Deutsche Bank from 1870 until today
Rooted in Germany - global from the beginning
Under the Empire 1870–1918

When the idea of founding Deutsche Bank became reality in 1870, banking was in the throes of radical change: industrialisation meant that industry’s financing needs were growing and the highly traditional banking sector was going to have to move with the times.

Adelbert Delbrück

In Berlin, a number of private bankers were open to new ideas. Their leading lights were Adelbert Delbrück and Ludwig Bamberger, both regarded as the “true founders” of Deutsche Bank. The bank’s statute was adopted on January 22, 1870, and a little under two months later, on March 10, 1870, the Prussian government granted it a banking license. This was the last license issued to a joint-stock bank in Prussia. The license requirement was abolished that same year.

The statute placed great emphasis on foreign business: “The object of the company is to transact banking business of all kinds, in particular to promote and facilitate trade relations between Germany, other European countries and overseas markets.” The direct aim was to challenge the hegemony of British banks, which continued to dominate the financing of German foreign trade. From the outset, international business was built up steadily.

Between 1871 and 1873 Deutsche Bank opened five branches: in Bremen, Yokohama, Shanghai, Hamburg and London.

The founders, all of them bankers, showed vision in choosing the name Deutsche Bank even before Germany had been established as a nation-state. However, little did they suspect that they were creating tough competition for themselves. In the long run, financing foreign trade was not viable on its own, so the newly-founded bank was soon on the lookout for other areas of business.

First share certificate of Deutsche Bank

In the very year of its foundation, Deutsche Bank began to accept deposits in cash. Nowadays that sounds self-evident, but for the German banking world it was little short of revolutionary. The bank needed a solid base and
found it in the deposit-taking business. Georg von Siemens, one of the two original members of the Management Board and a leading light in the history of Deutsche Bank, realised this from the start. By promoting this area of business he not only created a broad capital base for the company; he also helped deposit-taking business to become firmly established in Germany.

When Deutsche Bank started business on April 9, 1870 its first office was at 21 Französische Strasse in Berlin, on the first floor of a rather ordinary-looking building.

The bank remained there for just over a year and then moved, together with around fifty staff, to premises very near the Berlin Stock Exchange. In 1876, construction began on new head-office buildings at the junction of three streets – Behren Strasse, Mauer Strasse and Französische Strasse. The view of the two connecting "bridges" was to become something of a trademark for the bank.

Deutsche Bank’s head office in Berlin, around 1910

First premises at Französische Straße, Berlin

1889
Participation in the founding of Deutsch-Asiatische Bank

1890
Participation in the founding of Mannesmannröhren-Werke (steel pipe industry)

1892
Opening of Munich branch

1894
Participation in the founding of Banca Commerciale Italiana

1897
Deutsche Bank supports the conversion of Siemens & Halske into a joint-stock company

1898
Participation in the Shantung Railway Company and Shantung Mining Company in Northern China

1901
Opening of branches in Leipzig and Dresden

1903
Concession to build the Baghdad Railway

Acquisition of Romanian oil company Steaua Romana
Deutsche Bank’s early decades were a period of rapid expansion; the bank had an eye for good business prospects and a sound feel for risk. Issuing business began to grow in importance in the 1880s, and in the 1890s it really took off. And it meant that the capital market could be tapped for investments in new industrial and infrastructure enterprises. The bank played a major part in the development of Germany’s electrical-engineering industry, but it also gained a strong foothold in chemicals and steel. A solid base in Germany permitted the financing of business abroad, which in some cases kept the bank occupied for years, the best-known example being the Baghdad Railway.

The second half of the 1890s saw the beginning of a new period of expansion at Deutsche Bank. The bank formed alliances with large regional banks, giving itself an entrée into Germany’s main industrial regions. Joint ventures were symptomatic of the concentration then underway in the German banking industry. For Deutsche Bank, domestic branches of its own were still something of a rarity at the time; the Frankfurt branch dated from 1886 and the Munich branch from 1892, while further branches were established in Dresden and Leipzig in 1901.

In addition, the bank soon recognised the value of specialist institutions for the promotion of foreign business, concentrating on Latin America and Asia. Deutsche Ueberseeische Bank was established as the sole subsidiary in 1886.

Its operations were focused on Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Three years later Deutsch-Asiatische Bank, headquartered in Shanghai, was established with the backing of a consortium of the leading German banks. In Africa, Deutsche Bank’s activities were via stakes in banks and railways.

When in spring 1914 the "Frankfurter Zeitung" told its readers that Deutsche Bank was “the biggest bank in the world”, the claim marked not only the climax but the end of an era. The First World War brought the first phase of the globalisation of the world economy to an end and forced Deutsche Bank to concentrate on its activities in Germany for a long period.
In the Weimar Republic 1919–1932

After the First World War the banks had to come to terms with a very different world. Before business was able to recover, Germany was hit by inflation.

At the peak of inflation in 1923: banknote for 20 billion marks

The immediate post-war period was a time of liquidations and acquisitions. The bank had lost most of its foreign investments and branches. In Germany, by contrast, the branch network was expanded considerably, mainly via mergers with partner regional banks.

There was new business, some of which was to have an impact for a long time to come. The bank played a significant role in the establishment of the film production company, UFA, and in the merger of Daimler and Benz.

The consolidation of the German banking industry peaked in 1929 when Deutsche Bank merged with its most powerful rival, Disconto-Gesellschaft. For eight years what was easily Germany’s largest bank operated under a dual name – Deutsche Bank und Disconto-Gesellschaft – before reverting to its former, rather more memorable name in 1937.

Increasing costs and the trend towards consolidation throughout the industry were the main reasons for the merger. It was the most significant merger in the German financial world for decades, and it came at just the right time to help counteract the unfolding world economic and banking crisis.

In terms of its political impact, that crisis was the most disastrous economic event of the century. The shortage of liquidity that paralyzed the banks was fuelled by a combination of short-term foreign debt and borrowers no longer able to pay their debts, while the inflexibility of the state exacerbated the situation.

For many years, it would not be possible to return to circumstances that might in some ways have been considered reminiscent of the ‘golden age’ before the First World War.

Merger of „Deutsche Bank und Disconto-Gesellschaft“ 1929

1920
Acquisition of Hannoversche Bank, Braunschweiger Privatbank and Privatbank zu Gotha

1923
Hyperinflation in Germany

1924–25
Acquisition of Württembergische Vereinsbank in Stuttgart and Essener Credit-Anstalt

1926
Participation in the founding of Lufthansa and in the merger of Daimler Motoren-Gesellschaft, Stuttgart, with Benz & Cie., Mannheim, to form Daimler-Benz

1927
Acquisition of Lübecker Privatbank

1928
Acquisition of Hildesheimer Bank

1929
Merger of Deutsche Bank and Disconto-Gesellschaft; the company is now called ‘Deutsche Bank und Disconto-Gesellschaft’

1931–32
Following the banking crisis, Deutsche Bank and Disconto-Gesellschaft has to deposit one-third of its share capital with the state-owned Golddiskontbank
Deutsche Bank
History

In the Third Reich

1933–1945

Hitler's seizure of power in 1933 marked the beginning of the darkest chapter in the history of Deutsche Bank. By 1945, after twelve years of National-Socialist rule and six years of war, not only was the bank itself on the brink of the abyss; it had also allowed itself to become a tool of the Nazi state.

The racist goals of the regime from the outset, putting up no resistance; the feeling of impotence and feebleness instilled in them by the aftermath of the 1931 banking crisis and the anti-bank ideology of leading Nazis was simply too great. Adaptation and a willingness to compromise were in their view the order of the day. For instance, by 1934 the three members of the bank’s Management Board whom the new government defined as Jews had been banished from this body. Only on the Supervisory Board was a Jewish colleague tolerated as late as 1938.

What had begun with the dismissal of Jewish staff soon continued with the so-called ‘Aryanisation’ of Jewish firms. This ousting of the Jewish population from the business life of the nation reached its peak in 1938, when following a series of laws and decrees Jews were forbidden to indulge in any kind of economic activity. By the end of 1938, Deutsche Bank had been involved as an intermediary and lender in at least 363 cases of ‘Aryanisation’.

When in 1938 the National-Socialist government began systematically to monitor and freeze Jewish assets, Deutsche Bank’s Jewish customers were affected as much as those of all other banks. By the time the war ended, almost all account assets and deposits held by Jewish customers had been transferred to the German Reich. This exercise in dispossession proceeded under cover of a seamless panoply of laws and ordinances that gave a semblance of legality to what was in effect robbery by the state. No one offered any direct resistance to the new Nazi legislation; in fact, to do so would have been extremely dangerous, as witnessed by the example of two Deutsche Bank directors who were executed in 1943 simply for voicing “defeatist” remarks.

Even before the Second World War, Deutsche Bank used the aggressive expansion of the German Reich into Austria and Czechoslovakia in order to open new branches in those areas and acquire holdings in banks already operating there. Once the War had commenced, the same kind of business expansion was pursued in the occupied countries of western and south-eastern Europe.
As a bank with international connections and a branch of its own in neutral Turkey, in the period between 1942 and 1944 Deutsche Bank was also involved in the German Reich’s gold transactions. During those years, Deutsche Bank purchased 4,446 kg of gold from the Reichsbank, selling it on in Istanbul. As we now know from the findings of the independent Historical Commission Appointed to Examine the History of Deutsche Bank in the Period of National Socialism, at least 744 kg of that gold came from Holocaust victims. However, no crystal-clear answer could be found to the question of whether the bank was aware of the origin of that gold.

Research by the independent Historical Commission also found that the Katowice branch and the sub-branches under it had granted loans to construction firms working at Auschwitz, where they were engaged in building the IG-Farben factory and the concentration camp.

Deutsche Bank acknowledges its ethical and moral responsibility. That is why it was not only involved in the foundation set up jointly by German business and the federal government, "Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future"; it is also making every effort to have its own past fully and critically reappraised.
In 1945, after 75 years in business, Deutsche Bank was on the verge of ruin. The post-war period proved to be the toughest in its history. The occupying forces either nationalised all banks – as happened in the Soviet zone, for example – or allowed them to remain in operation at regional level. In 1947-48, Deutsche Bank was broken up into ten banks, thereby briefly reviving at least the names of some banks that had disappeared in mergers many years before. Banking under the name “Deutsche Bank” was henceforth forbidden.

The economic downsides of this fragmentation soon became tangible. Following the formation of the Federal Republic (“West Germany”, as it was commonly called), the bank was able to regroup in two stages, chiefly thanks to the efforts of Hermann Josef Abs. In 1952 an interim solution was reached, with Rheinisch-Westfälische Bank being set up in Düsseldorf, Süddeutsche Bank in Frankfurt and Munich, and Norddeutsche Bank in Hamburg. In 1957 the three merged to form Deutsche Bank once again.

1946–1957

1946–47 The American military government (OMGUS) investigates Deutsche Bank

1947–48 In the Western zones of occupation, Deutsche Bank is split into ten autonomous institutions

1949 In West Berlin, Berliner Disconto Bank is established as the successor institution to Deutsche Bank

1952 The successor institutions are combined to form three joint-stock companies: Norddeutsche Bank, Rheinisch-Westfälische Bank and Süddeutsche Bank

1953 The London Debt Agreement – negotiated by the subsequent Spokesman of the Management Board of Deutsche Bank – restores the creditworthiness of the Federal Republic of Germany

1956 Foundation of DWS (mutual fund company)

1957 Merger of the three successor institutions to form Deutsche Bank AG, a joint-stock company with its registered office in Frankfurt
Internationalisation 1958–1988

After Deutsche Bank was re-established it succeeded in readopting its traditional role in international financing and entering new lines of business in Germany.

The post-war period was a time of crucial decisions concerning banking policy. Product policy played a relatively minor role. This changed at the end of the 1950s when the bank ventured into general retail banking. Within a couple of years the number of private clients increased immensely, corresponding with strong growth in the domestic branch network.

International issuing business became more important as Germany moved from being a debtor to being a creditor nation. A major milestone was the 1958 flotation of a foreign-currency bond for the Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa, with which Deutsche Bank reopened the German bond market to foreign companies.

International business grew far more important in the 1970s. Deutsche Bank began to take shape as a global group. New branches abroad supported this development. The evolution of financial markets, technological progress and the acquisition of major banks in Italy, Spain, the UK, and the United States have all meant that Deutsche Bank has changed more in the last decades than in the preceding century.

Bank advertising in 1960

Foreign bond for the Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa

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New logo of Deutsche Bank

1958 On behalf of Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa, Deutsche Bank floats what is the first foreign bond on the German capital market since 1914
1959 Deutsche Bank enters the retail banking business by introducing small personal loans
1963 Start of “club banking” through the foundation of the European Advisory Committee, from which EBIC emerges in 1970
1970 Foundation of Compagnie Financière de la Deutsche Bank in Luxembourg, the precursor of today’s Deutsche Bank Luxembourg
1973 Representative offices open in London and Moscow
1974 Launch of Deutsche Bank’s current logo
1986–88 Acquisition of Banca d’America e d’Italia

Expansion in twelve countries of the Asian Pacific region, as well as in Brazil, Canada, Portugal and the Netherlands.
Becoming a global player 1989 until now

The nineties were marked by additional acquisitions and the establishment of subsidiaries abroad, in no small part against the background of political transformations in Eastern Europe.

In the following years international investment banking accounted for an ever-increasing share of Deutsche Bank’s business. Globalisation brought the capital markets even closer together. The liberalisation of economic areas and innovative technologies opened up new growth opportunities. Since then Asia in particular has seen new markets develop at breakneck speed.

Starting with the acquisition of the UK merchant bank Morgan Grenfell in 1989 global expansion culminated in the acquisition of the New York investment bank Bankers Trust, which opened the American market up to Deutsche Bank.
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Takeover of Scudder Investments</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Acquisition of the Swiss Private Bank Rued, Blass &amp; Cie</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Opening of a branch office in Beijing Ac quasi on of the Russian investment bank United Financial Group (completed in 2006)</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>Takeovers of Berliner Bank and Norisbank Branch openings in Dubai and Riyadh</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Acquisition of Postbank and Sal. Oppenheim in Germany as well as parts of ABN AMRO in the Netherlands</td>
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<td>2018</td>
<td>Initial Public Offering of DWS DB Privat- und Firmenkundenbank AG created from the merger of Postbank and Deutsche Bank’s private and commercial clients business</td>
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In 2008 Deutsche Bank had to overcome the most severe global financial crisis since the Second World War. In subsequent years several cases of rule breaches and misconduct were discovered that damaged the company’s reputation. In early 2017 the Management Board issued a public apology for serious errors, for example in its US mortgage business activities between 2005 and 2007.

Deutsche Bank was founded almost 150 years ago as a partner to German companies for their global banking needs.

Today it is a leading European bank with global reach. Deutsche Bank provides commercial and investment banking, retail banking, transaction banking and asset and wealth management products and services.

The repercussions make it absolutely essential to implement changes over the long-term. The aim is to make the bank a pillar of society once again.