

30 Years of Carpathian Euroregion

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ABSTRACT

In the summary of this work entitled Memories, Successes, Reformation. Our Mutual Past-Our Common Future, together for Europe. 20 years of Carpathian Euroregion (translation from Hungarian), Professor István Süli-Zakar points out that in the years 1990s countries such as Hungary, Romania, Poland, Ukraine, and Slovakia regarded each other with fear and lack of cooperation. One of the presumed centres of potential crises in the years 1990 was considered to be Carpathian region. The crisis in this region was dismantled and unfortunately nothing happened here. The author Süli-Zakar points out the role of creation of Carpathian Euroregion which has as target to foster good relations with the neighbours. Other objective accomplished by this organisation points out the author was to bring western European methods of expertise in the Carpathian region area.

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Review of: Süli-Zakar, István. *Emlékek, Sikerek, Megújulás, Közös Múltunk-Közös Jövönk, Együtt Európáért: 20 Eves a Kárpátok Euro régió [Memories, successes, renewal. Common past-common future. Together for Europe: Carpathian Euroregion has 30 years old].* Debrecen: DIDAKT Kft., 2013, 499 p. ISBN 978-615-5212-18-05.

In the summary of this work entitled *Memories, Successes, Reformation. Our Mutual Past-Our Common Future, Together for Europe. 20 years of Carpathian Euroregion* (translation from Hungarian), Professor István Süli-Zakar points out that in the years 1990s countries such as Hungary, Romania, Poland, Ukraine¹ and Slovakia regarded each other with fear and lack of cooperation². One of the presumed centres of potential crises in the years 1990 was considered to be Carpathian region. The crisis in this region was dismantled and unfortunately nothing happened here. The author Süli-Zakar points out the role of creation of Carpathian Euroregion which has as target to foster good relations with the neighbours³. Other objective accomplished by this organisation points out the author was to bring western European methods of expertise in the Carpathian region area⁴.

Several conferences, discussion and programs were organised in the framework of Carpathian Euroregion. The importance of this region will be given by its geostrategic position as the external boundary of the European Union stretches along its territory⁵. The author dedicates a large space to the chapter *Carpathian Euroregion. 20 Years for Development of Cross-border Cooperation*. The subjects of regional crisis and regional growth raised a great interest in the regions of border, points out the author as “The entire area of the Carpathian Euroregion- concerning all member countries- is a periphery from a social and economic point of view”⁶. Among the aims of the creation of Carpathian Euroregion, the author establishes the following: to provide a proper organisational framework for the members, to provide regional development, to create new neighbourhood relations between the stakeholders.

¹ István Polgar and Anca Oltean in the book review with the title “A More Efficient Cooperation at the Eastern Border of EU” in *Eurotimes 15, A Security Dimension as Trigger and Result of Frontiers Modifications*, ed. Giuliana Laschi et al. (Oradea: University of Oradea Press, Spring 2013), 209, offer interesting details on the situation and influence of European Union in Ukraine before the Russian intervention. Revealing the opinion of Stephan Vidniansky in the article, “The evolution of foreign policy, strategy of national security and military doctrine of Ukraine in the context of its European integration course” the authors conclude. “In contemporary times that are characterized by globalisation and collective security system, we have a post-bipolar world. After the dissolution of Warsaw Pact, in the world remained only NATO as the main pole of power. Rapprochement to NATO values, but also the European choice-integrating Ukraine in European economic, political and legal space are of equal importance for Ukraine shows the author (see Stephan Vidniansky). In spite of these interests, the president of Ukraine, Victor Yanukovich approved National Security Strategy and Military doctrine of Ukraine without the consent of Ukrainian population or NATO. NATO, in consequence developed a non-alignment strategy for Ukraine and focused outside the Ukrainian territory, not offering military guarantees for Ukraine while European Union would avoid to take Ukraine as a member leaving it the possibility of free trade and association partnership”.

² Süli-Zakar, István. *Emlékek, Sikerek, Megújulás, Közös Múltunk-Közös Jövönk, Együtt Európáért: 20 Eves a Kárpátok Euro régió [Memories, successes, renewal. Common past-common future. Together for Europe: Carpathian Euroregion has 20 years old].* Debrecen: DIDAKT Kft., 2013, 499 p. ISBN 978-615-5212-18-05.

³ See the article of Ioan Horga and Mircea Brie, “Can Hungarian-Ukrainian-Romanian-Moldovan be an inclusive Frontier of Europe?”, in *Relacje Polsko-Rumunskie. Historia gospodarska, Unia Europejska [Polish-Romanian relations. History, economy and European Union]*, ed. Stanisława Sagana and Viktoriyi Serzhanovej (Rzeszow: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2013). The authors point out the role of the Institute for Euroregional Studies from Oradea (Romania) in fostering regional cooperation, but involved in the consolidation of Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation. Around the activities of the Institute (ISER) several specialists from regional universities gathered together with the review of the Institute of Euroregional Studies from Oradea, *Eurotimes*, a genuine arena of confrontation and communication of points of view, scientific studies, book reviews in the field of Euroregional studies. The authors conclude:” The implication of ISER in scientific, research and development projects at the Hungarian-Romanian border comes to actually prove how a long term exclusive border has been turning into an inclusive border. A discontinuous border has become a true borderland (....) Horga and Brie, 48.

⁴ Süli-Zakar, 369.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 370.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 371.

Firstly the author focuses on the geographical basis of the cooperation. The Carpathian Mountains surround the Carpathian basin, the author characterising the area as “a geopolitical division of the region that exceeds the morphological division”⁷. After making the portrait of the geopolitical history of the region, the author focuses on the economy before the change of regime and the peculiarities of the transition period. The author starts by characterising the territories that form Carpathian Euroregion as peripheries. Among the problems of these regions the author mentions “environmental problems, lack of infrastructure, unemployment, problems of economic cooperation and political, psychological and socio-cultural problems”⁸. But as the author remarks, in the last 10 or 12 years the Carpathian region become more and more developed economical space. What happened was an increase in private sphere and the development of market economy in the region and the fact that processes that started in developed economies were inaugurated in the region, the modernisation of the region being in continuous development. On the other hand, the author remarks a backwardness of the boundary regions. In what concerns the rate of unemployment this exceeds 30% in many districts. The unemployed people from the region have most often a low cultural level. In the end, of nineties, shows the author 2500 of people filled in questionnaires that family farms are in fact “involuntary ventures”, when other enterprises are missing. The rural population, shows the author, is confronted with social, political and economic uncertainty⁹. Many people tend to reintegrate in the agrarian society of the villages. Agricultural ventures based on popular support are encountered at the country. After describing the main characteristics of the economy of the region, the author focuses on the present geopolitical situation of East Central Europe. The regions have peculiarities given by the varieties of ethnies and traditions. The author considers that collectivist theories and ideologies are manifested in the region. In 1989, the entire geopolitics of the zone changed, the zone entered in the Western Europe sphere of interests. After 1989, points out the author, the cross-border alliances pay an important role in the process of integration and management of EU funds¹⁰. The regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe followed the example of previous years of regional integration from Western Europe. The cross-border cooperation was very important for the evolvement of the economic relations from Carpathian Region. In consequence, it was formed a Slovakian-Ukrainian-Hungarian Small Border Economic Sub-region. Cooperation in the field of tourism and ecology determined the creation of East Carpathian Biosphere Reserve. In the same time, the universities of the region deepened their relationships of cooperation fostering conferences, studies abroad, contests and competition. Since 1996, points out the author, the Carpathian Euroregion were struggling with economic problems. The author suggests that for improving the situation “It would be important to involve entrepreneurs, research institutions and other civil organisations into the main body of the Euroregion”¹¹. The cooperation within Carpathian Euroregion’s structures was hardened by the fact that the levels of development of the composing regions and by the fact that decisions were taken at Central level¹². Also the infrastructure level of the region varies. In time, the differences existent between regions were bypassed. It took some time to create proper structures of cooperation which was not an easy task because people in the region expects too much from the Euroregion. Common events were organised such as exhibitions and fairs, a calendar of the events of

⁷ Ibid., 374.

⁸ Ibid., 380.

⁹ Ibid., 389.

¹⁰ The paper of Constantin-Vasile Țoca, “Different Territorial Levels of Romanian-Hungarian Cross-border Cooperation”, in *The Frontier Worker –New Perspectives on the Labour Market in the Border Regions*, ed. Adrian-Claudiu Popoviciu and Dana Cigan (București: Editura C.H. Beck, 2013), 71-80, underlines that the subject of his research are the communities of Debrecen and Oradea: “In order to join the European Union, Romania had to join the European system of the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) in 2002. “The present Europe is a Europe of regions, says Constantin Țoca, and this idea has its origins in the writings of Denis de Rougemont in the 1960s. As a prove of the importance of regions for European politics, the European financing for regional policy was for the years 2007-2013 of 3478 billion euro as compared to the 2000-2006 period when the budget for regional policy was of 213 billion euro. The author brings into discussion the Euroregional dimensions, the definition, function and types of Euroregions, but also counties and cities dimensions.

¹¹ Süli-Zakar, 395.

¹² Ibid.

the Carpathian Euroregion was prepared, as well as joint conferences. Another initiatives with positive results was to create good conditions for border crossing between member countries¹³. The author focuses then on the most significant cross-border social relations in the Carpathian Euroregion. One of the aims of regional cooperation after 1989, considers the author, was the etherisation of borders. In time, international relations of the region increased. The Successes of the Euroregion in the field of economy, but also in science and culture are very important. The universities in the region and their rectors work closely with the politics of Euroregion in order to deepen integration in the education field among member states. In order to foster the cross-border cooperation, the autonomy of universities is important¹⁴. Thus intelligentsia from both countries can survive in the regions of border. In the chapter “Joint representation: the relationships between the Carpathian Euroregion and the institutions and organisations of the EU (Euroregio Maas-Rhine, AEBR) “the author shows that the institution of IEWS accelerated the creation of the Euroregion, its influence ending in the present days because it was considered that the Euroregion should stay on its feet. The Euroregion cooperated strongly with European Union enjoying the opportunities offered by it. In the chapter “factors promoting and impending progress” the author points out that the infrastructure of the region is less developed than the national averages. The cooperation is hardened by the political barriers, but also because the different existent conditions in economy, social life, and infrastructure between region. The region is expected to develop by EU funds, its own ressource being very narrow.¹⁵ The author considers that there are not only necessary the EU funds, but also the necessary skills for elaborating international programs. The work continues with the chapter “New frame conditions provided by the European Union”. Thus the author describes the conditions of cross-border cooperation after 2004: “After the enlargement of 2004 Hungary, Poland and Slovakia also benefitted from the support of the INTERREG Communal Initiative. The INTERREG is one of the four Communal Initiatives (INTERREG, URBAN, LEADER, EQUAL) and its main objective was to assist the cooperation between the areas and regions by the borders of the EU, to promote the creation of the economic and social cohesion, to provide the sustainable development of the European region and to carry out the territorial integration”¹⁶.

In the continuation of his study, the author focuses on *Regional Development Potentials in the Carpathian Euroregion*. The author draws a few characteristics of the economy of the region. The agriculture plays an important role where farming, processing will have an important role in raising the living standards¹⁷. The lack of capital persistent in the region causes the consuming of lack ressource of the agriculture. Economy in the region must be modernized and also the infrastructure. The author makes a SWOT analysis of the Carpathian Euroregion. The author tries to identify the most important factors that determined the development of the region. The transformation of traditional agriculture must be encouraged in the region, by diversification of the region of the region

¹³ Ibid., 396.

¹⁴ Ioan Horga and Mircea Brie in the article “Europe between Exclusive Borders and Inclusive Frontiers” in *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Studia Europea* LV, 1 (Cluj University Press, 2010): 67-69, talk about the concept of European civilisation unity that developed during historical times, but also the notion of cultural borders. They don’t intend to trade such cultural borders in the European Union areal concluding that Europe is a fortress for the rest of the world. The attempt to separate Europeans of non-Europeans from a cultural perspective is impossible, shows the authors. Also local European cultures from Europe have a European core with regional nuances. Thus we can talk about European cultural unity is the opinion of Mircea Brie and Ioan Horga, in the paper, “Europa: Frontiere culturale interne sau areal cultural unitar” [Europe:internal cultural frontiers or cultural unitary areal], *Modoscopie (Probleme de analiză politică)* [Modoscopie (Problems of political analysis)] 3, (L) (2010): 123. “The image of the European culture is given by the association of the concepts people-culture-history-territory, which provides certain local features. From this relation, we identify a cultural area with local, regional and national features beyond a certain European culture. Thus, we identify at least two cultural identity constructions on the European levels: a culture of cultures, that is a cultural area with a particular, local, regional and national strong identity, or a cultural archipelago, that is a common yet disrupted cultural area. Whatever the perspective, the existence of a European cultural area cannot be denied, although one may speak of diversity or of “disrupted continuity””.

¹⁵ Süli-Zakar, 401.

¹⁶ Ibid., 404.

¹⁷ Ibid., 407.

and by distinguish development of human resources. The economy must develop by the creation of local products and by the development of tourism. The SWOT analysis pursued the following objective: regional development strenghts, regional development weaknesses, regional development opportunities and regional development threats¹⁸.

In the chapter *Visions of Future, Perspectives. Mission* the author identifies three potential scenarious in the evolution of the country: pessimist scenario, realistic scenario and optimist scenario¹⁹. The pessimist scenario assumes that the crises core-periphery will last longer in Carpathian Euroregion, the realistic scenario envisages that the region will develop following the model of the European Union and being in a continuous process of modernisation and the optimist scenario envisages the dilution and division of national boundaries and a close socio-economic cooperation on both sides of the border²⁰. The most important scenario identified by the authors is the “scenario of mosaic –like development”²¹, a realist scenario²². The author defines the objective of Carpathian

¹⁸ Grigore Silași and Paolo Magagnotti point out that border regions usually have a peripheral location, not being on the priorities list of their national states. The authors underline that cross-border cooperation is designed to improve economic development of the border regions: “Of course cross-border cooperation can be—and usually is— an important instrument to promote economic development, but it must be understood in real economic terms. The EU funding is of utmost importance, an essential key for success, and support from national and territorial authorities directly involved is required, too. In the past, we have frequently realised that the regional and local authorities relied too much on EU financial support and understand “subsidiarity” in the “positive” principle only, forgetting that it requires primarily “responsibility”. Grigore Silași and Paolo Magagnotti, “Cooperation between Regions of Different Countries and Cross-border Cooperation in Europe. The Case-study Euroregion Tirol-South Tirol-Trentino” in *Regional and Cohesion Policy. Insights into the Role of the Partnership Principle in the New Policy Design*, ed. Ioan Horga et al. (Debrecen/Oradea: University of Debrecen Press, University of Oradea Press, 2011), 179.

¹⁹ Luminița Șoproni defines what is the economic frontier, a complex concept, different from the separation of economies of the two states. The author divided her paper in three parts: the border and separation of economies of the two states. The author divided her paper in three parts: the border and the trade policy measures, the economic border and the binomial integration –division and the part of conclusions. In the first part, the author refers to the three components of commercial policy: taxation, non-tariff instruments, promotion of exports and stimulation instruments. Quoting Milton Friedman, the author disagrees with the protectionist view of certain states, considering the role of economic borders should be diminished. In the second part of her work, the author quotes several authors that wrote about globalisation and diminishing the role of borders. These authors militates for globalisation. See Luminița Șoproni, “The Economic Borders in the Age of Globalization” in *The Frontier Worker-New Perspectives on the Labour Market in the Border Regions*, ed. Adrian-Claudiu Popoviciu and Dana Cigan (București: Editura C.H. Beck, 2013), 53-62. In the part of conclusions, Luminița Șoproni states: “Regardless of the perspective from which we see the evolution of the world economy, it can be said that both phenomena, globalization and regionalization, determine the multiplication and diversification of the relations between economic players (especially states and corporations), thus leading to the diminishing of the role of economic borders –and therefore, the diminishing of themselves.”, Ibid., 60.

²⁰ Ioan Horga and Ariane Landuyt in the article “Communicating the EU Policies beyond the/Its Borders” in *Communicating the EU Policies beyond the/ Its Borders*, ed. Ioan Horga and Ariane Landuyt (Oradea; Oradea University Press, 2013), 5, define the concept of border as a limit that separates two territories, a clash of two different cultures, civilisations, manners of space organisation, a line that separates two jurisdictions. The authors talk about political boundaries and symbolic boundaries with a soft delimitation. Borders also marked the delimitation between two different political systems, making a distinction between “us” and “others”. Ioan Horga underlines that EU should strenghten the borders in relation with non-EU countries, respectively it should make more permeable , soft, intrusive internal EU frontiers. It is about de-bordering EU, respectively rebordering of EU in relation with non-European Union neighbours: “Put it in another words de-bordering can be seen as underpinned by the process of Europeanisation and the notions of supranational citizenship and identity. European integration and the enlargement of the EU can be considered the major factors in the debordering of Europe, as EU integration changed borders from being markers of demarcation to symbols of a past to be overcome. Considering the fact that borders shape identities, trying to build a EU citizenship and a EU identity could be easily achieved if the borders between EU citizens vanish and those of the EU with the non-EU countries are made more visible. So de-bordering leads in this case to re-bordering”. Ioan Horga, “Deepening/Widening EU Building versus Debordering/Rebordering of EU Frontiers”. In Ibid., 30.

²¹ Starting with the concept of Ethnicity and Religion, Mircea Brie explains that frequently these terms generate emotions and that people always lived in communities where cultural dialogue was possible. Mircea Brie “Ethnicity, Religion and Intercultural Dialogue in the European Border Space”, in *Ethnicity, Confession and*

Euroregion that are the improvement of living standards in the region, peace, friendly relations with the neighbours, permeability of the borders and not dividing lines²³. In the chapter *Regional Development Strategic Programme of the Carpathian Euroregion Interregional Association (2014-2020)*, professor Süli-Zakar shows that the objective of Euroregion to raise living standards can be achieved through sustainable development of the economies, but also through conservation of natural resources. The programs that are developed in the region are compatible with EU legislation that funds local initiatives through European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Community Initiatives²⁴. Human resources have to be protected and educated in the framework of sustainable development, and creation of other organisations having in mind cross-border cooperation is considered welcomed by the author. Among the priorities of regional cooperation, one could note: the raising of education level in the Euroregion; the increasing of efficiency in the economy of the region, in service sector and infrastructure; diversification of economic activities, new jobs in the protection and conservation of environment, preservation of cultural values and heritage, development of human resources and support of local initiatives²⁵. In the chapter *Financial and Personal Conditions of the Strategic Developments, Alternatives of Improvement*, the author set out four objectives of Hungarian-Slovakian-Romanian-Ukrainian European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument Programme of Cross-border cooperation, namely: economic and social development; common challenges; effective and safe border; people-to-people cooperation. The financing of regional programmes can be achieved by local financial means, national governmental supports and foreign funds: “The most important external funds are the subsidies of the European Union. From 2004, three member countries of the Carpathian Euroregion may count on supports from the Structural Funds as well as a considerable fund shall open up within the Community Initiatives too-only if a proper programming system is introduced successfully. As a result of its situation, the Carpathian Euroregion may especially rely on supports from the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI) for the development of education, training and employment”²⁶.

In the part of conclusions, professor István Süli-Zakar underlines the importance of infrastructure in the development of Euroregions²⁷. The isolated regions, with poor infrastructure will still remain hardly accessible. The author emphasises the problem of producers from Carpathian Euroregion, which have to become entrepreneurs in order to make the region to develop²⁸. In order to

Intercultural Dialogue at the European Union Eastern Border, ed. Mircea Brie et al. (Oradea: Editura Universităţii din Oradea [Oradea University Press], 2011), 13. In these marginal communities, as they are the communities from the periphery of Romania and Hungary, the problem of minorities that are still perceived with enmity, still exist. Also, these marginal communities are close communities sharing, still, the traditional values of the society. In contrast, European cultural archipelago, the core of future Europe, will bring together with its communities, constituting itself as a “mosaic”. Ibid., 19.

²² Süli-Zakar, 413.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 419.

²⁵ Ibid., 420-421.

²⁶ Ibid., 428.

²⁷ Adrian-Claudiu Popoviciu and Constantin Țoca, “Romanian-Hungarian Cross-border Cooperation through a Possible EGTC Oradea-Debrecen” in Ioan Horga et al., *Regional and Cohesion Policy. Insights into the Role of the Partnership Principle in the New Policy Design* (Debrecen/Oradea: University of Debrecen Press, University of Oradea Press, 2011) talk about a possible choice of EGTC Oradea-Debrecen, considering that it is possible the creation of a Eurometropolis in this areal. The authors make a description of the region Oradea-Debrecen with high unemployment and seasonal labour migration which has a poor influence. The authors consider that the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation is a necessary solution in the areal Oradea-Debrecen considering that “Cross-border cooperation is the central priority of raising the competitiveness of border regions, further contributes to economic and social integration of adjacent border areas. Although significant differences exist between border populations, their desire to live a better life creates the critical mass for determining the authorities in implementing this new Community legal instrument”. Ibid., 260.

²⁸ Adrian-Claudiu Popoviciu in the article “The Frontier Workers and the Cross-border Cooperation”, in Ioan Horga et al., *Regional and Cohesion Policy. Insights into the Role of the Partnership Principle in the New Policy Design* (Debrecen/ Oradea> University of Debrecen Press, University of Oradea Press, 2011) defines the concept of frontier worker in the regions of border as defined by *Cross-border Cooperation Manual*: “if we refer to the lowest level of the common denominator, the frontier worker is the one that, keeping his resistance

get closer to the most important funds, concludes the author, the Carpathian Euroregion has to get involved in lobby activities. After emphasising the importance of European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), professor István Süli-Zakar concludes that this year we celebrate 30 years since the founding of Carpathian Euroregion, twenty years of successes overshadowed only by incapacity to adjust to realities of the changing geopolitical situation²⁹.

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Popoviciu, Adrian-Claudiu and Constantin Țoca, “Romanian-Hungarian Cross-border Cooperation through a Possible EGTC Oradea-Debrecen”. In *Regional and Cohesion Policy. Insights into the Role of the Partnership Principle in the New Policy Design*, edited by Ioan Horga, Iordan Gh. Bărbulescu, Adrian Ivan, Mykolia Palinchak, István Süli Zakar, 241-261. Oradea/ Debrecen: University of Debrecen Press, University of Oradea Press, 2011.

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or residence in a *border area of 10, 20 or even 50 km*, residence to which he returns at least once a week, occupies a stable working place in the neighbour state inside *an area with the same dimension*”. (Regulation (CE) no.883/2004, Art.4). Mircea Brie et al., “European Public Policy. Tools, Models and Behaviour in Public Space-Introductory Study”, in *European Public Policies. Instruments, Models and Behaviour in the Public Space*, ed. Mircea Brie et al. (Oradea: Editura Universității din Oradea [Oradea University Press], 2013), mentions a few contributions of colleagues from the Institute of Euroregional Studies in the regional cooperation issues: for regional competition and employment objective, the freedom of movement for workers within border areas has been the subject of research for other specialists, as well. We recall here the case study undertaken on Romanian-Hungarian border elaborated by Adrian-Claudiu Popoviciu (Popoviciu, 25-39) or the research in the direction of regional cooperation in various fields of common interest at the level of the two communities of Debrecen and Oradea (Țoca and Horga, 73-82), as well as the proposal of a possible Debrecen-Oradea Territorial Grouping through the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Tool (Țoca and Popoviciu, 89-102).

²⁹ Süli-Zakar, 433.

Süli-Zakar, István. *Emlékek, Sikerek, Megújulás. Közös Múltunk- Közös Jövönk, Együtt Európáért: 20 Eves a Kárpátok Eurorégió* [Memories, successes, renewal. Common past-common future. Together for Europe: Carpathian Euroregion has 30 years old.] Debrecen: DIDAKT Kft, 2013.

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