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Critical Raw Materials Act: COREPER set to approve Parliament's first reading position

On March 13, Member State Ambassadors of the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER I) are expected to approve the European Parliament's first reading position (Legislative Resolution) on the proposal for a Critical Raw Materials (CRM) Act.

After COREPER's approval, the Foreign Affairs Council will formally adopt the text without debate (as an "A" item of the agenda) on March 18.

Following the Council's adoption, the legislative process would be finished and the final text published in the EU's Official Journal. The Act would enter into force on the twentieth day following its publication.

The EU seeks to develop its own mining industry and reduce dependence on foreign actors for raw materials regarded as crucial for the green transition. Recognizing that becoming self-sufficient is neither feasible nor desirable, with the Critical Raw Materials Act, the EU aims at creating more diversified and resilient supply chains for critical raw materials.

The Netherlands and India reveal a collaborative roadmap

The India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) and the Netherlands Innovation Network have published a report titled ‘Indo-Dutch Semiconductor Opportunities’ where they present a roadmap for joint collaboration in the sector.

The report is the result of ten months of intense conversations among industry leaders, academics and policymakers from both countries. It outlines investment opportunities for Dutch firms in India and potential joint R&D projects and exchange programs to enable knowledge sharing and skill development. As a major player in the semiconductor industry, the Netherlands has a vested interest in locating production in countries with an abundance of highly-skilled workers (which are not scarce in India). Notably, Dutch NXP has been present in India for more than 50 years, holding over 500 patents, employing 2500 engineers and operating in four locations throughout the country.

The semiconductor sector in India continues expanding, especially in the areas of design and product consumption, driven in part by government policies and incentives.

Intel and ASML hit ‘first light' milestone on first High-NA EUV tool

ASML and Intel have announced a noteworthy milestone in the development of High-NA lithography systems: activating the light source and making the light reach resist on a wafer. This indicates that the light source and mirrors are aligned adequately, which is a necessary step in the bring-up process.

The attainment of the 'first light' milestone also signals the operational status of a key component within the Twinscan EXE:5000 system. Still, this process will require further advancements to reach peak performance.

ASML's Twinscan EXE High-NA EUV litho machines, equipped with projection optics featuring a 0.55 numerical aperture, can achieve impressive resolutions down to 8nm with a single exposure. This is a significant improvement compared to typical Low-NA EUV systems, which offer a 13.5nm resolution with a single exposure. The first of these cutting-edge systems is currently located at ASML's laboratory in Veldhoven, Netherlands, while a second system is under assembly at an Intel facility near Hillsboro, Oregon.

The tool is expected to be used in the upcoming years by major chipmakers such as TSMC and Samsung, with Intel already confirming its intention to use it for the production of its 14A generation chips.

Success at the ECS Brokerage event

The Electronic Components and Systems (ECS) Brokerage event took place on February 20 and 21 in Brussels and provided a great chance for the 518 participants to explore collaboration opportunities within the ECS community and to learn about the Chips Joint Undertaking as well as the ECS Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) for 2024.

Lucia Sioli, the Director for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Industry at the European Commission, kicked off the event with a presentation offering insights into the Chips for Europe Initiative and the latest developments surrounding it. The implementation of a portion of this initiative falls under the responsibility of Chips JU and the first calls for establishing pilot lines are currently open, with a deadline set for February 29.

Subsequently, Jari Kinaret, Executive Director of Chips JU, and Anton Chichkov, Programme Officer at Chips JU, further discussed the details about the Chips JU calls that are not directly linked to the Chips for Europe Initiative. Patrick Cogez proceeded with a presentation about the new SRIA 2024. The morning session wrapped up with Caroline Bedran (Director General, AENEAS), Elizabeth Steimetz (Director, EPoSS) and Paolo Azzoni (Secretary General, INSIDE), emphasizing the crucial role played by industry associations in promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing within the ECS community and highlighting key aspects of the Chips JU program.

Before lunch, 16 SMEs could present their pitches. This diverse segment served as a way for companies to deepen collaboration and get to know each other's work. Project ideas were exchanged through the ECS Collaboration Tool and face-to-face consortium meetings during the afternoon session.

Day two was marked by Yves Gigase (Chips JU Head of Programmes) overviewing Chips JU calls for the Chips for Europe Initiative and upcoming activities. The afternoon session was allocated to the dynamic exchange of project ideas, available via the ECS Collaboration Tool and face-to-face consortia-building meetings.

Baden-Württemberg commits to its semiconductor industry

The event 'Semiconductors - Cutting-edge Technology from and for Europe – How do we Strategically Strengthen the Value Creation in Europe?' was hosted on Thursday, March 7 at the Baden-Württemberg State Representation in Brussels in cooperation with ASML, TRUMPF and ZEISS.

The speakers included Dr. Nicole Hoffmeister-Kraut, minister for economy, employment and tourism in Baden-Württemberg; Andreas Nitze, Head of Government Affairs at ASML Germany; Dr. Berthold Schmidt, Chief Technology Officer and Member of the Managing Board at TRUMPF SE + Co. KG; Dr. Thomas Stammler, Chief Technology Officer at Zeiss SMT; and Roberto Viola, Director General of DG CONNECT.

The European Chips Act took center stage in the discussion, as did the EU's overarching goal of strengthening its technological sovereignty, competitiveness and resilience. Nonetheless, other key topics for the industry, namely, the PFAS regulation, export controls and transnational cooperation, were also part of the debate.

For feedback, get in touch with the SEMI Europe Advocacy Team at euadvocacy@semi.org.