

CALL FOR PAPERS
LAW AND CRISIS

UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ



Between Crisis Law and the Crisis of Law

3rd Conference of the Young Network Legal History
12 to 14 June 2025
University of Graz

War, dictatorship, famine, fire, floods or epidemics - the term "crisis" is omnipresent in current legal discussions. The 3rd conference of the Young Network for Legal History aims to explore the interplay between law and crisis from various perspectives:

How did private law react to economic, political or social crises? Crisis prevention certainly has to be addressed in this context. However, crisis management through private law is also of significant importance: What legal instruments exist besides the *clausula rebus sic stantibus* or contractual frustration (Wegfall der Geschäftsgrundlage)? How did they develop? What is the legal meaning of the term "crisis" and how has it been used as a legal argument? Can private law be "crisis-proof" – or has a crisis of private law been impending previously in legal history?

The ability of the liberal-democratic state to resist crises played a fundamental role in the development of constitutional and administrative law. How can constitutional law, institutions and fundamental rights be safeguarded even in turbulent times? How did constitutional mechanisms for crisis prevention and crisis defence develop? When and why did these attempts fail and what lessons can be learned, for example from the Interwar Period, for the present and future? Is it even necessary for constitutions to be "crisis-proof"?

As the main instrument of states for vengeance and retribution, for deterrence and prevention, criminal law has also played a key role in times of crisis. How were criminals prosecuted particularly in times of crisis? How did criminal law change during crises and how did crises change criminal law? How did repression and the decline of democracy in the Interwar Period relate?

The crisis' dimensions in terms of history of international law must not be forgotten. How did international law develop in light of war and peace, famine or environmental disasters? How did international law deal with the existential crisis after 1918? In this regard Wilhelm Grewe underlines that due to the horrors of World War One doubts increased if the Western-Christian community of states was truly the only existing "civilisation".

Roman law also demonstrates that crises require exceptional measures. Within Roman public law, the office of the dictator is worth mentioning, as it formed an exception to the principle of collegiality of Roman offices to which the other *magistratus* had to subordinate themselves. Roman private law was similarly reactive to exceptional circumstances, whether due to political and social crises or natural disasters. Examples include debt forgiveness (*tabulae novae*) and *remissio mercedis*, the postponement of rent payments. These are special regulations that characterise our laws until today.

The 3rd Conference of the Young Network Legal History aims to address these topics at the University of Graz from 12 to 14 June 2025. Diverging submissions will be accepted this year as well. The conference will be held in **German and English**. Each contribution should not exceed 20 minutes. Applications must be submitted by email to rechtsgeschichte@uni-graz.at **by 8 December 2024**.

Applications must include the following documents:

- Anonymised exposé (max. 500 words)
- Curriculum vitae (without name and picture, max. one page)

Successful applicants will receive a response until the end of January 2025. A publication of the contributions (if possible, with peer review) is in consideration. Since the conference is particularly intended to promote intellectual exchange between young legal historians participants without contributions are also cordially invited to attend the conference! Unfortunately, financial assistance regarding travel and accommodation cannot be provided.

Further details: <https://rewi-grundlagen.uni-graz.at/de/tagung-junge-rechtsgeschichte/>