

Interview with Dr Mateus Wyrzykowski, Empa, Switzerland

Dr Mateusz Wyrzykowski is a Group Leader "Concrete Technology" in the "Concrete and Asphalt Laboratory" of Empa, Switzerland. His research is devoted to sustainable concrete, concrete with reduced emissions (negative emission technologies), volume stability and cracking of concrete. Dr Wyrzykowski officially joined RILEM in 2006. He has been Associate Editor of [Materials and Structures](#) since 2021, and Managing Editor of *Materials and Structures* (2015 – 2019) and [RILEM Technical Letters](#) (2015 – 2023). He was Deputy Chair of RILEM Technical Committee (TC) [260-RSC Recommendations for use of superabsorbent polymers in concrete construction](#) between 2014 and 2021, and he has been a member of several RILEM TCs. [Dr Wyrzykowski became RILEM fellow in 2025](#). In March 2025, he succeeded Prof. Alexandra Bertron as **Editor-in-Chief of RILEM Technical Letters**. This interview is an opportunity to reflect upon the OPEN ACCESS journal of RILEM.



21 October 2025

RILEM Implementation Manager (RIM): Good morning, Mateusz! How is life going in your new role of Editor-in-Chief of *RILEM Technical Letters*? Is it keeping you busy?

Dr Mateusz Wyrzykowski (Mateusz): Good morning, Daniela! Well, it is keeping me busy, of course! But the good thing about it is that I cannot say “it’s a surprise”, because I’ve been involved in this journal for eight years, initially supporting Nicolas (*Editor’s note: Dr Nicolas Roussel, founding Editor-in-Chief of RILEM Technical Letters*) in my role as Managing Editor, and then Alexandra (*Editor’s note: Prof. Alexandra Bertron, former Editor-in-Chief of RILEM Technical Letters*). So... I knew what to expect. Besides, I knew that the journal was handed over to me in an excellent condition. Having said that, still, when you start, there are always new things that you notice and that you have to learn, but I feel myself well in this role and I think it’s going very well now.

RIM: Are you happy with the team of people supporting you?

Mateusz: Yes! I’m very happy with the support of Luiza (*Editor’s note: Dr Luiza Miranda, Managing Editor of RILEM Technical Letters*), and also, of course, I’m very happy to work with the Associate Editors because some of them, many of them actually, have been with the journal since the very start. When I asked them if they would have liked to continue with me in this role, I must say, I was a little bit worried: it would have been completely fair of them to say “We’ve been doing it for eight years, and now we want to make space for new people”. The happier I was when I received so many positive responses expressing the readiness to stay and continue serving the community as editors of this journal. I think we have now a very versatile and extremely competent [editorial team](#).

RIM: For the readers of this interview that are not familiar with *RILEM Technical Letters*, would you like to say a little bit about this journal?

Mateusz: *RILEM Technical Letters* is a very special outlet starting from its open access feature. Nowadays, it’s pretty common to have open access publications. As we were starting in 2016, it was still not the case. Open access was still a very new ground in our field. And this was one of the reasons why RILEM wanted to start this journal at that time as open access: to experiment, but also to offer this novel opportunity to its members. What makes this journal even more special is its format of “letters”: these are not regular research papers. We have every now and then research papers, but most of them are

short letters that present a very specific point of view, a personal scientific opinion of a researcher, or a team of researchers. They identify new topics, or still open questions and research needs in the field. This is what makes it very special because there is no such dedicated journal in the field that would allow for something like that. We receive feedback from the readers, in particular from the practitioners, that such condensed format, and freely accessible too, is very well received in the field.

Together with this comes the idea that the journal publishes on invitation only, with authors coming from RILEM; not all authors, but at least one of the authors of a publication needs to be a RILEM member. This has to do with the fact that the full costs of publication are sponsored by RILEM according to the Diamond Open Access framework. This initiative enables members to publish for free — a way for the association to recognize and highlight their contributions. This, again, is something exceptional in our field.

RIM: You said that these letters are most of the time representing the opinion of a researcher or a group of researchers. Would you also say that the letters reflect the opinion of RILEM?

Mateusz: No, not necessarily. In order to guarantee scientific independence and freedom, our [editorial policy](#) states specifically that the letters represent the point of view of the authors, and not of their institutions nor of RILEM.

RIM: How does a paper submission work?

Mateusz: One person cannot just go to the web page and submit a paper, for we publish based on invitations. Hence, most of the potential topics are identified by the editors, and the prospective authors get the invitation. But what we additionally offer to the RILEM members, if they themselves identify a topic that they would like to present, is to feel free to contact us and send us an abstract. In fact, we very much rely on the initiative of the RILEM community in this regard. If we find a proposed topic within the scope of the journal, we are happy to invite it: so formally it is still an invitation, but again, we are open to getting proposals for such letters directly from the authors.

RIM: Let's talk about the "special letters" of the journal: the letters of opening and closing TCs, the Colonnetti medallists' papers, and the regional papers!

Mateusz: Yes, that's very interesting! The idea is that when TCs are formed and when they are closed, they have a potential outlet for sharing a short summary of all the motivations and outcomes, respectively, of such TC. This is a new format that we started recently, and it is going very well. The TCs have many ways of publishing their work, for example, in *Materials and Structures*, where they present their reports on inter-laboratory studies or on classical research studies. Then the whole compendium of what a TC does is typically published in a State-of-the-Art Report (STAR) by Springer. What was missing was a platform to give a concise summary of the often very wide range of topics tackled by a TC. There is the STAR book that offers the whole overview of all the work, but now there's also a short summary, very streamlined and scientifically sharp – it can be especially useful to researchers and industrial practitioners outside the RILEM community.

RIM: What about the regional papers?

Mateusz: This has been a very successful format! It started in 2020, and by now there have been five papers: one for Africa, Latin America and Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, Europe, and then North America. These regional papers are typically written by a group of authors: we want to offer a platform where people even with different points of view can come together and work on something that is universal for the whole region. We still have couple of regional papers in our publishing plan...

RIM: I understand you are launching a new type of “special letter”...

Mateus: Yes! It is a kind of summary of conferences. I believe it's a new format that we have not seen yet in the field, not in my time anyway. The idea would be that the chair of the scientific committee, or a group of delegates, write about the research highlights or an outcome of discussions, from a conference. This could be also done by the keynote speakers because keynote papers are very often not in the proceedings, and anyway, what is very interesting sometimes is the discussion that accompanies the keynote lectures. In the conference proceedings alone, this usually goes missing - we want to establish a new platform to preserve these scientifically important insights. So, I believe *RILEM Technical Letters*, with its agility and open eyes to new trends in publishing, is the right outlet for such discussions to happen.

RIM: What is your view about what is happening at the moment with the use of artificial intelligence to write a paper, to create non-existing citations, to manipulate citations, etc?

Mateusz: Well... this does not come as a surprise. I am not excusing this, of course! But I see it as a result of an increasing pressure on researchers and institutions to publish. It is way beyond this saying “publish or perish”. Now it's “publish a lot and publish in the best journals and publish fast, tomorrow already”! The number of submissions in virtually all fields is increasing significantly! If the number is increasing, then probably all these misconduct cases will be more visible also. But I must say we have been very fortunate till now, and I hope for longer as well, because, as I mentioned, we work with authors that are the most regarded experts in our field, the active RILEM members. They understand the challenges in scientific publishing and exhibit highest ethical standards. This is the first line of defence against misconduct in the scientific publishing. But having said that, we still have, of course, policies in place and a very diligent team of editors. In addition to this, what makes us well prepared to deal with such cases is the fact that we don't have financial interest in publishing. We work for the society, for RILEM Association – this makes us also a little bit better secured from such cases of misconduct. I really would like to remind the readers about the role of RILEM in sponsoring *RILEM Technical Letters*: it is the Association basically defining the high standards. This is not universally the case, especially not in the building materials field.

RIM: What is the ideal paper letter that you would love to receive?

Mateusz: So... sometimes we receive proposals of regular research papers that I see are very good. Yet we say “No, thank you. Please just submit it to a regular journal, like *Materials and Structures*, for example”. This is because we are not usually publishing regular research papers, we rather aim at the letter format. So, it always hurts me somehow to say “This is a very good paper, but please not for us”.

The ones that I would still love to see... well, I am seeing them regularly and this is something extremely rewarding, I must say! This is what I'm learning only since I started this role of Editor-in-Chief: it is extremely inspiring when people get in touch with the journal, either via the Associated Editors or directly with me, and proposing a topic that is new and many people don't know about it, or there's still confusion in the field, and they want to publish about it. This is the best format I can dream of! Probably the most interesting submission would be to publish something very controversial, to have experts that on the scientific level are on completely opposite sides of a barricade, coming together and writing a paper. This would be something most desired, in my opinion, because it could launch, or provoke if you will, entirely new scientific and technological breakthroughs.

I would also like to hear back more often from the RILEM members from the industry sector. We published a couple of good letters from them in the past, and I encourage more to come. These could

be very good papers that have this industrial touch, in a sense that they might show what is relevant and what is not.

RIM: It has been very rewarding to chat with you today, Mateusz. Thank you so much for your time!

Mateusz: My pleasure!