



**NIACRO Submission to the Northern Ireland Affairs
Committee Brexit and Northern Ireland Inquiry**

22 February 2018

NIACRO is a voluntary organisation that has been working for almost 50 years to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities. Specifically, its contributions have been to:

- Support the resettlement of adults leaving prison and those on community supervision
- Build skills, confidence and employability of people both in prison and in the community
- Build the resilience of children, young people, families and adults who are displaying behaviour that would put them at risk of engaging with the criminal justice system, supporting positive lifestyle choices
- Influence service providers in the statutory, voluntary and community sector and building their capacity to provide appropriate support and bespoke training
- Contribute to public debate and influencing others with regard to criminal justice matters, at the highest level.

At the heart of NIACRO's work is a drive to reduce (re)offending within the understanding that integrated and flexible approaches towards desistance are most effective.

NIACRO welcomes the opportunity to provide written evidence to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Brexit and Northern Ireland Inquiry. NIACRO believes there are a number of key areas that directly affect the work that we do, these relate to:

- Protecting Peace and Stability in Northern Ireland
- Protecting Human Rights (in particular of those in contact with the Criminal Justice System and their families)
- Co-operation in Criminal Justice.

Why do you think Brexit poses a particular challenge or opportunity in this area?

Protecting Peace and Stability in Northern Ireland

The all-island legal framework that shared EU membership provides on the island of Ireland is also important to protecting continued peace and stability in Northern Ireland.

The retention of this framework is essential to avoiding the necessity for a physical and economic border. The reestablishment of a 'hard' border on the island of Ireland requiring visible enforcement along its length, poses a direct threat to the progress made in recent decades.

Furthermore, direct support from the EU, not least through successive PEACE programmes, has played a vital role in developing peace and stability in Northern Ireland.

Protecting our social, economic and human rights

As an organisation working to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities, NIACRO fears that Brexit could result in the loss of protections currently provided by EU legislation. It is vital that the UK's withdrawal from the EU does not result in an erosion of individual social, economic and human rights – particularly for the individuals and service user groups who we support through our suite of services, and who we advocate on behalf of.

Co-operation in Criminal Justice

Post-Brexit, the relationship between the UK and the EU is a key issue for future criminal justice cooperation: the extent to which criminal justice in the UK and the Ireland depend on EU instruments and the significance of this for the Good Friday Agreement (GFA). Devolution of responsibility for criminal justice to the Northern Ireland Executive has not diminished the need for co-operation between Dublin and London. This is arguably more significant given the current political stalemate that exists in Northern Ireland. The extent of EU facilitated cooperation and the complexity of maintaining the Common Travel Area has not been fully explored in any UK position statement released to date. This makes it difficult to predict exactly how leaving the European Union will affect the criminal justice system and what the impact will be in Northern Ireland.

What could the Committee focus on in its inquiry and who do you think we could speak to?

NIACRO believes that it is important to ensure a comprehensive process with the full involvement of non-government sectors, particularly those working in criminal justice and/or on a cross-border basis to review the financial and policy implications of the withdrawal on the individuals and service user groups who they support.

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