

The Great Transformation. State and Communal Civil Service in Vienna, 1918–1920

Abstract

When considering such major political upheavals as the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy and the subsequent creation of the First Republic, the question of continuities and ruptures in public administration suggests itself. This project focuses on the transformations taking place in the years immediately after the end of the monarchy in administration on the federal level and on that of the city of Vienna. The situation of Vienna's communal civil servants was far more advantageous than that of federal employees, who were heavily affected by inflation and personnel cuts.

The project will examine the proceedings of the Inter-Ministerial Committee and other bodies which dealt with the personnel, financial, administrative and political issues connected with the transformation of public administration between 1918 and 1920. The perspective of public servants themselves will be included in the analysis on the basis of the documents of a hearing conducted in 1919 and of articles from periodicals published by and for public employees.

This project addresses a substantial gap in prior research, given that the history of public administration and its personnel in post-1918 Austria is poorly explored to date. The examples of the federal and the Vienna communal administration will allow important questions regarding the relationship between state and society to be investigated. The first years of the republic saw efforts toward a rollback of the bureaucratic state and a democratisation of public administration on a structural level. The internal logic of public administration sometimes counteracted these aims. Finally, the effects of the period's political, economic and societal changes on public employees as a socio-professional group will be examined.

In co-operation with the *Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities* at the Austrian Science Academy, the project aims for a digital presentation of the more significant documents among the sources to be examined. These will be brought together and presented in a form that will both make the numerous relationships and cross-references among the documents transparent and allow for thematic searches. Documents will be indexed both by persons and by subject matter, following a catalogue of the major topics and issues involved in the transformation of public administration.