



# BRIDGING HERE AND THERE: THE MULTIFACETED ROLE OF THE UKRAINIAN DIASPORA IN INTEGRATION, RECOVERY AND RETURN

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# Displaced Ukrainians will follow diverse trajectories in the coming decades

- Some will settle permanently in host countries, while others will return after it becomes possible. For both of these groups, **dual intent integration** support is relevant.
  - In the framework of dual intent integration, integration measures and activities prioritise improving forced migrants' socio-economic opportunities regardless of their future location, while deliberately looking to minimise possible return barriers in both host and origin countries.



- There will likely be **another group of Ukrainians**, who may remain abroad for the foreseeable future but wish to maintain strong ties with Ukraine and may consider returns at a later date –this will form part of the **expanded diaspora**.



# Ukraine's global, institutionalised diaspora: over 150 years in the making



“The diaspora from a given country [...] includes not only the nationals from that country living abroad, but also migrants who, living abroad, have acquired the citizenship of their country of residence (often losing their original citizenship in the process) and migrants’ children born abroad, whatever their citizenship, as long as they retain some form of commitment to and/or interest in their country of origin or that of their parents” (EC 2005)



- The concept of “diaspora” in Ukraine has traditionally reflected late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century migration and political exile, a view further reinforced by the 2004 Law on Foreign Ukrainians.
- Recent emigration and the ongoing displacement crisis are **prompting a broader, more inclusive understanding of the Ukrainian diaspora.**
- The draft Strategy on “Ukrainian Global Community” broadens the scope to include all Ukrainians abroad (except tourists) and “foreign Ukrainians” who identify with the Ukrainian state and nation. Though not yet adopted, this aligns closely with the EU’s 2005 definition of “diaspora.”

## Examples of large Ukrainian diaspora communities outside Europe:

Approx. 1.36 million people – nearly 4% of Canada’s population – report Ukrainian as one of their ethnic or cultural origins.

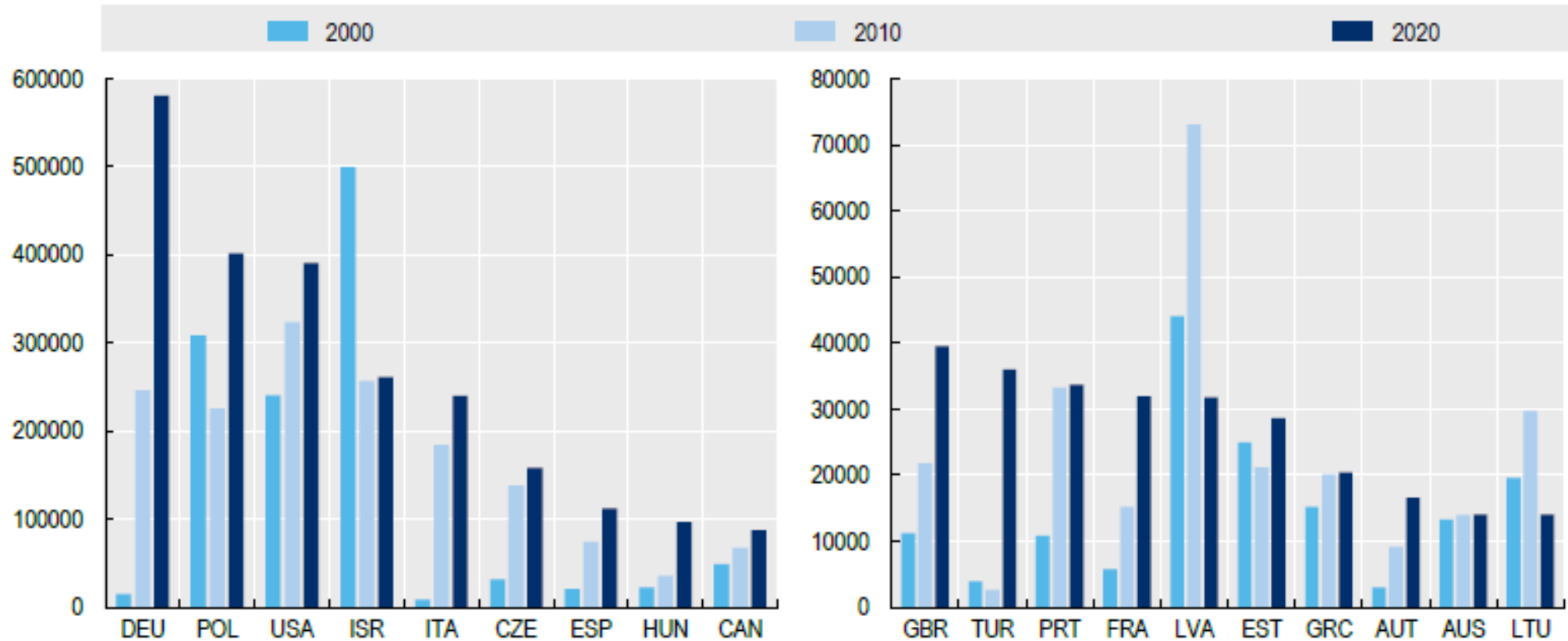


More than 1 million individuals with Ukrainian ancestry

Approx. 5–7% of Israel’s population is of Ukrainian origin, totalling around 500,000 to 700,000 people.



## New 'diasporas-in-information' since 1990s (1/2)

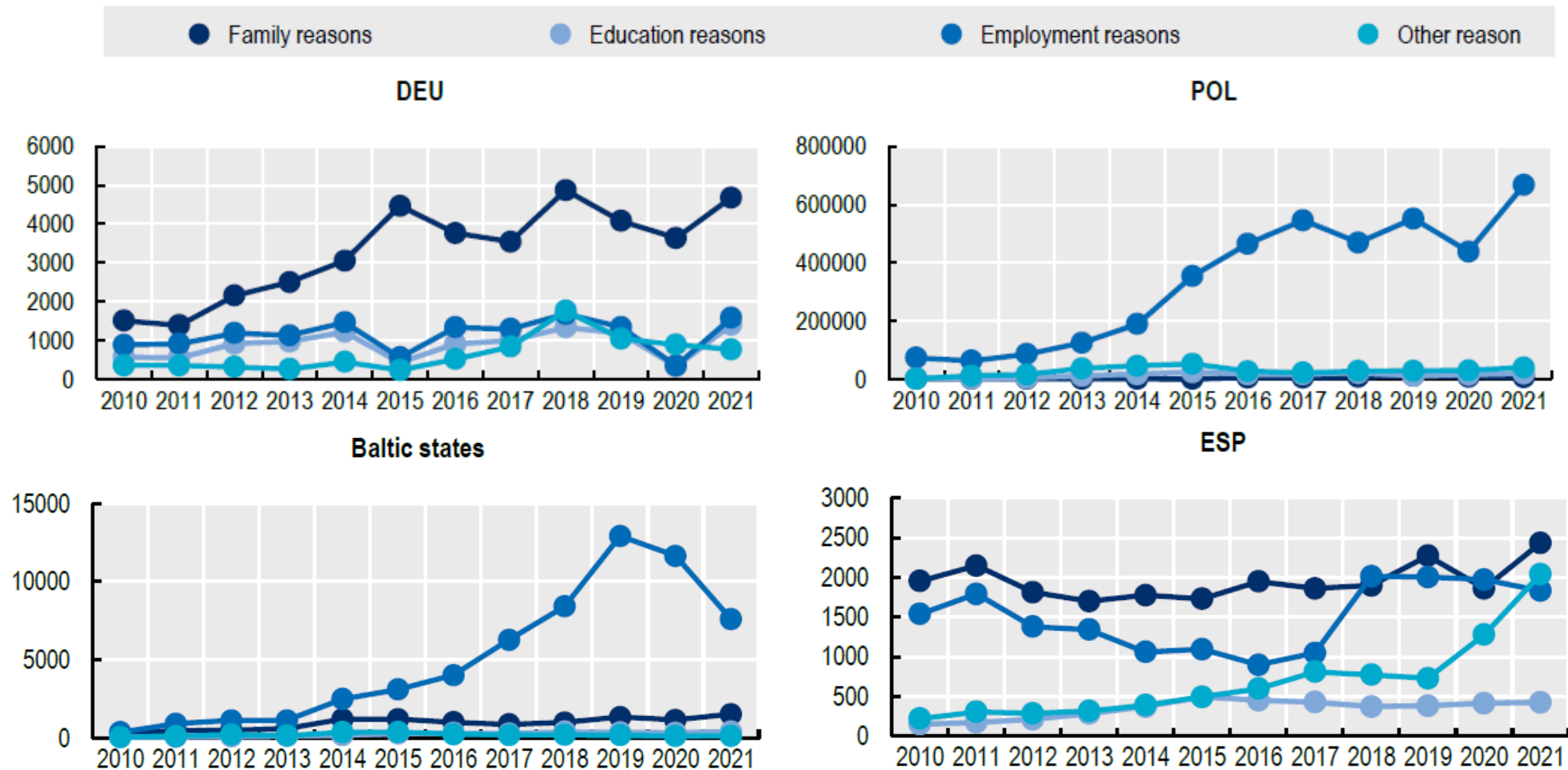


*Stocks of Ukrainian first-generation immigrants in OECD countries, 2000, 2010, 2020*

*Source: The Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC)*



## New 'diasporas-in-information' since 1990s (2/2)



*First residence permits granted to Ukrainian citizens in the EU, by Reasons, 2010-2021*

Source: Eurostat



# Ukraine's global community represents a vital strategic asset

- Ukrainian global community is very diverse, but generally well-institutionalised.
  - On the eve of the Russia's large-scale invasion, there were at least 1000 different Ukrainian diaspora structures worldwide.
- Non-institutionalised civic involvement has also been prevalent, as evidenced by the widespread response to Russia's war against Ukraine.



Since 1967



Since 2015



Since 1948



Since 1940



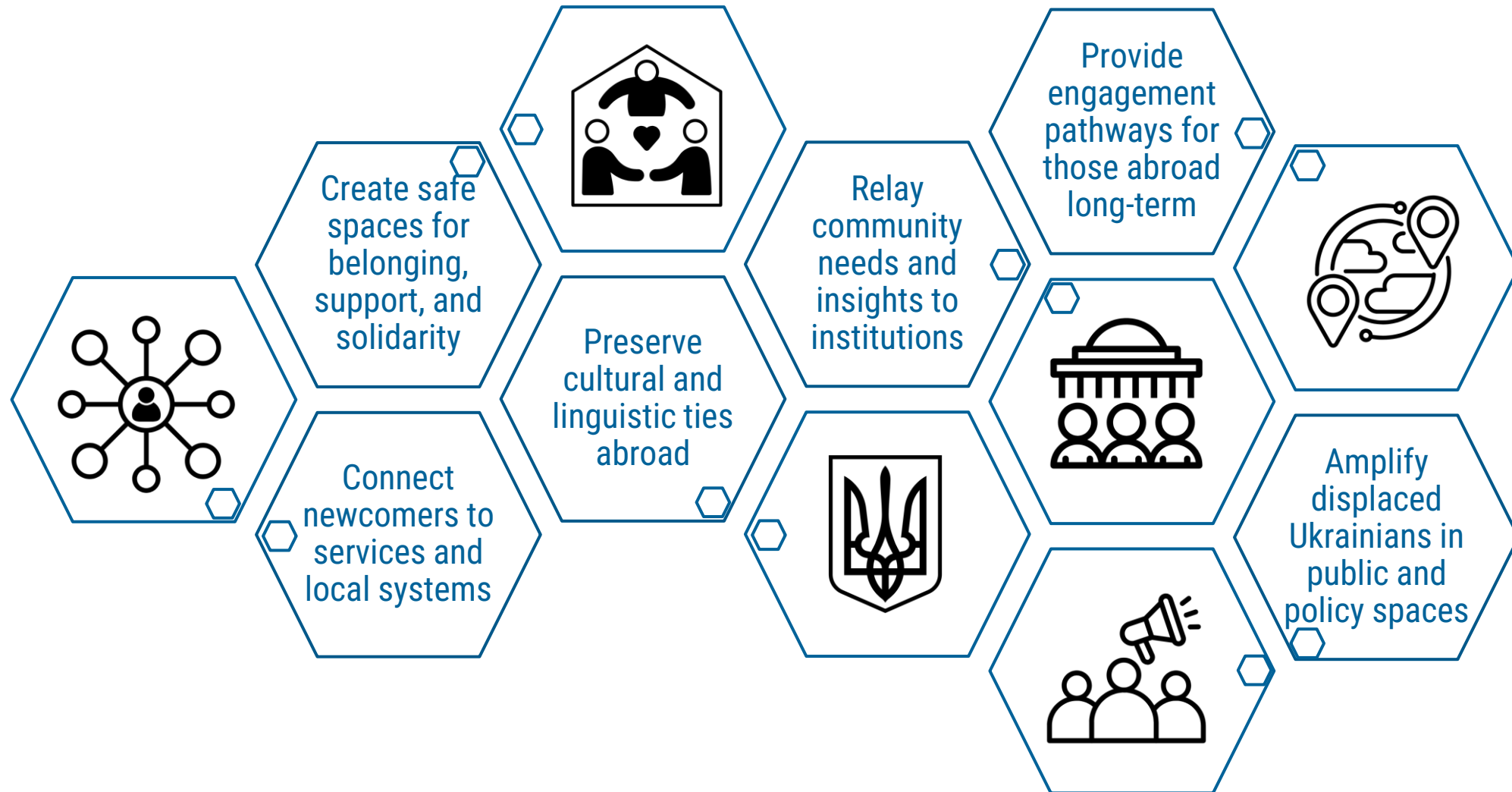
Since 1911  
(Plast Ukrainian Scouting  
Organization)



Since 2014



# How are existing diaspora structures been supporting displaced Ukrainians?





# The diaspora is a vital force for Ukraine's resilience, recovery, and reconstruction

- Contribute to economic revitalisation through remittances and investment
- Support entrepreneurship and job creation across sectors
- Reinforce institutional capacity during the recovery
- Promote international advocacy and sustain global solidarity
- Preserve cultural identity and foster civic engagement abroad
- Fostering transnational engagement with displaced Ukrainians





# How can host countries work with diasporas in the context of recovery, reconstruction and economic development? (1/2)

## France's co-development initiatives with its African diasporas

Launch and purpose	France initiated different co-development programmes in the early 2000s, notably with Mali (already since 2001) and Senegal (since 2005). These initiatives have <b>aimed to engage diaspora communities in France to contribute to development projects in their countries of origin</b> , fostering mutual benefits for both host and home countries.
Why France did it?	The French government recognised the potential of its immigrant communities to act as bridges between France and their homelands. By supporting diaspora-led projects, France sought to promote sustainable development abroad while <b>strengthening integration and civic engagement at home</b> .
Approach	<b>Co-funded projects</b> ranged from infrastructure development to educational initiatives, enhancing local capacities in origin countries. In the first Senegal programme, for instance, approximately 29% of funds were contributed by the diaspora, 63% by France, and 8% by other partners.
Relevance with Ukraine	France's approach demonstrates how host countries can facilitate diaspora contributions to homeland development. For Ukrainians abroad, similar co-development models could be established, enabling them to support reconstruction and development efforts in Ukraine through structured partnerships.



## How can host countries work with diasporas in the context of recovery, reconstruction and economic development? (2/2)

### Germany supporting development-oriented returns from the diaspora

Launch and purpose	Since the 1980s, GIZ has <b>supported diaspora professionals trained in Germany to return to their countries of origin, promoting knowledge transfer and capacity building</b> . The programme has evolved under various names, currently known as the Expert Fund Migration & Diaspora.
Why Germany did it?	Germany recognised that the emigration of highly skilled individuals from low- and middle-income countries was contributing to a significant brain drain in essential sectors such as healthcare, education, and public administration—potentially <b>exacerbating the very structural challenges that drive further emigration from these countries</b> .
Approach	The current programme supports returns to 22 countries, offering placement assistance, salary top-ups, reintegration support, and training. GIZ works with local employers to match experts to priority roles. Over 15,000 professionals have been supported, notably in health, education, and governance.
Relevance with Ukraine	Given the large number of skilled Ukrainians with experience abroad, including those arriving between 1990-2022, such programmes could play a key role in post-war reconstruction by supporting the return and job-matching of skilled professionals to help rebuild critical sectors when safe returns become possible.



## Looking ahead

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- Diasporas are not passive bystanders nor in limbo – they are uniquely positioned to shape integration, development, and post-crisis futures, and to serve as **a strategic asset for Ukraine and to host countries**.
- As host countries plan for the future beyond temporary protection, engaging the Ukrainian global community will be **essential to developing sustainable, effective long-term solutions**.
- For host countries, engaging with the Ukrainian diaspora offers concrete benefits:
  - it provides a channel for indirect support to Ukraine when direct aid may be constrained;
  - it fosters social cohesion by encouraging civic participation and trust-building within Ukrainian communities;
  - and it strengthens transnational ties that can support trade, investment, and foreign policy goals.
- Harnessing this potential requires **deliberate policies and partnerships** that recognise the diaspora's diverse roles – as connectors, contributors, and changemakers – across borders and over time.



Find out more:

## Migration

Migration is a highly topical issue in OECD countries. Migrants arrive for diverse reasons – to reunite with their families, to address labour shortages, or to flee conflict. Effective policies are necessary to make the most out of international migration, to help migrants integrate and build inclusive and cohesive societies.

Policy issue

Key links

[International Migration Outlook 2023](#) >

[State of integration in Germany](#) >



## Explore all our content on Ukraine

[Learn more](#)

OECD's work on migration:  
<https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/policy-issues/migration.html>

OECD's work on Ukraine:  
<https://www.oecd.org/en/countries/ukraine.html/>

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