Summary

22nd EAWS General Assembly 2025

Seggau, Austria

On 24th – 26th June 2025, 86 participants from 19 countries and from 29 warning services met for the 21st EAWS General Assembly at Seggau Castle in Leibnitz Austria. The GA was hosted by the Avalanche Warning Service, Styria. From overseas warning services, Ryan Buhler (Avalanche Canada) and Ethan Greene (Colorado Avalanche Information Center) participated.

Co-Chairs report 2025

Arno Studeregger (Avalanche Warning Service Styria, AT) and Chris Pielmeier (SLF, CH) summarized the past three years where important steps forward were taken to renew the Standard of the European Avalanche Danger Scale (EADS) including aspects of Risk Communication. An overview of the CAP Format was given and recommendations for avalanche accident documentation as well as for issue time and validity were adopted. A discussion of the key questions around the possible reorganization of the EAWS itself into a legal organization under European right (EGTC) was carried out in a World-Café format and crucial feedback was collected as basis for a next proposal. EAWS manages to show fatalities on the website, yet ongoing updates are necessary by all services. An extraordinary, virtual GA was approved for 2026, when the final voting on the new EADS is planned to take place.

TAB coordinator report 2025

Thomas Feistl, (Bavarian Avalanche Warning Center, D) reported on the activity in the TAB and the WGs since the GA in Davos in 2022. The TAB was in operation one year longer than normally to resume to the alternating rhythm with ISSW, which was common practice prior to the Corona pandemic. The Chairs and the Coordinator had several online meetings and one meeting in person in Munich where discussed pending issues of the EAWS were discussed.

The TAB consisted of: Chiambretti Igor (IT), Diggins Mark (UK), Feistl Thomas (DE), Lanzanasto Norbert (AT), Mitterer Christoph (AT), Zweifel Benjamin (CH), Anne Dufour (FR), Emma Barfod (NO).

Throughout the 3 years, 17 online TAB meetings took place mainly on the topics of the WGs, their progress and the next steps. Additionally two Extended Virtual TAB Meetings (all members invited) were organized to address the entire EAWS community, giving everybody the opportunity to contribute, give feedback and input to the topics of the WGs. The focus of the second meeting was on the WGs of Matrix and Scale and Funding. There was an in-depth discussion about the draft version of the documents for establishing an EGTC, as well as the subsequent steps.

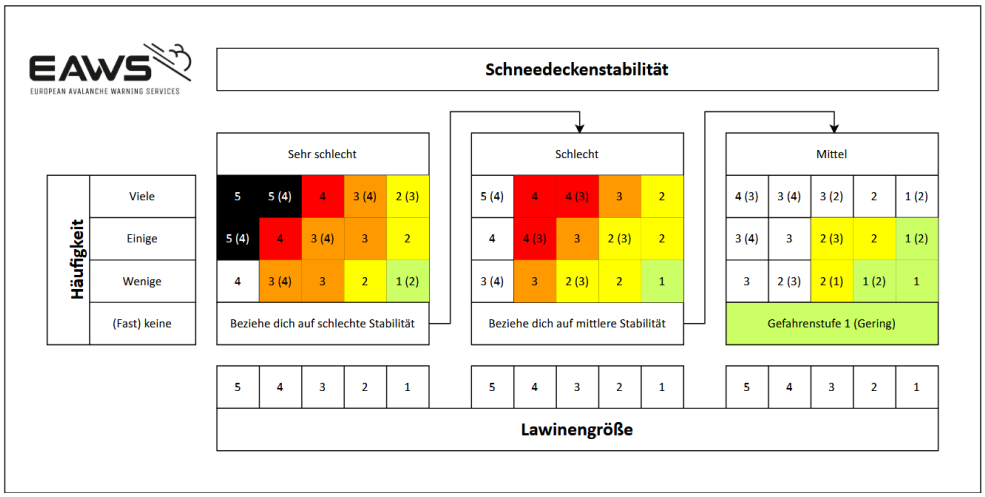
Working group *Matrix and Scale*, leader Karsten Müller (NVE, NO)
Working group *Risk Communication*, leader Mark Diggins (SAIS, UK)
The new danger scale and the supplementary descriptive document were developed by the Matrix and Scale WG in close cooperation with the Risk Communication WG. While the Matrix is the main tool for avalanche forecasters to define the danger level, the Danger Scale is designed to help end users easily and clearly understand the impact of each avalanche danger level. Communication issues were therefore more important than technical terms. Harmonization with North America was the aim, but national European constraints had to be taken into account. The derivation process was highly complex, with the Matrix and Scale and Risk Communication WGs had several internal and in-person exchange meetings until the documents were finalized. Although the time for feedback on the final document from the TAB was limited, the WGs sought and incorporated feedback from the TAB and all EAWS members several times throughout the three-year process. The new danger scale proposal was voted “accept” at the GA 2025 to go forward into the consolidations phase with the warning services and their interest groups and associations. One exception was the proposed color “black” for danger level 5. Alternative, the color “dark red” was voted “accept”. Also, the suggested time table for the translations, revisions and implementation of the new danger scale was accepted. The final voting on the EADS will take place at an extraordinary, virtual GA in October 2026. The extraordinary GA was also voted for and accepted.

Proposal for the updated European Avalanche Danger Scale

Technical Description	Danger Level	Signal Word	Color	Icons for Danger Level	Avalanche Conditions	Travel Advice	Avalanche Occurrence	Avalanche Size and Impact	Advice for Crisis Management.
Natural avalanches occur in many locations. Avalanches can be very large and extremely large.	5	Extreme	HEX: #000000 RGB: 0 0 0 CMYK: 0 0 0 100		Extraordinary avalanche conditions.	Avoid all avalanche terrain	Natural avalanches are widely expected to occur.	Avalanches can have catastrophic effects on infrastructure and potentially on entire villages.	Prepare for extreme conditions and provide orders and actionable advice to the public. People, roads, settlements, and other infrastructure are at risk.
Avalanches can be triggered by people in many locations. Natural avalanches occur in some or many locations. Avalanches can be large or very large.	4	High	HEX: #ff0000 RGB: 255 0 0 CMYK: 0 100 100 0		Very critical avalanche conditions.	Travel in avalanche terrain is not recommended.	Avalanches can easily be triggered in many places. Natural avalanches can occur in many places.	Avalanches can be large enough to kill people and can sometimes be large enough to destroy infrastructure.	Prepare for severe conditions and consequences. Provide actionable advice to the public. Mainly people and infrastructure in avalanche terrain are at risk.
Avalanches can be triggered by people in some [or many] locations. Natural avalanches can occur in nearly no to some locations. Avalanches can be medium-sized or large.	3	Considerable	HEX: #ff9900 RGB: 255 153 0 CMYK: 0 40 100 0		Critical avalanche conditions.	Cautious route-finding and conservative decision-making essential.	Avalanches can easily be triggered in some places. Natural avalanches can occur in some places.	Avalanches can be large enough to kill people and can sometimes be large enough to damage a small building.	Awareness required. Keep informed of forecasted trends in avalanche conditions. Mainly people in avalanche terrain are at risk.
Avalanches can be triggered by people in a few [or some] locations. There are typically nearly no or at most a few locations where natural avalanches can occur. Avalanches can be medium-sized.	2	Moderate	HEX: #ffff00 RGB: 255 255 0 CMYK: 0 0 100 0		Avalanche conditions require caution.	Evaluate snow and terrain carefully and identify features of concern.	Avalanches can be triggered in a few places. Natural avalanches can occur in a few places.	Avalanches can be large enough to carry and sometimes be large enough to bury and kill a person.	No special awareness
There are nearly no [or at most a few] locations where avalanches can be triggered by people or occur naturally. [Stability is often fair or good.] Avalanches are generally small but can be medium-sized.	1	Low	HEX: #ccff66 RGB: 204 255 102 CMYK: 20 0 60 0		Generally safe avalanche conditions.	Watch for unstable snow in high consequence terrain.	Avalanches can be triggered in rare circumstances. Natural avalanches are not expected to occur.	Avalanches are expected to carry and can sometimes be large enough to bury and potentially kill a person.	No special awareness

From the WG Matrix & Scale, Frank Techel (SLF, CH) presented the minor changes to the EAWS Matrix and the its revised Definitions, which were voted “accept” by the GA as standard for all EAWS members, see also

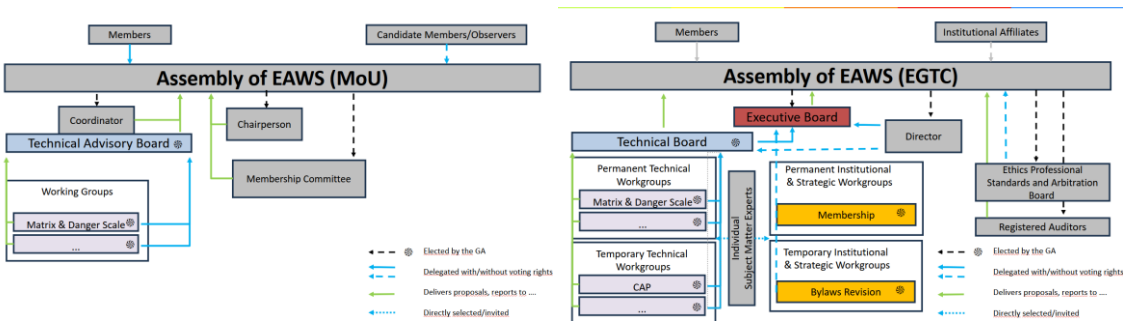
https://www.avalanches.org/downloads/#eaws-matrix



The WG continues, the leader remains Karsten Müller. Its proposed next steps are (encompassing themes from danger scale, matrix, risk communication, CAP):
-oversee and aid during the consultation phase (September 2025 - April 2026)
-conduct the revision (May & July/August 2026)
-provide documents for the extraordinary GA in Oct 2026
-oversea final design process given final acceptance at GA (October 2026)
-support introduction of accepted DS by winter 2027/28 (2027)

For formal revision process, the WG will proceed in small sub-groups to be efficient. Currently, Karsten's ideas for three subgroups are (WG members will be determined by end of August 2025):
-Update column "crisis management" and ensure compatibility of the scale with CAP (preferably former CAP group members)
-Create and spread user tests and surveys regarding understanding of terms in the updated DS and user feedback (preferably former Risk Comm. members)
-Final revision based on incoming feedback (preferably former Matrix and Scale or Risk Comm members)

Working group *EAWS Funding and Organization,* leader Christoph Mitterer (AWS Tyrol, AT)
Christoph presented a comparison of the organigrams of the EAWS under the existing MoU and under a potential EGTC organization form.



Prior to the GA, the working group EAWS Funding and Organization, AT) had collected feedback on the proposed EGTC papers, that were sent to members by Christoph in 2024. Written feedback was received from Finland, Switzerland, Val d'Aran, Bavaria, Carinthia, Norway and AINEVA. Informal feedback was received from Styria, Valle d'Aosta and MeteoFrance. Summary of that feedback is:
Extensive work has been done, but:

-the proposal is too complex for EAWS's needs (overshoot)
-Larger services hardly see any advantages compared to the administrational hurdles
-Smaller services do see advantages (e.g. better representation and funding)
-Questions on the core objectives
-Questions on disadvantages of non-EU based warning services
Some critics to the proposed timeframe and possibility of transitioning from EAWS based on MoU to EAWS based on an EGTC
-Some critics on how voting rights were calculated
-Some critics on the membership fees
-Some critics on proposed change of name
-Some critics/questions on membership classes

In order to give the members a further chance to rise questions and give feedback, the WG carried out a "World-Café"-style discussion at the GA with 4 stations on the following topics: Objectives and Motivation (Igor Chiambretti), Finances and membership fees (Jürg Schweizer), Membership categories and voting rights (Thomas Feistl), Organisation structure and scenarios for transition EAWS MoU→EGTC (Christoph Mitterer)

The WG proposes to continue and it was "accepted" by the GA by voting. The leader remains Christoph Mitterer. Its proposed next steps are:
-update draft proposal / documents while reducing complexity
-carry out a survey on transition possibilities
-create plan for every member
-if possible/feasible, prepare everything for founding an EGTC

Working group Common Alerting Protocol (CAP)

Anne Dufour (MeteoFrance, F) and Jürg Trachsel (SLF, CH) presented the state of the art of CAP and highlighted possibilities and limitations. The WG prepared a report for the GA.
The WG does not continue. However, one or more members of the WG CAP should participate in the future WG danger scale to ensure the compatibility of the new danger scale with CAP.

Working group Accidents

Emma Barfod (NVE, NO) presented a report on avalanche accident documentation parameters. It contains a long list and short of parameters and its definitions. The short list, as a Recommendation for documentation by all EAWS members, was presented for voting and it was "accepted" by the GA by voting.

New Working group: National and Regional Forecaster Education and Training

Igor Chiambretti (AINEVA, IT) and Christian Jaedicke (NGI, NO) proposed the topic for a new working group (as formerly proposed in 2022). The aims are to establish a state of the art":
-overview of existing programs and courses
-existing tools and educational materials
-exploring willingness for staff exchange programs
The start of the new WG was "accepted" by the GA by voting.

TAB proposal: new EAWS recommendation on issue time and validity of avalanche forecasts
Chris Pielmeier (Co-Chair) presented a proposal for a new EAWS recommendation to harmonize issue time and validity of avalanche forecasts within the EAWS.

Membership committee

Jürg Schweizer (SLF, CH) reported from the membership committee:

After a qualifying period of 3 years, the Swedish Avalanche Warning Service became EAWS member in 2025.
After a qualifying period of 3 years, Ukrainian Avalanche Warning Service became full EAWS member in 2025.

There were no new applications since the last GA 2022 until the GA 2025.

Discussion with end-users/interest groups of AWS

During the "Presentation and discussion with Associations/End-users", an exchange with interest groups and associations in form of a panel discussion, Florian Hellberg from the Bavarian Commission of Alpine Safety and Thomas Wanner from the Austrian Alpine Club (ÖAV) and Thomas Stucki, as deputy of Martin Ruggli, head of the Swiss interest groups/KAT were present at the podium. Chris Pielmeier moderated the podium talk. In summary, Florian Hellberg and Thomas Wanner had the following input/suggestions:
1. introduce subdivision of danger levels in all countries
2. issue standardized avalanche problems
3. more behavioral recommendations (clear and understandable), especially for beginners and young people
4. avalanche information also between June and October (not necessarily in bulletin form)
5. annual season kick-off meeting with associations (update on innovations, exchange)
6. publication of the 3 parameters from the EAWS matrix (snowpack stability, stability distribution, avalanche size)
The first two points were requested by both - the others by one or the other.
Martin Ruggli from the Swiss Avalanche Core Training Team (KAT) had the following input/suggestions:
7. uniform structure and presentation of avalanche bulletins, uniform functionality
8. overview of older avalanche bulletins
9. uniform feedback system
10. uniform presentation of measurement data

The presentations were followed by a lively, open and constructive panel discussion, which can be briefly summarized as follows: There is a lot of good will, interest and intention to develop further together and to continue on this path. Specific points:

- On point 1: There are still inhibitions on the part of individual warning services to name the intermediate levels of danger already mentioned in the text. However, there are warning services that are actively addressing this issue. Thomas Feistl (AWS Bavaria, D) commented that In Germany, the introduction of the subdivision of danger levels is not considered a core topic by all associations. As there is no clear definition of the danger level subdivisions, a uniform introduction in Europe is currently not possible. If countries outside Switzerland introduce their own criteria, there is a risk that the harmonization and standardization that has been positively perceived by everyone in recent years will deteriorate. The current focus of the "Matrix and Scale" working group is on the uniform definition of the five hazard levels. There are still discrepancies here that should be resolved before dealing with the subdivisions of danger levels. Changes to important definitions such as the hazard levels (introduction of subdivisions) should be agreed in EAWS working groups and introduced uniformly across Europe.
- On point 2: This is less about the definition and more about the assignment of avalanche problems. After the definition is standardized, the assignment is made according to avalanche warning service criteria. The TAB (technical committee) of the EAWS takes up this point (standardized workflow).
- Where does the danger level apply? Opinions (both avalanche warning services and practitioners) still differ

on this. Some are of the opinion “in the core zone”, outside of which the one-level rule applies (CH), others are of the opinion “in the entire region” (as in D, for example), whereby the “core zone” indicates the most dangerous places.
The German-speaking avalanche warning services will address this topic in October at a transnational avalanche forecaster training course.
- Weather information in the avalanche bulletin: ... is still valued and should be retained. However, it is also the case that with the many weather apps, the importance of the avalanche bulletin has decreased and could most likely be reduced.
- A trend (over 2 days) with danger levels (without further details) is desired.
- The EAWS matrix is used in the OEAV for training (higher levels).
- The ÖAV only uses the Skitourenguru for tour planning in training, no longer Stop-or-Go and SnowCard.
- There have been some changes and harmonization among the warning services in recent years, which is much appreciated by the users.
- Observations from the terrain are still very important for the avalanche warning services. Private platforms could mean that this feedback is collected and disseminated by the platforms, thus increasing the distance between the warning services and the users. This would not be in the interests of the warning services.

Elections 2025

The elections have taken place including the voting rights and 2/3 majority rule as defined in the MoU. All decisions have taken place in the first voting round.

Chair and Coordinator
Christine Pielmeier (Chair), Thomas Feistl (Coordinator)

TAB members
Montserrat Bacardit, Igor Chiambretti, Mark Diggins, Silke Griesser, Norbert Lanzanasto, Christoph Mitterer, Kinga Ostrowska, Frank Techel, Alexandre Trajan

Membership Committee
Emanuela Gini, Gloria Marti, Ales Poredos, Lisa Pulling, Thomas Stucki

Future working groups
The GA approved following working groups for the next period:

- Scale (and Matrix) (continued): with focus on new danger scale, WG leader: Karsten Müller,
Risk Communication and CAP topics included in this WG
-Funding and Organization (continued): Implementation of feedback, new proposal, WG leader: Christoph Mitterer
- Forecaster education (new): review of state of the art, WG Leader: Igor Chiambretti

Location 2027, next in-person General Assembly
The proposals from Andorra and Zakopane were voted on by the GA, the majority voted for Zakopane.

Next general assemblies (GA)

End of October 2026: extraordinary, virtual GA with voting on final proposition Avalanche Danger Scale (EADS)
14.-17. June 207: on-site GA in Zakopane, Poland (TOPR, Kinga Ostrowska)