

Post-Brexit border could add 24pc to cost of doing business here

By Colm Kelpie

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A HARD Border post-Brexit could add almost a quarter to the cost of doing business for some firms, the Irish Exporters Association has said.

Simon McKeever, IEA chief executive, also said he had been "shocked" at the level of unpreparedness among large Irish-owned firms, although they were now "getting their head around" the customs issue. Smaller companies, however, were not, he added.

Mr McKeever told TDs at the Oireachtas Budgetary Oversight Committee that IEA members were grappling with the threat of a return to a administrative border and what would happen to the considerable amount of trade between Ireland and the UK.

"Our sense from companies is that bigger, non-Irish-owned companies are getting their head around the customs piece," he said.

"The bigger Irish indigenous companies, I've had a number of conversations with people, and I was quite shocked in the level of unpreparedness, but they're beginning to get their head around the customs piece. Smaller companies are not."

He said the implications of an administrative border would mean higher costs for business.

"Where the border is really going to be is people's offices," Mr McKeever said.

"The implication of a border is a higher administrative burden on people, and we've seen figures that that could be anything up to a 24pc increase in the cost of doing business."

The IEA also said that poor roads and infrastructure, particularly in the west of the country, was hampering the ability of exporting firms outside of Dublin to attract and retain qualified staff.

"I think that's a real issue for them. I have to say every time we go over there, we're quite appalled by the state of broadband. We had an event the year before last over there and the broadband kept cutting out, and it was quite shambolic. I think that part of the country has been neglected and does need quite a bit of an increase in infrastructural spend," he said.