

***Standard & Poor's Affirms Ireland's 'AAA' L-T, 'A-1+' S-T Ratings on Strong Government Finances; Outlook Stable.***

Standard & Poor's has affirmed Ireland's top AAA long term and A-1+ short term credit ratings.

In a report published on 23 December 2004, S&P states that the ratings, which are the highest achievable, are supported by the diversified and flexible nature of the economy, strong general government finances, and favorable demographic structure and future pension liabilities. S&P emphasizes Ireland's strong economic growth, sizable foreign direct investment inflows, strong productivity gains and employment growth. S&P highlights the fact that the general government balance has been in surplus for four out of the last five years and that Ireland has reduced its debt burden from around 90% of GDP a decade ago to around 30% of GDP at end 2004, giving Ireland the second-lowest debt burden in the euro area.

NTMA  
4 January 2005