



# Disarm

## ... For Peace

Quaker Peace & Social Witness  
Peace & Disarmament Programme

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### European Parliament Elections: An opportunity for peace

*The European Parliament elections in June will directly represent almost 500 million European citizens to the European Union. It is our democratic voice in the EU. In this special edition of 'Disarm...For Peace' Anya Whiteside of the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA), will examine the importance of the upcoming elections including the role that the European Parliament can play in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.*

Whether we realise it or not, as citizens of the European Union, our daily lives are constantly affected by decisions made within the EU, from the price of our mobile phone charges to our ability to travel and work freely across Europe. The EU also affects the lives of those living outside its borders. The EU is the largest donor of international aid worldwide, it is increasingly important in negotiating CO2 cuts and its free trade creates one of the most

comprehensive trade blocs in the world. The European Parliament is our voice in this system. It directly represents us - the citizens of Europe - to the EU.

The EU was set up as a peace project after World War II in an attempt to avert future bloodshed through common European trade and cooperation.



The European Parliament

Photo: Martina Weitsch

Today, peace is still central to the EU's work and rhetoric. Chapter 1 of the Lisbon Treaty states that the EU will 'preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security'.

So what can the European Parliament do to make sure that peace and conflict prevention really are prioritised within the EU? What power does the European Parliament have to influence EU policy?

And what might Friends want to consider

discussing with their MEP candidates in the lead up to the election in the UK on 4<sup>th</sup> June?

Hopefully some of the information that follows – put together by QCEA staff – will help Friends to answer some of these questions.

**Anya Whiteside, QCEA**

# Peacebuilding and Development Aid



Photo : Jayel Aheram

Money talks, and like it or not this is certainly true within the EU. The European Parliament has the final say on the EU budget, giving it influence over EU spending, including development aid.

The EU is the largest aid donor worldwide. The European Commission has several financial instruments which it uses for its development work. These include the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) which funds thematic development programmes and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) which aims to support democracy and human rights worldwide. These fund long-term development programmes and come under the EU budget.

Despite EU recognition of the interconnectedness between peace and development however, neither of these instruments makes any clear reference to conflict prevention nor does it insist that money used from these instruments must be conflict-sensitive.



The Wall of International Peace, Moscow

Photo: Jeff Bauche

## QCEA recommends

- That the European Parliament uses its influence over the EU budget to insist that conflict prevention is considered within the DCI and EIDHR financial instruments and implemented to ensure that development funded by these instruments is conflict-sensitive. QCEA believes that if the DCI and the EIDHR specifically mentioned how they could be used for peacebuilding they would become more powerful and effective instruments for development.

## Questions for MEP candidates

- How do you feel the European Union can make sure its development work effectively mainstreams conflict prevention?
- How will you work towards making sure that conflict prevention is considered within the financial instruments used for development aid over which the European Parliament has budgetary control?

### The Basic EU structure

The European Union is made up of three main institutions.

- **The Council of the EU** is made up of ministerial representatives from Member State governments.
- **The European Parliament** is made up of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) directly elected every 5 years by the citizens of the European Union.
- **The European Commission** is nominated by Member States and appointed by the European Parliament.

The Council of the EU and the European Parliament make the decisions about what the EU does and what EU law should be. About two thirds of these decisions (all those relating to 'Community Policies') are made jointly by the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. The rest of the decisions (those relating to 'Common, Foreign and Security policies' or 'Justice and Home Affairs') are taken by the Council of the EU, and the European Parliament is only consulted and informed. This means that on these issues it is the national governments of the Member States who make the decisions. The European Commission is in charge of initiating, drafting and implementing EU legislation.

# Peacebuilding and EU structures



Photo: Cayusa

Structural aspects of the EU may seem boring, but in fact they are crucial if we want to see an EU that takes peacebuilding and conflict prevention seriously.

The European Commission's work relating to external relations is done through one of its Directorate-Generals, DG Relex. Within this Directorate-General however, there is no single body that has responsibility, time or resources to ensure that peacebuilding and the mainstreaming of conflict prevention is adequately addressed and financed.

If the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, the structure of the European Commission will change. A new body, the Joint European External Action Service, will be created to implement external action. Currently the discussion around the composition and role of this future body are very secretive. The Lisbon Treaty obliges the Council to consult the European Parliament about the External Action Service which means that MEPs could have influence over how it develops and what it includes. The European Parliament could therefore push for conflict prevention and peacebuilding to be an important part of any new structure.

## QCEA recommends

- That within DG Relex there should be a well-resourced peacebuilding directorate to make sure that conflict prevention is mainstreamed and peacebuilding adequately coordinated and addressed.
- That if the Lisbon Treaty is ratified then a well-resourced directorate-level department should be included into the new structure of the External Action Service.

## Questions for MEP candidates

- Will you ask the Commission to make sure conflict prevention is taken seriously by creating a well-resourced peacebuilding directorate within DG Relex?
- Will you call for a well-resourced directorate level peacebuilding department to be created within an external action service if such a service is created during the next Parliamentary term?

## The European Parliament and the UK: The Basics

- In the UK the European Parliament elections take place on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2009.
- The UK currently has 78 MEPs, but in June 2009 the UK will elect 72 MEPs overall.
- The UK is divided up into 12 regions. In each region there are between 3 and 10 MEPs who represent the people living in that region.
- Individuals vote for one of the candidates standing in their region. The candidates are either put forward from one of the national parties or individuals can stand as independents.

### What is the electoral system in Britain?

Each party puts forward a list of candidates for each region called a regional list. This list is the party's order of preference for their candidates. The first candidate on the list gets elected first followed by the second and third candidates depending on the number of votes and so on. Each adult in Britain (apart from prisoners) has one vote. You can vote for one of the party's lists or for an independent individual in your region. The number of candidates that get elected from each party's regional list directly depends on the number of votes that each list gets.

### What is the electoral system in Northern Ireland?

In Northern Ireland MEP candidates can only stand in one constituency and may nominate themselves or be nominated by a member of the constituency. Candidates may either represent a political party or stand as independents with the support of 60 people from their constituency. On polling day the names of all the candidates standing appear in alphabetical order. The voter marks their order of preference putting a 1 by the name of their favorite candidate, a 2 by the name of their second choice and so on. This means that the voter's vote is transferred to their second, then third choice and so on if their first choice is elected or eliminated.

# QCEA: The Voice of Friends in Europe



The QCEA building in Brussels

At QCEA we represent the views of Quakers across Europe in the EU institutions and inform Quakers of what is happening within the EU. The European Parliament is one of the key bodies we work with.

QCEA is in the process of putting together information for interested Friends on the European Parliament elections and on issues that Friends may be particularly interested in discussing with their MEP candidates. Please have a look at the ever-growing QCEA webpage on European Parliament elections at <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/epelections/index.htm>

For more information, to offer feedback and comments on the material produced, or to inform QCEA about any contact or discussions you have had with your MEP candidates, please contact Anya Whiteside at [awhiteside@qcea.org](mailto:awhiteside@qcea.org) You can visit the QCEA website at: [www.quaker.org/qcea](http://www.quaker.org/qcea)

## Dialogue for a nuclear weapon-free world

This new QPSW-BASIC initiative aims to build on recent positive moves in international nuclear disarmament by facilitating engagement between Friends and decision-makers.

Each Friend is allocated a senior civil servant, diplomat, Minister or member of the Shadow government with whom to correspond, and is provided with background information and suggestions on what to include in the letters.

There are still a few places left, so if you are interested in participating, please contact Kat Barton (see details opposite). Full information about the initiative can be downloaded via: [www.quaker.org.uk/disarm](http://www.quaker.org.uk/disarm)

# About the QPSW Peace & Disarmament Programme

*Disarm ... For Peace* is edited by Kat Barton for the Peace & Disarmament Programme of Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW).

The Programme is one of a number in QPSW working to further peace, social justice and other areas of Quaker interest and concern.

We:

- Work with Quakers and others to develop a deeper and wider understanding of the Quaker peace testimony;
- Campaign for sustainable global security through disarmament, and against militarism;
- Support the peace movement;
- Lead the Quaker response in Britain to international military crises.

Current priority areas are promoting a sustainable security agenda amongst Friends, the public and policy makers, facilitating Friends' dialogue with decision makers on nuclear disarmament, publicising peace issues amongst Friends and others, and working with other groups in the peace movement to help forge a peacebuilding community.

Kat Barton manages the Programme.

## Resources

For the latest events, resources and action opportunities, visit

[www.peaceexchange.org.uk](http://www.peaceexchange.org.uk)

If you would like a catalogue of resources for learning about peace and taking action, have a query or comment, or need to keep us up-to-date with your contact details, please email [disarm@quaker.org.uk](mailto:disarm@quaker.org.uk) or call 020 7663 1067.

Alternatively, write to:

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Visit us on the web at

[www.quaker.org.uk/disarm](http://www.quaker.org.uk/disarm)

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