

DECLARATION

Vanguard Initiative for New Growth by Smart Specialisation

Engagement for the future of industry in Europe

The political leaders of 10 European industrial regions were gathered on 8 November 2013 in Brussels to engage in a joint effort for the industrial future of Europe. The 'Vanguard Initiative for New Growth by Smart Specialisation' supports the wider application and visibility of smart specialisation principles with the aim of boosting EU competitiveness and future growth. This regional engagement anticipates the proposed 'Industrial Compact', expected to be launched by the European Council in February 2014.

We, political leaders of the regions associated in the 'Vanguard Initiative for New Growth by Smart Specialisation', share with the European Council the analysis, ambitions and objectives that give rise to the project of an Industrial Compact for Growth. In supporting the efforts for the stabilisation of the financial and budgetary crisis there is a need to drive a new growth path for Europe with a central place given to the industry of the future.

Our proposals are shaped as a 'Vanguard Initiative' because we are convinced that leadership and strong partnerships are needed to achieve this ambition. Our political engagement for an Industrial Compact is based on a firm belief that entrepreneurship on the one hand and common policy goals to respond to societal challenges on the other will provide the impetus for revitalised European industrial growth.

This Vanguard Initiative has its foundations at the regional level. EU regions are the closest policy link to the bottom-up growth dynamics for the renewal of our industrial fabric, through their proximity to place-based innovative partnerships and clusters in the regions. Such partnerships and clusters form eco-systems that are launching new fast-growing innovative SMEs. They can re-shape industrial structures which are vital for new growth. Thanks to unique combinations of innovation and entrepreneurship in the regions they can develop solutions for the grand societal challenges while delivering on the EU's ambitions for improved international competitiveness. The political leaders of Vanguard regions are advocates of a strong multi-level governance to support the growth of such eco-systems.

To this end the regions taking part in this Vanguard Initiative are committed to a joint operationalisation of 'smart specialisation'. We believe that smart specialisation can serve as a coordination mechanism for our common efforts to foster structural renewal in Europe on the basis of each region's competitive strengths. Prioritising public resources for innovation and industrial renewal is an essential ingredient for this. Smart specialisation strategies provide the necessary impetus for re-focusing of priorities through public-private partnerships that exploit the entrepreneurial opportunities of the region while simultaneously providing the basis for finding synergies across Europe.

The 'Vanguard Initiative for New Growth by Smart Specialisation' seeks to better position and embed the smart specialisation agenda within relevant EU policy framework in following concrete activities:

- Matching strategic roadmaps between, national and European policy levels in support of European priority areas for the future of industry, in particular those that are identified in the Industrial Policy Communication of October 2012¹. Vanguard regions are committed to develop joint roadmaps for building critical mass and complementary specialisations in these emerging industries.
- Aligning strategic investments, coming out of these roadmaps, in order to open new industrial pathways via flagship projects such as demonstrators and pilots identified in the European priority areas. Vanguard regions are committed to combine their resources with European investments in these focus areas.
- Upgrading regional partnerships and clusters with global potential, which are identified in smart specialisation strategies, to European world-class clusters that can compete globally. Vanguard regions are committed to internationalise their cluster initiatives in cross-border and networked European clusters and partnerships.

An Industrial Compact for Growth requires multi-level political leadership which highlights common goals, while promoting a bottom-up entrepreneurial drive for value-creation. The Vanguard Initiative is committed to ensuring greater visibility and stronger positioning of smart specialisation principles and practice in the EU Compact for Growth. The regions that have strong industrial ambitions and smart specialisation strategies for an innovation driven structural renewal can make a difference.

The under-signed EU regions are committed to the development of a unique partnership for growth, which will be ready to act as a strategic dialogue partner in supporting and influencing related EU policy and would welcome the exchange of ideas at Council, Parliament and Commission levels.

Euskadi

Lombardia

Malopolska

Nordrhein-Westfalen

Scotland

Region Skåne

Tampere Region

Vlaanderen

Wallonie

Zuidoost - Nederland

¹ These priority areas are: Markets for advanced manufacturing and technologies for clean production; Markets for key enabling technologies; Bio-based product market; Sustainable industrial policy, construction and raw materials; Clean vehicles and vessels; Smart grids.

