



Diaspora engagement mapping TUNISIA

Facts & figures

Terminology: Tunisia refers to its diaspora as 'Tunisians abroad' (Arabic: التونسيون المقيمون في الخارج al-tūnisiyyūn fi-l-khārij ; also الجالية التونسية al-jālīyyah al-tūnisiyyah; French: tunisiens résidents à l'étranger), although the term diaspora is also used in some contexts. In the context of the national survey on international migration (Tunisia-HIMS), the term 'migrant actuel' (current migrant) or émigré are used.

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections
for citizens residing abroad²



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **5.46%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **2,872**

Voting from abroad:

At embassies/consulates



Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from [UNDESA \(2024\)](#) and remittances from the [World Bank \(2023\)](#).

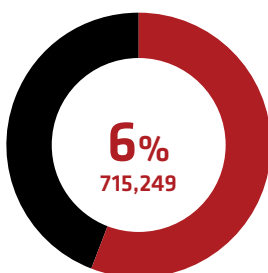
Emigration



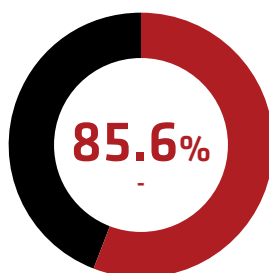
% of emigrants in
total population



% of which
in the EU



♂ 55%
♀ 45%



♂ 55.3%
♀ 44.7%

Top countries of destination



France	444,223
Italy	117,917
Israel	52,231
Canada	30,350
Belgium	19,761

11963 Code de la Nationalité Tunisienne, available at : <https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2022022/5e00d4e64.pdf> . Amendment no. 93-74 of July 12, 1993 modified the Code du Statut Personnel to give wives the right to transfer her patrimony and nationality to children to the same extent as husbands, even if married to a foreigner, with her father's approval. This is important to the diaspora, as it enables women to pass on Tunisian nationality to their children. The legal change predated similar legislation in other North African states by over a decade. Full text available in French at: <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/73374/74946/F-1287339442/TUN-73374.pdf>
2 Tunisians abroad have had the right to vote in presidential elections since 1988, and in parliamentary elections since 2011. Version consolidée de la loi organique n° 2014-16 du 26 mai 2014, relative aux élections et référendums telle que modifiée et complétée par la loi organique n°2019-76 du 30 août 2019: <https://legislation-securite.tn/fr/node/44286>.
For more information, see Jaulin, T. (2016), 'Geographies of external voting: the Tunisian elections abroad since the 2011 Uprising', Comparative Migration Studies 4, 14.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2017** ● **The National Migration Strategy**³ was firstly elaborated in 2012, when Tunisia undertook a series of consultations that led to the first version of the National Migration Strategy. A consultation process was launched in July 2017 with various national and international partners, including the diaspora.⁴ Its current state of implementation remains unclear. One of the strategy's five pillars is 'human development and social inclusion', under which are included objectives in relation to: protecting the rights and interests of Tunisian migrants and strengthening the links between them and with Tunisia; strengthening the contribution of migration to socio-economic development at the local, regional and national levels; and promoting regular migration of Tunisians. The strategy also recognises governance reform and strengthening of institutions as priorities to enable these objectives to be achieved.
- 2022** ● **Tunisia Vision 2035**⁵ recognises the importance of Tunisian diaspora in the national development process. Aiming to strengthen diaspora's role as active partners in the country's economic and social development efforts, it intends to: 1) establish an inclusive national policy to integrate Tunisians living abroad into development initiatives; 2) harness their skills and experience to support national projects; 3) encourage diaspora investment in strategic projects in Tunisia; and 4) guarantee the rights of Tunisians abroad and their access to social and cultural services.

» Trends

Historically, Tunisian migration policy tended to be focused on diaspora management and provision of social services to this group, as well as controlling labour (e)migration. Tunisia's approach was widely considered as transactional by Tunisians and by EU states.⁶ Despite this, Tunisians in the diaspora feel a strong motivation to contribute to the development process in their home country, and many choose to invest and open businesses in their villages of origin.⁷

The Office of Tunisians Abroad (Office des Tunisiens à l'Etranger, OTE) within the Ministry of Social Affairs, Solidarity and Tunisians Abroad, was initially established in 1988 to promote national identity and support the integration of Tunisian migrants abroad.⁸ Following the launch of the Tunisian Presidential Programme in 2009, the focus of strategic policies turned increasingly to national development, including provision of social and cultural services to the diaspora, as well as economic benefits from remittances and investment, business networks, and knowledge transfer.⁹

The 2011 revolution - influenced and supported by diaspora contributions and activism - provided an opportunity for a change in direction, and new structures and policies were introduced. Following the 2011 elections, the newly appointed government recognised the potential contributions the Tunisian diaspora could offer to national development efforts by establishing a specific migration department within the Ministry of Social Affairs.¹⁰

3 Full text available at: http://ote.nat.tn/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/SNM_FRA_FINALE.pdf

4 <http://ote.nat.tn/la-strategie-nationale-migratoire-snm-2017/>

5 https://www.mdci.gov.tn/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/version_pr%C3%A9liminaire-_vision2035_juillet_2022.pdf

6 See, inter alia, Poussel, S (2017:205-220), 'Tunisia and its diaspora: between protection and control' in Agnieszka WEINAR (ed.), *Emigration and diaspora policies in the age of mobility*, Cham: Springer; and Cohen-Hadria (Ed) et al (2018), ,

The Eu-Tunisia Privileged Partnership – What Next?, EUROMESCO Joint Policy Study. Available at: https://www.euromesco.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/EuroMeSCo-Joint-Policy-Study_EU-Tunisia-Partnership.pdf

7 Delahaye S.G., Tejada G. (2019) Transnational Investments of the Tunisian Diaspora: Trajectories, Skills Accumulation and Constraints. In: Elo M., Minto-Coy I. (eds) *Diaspora Networks in International Business. Contributions to Management Science*. Springer, Cham

8 The Office of Tunisians Abroad (OTE): Art.14, law n° 60-88 of June 2, 1988.

9 Tunisian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Priority co-operation fields: [http://www.diplomatie.gov.tn/index.php?id=27&L=2&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=27&tx_ttnews\[pointer\]=12&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=605&cHash=528bb871d5bf29394505cc7516888ca4](http://www.diplomatie.gov.tn/index.php?id=27&L=2&tx_ttnews[backPid]=27&tx_ttnews[pointer]=12&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=605&cHash=528bb871d5bf29394505cc7516888ca4)

10 Kriaa, M. et al (2012). *Migrations des Tunisiens en Libye : Dynamiques, défis et perspectives*, Tunis : Banque Africaine de Développement (BAD) and IOM, 2012.

In addition to new services through the OTE, the government has sought to introduce new data collection tools (such as a register of overseas professionals), and research bodies, in particular the Observatoire National pour la Migration, to help develop an evidence base regarding this key national strategy priority (see Spotlight section).

During consultations on the 2019 budget for the Ministry of Social Affairs, representatives in the national assembly argued that there were insufficient resources allocated for programmes targeting the diaspora, and called for a dedicated national strategy for the Tunisian community abroad in order to boost the country's economic development.¹¹

In 2024, Tarek Bouhlel, the Director of African Cooperation at the Tunisian Ministry of Economy and Planning, confirmed that diaspora remittances will be incorporated into the next national development plan of Tunisia (2026 - 2030).¹² This measure aims to optimise remittances as a source of financial development and to strengthen ties between the diaspora and development.

Obstacles



- **Lack of trust:** Historically, there has been a lack of trust in government structures for diaspora engagement, as these were perceived as linked to the government's focus on controlling emigration. The 2011 revolution helped clear the slate in this regard, creating much greater opportunities for diaspora engagement. However, there remain concerns in the diaspora about the Ministry of Social Affairs being the lead agency for diaspora engagement because of this legacy, and there have been calls for a dedicated diaspora ministry to be established.
- **Poor coordination** between institutions responsible for diaspora issues continues to be a barrier to more effective diaspora engagement, despite institutional and other reforms.
- **Slow implementation:** The development of the National Migration Strategy was well received by many in the diaspora as a bold and comprehensive strategy concerning migration and diaspora engagement, but the gap between policy development and implementation is a source of frustration and risks disengagement. This is another factor feeding into the lack of trust mentioned above.
- **Lack of resources for diaspora engagement:** The diaspora have complained that government resources allocated to diaspora engagement, and in particular diaspora outreach and community centres, is insufficient to mobilise diaspora contributions effectively in Europe and the US.

¹¹ <https://www.webmanagercenter.com/2018/12/03/427784/budget-2019-necessite-dune-strategie-nationale-pour-les-tunisiens-a-le-tranger/>

¹² <https://www.uneca.org/stories/cooperation-between-institutions-key-to-enhancing-remittance-contributions-to-development-in>

SPOTLIGHT: Effective practices

Explore 400+ practices by country, SDG or sector of engagement in the [interactive database!](#)



Migration Governance and Strategy Programme (ProGres Tunisie)

PARTNERSHIP

This partnership programme aims to strengthen migration governance and institutional coordination in Tunisia, with two components relevant to diaspora engagement. With support from ICMPD, the first of these focuses on migration governance to operationalise the National Migration Strategy; to implement a statistical survey on migration in Tunisia (TUNISIA -HIMS); and to improve coordination and implementation of the different programme components. The second, supported by GIZ, focuses on diaspora mobilisation and development of employment and investment opportunities through diaspora mobilisation, including support for diaspora investors.

INVESTMENT + ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Facilitating Diaspora Investment and Entrepreneurship

This initiative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Central Bank of Tunisia facilitates diaspora investment and entrepreneurship, including support for start-up businesses, digitalisation of transactions, and development of more flexible foreign exchange regulations.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

MEETAfrica (Mobilisation Européenne pour l'Entrepreneuriat en Afrique)

A partnership between the French Development Agency (AFD) and Expertise France to support innovative diaspora entrepreneurship, this is a flagship programme of the Rabat Process that provides expert advice and mentoring, as well as access to start-up funds, for diaspora investors in different African countries. In Tunisia it supports a range of diaspora enterprises in sectors such as science and technology, health, renewable energy, and organic agriculture.

HEALTH

Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMDI): Support to the Governorate of Kasserine socio-health system

The governorate of Kasserine has partnered with the Tunisian community residing in Tuscany, Italy, to address a critical lack of health infrastructure in the regional Kasserine Hospital, and surrounding health centres. The “Support to the Governorate of Kasserine socio-health system” initiative aimed to develop resources and more effective practices with the support of the Tunisian community residing in Italy, Croissant Rouge National Tunisien, and COSPE – Cooperazione per lo Sviluppo dei Paesi Emergenti.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Migration as a resource: mobilising the Tunisian diaspora and stabilising disadvantaged communities in Tunisia

The aim of the project is to harness the potential of the diaspora to make a significant contribution to the economic development of Tunisia's north-western and south-eastern regions. As part of its ongoing efforts, the project has introduced the “[Investment Guide for Tunisians Residing Abroad](#)”, a crucial information resource providing diaspora investors with information on the investment climate, as well as detailed administrative steps and procedures for investing in Tunisia. In its second phase, the project will extend its impact to include Tunisians living abroad in Germany, Saudi Arabia, Côte d'Ivoire, France, and Italy. Innovative aspects of phase 2 include enhanced technical support for businesses to penetrate new markets and sell products online, with a continued emphasis on supporting vulnerable groups, women, and social and solidarity-based business projects for sustainable development.

New Guide for Tunisians Abroad

The Office of Tunisians Abroad launched in 2022 a new edition of the Guide for Tunisians Abroad that contains information that can be useful to the diaspora on the economic and social levels, as well as provides practical advice to the diaspora. Sections include a guide for consular services, diplomatic missions and socio-cultural centers, a guide on the economic climate, fiscal and financial advantages to the diaspora, and one stop shops. It also contains a guide for social coverage of Tunisians residing abroad, family benefits and bilateral agreements at the social level.

INFORMATION

Mobility for young Tunisian professionals 2022-2026

The Swiss Confederation's program, in close collaboration with the Tunisian authorities, aims to involve the Tunisian diaspora in sustainable development and to encourage qualified circular migration between Tunisia and European countries, including Switzerland. The project encourages members of the diaspora in Switzerland to invest in Tunisia and strengthen their ties with their communities of origin. In addition, it facilitates the circular migration of young Tunisian professionals, offering work experience opportunities in Switzerland to enhance their skills and contribute to the Tunisian economy on their return. The programme also focuses on supporting the Tunisian government in creating effective governance structures to integrate migration into policy frameworks, recognizing the multifaceted benefits of diaspora resources beyond the economic dimension. The initiative aims to create an environment conducive to the use of human and financial capital in line with Tunisia's migration strategy.

YOUTH + POLICY

DIASDEV project 2021

The project is a collaboration between the French Development Agency and Caisses des Dépôts (CDCs) in Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal, France, and Italy, and focuses on facilitating and securing financial flows (remittances, savings, investments) from the diaspora in Europe and Africa. It aims to enable beneficiary African savings banks to facilitate productive use of the diaspora's financial resources through centralised information, technical and financial support and innovative solutions. Services include analysing diaspora financial patterns, mapping relevant operators, identifying market gaps, and providing recommendations in three key components: an information platform, support to actors/operators, and innovative savings mobilisation instruments. Through these tailored services, this project allows diaspora to freely transfer savings with reduced costs and increase their participation in financing development investments in the country of heritage.

FINANCE + LOCAL
DEVELOPMENT

The Financial and Economic Inclusion (EDMEJ) Programme 2024 - 2027

The EDMEJ programme aims to strengthen the socio-economic inclusion of young people, Tunisian returnees, and the local communities in Tunisia. Its specific objectives include: 1) strengthening the capacities of Tunisian authorities to support sustainable (re)integration of the returning diaspora; 2) supporting a referral system and diversifying integration opportunities through targeted vocational training; and 3) mobilising diaspora investment to promote financial inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Funded by the EU, the programme is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Creative Tunisia, and the Tunisian Foundation for Development, in collaboration with partner institutions in Tunisia.

RETURN AND
INTEGRATION, INVESTMENT



Creative Tunisia 2.0: Employment generation in the handicrafts sector through the support of migration actors in Tunisia

INVESTMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As part of the EDMEJ programme, Creative Tunisia 2.0 aims to enhance employment opportunities in the handicrafts sector through an inclusive approach and participation by the Tunisian diaspora. It offers technical and financial support for Tunisian diaspora members who run a platform selling Tunisian artisanal products in their country of residence to improve their business and marketing strategies. By promoting Tunisian products worldwide, the project contributes to employment generation and socio-economic integration of vulnerable populations in Tunisia, including youth, women, and returning migrants.

Creative Tunisia 2.0 is implemented by the UNIDO Tunis Field Office, with support from the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS).

Diaspora for Development (D4D): Mechanism for startups from the Tunisian diaspora

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Implemented by Caisses des Dépôts (CDCs) Tunisia, as part of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) ProgGres Migration programme, D4D has supported 30 startups run by the Tunisian diaspora in various sectors such as e-services, healthtech, artificial intelligence, agritech, foodtech, and traveltech. The objective of the programme is to ensure scalability and financial sustainability of the beneficiary startups, ultimately strengthening Tunisian entrepreneurial network and enhancing income-generating activities.

Annex:

List of Actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 430+ institutions](#)

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU CIDO)

Tunisia is a member of the African Union and nominates a diaspora focal point as part of the African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU CIDO) Continental Meetings.

Arab League

Community of Sahel-Saharan States

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

General Directorate of Migration and Tunisians Abroad (DGMTE)

Established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad at the end of 2023, the DGMTE is responsible for managing Tunisian migration, including voluntary return and reintegration, monitoring and participating in international cooperation, providing protection for Tunisians abroad, and promoting the participation of Tunisians abroad in national development.

Ministry for Social Affairs

The Ministry for Social Affairs is the lead ministry for migration issues and for Tunisians abroad. It oversees the Office of Tunisians Abroad, the National Migration Observatory, and the Higher Council for Tunisians Abroad (see below).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

The MFA is responsible for consular affairs. Tunisian consular social affairs officers provide advice to Tunisian diaspora in countries of residence.

Ministry for Development, Investment and International Cooperation (MDIIC)

The MDIIC is responsible for investment promotions and development cooperation. In partnership with the MFA and the Central Bank, it is developing diaspora investment schemes.



- At sub-ministerial level

The Office for Tunisians abroad (Office des Tunisiens à l'Etranger, OTE)

The Office of Tunisians Abroad (OTE) maintains a database of skilled diaspora and those that might be willing to participate in development initiatives. This database facilitates contacts between organisations, diaspora groups and associations, and civil society actors; enhancing their ability to network effectively, their access to information and knowledge sharing, although it remains rather theoretical at this stage.

The Higher Council for Tunisians Abroad (Conseil Supérieur des Tunisiens à l'Etranger)

The Council is a consultative body of the OTE (see above), announced in 2016, that arose from diaspora proposals from 2011 onwards, although legal provisions for such a body were made in 1990. It is to be consulted on draft laws and regulations, international conventions and treaties relating to Tunisians abroad. Decrees for its formal establishment were due to be published in 2018.¹³

National Migration Observatory (Observatoire National pour la Migration, ONM)

ONM is a public administrative institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs. It is responsible for collecting information and related data at the national and international levels, ensuring that it is updated and analysed regularly and for conducting research and studies on migration. Its web portal provides access to reports and ONM's databases. ONM has started working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to strengthen information collection and management in relation to migration and the diaspora, and in particular institutional coordination.¹⁴ One activity of this work will be the review and updating of the 'Jelia' directory of Tunisians Resident Abroad. ONM Data Portal: <http://data.migration.nat.tn/fr/>

Dar El-tounsi

The OTE established the Dar El-tounsi ('House of the Tunisian') network of socio-cultural spaces in 2000 in order to support the activities of the Tunisian community; to design and implement social mentoring programmes for the diaspora; and to enable young people to pursue cultural and educational activities.¹⁵

Social Attachés

Originally created in 1972, the Social Attachés are assigned to Tunisian embassies and consulates in Europe, Canada and the Arab world to protect the interests of Tunisian nationals abroad, in terms of social security coverage, handling marital conflicts, and ironing out difficulties encountered in health, judicial and administrative fields.

¹³ <https://www.webmanagercenter.com/2018/07/24/422655/les-decrets-portant-sur-la-creation-du-conseil-superieur-des-tunisiens-a-letranger-seront-bientot-publies-adel-jarboui/>

¹⁴ Personal communication, ICMPD Tunisia, April 2020

¹⁵ <http://consulat-tunisie.ca/>

Diaspora organisations in Europe

Association des Tunisiens des Grandes Ecoles (ATUGE)

France, United Kingdom 1990

Read more about diaspora organisations
in "[Starting guide: What is a diaspora
organisation](#)"



Development activities

ATUGE is a non-profit, Tunisian diaspora professionals' association. A network of more than 3500 people, ATUGE brings together students, young graduates and alumni of French Grandes Ecoles. ATUGE has a presence in Tunis, Paris and London and runs an international network that works to strengthen cooperation with Tunisia through investment events organised in all three cities and to connect Tunisians in the diaspora with Tunisia through regular events and projects.

Association de Soutien aux Enfants (ASSEN) France 2010

Development activities

ASSEN is a diaspora humanitarian association founded by young Tunisians living in France. ASSEN helps the most destitute children in Tunisia and around the world.

Association des Compétences Tunisiennes résidant en Suisse (ACTS) Switzerland 2016

Development activities

ACTS works to mobilize the skills of Tunisians residing in Switzerland in order to contribute to the achievement of Tunisia's priority development objectives. ACTS aims to be the reference point for consultation with Tunisian diaspora experts in Switzerland in target sectors such as health, ICT and technology, banking services, the green economy, institutional governance and soft skills, finance, investment, and exports.

Association Tunisiens des Deux Rives France (T2RIV) France

Development activities

T2RIV works to support the Tunisian people in their march towards freedom, justice, democracy and development. Its priority is providing assistance to the most disadvantaged through social, humanitarian and economic activities. The Ministry of Women, Family and Children, in partnership with the Association Tunisiens des Deux Rives France (T2RIV) and the governorate of Sidi Bouzid, have rolled out a local development project designed to revive the farming sector within the region. Supported by the knowledge, practical skills, and remittances of the Tunisian diaspora in France, rural women of Sidi Bouzid are supported to actively engage in farming activities that generate a permanent income.¹⁶

Association des Compétences Tunisiennes Innovantes de France (ACTIF) France 2004

ACTIF works to provide innovative solutions and promote collaboration between France and Tunisia in the areas of new technology, economy, culture, humanitarian aid, and development. After the revolution, ACTIF has been active in facilitating debates and representing diaspora voices in the Tunisian political scene.

¹⁶ Source: <http://www.migration4development.org/en/projects/profiles/tunisia>

Communauté Tunisienne en Suisse (CTS) Switzerland

CTS works to support the Tunisian community in Switzerland, strengthening their sense of belonging and solidarity within the diaspora. It aims to facilitate the integration of Tunisians living in Switzerland, to raise awareness within new generations about their heritage, to create a network between the Swiss population and the Tunisian diaspora, and to promote investments and development opportunities in Tunisia.

Diaspora in Action e.V. Germany

This network of Tunisian academics and change-makers works on knowledge transfer, resource sharing, network consolidation, and community strengthening, aiming to contribute to the prosperity of Tunisia.

PONTES Ricerche e Interventi Italy 2006

Development activities

PONTES Ricerche e Interventi is a Tunisian diaspora organisation in Italy, part of the transnational civil society network PONTES, which operates between Italy and Tunisia and, more generally, between Europe and Middle East and North African countries. PONTES was founded to promote diversity and integration actions of migrants, with a specific focus on the integration of second-generation young people and migrant women. Its projects include maternal and child protection centres (SMEs) in Tunisia, and the COMACT DIASPORA project to promote entrepreneurship in the diaspora.

Le Pont Genève Switzerland 2015

Le Pont Genève was founded by a group of Swiss and Tunisian activists in Geneva with the aim of promoting cultural exchange between Switzerland and Tunisia in order to strengthen the culture of democracy and citizenship.

Réseau ALYSSA France 2005

Development activities

Réseau ALYSSA is an international network of Tunisian skills. It is an apolitical diaspora association bringing together a group of people of Tunisian origin to exchange, share and create value in solidarity with Tunisia. The network, created in 2005 in Lille, works to mobilize the skills of Tunisians abroad for development. It also raises funds for education projects in Tunisia. ALYSSA is developing a platform for OTE dedicated to Tunisian diaspora organisations around the world, intended to serve as a hub for calls for projects in various areas of development, economic meetings, cultural exhibitions, organisation of a 'Tunisia week', visits, and internships targeting the diaspora.

Tunespoir France 2013

Tunespoir is a non-political charitable association aiming to promote sustainable and self-reliant development in rural communities in Tunisia. The organisation is committed to improving living conditions and ensuring socio-economic integration of disadvantaged populations through tailored projects that meet local needs. Key actions include providing support for infrastructure-building, income-generating, and education projects.

Twenssa en France France 2019

Twenssa en France focuses on fostering community ties within the Tunisian diaspora in France by providing a networking platform, and supporting cultural events and community engagement initiatives.

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