

AVA Annual Report

20160920-AVA Dominique Létang, Commission President

Dear members,

Since our last congress in Killarney, following, you will find the work made in our avalanche commission during the year:

Board meeting - Zurich, 2016 January from 22th to 23th

The two recommendations, we presented at the last congress, have been definitely approved:

Slalom strategies:

<http://www.alpine-rescue.org/ikar-cisa/documents/2016/ikar20160127001940.pdf>

Accident prevention:

<http://www.alpine-rescue.org/ikar-cisa/documents/2016/ikar20160127001941.pdf>

All the avalanche death statistic are now available:

by activity: <http://www.ikar-cisa.org/ikar-cisa/documents/2016/ikar20160514002299.pdf>

by country: <http://www.ikar-cisa.org/ikar-cisa/documents/2016/ikar20160514002300.pdf>

Report from dog-handlers sub-commission:

Minutes Dog-Handler Workshop in Villanders, South Tyrol, Italy / May 4th-8th, 2016

Wednesday May 4th, 2016

Marcel Meier, Leader of the ICAR Sub-Commission Dog-Handlers, visits together with Wolfgang Rainer the training ground for the coming days. The program is discussed and reviewed in detail. Then the course gets explained to the colleagues of South Tyrol. Main theme of the course: Training of young dogs in the following areas:

- Site search dogs
- Trailing dogs
- Human remains detection dogs

The attendees arrive individually. In the end a total of 48 dog-handlers are present. After check in at the Salmbergerhof Hotel in Villanders, there is dinner at 19.00.

Thursday May 5th, 2016

Weather sunny

Breakfast 07.30

Opening of the workshop/orientation of the participants 08.30

Start at the workplaces 10.30

Dinner 19.00

Presentations 20.30

Punctually at 08.30 Marcel Meier of Alpine Rettung Schweiz opens the workshop.

He emphasizes on three points in focus:

- no biting
- dog waste is picked up
- punctuality, compliance with the given times

In the morning and in the afternoon we work in the field. The representatives of the different countries show us their work with young dogs. Each workplace creates interesting discussions and exchanges of experience. The way how the dogs are lead is extremely interesting to observe. Also very exciting is the basic training of Main Trailing dogs.

In the evening:

- The colleagues of South Tyrol present their new e-learning module.
- Seppolo Lederhaas presents a brochure on training in Austria.

Friday May 6th, 2016

Weather sunny

Breakfast 07.30

Start of the training exercise 08.30

Start at the workplaces 13.00

Review of the training exercise 17.30

Dinner, informal time together 19.00

Training exercise: In the morning a training exercise is conducted. Our South Tyrolean friends didn't spare on efforts for that: A collection of GPS data of all attendees (dog-handlers, dogs and fake victims) takes place. Everything is covered by local TV and a radio station. Scenario: Five missing persons successfully tracked and located by the Main Trailing dog or the site search dogs.

In the afternoon work continues in two groups. Main topic is the basic training work with young dogs in detail. It's impressive to see how our colleagues of the Guardia di Finanza work with young dogs.

Before dinner two presentations take place:

- Review of the training exercise with all collected GPS data.
- Our Austrian colleagues show how to play with dogs.

Dušan Polajnar (link into the ICAR Executive Board) and his wife Radna visit the event as guests. With a cool bright yellow drink we let the day come to an end.

Saturday May 7th , 2016

Weather sunny

Breakfast 07.30

Start at the workplaces 09.00

End at the workplaces 16.30

Review of the workshops 18.15

Dinner, informal time together 19.00

The participants are split up in four groups:

- Main Trailing
- Human remains detection dogs
- Site search dogs
- Playing with dogs

Each of the above themes has its own workplace. Every dog-handler performs exercises with his own dog. Once again interesting discussions and exchanges of experience are a highlight.

For the review Marcel Meier welcomes the participants in the dining room. The recap of the day is done in brief words, followed by an open discussion. All participants are satisfied with the process and the organization.

Special thanks (“one meter of beer”) are given to the Chairman Wolfgang Rainer and his colleagues for the excellent support and organization. Marcel Meier acknowledges as well the friendly hosts for food and accommodation. A very fine Tyrolean evening brings the day to an end. 3/3 Sunday May 8th , 2016 Weather sunny Breakfast 08.00 Individual departure as of 09.00 After breakfast all attendees say goodbye and make themselves on the way back home.

Report from the prevention working group/video meeting June 13th , 2016

by Per-Olov Wikberg

1. Opening of the meeting

2. Participants

- Manuel Genswein, Switzerland
- Krister Kristenssen, NGI, Norway
- Nils Hallberg, SEPA, Sweden
- Per-Olov Wikberg, SEPA, Sweden

3. We went through the different tasks that the group has decide to work with the last years. It seems that not so much progress has been made since the last meeting so Manuel took the responsibility to set up a new web service on the domain of mountainsafety.info (if I got that right) regarding the project that will collect and communicate useful mountain safety related info for travelers with information from as many countries as possible. This web service shall be up and running just before the ICAR congress in Bulgaria and will be presented there.

4. We had a longer discussion regarding how to work in the future and everybody agreed to, that the most successful meetings the last years, has been when we have arranged longer separate work meetings and at those meetings been able to concentrate on issues that all the member organizations could benefit from. As for an example, Innsbruck meeting in 2012, Split meeting in 2013 and Killarney/Ireland in 2015.

Very few people seem to be able to participate at the video meetings and very little progress is made between the meetings. So our proposal is to start to plan and arrange a 2-day work meeting in the spring of 2017 instead of trying to arrange a proper work meeting at ICAR in Bulgaria. This proposal has also a good support from the survey that was conducted in 2014 regarding what to focus on in the working group. Over 80% of the participants chooses the alternative the we should focus on to “Arrange annual meetings focusing on sharing experience and knowledge with each other regarding mountain safety related issues, sharing data and following relevant research projects”

5. At the meeting we decided to aim for to arrange a rather short, around 1 hour meeting on Thursday afternoon in Bulgaria to sum up all the possible issues that could be subjects and themes for the meeting in the spring in 2017 and also to discuss the funding issue in order to be able to get some more power to the development. One subject that was mentioned was the task that was discussed in Innsbruck in 2012 regarding how develop international standards and recommendations regarding to measure success in prevention programs as for an example avalanche forecasting services.

6. We also discussed the ICAR Mountain Safety Foundation and other possibility's to find external funding for future activities which will hopefully lead to increased engagement and improved work efforts. Within the EU there is many possible ways at the moment to find funding to cover as for an example, meeting costs, new innovations, international collaboration projects and so on. The group should set the goal so that we within 1-2 years should both have applied and received enough funding for cost covering. This is really needed to be able to really set up necessary speed and power to the group. With appropriate funding we should be able to increase our possibility to both identify future challenges and to find the possible solutions in order improve our national prevention programs, both for mountain rescuers as well as for the visitors of the mountains in the name of ICAR.

Report from the “best practices in avalanche rescue” working group:

Spring 2016 Workgroup Report by Manuel Genswein, Workgroup Leader

About the ICAR Consensus Workgroup "Best-Practice in Avalanche Rescue":

The ICAR Consensus Workgroup "Best-Practice in Avalanche Rescue" was officially constituted during the 2014 annual congress of ICAR in Lake Tahoe. Its primary mission is to take the preexisting, multilingual Swiss "Best-Practice in Avalanche Rescue" consensus of the Swiss Core Training Team “Avalanche Prevention in Snow Sports” to a worldwide ICAR level. Whereas the previously existing material has been declared as a national standard only in Switzerland, it is important to recognize that numerous countries and organizations all over the world have already partly or fully used the same approach and materials as an unofficial standard in large scale. Prior to the Stubai 2016 meeting, the workgroup has collaborated and showed progress during the 2015 ICAR congress in Ireland as well as during the year by bi- and multilateral exchange and physical meetings. This report informs about the practical work done during the 2016 spring meeting. A separate concept paper will present the "Mountain Safety Knowledgebase", which has evolved out of the work being done in this workgroup.

Workgroup Participation:

The following countries are represented in the workgroup: (listed in alphabetic order)

- Canada
- France
- Germany
- Great Britain
- Holland
- Iceland
- Italy
- Norway
- Poland
- Slovenia
- Sweden
- Switzerland

In addition, translations exist in: Japanese, Slovak, Spanish

Delegates from the participating countries were chosen based on competence and with the goal of fair representation of the different user groups, regions, application environments and countries. Many of them officially represent ICAR member organizations. Others, such as from Canada, Holland or Sweden were chosen based on their specific expertise in this field and for the representation of specific user groups. The delegates from Iceland and Canada were not physically present during the meeting, but participate by providing feedback and translations in electronic format.

Meeting location:

Similar to the ICAR meetings in its early years, the workgroup of the avalanche commission has decided for a meeting location which allows to bring theory and practice as close as possible together. The Franz-Senn hut of the Austrian Alpine Club was selected for this purpose and provided an environment where the workgroup could change between an avalanche field and a modern meeting room within 10 minutes.

Logistics Support for Work Sites:

For best efficiency when working outside, two mountain rescuers from TOPR were hired as logistics support unit to prepare the fields so that the workgroup members did not waste any time with preparations, but could directly start with their testing and verification tasks in the field.

Documenting the Consensus in Standardized Illustrations:

An important part of the knowhow of the consensus "best practice" is documented not only in words, but as well in standardized illustrations. For this purpose, an art-work professional with the necessary equipment was present during the meeting and has integrated the required modifications to existing illustrations and added new illustrations. This very time-consuming task, which included integrating the text overlays in 13 languages is continuing throughout the summer in order to finalize work for the annual ICAR congress in October.

Stubai Work Program:

The workgroup met Sunday evening in Stubai valley for a common dinner and start-up meeting, where the detailed program for the following working week was discussed and optimized for best efficiency with the local conditions.

In the following four, intense and efficient working days, Monday - Thursday, the daily routine started with a 6.15 breakfast followed by some indoor work before the first practical trials in the field. Lunch and dinner were provided by the hut, the evening session ended usually around 23h and special projects and language issues often were solved past midnight. The workgroup treated the different disciplines of avalanche rescue topic by topic, always starting at the content for beginners and then progressing gradually up to the solutions for the most proficient level of application and knowhow. This procedure assured consistency in procedures and terminology across user groups and special application cases in each topic. As part of the progress, the workgroup established an efficient workflow and data management between the members and the art-work/database coordinator. At the end of the meeting on Thursday evening, all necessary modifications to the database have been either already implemented or properly recorded on the workgroup server.

Engadin Post-Workshop June Meeting and Summer Work:

In order to process all the data of the Stubai meeting, a 3 day progress work meeting with the participation of 3 countries took place in June in Samedan, Switzerland in the office of the art-work coordinator. The remaining tasks of processing the Stubai workgroup consensus into the database continues during summer and early fall with the goal to present a completely updated version for the next workgroup meeting prior to the annual ICAR congress in Bulgaria.

Workgroup Activities Planned for Fall 2016:

The Stubai consensus and outcome of this workgroup meeting will be presented during the pre-conference day of the 2016 annual conference of ICAR in Bulgaria. In different workshops, two members of the workgroup will present each topic of the consensus "best practice" solution and the available visualization in the database.

During the regular conference program, there will be time assigned for this workgroup in the avalanche commission to continue their mission and to assure full agreement with the remaining avalanche commission member.

Conclusion:

We did an interesting and relevant job during this year and I would like to thank all of you, leaders, volunteers and members for supporting our work. We already have several challenges for the future. So, I am very motivated to continue upon this way. As we will have in Borovets the election of the future presidents of the commission, if you decide it, it would be an honor for me in becoming the president of the avalanche commission for the 4 years coming.

I will represent ICAR for a meeting in Milan (Italy) at the end of September between The UIAA, ENSA, UIAGM regarding the possibility to implement an international standard called "Mountain Safety Knowledge Base" built by M. Genswein, which will be presented at the congress in Borovets.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you in Bulgaria!

Best regards.