



Federal Administrative Court Supreme Court



Welcome, dear guests,

to this building, which used to accommodate the former Imperial Court of Justice and today houses the Federal Administrative Court. You will certainly be impressed by its size and splendour. This was indeed what its architects intended: The courthouse was built in Leipzig during the reign of Emperor Wilhelm II to represent the “third power” of state – the judiciary. It was meant to be on an equal footing with the building of the Imperial Parliament, which was constructed at the same time and dedicated to the “first power” of state – the legislature. The building survived World War II, albeit with considerable damage, and served as a museum during the period of the German Democratic Republic. In 2002, it became a courthouse again: It now houses the supreme administrative court of Germany, the highest judicial authority to rule on legal actions by citizens against administrative measures. For this purpose, the building was restored, starting in 1998, achieving a synthesis between heritage protection and modern office architecture.

Please come in: The administration of justice in Germany is a public affair and courthouses belong to all citizens.

The Federal Administrative Court

The Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig is the supreme administrative court of the Federal Republic of Germany. It rules on disputes in the area of administrative law, unless another court is competent.

In most cases, the Federal Administrative Court acts as a court of appeal deciding upon appeals on points of law. Its primary tasks are to preserve legal unity and to further develop the law. In this regard, it adjudicates on fundamental questions of federal law. It reviews whether the decisions by the administrative courts and higher administrative courts of the federal states challenged by an appeal on points of law are compatible with federal law. In doing so, it significantly defines the interpretation and application of the law. It neither establishes facts itself nor interprets federal state law.



In certain disputes (i.e. on the planning and development of important transport routes), the Federal Administrative Court takes final decisions as the court of first and last instance. Then, its purpose is not merely to clarify questions of law, but also to establish the facts upon which the decision is based.

The Federal Administrative Court contributes to the multi-level cooperation of European courts. It applies EU law and collaborates closely with other European and international courts.



! *More than 200 persons work at the Federal Administrative Court. Approximately one third of them are judges and research associates, the other two thirds are employed in the court administration.*

Organisation

A committee for the election of judges elects the **judges** of the Federal Administrative Court. They discharge their judicial duties in **senates**. There are ten senates deciding on appeals on points of law (as of 1 January 2026) and two senates deciding on military affairs. The senates deciding on appeals on points of law are composed of five or six judges and the military affairs senates of three, each including their presiding judge. In addition, a research associate supports the work of each senate.

An allocation of jurisdiction scheme specifies the current number of senates and the competences.

The **President** is the head of the Federal Administrative Court and represents the Court to the outside. She or he exercises the administrative supervision of the judges as well as the administrative and operational supervision of the non-judicial personnel. The **Vice President** acts as her or his substitute. The President is also a member of a senate and presides it. Due to judicial independence, she or he has no authority over the other members of the senate.

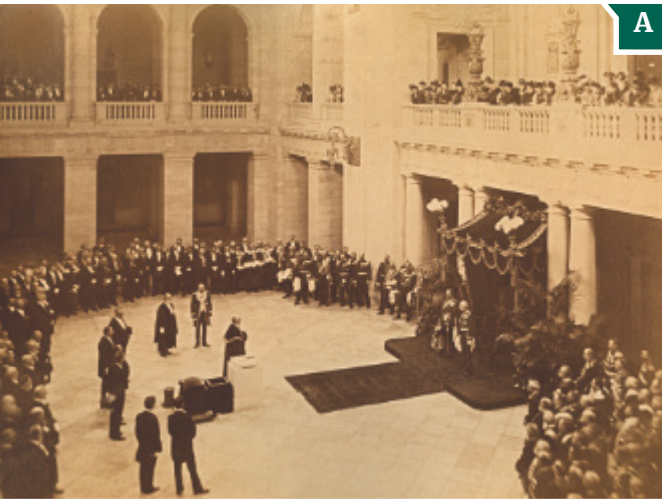
The **court administration** supports the executive body of the Court and the senates in the discharge of their duties. It is divided into the administrative department, the registry, the legal documentation, the library and the department for external relations.

The building of the Imperial Court of Justice

Since 2002, the building of the former Imperial Court of Justice in Leipzig houses the Federal Administrative Court. The Imperial Court of Justice was the highest court of the civil and criminal jurisdiction in the German Reich from 1879 to 1945. Its jurisprudence and the architecture of the building reflect the chequered history of Germany during this period.

With the end of World War II, the activities of the Imperial Court of Justice ended. During the period of the German Democratic Republic, the building was used for the Museum of Fine Arts, the Georgi Dimitrov Museum, a recording studio of the main film production company of the GDR “DEFA” (*Deutsche Film AG*) as well as to house several administrative authorities. After reunification, the Independent Federalism Commission of the Federation and the federal states recommended a relocation of the Federal Administrative Court to Saxony. Since 2002 – after restoration and reconstruction – the building of the former Imperial Court of Justice has become a place for the administration of justice again.

Both then and now, the building is one of the most impressive courthouses in Germany. It was built in the style of historicism with touches of Italian and French archetypes. Its architecture symbolises in many ways the national and legal unity of Germany as well as the importance of the law and its judicial enforcement.



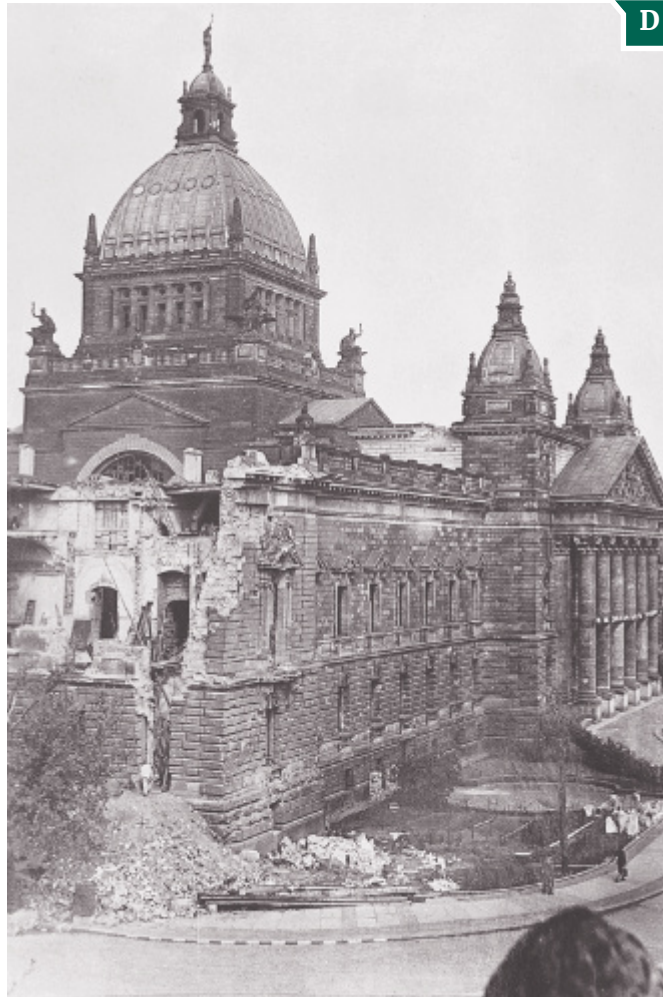
A



B



C



D

Historical photos:
 A-C: Museum of City History Leipzig
 D: Federal Administrative Court
 E: Kunstmann, Krostitz



E

- 1879** — Founding of the Imperial Court of Justice
- 1884/85** — Architectural competition
- 1888** — Laying of the foundation stone
- 1895** — Inauguration of the building of the Imperial Court of Justice
- 1945** — Dissolution of the Imperial Court of Justice
- 1952-1990** — Building used as museum, recording studio and by administrative authorities
- 1992** — Recommendation by the Federalism Commission
- 1998-2002** — Restoration and reconstruction
- 2002** — Installation of the Federal Administrative Court



A *Laying of the capstone
in the Imperial Court of Justice
on 26 October 1895*

B *Imperial Court of Justice seen from
the Pleißewehr (around 1915)*

C *Reichstag Fire Trial
on 21 September 1933*

D *Destroyed façade of the building
of the Imperial Court of Justice (1945)*

E *Reconstruction works at the
building of the Imperial
Court of Justice (1998–2002)*

The administrative jurisdiction

The administrative jurisdiction has its origins in the second half of the 19th century. The first German Higher Administrative Court was constituted in the Grand Duchy of Baden. Prussia also established an administrative jurisdiction several years later with, inter alia, the constitution of the Prussian Higher Administrative Court. At imperial level, there was no uniform system of legal protection until the Weimar period. Only in 1941, the Imperial Administrative Court was established but provided only limited administrative legal protection.

After 1949, each of the federal states of West Germany created its own administrative jurisdiction. In 1953, the legislature established the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin as a court deciding on appeals on points of law at federal level. The Code of Administrative Court Procedure, which regulates the structure and organisation of the administrative courts as well as the proceedings at federal and federal state level, entered into force on 1 April 1960. In contrast, the German Democratic Republic abolished the administrative jurisdiction. Only towards the end of the 1980s, people were entitled to have certain administrative measures reviewed by the courts.

After reunification, the newly founded federal states established administrative courts and higher administrative courts as well. Since then, the Code of Administrative Court Procedure has been uniformly applied throughout Germany.

Come visit us!

Visits

The Great Courtroom, the cupola hall and the Museum of the Imperial Court of Justice can be visited free of charge:

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.

Guided tours

The visitor's service of the Court organises guided tours through the building. For further information, please visit our website.

Contact

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Getting here

S-Bahn: lines 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 5X

(stop: *Wilhelm-Leuschner-Platz*)

Tram: lines 2, 8, 9, 14 or bus: line 89

(stop: *Neues Rathaus*)

Tram: lines 10 and 11

(stop: *Münzgasse/LVZ*)

www.bundesverwaltungsgericht.de/en

