



# Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs

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## Not a Panacea: The European Union and Free Trade Agreements

Free trade is a major part of the work of the European Union (EU). Across the globe, where it does not already have free trade deals with partner countries, the EU is negotiating and signing agreements to minimise barriers that prevent or obstruct trade. These agreements range from limited economic partnerships with small countries such as Lesotho, to preferential trade agreements with emerging nations like Morocco, to ground-breaking free trade agreements with major world powers such as the United States (US; that deal is referred to as TTIP). The EU Commission has a specific Directorate General (department) employing 500 people, devoted solely to improving global trade opportunities for the EU. The newly appointed European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, has also highlighted trade as one of the five main priorities of his presidency.

While it is clear that trade is high on the EU's agenda, what is not so clear is the accountability of this programme. Who receives the benefits of these trade

deals? Might these trade deals have a negative impact on the EU's other policy targets and goals? And has there really been a fair and transparent debate about the public's desire for such agreements?

### A Fair Deal - The EU's Free Trade Past

Trade has always been a cornerstone of the European Union and its predecessors. Ensuring that EU Member States were economically intertwined and reliant on each other was seen as a way of preventing conflict. It was also seen as a way of improving people's material existence through efficiencies in production and the removal of unnecessary trade barriers, to allow goods and services to flow seamlessly across borders. As Jean Monnet stated as early 1943, "The countries of Europe are not strong enough individually to be able to guarantee prosperity and social development for their peoples. The States of Europe must therefore form...a common economic unit". The Treaty of Rome (1957) also clearly states in its preamble that "the removal of existing obstacles calls for concerted action in order to guarantee steady expansion, balanced trade and fair competition".

But the internal trade that helped establish the EU not only brought economic benefits, it was also accompanied by strong social responsibilities. Each nation that became part of the EU had to sign and implement a number of different agreements to create a fair and balanced economic environment. Each state had to enshrine democratic institutions, meet environmental, labour and safety standards, and guarantee access to justice for all citizens. This ensured fair and balanced markets, while at the same time creating a society which helps improve the quality of life for its citizens.

### Modern EU Free Trade

Since the 2008 financial crisis, one of the EU's key aims has been to "strengthen Europe's capacity to grow and create more and better jobs". The free trade deals that the EU is currently negotiating or signing, clearly aim to once again use trade to boost the European economy. It is said that the opening of markets will increase economic growth, provide jobs, and improve the lives of ordinary citizens in the EU, as well as the lives of citizens in partner countries. However, many of the agreements currently being



International Free Trade has increased massively in the last three decades . Image Credit: tsuna72 C.C

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negotiated are fundamentally different from the form of trade that helped to create modern Europe. They are devoid of the social protections and guarantees that were the hallmark of EU trade ideas. They focus on expanding trade to increase gross domestic product (GDP) and other economic measurements but don't have the social guarantees **necessary to create a balanced society**.

The most pertinent examples of such deals are the EU-US deal (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP), and the Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (CETA) between the EU and Canada. Both of these trade deals are ambitious. They aim to create free trade areas, removing as many barriers as possible, along with the mutual recognition of regulation in a wide range of sectors. Those promoting the deals claim they offer huge benefits with few or no costs: cutting production costs, creating jobs and increasing wages. However, beyond the optimistic calculations which have been found wanting by a wide range of analysts, there are questions which remain unanswered around these deals. How will the EU prevent competition becoming so fierce that it leads to a race to the bottom in terms of wages and regulatory standards? How will the EU prevent these trade deals from negatively impacting its environmental and carbon reduction policies? How will the EU ensure that the benefits from these trade deals filter down to ordinary citizens and are not captured by **big corporations or already wealthy citizens**? How will the EU reconcile its precautionary principle (in which a product is not allowed onto the market until it is guaranteed not to be harmful) with the US scientific-based approach (in which a product is allowed on the market until it is deemed to be definitely harmful)?

There have been very few answers forthcoming on these questions, and, with the negotiations totally secret, European citizens have had no opportunity to find such answers themselves. While negotiators and politicians have repeatedly said that regulatory standards will not deteriorate, they have never provided evidence on how they are planning to ensure that this is true. Instead, they have just provided vague promises.

For example, the reports commissioned by the European Commission state that TTIP would have **"negligible effects on the rate of CO2 emissions and utilisation of natural resources"** with an estimated **0.02-0.07% increase in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)**. This low figure is based on expected technological efficiencies and reductions in production. However, even if this prediction proves to be correct, it still does not help work towards **the EU 2020 targets of reducing GHG's by 20 to 30%**. If the predictions prove to be incorrect, and emissions increase, the EU's trade policy will contradict the EU's own environmental targets. **Friends of the Earth**

**Europe has also raised concern that TTIP could have a serious negative impact on future environmental policy**, as EU environmental standards are weakened to tie in more closely with US regulation. This would again have a direct negative impact on the EU 2020, 2030, and 2050 emission reduction targets.

Another example can be found in the cosmetic products sector, which has been targeted as an area where regulatory convergence can occur with trade barriers removed and rules harmonised. **However, there are significant differences between the rules in the two economic areas. In the EU, 1328 possible cosmetic ingredients are prohibited, with 250 more heavily regulated. In the US there are only 11 ingredients forbidden at the federal level. There are also significantly stricter rules in the EU regarding labelling of cosmetic products and warnings over ingredients that may cause health risks.** But negotiators have yet to explain how these very different regulations will be unified or mutual recognition achieved without EU standards being reduced. The other option for convergence, that US regulations are increased, seems unlikely in the current political climate and has not been mentioned by the US government as an option.

With such important issues at stake, a fair, open, and transparent debate around the subject of free trade should be taking place to inform EU citizens and allow them to have a say in the future of Europe. Currently this is not happening.

Photo Credit: John Lord C.C.



Although the European Commission's DG Trade has established a website for each specific agreement it is negotiating and has made some effort to reach out to civil society in the form of regular dialogues, it has not really consulted the public in an open and transparent manner. There has been no public consultation on free trade in general, nor any public opinion sought on the overall current EU trade policy.

The current data suggests that, while the public support the idea of exchanging goods, services and ideas with other countries, there are concerns both about the EU's free trade agenda and the regulatory standards currently in place in some of those nations



with which the EU is negotiating. According to the EU's public opinion monitor Euro Barometer, only around 40% of EU citizens see globalisation in its current form as good for them, 42% have a negative outlook on this subject and a further 18% were unsure. Research conducted by the American think tank Pew Research found that while around 50% of Germans supported the general idea of TTIP, only 38% wanted to remove all barriers to trade as is proposed under TTIP. Moreover, the same research clearly shows that German citizens clearly believe that US regulations are inferior, with only 4% saying they trusted US automobile standards and just 2% saying they trusted US food standards. More generally, many civil society organisations, which represent a wide spectrum of specific EU and US social groups, have raised their concerns about TTIP, CETA, and the EU's current trade agenda. These range from total opposition to free trade, to specific concerns over limited sections of the deal.

The European Union represents what can be built through the positive and progressive aspects of trade. Not only do nations coexist peacefully and exchange goods and services, but, over the last five decades,

living standards have improved immensely, as the EU has brought in high quality minimum standards through strong regulation. In contrast, the new trade deals currently being negotiated, particularly CETA and TTIP, not only represent a move away from attaching trade to social improvements, they could in fact, through competition in unregulated markets, have a negative impact on the EU's existing standards. QCEA believes that trade must be conducted in the right manner: to build human well-being and take into consideration the limits of the earth's resources. Trade should be ambitious in more than just economic terms; EU trade policy should be equally aspirant in its environmental and social aspects. The EU should strive to use trade to meet its goals of peace through social equality and human well-being, by building an economy that works within the boundaries of our resources. The EU should build on the strengths of the past decades to make a Europe which addresses today's challenges with a vision for the future.

**Chris Diskin**

## Announcing the QCEA Study Tour 2015

Join us in Brussels and Strasbourg 18 - 25 April 2015

*Come and learn, discuss, and reflect on what Europe, the European Union and Council of Europe mean to you.*

We plan to visit the institutions of the European Union, the European Court of Human Rights, and the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, as well as meeting with officials, MEPs, and NGOs. "It helped us understand something of the way the EU works and how it is changing, and also that the EU Institutions are open to the public and willing to listen to it and groups that represent it." said one recent participant.

People who are over 18 and who can handle a fair amount of walking are welcome to join. The price will depend on whether you prefer to stay in hostel dorms or in hotels.

For more information, contact [studytour@qcea.org](mailto:studytour@qcea.org).



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## Peace League Table Allows us to Hold our Governments to Account

In June 2014, the Institute for Economics and Peace launched its seventh annual **Global Peace Index** (see [www.visionofhumanity.org](http://www.visionofhumanity.org)). This index compiles twenty-two indicators from robust information sources to measure the extent of violence in 162 countries. Each country is given an overall score, as well as individual scores for the level of safety and security within the country, the involvement in domestic or international conflict, and the degree of militarisation.

The indicators used by the Global Peace Index include the possession of heavy weapons, terrorist activity, deaths in conflict, and a country's financial contributions to international peacebuilding. There are also a small number of indicators that point to some of the underlying causes of violent conflict, such as poor adult literacy rates and gender inequality. Globally, Iceland is ranked as the most peaceful country and Syria the least peaceful.

Europe scores comparatively well. Of the top twenty most peaceful countries, fifteen are European, of which twelve are European Union members. However, a small number of EU countries are ranked much further down on the Peace Index. Lithuania, the United Kingdom, France, and Cyprus are ranked 46th, 47th, 48th, and 51st respectively. Even further behind is Greece, which is ranked 86th, just above Macedonia (87th) and below Liberia and Ecuador.

Whilst many countries are committed to the concept of the EU as a peace project, these five EU Member States have fallen far behind and must urgently address the causes of their country's violence. The detailed country-specific information published by the Global Peace Index allows us to identify the areas of violence that need to be addressed.

### United Kingdom (47th) and France (48th)

The UK and France are affected in similar ways by insecurity and violence. In recent years both countries have experienced violent demonstrations and terrorist activity. The indicators show that the UK has a fairly high level of public perception of criminality, despite a very low murder rate. Whilst both countries are guilty of exporting weapons to other parts of the world, France's score for this is particularly poor.

High levels of militarism in both countries are also reflected in their attitudes toward policy making at the EU. **The UK continues to be disengaged from many aspects of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), favouring the more militaristic North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.** By contrast, France is very engaged in EU CSDP; however, as seen in their

presidency of the European Council in 2013, **the French government seeks an EU policy that focuses on traditional defence cooperation and support for the European arms trade.**

Importantly, there is one indicator on which the UK and France are both given the worst possible score - possession of nuclear weapons. They are the only nuclear-armed EU members, and both could make a real contribution to world peace by disarming. As part of the research for the Global Peace Index, an estimated cost of violence is calculated for each country. **The annual cost of violence containment in the UK and France is approximately 1200 Euro per citizen.** Nuclear weapons take considerable resources that could be invested in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Possession of nuclear weapons by British and French governments may seem very distant to citizens, but it has a cost to each of their citizens.



Lithuanian Army on manoeuvres 2014. Photo Credit J.Cress Jr C.C

### Lithuania (46th)

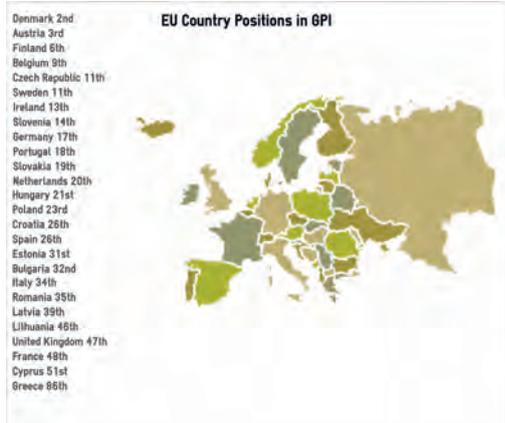
Lithuania suffers from a higher-than-average murder rate, and the public perception is that criminality and corruption are very common. Lithuania could improve its rating by reviewing its spending priorities: government spending on education is low, as are contributions to UN peacekeeping operations. A particular challenge for Lithuania over the next year will be to resist those who call for stronger militarism to deter interference by Russia.

### Greece (86th)

Greece is the EU Member State with the lowest rank on the Global Peace Index. The analysis by authors at the Institute for Economics and Peace points to a wide variety of problems facing the country. The economic challenges facing Greece have had an impact on the human needs of the population, as seen by the very high levels of unemployment. Greece's population is more likely than average to perceive corruption within society, and the country has also witnessed violent demonstrations.



However, many of the indicators on which Greece performs poorly relate to militarism and violence. These include: access to small arms and light weapons amongst the population, weapon imports, poor relationships with some neighbouring countries, and high levels of hostility to foreigners.



Alongside all of these factors, Greece also scores comparatively poorly on education spending. Data from the Global Peace Index allows us to calculate that the average annual cost of violence per person in Greece is almost 800 Euro. The Greek government should prioritise peace over militarism.

### Cyprus (51st)

Despite being the EU's second-worst performer, as a very small member state, Cyprus has very little impact on overall scores of peace in the EU. It scores poorly on some Global Peace Index indicators not yet mentioned above. For example, Cyprus has the

maximum score for the number of displaced people. This is due to its location on a divided island and in close proximity to Syria and North Africa. These factors have encouraged Cyprus to employ a large number of security personnel, another indicator used by the index.

In seeking more peaceful policies, Cyprus should consider research showing the relation between gender equality and peace. Currently only 1 in 8 Members of Parliament are women, amongst the lowest proportion in the EU.

### Developing peace

Peace is an elusive concept that has long been understood by Quakers as more than just the absence of war. The Global Peace Index is improving our understanding of peace and how it can be measured. It can also be used to celebrate peaceful government policies. For example, Ireland is the 13th most peaceful country globally. The index shows it has comparatively few weapons imports, few heavy weapons, good relations with neighbouring countries, and a free press.

The peacefulness of a country is certainly more complicated that can be expressed in a ranking, but the Global Peace Index is providing us with a currency with which we can engage policy-makers. It is an improvement in transparency that can be used to ensure the integrity of governments who talk about peace but whose policies contain the seeds of war.

*Andrew Lane*

## QUAKER HOUSE NEWS

3 June - Andrew met with representatives of other churches in Europe, discussing the results of recent elections and sharing Friends' perspectives on engagement with Far-Right groups.

4-5 June - Alexandra met with colleagues at our sister organisation, Friends' Committee on National Legislation in Washington DC.

11 June - Chris took part in a Sustainable Trade meeting, asking whether the continued existence of 'Buy America' schemes in US law would create an imbalance within TTIP. He has also taken part in a number of Civil Society Dialogues with the European Commission this summer.

13 June - Andrew joined other members of the Human Rights and Democracy Network at a meeting with Greek and Italian representatives of the European Council's 'Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens Rights and Free Movement of Persons' to advocate for an internal human rights strategy for the EU.

23 -26 June - QCEA joined other NGOs at the semi-annual conference of international NGOs at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

24 June - Chris and Andrew ran workshops on youth unemployment and the role of an NGO in Brussels, for a group of students from Germany. The students developed a strategy to reduce youth unemployment through consensus and worked in groups to design their own NGO and advocacy plan.

1-4 July - Two students from Friends' School Lisburn visited QCEA on work experience. They conducted research on the new MEPS and recorded a video encouraging citizens to participate at a European level.

4 July - Andrew took a group of Mennonite students to the European Parliament and spoke about Quakers and 'Seeing Good in the Other'.

Staff members at QCEA: Alexandra Bosbeer, Sevasti Christoforou, Chris Diskin, Andrew Lane and Gordon Matthews.



## Amplifying the Quaker Voice!

When I travel to European Yearly Meetings and other Quaker gatherings to present the work of QCEA, I am often asked how we do our work. How do we speak up to ensure that our Quaker voice is heard?

The answer to this question depends on the topic and on the opportunities for advocacy. We work in peace, human rights, sustainability, economic justice, and democratic governance. We publish briefing papers, raise questions at meetings, write letters, and collaborate with other NGOs in networks such as the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office and the Human Rights and Democracy Network. And part of our job is to facilitate democratic engagement: we operate an action alert list, informing Friends about opportunities to tell EU institutions what you think.

### Responding to the invitation

Many opportunities for the public to engage come through consultations held by the European Commission. The Commission actively seeks people's opinions: **one current stakeholder consultation** is about the guidelines for consulting stakeholders. And, although a consultation about consultation may seem to parody itself, how questions are framed and distributed can make a big difference to the quality of the responses.

One of the first tips for someone planning a consultation, is to make every effort to make the subject accessible. A counter-example could be seen recently in a consultation run by the European Commission's Trade directorate on the proposed Investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanism. The questions are very technical and inaccessible for many people. A cynic might view this as an attempt to block ordinary people from voicing their rejection of a mechanism which would permit corporations to sue governments for loss of profit, thereby possibly discouraging legislation which is needed for the public good. Happily, **the massive response** (nearly 150,000) indicates that people still managed to overcome the overly technical design of the questionnaire. This was one example of a consultation for which **QCEA designed model answers** for people to use as a basis for their own responses.

Another tip for a good consultation would be to leave sufficient room for useful answers. While one may not envy the Commission officials who now have to summarise 150,000 responses with up to 1½ pages for each of 13 substantive questions, **the just-closed consultation on corporate social responsibility**, with answer spaces to a maximum of 100 to 500 characters does seem overly efficient. (This paragraph is 452 characters, so, close to the maximum).

### Speaking of the environment

A high proportion of the European Commission's public consultations cover topics related to the environment. They are crucial: we urgently need to develop a new way of relating to the planet. **Earth Overshoot Day**, the day on which we have already used up the resources that are replenished by the earth in a year, will have passed by the time you read this. For the next 4½ months, we will be living in debt, using up resources which cannot be replenished. Not even borrowing from the future, really, since next year we will also use up more than can be replenished. We are simply overusing the planet, and policy and regulation change is one element to halting this destruction. It might seem distant, but using one's voice to influence policies implemented at the European level is one way to help make the new world become a reality. You, too, can join in and amplify the chorus.

### Leaning on the earth

What could you write about today? **The Commission currently has a consultation on habitat banking (no net loss of biodiversity) which is open for the submission of responses until mid-October.** The **first-ever European Citizen's Initiative** -on the right to water- has stimulated the European Commission to hold a consultation on a drinking water directive, which is open until 23 September. A consultation on land as a resource is **planned for later this year.**

**You can also offer your opinion on the Europe 2020 goals.** These include demand for and sources of energy as well as 'green jobs' under the umbrella of 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth'. Or you can sign up for QCEA action alerts and receive our model answers, when they are completed, as a basis for your own. **Another opportunity will be a consultation on renewable energy policies expected to open during the second half of 2014.**

### Energy and the world we would like to see

The EU is currently working on mutually agreed targets for 2030 - **planned for agreement by heads of Member States in October 2014** as these targets will be relevant to the international climate negotiations. The EU participates as a block in these negotiations as well as each Member State being able to participate individually. **The preparatory report to the European Council** (meeting of heads of state) described a need to ensure security through maintaining a mix of energy sources - including shale gas.

The national mix of energy sources may be determined by each EU Member State, according to the Lisbon Treaty, but pollution across boundaries is an EU



competence. This makes legislation on shale gas a complex matter in terms of policy responsibility.

Following extreme resistance at the Council meeting last winter by the UK and Poland, fracking (shale gas) has been subjected only to guidelines rather than legislation. Fracking is seen as providing cheap energy: QCEA's work on building the costs to the environment into models of economic efficiency are of use here, as the escape of methane from disused wells can never be capped. We risk changing our climate forever when we permit the building of fracking wells.

### Trading energy

QCEA's work on trade is also relevant to our environment programme. For example, [the free trade deal, currently being negotiated with the US](#), may permit the US to force the EU to accept imports of shale gas and [tar sand fuel](#) (which the US refines, although it is extracted in Canada), and make the EU complicit in the environmental damage that these methods of extraction cause.

### Energy and peace

The EU energy strategy has a direct influence on peace: the interest in Ukraine, through which oil pipelines pass from Russia, the current EU sanctions against Russia, and a related agreement on oil between Iran and Russia (announced last Wednesday, 6 Aug 2014), indicate the changing landscape and the need to have an audible Quaker voice focussing on peace and environment.

**Alexandra Bosbeer**

To sign up for QCEA's action alerts, send an e-mail to Gordon Matthews at [office@qcea.org](mailto:office@qcea.org). You can also review the list of current European Commission consultations [directly at \[http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/consultations/index\\\_en.htm\]\(http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/consultations/index\_en.htm\)](http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/consultations/index_en.htm)

The European Citizen's Initiative on the Right to Water can be found online at <http://www.right2water.eu>

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If you are subscribing in the euro zone, please contact the QCEA office; to pay in sterling please contact Simon Bond at [simon@armitage.biz](mailto:simon@armitage.biz); or visit [www.qcea.org/home/involved/donate/](http://www.qcea.org/home/involved/donate/)

## Introducing Our New Communications Assistant: Sevasti Christoforou

My name is Sevasti Christoforou, and I was born and raised in Athens, Greece. I hold a BA in Communication and Media from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and I just finished my master studies in Media, Culture and Society at Erasmus University, Rotterdam. One of my main interests is exploring the role of social media in socio-political change and political communication. The recent socio-political developments in my native country and, more generally, in Europe have intensified my passion for social research and action. My concerns include the growth of far-right political groups and parties in Europe, as well as the increase in hate speech and intolerance in social media, especially on Twitter.

I am a big fan of social networking platforms, and I am always curious to discover new and useful communication tools and tactics. I am excited to be able to support the work of QCEA. Joining QCEA is a great opportunity for me to learn more about Quakers and their work on European affairs as well as to educate and inform myself further about current socio-political issues.





## Supporting Quakers

*"No! I am not Prince Hamlet,  
nor was meant to be;*

*Am an attendant lord, one that will do  
To swell a progress, start a scene or two"*

*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by T S Eliot*

I also fill a supporting role, as treasurer of QCEA British Committee, a group that aims to strengthen the link between QCEA and Quakers in Britain. The role of the treasurer is to present clear accounts and, with other members of the British Committee, to gently encourage Meetings and Friends (Quakers) in Britain to contribute funds to enable QCEA's valuable work.

In recent years, I have been enormously impressed by three organisations or groups that are working at society's growing points. One is the Tax Justice Network that in little more than ten years has grown from just two people with a concern about the detrimental effect of the international tax system on developing and poor countries to a group that has put issues on the agendas of national governments and international bodies. (One of the founders is a Friend.) They exemplify the power of a small group and have achieved remarkable success in making change happen.

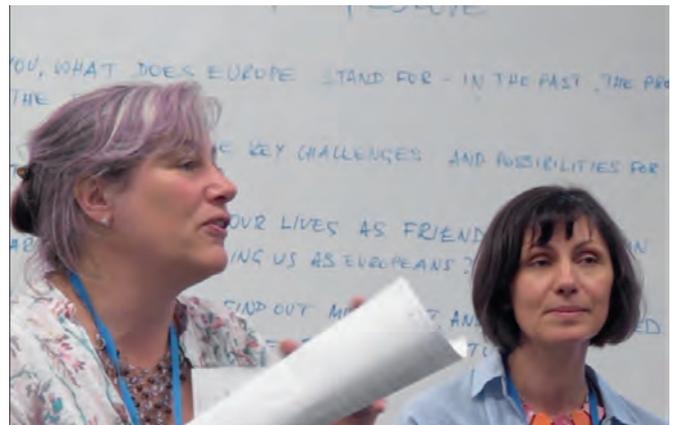
Another is those who are prepared to challenge received wisdom and think deeply and radically about how our financial system can be changed to better meet our needs. I feel there is great vitality and potential here that goes unrecognized by mainstream politics or media.

Last but not least is QCEA which seems to impress everyone who comes into contact with it, Quakers and non-Quakers alike. It embodies some of the characteristics of the above: a small group changing behaviour and pushing at the frontiers. It has been a privilege to support it.

In supporting these causes, I hope that in my small way I am encouraging a more peaceable and better world, working for a society and economy in which the Quaker testimonies to peace, truth, equality and simplicity can flourish.

**Simon Bond**

Meeting collections or other contributions to help support QCEA's work that are in UK Sterling can be sent to QCEA British Committee at 1 Lynton Green, Maidenhead, SL6 6AN, UK in favour of QCEA British Committee. Email [simon@armitage.biz](mailto:simon@armitage.biz) or phone in the UK 01628 631216 if you would like to know more about how we can help Meetings in Britain to engage with QCEA as the Quaker voice in Europe.



Alexandra Bosbeer and Lina Jordan of QCEA British Committee conducting a session on the future of Europe at Britain Yearly Meeting Gathering. Photo Credit: R. Seebohm



## Around Europe

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