



Call for expressions of interest to join the City2City programme of the Urban Transitions Mission

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

UTM City2City programme

Version as of 4 August 2025



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Introduction

The [Urban Transitions Mission](#) (UTM) aims to strengthen the capacity of participating cities, local and regional authorities and other key stakeholders to implement cooperation across key themes relevant to sustainable urban transitions by continuously assessing, considering and meeting the needs that cities themselves highlight. In service to this goal and in response to multiple requests from within the UTM City Cohort, the UTM is launching a new initiative for global inter-city twinnings: the UTM City2City programme.

This UTM City2City programme, which is funded by the European Union¹, will serve to:

- further the guidance offered by the UTM via its Net-Zero Urban Transitions Framework;
- assess, expand and refine the UTM capacity building and training offer; and
- identify and scale new (joint) pilot actions.

UTM twinnings aim to improve cities' capacity to design, implement and manage sustainable and innovative urban practices in integrated and participative ways. Cities will be selected to pair with likeminded peers to develop and implement local action plans on a common priority identified by the cities themselves.

The collaboration will spark the development of collaborative solutions. It will also help identify viable and bankable pilot projects that the city could implement in the short-to-medium term through fostering cooperation with key city partners (public and private).

The UTM is now looking to select up to 50 motivated cities from the [UTM Cohort](#) to take part in up to 20 twinnings until the end of 2026. Cities are invited to apply online and **express their interest to join the UTM City2City programme by 4 September 2025** through a brief [questionnaire form](#).

The cities selected for the UTM City2City programme are expected to commit to start working with their peers from matched cities for around 12 months' engagement, depending on their needs. Those twinnings from the first call should launch in autumn 2025.

All programme materials are available at: www.urbantransitionsmission.org.

¹ The UTM City2City programme is funded by the European Union under Grant Agreement n. 101102296 – MI UTM – HORIZON-MISS-2024-CIT-IBA of the Horizon Europe programme.

1. About the UTM City2City programme

1.1 What is the UTM City2City programme?

This programme is a brand-new twinning programme launched on 1 July 2025 by the [Urban Transitions Mission](#) (UTM). The UTM aims to leverage the exchanges initiated by this programme, which is 100% funded by the European Union, to increase the capacity of cities across world regions, empowering them to shape urban transitions based on robust knowledge and participation in a strong net-zero community of support and exchange.

106 cities across all world regions have already joined the [UTM City Cohort](#), as part of the target of 300 cities worldwide by 2030 set by the UTM Steering Committee. To help these cities' journey to net-zero, the UTM City2City programme builds on the UTM Net-Zero Urban Transition Framework as a user-friendly and accessible guidance for cities to future-proof their plans.

By participating in the UTM City2City programme, your city will be able to:

- **LEARN:** Get access to new ways of approaching challenges and benefit from knowledge from global experts and from a wider pool of good practices
- **SHARE:** Help other cities to solve issues by sharing own experiences and lessons from testing innovative solutions
- **EXCHANGE:** Benefit from open dialogue and partnership forged with new global peers and relevant stakeholders, both public and private
- **SHOWCASE:** Profile your best practices and achievements internationally
- **PILOT:** Work in a deep exchange environment with new partners to make your vision of sustainable urban development a reality.

Cities selected for the UTM City2City programme will exchange with their peers in groupings of up to 3 cities on jointly-agreed topics of mutual interest.

1.2 What is the thematic focus of the programme?

Based on feedback collected from the UTM City Cohort, the twinning programme will focus primarily on twelve urban transitions priorities identified by cities themselves:

- 100% renewable energy generation & technologies
- Waste-to-energy
- Housing/Net-zero buildings
- Cooling planning, measures & technologies
- Sustainable integrated lighting
- Mobility, electric vehicle grid & storage
- Clean hydrogen
- Resilience of infrastructures
- Sustainable ports/harbours

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- Digital twins & solutions
- Data management
- Blended finance, SPVs (special-purpose vehicles) & green bonds

1.3 What distinguishes UTM's City2City programme from similar initiatives?

The UTM City2City programme will help UTM's cohort – current and prospective cities – create a wider sense of community, experience innovation in urban transitions, define new training needs and R&I priorities, and identify and scale new pilot actions. In particular, the programme stands out by offering:

Though there have been several peer-exchange initiatives, many of which have provided experiences and lessons learned leveraged to improve the methodological approach of UTM City2City, this twinning programme can be considered as rather distinguished for several reasons:

- **Exclusivity:** It is a closed programme, open only to UTM cities, though an exception has been made to consider selecting also non-UTM cities that apply to join the UTM itself in parallel, by the same deadline.
- **Global coverage:** The UTM's worldwide reach as the UTM City2City programme, which allows your city to forge new partnerships and draw new inspirations from across world regions.
- **Pilot designs:** UTM's framework focused on co-creating needs-based pilot projects allows participating cities to transform collaborative discussions with peers and experts into concrete action ready to be implemented on the ground.

2. Expected engagement in the twinning programme

2.1 What does the UTM City2City programme offer?

The UTM places great value on the long-term benefits of capacity building and knowledge transfer, both of which have been thoroughly embedded into UTM City2City's [structure](#). In practice, this means that the UTM team is drawing on long experience from leading similar initiatives and exchange programmes to nurture an environment conducive for participating cities to learn valuable lessons from each other and experts meant to help iteratively transform cities' challenges into viable opportunities.

Experienced facilitators from the UTM team will coordinate each twinning, organize all group sessions and guide cities' interactive discussions between participants. The UTM team will be there every step of the way for your city as it builds up relevant capacities,

from launching new twinings to ensuring effective knowledge transfer to moderating the final [showcase](#) which could feature your city's insights on a global stage.

Though the programme's design aims to ensure that cities gain relevant expertise, its practical focus is aimed towards preparing the ground for concrete pilot actions to be implemented. The UTM will leverage existing relationships with the [Global Covenant of Mayors](#) (GCoM) and international experts (e.g., members of the [UTM Global Innovation Alliance](#), [UTM R&I Clusters](#), other [Mission Innovation](#) initiatives, etc.) to broker the co-creation of viable solutions fit-for-purpose and meeting your city's own needs and ambitions.

Please note that the UTM does not provide direct financial resources to the cities of the cohort to implement actions, even those developed within the UTM City2City programme.

2.2 What are cities committing to by joining UTM's City2City programme?

Cities selected under the UTM City2City Programme must commit to:

- Cooperate regularly and consistently with their partner cities and any other participants in their twinning, and share updates on their progress, including with the wider UTM community.
 - The duration of each twinning's implementation may vary (e.g., depending on the challenges faced by participating cities), but is foreseen to last up to 12 months.
- Ensure an adequate [mandate](#) and support (e.g., time, team capacities, resources) to designated representatives of the city suitable for implementing the work and actively contributing to all stages of the twinning.
 - The mandated individuals should also be sufficiently competent in the topic(s) at hand, as well as being proficient enough in understanding and expressing themselves in English at a reasonable level, since UTM intends English to be the only working language.
- Enable the active participation of one or more (consistent) representatives from each city in all activities for the duration of the twinning.
 - Having the same (leading) individual be consistently active for the entire duration helps ensure continuity and coherence of all twinning activities involving the city.
- Foster conditions for the solutions refined during the twinning process to be put into practice as economically-viable pilot projects.
 - These exchanges are explicitly meant to lead towards economically viable pilot projects that support the city in their journey to net-zero.
 - They should also encourage the involvement, as appropriate, of other public entities, businesses researchers and local/civil communities.
 - Cities should strive to bring their ideas to life, meaning that they commit not only to explore possible solutions with city peers, other key stakeholders and relevant experts, but also to make steps towards securing investment, adopting supportive policies and implementing real progress on the ground.

- Share widely the experiences from their UTM City2City twinning and their progress towards real-world implementation of pilots.
 - Cities should be prepared to [share learnings](#) with other cities, even beyond the given twinning, by being featured as part of other UTM activities (e.g., testimonials used for promoting UTM, webinars, UTM Summits or the final UTM City2City Showcase) and/or through mutually-beneficial synergies with partner initiatives and events in a similar field.
 - Each city will be required to regularly share feedback (e.g., about twinning-related outcomes, challenges, progress and recommendations) with the UTM team responsible for monitoring results and impacts from the various twinings.

2.3 What are the expected duties of city representatives?

The designated representative(s) of each city are expected to commit to contribute actively to all activities organized in the framework of the twinning. This includes self-preparation and/or engaging other city colleagues and local to national stakeholders, as needed, for:

- Presenting their city's own relevant (positive and/or negative) experiences and expertise, useful for both contextualizing challenges faced and potentially benefitting others' progress;
- Coordinating the collection of any necessary data, insights, feedback, involvement, etc. from other stakeholders;
- Contributing to mutually-beneficial discussions with peer cities and other participants to uncover viable pathways for cities to shape and accelerate their urban transitions;
- [Showcasing](#) their city's progress and lessons learned and taking advantage of other opportunities that may arise (e.g., UTM events, other national or international events, etc.) to highlight their UTM City2City work.

As stated previously, cities should ensure that one or more designated staff remain consistently active in City2City. Ideally, this would include a continually-involved representative with some level of decision-making authority who has been [mandated](#) to lead City2City for them, and whose role is to coordinate and ensure others' contributions on behalf of the city. Typically, such individuals are departmental heads and/or technical employees relevant to the topic at hand. Political level representatives who possess the necessary technical expertise and time availability to contribute fully may also be considered. In many cases, external local expertise (e.g., businesses, researchers, NGOs, etc.) can provide valuable added contributions to enhance the uptake and acceptance of eventual pilots. Ultimately, each city is responsible for nominating the staff that best represents and serves their specific interests and ambitions.

2.4 What role do cities have in sharing their UTM City2City experiences?

The UTM City2City programme is also about networking and forging mutually-beneficial relationships with global colleagues. Twinned cities will become part of a large community of peers and stakeholders engaging in sustainable urban development.

City representatives are expected to share their own city's experience even beyond their own twinning to other peers during suitable opportunities, such as events (e.g., webinars, conferences, etc.) organised by the UTM and/or partner initiatives. This includes the final UTM City2City Showcase, an online synthesis workshop open to the wider UTM City Cohort. The aim of the final showcase is to further inspire the uptake, scale and replication of concepts and pilots developed under the UTM City2City programme amongst additional cities not involved in twinings.

Additionally, cities should seek out ways to promote at a local level their own activities in UTM City2City with relevant stakeholders and their wider community.

2.5 Will participating cities receive a set budget of financial support?

The UTM does not have a set budget to support cities directly, therefore it does not support any projects or pilots financially. Nonetheless, the UTM City2City programme does strive not only to expedite knowledge transfers, but also to broker access to viable technical and financial solutions that could accelerate implementation on the ground.

Furthermore, whilst most of the meetings are planned to take place in an online [format](#), the UTM strives for one in-person session per twinning. In practice, this means that there may be limited travel support available from the UTM. In such cases, at most 1 representative per city for a single day's interaction could have relevant travel costs reimbursed. Such options will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. To complement this potential support from UTM, participating cities are welcome to support additional representatives and/or longer stays for designated delegates.

3. Eligibility and overall application process

3.1 What are the overall steps for joining the UTM City2City programme?

The recruitment and selection of cities to the programme follows an open and transparent process. Expressions of interest from cities, submitted via an online form, will be evaluated first against [eligibility](#) criteria, and thereafter along a number of key criteria for [selecting](#) and prioritising applicants for [matchmaking](#).

When applying on behalf of your city, there are only two overarching steps:

1. Check your city's eligibility and that you have a [mandate](#) to apply on behalf of your city to the UTM City2City Programme, including overall support/capacity from your city's decision-makers to participate fully.
2. Fill in all mandatory questions in the [online application form](#), and as many of the optional ones as you find useful, before the deadline – 4 September 2025.

Applicants are highly encouraged to submit their own application earlier than the stated deadline, in case any early scans by the UTM team of incoming submissions allow any issues (e.g., eligibility) to be resolved in a more timely manner.

All applicant cities will be duly notified about the outcomes of the selection and matchmaking process. For any questions, please contact the UTM team at: [utm \[at\] globalcovenantofmayors.org](mailto:utm[at]globalcovenantofmayors.org).

3.2 How do the primary eligibility criteria relate to the application process?

To join the UTM City2City programme, a city must be a part of the [UTM City Cohort](#). This means that the city has been officially accepted into the cohort and already fulfils the UTM criteria below (as also described in the [FAQ for cities to join the UTM](#) itself):

- In the UTM context, a “city” refers to the local governmental administration of a city, town, consortium of (small) municipalities with shared infrastructure, metropolitan area, county or similar public authority within your own national governance structure;
- The city must have a total of at least 50,000 inhabitants;
- The city must be a [Global Covenant of Mayors](#) (GCoM) signatory or commit to become one within three months of engaging with the UTM – if the applicant is a consortium of municipalities, each municipality within it must be a GCoM signatory;
- The city must have a climate action plan/strategy covering the whole city (e.g., SECAP, SEACAP, CAP² or equivalent) – each municipality within an applicant consortium must also have their own equivalent plan/strategy in place.

² SECAP (Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan); SEACAP (Sustainable Energy Access and Climate Action Plan); CAP (Climate Action Plan).

Therefore, you should determine which of the following scenarios reflects your city's status, in order to know how to apply to the UTM City2City programme:

1. If your city *already is part of the UTM City Cohort*, then:
 - Your city is already eligible in principle, and therefore you only need to complete the UTM City2City programme's [online submission form](#) for evaluation.
2. If your city has *already applied to join the UTM City Cohort*, and that application is still pending review, then:
 - Your city may be considered as tentatively eligible, and therefore you also still need to submit the same UTM City2City programme [form](#) as above.
3. If your city has *not yet applied to join the UTM City Cohort*, then both:
 - You should submit the same [form](#) as above for the UTM City2City programme, and
 - Your city must *also* separately [apply to join UTM Cohort](#) itself in its own parallel process to be considered as tentatively eligible for these twinnings at all.

N.B.: In this 3rd scenario, it is up to you to decide to apply first to the UTM City2City programme or first to the UTM Cohort – the important point is that the UTM receives both separate applications by the same final deadline of the UTM City2City call.

Furthermore, for the 2nd and 3rd scenarios above, it must be noted that a prospective UTM city's timely submission to join the UTM Cohort does not guarantee it will join the UTM City2City programme. If a city ultimately is not selected to join the UTM Cohort, for whatever reason, then by default it also will be considered as ineligible to join the UTM City2City programme for this call.

3.3 Which other eligibility criteria are important for a city to meet?

Furthermore, applicants should demonstrate institutional readiness and thematic relevance to the goals of the UTM City2City programme, including the following:

1. The person submitting the application has a clear, official [mandate](#) to do so on behalf of the applicant city.
This is especially important if the applicant is a separate entity applying on behalf of an eligible city (e.g., national/regional authorities, public agencies, municipally-owned companies, private businesses, consultants, universities, NGOs, individuals, etc.), instead of being a representative of an eligible local government itself. This means that others are generally considered as ineligible direct beneficiaries, unless they demonstrate a clear mandate from an eligible city.
2. The applicant and their city team are prepared to participate actively in UTM City2City activities and communicate in English, while the city commits appropriate budget/resources/capacities for a successful engagement throughout the duration of its UTM City2City twinning.

3. The city expresses a coherent and relevant motivation to participate in the UTM City2City programme, including clear expectations about their proposed exchange and a willingness to share their own experiences with urban transitions, both positive and negative, to benefit others.
4. The city's proposed priorities and topics of interest outlined in their application must be relevant to the UTM City2City programme. Furthermore, the city should demonstrate a strong commitment to engaging suitable (local) partners from various sectors (e.g., other public bodies, private companies, research/academia and civil society), as appropriate for the local context and the chosen priority/topic, to ensure that effective action can be taken on the ground.

3.4 Why is it important that the applicant has a clear, official mandate?

At a basic level, it is essential for applicants to confirm ahead of time that they have the relevant mandate to apply for a twinning on behalf of the city. This step helps ensure adequate political support, technical capacity and access to resources for an effective twinning.

At a higher level, because these twinings are intended to make definite strides towards the implementation of concrete pilot projects, it is crucial to confirm that the city's key decision-makers agree that 1) the proposed action is a priority for the city, and 2) that a twinning programme such as this could be an effective step to bring the idea forward.

To both ends, the UTM highly encourages applicants to discuss the city's engagement in the UTM City2City programme with the appropriate political and administrative representatives before applying. Ideally, such an internal assessment would involve all relevant municipal departments, and perhaps even already discuss options with key external stakeholders.

3.5 Which other factors may play a role in the selection process?

The UTM team uses an approved internal set of criteria for evaluating the added value and relative prioritization of a given city applicant to be selected to join the UTM City2City programme. These largely complement many of the [eligibility](#) factors summarized above to get a sense of comparison between applicants, such as the following, which more or less mirror questions in the application form:

- **Mandate:** The city holds official jurisdiction to deal with the proposed actions, or for those lacking a full [jurisdiction](#), at least clarity on how they'd overcome such gaps.
- **Impact:** The proposed action seems to be an effective, impactful plan that considers all aspects (e.g., technical, regulatory, financial, etc.) most relevant to the specific topic, and seems feasible to implement.
- **Added value:** The city has already started planning/evaluating innovative solutions and ambitious measures on the specific topic and/or seems well aligned with previous/ongoing activities, but without merely repeating earlier efforts.

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- Engagement: The city seems to have concrete plans for engagement of stakeholders (e.g., businesses, finance sector, researchers, civil society and perhaps even other public authorities) in these specific topics.
- Previous experiences: Though not required, it is considered beneficial if a city can demonstrate that they could reasonably:
 - share additional good practices, missteps, lessons learned, etc. useful to other cities (especially in relevant innovative financing and/or business plans); and
 - leverage a track-record of cooperating with other cities (but ideally not on the precise topic proposed) to facilitate a more effective exchange.

With the aim to foster the highest impact and transferability of the innovations developed within the twinnings, the UTM will strive for a balanced engagement of cities worldwide. As much as is truly possible, given the yet-unknown pool of cities applying to the UTM City2City programme, the aim is to somehow strike an appropriate balance in terms of geographical distribution, diverse climate/urbanisation contexts represented and differentiated sectoral priorities to be covered.

3.6 How are matches made between cities?

The [eligibility](#) and [selection](#) criteria are ultimately combined with a set of qualitative considerations meant to facilitate effective matchmaking between various applicants. The goal is for the matches initiated by the UTM City2City programme to lead towards meaningful, long-term relationships between participating cities. The main aspects relate to alignment of the following, though not necessarily ranked in this order:

- Topical: The matched cities demonstrate complementary needs or experience of the selected topic.
- Institutional: The cities have relatively similar jurisdictions and responsibilities to act on the proposed specific issues.
- Geography: Cities having similar geographies, demographics, etc. may prove likelier to sustain their relations into the future, especially if located in compatible time zones.
- Preferences: Applicants may mention preferred cities for cooperation, but these should not overlap with pre-existing/funded initiatives, especially with those cities.

3.7 How can my city cooperate with specific cities in our twinning?

A distinct question within the [application form](#) (Part F) allows applicants to indicate up to 2 preferences for pairing with specific cities that may hold relevant experience in certain areas of mutual interest. Such preferences will be taken into consideration to the extent possible during the matchmaking process.

Should you have a specific preference in terms of city pairing, you may find it beneficial to reach out to the [eligible](#) cities you prefer for an UTM City2City exchange.

- This gives you the chance to coordinate applications and uncover the added value that could arise from working together.
 - At a minimum, it is recommended that your cities should name one another in your respective applications' Part F.
 - *Please note that UTM does not aim to repeat activities you may have engaged in with these cities.*
- Should your preferred city not yet be a part of the [UTM City Cohort](#), make sure to inform them on the requirement to join the cohort.
 - Your eagerness to cooperate with your preferred city may provide a motivation for them to [join UTM](#) through its own parallel process that will complement their separate application to the UTM City2City programme.

The UTM team cannot put you in contact with other cities, nor coordinate pre-submission interactions on behalf of cities.

3.8 What is the timeline for the application and selection process?

1. The first call for cities to apply to join opened on 1 July 2025. There will also be a second call, planned for early 2026, for additional cities to apply to the UTM City2City programme.
2. A city can apply until Thursday 7 August 2025.
3. The UTM City2City programme aims to select up to 50 cities for up to 20 twinnings. The first call will likely see less than half of the total twinnings being confirmed, with the remainder of twinnings joining the UTM City2City programme after the second call envisioned for early 2026.
4. The UTM team aims to inform all applicants about the selection/matchmaking results no later than one month after the close of the call, depending on the number and quality of applications received.
5. The launch of the first set of twinnings is expected to be announced in early/mid-autumn 2025, with implementation beginning immediately thereafter.

4. UTM City2City programme implementation

4.1 What is the structure of a UTM City2City twinning?

Each twinning will primarily revolve around four interactive sessions:

1. Session 1: Mapping out the main challenges
 - Each city outlines their state of play (i.e., motivation, needs, progress so far, experiences they could share with others, etc.) and common challenges (e.g., infrastructure, financing, partnerships, public acceptance, etc.), for the initial theme.
 - The goal of this session is to agree on a single specific focus to jointly pursue for the twinning. In rare cases, a second focus might be possible, but still related to the top joint priority.
2. Session 2: Deep-dive into specific needs
 - Cities expand into the details (e.g., what has been tested, what went forward, what ended up failing, etc.) about their efforts until now to uncover more precise gaps and opportunities.
 - Additional (local) partners and stakeholders may be brought on board, and perhaps even additional observers with relevant expertise.
3. Session 3: Joint assessment of possible (technical) solutions
 - Building upon the previous sessions, selected experts (e.g., from members of the [UTM Global Innovation Alliance](#), [UTM R&I Clusters](#), other [Mission Innovation](#) initiatives, etc.) may present best practices that may work in the cities' contexts.
 - Responsible staff from each city should be engaged in this discussion to be able to trouble-shoot the proposed ideas and mention any readily-apparent needs, challenges, constraints, opportunities, etc. linked to local deployment.
 - These same city representatives will be tasked to explore further these proposed solution(s) internally with other relevant city colleagues and decision-makers, as well as among key external stakeholders.
4. Session 4: Converting concept(s) into concrete pilots.
 - Representatives return to the final session with the results of each city's initial internal assessment into the considered solution(s), discussing feedback from other city staff/leaders and other relevant stakeholders to revise plans.
 - Participating cities and experts jointly brainstorm potential steps, partnerships, work-arounds, etc. to shape the concept into a form that leads towards an impactful and (economically) viable pilot project that supports the city in their journey to net-zero.

4.2 What is the format for twinning sessions?

Each of these above four sessions are planned, by default, to be conducted online as facilitated interactive sessions. Such a format balances convenience for city representatives to participate in a meaningful manner with greater chances for even more (local) stakeholders to contribute and benefit from joint discussions.

The UTM will strive to support up to one session per twinning to be organized in-person (e.g., site visits, dedicated session at UTM or other events, on-site workshops, etc.), only to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The [limited financial support](#) which might even be possibly offered by the UTM (i.e., specific travel costs only) is rather constrained, meaning that longer-lasting formats (e.g. temporary staff exchanges, work placements, job-shadowing, etc.) simply are not possible with just UTM funds alone, though participating cities are welcome to come to their own agreements amongst themselves.

4.3 Which kinds of results are expected from each UTM City2City twinning?

UTM City2City twinings are each meant to lead towards the identification and refinement of practical, economically-viable and innovative pilots that cities could realistically [commit](#) to take forward for implementation. By brokering tailored knowledge and access to the technical, regulatory, economic, financial, social, etc. solutions which proactive cities may need, the UTM City2City programme is meant to help lift cities' pilots off the ground. At the end of the twinning process, cities are expected to have co-created individual or joint solutions which are then ready to be taken to the next level.

Furthermore, working with paired cities to identify key gaps and potential solutions can build up useful problem-solving competencies and forge valuable local to international partnerships which can bring long-term added value to how effectively cities can operate and achieve their own ambitions. In addition, the increased visibility that UTM can offer to your city (e.g., being featured in the final [showcase](#)) could serve to inspire further collaborations and to amplify opportunities for scaling up or replicating ongoing activities and solutions tested by your city.

5. Contacts

You could not find an answer to your question?

Please contact us at [utm \[at\] globalcovenantofmayors.org](mailto:utm[at]globalcovenantofmayors.org) and we will be happy to support.

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