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GreenMove Project:

Innovative technologies for Sustainable
Mobility and Energy Efficiency in Island and
rural contexts



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Promoting common European values and democratic dialogue in rural communities

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Gotse Delchev Municipality, Bulgaria

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Where we are

Gotse Delchev Municipality is located in Southwestern Bulgaria, along the Mesta River at the foot of the middle Pirin Mountains. The region is mainly mountainous, but the right bank of the Mesta River has extensive fertile lands that are cultivated. The city is 18 km. from the border with Greece and 100 km. from the Aegean Sea. Due to its geographical location, Gotse Delchev falls into the zone of the transitional Mediterranean climate zone and the climate is mild and warm with average annual temperatures of 11-12°

The town of Gotse Delchev is named after the great revolutionary Gotse Delchev. The area is an interesting mosaic of different types of relief and includes the vast Gotse Delchev valley, the southern parts of the picturesque Momina gorge on the river Mesta, the foothills of the Western Rhodopes, the southeastern part of Pirin and the northern part of Slavyanka mountain. The municipality has one town and 12 villages. The water resources are extremely rich due to the Mesta River and its many tributaries, the flora and fauna are very diverse, and on its territory is the Orelyak Nature Reserve, Pirin National Park, which is included in the UNESCO World Natural Heritage List, the Alibotush Protected Area and the Mesta Protected Area.

River Mesta valley



Unique rural characteristics

Gotse Delchev is part of the most dynamically developing region of the country – the South-West, which is partly due to the unique rural characteristics of the municipality, contributing to a sustainable lifestyle of the population.

The favorable geographical location and proximity to the border with Greece and the port of Kavala, preserved nature, which is a protected area under the legal protection of Natura 2000, rich forest fund, rich natural resources, as well as the relatively favorable demographic characteristics of the population, compared to the average for the country, are some of the characteristics of the municipality that favor a sustainable lifestyle in the region.

Good levels of economic activity of the population; presence of active enterprises in all categories (micro, small, medium and large enterprises); presence of entrepreneurial structures that promote business and cross-border relations with neighboring countries are characteristics defined by the Municipality as favorable for the development of the region.

The good environmental characteristics (air, soil, noise, low pollution), which allow the development of ecological agriculture and tourism, as well as the decreasing losses of drinking water during its transmission through the network, further improve the quality of life and meet the environmental standards for sustainable living

Innovative technologies or practices related to sustainable mobility and energy efficiency in Gotse Delchev

The Municipality of Gotse Delchev has developed and adopted a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan with an implementation period of 2023 – 2040.

The Plan is a strategic document designed to meet the mobility needs of people and businesses in the city and its surroundings with the aim of achieving a better quality of life. It follows the European concept of urban transport planning, which introduces step-by-step approach to urban mobility. The plan ensures that urban areas in Europe will develop in a more sustainable way and that they strive to meet the European Union's objectives for a competitive and resource-efficient European transport system. The main determinants of the new sustainable transport policy of the city of Gotse Delchev are:

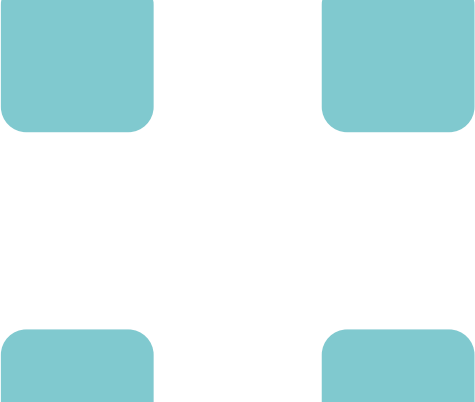
- changing the way of trips in favor of public urban transport and non-motorized modes of transport with better environmental and energy efficiency;
- reduced use of personal vehicles in urban trips;
- promotion of non-motorized modes of transport such as walking and cycling;
- promoting the use of public urban transport;



- building and improving the existing transport infrastructure;
- managing transport flows in the city using IT systems;
- improving traffic safety;
- managing the parking system;
- improving the quality of life and work through increased mobility and accessibility.

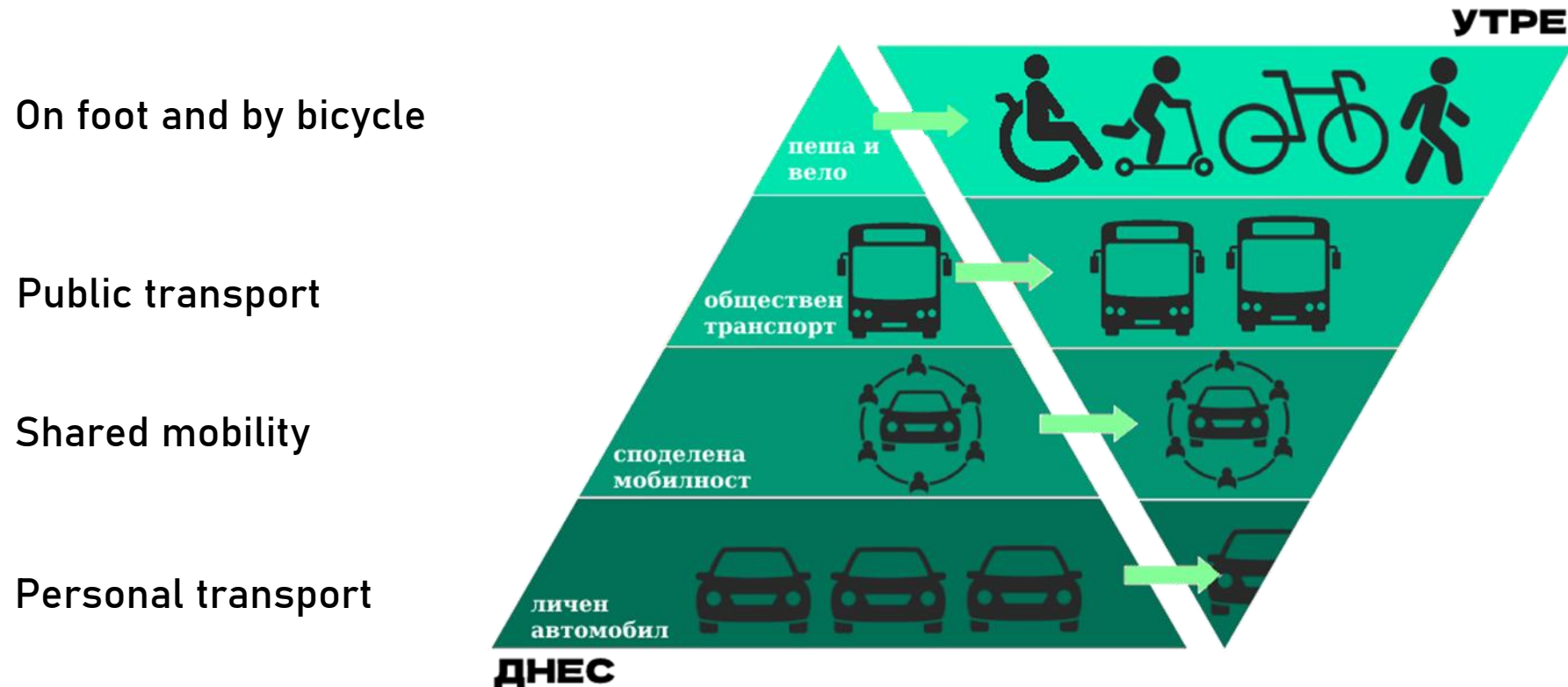
Innovative technologies or practices related to sustainable mobility and energy efficiency in Gotse Delchev

The adoption of a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan shows the aspiration of Gotse Delchev Municipality to solve these problems of the modern city through a new vision in the implementation of sustainable transport policy, which will provide a number of advantages for the future development of the city:

- Integrated approach in transport and spatial planning;
 - Better quality of life for residents;
 - Positive effects on the environment and health;
 - Better mobility and accessibility;
- 
- Improving social inclusion;
 - Increasing the capacity to fulfil the city's obligations;
 - Better access to EU funds.

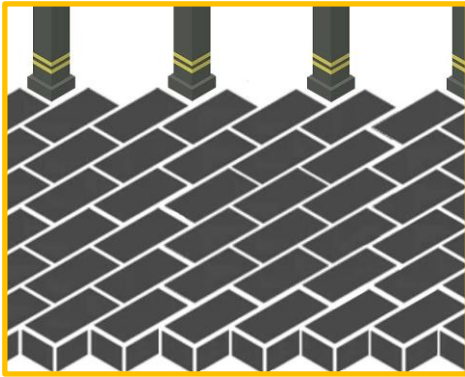
Innovative technologies or practices related to sustainable mobility and energy efficiency in Gotse Delchev - Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan

THE INVERTED PYRAMID OF URBAN MOBILITY - from today to tomorrow



Innovative technologies or practices related to sustainable mobility and energy efficiency in Gotse Delchev - Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan

The Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan includes 27 different investment projects worth a total of 19 million euros investments.



Repair of sidewalk areas



Increasing pedestrian safety near educational institutions



Improvement of inter-block spaces and parking spaces in residential neighborhoods



Increasing the participation of bicycles in transportation

Innovative technologies or practices related to sustainable mobility and energy efficiency in Gotse Delchev - Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan

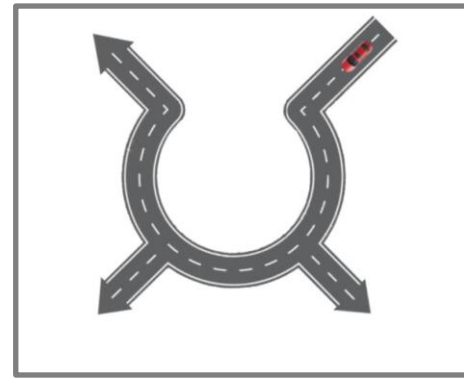
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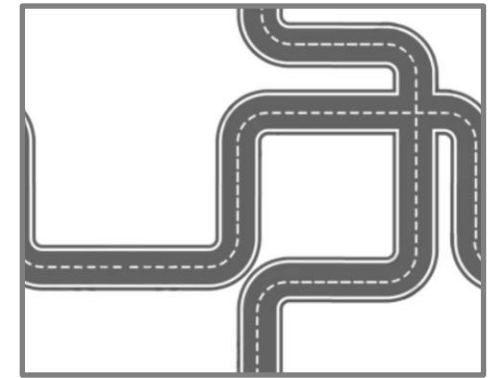
Renovation of public transport stops



Renovation of the asphalt pavement on public transport routes



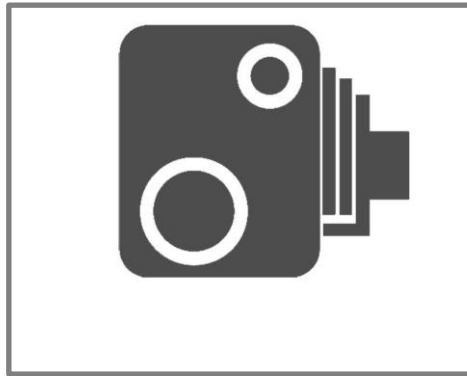
Reconstruction of detour roads



Rehabilitation of the street network to ensure communication and accessibility

Innovative technologies or practices related to sustainable mobility and energy efficiency in Gotse Delchev - Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan

The Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan includes 27 different investment projects worth a total of 19 million euros.



Video surveillance systems and sanctioning of violators



Construction of underground/ground parkings in the central part of Gotse Delchev



Parking control



Mobility management and control center

Innovative technologies or practices related to sustainable mobility and energy efficiency in Gotse Delchev - Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan

Energy efficiency practices that have been introduced in the municipality are mainly related to the renovation of residential and public buildings, replacement of street lighting with energy-saving ones and installation of photovoltaic systems in public buildings.

Within a few years, the following European, national and own funds have been invested in total:

13 million euros in EE for housing

2 million euros in EE for public buildings of the municipality.

1 million in energy-saving lighting in Gotse Delchev and other settlements

Energy efficiency in Gotse Delchev

On public buildings



Energy efficiency in Gotse Delchev

Energy-saving street lighting



Energy efficiency in Gotse Delchev

Energy-saving street lighting



Energy efficiency in Gotse Delchev

Private homes



Energy efficiency in Gotse Delchev - successful initiatives and projects



Successful case studies/ best practices that aligns with sustainable mobility in rural contexts

Municipality of Gotse Delchev has taken various steps towards sustainable mobility in rural areas, although basically this process faces a number of challenges related to the geographical terrain, social structure and economic conditions. Some of the successful practices that can be linked to sustainable mobility in the region include:

1. Development of integrated transport:

🕒 Sustainable transport solutions: The Municipality of Gotse Delchev has made efforts to integrate different modes of transport – buses, minibuses, to a small extent bicycle paths. This is especially important for easing mobility in rural areas, where people often don't have access to private vehicles or public transport.



Optimization of bus routes: In order to reduce dependence on private cars, transport schemes are being developed that connect the various settlements in the municipality with larger cities and important transport hubs.



Successful case studies/ best practices that aligns with sustainable mobility in rural contexts

2. Improving road infrastructure

Creating safe walking and cycling routes: The ability to use bicycles and walk is critical for the development of sustainable mobility. The Municipality of Gotse Delchev strives to establish pedestrian and bicycle paths that connect villages and ensure safety.

Road safety: Construction and repair of roads that are safer for all road users, while minimizing the environmental footprint of transportation activities.



3. Support for electric vehicles

Creation of charging stations for electric vehicles: Expanding the infrastructure for charging electric vehicles, which is part of the efforts to reduce air pollution and dependence on fossil fuels. There are 4 charging stations for electric vehicles in the town of Gotse Delchev and the region.

Support for electric vans and transportation: The Municipality of Gotse Delchev is exploring the possibility of introducing electric minibuses in small settlements that could serve short-distance trips more frequently. Funding is being sought for 2 electric vehicles.

Challenges in implementing sustainable mobility in rural areas

1. Geographic and infrastructure restrictions

Terrain and distances: The villages in the region are located at considerable distances, often in mountainous terrain, which makes it difficult to build effective transport networks. The roads are old, narrow and poorly maintained, which is a serious obstacle.



Solution: Investments in infrastructure modernization and implementation of innovations, such as smaller transport units to serve more remote areas, as well as the use of electric vans and vehicles that are more flexible



2. Low population density

Difficulties in achieving economic viability of transport: Many rural areas have small populations, making it difficult to provide regular and sustainable transport services due to financial constraints.



Solution: Introducing flexible transport solutions that can adapt to seasonal population fluctuations or transport needs at certain times.

Challenges in implementing sustainable mobility in rural areas

3. Social and cultural barriers

Distrust in the new technologies and services: In some regions, there is resistance from residents to new technologies or innovations such as electric vehicles, shared transportation, or digital platforms.



Solution: Educational campaigns and initiatives that explain the benefits of sustainable mobility and demonstrate concrete examples of successful projects.



4. Financial and administrative challenges

Limited budgets and resource support: Financing large infrastructure projects for sustainable mobility in rural areas can be difficult.



Solution: Actively seeking national and European funding, as well as cooperation with national institutions to support the development of infrastructure.

Challenges in implementing sustainable mobility in rural areas

Municipality of Gotse Delchev has managed to overcome some of these difficulties by actively seeking European funds and joint projects with other municipalities and institutions, such as the projects approved so far under the Integrated Territorial Development approach.

The projects that are financed through EU programs provide the necessary resources for large-scale infrastructure projects that can later be expanded and integrated into the wider national transport network.

Despite these efforts, the challenges to sustainable mobility in the rural areas of Gotse Delchev remain, with the constant improvement of infrastructure and the integration of new technologies remaining at the heart of future development

Successful case studies/ best practices that aligns with sustainable mobility in rural contexts

Rehabilitation of city streets



Successful case studies/ best practices that aligns with sustainable mobility in rural contexts

Rehabilitation of city streets



Successful case studies/ best practices that aligns with sustainable mobility in rural contexts

Construction of ring roads that relieve traffic



Successful case studies/ best practices that aligns with

Rehabilitation of roads in hard-sustainable mobility in rural contexts
to-reach settlements



Collaboration between different stakeholders

Municipality of Gotse Delchev is implementing various strategies to promote cooperation between local authorities, non-governmental organizations, businesses and community members in the context of sustainable mobility and energy efficiency. To achieve these goals, it relies on active dialogue, joint initiatives and the use of financial and strategic mechanisms that bring together different stakeholders. However, so far, cooperation between different stakeholders is not well developed.

1. Creating partnerships and coalitions

One of the main strategies in this direction that Gotse Delchev Municipality uses is the creation of partnerships with various stakeholders to achieve sustainable solutions.



For several years now, the municipality has established a Local Initiative Group, which works together with local authorities, NGOs, businesses and the community. Its goal is to invest European funds in local communities to support various initiatives, including energy efficiency.

Collaboration between different stakeholders

2. Involving the local community in the decision-making process

The successful involvement of community members is key to the success of sustainable mobility and energy efficiency initiatives. The Municipality of Gotse Delchev actively encourages the participation of local residents in the planning and implementation processes of these initiatives. An example of this is the campaign for the renovation of multi-family housing, which has been running for several years, in which all residents of the blocks are included both in the preparation of the documents and in the implementation.

3. Communication and transparency

The Municipality of Gotse Delchev emphasizes the importance of conducting open communication between the various stakeholders. This includes:

Information about funding opportunities: Through public announcements and platforms, local authorities inform both citizens and businesses about the availability of financial programs and European funds that can be used to support sustainable mobility and energy efficiency initiatives.



Collaboration between different stakeholders

4. Use of European funds and projects

Financing green projects: Local authorities rely on and use European funds to implement renewable energy sources in municipal buildings and promote sustainable construction, as their own funds are limited.

Program initiatives: Gotse Delchev Municipality actively participates in interregional and transnational projects that share experience and resources with other municipalities in Bulgaria and Europe, such as this event.

5. Public-private partnerships

Although rural areas often have limited access to resources, public-private partnerships are an effective way to achieve sustainable results. In this context, the municipality is looking for ways to jointly implement energy efficiency and mobility initiatives by supporting private and joint initiatives to invest in green technologies and infrastructure, such as installing solar panels or developing new transport services that meet the needs of local residents.

Overall, the main strategy for the successful implementation of sustainable practices in the municipality of Gotse Delchev is to integrate the efforts of all stakeholders through active cooperation, sharing resources and using funding opportunities.



Democratic dialogue and community engagement in developing and implementing sustainable mobility initiatives

Gotse Delchev Municipality actively seeks to promote democratic dialogue and community engagement in the process of developing and implementing sustainable mobility initiatives, while striving to strengthen European identity. This approach not only ensures that local needs and specificities are taken into account, but also that residents feel part of a wider European family that shares values such as sustainability, innovation and cooperation.

The municipality implements various strategies to promote democratic dialogue and community engagement. This includes public discussions and announcements on the municipality's website for opinions, surveys and other forms of feedback.

Joint decision-making process

The Municipality of Gotse Delchev is committed to democratic inclusion in the decision-making process. This is achieved by including local residents in working groups, forums and consultations, in which opportunities for improving infrastructure and transport networks are discussed.

- 🕒 **Working groups and surveys:** Through surveys and working groups, local residents can express their needs and preferences regarding public transport and new mobility solutions.

Observers and community representations: Local residents who have an interest or specialized expertise in certain areas (e.g., ecology or transportation) may be invited to participate in committees or panel discussions.

How to strengthen a sense of European identity while being sensitive to local needs?

Connecting local needs with European values

To strengthen the sense of European identity, it is important to highlight how local projects and initiatives connect to broader EU goals, such as sustainability, innovation and social inclusion.

Promoting European programs and funds: The Municipality of Gotse Delchev actively communicates with citizens how European funding for sustainable initiatives is used to improve local infrastructure, as well as how these projects are part of the EU's broader vision for a green future through public events and the constant visualization of the funding.

Emphasizing the European context: Through information campaigns and media materials, local residents understand how sustainable mobility and energy efficiency initiatives align with the EU's climate change goals.

How to strengthen a sense of European identity while being sensitive to local needs?

Active participation in international and cross-border projects

For the third programming period, the Municipality of Gotse Delchev has been participating in international projects that unite different regions and cultures to build a sense of belonging to common European goals.

Transnational initiatives: Through participation in projects that cover not only Bulgaria, but also other European regions, the exchange of good practices and innovations is ensured.

Partnerships with other European municipalities: Cooperation with other European municipalities creates a network of communities that share common goals for sustainable development and European integration. The cooperation is mainly cross-border – with Greece and North Macedonia.

Successful international and cross-border projects

Educational and infrastructure projects with North Macedonia



Successful international and cross-border projects

Cultural projects with North Macedonia



Successful international and cross-border projects

Educational and infrastructure projects with North Macedonia - construction of a building for an international summer camp



Successful international and cross-border projects

Infrastructure projects with Greece - greenhouse for growing flowers and seedlings for city parks and gardens



Successful international and cross-border projects

Infrastructure projects with Greece – educational environmental center for children



Successful international and cross-border projects

Infrastructure projects with Greece – delivery of medical equipment



Successful international and cross-border projects

Infrastructure projects with Greece – delivery of medical equipment



Capacity-building strategies or training sessions which could be effective in empowering local stakeholders

In order to empower local stakeholders in the Municipality of Gotse Delchev (including youth and women) and ensure their active participation in sustainable mobility decisions, it is necessary to implement strategies that focus on increasing capacity, awareness and activism. This means including different social groups, as well as paying special attention to young people and women, who can often be underrepresented in decision-making processes.

What capacity-building and empowerment strategies could be used:

1. Educational initiatives and workshops to raise awareness
2. Creation of platforms for participation and exchange of experiences
3. Inclusion of women in decision-making processes
4. Creation of partnerships with educational institutions
5. Development of leadership skills and networks for exchange

Capacity-building strategies or training sessions which could be effective in empowering local stakeholders

Conclusion

Strategies for empowering local stakeholders in the Municipality of Gotse Delchev should focus on educational initiatives, creating platforms for participation and actively involving women and youth in decision-making processes. Through leadership programs, exchange of ideas and specialized seminars, the Municipality of Gotse Delchev can ensure sustainable development of local mobility and engage the active participation of all citizens.

Monitor and evaluation of the impact of sustainable mobility and energy efficiency initiatives

Currently, the Municipality of Gotse Delchev does not have a procedure for measuring the impact of sustainable mobility and energy efficiency initiatives

Key evaluation indicators that could be used:

1. Carbon emission reduction indicators – measuring the amount of CO2 saved through the use of cleaner means of transport, the deployment of renewable energy sources and increasing energy efficiency
2. Mobility and transport pattern change indicators – this includes measuring the percentage reduction in the use of private cars and the increase in the use of public and alternative means of transport such as bicycles, electric vehicles and walking.
3. Energy efficiency of buildings and infrastructure. This includes monitoring the reduction of energy costs for heating, cooling and lighting through the use of energy-efficient technologies such as insulation, LED lighting and the renovation of heating systems.
4. Social and economic indicators – jobs and economic activity generated by projects (e.g. in the green technology sector), as well as the accessibility of transport for vulnerable groups such as pensioners and people with disabilities.



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Thank you!

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