

## Creative Cooperations

European Voluntary Service and youth exchange network

GOALS – APPROACHES – INSTITUTIONS – PERSPECTIVES

Berlin 2000

creative cooperations. The network at a glance

## Creative Cooperations

brings together the following institutions:

### Schlesische 27

International Youth and Culture Centre (Berlin, Germany)

Kiebitz (Duisburg, Germany)

Gallus (Frankfurt am Main, Germany)

Babylon (Vilnius, Lithuania)

### Circus schools (training centres)

Chapitô (Lisbon, Portugal)

### Training initiatives with artistic project work

Arsis (Athens, Greece)

Lätting Kultur (Gävle, Sweden)

Liceum Ogólnokształcące (Zabrze, Poland)

### Musical initiatives (community art)

Community Music Wales (Cardiff, Wales)

### Artists' cooperatives

The Pioneers (Cardiff, Wales)

### Theatres

Théâtre les Bernardines (Marseille, France)

Stella Polaris (Stokke, Norway)

Kana Teatr (Szczecin, Poland)

Legion Teata (Tampere, Finland)

Terra Nova Teatret (Copenhagen, Denmark)

Art and culture centres with diverse activities

Werkstatt der Kulturen (Berlin, Germany)

Organizations dedicated to European youth encounters and international understanding

Arci (Vasto, Italy)

Arnasa (Basque Country, Spain)

Filoxenia (Krioneri, Greece)

Filia (Berlin, Germany)

Mladi Most (Mostar, Bosnia)

Film studios

Kino Cyprus (Cyprus)

creative cooperations. The network that doesn't waste words

What is Creative Cooperations?

Creative Cooperations is a European network of youth arts projects. A total of 22 organizations from 15 European countries, 17 of them from EU member states, have joined together and agreed on a programme of concerted action.

### **Objectives**

Creative Cooperations offers an opportunity for disadvantaged teenagers and young adults in particular to gather European experience in artistic and creative community work and to obtain training.

### **Mandate and status**

Creative Cooperations was founded under a mandate from the European Commission and on the initiative of the Schlesische 27 international culture centre in Berlin. Creative Cooperations was initially selected as a pilot network for the European Voluntary Service youth programme and has since won recognition as a multilateral network.

### **Shared priorities**

The institutions and initiatives belonging to Creative Cooperations undertake many different types of work in diverse areas. But all projects rest on the following principles:

Youth arts work begins with artistic experience and production

Youth arts work demand and encourages active participation and creative expression

Youth arts work is focused on areas of social concern

Youth arts work is community work and plays an important part in solving the problems of our times

## **European Voluntary Service**

Creative Cooperations offers young people between the ages of 18 and 25 a chance to join in the new European Voluntary Service programme. There are two cycles per year in which young Europeans can learn, try things out, make discoveries, gather European experience and develop their skills in a partner project.

## **Main target group**

Creative Cooperations is aimed specifically at young people who have an interest in arts but have not had a chance to discover the opportunities offered by international voluntary work for themselves.

## **Coordinating group**

The various threads of Creative Cooperations come together at a coordinating office. The coordinating office is also the point of contact for the European Commission and is based at Schlesische 27 in Berlin.

The participating organizations in Berlin have come together to form a joint project group. The two affiliates from Cardiff (Wales) are likewise involved in joint activities.

## **Network history**

Creative Cooperations was founded in July 1996. 21 partners from 10 EU member states established the network with a view to collaborating under the European Voluntary Service (EVS) youth programme.

In the pilot phase (March 1997 to February 1998) Creative Cooperations began work as a flagship project: The groundwork was laid for the network and its office, a steering group and an advisory pilot group met and agreement was reached on substantive, operating and financial standards.

The first volunteers were selected, prepared for their assignments, deployed and given follow-up support in the flagship-action phase from May 1997 to October 1998.

In July 1998 Creative Cooperations made an application under the revised EVS programme to run a programme spread over two years for 25 young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in which they were to be given a chance to do voluntary service for a period of 12 months each.

In 1998 Creative Cooperations was recognized as a multilateral network and launched its envisaged second action phase that November.

Tailor-made pre- and post-assignment training programmes and coordinating meetings were held and their methodology improved in all action phases.

The joint Point Melting Pot youth panel in Berlin in May 1999, which included a volunteers' seminar, a coordinating meeting, public evaluation and a presentation of the work undertaken by Creative Cooperations, set the tone for future activities. The youth panel concept was developed further at the coordinating meeting in Vitoria/Basque Country in May 2000.

Creative Cooperations has documented and publicized at length the experience it has gained in networking and in integrating disadvantaged young people. Representatives of the network have taken part in numerous national and international conferences and working parties.

## **School for life**

Creative training and aesthetic education are to develop in every respect the young adults' abilities to

- perceive through their senses
- understand through their senses and through concepts
- and to depict their perceptions, impressions, feelings and knowledge.

Youth arts and culture work is to be conducted as a school for life.

Educational and training objectives in brief:

teaching of basic and key skills

linguistic competence

an explorative sense of inquiry

empathy

a sense of purpose

self-organization

thinking in project contexts

development of a social and personal identity resting on reflection and of an ability to cope with disappointments

## **Against poverty and discrimination**

Particular efforts are to be targeted on the disadvantaged young people and the focuses of social concern in the respective communities. The aim is to involve in European Voluntary Service particularly such young adults as are in danger of becoming marginalized.

Intercultural work in the communities is designed to combat xenophobia and racism.

The "compensatory" and sociocultural aims in brief:

development of strategies to reach disadvantaged teenagers and young adults

combination of creative training with vocationally based programmes and development of occupational skills

art as a third place for inter- and transcultural encounters

improvement of the sociocultural image and climate at focuses of social concern

## **Intercultural European experience**

The European Voluntary Service exchange programme is designed to confront the young people with the challenge of coping with a new language and culture, a new community and a new institution and to help them rise to this challenge through care, training and support, and to learn from it. It is hoped that in this way the young people will no longer see their own cultures and lives as the only possible forms and start to reflect on them.

The aims of European intercultural education in brief:

openness and tolerance

respect for and a liberal attitude towards traditions

an ability to cope with conflicts

creativity in the development of new forms of cultural depiction, communication and organization

knowledge of foreign languages and the countries where they are spoken

flexibility and mobility

### **Synergy effects between participating institutions**

The presence of European volunteers in the work of the various institutions is intended to further the development of these institutions themselves.

In close, ongoing cooperation with one another, the projects are to develop standards, forms of work and communication and democratic, transparent domains for volunteer activities which may legitimately be labelled "European".

Development aims in brief:

intensive exchange on practical, conceptual and evaluative work

Europe as a local experience

work which is sensitive to the cultural and educational policy situation in Europe, and to the European labour market

### **SEMINARS AND THEIR METHODS**

POINT MELTING POT youth panel, May 1999

You're responsible for yourself. That's quite a change. (Sandrine)

creative cooperations. Specific projects (selection)

ARCI, Vasto

The Arci New Association is a large organization with more than 20,000 members in the Abruzzi region and over 100 clubs and meeting points throughout the region. Arci has organized numerous cultural initiatives and campaigns, festivals and competitions. It focuses on music, film and the fine arts. Arci provides support in particular for young artists who have yet to become established and lack funds of their own. Over and above this Arci has been and still is involved in numerous social and grassroots initiatives seeking to integrate minorities, support refugees, combat poverty and win respect for human and civil rights. Arci, Vasto is affiliated to the network.

ARSIS, Athens

Arsis, the Association for the Social Support of Youth, was founded in 1992. It concentrates on work with unemployed youngsters and with homeless young people of 15 and upwards who have been in trouble with the law. Arsis maintains permanent centres in Athens, Volos and Thessaloniki, and others are under development. Arsis works with short-term projects and campaigns as well as longer-term skills-development programmes. Artistic training is only one field. Young people can also train as motor mechanics or undergo commercial training with Arsis. Arsis considers itself a social and study

project which helps to shed light on and draw public attention to the social situation of disadvantaged young people.

#### Chapitô, Lisbon

Chapitô in Lisbon, established in 1987, is a school for circus and show business occupations. Chapitô has a circus tent, an audiovisual studio, an artistic impression studio, a documentation centre and a library, its own repair shop and a restaurant which is known throughout the city. Apart from the school, Chapitô incorporates a children's space and an animation team which concentrates its work on endangered young people and cooperates with the COAS (Observation Centre and Social Action).

#### Community Music Wales, Cardiff

Community Music Wales (CMW) is an umbrella organization of numerous different music groups and projects in southeast Wales. These projects make it an established part of the local arts scene in Cardiff and other places in Wales. CMW assists groups and projects particularly in obtaining funds, training and coordinating their activities. CMW provides particular support for music projects with disadvantaged and endangered young people. CMW, like Arsis, is involved in wider national reporting initiatives on the social and cultural situation of young people and seeks to draw public attention to youth issues through events, campaigns and publications.

#### Filia, Berlin

Filia is the first self-governing Greek-German youth centre in Germany. It is run by a non-profit youth association as a counselling and meeting centre. Filia organizes intercultural encounters and provides a wide range of counselling services for the young people. The many different dance and music courses (in collaboration with the night school in the borough of Neukölln) and video, photography and Greek cooking workshops are designed to help develop their creativity. Organized by Filia, the Greek film festival in Berlin is known throughout the city.

#### Filoxenia, Krioneri

Filoxenia, which was established in 1995 and began work in 1997, is first and foremost an information and coordination bureau devoted to ecological issues and farm tourism in the village of Krioneri in the Peloponnesians and the nearby port town of Kiato. It informs and counsels the young people, notably young farmers in the region, on training and occupational issues – particularly with regard to the European labour market – and on openings for activities, specifically in the fields of art and culture. Filoxenia provides young people with foreign language training and operates seminars and other exchange activities with foreign countries.

#### Kiebitz, Duisburg

Founded in 1985, the Kiebitz International Youth and Culture Centre in Duisburg considers itself a meeting place for young people who are interested in working creatively with art and other cultures. Kiebitz works with young people from different cultural backgrounds, staging events courses, workshops and project weeks run by professional artists in the fields of fine art, photography, literature, painting, dance, video and theatre. *IBIBIK*, a local Turkish-German youth magazine, has been appearing since 1990. Kiebitz is among the winners of the Civis youth video competition and the North Rhine-Westphalia youth culture prize.

#### Mladi Most, Mostar

Mladi Most, literally "young bridge", had been active for six years and its work is dictated by conditions in the "ethnically", culturally and religiously divided city, by the wounds left by the war. Mladi Most works to encourage encounters and reconciliation between the various groups of the Mostar population at numerous events and courses, in tent villages and peace camps. Art and creative practice play a crucial role in the attempt to settle conflicts, provide anti-violence training and reduce prejudices. Photo, video and theatre projects, a newspaper of their own (the title means "those who

are not asked”) bring together children and young people from both parts of the city. The project’s women’s group has been instrumental in organizing well-attended workshops and spreading activities across the region.

#### The Pioneers, Wales

The Welsh Pioneers – founded in 1981 by a group of street artists and now a leading international name, mainly for their mosaics – are pioneers first and foremost of a changing concept of art: art outside of galleries and museums, art in urban spaces addressing local issues and initiating joint, open creative processes between artists and laypeople who are linked by art, craft and social development. Over the past years the Pioneers have involved hundreds of volunteers, trainees and school pupils – “children from 2 to 80 years of age” – in their activities, in a process which deliberately encompasses everything that forms part of creative work – art as well as bookkeeping and office work.

#### Schlesische 27, Berlin

Founded in the 1980s, Schlesische 27 is an international youth art and culture centre in Berlin-Kreuzberg. Professional artists from various domains work with children, teenagers and young adults from Kreuzberg and other Berlin boroughs. This may take the form of mostly one-week school courses with pupils from various types of school and of various age groups, or else of short and longer-term projects during leisure time, targeting in particular young people who are not in training or employment. Support is not a one-way street for Schlesische 27: the artistic products made in the various departments - fashion, music, theatre, dance, video, literature, digital arts for kids, cooking – should lend themselves to use by public and private sponsors.

#### Stella Polaris, Stokke

Stella Polaris is a theatre whose performances, plays and festive productions have made it a name well beyond Norway’s frontiers since it was founded in 1985. The work and play of Stella Polaris have their roots in medieval and older traditions. It focuses on the artistic techniques of performers and actors, mythology and story-telling. Stella Polaris holds regular workshops at which it invites teenagers and young adults to join in its activities. Stella Polaris serves as a reminder of the spiritual traditions which are threatened today and thus pursues the aim of a world which is more vibrant, more receptive to the senses and more open to intercultural contact.

creative cooperations. From the volunteers’ reports

#### Training and Transmission (I)

Initial shock ...

From the interim report by Lisa

(Community Music Wales)

Spring 1999

I received a very warm welcome and was introduced to all the people who work for Community Music Wales – CMW for short – and then taken to the house where I was to live. I had imagined living together with young people in similar situations to myself, but instead of that I was accommodated in a family household consisting of the mother, two sons, three cats, a dog and very many fleas, which didn’t make it any easier on the day of my arrival. I must admit that I had to get some rest and cried myself to sleep.

But when I had recovered from the initial shock, everything seemed not so bad after all. I got on absolutely fine with the mother, I had my first experience of living together with a handicapped child (her son) and of working (I was thinking at that time possibly of musical therapy with seven-year-old Sath) and I was given every imaginable support, but all the same I felt absolutely lonely and it was getting me down. I lacked social contacts with people of my own age.

Since I was still in my "work experience induction" phase and I had a chance to take a look at all sorts of projects by CMW and the Pioneers as well, it turned out that my life at the time changed very fast in a CITY CENTRE YOUTH PROJECT called GRASSROOTS. I got to know someone who invited me to join his band where I ended up as vocalist, and three of the band members were living in the same house and urgently looking for a fourth person. So I moved there after just one month. I felt much better after that and I had people of my own age around me and could talk to them about my everyday life here after a hard day's work. I now know the language (English) well enough that it is no longer a problem getting to know new people and I can cope with life without outside help.

intercultural observations ...

From the interim report by Katrin

(Babylon, Vilnius)

Spring 1998

Someone from the West expecting to see the primitive East will end up open mouthed at the advanced state of the consumer bug if they take a walk round the inner city.

The crusaders of the market economy, as a friend who visited me called them, present themselves mockingly as if they were the only natural alternative. A meal at Mc D. is a treat for a special day here. The whole family, licking at their whipped ice cream, pose behind the huge windows and enjoy being looked at by the crowds milling past. Fuji advertises its lightning speed on every street corner, and Benetton faces smile meaninglessly down at you from the press palace. The arrival of Western consumer goods is one of the factors which hold out hope for the future, something to cling to. It's almost beside the point that hardly anyone on a normal wage can enjoy them. It's just nice to have them around, to see their bright neon lights shining in the puddles of melted snow. The apparent stability of the West then is one of the uneasy foundations on which people rest in this country in flux.

CREATIVITY?

"... I started chasing her, putting her under pressure, and she stuck her tongue out at me to show me the hideous results and kept her distance. After a few weeks I abandoned this come-and-get-me game and adopted a different strategy. I focused all my concentration on drawing penguins."

Katrin

creative cooperations. The seminars and their method

Training and Transmission (II)

The Creative Cooperations seminars are the second way in which the European volunteers train to describe their experience and pass it on to others (transmission).

The training of the “new” volunteers overlaps with the follow-up process for the “old” volunteers in the seminars.

The “old” volunteers discuss their assignments in one-to-one talks (with the instructors), presentations and group discussions and work out, with the assistance of team leaders, ways in which they can describe their experience to the new volunteers (second part of the seminar).

The new volunteers confront their preliminary experiences in a similar manner and describe their expectations and fears, what they want out of their voluntary service and their questions.

The seminar instructors inform those present once again about the institutional framework and their rights and duties as participants in European Voluntary Service youth exchange programmes.

The “old” volunteers describe and discuss their assignments with the new ones in a brief multimedia presentation prepared in advance.

These talks are continued in the informal and personal setting of a jointly prepared meal followed by a party.

The seminars are documented as fully as possible in pictures and especially in sound. This documentation – together with other data – provides the basis for evaluation by the network and the projects involved.

Seminars: narratives, performing exercises and presentation

I didn't know what I was actually supposed to do. Nobody told me.. (Hanna)

There was no precise job description. This made me uncertain as to what was expected of me. The receiving project had failed to prepare an appropriate induction for the volunteer. (Shona)

Support is a nice-sounding word, but it would have been better if I had received some right from the outset. (Cynthia)

The person responsible for me wasn't very supportive. It would have been very good to have an artist as a contact. But the other volunteers were very helpful. I didn't get to know the people working on my project very well at all. “I don't know“ or “ask somebody else” was what I often heard in response to my questions. I have now stopped asking so many questions. (Shona)

I received a lot of help with organizing my leisure time. (Hanna)

I was helped a lot. I had to find my own work, but there was always someone around to talk to. (Veronique)

I received plenty of support and was able to state my own point of view in every situation. (Ilknur)

I got lot of help from my receiving project and from friends. (Angelo)

I was able to join in all aspects of my receiving project and was greatly appreciated by friends. It was a very positive experience. (Angelo)

I would have liked more language lessons. (Cynthia, Angelo)

It's a great success to look after yourself in a new country, to communicate in another language. (Veronique, Hanna)

I wasn't able to develop my knowledge of German very well in this multicultural Berlin. But I learned a lot about other European cultures and languages. (Shona)

Surprise yourself and show you can produce things you would never have thought before. (Hanna)

In the end I had a very positive feeling, mentally. I managed to do everything I had planned. (Cynthia)

I really learned a lot about other cultures, it's was a very multicultural experience for me. (Veronique)

I was able to put together my own programme apart from the decorating work. (Kelly)

I learned new technical skills and worked to professional standards. This enabled me to get rid of my fears. I had a chance to work together with very many different cultures. (Angelo)

I saw that I could set things in motion and help, that I wasn't useless to the project in Mostar. (Andrea)

Success?! The best day in the whole year was when I woke up after Christmas and felt quite normal – on the ball and really wanting to work. (Cynthia)

You're responsible for yourself. That changes you tremendously. (Sandrine)

GROUP DISCUSSIONS were held on four themes at the volunteers' seminar in April 1998: (1) support and participation, (2) creativity and autonomy, (3) communication and integration, (4) personal successes and disappointments.

The selection of STATEMENTS reproduced here on the first and fourth themes is a good reflection of the mood in the groups:

The volunteers from this cycle describe the time of their assignments in very positive terms. They put the successes mainly down to themselves – an expression of the independence they gained and their greater self-confidence. In the internal discussion, they are critical of the projects in many respects.

At the PANEL DISCUSSION the volunteers presented their work in the projects to a youthful audience, a perspective which relativizes many of their criticisms.

creative cooperations. The youth panel – Volunteers report to a youthful audience  
Training und Transmission (III)

In May 1999 the European volunteers from the Creative Cooperations network held a major YOUTH INFORMATION SESSION in Berlin: the YOUTH PANEL POINT MELTING POT.

The volunteers presented their perspective on European Voluntary Service and their work in the various projects to other young people from the city who are interested in artistic and cultural work and European youth exchange.

In this way the PANEL builds directly on the forms of presentation developed in the seminar. But the audience this time are young people outside the network. This entails higher formal demands on the presentation.

But first and foremost this act of "going public" opens up a different perspective for the young volunteers:

It is no longer a question merely of their own personal experience in European youth exchange

but of the point of European exchange as such: gathering creative and instructive experience in the European area and – in the opposite direction – making Europe something which can be experienced in specific places

and presenting the respective sociocultural role which each of the institutions affiliated to Creative Cooperations plays at its location.

The significance of this change of perspective for the young volunteers cannot be overstated.

For their audience of peers they become competent and critical representatives of the underlying ideas and the practices of Creative Cooperations and its affiliated projects:

turning Europe into an arena of experience and

furthering the skills development of young people and the sociocultural development of the places where the projects are based – notably at focuses of social concern – through artistic and creative work in the community.

This makes the YOUTH PANEL a third form of Training und Transmission which is to round off each cycle.

POINT MELTING POT youth panel

May 1999

Presentation ...

discussion ...

... and party

creative cooperations.

Creativity and skills development

Results (I)

Angelo Teixeira, born in Faro (Sé) on 18 January 1969, graduate of the Art and Theatre Vocational School (subject: theatre) in Lisbon, a very reserved young man of extremely few words, had trained as a lighting technician with Chapitô, but this led nowhere in Lisbon. Angelo Teixeira served as a voluntary lighting technician for a year at the Werkstatt der Kulturen in Berlin. He is now self-employed, working for small private productions. He still has contacts with the Werkstatt der Kulturen. It remains his base, but he is becoming increasingly independent of it. Angelo Teixeira has every intention of staying in Berlin for the next five years.

Robert Fuchs, born in Berlin on 20 October 1975, found his way to Schlesische 27 and an international exchange via a job fair in October 1996. Schlesische 27 delegated him to the Chapitô school of circus and show business trades in Lisbon. He worked continuously in the workshop there, soon learned Portuguese and has now begun training as a stage designer at Chapitô – the training he dreamed of in Berlin but didn't find for lack of opportunity and a lack of determination and initiative on his own part.

Sandrine Ribeiro, born in Montlucon 2 October 1975, left school out of a lack of interest before her brevet technicien supérieur. In 1996 she discovered her enthusiasm for theatre when she became involved in various projects which gave her a certain sense of purpose but no prospects. In May 1997 she came to Schlesische 27 as a volunteer and worked hard at her assignment. After her voluntary service she took advantage of a future capital grant and is just completing a project documenting specific methodological issues of youth theatre work. She found a secretarial post at the museum of ethnography with assistance from Schlesische 27, a job which offers a chance to learn and an opportunity to look around for further training and employment opportunities on her chosen career path.

creative cooperations. Evaluation keywords

Results (II)

Indicators of successful efforts

Departures

Putting life into words  
 Standing up for the cause  
 Synergy effects

Project managers' conference  
 May 1999

POINT MELTING POT youth panel, May 1999

22 partners joined together in the Creative Cooperations network with a view to fulfilling the mandate they had given themselves of carrying out community-based artistic work with disadvantaged young people under the European Voluntary Service programme. The network developed its own standards, its own forms of work and communication in this conjunction. This is the basis on which the Creative Cooperations projects have been working together continuously for more than four years now. More than 50 volunteers have been exchanged for six to twelve months during this period. Many of them have used their volunteer experience as a springboard and found employment or are in further training. Five volunteers have received a future capital grant.

For most of the young volunteers in the Creative Cooperations network their voluntary service is not a stepping stone on a preplanned career path but a departure in several respects: a departure into an unfamiliar culture and world of work, a departure from their familiar surroundings, their habits and their old social relations. These departures have an existential dimension, which means they are highly prone to crises (although this has nothing to do with the crises of educational scientists). These critical phases hold a host of opportunities. They place very special responsibilities on the institutions and the network. The panel in May 1999 demonstrated quite clearly the need for and benefit of an intense exchange between those responsible for the projects in this conjunction.

The preparatory and follow-up seminars with the volunteers are one of the established forms of work in the European Voluntary Service network. These seminars serve in particular to develop and train forms of narration, depiction and communication in which the volunteers can present their experience. The development of identity depends to a large extent on the depiction of biographical processes. The volunteers from one cycle exchange views among themselves at a seminar and the "old" volunteers answer questions from the new ones. Numerous, and in some cases dramatic, learning successes were revealed in the way many felt at home in this new "experienced" role after six months or a year.

The required volunteers' reports and *Point Melting Pot*, the volunteers' magazine, likewise serve to develop presentation and communication skills. Quite a few of the volunteers have drawn on their creative and artistic experience in their interim and final reports. At the same time, not all the volunteers by any means realized that this is anything but a "bureaucratic exercise".

The significance for the volunteers of youth information sessions like the panel in May 1999 cannot be overstated. One could sense how the volunteers' expectation of an audience had impacted positively on and intensified their presentation efforts. Their motivations and perspectives in examining their own experience as volunteers changed radically. They placed their own biographical experiences in the context of community art work and the youth exchange. And they sought to make this context clear – though not uncritically – to their audience and to defend it

The enthusiasm and elegance with which almost all volunteers confronted this challenge at the panel session was one of the most impressive experiences of all.

The joint discussion of the European Voluntary Service in the context of a public event ultimately involved those responsible for the projects in matters reaching beyond the domain of youth exchange and European Voluntary Service alone. These talks referred to the shared objectives and the different working conditions at the participating institutions. In this way the panel brought the Creative Cooperations projects a major step forward towards a more substantial objective, namely to intensify the practical, conceptual and evaluative cooperation between the institutions and – last but not least – to give it a European dimension.

DAS HAUS#, the initiative which Creative Cooperations proposed to the European Commission in the summer of 1999 – is a reflection of this development.

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