

**INVITATION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ANNUAL CONFERENCE
ON WEDNESDAY 19 AND THURSDAY 20 MARCH 2025 IN BUCHAREST**

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of the President, Mr Thomas NONN, we have the pleasure of inviting you to our General Assembly and Annual Conference that will take place **as usual in the third week of March**, i.e. **on Wednesday 19 and Thursday 20 March 2025 in Bucharest**.

ACDBR (Association of the Romanian Distribution Companies for Consumers Goods), our Romanian member association, kindly supports this event and has helped prepare an interesting programme.

- **On Wednesday**, all participants are first invited to have lunch. Then at 14.30 we will start the conference with two presentations on Romania (ACDBR + the evolution and trends in traditional Romanian trade). Political discussions around a joint Manifesto of Independent Retail Europe and ACDBR with local and EU politicians, and a panel discussion will follow, **in presence of Ms Maria Grapini, Romanian Member of the European Parliament** (S&D, Vice-Chair of the European Parliament's IMCO Committee – Internal Market and Consumer Protection –, and member of the AGRI Committee – Agriculture and Rural Development), among others. Afterwards we will have a presentation of the Commission of the key activities of the Retail Unit of DG GROW (Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs). The General Assembly – **participation is reserved to the leadership of the member organisations** – will close the working programme of first day. In the evening, we are invited to dinner by ACDBR in a typical Romanian restaurant, the Hanu' lui Manuc.
- **On Thursday**, the conference will re-start at 8.30. The **first session** will be dedicated to the reduction of **Packaging and Packaging Waste** and the **second one** to uses of **Artificial Intelligence in retail**. The last presentation of the day will be an entertaining keynote speech by Jack Stratten on innovative solutions in retail. We close the event with a networking lunch. As usual, the conference will end early enough to enable all participants to fly home in the afternoon, i.e. participants can book flights as of 16.30. We have foreseen a bus that will leave the hotel at 14.00 to bring the participants to the airport.

Please note that **the programme on 19 March, except for the General Assembly, as well as the Annual Conference are open to external guests and to all staff members and members of your organisation. We invite you to extend this invitation to your colleagues, members and retailers in order to enable them to have fruitful and constructive exchanges with their foreign peers.**

You will find attached all the practical information (accommodation, costs). [The registration form is available online](#). Participants are kindly requested to fill it out **BY THURSDAY 6 MARCH**. Should you need additional information, please contact Laurence (laurence.dessouroux@independentretaileurope.eu, +32 2 732 46 60).

We look forward to seeing you in Bucharest!

Kind regards,

Else GROEN, Director General

ANNEXES

- Practical information (page 2)
- **Draft** programme (pages 3 and 4)

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

1. ACCOMODATION

Rooms have been reserved at the hotel “Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Bucharest Convention Center”, Bulevardul Poligrafiei 3-5 A, Bucharest 013704 (<https://ramadaplazabucharest.ro/>).

From Bucharest Henri Coandă International Airport, you can take a taxi. Depending on the traffic, the transfer to the hotel will take between 20 and 40 minutes.

Room prices:

- a classic double room **for single occupation** (119€ per room and per night – incl. VAT, city tax and breakfast for the nights of 18 and 19 March);
- a classic double room **for double occupation** (129€ per room and per night – incl. VAT, city tax and breakfast for the nights of 18 and 19 March).

Your rooms have already been pre-booked (see [registration form](#)). Participants are kindly requested to pay directly the hotel for their rooms when they check out at the end of their stay.

2. PARTICIPATION FEE

The participation fee, which amounts to **250 euro per participant**, covers the costs of Independent Retail Europe for the organisation of this event (meeting room, lunch, etc.).

We would be grateful if you could transfer this fee in euros to our bank account at the bank ING (Avenue Marnix 24, 1000 Brussels) BE24 3630 0638 2438 (BIC: BBRUBEBB).

Please instruct your bank to debit any bank charges for the transfer to the payer.

3. LANGUAGES

To facilitate the preparation of the seating plan for the dinner, we kindly ask you to indicate in the registration form what languages you speak (English, French, German, Spanish, Italian...).

4. LEAVING BUCHAREST ON THURSDAY AFTERNOON

The Annual Conference will end early enough to enable all participants to fly home on that day. A bus transfer is foreseen to Bucharest Henri Coandă International Airport at 14.00, immediately after the lunch. **The participants can therefore book their departure flights from 16.30 onwards.** Please let us know in the participation form if you intend to take the bus to the airport. This will enable us book the appropriate bus size.

Annual Conference – 19 and 20 March 2025 – Bucharest

Day 1

Wednesday 19 March

Independent Retail Europe General Assembly and Annual Conference
Meeting venue: Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Bucharest Convention Center
(Bulevardul Poligrafiei 3-5 A, Bucharest 013704)

- 12.30** **Group lunch** at the hotel
==> The lunch will be available until 14.30
- 14.30-14.40** **Opening of the Annual Conference**
5' Mr Thomas NONN, President of Independent Retail Europe 2022-2025
[Meeting room Europa \(ground floor\)](#)
Wi-fi: Ramada – Password: hotelramada
- 14.40-14.55** **Welcome to Romania and presentation of ACDBR**
15' Mr Ghassan SHAKHSHIR, Board member of ACDBR, representative of Safeway International Impex SRL (RO)
- 14.55-15.05** **Evolution and trends in traditional Romanian trade**
10' Ms Maria HURDUC, Board member of ACDBR, Modern Buyer (specialized online magazine) (RO)
- 15.05-15.15** **Presentation of an independent Romanian retailer**
10' Mr Radu TRANDAFIR, General Manager, Drim Daniel Distributie FMCG (RO)
- 15.15-16.05** **Presentation and panel discussion on the “Joint Manifesto” of Independent Retail Europe and ACDBR on the policy needs for local retailers**
50'
With the participation of
- Mr Robert-Marius CAZANCIUC, Vice-President of the Romanian Senate
 - Ms Ramona CHIRIAC, Head of the European Commission Representation in Romania (TBC)
 - Ms Maria GRAPINI, Romanian Member of the European Parliament, Vice-President of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO) of the European Parliament
 - Mr Bogdan-Gruia IVAN, Minister of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism
 - Mr Ștefan-Radu OPREA, Head of the Prime Minister’s Chancellery (TBC)
 - And Ms Else GROEN, Director General, Independent Retail Europe (Moderator)
- 16.05-16.20** **Q&As**
15'
- 16.20-16.40** **Presentation of key activities of the Retail Unit of the European Commission**
20' Ms Géraldine FAGES, Senior Expert, European Commission, Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW), Directorate F3 “Food, Retail, Health”
- 16.40-16.55** **Q&As**
15'
- 16.55-17.15** **Coffee break**
- 17.15-18.15** **General Assembly**
60' ==> Reserved to the leadership of the Independent Retail Europe members of the General Assembly
[Meeting room Europa \(ground floor\)](#)
Wi-fi: Ramada – Password: hotelramada
- 19.00** **Meet in the lobby of the hotel**

19.30 Dinner at Hanu' lui Manuc restaurant
Str. Franceză 62-64, Bucharest 030167
Dress code: Business casual

Day 2

Thursday 20 March

Independent Retail Europe Annual Conference
Meeting venue: Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Bucharest Convention Center
(Bulevardul Poligrafiei 3-5 A, Bucharest 013704)

- 8.30 Start of the Annual Conference**
==> Open to external guests and to all staff members and members of Independent Retail Europe member organisations
Meeting room Europa (ground floor)
Wi-fi: Ramada – Password: hotelramada
- 8.30 Opening and introduction to the conference**
By the new President of Independent Retail Europe 2025-2028

Session 1 – The Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)

- 8.45-8.50 Opening by the moderator**
5' Ms Else GROEN, Director General, Independent Retail Europe
- 8.50-9.10 Presentation on the new EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation**
20' Mr Wolfgang TRUNK (PhD), Team Leader, European Commission, Directorate General for Environment, Unit B3 “From Waste to Resources” (online)
- 9.10-9.25 Q&As**
15'
- 9.25-9.40 Presentation on the new Romanian DRS system**
15' Ms Gemma WEBB, CEO and President, RetuRO Sistem Garanție Returnare S.A. (RO)
- 9.40-9.50 Q&As**
10'
- 9.50-10.50 Presentations and panel discussion – Initiatives for packaging reduction and remaining challenges for members**
60'
- Mr Hauke RATHJEN, EDEKA Verband kaufmännischer Genossenschaften e. V. (DE)
 - Ms Erika LUČICKAJA, SPAR International (EU)
 - PallEx speaker (RO) (TBC)
- 10.50-11.05 Q&As**
15'
- 11.05-11.10 Conclusion by the moderator**
5' Ms Else GROEN, Director General, Independent Retail Europe
- 11.10-11.35 Coffee break**
25'

Session 2 – Artificial intelligence

- 11.35-11.40 Opening by the moderator**
5' Mr Alexis WARAVKA, Director Competitiveness and Digital, Independent Retail Europe
- 11.40-11.55 Presentation**
15' Ms Karolina PIETZ DRAPIŃSKA, Komputronik SA (member of Expert) (PO) (online)

- 11.55-12.10** **Q&As**
15'
- 12.10-12.55** **Artificial intelligence in retail**
Mr Jack STRATTEN, Director, Insider Trends. RETHINK Retail Top Retail Expert 2025
45'
- 12.55-13.10** **Q&As**
15'
- 13.10-13.15** **Close of the conference**
Mr Alexis WARAVKA, Director Competitiveness and Digital, Independent Retail Europe
5'
- 13.15** **Networking lunch**
- 14.00** **Departure of the shuttle to Bucharest Henri Coandă International Airport (Otopeni – OTP)**
==> Participants can take a flight **from 16.30**

Update 4 March 2025