

The background is a vibrant blue with a complex, abstract pattern of dark blue and white. It features swirling lines, circles of various sizes, and leaf-like shapes, creating a dynamic and organic feel.

**YMCA EUROPE STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**2011 – 2016**



# Index

1	Preamble .....	Page 5
2	Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles .....	Page 10
3	The Strategy .....	Page 11
4	Priority 1: Mission Awareness – Advocacy – Representation .....	Page 11
5	Priority 2: Relevant Programmes .....	Page 13
6	Priority 3: Sustainability .....	Page 17



## Preamble

As we consider our new strategic direction, it is not easy to imagine how the world will look in 2016. In this fast changing world, one thing remains constant: the need for the YMCA.

News headlines remind us about the increasing differences across Europe and the growing number of people who live below the poverty line. The hope of recovery from a global financial crisis is evident in some societies but the economic divide between “haves” and “have-nots” widens. As a Christian youth-centred movement, we need to respond to these and many other challenges focusing young people in Europe. The effects of the crisis will probably linger for the next decade as many governments reduce their spending. Difficult financial conditions exist across the whole of Europe which affect not only individuals and businesses but also not-for-profit organisations like the YMCA, whose previously reliable funding lines are now under threat of reduction or cancellation.

We live in an interconnected and interdependent world in which governments, citizens and civil society initiatives must develop a sense of belonging to the same global community. For more than 166 years, a genuine European movement like the YMCA has shown a unique capacity to understand and implement that sense of belonging by helping individuals grow in body mind and spirit as they become socially active.

But YMCA Europe must improve its relevance as a common platform for our many different realities – as a living example and model for the society – constantly aware of the challenges of contemporary times. There are still many opportunities which we need to grasp to ensure the YMCA has a relevant and inclusive place in our communities so that we can continue to address the needs of our (mainly) young people in Europe.

The Berlin Wall fell more than 20 years ago. Europe has changed since then and so has YMCA Europe. The dream of a borderless Europe is a more evident reality for a growing number of our citizens who no longer see each other as “Northern-Eastern-Southern or Western” Europeans. The number of people in Europe with very similar priorities and common challenges will continue to grow and we must prepare for that. Especially as we serve a new generation of young people which is even further away from the traditional geographic, cultural and social stereotypes that have often been a historic barrier in our continent.

For all these reasons, in our Strategy we propose a new approach with new actions but we will retain our Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles. Our consensus in those defining elements has been the key to our success in so many different contexts and we believe they are as relevant and inclusive today as when they were written.

At the centre of all of our past strategies have been the young people of Europe – “Young Europe”. This will continue. If our Mission is still relevant, what needs to change is how we deliver our Mission to reflect our changing societies and their changing needs; in other words “social transformation”. This will give us our new strategic direction.

Over the last 20 years YMCA Europe has been very successful with Movement Development where the focus has been to start or restart YMCA National Movements in Central and Eastern Europe. Today there is over double the number of countries with YMCAs compared to the late 1980s and we will continue to look for opportunities for new National Movements. But our main emphasis will be to support and strengthen existing movements, across all of Europe. We will not simply continue with our successful past actions but will look forward to fulfil future needs.

The format of this strategy paper will follow the methodology of the World Alliance Global Operating Plan: *“to be strong and relevant, an organisation has to have a clear Vision, its work has to be relevant to young people and communities, and the organisation has to have a viable and sustainable foundation. Thus, Mission Clarity, Social [Programme] Relevance and Institutional Viability have been defined as the three pillars for Movement Strengthening.”* Using these three pillars we will embrace new ways of improving our capacities to work with Young Europe. This will be achieved through three priorities, each with specific aims and objectives:

**Priority 1: Mission Awareness – Advocacy – Representation**

**Priority 2: Relevant Programmes**

**Priority 3: Sustainability**

It is not the primary role of YMCA Europe to provide direct services to Young Europe but to ensure our national YMCAs are in the best position to serve the needs of their members. We see Europe-wide solutions to satisfying their needs to be not only sensible but absolutely necessary. We therefore propose three pan-European “signature programmes” that we believe the majority of our Movements can adopt in some form. It is possible that many existing and successful programmes can be aligned to fit into these signature programmes and for some Movements it may also offer a fresh approach to their work.

The advantage is two fold. One is internal to the YMCA. We can achieve synergy across Movements with common areas of interest that can stimulate increased mutual support, exchange of ideas, sharing of resources and so on. Secondly, it gives the whole Movement a unified and unique public face to the outside world which will greatly help all of our Resource Mobilisation efforts.

Some Movements have already told us that a simple change of wording of existing programmes can achieve the first steps of this synergy and they are very interested to investigate working with other Movements on joint approaches to funding and programmes. Others have indicated they are interested in exploring new programme areas to refresh a stale portfolio of existing programmes.

It is in this light that we have formulated the YMCA Europe Strategy 2011-2016. It is intended to be **inclusive and relevant**. Inclusive to ensure it embraces the wonderfully wide diversity of communities within Europe. Relevant to the interests and needs of our Movements and through them relevant to Young Europe. It is a living document which will be subject to periodic evaluation, review and updating, remembering that some outcomes will be difficult to measure.

## PRIORITY 1: Mission Awareness – Advocacy – Representation

***“A clear mission makes the YMCA focused and enhances its public image and effectiveness in empowering young people and communities” (World Alliance of YMCAs).***

A clear understanding of our mission helps us and the outside world to know why we do our work. It establishes who we are. Aims connected to Priority 1 use existing YMCA Europe programme structures (e.g. COG, YES, Global Co-operation) which will give them increased prominence thus underlining that Christian values, youth and being part of the worldwide YMCA family are at the very core of our work. A new structure of ‘Youth Policy’ will strengthen our youth advocacy voice including a re-vitalization of our presence in European Union and other relevant bodies.

Objectives relating to these Aims will allow our programme structures to proactively initiate and implement in depth discussions about our Mission and its practical consequences, and give them the role of advisory monitoring and review of our mission.

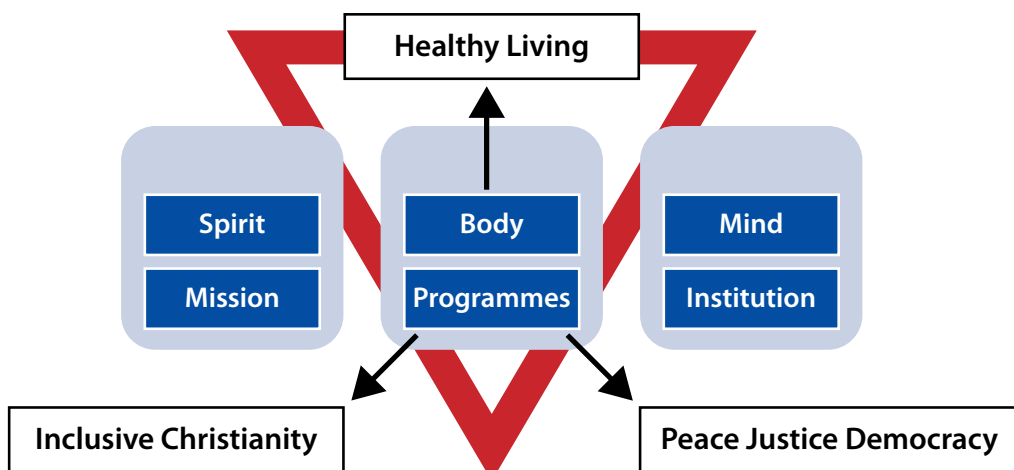
## PRIORITY 2: Relevant Programmes

***“Relevant programmes provide real solutions and tangible responses to issues that young people, families and communities are facing today. YMCAs with relevant programmes normally experience a dynamic and growing membership and are well perceived in the community” (World Alliance of YMCAs).***

At the heart of our new strategy are programmes, which are one of the YMCA’s biggest assets. It is through our programmes that the YMCA has sense and meaning, importance and vitality. An analysis of the best YMCA programmes in Europe shows there are three main programme areas which are clearly our ‘DNA’. They reflect our unique character, our ambitions and achievements as well as our Mission. Our signature programmes are:

- **Peace, Justice and Democracy**
- **Healthy Living**
- **Inclusive Christianity**

The strategy is modelled on the traditional body, mind and spirit format of our YMCA triangle which illustrates the interdependence of the three arms of the triangle, the three pillars of the global operating plan and these three programme themes:



The programme themes remind us of our best YMCA historic achievements. John R Mott was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946 especially for his Peace initiatives during World War II. The YMCA invented basketball, volleyball, and racquetball which are a few examples of how we have encouraged healthy living. We are one of the founders of the world-wide Ecumenical movement and we remain open to those of all faiths and those of none.

The YMCA naturally remembers its best traditions and is able to adapt to give modern and relevant programme answers to tomorrow's challenges. For example, Peace, Justice and Democracy addresses global citizenship, youth fellowships and exchanges with people living in conflict areas. Healthy Living addresses sport and fitness, obesity and HIV/AIDS education. Inclusive Christianity addresses our Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant richness, the interfaith dialogue. Additionally, these programme lines easily incorporate existing Programme Groups showing that their interests have a deep inclusive mission-sense and are not simply aims in themselves.

The programme themes can be applied across the whole of Europe, for example alongside our traditional Movement Development work in the geographical regions where we operate (Caucasus, Russian speaking countries and Balkans). Importantly, they are also more attractive and highly relevant for our Resource Mobilisation efforts, in all its dimensions.

The remaining programme lines reflect our key achievements from the last strategic period ('Festivals' and 'Education, Training and Leadership Development'). There is also a general heading of 'Ad Hoc Groups/Initiatives' to allow us to respond to new challenges.

The consequence of this approach will be to change the character of many of our forums, for example the annual combined Executive Committee meeting with the leading participants of YMCA Europe development work. There will be changes in YMCA Europe's reporting systems and changes to the format of the General Assemblies.

It will also be a priority to share this approach with new partners in the public and private sectors, involving them in supporting the initiatives of National Movements and YMCA Europe. To be able to find common grounds for cooperation and develop joint programmes will not only facilitate new ways of supporting our initiatives but – most importantly – will help the YMCA in Europe to spread its reality and vision. Therefore we must concentrate our efforts to identify relevant programmes that can cause an impact with individuals and their communities. Issues such as youth employment, migration and social inclusion must be in our agenda with the purpose of moving from "touching lives" to "changing lives".

## PRIORITY 3: Sustainability

***"Viable YMCAs are able to constantly generate the necessary resources to run their programmes. Their staff and leadership are competent and motivated, and they undergo regular training. Their governance and management structure is healthy and is in line with the programmes that the YMCA wants to deliver" (World Alliance of YMCAs).***

Our YMCAs can only continue to serve if we have suitable structures to lead, monitor, and operate in line with best practices of Institutional Governance. Similarly, we can only continue if we have sufficient resources to pay for the work we do.

Income streams of YMCAs in Europe come from a wide variety of sources, from Government through to individual donations. Income from membership fees provides very little revenue and there is very little fund-



ing from business sponsorship or Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives. “The greatest challenges, and opportunities, for YMCA Europe lie in the areas of ... marketing and communication, and fundraising” (European YMCAs Resource Mobilisation Analysis, YMCA Europe, December 2008). To be effective at Resource Mobilisation, we need to address Movements’ underdeveloped marketing and fundraising competencies. We all need to present ourselves more visibly and professionally to the external world through focussed communication, marketing and fundraising practices. YMCA Europe has held two General Assemblies concentrating on these issues and now we all need to put these theories into practice.

Objectives relating to the Aims within this Priority will improve our skills to do this work. We will establish a Fundraising Expert Team which will work collaboratively for both individual Movements and for pan-European funding. There will be an annual fundraising conference to educate and share best practices including branding and communication techniques. The YMCA Europe Resource Team (YERT) will expand its capacity to revue national Movements and provide confidential reports of their effectiveness and sustainability.

Sustainability of YMCA Europe, based on a continuous search for new sources whilst preserving the Principles and Mission of our movement, is more than just a guarantee for its existence. It means much more than that. To have a solid and sustainable platform will give us new opportunities to develop new initiatives, including the service to National Movements and the future extension of the YMCA across Europe. New potential partners will choose our proposals if we continue improving our quality in terms of programmes and the way we present ourselves. We are not alone in the social sector which means that our message must be clear, our impact must be measurable and our tools must be quality with continuous evaluation of our achievements.



# Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles

## Mission Statement

YMCA Europe is a working fellowship to strengthen Movements where people grow in body, mind and spirit. YMCA Europe is the Christian centred, youth focused umbrella organization for the federation of national Movements of Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCAs) within the European Area, which constitute its membership. As part of the Worldwide YMCA family its main function is the support, representation and development of its members.

## Vision

We dream of a European YMCA Movement

- inspired by its Christian ecumenical mission
- moved by an open and creative spirit, and actively involving young people
- playing an active and prophetic role in today's global and local realities
- uniting each other to realise the YMCA mission in the diversity of national contexts
- which is challenging and relevant for young people, both a sign of God's Reign and Love on earth.

## Guiding Principles

In working towards the fulfilment of this Mission, YMCA Europe will affirm that the Paris Basis, the Kampala Principles and Challenge 21 are the ongoing foundation statements of the mission of the YMCA

- Emphasise the Christian identity and mission of the YMCA as an ecumenical lay movement, working independent of, but in co-operation with the Churches and respecting confessional differences.
- Constantly analyse what our Christian identity and mission means in today's European and global realities and translate it into action in these contexts.
- Will recognize and endorse the pre-eminence of volunteers in the governance of the Movement at every level
- Ensure the active participation of young people at every level
- Aim towards gender balanced representation.
- Emphasise the YMCA's wholeness concept of body, mind and spirit in community.
- Promote and work for sustainable development to strive for justice, peace and integrity of creation.
- Emphasise international thinking and solidarity within Europe and worldwide.
- Respect and support the multicultural nature of Europe and the European YMCAs.
- Respect the independence and self-determination of each National Movement, as well as its specific way of expressing the YMCA's mission in the given cultural, religious and socioeconomic context.
- Strive for unity among the European YMCA family, including fostering processes of mutual learning, exchange and mutual critical reflection about positions in the spirit of "Begleitung".
- Be an inspiring, needs-orientated and effective organisation of high quality, applying the principles of subsidiarity and "Begleitung", and using innovative, participatory and process orientated methods.

# The Strategy

## PRIORITY 1: Mission Awareness – Advocacy – Representation

**YMCA Europe highlights the need to encourage, support and co-ordinate a high quality process of self-analysis leading to improved Mission awareness and its practical consequences, including the public image of YMCA Europe and the National Movements.**

### Aim 1: Christian Orientation

To bring all levels of YMCA Europe as close as possible to the Christian roots and Mission of the YMCA.

#### Objectives:

- A. To develop the Terms of Reference of the Christian Orientation Group, which reflect the ecumenical Mission and character of the YMCA and which strengthens its role in the frame of all YMCA Europe operations
- B. To develop collaboration with the Conference of European Churches
- C. To work with national movements to establish close working relationships with all major churches in Europe.

### Aim 2: Youth Participation

To encourage and support youth participation in YMCA Europe and its Movements on all levels and on all processes according to the principle of youth empowerment as an integral part of the mission of the YMCA.

#### Objectives:

- A. To develop the Terms of Reference of the YMCA European Spectrum (YES) working platform, to include the representative character of the group and ensure their presence and vitality is in the frame of all YMCA Europe operations.
- B. To constantly promote youth empowerment as part of YMCA Europe and its Movements' Mission, brand and everyday practise
- C. To strengthen the concept of participation of youth, with an emphasis on their active involvement in programmes and actions related with social transformation

### Aim 3: Youth Policy

To strengthen the existing YMCA Europe youth advocacy voice and develop and implement new practises, including YMCA youth representation in external bodies.

#### Objectives:

- A. To establish a 'Youth Policy' working platform of YMCA Europe as an integral part of its organizational structure; to ensure its vital presence during main YMCA Europe meetings and gatherings
- B. To develop the Terms of Reference of the 'Youth Policy' platform, which include mechanisms to have the formal mandate as the voice of the YMCA within its representation responsibilities
- C. To deliver regular training for YMCA Europe's representatives in external bodies
- D. To increase the role of YMCA Europe as a "reference organization" for youth in the European context with a special emphasis on cooperation with the European Union.

## Aim 4: European and Global Co-operation

To strengthen existing, and develop and implement, new practises of co-operation with the world-wide YMCA family by YMCA Europe and its Movements. There will be special emphasis on achieving a single voice and message through interactive sharing of best practises and information between European Movements and their internal and external partner organisations, including the World Alliance of YMCAs and other YMCA Areas.

### Objectives:

- A. To develop YMCA Europe on-line communications as the main tool for interactive sharing of best practices within European Movements
- B. To adapt the format and deepen the role of regular National Secretaries' Meetings and European Staff Conferences
- C. To analyse, develop and implement a system of mutual everyday collaboration between YMCA Europe and the World Alliance and other YMCA Areas, especially through YMCA Europe's members of the World Alliance Executive Committee and the Global Staff Team
- D. To review YMCA Europe priorities within the Global Operating Plan of the World Movement



## PRIORITY 2: Relevant Programmes

**YMCA Europe highlights the need to promote, encourage, support and co-ordinate high quality programmes relevant for individuals, families, local communities, societies and for YMCA Movement Strengthening processes on all levels and in all parts of Europe.**

### Aim 1: Peace and Democracy

To empower young people to build the YMCA as a strong and widely recognised Movement striving for peace and democracy as an integral part of its Christian Mission.

#### Objectives:

- A. To expand the 'Roots for Reconciliation' programme concept, accompanying it with appropriate pan-European training and events
- B. To facilitate and organize networks to motivate and engage young people to become actively involved in the decision making processes on all levels and within good governance practices
- C. To encourage cross-border co-operation and European citizenship between National Movements, especially those which are on different sides of conflicts
- D. To identify and implement social transformation initiatives according to the global reality in Europe and the specific needs in communities where the YMCA is present, including migrants and refugees
- E. To emphasise the concept of "social volunteering" by motivating, engaging and training youth to serve social, educational, community development and international projects with a focus on under-privileged sectors

### Aim 2: Healthy Living

To emphasise the importance and to encourage physical, social and mental health for young people, families and local communities as an integral part of the Christian Mission of the YMCA.

#### Objectives:

- A. To promote and support sport activities for all on every level, and the inclusion of sport and physical recreation during YMCA main events and gatherings
- B. To promote and support outdoor education and camping programmes, with special focus on programmes offered by YMCA scouts and jungschar
- C. To promote and support environmental sensitivity and education on all levels and to encourage environmentally friendly organizational practises on all levels
- D. To promote and support health awareness, with special focus on programmes relating to the prevention of HIV/AIDS
- E. To expand relevant networks and participation in YMCA Europe related working platforms

### **Aim 3: Inclusive Christianity**

To promote and encourage programme implementation of John 17:21 as a practical standard of everyday YMCA activities on all levels, as an integral part of YMCA Christian mission which strengthens our Christian identity.

#### **Objectives:**

- A. To facilitate a self-analysis of ecumenical practices of the YMCA on all levels and to develop an ecumenical character to all YMCA events and gatherings
- B. To stimulate Interfaith Dialogue within the YMCA as a reflection of the reality of contemporary Europe, and to promote knowledge about non-Christian religions as a tool for mutual understanding and co-operation with different faith groups, including appropriate training and youth exchanges
- C. To organize a pan-European seminar every two years as a working platform for reflection on relevant issues of contemporary Europe, especially including Interfaith Dialogue, Reconciliation and Social Inclusion
- D. To expand relevant networks and participation in YMCA Europe related working platforms

### **Aim 4: Festivals and Events**

To organise YMCA Europe youth festivals to offer a manifestation of every Movement within Europe, being an expression of the YMCA Christian mission and a tool for inspirational experiences for individuals and Movements Strengthening and which will provide Resource Mobilisation possibilities for YMCA on all levels.

#### **Objectives:**

- A. To organise the 2013 YMCA Europe Festival in Prague, Czech Republic, which
  - Expresses multicultural-multireligious-inclusion challenges of contemporary Europe and the YMCA from our Christian perspective
  - Includes National Movements in its preparation and implementation, both in logistics and programmes
  - Includes YMCA Europe working platforms and staff in its preparation and implementation
  - Emphasises the message of YMCA Europe and its social transformation capacity
  - Strengthens the reality and image of the YMCA in Europe through planned campaigns before, during and after the Festival
- B. To encourage, promote and facilitate YMCA youth festivals at regional level and also festivals organised by YMCA Europe working platforms

### **Aim 5: Education, Training and Leadership Development**

To emphasise the importance of the development of YMCA human resources on all levels and to continue to promote, facilitate and deliver wide ranging and relevant education and training across YMCA Europe on all levels. Special focus to be on training related to the implementation of actions within the priority directions of this Strategy.

#### **Objectives:**

- A. To analyse the educational needs of YMCA Europe on a regional level and to develop and deliver adequate training schemes, including an educational role of the YMCA Europe working platforms, including staff and the YMCA Europe Resource Team

- B. To develop new concepts and conditions for services offered by the European Training Centre in Lito-  
mysl, Czech Republic and to implement them through YMCA Europe representatives in the Training  
Centre Board
- C. To intensify co-operation of YMCA Europe with the YMCA universities network, especially with CVJM  
University in Kassel, Germany
- D. To develop a system of Individual Mentors where experienced volunteers and staff provide personal  
support, guidance and advice to suitable peer-groups across Europe

## Aim 6: Ad Hoc Groups / Initiatives

To emphasise the importance of immediate structural and programme responses of YMCA Europe to cho-  
sen new challenges of contemporary Europe and if needed to establish adequate new working platforms.

### Objectives:

- A. To secure forums, including the annual National General Secretaries and YMCA Europe Executive  
Committee meetings, for discussions about any required YMCA ad hoc Groups.
- B. To establish adequate working platforms for the co-ordination of required relief for individuals and  
communities – victims of natural disasters and war conflict







## PRIORITY 3: Sustainability

**YMCA Europe highlights the need to focus on sustainability on all levels of YMCA as understood in the context of the Global Operating Plan of the world Movement, where within a holistic perspective each Movement has inter-related Mission awareness, relevant programmes and institutional viability.**

### Aim 1: Institutional Viability

To continue and develop the institutional development of YMCA Europe and all member and co-operating Movements.

#### Objectives:

- A. To review existing organizational structures of YMCA Europe and to develop any proposed changes according to the requirements of the Strategy; to adapt responsibilities of members of the Executive Committee and staff to these new challenges
- B. To continue and develop the YMCA Europe Resource Team to assist National Movements in analysing their own institutional status to assist with their growth
- C. To develop YMCA Europe and Movements' efforts towards effective branding and effective communication of the impact and relevance of the YMCA
- D. Improvement of corporate branding in all publications, printed materials and on-line communication
- E. Improvement of impact assessment studies on all levels and each activity, and creatively improve the effectiveness of its communication
- F. To deliver annual measurable and time-framed Operational Plans related to the Strategy

### Aim 2: Resource Mobilisation

To continue, improve and develop YMCA Europe fundraising and Resource Mobilisation capacity on all levels.

#### Objectives:

- A. To co-ordinate YMCA Europe Resource Mobilisation efforts with similar processes of the World Alliance of YMCAs
- B. To increase YMCA Europe's presence and collaboration with European structures
- C. To work towards establishing annually renewed agreements with new partners in the public and private sectors in order to guarantee continuous support to YMCA Europe and its member movements
- D. To encourage and implement local and national YMCAs' engagement in selected international projects as direct partners with YMCA Europe
- E. To establish and vitalise the European YMCA Fundraising Team
- F. To organise an annual European Fundraising Conference
- G. To develop and implement new European fundraising campaigns and other creative fundraising initiatives
- H. To discuss with Movements new approaches to their annual contributions paid to YMCA Europe
- I. To consolidate and optimise the existing facilities, educational centres, youth hostels, hotels, holiday centres and camps across Europe considering it as a network and a resource for our common movement and for potential partners.

## Contact Us

YMCA Europe (European Alliance of YMCAs)  
Na Porici 12  
CZ-110 00 Prague 1  
Czech Republic

Phone: +420 224 872 020  
Fax: +420 224 872 025  
E-mail: [info@ymcaeurope.com](mailto:info@ymcaeurope.com)  
Internet: [www.ymcaeurope.com](http://www.ymcaeurope.com)

## Bank details

Komerční Banka a.s.,  
Havlickova 13  
111 21 Prague 1  
Czech Republic

EUR Account IBAN No: CZ84 0100 0000 1955 7969 0217  
CZK Account IBAN No: CZ10 0100 0000 1955 7968 0297  
USD Account IBAN No: CZ70 0100 0000 2766 3417 0287

SWIFT: KOMBCZPP



