



Centre for  
Cross Border Studies

# **2022 QUARTERLY SURVEYS** on the conditions for North-South and East-West cooperation

Report on the findings  
from the four Quarterly Surveys  
on North-South and East-West cooperation in 2022



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November 2023

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2021 the Centre for Cross Border Studies began to undertake quarterly surveys on the conditions for North-South and East-West cooperation, aimed at community organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland. In order to understand the underlying context for these forms of cooperation and the relations underpinning them, the surveys focus on four dimensions: the political, social, regulatory and material contexts. The main findings and central issues arising from the results of the four quarterly surveys undertaken in 2022 are as follows, with further details provided in the body of this report.<sup>1</sup>

## North-South cooperation

- Responses show continued strong commitment to North-South and East-West cooperation among community organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland, and continued determination to maintain cross-border relations and collaborative activities despite the existence of an often turbulent and uncertain political context.
- Over the course of 2022 there were significant levels of cross-border contact between organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland taking part in the surveys, with a large majority in every quarter indicating that they had had meetings with counterparts in the other jurisdiction.
- In every quarter the majority of respondents reported that challenges to North-South cooperation had been discussed on occasion. The highest percentages of those indicating that obstacles to cooperation played a significant part in their discussions took place in the first and final quarters of 2022. Although no direct correlation can be definitively made, these two quarters coincided with periods of particular political instability in Northern Ireland.
- A challenge that was discussed with much greater frequency in 2022 than in 2021 was the issue of funding for cross-border projects.
- The main areas of North-South activity respondents were involved in were education, arts, culture and the creative industries, community development, promotion and support for cross-border cooperation, economic development, the environment, rural development, and sport.
- There has been a steady increase in the numbers of those considering new North-South cooperation activities over the course of 2022 (from 74.5% in Q1 to 78.1% in Q4), which continues a trend from the previous year. Although no direct correlation can be assumed, this steady increase in those considering new North-South collaborations coincides with the introduction by the Irish Government through its Shared Island initiative of new funding streams.
- Responses to the 2022 quarterly surveys point to an overall trend of the majority of respondents being in receipt of funding for their North-South collaborations. Q1 saw 56.8% of respondents indicating they were in receipt of funding, rising to 66.7% in the final quarter – the highest percentage of respondents funded for their North-South cooperation activities since these quarterly surveys began in 2021.

<sup>1</sup> The equivalent report for the surveys undertaken in 2021 can be accessed at: <https://crossborder.ie/reports/2021-quarterly-surveys-on-the-conditions-for-north-south-and-east-west-cooperation-report-on-the-findings-from-the-four-quarterly-surveys-on-north-south-and-east-west-cooperation-in-2021/>.

- For most of 2022 half of the respondents based in the Republic of Ireland indicated that they were not funded for their North-South cooperation activities, although that decreased to 40% in the final quarter.
- In 2021, the third most frequent source of financing for respondents' North-South cooperation activities had been their organisation's own core funding. In 2022 this became the second most frequent source of financing. As in 2021, the most important source of funding in every quarter in 2022 was the Irish Government (e.g. the Department of Foreign Affairs' Reconciliation Fund and the Shared Island Unit). The third most important source of funding was the European Union (e.g. PEACE, INTERREG and LEADER), which had been the second most important in 2021. Charitable foundations were some way behind these.
- With the exception of the second quarter, the majority of respondents were of the view that the political context for North-South cooperation in 2022 had stayed more or less the same (with 75.6% of this view in Q4). No respondent thought the political context had improved in the first quarter, and the most positive outlook was recorded in Q3, where 11.1% of respondents thought there had been an improvement. The second quarter saw the most pessimistic response, with 47.8% of respondents indicating that the political context had deteriorated, which was the majority response in that quarter.
- According to the comments offered by respondents, the issue of greatest concern regarding the political context for North-South cooperation was the absence of functioning political institutions in Northern Ireland.
- Responses indicated general stability in terms of the social context for North-South cooperation, with the majority in every quarter in 2022 stating that it had remained more or less the same over the course of the year, with that assessment attaining its highest response rate in the final quarter (78%).
- Those respondents who chose to comment on the social context for North-South cooperation in 2022 reflected quiet determination to collaborate but tempered with concerns regarding the cost of living crisis (particularly prominent in Q3) and a perception that support from loyalist communities in Northern Ireland for such cooperation was absent due to opposition to the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.
- Although the majority response in every quarter was that the regulatory context for North-South cooperation had remained more or less the same, that majority declined from 64.7% in Q1 to 56.1% in Q4. No respondent over the course of 2022 viewed the regulatory context as having improved. Instead, there was a significant minority (20% or above) in every quarter who considered it to have deteriorated.
- The comments offered by respondents on the regulatory context for North-South cooperation pointed to continued general uncertainty, largely as a result of legislation introduced by the UK Government. The [Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#) was cited by several respondents as a key piece of legislation with potential consequences for cross-border mobility on the island of Ireland.
- In terms of the material context for North-South cooperation, meaning how access to good or services necessary for civic society organisations and local authorities to undertake their collaborative activities effectively, the overall trend in 2022 was of general or even growing stability. From 56.9% of respondents believing this to be the case in the opening quarter, by the final quarter this percentage had reached 65.9%. In every quarter there was also a small minority who thought the material context had improved.



- Comments offered in 2022 by some respondents noted how factors external to Brexit and the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland were having negative impact on access to goods. In these cases, it was the war in Ukraine that was explicitly or implicitly seen as the cause of the difficulties being experienced, as well as inflationary pressures as a result of rising energy costs (which were also a result of the war in Ukraine) and the depreciation of sterling.

## East-West cooperation

- In terms of contacts between civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland with counterparts in Great Britain, the overall trend in 2022 was of an increase in terms of those who indicated they had had East-West meetings.
- Whereas discussions on obstacles to cooperation may not have featured as strongly in East-West meetings as was the case in North-South meetings, respondents nevertheless indicated that this was a fairly important theme in their conversations.
- Where obstacles to East-West cooperation were discussed, the issue raised with the greatest frequency related to access to funding, and the design of new UK funding programmes. However, respondents also noted policy differences between the nations and regions across these islands, as well as the status of political relations between governments.
- Although the numbers of respondents involved in East-West collaboration activities were significantly lower than those cooperating with counterparts in the other jurisdiction on the island of Ireland, a majority were nevertheless doing so in every quarter of 2022.
- Those respondents who were involved in one or more East-West collaborations in 2022 indicated that the principal themes of their collaborations were education (the most popular theme), human rights, economic development, arts and culture, and community development. Other areas of East-West collaboration included peace and reconciliation, the environment, citizens information, equality, and local government.
- In every quarter of 2022, the majority of civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland that responded to the surveys indicated that they were *not* considering new collaborations with counterparts in Great Britain.
- The majority of respondents involved in East-West activities in 2022 did so without any funding support.
- The primary sources of *external* funding support for East-West cooperation were charitable foundations, followed by the EU, and then the UK Government, exactly in the same order as in 2021. Other, less significant sources were the Irish Government, Northern Ireland Government Departments, and UK (academic) research bodies. However, it is crucial to note that – as was the case in 2021 – many respondents indicated that they used their own core funding to support their East-West activities; in fact, this was the second highest source of financing for those activities.
- When asked about the extent to which the political context in 2022 was supportive of East-West cooperation, the overall trend was somewhat similar to that found in relation to North-South cooperation. A very significant majority (60.8%) in the first quarter considered the political context to have remained more or less the same as in the last quarter of 2021. In the second and third quarters, however, the responses were more negative, with 47.8% in Q2 judging the political context for East-West cooperation to have deteriorated, and 42.2% holding this view in Q3. The final quarter of 2022 then witnessed a significant majority (70.7%) regarding the political context to have remained more or less the same.

- Where respondents to the 2022 surveys offered more detailed comments on their assessment of the political context for cooperation with counterparts in Great Britain, the views expressed were reflective of major political events in Westminster. Thus, in the second quarter there were generally negative comments relating to the UK Government's introduction in June of the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill. Respondents' comments also pointed to the uncertainty caused by the changes in the leadership of the Conservative Party, and therefore of Prime Minister, although some glimmer of hope appears to have been attached to Rishi Sunak's taking over of the premiership, which was seen as translating into a different approach to the UK's relations with the Republic of Ireland and the EU.
- The social context (attitudes within communities) in 2022 for collaboration between community organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland with counterparts in Great Britain appears to have been more robust than the political context. Generally, there were significant majorities (greater than those seen in relation to the political context) in every quarter judging the social context to have remained more or less the same.
- Although stability was the favoured response when it came to how local authorities and civic society organisations on the island of Ireland perceived the regulatory context for East-West cooperation in 2022, there was also a significant proportion of respondents who saw it as having deteriorated.
- The comments offered by respondents underline the sense of uncertainty as to the nature of the regulatory context for cooperation between the island of Ireland and Great Britain. From these comments, the uncertainty appears to result from both a lack of knowledge of any relevant changes, and from legislative moves by the UK Government liable to cause regulatory divergence between the two islands.
- By the final quarter of 2022, the vast majority of respondents (75.6%) were of the opinion that the material context for their collaborations with partners in Great Britain had remained more or less the same, while this quarter also saw the lowest percentage (12.2%) saying that it had deteriorated. However, it should also be noted that there were very few prepared to say it had improved. This is similar to the responses in regards the regulatory context, and in both cases no responses in Q3 indicated an improvement. Moreover, there were also substantial minorities who were unsure as to the status of the material context.
- Where respondents offered explanatory comments on their views of the material context for East-West cooperation in 2022, the issues raised were not always connected to the UK's departure from the EU. In these cases, there were concerns regarding the cost of living crisis, rising energy prices, as well as the impacts of the war in Ukraine, among other factors.

The core findings and issues raised in the responses to the 2022 quarterly surveys are explored in greater detail in what follows.

# ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES

The Centre for Cross Border Studies, based in Armagh, Northern Ireland, has a strong reputation as an authoritative advocate for cross-border cooperation and as a valued source of research, information and support for collaboration across borders on the island of Ireland, Europe and beyond.

The Centre empowers citizens and builds capacity and capability for cooperation across sectors and jurisdictional boundaries on the island of Ireland and further afield. This mission is achieved through research, expertise, partnership and experience in a wide range of cross-border practices and concerns (for more details visit [www.crossborder.ie](http://www.crossborder.ie)).

# 1. INTRODUCTION

In March 2021 the Centre for Cross Border Studies undertook its first quarterly survey on the conditions for North-South and East-West cooperation.<sup>2</sup> Aimed at civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland, the purpose of this and the subsequent quarterly surveys over the course of 2021 and 2022, was to gain insights as to the extent to which Article 11 of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland is being adhered to, and whether organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland were maintaining their collaborative relations with counterparts in Great Britain. In other words, the surveys sought to understand whether the Protocol was being implemented and applied in a manner **‘so as to maintain the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation’** (Article 11), and whether the United Kingdom’s commitment set out in the preamble to the Protocol **‘to protecting and supporting continued North-South and East-West cooperation’** was being borne out by respondents to the surveys.

The reason why these surveys have been aimed specifically at civic society organisations and local authorities is due to the Centre for Cross Border Studies’ concern that that the mapping exercise of North-South cooperation undertaken in 2017 by the UK and EU to inform the negotiations on the UK’s withdrawal from the EU overlooked the kinds of cross-border cooperation they often undertake. This possibility was highlighted by both the UK and EU, admitting that “areas of informal, local and community-level cooperation may not have been captured by this exercise” (para 16 of Department for Exiting the European Union’s December 2018 [“Technical Explanatory Note: North-South Cooperation Mapping Exercise”](#); see also European Commission’s “Negotiations on Ireland/Northern Ireland, Mapping of North-South Cooperation”, p.4). Moreover, the Centre for Cross Border Studies was also concerned that attention should be paid to the evolving experiences of civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland in their collaborative relations with Great Britain.

Those concerns had already been expressed in August 2018 during the negotiations on the UK’s departure from the EU,<sup>3</sup> and in November of the same year following the publication of the draft Withdrawal Agreement (as negotiated by the UK Government under Theresa May). In the latter, the Centre for Cross Border Studies noted:

<sup>2</sup> We are grateful to the Department of Foreign Affairs’ Reconciliation Fund, whose support for the [“Maintaining the necessary conditions for cooperation and cross-border lives”](#) project made it possible for us to begin to undertake this work, which has been able to continue through the Reconciliation Fund’s Strategic Partnership programme. We also thank the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science for the core funding the Centre for Cross Border Studies receives, which enables us to continue to support, promote and advocate for improved cooperation.

<sup>3</sup> In our “Briefing Paper 4: The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and the negotiations on the UK’s withdrawal from the EU” (August 2018), we stated: ‘The post-Brexit preservation and development of the full range of socio-economic relations and North-South cooperation between the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland are essential to the continued adherence to the 1998 Agreement. But so is the preservation and development of relations and cooperation between the island of Ireland and Great Britain, which includes not only relations between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, but also between England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. That is to adhere to the full spirit of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement’ (p.27).

The Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in the draft Withdrawal Agreement of November 14<sup>th</sup> represents the best deal on offer for Northern Ireland that safeguards against a 'hard' border on the island and protects North-South cooperation. **As it presently stands, however, the Protocol does not protect the totality of existing socio-economic relations within and between these islands, notably the East-West dimension, of the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.** Although primarily concerned with the "unique circumstances on the island of Ireland", the Protocol could have more fully integrated the institutions created under Strand 3 of the 1998 Agreement, in recognition that some of the "unique circumstances" on the island of Ireland arise from its relations with Great Britain. However, we also recognise the difficulty in this, given the UK's decision to leave the Single Market and Customs Union.<sup>4</sup>

The Centre for Cross Border Studies' Research Briefings published after each quarterly survey over the course of 2021 and 2022 have highlighted the evolution of the tensions surrounding the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland and the often fractious relationship between the UK Government and the EU.<sup>5</sup> 2022 was a particularly turbulent year in terms of the political landscape in the UK, which saw the departures of both Boris Johnson and Liz Truss as Prime Minister, with the latter being succeeded by Rishi Sunak and appearing to bring a less confrontational approach to his government's relations with the EU.

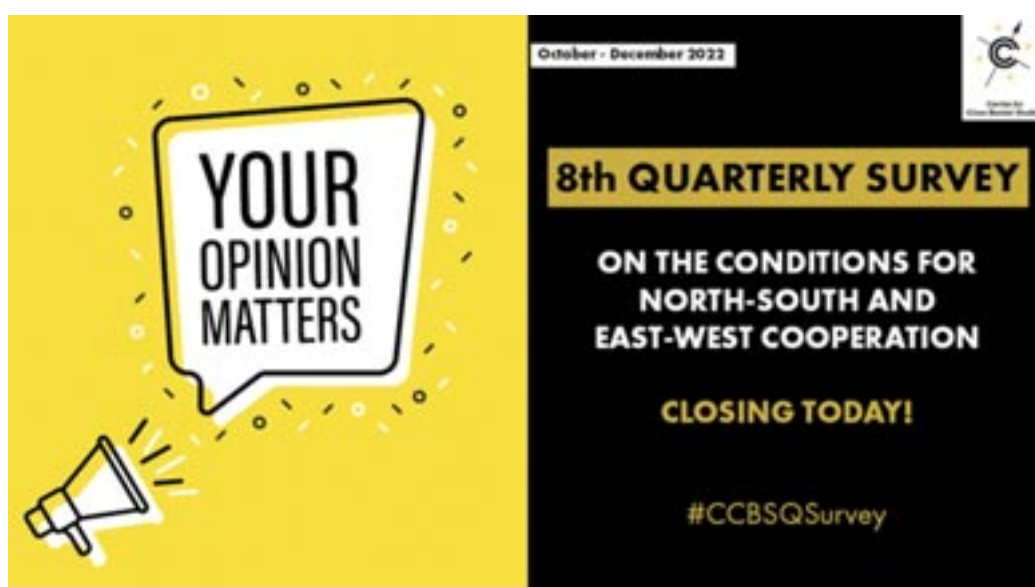
This report, then, focuses on the responses to the four quarterly surveys and to any significant trends that may have emerged over 2022 and its purpose, therefore, is not to offer a detailed commentary on the evolving political discussions over the Protocol. It begins by setting out the overall methodology employed by the quarterly surveys and the nature of the respondents. This latter point is given further focus in the subsequent section, looking at the changing make-up of the respondents, before examining the responses on the context for North-South cooperation, followed by an analysis of responses on the context for East-West cooperation. In both cases, we examine the political, social, regulatory and material context. The report then briefly sets out respondents' overall assessment of the Protocol's merits in relation to North-South and East-West cooperation respectively, before offering some concluding remarks.

<sup>4</sup> Centre for Cross Border Studies, "Centre for Cross Border Studies Statement on draft Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union" (November 2018), p.3.

<sup>5</sup> These Research Briefings, among others, can be accessed at <https://crossborder.ie/what-we-do/research-policy/briefing-papers/>.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The Centre for Cross Border Studies' Quarterly Survey on the conditions for North-South and East-West cooperation uses an online questionnaire, constructed using Google Forms. Each survey is advertised on all the Centre's online platforms (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and website),<sup>6</sup> and through the Centre's monthly Border-Zine.<sup>7</sup> This means that respondents are self-selecting, and although they must provide an email address in order to complete the survey, the surveys are anonymised. When an individual respondent completes the survey for the first time, they must submit some basic information regarding their organisation or local authority, including their experience of North-South and/or East-West collaboration and relations. When completing the survey on subsequent occasions, repeat respondents no longer have to provide this organisational information.



The main sections of the questionnaire focus on North-South and East-West cooperation, gathering respondents' views on the evolving political, social, regulatory and material contexts for their cooperation activities, as well as their levels of North-South and/or East-West contact. In terms of their North-South and/or East-West contact, the survey also asks whether those contacts have involved discussions on challenges to their cooperation, whether respondents are involved in current collaboration projects (and what their sources of funding are), as well as whether they are considering new collaboration activities.

Respondents are asked to compare many of these factors with the previous quarter, such as "In comparison with the previous quarter [...], do you think the political context has a) improved, b) deteriorated, c) stayed more or less the same, d) don't know". In many cases the questions require a response, but in others not all respondents need to provide an answer. This is the case, for example, where a respondent indicates that their organisation or local authority is not in receipt of funding, which means that they are not asked to respond to the subsequent question on sources of funding.

<sup>6</sup> @CCBSCrossBorder (Twitter), @crossborderstudies (Facebook), Centre for Cross Border Studies (LinkedIn), [www.crossborder.ie](http://www.crossborder.ie) (website).

<sup>7</sup> To see past copies of the Border-Zine, visit <https://crossborder.ie/border-zine/>.



However, it is important to note that two minor modifications were made to the surveys in 2022 in comparison to the surveys undertaken in 2021. The first was the introduction of an option to allow respondents to offer any practical suggestions to improve North-South and East-West cooperation respectively. The other modification was, instead of asking respondents about their levels of knowledge and main sources of information relating to the Protocol as had been the case in three of the four surveys carried out in 2021, in 2022 respondents were asked whether the Protocol was a good or bad thing for North-South and East-West cooperation.

The nature of the surveys means that the majority of the questions produce responses that can be analysed in percentage or numerical terms. In other words, for example, we can see the percentage of respondents who consider the political context for North-South cooperation to have deteriorated or improved in comparison to the previous quarter. These questions are supplemented by explanatory commentary from respondents, which can allow for the identification of common issues. Analysis of these responses, and other issues related to what these surveys may tell us, merits some additional consideration.

### 3. UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING THE RESPONSES

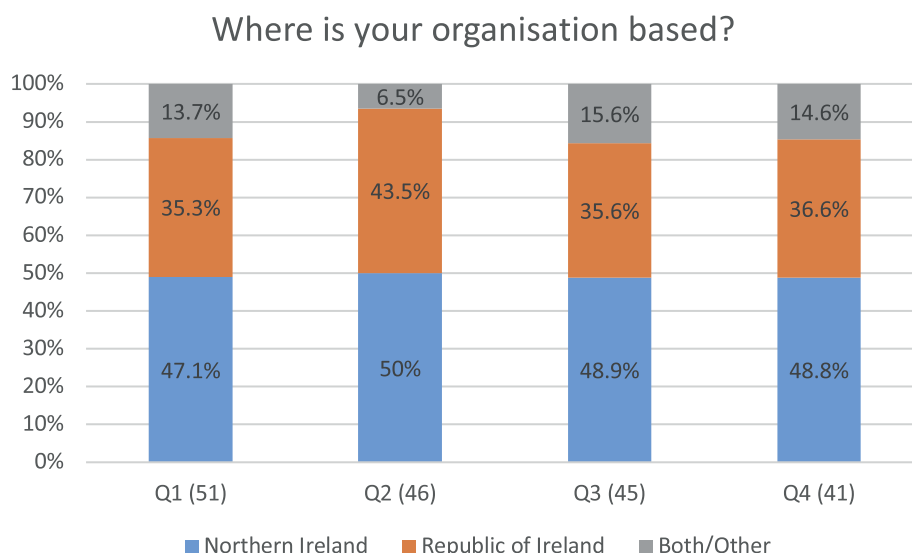
There are some important factors that need to be borne in mind when considering the nature of the responses to these quarterly surveys, and what they can tell us. It is important to recall that respondents are self-selecting. Moreover, although these quarterly surveys are aimed at civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland, and therefore not at individual citizens, nevertheless the responses cannot be assumed to be “corporate” responses that offer the conclusive views of an entire organisation or local authority. Instead, we should assume that those responding are individuals with responsibility for or an interest in North-South and/or East-West cooperation within their organisation or local authority. Notwithstanding this, given that such individuals are usually more conscious of the potential impacts on North-South and/or East-West cooperation of the evolving underlying contexts than those who are not immediately involved or have an interest in such cooperation, their responses offer us valuable insights into the nature of the current conditions for North-South and East-West cooperation.

Another important factor to be considered is the changes to the composition of the panel of respondents to each individual quarterly survey. The one-off participation of a small number of respondents to the surveys (i.e. responding to only one of the quarterly surveys) means that in the first instance each survey offers a snapshot in time of how respondents view the conditions for North-South and East-West cooperation. The identification of any emerging trends and how those conditions are evolving from quarter to quarter needs to be largely based on the answers provided by repeat respondents. However, given that a stable cohort of respondents has been developed over the course of 2021 and 2022 means that we can be more confident of the precise nature of emerging trends. The evolving nature of the composition of the respondents to these surveys is what concerns us next and is an issue that begins to raise some important questions.

## 4. THE CHANGING COMPOSITION OF RESPONDENTS

Respondents to the quarterly surveys are asked where their organisation or local authority is based. Figure 1 sets out the percentage of respondents based in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and those based in both jurisdictions (with the number in brackets at the foot of each column indicating the number of responses).

Figure 1



In terms of the different representation of respondents to the quarterly surveys in 2022 from the two jurisdictions, it is worth recalling here the equivalent report on the surveys undertaken in 2021:

Whereas in the first quarter of 2021 the majority of respondents (55.7%) were located in the Republic of Ireland, from the second quarter onwards the majority were located in Northern Ireland. Indeed, the proportion of respondents based in the Republic of Ireland saw a steady decline over 2021, with only 31.4% of respondents to the 4<sup>th</sup> survey being from that jurisdiction.<sup>8</sup>

The decline in the proportion of respondents from the Republic of Ireland in 2021 was noted in the report as an issue of concern, potentially indicative of an emerging trend of growing reluctance among organisations based in the Republic of Ireland – particularly smaller ones – to engage in North-South cooperation due to the tensions surrounding the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. Indeed, referencing the Centre for Cross Border Studies' quarterly surveys, these concerns were highlighted in a report recently published by the European Economic and Social Committee:

CSOs [Civic Society Organisations] in the Republic of Ireland (particularly smaller ones with more limited resources) are reducing their collaborations with counterparts in Northern Ireland. The reasons for this are the "chilling effect" arising from the negative political context and relations surrounding discussions on the Protocol, and the emergence of obstacles to cooperation. This means that such organisations begin to

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Soares, "2021 Quarterly Surveys on the conditions for North-South and East-West cooperation: Report on the findings from the four Quarterly Surveys on North-South and East-West cooperation in 2021" (Centre for Cross Border Studies, April 2022), p.9.

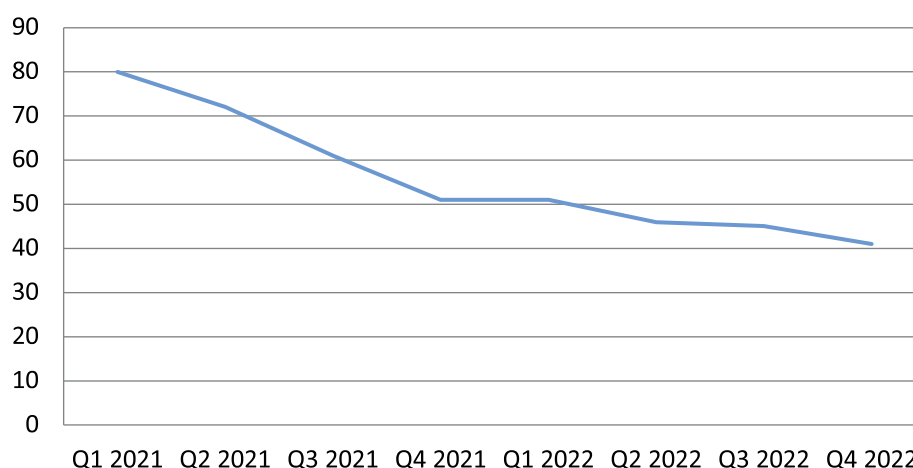
prioritise their activities within their own jurisdiction, as well as within the European networks they may be involved in, where it is reported that there is no longer a presence of counterparts from Great Britain and, in some cases, of counterparts from Northern Ireland.<sup>9</sup>

However, 2022 did not see a repeat of the decline in the proportion of respondents from the Republic of Ireland as had been the case in 2021, with no quarter experiencing the same low level response (31.4%) that occurred in the last quarter of 2021. Indeed, the lowest representation of respondents from the Republic of Ireland in 2022 was 35.3% (in Q1), and the highest was 43.5% (in Q2). The fact that the decline in the proportion of respondents from the Republic of Ireland was not repeated in 2022 does not necessarily mean that the concerns raised in 2021 are no longer valid.

To understand why this may be the case, we need to consider the overall numbers of respondents and how these have fallen from the first quarter of 2021 to the last of 2022, as can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2

### Number of respondents 2021-2022



Although the rate of decline in the number of respondents in 2022 was much less acute (in 2021 there was a fall of 36.2% from Q1 to Q4, while in 2022 it was 19.6%), it nevertheless remains a cause for concern. In the report looking at the quarterly surveys from 2021, the falling numbers of respondents prompted two interrelated questions: were they 'reflective of increasing fatigue in relation to Brexit in general and the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in particular, or a diminishing interest in taking part in these surveys?'<sup>10</sup> While there is every possibility that civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland may be increasingly unwilling to respond to these surveys, not least given the number of other competing pressures they are facing, it is also possible that exhaustion (or resignation) has set in with regards to Brexit and the Protocol. Both of these possibilities present the significant challenge of how we can continue to effectively monitor the intensity of North-South and East-West cooperation at the informal, local and community-level.

<sup>9</sup> European Economic and Social Committee, "Information Report: The Implementation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement" (25 January 2023), p.47.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Soares, "2021 Quarterly Surveys on the conditions for North-South and East-West cooperation: Report on the findings from the four Quarterly Surveys on North-South and East-West cooperation in 2021" (Centre for Cross Border Studies, April 2022), p.10.

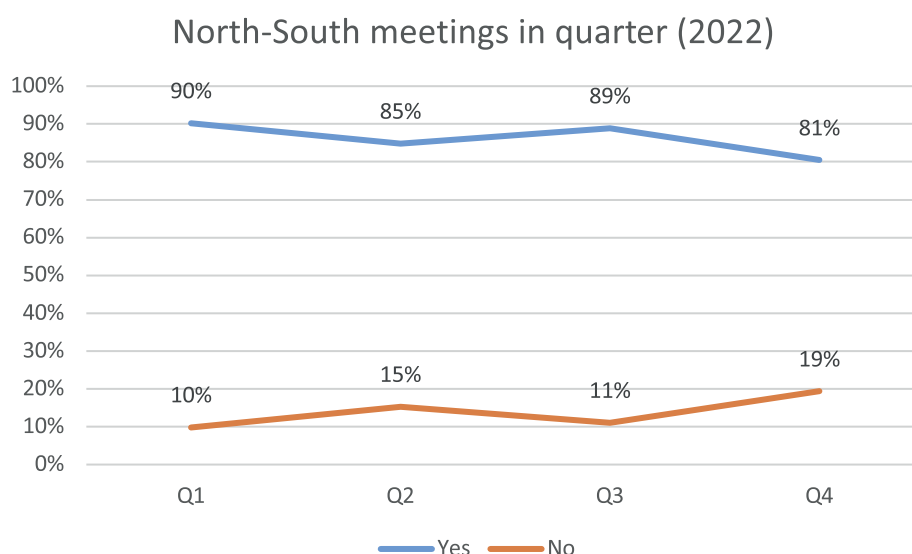
Returning now to the issue of how the slowing rate of decline in 2022 of the proportion of respondents from the Republic of Ireland may not necessarily translate into an easing of the concerns regarding a reduction of their collaboration with counterparts in Northern Ireland, it is important to consider levels of commitment. What is meant by this is that the question arises as to whether the respondents from the Republic of Ireland who repeatedly complete the quarterly surveys represent a particularly committed core in terms of cross-border cooperation. They, therefore, may not necessarily be representative of the wider body of civic society organisations in that jurisdiction, where some (particularly smaller ones) who had engaged in North-South collaboration previously are no longer doing so, or are at least showing signs of reluctance to commit to such collaboration given the uncertainties and divisions surrounding the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland and the absence of a Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive. The Centre for Cross Border Studies hopes to undertake further research specifically to seek clarity on this issue, but now we turn to what the responses to our quarterly surveys in 2022 tell us about the intensity of North-South cooperation.

## 5. THE NORTH-SOUTH DIMENSION

### 5.1. Contact and collaboration

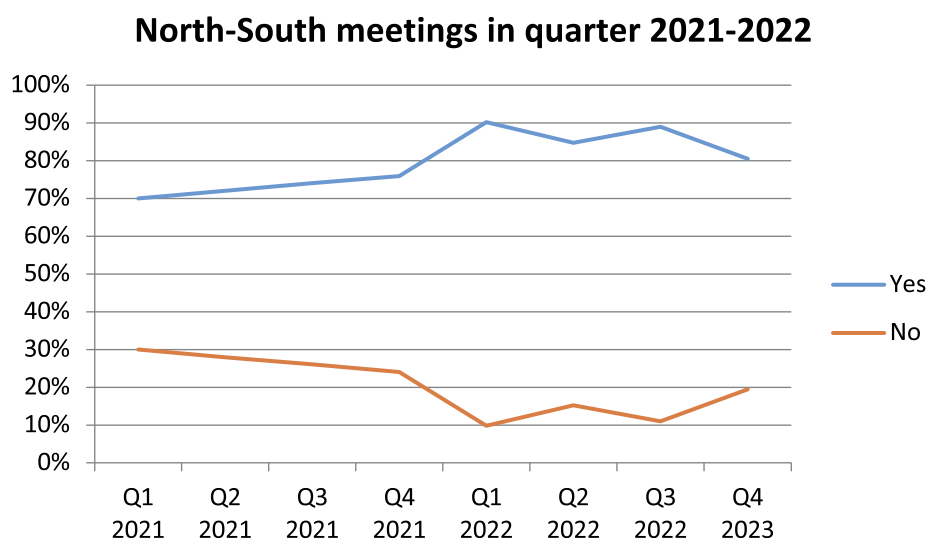
Bearing in mind our remarks above, it is evident from the responses over the course of 2022 that there were significant levels of cross-border contact between organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland taking part in our surveys, with a large majority in every quarter indicating that they had had meetings with counterparts in the other jurisdiction.

Figure 3



As can be seen in figure 3 above, 90% of respondents reported having had meetings with organisations in the other jurisdiction in the first quarter, with 89% reporting the same in Q3. The final quarter of 2022 saw the lowest percentage of respondents reporting North-South meetings, although at 81% this is still above the highest percentage recorded in 2021 (76%). To be able to compare the responses between 2021 and 2022, Figure 4 sets these out.

Figure 4

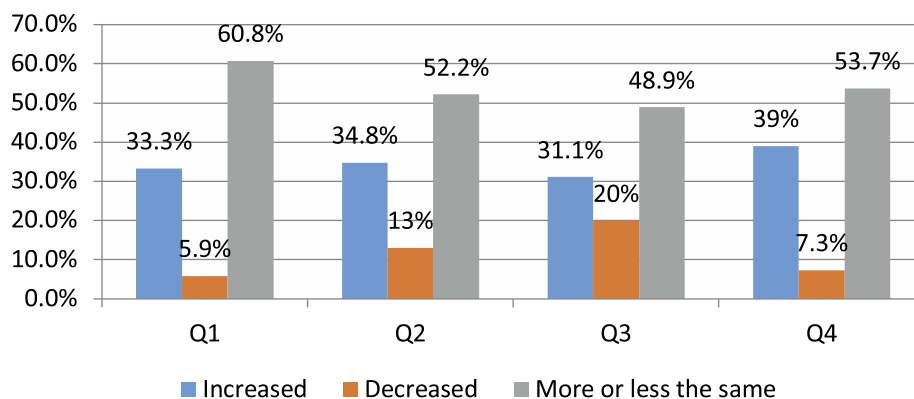




In each quarterly survey respondents were also asked to indicate whether the number of meetings they had had with organisations in the other jurisdiction had increased, decreased, or stayed more or less the same in comparison with the previous quarter. As was the case in 2021, the predominant response across all four quarters, as set out in figure 5, suggested a general maintenance of levels of North-South contact between organisations and local authorities, with Quarter 3 having the highest percentage of respondents indicating that the number of North-South meetings they had been involved in had decreased (20%).

Figure 5

### Number of North-South meetings in comparison with previous quarter

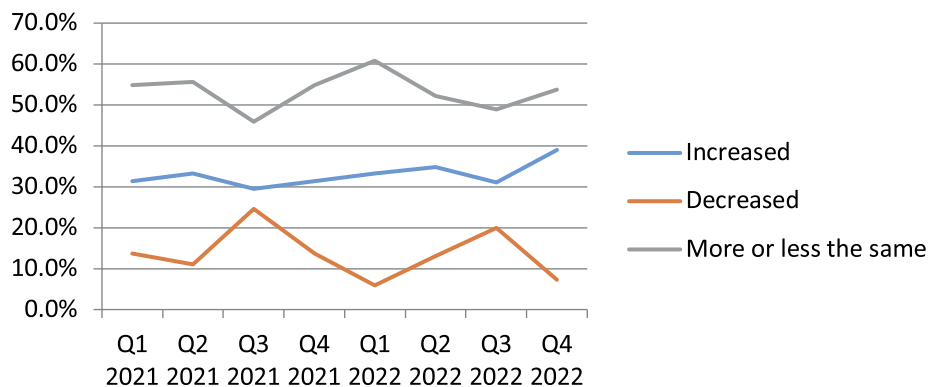


The final quarter of 2022 saw the highest percentage (39%) of respondents indicating the number of North-South meetings had increased in comparison with the previous quarter, while the first quarter was the one where the highest percentage was reached (60.8%) in terms of those indicating that the number of North-South meetings was more or less the same as in the previous quarter (the final quarter of 2021).

Figure 6 sets out the responses over the course of 2021 and 2022.

Figure 6

### Number of North-South meetings in comparison with previous quarter 2021-2022

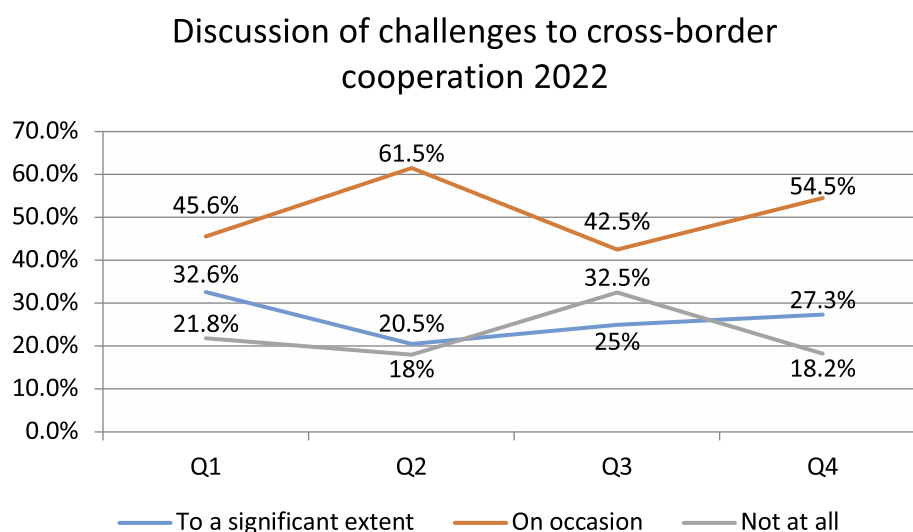


As was noted earlier, and as can be seen in Figure 6, throughout both 2021 and 2022 the majority of respondents reported having more or less the same number of North-South meetings as in the previous quarter. In both years, and indicative of the fact that this quarter coincides with the summer months, Q3 was where the highest percentages were reached in terms of those who indicated the number of North-South meetings had decreased from the previous quarter.

However, in comparing the responses from 2022 to those in 2021, it is in Q4 of 2022 that the highest percentage of those reporting an increase in the number of North-South meetings occurs (39%), with 2021 seeing Q2 with the highest in that year (33.3%). In fact, when comparing the results in 2022, every quarter reveals a higher percentage indicating an increase in meetings when compared with the same quarter in 2021. These results could raise the question once more of whether the fact that there was what could be considered to be a “core” of repeat respondents in 2022 is reflective of their commitment to cross-border cooperation. In other words, would these percentages in 2022 be lower if all of the same respondents in 2021 had taken part in the survey, recalling the declining overall number of respondents from 2021 to 2022?

Civic society organisations and local authorities who indicated that they had had meetings with counterparts in the other jurisdiction were asked whether they had discussed challenges to North-South cooperation to a significant extent, on occasion, or not at all. Figure 7 sets out the responses over the four quarters of 2022.

Figure 7

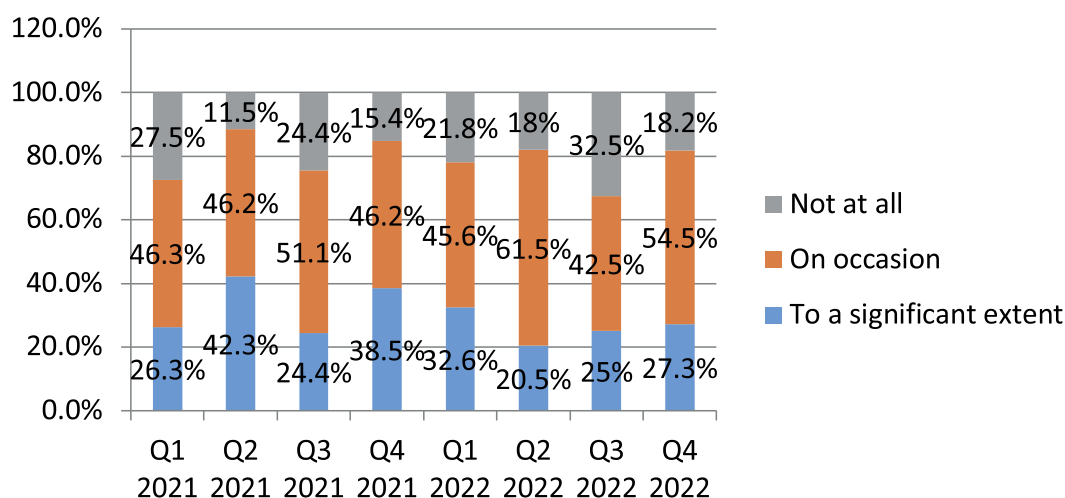


In every quarter the majority of respondents reported that challenges to North-South cooperation had been discussed on occasion (peaking at 61.5% in Q2). The highest percentages of those indicating that obstacles to cooperation played a significant part in their discussions took place in the first and final quarters of 2022 (32.6% and 27.3% respectively). Although no direct correlation can be definitively made, these two quarters coincided with periods of particular political instability in Northern Ireland, with the DUP’s Paul Givan resigning as First Minister in February, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland delaying a decision in December to call Assembly elections.

Figure 8 shows the extent to which obstacles to cooperation informed discussions at North-South meetings over the course of 2021 and 2022.

Figure 8

### Discussion of challenges to cross-border cooperation 2021-2022



Over the whole period from the first quarter of 2021 to the final quarter of 2022 challenges to cross-border cooperation always featured in the vast majority of North-South meetings. There is also a repeated pattern in the two years, with challenges to cooperation featuring most strongly in the second and final quarters of 2021 and 2022, and not as strong a focus for discussion in the first and third quarters. However, when comparing the two years we can note a lessening of the presence of challenges to cross-border cooperation in North-South meetings taking place in 2022. Whereas challenges to cooperation were discussed on occasion or to a significant extent by 88.5% and 84.7% of respondents in Q2 and Q4 of 2021, in the corresponding periods in 2022 they were discussed by 82% and 81.8%. Moreover, in Q3 of 2022 only 67.5% of respondents reported discussing challenges to cooperation at North-South meetings on occasion or to a significant extent. This was the lowest figure for all of 2021 and 2022.

From the more detailed responses offered by those completing the surveys in 2022, a strong contrast to what challenges to cross-border cooperation were discussed in North-South meetings was the almost complete absence of what had featured heavily in 2021: the Covid-19 pandemic's impacts on the ability of organisations and local authorities to meet on a cross-border basis, and the challenges citizens in general were encountering in terms of navigating differences in public health regulations put in place by the two jurisdictions. However, an issue that was raised by several respondents in 2022 was related to the moves to remote working that the pandemic had brought about, and the use of online platforms for cross-border meetings. These are some of the illustrative comments:

- "Zoom calls between people of different persuasions" (Quarter 1).
- "Taxation implications when working from home, if home is across the border" (Quarter 1).
- "Tax, working from home" (Quarter 1).
- "Cross border workers and wfh [Working From Home] issues" (Quarter 2).
- "The challenge of distance and remote engagement" (Quarter 3).

A challenge that was discussed with much greater frequency in 2022 was the issue of funding for cross-border projects. The following comments from respondents perhaps point to the growing uncertainties regarding funding as EU-funded projects were coming to an end, and signs of changes to how organisations needed to operate.

- “Funding and Brexit” (Quarter 1).
- “Because of Brexit it is now necessary to register [...] in the south to access some funding streams” (Quarter 1).
- “Research funding – primarily EU sources” (Quarter 1).
- “In relation to Erasmus funding” (Quarter 1).“
- Funding from Irish Government to NI groups in absence of funding from UK government” (Quarter 1).
- “Brexit impact on research funding” (Quarter 2).
- “A southern Council must be the lead partner in applications to EU and Shared Island funding” (Quarter 2).
- “Delays in Peace Plus” (Quarter 2).
- “EU funding for research – not applying to the UK” (Quarter 2).
- “Exclusion from Interreg” (Quarter 2).“
- “Access to EU research funding for NI organisations” (Quarter 2).
- “General discussion re ongoing situation and lack of funding” (Quarter 3).
- “Funding for international and EU research issues caused by Brexit” (Quarter 3).
- “Securing funding for research from Europe” (Quarter 3).
- “Obtaining funding for cross border projects” (Quarter 3).
- “Funding disparities” (Quarter 3).
- “Lack of funding and relationships” (Quarter 3).
- “Loss of EU funding” (Quarter 3).
- “We have discussed some difficulty in obtaining funding for projects” (Quarter 4).
- “Increasing number of European researchers/scientists are relocating out of UK/Northern Ireland as a result of Brexit and visa and residency issues. This is impacting on shared research projects” (Quarter 4).
- “Different laws governing implementation of funded projects” (Quarter 4).
- “Funding challenges” (Quarter 4).

A range of other issues relating to cross-border cooperation were reported to have been discussed in North-South meetings in 2022 that had also featured in the 2021 quarterly surveys. However, a number of those issues were identified with greater frequency in 2022, including changes to the operation of the Common Travel Area (CTA), cross-border insurance, and cross-border access to healthcare. These are some of the comments offered by respondents:

- "Need for papers to cross the border, health requirements, cost" (Quarter 1).
- "Cross-border insurance, recognition of qualifications, cross-border mobility of non-UK/Irish citizens" (Quarter 1).
- "Discussions about racially discriminatory checks on the common travel area, and legal barriers for non-EU residents to cross the border" (Quarter 1).
- "Lack of institutions" (Quarter 1).
- "Accessing cross border healthcare in the absence of EU schemes" (Quarter 1).
- "The UK's pending visa waiver scheme and wide ranging impact on communities" (Quarter 1).
- "Brexit impact on education and training" (Quarter 1).
- "Challenges relating to climate action" (Quarter 1).
- "Poor N/S relations in relation to Brexit & Protocol" (Quarter 1).
- "Access to all-island services and cross-border travel for migrants given lack of protection under Common Travel Area" (Quarter 1).
- "Differences in health service organisation, patient treatment and travel post-Brexit" (Quarter 2).
- "The challenges of providing education in border regions" (Quarter 2).
- "Transport of sets [for arts and culture events]" (Quarter 2).
- "Discussed barriers/certainty of entitlement re access to cross-border and island of Ireland healthcare initiatives, particularly for migrant communities" (Quarter 2).
- "How do we ensure that we continue to work together as NI diverges from EU" (Quarter 2).
- "Citizens' rights, free movement, social security, banking, the practical impacts of Brexit" (Quarter 2).
- "Cross border social security and immigration" (Quarter 2).
- "Issues around VAT, visas for some employees, recognition of licences" (Quarter 2).
- "Protocol, political instability in the North and lack of functioning Assembly in NI, proposed changes to legislation at Westminster level" (Quarter 2).
- "The challenge has been around insurance policy requirements (Employer's Liability, Public Liability & Professional Indemnity) [...] for any work we carry out south of the border" (Quarter 2).
- "Political instability in NI. Lack of government to make decisions. Withdrawal of DUP from all island work and the signal it is giving to others to withdraw" (Quarter 2).
- "Political situation" (Quarter 3).
- "Discussed potential issues arising from introduction of Electronic Travel Authorisations for those moving across the land border if they are non-British, non-Irish people without recognised UK immigration status" (Quarter 3).
- "Uncertainty in relation to the current political situation is unfortunately underpinning much of our discussions" (Quarter 3).
- "Policy differentials, community tensions as a result of Brexit/Protocol" (Quarter 3).

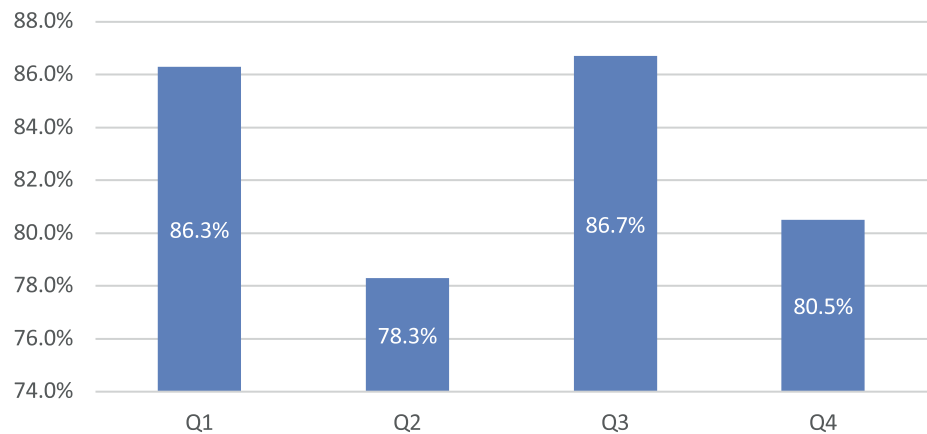
- "Recruitment of staff" (Quarter 3).
- "Haulier's Licence" (Quarter 3).
- "Cross-border insurance, cross-border data" (Quarter 3).
- "Brexit, protocol, lack of Stormont, Border Poll issues" (Quarter 4).
- "Impact of Brexit on non UK/Rol citizens living on either side of the border; increasing hostile environment, led by Tory party in UK, and British Home Office to immigration beginning to politically target the border as a 'weak link' in 'defending their shores from illegal immigration'" (Quarter 4).
- "Cross-border cooperation for peace projects and the specific challenges around differentials in employment law when employing someone from the south under a northern contract" (Quarter 4).
- "Key issues around rights of asylum seekers who are recognised in the UK as having right to remain, but when looking to register with university courses run in the north but accredited by southern universities, they were treated as international students. It was a difficult issue and remains unresolved" (Quarter 4).
- "Electronic Travel Authorisations referenced at meeting of [three organisations]" (Quarter 4).
- "Extra requirements facing Haulage Licence holders. Difficulties for Frontier Workers who do not have British or Irish passports" (Quarter 4).
- "Lack of NI Executive, loss of workforce as a result of Brexit" (Quarter 4).
- "The main obstacles discussed were cross-border insurance, cross-border data, and the introduction of the ETA system" (Quarter 4).
- "Labour mobility" (Quarter 4).
- "Brexit/Protocol, lack of Stormont Assembly, Loyalist Communities Council opposition to cross border activity and co-operation" (Quarter 4).

In terms of the greater frequency of certain issues being discussed in North-South meetings in 2022 in comparison with the previous year, it is important to recall how the underlying context for some of these changed over this period. For example, increasing political tensions in Northern Ireland led to the resignation of the DUP's Paul Givan as First Minister and to the subsequent collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive, with the institutions not being able to function following the Northern Ireland Assembly elections in May as the DUP refused to nominate a Speaker. In Westminster, the Nationality and Borders Bill introduced in July 2021 was enacted into law in April 2022, confirming the legal powers for the UK Government to introduce the Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme.

While organisations and local authorities may have discussed challenges to North-South cooperation in meetings, our surveys indicated that they were nevertheless involved in significant levels of North-South collaboration in 2022, as can be seen in figure 9.

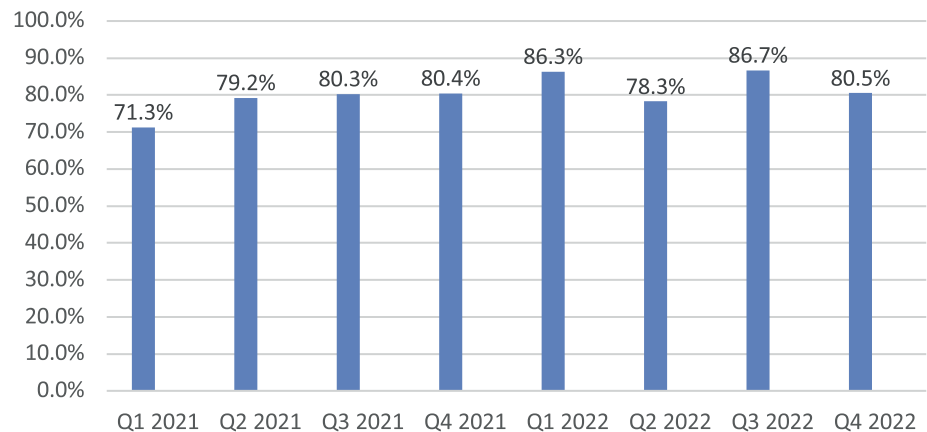


Figure 9 Currently involved in North-South collaboration 2022



Indeed, these figures reflect very high levels of respondents involved in North-South cooperation (the lowest figure being 78.3% in Q2), and are actually somewhat higher than those for 2021, as can be seen in Figure 10.

Figure 10 Currently involved in North-South collaboration 2021 and 2022

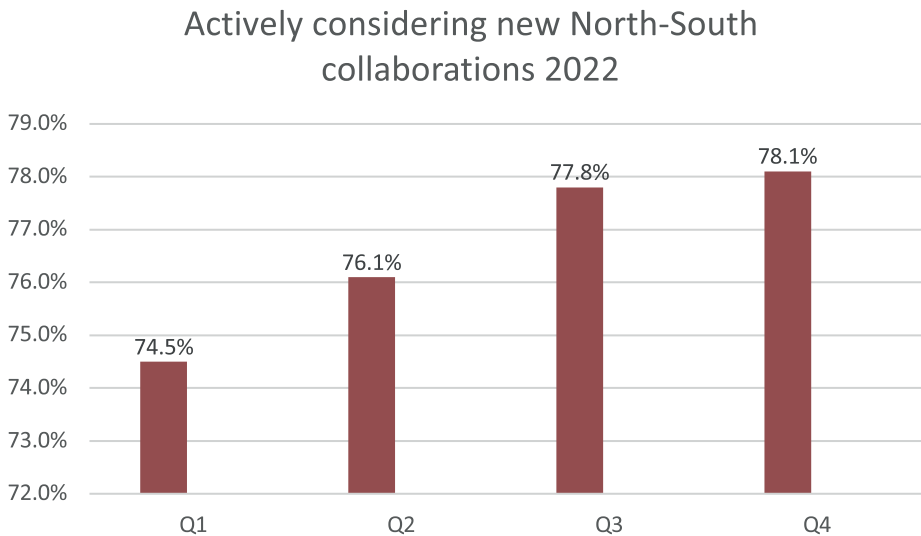


However, a note of caution is needed here. Almost all respondents to our surveys are now repeat respondents, which is beneficial in terms of enabling us to be more confident in identifying certain trends; but it is also reasonable to assume that organisations involved in North-South (and/or East-West) cooperation are more likely to respond to our surveys, which would inevitably lead to these high figures.

The main areas of North-South activity respondents were involved in were education, arts, culture and the creative industries, community development, promotion and support for cross-border cooperation, economic development, the environment, rural development, and sport. However, it should be stressed that there were many other types of activity in which respondents were currently engaged on a North-South collaborative basis, such as human rights, transport, youth, equality, local government, employment, and health, among others. It should be noted that education figured more prominently as an area of North-South cooperation in 2022 than in 2021.

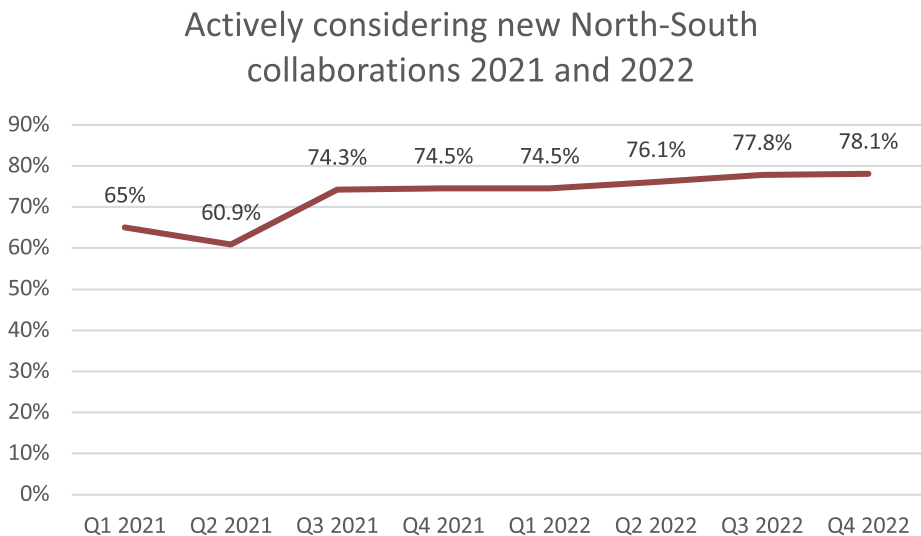
Another positive sign of respondents' commitment to North-South cooperation is in how many indicated that they were actively considering new collaboration activities. As shown in figure 11, significant and increasing majorities said that they were looking for new North-South cooperation projects.

Figure 11



The steady increase in the numbers of those considering new North-South cooperation activities over the course of 2022 (from 74.5% in Q1 to 78.1% in Q4) continues a trend from the previous year, as can be seen in Figure 12.

Figure 12

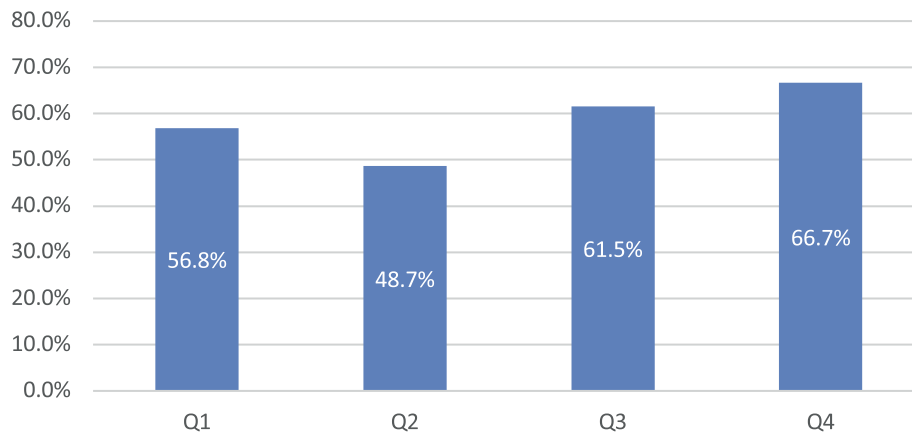


Although no direct correlation can be assumed, this steady increase in those considering new North-South collaborations coincides with the introduction by the Irish Government through its Shared Island initiative of new funding streams. These included the Shared Island Local Authority Development Funding Scheme and the North-South Research Programme.

In terms of funding, responses to the 2022 quarterly surveys point to an overall trend of respondents being in receipt of funding for their North-South collaborations, although with a dip in the second quarter, as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13

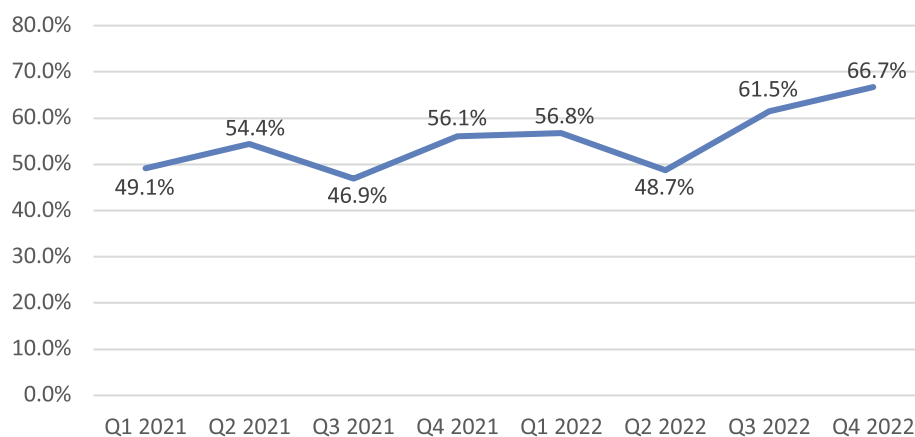
### Currently in receipt of funding for North-South cooperation activities 2022



In 2022, therefore, Q1 saw 56.8% of respondents indicating they were in receipt of funding, rising to 66.7% in the final quarter. This, as can be seen in Figure 14, is the highest percentage of respondents funded for their North-South cooperation activities since these quarterly surveys began.

Figure 14

### In receipt of funding for North-South cooperation activities 2021 and 2022

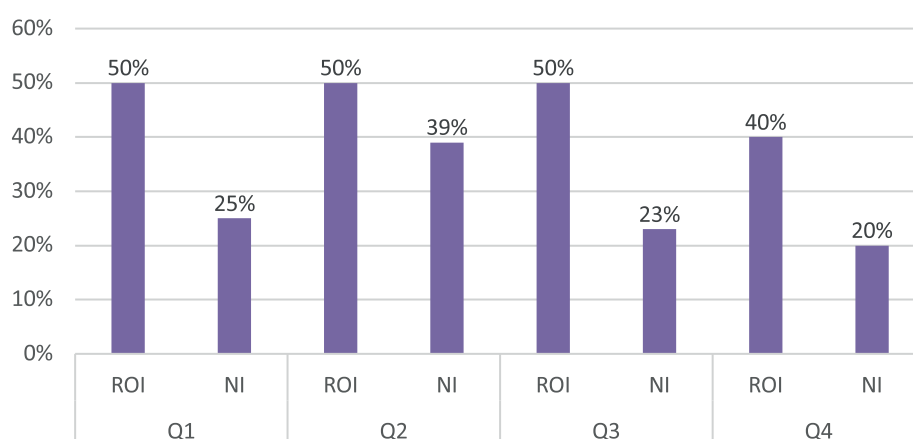


While a degree of optimism should be derived from this overall increase in the percentage of respondents in receipt of funding for North-South cooperation, it needs to be tempered by the fact that in Q4 of 2022 33.3% of respondents were not funded for their North-South collaborations. Moreover, the question arises as to whether these results are representative of the overall landscape for civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland, and whether there is a greater likelihood that those who are not in receipt of funding will not respond to our surveys. It is important to recall, therefore, that these results reflect the realities of the respondents, which may not necessarily correspond to the realities of others. Nevertheless, the fact that the vast majority of respondents are repeat respondents, and that 33.3% of these were not funded for their North-South collaborations in the final quarter of 2022 should be a cause for some concern, particularly if the overall context for cooperation were to become more challenging, and especially if this were to lead to increasing costs.

As we noted in last year's report on the 2021 quarterly surveys, there is a differential in terms of those in receipt of funding for North-South cooperation, depending on whether they are based in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland (and excluding those that are all-island organisations). Figure 15 shows the percentage of respondents not in receipt of funding according to their jurisdiction.

Figure 15

### Not currently in receipt of funding for North-South collaboration (ROI and NI) 2022



What we can see is that for most of 2022 half of the respondents based in the Republic of Ireland indicated that they were not funded for their North-South cooperation activities, although that decreased to 40% in the final quarter. By contrast, the majority of organisations in Northern Ireland were in receipt of funding throughout 2022, with Q2 showing the highest percentage of those that were not, at 39%. However, if we look at the overall responses from 2021 and 2022 (Figure 16) and specifically at those from the Republic of Ireland from the same period (Figure 17), there may be indications of a narrowing of these disparities.

Figure 16

### Not in receipt of funding for North-South collaboration (ROI and NI) 2021-2022

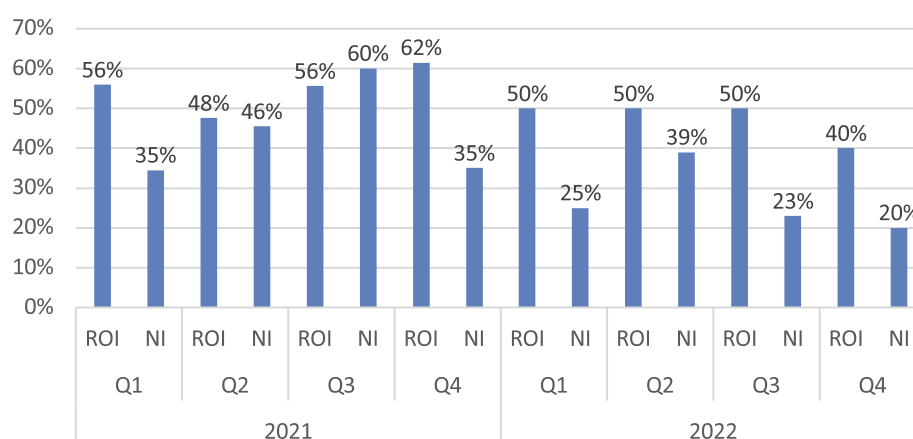
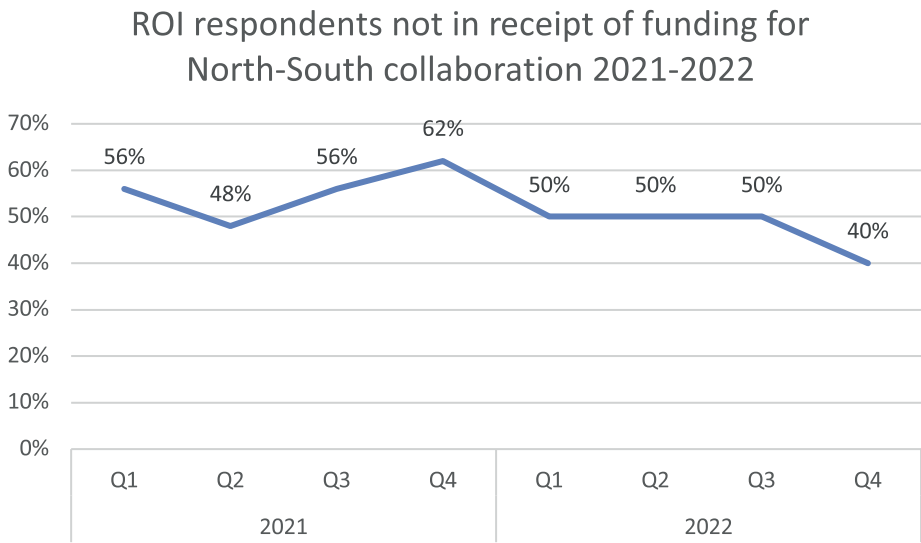


Figure 17



Although there were still higher percentages of respondents from the Republic of Ireland without funding for their North-South cooperation activities than those in Northern Ireland, the gap between them was generally narrower in 2022, with the percentage of those not in receipt of funding falling to its lowest level by the final quarter of that year.

In 2021, the third most frequent source of financing for respondents’ North-South cooperation activities was their organisation’s own core funding. In 2022 this became the second most frequent source of financing. As in 2021, the most important source of funding in every quarter in 2022 was the Irish Government (e.g. the Department of Foreign Affairs’ Reconciliation Fund and the Shared Island Unit). The third most important source of funding was the European Union (e.g. PEACE, INTERREG and LEADER), which had been the second most important in 2021. Charitable foundations were some way behind these, while one respondent identified a Northern Ireland government department as their source of funding, and another identified the UK Government.

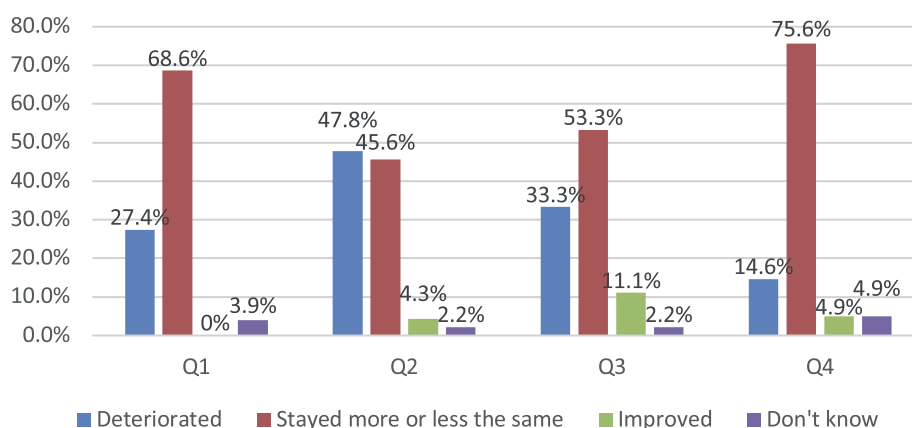
While the opening of the EU’s PEACE PLUS programme will become an important source of funding for North-South cooperation going forward, it is concerning that responses to the 2022 surveys continue to suggest that there are few funding opportunities provided by charitable foundations to support North-South collaborative projects and that such foundations’ programmes may be predominantly limited to single-jurisdictional work. Moreover, in 2022 there was again little evidence of support from Northern Ireland government departments or from the UK Government for North-South cooperation.

## 5.2. The political context for North-South cooperation

Over the course of 2022, respondents to our quarterly survey were asked for their views on the underlying context for North-South cooperation according to four dimensions: the political, social, regulatory and material contexts. Figure 18 sets out how respondents thought the political context had fared in comparison to the previous quarter.

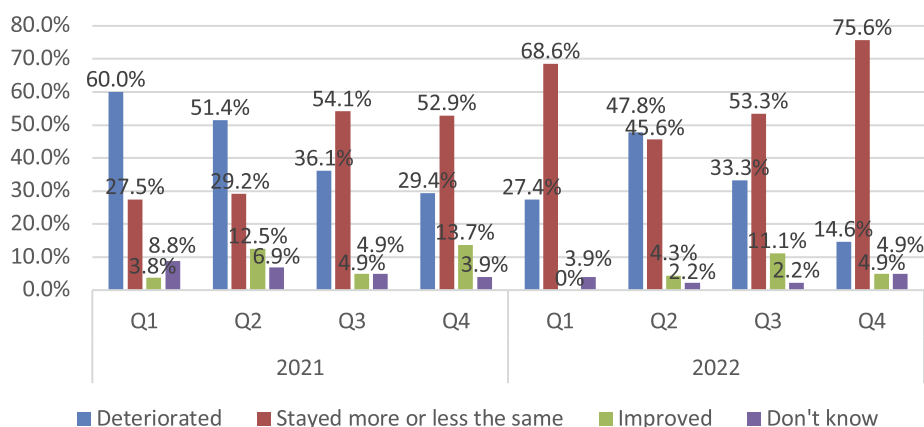
Figure 18

Political context for North-South cooperation 2022



With the exception of the second quarter, the majority of respondents were of the view that the political context for North-South cooperation had stayed more or less the same (with 75.6% of this view in Q4). No respondent thought the political context had improved in the first quarter, and the most positive outlook was recorded in Q3, where 11.1% of respondents thought there had been an improvement. The second quarter saw the most pessimistic response, with 47.8% of respondents indicating that the political context had deteriorated, which was the majority response in that quarter. However, if we compare the responses to this question over the course of 2021 and 2022 in Figure 19, there appeared to be a majority view that the political context had generally remained more or less the same over the course of 2022, which was more marked than in 2021.

Figure 19

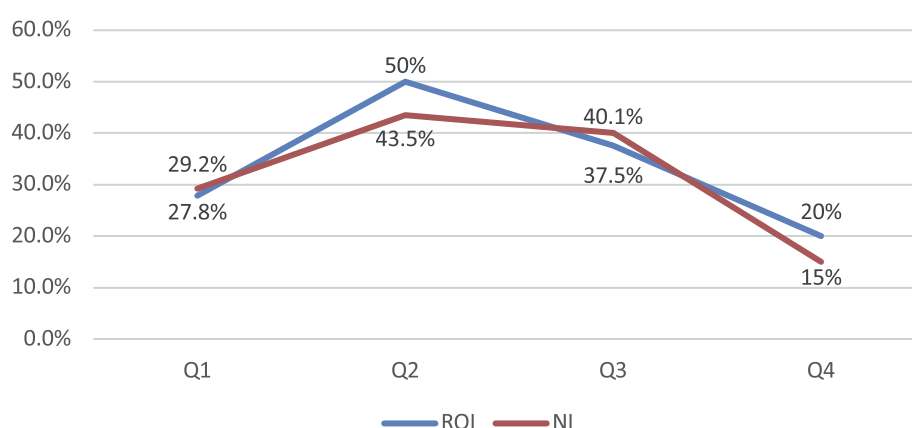
Political context for North-South cooperation  
2021-2022



It is important to place the majority response in 2022 that the political conditions had stayed more or less the same into context. The first half of 2021 saw a majority of respondents viewing the political context as having deteriorated quarter-on-quarter, and then remaining more or less the same – in that deteriorated condition – for the rest of 2021 and for the first quarter of 2022. In the second quarter of 2022 there was a further deterioration of the political context, with respondents then indicating that the political context remained in that deteriorated state for the rest of 2022.

If we exclude respondents representing the views of all-island organisations and focus exclusively on those located in either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland, we see in figure 20 that over the course of 2022 there were variations as to which jurisdiction was more inclined to see the political context for North-South cooperation as having deteriorated.

Figure 20 % of ROI and NI respondents considering political context as deteriorating 2022



This situation differs from what was seen in 2021, where respondents in the Republic of Ireland were generally more inclined than those from Northern Ireland to view the political context as having deteriorated (this was the case in three out of the four quarters in 2021). However, in the [report on the quarterly surveys from 2021](#), the following was noted in relation to how in the final quarter of that year there had been a reversal in terms of how organisations from the Republic of Ireland were less inclined than those in Northern Ireland to view the political context as having deteriorated:

What we are suggesting may be taking place here is that the respondents from the Republic of Ireland who have continued to respond to the surveys throughout 2021 could be more resilient in the face of a more challenging context, with those who stopped responding after quarters 1 and 2 having done so precisely as an indication of an increasingly negative political environment, leading to a disconnect (even if temporary) from discussions on North-South cooperation (p.20).

It could be the case that repeat respondents from the Republic of Ireland in 2022 were continuing to show resilience and a certain degree of accommodation to the overarching political context, thereby no longer apt to be generally more pessimistic than their counterparts in Northern Ireland.

According to the comments offered by respondents, some of which are reproduced below, the issue of greatest concern regarding the political context for North-South cooperation was the absence of functioning political institutions in Northern Ireland. With the resignation of the DUP First Minister, Paul Givan MLA, in February 2022 and the failure to form an Executive following the

Northern Ireland Assembly elections in May, respondents viewed the consequent impact on the operation of the North South Ministerial Council as providing a negative political context for North-South cooperation. Comments also highlighted how the political context in Northern Ireland was seen as making it difficult for those from non-nationalist communities to engage in collaborations with counterparts from the Republic of Ireland. The political context was also seen as being undermined due to political instability in London, caused in part by unilateral actions on the part of the UK Government in relation to the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, namely through its introduction in June 2022 of the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill. However, that instability was further caused by the resignations of Boris Johnson as Prime Minister in September, quickly followed by Liz Truss in October, with the inevitable changes in the make-up of the Cabinet. Nevertheless, respondents did point to some cautious optimism in the final quarter of 2022 due to the new Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, appearing to take a more conciliatory approach to relations with the EU. Moreover, comments also stressed how North-South cooperation was still taking place between local authorities and civic society organisations, despite the political turmoil, and that funding support from the Irish Government's Reconciliation Fund and Shared Island initiative, along with opportunities to be provided by PEACE PLUS, were able to mitigate to some extent the lack of a positive political atmosphere.

- "Protocol still being treated by some politically as an identity rather than a technical issue" (Quarter 1).
- "Some political uncertainty following resignation of First Minister and upcoming elections" (Quarter 1).
- "Our political advocacy with the Irish government has increased, but the context for political advocacy in Northern Ireland has decreased due to the collapse of the institutions" (Quarter 1).
- "The very real threat of a lengthy period in NI without an Executive ahead of and following the Assembly elections in May can only heighten tension not just in NI but across the border" (Quarter 1).
- "Government by civil service means that interactions with cross-border partners are almost inevitably more drawn out than they should be" (Quarter 2).
- "The political interests opposed to greater cross-border collaboration have increased (and been facilitated in increasing) a public narrative that this diminishes their ability to strengthen UK collaboration/their culture and practice" (Quarter 2).
- "The political context for stability and continuity has deteriorated across the board and it is increasingly challenging to encourage women from non-Nationalist communities to engage in new cross border work" (Quarter 2).
- "Relations between the UK Government and the EU and Irish Government have deteriorated to a significant extent in light of the UK Government's introduction of domestic legislation to disapply most of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland" (Quarter 2).
- "Political rhetoric is becoming more divisive – particularly within PUL communities in the North. Upsurge in sectarianism is a problem with people trying to put pressure on those engaging in cross border work" (Quarter 3).
- "Given the elections in Northern Ireland and no Assembly formed, difficult to engage. Also, with PM election in the UK and now change of cabinet, little engagement seems to have been able to take place" (Quarter 3).

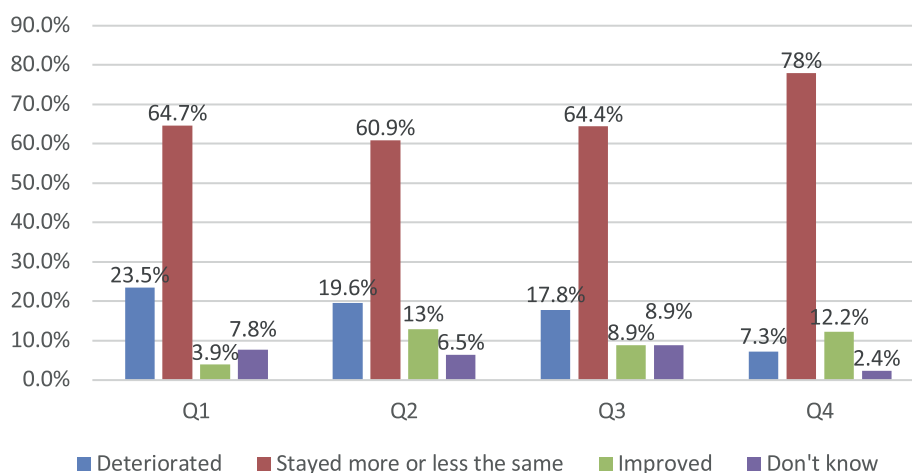
- “There is greater awareness and willingness to engage in conversation on the impact of negative political context on shared work and a responsibility, even if not working in Political conversations spaces because we need to find supportive ways of countering a divisive, fear and exclusion narrative which is running counter to ongoing inclusivity in the everyday work on the ground but we are not making as much ‘noise’ so it may seem it isn’t happening. On the other side of that, colleagues are fearful of being drawn into that “P” political space where they feel they may then be vulnerable to attack from those opposed to cross-border working – which is predominantly but not exclusively coming from Northern political and paramilitary interests” (Quarter 3).
- “For much of this period, political uncertainty in London has not allowed for the improvement of the context for cooperation, although more positive signs began to emerge more recently. However, it is still too soon to tell whether this positivity will endure” (Quarter 3).
- “No government in the North, fear of reprisals if you are seen to work with southern groups” (Quarter 4).
- “We work well with other Local Councils but they are at a standstill because of the lack of an Executive” (Quarter 4).
- “Protocol/Brexit and fall of Stormont all issues on negative side. Shared Island approach is a positive political development” (Quarter 4).
- “The lack of a devolved administration in NI means there is a continuing hiatus in cooperation at highest levels, which impacts at regional and local levels as a consequence. The funding opportunities through Peace Plus, Shared Island and Reconciliation Fund mitigate the consequences of this political hiatus to some extent by providing opportunities for dialogue, interaction and development” (Quarter 4).

### 5.3. The social context for North-South cooperation

Respondents to the quarterly surveys were asked to consider attitudes within communities towards North-South cooperation – the social context. As can be seen in Figure 21, the responses indicated general stability in terms of the social context, with the majority in every quarter in 2022 stating that it had remained more or less the same over the course of the year, with that assessment attaining its highest response rate in the final quarter (78%).

Figure 21

Social context for North-South cooperation 2022



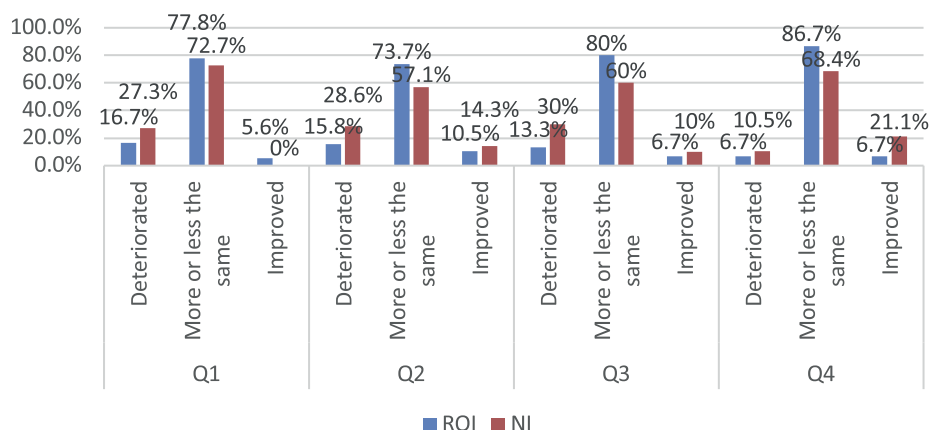
However, while the sense of stability of the social context in regards North-South cooperation over the course of 2022 appears to have been somewhat more significant than in regards the political context, it is also important to note that for the first three quarters the second highest response indicated that the social context had deteriorated. This went from 23.5% in the first quarter to 19.6% in the second, and 17.8% in the third. It was only in the final quarter of 2022 that the second highest response rate (12.2%) indicated that the social context had improved, while only 7.3% were of the view that it had deteriorated. These results – with the second highest response in Q1 to Q3 indicating the social context as having deteriorated – could be suggestive of how civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland view political tensions spilling over into the social context. Indeed, as noted earlier, the first quarter of 2022 came in the immediate aftermath of the resignation of the DUP's Paul Givan from the office of First and Deputy First Minister, while the second quarter was dominated by the Northern Ireland Assembly elections, and the third quarter saw the failure to form an Executive and the introduction of the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill by the UK Government.

However, as Figure 22 suggests, there were differences between how organisations and local authorities in the two jurisdictions viewed the social conditions for North-South cooperation.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> We are focusing here exclusively on organisations and local authorities located in one or other of the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland, and not including those organisations located in both jurisdictions. We are also excluding "don't know" responses (of which there were very few).

Figure 22

### NI and ROI responses on social conditions for North-South cooperation 2022

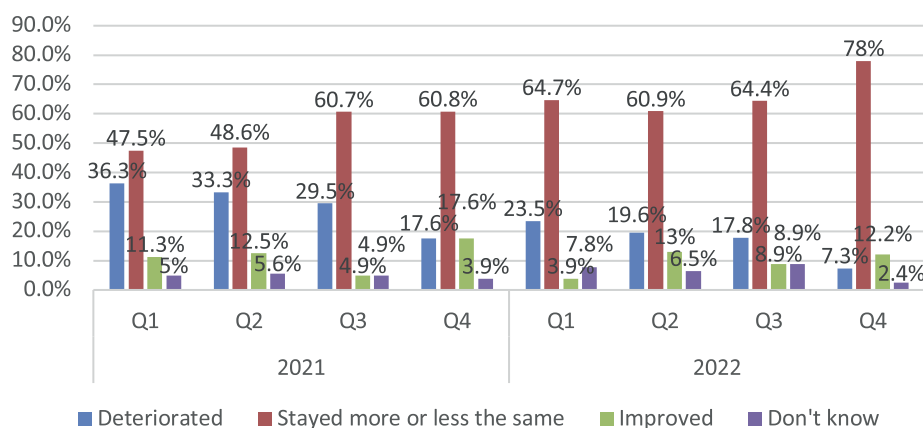


In every quarter of 2022, it was respondents from the Republic of Ireland who were more of the view than those from Northern Ireland that the social context for North-South cooperation remained stable. While the majority of respondents from Northern Ireland also indicated that the social context had stayed more or less the same, they were not as unequivocal as their counterparts from the other jurisdiction. Notably, those from Northern Ireland were more inclined to consider the social context as having deteriorated in every quarter, with that disparity achieving its peak in Q3, where 30% of Northern Ireland respondents being of this view, compared to 13.3% of respondents from the Republic of Ireland – a 16.7% gap between the two. Conversely, those from Northern Ireland were also more inclined to view the social context as having improved. Although in the opening quarter of 2022 no respondent from Northern Ireland indicated the context as having improved (while 5.6% from the Republic of Ireland did so), in every other quarter there were more from Northern Ireland than the Republic of Ireland who were of the opinion that the social context had improved. However, the disparities between respondents from the two jurisdictions was not as significant compared with the different rates indicating the social context as having deteriorated. Whereas, as noted above, the difference in Q3 between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland respondents who considered the social context as having deteriorated was 16.7%, the maximum differential between respondents in the two jurisdictions who saw it as having improved was 14.4% in the final quarter.

Although it is not possible to draw any definitive conclusions from these differences between respondents from the two jurisdictions, it is possible that they reflect their respective communities' proximity to political instability and divisions. While the overall majority of civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland responding to these surveys saw the social context as remaining relatively stable over the course of 2022, the fact that that majority was more pronounced among respondents from the Republic of Ireland could be indicative of how the communities that they serve were less impacted by political events in Northern Ireland and in Westminster. Respondents from Northern Ireland, on the other hand, may have been more inclined to reflect how their constituent communities reacted more positively or negatively to the evolving political situation, which could in itself be seen as indicative of problems of social cohesion and division.

Nevertheless, as can be seen in Figure 23,<sup>12</sup> the overall trend from 2021 to 2022 is one where respondents were becoming increasingly confident of the general stability of the social context for North-South cooperation, even if this does not represent an overall view that it had been improving to any significant extent.

Figure 23 Social context for North-South cooperation 2021-2022



Indeed, looking at the overall trends, the highest percentage of respondents who thought the social context had improved was in the final quarter of 2021, at 17.6%. The steady growth in the number of respondents who thought it had remained more or less the same is coupled with a general decline in the numbers of those who considered it to have deteriorated, from 36.3% in the first quarter of 2021 to 7.3% in the final quarter of 2022.

Those respondents who chose to comment on the social context for North-South cooperation in 2022 reflected quiet determination to collaborate, but tempered with concerns regarding the cost of living crisis (particularly prominent in Q3) and a perception that support from loyalist communities in Northern Ireland for such cooperation was absent due to opposition to the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. As can be seen in the representative sample of the comments offered, some respondents raised concerns that the economic situation in Northern Ireland could be impacting on communities' ability to engage in North-South cooperation.

- "Given the political context has not substantially changed, community attitudes which can be influenced by politicians' stances are likely to have also remained similar" (Quarter 1).
- "The lifting of COVID restrictions and an increased understanding on common social and economic challenges in the context of recovery" (Quarter 1).
- "Upcoming NI elections period will see new political arrangements emerge" (Quarter 1).
- "There are small elements of the Loyalist community in Northern Ireland trying to impede north-south cooperation [...] as a protest against the Protocol" (Quarter 1).
- "Local community groups are more willing to collaborate on environment, climate and tourism issues" (Quarter 2).

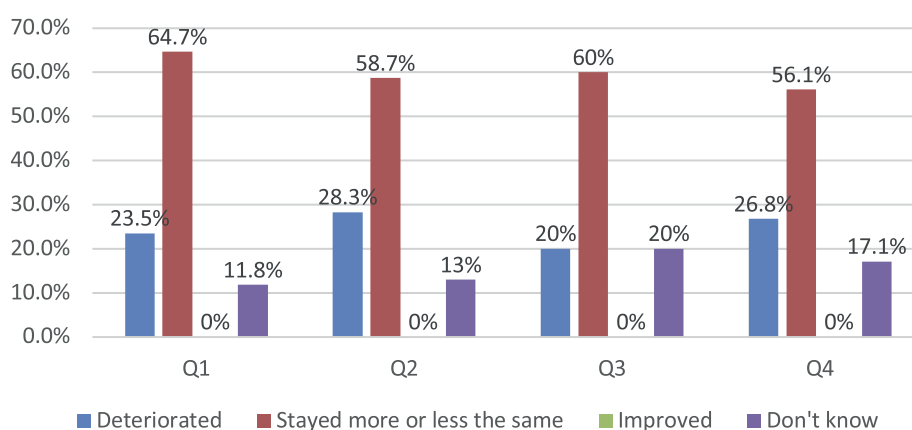
<sup>12</sup> This chart includes the "don't know" responses.

- “The social context has improved in some communities or the desire has increased in some communities, but quite possibly this is balanced by a retraction on collaboration for those working on social development/justice” (Quarter 2).
- “[T]here seems to be a turning away from collaboration and remaining within one’s own ‘jurisdiction’” (Quarter 2).
- “Relationships between communities north and south are very fragile, they need protection from the fallout of extreme politics” (Quarter 2).
- “Priorities have shifted due to cost of living crisis” (Quarter 3).
- “Cost of living crisis potentially limiting capacity to become involved in wider collaboration (though could also be a spur for some)” (Quarter 3).
- “Lack of local gov’t and increased social priorities around the Income Crisis driven by Westminster is having an impact on the ground” (Quarter 3).
- “The social context has become more quietly determined to keep going despite the political context” (Quarter 3).
- “Ireland residents reluctant to travel to Northern Ireland” (Quarter 4).
- “There does seem to be more negativity among Loyalist communities owing to the NI Protocol” (Quarter 4).

## 5.4. The regulatory context for North-South cooperation

The third dimension civic society organisations and local authorities were asked to assess was the regulatory context for North-South cooperation – whether legislation and regulations were supportive of or undermining cross-border relations. The responses, as set out in Figure 24, point to growing uncertainty as to how the regulatory context would facilitate continued North-South cooperation.

Figure 24 Regulatory Context for North-South cooperation 2022

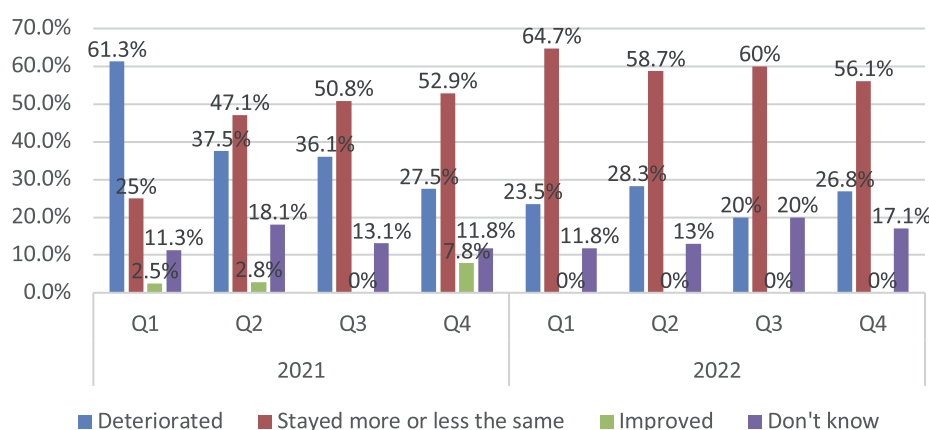




Although the majority response in every quarter was that the regulatory context had remained more or less the same, that majority declined from 64.7% in Q1 to 56.1% in Q4. It is also notable that no respondent over the course of 2022 viewed the regulatory context as having improved. Instead, there was a significant minority (20% or above) in every quarter who considered it to have deteriorated. Also of some significance is the number of respondents in every quarter who did not feel they were in a position to provide an assessment, which even if relatively small (with 20% in Q3 being the highest percentage of those who responded “don’t know”) nevertheless suggests a degree of ongoing uncertainty as to whether the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland had indeed altered the regulatory context in a manner that would impact on their North-South cooperation activities.

Looking at the trends over the course of 2021 and 2022, as set out in Figure 25, we can see how the growth in the majority of respondents in 2021 who considered the regulatory context to have remained more or less the same appears to have suffered a reverse in 2022.

Figure 25 Regulatory Context for North-South cooperation  
2021-2022



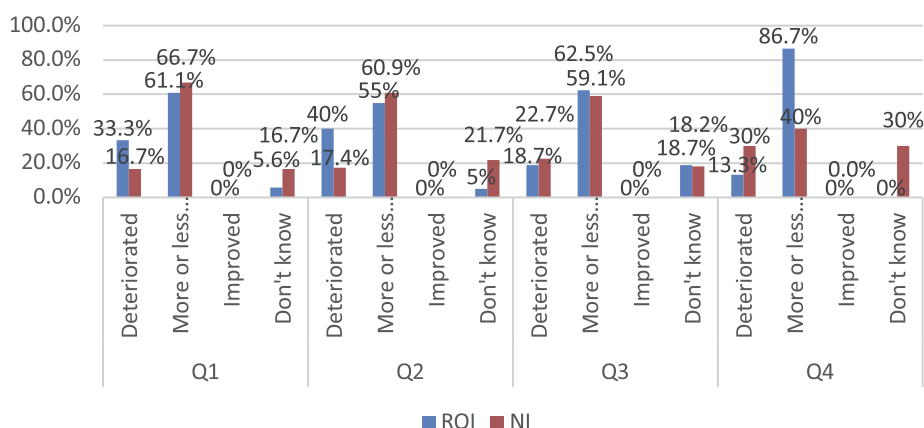
Whereas in 2021 the percentage of respondents who were of the opinion that the regulatory context for North-South cooperation had remained the same grew quarter on quarter (from 25% in Q1 to 52.9% in Q4), in 2022 we can see that the stability of the regulatory context is being questioned. Moreover, although in 2022 there was no equivalent pessimism as that recorded in the first quarter of 2021 (where 61.3% of respondents considered the regulatory context to have deteriorated), there were two quarters (Q2 and Q4) where the percentage of those who noted a deterioration in the regulatory context was above that recorded in the final quarter of 2021.

Focusing on the responses from organisations and local authorities based in one or other of the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland and excluding those based in both jurisdictions (Figure 26), two issues arise. One is that in the first half of 2022 it is those located in the Republic of Ireland who register a significantly more negative perception of the regulatory context for North-South cooperation, with those located in Northern Ireland becoming more pessimistic in the second half of the year. We can thus see, for example, a difference of 22.6 percentage points in Q2 between the percentage of respondents from the Republic of Ireland who considered the regulatory context to have deteriorated (40%) compared to those from Northern Ireland (17.4%); by the final quarter of 2022 this position was reversed, with 30% of respondents from Northern Ireland viewing the regulatory context as having deteriorated, compared to 13.3% of those from the Republic of Ireland (a difference of 16.7 percentage points). Moreover, by the final quarter 86.7% of Republic of Ireland respondents considered the regulatory context to have remained

more or less the same, compared to only 40% of Northern Ireland respondents. The other issue of note is that those in Northern Ireland were more likely than those in the other jurisdiction to indicate that they didn't know whether the regulatory context for North-South cooperation had improved or deteriorated (this was the same in 2021).

Figure 26

### NI and ROI responses to the regulatory context for North-South cooperation



The comments offered by respondents on the regulatory context for North-South cooperation, some of which are reproduced below, point to continued general uncertainty, largely as a result of legislation introduced by the UK Government. The [Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#) was cited by several respondents as a key piece of legislation with potential consequences for cross-border mobility on the island of Ireland, although none of them made an explicit connection to how this might affect North-South cooperation. Nevertheless, the principal undercurrent within many of the comments was how UK Government actions could result in regulatory divergence that would create obstacles for North-South cooperation.

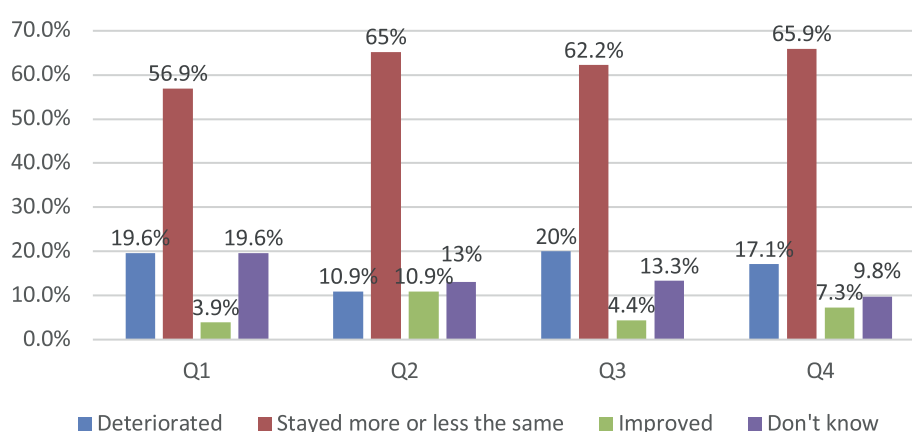
- "Brexit and Protocol arrangements may be becoming stable" (Quarter 1).
- "There is concern about the pending visa waiver scheme being introduced by UK over Brexit for non Irish EU nationals to travel across the Irish border into Northern Ireland/UK (CTA)" (Quarter 1).
- "The regulatory context has not changed, despite a need for unifying regulations on both sides of the border" (Quarter 1).
- "It has specifically deteriorated in relation to immigration and rights of immigrants due to the new immigration regulations (some proposed/some already implemented). While much heavy weather is being made of goods, people also matter and the 'invisible' border is very visible to residents in both jurisdictions who are not UK or ROI citizens – impact has increased significantly over past 6 months" (Quarter 2).
- "There remain major uncertainties around the regulatory framework governing cross-border trade, access to services, continued supply of medicines, environmental standards and governance, conflicts between the UK Internal Market legislation and the NI protocol as well as UK devolution more widely, exacerbated by the threat of trade sanctions, due to unilateral and illegal actions" (Quarter 2).

- “Recently passed UK legislation, the Nationality and Borders Act, provides for the introduction of ‘Electronic Travel Authorisations’ which look set to impact non-British, non-Irish people moving around the island. Regulations will set out detail before the system becomes operational” (Quarter 2).
- “The uncertainty regarding the British Government’s attitude to the Northern Ireland protocol has made the regulatory context uncertain” (Quarter 2).
- “Uncertainty has become the norm and makes forward planning difficult” (Quarter 3).
- “Lack of clarity” (Quarter 3).
- “I am not sure anymore where we are over regulatory issues” (Quarter 3).
- “Nothing is really changing in regulation/legislation because we still have no functioning regional government and UK are not significantly moving to regulate for the North. At the end of October we will know what comes next” (Quarter 3).
- “The Retained EU Law Bill currently in passage at Westminster is giving rise to concerns about increasing divergence of legislation in that it is proposed that much EU-derived domestic legislation would be automatically repealed at the end of 2023 unless preserved by Ministers” (Quarter 4).
- “Impact of Brexit more pronounced in some areas e.g. cross border working” (Quarter 4).
- “Still a mess” (Quarter 4).

## 5.5. The material context for North-South cooperation

In terms of the material context for North-South cooperation, meaning how access to good or services necessary for civic society organisations and local authorities to undertake their collaborative activities effectively, the overall trend in 2022 was of general or even growing stability. From 56.9% of respondents believing this to be the case in the opening quarter, by the final quarter this percentage had reached 65.9%, as can be seen in Figure 27. In every quarter there was also a small minority who thought the material context had improved (the maximum percentage reached was 10.9% in Q2, where it equalled the percentage of those who thought the material context had deteriorated). As we saw, this was not the case in relation to the regulatory context for North-South cooperation, where no respondent throughout 2022 thought this dimension had improved.

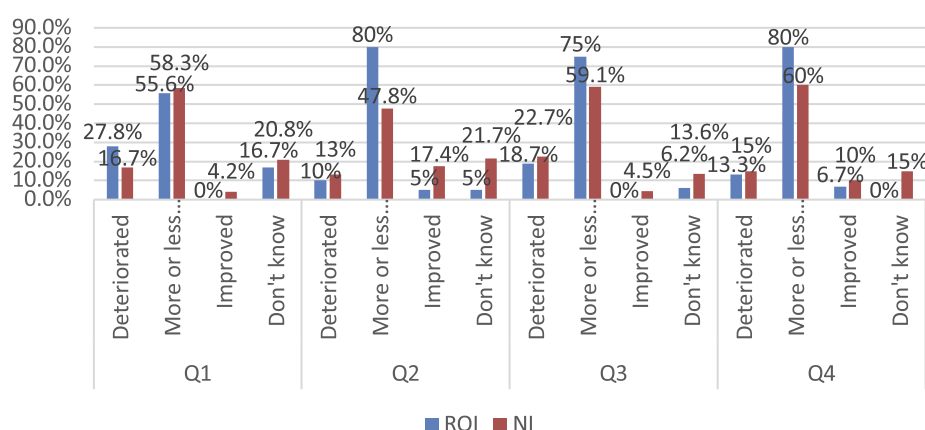
Figure 27 Material context for North-South cooperation 2022



However, although there were respondents in every quarter who thought the material context for North-South cooperation had improved, there were also usually larger minorities who considered it to have deteriorated, reaching a maximum of 20% in Q3. Nevertheless, the majority view throughout 2022 was that the material context had remained more or less the same.

When we concentrate on the responses from civic society organisations and local authorities located in one or other of the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland, we can see as set out in Figure 28 that from Q2 onwards that it is those from the Republic of Ireland who were more inclined to view the material context as having stabilised.

Figure 28 ROI and NI responses on the material context for North-South cooperation 2022

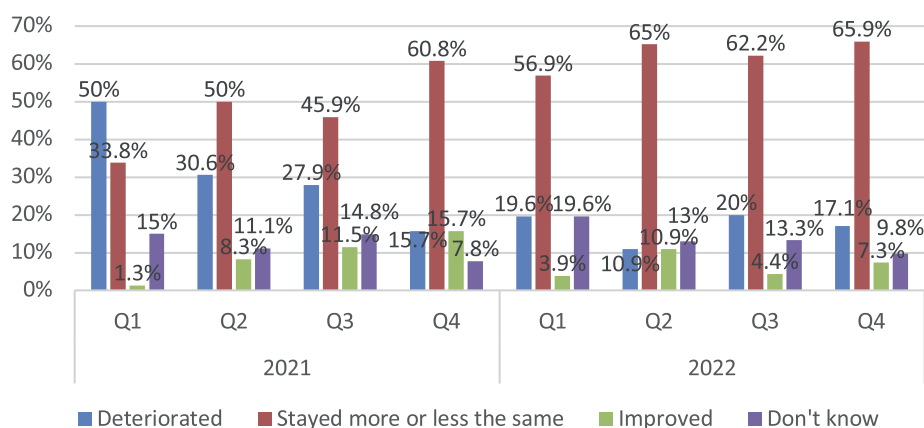


Whereas in the opening quarter of 2022 civic society organisations and local authorities in the Republic of Ireland were more pessimistic than their Northern Ireland counterparts (with 27.8% of those from the Republic of Ireland considering the material context as having deteriorated, compared to 16.7% of those from Northern Ireland), in the following quarters they were more likely to indicate stability. Thus, for example, in Q2 80% of respondents from the Republic of Ireland viewed the material context as having remained more or less the same, while only 47.8% of those from Northern Ireland were of the same view. In contrast, from Q2 onwards those from Northern Ireland were more apt than their Republic of Ireland counterparts to offer either a more positive or negative view of the material context. Not only were they more likely to consider the material context to have deteriorated, but there were also those from Northern Ireland who were more likely to view it as having improved. This would account for why there was a greater majority of respondents from the Republic of Ireland pointing to stability from Q2 onwards.

Indeed, when looking at the evolution of trends from 2021 to 2022, as can be seen in Figure 29, there has been a generally steady growth in the percentage of respondents who considered the material context for North-South cooperation to have stabilised.

Figure 29

### Material context for North-South cooperation 2021-2022



From only 33.8% of respondents in Q1 of 2021 of the opinion that the material context had remained more or less the same, this figure had grown to 65.9% in the final quarter of 2022. Similarly, whereas at the beginning of 2021 50% of respondents thought the material context had deteriorated, by the final quarter of 2022 only 17.1% were of this opinion. However, it should also be noted that there was no equivalent trend in terms of those who thought the material context had improved, where instead we saw considerable fluctuation in 2022. In this case the lowest percentage of respondents who noted an improvement was in the opening quarter of 2021 (1.3%), rising quarter-on-quarter in that year to the highest percentage recorded in the final quarter (15.7%). By contrast, in 2022 there was no equivalent sustained growth in terms of those who considered the material context to have improved.

As can be seen in the representative sample reproduced below, the comments offered in 2022 by some respondents note how factors external to Brexit and the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland were having negative impact on access to goods. In these cases, it was the war in Ukraine that was explicitly or implicitly seen as the cause of the difficulties being experienced, as well as inflationary pressures as a result of rising energy costs (which were also a result of the war in Ukraine) and the depreciation of sterling. However, some respondents also noted how businesses seemed to be adapting to the post-Brexit, while others noted how they were increasingly sourcing goods and services from the other jurisdiction on the island of Ireland.

- "Anecdotal evidence of difficulty accessing some goods" (Quarter 1).
- "No apparent contract opportunities to develop shared work or that would support our development agenda for collaboration" (Quarter 1).
- "We haven't needed any access to goods or services in the other jurisdiction during this quarter, so the best answer is 'don't know'" (Quarter 1).
- "Seems to be flowing OK" (Quarter 1).
- "War related impacts" (Quarter 2).
- "Apart from those who really do not want to, most people are learning to manage and benefit from increasing all-island opportunities" (Quarter 2).
- "The level of North/South trade has increased significantly" (Quarter 2).

- “What would have taken ten days now takes 10 weeks” (Quarter 3).
- “With the passage of time, we hear more and more feedback that companies in these islands are slowly but surely getting to grips with the administrative and logistical impacts of Brexit and the Protocol on trade. So when I state ‘improved’, I say that with this qualified note” (Quarter 3).
- “The impact of the currency crisis in sterling and rising energy and inflation costs is having an impact on many organisations, particularly those in civil society” (Quarter 3).
- “[I]ncreasingly the practical option for those of us in the North is to source from the South in terms of goods” (Quarter 3).
- “Brexit realities beginning to hit home” (Quarter 4).
- “Businesses working their way through protocol admin to better effect” (Quarter 4).

## 5.6. Summary conclusions on the conditions for North-South cooperation in 2022

Among the conclusions that can be drawn from the results of our quarterly surveys in 2022 is that, to a general extent, the context for North-South cooperation had largely stabilised. However, this should not necessarily be seen as an outright positive. Instead, the increasing tendency of respondents to point to stability may instead indicate how local authorities and civic society organisations on the island of Ireland were becoming increasingly acclimatised to contexts that were not necessarily as accommodating to North-South cooperation as they were pre-Brexit. Moreover, responses to the quarterly surveys also showed how that relative stability was tempered by an undercurrent of uncertainty, which became more pronounced at points where the political context was characterised by significant instability. This was particularly the case in light of the failure to form an Executive following the Northern Ireland Assembly elections, and when the UK Government introduced the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, as well as when there were changes in UK Prime Minister. Similarly, however, respondents also reacted with cautious optimism in the wake of Rishi Sunak’s becoming Prime Minister and in what was seen as a more positive approach by the UK Government to its relations with Brussels.

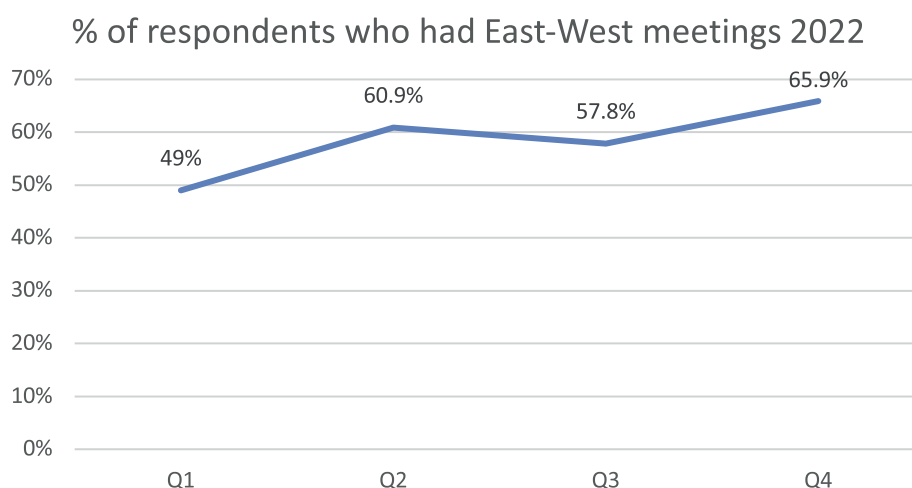
In general terms, while the social and material contexts for North-South cooperation in 2022 were seen as becoming increasingly stable, the relative stability of the political context was only really perceived as such by respondents in the final quarter. By contrast, and what should be of concern, the sense of stability of the regulatory context for North-South cooperation gradually diminished over the course of 2022. However, this report now turns to the contexts for cooperation between the island of Ireland and Great Britain.

## 6. THE EAST-WEST DIMENSION

### 6.1. Contact and collaboration

In terms of civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland responding to our surveys and their contacts with counterparts in Great Britain, the overall trend is of an increase in terms of those who indicated they had had meetings, as can be seen in Figure 30.

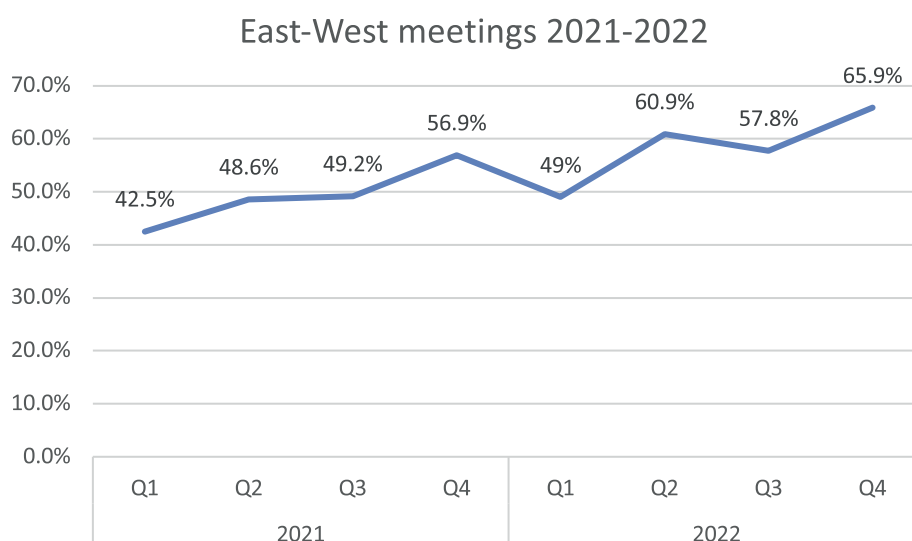
Figure 30



From Q2 onwards, therefore, the majority of respondents indicated that they had had meetings with civic society organisations and/or local authorities in Great Britain, and even in the opening quarter of 2022 49% of respondents indicated the same.

Indeed, if we look at the trend over the course of 2021 and 2022, as set out in Figure 31, we can see a generally steady increase in the percentage of respondents who had meetings with counterparts in Great Britain.

Figure 31



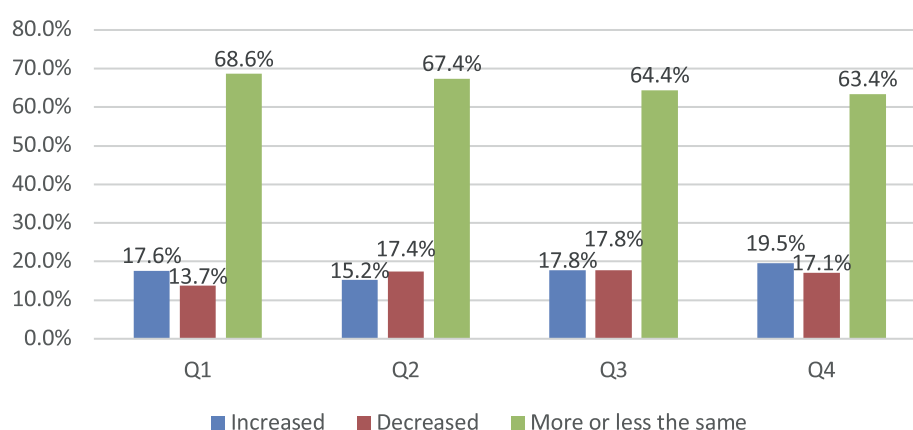
From 42.5% of respondents in the opening quarter of 2021, by the final quarter of 2022 the percentage had increased to 65.9%, although with some fluctuations in 2022. However, perhaps understandably, these figures are below the equivalent for North-South contacts, where the lowest percentage of those who had had meetings with counterparts in the other jurisdiction on the island of Ireland was 70% (in Q1 of 2021), and the highest was 90% (in Q1 of 2022).



Respondents to our quarterly surveys were also asked whether the number of meetings they had with their counterparts from Great Britain had increased, decreased, or stayed more or less the same as in the previous quarter. Figure 32 suggests that the quarterly levels of East-West contact remained generally stable over the course of 2022.

Figure 32

### Number of East-West meetings in 2022 compared with previous quarter

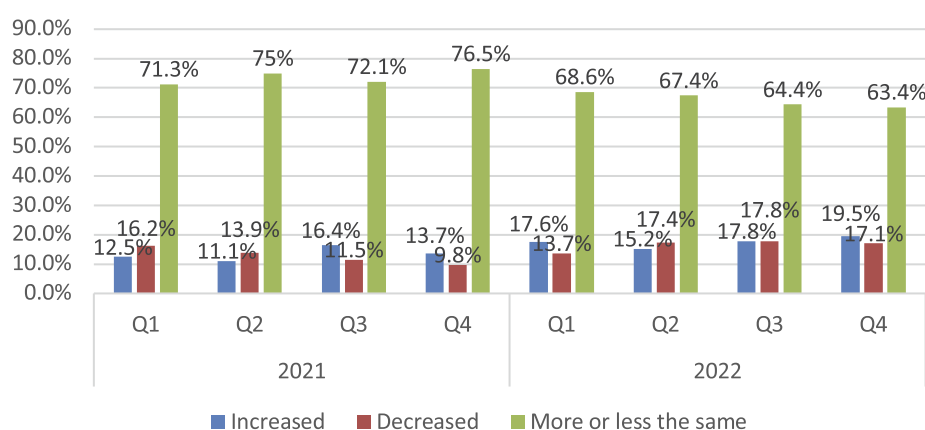


However, whereas the vast majority of respondents in every quarter of 2022 indicated that the number of East-West meetings they had was more or less the same as in the previous quarter (always above 60%), there was some fluctuation in terms of the percentages of those who reported that the number of meetings had increased or decreased. In the first and final quarters the percentages of those reporting that they had had more meetings with counterparts in Great Britain than in the previous quarter (17.6% and 19.5% respectively) were above those who indicated that they had had fewer meetings (13.7% and 17.1% respectively). In the second quarter of 2022, this situation is reversed, with a higher percentage (17.4%) reporting fewer East-West meetings than those reporting an increase (15.2%). In the third quarter the percentages of those who reported an increase and those who reported a decrease in the frequency of meetings was the same (17.8%).

If we compare the same responses over the course of 2021 and 2022, as set out in Figure 33, the fluctuation in the frequency of East-West meetings in 2022 is more discernible.

Figure 33

### Number of East-West meetings in 2021 and 2022 compared with previous quarter

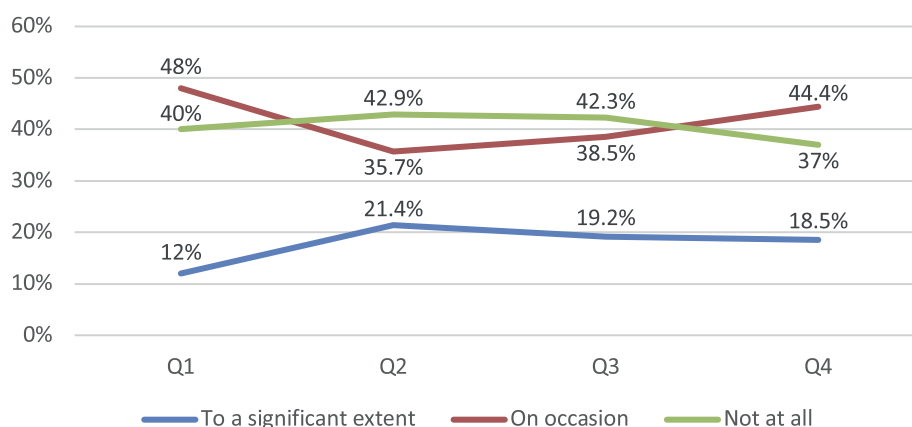




Although there was always a majority in every single quarter over this two-year period that reported the same frequency of meetings as in the previous quarter, we can see that that majority suffered a steady decline from the final quarter of 2021 to the same quarter in 2022.

The extent to which civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland discussed obstacles to East-West cooperation in their meetings with counterparts in Great Britain in 2022 is set out in Figure 34.

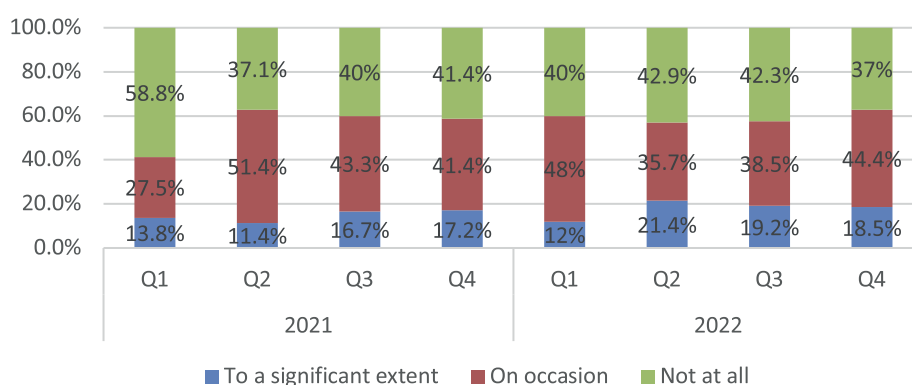
Figure 34 Discussion of obstacles to East-West cooperation 2022



Whereas discussions on obstacles to cooperation may not have featured as strongly in East-West meetings as was the case in North-South meetings, and the highest response rates in Q2 and Q3 were that obstacles to cooperation did not feature at all in East-West meetings, respondents nevertheless indicated that this was a fairly important theme in their conversations. Indeed, while Q2 saw the highest percentage of those who reported their East-West meetings discussing obstacles to a significant extent (21.4%), if we combine the percentages of those who discussed them to a significant extent with those where they were discussed on occasion, then meetings where they were not discussed at all form a minority in every quarter of 2022.<sup>13</sup>

As can be seen in Figure 35, this has been the case from the second quarter of 2021 onwards.

Figure 35 Discussions of obstacles to East-West cooperation 2021-2022



<sup>13</sup> The percentages of meetings where obstacles were discussed to a significant extent combined with those where they were discussed on occasion are as follows: 60% in Q1, 57.1% in Q2, 57.7% in Q3, and 62.9% in Q4.

What we can also see is that over a two-year period, it is from the second quarter of 2022 onwards that the highest percentages of East-West meetings where obstacles to cooperation were discussed to a significant extent were recorded.

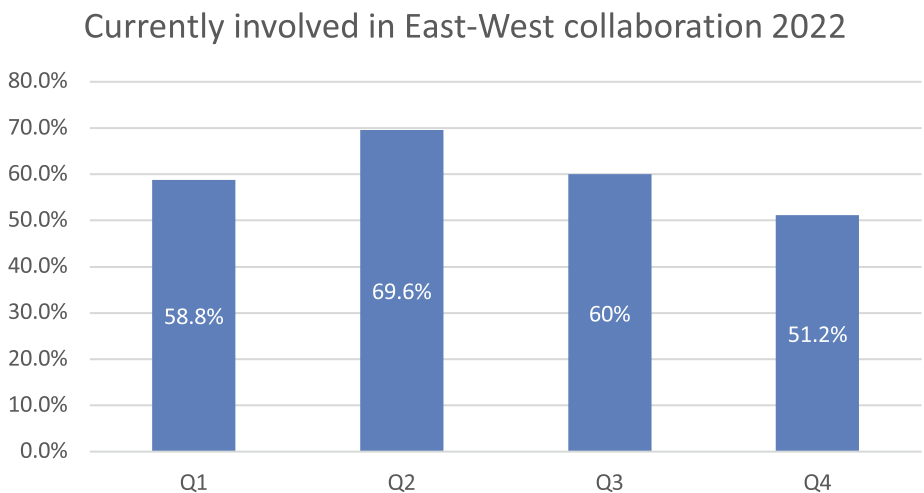
Where obstacles to East-West cooperation were discussed, according to the more detailed comments offered by respondents, the issue raised with the greatest frequency related to access to funding, and the design of new UK funding programmes. However, as can be seen in the sample of comments reproduced below, respondents also noted policy differences between the nations and regions across these islands, as well as the status of political relations between governments.

- “The emerging proposals for new UK-wide Government policies and proposed programmes (e.g. Levelling Up, UK Shared Prosperity Fund) have different implications across the UK making it more difficult to take a common view with partners in GB” (Quarter 1).
- “They have primarily revolved around NI orgs educating orgs in Great Britain on cross border issues, such as the potential ETA [Electronic Travel Authorisation] scheme.” (Quarter 1).
- “Changes in funding streams and how UK SPF [Shared Prosperity Fund] might be different here to the UK” (Quarter 1).
- “In the absence of transnational INTERREG programmes for GB organisations, how they might continue to develop joint cooperative projects with Irish organisations” (Quarter 1).
- “Discussion was more to do about collaboration between Great Britain and wider EU not just Ireland” (Quarter 2).
- “Impact of non-devolution of some matters/ devolution of others means regions can be as different between policy and practice to be discussed and worked with is often as great/ greater than cross border work.” (Quarter 2).
- “New but still unclear arrangements across the different jurisdictions of the UK for new UK programmes such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund are creating” (Quarter 2).
- “The impact of the Protocol and Brexit on devolution and devolved nations” (Quarter 2).
- “Loss of Interreg and Horizon opportunities” (Quarter 3).
- “Lack of investment / rising costs” (Quarter 3).
- “Recent funding call for collaboration between Scotland and Ireland but only academia is eligible” (Quarter 3).
- “The peace fund is completely directed to north south relationship building. We have grave concerns with this” (Quarter 3).
- “Access of UK entities to EU funds” (Quarter 4).
- “Although part of the UK, Public administration in N. Ireland is very different to that in England & Wales. A key example is the role of local authorities and their relationship & linkage to Government; the impact of front-line work being within ‘non-devolved’ matters. e.g. immigration including asylum seeking and refugee community integration. The continuing ‘fake news’ on protocol holding centre stage in N. Ireland Political Party debate” (Quarter 4).

- “Difficulties relating to finding networking arrangements within a Europe-wide consortium of universities” (Quarter 4).
- “Political stalemate in NI and in UK/EU context and its impact on everyday life” (Quarter 4).

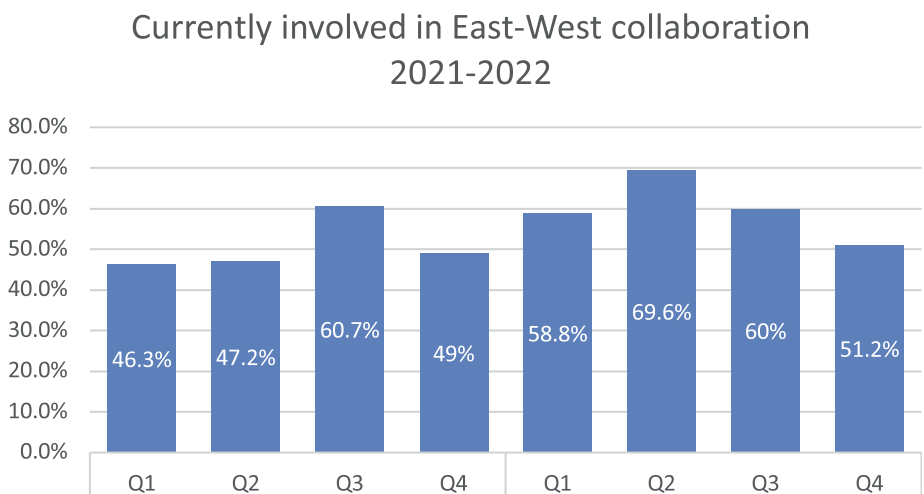
Although once again, and as had been the case in 2021, the numbers of respondents involved in East-West collaboration activities were significantly lower than those cooperating with counterparts in the other jurisdiction on the island of Ireland, a majority were nevertheless doing so in every quarter of 2022, as can be seen in Figure 36.

Figure 36



Almost 70% of respondents in Q2 stated that they were collaborating with counterparts in Great Britain, which is a very high rate even if it is lower than the highest rate recorded for North-South cooperation (86.7%), or even lower than the lowest rate for the North-South dimension (78.3%). Indeed, Figure 37 suggests that 2022 saw a comparatively higher rate of East-West engagement than in 2021.

Figure 37



However, although with the exception of Q3 there were a higher number of respondents involved in East-West collaborations in every quarter of 2022 in comparison with the same quarter in the previous year, we must again sound a note of caution. These generally higher rates of East-West collaboration are taken from a declining number of respondents to the quarterly surveys in 2022.

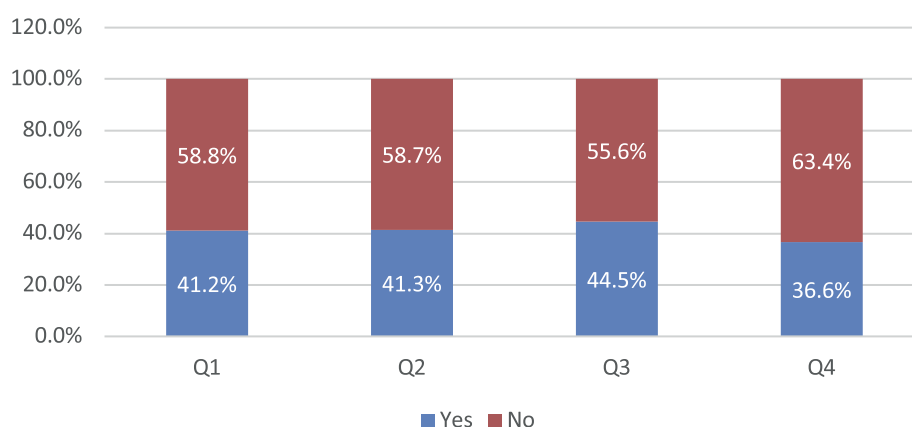
These repeat respondents could, therefore, be comparatively more resilient than those who ceased to respond to the surveys and who may have also ceased their East-West collaborations.

Nevertheless, those respondents who were actively involved in one or more East-West collaborations in 2022 indicated that the principal themes of their collaborations were education (the most popular theme), human rights, economic development, arts and culture, and community development. Other areas of East-West collaboration included peace and reconciliation, the environment, citizens information, equality, and local government.

In every quarter of 2022, as can be seen in Figure 38, the majority of civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland that responded to the surveys indicated that they were *not* considering new collaborations with counterparts in Great Britain.

Figure 38

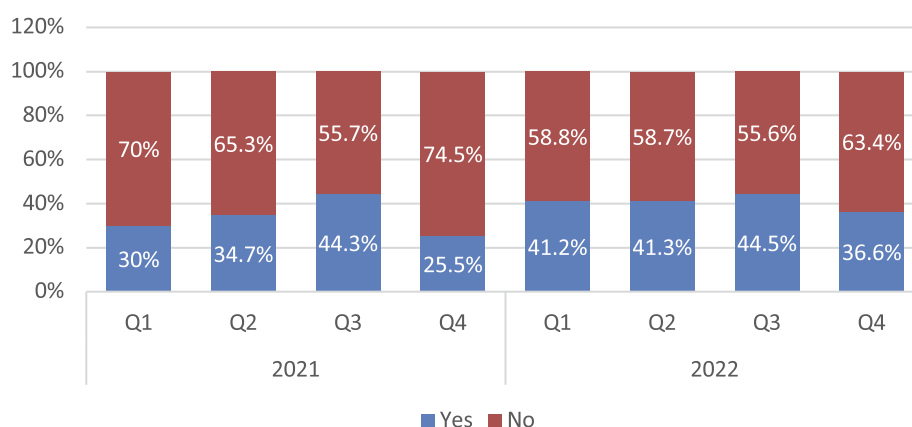
### Actively considering new East-West collaborations 2022



The highest percentage of respondents who were considering new East-West collaborations was 44.5% in the third quarter. This figure contrasts sharply with the equivalent for North-South cooperation, which was 78.1% (in Q4), and where the lowest percentage considering new North-South projects was 74.5% (in Q1). However, if the results from 2021 are taken into account, there may be some limited room for optimism in terms of the future of the East-West dimension. Figure 39 suggests that, in general, respondents in 2022 were more willing to consider new East-West collaborations than was the case in 2021.

Figure 39

### Actively considering new East-West collaborations 2021 and 2022

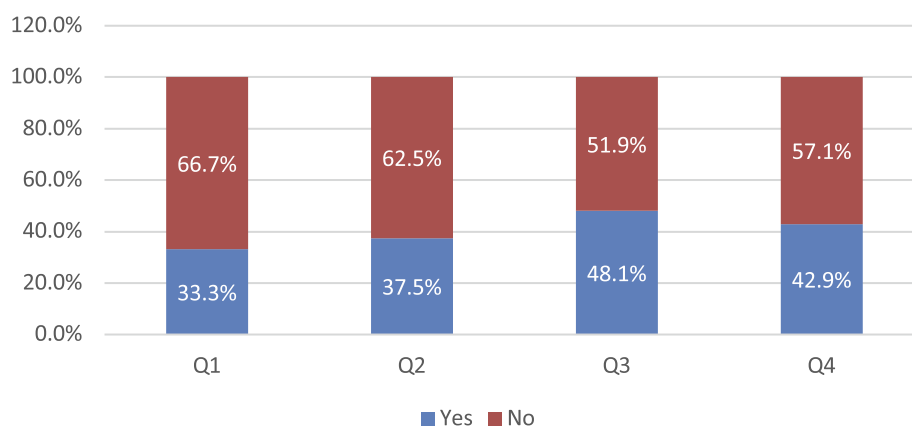


And yet, although in 2022 on average 40.9% of respondents indicated they were planning new collaborations with counterparts in Great Britain as compared to 33.6% in 2021, any optimism must be tempered by the potential increased resilience of the reduced number of respondents in 2022, as already mentioned.

There are, of course, important factors that could explain why civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland are more involved in North-South collaborations than East-West, not least geographical proximity. But the availability of funding must also play an important part, and Figure 40 shows how the majority of respondents involved in East-West activities in 2022 did so without any funding support.

Figure 40

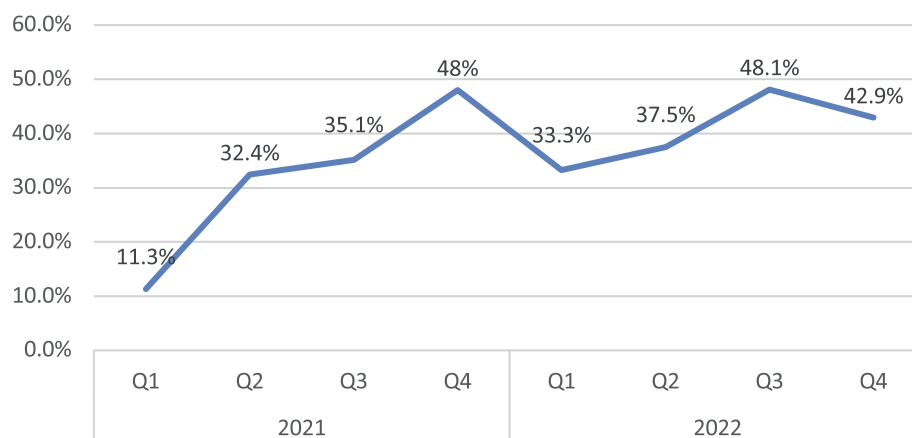
### Currently in receipt of funding for East-West collaboration activities 2022



Again, similar to the trend in relation to respondents considering new East-West collaboration activities, there were generally more indicating in 2022 that they had funding support for their East-West collaboration in comparison with 2021, as can be seen in Figure 41.

Figure 41

### Funded for East-West collaboration activities 2021-2022



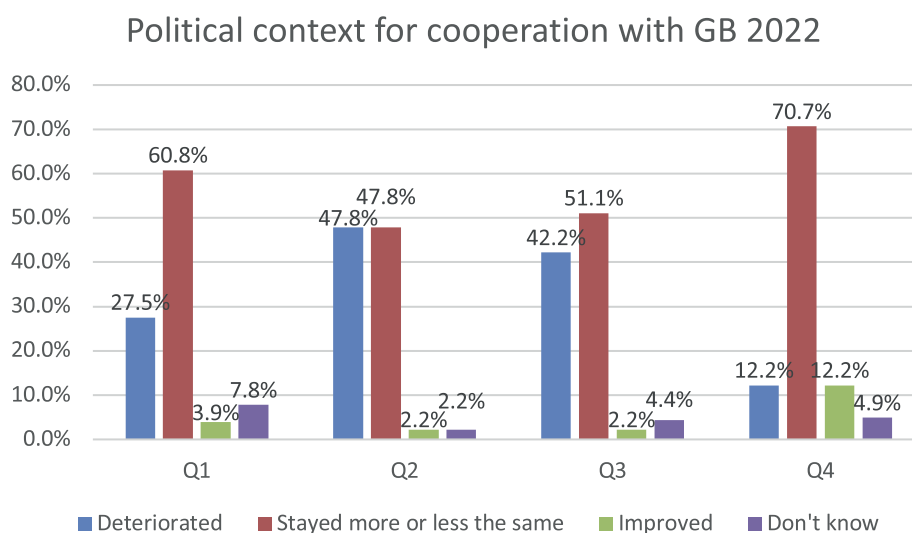
The lowest percentage of those indicating they were funded in 2021 was 11.3% (Q1), whereas the lowest in 2022 was 33.3% (Q1). However, if the result from the first quarter of 2021 is discounted as a comparative outlier, then the overall trend is generally stable, although with a slight overall increase in 2022.<sup>14</sup>

According to respondents, the primary sources of *external* funding support for East-West cooperation were charitable foundations, followed by the EU, and then the UK Government, exactly in the same order as in 2021. Other, less significant sources, were the Irish Government, Northern Ireland Government Departments, and UK (academic) research bodies. However, it is crucial to note that – as was the case in 2021 – many respondents indicated that they used their own core funding to support their East-West activities; in fact, this was the second highest source of financing for those activities.

## 6.2. The political context for East-West cooperation

When asked about the extent to which the political context in 2022 was supportive of East-West cooperation, the overall trend was somewhat similar to that found in relation to North-South cooperation. As shown in Figure 42, a very significant majority (60.8%) in the first quarter considered the political context to have remained more or less the same as in the last quarter of 2021; the equivalent figure for North-South cooperation was 68.6% (see Section 5.2). In the second and third quarters, however, the responses were more negative, with 47.8% in Q2 judging the political context for East-West cooperation to have deteriorated, and 42.2% holding this view in Q3. The final quarter of 2022 then witnessed a significant majority (70.7%) regarding the political context to have remained more or less the same (with only 12.2% seeing it as having deteriorated). Again, this was broadly the trend seen in relation to the political context for North-South cooperation, although with some differences in terms of the strengths of opinion.

Figure 42

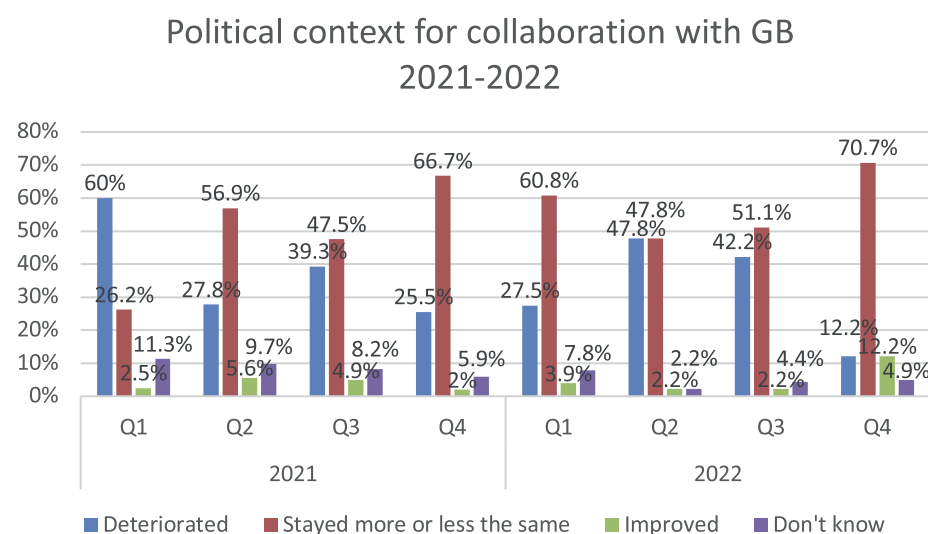


<sup>14</sup> The average percentage of those in receipt of funding in 2021 (discounting Q1) was 38.5%, with the average in 2022 being 40.4%.

In terms of the responses indicating a deterioration in the political context in 2022 for East-West collaboration, apart from the second quarter there was no significant difference between those community organisations of local authorities based in either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland. Although Q2 saw 63.2% of those who were of the view that the context had deteriorated being from the Republic of Ireland, in Q3 and Q4 there was an equal 50/50 split, and in Q1 54.5% of negative responses were from the Republic of Ireland.

Figure 43 shows the responses to this question from both 2021 and 2022, and suggests that respondents were more inclined to view the political context as having stabilised in 2022 than in 2021.

Figure 43



The year-on-year comparison also shows that – with the exception of Q2 – respondents in every quarter of 2022 were less inclined to assess the political context as having deteriorated than in the previous year.

Where respondents to the 2022 surveys offered more detailed comments on their assessment of the political context for cooperation with counterparts in Great Britain, the views expressed are reflective of some major political events in Westminster. Thus, in the second quarter there were generally negative comments relating to the UK Government's introduction in June of the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, which sought to nullify or amend several aspects of the agreement between the UK and EU, specifically regarding checks on trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the role of the European Court of Justice in legislation in Northern Ireland. Respondents' comments also pointed to the uncertainty caused by the changes in the leadership of the Conservative Party, and therefore of Prime Minister, although some glimmer of hope appears to have been attached to Rishi Sunak's taking over of the premiership, which was seen as translating into a different approach to the UK's relations with the Republic of Ireland and the EU.

Some of those comments are reproduced below.

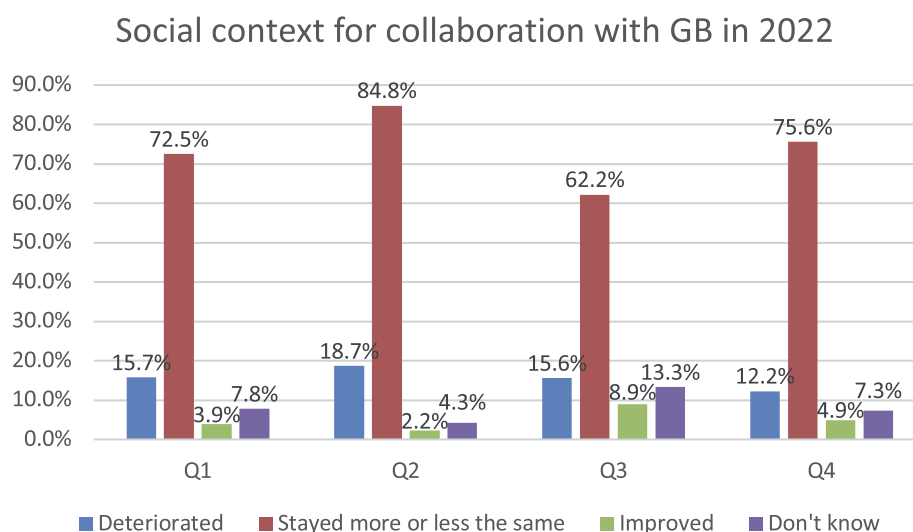
- “Opportunities for collaboration in times of crisis – a European war changes the context and hopefully allows leaders to co-operate on more pressing ecological issues (in the widest sense)” (Quarter 1).
- “It’s difficult to gauge the UK Government’s commitment to the Protocol. This uncertainty then has a detrimental knock-on effect on strategic planning for any potential new collaborations” (Quarter 1).
- “Improving dialogue with main political parties, however, considerable distrust of Conservatives” (Quarter 1).
- “Protocol being dealt with, unionist unity” (Quarter 2).
- “The issue over the Protocol and the introduction of new legislation to override the Protocol is souring East/West relations” (Quarter 2).
- “The political environment as managed by the current government at Westminster is driving a wedge between majority communities in NI and impacting on community relations and space for collaboration” (Quarter 2).
- “Raft of new legislation from London on protocol, legacy issues, etc ill thought-out and not wanted” (Quarter 2).
- “Unilateral actions by UK Government regarding the Protocol have had a significant negative effect on the political context for cooperation between the island of Ireland (particularly the Republic of Ireland) with GB” (Quarter 2).
- “Political uncertainty in UK PM leadership context” (Quarter 3).
- “Lack of political leadership over protocol – conservative leadership campaign and lame-duck prime minister” (Quarter 3).
- “With the election of a new PM taking place for part of this quarter and a new cabinet now in place, little decisions could be made by organisations in Great Britain” (Quarter 3).
- “Uncertainty regarding fiscal policies, impact on trading and the uncertainty regarding the EU and the Northern Ireland protocol means a challenging political context” (Quarter 3).
- “UK immigration policy and position on Protocol is creating significant challenges for community organisations including our own” (Quarter 3).
- “New government in place” (Quarter 4).
- “Better relations between Ireland and UK since Sunak became PM” (Quarter 4).
- “We are all living and working in constantly shifting and increasingly sinking sand with no sense that the government or political leaders have the capacity to agree a solution – we are drifting to an exit door with no idea if it will open or where it will take us. Still we rise every day and do what needs to be done. It cannot continue like this” (Quarter 4).
- “New Prime Minister and Ministers should lead to some stability and clarity on policy” (Quarter 4).



### 6.3. The social context for East-West cooperation

The social context (attitudes within communities) in 2022 for collaboration between community organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland with counterparts in Great Britain appears to have been more robust than the political context. Generally, as can be seen in Figure 44, there were significant majorities (greater than those seen in relation to the political context) in every quarter judging the social context to have remained more or less the same.

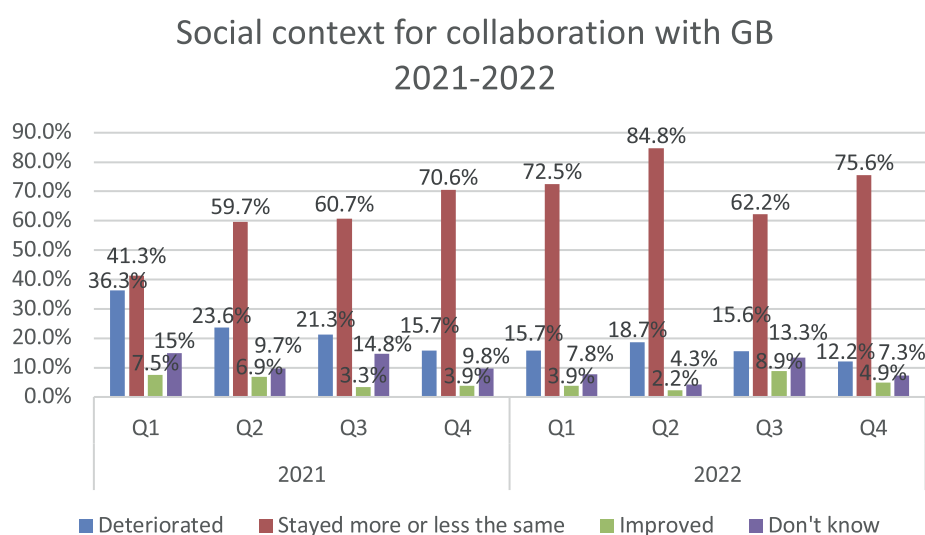
Figure 44



It is interesting to note that it is in the second quarter of 2022 that the highest percentage of respondents thought the social context had remained the same as the previous quarter (84.8%), which is the same quarter that saw the highest percentage (47.8%) indicating that the political context had deteriorated. However, it should also be noted that there were no indications that respondents saw significant improvements in the social context for East-West cooperation. Indeed, not only was the highest percentage of those who considered the social context to have improved 8.9% (Q3), in every quarter there were more respondents who did not know whether the social context had improved or not than those who thought there had been an improvement.

As can be seen in Figure 45, the general trend over the course of 2021 and 2022 has been for respondents to increasingly see the social context for cooperation with Great Britain as having stabilised.

Figure 45



Although in 2022 there was no return to the more negative outlook in the first quarter of 2021, where 36.3% of respondents assessed the social context to have deteriorated, the growing consensus around stability does not necessarily correspond to a significantly more positive view of the situation. Instead, it is a view that the social context is simply not getting worse.

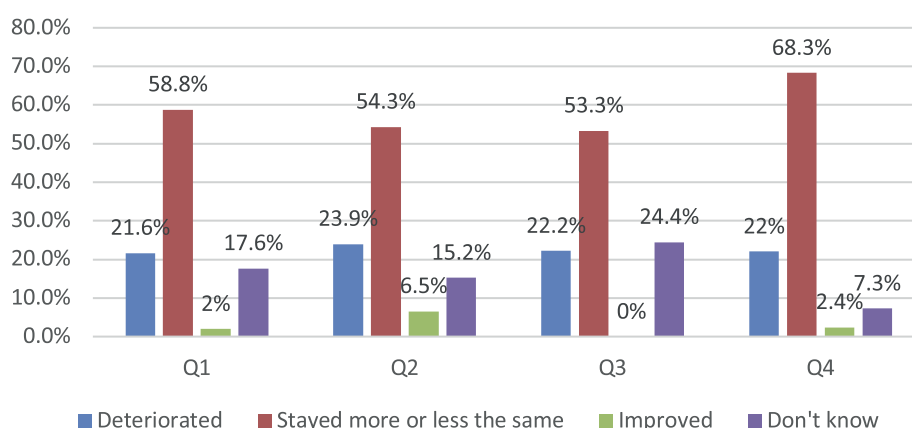
Whereas there were a significant number of respondents who offered more detailed comments in relation to the political context for East-West cooperation, this was not the case in terms of the social context. Those who did so generally gave very short comments, which in some cases pointed to a lack of contact with counterparts in Great Britain, as can be seen from those that have been reproduced below.

- "Rejection of amnesty legislation" (Quarter 1).
- "No change; very little social contact" (Quarter 1).
- "End of Covid restrictions" (Quarter 1).
- "Building good relations with veterans groups in GB" (Quarter 2).
- "UK focus has changed due to EU-UK deterioration" (Quarter 2).
- "Not sure, no ongoing social collaboration in recent years" (Quarter 2).
- "Narrow eligibility criteria for funding that is available for collaboration" (Quarter 3).
- "We have been developing potential projects and meeting both in NI and GB" (Quarter 3).
- "People working within rights and social justice are working more closely together because of the political context becoming more negative. The hostile environment is a political reality propelling social actors to more collaborative work" (Quarter 3).
- "Cost of living crisis" (Quarter 4).
- "Focus on cost of living and post-covid has meant groups are inward-looking and less likely to focus on looking up and out" (Quarter 4).

## 6.4. The regulatory context for East-West cooperation

Although stability was the favoured response when it came to how local authorities and civic society organisations on the island of Ireland perceived the regulatory context for East-West cooperation in 2022, there was also a significant proportion of respondents who saw it as having deteriorated, as can be seen in Figure 46. Another factor of note is the element of uncertainty suggested by the percentages of those who indicated they didn't know whether the laws and regulations underpinning or affecting East-West collaboration had improved or deteriorated.

Figure 46 Regulatory context for collaboration with GB in 2022



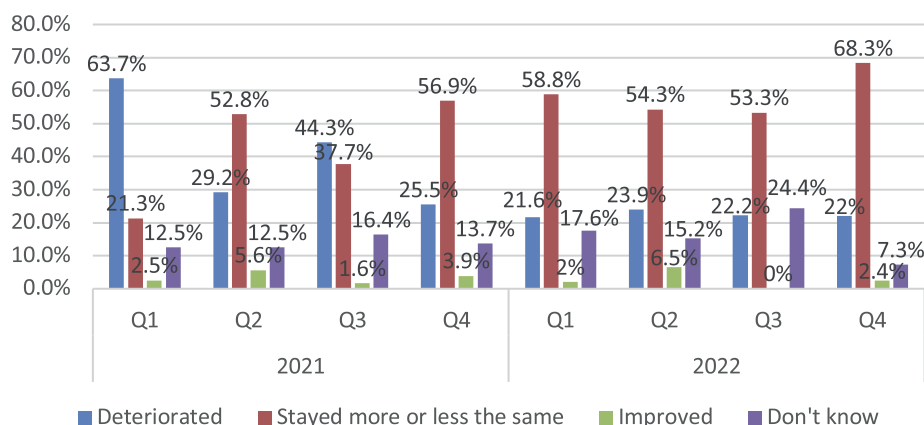
The final quarter of 2022 is when the highest percentage of those who regarded the regulatory context as having remained more or less the same is recorded (68.3%), which is considerably higher than in all previous quarters and may be due to it coinciding with the perceived change in approach by the new UK Prime Minister in his government's relations with the EU. Similarly, it is in the second quarter that the highest percentage of respondents regarded the regulatory context as having deteriorated (23.9%), which was the period in which the UK Government introduced the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill. In fact, the lowest percentage of respondents pointing to deterioration was 21.6% in the opening quarter, with all remaining quarters seeing 22% or above of respondents holding a negative view of the regulatory context.

However, it should be noted that there were higher percentages of respondents judging the regulatory context to have deteriorated in relation to North-South cooperation (see Section 5.4). The highest percentage holding this view in terms of cooperation on the island of Ireland was 28.3% in the second quarter. But there were also higher percentages of respondents viewing the regulatory context to have stabilised for North-South cooperation in comparison to East-West cooperation, with the highest being 64.7% (Q1) and the lowest 56.1% (Q4). Another major difference in relation to views of the regulatory context for North-South and East-West cooperation is that no respondent saw it as having improved in terms of the former, while there were some instances of positive responses in relation to East-West cooperation in quarters 1, 2 and 4. Moreover, as has already been suggested, there were higher percentages of "don't knows" in relation to East-West than North-South cooperation.

In fact, the evolution of responses to this question in the quarterly surveys from Q1 of 2021 to the third quarter of 2022 suggests an increasing tendency to either judge the regulatory context for East-West cooperation to have stabilised, or to indicate uncertainty ("don't know") rather than point to a deterioration, as can be seen in Figure 47.

Figure 47

### Regulatory context for collaboration with GB 2021-2022



The final quarter, however, bucks the trend, as the percentage of “don’t knows” falls significantly, while the percentage of those suggesting the regulatory context has remained more or less the same increases by 15 percentage points.

The sample of more detailed comments offered by respondents reproduced underlines the sense of uncertainty as to the nature of the regulatory context for cooperation between the island of Ireland and Great Britain. From these comments, the uncertainty appears to result from both a lack of knowledge of any relevant changes, and from legislative moves by the UK Government liable to cause regulatory divergence between the two islands.

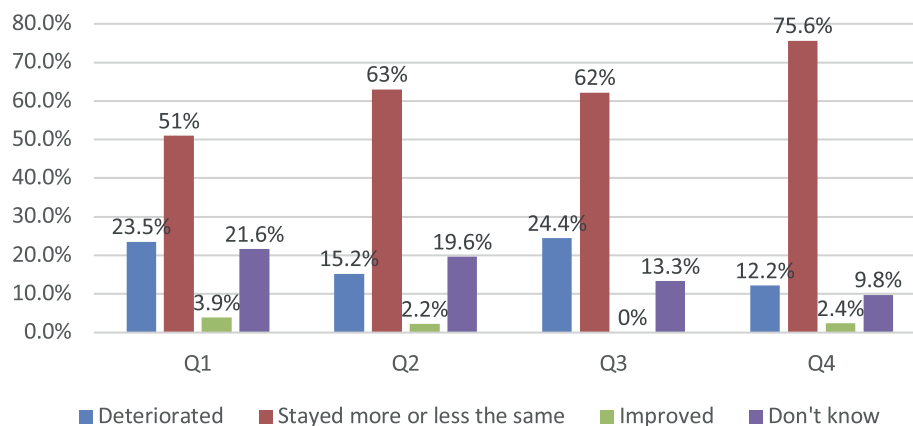
- “Simple issues such as shipping of goods are more complicated with new customs and regulatory formalities” (Quarter 1).
- “I’m not aware of any regulatory changes between NI and Britain that would impact our project or potential new collaborations between the regions” (Quarter 1).
- “We have not been keeping abreast of any changes in the regulatory context, and therefore don’t know” (Quarter 1).
- “Brexit complications regarding European funding applications” (Quarter 2).
- “The rules [...] on free movement are beginning to change daily” (Quarter 2).
- “Proposed legislation affecting human rights and equality has prompted an increase in conversations between organisations about respective responses” (Quarter 2).
- “Failures to implement [...] Protocol and resolve outstanding issues” (Quarter 3).
- “Not sure where we stand on regulations at the moment” (Quarter 3).
- “We are increasingly ‘out of regulation’ watching deregulation increase on the other island (less so Scotland)” (Quarter 4).
- “Retained EU Law Bill may result in greater divergence between NI and GB due to requirements of Protocol, depending on progress on Protocol Bill and negotiations also” (Quarter 4).

## 6.5 The material context for East-West cooperation

The final core dimension respondents are asked to consider in our quarterly surveys is the material context for East-West cooperation. In other words, whether access to goods or services necessary for organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland has altered in ways that affect their ability to collaborate effectively with organisations in Great Britain. In 2022, as set out in Figure 48, the overall trend was generally in line with the responses regarding the regulatory context, although with slightly more pronounced majorities regarding it to have remained more or less the same.

Figure 48

Material context for collaboration with GB in 2022

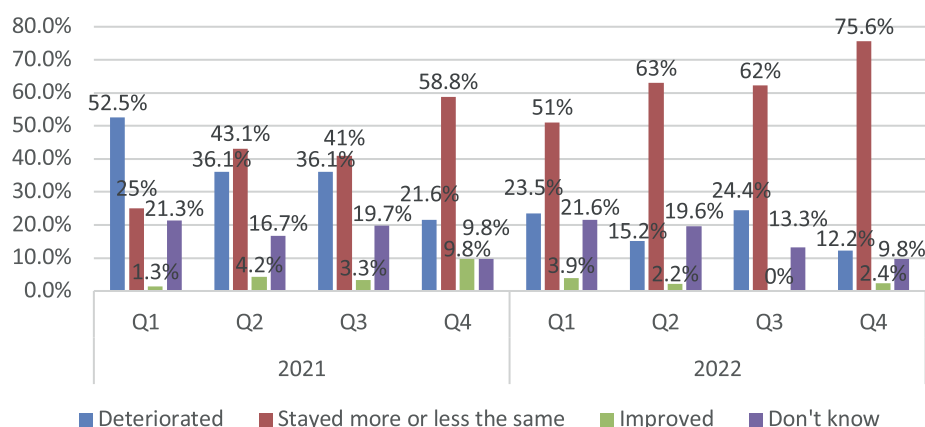


By the final quarter of 2022, the vast majority of respondents (75.6%) were of the opinion that the material context for their collaborations with partners in Great Britain had remained more or less the same, while this quarter also saw the lowest percentage (12.2%) saying that it had deteriorated. However, what should also be noted is the lack of a more positive outlook on the material context, with very few prepared to say it had improved. This is similar to the responses in regards the regulatory context, and in both cases no responses in Q3 indicated an improvement. Moreover, there were also substantial minorities who were unsure as to the status of the material context, even if the percentage of those answering "don't know" decreased quarter-on-quarter, from 21.6% in Q1 to 9.8% in Q4.

The general trend over 2021 and 2022, as shown in Figure 49, is one where civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland were increasingly apt to seeing the material context for East-West cooperation to have stabilised, without implying it had necessarily improved.

Figure 49

Material context for collaboration with GB  
2021-2022



Whereas in the opening quarter of 2021 only 25% of respondents were of the opinion that the material context had remained more or less the same, as already noted this percentage had reached 75.6% by the final quarter of 2022. Over the same period, the percentage of those who regarded the material context as having deteriorated fell from 52.5% in Q1 of 2021 to 12.2% in Q4 of 2022. Importantly, however, the percentages of those who thought the material context had improved fell in 2022.

Where respondents offered explanatory comments on their views of the material context for East-West cooperation in 2022, the issues raised are not always connected to the UK's departure from the EU. In these cases, there are concerns regarding the cost of living crisis, rising energy prices, as well as the impacts of the war in Ukraine, among other factors. However, there are also some examples offered of where access to goods or services is seen as having become more challenging due to Brexit, although without necessarily providing any details.

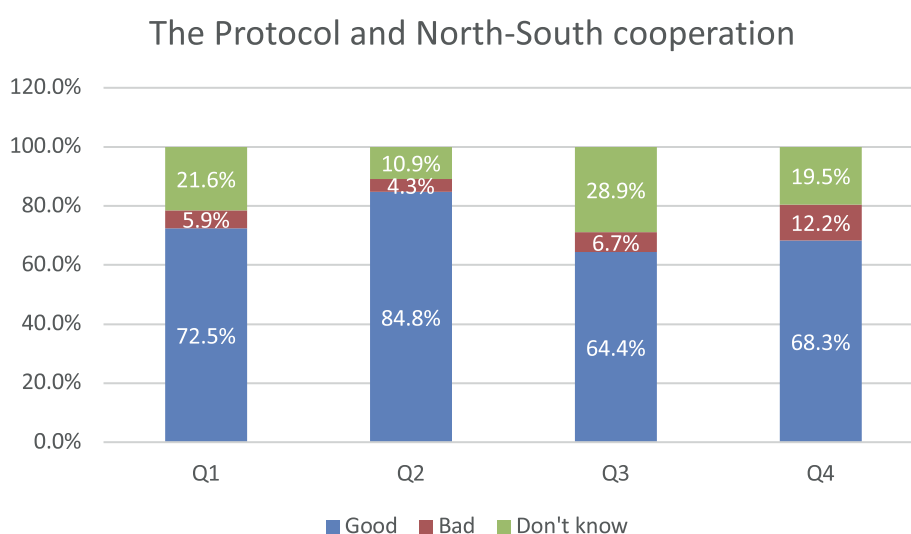
- "P&O ferries dispute will impact on supply chain and the war in Ukraine will change the material context. NI on the periphery and lagging behind on sustainable energy initiatives" (Quarter 1).
- "I'm not aware of any material changes between NI and Britain that would impact our project or potential new collaborations between the regions" (Quarter 1).
- "The decline in citizens' material circumstances – enhanced by the burgeoning cost of living crisis – which represents deterioration in living standards has conversely 'improved' the context for organisations to collaborate" (Quarter 2).
- "Simple issues of reliability on deliveries reduced due to customs and regulatory confusion" (Quarter 3).
- "Still difficult to get some products from Great Britain to Ireland" (Quarter 3).
- "The impact of fiscal policies and rising inflation and rising energy prices will have a negative effect on the material context for collaboration" (Quarter 3).
- "Notice when ordering goods some are not delivering to NI or are charging higher rates" (Quarter 4).
- "Inflation is the key issue; we have to fly to conferences – increasingly it is easier to get to/from GB (outside London) via Dublin" (Quarter 4).
- "The continuing obstacles with regard to Brexit and the NI Protocol impact" (Quarter 4).

## 7. THE PROTOCOL ON IRELAND / NORTHERN IRELAND

Given its prominence in discussions over North-South and East-West cooperation and relations, and its specific role in maintaining the necessary conditions for cooperation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, respondents to the 2022 quarterly surveys were asked for their views on the extent to which it was supportive of North-South and East-West cooperation.<sup>15</sup>

In terms of North-South cooperation, there were relatively significant majorities in every quarter that thought the Protocol was on balance a good thing. However, as can be seen in Figure 50, there was no consistent trend in terms of growth of those who were of this opinion.

Figure 50



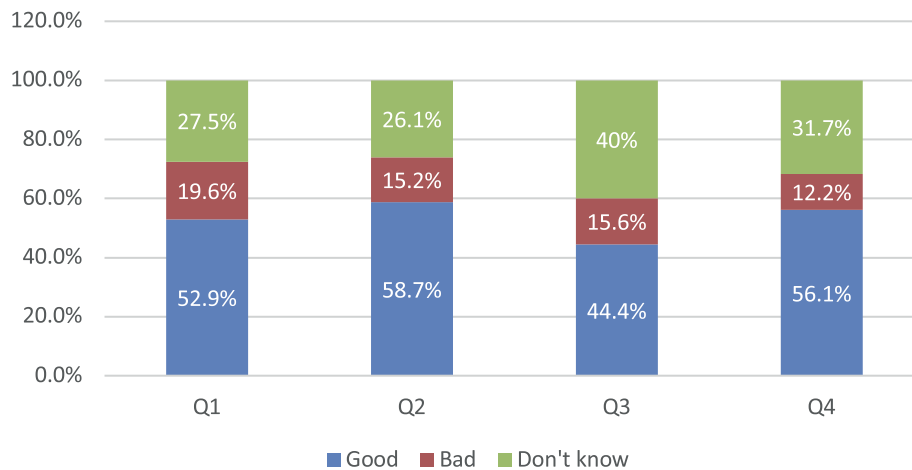
Although there was a quarter-on-quarter increase in terms of those who thought the Protocol was good for North-South cooperation (from 72.5% in Q1 to 84.8% in Q2), there was then a decrease in Q3 followed by a small increase in Q4. The final quarter of 2022 also saw the highest percentage of respondents (12.2%) of the opinion that the Protocol was on balance a bad thing for North-South cooperation. It should also be noted that there were large percentages in the second half of 2022 (28.9% in Q3 and 19.5% in Q4) who were not sure whether the Protocol was good or bad for North-South cooperation.

The picture was comparatively more negative in terms of the Protocol's support for East-West cooperation. This is not to suggest, as can be seen in Figure 51, that community organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland were of the opinion that it was definitively bad for their collaborations with counterparts in Great Britain.

<sup>15</sup> This was a departure from the format followed in the 2021 surveys (from Q2 onwards), where respondents were asked to assess the extent to which they felt informed about the Protocol, whether there was enough relevant information available to those involved in cooperation, and what were their sources of information.

Figure 51

## The Protocol and East-West cooperation



What is clear from Figure 51 is that the percentages of those who thought the Protocol was good for East-West cooperation were much lower than those who were of that opinion in relation to North-South cooperation. The highest percentage in terms of East-West cooperation was 58.7% (in Q2), whereas it had been 84.8% for North-South cooperation (in the same quarter). Importantly, whereas the percentages of those who thought the Protocol was bad for East-West cooperation were higher than in relation to North-South cooperation, the significant difference is in terms of those who were uncertain. In this case, in the third quarter 40% of respondents did not know whether the Protocol was a good or bad thing for cooperation with counterparts in Great Britain.



## 8. FINAL THOUGHTS BY WAY OF A CONCLUSION

Each of the quarterly surveys in 2022 gave respondents the opportunity to offer any final thoughts they might have, and many did so. As was the case in 2021, what came through strongly in many of these comments was the commitment from community organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland to North-South and East-West cooperation and relations. But, once again, respondents' commitment to such cooperation and relations is not always equalled by the political context in which they have to operate, nor by policy-makers' ability to grasp the opportunities presented by cross-border cooperation.

Crucially, both some of the final comments as well as responses to individual questions in the 2022 surveys also point to a view that the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland is a necessary instrument, but not one that is not without its flaws. Certainly, while a significant majority regarded it as on balance a good thing for North-South cooperation, that was not the case in terms of East-West cooperation. Moreover, it was also clear that the Protocol – as part of an international agreement between the UK and EU – could not be a guarantee of the maintenance of the necessary conditions for North-South cooperation if unilateral actions by one of the parties to that agreement appeared to be contrary to the Protocol, resulting in high levels of mistrust. This came through strongly in responses reacting to the UK Government's introduction of the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, undermining confidence in its commitment to maintaining the necessary conditions for North-South cooperation, with London's repeated voicing of its willingness to diverge from the EU further compounding that mistrust, which also impacted on the confidence to maintain East-West cooperation and relations. However, it was also noticeable how, following Rishi Sunak's rise to Prime Minister and the change in his administration's tone in its dealings with the EU, respondents reacted with some comparative optimism. Whether that optimism is well placed will be borne out in the 2023 surveys, but we will give the final words to our respondents, with some of their final comments from 2022 reproduced below.

- "Protocol is a good thing IF implemented in the correct spirit" (Quarter 1)."
- All organisations need to stay actively focused, informed and forward-looking" (Quarter 1).
- "Fact-checking is needed – loudest voices are those of the anti-Protocol groups- fearmongering and lies are the norm – where are the counter-arguments and counter voices and fact-checking that needs to be done? Now more than ever the civic engagement process is needed to ensure the voices of those on the ground are heard" (Quarter 1).
- "Cooperation projects are coming to the end of their cycle and partners from the UK have to say goodbye to any further opportunities" (Quarter 2).
- "New/forthcoming UK legislation impacting human rights and equality has prompted increased conversations on a North-South and East-West basis about potential implications and responses" (Quarter 2).
- "There is an urgent need for engagement between political reps and civil society organisations. This is not for lack of effort on the part of civil society. Grassroots organisations are best placed to ensure accurate and timely information is being distributed to communities – avoiding misinformation and vacuums" (Quarter 2).

- “Relationships on the island are in perpetual motion similar to other parts of the world. Politics are changing quickly and we now see how international events in Ukraine have an impact even on this island. The work of conflict resolution must be continuous and improved to react to the changing context all the time. An insufficient level of attention has been given to the NI situation in recent years, which means that there may be slippage in the confidence-building measures to ensure peace and non-violence” (Quarter 3).
- “The Protocol (although flawed) is necessary due to the decision of the UK to leave the EU. The Protocol is positive for North-South cooperation as it allows enterprise in the North to access EU markets and should promote economic growth in the region. In terms of East-West cooperation, the Protocol is the agreed mechanism to manage the relationship between the UK and EU, and has been ratified by the UK parliament. To this end it can be positive to manage and support that very damaged working relationship” (Quarter 3).
- “Continue the confidence-building between North and South through the soft power of art, culture, language, sport, religion, history and environment. Continue to develop real links to eliminate old barriers on the island” (Quarter 4).
- “More ‘systems thinking’ needed to bring some understanding, to bring some order to the current chaos” (Quarter 4).

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