

Press release

MEDICA 2026 puts start-ups in the spotlight

Around 500 young companies will meet investors, industry representatives and healthcare providers – pitch final to be held on the MEDICA MAIN STAGE for the first time

Start-ups have long been an integral part of the medtech and digital health industries. They develop AI applications, new diagnostic solutions, robotics, digital care concepts and technologies that have the potential to transform medical processes. But a good idea alone is not enough: clinical validation, regulation, funding, scaling and access to partners and end-users are crucial.

This is precisely where MEDICA 2026, taking place from 16 to 19 November in Düsseldorf, comes in. Among the several thousand exhibitors are a total of over 500 start-ups. With the MEDICA START-UP PARK, the new MEDICA START-UP STAGE, the MEDICA INNOVATION FORUM and additional investor and networking opportunities, MEDICA is further consolidating its leading international position as a platform for young companies. A highlight is the MEDICA START-UP COMPETITION: its grand pitch final will take place for the first time in 2026 on the new MEDICA MAIN STAGE in Hall 12.
This means that the programme's 'staging' of the start-ups also follows MEDICA's strategic transformation course. Innovation should not be presented in isolation. The young development teams will meet specifically with those who can evaluate, finance, further develop on an industrial scale or integrate technologies into concrete healthcare processes.

"Start-ups bring speed, new technologies and fresh perspectives to the healthcare sector. However, it is crucial that a good idea develops into a solution that can be financed, scaled up and implemented in healthcare provision. This is precisely why we bring founders together with investors, industry representatives, clinical users and international partners. The fact that the final of our START-UP COMPETITION is taking place on the MAIN STAGE for the first time sends a clear signal: innovation belongs at the heart

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of MEDICA," explains Carmen Berger, Director of MEDICA & COMPAMED at Messe Düsseldorf.

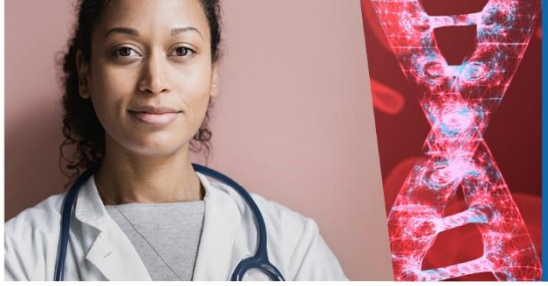
Hall 17 becomes the meeting place for the start-up scene

A key hub is the MEDICA START-UP PARK in Hall 17. More than 100 international start-ups will be presenting their technologies and business models there – ranging from AI and digital health to medical technology, robotics and diagnostics. In keeping with its theme, the START-UP PARK is situated right at the heart of MEDICA's new Digital Health Hub and in the immediate vicinity of the equally new MEDICA DIGITAL HEALTH STAGE, curated by Prof. Dr David Matusiewicz.

The range of companies represented at the START-UP PARK illustrates just how differently young enterprises are tackling current challenges in healthcare. Tano Care from Dortmund, for example, is working on the digital transmission and clear presentation of laboratory results for patients. The Freiburg-based company LABMaiTE combines AI algorithms with automated laboratory platforms to optimise biological processes in real-world experiments.

MedicubeX from Finland is presenting the eHealth Station, a self-service health pod that records vital signs and risk factors and can subsequently facilitate a telemedicine consultation. Other start-ups are developing AI-supported EEG analyses, digital services for people with panic disorders, AI avatars for multilingual communication, or automated materials management systems to ease the workload on care staff.

This makes the START-UP PARK a showcase for the breadth of innovation today: from individual medical devices and digital applications to solutions for workflows and new care models.



New START-UP STAGE: Pitching, learning, finding partners

New for 2026 is the MEDICA START-UP STAGE, also in Hall 17. It serves as a central stage for start-ups and scale-ups within the START-UP PARK. The English-language programme combines company presentations with knowledge transfer and networking. Among the speakers on stage is Inga Bergen, one of the most renowned digital health experts.

At the “Pitch & Connect Sessions”, young companies present their solutions. The Knowledge Hubs address key issues that go beyond technological development, such as cyber security, clinical validation, certification, financing and growth.

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Access to capital and strategic partners is also being organised in a more targeted manner. Investor roundtables, business matchmaking events and other networking opportunities bring start-ups together with investors and potential collaboration partners. The focus is on market opportunities, scaling, financing and concrete business opportunities.

MEDICA START-UP COMPETITION in the spotlight

Young companies will gain visibility at the 15th MEDICA START-UP COMPETITION. Start-ups from the fields of AI in medicine, robotics, laboratory diagnostics and resilience – including cyber security – will compete against one another. The finalists will present their solutions for the first time on Tuesday, 17 November, from 3 pm on the new MEDICA MAIN STAGE in Hall 12.

The move to the central main stage underlines the increased importance of start-up activities within MEDICA. Young companies will thus present their ideas not only within the start-up community, but at the heart of the international trade audience.

Last year’s winner demonstrates what taking part can achieve. The Austrian start-up SVAN Technologies impressed in 2025 with an auto-stop technology

for bone drilling. The system is designed to detect when the drill bit passes from the cortical bone into the medullary cavity and to stop automatically.

Valuable contacts through participation in MEDICA

Since the competition, SVAN says it has expanded its team and laid the groundwork for further clinical and industrial development. The company also found a contract manufacturer through contacts made at MEDICA. “We found our contract manufacturer – a certified company in India authorised to produce for Europe, the USA and Asia – at MEDICA,” explains Gunpreet Coudert Oberoi.

For her, one of the key benefits of MEDICA is access to international investors, hospitals, end-users and industry partners. She also recommends that other medical technology start-ups take part in the competition, emphasising that thorough preparation is crucial: “Giving a presentation there is something special. It takes a lot of courage to present on a big stage. You also must make sure that the message gets across not only to the highly qualified jury, but also to the audience.”

Oberoi will also be attending MEDICA in 2026. On 17 November, she will be taking part, amongst other things, as a speaker at “Women in Health – Closing Gender Gaps in Healthcare” at the MEDICA INNOVATION FORUM, as well as in the MEDICA START-UP STAGE programme.

MEDICA INNOVATION FORUM bridges technology and healthcare

The start-up ecosystem extends beyond Hall 17. The MEDICA INNOVATION FORUM in Hall 11 brings together international experts and companies and, over the four days of the trade fair, explores technologies and trends that are transforming healthcare. These include AI and big data, digital healthcare models, robotics, wearables, cyber security, the European Health Data Space, and new approaches to diagnostics and personalised medicine.

This creates an important link between start-ups and overarching industry issues: How can digital solutions be integrated into existing care processes? How can health data be put to good use? What regulatory and economic conditions must be met? And how can new technologies ease the burden on healthcare staff and improve care?

From innovation to growth

With START-UP PARK, START-UP STAGE, START-UP COMPETITION, the MEDICA INNOVATION FORUM and targeted investor formats, such as the Investment & Growth Lounge, MEDICA 2026 creates a networked environment for the various development phases of start-ups.

The approach goes beyond mere visibility. Start-ups can get to know potential users, receive feedback from the healthcare sector, meet investors, find industry partners for development and manufacturing, and tap into international markets.

This brings to life a central tenet of MEDICA's strategic development within the start-up sector: innovation gains relevance when an idea becomes a practical solution and a contact turns into a sustainable partnership.

MEDICA 2026 will take place from 16 to 19 November at the Düsseldorf Exhibition Centre. The concurrent COMPAMED 2026 (in Halls 8a and 8b) rounds off the range of topics by covering the technological foundations and supply chain expertise of medical technology.

Further information is available at: https://www.medica-tradefair.com.

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