

*The Patentability Requirements in the Venetian Republic  
Between the 15th and 18th Centuries*

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In 1474, the Venetian Republic enacted what is widely recognized to be the first Patent Act in the world. Legal scholars have generally assumed that, after this point, patents were granted in Venice based on the requirements set forth in this Act. This is because they relied on the writings of historians and political scientists who, however, did not have legal training and, consequently, missed many of the legal nuances of the Venetian patent system. In fact, up to now, only two other legal scholars have examined the original Venetian patents. In this article I use original documents from the Venetian State Archives to present a detailed account of the patentability requirements needed to be met by Venetian and foreign inventors to secure a Venetian patent. The accurate description of these requirements is very important to fully understand the reasons behind the adoption of the first patent system in the world and its effects on modern patent systems.

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