**EQAC STUDY VISIT – UNIVERSITY OF ALICANTE JUNE 3 -7 2019**

**Overall objective of the Study Visit – understand how well the AZ HE sector is placed to align with/integrate the European Standard and Guidelines (2015)**

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1. *Size of group and preparedness of attendees*

Approximately 50 representatives from the 11 Partner institutions attended the Study Visit plus various representatives from the EU partners. Middlesex University sent 4 representatives to present various sessions that extended over 2 days as well as to attend the Project Management Meeting. KTH was represented by an academic for 1.5 days and the Project Manager for 1.5 days. SMK was represented by the Project Manager for 1.5 days.

The size of the Azeri group was too large to be able to work in efficient and effective manner, given that the focus of the Study Visit was to determine how each Partner institution was progressing at this mid-point of implementation of the Project. We would recommend that in future that a manageable group would number no more than 25 representatives from the 11 Partner institutions, Also, quite a few attendees where challenged when it came to being proficient in English which meant that translating amongst university groups was at times disruptive during the presentations. Consequently, we would also recommend only those representatives that are proficient in English participate in similar future Project activities.

Despite the foregoing outlined challenges it would be safe to say that at least the AZ Partners now have a much clearer outstanding of how the European Standards and Guidelines (2015) can be integrated despite the current restrictions of the AZ HE legal framework.

1. *SWOT Analyses aligned with ESG as objectives for internal Quality Assurance*

Some were very ambitious, some had little of understanding of how to develop a SWOT using the ESGs as Key Indicators. Nevertheless, each AZ partner presented their individual understandings of how well each institution was placed in terms of its particular set of Strengths and Weaknesses. Overall it was not a bad effort on the part of the Azeris given their lack of experience with working with this type of institutional diagnostic tool.

1. *Action Plan developed after revision of SWOT analyses*

Most Action Plans contained longer term strategic objectives as to how they align with/integrate each of the 10 ESGs for internal Quality Assurance. The suggestion given was to break down the stragegic Action Plan into smaller, manageable and realistic tasks and for progress to be reviewed every 3 months in order to ensure that the actions are relevant or need to be revised to achieve the overall objectives. A couple of the Partner institutions chose to focus on only alignment with/integration of 1 or 2 of the ESGs which appears to be a more realistic and manageable approach.

1. *General observations*

In summary, although it was a long and extended Study Visit that probably could have been concluded in a shorter time span, the Azeri partners left with a clearer understanding of the ‘nuts and bolts’ of internal Quality Assurance i.e. what actions need to take place at institutional level to align with the ESGs and/or where compliance in even a descriptive sense is currently not possible because of the current context of the Azeri HE landscape.