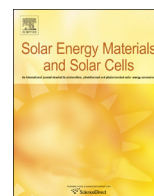




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## Worldwide outdoor round robin study of organic photovoltaic devices and modules



Morten V. Madsen<sup>a,\*</sup>, Suren A. Gevorgyan<sup>a</sup>, R. Pacios<sup>b</sup>, J. Ajuria<sup>b</sup>, I. Etxebarria<sup>b</sup>, Jeff Kettle<sup>c</sup>, Noel D. Bristow<sup>c</sup>, Marios Neophytou<sup>d</sup>, Stelios A. Choulis<sup>d</sup>, Lucimara Stolz Roman<sup>e</sup>, Teketel Yohannes<sup>f</sup>, Andrea Cester<sup>g</sup>, Pei Cheng<sup>h</sup>, Xiaowei Zhan<sup>h</sup>, Jiang Wu<sup>i</sup>, Zhiyuan Xie<sup>i</sup>, Wei-Chen Tu<sup>j</sup>, Jr-Hau He<sup>j</sup>, Christopher J Fell<sup>k</sup>, Kenrick Anderson<sup>k</sup>, Martin Hermenau<sup>l</sup>, Davide Bartesaghi<sup>m,n</sup>, L. Jan Anton Koster<sup>m</sup>, Florian Machui<sup>o</sup>, Irene González-Valls<sup>p,ak</sup>, Monica Lira-Cantu<sup>p,ak</sup>, Petr P. Khlyabich<sup>q</sup>, Barry C. Thompson<sup>q</sup>, Ritu Gupta<sup>r</sup>, Kiruthika Shanmugam<sup>r</sup>, Giridhar U. Kulkarni<sup>r</sup>, Yulia Galagan<sup>s</sup>, Antonio Urbina<sup>t</sup>, Jose Abad<sup>t</sup>, Roland Roesch<sup>u</sup>, Harald Hoppe<sup>u</sup>, P. Morvillo<sup>v</sup>, E. Bobeico<sup>v</sup>, Eugen Panaitescu<sup>w</sup>, Latika Menon<sup>w</sup>, Qun Luo<sup>x</sup>, Zhenwu Wu<sup>x</sup>, Changqi Ma<sup>x</sup>, Artak Hambarian<sup>y</sup>, Varuzhan Melikyan<sup>y</sup>, M. Hamsch<sup>z</sup>, Paul L. Burn<sup>z</sup>, Paul Meredith<sup>z</sup>, Thomas Rath<sup>aa</sup>, Sebastian Dunst<sup>aa</sup>, Gregor Trimmel<sup>aa</sup>, Giorgio Bardizza<sup>ab</sup>, Harald Müllejans<sup>ab</sup>, A.E. Goryachev<sup>ac</sup>, Ravi K. Misra<sup>ac</sup>, Eugene A. Katz<sup>ac</sup>, Katsuhiko Takagi<sup>ad</sup>, Shinichi Magaino<sup>ad</sup>, Hidenori Saito<sup>ad</sup>, Daisuke Aoki<sup>ad</sup>, Paul M. Sommeling<sup>ae</sup>, Jan M. Kroon<sup>ae</sup>, Tim Vangerven<sup>af</sup>, Jean Manca<sup>af</sup>, Jurgen Kesters<sup>af</sup>, Wouter Maes<sup>af</sup>, Olga D. Bobkova<sup>ag</sup>, Vasily A. Trukhanov<sup>ag</sup>, Dmitry Yu. Paraschuk<sup>ag</sup>, Fernando A. Castro<sup>ah</sup>, James Blakesley<sup>ah</sup>, Sachetan M Tuladhar<sup>ai</sup>, Jason Alexander Röhr<sup>ai</sup>, Jenny Nelson<sup>ai</sup>, Jiangbin Xia<sup>aj</sup>, Elif Alturk Parlak<sup>al</sup>, Tülay Aslı Tumay<sup>al</sup>, Hans-Joachim Egelhaaf<sup>am</sup>, David M. Tanenbaum<sup>an</sup>, Gretta Mae Ferguson<sup>an</sup>, Robert Carpenter<sup>ao</sup>, Hongzheng Chen<sup>ap</sup>, Birger Zimmermann<sup>aq</sup>, Lionel Hirsch<sup>ar</sup>, Guillaume Wantz<sup>ar</sup>, Ziqi Sun<sup>as</sup>, Pradeep Singh<sup>at</sup>, Chaitnya Bapat<sup>at</sup>, Ton Offermans<sup>au</sup>, Frederik C. Krebs<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Energy Conversion and Storage, Technical University of Denmark, Frederiksborgvej 399, 4000 Roskilde, Denmark

<sup>b</sup> IK4-IKERLAN. Microsystems. CIC-Microgune, E-20500 Arrasate-Mondragon, Spain

<sup>c</sup> School of Electronic Engineering, Bangor University, Dean St., Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 1UT, UK

<sup>d</sup> Molecular Electronics and Photonics Research Unit, Cyprus University of Technology, 45 Kitiou Kyprianou St., 3041 Limassol, Cyprus

<sup>e</sup> Physics Department, Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), CP 19044, 81531-990 Curitiba, Parana, Brazil

<sup>f</sup> Chemistry Department, Addis Ababa University, P. O. Box 1176, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

<sup>g</sup> Department of Information Engineering – University of Padova, via Gradenigo 6B, 35131 Padova, Italy

<sup>h</sup> Department of Materials Science and Engineering, College of Engineering, Peking University, Beijing 100871, China

<sup>i</sup> State Key Laboratory of Polymer Physics and Chemistry, Changchun Institute of Applied Chemistry, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Changchun 130022, China

<sup>j</sup> Institute of Photonics and Optoelectronics & Department of Electrical Engineering, National Taiwan University, Taipei 10617, Taiwan

<sup>k</sup> CSIRO Energy Technology, P.O. Box 330, Newcastle, New South Wales 2300, Australia

<sup>l</sup> Institut für Angewandte Photophysik, Technische Universität Dresden, George-Bähr-Straße 1, D-01069 Dresden, Germany

<sup>m</sup> Photophysics and Optoelectronics, Zernike Institute for Advanced materials, Nijenborgh 4, NL-9747AG Groningen, The Netherlands

<sup>n</sup> Dutch Polymer Institute, P. O. Box 902, 5600 AX Eindhoven, The Netherlands

<sup>o</sup> Institute Materials for Electronics and Energy Technology (i-MEET), Department of Material Science, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Martensstrasse 7, 91058 Erlangen, Germany

<sup>p</sup> p11CN2 - Institut Catala de Nanociencia i Nanotecnologia, Campus UAB, 08193 Bellaterra (Barcelona), Spain

<sup>q</sup> Department of Chemistry and Loker Hydrocarbon Research Institute, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089-1661, USA

<sup>r</sup> Chemistry and Physics of Materials Unit and Thematic Unit on Nanochemistry, Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Jakkur, Bangalore 560064, India

<sup>s</sup> Holst Centre – Solliance, P.O. Box 8550, 5605 KN Eindhoven, The Netherlands

<sup>t</sup> Technical University of Cartagena, Plaza del Hospital 1, 30202 Cartagena, Spain

<sup>u</sup> Institute of Physics, Ilmenau University of Technology, 98693 Ilmenau, Germany

<sup>v</sup> ENEA, P.le E. Fermi 1, 80055 Portici (Napoli), Italy

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [mves@dtu.dk](mailto:mves@dtu.dk) (M.V. Madsen).

<sup>w</sup> Department of Physics, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115, USA

<sup>x</sup> Printable Electronics Research Center, Suzhou Institute of Nanotech and Nanobionics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Suzhou, Jiangsu 215123, China

<sup>y</sup> Engineering Research Center (ERC), American University of Armenia (AUA), Armenia

<sup>z</sup> Centre for Organic Photonics & Electronics, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD 4072, Australia

<sup>aa</sup> Institute for Chemistry and Technology of Materials, Graz University of Technology, Stremayrgasse 9, 8010 Graz, Austria

<sup>ab</sup> European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Institute for Energy and Transport, Renewable Energy Unit, European Solar Test Installation, Via E. Fermi 2749 I-21027 Ispra (VA), Italy

<sup>ac</sup> Department of Solar Energy and Environmental Physics, J. Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 84990 Sede Boqer Campus, Israel

<sup>ad</sup> Kanagawa Academy of Science & Technology, KSP West 6 F, Sakato 3-2-1, Takatsu, Kawasaki 213-0013 Kanagawa, Japan

<sup>ae</sup> ECN Solar Energy, Westerduinweg 3, 1755 LE Petten, The Netherlands

<sup>af</sup> Institute for Materials Research (IMO), Hasselt University, Wetenschapspark 1, B-3590 Diepenbeek, Belgium

<sup>ag</sup> International Laser Center and Faculty of Physics, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow 119991, Russia

<sup>ah</sup> Materials Division, National Physical Laboratory, Hampton Road, TW11 0LW Teddington, UK

<sup>ai</sup> Department of Physics, Imperial College London, South Kensington, London SW7 2AZ, UK

<sup>aj</sup> College of Chemistry and Molecular Science, Wuhan University, Wuhan 430072, China

<sup>ak</sup> CSIC – Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, ICN2 Building, Campus UAB, 08193 Bellaterra (Barcelona), Spain

<sup>al</sup> TÜBİTAK Marmara Research Center, Chemistry Institute, 41470 Gebze, Kocaeli, Turkey

<sup>am</sup> BELECTRIC OPV GmbH, Landgrabenstr. 94, 90443 Nürnberg, Germany

<sup>an</sup> Department of Physics and Astronomy, Pomona College, 610 N. College Ave., Claremont, CA 91711, USA

<sup>ao</sup> Inside2Outside Ltd. Fenstanton, Cambridge, UK

<sup>ap</sup> Department of Polymer Science & Engineering, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou 310027, China

<sup>aq</sup> Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems ISE, Heidenhofstraße 2, 79110 Freiburg, Germany

<sup>ar</sup> Université de Bordeaux, Institut Polytechnique de Bordeaux, Laboratoire IMS, UMR CNRS 5218, 16 Avenue Pey Berland F-33607 Pessac, (France)

<sup>as</sup> Institute for Superconducting and Electronic Materials, Australian Institute for Innovative Materials, University of Wollongong, North Wollongong, New South Wales 2500, Australia

<sup>at</sup> Print and Media Technology, TU Chemnitz, Reichenhainer Straße 70, 09126 Chemnitz, Germany

<sup>au</sup> CSEM Muttenz, Tramstrasse 99, CH-4132 Muttenz, Switzerland

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## ABSTRACT

Accurate characterization and reporting of organic photovoltaic (OPV) device performance remains one of the important challenges in the field. The large spread among the efficiencies of devices with the same structure reported by different groups is significantly caused by different procedures and equipment used during testing. The presented article addresses this issue by offering a new method of device testing using “suitcase sample” approach combined with outdoor testing that limits the diversity of the equipment, and a strict measurement protocol. A round robin outdoor characterization of roll-to-roll coated OPV cells and modules conducted among 46 laboratories worldwide is presented, where the samples and the testing equipment were integrated in a compact suitcase that served both as a sample transportation tool and as a holder and test equipment during testing. In addition, an internet based coordination was used via [plasticphotovoltaics.org](http://plasticphotovoltaics.org) that allowed fast and efficient communication among participants and provided a controlled reporting format for the results that eased the analysis of the data. The reported deviations among the laboratories were limited to 5% when compared to the Si reference device integrated in the suitcase and were up to 8% when calculated using the local irradiance data. Therefore, this method offers a fast, cheap and efficient tool for sample sharing and testing that allows conducting outdoor measurements of OPV devices in a reproducible manner.

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## 1. Introduction

12% record efficiency [1] is the number that represents the organic photovoltaic (OPV) technology today. However, in the OPV community today, the constantly reported efficiencies of different OPV technologies are scattered along a wide scale with an average performance much below the current record efficiency [2–3] creating concerns whether the technology is mature for industrialization. Besides the challenges of reproducible manufacturing of devices, the large spread in the reported efficiencies is often generated by the inaccuracy of testing procedure. Given the costly and time consuming process of device performance certification at accredited laboratories, many researchers choose to test their device in their own laboratories using the equipment on hand and procedures attuned to the equipment and device architectures. Since OPVs are sensitive towards the testing conditions, the reported results are linked to the local testing procedures and thus, become irreproducible in other laboratories. Therefore, the field is in need of common testing procedures and protocols (for example according to International Electrotechnical Commission standards) that can allow more harmonized procedures and can deliver reproducible results. This issue is

currently one of the primary focuses within the OPV topic in the Project of European Research Infrastructure (SOPHIA) and the European Energy Research Alliance (EERA).

One of the best techniques for establishing common testing methods is the round robin or interlaboratory study, where the set of test samples is shared among a number of laboratories and testing and intercomparisons are performed [4–11]. A round robin is a useful tool that allows reaching consensus on best practices for both designing device architectures, utilizing the most suitable test equipment, and creating common test protocols. Within the OPV field, a number of different round robin studies have already been presented for both initial power output [12–14] and lifetime [15–18] measurements, which addressed the issue of large spread of data among different laboratories.

While many lessons have been learned this article presents a new characterization method for photovoltaic devices that involves an innovative approach of “suitcase samples”. The samples are integrated in a special compact suitcase that provides sample protection and at the same time allows easy transport, mounting, electric contacting, and testing of the samples with virtually no use of external equipment and therefore, allows

sample sharing and round robin characterization using low cost tools and equipment. The method was tested in an outdoor round robin study conducted for roll-to-roll produced OPVs among 45 laboratories (+ 1 coordinator) worldwide. To cover such large scale study, an internet based coordination was used. A website infrastructure was created to allow central coordination and communication between all the laboratories, transportation of the samples, and reporting of the results in a controlled format. The manuscript describes in detail the sample development, the web based coordination process and the control of the reporting procedures. It further analyzes the results of the measurements and discusses the advantages and shortcomings of the new method.

## 2. Experimental

### 2.1. Sample and suitcase preparation

Roll-to-roll coated OPV modules produced at the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) were used for the tests. The devices had an ITO free structure of Ag grid/PEDOT:PSS/ZnOx/P3HT:PCBM/PEDOT:PSS/Ag grid/PET substrate. The two PEDOT:PSS layers on both sides have different chemical alterations and therefore have different energy levels. The devices were encapsulated using flexible Amcor packaging barrier foil and epoxy adhesive (DELO LP655) and fixed on a rigid platform. The device terminals were connected to easily accessible electric plugs as shown in Fig. 1. Three sample designs were used with correspondingly serially connected 1, 3 and 6 stripes of solar cells in each module. The terminals of the modules were additionally sealed by epoxy to prevent the diffusion of oxygen or water inside the device. Si photovoltaic modules were additionally used as references. A thermocouple was glued on the backside of one of the OPV samples for temperature measurements. Table 1 shows the ID and the average performance of the samples (together with standard

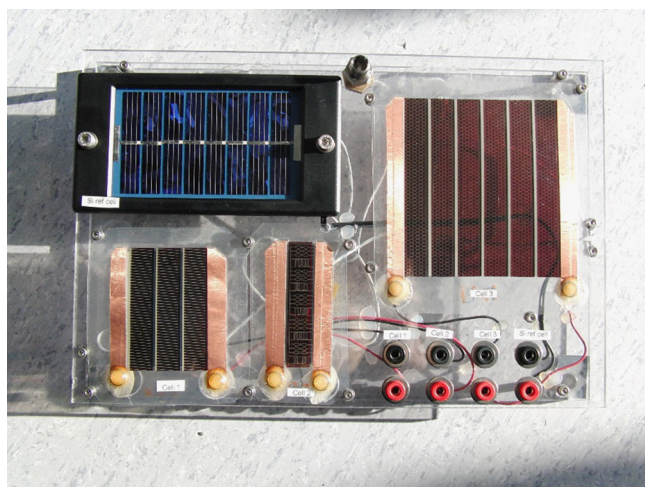


Fig. 1. Three OPV modules and one Si reference module fixed on a rigid platform.

Table 1

Description and the average performance of different samples. The values represent the average of four samples tested under solar simulator with light intensity close to 1 sun and sample temperature of 60 °C.

Sample ID	Description	Active area (cm <sup>2</sup> )	V <sub>oc</sub> [V] (STD %)	I <sub>sc</sub> [mA] (STD %)	FF [%] (STD %)	PCE [%] (STD %)
Cell 1	OPV module with 3 stripes	21.32	1.52(2.3)	33.3(10)	57(3.2)	1.35(13)
Cell 2	OPV cell with 1 stripe	6.9	0.54(1.4)	38.8(3.6)	52(5.1)	1.58(5.5)
Cell 3	OPV module with 6 stripes	67	2.93(1.1)	56.9(4.7)	52(4)	1.3(5.7)
Cell 4	Si reference module	47.4	4.14(0.5)	160(0.4)	72(1)	10.1(0.8)

deviations) tested under solar simulator in DTU with the sample temperatures set close to 60 °C and the light intensity calibrated to 1 sun using photodiode with a KG5 filter. Such calibration provides good accuracy for P3HT:PCBM devices, but not for the Si module and therefore, significantly lower values were obtained for Si compared to AM1.5G. This, however, is not critical, since the same conditions were used for post-ageing measurements to record any changes. Figs. S1–S4 in the supporting material additionally shows typical IV curves for each type of sample.

The compact suitcase (36 × 29 × 17 cm) used for sample transportation was customized to serve also as a sample holder during testing. Fig. 2(a–e) shows the mounting of the sample platform both inside the suitcase (for transportation) and on top of the suitcase (for testing). Both the platform and the lid contained integrated magnets to allow easy fixing of the platform inside the lid (Fig. 2a) and on top (Fig. 2 b and c). The threaded rod allowed fixing of the angle of the lid at a certain position. The “angle adjustment tube” easily mounts on the platform and allows for determination of the angle for direct incidence of sun irradiation (Fig. 2 d and e). Fig. 2a also shows the components provided in the suitcase, such as the multimeter for measuring open circuit voltage V<sub>oc</sub>, short circuit current I<sub>sc</sub> and temperature of the samples, cables for electrical measurements and an angle measuring scale.

### 2.2. Measurement procedures

The suitcase contained a copy of the detailed protocol (also made available at the round robin website) describing the testing procedure of the samples and the reporting of the data. The protocol contained detailed instructions on setting up the samples, soaking the samples under light for 30 min followed by performance testing. The experimenter was recommended to perform both full I–V testing (depending on locally available equipment) and measure I<sub>sc</sub> and V<sub>oc</sub> of each sample using the provided multimeter. The Si reference device was used both as a test sample and as a reference for irradiance. The experimenter was also recommended to use local sensors (if available) to record the local irradiance level. The temperature of the samples was recorded via the thermocouple attached to one of the samples and the multimeter. 5 measurements for each parameter of each cell were required. Reporting of the results was done via the electronic form set up on the website. A copy of the original protocol is provided in the Supporting document (S2). The website used for coordination and data reporting is described in the Supporting document (S6).

### 2.3. Participating laboratories

The participants were originally recruited at the International Summit on OPV Stability (ISOS-5). The studies were additionally advertised at <http://plasticphotovoltaics.org/roundrobin> and a few participants were engaged this way. Finally a number of laboratories were contacted directly in an attempt to fill out the world-map. The finalized list of participants can be seen in Table 2 and the geographic location in the map in Fig. 3. To carry out the round robin among such a large number of participants within a



**Fig. 2.** a) General view of the suitcase and its content, b) mounting of the sample platform on top of the suitcase, c) adjusting the angle of the lid via a rod with a thread, d) adjusting the angle to sun altitude and e) measuring the angle.

reasonable time, four identical suitcases were circulated at the same time in four loops. Certain labs (marked blue in the map in Fig. 3) volunteered to perform more than one test. Due to time constraints, however, each participant eventually received the samples only once.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Logistics

Four loops were organized among 45 laboratories with four suitcases circulating in parallel. Fig. 4 shows the map with the tracking lines of the suitcase routes and a table with the numbers of laboratories in each loop and the total time of measurements. While 2 weeks were originally set for testing and transportation for each participant the actual average time reached 3.5 weeks and the total test period lasted around 10 months. Such an extension was mainly caused by custom clearance procedures at the country borders, especially when the suitcase was traveling across continents. Express services were used to accelerate the transportation. However, it was later discovered that using regular posting service did not require slow and expensive custom clearances and therefore had a much better result.

While 6 of the participants had to perform the measurements in a cloudy day with no direct sunlight, in most cases a clear sky measurement was achieved. Although the “cloudy” measurements gave a good insight on the linearity of the devices versus the irradiance, the overall deviations were somewhat larger and therefore these data were not taken into account during the

calculation of the average performance. In addition, in some cases the testing was performed under unusual conditions, such as at 3000 m elevation in Armenia or at  $-15\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  air temperature in Russia, the former not having significant effect on data deviations, while the latter resulting in reduced performance of the OPVs compared to the Si reference device. The participants were also recommended to perform the testing as close to noon time as possible, to reduce the spectral mismatch effects of sunlight.

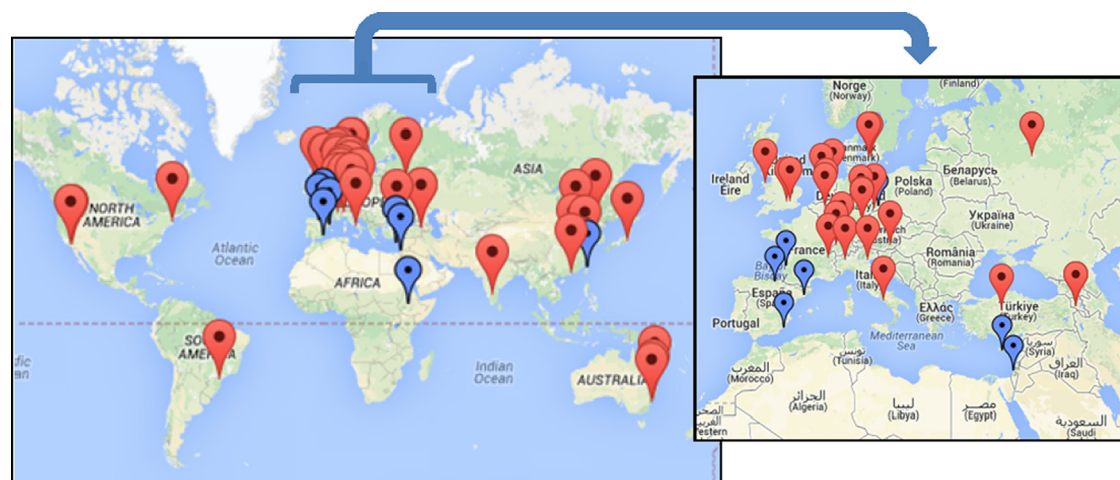
#### 3.2. Degradation and failure of samples

The samples were tested before and after the experiments at the host laboratory (DTU) to record possible degradation effects during transportation and tests. Fig. 5 shows the performance of all the samples after the experiments, normalized to the initial values. Three out of twelve OPV samples showed degradation (marked with black circle in Fig. 5) caused mostly by the drop of fill factor FF, but for some also by  $V_{oc}$  and  $I_{sc}$ . However, for the cell 3 in the suitcase 4 the lower FF was recorded only at the laboratory of origin upon return, while the actual round robin measurements did not show patterns of degradation. Since the encapsulation of devices was entirely automated (made by R2R machinery), which secures good reproducibility of lifetimes, the reason of degradation was assigned to the sealing of device terminals, which was performed manually and possibly imperfect in some cases, resulting in diffusion of oxygen and water inside the barrier, which is a common failure mechanism as was reported earlier [18–19]. Visual inspection of the samples did not reveal any failures. The reported measurements that showed degradation patterns were not used in the calculations of the average performance.

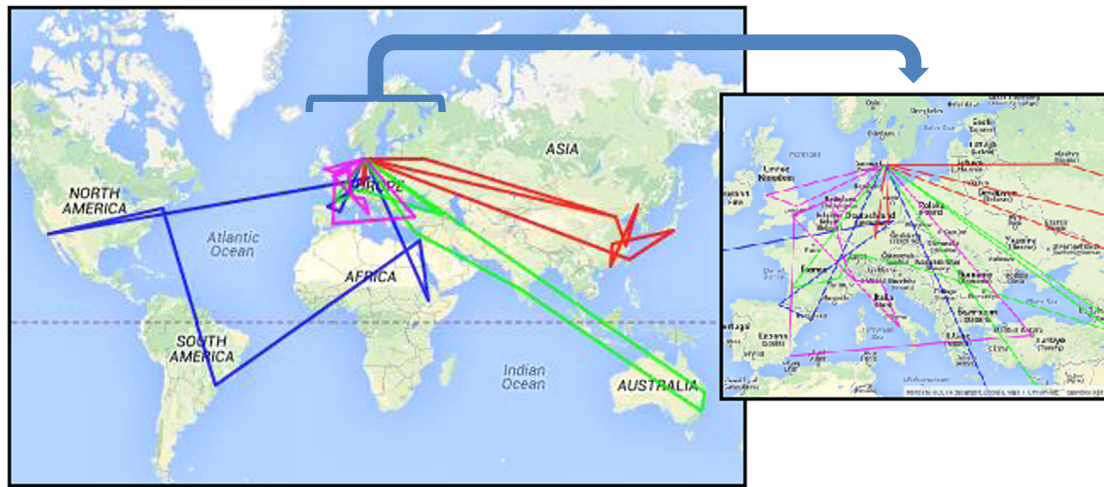
**Table 2**

The full list of participants in the study.

	University/organization	Contact person	Country
1	Belelectric	Hans-Joachim Egelhaaf	Germany
2	Ben-Gurion University of Negev	Eugene Katz	Israel
3	CEA-INES OPV group	Matthieu Manceau	France
4	Cin2	Monica Lira Cantu	Spain
5	CSEM	Ton Offermans	Switzerland
6	ECN	Jan M. Kroon	Netherlands
7	ENEA	Pasquale Morvillo	Italy
8	University of Erlangen-Nuremberg	Florian Machui	Germany
9	Inside2Outside	Robert Carpenter	England
10	IAPP	Martin Hermenau	Germany
11	IKERLAN	Roberto Pacios	Spain
12	Ilmenau	Roland Roesch	Germany
13	Imperial College	Sachetan Tuladhar	England
14	IMS	Guillaume Wantz	France
15	Fraunhofer ISE	Birger Zimmermann	Germany
16	Joint Research Centre	Giorgio Bardizza	Italy
17	KAST	Katsuhiko Takagi	Japan
18	Cyprus University of Technology	Marios Neophytou	Cyprus
19	NPL	Fernando Araujo de Castro	England
20	National Taiwan University	Jr-Hau He	Taiwan
21	Northeastern University	Latika Menon	USA
22	Pomona College	Gretta Mae Ferguson	USA
23	University of Groningen	L. Jan Anton Koster	Netherlands
24	Bangor University	Jeff Kettle	Wales
25	Siano	Changqi Ma	China
26	Holst Centre	Yulia Galagan	Netherlands
27	TU Chemnitz	Chaitanya Bapat	Germany
28	Graz University of Technology	Thomas Rath	Austria
29	University Hasselt	Jean Manca	Belgium
30	Tübitak	Elif Alturk Parlak	Turkey
31	University of Wollongong	Ziqi Sun	Australia
32	University of Southern California	Barry Thompson	USA
33	Wuhan University	Jiangbin Xia	China
34	American University of Armenia	Artak Hambarian	Armenia
35	The University of Queensland	Mike Hamsch	Australia
36	Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research	Giridhar U. Kulkarni	India
37	CSIRO Energy Technology	Chris Fell	Australia
38	International Laser Center & Faculty of Physics, M.V.Lomonosov Moscow State University	Dmitry Paraschuk	Russia
39	Federal University of Paraná	Lucimara Stolz Roman	Brazil
40	Technical University of Cartagena	Antonio Urbina	Spain
41	Addis Ababa University	Teketel Yohannes	Ethiopia
42	Changchun Institute of Applied Chemistry	Zhiyuan Xie	China
43	Department of Polymer Science and Engineering, Zhejiang University	Hongzheng Chen	China
44	Peking University	Xiaowei Zhan	China
45	Dipartimento di Ingegneria dell Informazione, Università di Padova	Andrea Cester	Italy
46	Technical University of Denmark (Coordinator)	Morten V. Madsen/Suren Gevorgyan	Denmark



**Fig. 3.** Flags in the google map correspond to the locations of the 46 participants. Blue colored locations were the sites intended for multiple measurements. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)



Suitcase ID (line color)	Number of participants	Total time of testing (days)
S1 (Blue)	9	232
S2 (Red)	12	310
S3 (Green)	10	259
S4 (Pink)	14	309

Fig. 4. Routes of the four suitcases. The table below shows the number of participants and total time of experiments for each loop.

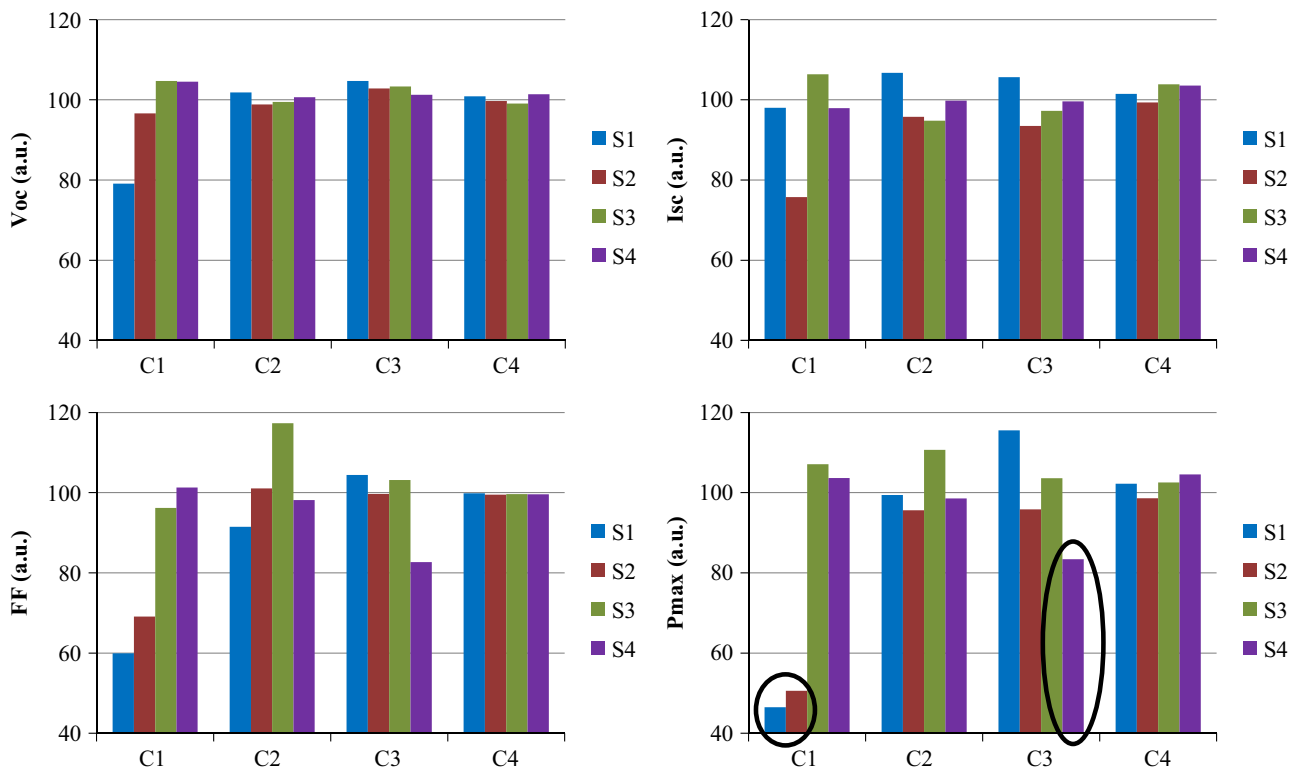


Fig. 5. Performance of all the samples after the experiments normalized to the initial values. C1 to C4 refer correspondingly to Cell 1 to Cell 4 in each suitcase (Table 1). The three samples which showed degradation are marked with a black circle.

Some of the participants additionally reported a weak contact of the terminal of cell 1 in suitcase 3, which was resolved by pressing on the contact. Detachment of the thermocouple from the back of the samples was also recorded. The issue was resolved by re-attaching the sensor with new epoxy adhesive.

### 3.3. Spread of data

According to the test protocol the participants were required to record the photocurrent of the reference Si (Si devices were not calibrated prior to the studies) during testing of each sample, as

**Table 3**  
Temperature coefficients of  $I_{sc}$  and  $V_{oc}$  of the test samples.

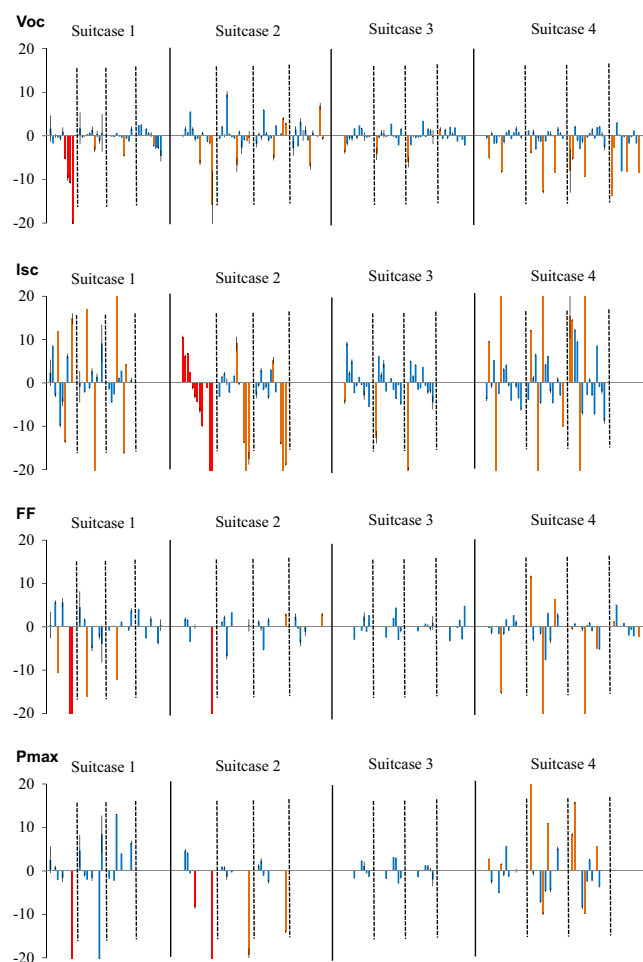
Device	$I_{sc}$ temp. coeff. (%/°C)	$V_{oc}$ temp. coeff. (%/°C)
Si device	0.12	−0.26
OPV device	0.17	−0.041

well as record the local irradiance, if a local sensor was available. 17 labs reported locally recorded global irradiance data, which was typically recorded using a pyranometer positioned in the same plane as the samples. The reported irradiance data was used to normalize the reference Si  $I_{sc}$  data to  $1000 \text{ Wm}^{-2}$ , which was then used to estimate the temperature coefficient for Si devices (the data for all Si devices from four suitcases were combined to improve the statistics and outliers were not taken into account) and normalized the data to temperature. Sample temperature of  $40^\circ\text{C}$  was used for normalization. The same procedure was performed for OPV samples. For the latter, however, the OPV  $I_{sc}$  was normalized to the already temperature corrected Si  $I_{sc}$ . To do so the average 1 sun value of Si  $I_{sc}$  was identified, which was 183 mA and this value was used for normalization. Exception was made for the data of the Joint Research Center that reported the accurately calibrated and normalized data including the spectral mismatch calibration. In the case of  $V_{oc}$  only the data above  $600 \text{ Wm}^{-2}$  were used ( $V_{oc}$  was not corrected to irradiance) for estimation of the temperature coefficients for both OPVs and Si. Table 3 shows the determined coefficients. This method has a number of underestimations, such as:

- Spectral mismatch in different geographic locations and between Si and OPV devices is not taken into account.
- In some cases, there is a time delay between measured  $I_{sc}$  and temperature values.
- Temperature is measured only on one OPV sample per suitcase and while valid for the other OPV samples, it may not reflect accurately the temperature changes in the Si device.
- The temperature range is mostly limited to  $20\text{--}50^\circ\text{C}$ .
- $V_{oc}$  values are not normalized to irradiance.

Despite these deviations, the large quantity of the data is believed to give sufficient precision for temperature corrections. To confirm this,  $P$ -values were calculated for the different parameters, which represents the statistical significance of the data trend. The results revealed very low  $P$ -values for the three coefficients in Table 3, while a value of 0.07 was observed for the temperature coefficient of Si  $I_{sc}$  suggesting that the data for the former is statistically significant, while for the latter the significance is low. Taking the aforementioned underestimations the obtained values must not be treated as generic, but rather as values that describe the sample behavior under different temperatures for the given method of temperature and device performance measurements.

In order to calculate the deviations among the reported measurements, first the data were corrected to a common temperature of  $40^\circ\text{C}$  with the temperature coefficients in Table 3. Then these were filtered for any outliers caused by device failure or extreme testing conditions (irradiance below  $600 \text{ Wm}^{-2}$  or air temperatures below  $0^\circ\text{C}$ ). As a next step the average of 5 measurements was calculated for each laboratory (as there were 5 measurements performed for each sample by each laboratory). This was followed by calculation of the weight average of the data among laboratories for the same sample and then re-calculation of a new weighted average using only the data within 10% deviation from the first weighted average. The weighted average was chosen since some of the laboratories reported less than 5 measurements



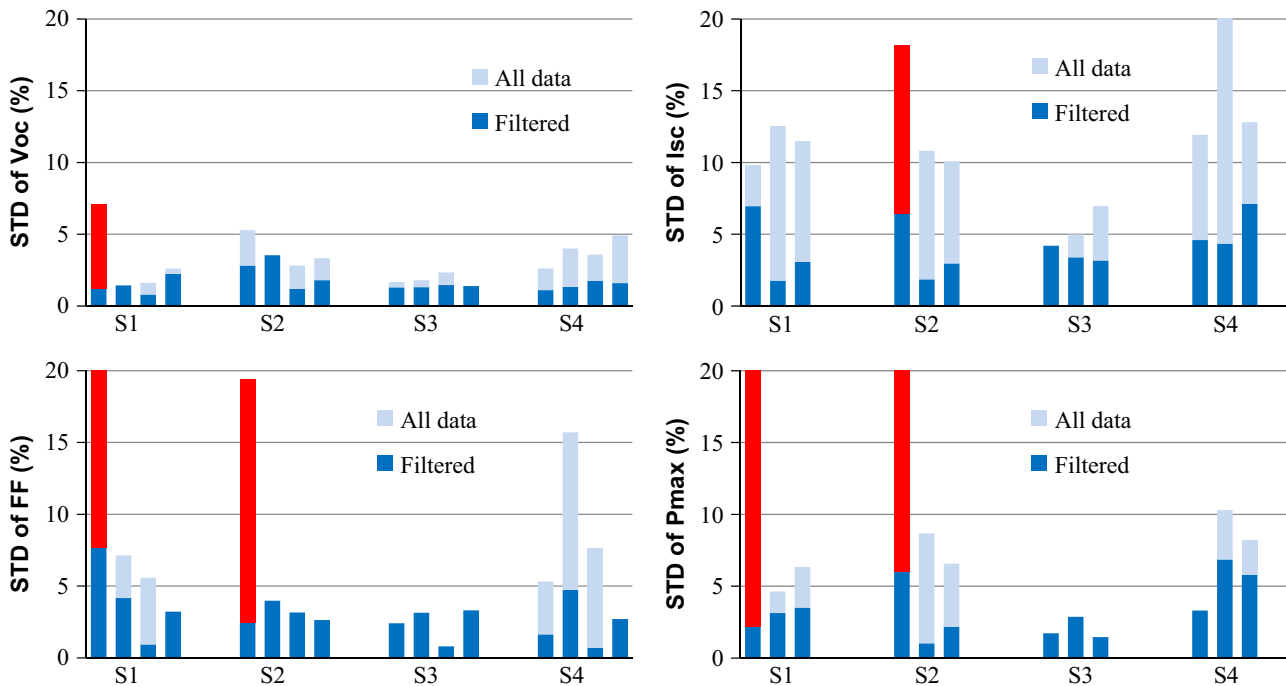
**Fig. 6.** Deviations of reported PV parameters for all the laboratories for each suitcase. The orange columns represent the data that was qualified as an outlier due to extreme testing conditions. The red columns represent the data of degraded devices. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

per sample. Fig. 6 shows the distribution of the deviations of all the laboratories for all the cells in each suitcase. The following labeling is used to identify the large deviations:

- The orange columns represent the data that were either qualified as outliers due to extreme testing conditions or were above a deviation of 10%.
- The red columns represent the degraded samples.
- The black solid lines separate the measurements of each suitcase and the dotted line separates the samples.
- The error bars represent the standard deviation of the 5 measurements.

The actual values of all the deviations are presented in S3 in the supporting document.

Fig. 7 shows the standard deviation among the data presented in Fig. 6 for each sample. Results are shown for both the filtered data (dark blue) and the data with the outliers (light blue). The degraded devices are marked by red. While the calculations of  $I_{sc}$  and  $V_{oc}$  are based on at least 9 and more measurements/labs, for FF and maximum power  $P_{max}$  fewer data points are available (since only some performed IVs or reported FF) and thus may not represent the true spread accurately. According to the results, the agreement among the data is not affected by device failure or



**Fig. 7.** Standard deviation for all the devices in each suitcase among the laboratories. Results are shown for both the filtered data (dark blue) and the data including the outliers (light blue). The degraded devices are marked by red. Since  $I_{sc}$  (and consequently  $P_{max}$ ) was normalized to the measured reference Si module there is only 3 columns in  $I_{sc}$  and  $P_{max}$  plot. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

critical weather conditions and is somewhere at 5% and less, which is a rather small spread, given the nature of the testing conditions and the device sensitivity towards testing conditions. The data are presented for the case in which  $I_{sc}$  (consequently also  $P_{max}$ ) was normalized to the measured reference Si module. The same calculations made with  $I_{sc}$  normalized to the locally reported irradiance values (with less statistical data, since limited number of laboratories reported irradiance) gave up to 8% average standard deviations for both  $I_{sc}$  and  $P_{max}$  (the plots of standard deviations of those are provided in [Supporting document S4](#)). All the values of the standard deviations are given in [Supporting document S5](#).

In addition,  $V_{oc}$  and  $I_{sc}$  values were compared between the measurements performed by the provided multimeter and the local measuring units, which did not reveal significant differences.

#### 4. Discussion

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the results:

1. The internet based coordination allowed the realization of a round robin at a massive scale involving 45 laboratories from all populated continents (excluding Antarctica). The internet based platform allowed having efficient communication with many participants in parallel and quickly resolving any issues and saving time. In addition, the internet based reporting allowed controlling the format of the data and significantly eased the analyses of the immense amount of data. The online method therefore suggests a novel format of round robin coordination with significantly improved speed and quality of experiments and data reporting.
2. The customized “suitcase” design of the sample holder allowed having good protection of the samples, easy transportation and most importantly did not require special external tools for mounting the samples for measurements. The approach saved

both significant amount of time and possible extra costs for installation and measurements of the samples for participants. This also allowed a larger number of participants (especially groups with limited budgets) and therefore, significantly increased the “OPV consortium” for improved and harmonized testing of OPV devices.

3. It is well established that OPVs are rather sensitive to the light spectrum and therefore for sample characterization it is recommended to use light sources as close to real sun light as possible [20]. In addition, solar simulators often have the problem of limited spatial uniformity of illumination and therefore put constrains on the dimensions of samples that can be accurately characterized [21,22]. Obviously, using the real sun helps avoid costly equipment with aforementioned limitations. The results presented in this manuscript suggest that the accuracy of outdoor testing is not inferior to earlier reported indoor tests [14] and even more accurate in some cases. The spread is confined within approximately 5% if considering only the tests under reasonable weather conditions (clear sky and above 0 °C air temperature) and if a reference Si module is provided as a reference. If local irradiance data is used then the spread can be up to 8%, which is still a relatively good value.
4. The tests additionally allowed the participants to address the accuracy of the local irradiance measurements and the procedures of OPV power output measurements.

Based on the aforementioned results it can be concluded that the described approach offers fast and cheap technique for testing and reporting photovoltaic device performances in a reproducible manner using only basic equipment on hand and sharing the samples with a number of laboratories. One has to bear in mind that this regards the consistency of results between laboratories, but does not make a statement about the deviations from the (unknown) true performance of the devices.



#### 4.1. Shortcomings

1. The main shortcoming of the technique is linked to the weather conditions and possibly cannot be used in winter season especially in countries with limited amount of sunny days.
2. The provided multimeter has limited accuracy and thus, needs to be rechecked and calibrated with an accurate source meter prior to and after such studies. In addition, the multimeter is only suitable for extracting  $V_{oc}$  and  $I_{sc}$  parameters, while an appropriate source meter is required for full  $I-V$  scan and determination of power output of the device.
3. While the aim of this study was to investigate the deviations among the laboratories, in order to accurately determine the tested sample performance the provided Si reference devices need to be traceably calibrated (including temperature coefficient) and must also contain an integrated temperature sensor. Furthermore spectral mismatch corrections need to be performed.

#### 5. Conclusions

The article presented a new method of OPV characterization in outdoor conditions using a suitcase sample approach, where the test samples and the testing equipment were packaged in a compact suitcase, which served both as a transportation tool and as a holder for the samples during outdoor round robin testing. Outdoor round robin characterizations of roll-to-roll coated OPV modules were conducted among 45 laboratories worldwide using this method. The study additionally involved internet based coordination via a common portal that allowed centralized and efficient communication among the partners and a controlled reporting format of the results. The OPV sample performances were tested at each laboratory and compared with a reference Si module. The results revealed a standard deviation of around 5% and less for measurements performed on clear sky days. When the data was normalized to local irradiance values, the standard deviations reached up to 8%, which is still reasonably low compared to earlier reported indoor round robin studies.

Although the technique is applicable only in good weather conditions, based on the aforementioned facts it may offer fast and cheap testing and reporting of performance of organic photovoltaic devices and modules in a comparable and reliable manner and therefore can improve the interoperability among the different groups.

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#### Appendix A. Supporting information

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the online version at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.solmat.2014.07.021>.

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