ISSMGE FOUNDATION
REPORT ON CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

Your Name: LEFEVRE Elise	***Your Organization:*** Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)	***Date of report:*** 22/06/2026
Conference Title: 21st International Conference on Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering – Geotechnical Challenges in a Changing Environment	***Location of Conference:*** Austria Center Vienna, Vienna, Austria	***Dates of Conference:*** 14-19/06/2026

What you learned:

The ICSMGE conference provided valuable insights into both the historical development of geotechnical engineering and the latest advances in the field. The keynote lectures were particularly inspiring, from Sergei Terzaghi's perspective on the legacy of Karl Terzaghi and the foundations of soil mechanics, to Prof. Jean-Louis Briaud's presentation on soil erosion and Prof. Gioacchino Viggiani's lecture on developments in experimental geomechanics.
The parallel and poster sessions allowed me to learn more about current research activities in areas closely related to my PhD. In particular, I gained new insights into:

- Sustainable soil stabilization and ground improvement techniques;
- Alkali-activated materials for geotechnical applications;
- Bio-mediated soil improvement methods, including biocementation;
- The influence of environmental exposure on stabilized soils;
- Recent developments in geo-environmental geotechnics;
- Advances in unsaturated soil behaviour and suction-related processes.

Overall, the conference broadened my understanding of current research trends and provided valuable knowledge directly relevant to my doctoral research.

People you met:

The conference provided valuable networking opportunities and allowed me to interact with both academic researchers and industry professionals. Among the people I met were Sara Rios (University of Porto, Portugal), Nuno Cristelo (University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Portugal) with whom we discussed about our research, but also Rami Chalhoub (Université Grenoble Alpes, France), with whom I exchanged insights on ongoing PhD research and current developments in geotechnical engineering.
I also had the opportunity to discuss with industry professionals, including Paola Viviana Pantoja Arboleda (Jan De Nul), who is involved in the development of offshore wind farm projects and graduated from the same engineering program at ULB a few years before me. These discussions provided valuable perspectives on the links between academic research and engineering practice.
In addition, I had the pleasure of reconnecting with researchers I had previously met, including Leon van Paassen, further strengthening my professional network within the geotechnical community.

Main features of conference:

The ICSMGE is the flagship conference of the ISSMGE and covers the full spectrum of geotechnical engineering. The conference featured keynote, state-of-the-art and invited lectures delivered by leading international experts, addressing both the historical development of soil mechanics and emerging challenges in geotechnical engineering.
The technical program included numerous parallel and poster sessions covering a wide range of topics such as ground improvement, environmental geotechnics, unsaturated soils, laboratory and in-situ testing, sustainability, energy geotechnics, numerical modelling and field monitoring. The conference also provided opportunities for discussion between researchers, practitioners and industry representatives, fostering knowledge exchange across different areas of geotechnical engineering.
A particularly valuable aspect of the conference was the combination of fundamental research, engineering practice and innovative technologies, providing participants with a comprehensive overview of current developments and future directions in the field.

Your comments on the conference:

The ICSMGE conference was exceptionally well organized, especially considering its large scale and the number of participants. The logistics ran smoothly throughout the event, from registration to the management of technical sessions. The availability of a media center where presenters could check and upload their presentations in advance greatly facilitated the organization of the sessions and ensured that presentations proceeded without technical issues.
The conference venue was well suited to hosting such a large international event, providing comfortable spaces for presentations, poster sessions, exhibitions and networking activities. The catering arrangements during breaks and lunch periods were also of high quality and contributed to a pleasant conference experience.
Another particularly valuable aspect was the presence of numerous industrial exhibitors and company booths. These provided an excellent opportunity to discover recent technological developments, innovative equipment and ongoing industry projects, while fostering interactions between academia and professional practice.
Overall, the conference offered an excellent environment for scientific exchange, networking and professional development.

Please attach short report (maximum 400 words) suitable for publication in the ISSMGE Bulletin:

The 21st International Conference on Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering was an outstanding opportunity to engage with the international geotechnical community and learn about the latest developments across the full spectrum of geotechnical engineering. Bringing together researchers, practitioners and industry representatives from around the world, the conference offered a rich technical program combining keynote lectures, parallel sessions, poster presentations and industrial exhibitions.

One of the highlights of the conference was the series of keynote lectures, which provided both historical perspectives and insights into emerging challenges in geotechnical engineering. The presentation by Sergei Terzaghi offered a unique reflection on the legacy of Karl Terzaghi and the evolution of soil mechanics over the past century. The keynote lecture by Prof. Jean-Louis Briaud on soil erosion and the presentation by Prof. Gioacchino Viggiani on advances in experimental geomechanics were particularly inspiring. I also greatly enjoyed the Bishop Lecture delivered by Prof. Federica Cotecchia, who demonstrated how the mechanical behaviour of fine-grained soils can be related to their microstructural features.

The technical sessions covered a wide variety of topics, including sustainable soil stabilization and ground improvement, alkali-activated materials, biocementation, geo-environmental geotechnics, unsaturated soil behaviour, earthquake engineering, physical modelling, underground construction, deep foundations and offshore geotechnics. The Young Engineers sessions were especially interesting as they showcased innovative research carried out by early-career researchers across diverse areas of geotechnical engineering.

Beyond the technical program, the conference provided excellent opportunities for networking and scientific exchange. I had the opportunity to discuss with researchers working on topics closely related to my PhD research, as well as with industry professionals involved in large-scale engineering projects. The informal discussions during coffee breaks, poster sessions and social events allowed me to exchange ideas, broaden my professional network and gain valuable perspectives on future research directions.

I would like to thank the local organizing committee for the excellent organization of the conference and the ISSMGE Foundation for its financial support. Their contribution made my participation possible and allowed me to benefit from an enriching scientific and professional experience that will undoubtedly contribute to my doctoral research and future career in geotechnical engineering.

Photographs from Conference:



