

Press Release

Essen, 6 May 2021

Gas transmission pipeline and technical installations ready for operation

ZEELINK competes technical commissioning of one of Germany's largest infrastructure projects

The 216 km ZEELINK pipeline and its technical installations came into operation today. The € 695 million project, which has been one of the largest infrastructure projects in Germany in recent years, was completed on time and on budget. ZEELINK is needed to ensure the timely and smooth changeover from L-gas to H-gas for around five million domestic, commercial and industrial customers in North Rhine-Westphalia and beyond.

Armin Laschet, the state premier of North Rhine-Westphalia and guest of honour at the commissioning ceremony, said: "The ZEELINK natural gas pipeline helps to better interconnect the European energy infrastructure and thus stands for security of supply – both now and in the future. It is an important building block for the modernisation of our country. With this project we have shown quite impressively that infrastructure projects of this magnitude can be delivered on time and on budget, and that makes us proud!"

Dr Jörg Bergmann, CEO of OGE: "ZEELINK is not only one of our largest projects, but also a state-of-the-art pipeline system that is fit for the future, because today the focus is on natural gas, but in the future it will be green gases. Our company will continue on its path towards sustainable climate targets."

Dr Thomas Gößmann, Chairman of the Executive Board of Thyssengas: "ZEELINK was and is a project based on partnership and that includes the state of North Rhine-Westphalia: politics, administration, business and residents. Together with OGE, we ensure that energy is made available where and when it is needed. This reliability is essential for a well-planned and increasingly green gas infrastructure as the backbone of the energy transition."

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Julien Mounier, CEO of Stadtwerke Düsseldorf, said: "Our customers not only trust that heat and electricity are available around the clock, but they also want us to keep a close eye on climate protection. With natural gas and combined heat and power generation, we have already taken a first step towards decarbonisation. For our next step, we are using green gases and industrial waste heat. This is the only way we can ensure the supply of heat to urban areas while also continuing to reduce carbon emissions."

Information on the project

ZEELINK is the largest single project in the 2015 and 2016 Gas Network Development Plan. The gas transmission pipeline runs from Lichtenbusch near Aachen to Legden in the Münsterland region. ZEELINK is a joint project of the transmission system operators Open Grid Europe GmbH (75 percent) and Thyssengas GmbH (25 percent). The technical facilities now commissioned include four gas metering and pressure regulating stations and a compressor station in Würselen.

The project had an ambitious timeline from the very start. The planning and approval process was completed in several stages place between 2015 and 2019 and involved a close dialogue with politicians, local authorities, public interest groups and local residents. Around 260 partners and about 1,800 employees from 15 nations were involved the construction project since spring 2019. The most important milestones included the crossing of the Rhine near Rheinberg and Voerde and the completion of the compressor station in Würselen with its three state-of-the-art compressor units. 13,000 pipes, each weighing about eight to nine tonnes, and 30,000 pipe welds now make up the centrepiece of the L-to-H-gas conversion project for North Rhine-Westphalia and beyond.

Information on the L-/H-gas conversion

The conversion from L-gas (low calorific gas) to H-gas (high calorific gas) had become necessary because of the decline in supplies from the Groningen field in the Netherlands where production will all but come to a halt by 2030 at the latest. The properties of natural gas always depend on the geological setting, while deliveries have developed historically. The new ZEELINK pipeline ensures that new H-gas supplies from the north, south and west can now be connected. In the north, the pipeline links up with the LNG terminal in

Zeebrugge, which is also one of the namesakes of the pipeline project. To the west, a compressor station in Legden, which is currently going through the planning approval process, will provide the connection to the local infrastructure. The compressor station in Würselen will ensure the smooth onward transmission of the H-gas.

The switch from L-gas to H-gas for the customers will now take place in several stages via the networks of the municipal utilities. Like all gas transmission pipelines in Germany, ZEELINK is based on a rigorous safety management regime.

About ZEELINK

The ZEELINK gas transmission system is part of the 2015 and 2016 Gas Network Development Plan (NDP Gas 2015 and 2016) and will facilitate the necessary conversion from L-gas to H-gas. Both gas types are used in Germany. However, L-gas consumption is expected to drop by about 90 per cent until 2030 because of declining production. The ZEELINK project will guarantee the supply of H-gas to millions of residential, commercial and industrial gas users. This makes ZEELINK a hugely significant infrastructure project for North Rhine-Westphalia and the whole of Germany. For more information about the project, go to www.zeelink.de.

About OGE

OGE is one of Europe's leading gas transmission system operators. With our pipeline network spanning approximately 12,000 kilometres, we transport gas throughout Germany. Our geographic location makes us the central link for gas flows across the European single market. 1,450 OGE employees ensure security of supply. We make our network available to all market participants in a transparent and non-discriminatory way in line with market needs. We enable energy supply. Today and in the energy mix of the future. For more information about the company, go to www.oge.net.

About Thyssengas

Thyssengas GmbH, based in Dortmund/Germany, is an independent gas network operator and one of Germany's leading natural gas transmission companies. In its core market area, North Rhine-Westphalia, the company operates seven branch offices and a pipeline transmission system of around 4,200 kilometres supplying up to 100 billion kilowatt-hours of natural gas to distribution system operators, industrial companies and power plants in a safe and environmentally friendly way. For more information about the company, go to www.thyssengas.com