



## Overview of laminate floors collection and recycling

A recommendation to CIFULO

EPLF Taskforce on Collection

April 2022

The EPLF Taskforce on collection conducted a survey amongst its members on recycling and reuse of laminate flooring in Europe. Feedback was collected on twenty-four countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK. The members of the Taskforce also interviewed the [German Waste Wood Association](#) (BAV e.V.) to have further insights on waste wood recycling in Germany.

The main findings are summarised below:

- In most countries laminate flooring is considered as **wood waste**. In some countries it is considered as non-recyclable wood-based product so that it is mixed with miscellaneous.
- There are several waste wood collection streams with some variations: in France, natural wood and furniture are both collected in a separate containers; in Spain they are collected together but they can be separated according to their value/quantity/quality.
- In most countries and cities in Europe there are municipal waste collection parks, or commercial waste collection points. While they are usually accessible to both professionals and private individuals, professional users have to pay.
- Once wood waste arrives at the recycling plants, it is sorted and chipped. In Germany, for example, the process is more complex, with four different sorting categories (A1, A2, A3, and A4) depending on the properties of the wood (mechanically processed, varnished, with or without preservatives). The sorting takes place already at the collection points. In Sweden the sorting process is different, wood waste is usually sorted at source into untreated and treated wood to facilitate material and energy recovery.
- When it comes to the cost of collection, transport and recycling of flooring waste, municipalities, companies, installers, and individuals are responsible for the costs. In some countries, residential users are encouraged to dispose of their wood waste in designated collection point for free (e.g. Norway where a limited number of deliveries by car is free per year).
- In most of the countries surveyed, recycled wood is used for energy recovery and particle boards, also known as chipboards.
- However, most respondents are aware of some projects looking into the recycling of laminate floors (e.g. industrial pilot project to produce MDF/HDF panels from old recovered (steamed) laminate flooring).

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- When asked about recycling plants for other types of flooring such as resilient, carpet or parquet, participants mentioned that in countries like Belgium resilient and carpet are collected separately and recycled. Parquet also goes into treated wood. In Germany parquet and real wood flooring are recycled, but these materials are downcycled and are not used as raw materials in the original product.
- Legislation:
  - Most of the surveyed countries confirmed that currently there are no specific regulations on wood waste collection (or they are under review) but have a national waste management plan. Exceptions are Austria and Germany with detailed regulations on wood waste. For example, in Austria, recycling of wood waste is predominant (75%) compared to burning in power plants (25%).
  - An interesting case is France, where Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) will start from January 2023 with the obligation for the producer to organise the waste collection of all construction material. In other countries such as Austria, the EPR-system does not include flooring.

EPLF position on collection and recycling of laminate flooring:

- Laminate floorings are made with (minimum 65% and up to 80%) wood<sup>1</sup>.
- Laminate floorings should be collected with wood.
- Ideally, laminate floorings should be sorted at the collection point.
- Some solutions already exist to separate MDF from other wood-based products (e.g. by sensor-based technologies) once it reaches the recycling plant and we expect more will hit the market in the near future.
- While laminate is mainly recovered as energy, it can be recycled rarely into chipboards or turned into pellets. Industry is testing various technologies including recycling of MDF/laminate flooring panels by steaming into wood fibres and reuse of these fibres in new HDF/MDF products.
- With the energy crisis looming, the contribution of laminate flooring to generating heating in Europe should not be under-estimated.

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<sup>1</sup> with some manufacturers reporting up to 90% wood content.