

# AUFGESPÜRT

The magazine of the International Search and Rescue Dog Organisation



## ***IRO Heroes***

A remarkable team in action

***When every  
minute counts***

Ready to respond



Issue  
01/26

# Dear dog lovers,

**When a search and rescue dog indicates a find, it is the result of thousands of hours of training, experience and, above all, trust. Years of preparation and a close bond between dog and handler lie behind that moment, built day by day so that they can work as one when it really matters.**

What often goes unseen is that none of this would be possible without people like you. Thanks to your support, curious puppies grow up to become reliable search and rescue dogs. Teams are trained, assessed and prepared for situations where every minute counts.

This magazine offers a glimpse into this world. It reveals what matters during a search operation, what happens long before a team is deployed and all the unseen work that goes into it.

At the heart of it all is something that cannot be measured, yet makes all the difference: trust. Trust between dog and handler. And trust between the IRO – the global umbrella organisation for search and rescue dog work – and people like you, who make our work possible.

Your support helps to ensure that search and rescue dog teams will always be ready when needed – calm, dependable, and prepared for those critical moments.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

**Yours,**

*Daniela Rupp*  
**Daniela Rupp**  
Editor-in-Chief



**Trust is the  
foundation.  
Great teamwork  
is the result.**



## 04 IRO Heroes

Ares and his handler, Dušan, make a great team. Together, they save lives.

## 06 From puppy to lifesaver

How does a puppy become a search and rescue dog? Ares demonstrates the process.

## 08 When every minute counts

Search and rescue dog teams are ready to respond in critical situations, as they did during a recent search operation in Vienna.

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# Contents



## 10 A keen nose and a big heart

Meet Miro – our new mascot

## 12 A legacy that lives on

Make a difference beyond your lifetime.  
Leave a legacy, pass on your values.  
Find out more about gifts in wills.



See the special bond between  
Dušan and Ares for yourself!  
Just scan the QR code to watch the video.



***The forest is silent.  
No wind, no birdsong.  
Only the soft rustle  
of paws through the  
undergrowth. Ares is  
at work. Out there,  
somewhere, someone  
is waiting to be  
found. Ares knows  
it. He can sense it.  
Nothing distracts him.  
Nothing can throw  
him off course.***

The eight-year-old Labrador moves silently through the dense woodland, his nose close to the ground, then lifted into the air again. The search area covers several hectares, and the terrain is challenging. Step by step, he makes his way forward, ignoring wildlife, unfamiliar scents, fresh bear tracks and countless other distractions. His handler, Dušan, follows at a distance. He watches Ares, reads his signals and keeps an eye on the bigger picture. He knows this phase well, and it always brings the same combination of concentration and quiet tension. The two have completed around 100 search and rescue operations together. You might think that it eventually becomes routine. It doesn't.

Then: barking. Loud, persistent and unmistakable. Dušan makes his way through the undergrowth.

***One look.  
One small  
signal.  
And Ares  
knows  
exactly  
what to do.***

There, among the roots and tangled vegetation, sits Ares. And beside him is the missing person.

It feels like a real search operation, but this time it is a test. Every two years, the IRO Mission Readiness Test in Slovenia assesses whether a search and rescue dog team is ready for deployment when someone goes missing, under conditions that are as close to reality as possible. The standards are high. Over several days, Ares and Dušan face a series of demanding tasks. Two daytime searches and one night search test the team's physical and mental limits. Each search is treated as if it were real, even though no one's life depends on the outcome this time. Ares and Dušan pass the Mission Readiness Test for Area Search. For the second time in a row.

Dušan has been a search and rescue dog handler for 45 years, and Ares is the sixth dog to work alongside him. They know each other inside out and share a close bond. Often, a glance or the slightest gesture is all it takes. That level of trust does not develop overnight. It grows through time spent together, intensive training and countless deployments.

"Nothing seems to faze Ares," says Dušan. „During a search, he is completely focused. At home, he is a true family dog: playful, affectionate, and always by our side.“

It is precisely this combination that makes Ares so special — a hero when it matters most.

# A team you can rely on



# From puppy to lifesaver

**Even heroes start small. Before he became the reliable search and rescue dog he is today, Ares was just a curious, lively puppy.**

"Ares was the liveliest puppy in the litter – alert, curious, and full of energy," recalls his handler, Dušan, thinking back to August 2017 when he first met Ares, who was just a few days old at the time. From that moment on, the two were inseparable, and Ares was raised in an environment designed to nurture his abilities from the outset.

His training started early, but was always centred around play. Ares learnt that searching for and finding a person was a positive experience. Every success was rewarded with treats, his favourite toy, and lots of praise. He was also gradually introduced to different environments and experiences. He explored a variety of surfaces, walked across metal grates, balanced over small obstacles, and ventured through his first tunnels. Rustling tarpaulins, clattering objects, and unfamiliar sights and sounds were all part of the experience. Step by step, Ares became more confident and capable. "It's important to me that the dogs feel comfortable and are never put under pressure," explains Dušan.

As Ares grew, so did the challenges. He began training alongside other young dogs and their handlers, learning to stay focused, cope with distractions, and move confidently through different

situations. Even as the tasks became more demanding and the searches more complex, the training remained playful. Ares was encouraged to follow his natural desire to search and find – an instinct that was carefully nurtured throughout his training.

By the age of two, Ares was fully trained in area, avalanche and rubble searches. The lively, adventurous puppy had grown into a reliable search and rescue dog – and the other half of a remarkable team.



## **Become a sponsor today**

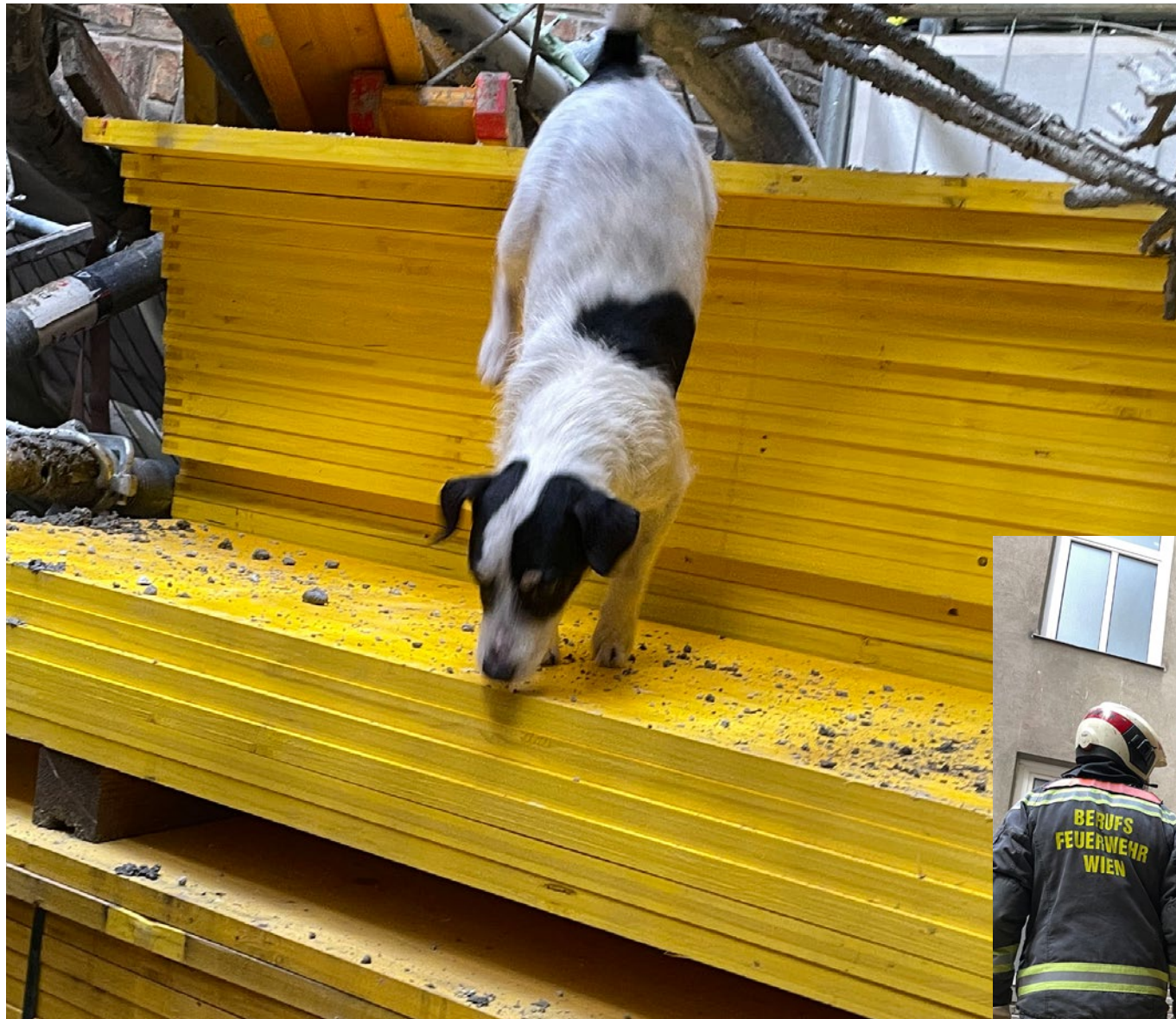
Ares started out life as a playful puppy. Today, he helps to save lives. This journey takes time and patience, as well as people who make it possible. With just 5 euros a month, you can support the training of search and rescue dogs from the very beginning, through play, encouragement and care. **Support a puppy on its journey.**



# The IRO Mission Readiness Test at a glance



- Teams remain on standby throughout the test and must be ready to reach the deployment site within 15 minutes.
- Two daytime searches are completed by teams, with each search covering approximately six hectares of woodland – that is, roughly the size of eight football pitches.
- During the night-time search, teams must cover an area of approximately ten metres on either side of a three-kilometre forest trail.
- Each search is limited to a maximum of 60 minutes.
- Teams are also assessed on their ability to use GPS effectively for navigation.
- Handlers must demonstrate that they can provide first aid to their own dog.
- Search and rescue dog teams must pass the test every two years to maintain their operational status.



# When every minute counts

On 17 March 2026, scaffolding and formwork collapsed during concrete work in the courtyard of an apartment building in Vienna. One worker was seriously injured and several others were believed to be trapped beneath the rubble. The Vienna Fire Brigade responded to the scene and search and rescue dog Arvi was among those deployed.

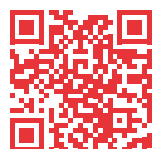
Moments like these demonstrate just how valuable search and rescue dogs can be. They can reach places where technical equipment reaches its limits and can often provide vital information within minutes.

Arvi, a Parson Russell Terrier, calmly and methodically made his way through the difficult terrain. With unstable structures, exposed steel reinforcement and concrete that is still wet in places, each step must be carefully considered. His small size, agility, and keen sense of smell enable him to access areas that are almost inaccessible to humans and machinery, while he continues to search for signs of human scent.

Once the deployment is over, the dogs are cleaned at the scene. Concrete, dust and dirt cling deep into their coats. Only then is their work truly finished.

Deployments like this demonstrate just how much goes into the work of search and rescue dogs: training, preparation and dedication. From the dogs, and from the people by their side.

***When people and machines reach their limits, it's time for search and rescue dogs like Arvi to step in.***



## ***Your support makes a difference***

When lives are at stake, well-trained search and rescue dogs are invaluable. Your donation helps ensure that teams around the world can respond quickly and reliably when needed most. ***Donate today!***

## A keen nose and a big heart

**You might have spotted him already:  
the cheeky, four-legged character  
making his way through the pages of  
this magazine.**

Sometimes, he sits attentively on the edge of a page. At other times, he peers around the corner as if he has picked up a scent.

**This is Miro.  
Our new mascot.**

As our illustrated search and rescue dog, he will accompany you through every issue, always alert and friendly, and with a nose for stories worth telling. He represents the many operational and trainee search and rescue dogs around the world.

Miro embodies the qualities that make a great search and rescue dog: enthusiasm, reliability, and courage. At the same time, he adds a touch of light-heartedness and reminds us that trust and teamwork lie at the heart of every successful search.

Throughout the magazine, Miro will guide you through the different sections, share the occasional tip, and hopefully bring a smile to your face along the way. Little by little, he will become a familiar companion.

We're delighted to have him with us. We hope you'll grow as fond of him as we have.

**Attentive.**  
**Spots what others miss.**



**Sensitive.**  
**Responds to the slightest signals.**



**Curious.**  
**Follows every scent with determination.**



**Cooperative.**  
**Works closely with his partner.**



**Friendly.**  
**Brings a smile.**



**Reliable.**  
**Works with remarkable precision.**



**Brave.**  
**Steps up when it matters most.**



# A legacy that lives on



## There are moments in life when we find ourselves wondering what we will leave behind.

Sooner or later, many people ask themselves this question. It is often not only about family or those closest to them, but also about the desire to make a difference that extends beyond their own lifetime.

In Austria, more and more people are giving this question careful thought. They want to decide for themselves what will happen to their estate and ensure that it continues to do good in the future.

The reasons are as varied as the people themselves. Some want to leave a lasting mark, while others feel a personal connection to specific organisations or wish to perpetuate values that are important to them. Often, it is simply the desire to continue making a difference beyond their lifetime.

### Gifts in wills in Austria

- **More than 120 million euros donated each year**
- **One in every nine euros donated comes from a gift in a will.**
- **Around 2,000 wills each year include a gift to a charitable organisation.**

Source: Fundraising Verband Austria

## Many people want to make a difference that will last beyond their lifetime.

A will provides an opportunity to put these wishes in writing. It offers clarity and peace of mind for both the person making the will and their loved ones.

Many people also choose to include a charity in their will alongside family and friends – not instead of their loved ones, but as an additional way to support a cause they care about.

## Good to know

For many people, writing a will can seem like a significant decision. However, even a small gift can have a lasting impact. If you are considering leaving a gift in your will, we would be happy to have a personal, confidential conversation with you.

**Daniela Rupp**  
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Phone: +43 662 82 65 26 12



The work of search and rescue dog teams can also be supported through a gift in will. Training, ongoing practice and deployments require time, experience and reliable structures. Gifts in wills help secure this work for the long term – and make it possible to provide help where it is needed.

# For the love of dogs – and their health

**Search and rescue dogs face considerable physical demands during training and deployment. Focus, stamina and recovery are all crucial factors, as are healthy digestion and a balanced immune system.**

This is where SonnenMoor's natural moor comes in. This natural product is made from herbs, plants and other organic matter that have been formed over thousands of years beneath water and without exposure to air. It contains valuable humic acids, which may help to protect the digestive tract and support gut health naturally.

Magdalena Koczera, one of IRO's Lead Trainers, an active dog handler, and head of training for the Vienna Fire Department's search and rescue dog unit, has used natural moor as part of her dogs' everyday lives for many years, particularly during demanding periods such as training, tests, or deployments. "Our dogs do an incredible amount. That's why it's important to me to give them the best possible support and rely on things that have proven themselves over the years."

A healthy gut helps the body absorb nutrients efficiently and cope better with physical demands. Magdalena has also noticed visible benefits: "Their coats are glossy and their eyes look brighter." She particularly appreciates how easy the product is to use in everyday life. "I can take the bottles with me wherever I go, whether we're training or deployed abroad."



**IRO Trainer  
Magdalena Koczera  
supports her dogs' gut  
health, helping Nyx to  
stay calm and focused  
during every search.**



SonnenMoor's natural moor contains no artificial additives and is based on one of the oldest natural substances known to support the digestive system. It is a natural product that has also proven itself over many years as part of the everyday lives of active search and rescue dogs.

# How well do you know our search and rescue dogs?

# COMPETITION

**Put your knowledge to the test for  
the chance to win a one-litre bottle  
of Natural Moor for Animals!**

**How often do search and rescue dog  
teams need to have their mission  
readiness assessed?**

- A) Every year
- B) Every two years
- C) Every five years

You will find the answer in this magazine. Please send your answer by 31 July 2026, either by post to: International Search and Rescue Dog Organisation, Moosstraße 32, 5020 Salzburg, Austria. Alternatively, you can email your answer to [foerderer@iro-dogs.org](mailto:foerderer@iro-dogs.org). Legal recourse is excluded. Cash payment is not possible.



# Miro wishes you the best of luck.





Every  
contribution  
counts.  
[iro-dogs.org](http://iro-dogs.org)



# THANK YOU

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