

Dutch high-tech group ASML posts sharp Q1 slump

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The Dutch company ASML, which supplies computer chip-making systems and is a global high-tech bellwether, posted on Wednesday sharp drops in sales and net profit for the first quarter 2013, but said it expected business to pick up later in the year.

Net profit stood at 96 million euros (\$126 million), down by 66 percent from 282 million euros over the same period last year, but was nonetheless better than an average analyst forecast of around 83 million euros compiled by [Dow Jones](#) Newswires.

Group sales slumped by 40 percent to 892 million euros, but stayed within [ASML](#) targets, which analysts said reflected the current weak [global demand](#) for micro-processors.

"We achieved first quarter sales ahead of and gross margin in line with our guidance and reiterate our expectation for a sales acceleration during the year," the group's chief executive Eric Meurice said in a statement.

He added that ASML expected "full year net sales similar to the level of 2012."

In January, the group reported a 16.25 percent drop in 2012 profit to 1.1 billion euros, on sales that were 21.88 percent lower at 4.7 billion.

ASML received 25 new orders in the first quarter valued at 715 million euros, compared with 32 in the fourth quarter last year, the group said.

It also had a backlog of orders which included 42 machines with a total value of 1.26 billion euros, against 46 machines at the end of last year.

Headquartered just outside the southern Dutch city of Eindhoven, ASML operates in 16 countries and is considered a good indicator of conditions in the microprocessing industry.

It manufactures machines used to make [integrated circuits](#) and semiconductors and has 8,000 full-time employees.

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