# Enterprise train highlights new blueprint for cross-border cooperation on Good Friday Agreement anniversary



In the context of the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, the role of cross-border services, particularly the Enterprise train service, has been highlighted as a prime example of effective collaboration between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This service has been lauded for breaking down barriers more profoundly than the various north-south bodies established under the Agreement itself. The comments, made by prominent figures including the DUP's Michelle McIlveen and Translink's Chief Executive Chris Conway, reflect a growing sentiment that practical initiatives are more impactful than political frameworks alone.

Initially contentious, the development of cross-border bodies in 1998 aimed to foster cooperation across several sectors, including health, education, and cultural exchange. Despite these efforts, a recent report from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) indicates that much of the potential for enhanced collaboration remains unfulfilled. The report calls for expanded initiatives that could further leverage the Agreement's foundational principles, suggesting that sectors like health and the environment are ripe for deeper integration. The report emphasises the benefits that could arise from a more ambitious approach to cooperation, reinforcing the idea that infrastructure projects like the Enterprise could serve as a model for other sectors.

Recent statistics show that an estimated 30,000 individuals cross the border daily for work, a clear indicator of the enhanced economic interdependence that has developed since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. This trend not only underscores the agreement's success in fostering stability but also highlights a broader cultural shift where cross-border cooperation is seen as vital for both economic resilience and community cohesion.

However, this progress faces challenges, particularly in light of Brexit. The potential reintroduction of border checks has sparked criticism from leaders like Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, who acknowledges that such measures could significantly undermine the spirit of the Good Friday Agreement. Varadkar's concerns echo a growing consensus that maintaining free movement across the border is essential for preserving the peace and economic prosperity achieved over the past two decades.

Amid these uncertainties, the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement has reaffirmed its commitment to developing cross-border health and social services. This dedication sends a strong message about the importance of collaboration in tackling issues that impact communities on both sides of the border, especially as new challenges arise in the post-Brexit landscape.

In summary, while the Enterprise service represents a significant step forward in cross-border cooperation, broader efforts must be made to realise the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement. As debates continue around the implications of Brexit, the call for enhanced, practical cooperation becomes increasingly vital to maintain the progress that has been made.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/columnists/sam-mcbride/the-cross-border-service-doing-more-to-break-down-barriers-than-all-the-north-south-bodies-combined/a1928866574.html), [[4]](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/the-belfast-agreement-20-years-on-a-tale-of-two-cities/36782261.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/columnists/sam-mcbride/the-cross-border-service-doing-more-to-break-down-barriers-than-all-the-north-south-bodies-combined/a1928866574.html), [[2]](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/has-not-met-its-full-potential-cross-border-co-operation-could-be-expanded-says-new-report/a1753050257.html), [[5]](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/varadkar-accepts-criticism-that-border-checks-undermine-good-friday-agreement/38478413.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.thedetail.tv/articles/cross-border-workers-increasingly-confident-part-of-all-island-economy-since-1998), [[6]](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/northern-ireland/neverendum-brexit-and-border-poll-prospects-threaten-good-friday-agreement-prosperity/42297584.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/varadkar-accepts-criticism-that-border-checks-undermine-good-friday-agreement/38478413.html), [[7]](https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_the_implementation_of_the_good_friday_agreement/2022-02-10/2/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/columnists/sam-mcbride/the-cross-border-service-doing-more-to-break-down-barriers-than-all-the-north-south-bodies-combined/a1928866574.html), [[7]](https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_the_implementation_of_the_good_friday_agreement/2022-02-10/2/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/columnists/sam-mcbride/the-cross-border-service-doing-more-to-break-down-barriers-than-all-the-north-south-bodies-combined/a1928866574.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/has-not-met-its-full-potential-cross-border-co-operation-could-be-expanded-says-new-report/a1753050257.html> - A recent ESRI-Shared Island report indicates that cross-border cooperation in key areas outlined by the Good Friday Agreement has not reached its full potential. The study highlights opportunities for expansion in sectors such as education, health, and the environment, suggesting that increased collaboration could further enhance the benefits of the Agreement.
3. <https://www.thedetail.tv/articles/cross-border-workers-increasingly-confident-part-of-all-island-economy-since-1998> - An estimated 30,000 individuals commute daily across the Ireland-Northern Ireland border for work, reflecting a growing confidence in the integrated cross-border economy since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. This trend underscores the success of the Agreement in fostering economic interdependence and stability.
4. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/the-belfast-agreement-20-years-on-a-tale-of-two-cities/36782261.html> - Reflecting on the 20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, this article discusses the significant transformation in border dynamics. The once heavily militarised and monitored border has become largely invisible, symbolising the peace and cooperation achieved since the Agreement's signing.
5. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/varadkar-accepts-criticism-that-border-checks-undermine-good-friday-agreement/38478413.html> - Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar acknowledges criticism that proposed border checks in a no-deal Brexit scenario could undermine the Good Friday Agreement. He outlines potential impacts, including checks on goods and live animals, and emphasises the need to balance these measures with the Agreement's principles.
6. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/northern-ireland/neverendum-brexit-and-border-poll-prospects-threaten-good-friday-agreement-prosperity/42297584.html> - This article highlights concerns that Brexit and potential border polls could threaten the economic and social gains achieved under the Good Friday Agreement. It calls for enhanced cooperation among the governments of Belfast, Dublin, and London to safeguard the Agreement's benefits.
7. <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_the_implementation_of_the_good_friday_agreement/2022-02-10/2/> - The Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement discusses ongoing cross-border health and social care services. Despite uncertainties like Brexit, the Committee remains committed to maintaining and developing collaborative services to improve the lives of those in border areas.