



Around Europe

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The Right to Conscientious Objection in Europe



Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg

On 27 April 2005 QCEA launched its latest report '*The Right to Conscientious Objection in Europe: A Review of the Current Situation*' at the Council of Europe. Aware of the fact that conscientious objectors are still treated harshly in some European countries and that the right to conscientious objection is not even recognized in all the member states of the Council of Europe, QCEA commissioned this report

to highlight the problems which still remain in Europe with regard to the right to conscientious objection to military service.

This report provides an overview of the current situation in Europe. In recent years many developments have taken place with regard to conscription and conscientious objection. Several European countries have suspended conscription although most European countries still maintain conscription and most European young men are still liable to perform military service. In many countries, particularly in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the former Soviet Union, both legal regulations on the recognition of the right to conscientious objection and actual practice are changing quickly. In other European countries, the right to conscientious objection is still not recognized fully or at all and there is still harsh treatment of conscientious objectors.

We were fortunate to have both Friedhelm Schneider, Vice-President of the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO, www.ebco-beoc.org) and EBCO Delegate to the Council of Europe, and Andreas Speck of War Resisters' International (WRI, www.wri-irg.org) at the launch.

The report is available to download from the QCEA website (www.quaker.org/qcea/coreport) and print copies are available from the QCEA Office.

On 28 April, Liz Scurfield, was one of four NGO representatives who spoke at the Hearing on the Human Rights of Members of the Armed Forces in Europe held by the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. In her speech Liz focused on the right to conscientious objection for professional soldiers, serving conscripts and reservists and on specific human rights violations in the armed forces of some member states of the Council of Europe which lead to significant levels of draft evasion and/or desertion. The Rapporteur, Mr Alexander Arabadjiev (Bulgaria) will hopefully incorporate some of the points Liz raised in his forthcoming report.

Liz Scurfield



Charlotte Wetton joins QCEA



After three months as the sole Programme Assistant Robin Bloomfield has been joined by Charlotte Wetton.

I was introduced to European Quaker activism by the Friends Schools' Study Tour and I decided then to apply for programme assistant when I left university. The Tour led me to study International History and International Politics at the University of Sheffield. These were three packed years in which I spent a year studying in Alberta, Canada and the rest of the time as an enthusiastic participant in Amnesty International and the Anti-Fascist League to name but two. My key interests are women's human rights and refugees and I hope to do an MA in Gender and International Politics in the future.

My attachment to Quakerism comes from my time at the Mount School, York. In October I attended a Woodbrooke course in Spiritual Activism. I hope this inner journey progresses throughout the year and am looking forward to going to Meeting more regularly while at QCEA.

I am also a creative writer and have a strong interest in the Arts, particularly film and contemporary art.

Charlotte Wetton

Sign up to the European Peace Directory

QCEA is working to set up an online Directory of Organisations and Groups working for Peace in Europe.

The Directory is intended to be an online resource for all those in Europe who are working for peace and want to find out who else in Europe is working in this field. We are including all European countries, not just EU Member States, in the Directory.

Any group or organisation interested in signing up to the Directory should go to: www.quaker.org/qcea/peacedirectory or e-mail rbloomfield@qcea.org.

The Directory costs nothing to join and will be free to access.

All groups who sign up to the Directory must be non-violent and committed to working through peaceful means.

The deadline for signing up to the European Peace Directory is: **24 June 2005**

The European Peace Directory is being produced in association with: **Mouvement Chrétien Pour la Paix**.

Please distribute this information to any group or organisation you think may be interested in joining the Directory.

Robin Bloomfield

Peace Tax Update

During the Spring session of the Parliamentary Assembly at the Council of Europe, QCEA put forward a draft resolution on the right of conscientious objection to the payment of taxes for military purposes to the Human Rights Grouping of the International NGOs with participatory status at the Council of Europe.

Conscientious objectors refuse, on moral grounds, to take part in military activities. QCEA believes that the right of conscientious objection should be extended to those who cannot in all conscience pay for military activities.

Although we had an interesting debate on the subject, the Human Rights Grouping was not willing to support the resolution at this time. QCEA is now seeking a member of the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights at the Council of Europe to take forward our proposal. We are also considering what other action to take on this issue.

The draft resolution and the Briefing Papers we prepared on this subject are available on our website at: www.quaker.org/qcea/peacetax.

More information on the participatory status of NGOs at the Council of Europe is available at: www.coe.int/T/E/NGO/Public/

Robin Bloomfield



Civilian Crisis Management: What is it and what is still to be done?

QCEA has been working with EPLO (the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office) for the last 2 years on strengthening the EU capabilities for civilian crisis management. We touched on this briefly in the last edition of *Around Europe* in our short report on the 'Partners in Prevention' Conference.

Civilian crisis management is one of the EU's European Security and Defence Policy instruments which form part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. For the EU, civilian crisis management is very clearly defined as:

- Police intervention
- Rule of law intervention
- Civil administration intervention
- Civil protection intervention.

In its original concept, these 4 types of interventions were seen as very separate. Over time, the concept has developed further and the EU now sees possible missions which combine two or more of these elements. This was confirmed in the Action Plan on Civilian Crisis Management adopted by the Council of the European Union in June 2004.

The EU has agreed 8 missions within the European Security and Defence Policy; 3 of these were military missions and 5 were civilian ones. The civilian missions are:

1. A Police mission in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
2. A Rule of Law mission in Georgia
3. A Police mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina
4. A Police mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
5. An integrated Rule of Law mission for Iraq.

Within the Council General Secretariat there is a small staff of about 25 (compared to 150 military staff) who coordinate such missions and develop the necessary policy, strategy and logistical support to make them happen. There is also a Committee for Civilian Crisis Management (CIVCOM) on which diplomats from all EU Member States are represented and who develop the policy for the EU in this area.

QCEA and EPLO welcome this work and applaud it but see the need for much more.

The reason we co-hosted the 'Partners in Prevention' Conference (reported in the last edition of *Around Europe*) was the realisation

that we, as representatives of civil society, representing a number of NGOs working on conflict prevention issues, must continue the dialogue with policy makers on what is still to be done:

- One of the major issues facing the EU is having the right people available at the right time for civilian interventions. The current concept of civilian intervention is based on exclusively state actors (civil servants or state employees) being made available. Despite this, there is no forum at EU level where the ministers responsible for such personnel can discuss interventions at a political level. Decisions about missions are taken by ministers for foreign affairs who are not responsible for the personnel concerned. What is needed is an EU forum for those ministers to build common approaches across the different issues involved.

- There is too little coordination between different parts of the European Union (Council and Commission) to ensure that short-term crisis management and long-term peace building are fully integrated. What is needed is an innovative framework for joined up policy at operational level both within the EU and with other actors (international, state, and non-state).

- The integration of NGOs into the civilian crisis management activities of the EU is of major significance

- Training, recruitment and coordination of civilian personnel needs more resources.

(For a full analysis of these issues please see the EPLO policy statement: *Generating Civilian Capabilities: Moving Beyond Crisis Management to Peacebuilding on the QCEA website at www.quaker.org/qcea/eplomarch05.pdf*)

In short, civilian crisis management is a good start. But it is not enough. It is not long-term enough in its concept, it is not well enough connected to the longer term instruments and approaches of the European Commission, the Member States and other international actors, it is not well enough resourced at any level, and it does not take on board the contribution which NGOs can, should and need to make to ensure that crisis management can lead to long-term peacebuilding.

Martina Weitsch



News in Brief

The Constitutional Treaty - Update

The 'yes' camp has had a sudden surge of support claims the latest French opinion poll. With a strengthening of the socialist campaign, 52% of French voters would now vote to ratify the European Constitution according to opinion polls. French voters are under increasing pressure with the German Chancellor and the 'grand old men' of the left - former Commission President Jacques Delors and former Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin - weighing in for the 'yes' vote.

Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia, and Italy have already ratified the Constitutional Treaty via parliament, while Spain voted 'Yes' in a referendum in February. Referenda still to come are: Netherlands 1 June 2005, Luxembourg 10 July 2005, Denmark, Poland 25 September 2005, 27 September 2005, Portugal 9 October 2005, Ireland October 2005, and the UK 6 May 2006. The Czech Republic has yet to decide about a referendum.

A 'no' vote in any country would have a serious impact on implementation, but a 'no' vote in France or the Netherlands, two of the founders of the EU, could derail the process completely.

QCEA Website Relunched

QCEA has just relaunched its website with a new design. The site is online at:

www.quaker.org/qcea/

QCEA would like to thank Saffron Walden Preparative Meeting for helping to support the redevelopment of the site financially.

Confused by Eurojargon?

The language and words used relating to the European Institutions and European politics can often be confusing and unclear to the general public. For all the people who would like to have this 'eurojargon' explained, QCEA recommends '*A Plain Guide to Eurojargon*' produced by the European Commission. The guide is available on the Europa website at: http://europa.eu.int/abc/eurojargon/index_en.htm

For legal and technical terms the glossary available at: http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/glossary/index_en.htm is also useful.

OSCE Vision for the Future without the Voice of Women

In December 2004 the participating States of the OSCE decided to set up a high level panel of eminent persons to draw up a vision for OSCE's future. In the March 2005 edition of the OSCE Magazine a short feature on this panel reveals that it is composed entirely of men.

QCEA enquired of the OSCE why this was so and expressed its concern that the voice of women was not to be heard in this important debate. In response, QCEA was informed by the OSCE that appointments to the Eminent Panel were made from nominations by the 55 participating States. None of these States had nominated a single woman!

If your country is a participating State (you can find out at: www.osce.org/about/13131.html), you may want to take this up with the relevant department in your government.



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