

Rules of the Competition

National Cybersecurity Hackathon 2026

Preamble

These rules define the conditions of registration and participation in the National Cybersecurity Hackathon 2026, organised as a cybersecurity Capture The Flag [CTF] competition.

The Hackathon is organised in Kenya as part of the CyberWeek Africa, October 2026 in Nairobi, Kenya | <https://www.cyberweekafrica.com/>, by the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy (MICDE) and Expertise France (under European Union funded KCR project) and their partners.

The Hackathon will be announced through the official communication channels of the organisers, including:

- Event website: <https://www.cyberweekafrica.com/hackathon/>
- Registration platform: <https://www.cyberweekafrica.com/ctf-reg/>
- Social media channels:
 - X
 - LinkedIn
- Participant communication channel: [To be communicated to participants individually](#)

For the purpose of these rules, the organisers and authorised partners are jointly referred to as the Organisation.

1 Principle of the Competition

- 1.1 The National Cybersecurity Hackathon 2026 is a cybersecurity competition in Capture The Flag format. It aims to identify, encourage and recognise emerging cybersecurity talent in Kenya through practical technical challenges.
- 1.2 The competition will be organised in teams. Each team should be composed **from two (02) of four (04) participants**. The final competition will bring together two finalist teams per region, selected through the prequalification phase.
- 1.3 The Hackathon will include technical challenges in the following categories: Binary Exploitation; Web Security; Reverse Engineering; Forensics; Steganography; Network Security; Mobile Security; OSINT.
- 1.4 Participants will solve challenges through the competition platform and submit flags or answers according to the instructions provided for each challenge.

2 Conditions of Participation

- 2.1 Participation in the Hackathon is free of charge and implies full acceptance of these rules by all participants from the moment of registration.
- 2.2 To participate, each applicant must:
 - Be **at least 18 years old and under 30 years** old at the time of registration;
 - Be a citizen of Kenya;
 - Be able to present a valid identity document;
 - Register with accurate and complete information;

- Participate as part of a team registered under one participation track;
- Be available for the online prequalification phase;
- Accept the code of conduct and responsible cybersecurity rules;

If selected, be available to attend the final phase in Nairobi;

- Bring their own laptop or similar device with Wi-Fi capability, charger and any required accessories to access the competition platform.

- 2.3 The competition is open to natural persons only. A competing applicant or team must not be a government agency, public administration, political organisation, non-profit organisation or any other legal entity. Institutions may support outreach or host participants, but they cannot participate as competing teams.
- 2.4 The Organisation may request proof of age, citizenship, identity or eligibility at any stage of the competition. Failure to provide the requested information may result in exclusion from the competition.
- 2.5 The Hackathon is not open to individuals who may create a conflict of interest or undermine the fairness of the competition. This includes:
 - Members of the challenge design team;
 - Staff directly involved in scoring, jury deliberations or platform administration;
 - Immediate relatives of members of the organising team, jury, challenge design team or platform administration team, where this creates a real or perceived conflict of interest;
 - Individuals who had prior access to confidential challenge content;
 - Participants who refuse to accept the Code of Conduct;
 - Participants with a known and documented history of serious misconduct during previous public events or similar competitions.
- 2.6 Participants must not be involved in any illegal activity or engage in any conduct that may compromise the safety, integrity or reputation of the Hackathon.
- 2.7 The possession, use, distribution, sale or consumption of illegal drugs, controlled substances or prohibited substances during any phase of the competition, including the online prequalification, finalist preparation, final competition and related official activities, is strictly prohibited.
- 2.8 Participants must not take part in the competition while under the influence of alcohol, drugs, illegal substances, controlled substances or any other substance that may affect their behaviour, judgement, safety or ability to participate properly.
- 2.9 The Organisation reserves the right to refuse, suspend or cancel the participation of any applicant, participant or team where credible concerns exist regarding illegal conduct, use or possession of prohibited substances, fraud, misconduct, false declaration, breach of these rules or breach of the Code of Conduct.

3 Team Composition and Registration

- 3.1 **Participants shall compete in teams.** Each team should ideally include four members and shall not exceed four members.
- 3.2 Each team shall designate one team captain. The team captain will serve as the main point of contact with the Organisation and will be responsible for ensuring that all team members receive official information.

- 3.3 Each participant may belong to only one team. Multiple registrations, false identities, account sharing or participation under another person's identity are prohibited and may result in immediate disqualification.
- 3.4 Each team shall register through the official registration process and provide the required information, including:
- Team name;
 - Region represented, in accordance with the regional representation rules;
 - Participation track: **"University / TVET Track"** or **"Open Track"**:
 - For University / TVET teams: name of the institution and campus represented;
 - For Open Track teams: regional affiliation of each team member as evidenced by **national ID or passport or original student's card**;
 - Information on members:
 - Names of team members;
 - Date of birth of each team member;
 - Gender of each team member, for award eligibility and reporting purposes;
 - Contact details (Email);
 - Proof of Kenyan citizenship, identity, age and regional affiliation, to be presented upon request;
 - Any other information required for competition administration.
- 3.5 The Organisation may reject team names that are offensive, discriminatory, political, misleading or contrary to the spirit of the competition.
- 3.6 Each team shall register under one of two participation tracks:
- the **"University / TVET Track"**, for teams applying through a recognised university, college, campus or TVET institution:
 - The region represented by the team shall be determined by the physical location of the campus through which the team is applying. Where an institution has several campuses, the relevant region shall be the region of the specific campus represented by the team, not the location of the institution headquarters or main administration.
 - Team members may come from different counties or regions, provided that they are enrolled in, attached to or formally representing the same campus or institution located in the declared region.
 - The Organisation may request proof of enrolment, institutional affiliation or confirmation from the relevant university, college or TVET institution.
 - The **"Open Track"**, for self-taught participants, young professionals and other eligible participants not applying through a university or TVET institution:
 - All team members shall have a common regional affiliation with the region represented by the team. This regional affiliation shall be verified through a national ID, passport.
 - Self-taught participants, young professionals and other Open Track participants may not combine members from different regions in one team for the purpose of regional representation.
- 3.7 A team may register under one track only. A participant may not register in more than one team, one track or one region.
- 3.8 Where possible, the two finalist teams selected from each region shall include one team from the University / TVET Track and one team from the Open Track. If one track does not have a sufficient

number of eligible or qualifying teams in a given region, the Organisation may allocate the available finalist slot to the next highest-scoring eligible team from that region, regardless of track.

- 3.9 Any false declaration regarding identity, age, citizenship, regional affiliation, institutional affiliation, team composition or participation track may result in rejection of the application, cancellation of scores, disqualification of the team or withdrawal of any prize or recognition awarded.

4 Organisation of the Competition

- 4.1 The competition will be organised in three main phases:

- Registration;
- Online prequalification;
- Final competition in Nairobi.

- 4.2 The Organisation reserves the right to adjust the dates, duration, technical arrangements or format of any phase where necessary, provided that participants are informed in due time.

5 Registration Phase

- 5.1 The registration platform will be open from **21/09/2026 to 02/10/2026**, unless the maximum number of teams is reached earlier.
- 5.2 After registration, eligible teams will receive the necessary information for participation in the online prequalification phase, including platform access instructions, schedule, technical requirements and communication channels.
- 5.3 The Organisation may verify eligibility before or after the prequalification phase. Registration does not automatically guarantee access to the final competition.

6 Online Prequalification Phase

- 6.1 The online prequalification phase will be organised from **03 October 2026 00:00 to 04 October 2026 to 23:59**.
- 6.2 The purpose of the prequalification phase is to select finalist teams for the national final in Nairobi. The Organisation intends to select two teams per region, based on the scores obtained during the prequalification phase and the final regional allocation rules.
- 6.3 The prequalification phase will take place online through the competition platform. Participants are responsible for ensuring that they have adequate internet access and suitable equipment.
- 6.4 The platform will be available during the time window communicated by the Organisation. At the close of the prequalification phase, the Organisation will review the scoreboard, verify compliance with the rules and confirm the finalist teams.
- 6.5 The list of finalist teams will be communicated within a reasonable period after the end of the prequalification phase. The Organisation may disqualify any team where there is evidence of cheating, false registration, unauthorised assistance or breach of the rules.

7 Finalist travel, accommodation and mentorship

- 7.1 Finalist participants will be transported **from their respective regions to Nairobi on 27 October 2026**.

- 7.2 Travel arrangements will be organised to ensure that participants arrive at their designated hotel no later than 18:00. This also applies to participants from Nairobi.
- 7.3 The Organisation will communicate the travel arrangements, reporting points, departure times and hotel details directly to the finalist teams. Participants shall comply with the communicated arrangements and promptly inform the Organisation of any issue that may affect their travel or timely arrival.
- 7.4 Finalist participants will:
- Be accommodated in individual rooms at a hotel designated by the Organisation;
 - Receive full-board accommodation for the period covered by the Organisation;
 - Attend the mentorship and preparation session on 28 October 2026 at the same venue;
 - Receive the detailed mentorship agenda upon arrival;
 - Be transported on the morning of 29 October 2026 from the hotel to the final competition venue.
- 7.5 Following the final competition and award ceremony, participants will remain accommodated on a full-board basis at the same hotel until their scheduled departure.
- 7.6 **Return travel will be organised for 31 October 2026**, with arrangements made, as far as reasonably practicable, to enable participants to reach their respective regions no later than 18:00.
- 7.7 Participants shall comply with the return itinerary, departure time and other logistical instructions communicated by the Organisation.
- 7.8 No extension of accommodation, travel or subsistence support beyond the approved schedule will be covered by the Organisation. Any participant choosing to extend their stay in Nairobi shall make and bear full responsibility for their own accommodation, meals, transportation and related expenses.
- 7.9 The Rules of the Competition and the Code of Conduct shall remain applicable throughout the official finalist programme, including travel, accommodation, mentorship, organised transfers, the final competition and related activities.
- 7.10 Participants must carry a valid means of identification throughout their stay and present it upon request by the Organisation, hotel management, venue security or any other authorised official. Participants must also comply with reasonable instructions concerning travel, accommodation, safety, security, access control and event logistics.

8 Final Competition Phase

- 8.1 The final competition will take place in person in Nairobi during Cyberweek 2026 from the **29 October 2026 10.00 up to 30 October 2026 10.00 for 24h**. The venue and schedule will be communicated to the finalist teams.
- 8.2 Finalist teams will receive an official invitation from the Organisation. **Access to the final venue will require presentation of a valid identity document** and any badge or confirmation issued by the Organisation.
- 8.3 Finalist teams shall arrive at the venue at the time indicated by the Organisation for registration, technical checks, installation and briefing.
- 8.4 During the final competition, participants cannot leave the competition area without authorisation, except for reasons approved by the Organisation.

- 8.5 At the end of the final competition, the scoreboard will be closed. The Organisation and jury will verify the results before confirming the winners.

9 Challenge Categories

- 9.1 The Hackathon will include challenges in the following technical categories:

- **Binary Exploitation:** challenges involving exploitation of vulnerable binaries, memory corruption or related low-level security issues.
- **Web Security:** challenges involving web application vulnerabilities, insecure configurations, authentication issues or other web exploitation scenarios.
- **Reverse Engineering:** challenges requiring analysis of compiled code, applications, binaries or obfuscated logic.
- **Forensics:** challenges involving analysis of files, systems, logs, memory artefacts, disk images or other digital evidence.
- **Steganography:** challenges involving discovery of hidden information in files, images, audio, text or other media.
- **Network Security:** challenges involving network traffic analysis, protocols, packet captures, service enumeration or network defence scenarios.
- **Mobile Security:** challenges involving mobile applications, mobile platforms, application behaviour or mobile-related security issues.
- **OSINT:** challenges involving open-source intelligence techniques using authorised and competition-approved information sources.

- 9.2 The Organisation may adjust the number, difficulty and distribution of challenges in each category.

10 Challenge Rules

- 10.1 Each challenge will include a description, expected task and scoring value. Participants must recover or identify the required flag, answer or result and submit it through the competition platform.
- 10.2 The resolution of a challenge will award points according to its difficulty. Some challenges may include hints. The use of hints may reduce the total points available for the relevant challenge.
- 10.3 The ranking will be based primarily on the total number of points obtained. In case of equal points, the time of submission or other tie-breaking rules defined by the Organisation may apply.
- 10.4 Participants may use publicly available documentation, manuals and reference materials during the competition, unless expressly prohibited for a specific challenge.
- 10.5 The following actions are **strictly prohibited**:
- Attacking, scanning, testing or interfering with any system that is not expressly identified as part of a challenge;
 - Attacking or attempting to disrupt the competition platform;
 - Attacking the venue network, organiser systems, other participants' devices or any external system;
 - Sharing flags, solutions, credentials or challenge answers with other teams;
 - Receiving assistance from persons outside the registered team;
 - Using another team's account or sharing team credentials;
 - Publishing or sharing challenge content, solutions, flags or internal competition information without written authorisation from the Organisation;

- Attempting to manipulate the scoreboard, scoring system or platform;
 - Conducting any action contrary to these rules, the code of conduct or applicable law.
- 10.6 Any breach or attempt to bypass these rules may result in warning, penalty, score cancellation, exclusion from a challenge, disqualification from the competition or removal from the venue.
- 10.7 If a participant discovers a vulnerability in the competition platform or in any system not intended as part of a challenge, the participant must report it immediately to the Organisation and must not exploit, disclose or share it.

11 Scoring and Ranking

- 11.1 The scoreboard may be updated in real time during the competition. The Organisation reserves the right to hide, freeze or review the scoreboard where necessary to preserve the integrity of the competition.
- 11.2 The official ranking shall be established on the basis of:
- Total points obtained;
 - Time of submission, where applicable;
 - Compliance with the rules;
 - Any penalty or disqualification decision;
 - Final validation by the Organisation and jury.
- 11.3 The data from the competition platform will serve as the main basis for scoring. The Organisation may review logs, submissions and other technical evidence before validating the final ranking.

12 Prize categories and Awarding

- 12.1 The following prize categories are planned for the Hackathon:

N°	Prize Category	Basis for Award
1	1st Prize - National Cybersecurity Hackathon Champion	Highest-scoring team in the final competition
2	2nd Prize - National Runner-Up	Second highest-scoring team in the final competition
3	3rd Prize - National Third Place	Third highest-scoring team in the final competition
4	University / TVET Track Special Prize	Highest-scoring University / TVET Track team not already awarded a national podium prize
5	Open Track Special Prize	Highest-scoring Open Track team not already awarded a national podium prize
6	Best Regional Team	Region whose finalist teams together score the highest number of points

- 12.2 In addition to the six prize categories listed above, the Organisation, upon recommendation or validation of the jury, may award additional prizes, distinctions or special recognitions. Such awards may recognise exceptional merit, technical achievement, teamwork, innovation, responsible conduct, inclusion or any other noteworthy contribution to the Hackathon.
- 12.3 The **award ceremony will take place during Cyberweek 2026 the 30 October 2026.**
- 12.4 The winners will be confirmed after verification of the final scoreboard, eligibility conditions and compliance with these rules.

- 12.5 The Organisation may define an individual scoring method for awards that require individual assessment. This may include individual challenge scores, individual tasks, jury verification, facilitator observations or another method communicated before the final competition.
- 12.6 The nature and value of prizes will be communicated before or during the event. Prizes may include cash awards, professional placement opportunities, training and certification prizes, equipment and technical tools, mentorship, networking opportunities or institutional recognition.
- 12.7 Prizes are not transferable, exchangeable or refundable by the Organisation or sponsors, unless expressly stated otherwise.
- 12.8 The Organisation reserves the right to withhold, replace or withdraw a prize in case of ineligibility, false declaration, misconduct, disqualification or breach of these rules.

13 Complaints and Disputes

- 13.1 Participants may report technical issues, scoring concerns or rule-related questions through the official communication channel indicated by the Organisation.
- 13.2 Any complaint must be submitted within the timeframe defined by the Organisation. Complaints submitted after final validation of the results may be rejected.
- 13.3 The Organisation and jury will review relevant complaints in good faith. The final decision of the Organisation and jury on rankings, disqualification, penalties and prizes shall be final.

14 Data Protection and Use of Images

- 14.1 By registering for the Hackathon, participants consent to the collection and processing of the personal data required for the organisation and administration of the competition.
- 14.2 The information collected will be used only for purposes related to the Hackathon, including registration, eligibility verification, communication, scoring, reporting, logistics, award management and visibility.
- 14.3 Personal data will not be shared with third parties without consent, except where required for the organisation of the competition, legal compliance or prize administration.
- 14.4 Photos, videos or public communication using the image, name or profile of participants will be subject to the applicable consent process.
- 14.5 The Organisation will take reasonable measures to protect participant data and will not retain unnecessary personal data beyond the period required for the organisation, reporting and audit of the activity.

15 General Conditions

- 15.1 Participation in the Hackathon implies full acceptance of these rules.
- 15.2 Each participant is responsible for their own laptop, charger, software, accessories and personal belongings. The Organisation shall not be responsible for loss, theft, damage, malfunction or incompatibility of participant equipment.
- 15.3 Participants are responsible for ensuring that any tools, scripts or materials they use during the competition are lawful and authorised.

- 15.4 Participants shall respect the organizers, facilitators, jury members, sponsors, other participants, venue staff and all persons involved in the event.
- 15.5 The Organisation reserves the right to modify these rules where necessary for operational, technical, legal, security or organizational reasons. Participants will be informed of any material change.
- 15.6 The Organisation may cancel, postpone or modify the competition in case of force majeure, technical failure, security concern, insufficient participation or any other serious reason affecting the proper implementation of the Hackathon.