



IFKIS – ten years of experience with the intercantonal early warning and crisis information system as a good-practice example for local capacity building

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As a consequence of the avalanche winter in January/February 1999 in Switzerland the project “intercantonal early warning and crisis information system” (IFKIS) was initialised. The goal of this project was to close the gaps recognised in the event analysis of this one-month avalanche period, which caused 17 fatalities and over 600 million CHF of damage [1,2]. Whereas the system of integral avalanche protection consisting of technical measures, land use planning and protection forests proved to be successful, the most important gaps were found to be in the organisational part. Especially communities who did not have an every-winter-experience had faced problems in managing the extraordinary event. The main deficiencies were less experienced or even missing local avalanche safety services and missing information and communication. The results of the IFKIS project embrace a concept for education courses, a concept for compulsory booklets and a guideline for the daily work in local avalanche safety services, and the information system IFKIS-InfoManager improving the two-way communication between the national avalanche warning service and the local services on the one side and enhancing the communication between local and regional avalanche services (IFKIS-MIS) on the other side [3].

The results of the project IFKIS are implemented in practice since 10 years. Since 2000 every winter two to three courses were conducted at two levels either in German, French and Italian. Since 2000 about thousand participants completed the courses. Feedback from participants and observations made by cantonal authorities and the national avalanche warning centre SLF revealed that these education courses greatly improved the local capacity for dealing with critical avalanche situations. The system of regular avalanche courses at the community level served meanwhile as a good-practice example for comparable courses initialised by the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) as a consequence of the severe flood events in 2005 in Switzerland. The goal of these courses is to establish a network of natural hazard observers in every community in Switzerland. The information system IFKIS served as a good-practice example for the development of the “Common Information Platform GIN”, also as a consequence of the flood event 2005.

We will present experiences from this 10-year period in which capacities of local and regional stakeholders, institutions and authorities were considerably improved. Based on the framework of various capacities developed in the EU FP7 project “CapHaz-Net”, we will highlight crucial cornerstones necessary for improving social capacities by the example of the IFKIS-framework in Switzerland.

References

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