

**EXTRACT FROM  
FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
OF THE  
MINISTER FOR FINANCE  
MR. CHARLIE MCCREEVY, T.D.  
3 DECEMBER 2003**

**Decentralisation of Government Departments and Agencies**

It is important that the growth we expect should be regionally balanced. In this regard, I am today announcing details of decentralisation of Government Departments and Agencies as promised in Budget 2000.

For the first time ever, decentralisation will involve the transfer of complete Departments – including their Ministers and senior management – to provincial locations. A total of eight Departments and the Office of Public Works will move their headquarters from Dublin to provincial locations, leaving seven Departments with their headquarters in Dublin. All Departments and Offices will be participating in the programme.

Ministers with headquarters outside of Dublin will be provided with a centralised suite of offices, close to the Houses of the Oireachtas, for a small secretariat so they can conduct business while in Dublin and when the Dáil is in session.

The previous decentralisation programme involved the relocation of some 4,000 public service jobs. The programme I am announcing today is far more radical. In total, it will involve the relocation of 10,300 civil and public service jobs to 53 centres in 25 counties.

**Details of Implementation**

Full details of the decentralisation programme are outlined in the Budget Summary.

The programme will be implemented through the transfer of staff on a voluntary basis. There will be no redundancies and, as on previous occasions, the payment of removal or relocation expenses will not arise.

For the reasons outlined in the Summary, decisions on location have yet to be made in relation to over 1,300 of the 10,300 jobs being decentralised. I also believe that the final total can be closer to 12,000 jobs and I intend to examine options in this regard once the new programme is well underway.

The Government has also decided that, save in exceptional circumstances, any new agencies or bodies being established in future should be located in areas compatible with the new programme of decentralisation.

I am establishing an Implementation Committee to drive forward implementation of the programme with the Chair of the Committee reporting to a Cabinet sub-committee.

I am also providing an additional €20 million capital in my Department's Vote for 2004 to meet any up-front investment required.

### **Benefits for all**

I believe that over time decentralisation will lead to a radical change of culture in terms of policy formation in this country. No longer will policy be made entirely in Dublin on the basis of a Dublin mindset.

I am convinced that decentralisation offers considerable benefits for the Departments involved, the communities to which they will be relocated, the staff that will transfer and the country as a whole.

The Government has sought to ensure that the units being transferred are large enough to provide career opportunities for staff either within their own Department or in another Department within a reasonable distance. Indeed, the radical nature of this programme means that capable civil servants who are interested in decentralisation can look forward with confidence to good career prospects outside Dublin in the future, something which has been much less a feature of decentralisation in the past.

Decentralisation can bring very significant benefits for the staff involved. These benefits will include reduced commuting times and lower house prices outside Dublin. Discussions will be held with the public service unions on the programme.

### **National Spatial Strategy**

The locations which have been selected take full account of the National Spatial Strategy, the existence of good transport links – by road, rail and/or air – and the location of existing decentralised offices. The aim has been to establish viable clusters of work units within a region, either in the form of self-contained locations or clusters of sites located geographically close to each other or to existing decentralised locations. This will help to avoid the pitfalls of fragmentation and protect service delivery.

Although Dublin remains vital to economic development, the Government's National Spatial Strategy recognised that Ireland also needs a more even spread of development. Unbalanced development is not sustainable in the longer term, economically, socially or environmentally. More balanced regional development will contribute to sustainable long-term economic growth to the benefit of all our citizens.