

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: STRATEGIC RESEARCH CENTRES NETWORK IN CENTRAL AFRICA

1. Background and Context

The Observatory on Organized Crime and Violence in Central Africa is a partnership project of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC). It aims to enhance the responses of policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and civil society to organized crime and violence in the region. The Observatory is funded by the European Union and is based in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

2. Rationale, Scope and Objectives

One of the Observatory's core objectives is to help establish a credible, sustainable network of academic and policy-oriented research centres that support the Observatory's mission. It aims to achieve this by building structured partnerships with state universities and relevant research bodies engaged in strategic research and thought leadership in the Observatory's thematic areas, namely organized crime, violent extremism, cross-border security dimensions, criminal economies, and their relation to violence in Central Africa.

These collaborations are designed to strengthen and extend existing policy research capabilities within participating centres. Selected institutions will be expected to build and consolidate expertise on local risks, evolving threat dynamics, and criminal economies, while actively engaging local, national, and international stakeholders in partnership with the Observatory.

Both established and emerging research centres are encouraged to apply.

3. Eligibility Criteria

- Research centres seeking to participate in the Research Centres Network are expected to meet the following criteria:
- Be a legally registered research institution, think tank, or university-based research centre
- Demonstrate an established track record of policy-relevant research in organized crime, violent extremism, cross-border security dimensions, criminal economies, and their relation to violence in Central Africa.
- Be based in, or have a sustained research presence in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Sudan, and South Sudan.
- Demonstrated ability to translate research into policy-relevant outputs tailored to diverse audiences (e.g., policymakers, regional organisations, civil society).
- Established relationships with national, regional, or local stakeholders, including government institutions, civil society organisations, and community actors.

- Ability to manage project funds in accordance with international donor standards, including financial reporting and compliance requirements.
- Availability of core research staff with relevant expertise and language capabilities (including English and/or French; knowledge of local languages is an advantage).
- Demonstrated commitment to gender equality and inclusion, with the capacity to integrate considerations related to women, youth, and vulnerable populations into research design and implementation on organised crime and conflict.

4. Application Requirements

Applicants are required to submit the following:

- A completed [application form](#) using the template provided by the Observatory.
- Official documentation confirming institutional affiliation.
- An indicative list (maximum 20) of key research activities undertaken by centre members, including dissertations, journal articles, books, conferences, seminars, and stakeholder engagements.
- Organisational chart, along with a list of current members.
- A statement of research priorities and a proposed work plan for 2026–2027.

5. Selection Process

Applications will be assessed through a competitive, two-stage review process coordinated by the Observatory:

1. All applications will first be reviewed to ensure compliance with the eligibility requirements and submission guidelines. Only complete applications that meet the stated criteria will proceed to technical evaluation.
2. Eligible applications will be assessed by a review panel composed of representatives of the Observatory and, where relevant, external experts. The panel will evaluate applications against the criteria outlined below and may shortlist candidates for further clarification or interview, if required.

Final selection will be based on overall merit and thematic balance, and the potential to contribute to a collaborative, multi-country research network.

6. Submission Guidelines

Applications must be submitted electronically to the designated email address(es) provided below.

- All application materials should be compiled and submitted in a single email, with documents attached in PDF format.
- The subject line of the email should clearly state: “*Application – Central Africa Research Centres Network*”
- Applications and queries should be sent to: tajavi@issafrica.org and sisso@issafrica.org
- The deadline for submissions is **23:59 hours CAT on 16 May 2026**.
- Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

Applicants will receive an acknowledgement of receipt within **two working days**. If no confirmation is received, applicants are advised to follow up using the contact details provided.

7. Duration and Timeline

- Deadline for applications: **16 May 2026**
- List of preselected centres: **21 May 2026**

8. Contact Information and Queries

For questions or requests for clarification regarding this call for applications, please contact the Observatory at: sisso@issafrika.org