

A Short Memoir by the Swiss National Group Chair, Dr. Philippe Menétrey



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When I took over the presidency of the Swiss Group of IABSE in 2014, the Association was under pressure. On one hand, there was the preparation of the 2015 Geneva conference with visions on new methods to hold conferences, to stimulate dialogues and exchanges. On the other hand, there was the departure of the executive director, which led to some uncertainties temporarily.

The best way that I could react during this period, as Chair of the Swiss Group, was to actively participate in the international events of IABSE to find the most appropriate reactions.

On the other hand, we also started organising visits to construction sites and completed projects in and around Switzerland, along with the engineers of the projects, as a learning expedition for our members and participants.

So, in 2015, the Swiss group visited the construction of the plant of Nant de Drance in Valais, the rehabilitation of



Swiss NG's field trip to the Palazzo del Lavoro in Torino, from Pier Luigi Nervi

the Chillon Viaduct by Jean-Claude Piguet, and the A9 viaduct. In 2016, one single day in the canton of Grisons allowed us to visit the Punt Val Mulinau, Zvrugiabücke Zignau, Vorderrheinbrücke Danis, Rheinbrücke Tavanasa with the explanations of Jürg Conzett, the Rheinbrücke Illanz West, the Lavoitobelbrücke, the Rheinbrücke Reichenau and the Rheinbrücke Tamins, with a vibrant speech by Professor Christian Menn. The same year and for the first time ever, the Swiss

group went to Germany to visit the Hochmoselbrücke construction site.

Then, in 2017, visits to the Lemman region was organized with the CEVA stations, the movable walkway of the Jet d'eau pier, the Sicli pavilion by Heinz Isler, my house, the rehabilitation of the Paudèze bridges, and the bridges over the Flon and the Artlab EPFL. In 2018, the group went to the Italian part of Switzerland to see the Viadotto Lugano-Bellinzona for Alp-Transit, the Calancasca arch bridge by Christian Menn and the Calancasca Selma bridge. In 2019, multiple ancient timber bridges in the Toggenburg were visited, as well as the bridge under construction over the Thur.

Thereafter, during the pandemic, visits took a pause, which we picked up again in 2022 with a two-day visit in Torino to see the Fiat Lingotto factory, the Palazzo del Lavoro, and the Automobile Museum by Pier Luigi Nervi.

Despite a very interesting program, these visits attracted only a few



2015, IABSE's Geneva Conference; and 2019 New York Annual National Groups Meeting



YES (Young Engineers Symposium 2018) in Luzern, with A.Frangi, D.Zwicky, E.Brühwiler, and others

participants, which could seem somewhat disappointing. Nevertheless, when surveying the participants after every visit, all were convinced of the value and relevance of such visits. I can only recommend carrying on with these visits since there is still so much to discover.

The Swiss group of the IABSE took care of the next generation by organizing the YES conferences in 2016, 2018 and this year in October, 2022. It also tackled the task of obtaining recognition for its masters, by preparing Jürg Conzett's application for the « IABSE International Award of Merit in Structural Engineering », which he was awarded in 2021.

After all these years, as the Chair of the Swiss group of IABSE, I remain convinced of the important role that the Association plays in creating links between universities and practicing engineers. Today, universities are

becoming very theoretical, and are drifting away from the practice of the profession that is structural and construction engineering. The students confirm this phenomenon, and the success of the mandatory internships are direct proof of it. Thus, it is with a message of encouragement that I recommend carrying on the activities of the IABSE with conferences, IABSE Commissions and Task Groups (TGs), publications, and site visits, which contributes in improving our understanding and designing capabilities, thereby upgrading our role from structural engineers to structural design engineers.

After these "short memories" and these years of Chairmanship of the Swiss Group of IABSE, I would like to conclude with a message of encouragement by realizing how the human spirit can transcend times, and how it drives us to evolve. In the last six years, the unthinkable happened,

crucial technological changes happened with the development of the applications of UHPFRC when in 2015 it was only a "breakthrough technology" and BIM was very scarcely used; changes on the global health plane with the appearance of the pandemic and its restrictions such as remote working and finally changes in the supply of resources with the energy and raw material shortages linked to the war in Ukraine. And despite everything, the human spirit evolves, adapts, and finds solutions, this challenge must accompany and help IABSE and all members grow in their respective professional as well as personal lives. And last but not least, I would like also to thank all members of the Swiss National Group and IABSE Secretariat for their support during this period

Philippe Menétrey

Chair, Swiss National Group (2015-2022)



Swiss Group visiting a construction site 10 mai 2019 in Toggenburg, Switzerland (left) on 27 October, 2021 in Zug, Switzerland (right)