VALUES MATTER

QUAKERS REFLECT ON EUROPE

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QUAKER COUNCIL FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Values Matter:
Quakers Reflect on Europe

Contents:

Quakers have been working for social, political and economic justice, and for an end to war for over 350 years. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) was established in England in the 17th century, at its heart lies the belief that there is 'that of God in everyone'. Quakers try to bear witness to their spiritual beliefs in their everyday lives, leading to involvement in political and societal issues. In 1947 Quaker organisations received the Nobel Peace Prize for humanitarian relief work in post-war Europe.

The Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) was founded in 1979 to promote the values of the Quakers in the European context and represents Quakers from eleven European countries.

QCEA RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONVENTION ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

"We see a Europe that is striving to become a peaceful, compassionate, open and just society."

(A Quaker Vision of Europe, QCEA December 2001)

1. A European Union based on human values

The Constitutional Treaty must set out clearly the values and objectives of the EU. The values must guide the direction and policies of the EU in the future. A clear description of the EU's objectives will improve the understanding of citizens of the purpose of the EU.

The Treaty must include commitment to: human dignity and equality; the peaceful and just resolution of conflicts; sustainable development; social justice; the rule of law; democracy; the need for integrity and accountability in public affairs.

The Treaty must state that its fundamental values are indivisible: that is, they are interdependent and must be balanced against each other. Following from this is the need to mainstream the fundamental values of the EU across all policy areas.

The universal nature of these values must also be stated. The Preamble of the Charter of Fundamental Rights currently includes reference to both the indivisible and universal nature of fundamental values.

2. Improvements to democracy and transparency within the EU institutions

Our consultation process has highlighted the common perception of the EU as centrally controlled, bureaucratic and difficult to understand. To improve this situation, the EU institutions must become more democratic and more transparent.

Recognising the European Parliament and the Council of the EU as representing the two 'constituencies' of the EU, that is, the citizens and the member states respectively, there is a need to move to a better balance between these two institutions and to improve public understanding of the decision-making processes of the EU. We therefore welcome moves within the Convention to extend the Parliament's powers of co-decision to a wider range of areas and to open Council meetings to public scrutiny when it meets in a legislative capacity.

3. Citizens and the EU must be brought closer together

Democracy in the EU cannot be improved simply by institutional reform. There is a need for much greater effort to engage citizens with the EU processes if the EU is to become relevant. Democracy should be understood as a process of empowerment and participation: it is not only about transparent and representative systems, although these are of great importance.

Citizenship involves both rights and responsibilities. To address the democratic deficit, the EU needs to become more relevant to citizens in terms of protecting and promoting their rights, and at the same time it must enable citizens to act on their political responsibilities and be able to participate in European level politics.

Protection and promotion of citizens' rights

We welcome the likely inclusion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights into the Treaty. This will make a clear statement about the importance of human rights to the EU. The method of inclusion in the Treaty must give the Charter maximum visibility and its inclusion in the Treaty must be publicised widely.

The rights of EU citizenship, currently enjoyed by nationals of member states of the EU, should be extended to people legally residing in the EU. On the basis of the universal and indivisible nature of the values recognised in Articles 2 and 3 of the draft Constitutional Treaty, the current discrimination between EU nationals and third country nationals should not be perpetuated. We draw your attention to the submission to the Convention from the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) for more detail on this proposal.

Enabling citizens to fulfil their responsibilities

We welcome the work of the Convention to simplify the Treaties into one document, hoping that this will be a start in making the EU more accessible to citizens. This must be backed up with greater transparency in the mechanisms of the EU if citizens are to understand and trust in its processes.

We recommend the introduction of a 'citizens' information file' to be attached to every Commission proposal, stating why the initiative was being proposed at that time and what it was intended to achieve. It would indicate possible problems and likely criticism, and would give a comprehensive list of everyone who had been consulted or who had lobbied in the course of preparation of the initiative.

In addition to making the EU more open and accessible, citizens and civil society organisations must be encouraged to be actively involved in the processes of the EU. This participation requires commitment from the institutions: we therefore join with many civil society organisations in calling for a legal basis for civil dialogue. We welcome the inclusion of Article 34 in the Preliminary Draft Treaty, recognising the importance of participatory democracy. We believe that to make participatory democracy a reality this Article must be strengthened and recommend the following wording:

> *The policy-making of the Union is based on the principle of participatory democracy. Accordingly, it shall be the responsibility of the institutions and bodies of the Union to take adequate measures to promote and ensure dialogue with associations of organised civil society at all stages of the policy making and legislative processes, including the drawing up and adoption of proposals and the monitoring and review of the implementation of policy.*

In implementing this Article, we recognise the value of existing processes to engage and involve citizens and civil society organisations. We recommend that such processes are developed and built on in an imaginative and constructive way.

The role of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) is also crucial in engaging citizens with the European process. As elected representatives, it must be the clear responsibility of MEPs to communicate more effectively with citizens.

These improvements must be backed up with better education and better publicity. A major finding of our project has been the extent to which participants lacked information about and awareness of European issues. Good quality, accessible and objective information is vital if citizens are to be active members of European society. The mechanisms for taking this information to citizens must be improved: although we recognise the steps that have been taken to improve accessibility of information on the internet, this is not enough. There is a role here for the EU, for national governments through their education policy and for organisations such as QCEA to educate and raise awareness among citizens.

In particular we recommend that the outcomes of the Convention, and eventually of the IGC, be publicised widely among the European population. Participants pointed out the success of the public information campaign surrounding the introduction of the euro: a similar campaign would be appropriate to mark the implementation of a Constitutional Treaty for the EU with the inclusion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

4. A value-based global outlook for the European Union

The values of the EU, being recognised as universal human values, must be applied to both the internal and external policies of the EU. The Treaty must describe the EU's commitment to the universal, worldwide application of its values and objectives.

As a major global power, the global responsibility of the EU and its constituent member states is as wide as the impact of their policies. The Treaty must therefore include a commitment to ensuring that all policies, both internal and external, are assessed for their global impact.

In recognition of the interdependence of both internal and external policy, there is a need for a coherent approach which can be provided by commitment to the cross-cutting objectives of **sustainable development** and **conflict prevention**. The EU's existing commitments to these objectives must be upheld as the cornerstones of external action.

Sustainable development
Global sustainable development, incorporating social, environmental and economic aspects, must be an explicit objective of all external and internal policy of the EU. In particular there is a need to prioritise the objective of sustainability within economic and trade policy.

We are concerned that within the work of the Convention too little attention has been paid to the importance of development co-operation. The report of the External Action Working Group made only minimal reference to development co-operation and poverty eradication and focused instead on the defence and promotion of the EU's values and strategic interests. It must be acknowledged that the commercial interests of the EU will sometimes be in conflict with its development aims. If the EU is true to its stated values these development aims must take precedence, or at the very least be given equal weight.

Conflict prevention

We believe that the EU is uniquely placed to play a role in the global prevention of violent conflict and applaud efforts that have been made in this direction. As the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts explains: *"The European Union is a successful example of conflict prevention, based on democratic values and respect for human rights, justice and solidarity, economic prosperity and sustainable development."*

We support the European Presidency Conclusions of the Göteborg European Council (15 and 16 June 2001) which state that *"Conflict prevention is one of the main objectives of the Union's external relations and should be integrated in all its relevant aspects, including the European Security and Defence Policy, development cooperation and trade"*. In accordance with these conclusions we recommend that this existing commitment to conflict prevention be included under Article 3 of the Draft Constitutional Treaty (or the corresponding article in any future draft). There should also be a specific mention of conflict prevention as the major objective of CFSP and of the need to integrate conflict prevention mechanisms into all aspects of external EU action.

We are gravely concerned about moves within the Convention towards higher defence spending and support for the European arms industry. The European Commission, in its Communication on the Prevention of Violent Conflict (COM(2001) 211, April 2001), cites *"the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and small arms"* in a list of factors which aggravate conflict. Support for the arms industry is thus clearly in opposition to the EU's objective of conflict prevention. We therefore urge the Convention **not** to include the encouragement of the development of the European arms industry as an aim of the EU, but rather to encourage disarmament and non-proliferation as part of the EU's commitment to conflict prevention.

General findings of the consultation:

The scope of our consultative project has been much broader than the work of the Convention although we also started from the questions posed in the Laeken Declaration. In particular our consultation has demonstrated the need to be aware that institutional reform will not in and of itself meet the challenges of the Laeken Declaration. The Union's values and objectives can only be realised with the active engagement and participation of civil society and institutions of government at all levels.
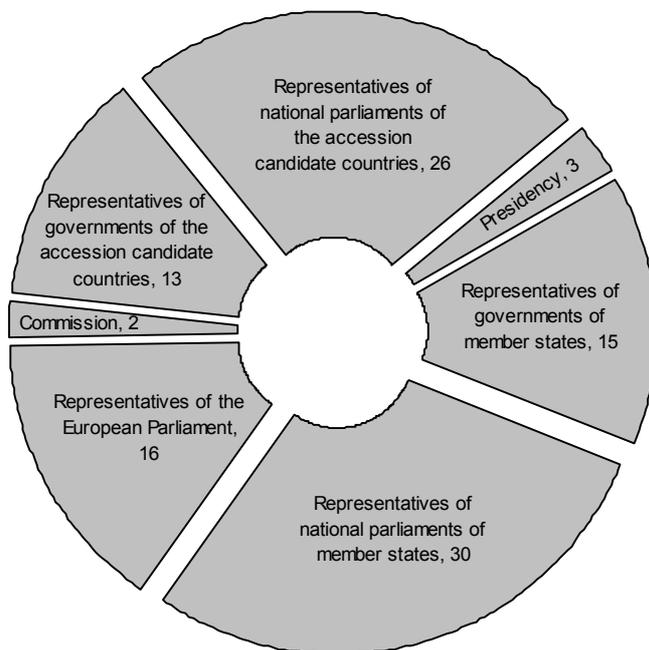
Convention members are urged to look back to the initial aims of their task and consider whether the work they have done so far will be able to fulfil these aims. We believe that the scope of the Convention has been too narrow to live up to the original mandate. The Convention must give thought to what mechanisms can be created to tackle remaining issues.

INTRODUCTION: QUAKERS AND THE CONVENTION

Quakers have been concerned about Europe for more than 300 years. In 1693 William Penn, an early Quaker, published his *Essay Towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe*. This was the first publication in the English language to suggest the idea of the nation-states of Europe co-operating in a *"Parliament or State of Europe"*. As Penn saw things, *"peace is maintained by justice, which is a fruit of government"*. Peace between states, as between individuals, therefore requires a system of justice and adherence to the rule of law. Penn's prophetic vision was more than 250 years ahead of its time.

For Quakers today Penn's words still ring true. The Convention on the Future of Europe (*see Box 1*), meeting to discuss the future vision and shape of the European Union, has provided the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) with an opportunity to engage Quakers across Europe in thought and discussion of issues which might seem to many to be out of the traditional sphere of Quaker concern. However, the EU needs the vision and commitment of groups like the Quakers if it is to develop in line with the spirit of Penn's essay. European issues are not separate from Quaker concerns for peace and justice, but intrinsically linked to them: European policies and actions have a wide-ranging global impact. As citizens of the EU, European Quakers have a responsibility to participate and contribute to its development. This project has aimed to help Quakers do just that.

Box 1: The Convention

Representatives of national parliaments of the accession candidate countries, 26

Presidency, 3

Representatives of governments of the accession candidate countries, 13

Commission, 2

Representatives of governments of member states, 15

Representatives of the European Parliament, 16

Representatives of national parliaments of member states, 30

Timeline:
15 Dec 2001:
Laeken Declaration set up the Convention
28 Feb 2002:
First plenary session of the Convention
May/June 2002:
Working groups established to produce recommendations on specific topics
24-25 June 2002:
Hearing for civil society
Sept 02 – Jan 03:
Reports of the working groups
28 Oct 2002:
Publication of 'Preliminary Draft Constitutional Treaty'
6 Jan 2003:
First draft of Articles 1-16 of the Constitutional Treaty. The next articles will be produced in the coming months.
June 2003:
Final scheduled plenary session of the Convention. Recommendations to be put forward to the European Council.
2004:
Inter-Governmental Conference. Heads of State to decide on how to implement Convention's proposals leading to possible adoption of new Constitutional Treaty.

The Convention, set up in December 2001 to debate and come up with solutions to the challenges facing the EU, is a new and fascinating entity. Bringing together political representatives of both the member states and those negotiating entry to the EU, representatives of both governments and national parliaments, plus representatives of the European institutions, the Convention was intended to be a more open and inclusive way of deciding on changes to the EU. Its task, set out in the Laeken Declaration[1], was broad: to tackle the challenge of globalisation and the EU's place in the world; to make the EU more democratic, more transparent and more efficient and, perhaps, to draw up a 'constitution' for the EU. The EU has evolved over the course of half a century. The Convention's aim has been to enable the EU to meet the challenges posed by the forthcoming enlargement to a possible 28 member states. Since its inauguration, the Convention has made surprising progress in some ways; in others it has been a disappointment.

From an uncertain sentence in the Laeken Declaration, the idea of drafting a constitution, or what has become known as a 'Constitutional Treaty', for the EU, has become the task of the Convention. This Constitutional Treaty will reorganise the existing Treaties which provide the legal basis for all EU structures, processes and actions, into one simple, coherent, comprehensible text. That is the theory. As the text is drafted over the course of the next few months it will be seen if the Convention can live up to this in reality.

This is great progress: perhaps with such a document citizens will understand what the EU is, what it does and why it exists. However, the Convention needs to do more than simply (!) rewrite the Treaties if it is to meet the challenges of the Laeken Declaration. There is a need to really engage with citizens, which institutional reform can only go some way towards. The Convention itself could have been an example of a new kind of interaction between institutions and citizens, but in many ways it has failed to live up to its own potential. The debates of the Convention have, to a large extent, focused on the technicalities of institutional reform, so it is hardly surprising that public awareness and involvement have not been larger. What the EU really needs is to remember its original aims and to reformulate them into a vision for the future. For many citizens, engagement with the EU will only come if they understand, not just what it does, but why it does it. The Convention needs to dedicate serious thought to the fundamental aims and values underlying the EU.

For Quakers, particularly of the generation which lived through the years 1939-45, the EU is held in high regard for the success of its original aim: "*to create, by establishing an economic community, the basis for a broader and deeper community among peoples long divided by bloody conflicts.*"[2] That is, to maintain peace in Europe. At this stage in Europe's history, on the verge of enlargement, we would do well not to forget this aim, but to celebrate it with a renewed commitment to the values of co-operation, multilateral dialogue, peace and justice.

The EU is a unique entity: it is not a state, but it has a role in shaping policy and legislation in those areas where member states have decided to co-operate. For citizens of EU member states, this means that decisions affecting them are made at different levels; local, regional, national and European. These levels are interdependent: decisions made at one level affect how policy develops at another. While this report focuses on the European level, this should not be taken to mean that Quakers, or QCEA as an organisation, believe that the EU is more important than local, national or global politics. We do believe that the EU is a body which has an impact on people's lives both in and outside its borders and that Quakers have important insights which they can bring to the development of the EU.

Many of the issues raised in this report are also issues at national level: apathy, for example, is not only a problem for the EU. While our recommendations focus on changes to the EU, many of the ideas could also be taken on board by national, regional and local institutions of government. In particular, there is a need for coherence in the values and objectives of the EU and its member states. The EU can achieve very little without the political commitment of these states. It is also vital for democracy that decisions be taken at the most appropriate level.

Looking outward, the EU has the potential to be a world-leader in value-based governance. To do this, it is vital that the EU is driven by the citizens of Europe. Only with this legitimacy can the EU develop a role on the world stage as a new form of regional power: democratic, decentralised, peaceful and value-driven.

INTRODUCTION: THE QCEA PROJECT

This publication is the result of a year-long project carried out by QCEA to investigate Quaker views on: the values and objectives of the EU; how to improve democracy in Europe; how to close the gap between the EU and its citizens; the role of the EU in the world. This report describes in more depth the results of the consultation in each of these areas.

The project has had three aims: providing information to Quakers on the key issues of the Future of Europe debate; consulting with Quakers on these issues, both through face-to-face contact and through written communications; bringing the outcomes of this consultation to the attention of the Convention as appropriate.

Information

Information has been provided in a number of ways: articles have been published in *Around Europe*, the QCEA newsletter; Briefing Papers have been produced, with information about the structures of the EU and the key issues; the QCEA website has been used to distribute this information and to provide links to other sources; and the seminars that were held (see below) had a substantial component of information.

Responses to the evaluation forms given out at seminars show that the vast majority of participants felt better informed about the issues of the Future of Europe debate after the seminars (50% felt 'much better informed', 47% 'a little better informed).
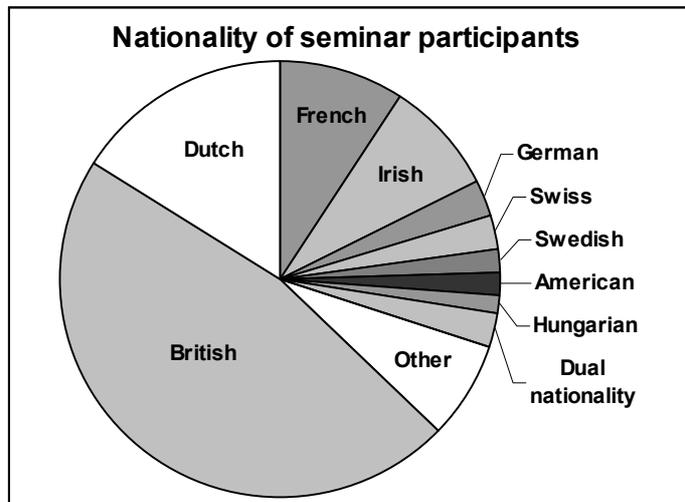
Consultation

Seminars
The consultation has been carried out predominantly through seminars and workshops held across Europe during 2002. We have held twenty-one events in nine different European countries, including the Associate Members' Conference entitled 'The Future of Europe: enlargement and its implications'. The events have varied in both length and content.

The number of participants in each seminar has also varied. Overall more than 400 people have participated in events as part of this project, including representatives of 26 different nationalities (*see Box 3*). The best represented national groups have been British, Dutch, French and Irish, reflecting to some extent the distribution of Quakers in Europe.

Nationality of seminar participants

The seminars have, for the most part, been informal and interactive. The aim has been to provide information, but also, and predominantly, to consult with participants on their views and opinions. Participants have therefore been asked to engage in discussion exercises designed to tackle the relevant issues. Due to the broad scope of the project, not all the issues were discussed in all of the seminars: we hope that we have managed to achieve an adequate representation of Quaker views through the course of the whole project.

Questionnaires

In addition to the seminars, a questionnaire was distributed. The questionnaires were sent to all Associate Members of QCEA (nearly 300 people) as well as being distributed to seminar participants. 168 completed questionnaires were returned to QCEA.

The questionnaire asked a number of questions about perceptions of the EU, priorities for Quakers and some more open questions towards the end on the hopes and fears of Quakers with regard to European integration (*click here to see a copy of the questionnaire*). The questionnaires were designed to supplement the face-to-face consultation of the seminars, providing information on a greater number of issues than it was possible to obtain during time-limited events. Although this method of compiling opinions is flawed in many ways, with problems of misunderstandings (both by questionnaire respondents and in the analysis of answers) and of the limited nature of 'tick-box' answers, we feel that the questionnaires have given an overview which complements the qualitative findings of the seminars.

Written contributions and independent discussions

QCEA has also asked for written contributions in response to the articles and Briefing Papers described above. We have had a large amount of correspondence related to this project: nearly thirty substantive written contributions as well as numerous requests for information. In addition to the seminars that QCEA has held, a number of Meetings have held their own discussion groups on the issues covered by the project: we have had reports of five such meetings; no doubt other groups have discussed the issues, perhaps more informally, and we hope that this report will contribute to continued reflection.

Input to the Convention

QCEA has been monitoring the Convention since it started work. We made an initial contribution in March 2002 to the Forum of the Convention, highlighting some general concerns based on the 'Quaker Vision of Europe' published by QCEA in December 2001. Since then we have made a number of contributions to the work of the Convention as appropriate.

The results of our consultation form the rationale for our latest set of recommendations to the Convention. These are presented at the beginning of the report. The recommendations are broad, and do not suggest any particular wording for Treaty articles. QCEA will continue to communicate with Convention Members as the drafting process continues and we may find it appropriate to suggest more precise recommendations, based on this report, in due course. We also encourage readers to communicate with their Convention members, making use of the QCEA recommendations.

Looking to the future

In the following report, we hope that we have been faithful to the views and opinions of Friends as communicated to us. In all such endeavours there is inevitably a filter of analysis of information between the first-hand communication of ideas and the production of an overview such as this one. For this reason we hope that readers will look upon this report not as a statement of corporate Quaker opinion, but as part of a process of reflection among Quakers.

This report does not represent the end-point: we hope it will stimulate further thought and discussion. The final two sections on Future Action outline the steps that QCEA will take to continue this process in its work, as well as providing ideas and sources of information to encourage readers to become more active in exercising citizenship at the European level. While we do not expect all Quakers to become instant European activists, we hope that those who feel that they can more appropriately take action locally or nationally will be more aware of the European context of their actions and the connections between local, national, European and global politics.

HOW QUAKERS SEE THE EUROPEAN UNION

Knowledge of the European Union

The results of the seminars give an indication of how well informed Quakers are about the EU. Participants were asked to judge what level of knowledge they thought that they had. The vast majority of participants judged that they had only a little knowledge of the EU. The notable exceptions were the seminars in Luxembourg and Brussels, where a higher proportion of participants judged that they were very knowledgeable about the EU; perhaps to be expected due to the geographical proximity of the institutions (and the fact that at least some of the participants work, or had worked, in the institutions or organisations connected with them).

In addition to this direct evidence from seminars that many Quakers feel that they do not have a great deal of knowledge about the EU, this finding is backed up by comments made by questionnaire respondents and from some written contributions. For example, in a letter from the Noord-Oost Monthly Meeting in the Netherlands, following a discussion group that the Meeting held independently, the Clerk writes: *"In the media we hear very little about the political developments in Brussels and when we do hear something it is so complex or uninteresting that we quickly switch our attention to different, easier to understand issues."* Many questionnaire respondents answered some of the more factual questions with 'I don't know' or 'I don't have enough information'.

In comparison to the wider European population, it can be seen that Quakers are not alone in feeling that they are under-informed about the EU. The Eurobarometer surveys show that most Europeans, when asked to assess their own knowledge of the EU feel that they know a bit, but not a lot about the EU. It is also striking that there are many more people who judge that they have very little knowledge, than those who judge that they have a lot of knowledge.[3]

This lack of information is problematic, as was pointed out by the working group on Supporting the Citizen at the Associate Members' Conference: *"Several members of the group expressed concern that they did not have enough information about the working of the Union either to meet their obligations or to exercise their rights."* In discussion of the question 'How can we close the gap between the EU and citizens?' all groups brought up the issue of information. There is clearly a demand among Quakers for objective, easily accessible information about the EU, how it works, and what it does.

> **Most participants in the QCEA seminars judged that they had only a little knowledge of the EU. This is similar to the findings for the wider European population.**
>
> **Participants identified the need for better information about the EU to fill this knowledge gap and to enable citizens to participate more effectively in the European system. *The chapter on 'Bringing Citizens and the EU Closer Together' looks at this more closely*.**

Attitudes towards the European Union

In both seminars and the questionnaires, the same question was asked: 'Do you consider yourself to be (or do you feel) pro-European?' This question was obviously ambiguous, as it does not refer directly to the EU, but simply to attitudes towards 'Europe'. This ambiguity was pointed out by many participants and respondents, some of whom felt that they could have two different answers to the question. However, the vast majority of those questioned answered strongly in the affirmative: 83% of questionnaire respondents ticked response 1 or 2, the highest proportion of such positive answers to any of questions 1 – 10, relating to attitudes towards the EU.

It is difficult to compare this to the wider European population, as in the Eurobarometer surveys the questions asked do relate specifically to the EU. The results of the most closely related question show that "*close to half of the people surveyed say that the EU conjures up a very positive or fairly positive image*"[4].

Discussion at the seminars gave a better understanding of participants' attitudes to the EU. The main reasons given for being 'pro-European' came in two categories; those who felt pro-European in a cultural sense, and those who were positive to the EU. Reasons given for being pro-EU fell into four main categories:

- Belief in the principles of co-operation and unity. However, while the principle of European co-operation is endorsed, there is a high degree of uncertainty about the actual policies, processes and structures.
- The EU is seen as contributing to peace in Europe; older participants in particular often pointed out that the EU was created to bring stability and peace to Western Europe after the Second World War, and that this was still a valuable task.
- Many people, reacting to current international trends, felt that the EU had the potential to be a moral counter-balance to the current militarism and dominance of the US.
- The pragmatic need for involvement and participation in an institution which exists and which has an impact not only on ourselves as EU citizens, but also on citizens and governments of other countries.

Key doubts about the EU included the perceptions that:

- The EU is too big, and has a top-down, centrally controlled approach
- The EU includes too much diversity to work effectively as there are so many different interests involved
- The EU poses a danger to the diversity of Europe
- Enlargement is happening too fast and existing problems will get worse as the EU gets bigger
- The EU has a negative impact on the rest of the world
- The EU is undemocratic and citizens know very little about how it works.

When compared to the results of the Eurobarometer, it can be seen that Quakers have a very different set of concerns about the EU than most European citizens do. When asked to identify positive and negative aspects of the EU, the Eurobarometer sample chose, on the positive side, the introduction of the euro and the free movement of people, and on the negative side, the end of national currencies, inflation and immigration.

A majority of Quakers asked feel 'pro-European'; in relation to the EU this is due to commitment to the principles of unity and co-operation for peace.

The perceptions of Quakers of the positive and negative aspects of the EU are different from those of the wider European population. Quakers are more concerned about the external impact of EU policies and the nature of the EU itself, which is perceived as a centrally controlled, non-transparent and undemocratic institution.

A EUROPEAN UNION BASED ON HUMAN VALUES

What are 'spiritual' values?

"Spiritual values should inform and shape all aspects of the political life."

<div align="right">(questionnaire comment)</div>

This quote sums up the Quaker attitude to spiritual values and their relationship to the political sphere, as well as all other aspects of life. However, for Quakers, the concept of living according to a set of values can be in itself a little problematic. Quaker tradition talks of 'testimonies', which can be understood as

> *"an active witness based on the central insight that there is 'that of God' in everyone. It is a witness to a divinely inspired view of society and so against any action, personal, social or international that in any way diminishes human beings."*[5]

In other words, Quakers try to live out their values, rather than simply work towards them. The values which Quakers uphold are not the end point, but, as one questionnaire respondent put it, are part of a process of living according to *"that guidance [which] comes directly through an inner conviction reached in stillness and discernment, and not from outward authority"*.

The beliefs which arise from this process of inner discernment can perhaps be described as 'Quaker' values, but they are not exclusively Quaker. We share our commitments to peace, equality, simplicity and truth with many other groups and individuals, both secular and religious. However, *"our Quaker background explains how we reach our conclusions and illustrates that we try to see all our activities as spirit-led."* (Report of one of the working groups at the Associate Members' Conference.)

What role should religion and spirituality play in the governance of a diverse society?

As Quakers, we feel that our spiritual experience influences and guides our everyday lives and actions. However, the European institutions have an impact on the lives of people of a wide variety of cultures and religions, including those of no religious affiliation. In this situation, the question of what role spiritual values should play in the future of the EU is a delicate one. One group, meeting independently in Anglars Juillac, France, expressed the following view:

> *"We would welcome the acknowledgement of the awareness of a common thread of spirituality and humanity that connects us all worldwide and that this thread should become the focus of Europe in its Government, institutions and legal structures rather than the perception of the thrust being purely military or economic."*

The role of faith groups in European decision-making was raised in the questionnaires. One common thread running through the answers was that faith groups such as Quakers have a role to play in highlighting the importance of spiritual and ethical values. Quakers have a historical tradition of 'speaking truth to power', this should be continued today at the European level as well as nationally and globally.

The proposed 'Constitutional Treaty' being drafted by the Convention on the Future of Europe will include sections defining the values and objectives of the EU. From the Quaker perspective, it is crucial that these values run through everything that the EU does. The idealism of the founders of the EU, determined to build co-operative structures to avoid war, must remain at the heart of the EU in the future.

- **Faith groups must be recognised as an important part of society, with a role to play in highlighting the spiritual and ethical dimensions of politics. They must have an equal right to be heard alongside other components of civil society.**

- **The future Constitutional Treaty of the EU must be value-based, recognising the need for strong values to guide the direction and policies of the EU in the future.**

Quaker priorities for a new value-based Constitutional Treaty

In this new value-based Constitutional Treaty, the important question is: which values should be at the heart of the EU? This question was posed both at seminars and in the questionnaires. At seminars, participants were given a set of cards with a number of different values written on them and asked to come up with five priorities, discussing also any conflicts and any ways in which the values might be grouped together. In the questionnaires, respondents were simply asked to choose five values from a list of eighteen.

In the seminars, many groups chose to order the cards into groups of connected values. Although there were differences in the way the cards were grouped and in the values picked as the most important, there was a substantial amount of similarity not only in the values chosen, but in the discussions surrounding these values and the way in which the values were interpreted. There was also similarity between the results of the seminar and the questionnaires. The following six headings provide a summary of the key values which Quakers see as the most important for the EU to prioritise:

- Respect for human dignity
- Peaceful and just resolution of conflicts
- Sustainable development
- Social and legal justice
- Democracy and better governance
- Integrity and accountability in public affairs

Respect for human dignity
The sanctity of the individual, coming from the Quaker belief in 'that of God in everyone', was seen by many groups as one of the most crucial values to uphold. Some groups felt that 'human dignity' was a more appropriate way to express this concept in the context of a secular institution like the EU. This is also the wording used in the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

These two headings were often used to group together concepts such as freedom, equality, diversity, cultural integrity and tolerance. However, within this set of values, conflicts were identified. For example, many groups felt there was a potential tension between cultural integrity and human dignity or freedom: while most Quakers do believe that the EU should

protect and encourage the toleration of a rich diversity of spiritual expression and culture, there is also concern that some cultural traditions can impact negatively on individuals. Freedom as an absolute value posed more problems for some, which were solved by most groups by qualifying the value in some way: for example 'freedom until it encroaches on the sanctity of individuals.' Ultimately, all these discussions point to the need for balance between different values, tolerance and respect for diversity and the upholding of individual human rights.

Peaceful and just resolution of conflicts

The peace testimony is a cornerstone of Quaker thought, so it is not surprising that peace and the need for the peaceful and just resolution of conflicts was a major priority for every group which carried out the exercise. In the questionnaires, peace was also the most frequently chosen value, and was seen as the most important value by a majority of respondents. In many cases peace was grouped with justice (both social and legal) and an equitable economic system. Quakers believe that there is a need to look to the root causes of conflict in social and economic inequality and oppression and that the EU needs to develop and strengthen its policies in these areas.

Sustainable development

For some groups sustainable development was seen to have mainly environmental implications, for others it was interpreted as a more wide-ranging concept incorporating social, environmental and economic themes. This partly depended on the choice of other values: in some cases social priorities were grouped under the next heading, however it was clear that in all cases the EU was seen to have a dual responsibility for both social and environmental development and protection.

Social and legal justice

For those groups who did not incorporate social justice under the heading of sustainable development, it was often combined with justice in a broader sense. Social justice was understood by many to require a more equitable economic system, and the point was often made that Europe is a very wealthy part of the world: more attention should be given to our responsibilities to poorer countries, particularly in developing economic systems which are more just and equitable. The EU objective of raising the standard of living within Europe was seen by many groups as too materialistic. What is more important is the promotion of equality, as well as a need to reassess the consumerist nature of our society.

Democracy and better governance

The choice of democracy as a key priority signals the perception of its importance in relation to the EU. In most cases groups chose to define democracy in more detail, focussing on elements such as the need for the involvement of all citizens in decision-making, the ownership of political institutions by ordinary citizens and the need for governments to be at the service of communities and citizens. For Quakers, democracy is not simply about a fair and representative system, but also relates to active participation and involvement of citizens in decision-making.

Integrity and accountability in public affairs

The Quaker testimony of integrity leads to a commitment to truth, openness, accountability and transparency. There is a strong feeling that these aspects are vital to European governance, with regard to concerns both about democracy and corruption.

In addition to these six priorities, two themes which were seen as overarching were those of the need for **compassion** and for a **global outlook** in the application of these values.

- **The new Constitutional Treaty must include commitment to: human dignity and equality; the peaceful and just resolution of conflicts; sustainable development; social justice; the rule of law; democracy; integrity and accountability in public affairs.**

- **The Treaty must state that its fundamental values are indivisible: that is, that they are interdependent and must be balanced against each other.**

- **The Treaty must also state the EU's commitment to the universal application of these values: globally as well as internally. Member States also need to be committed to the same values and objectives in order to work coherently.**

In almost all of the seminars, much discussion centred around economic themes. In particular, the value of 'competition' was problematic for many groups, with some rejecting it as an aim altogether. Competition was seen in these cases to be undesirable on both a personal and an economic level. However, in the seminars which involved participants from post-Soviet bloc countries a division arose between these participants and those from Western Europe. The importance of competition to economic development was emphasised by those who had experienced society without it. These discussions highlighted the cultural context of our beliefs and values and the extent to which these are influenced by our personal experiences.

This division did not prove in the end to be an obstacle to agreement within the groups about the priorities. Although the value of competition was disputed, none of the participants were of the opinion that competition should be pursued in and of itself. In all cases the priorities in the economic sphere were seen to be those of human and environmental development. Thus the values of sustainable development, combined with shared prosperity, an equitable economic system, responsibility for the environment and social justice were seen as the priorities, with competition (and economic growth) as potential (although by no means the only) means to these ends.

In EU terms the results of this debate lead very strongly to the conclusion that Quakers see the need for a better balance between the EU's priorities. Sustainable economic, social and environmental development must be pursued through coherent policies, emphasising first and foremost human need and well-being both within and without the EU. The EU already has commitments to social inclusion, the eradication of poverty and sustainable environmental development. These now need to be prioritised in practice. Economic policy must not dominate the agenda, but rather these social and environmental needs must be the guide for the economic direction of the EU. The value of the European Social Model must be recognised as a real alternative to a neo-liberal approach.

With the prospect of enlargement from the current 15 to a future 27 or 28 member states (*Box 2 shows the candidate countries*), these issues of balancing economic, social and environmental goals become even more important. Enlargement will mean that there will be greater economic inequalities within the EU. European economic policy must develop to address these inequalities within the framework of the European Social Model, balancing the social needs of all people in Europe with the need to develop the economies of the new

member states. This balanced social and economic development must run alongside environmental protection and the improvement of the quality of the environment, particularly in the new member states.

- **The Constitutional Treaty must state that the EU's commitments to social, environmental and economic development are equivalent: it is no longer appropriate for economic goals to take precedence.**

As well as the identification of priorities two general points were raised in almost every group that completed the exercise. First, all the values were seen as interconnected and interdependent. In the context of a Constitutional Treaty for the EU, this interdependence of values leads to an emphasis on the need for coherence between policy areas. This needs to happen not only in the initial declaration of values and objectives, but in the detail and implementation of these values and objectives.

Second, many people were wary of what they saw as 'big words' such as democracy, justice and equality. These words were seen by many as being empty of meaning, particularly due to over-use by politicians from all parts of the political spectrum. It was felt by many that concrete terms and objectives were more useful, particularly when thinking about the priorities of the EU, and of other institutions and governments. Again, in the context of a Constitutional Treaty, it is not enough to simply declare a dedication to peace, for example; this must be backed up with more detailed objectives in the fields of conflict prevention, dedication to multilateral processes and treaties, commitments to the non-proliferation of arms and so on.

- **In the Constitutional Treaty the EU's statement of values needs to recognise the interdependence of these values and the need to mainstream these values across all policy areas.**

- **The treaty should also back up dedication to abstract values with concrete objectives relating to their implementation in each area.**

Many of the values prioritised by Quakers are already commitments of the EU. However, it is vital that the Convention does not go backwards, but ensures that all of the EU's existing commitments are included in the new Treaty, where necessary advancing the human values emphasised here. It is also vital that these values are actually implemented and that EU policy actively works towards these fundamental objectives. The next three sections of this report will look in a little more detail at three areas: how to enhance democracy in the EU; how to engage citizens with EU processes; and the external policies of the EU. In each case, suggestions will be made for action by the Convention, as well as other actors, in implementing the values outlined above.

IMPROVING DEMOCRACY AND TRANSPARENCY

Two of the value priorities identified in the previous chapter relate to the need for better governance at the European level: democracy and better governance; integrity and accountability in public affairs. This concern for ensuring that these values are among the EU's major objectives corresponds to the current perception that at the European level there is a democratic deficit. In Switzerland, for example, none of the groups who took part in the same exercise chose democracy as a priority value. When asked, at the end of the exercise, why they did not feel that democracy was a priority, the response was simply that most participants felt that democracy already existed (in Switzerland) and therefore it was not seen as a priority. The opposite seems to be true of people's perceptions of the European institutions.

Perceptions of the 'democratic deficit'

It is clear that most of the Quakers who have been involved in this project have some level of dissatisfaction with the state of democracy at the European level.

Questions 8 and 9 on the questionnaire asked participants to answer the questions 'Do you think that the EU is transparent?' and 'Do you think that the EU is democratic?' giving an answer on a scale of one to six (one = yes, very; six = no, not at all) (*see Box 4*). The majority of respondents felt that the EU is not at all, or not very transparent, while the perception of democracy is slightly better. However, in both cases there were very few respondents who had a positive perception of the EU in this regard.

Box 4:

Q8. Do you think that the EU is transparent?

Q9. Do you think that the EU is democratic?
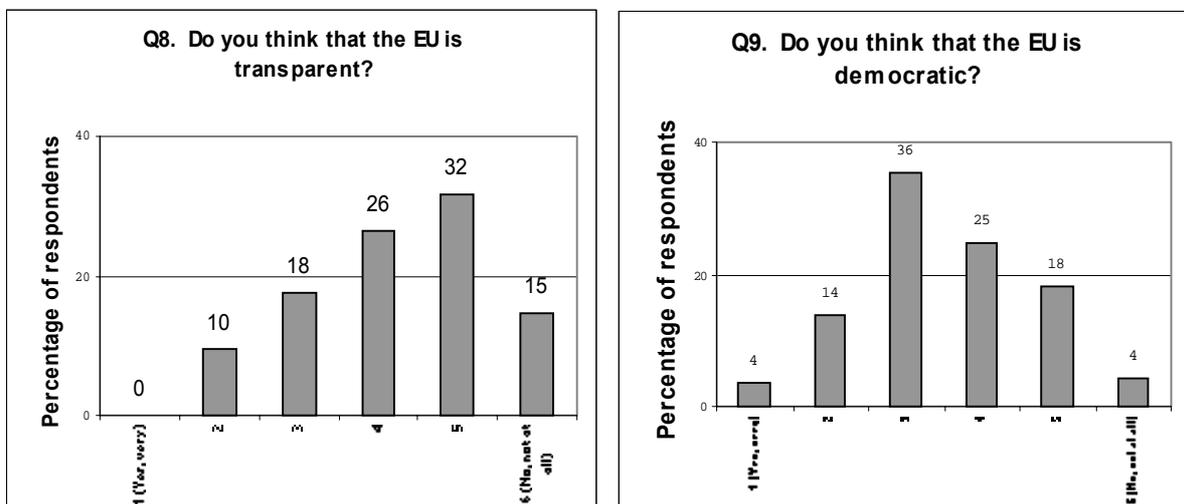
The nature of concerns about the governance of the EU can be assessed more precisely through looking at comments made by participants in seminars and in the questionnaires. As we saw in the section on perceptions of the EU, the EU is criticised for being a top-down, centrally controlled bureaucracy. These feelings are echoed in responses to question 15, which asked respondents to name their fears with regard to European integration. A significant number of these fears related to the size and governance of the EU. There is a

strong feeling that the EU is either already too big, or will become too big and that it will therefore not be manageable as an entity. This concern about size is closely linked to feelings that the EU will become more distant from citizens, that it is or will become too bureaucratic and that it is inaccessible to citizens. There is also concern that member states retain too much power within the institutions and that the interests they pursue will not necessarily be in the interests of ordinary citizens.

There is also negative feeling about the current balance of power between European institutions, national governments and local or regional authorities. Question 11 on the questionnaire asked participants to rank these different levels of decision-making in importance for a series of different policy areas (*see Box 5*). A number of respondents felt unable to answer the question, either due to a feeling of lacking the appropriate knowledge or due to an assessment of the question as too complex for a simple answer: a relevant criticism! However, a clear pattern emerges from the responses that were given:
- In seven of the policy areas more that half of the respondents felt that the policy should primarily be dealt with at the national level
- In six areas more than half the respondents felt that policies should primarily be dealt with at the European level
- In only one area, that of housing, was there a majority who felt that the local level was the most appropriate.

It is clear from these answers that both the national and European level are felt to be important arenas for decision-making. Those policy areas which have cross-border implications were generally felt to be more appropriately dealt with at the European level.

Box 5: At which level of decision-making should the following areas of public policy primarily be dealt with?

Q11. At which level of decision-making should the following areas of public policy primarily be dealt with?
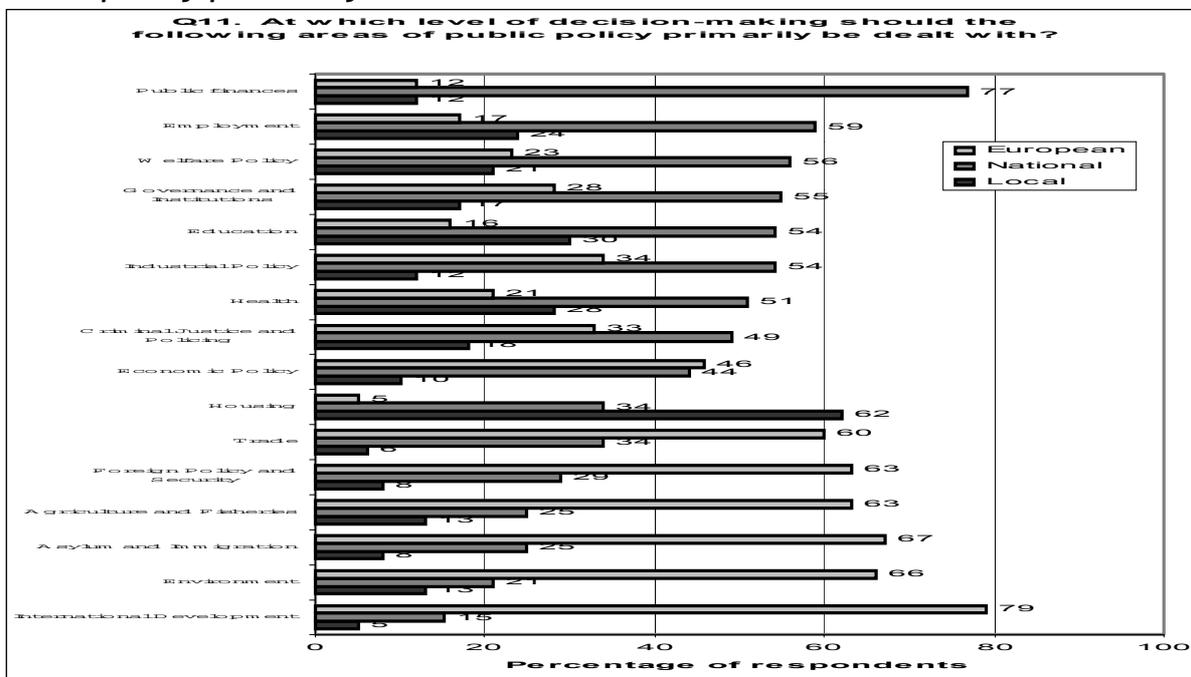
It is interesting to compare this part of the question to the second part, which asked whether respondents felt that the current balance between different levels of decision-making is correct. Only 6% of respondents answered yes to this, in comparison to 45% who answered no (the largest number either did not know or gave no answer). Many of those who answered no went on to explain that they felt that there should be a much greater role for local and/or regional government (of twenty-nine comments, fourteen called for more power to local government, five for more European decision-making, the rest did not specify but made comment on the current situation or the difficulty of achieving balance). It is interesting that this strong bias in favour of local decision-making and control emerged in the comments where in the first half of the question only one policy area was seen as being one which most people felt should be dealt with primarily at the local level.

We can perhaps conclude, as many respondents did, that the question of balance between different levels of decision-making is a complex one, to be assessed and reassessed for specific policies and situations. The call for more local government is not necessarily a call for policies to be dealt with solely or primarily at the local level, but for there to be much more local involvement in the development of policies, even if the primary engine of decision-making is national or European.

The question of different levels of decision-making is crucial to consideration of European governance. The balance of power between the member states and the EU has always been delicate, and it is a balance which has to be maintained in order for continued European co-operation to be possible and effective. There is a need for transparency at all levels in order to make the decision-making process more accountable.

While many of the Quakers involved in the project have concerns about European democracy and governance, there are some who feel that the current institutional situation is actually quite effective and democratic. One written contribution, from a Quaker who has worked within the institutions, states that *The original structure has worked well and should be retained as far as possible.*" The connection between greater knowledge of the institutions and a more positive attitude towards them was raised by one of the questionnaire respondents, who comments, in regard to question 9 about democracy that *"if I didn't know as much about the workings of the EU I would be much more sceptical*". However, we cannot assume that the perception of the EU as not very democratic is simply a misperception. There may be positive aspects of the current governance of the EU which escape the notice of many people, due perhaps to lack of media attention, but the feeling of powerlessness and lack of control in relation to European decision-making is part of the problem of the democratic deficit. The next section on citizenship will look in more detail at how citizens themselves can take a more active role in addressing this problem.

> **Many Quakers perceive the EU as being a centrally controlled bureaucracy lacking in democracy and transparency. To the extent that these perceptions are correct, the EU needs to become both more democratic and more transparent.**

> **Many Quakers are unhappy with the current distribution of power between different levels of decision-making: there is a need for more local participation and involvement.**

Improvements to the current institutional structure

The rest of this section will look at a number of suggested improvements to the institutional architecture which may go some way to addressing the concerns of Quakers with regard to the democratic situation of the EU. The Laeken Declaration posed the challenge of how to make the EU "*more democratic, more transparent and more efficient*". In answer to this, many participants have emphasised the value of the Quaker business method. Quakers do not use a system of majority voting to make decisions, but understand the need to hear all voices and to make decisions collectively, through the empowerment and participation of all. We feel that democracy, properly understood, is not simply about representative majority rule, but requires the greater involvement of citizens, empowerment of local communities in decision-making and the making of decisions at the most appropriate level.

The elements of the Quaker business method which are seen to be applicable to European institutions are summed up in a letter from Lausanne Quaker Meeting in Switzerland:

> "- *Firstly, individual country representatives should come to the meeting, not with their own country's personal agenda in mind, but with a view of finding what is best for Europe as a whole.*
> - *Secondly, during times of more heated debate, there should be a recourse to silence and reflection for a moment, with the goal of easing tensions and leading to more peaceful negotiations.*
> - *Finally, leaders of the meeting should attempt to discern "the sense of the meeting" when directing discourse and making final decisions, summing up the ideas and concerns of all members present as they work together towards their goal of finding what is best for Europe as a whole.*"

We cannot easily influence the mind-set of politicians and decision-makers, so the question is what institutional structures would best foster this kind of attitude towards decision-making. If the aim is that decisions are made on the basis of what is best for Europe as a whole, then there is a need for:

- **balance** between the different institutions which represent different interests in Europe
- **transparency**, so that it is possible to see who has had influence over which decisions and how the different interests have been taken into account
- **accountability**, so that the different institutions can be held to account by involved actors, be they citizens, local and regional authorities or national governments.

To create a better institutional balance, and to make the EU more democratic through enhancing the role of the institution which represents citizens, the European Parliament should have more legislative power. In the current EU structure, the Council of the EU, representing the governments of the member states, has too much power in relation to the European Parliament. There is a need to even up the balance between these two institutions, which represent the two 'constituencies' of the EU; the citizens and the member states. The proposal coming from the Convention to extend the range of the co-decision procedure is to be welcomed in this regard.

In terms of transparency the major problem lies with the Council. This criticism is backed up by the lack of awareness of the Council and its role among participants in the seminars. Despite being in some ways the most powerful of the European institutions, the Council is far less well known than the Commission or the Parliament. In order to deal with this issue, the

meetings and documents of the Council should be open to public scrutiny and greater media attention. Again, the Convention on the Future of Europe seems to be moving in the right direction in this regard. This would also mean that national governments would be obliged to defend their position in the Council to their electorates and to prepare these positions in a participatory and transparent manner.

- **We welcome Convention proposals to extend the European Parliament's powers of co-decision. A stronger European Parliament will provide greater balance in the representation of the interests of citizens and member states, leading to decisions being made on the basis of what is best for Europe as a whole.**

- **We also welcome plans to open Council meetings when it is exercising its legislative function: this increased transparency will raise awareness among citizens of decisions made by their governments and enable them to hold their representatives to account.**

Finally, if democracy at the European level is to be truly enhanced, there is a need for far greater understanding of the processes, and far greater participation by citizens. The current perception of the EU as a centrally controlled bureaucracy is disempowering, and changes to the institutional structure, if well publicised, may go a little way to changing this perception. However, there is a need for more than simply institutional change if citizens are to really be enabled to take part in European decision-making and hold decision-makers to account. The next section examines ways to engage citizens with European processes.

BRINGING CITIZENS AND THE EU CLOSER TOGETHER

The last section focussed primarily on institutional change for more democracy in the EU. However, the problem of the distance between citizens and the EU institutions, which the Convention was challenged with in the Laeken Declaration, is one which requires more than just institutional change. We have looked at this question more closely during this project.

What is citizenship?

Citizenship can be understood to have two distinct meanings. First, citizenship as a legal concept entails a certain set of rights and responsibilities according to the law of the state of which one is a citizen. Second, citizenship as a moral concept encompasses the idea of individuals taking an active role in the society in which they live.

These two aspects of citizenship are both important when considering how citizens can be brought closer to the EU. If the EU plays a positive role in terms of the protection and advancement of citizens' rights, this will increase the relevance of the EU for those citizens, making them more likely to engage with it. On the other hand, citizens need to develop their sense of responsibility as European citizens, becoming more active at the European level. This project has shed some light on the involvement of Quakers in European level processes and how this could be enhanced.

Citizens' Rights

Inclusion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU in the new Constitutional Treaty

The Charter is currently not a legally binding statement of human rights. This must change, and the need for this has been acknowledged in the work of the Convention on the Future of Europe. We welcome this acceptance of the Charter and stress that inclusion of the Charter as a legally binding document in the Constitutional Treaty is necessary for the development of a value-based European Union working for its citizens. It is also important that the Charter is a visible part of the new Treaty, incorporated in such a way as to produce maximum awareness among the citizens of the EU. We therefore draw attention to the need to raise awareness of the inclusion of the Charter and what this will mean for citizens.

- **The new Treaty must, as seems likely through the work of the Convention, include the Charter of Fundamental Rights.**

- **The Charter must be given maximum visibility and its inclusion in the Treaty publicised widely.**

EU Citizenship rights for non-EU nationals

At present, all citizens of EU member states are also citizens of the EU. This gives citizens a distinct set of rights in addition to their rights as national citizens: freedom of movement between member states; the right to vote in local elections in any other EU country in which they are resident; the transference of social protection and pension rights; entitlement to diplomatic protection; and the right to petition.

However, these rights do not extend to people living legally in the EU but who are not nationals of EU member states. This discrimination reinforces negative attitudes towards third country nationals and contributes to racism and xenophobia. One way to begin to address the problems that third country nationals may have is to extend EU citizenship rights to all people legally residing in the EU.

- **The Constitutional Treaty must extend the rights of EU citizenship to all people legally residing in the EU.**

What are the responsibilities of citizens?

Having considered above some of the elements of extending the human rights protections of the EU, we now consider the other side of citizenship, that of responsibility. If citizens are to become more involved in the EU, we need to understand what sorts of responsibilities we are talking about and to assess the problem, as currently perceived, of lack of involvement at the European level.

In a number of seminars, participants were asked to consider the question of our responsibilities as citizens. The responses of each group were remarkably similar. First were the obvious legal responsibilities of obeying the law, including the paying of taxes and (for some countries) voting. Second were a more complex group of moral responsibilities, comprising our involvement in society on the basis of certain values and principles. These could be split into two groups, our personal responsibilities and our political responsibilities.

On the personal side, citizens were understood to have responsibilities to other members of society, particularly the vulnerable and less privileged. Citizens also have the responsibility to engage with their local communities, not necessarily in a political way, but through taking responsibility for the local environment and for other people, through our consumer behaviour and through cultural activities.

On the political side, citizens have a responsibility to participate in democratic processes (including voting, whether or not this is compulsory). This participation should take an active form, for example involvement in local politics, taking collective action on issues of concern, informing our political representatives of our views and keeping ourselves informed of issues. It was also considered that citizens should take a critical view of the law, monitoring the policies of governments and speaking out over injustices. In extreme cases it could be the moral responsibility of a citizen to disobey the law, and although it was felt that this was a decision that should not be taken lightly, this moral responsibility was seen as having a greater weight than the legal responsibility of living within the law.

Quakers have a very well developed understanding of citizenship as active involvement in society. This is unsurprising considering the Quaker history of social action. However, when participants were asked to consider how they fulfilled these responsibilities at the European level, a different story began to emerge.

Quaker involvement at the European level

Having discussed the nature and responsibilities of citizenship, participants were then asked to assess what level of society they felt that they were most involved with. In four cases, this

was done by asking participants to vote with their feet and stand in a corner of the room assigned to one of four levels of society; local, national, European and global. The results were striking: of the 77 people involved in these four seminars, only one felt most involved as a citizen at the European level. In comparison, 44 felt most involved locally, 11 nationally and 19 globally (*see Box 7*). The lack of involvement in European issues and processes was astounding, and was echoed in discussion at other seminars, especially as there were a significant number of people who were highly involved in each other level of society.

Box 7:

At which level of society do you feel most involved as a citizen?
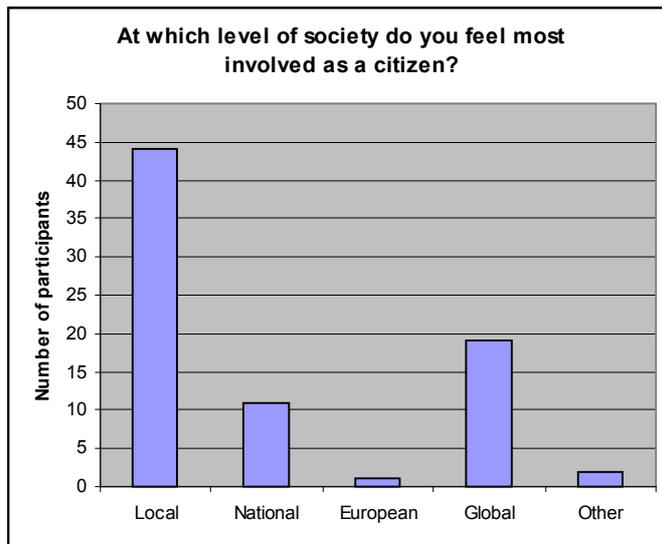
When asked in more detail about the types of involvement that each person was engaged with, a more complex picture emerged. For many people it was not easy to choose which level of society they felt most engaged with, as they were involved in activity at more than one level of society. Action at different levels was recognised as complementary and interconnected. However, while some instances of involvement at the European level were quoted, only one person cited involvement of a political nature. At every other level, Quakers are involved politically in society, whether directly in local government, through communication with their MPs or through campaigning organisations and action for global causes. European involvement, on the other hand, tends to be cultural or professional.

Due to the complexity of interconnections between different levels of society, some forms of action at national or global level may impact on European issues. This means that some of the participants were unconsciously involved at the European level. However, the lack of conscious and purposeful involvement is clear.

For a group of people as socially active as Quakers, this finding is remarkable and should be a grave cause for concern in the European institutions. The lack of Quaker involvement may be indicative of the broader lack of involvement of individuals at the European level. This non-participation is a serious problem for the EU, undermining its legitimacy, relevance and effectiveness.

The majority of participants are actively involved as citizens at local, national or global level. However, there is a deficit of involvement in European issues, especially in the political sphere.

Disempowerment and undereducation

This under-involvement at the European level can be attributed to a number of factors. Reasons given by participants in seminars fit in with the general picture of Quaker perceptions of the EU.

Lack of information and therefore ability to act

The most commonly cited reason for not getting involved in European issues was a lack of information and understanding about the structures, processes and policies of the EU. For example, many people complained that they were not made aware of who their MEP was and how to contact them.

The invisibility of European level NGOs

A similar problem was pointed out with regard to European level NGOs and campaigns. Many participants felt engaged at the global level through organisations with a global outlook and global structures. However, these participants were unaware of the fact that many of these organisations also have European offices and work on EU issues. Again, there is a lack of information and visibility, making individual involvement much harder.

Feelings of disempowerment

Many participants voiced feelings of disbelief in their ability to actually make a difference to European (or, in some cases, any other level) decision-making. This links to the perception of the EU as a huge, centralised institution, concerned with promoting its own interests or, in some people's perception, the interests of multi-national corporations. It is also connected to the lack of information: people do not know how to access decision-makers in what they see as a very complex system.

Negative feelings about the EU

Connected to both a lack of information and a feeling of disempowerment is the negative perception that many people have of the EU. Many of the negative statements that were made in seminars seemed to be based on a general feeling about the EU rather than on specific complaints. However, these negative ideas lead to less interest and therefore less involvement in the EU.

Other priorities/lack of time

Many people, when asked why they were not involved at the EU level (but were at the local, national or global level), simply said that they had different priorities and not enough time to pursue everything. Sometimes this was an emotional response, perhaps also connected to negative feelings about the EU, as one correspondent forcefully put it: "*I am irritated by so much energy being devoted to Europe when it seems to me much more important issues cry out for attention.*"

Solutions: how citizens and the EU can be brought closer together

All these reasons for lack of engagement at the EU level can be tackled. However, there are many actors involved and therefore a number of different types of action to be taken. Some of these relate directly to the current work of the Convention in that they could be incorporated into a new Constitutional Treaty, others need to be addressed in other ways.

More democratic and open institutions and processes

Feelings of disempowerment need to be addressed by changes in the institutional structure and method of the EU. The ideas for increasing democracy outlined in the previous chapter are a start in this direction. There is also a need for the institutions to recognise the necessity of engaging with citizens: we therefore join with many organisations of civil society to call for civil dialogue to be given a legal basis in the new Constitutional Treaty.

The greater involvement of citizens in European processes will not be achieved simply by the inclusion of an article formalising civil dialogue. Much thought needs to be given as to how the dialogue of institutions and governments with citizens can be carried out effectively. There are currently many examples of good practice which can be built upon and developed. For example, the development of the open method of co-ordination and the establishment of stakeholder forums to consult on relevant issues have both led to more involvement of citizens in specific areas. Such processes must be applied to more areas and publicised more widely in order to engage even more citizens.

The role of MEPs is also crucial in engaging citizens with the European process. This issue has been raised by many participants, particularly in Britain where there has recently been a change in the system of election of MEPs. This has led many people to feel more distant from their elected representatives. One idea to address this was put forward by participants in the Young Persons' Study Tour, who proposed the establishment of 'citizens' councils' to facilitate communication between MEPs and their constituents. Convened by MEPs and involving citizens from different sectors of society, such councils would provide information on current European issues to the community as well as keeping MEPs informed of local public opinion on these issues. Although it would be difficult to establish such councils across Europe (particularly bearing in mind the different systems of election for MEPs), the aim of better two-way communication between MEPs and citizens must be realised for the European Parliament to truly represent citizens in the EU.

- **The new Treaty must include an Article to give a legal obligation to the EU institutions to engage in dialogue with civil society organisations.**

- **Existing processes to engage and involve citizens and civil society organisations at all stages of policy making and implementation must be built upon in an imaginative and constructive way.**

- **Communication between MEPs and citizens must be developed to make the European Parliament a real voice for the people of Europe. MEPs must take active responsibility for communicating with their constituents.**

Simplicity, education and information

If citizens are to be truly involved in European processes then they first have to understand them. The first step in this direction has already been taken by the Convention: the decision to simplify the Treaties into one document. This should make the EU much easier for citizens to understand, with its aims, objectives, institutions and processes laid out in a logical and comprehensible way.

This alone will not be enough: there is a need for education to accompany this process, along with the provision of better, more objective and more easily accessible information. There are many different actors who could be involved in this process, for example; the EU itself, national governments, the media and NGOs. In particular, many Quakers are in support of information about the EU forming part of a broader curriculum on citizenship to be taught in schools across Europe.

There are, however, some obstacles to better education. Many national governments currently enjoy the position of controlling citizens' education about the EU: it may be to their advantage that citizens do not understand the ins and outs of EU decision-making in order to take credit for 'good' policies and lay the blame for 'bad'. The media is also seen as a problem, particularly in Britain, where there is a very negative outlook on European issues. The EU itself is in a difficult position with regard to education; on the one hand, it has very little competence in education and on the other, there is the likelihood that it could be regarded as propaganda or self-publicity if it were to take on this role itself.

- **We welcome the move to simplify the Treaties in one document, hoping this will make the EU more accessible to citizens.**

- **There is, in addition, a need for more education and information about the EU. This should be provided through a variety of sources. Citizenship education in schools should include information about the EU.**

In addition to better education, there is a need for greater transparency in the processes of the EU. In the previous chapter we put forward the need for transparency of the Council; this might also help with the portrayal of the EU by national governments. Another idea put forward by a contributor to the project is the creation of a 'Citizens' Information File' to accompany all Commission initiatives: "*Such a file would say why the initiative was being proposed at that time, what it was intended to achieve, would indicate possible problems and likely criticism, and would give a comprehensive list of everyone who had been consulted or who had lobbied in the course of preparation of the initiative.*" This openness in intention and process would lead to greater understanding of the reasoning behind Community policy and the actors involved, increasing the trust of citizens in EU processes.

- **Greater transparency in the mechanisms of the EU is required if citizens are to trust in its processes. A 'Citizens' Information File' could provide some such transparency.**

- **There is also a need for greater transparency on the part of national governments and parliaments. An equivalent 'citizens' information file' could be produced to show the European dimensions and impact of national policy.**

Faith groups and NGO action at the European level

Individual citizens need to be empowered to become involved with the EU. International NGOs which work at the EU level could do more to engage their members in EU level campaigns, rather than assuming that the institutions and issues are too complex. This should go hand-in-hand with the opening up of the institutions to civil society involvement, greater transparency and better information.

In a similar way, the role of faith-based organisations, such as QCEA, in bringing the ethical and spiritual dimension of issues to the attention of policy-makers, is as vital at the EU level as it is at the local, national or global level. The calling to 'speak truth to power' can be undermined by the problems of lack of information and disempowerment outlined above. There is also therefore a need for education and awareness-raising on the part of organisations like QCEA in order to facilitate greater involvement.

- **NGOs and faith-based organisations need to consider how to involve their members in EU level campaigns and issues. These organisations need to play a part in education and awareness-raising.** *See the chapter entitled 'Future Action: QCEA' for how QCEA plans to do this.*

Involvement of individual citizens

All these ideas for change need to be backed up by citizens themselves. As one seminar participant put it "*A problem is that we always talk of Europe in terms of 'they' or 'them' but it is really 'us'. I need to be aware of my personal power and have the courage to be outspoken. Christ was outspoken and got where He did by never shutting up. I can't keep thinking 'they are doing wrong' and never understand that I am involved too. We need a community of individuals who all take some responsibility.*" Many of these changes will not happen unless citizens demand that they do.

Many of the comments about the EU made by participants related to how centralised it is, how it is a 'top-down' institution. However, it is no good simply to demand that the EU makes itself 'bottom-up': there needs to be action at the grassroots from citizens to make this happen. For each of the recommendations above, there is action that needs to be taken by citizens or citizens' organisations to make it work. For example, citizens could: find out about how to get involved in consultation processes run by the Commission; write to their MEPs to ask about how their views are represented in Parliament; find out about the European branches of organisations they are members of and ask about European level action; contact the media to complain about inaccurate or biased reporting of European issues. All these types of action are necessary to back up the other recommendations made above.

- **Citizens need to take responsibility for their own involvement in European issues: see the chapter 'Future Action: Individuals and Quaker Meetings' for ideas and sources of information.**

A VALUE-BASED GLOBAL OUTLOOK

The area of external policy is one that has proved, during this project, to be one of the greatest concerns for Quakers. However, in the context of the work of the Convention, it is difficult to see how to recommend that the structures of the EU change in order to advance the values and priorities which Quakers are concerned about in this area. The first step is to set out the values and objectives of EU external action, the second to consider how these can best be implemented, a much more difficult step which is beyond the scope of this project to explore fully. In this section, therefore, some key issues and difficulties are highlighted as future areas of work, both for Quakers and the EU.

Values must be applied externally as well as internally

The Quaker priorities for EU values and objectives outlined in the chapter 'An EU based on human values' show the importance of the external impact of the EU for Quakers. Some of the key priorities have direct external implications, but for Quakers, all these values are universal, which leads to the recommendation of having a global outlook in all EU activity. For example, the EU must aim to promote human dignity for all in every one of its policies, both internal and external. In addition, internal policies should not just be assessed on their impact on EU citizens or member states, but also on their external impact. The global responsibility of the EU is as wide as the impact of its policies.

It should also be remembered that for most aspects of external policy responsibility remains with the member states. The EU's role is often one of co-ordination. A commitment must be made by the member states to work towards the EU's values and objectives in their foreign policy.

- **The Constitutional Treaty must describe the EU's commitment to the universal, worldwide application of its values and objectives. These values and objectives must also be pursued by the member states.**

- **The Constitutional Treaty must include the commitment to ensuring that all policies, both internal and external, are assessed for their global impact.**

The Laeken Declaration which laid out the task of the Convention on the Future of Europe had this to say about the role of the EU in the world:

> *"Europe needs to shoulder its responsibilities in the governance of globalisation. The role it has to play is that of a power resolutely doing battle against all violence, all terror and all fanaticism, but which also does not turn a blind eye to the world's heartrending injustices. In short, a power wanting to change the course of world affairs in such a way as to benefit not just the rich countries but also the poorest. A power seeking to set globalisation within a moral framework, in other words to anchor it in solidarity and sustainable development."*[6]
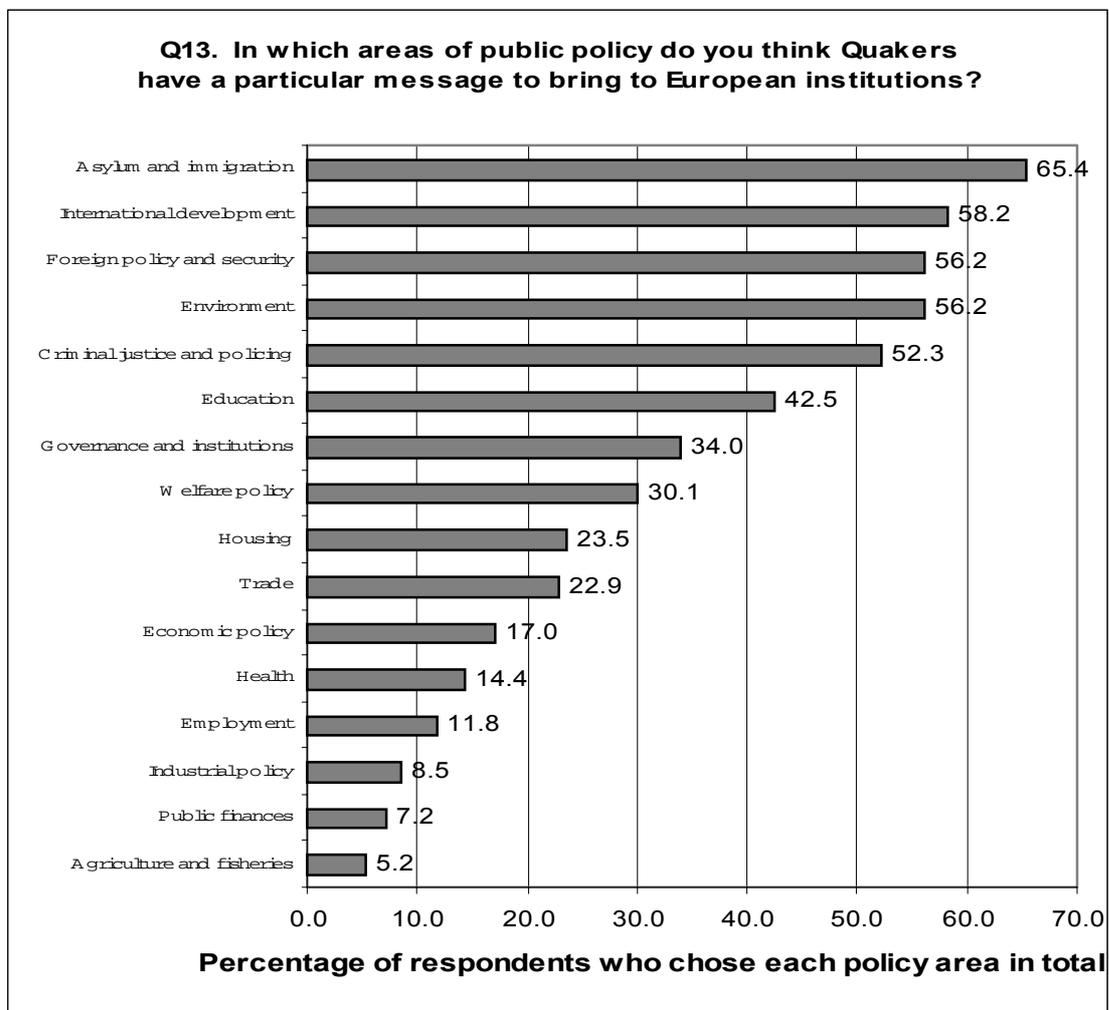
This is a vision which many Quakers would find it easy to unite with. However, the Convention seems to have forgotten its original mandate. The Convention working groups on external action and defence, along with the Commission's most recent submission to the Convention, all prioritise the need to defend the interests of the EU and its member states

rather than emphasising the EU's existing and more outward-looking commitments to sustainable development and conflict prevention. Convention members would do well to look back at the Laeken Declaration and to consider whether their progress so far is really moving towards this vision of an EU of moral weight seeking to use its privileged position to address injustice in the world.

Interdependence of external policy areas

The rest of this section will look at some of the areas pinpointed by Quakers as policies on which there is a particular Quaker message. When asked which were the areas on which Quakers had a message to bring to the European institutions, the most commonly chosen areas were those with external aspects: asylum and immigration; international development; foreign policy and security; and the environment (*see Box 8*).

Box 8: Questionnaire responses

Q13. In which areas of public policy do you think Quakers have a particular message to bring to European institutions?

Policy area	Percentage
Asylum and immigration	65.4
International development	58.2
Foreign policy and security	56.2
Environment	56.2
Criminal justice and policing	52.3
Education	42.5
Governance and institutions	34.0
Welfare policy	30.1
Housing	23.5
Trade	22.9
Economic policy	17.0
Health	14.4
Employment	11.8
Industrial policy	8.5
Public finances	7.2
Agriculture and fisheries	5.2

Percentage of respondents who chose each policy area in total

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It is vital to point out that these policy areas are all interlinked. Sound and sustainable economic policies are crucial to reduce the risk of conflicts. The inequalities between the richest and poorest regions of the world lead to economic migration flows. Conflicts, oppression and human rights abuses create refugees. Economic and social problems within European countries contribute to the inability of these countries to successfully offer asylum to those in need. Such connections are numerous and complex and point to the need for coherence between different policy areas, both internal and external.

The EU structures should reflect this interdependence of policy areas. Two concepts, sustainable development and conflict prevention, provide cross-cutting objectives for external policy. These should be mainstreamed through all EU policy areas. There must also be co-ordination between the EU and member states, with these objectives recognised as the goals of the member states to provide coherence in external action. The development of common positions must be based on the values of the EU as agreed in the Constitutional Treaty and not be reduced to the lowest common denominator.

- **The external and internal policies of the EU are interdependent. There is a need for a coherent approach which can be provided by commitment to the cross-cutting objectives of sustainable development and conflict prevention. The EU's existing commitments to these objectives must be upheld as the cornerstones of external action.**

- **The EU's member states must also be committed to the same objectives in order for coherence in external action to be achieved. These objectives should be ambitious, based on the common values agreed in the Constitutional Treaty.**

Asylum and migration

One of the 'fears' for Europe identified by respondents to the questionnaires was that the EU would develop into 'Fortress Europe'. This fear is strongly linked to concerns over asylum and immigration policy and the treatment of refugees and migrants in Europe. The majority of participants in the project also identified asylum and immigration as an area which should be dealt with primarily at a European level (*see Box 5, p?*), reflecting the reality of migration as an issue which, by its very nature, transcends national boundaries.

The area of asylum and migration is extremely complex, and it is beyond the scope of this report to address it in any detail. Concerns raised by Quakers during the project included the following:
- The EU must live up to its international obligations to provide asylum to refugees.
- We need a better understanding of the reasons for migration and should develop coherent and integrated policies to work towards a situation where people do not feel forced to leave their homes, this requires a more just and equitable global economic system.
- We should encourage a positive attitude towards migrants, especially in view of the role immigrants have played over the years in enriching communities, culturally and economically. We should not, however, view migrants as economic resources only to be used to fill gaps in our ageing population and we should also be aware of the impact that migration has on the home countries of migrants.
- We need to tackle racism and xenophobia to create a more open and inclusive society into which immigrants can be welcomed without existing communities feeling threatened.

As far as the work of the Convention goes, these concerns can be addressed in a number of ways, some of which we have expanded upon in other sections of the report. The values of the EU must be understood to be universal, applying to all. There is a need for strong policies on anti-discrimination as currently incorporated in Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty. This Article should retain a strategic place within the new Constitutional Treaty, emphasising the importance that is placed upon it. EU citizenship should be extended to third country nationals legally residing in the EU.

- **European policy on asylum and migration must recognise the fundamental rights of refugees and migrants and be based on the universal values of the EU.**

Sustainable development

Trade and development are two policy areas with interconnections as described above. External trade is one of the most important policy areas for the EU. The EU is a major world trading bloc: the 15 member states form the world's largest exporter and second largest importer. The EU represents the member states at the World Trade Organisation, making it one of the most influential actors in developing international trading agreements. The EU is also one of the most important actors in international development. The EU and its member states provide approximately half of all public aid to developing countries. The EU's policies in these two areas can thus be seen to have a major impact on the development of other countries.

This level of influence brings with it a need for an equal awareness of responsibility. Quakers involved in this project have consistently voiced fears that the EU will "*continue or exacerbate our present status of 'rich man's club' – well buttressed against the outside and exploiting where we can.*" There is a perception that the EU agenda is "*run by business and not by social needs*" and that there is too much "*concentration on growing materialism and consumerism*" (all comments taken from questionnaires). In addition, concerns have been raised about the Common Agricultural Policy and what are seen as double standards in terms of enforcing free trade overseas while protecting our own, already extremely wealthy society.

These perceptions and fears may be reduced somewhat on a reading of the aims of the EU's development policy:

> "*Community development policy is grounded on the principle of sustainable, equitable and participatory human and social development. Promotion of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance are an integral part of it… The main objective of Community development policy must be to reduce and, eventually, to eradicate poverty.*"[7]

This policy goes on to describe a number of areas for action, including the links between trade and development: "*It is the task of the Community to ensure that development policies and trade and investment policies are complementary and mutually beneficial.*"[8] All this sounds positive and coherent. However, the mission statement of the Commission's Directorate-General for Trade is less forward-looking with regard to the connections between trade and development: the purpose of the EU's trade policy is described as "*to promote the economic and political interests of the European Community.*"[9] There is no mention here of development goals, sustainability or human rights.

It is of concern that the objectives of the trade policy of the EU do not take account of the overriding principles of the EU with regard to, in particular, sustainable development. The Quaker view is that trade should be seen as a mechanism for the advancement of human and environmental global interests. There is a need for balance between the internal economic development needs of the EU member states and the economic development needs of the EU's trading partners. There is also a need for balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Development must remain a key priority for all EU external action. In the recent reorganisation of Council formations, the abolition of the Development Council, with its responsibilities subsumed into the work of the Foreign Affairs Council, is a worrying development. The Constitutional Treaty must clearly indicate that development is a key political priority of the EU and will not be subordinated to any other agenda.

Trade can be seen as an engine for development, but there must be recognition of the fact that equitable international trade policies may have an adverse domestic impact. If the EU is truly committed to global sustainable development (and sustainable development within the EU will not be possible without similar global developments) it must recognise that the 'economic and political interests of the European Community' may sometimes conflict with the human development needs of people in the rest of the world and with long-term environmental priorities. If this is the case then there is a need for gradual change.

This gradual approach must be combined with education about development and sustainability, leading to an internal change in attitudes and a simpler way of life. Quakers have a commitment to simplicity:

> "Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. Do you keep yourself informed about the effects your style of living is having on the global economy and environment?"[10]

This approach leads Quakers to be concerned about the overly materialistic and consumerist nature of European society. Long-term global sustainability will require us all to change our attitudes and life-style: the EU should recognise this. The current emphasis placed on economic growth and commercial interests jeopardises our future.

- **Global sustainable development must be an explicit objective of all external and internal policy of the EU. In particular there is a need to emphasise the objective of sustainability within economic and trade policy.**

- **Development co-operation must be recognised as a key political priority in the Constitutional Treaty: it must not be sidelined or subordinated to other goals.**

- **Sustainability requires a fundamental shift in attitudes to create a less materialistic and simpler society. The EU should work towards this.**

Conflict prevention

Foreign policy is a new and evolving field for the EU. The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is subject to the 'intergovernmental' method: common initiatives, strategy, and decision-making are all kept firmly in the hands of the member states, coming to agreements in the Council. However, the Commission's Directorate-General for External Relations has responsibility for some aspects of EU external action, and when it comes to conflict prevention, the cross-cutting nature of the area means that both trade and development policy are relevant, involving the respective Commission departments.

The Quaker perception of the EU's foreign policy is not particularly negative, but there is a very strong feeling that the EU has massive potential in developing strategies for conflict prevention which it is not yet living up to. The EU's historical roots are also remembered by many Quakers, as expressed by this correspondent: *"The overwhelming argument for the EU is its historic contribution to peace."* The EU must remember its own history in leading the way towards non-violent, multilateral and equitable solutions to conflict.

Current developments, however, do not seem to be following this path. The creation of a military Rapid Reaction Force, greater focus on (narrowly defined) 'security' and support for the European arms industry point to the militarisation of the EU rather than an innovative search for alternatives to violence.

While this paints a gloomy picture, there are many positive aspects of the EU's approach to conflict. The European Council of Göteborg concluded that *"Conflict prevention is one of the main objectives of the Union's external relations and should be integrated in all its relevant aspects, including the European Security and Defence Policy, development cooperation and trade"*.[11] We welcome this multi-faceted approach to conflict prevention and urge the Convention to remember these existing commitments in the drafting of objectives for the EU's external policy in the new Constitutional Treaty.

It is of grave concern that in the Commission's most recent submission to the Convention, conflict prevention is not mentioned under the section outlining the objectives of the CFSP, while in this same section the Commission states the need *"to encourage the development of the European arms industry"*[12]. While the current world situation is uncertain, this requires, more than ever, a commitment to the principle of finding just and sustainable solutions to the root causes of conflict. The Commission itself recognises that the arms trade plays no part in such solutions, citing *"the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and small arms"* in a list of factors which aggravate conflict[13]. Support for the arms industry is clearly in opposition to the EU's objective of conflict prevention.

Among Quaker and other organisations there is much expertise on non-violent conflict prevention and alternatives to armed conflict. Ideas put forward for the EU are:
- the need for pre-emptive diplomacy, consisting of early, unconditional dialogue at times of conflict;
- the establishment of a non-violent civilian peace corps (as proposed, for example, by the European Parliament[14]);
- the use of social measures to reduce poverty and inequality;
- more attention and resources to be put into research into the causes of conflict and development of non-violent alternatives to armed conflict;

- making use of existing expertise in relevant organisations.

All these ideas point to the need for greater resources and greater publicity for the EU's conflict prevention strategy as well as the need to be forward-thinking in the continuing development of this strategy.

The EU stands at a pivotal moment in the course it takes in foreign policy. Building on its roots of non-violent, multilateral co-operation to prevent conflict between the powers of Europe it should now continue on the same path, promoting multilateralism, commitment to international co-operation and the rule of law, and the use of economic measures to create a world where violent conflict becomes as unlikely as it currently is between the member states of the EU. The EU must have the vision and political will to pursue this path.

- **Conflict prevention must be the main aim of the CFSP.**

- **Conflict prevention must be incorporated into the Constitutional Treaty as a cross-cutting objective, to be mainstreamed across all relevant policy areas (in particular, CFSP, trade and development).**

- **The Convention must not endorse support for the European arms industry as an objective of the EU. This would go against the existing commitment to conflict prevention and lead to greater instability and a greater risk of violent conflict in the world.**

- **The EU must back up its conflict prevention strategy with the allocation of substantial human and financial resources.**

QCEA will continue to work on all these areas. *See the next chapter 'Future Action: QCEA' for more details*.

FUTURE ACTION: QCEA

Information and awareness-raising

This project has highlighted the importance of information in enabling citizens to take on their responsibilities at the European level and thus confirms the importance of QCEA's role in providing information to its Quaker constituency. QCEA will continue to actively provide information to Quakers on the following:

- Information about the structures of the EU (including information about the new structures which result from the work of the Convention).
- Information about topical issues, especially those connected to the values and priorities identified by participants and those relevant to QCEA project work.

In the coming months we will be reassessing our communications strategy. The following are some ideas for ways to improve the information we currently provide:

- Continued production of *Around Europe* to provide on-going news and analysis of relevant issues
- Production of occasional short briefing papers on specific issues, with action points for individuals and Quakers Meetings as appropriate
- Publication of reports on projects and programme work (similar to this one)
- Continued use and development of the website
- Use of e-mail to send more regular updates and action points as appropriate
- Continued organisation of the two annual study tours to Brussels and Strasbourg
- QCEA attendance at Quaker events and meetings

We hope to incorporate information with ideas for action on specific issues, thus enabling Quakers to play a more active role in the work of QCEA and in European level politics more generally. If you have any ideas about how we could improve on the information we currently provide, feedback would be appreciated.

Work on the Future of Europe

The work of the Convention will continue into the summer of 2003, and will be followed by an Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC), probably in 2004, when the Heads of State of the EU will decide how to act on the Convention's recommendations. QCEA will continue to monitor the progress of the Convention and the IGC and to react as appropriate. We will continue this work both independently and in co-operation with other NGO networks working for the same goals.

Programme work

QCEA's programme work has traditionally focused on three areas: peace, human rights and economic justice. The areas identified by Quakers as those where Quakers have a particular message confirm that these three areas of programme work should continue to be the focus of QCEA's work. In particular, asylum and immigration issues are seen as of importance in the

human rights field, and international development and environmental issues are identified as a focus for economic justice work.

The future work programme of QCEA is currently being developed and may include the following projects:

Peace
- Peace Tax – research project into the current state of the discussion on the Peace Tax issue in Europe
- Terror – Implications for Security Policies: A Non-Violent Response - A major consultation on this subject which will include locally led dialogues, seminars, a conference and a publication
- Conference for Peace Studies Institutes – such a conference would aim to enable constructive dialogue between institutes and NGOs interested in this area of work

Human Rights
- Asylum/Migration Briefing – publication detailing the current situation with regard to developments in common European asylum and migration policies
- Continuing Work on Asylum and Migration – following from the above assessment of current situation
- Review of Conscientious Objection in EU member and candidate states (joint project with EBCO)
- Criminal Justice Work – initial focus on the European dimension of women in custody

Economic Justice
- Corporate Social Responsibility - participation in Multi-Stakeholder Forum set up by the European Commission to come up with recommendations on CSR
- Development and Trade – working with QPSW and QUNO Geneva on projects relating to access for small farmers in developing countries to EU markets
- QCEA/QPSW Conference: major conference to be arranged jointly to examine economic justice issues and the role of the EU in world economic relations.

In all the programme work of QCEA, the lessons of the Future of Europe project will be taken to heart. In particular, attention will be paid in each case to the provision of useful information and briefings on the issues that QCEA is working on.

FUTURE ACTION: INDIVIDUALS AND QUAKER MEETINGS

This report starts with a summary of recommendations to the Convention on the Future of Europe. However, we hope that in reading this report it will have become clear that the future development of the EU is dependent not only on the actions of the Convention and the European institutions, but on a huge variety of organisations and individuals, including citizens. Experience of trying to access the Convention suggests that if citizens and citizens' organisations are to be heard in the EU they will have to push for greater participation. The development of a European citizenry starts with the individual: this section aims to enable you to become a more active EU citizen, participating in structures which do, in the end, influence not only our lives in Europe, but the lives of people all over the world.

Keep yourself informed

The lack of information has been identified throughout this project as one of the key obstacles to the involvement of citizens at the European level. Developing your own understanding of European institutions and issues is the first step to taking effective action. Here are some starting points:

QCEA:
We provide information through our newsletter, *Around Europe*, occasional longer reports (like this one), and our website (**www.quaker.org/qcea**). We are currently rethinking our communications strategy, so please let us know if there is anything that you would find particularly useful (email updates, more printed briefings, a more developed website…). We also run annual study tours of Brussels and Strasbourg which involve visiting the key institutions, meeting people working in NGOs, and introductions to the key issues that QCEA works on.

The internet:
If you have internet access, the EU websites are comprehensive and relatively easy to get around. Try starting with:

Europa: **http://europa.eu.int**
The entry point for all the EU institutions on the web. You can find official documents (Treaties, Commission proposals, Parliamentary opinions, Council decisions etc) as well as information about all the institutions, the people who work for them and how to contact them.

The Convention on the Future of Europe: **http://european-convention.eu.int**
The site gives access to all official documents of the Convention, information about plenary sessions, Convention Members, and the Forum where civil society contributions (including QCEA's) can be found.

The Future of Europe debate: **http://europa.eu.int/futurum**
More interactive and broader site than the Convention. Contributions from all sorts of people and organisations. On-line discussion and debate.

The following sites are newer and more interactive:
Your Voice in Europe: **http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice**

The EU wants you to "play an active role in the European Union's policy-making process" and "wants to listen to your ideas, face up to your criticism and learn from your experience."

Europe Direct: **http://europa.eu.int/europedirect**
"A service to help you find answers to your questions about the European Union."

European Information Points and Public Libraries:
For those of you who prefer your information on paper, try asking at your public library. Some libraries have European Documentation centres: even if yours is not one of them, asking for information about the EU will show that there is a demand for this information and perhaps lead to better provision in the future.

There are also European Parliament and Commission Offices in all EU Member States, which can provide information about the institutions and their activities. To find out the addresses of these offices, try contacting the European Parliament switchboard in Brussels (+32 (0)2 284 21 11) or the European Commission switchboard (+32 (0)2 299 11 11).

Build cultural links

During the project, many participants have emphasised the value of developing cultural and personal connections with people across Europe. Ideas that have been put forward are:
- Visiting people from other European countries, perhaps as part of exchange programmes or twinning schemes. You could also think about finding and visiting Quaker meetings
- Working in other countries
- Learning other languages
- Learning more about the histories and cultures of Europe.

Speak Truth to Power

Putting your views across to the European institutions may seem a difficult task: there are so many institutions and departments and it may be difficult to see who is actually making the decisions. Understanding the system may help with this, the information sources above will give you a start, for more specific information, try turning to NGOs working in specialised areas (see below).

Once you know what you want to say, there are different channels to go through:

The Convention on the Future of Europe:
The Convention will be continuing its work until at least June 2003. To influence this process you can write to the Convention members who represent your national government and parliament. To find out who is representing the Convention from your country, look at the Convention website which lists all the Convention members with contact details. Alternatively, contact the QCEA Office which can also provide this information.

The recommendations put forward in this report will be presented to Convention members by QCEA, but they will have more impact if Convention members also receive the same ideas from the people they are supposed to represent. You could use the conclusions on p?, or the more detailed recommendations on p? as the basis for your communication.

The Convention's aim is to produce a proposal for a Constitutional Treaty. This proposal will then go before an Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) for final adoption by Heads of State before it is ratified by Member States, probably sometime in 2004. National governments and parliaments will be involved in the IGC and the ratification process, so contact your national representatives to influence the process at this stage.

National governments and parliaments:

The Council of the EU, made up of representatives of national governments, is one of the most powerful bodies of the EU. This is where decisions are made, sometimes jointly with the European Parliament, sometimes not. The positions that national representatives take are worked out within national governments and will often be debated in national parliaments. National lobbying is therefore an effective way to influence the development of EU policy. Contact relevant government departments or government ministers to express your views on European issues, and to ask them what their position is. Contact with national Members of Parliament is also a good way to influence the process: this will also remind your representatives of the importance of European issues and their relevance for constituents.

Members of the European Parliament:

The European Parliament is the body which directly represents citizens, so therefore a good place to try to get your voice heard. In some countries MEPs are elected nationally, in others there are regional constituencies. It may be best to write to the MEPs who represent your area, to those from a political party which may support your position or to those who sit on a relevant committee. The best place to find out about MEPs is on the European Parliament website: http://www.europarl.eu.int. If you don't have web access try your national European Parliament information office.

Political Parties:

If you are a member of a political party, then try to find out what position the party takes on European issues and how you can influence the development of party policy on these issues.

The media:

The majority of participants in this project cited the mainstream media as their main source of information about the EU. However, the presentation of European issues by the media has also come under heavy criticism. One way you can begin to tackle this is to write to newspapers and broadcasters in reaction to coverage of European issues, pointing out misleading, inaccurate or biased reporting.

Take action through European organisations

If you find European issues a little overwhelming, you may find it easier to address them with the help of organisations working on specialist issues full time.

QCEA:

QCEA's role is to represent the concerns of Quakers at the European level. Strategic decisions about QCEA's work are made by QCEA's Council, consisting of members from each of the nine European Yearly Meetings, plus other Quaker bodies. Through the information we distribute we hope to enable Quakers to be more active on European issues. In the future we hope to develop projects with action points for individuals and Quaker Meetings. To support the work of QCEA, you can:

Become an Associate Member: Associate Members support the work of QCEA through an annual subscription. They receive the newsletter, *Around Europe,* as well as all QCEA reports. There is an Associate Members' Conference every two years. If you want to become an Associate Member, fill in and return the enclosed form, or contact the QCEA Office.

Supporting Membership: Quaker Meetings and groups can also become Supporting Members of QCEA. See the enclosed form for details.

Contact the QCEA Council Member for your Yearly Meeting: QCEA Council Members provide a link between QCEA and the Yearly Meetings. You can talk to them about your concerns and they will be glad to know that there are people in the Yearly Meeting supporting their work.

Talk to other Quakers about QCEA: Simply talking about QCEA and its work to other Quakers will spread interest and support among the wider body of Friends.

Invite QCEA: If you think that people in your Monthly, Quarterly or Yearly Meeting would be interested in finding out more about QCEA or about a specific project, you could invite someone from QCEA to visit and speak about their work.

More active involvement: In Britain and the Netherlands there are groups which support the work of QCEA. To find out how to get involved with these groups, please contact the QCEA Office.

Other NGOs:
There are hundreds of organisations in Brussels representing all sorts of different societal groups and opinions. Many are networks of national organisations (which you may already be members of). Find out if organisations that you are involved with are either members of European networks, or have European offices. If so, you could ask them for information about the issues they work on, and advice about how you could take action on these issues.

EUROPE: WORKING TOWARDS THE PRESENT AND FUTURE PEACE OF THE WORLD

Many of the ideas expressed during the project, and summarised in this report, can be brought back to the Quaker belief in the existence of 'that of God' in every human being, whether they be a citizen of an EU member state, a citizen of another state living within the EU or someone living outside the EU but affected by its policies.

This belief is at the heart of the recommendations of this report. We challenge the EU to take on board the need to:

Create an equitable economic system within the EU, based on social and environmental needs.

The strengths of the European Social Model must be recognised and this model should be extended to the new member states as enlargement occurs.

Work with international institutions to create an equitable global economic system.

The EU must recognise that the aim of sustainable development may sometimes conflict with European commercial interests: *"Our primary objective in speaking truth to power on social and economic issues, especially on the problem of world poverty, should be the interests of the poor. Our role is to remind the rich and privileged, including ourselves, of the challenge to surrender privilege."* Cecil R Evans, 1987, quoted in 29.12, Quaker Faith and Practice, Britain Yearly Meeting

Ensure that all people living within the EU, including those who are not citizens of member states, enjoy the same rights.

A first step towards this would be the extension of EU citizenship to non-EU nationals legally resident within the EU.

Build on the European experience to work for peace and the prevention of violent conflict world wide.

William Penn's vision for the 'present and future peace of Europe' was, in spirit, realised in the latter half of the twentieth century. Looking to the future, the challenge and opportunity for Europe is to use this experience to work for peace in the wider world.

References:

[1] *The Laeken Declaration on the Future of Europe was agreed by Heads of State at the European Council in Laeken on 15 December 2001:*
    http://europa.eu.int/futurum/documents/offtext/doc151201_en.htm
[2] Treaty Establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, 1952
[3] Standard Eurobarometer 57 (Spring 2002), p12:
    http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb57/eb57_en.pdf
[4] Standard Eurobarometer 57 (Spring 2002), p51:
    http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb57/eb57_en.pdf
[5] From the website of Britain Yearly Meeting -
    http://www.quaker.org.uk/more/qviews/qtestim1.html
[6] Laeken Declaration on the Future of Europe, 15 December 2001
[7] The European Community's Development Policy - Statement by the Council and the Commission (http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/lex/en/council20001110_en.htm)
[8] EC Development Policy as above
[9] Website of DG Trade: http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/misc/mission_en.htm
[10] Advices and Queries 41, Britain Yearly Meeting
[11] European Presidency Conclusions of the Göteborg European Council (15 and 16 June 2001)
[12] Commission Communication to the Convention on the Future of Europe (COM (2002) 728, 4/12/2002); section 1.3.3
[13] Commission Communication on the Prevention of Violent Conflict (COM (2001) 211, April 2001)
[14] European Parliament recommendation on the establishment of a European Civil Peace Corps; adopted 10/02/99, based on Report A4-0047/1999