

FEINDEF 25 highlights the Key Role of Female Leadership in Security and Defence

Madrid, XX May 2025. The 4th edition of the International Defence and Security Exhibition, FEINDEF, has come to a close with a clear message: the future of the sector is also being shaped by women. One of the most transformative initiatives of this edition was the roundtable held during the closing day, titled *"Female Talent: A Key Driver in the Growing Defence Sector,"* part of the "Women, Engineering and Defence" (MID) project.

The event brought together three prominent figures in the field: Brigadier General Ms Loreto Gutiérrez, Director of the National Security Department; Ms Elena Delgado, Director of National Business Development at EM&E Group; and Ms María Jesús Llordén, Manager of the Innovation and Services Centre (CIS) of the Defence and Security Technologies Directorate at Isdefe. They shared their experiences in a traditionally male-dominated environment, advocating for the impact of female talent, the value of diverse perspectives, and the importance of inspiring new generations.

Moderated by Ms Eva Cervera, Director General of Grupo Edefa, the discussion addressed, openly and constructively, the barriers and opportunities women face in this traditionally male-oriented field. The speakers highlighted the value of female leadership, the richness of diverse perspectives, and the urgent need to motivate and inspire future generations.

The session shed light on a still-challenging reality: women represent less than 25% of the workforce in the defence industry and barely exceed 13% in the Armed Forces. While the figures are improving, access to leadership positions remains limited. The participants unanimously agreed that "talent has no gender," but noted that many young women still do not see themselves pursuing technical careers—making the visibility of role models and the creation of inclusive, motivating environments essential.

Recognition of Female Talent in Defence

The event was brought to a close by Ms María Amparo Valcarce García, Secretary of State for Defence, who emphasized: "Beyond investing in security, Spain must invest in talent—and cannot afford to disregard half of its potential: women." She also presented the MID Awards, created to honour outstanding professional careers in the fields of defence and engineering:

· **Individual Award:** Ms Concepción Rodrigo Bayo, Navy Captain in the Navy Engineering Corps and Director of the Higher Technical School of Naval Weapons, for her professional achievements.

· **Institutional Award:** Sainsel Sistemas Navales, for its promotion of the values of the MID project. The award was received by the company's Chairwoman, Ms Susana Hernández Ruiz.

· **Extraordinary Award:** Ms Sandra Gusi Martínez, a biologist specialized in microbiology and a researcher at the molecular biology and immunology laboratories of the NBQ Defence Systems Department at the INTA's La Marañosa campus.

MID Project: Inspire and Promote

The “*Women, Engineering and Defence*” (MID) project—an initiative by the Secretariat of State for Defence in collaboration with the Royal Academy of Engineering, Isdefe, the Defence Technologies Circle Foundation, and the FEINDEF Foundation—aims to highlight the role of women in engineering and encourage STEM vocations among girls and young women, introducing them to science, technology, and engineering from an early age. Through outreach activities, mentoring programmes, and intergenerational dialogue, the initiative seeks not only to attract female talent, but also to retain it and support its professional development in key sectors for the country.

FEINDEF has proven the ideal platform to advance this mission, providing an international forum where innovation, industry, and talent converge. As one of the most transformative initiatives of this fourth edition, the MID project has demonstrated that today's conversation about defence is also a conversation about inclusion, equality, the future, and diversity.

With this 4th edition, the exhibition leaves a significant legacy, reaffirming its commitment to an open and inclusive approach to defence—where female leadership is not only welcome but essential to meeting tomorrow's challenges.

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