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ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
THE CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 16/09/2020

External Evaluation Report (Programmatic)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  Ledra College

- **Town:** Nicosia

- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School/Faculty

- **Department/ Sector:** International Relations

- **Program of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

  In Greek:

  Διεθνείς Σχέσεις, Παγκόσμια Οικονομία και

  Στρατηγική

  In English:

  International Relations, Global Economy and Strategy

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English

- **Program's status**
  New Program: Yes
  Currently operating: No

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The onsite site visit took place on Tuesday September 15, 2020 on Zoom and lasted approximately 5 hours.

The purpose of the visit was to assess the accuracy of information and findings included in the Application for Evaluation Accreditation of the Bachelor of Arts (BA) in International Relations, Global Economy and Strategy (Doc. Number: 200.1) submitted by the Ledra College, and to explore further issues identified in the Application. The EEC followed the agenda set by the CYQAA.

Initially, we discussed the application of the College with the Rector, Dr. Kakouris. Then, the committee members had a meeting with the internal evaluations' committee of the College. This was followed by a meeting with the program coordinator, Dr. Charalambides, and, finally, we met with the teaching staff, students and administrative staff. The discussion that took place was constructive.

In addition to the site visit, the Committee made a thorough examination of all key documentation including:

- Application Document 200.1;
- Program Description;
- Curriculum and Learning Aims and Objectives;
- Module Outlines;
- CVs of all faculty members in the program.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Christos A. Ioannou	Professor	University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne
Nikolaos Papadakis	Professor	University of Crete
Arndt Brendecke	Professor	LMU Munich
Andrea Lambe	Student	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

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C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*

- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
     (a) sub-areas
     (b) standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)
     (c) some questions that EEC may find useful.

- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*

- *Under each assessment area, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

  ### *Findings*

  A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

  ### *Strengths*

  A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

  ### *Areas of improvement and recommendations*

  A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- *The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the Program of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*

- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the Program of study as a whole.*

- ***The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.***

1. Study Program and study Program's design and development
(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Sub-areas

    a. Policy for quality assurance
    b. Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review
    c. Public information
    d. Information management

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the Program of study:*
  - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
  - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
  - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
  - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
  - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
  - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*

b. Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

- *The Program of study:*
  - *is designed with overall Program objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
  - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
  - *benefits from external expertise*
  - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
  - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
  - *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the Program and the number of ECTS*
  - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
  - *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
  - *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*
  - *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher*

Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area
- *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the Program is up-to-date*
- *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the Program*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

c. Public information

Standards

- *Regarding the Program of study, clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about:*
  - *selection criteria*
  - *intended learning outcomes*
  - *qualification awarded*
  - *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - *pass rates*
  - *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - *graduate employment information*

d. Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the Program of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - *key performance indicators*
  - *profile of the student population*
  - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - *students' satisfaction with their Programs*
  - *learning resources and student support available*
  - *career paths of graduates*

- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the Program and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study Program's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*
- *Please evaluate a) whether the study Program remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study Program are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the Program correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study Program ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study Program?*
- *How does the study Program support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study Program (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- ***How long does it take a student on average to graduate?*** *Is the graduation rate for the study Program analogous to other European Programs with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***
- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study Program (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the Program of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study Program on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The BA program in "International Relations, Global Economy and Strategy" is a conventional academic program, namely, a 4-years' (full time), Bachelor of Arts, plus an optional foundation year. The main purpose of the four-year program is to provide advanced knowledge in an interdisciplinary approach that intends to combine four separate but still interlinked sectors of international relations-politics: a) international politics,

b) international political economy, c) European integration and regional political, strategic and economic developments, and d) strategy in international politics and enterprises.

Policy for quality assurance

The policy for quality assurance of the program of study is in line with the relevant policy of the Ledra College. It has a formal status and is publicly available. Faculty performance, according to the application and the relevant presentations, will be evaluated according to the established policy of the College. However, the analytical set of criteria used for the evaluation of the faculty performance is not completely clear. The policy for quality assurance supports the organization of the quality assurance system through regulations and processes. More specifically, the annual faculty performance appraisal is based initially on a self-assessment of two key areas: teaching effectiveness and scholarly and professional activity. A peer faculty member reviews classroom evaluation annually. The program coordinator reviews annually each faculty. The faculty performance appraisal process includes the student evaluation analysis and the peer class observation. This review is discussed with the faculty member, and both the faculty member and the program coordinator sign the form. The academic director appraises program coordinators through the same process.

Hence, the quality assurance operational framework and the relevant procedures seem to support teaching, administrative staff and students. It should be noted at this point that, according to the application, all faculty members shall be evaluated every semester for every different course taught, using an approved student evaluation form and student evaluations are considered an integral part of the faculty performance appraisal process. However, it is not clear how the teaching staff's evaluation by the students actually affects the teaching process, as well as teaching staff members' evaluation and promotions.

Faculty should be available on a regular basis for consultation with students and thus need to be aware of relevant academic and procedural matters, while all students are assigned to faculty advisors. Advisors are expected to assist students in planning their academic work. Additionally the quality assurance policy and procedures, according to the application and the relevant presentations, ensure academic integrity and freedom. Every complaint with regard to conduct or harassment will be investigated by the managing director. An analytical code of professional conduct, for all those acting on behalf of the College, is established, emphasizing integrity, responsibility, decency, reliability and compliance to the laws and regulations of the Republic of Cyprus and the College's policies related to their duties and responsibilities.

The quality assurance policy guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff, since the College's policy prohibits discrimination on any of the grounds covered by the laws including race/national/ethnic origin, color religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, class, political, conviction or affiliation. The managing director is in charge of looking at any structure of viable discrimination. Further the College's code of conduct and ethics guidelines do not tolerate sexual harassment of students, faculty or personnel.

A deficit regarding the established QA policy is that provisions for the involvement of external stakeholders in the QA policy have not been established, at least concerning the BA Program under evaluation.

Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

The program of study is designed with overall program objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes, presented in every course's outline. The courses of the program focus on principle diplomatic approaches and the nature and role of international institutions, while the study program also emphasizes international security at both global and regional level and the interactions among politics, international business, state strategies and international organizations. Emphasis is also laid on the economic aspect of strategies and abovementioned international and transnational interactions. Within this

framework, economics, politics and state or enterprise purposes are examined in conjunction to the strategies of states and enterprises, while issues of international political economy, international governance and geopolitics are also raised.

At this point, we should mention that the EEC had no access to the courses' learning material prior to the evaluation (even though this is a requirement for the evaluation set by the CYQAA). Further, as the EEC was informed during the online meetings and the presentations, the abovementioned material is not available or prepared for the vast majority of the courses. This is a clear deficit that the EEC is obliged to report.

The study program seems to benefit from external expertise, while it reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe. The courses include several methods of evaluation and many of them include assignments. The methods of evaluation, presented in every syllabus, seem to correspond to the level of the program and the number of ECTS. However the lack of the courses' learning material, does not allow the EEC to certify that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS.

The program of study seems to include placement opportunities. However, given the objectives of the BA program and its emphasis to "practical'-applied facets of international relations, there is a clear lack of an internship program, formally incorporated to the study program. The explicit aim of the program, namely that students should be exposed to courses reflecting many factors and criteria of international politics, while giving them the chance to adapt their learning approaches to specific issues for which they have specific professional interests and make them competitive in the job market, makes the need for an established and sustainable internship program (as a substantial part of the study program) self-evident. It could strengthen the career prospects and the employability of the graduates.

The program of study is subject to a formal institutional approval process, while it results in a qualification that is specified and communicated, and seems to refer to the correct level (6) of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Procedures for periodic formal evaluation of the program are in place, while the internal review process of the program is in line with the relevant ones of the College and involves all the sections of the College community and stakeholders: students, academic and support staff, administrators, graduates, employers and other agencies.

Yet, the EEC has certain concerns and reservations regarding the structure, content and operation of the study program. More specifically:

1. The BA program is clearly teaching-oriented. Teaching workload is "heavy" (even overwhelming) and that could undermine research, which is a requirement for quality teaching, especially in such a dynamic field, as International Relations. Given the overall structure of the program, the intended learning outcomes, the variety of the objects and courses and the program objectives, enhancement of research is of vital importance in order to ensure that the BA program is regularly reviewed in light of the latest research in the given disciplines.

2.   In terms of the elective courses, offered per semester, the potential choices of a student are rather narrow-limited.

3. The EEC appreciates and acknowledges the quality of the existing Teaching Staff. However, in terms of quantity, given how broad and demanding such a BA program is, the EEC considers that the existing Teaching Staff is limited.

Public information
According to the application and the presentations, clear, up-to date and readily accessible information is to

be published about many of the key-aspects of the study program (including selection criteria, intended learning outcomes, qualification awarded, teaching and assessment methods). Taking into account the public information already provided for the relevant MA program entitled "International Relations, Global Economy and Strategic Analysis" (see https://ledra.ac.cy/international-relations/) the EEC is confident that in terms of public information, the new BA program is compliant.

It should be mentioned at this point that, during enrolment, students are given details of their induction session along with the student handbook. The induction session introduces information about student support, IT and learning technology resources, course, module requirements etc.

Information management
Information for the effective management of the program of study is reported that is collected, monitored and analyzed at different phases and stages. According to the application, feedback forms are distributed and collected at the end of the induction session and used to improve students' experience. However, there was no relevant information about these feedback forms and mainly about the way they will be used in order to improve students' experience. Further, no details have been provided regarding the students' Personal Development Plan and the non-credit course called Principles of Learning. It is not clear whether both the Development Plan and Principles of Learning course are horizontal for the whole Institution or whether there are provisions to adjust them to the needs of the students of the specific BA program.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The BA program in "International Relations, Global Economy and Strategy" is based on an interdisciplinary approach, focusing on international relations and power politics. It has a formal status and is anticipated to be publicly available, while it is designed with overall objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and include intended learning outcomes. Given its content, the BA program is coherent and consistent with international developments. The program's structure and design reflects, at a certain extent, the aims of the BA program. Content and objectives of the study program are partially in accordance with each other, since the objectives of the program (as well as the program itself) are very ambitious and broad. The content reflects its interdisciplinary approach and rationale, at least judging from the syllabi of the courses (since the EEC had no access to the courses learning material). The content and the delivery of the program correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Additionally, the program provides opportunities for international students to participate in the study program, given that the language of instruction is English. The abovementioned program consists of compulsory courses and electives, in line with its overall scope, which are distributed quite effectively over the semesters. However, the limited choices in terms of elective courses provided to a student per semester remains a challenge. The courses offered are consistent (yet, not equally) with the 4 main areas of the BA program.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Problem areas have been already presented and analysed. Thus, the EEC proceeds in a series of recommendations and subsequently suggests major changes concerning the BA program. More specifically:

The EEC strongly recommends the academic team to prepare all courses' learning material, prior to the beginning of the program. Their lack is a clear deficit.

As already mentioned, the BA program is teaching-oriented and that could undermine research and its combination- reflection to teaching. Given the extent of the topics raised and how broad the BA program is in terms of subjects, as well as the financial forecasts provided, the EEC strongly recommends the Institute (Ledra College) to recruit more staff in order a) to respond to the needs and demands of this ambitious program and b) to reduce teaching workload and enhance research.

For reasons already explained, the EEC strongly recommends to include a formal internship program (corresponding to specific ECTS) in the study program.

The way in which teaching staff's evaluations by the students affect the teaching process, should be clarified and specified.

Taking into account the areas and the objectives of the BA program, the EEC encourages the academic team to further focus on specific insights, parameters and aspects of the role of enterprises in the global economy and even geopolitics as well as their interaction with the state and economic governance, probably via offering at least one more (apart from the existing one on International Trade) relevant, specialised (compulsory or elective) course.

Additionally, the EEC recommends involving external stakeholders in the quality assurance policy of the study program.

Finally, given the structure of the program and the student-centered approach adopted (according to the application and the presentations), the EEC recommends the academic team to include focused Seminars, namely courses offered in small groups of students, at least one per each sector (international politics, international political economy, European integration and regional political, strategic and economic developments and strategy in international politics and enterprises) on specific issues-case studies related to the above-mentioned sectors. Seminars can provide added value to the program, enhancing students' research and team-building skills and competences and providing them with a sort of individualized learning experience (i.e. via assignments drafting and presentation in the class).

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Partially compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Partially compliant

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment *(ESG 1.3)*

Sub-areas

    a. **Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**
    b. **Practical training**
    c. **Student assessment**

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a. Process of teaching and learning

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

b. Practical training

Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

c. Student assessment

Standards

- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*

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- *The criteria for and method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study Program? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

Findings
A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The suggested number of students in the courses is low, which is a big plus of the program. The Institute seems to have cultivated a good environment between staff and students.

A crucial part of the program of study is the link between theory and practical training. On these standards, the lack of practical training is a huge deficit. The academic staff talked about organizing meetings with multinational companies, ministries and seminars, specialists and lecturers to talk about practical matters and their area of expertise, but this is not formally included in the study program. The lack of practical training has a negative impact on the assimilation of students in the labor market and their program's and degree's interconnection with employment requirements and qualifications.

The Institute is to be commended on its approach to provide accommodation to foreign students as soon as they arrive to Cyprus, thus mitigating the cultural shock of foreign students.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The College places attention towards facilitating better practices in delivering its teaching as well as placing their graduates. A very high percentage of graduates of current programs finds job after graduation. Finally, there seems to be an student-centered element in the College where they provide mentoring and guidance to students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

There are a couple of problems that have been identified. First, there has to be a clear effort in incorporating practical training/internships in the program. Second, the bibliography seems to be partially outdated and thus the need to update the references is clear. Another problem is that the College needs to find and hire talented individuals to join the full-time faculty, which will enable students to see more faculty members, and be exposed to different pedagogical approaches; in general, students will have a more well-rounded experience as opposed to have the same instructor in different courses. In addition, more emphasis should be placed in faculty members conducting frontier research and incorporating their research into their teaching. In other words, the Department should strive to achieve research-led teaching. We did not observe any evidence of that happening. Finally, we would welcome an add-on course that deals with intercultural dialogue and respect, gender equality, social integration of people with disabilities; components that are crucial in policy-making and international and transnational relations and affairs.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centered teaching methodology	Partially compliant
2.2	Practical training	Non-compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Partially compliant

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3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

Sub-areas

    a. Teaching staff recruitment and development
    ~~b.~~ **Teaching staff number and status**
    c. Synergies of teaching and research

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a. Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study Program, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study Program.*

~~b.~~ Teaching staff number and status

Standards

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the Program of study.*
- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality Program of study.*
- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.*

c. Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*

- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the Program's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How are the members of the teaching staff supported with regard to the development of their teaching skills? How is feedback given to members of the teaching staff regarding their teaching results and teaching skills?*
- *How is the teaching performance assessed? How does their teaching performance affect their remuneration, evaluation and/or selection?*
- *Is teaching connected with research?*
- *Does the HEI involve visiting teaching staff from other HEIs in Cyprus and abroad?*
- *What is the number, workload, qualifications and status of the teaching staff (rank, full/part timers)?*
- *Is student evaluation conducted on the teaching staff? If yes, have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*

Findings
A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The program employs 7 full-time, 1 part-time and 2 visiting faculty. Their teaching loads are diverse ranging from 4 periods per week to 12 periods per week. The committee felt that the institution is not making a clear effort to have transparent processes for recruitment and faculty development. The institute focuses on teaching. The performance reviews of the faculty as well as promotion criteria seem to depend almost exclusively by the quality of their teaching. The program is taught in its majority by full-time staff, which is a plus for the program. Finally, the committee felt that there has not been a serious effort by the department towards grant proposals and academic publications. The coordinator has published books on contemporary issues but some of the faculty seem not to be particularly interested in publishing work in academic journals or writing grant proposals.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

There exist a number of good practices while for some there is scope for improvement. For instance, a plus of the program is the mix of instructors coming from a variety of backgrounds. For instance, one of the instructors is the former general commander of Cyprus Air Forces. Furthermore, the institute involves visiting teaching staff from abroad. Student evaluations on the teaching staff are quite important for faculty development and promotion. Our discussions suggested that the results of student feedback are analysed and taken into account for the improvement of the pedagogical process.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Teaching seems not to be connected with research and the emphasis is not on presenting cutting-edge scientific developments in the classroom but rather disseminating established knowledge. The teaching workload for the faculty is prohibitively high to allow substantial time for research activities, grant proposals and collaborations. Specifically, on average, the teaching load is much higher than that of most Higher Education Institutions. We firmly believe in a more balanced load comprising of research as well as teaching. The dispersion in teaching load among staff (from 52 hours per semester to 156 hours per semester) is not typical or ideal and might cause friction and lack of transparency in procedures. The committee felt that the College is not making a clear effort to have transparent processes for recruitment and faculty development. For instance, the procedures underlining dismissal of untenured academic faculty were fuzzy. Specifically, the Rector indicated their difficulty to dismiss untenured individuals that pertains to the legal system in Cyprus. Given our experience with other institutes in Cyprus, we consider his concerns far-fetched and advise towards transparent and implementable procedures in dismissing, hiring and promoting faculty. Furthermore, these procedures need to be common knowledge. There has to be a genuine investment in academic research. If some of the current faculty is unable or unwilling to publish in academic journals, then, the institute needs to invest in hiring new faculty that are both teaching- and research-oriented. This will culminate in synergies in teaching and research that are currently non-existent. Finally, there does not exist a structured process for research dissemination (e.g. weekly or bi-weekly seminars).

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Partially compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Partially compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Non-compliant

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification *(ESG 1.4)*

> **Sub-areas**
> a. **Student admission, processes and criteria**
> b. **Student progression**
> c. **Student recognition**
> d. **Student certification**

4.1 Student admission

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

4.2 Student progression

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
  - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
  - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

4.4 Student certification

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*
- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Are the admission requirements for the study Program appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

Findings
A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.
Admission is, in general, based on the high school diploma. Upon arrival, students are tested in English and if they earn a passing grade are allowed to enrol in the 4-years' program; otherwise, they need to undertake foundation courses until they earn a passing grade. In the context of the particular program, the Rector indicated a vast interest in the new program receiving around 100 applications and an incoming class of 16-18 students. Screening occurs via (i) grades in the high school diploma, and (ii) an interview which allows the admissions' committee to discern their true interest towards the program. The student must earn a passing grade in all 31 courses (23 compulsory + 8 electives) and complete with a passing grade a final thesis. If the student fails twice a course, then s/he is expelled from the program.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.
There is a student support and services system that supports students with regards to academic and personal problems and difficulties. A strength of the program is that the retention rate is relatively high and with an upward trend. Job placement seems to be quite high, which is a big plus for the institute.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

A couple of suggestions. First, for the sake of transparency and public knowledge there should be information on the website with respect to the characteristics of the incoming class for each program e.g. grades, background etc. In addition, the composition of students seems to be quite concentrated to Cyprus, Nigeria and Ghana. To open up, more information should be provided and accommodate for the variations in the international educational systems. Finally, it seems that a lot of information on admissions etc is delegated to specialists, which is ok, but, at the very minimum, there should also be sufficient information on the website.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Partially compliant
4.2	Student progression	Partially compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

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5. Learning resources and student support *(ESG 1.6)*

Sub-areas

a. **Teaching and Learning resources**
b. **Physical resources**
c. **Human support resources**
d. **Student support**

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study Program.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study Program.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study Program.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study Program and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*
- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*
- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*
- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study Program, etc.)?*
- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

From the documentation, the presentations and the online site visit we learned that most of the necessary resources are digitally available. The common procedure is that the teachers provide the students with course materials via moodle. Students can also use a small library and an online information system (https://ebscohost.com) to consult literature on their own. However, as the program is rather teaching-oriented,

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such opportunities for independent study and research are conceptually secondary. The descriptions in the application as well as a virtual tour allowed us to get an impression of the classrooms, the PC rooms, the library and the cafeteria of the relatively new building at Langada Street. Classes can be held under very good conditions, as all classrooms are well equipped (projectors, whiteboards etc.). How teaching methodology and conditions will change under covid-19 conditions, however, was neither explained in the written application nor in the oral presentation unless we asked for it. This is remarkable in that the costs of the program were apparently calculated already on the assumption that teaching will take place under covid-19 conditions.

The application procedure and the test of the foreign language level should ensure that the students' level is relatively balanced. The selection process takes into account both previous achievements and the interviews with the candidates, although it remains vague which exact criteria are evaluated in the interviews. The verbal information that candidates should be familiar with international institutions suggests that previous knowledge is awarded here, which is partly identical to the knowledge to be imparted by the program.

The recruitment and supervision of the new students appears to be in good and professional hands, which is very important because the majority of the students come from abroad, mainly from some African countries.

The interdisciplinary nature of the program must be assessed ambivalently. Although the interdisciplinary arrangement is fundamentally convincing, certain problems arise: Firstly, the program asks too much from both students and staff. The students are driven in a tour de force through matters of international politics, economics, political science and international law by a relatively small teaching staff. Secondly, the teaching-oriented approach leaves little room for individual interests or for the discussion of current research questions and debates. The literature intended for the individual courses is partly outdated, for example in IREL-201 (States and Alliances. Foreign Policy and Strategic Analysis) or IREL-306 (Nuclear Power, Nuclear Strategies). However, important recent developments (cyber security etc.) are also discussed in the program.

The vast majority of the necessary books and articles for the program are not yet available at the institution, neither in print nor in open access.

Student mobility is supported on a low basis. Even though the students are supervised individually, the college does not provide solutions to specific special needs. Disabled students, for instance, have no or very limited access to the college, given that the building has no elevator.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The physical equipment of the college can be rated as very good. This includes the classrooms and PC rooms. Part of the program touches important recent developments.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

The teaching is rather teacher- than student-oriented. A small teaching staff with a high teaching load is responsible for a relatively large range of subjects. The program director explained that teaching is often based on discussing current conflicts and developments in foreign policy and also on the teacher's own personal

experience in such matters as well as his (or her) familiarity with international institutions. A solution to this problem has already been mentioned above. Book supply via the library and online resources is very limited, which makes own researches more difficult. Internships would strengthen both the careers of the students and their own experience.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Partially compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Partially compliant
5.4	Student support	Partially compliant

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6. Additional for distance learning Programs *(ALL ESG)*

Sub-areas

 a. **Distance learning philosophy and methodology**
 b. **Distance learning material at the appropriate level according to EQF**
 c. **Interaction plan and Interactive weekly activities**
 d. **Study guides**

---

a. Distance learning philosophy and methodology

Standards

- *The distance learning methodology is appropriate for the particular Program of study.*
- *Feedback processes for students in relation to written assignments are set.*
- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on distance learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*

b. Distance learning material at the appropriate level according to EQF

Standards

- *Twelve weekly interactive activities per each course are set.*
- *The distance learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment and the following are applied:*
  - *Simulations in virtual environments*
  - *Problem solving scenarios*
  - *Interactive learning and formative assessment games*
  - *Interactive weekly activities with image, sound and unlimited possibilities for reality reconstruction and further processing based on hypotheses*
  - *They have the ability to transfer students to real-life situations, make decisions, and study the consequences of their decisions*
  - *They help in building skills both in experiences and attitudes like in real life and also in experiencing - not just memorizing knowledge*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for distance learning, which is responsible for the support of the distance learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*

c. Interaction plan and Interactive weekly activities

Standards

- *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
  - *among students*
  - *between students and teaching staff*
  - *between students and study guides/material of study*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students and teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of distance learning.*

d. Study guides

Standards

- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with distance learning philosophy and methodology and the need for student interaction with the material is developed. The study guide should include, for each course week / module, the following:*
  - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the Program, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
  - *Presentation of course material, and students' activities on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
  - *Weekly outline of set activities and exercises and clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
  - *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
  - *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
  - *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
  - *Synopsis*

- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the Program according to the EQF.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Is the nature of the Program compatible with distance learning delivery?*
- *How do the Program, the material, the facilities, and the guidelines safeguard the interaction between students, students and teaching staff, students and the material?*
- *How many students upload their work and discuss it in the platform during the semester?*
- *Are the academics qualified to teach in the distance learning Program?*

Findings
A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
6.1	Distance learning philosophy and methodology	Choose answer
6.2	Distance learning material at the appropriate level according to EQF	Choose answer
6.3	Interaction plan and Interactive weekly activities	Choose answer
6.4	Study guides	Choose answer

7. Additional for doctoral Programs *(ALL ESG)*

> ### Sub-areas
>
> a. **Selection criteria and requirements**
> b. **Proposal and dissertation**
> c. **Supervision and committees**

7.1 Selection criteria and requirements

Standards

- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the Program, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree Program are analysed and published:*
  - *the stages of completion*
  - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the Program*
  - *the examinations*
  - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
  - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

7.2 Proposal and dissertation

Standards

- *Specific and clear guidelines for the writing of the proposal and the dissertation are set regarding:*
  - *the chapters that are contained*
  - *the system used for the presentation of each chapter, sub-chapters and bibliography*
  - *the minimum word limit*
  - *the binding, the cover page and the prologue pages, including the pages supporting the authenticity, originality and importance of the dissertation, as well as the reference to the committee for the final evaluation*
- *There is a plagiarism check system. Information is provided on the detection of plagiarism and the consequences in case of such misconduct.*
- *The process of submitting the dissertation to the university library is set.*

7.3 Supervision and committees

Standards

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
  - *regular meetings*
  - *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
  - *support for writing research papers*

- o *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?*
- *Is there a link between the doctoral Programs of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?*
- *Can you please provide us with some dissertation samples?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
7.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Choose answer
7.2	Proposal and dissertation	Choose answer
7.3	Supervision and committees	Choose answer

8. Additional for joint Programs *(ALL ESG)*

Sub-areas

    a. **Legal framework and cooperation agreement**
    b. **The joint Program**

8.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement

Standards

- *The joint Program is offered in accordance with legal frameworks of the relevant national higher education systems.*
- *The terms and conditions of the joint Program are laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement in particular covers the following issues:*
    - *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the Program*
    - *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation, including funding, sharing of costs and income, resources for mobility of staff and students*
    - *Admission and selection procedures for students*
    - *Mobility of students and teaching staff*
    - *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures*
    - *Handling of different semester periods, if existent*

8.2 The joint Program

Standards

- *The partner universities apply joint internal quality assurance processes.*
- *The joint Program is offered jointly, involving all cooperating universities in the design, delivery and further development of the Program.*
- *Aims and learning outcomes are clearly stated, including a joint syllabus, language policy, as well as an account of the intended added value of the Program.*
- *Study counselling and mobility plans are efficient and take into account the needs of different kinds of students.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Does the joint study Program conform to the requirements of a study Program offered at the specific level?*
- *Is there a system that assures the quality of joint provision and guarantees that the aims of the Program are met?*
- *Do the mechanisms for ensuring the quality of the joint study Program take into consideration the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)? Are they adopted by all the universities involved?*
- *Is the division of responsibilities in ensuring quality clearly defined among the partner universities?*
- *Is relevant information about the Program, e.g. admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures, well documented and published by taking into account the specific needs of students?*
- *What is the added value of the Program of study?*
- *Is there a sustainable funding strategy among the partner universities? Explain.*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
8.1	Legal framework and cooperation agreement	Choose answer
8.2	The joint Program	Choose answer

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D. Conclusions and final remarks

Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the Program of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

The Committee enjoyed talking with the students and academic staff of the Ledra College. We engaged in constructive discussions and there is a willingness to improve the Department and the College. There is a clear focus on helping students achieving their goals, which is very reassuring. The fact that most graduates find jobs is also very promising.

We have made specific recommendations in the main body of this report. Our main recommendations, which will be summarized below, aim to elevate the College to the standards of comparable European programs. Currently, the College falls below these standards at least in some of the key-aspects of the new BA program under evaluation. First, we would like to emphasize the need for the Department to become more research active, and engage in research-led teaching. There has to be a genuine investment in lecturers who are research active. Such investment will culminate in synergies between teaching and research that are currently non-existent, provide a more balanced teaching load to the entire faculty, expose students to a variety of instructors and a diverse spectrum of pedagogical approaches, and stimulate the curiosities and research agendas of both the faculty and the students. A value-added of a more balanced and less dispersed (across departmental instructors) teaching load is that the faculty performance review procedures will become clear and transparent. It is a big question mark to the committee members how can one evaluate in a fair and consistent manner two full-time individuals that teach 80 and 140 periods per semester, respectively. Furthermore, there is a clear need to incorporate practical training/internship opportunities in the program. In addition, the College needs to organize a seminar series where frontier research will be presented by seminar speakers from Cyprus as well as other countries. Finally, the committee felt that the procedures pertaining to hiring/promotions/dismissals were fuzzy and thus recommends revising them and making them clearer.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Christos A. Ioannou	
Nikolaos Papadakis	
Arndt Brendecke	
Andrea Lambe	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 16/09/2020