

# Cribs and mattresses: what has changed from the 1990s to the present

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**T**he history of standardization regarding cribs dates back to 1996 when the **parts 1 and 2 of EN 1130-1** were published. Italy adopted them as a national standard in 1998. A very simple standard, compared to the current documents concerning the safety of children's products; this also due to the fact that it was structured and designed, obviously, during those years and for the market of those years.

The cradle is obviously used as children sleeping place for a short period of their life, from birth to a few months, until the child has grown and is no longer able to stay inside, or since he is able to stay sitting alone. It is important that cradles are safe products because the child is left inside for many hours and often without the adult supervision. In the eighties and nineties, very simple cradles could be found on the market, often made up of a wicker basket or a covered structure and a frame. In those years, as nowadays, it often frequent to use cradles provided by relatives or friends, in some cases dating back to some decades before.

The standard EN 1130:1996, currently still in force (up to July 2019), applies to cots for domestic use and defines the safety requirements. It is divided into two parts:

- part 1: security requirements
- part 2: test methods.

**Part 1** lists a series of **requirements relating to materials, construction (openings, edges, ...), the base of the bed, the sides and ends, stability, packaging, instructions and product marking.**

In **part 2 the equipment description and the test methods** to be used in order to verify the requirements are described. The mattresses inside these cribs were usually made to measure and sold with the cradle; at that time none specific standard on these products was available.

Even the way children sleep, as well as the products put on the market, has changed a lot over the years; in those years the children, from the suggestion of pediatricians, were positioned to sleep prone or on their side. Over time and as a result of many studies and research, the supine position is now considered the safest. In fact, over the years, there has been a decrease in SIDS cases (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) following the recommendation by pediatricians to let the children sleep in a supine position.

A further advice is precious: avoid high temperatures in the place where the child sleeps and use sufficiently "hard" mattresses.



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The first standard on mattresses for children was published just in 2017, drafted on behalf of the European Commission: compliance with its requirements gives presumption of conformity to the General Product Safety Directive.

The standard is the **EN 16890: 2017 + AC: 2017** and it lists a series of requirements that take into consideration the “hardness” of the surface where the child sleeps, as well as its composition and dimensions. The standard includes

- chemical and thermal requirements: the mattress have to be produced with non-hazardous materials and have to comply with specific fire reaction requirements;
- dimensional requirements: the dimensions declared by the manufacturer have not to deviate too much from the actual measurements, so as to avoid entrapment between the mattress and the crib/cot, especially when the two products are sold separately.

So, coming to today, the new standard on cradles should be shortly published (it is expected by the end of the year). This revision also takes into account the new products introduced on the market. In fact, in addition to the classic cradle, the document has also been studied for suspended cribs and bedsides sleepers, both for domestic and non-domestic use. Hospitals are excluded.

These products have been introduced on the market during recent years and are therefore currently not covered by any standard. Another very important point: this standard was also prepared on the mandate of the European Commission. Compared to the previous version, the most important changes are the following:

- both parts are included in a single document, with requirements and test methods combined;
- the structure of the standard has been modified according to a risk assessment approach;
- the addition of specific requirements for suspended cribs and bedsides sleepers;
- the addition of the requirements concerning chemical and thermal risks.

Over the years, cribs and mattresses have undergone a remarkable change and new products have also been introduced on the market, more and more responsive to the needs of the modern parents. To do this, perhaps much more abroad than in Italy, the bedsides sleepers become increasingly popular. These products, a few generations ago, would have had not any market opportunity. Over the years, the way of thinking and raising children has changed a lot, habits have changed and the fact that once the child stayed to sleep in his room has been replaced by the fact that today we feel the need to sleep with the child next to us. As a consequence, standardization had to take this change into account, following the market and the new knowledge acquired over the years; the drafting of standards concerning childhood furniture is a great responsibility and should be done by placing risk reduction as the main objective. The final goal is indeed to ensure that designed and manufactured products are safe.

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