

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR SOIL MECHANICS AND GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERING



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Report on the activities of technical committee – TC 20

Compte rendu sur les activités de la commission technique N° 20

S.Thorburn – *The International Society for Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering*

ABSTRACT: This report presents the twelve years old history of the international committee (TC20) whose interests and functions relate solely to the professional practice of geotechnical engineering. It refers to the excellent reviews of international practice conducted by the first two committees between 1985 and 1993.

The report presents the decisions taken by the third committee to progress the earlier work in a positive manner by developing a mission statement and defining objectives.

A definition is given of professional practice and a code of conduct is presented for approval by the International Society (ISSMFE).

1 INTRODUCTION

Twelve years have passed since the formation of a committee whose terms of reference related primarily to professional practice. This departure from committees formed to consider and prepare guidance on technical and research matters was unique in the history of the International Society of Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering (ISSMFE). Although the task group is described as a technical committee (TC20), its interests and functions relate solely to the international practice of geotechnical engineering. There is, therefore, no conflict with the scientific and technological aspects of the other technical committees.

The first international committee charged with the task of advancing the practice of geotechnical engineering was formed in 1985, which was the year of the XI ICSMFE held in San Francisco, USA. This international committee, acting under the chairmanship of H P Aldrich, Jr, USA, conducted a review of practice within the member countries of the ISSMFE with the aim of improving the international practice of geotechnical engineering and also the status of the profession.

The second committee (1989-1993), under the chairmanship of P A Green, UK, conducted another, more extensive, review of the practice of geotechnical engineering in the member countries, and this second review followed the style and format of the first review, with the exception that a question on education and training of geotechnical engineers was added to the list of subjects.

Twenty two reports representing the professional practice of geotechnical engineering in twenty seven member countries were prepared by the members of TC20.

The second committee (1989-1993) concluded that:

Geotechnical engineering is now established as a key discipline in civil engineering and is widely recognised as a special area for education, training and practice.

There is a consensus that fee bidding is having a detrimental effect upon professional practice.

With an increasingly commercial market, most countries are reporting a more active stance by firms in the marketing of geotechnical services.

The third international committee appointed by Professor M B Jamiolkowski to serve during his term of office (1993-1997) were given the terms of reference which follow:

1. To promote co-operation and exchange of information among those concerned with the conduct of professional practice in geotechnical engineering.
2. To interact with TC23 on Limit State Design in Geotechnical Engineering in order to explore the influence of EC and of other New Codes on Professional Practice in Geotechnical Engineering.

The third international committee met at the XIth ECSMFE in Copenhagen in May 1995 and considered, among other matters, the terms of reference. The committee decided that there was an urgent requirement for clear general objectives to be defined to enable the work of the committee to progress positively and satisfactorily. The terms of reference were adopted by the committee as specific objectives set within general objectives formulated at the meeting in Copenhagen. A mission statement was developed, together with the aims which follow:

1.1 *Mission Statement*

To provide an International Forum for Geotechnical Engineers engaged in Professional Practice.

1.2 *Aims*

- a) To improve the Professional Practice of geotechnical engineering.
- b) To formulate a Code of Conduct.
- c) To encourage communication between Professional Practitioners on an International basis, leading to a proper understanding and recognition of sound practice within member countries.
- d) To support the continuing education and training of Geotechnical Engineers.
- e) To encourage the development and maintenance of registers within member countries of Geotechnical Engineers who are engaged in Professional Practice.

A difficulty that confronted the third committee was the lack of a definition for professional practice.

Professional practice was defined by the committee as the regular exercising of special skills derived from proper education, training and experience. It seemed evident that, with the rapid progress in technology, there would be a requirement to maintain and advance those special skills.

It was considered important by the committee that those engaged in the professional practice of geotechnical engineering should possess a sense of personal responsibility, and that this level of responsibility meant that individuals should have a code of conduct. Personal integrity; the acquisition of skill, knowledge, and experience; the protection of the interests of clients; and a commitment to equity are timeless professional values.

The third international committee have developed, therefore, a code of conduct and seek the support of the International Society for its adoption by all member countries.

The members of the third international committee (TC20) consider that there is a need for recognition of the advantages of co-operation and communication between the members of the

International Society (ISSMFE). Technological advance is accelerating, and, as member countries develop their industries, commerce, and investment, there will be significant changes in world economies.

Finally, the Third International Committee fulfilled their terms of reference by making major contributions to the success of two international workshops.

The first workshop was held in London in October 1996 at the Institution of Structural Engineers. The subject addressed was the influence on professional practice of Eurocode 7 (Geotechnical Design).

The second workshop was held in New Delhi in January 1997 and addressed issues such as ethics, liability, peer review, registration and the influence of Eurocodes on professional practice.

2 CODE OF CONDUCT

2.1 *Society*

- a) Members shall protect the public interest, particularly in matters of health and safety.
- b) Members shall promote the necessity to defend public interest.
- c) Members shall use their education, professional skill and experience to enhance the quality of life, and protect the environment for future generations.
- d) Members shall defend the precepts by example and by encouraging both membership of the ISSMFE and the adoption of its ethical principles.

2.2 *Professional Practice*

- a) Members shall possess adequate skill and experience for the tasks undertaken.
- b) Members shall accept responsibility for their actions and shall acknowledge the technical contributions by colleagues.
- c) Members shall encourage and participate in continuous professional development and support the training of young geotechnical engineers.
- d) Members shall communicate with each other, as appropriate, in order to disseminate technical knowledge for the benefit of Society.

2.3 *Precepts*

- a) Members shall recognise skill, competence and knowledge without cultural bias and prejudice.
- b) Members shall behave in an equitable manner.
- c) Members shall be honest and impartial.
- d) Members shall act in the best interests of clients and maintain confidentiality.
- e) Members shall make clients aware of technical risks and of the consequences of uncertainties.
- f) Members shall avoid conflicts of interest.