

Press release

Frankfurt a. M., 08 September 2026

Design Policy Days 2026: How design can shape politics, public administration and democracy

International closing conference of World Design Capital Frankfurt
RheinMain 2026 | 11 to 14 November | Free to attend

Taking place from 11 to 14 November 2026, the *Design Policy Days* will be both the highlight and culmination of World Design Capital Frankfurt RheinMain 2026. Participants are invited to rethink design as a political and social force for change and to put it to the test in practice. Over four days in Wiesbaden, Offenbach and Frankfurt, stakeholders from politics, public administration, academia, design, business and civil society will discuss what citizen-centred public administration and sustainable cities could look like and how they could work in practice. On the fourth day, the *Design Assembly* at Frankfurt's Paulskirche will bring together the international WDC network, regional stakeholders and politicians. The Design Action Plan Frankfurt RheinMain will be presented there as a roadmap through to 2030, and the WDC title will be formally handed over to Busan, South Korea, for 2028.

The aim of the *Design Policy Days* is to harness the momentum generated by World Design Capital Frankfurt RheinMain 2026 to promote democratic and sustainable regional development. Design is to be established as a strategic tool for democratic, sustainable and citizen-centred regional development.

Design Action Plan as a roadmap for Frankfurt and the region

The key outcome of the free conference will be the *Design Action Plan Frankfurt RheinMain*, a roadmap intended to embed design sustainably in regional decision-making processes and serve as the legacy of the 2026 WDC year. The plan will be presented at Frankfurt's Paulskirche during the official *Design Assembly* on the fourth day (14 November 2026). At the subsequent *Convocation Ceremony*, the WDC title will be officially handed over to the next World Design Capital, Busan in South Korea.

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

Gefördert durch /
Funded by



STADT FRANKFURT AM MAIN



Auf Grundlage der Leitidee von /
Based on the core idea of

Design for Democracy.
Atmospheres for
a better life

World Design Capital® ist eine Initiative der /
World Design Capital® is an initiative of



The *Design Policy Days* are a biennial international specialist conference forming part of the official programme of the World Design Organization (WDO) within the framework of World Design Capital Frankfurt RheinMain 2026. The *Design Policy Days* focus on the question of how design can effectively act as a catalyst for addressing social and political challenges. Specifically, the focus is on how design can help cities and regions develop sustainably, strengthen democratic processes and make public institutions more citizen-centred.

The conference is aimed at stakeholders from the worlds of politics, public administration, academia, design, business and civil society who wish to discuss the role of design in addressing social and political challenges and to learn about new approaches. Attendance at the *Design Policy Days* is free of charge.

Three Conference Days, Three Perspectives, Three Venues

Wednesday, 11 November (Wiesbaden): When Public Service Is Designed

The opening event at Heimathafen Wiesbaden will focus on citizen-centred administration. International service design experts will discuss sustainable, citizen-centred public services, creative bureaucracy and digital administration in Hesse, the Rhine-Main region and beyond with representatives from politics and business. A key focus will be on how pilot schemes and projects tested during the WDC year can be transformed into sustainable practices through participation and co-design. Contributors include renowned international experts from the fields of design, politics and public administration.

- Contributors: Sabine Junginger (design researcher), Birgit Mager (service design pioneer), Martin Jordan (Federal Digital Service), Tobias Witt (CityLAB Berlin), urbanist Charles Landry and others.
- Practical sessions: Workshops by CityLAB Berlin and EU Policy Lab on AI, data and digital public services.

Thursday, 12 November (Offenbach): When Form Becomes Attitude

At the Offenbach University of Art and Design, a series of keynote speeches will focus on the political stance of design, exploring the question: How can design have an impact in urban spaces, digital spaces and political debates? In collaboration with the *Board of International Research in Design (BIRD)*, WDC projects and interventions in public space will be discussed at an international symposium.

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

- Keynote speakers: Tatjana Schneider (architecture theorist), Noemi Bisson (designer and researcher) and Silvio Lorusso (Italian author and designer).

Friday, 13 November (Frankfurt am Main): When Design Gets Political

At Goethe University Frankfurt, in collaboration with German Design Day and the Normative Orders Research Centre, the focus will be on how design can be integrated into state structures as a democratic competence. With contributions from, amongst others, peace and conflict researcher Nicole Deitelhoff, WDO President Pradyumna Vyas, EU Policy Lab Director Thomas Hemmelgarn, and design researcher Lucy Kimbell. Across the three thematic areas – DEBATE, REFLECT and ACT – approaches to civil society, digital sovereignty, transformation and state reform will be discussed and explored, ranging from round-table discussions and academic panels to workshops and an exhibition of international case studies.

- Participants: Nicole Deitelhoff (peace researcher), Pradyumna Vyas (WDO President), Thomas Hemmelgarn (EU Policy Lab), Lucy Kimbell (design researcher), as well as Dr Ina Hartwig, Head of the Department of Culture, and Eileen O'Sullivan, Head of the Department for Citizens, Digital Affairs and International Relations.

The day will conclude with Finance Minister Alexander Lorz and State Secretary Manuela Strube presenting the *Hessian State Prize for Universal Design*. The prize, under the patronage of Minister-President Boris Rhein, recognises products, projects and services that break down barriers: in the digital sphere, in the built environment and in everyday life.

Grand Finale at Paulskirche: Design Assembly and Handover Ceremony

Saturday, 14 November (Frankfurt am Main):

At Frankfurt's Paulskirche, representatives from politics, public administration, academia, design, culture and civil society will come together for the *Design Assembly*. The assembly will take stock of World Design Capital Frankfurt RheinMain 2026, whilst also looking ahead to the future. The focus will be on the handover of the *Design Action Plan Frankfurt RheinMain*: an invitation to the region to translate the ideas initiated during the WDC year into concrete next steps and lasting structures. International World Design Capitals will also share their experiences of the long-term impacts a WDC year can have on institutions, networks and political strategies.

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

Gefördert durch /
Funded by



STADT FRANKFURT AM MAIN



Auf Grundlage der Leitidee von /
Based on the core idea of

Design for Democracy.
Atmospheres for
a better life

World Design Capital® ist eine Initiative der /
World Design Capital® is an initiative of



In the evening, the formal *Convocation Ceremony* will take place: the World Design Organisation will officially hand over the title of World Design Capital to Busan, South Korea, which will be the World Design Capital in 2028. The handover marks the conclusion of the Frankfurt RheinMain 2026 WDC year and looks ahead to the next World Design Capital, Busan 2028. Music and artistic performances will accompany the event, creating a setting for dialogue between representatives of both regions. The ideas developed during the WDC year, together with the *Design Action Plan*, will form the basis for further work in the region.

Exchange, Networking and International Experiences

At the *Network of Cities Meeting* on Saturday, 14 November, 2026 at the Römer in Frankfurt, former World Design Capitals will report on the long-term impacts their programmes have had – for example, in the form of new networks, permanent institutions and political strategies that embed design in public administration and urban development. The meeting will bring together policy-makers from the Frankfurt Rhine-Main region and representatives of former World Design Capitals.

Throughout the conference, get-togethers at all three venues will provide opportunities for dialogue between regional initiatives, international guests, institutions and the design community.

The closing party at the Tokonoma Club marks the official end to the conference and the WDC year.

Information and registration

Participation in all events of the *Design Policy Days* is free of charge. Detailed information on the programme, the speakers, event venues and ticket bookings can be found [online](#).

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

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.

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

Gefördert durch /
Funded by



STADT FRANKFURT AM MAIN



Auf Grundlage der Leitidee von /
Based on the core idea of

Design for Democracy.
Atmospheres for
a better life

World Design Capital® ist eine Initiative der /
World Design Capital® is an initiative of

