
STATEMENT

STATEMENT

20th September 2004



“The Voice of SMEs in Europe¹”

RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND: UEAPME PRAISES HISTORIC WIN FOR RURAL MICRO ENTERPRISES

UEAPME, the European association representing crafts and SMEs employers, praised the Commission’s decision to include micro-enterprises in the rural development fund proposal for 2007-2013. The fund proposal, which was discussed in the Commission’s rural development advisory group committee last week, will allow micro-enterprises in rural areas to fully play their role of growth agents in less industrialised areas of the EU.

“The historic divide between agriculture and other rural economic drivers is closing. For the first time there is the acknowledgement that micro-enterprises and SMEs have a vital role to play in rural development in the EU” said **Hans-Werner Müller**, Secretary General of UEAPME today.

Micro-enterprises have been included in the so-called third axis of the rural development fund proposal 2007-2013. This third axis will be attributed 15% of the total fund.

Market towns and surrounding rural economic activity are an essential part of agricultural entrepreneurship, offering jobs and opening new markets for producers and products. With this decision trade in rural areas will be promoted and the overall standard of living in the countryside and nearby villages is likely to be increased.

UEAPME has long campaigned for the development of rural areas and will continue to lobby for a stronger link between rural policy and cohesion policy.

Note to editors: For further information, please contact Victoria Carson on tel +32 2 230 7599

¹ UEAPME (**U**nion **E**uropéenne de l’**A**rtisanat et des **P**etites et **M**oyennes **E**ntreprises / **E**uropean **A**ssociation of **C**raft, **S**mall & **M**edium-sized **E**nterprises) is the European Social partner representing craft, trades and SMEs in Europe (EU and countries applying for accession to the EU). It represents, through 75 national and European sectoral federations, over 10 million small enterprises, which employ over 50 million people.