

Internal Security Fund (ISF)

Call for proposals on the fight against corruption (ISF-2026-TF2-AG-CORRUPT)

Concept proposal

BLOCKS: BuILding Operational anti-Corruption toolKits for EU Member and Candidate States

(under definition)

Trento, August 2026

Coordinator



[Department: eCrime and/or CSSC – TBD]

This document is a concept note and represents a preliminary version of the final proposal. Consequently, all information contained herein could be subject to change in the final version.

CALL INFORMATION

Call: [Call for proposals on the fight against corruption \(ISF-2026-TF2-AG-CORRUPT\)](#)

Deadline: 24 September 2026, 17:00 (CEST)

Priorities, activities, and outcomes addressed by the proposal

Project proposal “BLOCKS” addresses all **priorities** of the call for proposals:

1. *Strengthening cross-border and EU-level responses to corruption including the implementation of EU anti-corruption recommendations;*
2. *Enhancing prevention, detection, and enforcement capacities;*
3. *Promoting integrity and institutional resilience.*

Project proposal “BLOCKS” provides for the following **activities** covered by the call for proposals:

- *Activities supporting the implementation of anti-corruption recommendations addressed to Member States in the annual Rule of Law reports or in the European Semester; such as developing implementation roadmaps, monitoring tools, or coordination mechanisms between competent authorities;*
- *Activities improving integrity and anti-corruption in national authorities including through capacity building and trainings, as well as the development of relevant frameworks, tools or practices;*
- *Activities promoting evidence-based policy making in the field of anti-corruption including through data collection, analysis and the development of relevant methodologies or indicators;*
- *Activities identifying corruption risks and challenges in the private sector and public sector, including through risk assessment and the measures to mitigate these risks;*
- *Activities reducing corruption in areas with a high risk of corruption, such as targeted measures addressing vulnerabilities;*
- *Activities supporting the inclusion and progress of anti-corruption, ethics and integrity education at all educational levels.*

Project proposal “BLOCKS” aims to achieve the following **outcomes** set by the call for proposals:

- *Strengthened structural and/or operational approach in the prevention of corruption in the public and private sector;*
- *Increased implementation of anti-corruption recommendations to Member States highlighted in the annual Rule of Law reports and in the European Semester, as well as the objectives of the Directive on combating corruption;*
- *Improved data collection and risk management tools that enable mitigation or oversight in areas with high corruption risks;*
- *Increased understanding of the challenges and good practices in the areas mentioned as priorities, including emerging forms of corruption and new methods used by criminal networks, and/or risks of infiltration of organised crime through corruption into MS economies, politics and societies at large.*

Background

April 2026 marked the adoption of the new Directive on combating corruption, replacing Framework Decision 2003/568/JHS and the 1997 Convention on the fight against corruption, and amending Directive (EU) 2017/1371. After defining a set of ten corruption offences (Chapter II, Articles 3-11) to be independently integrated into the penal systems of each Member State, in Chapters III and IV the Directive includes provisions on prevention and cooperation among MSs in the fight against corruption.

While transposing Chapter II of the Directive requires legislative intervention in national criminal law, Chapters III and IV require concrete action in the fields of risk assessment, training and data collection. In particular:

- Article 22: “[...] Member States shall ensure that one or several bodies or organisational units tasked with the prevention of corruption are in place and possess the necessary expertise to fight against corruption. The tasks of such bodies or organisational units may include, as appropriate: [...] (d) **identifying sectors or occupations most at risk of corruption**; [...]”
- Article 24: “(1) Each Member State shall take the necessary measures to provide **up-to-date training for its national officials** to be able to identify different forms of corruption and corruption risks that can occur in the exercise of their duties and to react in a timely and appropriate manner to any suspicious activity. (2) [...] Each Member State shall take the necessary measures to provide specialised and **up-to-date training for law enforcement and judicial authorities** tasked with criminal investigations and criminal proceedings of offences falling within the scope of this Directive.”
- Article 34: “(1) Member States shall have a **system in place for the recording, production and provision of anonymised statistical data on the criminal offences referred to in Articles 3 to 11 of this Directive.**”

Indeed, to establish a truly harmonised anticorruption framework, the transposition of the new EU Directive on combating corruption is imperative. However, to maximise its impact from a practical and operational perspective, **the transposition of legislation must be supported by standardised measures that foster coordinated anti-corruption actions**, with a view to strengthening the alignment of European practices.

Objectives

The proposed project “BLOCKS” intends to provide **support** to EU **Member States** in the **harmonised implementation** of the **new Directive on combating corruption**, and to **Candidate States** in the **alignment** to EU standards, within the specific context of their accession process under **Chapters 23 and 24** of the Acquis.

To reach this goal, the project proposal has three specific objectives:

- (1) Elaborating a harmonised **data collection toolkit** to gather statistical data on corruption offences (under Articles 3-11, and 34 of the new anti-corruption Directive) across EU MSs and CSs.
- (2) Developing a **risk assessment methodological toolkit** to identify sectors and occupations most at risk of corruption (under Article 22 of the new anti-corruption Directive), both at public and private level, to target prioritised interventions;
- (3) Designing evidence-based **training materials** regarding:

- a. corruption offences and their manifestations targeting personnel operating in sectors and occupations found at-risk, to strengthen their expertise (under Article 24 of the new anti-corruption Directive);
- b. toolkits and instruments developed in the framework of the BLOCKS and qAID projects, to guide the relevant stakeholder—both at public and private level—through their correct use, ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of the projects results.

(4) Enhancing institutional resilience and capacity-building by providing open access tools and knowledge through the **EU's first integrated anticorruption platform**.

The proposed project thereby aims to **strengthen the standardisation of cross-border and EU-level operational responses to corruption by detecting at-risk situations** through evidence-based tools and methodologies. Nonetheless, the project's objective is to promote **institutional resilience and operational capacity** of EU MSs to comply with the new Directive and of CSs to align to EU standards within the context of EU enlargement, by providing them toolkits to further enhance the fight against corruption across Europe.

Work Packages

WP1 – Management and coordination of the action. Leader: UNITRENTO (M1-M24).

- Work Package description

To manage and coordinate the action.

- Tasks description

Task	Timing	Scope	Main contributors
T1.1	M1-M24	Establishment of project organisation and procedures	All partners
T1.2	M1-M24	Kick-off meeting and mid-term meeting	All partners
T1.3	M1-M24	Monitoring of deliverables, milestones, and progress reports	WP leaders
T1.4	M1-M24	Financial and administrative coordination	All beneficiaries

WP2 – Data collection toolkit. Leader: UNITRENTO (M3-M9).

- Work Package description

To develop a standardised toolkit for the recording, production and provision of anonymised statistical data on the criminal offences. A set of guidelines will support the correct completion and usage of a data collection matrix, in order to generate a comprehensive and user-friendly framework. The toolkit will be tested in a predefined number of EU Member and Candidate Countries. The piloting phase will allow to probe the validity and the adaptability of the tool in different national contexts, and to finalise the developed matrix. Moreover, an additional outcome are guidelines for the correct collection of statistical data on corruption offences, adding recommendations and suggestions to build an efficient and comprehensive database.

- Tasks description

Task	Timing	Scope	Main contributors
T2.1	M3-M5	Based on Articles 3 to 11 of the new EU Directive on Combating corruption, this task aims to create a standardised categorisation of corruption criminal offences . The objective will	UNITRENTO

		be achieved through a systematic reconstruction of the existent corruption juridical categories across Europe. Mapping the legislation of the European Countries—focusing on the pilot ones—will allow to develop a standardised set of corruption categories to harmonise the systematic collection of data on criminal offences, making data comparable across Europe.	
T2.2	M5-M7	The task aims to develop a data collection toolkit on corruption criminal offences, dismissed court cases, non-trial resolutions, natural persons (public officials and high officials) and legal persons prosecuted, convicted and fined. The toolkit will take into consideration statistical data of the previous 5 years to enable also time-based data comparability.	UNITRENTO
T2.3	M7-M9	The task is dedicated to the pilot phase of the data collection toolkit in a predefined set of pilot countries—both Member and Candidate States. The task envisages the involvement of the anticorruption agencies, part of the consortium as Associated partners. The agencies task is to complete the developed matrix and to return it with comments and suggestions for refinement. After the analysis of the results, a set of guidelines on how to correctly collect statistical data on corruption offences will be designed, adding recommendations and suggestions to build an efficient and comprehensive database on corruption offences.	UNITRENTO – RAI – Associated partners

- Deliverables

Deliverable	Task sources
D2.1 – Data collection toolkit	T2.1; T2.2
D2.2 – Piloting results (not public)	T2.3
D2.3 – Recommendations and guidelines	T2.3

WP3 – Risk assessment methodological toolkit. Leader: CSD. (M8-M14)

- Work Package description

To develop a risk assessment methodological toolkit aimed to identify sectors and occupations most at risk of corruption. The toolkit will be piloted in the same EU Member and Candidate States covered in Work Package 2. The testing phase will ensure the ability of the toolkit to identify specific sectors and occupations at risk of corruption, both at public and private level.

- Tasks description

Task	Timing	Scope	Main contributors
T3.1	M8-M10	The task objective is to map the state of the art on risk assessment methodologies and risk indicators in the field of anticorruption, both at public and private level.	CSD
T3.2	M10-M12	The task aims to develop a risk assessment methodological toolkit capable of identifying at-risk sectors and occupations within a specific organisation, both at private and public level.	CSD
T3.3	M12-M14	The task is dedicated to the pilot phase of the risk assessment methodological toolkit developed in the previous phase. This moment envisages the involvement of the anticorruption agencies, part of the consortium as Associated partners. The	CSD – RAI – Associated partners

		agencies are required to use the toolkit and provide suggestion for its refinement. A set of guidelines on the correct use of the risk assessment methodological toolkit will be designed to ensure the maximisation of its efficiency.	
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- Deliverables

Deliverable	Task sources
D3.1 – Mapping risk assessment toolkits and indicators on corruption	T3.1
D3.2 – Risk assessment methodological toolkit	T3.2
D3.3 – Guidelines	T3.3

WP4 – Training protocol and activities. Leader: RAI (M14-M21).

- Work Package description

To elaborate a standard evidence-based training model for sectors and occupations at-risk identified through the risk assessment methodological toolkit. The model will be tested in the pilot countries' at-risk sectors and occupations. After refinement, the training model will be enclosed in a protocol to ensure its replicability by the anticorruption agencies.

- Tasks description

Task	Timing	Scope	Main contributors
T4.1	M14-M16	The task objective is to define contents and modalities of the training activities . The identification of the risk sectors and occupations sets the starting point to design country-based training materials and activities aimed to increase awareness of corruption manifestations and their consequences, as well as the impact at a personal and organisational level.	RAI
T4.2	M17-M20	The task aims to carry out the training activities and disseminate the materials designed in the previous phase. The task is going to be achieved with the cooperation of the anticorruption agencies, part of the consortium as Associated partners, who are the point of contact with the at-risk sectors and occupations to be trained.	RAI – Associated partners
T4.3	M20-M21	The task aims to elaborate a training protocol to ensure the training activity to be reproduced. The protocol consists of a guideline to build tailored training activities and materials. The training protocol assures the sustainability of the project as the anticorruption agencies are in possess of the necessary materials to reproduce the process periodically.	RAI

WP5 – Anticorruption platform and dissemination. Leader: UNITRENTO – with the support of RAI (M3-M24)

- Work Package description

To ensure the effective dissemination of the project results to relevant communities and stakeholders, to promote the developed tools and maximise the project's impact. The objective is going to be achieved also through the designing of the first EU integrated anticorruption platform with complete open access to the existing anticorruption materials developed in the framework of BLOCKS and other related EU projects.

- Tasks description

Task	Timing	Scope	Main contributors
T5.1	M3-M24	Design and implementation of the project communication strategy and dissemination plan	All partners
T5.2	M3-M24	Design of the first EU integrated anticorruption platform , composed of the following sections: a. Statistical data on corruption offences; b. Database of the more significant corruption court cases; c. Tools section storing the operational results of BLOCKS, qAID and other projects focusing on corruption (e.g. SceMaps, Private Corruption Barometer and others) and, when available, providing training on the correct use of the materials.	UNITRENTO - RAI
T5.3	M3-M24	Networking and dissemination events	All beneficiaries
T5.4	M3-M24	Organising an international conference (in Brussels)	All partners

Proposed consortium

Coordinator

- UNITRENTO [Department: eCrime and/or CSSC, TBD] - University of Trento (Italy)

Co-beneficiaries

- CSD – Centre for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria)
- RAI - Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Associated partners

- TBD

The consortium seeks to involve a wide network of **anticorruption agencies** from Member and Candidate States to strengthen the feasibility of the project and the effectiveness of its results.

For additional information, please see the next page.

Participating as Associated partner: key FAQ and practical details

- **What is the expected level of involvement/commitment for the anticorruption agencies as Associated partners?**

Anticorruption agencies are involved as key strategic stakeholders and end-users. Their expected involvement consists of providing operational feedback and guidance based on their field experience. Specifically, agencies will be asked to review and test the project outputs to ensure they meet actual operational needs. This collaborative dialogue requires limited staff effort but is essential to guarantee the practical feasibility and real-world impact of the project.

The following table details the involvement in each Work Package.

Work Package	Task
WP1	Representatives will participate in the kick-off and mid-term meetings.
WP2	Anticorruption agencies will participate in the WP's piloting phase by completing the shared data matrix and providing structured feedback and recommendations.
WP3	Anticorruption agencies will test the developed risk assessment methodological toolkit and provide technical feedback and suggestions for its improvement.
WP4	Anticorruption agencies will act as the key liaison between target at-risk sectors/occupations and consortium partners responsible for delivering training activities and materials.
WP5	Anticorruption agencies will be asked to provide feedback and suggestions for the improvement of the EU integrated anticorruption platform. Representatives from anticorruption agencies will participate in the final international conference in Brussels.

- **What kind of administrative and/or financial obligations do the Associated partners have?**

Participation as an Associated partner entails no administrative or financial obligations. While Associated partners do not hold a direct project budget, all eligible expenses associated with their participation, such as travel and accommodation costs, will be borne directly by the consortium's beneficiaries.

- **The participation as Associated partner entails legal bindings with the European Commission or the Consortium?**

No, Associated partners do not enter any legally binding commitments with either the European Commission or the Consortium. Since Associated partners are not required to sign the Grant Agreement or the Consortium Agreement, they bear no legal obligations or financial liabilities.

However, the involvement of anticorruption agencies as Associated partners greatly strengthens both project feasibility and the value returned to the agencies themselves. By contributing their operational insights, agencies ensure the project delivers highly tailored, effective tools that directly bolster their institutional capacity in the fight against corruption.

- **What are the requirements for participation?**

To participate as Associated partners, organisations need to provide their PIC number, along with the details of a contact person and their email address.

About us

The **University of Trento**, founded in 1962, ranks among the top Italian and European universities for research impact, innovation and teaching quality, with a strong international outlook.

Since early 2021, the **Centre for Security and Crime Sciences (CSSC)**, a joint initiative of the University of Trento and the University of Verona, conducts advanced applied research and high-level training activities in a strongly interdisciplinary manner. Administratively based at the University of Trento, it is directed by Prof. Andrea Di Nicola and coordinated by professors and researchers from departments of both universities.

CSSC adopts a strongly inter/multi-disciplinary approach to security issues and their global challenges. In particular, it focuses on the implementation of 1) complex, interdisciplinary, applied research projects at the national and international level; and 2) high-level education courses for graduates and professionals on safety and security issues and their challenges in a global society. It does so by integrating knowledge from a wide range of disciplines, including criminology, law, statistics, mathematics, sociology, information sciences, the humanities, engineering, economics, medicine, psychology and cognitive sciences, physics, and biology. Members of CSSC are professors and researchers of the two Universities who are experts in the field from their respective domains. CSSC grows from the experience of different research groups dealing with crime and security issues within both the Universities of Trento and Verona. Among these, eCrime, the research group on eCriminology of the Department “Faculty of Law” of the University of Trento.

Founded in 2011, **eCrime** is the research group on digital criminology within the Faculty of Law, University of Trento. It has been among the pioneers in studying the intersection of organised crime, illicit markets and digitalisation. Coordinated by Prof. Andrea di Nicola and Dr. Gabriele Baratto, the group has built over a decade of specialised expertise in organised crime, corruption, human and drug trafficking. eCrime brings together multiple disciplines – including criminology, law, statistics, information sciences, and others – to conduct applied research on crime and security in today’s digital society. It addresses both traditional and emerging forms of crime and security using innovative methods and tools. It was among the first research groups to explore the intersection between organised crime, illicit activities and markets, and digitalisation and the digital society, thereby developing extensive knowledge and expertise across a range of topics. Since its establishment, eCrime has coordinated or participated in more than twenty national, European, and international research projects, most of which have focused on the impact and relevance of digital tools—including web platforms and social media—on criminal and illicit processes and activities. Its flexible structure brings together members from within the University of Trento—professors, researchers, fellows, doctoral candidates, and collaborators—as well as external Italian and international scholars from other universities and organisations.

Together, CSSC and eCrime have developed **strong, practically oriented competences in the fight against corruption**: they have contributed to design and build investigative tools, data-collection and monitoring platforms, risk-assessment methodologies and training materials on corruption, organised crime, counterfeiting, hate speech and cybercrime. This work is carried out in close and ongoing collaboration with policymakers, including national ministries and the European Commission, as well as law enforcement agencies and prosecutors, international organisations, and civil society organisations across the EU, through numerous EU-funded action grants.

Contacts

For any further information, or to confirm your interest in joining the project, please contact:

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