



Quaker  
Council for  
European  
Affairs

# Strategic Plan

2017–2022

**Quaker  
Council for  
European  
Affairs**

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# 1 Introduction

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QCEA was founded in 1979 to promote the values of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in the European context. QCEA aims to advocate non-violent approaches to conflict resolution, the intrinsic equality of all people everywhere, and a sustainable way of life for everyone so that the one Earth we share can support us all.

QCEA calls on the European institutions and their Member States to contribute to a Europe which is peaceful, compassionate, open and just in its dealings both within Europe as well as with the countries and peoples beyond their boundaries. QCEA is a member of advocacy networks EPLO (European Peacebuilding Liaison Office) and HRDN (Human Rights and Democracy Network) as well as a number of Quaker networks.

Between Autumn 2015 and Summer 2017, QCEA undertook a transition programme to review and revise its purpose, objectives and approach to its work. In September 2016, its restructured governance body decided to focus its work on two programmes, namely peace and human rights. QCEA has decided to build a team of experts in these two areas and to use the quiet diplomacy approach which QUNO (the Quaker Offices at the United Nations) have both used successfully in their daily work.

**Note:** *The way we propose using quiet diplomacy and what we aim to achieve are explained in more detail in the appendix to this document.*

QCEA's desire to take a more strategic view of our work and the environment we operate within, i.e.: looking more than a year or two ahead, necessitates thinking further ahead on our direction, goals and approach. For this reason this strategic plan has been developed to work to a five-year horizon (to 2022). This is a "living document" that will need to be updated as time passes and significant events or decisions affect our view of the future. In time it may be possible to extend the view to more than five years ahead in both a European and organisational context.

## 2 European strategic context

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European cooperation and standards (from environment to human rights) have an impact across the world. European institutions manage the largest development and peacebuilding budgets used globally, as well as provide mechanisms for dialogue and enforcement of human rights standards on a continent with a long history of war and nationalism (in its extremist form as a political ideology driving conflict and division).

Following recent violence with terrorist attacks inside and outside European borders, and a threat of disintegration with “Brexit” (the UK’s departure from the European Union), the politics of fear have had an increasing impact on the continent. While elections in Europe, including France and the Netherlands, during the first half of 2017 held off the drift to the right and extreme right, the hung parliament in the UK increased instability there during Brexit negotiations. Current uncertainty about future elections in Europe makes it unlikely that paranoia, which has driven the European Union recently, will decline – or that the EU will move away from militarisation and use of military solutions for complex problems which has been used as a frightened attempt to appear to be a single unit.

Our programmes are operating in an environment where European cooperation is fragmenting and European institutions are responding by increasing military cooperation and support for the arms trade. Migration is being portrayed as a security challenge rather than an opportunity and the statements by the British Prime Minister of her aim to leave the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) weakens the legitimacy of the ECHR and, in turn, the rights of European citizens (even if this is unlikely to turn into policy action in the next five years).

## 3 Our vision and values

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*“QCEA brings a vision based on the Quaker commitment to peace, justice and equality, to Europe and its institutions.”*

Our “mission” can be expressed as promoting faith-based Quaker values at the European level. We advocate non-violent approaches to conflict resolution, promote policies that respect the intrinsic equality of all people everywhere, and try to ensure that European policy sustains the planet’s resources and the lives of all those who share them.

As an independent non-governmental organisation committed to these values – and with long practical experience in promoting them – our aim is to contribute to infusing them into European policy-making and practice through:

- a peace programme that brings a new approach to security focusing on non-violent responses to conflict;
- a human rights programme that promotes the centrality of human dignity in policy making and the reduction of detention in the context of migration.

# 4 Goals

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In developing this strategic plan, “long(er)-term” looks at the three-to-five year horizon for programmes, while “short(er)-term” is focused on individual projects which we aim to complete within one-to-two years.

## 4a. General QCEA long-term goals

To achieve our vision, our overall goals are:

- to make a significant contribution to reducing the fear of the ‘other’;
- to help develop European policies that recognise the shared humanity of all people.

## 4b. Programme goals

### Peace programme

1. QCEA will bring new ideas for conflict resolution and peacebuilding as alternatives to further militarisation.
2. The peace programme will develop and advocate for a new vision of security, adapted to the European context and that is based on “shared responsibility”, embodying economic, social and political measures.
3. In order to do so, the peace programme will highlight research on civilian non-violent alternatives to conflict, and give it visibility.
4. The general programme goal is therefore to increase the focus on peacebuilding tools, shown through levels of European funding for peacebuilding, but also by how European institutions and Member States talk about their role in the world.

## **Human Rights programme**

1. QCEA will promote the basic rights and values that European governments agreed after the Second World War, promoting human dignity for all.
2. The programme will focus on the reduction of harm to migrants, particularly detention and other forms of violence contributing to:
  - the development of more humane migration and asylum systems in Europe;
  - the promotion of existing human rights protection mechanisms, particularly the European Convention on Human Rights.
3. The general programme goal is therefore that the human dignity of the most vulnerable is an important political concern at the European-level, promoted through European policy. As we influence policy makers in terms of both 'heads' and 'hearts', our human rights programme will involve quiet diplomacy and research-based advocacy, but also cultural events that seek to show the human face of migrants to European policy-makers.

## **4c. QCEA's shorter-term (project) goals**

Within the programmes our goals include these aims:

1. To develop and advocate for a new vision of security, adapted to the European context and that is based on "shared responsibility", embodying economic, social and political measures.
2. To collate research on civilian non-violent alternatives to conflict, and produce a report that gives them visibility, identifies research gaps and addresses them.
3. To advocate for the implementation of alternatives to child immigration detention. Making specific and focused contributions to the wider issue of safe ways for refugees and migrants to reach Europe, including anti-migrant hate and violence.
4. To undertake quiet diplomacy, in partnership, that contributes to policies that ensure people are not returned to unsafe places and the European external policies value the rights of refugees.

# 5 Strategic approach

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The overall strategies by which we will achieve success are to:

- ensure that all proposed work is aligned to our Quaker vision and values(as expressed under section 3);
- develop our “quiet diplomacy” approach (based on the QUNO model);
- reduce public campaigning, but connect Quakers with common concerns;
- deliver our programmes through shorter-term projects with specific objectives;
- focus on two key long-term programmes: Peace and Human Rights.

The approach for both programmes will involve:

1. bridging different actors and communities of actors;

**Note:** *as well as conventional actors (such as commission officials, MEPs and NGO representatives) with whom we are already in contact we need to reach out to the ‘unusual actors’ in our advocacy strategies: police, European Defense Agency, Armies etc. This is to ensure that we are not solely “preaching to the choir”.*

2. linking topics that are directly related and feed off of each other, such as human rights implications of military responses to migration;
3. providing a space for policy makers and other groups to meet and better understand issues and find non-violent answers.

# 6 Resources and enablers

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## 6a. Experience and reputation (critical success factors)

### External

- We have credibility in Brussels to convene and are called upon to partner influential people or take part on panels on peace & security and human rights.
- We have built trust amongst different type of actors in Brussels and so are able to bring opposing actors around a table to talk.
- We have the necessary visibility versus quietness to achieve change.
- We are capable of bringing new ideas and new approaches to issues.
- We have the expertise to enable solution-orientated engagement with policy makers and develop all aspects necessary for our work to have an impact in Brussels.

### Internal

- We are experienced and able to adapt and be positively resilient to significant and negative political change.
- We are surrounded by people that support, volunteer, work and govern QCEA who value and inspire each other, and our external partners.
- We are financially secure and our resources are used ethically.

## 6b. People

As we develop projects to deliver our goals we need to consider:

- What skills, experience and competencies we have and are needed?
- What are our current gaps?
- Given our view of the future, what will we need in three to five years time? (e.g. skills to hire in or develop; skills mix)
- What need there is for non-resident and short-term resident expertise to fill in knowledge gaps amongst resident staff?

We will continue to build our professional and experienced team to deliver our programme goals. A new strategic direction included a minimum staff commitment of 1.5 full time equivalent staff to be dedicated to each programme undertaken by QCEA.

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## 6c. Quaker House

Quaker House is a unique venue at the heart of the European institutions. It is an asset that is central to our ability to convene.

As well as continuing to maintain and manage Quaker House we also must consider how we can better use it as a resource that actively supports achieving our goals, For example:

- Moving to a greater emphasis on daytime meeting spaces and less emphasis on overnight accommodation.
- Use for public and private events – selecting these based on how much the group and/or subject matter supports our vision and goals.
- Use for confidential “neutral ground” meetings (for other NGOs and, if possible, for Institutional actors).

## 6d. Finance and fundraising

Prudent use of our funds is essential. In the period 2017-2019 we plan to utilise fully the Irene Jacoby designated reserve and draw-down significantly against our general reserves to support our current level of staffing even if Yearly Meetings maintain current levels of donations.

The three-year grant awarded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust in July 2017 is lower than previously received, reflecting not only the pressure their funds are under but also their expectation that QCEA will draw down on its reserves during the current three year grant period.

To continue both programmes at current staffing levels we need to bring in ‘new money’ – i.e.: broaden our funding base – to ensure we can continue to operate in 2020 and beyond. To do this we have a long-term fund-raising strategy to:

- build a subscription model to generate more continuing commitments to fund QCEA regularly rather than obtaining one-off payments and donations;
- look outside the Quaker world for grants and other funding;
- develop funding campaigns around a specific theme; (e.g. Irish funding for Human Rights Forced Migration project);
- develop a series of funding campaigns or activities around a specific target (e.g.: using the ‘matched funding appeal’ to raise small donations from individuals for which we have an offer to match from a single large donor);
- obtain sponsorship of specific costed activities (e.g. the way the late 2017 Peace publication costs are being funded by an interested anonymous donor).

## 6e. Partnerships

Our vision and goals are ambitious and cannot be achieved by a small organisation working in isolation. QCEA needs to build on existing partnerships and develop new ones:

- Maintaining and strengthening the partnership with the two networks QCEA is a member of: HRDN and EPLO.
- Strengthen the CGM (Christian Group on Migration) network.
- Bridge and strengthen links with other networks: ConCoord (Development network) and Voice (humanitarian network in Brussels).
- Build and strengthen trust with relevant European Institutions and Member States. Maintain and build links with other Quaker organisations: particularly QUNO New York and Geneva.
- Through our General Assembly, work closely with Yearly Meetings to communicate that active advocacy is their (Yearly Meetings and other Friends) responsibility.
- NGOs we share resources with: ENAAT (European Network Against the Arms Trade) and Nonviolent Peaceforce both have staff based in Quaker House.

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## **6f. Communications**

The nature of our work means that there are two main audiences for all our output: European policymakers and our supporters, many of whom are Quakers. These two target groups are almost entirely distinct from each other, meaning that QCEA's communications work needs to be two-pronged.

### **Policymakers**

QCEA should increasingly play to its strengths with both its target groups. In Brussels, this means becoming more visible at policy events which are relevant to our work, through our attendance as well as our participation where possible. We will also consider a redesign of the website in order to better present our work and make a clean break with some of the 'legacy' elements of our activities.

Most importantly, however, we need to capitalise on our growing output (reports, research etc.) to increase our advocacy efforts. This means meeting more frequently with European stakeholders to discuss specific policies, with the work we have produced as a support; it also involves presenting our work publicly through advocacy events such as official launches for reports. Our good reputation and our perceived neutrality affords us a level of respect and trust which will allow us to do more than most organisations of our size. The Quakers' reputation is built on our convictions as much as our character; staying true to our values does not have to mean lapsing into inaction.

### **Supporters**

Among our supporter base, the challenge is different. There is a missing 'middle ground' between frequent social media posts and the occasional sharing of very technical papers and publications. We need to better convince laypeople that we are active and professional, but at the same time engage with them on a non-technical level.

Being more active in Brussels will improve the perception of QCEA among potential donors, but it will not help them to understand what we do. We will produce 'accessible' pamphlets to complement our policy documents to allow laypeople to engage with our work. We will also think about sending such publications to Meetings, instead of just subscribers, to increase the visibility of our work. This naturally implies higher printing and postage costs but it would stimulate discussion of QCEA among Friends who may not yet be aware of us, or what we do.

## **6g. Work methodologies**

Other methods to undertake our work and deliver our key messages include developing:

- quiet diplomacy events;
- events bringing culture and politics together for sensitisation of the broader public;
- research outputs to provide evidence-based structure to the argument for civilian peacebuilding and respect for human rights.

## **6h. Indicators to measure impact**

- Number and type of attendance at QCEA events: variety of organisations, level of representation.
- Number of relevant contacts within European institutions and Member State governments.
- Readership: how many people read our publications, how many people sign on to our newsletters, etc..
- Oral feedback by participants: type of comments and from whom.
- Number of requests for next events.
- Number of (draft) policy documents or directives modified to incorporate elements promoted by QCEA together with partners.

# 7 Plan monitoring & updating

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This current version of the plan has been developed by the Strategic Planning Group based on feedback from staff, ExCo (QCEA's Executive Committee) and General Assembly members.

An earlier version was reviewed by ExCo at its September 2017 meeting and this document has been amended on the basis of feedback subsequently received.

This current version is final, as amended and approved by General Assembly on Saturday 7 October 2017.

The Strategic Planning Group is due to meet on an at least yearly basis to assess the relevance of the strategic plan against the current European environment, adapt it (if necessary) and present any revision to ExCo and the General Assembly.

## Appendix

# QCEA use of, and approach to, “quiet diplomacy”

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### **What is quiet diplomacy?**

- It is a method of bringing together parties who are not aligned (for example: having a common area of interest but differing goals or priorities).
- It operates in a facilitated and confidential environment (for QCEA, in Quaker House, Brussels) that provides a “neutral ground” for meetings.
- The type of participants this is aimed at includes NGOs, lobbyists and Institutional actors.

### **Why does quiet diplomacy work?**

- It breaks down the hierarchical and formal structures of dialogue that usually prevent actors from opening up and seeking common ground.
- Traditional advocacy alone is not working in an environment where the rise of populism is feared.
- The same model has been very successfully used in other multilateral settings (chiefly by QUNO at the UN).

### **What do we hope to achieve with quiet diplomacy and why might it be valuable?**

- We want to unblock issues in peace and human rights where there is mistrust or deadlock.
- We will do this by providing a different, informal setting where participants can speak honestly and openly, listen to each other and overcome tensions (e.g. reduce the current mistrust between EU policymakers and civil society over migration policy).
- We already have other organisations that undertake effective work in Brussels keen to partner with us (e.g. the Catholic Bishops Conference that influenced the EU Global Strategy of 2016, and the leading migration network ECRE).

- Over the last six months we have successfully organised discussions with influential policy-makers on unpopular topics:
  1. EU policy and violent masculinity;
  2. Rethinking security on North Korea;
  3. Rethinking narratives on EU and Crimea;
  4. Militarisation of EU development spending;
  5. EU support for the arms trade.
- Both quiet diplomacy and joint work will allow QCEA to build better relationships with governments and institutions to expand our influence over the longer term. Where we partner with well-established and influential organisations, these partnerships can also be used to embed follow-up and accountability for the impact of the work.

### **Why do we think we can do quiet diplomacy?**

- We already have a unique asset of Quaker House close to the European institutions, and are building our reputation for successful convening.
- We have trialled quiet diplomacy meetings during 2016-17 and their popularity and success significantly exceeded our expectations.
- Participants have noted the different atmosphere of our meetings, and in some cases diverted from their government's/institution's position.

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