

Press Release,
November 2025

World Design Capital Frankfurt RheinMain 2026

Looking forward – das Morgen gemeinsam gestalten

From January to December 2026, the Frankfurt Rhine-Main region will be the official World Design Capital 2026, inviting you to experience design in all its facets. Around 2,000 projects and events, conceptualized and implemented in collaboration with approximately 400 partners, await people from the Rhine-Main area and an international audience. These diverse events, exhibitions, workshops, and hands-on activities all fall under the motto Looking forward – shaping tomorrow together.

For twelve months, the entire region will be addressing some of the major questions of our time: How should public spaces be designed to offer added value to society? How can architecture, mobility and digitalization contribute to a better quality of life? And what role does design actually play in a vibrant democracy? The diverse and extensive programme of World Design Capital 2026 will provide the answers.

Specially developed WDC events form key elements of the program and provide a common thread throughout the WDC year. These are supplemented by numerous projects initiated by large and small partners such as museums, universities, foundations, companies, initiatives, and associations. From the World Design Street Festival 2026 Module at the Frankfurt Bockenheimer Culture Campus to intercultural art workshops at the Leather Museum in Offenbach to the exhibition 'A Step Ahead – Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt at 125,' which celebrates the 125th anniversary of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt.

The events will be organized around monthly focus topics, ranging from design in education to climate & sustainability, building & living, science & research, design in politics, and design in business.

The overarching goal is for the events and projects to bring design to life as a tool for social change, thereby having a lasting impact on the Frankfurt Rhine-Main region beyond the year itself. In addition, the aim is to highlight the creative potential of Frankfurt Rhine-Main and to establish long-term networks between the various stakeholders.

World Design Capital
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c/o Museum Angewandte Kunst
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What is behind the WDC 2026?

The World Design Capital® (WDC) is an initiative of the globally recognized, non-governmental World Design Organization (WDO)® to recognize cities that use design as a driver for economic, social, cultural, and environmental progress. Frankfurt Rhine-Main (Germany) has been awarded the title for 2026 with the theme *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life.*

In recent years, the following cities have been honored every two years:

Turin (Italy), Seoul (South Korea), Helsinki (Finland), Cape Town (South Africa), Taipei (Taiwan, Chinese Taipei), Mexico City (Mexico), Lille Métropole (France), Valencia (Spain), and most recently San Diego (USA) and Tijuana (Mexico), which received the award jointly. For further information see WDO.org.

The three pillars of the programme:

WDC in-house productions

Our WDC events provide a common thread throughout the WDC year 2026 and create versatile stages for the creative industries. These include a mobile pavilion, the WDC ship Navigating Democracy, the international Open – Design Week Frankfurt RheinMain, the WDC Campus – young talents at work and the WDC Summer with the Module Festival. The focus is on networking and co-creation between design, technology, communication, mobility and civil society. Collaborations with universities, institutions, companies and initiatives bring design to life as a socially relevant practice. Key partners bring business and design into play in a targeted manner and help shape key projects, including the World Design Policy Conference in November 2026.

Cooperation

Important programme highlights are developed in close cooperation with selected, renowned partners such as museums, universities, companies and foundations from the region. These partners contribute their expertise, creativity and passion and play a decisive role in showcasing the diversity and innovative strength of the region.

Projects from the open call

Our was an important milestone. We received a total of 1,200 projects and ideas, many of which are now an integral part of our programme. This allows us to showcase the creative potential of Frankfurt Rhine-Main and connect the various stakeholders with one another. Numerous projects from the Open Call are rolling out a carpet in the region and forming the supporting foundation of WDC 2026, developed by people from the region, institutions and associations – from Frankfurt to Darmstadt, from Wiesbaden to Offenbach.

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The WDC Events 2026

Grand Opening WDC 2026

Date: 16 January 2026

Location: Centralstation Darmstadt, Im Carree 1, 64283 Darmstadt

The *Grand Opening of World Design Capital 2026* will mark the start of a year that transforms the Frankfurt RheinMain region into a laboratory and a stage for forward-looking design. The ceremonial opening at Centralstation Darmstadt features a multifaceted program—ranging from artistic performances and speeches, including one from Boris Rhein, Prime Minister of Hesse, to a keynote by renowned author and Professor of Planning and Architectural Sociology Martina Löw. The evening will also highlight a selection of events from the WDC's annual programme, followed by a get-together and a party.

WDC Hub

Date: 1 January – 31 December 2026, Opening Event: 24 January 2026

Location: WDC Hub at the Museum Angewandte Kunst, Schaumainkai 17, 60594 Frankfurt am Main

The official *WDC Hub* at Museum Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt will serve as the central point of contact for World Design Capital 2026 throughout the year. The location functions as the WDC headquarters, providing a space for exchange as well as information and meeting opportunities. Networking events, workshops, and discussion formats will take place, while the museum itself will host exhibitions on the theme *Design for Democracy* all year round.

Mobile WDC Pavilion

Date: 3 April – 25 September 2026

Location: Various locations across the Rhein-Main region, including Bad Homburg and Offenbach

The *mobile WDC Pavilion*, developed by Construct Lab, will tour the region from April to September 2026, bringing the themes of World Design Capital to life. Workshops, dialogue formats and educational programmes will take place at several locations – from city squares to cultural venues – showcasing the diversity of the region and involving the local community.

More details will be available in early 2026 on <https://wdc2026.org/>

Open – Design Week Frankfurt RheinMain

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Date: 5 to 14 June 2026

Location: Frankfurt, Wiesbaden, Darmstadt, Offenbach, Hanau, and surrounding region

In June, *Open – Design Week Frankfurt Rhine-Main – the World Design Experience* will show how design is paving the way for a resource-efficient and sustainable economy. In 2026, *Open* will launch the first *Design Week Frankfurt Rhine-Main* to put agencies, studios, universities, and companies in the spotlight and highlight the potential of design for the future, participation, and sustainability. Highlights include *Open MINDS* at Massif E, Europe's largest creative festival *Forward Festival*, *Open NEXT* with young talent and award ceremonies, and *Open DOORS* with guided tours of local design locations. Thematically, *Open SPACES* will explore aspects such as mobility, digitalization, housing, and the circular economy, bringing together smaller and larger players in the region. The *Open* network, consisting of IHK, Rat für Formgebung – German Design Council, Marketingclub, and Atelier Markgraph, will be present with an Impact Space, for example. In addition, CLUK will offer an interdisciplinary week of events for the creative industries, showing how creative methods can contribute to strengthening democracy, sustainability and social cohesion – through lectures, discussions, exhibitions, and activities.

The *Open* will also host *World Industrial Design Day*, organized annually by Deutscher Werkbund Hessen and partners, and will place a special focus on participatory formats such as an unconference (hackathon, barcamp, etc.) on the occasion of WDC 2026.

WDC Campus

Date: 14 April 2026 to 9 August 2026

Location: Museum Angewandte Kunst, Schaumainkai 17, 60594 Frankfurt am Main

WDC Campus is a key future project of World Design Capital Frankfurt Rhine-Main 2026 at Museum Angewandte Kunst (MAK) Frankfurt. As a laboratory and interdisciplinary platform for universities, it brings together design, art, architecture, social sciences, natural sciences, and engineering. The carefully curated exhibition presents the next generation at MAK Frankfurt, the WDC hub. This is accompanied by lectures, panels, and workshops. Around 16 universities develop projects for the campus during the winter and summer semesters. Companies, institutions, and students exchange ideas after the kick-off on 14 April 2026. The campus offers a space for the future ideas of young talents they deserve. The highlight is the Campus Festival from 3 to 5 July 2026, with a supporting programme and exhibition until 9 August. Everything is explained in a way that is easy for visitors to understand. The motto is: 'Gestalten wir, wie wir leben wollen.' ('Let's design how we want to live.')

World Design Policy Days

Date: 11 to 14 November 2026

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Location: Paulskirche Frankfurt and other venues in Wiesbaden and Offenbach

As part of World Design Capital Frankfurt Rhine-Main 2026, the *Policy Days* will provide a platform for a new international debate on the role of design in political processes. As the official World Design Policy Conference of the World Design Organisation (WDO), they will bring together decision-makers, designers, scientists, and representatives of civil society from all over the world to work at the intersection of design, politics and society.

The World Design Policy Days Frankfurt 2026 understand design not only as an economic or aesthetic factor, but as a strategic tool for social transformation. The central question is: How can design methods strengthen democratic processes, modernise administrative structures, and help shape an open, resilient society?

In keynotes, workshops, panels, and international dialogue formats, participants develop concrete recommendations for action for design-driven policy innovation – regionally anchored, globally networked. With the *Design Policy Conference*, Frankfurt Rhine-Main is contributing to the further development of an international discourse that rethinks design as a political competence.

The conference is the final building block in the development of a design strategy for the Rhine-Main region, the Design Action Plan Frankfurt Rhine-Main, and provides strong impetus for a future-oriented European design policy – in dialogue with actors such as New European Bauhaus, the EU Policy Lab, BEDA – Bureau of European Design Associations, and national and international design associations.

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