



History

RAL has represented the mark of quality for almost nine decades and is one of the world's oldest labelling professionals

The particularly high quality standards for products and services are developed by independent experts, subjected to continuous monitoring by independent institutions and constantly updated.

Our Quality Marks are trusted around the world, because they are reliable, objective and the regulations are always completely up-to-date.





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1925 Germany is experiencing economic recovery under the Weimar Republic - the economy requires rationalization

RAL has been setting the standard for continuous, independently controlled quality assurance since 1925

Germany found itself in a period of economic recovery in 1925. The country had overcome the crisis after the First World War and the increasing level of automation and electrification was promoting technical advancements. In addition, mass industrial production was developing at a fast pace. These factors created the framework conditions and acted as the trigger for the supply economy - and also consumers - to demand an orderly system for quality assurance labelling.

As a consequence of this rapid economic growth, German industry and the government of the Weimar Republic decided to:

- standardise and clarify quality assurance, testing and labelling conditions
- define unambiguous quality requirements
- monitor adherence by companies

The goal was to introduce uniform requirements for products and services that applied to all those trading in a particular industry. An institution was sought that could issue these orderly regulations and act as an independent entity.





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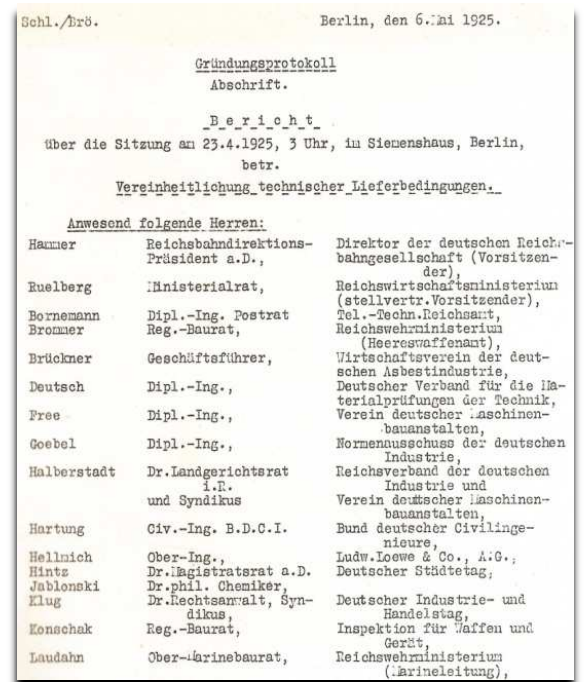
Naming of the "Reichsausschuss für Lieferbedingungen" (National Board for Delivery Conditions)

The

Reichs-Ausschuss für Lieferbedingungen

was founded on the 23rd April of 1925 and the abbreviation RAL has been retained to this day. Alongside numerous associations, representatives of the government at the time also participated in the foundation of RAL under the auspices of the Reichskuratorium für Wirtschaftlichkeit (RKW - Government Economy Committee). The RKW was under the control of the Reichswirtschaftsministerium (Ministry of Economics). However, RAL was already an independent institution at this time. RAL acquired the status of a legally registered association a short while later and became an independent legal entity. The association protected the name RAL - still characteristic today in RAL Quality Marks (RAL Gütezeichen) - in accordance with national and international copyright law.

In the early years of RAL, it was "RAL Registrations" and "RAL Agreements" that were the particular focus of attention because Germany required technical delivery conditions to act as measures for the rationalization of the economy. As a result of their elaborate origins, experts described the RAL Registrations and Agreements as "Laws that the economy had imposed on itself".





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In this context, RAL had the task of giving protection to the economy and consumers by providing truth and clarity in the labelling sector and reliably labelling goods and services.

The RAL Quality Assurance System grew out of this in the years to follow.

The prerequisites for a recognized labelling system are reliability and neutrality. Back then as today, neutrality was guaranteed through the involvement of expert institutions such as associations, testing institutions and state ministries, as well as through the testing of the legal situation in a competitive, monopoly, association and brand sense.

The reliability of the RAL Quality Assurance System was ensured both then as today by adherence with the Quality Assurance and Test Specifications by companies themselves, as well as through the regular monitoring carried out by independent third party testers. This is what continues to distinguish the RAL Quality Assurance System from all other labelling.



1927

RAL clearly defines colour tones

The history of RAL COLOURS began in a period of economic transformation: the first series-production automobile was being manufactured, the age of the talking movies had begun and an economic recovery in Germany had resulted in a rise in prosperity.

RAL set the first binding standards in 1927 with a collection of the 40 most widely used colours in industry and public life. These 40 colours were defined for the first time and uniquely classified using RAL numbers.

Today, the 2,328 RAL COLOUR are a defining worldwide standard used in industry, trade and design, as well as by professional users of colour.





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As the idea of quality assurance came increasingly to the forefront, this was reflected in the association's name. The new name incorporated the idea of quality and RAL was now called:

Ausschuss für Lieferbedingungen und Gütesicherung (Committee for Delivery Conditions and Quality Assurance)

The first users of the quality marks

The first users of the RAL Quality Marks (RAL Gütezeichen) came from large established associations that may appear a little exotic from today's perspective. These included, for example, the quality mark for the "Hands in oath labelling association", for products made out of bast fibres from the flax plant or for type-specific plastic mouldings for the Technical Association of Producers whose quality marks still existed up to the end of 1993.



1939 - 1945 No opportunities for regulations under private law to be effective or develop

As a voluntary, self-regulatory body in the German economy, RAL stood opposed to the dirigist economic policies of the National Socialists. The ambition of the Third Reich to gain absolute autarchy was hostile to the idea of free world trade and fostered Germany's isolation on the global market. The interest from manufacturers for RAL quality markets disappeared.

In the middle of the war, the responsible ministry in the Third Reich issued a state quality mark ordinance in 1942. RAL had thus lost its area of responsibility. There was no longer voluntary, self-regulation of the German economy in the form of quality marks.

1952 A new beginning in the social market economy

After the Second World War, it took a few years before the RAL Quality Assurance System and Quality marks (Gütezeichen) began to play a role again in the economy. The success of the new social market economy and the associated economic recovery quickly made it clear how important it was to have an independent institution that guaranteed unambiguous and reliable quality assurance and technical delivery conditions. In 1952, RAL became affiliated to the Deutschen Normenausschuss (DNA - German Institute for Standardization) and was given the name:

Ausschuss für Lieferbedingungen beim DNA



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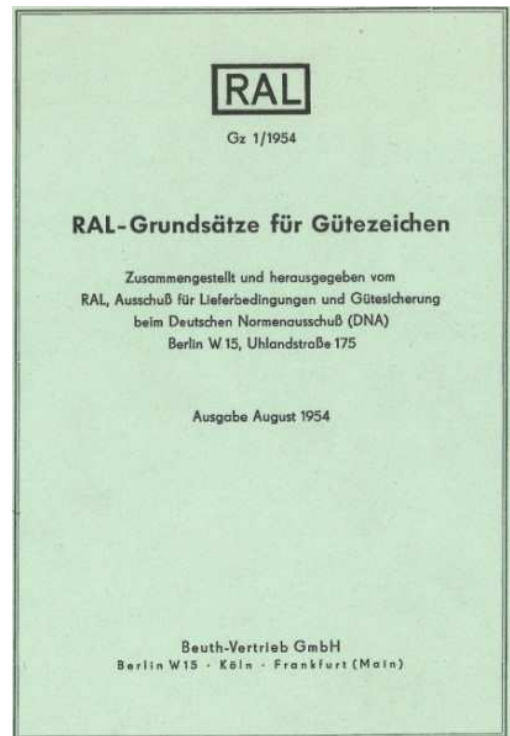
In contrast to the time of its foundation, RAL did not initially have any legal status of its own but was instead legally represented by the president of the DNA. However, this did not have any effect on its work or the RAL Quality Assurance System. RAL remained autonomous and independent, while the RAL Quality Assurance System preserved its reliability and neutrality.

The growing importance of quality assurance at the time meant that it became essential to set down the practical experience gained by RAL in the creation of Quality Marks (Gütezeichen) and the process itself in legal form.

1954 RAL Guidelines for Quality Marks (Gütezeichen)

In collaboration with representatives from the German economy, testing institutions, consumer organizations and the responsible state ministries, the cornerstones of the quality assurance system were formulated and published for the first time in August 1954 under the title of:

"RAL Guidelines for Quality Marks" (RAL-Grundsätze für Gütezeichen)





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1950s / 1960s **An upturn in fortunes for both the economy and RAL**

The tasks carried out by RAL were constantly expanded during the 1950s and 1960s. In particular, RAL intensified its public relations work and increasingly addressed consumers directly by presenting quality-controlled products as part of the "RAL -Lehrschauen".



Twenty years after the re-launch of RAL, its status as a registered association with its own legal identity was restored.

The Executive Board of RAL has since been made up of representatives from leading economic organizations, consumers, federal and state authorities and four full members from RAL who are elected at the association's general meeting. The Executive Board of RAL – previously the Advisory Board, today known as the Board of Trustees – reflected the balance of the business partners concerned and demonstrated the strict neutrality of RAL.

1978 **RAL serving the environment**

As a result of its recognized expertise in the issuing of quality marks, the Federal Environment Agency assigned RAL with the new responsibility in December 1978 for issuing the Blue Angel eco-labels. Therefore, RAL assumed a pioneering role as an environmental service provider from the very beginning.



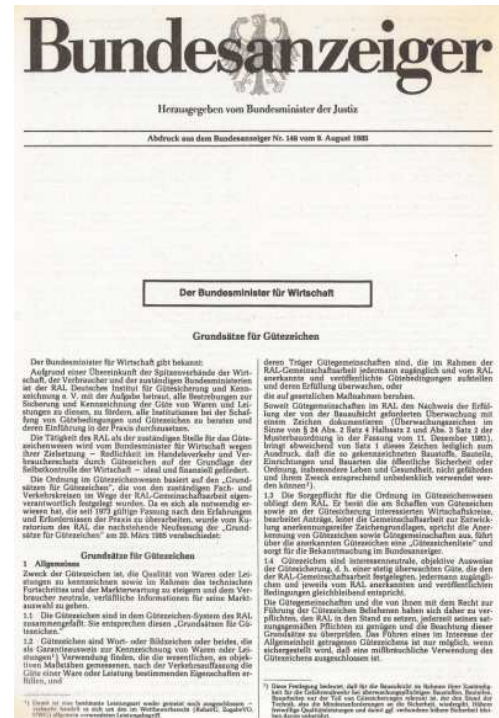
1980 **RAL receives a new name: RAL German Institute for Quality Assurance and Certification (RAL Deutsches Institut für Gütesicherung und Kennzeichnung e. V.)**

This non-profit organization placed their focus even more strongly on the organization

and functions of the quality assurance system and its labelling expertise.

1985 The Guidelines for Quality Marks (Gütezeichen) published in the German Federal gazette (Bundesanzeiger)

In order to underline the significance of the RAL Quality Assurance System, the "Guidelines for Quality Marks (Gütezeichen)" were published following a number of amendments on the 9th August 1985 in the German Federal Gazette by the Federal Ministry of Economics.



1992 RAL named a "Competent Body" by the European Commission

The European Commission created the joint EU environmental label the "EU Flower" - today called the EU Ecolabel - in 1992. As a result of its long-standing experience in environmental labelling, RAL was viewed as a suitable partner to take on the role of awarding authority by the Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and the Nuclear Safety and the Federal Environment Agency. In November 1992, RAL was issued with the task of awarding the European environmental label in Germany and was named a "Competent Body" by the European Commission.





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2008 RAL COLOURS and RAL Environment in a new legal form

The RAL German Institute for Quality Assurance and Certification (Deutsches Institut für Gütesicherung und Kennzeichnung) formed a new company called RAL gGmbH to handle its RAL COLOURS and RAL Environment business divisions. The company is a 100 % subsidiary of the RAL German Institute for Quality Assurance and Certification and was entered in the commercial register on the 29th August 2008.

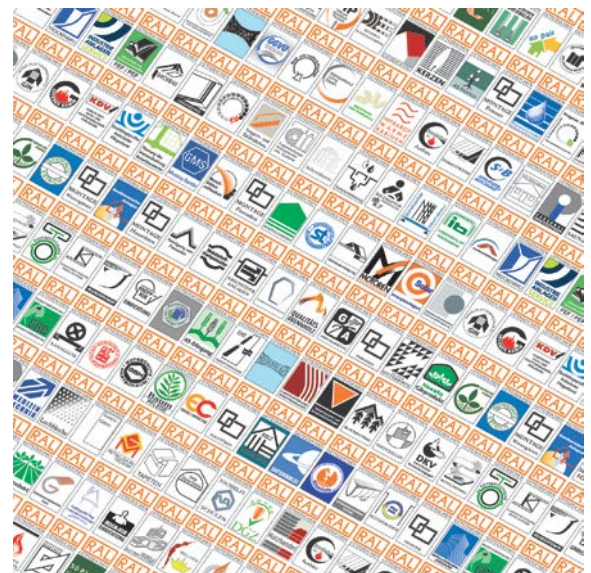


today RAL Quality Marks (Gütezeichen) – reflecting developments in the economy and society and providing consumer protection

RAL has become the mark of trust and safe orientation for consumers over the almost 90 years it has been in existence. As an instrument for the voluntary, self-regulation of the economy, RAL has when seen against its current responsibilities far exceeded the expectations of its original founders.



There were a total of over 130 Quality Associations at the beginning of 2013 with more than 9,000 member companies - from all areas of the economy both at home and abroad - who stand firmly behind the various RAL Quality Marks (Gütezeichen).





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1st July 2013

RAL takes over a new area of work

Quality and consumer protection have been our profession for decades. Due to this fact, Stiftung Warentest, also engaging in consumer protection, expressed their confidence by assigning the right to RAL gGmbH to market their foundation's logo licenses.

