

High-level debate in the European Parliament addresses rail's role in EU defence readiness

The European Parliament welcomed policymakers, industry leaders, and defence experts for a high-level debate focused on the strategic role of rail in enhancing the European Union's defence capabilities and crisis preparedness. As the EU seeks to bolster defence, military mobility is an important part of the picture and will rely on a seamless rail system with adequate infrastructure, rolling stock and rules of procedure. The event, held under the auspices of Rail Forum Europe (RFE) – the European Parliament Member platform dedicated to rail – was hosted by RFE Vice-Chair Dariusz Joński MEP and supported by the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER).

A key question as the European Union reinforces its common security and defence is how to move military assets across the bloc. In terms of land transport, only railways have the necessary attributes to carry heavy, oversized and potentially dangerous goods across borders safely and efficiently. Although a historic role of railways in the past, after steady decline in rail investment during peace time, military mobility today requires urgent attention. With an overlap of around 90% between the corridors identified as significant for military use and the corridors of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), much of the investment needed to complete or upgrade the rail network for military mobility, will also benefit transport users as a whole.

Key discussion points during the event included:

- Applying **dual-use standards in all relevant investments** in rail infrastructure (~90% of the TEN-T – including the high-speed rail network) and in rolling stock, to support both civilian and military mobility for broader societal benefits.
- Investing in **railway infrastructure capacity**, harmonising capacity management and interoperability across the EU to allow seamless train circulation for civilian and military convoys alike.
- Enhancing the **resilience** of the railway system in the face of hybrid threats through the protection of infrastructure, mechanisms for quick recovery of services, and appropriate levels of redundancy in the network and its support systems (including, for example, dual-mode locomotives that can run on alternative fuel sources).
- Restoring effective and **adapted governance** systems, coordinating military and civilian action, as well as adopting streamlined procedures that are swift and harmonised while preserving the **safety standards** of railway operations.
- Integrating **rail logistics** into EU defence planning and funding mechanisms.

- Improving railway interconnections and enhancing **cooperation with other high-capacity transport modes**, notably with the EU's ports.

With the EU's 2030 readiness target setting a clear timeline, participants agreed that immediate action is needed to find compatibility between transport and defence strategies, meeting the continent's mobility needs both in times of crisis and peace. The resources mobilised through the ReARM EU programme and the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034) will be critical in delivering on these ambitions.

Opened by the President of Rail Forum Europe, **Andreas Schieder** MEP, and hosting MEP **Dariusz Joński**, the event featured keynote insights on the intersection of transport and defence policy from **Magda Kopczyńska**, European Commission Director-General for Mobility and Transport, as well as a panel discussion moderated by **Alberto Mazzola**, Executive Director of CER. In the panel, the authors of the forthcoming European Parliament report on military mobility **Roberts Zile**, Vice-President, and **Petras Auštrevičius**, member of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence, were joined by the European Commission's **Herald Ruijters**, Deputy Director-General for Defence Industry and Space, and rail sector representatives **Agnieszka Wasilewska-Semal**, CEO of PKP Cargo and **Vytis Žalimas**, CEO of LTG Infra, Lithuanian Railways.

Roberts Zile, European Parliament Vice-President, said: *"EU military mobility planning faces serious hurdles like cross-border administration issues, funding hesitancy, and infrastructure vulnerabilities. In order to improve resilience and readiness we must use EU funds in a flexible and efficient way."*

Petras Auštrevičius, Member of the European Parliament Committee on Security and Defence, said: *"We are currently in a 'perfect storm', which presents a crucial opportunity to act differently and learn from past mistakes. Ukraine shows that military mobility is about more than troop movement but it's also crucial for civilian evacuation and humanitarian aid. We also need diverse transport options, including hybrid, electric, and diesel."*

Dariusz Joński, RFE Vice-Chair, said: *"Military Mobility creates the opportunity for enhanced EU-NATO cooperation by enabling better synergy and more coordinated cross-border actions. Moreover, the key word in Military Mobility should be dual-use, in order to use the financial resources for upgrading the infrastructure and buying new rolling stock that can be used also for civil purposes, creating tangible benefits for the EU citizens."*

Alberto Mazzola, CER Executive Director, said: *"With its unique ability to carry large and specialised loads over land, rail has a crucial role to play in enhancing EU defence capabilities. It is important to ensure that railways are fit for military purpose with judicious investment in robust infrastructure and versatile rolling stock that can serve the needs of society as a whole."*

CER's full recommendations on military mobility can be found on the CER website [here](#).

Contact person

Laura Henry
CER Head of Communications
E: laura.henry@cer.be
M: +32 491 16 21 73

About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together around 70 railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The membership is made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, representing 78% of the rail network length, 81% of the rail freight business and about 94%

Press release

Brussels, 4 September 2025



of rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policymakers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a competitive and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow us on Twitter [@CER_railways](https://twitter.com/CER_railways) or [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cer-railways).