

## Issue 3 - Thomas Popp, Germany

### Profile

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Activity: Head of sales department: Fischer Spezialbaustoffe GmbH  
Works in Heilbronn, Germany  
Experience in this sector: nearly 10 years  
Geographical working area: mainly Germany, but also international.

### The way to manage the expansion of near-surface energy field

*From your experience, different countries have different “Culture of Administration” regarding the installation of geothermal systems?*

Our company is a manufacturer for quality installation materials. We have a good knowledge of the international geothermal market (we deliver our products to 40 countries apart from Germany), so of course I can appreciate different “Culture of Administration” between countries: for regulation practices there is a high standard for instance in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and France. Here we have a bigger awareness for the use of quality products, while in other countries such as Netherlands, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland or Kosovo the effort for the approval process from a practical point of view is lower. In this case a broader use of the technique is fostered through weaker regulations on product quality.

*To deal with the different countries’ administration, do you follow a fixed procedure or do you adapt to the local administration?*

In a first discussion with foreign authorities, our first step is to raise awareness for the need of quality standards. We use knowledge exchange events hosted from the German chamber of commerce. Here we inform the countries about quality issues and foster the exchange of different regulatory standards. For example in Kosovo (one of the stronger commercial partner of ours, with Mongolia) we contributed over 3-4 years to implement high standards especially during the construction of big national building projects. In conclusion, there is not a prefixed formula, because first a development has to be triggered. In Germany, this process took 40 years and we are still not at the end. So fostering this development is a difficult task.

*Do you feel that the diffusion of near surface geothermal energy has generally increased in the last years?*

There was a period of increasing system installations in Switzerland and Austria, but in most countries, there is no “boom” in near surface geothermal energy. Most of the time we are in a pioneer phase with pilot projects. The more advanced countries already have an established market and try to keep it on a stable level, also with incentives. In Germany, the stable sales are around 64.000 heat pumps per year (now around 50/50 air/ground source heat pumps).

*How did Germany reach such status? Could it represent a best practice example for other countries?*

It was when the oil crisis happened that in Germany the first strong increase of geothermal installations occurred, also because approval procedures were very easy. However, later various damage events lead to a continuous tightening of regulation elements. This led to a very strict regulatory environment in Germany, which sometimes hinders installations. Now, especially with the technical development of used produces, regulatory barriers could be lowered again. A revision of regulations should include this factor and reflect the gained technical and environmental security.