

# Vanguard Initiative for New Growth through Smart Specialisation

## Letter to the President of the European Council

### Engagement for a European Industrial Renaissance

*The political leaders of 15 European industrial regions gathered on 30 January 2014 in Brussels to engage in a joint effort for the industrial future of Europe. The 'Vanguard Initiative for New Growth through 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 forthcoming debate on competitiveness and industrial policy in the European Council, prepared by the Communication of the European Commission of 22 January 2014 'For a European Industrial Renaissance'. The proposal in this Communication to set up 'Smart Specialisation Platforms' with the aim of helping regions to roll out smart specialisation programmes for industrial renewal is well-received. This Letter expresses the readiness of the political leaders of the partner regions to generate new and enhanced forms of interregional collaboration in priority domains for the future of industry in Europe.*

Dear Mister President Van Rompuy,

We, political leaders of the regions associated in the 'Vanguard Initiative for New Growth through Smart Specialisation', share with the European Council the analysis, ambitions and objectives for a European Industrial Renaissance. There is a need to drive a new innovation-driven growth path for Europe with a central place given to the industry of the future. Efforts to stabilise and boost economic growth across Europe depend on this.

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 to position the smart specialisation agenda at the centre of the EU's drive for new growth is based on a firm belief that entrepreneurship and common policy goals that respond to societal challenges 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 necessary for the renewal of our industrial fabric through their proximity to place-based innovative partnerships and clusters. Such partnerships and clusters form eco-systems that are the catalyst for new fast-growing innovative SMEs. They can re-shape industrial structures which are vital for new growth. Regional innovation ecosystems can and do develop solutions for the grand societal challenges while delivering on the EU's ambitions for improved international competitiveness.

The political leaders of the Vanguard Initiative are advocates of a strong multi-level collaboration to support the growth of such eco-systems. Generating critical mass which stems from a focused

approach to interregional cooperation is essential for competing successfully on an international scale.

To this end, the regions taking part in this Vanguard Initiative are committed to the application and embedding of Smart Specialisation principles in our approaches to regional innovation. 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 priorities through public-private partnerships that exploit the entrepreneurial opportunities within and across EU regions.

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

- Matching strategic roadmaps between regional, 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 2012. Vanguard Initiative regions are committed to developing joint roadmaps for building critical mass and complementary specialisations in these emerging industries.
- Aligning strategic investments, arising from these roadmaps, in order to open new industrial pathways via flagship projects such as demonstrators and pilots identified in the European priority areas. Vanguard Initiative regions are committed to combining 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 Initiative regions are committed to internationalising their cluster initiatives in cross-border and interregional networked European clusters and partnerships.

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

Therefore the smart specialisation Vanguard Initiative welcomes the proposal of the European Commission to combine regional and industrial policy tools to create Smart Specialisation Platforms to help regions roll out smart specialisation programmes, connected to the task forces for the six strategic areas. This offers significant potential for effective governance of joint efforts.

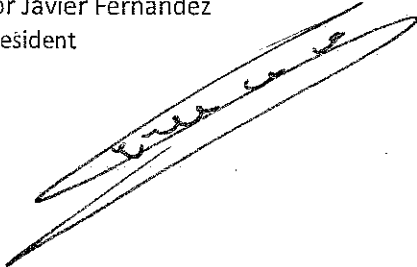
The smart specialisation Vanguard Initiative seeks to lead by example in developing interregional cooperation and multi-level governance for supporting clusters and regional eco-systems to focus on smart specialisations in these priority areas for transforming and emerging industries. These regions wish to build the synergies and complementarities in smart specialisation strategies to boost world-class clusters and cluster networks, in particular through pilots and large scale demonstrators. These investments will bolster the competitive capacity of Europe to lead in new industries for the future and develop lead-markets that offer solutions for our common challenges. To this end, the political leaders of the smart specialisation Vanguard Initiative commit themselves and call upon all political leaders to join and support this initiative for new growth.

Brussels, 30 January 2014

The under-signed EU regions are committed to the development of a unique partnership for growth, the Vanguard Initiative for New Growth through Smart Specialisation, which is 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.

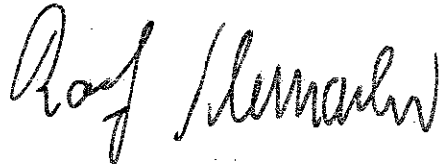
**Asturias**

For Javier Fernández  
President



**Baden-Württemberg**

For Nils Schmid  
Vice-Minister President and Minister of Finance and  
Economics, Baden-Württemberg



Guillermo Martínez  
Regional Minister of Presidency

Rolf Schumacher  
Director General, Ministry of Finance and Economic  
Affairs, Baden-Württemberg

**Euskadi**

For Iñigo Urkullu  
President of the Basque Country



**Lombardia**

For Mario Melazzini  
Regional Minister for Productive Activities, Research  
and Innovation

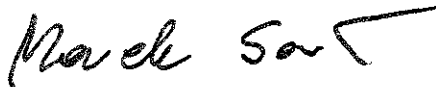


Arantxa Tapia  
Minister for Economic Development and  
Competitiveness

Fabrizio Sala  
Undersecretary for Expo 2015 and Business  
Internationalisation

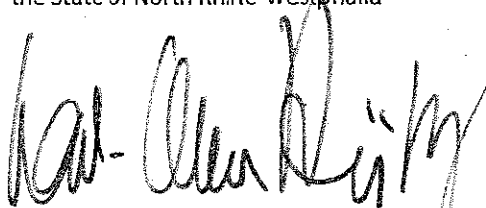
**Malopolska**

Marek Sowa  
Marshal of the Małopolska Region



**Nordrhein-Westfalen**

Ministry of Economic Affairs, Energy and Industry of  
the State of North Rhine-Westphalia



Karl-Uwe Büttof  
Director General  
State Economic Policy, Industry, Service Sector,  
Clusters, Foreign Economic Relations

The under-signed EU regions are committed to the development of a unique partnership for growth, the Vanguard Initiative for New Growth through Smart Specialisation, which is 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.

#### Norte

For Emídio Gomes  
President of Norte Regional  
Coordination and Development Commission



Carlos Neves  
Vice-President of Norte Regional  
Coordination and Development Commission

#### Rhône-Alpes

For Jean-Jack Queyranne  
President of the Rhône-Alpes Region



Bernard Soulage  
Vice-President of the Rhône-Alpes Region in charge of  
European and International Affairs,  
Member of the Committee of the Regions

#### Scotland

For John Swinney  
Cabinet Secretary for Finance  
Employment and Sustainable Growth



Angela Constance  
Minister for Youth Employment

The under-signed EU regions are committed to the development of a unique partnership for growth, the Vanguard Initiative for New Growth through Smart Specialisation, which is 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.

**Region Skåne**



Pia Kinhult  
First Governor

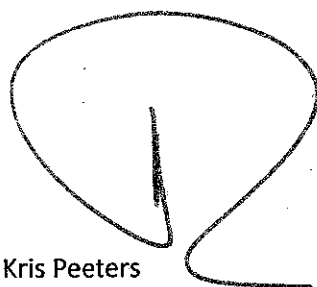
**Tampere Region**

For Harri Jaskari  
President of the Regional Board,  
Council of Tampere Region



Esa Halme  
Region Mayor

**Vlaanderen**



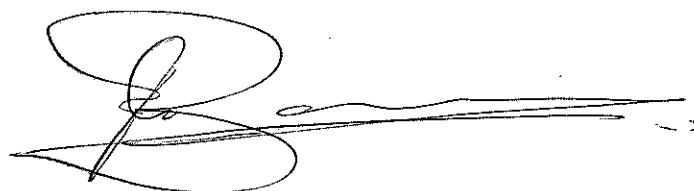
Kris Peeters  
Minister-President of the Government  
of Flanders

**Wallonie**



Jean-Claude Marcourt  
Vice-President, Minister of Economy,  
SME, Trade, New Technologies and  
Higher Education

**Zuid-Nederland**



Theo Bovens  
King's Commissioner for the Province of Limburg

The under-signed EU regions are committed to the development of a unique partnership for growth, the Vanguard Initiative for New Growth through Smart Specialisation, which is 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.

**Oberösterreich**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Strugl', written in a cursive style.

Michael Strugl  
Minister of Economic Affairs, State Government of  
Upper Austria