



## **Shale Gas Information Platform SHIP: first year of fact-based communication**

Andreas Hübner, Brian Horsfield, and Theresia Petrow

GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences, Chemistry and Material Cycles, Potsdam, Germany  
(huebner@gfz-potsdam.de)

Natural gas produced from shale, already on stream in the USA, and under development in many regions worldwide, has brought about a fundamental change in energy resource distribution and energy politics. According to recent IEA publications, shale gas production will continue to rise globally and will be embraced by many more countries than at present. Shale gas production, especially in densely populated regions, brings with it a new dimension of risk alongside potential benefits. A fact-based discussion of the pros and cons, however, has been hampered in part by a scarcity of scientific knowledge on the related risks, and by a lack of appropriate, i.e. transparent and balanced, communication of the academic research perspective.

With the Shale Gas Information Platform SHIP, the GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences engages in the public discussion of technical and environmental issues related to shale gas exploration and production. The project was launched online in early 2012, at a propitious time: the public debate was until then dominated by voices from industry and from environmental groups, which were often biased and/or lacking sound factual background. Significant academic research on the risks related to shale gas development and hydraulic fracturing operations in particular only started in 2011 and continued to expand in 2012. This was reflected in an increased output of peer-reviewed publications and academic reports. SHIP puts these into perspective and brings them to the attention of the broader public. With just one year of online presence, SHIP has already effectively filled the void in fact-based information on shale gas. This can be seen by a continuing demand for subscriptions to our News Email Alert Service, and by invitations SHIP has received to conferences and workshops, in order to share our experience of science-based and balanced information dissemination.

SHIP's web content is expanding and so is its expert network. Collaborations with large research initiatives, such as GASH Gas Shales in Europe (GFZ Potsdam), ReFINE - Researching Fracking IN Europe (Durham University) and the US EPA Gas STAR program ensuring up to date information is disseminated. However, the issue of shale gas is much discussed by local residents in potential exploration areas in Europe and elsewhere, and sound information becomes more scarce outside the English language domain. To remedy this shortcoming, large parts of SHIP content are translated to German and Polish; two countries where shale gas development is a hot topic on the political agenda. In the course of development of the SHIP initiative, other languages may follow.

SHIP seeks to grow continuously, and a conference like EGU's General Assembly is very well suited to spread the word. If you are interested to contribute/collaborate, please contact SHIP.