

Preface

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Founded in 2010 and financed by the European Science Foundation, the PALATIUM research networking programme aims at creating a common forum for research on the late medieval and early modern European court residence or palace (*palatium*) in a multi- and trans-disciplinary perspective (www.courtresidences.eu). In the broad and varied field of court studies, PALATIUM's focus on the court residence stands out as a main defining characteristic, distinguishing it clearly from similar initiatives in Europe. Fourteen research institutions from eleven European countries support this programme, amongst which the organizing institutes of this conference: the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the Slovak Academy of Sciences, both of whom we sincerely thank for the essential role they have played in enabling the network and in making this event possible.

The choice of venue seems particularly fitting in retrospect because of PALATIUM's roots. It was in Vienna in 2008, at the occasion of the aptly named conference '*Vorbild, Austausch, Konkurrenz. Höfe und Residenzen in der gegenseitigen Wahrnehmung*' organized by our host, the Austrian Academy of Sciences together with the Residenzen-Kommission of the Akademie für Wissenschaften in Göttingen, that some of the essential contacts were made, which eventually led to the PALATIUM programme. The Hofburg Project of the Academy thus deserves particular mention. However, since PALATIUM could be called a 'network funded by a consortium', thanks are also due to the other member organisations who stand behind us and to our 'parent company' the European Science Foundation.

The world of the courts 1400–1700 constituted a network of truly European scale and international character. Within this context, the intricate Habsburg network of courts, born from the marriage alliances between the House of Austria, the House of Burgundy, the House of Spain and the House of Jagiellon in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, stood out because of its territorial reach, connecting the Low Countries with the Holy Roman Empire, Bohemia and Hungary, and the Iberian peninsula. PALATIUM quite naturally has addressed these 'Habsburg Spheres' on different occasions, first in its start-up stage in the meeting of Madrid in November 2010 ('*Felix Austria*'), and now on a vaster scale in the conference at Vienna in December 2011. The organizers have sought the input of many disciplines apart from the architectural historian's, combining the knowledge of the historian of art, of the theatre, and of collecting, with that of the specialist in religious history, politics, diplomacy and travel, to address the Habsburg world from different angles. The collection of essays presented hereafter thus offers a first example of the inclusive approach PALATIUM has sought to encourage.