

Romania

on Europe's economic map.



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Polish-Romanian Bilateral
Chamber of Commerce and Industry
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POLISH-ROMANIAN BILATERAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

The Polish-Romanian Bilateral Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PRBCC) was established in 2016 at the initiative of Polish and Romanian enterprises, in response to the growing need for intensified economic cooperation between the two countries. The Chamber aims to create an independent and dynamic platform supporting the development of bilateral business, investment, and trade relations.

The Chamber focuses on promoting economic cooperation between Poland and Romania, supporting companies from both countries, and providing reliable information on business conditions in these markets. It organizes trade missions, B2B meetings, seminars, industry conferences, and networking events, and participates in projects promoting Polish and Romanian enterprises on the international stage.

As part of its activities, the Chamber also offers advisory services for companies interested in foreign expansion, facilitates market entry, and helps establish direct business contacts.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author of this report is Adam Sobieszkoda, Executive Director of the Chamber. He specializes in building long-term relationships with clients and business partners, business development and sales in Poland and Romania, as well as organizing economic and business-related events. He is a graduate of the SGH Warsaw School of Economics and the Poznań University of Economics and Business. In addition to his native Polish, he speaks English and Romanian.



The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2022, and the political shift in the United States following Donald Trump's re-election as President in 2024 are just a few of the major disruptions witnessed in recent years. In the shadow of these global shifts, some economies have gained while others have lost ground. A closer look at the European Union—especially its member states—suggests that Central and Eastern Europe has demonstrated exceptional resilience to these shocks.

In recent years, Romania has been drawing growing interest from Polish companies, as well as from enterprises across other EU countries. The following report aims to provide insights into whether this growing attention is justified, how Romania has evolved in recent years, and what its current position is on the economic map of Europe.

ROMANIA IN THE REGION

To understand Romania's current economic potential, it is worth analyzing its position in comparison to other European Union member states and countries in Central and Eastern Europe¹. According to the latest available data (including forecasts for 2024), Romania's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) amounted to EUR 354 billion². This places the country 12th among the 27 EU member states and 2nd in the Central and Eastern European region—right after Poland.

Over the past several years, Romania has been steadily strengthening its position as a regional economy. A turning point came in 2023, when Romania overtook the Czech Republic, reaching a GDP of EUR 324 billion (compared to EUR 317 billion for the Czech Republic). This growth confirms the dynamism of the Romanian economy, which—if the current trajectory continues—may soon reach a level comparable to the economies of developed Western European countries.

For comparison, Denmark's GDP in 2024 was EUR 397 billion. If current growth trends continue, Romania has a realistic chance of catching up with—and even surpassing—that level within a few years, which would significantly enhance its position within the European community.

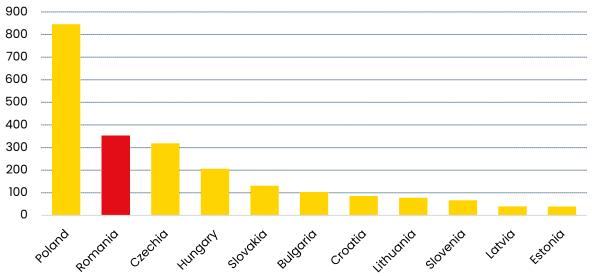
To assess the pace of Romania's economic growth, it is helpful to analyze data from the past five years, taking into account both

¹ For the purposes of this study, the following countries are considered to be part of Central and Eastern Europe: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia.

² Eurostat. Accessed May 08, 2025. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat.

the period just before the COVID-19 pandemic (2019) and the years during the pandemic (from 2020 onward). An analysis of cumulative GDP growth rates for the periods 2019–2024 and 2020–2024, in comparison with other EU member states, shows that Romania has achieved impressive results.





Source: Eurostat

On average, the Romanian economy grew at a rate of 9.5% annually between 2019 and 2024, and 12.5% between 2020 and 2024³. These figures place the country among the EU's top performers in terms of growth. In the first period analyzed, Romania was outpaced only by Bulgaria and Lithuania, surpassing countries such as Poland. In the second period, it ranked just behind Croatia and Bulgaria, once again ahead of Poland and other regional economies.

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³ Own calculations based on Eurostat. Accessed May 08, 2025. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat.

These results demonstrate that, despite unfavorable external conditions—such as the pandemic and the associated economic slowdown—Romania was able to effectively use this time to accelerate development. One consequence of this dynamism is the country overtaking the Czech Republic, which for many years held the position of the second–largest economy in Central and Eastern Europe.

DRIVERS OF ROMANIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

To understand the sources behind Romania's dynamic economic growth, it is essential to examine the key factors driving the national economy. The main engine continues to be private consumption. Household spending consistently accounts for the largest share of GDP—61.3% in the years 2019–2020 and 61.9% in 2023—remaining the fundamental pillar of growth⁴.

At the same time, gross fixed capital formation, i.e. investment, has gained importance. Its share of GDP increased from 23% in 2020 to 27% in 2023, placing Romania among the top EU economies in terms of investment intensity. In 2024, only Estonia (27.9%) and the Czech Republic (27.3%) allocated a larger share of their GDP to investment. For comparison, the EU average in 2023 was 22%, while Poland recorded one of the lowest results in the EU—17.9%. Forecasts for 2024 indicate that Romania will maintain a high investment level—25.7% of GDP.

⁴ Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2024. National Institute of Statistics, 2025.

https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/anuarul_statistic_al_romaniei_car te_ed_2024_en_0.pdf.; Romanian Statistical Yearbook 1990-2023, National Institute of Statistics, 2025.

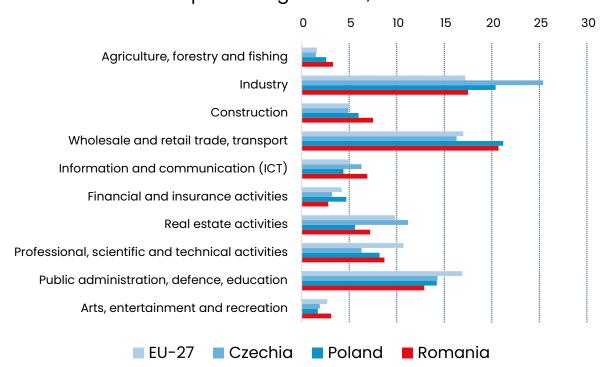
https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/asr_serii_de_timp_2024-en.pdf.

Investments also had a direct impact on economic growth—in 2023, their contribution to GDP growth was 2.4 percentage points, making them one of the most important growth factors.

An analysis of the economic structure helps identify the sectors contributing most to national income. The leading sectors include: wholesale and retail trade; food industry; accommodation and transport; manufacturing; professional, scientific, and technical activities; construction.

Structural changes between 2019 and 2024 are particularly evident in manufacturing, whose share of GDP fell by 3.8 percentage points. In the same period, the share of trade, accommodation, and transport increased by 2.8 pp, while agriculture saw a decline of 1 pp.

Gross value added and income by main industry, percentage of GDP, 2024.



Source: Eurostat

Two sectors deserve special attention for their sustained growth despite external challenges: construction and information and communication technologies (ICT). Both increased their share of GDP by 1.2 pp from 2019 to 2024, reaching 7.5% and 6.9%, respectively. These shares are higher than in comparable regional economies such as Poland or the Czech Republic, and they exceed the EU average—confirming the growing role of modern and infrastructure-oriented industries in Romania's growth model.

STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF ROMANIA'S TRADE DEFICIT

Despite clear economic growth in recent years, Romania continues to struggle with a significant trade deficit, placing it among the top European Union countries with the highest negative foreign trade balance. This trend has not only persisted but has shown signs of deepening. In 2019, the trade deficit amounted to approximately EUR 17.3 billion, and by 2024, its value had nearly doubled to EUR 33.4 billion⁵.

The main cause of this development has been the acceleration of import growth since 2020, which has outpaced export growth. The imbalance between these two categories points to structural issues in Romania's trade balance, including the limited competitiveness of certain domestic industrial sectors.

⁵ International Trade Yearbook of Romania 2024. National Institute of Statistics, 2025.

https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/anuarul_de_comert_international _al_romaniei_cd_9.pdf.; International Trade Statistics 12/2024. National Institute of Statistics, 2025.

https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/buletin_statistic_de_comert_international_nr.12_2024.pdf.

The trade deficit is concentrated in four key categories of goods:

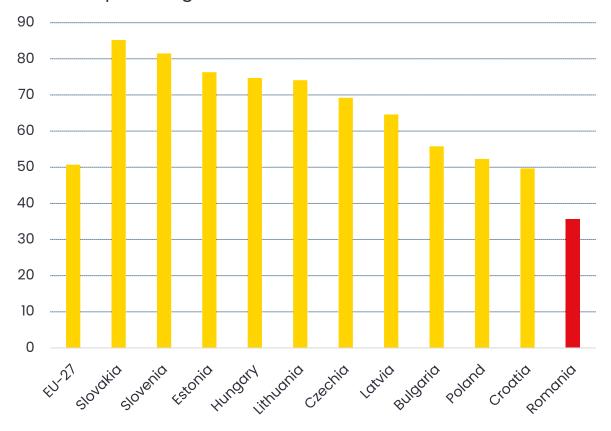
- Chemicals and related products accounting for 36% of the total deficit (with a deficit recorded in all subcategories).
- Manufactured goods, primarily classified by raw material –
 20% of the deficit (deficit across all categories except rubber products and wood products excluding furniture).
- Mineral fuels, lubricants, and related materials 16% of the deficit.
- Food and live animals 14% of the deficit (with a deficit in all subcategories except cereals and cereal products, and live animals).

In response to these challenges, the Romanian government—aware of the risks posed by an excessive trade deficit—has introduced programs aimed at strengthening the domestic production base and improving the trade balance. These include the ConstructPLUS⁶ program for the construction sector and INVESTALIM⁷ for the agri-food sector. Both were adopted in 2023 and provide funding for investments in fixed assets through 2026.

⁶ "The national program for the development of domestic production of construction products and materials – CONSTRUCTPLUS". Accessed May 06, 2025. https://oportunitatiue.gov.ro/en/program/programul-national-pentru-dezvoltarea-productiei-interne-deproduse-si-materiale-de-constructii-constructplus/.

⁷ "The national multiannual program INVESTALIM". Accessed May 06, 2025. https://oportunitati-ue.gov.ro/en/program/programul-national-multianual-investalim/.

Exports of goods and services in % of GDP, 2024.



Source: Eurostat

Another persistent challenge is the insufficient production base and the relatively low international competitiveness of Romanian enterprises. This is reflected in the share of exports of goods and services in GDP, which stood at just 35.6% in 20248. For comparison, the figure for Poland was 52.3%. This structural weakness in exports is one of the key areas that must be addressed if Romania is to sustain and expand its competitiveness within the region and the EU market.

Romania continues to strengthen its position as the secondlargest economy in Central and Eastern Europe, surpassing the Czech Republic. Thanks to strong economic growth and a rising

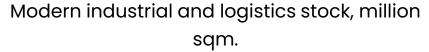
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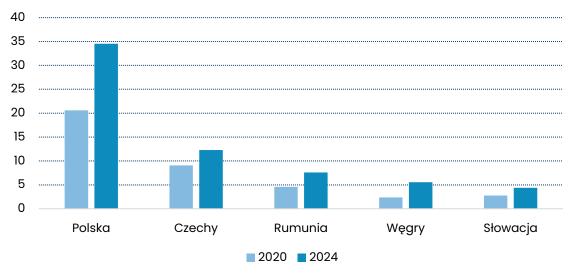
⁸ Eurostat. Accessed May 08, 2025. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat.

share of investment in GDP, the country has real potential for further convergence with the most developed economies in the EU. However, the persistent trade deficit and lower export competitiveness compared to Poland remain key challenges that will influence the pace and quality of this convergence process.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH POTENTIAL

When analyzing Romania's economic development, infrastructure must be considered as one of the key elements supporting growth. This analysis focuses on five main areas: industrial and warehouse infrastructure, road, rail, transshipment, and port infrastructure.





Source: own compilation based on data from Colliers and Cushman & Wakefield

Starting with warehouse and industrial space, in 2024 Romania had a total of 7.5 million square meters, ranking third in the region

behind Poland and the Czech Republic⁹. Compared to 2020, this area grew by 66%. Notably, Hungary recorded a 134% increase over the same period, and Poland saw a 68% increase¹⁰.

An analysis of the distribution of modern industrial and logistics centers reveals interesting insights about investment locations. The Bucharest-Ilfov region dominates, accounting for 49.2% of all new warehouse space in Romania. Other key regions include: the Western region with Timişoara (14.7%), Southern (Sud-Muntenia) (10.6%), the Central region with Braşov (9%), and the North-Western region with Cluj-Napoca and Oradea (8.9%)¹¹.

Investments tend to concentrate in well-connected regions with access to developed transport infrastructure, facilitating efficient goods movement. The map of modern warehouse center locations aligns closely with areas well integrated into Romania's motorway network, highlighting their strategic importance.

One of the country's major infrastructure challenges is the lack of a cohesive highway system connecting the western part of the country with the south, the east with the west, and the east with

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⁹ Marketbeat Central & Eastern Europe Industrial Q4 2024. Cushman & Wakefield 2025. https://assets.cushmanwakefield.com/-/media/cw/emea/czech-republic/insights/cee-marketbeats/pdfs/2025/2024_q4_cee_industrial-

marketbeat.pdf?rev=4a61081c618b4beab6e69b8ba7642819.

¹⁰ Turpin, Kevin. CEE Real Estate Market Outlook. September 2024. Colliers. https://ctp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/5.-Colliers-Guest-Presentation-CEE-Real-Estate-Market-Update.pdf.

¹¹ "The industrial and logistics stock in Romania will reach the 8 million sq. m landmark at the end of 2025, if the current development pace is maintained; Bucharest – Ilfov and the West region account for more than 50% of the total stock". October 2024.

https://cwechinox.com/the-industrial-and-logistics-stock-in-romania-will-reach-the-8-million-sq-m-landmark-at-the-end-of-2025-if-the-current-development-pace-is-maintained-bucharest-ilfov-and-the-west-region-account-f/.

the south. This insufficient connectivity negatively impacts balanced regional development, widening the economic gap between the more developed west and the less developed east.

At the end of 2020, Romania had 920 km of highways¹². By the end of 2024, the total length of highways and express roads reached 1,258 km¹³. In recent years, there has been a clear acceleration in road infrastructure projects. A good example is the A7 motorway (the so-called Moldavian Motorway), which will connect Ploieşti with Siret, linking eastern Romania with Bucharest. Construction began in 2020, and the section to Paşcani is expected to be completed by 2025/2026.

Despite historical delays in road development, Romania has accelerated the implementation of key transport projects. The A7 motorway is an example of an investment that could help reduce regional economic disparities and improve territorial cohesion.

Romania's strategic location offers significant potential for the development of the rail sector, especially amid the rising importance of sustainable and secure transport routes in Central and Eastern Europe. However, the current state of the rail infrastructure reflects serious structural issues, primarily resulting from years of underinvestment and limited modernization.

¹² Botea, Răzvan. "România a construit 54 km de autostrăzi în 2020 și rețeaua ajuns la o lungime de 920 km de cioturi de autostradă. Mai mult de o treime din drumurile modernizate din România au durata de viață depășită. Modernizarea unui kilometru de drum costă 800.000 de euro". 26.04.2021. https://www.zf.ro/eveniment/romania-construit-54-km-autostrazi-2020-reteaua-ajuns-lungime-920-km-20055566.

¹³ "Lungimea căilor de transport la sfârșitul anului 2024", National Institute of Statistics 2025. Accessed May 09, 2025.

https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/lung_cailor_transp24r.pdf

In 2023, the average speed of passenger trains in Romania was just 45 km/h, while freight trains averaged only 16 km/h¹⁴. In comparison, these figures in Poland were 56 km/h and 25 km/h, respectively, highlighting the extent of Romania's infrastructure lag.

The importance of rail as a strategic transport mode became evident during Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The blockade of Ukrainian Black Sea ports halted grain exports to Africa, prompting logistics companies to look for alternative routes bypassing Russian territory. In this context, the "Middle Corridor" gained significance—connecting the European Union (via Romania's port of Constanța) with China, through Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan, using both land routes and maritime transport across the Black and Caspian Seas.

Romania's railway development potential could be significantly boosted by EU funds allocated for the modernization of existing lines and the construction of new intermodal terminals. Interest in this sector is also growing among companies in the transport-freight-logistics (TSL) sector, which increasingly view rail as an alternative to road transport.

Another advantage is Romania's position along two Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) corridors, including the Baltic-Black Sea-Aegean corridor. Importantly, the Romanian government plans to build an entirely new high-speed railway

¹⁴ Manolache, Alina. "Cifrele care arată dezastrul de pe calea ferată. Trenurile de călători circulă cu 45 km/h, cele de marfă cu 15 km/h". 16.02.2024. https://hotnews.ro/primele-scenarii-pentru-calea-ferata-de-mare-viteza-bucuresti-budapesta-pe-unde-pot-trece-trenurile-cu-peste-200-km-h-si-care-sunt-costurile-estimate-harta-1781408.

line connecting Constanța with Oradea, enabling train speeds above 200 km/h¹⁵. Given current geopolitical dynamics, this project's strategic importance has increased considerably, potentially reinforcing Romania's role as a key link in Europe's logistics system.

The ongoing expansion of highways and express roads, coupled with the modernization and construction of new railway lines, is creating favorable conditions for the development of intermodal infrastructure in Romania. As of now, there are 22 intermodal (rail-road) terminals across the country, well aligned with major logistics and industrial hubs, supporting efficient supply chain integration¹⁶.

Romania has long attracted global logistics operators, who are steadily expanding their presence in the local market. One example is DP World, which in 2024 completed a modern intermodal terminal in Aiud, strategically located in the center of the country. According to the company, Romania's location and access to key corridors increasingly position it as a transshipment hub for East–West trade routes¹⁷.

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¹⁵ Vasilache, Adrian. "Primele scenarii pentru calea ferată de mare viteză București-Budapesta. Pe unde pot trece trenurile cu peste 200 km/h și care sunt costurile estimate-HARTĂ". 02.09.2024. https://hotnews.ro/primele-scenarii-pentru-calea-ferata-de-mare-viteza-bucuresti-budapesta-pe-unde-pot-trece-trenurile-cu-peste-200-km-h-si-care-sunt-costurile-estimate-harta-1781408.

¹⁶ Intermodal Terminals. Accessed May 09, 2025. https://intermodal-terminals.eu/terminalmap.php.

¹⁷ "DP World grows its European trimodal reach". 16.11.2024. https://www.worldcargonews.com/news/2024/11/dp-world-grows-its-european-trimodal-reach/.

One of the foundations of Romania's logistics potential is its access to the Black Sea and the port infrastructure in Constanţa—the largest seaport in the region. The port's importance increased significantly after the outbreak of war in Ukraine, becoming the main alternative to the blocked Ukrainian Black Sea ports. Between 2019 and 2021, average annual cargo volumes in Constanţa stood at 64.8 million tons. In 2022, following the Russian invasion, this rose to 75.5 million tons, and reached a record 92.7 million tons in 2023. In 2024, cargo volume stabilized at 77.5 million tons¹⁸.

As one of the ten largest ports in the EU, Constanța is also developing rapidly in terms of infrastructure. In 2024, a new Ro-Ro terminal covering 70,000 sq m was opened, dedicated to handling vehicles and rolling cargo. Simultaneously, investments were made to expand grain terminal storage capacity, responding to Romania's growing role as an alternative export route for Ukrainian agricultural products¹⁹.

Constanța Port is characterized by a high level of cargo diversification—including both bulk commodities (e.g., grain, minerals) and containers—which increases its operational flexibility and resilience to market fluctuations. Further investments in port and logistics infrastructure are crucial to

¹⁸ Port of Constanta - port statistics. Accessed May 09, 2025. https://www.portofconstantza.com/pn/page/np_statistici_port.

¹⁹ "DP World Boosts European Trade With €130m Investment In Romania". 15.05.2024. https://www.dpworld.com/news/releases/dp-world-boosts-european-trade-with-130m-investment-in-romania/.

maintaining and strengthening Romania's position as a regional leader in the transport sector.

The development of Romania's road, rail, port, and logistics infrastructure significantly increases the country's investment attractiveness, supports regional convergence, and reinforces its role as a key transport hub in Central and Eastern Europe.

POLAND AS A KEY TRADING PARTNER AND INVESTOR IN ROMANIA

Poland is one of Romania's main trading partners. In 2024, Polish exports to Romania amounted to EUR 8 billion, accounting for 6.4% of Romanian imports, ranking Poland 4th after Germany, Italy and Hungary. Compared to 2019, Polish exports to Romania increased by 55% and their share in Romanian imports increased by 0.4 percentage points²⁰.

The main products exported by Polish companies to Romania are:

- Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances and their parts (10.5% share of exports).
- Non-rail vehicles and their parts and accessories (7.8%).
- Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound and video recorders and reproducers, and parts and accessories of such articles (7.2%).
- Plastics and articles thereof (5.1%).

https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/buletin_statistic_de_comert_international_nr.12_2024.pdf.

²⁰ International Trade Yearbook of Romania 2024. National Institute of Statistics, 2025. https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/anuarul_de_comert_international _al_romaniei_cd_9.pdf.; International Trade Statistics 12/2024. National Institute of Statistics, 2025.

Rubber and articles thereof (4.2%).

When analyzing data on Polish imports from Romania, it is important to note that Romanian exports to Poland are more than twice as low as Polish exports to Romania. In 2024, Polish companies imported goods worth EUR 3.7 billion from Romania, which ranked Poland 6th among the main buyers of Romanian products.

In 2023, the largest share of Romania's goods imports to Poland were:

- Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof (18.4%).
- Non-rail vehicles and parts and accessories thereof (18%).
- Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances and parts thereof (11.1%).
- Rubber and rubber articles (5.8%).

According to data from the Romanian Trade Register (Oficiul Național al Registrului Comerțului), there were 1,757 companies with Polish capital registered at the end of 2024. It should be noted, however, that this compilation includes all entities with Polish capital registered since 1991, including companies set up by Polish citizens conducting, in fact, sole proprietorship in the form of a limited liability company.

According to the author of the report, more authoritative data is provided by a cyclical survey conducted by the Central Statistical Office (GUS). According to GUS data, in 2022 there were 212

enterprises in Romania owned by Polish-based entities, which employed a total of 14,400 employees²¹.

One of the largest Polish investors in Romania is the Maspex Group from the food industry, which through direct investments and acquisitions of Romanian companies has become one of the largest Polish investors in this market, employing 1,700 people by 2024. In addition to companies that started operations in Romania as early as the 1990s, more and more recognizable Polish brands are entering this market. In 2024, the Żabka Group, operating there under the Froo brand, inaugurated its operations in Romania.

It is worth noting that Polish companies already present in Romania are expanding their production capacity, including by building new plants. An example is Citronex, which in 2019 commissioned a banana ripening plant in Timişoara and is currently planning another investment near Sibiu²². It is characteristic that Polish investments in Romania are not concentrated around one industry. In the context of Romania's current economic situation, intensive infrastructure development and structural constraints due to an insufficient production base, the Romanian market offers significant opportunities for Polish companies, especially in the agri-food industry, construction, infrastructure and transport and logistics sectors.

²¹ Activity of enterprises having foreign entities in 2022. Warsaw, Statistics Poland, 2024.

²² Kinasiewicz, Agata. "Polski pomidorowy gigant inwestuje za granicą. Zbuduje szklarnię za 25 mln euro". 27.01.2023. https://www.portalspozywczy.pl/owoce-warzywa/wiadomosci/polski-pomidorowy-gigant-inwestuje-za-granica-zbuduje-szklarnie-za-25-mln-euro,218981.html.

SUMMARY – CHALLENGES AND RISKS

This report demonstrates that Romania holds a relatively strong position in the region and has real potential to become a local transport and logistics hub. The main challenges facing the Romanian economy include the effective use of available investment funds—particularly for infrastructure—in order to accelerate economic growth and activate long-term development mechanisms.

The risk of insufficient infrastructure modernization—felt especially by businesses and foreign investors—may slow Romania's dynamic development by creating uncompetitive conditions, for example in terms of the speed and ease of transportation.

Another major challenge is reducing the deepening trade deficit, which leads to serious structural imbalances: it increases Romania's dependence on imports while simultaneously hindering the development of its domestic production base.



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