



Quaker
Council for
European
Affairs

around
europe

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TESTIMONY OF EQUALITY

Working towards a more
just world

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EUROPE IN BRIEF

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European Ombudsman begins inquiries on EU human rights abuses

On 12 November, Emily O'Reilly opened an investigation into the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) – specifically the complaints mechanism for people who have suffered human rights violations at their hands. The complaints mechanism is thought to be deeply flawed and not to have brought justice to a single person.

Also in November, Emily O'Reilly opened an investigation into the European Commission following allegations that they ignored regular reports of human rights abuses committed in EU-funded border patrols in Croatia. As has been reported in several previous issues of Around Europe, these abuses of people seeking sanctuary in the EU have included stripping people naked in freezing conditions, burning clothes, smashing mobile phones, spraying with pepper spray or paint, and beating with batons. The EU is accused of failing to establish an Independent Monitoring Mechanism to deter Croatian police from committing these abuses. Since 2017, Croatia has received 108 million euro under EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and 23 million euro in emergency assistance for 'migration and border management' which are reported to have directly funded the salaries of the police officers undertaking the inhuman, degrading and violent treatment.

The Ombudsman has given the EU Commission until February to answer her questions. There has been some action under the new EU Home Affairs Commissioner, Ylva Johansson, who requested they provide evidence of investigations into the abuse in a letter sent to Croatia's Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Davor Božinovic, on 23 October.

Poverty and discrimination against Roma and Travellers increased during Covid-19

As was reported in several QCEA blogs over the summer, many Roma and Travellers lost income, and suffered from worsening sanitation and overcrowding. The EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) has publicly recognised this reality and the impact on health and more limited access to education. Discrimination and anti-Roma hate speech (particularly online) also increased according to FRA.

Belarus: systematic use of torture

Human rights abuses continue in Belarus following the protests against electoral fraud, police brutality, and government reprisals against peaceful dissent. Here we see yet another context where police do not show personal identity numbers, nor are there other mechanisms in place that would be necessary for accountability. There are now well-documented reports of widespread and systematic use of torture and ill-treatment in detention, including sexual violence.

Belarus is the only country in Europe not to have joined the Council of Europe and does not provide the freedom of assembly and expression guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights. However, Belarus is a participating state in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and so this diplomatic avenue remains. OSCE status includes international commitments to prevent torture, hold human rights violators to account, and conduct fair trials. None of which the Belarus government are currently doing.

Illegal pushbacks continue at scale

In the last half year at least 250 pushback operations took place between Greece and Turkey. Human rights monitors Mare Liberum have recorded more than 8,500 people that have been subject to illegal pushbacks since March, but think the true number is much higher. Information gathering is very difficult because the border is now highly militarised.

New deterrent of shame

In one recent instance, Greek authorities arrested a father following a shipwreck off Samos in which he survived, but his son drowned. He was arrested on suspicion of endangering a life - at what must have already been a very harrowing time.

EU budget 2021-27 not yet approved

On 16 November Hungary and Poland blocked the approval of the EU's seven-year budget (€1.81 trillion) and the recovery fund (€750 billion), as both countries continued to oppose the rule of law mechanism attached to the EU funds.

Over several years the Hungarian and Polish governments have been repeatedly accused of undermining rule of law, judicial independence and democratic institutions in their countries. European governments showed resolve in agreeing the new rule of law mechanism by qualified majority voting, (which would allow for the suspension of EU funds in case of mishandling European money or breaching EU values) as they knew it was likely Hungary and Poland would use the veto powers that all member states have when it came to the final budget vote.

New five-year EU LGBTQI* Equality Strategy

The EU Commission's strategy, launched in November, recognises the increase in attacks on LGBTQI* public events including Pride marches and declarations of LGBTQI* free zones (particularly in Poland). This is the first time that the Commission has set out a clear work programme covering a wide range of policy areas, proposing legislation to guarantee parents movement between member states without losing their parental status, and encouraging national action to ban so-called 'conversion therapies'.



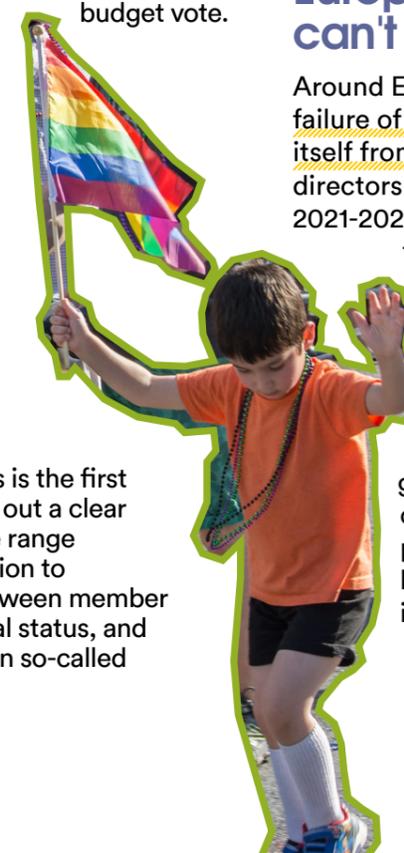
↑ PHOTO: katerha (CC)

Prison populations fall during Covid-19

Data collected by the University of Lausanne shows that Europe's prison population was 5 percent lower in mid-September compared with January 2020 (from 121.4 to 115.8 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants). One of the only territories to see an increase in the prison population was Sweden, having also chosen not to undertake a COVID lockdown like other countries. Despite the lower levels of incarceration 3,300 prisoners and 5,100 prison staff were recorded as having caught the virus in European prisons, suggesting that governments should have heeded calls to reduce incarceration further.

European Investment Bank can't kick carbon

Around Europe has previously reported on the failure of the EU's investment bank to separate itself from the arms trade. Now the EIB board of directors has approved a climate roadmap for 2021-2025 that allows high-carbon companies and financial intermediaries receiving funding to avoid the decarbonisation necessary to help address the climate crisis. The roadmap includes a transition period that even allows projects that pollute more than the Paris climate agreement would allow (i.e. more than 1.5 degree global heating), ignoring a previous EIB's commitment to do so. The roadmap prohibits investment in airport expansion, but not motorways, fossil gas projects, and industrial animal farming.





NEWS FROM Quaker House in Brussels

Since 1979, the Quaker Council for European Affairs has worked to bring a vision based on the Quaker commitment to peace, justice and equality to Europe and its institutions.



Introducing two new staff members at QCEA!

Pamela Nzabampema

Outreach and Community Organizer

Hello! My name is Pamela and I am thrilled to be your new Outreach and Community Organizer. My role has come about because QCEA has recently been awarded some specific funding to expand its work on hate and racism. In the next year, I will lead various activities that will challenge and deconstruct colonial and racist assumptions in human rights policy and discourse.

I will also communicate regularly with you about QCEA's work and coordinate events for QCEA supporters. I am not completely new to Brussels having worked here before in the European Parliament.

Partly owing to my experience of growing-up in a war-torn country, I have been very interested in means to ensure peace, justice and equality. Before joining

QCEA, I completed a doctoral degree in Peace Studies from the University of Bradford. My research examined policing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In line with a decolonial approach, the research aimed to move beyond the narrow, state-centric and normative approach to policing often promoted in externally-supported peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict societies towards a broader approach, which recognises the existence and the importance of various policing providers beyond the state.

Looking forward to working with you in the next 12 months!



Lena Hofmaier

Communications Assistant



Hello dear readers of Around Europe!

My name is Lena, and I am the new Communications Assistant at QCEA. I am trying to follow in the footsteps of my predecessor Martin Leng, who was with the organisation for more than three years. My role is to communicate what

QCEA is doing with both our supporters as well as others in the political arena in Brussels. QCEA communicates through creating publications, such as reports and Around Europe, and managing our presence on the internet through our website and social media accounts. That is lots of content to create and design!

I discovered the Quaker community about three years ago and have since been active in my local Quaker meeting (Freiburg) and with EMEYF, the Europe and Middle East Young Friends.

For my academic studies, I went to university in Bremen in Northern Germany and Maastricht in the Netherlands to study Political Science and European Studies. My studies, together with several internships in Brussels, made me familiar with the 'Eurobubble', the technicalities of European policy making, and (most importantly) advocacy in the EU – and I got 'hooked'.

Through Quakers I heard about QCEA and subsequently volunteered to do some translation work and enjoyed doing a fantastic internship at Quaker House earlier this year. What I loved most about my internship was that QCEA works truly value-driven and brings something unique and invaluable to Brussels: quiet diplomacy.

I am looking forward to use my skills in communications at QCEA and to get creative through communicating about issues I deeply care about. Likewise, I am excited to be able to work together with my wonderful colleagues at QCEA on bringing Quaker values into the European policy world!



Filmer la Police

Filming Police

Read QCEA's new report on **Filming the Police**, the second in a series of publications on police violence.

www.qcea.org/humanpolicing

New QCEA blogs:

Deltalicht

Dutch

www.qceadeltalicht.wordpress.com

Passerelles

French

www.qceapasserelles.wordpress.com

Join QCEA's online conversation



Want to keep in touch with QCEA's work in a more informal, interactive way? If you use Facebook, why not join our **Friends of QCEA** group, where you can discuss our work and our concerns with Friends and QCEA Supporters across Europe?

Peace Programme News

The QCEA peace programme continues to engage with upcoming EU policies on peace and security. Through getting involved in these issues, QCEA is living out the Quaker testimony of peace and equality.

QCEA launches report about Gender Equality & Inclusivity in Peace & Security

On November 10th, the QCEA peace programme organised the launch of a report and three short videos on gender equality and inclusivity in peace and security. The event was streamed live on YouTube. Over 350 people registered, an estimated 270 people joined the live event and 500 had watched the recorded video of the event the days after. For those not able to join on the day, you can still watch a recording of the event on our YouTube channel. The feedback we got was very positive! We had a very active live chat during the event, in which people reacted to the speakers' interventions and shared useful insights and remarks.

The event was co-hosted by the Embassy of Ireland to Belgium and featured Helena Nolan (Ambassador of Ireland to Belgium), Marc Fiedrich (Head of Unit, European Commission Foreign Policy Instrument, Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace),

Toni Haastrup (Senior Lecturer in International Politics, University of Stirling), and Laura Davis (Senior Associate, Gender, Peace and Security at the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office).

The discussion addressed a number of important issues such as the backlash to gender and inclusivity work, masculinities, militarism, intersectionality, hierarchies and power relationships, binary language, the need to work on peace rather than security, as well as the need for authenticity, listening, solidarity, and making space available for diverse and unusual voices. It was an opportunity to remind ourselves that gender equality has been at the heart of Quaker practice for almost 400 years.

Funded by the Economic and Social Sciences Research Council (ESRC) Impact Acceleration Account, this project builds on an existing collaboration with Katharine A. M. Wright, Senior Lecturer in International Politics at Newcastle University. The overarching aim of this project is to fill an existing gap by producing content of use for those involved in peace and security field operations and institutions.

The occasion: Anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

The launch event took place at the height of celebrations around the 20-year anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. This is fitting because the project addresses the remaining practical challenges to achieving this goal, specifically the importance of leadership, strategies for overcoming institutional resistance, and a lack of knowledge of the relevance of gender.



This UN resolution was a huge step forward in terms of taking gender issues into account in peace and security matters.

QCEA's best practice guide

Our report and videos are addressing the following themes:

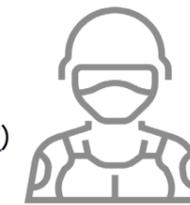
- Gender and inclusivity matter for peace and security
- Gender and leadership: Practising inclusivity in peace and security
- Overcoming resistance to work on gender: Strategies and approaches

Find our best practice guide and the accompanying videos on their dedicated webpage: www.qcea.org/gender.

Revision of the EU Concept on Mediation - a chance for Quakers to contribute!

More than 10 years after its original adoption by the European Council the [Concept](#) on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities is being revised. This is an opportunity for Quakers to share their experience and contribute to the discussion. We believe that the EU, as well as other mediation organisations, could build on the past experiences and draw lessons from past Quaker work. Therefore, at QCEA we are currently undertaking research on the EU's role in mediation, linking it to the recent British Quaker publication 'Dining with diplomats, praying with gunmen' by Ann Bennett. We look forward to sharing our findings with you.

European Peace Facility



The European Peace Facility (EPF) was proposed in 2018, with the intention of contributing to the EU's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work and to enhance global security. One component of the EPF (and the most worrying one) would allow the EU to 'train and equip' military and security forces in third countries. Since, under current rules, the EU cannot fund any military activity through its budget, the EPF is an off-budget instrument. This means that the European Parliament will not have any surveillance or control over it.

After intense intergovernmental discussions, the proposed EPF has been reduced from €10.5 billion to €5 billion for the period 2021-2027. The official Council decision establishing the EPF has not been finalised yet, but should be by the end of 2020. In order to implement the instrument a new division fully dedicated to the EPF, has been created.

QCEA remains highly concerned about many aspects of the EPF, including the potential provision of weapons and ammunition to armed forces with poor human rights records, the risk of arms diversion, and the lack of accountability and safeguarding. QCEA works with the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) and others in advocacy actions towards EU policy makers. QCEA also continues to promote the other civilian and nonviolent tools at the EU's disposal and suggests new ones.

EU defence ministers propose 'Strategic Compass'



In June of this year, the EU Defence Ministers decided to develop a Strategic Compass document, that will complement the EU Global Strategy (2016) and establish a common EU strategy for military policy. It intends to make EU-wide policy more coherent and will be released in 2022 under the French Presidency of the Council of the EU (where member states meet together). For now, the first stage is a comprehensive threat assessment conducted by the EEAS and the German Presidency with contributions from the EU member states. The document will notably consider the EU's tools for crisis prevention, one of which is the CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) missions.

Such a document echoes the call of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to implement a "geopolitical commission" as well as Josep Borrell's goal to see the EU (re)learn "the language of power". It fits into the recent shift of the EU towards a harder and more militarised approach to peace and security, a trend which QCEA has actively opposed through our work in Brussels.



Von der Leyen Commission: How fresh is the fresh start?

2020 saw the new European Commission release a raft of policies ranging from the European Green Deal to a [New Pact](#) on Migration and Asylum, and an EU anti-racism [action plan](#) among others.

With each of these measures, European institutions have been claiming a 'fresh start', a 'new agenda', 'a departure from...'. However, any hopes for more humane policies building on lessons learned from the past were quickly dashed: the new Comprehensive [Strategy](#) with Africa seeks a stronger partnership between the African Union and the EU without ever acknowledging that the 'ties that bind Africa and the European Union' were literally shackles in the not so distant past and what the unequal balance of power between the two continents means. The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy talks of 'speaking up' and 'condemning human rights violations and abuses' but so far has only whispered against the shrinking of rights in Hungary or Poland.

Policies are not created in a vacuum. Policy-makers not only shape but are also influenced by the society they live in. Behind the technical, 'professional' language used, lay lived-experiences, assumptions, and biases. This, combined with an acute lack of diversity and representation (EU institutions employ less than 1% of staff from ethnic minorities, and the NGO sector fares only marginally better) enables group thinking and one-dimensional policies that not only lack nuance or empathy, but at times prevents groups of people from thriving and living in dignity.

For example, narratives of migrant women as helpless, housebound and uneducated victims based on essentialist and racist perceptions have filtered into policy despite evidence that this group tends to be educated and skilled. Strategies devised by insti-

tutions and programmes delivered by civil society organisations that do not challenge accepted assumptions of migrant women have limited impact. Why? Because they fail to consider evidence and lived experiences! As a result, migrant women in Europe are both more likely to be over-qualified for their job and less likely to be employed.

It is striking that the conversations on a post-Covid-19 world frequently use a vocabulary similar to what is present in the latest European policy documents: fairness, transformation, solidarity, new start, reset. While presenting the European Commission's forthcoming workplan, von der Leyen referred to 2020 as a year to instantly [forget](#) and forever remember. While driven by a genuine wish for a better world, we ought to ask ourselves: what lessons have we learnt and how we will act in order for these hopes not to share the fate of current European policy outputs?

Good intentions without reflection can reproduce injustice and foster inequality. That is why QCEA's human rights programme's approach is guided by the following questions:

- 💡 *Is someone else doing it? What are we contributing?*
- 💡 *Does it go deep enough and far enough?*
- 💡 *Does it challenge assumptions and practices?*
- 💡 *Does it offer/promote alternative thinking or ways of doing?*
- 💡 *What connections are we making and what silos are we breaking?*

These are also questions that we ask colleagues in the 'Brussels Bubble' and beyond so that we can work together with empathy, discernment, and unbound imagination to bring about peace, justice and equality.

QCEA supporters gather to 'connect the dots'

In September, nearly eighty Quakers and friends as well as some Mennonites and Bahá'í from across sixteen European countries attended our 'Connecting the Dots' event online.

Connecting the Dots was an opportunity to come together and look for the bigger picture. It is by [filling the gaps and growing connection that justice, peace, and equality will no longer be considered as radical ideas but become a lived reality for all.](#)

Speakers included Ed Dommen (Swiss Quakers), Tracey Martin (Woodbrooke), Terri Beswick (ikletik), Laurel Townhead (Quaker United Nations Office), and Edwina Peart (Quakers in Britain).

We hope to continue the conversation in the future. A report of this event is available from lena.hofmaier@qcea.org.

"When we work in silos, there is less space for empathy and we can feel helpless. The event was about coming together to take a step back and see the bigger picture. What can we do to fill the gaps and hear the silences so that what Quakers value in justice, peace and equality no longer seem like radical ideas but become a lived reality for all of us."

Kékéli Kpognon,
QCEA Human Rights Programme

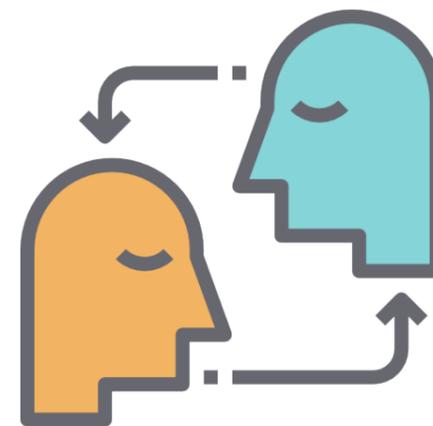
New QCEA workshop series about radical empathy makes a positive start

The course consists of a series of workshops designed to [strengthen empathy skills and highlight the relevance of empathy-led practice in the Peace and Human Rights fields.](#) The participants are policy professionals of different ages and stages in their career. We are happy to share that the first workshop was a success and welcomed participants with different backgrounds.

Core questions the course addresses:

- 💡 How can we hope to contribute to peace outside of ourselves when we are not working on peace within ourselves?
- 💡 How can we advocate for peace and justice without addressing tensions in the workplace?
- 💡 How do we shape fair policies that strike a balance between me, you and us?

"Do not be content to accept things as they are, but keep an alert and questioning mind. Seek to discover the causes of social unrest, injustice and fear; try to discern the new growing-points in social and economic life." *Britain Yearly Meeting, Advices, 1964*



Voices of participants

"This workshop is crucial to put human and soul back in the increasingly professionalised fields of peacebuilding and human rights"

"The workshop was a great opportunity to connect with policy makers and to discuss how we can do our work differently - in a more 'connected' way. The exchanges were very useful to realise how much certain needs are universal, and to what extent a failure to acknowledge and meet those needs can lead to miscommunication and conflict."

Human Rights Programme

Icon by Beccis via FlatIcon



Uncovered: EU-funded projects profit main arms exporters

by Laëtitia Sédou, European Network Against Arms Trade (ENAAAT)

In 2014, the EU co-legislators (Council and Parliament) adopted a pilot project for military research worth €1.5 million. In the following years the budget dedicated to military research and development (R&D) increased exponentially: from half a billion Euro in 2017-2019, to most probably €8 billion as of next year (covering 2021-2027).

It is an understatement to say that the vote in 2014 opened Pandora's box: it goes against the vision of the EU's founding fathers to control and constrain the production of war material and, even more so, it provides more space and financial means to the arms industry.

After years of trying to stop this funding from happening in the first place, peace groups like ENAAAT are now left with the sad role of trying to monitor how this money is being used and to warn about the risks such funding entails.

The first obstacle we face in this watchdog role is the severe lack of transparency. The European Defence Agency (EDA) had started off alright by publicising the detailed breakdown of all the beneficiaries of the first seven projects selected under the 2017 budget.

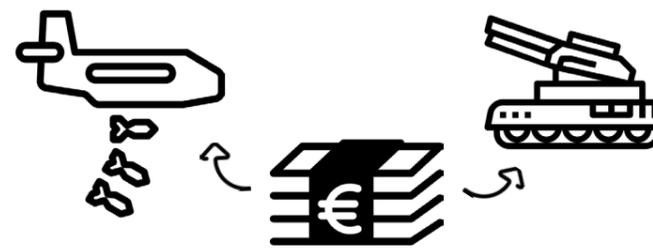
This led to interesting findings. For example: seven out of the eight companies that had advised the

European Commission to create this funding were receiving 41% of the budget allocated through those projects. No matter if this is a coincidence or not: Such a level of detailed information was never provided again, neither for the following projects run by the EDA, nor for the most recent ones selected by the European Commission in 2019.

Yet we know enough about the beneficiaries of 32 out of the 34 R&D projects currently funded or selected, to draw several conclusions (1):

Four countries get 53.5% of the grants allocated (in number of grants): France, Italy, Spain, and Germany. Although this is not a big surprise, it is worth remembering that these countries are also the biggest arms exporters in the EU. One of the main risks of this EU funding which, let us not forget, is mainly an industry-driven programme led by the Commissioner in charge of the internal market and the Defence Industry, is precisely contributing to exacerbate the on-going global arms race, which in turn feeds conflicts.

Another major reason for concern is the type of technologies being developed without any credible ethical assessment. One of the main objectives of the programme is to provide the EU with a 'technological advantage' as regards disruptive technologies "that will radically change the way to conduct war". Examples for such technologies are remotely piloted systems (drone swarms, remotely controlled tanks), increased automation through artificial



intelligence, and other technologies like hypersonic weapons or directed energy weapons (microwaves or lasers for example).

Even though many of those technologies have not been used on battlefields yet, many researchers are concerned: One can anticipate serious risks, ranging from extrajudicial killings to civilian casualties and human rights abuses, resurgence of large-scale attacks and proliferation, lack of proper human control over increasingly complex and fast systems, and challenged legal responsibility, to name but a few.

Adding to this, months of work by ENAAT and Vredesactie through different means (parliamentary questions, letters, Freedom of Information requests, and a complaint to the Ombudsman) give a quite worrying picture of the ethical assessments of military R&D projects funded by the EU.

After a decision of the European Ombudsman, the EDA eventually released the Ethical, Legal and Societal (ELSA) reviews of seven projects selected under the research funding. These documents show that the ELSA reviews fall short of being credible and are not in accordance with international obligations. The ethical aspect of these reviews mainly focused on the privacy of human participants and the impact on the environment, while no mention was made at all of international or human rights law, nor of major arms export control treaties.

This is a contradiction to article 36 of the Geneva Convention (Protocol I) which says:

"In the study, development, acquisition or adoption of a new weapon, means or method of warfare" states are under "an obligation to determine whether its employment would, in some or all circumstances, be prohibited by this Protocol or by any other rule of international law".

It implies that if there is no relevant treaty or customary law, states must examine whether the weapon under research "contravenes the principles of humanity" or "the dictates of the public conscience", according to the ICRC guide. Moreover, such review has to be carried out by an impartial reviewing body with a wide range of expertise and viewpoints.

When it comes to development projects managed by the Commission's Directorate-General DEFIS

(Defence Industry and Space), the situation is at best extremely confusing and contradicting:

The Commission first claimed that no ethical reviews were foreseen for the military development programme, but that no funding would be provided to technologies prohibited under international law - ignoring that obligations under international law are much wider than that.

It then took six months and two letters for DG DEFIS (European Commission department) to appear more aware of those international obligations and claim that it does conduct such ethical assessments. However, at the time they refused to give even partial access to documents relating to them. Very recently Alain Alexis, acting director at DEFIS, told euro-parliamentarians that ethical assessments were conducted internally by a group of engineering experts on ... defence. We are quite far away from an impartial body (the Commission being judge and jury about the programme being a success for the arms industry) with a wide range of expertise and viewpoints!

For all these reasons and for giving peace a chance, it is and will be very important that this EU funding for the development of dangerous weaponry is continuously challenged at both the European and national level.

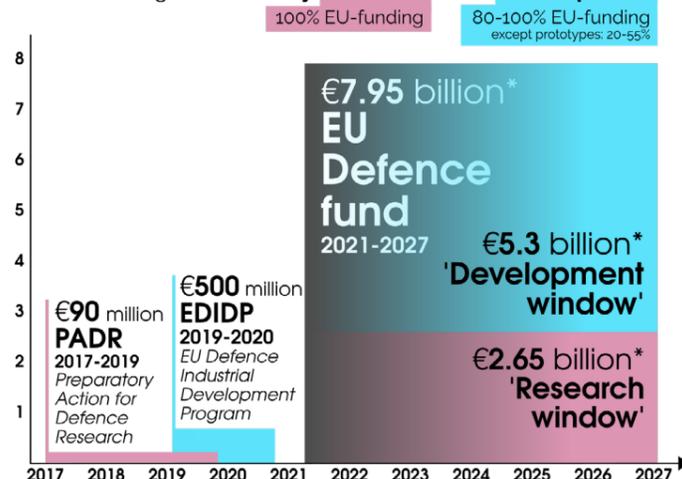
(1) see the recent ENAAAT publication on <http://enaat.org/2020/10/26/who-gets-most-of-eu-funding-for-military-research-and-development>

ENAAAT
european network against arms trade

How much taxpayer money is being handed to the arms industry?

The EU Defence Fund

The EU budget for military research and development.



* In current prices, according to EU council position of 1st October (2018/0254(COD)), still under negotiation with EU Parliament. National contributions are expected to co-fund development projects, in theory up to 4 times the EU funding size. In practice so far the level of national co-funding under EDIDP is low.

Working on migration policy as an African

Usually based in Africa, the author spent two years on secondment to an NGO in Europe. Here, he writes about his experience in the Eurobubble.

I would call living in Europe as an African a process of embracing certain positive things as well as negative things. You have access to some things you did not have before, such as enjoying some social and professional freedoms, a good care health system and infrastructure, and other facilities important in life. However, the experience of living in Europe provides an appreciation of the gaps in human rights practice in Europe, too. This includes discrimination against non-European nationals, racism, and other Black excluding policies that would put you in an unwanted position or give you feelings of non-belonging in society.

Working on migration policy in Europe as an African often put me in a difficult situation. Every week I faced the realities of the meetings that take place in and around the European institutions. I heard reports of fellow Africans, fellow humans, dying in the Mediterranean trying to reach the shores of Europe, and those who survived the sea journey, but are terrorised trying to cross European borders. I read about people who managed to arrive in Europe but were detained and forced to return to danger.

Meetings with EU policy makers ignore that there is no legal route through which asylum seekers can access European protection and that they can only make an asylum application by being on European soil. This issue is not on the table for discussion. The

silence of European discussions is another story of Europe that I've learned.

How I was perceived

Living and working in Europe can be very challenging for people of African descent because of the existing general perceptions towards Black people.

"Africa is considered the poorest continent but also the richest".

This saying is connected to many aspects of Africa, but few really understand what this means. Whether business, education, or other domains, all are being looked at through a poverty lens. Layered with the colonial propaganda of previous centuries and this misconception transforms into an unspoken notion of 'poor minded Africans'. The continent is problematised as inherently troubled. This is a basis for European policy that causes more harm to the people of Africa – wherever they live. It is amazing how rarely a counter narrative is shared and how very few Europeans are ready to understand (believe) those sharing them.

Whilst working on migration policy in Brussels, my point of view was always considered exaggerated or somehow bringing to the table the truths that Europeans dare not to speak of and are not interested in.

It is not the case that my perceptions towards migration simply differed, it was about the radically different value placed on my contribution compared to others with only desk-based experience in Europe. This is remarkable when you think we might be talking about a place I've called home, where I grew

up, was educated and worked from. I might be having something specific to say that would contribute to the shared understanding of participants in a European meeting. This way of thinking and acting deprives Black people of our right to be represented on issues that concern us, our right to matter.

Observations on the EU policy making world

The EU has made huge progress in its policy-making capacity and includes leading examples of good governance and transparency. Such experience gives the EU confidence to make policy for Europe, but also for beyond its boundaries, pursuing its interests through 'partnerships' with third countries.

The EU understands the importance of representation when it comes to policy formulation; it follows its procedures in place, whereby the European Commission has the right to initiate a policy proposal. However, both the European Parliament and the Council of the EU can also request the Commission draft of a new legislation. Other European institutions and citizens can also propose EU action in certain circumstances.

The Commission consults selected experts and non-governmental organisations throughout the process. Such a process is as well-structured as it sounds. Their views play a significant role in the EU policy making process. Many of those most involved in these processes have followed a narrow path to begin their career in the 'Eurobubble' and have little life experience beyond it once they arrive. They really do believe people that this process leaves no-one behind, or at least no Europeans behind. This problem is particularly acute when it comes to Africa policy. In Brussels, I saw and heard many Europeans named as experts in African affairs, in the EU institutions, but also in other international organisations and in NGOs.

However, when it comes to policies that concern non-EU nationals, including refugees and migrants, there is usually a complete lack of representation of those people. This reality sits alongside the politicisation of the migration issue, and nationalism in general. European nationalism has plagued the continent for centuries and it still misleads decision makers and results in inadequate policies that are harmful to many people.

It might not be a surprise to know that European policy may only be based on European interests, particularly in the highly charged area of migration policy. For instance, the externalisation of European borders leaves the so-called international responsibility to poorer countries, but also breaches international laws and continues to cause unimaginable pain for many in need of a place of sanctuary.

EU policies have a huge and direct impact on Africa, socially, economically and politically. Considering the number of people who have died at Europe's border, it is a huge loss for Africa and elsewhere. There are some NGOs that play a role in advocating against

anti-Black racism in Europe through denouncing discriminatory policies in statements or at policy events. The EU now needs to develop the capacity necessary to listen to these voices and build more inclusive policy making processes at the EU level that can grow sustainable and just partnerships.

Migrant-led NGOs

Migrants and diasporas initiatives for self-advocacy, mutual solidarity, and contribution to host societies are not new. However, only now do policymakers begin to acknowledge their value. We would like to use this space to shout out some positive examples of migrant- and diaspora-led initiatives:

For the past 35 years the African women-led organisation **FORWARD** has worked to end violence against women and girls by providing support to affected women, bringing together communities and developing skills and knowledge of service providers and policymakers. FORWARD's participatory approach involves listening to the lived experience in the migrant community in order to develop evidence-based programmes.

New Women Connectors (NWC) based in the Netherlands is an initiative led by migrant and refugee women to create policy and community shifts on matters that affect them. The collaborative platform brings together refugee and migrant women for peer support, to map their challenges, recommend solutions and become change-makers.

NWC was created and is led by Anila Noor who joined a new Expert Group set up by the European Commission in October 2020. The expert group regularly consults migrants on issues that directly concern them at the EU level and ensure effective policies and implementation.

In Belgium the **Collectif Mémoire Coloniale et Lutte Contre les Discriminations** explores the impact colonisation has had on representation, rights and autonomy of communities of African descent in Belgian and European societies today. Through guided tours and lectures, the group retraces the shared history that links Europe and Africa in all its complexity and for greater social cohesion.



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The ethics behind some NGOs' images

Quynh-Yen Kohnert, a student at St John University in York sheds light on why organisations and activists should be careful when producing and using images for their causes.

Nowadays many of us get our news from social media. Because it has become so ingrained in our daily lives, it is almost inevitable that much is easy to disregard. This competition for readers' attention can tempt NGOs to present ever more explicit images for their own interests, more than the interests of their subject, without reflecting on the ethical issues involved.

Most of us can understand the motives behind so-called 'development porn' (any type of media, written, photographed or filmed which exploits the poor's condition to generate sympathy) to reach a wider audience and raise awareness. This type of image can do more harm than good. It can violate an individual's rights, expose those who do not necessarily want their identity revealed, misrepresent or reinforce stereotypes, and fuel xenophobia. Some governments can exacerbate messages for their own purposes, for instance when refugees are scapegoated for political ends, such as the UK Prime Minister and Home Secretary have about people seeking sanctuary there.

At what point do exploitative images pose ethical challenges for NGOs?

Exploitative photographs are commonly used by NGOs to stress urgency and desperation. However, [photographs](#) such as the UNHCR-captioned 'Refugee or migrant? Word choice matters' by photographer Andrew McConnell and a photograph of Renee Bach holding a malnourished child raise ethical questions about consent, safeguarding, and the right to privacy. What then is the intention behind using these images: to evoke empathy, or compete for attention or funding...?

According to the AlJazeera [report](#) 'Does Humanitarian aid have a 'white saviour' problem?' Renee Bach, founder of SHC (Serving His Children) - an NGO 'combating malnutrition' in Uganda, was accused of posing as a medical professional whilst treating children. Quite apart from the motives behind setting up the NGO in the first place ("This woman knew very well she had no medical qualification but she turned the Ugandan children into bodies to experiment on." – Alaso Olivia Patience, co-founder of No White Saviors), the blog picture uploaded by Amanda (see on the right) typifies the questionable ethics of this mindset. It portrays a malnourished child as a 'photo op' for Bach and a young woman beside her. The child is visibly uncomfortable, yet the women still went ahead, despite how this looks and what it says about vulnerability and power imbalance between subject and photographer.

Exploitative images are sometimes used when sponsoring refugee children. This may be kind-

hearted, but it raises moral concerns. Arguably, the whole concept of advertising children for fundraising can be considered unethical. Making marketable commodities out of children steals their dignity, exposes personal details of their identity, increases the risk of favoritism, and undermines their right to protection and safeguarding. NGOs must be held accountable when they violate the rights of people they claim they want to support. There are other ways for NGOs to use images to demonstrate progress and the use to which donated funds are put, such as before-and-after pictures of communities who consent to them, without focussing on individuals' misfortune.

An ethical image is one which avoids stereotyping. Images need to be assessed not only in terms of what they contribute to the organisation itself, but also in terms of their impact on the subject whose



This illustration is based on a photograph from the blog <https://isaiah49.blogspot.com/2011/01/el-roi-saw-andrew.html>. We decided not to show the original photograph in order to protect the child's privacy and dignity. Illustration by the author Quynh-Yen Kohnert

image is used, and on the viewers' understanding. Humanitarian organisations should acknowledge and credit their subjects.

I invite readers to reflect on Kant's quote "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end." – Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals (1785).

QCEA General Assembly meets October 2020



"Covid gives us opportunities and challenges on how we move forward, revealing inequalities and putting things on the agenda which while present, were not at the forefront. It is changing how we work together and communicate as a community. We have thought about what we can learn from history, what ways of thinking must change. We recognize that there is a challenge to expertise and factually-based information. Additionally, we must consider the tension between individual rights and collective responsibility."

QCEA General Assembly, Saturday 3 October, 2020 (Minute 2020/22)

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