



THE DANUBE RUNS DRY AND THE ENERGY BILL



The summer of 2026 tested the energy resilience of Central and Eastern Europe, and the decisive variable did not come from the markets: it came from the level of a river. The drought that reduced the flow of the **Danube** struck the power stations that draw their cooling water from it, confronting two countries of the network with the same problem.

In **Romania** the **Cernavodă** nuclear plant shut down a first reactor at the end of July; on **11 August** the continuing fall in the river level made the closure of a second reactor likely within forty-eight hours, because the available water no longer guaranteed the safe operation of the pumps.

In **Hungary** the response was infrastructural: a **submerged weir** was built in the river, many thousands of tonnes of rock poured into the riverbed to raise the water level in front of the intakes. The works proceeded faster than expected and by **24 August** three of the four reactors at **Paks** were operating again. This is no technical detail: Paks supplies almost **half of Hungary's electricity demand**, and during the critical weeks the country imported electricity at high prices.

The wider picture remains one of caution. On **7 August** gas storage stood at **76.55%** in Italy against **58%** for the European average; the following day a drone coming from Romania exploded near a Bulgarian gas pipeline.

The mechanism deserves attention. Cernavodă and Paks lie hundreds of kilometres apart and belong to distinct national electricity systems, yet they draw water from the same river: a single climatic variable was enough to put two grids under pressure at once.

For Italian companies operating in the region the message is that energy security is not played out on supply contracts alone, but on physical infrastructure and its capacity to withstand conditions that until a few years ago were considered exceptional.

TOP NEWS

- **Network Event** — The Serbian chamber and the WB6 CIF at the CEI in Trieste: connectivity as the engine.
- **Brussels Focus** — France and Germany call for new trade defence tools and a roadmap on China.
- **Serbia** — On 11 September in Belgrade, Italian food turns into solidarity.
- **Poland** — Karpacz, 8 to 10 September: the thirty-fifth Economic Forum of Central and Eastern Europe.
- **Albania** — Ten years of the Association told by its founding members, in a series of video interviews.
- **Bulgaria** — The Association partners the «Gala in Sofia» festival: three evenings of opera and concert.

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TRIESTE, THE BRIDGE TO THE WESTERN BALKANS

On **24 August**, in **Trieste**, the President of the **Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia Marko Čadež** and the Secretary General of the **Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum David Piegazki** visited the Executive Secretariat of the **Central European Initiative**, received by Secretary General **Franco Dal Mas**.

The **WB6 CIF** is based in Trieste and brings together the six chambers of commerce of the Western Balkans; the CEI, from the same city, accompanies cooperation across Central and Eastern Europe. The visit brought to the same table the two institutions that, from Trieste, follow the region's economic path.

At the centre of the meeting was greater **economic integration** of the Western Balkans – within the region and with the European market – as a lever of company competitiveness. And **connectivity**: transport, energy, digital, between institutions and between people. Dal Mas described it as the engine of regional integration and a future priority of the new **CEI Action Plan**.

«Trieste has a natural vocation to be a bridge between Central Europe and the Western Balkans. The presence in the city of the CEI and the WB6 CIF is a concrete opportunity to strengthen the synergies between institutions and the business world, and to accompany the region's European path more effectively», said Dal Mas.

The meeting continues an established collaboration: the Serbian chamber and the WB6 CIF have taken part in CEI events, initiatives and projects, and concrete possibilities for joint activities emerged from it.

The theme is not new, but the moment makes it concrete: connectivity – transport, energy, digital – is the same matter on which the corridors linking the Adriatic to Central Europe depend, and on which this very August delivered a lesson, when the level of a river was enough to shut down reactors in two countries of the network.

For the companies of the network, the point is that integration is not decided in Brussels alone. It also passes through cities like Trieste, where the institutions representing companies on both sides of the Adriatic sit in the same block, and where connectivity stops being a chapter in a programme and becomes a list of works.

FOTO DA INSERIRE

evento-lato1.jpg

The port of Trieste, terminus of the corridors to Central Europe

FOTO DA INSERIRE

evento-lato2.jpg

The six Western Balkans chambers come together in the WB6 CIF



EUROPE LOOKS FOR NEW TOOLS IN THE FACE OF CHINA

On **17 July**, at the twenty-sixth Franco-German Council of Ministers held in **Brühl, France** and **Germany** asked the **European Commission** for rapid, concrete proposals to strengthen trade defence instruments, industrial policy and European economic security. Among the options put forward is a new **European resilience instrument** to reduce dependencies in critical sectors and the excessive concentration of supply chains.

Emmanuel Macron and **Friedrich Merz** instructed their ministers for the Economy, Finance and Foreign Affairs to draw up a joint roadmap on China by **September**, which will feed the European discussions of the autumn. The stated objective is not decoupling, but a combination of dialogue, **de-risking** and protection of European industry: industrial overcapacity and subsidies, the speed of trade defence investigations, market access and technology transfers. Macron spoke of a «historic convergence».

The main novelty is the German position. In the programme for growth and employment adopted by the coalition on **2 July**, Berlin announced a new external economic policy strategy: faster and more sector-specific anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures, action against circumvention and, in certain strategic sectors, technology transfer obligations for investors from some third countries. Operationally, Paris and Berlin will strengthen cooperation on **critical raw materials**: a round table with companies on the permanent magnets and **rare earths** value chain, and a European mining intelligence platform.

The picture is broader. On **13 July** the **Foreign Affairs Council** approved the document on the Union's strategic context: **Russia** is the most immediate and direct threat, **China** a critical long-term strategic challenge that uses trade imbalances and control of raw materials as instruments of pressure. Threats to European security, it acknowledges, are now also **geoeconomic**.

For the companies of the network the point is concrete: the centre of gravity of the European debate is shifting towards industrial policy, and with it the files on the **Industrial Accelerator Act**, on the screening of foreign investment and on public procurement. Those working in Central and Eastern Europe, where manufacturing chains are long and interwoven, would do well to follow them closely.

Article by the Delegation of Confindustria to the European Union

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HUMANITARNI FESTIVAL UKUSA ITALIJE



11. SEPTEMBAR 2026.
18 – 22H

GASTROŠOR
ŽORŽA KLEMANSOA 27

FOOD VOUCHER: 500 RSD



«Mangia. Dona. Ama.»: Italian food for children with cancer

On **29 July Confindustria Serbia** opened invitations to the second edition of the charity festival «**Mangia. Dona. Ama. — Jedi. Voli. Doniraj.**», to be held on Friday **11 September 2026** from **18:00 to 22:00** at **Gastrošor** in Belgrade, Žorža Klemansoa 27. The Association and **NURDOR**, the national association of parents of children with cancer, renewed their collaboration by signing a protocol: **all funds raised** during the evening will go to the care of children and adolescents with cancer. **Fifteen** partner companies provide the food, the drinks, the production and a creative workshop for the youngest guests. The **food voucher** costs **500 dinars** and is available in presale, reserved for companies.



Karpacz, the meeting point of Central and Eastern Europe

On **7 August Confindustria Polonia** drew companies' attention to the thirty-fifth edition of the **Karpacz Economic Forum**, to be held from **8 to 10 September 2026** at the Hotel Gołębiowski in Lower Silesia and organised by the **Institute for Eastern Studies**. This year's title, «The Architecture of the New Order – Stability in Times of Change», states the ambition of the event: to read the transformations of international geopolitical and economic balances. The 2025 edition drew more than **6,000 participants** and over **600 events** across panels and plenary sessions. At the centre of the discussion are **economic security** and industrial competitiveness, with reshoring and nearshoring as levers for stronger supply chains, **energy** and the transition, and artificial intelligence.



Ten years told by those who made them

In August **Confindustria Albania** launched «**10 anni, le nostre storie**», the series of video interviews in which the Association retraces its first decade through the voices of the entrepreneurs who built it. On **24 August** it opened with **Claudio Michelacci**, Vice President, founder and Sole Director of Alban Costruzioni and a founding member; on the **25th** came **Maria Cristina Busi Ferruzzi**, Vice President, President of ACIES and founder of CCBS – Coca-Cola Bottling Shqipëria; on the **27th** **Mario Tonucci**, First Vice President with responsibility for relations with Albanian institutions, present in the country with his firm since **1995**; and on the **28th** **Giordano Gorini**, Vice President and Chief Executive Officer of Essegei, in Albania since 2002 in hydropower, where the group runs **22 plants**.



«Gala in Sofia»: the Association alongside the festival

From **25 to 27 August** **Confindustria Bulgaria** was a partner of the «**Gala in Sofia**» **2026** festival, among the capital's cultural events of greatest international standing. The first evening staged **Tosca** by **Giacomo Puccini** with tenor **Kaufmann**; on the **27th** **David Garrett** performed, while **Sonya Yoncheva** was the protagonist of both evenings, together with the chorus, orchestra and ballet of the Sofia Opera. As a partner, the Association offered its members a **10%** discount on tickets and, to interested companies, a package of visibility opportunities. For the Association, a presence on a programme of this standing is a channel of relations with the local economic and institutional community.

MORE THAN MEMBERS. PARTNERS.

Confindustria Est Europa promotes a model of strategic collaboration among businesses, institutions and regions, through **two instruments designed to create shared value**:

13 Thematic areas



Sustainability and ecological transition



Innovation and digital technologies



Infrastructure and logistics



Energy and energy security



Cybersecurity, data protection, AI



Defence industry and dual use



Internationalisation of SMEs



Training, talent and young people



Life sciences, healthcare, pharmaceuticals



Agribusiness, food supply chains, traceability



Insurance, fintech and payments, advisory and export finance



Economic diplomacy, branding, business culture



Advanced manufacturing, automation, machinery

THEMATIC PARTNERSHIPS

Exclusive collaboration paths for companies wishing to stand out in one strategic field. **Every thematic partner:**

- Gains **institutional visibility** at events and in the newsletter, website and podcast;
- **Takes part in dedicated projects**, thematic round tables and missions;
- Receives an **exclusive badge** and tailored content;
- Enters a direct channel of dialogue with our representations across Central and Eastern Europe.

SUPPORTING PARTNER

A flexible option for those who wish to support the network's activities with a cross-cutting profile, without a thematic commitment.



- Those approaching our network for the first time;
- Those wishing to support the European project of Confindustria Est Europa;
- Those aiming to consolidate their institutional presence in the Balkans and Eastern Europe.



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