

“A dense pipeline network guarantees our energy supply.”



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Bernhard Lässer was born in Austria in 1969. He graduated in civil engineering from Innsbruck University in 1997. From 2006 to 2008, he obtained a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA) from Deggendorf University. Since 1998, he has been working with ILF Beratende Ingenieure GmbH at several locations and has gained experience holding a range of positions in several international pipeline projects. After some years working as a business unit manager, Bernhard Lässer has been Managing Director of ILF Beratende Ingenieure GmbH in Munich since 2012, also directing the ILF branches abroad. Bernhard Lässer is a lecturer in Pipeline Engineering at Leoben University.

Is the era of fossil fuels really coming to an end?

According to the forecasts I know, the era of fossil fuels will not come to an end in the foreseeable future. The question is rather: when will alternative energies be competitive enough to substitute fossil energy to a greater extent?

Where are the largest deposits of crude oil and natural gas – apart from submarine deposits?

The largest “onshore” deposits of crude oil are in the Middle East, Venezuela, Canada (including oil sand) and Russia. The largest natural gas deposits are located in Russia, Iran, Qatar, Turkmenistan, Saudi Arabia, and the USA (shale gas deposits).

Where do you see bottlenecks and supply gaps at the present time? How can long-term developments in demand be identified?

Shortages and supply gaps occur in those regions where the infrastructure necessary for transporting energy is lacking and where people can't afford energy supplies. To bridge such shortages, a supply infrastructure must be set up or developed further, which of course requires the corresponding financial means.

What advantages does a dense pipeline network have and who benefits from it globally?

A sufficiently dense pipeline network guarantees our energy supply. Otherwise, there is no guarantee of economic development or a safe supply to the population. This means that not only individuals benefit, but also the whole of society. Pipelines represent infrastructure that is usually operated without aiming at maximizing profits. There are regulatory bodies in many countries that pay attention to fair transport tariffs and competition. As far as the oil and gas prices are concerned, transport costs play a rather subordinate role.

What do you think are the biggest challenges when planning and installing a pipeline network which is relatively independent of topographical and geographical issues?

In former times, the biggest challenges in planning pipelines lay in the area of technical feasibility. Today, these tend to be geopolitical factors, environmental aspects, acceptance by the population, and the procurement of rights of way.

What advantages does trenchless tunnelling technology offer for the planning of new pipeline connections?

Trenchless tunnelling technology renders an important contribution when crossing sensitive or built-up areas. These technologies are often the only possibility to install certain limited route sections.

How do you see the potentials of trenchless tunnelling technology when planning, building, and using pipelines to transport crude oil and natural gas?

We expect that these technologies will increasingly gain influence when implementing pipeline projects. The reasons are, on the one hand, increasing environmental protection requirements and, on the other hand, public acceptance and the fact that the surface is becoming increasingly built-up.