

The beginnings

It was the **year 1990** when CATAS was the Italian reference laboratory for a product certification concerning formaldehyde emission from panels on behalf of a major German institute. The certification attested that the panels belonged to class E1, which was not yet compulsory in Italy but strongly requested in Germany. Catas was in charge of inspections and tests and then sent all periodic reports to the Nuremberg institute.

However, it was perceived that this model had more than a few shortcomings for the Italian companies involved, with difficulties related in particular to communication, not only in terms of contacts with the German institute (language problem), but above all in relation to the information that certified companies wished to provide to the market. In fact, there was no brand name, and the name of the German institute itself was not so well known in Italy as to arouse immediate recognition of the authoritativeness of the certification obtained.

On the other hand, Catas was working hard on this front, being present above all at the European regulatory tables where the standards for the analysis and control of formaldehyde emissions from panels were being defined. The large number of tests carried out by CATAS meant that the technicians taking part in these tables were considered to be among the most “expert” and were therefore involved in the “ad hoc groups” and in experimental research on the methods being defined. The authority of CATAS, therefore, grew until BAM, the German Federal Institute for Construction, **asked in 1991 for the designation of a Catas technician to the group of experts supporting the German government** in the definition of national legislation on the emission of formaldehyde from panels.

Thus, the Catas Quality Award was born. It was the customers of Catas themselves who urged and supported this quality mark for the wood and furniture sector which, among its peculiarities in addition to seriousness and authority, also had the strength of being Italian.



Our technicians at the beginning of the 90's if in possession of Catas certification.



First CQA logo

In 1991, the **first regulations and proposals** were prepared with some timid approaches by some companies.

However, **in 1993 there was the definitive turning point** with as many as three companies certified for the low emission of formaldehyde from panels. **Success was immediate** with appreciation and recognition even from demanding markets such as Germany, which in some cases led some manufacturers to declare that Italian semi-finished products were only accepted

The certification of paints

After these initial positive experiences, the field of certification expanded to include other products and paints in particular. **We are still in the 1990s** and one of the many hot topics was that of **paints for windows and doors**. In fact, the first European standards were being studied, which in fact filled a gap in the rules that had always been felt, especially in our country.

On the initiative of an Italian association of window and door manufacturers, research was started in 1997 to check whether the paint products sold on the Italian market complied with the standards being drawn up by the European Technical Committee CEN/TC 112.

The disappointing results of this research, which was carried out experimentally by Catas, left all the numerous participants truly perplexed, immediately making them feel the need, on the one hand, to follow the European standardisation work more closely and, on the other, to reconsider the formulations of paint products in the light of the European rules being defined. From the negative results of the Italian research, made public by articles and debated at various conferences, **arose the need to enhance paint products, or rather, coating systems that met the strict European standards.**

Here too, success was immediate; the European standards and **CATAS certification quickly became the basis for market comparison.**

Today, in 2023, there are **around 50 certifications** covering coatings, including some foreign manufacturers for both exterior and interior wood coating cycles.



Glulam Beams for window frames

Even in the area of glulam profiles for window and door frames, the market felt the lack of objective evidence of product quality, which, in some cases, gave rise to **significant problems**, such as the appearance of cracks or even delamination phenomena in the elements making up the profiles.



This was also **the 1990s**, and the experience of Catas, also in this case combined with European standards, led to **the definition of practical rules** concerning wood humidity controls, processing times, types of adhesives and relative quantities applied...

Eventually, combining these rules with product controls, a certification was born that some profile manufacturers requested directly from Catas during one of the many meetings that our institute organised to talk about standards and good working practices.

To date, there are several certifications in this area with a still growing interest on the part of the market.

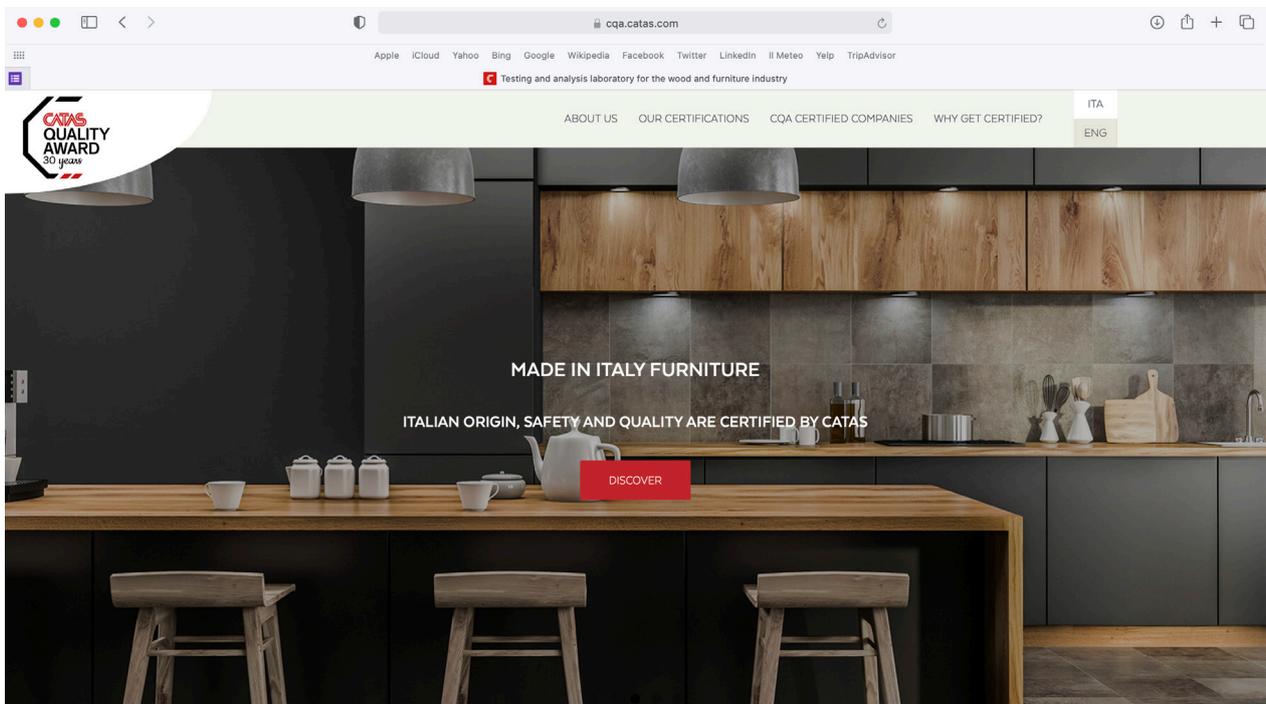
Made in Italy

In more recent years, we are now in 2018, CATAS certification has taken on a **new challenge**, namely that of **certifying a finished product**, thus aiming directly at the end user with a mark that attests not only to the Italian origin, but also to the quality of a piece of furniture.

The certification of Italian origin made its official debut at a major world furniture fair, the Orgatec in Cologne. For the first time, products from Italian companies were presented to an important international audience accompanied by the Catas mark that distinguishes furniture certified according to the UNI11674 standard: *“Furniture - Requirements for determining the Italian origin of furniture”*.

If in all previous experiences the effectiveness of the mark was linked to the recognition of the authority of Catas within the production market, the **Made in Italy by Catas** certification represents a considerable leap forward with a mark aimed at the entire market.

At the end of 2022, **there are some thirty certifications** with a lively interest in this new proposal.



Discover all the products certified CQA - CATAS Quality Award



Present and future

To date, there are **more than 200 certified products**.

Many of these concern the emission of formaldehyde from panels and also include those mandatory for the American market (CARB and EPA) for which Catas has been accredited since 2014 in accordance with UNI CEI EN ISO/IEC 17065.

Alongside the schemes already mentioned, others have sprung up to meet the demand of increasingly aware users of products that are not **only safe but also sustainable and environmentally friendly**.

One example is the **Catas Quality Award Safe, Durable and Sustainable certification** for coating systems, which combines the concept of quality performance with that of chemical safety and sustainability.

A scheme has also been created for furniture that rewards **low emission of volatile organic acids (VOC)** to respond to market sensitivity towards products that do not harm the health of those who use them.

In the wake of this **new-found consumer awareness, flooring manufacturers** have also shown great interest in the **new Catas regulation for wood flooring and parquet**, which, in addition to surface and mechanical performance requirements for the plank substrate, **guarantees the safety of the end consumer** by requiring **low emission of toxic substances (VOC)**.

Conclusions

For us at Catas, product certification is much more than just a scheme, a regulation or a mark. The spirit that drives certification is the desire to **instil confidence in all users** that the certified product, and consequently the company that produces it, is constantly aligned with the market requirements dictated by the relevant technical standards. As we know, in the furniture industry, standards are constantly evolving and **the certification body must constantly update its regulations**. This updating in turn affects the tests and checks that are carried out on **the certified product**, which must always **comply with the requirements of the most up-to-date regulations and laws**.

But there is more: a certification is realised in the **ongoing relationship between the company and Catas**.

What does this mean? It means that a path towards improvement is inevitably shared between these two realities, a path along which any criticalities or defects are discussed and assessed to create a **virtuous circle** that leads the producer to do more and better!

We would like to strongly emphasise this aspect: the function of a certification process is not only to certify the quality of a product over time but also **to help make it better and better**.

*Dedicated to all the companies that have accompanied us
these 30 years...
Thank you!*

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