

On Retail Trade Turnover in March 2021

In March 2021, retail sales returned to growth

In March 2021, after a three-month decline, retail trade turnover returned to growth. Retail trade turnover increased by 4.1%, compared to March 2020 (unadjusted data at constant prices).

Although restrictions on trade in non-food products were not yet lifted in March 2021, annual retail trade turnover in **non-food products** increased by 5.2%, providing a major contribution to overall trade. In March 2021, only pharmacies, opticians' shops, petrol stations, bookstores, and hygiene shops, where at least 70% of the range of hygiene products is sold, were allowed to conduct in-person operations. However, in other outlets, the range of goods traded on site was limited. In March 2021, retail sales of information and communication technology equipment in specialized stores increased significantly (i.e., by 42%). A significant rise was observed in retail trade of household electrical appliances (i.e., by 35%). Also, along with the resumption of the gardening season, the sale of flowers, plants, seeds, and fertilizers increased. After a major decline in previous months, the retail trade of sports goods and games and the retail trade of cultural goods and leisure goods increased by 15% and 16%, respectively. As in the previous month, one of the sharpest declines was observed in retail trade of clothing, footwear, and leather goods (i.e., by 15%). Nevertheless, the rate of decline slowed down significantly. Also, retail trade of pharmaceutical and medical supplies decreased by 10%. Retail trade of watches and jewellery and other retail sale of new goods in specialised stores continued to decline (i.e., by 25%).

By point of sale, the largest increase was observed in the distance shopping. In March 2021, mail order or Internet sales increased by 47%. Retail trade outside stores, stalls, and markets and other retail trade outside stores, stalls and markets increased by 46% and 40%, respectively. As in previous months, retail sales in second-hand stores declined the most (i.e., by 82%). Currently, the operation of second-hand stores remains limited. Also, a slight decrease in shopping at stalls and markets was observed (i.e., by 6%).

Retail sales of **food products** have fluctuated only slightly over the last five months. In March 2021, retail trade of food products was 1.9% higher than in March 2020.

In March 2021, retail **fuel** turnover at petrol stations increased by 6.6%, compared to March 2020.

The retail situation is expected to gradually improve in the coming months. The outlook has improved due to the government's decision to terminate the emergency situation. Also, from April 7, 2021, the stores, barring those that operate in large shopping centres and do not sell basic necessities, have been allowed to conduct in-person operations. Also, street sales (e.g., fairs) have been allowed to operate. However, developments will continue to depend to a large extent on the ability to successfully limit the spread of Covid-19.

Turnover of retail trade enterprises,
Changes against the corresponding month last year (as per cent), at
constant prices, seasonally unadjusted data

