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Romania’s Brewers Seek Excise Tax Freeze After Beer Sales Hit a 20-Year Low

A parliamentary committee backed a bill that would hold 2027 and 2028 beer excise rates at 2026 levels after a 4% market decline in 2025

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Romania’s beer producers are pressing for a freeze on the country’s beer excise tax through 2028 after local consumption fell to its lowest level in two decades, according to the Beer Producers Association of Romania.

The industry group said on Monday, Nov. 23, that the domestic beer market shrank by 4% in 2025, to 14.4 million hectoliters from about 15 million hectoliters in 2024. That decline followed drops of 5% in both 2022 and 2023, a temporary stabilization in 2024 and another contraction in 2025. Taken together, the market has lost about 15% of its volume over the past four years, the association said.

The group warned that any further excise increases could push the sector below a sustainable level at a time when demand is already weak. Constantin Bratu, the association’s director general, said brewers are not asking for the tax to be abolished but want a predictable tax regime that would allow companies to protect local production, maintain investment and preserve jobs.

Bratu said the beer sector reached what he described as a maximum level of tax pressure and a minimum level of volume in the first half of 2026. He argued that a stable market would help support a healthier tax base and, in turn, state budget revenue.

The request comes as lawmakers consider a change to Romania’s tax code. On Nov. 4, the budget, finance and banking committee of the Chamber of Deputies unanimously approved an amendment to a bill revising the fiscal code, identified as PL-x 639/2024. The amendment would freeze the beer excise tax in 2027 and 2028 at the 2026 level, stopping the automatic inflation-based indexation required under current law.

The bill still needs a final vote in the full Chamber of Deputies, which is the decision-making chamber on the measure, before it can be sent for promulgation.

Supporters of the amendment say another increase would place more pressure on prices and consumption at a moment when the market is already at a historic low. For the beverage industry more broadly, the debate matters beyond beer shelves. A prolonged squeeze from higher taxes and weaker demand could affect brewers’ production plans, capital spending and employment, while also feeding through to

distributors, retailers and agricultural suppliers tied to barley and other raw materials. A tax freeze, if approved, could give producers more room to plan output and investment, though that effect would depend on how consumer demand develops.

Under the current system, Romania’s standard beer excise is 5.83 lei per hectoliter per degree Plato. Independent producers with annual output of no more than 200,000 hectoliters pay a reduced rate of 3.21 lei. Degree Plato is the unit Romania uses to calculate beer excise, combining the volume of beer with its concentration.

The association said the excise rose by about 26% over 2025 and 2026 and by more than 55% compared with 2022. The tax has been changed four times in the past four years.

To illustrate the effect, the group said the excise on a 0.5-liter beer with 5% alcohol rose from about 0.22 to 0.23 lei in 2022 to roughly 0.34 lei in 2026. The increase is amplified in the final retail price because Romania applies a 21% value-added tax to the excise as well.

The industry group’s appeal reflects a wider concern in Romania’s drinks market that repeated tax increases can cut consumption without necessarily giving producers enough certainty to keep investing. Beer makers say that is especially important in a market that has already recorded several years of falling volumes.

For now, the proposal remains pending in parliament, where lawmakers must decide whether to keep the current automatic indexation system or lock in the 2026 excise level for the next two years.