

From the Maritime College to the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor: The Pivotal Role of the Faculty in Maritime Education and Maritime Tradition

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Abstract: This paper is dedicated to the establishment and development of the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, which celebrates sixty-five years of work and existence this year. The paper provides a chronological overview of the most significant events in the Faculty's history, emphasising its growth, the creation of new study programs, which result from the continuous development of the maritime economy and adaptation to changes dictated by the international maritime labour market. By emphasizing the centuries-old maritime tradition of Kotor, Boka, and Montenegro, with the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor serving as the pivot of higher maritime education, this paper examines the decades-long activities of the Faculty, one of the oldest units within the University of Montenegro. Although it is challenging to cover all aspects of the Faculty's operations—since it is involved not only in education and scientific research but also in initiating social and cultural activities in collaboration with various state, maritime, scientific, and economic entities—this paper highlights some key concepts to illustrate the rich socio-cultural, educational, scientific, and cultural contributions of the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor. In our “voyage”, we examine various aspects that define the Faculty's work, including quality standards, international cooperation, alignment with modern management practices in teaching, and membership in the world's most prestigious maritime organizations.

Keywords: Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, Development, Education and science, Current course.

1. Forerunners of maritime education

The need for education in the field of seafaring dates back centuries, reflecting the deep relationship between people and the sea in the magnificent Bay of Boka Kotorska and its surrounding hinterland. The favourable geographical location of this fjord has always made Boka

Kotorska open to the world, attracting various peoples and civilizations. This openness played a pivotal role in transforming Kotor, Boka, and nearby coastal towns into significant maritime centers of the Adriatic Sea and the Mediterranean in ancient times. These areas later flourished as vibrant hubs of economic, social, and cultural development. Montenegro has long been known as a battleground, and its rich history has been shaped by numerous peoples and civilizations, including the Venetians, Austro-Hungarians, Italians, Russians, French, and the rule of the Ottoman Empire [8]. For over a millennium, Boka Bay has acted as a crossroad for Eastern and Western cultures, languages, dialects, as evidenced by its remarkable architectural heritage.

The striking contrasts of the landscape, characterized by the rugged Montenegrin karst and limited cultivable land on one side, juxtaposed with the enchanting Boka Bay—referred to as the "Beauty of the Adriatic" by Šantić—have encouraged the people of Boka to engage with the world beyond their shores. This deep connection to the sea and the broader world has been evident since ancient times [1]. During the period of Venetian rule from 1420 to 1797, Perast, Dobrota, and Prčanj became key centers of trade in the Boka region. Notably, in the 16th century, Perast had a fleet of 60 ships, marking a significant milestone that would lead to increased maritime activity in the following centuries [1].

The people of Boka have left a lasting legacy in maritime history, not only through their participation in naval ventures and battles aboard magnificent sailing vessels but also by enriching their homeland with spiritual and civilizational heritage. Thanks to its sailors, Boka became a vibrant hub of culture, trade, and economy. Despite numerous invasions, the region remarkably retained its integrity and independence. The Kotor fraternity of seafarers, now known as the Boka Navy, had a pivotal influence on the dissemination of maritime knowledge and the training of seafarers in Kotor prior to the establishment of formal education [9]. One of the most significant events in the history of Kotor and Boka was the arrival of Saint Tryphon's relics in 809. Today, the Fraternity is dedicated to educating maritime professionals and preserving maritime heritage. This commitment is demonstrated through partnerships with educational institutions specializing in maritime studies and by hosting a variety of events designed to celebrate and maintain maritime traditions [10].

During the medieval period, maritime education was virtually non-existent, with only lyceums and grammar schools available for education. Upon finishing their religious studies, young men typically embarked on careers as "mozzi" or cadets [9]. Sailors gained valuable experience aboard

ships and enhanced their skills through private lessons conducted by experienced captains. After spending five years at sea, they would be required to pass a formal examination before a professional board, allowing them to earn their ranks and take command of a vessel. The role of a seafarer demanded immense sacrifices and a commitment to prioritizing the needs of others, alongside adherence to a strict code of ethics. The moral values associated with the maritime profession often called for personal sacrifice, with the seafarers frequently placing their own lives in jeopardy for the greater good [9].

As previously mentioned, skilled Boka seafarers and captains primarily gained their knowledge and education in private schools taught by sea captains and priests. The first maritime schools in the Middle Ages were established in Perast at the beginning of the 16th century, followed by Kotor (1637), Herceg Novi (1690), and Prčanj and Dobrota [1]. Undoubtedly, the most renowned among them was the school attended by the cadets of Russian Tsar Peter the Great in the 17th century, from 1697 to 1698, led by the distinguished captain Marko Martinović from Perast. The first state maritime school was founded in Kotor in 1849, under the name Nautical School; classes were conducted in Italian, and it served as the forerunner of today's Maritime High School Kotor [5].

2. From College to the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor

2.1. Evolution of academic program development

In 2024, the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor marks its 65th anniversary. Numerous authors note that the establishment of the Maritime College on November 19, 1959, in Kotor—fondly referred to as "Viša" (meaning College) by the locals and its former students—signifies the dawn of "a new era in which young individuals would gain education and bring new vitality to the social and cultural fabric of our city" [7]. The Maritime College was the first higher education institution for maritime education in the former Yugoslavia, and the first school for maritime training in the former Republic of Montenegro [3]. The establishment of the Maritime College was significantly motivated by practical reasons, such as the dynamic development of the maritime economy, the demands of Montenegrin shipping companies for skilled professionals, and especially the staffing needs of the large state company "Jugooceanija" as many seafarers had earned their officers' diplomas at the Faculty of Maritime Studies in Rijeka, often remaining there to live and work [4]. The early days of the Maritime College were characterized by ambition but also by a lack of

physical space. Initially, classes were held in the building of the existing Maritime High School, supplemented by the addition of new classrooms and a dedicated library room. The school initially offered two departments: Maritime Navigation and Marine Engineering, and in the 1960/61 academic year, the Maritime Economics Department was established [4].

The Faculty responded to the needs of the maritime labor market by elevating the skills of workforce. This has been achieved by creating a robust academic and professional framework in essential areas, including navigation, maritime law, English, French, and Italian languages, as well as mathematics, electrical and marine engineering, and mechanical disciplines. As a result of this strategic initiative, the newly established higher maritime institution was able to broaden and improve its existing study programs. In the 1965/66 academic year, two new departments were established: Tourism and Maritime Radiotelegraphy, in response to the growing demand for these skills within the former Yugoslav Navy [4]. The introduction of these departments led to an expansion in the number of maritime professionals. By the 1970s, the Maritime College employed 26 full-time faculty members with permanent positions, along with nine part-time staff. To accommodate the growing needs of the students, the existing building underwent renovations to provide additional classrooms, laboratories, offices, and a radio station specifically for the Radiotelegraphy Department. In addition, the building had a library that included a separate reading room for visitors.

The five key departments of the former Maritime College effectively addressed the educational requirements of the maritime industry and nautical tourism. Through a blend of technical and social courses, they nurtured professionals skilled in various maritime disciplines. Specifically, the curricula within the Nautical, Marine Engineering, and Radiotelegraphy Departments were designed to equip seafarers with advanced qualifications needed to operate and manage essential services on board. Meanwhile, the Maritime Economics Department focused on training future specialists in maritime business, insurance, and international trade. Additionally, the surge in tourism underscored the necessity for training personnel within the Tourism Department [3].

A significant milestone in the early development of the Maritime College occurred in 1972 when the institution relocated to its current premises, which now houses the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor. This charming building, just fifty meters from the sea, has become a cultural icon for Kotor, Boka, Montenegro, stands as a beloved destination for its former students. In the summer months, the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor is a popular

spot among tourists, who are drawn to its picturesque surroundings and the architectural elegance that echoes the grandeur of ancient captains' residences. The events of the 1970s catalyzed the further growth of the Maritime College Kotor. This decade was characterized by a booming maritime industry, a heightened interest in maritime education, and the swift expansion of higher education institutions in the region—evident from the transformation of the Maritime College in Rijeka into a faculty in 1978. Additionally, the establishment of the “Veljko Vlahović” University in Titograd in April 1974, along with several new faculties, created a pressing demand for qualified professionals. These graduates, after completing a four-year degree, were essential to meet the staffing needs of shipping companies, maritime agencies, ports, and the logistics sector [4]. No less important was the education of personnel in the field of maritime sciences, aimed at producing competent teaching staff to ensure the sustainability of the maritime academic community. In light of all this, the Maritime College Kotor, which then had five departments (Nautical, Marine Engineering, Maritime Economics, Maritime Radiotelegraphy and Tourism), became the Maritime Faculty Kotor in 1981, with an Organizational and Operational Department. Seven years later (in 1988) the Maritime and Port department was founded in Bar. This year marked the introduction of master's and doctoral programs for postgraduate studies.



Fig. 1 – *The building of the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor*
Photo by: Stevan Kordić

The newly formed Faculty (Fig. 1) played a crucial educational and societal role in enhancing the cultural identity of Kotor, Boka, and Montenegro. Among its many accolades, the Faculty received the Kotor Municipality award "November 21" in 1970 and again in 2015. It was also honored with the Charter from the Tourism Association of Montenegro in 1979, along with the Yugoslav Navy Plaque in 1976. Furthermore, the Faculty was honored with the esteemed "Oktoih" award in 1980 and received the Plaque of the University of Montenegro in 1994, acknowledging its outstanding contributions and achievements.

New academic programs were introduced at the Faculty during the 1999/2000 academic year, establishing two four-year departments: Maritime Nautical Studies and Marine Engineering. The previous two-year Department of Maritime Communications and Automation transformed into the Department of Marine Electrical Engineering. Since its establishment as the Maritime College in 1959, transitioning to the Maritime Faculty in 1981, and evolving into the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor in 2016, this prestigious institution has been led by a series of dedicated directors and deans. Despite various challenges shaped by economic and political changes in Montenegro and the surrounding region, these leaders have consistently upheld the maritime ethos of the institution, ensuring its continued influence in the social, educational, and cultural fabric of Boka and Montenegro. This commitment has allowed the Faculty to retain its significant role within the social, educational, and cultural landscape of Boka and Montenegro. As it commemorates 65 years of excellence, a variety of directors and deans have played pivotal roles in shaping its legacy, as outlined in Table 1.

Since the founding of the Maritime College Kotor in 1959, the number of graduates in the two-year programs from 1959 to 2003 reached 5,501, distributed as follows: 639 in the Economics Department, 1,350 in the Tourism Department, 113 in Port Transportation, 396 in the Radio Telegraphy Department, 144 in the Communications and Automation Department, 28 in Maritime Electrical Engineering, 1,509 in Marine Engineering, and 1,322 in Nautical Studies. From the introduction of four-year programs in 1999 to 2003, the total number of graduates was 782 across the following departments: Nautical Studies (22), Marine Engineering (24), Management Department (540), and Organizational Operations Department (196).

Table 1 - *Directors/deans during the Faculty's 65 years of work.*

Director	Time period	Name of the Faculty at the time of the director's mandate
Dr. Božidar Tripković	1959 –1973	Maritime College
Mr Ilija Maslovar	1973 –1977	Maritime College
Prof. Dr. Borislav Ivošević	1977 –1981	Maritime College
Dean	Time period	Name of the Faculty at the time of the dean's mandate
Dr. Milenko Pasinović	1982.	Maritime Faculty
Prof. Dr. Stevan Šaranović	1982–1984	Maritime Faculty
Prof. Dr. Stevan Šaranović	1984–1988	Maritime Faculty
Prof. Dr. Stevo Nikić	1988–1993	Maritime Faculty
Prof. Dr. Stevan Šaranović	1993– 1996	Maritime Faculty
Prof. Dr. Stevan Popović	1997–1998	Maritime Faculty
Prof. Dr. Borislav Ivošević	1999–2002	Maritime Faculty
Doc. Dr. Andrija Lompar	2002– 2003	Maritime Faculty
Prof. Dr. Marija Radulović	2003.	Maritime Faculty
Prof. Dr. Marija Radulović	2003–2004	Maritime Faculty
Prof. Dr. Milorad Rašković	2004–2007	Maritime Faculty
Prof. Dr. Milorad Rašković	2007–2010	Maritime Faculty
Prof. Dr. Danilo Nikolić	2010–2013	Maritime Faculty
Prof. Dr. Danilo Nikolić	2013–2016	Maritime Faculty
Prof. Dr. Danilo Nikolić	2017.	Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor
Prof. Dr. Špiro Ivošević	2017–2020	Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor
Prof. Dr. Špiro Ivošević	2020–2023	Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor
Prof. Dr. Tatijana Dlabač	2023–	Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor

(Source: Monograph 2024: 240 [5])

Since the introduction of three-year programs in line with the Bologna Declaration in 2004, there have been 2,144 graduates, distributed as follows: Nautical Studies (697), Marine Engineering (360), Maritime Sciences (193), Maritime Electrical Engineering (third-year differential, 107), Maritime Management (721), and Port Transportation (third-year differential, 66).

Since the accreditation of new study programs in 2017, the number of graduates in undergraduate studies is 319, broken down as follows: Nautical Studies and Maritime Transportation (130), Marine Engineering (52), Maritime Electrical Engineering (46), and Maritime Management and Logistics (91). A total of 569 diplomas were awarded in the one-year specialist master's studies, with 410 in Maritime Management and Maritime Sciences (96) since 2007, and 63 in the specialist study program of Maritime Polytechnics from 2012 to 2015. A total of 71 students attained the Master of Science degree in the one-year programs in Maritime Sciences and Maritime Management, and 5 in the newly re-accredited two-year master's programs. Thirteen students obtained the title of Doctor of Science in the three-year doctoral programs since 2017 [5].

2.2. Publishing Activities

Since the foundation of the Maritime College Kotor, the institution has placed a strong emphasis on publication to support its teaching endeavors. In 1974, the College released its inaugural Proceedings, which included symposium papers commemorating the 275th anniversary of maritime education at Captain Marko Martinović's school in Perast. This initial publication concentrated on the education of seafarers up until 1974 [3]. Beginning with the double issue 7-8/1981-82, the Proceedings evolved into the Proceedings of the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, continuing its publication until 2019, resulting in a total of twenty-two issues.

In an effort to enhance the quality of scientific research within maritime studies and share findings with the global academic community, the former Proceedings evolved in 2022 into the *Časopis Pomorskog fakulteta Kotor: Journal of Maritime Sciences (JMS)*, which now releases two issues annually. This journal issues two editions annually. The inaugural editor was Professor Špiro Ivošević (2022-2023), followed by the current editor Professor Milena Dževerdanović Pejović. The Journal publishes a diverse range of scientific, review, and professional papers covering contemporary issues in maritime studies, including navigation, maritime logistics and transport, maritime electrical engineering, energy efficiency, marine engineering, marine environmental protection, communication, automation, maritime law, economics, digitalization, management, and marketing in the

maritime sector, as well as issues related to seafaring education and quality assurance in training institutions. In collaboration with key local institutions and cultural organizations, the Journal devotes its invited paper to highlight the importance of education, maritime activities, and the cultural heritage of Kotor, Boka, and Montenegro. Since its establishment, the Journal has featured invited contributions including Professor Anton Sbutega's paper on "The Statutes of the Boka Navy Kotor from 1436 to 2016"; Danijela Nikčević's examination of "Seventy Years of the Maritime Museum of Montenegro in Kotor"; Nataša Gobović and Ana Kerndl's insights on "The Importance of the Maritime Library Collection in Research and Education"; Joško Katelan's study titled "The Historical Archive of Kotor – The Memory of the City"; and a dedicated piece by Professor Rajka Glušica titled "Five Decades of the University of Montenegro", which underscores the University's crucial role in social and cultural advancement.

2.3. Teaching process from the re-accreditation in 2017 to the present day

Under the Law on Higher Education, based on the principles of the Bologna Declaration, the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor adopted a new system of studies and thus, in the academic year 2004/2005, the first generation of students enrolled under this study regime. During the process of implementing the Bologna Process, classes were conducted outside the Faculty's main building, specifically in Budva from 2005 to 2011 for the academic study program Maritime Management, from 2011–2014 for the same department in Cetinje, and from 2012–2014 in Bar for applied study programs Nautical Studies and Marine Engineering. The following year, in 2015, a specialist study program in Maritime Polytechnic was established.

By the decision of the Council for Higher Education No. 05-1-32/2017 of 12 May 2017, new undergraduate academic programs were accredited at the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor. These programs were structured to adhere to the standards and regulations of leading maritime conventions, ensuring they align with international educational frameworks and the curricula of prominent maritime higher education institutions. The newly accredited undergraduate programs, each comprising 180 ECTS credits, are as follows: Nautical Studies and Transportation (with two elective modules: Nautical Studies and Maritime Traffic), Marine Engineering (with elective modules Marine Engineering and Inspection of Marine Mechanical Systems), Marine Electrical Engineering (elective modules Ship's Electrical and Energy Systems and Ship Information and Communication systems), and the socially oriented study program Maritime Management and Logistics (elective modules Customs, forwarding and insurance and Management of

maritime transport and logistics). Since the introduction of new academic programs in 2017, the Faculty of Maritime Studies has opened up a total of 260 positions for first-year students. This includes 80 places in the Nautical Studies and Transportation, along with 60 places in other study programs.

The technical study programs are aligned and compatible with the regulations and recommendations of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW 78/95/10) and they are also indirectly aligned with other conventions of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) such as SOLAS 74/78, MARPOL 73/78, among others. To confirm compliance with the requirements of the STCW Convention, the Faculty holds a certificate issued by the Croatian Register of Shipping and is subject to continuous inspections by national and international expert bodies. Due to the global nature of the maritime profession and the regulatory mechanisms governing this specific industry sector, as well as the aim to develop personnel capable of working both on land and at sea, the accreditation of new programs required the harmonization of study programs and ECTS catalogues with reforms that comply with national higher education mechanisms, that is, the European higher education credit transfer system. Consequently, the challenge for the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, in relation to other units of the University of Montenegro is to coordinate its activities in a manner that harmonizes the legal and statutory frameworks of the two relevant ministries: the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation and the Ministry of Maritime Affairs. The unique nature of the scientific, teaching, and pedagogical work at the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor is characterized by its multidisciplinary approach, the integration of teaching and professional practice, and a crucial feedback loop between the Faculty and the maritime industry.

From the perspective of applying international maritime conventions in the educational process, the curriculum development incorporates examples of best practices from comparable programs at reputable maritime institutions in the region, such as the Faculty of Maritime Studies Split, the Faculty of Maritime Studies Rijeka, the Maritime Department in Zadar, Faculty of Maritime Studies and Transport Portorož; Maritime University in Constanta, University of the Aegean and many others [2]. In addition to undergraduate academic studies, master and doctoral academic studies have also been re-accredited. The two-year master's studies (120 ECTS) consist of study programs in Maritime Science (with elective modules Nautical Studies and Maritime Traffic and Marine Engineering module), and the study program Maritime Management and Logistics. For the international recognition of the Faculty and the University of Montenegro, it is extremely important that in the 2024/2025 academic year, the Faculty of

Maritime Studies Kotor launched Montenegro's first international interdisciplinary master program (120 ECTS) taught in English as part of the MEP&M project: Maritime Environmental Protection and Management. This study program aims to strengthen the competencies of students and employees in public and private institutions within the blue economy sectors in Montenegro and Albania. In addition to lecturers and experts from Montenegro, the teaching process includes the Institute of Marine Biology at the University of Montenegro and universities in Durrës and Vlorë.

Given the international nature of the maritime industry, the goals of the undergraduate academic programs of technical profiling (Nautical Studies and Transportation, Marine Engineering and Marine Electrical Engineering) are to produce competent seafarers, future deck, engine, and electro-technical officers, qualified to work on the national and international fleets and to attain the highest maritime ranks. Many alumni of the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor have gained enviable positions in relevant ministries, port administrations, ports, marinas, as well as in maintenance, supervision and control, customs, freight forwarding, logistics companies, and maritime companies for crew employment, coastal navigation services, and the maritime safety. The socially oriented undergraduate academic program in Maritime Management and Logistics prepares professionals for a wide range of activities related to maritime activity and offers the possibility of employment in numerous maritime companies, ports, marinas, maritime marketing and management, the growing sector of nautical tourism, freight forwarding, and insurance.

The primary objectives of the master and doctoral academic programs are twofold: first, to address the deficit of qualified academic personnel among captains, deck officers, engine officers, and electro-technical officers who will be involved in the teaching process as well; and second, to provide talented individuals with the opportunity to engage in scientific advancement and pursue academic careers within universities, research institutions, and various organizations. Given that Montenegro is a maritime nation, the aim is to cultivate skilled professionals who can establish successful careers both locally and on an international scale [2].

2.4. Other resources for teaching and scientific research

Practical training plays a crucial role in the educational landscape at the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, facilitated through partnerships with various business entities and teaching facilities. In alignment with its strategic plan for 2019-2024, the Faculty is dedicated to enhancing the educational process while actively fostering connections with the maritime

sector. The Faculty has established an extensive network of collaborative agreements with numerous companies, institutions, and organizations, including Crnogorska Plovidba AD Kotor, Barska Plovidba AD, Luka Kotor AD, the Ministry of Defense of Montenegro, the Rescue and Fire Service, Jugopetrol AD, the Institute for Hydrometeorology and Seismology, UNA Montenegro Ltd., and Marina Portonovi, among others. A testament to its strong ties with the local community is the Memorandum of Cooperation signed with the Municipality of Kotor.

These agreements establish a strong basis for enhancing the Faculty's educational and research capabilities, promoting hands-on training, and launching collaborative projects and initiatives. Among the various opportunities available to students, the navigation on the school ship "Jadran" is particularly noteworthy. These voyages are expertly organized by the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor in collaboration with the Navy of Montenegro. The Faculty is equipped with state-of-the-art technology and adheres to high standards for a diverse range of instructional formats, including in-person classes, practical sessions, laboratory work, computer exercises, and online learning. It has nine classrooms and an amphitheater that collectively accommodate up to six hundred students, in addition to two computer labs and three dedicated practical exercise laboratories. A solid logistical framework for practical training has been established through the procurement of advanced simulators from leading manufacturers such as Transas, OSC, Rolls Royce, Kongsberg, ABB, and Unitest [5].

Situated in a picturesque coastal area near the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, the Maritime Library has been an integral part of the Faculty since its founding in 1959. This library boasts an impressive collection of over 25,000 items. It collaborates with the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, as well as the Institute of Marine Biology at the University of Montenegro, sharing its valuable resources. Notably, the existing library structure was renovated in 1989, made possible by the generous donation from Božo Dabinović, a shipowner based in Monaco, hailing from Dobrota. His contribution was a tribute to his father, Professor Antun Stijepov Dabinović. Beyond its role as an academic institution, the building also boasts significant historical and cultural value. It was here, on October 29, 1813, that the unification of Montenegro and Boka Bay was officially announced. This landmark occasion marked the founding of the Central Commission, with Petar I Petrović Njegoš serving as its president. Today, the building is proudly known as the Central Commission Building, a testament to its illustrious heritage [6].

In order to meet international standards and criteria in the field of education and training for seafarers, the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor has implemented a documented quality management system in compliance with ISO 9001-1994 standards since 2000. Starting in 2003, the Faculty began applying the ISO 9001-2000 system. Since 2017, the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor has implemented ISO 9001-2015, verified by the Croatian Register of Shipping, covering all study programs and organizational units. Over the past decades, the Faculty has continuously improved its quality standards, initially monitored by Lloyd's Register and later certified by the Croatian Register of Shipping and Bureau Veritas.

Training Centre within the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor has existed since 2000 and has operated as a separate organizational unit since 2009. Today, the Center offers more than sixty courses aligned with national and international IMO course model regulations, and primarily those of the STCW Convention. Additionally, the Faculty operates the Centre for Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship, equipped with 3D technology as part of a 3D laboratory. The Faculty also provides students and researchers access to the Marine Pollution Control Laboratory (Smart Bay Lab), the Oil and Oil Derivatives Analysis Laboratory, the Offshore Technology Laboratory, and the Maritime Electrical Engineering Laboratory. Moreover, the new Underwater Archaeology Laboratory has enabled the University of Montenegro to join the UNESCO UniTwin network of universities with programs and research centres in underwater archaeology [5]. The Faculty is the only accredited Marlins centre in Montenegro, which issues certificates of proficiency in Maritime English.

3. Contribution to social development and international recognition

The Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor is a state institution and a unit within the University of Montenegro, which includes nineteen faculties and four scientific research institutes. Originally established as Maritime College Kotor, the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor became a member of the University of Montenegro "Veljko Vlahović" in 1974, upon its founding. Consequently, the responsibility and mission of the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor are directed toward both education and socially engaged activities. In line with the University of Montenegro Strategy (2019-2014), the University is positioned as a "core of social activities" aiming to encourage cultural events, round tables, gatherings, and conferences on current topics, thus contributing to the sustainability of national identity, heritage, and addressing issues vital for sustainable development [11].

Aligning its work with this strategy and the Development Strategy of the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, the Faculty has recorded a series of socially engaged activities, implemented with the support of the local community and international partners and friends.

With its impressive organizational, human, and logistical capabilities, the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor took on the role of organizer and host for the *Kotor International Maritime Conference* (KIMC) in 2021. Since its establishment, this now-annual event has successfully united approximately one hundred scholars and researchers from both national and international settings, alongside numerous representatives from key ministries, maritime enterprises, agencies, and other relevant organizations. In 2024, this conference will mark a special occasion—the 65th anniversary of the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, coinciding with its academic celebrations.

Additionally, the Faculty launched its inaugural accredited life-long-learning program - summer school conducted in English. This year, it hosted the third consecutive international English-language summer program titled “Sustainable development of the yachting and cruise industries”. Furthermore, for the second consecutive year, the Faculty, in collaboration with the Sailing Club “Delfin” hosted the international scientific-professional conference “Boka Bay as a Sustainable Nautical Destination” in Tivat, which is part of the Wind Festival.

In 2023, the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor achieved a significant milestone by becoming a full member of the International Association of Maritime Universities (IAMU), marking decades of commitment to excellence in the education and training of seafarers. The IAMU now encompasses a collective of 74 universities, maritime academies, and faculties dedicated to maritime education, alongside the Nippon Foundation, bringing the total membership to 75 institutions worldwide [5].

The Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, University of Montenegro, became a member of the European Platform of Transport Sciences (EPTS Foundation eV), with the decision adopted at the Annual Assembly held in Warsaw on September 15, 2024. Thanks to numerous projects led or coordinated by the Faculty, the institution records a significant number of events, contributing to its international visibility and positioning of both the Faculty and the University worldwide, fostering collaboration not only with related higher education institutions but also with various governmental and economic entities across many European countries.

Since 2014, the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor has actively participated in the Erasmus+ program for student and staff mobility. With about 20 signed agreements with European maritime higher education

institutions, the Faculty reports increasing trends in this area. So far, over 60 student mobilities and more than 200 academic and administrative staff mobilities have been realized, with efforts ongoing to establish new cooperation agreements [5].

As part of its existing cooperation agreements with local authorities and with the assistance of relevant ministries, the Faculty is highly active in bringing science closer to students and the broader public, especially younger generations. During the "Days of Science and Innovation" event, a tradition at the Faculty of Maritime Studies and the University, the Faculty hosts numerous primary and secondary school students, who are introduced to the Faculty's resources, particularly its simulators and equipment in the Centre for Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship. Opportunities for studying, employment, and working in the maritime industry are presented through various events such as job fairs and the "Blue Career Day - Explore Horizons of Success" panel discussion.

Furthermore, the Faculty's continuous engagement in scientific and societal topics is reflected through numerous workshops and round tables. Some recent panels include "Education and Training of Seafarers", "Innovations in the Blue Growth Sector: Potentials and Trends", "Renewable Energy Sources for a Sustainable Energy Future", "The Position of Women in the Maritime Industry" and "The Importance of Academic Integrity and Combating Plagiarism". Given that students have been the focus of the Faculty's work since its establishment, special attention is paid to alumni through the "Alumni Stories" section on the official website, highlighting former students who have built careers onshore or aboard vessels. The Faculty also commemorates important dates in maritime history, such as the International Day of the Seafarer (June 25) and the International Day for Women in Maritime (May 18).

Since 1979, the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor has been a vibrant participant in the Blood Donors Club, actively contributing to blood donation efforts [6]. Furthermore, the Faculty plays a significant role in supporting its Student Organization, which enhances student life through a variety of activities. These include organizing sports tournaments, conducting charitable initiatives, publishing a student magazine, and implementing community-focused projects like reforestation and environmental conservation in coastal and marine regions. Additionally, the Faculty is home to a Trade Union Organization dedicated to uniting, safeguarding, and promoting the economic and social interests of its staff.

4. Current course and mission

Over the past sixty-five years, from a Maritime College to the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, the Faculty has overcome numerous challenges in its growth and development. Despite the lack of space and equipment in the early decades, the Faculty became a recognized and unique centre of maritime education in Montenegro and the region. During the past century, the Faculty marked its progress in teaching and scientific research, strengthening ties with international maritime entities to promote the image of a nautical and tourist destination during Yugoslavia's era and the operations of Montenegro's largest state maritime company "Jugooceanija". Despite the crises of the 1990s, which led to the collapse of Montenegrin shipping companies and impacted maritime education and the profession, the Faculty remained committed to developing competent personnel and scientific thought, actively participating in promoting the maritime identity of the town, the Bay of Kotor, and Montenegro.

Today, the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor is a modern institution of higher education, holding a prominent place in both the maritime academic community and the global maritime market. Given the dynamic changes in the maritime industry and sector, the Faculty's policy is oriented toward its goals: improving the teaching process and aligning it with labour market needs; advancing science and project activities that enable the establishment of new study programs; strengthening technical capacities and working conditions in line with trends in information and communication technologies. The Faculty continuously strives to engage in social and cultural work, and to connect with local industries, national and international bodies. In conclusion, as a leading institution specializing in maritime studies—a discipline that has long held significance due to its relationship with the sea—the Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor is committed to advancing its mission. It upholds the essence and integrity of the maritime industry while promoting scientific inquiry within a framework that prioritizes sustainability, safety, stability, and environmental consciousness.

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