

# Separation of Powers

## We have three separate branches of government:

### The Legislature

This is the Oireachtas (or parliament). It comprises the President and two houses: Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann. The main functions of the Oireachtas are to manage the State finances and to legislate for the good of the people.

### The Executive

This is the Government. The Government is made up of An Taoiseach and the ministers of the various government departments. The Government has the executive power of the State - the power needed to run the country. It formulates policies, promotes legislation and directs the operations of the various departments.

### The Judiciary

This is the collective name for judges. These are the judges who administer justice in the courts.

Each has separate and distinct powers. The Legislature passes the law, the Executive puts it into operation and the Judiciary interprets it. This concept is known as 'the separation of powers'.

By spreading the power of government among these three branches, one branch is unlikely to dominate the other two. If one branch of government had all the power it could lead to an abuse of freedom and rights.

It is a fundamental principle of the separation of powers that the three branches of government remain separate and independent. For example, judges must at all times be free of government influence when they go about their business of interpreting law in the courts.

