

Submission to the Northern Ireland Affairs
Committee Inquiry into the Government's New
Approach to Addressing the Legacy of The Past in
Northern Ireland

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Background

1. My background is as an interdisciplinary Political Scientist with a research speciality in processes of political, social, and constitutional change in the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland. I hold a prestigious Leverhulme Early-Career Fellowship at Cardiff University, School of Law and Politics. I have also held Postdoctoral Research Fellowships in the Wales Governance Centre and the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data. I completed my PhD in Political Science at the University of Galway (Ireland).
2. I am currently a Research Associate on an international research project entitled ‘Post Agreement Reconciliation(s) In Changing Political Eras. Comparing Northern Ireland, Colombia, and the Basque Country’, led by the Mereson Centre for International Security Studies, at The Ohio State University (USA). However, this response to the Committee’s call for evidence is submitted in a personal capacity. It draws on my twelve years’ experience of research on the Northern Ireland peace process, particularly in the context of Ireland’s European Union (EU) membership, and constitutional change in the UK and Ireland.
3. This submission addresses the specific point of what steps the Government should take to facilitate an effective process for reconciliation. Inevitably, as the two are tightly interconnected, it will also touch upon how to reform and strengthen the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery’s (ICRIR) independence.

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Summary Of Recommendations

1. A working definition of the term ‘reconciliation’ should be clearly provided, following the example offered and developed in the framework of the European Union (EU) PEACE programmes.
2. Only a substantive and meaningful reform process aimed at integrating top-down and bottom-up approaches to reconciliation could render newly designed policy mechanisms viable and able to tackle legacy issues in Northern Ireland. Such reform should be aimed at building sufficient confidence in the mechanisms and institutions designed to deal with the legacy of the conflict. Evidence exists from other post-conflict societies demonstrating how, after the experience of physical and psychological trauma, the period of individual healing and recovery is intertwined with political and social reconciliation. Therefore, the prospects for social and political reconciliation are undermined when a ‘top-down’ approach is favoured over the ‘bottom-up’ strategy as this leads to the prioritization of structural stability over societal well-being. To avoid such, this report suggests that any legacy initiative ought to be first and foremost **for and about** the victims and survivors of the conflict. Only through their active participation can the process be made sustainable and meaningful. Practical steps to take in this direction are:
 - a. From the top down, a reform process should refer to the blueprint set out by the Stormont House Agreement of 2014, which committed to several new initiatives around legacy cases, including a Historical Investigations Unit to examine unsolved murders carried out during the Northern Ireland conflict.
 - b. To build sufficient confidence, the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR) should be reformed in a way that is unrecognisable from what is currently in place.
 - c. From the bottom up, the process of linking psychological recovery with socio-political reconciliation should be developed relying more on the PEACEPLUS Programme. PEACEPLUS is a unique instrument specifically designed to support peace and prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. It is also the only funding that has survived the Brexit process. The programme has been largely disregarded by governments and officials, thus also failing to see its potential to help tackle legacy issues and foster positive processes of memorialisation at the civil society level.

Background Context

The 2023 Legacy Act (henceforth referred to as ‘the Bill’) was passed despite widespread and virtually unanimous criticism. It was opposed by all victim and survivor groups, church leaders, and all political parties in Northern Ireland, the Irish Government, the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, the Council of Europe, and bipartisan representatives of the US Congress.¹ Indeed, the US Congress noted its:

‘[...] Grave concern over your government’s decision to continue advancing the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill, which denies justice, suppresses the will of the people of Northern Ireland, and conceals the truth of the past.’²

The notion of ‘reconciliation’ features prominently among the Bill’s objectives, albeit without being precisely defined. Moreover, it was only included at a later stage, when the name of the main legacy body established by the former Conservative government – the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR) – changed from Information Recovery Body (IRB). There is a widespread belief that, while this may have been a belated realisation of the historic significance of the IRB acronym, this adjustment was also the result of a proactive decision to add the concept of reconciliation as a way to provide some legal basis to the conditional immunities scheme, which is part of the Bill.³

It is nonetheless a fact that the conceptual journey of ‘reconciliation’ in Northern Ireland (and other post-conflict societies)⁴ has been marked by definitional vagueness, imprecise meanings, and contestations. Decades of scholarly literature have attempted to describe reconciliation’s theoretical complexity. Scholars and practitioners have highlighted the limitations to any clear definition,⁵ and

¹A full copy of the letter from the US Congress can be found here: <https://boyle.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/boyle.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/boyle-et-al-letter-to-pm-sunak.pdf> (last accessed 19/01/2025).

² *Ibidem*.

³ Committee on the Administration of Justice - An Coiste um Riarachán Dlí agus Cirt (CAJ), 2025 ‘What could substantive ‘root and branch’ reform of the ICRIR look like? and would it be enough?’. Policy Report, pp. 96. Available at <https://caj.org.uk/publications/reports/what-could-substantive-root-and-branch-reform-of-the-icrir-look-like-and-would-it-be-enough/> (last accessed 19/01/2025).

⁴ See for example: Brett, R., (2022) ‘Victim-Centred Peacemaking: The Colombian Experience,’ *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 16(4), pp. 475-497; Brett, R., (2025) *Victim-Centred Peacemaking. Colombia’s Santos–FARC–EP Peace Process* (Bristol: Bristol University Press).

⁵ See for example: Bloomfield, D., (2003) ‘Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: A Handbook’, Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance; Brounéus, K., (2003) ‘Reconciliation: Theory and Practice for Development Cooperation’, Stockholm: The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency; Hamber, B. and Kelly, G., (2004) ‘Reconciliation: A Working Definition’, Belfast: Democratic Dialogue; Hamber, B. and Kelly, G., (2009) ‘Beyond Coexistence: Towards a Working Definition of Reconciliation’. In Quinn, J., *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Post conflict Societies*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, pp. 286–

there is still no formally accepted meaning of it. However, in Northern Ireland, one notable exception exists: that of the EU PEACE programmes.⁶

The EU PEACE package⁷ was designed in 1994 as a special financial programme to foster ‘peace and reconciliation’ in Northern Ireland. The package was originally not part of mainstream Structural Funds. Only in 1999, did it cease to be a ‘Special EU programme’ and became mainstreamed as a Structural Funds programme. This led to the setting up of a Northern Ireland Community Support Framework (CSF),⁸ which brought an additional layer of rules and regulations. However, its original objective has been maintained throughout the years. This has been summed up by academics as ‘encouraging the groundswell of cooperation and commonality by steering joint goals and the framework of peacebuilding activities from the bottom up.’⁹

The way in which the programme was initially implemented attracted criticism for the lack of clear guidance on how the supported activities – encompassing principles such as ‘to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society’ and ‘to address the legacy of the conflict’ –¹⁰ were supposed to promote reconciliation. Therefore, as part of the preparation for the PEACE II Extension (2004 to 2006), the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) funded a project under Measure 2.1 (Reconciliation for Sustainable Peace) that was at the time being managed by the Community Relations Council (CRC).¹¹ The project promoters embarked on a research exercise aimed at arriving at a working definition of the term ‘reconciliation’ in Northern Ireland.¹²

The authors – Brandon Hamber and Grainne Kelly – proposed as part of their working definition that reconciliation must be seen as a process that involves five interwoven and related strands.¹³ These are:

1. Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society;
2. Acknowledging and dealing with the past;

310; Rettberg, A. and Ugarriza, J. (2016) ‘Reconciliation: A Comprehensive Framework for Empirical Analysis’, *Security Dialogue*, 47(6), pp. 517-540.

⁶ For more information, please visit: <https://peaceplatform.seupb.eu/en/story-of-peace/key-themes/reconciliation/> (last accessed on 19/01/2024).

⁷ Also commonly referred to in the literature (among else) as: ‘the PEACE package’; ‘EU PEACE’; and the ‘Delors II package’.

⁸ European Parliament, (1999), Berlin European Council, 24 and 25 March 1999, Presidency Conclusions. Available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/ber1_en.htm (last accessed on 24/01/2025).

⁹ Knox, C., O’Connor, K., Ketola, M. and Carmichael, P., (2023) ‘EU PEACE funding: The policy implementation deficit’, *European Policy Analysis*, 9, pp. 290-310. Moreover, for a comprehensive account of the genesis of the PEACE programmes, please see: Lagana, G., (2021) *The European Union and the Northern Ireland Peace Process* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan).

¹⁰ Please visit: https://peaceplatform.seupb.eu/en/story-of-peace/key-themes/reconciliation/#_ftn1 (last accessed on 19/01/2024).

¹¹ McCall, C. and O’Dowd, L. (2008) ‘Hanging flower baskets, blowing in the wind? Third sector groups, cross-border partnerships and the EU peace programmes in Ireland’, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 14(1), pp. 29–54.

¹² Lagana, G., (2021) *The European Union and the Northern Ireland Peace Process* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan), pp. 137.

¹³ Hamber, B. and Kelly, G., (2004) *A Working Definition of Reconciliation* (Democratic Dialogue, Belfast).

3. Building positive relationships;
4. Significant cultural and attitudinal change;
5. Substantial social, economic, and political change.

The programme's fifth round, named 'PEACEPLUS' (2021-2027), is a €1.1 billion funding partnership supported by the EU, the Government of the UK, the Government of the Republic of Ireland, and the Northern Ireland administration.¹⁴ Its implementation context has dramatically changed, in line with changes in the relationship between the UK and the EU, following Brexit. The Brexit process has caused a serious decline in mobilisation, a change in interests, new territorial fragmentation, and political polarisation between the two Northern Ireland communities.¹⁵ This new set of circumstances sits uneasily in the EU peacebuilding structure. However, against the widespread lack of media coverage and debate on PEACEPLUS, many at the grassroots level believe in its power and potential to tackle societal polarisation and to shape the environment of trust in a reformed legacy approach from the bottom up.¹⁶

¹⁴ For more information, please visit <https://www.seupb.eu/peaceplus>

¹⁵ Murphy, M. C. (2018) *Europe and Northern Ireland's Future: Negotiating Brexit's Unique Case* (Newcastle: Agenda Publishing); Murphy, M. C. and Evershed, J., (2021) *A Troubled Constitutional Future: Northern Ireland after Brexit* (Newcastle: Agenda Publishing).

¹⁶ The Irish Association for Contemporary European Studies organised a conference to discuss the future of relationships between these islands in 2022, bringing together academics and practitioners. Practitioners, in particular, have made this argument. Videos and a report from the conference can be found here: <https://www.iaces.ie/relationships-on-these-isles>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2Kk2ky2P50>.

What are the key priorities to consider when dealing with the Northern Ireland conflict legacy?

The following points are made based on three key priorities that interviewees drawn from civil society groups active within both communities in Northern Ireland; the civil service(s) in Northern Ireland (the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Civil Service); officials from the EU; and representatives of Northern Ireland political parties, want at the heart of any legacy process. Interviews were conducted over the past six months as part of the research projects I am involved in. Interviewees have requested to remain anonymous.

1. **Ensuring public confidence in the institutions and processes.** Public trust in the mechanisms and agencies designed to deal with the legacy of the past is vital to be built, sustained, and enhanced. There is widespread agreement among participants in my research that, while certain aspects of it should be improved (e.g., administrative burdens), PEACEPLUS could be employed to shape this environment of trust from the bottom up.¹⁷ In addition, within this framework, a detailed definition of reconciliation has been provided, on which the government could build upon.
2. **Enhancing British and Irish relations by cooperating on conflict legacy.** Cooperation and reconciliation involving Irish, Northern Irish, and British authorities and peoples would be encouraged if citizens felt that the Irish state was equally willing to explore, act on, and address its role in the conflict and peace process. Again, PEACEPLUS, with its cross-border dimension, could contribute to enhancing cooperation in this direction. The more so, as both governments are already committed to the programme and contribute to it with matching funding.
3. **To assist victims and survivors in their search for both justice and truth.** Various contributors to my research have emphasised that the most problematic element of the Bill is its systematised approach to ‘truth without justice’. Victims will never accept the truth without subsequently getting justice.

¹⁷ E.g., Anonymous 1 (PEACE Project Coordinator in West Belfast), interview with the author, 16 January 2025; Anonymous 2 (PEACE Project Coordinator active within loyalist ex-prisoners in County Armagh), 17 January 2025; David Crabbe (a retired Civil Servant who served for 30 years in the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Irish Regiment during the Troubles from 1977 to 2007. Since 2007, he has been involved on a voluntary basis with several charities and other organisations dealing with the welfare of veterans), interview with the author, 20 January 2025.

Recommendations

This section provides in detail the evidential basis and potential benefits for introducing the recommendations discussed for the two themes in the executive summary.

Theme 1: Definition of the term ‘reconciliation’

Reconciliation has become a key normative concept in peacebuilding theory and practice. In his seminal work related to building and sustaining peace in divided societies, John Paul Lederach identified two fundamental characteristics of reconciliation that have largely withstood the test of time. First, reconciliation is essentially linked to peace, whether considered as a process or a goal. Secondly, the process of reconciliation, in its full range of political, social, and psychological dimensions, is central to healing and social transformation.¹⁸

Evidence coming from the PEACE programmes¹⁹ helps to identify four interdependent elements of reconciliation fundamentally interconnected to the definition provided by Hamber and Kelly in 2004. These have been highlighted by project participants as necessary aspects to address when tackling legacy issues. They can be identified because **‘reconciliation has not been adopted by the EU as a method or an instrument among many. It has guided the PEACE programmes to foster an overall relationship-oriented process that has been integral to the application of international law and the sustaining of ethnic peace from the bottom up’**.²⁰

Summary of Evidence

Drawing upon existing conceptual discussions and having compared PEACE evaluation reports from before and after 2004 (available on the PEACE platform), I suggest providing a definition of reconciliation encompassing the following elements:

- 1) Mutual acknowledgement of past suffering, non-repetition, and a commitment to repairing conflict-related harms. Examples of reconciliation initiatives addressing these aspects have included: supporting truth-seeking and telling, facilitating apology, and addressing trauma (e.g.,

¹⁸ Lederach, J. P., (1997) *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.)

¹⁹ Retrieval from the PEACE platform, which provides access to 1415 projects’ evaluation reports on the website <https://peaceplatform.seupb.eu/en/search/> (last accessed on 19/01/2024).

²⁰ Patrick Colgan, Former Chief Executive of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) interview with the author, 18 January 2025.

‘Healing through Storytelling and Dialogue’; ‘Healing Pain Residentials: Community Family Healing Process’; ‘Developing and Sustaining Storytelling and Dialogue Processes’).

- 2) Developing a vision for a shared and interdependent future. Reconciliation activities in this realm have served as a platform for adversarial parties and/or communities to negotiate, compromise, and progress toward new social relationships based upon joint aspirations (e.g., ‘Shared Futures’; ‘Sharing from the Start’; ‘Embracing Shared Communities’).
- 3) Building positive relations across social divisions and transforming polarised identities. Horizontal reconciliation activities, characterised by these objectives, were aimed at building trust between communities, the (re)integration of former combatants, and the facilitation of dialogue and storytelling. Vertically, reconciliation activities facilitated improved governance, enhanced access to justice, and built trust between the state and the citizens (e.g., ‘Coiste na n-larchimi’; ‘EPIC’; ‘Tra Ghearr Educational Programme’).
- 4) Significant cultural, social, economic, and political change. Reconciliation activities in this realm addressed various dimensions of structural violence including historic inequities and colonial legacies, facilitated economic reform, established new social norms, strengthened social cohesion, and built inclusive local institutions (e.g., ‘Connors Social Club’; ‘Meenreagh Social Centre and Hostel’; ‘Rural Health & Social Well Being Project’).

Potential benefits of adopting Recommendation 1

To precisely define the notion of ‘reconciliation’ in a way that encompasses all levels of society, and that includes all the priorities highlighted, will ensure that a new approach to addressing the legacy of the Northern Ireland conflict starts as a process designed **for and about** the victims and survivors of the conflict. This in turn will enhance public confidence in the state(s), including in the Republic of Ireland’s government.

Theme 2: Integrating top-down with bottom-up approaches to reconciliation

The overarching hope in post-conflict Northern Ireland has hinged on those peacebuilding processes and activities aimed at revising the organisational structures that existed prior to the signing of the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and before the establishment of Direct Rule by the UK government. As is often the case, the focus in terms of resources and personnel has favoured macro-level institutional reform and democratisation processes. At the same time – although to a lesser extent, at least in terms of resources – the EU, through the PEACE programmes, has incentivised the bottom-up work to rebuild a vibrant civil society that could participate with the top level in decision and policymaking activities. The PEACE money has leveraged the social capital of cooperation, trust, and support that rests with the mid-range and their grassroots constituents.

Was the process perfect? Absolutely not. Accordingly, the structural weaknesses of both the institutional and the EU approach have been largely investigated by scholars and practitioners.²¹ However, international evidence exists that suggests ways to go beyond the problematic distinction between ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches, thus also tackling the structural issues impacting on Northern Ireland’s stability. Taken together, these contributions suggest that:

1. Ways and research strategies need to be found to hear unheard voices, see forgotten relationships and contexts, and thus make peacebuilding relevant to those who lived through the conflict;
2. Remember that peace and reconciliation are unlikely events where and when the subjects of peacebuilding are not recognised as actors and perceived as spectators to peace processes;
3. Any assumption about the passivity of victims and survivors is implicit in any approach that distinguishes and separates institutional and grassroots approaches to peacebuilding;

²¹ See for example: McCulloch, A., (2021) *Power-sharing in Europe: past practice, present cases, and future direction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan); Lagana, G., (2021) *The European Union and the Northern Ireland Peace Process* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan); Knox, C., O’Connor, K., Ketola, M. and Carmichael, P., (2023) ‘EU PEACE funding: The policy implementation deficit’, *European Policy Analysis*, Vol. 9, pp. 290-310 Lagana, G. and Pearce, S., ‘The role of European Union (EU) metagovernance in supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland’, *European Policy Analysis* (Forthcoming).

4. Peacebuilding initiatives ought to be first and foremost for and about, and are sustainable and meaningful only through the active participation of, those that lived through the conflict.

Summary of Evidence

Drawing upon existing conceptual discussions and analysis coming from legacy issues in Spain and Uruguay,²² I suggest that a combined top-down and bottom-up approach to address the legacy of the Northern Ireland conflict should include:

1. A re-engagement with the 2014 Stormont House Agreement and its provisions. This included a Historical Investigations Unit. Several interviewees agreed that legacy mechanisms are supposed to provide victims and survivors with the maximum independence necessary and that the 2014 provisions had been developed in that direction.²³ Similar recommendations had been made by Dr Thomas Leahy in relation to the Republic of Ireland government's approach to legacy issues in 2019.²⁴
2. A comprehensive reform of the ICRIR. This includes bringing it into line with the international legal framework to guarantee ECHR-compliant investigations in cases meeting the threshold for reinvestigation and maximum disclosure in Family Reports.²⁵ Other areas of legislative reform would include: independent appointments; unqualified and robust powers to receive disclosure; removal of the 'national security veto'; guarantees of ECHR-compatible investigations once the investigative threshold is met; financial autonomy; and independence requirements for investigators and oversight structures.²⁶ Lastly, the name should be changed as proof of renewal and in order to gain the trust of civil society.

²² Charbonneau, B. and Parent, G., (2012) *Peacebuilding, Memory and Reconciliation. Bridging Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches* (London: Routledge).

²³ Anonymous 3 (Civil Servant in Northern Ireland), interview with the author, 06 January 2025; Anonymous 4 (Civil Servant in Northern Ireland), interview with the author, 17 January 2025, Belfast.

²⁴ Leahy, T., (2019) 'The Irish Government and Dealing with Northern Ireland Conflict Legacy', Full Report to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement'. Available at https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_the_implementation_of_the_good_friday_agreement/submissions/2019/2019-06-20_opening-statement-dr-thomas-leahy-lecturer-cardiff-university-justice-for-the-forgotten_en.pdf (last accessed on 19 January 2025).

²⁵ Committee on the Administration of Justice - An Coiste um Riarachán Dlí agus Cirt (CAJ), 2025 'What could substantive 'root and branch' reform of the ICRIR look like? and would it be enough?'. Policy Report, pp. 5. Available at <https://caj.org.uk/publications/reports/what-could-substantive-root-and-branch-reform-of-the-icrir-look-like-and-would-it-be-enough/> (last accessed 19/01/2025).

²⁶ Ibidem.

3. Tackling polarisation, fostering memorialisation, and promoting Anglo-Irish cooperation in dealing with the past by relying more on PEACEPLUS. While its critics assert that the PEACE package has had little or no impact in bringing Northern Ireland's divided communities closer together, recent research and interviewees all agree that, whilst imperfect, PEACEPLUS is the most powerful instrument currently available to civil society to tackle divisions²⁷ and shape the environment of a new post-Brexit peace process. To improve its potential, the following measures should be considered:
- a) The programme could be employed to improve the administrative capacity of the local administration in devising locally relevant implementation strategies;
 - b) A case should be made to the EU Commission to allow for more local discretion in the design and implementation phases, so as to account more for the context of local divisions;
 - c) The programme should go back to being a 'Special EU programme', which allowed for the above-described freedom and discretion.

Potential benefits of adopting Recommendation 2

- **Victims and Survivors:** Whilst imperfect, the 2014 Stormont House Agreement was characterised by a willingness to provide independence in investigating legacy cases and to produce a narrative about the conflict reflecting the multifaceted experience for people. In this regard, Gráinne Kelly and Brandon Hamber in their academic work recognise that:

'In post-accord peacebuilding processes the sharing of personal testimonies or micro-narratives of conflict can play a particular role in challenging historical narratives and adding complexity to the dominant narratives that have hardened during the course of the conflict.'²⁸

Providing a combined top-down and bottom-up approach, including an Oral History Archive and further options for private dialogue through memorialisation, truth-seeking and telling, facilitating apology, and addressing trauma in the spaces created by PEACEPLUS, will help to put in place maximum opportunities for victims and survivors to get closure.

²⁷ Anonymous 5 (former loyalist combatant), 15 January 2025; Anonymous 6 (former Protestant/loyalist combatant), 16 January 2025, Belfast; Anonymous 7 (former Republican combatant), 16 January 2025; Avila Kilmurray: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2Kk2ky2P50>; Patrick Colgan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1EE1NSsbHQ>.

²⁸ Hamber, B. and Kelly, G., (2016) 'Practise, Power and Inertia', *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 8(1), pp. 26.

- **Public confidence in the state:** by assisting in building a convergence of goals and by designing an environment in which to tackle polarisation through a combined top-down and bottom-up approach, the public could be assured that the government(s) are endeavouring to provide closure to victims and survivors, if possible.
- **Enhancing British-Irish-Northern Irish relations:** the PEACEPLUS cross-border dimension means that discussions could be open to Irish citizens as well. The Irish government can engage here in outreach to those affected by the conflict across these isles, demonstrating its commitment to reconciling Irish and British people.

Concluding remarks

I welcome feedback on these recommendations. The recommendations represent work in progress but also reflect current research findings. The purpose of suggesting them is to enable the UK government to fulfil its obligations starting from how they were outlined in the Stormont House Agreement of 2014, and to assist victims and survivors in their quest for truth, justice, and closure where possible. The recommendations also attempt to complement ongoing reconciliation efforts across these isles and acknowledge that certain steps have already been taken by governments, which included significant input from the EU in supporting the process from the bottom up.

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Rettberg, A. and Ugarriza, J. (2016) 'Reconciliation: A Comprehensive Framework for Empirical Analysis', *Security Dialogue*, 47(6), pp. 517-540.

List of Interviews

Anonymous 1 (PEACE Project Coordinator in West Belfast), interview with the author, 16 January 2025.

Anonymous 2 (PEACE Project Coordinator active within loyalist ex-prisoners in County Armagh), 17 January 2025.

Anonymous 3 (Civil Servant in Northern Ireland), interview with the author, 06 January 2025.

Anonymous 4 (Civil Servant in Northern Ireland), interview with the author, 17 January 2025.

Anonymous 5 (former Loyalist combatant), 15 January 2025.

Anonymous 6 (former Loyalist combatant), 16 January 2025.

Anonymous 7 (former Republican combatant), 16 January 2025.

Colgan, Patrick. Irish diplomat with a long career in peacebuilding in Northern Ireland and Colombia. From 2004 to 2015, he served as Chief Executive of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), which was set up by the British and Irish Governments to manage peacebuilding programmes in Northern Ireland, Ireland and parts of Western Scotland. Interview with the author, 18 January 2024.

Crabbe, David. Retired Civil Servant who served for 30 years in the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Irish Regiment during the Troubles from 1977 to 2007. Since 2007, he has been involved on a voluntary basis with several charities and other organisations dealing with the welfare of veterans. Interview with the author, 20 January 2025.

Online Resources

Avila Kilmurray: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2Kk2ky2P50>.

Patrick Colgan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1EE1NSsbHQ>.

Letter from the US Congress on the Legacy Act: <https://boyle.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/boyle.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/boyle-et-al-letter-to-pm-sunak.pdf>

All the mentioned PEACE-funded initiatives are retrievable from the PEACE platform, which provides access to 1415 projects' evaluation reports on the website <https://peaceplatform.seupb.eu/en/search/>.

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