

WMF 2026 Sets New Records for Global Innovation

More than 75,000 attendees from 90 countries joined three days of AI, technology, business, education and cultural exchange in Bologna.

BOLOGNA, ITALY, ITALY, July 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [WMF – We Make Future](#) has closed its largest edition to date. Conceived and organized by Search On Media Group, the event welcomed more than 75,000 attendees from 90 countries from June 24 to 26 at BolognaFiere, confirming its role as a global platform for artificial intelligence, technology, digital transformation and social innovation.



WMF 2026 Mainstage: the global forum on innovation

Across more than 70,000 square meters of exhibition space, WMF 2026 featured nine halls, 90 stages, more than 1,000 speakers, over 800 exhibitors and sponsors, 3,000 startups, SMEs and open innovation stakeholders, more than 50 international delegations, 20 country pavilions, over 40 side events and more than 3,000 organized B2B meetings.

“WMF 2026 clearly demonstrated that innovation is not a single industry, but a shared arena in which economic development, democracy, culture, employment, rights and the future are being shaped,” said Cosmano Lombardo, Founder and CEO of Search On Media Group and creator of WMF. “Over these three days, we saw connections emerge between very different ecosystems—from industry to research, from digital technology to culture and from international capital to emerging companies. This achievement strengthens the work we carry out through Search On Media Group: building platforms capable of creating value for the innovation ecosystem in Italy and around the world. This is what Build What Matters means: placing technology, business and responsibility at the service of what can truly shape the future.”

A Record-Breaking International Edition

The international dimension of WMF 2026 extended throughout the entire event, with participants arriving from Europe, North America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The event generated tangible opportunities for partnership development, business matching, internationalization, startup scouting, open innovation, institutional dialogue, professional education and cross-cultural exchange.

Its cross-industry architecture, structured around 14 strategic sectors, was designed to connect areas that are distinct but increasingly interdependent. Companies, institutions, Big Tech organizations, SMEs, startups, investors, professionals and research centers were able to access business, growth and collaboration opportunities within a single platform, offering an integrated perspective on technological, economic and social development.

Organizations represented at WMF 2026 included Dell Technologies, Intel, Philip Morris International, Generative Bionics, LG NOVA, Billboard Italia, Google, Microsoft, the European Space Agency, CINECA, the Italian Institute of Technology, AMD, Fincantieri, Rai Pubblicità, eToro, Klarna, OpenAI, Chora, Will Media and the Clust-ER Innovate, Build, Tourism and Agritech networks, alongside international companies, investment funds, institutions, research centers and delegations.

Business, Investment and Open Innovation

WMF 2026 served as a global business and development platform for companies, startups, investors, Big Tech organizations, institutions and innovation stakeholders. Its exhibition area, country pavilions, private meetings, networking initiatives and partner events created new connections across markets, regions and innovation value chains.

The startup and open innovation ecosystem played a central role. WMF brought together 3,000 startups, SMEs and investors, offering business matching, international networking, pitching opportunities, visibility and access to growth programs.

The WMF International Startup Competition, one of the world's largest startup competitions and now in its 13th edition, recognized four winners: TerraSpark received the Jury Award, MaestroHub won the Audience Award, Brainfood Intelligent Media Cloud received the Global Impact Challenge Award and WealthRyse won the Saudi Makes Future Award.

Additional startups from around the world took part in pitch sessions, meetings with investors, networking activities, visibility programs and international development opportunities. WMF's investor, corporate, media and startup support network spans Europe, North America and Asia and covers the full startup life cycle, from pre-seed to scale-up. Structured around capital, deal flow and amplification, the ecosystem represents \$304 billion in assets under management, \$1.5 billion in portfolio value and more than 17,000 investment rounds managed.

The Mainstage as a Global Forum

Alongside its business dimension, WMF reaffirmed its role as an international cultural forum where institutions, entrepreneurs, researchers, artists, journalists, activists and innovators could examine the present and discuss future trajectories.

Guests included Henna Virkkunen, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy; Michiel Scheffer, President of the European Innovation Council Board; Lucia Borgonzoni, Undersecretary of State at the Italian Ministry of Culture; Roberto Saviano; Brunello Cucinelli; Mathew Knowles; Alberto Sangiovanni Vincentelli; Francesca Albanese; Nicola Gratteri; Veronica La Regina; Francesco Ubertini; Stefano Massini; Chris Smalls; Pierpaolo Bombardieri; Giuseppe Lombardo; Enrico Mentana; Corrado Formigli; Giulia Lamarca; Camihawke; Awed; Guglielmo Scilla; Gabriele Vagnato; Veronica Maffei; and Karma B.

Discussions addressed European technological sovereignty, artificial intelligence, supercomputing, semiconductors, cloud infrastructure, cybersecurity, employment, rights, public safety, journalism, geopolitics, sustainability, organized crime and Big Tech surveillance, connecting global policy and technology debates with the practical challenges faced by companies, institutions, communities and citizens.

WMF 2026 also featured concerts by Dardust, Ditonellapiaga and other artists, as well as entertainment and educational experiences spanning music, creativity and experimentation. Among the most distinctive initiatives was ICARUS, a project supported by tech creator Jakidale that set a new Guinness World Record at WMF for the world's largest paper airplane, combining engineering, research, imagination and live entertainment.

Another major initiative was the creation of ONIL, Italy's first independent observatory dedicated to the impact of artificial intelligence on employment. Announced from the WMF Mainstage, the observatory was formally established during UIL's 19th National Congress through an agreement signed by UIL General Secretary Pierpaolo Bombardieri and Cosmano Lombardo.

The initiative builds on a joint effort launched in 2021, which included a proposal for Italy's first collective labor agreement for the AI and digital technology sector, with the goal of protecting workers' rights and promoting continuous dialogue among innovation, business and society.

Education for AI, Digital and Tech Professionals

WMF 2026 also confirmed its role as a leading Italian and international education platform for AI, digital technology and the broader innovation economy. More than 90 stages hosted specialized learning tracks, workshops, case studies, tools and strategic insights designed to help professionals and organizations understand, anticipate and manage technological transformation.

The program addressed artificial intelligence, digital marketing, advertising, data and analytics, cybersecurity, machine learning, e-commerce, tourism, vibe coding, social media, work and human resources, smart cities, open innovation and fundraising. Several stages offered interpretation in English, Italian, Spanish and Arabic, expanding the accessibility and international reach of the educational program.

The Journey Continues Beyond Bologna

WMF 2026 closes having reached a new milestone in scale, international participation, content quality and its ability to generate business, education and cultural dialogue.

The global program will continue on November 5, 2026, in San Francisco with AI For Future, followed by Saudi Makes Future in Riyadh from December 14 to 16. WMF will then return to CES in Las Vegas and present AI Festival 2027 in Milan on February 11 and 12, before returning to BolognaFiere for WMF 2027 from June 10 to 12.

WMF – We Make Future is conceived, organized and produced by Search On Media Group.

The event is held under the patronage of the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Emilia-Romagna Region and the City of Bologna. It is supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Italian Trade Agency and the Emilia-Romagna Region, in partnership with Visit Emilia-Romagna and in collaboration with BolognaFiere, CINECA and the European Space Agency.

The 2026 Main Sponsors were Philip Morris, Dell Technologies and Intel.

Additional sponsors and exhibitors included Amazon Web Services; the European Space Agency; the Italian Ministry of Culture; Data Reply, Blue Reply and Cognita Reply; ALTEN; the Italian Institute of Technology; Eni; eToro; Credem Banca; Chateau d'Ax; Legacoop; Interpretfy; Michelin Inflatable Solutions; Tesla; BNP Paribas; Intesa Sanpaolo Innovation Center; Invitalia; the Calabria Region with Fincalabra; the Italian Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy with the Case del Made in Italy network; Netval; DEVPUNKS; and Rattix, alongside the companies, institutions, research centers, startups, investors, media organizations and international delegations that contributed to the WMF 2026 ecosystem.

Press Search On
Search On Media Group
press@searchon.it

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/929622885>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors

try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.