

Introduction

While the BPfA and Agenda 2030 are very relevant to addressing gender inequality in Irish media and communications industry, unfortunately there is very little discussion at a national level that explicitly connects the BPfA and Agenda 2030 to the question of gender inequality in Ireland. Gender inequalities in Irish media and communications industries tend to be examined in national isolation with little or infrequent regard for international policy or measures. There is some connection in the context of the Broadcast regulator with European legislation or initiatives, which may in turn reference Agenda 2030, but it is generally an under-represented discourse in the Irish context. Notwithstanding that gap the nine key issues of BPfA and Agenda 2030 are relevant to understanding the Irish context and reflect concerns with inequality in Ireland, as outlined in further detail below.

Evidence

1. Freedom of Expression (which includes safety of women journalists offline and online)

By international standards, Ireland ranks relatively high on the Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders; Ireland ranked 15th in the world in 2019. However, Reporters Without Borders (2019) highlighted key concerns for the future of press freedom: Irish courts have awarded “extraordinarily high damages” in defamation cases against the media; since 2005, members of the police force have been prohibited from speaking to journalists without prior authorisation; and there is a high concentration of ownership across private and state-funded media. Reporters Without Borders note that Ireland’s defamation laws, which are among the most restrictive in Europe, create a climate of self-censorship. In 2017, the European Court of Human Rights found that a €1.25 million award against one newspaper was in breach of freedom of expression. The reason for such high awards is generally attributed to the fact that Ireland is the only country in Europe where defamation actions are heard before a jury. A review of defamation laws is currently underway.

Until August 2019, businessman Denis O'Brien was the largest shareholder of Independent News and Media (INM), which controls much of the newspaper market. He remains the owner of Communicorp, which operates two national radio stations and a number of regional stations. Both media organisations have been embroiled in controversies relating to freedom of expression. The Data Protection Commissioner investigated a major data breach at INM in which thousands of emails from journalists and senior staff were accessed. The Irish taoiseach [Prime Minister] described the data breach as a "significant threat to the freedom of the press" (O'Regan and O'Halloran 2018). Since 2017, Communicorp banned all journalists from *The Irish Times* newspaper from appearing on its radio programmes. In 2019, Communicorp announced a similar ban applying to all journalists working for the news website *The Currency*.

In 2018 the criminalisation of blasphemy was repealed by referendum; no prosecution was ever made under the law. The current government plans to introduce an Online Safety Act and an Online Safety Commissioner to address issues relating to online harassment and harmful content. Ireland is one of the few European jurisdictions in which there has been a successful prosecution for the online harassment of journalists. This case is discussed in a report on the online harassment of journalists by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and International Press Institute (Griffen and McCully 2019). The case concerned the harassment of a female TV journalist and the perpetrator’s harassment included the online publication of photoshopped images of the victim. Although the prosecution

demonstrated that Ireland's existing law on harassment could be applied to online communication, it also highlighted that the existing law "is in need of reform and further clarification to effectively combat all types of online harassment and abuse" (Giffen and McCully 2019:36). Moreover, it was not clear whether the judge's sentencing took into account the impact on the victim's journalistic freedom. In 2019, a man was sent forward for trial accused of a seven-year campaign of online harassment against six women including journalists. The trial has not yet commenced. The Committee to Protect Journalists, which monitors attacks on journalists, records only one attack in Ireland since 1992: the murder of a woman journalist, Veronica Guerin, by a criminal gang in 1996. More recently, the fallout from the UK's Brexit referendum has increased tensions in Northern Ireland and along the border with the Republic of Ireland. In 2019, a woman journalist, Lyra McKee, was shot dead by paramilitaries during rioting in Derry city, Northern Ireland.

2. Gender Media Policy (which includes laws, regulatory frameworks, policies)

Between 2015 and 2019 there have been significant developments in gender and diversity policy in Irish media industries. The Irish Film Board (IFB), the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), Women in Film and Television Ireland (WFTI), and the Equality Action Committee (EAC) of the Writers and Directors Guilds played key roles in generating gender policy change. The IFB, now Screen Ireland, in December 2015 issued a 'Gender Equality Six Point Plan' aimed at addressing gender inequality in Irish film. The main components of the plan included a commitment to publish statistics on funding allocations and the gender breakdown of roles in completed projects. The board aimed to 'stimulate applications for development and production funding with female creative talent attached' (IFB, 2015). Training and mentorship were to be organized through Screen Training Ireland (STI), subsequently renamed Screen Skills Ireland. Early intervention in formal education settings was named as an important part of changing the gendered mind set. Enterprise Ireland, the Irish government organization responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in global markets, started an entrepreneurship start-up scheme that would encourage engagement with and dedicate space at existing incubation centers for female creative talent. Lastly, the IFB declared their intention to work with other industry partners in film and television production to embed gender equality 'within the decision-making process in screen content which is publically funded' (IFB, 2015).

In April 2018 the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland launched its Gender Action Plan. The Plan addressed four key areas in the promotion of gender equality. Firstly 'transparent and accurate data on the number of women involved in the sector, what roles these women have, pay structures... and whether there exists adequate gender balance in decision-making positions in the industry' was to be gathered (2018a: 3). Secondly, the BAI committed to undertaking specific gender research on questions of equality of access, on leadership, on air representation, on obstacles to participation and on working conditions. Thirdly, the BAI proposed to enhance its programme of sectoral development to support gender initiatives. Fourthly, the BAI was to address accountability (a requirement of the Council of Europe) by publishing the Gender Action Plan, promoting development initiatives and seeking partner opportunities with other bodies, funders and broadcasters. The RTÉ Strategy 2018-22 was published in March 2017 and noted an 'increased awareness' of 'gender diversity' in Irish society (RTÉ, 2018:35) but it did not speak specifically to meeting the needs of women in the audience, nor did it address the broader question of who was included in program making. Subsequently in October 2018 RTÉ launched their Diversity and Inclusion programme. The goals attached to that objective included 'a 50/50 gender balance across RTÉ as a whole and, where possible, within key levels of management' (2018b:6). A graduate sponsorship

programme and a revision of recruitment and selection strategies were also named as goals within the Charter.

3. Media Content (which includes representation of women in news -GMMP-, sexist stereotypes)

Since 2015, the annual Reuters Digital News Report survey has provided insights in the gender differences among Irish news consumers. In general, it identifies few differences between the consumption patterns of men and women. There are slight differences in preferences for news topics with women expressing a greater preference for health, education, and lifestyle news than men (Kirk at al. 2016) and women are somewhat more inclined to follow news on social media (Kirk at al. 2019). However, studies investigating patterns of gender representation find significant differences in the coverage of men and women.

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) has tracked gender representations in the news every five years since 1995. Ireland was included in the GMMP for the first time in 2015; findings from Ireland and the UK were combined for the report (Ross 2015). The study found that women struggle to comprise even a third of media professionals, with radio being the least inclusive of women media professionals. This is notable as radio remains a highly popular medium in Ireland and plays a leading role in Irish news coverage (Kirk at al. 2019). Across the media, gender stereotypes were much in evidence in relation to age. Women announcers and presenters mostly fell within the 35 - 49 age bracket with only 11 percent over 50 years of age. In Ireland, women represented only 33 percent of news sources across newspapers, TV, radio, and online.

The GMPP findings are borne out by other reports. A study of gender balance on news and current affairs programmes across three national radio stations found that female voices made up an average of only 28 percent of broadcasting time (Walsh, Suiter, and O'Connor 2015). In addition, male experts occupied a disproportionate amount of broadcasting time. Male experts accounted for an average of 73 percent of political voices, 80 percent of economics experts, and 85 percent of speakers on science or technology. The study recommended that current affairs programmes undertake gender reviews as part of their weekly and monthly reviews, and appoint individuals to monitor the gender breakdown of on-air voices. It also called on stations to add more female experts to contact databases and to set minimum targets in relation to gender roles. A report on gender diversity in radio programming about business (Culloty 2016) also found that women were underrepresented, especially on commercial stations. It identified significant scope to expand the representation of women working in finance and women who own or manage companies into stations' database of contacts.

4. Women in Indigenous and Community Media (which includes women's access, attacks against them)

Key findings from O' Brien's (2019) examination of women and the community media sector in Ireland notes that women are under-represented as participants in community radio, but there is little activity within the sector to address this imbalance. Women's voices are absent from community radio airwaves but this absence is framed through a limited explanation of women lacking on-air confidence. Solutions to the problem are limited to individual community stations rather than approached at a sectoral level. There is no sense that women's participation on air is a priority issue for stations, for the sector, nor for the national regulatory body. With regard to content, stations largely tended to produce "islands" of specialist women's programmes that were seen as non-normative. Gendered social and organisational structures

within community radio constitute further barriers to women's equal participation in community radio in Ireland.

5. Gender and Media and ICT Conglomeration (which includes women's access and participation in media and ICT industries, labour rights, etc.)

The media and ICT industries in Ireland include a small national broadcasting sector made up of public and private radio and television stations and channels;ⁱ national and local press; a small film industry that is supported by state and arts funding, tax incentives and foreign film production;ⁱⁱ and a growing technology, software and IT sector made up of a number of key large foreign-owned as well as small to medium size indigenous companies.ⁱⁱⁱ Each sector evidences different rates of women's participation in the labour market but all show an overall underrepresentation of women. This underrepresentation exists alongside an economy that is market-driven but also rights-based. For example, maternity leave is available to all female employees in Ireland, however, employment and work in the media industries is often freelance, precarious, and contract-based meaning that many women cannot avail of it.^{iv} Childcare costs are amongst the highest in Europe.^v Women remain largely responsible for family and childcare whether employed outside the home or not.^{vi} It is important to consider these factors in any analysis of women's labour and the Irish media and ICT sectors.

In the Irish film sector, Screen Ireland reports low numbers of women in directing and writing roles, with more representation in roles such as producer.^{vii} In the broadcasting sector, women have and continue to be underrepresented in leadership and management, senior and highly remunerated roles as well as in technical roles.^{viii} National broadcaster RTÉ, for example, has only one third of women to two thirds of men in higher income bracket roles.^{ix} Some research on television production suggests that structural inequalities in this sector impede women's ability to endure working conditions that penalise care-givers.^x A report on radio broadcasting from 2015 evidenced an under-represented of female voices on current affairs programmes across most public and private radio channels during peak hours.^{xi} In news and journalism, women were equally underrepresented as producers or sources of news, according to a 2015 Global Media Monitoring Report on UK and Irish media.^{xii} Patterns of underrepresentation are also evident in the ICT and digital technology sectors in Ireland. There is a problematic lack of women in professional ICT roles as compared to men and the proportion of female ICT specialists is not improving greatly.^{xiii} Low female participation is also a feature of other emerging sectors in Ireland such as digital games, where, it has been reported, women make up 13% of the workforce.^{xiv}

The highly problematic lack of access to and participation in the aforementioned sectors has resulted in a number of initiatives aimed at addressing this gender imbalance by creating equality of opportunity for women in the media and ICT industries. Among policies and practices launched in recent years are film funder Screen Ireland's Six Point Plan on Gender Equality that includes direct measures to increase the number of funded Irish film projects with female writers, directors or producers attached.^{xv} Elsewhere, the State's film tax incentive aimed at international and national film productions- Section 481- has a recently added condition of gender equality attached, meaning that all films seeking to avail of the scheme will be required to demonstrate initiatives aimed at improving gender and diversity on the productions.^{xvi} Given the large uptake of this tax incentive by film productions in Ireland, this has the potential to be impactful. In broadcasting, policies have been introduced by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), which is a significant funder of Irish radio and

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television programmes. Its 2018 Gender Action Plan, while not yet making gender equality a condition of funding, has begun to require gender data on applications for funding through its Sound & Vision scheme. It has also funded further research on gender and Irish broadcasting with a view to providing more data on female participation in this sector.^{xvii} Individual broadcasters- public and private- have been slower to take clear and transparent action on the reporting of gender participation or on developing initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in broadcasting. Irish-language broadcaster TG4 is an outlier in this respect. It partnered with Screen Ireland and BAI to fund Irish-language films that demonstrated gender balance in the creative team.^{xviii} In the ICT sector, there have been recent State-led and industry-led efforts to encourage more female participation. The National Agency for Workforce Learning has a number of initiatives aimed at women at various career stages in the broader section. This includes a return to work programme- Women ReBoot- as well the Women KickSTART programme aimed at encouraging women into more early career and entry level IT work.^{xix} However, while there is a general drive to encourage women to return to this sector, there are less efforts to address the reasons for their departure in the first instance. Women – rather than the sector or corporate cultures- are also perceived as the 'problem.' The government's report Forecasting the Future Demand for High-Level ICT Skills in Ireland, 2017-2022, for example, concentrates on urging women to enter the sector rather than changing the sector to be more inclusive.^{xx}

The aforementioned initiatives and practices are welcomed and will, at the very least, provide further data on gender and participation in the media and ICT industries. However, there are areas that require attention. The encouragement of women into media and ICT work must take place alongside measures to address structural and cultural barriers to entry in said sectors. Media work, for example, is often defined by anti-social hours that impede work-life balance and impacts on women's care-giving responsibilities.^{xxi} In addition, organisational structures need to change to accommodate women whether this is in the form of adjusting to women's care-giving responsibilities and to women's work patterns and styles. The ICT industries, in particular, is male dominated and may have a work culture that proves challenging for women. It is not a matter of accommodation of women but a reorganisation of work cultures that is cognisant of women as well as men. Key to enacting this is the collection and analysis of more data on women's work, employment and experiences of the media and ICT sectors. Currently, this is lacking (in comparison to, for example, UK data on the media industries) and, therefore, it is difficult to measure change.

6. Gender in Media and ICT Education (which includes gender in the curricula of Journalism and Communication schools, in media and information literacy, etc.)

Given the drive to achieve more gender balance in media representation, as well as the various initiatives aimed at increasing female participation in the media and ICT industries, there is a disappointing level of engagement with this issue in education and training including at primary and post primary stages, at higher level as well as in training schemes. In the primary education setting, guidelines published for embedding ICT in the curriculum make only passing reference to the need for strategies of gender inclusion^{xxii} despite the wider acknowledgement of gender inequality in the ICT labour markets. In addition, gender differences in digital literacy have been identified in primary level children, yet few formal efforts have been made at the State level to prevent different trends in media literacy among girls and boys.^{xxiii} Post-primary education in Ireland also demonstrates a lack of attention to

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gender and media and ICT on the curriculum. Media literacy is not formally addressed in the junior cycle curriculum, instead it is embedded within subjects such as English, and gender is not a critical lens through which media texts are examined.^{.xxiv} In relation to ICT, Computer Science was introduced to the Leaving Certificate cycle in 2018.^{.xxv} Although there is recognition by the State and educational institutions that this subject has typically low female participation,^{.xxvi} there are few structural initiatives to ensure that women's learning and teaching in Computer Science is paramount or to ensure that uptake of the subject is not polarised by gender as has been the case in subjects such as Design and Communications, Engineering and Physics where women are underrepresented.^{.xxvii} Practice to date has been to encourage awareness but not active measures to address issues of gender imbalance.

The higher education provision of media and ICT courses and subjects is perhaps much better than primary and post-primary education including journalism, media, film, television, computer science, and digital media. Overall there may appear to be high female participation in some courses and subject areas such as 'Audio-visual techniques and media production,' however female participation is very dependent upon the nature of the institution and the course.^{.xxviii} Women are over-represented on university courses and underrepresented on more vocational and practical/technical courses delivered through institutes of technology. In some cases, female participation drops to approximately 25% of students. This is reflected in industry figures that point to dominance of men in employment in the sector.^{.xxix} Journalism courses evidence significantly high participation of women, with 'journalism and reporting' courses offered through universities and institutes of technology showing much higher participation of women than of men.^{.xxx} Recent research on women's employment in the journalism sector, however, suggests that there are far fewer opportunities for women than for men.^{.xxxi} In ICT, the picture is bleaker again, with women making up less than 15% of all new entrants to such courses across universities and institutes of technology.^{.xxxii} Despite often-referenced need for women's participation in the ICT sector,^{.xxxiii} the government's 2022 ICT Skills Action Plan shows little by way of action to increase the participation of women in ICT education.^{.xxxiv} In addition, third level media and ICT courses might benefit from more focus on gender in the curriculum in order to encourage more female participation and to raise awareness of the gendering of technologies, roles and media representations. Few undergraduate or higher diploma journalism courses contained any modules specifically concerned with gender. Computing, computer science or courses in the field of ICT also had very few modules that emphasised gender. Higher level courses on media, film or communication studies- particularly university courses- are more likely to offer teaching and learning on gender and media, reflecting a tendency within these disciplines to focus on issues of identity and power in media and technology. However, the Irish university sector is not a typical provider of practical and technical education. Instead, institutes of technology- which show less focus on gender on the curriculum- provide most practical and technical training. There have been some efforts by educational providers to draw attention to and address gender imbalance on media and ICT-related courses,^{.xxxv} however, more needs to be done at the State level to ensure that gender is embedded across all curricula.

There exist diversity, visibility, and accessibility issues in relation to gender in Irish digital fields and these issues emerge early on in the educational pathway of Irish students. The November 2016 report by the STEM Education Review Group cites data from the Irish Central Statistics Office (CSO) that estimates that fewer than 25% of approximately 120,000 people working in jobs that use STEM skills are women. The report recognizes that "a major contributory factor is the selection of subjects and Third Level programmes by young women at post- primary level. One key barrier in this regard arises from the fact that, while parents are the main influencers when it comes to advising their daughters on how to define educational and career

paths, they generally lack information about career options". Currently computer science and digital skills is not a subject at secondary school so current national initiatives and data regarding gender in this subject are mainly to be found at third level. The same 2016 report identifies as that "a sustained, multi-faceted action plan for addressing the gender imbalance in specific STEM disciplines should be established and implemented as a matter of urgency. Particular emphasis should be placed on the marketing strategies and language used in this regard."

One recent initiative to address the gender imbalance in STEM in Irish universities is the recent announcement that it was creating 45 women only professorships in science and engineering. This initiative is in its very early stages so we have yet to see how successful it will be.

Keith Quille, Natalie Culligan, and Susan Bergin presented a paper on *Insights on gender Differences in CS1: A Multi-institutional, Multi-variate Study* at ITiCSE 2017 in Italy. This paper describes a study in which 693 students from 10 institutions in Ireland and one in Denmark participated. The goal of the study was to compare the profile of male and female students who were enrolled on introductory computer programming courses to see if any differences could be made by gender. The gender split was 79:21 respectively which itself is a telling ratio. The paper outlines the prominent concern of the lower uptake of CS by female students and the paper identified that female students underrate their programming self-efficacy compared to their end of year grade. The paper also identified that although female programming students have a higher mathematical grade prior to enrolling in their courses they have a significantly lower end of year grade expectation. Female students on the introductory programming courses examined in the study also had significantly lower self-rating on programming concepts, program design and completion and a greater level of anxiety for tests or test situations all at the beginning of CS1 compared to their male counterparts. Quille, Culligan, and Bergin (2017) highlight data from *A Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education. A report by the Higher Education Authority, Ireland.* (Liston, Frawley, Patterson, 2016) that indicates on average Irish enrolment of female students in CS courses is currently around 20%.

7. Gender and Digital Rights (which includes universal access to ICTs, women and girls in STEM, gender and Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, etc.)

Whilst Ireland is touted as a European hub of digital skills and technology, there is little data present regarding how digital rights intersect with gender.

8. Access to Information

With regard to Gender and Open Data currently there's little reporting on the users of Open Data in Ireland. A search of the web site of <http://data.gov.ie> (an online portal operated by the Irish Government Reform Unit of The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform) for the key word "gender" finds 24 datasets that include Science Foundation Ireland award applications by gender and CVT03 which lists the gender of staff participating on training courses by Economic Sector, Year and Statistic. There are also Freedom of Information disclosure logs but they just state the general type of data requestor not the gender, nor is there any data in Irish public library reports on users of Internet access.

Recommendations

In view of the evidence, specific & implementable actions that should be taken by governments/media and ICT industries/UN system.

1. Freedom of Expression

There is a need to lobby for changes to Irish defamation law to ensure greater freedom of expression for journalists. Online harassment law also needs further reform.

2. Gender Media Policy

There has been solid progress in this area in the last five years but there is still a need for the national public service broadcaster to implement a gender equality plan.

3. Media Content

There is a need to redress the under-representation of women in content, which should have specific targets attached for public sector and commercial outlets. Also there is a need for research to review achievements and failures in that regard as well as potential best practices.

4. ICT Content (no analysis)

5. Women in Indigenous and Community Media

Resources need to be allocated from public funds to community radio to facilitate greater participation by women and this issue needs to become a policy priority for the sector.

6. Gender in ICT Conglomeration

There is a need for data, policy and measures to address the structural factors that push women out of the ICT sector, and there needs to be policy designed to address shortcomings so that women will be attracted to ICT.

7. Gender in Media and ICT Education

There is an urgent need for target-driven practices in education to ensure that education providers are incentivised to encourage gender balance in media and ICT subjects. Such targets should be concerned with numbers of women taking up media and ICT subjects at second and third levels of education. Targets linked to additional funding may act as an incentive rather than a requirement. In addition, there is a need for gender to be directly embedded in primary and post-primary education and for it to be specifically taught and examined at the junior and senior cycles. Finally, higher education providers should include gender-focused initiatives in strategic plans and objectives as they have done in other areas such as employability. Again, targets linked to funding may encourage more effort on the part of higher education providers to increase women's participation on media and ICT courses.

8. Gender and Digital Rights

A recommendation of this report is to collaborate with the Open Data unit of the Irish Government to collate more data relating to gender and digital rights and access to information. This data could then be used to develop strategies to identify and address the resulting issues that emerge. A further recommendation is to run a series of digital skills workshops for girls aged 10 -16, this could evoke interest and confidence in girls in digital skills, topics and careers before they select career pathways. For example it is disappointing that the Irish Government's 2015 *Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 Enhancing teaching,*

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learning and assessment makes mention of inclusion but no mention of gender given the imbalance of gender in computer science courses at third level is so apparent.

9. Access to Information

There is a need for data to be gathered on users of Open Data and Irish public library reports need to include reports on gender and use of internet.

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Existing Good Practices linked to the issue (URL and contact details)	Links to BPfA	Links to the Agenda 2030
<p>Film Board and Broadcasting regulator's policy on gender and funding for productions that attach female talent</p> <p>Irish Film Board (2017) 'Six Point Plan on Gender Equality' Issued December 2015 available at https://www.screenireland.ie/about/gender</p> <p>Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (2018a) <i>Broadcasting Authority of Ireland Gender Action Plan</i>. Dublin: BAI.</p> <p>See note below for link to URL.</p>	J1 Participation	Goal 5
<p>Inclusion of Ireland in GMMP</p> <p>Global Media Monitoring Project. 2015. Who makes the news? Available at: http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/national/UK.pdf [Accessed on 10/10/2019]</p>	J2 Representation	Goal 5

BAI Gender Action Plan url:

https://www.bai.ie/en/media/sites/2/dlm_uploads/2018/04/20180423_BAI_GenderActionPlan_vFinal_AR.pdf

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Section 5

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Section 6

i There is a mixture of public (RTÉ Radio 1; RTÉ 2FM, etc.) and private radio stations (Newstalk; Today FM, etc.), with around thirty commercial radio stations. Television has a smaller number of channels with, again, a mixture of public commercial (RTÉ 1; RTÉ 2, etc.) and private commercial (Virgin Media One; Virgin Media Two, etc.).

ii Joint Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. 2018. Report on Development and Working Conditions in the Irish Film Industry. Available at: https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_culture_heritage_and_t

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