



Communicating Volcanology to the public – the first European Volcanoes’ Night at the University of the Azores (Portugal)

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Millions of people worldwide live in active volcanic areas and, even if they may be exposed to several related hazards, the economical benefits of volcanism are unquestionable (e.g., agriculture, tourism). Living with volcanoes and maintaining the balance between man and nature is challenging and, in order to keep it, a well-established multidisciplinary volcano monitoring program is needed to reduce the risks. In addition, communication among scientists, civil protection agents and the public is fundamental to have adequate reactions during periods of volcanic unrest crises. The Azores archipelago (Portugal), located in the North Atlantic Ocean, is formed by nine inhabited volcanic islands that have different types of volcanism and consequently the population is exposed to different hazards. The Research Centre for Volcanology and Geological Risks (CVARG), from the University of the Azores, was established in 1997 and has been the responsible for the volcano monitoring of the archipelago since then, in close collaboration with the Centre for Information and Seismovolcanic Surveillance of the Azores (CIVISA). In 2016, due to organic changes in the University of the Azores, the CVARG has evolved to the Research Institute for Volcanology and Risk Assessment (IVAR), which constitutes a multidisciplinary unit that involves geologists, geochemists, volcanologists, biologists, psychologists, engineers, chemists and physicists, with the main goal to study volcanoes under different perspectives. In addition to the scientific studies and the contribution to the volcano monitoring of the Azorean islands, the IVAR mission includes the dissemination of knowledge to society. A website, as well as seismological reports and social networks are some of the tools used for fostering closer links between scientists and the public. With this purpose, IVAR decided to participate in the 2017 European Volcanoes’ Night, an idea promoted by the Canary Islands Volcanological Institute (INVOLCAN), which aims to bring together members of the general public with scientists who work on the study of volcanoes, in order to meet and ask questions in a relaxed and welcoming setting. For this, IVAR organized a multidisciplinary program at the city of Ponta Delgada (S. Miguel, Azores), which included brief talks about geological hazards, volcano monitoring techniques and the possible impact of volcanic eruptions on the islands. The attendees had the opportunity to ask scientists some questions, visit the monitoring rooms, observe rock samples (hand samples and thin sections), and to actively participate in a session about volcanic risk perception and household multi-hazard preparedness. This event has been attended by almost 70 participants, from different ages and backgrounds, and echoed in the regional media, namely newspapers and television, which made possible to reach a much broader audience. The success of the first European Volcanoes’ Night at the University of the Azores is motivating the researchers to perform a second edition of the event in 2018.