

**World
Frankfurt**

**Design
RheinMain**

**Capital
2026**

**Looking forward –
das Morgen
gemeinsam gestalten**



Programme Preview WDC 2026

EN

Looking forward – das Morgen gemeinsam gestalten

World Design Capital Frankfurt RheinMain 2026 is bringing together people who are passionate about actively designing the future of our region. Whether individuals, initiatives, businesses, or cultural institutions, we're all working together on projects and cooperations to develop ideas for a future worth experiencing. Our exciting programme for 2026 highlights, across 7 thematic tracks, how design can strengthen democracy and positively change our lives. Along this journey, we invite you to join numerous exchange formats – regional and international.

For the latest updates, the full programme and more information, see:

wdc2026.org

On track towards WDC 2026 – Frankfurt RheinMain goes global

In 2025, Frankfurt RheinMain will showcase itself worldwide as a hub of creativity. Leading up to 2026, we're actively engaging in leading international design festivals, exhibitions, and conferences – from London to Vienna to Eindhoven. By sharing our regional ideas globally, strengthening international networks, and highlighting our region's innovative spirit, we're building powerful momentum for the future of WDC 2026.

World Design Organization (WDO)
World Design Organization (WDO)[®] is a globally recognized, non-governmental organization with United Nations consultative status, dedicated to promoting and advancing industrial design as a catalyst for positive change. Since its founding in 1957, WDO services over 215 member organizations worldwide, reaching hundreds of thousands of designers through innovative programmes and initiatives that champion 'design for a better world'.
World Design Capital[®] (WDC) is initiative of WDO in recognition of cities that use design to drive economic, social, cultural, and environmental progress. In addition to Frankfurt RheinMain (Germany) in 2026, WDO has recognized various international cities biennially. WDO.org

Across the region Frankfurt RheinMain

Since 2024, we've been actively engaging with the region through a variety of formats. More opportunities for exchange and participation will follow.

FestivalHub & WDC Embassies – Spaces to discover, exchange and participate

The *FestivalHub* at Museum Angewandte Kunst is WDC 2026's central home – a vibrant meeting point where the year's themes come together. Here, international impulses and regional perspectives converge, sparking exchange, dialogue and creative experience.

WDC Embassies are scattered across the region, connecting directly with the people. These embassies are located at central places of everyday life – in shopping streets, cultural venues, or tourism centres. They provide information about the programme, showcase selected projects, and serve as venues for local events, fostering exchange, information and connection.

WDC Workshop Truck on the road

The red *WDC Workshop Truck* hit the road in 2024, bringing conversations, impulses and ideas to towns like Darmstadt, Kelkheim, Hanau, Eltville and the fair Frankfurter Buchmesse. This journey continues over the next two years!

WDC Academy

To create a programme that drives positive, lasting change beyond 2026, we want to inspire and empower creators from the start, helping them design their contributions in ways that are sustainable and forward-thinking. The Academy will provide participants with knowledge, methods and creative tools needed to make their WDC 2026 contributions not just impactful but also accessible and future-oriented. The Academy will launch in summer/fall 2025, with expert-led sessions and team support.

WDC regulars' table

At the *WDC regulars' table*, we offer a space for relaxed exchange and networking every third Wednesday of the month. It will take place at different locations across Frankfurt RheinMain, bringing together new perspectives and ideas.

Discovering WDC 2026

Some of the WDC 2026 events focus on key themes that bring the year's vision to life. These events are co-produced by WDC 2026 and bring together groundbreaking actors from the region and the world.

World Design Spotlight – Each week highlights a different WDC 2026 theme across media platforms.

This format combines established media and various channels to feature exciting contributions revolving around *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life.* The *World Design Spotlight* can focus on projects, people, or companies and is designed to engage both a broad audience and design enthusiasts alike.

WDC Pavilion – The Mobile Heart of Frankfurt RheinMain

Sustainably built, modular, and mobile: The WDC Pavilion will travel through the region from April to October 2026, stopping at 5 to 7 key locations – from vibrant city squares to cultural landmarks. As a roaming event centre, people easily connect with WDC 2026, offering a tailored programme at each stop that reflects the region's diversity and engages the local community.

Frankfurt RheinMain Design Experience

In early summer 2026, Frankfurt RheinMain will become an international stage for designing tomorrow. For 9 days, visionary design from the region will meet impulses from around the world. Exhibitions, open studios, interactive experiences, and inspiring encounters! The events will take place at converted industrial sites, innovative venues and iconic spaces, linking the past and the future of the region.

Month of Design

August 2026 will be the *Month of Design* – a full month of creative happenings showcasing the diverse facets of design, making WDC 2026's year-long activities tangible. From installations and discovery tours to exhibitions, everyone in the region is invited to participate and explore the world of design.

World Design Street Festivals

The highlight of this month are the *World Design Street Festivals*, which will transform various urban neighborhoods into vibrant creative spaces over 3 consecutive weekends. Here, street art meets music, performance blends with community spirit. Through interventions in public spaces, artistic expressions, and participatory projects, we celebrate the cultural diversity and creative energy of the region. Whether it's interactive formats or subcultural impulses – this festival invites everyone to actively shape both the city and design.

Future needs Design – 3 Conferences, 3 Cities: World Design Policy Conference / World Design Network of Cities Meeting / WDC Convocation Ceremony

The *World Design Policy Conference 2026* will be the global gathering for design, politics and science, aiming to establish design as a strong driver for addressing societal and political challenges. The conference is divided into 3 themes – Politics, Administration and Attitude – and will take place in Wiesbaden, Frankfurt and Offenbach. The highlight: the Design Assembly in Frankfurt Paulskirche, bringing together all perspectives and fostering dialogue with regional politics. For this special occasion, we're bringing together the international network of World Design Capitals and the key players in the region. During the festive *Convocation Ceremony*, we will proudly pass the WDC title to the next World Design Capital.

Get involved – become a Partner of WDC 2026!

How we work, live, and do business is a matter of design. WDC 2026 offers companies the opportunity to contribute their ideas and projects to an international dialogue on the future – whether it's about sustainable materials, digital innovations, or new forms of collaboration. Connect with us, showcase your solutions, and get involved in designing tomorrow.

Get in touch!

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Exciting Projects along thematic tracks



Open Call Projects



Cooperations

- Save Democratic Spaces – Möglichkeitsräume schützen und schaffen
- Better together – In guter Gesellschaft
- With all Senses – Mit allen Sinnen
- Moving Forward – Von Vergangenem zu Visionärem
- Design in Schools – Design macht Schule! Frankfurt RheinMain lehrt Gestaltung
- Design meets Society – Der Designdiskurs um den erweiterten Designbegriff
- Cooperations with Universities – Programme mit der kreativen Hochschullandschaft der Region



The project selection offers a glimpse into the dynamic programme that will grow and evolve in the weeks and months ahead. For a detailed, up-to-date overview of all projects and cooperations, see:

wdc2026.org

Save Democratic Spaces

strengthens public spaces and shows why we must protect them.



Co-designing GündiWest /
by: studio formagora

This participatory design project works with volunteers and residents of the *GündiWest* housing project to co-create community spaces. GündiWest, a home for formerly homeless people, will move to a new location in late 2025.



Booty Bounce /
by: Sarah Arieibu & Team

Booty Bounce is a performance project over several months that puts queer BIPOC FLINTA* individuals in Frankfurt in the spotlight, while fostering their participation in the cultural scene.



Demokratiekioske /
by: Lust auf besser leben gGmbH

The *Demokratiekioske* project aims to use temporary kiosks and public spaces as discussion hubs, where communities can engage with democratic themes in informal, accessible ways.



Kulturcampus Frankfurt /
Partner: Vision31

Vision 31 is developing a temporary use concept for the Kulturcampus Frankfurt in Bockenheim, which is set to be built on the former university grounds. Various cultural institutions, including the University of Music and Performing Arts (HfMDK), are planned to relocate there. Despite significant delays and ongoing discussions, several initiatives are already active at the Kulturcampus: They are testing meaningful usage opportunities, inviting citizens to participate in the design process and using the vacant spaces for social and ecological transformations. The project partners of Vision 31 are: Offenes Haus der Kulturen, Making Frankfurt, Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences and the Culture Department of the City of Frankfurt.

Better together

shows: Together we can drive change and actively design our future.



Kiosk of Solidarity X Drogensozialarbeit FFM / by: Moritz Ahlert and Felix Egle

The *Kiosk of Solidarity X Drogensozialarbeit FFM* is a project in Frankfurt that addresses drug use, homelessness, and social exclusion. The kiosk brings together drug users, addiction services, and local communities in public areas to resolve conflicts, foster dialogue and bridge social and health gaps.



Kelkheim kann's – Straße der Vielfalt / by: City of Kelkheim (Taunus)

Kelkheim kann's – Straße der Vielfalt turns Frankfurter Straße into a meeting point for everyone. During the city festival in 2025 and 2026, local clubs and organisations will showcase what makes Kelkheim unique: its diversity and community spirit. There will be activities bringing together people from various cultures and art projects that stay in the city.



Exhibition: Yes, we care. Das Neue Frankfurt und die Frage nach dem Gemeinwohl/ Museum Angewandte Kunst

Yes, we care. Das Neue Frankfurt und die Frage nach dem Gemeinwohl explores the importance of caring for the common good and public welfare, both historically and today. The exhibition features ideas, people and initiatives in education, domestic work, social welfare and health, while also addressing the current challenges of the care crisis.

With All Senses

activates all senses to make democracy tangible and experiential.



BEAT BY BITS – AN OPEN-AIR VERSION OF 16BIT / by: Paula Rosolen/Haptic Hide

BEAT BY BITS (BBB) is a dance performance in public spaces across Frankfurt. It tackles the social and political meanings of techno, using a dynamic blend of sound, colour and movement to make these meanings perceptible.



Aufbruch und Abbruch: Architektur für Alle / by: BOYS* IN SYNC

A performative walk through the May housing estates: The performers alternate between tour guides and characters from Kleist's *Erdbeben in Chili*. The project prompts reflection on the intersection of architecture, democracy and crisis management.



Singen als soziale Praxis / by: Anouk Schmelz & Clara Maldener

People gather in public spaces to sing together, creating a sense of community!



Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt – A Step Ahead

Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt is a unique architectural ensemble of early modernism and has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2021. Established as an artist colony in the early 20th century, it will celebrate the 125th anniversary of its groundbreaking 1901 exhibition with the exhibition *A Step Ahead – Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt at 125* in 2026. The exhibition will highlight visionary design from Darmstadt's cultural creators, combining historical and forward-thinking approaches. In addition to innovative materials and adaptive technologies, the exhibition aims to inspire people to stay one step ahead of the current challenges in their lives and to envision a better, healthier and fairer future through an expanded understanding of design.

Moving Forward

addresses the challenges of tomorrow.
Together, we aim to create solutions.



The Street as a Runway /
by: Lorenza Manfredi & Team

The Street as a Runway explores the use of public spaces. Streets weren't always meant for cars. In workshops focused on kite-building and flying, people of all ages will come together in the streets.



Bibliotheken digifit / by: FD Kultur Rheingau-Taunus-Kreis

This project strengthens digital participation in the Rheingau-Taunus region. *Bibliotheken digifit* is a mobile, modular makerspace expanding the possibilities of 15 local libraries and enhancing digital expertise.



SEIT 19/02/20 HANAU /
by: Biarna Diegmüller

This digital platform gathers various texts and materials on right-wing terrorism. Users can download and share zines and posters to raise awareness and spark dialogue.



see-Conference / Partner:
BILDER DER ZUKUNFT e. V.

The *see-Conference* is a platform for envisioning the future through sustainability, visual communication, and innovative design. Since 2006, it has brought together activists and experts from design, arts and science to present projects aimed at a livable future. The 17th edition, on 26 and 27 April 2025, will focus on *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life*. The ideas and projects developed at the conference will continue to shape the programme of World Design Capital 2026.

Design in Schools

encourages young people to creatively design their environment and take responsibility for the spaces they inhabit.



TikTok-Formate – S-Bahn-Takes (WT) oder Blindcast (WT) / by: Bildungsstätte Anne Frank e. V.

S-Bahn-Takes (WT) and *Blindcast (WT)* bring two people together on TikTok to debate controversial topics.



Domäne S / by: Domäne S – für Schülerinnen und Schüler e. V.

This project transforms unused display cases and empty shop windows on level B at tube station Hauptwache into creative platforms for students in Frankfurt, allowing them to showcase their ideas and experience democratic participation in public spaces.



**Urbane Raumforschung Frankfurt /
by: studio gross klein**

Young people shaping their neighborhood! Together with experts and the local community they explore and transform public spaces. The city becomes their own project.



**Stiftung Deutsches Design Museum + Stiftung
Polytechnische Gesellschaft**

Stiftung Deutsches Design Museum, Stiftung Polytechnische Gesellschaft and WDC 2026 are launching an exciting joint project. The goal is to pool resources, create synergies, and develop an initiative that integrates design expertise directly into curricula, inspiring young people to embrace design.

Design meets Society

highlights and discusses how design can help drive and shape social change.



Re-Negotiating Space /

by: Kultur einer Digitalstadt e. V. and hortopia.org

The *Re-Negotiating Space* event series asks: How can we fairly consider nature and humans in urban planning? In 3 to 5 events, new ideas and ways for collaborative planning will be developed.



Summerschool 409 /

by: Gestalt Error 409

How can design have a true social and societal impact? Thirty participants will dive into the intersection of design and theory over three workshop days.



Typography for Democracy / by: Jewish Community of Frankfurt K.d.ö.R. and Bureau Mitte, Frankfurt

Typography for Democracy features several events that explore the cultural significance of typography as a bridge between cultures.



Woche der Meinungsfreiheit / Partner:

Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels

Woche der Meinungsfreiheit will involve diverse actors across Germany: bookstores, publishers, human rights and civil society organisations and cultural institutions, each contributing their own activities for their local communities. The programme includes a variety of events, from readings to performances, all aimed at encouraging dialogue, tolerance and freedom of expression. Across the country, various events will take place simultaneously during the week. An interactive website will simplify event organisation and make all contributions easily accessible. From 3 to 10 May 2025, the importance of free expression for an open and democratic society will be highlighted for the 5 time, this year following the motto: *Argue? Definitely!*

Cooperations with Universities and YTDC

build a network of the region's creative university landscape and educational institutions.

Collaboration with local universities is a core part of the WDC 2026 programme, through formats such as Open Call submissions, a university roundtable, and the Young Talent Design Campus organised by WDC 2026.

1) Open Call University Projects

Many universities have submitted projects to our Open Call in 2024, covering a wide range of topics in seminars and research projects: designing public spaces, political tools in design and the democratisation of digital content.

2) University Roundtable / Cooperations with Universities

The University Roundtable brings together actors from various universities, colleges and academic disciplines. Together, they will discuss and initiate potential collaborations and projects. We support the initiatives of partnering universities, from seminars and projects to theses, real labs, conferences, exhibitions, tours, summer schools, residencies and research initiatives with material budgets.

3) Young Talent Design Campus (YTDC) – International Summer School 2026

The YTDC will take place in 2026 at Museum Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt. It connects universities and their (international) students from the region and beyond, providing a platform for young designers and inviting them to participate in a summer school with keynotes and workshops focused on the expanded concept of design and its potential.

Imprint

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DESIGN ORGANIZATION