



## Mattresses and technical standards

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At the end of the 1970s it was still the tradition among Italian furniture dealers to throw in either a mattress or a picture of the Madonna when young couples were buying their first set of bedroom furniture. It's not out of disrespect that I am drawing attention the low commercial value held by mattresses in the past. There are a few exceptions, but generally, a mattress was considered an accessory in the Italian furnishing business. There was no point in wasting resources to ensure the quality of its technical characteristics, production system and performance ("never look a gift horse...").

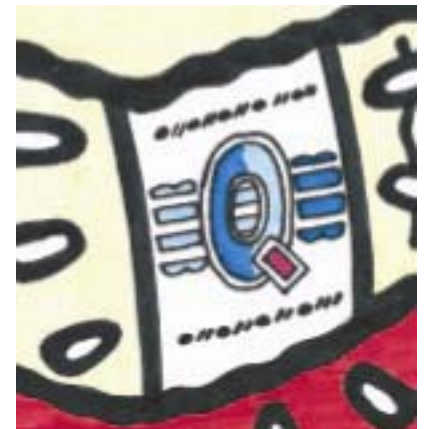
Whereas in the rest of Europe, and particularly in Germany (at the Nuremberg institute of furniture testing), mattresses were studied and researched scientifically, bringing resulting in a definition for test methods and basic requirements, making it possible to classify them objectively in terms of performance. This methodology was then used when European standards were created.

At the end of the 1980s the CEN (European Committee for Standardization) included among its projects the drafting of standards for mattresses (and beds), defining a precise work programme, organised into four European Norms (EN): the first three concern safety requirements and the relative test methods (EN 1725), methods for determining functional characteristics (EN 1957) and measuring methods and recommended tolerances (EN 1334); the fourth standard (EN 597) is subdivided into four parts and concerns the ignitability of mattresses and ignition sources.

All the above standards (with the exception of the final two parts of EN 597) have been completed. It is worth remembering that these norms have been acknowledged by all European standard makers, thereby synchronizing technical standards, an indispensable requirement for the free marketing and sale of mattresses in the European Union.

In Italy, UNI (Ente nazionale italiano di unificazione - *Italian National Unification Organisation*) has published the UNI 10707 standard (Mattresses: test methods and requirements), currently being revised to bring it in line with the needs of users, and it has started working on standards for mattresses in children's beds and cots.

In conclusion, it can be said that the mattress's right to dignity has been acknowledged: it is a device for sleeping and resting, and therefore must be studied scientifically, standardised and produced in such a way that it provides a level of performance that can guaranteed by predefined objective test methods. These norms make it possible for specialist independent institutions to certify mattresses, enabling the customer to buy a product without being met by unpleasant surprises as regards lifespan, hygiene, performance and comfort. In other words, a mattress whose quality has been tested and certified.



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