

CLIMATE PROTECTION AREAS

**No more fossil fuels for new
buildings in Vienna**



Climate protection areas: No more fossil fuels for new buildings in Vienna

Vienna is taking a historic step towards a crisis-proof and renewable energy future. The phase-out of fossil gas supply for buildings has begun. Since June 24th the first three climate protection areas are enacted in Vienna. In these areas, new buildings can only be built with a climate-friendly energy supply system.

“Even if the climate crisis does not seem to be an immediate threat, it is real and we can feel it. The heat waves and tropical nights that we experience in summer are not accidental. They are the result of too much CO₂,” stresses Vienna's Vice Mayoress Birgit Hebein.

The most effective way to fight the climate crisis is to reduce CO₂ emissions. Last year the city government adopted a new Smart City Strategy aiming for the reduction of local greenhouse gas emissions per capita by 85 percent by 2050. The current share of the building sector in CO₂ emissions is 20 percent. *“With the climate protection areas, we will be able to cool and heat 80 percent of new buildings in a climate-friendly manner and CO₂ emissions will decrease sharply.”* the city councilor said.

“Due to the intense construction phase in Vienna nowadays, the climate protection areas set the course for the next decades. For a successful energy transition, fossil gas must be restricted.” emphasizes Bernd Vogl, head of the Energy Planning Department of the City of Vienna. *“With an increased use of renewable energies the city is preparing for its future. By using green energy from the region, we are strengthening Vienna's resilience when it comes to energy supply.”* said Vogl.

Cooling included and other advantages

Systems based on renewable energy sources are economically comparable and competitive. This is already shown by practical experience from residential and school constructions. Especially when it comes to total cost analysis over 20 years or the possibility of cooling by heat pumps on hot summer days is considered, renewable energy systems appear to be the most cost-efficient solution today.

The use of air or geothermal heat pumps is particularly worthwhile. The running operating costs are significantly cheaper. Heating costs can be up to 55% lower than for buildings powered by fossil fuels.

The additional investment costs for a highly efficient building and its technology (under 10 percent) are offset by the same or lower overall costs over the entire lifespan of the building. In addition, energy solutions with heat pumps can be operated flexibly with renewable electricity that comes from solar power systems or from wind farms.

Green Light from the EU-Commission

The European Commission confirmed the exclusion of fossil heating systems by means of a regulation from the City of Vienna. No objection came from the European Commission, from other Member States or from companies.

This lack of objection on the part of the EU Commission can be interpreted as trend-setting in terms of climate protection. Vogl sees the result of the notification procedure as a prejudice for further measures relevant to climate protection.

“The measure shows that climate protection is more important than protecting the internal market for fossil heating systems. This is an important step for climate protection. Other cities and countries now have tailwind to make similar arrangements in their area of responsibility.” Vogl notes. Energy planning measures to decarbonize the energy system, such as Vienna's climate protection areas, are being recognized as a central step to achieving climate goals.

How to phase out oil and gas: Viennese building regulations strengthen climate protection

The definition of 'climate protection areas' is laid down in the ordinance on energy zoning plans in the Vienna Building Code § 2b. The outline of the areas is based on the possible supply by district heating. In addition, at least one further climate-friendly heating system based on renewable energy or waste heat must be feasible in this area. This ensures a freedom of choice for the heating system in climate protection areas.

The ordinances are prepared and evaluated by the Municipal Department for Energy Planning and then issued by the Municipal Council district by district. By autumn 2020, climate protection areas will be in force for eight (of the 23) districts of Vienna. The rest will follow in 2021.

The effect is a compulsory choice of a climate friendly heating and hot water system for new buildings. In the future, only "highly efficient, alternative systems" as per Vienna Building Code (§ 118 Para. 3) may be used for heating and hot water provision in new buildings erected within a climate protection area.

These systems are:

- District heating or micro-grid, provided at least 80% of the energy is renewable or from highly efficient combined heat and power plants.
- Decentralised energy supply systems based on renewable energy sources (heat pumps, biomass heating systems, solar energy, etc.), provided air quality requirements are met.
- Use of waste heat.

Next step: decarbonising the existing building stock

As a next step, climate protection areas shall be extended to phase-out fossil fuel heating and cooling systems in existing buildings. This is a much more delicate and complex task than for new constructions but one that has to be tackled to meet our climate targets.

LINK:

Vienna Building Code:

<https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=LrW&Gesetzesnummer=20000006>

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