• ALBANIA • BELARUS • BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA • BULGARIA • NORTH MACEDONIA
• MONTENEGRO • POLAND • ROMANIA • SERBIA • SLOVENIA • HUNGARY

» NEWSLETTER | ENGLISH EDITION

# CONFINDUSTRIA EST EUROPA

CONFINDUSTRIA EST EUROPA
www.confindustriaest.eu

NUMBER II
APRIL 1–15, 2025


## Fincantieri invests in Albania: agreement for a new Adriatic naval hub

II On April 9, 2025, **Fincantieri** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** (MoU) with **Kayo**, an **Albanian** state-owned **company** based in Tirana, to launch a strategic collaboration in the naval sector. The agreement was signed in Durrës in the presence of **Italian Minister** of **Defense Guido Crosetto**, **Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama**, and **Albanian Defense Minister Pirro Vengu**.

The goal is to **develop** an **innovative** and **sustainable industrial ecosystem** focused on **shipbuilding** and **maritime defense**. The project includes the **creation** and **management** of **naval infrastructure**, construction and maintenance of marine units, and the implementation of technical and professional training programs.

The initiative aims to **transform Albania** into a **strategic hub** for **shipbuilding** and **refitting** in the Adriatic, leveraging its geographic position and promoting regional economic growth. Fincantieri will contribute its expertise to support Kayo in developing projects that meet the highest technological and environmental standards.

This agreement **strengthens industrial ties** between **Italy** and **Albania** and represents a significant step toward modernizing the production capacities of the Balkan country.

## TOP NEWS

- **The impact of U.S. tariffs on Eastern Europe**
- **Confindustria Albania:** New headquarters for Si-mac Albania: an excellence serving the wood supply chain
- **Confindustria Bulgaria:** Bulgaria and artificial intelligence: towards the fifth industrial revolution
- **Confindustria Ungheria**: Advanced materials per l'automotive del futuro: evento in arrivo a Budapest
- **Confindustria Romania:** Employment and skills: Italy and Romania strengthen collaboration
- **Confindustria Serbia:** UniCredit Bank Serbia awards SMEs: "We value collaboration"
- **Confindustria Polonia:** Italian businesses demand simplification

for information:
comunicazione@confindustriaest.eu

# THE IMPACT OF U.S. TARIFFS ON EASTERN EUROPE

## U.S. tariffs suspended, but Eastern Europe remains on alert

Between late March and early April 2025, the United States announced new tariffs on steel, aluminum, cars, and a wide range of European goods, with a significant estimated impact on several Eastern European countries. However, on April 9, former president Donald Trump announced a 90-day suspension of the measures, opening a window for negotiations. Although not yet in effect, the tariffs have already had repercussions on markets and economic forecasts.

**Economic slowdown:** These measures represent a "**serious blow**" for Eastern economies that are strongly export-oriented. Countries such as **Poland**, **Hungary**, **Romania**, **Bulgaria**, and **Slovenia** show **export-to-GDP ratios well above the EU average** (e.g. Poland 39%, Slovakia 76%). **Poland** – although less dependent on automotive exports – **estimates a slowdown of -0.4% of GDP** due to the tariffs. S&P Global warns that U.S. tariffs could erode growth prospects throughout Central Europe. Regional markets reacted negatively: stock exchanges and local currencies in Central and Eastern Europe weakened following the announcements from Washington.

**Most affected sectors:** The **automotive** industry is the most exposed sector. Since April 3, all cars imported into the United States are subject to an additional **25% tariff** (in addition to the existing 2.5%), a measure that penalizes European exports overseas and indirectly **affects production chains in Eastern Europe**. In **Hungary**, which hosts large foreign automotive plants, concerns have arisen over potential reductions in orders and investments. In **Romania**, exports of **auto components**, **industrial machinery**, and **agri-food** products are at risk, while **Bulgaria** reports difficulties for **machinery**, **furniture**, and **food products** destined for the U.S. market. **Slovenia's steel industry**, which exported over €123 million in steel and aluminum to the U.S. in 2024, is also affected by the 25% tariff on these metals.

**Western Balkans**: In non-EU Balkan countries where Confindustria Est Europa operates (**Serbia**, **Albania**, **North Macedonia**), the **impact could be** proportionally **even greater**. **Serbia** is facing a **37% tariff** on all its exports to the U.S.—a severe blow for key sectors like automotive, defense, and agri-food, which totaled around $600 million in exports in 2024 (2.1% of Serbian exports). **North Macedonia** faces tariffs of **33%,** penalizing products such as **tobacco**, **clothing**, **iron**, and **steel**. Even Albania, although subject to the lowest tariff (10%), fears repercussions on an already limited trade flow (approximately €70 million per year in exports to the U.S., including aromatic herbs, for example).

## Italian companies and future scenarios: who is most at risk?

The potential implementation of U.S. tariffs has also drawn attention in Italy, especially among companies already operating in Eastern Europe. Many Italian groups have been present in the region for years with production plants, suppliers, or consolidated logistics networks. A tightening of trade relations with the United States could jeopardize not only the competitiveness of direct exports but also the **stability of integrated supply chains**, with cascading effects on **costs**, **timelines**, and **strategic choices**. In this context, the **European Union** has already expressed its intention to **open a diplomatic dialogue** with Washington while keeping a list of proportionate retaliatory measures on hand. **The climate remains uncertain**: on the one hand, a 90-day negotiation window has opened (thanks to the suspension announced by Trump on April 9); on the other hand, **European**—and especially **Italian—companies cannot afford to wait passively**. Several operators are already reconsidering their target markets, diversifying clients, and reviewing their value chains. **Some local governments**, such as Romania's, **have proposed targeted support measures for the most vulnerable sectors**, such as **automotive** and **machinery**. In the coming months, it will be crucial to see whether dialogue or polarization prevails. In any case, the **tariff issue confirms how international dynamics can directly affect production ecosystems** rooted in Central and Eastern Europe, underlining the importance of a coordinated European strategy to defend industry.

## CONFINDUSTRIA EST EUROPA AT THE MARKETHINK! WEBINAR


On April 15, Confindustria Est Europa took part in the **MarkeTHINK!** webinar, promoted by **Confindustria Sistemi Formativi** and dedicated to the **strategic role** of **marketing** within the association system. The issue of tariffs was also central to the presentation by **Alessandro Fontana**, **Director of Confindustria's Research Center**, who shared data-driven insights. The event involved research centers, communication offices, and foreign and territorial representations, including those of **Confindustria Serbia**, **Poland**, **Bulgaria**, **North Macedonia**, and **Hungary**. In a complex global context, the exchange between territorial and international structures is crucial to strengthen coordination and face new challenges together. The contribution from Confindustria's Research Center offered analytical insights useful to guide the activities of the representations.

www.confindustriaalbania.it

## New headquarters for Si-mac Albania: excellence in the wood supply chain

**Confindustria Albania** participated in the inauguration of the new headquarters of **Si-mac Albania shpk**, local partner of the **Italian group SCM** (based in Rimini), a **leader** in **wood processing technologies**. **Vice President Claudio Michelacci** congratulated **CEO Silvana Kulla** on the milestone, emphasizing the value of the investment in strengthening the sales, service, and maintenance network in the furniture, carpentry, and wood construction sectors, active in **Albania**, **Kosovo**, **North Macedonia**, and **Montenegro**. Also present were **Italy's Ambassador to Tirana**, **Marco Alberti**, and **Albania's Minister of Entrepreneurship**, **Delina Ibrahimaj**, confirming the strong synergy between Italy and Albania in the development of a modern and sustainable business ecosystem.

www.confindustriabulgaria.bg

## Bulgaria and Artificial Intelligence: toward the Fifth Industrial Revolution

On April 7, the roundtable **"Bulgaria and the Fifth Industrial Revolution"** was held in **Sofia**, focusing on the opportunities to attract strategic investors in artificial intelligence and data centers. **Confindustria Bulgaria** participated through its **Vice President for Energy**, **Plamen Dilkov**. **President Rumen Radev** emphasized Bulgaria's central role in the global **AI race**, thanks to its scientific tradition, digital infrastructure, and favorable energy environment. The country will host the **European BRAIN++ factory** (EuroHPC) and is already home to the Discoverer supercomputer, recently upgraded for AI applications. With **€485 million in EU investments** and a growing IT sector, Bulgaria aims to become a regional hub for AI and high technology.

CONFINDUSTRIA ROMANIA

www.confindustria.ro

## Employment and skills: Italy and Romania strengthen collaboration

On April 3, Bucharest hosted an event dedicated to enhancing **professional skills** and the **quality** of **employment**, supported by the **Italian Embassy**, the **Romanian Ministry of Labor**, and **Adecco Romania**. The meeting fostered dialogue among **Italian**, **Romanian**, and **European institutions** on the challenges of the labor market, increasingly oriented toward advanced technical skills. Participants included H.E. **Alfredo Durante Mangoni** (**Italian Ambassador**), **Simona Bucura Oprescu** (**Romanian Minister of Labor**), **Stefano Scarpetta** (**OECD**), and **Massimo Temussi** (**Italian Ministry** of **Labor**). **President Giulio Bertola** presented **Confindustria Romania**'s efforts, including the "**VINO ACASA**" initiative, aimed at encouraging Romanian talent to return home, supported by LIDL Romania.

CONFINDUSTRIA UNGHERIA

www.confindustria.hu


## Advanced materials for the automotive industry of the future: event coming to Budapest

**Confindustria Hungary** is organizing the event "**LATItech – Advanced plastic materials for the new automotive era**," dedicated to **polymers** and **thermoplastic compounds** for the **automotive industry**. The initiative will offer a unique opportunity to **explore** the **latest innovations** related to **electric mobility** and new **environmental regulations**, with the participation of leading companies in the sector. Key topics include **lightweight**, **durable**, and **sustainable solutions**, materials compliant with the ELV directive, and networking and business development opportunities for players along the supply chain. The event is **free** but has **limited seating**. Info and registration: CLICK HERE


CONFINDUSTRIA SERBIA

www.confindustria.rs

## UniCredit Bank Serbia awards SMEs: "We value collaboration"

**UniCredit Bank Serbia**, a member of **Confindustria Serbia**, awarded small businesses and entrepreneurs as part of the competition "**We reward successful collaboration**," an initiative aimed at both long-standing clients and new businesses. The award's goal is to strengthen the **relationship between the bank and companies**, promoting mutual trust and highlighting the entrepreneurial sector's contribution to national economic growth. During the ceremony, **Rastko Nicic**, **Executive Committee Member** and **Director of Retail** and **SME Banking**, reaffirmed the bank's commitment to supporting Serbian entrepreneurs: "We continue to show our clients that we believe in their value and that we are a reliable partner, ready to support their growth in a stable and lasting way."

CONFINDUSTRIA POLONIA

www.confindustria.pl


## Italian companies demand simplification and digitalization

**Confindustria Poland** conducted a survey among Italian companies operating in the country, gathering valuable insights to improve the **regulatory** and **bureaucratic environment**. **40%** of respondents cited **excessive complexity of regulations** and **slow procedures** as the main obstacles. Another **40%** reported **difficulties in interpreting laws,** with direct impacts on costs and project start times. Additionally, **60%** of companies deemed **the current digital tools provided by public administration inadequate**. Key proposals include **more streamlined online procedures**, **better coordination among institutions**, and **greater regulatory transparency**. The association will present these priorities to local authorities to promote a more efficient and competitive system.