



Reporting from the Iceland Deep Drilling Project

Karl Urban

Science journalist (freelancer), journalist network „Die Fachwerkstatt“, Tübingen, Germany (urban@die-fachwerkstatt.de)

Geoscience-related topics are in many cases difficult to communicate to the public: Often they include dead soil which not easily tells lively stories. And it is hard to sell those topics to editors of public media. In addition the topics might also be politically supercharged if they are resource-related with a visible environmental impact. Therefore any researcher involved might be overcautious while talking to journalists.

With a grant from the EGU Science Journalist Fellowship I travelled to Iceland in autumn 2016 to report about the Iceland Deep Drilling Project (IDDP). The project which started just weeks prior to my arrival aimed to drill the deepest borehole in a volcanically active region. During earlier trials the borehole collapsed or the drill string unintentionally hit magma. If successful the IDDP promises a much higher level of geothermal energy harvested.

The IDDP was therefore ideally suited to be sold to public media outlets since Iceland's volcanic legacy easily tells a lively story. But the drilling's potential environmental impact makes it a political topic in Iceland – even though geothermal energy has a positive public perception. Therefore the IDDP included some pitfalls I observed several times before while reporting about geoscience research. Those could be circumvented if researchers and journalists knew better about their expectations before any interview takes place.