

## Irish exporters ask for freeze of minimum wage in budget

Irish Exporters' Association urges 'prudent' budget amid Brexit and cost uncertainty

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*A container ship being loaded at Dublin Docks: rising insurance costs, pay and the impact of depreciation in sterling are among the issues highlighted by the Irish Exporters' Association. Photograph: Getty*

Cost competitiveness is the top concern of Irish exporters ahead of [Budget 2017](#).

Rising insurance costs, pay and the impact of depreciation in sterling are among the issues highlighted by the Irish Exporters' Association (IEA) in its pre-budget submission.

Calling for delivery of a "prudent" budget, the lobby group wants the minimum wage to be frozen at current levels for three years to allow for greater clarity on the "long-term implications of the UK leaving the EU".

“In the event that there are increases in the minimum wage in [Budget 2017](#), the IEA recommends a reduction in employers’ PRSI contributions to ensure no net cost to the employer,” the group says, noting the UK will be targeting foreign direct investment as it cuts the cord with Brussels.

## **Business costs**

It seeks Government intervention in the insurance market to address the “negative effect that it is having on business costs”. Among the measures it wants are incentives to encourage new entrants to the market and improve competition.

Addressing the “war for talent”, the lobby wants measures to prioritise investment in areas of skill shortage, including incentives for employers to support apprenticeship programmes. It also wants a “drastic” increase in housebuilding and control measures to “curtail rent inflation”.

It is concerned at the post-Brexit impact on Irish businesses of a fall in the value of sterling and wants the NTMA to manage a “national hedging strategy” offering discounted exchange rates to affected companies.

The IEA is also requesting a 10 per cent hike in the budget of Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia and in Irish Embassies to aid business entry to high-growth markets.

Finally, exporters want the introduction of measures to encourage entrepreneurship, such as reform of R&D tax credits, the introduction of a share incentive scheme for business owners, a level playing field on tax and more generous capital gains tax allowances and succession relief in family businesses.