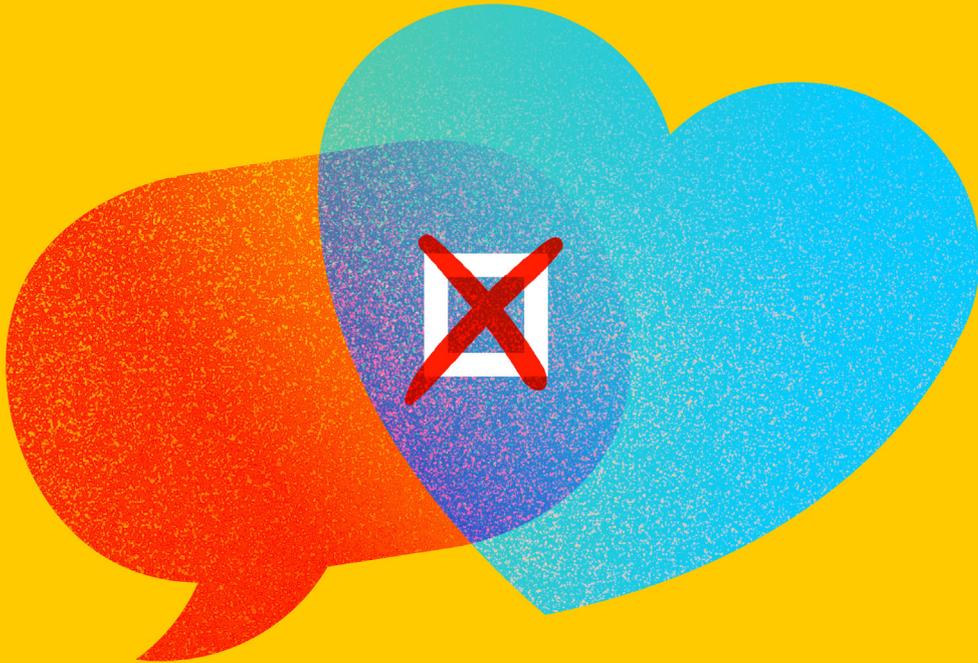




Quaker
Council for
European
Affairs

**around
europe**

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#choose respect

Anti-migrant hate speech is too common.
QCEA's new campaign aims to change that.

AND WE NEED
YOUR HELP! 

PAGE 2

What's the latest
from Europe's far
right movements?

PAGE 5

Brexit Meeting for
Worship: together at
a turning point

PAGE 6

Two members of the
QCEA team look back
on their time with us



Spotlight on Europe's extreme right

↑ Former Trump advisor Steve Bannon, who is now seeking to boost the fortunes of populist right movements in Europe.
PHOTO: GAGE SKIDMORE (CC)

With the European Parliament elections just a couple of months away, right-wing populist movements across the continent look set to make significant gains. Here is an update on some of their activities in the past few weeks.

FRANCE

Recent weeks have seen a spate of anti-semitic incidents in France, including the desecration of a Jewish cemetery near Strasbourg and the verbal abuse of a well-known Jewish philosopher during a march by the so-called *gilets jaunes* in Paris. Their movement – which began as a series of spontaneous protests against the policies of Emmanuel Macron – has morphed into something of a political entity, which now plans to field candidates in the May elections. Marine Le Pen and her far-right *Rassemblement national* party have associated themselves closely with the *gilets jaunes*, raising questions about the links between the anti-establishment protests and xenophobic ideology.

GERMANY

The *Alternative für Deutschland* party – which made significant gains in national elections and is currently the third party in the *Bundestag* – continues to drift further towards the extreme right. This shift is thought to be largely the work of Björn Höcke, the unofficial leader of an extreme wing of the party who has a long history of white supremacist views and affiliations. Höcke and his associates are now the subject of monitoring by Germany's intelligence services, who consider him "a threat to the liberal democratic principles of Germany's constitution".

HUNGARY

Viktor Orbán's government continues to use official channels to foment euroscepticism in Hungary over the question of migration – despite continuing to be a recipient of significant EU funding. In mid-February the administration launched a poster campaign featuring the face of European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, which stated that Hungarians have been "fundamentally endangered" by Europe's migration policies. The campaign followed previous posters attacking Hungarian-born philanthropist George Soros, who has become a popular target for anti-semitic and extreme-right conspiracy theorists.

UNITED KINGDOM

Unless Brexit is delayed or cancelled, the UK will not participate in the European elections. However, Nigel Farage – former UKIP leader and key player in the campaign in favour of Britain's withdrawal – recently joined the tiny "Brexit Party" and pledged to stand for re-election to the European Parliament should the UK still be an EU member in May.

BELGIUM

Steve Bannon (above) – the ideological figurehead of Donald Trump's presidential campaign – is currently in the process of founding an organisation known as "The Movement", which he envisions as a nationalist counterweight to George Soros' Open Society Foundations. Working from Brussels but targeting populist hotspots across Europe, he aims to coordinate their electoral efforts and "drive a stake through the Brussels vampire".

SOURCE: POLITICO.EU, BASED ON AN AGGREGATION OF NATIONAL POLLS TAKEN ON 18 FEBRUARY 2019

THE LATEST EUROPEAN ELECTION PREDICTIONS



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.

QCEA and AFSC together for peace in Brussels

In January QCEA and our bigger sister organisation, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), undertook a series of meetings with EU diplomatic staff. Pauline Muchina (below centre) is the Policy, Education and Advocacy Coordinator for Africa and is based in AFSC's Washington DC office. While in Brussels, she worked alongside QCEA Peace Programme Lead Olivia Caeymaex (right). They met staff from the EU External Action Service and Development Cooperation directorate, among others.

The focus of the meetings was to promote peacebuilding in several countries where the EU has a strong presence, and in which AFSC also operate: Burundi, Kenya, Somalia and Zimbabwe. AFSC works with communities, policymakers and the private sector to promote nonviolence and peacebuilding as responses to security challenges. They educate and advocate for peace at the local and national levels.

Meetings discussed important issues such as debt cancellation and the cessation of the use of lethal drones in Somalia. Staff from the European Union and the two Quaker organisations also discussed Kenya, including the need to monitor hate speech by politicians and for European funding for locally-led initiatives to reconcile communities.



PHOTO: AFSC

As the EU institutions closed for Christmas, Quaker House opened its doors

Many in Brussels' European quarter travelled home over the Christmas break, but Quaker House was open everyday from 21 December to 2 January for people that were not spending the holiday with their family. Quaker House served 350 meals and provided accommodation for up to ten people each night, all of whom would otherwise have slept on the street.

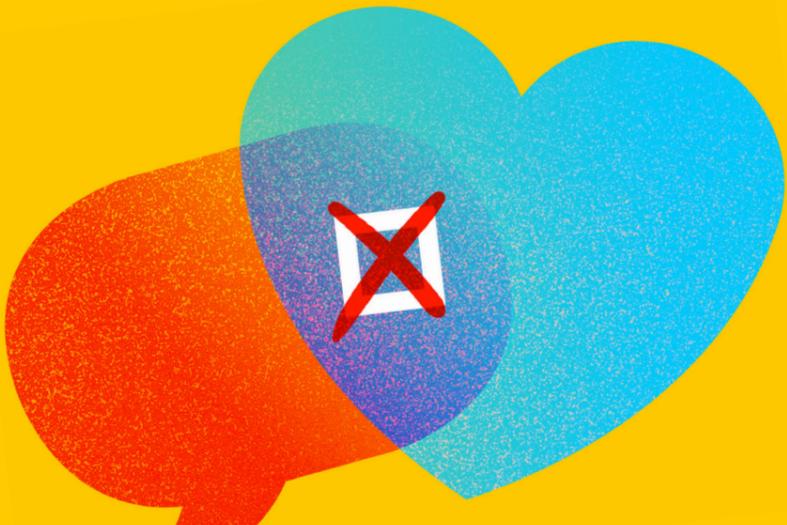
Brussels is one of the centres of global diplomacy, but it is also home to hundreds of homeless migrants whose lives have been shaped by European policy on growth, consumption, arms exports and unjust trade policies toward Africa. Whilst we normally focus on changing these policies, for one week we supported another kind of international community in our city.

From the agenda

» **4 February** Together with the Catholic Church, Baha'i International Community and Conference of European Churches, QCEA organised a dialogue about the **relationship between Europe and Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific region**. The dialogue took place prior to a major agreement between these parts of the world later this year. This meeting focused on opportunities for young people in Africa. Previous meetings have considered human rights, migration and development assistance.

» **8-10 February** QCEA run **anti-racism course for European Parliament staff**. As part of our work to build "Sanctuary Everywhere," the course took a deep look at how racism works. Participants learned about the structures and processes of racism and found ways of reducing its impact. Much of the course was about strengthening participants' awareness of subtle social and cultural influences that we all grow up with, and how these affect our behaviour.





In advance of the European elections in May, QCEA has launched a major new campaign against anti-migrant hate speech on the internet.

Migration myth-busting

Hate speech against migrants and refugees has become a huge challenge – particularly on the internet where it can be spread easily and anonymously. Much of this xenophobic content is based on misinformation about migrants and refugees. Sadly, even some of Europe's politicians seem quite willing to spread myths and rumours about immigration, fanning the flames of "fake news" in pursuit of electoral success.

In May, millions of EU citizens will head to the ballot box to elect the next European Parliament. Current polling suggests that up to a third of seats in the European Parliament may be won by the populist right wing, riding on the back of vitriolic anti-migrant narratives and increasing polarisation.

QCEA is concerned that harmful myths about migrants and refugees won't just damage our public discourse, but that they'll also affect the choices voters make – with very real consequences for Europe's migration policies. We also believe that our public life requires more dialogue and less confrontation in these highly polarised times.

To that end, we've launched **#ChooseRespect**, our campaign to coincide with the European elections. Until May, we'll be using Twitter to track the use of hate speech, xenophobia and migration-related myths by MEPs, parliamentary candidates and their staff. When we see it, we'll flag it up in the hope that others will join us in responding to hate with love.

We've also created a website which offers guidance on how to engage constructively with people using hateful discourse, both online and in the real world.

WE NEED YOUR HELP! ↗

The site also includes a "myth-buster" section, which aims to give Europe's voters the facts behind some of the most commonly-held misconceptions about refugees and migrants.

The aim is to equip people across Europe with the tools they need to get informed and vote with humanity, not hate – and to help others to do the same in a constructive way. It's easy to have an argument online, or to block someone who posts offensive comments. This campaign is about encouraging others to think again about their views, building bridges in the process.

On the page opposite, you can find examples of some of the commonly-held myths about refugees and migrants which our campaign seeks to debunk. If we can reach even a small number of the people in Europe who hold these views, we can have a real impact on the election result in May. Why not help us to spread the word and help Europe's voters to **#ChooseRespect** at the ballot box?

#choose respect

How you can get involved

If you use Twitter, follow us **@ChooseRespectEU**. Here you can take part in our efforts to flag xenophobic tweets by MEPs and candidates and respond to hate with love. If not, why not share our website with a friend, colleague or even a stranger who might benefit from some myth-busting?

www.ChooseRespect.eu

Heard this one before...?

"Non-European countries aren't playing their part in accepting refugees"

Over four million Syrians have fled their country since the conflict began. However, only 6% of them have been granted asylum in Europe, with the vast majority being hosted in countries bordering Syria. Turkey – with at least 3.5 million refugees in its territory – hosts more than any other country. And in Lebanon, Syrian refugees currently make up a quarter of the population. Even in relatively welcoming European countries like Germany and Sweden, asylum seekers and refugees still represent less than 1% of all people.

In reality, 85% of the world's displaced people are hosted in developing countries, which have far fewer financial resources than Europe to offer the support required. There *are* wealthy Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia who have failed to show solidarity with refugees, but they're the exception. Perhaps the real question is: why do EU member states continue to ally with inhumane regimes such as Saudi Arabia whilst providing little support to countries which need it?

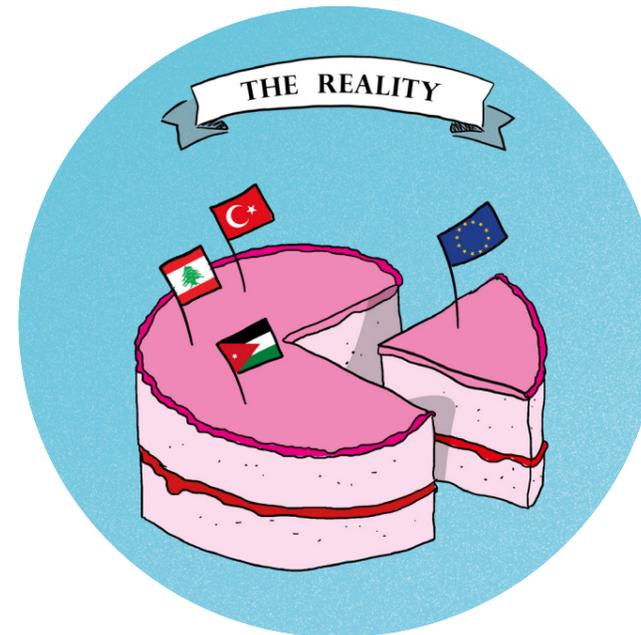


"Most of the people coming to Europe aren't 'real' refugees"

People from around the world seek asylum in Europe. But the chance of an application being accepted depends greatly on an asylum seeker's country of origin. Syrian citizens – who still represent the largest single group of applicants – were recognised as "genuine" refugees in 94% of cases. The only other countries whose nationals had more than a 50% chance of success were Eritrea, Somalia, Yemen and Palestine – all of which suffer from severe humanitarian challenges and serious violence.

Asylum applications by people who are more likely to be economic migrants (those fleeing poverty and other injustice) stand a far smaller chance of success. Less than 20% of Nigerians and Pakistanis who applied for asylum in EU+ countries were accepted, with the figure falling as low as 3% for Bosnians or Indians. Far from being a "soft touch", Europe's governments are actually pretty strict when discerning between refugees and economic migrants.

Discover the full campaign at www.ChooseRespect.eu



BREXIT MEETING FOR WORSHIP

Friday 29 March 2019
22:30 UK/Ireland
23:30 Brussels

Together with Woodbrooke and the Europe and Middle East section of Quakers (EMES), QCEA are organising an online Meeting for Worship to coincide with Britain's planned departure from the EU. Friends from across Europe will be connected via a dedicated online platform, allowing us to be together at this crucial, emotionally-charged moment in European history.

To register your interest in taking part, go to www.QCEA.org/BrexitMeeting



At the end of February, two members of the QCEA team moved on to new challenges. Before they left, we asked them look back on their time at Quaker House Brussels. Here are their reflections.



Looking back, looking forward

PHOTOS: KATE McNALLY

Dilia Zwart PEACE PROGRAMME OFFICER

My two years at QCEA have occurred during a challenging time for peacebuilding. For some, the word ‘peacebuilding’ may conjure images of high-level diplomats shaking hands ‘over there,’ in places outside of Europe. Yet the last few years have rocked the foundation of peace laid by post-WWII institutions such as the EU, and have shed light on deep issues of social exclusion in European societies. Through research and quiet diplomacy lunches, QCEA has shown how peacebuilding engagements – from natural resource management to peace education – can bring people together around difficult topics and build more sustainable peace, inside and outside Europe.

One of the many things that I have appreciated about QCEA’s approach is that peacebuilding is relevant everywhere. Importantly, reflection and planning are needed so that engagements are tailored to context and take into account peacebuilding principles such as inclusiveness. This reflectiveness resonates deeply with me. Prior to joining QCEA, my anthropological research emphasised understanding my identity and discerning how this might influence my world view. Moreover, I feel that the reflectiveness encouraged in *Building Peace Together* is much needed in a time of growing mistrust and quests for ‘quick fixes’ to global challenges.

Considering the difficult and changing political context, I am inspired by what the QCEA team has achieved and grateful to have played a part. Working in a small team means that my work at QCEA has been substantive, dynamic, and engaging: from researching *Building Peace Together*, to helping organise the five (and counting!) launch events, to delving into peace education. I’ve also had the opportunity to work with diverse partner organisations, such as co-organising a series of events with the volunteer-led Young Professionals

in Foreign Policy, and presenting *Peace Education: Making the Case* (shown below) to the diverse member organisations of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict Working Group on Peace Education. I have also contributed to establishing a monitoring and evaluation system in order to assess the impact of our activities. All of this has shown me what a unique place Quaker House is - a ‘safe space’ for honest, sometimes difficult discussions, located in the heart of the EU ‘bubble.’



Reflecting on my two years at QCEA, I feel that my work here has created a sound foundation for my future career. This March, I will be moving to London to join the staff of Imperial College’s Student Union. I will be coordinating the Academic Representation Network, training volunteers, and working on a range of projects that ensure that student voices are heard on campus. It will be an opportunity to learn new skills (and potentially to promote peace education in a university known for technology and business!). I see this as a stepping stone in a lifetime of peace work, directly or indirectly.

My two years at QCEA have occurred during a time that was challenging for human rights, as nationalistic and xenophobic movements across Europe have captured many citizen’s fears and uncertainty. By generating and fuelling xenophobic discourse – where foreigners are portrayed as a threat to national identity, culture and economic prosperity – an atmosphere has been created in which the drive to stop migration at all costs has superseded many political issues, kindness and even common sense. With the upcoming European elections there are causes for concern. Yet, I have seen that there is hope and people willing to stop the erosion of human rights.

Through research, advocacy and coalition building, I have worked to help move the ball forward in a positive direction regarding different aspects of human rights and migration-related issues.

This ever-increasing tendency towards building borders instead of bridges has led Europe to foresee a very large amount of money for border management. In this worrying context, I worked with two other organisations and successfully influenced the European Parliament’s position ahead of the negotiations with European states, ensuring that transparency and respect for human rights are taken into account in the EU proposed budget on border management.

In the context of the upcoming European elections, the likelihood of having human rights values, norms and standards challenged are great. That is why, as member of the Human Rights and Democracy Network – through my role as coordinator – QCEA has taken the lead in coordinating a campaign whose objective is to ask candidates to commit to upholding the founding values of the European Union, chief among them the respect for human rights.

Sylvain Mossou HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAMME OFFICER

Considering the difficult and changing political context, I cannot stress enough the inspiration I have felt in seeing what a small team of committed people has managed to achieve and I am grateful to have played a part. I have no doubt that I was able to grow professionally and personally.

This March I am moving on from QCEA, but will fortunately stay close to the team as I will be working in Brussels for another human rights NGOs, EuroMed, advocating for human rights values in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Working at QCEA has made me realise that it is in the darkest times that we, as individuals, communities and people, need to stand firm, resist hatred, and keep moving the ball forward for a better future. I thank QCEA and the Quaker community from the bottom of my heart.

Invest in the peacebuilders of the future

QCEA’s Programme Assistant scheme is something that we’re able to offer talented young professionals thanks to your donations.

It offers people beginning a career in pursuit of peace and human rights the opportunity to gain professional experience in international diplomacy.

QCEA’s Director, Andrew Lane, is currently looking for prospective donors who are eager to invest in the next generation of peacebuilding and human rights advocates. If this could be you our your Meeting, contact andrew.lane@qcea.org

QCEA would like to thank Dilia and Sylvain for their creativity and unending hard work in the cause of a more just world. We wish them many successes to come.

Donate to QCEA today

QCEA's important work on peace and human rights **depends on your generous support**. Over 50% of our income comes 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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To set up a recurring contribution or to make a one-off donation, either via DirectDebit or PayPal account, visit www.qcea.org/donate



Cheque

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BURSARY FOR A REFUGEE VOLUNTEER TO ATTEND A HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING COURSE

€450

SOCIAL MEDIA LAUNCH FOR OUR ANTI-HATE SPEECH CAMPAIGN

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SPONSORING A PROGRAMME ASSISTANT SCHEME FOR ONE MONTH

How your donation may be used

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