

Quaker Council for European Affairs submission to the webinar: "How to reduce inequalities and poverty throughout the upcoming economic and ecological transitions?"

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed and compounded inequality among those pushed to the margins of society. In policy circles, inequality tends to be an abstract concept that applies to the "other". Too often we tend to forget how many occupy those fringes, but there can be found women, those living with disabilities, those affected by gender-based violence, migrants, people of colour, those affected by conflict, climate change and so many more. The margins of the world are crowded spaces, the margins are the majority.

The pandemic forced radical shifts in economic orthodoxy, now is the time to mobilise in order to ensure that we do not go back to "business as usual". The Quakers Build Back Better initiative outlines five principles that would lead to not only to better economies, but better societies:

- Secure health and needs of everyone irrespective of employment or nationality.
- Protect and invest in public services.
- Rebuild society with a transformative Green New Deal – a plan to decarbonise the economy in a way that tackles inequality and enhances people's lives.
- Invest in people – restructure public and private finance so it supports sectors that nourish society and safeguard the future.
- Build solidarity and community across borders – promote changes that end global power inequalities.

Alternative models of consumption and production, different ways of envisaging relationships with the environment, social justice movements do already exist but current doctrines have rendered those invisible. To reduce inequalities, those affected by them need to be involved at all stages and at all levels of policy making. Experts with lived experiences of inequalities are too often not included in formulating responses because of deep rooted structural barriers.

What has been revealed during Covid 19 pandemic is that people that have been pushed to the margin are not seeking to be co-opted into the mainstream but they have long been at work to imagine a new world where peace, justice and equality have meaning for all, whether it is in time of pandemic or not.