

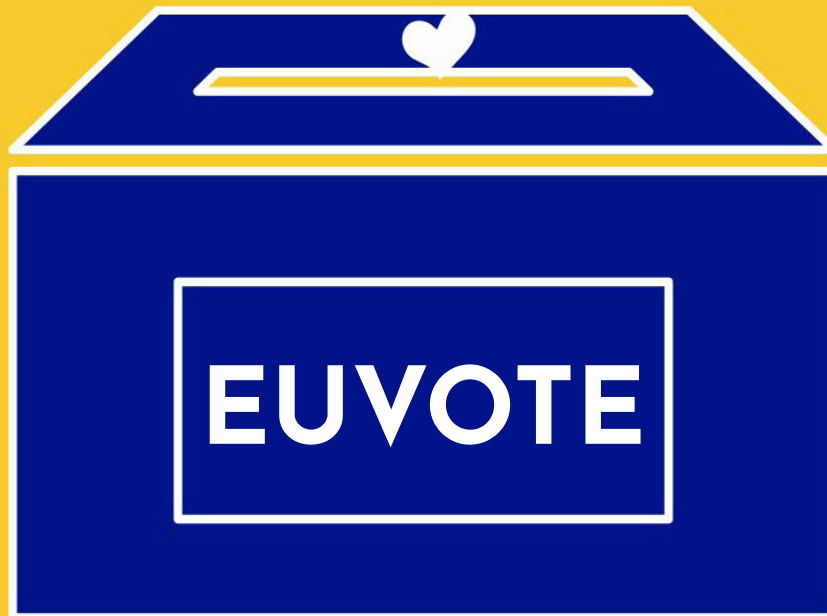


Quaker
Council for
European
Affairs



around
europe

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Towards a politics of compassion and integrity

PAGE 3

The importance
of the 2024 EU
elections

PAGE 5

QCEA's plans for
the upcoming
EU elections

PAGE 10-11

What QCEA
networks are up
to



A word from QCEA Clerk

In November 2022 I was fortunate enough to take part in QCEA's study tour. I strongly feel that the title of the tour 'Europe at a crossroads', still very much applies this year, in particular with the upcoming EU-elections in June. Are we heading towards *fear or trust*? This Around Europe includes important suggestions about how we can work against fear, hate and 'othering' and shows that changes towards a just and sustainable future are possible. The same challenges will be faced in other elections this year such as, among others, in the UK and in the US. Firstly, what we need is good factual *information*. For example, in an article in The Guardian on 29-12-23 it was made clear that the proportion of migrants and refugees of the world population has stayed the same

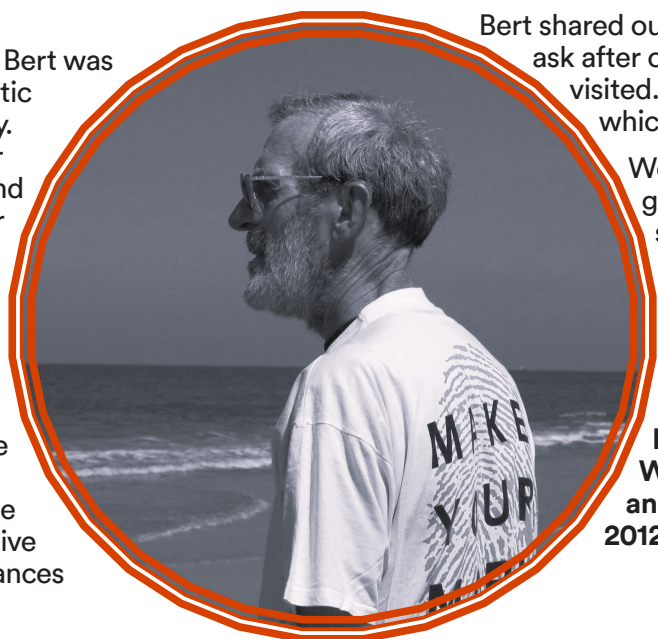
since the 1950s, i.e. 3% of the world's population, of which 0.3% are refugees. Secondly we need a lot of *compassion*. For many, the very basis of their lives, the way they live and work, seems threatened. At the same time trust in governments and institutions is diminishing. I believe that we are very much in need of a stronger civil society, building co-operative communities. Only together will we be able to face the necessary discomfort lying ahead, supporting each other with the courage to change. I write this in dear remembrance of Bert Touwen, my father-in-law, engaged Friend and predecessor in the role of clerk to QCEA (please see the following obituary).

Martin Touwen, clerk of QCEA's Executive Committee

Obituary to Bert Touwen

Bert Touwen, who died on 16 December 2023, was QCEA clerk from 2003-2007 of both the Bureau and the General Assembly.

In his interventions as clerk, Bert was gentle but probing, diplomatic but with just a touch of irony. He always arrived at Quaker House Brussels for a weekend of meetings in good time for lunch on the Friday, which gave us and him time to discuss the agendas and any perceived difficulties that might arise in the meetings to come. Bert was always keen to make sure he had understood all the finer points of all the papers, as he was aware that as a non-native speaker of English some nuances might escape him.

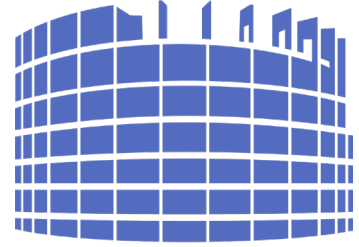


Bert shared our love of cats and would always ask after ours: QC (Quaker Cat) when he visited. We heard his tales of his cats which we enjoyed very much.

We think of Bert's long life with gratitude and of the loving service he gave to QCEA after what had been a difficult period for the organisation. Our service was much enriched by working with him and we are glad to have known him.

Liz Scurfield and Martina Weitsch, Joint Representatives and Heads of Office from 2002-2012

Shaping tomorrow



The importance of the 2024 EU elections

Between June 6-9, 2024, Europeans will participate in European Parliament elections—an important opportunity to shape the future of the European Union (EU). Beyond a mere ritual, these elections hold profound implications for citizens and the EU's trajectory.

The European Parliament and its powers

At the heart of this process is the European Parliament, the EU's sole directly elected institution. This distinctive legislative body plays a pivotal role in shaping laws, addressing a spectrum of issues such as environmental policies, security, migration, and economic matters, transcending national boundaries.

As a directly elected EU legislature, the Parliament holds supervisory and budgetary responsibilities, with decisions directly affecting the allocation of public funds through the EU's common budget and the regulation of the European Single Market.

Why the elections matter in Europe and beyond

Despite Brussels seeming distant, the 705 Members of the European Parliament have pivotal roles in deciding laws and determining the EU budget allocation. Citizens' ballots influence the composition of the European Commission—the body that drafts policy and monitors its implementation.

The intertwining of national and European issues underscores the significance of every vote, empowering individuals to actively participate in decision-making processes. The results of these elections will determine the direction of the EU on key issues such as economic policy, immigration, and the climate crisis.

The elections will also send a message to the rest of the world about the EU's commitment to democracy and its role in global affairs. The results will influence its ability to collaborate with partners on global issues like the climate crisis.

The 2024 EU elections stand as a pivotal moment for citizens to actively shape the future of the EU and address pressing global challenges through the power of democracy.

How do the EU elections work?

Navigating European elections might seem a bit confusing initially. To simplify the intricacies of this summer's upcoming European elections, we've prepared this handy explainer.

1 When is the vote?

Elections to the EU Parliament occur every five years. In 2024, the vote is scheduled between June 6-9, with the exact date varying by country.

2 How are Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) elected?

There are diverse voting systems across the EU, all utilising some form of proportional representation.

- Closed Lists: Voters select a party with a fixed candidate list, and MEPs are elected based on party vote share.
- Open Lists: Voters choose a party or a preferred candidate, allowing more flexibility.
- Single Transferable Vote: Electors rank multiple candidates by preference.

3 How are seats allocated?

With 720 seats in the new parliament (up from 705 now), EU treaties dictate seat allocation per country proportionally, based on a nation's population. Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta have the fewest seats with six each, while the EU's most populous member, Germany, has 96 seats.

4 What happens after the EU Elections?

- Newly elected MEPs negotiate to form political groups. A group requires at least 25 MEPs from a minimum of seven member states.
- MEPs meet in Strasbourg to elect the President and Vice-Presidents.
- Parliament votes on committee compositions, launching the new legislative term.
- The Parliament, with an absolute majority, elects the Commission President. If unsuccessful, member states propose an alternative within a month.
- The Council (i.e. the Member States), in consultation with the Commission President-elect, proposes Commissioners.

Who am I voting for?

In EU elections you vote for a candidate for a European party of which the candidate/national party is a member. Elected MEPs then form political groups in the new parliament.



Anticipating



the political landscape

of the EU Elections 2024



As we approach the European Parliament elections in 2024, significant changes are on the horizon, shaping the future political landscape of the European Union. The makeup of the new parliament will be key when deciding what legislation is developed and what it includes.

Current front-runners

If the elections were held today, the European People's Party (EPP) would likely secure the most seats, maintaining its position as a center-right political force. Following closely are the Socialist and Democrats (S&D) and the Renew Group. The conservative nationalist group, European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), has the potential to become the third-largest group, challenging the centrist Renew Group. Unfortunately, the Greens/European Free Alliance may face setbacks, losing significant ground in terms of seats.

Shifting political dynamics

Current polls suggest a maintenance of the centre-right EPP's position, with gains in the smaller member states potentially offsetting losses elsewhere. Parties on the right may gain traction in various EU countries, including Italy. The far-right parties are also benefiting from the fragmentation of the political landscape in many EU member states. In recent years, there has been a decline in support for traditional centre-left and centre-right parties, which has created opportunities for smaller, more radical parties to gain traction.

In addition, challenges loom for the centrist Renew group in France and the Greens in Germany. The centre-left faces electoral struggles in Germany and France, indicating a noticeable rightward shift in European politics.

Implications for Europe's future

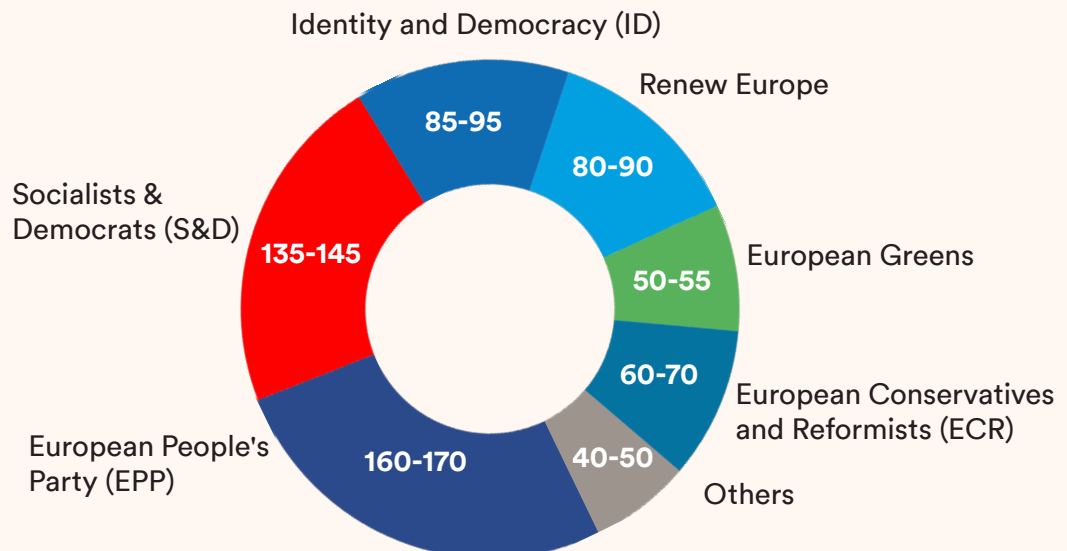
The outcomes of the 2024 elections hold profound implications for Europe's political landscape. The balance of power within the European Parliament will shape the ability of political groups to push their agendas and influence policy decisions. Additionally, the results may impact the selection of the next European Commission president, leading to potential shifts in the EU's strategic priorities.


This distribution currently projected could result in a fragmented European Parliament, with no single political group holding a majority. This would lead to increased political gridlock and make it more difficult to pass legislation.

As we approach this crucial electoral event, the European electorate remains engaged, with a significant number expressing concerns about their future. The polls indicate a potential shift in priorities, with climate change, poverty, and public health taking precedence. The results of the 2024 European Parliament elections could mark a turning point for the EU, influencing its direction and policies in the years to come.

What if elections were held today?

Based on current projections, if the 2024 EU elections were held today, the expected distribution of seats would be as follows:





We invite you to consider how you can carry out your work with compassion for all living things, integrity and concern for truth, and respect for those you engage with whoever they are

QCEA: compassion, integrity

and respect in EU politics

Being a politician isn't easy. The pressure of being in the public eye and having your decisions constantly scrutinised in the media must be exhausting. Social media has increased that pressure, and women and people of colour in particular find themselves verbally abused and even threatened.

Yet people still choose to put themselves forward as candidates. They have many different motivations but most MEPs we meet want to make a positive difference. It is however easy to lose sight of that when under intense pressure from one's government, one's political party or the intense lobbying of one group or another. In the heat of parliamentary debate, words become weapons and people are spoken about as problems or dangers rather than as human beings with needs and agency.

In the run up to and after the elections, candidates and those subsequently elected will be faced with a barrage of demands about what they should be doing, which policies they should support and which they should oppose. Through our networks QCEA too will be asking for more engagement with civil society, policies that enable safe migration and a peaceful and just Green Deal.

But Quakers believe that how decisions are made is also important. Listening with respect, seeking to understand and considering the facts without letting our own interests and emotions get in the way, taking

account of the needs of others – all of these are essential to the transformational decision-making needed to address the issues facing the Europe now.

QCEA will therefore ask candidates to reflect on the importance of compassion, integrity and respect. We will be sending out our message as a postcard to MEPs who will be standing for election again as well as sharing it on social media. The postcard will soon be available on our website so you can download it and send it to the candidates for your country.

After the elections, we will reach out to new MEPs and their staff through the postcards and through offers of training on how to practice compassion, integrity and respect in the European Parliament. Once your country's MEPs have been elected, you too can reach out to them with the postcard which will include a link to our website.

The truth is important. And hate speech is unacceptable. QCEA's Choose Respect website, which was so successful in 2019, will be updated and available as a resource to challenge myths about migration and offer ways to respond to hate speech by candidates or their supporters.

Where do European parties

stand on migration?








↑ PHOTO: CANVA

As Europe gears up for upcoming elections, migration continues to be, for better or for worse, one of the key issues dominating the political arena. The question of where political parties stand on migration influences public opinion as well as political parties' behaviour based on their own perceptions of what voters want to see.

At this stage it is not clear what concrete priorities will guide the direction of each party for the next EU mandate, with many still working on their electoral manifestos in processes that greatly differ in terms of

transparency and openness to participation. Some European parties still resort to opaque processes to write their manifestos, while others have embraced a more participatory and open approach. For those interested in potential avenues to influence, the [Good Lobby](#) published a useful overview of ongoing processes regarding electoral manifestos for each party.

In the absence of manifestos, we can gain insights from parties' historical positions and voting patterns to understand their general approach to the issue:

	Focus areas	Supported the recently agreed Migration Pact
EPP - European People's Party	Emphasis on protecting external borders, breaking smugglers' networks and externalising migration control (or even asylum processing) through partnerships with third-countries.	
European Greens	Emphasis on enabling safe and legal access, creating more ambitious schemes for resettlement and relocation and addressing root causes by changing trade and development policies that finance authoritarian regimes.	
PES - Party of European Socialists	Emphasis on legal migration channels, labour migration/anti-exploitation measures, and solidarity and fair distribution of migration responsibilities between Member States.	
Renew (ALDE - Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe)	Emphasis on (highly-skilled) legal migration, integration, and economic benefits of migration: remedying population decline and sustaining growth	
PEL - Party of the European Left	Emphasis on solidarity, responsibility-sharing, reducing violence at borders and humanitarian search and rescue.	
ECR - European Conservatives and Reformists	Emphasis on national control over borders and immigration policies, the need to reform international obligations to allow for returns, and the need to finance physical border barriers.	 (supports additional national and EU measures)
ID - Identity and Democracy	Emphasis on national sovereignty and identity, stricter border controls and a reduction in immigration via criminalisation measures.	 (does not support a European Common Approach)

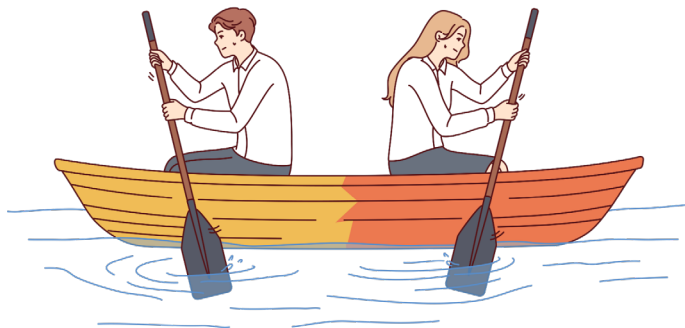
Some political figures have already announced their candidacy to run as Members of the European Parliament. To get a sense of their vision and priorities, QCEA has prepared a few questions, which we invite readers to share with candidates in their respective constituencies:

- ✧ **What are your 3 priorities on migration for the next EU mandate?**
- ✧ **What is your position on third country agreements on migration? How do you plan to ensure these agreements are in line with EU commitments on human rights?**
- ✧ **What is your vision for European dialogue and how do you see the role of civil society in guiding and informing policy?**

If you share this with a candidate MEP and receive a response, please let us know by email at saskia.basa@qcea.org

What do we see coming and what can we hope for?

In addition to massive changes expected in European political configurations, the next EU mandate will also come with challenges in following up with decisions made in the previous mandate. In rolling out the Migration Pact's implementation, a remarkably complex legislative package, trust issues may linger between Member States from Northern and Southern and Central European countries.



Hungary and Poland, who from the early days of negotiation rejected the Pact's proposal for a new EU common migration system, may not be the most cooperative in implementing a Pact they did not want in the first place. On the other hand, frontline countries may decide to look away when migrants decide to travel onwards to wealthier states in the north of the EU if they feel they don't receive adequate support, and states concerned with secondary movements may step up border controls and turn a blind eye as internal pushbacks continue to increase. This will continue to put considerable pressure on Schengen, the area of freedom of movement that the EU has cherished for years as a cornerstone of the European project.

For a political project that adopted as its mantra 'united in diversity', few meaningful efforts have been made to enable alternative forms of inter-institutional dialogue that may be more conducive of positive results for people affected by migration policies. This highlights the need to rekindle spaces where actors with different views can listen to each other's hopes and concerns and work towards a sense of solidarity and common destiny. With growing frustration within the European Parliament and increased calls for reform, the 2023-2026 mandate may be a litmus test for existing EU decision making processes. QCEA hopes to play its part in supporting transformative spaces through this period of change, as a listening presence and in supporting more imaginative and future-forward forms of dialogue.



Where do European parties

stand on

climate justice & peace?

The 2019 European elections were described as a “green wave”, with an increased number of MEPs from the Greens/EFA group, setting the stage for the EU Green Deal – a seemingly unified political consensus for the EU to transition towards a net-zero greenhouse gas emissions union by 2050. Ahead of the 2024 elections, where do European parties stand on the climate conversation? While the manifestos for the EU elections are not out yet, comparing the votes of each political group on climate policies to what they say they stand for can be a good indicator to assess their position on this issue. Three analyses, conducted by Climate Action Network Europe, Bloom, and Institut Jacques Delors (two NGOs and one political think-tank), provide insights into these positions.

In the EU Parliament, the Greens/EFA (Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance), the Left GUE/ NGL (Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left) and the S&D (Socialists & Democrats groups) emerged as climate policy leaders.

The Greens/EFA group, as expected, takes a resolute stance on climate change and biodiversity, prioritising these concerns as their top agenda. Committed to the Paris Agreement, they champion a pro-EU approach, often aligned with the IPCC recommendations in terms of policy, and support environmentally friendly policies while opposing proposals perceived as lacking ambition. Approaching environmental issues through an economic justice lens, The Left prioritises nature protection and animal rights. They advocate for a just deal and support decisions related to the EU Green Deal. However, they express dissent when they believe proposed measures do not adequately prioritise social justice over industry and companies’ interests. While the Green Deal ranks as the fourth priority for S&D, the group emphasises its commitment to a just transition. They advocate

for balancing carbon reduction with job protection and social equity. S&D generally supports decisions related to the Green Deal.

These three groups form a progressive voting coalition, supporting the fight against climate change and the protection of biodiversity as priorities. They work towards a just transition. From a peace perspective, consideration of conflict-sensitivity is lacking, but they are the three groups working the most towards climate justice in the EU Parliament.



In theory, the EPP (European People’s Party) articulates a commitment to cutting emissions and creating jobs while advocating for ambitious yet practical targets for carbon neutrality by 2050. Despite these declarations, their voting patterns often align with the other conservative groups, showing a propensity to oppose higher carbon reduction ambitions and environmental protection measures. In Bloom’s analysis, the EPP is the political group that scored the worst when it comes to supporting climate legislation, worse than both the ECR and ID groups. The ECR (European Conservatives and Reformists) group claims they align with sustainability principles, advocating for lower emissions, clean

air, and wildlife protection. Despite this, their voting patterns suggest a tendency to oppose decisions related to the EU Green Deal or abstain, expressing concerns about economic impacts. They often put economic considerations above environmental considerations in their voting behaviour. The ID (Identity and Democracy) group does not explicitly prioritise climate or environment in their stated values. They actively campaign against EU decisions regarding the energy transition. Voting consistently against Green Deal decisions, ID maintains a sceptical stance on environmental regulations and exhibits a very conservative approach, often opposing national binding measures related to the environment. These groups, EPP, ECR, and ID, represent a conservative voting coalition, exhibiting a more preventive approach to ambitious climate justice initiatives.



The last main political group, Renew (Liberals & Democrats), claims a commitment to addressing climate change for a transition that delivers economic prosperity and societal fairness. However, their voting patterns often reveal divisions between conservative and progressive members, making Renew a pivotal influencer and "kingmaker" in close decisions on environmental legislation.



As Europe navigates its climate future, the political terrain reveals a clear divide between progressive (left-wing groups) and conservative coalitions (right-wing groups).

QCEA has crafted a set of questions that we encourage readers to pose to candidates in their specific constituencies.

- ✦ **What are your three key priorities?**
- ✦ **How would you deal with potential conflicts rising from the green transition?**
- ✦ **How will you involve local communities and grassroots organisations in the decision-making process?**
- ✦ **How do you plan to ensure that no one is left behind from the EU Green Deal?**

If you share this with a candidate MEP and receive a response, please let us know by email at alice.privey@qcea.org

What do we see coming and what can we hope for?

The current state of the climate has not improved over the past five years. The precarious political consensus that paved the way for the EU Green Deal in 2019 now appears more vulnerable than ever. Despite this, the importance of the Green Deal remains undeniable, and we remain optimistic that a new, ambitious iteration will be a key component of the upcoming EU Commission Strategy. This optimism persists regardless of the potential impact of the EU elections, where parties sceptical of both the EU and climate action may gain more seats, as suggested by polls.

The urgent implementation of measures outlined in the current Commission's agenda is imperative. Simultaneously, progress needs to be achieved

in areas not adequately addressed in the existing Green Deal, such as the deforestation strategy, the Farm to Fork strategy, and updated EU legislation on chemicals.

EU climate policies have yet to bridge gaps between EU and national politicians, urban and rural regions, and various social classes. QCEA approaches this challenge with a peace-oriented perspective, advocating for a fair, just and peaceful transition. Such a transition not only presents an opportunity for enhanced social cohesion but also addresses the social tensions and conflicts arising from climate regulations.

How the arms industry



shapes European policies

way beyond the military

In 2017 the arms lobby broke an EU taboo and won a European Defence Fund. The latest ENAAT report published in early December 2023, “From war lobby to war economy”, shows the success of the industry’s lobby efforts and the increasingly close ties it fosters with policy-makers. This accelerated after February 2022 but had been going on for years before¹.

The largest EU arms companies and major lobby organisations like ASD-Europe have had hundreds of meetings with the European Commission and Euro-parliamentarians (MEPs) in the last decade. The Commission’s Directorate-General for the Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS) established in 2019 acts as a service provider for the arms industry.

New subsidies were recently allocated to the arms industry in addition to the Defence Fund, namely the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP) and the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act (EDIRPA). A new European Defence Industry Strategy should be presented in February with another funding programme potentially worth €1 billion.

The trend is broader than military and security policies: the recent report “Blood on the Green Deal”² is particularly revealing of the fact that EU institutions, and the Commission in particular, have warmly embraced arms industry representatives as partners in policy-making, rather than as commercial lobbyists looking to maximise revenues and profits.

And while the world was about to come together at COP28 in Dubai in one of the last opportunities to revert climate change, EU Defence ministers were echoing repeated demands by the arms industry to gain more access to private & sustainable finance. Taking advantage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the armament sector is successfully conducting a shameless green- & social-washing campaign to paint itself as intrinsically sustainable and socially beneficial, completely overlooking its own human and

environmental record: according to a 2022 study³, if the world armies were to be a country, they would have the 4th largest carbon footprint after China, the US and India, not considering the environmental impact of war destructions.

Without industry there is no armed forces, and without armed forces there is no security. And certainly not sustainability

NIVD (Dutch arms industry association), April 2023

ENAAT

↑ CREDIT: ENAAT

Presented as necessary to strengthen European security, the primary aim of this policy is in fact to increase the industry’s global competitiveness, combined with plans to ease export rules: this will mean more profits for arms producers and their shareholders, more weapons for authoritarian regimes and warmongers at the cost of more death, violence, repression and destruction, and a worsening environmental and climate crisis.

The European elections in 2024 will be crucial, as the new Parliament will be responsible for negotiating the revision of the EU current long-term budget (2021-2027) as well as the next one (2028-2034). Several European leaders and MEPs recently called for an increase in EU military spending, up to €100 billion, while most countries do not want to put more money into the EU budget and are instead calling for a focus on a few critical priorities. In the current political context, this can only divert more resources towards war and militarisation to the detriment of peace, justice and an effective response to climate change.

Unless European citizens say loud and clear that they want the EU to remain a peaceful project and resolve the root causes of conflict through non-violence, dialogue, diplomacy and climate and social justice, there can be no real security, i.e. one guaranteeing safety for all on earth.

Laëtitia Sédou, EU project officer at the European Network Against Arms Trade

³ ‘Estimating the Military’s Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions’, Scientists for Global Responsibility & Conflict and Environment Observatory, 2022

¹ ‘Securing Profits How the arms lobby is hijacking Europe’s defence policy’, Vredesactie, 2017

² ‘Blood on the Green Deal, How the EU is boosting the mining and defence industry in the name of climate action’, Observatoire des multinationales & Corporate Europe Observatory, 2023

A manifesto for a stronger EU

The role of civil society in elections and beyond

Quakers have always been involved in and strong supporters of civil society. QCEA has joined a coalition of over 180 civil society organisations championing a manifesto that calls for a reinvigoration of civil society's role in shaping the EU's future.

At its core, the Civil Society for EU manifesto underscores the indispensable role civil society plays in healthy democracies. Yet, this essential work is confronted by a growing list of barriers, hindering nongovernmental actors from realising their full potential.

As Europe gears up for the 2024 EU elections, the manifesto serves as a collective call to action, urging future EU leaders to recognise, support, and engage with civil society more effectively during and after the elections. The overarching goal is to unlock the

untapped potential of civil society, enabling it to contribute meaningfully to shaping a more inclusive and resilient Europe.

At the heart of the manifesto lies a profound concern for the shrinking civic space across Europe. Restrictive laws, administrative hurdles, and mounting threats have become formidable obstacles for civil society actors, impeding their ability to fulfill their vital functions. The manifesto unequivocally demands that the EU reverse these trends, fostering an environment that nurtures civic space and empowers civil society to actively participate in policymaking processes.

To achieve this transformation, the manifesto proposes a transformative duo of strategic initiatives: the adoption of an EU-wide Civil Society Strategy and the establishment of an Agreement on Civil Dialogue.

76%

Europeans think that civil society has an important role in promoting and protecting democracy and common values

47%

Europeans regularly engage with civil society organisations by taking part in initiatives, engaging online or donating

87%

Europeans believe that civil society should operate freely and keep those in power accountable

100m

Europeans volunteer for a non-profit organisation

These measures aim to formalize the recognition, protection, and engagement of civil society at all levels, ensuring its integral role in the policymaking process.

Statistics reinforce the manifesto's importance: 76% of Europeans believe civil society plays a crucial role in promoting democracy and common values, 87% advocate for civil society's freedom to hold those in power accountable, and 47% regularly engage with civil society organisations. Additionally, a staggering 100 million Europeans volunteer for non-profit organisations, showcasing the widespread commitment to civic engagement.

As the EU prepares for the 2024 elections, where democracy stands as the top priority for 37% of

Europeans, civil society needs to be recognised as a key player in strengthening democratic institutions and processes. The call for a comprehensive Civil Society Strategy and enhanced civil dialogue reflects a shared vision of a Europe where civic space is strengthened, civil dialogue is valued, and civil society continues to play a vital role in achieving positive social outcomes.

Find out more about the Manifesto:
<https://civilsocietyforeu.eu/>



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We've revamped **Around Europe** to be more thematic and to go out twice a year.

This means you can expect to see a more focused and in-depth look at different political issues, news stories, and policy debates happening across Europe. We'd love to hear your feedback on this new format.

Let us know what you think! Write us an email at office@qcea.org.

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