



WMF 2026 Sets New Records for the Global Innovation Platform: Artificial Intelligence, Technology, and Digital Innovation

WMF – We Make Future closes its record-breaking 2026 edition with more than 75,000 attendees from 90 countries, over 70,000 square meters of exhibition space, 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. Three days of business, culture, education, innovation, and entertainment explored—and helped shape—the global development of AI, technology, digital transformation, and social innovation.

Bologna, Italy, July 27, 2026

The largest edition in the history of **WMF – We Make Future**, the leading global event on AI, technology, and digital innovation, has officially come to a close. Conceived and organized by Search On Media Group, WMF welcomed more than **75,000 attendees from 90 countries and over 800 exhibitors and sponsors** from June 24 to 26, confirming its role as a global platform for businesses, institutions, Big Tech companies, startups, investors, researchers, cultural organizations, education providers, and social innovators.

“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 Edition

The figures reflect the unprecedented scale of WMF 2026: a new attendance record of more than **75,000 people from 90 countries**, over 70,000 square meters of exhibition space, nine halls, **90 educational 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, and over 40 partner events.** Year after year, WMF has expanded its ability to connect ecosystems, markets, institutions, professional expertise, and communities, establishing itself as one of the world’s major innovation hubs. Its international reach was evident throughout the three-day event, with participants from **Europe, North America, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.** WMF 2026 brought a global ecosystem to Italy, creating tangible opportunities for engagement, exchange, and development—from new partnerships and business matching to internationalization programs, open innovation initiatives, institutional dialogue, startup scouting, professional education, and cross-cultural collaboration.



A Global Hub for Business, Investment, and Open Innovation

For companies, startups, investors, Big Tech organizations, institutions, and innovation stakeholders, WMF 2026 served as a global platform for business and growth. More than 800 exhibitors and sponsors, 20 country pavilions, over 50 international delegations, private meetings, networking opportunities, and more than 40 partner events generated new relationships and collaborations across increasingly interconnected markets, regions, and innovation value chains. This role was further strengthened by WMF's cross-industry structure, organized around **14 strategic sectors** and designed to connect fields that are distinct yet increasingly linked through innovation. Over the course of the event, companies, institutions, Big Tech organizations, SMEs, startups, investors, professionals, and research centers were able to find business, growth, exchange, and collaboration opportunities within a single platform. This approach helped overcome traditional industry fragmentation and provided an integrated perspective on technological, economic, and social development.

Organizations participating in and contributing to the event 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 businesses, investment funds, institutions, research centers, and international delegations.

Startups and Investors: Capital, Deal Flow, and Global Reach

The startup and open innovation ecosystem played a central role in WMF 2026. The event brought together **3,000 startups, SMEs, and investors**, offering opportunities for business matching, international networking, access to growth programs, visibility, pitching, and direct engagement with the market.

The **WMF International Startup Competition**, one of the world's largest startup competitions and now in its 13th edition, recognized four winning startups: **TerraSpark**, recipient of the Jury Award; **MaestroHub**, winner of the Audience Award; **Brainfood Intelligent Media Cloud**, recipient of the Global Impact Challenge Award; and **WealthRyse**, winner of the Saudi Makes Future Award. Additional startups from around the world were also selected to access the opportunities offered throughout the event, including pitch sessions, investor meetings, networking activities, visibility programs, and international development opportunities. WMF's international network of investors, corporations, media organizations, and startup support organizations has also helped establish the event as a major platform for startup growth. Primarily active across Europe, North America, and Asia, the network covers the full startup life cycle, from pre-seed to scale-up. Structured around three pillars—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 2026 reaffirmed its role as **an international cultural forum**—a place where different ideas, areas of expertise, and perspectives came together to interpret the present and discuss future trajectories. Institutional representatives, entrepreneurs, scientists, artists, journalists, activists, and innovators from around the world took the Mainstage and the event's vertical stages, sharing their perspectives on some of the most pressing issues of our time.

Guests at this year's edition 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**; **Chris Smalls**; **Pierpaolo Bombardieri**; **Giuseppe Lombardo**; **Enrico Mentana**; **Corrado Formigli**, and many other Italian and international figures.

From European technological sovereignty and artificial intelligence to supercomputing, semiconductors, cloud infrastructure, cybersecurity, employment, rights, public safety, journalism, geopolitics, sustainability, organized crime, and Big Tech surveillance, WMF addressed some of the central issues shaping the global debate, connecting them with the real-world challenges faced by companies, regions, institutions, and citizens. The three-day event also featured concerts by **Dardust**, **Patagarri**, and other artists, along with entertainment and educational experiences that expanded the conversation about innovation beyond technology to include culture, music, creativity, and experimentation. Among these 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**. The achievement demonstrated how research, engineering, imagination, and entertainment can come together before a live audience. 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 Search On Media Group Founder and CEO **Cosmano Lombardo**. The initiative represents another step in the joint effort launched by UIL and Search On Media Group in 2021, which included a proposal for Italy's first collective labor agreement for the AI and digital technology sector. The work aims to protect workers' rights and promote ongoing dialogue among innovation, business, and society.

A Leading Education Platform for AI and Digital Technology

For participants seeking skills, professional development, and practical tools, WMF 2026 confirmed its position as a leading Italian and international education platform for AI, digital technology, and the broader tech industry. Through what the event presents as the world's most comprehensive educational program in terms of the variety, quantity, and quality of content dedicated to AI, digital marketing, and innovation, WMF offered professionals, companies, creators, marketers, developers, executives, startups, institutions, and younger generations a program of exceptional breadth and depth. More than 90 stages hosted



specialized learning tracks, workshops, case studies, practical tools, professional expertise, and strategic perspectives designed to help participants understand, anticipate, and manage industry transformation. Several stages offered interpretation in English, Italian, Spanish, and Arabic, strengthening the international reach and accessibility of the educational program. **Artificial intelligence, digital marketing, advertising, data, analytics, cybersecurity, machine learning, e-commerce, tourism, vibe coding, social media, work and human resources, smart cities, open innovation, and fundraising** were among the many areas addressed by a program designed to update skills, develop new professional capabilities, and guide both organizations and individuals through the ongoing transformation of the innovation economy.

The Journey Continues Beyond Bologna: San Francisco, Riyadh, and Las Vegas

WMF 2026 closes having crossed a new threshold in terms of scale, content quality, international reach, and its ability to generate business, education, and cultural dialogue.

The event now continues beyond Bologna and Italy. On **November 5, 2026**, WMF will return to San Francisco with **AI For Future**. From **December 14 to 16**, it will expand to Riyadh with **Saudi Makes Future**, followed by a new presence at **CES in Las Vegas** and **AI Festival 2027**, taking place in Milan on **February 11 and 12**. The journey will then return to BolognaFiere for the highly anticipated next edition of WMF, scheduled for **June 10-12, 2027**.

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 (MAECI)**, the **Emilia-Romagna Region**, and the **City of Bologna**. It is supported by MAECI, 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 at WMF 2026 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**; **Interprefy**; **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.

WMF - We Make Future is the largest International Trade Fair and Festival dedicated to Artificial Intelligence, Technology, and Digital Innovation.

From June 24 to 26, 2026, WMF returns to BolognaFiere (Italy) as a certified international event fully focused on the future of innovation. A global hub for the AI and tech ecosystem, WMF brings together each year the most advanced developments in artificial intelligence, digital and social innovation, alongside leading international companies, startups, scaleups, investors, institutions, universities, and non-profit organizations. With over 73,000 attendees from 90 countries in 2025, more than 700 exhibitors, 1,000+ speakers and guests from around the world, 2,800+ organized B2B meetings, and 3,000 startups and investors involved, WMF represents a unique convergence point for innovation-driven business and policy dialogue.



Its partner network includes organizations managing a combined €1.5 trillion investment portfolio, €304+ billion in assets under management (AUM), \$72.8+ billion in funded transactions, and over 17,000 investment rounds, positioning WMF as a global benchmark event for the innovation economy.

Saudi Makes Future – The Largest AI Exhibition in the Middle East

Saudi Makes Future is the Saudi edition of WMF – We Make Future, a certified international trade fair and global platform for innovation, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies. Developed through the collaboration between Search On Media Group, WMF – We Make Future, and PNG Saudi, the event will take place December 14–16, 2026, in Riyadh at the Riyadh International Convention & Exhibition Center. Building on WMF's vision, experience, and thematic architecture, Saudi Makes Future adapts the format to a strong AI-driven focus, structured across 14 strategic sectors exploring the impact of artificial intelligence on business, industry, society, and institutions. Aligned with Saudi Vision 2030, the event positions itself as an international platform for dialogue, cooperation, and development, designed for companies, startups, investors, and stakeholders seeking new opportunities for growth, training, and innovation in the Middle East and on a global scale.

Search On Media Group - Humans Leading Innovation Founded in 2004, Search On Media Group works to advance digital culture and innovation by managing professional communities, supporting knowledge-sharing initiatives, and delivering strategic and operational consulting through its Search On Consulting division, specializing in Digital Marketing and Digital Transformation for large organizations. From the expertise of Search On Media Group stem both the Event Agency Business Unit—responsible for organizing WMF and other proprietary and client events—and Hybrid.io, a flexible and customizable platform designed to manage online, hybrid, and on-site events.

Per informazioni e materiale

Search On Media Group SRL
Via Ugo Bassi 7, 40121 Bologna (BO), Italy
Press Office: press@wemakefuture.it
Tel: +39 051 0951294
en.wemakefuture.it

#WMF2026 | International Trade Fair and Festival on Innovation: AI, Tech and Digital.

POWERED BY



WITH THE SUPPORT OF



UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF



SCIENTIFIC PARTNERS

