

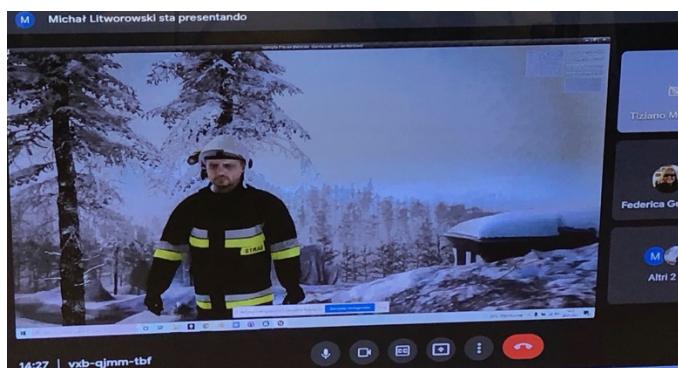
## **VR EU MODEX Passo del Tonale Content Workshop – 26-30 July – Rovereto, Italy**

### *Bolstering EU and UN partnership*

The INSARAG Secretariat participated in the Virtual Reality EU MODEX Passo del Tonale Content Workshop on the topic of Avalanche Search & Rescue, which took place from 26 to 30 July 2021 in Rovereto, Italy. The modalities of conducting exercises in Virtual Reality were presented and analysed by the participants, who then contributed to the development of the exercise itself. The workshop contributed to strengthening EU and UN collaboration and partnership.

The VR EUMODEX aims to support the effective preparation of avalanche search and mountain rescue teams with computer software and Virtual Reality goggles simulating the conditions of emergency response. The first scenarios presented were on avalanche search and mountain rescue, but with the potential of representing any type of scenario for response.

The companies involved in the development of the virtual reality programs were Swissteamleaders, from Switzerland, and Simprosoft, from Poland.



The rationale for the development of the VR EU MODEX field training exercise, which will take place in Rovereto from 19 to 22 October 2021, was that in the winter of 2017, a devastating avalanche and a minor earthquake occurred in Farindola, in central Italy, shutting down and collapsing several residential buildings and a hotel. The rescue was hampered by the fact that the mountain rescue and search teams did not have reconnaissance data on the buildings which were completely buried by the several-meter snow roll, which in turn delayed the rescue operations. As the avalanche came down from the mountain, impacting and destroying the Hotel Rigopiano, through the connecting road, rendering the hotel inaccessible, resulting in 220 mountain rescuers having to be involved. There were 29 victims, found several hours after the avalanche.

The VR EU MODEX intends to jointly train urban search and rescue teams and mountain rescue team at operational and tactical levels. The main objectives are to test interoperability, self-sufficiency, coordination, communication and SOP of teams under a winter scenario with avalanche situations.



The methodology used in the workshop fits the Flexible Response concept, as the exercise aims for USAR teams to be able to work in complex situations such an avalanche rescue operation. The exercise should enable USAR capacity to adapt to natural disasters in winter conditions within all their functions, i.e. management, information management, coordination and logistics.

The possibility of training in VR would potentially be useful for other end users as well, as it enables the possibility of recreating any type of disaster scenario. Using VR, as presented here, has the potential to evaluate the result of the trainees and can be repeated several times.

The VR EU MODEX field training exercise will be held from the 19 to the 22 of October 2021 at the Marco Training Centre of the Civil Protection of the Autonomous Province of Trento, recreating the scenario that was prepared and set up for the exercise in Tonale Valley, planned for March 2020, but postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the exercise in October, skeleton USAR teams and Mountain Rescue teams will be invited. They will practice on setting up the Usar Coordination Cell (UCC), the Reception/Departure Centre (RDC) and make assessment on several virtual areas in combination with real-life scenarios.

The INSARAG Secretariat was represented at the workshop by Colonel, Dr. Peter Jackovics, team leader of Hungarian Heavy Team (HUNOR) and UNDAC member, and Ms. Chiara Cera, intern of UN OCHA at the INSARAG Secretariat.



Colonel, Dr. Peter Jackovics, team leader of Hungarian Heavy Team (HUNOR), and Gerard Guerin, DG ECHO