

BUNDESWEHR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

Bulletin 1/2021



BUNDESWEHR

THINKING HYBRID

REFLECTIONS ON THE 2ND INNOVATION LAB

Introductory Remarks

The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic continues to have a firm hold on our country and on our lives. The Bundeswehr Command and Staff College (BwCSC) is also affected by this situation and fulfils its training mission under these very special circumstances. Many events and particularly those involving external participants have had to be cancelled or postponed.

Even though the digital learning platform ILIAS and its integrated video conferencing tool have brought about decisive advances in various areas, we have seen that many topics still require face-to-face communication. And one of these topics is, undoubtedly, training and education. A lot of knowledge can be imparted and discussed digitally. However, video conferences are not effective when it comes to shaping and developing a person's personality or if leaders have to quickly and directly coordinate matters with their team members, for instance during exercises.



on a face-to-face basis, adhering to all requisite hygiene measures of course. The focus has clearly been on the BSOC as this course has great relevance for the officers' careers. It serves as the basis for identifying each student's personal potential with a view to the selection conference during which the participants for future NGASOCs are selected.

Since August 2020, we have been able to successfully conduct two BSOCs without major restrictions and without any cases of serious illness. This was thanks to a clear regulatory framework and compliance with all hygiene measures but above all, it was thanks to the commitment, discipline and personal responsibility of everyone – be it learners or lecturers.

This clearly shows that training can be conducted successfully even in these truly special times – something we can all be proud of. We want to continue along this path in 2021, also with regard to the new IGASOC.

Aside from the training and education activities, other developments at the Bundeswehr Command and Staff College have evolved further, too. For instance, we reached another milestone in mid-October 2020 in our efforts to establish a new structure at the college. In an online meeting with representatives from the FMOd's Directorates-General for Forces Policy and Budget and Controlling, we discussed and defined the cornerstones of our future structure, in order to be able to adopt the final structure in the course of 2021. A lot of work, and most of it behind the scenes, had to be done to take this intermediate step. Today, we can proudly say that the BwCSC is making good progress in this respect.

'Responsible Normality'

The lessons we have learned since March 2020 have been continuously included in our ongoing training activities during this pandemic. An elaborate concept of hygiene measures forms the basis of our activities, which are guided by the principle of 'responsible normality'.

Fortunately, the long-planned change to the International General/Admiral Staff Officer Course (IGASOC) structure with January as the new start date has taken some pressure off: after bidding farewell to the 2019 IGASOC as planned in a dignified open air ceremony in June 2020 with students and staff keeping the required distance, we had enough time to organize additional rooms for instruction for the next IGASOC, which will arrive at the BwCSC only in January 2021. This 'pause' gave us sufficient time to ensure that the training provided to the National General/Admiral Staff Officer Course (NGASOC) students could continue with alternating in-person events and remote classes, depending on the respective topics. As a result, we have been able to conduct several modules and, most importantly, deliver more than one Basic Staff Officer Course (BSOC) iteration

Covid-19 – A Chance?

In the field of digitalisation, the coronavirus crisis has had a catalytic effect – this is also and particularly true for the BwCSC. In these times of rapid changes, the fact that we can benefit from the findings of our 'Digital College' project, which we have been conducting for one and a half years now, has proved exceptionally valuable. Within the scope of this project, the 2nd Innovation Lab was conducted in October 2020. In the following, we will report about this event, and we hope you will enjoy reading about it.



Background Setting

The BwCSC bulletin 1/2021 provides reflections on the 2nd Learning Innovation Lab, which took place on 28 and 29 October 2020. It contains the views of five process supervisors, who have been involved in the event and who have supported the lab on site with their expertise. Their task was to hold a mirror up to the project groups and to critically scrutinize the 45 project ideas. The process supervisors work for different organisations outside the Bundeswehr. What do they see as the bottom line of the second Innovation Lab? Have they gained useful ideas for their own organisations?

The Bundeswehr's training agenda and the resulting strategy regarding military initial, advanced and follow-on education and training in the armed forces and the Bundeswehr's exercise activities ['Militärische Aus-, Fort- und Weiterbildung in den Streitkräften und Übungswesen Bundeswehr'] served as a starting point for answering the following questions: 'How does command and control change in view of increasingly complex and challenging situations?' and 'What are the effects of an increasingly digitised environment on teaching and learning?' These questions were not discussed by only a few people behind closed doors at the

BwCSC but within the scope of the 1st Learning Innovation Lab in June 2019 involving a wide variety of people from the Bundeswehr, industry, the science community and public service institutions. One result of that first lab was the 'Digital College for Lifelong Learning' project, which is planned to have a duration of two years. Guided by the heads of the BwCSC's faculties, five project groups on culture, organisation, personnel, information technology and infrastructure have meanwhile developed many different ideas for the project. The aim of the 2nd Innovation Lab was to critically reflect and further develop these ideas together with experts from outside the college. The process supervisors supported this process in person at the BwCSC.

The COVID-19 situation has, somewhat unexpectedly, given the 'Digital College for Lifelong Learning' project additional impetus, particularly with regard to the topic of digitalising teaching and training at our institution. At the same time, this situation made it very difficult to plan and conduct the 2nd Innovation Lab, especially in terms of technological challenges. Against this background, the employment of process supervisors has been particularly valuable.

The 2nd Innovation Lab

The ideal setting for critical discussions is a face-to-face encounter. With this thought in mind, the 2nd Innovation Lab was originally planned as a primarily in-person event and scheduled to take place in June 2020. Due to the COVID-19 situation, however, it was postponed to October 2020. Right at the outset of planning, it was decided that the event was going to be conducted in a hybrid form, involving both physical presence and digital engagement.

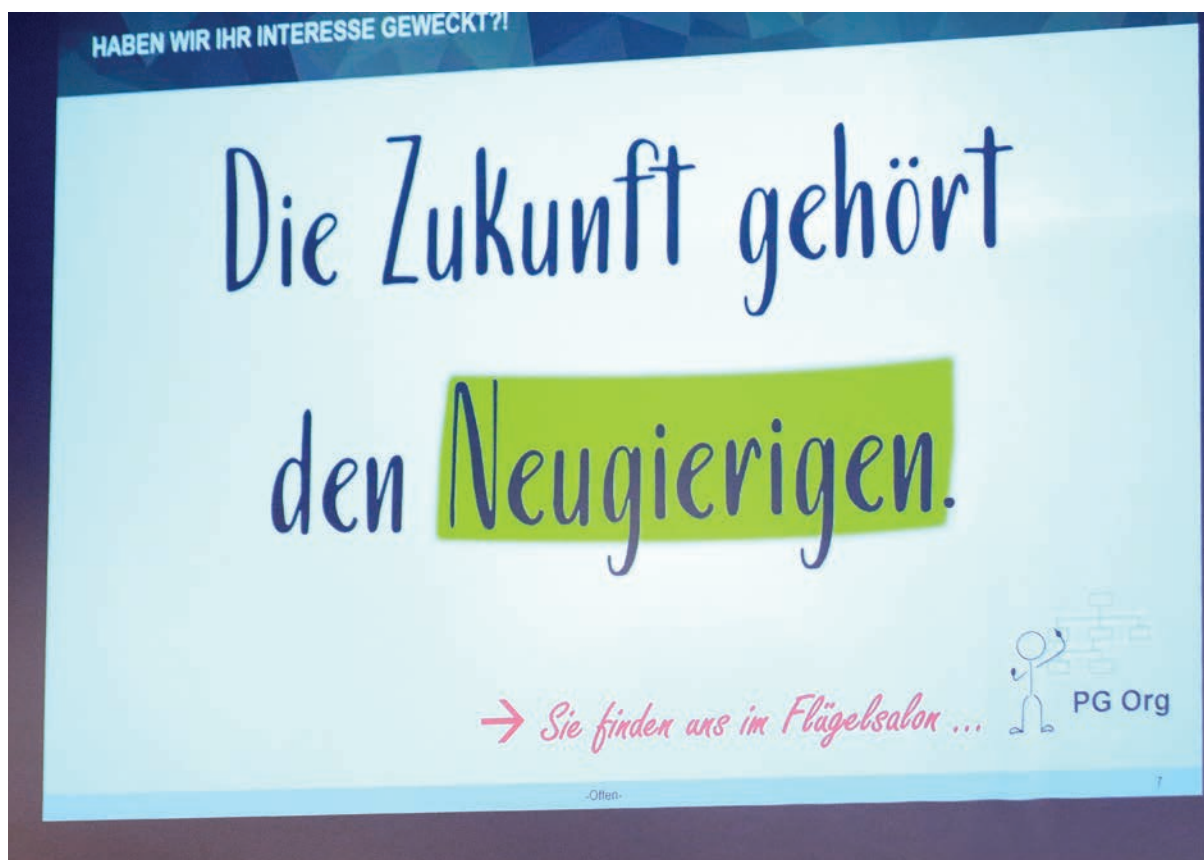
In order to meet the demands of such an event and comply with the requisite hygiene measures, the venue not only had to fulfil all technical criteria but it also had to be safe in terms of hygiene standards. In this context, room sizes were of particular importance. The Privathotel Lindtner in Hamburg met all those demands. The event was conducted from Wednesday noon to Thursday noon with about 140 par-

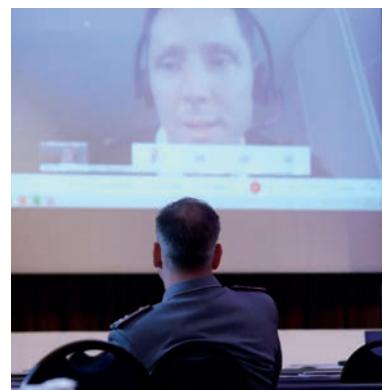
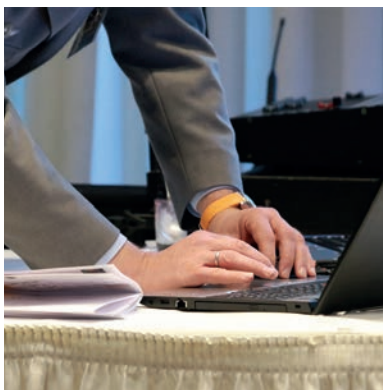
ticipants, 80 of whom took part online only via the ILIAS learning management platform. The event was divided into plenary phases and phases in which the project groups came together in workshops. This required all participants to be extremely well prepared.

The main focus of the event was on the five project groups' workshop sessions, which lasted 45 minutes each. In these sessions, the participants presented their project ideas in different ways and discussed them with guests. The process supervisors moderated the discussions, provided own input, listened to all ideas and suggestions and summarised the results. Aside from the workshop sessions, there were keynote lectures and a panel discussion on the topic 'Lifelong learning – wishful thinking or already a reality?'. Keynote lectures were held for instance by Dr Yvonne Zimmermann, Chair of Akademie Deutscher Genossenschaften e.V. (ADG), who spoke

about 'Digitalisation, leadership, culture: findings for successful changes in teaching and training', and by Stephan Gut, Head of the Educational Media Department of Schweizerische Bundesbahnen (SBB), who gave a presentation on 'What is behind virtual learning? Insights into digital learning and working'.

The entire process of the 2nd Innovation Lab was visualised by graphic recorder Tom Fiedler. This time, Mr Fiedler participated on an entirely virtual basis, producing his visualisations digitally. The participants could follow his work on a separate screen. Here, the process supervisors were responsible for regularly 'feeding' the graphic recorder with information using a collaborative platform. For detailed reports of the event and concrete insights, please visit our homepage www.fueakbw.de or go to the ILIAS website at <https://fueak.hsu-hh.de/>.





Conclusions drawn by the process supervisors regarding their project groups:

Each of the five project groups was assigned two process supervisors. Not all of them could join the event in person, but supported the groups online as best as possible. What do they see as the bottom line of the second Innovation Lab? Have they gained useful ideas for their own organisations? Five process supervisors describe their experiences with their project groups:

Process Supervisor of the Culture Project Group

Professor Dr Bernhard Ertl teaches at the Institute of Educational Sciences at the Bundeswehr University in Munich focusing on media-supported learning and teaching.

'Digitalisation is so much more than just a change of media. It does provide added value, but only if the processes that are to be digitalised are rethought and adapted in order to fulfil the potential of digitalisation. From a technical perspective, it is absolutely possible nowadays to conduct many face-to-face formats such as meetings or lectures digitally. In most cases, the mobility gained compensates for the required technical effort. But successful digitalisation is much more than that. It contributes the innovative

aspects of a change of media, for example collaborative digital workspaces or the extraction of asynchronous elements, to the aforementioned formats so that the time that is spent together in virtual rooms can be used in a more interactive and more productive way.

I was surprised to see that the role of the mindset is being prominently discussed at the BwCSC, too, as it is an equally important topic at the Bundeswehr University Munich. Often enough, the participation in a study programme or course is seen as a means to an end and as a way to improve one's career prospects in the organisation. What is not understood is that only an adequate mindset as a learner can lead to success as a leader. In the future, it will thus be essential to place even more emphasis on the importance of education, of lifelong learning and of acquiring additional competencies.'

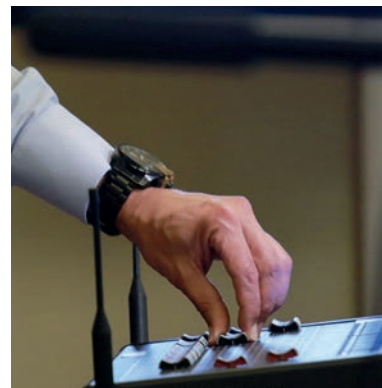
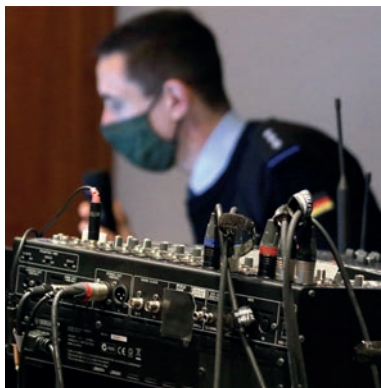
Process Supervisor of the Organisation Project Group

Professor Dr Stephanie Birkner is CEO of ZUKUNFT.unternehmen, a non-profit start-up initiative.

'From my point of view, the 2nd Innovation Lab has shown in two ways that the BwCSC is taking key steps towards fulfilling its version of a digital college.

For one thing, the lab had to be organised as a hybrid event due to the current crisis situation. Against this backdrop, the BwCSC team has impressively demonstrated that it is possible to bring together people from both digital and face-to-face environments, to encourage them to actively join discussions, to stimulate mutual learning processes and to provide technical support for these processes also in order to record and store contents for later use. So the participants did not just talk about joint learning irrespective of time and place but put it into practice, thus showing that it has already become a reality.

Secondly, the individual project groups in their presentations not only determined the necessary focus of effort of their respective projects but also identified important synergies and common challenges and chances. For instance, they discussed a central issue regarding the processual steps of digitalising the BwCSC, namely that technologies make an important and valuable contribution because they help to individualise educational structures and processes and make them more flexible. This is essential, as it will be the people who learn and teach at the BwCSC who will continue to be in the focus of the digital college in terms of actions and prospects of success.



What I have learned from this event is that we must not neglect the (further) development of roles and functions of those involved in the training and education process when digitalising training institutions. These roles and functions are closely linked not only to specific values and subjective norms but also to expected patterns of behaviour that all have an effect on the learning progress and personal development of our future leaders.'

Process Supervisor of the Personnel Project Group

Steffen Niemann, Senior Expert Corporate Learning and Development at the Federal Employment Agency in Nuremberg, says:

'We have had a highly interesting discussion just about the right topic, given the fact that for one thing, the parameters in the field of training and education have changed, and for another, the students have higher demands on their own learning and development. It is particularly important to consider the connections between the respective topics (demands on facilitators of learning, on programmes, equipment and infrastructure). These elements interact, they must complement each other and they must be developed further in a strategic process on an iterative basis.

Engaging in a dialogue with the people involved and affected and with external specialists about a clear concept of the future is a great impulse for such a strategic process.'

Process Supervisor of the Information Technology Project Group

Dr Sabine Huber is a senior account executive with Microsoft. As regards the Bundeswehr, she works with a focus on transformative basic, advanced and follow-on training.

'Reflecting on the topic of innovation, exchanging thoughts on the matter and discussing them requires time and space. Personal contacts between people facilitate such discussions. Digital communication is not the same as face-to-face encounters but it can complement them and build bridges in terms of time and space. This means that one has to listen, to understand and to explain in order to suggest new ways and to identify obstacles and address them. Learning is based on the concept of education, and education is culture. This means that an institution's learning culture is of great importance, as it is the foundation of both personal and organisational development. Digital basic, advanced and follow-on training opportunities are overdue and of central importance.

Findings from research on teaching and learning are used to transform face-to-face teaching into formats that enable modern, digitally supported life-long learning. Keywords in this context are learning guidance, learning discourse, scrutinising, forgetting, looking things up, understanding and applying in the sense of competency-based education and training. Larger teaching units are subdivided into orchestrated pieces of a puzzle that the learners can put together on an individual basis and use and process again at any time.

What I have learned from this lab is that an inter-institutional exchange on the topic of lifelong learning is essential in order to be able to identify synergies and to make common efforts to take the topic of lifelong learning to another level in society and in organisational cultures: What reservations are there with regard to personally optimised learning opportunities? How can we all contribute to raising acceptance for lifelong learning and help to make it a joyful experience? What is required in terms of space and time to make sure that learning opportunities are perceived as something genuinely positive and to make people discover the joy of learning new things and of deepening existing knowledge?'



Process Supervisor of the Infrastructure Project Group

Reserve Lieutenant Colonel Lars Rinke teaches at the Gymnasium Nepomucenum grammar school in Coesfeld and is also a trained specialist and advisor with regard to school buildings.

‘The buildings of the Bundeswehr Command and Staff College do not only define its outer appearance but also play a key role in shaping those who work and study inside by providing them learning and working conditions. There is a very positive attitude and great readiness among all those involved to newly think and plan the college’s infrastructure. Given the great number of processes that need to be included, the core process ‘pedagogy and didactics’ must be given particular focus especially in the field of infrastructure.

Within the scope of reorganising the college, planning phase ‘zero’ offers the opportunity to include all teaching personnel, students and the entire staff of the BwCSC in the innovation process. Phase zero can be the starting point of a concrete college development process leading to the establishment of the best possible learning environment for all users



and thus become an example for the entire Bundeswehr.

I have learned during this lab that communication via a stable IT connection forms the basis for all modern work and exchange processes, and thus also for education. We cannot afford to scrimp on these things when planning the infrastructure. The leadership of an organisation essentially determines the speed of innovation and the appeal and drawing power originating from transformation processes. Again, pedagogy and didactics are of vital importance.

All further processes must be geared towards strengthening this core process. The iLab [an open, collaborative, multifunctional and highly motivating learning space that is currently being built by the BwCSC and whose equipment and design will perfectly allow for the application of the methods of design thinking] shows that arising opportunities must be seized with courage and determination, and sometimes even unconventionally, in order to achieve new goals and try out new approaches.’



Lessons Learned

The most important lesson learned from the 2nd Innovation Lab is that this hybrid event was a success. Everyone did their best, and yet, despite previous experience with digital formats, we have seen that hybrid events are something we still have to get used to. Dealing with the technical side of things was not easy either, but all in all, things worked out quite well.

The comprehensive hygiene concept was very effective and provided security and a clear structure for everyone involved in the event.

But despite the fact that this format was successful and very productive, talks among the participants were somewhat limited in terms of scope and depth. The technical framework conditions in terms of bandwidth were good, but nevertheless there were malfunctions and interruptions, which, fortunately, could be reduced during the event.

The assumption that a face-to-face encounter is the ideal setting for critical discussions was confirmed by this innovation lab. For digital formats, this means that groups should be as small as possible in order to enable the participants to exchange views and opinions. Experience in the practical realisation of such events will help to initiate discussions and keep them going.

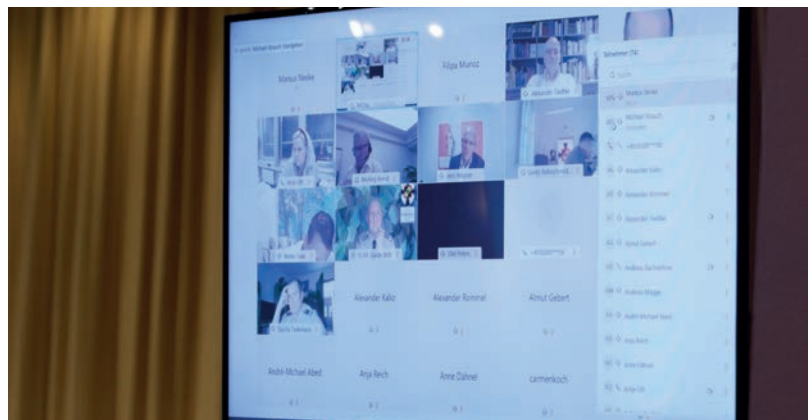
The intensity of the discussions between process supervisors and project groups varied. A large additional value was provided by the process supervisors with the impulses they gave in the workshops, in talks during the breaks and in their communication with the graphic recorder.

The hybrid format required great efforts in terms of time and personnel, as the BwCSC had to provide specialist personnel such as camera teams,

sound engineers and technicians as well as personnel to guide and moderate chats and discussions. All these specialists had to be tasked and briefed in time.

The ILIAS learning management platform of the BwCSC allowed for the best possible preparation in terms of structuring online workshop groups and providing information material prior to, during and after the 2nd Innovation Lab.

The added value that is normally provided by in-person events, however, such as talks during breaks, network building and critical debates, could be generated to a limited extent only. We are looking forward to 2021 when we might be able to hold discussions in a more personal setting again.



The Way Ahead

By the end of 2020, we want to decide which projects we are going to plan and realise in 2021. To this end, we will conduct another workshop in which we will structure our further project work.

For the 'Digital College' project, 2021 will bring the concrete implementation of several of the many project ideas. In 2021, the entire project will enter its final phase, and the search for ideas will also come to an end. And thus, by the end of the same year, a comprehensive concept with concrete recommendations for action will be developed.

It is our aim to come up with findings and measures that will have the greatest possible appeal for the entire Bundeswehr. This could become one focal point of the 3rd Innovation Lab (even though the event may be given a different name). The next event will also focus on networking, on entering cooperation projects and on exchanging best practices. One thing is already clear: the event will be conducted in a hybrid format again.

Parallel to the project, additional aspects related to the digitalisation of teaching and training will be further implemented in a structured and concept-based manner.

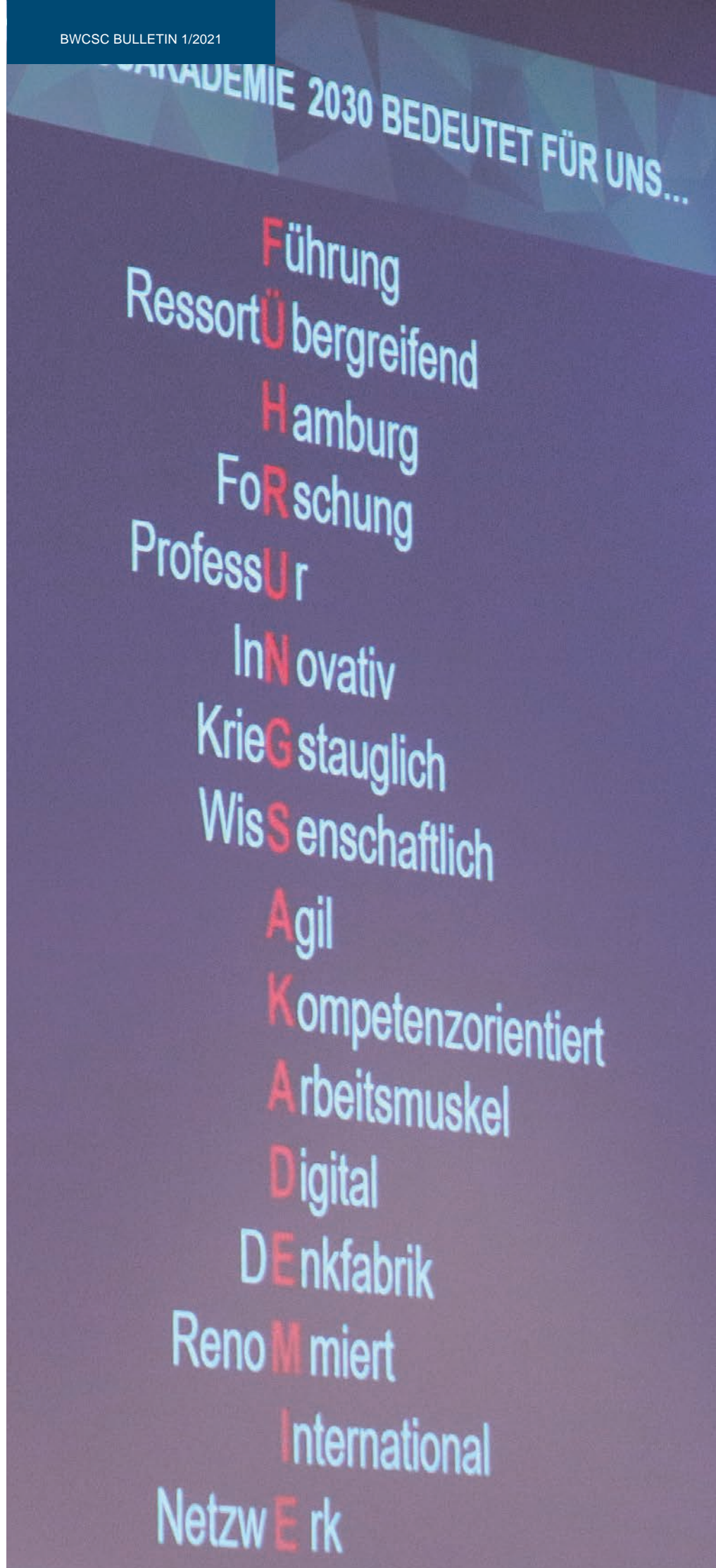
Outlook

The future viability of training and education is a topic that the BwCSC has been and will be dealing with on a continuous basis and at different levels. With the 'Digital College' project, questions regarding our training culture, lifelong learning and not least the attractiveness of our institution for learners have gained increasing importance. The responses to these questions will be significant for the BwCSC but also for the entire Bundeswehr training system. With this in mind, we are looking forward to a year 2021 that will be full of exciting developments and inspiring discussions.

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Photos: Bundeswehr/Lene Bartel



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Published by:
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