



Quaker
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Europe in brief

PHOTO: vwooevale via Canva Pro

EU Parliament enshrines 'European Defence Fund', a threat to the EU peace project

On 29 April the European Parliament voted to adopt the controversial so-called European Defence Fund (EDF), which will divert €7.95 billion of the EU budget (2021-2027) to fund the Research and Development (R&D) of new or enhanced weaponry and military technology.

The programme has attracted significant criticism. Some parliamentarians and NGOs have warned that the planned investments will boost military spending, the global arms race, and the development of disruptive technologies that will 'radically change the way to conduct war', like unmanned systems and the use of artificial intelligence. To make matters worse, the programme would move forward without adequate ethical safeguards, and lacks transparency and parliamentary control. During the debate prior to the vote, some MEPs reiterated their worries about a "blank cheque" to the industry, as the European Parliament will not be involved in scrutinising the spending for the next seven years. "This means that the Parliament will hardly have a say as to how the Fund will be implemented by the Commission and member states in the next seven years. And the security interest argument is regularly used to bypass EU transparency rules. It is a dangerous precedent which undermines EU democratic control" states Laëtitia Sédou, Project Officer at the European Network Against the Arms Trade (ENAAT).

ENAAT has been campaigning against EU funding for military research and development since 2016.

To read more about this recent vote and what the EDF is about, please visit www.enaat.org and find its recent articles and fact sheet on this topic.

Conference on the Future of Europe launches on 9 May

After months of negotiations and delays due to the pandemic, EU leaders finally agreed on a plan for a Conference on the Future of Europe. The [conference](#) is supposed to become a forum of discussion for EU citizens to share their opinion about how they want Europe to look like in the future. For this purpose, a multilingual digital platform launched on 19 April. On this platform anyone can contribute to the debates on various topics, including health, migration, or climate change and the environment. On 9 May, Europe Day, the conference was officially launched.

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) published a statement in which they welcome the conference: "We welcome the Conference as an initiative to involve all European citizens, civil society, as well as Churches and religious communities (...). A broad, open and inclusive discussion about the future of Europe is a much needed first step to renew trust in and reinvigorate commitment to the European Union as a true community of values."

While some organisations see the conference as a good step in the right direction of involving civil society, other voices are more sceptical: "The Conference on the Future of Europe is threatening to degenerate into a mere talking shop.", says the co-president of The Left in the European Parliament Martin Schirdewan.



PHOTO: Axel Kirch / CC BY-SA 4.0 (via Wikimedia Commons)

Northern Ireland: Outbreaks of street violence

Since the beginning of April, Northern Ireland saw [new outbreaks](#) of street violence. Unionists and nationalists clashed with both each other as well as with the police. Police officers struggled to close a gate in Belfast which was supposed to separate the parties from one another. This escalation of violence came as tensions are building in the province over the Brexit proceedings, which resulted in trade barriers between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. Some Unionist politicians had linked the violence to loyalist tensions over the Irish Sea border imposed as a result of the UK-EU Brexit deal. For the people of Northern Ireland, a majority of whom voted to remain in the EU in 2016, any post-Brexit changes are likely to have a significant impact.



↑ PHOTO: Heiko Küberling via Canva Pro

European Climate Law: A deal was reached

On 21 April, EU negotiators reached a [deal](#) on the European Climate Law, allowing the EU to go into this week's US-hosted climate summit with an agreement on the bloc's 2030 target. Unsurprisingly, the 2030 target was the big political disagreement of the night. However, in the end, parties did reach an agreement to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to the levels in 1990.

While the 55% target is in fact lower than the 60% which the Parliament had voted for before, the EU member states made a concession for MEPs by agreeing to cap the contribution of carbon removals from land use, agriculture, and forestry. Additionally, the European Commission agreed to consider increasing the contribution of carbon sinks in order to boost the EU's climate ambition to 57%. Negotiators also decided to establish an independent scientific advisory body to advise policymakers on the alignment of EU policies with the climate neutrality goal.

Mare Nostrum – our Sea?

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that since 2014, nearly [22,000](#) migrants have died in the Mediterranean Sea while seeking sanctuary in Europe. It is further estimated that twice that number has perished attempting to cross the Sahara Desert. To these, we must add the unaccounted souls missing while navigating the Atlantic Ocean to reach the shores of Europe, making this region the world's deadliest migration route. These deaths are the result of European policy choices, and not only through delayed or slow response time by coast guards and the criminalisation of NGO search and rescue missions. There is a direct [correlation](#) between the increased use of migration control technologies such as drones and an increase in migrant deaths. And the European Commission itself has recognised that the lack of legal pathways for migration -mainly visas- to Europe has led directly to increasingly dangerous attempts to cross the Mediterranean by boat.

Narratives on migration often point to conflicts and bad governance, or to underdevelopment and poverty, as "root causes" of African migration to Europe. Besides the fact that migration has been a fact of life throughout the whole of human history, there are many other factors missing from this picture. The origins of many violent conflicts around the world stem, for instance, from artificial borders imposed by European empires. Colonialism was justified by promises of infrastructure building and development, but in reality the people living in resource rich places remained poor as vast amounts of wealth were transferred to Europe. Inherited from that not so distant past is also the structural racism that creates dehumanising migration policies where Black lives drown in general indifference. Instead of a trade and exchange channel, the Mediterranean has become a moat to fortress Europe.

Foreign Affairs Council: New sanctions in response to human rights violations

On 22 March, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted [new sanctions](#) on 11 individuals and 4 entities responsible for serious human rights violations and abuses in China, North Korea, Libya, South Sudan, Eritrea, and Russia. The 11 sanctioned individuals were responsible for the military coup staged in Myanmar and the following military and police repression against peaceful demonstrators.

EU-Turkey relations were also addressed in the meeting. The Council found that since the Council conclusions from last December, some positive signals from Turkish leadership were received, however the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean remains fragile and de-escalation efforts must be sustained.



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.



PHOTO: mikdam via Canva Pro

QCEA co-organise recent course reimagining asylum systems

QCEA staff held a Woodbrooke course together with QARN (Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network) and QPSW (Quaker Peace and Social Witness)

As more people seeking refuge continue to drown in the Mediterranean, the UK government (like many others in Europe) continues to reinforce its hostile environment against undocumented immigrants. Despite many studies confirming that immigration is not damaging the economy or putting a strain on public services, people who migrate continue to be blamed for the UK's ills. How did we get here? What are the values and principles that underpin these ideas and policies and the language of exclusion and what can we do as communities interested in justice to change this landscape? These were the questions raised in a course organised by the Quaker study centre Woodbrooke together with QARN, QPSW, and QCEA's head of human rights programme Kékéli Kpognon.

The course programme included:

- Going from awareness to embodied action and practice
- Developing an understanding of the systems that exist and how to dismantle them
- Commitment to achieving racial and migrant justice
- Understanding our positions/ally-ship

Course content:

- A historical view of Britain's migration policy (the transatlantic slave trade, Windrush, the situation at Europe's border and stories of resistance) and questioning the values that underpin migration policy
- Commitment, responsibility and accountability: understanding systems of oppression, reforming vs dismantling, justice for who?
- Becoming ancestors to be proud of: everyday practice of racial and migrant justice, setting intentions for the road ahead

It is not a coincidence that the systems we live in force us to separate our heads from our bodies and spirits. The course convenors invited the attenders to bring together their full selves so that everyone could do the hard work of unlearning old patterns and learn new ways of connecting and integrating, as in the words of Renaissance humanist François Rabelais: "science without conscience is nothing but the ruin of the soul". This is a 500-year-old reminder that far from being in opposition, feelings are what infuse facts with humanity. Ultimately, dismantling unjust systems is committing to continuous reflection, to being open to experiences, to holding ourselves and each other accountable, and to extending grace and love to all.

Course convenor Kékéli Kpognon hopes that participants will continue to work in solidarity with others to build collectives and join movements that will harness power to seek justice.

"(...) this was a carefully crafted programme based on reflective practice, which is essential when enabling people to engage in discussions about race, providing a safe space, and I hope that there will be more"

- feedback from a participant

Our project on Gender & Inclusivity in Peace & Security got shortlisted for an award

Our project on Gender & Inclusivity in Peace & Security, co-lead with Katharine Wright from the Newcastle University, has been shortlisted for an Engagement and Place Award. This award was created this year to recognise the engagement of projects in the University engaging and inspiring non-academic audiences.

The shortlisted project aims at offering tangible guidance to individuals working on gender issues in peace and security institutions. It has produced a best practice guide with three accompanying YouTube video clips. These focus on the following three themes:

- Why does gender matter?
- What does good leadership on gender look like in practice?
- What strategies can contribute to overcoming resistance to gender?



QCEA and new climate report featured in The Parliament Magazine

Efforts of our engagement with journalists have paid off as our work and new report on climate, peace, and human rights got featured in the big publication called The Parliament Magazine. Under the headline "NGO claims EU climate policy 'not coherent' with bloc's stance on peace and human rights. Quaker Council says Europe's military sectors operating under a "state of exemption" with goals of European Green deal." the article features several key quotes from the report, which we hope will be widely read by the key audience.

The magazine prints more than 2.500 hard copies per issues which get distributed to EU institutions, an average of 18 thousand website visitors per months and 38 thousand followers on social media. Contributors of the magazine are usually current members of parliament, NGOs, Commissioners, and advocacy groups.

To read the article please visit [this link](#).



The project was launched in November 2020. It was watched live on YouTube by a total of 193 people (with 700 total views to date) from countries including UK, Ireland, Belgium, Serbia, Myanmar, Pakistan, France, Turkey. The physical copies of the guide were sent to a number of organisations and institutions, including the EU civilian and military missions, NATO, the UN, all EU member states representations in Brussels, MEPs but also NGOs like Oxfam, Search for Common Ground or GPPAC.

The winner will get a dedicated social media campaign, a professional video to showcase its work and press releases. The awards will be announced at an online event hosted by the Vice Chancellor and President of the University on Wednesday 26th May between 4pm and 6pm.



New report: Climate, peace, and human rights

To commemorate Earth Day on April 22, QCEA published a report entitled Climate, peace and human rights: Are European policies coherent?

The report is deeply rooted in the Quaker values emphasising the concept of 'right relationship',⁷ and how climate and environmental challenges are intimately connected to issues of peace, equality, and justice. The Earth is the living system that supports all life, including dignified human life. Caring for this system at all levels (from the local to the global) is imperative to achieving peace and human security.

Today, the climate crisis is higher on the EU agenda than ever before. The EU has committed to spending 30% of the its budget for the period 2021-2027 on climate action. In December 2019, the EU launched the EU Green Deal (EUGD) with the goal of regional transformation to meet the climate crisis. Yet, simultaneously, the EU also continues to invest in carbon intensive activities such as the arms trade.

Europe's military sectors operate under a state of exemption, with the European Green deal "completely and purposely" ignoring everything to do with the impact of militarisation on the climate crisis.

The report stresses that any green transition plan must also address sustainability and justice issues. This must begin with a reframing of the issue by placing people, not profits, at the centre. Climate justice must be approached from a rights-based approach that prioritises tackling power dynamics.

Linkages between climate, power and abuse of human rights

The issue of climate justice is vital in highlighting the linkages between climate, power, insecurity, and abuse of human rights. The ecological collapse we are experiencing is the direct result of an unequal social contract, unsustainable economic and political systems which are affecting families and communities throughout the globe, but which has had a worse impact on some more than others.

Gender

EU climate policy remains gender blind despite the fact that gender mainstreaming is a treaty obligation. And the environmental degradation dimension is still omitted from the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

Development

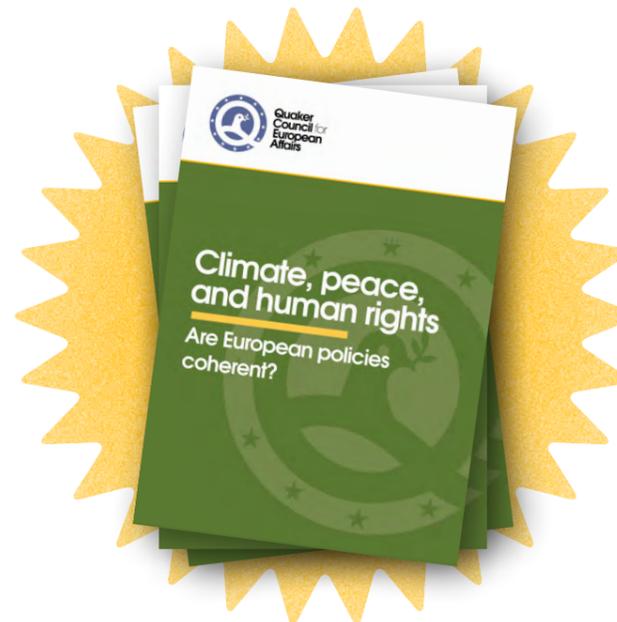
Current EU approaches to development are based on growth, consumption, and the expansion of human habitat and infrastructure, which sideline the natural environment, thereby undermining important local social and economic development. Therefore, there is a need to re-envision climate action in conflict-affected and fragile states as part of an integrated prevention, peacebuilding and development strategy, to which the EU can contribute.

EU militarisation

The EU's increasingly militarised approaches to foreign policy directly impedes the EU's declared climate aims. Demilitarisation needs to be part of any credible Green Deal. War impacts the environment, both during and in the aftermath from deforestation to toxic industries, agricultural stress and pollution of soil, water and air by oil.

Food sovereignty

If EU agricultural policies continue to contribute to domestic environmental and climate degradation, they will also have detrimental effects on the food sovereignty of other countries, particularly those in the global South.



EU trade policy and deforestation

The EUGD puts a strong emphasis on the protection and restoration of forests and of biodiverse areas across Europe. In practice however, EU trade policy is not coherent with those goals as trade practices by European companies in various countries sometimes promote deforestation, biodiversity plundering and violence.

Negative impact for environmental defenders

Where the EU contributes to deforestation, it also often endangers environmental defenders and increases threats to their territories.

Key recommendations

- Acknowledge historic and current social responsibilities of corporations and countries that benefit from polluting and exploiting ecosystems and communities
- Ensure that the work of EU institutions on the environment is intersectional
- Recognise, respect and promote voices of racialized communities
- Consider the concept of climate justice in domestic EU climate policy areas
- Pass a global green deal

You can find the entire report by visiting www.qcea.org/peace/climate

Event on Europe's arms trade: Answering the difficult questions

On 1 April the European Network Against the Arms Trade (ENAAAT), QCEA, and Stop Fuelling War (SFW) held an online event discussing how we can answer the difficult questions about the arms trade when talking to European policymakers, arms traders, colleagues, neighbours, or our own families.

Especially memorable was Laetitia Sedou's answer when asked if being a pacifist means that you are naive or idealistic: "The first answer I would give to them would be to say yes indeed I am idealistic. I have an ideal, I have a vision of the world that I want to fight for and there is nothing wrong with that. (...) it is thanks to idealist people that we have today democracy in Europe. The utopia or the ideals of yesterday have become the reality on a good number of issues." She also mentioned that her pacifism is based on figures by SIPRI and that the path of the use of force is obviously not successful, because if it were, then the world would be peaceful today.

Recording available!

Europe's arms trade
Answering the difficult questions:
 Sharing experience of conversations with policymakers, arms traders, and more
 hosted by Atiaf Alwazir, QCEA
 with speakers
 Laëtitia Sédou, European Network Against Arms Trade
 Holly Spencer, Stop Fuelling War
 Thursday 1 April 14h - 15h CET (1pm - 2pm BST)



Holly Spencer (SFW) said that "empathy is our biggest tool", which was a very powerful and memorable message which participants will remember.

The event was a big success. It was attended by 47 people who were very engaged and shared helpful resources on the chat.

A recording is available on [YouTube](#) (video) and [Soundcloud](#) (audio only).



EU Anti-Racism Summit 2021: Time to address structural racism in the EU

PHOTO: Life Matters via Canva Pro/Pexels

In March the European Commission held its first anti-racism summit in the wake of the adoption of the first anti-racism action plan at the end of 2020. Both the process leading to the writing of the plan and the preparation of the Anti-Racism Summit were marked by a conspicuous lack of substantive input from racialised people despite repeated calls by anti-racism groups to be involved in informing policies that would finally be effective in tackling racism in the EU. The top-down approach of European institutions was further illustrated by the fact that the online-streamed Anti-Racism Summit did not include a virtual space for real-time exchanges, a missed opportunity for a wider engagement with European citizens working in solidarity to end racism and discrimination.

Despite being invited to provide – in the words of the Commission – “reality bites”, anti-racist activists and organisation were able in the limited time imparted to them to make very powerful points on the need for an intersectional approach to justice in the EU in order for protection to be effective for all and the ineffectiveness of adopting anti-racist language if not rooted in anti-racist principles and actions.

At the heart of repeated calls during the Summit, and a mainstay of anti-racist movements, was the need to move the conversation away from seeing racism as only individual acts or iterations of hate

speech that can be solved with unconscious bias training, toward addressing structural racism which affect all aspects of the lives of racialised people in Europe.

While the European Commission seems hesitant to acknowledge the existence of structural racism and refers in the background paper to the Anti-Racism Summit to racism as a result of “stereotypes based on prejudice”, structural racism is a reality in Europe that manifests itself in education systems that gloss over Europe’s colonial history, migration policies responsible for thousands of death of racialised people in the Mediterranean, development assistance with the purpose of keeping “neighbours” in Africa, Asia, or the Middle-East away from Europe, or employment policies that force third country nationals into semi-permanent precarity because “foreign” qualifications are not recognised in the EU.

Structural racism also means that racism in the EU is not seen as a human rights issue and has led to thinking that the solution to tackling racism is to “fix” individuals instead of overhauling systems and structures.

It took 20 years for the adoption of the Racial Equality Directive in 2000, to be followed by the first EU anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025. After nearly a year of anti-racisms statements

and declarations by European institutions and NGOs following Black Lives Matter protests across Europe, there is no more time for soul searching and organisational reflections about dismantling structural racism and its corollary of injustices, especially when for decades solutions and recommendations have been presented by racialised groups but wilfully ignored.



GRAPHIC: EU Anti-Racism Summit 2021

An outcome of the European Anti-Racism Summit is that a line has been drawn and denial of the structural racism in the EU policy making sphere won't do anymore. Remains to see if the European Commission as well as “European Bubble” colleagues will make do on their words and finally be accountable.

A recording of the summit is available here: <https://www.antiracism-eusummit2021.eu/recording/>

British support for Quaker advocacy in Europe



The relaunch of British Friends of QCEA, which took place on 20 March 2021, stresses the importance of keeping British ties with Europe alive and fully functioning. Melanie and Andrew Jameson report.

The UK may have cut its ties with the European Union, much to the regret of many British Quakers. However, thanks to QCEA, we can still keep abreast of progress in Europe in the vital areas of peace, human rights and equality, truth to counter false narratives, and, most urgent of all: Climate change. This is the message of the British Friends of QCEA, whose purpose is to disseminate the work of QCEA more effectively, grow the support base for QCEA in the Britain, and ensure that its funding needs are well understood. To this end we held a relaunch on March 20th under the title 'Why Today's Europe Needs Quaker Voices and How You Can Help'. Around a hundred people, many of them new contacts, had responded to publicity and registered an interest in the event.

After an introduction by Jeremy Lester on post-Covid priorities for QCEA, we moved on to a European Trade Union perspective, ably presented by Jude Kirton Darling, Deputy Secretary General of IndustriAll Europe. Jude pointed out that Covid has disguised the economic impact of Brexit, and

that Boris's final agreement was only one step away from 'No Deal'. She warned us that British labour and environmental protections are now weak and at further risk from de-regulation as we are drawn towards the United States market. Jude urged us to pay attention to developments and protest low-wage exploitative practices.

By the end of the morning there was no doubt that 'Today's Europe Needs Quaker Voices'. In order to secure the renewed involvement of QCEA's voice, the focus turned to 'How You Can Help'. It was stressed that QCEA could not function without on-going support, relying on donations from Friends for at least half its funding. British Friends of QCEA – now increased in numbers – were urged to advocate for support and engagement in their Meetings, in order to keep an effective and successful Quaker presence at the heart of Europe.



PHOTO: Billion Photos via Canva Pro



Merci et au revoir

I joined QCEA in 2014 and began serving as Director in 2015. It has been a privilege to do this work and I am enormously grateful to have been upheld by so many others.

Everything at QCEA is a big team effort and together we have continued to develop our organisation - and we are playing an ever more relevant and unique role in Brussels. A great many people know us and they know us for being different, radical and trusted.

QCEA has an excellent team of expert and committed staff. I am proud to have worked with all of them. Our Executive Committee, General Assembly, support groups and other volunteers all continue to play their part. I will be forever grateful for having had the opportunity to meet so many different groups of Friends in different parts of Europe. I have made some life-time friendships - thanks to the Quaker way of getting to know one another in the things that are eternal. I will particularly remember the Sanctuary Everywhere conference in 2017, among the many study tours, Yearly Meetings, Border Meetings, Peace and Service Consultations etc.

I have learned so much from working with colleagues at the European institutions and with peers in other peacebuilding and human rights organisations, as well as the other faith representations in Brussels. Fond memories include involvement in the work of the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe – two institutions that seek to build a shared security.

My time in Brussels has convinced me that there is a huge gap between what international organisations and NGOs are doing and the needs of humanity. Too many of the big NGOs are headquartered in Europe and north America, funded by governments that benefit from the status quo, and inextricably linked to agendas that maintain global systems of inequality. Systems that need to be torn down.

I believe in multilateralism as much as I did when I arrived. I think European cooperation is essential, as long as it doesn't come at the expense of people in other parts of the world. The European Union is held back by the governments elected by the continent's people – forming a centre-right majority at the Council of the EU for more than a decade. Ultimately all politics is local and the future of Europe is shaped in the ballot box of every village and town.

The EU is also far less effective than it could be because of the ways in which it manages its human resources. There are many good people working inside the institutions, and there is that of God in each of them. However, systems of privilege, such as feeder schools and colleges, keep the European institutions staffed by people of an affluent background - and more than 99% of them white. The pool is so narrow in life experience that they are fundamentally unequipped for today's challenges, let alone tomorrow's. Immorally high salary levels for European officials further segregate policy-makers from both other residents of Brussels, and European citizens more widely.

What has given me a huge amount of strength has been of the transitory homeless population in Brussels. Most are refugees from genocide in Darfur and the Nuba Mountains and from military conscription in Eritrea, and many have moved from childhood to adulthood on the cold streets of Europe. I have made many friends in this community. Some have made it to the Britain – home of the empire which shaped their homes and circumstances – and some I leave behind on the continent as I too migrate to Britain. The characteristics of these friends represent so much of what I now aspire to be like. I am a changed person for knowing them and I will never be able to thank them enough for the friendship that I have been shown.

Covid-19 has made everything more complicated in my final year. We have adapted well and ended 2020 in a good financial position. However, there is some rebuilding to do after a year of not being able to welcome so many into Quaker House.

The QCEA team, including our two heads of programme and our new director are ambitious for the coming months and years. I am hugely confident in their talents and plans. As we move out of the pandemic I hope that the whole QCEA family will support Timmon Wallis as he takes up the challenge of Quaker leadership. Quakers are doing unique work at the European level and we are needed as much as ever.

I leave Brussels better informed about how international governance works, and therefore angrier and even more deeply committed to the radical change Quakers seek through our testimony.

I also leave more grateful for the people who give everything to resist injustice.

I am very much looking forward to a career in teaching, and also a little petrified. It is a big change for me and I have so much to learn in the coming months.

Thank you for all you have done in support of QCEA work and me personally in the last 7 years. I cannot thank you all individually here, but you know what you have done. I love you all and hope we meet again.

In Friendship,
Andrew

Andrew Lane served as QCEA director from 2015 to 2021.



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.**

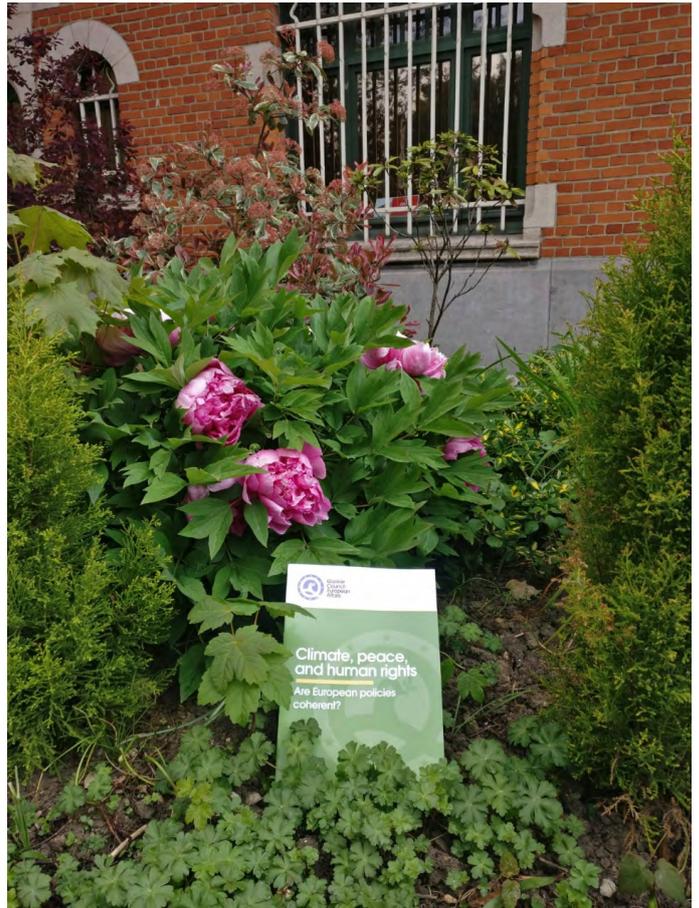


PHOTO: Clémence Buchet-Couzy



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Donate online

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

Friends in the United Kingdom only can also donate by sending a cheque or charity voucher payable to **British Friends of Quaker Council for European Affairs to:**

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West Yorkshire

LS20 9JQ

British Friends of QCEA is a registered charity in the United Kingdom, no. 293776. If you would like confirmation that your donation has been received, please email office@qcea.org with your name and details of your payment. Alternatively, enclose a contact detail with your cheque when posting.



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