

## Building Regulations (Vienna, 12 Jun 25)

Austrian Academy of Sciences, postal savings bank building (Postsparkasse), Georg-Coch-Platz 2, 5th floor, room 8, 1010 Vienna, Jun 12, 2025

Registration deadline: Jun 9, 2025

Christian Welzbacher

Building regulations of the long 19th century in central Europe. International workshop.

A comparative look at the building regulations of Vienna and Berlin in the 19th and early 20th centuries will for the first time derive site-specific Viennese characteristics from the general developments in architecture, legislation, building administration and urban planning. The workshop will provide an international and transdisciplinary contextualization in order to better understand the connections between organized urban growth in the context of metropolitan development via its regulatory side.

### Project description:

The legal basis for all building activity are 'building regulations'. They are intended to protect against all conceivable dangers in the field of built architecture and guarantee safety in public (outdoor) spaces as well as in private (indoor) spaces – and they are intended to bring order to the historically evolved urban structures, which in the eyes of the 19th century were chaotic and therefore unhealthy. Discussed in European countries since the 18th century, they were enacted in the 19th century for numerous cities in Central Europe and adapted at regular intervals to the specific needs and requirements of the growing and changing metropolis. Despite the existence of several academic articles and publications on the topic, building regulations continue to be a side issue in architectural historiography – despite the fact that these legal provisions not only regulate functional aspects of architecture, but also strongly influence its aesthetic appearance (building heights, building lines, materials, etc.).

Building regulations do not act on their own and do not initiate building activity per se, but react to specific circumstances and situations, indeed challenges, which compel action. There are motives that lead to the creation of building regulations, and there are people involved who devise and formulate these building regulations, their components and how these components interact with each other and are interwoven in the text, and who bring them into force. If a building code is subsequently adopted by a municipal council and if master builders and property owners are also represented on this body as local councillors, then the question arises as to which and whose interests a building code actually satisfies (and, as a result, whether merging of interests even lead to conflicts of interest).

Apart from these questions, which point to the target audience of building regulations, we would also like to ask about the organisation of building regulations and building laws as well as about the processes that led to the creation of building regulations or made them law. Who drafts building regulations, who formulates them, who votes on them, who monitors compliance with them?

Although Vienna was the imperial capital and residence of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Vienna Building Code of 1829 was by no means the first in this state. The fact that Prague received its first building regulations as early as 1815 raises the question: when do which building regulations come into being – and, above all, for which city (or even beyond its borders)? What scope can individual building regulations have?

After the Habsburg state had initially issued building regulations for its cities, what did it mean when the municipalities were able to adopt building regulations on their own responsibility? What can we learn about the relationship between the state and local authorities from building regulations? Or was it more about the relationship between the state and (middle-class) private citizens?

Furthermore, we want to scrutinise building regulations from the point of view of society as a whole, where, for example, social areas of conflict are to be brought under control through the definition of zoning in building regulations by keeping the different wealth classes of an urban population apart through targeted segregation.

And finally, we want to ask about the effects of building regulations on architecture and urban development, about their significance for the design of urban spaces (open spaces such as streets and squares, interior spaces of various kinds, etc., but also the effects on existing structures such as historic city centres), i.e. about the material forms that building regulations produce.

Programme:

09:15–09:30: Doris Gruber, Vienna: Welcome speech.

09:30–10:15: Richard Kurdiovsky, Vienna: Reporting on building regulations in newspapers and journals between 1828 and 1849.

10:15–11:00: Harald Stühlinger, Vienna: The shape of the city. Architecture, urban design and building regulations in 19th century Vienna.

COFFEE BREAK

11:30–12:15: Josef Holeček, Prague: Similar rules, different cities? Structural comparison of Bohemian and Moravian building regulations and their manifestation.

12:15–13:00: Éva Lovra, Debrecen: Urban morphological changes in Budapest (1867–1918) through building regulations.

LUNCH BREAK

14:30–15:15: Roksolyana Holovata, Lviv: Lviv's building regulations of 1855 and 1885: tracing the policy of city districts development.

15:15–16:00: Giulia Mezzalama, Turin: Building regulations at the turn of the 20th century: from Paris to Italy.

COFFEE BREAK

16:30–17:15: Christian Welzbacher, Berlin: Which interests are (not) reflected in building regulations?

17:15–18:15: Discussion and securing the results.

Participants:

Mónika Pilkhoffer, Budapest

Friedrich Hauer, Vienna

Hannes Tauber, Vienna

Karoline Gattringer, Vienna

Manuel Swatek, Vienna

Vendula Hnídková, Prague

To participate please register here by Monday, June 9, 2025:

[www.oeaw.ac.at/ihb/aktuelles/anmeldungen-zu-ihb-veranstaltungen/  
bauordnung-in-zentralauropa](http://www.oeaw.ac.at/ihb/aktuelles/anmeldungen-zu-ihb-veranstaltungen/bauordnung-in-zentralauropa)

CONTACT:

For further inquiries please contact: [richard.kurdiovsky@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:richard.kurdiovsky@oeaw.ac.at)

Download Programme and Project Description:

[https://www.oeaw.ac.at/ihb/detail/event/bauordnungen-des-langen-19-jahrhunderts-in-zentraleur  
opa](https://www.oeaw.ac.at/ihb/detail/event/bauordnungen-des-langen-19-jahrhunderts-in-zentraleuropa)

Reference:

CONF: Building Regulations (Vienna, 12 Jun 25). In: ArtHist.net, May 29, 2025 (accessed Jul 4, 2025),  
<<https://arthist.net/archive/49376>>.