



German ministry selects proposal to build “Maria Sibylla Merian Centre” at the University of Ghana

The German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) has selected an ambitious proposal to build a Maria Sibylla Merian International Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Ghana in Accra (MICAS Africa).

See press release by the ministry (in German)

<https://www.bmbf.de/de/forschungskolleg-nachhaltiges-regieren-entsteht-in-ghana-5009.html>

A smaller part of the institute's activities will also be conducted at a second site, at the Centre de Recherches sur les Politiques sociales (CREPOS) in Dakar (Senegal). The centre will engage with the topic of "Sustainable Governance".

The BMBF seeks to promote the internationalization of the humanities, cultural and social sciences. Merian Centres are a novel and highly visible approach to connect German research institutions with research communities in the Global South. The Centre in Ghana, **MICAS Africa**, will be the fourth of such institutions, with centres in New Delhi (India), Guadalajara (Mexico) and São Paulo (Brazil) having been founded through the BMBF programme in the course of the last two years already.

MICAS Africa speaks to many disciplines and aims at bridging the divide between basic and applied research and reducing existing asymmetries in global knowledge production. Under the roof of its general topic “Sustainable Governance,” the central focus will be with questions of democracy building, conflict management, and the interconnection between environmental factors, natural resources and societal development. **MICAS Africa** will serve as a hub for exchange, collaboration and networking not only among leading researchers in their respective fields, but within an international scholarly community that also includes a significant proportion of the brightest early career researchers. Moreover, **MICAS Africa** will serve as a bridge between the Anglophone and Francophone world, something which can be done most effectively in West Africa.

The selected consortium is led by the University of Freiburg. The Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS) and the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute will provide the strategic and organisational backbone of the project. The other consortium partners are the Goethe University Frankfurt, the German Institute of Global and Area Studies Hamburg (GIGA), the Department of Political Science at the University of Konstanz, and the German Historical Institute Paris. On the African side the Centre Point Sud in Bamako and its affiliated network partners play a crucial role.

MICAS Africa draws its particular strength from its African partners: The University of Ghana is one of the leading research-oriented universities in Africa and arguably the most important research institution in West Africa. The second site of the centre will be located at the Centre de Recherches sur les Politiques sociales (CREPOS) in Dakar.

CREPOS is a highly renowned research institute in the Social Sciences that brings in expertise through an already established project for early career researchers together with one of the consortium partners, the German Historical Institute in Paris.

MICAS Africa will open in the second half of 2018 and welcome its first generation of researchers from early 2019 onwards. It will strive to become the leading Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa, offering individual fellowships and supporting interdisciplinary research groups in a wide range of disciplines.

The current decision involves a budget of €1.7 million for a 2.5 year preliminary phase. There is an understanding that the centre will potentially be funded by the German Ministry for up to 12 years - with a yearly budget of € 2 million during the main phase of funding (6 years).

Prof. Andreas Mehler, director of the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute Freiburg and the initiator of the project says: „MICAS Africa is set to transform academic relations between Germany and Africa. It will also build on existing strong networks. This will be instrumental in attracting the best and brightest minds to a centre that aims at being socially and academically responsible”.

Prof. Ebenezer Owusu, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana stated: "The University of Ghana is a unique place in the scholarly world, combining what Africa has to offer intellectually, with a fully international mindset. My colleagues and I will not spare any efforts to make MICAS Africa a success."

The German consortium members together with its African partners will now start the necessary preparations, including the naming of the joint German and African directors of the institute and all necessary preparations to welcome the first group of fellows of **MICAS Africa** in Accra in the academic year 2018/19.

Press release by University of Freiburg (in German)

<http://www.pr.uni-freiburg.de/pm/2017/wissenschaftlicher-austausch-in-afrika-wird-von-freiburg-aus-verstaerkt>

Further information on the consortium partners can be found at:

- University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, <https://www.ug.edu.gh/>
- Centre de Recherches sur les Politiques sociales (CREPOS), Dakar, Senegal <http://ihacrepos.hypotheses.org/>
- Arnold Bergstraesser Institute <http://www.arnold-bergstraesser.de/>
- Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Afrikaforschung (ZIAF) www.ziaf.uni-frankfurt.de
- German Institute of Global and Area Studies Hamburg (GIGA) <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/de>
- Universität Konstanz <https://www.polver.uni-konstanz.de/>
- German Historical Institute Paris <https://www.dhi-paris.fr/home.html>

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