



Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs

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Responding to an Increase in Far-Right MEPs

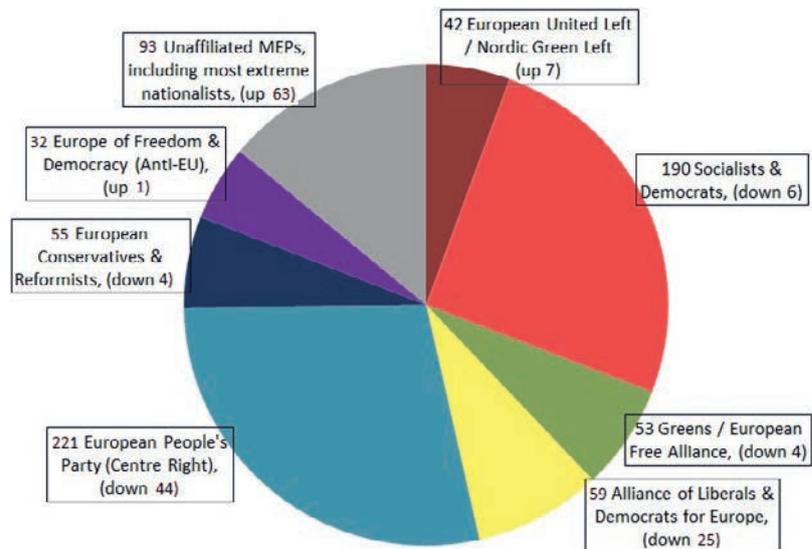
The increase in support for some far-right parties means it is now more important than ever to engage your Member of the European Parliament (MEP). Between 22 and 25 May 2014 citizens from 28 countries elected a new European Parliament. One quarter of MEPs belong to parties that are anti-European, and many are from the far right. The voting is over, but we still have a responsibility to engage with politics.

The average voter turnout in the election was 43%, the same as in 2009. Many more Europeans voted for far-right nationalist parties than 5 years ago. Far-right parties range from anti-EU nationalist parties to the most extreme which are xenophobic and have been linked to violence.

The Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV), led by Geert Wilders, did not increase its vote share, but still returned 5 of the Netherlands' 26 MEPs to the new Parliament. Geert Wilders has asked leaders of right-wing parties in other countries to work with the PVV in the new Parliament. France's Front National, led by Marine Le Pen, received 25% of the vote and returned 24 MEPs. In Britain, UKIP gained 27% returning 24 MEPs. Denmark's People's Party, which had campaigned for tougher immigration controls, received 27% of the vote and 4 MEPs.

These parties prefer not to be associated with parties even further to the right, including Golden Dawn in Greece (3 MEPs) and Jobbik in Hungary (3 MEPs). Front National has excluded candidates who publicly use racist language or praise Nazi ideas. Like UKIP, Front National have been keen to point to their small number of ethnic minority members to rebut claims that they are racist.

One of the most extreme parties, [Hungary's Jobbik](#), says it is a party of the greater Hungarian nation, not the smaller borders imposed on the country by historic peace agreements. It wants the Hungarian government to look out for the interests of Hungarian speakers



The 2014 European Union Parliament Groups by number of MEPs. Image Credit: A.Lane.

who live beyond its borders. It speaks unkindly of minorities within Hungary, such as Roma, whom the party does not consider to be a Magyar people. This form of ethnic nationalism has often been a seed of violent conflict in Europe, as in the former Yugoslavia.

Should a larger bloc of far-right politicians lead us to change anything about our approach to the European Parliament? Firstly, we need to work to counter their opposition to European efforts to prevent conflict, provide development aid and protect the environment. As politicians, MEPs help lead and shape public debate. They have a responsibility to promote peace, justice, and inclusion amongst their constituents.

And we citizens have a responsibility as well. Recently, in expectation of these election results,

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QCEA held two workshops at the annual gathering of Quakers in the Netherlands. The workshops discussed how Quakers could respond to increased public support for the far right.

During our discussion about why such groups exist, we considered how some politicians create fear to help them gain or reinforce their power. We also discussed the link between our economic system and extreme politics. However, it is notable that the far right has not gained strong support in some countries with both migration and economic difficulties, such as Spain. A new leftist party whose optimistic name, Podemos, translates as 'We Can' received the votes of many discontented Spanish voters. This suggests voters are willing to respond to parties offering a positive vision, rather than policies based on fear.

Britain Yearly Meeting's Quaker Faith & Practice 23.36 reminds us that "Being aware of injustice and doing little about it condones that injustice". In the workshops, we challenged ourselves to be more aware of prejudice, discrimination, or tension in our local communities. We thought about how to respond to hostility or to inaccurate information in our local media or from neighbours. The workshop participants were also concerned that refugees could study in the Netherlands but were prevented from using their skills due to working restrictions. Addressing injustices that marginalise sections of our communities might be an effective way of tackling the fear the far right wish to create.

Longer-term peace-building and multi-faith work was highlighted as important during this discussion among Dutch Quakers. One route to peace could be through outreach to far-right groups in a spirit of love, and also outreach to minority groups that seeks their inclusion and equality within society. Voluntary work can bring

people together from different backgrounds: volunteering may put us in a situation where we can provide practical or emotional support to someone facing discrimination or prejudice.

Quakers who have worked on equality include John



Voting in the European Parliament.
Photo Credit: European Parliament C.C.

Hoyle, who in 1816 wrote *The Gypsies*, an ethnographic study of the Roma people that drew attention to widespread discrimination and called for better treatment. In the 1880s, Catherine Impey founded the first anti-racist journal in Britain. Today, Quakers in Europe can lobby the EU and national authorities to tackle hate crime and public incitement to violence. [The European Network Against Racism](#) has called on the European Commission to launch infringement proceedings against those Member States whose legislation and practices breach existing EU legislation on racist crime.

Both at a European level and in our personal lives, we should seek to act to promote equality and justice.

Andrew Lane

Don't Forget - Tell the EU Commission What You Think

The European Commission is currently negotiating a new trade agreement with the United States of America, known as 'The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership' or simply TTIP.

Currently, TTIP will include an Investor-State Dispute Settlement clause, or ISDS, which would allow corporations to take legal action against governments in international arbitration courts over legislation that damages, or even just potentially damages, corporate profit.

On 27th March 2014 the EU Commission opened a public consultation on ISDS, asking citizens to put forward their opinions within the next three months. QCEA has submitted a response, however, adding your voice can help make a difference.

Say no to ISDS by responding to the consultation! We have prepared a model answer to help you, a link to which can be found below. The deadline is 6th July 2014.

***Visit the QCEA website to see and utilise our model answer:**
www.qcea.org/2014/06/ttip-consultation-call-for-submissions-and-model-answers/



So What Happens Now? Creating Structures of Power

The European Parliament has been elected. Each EU Member State has a number of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), e.g. 96 for Germany, 73 for the UK, 26 for The Netherlands, and 11 for Ireland. There is still much to do before the first plenary sitting in early July and before the main work can begin in early September. Election results are not considered final until the first sitting of the European Parliament (EP) in July, [which is why lists of who has been elected can be hard to come by](#).

Gathering alliances

What will happen in the meanwhile? Parliamentarians are re-arranging themselves into political groups. These are alliances of similar parties which discuss legislation and come to common positions (although MEPs are not required to vote in line with their group). The political groups may speak to motions and table amendments. An MEP may belong to one group, or none, in which case they are called a non-attached member.

There were seven groups in the most recent Parliament, but this could change with the recent elections. To be recognised, a political group must include at least 25 MEPs from seven Member States. The largest group according to the unconfirmed election results as of 5 June, is the centre-right European People's Party (EPP) with 221 seats. The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) has 190 seats, while the next largest group, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), has only 59 seats, not many more than the European Conservatives and Reformists (55) or the Greens/European Free Alliance (53). One grouping that seems to be forming is the EUD (EU Democrats), which describes itself as an alliance of MEPs opposed to EU membership. The group states that it does not facilitate racist views.

Setting up structures for decision-making

The parliamentary committees are also being decided during these months. They are subgroups of the parliament working on particular topics: civil liberties, justice and home affairs, for example, or fisheries. International trade has its own committee, while human rights is a subcommittee under foreign affairs. Committees can instigate as well as amend legislative proposals, and they present reports to the plenary of the parliament. The composition of the committees, each with between 24 and 76 MEPs, must reflect the composition of the plenary, so committees can only be formed after the MEPs are confirmed during the first plenary on 1-3 July.

Also being formed are the 41 delegations. These are groups of 12 to more than 70 MEPs who represent the EP to third countries, with the stated intention of promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Alexandra Bosbeer

Helping Your MEP to Get to Know Your Concerns

Although there is a lot of arranging going on, and little legislation, this is a great time to get in touch with your MEP, to inform them about issues and about your concerns. National party websites generally have the names and contact details of the party members who have been elected. And, as of the confirmation in July, you will be able to find the full list of MEPs online at www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/full-list.html. QCEA has a guide available on contacting your MEP www.qcea.org/2012/09/bp-finding-the-right-audience/

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Detention of Women Awaiting Trial Abroad

The experience of women who are imprisoned abroad highlights many of the aspects of European criminal justice which need reform. In particular, in some countries in Europe, there are worrying increases in the number of women detained arbitrarily whilst they await trial. The circumstances that may have led them to be involved with a crime, and the support that could help them create positive change in their lives, are both being ignored by authorities.

Across the EU, judicial authorities are remanding women suspected of committing a crime into detention on the basis of their nationality. So why are women arrested abroad more likely to await trial in prison?

Judicial authorities are more likely to incarcerate a person suspected of a crime outside of their own country due to [a perception that they are more likely to abscond](#), even if they have ties to the country where they have been arrested. In Greece, two-thirds of pre-trial detainees are foreign nationals: even when they have a local address, they are considered a flight risk on the basis of their nationality alone.

Photo Credit: Matteo Parrini C.C.



Pre-trial detention of women has increased in some countries.

A panel of Greek legal experts contributing to [work by Fair Trials International](#) recently reported that many detainees were likely to be acquitted if they had proper access to legal assistance in a language they could understand. The research found that, as interpretation is only provided in court, foreign suspects who cannot speak the local language have limited interaction with lawyers, prison staff, and fellow detainees.

In some parts of Europe, the pre-trial imprisonment of foreigners appears to be happening more often, despite closer criminal justice cooperation by EU Member States. In the UK, the number of foreign women in prison rose by 49% between 2000 and 2009. This was not due to an increase in convictions but [an increase of 171% in pre-trial detention of foreign national women](#). Similar increases in Portugal between

2003 and 2013 led to [research that found](#) that whilst some women detainees had independently chosen to travel to Portugal, others had the decision made for them by a family member or a trafficker.

Being trafficked can be a pathway into prison

Many women detained abroad may have been trafficked or otherwise exploited. In Dublin during 2013, three-quarters of those in pre-trial detention relating to [large-scale cannabis cultivation](#) were Chinese and Vietnamese nationals who said they were victims of exploitation. Victims of trafficking have either never consented to the activity in which they become engaged, or initial consent has been rendered meaningless by abuse, coercion, and deception by traffickers. [Victims of trafficking](#) are exploited at their destination, often being put into forced labour or prostitution. [Women and girls account for 80%](#) of people known to have been trafficked within or to the EU. It is important to remember, however, that trafficking is diverse: [men are trafficked for forced labour including road construction, for example](#).

"Women imprisoned abroad are doubly disadvantaged"

[Research has been conducted with 43 women detained in the UK who are from Eastern Europe, Asia and the Caribbean](#), and who were victims of trafficking before entering the criminal justice system. The research shows how detention continues to disempower women. One Chinese woman trafficked to work in cannabis production said, "At early stages at court the only thing I understood was the next hearing dates and I just felt I was in their hands, like being in the hands of the people who brought me here."

[Women in the Portuguese study](#) were also found to have limited access to legal and other support. An additional burden was racism experienced whilst in prison.

A failure to provide support

Support is often available through one's personal relationships, but detention can strain these. Support services can help the prisoner in later moving away from crime by improving education, providing alcohol and drug rehabilitation, or explaining their rights to social security and housing support. This [vital access to support services](#) is an important cornerstone in improvements to criminal justice policy. However, support services are often less accessible for pre-trial detainees, as prison systems prioritise convicted



detainees with more predictable release dates or do not inform prisoners until after conviction about the opportunities for support. At the same time, a higher proportion of people imprisoned before their trial may have complex and more urgent needs than convicted prisoners, including stress regarding their trial as well as mental health or addiction issues. With poorer access to support services, pre-trial detainees can be at increased risk of self-harm.

Women imprisoned abroad are doubly disadvantaged by inappropriate support in prison systems designed for men who speak the national language. Monitoring the use of support services by women prisoners from abroad would allow Member States to learn from good practice and help ensure that the support is also accessible to this part of the prison population.

Conclusion

Member States have been required to implement EU Directive 2011/36 regarding human trafficking since April 2013. The Directive aims to reduce human trafficking and ensure that support is provided to victims. For example, the Directive requires that all evidence of a suspect having been coerced or

exploited should be integral to any decisions about the detention of that person before trial.

Once a person is detained, the EU Member State must abide by Article 11, which requires the provision of support “before, during and for an appropriate period of time after the conclusion of criminal proceedings”. It specifies that support includes necessary medical treatment including psychological assistance, counselling, information, translation, and interpretation.

In June 2014 the European Council (Heads of Government from each EU Member State) will agree strategic guidelines for the Commission's work over the next five years. This presents an opportunity for the Council and Commission to reduce the number of foreign nationals in pre-trial detention. As people who have been trafficked are susceptible to re-victimisation, holistic support services should be provided as an alternatives to pre-trial detention. This would help victims of trafficking to regain a sense of trust and security after the trauma of their experience.

Andrew Lane

QUAKER HOUSE NEWS

4-6 April: QCEA's Council held its semi-annual meeting and welcomed its new clerk, Oliver Robertson. The Council discussed a vision for QCEA in 2019. You could be a part of making this come true with your financial support!

6-12 April: Andrew led the 2014 Study Tour group, introducing the work of the European Union and the Council of Europe (see comments on page 6).

15 April: Rebecca met with a group of Young Voters to discuss expectations of the European Parliament Elections.

16 April: Alexandra observed one of the final debates of the 2009-2014 European Parliament, during which World War I and also the current conflict in Ukraine were discussed.

24-27 April: Alexandra enjoyed several days in Dublin with Irish Quakers at Ireland Yearly Meeting, where she also had an opportunity to speak about our work.

27 April: Chris spoke on a regional BBC radio programme about the European Parliament elections and why Quakers are concerned about the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

April-May: Rebecca engaged with NGOs and academics as part of her research into why some EU

Member States have not transposed criminal justice measures in the timeframe agreed.

2-7 May: Chris spoke to several Quaker Meetings in Britain about his work at QCEA, the European elections, and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the EU and the US.

8 May: Chris helped to introduce a European Elections webinar organised by the British support group, QCEA British Committee.

8 May: Andrew met with a number of Christian NGOs working in Brussels to discuss their work on migration, including alternatives to detention.

15 May: Andrew spoke to UN, NGO, and NATO representatives about the Quaker Peace Testimony, military expenditure, and the development of drones by the European Defence Agency.

16-18 May: Andrew joined 70 Friends at Netherlands Yearly Meeting.

29 May-1 June: Alexandra travelled to the Central European Quaker Gathering in Vienna, while Andrew joined Friends in Sweden.

Staff members at QCEA: Alexandra Bosbeer, Chris Diskin, Andrew Lane, Gordon Matthews, and Rebecca Viney-Wood.



QCEA Study Tour Walks the Corridors of Power in Europe

Every year or so, we gather Quakers and others from around Europe and introduce them to the European institutions. The latest QCEA Study Tour took place in April this year. Together we explored the institutions of the European Union in Brussels and those of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, including the European Court of Human Rights. We were very grateful to many speakers from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and others who met with the group. The visit allowed participants to engage directly in advocacy, asking speakers about important issues such as gender equality, economic injustice, Ukraine, and human rights.

Gill Parker, from Saffron Walden Meeting

“It was very helpful to have the excellent preparation sessions given by QCEA staff before we visited the various institutions.

High points of the tour for me included our visit to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe where we heard the debate regarding the position of Russia in the Council Of Europe after its annexation of Crimea; hearing Quakers working in the European Union telling us how they put their Quaker principles into practice in their work. It was lovely to be greeted as Friends in such shiny imposing buildings.

I was impressed with the openness of the officials who talked to us and answered our many questions.”

Peter van Leeuwen, from The Hague Meeting

“This is the second study-tour I have joined, just because I found the first one in 2010 so very exciting. And now this one proves to be more exciting again. It was such a multi-national group, from the Netherlands, UK, Lebanon, Palestine, and Ukraine.



The Study Tour at the European Commission. Photo Credit: A.Lane.

We had fantastic things happening... such as a huge debate on Ukraine. It has been a great experience, and I learned a lot.”

Jumana Abu Ghazaleh, from Ramallah Friends School

“I had a fantastic week with extra-ordinary people. It was amazing. Once in a life-time. I want to do it again and again.”

Kate Hale, from Marazion Meeting

“Since being in Brussels, I now feel much more part of Europe.

I also feel like I have some idea now how to lobby and how to affect my MEP and the decisions that Europe make. I will go back to Britain and speak positively about Europe to those people who are so against it.”

Julian Wood, from Bristol Redland Meeting

“I found doing the Study Tour has deepened my interest and knowledge of the European institutions, and of Quaker work with them. I have a connection now and feel more personally involved, informed, and engaged with Europe.

It was fantastic to be with a group of Quakers and those interested in Quakerism. It helped me grow along my spiritual path to be sharing the experience with such a varied group of people from around Europe and the Middle East.”

Susan White, from Brighton Meeting

“I went not really knowing much about how the EU really works. So I listened a lot, joined with the others in bombarding our speakers with questions (some of our group asked a lot of very challenging questions which took some of the presenters by surprise!) and came away strongly pro-EU.

While it is true that the huge organisation has many failings, it is a bulwark, albeit somewhat fragile, against more wars. We will have achieved something truly spectacular if we ever manage to get 28 very diverse countries to collaborate well, but we won't succeed unless we try.”

The next QCEA study tour is likely to take place during the week of 20 April 2015. To pre-register, contact studytour@qcea.org.



Faith at Work:

QCEA Staff Reflect on How their Faith Underpins Their Work



Staff celebrate a birthday at QCEA. Photo Credit: A.Lane.

Doing something to improve the world seems to me to be the only way to justify the natural resources we consume by being here. I firmly believe each person has a responsibility, earned simply by being alive, to make a positive contribution to the world. These contributions will be different: it could be raising one's children with love, or facilitating goodwill among one's neighbours, or being an excellent musician whose recordings bring joy to listeners. If we each find the areas in which our skills can make the biggest impact, we are making the best contribution.

The direct experience of the Divine means both that God is present here in this world and that we are responsible for honouring that spirit of love through our actions.

Alexandra Bosbeer

One of my core beliefs is that there is that of god in everyone. This belief underpins and informs my work at QCEA, as I seek to shine a light on the structures of criminal justice in the EU. I am putting my faith into

action by contributing to a long-standing Quaker discourse which promotes fairness, equality and reform within justice systems.

Rebecca Viney-Wood

Economic inequality is unjust and inefficient. It is a waste of human capital and leaves many people without the basic necessities for a happy and fulfilled life. So I feel compelled to work for justice.

Chris Diskin

I depend on God's spirit for guidance and strength. On my own as an individual there is little that I can achieve. If I can find my right place within my faith community, Quakers in Europe, I can play a useful part in the work to which we are called, which is to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. By taking a little time each day, usually at breakfast time, to be quiet and perhaps read the reflections of men and women of faith, I can see my life and work in perspective - as part of God's plan to bless us all with peace and justice, i.e. "shalom", the peace-with-justice which is the subject of our Quaker peace testimony.

Gordon Matthews

My faith rests in an experience of a caring, peaceful and loving God, whom I understand through the example set by Jesus of Nazareth, a companion whom I have relied upon during my childhood and adult life. The lives of Quakers, such as Bayard Rustin and William Boen, inspire me to act by demonstrating the indivisibility of faith and life.

Andrew Lane

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Representing Quakers



Alexandra hears from Quakers at Central European Gathering. Photo Credit: A.Bosbeer.

QCEA had an opportunity recently to hear from Quakers living in Central Europe, and from others living in Eastern Germany, about what they feel the Quaker voice in Europe should be saying. Here are some of the thoughts that were voiced:

- The Quaker voice should witness with truth and integrity; it should bring the heart of Quaker values into the public arena. We as Quakers should ensure our action is rooted in our faith and in spiritual practice. Quaker faith is about the experience rather than the words: these values mean QCEA's work is about implementation rather than simple statement of values.
- Peace links all other issues. We should be mindful of how we treat the universe, which includes respect for humanity as well as sustainability. Important issues are migration and human trafficking, unemployment and homelessness.
- One function of an advocacy voice like QCEA is to give inspiration and advice to help local Quakers and other like-minded people take action on important topics, such as through QCEA's action alert list. You can sign to QCEA Action Alerts at www.qcea.org/home/involved/action-alerts.

- Direct communication and mediation are traditional strengths of Quaker practices, which could build needed trust in international politics. Some of this trust among the public (voters) can be built by knowledge about the issues, how to contact people, and whom to contact (including, of course, your MEP and other political representatives).

QCEA is currently most active in economic justice, peace, and human rights, as well as our other programme areas of sustainability and democratic governance. I was pleased to be able to tell Friends at these gatherings about our work to ensure that the EU actually implements policies which are in line with its stated values of peace and human well-being. If you would like QCEA to join your Area Meeting or Yearly Meeting to discuss our work, please get in touch.

QCEA is governed by a Council of representatives from Quaker Yearly Meetings and other groups such as the Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation. We are always interested in hearing well-tested concerns and feedback from Quakers - we represent you at the European level!

Alexandra Bosbeer



Around Europe

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