



SME Success Stories 2022

Guide for Applicants

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1 About Vanguard

The Vanguard Initiative is a unique alliance that gathers 39 of the most advanced industrial regions in Europe, focused on stimulating industrial innovation and building European value-chains based on complementarities in regional smart specialisation strategies.

The core activity of the Vanguard Initiative is the implementation of its Pilot Projects, which have been developed through the active participation of clusters, science parks, research institutes and universities in the member regions.

All Pilot Projects are close to the market and therefore have a high commercial potential. This means that the Pilots focus on applications at post-prototyping level (> TRL5), with the potential for full market deployment in a time span of 3 to 5 years.

By bringing regions and their stakeholders together, the Pilot Projects aim to accelerate market uptake of innovations in 7 thematic areas:

- Advanced Manufacturing for Energy Related Applications (ADMA Energy)
- Efficient and Sustainable Manufacturing (ESM)
- Bio-Economy (BIO)
- New nano-enabled Products NANO)
- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- 3D Printing (3DP)
- Smart Health (SH)

2 SME Success Stories

The SME Success Story action aims at boosting the involvement of innovative SMEs in the Vanguard Initiative pilot activities. The objective is to promote significant and relevant SME and industry participation, and thereby to promote a quicker market uptake of products and services. Ultimately this would strengthen interregional value chains.

Only SMEs registered in one of the VI Regions are eligible to participate in the present funding scheme and to receive financial support from the VI.

The applicant should clearly describe the challenge they are currently facing and/or the expertise already identified to solve such challenge. The current support scheme will only finance and support interregional collaboration between at least two legal entities (at least one of which is an SME – the applicant) located and registered in at least two different Vanguard Regions in at least two different countries.

Each proposal shall therefore foresee the cross-border collaboration with one (or more) partners or solution providers located in another Vanguard Region. This means that collaborations between Vanguard Regions located in the same countries are considered not eligible.

The collaboration shall always involve at least one SME (the applicant) and shall happen between organizations registered in one of the Vanguard Regions.

The Vanguard Innovation Voucher consists of a **one-time, lump-sum payment of 11.000€** aimed at supporting and strengthening SME-driven interregional innovation value chains.

The applications shall address one of the thematic and industrial areas of the VI as also identified by its pilots:

- Artificial intelligence
- Advanced Manufacturing for Energy Related Applications in Harsh Environments
- Bio-Economy
- Efficient and Sustainable Manufacturing
- High-Performance Production through 3D-Printing
- Nano-enabled Products
- Smart Health

All activities starting from TRL5 are eligible, with a preference for activities between TRL6 and TRL8.

The SME Success Story programme is managed by Steinbeis 2i GmbH (the managing organisation) in cooperation and on behalf of Vanguard Initiative asbl.

2.1 Goal of the programme

In this unprecedented time, SMEs across Europe are facing deep transformation processes that may be decisive for their future positioning in national and international markets. At the same time, the need of embracing twin transition swiftly and decisively is becoming clear for everyone.

Facing these profound decisions while also running and scaling a business can be a difficult task for many SMEs that struggle with the relatively limited resources at their disposal. External support could prove crucial in this context but is rarely for free or without strings attached. This is where Vanguard Initiative with its SME Success Stories programme steps in.

In this first edition of the Programme, VI will offer the 5 awarded SMEs a tailored programme to support international innovation collaboration along with a financial support of €11.000 in the form of an Innovation Voucher that can be used to support and fund the initial stages of this collaboration.

Vanguard is also bringing its network of innovation ecosystems and qualified experts to facilitate and support cross-regional innovation practices. The Vanguard Pilot Monitoring group (VPM) – which is Vanguard's central exchange for its industrial support activities - is also available to support winning companies in the identification and selection of relevant partner profiles, if necessary.

All the activities funded through the Vanguard SME Success Stories programme will also be disseminated and promoted in Vanguard's regional, national, and international networks, and the participating SMEs can benefit from this activity to promote their innovation within the most important industrial partnerships and groups at European Level.

2.2 What we are looking for

The SME Success Stories call aims at supporting groundbreaking innovation projects from SMEs registered in Vanguard Regions, that are looking for international industrial and/or technological partners to solve existing technological challenges and/or complement their existing innovation with advanced technological solutions.

For this first call the aim is to select 5 SME-driven innovative projects that thematically fall in the area of one of our Pilots (see [here](#) for a list of the Pilots and their activities).

We are looking to **support activities between TRL5 and TRL8**, with particular focus on activities of TRL6 and above (please refer to the official TRL definition as adopted by the European Commission in the Horizon Europe programmes available in the Annex section of this document).

2.3 What is in for the participant SMEs

The goal of the SME Success Stories programme is to facilitate cooperation and strategic innovation practices between SMEs and other relevant actors in the Vanguard Regions.

In order to facilitate this strategic cooperation, Vanguard has launched the present call of proposals which will offer to the winners the following advantages:

- One-off innovation support voucher of 11.000€ to support their innovation process
- Dedicated matchmaking support leveraging Vanguard's Regions innovation ecosystems (thanks to the support of Vanguard's Pilot Monitoring Group), if necessary
- Access to the VI Success Stories Portfolio and showcase of a unique alliance that gathers 39 of the most advanced industrial regions in Europe

2.4 Eligibility and general conditions

All the following conditions shall be fulfilled for an application to be considered eligible. Only eligible applications will be processed for evaluation.

- The applicant must be an SME as defined by the EU¹ and thus, having less than 250 employees; generating no more than EUR 50 million in annual turnover or EUR 43 million in total assets.
- The applicant must be a single SME, which will be the main beneficiary of the action. Applications made by consortia composed of several SMEs are not allowed.
- The application shall envisage cross-border collaboration between the beneficiary SME and other eligible partners (see Section 2.8.1) for activities between TRL5 and TRL8.
 - If already identified, the other partner(s) involved in the collaboration shall also be located in one the Vanguard Regions
- The Vanguard Innovation Voucher awarded within the framework of the present Vanguard SME Success Stories call for proposal shall be used exclusively to completely or partially support the activities described by the applicants in the application form submitted.
- The proposed applications should be in line with the industrial priorities of the Vanguard Regions, and therefore its activities shall fall under one (or more) thematic areas corresponding to one (or more) Vanguard Pilot.
- The applicant SME shall not be subject to any of the exclusion situations referred to in article 136(1) of the EU Financial Regulation 38 ([available here](#)), such as:
 - Ongoing bankruptcy procedure.
 - Final administrative decision of misconduct related to obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the applicable law.
 - Guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the applicant belongs.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition_en

- Other major financial and administrative misconduct as per Article 136(1) of the EU Financial Regulation 38.

2.5 Admissibility Check

In order to be admissible to participate in the programme, the applicant SME should be registered in one of the European Regions partaking in the VI. An updated list of these Regions is available [here](#).

The check will be done based on the information provided by the applicant in the application document and in the Declaration of Honor that will be submitted together with the application

All information provided by the applicants, such as the application form and the Declaration of Honor shall be in English. This includes also the communication between the applicants, VI and the managing organisation Steinbeis of the programme - including the ones that will take place after the project has been selected.

2.5.1 Exclusion Criteria

The following criteria will be used to exclude applicants from the present call for proposal:

- Proposals not envisaging the collaboration/cooperation with at least one partner located in a VI Region will not be considered eligible.
- Proposals not complying with one (or more) of the conditions set in Section 2.4 will not be considered eligible.
- Proposals submitted through channels other than the official email address SME@s3vanguardinitiative.eu will also not be considered eligible.
- Proposals submitted in any language other than English.
- Incomplete proposals and/or proposals not containing the full documentation (Application Form and duly signed Declaration of Honor).
- Proposals coming and/or involving any direct partner or associated partner of the Vanguard Initiative
- Proposals coming from a consortium of one or more applicants (only single beneficiary are eligible for the present call for proposals).

2.6 Application process

Applicants shall submit their application in PDF form before the deadline of 30 June 2022 at 17:00 Brussels time

Only applications sent to the email address sme@s3vanguardinitiative.eu before the deadline and containing all required documentation (application form and signed Declaration of Honour) will be considered.

Only applications fulfilling the eligibility criteria will be processed for evaluation. Once the evaluation processes are completed (see Section 2.9 for more information about the evaluation criteria) the five winning proposals will be contacted to sign the grant agreement with the managing organization Steinbeis on behalf of Vanguard Initiative.

For further information about contractual obligations and implementation of the selected projects please refer to Section 3.

2.7 Application Documents and Templates

The official application documents and templates are available at the following website:

<https://www.s3vanguardinitiative.eu/what-we-do/smes-intermediary-organisations>

Only applications submitted using the official templates will be considered eligible for evaluation.

2.8 Funding conditions

The present VI SME Success Story call for proposals provides 5 (five) Innovation Vouchers consisting of 11.000€ each to SMEs registered in one Vanguard Region. The Innovation Voucher consists of a one-time, lump-sum payment of 11.000€ aimed at supporting the selected projects, in order to strengthen SME-driven interregional innovation value chains across Vanguard Regions in Europe.

The Innovation Voucher shall only be used to achieve the objectives described in the awarded applications, and only to perform eligible activities as described in Section 2.8.1 below. The intended use of the voucher, together with its role in the innovation strategy of the company and its foreseen impact in the business strategy of the company should therefore be clearly stated in the application.

Other costs directly linked to the execution of the proposed action (e.g. travel costs, administrative costs and overhead) are also eligible.

Furthermore, the following conditions apply:

- Only one proposal per applicant may be selected for funding under the present innovation support scheme.

The funded applications shall also be in line with the “absence of double public funding” principle, meaning that the very same activities cannot receive or be supported by other public funds. The full amount of the voucher (€11.000) will be transferred to the five awarded SMEs at the end of the evaluation process, provided that all required documentation is correctly submitted and approved by the managing organisation Steinbeis.

All relevant dates and deadlines for the project are provided in Section 3.3.

2.8.1 Eligible activities

Only cross-border collaborations involving organizations registered in Vanguard Regions are eligible. The €11.000 innovation voucher made available by VI shall only be used for such activities, that fall into one (or more) of the categories below.

The beneficiary shall always be the awarded SME, which acquires, purchases, or buys services, products and/or other relevant services necessary for the finalization of the project submitted.

In principle the SME is free to choose its own partner, provided that all eligibility conditions as defined in Section 2.4 are fulfilled.

The activities shall be aimed at:

- **Development of new product/process** in one of the areas targeted by the VI Pilots
 - Artificial intelligence
 - Advanced Manufacturing for Energy Related Applications in Harsh Environments

- Bio-Economy
- Efficient and Sustainable Manufacturing
- High-Performance Production through 3D-Printing
- Nano-enabled Products
- Smart Health
- **Improvement of existing product/process** (not including TRL9 activities) in one of the areas targeted by the VI Pilots (see list above)
- **Purchase of strategic services and/or expertise by Research providers and/or R&D institutions** located in Vanguard Regions, aimed at the development of new products or services in one of the areas targeted by the VI Pilots
- Acquisition of other types of services (e.g. demonstrators, pilots etc.) from technological/service providers located in another Vanguard Region

Please bear in mind that only cross-border cooperation between SMEs and other organizations registered in Vanguard regions are considered eligible. This means that the SMEs and the selected partner/provider should be registered in two Vanguard Regions from two different countries. Collaborations between SMEs and other actors located in two Vanguard regions in the same country are not foreseen at this time.

2.8.2 No Conflict of Interest

Applicants will be required to declare that they are not aware of potential **conflicts of interest** regarding the present call for proposal. These include any situation in which impartial and objective implementation of the submitted project is not possible anymore for reasons related to personal, economic or any other shared interest with one or more of the parties involved in the project implementation (conflict of interest).

At proposal stage, this declaration will be made using the provided Declaration of Honor form.

If a potential conflict of interest situation arises during the project's implementation, the awarded SME shall promptly inform the managing organization and VI about possible situation constituting or likely lead to a conflict of interests and take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

2.9 Evaluation

2.9.1 Evaluation criteria

The overall goal of this exercise is to select and support actionable SME Success Stories that are helpful for the following, overarching objectives:

- Showcase the impact of the Vanguard Initiative toward technological growth of European SMEs
- Learning factor for the VI and its members

The following criteria in the table below reflect such objectives.

- Relevance and innovativeness of the project
 - Clarity and consistency of the project
 - Clear coherence with the objective of the call and thematical continuity with one (or more) VI Pilots
 - Relevance and effectiveness of the proposed innovation in terms of novelty and ambition
 - SME profile and quality of the team behind the proposal
- Expected Impact

- Clear methodology for implementing the project and feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame
- Added value for the SME (the implementation of the proposed idea/solution can effectively create an added value for the company compared to the current situation)
- Ambition and expected long-term impact of results (e.g. plan for TRL9 activities and/or clear commercialisation strategy)
- European and Vanguard
- added value
 - Added value in terms of EU strategical priorities (e.g. Twin transition)
 - Number of Vanguard Regions targeted by the Pilot
 - Coherence with Vanguard objectives and strategy
- Each criterion is composed of different sub criteria, as stated in the table below which also contains a brief explanation of each of them. Only the three main criteria (Relevance and innovativeness of the project; Expected Impact; European and Vanguard added value) will be scored and contribute to the final proposal's ranking.

Criteria	Explanation	Threshold	Score
1 – Relevance and innovativeness of the project			
Clarity and consistency of the project	Is the application clear in its scope, goal and proposed execution?		
Clear coherence with the objective of the call and thematical continuity with one (or more) VI Pilots	Is the application addressing one of the goals and priorities of the Pilots and Demo Cases?		
Relevance and effectiveness of the proposed innovation in terms of novelty and ambition;	Is the application in line with the Call? Is it relevant to reach the goals of the SME Success Stories call?		
SME profile and quality of the team behind the proposal	Has the SME and the identified partners and providers the right profile to execute the proposed concept.		
		3	5
2- Expected Impact			
Clear impact definition and realistic goals within the proposed time frame	Has the applicant clearly identified the impacts of the project and how to achieve them during the project period?		
Added value for the SME: the implementation of the proposed idea/solution can effectively create an added value for the company compared to the current situation	Is the application clear in terms of what added value it generates for the applicant SME? Is this added value considerable and/or can provide significant advantages for the applicant?		
Ambition and expected long-term impact of results (e.g. plan for TRL9 activities and/or clear commercialisation strategy)	Is the application part of a broader and well-defined strategy towards exploitation/commercialisation of the project's results?		
		3	5
3 - European and Vanguard added value			
Added value in terms of EU strategical priorities	Is the proposed idea in line with the strategic goals and objectives of the EU?		
Number of Vanguard Regions targeted by the Pilot	Has the project the potential to create new (or strengthen existing) value chains involving more Vanguard Regions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only in case the potential partner(s) is already identified, is the project able to involve another Vanguard Region on top of the one already proposed? 		
Coherence with Vanguard objectives and strategy	Is the application helping to advance the state-of-the-art of the pilots/demo cases and/or is the application addressing one of their needs?		
		3	5
		Threshold	Max. score
		9	15

The maximum score is 15, and the threshold is set at 9. Applications below this score are not considered to be eligible.

The evaluation criteria are the same as the ones defined by the European Commission for its Horizon programme² and therefore:

- 0 – Proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
- 1 – Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- 2 – Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
- 3 – Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
- 4 – Very good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
- 5 – Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Only eligible applications will be evaluated.

The selected applicants will be informed by email and the titles of the selected applications, together with the publishable summary, will be published on the SME Success Stories website.

The detailed evaluation results will not be published, but they will be available to applicants requesting further information and clarifications.

2.9.2 Evaluation process

After the deadline of the call, and provided that the application fulfills the eligibility criteria (see Section 2.4) for the programme, a pool of selected Vanguard evaluators will be in charge of evaluating all the eligible proposals according to the criteria defined in Section 2.9.1.

Each proposal will be evaluated by at least 2 evaluators selected from the Evaluation Committee. The Evaluation Committee consists of experts from the VI, including representatives of the secretariat, the board, the Vanguard Pilot Monitoring (VPM), the pilots and Steinbeis as managing organisation. Each evaluator is required to sign an NDA to ensure the highest level of confidentiality.

All eligible applications passing the overall threshold of 9 points will then be ranked and sorted by highest score.

The **final score** of each proposal is the mean of the total score of the experts, divided by the number of experts.

The five highest scoring applications will be declared eligible for funding, and they will be contacted by the VI and the managing organisation. The names and the brief summary of the selected projects will also be published on the Vanguard Website for publicity and communication purposes.

The other eligible applications passing the threshold will not automatically qualify for funding, but they will be inserted in a reserve list which may be used, should the proposals initially funded withdraw.

In case of two (or more) application scores or an ex-aequo result, the following conditions will be considered to create the final ranking:

² https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/from-evaluation-to-grant-signature/evaluation-of-proposals/elig_eval_criteria_en.htm

- Highest score awarded in Criteria 3 – European and Vanguard added value
- Highest score awarded in Criteria 2 – Expected impacts
- Highest score awarded in Criteria 1 - Relevance and innovativeness of the project

In case there is still an ex-aequo after this process, the time of submission of the proposals will be considered as further criteria, defined as the time in which the proposal was delivered to the email address SME@s3vanguardinitiative.eu

The Evaluation Committee will prepare an Evaluation Report for internal use only. Only the name of applicants successfully selected to access the SME Success Stories support programme will be published.

All applicants will be informed about the results of the evaluation. Successful applicants will be directly contacted by the VI and the managing authority to proceed with the Voucher process.

3 Selected applicants and project implementation

3.1 Grant Agreement Preparation

The five selected applications will be invited to the Grant Agreement preparation, which will define the contractual obligations of the parties as well as provide the legal framework for the financial support.

The Grant Agreement will be signed between the managing organisation Steinbeis on behalf of the VI and the five selected SMEs.

3.2 Obligations for winners

The Innovation Voucher awarded by the SME Success Stories Programme is designed to be an agile tool to facilitate interregional innovation cooperation and avoid administrative burden for the selected projects as much as possible.

The selected SMEs are free to choose the best way to implement the proposed projects, provided that the content of the project as well as its main objectives remain the ones stated in the application form and have therefore been evaluated by the Evaluation Committee.

In case of major issues impeding the correct implementation of the proposed project, the SME shall promptly inform the VI and the managing authority to assess the situation and identify possible solutions. If no solution can be found, or if the selected applicant wishes to withdraw from the SME Success Story programme before completing the project the support programme shall be considered as terminated, and no payment nor other services will be provided to the selected SME.

Further obligations of the voucher recipient are the following:

- Avoiding conflicts of interest
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Promoting the action and give visibility to the EU funding
- Liability for damages

Before payment of the Innovation Voucher, the selected SMEs shall deliver a Final Progress Report describing the activities done and the results achieved, as well as a clear justification of the expenses incurred, with accompanying evidence.

Part of this report may be used by the VI for inclusion in internal reporting documents and in public presentations. Inclusion of confidential information should therefore be expressly annotated, and the limits of its authorized handling specified beforehand. A publishable summary of the short final progress report, destined for publication on the Vanguard website, will also be required.

The structure of the short Final Progress Report and of the publishable summary will be shared with the selected SMEs in a timely manner.

An invoice, receipt or any other proof of payment related to the costs claimed in the Final Progress Report should also be submitted together with the Final Progress Report and stored to be available in case of an audit. Should any of the above reports and documents be missing or not correctly submitted, the VI and the managing organisation Steinbeis may suspend the payment even in the presence of the Final Progress Report describing successful activities.

3.3 Timeline and Reporting

30 June 2022 at 17:00 Brussels Time	Deadline for submitting applications
20 July 2022	Publication of the results and information of winning applicants
30 August 2022	Signed Grant Agreement received by the managing authority
30 January 2023	Deadline for submitting the Final Progress Report
15 February 2023	Innovation Voucher payment to the beneficiaries (provided that all submitted applications are beneficiary)

3.4 Communication and Publicity

The SME Success Stories aims at showcasing excellent SME-driven collaboration processes in the VI ecosystem.

One of the key goals of the SME Success Stories programme is therefore to communicate and disseminate the selected projects and their key results to different regional and international audiences.

The beneficiaries of the project awarded in this Open Call therefore agree to have basic information such as their name, their status, the public summary provided in the application etc. used for communication and dissemination purposes.

The beneficiaries of the awarded projects may also be asked to conduct brief written and/or video interviews to present their projects and showcase their collaboration.

All communication measures, as well as their content, will be defined and agreed upon with the selected project winners/beneficiaries, and in all cases it will be up to the selected SMEs to choose what kind of information and in which details to share for publicity measures. More details for the selected will be available in the Grant Agreement that they will sign after the successful evaluation process.

3.5 Legal Framework and IPR

3.5.1 Legal basis

The present programme is funded by the Vanguard Initiative asbl under the *VI Call 2021 on how to use the VI financial reserves*. On behalf of the Vanguard Initiative and its members, Steinbeis 2i GmbH is implementing the programme following the VI General Assembly vote held on 25.11.2021.

3.5.2 Confidentiality

Applicants must be aware that the submitted information and the other documents that will be shared with parties will be used by the VI asbl, Steinbeis 2i GmbH and other entities involved in the SME Success Stories Programme. Specifically, programme's winners must be aware that the organisers will keep internal records of, among others:

- A list of applications received, identifying the name and address of applicants.
- All communications with applicants before call closure and during the evaluation.
- The names and affiliations of the members of the Evaluation Committee.
- For each application, a copy of the filled forms used in the evaluation.
- A record of all incidents which occurred during the evaluation (e.g. how conflict of interests was handled if they were detected during the evaluation process) and any deviation from standard procedure (e.g. if a proposer selection was not the highest scoring application, you must document the objective reasons why the highest scoring one was passed over).
- Copy of requests for payment and attached documents.

Subject to the conditions established in the implementing agreements, decisions or contracts, any data, knowledge and information communicated as confidential in the framework of an action shall be kept confidential, taking due account of European Union law regarding the protection of and access to classified information.

The voucher winner shall comply with national legislation, regulations, and ethical rules in the countries where the present action will be carried out.

3.5.3 Privacy

Personal data shall be collected, processed and published in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679, also known as GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). Please refer to Annex 2 for a complete Privacy Statement.

3.5.4 IPR

The following Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) conditions will be followed in the framework of this open call:

- The proposals submitted should be solely based on original works by the applicants and their foreseen developments are free from third party rights, or they are clearly stated.
- All IPR created by the applicants via the funding they received from Vanguard will remain to the applicants, who will be the unique owners of the solutions created within the framework of their proposed projects.
- Any communication or publication by the funded applicants shall clearly indicate that their project has received funding from the VI under the SME Success Stories programme and displaying the VI logo

on all printed and digital material, including websites and press releases for the duration of the support programme.

- Parts of the projects selected for funding may be used in the framework of VI communication measures, including its member Regions and associated partners. Such use may include dissemination and communication purposes, press releases, online and offline communication materials, development of support measures and case studies etc.
 - In any case, no sensitive technical information regarding IPR and other sensitive industrial information will be used for such purposes.

Annex 1 – TRL Levels

The following list represents the official Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) definition as used by the European Commission in the Horizon Europe Programme, as described in the Annex B described in Annex B of the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022 General Annex B available here https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-13-general-annexes_horizon-2021-2022_en.pdf.

Technology Readiness Levels

Where the specific call conditions require a Technology Readiness Level (TRL), the following definitions apply, unless otherwise specified:

- **TRL 1** — Basic principles observed
- **TRL 2** — Technology concept formulated
- **TRL 3** — Experimental proof of concept
- **TRL 4** — Technology validated in a lab
- **TRL 5** — Technology validated in a relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)
- **TRL 6** — Technology demonstrated in a relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)
- **TRL 7** — System prototype demonstration in an operational environment
- **TRL 8** — System complete and qualified
- **TRL 9** — Actual system proven in an operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies, or in space)

Annex 2 – Privacy Statement

Vanguard Initiative (VI) is committed to ensuring protection of all personal information that it holds, and to provide and to protect all such data. We recognise our obligations in updating and expanding this program to meet the requirements of GDPR ensuring that all individuals whose personal information we process have been informed of why we need it, how it is used, what their rights are, who the information is disclosed to and what safeguarding measures are in place to protect their information.

VI is dedicated to safeguarding the personal information under our control and in maintaining a system that meets our obligations under the new regulations.

We have updated our retention policy and schedule to ensure that we meet the "data minimisation" and "storage limitation" principles and that personal information is stored, archived and destroyed in accordance with our obligations.

VI respects the privacy of its users and is the sole owner of the information collected. The protection of privacy of individuals, including their personal data, is of great importance to VI, thereby reflecting the provisions of the Charter on Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular article 8 and article 16, respectively.

The European Union data protection law applies to the processing of information and the VI provides the controls described in this policy so individuals can exercise their right to request access to, update, remove, and restrict the processing of their information.

They also have the right to object to the processing of their information.

The VI will retain personal information for the period necessary to fulfil the statutory purposes outlined in the Obligation of Information. When assessing these periods, the Vanguard Initiative carefully examines its need to collect personal information at all and in case it establishes a relevant need it only retains it for the shortest possible period to realize the purpose of collection.