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Regional Policy of Ukraine in the Framework of the EU-Ukraine Cooperation

Abstract

The challenges of the implementation of the provisions of the EU Regional policy in Ukraine are determined in this article. The history of cooperation between Ukraine and the EU in the framework of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and Association Agenda are investigated here. The main features of the cross-border cooperation and perspectives of further development of regional policy in Ukraine are described in the article.

Key words: *Ukraine, EU, regional policy, cooperation, European integration, EU-Ukraine cooperation, Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, Association Agenda, cross-border cooperation.*

Abstrakt

W artykule omawiane są wyzwania związane z wdrażaniem postanowień polityki regionalnej UE na Ukrainie. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono historii współpracy między Ukrainą a UE w ramach układu o stowarzyszeniu. Wyszczególnione zostały najważniejsze cechy współpracy transgranicznej i perspektywy dalszego rozwoju polityki regionalnej Ukrainy.

Słowa kluczowe: *Ukraina, UE, polityka regionalna, współpraca, integracja europejska, współpraca UE-Ukraina, układ o stowarzyszeniu między Ukrainą a UE, program stowarzyszeniowy, współpraca transgraniczna.*

Introduction

Ukraine's integration into the EU is a key priority in Ukraine's development, especially now, when the country, the European region and the entire world watch the situation in Ukraine and wait for a solution. The strategy for European integration of Ukraine is dominant in internal and external policy of Ukraine. Its roots are in the history of our people, their desire to live in a democratic, economically developed and socially oriented country. The aim is to meet the conditions for joining the EU, a community of highly-developed countries, through large-scale internal changes. This choice is supported both by the majority of political parties in Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

Ukraine is facing its most serious crisis since independence in 1991. Ukraine is now facing its most serious crisis since independence in 1991. In March 2014, a false referendum was held, resulting in the occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. Two eastern regions, Luhansk and Donetsk, are under serious threat of separation. As a result, Ukraine is now in the process of building a completely new state with a more pro-European orientation and renewed perspectives for peace and stability within the country and in Europe.

The European Union is also in the process of major changes including the rethinking of its policy of enlargement. This stage is very important for Ukraine, too. Ukraine gained new possibilities and met challenges in 2013 and 2014, opening up new strategy perspectives and additional opportunities for the deepening of European integration policy. This political situation in EU-Ukrainian relations is mostly determined by the character of these relations and the perspectives of Ukraine's future development. Therefore, it is in the core interest of the EU to have an independent, politically stable and economically strong Ukraine as a neighbour. This is a key condition for lasting peace and stability in Europe.

The article will be dedicated to the investigation of the development of EU-Ukraine relations, challenges for the improvement of such cooperation and regional development of Ukraine on the basis of the European best practices. It will open access to understanding the possibilities of using Structural Funds and project approach to the implementation of reforms and regional development in Ukraine.

History of cooperation

After gaining independence in 1991, with the desire to give more responsibility to local and regional governments, Ukraine pursued a policy of wrecking the heavily centralized command economy of the Soviet years. Ukraine has shown the desire to tighten the relationship with the European Union and the EU recognizes this movement. It shows this recognition by including the participation of Ukraine in a number of cross-border corporation programs. Apart from this, the country is directly involved in the forthcoming Black Sea Synergy and Danube Strategy Programs.

Willing to be closer to the European Union and end the wide disparities between the isolated northern and eastern provinces and the wealthier western provinces, Ukraine has also begun a regional development policy. In order to set up a dialogue on the regional policy and cooperation, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the European Commission and the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction of Ukraine on 22 July 2009 (*EU-Ukraine-Regional ...*).

The accumulated endogenous problems of regional development of the economy of Ukraine since 2013-2014 have been supplemented with the effect of geopolitical factors. The fact that Ukraine took practical steps concerning the European integration and most notably that prepared to sign the Association Agreement of Ukraine and the EU became the grounds for activating business cooperation with the EU countries and for deeper entrance into the "gravisphere" of the European economy (*New Regional Policy ...*, p. 7).

At the same time, denying the fact that Ukraine chose the European way, the Russian Federation performed a series of complex of aggressive actions. They started by squeezing Ukrainian companies from Russian markets followed shortly by introducing a number of trade barriers that escalated into the "trade war". The latter led to the significant downfall of the flow of exports from Ukraine to the RF and to a reduction of industrial cooperation in this area.

Today Ukraine has an acute need for creating an effective regional development strategy capable of mobilizing decentralized resources for regional development. Recovery of local communities' capability can take on the role of reintegration throughout the country, but only if they can overcome the division of approaches, solutions and partial reform initiatives (*New Regional Policy ...*, p. 7).

The challenges of regional policy in Ukraine are neither unique nor solely caused by internal signs of crisis. In fact, these problems are global and

have motivated the introduction of new models of regional policy and local development on pragmatic grounds. Nowadays Ukraine needs more pragmatic approaches to create a new regional policy in the process of its social and economic renovation.

New regional policy for a new Ukraine must combine European approaches and Ukrainian strategies that correspond to the requirements of the modern world. It should rationally combine the powers of communities with present and potential resources. Schemes of government support should have a stimulating effect. Integrity, cohesion and inclusiveness can become the ground principles of development, coexistence and cooperation of communities, regions and the country (*New Regional Policy ...*, p. 7).

The significant disproportion in development of the regions of Ukraine is indicative of the fact that the existing model of national economy is non-inclusive. Excessively disproportionate levels of allocated tangible equity (investments) and gross output are combined with a very moderate differentiation of income levels. This is indicative of the existence of a significant gap between the economic results of regions and quality of life for regional communities. An extremely high share of Kyiv city upon each indicator shows the harmful level of centralization of economy. High regional disproportion logically leads to the breach of the single integrated economic space of Ukraine.

The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement

The signing of the Association Agreement of Ukraine with the EU in 2014 in combination with the unilateral implementation of trade preferences for Ukraine and full-fledge implementation of the free-trade zone since 2016 became very positive factors for the revival of mutual trade. Such factors backed changes in the goods structure and in the regional pattern of Ukrainian exports after being removed from the Russian markets. Based on the results of 2016, the volume of exports of goods from Ukraine to the EU increased by 3.7%, even though the general trend of decrease in the volume of exports was still active in this period, amounting to 4.6% (*New Regional Policy ...*, p. 14).

The Association Agreement aims to renew the EU-Ukrainian common institutional framework, facilitating the deepening of their relations in all areas and strengthening political association and economic integration between Ukraine and the European Union by means of mutual rights and obligations. It should provide a solid basis for further convergence between Ukraine and the EU on foreign policy and security issues, including pro-

moting respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders. The EU and Ukraine shall address in a timely manner the challenges to these principles at all appropriate levels of the political dialogue, including ministerial level. The establishment of a deep and comprehensive free trade area with the large-scale regulatory approximation of Ukraine to the EU standards will contribute to the gradual integration of Ukraine to the EU Internal Market. The Association Agreement should also enhance cooperation on a broad range of aspects of justice, liberty and security, including migration issues.

Institutional factors related to the implementation of the potential Association Agreement allowed the unweight the regional proximity factor, which traditionally defined the focus on trade with the EU from the eastern regions of Ukraine. Provisions of the Association Agreement should be the legal basis for the intensification of cooperation between Ukraine and the EU concerning the noted issues (*New Regional Policy ...*, p. 16).

Particularly Chapter 446 of the Agreement envisages mutual actions concerning the development of cross-border cooperation and support in adopting regional policies in Ukraine with special attention on the development of underdeveloped territories.

Promotion of large involvement from local and regional government bodies in cross-border and regional cooperation as well as the strengthening of cross-border and regional economic relations and business partnerships is envisaged in Chapter 447 of the Agreement.

Among the top-priorities of such cooperation Chapter 448 recognizes the transport sector, power industry, public utilities, culture, education, tourism and healthcare.

TITLE V Economic and Sector Cooperation Chapter 27 Cross-Border and Regional Cooperation Article 446: The Parties shall promote mutual understanding and bilateral cooperation in the field of regional policy, on methods of formulation and implementation of regional policies, including multi-level governance and partnership, with special emphasis on the development of disadvantaged areas and territorial cooperation, hereby establishing channels of communication and enhancing exchange of information between national, regional and local authorities, socio-economic actors and civil society (*Угода про асоціацію ...*).

Article 447: The Parties shall support and strengthen the involvement of local and regional-level authorities in cross-border and regional cooperation and the related management structures, to enhance cooperation through the establishment of an enabling legislative framework, to sustain and

develop capacity-building measures and to promote the strengthening of cross-border and regional economic and business networks.

Chapter 17 Agriculture and Rural Development Article 403 The Parties shall cooperate to promote agricultural and rural development, in particular through gradual approximation of policies and legislation (*Угода про асоціацію ...*).

Article 404: Cooperation between the Parties in the field of agriculture and rural development shall cover, inter alia, the following areas: (a) facilitating mutual understanding of agricultural and rural development policies; (b) enhancing administrative capacities at central and local levels for the planning, evaluation and implementation of policies; (c) promoting modern and sustainable agricultural production, respectful of the environment and of animal welfare, including extension of the use of organic production methods and the use of biotechnologies, inter alia through the implementation of best practices in those fields; (d) sharing knowledge and best practices of rural development policies to promote economic well-being for rural communities; (e) improving the competitiveness of the agricultural sector and the efficiency and transparency of the markets as well as conditions for investment; (f) disseminating knowledge through training and information events; (g) favouring innovation through research and promoting extension services to agricultural producers; (h) enhancing harmonisation of issues addressed within the framework of international organisations; (i) exchanging best practices on support mechanisms for agricultural policies and rural areas; (j) promoting the policy of quality of agricultural products in the areas of product standards, production requirements and quality schemes.

Article 405: In pursuing the above cooperation, without prejudice to Title IV (Trade and Trade-related Matters) of this Agreement, the Parties shall support gradual approximation to the relevant EU law and regulatory standards, in particular those as listed in Annex XXXVIII to this Agreement.

Article 406: A regular dialogue will take place on the issues covered by Chapter 17 of Title V (Economic and Sector Co-operation) of this Agreement (*Угода про асоціацію ...*).

AA implementation (*New Regional Policy for Renewed ...*, p. 14):

- The growth of trade cooperation is accompanied by the increasing number of European investments.
- Cross-border cooperation has its results as well.
- Continuation of readapting of the national economy to change its geopolitical factors requires improvement of the corresponding economic, law and institutional framework.

The Association Agenda

The Association Agenda, approved by the Association Council between Ukraine and the EU in March 2015, is a common practical tool for preparing and promoting the full implementation of the Association Agreement (*EU-Ukraine Association Agenda ...*). This document is the main mechanism for monitoring and evaluating Ukraine's progress in the implementation of the Association Agreement. The EU provides Ukraine with support, including financial, in meeting its goals and priorities as outlined in the document.

The Association Agenda establishes the following priorities of Ukraine-EU cooperation in the field of regional development (paragraph 7.24):

- Implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding for launching a dialogue on regional policy and development of regional cooperation;
- Implementation of the State Strategy for Regional Development for the period up to 2020 adopted in 2014;
- defining the framework for regional development by adopting the Law on the Principles of State Regional Policy or amending the legislation on regional development;
- An effective coordination mechanism on the ground, including a structured consultation process with stakeholders of regional development (at the national and regional levels, including civil society);
- Full transparency and control of budget allocations for regional development, including the State Fund for Regional Development and subventions.

The Association Agenda also defines the tasks for cooperation between the Parties on agriculture and rural development (paragraph 7.12).

It is envisaged that the Parties will cooperate to prepare for the implementation of the *acquis communautaire* provided for in the relevant annexes to the Association Agreement, as well as support Ukraine through enhanced work on the initiated dialogue in the field of agriculture.

In the border regions there are many common goals whose achievement requires the transboundary cooperation of neighboring countries. They must adopt a unified approach and coordinate joint actions, in particular for the development and operation of transport and energy infrastructure, environmental protection and security.

It is also necessary to jointly resolve individual problems arising from the financial and economic crisis. In particular, they must overcome economic inequality and unemployment, balance labor and post-conflict migration, increase the level of business activity and employment of the population

of the border regions. There is also a need to address environmental problems, including support for biological diversity, protection and preservation of a common cultural heritage.

Approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the National Strategy of modernization "Ukraine 2020" claims that the state regional policy has the aim to prevent the growth of disparities, since they hinder the development of specific regions. The policy is also aimed to provide people with a comfortable and safe living environment, that is not dependent on the place of residence. This reduce of disparities would be reached by the augmentation of a concordance of policies facilitating the development of "growth points", as well as the support of areas that are economically less developed.

Therefore, there is a need for a differentiated approach to the implementation of regional state policies based on the difference in regional development in Ukraine. This implies, first, the enhancement of the autonomy of the regions in defining the strategy for socio-economic development and choosing the means of its implementation. Second, it requires the involvement of local communities, business, and organizations to the solutions of the regional development problems. Also by the reduction of public resources that have been prescribed to the development of regions, the emphasis could be changed from exogenous development of problem areas to the improvement of their endogenous potential (Simkiv, 2015).

Internal problems of sustainable development in Ukraine:

- Lack of adequate national regional policy
- Lack of regional development funding
- Significant economic, social, cultural and other differences between the regions in Ukraine
- Low ecological culture of the citizen of Ukraine

The Strategy for Sustainable Development of Ukraine until 2020 determines goals and indicators of their achievement, as well as directions and priorities of state development. The purpose of these reforms are to achieve the European standards of life and create a decent place in the world for Ukraine. The Strategy includes 62 reforms. 8 reforms and 2 programs are the top priorities among them. The Strategy also defines 25 key indicators of successful state development (*Ukraine 2020 ...*).

The top priorities are: reform of the national security and defense system, renewal of authorities and anti-corruption reform, judicial and law enforcement reform, decentralization and public administration reform, deregulation and development of entrepreneurship, healthcare reform and tax reform.

Other top-priorities include two programs – energy independence and the popularization of Ukraine in the world. This includes the promotion of state interests in the global information space. Peculiarities in the regional development of Ukraine only reaffirm the unreasonableness of rejection with regards to compensatory politics and the confrontation between its goals and the competitive politics of government regulation.

The compensatory regional politics aims at the internalization of positive external effects through the financial instruments and measures of the competitive one is aimed at the intensification of entrepreneurial activity and innovative processes in the regions, forming competition in the national and global environment regional economies. This approach allows for the reduction of inter-regional disparity by activating the mechanisms of a spatial resonance distribution of development. It also reduces the gap between "growth points" and peripheral areas in the macro-regional scale (*EU-Ukraine-Regional Policy ...*).

The supreme importance during the reformation of decentralization in management is related to the increase of autonomy in the regions of Ukraine. Regional authorities will be able to amplify their capacities to solve problems with regional development after gaining significantly more financial resources and powers, while public authorities will have the ability to focus initially on creating the necessary general conditions. All of the above would mean the reduced role of the selective component of regional politics and the increase of system – wide components.

The question about who and what the state should support – underdeveloped regions or regions – leaders – disappears altogether with the decentralization of power, empowerment and economic independence in regions. From this process, the high regions will benefit more, compared to when they received centralized help from the state. On other equal terms of self-managing, the economic and financial capacities will allow the region to assure the high – quality economic growth beyond the support from the government. However, the underdeveloped regions cannot refuse governmental assistance, as they do not have the corresponding economic potential and passable financial resources. Therefore, ensuring the free development of leading regions and helping the backward areas is the role of the government (Simkiv, 2015).

According to the Report on the New Regional Policy for a Renewed Ukraine conducted by the Institute of Social and Economic Research in 2017, regional policy will become one of the key aspects for the institutional renovation of Ukraine, its territorial and social reintegration and the formation

of the basis for the dynamic and sustainable development of economy and society. Implementation of the modern model of regional policy in Ukraine will require the following top eight priority steps to be taken (*New Regional Policy ...*, 2017, p. 35-37).

I. New Strategy

1. The law of Ukraine "On the principles of state regional policy" and the State strategy of regional development until 2020 is to be amended to the compliance with the requirements and instruments of the European cohesion policy.
2. The Council of regional development under the President of Ukraine should be working on the program-based and systematic principles as an instrument of monitoring of regional measurement of reforms and both horizontal (region-region) and vertical (community-region-state) coordination of their implementation.

II. Internal Unity and External Partnership

3. "Road map" of deoccupation of parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions must be formed based on the open dialogue and presented to the wide audience, this "road map" should include the key objectives regarding the stabilization of economy, protection of human rights, realization of peace. Plan of recovery of economies of Donetsk and Luhansk regions shall be formed and implemented, it has to ensure cross-sectoral and interregional interaction with aim of resumption of sustainable work of economies of these regions on the principles of structural modernization and overcoming of the crisis of the old industrial sectors.
4. Strategy of development of the South of Ukraine should be created and be aimed at extension of cooperation of the corresponding regions on the basis of development of maritime culture, tourist and recreational complexes, facilities working with alternative energy sources, solving of ecological problems, reformation of the transport logistics etc.
5. Renewed organizational and legal mechanics of operation of Ukrainian parts of European regions and cross-border cooperation in general shall be developed and implemented based on the modern European norms and practices.

III. New Powers and Resources

6. Barriers of the voluntary amalgamation of local communities shall be dropped, first ever election to the local government bodies shall be performed within such territorial communities.

7. From focusing on decentralization and changing the administrative territorial system by means of local reforms accents should be proceeded to increasing capabilities of communities regarding the implementation of efficient practices of encouraging and stimulating economic activities and attraction of investments.
8. Development of agencies of regional development should be encouraged as the unprofitable and unbudgeted institutions that will help local government to implement the regional strategy of development on the principles of public-private partnership.

Cross-Border Cooperation

The development of cross-border cooperation is a priority of the EU neighborhood policy. Today cross-border cooperation is carried out both at the interstate level, and at the level of territorial communities, their representative bodies, and local executive authorities. Such cooperation contributes to the social and economic convergence of the border regions and the creation of new opportunities for their development, including the development of economic, social, scientific and technical, environmental, cultural and other relations, and the exchange of experience (*Державна програма розвитку ...*).

Ukraine has a border with seven states, 19 of the 27 administrative-territorial units are frontier. In the territory of such border areas as Vinnytsia, Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Lugansk, Odessa, Sumy, Kharkiv, Chernivetska, Chernihiv, Donetsk, nine Euroregions were created – Bug, Upper Prut, Dniester, Dnipro, Carpathian, Lower Danube, Slobozhanschina, Donbass and Yaroslavna, five Euroregions were created with the EU member states (Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary). Within the framework of Euroregions, cross-border cooperation has been carried out since 1993.

Over the past 10 years, considerable attention has been paid to Ukraine and political support has been given for the development of cross-border cooperation. The legal and contractual framework for such cooperation has been established along with legal mechanisms for the preparation and implementation of cross-border cooperation projects with the EU member states, including the procedure for competitive selection of projects (programs) of cross-border cooperation that may be included in this Program. During this period, two state programs for the development of transfrontier co-operation were adopted – the State Program for the Development of Cross-Border Cooperation for 2007-2010, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated December 27, 2006 No. 1819, and the State Program for the Develop-

ment of Cross-Border Cooperation for 2011-2015, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of December 1, 2010 No. 1088.

The purpose of these programs was to intensify the socio-economic, scientific and technical, ecological, and cultural development of subjects of cross-border cooperation. Also selected on a competitive basis, projects for implementation of which state financial support was envisaged in accordance with the Law of Ukraine "On Transboundary Cooperation". However, the required amount of funds for the implementation of these projects in the state budget was not provided. The sources of funding for cross-border cooperation projects have mainly been the resources of local budgets and international technical assistance, in particular the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument's 2007-2013 frontier cooperation programs, as well as state budget funds intended to co-finance large-scale infrastructure projects approved under the State Development Program cross-border cooperation for 2011-2015.

As a result of this underfunding, the tasks and measures of the above-mentioned state programs have not been fully implemented, in particular, outstanding problems and unfulfilled measures of the State Program for the Development of Cross-Border Cooperation for 2011-2015, which included:

- creation of automated points of measurement of surface water quality indicators in transboundary water bodies of Transcarpathian, Volyn and Chernivtsi regions, as well as air quality and control over the level of transboundary air pollution over long distances;
- implementation of joint Ukrainian-Moldovan and Ukrainian-Romanian projects on urban development of the regions.

Consequently, the main problems of cross-border cooperation, as in previous years, are insufficient rates of social and economic development in the border regions of Ukraine and the lack of tools for supporting its implementation. A new challenge has been the conflict in eastern Ukraine, until the full resolution of which the implementation of cross-border cooperation projects with the Russian Federation by border regions is impossible.

Conclusions and perspectives of further development

Thus, the establishment and further intensification of interregional and transborder cooperation as the main component of the regional policy of Ukraine and the western regions, in practice, requires in practice:

- Creation of the appropriate legal and regulatory framework that does not contradict the norms of the legislation of the European Union;

- The need for the establishment and legislative justification of interregional systems, such as interregional and cross-border clusters and clusters of enterprises;
- Creation of effective institutions for regulation and coordination of interregional and transfrontier co-operation should take place not only at the state level and level of local self-government bodies, but also at the level of public associations. Citizens' activities should be heated and directed towards effective action through forums, roundtables, as well as multi-level dialogue between central, local authorities, business structures and civic organizations;
- Monitoring and ongoing liaison between interregional co-operation actors will take place only with sufficient information support, which should become the main source for statistical analyzes and create the investment attractiveness of the respective regions. Consequently, there is a direct need for the creation of a nationwide information resource, such as a website, for interregional cooperation, which will include not only cognitive information, but also statistical analysis and data;
- Establishment of internal social and cultural contacts and exchange of experience in various spheres of activity.

The same is true for cross-border cooperation, with only one difference in cooperation at the border. On the basis of work for the Euroregions, create a structure for the development of interregional and cross-border cooperation for local self-government bodies. With decentralization, this is a leading trend. It is necessary to develop by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine a, "Program for the development of interregional cooperation with local self-government bodies", which will create a prospect for cooperation and development on the ground. It is also necessary to develop a Standard Provision for a department or sector on issues of interregional cooperation for this program. But first of all, it is necessary to ensure regulatory regulation in this area. This regulation means to register the value of interregional cooperation, in order to protect against ambiguity.

As we know the common regional policy by means of the Structural Funds aims to help the poorer regions of the European Union to face the increased trade and competition from the more developed regions imposed by the single market. Such a union, implying abandonment of the use of exchange rate adjustment as a means of balance of the national economy, would be to the detriment of the poorer Member States without an efficient common regional policy revolving around sufficient capital transfers from the richer to

the poorer regions of the EU. The common regional policy aims, therefore, at the economic and social cohesion of the Union.

The common regional policy's main objective is based on the diminution of the existing imbalances and the prevention of further regional incongruity in the EU. It is supposed to be reached by transferring European resources to problem regions with the help of the Structural Funds – financial instruments of the European Union.

The common regional policy of the European Union does not want to supplant the national regional policies. The problems in the regions have to be first of all solved by the Member States, respectively to the principle of subsidiarity. Through their own regional policies, they have to promote infrastructures and financially support job – creation investments.

In order to avoid competition for regional aid between Member States, the common regional policy coordinates national regional policy by enunciating guidelines and establishing fixed principles. To give "regional dimensions" and more impact on the regions most in need of care, the policy also coordinates the various policies and financial instruments of the European Union (*EU regional development ...*).

Uneven development of the regions, urban maturation, restructuring of rural areas, as well as the rehabilitation of affected areas from natural disasters are the similar challenges that both Ukraine and the European Union are facing now. The key asset dealing with these challenges is based on the regional policy, the support of social and economic development, and on building up administrative capacity at local and regional levels.

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Угода про асоціацію між Україною, з однієї сторони, та Європейським Союзом, Європейським співтовариством з атомної енергії і їхніми державами-членами, з іншої сторони від 27.06.2014 р. http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/984_011, 11.05.2019.

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