

EDUCATION ON SNOW AND AVALANCHES: AN EXPERIENCE IN AOSTA VALLEY (ITALY)

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ABSTRACT: Scientist dealing with snow and avalanche research are more and more recognizing the need of spreading their knowledge to a wider public, not confined into the academic world. The objective is to create a real education to snow and related subjects in order to raise consciousness about one of the most important elements of the mountain environment.

We are engaged in a number of programs of education and training that act at various levels, from children of primary school to graduating students. All activities are performed in strict collaboration with Italian and international experts involved in the same field.

This contribution describes experiences carried out in Aosta Valley, a little Italian region entirely situated on Alps. The lives of people in this region are particularly affected by the presence/absence of snow, by its conditions and related phenomena. Furthermore, tourism is one of the main sources of income of the region, especially during Winter season, when snow represents an unavoidable attraction and a risk factor as well. Therefore, public authorities are deeply interested in improving knowledge of snow science and in creating experts in the field.

The first experience is focused on children of primary schools in some villages in the Aosta Valley. The researchers introduced the pupils to the world of snow through face-to-face dialogue, slides, tales. They visited an exhibition on snow and avalanches organized specifically for this activity (Project INTERREGIIIA), then they applied and verified their new knowledge on field. It revealed an intense experience as testified by the colored and rich drawings produced by the children.

The second case refers to various campaigns conducted to train graduating students. They start learning some theoretical knowledge on snow and avalanche at University, which supported them during field excursion focused on snowpack evolution, artificial snow production, avalanche warning system and risk management.

KEYWORDS: snow science, didactics, popularization, exhibition.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Regione Autonoma
Valle d'Aosta, Assessorato Territorio Ambiente e
Opere Pubbliche, Direzione Tutela del Territorio,
Ufficio Neve e Valanghe. AINEVA. Comando
Truppe Alpine-Servizio Meteomont. Monterosaski.