



**Quaker  
Council for  
European  
Affairs**

# Humanising Europe

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An overview of the QCEA  
Human Rights Programme  
2017—2022

**November 2018**

# Our Human Rights Programme at a glance

Broadly speaking, QCEA's Human Rights Programme works to:

- promote **alternatives to child immigration detention** in Europe;
- support **humane European external migration policies**;
- tackle **police/security violence** against refugees and migrants;
- build **positive narratives** in an effort to reduce hate speech.

Together, our projects seek to “**humanise Europe**”. We want to shed light on, and put an end to, the less-widely recognised challenges faced by migrants and refugees arriving in Europe.

In addition to advocating for more humane policies on the EU's borders themselves – ending the separation of families, opposing the creation of “camps” in third countries – we aim to address the ongoing human rights abuses faced by migrants who are present in European countries. This includes the detention of children because of their migration status, but also the phenomenon of violence towards refugees on the part of police and private security companies, as well as hate speech on the internet.

QCEA begins from the principle that migrant rights are human rights, and that more thorough awareness and application of the existing human rights framework is an important first step. However, we are not focused purely on political or institutional change – we also seek to “re-humanise” migrants and refugees in a wider context of xenophobia and which strips them of their agency and humanity in public discourse. By reaffirming respect for vulnerable people and their rights, and lobbying for policymakers to do the same, we aim to take a stand against the setting of dangerous precedents which risk undermining the protections we should all enjoy.

The EU's proposed new budget foresees a 380% increase in funding for external border controls, with limited scope for transparency or oversight.

European migration policy is trapping children in detention, sometimes with adults they don't know. They rarely benefit from support which would help them understand the process or address their trauma.

## Alternatives to child immigration detention

Across Europe, hundreds of children are held in detention simply because of their migration status. This worrying practice remains poorly understood and under-documented, even among policymakers.

For two years running, QCEA has sourced and published the most up-to-date statistics on child immigration detention in Europe – vital evidence which helps us to **lobby for alternatives**.

## Humane European external migration policies

The EU increasingly seeks to militarise its borders and respond to migration flows in terms of “hard security” foreign policy – bad news for Europe's values as well as for millions of people in Africa.

QCEA is bringing together key stakeholders in order to **assess the human consequences** of current migration policies, and to ensure the next EU budget does not build walls at home whilst compounding instability abroad.

## Police and private security violence

From Calais to Belgrade and beyond, migrants and refugees in Europe are frequent victims of violence on the part of police and private security forces.

QCEA is producing an accessible, multi-lingual pamphlet designed to **educate migrants about their rights**, and build awareness of relevant European law among security actors and civil society.

## Anti-migrant hate speech

Violent and dehumanising language against migrants is all too common on the internet, but it can have real-world consequences both in the street and at the ballot box.

In the run-up to the 2019 European elections, QCEA is working with major online content providers to produce a **“toolkit” for building positive narratives** and refuting key anti-migrant myths.

## How we work

Our theory of change is built around three methods of engagement: **research, advocacy and quiet diplomacy**. We undertake research to identify the challenges facing refugees and migrants, as well as potential policy responses which are both humane and workable. In the case of child immigration detention, our unprecedented research into this poorly-understood practice led to QCEA presenting our findings and recommendations to hundreds of experts across Europe, and to discussions with the head of the European Fundamental Rights Agency. We followed up our report with a study of the alternatives to detention, highlighting the pockets of good practice that already exist across Europe, and are advocating for wider use of alternatives.

Our advocacy work builds on QCEA's substantial network of policymakers and civil society actors in Brussels and elsewhere in Europe. We maintain good relations with key personnel in all the main EU institutions, through both bilateral contacts and advocacy events which we organise on a regular basis. This allows us to be part of important conversations on matters of relevance to our work, and our presence is highly productive. For example, QCEA serves as chair of a newly-formed working group in the European Parliament, bringing together sixteen MEPs and human rights organisations to foster exchange and cooperation. We are also the current chair of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, which enjoys close links with the office of the EU's High Representative for External Affairs, and are also an accredited NGO at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

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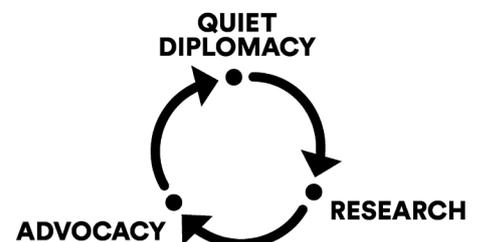
### What is "quiet diplomacy"?

Our third working method, which we practice almost uniquely in the Brussels "Eurobubble", is quiet diplomacy. We bring together decision-makers and others, providing a supportive space where they can frankly discuss policy and build common ground in an informal, off-the-record setting. QCEA is rare in its capacity to perform this role: as Quakers, our reputation for trustworthiness and integrity has proven vital in helping us to bring the right people together, meaning we can facilitate the discreet discussions which lead to real change. While the specific content and outcomes of these meetings need to remain confidential, we are increasingly seeing governments send their most senior human rights staff to our meetings. It is clear that there is a type of conversation that people can have at Quaker House which they can't get elsewhere.

*"This is one of the most honest conversations we've had in Brussels"*

FEEDBACK ON A QCEA QUIET DIPLOMACY MEETING

This cyclical process – quality research, allowing us to build connections which bring people together in the name of advancing an issue at the practical level – is at the core of QCEA's work on the human rights of refugees and migrants.



### About the Quaker Council for European Affairs

Since 1979, QCEA has worked to bring a vision based on the Quaker commitment to peace, justice and equality to Europe and its institutions. We seek to build support for humane, non-military policies at the EU level, both inside and outside its borders. We do so in the spirit of peaceful cooperation which forms the foundation of European politics. QCEA has just under 300 "Supporters" – individuals or Quaker groups who each make a small yearly donation to our work. In addition, we receive block donations from national Quaker bodies across Europe, as well as grants from several Trusts and Foundations (16% of total income in 2017).