



Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs

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Gaza - the largest prison on earth?

Smile - you are in the biggest jail on earth, GAZA. This inscription was on a mug I bought last week in Gaza. It somehow sums up the feeling I got of the people of Gaza, smiling and coping, in the face of the hopelessness of their situation. Everywhere I went I was met with a smiling "Welcome to Gaza", "Where are you from? What are you doing in Gaza?" It is hard to understand how 1.5 million people, half of them children, all effectively locked in a tiny stripe of land 45 km long and 5-12 km wide, 365 sq km, (smaller than the Isle of Wight) can not only cope but do so with such dignity and humour. I saw recycling on a grand scale, tiny shops selling different car parts, one for windscreens, one for doors, and one for wheels. Many of the cars of Gaza were clearly made up of parts from different cars, though for many the mode of transport was back to the donkey and cart. I saw the rubble in the bombed industrial area of the north being meticulously collected onto those carts to be re-used as building material, the young men and boys risking getting shot if they ventured too close to the border with Israel. I did not get the feeling of a people who had given up, instead a people determined to survive, come what may. This was confirmed in the film *Aisheen - Still Alive in Gaza* I saw later in Ramallah. Of course, I am well aware that a six-day visit did not expose me to the reality of living under a siege.

Last year I spent five frustrating days waiting for permission to enter Gaza through the border at Erez. I was not refused permission until months later, but while waiting, the answer was that the permission was not finalised, maybe it will come through in a couple of hours/this afternoon/tomorrow morning etc. etc. After five days I returned to Norway. This time with the help of American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) permission was granted, and the only question at the Erez border was if I had any weapons with me! Ten minutes later I was through all the turnstiles, the metal doors, and the long walk through no-man's-land.

I was in Gaza visiting the thirteen kindergartens Quaker Service Norway (QSN) support, from Beit

Hanoun in the north to Rafah in the south, twelve of them in refugee camps - kindergartens where 1600



The kindergarten class as it moves to its next "corner"

five-year-olds for a few hours each day play and learn together in a safe, caring atmosphere. AFSC started the kindergartens in the 1970s, and they did a good job. The kindergartens are now run by the NGO, The Palestinian Early Childhood Education Programme (PECEP). In the recent external evaluation they were termed "model kindergartens" with the suggestion

that it was time to use that model in other kindergartens. What is this model? A well-planned and structured day with 50 per cent learning and 50 per cent play based on the "corner" approach: Concentration; art and science; story, singing and free play; and directed play. The "corners" are separate rooms, which mean that four times during the morning up to 130 children change rooms, which was amazing to watch. The children know who is in charge and follow the teacher's instructions, which are given in a caring and compassionate way.

"One and a half million people locked in the world's biggest prison and the world does not seem to be able to do anything about it."

Many of the children have experienced horrors that we can barely imagine, and I could see the trauma in some of their faces. Four years ago the teachers asked for training to be able to help these children. QSN, together with PECEP, started a project with



Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (GCMHP)



All change!

which provides training for teachers, workshops for parents, and a consulting clinic in the kindergartens. Children suffering from trauma receive help, and parents and teachers recognise the symptoms and know how to react. After the war the need was even greater and the project was extended. At a recent

conference held by GCMHP, participants called for providing a safe environment for the children and reinforcing their feelings of security and protection, and the importance of training parents in the early detection of their children's problems and how to deal with these problems through listening to them and conducting modifications to their style of parenting. QSN hopes to extend their cooperation with QCMHP in 2011.

Leaving Gaza was the same procedure in reverse, but this time as the metal doors closed behind me, and I eventually emerged the other side of the huge terminal building at Erez, the feeling of leaving a prison was overwhelming. One and a half million people locked in the world's biggest prison and the world does not seem to be able to do anything about it. The humour was more ironic on the mug I saw of a face with hands covering eyes, ears and mouth, and the inscription - The International Community.

***Penny Heymans, Norway Yearly Meeting's
Representative on QCEA Council***

Energy Efficiency: Time for the EU to put its money where its mouth is

"Energy efficiency is the most cost effective way to reduce emissions, improve energy security and competitiveness, make energy consumption more affordable for consumers as well as create employment" says the European Commission's Energy 2020 Strategy. Buildings consume 40 per cent of energy used in the EU, 7 per cent of which is for heating, thus the efficiency savings potential is enormous.

It seems everyone in the EU, Member States, Parliament and European Commission, knows this, but as Marie Donnelly, from the Directorate General (DG) for Energy, said, "everybody agrees energy efficiency is priority number one, but it's just not happening". We're currently on track to miss our target of 20 per cent energy efficiency savings by half - equivalent to the final energy consumption of Germany.

When you look at the proportion of EU funding that goes to energy efficiency projects however, it is not surprising that we're failing so starkly to meet our objectives. Certainly, there are interesting and innovative projects being funded, such as DG Research's CONCERTO initiative - "cities demonstrating energy & climate change policy solutions". As a proportion of what we're spending

overall however, such projects are mere drops in the ocean.

To get a sense of proportion, an overview of EU expenditure is needed. This is not an easy thing to

"If energy efficiency is priority number one, then Europe's funding does not match its priorities."

find, as the various DGs and their financial instruments account for only 20 per cent of the EU budget, and it is only this which is covered by the financial transparency system. The other 80 per cent is distributed via national and regional authorities, which means trawling through reams of

Commission webpages, for every region of every country, to get the often untranslated information. As a diplomat recently quipped "Nothing is so well hidden as on the internet".

Despite this, a coalition of Environmental NGOs has produced a document on the EU Budget's role in creating a sustainable future. It reports that the 2007-



2013 cohesion policy allocates only 1.2 per cent for energy efficiency, co-generation and energy management for the whole of Europe.

Some progress appeared to be made when the 2009 European Economic Recovery Plan earmarked up to 4 per cent of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for energy-efficient refurbishment and the use of renewable energy in existing homes. Yet, less than 30 per cent of this has been utilized, due to a colossal



It is time for the EU to back its words with actions; the sustainability challenge won't wait, and energy efficiency must be funded proportionately to its primary role in the solution.

lack of publicity, stringent co-financing requirements, and a laborious and complex application process.

Funding for energy research does not indicate the prioritization of energy efficiency either, with DG Research's current research framework allocating almost 40 per cent (€1.947 billion) of its energy funding to nuclear fusion. Yet the experimental fusion project 'ITER', as a green MEP bemoaned, is not expected to produce a single commercial electron before 2095. Meanwhile, research into energy efficiency and non-biofuel renewables is marginalized.

The picture is clear: if energy efficiency is priority number one, then Europe's funding does not match its priorities.

Energy 2020 tells us "It is high time that we move from words to action", and this is the message QCEA has been advocating to various Member States' Permanent Representations in Brussels. Whilst promoting the translation of widely spoken rhetoric into coherent, appropriate and binding policy commitments, we have encountered very different audiences. We've been faced with frank admittance that energy-efficient homes provide neither the ribbons to cut nor the photo opportunities for local and national politicians, who continue to hanker after big infrastructure projects, which are, after all, easier to throw money at than bespoke solutions at local level. But we've also run into the cottonwool wall of inscrutable faces and blanket agreement with the energy efficiency agenda, yet with the underlying impression that security of gas supply, from genuine or perceived threats, is their real concern.

Prestige projects and geopolitics may be one side of the picture, but climate change and resource depletion are the other, and with only lukewarm and ambiguous "progress" at Cancun, the time has passed for these two sides to be pitted against each other; it is the latter that must guide our policy decisions. With respect to energy efficiency, it is time for the EU to put its money where its mouth is.

Rachel Tansey

For more information, see 'Changing Perspectives - How the EU Budget can shape a Sustainable Future', www.foeeurope.org/publications/2010/Changing_perspectives_Nov_2010.pdf

An open letter to the European External Action Service

The Quaker Council for European Affairs welcomes the establishment of the new European External Action Service (EEAS) on 1 December 2010 and the transfer of staff from other European Institutions into the EEAS on 1 January 2011. This has been a long process which began when the erstwhile Constitutional Treaty included the concept of such a service; it took shape only after the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009; for the past twelve months it has held centre stage in the attention of key decision-makers and civil society. Now that it has become a reality, we want to contribute to its launch by putting forward some

thoughts and questions to those who will lead the EEAS.

The EEAS is a brand new Institution; it provides an opportunity to take a new look at how the European Union does foreign policy, why it does foreign policy and how it defines its interests.

Until the launch of the Service, the foreign policy agenda was set, every six months, by the rotating Presidency of the European Union; now, the agenda is set by the decision-makers who, as permanent chairs of working groups and committees, have a longer



term responsibility for ensuring that the Service does what the EU wants it to do. How is this going to affect the agenda?

There are many difficulties ahead. Staff will have to work in new structures, with new colleagues and on issues with which they may not yet be familiar. This will take time but there will also be pressure on them to 'hit the ground running'. How can those in leadership positions ensure that people are given the time and space to settle into their new roles?

Those leading the Service will have to deal with those organizational issues still outstanding - the budget, the office space, some of the structure, recruitment to some of the posts, training; all these take time and need focused attention to make sure that the culture of the EEAS is one that supports the aims of the Service. The fact that the Service involves staff distributed across the globe (and in several different locations in Brussels) makes that more challenging. How can the Corporate and Policy Boards of the EEAS ensure that all this happens and that it is not overtaken entirely by global events? How can they take the time to reflect in a context where urgency is the daily watchword?

This is a moment to take stock; to take stock of the fact that the European Union, above all, is a peace project. It was created to ensure that there would never be another war amongst its members. It is not

just an economic union; it is built on shared values and standards. The creation of the EEAS is an opportunity to turn that purpose, and those values and standards, into a new foreign policy agenda: an agenda built on peaceful cooperation in place of war; on human rights, the rule of law, democracy and equality in the way it interacts with other peoples and countries; on an understanding of foreign policy interests which are based on an understanding of the global indivisibility of security and of the interdependence of all people and peoples across the world.

The challenge for the new Service will be to realize this in foreign policy at a time when everyone is under pressure, when everyone wants to see results now, when everyone is consumed by the crises we face. The challenge for the leadership of

the Service will be to keep their head, to reflect and to hold onto global peace for all peoples as the guiding motivation for all that it does. It is a great challenge and one for which the EEAS will need the undivided support of Member State governments, Member State Parliaments and civil society in the Member States. If this is indeed the challenge the EEAS sets itself, it will rightly deserve that support.

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Martina Weitsch

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