



Netherlands-Flanders Economic Mission Comes to Phoenix – December 11, 2023

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Dec 11, 2023 · By Françoise von Trapp



One of the best things about being headquartered in Phoenix, AZ is having a front-row seat of all the semiconductor industry growth that's happening. Case in point: Last week (December 3-5) the city hosted one leg of a Netherlands-Flanders Economic Mission to the US that was sponsored by the Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The [mission's purpose](#) was to co-create sustainable solutions that promote innovation and partnerships in the global semiconductor value chain. Leaders of both the Netherlands and Flanders (Belgium) recognize that to such growth requires global collaboration and that the nations can learn a lot from each other by working together.



Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Netherlands

The international delegation was presided over by Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, and Jan Jambon, the Minister-President of Flanders. It included government dignitaries and senior executives from approximately 50 companies from the Netherlands and Flanders.

The two-day event in Arizona began with a visit to Luke Air Force base, which serves as a training ground for Dutch F-25 pilots, meetings with Governor Katie Hobbs and Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego, visits to local offices of Dutch companies, and a visit to the Heard Museum.

Day two started with a visit to Waymo, followed by a CEO roundtable, where participants shared how each of their regions is advancing the industry. Next was a visit to ASU to learn about its strategic research platform with semiconductor industry partners, as well as its Engineering program geared at training the next generation of talent for the industry. They wrapped up the day with a visit to ASM in Scottsdale. The company announced a \$300M investment in a 50,000 sq. ft. facility.

I was honored to be invited to an unpublicized meet and greet event on Tuesday, December 5, hosted by the Arizona Commerce Authority. There, Prime Minister Rutte, Minister-President Jambon, and ACA CEO Sandra Watson briefly addressed both the delegation and the gathering of 25 Arizona companies about collaborative opportunities in semiconductors and integrated photonics.



Minister-President Jan Jambon (photo bomb by PM Rutte).

During his remarks, Prime Minister Rutte shared his favorable impressions of Arizona, and what he had learned throughout the week. He talked about how it's not just about the big businesses, but the smaller ones that are supplying them. He also acknowledged the importance of the advanced packaging sector of semiconductor manufacturing.

Both Prime Minister Rutte and Minister-President Jambon talked about "the triple helix" of government, universities, and industry working together to come up with solutions not only to the economy but also to societal issues. Jambon remarked on how far innovation in Arizona has come in only 10 years. He said he was unaware of what was happening in Arizona and that he found it "amazing" – because "10 years is a very, very short time period." Jambon was most impressed by Arizonan's positive mindset. He said that Europeans often focus on the troubles of why things don't happen, and in Arizona, we make it happen.



Martijn Pierik (right) chats with PM Rutte and his colleague.

Our member company, Kiterocket, organized the evening. In a [LinkedIn post](#), Martijn Pierik, my business partner at 3D InCites and Kiterocket's Founder and Chair, cited his participation as "the highlight of his career, having had the opportunity to contribute to the advancement of the semiconductor industry and international business relations between The Netherlands and Arizona. Three things I'm deeply passionate about."

I was happy to see many familiar faces in the crowd – both from the visiting delegation and our member companies who have a presence in Phoenix. Local member companies EV Group, YES, Deca, Saras Microdevices, and DSV-IMS were in attendance, and had the opportunity to connect and network with the visiting companies.

I caught up with Peter Dijkstra, from Trymax Semiconductor, a 3D InCites community member who was part of the Dutch delegation. Like Jambon, he said he was particularly impressed with the can-do spirit and positive mindset. He said he learned a lot about the opportunities in Arizona. The company recently opened its US Headquarters in Delaware. Dijkstra was excited about the engineering programs at Arizona State University that are seeding the workforce with new talent.

I also chatted with Imec's Luc Van Den hove and Katrien Marent were part of the visiting delegation. They were both kind enough to give me a geography lesson about Belgium, explaining how Flanders is the northern state that is known for its innovation. Imec is based in Flanders, in Leuven.

In addition to participating in this mission that was visiting Arizona and Silicon Valley, the group from Flanders continued later in the week to the Midwest, stopping in Michigan and Indiana because Imec had [some exciting news](#) about collaborations with Purdue University and the University of Michigan. The European Institute is joining forces with Purdue University for R&D on novel semiconductor materials, systems, and sustainable manufacturing and has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of Michigan to jointly advance semiconductor technologies for the automotive industry. Van Den hove, Jambon, and Purdue President Mung Chiang participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially inaugurate a joint R&D lab on Purdue's campus.

After a period where it seemed like the semiconductor industry was in danger of becoming siloed, with each region working towards being self-sufficient, it's good to see the spirit of collaboration gaining ground once again. As Van Den hove recently expressed to me in a podcast interview, that's a good thing, because if we only focus on our regions, we run the risk of duplication and waste. Ultimately, the sustainable success of the semiconductor industry requires collaboration.



Russ Sanchez, Yes



Cori Ashley, EV Group



Ron Huemoeller and Eelco Bergman, Saras Microdevices



Meet and greet reception



Selfie with Eelco Bergman and Tim Olson, Deca



Samantha Hay, DSV-IMS



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