

ACCREDITATION REPORT OF THE SPECIAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

Sustainable Development of the Yachting and Cruise Industry

By Decision of the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (hereinafter: the Agency), No. 02-607/26-39/5 dated 06 April 2026, an expert Commission was appointed to conduct the accreditation procedure for the special training programme entitled “Sustainable Development of the Yachting and Cruise Industry” within the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, University of Montenegro, composed of:

1. Prof. Dr. Goran Vukelić, Full Professor at the Faculty of Maritime Studies, University of Rijeka, Republic of Croatia – President of the Commission;
2. Prof. Dr. Žarko Koboević, Full Professor at the Faculty of Maritime Studies, University of Dubrovnik, Republic of Croatia – Member of the Commission;
3. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Luka Vukić, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Maritime Studies, University of Split, Republic of Croatia – Member of the Commission.

The Commission was tasked with reviewing the request submitted by the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, University of Montenegro, No. 02-607/26-5/1 dated 05 February 2026, for the accreditation of the special training programme entitled “Sustainable Development of the Yachting and Cruise Industry”, together with the accompanying documentation, and based on direct verification of the factual situation, to prepare and submit to the Agency a Report on the quality assessment of the special training programme, its compliance with academic and professional needs, as well as adopted standards.

The Commission thoroughly examined the submitted accreditation request and accompanying documentation. For the purpose of directly verifying the factual situation, the Commission familiarised itself with the overall conditions for the implementation of the programme and conducted an assessment of the quality of the programme for lifelong learning purposes.

In accordance with the above, and based on the provisions of Articles 65, 132 and 156 of the Law on Higher Education (“Official Gazette of Montenegro”, No. 122/2025), as well as Articles 11 and 13 of the Rules on the Accreditation Procedure for Lifelong Learning Programmes, adopted by the Agency for the purposes of accreditation of lifelong learning programmes, the Commission hereby submits to the Agency the Accreditation Report for the special training programme entitled “Sustainable Development of the Yachting and Cruise Industry” on 29 April 2026.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Institution: University of Montenegro

Organisational Unit: Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor

Title of the Special Training Programme: Sustainable Development of the Yachting and Cruise Industry

Provider of the Programme: Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor

Scientific Field: Maritime Affairs and Blue Economy

Teaching Organisation: Combined teaching format including theoretical lectures, field teaching, demonstration exercises, and independent participant work.

Admission Requirements:

- for students: active student status and knowledge of the English language;
- for other participants: completed at least four-year secondary education and knowledge of the English language.

Qualification Level Acquired upon Completion:

Level VI of the Montenegrin National Qualifications Framework (professional qualification).

Qualification Acquired:

Professional Associate for Sustainable Development of Nautical and Cruise Tourism Ports.

Planned Duration:

Total of 90 hours.

ECTS Credits: 3

Planned Number of Participants:

Minimum 15, maximum 40.

II. ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH STANDARDS

1. Programme Description and Content

The lifelong learning programme “Sustainable Development of the Yachting and Cruise Industry” is an interdisciplinary educational programme organised as a summer school in English. The programme is implemented through cooperation between the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor and the Institute of Marine Biology, both organisational units of the University of Montenegro, with institutional support from the Port of Kotor and Porto Montenegro Marina.

The curriculum is structured through seven thematic units:

- (1) Sustainable development of nautical and cruise tourism,
- (2) Modern management of marinas and cruise ports,
- (3) Safety and security in marinas and cruise ports,
- (4) Planning and development of marina and cruise port infrastructure,
- (5) Assessment of key navigation parameters,
- (6) Smart and digital marinas and cruise ports,
- (7) Green marinas and cruise ports.

A total of 90 hours of activities is foreseen, consisting of 20 hours of theoretical teaching, 20 hours of field and practical teaching, and 50 hours of independent participant work.

The teaching process includes lectures, computational and laboratory exercises, demonstrations on Wärtsilä Transas NTPro 5000 navigation simulators, practical visits to the Port of Kotor and Porto Montenegro Marina, and work in the laboratories of the Institute of Marine Biology. Participants are also provided with access to online teaching materials and knowledge assessment tests. Teaching is conducted exclusively in English, thereby directly contributing to the internationalisation of the educational process at the University of Montenegro.

Compared to the previous accreditation, the programme has been upgraded from 2 to 3 ECTS credits and expanded with teaching content in the field of digitalisation and the development of smart marinas and cruise ports, in response to accelerated technological changes brought by the post-COVID era in port infrastructure management.

2. Programme Objectives

The general objectives of the programme “Sustainable Development of the Yachting and Cruise Industry” are clearly defined in the Elaborate and reflect the strategic orientation of the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor towards internationalisation and strengthening blue economy capacities in the Adriatic region.

The first fundamental objective is to increase the international visibility of the University of Montenegro by strengthening the internationalisation process, specifically through increasing incoming student mobility from foreign universities. The programme was initially launched within the Erasmus+ IESP project and is now continuing with the support of the Interreg IPA South Adriatic project SKILLS, thereby ensuring a continuous inflow of participants from Italy, Albania, and Montenegro.

The second objective concerns strengthening human capacities in companies whose primary business relates to the blue economy, including the cruise and yachting industries. The European Commission defines the blue economy as “all economic activities related to oceans, seas and coasts”, and this programme directly addresses the need for experts capable of managing modern and sustainable marinas and cruise ports.

Specific learning outcomes include mastering the latest trends in nautical and cruise tourism, applying modern management methods, understanding navigation parameters, analysing infrastructure and safety standards of port facilities, critically applying digital technologies in port operations, and classifying and controlling pollutants from yachts and cruise ships. The objectives are fully aligned with labour market needs, supported by research conducted in marinas, cruise ports, and maritime agencies in the South Adriatic region.

3. Justification for Programme Implementation

The Elaborate provides a multifaceted justification for the implementation of this lifelong learning programme, encompassing economic, labour market, environmental, and institutional dimensions.

At the labour market level, data from Montenegro indicate that in the period 2014–2024 the average number of employed persons reached approximately 200,000, while the unemployment rate amounted to around 11.5% (MONSTAT, 2025). Approximately one-fifth of total employment is linked to coastal activities, while GDP generated in the coastal zone per employee is 1.5 times higher than the national average. Nevertheless, employment in maritime affairs, ports, and shipbuilding remains relatively modest compared to Mediterranean countries, thereby creating a clear market niche for specialised training programmes.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for digital competencies in port management significantly increased, leading to the introduction of the new thematic area “Smart and Digital Marinas and Cruise Ports”. This shift towards digitalisation reflects current sectoral trends, including the application of IoT, AI demand prediction, digital twins, blockchain solutions in logistics, and cybersecurity of port operations.

The programme also responds to institutional and international obligations: the SKILLS project coordinated by the University of Montenegro through the Institute of Marine Biology is co-financed by the European Commission under Interreg IPA South Adriatic 2021–2027, ensuring both financial and organisational support for at least five years after project completion (until 2032). Letters of intent attached to the Elaborate, including a support letter from the Port of Kotor, confirm concrete industry demand for participants with this qualification.

4. Admission Policy

The admission policy of the programme “Sustainable Development of the Yachting and Cruise Industry” has been developed in accordance with the Rules for Lifelong Learning Programmes at the University of Montenegro and described in Chapter VI of the said Rules.

The target group consists of two categories of participants:

- active students who must hold student status at the time of application;
- employed persons and other interested participants who must have completed at least four-year secondary education.

Knowledge of English is mandatory for both categories since the programme is entirely delivered in English. Participants are also recommended to possess a laptop or tablet with installed Microsoft Office software and Zoom application.

All participants are required to complete a pre-test before the beginning of classes and a final test upon completion of the programme. Active participation in lectures, exercises, and field activities, as well as timely submission of assignments, is expected.

The planned number of participants is between 15 and 40 per cycle, representing the pedagogical optimum for interactive and practical teaching. During the implementation of the SKILLS project, programme costs are covered in accordance with Interreg programme rules. Following project completion (from 2028 onwards), the proposed fee is EUR 350 for active students and EUR 700 for employed participants.

5. Credit Value in Accordance with ECTS

The programme carries 3 ECTS credits, representing an increase compared to the previous accreditation cycle when the programme carried 2 ECTS credits. This increase directly reflects the expansion of teaching content, especially through the introduction of the thematic unit “Smart and Digital Marinas and Cruise Ports”.

The value of 3 ECTS is derived from the total of 90 hours of participant activities, in line with European standards (one ECTS credit corresponds to 25–30 hours of total student workload).

The programme is evaluated as a professional qualification at Level VI of the Montenegrin National Qualifications Framework. The Qualification Council of the Government of Montenegro confirmed in June 2021 the proposal for developing the professional qualification “Professional Associate for Sustainable Development of Nautical and Cruise Tourism Ports” (Level VI).

The acquired ECTS credits may be accumulated and potentially recognised within formal study programmes, thereby ensuring horizontal and vertical permeability of qualifications and adding value from the lifelong learning perspective.

6. Internal Mechanisms for Monitoring Programme Quality and Success

The Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor possesses an established and certified quality management system consistently applied to lifelong learning programmes.

At faculty level, the EN ISO 9001 quality management system has been implemented and certified by the Croatian Register of Shipping since 2017. The EN ISO 9001:2015 certificate is valid until May 2026.

Programme quality assessment by participants is conducted through electronic online surveys. Survey results are reviewed by the Faculty Council and submitted to the Centre for Quality Improvement of the University of Montenegro.

The Institute of Marine Biology, as co-organiser of the programme, possesses the accredited MEST EN ISO 17025:2017 quality system applied to laboratory and research activities.

7. Academic Staff Participating in Programme Delivery

The programme is characterised by a high degree of interdisciplinarity, with a teaching team composed of 23 experts from four organisational units of the University of Montenegro:

- Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor,
- Institute of Marine Biology,
- Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management,
- Faculty of Electrical Engineering.

Additionally, external experts from the Port of Kotor and the Simo Milošević Institute participate in programme delivery.

The programme manager is Prof. Dr Danilo Nikolić, Full Professor at the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, former Rector of the University of Montenegro (2017–2021) and former Dean of the Faculty (2011–2017).

8. Programme Structure and Achievement of Learning Outcomes

The programme structure consists of seven thematic units that systematically cover all relevant aspects of sustainable development of the yachting and cruise industry.

The curriculum is organised through a weekly schedule implemented over six intensive teaching days. Practical exercises include visits to Porto Montenegro Marina, the Port of Kotor, laboratories of the Institute of Marine Biology, and exercises on navigation simulators.

Learning outcomes are precisely defined for each thematic unit and aligned with Level VI of the National Qualifications Framework. Participants will be able to describe trends in nautical tourism, apply marina and port management methods, explain navigation methods, implement safety protocols, critically evaluate digital technologies, and propose decarbonisation strategies.

9. Economic Justification

The programme is designed as fully self-financing, with a clearly developed income and expenditure plan satisfying financial sustainability criteria.

During the SKILLS project implementation period (until 31 December 2027), participants do not pay tuition fees, as teaching costs are covered through European Interreg IPA South Adriatic funds.

For the post-project period, the proposed enrolment fee is EUR 350 for active students and EUR 700 for employed participants.

The Faculty of Maritime Studies and the Institute of Marine Biology have committed themselves to covering any potential financial deficit from their own resources, thereby guaranteeing the programme's long-term sustainability.

10. International Comparability

The Elaborate explicitly points to the high level of international comparability of the programme, supported by analysis of summer school and related programme offerings in Europe and the region.

No programme of similar content integrating nautical tourism, marina and cruise port management, digital transformation, and marine ecology within a 3 ECTS framework was

identified.

The programme is delivered exclusively in English, positioning it for the European and international student population. Participation of lecturers and students from Italy, Albania, and Montenegro through the SKILLS project directly contributes to the internationalisation of the teaching process.

III. ACCREDITATION POSITION

The Commission proposes the following accreditation position to the Agency:

1. Acceptance of the accreditation request for a period of 5 years.

Justification:

Based on the comprehensive analysis of the submitted Elaborate, it was established that the lifelong learning programme “Sustainable Development of the Yachting and Cruise Industry” of the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor substantially satisfies all prescribed standards and criteria for accreditation of special programmes in higher education, and its adoption is therefore recommended.

The Commission concludes that all key programme elements (objectives, learning outcomes, resources, and implementation methods) are clearly defined and mutually aligned. The programme is interdisciplinary and professionally grounded, designed in cooperation with the Institute of Marine Biology and supported by concrete letters of intent from economic stakeholders and international project financing under the Interreg IPA South Adriatic programme.

The programme providers possess a certified EN ISO 9001:2015 quality management system, clearly defined learning outcomes aligned with Level VI of the National Qualifications Framework, and highly competent teaching staff comprising 23 lecturers and researchers from four organisational units of the University of Montenegro.

Economic sustainability is ensured through a self-financing model combined with European project support and guaranteed institutional sustainability for at least five years after project completion.

Recommendations for quality improvement:

It is recommended to establish a mechanism for monitoring the professional development of programme graduates after completion, in order to obtain valuable feedback for continuous programme improvement.

It is also recommended to define measurable programme performance indicators (e.g. completion rate, participant satisfaction, international representation, number of industry

partners) in accordance with ESG quality assurance standards.

COMMISSION

Prof. Dr. Goran Vukelić – President

Prof. Dr. Žarko Koboević – Member

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Luka Vukić – Member

Date: 29 April 2026