



# SolidStandards

Enhancing the implementation of quality and sustainability standards and certification schemes for solid biofuels (EIE/11/218)



**D6.2**  
**Activity report on general feedback collection**



## The SolidStandards project

The SolidStandards project addresses ongoing and recent developments related to solid biofuel quality and sustainability issues, in particular the development of related standards and certification systems. In the SolidStandards project, solid biofuel industry players will be informed and trained in the field of standards and certification and their feedback will be collected and provided to the related standardization committees and policy makers.

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## About this document

This document is **Deliverable 6.2** of the SolidStandards project. It is Activity report on general feedback collection. This document was prepared in **March 2014** by:

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The logo for NEN (Netherlands Standardization Institute), consisting of the letters 'NEN' in a bold, sans-serif font inside a light blue rectangular box.

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## Foreword

This recommendation paper on “Standard development for solid biofuel storage” is developed as part of the Intelligent Energy Europe funded project, SolidStandards ([www.solidstandards.eu](http://www.solidstandards.eu)).

The SolidStandards project addresses the development of standards and certification systems for the quality and sustainability of solid biofuels. Ensuring both the quality and the sustainability of solid biofuels is critical for the further development of markets for solid biomass. These issues are being addressed through the on-going development of standards at CEN and ISO level, and the introduction of various voluntary certification systems. The SolidStandards project aims at enhancing the uptake of standards within the industry by providing training on standards implementation to solid biofuel producers across Europe. Furthermore, the project aims at providing input to on-going standardisation processes and policy decisions by gathering and providing industry feedback to standardisation committees and decision makers.

This short report, deliverable 6.2 ‘Industry feedback collection’, reflects on feedback collection activities as part of the SolidStandards Project (2012-2014) and some results are published that can be used for other project purposes as well.

In a broader approach, feedback was collected from a larger number of industrial players from all over Europe. Feedback was collected through a couple of instruments.

- Chapter 1 describes the questionnaire/online tool
- Chapter 2 describes the online discussion platform
- Chapter 3 describes some results
- Annex 1 consists of suggestions for improvement/useful experiences.

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## 1. Questionnaire/online tool

NEN has developed a questionnaire, together with the project partners. During the development of the questionnaire, pre-selected stakeholders were consulted. This eventually lead to a final version of the questionnaire.

A general overview of the types of questions in the questionnaire can be found below. The questionnaire was designed in order to gain insight the national industry (of 10 pre-selected European countries) and also in the types of biomass used in each specific country. The opinion and experiences of practioners with standards and certification is also included. They were enabled to give (specific) comments about the standards. Furthermore the question was asked if practioners already use solid biofuel standards (and if so, which ones) and/or which standards practioners intend to use in the future.

A remark must be made that a distinction was made between questions about the *technical quality* of biomass and the *sustainability aspects* of biomass. Some questions were very technically oriented and aimed at collecting needs and demands of specific (parts of) standards that need to be improved. The questionnaire also contained questions about storage and transport (and other, new, needs for standardization). Questions about certification were included as well, as well as biomass type specific questions.

Finally, the questionnaires contained questions about the (quality) of the training event according to the participants.

The lay-out of the questionnaire can be found below.

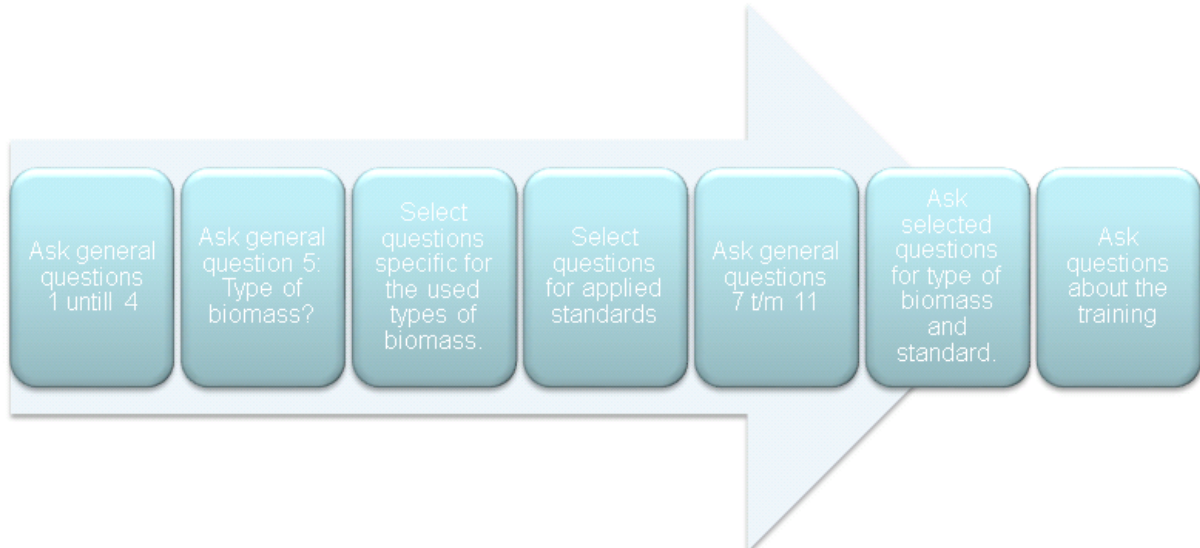


Figure 1: Lay-out of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was embedded in the project website as an online tool. The SolidStandards project partners decided to use the internet application 'Questback'. It was also possible to use a print-out and to send it to the SolidStandards project/NEN (who then processes it into Questback).

Respondents (454 in total) came were from all (10) countries involved in the Solid Standards project, and Italy. Some questionnaires were filled in by 'foreign' training participants. These participants came from the following countries: Sweden, Estonia, Russia, United Kingdom,

France, Norway, Latvia, Cameroon and Belgium. The table below shows the respondents' countries and to which target group they belong.

| Country         | Producers  | Traders   | End users | Others     | Total      |
|-----------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Austria         | 4          | 4         | 3         | 11         | <b>22</b>  |
| Belgium         | 0          | 0         | 0         | 1          | <b>1</b>   |
| Bulgaria        | 2          | 2         | 0         | 0          | <b>4</b>   |
| Croatia         | 8          | 4         | 3         | 3          | <b>18</b>  |
| Czech Republic  | 2          | 1         | 0         | 1          | <b>4</b>   |
| Denmark         | 4          | 16        | 6         | 11         | <b>37</b>  |
| Estonia         | 1          | 0         | 0         | 0          | <b>1</b>   |
| Finland         | 10         | 2         | 30        | 47         | <b>89</b>  |
| Greece          | 0          | 0         | 0         | 1          | <b>1</b>   |
| Germany         | 19         | 26        | 12        | 2          | <b>59</b>  |
| Italy           | 13         | 0         | 13        | 11         | <b>37</b>  |
| Ireland         | 0          | 0         | 0         | 1          | <b>1</b>   |
| Kamerun         | 0          | 0         | 0         | 2          | <b>2</b>   |
| Lithuania       | 26         | 19        | 7         | 22         | <b>74</b>  |
| The Netherlands | 4          | 0         | 1         | 25         | <b>30</b>  |
| Poland          | 17         | 9         | 9         | 10         | <b>45</b>  |
| Slovakia        | 0          | 0         | 0         | 2          | <b>2</b>   |
| Sweden          | 0          | 0         | 0         | 1          | <b>1</b>   |
| Other           | 1          | 0         | 1         | 24         | <b>26</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>111</b> | <b>83</b> | <b>85</b> | <b>175</b> | <b>454</b> |

The online tool was promoted in various ways. Almost all questionnaires were filled in by training participants. Just a couple of questionnaires were filled in by people who did not attend the training sessions. It appeared that (representatives of almost) of all relevant stakeholders, from all 10 countries, participated in the SolidStandards training and gave their feedback by means of the questionnaire.

Eventually, the results from the questionnaires were used for both the National Industry Position papers (deliverable 6.4) and the European Industry Position paper (deliverable 6.5).

Part of the questionnaires was about the quality of the SolidStandards training sessions. This was an excellent way of grading the quality of each training sessions (also reported about separately in another deliverable). The project partners able to improve its training sessions during the project.

Since each partner has a dump file of all answers relevant to its own country, some questionnaire results can contribute to more in-depth in sight in the country's opinion and demands. Although most questions were 'closed' questions, a minority of the questions were asked in an open way, and in a lot of instances, respondents gave useful answers. It is



advised to the project partners to also learn about these answers in order to get additional insight in the industry.

**Results:**

- **From November 2012 until September 2013 a total of 454 respondents filled in the the questionnaire. The questionnaire was filled in by people form all 10 countries involved in the SolidStandards project (and, additionally, also by 'foreign' participants in training events used the questionnaire).**
- **All partners made use of the online tool Questback/questionnaire and all partners used the results of Questback/questionnaire for their national position paper (to some extent).**
- **Results of Questback/questionnaire offer additional insight by means of answers given by respondents to open questions.**

Annex 1 contains learning points and suggestions for improvement of the online tool/questionnaire.

## 2. Discussion platform

At first, the project partners decided to use a (closed) LinkedIn group as online discussion platform. Despite a lot of effort to create a professional LinkedIn group, the group eventually consisted of just 20-25 members. Almost all group members were SolidStandards project partners or people directly related to them (colleagues, etc.).

During project meetings the project partners therefore agreed no to consider LinkedIn as the best available tool for a group discussion. And, on the other hand, several useful discussions took place during the training events and/or during the 1-to-1 meetings. These results have been published in the training reports as well.

Since the purpose of this platform was to collect industry feedback, the project partners considered the Hotline procedure as a proper way of feedback collection as well. The hotline provided insight in the different type of questions that the industry has (additional to the feedback collected during training sessions and by means of questionnaires). The users of the hotline were in all cases provided with an answer. In some cases this resulted in constructive one-to-one discussions. The results of the hotline are reported separately in this project.

**Results:**

- **There was not a discussion platform by means of a LinkedIn group.**
- **However, good discussions took place during training events and one-to-one meetings.**
- **Also the hotline also gave additional insights/facilitated some discussions.**

## 3. General results and overall conclusions

Questback/the questionnaires also delivered some interesting results (also useful for other SolidStandard project purposes). A couple of these results/figures are published below:

| Topic  | Number            | Remark  |
|--|-------------------|---|
| <b>Total number of respondents</b>   | 454               |   |
| <b>Total number of training participants</b>   | 853               |   |
| <b>Coverage of feedback by training participants</b>   | Approximately 53% | (almost) all questionnaires were filled in by training participants   |
| <b>Amount of different respondent's countries of origin</b>  | 21                | Several training sessions were visited by not only native participants.   |
| <b>Number of producers and traders/logistic companies intending to use standards in the future</b> | 126               | - 82 producers intend to use one or more standards in the future.<br>- 44 trader and/or logistics provider intend to use one or more standards in the future. |

### Overall conclusions

*The collected feedback of the questionnaires was used for the national industry position papers (and thus for the European industry paper as well).*

*It can be concluded that a proper online discussion panel by means of a LinkedIn group did not meet the needs of/ was not possible for feedback collection. This was replaced by input acquired by using the hotline tool of SolidStandards.*

*Overall it can be concluded that the questionnaire/online tool has contributed to the end overall result of the SolidStandards project, despite some suggestions for improvement. It is assumed that feedback contributed to objectives of the SolidStandards project: the uptake of standards about solid biofuels, and to provide input to on-going standardization processes and policy decisions.*

## Annex 1: Useful experiences/suggestions for improvement

Useful experiences and suggestions for improvement of the online tool/questionnaire are:

- a) The project partners agreed on the purpose the questionnaire: collecting a lot of, and in some cases technical in-depth, feedback. This resulted in quiet an extensive questionnaire. Bearing in mind that some of the respondents were dealing with solid biomass indirectly and/or for the first time (or just for a short period yet), quiet some respondents considered the amount of questions as 'too much' (and skipped parts of the questionnaire).
- b) The questionnaires were (not always) translated to the native language in all countries. This sometimes resulted in a situation that the questionnaire was considered too difficult.
- c) Data processing was performed in two ways: 1) 'automatically' when people used the website application (with the disadvantage that the online questionnaire was only available in English, contributing to the issue mentioned above under point b, and 2) manually (by the project partners) based on questionnaires that were filled in manually as well (foremost by training participants). This can be considered as 'inefficient'.



- d) The questionnaire was initially disseminated during the first round of SolidStandards trainings. A couple of questionnaires were filled in on paper but not yet processed in Questback. But, after that moment, the questionnaire itself and Questback were improved (based on new/better insight). This resulted in a situation in which it was impossible to process some answers from the first round. Luckily, this was just for a couple of questions the case. The results of these questions were not used for other purposes of the project, what is, in the end, a pity.
- e) The quality of the (online) tool 'Questback', chosen by the project partners, eventually was on some aspects a little bit disappointing. It was expected that the Questback could be used for useful reports. It appeared that only one group can be used in Questback, while 10 groups (10 countries) were needed. It seemed hardly possible to produce useful reports for each single country with Questback. The only way to produce individual reports per country was by exporting the data to Excel. NEN tried to present it in a proper way by means of Excel functions. And, besides that, the dashboard of Questback changed during the project, and some report options that NEN used were not longer available. Another disadvantage of using Questback is that it has not an option to stop the respondent if he/she skips or forgets an answer. This influences the overall validity of the questionnaire. And it appeared to be possible to for example answer 'no' to the question: 'are you aware of system X...' and later on give an opinion about that same system (what is impossible since there was no awareness/knowledge about the specific system at all). These are all aspects for improvement.
- f) The amount of feedback, and more importantly the quality of the feedback, differed per country. This is possibly also influenced by the aspects mentioned above, or languages issues. Nevertheless, the overall results (per country) were to a certain extent beneficial to the development of each national industry paper (and thus for the European industry paper as well).