



Vanguard Initiative: Political Leaders gather for high level discussion with Vice President Katainen on delivering growth and jobs across Europe.

Senior political representatives of 26 of the 30 member regions of the Vanguard Initiative met in Brussels today to restate their commitment to delivering growth and jobs through industry-led interregional cooperation, co-creation and co-investment. **Wim van de Donk, Current Chair of the Vanguard Initiative and King's Commissioner, Province of Noord-Brabant, South Netherlands said:** *"International cooperation is crucial to remove barriers to collaboration and co-investment across Europe. That is the aim of 'the Vanguard Initiative for New Growth through Smart Specialisation'. Within the Vanguard Initiative 30 European regions work to embed the smart specialisation agenda, to strengthen competitiveness, to internationalise Europe's industry and to create jobs. Because together we are stronger!"*

The meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on the progress that has been made by the Vanguard Initiative in the last year.

Outlining his support for the work of the Vanguard Initiative in this area, European Commission Vice President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, Jyrki Katainen said:

"Regions should be fully involved in the European investment plan. Therefore, I welcome the commitment of the Vanguard Initiative to create interregional partnerships of innovation actors and businesses for joint demonstration projects in new industrial growth areas. This brings new bottom-up and collaborative investment dynamics, which will have a positive impact on European growth and jobs." **European Commission Vice President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, Jyrki Katainen**

Joint investments are at the core of the Vanguard Initiative approach. Work is underway to generate financing and investment models that can support the joint demonstration cases flowing from its 5 pilot projects and can deliver early stage investment capital in innovative SMEs.

Central to this bottom-up approach is strong and focussed industry engagement. The Vanguard Initiative is pioneering a new approach to support EU industry internationalisation and competitiveness by developing joint demonstration cases in key industry domains, the final goal of which is full scale commercialisation.

The political leaders present had the opportunity to hear directly from companies involved in the current pilot projects in advance of their participation in the Vanguard Initiative Matchmaking Event on Thursday 25 February.

Flubetech, a Catalonian SME based near Barcelona, produces high tech coatings and surface modification of tools and components. The company is involved in the Efficient and Sustainable Manufacturing Pilot Project. Their CEO, Carles Colominas said;

"Participation in the ESM Pilot (Efficient and Sustainable Manufacturing) will allow our company to create a network with European partners that complements our know-how; to test the market and identify potential end-users as well as getting funding and access to



*cutting-edge technologies that will facilitate building demonstration facilities. This is a unique opportunity for a SME company like ours.” **Carles Colominas, CEO, Flubetech.***

Developing and delivering global value chains requires the participation of both SMEs and larger players such as South Netherlands company **Philips Lighting**, who is participating in the 3D Printing pilot. **Ronald Maandonks, Global Head of Public and Private Partnerships** also shared with Vanguard Initiative’s political leaders the benefits they feel they have gained.

While all participants in today’s meeting are clear that there are barriers to collaboration and co-investment that will continue to emerge, there was confidence that by continuing to learn by doing, the Vanguard Initiative remains in a strong position to address these challenges for the benefit of the participating regional economies and for Europe as a whole.

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Notes to Editors

Since its establishment in November 2013, the Vanguard Initiative has grown from a group of 10 regions to having 30 regional members from across Europe. All participating regions have signed the Milan Declaration, a political commitment that explains how the Vanguard Initiative will work together to co-create, co-fund and collaborate on projects and programmes across the regions (and with those outside of the Initiative who have relevant specialisms) where there is a close match in relative strengths to further develop EU value chains in key areas.

Pilots – There are currently 5 pilot projects underway as part of the Vanguard Initiative. The purpose of all of the pilots is to generate viable, commercial propositions by joining up experts from within the regions in order to better understand and exploit opportunities in the areas identified.

In the field of Advanced Manufacturing there are three on-going pilots,

- 3D Printing lead jointly by Flanders, South Netherlands and Norte;
- Advanced Manufacturing for Energy Related Applications in Harsh Environments (ADMA Energy) jointly led by Scotland and the Basque Country;
- Efficient and Sustainable Manufacturing (ESM), jointly led by Lombardy and Catalonia

There are also pilots in the field of:

- New Nano-Enabled Products, jointly led by Tampere and Skane Regions and
- Bioeconomy, jointly led by Randstad and Lombardy Regions

For further information on the Vanguard Initiative please click [here](#).

Vanguard Initiative Matchmaking Event

On the 25th of February, businesses, intermediaries and knowledge institutes will come together in Brussels to explore business opportunities in fields of importance to European industry. Over 400 participants will engage in the development of demonstration cases in the fields of High performance production through 3D-printing, Bio-economy, Efficient and sustainable manufacturing, Energy applications in harsh environments and New nano-enabled products. Additionally, there will be exchanges on issues that are key to the development of demonstration projects across different regions such as European and regional funding, certification and intellectual property rights.

The Matchmaking Event is supported by the European Commission and organised under the flag of the South Netherlands Vanguard Initiative chairmanship.

For further information on the matchmaking event click [here](#).