

Press release

U.S. tariffs threaten European steel and European sovereignty. Effective EU safeguards are needed, urges EUROFER

Brussels, 12 March 2025 – The imposition of a 25% blanket tariff by the United States' administration on all steel imports exacerbates an already dire market environment for the European steel industry and poses a genuine threat to its future. The sector expects the European Union to respond with an effective revision of the safeguard measures that will mitigate the impact of the U.S. tariffs and ensure the longevity of the industry in the long-term, says the European Steel Association.

"President Trump's 'America First' policy threatens to be a final nail in the coffin of the European steel industry. If European steel disappears, so too does European automotive, European security and defence, energy infrastructure, transportation and others. What is at stake is European sovereignty", said Dr. Henrik Adam, President of the European Steel Association (EUROFER). "Under the first Trump administration, we already witnessed the huge impact of Section 232. EU steel exports to the U.S. decreased by over 1 million tonnes, while for every three tonnes of steel deflected from the US market because of Section 232, two tonnes arrived in the EU.

Today, the overall market situation for European steel is much worse than in 2018. These new measures imposed by Trump are more extensive, therefore the impact of the U.S. tariffs is likely to be far greater", continued Dr. Adam.

Firstly, the Trump administration has removed all product exemptions and Tariff Rate Quotas that the EU had previously negotiated. With EU steel exports to the U.S. already having fallen by 1 million tonnes, the EU now stands to lose at least another 1 million tonnes of steel exports to the US. Moreover, the blanket import tariff also now includes "derivate" steel products, reducing export opportunities for a further 1 million tonnes of EU products worth €7 billion annually to the EU economy.

Secondly, with global excess capacity having reached record levels in 2024 and set to increase again in 2025, the EU market – already saturated with cheap steel imports from Asia, North Africa

and the Middle East – will be further flooded as steel intended for the US market will be redirected. 18 million tonnes of steel were exported to the U.S. under preferential regimes and are now at risk of deflection towards the EU market. EU steel production, which lost 9 million tonnes of capacity and 18,000 jobs in 2024 alone, is at even greater risk. There is also the prospect that yet more steel will be deflected to the EU market if additional reciprocal tariffs are imposed by the U.S.

“Simply put, while all other countries – today the U.S. – protect their national steel production, the EU has had the most vulnerable market in the world”, said Dr. Adam. “Our producers already face the highest energy prices while having the highest climate ambition. Meanwhile, they are being undercut by cheaper, more carbon intensive foreign imports”, he added.

In view of the existential threat to European steel caused by the spill-over of global overcapacity, foreign subsidies and dumping, now compounded by the new U.S. tariffs, the EU has committed to revising the current EU steel safeguard regime by 1 April. It is crucial that these measures are robust and meaningful.

“It is crucial that the revised steel EU safeguard measures are robust and effective to respond immediately and decisively to counter further deflection of steel imports flooding the EU market. The time has come”, concluded Dr. Adam.

Notes for editors

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About the European Steel Association (EUROFER)

EUROFER AISBL is located in Brussels and was founded in 1976. It represents the entirety of steel production in the European Union. EUROFER full members are steel companies and national steel federations throughout the EU. The major steel companies and national steel federations in Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom are members. The European Steel Association is recorded in the EU transparency register: 93038071152-83.

About the European steel industry

The European steel industry is a world leader in innovation and environmental sustainability. It has a turnover of around €191 billion and directly employs around 303,000 highly-skilled people, producing on average 140 million tonnes of steel per year. More than 500 steel production sites across 22 EU Member States provide direct and indirect employment to millions more European citizens. Closely integrated with Europe's manufacturing and construction industries, steel is the backbone for development, growth and employment in Europe. Steel is the most versatile industrial material in the world. The thousands of different grades and types of steel developed by the industry make the modern world possible. Steel is 100% recyclable and therefore is a fundamental part of the circular economy.