



## Decentralized cooperation in the Balkans



### Macedonia

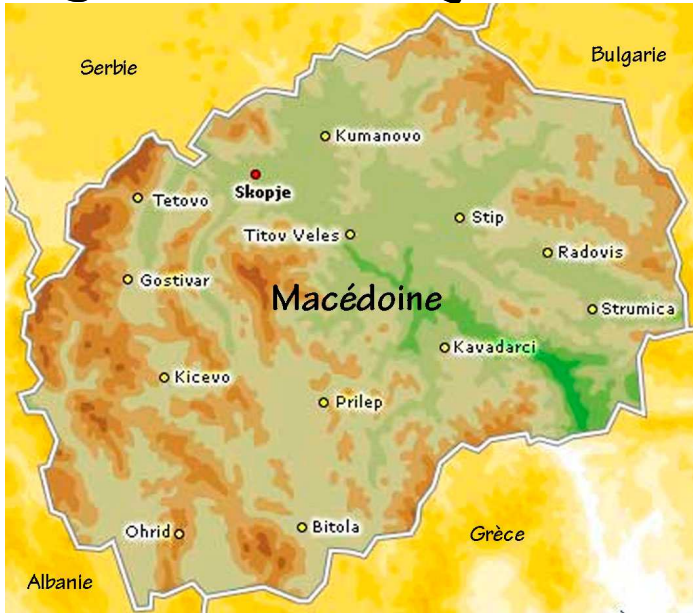
From 2nd to 11th december 2009

Assessment and analysis  
of the 5th 2009 project  
assignment.

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# Programme and Itinerary



## Wednesday 2nd December

Arrival at Skopje.

We took part in a workshop on the media and new technologies organized by the local branch of Alda, the Association of local democratic agencies (<http://alda-europe.eu>) and by Metamorphosis ([www.e-society.mk](http://www.e-society.mk)) as part of the multilateral decentralised cooperation project undertaken by the Auvergne region and the Hautes-Alpes General Council.

At the same time, an internal meeting with Project participants concluded that additional help should be put in place to create websites dealing with tourism, with ALDA acting as project manager.

Training for guides (equivalent to the French mountain leader) was also retained as it was identified as a request common to all the Balkan countries.

## Thursday 3rd December

Transfer to Tetovo. Finalising the programme and appointments for the 10 days to come.

Meeting with Frederic Charrier, project manager for "Patrimoine Sans Frontieres" PSF ([www.patrimsf.org](http://www.patrimsf.org))

This association sets up assignments for expertising heritage in danger, essentially in post war zones, leading to recommendations for safeguarding heritage, establishing case files and project management. At Prizren, for example, the PSF association coordinated the project to renovate a church with funding from UNESCO, and both the French and German ministries for Foreign Affairs. He is staying in Tetovo for a minimum of 6 months to raise local awareness about the structural heritage, and in particular by setting up educational projects for children.

Meeting with Albert Qazimi, head of the Tourist department for the municipality of Tetovo and feedback on the progress of the projects.

## Friday 4th December

Day working with the webmaster to build the website dealing with tourism.

## Saturday 5th December

Meeting with French students at the French Alliance.

Although the guides are well trained technically, unfortunately a major handicap still remains, namely that they do not speak any foreign languages apart from English. Evidently, if there are no French speaking guides, French travel agents will not arrange hiking tours to Macedonia. French lessons were offered free of charge at the Cultural centre and French Alliance but the results were very limited.

We therefore decided to broach the problem from another angle and to train French-speaking students as mountain guides. 12 students attended the meeting, the purpose of which was to explain what the job of guide entails and to answer any questions. Faton Sherifi, President of the French Alliance, offered to contact Kostantin Ciriviri, head of training, so that any students interested could

enrol on the next session due to start in February 2010. The cost of training is approximately 1 400€. Obviously most Macedonians can not afford to pay such an amount as the average monthly income is only 250€. It is therefore of utmost importance to find financing to fund all or part of this amount.

### **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December**

The Luboten Mountain Club organized a hike starting from Tetovo.

Over 40 people followed voluntary guides on a classic route which climbed up to the fort overlooking the town and crossed through several villages then back down to the Leshok monastery where we waited for minibuses to pick us up. This moderately difficult route is perfect for mountain biking, and again confirmed that the Shar Planina mountains are an attractive destination.

### **Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December**

Workshop dealing with economic development possibilities in protected areas at Jacen, Tito's former hunting grounds reserve, organized by Kostantin Ciriviri, head of mountain guide training. We talked about French experience and expertise in terms of mountain tourism, and the concept of the Regional Park in particular, which manages to combine economic development with protecting the environment.



Meeting at the Jacen hunting lodge

## **Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December**

Public holiday in Macedonia.

Working on decentralised cooperation and tandem 2010 projects with Paul Chambry, director of the French Alliance in Tetovo.

## **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December**

The town of Gostivar is located half an hour's drive from Tetovo at the foot of the Shar mountains, and is home to the Mavrovo ski resort, the best one in Macedonia. Here, in the company of Kostantin Ciriviri, we met the mayor and then Amanda Leavitt, who is in charge of the local development office. These meetings confirmed that developing tourism is also part of the council's schedule and that various actions are in motion with an Italian programme of cooperation.

Meeting with the mayor of Tetovo and his team.

Return to Skopje.



View of the Shar Planina chain from Jacen

## **Thursday 10 December**

Meeting at the French Embassy Cooperation and Cultural Action Service with Corinne Salenson, cooperation attaché.

Firstly, we analysed the results of the 2009 assignments then discussed the 2010 Hautes Alpes decentralised cooperation project. This will mainly involve working in partnership with the municipality of Prizren in Kosovo, actions with Macedonia being limited to continuing those started in 2008.

Meeting with Zoran Stojkovski, director of the Center for Institutional Development ([cira.org.mk](http://cira.org.mk)). This non-governmental organisation helps a large number of projects with funding from many diverse sources and could in the future support the concrete projects linked to mountain tourism that we have identified.

## **Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December**

Return to France.

# Conclusion 2009 and Forecast for 2010

## At Tetovo

As is the case in most towns in Macedonia, the local council has to manage many priority issues such as waste collection and treatment, water management, road maintenance etc.

In spite of this, the Tetovo council provides unfailing support to French actions in the field of tourism namely decentralised cooperation with the Hautes-Alpes General Council, the Franco-Spanish Tandem projects, and heritage development with Patrimoine sans Frontières.

The results of this collaboration are as follows:

- the creation of a tourism service directed by Albert Qasimi
- creation of a website promoting tourism ([www.enjoytetovo.com](http://www.enjoytetovo.com))
- an interactive map of the town's heritage
- publication on 25th January 2010 of a guide book of the Shar mountains, translated into four languages : Albanian, Macedonian, English and French.

Although these results may appear limited when compared to our Alpine regions, absolutely nothing existed here before and there had been no previous development of the area.

On the other hand, results of meetings organised in the villages, especially as far as accommodation is concerned, will only be apparent in the mid term, probably within 4 or 5 years.

## In Macedonia

Although tourist development in Tetovo and the Shar mountains remains the main project, we initiated and took part in many meetings with a wider audience such as central administration, other town councils, guides, NGO managers, chamber of commerce for tourism etc.

These meetings led to the following conclusions:

- the difficulty of coordinating and centralizing information concerning all the actions undertaken during these assignments
- several areas, towns, and national parks have projects to open tourist offices, for websites, and promotion but they lack essential information namely, knowledge of their public, which public to target?
- The idea of a product connected to the development of sustainable tourism remains vague. Travel agencies are perfectly capable of organising a classic trip to Turkey for example, or any other tourist destination, but paradoxically, are incapable of designing a nature and culture tour in their own country because they do not know their market.
- It is important that this product take into account all of the elements such as access, accommodation, transport, organisation of activities, and networking which combine together to make a tourist destination successful or not. In this area too, no global vision exists.
- Finally promoting Macedonia is still in its early stages and means of advertising has probably not been clearly established.

Macedonia could take part in Shows specializing in nature tourism and natural products which exist in France and elsewhere in Europe. The cost would be relatively modest when compared to the cost of making a video advertisement and the results would surely be more widespread.

The general opinion is that the government should initiate the actions linked to these needs in order to involve all of the Macedonians concerned.

It also emerges that the CG05/CCI/CRET action stands out in terms of its concrete applications directly linked to the local economy.

The crossborder aspect of mountain tourism seems obvious.

A tour in the Shar and Korab mountain ranges between Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo and which combine culture, mountains and sport could easily see the light of day.

Although a cross border hiking tour is not politically possible for the time being, crossing from one country to another via the Debar and Jazince border posts poses no problem and forms an interesting alternative.

Therefore, for 2010, actions already started in Macedonia will be continued and a decentralised cooperation project between the Hautes-Alpes and the municipality of Prizren in Kosovo is envisaged, with mountain tourism remaining as the main theme.