

**VANGUARD INITIATIVE**  
New growth through smart specialisation

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## **MILAN DECLARATION**

### **Joining Forces for Investment in the Future of Europe**

*We, the political leaders and representatives of the Vanguard Initiative for New Growth through Smart Specialisation, call upon the leaders of Europe to join forces to spur growth and job creation through innovation and a renaissance of industry. We renew our previous commitments of 30 January, in the context of persistent economic challenges, and wish to see regions play their full role in the forthcoming Industrial Policy Roadmap for Europe to be agreed in spring 2015.*

#### **A new pathway to growth through smart specialisation**

The Vanguard Initiative offers a new approach to growth and job creation in Europe. The mobilisation of our regional resources and ecosystems, aligned to smart specialisation strategies, enables us to address European priority areas in research, innovation and industrial policies. The growing interdependence of economies calls for the full exploitation of the European single market, allowing regional economies and enterprises to specialise in the part of the value chain that they are, or can be best at. We are committed to collaborating with the European Commission and other EU Institutions to design new multi-level support mechanisms as part of a wider European agenda for growth and jobs.

#### **Engaging for interregional collaboration**

The Vanguard Initiative brings together regions where there is a political will to play an active role in the renaissance of industry and to transform regional clusters into world-class clusters. Partner regions are committed to the development of inter-regional networks, based on bottom-up entrepreneurship and regional clusters that co-invest in new, interconnected European and global value chains. Our commitment to lead-by-example in inter-regional cooperation will lead to greater collaboration resulting in the co-development of mechanisms that stimulate the entrepreneurial discovery of our complementary smart specialisations, such as Smart Specialisation Platforms.

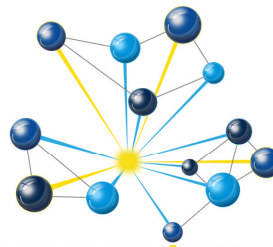
## **Stepping up co-investment**

Innovative solutions, which respond to societal challenges and the transition to a sustainable economy, can drive new growth. However, this requires a boost in innovation-driven investment. While industry must take a leading role in stepping up these investments, governments must create favourable framework conditions.

We welcome the European Commission Communication on 'Research and innovation as sources of renewed growth', which emphasises the need to improve the quality and efficiency of public spending through more effective strategies such as smart specialisation. The European Commission's €300 billion public-private investment programme in critical infrastructures and industry clusters is another important element in the European recovery strategy. The Vanguard Initiative is ready to join this coalition for growth to help revive Europe's economy, through common efforts enabling co-investment in European priority areas of innovation and industrial renaissance. However, this will require full recognition of the role of smart specialisation, regions and clusters in the EU Industrial Policy Roadmap and supporting EU programmes.

## **New instruments to support bottom-up entrepreneurship, co-creation and clusters**

To drive this agenda, more effective policy instruments and precise methodologies are needed. Smart specialisation is an effective approach for scaling up regional initiatives into European wide value chains, closing the gap with the markets and implementing EU priorities on the ground. The pilot actions set up by the Vanguard Initiative aim to exploit the network effects of regional investments in co-developing and demonstrating new business solutions. The support mechanisms at all policy levels and across policy domains must be directed to the needs of the cluster roadmaps for new interconnected value chains. We invite the European Commission to develop financing instruments to leverage cluster-based co-creation initiatives for networks of demonstrators and pilots in emerging and transforming industries. At the same time, we are committed to contributing to the creation of favourable framework conditions, in particular by investing in skills, strategic use of public procurement and better regulation, to stimulate innovation-driven growth and an industrial renaissance.



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## Engagement of the Vanguard Initiative

We are ready to **take action**, based on our commitment to lead-by-example and to work in partnership with the European Commission and other EU institutions.

We **commit** to:

- Supporting the **setting up of interregional networks** that will foster alignment between innovation roadmaps for co-investment in European priority areas, e.g. the pilot actions for the Smart Specialisation Platform Advanced Manufacturing.
- Facilitating **access to combined funding** for co-investment projects, taking advantage of better synergies between regional, national and European instruments to support this interregional collaboration.
- Exploring solutions to **leverage public-private investments** through European Investment Bank/European Investment Fund, in particular to support demonstration and piloting of new value chains in European industry clusters.
- Working on implementation of **smart specialisation strategies** to foster better alignment between the regions, bottom-up cluster platforms and top-down European partnering initiatives. We will continue to engage in pilots for policy learning in the framework of specific policy support actions and platforms.
- Contributing to the **European Cluster Strategy for New Growth**, with smart specialisation at its core. We will continue to engage in pilots for interregional and transnational cluster policy development.
- Developing the Vanguard Initiative as a valued, focussed partnership to stimulate and support **a strategic dialogue** among our members and with the European Commission to counter bottlenecks and create opportunities for new growth through smart specialisation.

Milan, 13 November 2014