

Press Release

Brussels, 7 May 2019

The European Panel Federation strongly supports the Single Market – EPF calls for European harmonisation of E1 as the minimum allowable standard, and for ½ E1 as a new market class.

The European Wood-based Panel Federation (EPF) clarifies the common position of its members following developments in market, regulatory and judicial affairs, and with the unanimous agreement of its General Assembly given on 3 April 2019 in Brussels.

EPF strongly supports the single European market. It endorses harmonised standards across all EU-28 Member States. EPF welcomes the decision of the European Court of Justice in case T-229/17 on 10 April 2019, as it upholds the common European requirements of the Construction Products Regulation (CPR). This prevents fragmentation and the possible introduction of specific requirements by individual Member States. EPF feared the confusion that this could have caused to consumers.

European wood-based panels are used for furniture, construction, packaging and many other applications. CE-marked panels are produced according to EN 13986, the harmonised European standard for wood-based panels for use in construction. This defines two classes for formaldehyde emissions being E2 and E1. EPF members have committed since 2007 to make only E1 (or lower).

With its project E1 Compulsory, EPF seeks to ensure that no panels circulate in Europe with an emission level above that permitted by E1. ECHA's recent proposal for a restriction recommends to: "... restrict the placing on the market or the use of all articles releasing formaldehyde at concentrations greater than or equal to 0.124 mg/m³ in the air of a test chamber used under the conditions prescribed in EN 717-1." This matches E1, the ambition of EPF, and is thus supported.

With its project New Standard, EPF wishes to respond to market demand by adding a new class to the harmonised European standards to be known as ½ E1, with emission limits set at half the value of E1, tested according to EN 717-1. A request for such an additional class (see Annex for further details) has been made to the European Commission and CEN (European Committee for Standardization), asking for the fastest possible introduction, and is currently under consideration.

Chairman Dr Paolo Fantoni comments: "EPF members expect for E1 to be confirmed EU-wide as the minimum requirement for concerned panels by the current restriction process, thus delivering greater regulatory control, and for ½ E1 to be introduced as a new voluntary European class as soon as possible, thus responding to market demand". Precise timings, especially for ½ E1, remain open due to various issues, including available testing capacity.

EPF urges caution on any demands for panels that go beyond these, especially if they infringe CPR which delivers common European requirements and a level playing field for construction products, including wood-based panels. EPF will give the latest update on the rapidly evolving topics of E1 and ½ E1, as well as on other EPF activities at its Press Conference to be held on Tuesday, 21 May 2019 at Interzum in Cologne. All press contacts are warmly invited to attend.