ISSMGE FOUNDATION
REPORT ON VIRTUAL CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

Your Name: Johny Khalifeh	***Your Organization:*** Dar Al-Handasah	***Date of report:*** 30 June 2026
Conference Title: 8th International Young Geotechnical Engineers Conference (8iYGEC 2026)	***Location of Conference:*** Graz University of Technology, Graz, Austria, and Virtual	***Dates of Conference:*** 11–14 June 2026

What you learned:

Participating in the 8th International Young Geotechnical Engineers Conference (8iYGEC) gave me the opportunity to join a global gathering of young engineers nominated by ISSMGE Member Societies. With no single theme set by the organisers, the sessions covered a wide spectrum of modern geotechnical topics: ground improvement, laboratory and field testing, foundations, soil behaviour, and numerical modelling.

Exploring the program and reviewing manuscripts shared by fellow delegates provided me with a clear picture of the challenges my generation of researchers is addressing internationally, as well as the experimental and computational methods being applied. Keynote lectures from senior geotechnical engineers added valuable context, situating these contributions within the broader state of practice.

Preparing and presenting my own work, “Mixing between bentonite grout and pore water during grout propagation,” was itself a significant learning experience. Because the presentation was recorded in advance and made available online, I had to communicate my specialised findings with clarity. My research showed that the intermixing between advancing bentonite grout and in-situ pore water produces a gradual, S-shaped concentration profile rather than the sharp front often assumed in design. Importantly, this behaviour is governed primarily by the soil’s grain-size and pore-size distribution, rather than by grout properties or injection conditions.

People you met:

What I valued most about the conference was that it was designed entirely for young engineers, with each ISSMGE Member Society nominating representatives aged thirty-five or younger. This created a unique environment where participants were all at a similar stage in their careers, yet came from a wide range of countries and backgrounds.

Even though I joined remotely, the organisers provided effective online spaces to connect. A dedicated Discord server allowed us to share manuscripts, ask questions, and discuss our work. Through these exchanges, I was able to build relationships with other early-career researchers and practitioners working on ground improvement and related areas, while also becoming part of the wider ISSMGE Young Members community.

For someone based in Lebanon, the chance to establish these international connections from a distance was especially valuable.

Main features of conference:

The 8th International Young Geotechnical Engineers Conference was hosted by the Institute of Soil Mechanics, Foundation Engineering and Computational Geotechnics at Graz University of Technology, and it ran over three days in the lead-up to the 21st International Conference on Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering in Vienna, which meant that many delegates were able to attend both events. As the official young members' conference of the ISSMGE, it brought together representatives nominated by Member Societies around the world, all of them thirty-five or younger. The organizers chose not to fix a single theme, welcoming contributions on any area of geotechnical engineering, and this gave the program real breadth, with oral presentations from the young delegates arranged into technical sessions alongside keynote lectures from more senior engineers. A highlight of the program was a special session featuring Mr. Sergei Terzaghi, grandson of Karl Terzaghi. The accepted papers were gathered into the conference proceedings and published in the NAWI book series of Graz University of Technology.

The conference was run in a hybrid format, so that people could participate either in Graz or online, and I participated remotely because the current situation in the region made it very difficult to arrange the travel that attending in person would have needed. I understand that several other participants from Lebanon presented their work in the same way.

Your comments on the conference:

Overall, the 8th International Young Geotechnical Engineers Conference was a very well-organised and welcoming event. Even though I participated remotely, the hybrid format ensured that I could present my work with no issues. The organising committee at TU Graz provided clear instructions for submitting my recorded presentation and responded quickly and helpfully whenever I reached out, which made the process smooth and encouraging.

Sharing research carried out in Lebanon with an international audience,

and seeing how it connected to the work of peers tackling similar problems, was a meaningful experience. It strengthened my sense of belonging to the global geotechnical community and helped me understand more clearly how my contribution fits within ongoing developments in the field.

I am sincerely grateful to the ISSMGE Foundation, whose support made it possible for me to take part. At this stage of my career, being able to present at an international conference devoted entirely to young engineers was both motivating and valuable, and I would warmly encourage other young geotechnical engineers to apply.

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

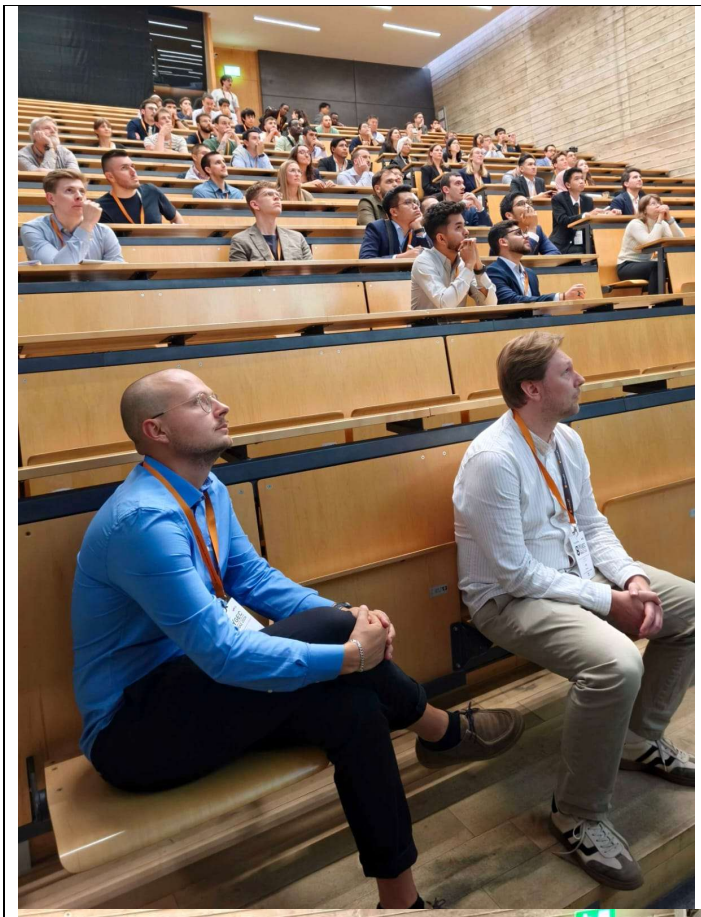
The 8th International Young Geotechnical Engineers Conference was held from 11 to 14 June 2026 at Graz University of Technology in Austria, hosted by its Institute of Soil Mechanics, Foundation Engineering and Computational Geotechnics. It was timed to take place in the days just before the 21st International Conference on Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering in Vienna, so that participants could take part in both, and as the official young members' conference of the ISSMGE it brought together representatives nominated by Member Societies from all over the world, every one of them thirty-five or younger.

Rather than settling on a single theme, the organisers welcomed work on any area of geotechnical engineering, and the result was a program with a wide scope, with presentations from young delegates sitting alongside keynote lectures from more experienced engineers. For a researcher early in their career, it is an unusually supportive setting in which to share a first piece of international work and to start building a network of peers.

My own contribution, which I presented remotely, was a study carried out in Lebanon titled "Mixing between bentonite grout and pore water during grout propagation." Bentonite grouts are widely used to lower the permeability of soils and to improve their resistance to liquefaction, and design normally assumes that the injected grout pushes the pore water ahead of it as a sharp front. What our column experiments show is that the two actually mix, so that the concentration falls away gradually in an S-shaped curve; in practice the treated zone ends up diluted to around 80% of the injected concentration, and the grout reaches roughly 20% farther than the theory predicts. The strength of this effect turns out to depend mainly on the grain-size and pore-size distribution of the soil, rather than on the properties of the grout or the rate at which it is injected.

I am sincerely grateful to the ISSMGE Foundation, whose award made my participation possible. For a young engineer from Lebanon, where taking part in international conferences is not always easy, that support made a real difference, and I would encourage others to apply.

Photographs from Conference:







Virtual Attendee