, bringing together different organisations and countries to share ideas and experiences from within the global women and sport movement.

The conference itself was a starting point for change including the launch of the Brighton Declaration plus the creation of the International Working Group on Women & Sport (IWG).

Since 1998 the IWG have commissioned a quadrennial progress report to track the impact of four years of intervention at local and global levels, surveying the signatories to the 2014 Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration.

This report provides a summary of progress on women and girls in sport and physical activity since the IWG Progress Report 2013-2018 (2018 Progress Report), including:

- high level results with evidence of change
- key emerging themes
- COVID-19 and its implications for girls and women in both sport and physical activity
- priorities for action.

1.2 LOOKING BACK

Key themes and recommendations that emerged from the 2018 progress report included:

- women in leadership
- gender based violence
- media coverage and portrayal of women in sport
- gender mainstream strategies
- policy and action planning for gender equality,
- gender based research, monitoring and evaluation.

These were combined with the discussion at the 7th IWG Conference in 2018 conference and recommendations resulting in the IWG's Botswana Big 5 recommendations.

1.3 RESPONDENTS

In 2022 the survey received responses from a wide range of organisations including: ministry or government departments/sport and/or recreation councils (9%), Olympic or Paralympic committees (19%), sport federations/organisations (57%), women in sport organisations/groups (10%), sports or recreation clubs and groups (1%), and tertiary education providers (1%).

These came from around the world: Europe (32%), Asia (16%), the Americas (12%) Africa (11%), and Oceania (6%) as well as from organisations with an international focus (24%).

Botswana Big Five Recommendations

1

Media

Increased coverage of women's sport without limiting stereotypes

2

Accountability

Increase transparent resource allocation

3

Representation

Equitable leadership roles

4

Research to practice

Evidence based policies and practices

5

Communication

IWG digital platform



1.4 2022 PRIORITY ISSUES

Feedback from the 2022 respondents indicates that some similar issues recorded in the 2018 Progress Report remain while some new priorities are emerging.



COVID-19 has had an economic effect that impacts women’s rights. Women are the first to give up their positions if children and aging parents are at home due to the pandemic, leaving them vulnerable.

WOMEN IN SPORT ORGANISATION/
INTERNATIONAL.

Issues	2022	2018
Lack of women in leadership positions	✓	✓
Gender based violence in sport	✓	✓
Lack of women’s coverage/portrayal in sports media	✓	✓
Lack of women coaches and instructors	✓	✗
Discrimination/gender bias in elite system	✓	✗
Lack of gender mainstream strategies	✗	✓
Lack of policy and action plans for gender equity	✗	✓
Lack of gender-based research and evaluation	✗	✓

As highlighted in the 2018 Progress Report, one of the biggest barriers to achieving equity for girls and women in sport and/or physical activity lies in the fact that sport and physical activity are based on an outdated model that does not reflect modern society and the societal progress that has been made and contemporary events. COVID-19, in particular, has had negative consequences for women and girls, and sport and physical activity have also been impacted.

1.5 REPORT OVERVIEW

The topics covered in this report include:

- policy, strategy and action planning and research to track progress
- leadership and decision-making including the focus of human resources on girls and women
- coaching and instruction, education and coaching programmes and materials, referees, judges and umpires
- participation in physical activity and sport both in schools and in the wider context
- high-performance sport including the elite-level system and retirement from elite sport
- health and well-being including gender-based violence and eating disorders
- female-friendly places including facilities, environments and childcare
- media coverage and portrayal
- the impact of COVID-19 on progress.

Each section of the report provides:

- a summary of the current situation including data and comparative analysis with the previous reporting period
- examples of action being taken including links to the [IWG Insight Hub](#)
- reasons for action and inaction
- insights based on the evidence available
- recommendations for future action.

The full IWG Progress Report 2022 is available on the IWG Insight Hub: <https://www.iwginsighthub.org/>

2 A SUMMARY OF ACTION

In nearly all areas of investigation, organisations and their activities have had positive impacts on reducing the inequities experienced by girls and women in sport and physical activity.

The primary reasons that organisations gave for not taking action were:

- a lack of resources
- that the specific focus was not currently a priority
- that this topic was out of their organisational scope.

There are however a number of areas for intervention where there is low recognition and/or acceptance that a situation [such as lack of childcare] is an issue. These are explored in more detail in the body of this report.

2.1 MONITORING PROGRESS

Monitoring progress has been a key recommendation of many reports and is included in the Botswana Big 5.

The 2022 Progress Report survey collected information about research, evidence and analysis in the topics listed. While there has been an increase in the proportion of respondent organisations with action plans focusing on equity for girls and women, there has been little change in the number of those commissioning or undertaking research which specifically focuses on females in sport and physical activity. Capacity, resources and staffing are the main reasons preventing 29% of the organisations surveyed from undertaking female-focused research.

There has, however, been an increase in research, data and evaluation focused on understanding athletes, organisational staff, coaches and leaders through a gender lens.

A considerable range of research has been undertaken.

Athlete-focused research has included gender-specific needs and concerns, health issues (injury and illness), safety (e.g. headgear), physical conditioning and a specific focus on menstruation.

There has been considerable data collected about **participation**, including strategies and tactics to increase participation of girls and women.

Many organisations are **tracking gender balance** in senior and governance roles, across coaching and officials, and some are using these insights to develop specific interventions to improve the pathways, confidence and competence of women in these areas.



There is increased recognition of the value of female-focused research and that research can guide policy and programmes by focusing attention on specifically identified areas. More emphasis needs to be placed on tracking performance over time.

More than three quarters of respondents who had undertaken research were prepared to share this information, and this will be hosted on the Insight Hub as part of completing the IWG Progress Report.

2.2 STRATEGIES, INVESTMENT AND EVALUATION

Areas of major change are:

- strategies, policies and plans with a gender perspective **76%**
- gender targets **67%**
- monitoring and evaluation **56%**
- investment **54%**

Singly, or in combination, these activities have effectively increased the number of women and girls participating in recreation and sport, and reflect a greater understanding of the processes that drive change. However, nearly half of the policies and plans have no specific resource allocation, and fewer than half of respondents (46%) have evaluated their plans.

Recommendation 1
Continue to apply a gender lens to collect baseline information and track impact through project and programme evaluations.

“ We work to ensure others policies use a gender lens, have advised on international gender policies such as the IOC and any policies that are aligned to gender related issues such as safeguarding policies.

WOMEN IN SPORT/
INTERNATIONAL

2.3 LEADERSHIP – DECISION MAKERS, COACHES, OFFICIALS

A considerable proportion of the respondent organisations have been taking action to ensure that women are in positions of influence and/or that girls and women were a focus for action. In addition, nearly three-quarters had undergone constitutional change.

Areas of focus included:

- actions to increase the number of women as leaders **85%**
- staff or groups with gender focus, women's committees **40%**
- girls and women focused roles **33%**
- gender committees **16%**

Leadership and decision-making by women are being achieved through: constitutional change (74%), mentoring (60%), training (60%), networks (57%) and quotas (51%).

Coaches and instructors have been a focus for nearly three quarters of respondents. There was a reduced focus on referees, umpires, officials (51% was 58%). Tactics used included: campaigns, women-only courses and changed training and development materials.

Recommendation 2

Collect and share case studies on the IWG Insight Hub as a useful resource for other organisations wanting to drive change. Include sample constitutions, training and mentoring programme resources, links to research and evaluations.

Recommendation 3

Design and deliver training and development programmes and resources that acknowledge the specific requirements of girls and women as athletes, coaches, referees and umpires.

Recommendation 4

Drive system change to achieve gender balance throughout organisations, from board to place of play, creating environments where women thrive. Promote the business case of women in sport leadership as a key benefit.

2.4 PARTICIPATION

It is likely that COVID-19 had an impact on delivery in some contexts and may explain the decline in the proportion of respondent organisations that have focused on increasing the participation of girls and women. However, a greater range of interventions are being used.

Physical activity in schools (52% was 66%), has included initiatives focused on staff training (80%), girls trained to coach/officiate (78%), leadership programmes (71%) and girls-only opportunities (71%).

Organisations taking action to promote participation have reduced, (85% was 91%) however, organisations are using a range of the following approaches: training of personnel (76%), action plan (69%) and dedicated resources (56%).

The proportion of respondent organisations providing transport to sport and offering girls-only facilities has also decreased. This however remains a priority for some organisations especially in places where travelling alone is too dangerous, and where dedicated female-only facilities are the only way by which some young women get to participate.

Organisations need to refocus their efforts on increasing the participation of girls and women, a strategy of particular importance and value in a post-COVID-19 world. Training of staff, action plans with a gender focus and dedicated resources, safe travel and female-focused facilities are just some of many ways by which this can occur.

Recommendation 5

Continue empowering girls through developing their leadership and coaching skills.

Recommendation 6

Prioritise planning, resourcing and implementation of programmes that target those most highly impacted by the social and economic consequences of COVID-19.

Recommendation 7

Continue addressing issues of safe transport to sport and active recreation.

Recommendation 8

Leverage the new delivery modes tested during COVID-19 to provide programmes that reach a wider audience.

2.5 HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPORT

Elite sport (75%) also had a positive increase in actions to improve the situation for girls and/women, with activities including: campaigns to increase women coaches/leaders (74%), harm prevention policies (63%), funding allocations (60%) and support for emerging athletes (48%). There are some examples of the power of the athlete voice as a critical component in change.

There has been a slight decrease in organisations supporting women into **retirement** from elite performance (36% was 40%), which may be due to the extended Olympic cycle. Interventions have included: education opportunities (61%), careers coaching (57%) and workshops/seminars (57%).

Only a small percentage of respondents said that improving the situation for women in elite sport was 'not an issue'. This is a major change from the previous report.

The challenges for women in elite sport are now in the media headlights, and audiences are hearing more from women athletes. The situation has started to improve, beginning with a willingness to admit to issues, and to address harm prevention, funding, support, and retirement issues.

Recommendation 9

Structure the high-performance-sports system to value women as athletes, coaches and umpires, allowing career development without prejudice or barriers.

Recommendation 10

Continue to build policies and practices that keep girls and women safe in all sporting contexts, but particularly in high performance, where girls and women can thrive and lead, and share their knowledge and skills.

Recommendation 11

Develop and implement systems that support athletes in their preparation for retirement, and their transition from competition to retirement.

2.6 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The 2022 report identified: an increased focus on gender-based violence (67% was 63%) and no change to the focus on eating disorders (22%).

Competitions are a place for education, where women can come together and receive information and support.

While the **safety** of girls and women is a pressing issue for many, there has been little change since 2018.

Gender-based violence reduction interventions (67% was 63%) include: policy and guidelines, campaigns, educational programmes and victim support mechanisms.

Eating disorders continue to be a focus, and for a number of organisations this was an emerging priority. Limited resources and the demands of other priorities made this more complex. For some organisations, interventions are woven into their wider organisational well-being policies and programmes. Tactics being employed include: encouraging discussions about eating disorders and body image, amending nutrition education materials, and meeting with athletes' families, doctors and nutritionists.

Recommendation 12

Use sport as a safe place to provide information and resources to support girls and women.

Recommendation 13

Create more awareness of health and safety as an issue for girls and women in sport, and demonstrate how to build policies and processes that support safe participation in sport at all levels including implementing child safeguarding policies and safeguarding training.

Recommendation 14

Develop and implement policies and practices that prevent gender-based violence and communicate these throughout all parts of the sport and physical activity system.

Recommendation 15

Raise awareness of the implications of eating disorders on current performance and the long-term repercussions for women athletes. Use existing research and effective interventions to support this.

2.7 FEMALE-FRIENDLY SPACES

Fewer organisations are focusing on facilities that meet the needs of girls and women.

Facility provision interventions include: changing facilities, access to appropriate equipment, and resources to develop or improve facilities. There are proportionally fewer organisations, among those who responded, focusing on equitable venue scheduling, female-only times and safe transport.

There is still a lack of understanding about the specific needs of women athletes.

Childcare access and provision continue to be an issue with only 20% of respondents taking action to ensure childcare needs are met. In the main this focused on: providing a safe play space (64%), providing play equipment (57%) and providing resources to enable childcare in facilities (57%).

As with many aspects of women's sport, there is still an attitude of self-responsibility – women using extended family to care for their children. Staffing for childcare needs to take a higher priority, ensuring children's safety and women's ability to participate confidently.

Recommendation 16

Invest in facility development or improvement through a gender lens to ensure the appropriate vision of safe and appropriate spaces. Provide appropriate playing environments (changing facilities, gender-specific resources, equipment) and an environment that supports girls' and women's specific needs.

Recommendation 17

Use cost-effective, alternative programming and scheduling solutions that provide women-only or girls-only time slots.

Recommendation 18

Support childcare to enable women and men to participate, prioritising staffed childcare on site.

2.8 MEDIA

There has been no change in the proportion of responding organisations (61%) working to change the visibility of women in sport, and how women are portrayed.

Media coverage was typically achieved through two areas:

- Improving public knowledge of women athletes and women's sport **90%**
- Campaigns to promote improved coverage of women's sport **67%**

Media portrayal is an area that has been proactively managed, with many respondent organisations taking control of the content by providing positive imagery and stories of women athletes and teams to the media. Others were more proactive about their own content.

These interventions have extended to how women have been portrayed in the media, by providing media with images and stories of women athletes and teams (91%).

Recommendation 19

Create gender-positive, engaging content showing the strength and skills of women and girls participating and competing at all levels of sport to share with media outlets. Provide content that balances women/girls with men/boys.

Recommendation 20

Build awareness, capacity and capability of the media to increase awareness of issues and tactics for improving media representation of women and girls playing sport that reflects strength and skills not stereotyped images of women.

Recommendation 21

Monitor and report media coverage and representation.

3

IMPACT OF COVID-19

Three key themes emerged:

Barriers to participation

An increase in existing concerns [or barriers to participation] about issues such as violence, discrimination and a lack of action in getting women a fair deal in sport.

Training and competition

Recovery time for athletes in terms of training and competition - and for organisations once the restrictions are passed.

Financial insecurity

Impact on all parts of the system.

Ninety-five percent of the organisations who responded said they had been impacted by the pandemic. The impacts of COVID-19 on the respondents were wide-ranging, and for many these will be long-term.

In addition to the information captured as part of this research, there are other projects that have specifically researched the impact of COVID-19 and have indicated that vulnerable groups have been more impacted by the pandemic than others.

Where resourcing is an issue, the needs of women and girls are often the first to be pushed aside, which has been the experience for some. Sports of all kinds have been off the agenda in many countries for long periods, impacting athletes' abilities to hone their skills, compete and perform at their best. At the community level, some programmes have shut down altogether, and others have had to shift their focus to core delivery just to survive.

Some organisations were able to transform their delivery to online services, improve communications and become more technologically proficient, but those were in the minority of respondents.

Organisations need to focus on the most vulnerable groups - that is, those most impacted by the economic and health fallout of COVID-19, and in particular those who are victims of violence and aggression. Some organisations will need to refocus on their priorities, which may mean retaining current decision-makers, facilitators, enablers and participants, and then focusing on rebuilding their organisations.

Recommendation 22

Identify those groups most impacted by the social, health and economic impacts of COVID-19 (vulnerable groups, those isolated, etc) whose participation in sport is compromised, and prioritise investment and programmes to redress this impact.





4 BARRIERS TO EQUITY

Women's sport and the women in sport movement globally have developed in many different ways and there is increasing importance placed on evidence-based knowledge to inform political actions in sport, as in other spheres of life.

This 2022 Progress Report identifies the most significant barriers to achieving equity.

Lack of women in leadership

In most societies, leadership is most often associated with masculinity, compelling women leaders to work extra hard to gain respect and recognition because of their feminine traits that are associated with weakness. In patriarchal societies, men are considered to be better decision-makers, and, in some parts of the world, men are uncomfortable with women in decision-making positions in sports.

“ Significant and fundamental changes still need to be made particularly related to culture and paternal forums surrounding gender equality, equal pay, opportunities to lead, and training and development opportunities.

WOMEN IN SPORT ORGANISATION/INTERNATIONAL

“ Even though women rise to executive level positions [in Africa], decisions may still be made by lower ranked men.

OLYMPIC/PARALYMPIC/AFRICA

Gendered social norms and expectations

The gendered role and status of women (sometimes based on cultural and religious beliefs) result in pre-conceived ideas, stereotyped views of women and paternalistic attitudes.

“ There are many countries where women face many legal barriers which restrict their opportunities, especially in sport.

SPORT FEDERATION/EUROPE

Sport and physical activity are not seen as equal human rights for males and females

The multiplicity of roles and responsibilities that girls and women experience often results in less ‘free time’ to participate in sport.

“ Sport is still seen predominantly as recreational for women. Therefore, women are still expected to prioritise and do more “important tasks” and then participate in sports in their spare time.

SPORTS FEDERATION/AMERICAS

Socio-economic and financial factors

Facility hire, childcare, clothing, safe travel influence the abilities of women and girls to participate in many aspects of sport and physical activity.

“ Financial support that considers all aspects required for women and girls to participate - eg facilities’ availability and costs (times that suit women and girls are often pre-booked for men’s events such as 5 a side football), childcare options either on site of the activity or in the home, appropriate clothes, footwear, travel to and from [the activity].

SPORT FEDERATION/ EUROPE



Lack of visibility of girls and women

Invisibility in sport has a multiplying effect – you can't be her if you can't see her - and lack of media coverage reduces revenue generation opportunities.

“ Coverage for female sports to raise the profile, generate revenue and highlight the opportunities available.

SPORT FEDERATION/ EUROPE

Outdated models of sport

Male-centric models of planning and delivery are barriers for girls and women.

“ The biggest barrier to achieving equity for girls and women in sport and/or physical activity lies in the fact that sport and physical activity is based on an outdated model. The structure, values and ambition do not reflect modern society and the progress that has been made in other areas of society.

OLYMPIC/PARALYMPIC ORGANISATION/EUROPE

5 FOCUSING ON PROGRESS

In the context of the global pandemic, there has been positive progress in many areas, a testament to the hard work of committed leaders who are working to create equity for girls and women in sport and physical activity.

It is clear from the survey responses that there is a **determination to succeed** – people are committed to ensuring equity for girls and women in sport and physical activity.

Many organisations continue to work in countries and communities where gender roles and expectations are based on gendered societal norms, that create significant challenges. However, there is **vision, tenacity and pride in achievements** to date regarding the future for girls and women.

There is clear recognition of the challenges ahead, and a **willingness to share good practice** across policy and programmes, tool kits and training.

There is also **genuine gratitude for the work of the IWG** as an organisation that advocates for change, and provides a lightning rod for issues of equity in sport, and a hub for insights and action. The power of collective action is acknowledged and appreciated.

The **value of tracking and reporting progress** is that they ensure there is clear evidence for and of change, and reflect global impact.

The ongoing review of progress is also an opportunity to **reinforce the commitment that signatories** of the Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration, make to its principles.

CHANGE INSPIRES CHANGE

Global and societal change continue to create a dynamic environment for girls and women in sport and physical activity.

In the 2022 report, areas of inequity for women and girls identified as 'requiring most urgent action' are:

- under-representation in decision-making positions
- under-representation as coaches and instructors
- discrimination/gender bias in elite-performance areas.

Over the past four years priorities for action have changed – some have emerged more strongly and others have become less important.

Emerging issues

These emerging issues could be considered as topics of research in future progress reports.

- **gender identity** including transgender and intersectional influences
- **indigeneity**, particularly in colonised communities, requires further investigation
- **motherhood**, and the distinct lack of commentary about women as mothers taking part in sport and physical activity or the impact of motherhood on participation in physical activity and high-performance sport
- **people with disabilities** continue to have less visibility and value in the sporting system
- the economic and societal **impact of COVID-19** on women in sport.



BRIGHTON PLUS HELSINKI 2014 DECLARATION ON WOMEN AND SPORT

7.1 PRINCIPLES

1. Equity and equality in society and sport

a. Every effort should be made by state and government to ensure that institutions and organisations responsible for sport and physical activity comply with the equality provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Declaration of Berlin (UNESCO MINEPS V) and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

b. Equal opportunity to participate and be involved in sport and physical activity, whether for the purpose of leisure and recreation, health promotion or high performance, is the right of every woman, whatever her race, colour, language, religion, creed, sexual orientation or identity, age, marital status, ability/disability, political belief or affiliation, national or social origin.

c. Resources, power and responsibility should be allocated fairly and without discrimination on the basis of sex or gender, but such allocation should redress any inequitable balance in the benefits available to women and men.

2. Facilities

Women's and girls' participation in sport and physical activity is influenced by the extent, variety and accessibility of facilities, especially spaces which are safe and secure. The planning, design and management of these should appropriately and equitably meet the particular needs of women and girls in the community, with special attention given to the need for child care provision, safe transport and safety during participation and performance.



3. School and youth sport

a. Research demonstrates that girls and boys approach sport from markedly different perspectives; and that quality physical education (QPE) is particularly important for girls to learn the skills, knowledge and understanding they require for lifelong participation. Those responsible for sport, education, recreation and physical education of young people should ensure that an equitable range of opportunities and learning experience, which accommodate the values, attitudes and aspirations of girls, is incorporated in programmes to develop physical literacy and basic motor skills of young people.

b. In particular, the provision of QPE should be guided by the UNESCO Guidelines on Quality Physical Education and the ICSSPE International Position Statement on Physical Education.

4. Developing participation

a. There is growing evidence of the health benefits of active participation in sport and physical activity and strategies should embrace the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) for adult and young people's activity levels.

b. Women's participation in sport and physical activity is influenced by the range of activities available. Those responsible for delivering sporting opportunities and programmes should provide and promote activities which meet women's needs and aspirations during their whole lifespan from childhood to elderly women.



5. High performance sport

a. Governments and sports organisations should provide equal opportunities for women to reach their sports performance potential by ensuring that all activities and programmes relating to performance improvements take account of the specific needs of female athletes, and that these are built into sustainable infrastructures for developing sports performance.

b. Those supporting elite and/or professional athletes should ensure that competition opportunities, rewards, incentives, recognition, sponsorship, promotion, and other forms of support are provided fairly and equitably for both women and men.

6. Leadership in sport

Women remain under-represented in the leadership and decision making of all sport and sport-related organisations. Those responsible for these areas should develop policies and programmes and design structures which increase the number of women coaches, advisers, decision makers, officials, administrators, and sports personnel at all levels, with special attention given to recruitment, mentoring, empowerment, reward, and retention of women leaders.

7. Education, training and development

Those responsible for the education, training, and development of female and male coaches and other personnel, as well as managers and leaders in the delivering sport and physical activity should ensure that education processes and experiences address issues relating to gender equity and the needs of female athletes, including a safe and secure environment, equitably reflect women's role in sport and physical activity and take account of women's leadership experiences, values and attitudes.

8. Sport information and research

Those responsible for research and providing information on sport should develop policies and programmes to increase knowledge and understanding about women and sport and ensure that research norms and standards are based on research on women and men. Research on women and sport be initiated and data and statistics broken down by sex be systematically collected by governments and sport organisations, and efforts be taken to include gender-balanced data gathering on sport and physical activity as an assignment for institutions compiling statistics on social developments at international and regional levels.

9. Resources

Those responsible for the allocation of resources should ensure that support is available for sportswomen, women's programmes and special measures to advance this Declaration of Principles.

10. Domestic and international cooperation

Government and non-government organisations should incorporate the promotion of issues of gender equity and the sharing of examples of good practice in women and sport and physical activity policies and programmes in their associations with other organisations, within both domestic and international arenas.

The IWG, together with relevant partners, regularly collect and share information on the adopted policies and achievements, and a progress report of the developments (based on the Brighton plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration on Women and Sport) be presented at the IWG World Conferences on Women and Sport.



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