



PROCHILD

PROTECTION AND SUPPORT OF ABUSED
CHILDREN THROUGH MULTIDISCIPLINARY INTERVENTION



Co-funded by the Rights,
Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC)
Programme of the European Union

NEWSLETTER

TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

810109 - PROCHILD -REC-AG-2017/REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2017



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PROCHILD PROJECT

The PROCHILD project seeks to create a multi-professional, integrated model of cooperation with stakeholders involved in response to violence against children. The project will tackle underreporting and fragmentation of services and implement a joint approach based on complementary competences and the child's best interest.

BACKGROUND

Child abuse affects all social classes and ethnicities, and it features a variety of characteristics, such as the age of the victim, violence type and severity, the context where it takes place and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. This phenomenon is difficult to identify and monitor due to the cultural mechanisms of minimisation and denial. Child abuse is often repeated and victims get protection and rehabilitative, social and psycho-emotional treatment at a later stage. Clinical evidence

and research have shown short, medium, long-term consequences of violence on health highlighting how physical and psychological damage require early, integrated and specialist treatment.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the project are to:

- Protect fundamental rights of children
- Promote early detection and reporting of abuse/mistreatment cases;
- Adopt a multi-professional model of protection & care of child victims
- Develop integrated and shared protocols among Social and Health Services, Educational Agencies, Police, Judicial Authorities
- Increase the skills of professionals for an early identification of the phenomenon
- Search for viable and appropriate ways to make victims of violence and their families/caregivers, an active part of the assessment and improvement of protection and support services.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The outcome expected from the project includes:

- An e-learning platform for professionals and students that will host training materials,
- Awareness-raising on what child abuse is, and what to do to give/receive support, targeted to families, minors, school staff, social and health professionals, police and judicial authority,
- Completion of local/ national protocols contributing to the creation of an integrated intervention model for early detection of abuse/mistreatment, reporting and protection of child victims,
- Starting the dialogue for the creation of an Italian epidemiological registry on violence against children that will enable data analysis and intervention.

THE CONSORTIUM

PROChild is a transnational project involving:

- Alma Mater Studiorum, Università Di Bologna, Italy
- Terveyden Ja Hyvinvoinnin Laitos, Finland
- La Voix De L'enfant, France
- IARS International Institute, United Kingdom
- Katholische Fachhochschule Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany
- Institouton Ygeias Tou Paidiou, Greece



PROJECT UPDATES

PROCHILD has made significant strides towards progress and is still actively involved in activities, which will lead to the next phases of the project. This is what we have achieved so far:

- The consortium has successfully completed Work Package 3, which aimed to map operators' needs to foster an integrated approach towards early detection and treatment of abused minors.
- We have finished collating and analysing evidence to produce various reports, including collection of good practices, publication on causes of violence against children & role of parental mental health, report on the training needs of professionals, report on elements and criteria for early detection of abused minors, and the report on protective and risk factors after child abuse for the development of psychosis.

All the reports are available here: <https://www.prochildproject.org/documents>

Currently, we are proceeding with Work Package 4, which aims to develop protocols among the actors who are involved in the assistance and protection of abused children in accordance with a transferrable interdisciplinary intervention model. This intervention model includes:

- Treatment and support for minors who have been victims of abuse and their families. This will be evaluated using our newly-developed questionnaire.
- Conducting focus groups with judicial and social services in round-table discussions.
- Developing a European interdisciplinary and multi-professional model for detecting abuse and mistreatment, in order to protect minors in need of assistance.

Ultimately, this intervention model should reduce underreporting. It should also, clarify how to conduct treatment to protect minors social-

ly, medically, psychologically and legally.

The PROChild website now has two new platforms. This includes a web-platform for the purpose of educating professionals working with children, and a multimedia page, to assess child abuse awareness material for families and schools on a European level.

In order to bring all our ideas together, La Voix De L'enfant hosted the first transnational project meeting in Paris in May 2019. You can read more about this on our website (<https://www.prochildproject.org/2019/05/08/prochild-meeting-in-paris-2/>).

Our partners in Europe have worked tirelessly to bring this project to light. Their individual strides are highlighted in the succeeding pages.

NATIONAL TARGET AND ACTION PLAN FOR PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN FINLAND

Finnish institute for health and welfare (THL) is coordinating National Target and Action Plan for Preventing Violence against Children in 2020-2025. The target and action plan will be published November 26th in a conference "Supporting Non-violent and Participatory Childhoods". The event is an official side event for Finland's six-month Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Finland's National Target and Action Plan for Preventing Violence Against Children will cover a wide range of actions targeted in preventing violence against children, supporting child victims and helping professionals to work in cooperation. The target and action plan consist of 15 chapters that include different themes such as mental and physical violence, child sexual abuse, children's rights, participation, multi-professional cooperation, domestic violence, and vulnerable child groups. The plan will also support the mainstreaming of practices compliant with the Barnahus standards in Finland.

The writers of the target and action plan are professionals from ministries, universities, research centers, hospitals, the police, municipalities and non-governmental organizations who are experts in tackling violence against children. There are roughly one hundred enthusiastic professionals taking part in the making of the target and action plan nationwide.

PROCHILD project supports the drafting of the target and action plan and will also take part in the implementation of the plan. In August, PROCHILD project's researcher Hanna Kettunen held a round-table discussion with the National Steering Group for Preventing Violence against Children. The steering group takes part and monitors the drafting of the National Target and Action Plan for Preventing Violence against Children. The steering group will also monitor the implementation of the plan in 2020-2025.

During the round-table, professionals discussed in detail different targets and actions set in the first draft of the target and action plan. There are around 100 actions in the plan which covers services for children and families, and training for professionals. The common aim was to write down actions that are concrete, viable and measurable, so that the plan can be implemented at all levels. The round-table produced fruitful discussions between professionals and the active work for the target and action plan has continued since.



FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT "SUPPORTING NON-VIOLENT AND PARTICIPATORY CHILDHOODS" CONFERENCE:

<https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en/whats-new/events/thl-s-eu-2019-side-events/supporting-non-violent-and-participatory-childhoods>

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BARNAHUS STANDARDS IN FINLAND:

<https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en/research-and-expertwork/projects-and-programmes/barnahus-project>



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF APPLIED RESEARCH ON ADDICTION AND FAMILY IN GERMANY



Prof. Michael Klein is the head of the German Institute for Addiction and Prevention Research and German coordinator of PROCHILD project

The German Institute on Addiction and Prevention Research celebrated its 20th anniversary on July 5th 2019. Since its founding in 1999, the former Platform of Excellence on Applied Addiction Research has pursued applied research on the sociological and psychological aspects of substance abuse.

Professor Michael Klein, head of the Institute and German coordinator of PROCHILD project, has had a special interest in substance abuse in relation to parental violence and parental mental health problems for a long time. Over the last twenty years, this resulted in a number of successful projects that raised awareness to this topic and improved the care situation of affected children.

To mark its 20th anniversary, the Institute organised a symposium during which different lectures were held and current research projects were presented and discussed. Since the topic of addiction in general and particular in relation to family is a multidisciplinary one, about 130 professionals from different fields such as Medicine, Social Work, Child Protection Services, Psychology and Politics came together. This proved to be a good opportunity to not only look back at what had already been achieved, but to draw attention to the diverse research that is currently conducted at the German Institute on Addiction and Prevention Research. In addition to research projects on the topics of substance abuse, the institute is also involved in four other projects concerning vulnerable children particularly.

The project "SHIFT Plus" is funded by the Federal Ministry of Health. The aim of this project is to develop and evaluate a group intervention for drug addicted parents with children aged 0 to 8 years. The intervention is directed towards strengthening parenting skills and family resilience. The SHIFT Plus project also supports parents in becoming drug-free.

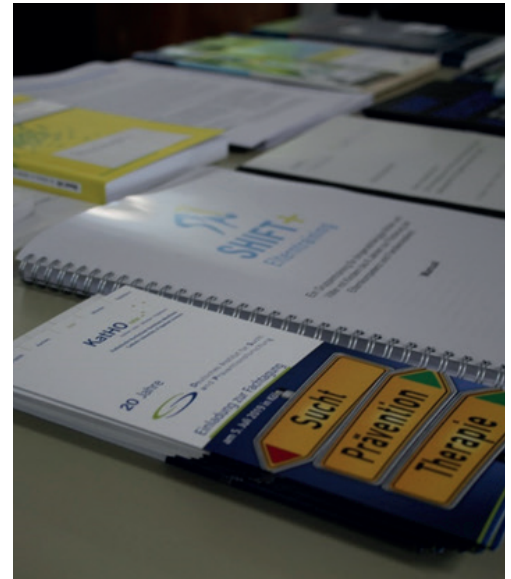
Another research project that the German institute is involved in is called "PEPE-Kids." The project develops a psycho-educational prevention programme for children of alcohol or drug abusing parents who are currently in a withdrawal treatment. "PEPE-Kids" strengthens the children's psychosocial resources and coping mechanisms during this vulnerable time.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research funds the research project "IMAC-MIND." This research project seeks to improve mental health and reduce the risk of addiction in children and adolescents. Previous research

showed that children with substance abusing parents are at a higher risk for substance abuse and addiction later in life.

The PROCHILD project was presented to show the efforts made on a European level to improve the cooperation between professionals from different fields in order to protect children. Since cooperation and the lack thereof, is a hotly discussed topic in Germany at the moment, PROCHILD gained the interest of many listeners.

The briefly described research projects above illustrate the different perspectives needed to address child abuse. The 20th anniversary offered a good opportunity to bring some of these different perspectives together and to contribute to an active exchange between professionals.



THE SANT'ORSOLA HOSPITAL IN BOLOGNA OPENED A COUNSELLING CENTRE AGAINST CYBERBULLYING IN ITALY TO FACILITATE CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH



The medical staff of the Sant'Orsola University Polyclinic and the Postal Police

In order to combat child abuse, the Sant'Orsola University Polyclinic opened a counselling centre. The aim of the centre is to prevent online child abuse and violence. It also seeks to provide support for victims of abuse.

The counselling centre, ushered in on Wednesday 6th February within the Paediatric A&E of the Sant'Orsola Hospital, is the result of the ongoing collaboration between the medical and non-medical staff of the Sant'Orsola Hospital and the experts of the Postal and Communications Police in the Emilia-Romagna Region.

Marcello Lanari, project manager of the PROCHILD project and Paediatrics Professor at the University of Bologna and Head of Emergency Paediatrics Unit at the Sant'Orsola Hospital, runs the Paediatric A&E, which receives every year at least 80 cases of child abuse and has become a reference point at the District level.

In the words of Professor Lanari, "The counselling service will offer minors, their parents, educational staff and every citizen, ways to detect and tackle online forms of child mistreatment and abuse."

At the same time, medical and non-medical staff working in this field such as nurses, social workers, lawyers and educators will receive child abuse training from the Postal Police. This training will help professionals be

better at identifying various forms of violence. After identification, the professionals will be given steps on how to move forward.

For further information: http://www.dire.it/05-02-2019/291756-a-bologna-apre-un-punto-di-ascolto-sul-cyberbulismo/?fbclid=IwAR1UnnGfUt0Lnp6B3Kt-sp4zqs2zjMSeGbEmY14jXIOJA02vhMwn_sC9vFM



Medical and non-medical staff training by the Postal Police

PROTECTION AND SUPPORT OF ABUSED CHILDREN THROUGH MULTIDISCIPLINARY INTERVENTION **IN GREECE**

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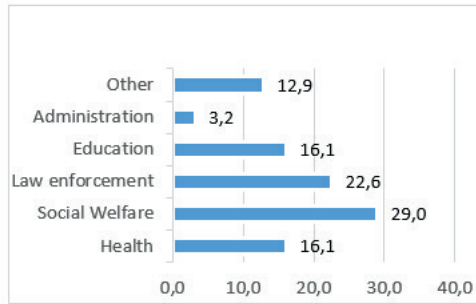
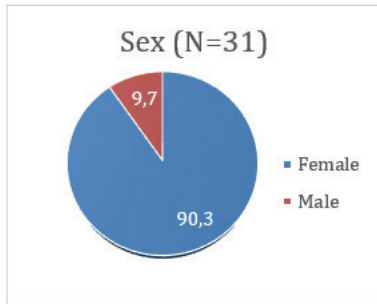
The aim of the workshop was to increase knowledge on functional organisational protocols, which foster integrated intervention. These workshops have also become a starting point of dialogue, which is a necessity, in a multidisciplinary approach of the professionals who are involved in violence against children.

The Supreme Court's public prosecutor organised two workshops for judicial authorities. She showed great sensitivity in approaching child abuse issues and finding solutions to the problem. She also advocated strongly for raising awareness about the issue of child abuse. She focused more on judicial operators who work closely with these abused children.

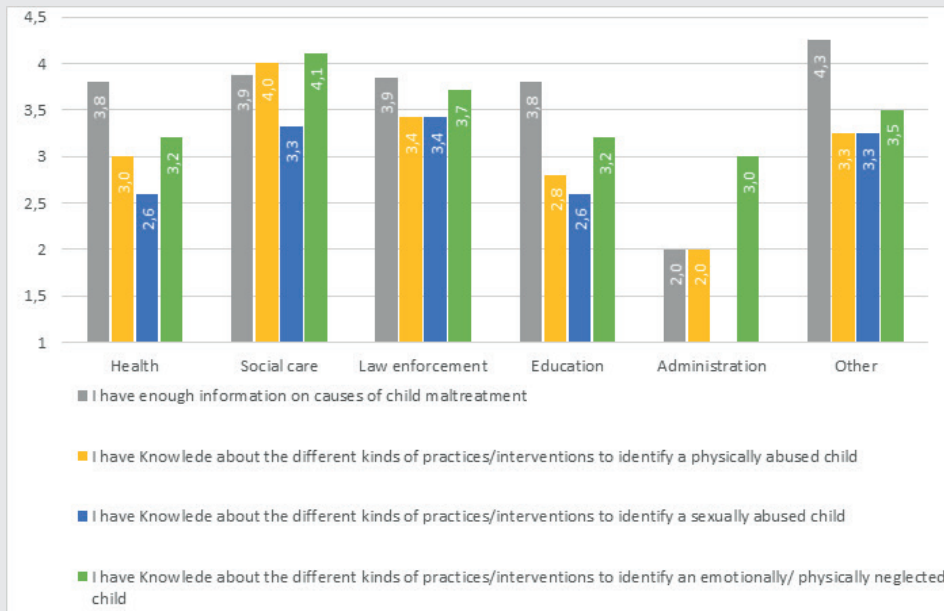
Organised workshops promote conversation among professionals to find solutions to combat child abuse. Some of the research results for identifying the professionals' training needs are presented below:

Details about the survey

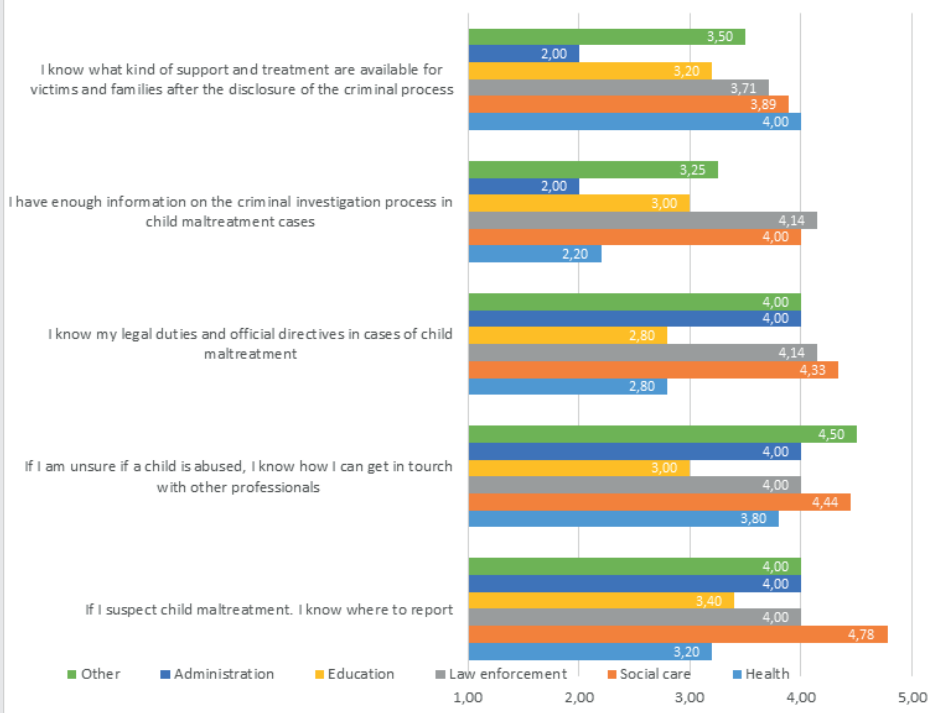
Work Sector



The professionals who work in social care are more confident about recognising all forms of maltreatment.



Support and work field



Support for Victims

All professionals know where to report and which field to report specific cases of child abuse. The professionals from the field of social care are more aware about the processes needed for support and treatment of victims. Teachers and educators are less aware in comparison with the other professionals about how to get in touch with other professionals if they are unsure about the abuse of children.

The first workshop took place in Athens, on 20th March 2019, with the participation of approximately 90 professionals (30 professionals from the field of law enforcement and 60 professionals from the judicial authorities). These professionals were very satisfied with the workshops they attended. At the end of this workshop, there were two positive outcomes. The professionals agreed that it was necessary to continue training operators of justice. Moreover, there was a need for better collaboration with the professionals of other fields who are involved in child abuse and neglect.

The second workshop took place in Thessaloniki, on 6th May 2019. This workshop was organized with a collaboration of the Supreme Court Public Prosecutor and the Prosecutor's Office Director in Thessaloniki. Approximately 50 justice operators and police officers participated in this workshop. These professionals expressed utmost interest in the topics discussed during the workshop. At the end of the workshop, the professionals in attendance pointed out the importance of similar child abuse workshops in Greece. They maintained that educating professionals was the only way child abuse could be properly tackled.



MAPPING AND ANALYSING THE TRAINING NEEDS OF CHILD PROTECTION PROFESSIONALS IN THE UK

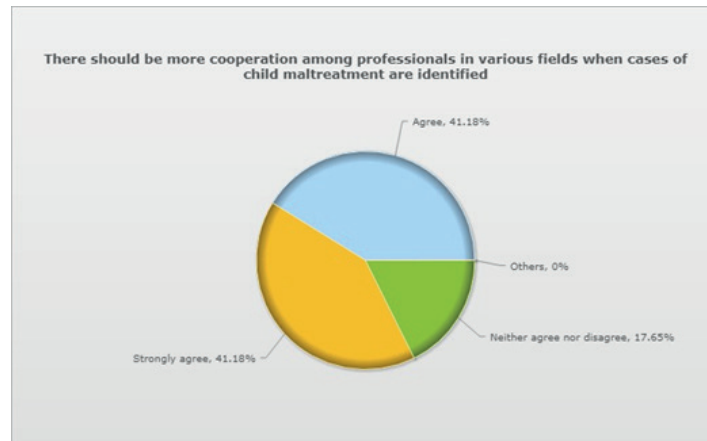
During March and April 2019, The IARS International Institute disseminated a survey called “Good Practices in Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect” to a wide network of professionals in the UK. The survey’s aim was to identify a professional’s strengths and weaknesses concerning the identification of potential cases of child maltreatment, and to address any training needs they may have. The purpose of the survey was to identify areas in which training for professionals can be refined in order to better identify and address children in situations of maltreatment and to better integrate communication and cooperation among professionals who work together in supporting these children.

We distributed the survey to educators, healthcare providers, social service professionals, law enforcement agents, and other professionals who work with minors in the UK. The majority of our respondents were younger professionals with the mean age of twenty-nine years old and with four years of experience on average. Furthermore, 53 percent of the respondents worked as educators and 47 percent worked in non-educational lines of work, including health care, social care, and administration.

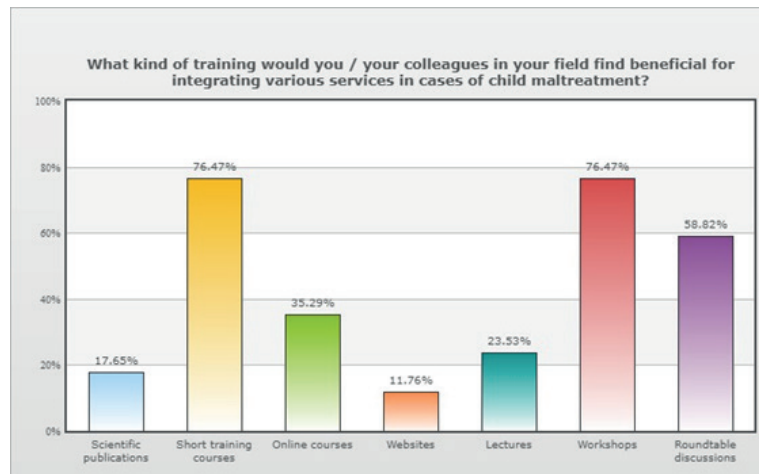


Over half of our respondents felt they had sufficient information on the causes of child maltreatment. No respondent confidently claimed that they either strongly agreed or strongly disagreed. Instead, all responses showed a more moderate understanding of the topic. In the UK context, more awareness raising is clearly needed, and the PROCHILD partnership will advocate to raise awareness on the early signs of abuse and how to provide the right support for minors and their families.

In terms of training needs, our survey responses demonstrated no majority consensus regarding professionals’ confidence levels when addressing concerns over violence, sexual abuse or emotional maltreatment. However, respondents in the UK felt the least prepared and strongly disagreed with having sufficient knowledge on how to address concerns of sexual abuse with a child.



Our survey responses also revealed that the vast majority of the respondents would like to see more cooperation among professionals from various fields when cases of child maltreatment are identified. This further intensifies the importance and relevance of the PROCHILD project in the UK, as we are aiming to strengthen the integration and interdisciplinarity of services and cooperation between different sectors in tackling child abuse.



In regards to future training, professionals showed a consistent interest in short training courses, workshops, roundtable discussions, and online courses. This means that more interactive, engaging methods of training seemed to be preferred among the respondents in the UK. This is a reassuring outcome, as again it demonstrates that there is a high need for initiatives, such as PROCHILD, and in particular when it comes to increasing the skills of professionals responsible for protecting children from abuse. We hope that professionals across Europe will find the interactive e-learning platform beneficial for their good practices.

We are pleased with the successful dissemination of the survey, as it was able to shed light on the current confidence levels of professionals in the UK. The results clearly demonstrated the strengths and weaknesses of our professionals when it comes to detecting potential cases of child maltreatment. In addition, the survey managed to effectively map out the areas where further training is required for the professionals in the UK, for instance in cases of sexual abuse. We look forward to sharing the outcomes and the impact of the PROCHILD Project to a wider network of professionals in the UK.

ACTIVE ROUNDTABLE MEETING **IN FRANCE** BETWEEN PROFESSIONALS

La Voix De L'enfant hosted a roundtable meeting in Paris on the 17th of September 2019. The purpose of the meeting was to create conversations, debates between medical, social, legal field, law enforcement, and educational professionals in order to determine the three prevalent concerns on tackling child abuse. All ten professionals who participated in this meeting had relevant experience with child mistreatment and came from different regions in France. They took part in discussions supported by their own experiences, researches and knowledge.


Each professional shared situations of child mistreatment they had to deal with in their professional backgrounds. Their experience provided significant substance to the debate. These experiences highlighted malfunctions in the system in relation to identification and reporting of child abuse. At the end, these three concerns emerged prevalent:


1. How to share information with professionals which foster communication between parents and provide alerts in case the child is in danger.
2. How to support children who have been placed back with their parents after separation due to failure to report among others.
3. How to train professionals, parents, or others caregivers of children on an interdisciplinary ground.

The goal of the upcoming meetings is to work on the aforementioned fields and submit proposals to political, institutional stakeholders and professionals to promote a synergistic approach and an integrated model of co-operation.



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