



Interview with
Dr Branko Šavija
TU Delft, The Netherlands
2020 Colonnetti medallist

This interview took place after Dr Šavija's presentation at the RSCC2020, Portugal, on Wed 11 March 2020. The video of this presentation, titled "Testing techniques and numerical models for understanding and development of cementitious materials", is temporarily available [here](#). The edited video will soon become available on the [YouTube RILEM channel](#).

RILEM Implementation Manager (RIM): When and how did you become a RILEM member?

Dr Šavija: I started my PhD in 2010 and in 2011 I followed the RILEM EAC course on "Concrete Microscopy" organised by my research group (cfr. Materials and Environment, Faculty of Civil Engineering and Geosciences of Delft University of Technology). After the course, I received a 3-year free RILEM membership and this is how I started to get interested and involved in the RILEM activities. I also attended some other RILEM events, like conferences and seminars, but I only joined a RILEM Technical Committee (TC) two years ago for the first time.

RIM: ... after the completion of your PhD, correct?

Dr Šavija: Yes, correct!

RIM: Why you didn't join a TC earlier?

Dr Šavija: I do not know... somehow I thought that it was for more experienced people but I regret now the fact that I didn't join earlier. I think joining a TC is a very useful experience for a young researcher.

RIM: I know what you mean... I received the same feedback from other PhD students. RILEM is trying to divulge the message as much as possible that PhD students are very welcome to join a RILEM TC.

Dr Šavija: Well, when I was a PhD student I shared my office with a colleague that was also a PhD student but he was a TC member already then! I think that it was very beneficial for him. I think it was more my fault as I did not feel comfortable with joining a TC.

RIM: Are you supervising any PhD student now? If yes, would you encourage them to become RILEM members?

Dr Šavija: I am currently supervising PhD students, yes! All of them are RILEM members and some are TC members. I definitively support them to do so as it is very useful. It is actually more useful for PhD students than any other TC member because being part of a RILEM TC puts you in contact with



people that can help your career, they can even recommend you for a position after your doctoral studies!

RIM: Has being a member of a RILEM TC helped your career?

Dr Šavija: Definitely! And it makes me think that in the next future I can be a TC chair!

RIM: Why did you apply for the Colonnetti medal?

Dr Šavija: My supervisor suggested that I could apply and so I did. I also personally know some of the medallists of previous years and they are all very happy with the recognition that comes with this medal.

RIM: Did you expect to win?

Dr Šavija: Not really. You never know how many people will apply and there are so many good researchers. It was my last opportunity to apply due to age limit so I was hoping to receive the award but not confident to get it!

RIM: One of RILEM's goals is to promote sustainable and safe construction and to do so it is important to reach those who will implement and put in practise the research carried out by the RILEM TCs. I read your CV and I understand you had some experience as engineering consultant between your postdoc and your position as Assistant Professor. Would you mind to share your opinion about the relationship between RILEM and the industrial sector?

Dr Šavija: As an engineering consultant I worked for a research institution (cfr. TNO, The Netherlands). Some of my colleagues were actively involved with RILEM. From my personal experience, I think that only senior people from the industry are connected to RILEM while in the academic world also less experienced people, i.e. PhD students, are connected. That said, RILEM has the position to build a bridge between industry and research.

RIM: Are you disappointed with the way the Colonnetti ceremony happened in Guimaraes? I refer to the fact that you, like many others, presented your work in remote mode from The Netherlands and that there was not a medal physically presented to you.

Dr Šavija: Actually I was very pleasantly surprised that the organisers managed to organise everything so functionally in such a short notice. I was nervous about travelling to Guimaraes because of the current situation. I received an email on Monday from the organisers and two days later, on Wed, everything worked ok. I think this shows us possibilities for the future. Without any doubt, it is better after your talk to discuss in person your research with the other conference delegates, but the RSCC2020 organisers did a very good job. I am not disappointed! We should all applaud them for what they did in such a short notice.