Adapting Public Services to Citizen Requirements: Trend or Need?

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February 2018

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Abstract

Public services are the basic elements in the evolution of a local administration. They can be developed with the help of IT sector and received by the decision makers in due time, so that citizens can continue their life and evolution in relation to the new standard of living using computer technology. The technological level of a territorial administrative unit, as well as the opening to urban and computer technology, of the urban representatives, are directly proportional to the degree of the area development, either local or national.

Thus, an adequate technological equipping of all public institutions can generate both information and a pool of information that will lead to a quicker, better justified and grounded decision that satisfies the needs of the citizen when requesting. Through this paper, the author aims to highlight the need to adapt new information technologies in public services, as well as the benefits of implementing and using them.

Keywords: *service, technology, development, information, decision, ghiseul.ro.*
JEL Classification: M20, M40, M41, H5

Introduction

The implementation and use of information systems make public services at all levels accessible and usable for all users, mainly citizens, who are generally the end-users. The computerization of public services generates easier access to all information for the entire population concerned, regardless the location, but with due respect to the legal provisions.

Through this article the author aims try to highlight how public on-line services are structured, the recipients of online public services and the importance of securing the IT services that are a basic element in the use of information services.

The aim of the author is to try to highlight and analyze the dynamics of the use of public services by the population of the computer systems. This analysis will give an overview of the current situation, as well as the trend that will follow in the coming years in accessing, using and solving different situations in public services. Through this

analysis, we will be able to answer the question that generated the title of this article, namely: *Is the adaptation of public services to the requirements of the citizen a trendy fashion or a necessity?*

The article is structured on three main points as follows:
- the way public services are divided and whom they are addressed to;
- the presentation of information systems in the public institutions, especially at the level of city halls, securing information systems in order to secure the data of public institutions as well as the users and beneficiaries of public services;
- the situation of online payments to various public institutions, analyzed to determine the trend of these services.

The article ends with the conclusions drawn from the analysis presented in the paper, as well as with proposals to improve this system in order to determine the evolution and satisfaction of both the public service provider and the beneficiary of these services.

1. Classification of on-line public services

In the literature, there are multiple classifications of online public services, the most used being by content or by the final recipient. Next, the main classifications will be briefly presented to give an overview of the themes addressed in the paper.

1.1 On-line public services can be classified according to the recipients of the information as follows:

a) on-line public services for citizens;
b) on-line public services for organizations, legal entities governed by public or private law;
c) on-line public services both for citizens and organizations. *(Alexandru and Matei, 2002)*

According to Parlagi and Iftimoaie (2001), **on-line public services for citizens** *can be classified as follows:*
- electronic payments such as e-taxes, e-taxes or e-fines, debts to the state, such as taxes, declarations and taxes, contraventions fines, auto or construction licenses etc.;
- job search services through bidding centers;
- social services: unemployment benefits, social assistance, reimbursements or payments for medical purposes, scholarships;
- personal document issuing services (identity papers, passports, driving licenses, birth and marriage certificates, application for citizenship acquisition and recovery);
- vehicle registration / scrapping services;
- services for electronic notification of change of address;
- access to public libraries (on-line catalogs and search tools) and multimedia centers;
- enrollment in upper and secondary education, as well as the up-to-date school situation;
- health services;
- electronic services for the issuance of permits, authorizations;
- electronic information services for citizens, info-kiosk type;
- portals for administrative forms, requests, petitions, complaints;

- public interest information services as well as statistical office data.

On-line public services for organizations

Among the online public services for organizations are the following:
- registering or deleting a company;
- electronic payments, such as e-taxes, e-taxes or e-fines, of state debts, such as taxes, declarations and taxes, contravention fines, auto or construction permits, environmental permits, social security contributions, payment of VAT;
- vehicle registration / scrapping services;
- electronic services for the procurement of goods and services, including public procurement;
- portals for administrative forms, requests, petitions, complaints;
- public interest information services as well as statistical office data;
- services related to customs declarations;
- electronic services for the issuance of permits, environmental permits;
- access to public libraries (on-line catalogs and search tools) and multimedia centers.

Online public services for both citizens and organizations (Order no. *2632/2016*).

From the category of on-line public services for both the citizen and the organizations are included the public services listed above as well as the following:
- Classification of public services, related to the degree of online public administration interaction with citizens and organizations.

* Public services, depending on the degree of online interaction of public administration with citizens or organizations, legal entities governed by public or private law, are classified as follows:
   a) public services exclusively for on-line information of citizens and organizations;
   b) public services for the on-line information of citizens and organizations, based on their direct interaction with the public administration;
   c) public services aimed at informing citizens and organizations, as well as interacting exclusively on-line with the public administration.

* Public services intended solely for on-line information of citizens and organizations.

These services can be accessed through information provided on the websites of public administration institutions. Among the categories of this information are (but not limited to): the activity of public administration institutions; one-stop information desk; checking taxes and fees; statistical data; the necessary documents for the issue of official documents; acts of corruption; persons in general pursuit; search folders; the court sessions; jurisprudence; information on: transnational problems caused by the misapplication of Community law by public authorities in EU Member States.

* Public services for on-line information of citizens and organizations, based on their direct interaction with the public administration.

These public services are those on-line services which, in addition to informing citizens and organizations, are designed to facilitate activities such as electronically

downloading data, information, and typified documents to help them convey their answers to state authorities. The following categories of services include, but are not limited to:

a) **electronic payment systems (taxes, fines) by making electronic forms, questionnaires, addresses, programs and work points or any other data, information, useful documents in the relationship between the public-administration and citizens or organizations;**

b) the portals relating to the Data Collection Mechanism at the National Agency of Civil Servants (HRMIS) or of any other nature, with the possibility of downloading the documents in electronic format.

* Public services aimed at informing citizens and organizations, as well as interacting exclusively on-line with the public administration.

From the category of public services, aimed at informing citizens and organizations, as well as the exclusively on-line interaction with the public administration, are the following:

- forum, blog, webmail;
- electronic payment systems (taxes, fines), through which online debits to the state, taxes, fines, automobile or construction licenses can be paid;
- appointments;
- multidisciplinary portals with corruption-related complaints, e-petition, e-application, e-learning, e-government, e-accreditation, e-administration, e-counter, e-complaints, on-line, cultural;
- checking the quality of the insured at the National Health Insurance House;
- collecting and validating on-line statistical data (e-SOAP);
- general search;
- interactive one-stop shop;
- traffic notifications;
- soliciting and obtaining Internet domains;
- "track-and-track" electronic tracking option for postal services;
- services for completing and transmitting on-line electronic declarations / registers;
- online enrollment in databases of European Fund access projects, ESF (European Social Fund);
- medical services;
- on-line reporting of periodical operations of family doctors.

1.2. Operational objectives and impact categories related to online public services.

The information security objectives in on-line public services are confidentiality, availability, integrity, authenticity and non-repudiation *(Matei, 2006)*. The confidentiality of managed information in on-line public services is accomplished by implementing security measures designed to ensure control of authorized access to cyber information and infrastructures and authorized dissemination of information.

The availability of managed information in on-line public services is achieved by implementing security measures designed to ensure timely access to on-line public services. Also, integrity of managed information in on-line public services is achieved by

implementing security measures designed to protect information and cyber infrastructures against unauthorized alteration or destruction.

The authenticity of managed information in on-line public services is accomplished by implementing security measures designed to ensure that the information issuer is the one that claims to be. Non-repudiation of managed information in on-line public services is accomplished by implementing security measures that cannot be denied transmission / receipt of information by the parties involved.

High, moderate or low impact categories of online public services are:
- Depending on the impact on citizens, organizations or public administration institutions, if one or more cyber security objectives are compromised, each public administration institution providing such public services establishes its own security.
These standards establish three categories of impact, as follows: high; moderate; low.
- The actual impact value is represented by the highest estimated impact on each of the security objectives of online public-service information provided by public administration institutions.

2. Presentation of information systems in the local public institutions

The Social Assistance software is intended for mayors and social welfare departments within them, being adapted to OG. 93/2016 and HG 559/2017. This program helps to electronically record the VMG files (minimum guaranteed income) drawn up in accordance with Law 416/2001 as amended by Laws 276/2010 and HG. 778/2013 and the files for ASF (Family Support Allowance) according to Law 277/2010 and HG. 778/2013. The program also includes an AIL (heating aid) registration module according to GO. 70/2011 and HG. 778/2013. In addition to the above aids, other forms of social assistance such as: insertion stimulus, state allowance for children and child-raising allowance**.**

2.1. Functions and reports included in the program

According to Preda (2006), the most important functions of the program are:
- salvage in the database of social assistance applications, support allowance, heating aid;
- adding social investigations to the file, with the option of creating a social investigation based on the data saved in the previous investigation;
- automatic filling in of the payment card for social aid files;
- issuance of mayor's provisions regarding granting / not granting / modification / suspension / termination of the right to social support or support allowance;
- the mentioned documents (request, inquiry) in doc. format ready for printing;
- the possibility to add data about documents attached to the file (certificates, certificates) and to set alerts on their expiration date;
- the electronic records and management of the working days that the beneficiaries of social assistance have to carry out according to Law 416 and of their performance or non-performance as well as of the persons designated to carry them out.

- the existence of a history of the file, which allows it to be tracked over time (the periods in which it was paid, the period during which it was suspended);

The Social Assistance software is intended for mayors and their social welfare departments, the program also includes reports that are included in its operating system, and the reports contain important information in managing local government such as:
- the centralizing situations and the provisions issued by the mayoralty (both for setting new payments and for modifying / suspending existing ones).

a) the status of approved applications for social assistance;
b) social-benefits paid;
c) emergency aid;
d) funeral grant.

- centralizers of people (holders or other persons enrolled in the file) grouped by different categories (lists of pupils learning at a certain school unit, lists of people able to work and looking for a job).

2.2. Transparency in the management of public information and services by electronic means

The use of the electronic procedure for accessing public information and services and their provision by electronic means is an integral part of public administration reform. Transparency of the public information and services is very important, and it should be taken into account that the provider of information and public services transmitted by electronic means at the same time as the traditional procedures is represented by the Public Administration Authorities (*Law no. 161 of 19/04/2003*).

2.2.1. The objectives of the IT system implementation and use are as follows:

- reducing public spending, fighting bureaucracy and corruption at the level of public institutions;
- increasing the transparency of the use and administration of public funds;
- improving access to public information and services in accordance with legislation on personal data protection and free access to public information;
- elimination of direct contact between the office worker and the citizen or the economic agent;
- the provision of quality public information and services through electronic means;
- strengthening the administrative capacity of public institutions to fulfill their role and objectives and to ensure the provision of public information and services in a transparent manner.
- promoting collaboration between public institutions for the provision of public services by electronic means;
- redefining the relationship between the citizen and the public administration, respectively between the business environment and the public administration, in order to facilitate their access to public services and information through information technology;
- promoting the use of the internet and cutting-edge technologies in public institutions.

2.2.2. The principles underlying the provision of information and public services by electronic means are:

- transparency in the provision of information and public services;
- equal, non-discriminatory access to information and public services, including for people with disabilities;
- the efficiency of the use of public funds;
- confidentiality, or guaranteeing protection of the privacy of personal data;
- ensuring the availability of public information and services.

Public administration authorities are required to ensure compliance with previous principles in relation to natural or legal persons interested in using the electronic procedure for access to public information and services as well as for exchange of information.

The National Electronic System was established as a public utility information system in order to ensure access to public information and the provision of public services to individuals and businesses.

2.3. The National Electronic System Operators

The most important operators of the National Electronic System, which are highlighted in detail in the next paragraph, can be filled in with other operators that comply with the law and which are of interest to certain categories of the population, so that the number of the operators of the national electronic system to expand, expanding IT and expanding transparency in public institutions at all levels.

a) The General Inspectorate for Communications and Information Technology, subordinated to the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, for the "e-Government System"

b) Ministry of Public Administration, for the "e-administration system";

c) the authority established by the Supreme Defense Council for the National Defense and Security System.

Within the National Electronic System, other natural or legal persons, such as banks, notaries, experts, under the law, may participate.

3. The evolution of on-line tax and tax payments in the Ghiseul.ro

Online card payments of taxes and fees through Ghiseul.ro saw record increases in the first three months of 2017 - over 144,000 transactions, up 215% over the same period last year, the value of transactions being almost 47 million lei, up 258%, according to data from the Electronic Payment Association of Romania (APERO). If the current growth rates persist, there are chances that at the end of 2018 Ghiseul.ro will reach 500,000 users, compared to the 224,000 currently counting.

Figure no. 1 - The state of on-line payments of taxes and duties in the first quarter of 2016 as compared to 2017.
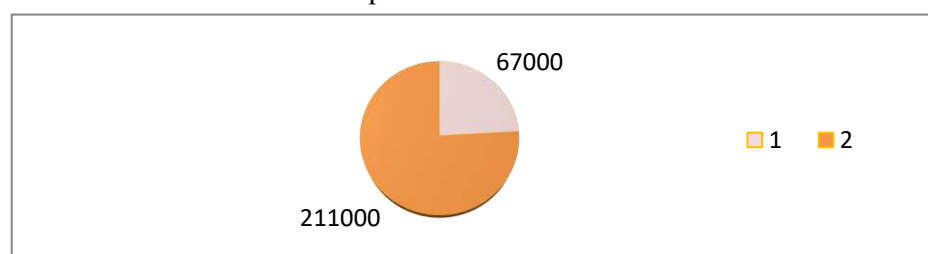
In the first quarter of 2017 (1) have been made 211,000 payments of taxes and fees made online, respectively a 215% increase over the first quarter of 2016. In the first quarter of 2016 have been made 67,000 payments (2) of taxes and fees made online, represents the total weight of payments in the first quarter of 2016 respectively 100%.

2017 was the best year for Ghiseul.ro in terms of number of users, transactions and value of payments. In the six years of existence, there were 297 public institutions included in the system, 224,000 accounts and 448,000 transactions worth 137 million lei.

Figure No. 2 The situation of credentials for activating the accounts for making payments through Ghişeul.ro during 2011-2012 until the end of 2017.
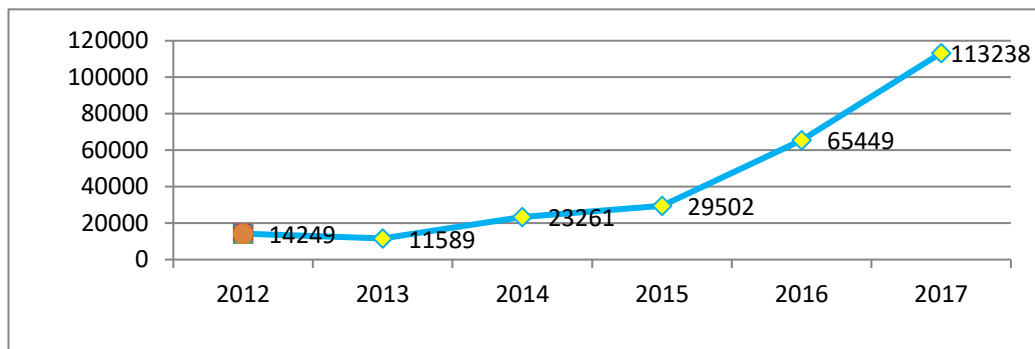
Analyzing Figure no. 2, we can see that starting 2011-2012, when the on-line access to various public services was launched via Ghişeul.ro and until 2017, there was a continuous increase of users of these services through the on-line system, which make us conclude that it will generate the same evolution in the years to come, and public institutions that offer these services to the population need to adapt both their working techniques and staffing to the requirements of the citizens.

By Ghiseul.ro not only taxes and fees are paid, but also automobile fines and internet.ro domains. The data presented by www.hotnews.ro show that: 57% of all online payments were local tax and tax payments, 8% payments to the National Agency for Tax Administration, 9% fines and 18% payments to RoTLD, who manages .ro domains.

Figure No. 3 Structure of payments made on-line in the first quarter of 2017 to public institutions.
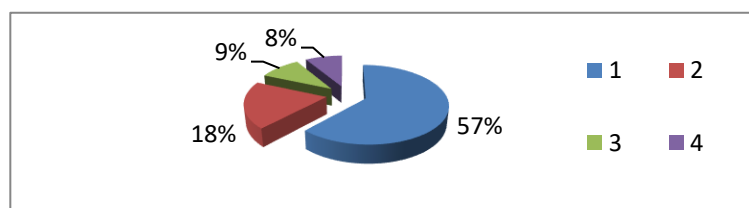
The representative of Ghiseul.ro, George Anghel, warned that for the payment of taxes and taxes to National Agency for Tax Administration, although all the debits valid throughout the year are displayed in the system, National Agency for Tax Administration cannot currently process payments ahead of time, due to regulations in force.

The entry of legal persons into the Ghiseul.ro platform will lead to a significant increase in transaction volumes. It is expected that the share of payments to National Agency for Tax Administration will increase as a result of the fact that the Tax has just entered the system.

The National Agency for Tax Administration section contains information about the taxes and fees that are paid and should not be paid ahead of schedule. For now, National Agency for Tax Administration cannot operate made payments if they are made before the deadline.

At local tax offices, what debts are to be paid at the beginning of the year and the information is updated in real time as you pay, but in the case of National Agency for Tax Administration, we are talking about a different logic, which comes from legal provisions and minister orders.

If we pay earlier the tax, that payment cannot be taken into account by National Agency for Tax Administration as a prepayment or before the due date, but if we pay it later, it generates penalties.

**Figure No. 4** Structure of payments made online in 2017 to public institutions.
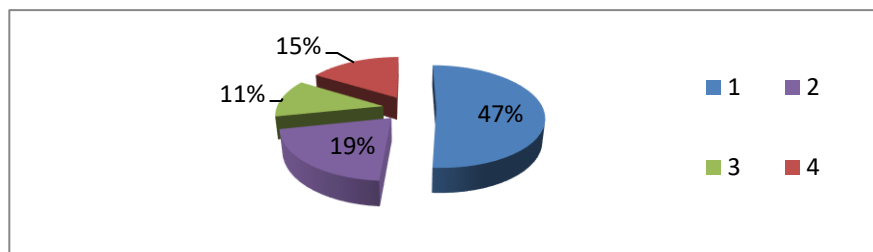
The situation of online payments in December 2017, is thus presented: 47% represents on-line payments of local taxes and fees;19% on-line payments to the National Agency for Fiscal Administration; represents online payments to the service that manages .ro (RoTLD) domains; 11% represents payments of payments on-line for fines; 15% represents on-line payments to the service that manages Roads .ro (RoTLD).

Figure no. 3 and figure no. 4, present the situation of online payments in 2017, a situation that has a different dynamic in March 2017 as against December 2017, and by analyzing this situation we present in figure no. 5, we will understand the future evolution of the use of this platform, the trend of payments in the future.

Figure No. 5 Situation of payments made online in 2017 to public institutions, their dynamics in March 2017 compared to December 2017
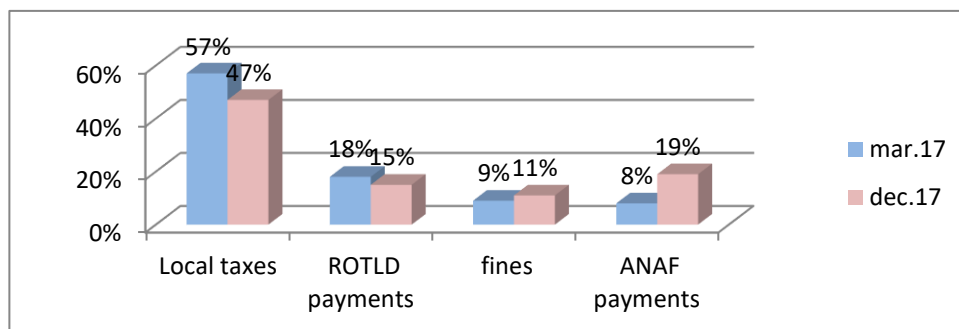
What happens if someone paid a tax to the National Agency for Fiscal Administration ahead of schedule?

The money reaches the collecting accounts of the National Agency for Fiscal Administration, this money remains in the ANAF system until the payment is allocated to the declared and recorded debits. There is the possibility that the money will go on time, but if it is not extinguished in time and is misplaced, uncharted debts appear and they generate penalties.

When can companies make payments through Ghiseul.ro?

Opening up to legal entities is technically feasible, the platform is ready at any time, but only a change of legislation is needed. The platform www.Ghiseul.ro is a project developed by the Agency for Digital Agenda of Romania (AADR) and the Association of Electronic Payment in Romania (APERO), which was extended for an indefinite period.

In 2016, Romania was on the last place in the EU as far as digital public services are concerned

Romania has made significant progress in the availability of open data, but the supply and use of e-government services remain low, our country being at the bottom of the European Union DESI list of digital competences, made public by the European Commission.

At European level, important steps are being taken to facilitate online services provided by citizens' public administrations. In October 2016, the European Parliament adopted new European rules according to which websites and applications of public administrations, hospitals, courts and other public sector organizations should become more accessible to everyone.

Under the new rules, websites and mobile applications for public sector organizations: administrations, courts, police, hospitals, universities and libraries will have common accessibility standards. The lawmaker has ensured that applications used on mobile phones will follow the same rules.

The need for certification

Any successful organization knows that information and processing support, IT systems and networks are very important business resources. They are today more and more threatened by a lot of attacks, which can include computer-assisted frauds, computer viruses, hacking, DoS, espionage, sabotage, vandalism, fire or floods. Also, customer's demands and expectations are now moving towards the security of information processed by suppliers, and major businesses will take this into account.

For any organization that intends to enter into various partnerships and maintain and expand its business, it is necessary to implement and certify an information security management system as part of an entire management system based on the security risk assessment approach establishing, implementing, managing, monitoring, maintaining and improving information security.

Certification ensures that the best practices of planning, installation, configuration, use and maintenance of information systems have been applied (*Order no. 2632/2016).* It has been established that the Ministry of Public Finance will extend the use of the PatrimVen information system by providing public authorities and institutions in the central and local public administration with a view to providing services for the measures included in the integrated plan to simplify the administrative procedures applicable to citizens, Romania's Strategy for Strengthening Public Administration 2014-2020.

4. Conclusions

The implementation and use of the information system within the public institutions is a fundamental element of evolution, even if, according to the analysis carried out at the level of the states that make up the European Union, Romania is on the last place with the digital public services in 2016, but according to the data published by the authorised institutions, it turns out that Romania has applied new strategies for implementation, information and use of information systems every year.

The use of computer systems for accessing public domains as online registration for obtaining documents, services, information or other important elements for the individual or legal entity beneficiary, makes everyone equal, discrimination, favoritism or corruption to diminish. Also, the use of the information system in public services can generate a considerable financial economy and efficiency for both parties, i.e. both for the public service provider and for the public service beneficiaries.

In view of the analysis of the data and information presented in this article, we can conclude that the level of the evolution of the information system within the public institutions in Romania has increased annually since 2011 and so far, both at central and local level, a situation that can be clearly seen in figure 2 of the article, where the statements of account activation credentials are made regarding payments through Ghişeul.ro during 2011-2012 until the end of 2017.

Another decisive analysis of the increase in the use of online public services in public institutions is given by figure 1, in which we highlighted a comparative situation

of payments made through the Ghişelul.ro platform in March 2016 compared to March 2017, an analysis that we consider to be emblematic and reference for the future trend.

The fact that figure 5 shows an increase in on-line payments to the National Agency for Fiscal Administration, we consider that this increase will lead to a very high growth of the use of on-line services in the next years, which will oblige public institutions to take rapid and serious measures to support, streamline and secure the IT system.

Our view is that the use of information systems at all levels in public institutions is essential, but if the information systems used as well as their security are not updated, adapted and used with utmost responsibility and confidentiality, serious problems can arise within these systems with repercussions on the poulticei.

Through this article, the author tried to highlight the benefits of the IT system for all social categories and for all the population who need to use or benefit from any kind of public services, and for people with serious health problems but without going to the other extreme namely the total dismantling of the offices to which those interested in a particular public service can directly address. So, we can conclude that the most prominent use of information systems in public services is not a trend but a necessity.

Our proposal is to make a very pragmatic analysis of the evolution of the use of information systems, taking into account the trends in the use of computer systems by as many people as possible, but also taking into account the legislation and the decisions taken at the level of the public institutions to accept as few jobs as possible, directly with the population.

Another suggestion is that, as a pragmatic analysis of the state of use of information systems in public services, consideration should also be given to the technology of institutes with computer systems appropriate to new trafficking patterns, as well as the provision of IT systems with adequate security systems to protect both institutions as well as consumers of public services, respectively the population.

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