

Dutch hi-tech company ASML profits rise

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ASML, key global supplier of computer chip-making systems and high-tech bellwether, Wednesday posted record sales for 2011 alongside a fourth-quarter slump of nearly 30 percent in net income.

Sales for 2011 stood at 5.6 billion euros (US\$7.1 billion), up from 4.5 billion euros in 2010, it said in a statement.

Fourth quarter [net profit](#) was 285 million euros, easily beating analyst forecasts for 229.5 million euros compiled by Dow Jones Newswires.

Sales in the last three months of 2011 were 1.2 billion euros, down 20 percent year-on-year, [ASML](#) said.

The group, based in southern Netherlands, received 37 new orders in the fourth quarter worth 710 million euros, 14 more than in the third quarter but significantly less compared with the same period last year.

"We expect a healthy start for 2012 as we plan first quarter bookings for 2012 at above that of the fourth quarter last year," ASML chief executive Eric Meurice said in the statement.

ASML estimate sales of 1.2 billion euros in the first quarter of 2012 and 2.4 billion for the first half of the year.

"ASML intends to increase the [dividend](#) by 15 percent compared with last year," it said, saying it would propose a dividend of 0.46 euros per ordinary share, compared to 0.40 euros paid in 2010.

The group employs 8,000 workers and serves [chip manufacturers](#) in more than 55 locations in 16 countries.

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