



Statistics in focus

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REGIONS

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How rich are Europe's regions?

Experimental calculations

Axel Behrens

1. Introduction

How rich are Europe's regions? To answer this question, we need first of all to explain what is meant by the terms: *region* and *rich*. This report covers the European Union plus the candidate countries. The NUTS classification (Nomenclature of Territorial Statistical Units) is used to define the regions, with the analysis focussing only on NUTS level 2 regions. The term '*rich*', however, is not so easy to define. In this case, it should not be used in terms of wealth, but in terms of income. Wealth only plays a role insofar as it can generate income, e.g. interest income. We would, however, like to go one step further and regard income, in economic theory terms, as something which is important in that it allows people to consume and provides utility. Using this definition, however, public goods - for example - which are provided free of charge also provide utility and in this sense should also be regarded as a special type of income.

This work is based on currently available data. It is a pragmatic analysis which does not seek to describe the theoretically best indicator, but to develop an indicator which uses the available information in as meaningful manner as possible. The analysis is confined to NUTS level 2. The European Union is divided into 211 regions at this level, which is used as the basis for much of European structural policy.

2. Regional GDP and its weaknesses

Regional gross domestic product (GDP) is currently the key, and most widely used, indicator of wealth at regional level. This GDP is often expressed in purchasing power standards (PPS) and per capita to make the figures comparable between regions.

GDP at regional level is calculated using the output approach. It is the total value of the goods and services produced in a region by persons employed in the region. This generates income, but the multitude of inter-regional links and measures taken by the State do now mean there is absolutely no guarantee that this income actually reaches the inhabitants of a region. This is important in that income conditions a household's consumption capacity, and regional GDP is therefore an insufficient indicator for measuring a region's wealth.



The main weakness of regional GDP per capita is that a 'place-of-work' figure is divided by a 'place-of-residence' figure. This inconsistency is of relevance wherever there are commuter flows - i.e. people who work in one region but live in another. The most obvious example is the UK "Inner London" region, which has by far the highest regional per capita GDP. This GDP is not, however, directly translated into income for the inhabitants of "Inner London", as thousands of commuters journey to work into London every day but live in neighbouring regions. Hamburg and Vienna offer other examples of this.

3. Disposable household income

The arguments presented above are well enough known and have already been discussed at length. This is why regional accounts were included in the ESA95 delivery programme, which is compulsory for Member States (cf. Statistics in Focus 07/2003 "Income of private households and gross domestic product in Europe's regions").

The information to be provided includes disposable household income. The fact that this figure is residence-based means that it can easily be divided by the number of people in a region.

Now there is a problem: the proportion of disposable income in GDP varies enormously from country to country. In Sweden and Finland it is around 45%, in France, Spain and the United Kingdom about 60%, followed by Germany and Italy at ca. 65%, and in Greece it is over 70%.

These huge differences make it very difficult to compare (or rank) regional disposable household income. Differences between countries relating to fixed capital consumption and primary income balances or the balance of transfers to/from abroad are not taken into consideration, and the whole issue of differences in government activity in particular is completely neglected.

If such a comparison is nonetheless to be drawn (cf. Statistics in Focus 07/2003 "Income of private households and gross domestic product in Europe's regions"), the regions of Sweden and Finland end up in the bottom third of the table, as the State accounts for a large slice of economic performance in these countries, thus leaving households with less income at their disposal.

It should, however, be borne in mind that the slice taken

initially by the State is then given back in one form or another. State activity is generally for the benefit of citizens with the result, for example, that less of their disposable income has to be spent. One example should make this clear: if the State uses its income to finance good and cheap child care facilities, then private households do not need to purchase this service at a high cost in the private market. A good public transport system reduces private expenditure on cars, and many other examples could also be given. To sum up, however, it can be established that comparing regional disposable income of households does not reflect the actual prosperity of a region, which should be expressed in the consumption of private and public goods and services.

4. The two-stage approach

In the national accounts approach, there are clearly defined systems of equations. Taking regional gross domestic product as the point of departure, the balance of income from abroad is certainly relevant for households as it expands their consumption capacity. Fixed capital consumption, on the other hand, is regarded as a social cost which reduces the household's consumption capacity when its capital stock remains constant. The balance of these transactions gives the net national income at market prices.

The net national income at market prices now has to be corrected for transfers to or from abroad, which then gives the disposable income of all sectors of the economy.

The difference between the disposable income of all sectors and the disposable income of private households corresponds to the disposable income of other sectors. It is therefore useful first of all to get an idea of the figures involved. Disposable household income in the European Union is by far the largest component of total disposable income, and makes up an average of 71% of the total, within a range of 56% to 78%. General government disposable income accounts for 25% (ranging from 19% to 36%). The Rest makes up the rather modest average total of 4%, the range here running from 2% in France to 14% in the Netherlands.

Moving on to the regional distribution of these components, figures are available for the regional distribution and level of disposable household income,

but no data are currently available for the regional distribution of disposable income for other sectors - a heading which includes the operating surplus and property income of corporations, and State activity. The latter includes redistributive activities, infrastructure, defence expenditure, etc. All these transactions benefit private individuals in some form or another. This also applies to the operating surplus and property income of

corporations, as these do ultimately also belong to private individuals. Information is not, however, available on the regional distribution and relative magnitude of these two components. These components do, nonetheless, contribute substantially to wealth in the regions, and ignoring them makes it considerably harder to compare two regions from different countries.

Following the national accounts approach, the path from GDP to disposable household income is thus as follows:

	Gross domestic product at market prices	
	+	
	Balance of primary income from rest of the world	
	-	
	Fixed capital consumption	
=	Net national income at market prices	
	-	
	Balance of current transfers to/from rest of the world	
=	Disposable income of all sectors	(100%)
	-	
	Disposable income of financial/non-financial corporations and private non-profit organisations	(average 4%)
-	Disposable income of the State	(average 25%)
=	Disposable income of private households	(average 71%)

Taking the arguments presented above into account, the following procedure is now proposed:

- 1) the disposable income of households is divided amongst the regions in accordance with the regional structure, which is already known.
- 2) the difference between the "disposable income of all sectors" and the "disposable income of households" is then broken down per capita across the population of the individual regions in each country.

This approach seems to be easier to justify for the State sector than for private organisations. Given, however, how low a percentage of the total figure is involved (4% on average), this has only a marginal influence on the results.¹

- 3) The sum of activities 1) and 2) is divided by the number of persons living in a region. The figure used here is the average annual population, which is also the denominator for GDP per capita.

This is the easiest and most transparent method of dividing up the remaining balance. Information is not available on the regional breakdown of these parameters, so it is assumed that on average State activity benefits each citizen of a region equally. This involves the assumption that each of the regions within the country has the same age structure - a bold, but not totally unrealistic assumption. The problems are somewhat greater when it comes to the operating surplus and property income, but given the total lack of other data here too upon which to compile a regional structure, the per capita approach is again adopted.

¹ Experiments with other distribution keys, such as value added or persons in employment, resulted in a virtually identical regional structure. The per capita approach was therefore chosen for transparency reasons.

5. Results

Caution should still be exercised in interpreting the initial results for this new indicator. Austria was not able to submit data, a gap which is due to be filled by summer 2003. Germany was granted an exemption allowing it to submit only NUTS level 1 data - i.e. for the *Bundesländer*. There are no regional data available yet for disposable household income in Bulgaria and Turkey. There are unfortunately no national accounts data available for Malta, Cyprus, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, although regional data on households do exist. These gaps are also due to be filled shortly.

The data from this first cycle are also still subject to revision.

Subject to all these reservations, it is possible to state the following:

The Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg is clearly the richest region in Europe. This finding comes as no surprise at all and has been confirmed by other studies.

The performance of northern Italian regions was very good, with 5 of the 11 top-ranking regions being in Italy. One reason for this could be the fact the State redistribution policy in Italy has a lesser impact than in other countries, although it should be pointed out again here that the State's share of disposable income was divided up per capita. It may well be that the redistribution is carried out in some other way.

It is also clear that there are significant improvements in the relative positions of regions bordering on central London, and the fact that the Outer London region alone is up 88 places is obviously the result of commuter flows.

Commuters also undoubtedly play a role in Flevoland and Namur, which each rise more than 60 places in the rankings.

There is a significant level of regional redistribution in Germany. The five new *Bundesländer* improve by an average of around 15 places, whilst Hessen and Berlin lose out, as do some of the larger *Bundesländer* by area such as Bayern (down 20) and Baden-Württemberg (down 6).

In terms of relative position, the largest falls are recorded by the capital regions of Prague (Czech Republic) and Madrid (Spain).

It is possible that this approach still needs to be refined. Nor are all the data complete. The initial results of these calculations do nonetheless appear plausible and help to provide a more objective comparison of Europe's regions.

The following table displays the "winners" and "losers" of a ranking according to the new indicator instead of regional GDP.

Table 1: Change in relative position

Region	Change in ranking when classified by the new indicator rather than by GDP
Outer London (UK)	+88
Flevoland (NL)	+65
Drenthe (NL)	+61
Namur (B)	+60
Hainaut (B)	+58
Oost-Vlaanderen (B)	+56
:	:
Lisboa e Vale do Tejo (P)	-62
Navarra (E)	-76
Baleares (E)	-76
Cataluna (E)	-81
Madrid (E)	-91
Praha (CZ)	-153

	Regional GDP		New indicator		New indicator rank	Difference in rank	Regional GDP per capita,	New indicator per capita,
	2000	per capita	per capita	GDP rank			Average=100	Average=100
Average of the available regions	22034	18827						
LUXEMBOURG (GRAND-DUCHE)	44140	33537	3	1	2	200	178	
VALLE D'AOSTA (I)	27831	27479	21	2	19	126	146	
TRENTINO-ALTO ADIGE (I)	30804	24699	11	3	8	140	131	
VLAAMS BRABANT (B)	25357	24111	34	4	30	115	128	
INNER LONDON (UK)	54565	23917	1	5	-4	248	127	
LOMBARDIA (I)	30402	23110	12	6	6	138	123	
PIEMONTE (I)	27024	23063	25	7	18	123	123	
BREMEN (D)	32298	22962	8	8	0	147	122	
BRABANT WALLON (B)	22765	22952	51	9	42	103	122	
UTRECHT (NL)	31711	22871	9	10	-1	144	121	
EMILIA-ROMAGNA (I)	29182	22771	16	11	5	132	121	
ILE DE FRANCE (F)	35783	22755	5	12	-7	162	121	
SURREY, EAST AND WEST SUSSEX (UK)	23815	22516	42	13	29	108	120	
OUTER LONDON (UK)	19774	22360	102	14	88	90	119	
NOORD-HOLLAND (NL)	29433	22179	14	15	-1	134	118	
STOCKHOLM (S)	33235	22065	6	16	-10	151	117	
AALAND (FIN)	31463	22062	10	17	-7	143	117	
HAMBURG (D)	41025	22031	4	18	-14	186	117	
BERKSHIRE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND OXFORDSHIRE (UK)	29510	21878	13	19	-6	134	116	
BEDFORDSHIRE AND HERTFORDSHIRE (UK)	24187	21835	41	20	21	110	116	
OOST-VLAANDEREN (B)	21173	21780	77	21	56	96	116	
FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA (I)	25795	21732	31	22	9	117	115	
ZUID-HOLLAND (NL)	26154	21678	28	23	5	119	115	
ÖSTERREICH	25831	21615	30	24	6	117	115	
ANTWERPEN (B)	28265	21449	18	25	-7	128	114	
ESSEX (UK)	21168	21391	78	26	52	96	114	
REG.BRUXELLES-CAP./BRUSSELS HFDST.GEW. (B)	49191	21264	2	27	-25	223	113	
DANMARK	26803	21219	27	28	-1	122	113	
BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG (D)	27576	21218	23	29	-6	125	113	
ZEELAND (NL)	22041	21201	60	30	30	100	113	
NORDRHEIN-WESTFALEN (D)	24556	21197	39	31	8	111	113	
TOSCANA (I)	25660	21168	32	32	0	116	112	
NOORD-BRABANT (NL)	24869	21048	35	33	2	113	112	
LIGURIA (I)	24423	21027	40	34	6	111	112	
NORTH YORKSHIRE (UK)	21294	21010	75	35	40	97	112	
WEST-VLAANDEREN (B)	22297	20985	55	36	19	101	111	
GELDERLAND (NL)	21839	20979	66	37	29	99	111	
DRENTHE (NL)	19867	20943	99	38	61	90	111	
LIMBURG (NL)	22066	20876	59	39	20	100	111	
BAYERN (D)	28022	20849	20	40	-20	127	111	
NORTH EASTERN SCOTLAND (UK)	27795	20848	22	41	-19	126	111	
LAZIO (I)	25512	20834	33	42	-9	116	111	
VENETO (I)	26900	20742	26	43	-17	122	110	
CHESHIRE (UK)	25860	20718	29	44	-15	117	110	
UMBRIA (I)	22734	20584	52	45	7	103	109	
UUSIMAA (SUURALUE) (FIN)	32365	20506	7	46	-39	147	109	
EASTERN SCOTLAND (UK)	22668	20471	53	47	6	103	109	
GRONINGEN (NL)	28096	20451	19	48	-29	128	109	
FRIESLAND (NL)	20671	20433	86	49	37	94	109	
DORSET AND SOMERSET (UK)	19651	20429	103	50	53	89	109	
GLOUCESTERSHIRE, WILTSHIRE AND NORTH SOMERSET (UK)	23734	20369	44	51	-7	108	108	
SOUTHERN AND EASTERN (IRL)	28571	20353	17	52	-35	130	108	
LIMBURG (B)	20477	20337	93	53	40	93	108	
OVERIJSSSEL (NL)	21344	20260	74	54	20	97	108	
FLEVOLAND (NL)	18062	20182	120	55	65	82	107	
HEREFORDSHIRE, WORCESTERSHIRE AND WARWICKSHIRE (UK)	21978	20159	61	56	5	100	107	
BOURGOGNE (F)	20955	20156	80	57	23	95	107	
KENT (UK)	21188	20120	76	58	18	96	107	
SYDSVERIGE (S)	22260	20113	56	59	-3	101	107	
VAESTSVERIGE (S)	22898	20100	50	60	-10	104	107	
OESTRA MELLANSVERIGE (S)	20674	20079	85	61	24	94	107	
HESSEN (D)	29249	20049	15	62	-47	133	106	
LINCOLNSHIRE (UK)	19170	20004	108	63	45	87	106	
HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT (UK)	24709	19940	37	64	-27	112	106	

	Regional GDP		New indicator		New indicator rank	Difference in rank	Regional GDP per capita, Average=100	New indicator per capita, Average=100
	2000	per capita	per capita	GDP rank				
Average of the available regions	22034		18827					
MELLERSTA NORRLAND (S)	21949		19937	63	65	-2	100	106
MARCHE (I)	23066		19937	48	66	-18	105	106
RHEINLAND-PFALZ (D)	21851		19858	65	67	-2	99	105
SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN (D)	21739		19844	67	68	-1	99	105
CENTRE (F)	20519		19837	92	69	23	93	105
NIEDERSACHSEN (D)	21691		19831	69	70	-1	98	105
RHONE-ALPES (F)	23309		19830	45	71	-26	106	105
SHROPSHIRE AND STAFFORDSHIRE (UK)	19461		19751	106	72	34	88	105
ALSACE (F)	23250		19682	46	73	-27	106	105
AUVERGNE (F)	19551		19663	104	74	30	89	104
SMAALAND MED OEARNA (S)	21956		19656	62	75	-13	100	104
LIMOUSIN (F)	18529		19651	115	76	39	84	104
AQUITAINE (F)	20424		19624	94	77	17	93	104
NAMUR (B)	16935		19561	138	78	60	77	104
SAARLAND (D)	21887		19558	64	79	-15	99	104
EAST ANGLIA (UK)	24694		19545	38	80	-42	112	104
SOUTH WESTERN SCOTLAND (UK)	20942		19542	81	81	0	95	104
PROVENCE-ALPES-COTE D'AZUR (F)	20524		19529	91	82	9	93	104
NORRA MELLANSVERIGE (S)	20570		19479	89	83	6	93	103
LIEGE (B)	18474		19460	116	84	32	84	103
HAUTE-NORMANDIE (F)	21522		19385	71	85	-14	98	103
HAINAUT (B)	16003		19346	144	86	58	73	103
CHAMPAGNE-ARDENNE (F)	21375		19276	73	87	-14	97	102
LEICESTERSHIRE, RUTLAND AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE (UK)	23195		19274	47	88	-41	105	102
FRANCHE-COMTE (F)	19804		19251	101	89	12	90	102
OEUVRE NORRLAND (S)	20793		19215	82	90	-8	94	102
PICARDIE (F)	18606		19195	114	91	23	84	102
ETELA-SUOMI (FIN)	21696		19188	68	92	-24	98	102
DEVON (UK)	17898		19163	123	93	30	81	102
MERSEYSIDE (UK)	15872		19133	147	94	53	72	102
HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS (UK)	17039		19092	137	95	42	77	101
CUMBRIA (UK)	20580		19067	88	96	-8	93	101
POITOU-CHARENTES (F)	18743		19066	113	97	16	85	101
BASSE-NORMANDIE (F)	19286		19064	107	98	9	88	101
BRETAGNE (F)	19480		19055	105	99	6	88	101
MIDI-PYRENEES (F)	20012		19031	98	100	-2	91	101
LORRAINE (F)	18873		19024	112	101	11	86	101
GREATER MANCHESTER (UK)	20030		19015	97	102	-5	91	101
LANCASHIRE (UK)	18333		18965	117	103	14	83	101
EAST RIDING AND NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE (UK)	21386		18953	72	104	-32	97	101
PAYS DE LA LOIRE (F)	20352		18900	95	105	-10	92	100
LUXEMBOURG (B)	17240		18891	131	106	25	78	100
PAIS VASCO (E)	22936		18843	49	107	-58	104	100
BERLIN (D)	21616		18801	70	108	-38	98	100
WEST YORKSHIRE (UK)	20690		18781	83	109	-26	94	100
DERBYSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE (UK)	20320		18714	96	110	-14	92	99
NORTHUMBERLAND AND TYNE AND WEAR (UK)	17754		18681	125	111	14	81	99
TEES VALLEY AND DURHAM (UK)	17189		18680	132	112	20	78	99
WEST MIDLANDS (UK)	20988		18662	79	113	-34	95	99
VALI-SUOMI (FIN)	19080		18628	109	114	-5	87	99
BORDER, MIDLAND AND WESTERN (IRL)	18940		18604	110	115	-5	86	99
EAST WALES (UK)	22102		18543	58	116	-58	100	98
ITA-SUOMI (FIN)	16849		18518	140	117	23	76	98
CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY (UK)	14685		18517	165	118	47	67	98
NAVARRA (E)	23801		18467	43	119	-76	108	98
NORTHERN IRELAND (UK)	17575		18460	126	120	6	80	98
POHJOIS-SUOMI (FIN)	20679		18385	84	121	-37	94	98
ABRUZZO (I)	18916		18361	111	122	-11	86	98
SOUTH YORKSHIRE (UK)	16901		18357	139	123	16	77	98
LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON (F)	17560		18291	127	124	3	80	97
MOLISE (I)	17807		18158	124	125	-1	81	96
WEST WALES AND THE VALLEYS (UK)	15988		18154	145	126	19	73	96
MADRID (E)	24855		18018	36	127	-91	113	96
CORSE (F)	17188		18005	133	128	5	78	96
BRANDENBURG (D)	15696		17794	149	129	20	71	95
SACHSEN (D)	15908		17763	146	130	16	72	94
THUERINGEN (D)	15725		17683	148	131	17	71	94
ATTIKI (EL)	17432		17610	129	132	-3	79	94
BALEARES (E)	22221		17568	57	133	-76	101	93

	Regional GDP 2000	New indicator per capita	GDP rank	New indicator rank	Difference in rank	Regional GDP per capita, Average=100	New indicator per capita, Average=100
Average of the available regions	22034	18827					
SACHSEN-ANHALT (D)	15455	17454	152	134	18	70	93
CATALUNA (E)	22488	17430	54	135	-81	102	93
NORD-PAS-DE-CALAIS (F)	18228	17379	118	136	-18	83	92
MECKLENBURG-VORPOMMERN (D)	15680	17175	150	137	13	71	91
BASILICATA (I)	16591	17173	142	138	4	75	91
DYTIKI MAKEDONIA (EL)	15154	17146	158	139	19	69	91
RIOJA (E)	20615	17106	87	140	-53	94	91
ARAGON (E)	19867	16925	100	141	-41	90	90
SARDEGNA (I)	17067	16651	136	142	-6	77	88
NOTIO AIGAIO (EL)	18030	16268	121	143	-22	82	86
CANTABRIA (E)	18144	16196	119	144	-25	82	86
PUGLIA (I)	15173	15652	157	145	12	69	83
CYPRUS	17115	15644	135	146	-11	78	83
CALABRIA (I)	14047	15605	167	147	20	64	83
CASTILLA-LEON (E)	17156	15589	134	148	-14	78	83
COMUNIDAD VALENCIANA (E)	17906	15541	122	149	-27	81	83
SICILIA (I)	14790	15457	163	150	13	67	82
CEUTA Y MELILLA (E)	15403	15444	153	151	2	70	82
LISBOA E VALE DO TEJO (P)	20538	15363	90	152	-62	93	82
MARTINIQUE (F)	15230	15352	155	153	2	69	82
CAMPANIA (I)	14759	15292	164	154	10	67	81
ASTURIAS (E)	16019	15206	143	155	-12	73	81
CANARIAS (E)	17526	14940	128	156	-28	80	79
GUADELOUPE (F)	13025	14528	172	157	15	59	77
REUNION (F)	11401	14439	182	158	24	52	77
VOREIO AIGAIO (EL)	14822	14432	162	159	3	67	77
IONIA NISIA (EL)	13373	14370	170	160	10	61	76
CASTILLA-LA MANCHA (E)	15088	14345	159	161	-2	68	76
GALICIA (E)	14625	14225	166	162	4	66	76
MURCIA (E)	15525	14084	151	163	-12	70	75
KRITI (EL)	14943	14080	160	164	-4	68	75
ANDALUCIA (E)	13825	13595	169	165	4	63	72
STEREA ELLADA (EL)	17264	13452	130	166	-36	78	71
MADEIRA (P)	16827	13356	141	167	-26	76	71
ALGARVE (P)	14912	13166	161	168	-7	68	70
GUYANE (F)	12139	13119	177	169	8	55	70
EXTREMADURA (E)	11980	12971	178	170	8	54	69
ANATOLIKI MAKEDONIA, THRAKI (EL)	12343	12829	174	171	3	56	68
THESSALIA (EL)	13873	12726	168	172	-4	63	68
DYTIKI ELLADA (EL)	11544	12602	181	173	8	52	67
SLOVENIJA	15183	12574	156	174	-18	69	67
IPEIROS (EL)	10643	12499	185	175	10	48	66
KENTRIKI MAKEDONIA (EL)	15352	12237	154	176	-22	70	65
PRAHA (CZ)	27354	12084	24	177	-153	124	64
ALENTEJO (P)	12312	11913	175	178	-3	56	63
CENTRO (P)	12247	11772	176	179	-3	56	63
NORTE (P)	12659	11603	173	180	-7	57	62
ACORES (P)	11683	11573	180	181	-1	53	61
PELOPONNISOS (EL)	13033	10470	171	182	-11	59	56
JIHOZAPAD (CZ)	11840	9950	179	183	-4	54	53
STREDNI CECHY (CZ)	10615	9716	186	184	2	48	52
SEVEROVYCHOD (CZ)	10871	9703	184	185	-1	49	52
JIHOVYCHOD (CZ)	11059	9548	183	186	-3	50	51
SEVEROZAPAD (CZ)	10352	9421	188	187	1	47	50
STREDNI MORAVA (CZ)	10167	9409	189	188	1	46	50
MORAVSKOSLEZKO (CZ)	10542	9334	187	189	-2	48	50
EESTI	9063	7532	190	190	0	41	40
LIETUVA	8059	7242	191	191	0	37	38
LATVIJA	6975	6248	192	192	0	32	33
TURKEY	5714	5386	193	193	0	26	29

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