

Authors: General Steve Thull und Erny Gillen

Introduction

Values do not exist in a vacuum. They arise and grow in groups of people who (have to) act together. Lived in the most diverse situations, they can be experienced implicitly and explicitly in the specific cooperation. Communication and mediation mostly happen between the lines and in the context of actions. The expected and actually experienced values find their expression in the positive and negative narratives about the joint experience. In these narratives, the mix of values is processed affectively and interpreted existentially: Is my deployment worthwhile? With whom and why am I risking my life?

The *valeurs phares* (flagship values) project, carried out by the Luxembourg Army in 2019 and 2020 at the instigation of the minister responsible, François Bausch (Green Party), and with the expert support of the Moral Factory (Erny Gillen), was concerned with putting the values lived and to be lived, based on the narratives and experiences of army members of all ranks, into words that make sense to the participants and clients.

The outcomes produced during the collaborative process include a Values Charter, Values Grid (see next page, Figure 1), Commentary, and a Military Code of Conduct as a normative mirror, which can be accessed through the army website.¹

The process and outcomes are briefly outlined and reviewed below.

The participants

The process was initiated out of political conviction and was not instigated by any internal scandals that would have required a political and military response to public pressure. Rather, this *underlying motive* was aimed at achieving a shared understanding of a small and relatively new *sui generis* army² with very different national and international commitments. Accordingly, the army's leadership was able to manage the process openly with very little pressure in terms of time or the need to produce results.

RELIABLE, RIGHTEOUS AND COMMITTED TO THE SERVICE OF LUXEMBOURG AND ITS ALLIES

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A VALUES GRID FOR THE LUXEMBOURG ARMY

The Luxembourg Army has agreed on its own Values Grid in a process initiated and expertly facilitated by the Ministry of Defense. It has therefore co-developed its own ethos, reflected on it, put it in writing and set it out in concrete terms in a Code of Conduct. This is a report on the prerequisites and challenges of such a participatory approach as well as on the essential findings ("lessons learned"). It was written in consultation with the Luxembourg Ministry of Defense.

In addition to a steering group, in which those responsible from the ministry and the army were able to set the course flexibly together with the project manager, it was the *Command Senior Enlisted Leaders* and the communications office who were responsible for organizing the interviews, meetings and events internally.

To ensure that the Values Charter and the Values Grid were communicable and presentable beyond the boundaries of the Luxembourg process, educational facilities and institutes belonging to the partner armed forces from Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland were first invited to provide qualitative feedback in terms of a peer review and then later share experience-based suggestions for implementation at a joint event (on-site and online).

The process and outcomes were presented to the public via the press in October and December 2020.

Author The major stages and outcomes



General Steve Thull,
Chief of Defense, Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg

Values form part of the genetic make-up of an army. They are transmitted explicitly and implicitly, affectively and ritually, from generation to generation through the uniform, drill, comradeship, and finely tiered hierarchy. They express the identity of army members and of the army itself. They are lived, visibly posted, inculcated, and repeated to create bonds between the diverse people with and without uniforms. In this way, they create a common horizon and give meaning to the military training and deployment beyond the many small, standardized procedures and rules. Sociologist Hans Joas succinctly summarizes the ongoing genesis of values as follows: “Values arise in experiences of self-formation and self-transcendence.”³

Involving the members of the army

In view of this background and approach, 56 people out of approximately one thousand military and civilian army personnel were interviewed in individual interviews and, in some cases, in small groups about their experiences with values in the Luxembourg Army. In these *qualitative interviews* the age groups, gender and hierarchical levels were proportionally taken into account. Word groups were formed around the most frequently men-

tioned values such as discipline, righteousness, comradeship and commitment, and fed back to the participants in four mixed *focus groups* in order to find out which of the identified notions found the most approval and understanding within the multicultural, multi-religious and multilingual reality of the army.

Differentiating flagship values

It became clear that the flagship values of commitment, righteousness, and reliability were assigned different weightings depending on the perspective and point of view. To account for this fact, a *dynamic grid* (see Figure 1) was developed around the three flagship values, which can be read and interpreted across three levels and four columns. The differentiations of the flagship values were discussed many times, and were changed and nuanced in French until they appeared coherent according to the steering group.

Relating values in perspective

As a result, the Grid creates meaningful perspectives for individuals, the groups to whom they belong, and the specific task they perform within the larger mission. Read in the overall context, respect, as an expression of personal *reliability*, allows the fundamental equality and dignity of all people to shine through at the righteousness and commit-

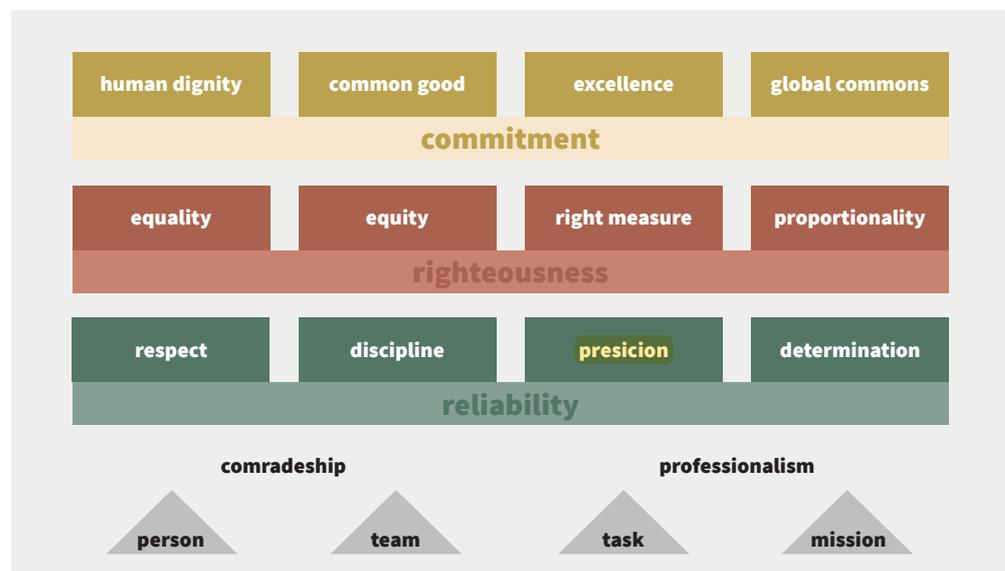


Figure 1

ment levels. In this context, human dignity represents the target value, equality the ethical value, and the required respect the normative value. Applied to the “we” perspective, common good and equity shine through as basic values of discipline. The spirit of comradeship expressed by these six subcategories is embedded in the larger context of human rights and the rule of law.

Respect for individuals

Anyone taking the perspective of a commander in charge of individuals and groups applies the first two columns of the Grid from top to bottom. The enjoined values of *respect* and *discipline* are based on equality and equity within the respective groups, and serve the shared commitment to our civilization and culture, which primarily emerged from the contrasting experiences of the Second World War.

Professionalism at work

The next two columns relate to specific tasks and the larger mission. Here, *reliability* is understood as precision in the task and determination in the mission. At the *righteousness* level, the right measure and proportionality are offered as ethical mediation tools to achieve the objectives of excellence and *global commons* in the specific case, as determined through *commitment*. While policy-makers must determine the priorities among the global commons to be defended, such as peace, public health or border protection, for example, in order to activate the military for a specific mission, it is up to the army leadership to determine the level of excellence to be achieved within the bounds of what is feasible. The values differentiated in the last two pillars constitute the *professionalism* of an army under the rule of law.

Values Charter

After the Values Grid had been validated by the political and military levels, the Values Charter was drafted. The Charter integrates the flagship values and their differentiations into the historical, international and institutional fabric of the Luxembourg State as an

active part of the international community of values. In this national narrative, the army assumes its mandate with a collective “we”, and commits to perform its service to the country and beyond with its allies in a reliable, righteous and dedicated manner.

The various drafts for the Grid and charter were discussed, nuanced, and enriched with the partner armed forces’ educational facilities and institutes before the responsible Luxembourg authorities then finalized the texts. In order to keep the highly meaningful sentences of the Charter and the abstract Values Grid alive beyond the process, a Commentary was written whose elements can be used, for example, in education and training as well as in public relations.

Protecting values

Finally, together with the international partners involved in the creation process on the one hand and the newly appointed Chief of Staff Steve Thull and his leadership team on the other, a seminar was held at the Grand-Duc Jean Military Center in October 2020 to initiate the final step of this process, namely the *specific implementation* of this work on and with the values for everyday practice.

Following the practice-led seminar, where different fundamental, didactic and military tools were presented and then examined in more detail and discussed in small groups, the Chief of Staff convened an open working group that was tasked with drafting a normative Military Code of Conduct and submitting it to him for enactment before the end of 2020.

This text was deliberately written in Luxembourgish because it is the vernacular used among military personnel. While the Values Charter with Commentary and Grid applies to all members of the army, the Military Code of Conduct is aimed directly at all uniformed personnel. The Code thus created now plays a key role in training recruits and soldiers as well as in the cooperation between all members of the army.

Under the leitmotif “réussir ensemble” (together for success), the Luxembourg Army has redefined its horizon of values and an-

Author



*Dr. Erny Gillen,
founder and director
of Moral Factory,
Luxembourg*

chored it normatively in its internal regulations. Thanks to the political support, ambitious will of the military leadership and active participation of civilian and military members of the army across all ranks, as well as the technical support provided by partner armed forces, outcomes were developed and set down in a relatively short time that provide support and guidance for current and future missions.

Communicating values

Those who want to measure themselves (or be measured) by their own values must disclose them internally and externally. After all members of the army had had the opportunity to be presented with the process and the Values Charter in advance of the international seminar held at the barracks, the public was informed at a press conference held by Minister of Defense François Bausch and the authors. At the end of 2020, the Chief of Staff was able to inform the press that the last conceptual implementation step had also been completed with the laying down of the Military Code.

Findings from the process

Even if it is still rather early in September 2021 to review the sustained success of the *valeurs phares* project for the Luxembourg Army, some key factors can already be identified here that have led to the successful implementation of this values anamnesis, the codification of a dynamic structure of values as well as their translation into the norm-governed work and life together in the Luxembourg Army.

Leadership commitment

The unprejudiced, interested and financial commitment of the responsible ministry from the very beginning was decisive for realizing and implementing the *valeurs phares* project. Equally important was the army leadership's willingness to respond positively to the minister's request and to open itself to an external, professional analysis of its implicitly lived values.

Professional expertise and empathy

The project's success also required professional and independent support. Without a transparent and comprehensible approach, and without a person from the applied ethics field who was networked beyond national borders, the process would hardly have gotten off the ground, especially at the beginning. Patient empathy and a target-led approach based on integrity are indispensable qualities for any external person in whom members of the army can entrust themselves.

Institutional trust

Institutional trust is essential for the success of such a project. This was ensured by the steering group and the internal support group. This way, the values lived and to be lived across the army could be ascertained, critically reflected upon and finally defined in an open-ended manner. The necessary freedom granted by the ministry and army leadership for such a sensitive process was guaranteed by the ethical advisor.

Putting values in relation

The Values Grid, Values Charter and Commentary complement one another and create a framework for the Military Code. In the interplay between the four documents, which were developed in a participatory manner, the potential for further and corrective interpretations and applications is preserved. The freedom granted by the political leadership at the beginning to co-develop their own military ethos is thus retained beyond the completed project as an impetus and challenge for ethical action.

Willingness to implement findings and implementation tools

At the end of this stage of the process when it came to precisely formulating the Charter, which had grown as part of the moderated participatory process within the Luxembourg Army and the critical feedback from the foreign military partners, the military leadership decided on the wording and style of the text within the context of the steering group.

This procedure was explicitly endorsed by the ministry and motivated the then newly appointed Chief of Staff to embrace the Luxembourg Army Charter. The presence of the Minister, along with the statements made by himself and his staff at the international seminar, confirmed that the project was jointly intended and that the result was politically recognized.

The fact that the basic text of the Charter was quickly followed by a *Code of Conduct* for everyday life, which was called for by the military leadership, must be seen as another key element for the success of the project's military implementation beyond the project period. Without comprehensible support through specific rules of conduct, the values and Charter would not become second nature to the military. The Code thus becomes a crucial mirror in which everyone can check whether their actions are in line with the collective values!

1 <https://www.armee.lu/actualites/2020/engagement-droiture-et-fiabilite-presentation-de-la-premiere-charte-des-valeurs-de-l-armee-luxembourgeoise: Werte-Charta, Kommentar und militrischer Verhaltenskodex> (accessed 16 November 2021).

2 The Luxembourg Army has been able to recruit EU citizens as volunteer soldiers since 2003. Representing 16.2% of this corps in October 2021, they come from Belgium, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain. Luxembourg had a population of 634,730 as of January 1, 2021, with 47.2 percent foreigners. The Portuguese community (14.9%) accounts for the largest share among the 170 nationalities. This considerable multiculturalism is a feature of both the country and army. Further details about the demographics at: <https://luxembourg.public.lu/de/gesellschaft-und-kultur/bevolkerung/demografie.html> (accessed 16 November 2021).

3 Joas, Hans (2000): *The Genesis of Values*. Cambridge, p. 10.