



The second phase of the Startup Competition at WMF, the world's largest international startup competition, is now open

The second selection phase of the WMF - We Make Future Startup Competition is now open. Startups from around the world have until April 11 to apply for the competition, which will bring the top six finalists to the Mainstage of the International Trade Fair on AI, Tech & Digital Innovation. The finalists will have the opportunity to pitch to an audience of over 300 international investors and venture capitalists, expected at WMF 2025 from June 4 to 6, representing a portfolio of \$1.3 billion, with \$60.7 billion in transactions and \$214 billion in assets under management. Beyond the finalists, additional startups will be selected through the call and will have the chance to schedule B2B meetings with investors, access the startup stage, and exhibit in the dedicated startup district. Thanks to the partnership between WMF, the Tecnopolo of Bologna, and the Metropolitan City of Bologna, selected startups may also gain access to Tecnopolo spaces.

Bologna, March 11th 2024

The second selection phase for the WMF - We Make Future [Startup Competition](#) (June 4-6, 2025, BolognaFiere) is **officially open!** This is the world's largest international startup competition, which in its previous edition awarded a total prize pool of over €2.1 million and attracted applications from five continents. Startups, both Italian and international, wishing to participate can apply **by April 11, 2025.**

The competition, one of the longest-running initiatives of WMF, the International Trade Fair on AI, Tech & Digital Innovation, is aimed at startups led by teams with innovative projects or ideas in the technology and digital sectors, with particular interest in projects that can have a positive impact on society, the environment, and focus on AI applications.

Six finalists will be selected to compete on the Mainstage, presenting their projects to the audience of the international fair, which in its previous edition welcomed over 70,000 attendees from 90 countries, and to a jury of **investors, VCs, incubators, and accelerators.** [More than 300 international venture capitalists](#) are expected, including **SoftBank, the European Council, EIT Digital, and LG NOVA**, representing a portfolio of \$1.3 billion, with \$60.7 billion in transactions and \$214 billion in assets under management.

"The Startup Competition at WMF is a concrete tool to connect startups, investors, and corporate VCs on a global scale. Thanks to our continuous scouting process and International Roadshow, we offer startups direct access to capital, mentorship, and growth opportunities in leading innovation ecosystems," explains **Cosmano Lombardo**, Founder and CEO of Search On Media Group and creator of WMF. *"With over*

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International Trade Fair on Innovation: AI, Tech and Digital

#WeMakeFuture

300 venture capitalists and investors from around the world gathered in Bologna from June 4 to 6, the competition is a unique opportunity for startups to validate their business models and attract strategic investments. At the same time, for VCs and corporates, it is a privileged platform to discover the most promising startups and create new synergies within the global innovation landscape.”

The call also selects other startups that will be able to participate in the international three-day event, seizing top-level **business opportunities** with key stakeholders in open innovation. This year, WMF continues to solidify its position as a **global hub for innovation, technological entrepreneurship, and ecosystem cooperation**, fostering connections between the demand and supply of innovation and creating strategic connections between **startups, corporates, investors, and institutions**. This is a unique context on the international stage, capable of generating real business opportunities, co-development, and internationalization.

WMF 2025: All the Opportunities for Startups and Innovation Stakeholders

The three-day event, which annually brings together the **global innovation ecosystem**, represents a pivotal moment for creating **new synergies** among the many actors converging in Italy for the occasion. Among the opportunities for the startup world, organized within the thematic and vertical event, [World Startup Fest](#) – the international reference event for startups, scaleups, and investors – are the chance to organize **B2B meetings** with investors, pitch projects on the **Startup Stage**, and present at the dedicated startup exhibition area, the **Startup District**. For startups selected through the Startup Competition call, there is also the opportunity to get involved in initiatives like the **Global Impact Challenge**, dedicated to impact-driven startups and investors, the **Global Startup Program**, designed to support the development of a community of founders who have launched innovative Italian and international entrepreneurial projects, and the **Call AI 4 Future**, whose third edition was launched last January at the CES in Las Vegas.

Finally, a significant opportunity born from the collaboration between **WMF, Tecnopolo di Bologna**, and **the Metropolitan City of Bologna** allows selected startups to access spaces at the Tecnopolo, home to the Leonardo supercomputer.

To apply for the international WMF Startup Competition call, you must [complete the form](#) on the dedicated page by **no later than April 11**.

The historic startup call, now in its 13th edition, is one of the initiatives that WMF – the International Certified Fair organized by Search On Media Group – has been promoting for over 10 years to foster entrepreneurial culture and support the development of the innovation ecosystem, both in Italy and internationally. The aim is to generate a flow of opportunities between Italy and abroad.

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International Trade Fair on Innovation: AI, Tech and Digital

#WeMakeFuture

Useful Link

- [WMF - We Make Future](#)
- [First VCs and Open Innovation Stakeholders](#)
- [Call Startup Competition](#)
- [World Startup Fest](#)
- [Startup District](#)
- [Global Impact Challenge](#)
- [AI 4 Future](#)

WMF - We Make Future - International Fair and Festival on Tech and Digital Innovation

From June 4th to 6th, 2025, at BolognaFiere, the WMF - We Make Future will return. It is an internationally certified trade fair fully dedicated to the world of innovation. A globally significant event, it annually brings together the best of digital and social innovation, key international players, startups, scaleups, investors, institutions, universities, and non-profit organizations. With over 70.000 attendees from 90 countries in 2024, more than 700 sponsors and exhibitors, over 1.000 speakers and guests from around the world, 3.000 startups and investors and a portfolio of investments amounting to 1.3 trillion, the WMF is the leading international trade fair for the world of innovation.

Search On Media Group

Since 2004, the company aims to spread digital culture by managing communities, supporting sharing activities, and providing strategic and operational consulting through Search On Consulting, in the field of Digital Marketing and Digital Transformation for large companies. From the experience and professionalism of Search On Media Group also come the Business Unit Education - which organizes the WMF and other educational events - and the ibrida.io platform - managing online, hybrid, and offline events in a customizable and flexible way.

For information and materials

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