from Europe, with love?

The EU’s proposed new budget: hard security and harder borders, at home and around the world

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QCEA speaks out in defence of migrant rights at major international conference

On 17 and 18 September, QCEA took part in Europe’s largest annual human rights conference, where it spoke in defence of migrant rights before representatives of over fifty states.

The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM), organised each year by the OSCE, brings European governments together with civil society organisations to discuss a variety of human rights issues, including migration.

During an afternoon of lively discussion, which included interventions by both the USA and Russia, QCEA’s Martin Leng delivered a powerful defence of the fundamental rights of child migrants held in detention, as well as a warning about the real-world consequences of xenophobic hate speech.

WHAT IS THE OSCE?
The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is an intergovernmental body comprised of fifty-seven countries. Based in Vienna, it works on a wide range of issues linked to security and conflict prevention in Europe and Central Asia. It was founded in 1975 to serve as a working-level “bridge” between Western and Communist Europe, and to this day remains one of the continent’s most geographically inclusive international organs; Canada and the USA are also member states.

One of the most important functions of the OSCE is election observation, which it undertakes via the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). It oversees a network of 75,000 observers who verify the democratic integrity – or otherwise – of elections in all its member states. The idea is that effective democratic processes guarantee the “human dimension” of security and reduce the risk of political unrest.

The ODIHR also organises the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, which allows member states and civil society organisations to meet and discuss a variety of topics at the intersection between human rights and security policy. Not surprisingly, migration has been a key theme in recent years, and it is in this context that QCEA spoke at this year’s event.

Find out more about the ODIHR at www.osce.org

New QCEA publications launched

QCEA’s peace and human rights programmes have continued their important research over the summer, with several new publications launched recently which will contribute to our advocacy work over the coming months.

Building Peace Together, our innovative peacebuilding resource, is now available to download in Arabic from our website. Given that our publication is designed to equip a wide range of people with the tools to resolve conflict and consolidate peace, its availability in Arabic is vitally important given the multiple conflicts currently taking place in the Middle East. Building Peace Together is already available in English, French and Russian, and you can access all versions for free online via our dedicated webpage.

www.qcea.org/BuildingPeaceTogether

Last year, QCEA published the most up-to-date statistics available on the subject of Child Immigration Detention in Europe, a little-discussed but common practice across the continent. In the wake of this success, we continued our research and have now released an updated version of our report, with the latest figures from 2018. Does your country detain children simply because of their immigration status? Our report will not only tell you, but also give you concrete examples of workable alternatives for which you can advocate in your community.

As mentioned in the last issue of Around Europe, we also recently published a report into online hate speech against refugees and migrants. Xenophobia on the internet is very common, but that doesn’t make it any less dangerous – recent research in Germany shows that it can trigger real-world violence against refugees. What is Europe doing to tackle the problem? In Anti-Migrant Hate Speech, we explore efforts by both citizens and their governments.

Finally, we’ve just published a discussion paper on the Khartoum Process, the forum for migration policy between the EU and the Greater Horn of Africa region. The EU is rapidly expanding its migration partnerships with third countries. We need to learn lessons to protect human rights. See page 8.

All QCEA publications are available via our website. Most are also available in hard copy, which we can send you free of charge on request. To ask for copies, email martin.leng@qcea.org

QCEA presents at EU peacebuilding conference

The final conference of the Horizon 2020 project EU-CIVCAP took place on 12 September, organised by Brussels’ most high profile think tank, CEPS. The conference identified lessons and best practices for EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

QCEA Peace Programme Lead, Olivia Caeymaex, spoke on the final panel of the day which plotted the future of EU peacebuilding efforts. QCEA used the opportunity to share some of the lessons of our own publication Building Peace Together. We also raised the absence of a widely agreed definition of peacebuilding. Some policy makers are using the word as a cover for military and coercive policies. Following a campaign by peacebuilding organisations, some dictionaries have decided to include peacebuilding as a word from next year.

In recent months QCEA has also been engaging with the European Parliament to promote peacebuilding. The Parliament’s committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) is preparing a report on “Building EU capacity on conflict prevention and mediation”. The report should be discussed and adopted in the autumn. A Quaker House lunch discussion with the report’s rapporteur, MEP Soraya Post provided input into the report. The lunch was jointly organised by QCEA and the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office.
THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL YEAR BEGINS

In Brussels and Strasbourg, September marks the rentrée, or the end of the summer break, and the political year began with a full agenda.

- On 12 September, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker gave his final State of the Union speech before the European Parliamentary elections next spring. He called on Europe to "embrace the kind of patriotism that is not directed against others, and [to] decry kneejerk nationalism which attacks others and seeks scapegoats rather than looking for solutions that allow us to co-exist better."

- On that note, the European Parliament voted the same day to trigger Article 7 proceedings against Hungary. The groundbreaking decision – which could see the country sanctioned or stripped of its voting rights in the European Council – was taken in response to ongoing concerns about human rights and the rule of law under Viktor Orbán’s authoritarian government. The vote passed with the required two-thirds majority, meaning the European Council is now required to act. However, Poland has threatened to veto any punitive measures, meaning, sadly, that the Parliament’s decision may be purely symbolic.

- Negotiations for the EU’s next seven-year budget are ongoing, and an agreement is expected in early 2019. The proposed spending plan contains many elements of concern to Quakers – see our report on page 6 for more information.

SWEDISH ELECTIONS: NO EXTREME-RIGHT LANDSLIDE, BUT CAUSE FOR CONCERN

On 9 September, Sweden went to the polls for a general election which was seen as yet another barometer for the health of the far-right in Europe. Observers had feared that the xenophobic Sweden Democrats party might have won at least 20% of the vote, but in the end they came third with 17.5%.

However, this represented the largest swing in favour of any party, and all mainstream groups lost seats, indicating the apparent broad appeal of populism. A coalition will be needed to form a government.

At the time of going to print, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven had just been ousted in a no-confidence vote, but in the end they came third with 17.5%.

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The Swedish Democrats were formed from various white nationalist and fascist movements, but began a “sanitisation” process in the 1990s.

NEW LEADERSHIP IN EU FOREIGN POLICY

European Commission Vice President and foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini announced two senior appointments in September. Sofie From-Emmeresberger becomes the new chair of the Political and Security Committee – where EU member states and the European Commission make major decisions about EU foreign policy, including when to deploy EU military and civil missions.

Sofie From-Emmeresberger served as the Ambassador of Finland to Kenya until 2015, when she moved to be Ambassador to NATO. One of the challenges facing her as PSC Chair will be to adapt the EU’s Naval operation in the Mediterranean, Operation Sophia, following Italy’s request to change the disembarkation rules.

Federica Mogherini has also appointed a new Director for Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability and Civilian Operations Commander. Vincenzo Cippolla joins from the Italian Carabinieri where he served as Deputy Commanding General.

Uncertain Future for Rescue Ship

On 24 September, the French government refused to allow the rescue ship Aquarius to dock in Marseille, leaving dozens of refugees onboard in limbo. The decision followed several cases of similar ships being turned away from Italian ports in previous months.

The Aquarius is the last private humanitarian vessel operating in the sea off Libya, where it works to save people attempting to cross to Europe from the war-torn country. Its future had already been thrown into jeopardy after Gibraltar, and then Panama, both stripped the ship of its registration earlier in September – allegedly at the behest of Italy’s new populist coalition government, a claim it denies.

The French government justified its decision to turn away the fifty-eight migrants by referring to a rule that rescue ships must transport passengers to the nearest port, which in this case was not Marseille. However, the number of alternative ports still willing to accept rescued migrants continues to fail.

SERBIA JOINS EU HUMAN RIGHTS BODY AS AN OBSERVER

In July Serbia became an observer at the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), allowing the Serbian government be supported by FRA in identifying and implementing measures to improve human rights in the country. Serbia will nominate an observer to take part in FRA Management Board meetings, as well as a National Liaison Officer. QCEA has worked closely with FRA during its research and advocacy on the detention of children. Serbia has so far been reluctant to provide information on the number of children in immigration detention to FRA or QCEA, so we hope this will bring a change.

FAKE NEWS” JOURNALIST NAMED AS HEAD OF ITALIAN STATE BROADCASTER

In a blow to journalistic integrity, a journalist with a history of publishing stories proven to be factually incorrect has been appointed President of Rai, the Italian state broadcaster. Marcello Foa is also known for propagating conspiracy theories about vaccination, as well as anti-gay views. The appointment was made by Italy’s newly-elected populist government, led by Giuseppe Conte.

BREXIT CORNER

As Theresa May’s so-called ‘Chequers Plan’ continues to founder over issues such as the Irish border, the British government has been far clearer on other Brexit-related matters – most notably its desire to remain an enthusiastic member of the EU’s growing military and security activities. As QCEA’s recent blog post points out, “it seems the only thing less tolerable to the British than the existence of an EU army is being excluded from it.”

Read the full blog post at qceablog.wordpress.com

The EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, speaking at a recent meeting with the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office. As a member of EPLO, QCEA staff were present and had the opportunity to discuss peace policy with her.

PHOTO: EPLO

MOGHERINI CALLS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM

Federica Mogherini (pictured above) set out her agenda for the year ahead at the EU Ambassadors’ Conference that took place on 3 September. In her wide-ranging speech she explained that, despite the EU’s pivot toward military policies, the “European way” was do do this as part of a much broader engagement. However, there was no mention conflict prevention, peacebuilding or human security.

PHOTO: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (CC)

Jean-Claude Juncker delivers his final State of the Union speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

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At the time of going to print, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven had just been ousted in a no-confidence vote, after leading the once-formidable Social Democrats to their worst electoral showing in decades (see graph).

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By early 2019, the European Union’s member states will have reached agreement on the Union’s ‘multi-annual financial framework’ (MFF) for the next seven years. The final settlement will determine how the EU spends its money in the period 2021-2027. The eventual importance of what is decided can’t be understated. As the world’s biggest aid donor and a significant influence on global commercial and environmental policy, the EU has immense influence in global affairs.

However, recent years have seen a swing towards populism and authoritarianism in many member states, meaning that the EU is coming under increasing pressure to take a harder stance on issues such as migration and border control. At the same time, uncertainty about America’s commitment to NATO under Donald Trump has pushed many European policymakers to seek security guarantees closer to home.

All of these influences are more than apparent in working papers concerning the MFF, which began to emerge over the summer. As it stands, the proposed spending plans include massive increases in funding for border control and military research, as well as questionable external spending to “tackle the root causes of migration.” But what exactly is being proposed?

**Peacebuilding and migration**

The institutional logic in the European institutions is that migration is essentially provoked by insecurity, and so reducing conflict abroad will result in fewer refugees arriving on Europe’s shores. While peacebuilding in developing countries is a laudable task for the EU to assume, the new budget proposals actually mark a move away from the civilian-centred methods which have proven fruitful until now.

Instead, the EU proposes to create a €10.5bn ‘European Peace Facility’, which replaces several existing funds. While the name sounds reassuring, the money will actually be spent on training and equipping armies in Africa – the theory being that local security forces should be better equipped to handle instability which pushes people to flee.

However, reinforcing the militaries of governments with poor human rights records risks further entrenching the violence and oppression which creates migration flows in the first place. And worst of all, the new Peace Facility sits outwith the main EU budget, meaning that the European Parliament has no oversight over spending.

**Border control and asylum**

While the EU risks worsening the situation abroad, it also plans to securitise its own borders, locking refugees and migrants in danger zones like Libya. Funding for border management and asylum controls looks set to rise by 260%, to €34.9bn. This includes the creation of a 10,000-strong European Border and Coast Guard Agency, as well as funding for controls at the national level. Again, this makes oversight of things like rights abuses very difficult, and marks a sad return to the “fortress Europe” policy of the past.

**Military research**

The militarisation of the EU over the past two years has been incredibly rapid, with last year’s ‘Permanent Structured Cooperation’ (PESCO) agreement fast-tracking common military and security projects between member states. The new budget proposals build on this trend, setting aside €10.5bn for “defence research” among Europe’s private sector military contractors. Working papers state that funding will only be disbursed if at least three member states commit to procuring the final products, which range from armoured vehicles to night-vision weapons equipment. This amounts to an effective subsidy for the arms trade – of exactly the same size as the proposed “Peace” Facility.

The EU is at a political and moral crossroads, and the next budget will determine whether we live in a Europe of sanctuary or a Europe which acquiesces to the politics of division and fear.

**WHAT IS QCEA DOING?**

Many civil society organisations in Brussels have expressed concerns about the direction indicated by the proposed MFF, but naturally many have chosen to focus on the policy consequences for their field of work. If we are to speak out against the more worrying elements of the new budget, we need to speak with one voice.

QCEA has begun to collate the concerns of our colleagues in one place, namely a special ‘micro-site’ with EU staff and civil society partners as part of our ‘quiet diplomacy’ work. To find out more, please visit www.qcea.org/mff.

Later this year, we plan to begin discussing the MFF with EU staff and civil society partners as part of our ‘quiet diplomacy’ work.
QCEA advocacy supported by new human rights paper

In recent months QCEA has hosted a research project interviewing EU policymakers about the impact of EU policy on the human rights of migrants travelling from the Greater Horn of Africa region (GHoA).

In the last four decades, the people in the GHoA have confronted a series of challenges, such as violent conflict, state failure, and economically and environmentally damaging climate change. A main consequence of these challenges was a spike in the number of people migrating both within and outside the region.

In November 2014, the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, also known as the Khartoum Process, became the main cooperation forum on migration between the European Union and GHoA. QCEA’s research is helping to fill the gap in public information about the impact of the Khartoum Process on human rights.

Our research has included interviews with a wide range of policymakers and academics, including leading MEPs and EU officials in the region. The information and perspectives gathered have formed the basis of a “discussion paper” to be published in October 2018 (shown below).

Through an analysis of the relations between the GHoA and the EU, QCEA’s new discussion paper outlines a series of opportunities and challenges facing European governments. The discussion paper focuses on how the human rights of migrants, in or from the GHoA region, can be better protected.

QCEA’s discussion paper is set within the context of a 2015-16 political crisis in which EU member states were unable to unify around a common migration policy, particularly with regard to the fair sharing of the intake of migrants (most of whom arrived in Europe via Greece, Italy and Spain).

Perceptions of public concern about inward migration have created fear amongst many political leaders of increased support for far-right political parties. This paper recognises the difficult situation this has created for European policymakers, while offering realistic and constructive ways forward.

The paper questions how far the Khartoum Process is really in the interest of GHoA, and considers the impact it has had on legislation in the region. In particular, concerns are raised about policies that reinforce borders within Africa as a part of a ‘whole of route’ approach to migration, and the barriers this may create to regional cooperation.

The discussion paper raises the prospect of a different model in which local, national and international actors work together to construct, from the bottom up, a new narrative on migration. The absence of safe and legal ways for migrants to enter the EU from the Greater Horn of Africa is also identified as a factor supporting human trafficking networks in the region.

You can read QCEA’s discussion paper on the Khartoum Process at bit.ly/2xPEHrT

Giving refugees themselves a voice on integration and inclusion

Who better to talk about the integration and inclusion of refugees than the refugees themselves? That’s exactly what QCEA did on 17 September, when we brought together refugees living in Italy, Sweden, Austria and elsewhere to meet European policymakers at Quaker House Brussels.

It’s rare that refugee voices are heard in high-level discussions on migration. But at this unusual event, organised in partnership with the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), the people actually affected by integration policy had the opportunity to set out the main obstacles to building inclusive societies in Europe.

Building on their own research, the participants were clear about the barriers to integration they and others faced. At the policy level, apparently obvious challenges such as limited access to education and the labour market were highlighted, as well more structural issues such as poor consultation with refugees in decision-making processes that affect them. This is equally true at the European level, as noted during the event.

Some participants also raised the issue of anti-migrant political discourse. The impact of a negative political narrative portraying refugees as unwilling and even incapable of adapting to their host communities was discussed. These assumptions and stereotypes have pervaded policy, thus perpetuating the existence of the social barriers discussed above.

Also in attendance were representatives from the European Commission as well as seven European governments. What was their perspective on this apparent ‘vicious circle’? While the EU has offered support in developing and coordinating member states’ actions and policies on integration, overall competence does rest largely at the national level. However, following a review of the action plan the Commission intends to support its member states further, particularly in terms of facilitating labour market access and inclusive decision-making.

For civil society actors like QCEA, it can sometimes feel like “one step forward, two steps back” on this issue. But we believe that by drawing attention to the issues, and particularly by giving a voice to those who may otherwise have remained unheard, we can help contribute to smarter, more sensitive policymaking.

This meeting was part of a series of discussions we organise with ECRE. Together we seek to build relationships and facilitate discussions that can find common ground and break through difficult issues.

Helping the Helpers
PROJECT UPDATE

Helping the Helpers, QCEA’s effort to tackle secondary trauma among volunteers working with refugees, has chosen the participants for its pilot project. They are all actively working with migrants and/or refugees, and several are refugees themselves. They are currently working in Greece, Ireland, France, Turkey and the UK, and originally come from Australia, Belgium, Turkey, Israel, Rwanda, Syria, UK and Switzerland.

The group met with the organisers in September in Brussels for five intensive days of learning about vicarious and secondary trauma. They learned ways to treat it in themselves and how to help those they work with to learn the same skills. The group will meet next in March and September of next year, and between those sessions will connect monthly to review what they’ve learned and to support each other in using their new skills.

The project organisers are all Quaker psychotherapists who specialise in trauma treatment. They come from the US, UK, Belgium and Italy.

Find out more at www.qcea.org/Helpers
With the rise of far-right politics in some parts of Europe, are faith groups are ready to challenge the rise of xenophobia? More crucially, would religious organisations be likely to repeat any of the same failures of the 1930s should the political situation deteriorate even further? If we are to do so, we need to start preparing now. That was one of the most striking conclusions which emerged from an interfaith lunch on the subject of truth, which was organised by QCEA on 4 September.

Twenty-seven representatives from faith-based organisations attended, including all major world religions as well as smaller groups. Officials from the European Commission and from different political groups in the European Parliament also took part, including Quaker MEP Molly Scott Cato.

The following questions were discussed in what proved to be a thought-provoking meeting:
- What does Truth mean to faith representatives and faith-based organisations working at the European level?
- How far has dishonesty become a tool of our civil and political life? What can our voices add to this conversation?
- What is our duty to speak truth?
- What can we do this year to build common ground as an antidote to forces of division?

The concept of truth is often used in faith conversations to mean something broader and deeper than just the opposite to falsehoods. Misinformation and political spin are not new, but until two years ago most people had not heard the now frequently used terms ‘post-truth’ and ‘fake news’.

Against this very modern emergence of “alternative facts” and the systemic denigration of evidence which contradicts a political ideology, one participant said that it was important that faith groups accept that their truth is not supreme, and that we acknowledge the empirical value of science.

On the same theme, Molly encouraged faith groups to think more deeply about just how far truth really is relative, given that subjective interpretations of reality are being abuse for political purposes.

Speaking from a more political perspective, she also made reference to the ‘big lie’ in political discourse – saying something so unbelievable that the audience believe that some part of it must be true. Again, this tactic is nothing new, but we see it deployed frequently by the current US administration as well as this tactic is nothing new, but we see it deployed frequently by the current US administration as well as against a political ideology, one participant said that it was important that faith groups accept that their truth is not supreme, and that we acknowledge the empirical value of science.

At Quaker House Brussels, we regularly hold ‘Quiet Diplomacy’ lunches, where decision-makers come together to have sensitive conversations away from the spotlight. The guarantee of discretion and non-judgment offered by QCEA for these events means that they are a useful and trusted channel of communication.

While we know that people do not come to these lunches for the food, we nonetheless try to make the lunch itself stand out from what might normally be expected. This helps foster the warm and creative atmosphere we need for our discussions.

All of the food is made in-house, and we try to make sure that it encourages quiet exchanges of information. For example, we know that multi-colored fruits and vegetables provide vitamins and minerals, which help mental acuity and focus. We also know that dopamine-inducing foods can increase the feeling of well-being. These include leafy greens, legumes, fish, poultry and eggs. Magnesium can help us stay calm, and we find it in seeds, spinach, nuts and chocolate. Finally, carbohydrates can provide quick energy for the brain. We try to build our lunches around these foods.

Most of our lunches begin with a time for participants to meet and talk with each other while they are eating. This means that we need to have food that can be easily negotiated with one hand while standing up. It cannot be drippy. As Peace programme lead Olivia Caemyaux says, “we do not want to be remembered as the place where someone ruined their favorite blouse or tie”.

We also always have some food on the table during the meeting that is eaten with the hands (clementines are a favourite). In addition to looking handsome, it can play a role be providing something to do with hands when time to think is needed.
Donate to QCEA today

QCEA’s important work on peace and human rights depends on your generous support. Over 50% of our income in 2017 came from donations, and we receive no money from the European institutions, meaning we can speak truth to power without fear or favour.

Donating is quick, easy and makes a real difference to our work. Here’s how to help.

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