



Labour in France and Germany: opposite strategies



Author: Alain Fabre

France and Germany both want to maintain a high level of social protection in a globalised world. But beyond this common goal, everything separates the two countries regarding their strategies to achieve it: both are clearly opposite in terms of the role played by labour in the economy and society.

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Front page! :

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 The Robert Schuman Foundation is acknowledged as being the reference French research centre on Europe (Special Prize 2012 awarded by the jury of the Think-Tank Observatory). Established in Brussels, where it features amongst the leading lists of think-tanks, it is represented across the Union and works as a network with many international experts and partners. Today we need your help to continue our task, since resources and subsidies are becoming increasingly rare. You can help us with a donation, 66% of which you will be able to deduct from your next income tax return, if this is undertaken before 31st December 2012. Your support will be extremely valuable to us and we thank you in advance...
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The Robert Schuman Foundation has published the second revised and improved edition of the Permanent Atlas of the European Union. This work of reference presents the Union, its institutions and each of its Member States via their history, their culture and their statistic



realities. A unique innovation, it offers access to an internet site www.atlas.permanent.eu, on which information is permanently updated, enabling everyone to have the freshest data about Europe and its Member States. Order it on line... [Read more](#)

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"Talking Europe" hosts Vaira Vike-Freiberga



As part of the partnership between the Robert Schuman Foundation and the Audiovisuel Extérieur de la France (AEF), the Foundation is broadcasting its most recent programme on its site "Talking Europe" whose guest this week is Vaira Vike-Freiberga, former President of Latvia and Chair of the group of experts on pluralism in the European Union. Interviewed by Pascale Joannin, General Manager of the Robert Schuman Foundation, Vaira Vike-Freiberga believes "the spectacle of division provided by the leaders of Europe a scandal, who do not "treat the countries in the East as equals.".. [Read more](#)

The Foundation has modified its Facebook account into a Page



In order to facilitate its communication and as part of Facebook's regulations the Robert Schuman Foundation has recently modified its account which has been changed into a page. All of the members of the Foundation's team thank you for the interest you take in its work, which you then share with others... [Read more](#)

Elections :

Borut Pahor wins the Presidential Election in Slovenia



Borut Pahor (Social Democratic Party, SD) won the second round of the presidential election on 2nd December in Slovenia. The former Prime Minister (2008-2011) won 67.44% of the vote and easily drew ahead of outgoing Head of State, Danilo Türk, who won 32.56%. Turn out was the lowest since the country's independence in 1991: it totalled 41.95% i.e. 16.51 points less in comparison with the second round of the presidential election on 11th November 2007... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

The Eurogroup adopts a detailed plan for the reduction of the Greek debt



On the sidelines of the renewed agreement between Greece and the troika (ECB, Commission and IMF), which will enable the payment of a further tranche of aid totalling 43.7 billion euros, the 17 Euro zone Finance Ministers (Eurogroup) set out a plan to reduce the burden of the Greek debt on 26th November 2012, in order to stabilise it at 124% of the GDP by 2020. Hence it is planned that Greece will transfer quarterly all of its incomes from the privatisation of State property onto a separate account, that is designed to reimburse the interests of the debt. 30% of the primary surplus will also feed into this account... [Read more](#)

The OECD forecasts slow, unequal recovery in the world economy



On 27th November 2012 the OECD published its report on the Economic Outlook for the next two years. It forecasts a slow, unequal recovery over this period in the world economy. Although growth in the emerging economies will start to rise again, there will be budgetary stalemate in the US and the euro zone crisis will threaten to plunge the world into recession. The euro zone will remain in recession in 2013 with a slight GDP contraction of 0.1% before growth kicks in again at 1.3% in 2014. The OECD is calling on the public authorities to take decisive steps to improve business and consumer confidence to strengthen growth and employment... [Read more](#)

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Continuation of the Spanish recession in the fourth quarter of 2012



On 28th November 2012 the Bank of Spain published its monthly bulletin. It forecasts that the recession will continue in Spain in the fourth quarter. "All of the available information indicates that the GDP will continue to decline in the last months of 2012, when the effects of anticipated purchases caused by the rise in VAT in September will come to an end," it explained. The next day the OECD published a report that confirmed this assessment indicating that Spain was in the midst of an extended recession. Although the country is "recovering" it must however continue the reforms started by remedying the financial crisis and excessively high unemployment and by restoring confidence regarding public finances... [Read more](#)

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Portugal: the Parliament approves the 2013 budget



On 27th November 2012 the Portuguese Parliament approved the 2013 budget. This budget is of an unprecedented austerity - a general increase on income taxes of 14.5% for the most vulnerable and 48% for the wealthiest, a surtax of 3.5% on all tax bands, a reduction in unemployment benefits and sick pay by 5% and 6% respectively. It is "a step on the right path to recovery" said Finance Minister Vitor Gaspar and should bring the public deficit down to 4.5% of the GDP at the end of 2013... [Read more](#)

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The UK warned about the lack of own funds in its banks



The Bank of England is concerned about the lack of own funds in the British banks. This emerges in a report published on 29th November 2012. It recommends "that the financial markets authority (FSA), take steps to guarantee that the banks' capital is a true reflection of their assets, a realistic assessment of the future management costs and a careful calculation of what is at risk." The central Bank believes that the progress made by banks in raising capital has slowed the UK and that investor confidence is low... [Read more](#)

Commission :

The Commission publishes its priorities to revive growth



On 28th November 2012 the European Commission adopted its annual assessment of growth (EAC) which sets the priorities for the Member States in order for them to revive growth long term. The Commission has retained the following: to ensure budgetary consolidation which goes together with a growth strategy, to encourage loans to the real economy, to modernise public services and to fight to counter unemployment and its social consequences. The problem of youth unemployment is highlighted in particular in this report. MEPs criticised the conclusions, believing that they are still based on counter-productive austerity policies... [Read more](#)

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An ambitious road map for the Economic and Monetary Union



On 28th November 2012 the European Commission presented its vision of the necessary reform in view of reaching true economic and monetary union. Short term (6-18 months) it recommends the implementation of the reforms that have already been agreed, the adoption of the Single Supervisory Mechanism (on-going), the adoption of a Single Resolution Mechanism for struggling banks and the adoption of a tool for convergence and competitiveness that is distinct from the multi-annual financial framework. Mid-term (5 years), the Commission is planning the "communautarisation" of fiscal policies and employment, a budgetary capacity that is specific to the euro zone and the creation of European treasury bonds. Long term the plan is to create a totally separate euro zone budget and issue a joint public debt... [Read more](#)

Better protection for businesses against trade fraud

On 27th November 2012 the European Commission announced a series of new legislative measures to strengthen the directive on fraudulent



trade practices. These measures should lead to greater protection of businesses from trade fraud such as the invoicing of services which were supposed to be free and the scam of professional directories. In real terms an authority will be appointed in each Member State in view of exchanging information about the fraudsters and putting an end to their practices... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Greater democratic control of the ECB by MEPs?



The parliamentary committee responsible for Economic and Financial Affairs gave its position on 29th November 2012 on the introduction of the single supervisory mechanism. This mechanism notably anticipates the strengthening of the supervisory powers of the ECB and a change in the role of the European Banking Authority (EBA). MEPs are also asking for greater powers of democratic control over these two organisations, which goes together with the transfer of power that they will enjoy. MEPs want for example to be able to investigate if the ECB's supervisor makes a mistake and are asking to be able to approve the Chair of the Supervisory Committee... [Read more](#)

For democracy in Egypt!



The President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, is advising on the end of economic and political cooperation between the EU and Egypt in order to put pressure on President Mohamed Morsi. "The European Union must understand quite clearly that there can be no political nor economic cooperation without a plural democracy in Egypt," he declared in an interview published in the Die Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung... [Read more](#)

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Council :

Towards a free trade agreement with Japan



On 29th November the Council of the European Union gave the European Commission the mandate to undertake negotiations in view of the conclusion of a free-trade agreement with Japan. This agreement will help towards the liberalisation of the goods trade, services and investments between the EU and Japan. At the same time the Commission will also negotiate the conclusion of a framework-agreement which targets cooperation between the EU and Japan in many other sectors... [Read more](#)

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Main conclusions in terms of Education, Youth, Culture and Sport



On 26th and 27th November 2012 the Ministers of 27 Member States came to a political agreement that aims to facilitate the acknowledgement of informal apprenticeship. They also stressed the role of literacy, education and training for growth and employment, as well as the need for the EU to have a strategy to protect children from the dangers of the internet. They also adopted a resolution aiming to strengthen dialogue with young people. Three representatives from the EU were appointed to the World Anti-Doping Agency... [Read more](#)

Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy



On 28th November 2012 the Ministers of the 27 Member States responsible for Agriculture discussed the reform of the direct payment system (its "ecologisation") in view of a reform of the CAP. Support to rural development and the draft regulation for the joint organisation of agricultural projects (single COM) were also on the agenda. Regarding the single COM the suppression of quotas on sugar planned for 2015 were debated in order to extend these quotas until 2020 at least. Regarding rural development the limitation of areas subject to natural constraints was discussed, as well as the management of risks and their field of application... [Read more](#)

Supporting renewable energies



The 27 Energy Ministers adopted the conclusions defining the areas of priority action for the development of renewable energies on 3rd December 2012. The priorities are the opening of the internal market of electricity; cooperation between Member States, support to infrastructures and consumers, as well as technological innovation...

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Towards a settlement over the 2013 budget dispute



On 30th November 2012 the Council announced that it had come to an agreement over the 2013 budget in order to avoid budgetary stalemate. For his part the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz declared that the proposal would not be retained by Parliament as it stood, deeming that the States were still not providing adequate guarantees... [Read more](#)

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Defence :

Neuron: European Cooperation with Six Member States



The Neuron successfully undertook its maiden flight on 1st December 2012. This drone is the result of industrial cooperation between Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland. The Neuron initiated in 2003 is 10 meters long and has a wingspan of 12.5 meters and an empty weight of 5 metric tonnes. It is to make up for the shortfalls in the European aviation industry... [Read more](#)

Germany :

The German Bundestag approves new measures for Greece



On 30th November 2012 German MPs approved the new measures designed to reduce the burden of the Greek debt to 124% of its GDP in 2020, 473 votes in support, 100 against and 11 abstentions. This is part of the Eurogroup, ECB, IMF's plan decided upon on 26th November last... [Read more](#)

Spain :

The ESM to recapitalise the Spanish banks



On 28th November 2012 the European Commission approved the plan to restructure four Spanish banks which have benefited from Spanish State aid since July 2012. However the financial aid granted to Spain via the ESM would only be released after the European Commission's approval of recapitalisation plans and the restructuring of these financial institutions. On 30th November last the bad bank for toxic real estate assets held by the Spanish banks (Sareb) was officially established with the Spanish State as being the only shareholder announced the Ministry for the Economy. The sale of Sareb will lead to the start of the transfer of toxic assets that notably emanate from four nationalised banks, Bankia, CatalunyaBanc, Novagalicia and Banco de Valencia... [Read more](#)

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France :

The Senate rejects the 2013 Financial Bill (part one)



On 28th November 2012 the Senate rejected the first part of the draft 2013 financial bill, 165 votes against, 156 in support; it notably anticipates a rise in taxes. The rejection of this first part - that of revenues - of the text implies the rejection of the entire text. This situation has arisen because of the abstention of the Communist group... [Read more](#)

The French group BIC against the dumping of Chinese lighters



On 26th November 2012 the French group BIC gave the European Commission "proof of the damage that the import of Chinese lighters will cause to prices". According to a press release by the group an EU decision will have to be taken before 13th December next. But it also says that the European Commission's DG Trade had issued a negative recommendation concerning the opening of the renewal procedure of the anti-dumping duty on Chinese flint lighter.".. [Read more](#)

Signature of the rail link Lyon-Turin project



An agreement was signed on 3rd December during the France-Italy summit regarding the High Speed Line, thereby validating the project to create this controversial rail link. This "common declaration relative to the Lyon-Turin tunnel", the cost of which is estimated at 8.5 billion euros, was signed by the Transport Ministers of both countries with the French President François Hollande and the President of the Italian Council, Mario Monti in attendance. The Foundation... has published a study on this subject... [Read more](#)

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Italy :

The left chooses its champion for the next general elections



On 2nd December 2012 the Italians were called to vote to elect the centre-left candidate who will stand in the general elections in 2013. With 60.95% of the vote, according to results that are just partial, the head of the Democratic Party (PD), Pierluigi Bersani was elected, ahead of Matteo Renzi, the Mayor of Florence, who won 39.05% of the vote... [Read more](#)

Czech Republic :

Resignation of the Defence Minister



The Czech Defence Minister Alexandr Vondra announced on 28th November 2012 that he was resigning. A member of the ODS party he did not succeed in retaining his seat during the senatorial elections that took place in October last. "I have decided to resign as Defence Minister," declared Mr Vondra to the press, admitting that he did not have "enough support from the electorate". The minister will leave office on 7th December next... [Read more](#)

UK :

Presentation of the Leveson Report on the UK media



Lord Leveson, the Chairman of the Independent Inquiry responsible for explaining the practices of the British media, recommended the introduction of a first bill on the press the first ever since the 17th century in the UK. In a report published on 29th November 2012, the latter suggests using the law to create a new, self-regulating, independent body to control the press. Organised by the media industry, this independent body that would have its own budget, would comprise external personalities. The British Prime Minister said he was against the creation of this new body, whilst on 13th July 2011 he ordered the establishment of an inquiry into the press, after the uproar that followed in the wake of the phone tapping by the News of the World, accused of having hacked into telephones to obtain sensational information... [Read more](#)

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New Governor at the Bank of England



On 26th November 2012 the British Finance Minister George Osborne announced the appointment of Mark Carney, the present governor of the Canadian Central Bank and Chairman of the Financial Stability Board, as the next governor of the Bank of England in succession of Mervyn King, the present governor. Marc Carney will take up office as of 1st July 2013... [Read more](#)

Albania :

Albania celebrates the hundredth anniversary of its independence



On 28th November 2012 Albania celebrated a hundred years of independence vis-à-vis the Ottoman empire, declared in the town of Vlorë in 1912. On this occasion the President Bujar Nishani delivered a speech in Flag Square. Many leading politicians were present including some from Kosovo - a country with an Albanian majority within its population. During his speech Mr Nishani paid tribute to the Albanian flag and to the men who had contributed to the country's independence, notably Ismail Qemal, the leading figure and first head of government of the independent state. He also spoke confidently about the country's future "closer than ever before to the European family".. [Read more](#)

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Ukraine :

Resignation of Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov and his government



On December 3rd 2012 Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Mykola Azarov together with his government. After the general elections on 28th October 2012 and according to Ukrainian law the departure of the Prime Minister also leads to that of the entire government. Whilst the decision to renew the government's mandate still has to be taken, the Head of State asked it to undertake current affairs until the appointment of its successors. Viktor Yanukovich's Party of Regions won the general elections, which were however deemed fraudulent by the opposition and international observers... [Read more](#)

UN :

The ICTY acquits three former Kosovar Commanders



On 29th November 2012 the Chamber of First Instance at the ICTY acquitted Ramush Haradinaj, former commander in the Kosovo Liberation Army (ALK) and former Prime Minister of this country, as well as Idriz Balaj and Lahi Brahimaj, also former ALK members -of all of the accusations brought against them and ordered their immediate release. They were accused of being directly or indirectly responsible, as members of a joint criminal organisation, of infringements of the laws or customs of war committed against Serb, Roma, Egyptian, Albanian and other civilians in Kosovo. However the Chamber of First Instance concluded that the accusation had not provided adequate evidence to establish the acts in question... [Read more](#)

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Eurostat :

The rate of unemployment up in the euro zone and in the EU



In October 2012 unemployment in the euro zone increased by 0.1% in comparison with September 2012 to reach 1.7%. The same increase can be seen across the entire EU. On a yearly base the increase is significant because the euro zone had an unemployment rate of 10.4% in October 2011 and the EU, 9.9%. The lowest unemployment rates can be seen in Austria (4.3%), Luxembourg (5.1%), Germany (5.4%) and in the Netherlands (5.5%). The highest rates are to be found in Spain (26.2%) and Greece (25.4%). In terms of variation between Member States unemployment rose in 16 States and decreased in nine. Young people are still particularly affected with rates of 23.9% in the euro zone and 23.4% in the EU... [Read more](#)

Inflation slows in the euro zone



According to figures published by Eurostat on 30th November 2012 the annual inflation rate in the euro zone was estimated at 2.2% in November 2012, which is less than in October when it lay at 2.5%... [Read more](#)

The EU devoted nearly 30% of its GDP to social protection in 2010

According to figures published by Eurostat on 27th November 2012



over the last few years social protection spending in the EU has increased. It rose from 26.1% of the GDP in 2007 to 29.6% in 2009 and 29.4% in 2010. This increase in the ratio is mainly due to the economic crisis, with total spending on social protection in the EU having risen by around 10% in nominal terms between 2007 and 2010, whilst the GDP remained almost stable. Whilst spending relative to the main service categories (pensions, healthcare, family) all increased by around 10%, unemployment benefits rose by one third... [Read more](#)

The Services Sector growing strongly in the EU



According to figures published by Eurostat on 26th November 2012 international trade in the EU's services rose in 2011. The export of the Union's services towards third countries increased by 7%, rising from 567 billion euros in 2010 to 604 billion in 2011, whilst EU imports grew by 4% rising from 464 billion to 483 billion. As a result the trade surplus in services has grown, reaching 121 billion euros in 2011 against +103 billion in 2010 and +83 billion in 2009... [Read more](#)

24% of Europeans threatened by poverty or social exclusion



According to figures published by Eurostat on 3rd December 2012, 24.2% of the European population was threatened by poverty and social exclusion in 2011, ie 120 million people. This figure lay at 23.4% in 2010. This rate rises to nearly 50% in Bulgaria, the most badly affected country: in the Czech Republic poverty affects 15% of the population... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

HIV increases in Europe



On 30th November 2012 the European Centre for the Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organisation (WHO) published a joint report on the development of the virus and support actions as well as prevention. "The number of people living with HIV in Europe is rising," stresses this report. In all in 2011, 121,000 new cases were diagnosed, including 28,000 in the European Union... [Read more](#)

Report on the Implementation of European Law



On 30th November 2012 the European Commission published its 29th annual report on the implementation of European law. The number of infringements observed has decreased by 15% but remains high and over 100 regarding Belgium, Greece and Italy. Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Malta are the countries which transpose European legislation most effectively. 60% of these infringements involve transport, environment, internal market, services and taxation. Moreover delays in the transposal into national law have increased sharply which means that the Commission has increased the number of fines it has set... [Read more](#)

European Crime Prevention Network



On 30th November 2012 the European Commission presented a report on the European Crime Prevention Network. This network aims to exchange good practice in terms of preventing urban crime in particular, juvenile delinquency and drug associated crime. The Commission says it is pleased with the network's results but encourages it to continue its efforts, notably by working more with local and regional authorities as well as with various European agencies, notably Eurostat, the CEPOL and EUROPOL. Crime has been declining in Europe over the last ten years but it's nature is changing: there are less crimes but more offences and "petty crime".. [Read more](#)

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Publications :

Une Jeune Fille de Varsovie



On 27th November 2012 the work "Une jeune fille de Varsovie" was published in which author Bogina Mond, a Frenchwoman of Polish origin, gives her memories of her commitment to the Polish Resistance. She speaks of her participation in the armed fight against the Nazis as part of the Interior Army (Armia Krajowa) notably during the battle of Warsaw... [Read more](#)

"Populism. The otherside of Democracy"



The rise of populism in Europe has given rise to the publication of a book entitled "Populism. L'envers de la démocratie" under the management of Marie-Claude Esposito, Alain Laquière and Christine Manigand. The book offers a series of articles on the concept of populism in order to make sense of it, and review it taking into account the most representative cases, from Finland to Greece and the UK. Magali Balent and Thierry Chopin, respectively Projects Manager and Studies Director at the Robert Schuman Foundation are the authors of two articles addressing, "the rhetoric of identity" and the other "liberalism under test"... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Christmas is coming!



Its Advent! The Christmas Markets have opened their doors in several towns of Europe. From Germany, Austria without forgetting some French towns, where the lights have been turned on, Christmas trees decorated and on the markets the perfume of mulled wine, chocolates and gingerbread accompany Christmas carols. Several towns including Nuremberg, Salzburg and Strasbourg have been marvellously decorated for this occasion... [Read more](#)

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The Desire for Freedom



The museum of German history (DHM - Deutsches Historisches Museum) in Berlin is devoting an exhibition to European art as of 1945 entitled "The Desire for Freedom". 113 artists from 28 European countries are exhibiting their works, all devoted to the idea of freedom in Europe after 1945. The exhibition has the support of the Council of Europe and the European Commission; it will be open until 10th February 2013... [Read more](#)

France/Russia - Unique Archives



The National Higher School for Fine Arts of Paris is putting on an exhibition entitled "Intelligentsia, between France and Russia, unique archives of the 20th century," as part of the year "France-Russia, language and literature 2012". This exhibition that is on until 11th January 2013 aims to offer visitors an overview of the intellectual exchange between France and Russia since the collapse of the Soviet bloc. More than three hundred pieces of work, which have been part of the exceptional opening of the archives of the Federation of Russia and access to largely unknown sources in France are on exhibit, ranging from intimate archives to the public, official and unofficial... [Read more](#)

Award of the European Cinema Prize



On December 1st 2012 the 25th Award ceremony for the European Cinema Prize took place at La Valette. The film "Amour" by Austrian Michael Haneke was designated best European film of the year. The film's two leading actors, Jean-Louis Trintignant and Emmanuelle Riva were designated best actor and actress. The Danish film "The Hunt" received the best scenario prize. Italian film director Bernardo Bertolucci and British actress Helen Mirren received a prize for their careers as actors... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



3rd December
Brussels
Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council

Brussels
Meeting of Euro Zone Finance Ministers (Eurogroup)



4th December
Brussels
Economy and Finances Council



4th-5th December
Hannover
CDU Federal Congress



6th December
Frankfurt/Main
ECB Governors Council



6th & 7th December
Brussels
Justice and Internal Affairs Council

Luxembourg
Employment, Social Policy, Healthcare and Consumer Council



9th December
General Elections Romania



10th December
Oslo
Award of the Nobel Peace Prize 2012 to the European Union

Brussels
Foreign Affairs Council



10th & 11th December
Brussels
Competitiveness Council



10th to 13th December
Strasbourg
European Parliament Plenary Session

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