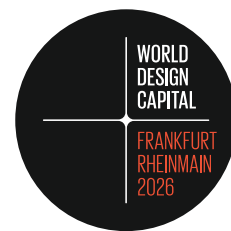


Press Release
19 June 2026



A Powerful Signal for the Region's Future: *Open – Design Week* Draws Thousands and Builds Momentum for Continuation

For ten days, the Frankfurt RheinMain region was all about groundbreaking design: as the central public event and flagship format of World Design Capital 2026, *Open – Design Week Frankfurt RheinMain*, held from 5 – 14 June 2026, demonstrated impressively how deeply design is rooted in the region – and the vital role it plays in driving social, environmental and economic change. The organisers' initial assessment is overwhelmingly positive, with the programme's remarkable diversity receiving an enthusiastic response from the public, industry professionals and international guests alike. Around 35,000 visitors attended more than 200 events during the festival, which took place at over 150 venues under the umbrella of *Open – Design Week*. Alongside the four *Focus Days* in Frankfurt, Darmstadt, Offenbach and Wiesbaden, the World Heritage Festival at Mathildenhöhe and the Forward Festival were among the biggest crowd-pullers.

'Open – Design Week has lived up to expectations and demonstrated just how much can be achieved when we view design as a collective endeavour that brings together business, culture, politics and civil society. The overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, combined with the outstanding quality of the individual events, underlines the valuable contribution we have made together to the region's design landscape – and beyond,' says Kai Rosenstein (director of production and head of *Open*).

'We must not allow this momentum to fade. Our clear objective now is to sustain the energy generated during our year as World Design Capital. We are already working on a Design Action Plan for the region, which will include the continuation of Design Week. Together with political stakeholders, as well as partners and sponsors from the business community, we aim to establish the structural and financial foundations needed to make Open – Design Week a permanent fixture in the region from 2027 onwards – more connected, more visible and even more participatory,' adds Carolina Romahn, managing director of WDC 2026.

World Design Capital
Frankfurt RheinMain 2026
c/o Museum Angewandte Kunst
Schaumainkai 17
60594 Frankfurt am Main
Germany

Presse / Press WDC 2026:
Christina Sweeney
Caroline Mohler
Mobile +49 151 55620038
Office +49 69 928 82933
press@wdc2026.org

Pressebüro / Press Office:
neumann communication
wdc@neumann-communication.de
+49 221 91 39 49 0

Umgesetzt durch /
Organised by:
Design FRM gGmbH

Geschäftsführerin /
Chief Executive Officer:
Carolina Romahn

Amtsgericht Frankfurt am Main,
HRB 130442

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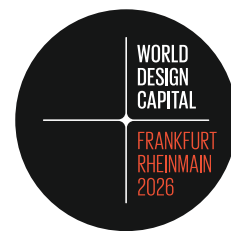
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Open Doors during Focus Days: All Facets of Design

The ten-day festival showcased the full spectrum of design. As part of the *Focus Days*, more than 150 workshops, agencies, studios, research institutes and cultural organisations opened their doors to the public. Visitors were able to access the venues and make use of dedicated design shuttles organised in collaboration with mobility partner MAZDA. They experienced first-hand how design can help address some of the most pressing challenges of our time – from sustainable materials and the intersection of craftsmanship and cutting-edge technology to new approaches to social interaction and business. The focus was on exchange and interaction. *‘Open – Design Week was a fantastic opportunity for us to demonstrate the many design challenges that lie ahead on the path towards a circular construction industry. Interest in the principles of the circular economy was enormous. These conversations foster the understanding that we as a society need in order to be prepared for the future,’* says Lina Djouiai, creative director, Circle Cube Offenbach.



Supporting Programme Generates Strong Reach

A historic yet forward-looking highlight of the *Open* programme was the World Heritage Festival at Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt, together with the opening of the exhibition *A Step Ahead / Einen Schritt Voraus*, marking the 125th anniversary of Mathildenhöhe. Held during the opening weekend, the events attracted around 18,000 visitors. The Forward Festival, one of Europe's leading creative conferences, celebrated a successful Frankfurt debut with around 1,100 participants, positioning the region as a hub for the international creative scene. In addition, a 50-strong international UNESCO delegation from the Creative Cities of Design network visited the region, underlining the global significance of its design ecosystem. The world premiere of the documentary *What Are People For? – The Legacy of Systems Design* about design pioneer Patrick Whitney, also added an international dimension to the programme. The film was screened in the festival space at Massif E, located in the former E-Kinos.

Issues relating to urban development and Frankfurt's future cultural mile were explored during a sold-out WDC 2026 event held in collaboration with Rooftop Day on the roof of the Jewish Museum. The participatory project OFF THE WALL also placed a particular focus on the city of tomorrow. As part of a three-day interactive intervention at the end of *Open*, it used temporary structures and workshops to transform Frankfurt's *Wallanlagen* parklands into a vibrant real-world laboratory for urban encounters. On Frankfurt's Goetheplatz the *Beat by Bits* project brought public space to life through dance performance.

Outlook: From WDC-Highlight to Lasting Institution

Open – Design Week 2026 has demonstrated the enormous potential of the Frankfurt RheinMain region and provided a strong foundation for future development. To secure this potential over the long term, the organisers intend for the format to evolve beyond a one-off event and become a lasting source of inspiration.

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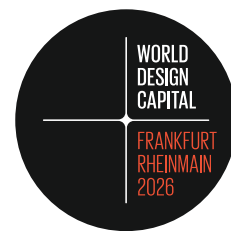
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The WDC organisers are therefore already looking ahead to ensure that the collaborations and networks forged during the festival are carried forward into the future. Special thanks go to all participating institutions, studios, creative professionals and partners from politics, business and culture whose commitment made this groundbreaking flagship project of WDC 2026 possible and provided an important new impetus for the region.



What is WDC 2026?

The World Design Capital® (WDC) is an initiative of the globally recognised, non-governmental World Design Organization (WDO)® that honours cities using design as a driver for economic, social, cultural and environmental progress. Frankfurt RheinMain (Germany) has been awarded the title for the year 2026 under the theme Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a Better Life. In previous years, the title has been awarded every two years to the following cities: Turin (Italy), Seoul (South Korea), Helsinki (Finland), Cape Town (South Africa), Taipei (Chinese Taipei), Mexico City (Mexico), Lille Métropole (France) and Valencia (Spain), as well as most recently San Diego (USA) and Tijuana (Mexico) as the first binational designation, and Busan (South Korea), selected as World Design Capital® 2028.

More information at WDO.org.

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