

Connecting international and domestic enforcement: The role of NCB Interpol Indonesia in the arrest and repatriation of a Romanian fugitive

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Abstract

International police cooperation has become increasingly important in addressing transnational fugitives who move beyond the jurisdiction of their home countries. This study aims to analyze how NCB Interpol Indonesia facilitated international police cooperation in the arrest and repatriation of Zuleam Costinel Cosmin, a Romanian fugitive arrested in Bali in January 2026. This qualitative case study analyzes official documents, institutional statements, media reports, immigration regulations, and academic literature through the perspective of Institutional Liberalism and Mathieu Deflem's theory of transnational police cooperation. The findings demonstrate that NCB Interpol Indonesia functioned as an institutional bridge by transmitting and integrating information from foreign NCBs, including digital information concerning Cosmin's whereabouts, to support his search and arrest in coordination with Indonesian law enforcement authorities. Following the arrest, NCB Interpol Indonesia continued its coordinating role by connecting police and immigration authorities throughout the deportation process to Romania. This study contributes empirical evidence of the NCB's continuous role from fugitive identification and arrest to repatriation within a single case.

Keywords: NCB Interpol Indonesia; International police cooperation; Transnational fugitives; Red Notice; Deportation.

Abstrak

Kerja sama kepolisian internasional menjadi semakin penting dalam menghadapi buronan kejahatan transnasional yang melintasi batas yurisdiksi negara. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana NCB Interpol Indonesia memfasilitasi kerja sama kepolisian internasional dalam penangkapan dan pemulangan Zuleam Costinel Cosmin, buronan asal Rumania yang ditangkap di Bali pada Januari 2026. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus melalui analisis dokumen resmi, pernyataan institusi, laporan media, regulasi keimigrasian, dan literatur akademik, dengan menggunakan perspektif Institutional Liberalism dan teori kerja sama kepolisian transnasional Mathieu Deflem. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa NCB Interpol Indonesia berperan sebagai penghubung institusional yang meneruskan dan mengintegrasikan informasi dari NCB negara lain, termasuk informasi digital mengenai keberadaan Cosmin, untuk mendukung pencarian dan penangkapan bersama aparat domestik. Setelah penangkapan, NCB melanjutkan fungsi koordinatif dengan menghubungkan kepolisian dan imigrasi hingga proses deportasi Cosmin ke Rumania. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dengan menunjukkan secara empiris kesinambungan peran NCB dari pencarian hingga pemulangan buronan dalam satu kasus.

Kata Kunci: NCB Interpol Indonesia; Kerja sama kepolisian internasional; Buronan transnasional; Red Notice; Deportasi.

Introduction

Transnational crime has developed alongside increasing human mobility, advances in communication technology, and growing interconnectedness among countries, making law enforcement increasingly unable to rely solely on national jurisdiction (Azis et al., 2026; Afandi & Nytotama, 2026). In this context, international police cooperation has become an important instrument for locating offenders who cross national borders. Hufnagel (2021) explains that international police cooperation developed from practices of information exchange and technical coordination among authorities, which subsequently laid the foundation for the establishment of Interpol. This development demonstrates that Interpol does not function as a supranational police force, but rather as a mechanism that enables police forces of member states to communicate and cooperate. Sundram (2024) further emphasizes that transnational crime remains a major security concern in Southeast Asia because criminal activities transcend national borders and require collective responses.

The urgency of such cooperation becomes increasingly evident when suspects or fugitives leave the country where the crime was committed. Interpol provides a network that enables national police forces to exchange information concerning individuals, crimes, and offenders' whereabouts. In a study involving 317 Korean police officers responsible for foreign affairs, Cho (2022) demonstrates the growing importance of international cooperation due to the increasing number of offenders who flee abroad; the study specifically examined police perceptions of Interpol use, the utilization of Red Notices, and the level of cooperation with other countries. However, Calcara (2018) cautions that Interpol mechanisms also raise legal concerns. His analysis of *M.G. v. Bulgaria* and *Khadzhiev v. Bulgaria* demonstrates that rights violations may result from the misuse of Interpol's information system. Therefore, the effectiveness of international cooperation must be accompanied by legal certainty and oversight.

In practice, international police cooperation requires intermediary institutions capable of translating cross-border information into action at the national level. Based on more than 200 professional career trajectories in the legal and policing fields, Christensen (2022) demonstrates that transnational law enforcement develops primarily through police professionals and cooperation networks that connect national systems. Rahmad and Deni (2024) illustrate this function in Interpol cooperation between Indonesia and Colombia through the case of M. Nazaruddin; their study emphasizes the use of the I-24/7 global communication system and various notices, including Red Notices, for information exchange and the handling of transnational crime. De Onofre Junior (2024) also finds that Interpol functions as a liaison among national police forces, particularly in cooperation with Brazil's Polícia Federal, although greater operational autonomy remains necessary.

Research on international police cooperation has been conducted from various perspectives. Hufnagel (2021) demonstrates the historical development of Interpol from technical cooperation practices in Europe, but does not specifically examine the operations of Indonesia's NCB in handling a particular fugitive. Cho (2022) finds that 317 Korean police officers view international cooperation and the use of Interpol as important in addressing offenders who flee abroad, but the study focuses on police perceptions rather than reconstructing a specific arrest case. Christensen (2022) finds that police networks constitute a foundation of transnational law enforcement, but his study adopts a socio-professional perspective. Rahmad and Deni (2024) demonstrate the effectiveness of I-24/7 and Red Notices in the Indonesia-Colombia case, but do not explain the sequence from fugitive search and arrest to repatriation. Meanwhile, De Onofre Junior (2024) confirms Interpol's role as a liaison among police forces, but focuses on Brazil.

This study aims to analyze how NCB Interpol Indonesia facilitates international police cooperation in the arrest and repatriation of Zuleam Costinel Cosmin, a Romanian fugitive arrested in Bali in January 2026. This case is important because it concretely demonstrates how international information can be translated into search and arrest actions through coordination between NCB Interpol Indonesia and domestic law enforcement authorities. In addition, this study examines the continuity of this role after the arrest, particularly when the repatriation process is carried out through immigration mechanisms. Kharisma, Swandiani, and Paliwang (2025) demonstrate that Interpol also plays a strategic role in strengthening law enforcement collaboration in Southeast Asia in addressing cybercrime, while Machado and Granja (2019) show that cross-border data exchange requires clearly defined boundaries of authority and professional interpretation. Thus, this study addresses an empirical gap concerning the role of an NCB in a specific international fugitive case.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method to analyze how NCB Interpol Indonesia facilitates international police cooperation in the arrest and repatriation of Zuleam Costinel Cosmin, a Romanian fugitive arrested in Bali in January 2026 (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case was selected because it demonstrates the connection between international police cooperation and domestic law enforcement and immigration mechanisms in handling a transnational fugitive. The analysis focuses on two interrelated processes: the role of NCB Interpol Indonesia in information exchange, fugitive searches, and arrest coordination, and its role in facilitating the repatriation process through the deportation mechanism. These two processes are analyzed using the Theory of Liberal Institutionalism and Mathieu Deflem's theory of transnational police cooperation to explain how institutional

networks, information exchange, and inter-agency coordination enable international police cooperation to operate without eliminating national legal authority.

The research data were obtained through documentary research using both primary and secondary sources. Primary data consisted of official statements, press releases, and institutional documents related to Cosmin's arrest and deportation, particularly information from the Division of International Relations of the Indonesian National Police (Divhubinter Polri), Bali Regional Police (Polda Bali), and Ngurah Rai Immigration Office. Reports from ANTARA News, detikBali, and The Jakarta Post were used as supporting data to strengthen the chronology and factual details of the case. Secondary data included immigration laws and regulations and academic literature addressing NCB Interpol Indonesia, international police cooperation, transnational policing, deportation, extradition, and human rights. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively through data reduction, data organization, interpretation, and thematic analysis. The findings were then organized around the two main focuses of the study: fugitive search and arrest, and fugitive repatriation through the deportation mechanism.

Results and Discussion

The role of NCB Interpol Indonesia in fugitive search and arrest

The case of Zuleam Costinel Cosmin demonstrates that the search for a transnational fugitive begins with the ability to connect information among authorities, rather than with the act of arrest alone. Cosmin, a 33-year-old Romanian national, entered Indonesia through Jakarta on November 14, 2023, after becoming a target of Romanian authorities. Subsequently, information concerning his whereabouts was circulated through the Interpol network. ANTARA reported that NCB Bucharest, NCB Brussels, and NCB Tashkent provided information regarding Cosmin's presence in Indonesia. This pattern demonstrates the function of the NCB as a connecting point between Romania's law enforcement needs and the capabilities of Indonesian authorities. Calcara (2019) explains that international police cooperation essentially involves the exchange of legal documents and criminal intelligence to address transnational crime or locate individuals. In this case, such information exchange provided the initial basis for searching for Cosmin in Indonesia.

This role became increasingly evident through the use of the Interpol communication network for information exchange. Case data show that information from several NCBs did not remain merely an administrative notification but was used to narrow the search for Cosmin. On January 20, 2026, ANTARA reported that after NCB Bucharest provided additional information through the subject's Facebook posts, the NCB Interpol Indonesia team resumed the search in Bali and subsequently succeeded in arresting Cosmin on January 15, 2026. This finding is consistent with Pangalila et al. (2023), who found that NCB-Interpol Indonesia has three active roles, namely as a

facilitator, coordinator, and investigator, supported by information exchange systems. Aulia et al. (2025) also demonstrated that the NCB performs a coordinating function through Red Notices, intelligence sharing, and coordination with domestic institutions. Thus, international information in the Cosmin case was transformed into a basis for operational action in Indonesia.

The information exchange was not solely formal but was also reinforced by open-source information from the digital environment. In the Cosmin case, the subject's Facebook posts, which were forwarded by NCB Bucharest, became an additional indication that he was still in Indonesia, prompting NCB Interpol Indonesia to refocus the search on Bali. This information is important because it demonstrates how digital information can function as a location clue, although the case sources do not provide technical details concerning the geolocation methods, analytical tools, or coordinates used. Böhm and Lolagar (2021) explain that OSINT encompasses methods for collecting and processing open-source data into information that can be used in the intelligence cycle. Within this framework, the use of Facebook posts in the Cosmin case is more appropriately understood as the utilization of open-source information to narrow the search area, rather than as evidence that the authorities employed specific digital forensics techniques.

The findings concerning digital information acquire greater significance when placed within a network of inter-agency cooperation. Case data indicate that the arrest operation lasted several days and involved NCB Interpol Indonesia, Polda Bali, Polresta Denpasar, and Polres Gianyar. Cosmin was ultimately arrested on January 15, 2026, in the Denpasar area of Bali. Table 1 summarizes the main stages, from the receipt of international information to domestic action. This pattern is consistent with Aulia et al. (2025), who found that NCB coordination connects the Red Notice mechanism and intelligence exchange with domestic law enforcement institutions. Wafi (2024) also demonstrated that NCB-Interpol Indonesia carries out inter-state cooperation in addressing transnational crime. Therefore, in the Cosmin case, the NCB can be understood as an operational bridge that translates cross-border information into law enforcement coordination at the national level.

Table 1. Stages of NCB Interpol Indonesia's work in the search for and arrest of Zuleam Costinel Cosmin

Stage	Case data	Function of NCB Interpol Indonesia
Initial information	Cosmin became a Romanian fugitive and was subject to a Red Notice	Receiving and following up on international information
Information exchange	Information originated from NCB Bucharest, Brussels, and Tashkent	Facilitating communication and intelligence exchange
Digital clue	Information from Cosmin's Facebook posts was conveyed by NCB Bucharest	Utilizing open-source information to narrow the search

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Domestic tracking	The search was directed toward Bali	Connecting international information with Indonesian authorities
Joint operation	NCB, Polda Bali, Polresta Denpasar, and Polres Gianyar were involved	Coordinating inter-institutional cooperation
Outcome	Cosmin was arrested in Bali on January 15, 2026	Facilitating the transformation of intelligence into law enforcement action

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Viewed through the perspective of Institutional Liberalism, this sequence demonstrates that international institutions help reduce uncertainty when offenders are outside the jurisdiction of their home countries by providing information, rules, and coordination mechanisms that enable states to cooperate in a more structured manner (Keohane, 1984). As summarized in Table 1, Red Notices, information exchange among NCBs, and the Interpol communication network provide channels through which authorities can obtain information without establishing new mechanisms for every case. Calcara (2019) identifies criminal intelligence exchange as one of the principal practices of international police cooperation, while Pangalila et al. (2023) demonstrate that Indonesia's NCB can actively function as a facilitator and coordinator. In the Cosmin case, the institutional benefit is evident in the transformation of information: initially, Romania had the need to locate a fugitive; subsequently, information moved through the Interpol network, was combined with digital clues, and was ultimately used by Indonesian authorities for field action. Thus, institutions function to reduce information gaps and coordination costs.

Deflem's (2001) perspective complements this explanation by highlighting the networked character of transnational policing. Calcara (2020) demonstrates that INTERPOL developed as a police network designed to enable law enforcement authorities to cooperate across national borders while remaining within the boundaries of their respective national laws. Deflem (2024) further highlights the changing significance of INTERPOL in international policing, particularly in the context of transnational security challenges. This pattern can be observed in the Cosmin case: Romanian authorities provided the interests and information concerning the fugitive, while Indonesia's NCB connected that information with the policing authority within Indonesian territory. Masyhar et al. (2023) demonstrate that NCB Interpol Indonesia also functions in information exchange and international cooperation when addressing cross-border crime. This means that cooperation in the Cosmin case did not involve Interpol taking over Indonesia's authority, but rather involved a relationship between an international information network and national law enforcement institutions (Deflem, 2004). The arrest itself was carried out by Indonesian authorities, while the Interpol network supported the identification and coordination processes.

The success of the arrest should also be examined critically to avoid oversimplifying the relationship between security and legal procedures. Calcara (2021) cautions that international cooperation through INTERPOL involves a tension between global security interests and the protection of individual rights. In the Cosmin case, the available data indicate that Indonesian authorities acted after obtaining information concerning his status as a fugitive and his presence in Bali, and subsequently carried out the arrest through a joint operation. This fact demonstrates the importance of distinguishing the function of international information from law enforcement authority within Indonesian territory. In other words, the Red Notice and NCB information functioned as triggers and support for the search, whereas physical action against the subject remained within the authority of Indonesian law enforcement agencies. This distinction is conceptually important because it demonstrates that transnational cooperation operates through the coordination of authority rather than by eliminating the boundaries of national jurisdiction.

Overall, the Cosmin case demonstrates that the role of NCB Interpol Indonesia in fugitive search and arrest operates through three functions: information facilitation, inter-agency coordination, and connecting the international police network with domestic authorities. Case evidence shows that information from NCB Bucharest, Brussels, and Tashkent, including a clue from Facebook activity conveyed by NCB Bucharest, helped direct the search toward Bali; subsequently, coordination with Polda Bali, Polresta Denpasar, and Polres Gianyar resulted in Cosmin's arrest on January 15, 2026. This finding reinforces Pangalila et al. (2023) regarding the active functions of the NCB and is consistent with Calcara (2020) concerning the networked character of transnational policing. Masyhar et al. (2023) and Wafi (2024) emphasize the importance of information exchange and coordination as instruments for addressing cross-border crime. This case demonstrates that the effectiveness of cooperation depends heavily on the ability to transform information into action.

The role of NCB Interpol Indonesia in fugitive repatriation through the deportation mechanism

After Zuleam Costinel Cosmin was arrested on January 15, 2026, in Kerobokan, Badung, the law enforcement process entered the repatriation stage, involving different institutions. Nampu (2026) reported that the Division of International Relations of the Indonesian National Police (Divhubinter Polri) repatriated Cosmin from Bali to Romania, while immigration information indicated that the deportation was carried out on January 21, 2026, through I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport. This sequence demonstrates that the outcome of the search and arrest must be followed by an institutional mechanism to remove a foreign national from Indonesian territory. Ramdani et al. (2022) explain that deportation constitutes an administrative immigration measure that may be applied to foreign nationals. Therefore, Cosmin's

repatriation cannot be directly categorized as extradition. In this case, the outcome of the arrest was subsequently processed through an immigration mechanism, while the NCB continued to play a role in maintaining the continuity of repatriation coordination.

Case data demonstrate that Cosmin was not repatriated through a formal extradition procedure but through deportation by the Ngurah Rai Immigration Office. The Ngurah Rai Immigration Office identified Cosmin as the subject of an Interpol Red Notice and explained that he was deported on January 21, 2026, following the Denpasar–Doha–Bucharest route on Qatar Airways (Wiguna, 2026). Bakhtiar and Kadriah (2022) demonstrate that deportation and extradition are distinct instruments in cross-border law enforcement. Palmer (2020) also shows that border control may intersect with criminal law enforcement interests when an individual wanted by one country is located in another country. Thus, the Cosmin case demonstrates the use of Indonesia's administrative authority to facilitate repatriation without equating deportation with extradition. This distinction is important because the legal bases, procedures, and authorities responsible for implementing the two mechanisms are different, although both may ultimately result in an individual being transferred across national borders.

The role of NCB Interpol Indonesia at the repatriation stage is particularly evident in the continuity of coordination following the arrest. Official information from the Ngurah Rai Immigration Office states that Cosmin's deportation was carried out by the Immigration Intelligence and Enforcement Team together with Divhubinter Polri and Polda Bali (Wiguna & Sulistiyandari, 2026). This fact demonstrates that deportation was not an action independently carried out by the NCB. The NCB remained part of the international police cooperation process, while Immigration exercised administrative authority to remove the foreign national from Indonesian territory. Astiti et al. (2023) explain that states have the authority to deport foreign nationals, but its implementation must remain within the applicable legal framework. As a result, this division of functions created an inter-institutional working relationship: the NCB supported the continuity of international police coordination, while Immigration carried out the administrative action that directly resulted in Cosmin's repatriation from Indonesia to Romania.

The administrative stage is important because deportation concerns not only the presence of a fugitive but also his status as a foreign national in Indonesia. Kusuma and Badriyah (2023) explain that deportation procedures constitute part of administrative immigration measures and are carried out by authorized immigration officials. Nuraeni (2023) demonstrates that immigration handling of foreign nationals subject to deportation may involve temporary detention until the repatriation process can be completed. However, the available sources on the Cosmin case do not provide

details of all such administrative stages. Therefore, the discussion cannot specifically state that each of these stages was applied to Cosmin. What can be confirmed is that the Immigration Intelligence and Enforcement Team, together with Divhubinter Polri and Polda Bali, carried out the deportation on January 21, 2026. This demonstrates that the repatriation process involved a transfer of authority from the policing domain to the administrative immigration domain.

Cosmin's repatriation also demonstrates deportation as an instrument of administrative law enforcement against foreign nationals in Indonesia. Yudi et al. (2024) explain that deportation is a form of administrative law enforcement under Law No. 6 of 2011 on Immigration, particularly in dealing with foreign nationals who fail to comply with immigration requirements. Wardana (2019) positions the supervision and enforcement of foreign nationals as part of efforts to maintain security and order within the territory. In the Cosmin case, this action produced a concrete consequence in the form of his removal from Indonesian territory and repatriation to Romania. He departed through I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport following the Denpasar–Doha–Bucharest route on January 21, 2026. Thus, the outcome of the arrest did not end with securing the fugitive but continued through a state administrative instrument. This position clarifies that deportation serves as a mechanism enabling Indonesia to administratively terminate Cosmin's presence within its jurisdiction.

The Cosmin case demonstrates that deportation can serve as a practical mechanism for repatriating a fugitive when the country where the crime occurred seeks the individual's return, while the repatriation is carried out under Indonesia's immigration authority. Nampu (2026) recorded that Cosmin was repatriated from Bali to Romania after being arrested on January 15, 2026. Bakhtiar and Kadriah (2022) emphasize the distinction between extradition and deportation, while Palmer (2020) demonstrates that deportation may function within the context of border control when transnational crime interests intersect with immigration law. In this case, the outcome was the transfer of Cosmin to his country of origin through an immigration channel. However, this outcome did not alter the respective authorities of the institutions involved. The NCB played a role in maintaining international police coordination, while Immigration carried out the deportation. Thus, inter-institutional cooperation became the factor connecting the law enforcement process with administrative repatriation.

Table 2. Stages of Zuleam Costinel Cosmin's repatriation through the deportation mechanism

Stage	Main actor	Role in the case
Arrest	NCB Interpol Indonesia and police	Securing Cosmin following the search process
Repatriation coordination	NCB/Divhubinter Polri	Supporting the continuity of international police cooperation

Immigration handling	Ngurah Rai Immigration Office	Handling administrative aspects concerning Cosmin
Deportation implementation	Ngurah Rai Immigration Office, Divhubinter Polri, and Polda Bali	Carrying out the deportation process
Repatriation	Immigration and relevant parties	Removing Cosmin from Indonesian territory through I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport to Romania

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 2 summarizes the division of functions among institutions involved in Cosmin’s repatriation process following his arrest in Bali. Although the purpose of repatriation is related to security, the treatment of individuals being repatriated also has a human rights dimension. Schmid (2021) discusses deportation in relation to its impacts on individuals and human rights, demonstrating that the removal of foreign nationals should not be understood solely as an instrument of state control. Through a study of fugitive repatriation, Efrat and Newman (2020) demonstrate that cross-border law enforcement cooperation may encounter considerations concerning individual rights and legal justice. In the Cosmin case, the available sources do not indicate any human rights dispute or legal objection during the deportation process. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to draw conclusions regarding any rights violations. What can be established is that the repatriation was carried out through Indonesia’s administrative mechanism and involved coordination among Immigration, Divhubinter Polri, and Polda Bali (Erviani, 2026). This means that the effectiveness of repatriation remained within the respective legal authorities of the institutions involved.

Overall, the role of NCB Interpol Indonesia in Cosmin’s repatriation can be understood as connecting the outcomes of international police cooperation with the exercise of domestic authority. Following the arrest on January 15, 2026, the process continued through coordination among Divhubinter Polri, Polda Bali, and the Ngurah Rai Immigration Office until the deportation on January 21, 2026. Table 2 illustrates that each institution performed a distinct function within this sequence. The NCB was not the institution that independently determined or carried out the deportation but played a role in maintaining the continuity of coordination from international police cooperation toward the repatriation process. This finding is consistent with Astiti et al. (2023), Kusuma and Badriyah (2023), and Yudi et al. (2024) concerning immigration authority and procedures. Thus, the NCB’s role in the Cosmin case lies in its ability to connect international cooperation networks with domestic institutions, enabling the arrest to culminate in repatriation through Indonesia’s legal mechanisms.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that NCB Interpol Indonesia serves as an institutional bridge between international police cooperation and law enforcement actions at the domestic

level in handling international fugitives. In the case of Zuleam Costinel Cosmin, this role operated through two interconnected mechanisms. First, the NCB facilitated information exchange through the Interpol network and translated information concerning the fugitive's whereabouts into a basis for searching and coordinating with police authorities in Bali, leading to his arrest on January 15, 2026. Second, following the arrest, the NCB maintained coordination with domestic institutions, particularly Immigration, enabling the law enforcement process to continue toward Cosmin's repatriation through deportation on January 21, 2026. These findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of transnational cooperation is determined not only by the availability of information networks but also by the NCB's ability to connect international information, domestic coordination, and national authority into a sequence of actions that results in arrest and repatriation.

This study contributes empirically by demonstrating how NCB Interpol Indonesia performs facilitation and coordination functions within a single case sequence, from international information exchange to the repatriation of a fugitive through an immigration mechanism. This contribution clarifies that transnational police cooperation does not replace national authority but operates through domestic institutions with their respective mandates. However, this study is limited by its exclusive reliance on secondary data, including official statements, news reports, institutional documents, regulations, and academic literature, and therefore cannot directly capture internal decision-making processes, operational procedures, or the perspectives of the officers involved. Future research is recommended to conduct interviews with NCB Interpol Indonesia, police, and immigration officials and to compare multiple international fugitive cases in order to explain variations in coordination mechanisms, success factors, and constraints in transnational police cooperation in greater depth.

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