



Future Action - European Civilian Capabilities

The Convention on the Future of Europe has completed its work. No more lobbying can be done at that level. QCEA has already lobbied the members of the Convention, the Presidium of the Convention and the Permanent Representatives of the Member States and Accession Countries.

The Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) failed in December 2003. It agreed to set up the European Armaments, Research and Military Capabilities Agency and this is now being done. There have been further discussions between Member States and the Irish Presidency and there are signs that the Draft Constitutional Treaty will be agreed in June 2004.

There is, however, no further room for lobbying on the contents of the Treaty as all matters other than those on which Member States failed to agree in December 2003 are essentially closed and will not be re-opened. We have to assume that the Articles on the Common Foreign Security and the European Security and Defence Policies will be adopted as they stand. These were not items where there was any disagreement between Member States.

What can be done at this stage?

Once the Draft Constitutional Treaty is agreed by the Council, it will need to be ratified by Member States. This may be done in different ways in different countries. It may involve a debate in the national parliament or it may be done on the basis of a referendum.

The difficulty with all these processes is that it is an all or nothing question. And as there is much that is good in the Draft Constitutional Treaty, it would be counter-productive to suggest that, for example, a referendum campaign should be fought against acceptance on the basis of the issues relating to the militarization of the EU. Partly, because this could only lead to a complete rejection of the treaty as a whole if it were successful, and partly because much of the groundwork for this militarization has already been laid in other Treaties already agreed. A rejection of the Draft Constitutional Treaty on the basis of the militarization issues would therefore not really achieve the intended objective.

However, where the debate does take place publicly, it is certainly worth raising the issues and ensuring that there is some public awareness of this little publicised element of the Draft Constitutional Treaty. This can be done through all the usual channels such as:

- Writing to your parliamentary representative(s)
- Writing to your local newspaper and raising the issue
- Holding public meetings at which the issues are debated
- Writing to relevant government ministers in your national government.

More urgently, and on a European level, the issues can be raised with candidates standing for election to the European Parliament. Even though the European Parliament does not have the right to make decisions in these matters, they do need to be consulted, their views must be taken into account, they have a right to receive regular reports, and they have a right to ask questions of the Commission and the European Union Foreign Minister, once

established. Special Representatives of the EU to conflict areas can also be asked to report to the European Parliament. Members of the European Parliament can therefore make some impact by ensuring debate on these matters.

What longer-term options for action are there?

QCEA and EPLO have not stopped working on the proposal for a European Peacebuilding Agency. The proposal has changed in its format but in terms of the underlying principles and demands we are still saying very much the same thing as we lobbied for during the Convention and the Intergovernmental Conference.

The issue is not so much as to whether there is an 'agency', an 'institution' which concerns itself with civilian capabilities, but a recognition that the European Union, despite its statements about its wish to intervene with civilian means, does not have the capabilities to do so and won't develop them unless resources and effort are put into the process of developing them and into creating the political will to support them.

Even in the very narrowly defined areas of civilian crisis management intervention in the areas of police, rule of law, civilian administration and civil protection to which the European Union has already committed itself in 2000, there are a whole range of issues which need to be addressed in order to make such interventions possible, effective, and safe for those who participate.

There are issues of common understanding of approach, of logistics, of physical resources, of availability of personnel, of training and a joint approach to training. There are language issues and there are issues of different systems adopted in each Member State. Not to speak of questions of communication systems compatibility. Such issues need to be addressed at a European level in order for the European Union to be able to engage effectively in conflict situations with civilian measures. This is acknowledged in the European Security Strategy which suggests that where civilian interventions have followed military ones, there ensued chaos. Such chaos is not inherent in civilian intervention; it is the result of a lack of planning.

But even that would not be enough to bring the peacebuilding model effectively to the world. Peacebuilding is much more than crisis intervention. Peacebuilding is a long-term process which involves capacity building at local level, which engages in the transformation of conflict before it erupts, which recognises the need for reconciliation to help to avoid future conflict and which engages in the long-term post-conflict reconstruction of communities, of infrastructure, of political and social systems which lead countries and communities to joint commitment and joint investment in their common sustainable future. Peacebuilding also relies on an effective system of early warning to allow intervention at a point when civilian measures are still possible and when killing can still be avoided.

Much of this work will need to be done at local level in areas of conflict or potential conflict. Civil Society has much to contribute to this process and does so; but it is not integrated enough into a strategic approach to peacebuilding, simply because the approach to peacebuilding is not strategic enough.

Crisis management and peacebuilding instruments are structurally divorced from each other at European Union level and therefore the overview of what is necessary and what is possible, the big picture, the ability to export effectively the successful model of peacebuilding that the European Union is, cannot be fully realised.

What we are suggesting can be stated quite simply:

- Focusing on the peacebuilding potential of the European Union;
- Developing and planning the systems necessary to make peacebuilding initiatives work well, and at short notice;
- Taking on board and learning from experience;
- Identifying the resources and the gaps in resources;
- Developing common standards of training for joint action;
- Commissioning research into peacebuilding;
- Ensuring that where civilian interventions follow military ones, the intervention is handed over smoothly and without chaos;
- Learning about logistics and security for participants;
- In short, planning for peace.

There needs to be recognition of these longer-term aspects of peacebuilding and the need for a coherent approach across all parts of the European Union, its Member States and Civil Society within them. At this stage and because there are some major changes happening in the Institutions of the European Union (the change in the number of Commissioners with the resulting changes in areas of responsibility; the proposal for the EU Foreign Minister and the proposal for an EU Joint External Service) it is not altogether easy to say what the right method is to ensure that all these things are done, done coherently and done in such a way as to engender the necessary political will.

QCEA and EPLO have therefore developed the original proposal and outlined in some detail what is needed by way of action rather than by way of institution building. These proposals were taken to the recent Western European Conference of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict and were endorsed there. The resolution, which found its way into the top spot of recommendations for the EU says:

'European structural reform for peacebuilding

We call for a serious dialogue between Member States, EU institutions and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to agree on structural reforms that will enable a more integrated and effective EU approach to the preparation and management of short-term civilian crisis management and longer-term peacebuilding. These reforms must cover planning, implementation and evaluation of crisis management and peacebuilding activities, including training, recruitment and research. We urge European governments to support the development of Civil Peace Services as an integral component of expanding capacities for peacebuilding.'

To ensure that this is turned into concrete action, there is much work to be done. Here, at European level, we will continue to lobby decision makers in the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council. At national level, the issue must be raised with parliamentarians and with relevant government departments in order to ensure that there is the political will to make this happen. The key decisions about such a proposal, about building the European peacebuilding capability needed, will be made by Member States.

To build the necessary momentum for change which this requires, it is important to raise awareness in the general public and in the peace movement of the following issues:

- The militarization of the EU
- The need for building up civilian capabilities
- The experience already gained by Civilian Peace Services in some countries
- The work done by international organisations which provide civilian intervention.

You can do this by:

- Writing for local and other newspapers
- Arranging public meetings
- Alerting local peace groups to the issues
- Discussions with candidates for election to the European Parliament and national parliaments.

Whatever action you take, QCEA would like to hear about it, so that we know where our proposals are being promoted and what reactions you get from decision makers and from the public.

For this subject, our contact is:

Martina Weitsch, QCEA, Square Ambiorix 50, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium

mweitsch@qcea.org

Phone: 0032 2 234 3064

Fax: 0032 2 230 63 70