How can the authenticity of a CATAS test report be verified?

Matteo Tosolini, Sara Gelormini

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We are often asked the following question: how can the authenticity of a CATAS test report be verified? The answer is simple: by checking its digital signature.
CATAS introduced the digital signature of its test reports in 2006 and its use gradually increased until 2019, the year in which CATAS decided to no longer issue paper test reports with handwritten signature.
A test report that has been digitally signed has references to the digital signature and the signer at the bottom of it.

This document is validated by digital signature and time stamping in accordance with the Italian laws and the European Directives which regulate the electronic signature systems.

Managing Director
Dr. Franco Bulian

...e sample name and, when relevant, its description, are given by the orderer, and C... ...mple submitted for the test and no others. Additions, deletions or alterations are not

But these references are not enough to ensure the authenticity of the document. You have to use some software to recognize the digital signature. In this article we use Adobe Acrobat Reader DC, a popular PDF viewer.

How to check the digital signature of a test report with Adobe Acrobat Reader DC
Open the test report with Adobe Acrobat Reader DC. All the information regarding the signature is displayed on the "Signature Panel" (choose View > Show/Hide > Navigation Panels > Signatures, or click the Signature Panel button in the document message bar).
There are three possible cases:

1. A digital signature is detected and the message "*Signed, all signatures are valid*" is displayed. The digital signature is regular. You have to verify that the digital signer is the same person indicated at the bottom of the test report. In this case **the test report is valid**.

2. A digital signature is detected and the message "*The validity of the document certification is UNKNOWN. The author could not be verified*" or "*The signature is valid, but revocation of the signer's identity could not be checked* " is displayed. It means that the signature is valid, the document has not been modified after the signature, but the certificate used to sign the document has expired. The unaltered test report is **most likely valid** but to be absolutely sure it is necessary to contact us.

3. If no digital signature is detected (signature panel not present) or the signature panel reports other errors, the document
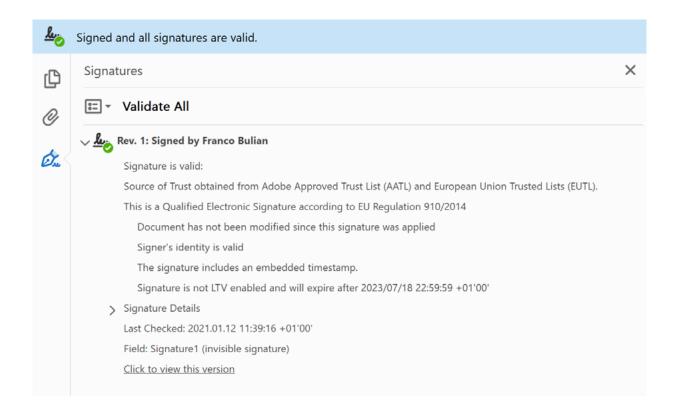
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is **potentially counterfeit**. Authenticity, paternity and integrity are not guaranteed. To check its validity, it is necessary to contact us.

The absence of the digital signature does not necessarily mean that there has been an intentional modification of the document. It is very easy to accidentally invalidate a digital signature: a note entered by mistake or a "Save As" made by some PDF Viewers can invalidate the document. On the other hand, quite often we discover intentionally tampered test reports with fake results / dates / descriptions. So, we confirm the basic rule: **a test report without digital signature has no legal value**. The same applies to **a digitally signed test report printed on paper**: **the hard copy has no legal value** as it is not possible to assess the integrity of the signature.
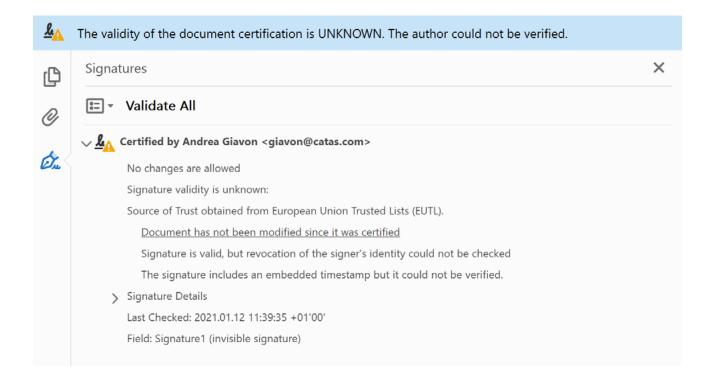
Examples of information that can be viewed on the "signature panel" of Acrobat Reader. In the first case the test report is regular. In the second case, it is possible that the signature is regular but that the certificate of signature has expired.

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For info:

Matteo Tosolini
+39 0432 747223
tosolini@catas.com

Sara Gelormini
+39 0432 747220
gelormini@catas.com