



A Euro-ISME award in partnership
with C&V Defence

Benoît Royal Prize for Ethics in Defence: Euro-ISME, in partnership with C&V Defence, opens nominations for the 2026 edition.

One year after honouring its first laureate, nominations for the Benoît Royal Prize are now open until 11 December 2026 for its second edition recognising ethical leadership in defence.

Brussels, 5 October 2026

After a landmark inaugural edition, **Euro-ISME** and **C&V Defence** today announced the launch of the second edition of the Benoît Royal Prize for Ethics in Defence, inviting nominations for individuals and organisations whose work embodies exceptional integrity in military and defence ethics. The response to the inaugural edition, and the urgency of the questions it raised, has only reinforced the two organisations' resolve to make this a lasting fixture on Europe's defence calendar.

A first edition that set the standard

Launched at the 2025 Euro-ISME Annual Conference at the Army War and Leadership College in Madrid, the Prize was awarded in its first year to **Professor Tine Molendijk** of the Netherlands. She was recognised for her contributions to the ethical dimensions of war and military operations, particularly the concept of moral injury, and for work that sheds light on the ethical challenges facing military and police professionals today while fostering deeper understanding between armed forces and civil society. Her selection, by a jury bringing together the Euro-ISME Board and C&V Defence's senior leadership, set a high bar for what the Prize was designed to celebrate: rigorous, courageous work that keeps ethics at the centre of defence practice.



The 2025 winner, Professor **Tine Molendijk**, receiving her prize from **Jean-Marc Vesco**, CEO of C&V Defence and **John Thomas**, President of Euro-ISME, in the presence of Brigadier General (Retired) **Benoît Royal**.

The Prize is named in honour of **French Brigadier General (Retired) Benoît Royal**, Euro-ISME's first president and a pioneering European voice in ethical military practice. For **John Thomas, President of Euro-ISME**, the first edition confirmed the value of the award: *"These are challenging times for us all. There are active conflicts in Europe, the Middle East and many other parts of the world. Some of the protagonists in these conflicts have embraced a win-at-all-costs strategy, pushing aside the established norms of behaviour enshrined in the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law. It is impossible to underestimate the profound effect this strategy could have on the safety and wellbeing of us all, not just those caught up in today's wars."*

Jean-Marc Vesco, Chief Executive Officer at C&V Defence, echoes that sense of urgency from the industry side, pointing to questions the sector is confronting in real time: *"At C&V Defence, we firmly believe that military ethics must reflect Europe's unique values: the primacy of our national and international commitments to the treaties and laws that regulate warfare, including in times of conflict."*

"As the battlefield becomes increasingly autonomous and as questions about the respective roles of humans and machines and the rules governing these technologies are becoming ever more pressing, this conviction must guide the way we design our defence systems, the way we use them, and the way we supply them", Vesco adds. "Considerable efforts are being made across the sector to ensure that AI systems operate ethically. Yet a more fundamental question must be raised: how can we guarantee the ethical alignment of AI tools intended to model human behaviour and support decision-making, if the very human model we rely on lacks ethical grounding? Ultimately, AI is merely a mirror of humanity."

A prize for the whole defence ecosystem

The Benoît Royal Prize for Ethics in Defence highlights the vital role of ethics across every area of defence, from military operations to the defence industry, research and academia. It recognises inspiring initiatives and honours the work of dedicated individuals and organisations, while serving as a platform for fostering dialogue around shared European values and strengthening global collaboration in the pursuit of ethical excellence in defence.

"Euro-ISME is delighted to bring this award forward with C&V Defence, to encourage those who work to ensure that ethics and morality continue to play an important role in all aspects of defence, from political strategy down to the tactical and operational level, including research, defence industries and academia," says **John Thomas**.

That shared conviction is one C&V Defence places at the core of its own practice. *"Standing alongside Euro-ISME for the Benoît Royal Prize is our way of reaffirming Europe's distinctive commitment to principled defence",* says **Jean-Marc Vesco**. *"In an ever-changing security landscape, this award honours those who ensure that ethical standards are not a constraint, but a strength."*

Practicalities

Nominations are invited to recognise European individuals or organisations who have shown exceptional courage, taken bold steps to promote military ethics, or made a lasting impact on ethical defence practices.

Nominations are open now and will close on **11 December 2026**.

Regulations and selection criteria are available on the Euro-ISME [website](#) and the C&V Defence [website](#). Nominees will be assessed by a jury bringing together the Euro-ISME Board and C&V Defence's senior leadership. The winner of the 2026 Prize will be honoured in Brussels in early 2027.