



INSPIRED

Certification
at VS

www.vs.de/de/



VS Vereinigte Spezialmöbelfabriken GmbH & Co. KG is Germany's leading manufacturer of school furniture, with a global brand presence. Our family-run organisation is also a successful supplier of fittings for office buildings and construction projects.

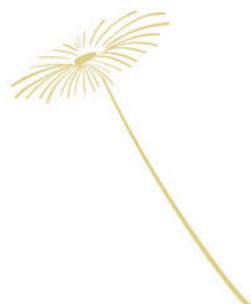
The issue of sustainability has long been an important focus. As a company, we have always considered it our responsibility to commit to **measures that benefit people, whilst protecting the natural environment**. As a result, we manufacture outstanding products under economically sensible conditions, which is key to our success.

We deliberately control our energy consumption by keeping well below the permitted limit values in our new building projects, continuously improving our energy performance. Thanks to modern system technology, we are becoming increasingly more economical in our use of resources during production. **Workplaces and workstations are ergonomically designed** to create a well-being environment, where employees can perform at their best and continue to develop.

To improve our approach to sustainability and make it increasingly transparent, we have developed a systematic corporate approach in the form of a sustainability pyramid. To do this, we have defined company and product-related sustainability modules and assigned these to various levels.

This provides us with an overview of how modules interrelate. The aim is to be able to evaluate any new requirements quickly and thoroughly, implementing them as and when appropriate.

In this brochure, we bring together information about our **systems for ensuring sustainability**, highlighting the most important certificates and standards at VS.



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Sustainability at VS
Version: 2019

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Do you have any concrete examples?

Many! We were one of the first furniture manufacturers to introduce water-based paint systems, over 20 years ago. As a result, we've long been able to keep well within the legal limit values for volatile solvents. The WC flushes in the administrative building are supplied from the extinguishing water pond which, in turn, is fed by the collected rain water.

Extending our commitment to occupational health is equally important. For example, making sure that all workplaces are ergonomically designed, from production to administration. Also included are relaxation and back fitness courses - or short daily training programmes during working hours that specifically target the physical strains involved in certain production sectors. These are just a few examples on how we promote well-being.

Mr. Müller, what is VS's approach to sustainability

An interview with VS's Managing Director, Philipp Müller.

What does sustainability mean for VS?

Sustainability covers many aspects. These include protection of the climate and the natural environment, but equally, responsibility for our employees and our social environment. Consequently, it forms an underlying principle which should be thought of as a guideline - the goal being to promote and maintain a fair and decent society. Of course, it's a very ambitious goal and by no means easy to achieve consistently in every area of the business. However, this does provide an on-going incentive to take a hard look at ourselves, so that we can continuously improve certain areas in terms of sustainability. That's the challenge!

Where and how does sustainability manifest itself at VS?

Quality, environmental and energy policies have been part of our corporate philosophy for decades. We consider it to be an important corporate principle to make responsible use of natural resources and minimise the environmental impact of production, transport and disposal. We want to be able to offer our customers safe, long-life products, all manufactured in a way that contributes as much as possible to environmental protection.



We are extremely economical in our use of energy. For example, we've modified the cycle steps in the powder coating plant so that less energy is consumed per carrier. We generate electricity in our own cogeneration plant, use renewable energies and produce heat using wood chips from operations in order to reduce CO₂ emissions. We've installed district heating pipelines to reduce energy losses during transportation to the plants and we also remind our employees regularly to help save electricity wherever possible.

We ensure our furniture has a modular design that permits recycling. For transporting orders, we use recyclable packaging material and also re-use packaging, such as furniture covers, wherever possible. Although our products are very durable, we do offer a spare-parts service. We also recover end-of-life furniture, disassemble it in our recycling yard and reintroduce usable salvage into the materials circuit via certified partner companies.

What do you do to ensure sustainable supply chains?

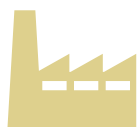
Naturally, we impose certain obligations on our suppliers by developing a supplier guideline, which must confirm their adherence in writing. It deals with compliance in human rights, working conditions, environmental and energy standards and business ethics. However, we also do our own evaluation of on-site conditions by conducting supplier audits, to check whether our requirements are actually being met.

As a business, is it possible to combine sustainability with economic success?

Yes, really well in fact! As a family-owned company since 1898, the long-term, cross-generational - that is to say sustainable - success of the company is more important to us than maximising short-term profits. Therefore, it's in our very nature to be interested in shaping a future that offers a high quality of life, in which we can achieve continued success.

What do you do personally to live in a sustainable way?

Along with many of our employees, I buy fruit and vegetables from the VS kitchen garden during the summer, which we run according to organic principles. When away on business, I prefer to take the train and avoid travelling by car or plane whenever possible. In addition to that, many lengthy business trips can be negated by organising video-conferences of course. Weather permitting, I also enjoy cycling to work!



The VS sustainability system

We have developed a systematic corporate approach in the form of a sustainability pyramid in order to make it increasingly transparent, allowing us to assess and improve it more easily. To do this, we have defined relevant corporate and product-related modules and assigned these to different levels within the pyramid.

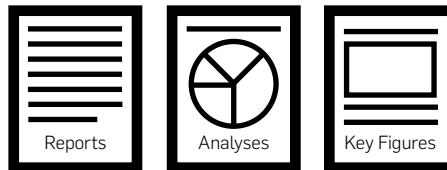


Company-related certificates

How does a company act in the role of manufacturer, property owner, employer and social stakeholder? What principles underpin its actions? What is the quality of its processes and are these clearly defined and documented? Various management standards define minimum requirements in these areas, helping to guide companies by providing the underlying criteria for external certification.



Various basic modules are involved in obtaining DIN EN ISO certification.



Company-related certificates Management systems

Quality management system DIN EN ISO 9001

Certification in accordance with ISO 9001 forms the basis for the continuous improvement of the company's internal quality management system. Quality management comprises all activities, including the definition of the associated competences and responsibilities - contributing in some way to achieving the organisation's quality objectives.

The principles underpinning quality management are: Customer orientation, management responsibility, involvement of stakeholders, process-oriented approach, continuous improvement, a factually based approach to decision-making and mutually beneficial supplier relations.

Environmental management system DIN EN ISO 14001

The ISO 14001 standard provides a framework for organisations, allowing them to protect the environment and respond to changing environmental circumstances in a way that dovetails with socio-economic needs. The organisation's sustainable development is made possible by a systematic approach in the following areas: Environmental protection, reduction of the impact of unfavourable environmental circumstances on the organisation, improved environmental performance, environmentally oriented alignment of the entire product lifecycle, achievement of economic benefits through the use of environmentally responsible alternatives and communication of environmental information.

Energy management system DIN EN ISO 50001

The standard refers to the factors an enterprise is able to influence and can be adapted to meet individual requirements - resulting in a systematic and

continuous improvement of energy efficiency. The purpose of energy management is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts, as well as cutting energy costs. The enterprise typically installs systems and implements processes that are necessary in order to improve energy consumption, energy usage and energy efficiency performance.

Validity

DIN EN ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO 50001 are internationally recognised. For each of these, recertification takes place every three years. VS has been certified in accordance with ISO 9001 since 1996, has had ISO 14001 certification since 2004 and ISO 50001 certification since 2016.



The CSR and sustainability report

Since 22nd September 2008, VS has been a member of the United Nations Global Compact, the world's largest initiative for sustainable and responsible corporate management. As a result, we have committed ourselves to integrating ten universally acknowledged principles into our corporate policy. We document our objectives, the measures we have taken and the progress we have achieved each year in a public report.



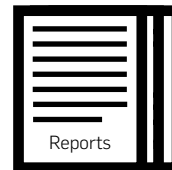


The purpose of the "Communication on Progress" report is to demonstrate how the ten UNGC principles are integrated in the corporate policy. This is documented, for example, by PEFC, the management certificates and numerous other documents.



Managementsystem
ISO 9001:2008
ISO 14001:2004
ISO 50001:2011

www.tuv.com
ID 9108613948



Communication on Progress The UN Global Compact

What is the UN Global Compact?

The United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) is one of the best-known initiatives for promoting responsible corporate practices. It has a membership of approximately 10,000 companies from 159 countries (status: June 2019). Through their voluntary commitment, members demonstrate good entrepreneurial practice and assume social responsibility in their core businesses. The UNGC is primarily a forum for learning and debate designed to identify exemplary best practices - to be adopted and implemented by other companies.

What are the commitments involved in a UN Global Compact membership?

Companies who join the UNGC undertake to incorporate the ten principles in their corporate strategies and implement them in all active countries and regions. These principles are subdivided into four areas: Protection of human rights, adherence to social and employment standards, environmental protection and the fight against corruption.

Every year, the members of the UNGC must publish proof of their social commitment in the form of a CSR and sustainability report on the UNGC website. This is the so-called Communication on Progress (COP). This reports on the implementation status of the ten principles, as well as on activities and progress in the promotion of sustainable development. The reports must fulfil certain criteria.

Validity

VS has been a voluntary member of the UN Global Compact since 2008. Since 2009, the company has published the obligatory annual self-declaration known as the "Communication on Progress" on the UNGC's web pages.



Certificates relating to product sustainability

The following pages list the comprehensive, higher-level sustainability standards according to which VS products are certified. In each case, certification is based on full consideration of the product – from the selection of the materials, through to the delivery of the furniture. The areas of energy, environmental impacts and social considerations are examined.





Product sustainability BIFMA e3 level

BIFMA e3 level is the sustainability standard of the association of American furniture manufacturers BIFMA (Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association). This is an assessment and certification system for environmentally friendly and socially responsible school, office and other non-residential furniture.

What criteria is the certificate based on?

Enterprises, sites and products are assessed in accordance with the criteria of environmental impacts, health/wellness impacts and social responsibility.

The BIFMA-level programme has three performance levels: Levels 1, 2 and 3. The higher the number, the more criteria is taken into account and met.

Validity

Since October 2013, most VS products have been certified in accordance with BIFMA e3 level. During the recertification in 2016, all the certified products received the highest level (3) of the applicable BIFMA certification, i.e. Platinum.

Other

The European counterpart of BIFMA e3 level is the European Level certificate (page 15).

With this certificate, we can help our customers during the certification of buildings. For example, in accordance with LEED (page 15) or Living Building Challenge.



Product sustainability Cradle to Cradle Certified™

"Cradle to Cradle" is underpinned by the idea of a waste-free economy that thinks exclusively in terms of cycles, i.e. circular value-added chains. All the employed materials are part of a natural or technical cycle. Thus, all waste in the conventional sense is avoided because all materials are reused or recycled - or can be composted without leaving harmful residue. .

What criteria is the certificate based on?

The "Cradle to Cradle Certified" label testifies to the fact that: The manufacture of the tested product only makes use of materials judged to be harmless in terms of their impact on humans and the environment (Material Health); the employed raw materials are reused (Material Re-utilisation); production is characterised by the careful use of energy (Renewable Energy) and attention is paid to water (Water Stewardship) and social responsibility (Social Fairness).

How is the certificate awarded?

Individual products are certified on the basis of the following criteria: materials/health, material re-utilisation, use of renewable energies, water and wastewater treatment and social responsibility. The certificate is awarded in one of five levels depending on the results: Basic, Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum.

Validity at VS

VS's JUMPER Air Active is the first chair designed for school and office use to successfully pass the demanding Silver certification process. The Pan-toSwing-LuPo school chair also has Silver certification. The Uno-C and Euro-line tables have been awarded Bronze certification (c2ccertified.org/products/). The certificate is recognised worldwide and is valid for two years.

Other

Cradle to Cradle Certified™ wird von vielen führenden Marken und Organisationen als bevorzugte Produktzertifizierung anerkannt.



During certification in accordance with European Level, some of the required documentary evidence is provided by these certificates.



Product sustainability European Level (FEMB)

European Level is a certification program developed by the European furniture association FMB in order to boost the sustainability of school, office and other non-domestic furniture. It has been accredited by the Deutsche Akkreditierungsstelle GmbH (DAkKS). It makes it possible to assess furniture in terms of its ecological and social impacts.

What criteria is the certificate based on?

European Level comprehensively sets out the sustainability-related requirements that school, office and other non-residential furniture needs to meet. The certification process examines the products themselves, their manufacture and the organisational framework in terms of four criteria:

Material: The influence of the materials on the sustainability of the products is evaluated - as are the efficient use of natural resources, product development, the proportion of recyclable materials, water and wastewater management, packaging and the product lifecycle.

Energy and Atmosphere: This aspect comprises, among other things, the development of an enterprise-specific energy policy, covering energy and greenhouse gas audits, the generation and use of renewable energies, the grey energy associated with products and reports on greenhouse gas emissions.

Human and ecosystem health: This criterion takes account, for example, the impact on humans and the natural environment. It considers the products, production processes, plus the measures taken regarding the maintenance and upkeep of production facilities.

Social Responsibility: This aspect makes it possible to identify and avoid hazards for employees and the environment. The criteria covers inclusiveness, the compa-

ny's commitment to the community and society, plus the importance of social responsibility in the supply chain.

How is the certificate awarded?

The certificate is awarded by independent, accredited certification bodies. The certificate is awarded in one of three levels:

- Level 1 (Basis),
- Level 2 (Medium) and
- Level 3 (Advanced).

Validity at VS

VS was the first company to be certified in accordance with the "European Level" standard, which was introduced in 2018. Around 50 certified products have achieved the highest level (3) (level-certified.eu/certified-products/). Recertification is performed every three years.

Other

The certificate is the counterpart of the US-American BIFMA e3 level (page 13).



Certificates relating to product and user safety



The certificates presented below relate to clearly defined aspects of sustainability. For example, to pollutant loads, the origins of the raw materials or to product safety. Certification involves a large number of basic modules in the form of core processes and statutory minimum requirements.



VS sustainability

VS sustainability pyramid

At the lowest level of our sustainability pyramid are the basic modules. These include a parts lists, key figures for water and electricity consumption, process descriptions for disposal of end-of-life furniture, manufacturing, packaging and operating instructions - plus many other elements.

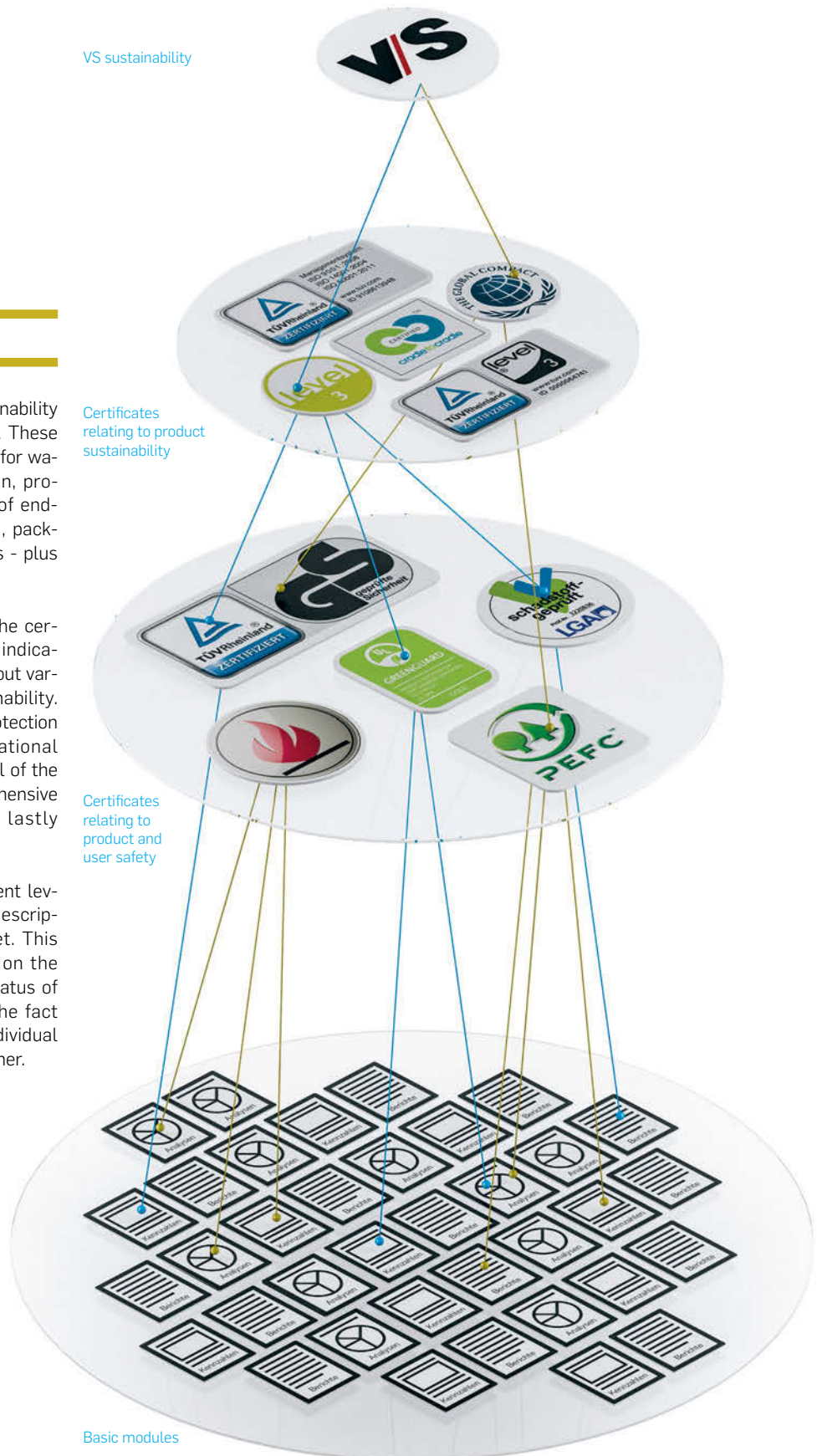
Above the basic modules are the certificates and key performance indicators that provide information about various specific aspects of sustainability. For example, environmental protection or our commitment to occupational health and safety. The next level of the pyramid consists of our comprehensive sustainability standards and lastly "sustainability at VS" at the top.

For each element on the different levels of the pyramid, there is a description in the form of a fact sheet. This contains detailed information on the associated requirements and status of their implementation at VS. The fact sheet also clarifies how the individual elements interact with one another.

Certificates
relating to product
sustainability

Certificates
relating to product and
user safety

Basic modules





The "LGA pollutant-tested" label provides important documentary evidence regarding constituents and emissions for European Level. In turn, the certificate involves other product certificates and basic modules.



Product and user safety LGA pollutant-tested

The "LGA pollutant-tested" label involves the testing of materials for their constituent, as well as pollutant, emissions. This guarantees the pollutant limit values correspond to (or are well within) the legal requirements. Given the current extent of our knowledge, no risk to health is expected to result from using these products.

What criteria is the certificate based on?

The label is awarded on a product group-specific basis for the following test criteria:

- Limitation of formaldehyde emissions
- Limit values for the emission of carcinogenic or mutagenic substances, or substances that are toxic for reproduction
- Limitation of wood preservative content
- Limitation of content of various heavy metals
- Products must not contain any PVC
- The use of organic halogen compounds and plasticisers are not permitted

To provide proof of this, it is also necessary to submit seamless evidence for all employed materials and components in the form of manufacturers' declarations, plus corresponding evidence from supplier companies.

Validity at VS

Most of the materials used at VS are LGA pollutant-tested. The certificate applies to one of six product groups in each case:

- Students' tables and table systems
- Upholstered students' and multipurpose chairs
- Upholstered students' and multipurpose chairs
- Students' and multipurpose chairs with plastic seats, plastic backrests, upholstered and non-upholstered
- Boards and projection surfaces
- Storage and cabinet-type units for school and office use

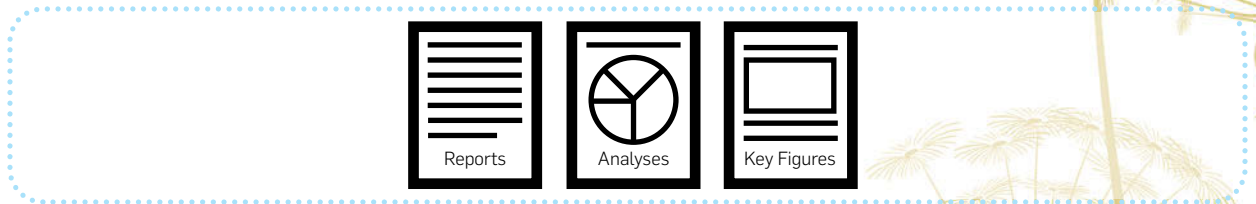
The certificate is recognised throughout Germany. After the initial test has been successfully passed, there is an annual follow-up test.

Other

LGA pollutant-tested is the counterpart of the US-American Greenguard certificate (page 18). It is comparable to the German "Blue Angel" (Blauer Engel) certificate (page 24) and the Nordic Ecolabel (Nordic Swan).



Various basic modules from the VS sustainability pyramid are a prerequisite for Greenguard. The certificate itself is taken into account for European Level certification.



Product and user safety Greenguard

The Greenguard certificate confirms product compliance with the upper limits of chemical emissions for use in office and other indoor spaces. Gold level Greenguard certification defines more stringent criteria for products used in schools, child day care centres, or other environments in which children are present for extended periods. Many of VS's furniture products have the "Greenguard" or "Greenguard Gold" certificate.

What criteria is the certificate based on?

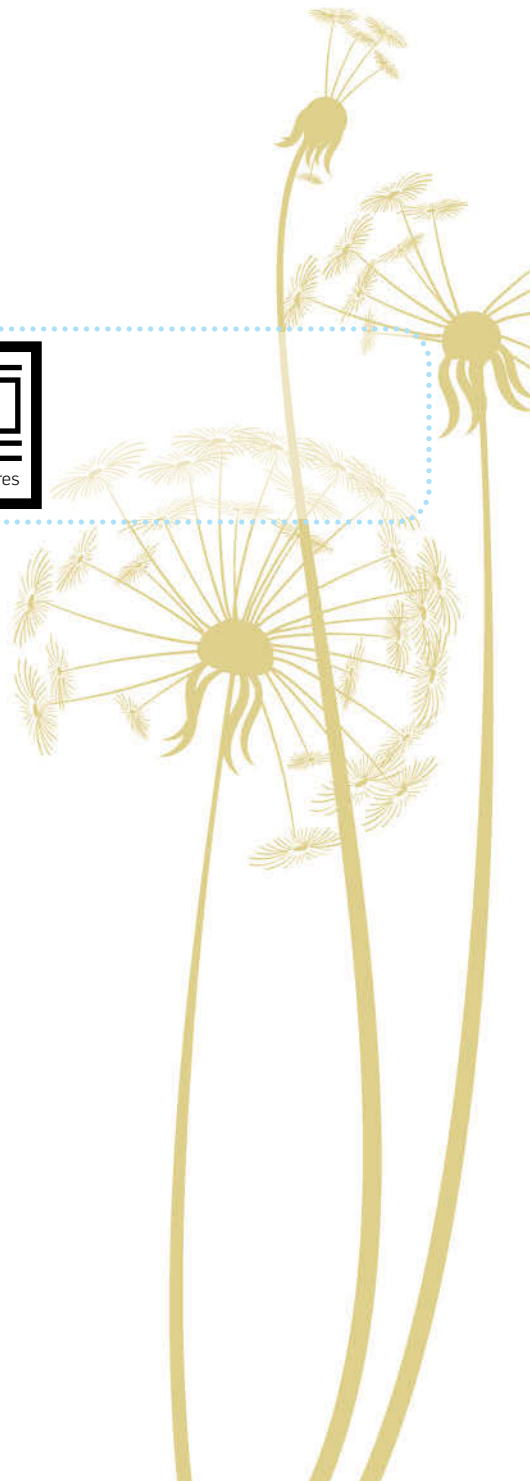
The test methods used for Greenguard Indoor Air Quality certification (listed as "Certified") or Greenguard Children & Schools certification (listed as "Gold") are comparable with those used in Germany. The certificate is recognised worldwide and renewed each year.

Validity at VS

So far, approximately 90 VS products are listed with Greenguard via VS America Inc. This list can be consulted by the public (greenguard.org under the sub-menu "find products").

Other

Greenguard is the US-American counterpart of LGA pollutant-tested (page 17).





Product and user safety

PEFC

PEFC stands for "Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes". The certificate is designed to testify a sustainable approach to forestry and its continuous improvement, while ensuring compliance with ecological, social and economic standards.

What criteria is the certificate based on?

With regard to wood and wood products, the route taken by the timber from forest cultivation, through the product chain (chain of custody), must be traceable.

Validity at VS

Since September 2014, VS has been approved to use the PEFC logo for its furniture containing wooden components manufactured at the Tauberbischofsheim site. All series products manufactured by VS from wood, or wood-based materials, are 100% certified.

The certificate is valid worldwide and is monitored on an annual basis.



The GS label plays an important role in achieving European Level certification. Various types of documentary evidence provided by means of the basic modules are pre-requisites for GS.



Product and user safety GS "safety tested" label.

The "safety tested" label (GS label) testifies to the general fitness for use of products.

What criteria is the certificate based on?

Products with the GS "safety tested" label are tested by an accredited laboratory on the basis of German product safety legislation. The main requirements are set out in DIN and European standards. Testing is performed at the manufacturer's request and is free-of-charge. The certification authority TÜV Rheinland LGA Products GmbH performs testing for VS.

Validity

All series products manufactured by VS have the GS "safety tested" label. The certificate is valid throughout Germany and remains valid for the certified product for five years.



Product and user safety

Fire protection

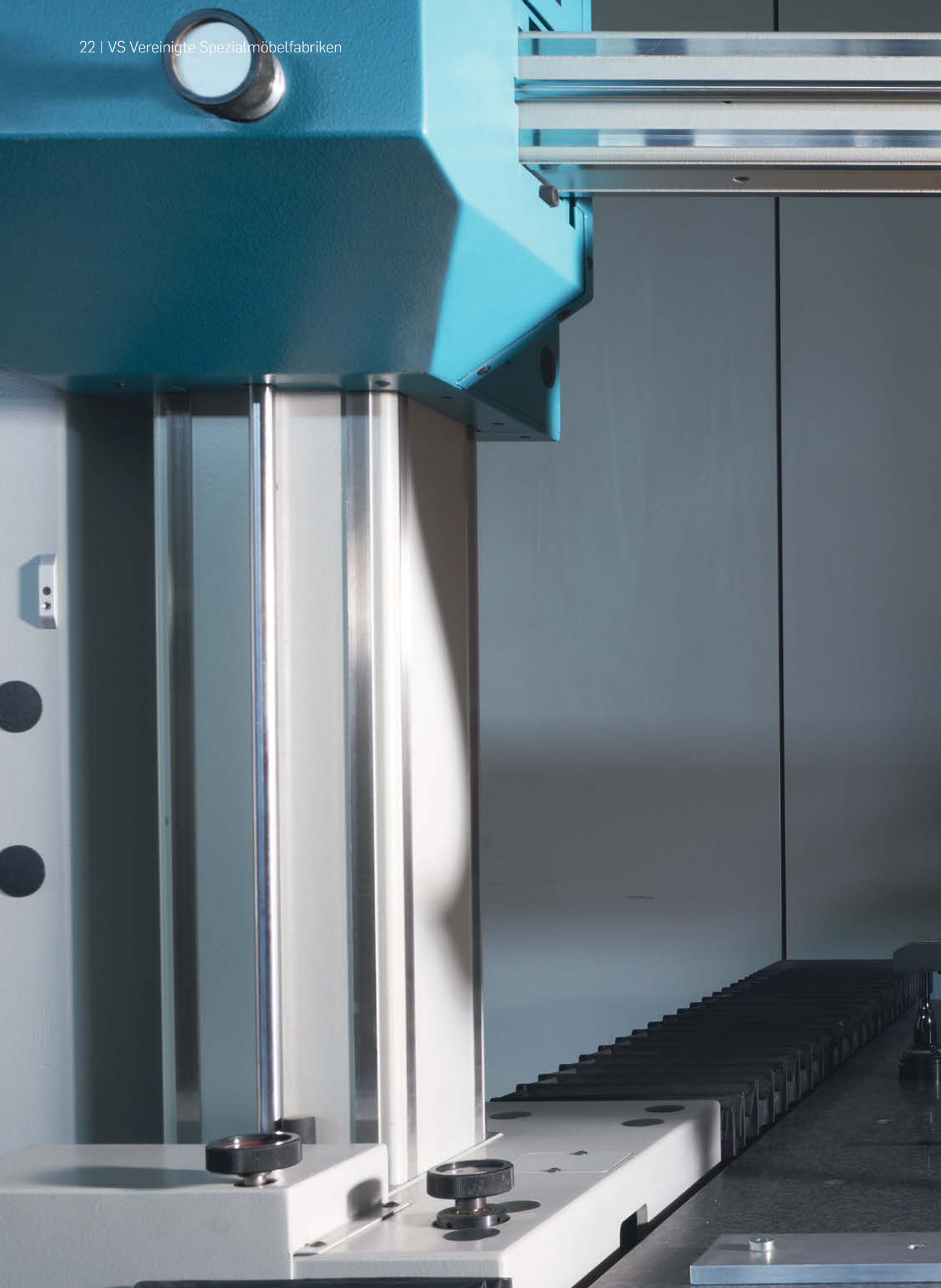
In the public domain, the question of fire protection is of the greatest importance with regard to safety. However, there is often confusion concerning the standards which have to be applied to furniture. The key fire protection standard is DIN 66084 on the "Burning behaviour of upholstered compounds", which specifies the classes P-a, P-b and P-c, which can also be applied to other seating furniture.

In accordance with these standards, classification is performed by means of the cigarette test as set out in DIN EN 1021 Part 1, the match test as set out in DIN EN 1021 Part 2 and the paper pillow test as set out in DIN 54341.

VS's upholstered furniture and chairs are tested in accordance with the commonly applied fire protection standards in close cooperation with accredited, independent test laboratories.

Validity

Even in the standard designs, the upholstered furniture and chair models from VS indicated above conform to the classifications P-c (low) and P-b (medium). The classification P-a (high) is achieved if the furniture is also equipped with a flame retardant material. VS offers this solution as an option.







Additional certificates and supporting documents

The products, materials and processes at VS are certified in accordance with the standards set out above. In addition, there are also further standards that make use of similar test criteria, but are not yet appropriate for the VS product portfolio. Other standards relate to materials or products purchased by VS, but can only be certified by their respective manufacturers - these also apply indirectly for VS. There are also standards that relate to the sustainability of buildings. In such cases, VS can contribute to successful overall certification by supplying certified furniture.

Product-related certificate Standard 100 by OEKO-TEX

The standard 100 by OEKO-TEX is an independent product label and is awarded to pollutant-tested textiles by the "International Association for Research and Testing in the Field of Textile and Leather Ecology". Textiles that possess this label demonstrably outperform the defined threshold values for certain health-threatening pollutants.

Validity

All the upholstery foams and most fabrics (or fabric groups) used by VS are certified in accordance with the OEKO-TEX standard. The certificate is recognised internationally.

Product-related certificate Blauer Engel

The German Blauer Engel (Blue Angel) label particularly indicates environmentally responsible products and services. It was introduced in 1978 as the very first environmental label and is one of the best known worldwide. The certificate is awarded by the German quality assurance and labelling institute RAL Deutsches Institut für Gütesicherung und Kennzeichnung e. V.

Validity

The Blauer Engel label is recognised throughout Germany and each label awarded is valid for five years. The production facilities are inspected every year. The standard cannot be applied to furniture manufactured from plastic and steel, which is alternatively labelled with the comparable LGA pollutant-tested certificate.

Product-related certificate **EU EcoLabel**

This certificate is issued by RAL GmbH and identifies products and services characterised by having lower environmental impact than comparable products. Corresponding documentary evidence of this must be submitted when applying for the award of the label. If all the requirements set out in the standard are satisfied, an agreement for the use of the label is concluded.

Validity

The certificate is valid throughout the EU and applies for five years in each case. It is also recognised in some countries that border the EU.

VS possesses the certificates BIFMA e3 level and European Level, which are equivalent to EU Ecolabel.

Product-related documentation **EPD**

An Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) is a type III product-specific declaration that makes available quantified, environmentally relevant information regarding a product's life cycle. It allows for the comparison of products with the same function. The basis for the EPD is provided by data verified by an independent body on life cycle assessments, factual analyses, impact assessments and other standards-compliant modules.

Validity

The EPD system is internationally recognised. The documents are used, for example, during the sustainability certification of buildings. At present, they are required only in the construction sector.

Product-related documentation **Environmental labels**

Environmental labels provide users with environmentally relevant information about products. Due to an increasing amount of environmental information being published, the International Organisation for Standardisation is developing DIN guidelines for various types of environmental labels. DIN EN ISO 14021 specifies the framework conditions for self-declared environmental claims, also known as type II environmental labels. These include the environmental product information (EPI) published by VS.

Type I and type III environmental labels are issued by third-parties and consider selected environmental criteria (type I, e.g. Blauer Engel), or make comprehensive quantitative statements based on life cycle assessments (type III, e.g. EPD).

Validity

Environmental labels are internationally valid and have different levels of acceptance depending on the type.

Product-related certificate **RAL "Goldenes M"**

The "Goldenes M" is awarded to products that have been tested for safety and health-related characteristics. Individually defined requirements form the basis for the testing of each product group. In the case of furniture, these are the following criteria: durability, stability, light-fastness, rub-fastness and pollutants.

Validity

The "Goldenes M" is recognised throughout Germany. Following an independent initial test, it is subject to continuous self-declarations. In addition, regular neutral inspections by external parties are performed. The certificate is currently only relevant for furniture used in the residential sector. It is not required for school, office, or other non-residential furniture.

Building-related certificate **LEED**

The US-American LEED system (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) was designed in order to assess the sustainability of buildings – including the internal equipment and all phases of the building life cycle. The assessment is made by awarding points. The total number of points awarded determines how the building is classified: Silver, Gold or Platinum.

Validity

The certificate is recognised worldwide and is valid for five years. Thanks to its BIFMA e3 level and Greenguard certification, furniture from VS can make a significant contribution to a building's successful LEED certification.

Product-related documentation **LCA**

LCA stands for Life Cycle Assessment and is synonymous with the idea of establishing an ecological or environmental balance sheet.

An LCA is a systematic, objective procedure for considering all the environmental loads associated with a product throughout its entire lifespan - from the employed raw materials, to transport, manufacturing processes, utilisation and waste management.

Validity

An LCA in accordance with ISO 14040 (framework conditions for life cycle assessment) or 14044 (requirements and instructions) is recognised worldwide. This type of life cycle assessment forms the basis for all verified EPDs (type III environmental label).



Overview of rates + support-

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