



The EU and Peacebuilding 2

Peacebuilding and EU structures

Background Information

The European Union was founded on a desire to create and maintain peace in a war-torn Europe and over 50 years later peace and security are still of the utmost importance to the EU. Quakers are well known for their commitment to peace, laid down in the Quaker Peace testimony and QCEA has been actively involved in much peace-work at an EU level over the years. The EU can contribute to a more peaceful world, but to do this in the most efficient, sustainable and cost-effective way peacebuilding and conflict resolution need to be prioritised within EU structures, particularly in external relations. This is especially true within the European Commission which is the initiating and implementing body of EU law.

Peacebuilding and EU structures

'The Union's aim is to promote peace'
Article 2.1 of amended Treaty of Lisbon¹

The European Commission initiates and implements EU policies, including all those linked to external relations in countries outside the EU. It is therefore crucial that peacebuilding is given enough resources and importance within European Commission structures.

The current highest level departments within the European Commission are the 46 Directorate Generals (DG) which are each responsible for a different policy area such as DG Environment and DG Economic and Financial affairs. Each Directorate General has a number of departments or directorates that work on more specific areas, below which are specific units which do the practical work. The EU's external relations policies are organised by DG External Relations (DG Relex). Peacebuilding is currently given sporadic attention at a unit level within DG Relex, but no single body has responsibility, time or resources to ensure that peacebuilding and mainstreaming of conflict-prevention is adequately addressed and financed.

If the Lisbon treaty is ratified the structure of the European Commission will change. A High Representative would be appointed to provide coordination between the Council and Commission and make the EU's approach to foreign affairs more coherent. The appointment of the High Representative has to be approved by the European Parliament. The High Representative would manage a new body, the Joint European External Action Service, which would be made up of national civil servants, the Council secretariat and Commission

¹ Official Journal of the European Union *The Lisbon Treaty: Amending the treaty on European Union and the treaty establishing the European Community, December 2007*, Accessed May 2009 at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:0010:0010:EN:PDF>

staff. It is still very unclear what an External Action Service would be like, how it would be organised or exactly what it would do if Lisbon is ratified. The importance of Peacebuilding should, however, remain as crucial as ever.

Although these structural aspects of the EU may seem boring, they are in fact crucial if we want to see an EU that takes peacebuilding and conflict-prevention seriously. Despite the fact that Lisbon has not been ratified, there has been discussion about what the External action service would look like. The Brussels-based Network of NGOs, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), has raised concerns along with other NGO networks as to the secretive nature of these talks². The Lisbon treaty obligates the Council to consult the European Parliament about the External Action Service which means they could have influence over how it develops and what it includes.

QCEA Recommendations to the European Parliament

QCEA has signed up to the recommendations put forward by a coalition of organisations specialising in peacebuilding and conflict- prevention activities especially nonviolent third-party intervention. <http://www.civilpeace.eu/>

1. QCEA recommends that within the existing EU Commission structure there should be a well-resourced peacebuilding directorate within DG Relex to make sure that conflict-prevention is mainstreamed and peacebuilding adequately coordinated and addressed.

Questions for MEP Candidates:

- Will you ask the Commission to make sure conflict-prevention is taken seriously by creating a well resourced peacebuilding directorate within DG Relex

2. QCEA recommends that if the Lisbon treaty is ratified then a well-resourced directorate-level department should be included into the new structure of the external action service.

Questions for MEP Candidates:

- Will you call on an open and transparent consultation process around the role of an external action service either under the Lisbon treaty or in any other discussions around structural changes to the EU
- Will you call for a well resourced directorate level peacebuilding department to be created within an external action service if it created during the next Parliamentary term.

²CONCORDE, NGO Voice, HRDN, EPLO, *Civil Society Expectations of the European External Action Service*, accessed May 2009 at: <http://www.eplo.org/documents/EEAS%20EPLO-HRDN-CONCORD-VOICE%20FINAL%20with%20cover%20page.pdf>