



Brexit: a challenge or opportunity for Cross-Border Cooperation in Ireland?



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Why are there borders in Northern Ireland? - Partition

- In **1870**, the Home Rule movement was founded. Spearheaded by **Isaac Butt**, it later evolved into the **Home Rule League**.
- Objective: achieve **autonomy**. Nationalists supported the movement, but **Unionists were strongly opposed to Home Rule**.
- In **1918**, **Sinn Féin, the Republican Party, won a landslide victory** in the elections. They refused to take up their seats in Westminster, and established **Dail Eireann** instead. This marked the beginning of the **Irish War of Independence**.
- In **1920**, the **Government of Ireland Act**, an initiative of the British Parliament, hoped to put an end to the fighting by **dividing Ireland into two entities, Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland**, but the Irish Republican Army refused to recognise partition.
- In **December 1921**, the **Anglo-Irish Treaty** was agreed putting an end to the War of Independence. This agreement established the **Irish Free State, an independent British Dominion**, from which Northern Ireland exercised its right to leave.
- Nationalists were divided on the Anglo-Irish Treaty, giving way to the Irish Civil War.



Historical context: The Troubles

The Troubles (1968-1998): is the name given to the period of community tensions between Nationalists and Unionists. Nationalists, a predominantly Catholic group, generally support the reunification of Ireland, whereas Unionists, a majority Protestant group, favour the union with Great Britain. Unionists enjoyed a 50-year, uninterrupted reign in Stormont (1920-1970), resulting in a discriminatory Unionist State towards the Catholic minority.



A number of civil rights marches led to violent clashes with loyalist paramilitary groups (UVF, RHC, UFF, UDA) and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). This led to a number of tragedies, such as;

- Bloody Sunday
- Battle of the Bogside

Over 3,500 people lost their lives during the Troubles.

Historical Context: The Good Friday Agreement

The Good Friday Agreement (GFA): also known as the Belfast Agreement, signed on 10th April 1998, was a peace agreement that put an end to most of the violence of the Troubles.

The GFA was approved by double referendum on 22nd May 1998. It represented a major development in the peace process.

Negotiations were led by moderates David Hume, from the SDLP, and David Trimble, from the UUP. The talks were boycotted by the DUP leader, Ian Paisley.

Eventually, Sinn Féin were given a seat at the negotiation table, which assisted in the maintenance and respect of ceasefires.



- These Agreement established:
 - the doctrine of consent
 - the rejection of violence
 - devolution
 - cross-community principle
 - A “power-sharing” Northern Ireland executive

Cultural consequences of the Partition: a segregated educational system

Historical segregation of the two communities along religious lines (Protestants and Catholics)

Ulster University report published in Nov 2020 shows segregation is still ongoing in pre-schools and primary schools (0 corresponds to an equal representation, 1 corresponds to a segregated school):

Figure 1: Segregation levels in all pre-schools in Northern Ireland

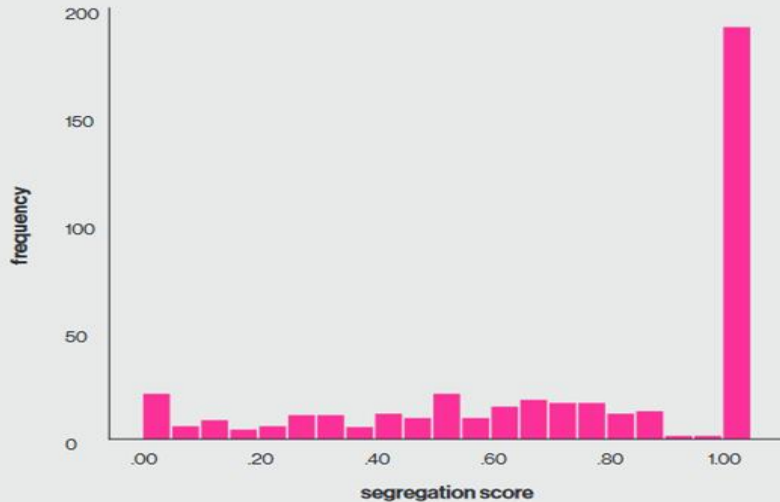
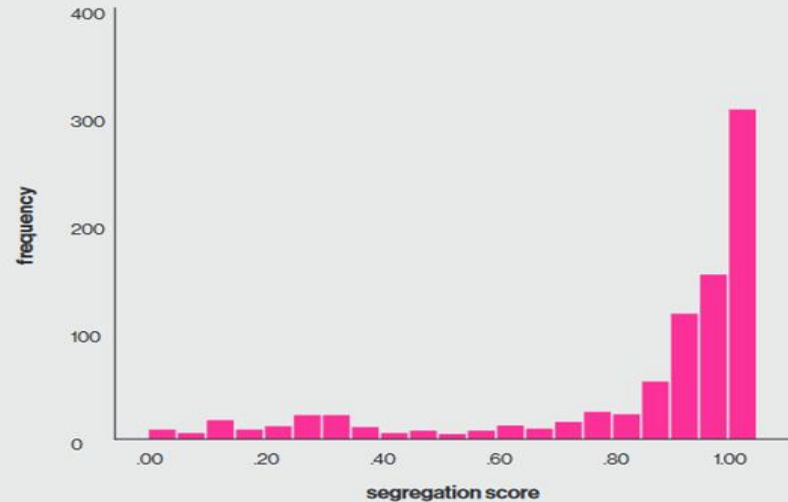


Figure 2: Segregation levels in all primary schools in Northern Ireland



Promoting shared education: the contribution of EU-funded programs

The **Integrated Education Fund**, founded in **1992** with the contribution of the **European Commission Structural Fund**, aims to bring together children of different religious and cultural backgrounds, to encourage open-mindedness and respect between communities

The **PEACE IV program 2014-2020** aims to increase **shared education**, namely by encouraging “direct and sustained contact between children of different backgrounds”

Impact of Brexit: the Withdrawal Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom guarantees the continuation of PEACE IV until 2023. On July 1st both parties agreed to continue the PEACE program with the PEACE Plus (2021-2027)

Cultural expression during the Troubles: Loyalist and Republican murals in Northern Ireland

An **historical means of expression**: the use of murals by Loyalists goes back to the early 1900s

The development of murals (images painted or graffiti on walls) as a means for Loyalists and Republicans to express themselves during **the Troubles**

Murals as an **alternative to traditional media** (press, radio): use of murals correlated to lack of access to traditional means of communication and feelings of marginalisation

Public art as a way to convey a **political message**: to support the authors' community and/or to convince people outside of their community

Predominantly a **Loyalist tradition** due to the **Flags and Emblems Act of 1954** which prohibited antagonistic symbols, such as the Shamrock and the tricolour Irish flag, until the development of **no-go zones** in Nationalist communities.

Examples of murals during the Troubles



1982 mural inviting people to join the Irish republican party Sinn Féin



1989 mural featuring "King Billy" (William III of England). A Protestant icon who fought against Catholic King James II of England during the Glorious Revolution

Murals as a way to promote cross-community integration

In the 2010s, there was an emphasis on the development of cross-community murals as a means to promote peace



2013 mural depicting an UDA parade (black and white) on the left, in opposition to the vision of a peaceful future on the right

Political Context: Unionist - vs - Nationalist

UNIONIST

Extreme fringe: Loyalist



Identify as British
Mainly Protestants
Pro-Union
Currently in majority

Political parties affiliated

- DUP
- UUP



NATIONALIST

Extreme fringe: Republicans

Identify as Irish
Mainly Catholics
Pro-unification
Currently in (large) minority

Political parties affiliated

- SDLP
- Sinn Fein

Non-sectarian:

- Alliance

Cross-Border Cooperation Pre-Brexit

PEACE

- 6 PEACE programmes since 1995
- PEACE IV programme (2014-2020):
 - Total value of €270 million (ERDF 85%, match-funding 15%)
 - 94% of the resources used to support social inclusion, combat poverty and promote labour mobility
- Eligible area: Northern Ireland and the Border Region of the Republic of Ireland (Co. Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal)
- 96 PEACE IV-funded projects

INTERREG

- 5 INTERREG A & B programmes since 1991
- INTERREG VA programme (2014-2020):
 - Total value of €283 million (ERDF 85%, match-funding 15%)
 - Help overcome the issues arising from the existence of a border (e.g. access to transport, health and social care services...)
- Eligible areas: Northern Ireland, the Border Region of the Republic of Ireland (Co. Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal) and Western Scotland
- 33 INTERREG VA-funded projects

Brexit & The Northern Ireland Protocol

Results of the Brexit vote in Northern Ireland :

- 55,8% voted Remain
- Ethno-nationalist nature of this vote :

Unionist 66% vs 12% of Nationalists voted Leave.

Catholics 15% vs 60% of Protestants voted Leave.



Polarisation of the Northern Ireland : debate on the border nature

How checks between Britain and Northern Ireland work

Certain goods, such as meat and eggs, need to be checked when they enter Northern Ireland from Great Britain



- Avoid a hard border in Ireland

- Make sure of the integrity of the EU's single market for goods is protected

- Facilitate unfettered access for Northern Ireland goods to the GB market

- Northern Ireland remains a member of the Single Market.

Cross-Border Cooperation Post-Brexit

The North-South cooperation:

- 6 formal areas of cooperation : agriculture, education, environment, health, tourism and transport.
- 6 “Implementation bodies” : Waterways Ireland, Food Safety Promotion Board, InterTradelreland, Special European Union Programmes Body, The Language Body and Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission.
- 156 other areas in the 2019 EU Mapping on North-South cooperation

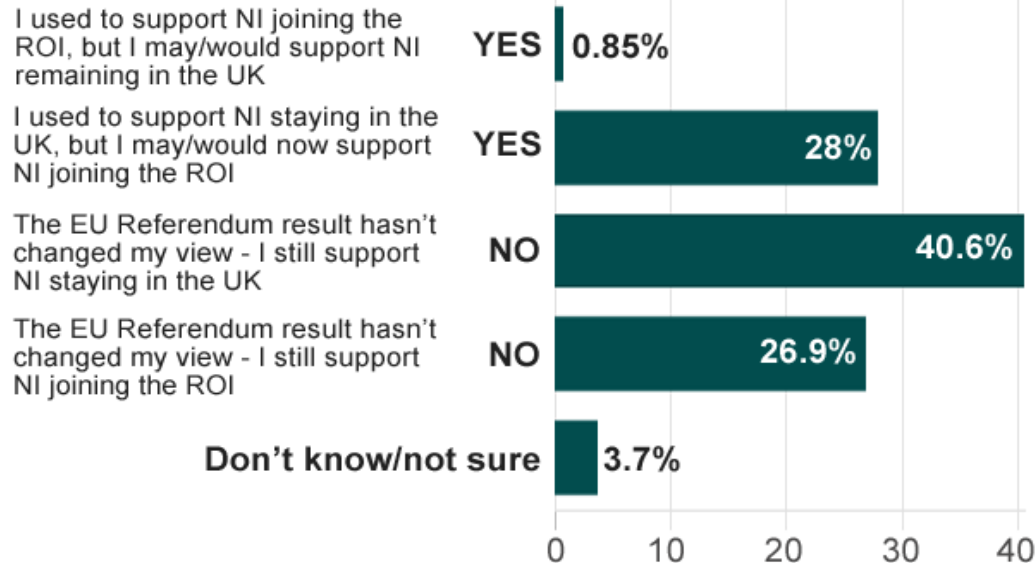


Example of the cooperation on the coronavirus

- Signature of the Memorandum of Understanding that includes cooperation through:
- modelling the impact of Covid-19
- sharing information on measures, good practices and research
- adopting consistent common messages

Brexit, a challenge for Unionism in Northern Ireland

Has the UK's decision to leave the EU changed your mind on the constitutional position of Northern Ireland?



Source: LT / YouGov / BBC

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-44398502>

BBC



Fire fed by petrol burns as youths clashed at the Peace Gate at the Springfield Road/Lanark Way interface on April 7 in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/04/09/uk/northern-ireland-violence-explainer-gbr-intl/index.html>

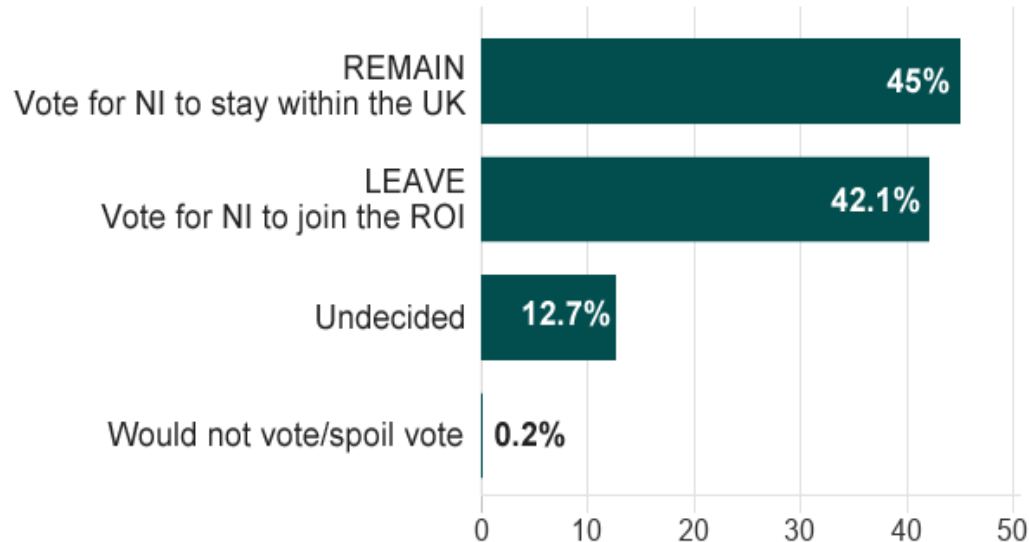


Unionists say the protocol damages trade and threatens Northern Ireland's place in the UK.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-56664378>

Brexit, an opportunity for Nationalism in Northern Ireland

If there was a referendum on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, would you vote?



Source: LT / YouGov / BBC

BBC

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-44398502>



Sinn Féin activists protest at the Parliament Buildings on the Stormont Estate in Belfast on January 31, 2020 against Brexit and call for a border poll on Irish Unity.



Demonstrators from 'Border Communities Against Brexit' attend an anti-No Deal Brexit protest at the Carrickcannon border crossing on the road between Dundalk, Ireland on October 16, 2019, and Newry in Northern Ireland. (Source: Time Magazine)

What future for Cross-Border Cooperation?



- The Peace Program is a funding instrument across 28 member states. It was created in 1995 and it aims to support the Northern Ireland peace process. The programme operates on a cross-border basis in Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland. The current Peace program is PEACE IV (2014-2020).

- Since Brexit, economic and trade between the two countries have increased considerably. Republic of Ireland imports from Northern Ireland have increased by a whopping 77% since the introduction of the Northern Ireland Protocol, and imports in Northern Ireland from the Republic have increased by 43% .

