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Vanguard Initiative: businesses, innovation intermediaries and knowledge institutes jointly explore business opportunities for Europe's industry of tomorrow

Over 400 businesses, innovation intermediaries and knowledge institutes came together today in Brussels to explore business opportunities in fields of importance to European industry. Participants engaged in the development of demonstration business cases in the fields of High performance production through 3D-printing, Bioeconomy, Efficient and sustainable manufacturing, Energy applications in harsh environments and New nano-enabled products.

Through a personalized Matchmaking program participants got access to new business partners in the mentioned fields. This event was organized by the Vanguard Initiative, a European network of 30 industrial regions that seeks to speed up the market uptake of new technologies through the establishment of industry-led, cross regional joint-demonstration platforms.

Pilot projects in these fields have been set up by the network during 2014 and 2015 and the event was the first time this wide range of stakeholders gathered for one and the same occasion. The majority of the participants were companies seeking business opportunities for increasing the market uptake of new technologies. The participants covered regions across Europe and ranged from small innovative SMEs to large companies seeking new solutions to pressing industrial challenges.

Yves Van Ingelgem from Flemish company Zensor stated that;

"The Vanguard Initiative helps us discover that there are a lot of interesting things going on all over Europe. There is a lot of potential for collaboration so the Vanguard Initiative Matchmaking Event is perfect for that."

During 30 parallel sessions the development of concrete demonstration cases was discussed and issues like regional funding and intellectual property rights were addressed. The topics ranged from bio-aromatics and biogas to 3D-Printed hybrid materials for cars and printed nanoelectronics. The sessions gathered a wide range of business stakeholders. Furthermore, over 150 bilateral meetings took place between potential partners, exploring business opportunities during the event.

Bruno Garavelli, Chief Executive Officer and Founder of the company X-Next from Lombardy said;

"The Vanguard Initiative can bring a lot to our organization. The network provides a good platform for validation of our technology. At the same time, I am confident that our technology, which is a key enabling technology, can be very useful for the pilot projects."

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

Bert Pauli, Regional Minister, Province of Noord-Brabant, South Netherlands said:

"Bigger and smaller businesses, intermediaries, knowledge institutes and EU institutions are our most important international network partners. To valorize new chances that arise for the global economy, international cooperation is crucial. Today's Matchmaking Event offered a



great opportunity. We worked on this important cooperation en strengthened the Vanguard Initiative.”

During the plenary session of the Matchmaking Event and also during the Vanguard Initiative Annual Political Meeting on the 24th of February, the European Commission expressed strong support for the network and its methodology towards unlocking the potential of Europe’s industry. Keynote speaker Ms. Christ’l Joris, president of ETAP and president of AGORIA, elaborated on the challenges in modernising European industry and the unique contribution of the Vanguard Initiative to that.

The event also proved that challenges remain on the road to realising new value chains. Today’s Matchmaking Event was an important step towards a European industrial renaissance.

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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,

- **High Performance Production through 3D Printing** lead jointly by Flanders, South Netherlands and Norte Regions;
- **Advanced Manufacturing for Energy Related Applications in Harsh Environments (ADMA Energy)** jointly led by a team in 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 Annual Political Meeting

Senior political representatives of 26 of the 30 regions of the Vanguard Initiative met in Brussels on the 24th of February to restate their commitment to delivering growth and jobs through industry-led interregional cooperation, co-creation and co-investment. The pilot projects and the opportunities and challenges linked to these was the focus point of discussion. The open session of the meeting was visited by Vice Commissioner Jyrki Katainen who delivered a speech as well as representatives from the Commission and the



Committee of the Regions. Philips Lighting, a globally leading company based in South Netherlands, and the Catalanian SME Flubetech delivered presentations providing the business perspective of the initiative.

The meeting was hosted by North Rhein-Westphalia at the Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the European Union.