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**The European Union's Assistance to the Regions of
the Former GDR, i.e. to the *New Länder* of the Federal
Republic of Germany:
Possible Lessons to be drawn by Poland**

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I. Introduction

The former GDR, for more than nine years the Eastern part of the Federal Republic of Germany, is the first of the former COMECON members which has obtained by way of the German reunification a full membership status in the EU. The monetary union with West Germany took place on 1.7.1990 and the constitutional union with West Germany was formally established three months later, i.e. on 3.10.1990.

Since the former GDR by vote of its parliament, the Volkskammer, became a constitutional part of the Federal Republic and thus automatically part of the European Union and of NATO, unlike the other former planned economies of Central and Eastern Europe, no formal accession negotiations were necessary for East Germany. The European Council adopted on 4.12.1990 a resolution which ruled that the area of the former GDR would be fully eligible for the benefits of the European Structural Funds.

In spite of the many differences which made the East German integration with the EU profoundly distinct from the accession process of the other former COMECON countries, such as Poland, the experiences gained by the East German so-called *new Länder* during their integration process into the West European and Atlantic structures can be seen in many ways as a sort of "forerunner" for the Central and East European candidate countries. It seems to be quickly forgotten that during the post-war period East Germany was for 40 years through the COMECON mechanisms closely linked to Poland and the other COMECON countries and only 9 years to the Western economic system. The imposed COMECON specialisation of production is still today in many ways a heavy legacy of this past reflected in the structure of the Polish industry.

II. Experiences from the transformation and modernisation process in East Germany

When looking back to the abolition of the former GDR and the unification with the Federal Republic of Germany in the fall of 1990, it becomes obvious that both parts of Germany were totally unprepared for such a process. There was no secret nor published "master plan" at hand or a sort of systematic "Agenda 2000" which

economic re-unification process. It was simply hoped that the forces of the "social market economy" introduced by Ludwig Erhard in post-war West Germany and supported by the Marshall Plan would - this time supported by massive transfers from West to East Germany - result in a repeat performance of the same "Wirtschaftswunder", the same sort of "Economic miracle", which catapulted West Germany within a few years into the top league of the industrialised OECD countries.

The main difference in the modernisation effort in both parts of Germany was grossly underestimated: Whereas the reconstruction of West Germany during the late forties could build on the roots of a market economy and on heavy investments into the productive sectors, East Germany more than 40 years later had to face a completely different climate. Not only had East Germany to overcome the painful legacy of the central economy philosophy but - furthermore - faced with attractive investment alternatives in many other countries in the world the heavy investments in East Germany went primarily into the modernisation of the government-funded infrastructure and only to a much lesser extent into the private sector. In an ironic sense, East Germany became the first victim of the globalisation process for which the fall of the Iron curtain has paved the way.

As a matter of fact, there is no other example in the entire economic history of the industrialised countries which could have served as a model for the sudden transformation of an entire economic system without any transition period. The cost for such a "shock therapy" for which no alternative was at reach are enormous and there is no end to be seen. Let me give you a few examples:

- In 1990, the German government has felt that the cost of integration could be financed through the privatisation of the East German industry which was thought to belong to the most modern and competitive industrial parts of the former COMECON.

The contrary was true:

After completion of the privatisation process, a public debt of about 200 billion DM (appr. 110 Bill.US-\$) was left behind. As a consequence of the privatisation, the ownership of the - drastically reduced - private sector is in practically all enterprises (with the notable exception of most the SME's) in West German hands or in

the hands of foreign investors.

- The 1:1 currency exchange from the East Germany currency into the Deutsch Mark coupled with the rapid assimilation of the East German wage level to that one of West Germany, made almost overnight the East

German economy non-competitive. Since simultaneously to the privatisation process the most important traditional former GDR markets in Central and Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union broke down, and the Western markets did not wish to absorb any East German products unknown to them, the "hörn market" in East Germany was within a few months invaded by West German and West European products which led ultimately to the acceleration of the de facto de-industrialisation of East Germany. From the 2,8 million. Jobs in the industry of the former GDR in the year 1990, in 1998 only 587.000 have remained.

* The East German industry with a population of appr. 25% of Germany contributes at present only 6% to the German exports. The export quota of East Germany is only 11.33% as compared with West Germany: 22.31%. The reasons for this are multiform: Although the East German industry exports proportionally still a high percentage of its products (19.9% as compared to West Germany with 8.8%) to the traditional privileged former COMECON markets, it is the West German industry which accounts for 87.04% (in 1998) for the fast growing markets in Central and Eastern Europe. In the markets OECD countries, the East German industry has found it difficult to gain considerable markets shares. East German companies do not have - in most of the cases - the necessary critical size to engage themselves in export markets. Furthermore, their lack usually innovative and thus competitive products. (see below the chapter on East German R&D capacity).

* As one of the consequences, the unemployment rate in East Germany is more than twice as high as in West Germany: 16.9 % in East Germany and 8.2% % in West Germany (October 1999). In reality, the percentage of the unemployed is considerably higher:

an estimated figure of 25% has to be added under the category of "hidden unemployment", i.e. people which have only part-time employment, which are in the process of government-funded re-training or which had to accept early retirement.

* The GDP growth rate in 1998 was 2.8% in West Germany and 2.0% in East Germany. The expected catching-up process of East Germany has considerably slowed down in the years since the re-unification. West Germany is now, once again, leading the annual growth. East Germany with a population of 25% of the German population contributed in 1998 only 9.3% to the German GDP and West Germany 90.7%. Whereas the average GDP per employed person (in current prices) amounted in Germany to 110,600 DM, the range in the East German *Länder* was between 78,000 DM and 67,200

DM.

* Similarly, the income gap between East and West Germany is still considerable: Although the growth rate of the net-income per household in the period 1993-1998 in East Germany was double as high as in West Germany, the average income per household in East Germany reached in 1998 only 75% of the West German average household which totals to 5,250

DM.

* At the time of the German re-unification, the GDP per inhabitant of East Germany was less than 1/3 (31.3%) of the comparable figure of West Germany. Nine years later, it has almost doubled, but it is still 40% behind the West German figure. The same can be said for the productivity of labour:

from 1991 31.0% to 1998 slightly more than 60% of West Germany.

* According to the Financial Times, the accumulated West German private assets (*Privatvermögen*) owned by a population of 66 million people amounted to 4,048 billion DM as compared to an accumulated figure of 272

billion DM in East Germany with a population of 16 million inhabitants.

» Agricultural co-operatives and state farms have been broken up and, due to a lack of competitiveness, more than 600,000 agricultural Jobs have been lost in East Germany, i.e. more than 75% of the Jobs in the agricultural sector.

* It is encouraging to note that since the reunification of the country something like 773,500 new companies (total net gain between newly created and bankrupted companies), almost all of them Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME's) - have been newly created in East Germany.

* Simultaneously to the transformation of the former industrial System

in East Germany, a similar break-down of the RTD base had to be witnessed.

The former Academy of Sciences of the GDR has been formally dissolved

and instead a number of public funded Max-Planck-Institutes, Fraunhofer

Institutes and similar institutions have been created. All universities have

been modelled around the West German university System. The industrial

research linked with the GDR *Kombinats* was scaled down to appr. 15% of its

former R&D personnel, i.e. at present not more than some 15,000

researchers are employed (usually working in SME's), whereas most of the

West German industrial researchers are employed by large companies. There

is an annual growth rate of the R&D personnel of appr. 3 - 4%.

The new Investors from West Germany or from OECD countries did not see any need for their new acquisition to have their own R&D laboratories, since all the necessary product and process innovations could be provided without any extra cost from the parent Company.

The Federal Government together with other public funding sources has injected during the years 1991-1998 7.8 billion DM into the industrial R&D of East Germany.

Within the total expenditures for R&D in Germany, 9.2% (7,2 billion DM in 1995) were spent in East Germany as compared to 90.2% (71,6 billion DM) in West Germany. Although there is an annual increase of the East German share, the West German expenditures in R&D are increasing - on a ten-fold higher scale - even more rapidly.

* In total, the annual West-East German transfer equals the amount of the entire annual EU budget, i.e. appr. 150 billion DM. In Total, between 1991 and 1998 1,200 billion DM have been transferred from West to East Germany. After a gradual slowing down of these transfers since 1994, an increase has been witnessed again since 1997 and this upwards trend is continuing in 1999.

Michael Käser of Oxford has figured out, that in the attempt "to close the gap" with in Germany, the average Western land resident has paid since 1990 more than DM 3,000 annually to the average Eastern land resident and that the average eastern land resident has received DM 13,000 annually. (Käser, ECE, *Economic Survey of Europe*, 1998 No.2 p.130).

If one would, for arguments sake, compare these transfers with Poland, a country with a population two and a half times larger than East Germany, one would have to effect an annual transfer into the Polish economy of an amount equal to 2 1/2 entire annual EU budgets... (ECE 98

Vol.2. p.III).

* Another comparison in this context seems to be useful: it is estimated that the PHARE Programmes have disbursed to the accession countries, such as Poland, up till now per year and per capita between 10 and 16 DM. During the same period, the EU transfers to the so-called "Cohesion countries" amounted to DM 1,300 for Ireland, and for the Mediterranean countries Greece, Portugal and Spain between 500 and 850 DM.

In order to illustrate the order of magnitude of these disbursements in using the example of Poland. Poland, as all the other candidate countries from Central and Eastern Europe would receive - provided the same rules would be applied - something like 400 Euro per capita and per annum from the EU Structural Funds, that is to say 15.6 billion Euro.

The following lessons may be drawn from the East German example:

» East German companies were in 1990 immediately and without any

transition period absorbed into a market economy and into the EU system, having to comply with a complete set of laws and practises applicable forthwith. The magnitude of this task was considerably higher than the gradual adjustments of national legislation of the EU applicant countries from Central and Eastern Europe to the *acquis communautaire*.

* Not only were the East German companies precluded from the devaluation which the Central and Eastern European states undertook, thereby enhancing competitiveness, but they encountered greater competition by reason of currency appreciation.

» The rise in labour costs was the greater burden because of the application of social charges which seems to be the most important problem.

Against this extreme example, Poland is facing in many ways a different situation although some similarities cannot be overlooked. The main lesson may be the fact that enormous money transfers, as in the case between West and East Germany, may safeguard social peace, but they cannot assure investments nor can they assure international competitiveness. Another important experience in the East German example is furthermore the fact, that a "knowledge system", i.e. the interaction of public and privately funded R&D institutes including the university system, cannot be kept alive without a functioning demand driven by the production sector.

* The integration of the former GDR into the EU system has certainly - though in a relatively modest way - facilitated the internationalisation of the East German economy in general and of the R&D function in

particular, but most of the EU R&D mechanisms could not be properly used because of the lacking equivalent R&D infrastructure in East Germany. Many of the EU cofinancing instruments could not be used because of the lack of "matching funds". The same phenomenon of a lacking absorption capacity in countries with transition economies can presently be observed by the similar incapability of the CEECs to use all the PHARE funds put at their disposal.

As a consequence, the EP has reduced in 1998 the EU PHARE fund allocation by 400 million ECU.

* The East German example could also demonstrate the danger, if within the transformation of former socialist economies the development of a science and technology policy or respectively the development of a research and development system does not receive the necessary political attention when defining national priorities within constraint budgets. The fact that the EU has considered the RTD chapter within the "screening process" as one of the so-called easy chapters should not be interpreted in such a way that Poland

would not have to apply considerable pressure in order to build-up a modern "knowledge System" enabling the country to compete ably with the mounting market pressures in particular from the Western OECD countries.

III. Mobilisation of German and EU Funds for the reconstruction of the East German Economy

The Integration of the East German regions remains, even more than 9 years after the German reunification, one of the most important tasks of the German government. To set this process in motion and to keep it politically alive, a catalogue of measures has been devised which is in its magnitude without any precedence. The financing of these activities became possible through a blending of national Federal funds, of Land and communal public finances specially allocated for this purpose and matched by EU funding. There is also a high proportion of funding from the private sector.

III a. EU Funds

Less than three years after the German re-unification, the European Council, as an exceptional measure, allocated for the benefit of East Germany from the European Structural Funds the amount of 3 billion ECU for the period 1991-1993. These funds have been channelled as follows:

- * Regional Fund (EFRE) 1.5 billion ECU 50%
- * European Social Fund (ESF) 0.8 billion ECU
- * European Agricultural Fund 0.6 billion ECU

The breakdown by Fund of the European Community contribution totalling 13.64 billion ECU in the Period 1994-1999 was roughly the following:

- * Regional Fund (EFRE) 6.820 billion ECU 50%
- * European Social Fund (ESF) 4.092 30%
- * Agricultural Fund (EAGGF): guidance 2.644 19%
- * Fisheries instrument (FIFG) 0.084 0,2%

For the period 2000-2006 this amount was increased to 19.9 billion Euro. In

order to illustrate the order of magnitude of this amount, it should be

stressed that Germany covers appr. 27% of the total EU budget and receives 14 % of the 213 billion Euro EU Structural Funds. 2/3 of the Structural

Funds allocated to Germany have been earmarked for the *New Länder* of East Germany. Whilst the 5 *New Länder* will continue during the next EU medium term financial planning (2000-2006) to be ranked among the "Target I" regions and will thus receive the highest Structural fund support, East Berlin has by-passed the critical mark of 75% average GDP and will thus receive funding on a lower scale. To compensate for this loss, the Berlin Summit has allocated for East Berlin an exceptional payment of 100 million Euro.

By coincidence, the definition of the national German development strategy for the reconstruction of the economies of the *New Länder* and East Berlin took place during the same period during which the Commission elaborated a "*White Paper*" on the medium term strategy for Growth, Competitiveness and Employment (Brussels 1993). The White Paper led to the European Council's short and medium term plan adopted on 10/11.1993. The main idea behind this concept was to generate rapid economic growth. It was felt that the reconstruction of East Germany in the early 1990s - and the parallel to the Situation almost ten years later in Poland is striking - can only create secure and sustainable Jobs if it is underpinned by the emergence of competitive firms with high labour productivity. Associated with this objective of rapid economic growth is the aim to ensure development that will always be environmentally acceptable. Furthermore, such economic growth process must be supported by extensive training and reskilling.

It was mentioned earlier, that the reconstructing concept of East Germany was based on a closely interacting funding mechanism mobilising simultaneously national governmental funds as well as international funding schemes - primarily stemming from the European Union. The four most important EU Instruments have already been introduced and are being described in more detail as follows. They will be the same for Poland, once the country has been accepted as a full member of the EU:

1. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is providing support for productive investment and Investment in production-related infrastructure as well as other measures. ERDF has a special focus on the needs of small and medium-sized businesses, research and development and is giving great weight to environmental improvement, including the re-

use of industrial wastelands.

2. The European Social Fund (ESF) Supports a coherent and coordinated approach in investing in the human resources in the regions. The ESF supports the qualification and retraining of the workforce to meet the

requirements of new markets. Part of this ESF support is focussing on the adaptation of the workforce to industrial change and the qualification for research and development. There is also a need to improve the access of young people to initial vocational training and a need to integrate the long-term imemployed, women and those facing exclusion from the labour market, into work.

3. The guidance section of the European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund places emphasis on village renewal as a way of strengthening the economic and social fabric of the countryside. It will also push further ahead with the creation of a market-oriented agriculture and in the re-equipment of the food processing sector and thus help to establish reasonable incomes for farmers.

4. The Financial Instrument for Fishery Guidance is supporting the adjustment of the fishing effort, the renewal and modernisation of the fishing fleet and port facilities and measures to establish a competitive fisheries sector, able to supply markets in the *New Länder* and further afield with quality products produced to a high Standard of Hygiene. It is also paying attention to aquaculture and the respect of environmental norms.

In addition to these four Structural Funds and Financial Instruments, a number of other EU financial devices are of relevance to the *New Länder*, e.g. financial support for the areas Energy, Training and Education, Environment, Research and Technological Development (RTD Framework Programmes), Audio-visual and Culture, Information and Communication, Industry, SME's, Trans-European Networks, Consumer Protection and others. The EU assistance for the new *Länder* in East Germany has been provided as follows:

1. Setting-up of a sort of ad-hoc "crash programme" covering the years 1991 - 1993 authorised by the Commission on 13.3.1991 and

amounting to 3 billion ECU.

2. Integration of East Germany into the programmes covered by the European Structural Funds geared towards the least developed regions of the EU (Target I regions) as decided on 20.7.1993. The current period of Structural Funding covered the years 1994-1999. During this period East Germany benefited from the highest regional support scheme set up for those EU regions which have less than 75% of the average EU GDP per capita.

East Germany continues after a decision taken by the EU summit in Berlin on 24-26.3.1999 to remain in this highest category also during the next budget

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period covering the years 2000-2006. Unlike the other "Target" Instruments, Target I regions receive 75% cofinancing from the EU. In addition to East Germany (with the exception of East Berlin) beneficiaries of the arrangements for the Target I regions are large parts of Greece, Ireland, Portugal and of Spain, the Italian Mezzogiorno, Scotland, the Burgenland of Austria, the arctic regions of Sweden and of Finland, the French overseas departments, the Azore Island, Madeira and the Canarian Island.

The Berlin summit in March 1999 has earmarked 195 billion Euro for the Structural Funds of the EU. In addition, 18 billion Euro have been earmarked for the so-called cohesion Fund. After their accession to the EU, all CEEC's would qualify as well to benefit from the "Target I" arrangements. If and how these new demands on the Structural Funds from the Central and East European accession countries can be financed, is not clear at present. In total, since 1991 the EU assistance for East Germany has amounted to 27.3 billion Euro.

The EU Funds have been used as follows:

17.8% Support for Investments in the productive sector and into economy-related infrastructure

17.1% Support for small and medium-sized enterprises

4.5% Support for research and technological development and Innovation

8.1% Protection and improvement of the environment

26.7% Measures related to the promotion of employment, of education and research

23.6% Measures related to the promotion of Agriculture for the development of rural areas and of fishery

It has been reported that the actual utilisation of these funds is rather difficult because of the heavy burden of administrative regulations attached to it. The highly publicised irregularities related to the reported misuse of European programmes which led ultimately to the collective resignation of the EU Commission will hopefully lead to more clarity and to more transparency in the ways EU funds are being utilised. Inevitably this process will lead, however, to even

more complicated administrative regulations which in particular SME's will find very often counterproductive to their participation. It has also been reported that the EU programmes are too fragmented. In the case of East Germany, they are involved in more than 100

different programmes.

III b. German Funds

Public transfers in favour of East Germany have taken place during the last years on an annual average scale of 170 billion DM. To this figures must be added an annual budget deficit of appr. 30 billion DM from the privatisation agency (*Treuhandanstalt*) which had the sole task to privatise or to liquidate, as the case may be, the former GDR industrial complex. These financial transfers can be specified as follows (Basic year: 1994):

* Fund „German Unity"	DM 34.6 billion
* Net transfer by the Federal government	DM 99.5 billion
» Sales Tax compensation	DM 11.0 billion
* Transfers for social security and unemployment	DM 33.5 billion
* Public transfers total	DM 178.6 billion
* <i>Treuhand</i> Budget deficit	DM 37.1 billion

There are additional items such as Administrative assistance to the new *Länder*, interest subventions for publicly carried credits, interest for the accumulated *Treuhand* debts etc.

Investment costs by the private sector and similar expenditure have not been accounted for.

To utilise these enormous funds wisely, the Federal Government, the governments of the new *Länder*, the municipalities, the Chambers of Industry and Commerce, the Employer Federations and the Trade Unions, the universities and many other private initiatives have devised a multitude of programmes all aiming at the modernisation of the public sector, the administration, the private sector as well as the "knowledge System" of East Germany. The 80,000 pages of texts issued since its creation by the European Community usually known as the *acquis communautaire* with which Poland and the other accession countries are presently faced are a relatively modest burden compared to the challenge with which the East German *Länder* have been confronted with when having to adapt to all legislation, rules and modalities which West Germany has developed since 1949 in order to build an efficient economy.

IV. Conclusions

* The major driving force behind the massive West German transfers into East Germany is the condition set in the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, Article 107, which calls for equal living conditions in all parts of the Federal Republic. Against this, the European Union which in essence follows a similar approach for all member countries of the EU, has only an auxiliary role which supplements the national efforts of its member states. Art. 130 a of the Treaty of Rome says to this effect: "The Community develops and pursues further the policy to strengthen its economic and social cohesion in order to promote a harmonious development of the Community as a whole". The instruments available to the Community to reach this goal are rather modest: The EU budget in total disposes in average only 3% of the budgets of its member states.

* In spite of the huge efforts undertaken by the German government to support a "catching-up" strategy allowing ultimately East Germany to bridge the still enormous gap with the West German economy, it had to be admitted that after the planned reduction and phasing out of publicly funded investment projects in the *New Länder*, the intended "catching-up" process came practically to a stand still. After years of overproportional increase, the annual economic growth rate in East Germany has considerably slowed down and is presently with 1,9% lagging behind West Germany (2,6%). Since it is

more than likely that this trend will continue, there is within decades no realistic chance that the Eastern part of Germany will be able to team up with the Western *Länder*.

* Although relatively small in size, the EU funds have been - and continue to be - a most important element in the funding of the massive reconstruction efforts of East Germany: the ratio of EU funding as compared to German national funding is about.

* The blending of EU funds with national funding sources has forced the recipients to think increasingly in "European terms" because they very often the co-operation with partners in other West-European countries. Such a European cross-border cooperation may otherwise not necessarily take place. This is an experience to which East Germany in the past was - for obvious reasons not exposed to.

* The deficit in the trade balance between the East German and the West German States in the years 1991-1994 has been on average 180 billion DM. (There are no more recent figures available). This amount is almost identical

with the annual West-East German transfers. It can be concluded from these figures that the great winner from the Integration of East Germany into the Federal Republic of Germany is the West German economy.

* If one carries this argument further and draws some conclusions from the trade balance between the EU-15 countries and the Central and East European candidate countries, it can be said that for example in the case of Germany, the German export into the CEEC's witnessed in the year 1998 an increase over the 1997 of 19.8% as compared to the average increase of all German exports of 6.9%. In 1998 Germany witnessed a trade surplus with the CEEC's amounting to 12.3 billion DM.

* The main lesson may be the fact that enormous money transfers, as in the case between West and East Germany, may safeguard social peace, but they cannot assure investments nor can they assure international competitiveness.

V. Considerations for the pre-accession strategy of Poland

1. One often tends to get the Impression that one of the major driving forces behind the desire of the CEEC's to become full members of the EU is the expectation that once this Status has been achieved, major advantages for the new members will come through the transfer of funds from the EU. Whatever the East German example may be worth for the completely different Situation in which the largest Central European accession country, e.g. Poland, finds itself, it is hoped that this presentation has demonstrated that the amounts of money necessary to integrate smoothly a former centrally planned

economy into the Western market economy System go beyond even the wildest Imagination. The East German so-called *new Länder* with a population of 16 million inhabitants has received appr. far more than 600 billion Euro from Federal German Funds and appr. 27 billion Euro from the EU which have been used as some relatively modest co-financing to national projects. The external amounts made available for the transformation of the Polish economic System will be a small fraction compared to the East German Situation.

2. If one was asked to formulate some cautious recommendations for Poland in the light of the experience of the East German example, one could conclude the following:

(a) All efforts should be made during the time until full EU membership is being reached - and thus Poland will be exposed to the full competitive pressure from the Single Market - to prepare for the international

competitiveness.

(b) In addition to the necessity to fulfil the conditions of the *communautaire*, it may be wise to study, and where appropriate, to introduce

similar programmes which have proven to be useful in the transformation

and modernisation of the economy in the former GDR.

(c) Never forget that the amount of external assistance during Poland's wny

from transformation to accession (and beyond) will in essence be no moiv

than 5%. 95% must be mobilised by Poland itself.

(d) Most importantly, äs the East German example shows, even the biggcs1

amounts of money - besides the limited absorption capacity of external aid

for any economy - cannot easily repair for the scars left from more than lbn

decades of a completely different political and economic concept. No "quick

fixes" seem to work. In the case of East Germany, it will take almost 11 k-

lifetime of a füll generation to catch-up with the other part of the counliy.

Education and Training will thus have to have an even higher priority.

(e) It is my conviction that the young generation, äs represented by the

student body of the Jagiellonian University, which is with its 600

years, one

of the oldest in Europe, if well trained will be the best guarantee that Polmul

will accelerate this difficult but rewarding and passionate way into lla-

European structure.

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