



Quaker
Council for
European
Affairs

QCEA STRATEGY 2023-2026

**Justice and peace
in a time of
climate crisis**



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Summary

Over the next three years Quaker Council for European Affairs will focus on three themes:

- Migration and peace
- Climate justice and peace
- Dialogues for transformation

The Quaker peace testimony underpins all our work and our areas of work are connected, particularly with regards to their root causes in cultural and structural violence and economic and racial injustice. QCEA will therefore prioritise working collaboratively as a team, actively seeking synergies both within our work and with the work of others.

People migrating from one place to another are affected by structural and physical violence. QCEA will bring peacebuilding approaches to the issue of migration, showing what needs to change so that migration can be safe and the rights of people who migrate can be upheld.

It is vital that European responses to the climate crisis are underpinned by a respect for human rights, a commitment to equality and in a way that minimises the potential for conflict. QCEA will bring a peace lens to Europe's transition to sustainability, identifying potential conflicts and showing how these can be addressed. We will seek to make evident the complex links between the climate crisis, conflict and responses to conflict, militarism and migration.

QCEA believes that transformative change is needed if we are to address the challenges of our times. This is only possible if people across political, social and geographic divides can listen and understand each other and seek common ground. We will build on our experience of quiet diplomacy and creating safe spaces for sensitive conversations to convene and facilitate dialogues on contentious and crucial issues between people with differing views and experiences, enabling them to deeply listen to each other and together consider ways forward. This work will need to be discreet and not tied to specific outcomes. It is long-term and risky but it is necessary and QCEA is one of the few organisations able to do this.

QCEA as an organisation seeks to be the change it is trying to bring about. We seek to be an anti-racist organisation that does not mirror the inequalities and discrimination of the patriarchal and racist societies in which we live. We commit to looking honestly at ourselves, our policies and practices, identifying where and how we need to change and making those changes. We recognise this work is ongoing and needs to be a collective effort.

We know we cannot achieve change alone. We strive to work in collaboration with other Quaker organisations, faith-based and civil society organisations where our goals are aligned. We are open to working with those we disagree with where they are willing to work with us towards positive transformative change.

1. Introduction



The world and thus the whole of Europe is faced with various complex crises, including the climate crisis, violent conflicts and increasing inequality. Ignored, or addressed without sufficient urgency and commitment of resources, these crises will negatively affect all our lives and are already disrupting the lives of millions of people. We need a sustainable Europe, able and willing to engage with peaceful and just approaches to the crisis at a global level. We advocate non-violent approaches to conflict resolution, promote policies that respect the intrinsic equality of all people everywhere and try to ensure that European policy demonstrates respect for the essential balance between humanity and nature to sustain all forms of life on the planet.

Quakers are truth seekers. We know that truth is not encompassed in a single point of view but needs to emerge from deep consideration of a range of perceptions and beliefs. The crises we face are complex and require transformative change to allow new ways of doing things to emerge. Open and honest dialogue across all differences is needed. We want to seek this truth with all possible partners, and will contribute our Quaker commitment to peace, justice and equality at the European level. We want to support European institutions in taking the right steps to provide for a better world.

We believe that QCEA is in a fortunate position to bring people together for transformative change:

- because of our independence from EU and other institutional funders,
- because of our radical Quaker roots and belief in transforming power,
- because of Quaker willingness to work on issues without knowing what the outcome might be.

This strategic plan is a follow up of the 2019-2024 version and replaces it from April 2023 onwards. It has been developed based on reflections on current Quaker concerns with our General Assembly and conversations with a range of organisations and individuals whom we have worked with over the years.

2. Areas we'll work on, why and what we hope will change



We will work on three programme strands that aim to combine our expertise and experience on working at the intersections between issues. We recognise that transformative change is needed to address the crises we face so a significant part of our time and resources will be devoted to this.

The three strands will be closely interwoven as we know that the issues are interlinked. Work on transformative change may lead to more specific pieces of work in the two other strands and work in the two other strands may lead to transformative change processes.

2.1 Migration and peace

Currently, people on the move are subject to violence at all stages of their journey - structural violence or violent conflict may cause them to leave their home, they may be subject to physical and emotional violence in the countries through which they pass, especially at borders or at sea. Refugee camps can be dangerous places, and migrants may be detained, abused, exploited and discriminated against in the destination country.

The narrative on migration in Europe is primarily one that sees migration as a threat to security and the migrant as 'other', thereby legitimising militarised responses. QCEA will bring a peacebuilding approach to the whole migration journey, focusing on ending violence towards people on the move.

Overall Objective: To create policy conditions to support safe, equitable and responsive migration systems that contribute to long-term, sustainable peace between all actors involved in migration.

QCEA will work on migration through a positive peace lens, recognising the full spectrum of violence that migrants encounter throughout their journeys. To stimulate policy transformation at the European level, QCEA will promote alternative approaches, propose viable solutions and amplify existing good practices that expand the space of rights for migrants, be it through citizen-led initiatives, universal access to essential services or regularisation schemes.

The scope of peacebuilding action on migration within Europe needs to be expanded, particularly by tackling structural violence, addressing hate speech and safeguarding the rights of migrants, minorities and people of non-European descent within and beyond European territory. EU external action often remains blind to issues of migration and displacement, at times exacerbating the very causes that lead people to migrate. QCEA will work to ensure that EU peacebuilding, climate and external action in the broadest sense are sensitive to issues of migration and displacement, and that displacement and forced migration are recognised as factors influencing conflict dynamics in countries of origin.

Due to the contentious nature of migration policy at the European level and thinning political will, QCEA will also work to co-create spaces for imagination and possibility as a tool to reframe narratives away from securitisation and criminalisation, and towards positive, non-victimising views on migration. Questioning as a way to reveal the new, QCEA will work to interrogate and denaturalise narratives that render migrants a permanent security threat and artificially separate groups based on cultural proximity, belonging, or perceived deservingness.

Why

Migration is normal and has happened for centuries. It increases in times of crisis such as those we are facing now. The 'othering' of people and of nature leads to conflict and environmental crises. Migration can be a spontaneous adaptation measure to climate-related impacts, and people will need to move as the climate changes. It is vital that people are able to do so safely, and without fear of violence.

Since its inception, QCEA has based its work on the Quaker peace testimony and has promoted a nonviolent approach to addressing conflict. We can bring our experience and expertise on peace to address violence towards people on the move and bring attention to individuals, communities, organisations and institutional actors who in their ongoing work, contribute to advancing rights-based approaches throughout migration routes.

What we hope will change

Migration will become safer at all stages and people on the move will have more agency to make decisions about their lives. The positive effects of migration will be better understood and policy will actively work towards these. Migration will cease to be treated as a security concern, and will be treated inherently as a political issue requiring a negotiated solution with the needs and interests of migrants and receiving communities at heart. EU external action will become more sensitive to issues of migration and displacement, working to tackle root causes of migration, rather than deterring movement.

2.2 Climate justice and peace



Many people in the world are facing both the negative effects of climate change and the effects of violent conflict. Climate change is a major and sustained risk to global security as well as a threat multiplier, and war impacts negatively on the environment. Peace requires that people are able to meet their basic needs and live in a healthy environment. In order to be able to adapt to climate change we need to be able to work together peacefully to develop solutions. QCEA will promote peaceful approaches to adapting to and mitigating climate change and expose and challenge the negative effects of militarism and war on the environment.

Overall objective: To work towards a transition to a more sustainable and fossil free Europe and a global world order that is sustainable, just and peaceful with robust and constructive ways of nonviolently addressing conflicts about resources as they arise.

QCEA will work on climate through peacebuilding and human rights lenses. We cannot transform society so that the world can survive and thrive in a time of climate crisis without also reducing the risk of conflict and ensuring that people have the tools to address conflict peacefully when it occurs. The European Green Deal is an attempt to address the causes of climate change in the European Union. The Deal requires massive changes in employment, trade and agriculture while still promoting growth. In the EU Climate Change and Defence Roadmap and the Strategic Compass, security is largely seen as a defence issue requiring purely technical solutions, rather than the provision of a safe and healthy environment. There is a tension between preserving ecosystems to save endangered species and the demand for the raw materials needed to create renewable energy infrastructure. If European policy makers do not consciously work towards positive peace and recognise that the world's resources are finite, existing inequalities between countries and populations will be exacerbated and poorer countries outside Europe will be adversely affected. Resistance to policies that address climate change will increase, leading to a surge in authoritarian and repressive responses, and an increase in inter-communal tensions and violent conflict. The next few years are crucial – both for reducing fossil fuel emissions and for building a future that is not blighted by local and international conflicts over resources and land.

Why

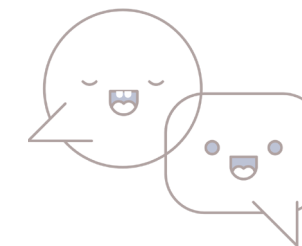
There are many organisations and movements addressing the causes and effects of climate change. QCEA's expertise and experience lies to a large extent in peace work. Therefore we want to focus on how the climate crisis affects peace and how war and conflict worsens climate change.

European policy and practices relating to conflict can have an impact on the climate. Proposed solutions to the effect of climate change can cause or prevent conflict.

What we hope will change

The links between conflict and climate change, both positive and negative will be better understood and will be considered when responding to conflict and to the effects of climate change. Peaceful resolution of conflicts caused by climate change will be supported and encouraged. Policy, law and practice aimed at addressing and adapting to the climate crisis will acknowledge and address the risk of conflict, and protect the rights of people affected and enable them to live in harmony with other living beings and entities.

2.3 Facilitating dialogues for transformation



QCEA believes transformative change is necessary to move beyond crisis and build a just, equitable and peaceful society. We will therefore be the instigator and convenor of spaces and processes that bring people of differing views (policy makers, decision makers, activists, citizens, those who have been marginalised or excluded) together to listen and talk to each other about the pressing questions and issues that need to be addressed in order for humanity to thrive in a time of climate crisis.

Why

Only through dialogue across differences can solutions to complex problems emerge and gain acceptance. We need to focus our resources on this rather than trying to mend a broken system. We can draw on the Quaker practices of quiet diplomacy and conflict transformation.

How

- Work on issues in migration, climate justice and peace that are stuck and where people involved are polarised.
- Enable people to bring their whole selves to the issues – their heart and hands as well as their head.
- Support people to listen deeply and openly to each other so that they can see beyond their own view of the issues and understand them better. This opens new ways of seeing.
- Illuminate and connect those who have found new ways of doing things, grounded in justice, equality and peace.

What we hope will change

To do this work we have to let go of our attachment to specific outcomes and hold ourselves open to other ways of looking at issues. We need to not be afraid of failure. Change will take time. But we believe that only by people coming together with this mindset will different ways of doing things emerge and economic, political and social systems and practices change.

2.4 Watching briefs

We know that European Quakers have many concerns. We can't work on them all. We have tried to identify those where we can bring a distinctive voice and approach and where there is potential for change in European institutions and perceptions in Europe more generally.

However there are some key issues for Quakers where we will keep a watching brief in Europe and where we will add a Quaker voice individually or through networks where we can. These are:

- The right to conscientious objection
- Long-term work towards lasting peace in Ukraine
- Challenging the arms trade and increased militarisation

We also work with other civil society organisations to keep civic space open at a time when it is being threatened in many places in Europe and beyond.

3. How change happens



There is no single theory of change - how things change depends on the type of change we are working towards. We have identified three types: improving policy (or making it less bad), reforming policy & practices and transformative change.

We propose that QCEA focuses at least a third of its capacity/resources on transformative change and most of the issues-focused work on reforming while supporting other organisations to do the detailed policy improvement - always with an eye to moving towards transformative change when possible.

Type of change	Making policy less bad/better	Reforming policy and practice	Transformative
What it does	Can make an immediate or medium-term improvement to people’s lives but does not change the system	Makes the system more effective or less destructive/ violent in the short or medium-term. Can sometimes lead to systemic change.	Leads to systemic change and ultimately new systems and ways of thinking and doing
Approach	Traditional amendment-based lobbying (mainly reactive) – focus on what the institutions are focused on; detailed analysis of documents; propose specific changes; seek allies in institutions	Traditional advocacy – pointing out policies/practices not working; offering alternatives; bringing those most affected to the table; building coalitions for change	Open-ended/transformative work for change: Letting go of outcomes so that we can bring people of different views into dialogue on existential questions that underlie policy and practice. Enable policymakers, activists and those affected to speak about hopes and fears and listen to each other. Work with what emerges.
How change happens	Small changes in policy and law can make a big difference to outcomes for people and ability to hold institutions to account.	Showing that policies are not working and describing viable alternatives enables policymakers to make better policies that lead to better outcomes for people. The involvement of people affected by and responding to injustice, conflict and the climate crisis is crucial in developing policy that will lead to just and peaceful practices.	We can’t just persuade people to our point of view. Current systems and practices are not able to bring about the changes needed to build a just and peaceful world that can withstand the climate crisis. Only when people of different views can come together, listen to each other and reflect on the existential questions behind an issue can they start to see that things need to change. People need to bring their whole self to this and to be able to open up to different ways of thinking.
What QCEA will do	We don’t have capacity or expertise to do this. Many organisations are doing this work and we can support by being active in selected networks with a focus on the issues we are working on. In these networks we will focus on bringing an integrated approach. (Example: ensure climate action is conflict-sensitive, mainstream anti-racism across policy areas, etc.)	In the themes we have identified (migration and peace; climate and peace) we will firstly research the specific issues we will focus on in the medium-term. We will work with others to call for humane and peaceful policies and practices, by offering and promoting alternatives; entering into dialogue with policymakers; challenging narratives which cause harm; and supporting those most affected by harmful policies and practices to speak their truth.	We will start by focusing on the climate crisis but remain open to other areas where transformational change is needed. We will build relationships with a wide range of people. We will convene one-off and continuing dialogues. We will use creative practices and art, regenerative practices and processes that genuinely enable listening and mutual understanding.
Linking the different types of change	Encourage networks to discuss existential questions behind what they work on and how they work. Invite network members as speakers and to engage in transformational change work. Offer our space and approach for issues where things have got stuck.	Relationships and credibility built will make policymakers more likely to engage in transformational change work. Alternatives will offer different models. Need for transformational processes may emerge from this work.	We have to be careful that our work on other kinds of change doesn’t undermine our ability to be seen as open and providing a safe space. More specific work may emerge out of these processes.

4. Our approach – the how



4.1 External

Quaker House is known in Brussels as a place where people can meet to safely discuss difficult topics and where everyone is respected and valued. Quaker House will be integral to our work on transformative change. We will use it for both one-off events and longer-term processes. We will use art and creative processes to develop trust and encourage conversation and creative solutions. Quaker House will be available to others to use as a venue for events in alignment with our aims, according to a transparent room hire policy that recognises the difference in access to resources of different organisations and groups.

Working with others

We will seek to work in collaboration with other **Quaker agencies**, in particular Quaker Peace and Social Witness and Quaker United Nations Office Geneva, where this will amplify the Quaker voice and work towards transformative change and support just policies at the international level.

In our work on migration and climate from a peacebuilding perspective we will continue to work with relevant **EU/European networks**. These will include the European Peace Liaison Office (EPLO), the Security Policy Alternatives Network (SPAN) and PICUM (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants). In these networks we will focus our efforts on advocacy directly related to the issues we are working on and encouraging network members to engage with transformative change processes and issues that cut across traditional areas of work. We will seek to work in partnership with other network members who share our vision and where we have complementary skills and experience.

To work in transformative change means being open to **working with organisations and individuals that have different values and ways of working than us**. This may expose us to a higher level of risk than we are comfortable with - we must be mindful not to take on too much risk but also remember that it is in our discomfort that we learn and grow.

European Quakers have a wealth of experience in the issues and approaches we will be working on. We hope that Quakers with relevant experience will be able to support us in an advisory and engaged role.

Everyone is needed in the work for transformative change. Through General Assembly members we will ask Quakers to raise relevant issues with their own governments, local, regional or national. We also know that there are many local transformative change processes happening throughout Europe and that Quakers are often involved with them. We will share these stories with policymakers to show what can be done.

4.2 Internal

Whole organisation

To do this work well, the organisation as a whole needs to look honestly at itself and reflect on what it means to be an inclusive and open organisation that can credibly offer spaces and processes that allow everyone to participate and thrive. We operate in a racist society and accept that we and our organisation are implicated in this. We commit to understanding how racism manifests itself in ourselves and our organisation and to addressing this. The General Assembly, Executive Committee, staff and volunteers will do this in ways that build relationships between us and enable us to speak honestly about where we need to change and grow. The sensitivity of this work and the learning and experience from similar work in Quaker and other organisations will be fully recognised in our approach.

Working as team

Most change is not achieved by the work of a single organisation but by the combined efforts of people and organisations doing different things. We must recognise that we are part of an ecosystem working for transformative change. Compared to the previous strategy this will mean that while staff members may lead on one area of work they will work across all the areas, contributing a variety of expertise and perspectives and actively seeking connections. To facilitate this kind of ‘open workspace’, a reorganisation of information systems is needed, including the setting up of relation management and communication systems. These changes must also secure the institutional memory of the organisation. Where appropriate, the information systems will be opened up for the benefit and contribution of Friends and partners.

Managing risk

To bring about the change we want to see, we know we need to take risks about who we engage with, how we engage and accept that the outcome is uncertain. At the same time, we must be mindful of our reputation, right use of our resources and the potential for harm. We will therefore assess the risk of each activity and take steps to mitigate harm to others, ourselves and to ensure that our resources are used in a transparent and effective way.

Communications

Our communications strategy will support the work of programmes seeking transformative change. In today’s nonstop communications climate, it is becoming more and more challenging to get our messages seen and heard by key audiences. And yet, communications are often vital to social changes. Employed effectively, communications have the potential to shed light on issues, shift attitudes, bridge debates between people of different views and raise funds.

The kind of work that QCEA wants to do requires a different kind of communication. Communications go beyond the reports we produce, events we run and materials we publish. It refers to how we engage with affected populations, policymakers, partners, supporters and other stakeholders in inclusive, innovative and meaningful ways to support transformative change.

We cannot work alone. In order for our communications to be purpose-driven and compassionate and wholesome we will seek to actively listen for feedback from our supporters, partners and other stakeholders and draw on their experience and contributions.

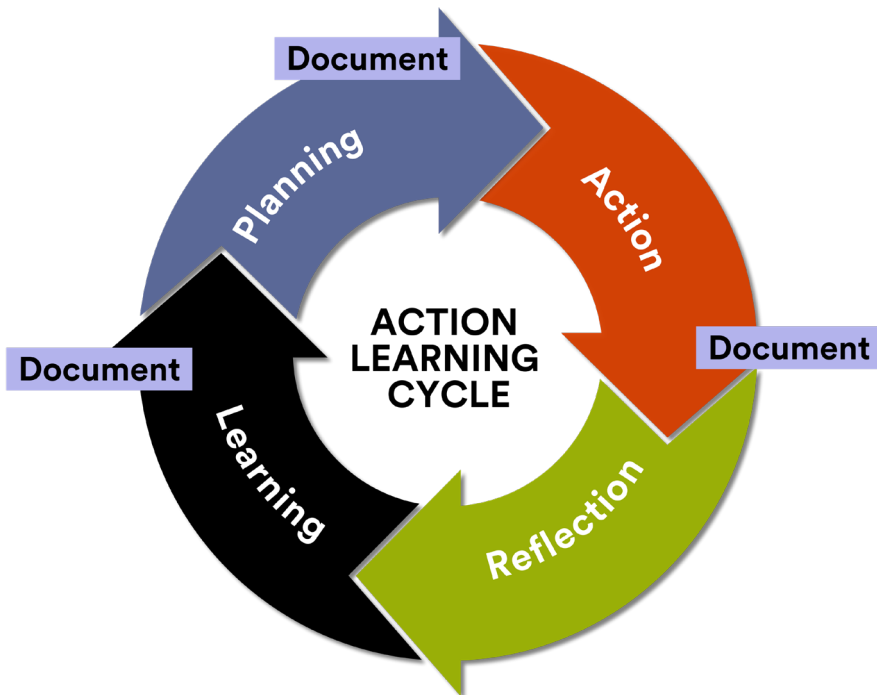
Guiding principles for QCEA’s communications

These are our beliefs about how communication should happen within and outside our organisation. To ensure effective and consistent implementation of QCEA’s communication, the following principles will be used to guide our communication activities and execution plans.

- **Coherence:** Make sure that all our outputs are in line with programme objectives;
- **Accessibility:** Use accessible, concise and understandable language;
- **Alternative narrative:** Challenge divisive narratives by promoting positive alternatives;
- **Inclusive language:** Ensure that the language we use everywhere reflects our mission and values and challenges colonial and racist attitudes and stereotypes;
- **Intentional engagement:** Make sure our outputs are fit for purpose; we communicate when concerns need to be communicated and not solely to fill in the silence;
- **Sustainable communications:** Opt for outputs that have the least environmental footprint;
- **Hope:** Give policymakers, supporters and donors hope, channelling their energy by showing them how they can make a better world.

Learning and accountability

In the kind of work we do progress is not steady and change can sometimes be difficult to see. We will use an action learning approach to review after each activity and to review and learn every six months. We will identify progress markers so that we can identify whether we are seeing the changes needed to achieve our objectives in each programme theme. Our focus will be on identifying learning so that we can adapt to remain effective.



We will record key information about our activities, progress against objectives and our learning and how we are using it. We will use this information to report to our supporters and donors.

In our dialogues for transformation work, we will focus our monitoring and evaluation on qualitative methods, for example, responses of participants to the process and how they report it influences them in their thinking about the question/issue. To reduce barriers to engage in evaluation, we will offer feedback channels in oral, written, or audio form, which will only be used for internal purposes. An initial emphasis on broad, open-ended questions (e.g. "most significant change") will help us to capture the range of impacts, and find out what is important to particular stakeholders. We expect the impact to be in the long-term, probably beyond the scope of this strategy but we will conduct scanning exercises to see where the approach may have made a difference to policy and practice in and beyond EU institutions.

5. Timeline for the strategy



We recognise that it will take time to develop our capacity and build the relationships we need to bring about change. We have therefore adopted a phased approach to the work as illustrated in the timeline below.

