



RETAIL TRADE IN THE EU AND ROMANIA

In February 2025, the European Union (EU) witnessed a modest yet positive shift in retail trade, signaling a cautious rebound in consumer activity. According to Eurostat, the seasonally adjusted retail trade volume increased by 0.3% in the euro area and by 0.2% in the EU compared to January 2025. On an annual basis, the calendar-adjusted retail sales index increased by 2.3% in the euro area and by 2.0% in the EU compared to February 2024.

Monthly and Yearly Comparisons

The monthly uptick in February follows a period of stagnation, as January 2025 saw retail trade volume remain stable in the euro area (0.0%) and grow by a mere 0.1% in the EU. This recent growth suggests a potential turnaround in consumer spending habits. Year-on-year, the 2.3% increase in the euro area and 2.0% in the EU indicate a strengthening retail sector compared to the same period in 2024.

Breaking down the data by retail sectors

- Food, Drinks, and Tobacco: In the euro area, sales increased by 0.3% compared to January 2025, and by 1.9% compared to February 2024. In the EU, the monthly increase was 0.2%, with a 1.4% rise year-on-year.
- Non-Food Products (except automotive fuel): The euro area experienced a 0.3% monthly increase and a 2.5% annual rise. Similarly, the EU saw a 0.2% monthly growth and a 2.5% increase compared to February 2024.
- Automotive Fuel: Sales in the euro area grew by 0.2% month-on-month and 0.7% year-on-year. The EU reported a significant 1.4% monthly increase, and a 1.2% in yearly increase.

Top Increases and Decreases by Member State

Among the EU Member States, the highest monthly increases in retail trade volume were recorded in: Cyprus: +4.7%, Estonia: +2.2%, and Lithuania: +1.7%. Conversely, the largest decreases were observed in: Bulgaria: -1.7%, Netherlands: -1.4%, Poland: -1.2%.

Retail Trade in Romania – February 2025

In February 2025, Romania's retail trade sector presented a mixed performance, reflecting both seasonal fluctuations and broader economic changes. When examining seasonally adjusted data, a clearer picture of underlying trends emerges. This adjusted perspective reveals modest resilience in the sector, particularly in the face of global uncertainty and local economic shifts.

Compared to January 2025, the volume of retail trade (excluding motor vehicles and motorcycles) declined by 1.0%, indicating a slight cooling in consumer activity following the typically strong holiday and post-holiday sales months. The downturn was primarily driven by contractions across all major retail categories. Sales of food, beverages, and tobacco fell by 1.9%, suggesting ongoing consumer caution in essential spending. At the same time, the sale of non-food products, while relatively stable, declined slightly by 0.1%. The retail trade of automotive fuel in specialized stores also dropped by 0.6%. These figures suggest that February was marked by a general restraint in consumption, possibly influenced by seasonal factors and economic prudence following end-of-year expenditures.

Despite this monthly decline, a year-over-year comparison with February 2024 shows a more optimistic picture. The adjusted retail trade volume increased by 3.3%, a sign of continued recovery and underlying consumer confidence. This annual growth was largely supported by the non-food sector, which recorded a robust 5.9% increase. The sustained strength in non-food sales likely reflects a rebound in discretionary spending, potentially driven by wage growth and improving household sentiment. The fuel sector also contributed to this growth, modestly, with a 0.3% rise in volume, indicating stable patterns in mobility and transport-related consumption. Conversely, the food, beverages, and tobacco segment showed a slight decline of 0.4% compared to February of the previous year, a trend that may point to changes in consumption behavior, price sensitivity, or competition from informal and alternative retail channels.

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Ioan Nistor

Chief Economist

EU retail trade volume up by 0.3% MoM and 2.3% YoY. Romania retail volume down 1.0% MoM but up 3.7% YoY. Cautious optimism for the following period.





Looking at the cumulative data for the first two months of 2025, compared to the same period in 2024, the adjusted figures show the steady, yet uneven, progress of the retail trade sector. The total volume of retail sales increased by 3.7%, a sign of economic resilience. Once again, non-food products led the way with a 6.3% rise, underlining the category’s role as a primary driver of retail expansion. Fuel sales also saw a 1.8% increase, affirming the sector’s stability. Meanwhile, sales of food, beverages, and tobacco registered a slight contraction of 0.5%, maintaining a pattern of stagnation or marginal decline.

Looking ahead, the trajectory of Romania’s retail trade sector over the coming months requires a consideration of both supportive and restraining factors. On the positive side, continued wage growth and stable employment levels could increase the disposable income and fuel further retail spending, particularly in non-essential categories. Should inflation remain contained and interest rates stable, consumer confidence is likely to remain intact.

However, several risks could temper this outlook. Persistent inflationary pressures, particularly in the food sector, may continue to erode purchasing power, leading consumers to reprioritize spending. Additionally, any tightening of monetary policy or increases in interest rates could suppress credit-financed consumption. External factors, including geopolitical tensions or energy price volatility, may also exert influence, especially on fuel-related sales.

In conclusion, while February 2025 brought a modest monthly contraction in Romania’s retail trade, the broader trend remains cautiously optimistic. The year-over-year growth and solid performance of non-food sectors suggest a degree of resilience and adaptation among both retailers and consumers. Yet, continued vigilance is warranted, particularly in light of macroeconomic uncertainties. The interplay between inflation, income, and consumer confidence will be central in shaping the sector’s path in the months to come.