

Press Release
15 January 2026

Five Key Themes, One Goal: Design for the Future of the Region

World Design Capital Frankfurt RheinMain 2026 structures its annual programme around five key themes, each highlighted during specific months, creating a clear narrative thread throughout the WDC 2026 year.

Shaping Living Environments Together

(Building & housing, mobility, sustainability & climate, public space & urban development, participation, inclusion, work, health)
– February, March, May –

How we live, build and move around shapes our lives. Sustainability, climate protection, technological innovation and social participation are key determinants of this development. World Design Capital Frankfurt RheinMain 2026 shows how climate-adapted construction, modular forms of living and circular architecture interact with future-oriented mobility and transport – from electric mobility and sharing to networked infrastructures.

At the same time, new public spaces and participatory formats such as communal cooking or gardening are emerging, facilitating social interaction and fostering participation. The focus is on how design can bring nature back into the city, facilitate sustainable practices and implement technology responsibly – for a shared, resilient and inclusive future.

Rethinking Learning, Exploring Design

(Education, schools, science & research)
– April, July –

Education is about more than the transmission of knowledge. It empowers us to shape our environment consciously, creatively and responsibly. Design plays a pivotal role in this process: it transforms the way we learn – in schools and universities and beyond institutional settings. New learning spaces, methods and tools foster curiosity, collaboration and independent thinking – from early childhood to youth and into lifelong learning.

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Designers and experts take knowledge directly to people; city squares, pavilions and excursions become places and spaces of learning. Unique formats such as the WDC Pavilion and the WDC Campus – involving around 40 universities from the region and from national and international partner cities – bring together laboratory, exhibition, workshop and forum in a single space, thus positioning education as the driving force for a present and future worth experiencing.

Future Cycles: Design, Crafts and Industry

(Craft, industry, consumption, work)

– June –

Design and creative practice are key drivers of industry and the economy. Rather than continually producing new products, the focus is shifting towards responsible consumption, reuse and recycling. Concepts such as cradle-to-cradle and new circular economy processes demonstrate how design can unite ecological responsibility with economic success.

In June, *Open – Design Week Frankfurt RheinMain* will highlight how design is helping to advance a resource-efficient, future-ready economy. For ten days, the Frankfurt RheinMain region will become an international stage for collaborative design. The festival showcases the work of regional designers and producers, bringing visionary design from the region into dialogue with ideas and impulses from around the world. *Open* will be a trade fair, a networking platform, a stage and a forum for new approaches, with a strong focus on regional ideas, cross-sector networking and collaboration in Frankfurt, Offenbach, Wiesbaden and Darmstadt.

Engaging all the Senses

(Culture, media, digitalisation, sport)

– August, September –

Through movement, sound, atmosphere, touch or taste, democracy is not only discussed or shaped, but experienced directly and immediately. We approach the design of our society through sensory, visual and physical experiences, opening up new perspectives and points of access. Artificial intelligence and digital platforms further expand these possibilities by supporting collaborative design and new forms of interaction.

A central element of this thematic focus will be the free *Module Festival* on the *Kulturcampus* in Frankfurt in August 2026. Its aim is to bring people together, open up new perspectives and push creative boundaries.

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Design in Dialogue – in Politics and Society

(Design discourse, design theory)

– October, November, December –

Design can make political processes more understandable and accessible – for example through user-friendly public services, new forms of civic participation or international collaboration. The focus is not on ready-made solutions, but on design as a method for addressing social inequality, rethinking memory and actively shaping democratic processes.

The Policy Days in November, held as the official conference of the World Design Organization (WDO)[®], will bring together policymakers, designers and researchers to develop concrete recommendations for design-driven policy. The aim is to create the Design Action Plan Frankfurt RheinMain, which sets out impulses for a future-oriented European design policy, in dialogue with initiatives such as the New European Bauhaus, the EU Policy Lab and BEDA.

Note:

A comprehensive selection of press images and further information on key collaboration partners, WDC events, the WDO, a collection of quotes, and an overview of highlight projects from the annual programme can be found here:

media.wdc2026.org/press

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