

ISSMGE Council Meeting, Vienna 2026

Appendix: Council Report for Europe

Rapport du Conseil pour l'Europe

Lyesse Laloui

École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), Switzerland

lyesse.laloui@epfl.ch

SUMMARY: This report contains an overview of the state of ISSMGE in Europe and a summary of the main activities in the region since the Council Meeting held in Sydney in May 2022.

1. Member Societies and Membership

Europe is the largest regional constituency within ISSMGE. Our 38 Member Societies, representing 39 countries, together account for approximately 42 per cent of total ISSMGE membership, with around 9,000 individual members across the continent. The Czech and Slovak Republics continue to be represented as a single society. The breadth and diversity of European geotechnical engineering, spanning every geological context from the Arctic to the Mediterranean and from the Atlantic coast to the Caucasus, is a source of genuine richness for the global Society.

The number of Member Societies is unchanged from the 38 recorded at the time of my election at the Sydney Council Meeting in 2022. The full list is given in the table below.

Member Society	Country / Region
Albanian Geotechnical Society	Albania
Austrian Geotechnical Society	Austria
Belorussian Geotechnical Society	Belarus
Groupement Belge de la SIMSG	Belgium
Geotechnical Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bosnia & Herzegovina
Bulgarian Society for SMGE	Bulgaria
Croatian Geotechnical Society	Croatia
Cypriot Society of Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering	Cyprus
Czech and Slovak Committee for SMFE	Czech & Slovak Republics
Danish Geotechnical Society	Denmark
Estonian Geotechnical Society	Estonia
Finnish Geotechnical Society	Finland
Comité Français de la Mécanique des Sols et de Géotechnique	France
Georgian Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering	Georgia
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Geotechnik e.V.	Germany
Hellenic Society of SMGE	Greece
Hungarian Geotechnical Society	Hungary
The Icelandic Geotechnical Society	Iceland
Geotechnical Society of Ireland	Ireland
Israel Geotechnical Society	Israel
Associazione Geotecnica Italiana	Italy

Member Society	Country / Region
Latvian Geotechnical Society	Latvia
Lithuanian Geotechnical Society	Lithuania
Netherlands Society for SMGE	Netherlands
Macedonian Association for Geotechnics	North Macedonia
Norwegian Geotechnical Society	Norway
Polish Geotechnical Society	Poland
Sociedade Portuguesa de Geotecnia	Portugal
Romanian Society for SMGE	Romania
Russian Society for Soil Mechanics, Geotechnics and Foundation Engineering	Russia
Serbian Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering	Serbia
Slovenian Geotechnical Society	Slovenia
Sociedad Española de Mecánica del Suelo e Ingeniería Geotécnica	Spain
Swedish Geotechnical Society	Sweden
Swiss Geotechnical Society – Geotechnik Schweiz	Switzerland
Turkish Society for ISSMGE	Turkey
Ukrainian Society for Soil Mechanics, Geotechnics and Foundation Engineering	Ukraine
British Geotechnical Association	United Kingdom

2. European Regional Conferences

2.1 XVIII ECSMGE, Lisbon 2024

The XVIII European Conference on Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering, held in Lisbon, Portugal, from 26 to 30 August 2024, was the defining event of my term and, I believe, a landmark in the history of the European conference series. Organised by the Sociedade Portuguesa de Geotecnia under the theme ‘Challenges of Geotechnical Engineering to Meet Current and Emerging Society Needs’, it brought together the European and global geotechnical community at its most vibrant.

The conference attracted 1,256 registered delegates from 73 countries, with 676 papers from 60 countries in the proceedings. The scientific programme comprised six Keynote Lectures, twelve State-of-the-Art Lectures, four Forum contributions and two Honorary Lectures, with 536 papers across 48 discussion sessions and 12 poster sessions. Ten specialist workshops were held alongside the main programme, and 77 exhibitors participated in the technical exhibition. By any measure, this was one of the most internationally diverse and well-attended editions of the European conference in its history.

I served as Chair of the Advisory Committee, delivered an address at the Opening Ceremony, and contributed a Keynote Lecture to the scientific programme. It was a privilege to see the European geotechnical community gather with such energy and purpose. The success of the Lisbon conference is above all a tribute to the Sociedade Portuguesa de Geotecnia and to the entire organising committee, for which I record the Society’s warmest appreciation.

2.2 XIX ECSMGE, Istanbul 2028

At the Closing Ceremony of the XVIII ECSMGE, following the vote at the 4th European National Assembly, I was delighted to announce that the XIX European Conference on Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering will be held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 20 to 25 August 2028, organised by the Turkish Society for ISSMGE. The selection followed a competitive process in which strong

candidacies were presented by both Italy and Turkey. Istanbul is a city of extraordinary historical depth and geological significance, and I have every confidence that the Turkish Geotechnical Society will deliver a conference of the highest quality. The whole European geotechnical community can look forward to 2028 with genuine anticipation.

3. European National Assemblies

One of the initiatives I am most proud of from this term is the creation of the European National Assembly series. Before 2022, there was no regular, dedicated forum in which representatives of all 38 European Member Societies could meet and speak together between quadrennial conferences. I established this series to address that gap directly, and five assemblies were held during the term:

- 23 November 2022, Lausanne, Switzerland (1st Assembly). The inaugural assembly, held at Bois Chamblard in hybrid mode, introduced my strategic plan and the five pillars for the 2022–2026 term. The quality of engagement from member society representatives across the continent from that very first meeting was enormously encouraging.
- 6 September 2023, Lausanne, Switzerland (2nd Assembly). A working session reviewing progress on the strategic plan.
- 12 March 2024, London, United Kingdom (3rd Assembly and Workshop). Attended by 41 delegates representing 27 national societies, this was the assembly that demonstrated most clearly the growing appetite within the European membership for this kind of structured, regular dialogue.
- 27 August 2024, Lisbon, Portugal (4th Assembly). Held during the XVIII ECSMGE, the assembly included the vote on the host city for the XIX ECSMGE, at which Istanbul was selected.
- 23 January 2025, Skopje, North Macedonia (5th Assembly). The assembly included a dedicated session on the implementation of the second generation of Eurocode 7, which drew strong engagement from member society representatives across the region.

The decision to hold the fifth assembly in Skopje was deliberate and, I believe, important. European geotechnics is not a western European phenomenon. It encompasses societies of every size and resource level, across a vast and diverse continent, and I wanted the assembly series to reflect that reality from the outset. The Macedonian Association for Geotechnics was a generous and accomplished host, the Skopje assembly was among the most substantive and engaged of the entire series, and I hope future Vice Presidents will be similarly ambitious about where they take the format.

4. Other International Conferences in Europe

In addition to the XVIII ECSMGE and the events described elsewhere in this report, a number of ISSMGE-sponsored international conferences were held in Europe during my term, organised or supported by Technical Committees and Member Societies. Among those confirmed are the following:

- 10th European Conference on Numerical Methods in Geotechnical Engineering (NUMGE 2023). Imperial College London, United Kingdom, 26–28 June 2023.
- 17th Danube–European Conference on Geotechnical Engineering. Bucharest, Romania, 7–9 June 2023 (*)
- 3rd International Symposium on Energy Geotechnics (SEG23). Delft, Netherlands, 2023.
- 5th Environmental Geotechnology, Recycled Waste Materials, and Sustainable Engineering. Warsaw, Poland, 3-6 July, 2024 (*)

- Nordic Geotechnical Meeting (NGM 2024). Göteborg, Sweden, 18–20 September 2024 (*)
- 3rd International Conference on Energy Geotechnics (ICEGT). Paris, France, 17-20 June 2025 (*)
- 5th European Conference on Unsaturated Soils and Biotechnology in Geotechnical Engineering. Lisbon, Portugal, 1-3 September 2025 (*)
- 29th European Young Geotechnical Engineers Conference. Rijeka, Croatia, 9–12 September 2025.
- 1st International Conference on Observational Method. London, United Kingdom, 17 March 2026.

Conferences marked with an asterisk (*) were attended by the Vice President for Europe.

5. Young Geotechnical Engineers

The European Young Geotechnical Engineers Conference is one of the great traditions of our community, an annual gathering that has given generations of early-career engineers the opportunity to present their work, to build lasting professional friendships, and to feel part of something larger than their own national community. I am delighted to report that the series remained active and well-supported throughout my term.

The 28th EYGEC was held at Popova Kula, North Macedonia, from 25 to 29 June 2024, organised by the Macedonian Association for Geotechnics. The continuity of the series at this point in the term owed much to the wider solidarity of the European membership. The 28th conference had originally been planned for Moscow, and when the sanctions environment made international travel and financial transactions there impossible, it was the Macedonian Association for Geotechnics that stepped forward to ensure the conference went ahead. "That willingness to act, at short notice and in difficult circumstances, is exactly the spirit that makes the European geotechnical community what it is, and it was a privilege to witness it firsthand when I attended the conference in Popova Kula."

The same spirit was shown by the Croatian Geotechnical Society when it came forward to host the 29th EYGEC. The conference had originally been allocated to Bulgaria, but when circumstances made it impossible for the Bulgarian Society to proceed at that time, Croatia stepped in at short notice to ensure the series continued without interruption. That kind of solidarity, where a society volunteers to take on a significant organisational undertaking at late notice out of commitment to the broader community, deserves to be recognised explicitly. The 29th EYGEC was held in Rijeka from 9 to 12 September 2025, at the Faculty of Civil Engineering, University of Rijeka, with proceedings subsequently published. I addressed the opening of the conference online. I record my deep appreciation to both the Macedonian Association for Geotechnics and the Croatian Geotechnical Society for their exceptional commitment to the next generation of European geotechnical engineers. It is fitting that the Bulgarian Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering will now host the 30th EYGEC in Sofia in 2027, completing a chapter that reflects the best of what this community is capable of.

6. Sub-Regional Conferences

6.1 Danube–European Conference on Geotechnical Engineering

The 17th Danube–European Conference on Geotechnical Engineering was held in Bucharest, Romania, from 7 to 9 June 2023, organised by the Romanian Society for Geotechnical and Foundation Engineering. I attended in my capacity as Vice President. The Danube conference series is a valued and distinctive tradition within European geotechnics, bringing together the geotechnical communities of central and south-eastern Europe with a depth and focus that reflects the particular geological and engineering challenges of the region. The 18th Conference is planned for Budapest, Hungary, from 9 to 12 June 2027.

6.2 Nordic Geotechnical Meeting

The Nordic Geotechnical Meeting 2024 was held in Göteborg, Sweden, from 18 to 20 September 2024, organised by the Swedish Geotechnical Society. I attended in my capacity as Vice President. The Nordic Geotechnical Meetings have been held regularly since 1950 and are among the most enduring and distinguished of European geotechnical traditions, a testament to the long-standing collaborative culture of the Nordic geotechnical schools.

7. Communications and Regional Engagement

At the start of my term, the European region had no dedicated communications infrastructure of its own. I regarded this as a significant gap and addressed it as an early priority. A dedicated regional website was established at <https://issmge-e.eu>, available in 22 languages and now attracting more than 3,000 visitors per month. A LinkedIn presence for ISSMGE Europe was also created, extending our reach into the professional networks where a large and growing proportion of European geotechnical engineers are active.

Eight editions of the ISSMGE Europe newsletter were published during the term: Summer 2023, a Special Edition 2023 produced in connection with the XVIII ECSMGE, Spring 2024, Spring 2025, April 2025, Summer 2025, Autumn 2025, and Winter 2025. Distributed through the national member societies, the newsletters provide a regular connection between the European regional office and the wider membership. The acceleration in publication cadence (four editions in 2025 alone) reflects the growing ambition and confidence of the communications programme. All editions are archived and accessible via the regional website.

I believe that visibility matters. A community that cannot communicate about itself cannot advocate for itself, cannot inspire the next generation, and cannot demonstrate its value to those outside it. The infrastructure built during this term is a foundation on which successive Vice Presidents can continue to build, and I hope they will.

8. General Remarks

I have had the privilege of serving as Vice President for Europe during what I believe has been an exceptionally productive and energising period for the European geotechnical community. Looking back across the four years, I am struck above all by the vitality and commitment I have encountered at every level of the European membership: in the major conferences, in the national assemblies, in the sub-regional meetings, and in personal conversations with society officers and members across the continent.

European geotechnics is a community that deserves to be better known and more confidently celebrated, including by itself. Our 38 Member Societies represent a formidable collective resource: decades of accumulated experience in some of the world's most demanding geotechnical environments, a tradition of rigorous education and research, and a capacity for practical innovation that is second to none. The XVIII ECSMGE in Lisbon, which drew more than 1,250 delegates from 73 countries, was a vivid demonstration of what that community looks like at its best.

When I presented the strategic plan at the inaugural National Assembly in November 2022, it was organised around five pillars: industry engagement; connecting with the Mediterranean and Middle East; innovation and technology transfer; communications; and research and continuing education. Reviewing that plan honestly, the communications pillar has been substantially delivered: the website, the LinkedIn presence, and the newsletter programme are real and lasting infrastructure. The research and education pillar has been served through support for the EYGEC series and through the Eurocode 7 session at Skopje. Industry engagement, particularly the relationship with the European Federation of

Foundation Contractors, remains a programme in development, and I would encourage the incoming Vice President to continue building those bridges.

The National Assembly series is the structural contribution of this term I hope will prove most durable. That forum now exists, has met five times, has travelled from Lausanne to Skopje, and has created habits of dialogue and mutual knowledge among the European member societies that did not exist four years ago. I hope successive Vice Presidents will sustain and deepen it.

The term had its difficulties. The sanctions environment that developed from early 2022 made it impossible to proceed with the 28th EYGEC in Moscow: international travel and financial transactions were simply not viable. That the conference took place at all, and took place well in North Macedonia, is a tribute to the adaptability and solidarity of the European geotechnical community. I am deeply grateful to the Macedonian Association for Geotechnics for stepping forward, and equally to the Croatian Geotechnical Society for hosting the 29th EYGEC in Rijeka.

European geotechnics also punches above its weight on the world stage. Our researchers and practitioners are present and influential across the full breadth of ISSMGE's Technical Committee work, and the second generation of Eurocode 7, whose implementation has been a live and demanding process throughout this term, is a contribution to global standardisation of practice that will endure for decades. These are reasons for genuine pride, and I believe the European geotechnical community should say so more loudly.

I am grateful to all 38 Member Societies for their engagement and their trust. And I am grateful to the European geotechnical community as a whole for the welcome and the generosity it has shown me throughout these four years. It has been, genuinely, a privilege.

Looking ahead, European geotechnics has every reason for confidence. The XIX ECSMGE in Istanbul in 2028 gives the community a shared horizon to work towards, and I am certain it will be a worthy successor to Lisbon. The discipline is addressing questions that matter: climate adaptation, energy transition, sustainable infrastructure, and the resilience of the built environment. These are the great engineering challenges of our time, and European geotechnical engineers are at the forefront of meeting them.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome my successor as Vice President for Europe. I am certain that the European geotechnical community will give my successor the same warmth and support that I have been fortunate to experience, and I look forward to following the continued progress of this exceptional region.

Lyesse Laloui

Vice President for Europe, ISSMGE

Vienna, 2026