

PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

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Licenses for Montenegrin Raft Skippers in Accordance with International Standards

This license will fully prepare raft skippers to for their job during tourist season

Training for whitewater river raft skippers, organized by Center for Vocational Education and under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was held Between 13th and 20th May in Šcepan polje (Sastavci Camp). Training for 15 raft skippers from 6 municipalities in the Northern Montenegro was conducted within the project «Unleashing Sustainable Tourism Entrepreneurship in the Area of National Park Durmitor».

Raft skippers were trained by experts from Slovenia and Montenegro, in domains of environmental protection, providing first aid assistance, rescue skills, rowing techniques, communication with tourists and conflict resolution. The aim was to enable trainees for a good quality performing of raft skipper duties and gaining competences for safe boat/raft steering. This training is conceived according to the International Rafting Federation standards and it is adjusted to the whitewater river rafting conditions in Montenegro.

Raft skipping license testing was held on May 24th, also in Šcepan polje. Test Commission consisted of representatives from Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Transportation, Port Director's Office Bar, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and Center for Vocational Education.

Mr Tomica Paovic, UNDP LO Podgorica Tourism and Entrepreneurship Coordinator, said: «**Over the past ten days, during this very dynamic and interesting training, raft skippers showed enviable knowledge and skills on a wild river which is at this time of year far more difficult to subdue than in the summer. Given that this type of training, besides the compulsory theoretical part, focuses fully to the practical aspect, all the participants in training including Commission members, agreed that this model should be applied to other domains of adult education and training. Representatives of several NGOs which observed the training on the spot had a chance to confirm one serious approach to training and examiners' competences.**»

UNDP started the activities in the domain of whitewater river rafting early in 2005, through an exchange of experiences with the raft skippers from Slovenia, through interactive training programs in communication with tourists and using the environmental protection knowledge. Given that the strategic determination of the Government of the Republic of Montenegro is planning within sustainable development framework, this activity comes to full harmony with the UN Millennium Development Goals. Training for raft skippers should contribute to improving of service quality, inducing of entrepreneurship and increase in income since, according to Mr Tomica Paovic, **in 2005, only within NP Durmitor borders, over 3.000 tourists used rafting services and between 12 and 15 thousand tourists who rafted the year before along the entire Tara river course directly or indirectly brought over 1 Million Euros profit.**

The Project «Unleashing Sustainable Tourism Entrepreneurship in the Area of NP Durmitor» is a concrete step towards implementation of the Program “Strategic Framework for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Northern and Central Parts of Montenegro”, adopted by the Montenegrin Government in September 2004 and financially supported by UNDP in partnership with the American philanthropic organization “Rockefeller Brother Fund”. Implementation of this Project linked local stakeholders and donors for the first time, creating thus a basis for the *network* of future initiatives for starting business activities in the domain of sustainable tourism, protection of biodiversity and reduction of poverty in the Northern and Central parts of Montenegro.

As announced by Mr Tomica Paovic, early next month, in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism of Montenegro and under the auspices of the World Tourist Organization and George Washington University, UNDP will organise a Consulting Practicum which will gather 16 MAs in tourism and 2 tourism teachers from the USA and Europe. Together with teachers and students from Faculties of Tourism in Bar and Kotor, they will work on a plan for development of Durmitor as tourist destination. The project will include numerous institutions, SMEs, entrepreneurs and NGOs from Montenegro, as well as the Geographic-Information Office in Podgorica.

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UNDP in Montenegro promotes sustainable development, which is economically viable, socially inclusive and environmentally friendly.