



**Quaker  
Council for  
European  
Affairs**

**QCEA STRATEGY 2026-2030**

**Upholding Quaker values  
in a time of uncertainty**



# Introduction

Fifty years ago, Quakers in Brussels began discerning how they could engage with European institutions to tackle the root causes of cultural and structural violence. Within a few years the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) was created, which for 46 years has been advocating for peace, equality and justice. While social welfare, human rights, economic and environmental justice have been partially embedded into the evolution of what is now the European Union, its future effectiveness is uncertain following the exit of the United Kingdom, increased militarisation across sectors, political polarisation, and democratic backsliding. Globally the human rights and rules-based international order is being dismantled, diminishing the effectiveness of institutions such as the Council of Europe.

In the current permacrisis of widening inequality, climate breakdown, renewed racial injustice, an entrenched fortress mentality and mass displacements, we should not let fear overtake us. It is possible to both recognise the danger of these times and look for the opportunities, however limited, for QCEA to present a vision of a Europe that respects human dignity. QCEA's strategic location in Brussels also allows collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders, to seek a continual revelation of the truth by engaging with those who hold different views. For 2026-2030, this approach will be centred on three pillars:



## Pillar 1: Address the Intersections of Climate, Migration, and Peace

European governments are yet again restricting borders and approaching migration with a fortress mentality. At the same time, the impacts of climate change are worsening, forcibly displacing local populations. This will be the initial focus of the work. Whether climate-driven migration is sudden or gradual, it can strain local communities, cause more environmental damage and fuel conflict. While currently most climate displacement occurs within countries, projections indicate that international movements will likely increase. The objective is that, before large-scale displacement reaches Europe, a framework should be in place that legally defines and responds fairly and humanely to climate-driven migration. Otherwise the mistakes of the past will repeat, with reactive crisis management dominating policy.

### How?

QCEA will promote a positive peace approach to address the intersection between climate change, migration, and violent conflict, exploring, particularly through gender and peace lenses, how these overlapping crises influence and exacerbate each other. QCEA will conduct its own research if necessary, but will primarily link others working in these fields, making their work accessible to Friends, civil society and decision-makers. This will be used to encourage EU institutions and Member States to move away from militarised policies, promoting integrated, multi-sector approaches with meaningful inclusion of civil society, particularly those with lived experiences, that address associated factors such as the roles of extremist politics, racism and the legacy of colonialism.



## Pillar 2: Rethinking Security in Europe

The invasion of Ukraine and changing security perceptions have emboldened the arms industry and politicians driven by fear. With rising militarisation across Europe, the security discourse needs to be steered toward one that addresses root causes of conflict and promotes just solutions working towards sustainable civil security. In several European countries Friends are engaging with civil society networks of academics and activists to advance visions of security that are based on proactively building peace, and promoting human dignity and cooperation, in tangible geopolitical terms. These national level civil security initiatives are called "Rethinking Security". Integral to QCEA's work in this field will be continued support for conscientious objectors in Europe. While defending conscientious objection from a human rights-basis at the EU and Council of Europe, QCEA can also promote civil security alternatives to military conscription in Rethinking Security narratives. The overall objective is to establish civil security approaches within the security debate in Europe.

### How?

Realising the current political climate, a long-term approach will be necessary to cultivate narratives prioritising civil over military security for Europe. This will be done by strengthening networks with partners and linking to Quakers to build synergies with Rethinking Security groups. This will allow us to collectively advance these narratives to influence the European institutions, such as those of the European Union, Council of Europe, NATO and the currently under-utilised OSCE. As this initiative develops it will identify what roles are best for QCEA

to have - such as facilitating communication of a clear concept of security at all levels from international to personal, referencing prior Quaker peace work, history of civilian service and civil disobedience. This will include expanding the network, creating spaces for safe debate, or conducting our own research. This engagement will also be crucial to balancing public awareness campaigns with EU advocacy.



## Pillar 3: Speaking Truth to Power in a Crisis of Democracy

Democracy is in decline globally. This is now visible across Europe, with far-right movements surging in popularity as they attack multiculturalism and liberal democracy. Although they are still hindered by differences among themselves, the far-right parties have become increasingly powerful within the EU institutions. They have begun systematic attacks against organised civil society at the EU level, threatening their financial and political ability to promote climate and social justice in European policies. Within this context, QCEA will be guided by Quaker testimonies such as truth, equality and community. The objective is for QCEA to work, with partners, for a strong European civil society and secure democratic rights.

### How?

As the crisis of democracy intensifies across Europe and globally, QCEA will put Quaker testimonies into action, speaking truth to power in a gentle but determined way — reminding the EU of its legal obligations to engage civil society, raising our voice for marginalised groups, defending freedom of assembly and supporting those unjustly criminalised for peaceful actions. Quaker work will emphasise seeking truth amid disinformation, misinformation and manipulation, particularly as pressure on NGOs increases. QCEA can offer open-minded support where it is needed within existing endeavours. The organisation can rely on its core strengths of conducting and disseminating its own research and enabling quiet diplomacy. This warrants a Quaker-specific imprint and builds on QCEA's reputation while helping others engage with decision-makers and fostering dialogue.

## How QCEA Will Work Towards These Goals

With limited resources, QCEA will modify approaches as situations change, balancing immediate needs with a long-term approach and using the overlapping nature of the three pillars to distribute resources as needed. These choices will form the starting point for the work-plans within each pillar for 1-2 years. Through this strategy, QCEA will seek to intervene where specific Quaker imprints can be most meaningful. We aim to bear witness to a more just and peaceful Europe engaged in building a better world, grounded in Quaker values and shared with all those who seek positive transformative change. QCEA will continue fostering relations with Yearly Meetings and Quaker organisations to involve them in developing networks on these issues.

QCEA will ensure that its public-facing work does not undermine its ability to carry out quiet diplomacy, which remains a core strength. Quiet diplomacy can serve as a tool for the transformative changes needed to end the permacrisis. This is only possible if people across political, social and geographic divides can listen and understand each other and seek common ground.



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