



## CORPORATE RE-DOMICILIATION

Issued 6 January 2022

ICAEW welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation document on Corporate re-domiciliation published by the government in October 2021, a copy of which is available from [this link](#).

The government needs to give greater thought to the types of companies it wishes to attract to the UK by introducing this facility or make its thoughts more explicit during the consultation process. By providing more details, we will be able to provide a more detailed analysis of whether its objectives are likely to be met.

In particular, if the government is aiming to attract companies currently located in offshore financial centres, it should ensure that those companies operate to the same reporting and governance standards as existing UK companies. There is an inherent risk that some companies used to a less strict regime (eg in respect of money laundering) will not be able to meet the UK's standards.

The government may wish to research in greater detail the experience of other territories who have introduced re-domiciliation regimes and the motives for doing so.

If the intention is for the government to attract more investment in the UK then this measure needs to be coupled with others that would provide more significant incentives to companies moving their operations here.

This response of 6 January 2022 has been prepared by the ICAEW Tax Faculty and the ICAEW Business Law Department.

Internationally recognised as a source of expertise, the ICAEW Tax Faculty is a leading authority on taxation and is the voice of tax for ICAEW. It is responsible for making all submissions to the tax authorities on behalf of ICAEW, drawing upon the knowledge and experience of ICAEW's membership. The Tax Faculty's work is directly supported by over 130 active members, many of them well-known names in the tax world, who work across the complete spectrum of tax, both in practice and in business. ICAEW Tax Faculty's Ten Tenets for a Better Tax System, by which we benchmark the tax system and changes to it, are summarised in Appendix 1.

ICAEW's Business Law Department is responsible for ICAEW policy on selected business law issues including company law. It is supported by groups of expert volunteers, including its Company Law Panel.

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## KEY POINTS

1. More information on the expected benefits of the proposal and how it will be implemented is needed before we can comment in detail. We note that less than 12 weeks (during a holiday period) have been allowed for responses. We have not therefore been able to consult as widely as we might otherwise have done, particularly as regards the potential demand for redomicile and to what extent it might benefit the UK.
2. We understand that the relevant government departments are developing the proposals further and would be happy to help on relevant aspects that might arise later in the process.
3. In the meantime, we believe that government should consider further the potential costs versus benefits of the proposal and provide more information on how it will be implemented, if it is taken forward. We hope that our comments on these issues below will be helpful in that respect.
4. We have provided specific responses to some, but not all of the questions in the consultation document. Where we have not responded, this is either because we do not have the necessary expertise to provide an informed response, we have had insufficient time to consult with experts in the area concerned or we feel that the consultation needs to be developed further so that we have specific questions or proposals on which to comment.

## COSTS AND RISKS VERSUS BENEFITS

### Costs and risks

5. The policy purpose is to increase the attractiveness and availability of the UK as a destination to locate a business and in which to invest. This proposal is deregulatory in the sense that it gives relevant companies more choice and freedom. These are reasonable policy objectives but before any decision is made they need to be balanced against the possible costs and risks of the proposal. A detailed cost versus benefit assessment is needed to support such a significant change to our company regime.
6. The direct costs will include costs of systems and staff at Companies House needed to implement and maintain the regime. If these are going to be borne by companies wishing to redomicile, those costs will need to be assessed and registration fees set accordingly. It will be necessary for the likely demand to be assessed to do this (see below).
7. While it may be impracticable to quantify them meaningfully, there will also be indirect costs, for instance additional resource needed to monitor and control money laundering risks.
8. Unless care is taken in implementing (see below) the proposal could result in an influx of companies who seek, in effect, to trade on the UK's reputation as a trusted jurisdiction but do nothing in themselves to merit or enhance that reputation. We note that the New Zealand regime is, according to its own website, aimed at attracting companies from 'offshore tax havens'. The consultation document refers to possible interest in companies located in offshore financial centres, which could include businesses which have engaged in the sort of practices and behaviours that the UK government would not wish to encourage relocating to the UK.
9. Practical difficulties might arise for companies that redomicile. For instance, if a relevant company can retain its constitution (designed for local law purposes) but will be required to comply with the UK company law (eg regarding shareholder voting and directors' responsibilities), there is a risk of complexity or inconsistency. Language difficulties might also arise. A relevant company should therefore seek professional advice, but this will have a

cost. It must also be supposed that some companies, particularly smaller ones, might seek to minimise effort in this regard.

10. The consequences arising out of practical issues like this (eg disputes and litigation) may lie with the companies concerned, but if the regime does not operate smoothly in practice, it cannot be expected to enhance the UK's reputation as a place to do business.
11. Government should seek to assess whether or not these potential concerns are likely to arise in fact, eg by looking at a representative sample of companies that have redomiciled in jurisdictions that permit it, including ones that have subsequently become insolvent (if any).

### **Potential benefits**

12. We understand anecdotally that there is a demand for overseas companies to redomicile to the UK, but would like to see government provide evidence of this, including:
  - how many companies;
  - what type of company (eg large, small, micro) and business sector;
  - from which jurisdictions and to which jurisdictions; and
  - reason given for redomiciling and whether or not the objective was met.
13. Demand should be assessed according to the nature of the regime as it will be implemented, not in the abstract. For instance, if registration fees might be substantial, a company would need to know this to assess whether or not alternatives (eg establishing a UK branch or subsidiary) might be preferable. It would also need to be aware of key facets of the UK legal regime that will apply to it, including recent changes to UK law that have increased the risk of personal liability for directors.
14. Even if there is substantial demand, it is not clear to us what benefit would ensue for the UK from the mere fact that a company is domiciled here. It does not appear that a company redomiciling will be treated differently from other UK companies. This means that it would not need to:
  - make a profit;
  - employ anyone in the UK;
  - own any assets in the UK;
  - be managed from the UK (eg by directors resident here).
15. Government will, therefore, need to assess what benefit will ensue from those companies that do wish to redomicile.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

16. If this proposal is taken forward, it is essential that it is carefully implemented so that no damage is caused to the UK's reputation. There are many issues that require further consideration in this respect, including whether there are any jurisdictions where risks of permitting companies to re-domicile to the UK would be higher than others. This might include, for instance, jurisdictions that do not apply equivalent accounting standards.
17. We agree that the questions raised in the consultation about protection of creditors and assurances regarding accounts (and audit) need to be considered carefully. We are not in a position to respond to such broad ranging issues in the short time allowed but would be happy to consider focused questions further with our relevant experts as the proposals are developed.
18. Companies incorporated in the UK that have little nexus with the UK can give rise to practical difficulties for instance, in enforcing UK law against directors resident overseas or recovering

assets (eg in insolvency) held overseas. Whether or not these issues would be more prevalent in relation to companies that redomicile to the UK would depend on the nature of the companies that ultimately decide to do so.

## ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

### **1. What do you see as the advantages of re-domiciliation compared to existing routes to relocate a company to the UK, and how material are they?**

19. The main advantage to inward re-domiciliation is the fact that there is no need to set up an additional company in the UK. Having additional companies in a corporate structure brings a number of ongoing administrative costs and complications that can be avoided by shifting the place of the company's registration to the UK. These include audit costs, management time, tax compliance costs and legal fees.
20. Of course, it is possible to transfer business and assets to a new company and then close down the existing company, hence avoiding the ongoing cost of maintaining two companies. However, even the most straightforward of company liquidations can cost several thousand pounds in legal and other fees, which would be avoided if the existing company could be kept open.
21. Having said that, the most important factor to consider is how to make the UK a more attractive place for businesses to locate to and we are not convinced that offering a wider range of methods for achieving this will make a huge difference in that regard, unless existing methods create prohibitive tax charges overseas, for example, which would make a move to the UK a non-starter.

### **3. What level of demand might the UK see from firms seeking to re-domicile?**

22. Despite the benefits referred to above, we anticipate that initial demand for re-domiciliation would be relatively low until companies began to see the benefits compared to existing methods of transferring businesses to the UK. We suspect that this would be of niche interest only until the benefits become more widely appreciated. There would need to be a substantive education campaign to make businesses and their advisers aware of the new facilities open for transferring businesses to the UK.

### **4. From what jurisdictions would companies be most likely to re-domicile to the UK?**

23. We consider that the demand is likely to be highest from those businesses that already have a physical presence in the UK (or are looking to develop one) and that are currently incorporated in a territory where the ongoing finance, legal and compliance costs of running the business are relatively high, such that transfer of the place of incorporation to the UK would help to reduce these costs.
24. However, it is likely that other factors such as location of customers and key management and the respective tax regimes would have a much bigger impact on whether a business makes the decision to relocate to the UK in the first place.

### **7. Are there other administrative, financial, or other barriers that would still prevent a company re-domiciling to the UK even with a re-domiciliation regime being established?**

25. Yes, if the country of origin retained any compliance or other requirements over the company concerned, then the benefit of re-domiciling from that country would be reduced. Also, from a tax perspective, if the country of origin applied exit taxes on assets held by the company on transfer of incorporation, then the tax cost may outweigh the savings achieved from re-domiciling to the UK. Finally, if other more substantive reasons for the business to relocate to the UK do not exist then it is unlikely that it would do so, regardless of the increased range of options for achieving this.

**10. The Government's view is that an economic substance test is not necessary for re-domiciliation. Do you agree?**

26. We agree that in the interests of the consistency of treatment and fairness, an economic substance test is not required. However, we question the benefit of bringing businesses into the UK if they are not planning to contribute a certain level of economic activity or employment to the country, especially if such activity presents a higher risk profile than existing UK based businesses,

**12. Will the existing arrangements that do not allow companies to move between certain UK nations have a bearing on overseas companies' decisions whether to redomicile in the UK?**

27. We do not consider that this would have a significant impact on overseas companies' decisions. However, we do believe that a degree of inconsistency would be created if businesses can re-domicile into England/Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland but not re-domicile between these nations.

**13. Do you have any views on how the regime should best ensure departing country conditions are met? Is there anything else we should consider?**

28. We agree with the conditions and requirements set out in the table in Chapter 3 of the consultation document from the perspective that they will help to ensure a high level of compliance from companies re-domiciling to the UK. However, we envisage that UK authorities will need to liaise closely with the respective authorities of the territories from which businesses are migrating because just as the UK may develop policies to control the 'quality' of companies re-domiciling from the UK, other territories may have rules which prevent those companies from re-domiciling away from them. A company may potentially find itself domiciled in two different countries or in no country, neither of which would be a desirable outcome.
29. With regard to departing country conditions, we believe that it will not be possible to apply a one-size-fits-all approach and that the individual conditions for each country will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. We also consider that it will be the company's responsibility to ensure that it meets those conditions and it is not down to Companies House to police this.

**14. Do you have views on our proposed approach, which would allow all bodies corporate to re-domicile to the UK, subject to the relevant entry criteria?**

30. We are not able to provide a substantial response to this question but agree in principle that all types of body corporate should be allowed to re-domicile to the UK, rather than just collective investment vehicles, if the intention is to encourage economic activity to be migrated to the UK.

**15. Should we preclude directors who do not have a good standing (i.e. pending court cases) from re-domiciling to the UK? If so, is confirmation from the departing jurisdiction's competent authority the best way of assessing this?**

31. We don't have any particular insight into whether any particular overseas' authority would be able to provide a certificate of good standing on the basis that no proceedings have been taken against the director and that there are no outstanding cases against them. The government would need to consider whether the territories from which re-domiciliation is possible can facilitate this. We certainly don't believe that it would be reasonable for the authority to be expected to provide more detailed feedback than this on the suitability of the individual concerned to be a director of a UK domiciled company.

**16. Do you have any views on our good faith criteria?**

32. We believe that it is reasonable for the UK government to apply restrictions to re-domiciliation where it does not consider that the transfer is in good faith. However, we would be interested to hear more about the criteria and the process the relevant department would undertake in order to determine whether this test has been met.

**17. Should it be necessary for firms to have completed a reporting period to redomicile? What other reporting information should be provided to the Registrar or should it be able to request and is the audited accounts requirement sufficient and proportionate?**

33. While completion of a reporting period would help the UK to assess whether a company is solvent and well-managed, it is also possible that a company may find itself registered in one territory and very soon thereafter find that it would be better suited to registration with the UK authorities. Such situations are likely to be rare but not impossible (eg the company acquires a new UK-based customer that makes up the majority of its sales, the directors move to the UK for personal reasons).
34. We therefore suggest that a complete reporting period need not necessarily be a hard and fast requirement. However, it is also essential that the government sets minimum standards of reporting which a company must be able to demonstrate that it can meet before being allowed to re-domicile to the UK. One of the ways in which the company could demonstrate this is for the company concerned to prepare a set of accounts that meet UK audit and accounting standards so that Companies House can check that they meet the required standard. It is possible that the audit and accounting standards in the territory in which the company is currently domiciled are not as high as those in the UK and so this requirement could be included even where a reporting period has been completed and a set of accounts filed in that territory.

**19. The Government is not minded to prescribe a minimum turnover/size of companies that can re-domicile. Do you agree?**

35. We don't have a particular view on this but note some of the pros and cons that the government may wish to consider in setting a minimum turnover size:
- Setting a minimum may prevent some companies from re-domiciling to the UK and therefore bringing valuable activity to the UK which would contribute to the economy
  - Setting a limit means that someone is required to check whether any company applying for re-domiciliation meets this test
  - Setting a threshold of the size required for an annual audit would ensure that all companies re-domiciling to the UK would need to be audited and therefore meet certain accounting and reporting standards.

**29. Would you be in favour of the UK introducing an outward re-domiciliation regime?**

36. If the UK is proposing a two-way regime, then the government should not only assess potential demand for inward re-domicile but also demand for UK companies to re-domicile elsewhere. It would also need to consider the risk that the ability of companies to move away might inhibit its freedom to change relevant laws in future (without rescinding the right for companies to move away, which might impact the UK's reputation).

**37. Is clarification required as to whether a company will become or cease to be UK resident following a re-domiciliation to or from the UK?**

37. Inherently, the answer to this question must be yes because companies will need to know whether they are resident in the UK for tax purposes in order to apply the UK tax code to their circumstances.

**38. Which of the above options would be preferable and why?**

38. We believe that companies should be treated the same whether they were originally incorporated in the UK or move their place of registration to the UK. We therefore agree with option 1 under each of paragraphs 5.9 and 5.10 which would ensure that companies re-domiciling to the UK would become UK tax resident under domestic law and cease to become so resident on re-domiciling out of the UK unless central management and control remains in the UK.
39. We note that this treatment is slightly different to that applied to Societas Europaea (SEs) and Societas Cooperativa Europaea (SCEs) under ss16 & 17 CTA 2009 in that such entities did not cease to be UK resident merely because they later transferred their registered office from the UK. However, we do not believe that such treatment is consistent with that applied to other UK registered companies and therefore not following this treatment removes an anomaly from the legislation.

**39. Are there any other options which should be considered?**

40. Consideration will need to be given to the relevant double tax agreement where a company transfers its place of registration to or from another territory and the relevant domestic tax law in that other territory. As noted in the consultation document, this may give a different outcome than if domestic legislation was considered in isolation.

**40. Do you have any views on how material this risk is, and what additional protections might be introduced to prevent such loss importation?**

41. We understand the government's concern that businesses may use re-domiciliation as a way of bringing overseas losses into the UK tax net to use against UK profits for group relief purposes. However, if those losses are pre-existing and the company concerned has not previously had a taxable presence in the UK for corporation tax purposes, then there is no facility for the company to bring those losses forward into the UK tax regime in any event. This is a similar outcome to the situation where a new UK company acquires an existing trade from a subsidiary that has been wholly carried on offshore.
42. In respect of losses generated once the company has been domiciled and tax resident in the UK, we see no reason why these losses could not be surrendered to other UK companies in the group. There are existing provisions alluded to in the consultation document which prevent losses from being surrendered in certain circumstances, such as where the loss arises in respect of a trade carried on wholly outside the UK under s100 (2) CTA 2010 or where the loss has been incurred by certain dual resident companies under s109. We consider that the existing measures in place would suffice.
43. If a business' only motivation is to bring a loss-making company into the UK tax net in order to off-set its losses against profits of other companies in the group then arguably the loss making company is not trading with a view to profit and so its losses would be denied for all relief purposes in any event. We also believe that it would be inconsistent to apply different rules to a company going forward just because it had previously been non-UK resident and domiciled compared to companies that have always been UK resident and domiciled.



**41. Do you have any views on this?**

44. We believe that this could be an opportunity to reform the tax legislation so that a consistent approach is applied to assets brought into the UK tax net on a company becoming tax resident in the UK.
45. It seems to us that the most equitable position would be for all assets (eg chargeable gains assets, intangible fixed assets, capital allowances assets) to be brought in at market value on the date of migration.
46. The downside to this treatment is that it would require a professional valuation of all such assets. This would add additional costs to the process of re-domiciliation and would also open up the possibility for disagreements with HMRC if it did not agree with the valuation arrived at. By contrast, original cost and accounting value (which are the default positions for chargeable gains assets and intangible fixed assets respectively) are matters of fact (although accounting values are subject to impairments and revaluations and so therefore there is an element of subjectivity about them).
47. The advantages of this approach, however, are that:
- it would provide consistency across the various elements of the tax legislation, thereby making it easier to remember and apply
  - it would provide consistency with other methods of bringing an overseas trade into the UK (such as being acquired by a newly incorporated UK company from its overseas resident subsidiary); and
  - it is arguably the most equitable position, assuming that the company has no existing UK tax history. It seems fair that a company should only realise UK profits, gains and losses based on the position at the point where its UK taxable presence begins.
48. One downside of adopting a market value approach for the intangible fixed asset regime is that this moves away from the accounting basis of taxation on which this regime is built, thereby introducing more adjustments for tax purposes from the accounting position.

**42. Do you have any views on the impact of the proposals for a re-domiciliation regime on personal taxation?**

49. We are only able to provide a response here in relation to the tax impacts for UK resident individuals or the UK tax impacts for overseas residents. The overall tax impact for non-UK residents will be dependent on the tax rules in the territory in which they are resident.
50. For individuals who are UK resident but non-domiciled here (in particular), a company becoming domiciled in the UK may have an impact on the situs of shares and securities issued by the company for capital gains and IHT purposes. In addition, if an asset becomes UK situs then any income earned from that asset will become UK derived income and therefore will be subject to UK tax, whether or not it is remitted to the UK.
51. For capital gains tax purposes, shares or securities of a company incorporated in any part of the UK are treated as situated in the UK. In addition, there is a general rule which says that shares and securities are located in the place where they are registered. This should therefore mean that if a company re-domiciles to the UK and its share capital becomes registered with Companies House, those shares will become UK situs assets.
52. If a company re-domiciles to the UK, this should not cause shares and securities in that company as being treated as disposed and reacquired by its UK shareholders, or if there is some uncertainty around this, that outcome should be confirmed in the UK tax legislation. Where a new UK holding company acquires the shares of an overseas company and issues shares in itself in return, the same outcome should arise due to specific provisions for capital gains and stamp duty purposes that ensure that such 'share-for-share' transactions are tax neutral. Having said that, there are very specific tests that need to be met for such reliefs to apply and so introducing a re-domiciliation mechanism as an alternative way of bringing a business into the UK therefore means that the company owners do not need to worry about whether those tests have been met.

**43. Do you have any views on the impact of the proposals for a re-domiciliation regime on STS?**

53. We consider that as stamp duty and stamp duty reserve tax are broadly taxed on the transfer of shares issued by a company incorporated or registered in the UK, transferring the place of registration of a company moves its shares into and out of the scope of these taxes. If the government was concerned about anti-avoidance, it could retain the right to tax the transfer of shares of companies that have ceased to be registered in the UK, although it seems unlikely to us that one of the main purposes of a company re-domiciling out of the UK would be to avoid stamp taxes.
54. We also note the commentary included in an article dated 3 December 2021 by Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer in Tax Journal on this consultation document which notes that companies may wish to re-domicile to the UK in order to list their shares directly on UK stock markets (whereas foreign incorporated entities must list in the UK through a depository interest (DI) structure). SDRT does not generally apply to such listings where the shares are 'foreign securities' which, unusually, is determined by whether the company is UK resident for corporation tax purposes. As we have set out above, re-domiciliation to the UK is likely to cause many companies to become UK tax resident and so this may therefore bring the listing of their shares into the scope of SDRT if carried out through a DI structure. Consideration will need to be given as to whether a direct listing will be possible for companies that have re-domiciled to the UK.

**44. Do you have any views on the impact of the proposals for a re-domiciliation regime on VAT?**

55. As noted in the consultation document, whether a company needs to register for VAT or report its supplies of most services in the UK is dependent on whether it is "established" or has a "fixed establishment" here from which those supplies (of services) are made. Similarly when receiving services the place of supply will be where the business using the service supplied is established. Its place of incorporation or place of residence for other tax purposes is not relevant. However, we are concerned that HMRC's existing guidance does not reflect this.
56. VATPOSS05950 refers to the VAT Tribunal cases of *Binder Hamlyn (EDN/82/55)* and *Vincent Consultants (LON/88/254)* in which the Tribunal found that the registered office in the UK of companies that traded abroad was the establishment at which or for the purposes of which accountancy and consultancy services concerning UK company law requirements were most directly used.
57. However, it appears that this UK case law has been overtaken by CJEU case law (eg *Planzer case C-73/06*) and EU law in the Council Implementing Regulation 282/2011 (articles 10, 11 and 13a). Article 10.3 specifically provides that "3. The mere presence of a postal address may not be taken to be the place of establishment of a business of a taxable person."
58. This is a particular problem in respect of companies being charged, by UK service providers, for services (such as audit services, but also including many other services such as consultancy, legal services etc) where those companies are 'simply' registered in the UK but which carry on their businesses wholly abroad. These companies are not generally VAT registered in the UK as they are not making any supplies in the UK. Hence, they are incurring UK VAT which they cannot off-set against output VAT (or claimed back under Part XXI of the VAT Regulations 1995), creating an additional 20% cost and making the UK a less attractive location in which to have a registered office.
59. We appreciate of course that the UK is no longer in the EU and so HMRC may therefore take the view that EU case law no longer applies. However, to take that approach risks making the UK an unattractive place for a company to locate its registered office in if its trading activities remain wholly offshore. We therefore recommend that HMRC revisits its guidance in this area, especially if it wishes to make corporate re-domiciliation a success.

60. Companies can also join a UK VAT group if they are either established or have a fixed establishment in the UK, regardless of where they are incorporated or resident for other tax purposes. It is also therefore difficult to see why anti-avoidance measures would be needed, although if the government has any specific concerns we would be happy to consider them.

***45. Do you have any views on any other tax consequences of a company redomiciling in or out of the UK and whether any other amendments to UK tax law should be considered?***

61. It may be worthwhile updating the tax legislation in situations where a company is referred to as being 'incorporated in the UK' (for example s14 CTA 2009 and s275 (1) (da) TCGA 1992). To date, it has not been necessary to consider whether this means 'originally incorporated' or 'currently registered' in the UK as it has not been possible to move the place of incorporation. The policy outcome the government wishes to achieve will determine how these provisions are amended.

## APPENDIX 1

### ICAEW TAX FACULTY'S TEN TENETS FOR A BETTER TAX SYSTEM

The tax system should be:

1. Statutory: tax legislation should be enacted by statute and subject to proper democratic scrutiny by Parliament.
2. Certain: in virtually all circumstances the application of the tax rules should be certain. It should not normally be necessary for anyone to resort to the courts in order to resolve how the rules operate in relation to his or her tax affairs.
3. Simple: the tax rules should aim to be simple, understandable and clear in their objectives.
4. Easy to collect and to calculate: a person's tax liability should be easy to calculate and straightforward and cheap to collect.
5. Properly targeted: when anti-avoidance legislation is passed, due regard should be had to maintaining the simplicity and certainty of the tax system by targeting it to close specific loopholes.
6. Constant: Changes to the underlying rules should be kept to a minimum. There should be a justifiable economic and/or social basis for any change to the tax rules and this justification should be made public and the underlying policy made clear.
7. Subject to proper consultation: other than in exceptional circumstances, the Government should allow adequate time for both the drafting of tax legislation and full consultation on it.
8. Regularly reviewed: the tax rules should be subject to a regular public review to determine their continuing relevance and whether their original justification has been realised. If a tax rule is no longer relevant, then it should be repealed.
9. Fair and reasonable: the revenue authorities have a duty to exercise their powers reasonably. There should be a right of appeal to an independent tribunal against all their decisions.
10. Competitive: tax rules and rates should be framed so as to encourage investment, capital and trade in and with the UK.

These are explained in more detail in our discussion document published in October 1999 as TAXGUIDE 4/99 (see <https://goo.gl/x6UjJ5>).